Smarden Parish Design Statement



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Guidelines for Future Development

These have been formally adopted by Ashford Borough Council on 26 April 2007 as Supplementary Planning Guidance for Development Control purposes. Please note that although the rest of the document has not been adopted it nevertheless provides important background and context to these guidelines.

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Introduction



The street has retained its character over time.



1.1 The people of Smarden are proud of their parish and derive great pleasure in living here. This statement is not about preventing changes to Smarden but seeking to influence them so that they are sympathetically managed for the good of all.

1.2 Smarden has grown over many generations. Much of its history, particularly in its fine old buildings, is still visible for all to enjoy and makes a significant contribution to the unique character and quality of its environment. Our objective is to ensure that future growth will equal or better that of the past and not compromise for future generations that which we still continue to value. We ask therefore that whatever development is being proposed you:

- **Read this design statement and its guidelines for future development.**
- **If you don't live or work here – visit the village/parish to see and understand the place for yourself.**
- **Discuss proposals with those who may be directly affected and/or with representatives of the community as a whole.**

1.3 Design statements are the brainchild of the Countryside Commission which, in 1993, published Design in the Countryside which proposed the preparation of village design statements. Since that time, Kent County Council (KCC) and Ashford Borough Council (ABC) have actively encouraged communities to pursue the preparation of design statements for their area. ABC has already adopted a number of statements as supplementary planning guidance documents for the general benefit of the communities.

1.4 The statement is intended to increase awareness of our natural, rural and built environment. It should help planners and developers, builders and architects, landowners and householders and the local business community. It seeks to influence the choice of details such as materials and surroundings, all of which can affect the visual qualities and amenities of the parish and to indicate the standards that residents would like to see kept. It should be seen as trying to help rather than hinder change of whatever type. Above all, it wants to avoid misplaced and/or unsympathetic developments of any sort, housing, commercial buildings or simple extensions or alterations. Our main concerns are over appearance, design and a sensitive planning approach so that change matches the existing character of the parish.



Consultation

2.1 Following a Parish meeting held by the Parish Council in November 2001, a Steering Group was set up charged with the task of preparing this Statement. The Group decided at its first meeting that the statement should refer to the parish as a whole, hence the title. Following the inaugural meeting of the Group a notice was placed in the parish magazine in February 2002 reporting on that meeting and asking for volunteers and assistance in the preparation of the Design Statement. It was then decided to hold a Workshop in order to involve the Parish as much as possible. A Notice to this effect was placed in the parish magazine asking for volunteers. Subsequently, the Workshop was held in May 2002 when some forty local residents took part. They were sent out in teams to take photographs and make notes of anything they felt to be of interest in the parish. The photographs were developed on the same day and each group then made a presentation to the other groups, explaining why they felt the subject matter of the photograph was important to the Parish.

2.2 The Steering Group then prepared the first draft of the statement with two members being responsible for the preparation of each section. Subsequently, these drafts were evaluated by different members of the Group and revised where it was thought necessary.

2.3 This draft, together with the photographs to be used, was put on general display in the Village Hall in July 2002 and the public invited to give their comments in writing on the day. Approximately sixty people took part in this exercise. The Steering Group then carried out an evaluation of the comments received and revised the draft statement accordingly. This again was reported in the magazine in September 2002. This revised draft was then printed in bulk and the Parish invited in May 2003, by way of the parish magazine, to collect copies from various points around the parish for their further study and comment.

2.4 Following this exercise additional alterations to the draft were considered and included by the Steering Group. A draft was then presented to Ashford Borough Council for consideration. Subsequently, a number of discussions took place with the Council and further revisions on layout were made and commented upon. Further drafts were prepared and considered by the Council prior to the printing of this Statement.



One of the groups involved in the workshop. Participants were asked to photograph the visual aspects of the parish that are important to them and make up its distinctive character.

The Steering Group:

Tony Lush – Chairman
Fran Lester – Secretary
Ted Jackson – Treasurer
Gill Bromley – Parish Council
Charles Bonham Miller
Christine Edwards – Primary School
Vikki and Chris Furse
Paul Hopkins
Gill and Mark Withers



The village has evolved as a settlement over hundreds of years, but there is harmony in the way it all fits together within the landscape.













Perceptions of the Younger Generation from Smarden School

A FAVOURITE PLACE IN SMARDEN

This section includes some of the thoughts and feelings about the places in Smarden that children in class 4 from Smarden Primary School thought were special.

My Village

"I live in Smarden because I always wanted to. It is a great place and other people would like to look around. There are three shops, the butcher's and a Post Office and the cake shop. I like playing at the park and going to school. The church is the place where people go and pray and ring bells. Lots of people think about God."

The Park (The Minnis)

"The park is for many different ages from 0 years old to 99 years old. It is a good place to be with your friends on the weekend and in the holidays. The park includes a child climbing frame, two sets of swings… a tennis court… a skate park… there is also a football field… And so the park is well used… also by many others for dog walking, fireworks, Jubilee parties and many more this is why it is my favourite place because it is for everyone."

The Youth Club

"My best place is the youth club because it gives kids a chance to hang around with their friends more."

The Village Pond

"The village pond is always changing. The ducks come and go to other ponds to mate and breed. It holds lots of wildlife, such as dragonflies, pond skaters, water fleas, fish and maybe even a few frogs. It is because you can sit still there and watch all the wildlife that I like it."

Smarden Post Office

"I chose Smarden post office because I can get all my favourite magazines and sweets and food. Whenever I go into the post office I always meet my friends and we talk… The post office is brilliant!"

Views

"Heading into Smarden from Bell Lane you come past the new houses and set your eyes on the church of St Michael's, the Tudor house right in front and the greenery of the countryside. The reason I like this view is because I like contrast between the old buildings and the countryside. I also like the way St Michael's rises up behind the old Tudor house and the way the lush greenery surround the buildings. Smarden also helps people imagine what it was like to live centuries ago by looking at the old weatherboard and half timbered Tudor houses."

Chessenden

"I chose Chessenden because of the beams and the tiled roof but the real reason was because of the diamonds on the windows."

Defining the area included in the Parish Design Statement

THE VILLAGE

4.1 The village centre is a designated Conservation Area, as shown on the map shown on page 19. This also shows the collection of Listed Buildings, including the Grade I St Michael's Church, known as the Barn of Kent (dating from 1325), four Grade II* and a large number of Grade II houses, some of which had their origins in the 15th century. The Zion Chapel, the Chequers and the Flying Horse Inns, the Post Office and the butchers shop, are Grade II as well. The Minnis, an important area of open space is at the heart and adjoins the Primary School to the east, which dates from 1860. Other buildings include a small business centre on the site of a medieval tithe barn, and two residential cul-de-sacs at Beult Meadow (1970's) and Vesper Court (1980s).

4.2 Properties and developments in the village, adjoining or beyond the Conservation Area, as shown on the plan on page 19, include a number of individual properties such as Jubilee House, an 18th century experimental attempt to continue the timber-framed weather-boarded tradition, the Thatched House (a 15th century Grade II* listed hall house), and the later development between the 1940's and 1990's of small housing estates, and the village hall (2007). Thus the village includes buildings from the 14th century onwards.

THE PARISH

4.3 The parish (see map on page 20) extends far beyond the village centre and includes a number of small hamlets, as well as farms and individual properties. These outer areas can also boast of a further twelve medieval houses which are of architectural or historical note and which are listed in the Gazetteer of Medieval Houses in Kent by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. Of the listed buildings there are a further three of Grade II*, notably Biddenden Green Farmhouse, West Hoy Farmhouse and Hamden, which Newman (The Buildings of England, West Kent and the Weald) describes as "an almost complete 14th century medieval hall house of a rare type". Other buildings of note are Vesperhawk Farm House, Marley Farm House and Tilden Chapel, rebuilt in 1892 having been home to a Baptist congregation since 1726. In addition, The Bell, a well-known public house built in 1536.

4.4 The outlying buildings of the parish were traditionally farming centres but most, including several oasts and barns, have now been converted to residential use and by the year 2000 there were only some seventeen working farms, averaging just over 80 hectares (200 acres) each.

4.5 With the exception of those mentioned in paragraph (4.1) above, most of the businesses are to be found outside the village centre, including two further small 20th century sites at Marley Farm and Monk's Hill.



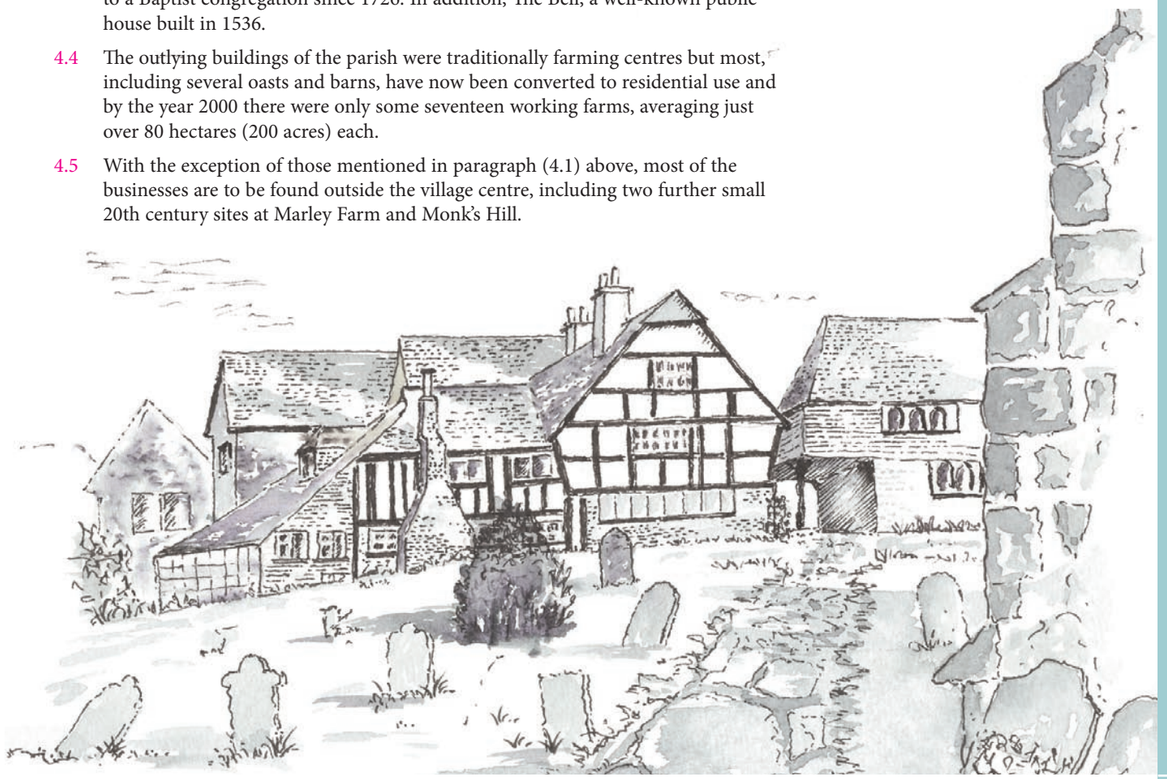
Zion Chapel in The Street.



The Thatched House.



Hamden.



Smarden Parish Design Statement

History



Cloth Hall.



Kite Farm, once a typical farmstead.



East End Cottages, part of The Street.

5.1 Whilst it is not appropriate to undertake an extensive historical study, a brief outline is given to help in understanding some of the influences that make our parish what it is today. That is, the influences on the evolution of the landscape, the shaping of settlements and the development of the distinctive buildings that characterise the parish, considered in later sections.

5.2 Although archaeology has shown some evidence of Bronze Age and Iron Age workings, early settlers, in the main, had avoided the Weald as it was covered by a dense forest, and was an area of heavy clay. However, the pressures of a growing population changed this and from about the 8th century onwards, places with Anglo-Saxon names ending in 'den', meaning woodland clearing, came into existence. Smarden was one such place.

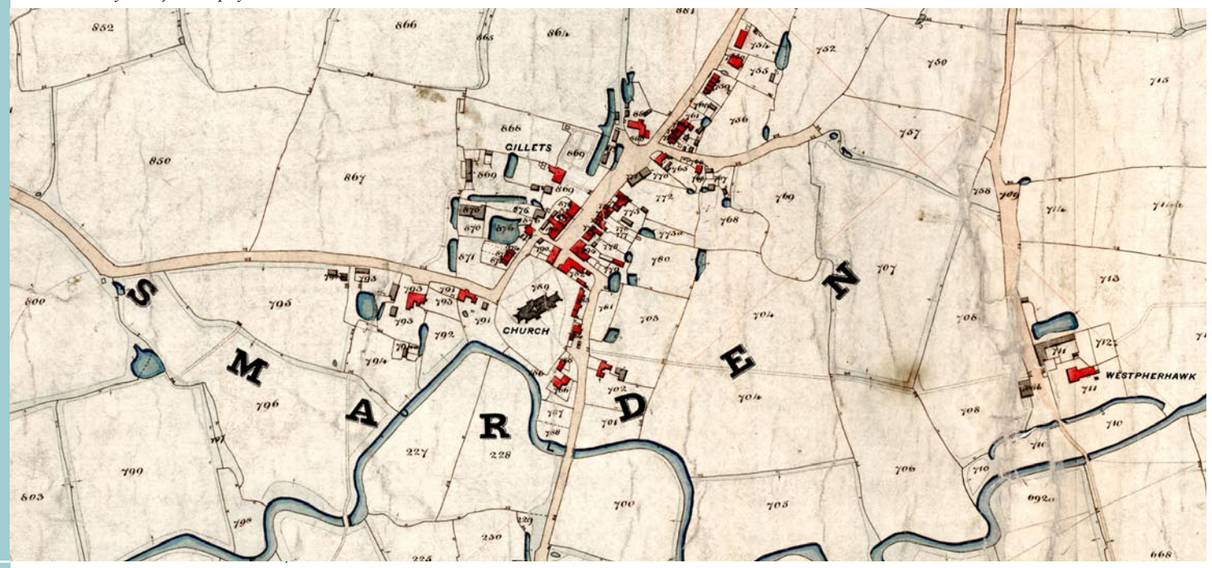
5.3 As cultivation increased and other farming activities began these clearings were made bigger and new ones were created. Within Smarden Parish there are further places with 'den' names, including Biddenden Green, Haffenden, Hamden, Romden and Smarden Bell, indicating this increased activity. Some are located on 'north/south' roads, which could well have been drove roads for livestock. These, in turn, became a means of communication and today's winding lanes started, presumably, as tracks to link individual farmsteads and dwellings, the latter forming the nucleus of the hamlets and the village that then evolved around them.

5.4 In subsequent centuries as landowner's property was divided equally between his children under the gavelkind inheritance laws, the landscape evolved with a pattern of small fields, with hedgerows used as boundary markers, which is still evident today.

5.5 In the 14th century under Edward III, Flemish weavers settled in the area to manufacture broadcloth. Also during this period a weekly market and an annual fair were held in the village, granted under charter. Although never as prominent as nearby Cranbrook, Smarden prospered in the Wealden wool trade and became an established industrial centre. Some of its oldest and most distinguished buildings date from this era.

5.6 By the middle of the 18th century the wool trade had gone, the fair and market lapsed, and agriculture had become the dominant activity. Despite various economic changes since then the parish retains a strong rural and agricultural identity. The size of the population has been relatively stable since medieval times. Consequently additions and changes to its built environment have been small and gradual. Arguably the greatest change has been seen since the 1940's with the addition of the various small housing estate developments to the village. Also in recent decades the evolution of agricultural activities has resulted in the adaptation of many buildings from agricultural usage into residential accommodation.

Extract from Tythe Map of 1838.



The Setting of Smarden

LANDSCAPE SETTING

6.1 The parish lies within the Low Weald where the topography is generally flat or gently undulating low-lying ground but with some rises above the general level. The lower land is around the River Beult a significant feature in the landscape that tends to flood following heavy rainfall, which winds from east to west across the middle section of the parish where ground levels are as low as 20 to 25 metres above sea level. Away from this area levels gently rise up to between 35 to 40 metres in parts of the north of the parish and similarly to the south. The underlying geology is extensively Weald clay but there are some alluvium, brick earth and gravel terraces along or near the river, and elsewhere some pockets of sand or limestone.

6.2 The parish is characterised by generally small-scale fields enclosed by hedgerows with trees and criss-crossed by small drainage ditches and streams, small ponds (of which there are some 450-500) often surrounded by trees and areas of woodland. Many of the hedgerows include a variety of species such as elder, ash, hornbeam, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and scrub oak and some are almost certainly 100's of years old. Later windbreak hedges of poplar and similar high-growing trees, traditionally used to protect hops and orchards, can also be seen. Oak trees are dominant, as elsewhere in the Weald, some of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The largest area of woodland, known as Dering Wood, is managed by the Woodland Trust and importantly is open for public access.

6.3 Oasts and other farm buildings punctuate the landscape but buildings in the parish are generally well screened by the trees and hedgerows. The village is similarly well screened and from many viewpoints only the church tower gives it away. Where the views are more open towards the north, the villages of Egerton and Pluckley can be seen at the top of the Greensand Ridge, and the North Downs behind on the distant horizon.

6.4 Smarden still has a relatively unspoilt rural landscape, the main intrusion being the railway - a main Kent to London line - that crosses from east to west in the northern half of the parish, about one kilometre to the north of the village centre. The line is at ground level, embanked or within cuttings. It bridges one road and is bridged over by three other roads. It provides no direct transport for the parish but has had a significant impact on land use and field patterns. Although it is a dominant feature in the landscape trees and scrub help to soften its visual impact. The quality of the landscape across the parish as a whole is recognised in that it is identified in the Ashford Local Plan as part of the Low Weald Special Landscape Area. Planning policies therefore apply which give it long-term protection and priority to its landscape over other planning considerations.

KEY LAND USES AFFECTING THE SETTING OF SMARDEN

Agriculture & Farming

6.5 Farming still remains the principal industry in the parish but now with a mixture of crops being grown. As well as wheat and barley, crops such as oilseed rape and maize bring different colours to the landscape. Sheep, cattle and horses continue to be grazed. Hop fields have declined in number as have orchards. Some hedgerows have been removed to make larger fields for cultivation. In recent years some redundant fields have been transformed into plantations of non-native hybrid poplars and demonstrate how changes in agriculture have affected parts of the landscape.

6.6 Diversification has also had an influence on land use with some barns and oasts being sold for residential conversion. New uses for redundant agricultural buildings have been a positive step where they are compatible with their rural setting.

6.7 In situations where farms have ceased to operate the land and buildings have been sold separately. This has had the effect of releasing more unfettered residential accommodation onto the housing market. The land has been used to increase individual landholdings and/or increase grazing land.



View of the River Beult and surrounding area.



River Beult in flood.



One of the many oak trees still visible in the area.



Poplar plantations have brought changes to the local landscape.



Dering Wood, a haven for wildlife and native plants.

Arable and livestock farming in the parish.









Ripe for new use?



Put to new use.

Industry (Business)

6.8 There is a wide variety of businesses represented in the parish, providing employment for many people, ranging from commercial vehicle body building to metal spinning, from kitchen distribution to garden services, from garden nursery to beauty therapist, from leisure fishing to bed and breakfast for visitors. In the main these are located at Smarden's two industrial estates, The Smarden Business Estate at Monk's Hill and Marley Farm, Headcorn Road or at the single sites in or close to the village centre. In general these sites do not have a significant affect on the setting of Smarden being reasonably well contained visually with only localised views.

6.9 Major attractions thriving in the village centre are two public houses, the Chequers and Flying Horse, the Post Office newsagent and store, the butcher's shop, and an art gallery together with the Bell public house in Bell Lane. These businesses form the important hub of the community of Smarden Parish, but are also patronised by many outsiders. They are part of the built fabric and make a significant contribution to the way in which Smarden functions as a place.

GATEWAYS AND APPROACHES

6.10 The 'gateways' and approaches from the countryside to the parish and village are particularly important to the setting of Smarden because they set the scene for what is beyond, giving that all-important first impression. These are defined below and also indicated on the map on pages 20 & 21.

6.11 All of the roads running through the parish retain their rural character, including the busiest and most direct route via Bell Lane, a C class road linking the A274 to the south and the A20 to the north. It generally takes HGV through traffic away from the village centre and helps to minimise the otherwise adverse impact that it would have, including on its visual integrity. The nature of the other main routes, particularly the tight bends, which are a characteristic and defining feature on the approach to and from the village, in general assist in keeping the speed of traffic in check and the effect of it on the quality of the environment.

6.12 The approach from adjoining parishes is essentially through the typical low Weald landscape and unless the Smarden parish boundary was marked it would be difficult to tell where it is on any of the eleven roads that cross it. However, there are some distinctions: the most obvious is from the northeast where the road runs between Frith and Dering Woods, often referred to as Smarden Woods, starting just a few metres before the boundary is crossed. Here the 'tunnel' of trees encloses the view for about one kilometre. Dering Wood is also met to the west of the Pluckley Road approach but the view to the east is marred by the large clay stockpile at the Pluckley brickworks site. At the 'gateway' along the Biddenden Road from the southwest and Bell Lane from the west south-west the topography is such that there are long views across the landscape to the Greensand Ridge and North Downs.

6.13 There are four roads that continue direct into the village itself, Pluckley Road from the northeast, Bethersden Road from the south, Biddenden Road from the southwest and Water Lane from the northwest. The narrow winding nature of these roads and the screening provided by the trees and hedgerows means that there is no overall view of the village as it is approached, the view changing as different buildings and features appear. Each approach presents its own surprise as you round a bend with the final masterpiece being The Street.

6.14 The development along the approaches from the 'gateways' of Pluckley, Biddenden and Bethersden Roads could be described as 'ribbon' development but properties are set back from the road within large gardens and generally do not seem out of place. There are some scattered individual properties along the Water Lane approach but the 'gateway' is well defined by the small estate development at Ashenden on the edge of the village. An area of planting on its western side provides an important break, softening its boundary with the countryside and helps to contain the village. The south side of the road in this area is undeveloped apart from the buildings at the farm which are set back from the road. Along this approach there are views across the fields towards the river and also the church.

Approaches to and from the village.













"Each approach presents its own surprise as you round a bend with the final masterpiece being The Street."

Settlement

Some of the many roads and lanes around the parish.









Parking is a problem.



Footpaths linking the parish.



7.1 The main settlement, i.e., the village, is situated on the north side of the river along Cage Lane, The Street, Pluckley Road just beyond and part-way along Mill Lane, along Water Lane as far as Ashenden, and part-way along Vesper Hawk Lane. To the south of the river there are a number of buildings dispersed along Cage Lane continuing part way along Biddenden Road and along the Bethersden Road as far as Romden Road. Beyond the main settlement there are hamlets at Hegg Hill, The Quarter, Biddenden Green, Maltman's Hill, Romden, Hamden, Snughorne, Smarden Bell, Tilden and Haffenden Quarter, as well as farms and individual properties scattered across the parish. The largest single undeveloped area of the parish is Dering Wood to the northeast, an area of some 125 hectares.

TRANSPORT LINKS

7.2 The roads and lanes that link these settlements to provide circulation within the boundaries of the parish, and to adjoining areas, towns and villages beyond, vitally affect local life, work and visiting. Not only have they influenced the pattern of settlement, but they also make a positive contribution to the character of the locality and help to create a sense of place particularly within the village.

7.3 Residents, visitors and services depend greatly on motorised transport. Public transport is very limited with bus services being minimal and the nearest railway station some three miles away. Due to the age of the village off-street parking is limited and significant street parking takes place. This causes traffic congestion and inconvenience to public services and general public alike, as well as visual intrusion.

7.4 A network of public footpaths provides opportunities to walk either when going about one's daily business or for leisure purposes. Traditionally these would have been the main link to the village from outlying areas of the parish. Footways/ pavements are only found on both sides of the road in a small section of The Street. Elsewhere, they are to be found on one side only or not at all. In the centre of the village they provide an important pedestrian link to community facilities including the school, church, shops, village hall, recreational areas, etc.

PATTERN AND LAYOUT

7.5 There is no obvious pattern or master plan to the way the village grew as a settlement. It essentially occurred naturally over hundreds of years until the introduction of the modern planning system in 1947. There is nevertheless cohesion in the way it all fits together. At best it could be described as a linear settlement, with many of the earlier buildings fronting/facing each other across narrow roads, but generally the tortuous nature of its roads means that much of the settlement is broken down into discrete areas. This is continued with most of the modern housing additions planned around estate access roads.

7.6 The river already acknowledged as being significant within the landscape is another linear feature that has influenced the shape of the main settlement, providing a natural barrier and containment of it to the west, south west and south. Public open spaces of long standing, the churchyard and gardens provide all important separation and breathing space between buildings, both in a physical and visual sense. Given their varying sizes and nature, and the arrangement of buildings within and around them, the resultant effect on the density of the development within the village provides a certain degree of informality. These spaces are generally characterised by trees and hedgerows, some providing enclosure of spaces, boundaries to properties and roads, some backdrops to or screening of buildings, some providing focal points or defining views. Many are of some maturity and of individual or collective value, but generally, all provide enhancement to the quality of the built environment and confirm its traditional rural credentials. The introduction of close-boarded fencing to replace hedges in recent times has to some extent detracted from this context.

7.7 The settlement including the public open spaces is surrounded by agricultural land. It is notable that this too is in the main bounded by hedgerows and trees. The effect of this, as mentioned above (in paragraph 6.3), is that much of the development is generally well screened from many viewpoints.

Settlement

7.8 The historic core of the village is relatively compact and centred close to the church, which has roads on three sides, linked by pathways across its churchyard. To the northeast of the church, the buildings in Water Lane and those to the east in Cage Lane wrap around in a rectangular fashion, with some buildings backing immediately on to two of the churchyard boundaries. On the opposite side of Cage Lane, with access by the Flying Horse public house car park is Beult Meadow, a small estate of houses set around a landscaped pond. The Street where it joins with Water and Cage Lanes provides a strong axis with the church, with most of the buildings at its western end close together or adjoining, and facing each other. Similarly to the northwest, Water Lane forms an axis with the church but the properties at this end are fewer and are set within large gardens. The result of the pattern and layout within this historic core is that there are in effect a number of places and spaces with there own sense of belonging, distinctive appeal and character that make up the whole.

7.9 Moving away along The Street there are fewer buildings, (i.e., the density of the development is much lower,) with some also set back further from the road and within gardens. The layout is then further opened up with The Minnis, an important protected public open space, and buildings here being on the south side of the road. Behind properties in The Street at this point there is a small cul-de-sac development of detached properties off Vesper Hawk Lane where there are also some individual properties. To the east of The Minnis stands the school, with its own playing field to the rear, behind which is Cornes Meadow, also a protected public open space. These are all key places and well used spaces for informal recreation and sport for the school and whole community, respectively. However, despite a degree of enclosure by hedgerows and trees, they also have a strong visual presence that adds significantly to the quality of the village environment as well as providing a transition to the adjoining countryside beyond, to which they are also linked by public footpaths. Opposite the school is a small cul-de-sac of council houses, Green Lane, with sizeable gardens set around a small green. Adjoining to the east is Chessenden Lane, a small cul-de-sac development of bungalows, with the access road also serving the village hall and a detached property set within large grounds.

7.10 To the east of the school there are a number of detached properties along Pluckley Road, some of which are set back off a private driveway. Further along there is a development of council houses and bungalows, Glebe Close, set within gardens off a cul-de-sac road that also serves a number of individual properties and a more recent high density development of mostly terraced properties, known as Haslewood Close adjoining the Old Rectory. From here buildings become more spread out as the road continues round two sharp bends to Mill Lane and away from the village.

7.11 Along Water Lane beyond the historic core on the north side, there are two modern estates, The Acorns and Ashenden, set out around estate roads with landscaped areas. There are some older, similar sized houses, The Oaks, between the two estates facing Water Lane, but with larger gardens. As they front onto Water Lane and back onto the fields behind, these developments have very much a linear character even though internally the houses are set around the estate access roads.

7.12 Along Cage Lane to the south, and east along Bethersden Road there are a variety of individual properties set within gardens on one side of the road or the other, and a small group of council houses known as the Buffalo. The space opposite, between and behind these properties, helps to ensure that the rural character is not overshadowed. This is similarly the case with the few properties to the south of Cage Lane and west along Biddenden Road.

7.13 The other settlements in the parish which include a number of hamlets as referred to in paragraph 7.1 above are small in scale and are generally informally arranged with buildings located at or close to the intersection of roads. They are characterised by farms and a small number of residential properties some of which are converted farm buildings. There are distinctions between them, for example, at Smarden Bell there is a Public House fronting the road and adjoining business premises, at Tilden a Baptist Chapel set within a graveyard and at Romden, the house known as Romden Castle with its tower.



Scattered properties on route to the village.



Modern additions to the village.



Tilden.



Romden.

Buildings

Typical buildings that characterise the parish and show various elevational and roof finishes.





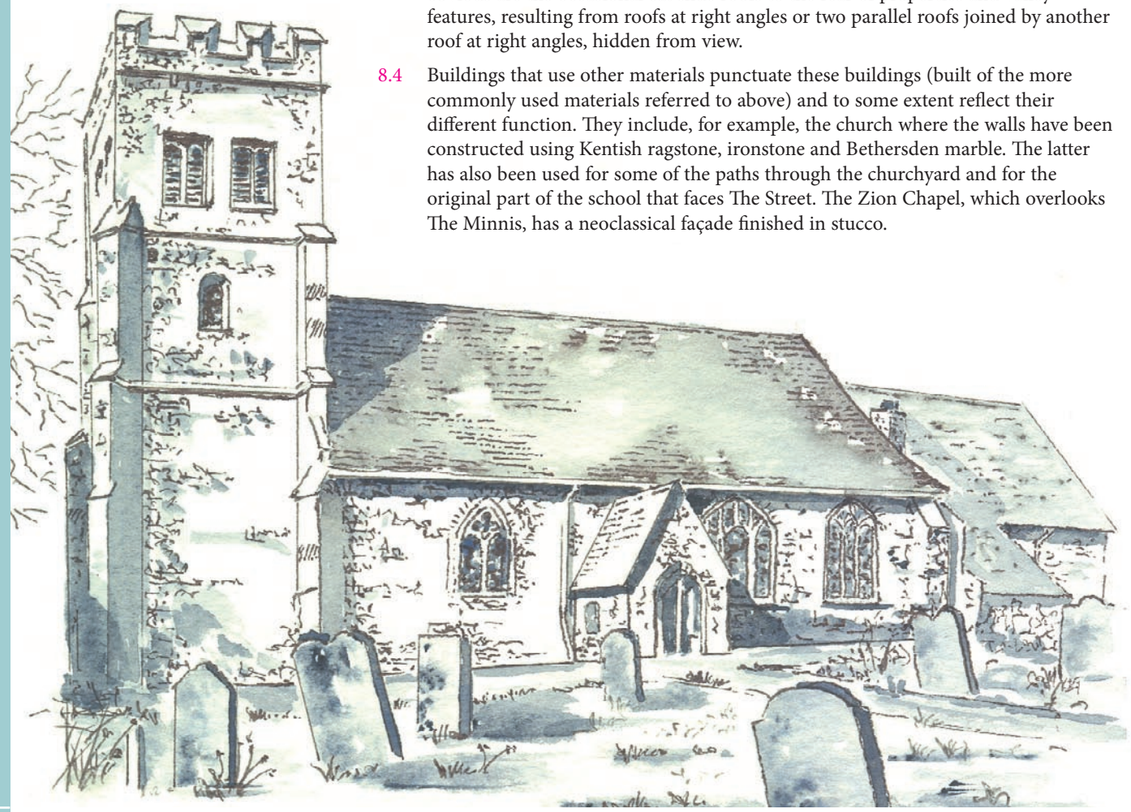
8.1 Smarden is one of a number of Wealden parishes that can boast a diverse range of fine old buildings. However the way they sit in the landscape or fit together with surrounding buildings, spaces and other elements, as well as their individuality, give Smarden its own unique appeal and character. The architectural and historic interest of many of these buildings is recognised in that some 130 are listed buildings. These range from its Grade 1 Church and Grade 2* timber-framed houses, to one of its bridges, an old village lock-up built in 1864 and the village phone box! Furthermore the village centre (where there is an obvious concentration of such buildings) is designated a Conservation Area.

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

8.2 The historical development and growth of Smarden over the centuries is not only seen in its layout but is more clearly reflected in successive styles of architecture and uses of available materials. This has resulted in a great variety in the massing, detailing, architectural features, colours and textures of buildings – all with individual qualities that contribute to the whole.

8.3 The historic buildings are mostly of half-timbered and timber-framed houses and those clad with white painted timber weather-boarding. In the latter case this is often only at first floor level with brickwork at ground level, frequently in Flemish bond with blue headers and sometimes painted. Tile hanging at first floor level is also characteristic. Sometimes a combination of all these materials has been used, particularly where a building has been added to or renovated. Noticeably the unifying element in such a diversity of materials and building styles is in the roofs, which are mostly finished with Kent peg tiles which are orangey brown in colour and mellowed with age. Due to the different alignment, sizes, and shapes of buildings there are some interesting roofscapes which are particularly noticeable in views along the Street from the east, approaching the Street from Cage Lane and from the Churchyard. The roofs have steep pitches, vary in height, have a mix of gables, hips, and barn hips, often feature chimneys at ridge level and occasionally include dormer windows that are generally well integrated into the roofscape. Less obvious are the occasional cat slide roofs to the rear of properties and valley features, resulting from roofs at right angles or two parallel roofs joined by another roof at right angles, hidden from view.

8.4 Buildings that use other materials punctuate these buildings (built of the more commonly used materials referred to above) and to some extent reflect their different function. They include, for example, the church where the walls have been constructed using Kentish ragstone, ironstone and Bethersden marble. The latter has also been used for some of the paths through the churchyard and for the original part of the school that faces The Street. The Zion Chapel, which overlooks The Minnis, has a neoclassical façade finished in stucco.



Buildings

8.5 Similarly, as an alternative roof material, slate has been used on a number of buildings notably the main roof of the church, although it was originally finished with oak shingles, Zion Chapel and some adjoining properties. There are also some examples of thatch on houses and barns but these are not widespread.

8.6 Although some of the modern buildings are of brick, many have tile-hanging or timber weather-boarding at first floor level to reflect the character of the historic buildings, including the more recent estate developments. Their success or otherwise relies on good quality materials and appropriate detailing; there are some good and not so good examples that speak for themselves.

8.7 At Green Lane the houses are of a prefabricated/systems build construction known as Airey, the walls being clad with precast concrete panels with an applied/exposed aggregate finish.

8.8 In the modern developments, the roofing materials used are not all characteristic or of the quality of the local vernacular and detract from it. Concrete tiles have often been used in place of clays, in some cases pantiles have been used because roof pitches have been too shallow for plain tiles, and machine-made tiles have generally been used instead of handmade tiles or their modern equivalent. Whilst some of these have weathered to a more acceptable colour and texture overtime they do not have the inherent quality of the Kent peg tiles used on the older buildings. Nevertheless on some of the recent developments, good quality clay tiles of appropriate colour and texture have been used, whilst reclaimed tiles have been used on a few individual houses.

8.9 The buildings that characterise the rest of the parish are similar in design and appearance to those in the village, spanning the same time period. Many of the historic buildings have become an integral part of the rural landscape particularly at some of the farms/former farms where there are barns, oast houses and other farm buildings, as well as houses, with architectural or historic interest. The barns are generally timber framed, clad with weather-boarding finished with tar or creosote and with roofs finished with Kent peg tiles. A number of the other farm buildings are of similar construction although some are thatched and others have been re-roofed with sheets of corrugated iron. The oast house kilns, which are either round or square, are built of brick or stone with the remainder of the building often clad with timber weather-boarding at first floor level. The roofs are generally finished with Kent peg tiles. Many of the barns and oast houses have been converted into dwellings but on the whole they retain much of their original character.

8.10 Modern agricultural buildings have been added to many of the farms. These include open Dutch barns roofed with sheets of corrugated iron painted in bright colours, large yards and barns clad with materials such as corrugated cement sheeting or colour-coated profiled steel sheeting, and other buildings built of breeze or concrete blocks. The siting of some of these modern additions and the types of materials used, in some instances detracts from the appearance and setting of the traditional farm buildings and houses.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES AND DETAILING

8.11 Amongst the most distinguishing features of most buildings are the windows and doors. These vary to a large extent with the age of the building and include a variety of styles and patterns. Some are more common than others. They are mostly painted timber although some are stained, particularly in the case of some of the barn or oast house conversions. A common theme in the paint finish of windows on some of the historic buildings, also picked up on some more recent developments, is that of a black outer frame and sill with the remainder white. This is a particular characteristic of many of the buildings that have white painted weather-boarding. UPVC windows have been used for some of the more recent developments and also replacement windows and doors on unlisted properties outside of the Conservation Area. However, generally the proportions, the size of the frame sections, size and detailing of glazing bars, and the finish are not as aesthetically pleasing as traditional timber windows, and therefore they are not necessarily the best choice.

Typical buildings that characterise the parish and show various elevational and roof finishes.











Modern buildings - some finished to reflect the historical surroundings.





Hayland Farm.



Converted oasts and barn.





Two more of the village's listed buildings.



Service providers' plant and equipment which can be intrusive if not effectively screened.

Buildings

8.12 With so many buildings that are of special architectural or historic interest it is not difficult to find some interesting architectural features or detailing, all of which add to the unique character of Smarden. Some examples include: the understorey of the Pent House that gives access to the churchyard from The Street; dormer windows to attic rooms on a number of properties, three small arched windows and name/ date carving on Hartnup House; the curved weather-boarding on the corner of the Chequers public house; carvings of wyverns on the Dragon House and a variety of interesting chimney stacks.

OTHER STRUCTURES AND FEATURES

8.13 There are a number of other structures and features that add to the interest and quality of the environment. Examples include the old village pump of 1897 and the phone box in The Street, a number of historic bridges over the River Beult and the base of one of the Smarden windmills at Mill House in Cage Lane. There is little in the way of street furniture although there are a number of benches in various places. However there are some features arising from services, that detract from the visual quality and integrity of buildings and the local environment, and these are considered below.

STREET LIGHTING

8.14 Street lighting has only been provided in the more recent housing developments. Although it is beneficial for safety and security it can be visually intrusive and out of character particularly in the countryside or within an historic setting. It could be argued therefore that the village centre not having any does help to preserve the character of the village. It is a sensitive issue though and opinions are divided.

ROAD SIGNS

8.15 Although road signs of various kinds are necessary they can spoil the view. There are instances where there is a proliferation of them in one location and their positioning appears to have been by accident rather than design. This is particularly noticeable at some gateways into the village and does not give a good first impression of the village.

PLANT AND EQUIPMENT FOR ELECTRICITY, GAS, TELEVISION AND TELEPHONES

8.16 The overhead electricity power lines and telephone cables, for example, in Cage Lane and The Street detract from the overall quality of the Conservation Area whereas the more recent housing developments have benefited from underground cables. Similarly the plant and equipment of service providers can be ugly and damage the quality of the local environment. Also satellite dishes are visible on many buildings in Smarden and can look incongruous. In addition, there are currently two phone masts in the parish, which by their size and nature are obtrusive

VIEWS

8.17 Smarden has many views that capture the essence of its distinctive character that are highly valued and important to retain. These include views of individual buildings within their own grounds, such as the Thatched House and the Cloth Hall, but perhaps some of the more special views are those of groups of buildings. There are for example some significant views of and along The Street, and at the eastern end of Water Lane, especially looking towards the church. These are shown on the plan on page 19. The church tower dominates in these and many other views within the village, and beyond from elsewhere in the parish some of which are also identified on the plan on page 20.

Guidelines for Future Development

The following guidelines have been adopted by Ashford Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance for development control purposes and should be taken into account and/or addressed when considering new development proposals in the parish/village:

RESPECTING THE SETTING OF SMARDEN

Landscape context

See **Paragraphs 6.1 – 6.4 on Page 7** of this design statement for more details.

G1. The rural character, quality and visual variety of Smarden's landscape with its mosaic of small scale fields, hedgerows, trees, woodlands and other landscape features should be protected and enhanced.

All development proposals should take account of the landscape context of the development site. Where appropriate a Landscape Assessment should be carried out to consider the visual impact of the development and to identify any necessary mitigation and enhancement of the landscape.

Landscape features

See **Paragraphs 6.1 – 6.4 on Page 7** of this design statement for more details.

G2. Individual landscape features that make an important contribution to the landscape character and quality of Smarden as a whole or in a particular location should be preserved and enhanced.

Where particular landscape features or surface cover are neglected and/or in decline, they should if appropriate/practicable be restored or reinstated if and when the opportunity arises.

Existing trees and hedgerows

See **Paragraphs 6.2 – 6.4 on Page 7** of this design statement for more details.

G3. Mature trees and hedgerows are an integral part of Smarden's landscape. Many are hundreds of years old and cannot be replaced overnight. Therefore, unless there are exceptional circumstances, existing trees and hedgerows should be retained, and protected from damage during construction activity.

Significant public views

See **Paragraph 6.3 on Page 7 and Paragraph 8.17 on Page 14 and the Maps** in this design statement for more details.

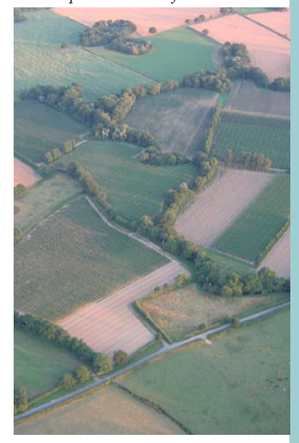
G4. Significant public views within the built and rural environments, as identified in this document, should be protected/retained and enhanced. This would include for example those of and along The Street and Water Lane, those of and from the Minnis, those of individual buildings such as the church and other listed buildings, and long views towards the village and of the church. Views from the network of public footpaths within the parish should also be taken account of.

Gateway sites

See **Paragraphs 6.10 – 6.14 on Pages 8 and 9 and the Parish Map** in this design statement for more details.

G5. Particular regard should be paid to the 'gateway' locations, identified in this design statement, to ensure that any new development does not detract from their overall rural character. Landscape features should be retained and enhanced and any openness of the countryside or spaces should also be respected. The design and appearance of any new development should comply with the other guidelines in this statement.

Landscape context and features.









The Minnis - important open space.



A significant public view in Water Lane.



SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Conservation and enhancement of Smarden's distinctive character:

See **Pages 7 – 14** in this design statement for more details.

G6. New buildings or building work should respect, conserve and enhance the historic, architectural and landscape context that give Smarden its distinctive character as described in this design statement and as additionally observed.

To understand the context for new buildings or building work the following factors should be carefully considered:

(i) ***The way in which Smarden has developed organically over the centuries,*** *as referred to in paragraphs 7.5 - 7.13,* ***and the harmony that is evident in the way it comes together.***

(ii) ***The pleasantness of particular areas or groups of buildings, their 'sense of place' and integrity.*** *How they are enclosed, how they relate to open spaces, how they fit within the landscape, the important contribution of trees, shrubs and hedgerows, and how they are linked to other parts of the village or parish.*

(iii) ***The scale, height, form, features, detailing, massing, layout and density of existing buildings, and the periods of development*** *in the different parts of the village and parish, as described on Pages 10–14.*

(iv) ***The common themes but also the variety in the design, styles and appearance of existing buildings,*** *including the materials and colours that have been used, roofscapes, architectural features, detailing, etc. as described and illustrated on Pages 12-14.*

(v) ***The special quality, interest, setting and appeal of individual buildings,*** *of which there are examples illustrated throughout this document, (whether or not they are listed buildings) both in a general sense and those that provide the particular context of any proposal for new buildings or building work.*

(vi) ***The special architectural and historic importance of the Conservation Area,*** *and the significant contribution it makes to the character of Smarden as a whole.*

(vii) ***Views of, from or within the proposed development site and the impact that the proposed building(s) would have on them*** *as well as those particularly identified in this statement on the maps and referred to in paragraph 8.17 on page 14.*

(viii) ***Transition from the countryside to the settlements,*** *particularly relevant at 'gateway' locations and the rural edge of the village and other settlements where, for example, the density of any development is low and where buildings are seen more in the context of landscape features and larger spaces. Particular care should be taken to ensure that these areas are not 'urbanised.'*

Design and use of materials

See **Pages 12 -14** in this design statement for background.

G7. A high quality of design that properly reflects consideration of the factors in guideline G6 above is expected for all new buildings.

(i) ***A pastiche*** *of design styles and use of materials* ***or slavish imitation*** *of existing buildings* ***should be avoided.***

(ii) ***Design solutions should be innovative and complement the places in Smarden that have evolved overtime*** *respecting the scale, height, form, features, detailing, massing, layout and density of existing buildings.*

(iii) ***Buildings of a suburban character,*** *for example, buildings with a deep plan and bulky form that would overly dominate existing buildings* ***should be avoided.***

(iv) *Any new housing developments should seek to* ***create discrete areas with a 'sense of place' reflecting local character and distinctiveness.***

(v) *All proposals should have regard to the objectives and principles for* ***achieving sustainable development.***

(vi) *Whilst there is variety in the features and detailing on existing buildings there are also, for example, a number of* ***window styles that are used more commonly*** *as illustrated in this guide, and these* ***should be used to good effect to contribute to the local distinctiveness*** *of new buildings/developments.*

(vii) ***Sensitive use of materials, textures and colours*** *that respect the essential character of the immediate setting of the development site and the parish as a whole, described and illustrated in this design statement,* ***will be essential.***

(viii) ***Use of 'locally' sourced traditional materials,*** *such as 'red' stock or 'red' multi-stock bricks from wealden clays, clay roof and wall tiles – particularly Kent peg tiles, timber weather boarding and timber framed windows, doors and other joinery* ***will be actively encouraged.***

(ix) ***Use of concrete tiles and metal roofing systems should generally be avoided.***

(x) ***Use of concrete blocks, engineering bricks, wire cut or other bricks with sharp edges and smooth faces should generally be avoided for facing work.***

(xi) ***Use of UPVC*** *cladding, barge boards, fascia, soffits, windows and doors* ***may not always be considered appropriate.*** *Where it can be used without compromising the architectural or historic context or integrity of existing buildings* ***UPVC may be acceptable, providing local character and styles are respected and subject to good quality detailing and finishes.***

Design and Access Statements

G8. As part of the Design and Access Statement provided with any planning application to explain the logic and rationale of their design solution(s), developers should demonstrate by contextual studies (using drawings and photographs) that the design(s) of any new building(s) is/are appropriate. Furthermore, that they would not have an adverse visual impact within the local environment/landscape or street scene as a whole, or adjoining/adjacent buildings or land in particular.

Existing buildings – alterations, extensions and restoration work

G9. Alterations, extensions and restoration work should be wholly compatible with the particular building(s) in design and appearance, using matching colours and materials, and respecting any special architectural or historic interest. Neighbouring/adjoining buildings should also be taken into account.

Conversions of redundant farm buildings

See **Paragraph 8.9 on Page 13** of this design statement for background.

G10. Conversions of redundant farm buildings, such as barns and oast houses, should be designed so that they conserve the essential character of the building(s) and their setting within the agricultural landscape. Note should be taken of existing examples within the locality to help determine the best approach.

New planting and other landscape measures

See **Paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 on Page 7 and Paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 on Page 10** in this design statement for background.

G11. New planting and other landscape measures should be an integral part of development proposals/the design process. Planting should generally be of species that are indigenous to the locality in and around Smarden and where appropriate of a form that is compatible with the historic setting.

Boundary treatment and means of enclosure

See **Paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 on Page 7 and Paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 on Page 10** in this design statement for background.

G12. Native hedgerows are the predominant form of boundary treatment and means of enclosure in the parish and are a valued part of its rural character. As such they should be retained, protected, enhanced and added to.

















Guidelines for Future Development

(i) ***The planting of new hedgerows*** *or supplementary planting of existing hedgerows* ***will be actively encouraged as the preferred means of enclosure.***

(ii) *If* ***walls and other traditional good quality boundary enclosures*** *are considered appropriate they* ***must respect their setting and local character,*** *including in terms of their height, materials used, detailing and finishes.*

(iii) ***New or replacement fencing,*** *where it is necessary,* ***should be sympathetic and appropriate to the rural character*** *of the settlement and/or landscape, and take account of public views. Some types of fencing, for example, close boarded or panelled fences can detract from/unacceptably dominate the setting of buildings or the local landscape particularly along site frontages.*

SERVICING DEVELOPMENT

Rural lanes

See **Pages 7-11** in this design statement for background.

G13. Care should be taken to ensure that any new or improved accesses and suitable visibility splays required to serve any new or existing development do not have an adverse impact on the character of our rural lanes, which should be conserved and enhanced.

Parking for new development

See **Pages 10-11** in this design statement for background.

G14. Parking spaces should be provided for in the layout of any new development in a way that reduces the dominance and visual impact of vehicles and expanses of tarmac on the character of the development as a whole and on the surrounding area.

Although on street parking is important to the daily activity of village life, where practicable it should be discouraged as it detracts from the historic and rural character of Smarden.

Street lighting

See **Paragraph 8.14 on Page 13** in this design statement for background

G15. Whilst street lighting is beneficial for safety and security it can be out of character particularly in the countryside or within an historic setting. There is however a wide range of options available for lighting and where it is proposed as part of a new development or within the existing environment, a sensitive approach needs to be taken.

Lighting specifications should achieve a balance between the essential luminance and light pollution such that light spill, glare and glow are minimised.

Unsightly styles of columns and light fittings should also be avoided.

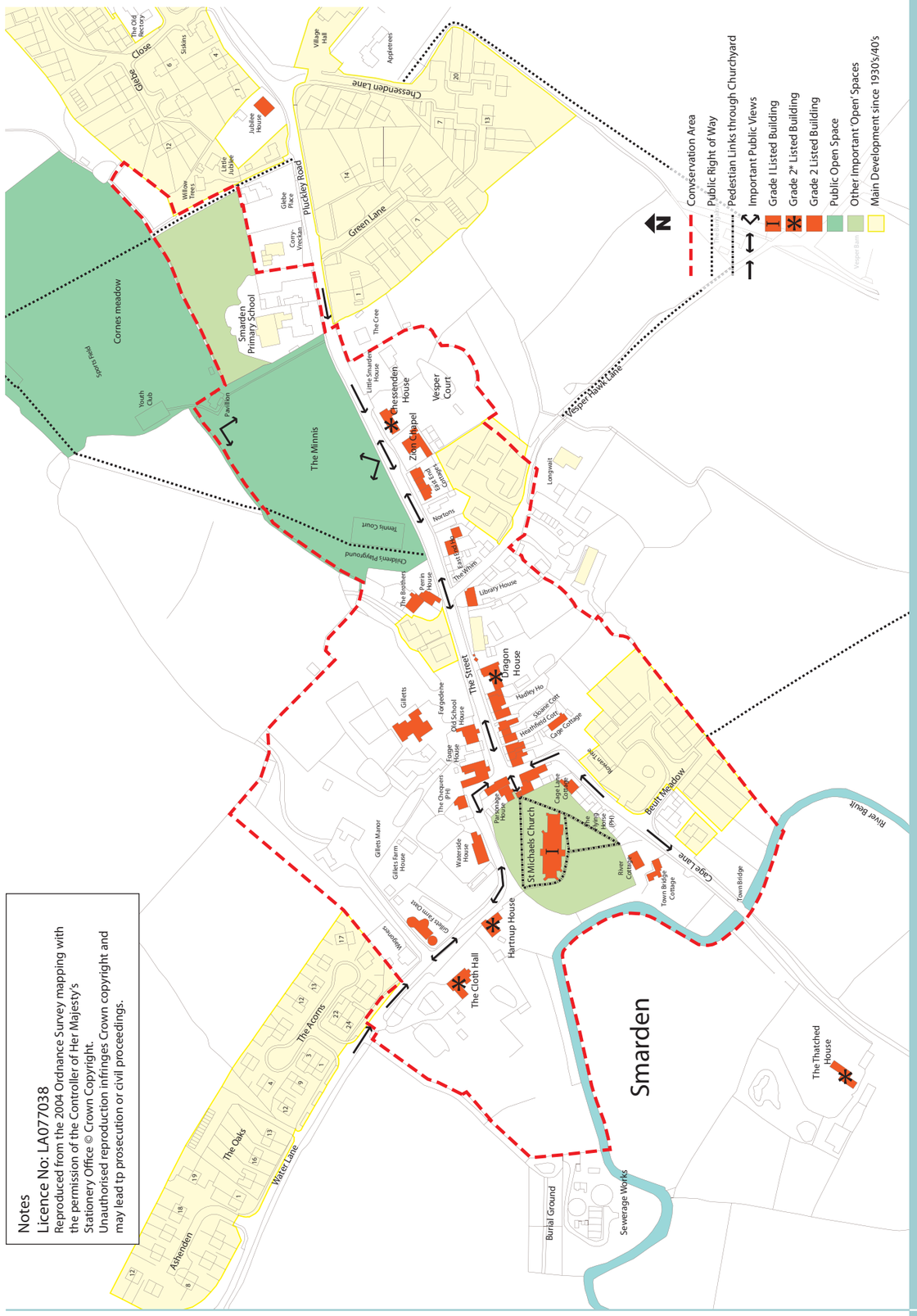
Road signs

See **Paragraph 8.15 on Page 13** in this design statement for background.

G16. Any new road signs should be carefully sited. The proliferation of signs at some 'gateways' into the village is unnecessary. Opportunities should be taken to rationalise them.

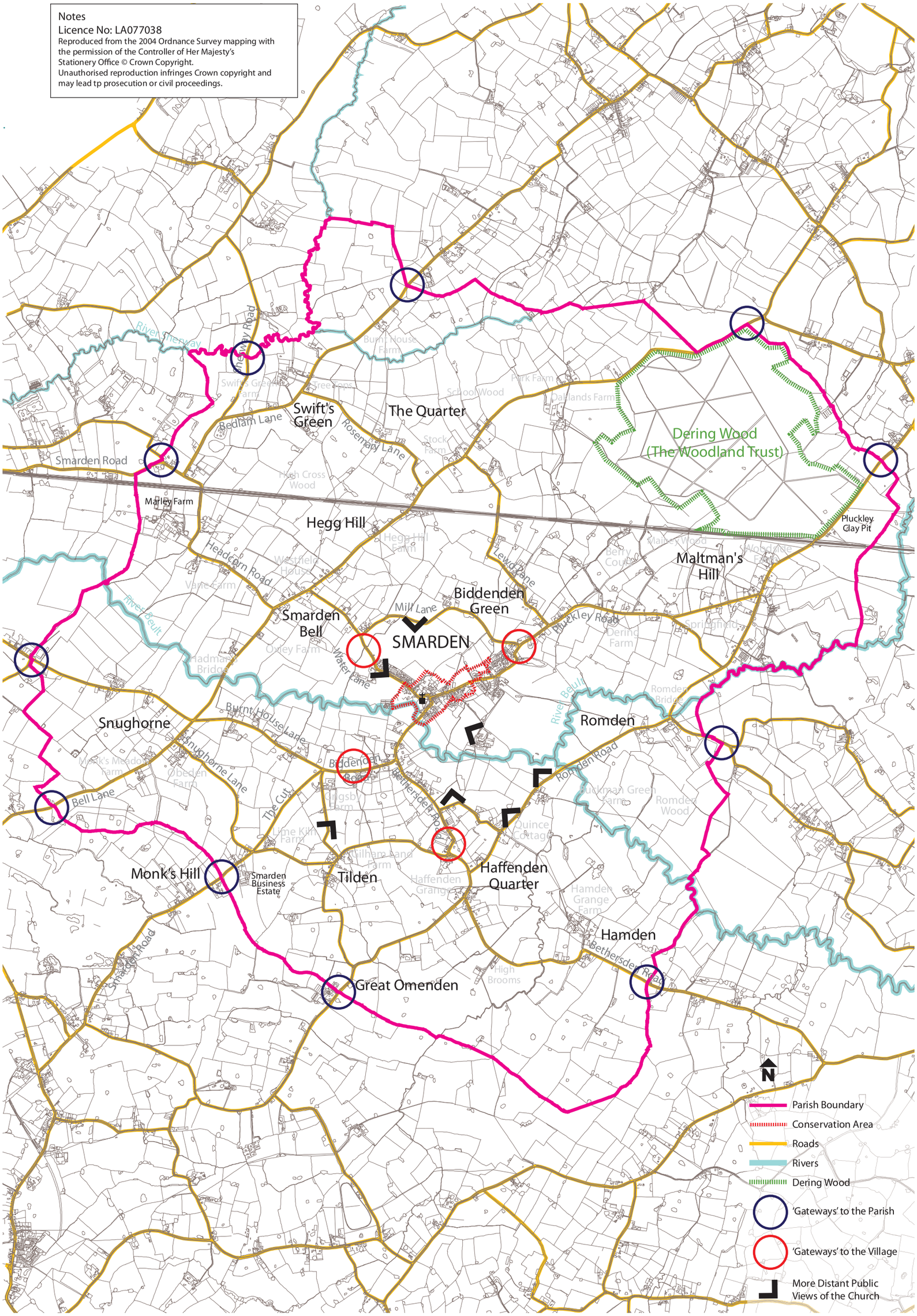


The Village Conservation Area



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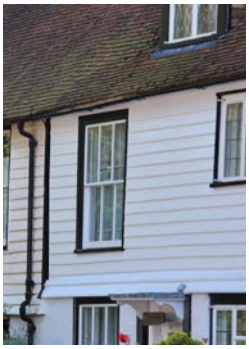
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