

I – COMPACT CUL-DE-SAC DEVELOPMENTS



Designed on similar principles to the clustered cul-de-sac developments appraised in Section H, these developments are of higher density, comprising apartment blocks or terraced town houses set within compact plots or communal grounds. They have all been constructed since the late 1990s on redundant works sites or infill sites within the built up area.

Properties often front directly onto the pavement or road or are set behind a shallow unenclosed front garden of low planting and have private enclosed space to the rear. Properties have parking spaces or garages. The steep roofs and more compact form give the development a more enclosed urban character. The enclosed cul de sac layout creates a quiet, private character.

Whilst a variety of materials and building designs are used, the overall form, materials, scale and character are generally very cohesive.

Properties are finished in a variety of traditional materials with relevance to the Kent vernacular such as red/orange bricks, weatherboarding, painted render and hanging clay tiles (sometimes decorative). The designs also incorporate traditional details such as dormer or half dormer windows, contrasting brickwork over doors and windows and chimneys. Windows and doors are often well aligned with each other and the dominant areas of brickwork over glazing give the facades a robust appearance.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Late 1990s onwards</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Terraced town houses and apartment blocks</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Residential</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>2-3 storeys, a few 4 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red, orange/red and yellow brick, tiled roofs, weatherboard, painted render white casement windows</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Open frontages</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Landscaped amenity space within developments</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Enclosed, private character – created by scale, massing and inward looking development*
- *Cohesive character created by repeated designs and uniformity of scale, height, build materials and colour palette*
- *Quality surface treatments and street furniture*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Traffic noise (most areas) from traffic travelling along near by major routes, including the M20 and the Medway Valley railway line*

I1 – LEYBOURNE PARK

Comprising: Sherwood Avenue, Aberly Drive, Eaton Place, Ingram Close,

Located on the former Frantschach site at the edge of New Hythe Industrial Estate, this modern development, built in the late 2000's, incorporates 370 units. The site is accessed from Bellingham Way and includes two and three storey semi-detached houses and town houses and three and four storey blocks of flats.



The development is predominantly constructed using red and yellow brick with white casement windows throughout. The heavy use of coloured weatherboarding in white and pale blue and cream render adds variety to the street scene. The roofs are a mixture of hipped and pitched, with some front facing gable ends on the blocks of flats, and pitched dormer windows incorporated into the roof space of the houses. This produces an interesting roofscape. Despite the variety of building designs and the palate of materials used, the use of grey slate on all roofs and white casement windows helps create a cohesive feel and unifies the development.

Red brick and buff coloured concrete lintel detailing (see right) is evident on some houses which pick up details from the 19th Century cottages in the surrounding character areas.

The development has an enclosed, private feel as the taller flatted blocks are distributed around the periphery of the area, enclosing the smaller scale houses and public spaces within.

This layout, combined with the flat levels across the site mean that views into and out of the development are limited to glimpses between buildings (see below).



Although there are a series of public open spaces included within the development which provide some landscaping as well as valuable community facilities, the absence of front gardens and mature planting within the scheme do not help to soften the hard lines of the architecture. This has resulted in a starkness to the development.



The majority of car parking is provided on street, through designated bays and forecourts. Although surface materials are attractive, this has resulted in a predominance of parked cars which clutter the street scene (see above).

Glimpses of New Hythe Industrial Estate can be clearly seen between buildings in the North, East and South of the development, and in some instances the industrial units are in close proximity and interrupt views of the North Downs. .

Road noise from traffic travelling along New Hythe Lane and Papyrus Way is clearly audible throughout the development.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Provision of public open space within the development provides valuable community facilities and the landscaping softens the hard architecture
- Enclosed and private character created by taller buildings being located around the periphery of the site
- High quality street surfacing and furniture

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from New Hythe Lane and Papyrus Way
- Cluttered streetscape caused by on-street parking
- Views of unsightly industrial structures at the neighbouring New Hythe Industrial Estate



Ref **I1**

Title **Leybourne Park**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



I2 - BRAMPTON FIELD

Comprising: Brampton Field

A compact cul-de-sac development built on a former industrial site located off New Road incorporating flats, two and three bedroom terraced housing and one four bedroom house. The development is located at the southern edge of the built-up area, enjoying long panoramic views of the surrounding countryside to the south. This distinctive enclave is a Taylor Woodrow development and was granted planning permission in 2007.



The distinctive features of this area are the high-density terrace red and brown brick properties, with gable-ended steep pitched roofs and white casement windows (see left) which create a highly enclosed inward looking private character.

A positive feature is the strong cohesive character created within each terrace block through the uniformity of build materials, features such as pitched porch canopies with white wooden supports and details such as the same coloured front doors (see left, where one row of terrace housing has green doors whilst another row has red painted doors). The pitched roof dormer windows add visual interest to the roofscape as well as creating a sense of rhythm. Many of the surface treatments are of a high quality, including block paving (see left).

The flats are characterised by garages on the ground floor with accommodation above. They are built of red brick and have dark wood boarding on the upper storey with steep pitched roofs (see right).



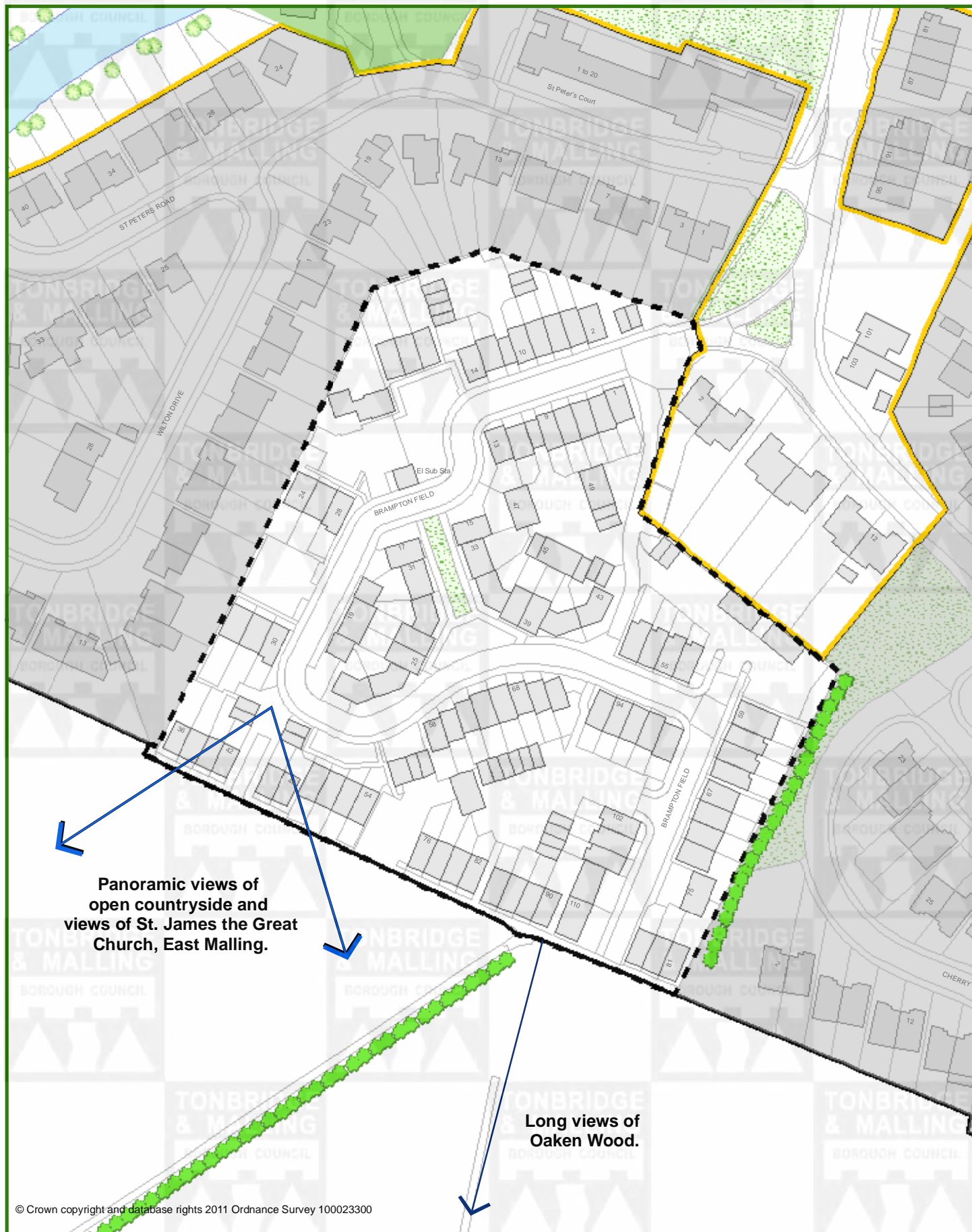
Locally distinctive positive features of this enclave development include the setting of the area. The farmlands to the south create a contrasting strong rural character and the open countryside is directly accessible from the development via public footpaths (see above, right). Panoramic views of the countryside including Oaken Wood in the far distance and St Peter the Great Church, (East Malling) in the middle distance (see above, left) can be enjoyed from the southern edge of the character area. To the north, there are glimpses of St Peter's Church, Ditton, which is located in the Conservation Area (see above, middle).

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Strong cohesive character created by uniformity of scale, height and build materials
- Panoramic views of the countryside to the south including long views of Oaken Wood and middle distance views of St Peter the Great Church in East Malling
- Glimpse of St Peter Church in the Conservation Area to the north
- Quality of surface treatments
- Enclosed, private character – created by close relationship between buildings, short curving streets and inward looking properties

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors



I3 – MEDWAY COURT

Comprising: Medway Court

A compact, enclosed cul-de-sac development constructed in 2003 on a relatively narrow strip of flat, low lying, previously industrial land between the railway and River Medway, incorporating flats and terraced housing.



The wharf style 2 to 4 storey town houses are constructed of brown brick, some with white weatherboard and have orange/brown clay or grey slate roofs with forward facing gables and decorative dormer windows. The upper storeys project forward supported on black metal brackets with white garage doors below (see left). A strong cohesive character is created within the development by the use of repeated designs, a coordinated range of material and the brown/white/grey colour palette with black details which include Juliette balconies, brackets, pipework and decorative swan neck lamps. The high quality block paving contributes to the character of the development, although unscreened on street parking clutters the townscape.

The western end of the site is wider, allowing space for a curved road layout creating changing vistas. The buildings are set back at angles to the road and a belt of trees is visible over the rooftops to the west (see right). The curved white weather boarded crescent is a particular feature with the buildings set above the road behind decorative black railings (see below left). At the eastern end the site narrows to a point with the access road following the boundary adjoining the railway line which is effectively screened by a panel fence. The site is affected by noise from Station Road and the railway.



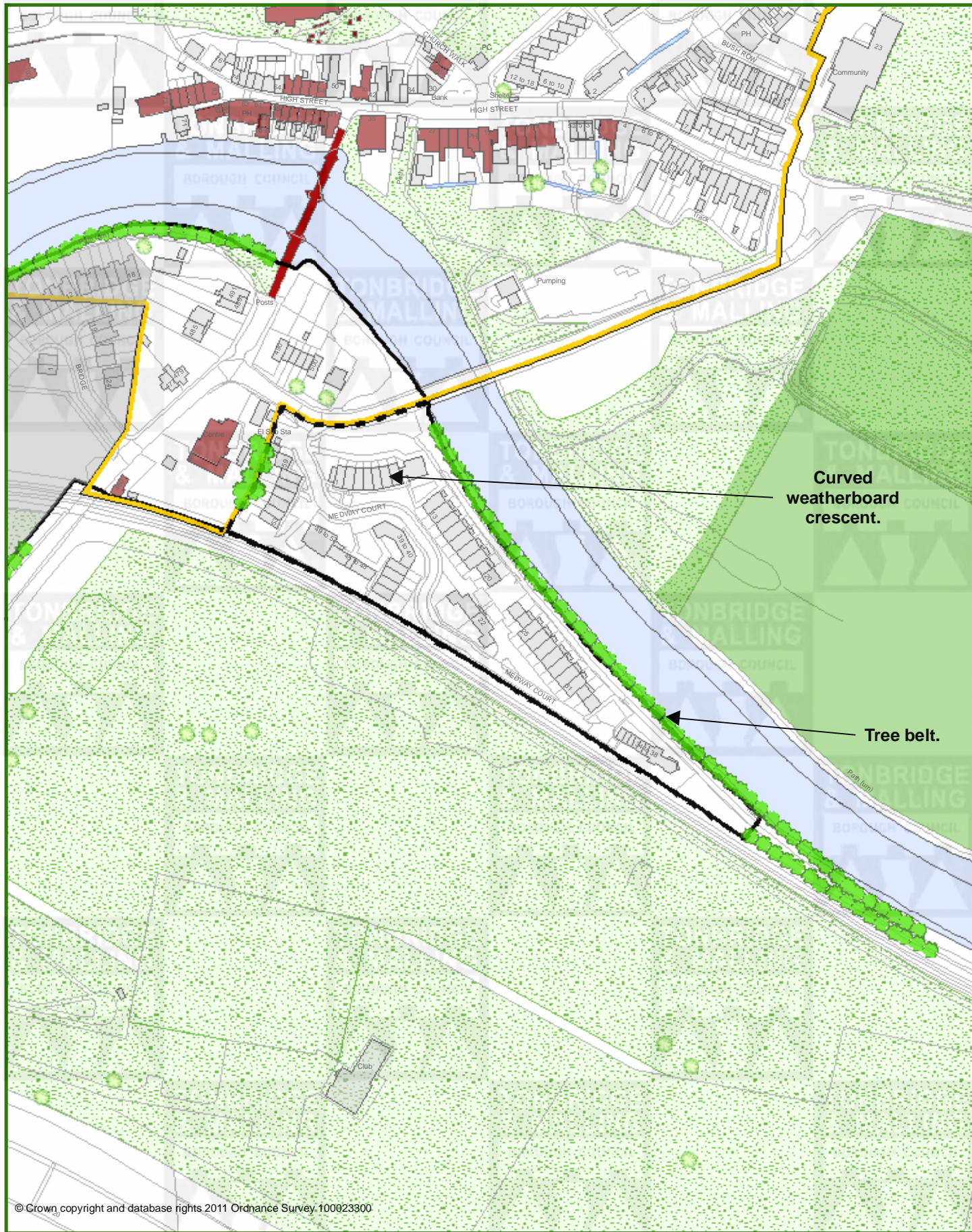
There is access from the development to the river footpath via black iron steps and many of the properties on the north side have balconies overlooking the river and tow path (see above right). The buildings are designed to look decorative from the rear incorporating white weatherboard, balconies, stone details and overhung gables which create a lively river frontage. Whilst at the front the properties are open plan, to the rear they have compact gardens enclosed by wooden fencing. A belt of trees contributes to the verdant, tranquil character of the tow path, enclosing the space.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Wharf style buildings provide links with the industrial heritage of this riverside location
- The varied orientation of the buildings contributes variety to the development and provides changing vistas
- A strong cohesive character is created within the development by the use of repeated designs, a coordinated range of materials and the brown/white/grey colour palette with black details which include Juliette balconies, brackets, pipework, railings, steps and decorative swan neck lamps
- The white weatherboarded crescent is a distinctive feature, contrasting with the straight facades and brick finish of the other buildings
- The river side of the development is verdant and tranquil. The buildings are designed to look decorative from the rear incorporating white weatherboard, balconies, stone details and overhung gables which create a lively river frontage
- Tree belts to the north east and west of the development
- High quality surfacing
- The development is screened from the railway line

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from the M20 motorway and Station Road
- Train noise
- On-street parking clutters the townscape



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0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref I3

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title Medway Court



I4 – BRIDGE PLACE

Comprising: Bridge Place

This compact cul de sac development is located on flat, former industrial land on a curve in the River Medway close to a bridge connecting to the historic Aylesford village centre and immediately adjoining the conservation area. This development of terraced and semi detached three storey townhouses has an inward looking enclosed character and benefits from a green open space on the west side. Tall trees along the river form a back drop to the north east of the development and it is screened from adjoining industrial uses and the railway to the west by a high board fence.



The houses are constructed of white/yellow or red/brown bricks with some black or cream weatherboard on upper stories. The short terraces of 4-6 houses are symmetrically designed and have prominent front facing gables at either end. The steeply pitched slate effect roofs have no chimneys. Wide pitched porch canopies supported on white wooden brackets are a distinctive feature, above integral garages with white doors. The development has a strongly cohesive design due to the uniform design, materials and colour palette (see left). Some garages have been converted to living space introducing windows and a more active frontage to these elevations.

The frontages are unenclosed, the houses being set behind paved parking areas. The character of the scheme is enhanced by quality block surfacing on footways and parking areas, soft landscaping incorporating shrubs and trees and coordinated black lamps (see right). There are short views of trees to the north east and south west.



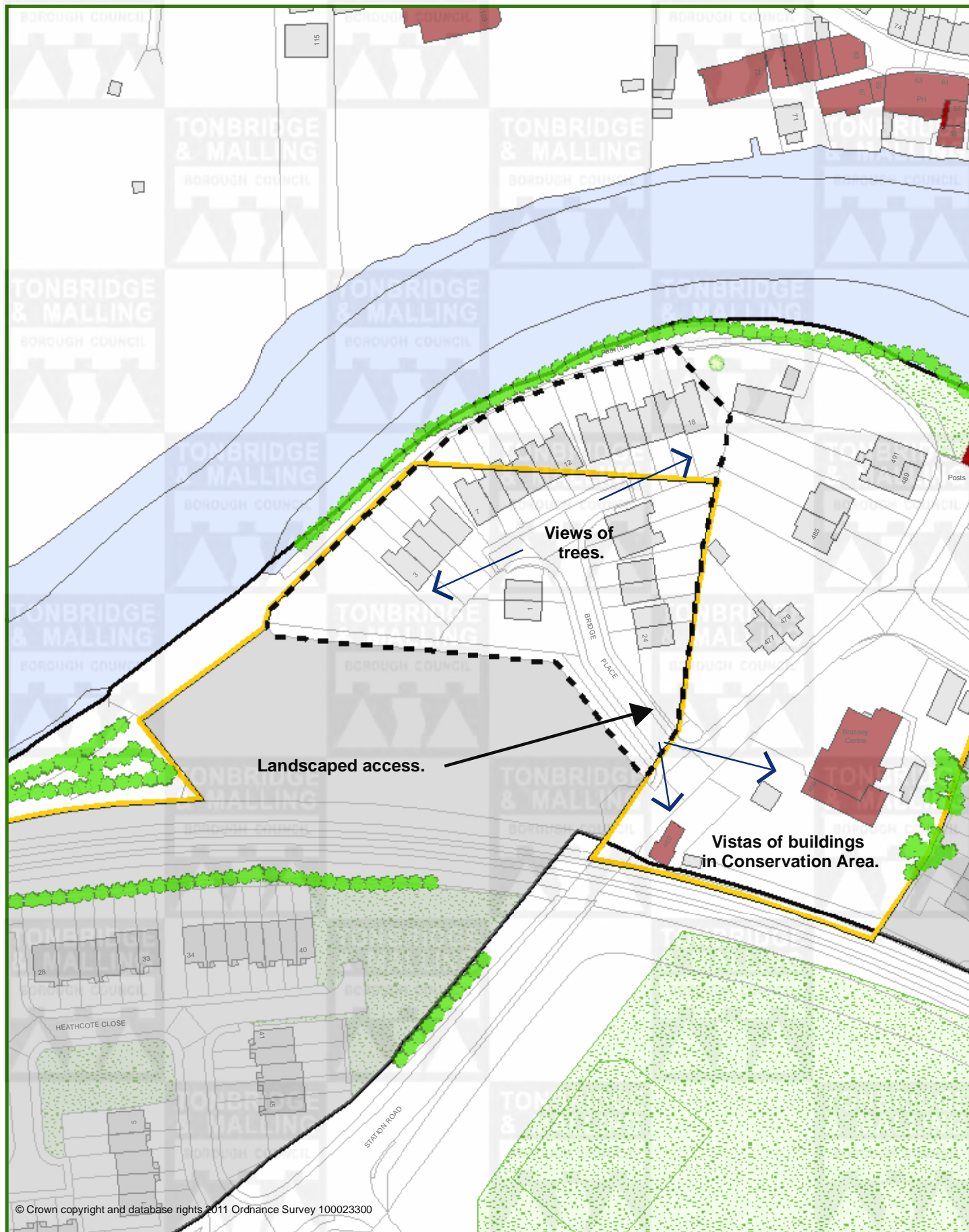
The development is located down a landscaped access bordered by panel fencing and soft landscaping providing a visual separation from the busy Station Road and contributing to the tranquil enclosed character of the scheme (see above left). From the access road there are short views of ragstone buildings within the Conservation Area (see above right). Whilst levels of activity within the development are low, there is noise from Station Road and the railway line.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The development has a strongly cohesive design due to the uniform symmetrical design, materials and colour palette
- Tranquil, inward looking and enclosed character
- Quality of surface treatments on footways and parking areas
- Coordinated street lamps
- Soft landscaping incorporating shrubs and trees
- The development is located down a landscaped access which provides a visual separation from the busy Station Road
- Short views of ragstone buildings within the Conservation Area
- Small area of green public open space
- Tree belt to the north east

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from Station Road, the M20 and the railway



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0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref **I4**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Bridge Place**



I5 – FRIARS VIEW

Comprising: Friars View

This is a compact, enclosed cul de sac development of three3 storey town houses and apartments on a flat, narrow strip of former industrial land on the south bank of the River Medway, immediately north of the railway line, abutting the conservation area to the east.



The terraced yellow brick houses are constructed on an uneven building line with slate roofs. Sections of the upper storeys project forwards and are faced with white painted render supported on brightly coloured metal posts. This is a characteristic feature giving the scheme a unique identity and creating rhythm of repeated features and interest in the frontage. There is some tile hanging on the recessed elevations (see left).

An apartment building south of the entrance utilises the same materials/colour scheme as the houses with yellow brick ground floor and white painted render or tile hung upper storeys (see right). The staggered front elevation and extensive glazing minimise the visual bulk of the building. Discrete underground parking reduces pressure for on street parking in the relatively narrow access road. Balconies, contrasting brick work and the variety of finishes enliven the front elevation.



At the eastern end, there is direct access to the river bank with a vista to the north east of the Priory in the Aylesford conservation area (see above right). All of the houses on the north side back onto the river (see above left). The rear elevations are plain yellow brick under steeply pitched grey slate roofs with roof lights and some with prominent tile hung gables. Balconies with coordinated green railings also add interest. The houses are set above the river with landscaped rear gardens enclosed behind a tall ragstone wall which is a particular feature of this development. The whole scheme is a harmonious blend of yellow, grey and green with red/brown highlights. The riverside frontage is verdant and tranquil contrasting with the more angular, urban character of the front elevations. The spaciousness of the rear outlook also provides a pleasing contrast with the more enclosed space to the front of the buildings.



The eastern end of the development has a particularly strong rhythm (see left), the houses being set at an angle to the road on a staggered building line with the forward projections, gable ends and regular glazing creating a uniform and distinctive townscape. The angled layout maximises plot size on this narrow section of the site.

The development is effectively screened from the railway by a wooden fence and, at the western section, some trees. It is enhanced by the use of quality block paving and granite setts on the access and parking areas. Lantern style lighting and soft landscaping further enhance the scheme (see right). Trees enclose the view at the east end and towards the south and north.

There is some road and rail noise.

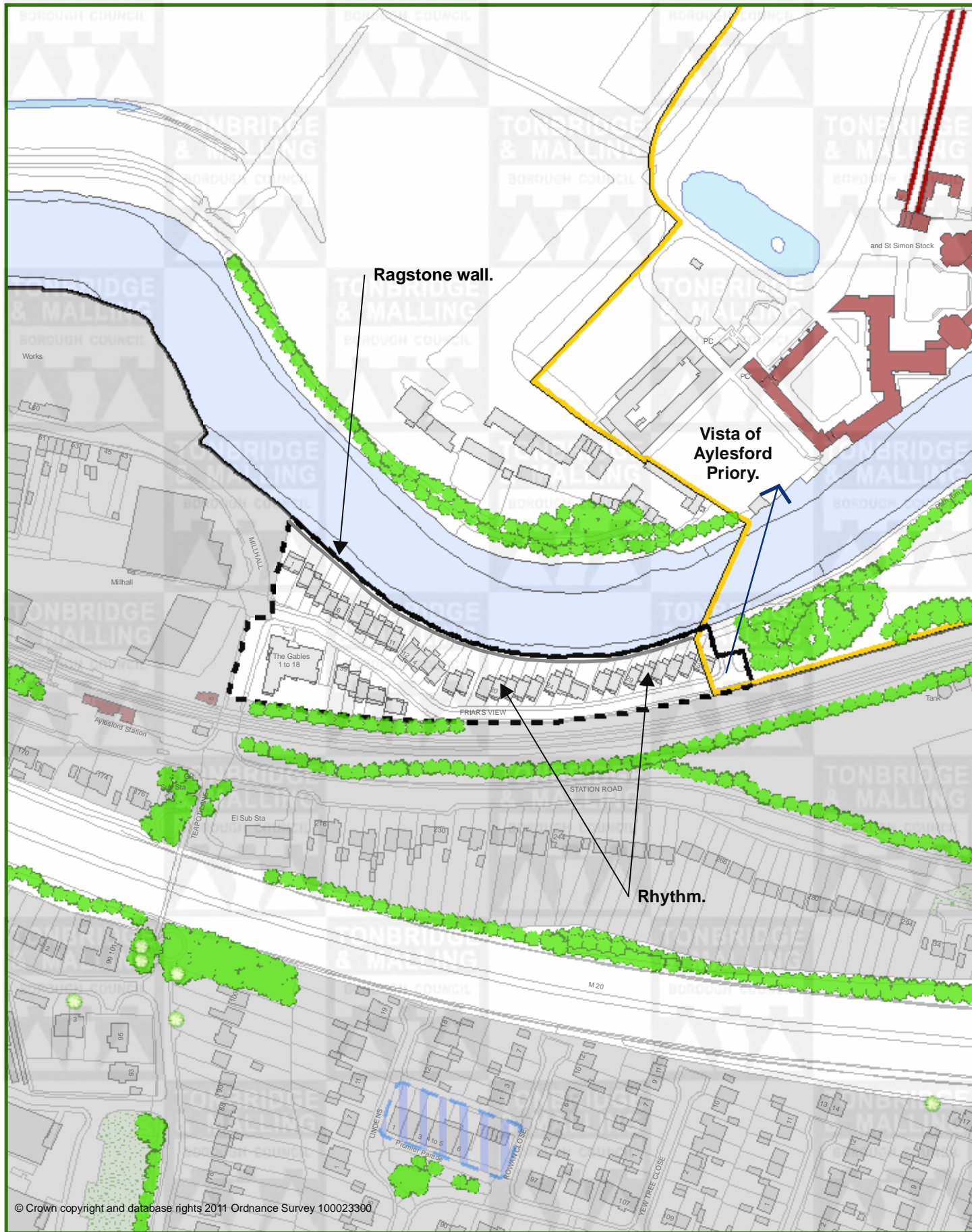


Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- A strong cohesive character is created within the development by the use of repeated designs, a coordinated range of materials and the limited colour palette. The forward projecting upper storeys contribute to the identity of the scheme
- The river side of the development is verdant and tranquil, the spaciousness contrasting with the more compact, enclosed urban character to the street
- The design and materials of the apartment block minimise the visual bulk of the building
- The mellow ragstone wall is a particular feature of the development
- Vista to the north east of Aylesford Priory in the conservation area
- High quality surfacing and lantern style lamps
- Sections of the development have a strong rhythm created by the repeated building design, forward projections, gable ends and fenestration
- The development is enclosed by trees to the north of the river and east and south
- Shrubs and other planting softens the architecture

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from the M20 and Station Road and rail noise



0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref I5

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title Frairs View



J – BUNGALOWS



Bungalows became a popular form of development initially in the 1920s/1930s particularly on what would have been relatively cheap suburban land. Bungalows also formed a component part of larger estates. The majority of bungalows date from the 1920s/1930s and the 1960s/1970s. The design of the bungalows changed in these two periods with the earlier bungalows generally being squarer and having more elaborate rooflines, hipped roofs, porches and more design detail than the later buildings which tend to be plainer and more rectangular in design with gabled roofs. Later in the 1960s, the form evolved into chalet bungalow with bedrooms in the roof spaces, with dormers. The 1920s/1930s bungalows often have front gardens enclosed by walls, hedges and picket fences, whereas the 1960s and 1970s properties are usually open plan. Despite these differences, where bungalows predominate, even where the building style is different, the character of the area tends to be similar as the single storey buildings create an open, relatively uniform townscape. The low building height together with the location on the edge of the urban area at Hermitage Lane allows long views over the countryside to the East.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
Age of buildings	1920s, 1960s and 1970s
Type of buildings	Detached
Main uses	Residential
Building heights	1 storey or with upper storey in the roof
Prominent building materials	Buff brick, cream or white painted render, white windows, brown roof tiles or grey roof slates.
Predominant boundary treatments	Open plan, dwarf walls, some hedges and picket fences
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Strong cohesive character created by uniformity of materials and design*
- *Verdant edges created by dense tree belts*
- *Rhythm created by distinctive and prominent repeated roof lines and porches*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *The character areas within this type are unique and distinctive. See individual appraisals for negative features worthy of enhancement*

J1 – BLACKLANDS

Comprising: Blacklands (South), Blacklands Drive

A small development of 11 detached and semi detached bungalows built in the 1960's around the eastern extent of the Clare Park and Blacklands Conservation Area. This separates them from the character areas of the Step Stile Estate and Clare Park to the east. These are private roads. The site is accessed from Chaucer Way.



The 2 storey chalet bungalows are constructed of buff brick, with steeply pitched roofs, with prominent front facing gable ends. Properties have side facing dormer windows incorporated into the roof. The roofs are finished in dark brown concrete tiles, with white bargeboard detailing. All properties have attached or integrated garages and are set behind generous front gardens. The majority of front gardens are enclosed by hedging or dwarf walls and incorporate off street car parking.

The repeating gable end and steep roofline give the area a rhythmic uniform character.



The character area is divided into 2 sections by the Clare Park and Blacklands conservation area. Both sections are screened from this by dense mature tree belts which surround the area. Glimpses of this green backdrop can be seen between and over the properties and gives the area a verdant feel. The dense screening and flat topography mean that there are no long views of the surrounding area and this gives the development an enclosed and private character.

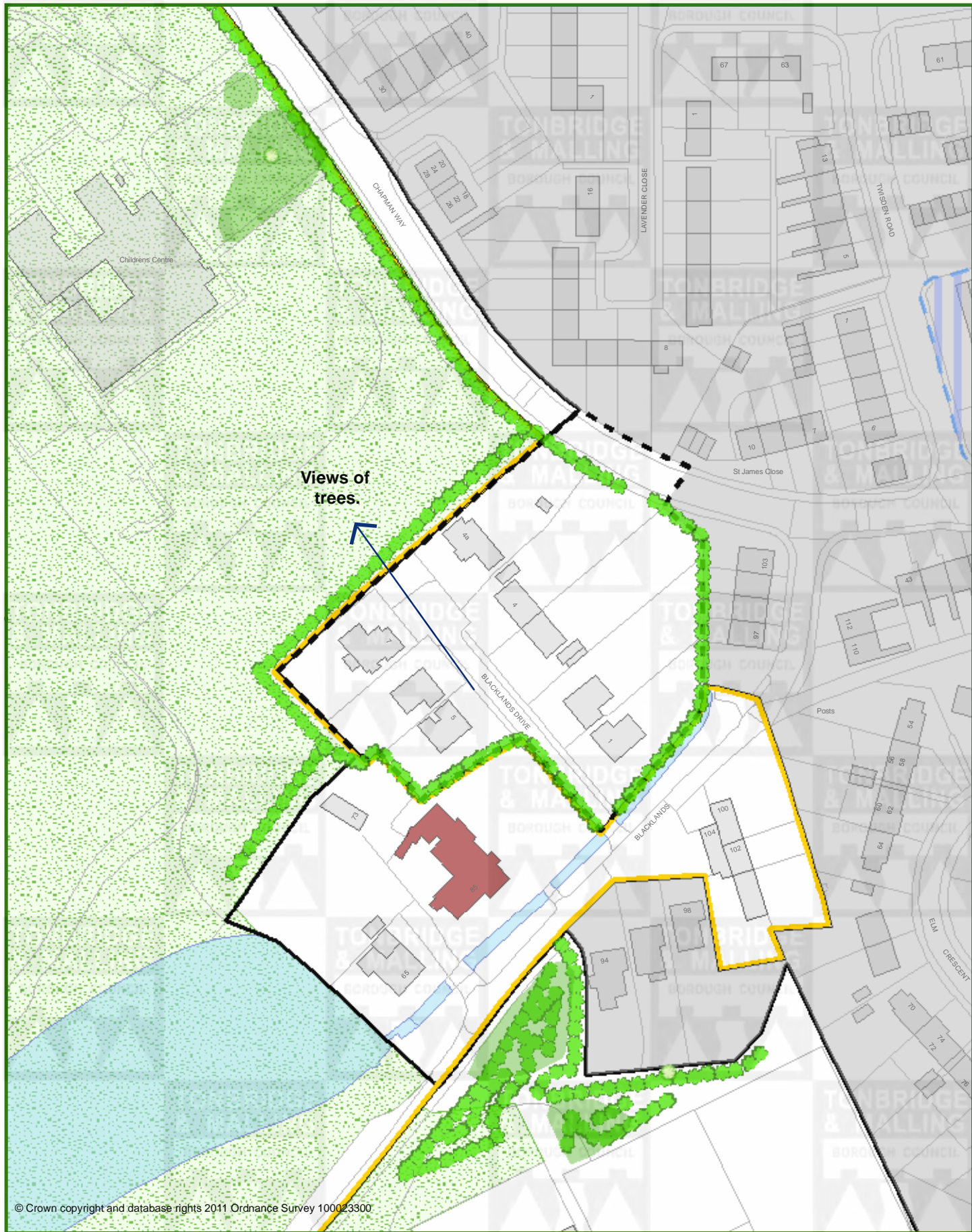
Personalisation of properties has been kept to a minimum and has therefore not diluted the strong cohesive character. However, the condition of the road surface in places is poor which detracts from street scene.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Strong cohesive character created by uniformity of materials and design*
- *Verdant edges created by dense tree belts*
- *Rhythm created by distinctive and prominent repeated roof lines and gable ends*
- *Enclosed private character*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Poor surfacing of roads*



0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref **J1**

Title **Blacklands**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



J2 – HERMITAGE LANE

Comprising: Hermitage Lane

This is a ribbon development of 1920s bungalows extending along the west side of Hermitage Lane, south of Aylesford. The properties are part of the Royal British Legion Village and were once part of a more extensive area of similar bungalows on the south side of the A20 where Sainsburys is now located. They were built after the First World War to house disabled servicemen.



The bungalows are of uniform construction with white rendered walls, gabled slate tiled roofs, narrow brick or rendered chimneys and white casement windows. The gable ends are weatherboarded. At the front the roofs extend forward to form a wide porch supported by wooden posts and decorative brackets. The porches are enclosed by railings or posts. The bungalows, set back from the road on a staggered building line, are distinctive and unusual. They have a traditional appearance, the low slung roofs, porches, wooden posts and brackets providing a rustic cottage charm (see left).

Each property is set in the centre of a landscaped garden enclosed by hedges and wooden fences with picket gates (see right). The design and layout of the bungalows shows the influence of the Garden City Movement. There are long views eastwards across Hermitage Lane towards Maidstone.

From the rear, the bungalows have a less uniform appearance due to small rear extensions and personalisation of the garden areas. The condition of the bungalows varies.



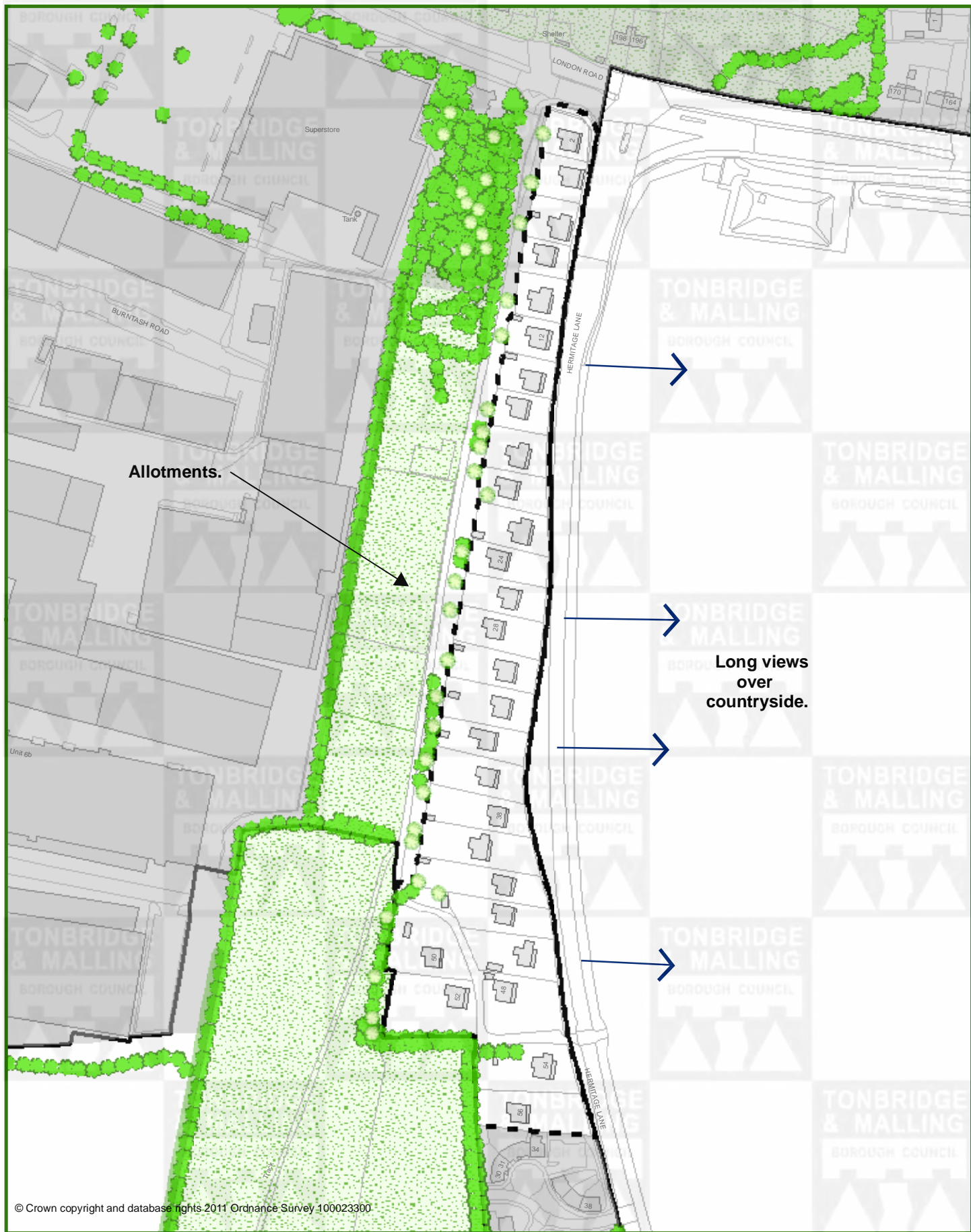
The properties back onto a private access road lined with broad green verges. West of the road there are green open spaces and allotments. The outlook to the rear is verdant and tranquil, contrasting strongly with the busy road to the front (see above). The light industrial units to the west are screened by a wide belt of mature trees (see above right).

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The uniform height, design and colour of the bungalows create a distinctive and unusual character
- The white rendered walls, low slung slate roofs, wide porches, wooden posts and brackets create a traditional cottage character influenced by the Arts and Crafts and Garden City Movements. This is also demonstrated in the staggered building line and relatively large garden plots enclosed by hedges and wooden fences with picket gates
- The low height, set back of the buildings, wide plots and long views creates a spacious character
- The bungalows provide a neat, uniform frontage onto Hermitage Lane
- There are long views eastwards towards Maidstone
- The private road to the rear of the houses has a tranquil, quiet, informal character enhanced by the wide verges and views over the allotments and grassed open spaces
- A belt of trees screens the neighbouring industrial uses to the west

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Hermitage Lane is a busy route causing intrusion from traffic noise and movement
- Some bungalows are in a poor state of repair with low quality extensions



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0 20 40 60 80 100

200

Metres

Ref J2

Title Hermitage Lane

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



K – ARCADIAN AREAS



In one area of the Medway Gap, Cobdown, the landscape dominates the buildings, creating a verdant, almost rural character. Mature trees rather than buildings contain the public space.

In this area the houses are built at a low density where the buildings are not very noticeable. They are screened from view from the A20 road by a belt of mature trees.

Cobdown is located quite close to the A20, but it provides a strong contrast to the bustle of the busy road. It has no through traffic, being enveloped to the north-east by Cobdown Woods, and has a peaceful, private ambience.

K1 – COBDOWN

Comprising: narrow link roads via Cobdown Sports and Social Club and Cobdown Farm Conservation Area.

An area where the landscaping dominates the buildings including a belt of tall specimen trees, Cobdown Wood (covered by TPO) and open space peppered with a small cluster of low density detached houses and a large Victorian property (currently used as offices) at the end of a narrow link road from the A20 through Cobdown Sports and Social Club to the south, an Area of Landscape Significance.



The dominant characteristic of the area is the landscaping. The small cluster of properties at Cobdown (see above) is set several hundred metres back from the main A20 road. They are screened from the view of the area from the London Road by a belt of mature specimen trees (see right) which are set close to the frontage of the houses creating an enclosed, private and verdant character. The large open area between the properties and the A20 is Cobdown Sports and Social Club, an Area of Landscape Significance which is protected open space. This open expanse of sports fields is a positive feature providing a setting for the character area and a significant buffer between the properties and the busy and noisy A20 road. Glimpses of the ALS from Station Road can be enjoyed through a screen of tall trees lining its eastern edge whilst short views of the wide open fields can be enjoyed from the A20 near the junction with New Road.



Cobdown House is the original property (see top, right) dating back to the mid-1800s. It is a large two storey building with white painted render, hipped tiled roof and white framed windows. The House's scale and finish means it is the most prominent building in the area and glimpses of the property can be seen through the screen of mature specimen trees. It has been subject to some alterations and extensions over recent decades but these have not harmed the character of the property or the character area. Cobdown House nestles within the mature landscaping of the area including Cobdown Wood which envelopes the property to the north and east and the belt of tall specimen trees a short distance from the frontage creating an enclosed, private and verdant character.

Four large detached properties constructed in the early part of the 21st century (see above) are located approximately 100 metres to the west of Cobdown House. They are two storey properties with hipped and half-hipped roofs, with white casement windows. The houses have brown tiles on the upper storey with cream colour painted render on the ground floor and include features such as pitched porch canopies supported by wooden struts. The properties do not relate closely in character to Cobdown House nor do they relate in anyway to the properties on Cobdown Close (open plan housing) whose gardens they back onto.

In addition to the private enclosed character another positive feature is the short views to the south of the roundels and cowls of the former oast within Cobdown Farm Conservation Area (see right).



LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

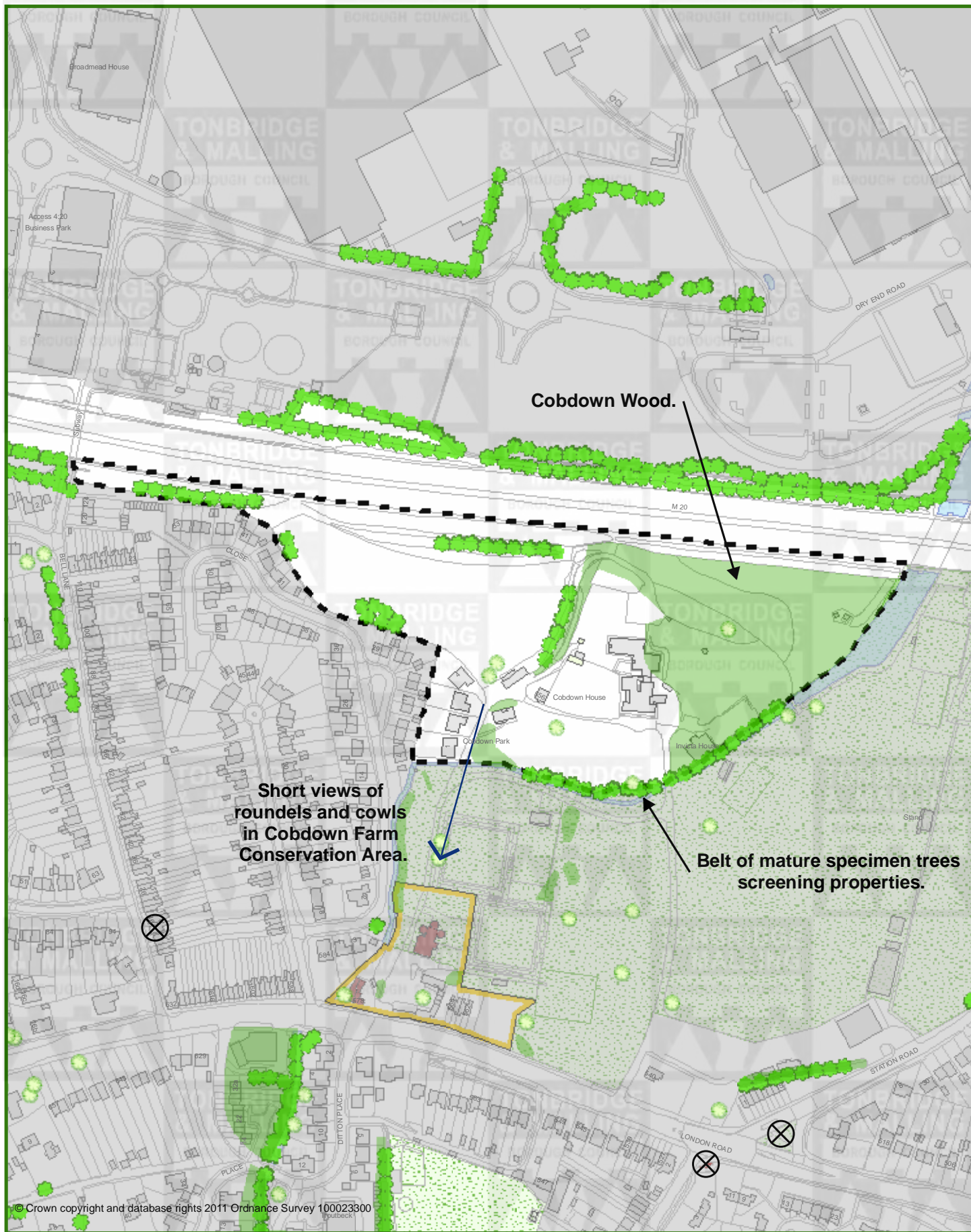
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>19th and 21st century</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Detached</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Residential and office</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>2 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Red brick, brown roof tiles, white windows (residential), white painted render and grey slate roof, and white windows (office)</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Hedges, trees, shrubs</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Glimpse of Cobdown Sports and Social Club, an Area of Landscape Significance, through the screen of tall specimen trees to the south</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Mature landscape features, which dominate the area, including a belt of tall specimen trees bordering the southern boundary of the area and Codown Wood, which envelopes Cobdown House to the east and north
- Short views of the roundels and cowls of the former oast within Cobdown Farm Conservation Area to the south
- The wider setting of the character area by Cobdown Sports and Social Club, an Area of Landscape Significance
- Tranquil character
- Private character created by the belt of tall specimen trees screening views of the area from the A20 and Station Road, no through traffic and the mature tall trees and other landscaping that surround and envelope the properties

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors



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0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref **K1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Cobdown**



L – MIXED CHARACTER AREAS



In some areas, piecemeal development and redevelopment can result in a frontage that is very mixed in terms of the layout, style and age of buildings. In the Medway Gap,, whilst the character is more mixed along the principal routes, the housing areas to the rear have generally retained a distinctive character related to the period in which they were designed, by whom and for whom they were constructed and the physical factors of their location. There are however a few exceptions and these fall into two categories: 1) where the individual

houses vary so in age, materials and appearance that no particular character predominates, and 2) where the variety of house types, scale and materials is deliberately planned as part of a single development of the same age so that there no single character type predominates, eg Leybourne Lakes. For the purposes of this appraisal, these areas have been designated as being of mixed character.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>Mixed age, principally 19th century onwards</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Detached, semi-detached, terraced houses and bungalows</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Residential, some retail and community</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>1 – 3/4 storeys</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Brown, red or buff brick, painted render, weatherboarding, hung tiles, mock tudor beams, tiled roofs, concrete</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>Various including low brick walls, low wood panel fences, low railings, hedges and open plan.</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Landscaped public amenity spaces sometimes incorporated in the developments</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Spaciousness (in most areas) – created by properties being set back from the road with deep frontages*
- *Building line, road layout and topography provide for short and long views of surrounding landscape including, in some areas, the North Downs and Leybourne Lakes*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Traffic noise from traffic travelling along near by major routes including the A20 and M20*

L1 – CASTLE WAY (SOUTH)

Comprising: Castle Way and Pump Close

This character area comprises a mix of properties that are predominantly detached but range in age from Victorian to present day. Castle Way is wide and prepossessing, providing access to the A20 and M20 junction 4 and Leybourne while Pump Close is an undulating cul-de-sac tucked behind Castle Way between the A20 and the A228 by-pass.



Castle Way is the main access route to Leybourne from the A20 London Road and the M20 junction 4. This section of Castle Way is landscaped with wide grass verges and some street trees that together with the mature trees, hedges and shrubs of some front gardens, create a verdant character. On the urban fringe of the Medway Gap, Castle Way has a semi-rural character created by the trees, hedges and shrubs of the gardens that front onto the road along with the continuation of "greenness" provided by the area of landscape significance to the north.



Part of the western side of Pump Close is an open naturalised landscaped area and is outside of the urban confines and therefore this character area, but is visible from the road. It contains long grasses, shrubs and trees and slopes downwards to a small stream and the tall acoustic fence at the side of the by-pass. There are views beyond to Leybourne Wood that sits in an elevated position and provides a backdrop to the area, further contributing to its green, semi-rural character.



Until the late 1950s, Pump Close was the main part of the A228 Malling Road from the A20 London Road and contained only a few Victorian properties and farm buildings. Castle Way was fully operational by 1961, but Pump Close was not closed off as a cul-de-sac until the time of the West Malling Bypass was opened in the 1980s. There is no through traffic and with the backdrop of the trees and open spaces, creates a tranquil semi-rural character despite the proximity to the by-pass which is well screened by the trees and acoustic fence. However, towards the southern end, there is some traffic noise from the A20. The overhead wires create a detracting feature to the otherwise verdant and semi rural character of the area.



The earliest properties in the area are predominantly situated on Pump Close and were related to the farming and milling industries of the area during the 17th and 18th century. There is a variety in these period properties suggesting they were built to accommodate a variety of workers. They range from two storey terraced cottages built in red brick with red hung tiles and grey tiled hipped roofs with central chimney, white casement windows and short front gardens enclosed by a low stone wall, to a two storey detached cottage with Flemish bond with burnt headers and narrow white casement windows and chimneys on each of the side elevations and central front door with open porch. The largest property is two and three storey, stone built with black weatherboarding on the upper storeys, white casement windows and red/brown clay tiled half hipped roof (top left).



The late 1960s and 1970s saw further development here with individual plots being developed on an ad-hoc basis. Although they are built on an individual basis, they share similar architectural styles e.g. large and irregular fenestration, broad white soffits and low density development, e.g. chalet style bungalows. Some have now been modernised or individualised with coloured render, replacement windows and conversion of the loft space creating a more eclectic character in the overall style and design of properties in this area, but this has undermined the uniformity previously shared when the houses were built in the same period and in a similar style. However, the modern individualisation and modernisation of properties adds further to the variety in this area.



Piecemeal development has continued although there is some greater cohesion in the design of the later architecture, particularly where it mirrors the details and features of the original buildings. This includes half hipped roofs, red/brown hanging tiles on uppers storeys, the inclusion of the low brick boundary wall, white casement windows and large enclosed plots set well back from the road.



The eastern side of Castle Way is well screened by mature trees and hedges (some high fencing) and landscaped front gardens which are deep, with the properties set well back from the road. Most of the properties are not visible from the road and the landscape completely dominates the environment creating an arcadian character where the landscape dominates the built environment. This further contributes to the verdant outlook from the public domain and looking both north and south down Castle Way and semi-rural character of the area.

Listed Buildings

Leybourne Village Pump

Ornamental water pump dated 1859. Stone octagonal-shaped pump with moulded coping, cast iron spout, and handle to right. 8 feet high, circled by C20 iron rails in octagon. Pair of low flanking random rubblestone quadrant walls and low outer piers on squared bases with pyramidal caps. Inscription on pump: "Drink weary pilgrim, drink and pray for living waters they only they can satisfy earth's sons and daughters. 1859".

Grade II

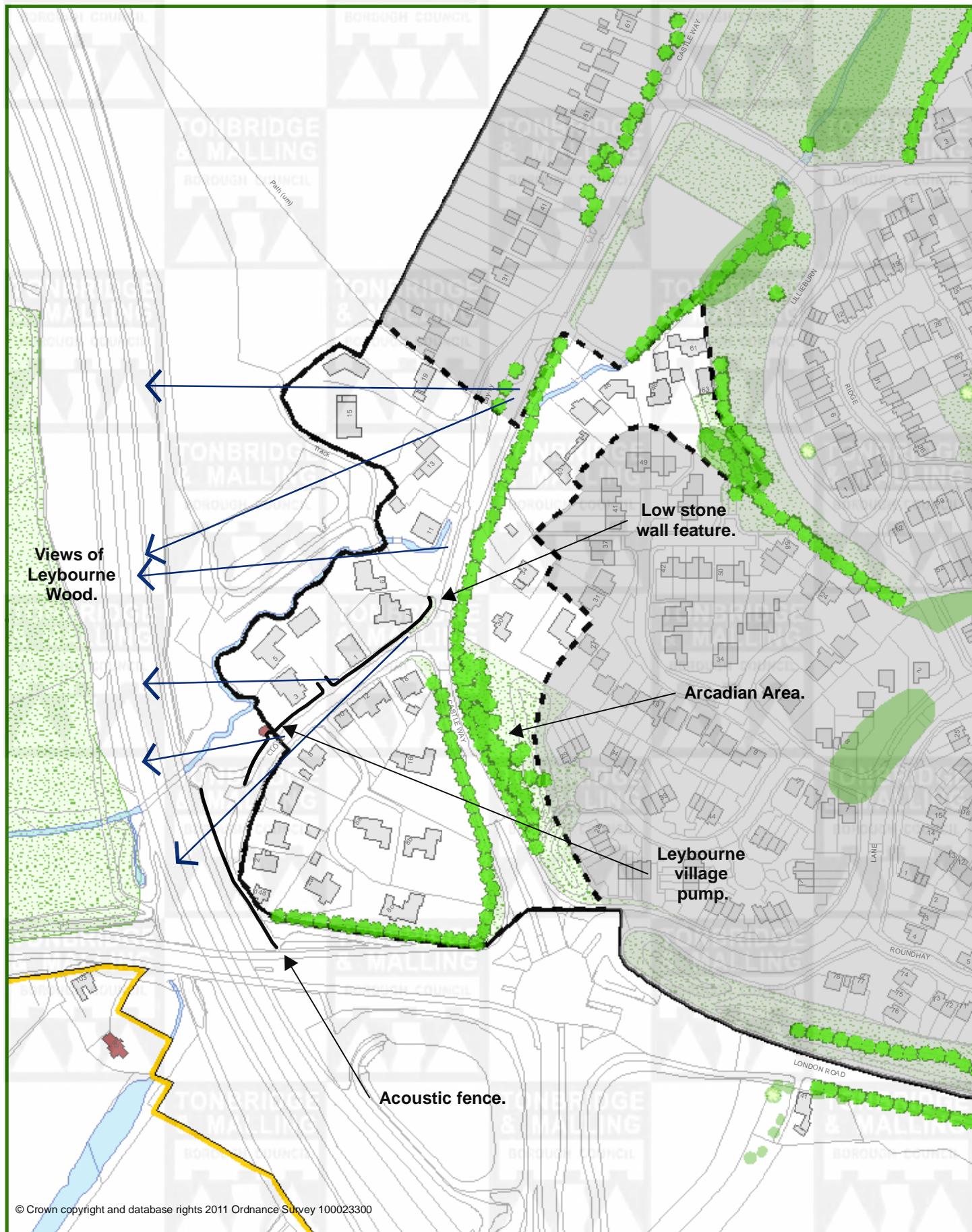


Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Individual buildings and groups of buildings from different periods and in different architectural styles provide visual interest and variety
- Verdant frontages and edges provide a green and verdant character to the area that is further enhanced by the row of properties on the east side of Castle Way that are hidden from the road by dense and tall trees, hedges and shrubs
- Large plots and houses set back from the road on undulating land create a spacious character where they are visible from the road and do not obscure the panoramic views to the west of Castle Way
- Leybourne village pump (listed) stands out from its surroundings which is amenity green space with tall grasses and trees, with residential development opposite
- Traditional materials, details, decorative features and boundary treatments
- Views of Leybourne Wood to the west
- Quiet/tranquil character despite proximity to main roads and the by-pass
- Outlook from Pump Close and Castle way to open space, private gardens and woodland contribute to a green and verdant character
- Private, enclosed character along the eastern side of Castle Way where the buildings are hidden by mature established landscaping and spacious, open character along the western side of Castle Way and Pump Close with its views over open space to Leybourne Wood on elevated land to the west

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors although the overhead cables on Pump Close detract from the character of the area



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0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **L1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

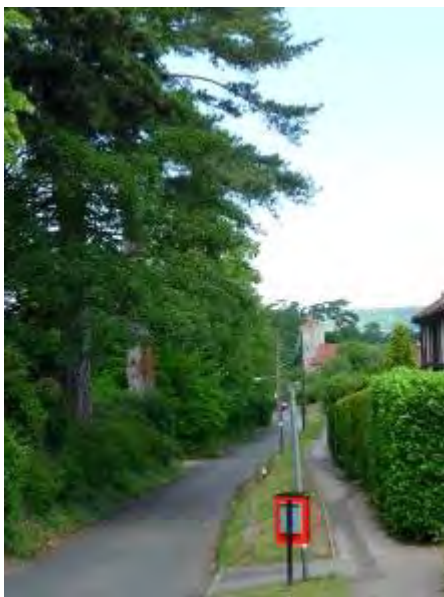
Title **Castle Way (South)**



L2 – RECTORY LANE AREA

Comprising: Rectory Lane South/ Rectory Lane North and Little Market Row.

Rectory Lane is a narrow straight road with a dog-leg bend that is separated by Oxley Shaw Lane that was built as an access road for the major housing development of the early 1980s. Rectory Lane begins in the north opposite the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul on Castle Way and provides access to a number of properties to the left and the right that are predominantly set back from the road in deep enclosed front gardens. The road is blocked off to vehicles at the south of Rectory Lane North, but pedestrian access is provided to Oxley Shaw Lane and Little Market Row. Across Oxley Saw Lane is the northern end of Rectory Lane South that slopes downwards to the dog-leg bend and then slopes upwards to the junction with the A20 London Road.



Rectory Lane North is narrow and only has a separate pavement on the eastern side where this was done as part of the development of Bridgewater Place. 1980s development lines the eastern boundary of this section but is part of a separate character area. Despite this, the properties are set back from the road and the use of landscaping softens what might otherwise be a hard landscape and contributes to the otherwise verdant character of the area.

With views of the St. Peter and St. Paul Church on Castle Way, the tree backdrop behind and the North Downs in the background, this area enjoys a verdant, semi-rural almost arcadian character as the landscape dominates over the buildings in this environment.



As is commonplace in mixed areas, there is a variety of building styles, sizes and materials. There were no properties at all on Rectory Lane until the 1930s and these were mainly on Rectory Lane South near the junction with the A20 London Road. Throughout the 1960 and 1970s, further development took place on an individual basis including the redevelopment of existing premises. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the remaining vacant plots were developed and some properties were developed at a greater density, including additional units being placed in some of the larger plots.

Although there is a vast variety in materials and architectural styles, a unifying feature is that they all share large frontages that are predominantly enclosed creating a private and intimate character to the narrow road which has a 'country lane' character to it.



Little Market Row provides a node for the wider area and includes a small variety of shops and services to meet the day-to-day needs of the local community. In addition to the retail premises that have flats above and were built as part of the major development that took place in the early 1980s, this local centre also has a doctor's surgery and a village hall that together create an important community hub for local communities and a visual break as the only buildings with a large footprint or more than two storeys in the area. Within the local centre, there are small patches of lawn and hedges, shrubs and trees which contribute to the green character of the area.

Although not listed, the Old Rectory public house and restaurant plays an important role in providing an identity for this node. Built in the 1870 for the Rector of the Parish, this property is unique in its design with numerous chimneys that are tall and slim, the tops of which can be seen from some of the surrounding areas. Within the local centre, it stands alone in open grounds and provides an architectural focal point for the area.



The 'Leybourne' sign at the node contributes to a sense of place for the whole area and depicts important local historic buildings and history of the village.



Rectory Lane South is traditional piecemeal development with some blocks of uniformity, such as the semi detached and detached properties built in the 1930s that have hipped roofs with gable roofs over the principal fenestrations and black beams and white painted render in the gable roof space. Bay fronted windows and hanging tiles or further mock Tudor details are commonplace, as are chimneys and white casement windows. Despite the mix of architectural styles, periods and details, the properties share a common scale and the properties are set well back from the road, usually in landscaped gardens contributing to the verdant and tranquil character.



Rectory Lane South has no separate footpath and the narrow road and greenery of the front gardens creates a verdant, almost arcadian, informal semi-rural character here. Overhead cables and wires are a detractor although they are only visible in certain places where there is a concentration of them.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Verdant frontages/edges, eg landscaped gardens, hedges and tall trees
- Individuality of buildings along Rectory Lane North and Rectory Lane South with unifying factors such as deep set front gardens and landscaping
- The Old Rectory and the 'Leybourne' village sign are local landmarks
- Rectory Lane North and Rectory Lane South are dead ends with no through traffic and are narrow 'rural' lanes with no pavement, have a tranquil and verdant, almost arcadian character
- Grassed public areas within the local centre, landscaped frontages and the mature trees in both the public and private domain create a verdant character
- Glimpses of the North Downs between properties and views of the tree backdrop and St. Peter and St. Paul Church contribute to the green and rural character of the area
- Little Market Row and the Old Rectory pub and restaurant provide a node of activity and contribute to a sense of place for the general area

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Some traffic noise from the A20 London Road at the junction with Rectory Lane South
- Concentration of overhead wires detracts from the streetscene



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0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref L2

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title Rectory Lane Area



L3 – SPRINGFIELD ROAD

Comprising: Brook Road, Springfield Road

This residential development nestles between Lunsford Lane and the lakes of the former Leybourne Quarry to the west. The land formed part of the former Lunsford Hall estate and was sold off in plots to individuals and companies in the early 20th Century. The earliest properties date from c. 1900, with further development occurring incrementally up until the 1970s.

The properties are a mixture of detached, semi detached and terraced, including bungalows and two storey houses. They have been built using an eclectic mix of materials along a varied building line.

Views of the neighbouring lakes and woodland can be seen to the west along Brook Road and at the southern end of Springfield Road.

The earliest properties in this area are the short terrace of Bonaccord Cottages on the eastern side of Springfield Road and a single detached property to the north of Brook Road. These properties date from around 1900 and are situated on long narrow plots.

The terraced properties, although originally buff brick with red brick string course and lintel detailing, have been subject to a degree of personalisation with the front façade being painted or rendered in some cases. The windows and doors have been replaced and now include a mixture of white sash and casement windows in a variety of styles.



Properties along Brook Road and the northern section of Springfield Road are a mixture of detached 1960s brown and buff brick bungalows with hipped roofs and 2 storey properties, set behind deep front gardens and grass verges with off road car parking. The retention of front gardens, mature planting, the grass verges and the green backdrop provided by the woodland and lakes to the west help create a spacious yet private character. The low scale of buildings also adds to the spaciousness

Although there has been a degree of personalisation of the properties, including side extensions, painted facades and the addition of roof lights and dormer windows, this individualisation adds to the mixed character of the area and helps create visual interest. The mixture of boundary treatments throughout the area also adds to this diversity, although there has been some loss of front gardens for car parking.



Although the bungalows continue along the length of Springfield Road, the properties in the southern section also include a larger number of semi detached two storey properties dating from the 1970s. These properties have weatherboarding and hung tile detail to the upper front façade, with pitched roofs and shallower front gardens.

The incidence of mature planting and hedging diminish southwards along the road. This, along with the absence of the grass verge along the eastern edge of the road creates a more enclosed character.

Despite the low volume of traffic through the area, there is significant traffic noise from M20 to the south.

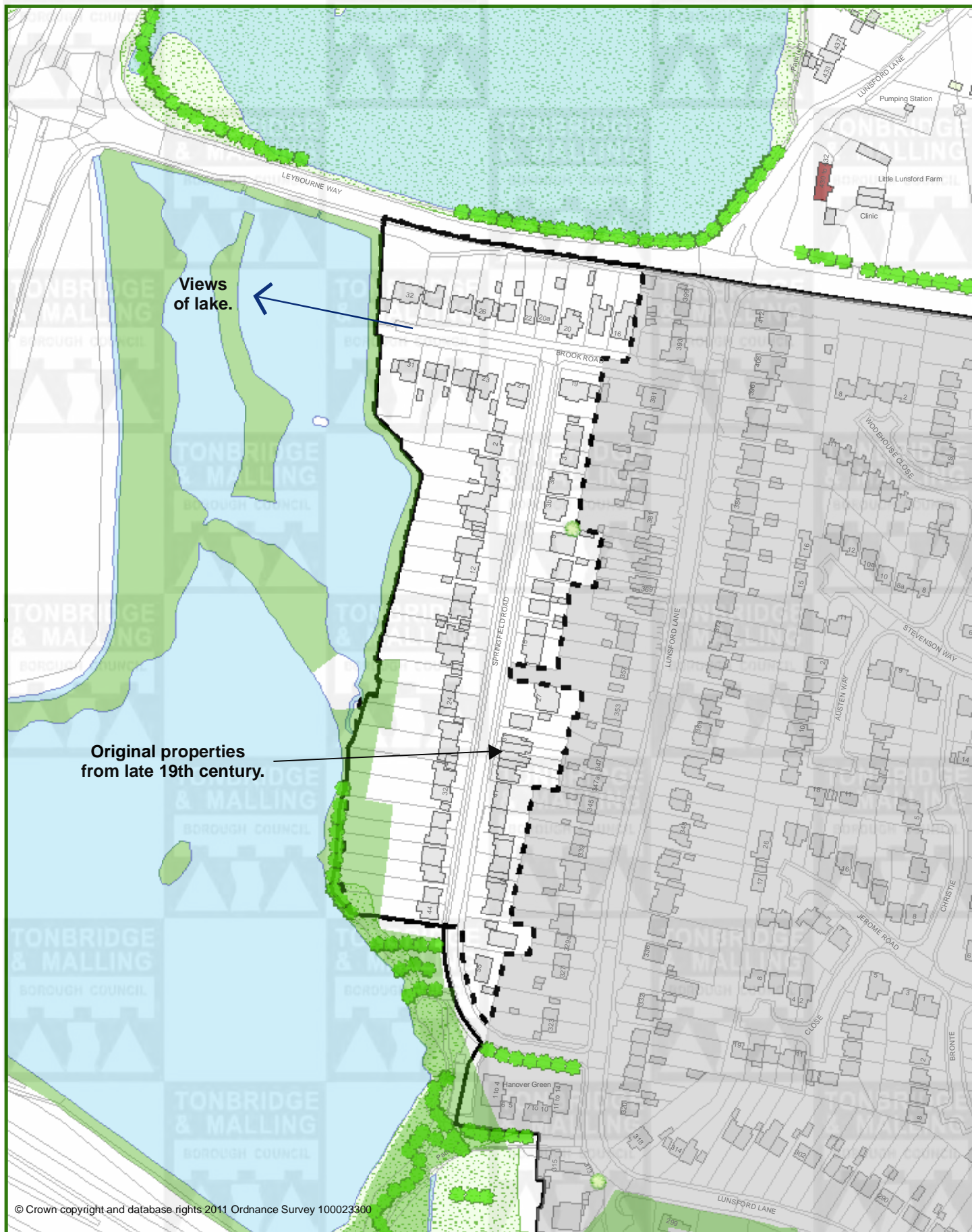


Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Individuality of buildings
- Spaciousness created by low scale properties being set back from the road; open frontages; wide verges

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from M20
- Poor road surface and pavement



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0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **L3**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Springfield Road Area**



L4 – LEYBOURNE LAKES

Comprising: The Lakes, Perch Close, Bream Close, Reed Close, Pike Close, Carp Close, The Rushes, New Hythe Lane.

Leybourne Lakes is a modern development built in the 2000s in four phases, comprising a mixture of flats, town houses, short terraces and detached properties. It is located to the North of and accessed from Leybourne Way, and is bounded to the west, north and east by Leybourne Lakes Country Park, specifically the large lakes which now occupy the former quarry site.

The character is only mixed in terms of types of properties because the whole area was planned as a single development and the palette of material is consistent throughout. As a large scale single development, there is no overriding single character to the area, and as such it exhibits a mixed character.



The development consists of a series of curved streets and culs-de-sac. There is a mix of housing types from two storey terraced and detached properties, to three storey town houses and detached homes, and three and four storey blocks of flats. Despite the differences in scale and layout, the palate of materials used in this planned development, and the views to the surrounding natural landscapes as well as the planned green landscapes integrated within the development creates a cohesive and unifying character to the area.



Although the architectural styles, details, scale and colours vary thorough the area, the continued use of red brick and coloured weatherboarding creates a cohesive character. White wooden details such a verandas, balconies and open porches are found throughout the development.

The roofs are a combination of pitched, hipped and front facing gable ends, some with pitched dormer windows included in the roof space. This variation adds visual interest, but the sole use of grey slate as a roofing material again unifies the development.



Landscaping, and in particular the use of water play an important role in the character of Leybourne Lakes. Views of the lakes (see above left) and the North Downs (see below left) can be seen between properties and from some communal areas. However, consideration also needs to be given to the management requirements of the Country Park and in particular the management of lakeside vegetation. Rotational coppicing of lakeside vegetation will therefore result in views to and from the housing altering from year to year. Additional water features (see above right), specimen planting and green spaces have been integrated into the development to reflect the prominence of the surrounding natural environment and these help to create a spacious open character.



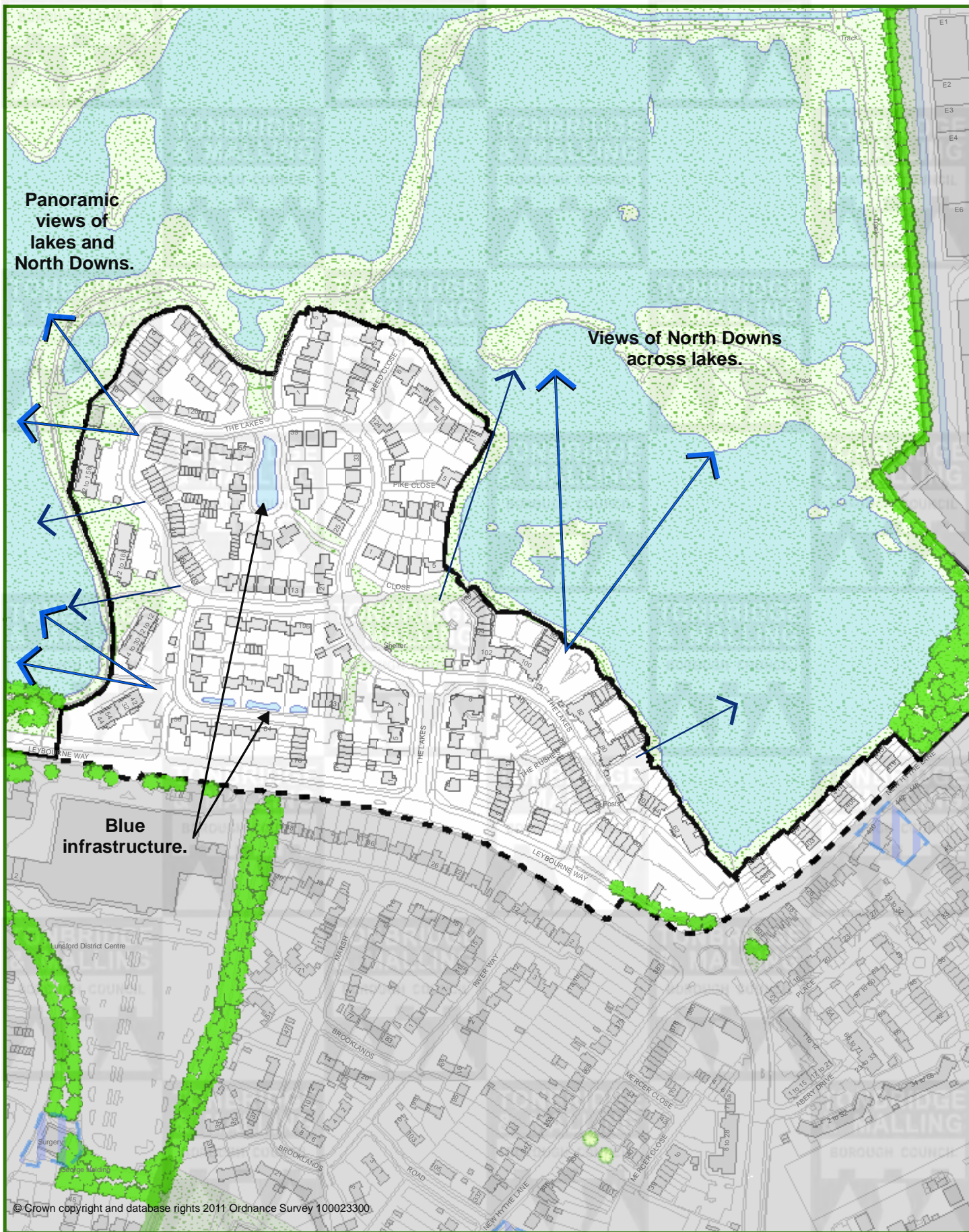
Road noise from Leybourne Way and New Hythe Lane can be heard along the southern and eastern boundaries oft the site.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Strong cohesive character created by consistency of materials, particularly the use of coloured weatherboarding, grey roof tiles, white wooden details and landscaping
- Views of Leybourne Lakes and the North Downs
- Direct pedestrian and cycle access to Leybourne Lakes Country Park
- Individual design of buildings
- Spaciousness character created by properties being set back from the road behind landscaped areas and front gardens as well as long views out of the area
- Quality of paved shared surface treatments

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from traffic travelling along Leybourne Way and New Hythe Lane
- Views of industrial buildings to the North East



0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref **L4**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Leybourne Lakes Area**



L5 – LUNSFORD LANE

Comprising: Lunsford Lane and Hanover Green

Lunsford Lane is a long linear road, one property deep connecting the A20 London Road in the south to Leybourne Way in the north. The road is relatively level and flat, but slopes downwards at the northern section allowing views over to the woodland at Leybourne Lakes and beyond to the North Downs. The properties on Lunsford Lane vary in date from the early 20th century to the present day. There are 'blocks' of properties with a similar character that are of the same period and constructed in the same architectural style and materials, but overall, the road provides a varied, mixed character with a range of property types and styles.

Starting in the south, near the junction with the A20, Lunsford Lane contains a string of detached and semi detached properties one house deep on the western side and the eastern side provides a high bank with mature trees that provides a visual break between Lunsford Lane and the housing development on the eastern side beyond this. The tree lined bank also contributes to the green character of this part of the area, and contains the adjoining character area, making the distinction between the modern cul-de-sac development and the linear development of Lunsford Lane.



The properties along the western section of Lunsford Lane were predominantly built in the 1930s and are two storey semi- detached properties either with red clay hipped roofs, white casement windows and red/brown brick with painted render on the upper floors with red/brown brick quoins or have red clay tiled hipped roofs, some with chimneys and white or yellow painted render and white casement windows. The larger, later properties have been individualised less and the consistent roof line and building proportions create a sense of rhythm here. A local convenience store provides a node.

There are some individually built properties, but the predominant character of the area is created by the two types of 1930s housing. Where the earlier properties have been individualised, this has diluted the character because it interrupts otherwise uniform proportions of building and plot size.



The building line of the properties along the southern section (western side) of Lunsford Lane is staggered. Where there are breaks between the buildings, there are glimpses over to the North Downs .

Lunsford Lane then crosses over the M20 where the variety and mix of property styles and types continues. The M20 is set down on a lower level although there is some traffic noise near the bridge crossing.



As the road crosses over the M20, it bends round to the west in a dog leg before it straightens out again and slopes down northwards. The sloping land levels allow for glimpses between properties of the rooftops of the properties in the adjacent character area to the north and east and northwards from the top of the slop downwards to Leybourne Country Park in the north and the North Downs beyond. There is some small scale infill development around the bridge that crosses the M20, predominantly 1970s and later. Where the road is bordered by the rear of the properties of Carroll Gardens, there is a mature band of trees and shrubs that contribute to the green and semi-rural character of the area. There is a long string of late 1930s semi detached properties opposite Carroll Gardens that are set well back from the road. They all share the same proportions and are built in the same materials, but there is a variety in the roof types – all are pitched but some have front facing gables and protruding bay windows on both storeys showing a strong unity of character.



On the southern side of Lunsford Lane at the bend, there is a small cluster of Victorian properties, Lunsford Hall and associated buildings. They are contained behind a high brick wall and set back from the road, afforded further privacy by the tall mature trees around the site. Although some of the building have recently been renovated, sympathetic materials have been used to maintain the original character of the buildings.

A public footpath to the side provides access to the open countryside and is lined with trees and shrubs, providing a green edge to the area, softens the landscapes and contributes to the green character of the area.

There are views down Lunsford Lane northwards to Leybourne Lakes Country Park which is heavily wooded, and provides a backdrop to the area at this point.

The land levels change here, with the properties on the western side of the road set downwards providing views over the roof tops to the North Downs.



Individual properties are few and far between. The predominant character of this area is made up of groups of buildings that have been built in the same style and in the same materials. There are clusters of buildings that share the same design details such as these bungalows shown above on the right. They have pitched roofs in brown tiles with protruding gables that also have pitched roofs, are constructed of brown brick and have white casement windows and small chimneys to the side. Their frontages are generally unenclosed with lawns as the low brick walls retain the gardens. On the opposite side of the road, the western side, properties are semi-detached two storey with hipped roofs and central chimneys, constructed in red/brown brick with white painted render and white casement windows.

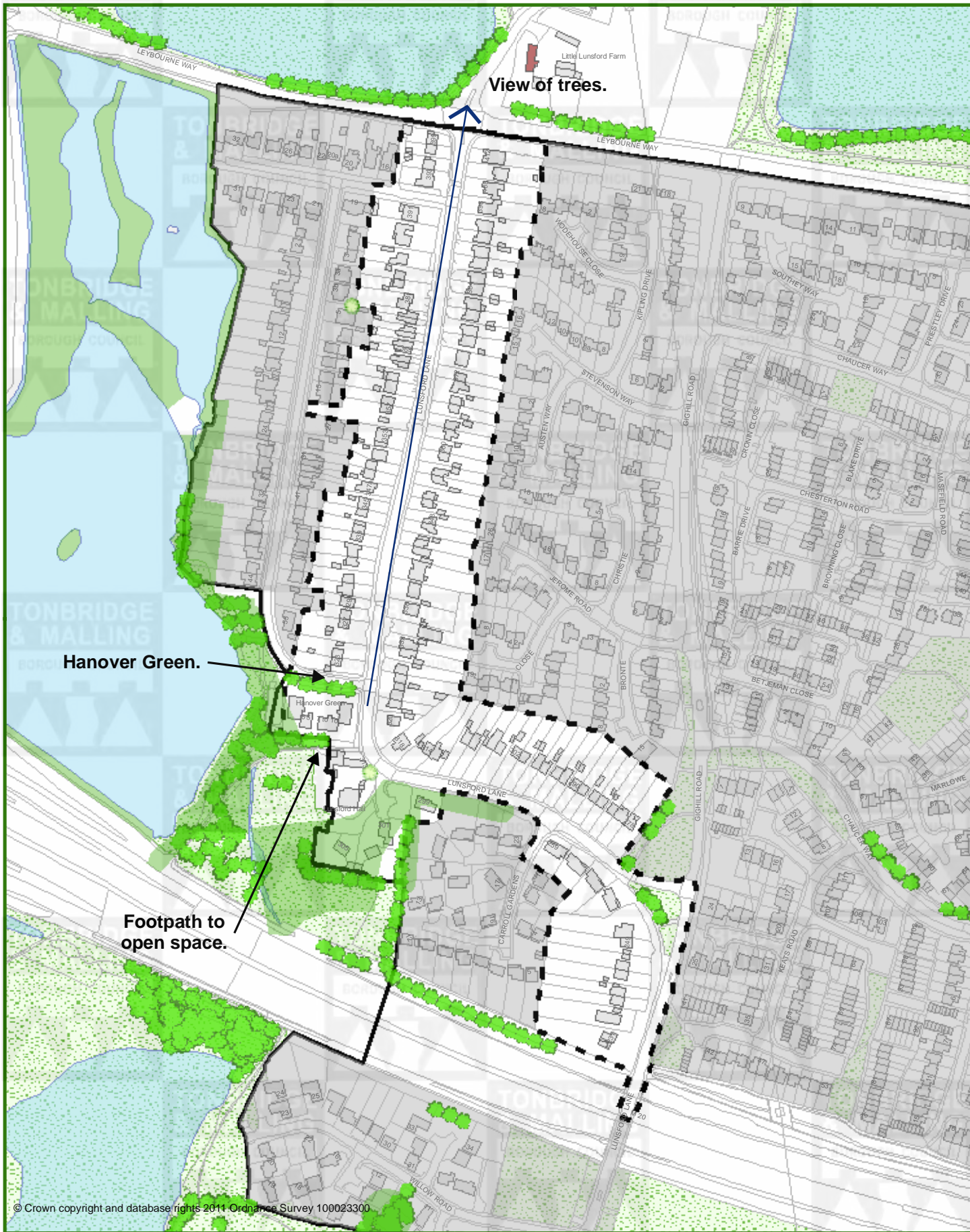
Despite the variations in design and materials overall, the majority of properties share deep front gardens that are enclosed with brick walls and have trees and shrubs that contribute to the green and open character of the area, and have unifying features that create strips of uniformity in the streetscene.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Trees, grass verges and tall hedgerows at the southern section of Lunsford Lane create verdant views and contribute to a green character
- Local convenience shop provides a node
- Group of historic buildings known as Lunsford Hall provide a historical focal point for the area. Traditional materials, details, decorative features and boundary treatments
- Rhythm created by distinctive and prominent repeated regular patterns of groups of buildings built at the same time in the same materials (painted render, bond of brick), have gable ends facing the road; chimneys; fenestration/ door openings in common such as bay windows or dormer windows
- Spaciousness created by properties being set back from the road with deep open frontages
- Views of the North Downs and of the dense tree belt around Alders Lakes.

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors although some personalisation of properties has diluted the original character of the area and interrupts uniformity when there are groups of building built in the same materials and in the same period



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0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref L5

Title Lunsford Lane

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal





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0 50 100 150 200 250 500 Metres

Ref L5

Title Lunsford Lane

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



L6 – THE STREAM

Comprising: Bradbourne Lane, The Stream

This character area adjoins Ditton Conservation Area and runs along its eastern and northern boundaries. The character area is separated into two sections by a portion of the conservation area and a stream which runs north to south. Views into the conservation area are a key feature and there are views of the ford from The Stream and Bradbourne Lane. Residential properties along Bradbourne Lane are a mixture of two storey 1930's semi detached properties with deep front gardens and new build detached houses. Properties along The Stream include 19th Century Cottages, bungalows and 1960's detached properties set behind shallower frontages and more limited car parking.



The properties along Bradbourne Lane are of a mixture of ages and styles. The inter war properties have two storey bay windows and central chimneys set behind deep verdant front gardens. These are enclosed by low boundary walls and high hedges which create an private character. Modern additions and any personalisation have been kept to a minimum. The more modern properties have a mixture of dark brown and white windows, and a variety of roof lines. The new build properties include additional features such as dormer windows and catslide roofs, and have shallow front open gardens that front onto shared space rather than Bradbourne Lane itself.



Listed buildings within the adjoining conservation area are visible from the edge of the character area and contribute to the visual variety of buildings in this mixed area.



Bradbourne Lane has a verdant character due to the proximity of a significant area of natural greenspace which forms part of the adjacent conservation area to the south of the lane. This forms a mature green edge to the character area. This is further enhanced by the mature landscaping and trees along the property boundaries to the north of the lane which give area an arcadian feel.

Bradbourne Lane has limited vehicular traffic as there is a ford at the eastern edge and the road has been formally stopped-up at this point. It therefore has a tranquil character with very little traffic noise.



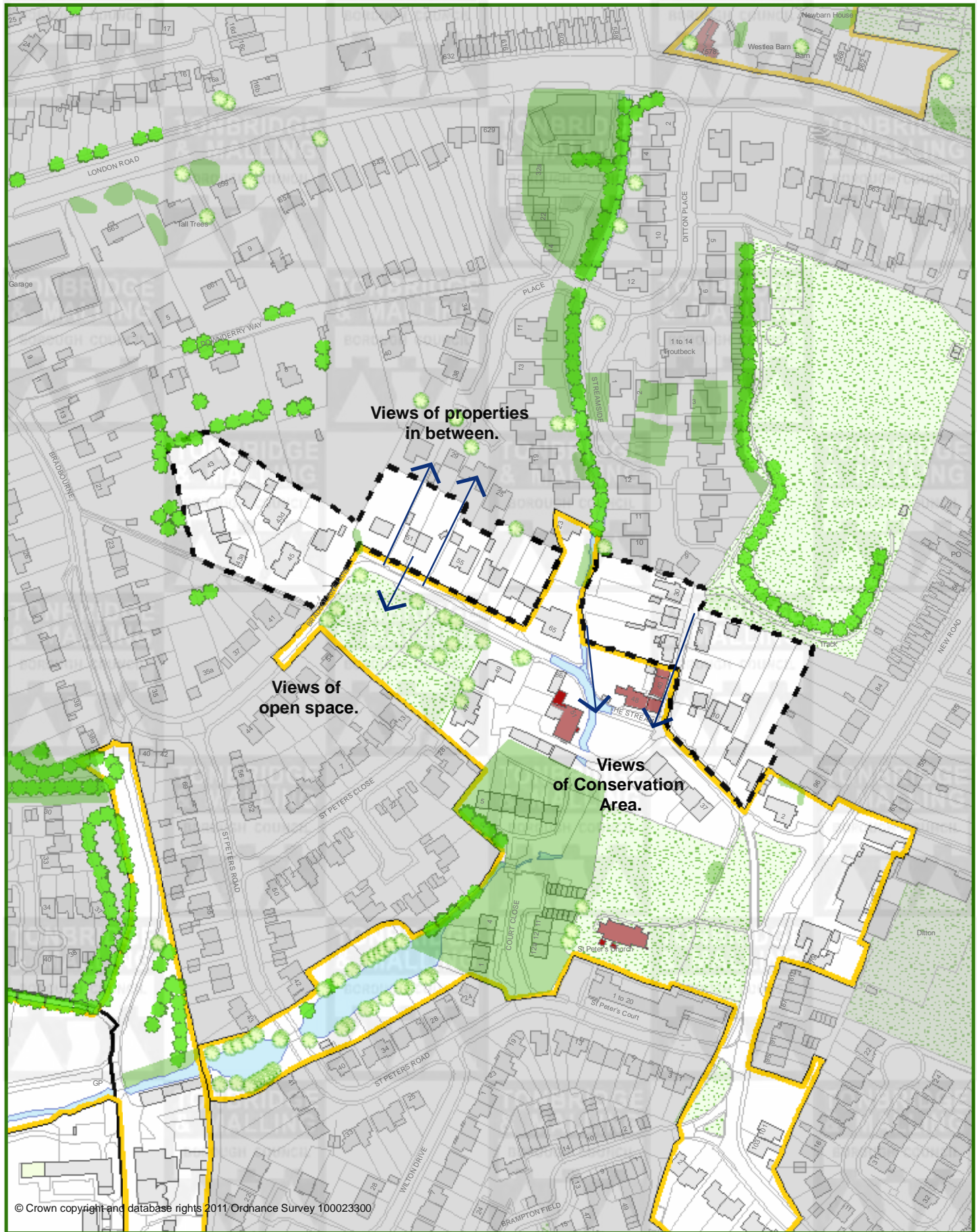
Properties in the eastern portion of the character area, along The Stream, are also varied and include semi detached 19th Century cottages, detached bungalows and 1960's detached houses, as well as some plots currently under construction. The majority of these homes front directly onto the highway with limited car parking. The roof line is varied and includes hipped, half hipped, flat roofs and forward facing gables. The front elevations include brick and render in a variety of colours, some with hung tile and brick details. The roofs are slate or tiles. Many of the properties have replacement windows and doors and there has been some unsympathetic personalisation of properties.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Verdant frontages and edges with landscaped gardens, hedges and tall trees
- Individuality of buildings
- Quiet and tranquil character
- Spaciousness created by properties being set back from the road in the western portion of the character area

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Views of the unsightly concrete blocks at both ends of the ford currently detract from the character of the area.



0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref L6

Title The Stream

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



L7 – PARK FARM AREA

Comprising: Park Farm and Walnut Row.

This is a small area just within the urban confines consisting of a handful of properties from different periods and in different styles that are set on Walnut Row a straight rural lane that leads to the East Malling Research Station. A small cul-de-sac sited behind the main thoroughfare at the very edge of the urban confines and a large period property sits on the road as it reaches the top of a gentle incline affording wide reaching views over open countryside to East Malling Research Station and the Church of St. James the Great in East Malling village. The area has an open, rural character with uninterrupted views over open countryside, and a selection of farm and agricultural buildings around the area, including a traditional oast house. There are a number of trees and hedgerows and open grassed areas that further contribute to the green and open character of the area.



Walnut Row is a terrace of four two storey properties built in 1948. Red brick with white casement windows and brown tiled hipped roof, and centrally placed chimneys on the protruding wings at both ends of the terrace. The properties are set well back from the road in grassed lawns enclosed by low open fences and hedges and shrubs. In front of the gardens there is a strip of grassed lawn and no pavement contributing to the rural, verdant character.

The area is set on low lying level land affording views northwards of the North Downs.

Despite the variety in ages and styles of the properties in the area, the landscape is a key feature that helps provide some unity.

The oast house is outside of the urban confines and therefore the character area, but it is an important local building that contributes to the rural character.





The building in the photo above right (Park Farm) dates from the Georgian period and has many of the characteristics typical of properties from this period including 12 light sash windows and symmetrical building proportions in the principal elevation. The rear of the property is more prominent to the streetscape and is likely to be a later addition to the original building as there is no symmetry here and the windows are smaller, suggesting this was added during the Victorian era.

The properties shown in the photo on the left are tucked behind Walnut Row and are more modern, built circa 1960s and are typical Open Plan style, two storey brown brick with brown hung tile details, white fenestration and shallow brown concrete tiled roofs that are pitched at one end and hipped at the other with short square chimneys and white barge boards.



The principal elevation of Park Farm faces southwards and is enclosed with a high beech hedge that runs along the property boundary and beyond to the east and a traditional boundary wall that runs along the eastern boundary of the character area that also marks the edge of the built up area.

Large, mature trees also contribute to the green and rural character of the area.

Long wide open views of the open countryside, trees along the highway and grassed verges provide an open, verdant rural character. There are views of the Church of St. James the Great in East Malling village in the distance to the west across the land owned by East Malling Research Station.





Across the traditional stone wall that runs along the eastern boundary of the area, there are open views across to Brampton Fields.

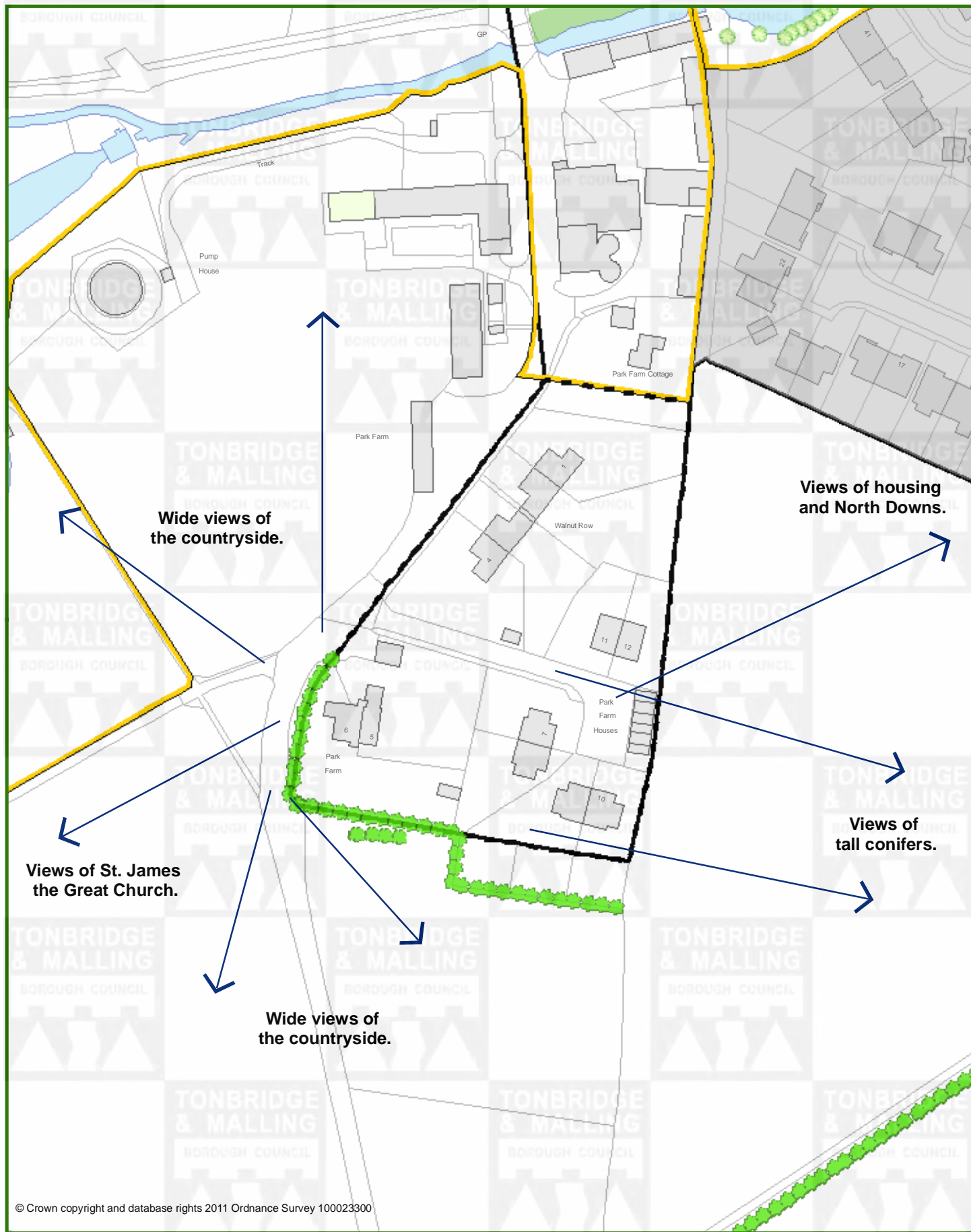
The road surfacing in the area is poor and there is no pavement. However, this informal layout contributes to the rural character of the area.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Verdant frontages and edges such as landscaped gardens, hedges and tall trees create a green and open, rural character
- Park Farm, Walnut Row and the stone wall running along the east of the character area contribute to the historic character of the area
- Traditional materials, details, decorative features and boundary treatments
- Wide views of the surrounding countryside and over to St. James the Great Church, East Malling village
- Individuality of buildings and groups of buildings
- Quiet/tranquil character
- Spaciousness created by properties being set back from the road with open frontages; wide grass verges and other open space, the level topography and the long views over open countryside

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors although the road surfacing is poor



0 10 20 30 40 50 100 Metres

Ref **L7**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Park Farm Area**



L8 – PRIORY GROVE

Comprising: Priory Grove.

Priory Grove is a curved loop accessed off Station Road. It consists of bungalows on the "inside" of the loop and semi detached properties set back from the road with driveways on the "outer" side of the looped road. There is a small pocket of 1970s semi detached properties and a pair of individually built 1980s semi-detached houses near the junction with Station Road. The area is set higher up than Station Road and this affords views of the North Downs to the north and west and views of woodlands to the south.



The semi detached properties are predominantly red or yellow brick built with pitched roofs and some hipped roofs, all with brown concrete roof tiles and a centrally placed chimney. The windows are white casement windows and some properties have been individualised with front porch extensions and replacement windows and doors.

There are panoramic views to the north of the North Downs. In front of the North Downs, a row of trees that buffers the M20 provides a green backdrop to the area, and the green front gardens and trees further soften the built environment of the area.



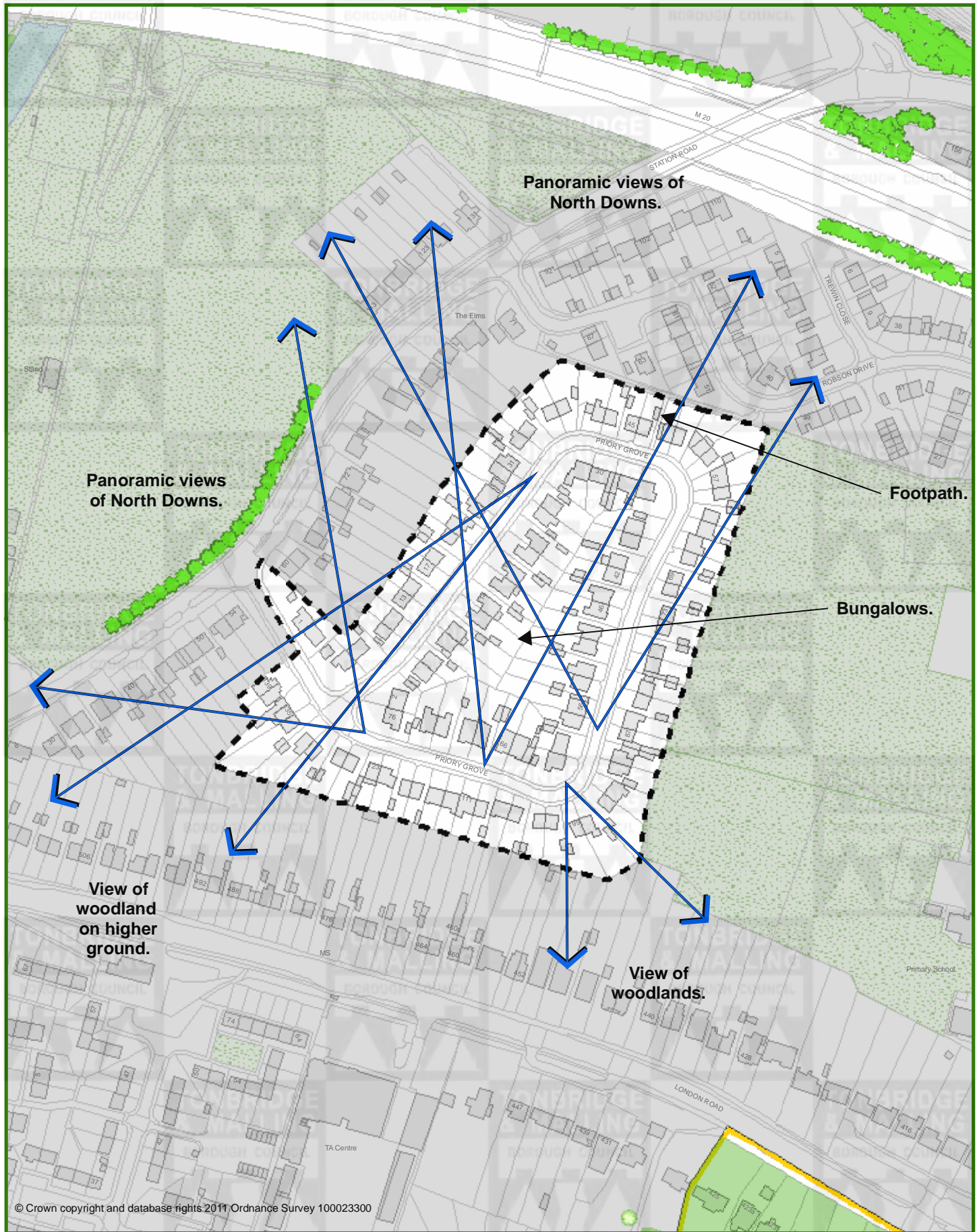
The bungalows are set around the inside of the loop of Priory Grove. They are predominantly brown brick with grey concrete roof tiles and hipped roofs with front facing gables, some have been rendered. The boundaries tend to be low brick walls in a variety of brick patterns and finishes.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

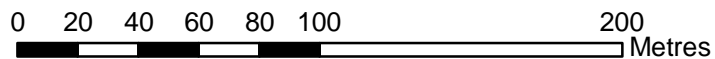
- Strong cohesive character created by the uniformity of materials and repeated designs of the two mixed building types and scale (semi-detached properties on the "outer" side of the looped road and the bungalows in the "inside" of the loop)
- The urban character is softened by the landscaped front gardens and the backdrop of trees
- Views of North Downs and woodlands
- No through traffic creates quiet residential character

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors



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Ref **L8**

Title **Priory Grove**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



L9 – BRADBOURNE LANE

Comprising: Bradbourne Lane

Bradbourne Lane is located off the A20 and leads southwards to St Peters Road and Ditton Conservation Area which occupy a much lower elevation opening up long panoramic views of the areas to the south including Oaken Wood. It is a mixed area comprised of semi-detached and detached houses and bungalows dating from the 1930s to the 1970s. In addition to the residential properties there is a restaurant (Tandoori Palace) which occupies a 19th century cottage near the junction with the A20. The character area of Downderry Way is accessed off the eastern side of the road.



There is a mixture of ages and styles of residential development in the area and the contrast from the east and west side of the road is quite significant (see above left and middle). The oldest residential properties are located on the eastern side comprising bungalows built of concrete blocks dating back to the 1930s (see above, middle). There is a row of brown-brick two storey semi-detached houses on the western side which were built in the 1940s for workers of the nearby East Malling Horticultural Research Station (EMHRS) (see above, left). The most recent developments include two clusters of open plan housing which bookend the area and these were built in the 1960s and 1970s (see top right and right). This mixture is a positive feature creating a diverse rich character. A unifying characteristic for the area are the deep frontages with relatively low level front border treatments including a ragstone wall (west side) and hedges.



The semi detached 1940s houses on the western side occupy large plots. The properties are built of brown brick with hipped roofs topped with brown tiles. Cat slide roofs are a distinguishing positive feature of the houses (see top, left). White casement windows feature throughout.

Another positive feature is the retention of the original character. The front boundary treatment of a ragstone wall (see left) makes a positive contribution to the character of the area providing a distinctive, high quality linear definition to the edge of the plots.

The bungalows on the eastern side of the road are constructed of concrete blocks, with steep pitched red tile roofs with a single pitched dormer window in the roof facing the road (see right). Some have additional windows in the roof. Some also have bay windows to the ground floor. The repetition of design features such as the dormer windows and materials, together with the common scale, and unified building line help to create a cohesive character to this side of Bradbourne Lane. There has been some individualisation, including rear extensions and pebble dash front facades but these have not diluted the original character. The properties follow a stepped building line, which is mirrored on the western side of the road, following the slope of Bradbourne Lane southwards towards St Peter's Road.





Open plan housing features at the northern (terrace block, see left) and southern extents (semi-detached) of the area. These developments share similar characteristics including brown brick houses fronting Bradbourne Lane with low pitched and hipped roofs, red/brown hung tile detail to the upper front façade and white casement windows. Positive features include the enclosed private character of the properties near the junction with the A20 and the deep frontages and striking stepped building line of the properties at the southern extent of the area (see previous page, middle right). Negative features for the terrace block include significant road noise from the A20 and the poor surface quality of the forecourt.

An exception to the predominant residential character in the area is the Tandoori Palace restaurant located on the western side of Bradbourne Lane near the junction with the A20. This occupies a large 19th century cottage with a large tarmac parking area at the front and a small narrow garden to the west. The property occupies an elevated position near the brow of the hill with views across the A20 to the North Downs, which is a positive feature. The short view of the KIA garage to the north-east is a negative feature because the building is undistinguished with no significant design details or features. The extension to the restaurant is not a positive feature because it lacks many design details and materials evident in the original 19th century cottage, e.g. hipped tiled roof.



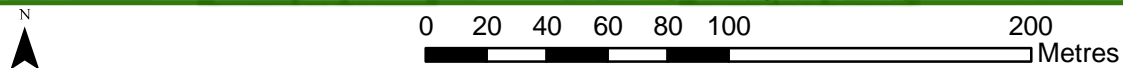
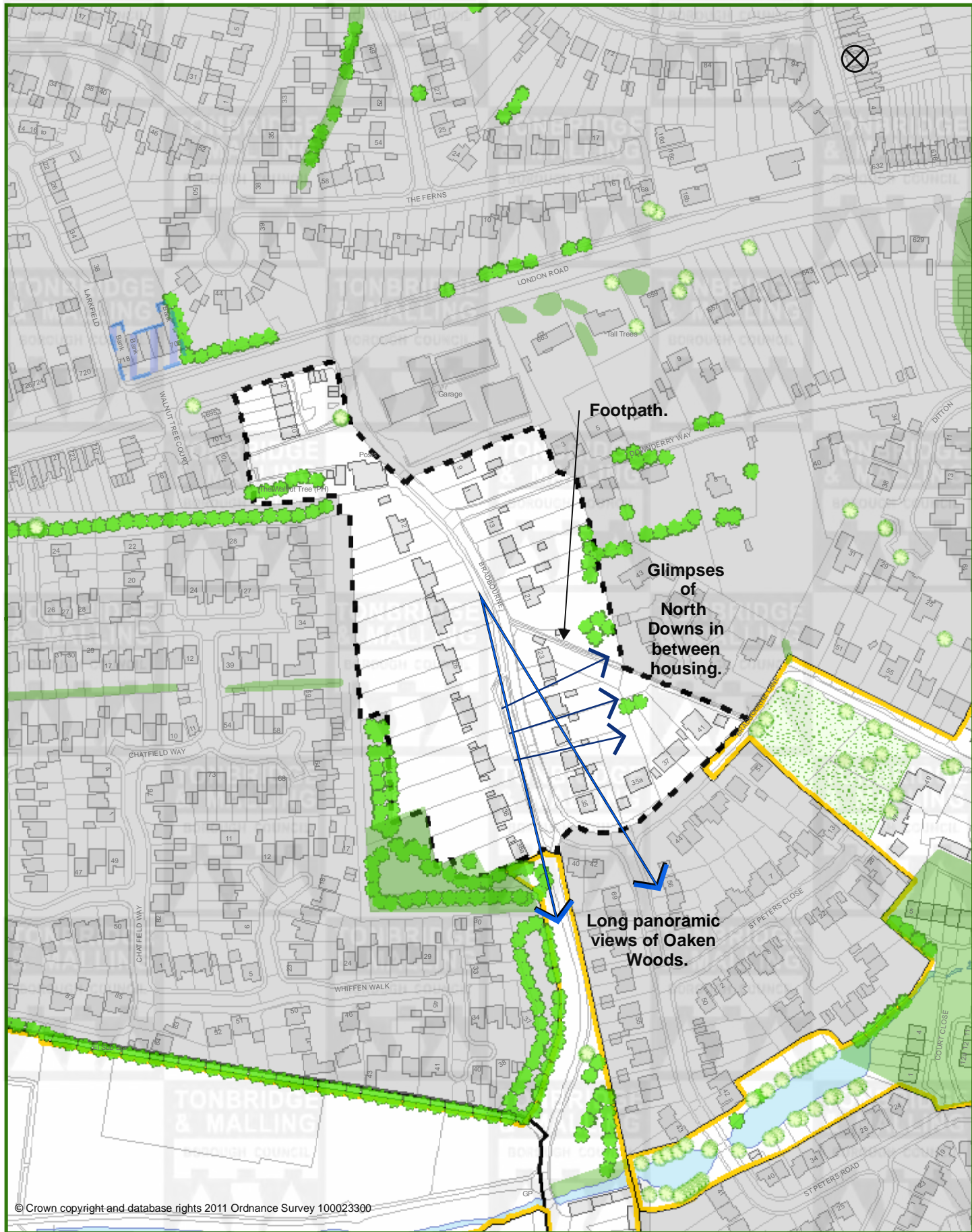
Significant positive features of the area as a whole are the views east and southwards. The undulating topography results in Bradbourne Lane sloping to the south towards St Peter's Road and Ditton Conservation Area. This allows for long panoramic views across Ditton and towards Oaken Wood in the far distance which provides a strong verdant edge to this outlook. There are also glimpses of the distant North Downs between the bungalows from the western side of Bradbourne Lane (above, middle).

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Long, panoramic views to the south of the surrounding countryside and Oaken Wood in the far distance
- Glimpses of the distant North Downs in between the bungalows
- Spacious character created by large plots, deep frontages and topography creating long open views
- Verdant frontages created by mature hedges and trees located in front gardens and grassed areas by the roadside
- Distinctive traditional ragstone wall providing a strong linear edge to the properties on the western side of the road
- Cohesive character within small groups of properties, in particular the bungalows and 1940s housing, created by uniformity of building height, scale, design and materials

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Traffic noise from A20 in the north of the area
- Poor surfacing of forecourt to housing and restaurant in the north of the area



Ref **L9**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Bradbourne Lane**



L10 – ST PETER’S ROAD AREA

Comprising: St Peter’s Road and St Peter’s Close

An area of mixed character including two-storey semi-detached houses and semi-detached and detached bungalows dating back to the 1960s. St Peter’s Road, which runs through the area, gently slopes up in a northerly direction towards Bradbourne Lane. The entrance from the south is via St Peter’s Road which passes over The Stream (located in the Ditton Conservation Area) which frames this part of the character area. The character is only mixed in terms of types of properties because the whole area was planned as a single development.



The properties fronting St Peter’s Road along the western edge are in the style of 1930s Cox housing with a combination of a cat slide roof and half-hipped roofs topped with either brown or green concrete tiles (above left). They have two storey canted bay ‘suntrap’ windows and white-washed render on the upper storey and are built of yellow brick. A positive feature of the design is the sloping roofs which allow short views between the properties of the tall specimen trees in the Bradbourne Estate to the west (a Conservation Area). This original character has been diluted and the views have been reduced by dormer extensions (see above, left). Whilst the materials used in the extensions are sympathetic to the original building, the streetscape has been transformed and in some cases the symmetry of the profile of the buildings has been lost (where only one of the semi’s having a dormer extension), which is not a positive feature of the area.

A positive feature is the relatively short views of the tall specimen trees in the Ditton Conservation to the south-east which is possible because of the low profile bungalows lining the east side of St Peter’s Road (see above, right).



The properties along St Peter’s Close are a combination of semi-detached two storey houses built of buff brick with shallow gable-ended pitched roofs and attached garages (above, right) along the northern edge and semi-detached bungalows with gable-fronted and gable-ended roofs built of yellow and red brick (above, left). The brick built porches and garages on the semi-detached houses in St Peter’s Close break up the otherwise flat frontages and the chimney stacks on the roof pitch create a sense of rhythm. Unifying features which help create a cohesive character for the whole area include lawned open frontages with very few landscape features of significance.



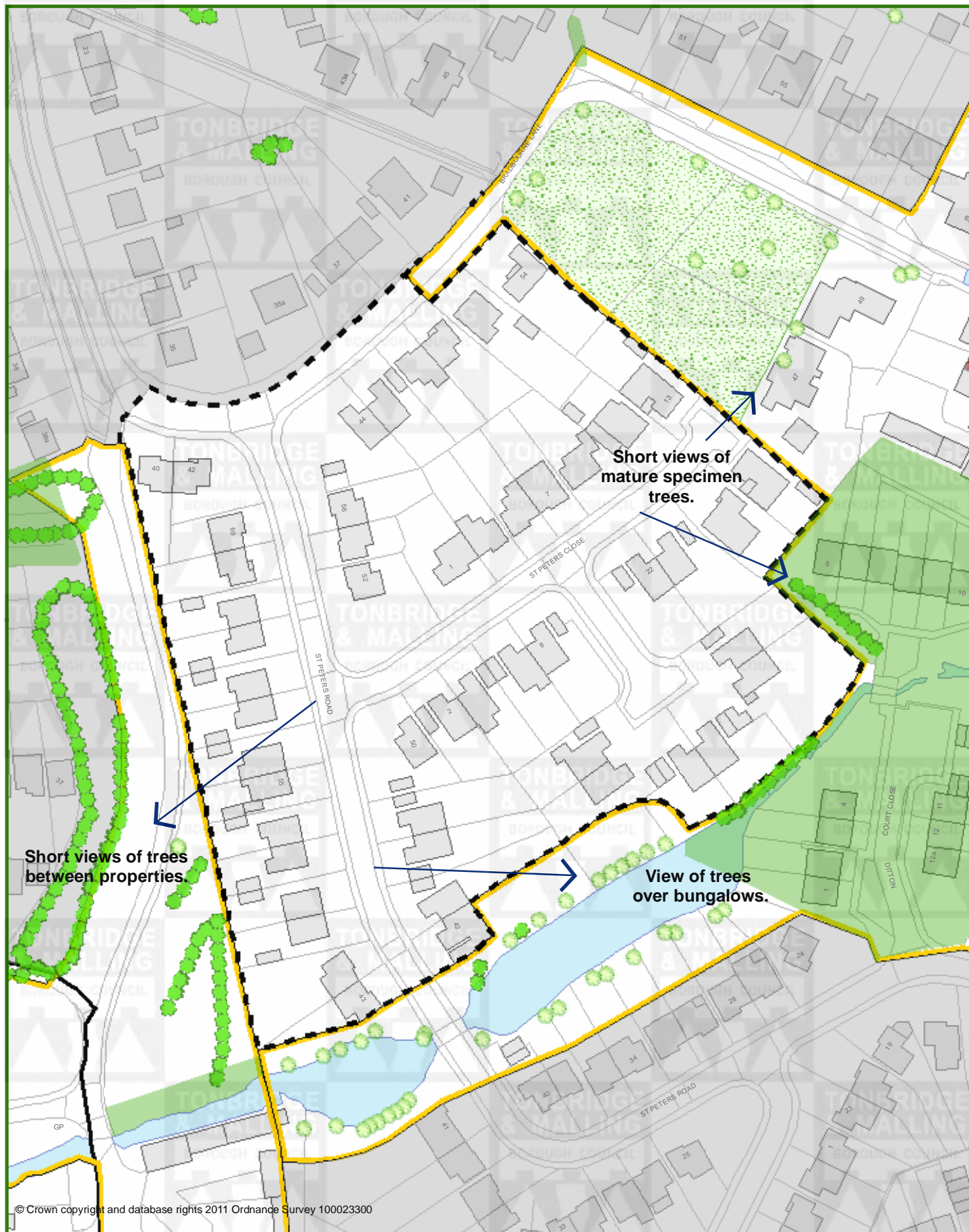
At the eastern end of St Peter's Close there are short views of the individually styled properties and mature specimen trees in the adjoining Ditton Conservation Area (see above left). The line of tall trees which sweeps around the southern edge of the character area following 'The Stream' is a positive feature providing a verdant frame (see above right for tree-lined southern entrance to character area). The layout of St Peter's Close has an enclosed, private character with no through routes which is another positive feature.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Short views of the tall specimen trees in the Bradbourne Estate (Conservation Area) between properties on the west side of St Peter's Road
- Short views of the tall specimen trees in the Ditton Conservation Area which provide a verdant edge to the area along the eastern and southern boundaries following the path of The Stream
- Cohesive character created by open uncluttered frontages, chimney stacks, colour and type of building materials and the building line
- Enclosed private character along St Peter's Close

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors



Ref **L10**

Title **St Peter's Road Area**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



L11 – MILL HALL

Comprising: Mill Hall

This area has a mixed character and contains three Victorian residential terraces and a number of large commercial premises nestled on flat, level land between the Medway Valley railway line and the River Medway. The area is accessed off Station Road over a level crossing and is a long curved road that provides access to Mill Hall Business Estate and other stand alone industrial premises.



The area has an industrial character at first glance with large commercial premises that face onto the main road. The River Medway is well shielded from the public realm due to a dense row of trees, buildings and walls or fences between the road and the river's edge. Tall single storey double height commercial buildings are prominent but vary in age and quality.

The line of trees along part of the river bank and along the southern boundary of the site with the railway line, provides some greenery and softens what would otherwise be a hard landscape.

The road surface is uneven and rough in some places with partial pavement and informal parking areas on rough uneven terrain creating a stark contrast with the modern, high quality housing development on the site adjacent.





The older commercial and industrial premises are tired and poorly maintained. This contrasts greatly with the well kept newer development that is built around a cul-de-sac layout with herringbone paving and deliberate colour in the building frontages to create interest and a sense of unity for the buildings in that business park.



Although there is a significant amount of greenery in the area in the form of grassed areas and mature trees and hedgerows, the high boundary brick walls of some premises create a hard townscape, softened only by some informal, wild vegetation.

Within the area, there are three separate 'blocks' of residential development. All residential properties (with the exception of the white house in the above photo on the right) is Victorian.

The first block faces directly onto the Highway and personalisation of these properties has diluted the otherwise historic character of this row. Painted brickwork, replacement windows and doors and dormer windows in the roof have all contributed to this dilution. The other 'blocks' are well screened from the road due to their deep front gardens that sit behind a wall and tall hedge or the angle of the road creates privacy.





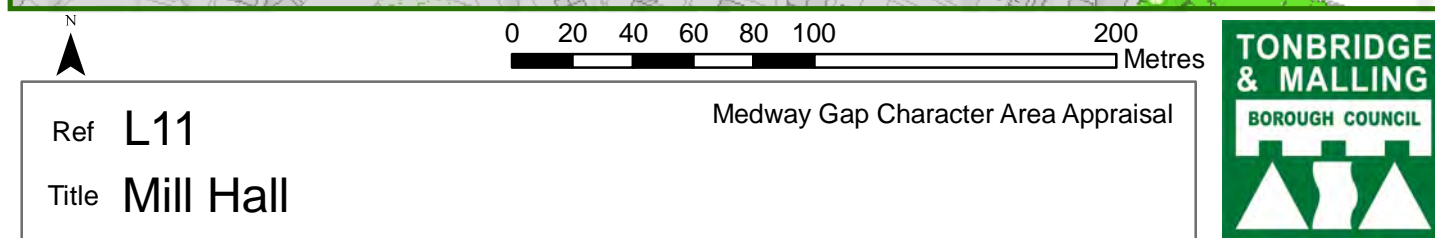
The industrial and commercial premises at the western end of the site are well kept and have a low brick wall with decorative pattern running along the edge of the site with the river. The brick wall contains the site and obscures views of the river. However, there are panoramic views across the river over to the North Downs and the open countryside on the opposite side of the bank.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Panoramic views of surrounding countryside and the North Down
- Individuality of buildings and groups of buildings create interest
- Quiet/tranquil character
- Mature trees, hedgerows and grassed areas

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Some poor surfacing of roads and pavements
- Quality and condition of some of the older industrial premises



M – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION



The Royal British Legion Village is a unique institutional development which is unified by its parkland setting and historic remnants of Preston Hall. Although it has a mixed character, there are several unifying features that together with the parkland setting justify its identification as a separate and unique character area type.

M1 – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION VILLAGE PRESTON HALL AREA (WEST)

Comprising: Homefarm Estate, The Duchess of Kent Court, Charles Busby Court, Admiral Moore Drive, Dennis Cadman House, Clark Mews, Bentley Close, McKenzie Close, Howick Close, William Baker House, Clive House, London Road, East Park Road, Preston Hall.

The Royal British Legion Village is constructed on the estate lands of Preston Hall, occupying an extensive site to the east of Hall Road and north of London Road. The estate dates back to at least the 12th century, and in the 19th century was the seat of the Brassey Family. It was taken over by the Royal British Legion in 1923 with the aim of providing accommodation for disabled servicemen who had been discharged from Preston Hall Hospital. The buildings are set in extensive landscape and comprise terraced houses and apartments, most of which were built after 1970. In addition to the residential units, the site contains a medical centre and community facilities. The village is accessed from Hall Road and via the hospital site to the east.



The Village has a verdant, parkland setting and expanses of grass and many large specimen trees and belts of trees have been retained, giving the area a spacious green character.

Sections of old estate ragstone and brick walls have been retained which create a link with the history of the estate. The mellow colours blend attractively with the soft landscaping. The walls around Clark Mews (see right) and bordering the London Road are of particular landscape value.



Some 19th century estate buildings have been retained including the lodge by the entrance to Admiral Moore Drive (see above right) and The Doctor's House and Little Guest House north of Clark Mews (see above left). Constructed in ragstone with slate or clay tiled hipped and half hipped roofs, the buildings display many original design features including black barge boards, mullioned windows, black wooden brackets and prominent chimneys.

A former courtyard is now occupied by small units and workshops.



Within this parkland setting, terraces and blocks of housing have been constructed of various ages and styles. The most extensive area is towards the southern end of the site, screened from the London Road by a broad belt of trees which form a green backdrop. McKenzie Close and Howick Close comprise two storey terraced buff brick houses with shallow brown concrete tiled roofs facing onto short culs de sac. The front gardens are enclosed by panel fences and the streets have a quiet, residential character. The communal garage blocks are being refurbished which greatly enhances the quality of the environment.

Howick Close and McKenzie Close are linked together by two three storey apartment blocks, William Baker House and Clive House constructed in the same materials as the houses, which overlook communal grassed areas planted with trees. The whole scheme is neat and well maintained.



To the north Charles Busby Court and Dennis Cadman House are constructed of red/brown and buff brick with brown concrete tiled shallow mono pitch roofs and red hung tiles. Some buildings have balconies. The unremarkable buildings are enhanced by the spaciousness of their setting and soft landscaping and their irregular shape reduces their visual bulk. . To the north the buildings overlook a small memorial garden and tall garden wall. To the east there are glimpses of the roofline and chimneys of Preston Hall.



At the eastern edge of the site, Queen Elizabeth Court is a high quality orange red brick development with decorative brickwork and clay tiled steeply pitched roof and white window frames. The one and two storey structure nestles among mature trees and there are vistas to the north east of Preston Hall and longer views towards the North Downs. The surrounding surfacing is high quality. The neighbouring Mountbatten Pavilion is a wide low brown brick building with white weatherboard, regularly spaced glass doors and distinctive projecting white framed windows. The Duchess of Kent Court (above right) is two storey flat roofed buff brick building with prominent balconies and a large parking area to the front. It is enhanced by a wide grassed area and mature trees.



Clark Mews (above left) is a cul de sac development of two and three storey houses constructed in buff brick with red hung tiles, wide fenestration and gabled brown concrete tiled roofs. The development has a private, quiet character being enclosed by very high old garden/farm walls which are yellow brick or rendered. The wall to the north is embellished with urns. To the south there is a wide wrought iron black and gold gateway (see above right) giving views across green open space to other buildings and Preston Hall. Grassed areas and landscaping enhance the scheme.

Opposite the entrance there are two pairs of semi-detached cream rendered 1930s houses.

The Capel Morris Centre by the northern entrance is a one storey club building of red brick with a brown tiled hipped roof set behind a landscaped parking area. The low height and colour scheme are sympathetic to the character of the area.



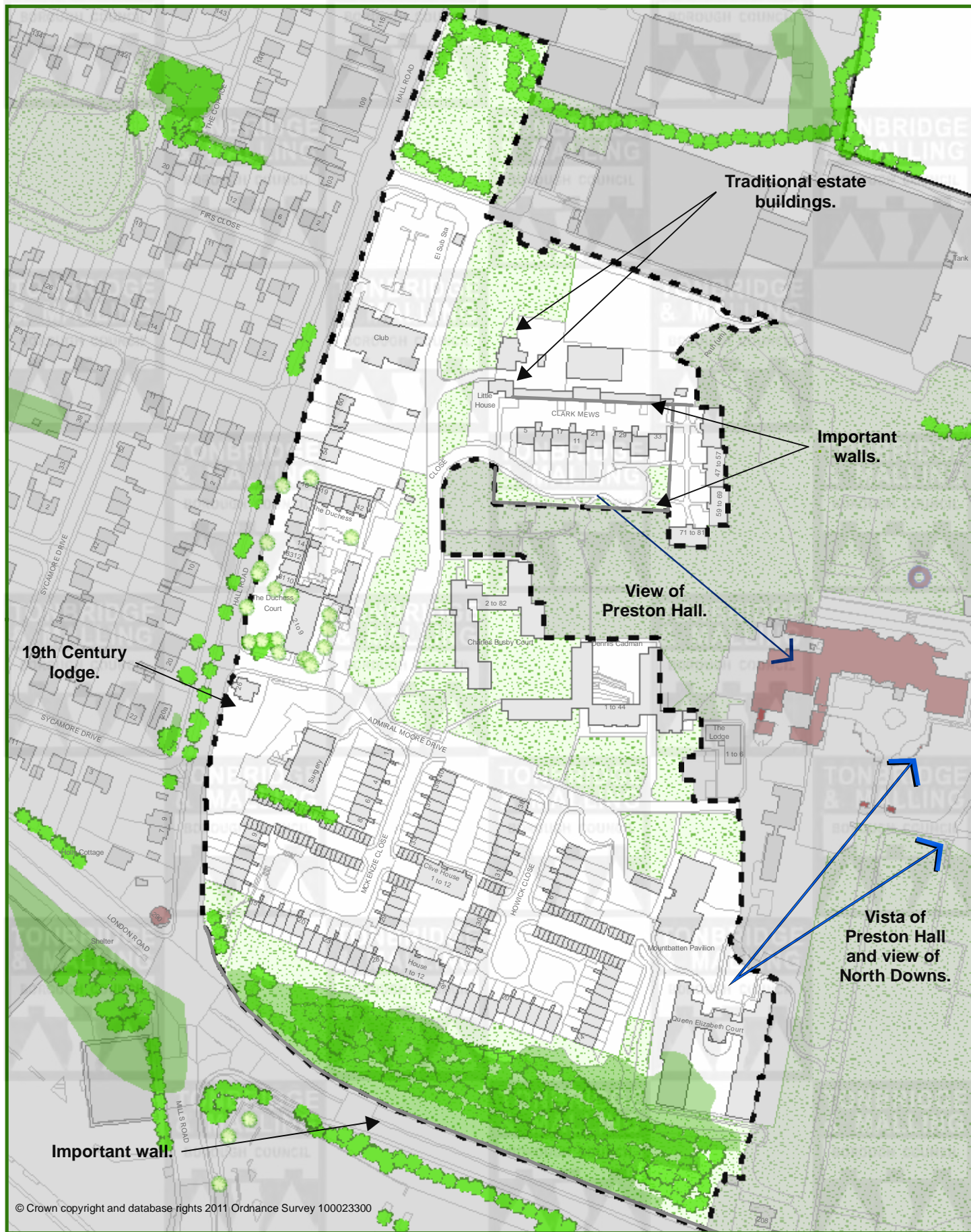
LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
Age of buildings	19th century estate buildings and old walls to present day
Type of buildings	Mainly terraced houses and apartments
Main uses	Residential
Building heights	1 - 3 storeys
Prominent building materials	Buff, brown, orange and red brick, red hanging tiles, red or brown roof tiles, white painted sash windows
Predominant boundary treatments	Old ragstone walls and open plan
Open spaces	Parkland with open frontages to buildings

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The Royal British Legion Village has a unique character. The piecemeal development of the estate has resulted in a mix of uses, materials and building styles but the spacious green parkland setting has a unifying effect
- The area has a spacious, verdant character enhanced by mature tree belts, individual specimen trees, expanses of grassed open space, shrubs and flower beds
- The retention of 19th century estate buildings and old walls creates a link with the past on this ancient estate. The buildings are constructed of traditional local materials and retain period details. The walls north of the London Road and around Clark Mews are of particular landscape importance
- Remnants of garden/farm walls provide a link with the past and are of considerable landscape value
- There are vistas of the roofline and chimneys of Preston Hall from a number of points in the area. Vistas of the Hall and longer views of the North Downs contribute to the sense of history and the spaciousness of the area
- The various 20th century residential areas have different characters. The more recent development is more sensitive to local character in terms of the pitched rooflines and use of traditional materials
- The site has a quiet character
- The quality of the surface treatments is generally good. The site is well maintained
- The London Road is screened by a broad belt of trees

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- There is some traffic noise from the A20 London Road on the southern section of the area
- Some of the earlier 20th century residential buildings now appear unsympathetic to the location in terms of design and materials



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0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **M1**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Royal British Legion Village
Preston Hall Area (West)**



N – RETAIL AREAS



In the first half of the twentieth century, retail provision in the Medway Gap was provided by stand alone or groups of shops in the village centres. The area generally was rural, and the need for retail provision was limited. As the area expanded through planned growth during the 1950 to 1970s, small scale planned retail development took place to meet the day-to-day needs of the local communities. In addition to the smaller local centres there are three main retail areas in the Medway Gap that seek to provide for the needs of the wider area. The District Centre at Martin Square, Larkfield contains a number of shop units that were purpose built in the early 1960s and includes a library. Lunsford Park was originally a district centre anchored by a supermarket with four adjoining units. In the early 2000s, the supermarket expanded to a larger format to include non food items and provide many of the goods and services commonly found in retail units of this format such as a pharmacy and café. Also an out –of-centre retail park, South Aylesford provides for the retail needs of the wider area, including Maidstone and contains a number of retail warehouses and a large superstore.

Throughout the years, some of these retail centres have undergone cosmetic modernisation and full scale redevelopment and the units are constructed in a variety of materials and styles. The general architectural styles of their period of construction and refurbishment (where applicable) are reflected in the design features and materials used in the buildings.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
<i>Age of buildings</i>	<i>1960s onwards</i>
<i>Type of buildings</i>	<i>Large individual buildings, large linked buildings or groups of smaller linked units</i>
<i>Main uses</i>	<i>Superstores, retail warehouses, car showrooms and smaller retail units</i>
<i>Building heights</i>	<i>Single storey, some double height</i>
<i>Prominent building materials</i>	<i>Steel, glass and brick</i>
<i>Predominant boundary treatments</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>None</i>

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Similar building designs create a cohesive character where there are groups of buildings*
- *Verdant southern edge with short views of the grouping of tall mature trees in the ground of the Hamlets Hotel to the south on the A20*
- *Landscaping softens the otherwise hard urban streetscape*
- *Quality surface treatments*
- *Quality buildings constructed in quality materials and modern facias*
- *Enclosed character created by belt of mature trees*
- *Some local reference points created by specific design features such as the clock tower at Tesco at Lunsford Park*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Background noise from traffic travelling along nearby roads, e.g. the A20*
- *Parking signs clutter the streetscene*
- *Lack of details and features of interest in some of the buildings*

N1 – MARTIN SQUARE

Comprising: Martin Square

A retail centre comprising two three-storey blocks facing inwards onto a central square which is used for car parking. The blocks include a total of 20 compact retail units on the ground floor with maisonettes on the upper two storeys. Martin Square was an integral part of the development of the Birds Estate to the west by the Malling Rural District Council in the mid-1960s. Between the Square and the A20 to the south there is the Abbeyfield Care Home and library, built at a similar time to the Birds Estate, and the three storey Larkfield Health Centre which was developed in the early part of the 21st century. The Square is accessed from Kingfisher Road to the north and by a pedestrian footway from the A20 and the Morrisons car park in the south-east corner.



The three storey blocks face inwards onto the central parking area on the northern and eastern edges creating an enclosed character. They are undistinguished in their design lacking any detailed features of note. They have flat fronted elevations with a flat canopy over the walkway (see left). The blocks are built of buff brick with shallow pitched gable-ended roofs topped with brown concrete tiles. White casement windows feature throughout in the maisonettes on the upper two floors.

It is evident that the Square forms part of the wider development of the Birds Estate, sharing many similarities in building design including shallow pitched roofs, flat fronted elevations, white casements windows and, along Kingfisher Road (see right) similar building heights, roof lines and materials.



Trees lining the division between the covered walkways and the car parking area (see above) help soften the hard urban landscape and broaden the colour palette of the area when in full foliage.

The public toilet opposite the parking area are not well maintained and detract from the character of the area (see above centre and right)



The library and Abbeyfield Care Home to the south were built at a similar time to Martin Square but did not form part of the planned development. These buildings are set back from the Square surrounded by a lawned area. Abbeyfield has more variety in its building design than Martin Square, with white weatherboarding on the upper storey and contrasting coloured bricks inset on one of the side elevations (see above right). The library is a building designed purely with function in mind and is undistinguished in appearance with no detailing or features of note (see above, left).



The surface treatments are varied, including block paving and stone insets, and are of a good quality and contribute positively to the character of the area (see above left).

The most modern development is the Larkfield Health Care Centre in the south east corner which was built in the early part of the 21st century. It has more variety in its building design than the other buildings, being built of a mixture of red and brown brick with variable heights and roof lines and a small clock tower providing some visual interest (see above, middle)

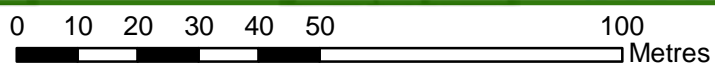
A significant positive feature is the verdant southern edge to the character area. This is created in the foreground by the trees lining the central car park and the lawned area in front of the Care Centre. The group of tall mature trees in the grounds of the Hamlets Hotel and adjoining properties on the A20 provide a strong verdant back drop which is even more pronounced thanks to the single storey of the west wing of Abbeyfields. This short view contributes positively to the setting and character of the area and is worthy of protection (see above, right).

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Similar building designs to the neighbouring properties of the Birds Estate create a strong sense of place
- Verdant southern edge with short views of the grouping of tall mature trees in the ground of the Hamlets Hotel to the south on the A20
- Rows of trees lining the edge of the square soften the hard urban landscape
- Quality surface treatments
- Enclosed character

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Background noise from traffic travelling along the nearby A20
- Public toilet block
- Undistinguished buildings lacking details and features of interest



Ref **N1**

Title **Martin Square**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



N2 – LUNSFORD PARK

Comprising: Leybourne Way

Lunsford Park is an Out-of-Centre Retail Facility in the parish of East Malling and Larkfield. It is accessed off Leybourne Way, a main access route connecting the A227 and the M20 with Larkfield. The buildings of the character area are set back from the road behind tall trees and shrubs but there are breaks in the tree line to provide short glimpses of the operational car parking and HGV loading bays. The site is flat and level with a high tree and shrub covered bund around the western, southern and eastern boundaries. These boundaries enclose level surface car parking. A one way road system around the site allows a separate entrance and exit and there are three individual pedestrian accesses to neighbouring areas.

The buildings consist of one hypermarket and two separate (but attached) retail units – one of which is currently vacant. Together they comprise a purpose built retail centre that was originally built to meet the day to day shopping needs of the neighbouring communities. However, over the years, the main superstore has expanded and now provides for a much wider catchment area.

The buildings are single storey brown brick built with large plate glass windows on the southern elevations. The roof, brown concrete roof tiles, is pitched with a steep hipped feature roof at the main hypermarket entrance with a small square clock tower which provides a focal point for the area.



The character area is enclosed on the western, southern and eastern sides by a bund that is lined by grass and mature trees and shrubs. The trees and vegetation create a sense of enclosure.

By the exit there is a petrol filling station which is visible from the main road, Leybourne Way and provides a local reference point.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Verdant bund around the western, southern and eastern boundary of the site creates a sense of enclosure
- Steep hipped roof and clock tower at hypermarket entrance provide a focal point for the otherwise utilitarian building with no specific local reference

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- No significant detractors



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0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref **N2**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **Lunsford Park**



N3 – SOUTH AYLESFORD RETAIL PARK

Comprising: Mills Road

This retail park is situated near the eastern edge of the urban confines of the Medway Gap. It is surrounded on its northern boundary by a dense line of trees and shrubs and the A20 London Road beyond. Junction 5 of the M20 is within easy reach widening the catchment of the area to include those from further afield. To the west, there is a line of trees and a small bund to the southern corner that acts as a buffer between the retail park and the residential properties beyond. To the south, the land rises up sharply to a level platform which forms part of the Quarry Wood Industrial Estate. The eastern part of the site is set up on a higher level platform that again is bounded by trees and shrubs with further commercial premises abutting the boundary with the Industrial Estate, albeit on a similar level. The eastern part of the site contains a single storey superstore building and the western part of the area houses large height single and some double storey retail warehouse units.



The retail park is surrounded by a bund on the western boundary creating a sense of enclosure and a strong edge to the area.

The buildings and double storey height retail warehouses with glass frontages and pale brick side pillars. The roofs are flat with a gentle front to rear slope, and steel flat canopies over the main entrances.

The buildings sit around the edge of the area with the car parking provision in the middle. Trees and low shrubs within the car park soften the otherwise hard streetscene.

The higher level platform to the east is bounded by a line of trees creating an edge between the area and the A20 to the north.

The wide open car park is flat and level with views across the western boundary over to the retail warehouses and the tree line backdrop. There are a number of trees and low shrubs and grassed areas that with the tree lined boundary soften the otherwise hard landscape, but also obscure the building.

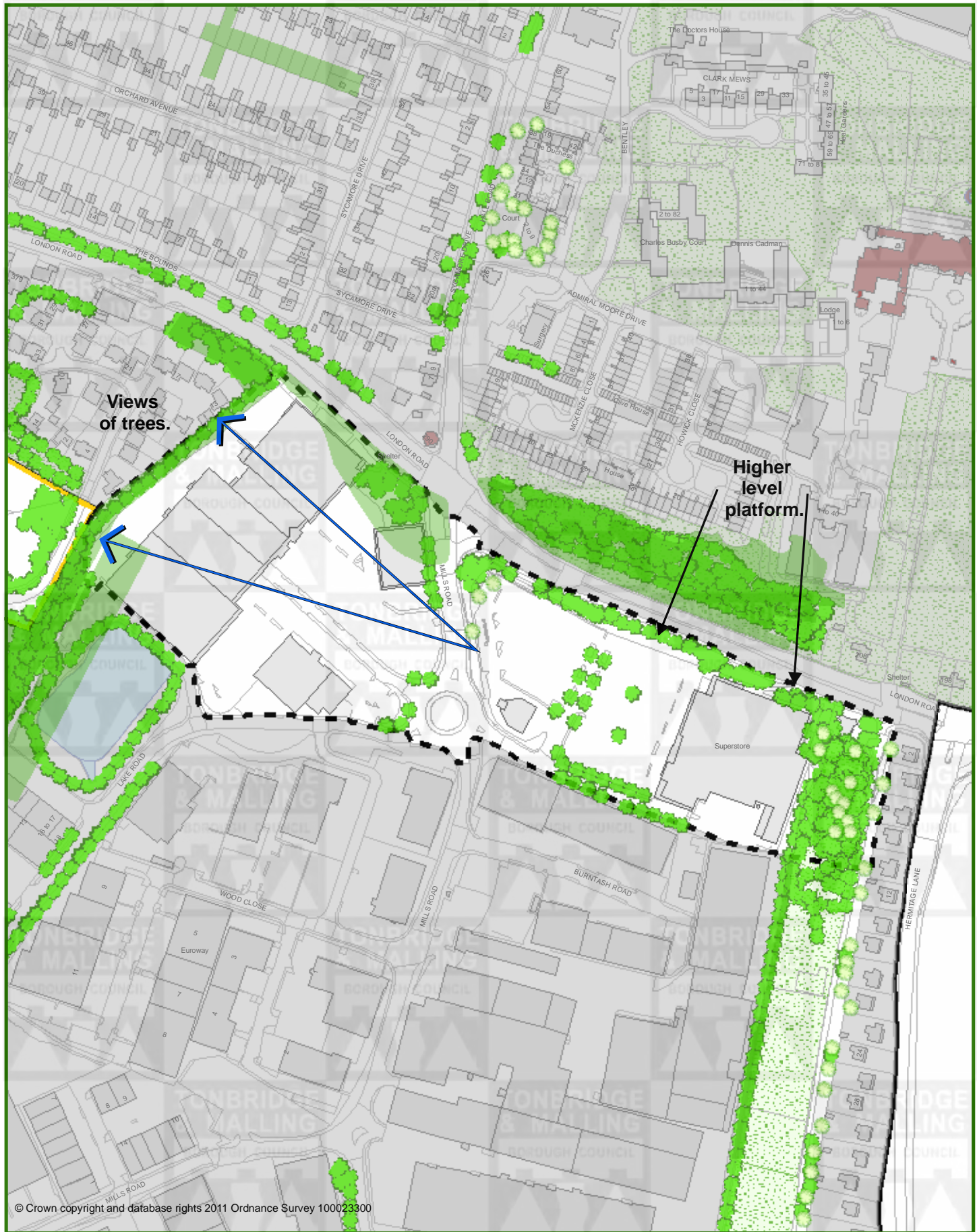


Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- *Cohesive character created by the similarities in scale, height, design and materials*
- *Trees along the edges of the area provide a sense of enclosure*
- *Landscaping softens the otherwise hard streetscape*

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- *Traffic noise from the A20 to the north and the industrial estates to the south*
- *Poor pedestrian links between the different sections of the area creating poor permeability*



0 30 60 90 120 150 300 Metres

Ref **N3**

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title **South Aylesford Retail Park**



O – COMMERCIAL AREAS



New Hythe Industrial Estate

The main commercial areas of the Medway Gap are set around the edges of the urban areas in the north east, close to the River Medway and the M20 at New Hythe and on the south western edge of the urban confines at Quarry Wood Industrial Estate.

Commercial development in the Medway Gap began along the banks of the River Medway as the River was used to transport goods to other parts of Kent. This legacy has continued with some remaining riverside commercial sites, while the needs of modern businesses have made other areas more desirable. Over the past 20 years, much of the older, smaller riverside commercial sites that had poor access for commercial vehicles have been redeveloped for housing.

O1 – NEW HYTHE

Comprising: West Mead, New Hythe Lane, Papyrus Way, Central Road, Premier Road, College Road, West Mill Road, Wet End Road, Dry End Road, Mill Hall Road and Bellingham Way

New Hythe Industrial Area occupies an area of approximately 1.3 million square metres between the River Medway, the M20 between junctions 5 and 4, with the Maidstone – Strood railway line running through the site. The area itself falls with the Parishes of Ditton, Aylesford, and Larkfield and East Malling.

Despite the size of the area, there are no commonalities which unify the character of the area or create specific sub areas, with the exception of Larkfield Trading Estate which is located on the edge of Leybourne Lakes and has a more open character.

Set in the floodplain, the overall area is flat and level and the secure boundary treatments that are commonplace throughout the area and obscure views into the premises or across those individual sites to the River Medway and the North Downs reduce the possibilities for creating local reference points.

In name, there are a number of separate industrial estates within the area that provide a full range of premise sizes and types for commercial and industrial purposes and vary in age and quality of design, materials, maintenance and access. In some areas, the landscaping is particularly significant, either through the role it plays in shielding the buildings from the public domain or to soften what would otherwise be a hard street scene. Most of the roads are lined with double yellow lines. Consequently, the roads are free of on-street car parking which is provided within the premises, not usually visible from the road.



There is great variety in the quality of materials, age, architectural style, height and scale of the premises in New Hythe ranging from modern flagship premises such as this modern office and warehouse/distribution centre to older, small scale buildings such as the late Victorian property situated at the entrance of SCA Packaging on New Hythe Road.

Buildings still remain from the late 19th century, although most of the buildings date from the 1950s onwards.

Modern premises have been built to replace some of the derelict outmoded buildings to better meet the needs of modern businesses; they are constructed in a variety of contemporary materials and are reflective of their era.



Despite the variety in buildings, large commercial premises dominate the area, many of which are derelict or vacant. Tall chimneys and warehouse style buildings are predominant and are constructed in a variety of materials predominantly steel and brick and range in age from late Victorian to present day.

In many cases, views into commercial premises such as Aylesford Newsprint and SCA Packaging which are larger in scale, are restricted due to tall trees and landscaped verges of shrubs and bushes. These landscaped strips provide some much needed colour and soften the otherwise hard landscape

The chimneys of Aylesford Newsprint are synonymous with the area and are visible from the M20 and some surrounding areas and therefore are a local landmark.



The building in the photograph above left shows a late Victorian building that forms part of the wider single business activity that operates from the northern part of the area and includes a number of other buildings for operational purposes including high height single storey warehouse buildings and chimneys. Despite the Victorian building, the area is now dominated by development from the 1950s onwards.

The building shown in the photo above right is part of a smaller row of identical individual buildings. The grey and blue cladding adds some colour where the landscaping is minimal

Larkfield Trading Estate is located along the north eastern edge of Leybourne Lakes. It has panoramic views of the lake and the residential development beyond. It provides a backdrop to the Trading Estate and a visual break between the residential and commercial areas.



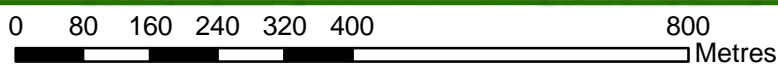
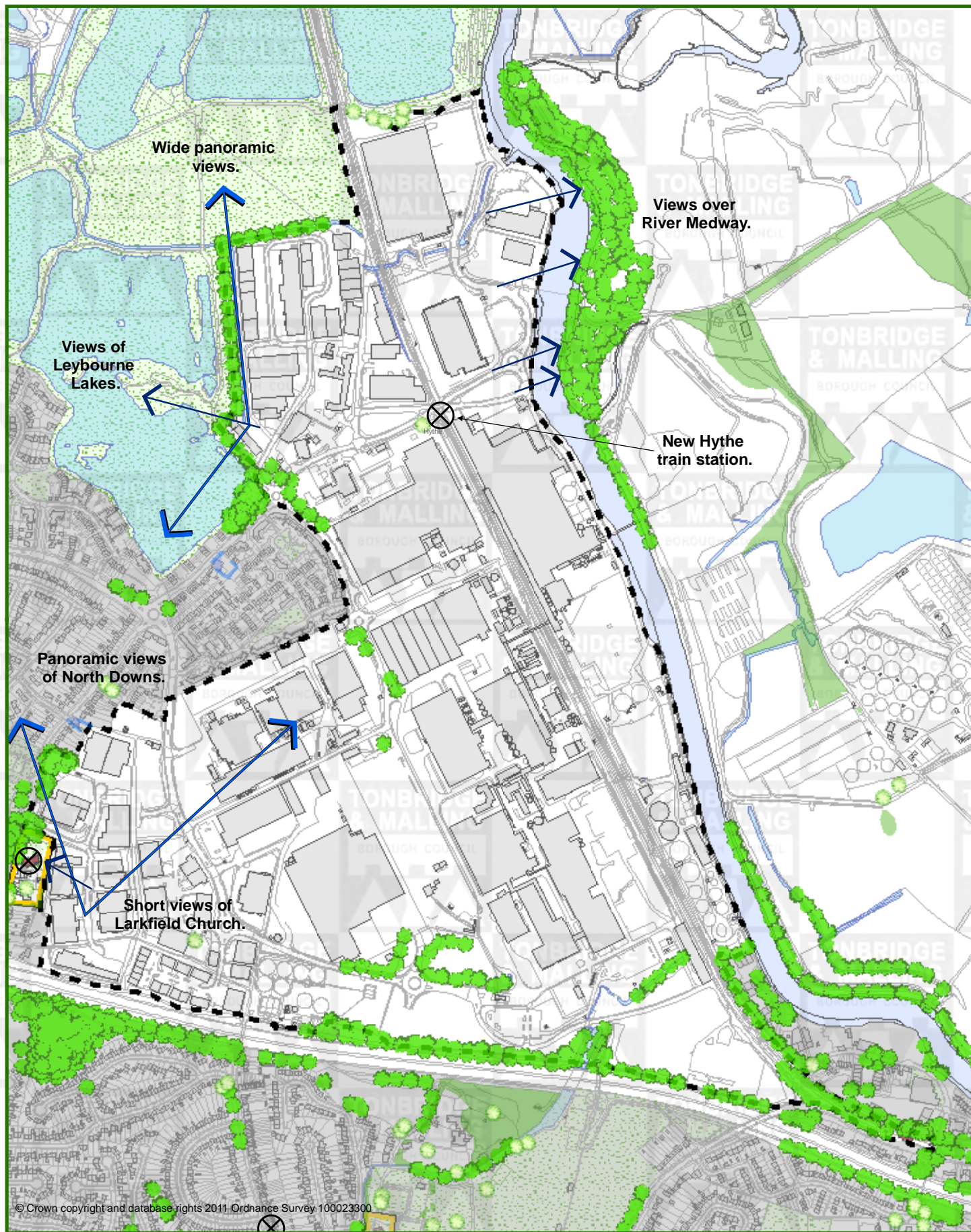
LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
Age of buildings	Late Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Large individual buildings or groups of linked units
Main uses	Industrial premises, offices and trade counter retailing.
Building heights	1 -2 storeys although some single storey building heights are equivalent to 4 storeys or more
Prominent building materials	Brick, steel and glass in the modern buildings and red brick in Victorian buildings
Predominant boundary treatments	Metal fences and landscaped verges
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Variety in building heights, scale and materials creates some visual interest and provides some local markers where the buildings are visible through the boundary treatments
- Landscaped verges provide greenery that screens otherwise plain buildings, provides visual interest and softens the otherwise hard landscape
- Aylesford Newspaper Print chimneys provide a local landmark
- Views over Leybourne Lakes from the Larkfield Trading Estate

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Some vacant and/or derelict premises detract from the area
- General lack of formal landscaping in some areas creates a hard uninviting environment
- Some buildings are undistinguished with no local references



Ref O1

Title New Hythe

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal



O2 – QUARRY WOOD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Comprising: Burnt Ash Road, Dukes Walk, Lake Road, Mills Road and Wood Close.

Quarry Wood Industrial Estate is located behind the South Aylesford Retail Park off the A20 in the parish of Aylesford. Land levels vary providing a 'platform' level to the north of the character area that sits above the retail park. South of that platform, the levels drop dramatically, with a second tier of industrial and commercial premises located in the base of a dip with a high bund around the western and southern boundary of the character area. To the east, the levels rise gently upwards where a further commercial area sits.



The older part of the industrial estate is located to the east of the area and comprises large scale buildings with, little car parking, the focus being on operational parking for commercial vehicles, and little or no landscaping providing a hard and uninviting character.



In the north, the area is dominated by a number of high quality contemporary designed car showrooms that sit on the high level platform overlooking the retail park below with panoramic views over to the North Downs. These showrooms have modern, contemporary quality materials, landscaping and are of similar scale. As a result of their elevated position, they are more visible than the older stock set behind. The character area is surrounded by trees or land that is covered with shrubs and trees on all sides apart from the east where the boundary is not visible past the large buildings.

To the western part of the high level platform, there are a number of smaller two storey warehouse units with pitched roofs and some decorative design features such as brick arches over the main entrance doors and pillars in contrasting brick colour. Dedicated parking areas and the double yellow lines on the highway provide a tidy character, with the street trees softening the otherwise hard character and providing some further visual interest to the area.





The southern and south eastern section of the character area is set lower down on a level platform that is bounded on the southern and western side by a high tree and shrub lined bund. This is the most modern part of the area where building height varies between three storey office buildings and large multi-storey headquarter premises for warehouse and distribution purposes. Landscaping is of a high quality, with more varied species of plants, softening the character and providing colour and variety against the open vertical metal fences.

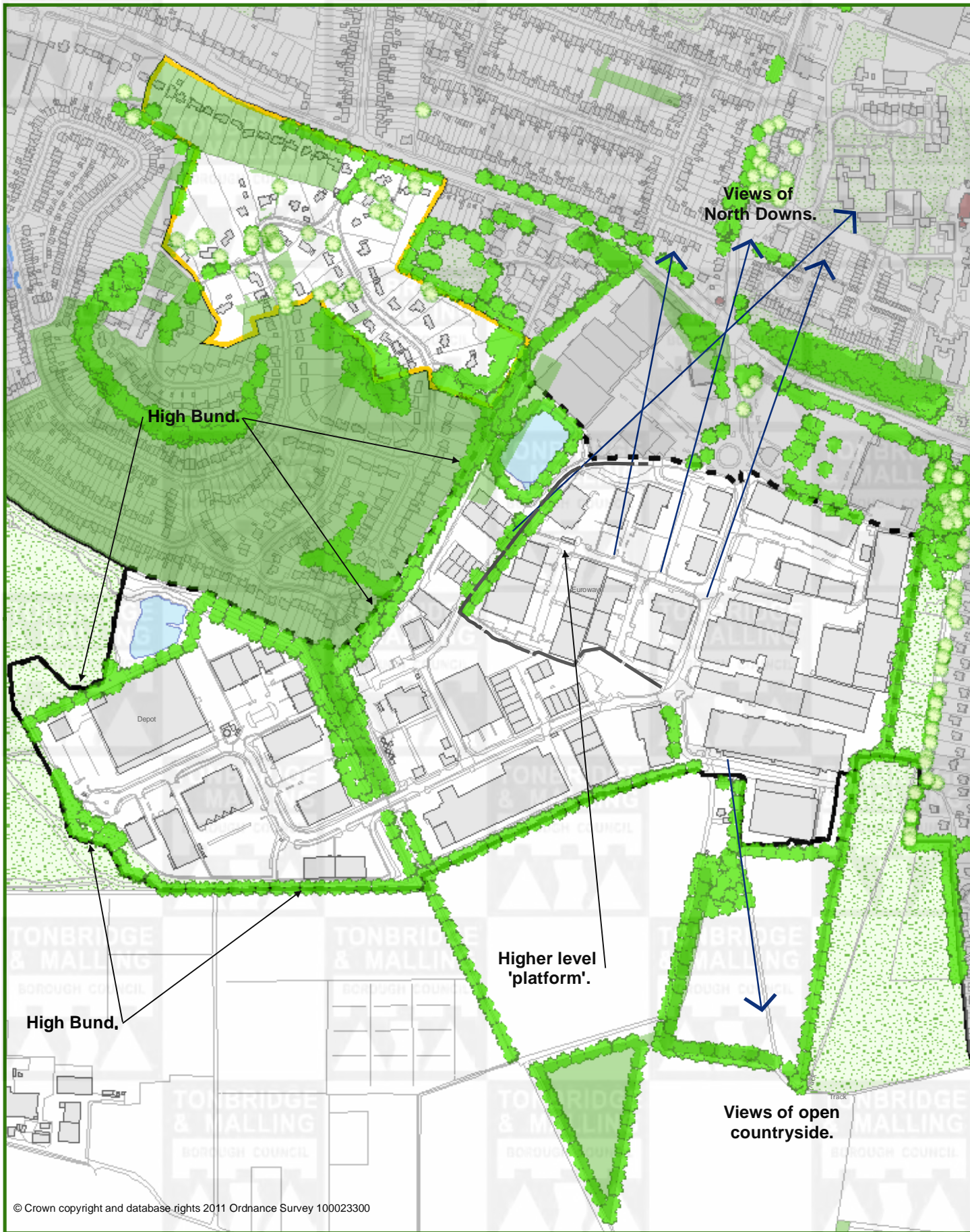
LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	
Age of buildings	1950s to present day
Type of buildings	Large individual buildings or groups of linked units
Main uses	Industrial premises, offices, retail warehouses and car showrooms.
Building heights	2 -4 storeys although some single storey building heights are equivalent to several storeys
Prominent building materials	Steel, glass and brick
Predominant boundary treatments	Metal fences and landscaped verges
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Panoramic views of the North Downs
- Landscaped verges, street trees, landscaped business premises and shrub/tree lined bund create a green character and soften the otherwise hard character of the area
- Despite some old and outmoded buildings, the general design quality of the buildings is high with quality contemporary materials, varied and plentiful, well managed landscaping and spacious layouts and good visibility from the public domain providing local reference points

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- Some older undistinguished buildings with no local reference in contrast to the newer building that provide local reference points
- General lack of landscaping in some areas creates a hard uninviting environment



O3 – PRESTON HALL (NORTH)

Comprising: Preston Hall (north)

A complex of bulky single storey commercial buildings on the site of the former Preston Hall Farm. The site adjoins the M20 to the north.



The 1-2 storey buildings are screened from Hall Road by a fence, ragstone wall and tall trees. The southern part of the site comprises buildings used by the Royal British Legion. The building closest to Hall Road overlooks a grassed open space which is enclosed by trees. The site is neat and unobtrusive. The building is constructed of buff brick with slightly pitched roofs and white casement windows and is accessed via paved paths. There are long views of the North Downs from the southern edge of the area and short views eastwards of trees.

The northern part of the site is more informal and comprises open storage and workshops. The M20 is immediately to the north, elevated above the commercial buildings and there is considerable road noise. The site has little landscaping but the units are set back from Hall Road and have no harmful impact on it. It is highly visible from the M20.

A cottage with ragstone ground floor and half timbered upper storey is hemmed in by the motorway and industrial units, looking incongruous in its setting.



LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

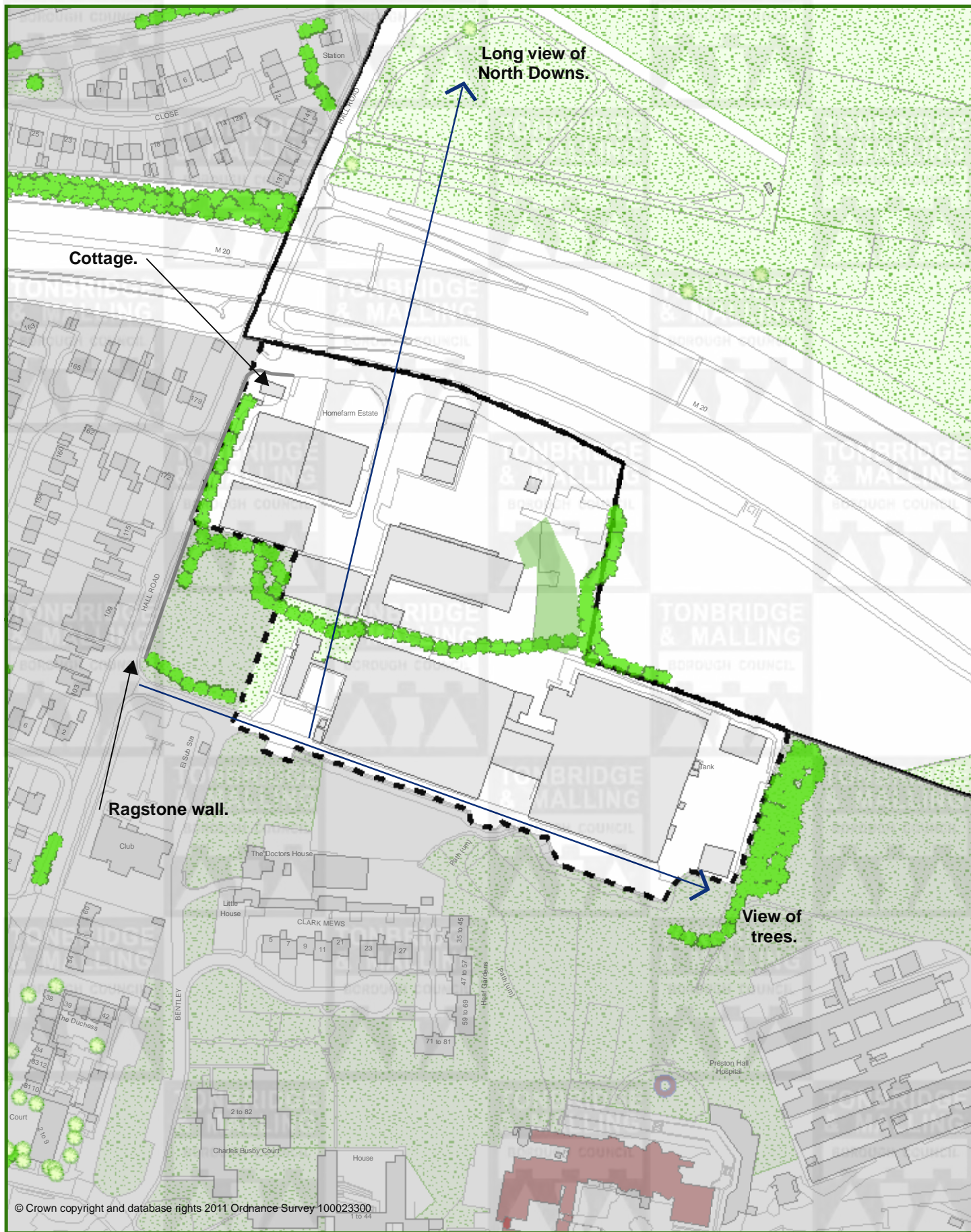
Age of buildings	1950s onwards
Type of buildings	Large individual buildings
Main uses	Industrial, warehouse and manufacturing
Building heights	Double height single storey
Prominent building materials	Steel and brick
Predominant boundary treatments	None
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- The site is low lying and set back from the road, having little visual impact on the surrounding residential areas
- Tree belts, ragstone wall and fencing screens the industrial units from Hall Road and trees screen the site from the hospital
- The Royal British Legion buildings are well maintained, landscaped and unobtrusive
- There are views of the North Downs and eastwards towards trees

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- The northern part of the site adjoins the M20 motorway resulting in intrusion from traffic noise and movement



0 20 40 60 80 100 200 Metres

Ref O3

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title Preston Hall (North)



O4 – STATION ROAD (NORTH)

Comprising: Station Road (north side)

This is a level site between the railway line to the north and Station Road to the south. The entrance is at the junction with Hall Road. The building comprises one large single storey warehouse/depot unit and various ancillary buildings. The site appears to be in a variety of temporary uses. It is identified in the Development Plan as being suitable for housing redevelopment



The long side elevation of the single storey building is parallel to Station Road. It has a utilitarian appearance with a ridged grey roof above brown walls. The site is enclosed by a wire fence and is partially screened by trees. It is screened from the railway by trees on the north side. The area around the depot is hard surfaced with poorly maintained concrete and signage by the entrance contributes to a cluttered streetscape. The whole site has a neglected appearance and detracts from the character of the area.

LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

Age of buildings	1950s onwards
Type of buildings	Large individual building
Main uses	Industrial and warehouse
Building heights	Double height single storey
Prominent building materials	Brick
Predominant boundary treatments	None
Open spaces	None

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

- Trees partially screen the site

Negative Features Worthy of Enhancement

- This large utilitarian building has no distinguishing features and has a long elevation visible from Station Road
- The surfacing and fencing is poor quality
- The site is only partially screened by trees
- The signage clutters the townscape



Trees partially screen the site from station road.

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0 50 100 150 200 250 500 Metres

Ref O4

Medway Gap Character Area Appraisal

Title Station Road (North)



9 Design Guidance

New development of whatever scale cannot be viewed in isolation. The design of all new development should take into account the character of the building or site on which it is situated and the surroundings (the locally distinctive contextual features). This will help ensure that the design of new buildings evolves, where appropriate, from the qualities that make many parts of the Medway Gap distinctive. It is important that new development creates a place that is valued and well related to local character. Where such distinctiveness is present and is ignored, new development can be bland, lose reference to essential local features and, as a result, erode local character and distinctiveness.

Whilst some minor development is permitted by Parliament without the need for a planning application (usually known as “permitted development”) home owners and developers who are considering such alterations should refer to the distinctive characteristics of their area as described in this SPD when considering even minor development to ensure an acceptable result. The Council’s planning staff will also use the SPD as a basis for giving advice to those who intend to exercise permitted development rights. Although the Council will not be in a position to *require* these good design principles in such cases, it will nevertheless encourage their use where possible.

There are four principles which the Council will apply in protecting, conserving and, where possible, enhancing the character and local distinctiveness of the area. The principles are consistent with, and supplement, the policies in the Core Strategy and the Managing Development and the Environment DPD. In applying these principles, regard must also be paid to the need to achieve sustainably designed properties that, where practicable, take advantage of local site conditions and incorporate materials, technologies and planting that help to reduce their energy requirements and therefore lower their carbon footprint. This is a key priority of the Council as well as being an objective of the Managing Development and the Environment DPD. Providing this objective is addressed early in the design process in a sensitive way that respects the local character as identified in the Character Area Appraisals, there is no reason why it should not be effectively delivered without compromising the principles set out below:

Where validation provisions require it proposals should be accompanied by a design and access statement that explains how the proposal:

- **respects the locally distinctive positive features of the character area identified in the SPD. The positive features of an area such as building and roof lines, scale, massing, design characteristics, boundary treatments, landscape and layout should normally be reinforced by the proposal. Using local historic details and materials will also reinforce the character and local distinctiveness of the area.**
- **wherever possible, improves the character and design quality of the character area, and thus the town of Tonbridge, by reinstating or reinforcing locally distinctive positive features of the character area identified in the SPD and/or replacing, screening or otherwise mitigating negative features worthy of enhancement, or**
- **creates a new local character in areas where there are few locally distinctive positive features or on more extensive sites where there is a greater opportunity to create a new local character.**

Proposals may come forward that can, exceptionally justify a departure from the local context. Such proposals will need to establish clear and overriding planning and design justification if they are to prove acceptable.

Local analysis and consultation has been used to interpret these design principles and develop appropriate design guidance for assessing development proposals within each character area. This is set out below.

Respecting the locally distinctive positive features of the character areas identified in the SPD.

In order to respect the locally distinctive positive features of a character area, development will be expected to:

(1) Protect or enhance the setting of the conservation areas and listed buildings

The Medway Gap contains four Conservation Areas; Larkfield Church; Ditton; Holt Wood and Cobdown Farm. In addition the undulating topography gives views across a further three Conservation Areas; Aylesford; Bradbourne and Clare Park & Blacklands which lay adjacent to the Medway Gap boundary. Given that some character areas are built on higher ground set above the Conservation Areas, the impact of development within them could have greater impact. It is therefore important that any development in such areas and in Character Areas immediately adjacent to Conservation Areas preserves or enhances their character.

There are a number of listed buildings situated within the character areas of the Medway Gap. Listed building controls apply to all works affecting a Listed Building. The design of new buildings in proximity to historic buildings also needs very careful consideration since the setting of a listed building is often an essential part of its character, especially if a garden or grounds have been laid out to complement its design or function. An important aspect of the design process in such situations will be to balance the impact on both the listed building and the character area.

(2) Respect the scale, height, form, alignment, space, layout and density, materials and character of the area

For each character area there are identified locally distinctive contextual features and positive features which new development should respect. In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, height and alignment of the buildings and the rhythms formed, for example, by chimneys, porches, brick details and fenestration and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors and boundary treatment.

At the large scale, the **height and form** of buildings are often relatively uniform within character areas, although some variation may be evident. Significant differences in height may not respect the local context. Roofscape patterns are often repeated through a street, bringing unity or a rhythm of repeated shapes (hipped or half-hipped roofs, gable ends facing the road, or unified, simple roof lines which front the street with no projections such as dormer windows). The unity or rhythm of rooflines should preferably not be compromised by inappropriate roof extensions.

In relation to **alignment** of the buildings, in some instances regular building lines are established. For example, groups of detached properties set back along a common building line behind mature landscaped gardens giving a spacious, verdant character. In other clusters, properties are situated on a straight building line with a minimal set back from the street providing a tight knit urban form. A distinctive unity is retained. It is important that new buildings respect the alignment of buildings in order to fit well within the local context. Where buildings are set back a consistent distance from the street along

a common building line the visual integrity of a whole street should not be compromised by porches or front extensions.

These considerations apply to the front building line and also to the width of the development within the plot and the **space** that exists between and around buildings. There should be sufficient width within a plot to locate the building(s) and provide adequate separation between them in order to reflect the general spacing characteristics of an area. There are considerable pressures to maximise the use of sites but this should not be to the detriment or erosion of the distinctive character of the area.

Many of the character areas possess a strong unified palette of **materials**. For example, the brown brick, white casement windows and brown tiled roofs of the Early Public Housing at Brooklands Road, or the red/brown brick terraces, white casement windows and white pitched porch canopies of the compact cul-de-sac of Brampton Field. The choice and combination of materials is crucial to the success of a scheme. In creating a locally distinctive environment, the number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum. New buildings, or extensions, should be constructed of materials which respect those used in the character area within which they are proposed.

A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful **detailing** eg brick detailing such as arches above windows and doors, string courses, bay windows, decorative tile patterns and coloured weatherboarding. The following typologies of character areas contain significant examples of original and valuable detailing:

- Parts of the Main Road Frontage along the A20
- 19th Century cottages of Bell Lane
- Early 1920's public housing, and
- 1930's semi-detached housing

New buildings, or extensions, should, where appropriate, apply local detailing which reinforces the character of the area within which they are proposed.

Careful consideration should also be given to ensuring that good quality traditional detailing on buildings is retained. Where these have been removed, efforts should be made to restore them. Replacement doors, windows and roofs should closely match the design and materials of the original features. Where inappropriate new windows, doors and roofs are to be replaced, the opportunity should be taken to put back in the original style.

The principles set out above should drive the design process in the vast majority of cases. However, they should not necessarily be regarded as a deterrent to the creation of imaginative high quality contemporary designs using appropriate contemporary materials in the right setting.

(3) Retain traditional boundary treatment and natural features

Ragstone and brick walls, hedges, fences and mature trees are prevalent features in different character areas. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and help reinforce the character of an area. Areas can be distinctive by virtue of their well-treed appearance. Development should not erode such features through the loss of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment.

Parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the street enclosure, a loss of defensible space around the building and the link to the character of the area. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosure should be reinstated. Where the opportunity arises, new boundaries should use the prevailing materials and designs in the character area. So far as possible, some space should be allowed for planting or other features to soften the effect of parked vehicles upon the street scene.

(4) Protect local landmarks

The Medway Gap contains a number of landmark buildings which help give historic and visual reference points, eg the 14th century Wealden Hall, assist legibility of the area and help prevent a monotonous appearance. Such buildings can sometimes be somewhat unusual features in a particular character area. There are a number of local landmark buildings identified within the character areas shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps. These buildings are important in the street scene and, where appropriate in the context of the development proposed, there will be a strong presumption that they will be retained and incorporated in any new development. Important views of these buildings from the surrounding character areas are identified in this SPD (see Guidance Note (6) below)

5) Protect and Enhance Landscape Features

Some character areas such as the clustered culs-de-sac in Leybourne have significant areas of public open space (shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps) as an integral part of their character. Important open spaces may already be protected for their recreational value by other policies in the LDF but they should also be retained, and their tranquil character respected, because of their importance to the amenity and character of the area.

The appraisal also identifies a number of tree belts which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps) some of which may form an edge to the character area (sometimes representing an original field boundary), and some form a backdrop to development or act as a visual amenity (sometimes in an area where the buildings themselves may have little distinctive character). These features perform an important function within a character area(s) and should be protected and, so far as possible, retained in any new development.

There are five Areas of Landscape Significance which provide a landscape framework within the Medway Gap. Within these areas, the landscape is the dominant feature. Development should not erode the character of these areas which are valuable in their own right but also in providing an extensive landscape framework to a number of surrounding character areas.

There is one character area (Cobdown) where landscape dominates the buildings, creating a verdant, almost rural character. Mature trees rather than buildings define the public and private space particularly along the southern boundary where a belt of tall specimen trees screens the properties from view from adjoining character areas.

The remnant woodland, mature trees, both individual specimens and clusters, as well as hedges strengthen the verdant character of many areas and, as such should be retained and appropriately managed. Development should not erode these unique features through the loss of trees which are important to local character.

6) Protect views of the open countryside and across the area

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the North Downs, Medway Valley and Oaken Wood from some of the character

areas (shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps). These views are important to the character of the area and should not be lost through future development.

A number of long distance views from a range of high points extend across the area. Some built up areas are visible from a number of vantage points where views intersect. Development within these most visible areas becomes strategically important. There will be a presumption against development that unacceptably intrudes into these important views or competes with recognised landmarks.

7) Respect the quiet residential character

The cul de sac layout with no through traffic; distance from the main roads; proximity of the countryside and almost exclusively residential development has resulted in a quiet residential character within some of the Medway Gap, eg southern parts of Ditton and central areas of Leybourne. This character should not be adversely affected by new development.

8) Improve the character and design quality of a character area, and as a result the Medway Gap area

(a) Residential areas

Many parts of the area are likely to remain largely unchanged by substantial redevelopment over time but there may be opportunities for new development. For example, isolated properties or in some cases garage courts may be replaced (subject to there being satisfactory alternative parking provision). In such cases, the scale and form of the surrounding development as well as the locally distinctive positive features should be respected.



In some cases there may be opportunities to enhance the area through the creation of individual buildings of interest or additional landscape features. Landmark buildings can lift a design from the ordinary and may be justified on the basis of a sound urban design appraisal of their context and a perceived environmental uplift to the quality of the area.

In designing new development a high standard of intrinsic design quality is required. Interesting detailing such as created by brick patterning and the shape and pattern of roofs, windows and doors can enhance a design whether for new build or alteration to an existing building which can add to the character and distinctiveness of an area.



In designing new development such as replacing buildings which detract from the character of the area, or other opportunities, a high quality, visually attractive design is required. Detailing was not a feature of modern designs in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s to the detriment of the character of buildings and the wider housing estates in which they were situated. More recently, detailing such as brick patterning and the shape and pattern of windows and doors is being added to designs, and this will be encouraged, firstly when making an alteration to

such a building and secondly where new buildings are erected to add to the character and distinctiveness of an area.



Over-generous road space should be avoided and streets should be defined by a coherent and well structured layout using different road widths which create a hierarchy of spaces with the buildings providing a strong sense of enclosure where the setting demands it (as in the example shown left). However, it would be inappropriate to seek to impose such a design solution in every case and where this would be inappropriate to the character of the area. (e.g. areas of open plan housing).



There is likely to be a demand to retrofit some buildings, not built to current energy efficiency standards, with new cladding, solar panels and added insulation (such as the example shown above). Whilst it would be desirable to minimise the impact of such changes on buildings of quality, it may be a virtue to use such improvements to uplift undistinguished, standardised architecture and add a new distinctiveness to an area. Likewise, new development built to a high sustainable standard can achieve similar benefits, providing the principles of passive design are addressed sensitively at the conception stage of the scheme having regard to the character of the area.

(b) Commercial Areas

The industrial and commercial buildings in the Medway Gap are found in the specific commercial areas in industrial estates separate to the residential parts of the area. Within these employment areas, the variety of building size, materials and quality is vast, ranging from small workshops to the large premises of global companies in prestigious, high quality buildings.



Over time, some of the stock has been refurbished or rebuilt to provide a higher quality and more diverse commercial and industrial premises offer. Where there are opportunities for new development in this area, high quality designs, materials and landscaping should be used in order to uplift the quality of the commercial areas. In appropriate locations such as at road junctions, landmark buildings may be appropriate in adding interest and legibility to the Character Area. The use of high quality materials would help to firmly establish the character and identity of place, in terms of both the public realm of streets and the built form of buildings and structures.

The employment areas are largely on the periphery of the urban confines and on the northern edge of the M20. In order that these areas do not intrude visually on the open countryside beyond and on the network of roads, landscape belts are already in place along the strategic routes and act as a buffer to the countryside. This practice should be continued and enhanced where opportunities exist.

(c) Retail Areas

Smaller retail areas such as Martin Square have been developed as an integral part of the surrounding residential area. This has resulted in the Square sharing several design features and materials with the neighbouring houses which has created a strong sense of place. Whilst the design of Martin Square means that new development opportunities are very limited, it is important that any proposals that do come forward respect the close relationship in terms of design principles, materials and features, between the retail area and the residential properties that surround it.

Lunsford Park and South Aylesford Retail Park, are purpose built for retail with the buildings on the edge of the character area set around a central level car parking area. Due to modern, contemporary quality shopfronts and landscaped strips within the centre, the hard landscape of the car park is softened and this should be maintained as should the tree lined boundaries and the backdrop of trees.

9) Reinstate or reinforce positive features



Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of an area. This could mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and boundary hedges.

There are examples where open frontages are created to the road leaving no definition of the space, reducing security and in many cases a loss of pride in the maintenance of the space. Where appropriate to the character of an area, private space should be defined by a clear boundary. Front boundaries should be retained or restored to the prevailing feature in the character area.



10) Provide streetscape enhancements

Opportunity should be taken as part of development proposals to ameliorate the negative features of an area identified in the Character Area Appraisals. Reduction in the street clutter of signs or improvements to street furniture or footway/road surfaces, would contribute to improving the character of the area.

11) Noise

The main generator of noise in the Medway Gap is traffic on the motorway and the busier routes of the A20 London Road, New Hythe Lane and Station Road. The level of traffic noise are not matters that can be addressed by this SPD or in most cases by the Borough Council. However, where new development is proposed that might generate noise which could adversely affect the character of an area then the LDF contains a policy that aims to address the matter. However, the Council is not normally able to control noise disturbance during the construction period under planning legislation.

Appendix 1

By Design – Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR 2000)

The guide is intended as a companion to Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) [and subsequent Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)] and aims to encourage better design and to stimulate thinking about urban design.

The guide states that understanding the local context should be the prelude to drawing up the planning 'toolkit'.

A range of techniques is available, but the guide states that carrying out an appraisal is more important than the specific technique used and a simple assessment is better than none. The guide provides pointers to understanding an area in terms of its urban design.

The guide sets out a series of checklists to act as a guide to the assessment of an area. They are not meant to be followed slavishly. Understanding the local context does not require every item on the checklists to be examined on every occasion and in every place or in the same depth. The checklists provide pointers to understanding an area in terms of its urban design and the following elements have been particularly relevant to the appraisal of the Medway Gap.

Character

A place with its own identity

Appraisals can include assessments of:

- the origins and development of the topography of the area, including surviving elements of historic street patterns, plot subdivisions, boundary treatments and the relationships between buildings and spaces;
- the architecture and historic quality, character and coherence of buildings, both listed and unlisted, and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area;
- the character and hierarchy of spaces and their townscape quality;
- prevalent and historic building materials;
- the contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces, trees, hedges and other cultivated elements;
- the area's prevailing (or former) uses, plan forms and building types;
- the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside, including significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas;
- features which have been lost, or which intrude on or detract from the character of the area.

Continuity of building frontages and enclosure of public spaces

A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished

Techniques include identifying and mapping:

- gap sites and abnormal setbacks which interrupt the common building line of the street;
- instances where the backs of buildings are exposed to public view and access (as in the case of back gardens on to roads, alleys and public spaces);
- active and dead frontages at ground floor level: positive factors such as entrances, shopfronts and windows; and negative factors such as long blank facades and high boundary walls, and service entrances and yards;
- active and dead frontages at upper floors: positive factors such as windows of habitable rooms overlooking public space; and negative factors such as blank gable walls and unused space over shops;
- places where buildings meet the public realm: boundary treatments such as gates, railings, fences and boundary walls; front gardens and in-curtilage parking; and servicing;
- spatial enclosure: the relationship between the heights of buildings and the spaces they define;
- planting (such as trees and hedges), natural features, land form, and retaining walls which define and enclose blocks and spaces.

Quality of the public realm

A place with attractive and successful outdoors

Public realm audits can include assessments of:

- hard landscaping (paving materials, kerbs, walls, steps and ramps);
- planting (trees, planters, grassed areas, flowers and borders);
- street furniture (seats, bins, bollards and railings);
- lighting (pavement, pedestrian, highway, security, building and feature);
- shopfronts (thresholds, glazing, stall risers, signs, banners and shutters).
- advertisements (hoardings, kiosks and banners);
- traffic and highways installations (including highway markings, traffic signals and control boxes);
- public space use and management (informal use as well as formal, events, markets, graffiti removal, litter collection and street cleansing).

Legibility

A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand

Appraisals of:

- gateways and points of transition (at main entry points, between different areas and at transitions between different uses);
- nodes (important junctions and points of interaction);
- landmarks and features (important buildings, corners);
- views and vistas (seen from within the area and from the outside);
- edges, seams and barriers (including the boundaries between different zones and areas, and streets which integrate or sever).

Glossary

Amenity Green Space	Informal recreational open space most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas, other incidental landscaped areas including private greenspace that has visual or other value, even if no physical public access is possible.
Arcadian	Areas where the landscape dominates the buildings, creating a verdant almost rural character. Mature trees rather than buildings contain the public space.
Areas of Landscape Significance	Substantial areas of landscaping which provide an extensive landscape framework.
Balustrade	Series of short posts supporting a handrail.
Bargeboards	Exterior visible board placed against the incline of the gable roof.
Bond	The type of bond is the pattern in which bricks are laid.
Cladding	External covering or skin applied to a structure usually timber or tile.
Cohesive Character	Areas that share common features which combine to create a unified character.
Conservation Area	An area of special architectural and/or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Coping or Coping Stone	Protective course of masonry or brickwork capping a wall.
Core Strategy	The main Development Plan Document which sets out the long-term spatial vision for the Borough and the main strategic policies and proposals to deliver that strategy.
Course	Continuous layer of brick or stone, etc in a wall.
Dentil Course	The alternation of projecting brick headers or stone blocks along cornices or string courses at regular intervals.
Development Plan Document (DPD)	A document containing planning policies guiding the spatial development of the Borough. The <i>Local Development Framework</i> comprises a set of DPDs including the Core Strategy, the Development Land Allocations DPD, Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan and the Managing Development and the Environment DPD. The policies in DPDs can be amplified by <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> .
Eaves	Underpart of a sloping roof overhanging a wall.

Façade	The face of a building (generally the front).
Fenestration	The arrangement of windows in a façade.
Flat Porch Canopies	Small flat roofed opening above the principal entrance.
Frontages	The full length of a plot of land or a building measured alongside the road onto which the plot or building fronts.
Gable	The triangular upper portion of a wall at the end of a pitched roof
Header	The short side of a brick laid so that it appears on the face of the wall
Jettied Upper Storey	Upper storey of a building that projects out above the lower storey.
Lintel	Horizontal beam or stone bridging an opening, usually above a window or door.
Local Development Documents (LDD)	The collective term for the <i>Development Plan Documents</i> and <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> in the <i>Local Development Framework</i>
Local Development Framework (LDF)	A portfolio of <i>Local Development Documents</i> forming the planning framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy.
Managing Development and the Environment DPD	The <i>Development Plan Document</i> that sets out policies and proposals to manage development and protect the environment of the Borough.
Massing	The overall volume of a building.
Metropolitan Green Belt	Defined area of open countryside where there is a strong presumption against inappropriate development.
Panel Fence	Fence consisting of metal or wooden vertical panels.
Panoramic	Wide view of a surrounding area.
Parapets	Low wall for protection at any sudden drop. Also used to conceal a roof.
Pebble Dash	Render of cement mortar and pebbles.
Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1)	Document that sets out the Government's national planning policies and guidance on creating sustainable communities.
Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)	Document that sets out the Government's national planning policies and guidance on Housing.

Quoins	Dressed stones at the corners of a building. Sometimes all the stones are of the same size; more often they are alternately large and small.
Render	A coat of exterior cement or plaster applied to a masonry wall.
Ribbon Development	Development one property deep that strings along a road.
Roof - Cat Slide	A pitched roof, one side of which is much longer than the other.
Roof – Half-Hipped	A roof which has a half gable with the upper ends of the roof being sloped rather than vertical.
Roof - Hipped	A roof which has sloped rather than vertical <i>gable</i> ends.
Roof - Monopitch	A roof which slopes in one direction only.
Roof - Pitched	Double pitched roof with vertical <i>gable</i> ends.
Rural Service Centres	Larger villages in the Borough that provide a range of shops, services and facilities.
Rusticated	A bold textured look, often by bevelling the edges of brick, stonework or render to form deep-set joints while leaving the central face rough-hewn or carved with various pointed or channelled patterns.
Sill	Horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door frame.
Soffit	underside of an arch or <i>lintel</i> , etc.
Streetscape	the appearance of the entire street.
Stringcourse	Horizontal brick or stone course or moulding projecting from the surface of a wall often using a different coloured material and sometimes patterned.
Stucco	A durable finish for exterior walls, usually composed of cement, sand, and lime, and applied while wet.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	A document that sets out further detail on certain policies in <i>Development Plan Documents</i> .
Sustainable Development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Tile - Hung	Tiles that are hung on the façade of a building.
Tile - Kent Peg	Tiles traditionally made from clay and "pegged" onto the roof or fascia and overlap each other.
Tile - Ridge	A tile that is bent in cross section; used to cover the ridge of a roof.
Tile - Scalloped	Tiles that have curved edges on the bottom side.

Tile - Pantile	Roof tile of 'S'-shaped section.
Tree Preservation Order (TPO)	Special protection afforded to individual trees and groups of trees that seek to retain and protect them.
Verdant	Green with vegetation.
Vernacular	Methods of construction which use locally available resources and traditions to address local needs and circumstances. Vernacular architecture tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmental, cultural and historical context in which it exist.
Vista	A short view, often through an avenue of trees or row of buildings, etc. normally terminated by a building or group of trees, etc
Weatherboarding	Wall cladding of overlapping horizontal boards.
Window - Bay	Three-sided window of one of more storeys that projects from the face of a building.
Window - Bow	Curved window of one of more storeys projecting from the face of a building.
Window – Canted Bay	Three-sided window of one of more storeys projecting from the face of a building with angled sides.
Window - Casement	Side hinged window.
Window - Dormer	Window placed vertically in the sloping plane of a roof with a roof of its own.
Window - Glazing Bars	Wooden, sometimes metal, bars that separate and support window panes.
Window - Leaded	Small glass panels, often diamond shaped, joined by lead strips.
Window - Mullion	Vertical post or upright dividing a window into two or more window panes.
Window - Oriel	Window of one of more storeys projecting from the face of a building resting on corbels or brackets and starting above ground level.
Window - Sash	A window with sashes sliding glazed frames running in vertical grooves.
Window - Transom	Horizontal bar across the openings of a window dividing it into two or more window panes.

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