ASHFORD
BOROUGH
LOCAL PLAN

Conservation Area Assessment

Hothfield

Conservation Areas are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

There are 43 Conservation Areas in Ashford Borough.

HOTHFIELD CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

AREA APPRAISAL [Brief, objective description of Conservation Area - scale, location, other special characteristics]

The Conservation Area has three distinct parts:

1. The small development around St Margaret's Church and the walled garden with its fine Listed Buildings and intimate "hamlet" scale.

2. A large area of rural open space with its gently undulating landscape and mature trees reminiscent of parkland giving views over many miles to surrounding rural land.

3. An area of ribbon development following the road network through the village and lying outside the Listed wall which encloses both the open space and cluster of development around St Margaret's Church, and which contains some attractive and historic buildings.

In general, there are several physical barriers which prevent this large scale Conservation Area from being viewed cohesively. In particular, the wall which runs in a north/south axis along the Bethersden Road forms a visual break between the various elements identified above.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	The Conservation Area covers a large area and is characterised generally by a gently undulating landscape rising to the crest of a hill occupied by St Margaret's Church and a small cluster of Listed Buildings. The road pattern within the Conservation Area itself is generally linear and follows two axes, one being north/south and following the line of the wall, the other being east/west skirting the open space The open space itself is criss-crossed in an east west direction by a public footpath. The main form of built development along Bethersden Road is ribbon in character and is of medium density. Most dwellings are set back from the road frontage by 10 to 15 m and a well defined building line exists. To the east of Bethersden Road the area is entirely rural in character being agricultural grazing land with some fine specimen trees. At the crest of the hill to the south of the Conservation Area is St Margaret's Church. The adjoining buildings have a rustic character where the pattern of development consists of a series of courtyards.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
archaeological significance and potential of the area	There is an area of archaeological significance around St Margaret's Church at the crest of the hill and this includes the Churchyard and surrounding fields. As such there is easy access to potential finds. There are no ancient monuments within the Conservation Area boundary. The area around the Church of St Margaret (formerly Church of St Mary) dates back to medieval times and the cluster of buildings around the Church date from the late 18th Century.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.	All spaces are of an informal nature, the largest being the open countryside which resembles a park, lying within the wall. This area gives fine views out towards the east into surrounding countryside and is of town significance in hierarchical terms. Several important gaps exist between and leading to built up development along the Bethersden Road which are rural in character and of a very informal nature i.e meadows and trees, pasture land for grazing animals etc. These allow views uphill towards St Margaret's Church or out into rural land e.g between Thanet House and The Rectory. There are a variety of building types and styles along the Bethersden Road. Generally these are of a Kentish vernacular appearance using local materials such as Kent Peg tiles. There are however many new additions to the ribbon development for example Thanet Terrace, which is a typical 1940's/50's public housing development. Thanet House to the west of the Conservation Area is an important landmark building and this is visible across open fields when travelling from the South along the Bethersden Road. The Listed wall to the former kitchen garden of Hothfield Place is also a local landmark which is just visible above the wall fronting Bethersden Road. St Margaret's Church being on the crest of a hill is visible over a wide area both from the south and the north. The cluster of buildings around St Mary's Church are the most important buildings in terms of interest and quality, many being Listed. The main uses are residential.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the use of distinctive and traditional building materials	There are many examples of traditional building materials in the built form, mainly red brick and Kent Peg tiles . However there are some notable exceptions, for example the cluster of buildings around Park Lodge, Gate Lodge and Home Farm on the north eastern tip of the Conservation Area. These dwellings are Victorian and consist of yellow brick and slate tiling. Street furniture is sparse due to the rural nature of the area. The predominant marker in terms of the cohesion of the Conservation Area is the '4' high red brick wall which follows the line of Bethersden Road and The Street built in red clay bricks. This physically separates the open space on one side of the Conservation Area with the built development along Bethersden Road on the other.
the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area	The mature trees within the open space to the east of the wall are extremely distinctive Most are very sparsely scattered but this allows fine views in to and out of the Conservation Area. The predominant species are Elm, Oak and Poplar. In order to sustain the character of the open space, it would be beneficial to enhance with mature tree planting, but on the whole the attractiveness of the Conservation Area is due to the open views in to and out of the area.
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	No major changes have occurred along the Bethersden Road. St Margaret's Church and the surrounding cluster of buildings however were originally in agricultural use and several barns and a dovecote have been converted to residential. This has resulted in the introduction of domestic features such as rooflights in some of the Listed barns and unattractive sheds and other temporary structures.
historical evolution	The road structure is historical and has obviously existed in this form for some time, skirting the brick wall running along a north/south axis. In this respect ribbon development has formed alongside the road and distinguishes the historical part of the village from the more modern residential areas to the north of the Conservation Area. The new development of bungalows adjoining Hothfield Manor is somewhat intrusive when viewed from Bethersden Road in a southerly direction. The public sector housing to the west of the Conservation Area known as Thanet Terrace also spoils some views because of the mediocre design quality but generally they help complete the pattern of ribbon development within The Street.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside	Built development/open spaces are physically distinct from each other and are "divided" by the presence of the brick wall alongside Bethersden Road. There are extensive vistas and panoramas from the south where land rises up to the crest of the hill giving glimpses of St Margaret's Church and also from within the wall to countryside beyond. The walled garden and cluster of buildings around St Margaret's Church are visible only from within the open space but not from public roads.
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	Very limited loss/damage other than use of tarmac road surfaces. The car park to the Thanet Arms Public House is also unattractive and there is lack of a front boundary to screen the hard surfacing Generally there is no litter problem nor are there any hoardings or noise or clutter from any individual source. There are few fussy road markings. Some pockets of modern housing along Bethersden Road and to the north of Park Road spoil long views across the open space area as does the green corrugated roof of the Post Office to the north of the Conservation Area.
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	1. The village hall to the south of Park Drive lies within an otherwise uninterrupted area of open space and this is of poor design quality and surrounded by non-native tree species such as Leylandii Cypress. The development intrudes unacceptably into the northern part of the Conservation Area. 2. Car park to the Thanet Arms public house is hard surfaced and new landscaping and/or front boundary treatment is required to hide this intrusive feature. 3. The Post Office roof should be replaced with traditional clay tiles. 4. Planting of native trees along the northern boundary of the Conservation Area within the open space would help screen public sector development housing along Park Drive which currently detract from long views across from St Margaret's Church.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	1. Burts Walk, an area of woodland, which lies to the south-west of the Conservation Area is of no particular merit and in fact obscures views along Bethersden Road when approaching the Conservation Area from the South. 2. The group of Listed Buildings to the north of the Conservation Area including the Thanet Arms public house and dwellings to the north are not particularly well defined and are situated opposite unattractive modern development. However, the quality of the dwellings themselves is good. 3. The village hall to the south of Park Drive is a modern unattractive structure but this is presently well screened by various coniferous trees and shrubs which provides an effective screen when viewed from open space to the south.
the existence of any threats to the area	There have been several alterations to Listed Buildings and new development close by existing Listed structures which have detracted from their intrinsic character and appearance. Notably, the new bungalows alongside Polla House appear somewhat incongruous against the walled garden. The introduction of domestic features to other existing Listed Buildings such as those to the north of Polla House has also diminished the historic value in some cases.

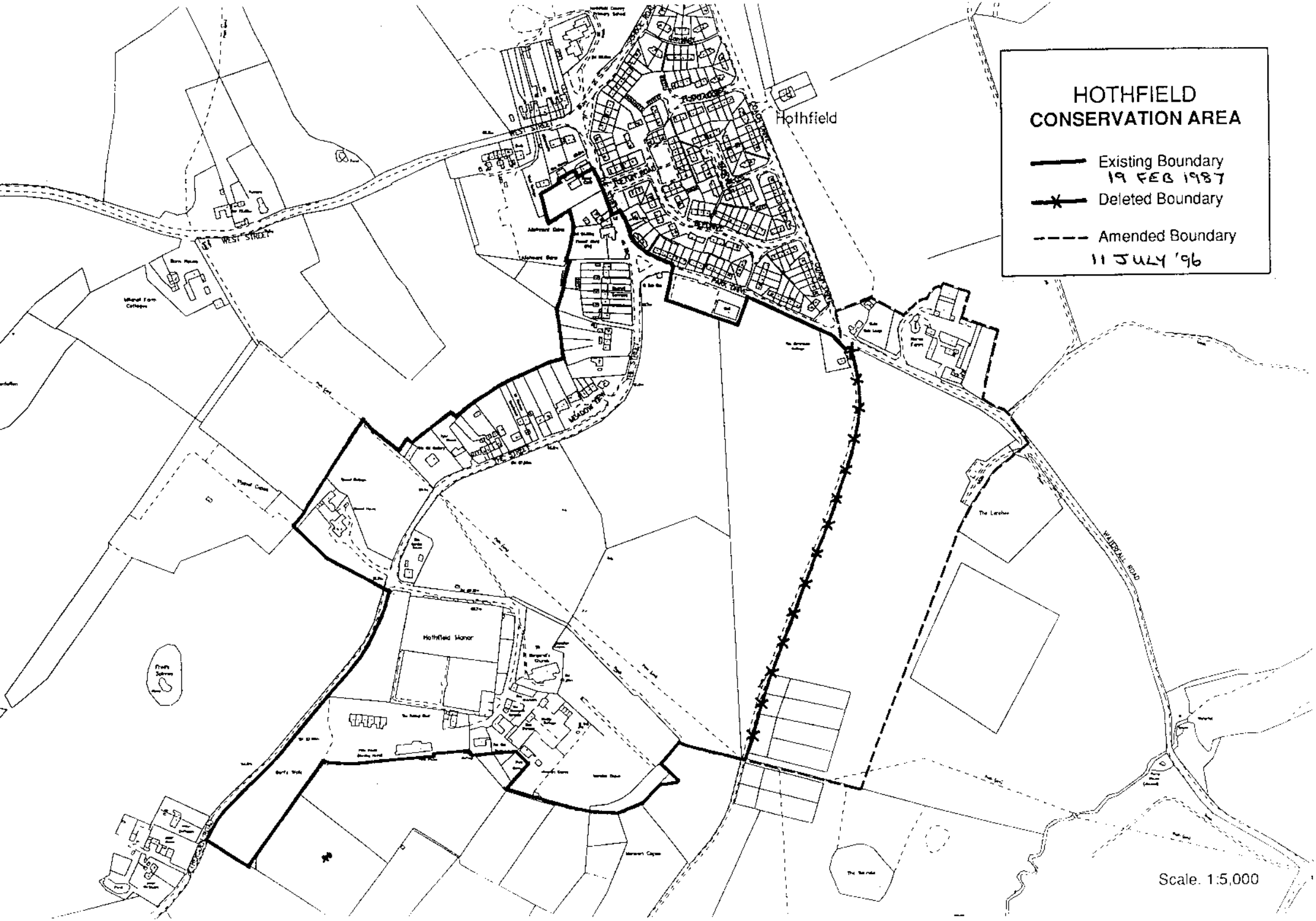
OUTCOMES

Area boundary	It is suggested that the area boundary is extended to include a larger area of open space to the east and the small group of buildings to the north-east of Park Lodge known as Gate Lodge and Home Farm. This is because the open space to the east continues up to the crest of the hill. Home Farm and Gate Lodge relate in design terms to Park Lodge and form a cohesive group which should be protected.
Potential Article 4 Directions	Land to the south of Polla House which is agricultural and open in nature and which provides long views from the south up to the Church should be protected from future agricultural development.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	Encouragement should be given to providing a new site location for the village hall within or adjoining the built up confines of the village in order to release the existing site from its developed status. If possible, this area should revert back to open space consistent with the rest of the open land to the south.
Potential improvement schemes	1. As Site Policies above. The surrounding trees, whilst helping to screen the building are mainly coniferous and appear incongruous against the existing Elms, Oaks and Poplars within the open space area to the south. The planting of native specimen trees is needed to replace those around the hall. 2. Additional planting of native trees would be beneficial to screen Nos. 27 - 35 Park Drive from long views down from St Margaret's Church. 3. Additional landscaping and/or screening is required to soften the impact of the car park outside the Thanet Arms public house. 4. The green roof to the Post Office opposite the public house should be replaced with traditional materials

Officer: Miss G Eglintine

Date: 6 November 1995

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HOTHFIELD
CONSERVATION AREA
Existing Boundary
19 FEB 1987
Deleted Boundary
Amended Boundary
11 JULY '96
Hothfield
WEST STREET
PARK LANE
MEADOW VIEW
Hothfield Manor
WALDRAM ROAD
Scale. 1:5,000