

# HILDENBOROUGH CONSERVATION AREA



## Introduction

The objective of the Hildenborough Conservation Area Appraisal is to analyse and record the special character of the Conservation Area, which was originally designated in December 1990. Following a re-assessment of the conservation area boundary, the Borough Council proposes to update it to include new areas and exclude others. The appraisal covers the area within the revised Conservation Area boundary and provides further details to assist with the interpretation and use of planning policies. It will help guide the Council in making planning decisions on planning applications and to this end will be adopted for development control purposes.

It is intended that this appraisal will inform and influence the activities of the Council and other bodies (e.g. Kent County Council and other statutory agencies), where these impact on the Conservation Area. It will also assist in the identification of any programmes of action that are considered appropriate by these bodies, subject, of course, to financial limitations and other priorities they may have.

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



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

## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

## ***Location, Setting and Physical Form***

Hildenborough is situated to the north west of Tonbridge about 8 km north of Tunbridge Wells, 5 km south-east of Sevenoaks and 22 km south-west of Maidstone. Originally a rural area of manors, farms and clusters of cottages, the village has grown in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to form an elongated settlement extending over 2 km along the London Road from the 19<sup>th</sup> century village centre in the north west, to the Tonbridge boundary in the south east (see Map1).

The traditional village centre lies on the north east side of the London Road and is physically separated from the more built up part of Hildenborough by a green gap and West Wood.

The village is situated on gently rising land on the northern edge of the Medway Valley. The wooded hills and ridges of the Low Weald rise sharply to the north and Sevenoaks Ridge can be seen from several points. However, views to the north and west are frequently obscured by the rising topography, tree belts and curving roads. The eastern section of the Tonbridge Road follows the contours with the land rising steeply on the northern side. From this vantage point, there are views to the south of the High Weald, and specifically Bidborough Ridge, across the low lying land of the Medway river floodplain. However, from the flatter ground south of the road, these long views are again frequently obscured by the belts of tall trees around the edges of the village.

Prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, much of the Tonbridge Road frontage was densely wooded. Areas of woodland and belts of trees remain, particularly around the northern part of the village where West Wood and the wooded estates of Sackville School and the Raphael centre provide a verdant setting for the conservation area. This landscape setting is important to the character of the area with the trees visible over the houses from a number of vantage points. Within the Conservation Area, tree belts and woodland run the length of the southern side of the London Road forming an edge to the Conservation Area and providing a verdant setting for the listed buildings along the Tonbridge Road. These trees can also be seen from Mount Pleasant and Moon Lane providing a green vista.

The Conservation Area covers the 19<sup>th</sup> century village centre from the Church to the Half Moon Public House on the London Road and extends to the north east to incorporate Mount Pleasant, Church Road, Half Moon Lane and part of Riding Lane. Map 2 shows the extent of the Conservation Area. For the purposes of this appraisal, the Conservation Area has been split into two sub-areas as follows:

***Sub-area A*** – This covers the London Road frontage, Church Road (south) and Riding Lane. It is a mixed use area and incorporates all the listed buildings in the Conservation Area.

***Sub-area B*** – This covers Church Road (north), Mount Pleasant and Moon Lane and is a residential area of late Victorian cottages and villas.



Map 1 - The location of Hildenborough

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## *Origins and Development of Hildenborough*

The name Hildenborough is derived from the Old English 'hilden' meaning a clearing at the bottom of a hill – in this case the steep hill up to Sevenoaks Ridge. 'Borough' is thought to have been added later, probably when Hilden Manor was built.

In the medieval period, the current parish of Hildenborough consisted of a number of separate manors and their domains, all first mentioned in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. These comprised Philpots Manor, Dachurst Manor which probably stood on land between Stocks - Green Road and Leigh Road, Nizels Manor to the north west, the Manor of Hollanden around Watts Cross and Hyldenn Manor to the south east. The Tonbridge Road was an important route from London to the coast and by the 17<sup>th</sup> century several public houses, including the Half Moon served the travellers by serving food and providing fresh horses before the steep climb into Sevenoaks. In 1709 the first turnpike was opened and by 1784 regular mail coaches were established. However, Hildenborough remained little more than a hamlet. Watts Cross and Hilden Green may be found on 18<sup>th</sup> Century maps but Hildenborough is not mentioned.

The majority of the buildings within the village today date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Oakhill House and Pembroke Lodge were constructed in 1804. At the junction of the Tonbridge Road with Leigh Road, The Flying Dutchman Public House was substantially remodelled in the 1840s and there is a cluster of villas and cottages around it which date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1844 the Church of St John was built designed by Ewan Christian. At that time Hildenborough was part of the Parish of Tonbridge and the new church was built to serve this scattered rural population. The Vicar of Leigh donated land and money for the provision of a church, parsonage house and schools.

The Church was built in gothic style in local materials – Kentish rag with sandstone dressings, tiled roof and shingled spire. It formed the focal point of the developing community.

The vicarage was built adjacent to the church in 1845 and the village primary school in Riding Lane was opened two years later.

The school was built before the Education Act of 1870 and paid for by voluntary contributions.

In 1866 two substantial High Victorian country houses and their lodges, both of which are now occupied by schools, were built in the vicinity of the church. Foxbush and Mountains were both designed by G Somers Clarke. Hollanden Park, now the Raphael Centre, off Coldharbour Lane, was also built in that year.

By the late 1860s, a small village centre had developed on the north side of Tonbridge Road between the church and Mount Pleasant.

By the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the network of streets which make up the Conservation Area today was complete. The village centre included houses, shops and local community facilities. There were various shops in Riding Lane including a grocers, butchers and sweet shop. A Drill Hall was constructed in 1902 (See Map 2).



Map 2: Hildenborough in 1906

Land in Mount Pleasant was donated for use as a village green in the 1920s and the recreation ground in Riding Lane, just north of the Conservation Area, was opened in 1932. The village had a fire station in Church Road and the local policeman lived at No. 180 Tonbridge Road. A post office occupied the site of the current One Stop shop. In 1933, Kemps Cottages in Riding Lane were condemned and the occupants moved to new Council housing in Church Road.

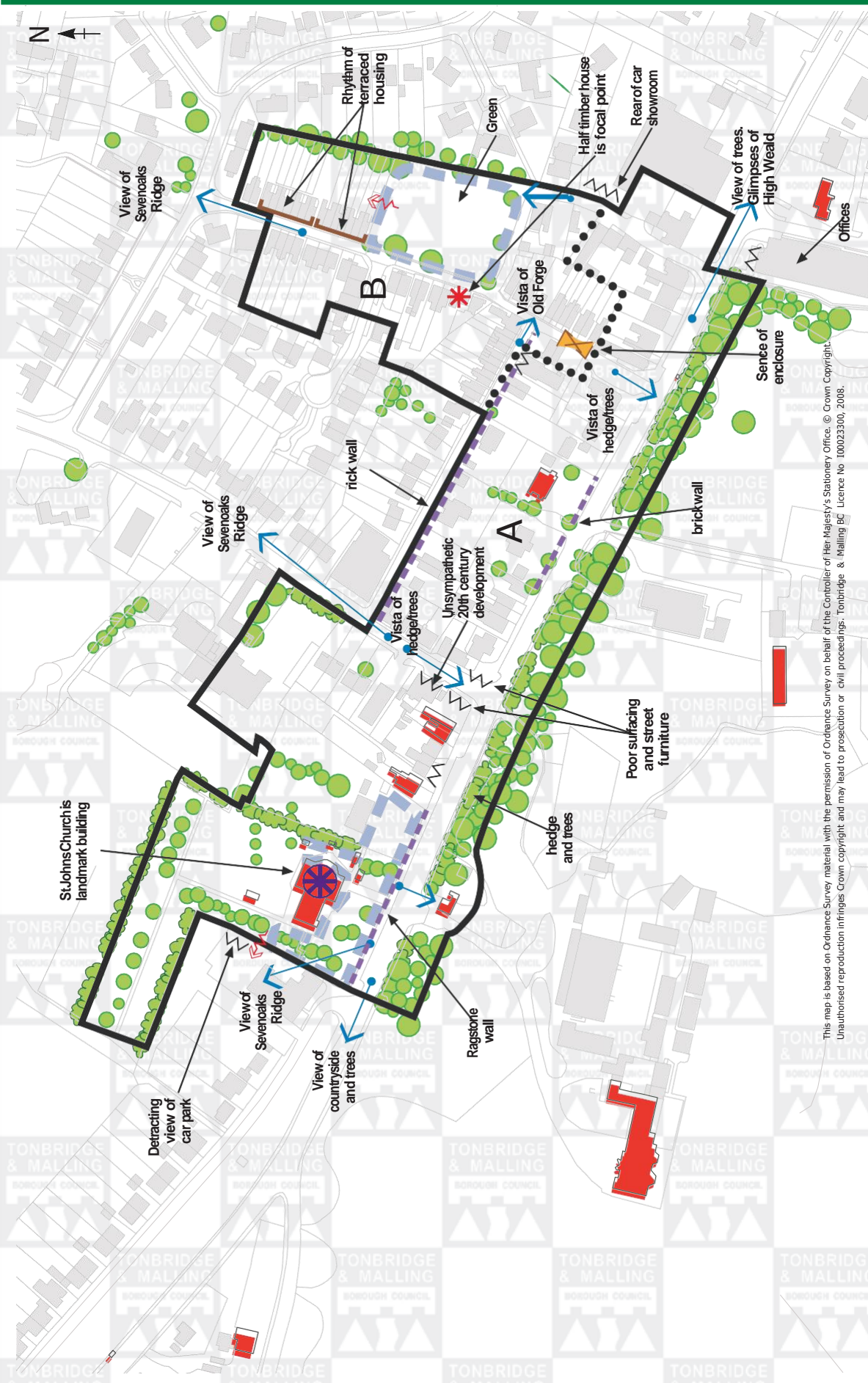
Since the 1930s, the Conservation Area has seen some infill and redevelopment along the Tonbridge Road and the construction of new community facilities including the village hall in 1971 (on the site of the former drill hall) and the expansion and partial redevelopment of the primary school on Riding Lane. In 1956 the Church Hall immediately to the west of the Conservation Area was constructed followed by a car park in 1957. The church yard was extended into part of the Glebe field in 1965. Most recently, Mount Pleasant Court, to the rear of Mount Pleasant and Riding Lane was developed for housing in 2004.














More recent development within the Conservation Area has been limited to small pockets of infill and brownfield development.

The countryside around the village is designated as Green Belt.

*The Hildenborough Parish Council website assisted with compiling the historic information.*

# HILDENBOROUGH TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS



-  Landmark
-  Focal point
-  Views/vista
-  Lack of enclosure
-  Important visual space
-  Visual pinch point
-  Rhythm - group of buildings with similar proportion or details
-  Visual intrusion
-  Important trees - acting as focal points etc.
-  Important hedges
-  Boundary treatment contributing to special character
-  Listed Building
-  Boundary of sub-areas

Map 3



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

Map 3 shows the key features of the Conservation Area and forms part of the townscape appraisal. It should be looked at in conjunction with this text.

### ***Special Character***

The Church is the principal landmark building of the Conservation Area in a prominent position by the London Road and the only one built of stone. The construction of the church, vicarage and school marked the beginning of the development of this part of the village as a community hub. The spire is visible from several points in the Conservation Area and beyond.

The Conservation Area is today principally late Victorian with some 20<sup>th</sup> century infill and redevelopment. The majority of buildings were constructed between 1845 and 1900.

The larger properties and public house face onto the London Road indicating its importance on the coaching route from London to the south coast. These houses are individually designed detached and semi detached properties in larger plots. The Half Moon Public House, although much altered over the years, has origins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century providing a link with pre-Victoria times.

The streets to the north of Tonbridge Road are narrow and lined with smaller terraced cottages and semi detached houses. There is a strong contrast between the bustling mixed use character of Tonbridge Road and the quiet residential streets behind.

The churchyard and small green off Mount Pleasant are important open spaces in the Conservation Area which has an otherwise more dense character. The green provides an attractive setting for the houses in Mount Pleasant and acts as a contrast to the surrounding tight knit development. The churchyard provides an oasis of rural tranquility beside the busy Tonbridge Road and an extensive green setting for the listed Church.

The hedge and band of trees lining the southern edge of the London Road are a prominent landscape feature enhancing the setting of the listed buildings and reinforcing the rural character of the village. These and the hedge bordering the churchyard form an edge to the Conservation Area.



### *Sub Area A – Tonbridge Road Frontage including Riding Lane and south side of Church Road.*

The sub area straddles both sides of the Tonbridge Road. Formerly the main route from London to the coast, the village is now bypassed by the A21, but the Tonbridge Road remains busy with constant traffic. It rises gently from east to west. The south western side of the road is lined by a hedge, trees and woodland which make a significant contribution to the character of this sub area. They enclose the space along Tonbridge Road, provide a strong edge to the conservation area and a pronounced linear feature. This verdant frontage closes vistas from Mount Pleasant and Ridings Lane and provides a green setting for the listed buildings fronting onto the Tonbridge Road. The north western end of the conservation area is particularly verdant with the wooded grounds and lodge of Sackville School on the south side of the road and the Church and vicarage of St John and the extensive churchyard with mature specimen trees on the other side.



View north west along the London Road from the Church of St John

At the south eastern end of the conservation area there is an abrupt change of character beyond the Half Moon Public House with a car showroom frontage immediately adjoining the boundary and modern office buildings on the south side of the road. This area is less verdant and forms a rather stark setting for the conservation area. To the south east there are views of the trees lining the Tonbridge Road and a glimpse of the Sevenoaks Ridge in the distance.

The buildings along the Tonbridge Road frontage are mid nineteenth century or later with the exception of the Half Moon public house which has much older origins.



Church of St John

The church of St John occupies a prominent position at the western end of the village. It was the first church designed by Ewan Christian and is thought to be one of his finest. Completed in 1844, it is constructed of roughly coursed ragstone with ashlar dressings. The 20<sup>th</sup> century shingled peg tiled roof has tile patterns. The tower to the south east has slightly tapering sides and a shingled spire. The church has an important collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century stained glass windows including one by Burne Jones. The importance of the church is symbolised by its being the only building in the Conservation Area that is constructed of stone and it is the principal landmark building in Hildenborough.

A low ragstone wall echoes the materials of the church and runs across the front of the churchyard, extending part way down the sides. It forms an important boundary feature to Tonbridge Road. The rest of the churchyard is enclosed by trees and hedges except on the northwest side where the church yard gives directly onto the 1950s church hall and parking area. A line of immature trees has been planted to mark the boundary but does not yet effectively enclose the space.



Churchyard



Unenclosed part of the churchyard  
with views of the car park



Lych gate with inscription

There are a number of attractive specimen trees which enhance the setting of the church and help enclose the space on Tonbridge Road, including traditional yews. The weathered gravestones and memorials, some of which are listed, and inscribed lych gate add to the historic character. With little development visible, the churchyard has a peaceful, rural character despite its proximity to the main road. To the rear there are views across the glebe field.



The Vicarage

The vicarage adjoins the church and is visually linked by the ragstone wall which runs across the frontage of both buildings. The scale of the building with steep gabled roof set in large landscaped grounds reflects the character of the church and churchyard, emphasising the historic low density quality of this part of the Conservation Area. The red/orange brick and decorative diamond and herringbone brickwork on the front elevation, stone finials, quoins

and window surrounds provide interesting detailing. The mature trees in the garden help enclose the space on Tonbridge Road and provide a verdant setting for the building.



On the opposite side of the road, the lodge at the entrance to Sackville School is a prominent feature in the street scene. An interesting example of late Victorian Vernacular Revival Style, the building was originally the lodge to a country house called Foxbush, now Sackville School, the single storey Grade II listed building with attic was built around 1866 and designed by G Somers Clarke. It is constructed in Flemish bond with tile hung gables decorated with bands of scalloped tiles, a peg-tile roof and brick stacks. The tall chimney stacks, jettied gable and pyramidal porch roof supported on timber posts are particular features. As a listed building, the lodge has group value with the main house with which it was originally associated. In terms of the Conservation Area, the former country house is not prominent from Tonbridge Road.



Lodge, Sackville School



Listed Victorian cottages, London Road.

Further down the London Road on the north side, two pairs of Grade II listed cottages date from around the 1840s. Constructed in Flemish brick bond the houses have slate hipped roofs and brick stacks. Numbers 192 and 190 were originally called Foxbush Cottages and are said to have housed workers from the Foxbush estate.



Hildenborough Primary School

Hildenborough Primary School is situated to the rear of the Vicarage in Riding Lane. Constructed in 1847 the school was designed by Ewan Christian, who also designed the church. Although considerably extended and modernised, the character of the original building has been retained and is included in

the Conservation Area. The wide, low single storey building has two storey gabled elevations at either side with black bargeboards, tall chimney stacks and a brown plain tiled roof. The front elevation has decorative blue header diamond patterns. The upper storey is jettied on wooden brackets and tile hung. The building has both sash and casement windows and sits behind a deep tarmac playground and various utilitarian out-buildings. Tree belts bordering the recreation ground and glebe field form a green backdrop.

The 1830s Pembroke Lodge comprises a white stuccoed gentleman's villa set within a landscaped walled garden. The rectangular 2 storey building has a hipped slate roof and symmetrical front with rusticated quoins and a band below the first floor window sills. The ground floor windows are recessed with round-headed moulded arches above them and pilasters.

The Half Moon Public House is thought to date back 500 years although the front part was added about 1707. It is the oldest building in the Conservation Area and provides a link with the historic importance of the Tonbridge Road as a coaching route.



Half Moon Public House

The remainder of the properties fronting London Road, and Church Road to the rear, comprise 19<sup>th</sup> century two storey houses, several of which have been converted to shops and offices, and more recent infill development. The properties are set on an uneven building line with the smaller semi-detached houses set closer to the road in narrower plots than the grander buildings which are set back behind walls and landscaped gardens. There are attractive vistas in Tonbridge Road and Church Road of these larger properties. The buildings are red brick, some rendered and painted cream or white with brown tiled or slate roofs. Some retain Victorian decorative details such as plaques, quoins, decorative bargeboards, gently arched window openings, sash windows, contrast brickwork, but the commercial buildings have been adapted through time with flat roofed extensions and modern shopfronts which mask the original building design.

Boundary treatments include ragstone and tall Victorian and more recent brick walls, hedges, and less appropriate wooden panel fences. Brick walls on the north side of Tonbridge Road and to the south side of Church Road are strong linear features, helping to provide enclosure to the street scene and enhancing the historic character of the Conservation Area. The commercial properties have unenclosed, tarmac frontages.





There are some features which detract from the historic character. The pavements in the sub-area are tarmac and in poor condition. The lighting and street furniture including bollards, bins, bus shelters and seating are of standard modern designs and are poorly coordinated. At the entrances to Riding Lane and Mount Pleasant the pavement forms a wide expanse of tarmac with black plastic bollards and poorly coordinated bins and seating. Some of the modern shop fronts are unsympathetic to the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in which they are situated and paraphernalia clutters the streetscene outside the One Stop Shop. Flat roofed buildings and extensions do not enhance the special character of the Conservation Area. The historic character of Half Moon Lane has been harmed by with the introduction of high spiked metal fences, car park, workshops and unsympathetic 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture. The entrance to Riding Lane has also been affected by unsympathetic 20<sup>th</sup> century development. London Road is busy and traffic noise impacts on this environment.

### **Key Features**

- The landmark building of the church of St John dominates the skyline.
- Verdant frontage particularly on the south side where the hedge is a strong linear feature enclosing the road and forming an edge to the conservation area. Mature specimen trees and other trees help enclose the road and soften the townscape on the north side.
- Built up frontage restricted to the north side of Tonbridge Road with the south side comprising the Sackville School grounds and West Wood.
- The low density cluster of the contemporary church, vicarage and primary school in respective grounds at the western end of the sub area.
- 2 storey buildings set at varying depths from the road with plot width and set back depending on the status of the building.
- Brick walls on the north side of Tonbridge Road and to the south side of Church Road.
- Listed 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
- Limited range of traditional materials, with a predominance of orange/red brick, tile, white and cream paint and slate with stone reserved for the dominant building and walled enclosure
- Wide, straight, gently-sloping busy main street with a variety of uses, pedestrians and traffic with long views restricted by trees.

### ***Sub-Area B – North of Tonbridge Road including Church Road (north), Mount Pleasant and Half Moon Lane.***

This sub-area is situated on flat ground comprising principally late 19<sup>th</sup> century modest 2 storey housing in narrow plots. This area was developed after the construction of the Church and school and the properties are mainly terraced or semi-detached, set close to the road behind shallow front gardens with a variety of boundary treatments. There are few larger detached houses and these generally face the green.

The sub-area forms a small enclave of cottages and houses dating almost exclusively from 1870-1900. Although in close proximity to the Tonbridge Road, the character is very different with the narrow streets and on-street parking discouraging through traffic.

Entering Mount Pleasant from Tonbridge Road, the start of the sub-area is marked by a sense of enclosure achieved by a constriction in width, provided by the Gospel Hall, and the change to a residential character. The straight streets form a grid pattern and allow vistas of buildings and vegetation both within and beyond the sub-area. There is a long view of the Sevenoaks Ridge to the north along Mount Pleasant but otherwise the dense, tight knit housing obstructs longer views giving the area an enclosed character.

The small village green is an important feature. Approaching along Half Moon Lane or Mount Pleasant from the Tonbridge Road, the sudden opening out of the street contrasts dramatically with the narrow enclosed streets. The green space is enclosed on three sides by housing and on the east side by a panel fence and row of mature trees.



The small green with trees and benches has a simple, intimate charm and provides an attractive setting for the interesting group of small villas on the west side.



The Village Green looking west (above) and the east side (right).



A Grade II listed stone drinking water fountain stands on the green to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The structure, constructed of Portland stone with a pink polished granite bowl in a trefoil-headed niche, is dated 1887. It is a good example of late Victorian street furniture.

Along the straight streets, the narrow terraced, semi detached and detached houses are set along a consistent building line, close to the road behind shallow front gardens resulting in a strong sense of enclosure. The houses are all two storeys in height and predominantly of red brick with tile or slate roofs. They all have chimneys and vertical fenestration. However, despite these unifying features, the streets have pleasant variations in the roofline, pitch, architectural details and boundary treatments.



Mount Pleasant

On the north side of Church Road and at either end of Mount Pleasant, short terraces of houses are set in narrow plots. The flat fronted buildings have little ornamentation other than contrasting brick bands. The straight Mount Pleasant Crescent (below) has a pleasing rhythm created by the regular chimneys on the ridge and evenly spaced gently arched window openings and doorways. Some original 6 panel doors have been retained. Opposite, a red/orange brick terrace has a yellow contrasting brick band and slate roofs. In Church Road, single storey porch additions have disturbed the rhythm but the buildings retain a simple charm.



Church Road



Mount Pleasant



In the vicinity of the green there are several detached and semi detached villas. There are no listed buildings in the area but there are buildings of interest including Old Forge House. When the toll-gate and house at the Flying Dutchman were demolished, the materials were used to build this house in Mount Pleasant with Flemish bond, tiled roof and pitched roof porch. The detached house forms part of a group which creates a picturesque vista from Church Road and along Mount Pleasant more generally. The group is well preserved and is unified by the domestic scale, common building line close to the back of the pavement, use of orange/red brickwork and the retention of original features including canted single storey bay windows, Flemish bond brickwork, original sash windows and slate or tiled roofs.



Mount Pleasant east side looking towards Tonbridge Road.

Another attractive group of villas overlooks the green. The group is enlivened by a villa with timber details, square two storey bays, providing a contrast to the surrounding brick properties and creating a visual focal point of interest. The well presented properties are set close to the back of the pavement but climbing plants and low boundary treatments enhance the frontages. The varied roofline, gables and blend of red, white and black contribute to the harmonious informal character.



Mount Pleasant west side overlooking the green.



On the south side of the green, the front of No. 9 and side elevation of No. 5/7 face the green with an old wall, panel fencing and a garage between the two. These properties have retained original windows and architectural details.



No. 5



Boundary treatments throughout the sub-area are varied and include low brick walls, hedges, picket fences, bollards and chains. The western side of Mount Pleasant (south) and south side of Church Road are enclosed by high Victorian brick walls which help enclose the public space and add to the historic character of the area. There is a loss of enclosure on the north side of the green where a wire fence separates the green from the neighbouring garden.

The only 20<sup>th</sup> century properties in the sub-area are the houses built in 2004 on the west side of Mount Pleasant which face the green but flank the entrance to Mount Pleasant Court. The properties are important for enclosing the street. The compact houses are sympathetic to their surroundings in terms of building line, scale, steeply pitched gabled slate roofs, timber porches, red brick with grey bands.



Recent Housing, Mount Pleasant

Throughout the sub-area the pavements are tarmac or grey pavers. The simple heritage style black lamp posts enhance the historic character. Period details have been retained on some properties but there has also been considerable replacement of original windows, doors and roof tiles which has had a detrimental impact on the historic and architectural character. On-street and pavement parking, overhead wires, bins and poor upkeep of some front gardens and boundaries are further detractors.

### Key Features

- Strongly enclosed, narrow streets
- Domestic scale with common building line close to the back edge of pavement
- Village green which provides a contrasting open space in a densely developed area, attractive vistas and the setting for the surrounding villas
- Late Victorian character with retention of original features including canted single storey bay windows, Flemish bond brickwork and original sash windows
- Listed Victorian drinking fountain
- Harmonious blend of traditional materials using a limited palette of colours including orange/red brick, tiles, slate and half timbering
- View of Sevenoaks Ridge

## Physical Fabric

The Conservation Area provides a snapshot of building styles and materials in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The use of traditional building materials – primarily bricks, tiles, slates and sandstone – creates a subtle palette of colours based around red, pale yellow, black, white and grey.

The dominant structure is the Church of St John which is the only stone building in the Conservation Area. It is constructed in local ragstone with ashlar dressings. The Churchyard and Vicarage are fronted by a low ragstone wall. Stone is also used sparingly in quoins and decorative features around doors and windows on some properties.



Ashlar dressings on the church



Brick and stone details on the Vicarage.



Flemish bond with blue headers.

However, the predominant building material is red brick. On most buildings this is left exposed. Yellow and dark grey bricks are used for decorative courses and details. Diagonal brick patterns adorn some elevations. On many of the properties Flemish brick bond is used, with or without contrasting blue headers. The Vicarage is constructed using the English brick bond. However, other decorative finishes were used on individual properties including stucco, render and mock half timber. The white and cream paintwork on these houses brightens the townscape, providing a pleasant foil to the orange/red brickwork. White or black painted timber is utilised for window frames, doors and barge boards and occasionally for half timbering, brackets and porches. The 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings are generally constructed of red/brown machine made bricks.



Decorative finishes

Many of the properties have little adornment. The 1830s Pembroke Lodge is notable for its symmetrical white stuccoed façade, plat band, window arches and rusticated quoins. Sackville School Lodge and Hildenborough Primary School are more intricately detailed than other buildings in the Conservation Area incorporating vernacular features including hung tiles, prominent chimney stacks, timber brackets, jettied upper storeys, diamond brick patterns and decorative bargeboards. These buildings reflect the domestic revival style which became popular in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This style referred back to the vernacular buildings and materials of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods.



Sackville Lodge



Hipped slate roof (above)  
Church roof (below)

The roofs are traditionally clay peg tiles or slate and vary accordingly in pitch and style. Some properties have gable ends facing the road. Several detached properties have shallow hipped slate roofs. A number of roofs have been replaced with concrete tiles and the more recent properties have flat roofs. On the Church of St John patterns have been created using shaped roof tiles but most roofs are plain, topped by plain chimneys, usually on the ridge or hip.

The majority of original windows are single or divided pane recessed sash windows with horns projecting down on the upper sash. There are some casement windows. Many original windows have been replaced. Several commercial buildings in Tonbridge Road have modern shop windows at the ground floor. Single and double storey canted or square bay windows which became more fashionable after 1850 can be seen in

some parts of the Conservation Area with flat or pitched roofs covered with tiles or lead. In some properties, small roof lights have been introduced which generally blend into the roofline.

Boundary treatments include red brick and ragstone walls, hedges, wooden fences and black railings. The tall brick walls bordering Tonbridge Road and Church Road are particular features. Some of the walls have decorative brickwork. The larger Victorian houses are shielded from the road by walls with tall shrubs and trees behind. Many of the smaller and older properties have very narrow front gardens.



The black lamp posts in parts of the conservation area enhance the historic character, as does the Victorian drinking fountain.



## ***Features affecting the character and appearance of the Conservation Area***

To understand what is special about the Conservation Area it is useful to note those features that are out of character with the area. This not only emphasises the importance of the remaining special features of the area but also allows potential improvements to be identified.

- Pavement surfacing in the Conservation Area is of variable quality and comprises standard tarmac and grey pavers. Adjoining the Tonbridge Road, particularly by the junctions to Riding Lane and Mount Pleasant, there are wide poorly surfaced pavements which detract from the historical qualities of the buildings.
- The black heritage style lamp posts in Church Road and Mount Pleasant enhance the character of the area. However, by the Tonbridge Road the street lighting, bus shelters, benches, plastic bollards and bins are of standard designs and poorly coordinated, creating uninviting public spaces.



Poor quality public spaces and street furniture

- A number of the commercial premises on Tonbridge Road have modern shop fronts which do not respect the traditional features or widths of upper storeys have been introduced and detract from the buildings on which they are placed and the character of the Conservation Area. The clutter associated with commercial premises harms the character of the area and setting of listed buildings



Street clutter and insensitive shop front



- Overhead wires detract from the attractiveness of the Conservation Area though the cost of replacing these underground is normally prohibitive.
- The removal of traditional boundary treatments, particularly on the Tonbridge Road to create parking spaces can harm the unity with adjoining properties and expose views of car parking. Expanses of wooden panel fencing create a bland frontage.



Open and panel fenced frontages

- In the narrow lanes north of Tonbridge Road, the tight form of development creates pressure for on-street and pavement parking. Satellite dishes and bins harm the appearance of these areas.
- Some 20th Century development significantly erodes the character of the area through the use of inappropriate materials. Flat roofed buildings and extensions are visually intrusive, jarring with the varied, traditional roofscape of pitches and gables.
- Whilst there are public spaces which act as oases from the traffic noise in the area, the noise and presence of traffic on Tonbridge Road detracts from the pedestrian environment.
- Poorly enclosed boundaries on the north side of the village green and to the west of the churchyard, reduce the visual integrity of these important open spaces.



West side of Churchyard  
overlooking car park

## ***Management Proposals for the Conservation Area***

English Heritage good practice advocates that local authorities should prepare a management plan to address the issues arising from the Conservation Area Appraisal and set out recommendations for action. Some of these actions will be applied generally to Conservation Areas in the Borough, whilst others, such as enhancement proposals, are specific to the Hildenborough Conservation Area.

### ***Management Proposals applicable to all Conservation Areas in the Borough***

#### ***Application of Planning Policy***

*The Borough Council will consistently apply adopted and future planning policy to ensure high quality design which is appropriate to protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This will be applied to all development requiring planning or listed building consent including new development such as replacement or new buildings, small scale alterations and extensions to buildings, boundary treatment and, where applicable, surfacing front gardens. This approach will be followed for proposals both within the Conservation Area and those which affect its setting or impact on its character.*

#### **Implications for Hildenborough Conservation Area**

Within Hildenborough Conservation Area the Borough Council will encourage the replacement of recent buildings with development, for example redevelopment of the modern buildings within Riding Lane, where this would preserve or enhance the character of the area. Such development may be of different architectural styles but should still be able to demonstrate a good relationship with its setting and the character of the area.

For example, the rear of the car showrooms in Half Moon Lane is visible from, and influences the character of, the Conservation Area and special attention should therefore be paid to the Design Guidelines set out in this document and public realm enhancements.

#### ***Shop Fronts and Advertisements Supplementary Planning Document***

*The Borough Council will bring forward a new supplementary planning document on shop fronts and advertisements which will have special consideration for Conservation Areas. It will amplify and illustrate Saved Local Plan policy P4/13*

#### **Implications for Hildenborough Conservation Area**

Tonbridge Road and Riding Lane contain a number of inappropriate shop fronts and fascias which, when proposals come forward, should be replaced with designs and materials which harmonise with the original character of the area and the design elements of the buildings to which they are to be fitted. Currently, there is not a proliferation of advertising within the Conservation Area and the number of signs is limited. Strict control should be maintained over the amount and type of advertising in the Conservation Area to maintain this delicate balance.

### ***Repairs to Buildings in Conservation Areas Good Practice Guide***

*It would particularly assist home owners of the Borough Council's Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas if Good Practice Guides were complemented by an information leaflet on replacement doors, windows and roof materials considered to be suitable within Conservation Areas. This will have much wider application. It will recognise the need for replacement features and will also give practical guidance on design, acceptable materials and products and may assist with the selection of suppliers.*

#### **Implications for the High Street and the Freehold Conservation Areas**

Original doors, windows and roof materials have been replaced in some of the Victorian properties within the Conservation Areas. The Leaflet will be publicised within the Conservation Areas and distributed to households and be available on the website.

### ***Building Regulations***

*The Borough Council will continue to apply Building and Fire Regulations sensitively in Conservation Areas and to Listed Buildings to attempt to ensure that there is no conflict with the preservation of the character of the area or the building.*

## *Management Proposals for Hildenborough Conservation Area*

### *Street Furniture*

The Conservation Area contains a large number of uncoordinated items of street furniture such as bins, bollards, seats and signs. The amount of street furniture results in clutter which detracts from the character of the Conservation Area.



Through enhancement measures, or gradual replacement or repair, there is a real opportunity to upgrade and group together the existing items to a common suite of specified components such as benches, bins, seats and bollards. In this rural setting, where trees and natural vegetation dominate, the use of wooden street furniture would help to reinforce and unify the character of the Conservation Area. Wherever possible, most of the street furniture should be grouped together in a coordinated way and, where appropriate, located at the back edge of the footway.





### ***Enhancement of the boundary between St John's churchyard and car park***



The views of car parking from the churchyard detract from the setting of the listed building, the enclosure of the churchyard and the character of this part of the Conservation Area. Screening the car park, and enclosing the churchyard would enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The front boundary comprises a ragstone wall and returning the wall north eastwards from the Tonbridge Road to create this boundary would be an appropriate enhancement. Alternatively, a hedge would be an appropriate solution, responding to the boundaries along the north west of the churchyard.



### ***Enhancement of the Shop Frontage on Tonbridge Road***



The lack of a rear storage area means that there is significant clutter in the forecourt outside the shop on Tonbridge Road. The forecourt has fenced boundaries. A comprehensive scheme for screening the paraphernalia would significantly enhance this part of the Conservation Area. A decorative wall would be a robust solution which would appropriately enhance the Conservation Area.



### ***Enhancement of Property Frontages***

Parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the historic character of the area and loss of defensible space around the building. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosure should be reinstated. Where the opportunity arises, new boundaries should use the prevailing materials and designs in the sub area such as a ragstone or appropriately detailed red brick wall with a coping and entrance gate pillars, or mature 2 metre high hedge



## Design Guidelines

- It is not anticipated that there will be significant change in the Conservation Area. However, when proposals come forward, the scale, massing, height, form, alignment, density and layout of any new development should respect the character of the area within which it is proposed as described in this Appraisal. The lower density of the large buildings set in landscaped grounds at the western end of the Conservation Area should be respected. Buildings within the Conservation Area should generally be 2 storeys in height. Within Riding Lane and Mount Pleasant, development should be tightly arranged to adjoining buildings and close to the back edge of the pavement. Within Tonbridge Road, buildings should be set back from the road behind a walled or hedged boundary at a depth which correlates with the size of the building. The smaller the building, the closer to the road the set back.
- Good quality design relies, amongst other things, on the choice and combination of materials. This is crucial to the success of a scheme. A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful detailing and use of materials, and through a fine balance between variety and uniformity in a building or development. The number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum. New buildings should consist of materials which respect the character of the sub-area within which they are proposed. The materials listed in the Physical Fabric section and described in the relevant sub area section are appropriate.
- Extensions and new outbuildings should be well designed and be subordinate to the original building. 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. For corner buildings, careful attention to the design of prominent side elevations will be necessary.
- Within the Conservation Area, plain clay roof tiles are a common feature and would be acceptable in many locations. Elsewhere, slate roofs are used. Concrete tiles should not be used.
- Replacement doors, windows and roofs should closely match the design and materials of the original features of the building. Where inappropriate new windows, doors and roofs are to be replaced, the opportunity should be taken to put back in the original style. White painted windows are a common unifying feature within the area.
- New shop fronts and advertisements should respect the scale, period, design, material and detail of the individual building of which they form part, as well as harmonising with the wider streetscene.
- Careful consideration should be given to ensuring that good quality traditional detailing on buildings is retained eg brick detailing such as string courses, decorative tile patterns, brick bonding and chimneys. Where removed, efforts should be made to restore them.
- Additions such as satellite dishes, flues, extractor fans and alarm boxes should preferably be located where they are not visible from public vantage points.



- Front boundaries should be retained or restored to the prevailing feature in the sub area: for example, approximately 1 metre high ragstone or red brick wall with a coping and entrance gate pillars; brick wall topped by hedge; hedge and railings or mature 2 metre high hedge. Parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the historic character of the area and loss of defensible space around the building. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosure should be reinstated. Where the opportunity arises, new boundaries should use the prevailing materials and designs in the sub area.
- Provision of off-street parking should not erode the character of the conservation area.
- Trees, hedgerows and verges which are important to the character of the conservation area, should be retained.
- The area contains an important landmark building which helps give reference points within the area and to the village from the surrounding area. The church and its setting should be carefully maintained and protected.
- Views and vistas of townscape features, such as landmarks, and the countryside beyond the built up area should be preserved.
- The village green should be retained and its character respected.
- When a proposal incorporates new street furniture, it should have reference to the Management Proposals for the Conservation Area.
- Buildings which would be visible from the Conservation Area, or form part of its setting, should preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.

## ***Planning Policy Background***

The Appraisal will help interpret:

- Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment),
- the Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy (Policies CP1 – Sustainable Development; CP24 – Achieving a High Quality Environment and CP25 – Mitigation of Development Impacts), and
- the Managing Development and the Environment DPD (Policy SQ1)
- Saved Local Plan Policy P4/13 – Shopfront Design

The Government's overarching aim in PPS5 is that the historic environment and its heritage assets (which include Conservation Areas) should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. To achieve this, the Government's objectives for planning for the historic environment include the following:

- to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions concerning the historic environment:
  - recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource
  - take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation; and
  - recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.
- to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance by ensuring that:
  - the positive contribution of such heritage assets to local character and sense of place is recognised and valued.

Policies within the adopted Development Plan Documents seek to preserve and enhance the natural and built environment.

The Core Strategy expects all development to be well designed and of a high quality in terms of detailing and use of appropriate materials, and must through its scale, density, layout, siting, character and appearance be designed to respect the site and its surroundings.

The Managing Development and the Environment DPD requires development to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the area, including its historical and architectural interest, and the prevailing level of tranquillity and the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, the pattern of settlement, roads and the landscape, urban form and important views.

*Planning Consultants Tony Fullwood Associates and the Borough Council would like to thank members of the Hildenborough Parish Council, Hildenborough Village Preservation Association, Hildenborough Conservation Group, and individual residents who contributed to the Appraisal*

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