ASHFORD
BOROUGH
LOCAL PLAN

# Conservation Area Assessment

# Charing

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.

## CHARING CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

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

Charing is a large Conservation Area which falls into three parts - the main High Street lined with listed buildings; the Market Place, Village Green and former Archbishop's Palace; and area between the A20 and the railway. In the main these three areas reflect the organic growth of the village. The village is located on the lower slopes of the escarpment of the North Downs. The High Street is therefore sloping. This street is a fine group of medieval buildings constructed in Kentish vernacular, many are timber framed and have later fronts. The Archbishop's Palace is of particular historic and archaeological importance. There is a marked contrast between the hustle and bustle of the High Street and the peace and calm of the Market Place, churchyard and Village Green. Several buildings are listed Grades I and II*. The A20 is a significant break in the continuity of the Conservation Area. It has a severe adverse impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

The area south between the A20 and t he railway has a number of older Listed Buildings but the general character is of Victorian/Edwardian larger houses perhaps reflecting the village's extension following the arrival of the railway.

| ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION | COMMENT |
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| topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography | The chief characteristic is the linear form of the High Street down the slope of the North Downs. Most buildings within the High Street are constructed in line with the slope. Plots being at right angles to it. The south western part of the Conservation Area is on rising ground to the south of the A20. The road network reflects the old routeways up the Downs and along the base of the escarpment. The A20 is a later by pass to the village. |
| archaeological significance and potential of the area | The village, because of its age, must have significant archaeological potential. The area around the Archbishop's Palace is an Ancient Monument. Recent visits to this site by English Heritage and Kent County Council Archaeology have underlined how little is know about this area and what a rich source of archaeological information. |

| ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION | COMMENT |
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| the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality. | There are a number of spaces which make up the whole. In the main they are discreet areas.<br>1. The High Street - the dominant feature - long linear space lined with buildings - views closed off by buildings - small gap views to yards/buildings behind - lively street - large variety of buildings all of high quality. Very high quality of townscape.<br>2. Market Place/Churchyard/Village Green. This space feels separate from the High Street because access to it is down a narrow short length of street. There are views into it from the High Street - giving a framed view of the Church and a fine mature tree outside the Library. Once in the Market Place its important relationship with the Village Green becomes apparent. Currently this view is curtailed by walling and overgrown brambles etc. The Village Green itself is bounded by trees and fences which give a strong sense of enclosure.<br>Beyond the Market place is the space created by the Palace Yard - visible through the arch and the Churchyard and route down to the Church Hall. These spaces have an enclosed feel but are subservient to the main space.<br>3. Old Ashford Road and approach from the east. This area is dominated by trees and in part the A20. It does not especially feel part of the historic areas particularly at its eastern end. This part comprises a large area of trees and large pond adjacent to Moat House. Boundary of Conservation Area is along north side of A20 at the moment. On south side is Kent County Council depot - an eyesore - and a large open field giving views to Burleigh House. This field links two parts of the CA together but is not in the area now. It is an important open space.<br>4. A20 crossroads - Because of the dominance of the A20 this space has little or no relationship to the built environment either side. Townscape quality is very poor.<br>5. Station Road. A narrow winding road with a variety of buildings, large trees and walls. General character is of enclosure. Most buildings are close to the road. Large trees overhanging the road add to this. View at western end of Station. Dominated at this end by modern unsympathetic dwellings in Burleigh Road.<br>6. Burleigh Road - a narrow unmade road. Two pairs of black and white semi detached houses of interest view to trees on the skyline. Rest of buildings are not of major architectural merit but are of similar styles and create an interesting space.<br>7. Open land behind Archbishop's Palace. This area not seen from Market Place but very important for setting of the Palace - strong link visually to open farmland and Downs to the north. Part of space enclosed by brick and flint walls. Some of walls are listed. Those to frontage of Pett House are not and are in a poor condition. |

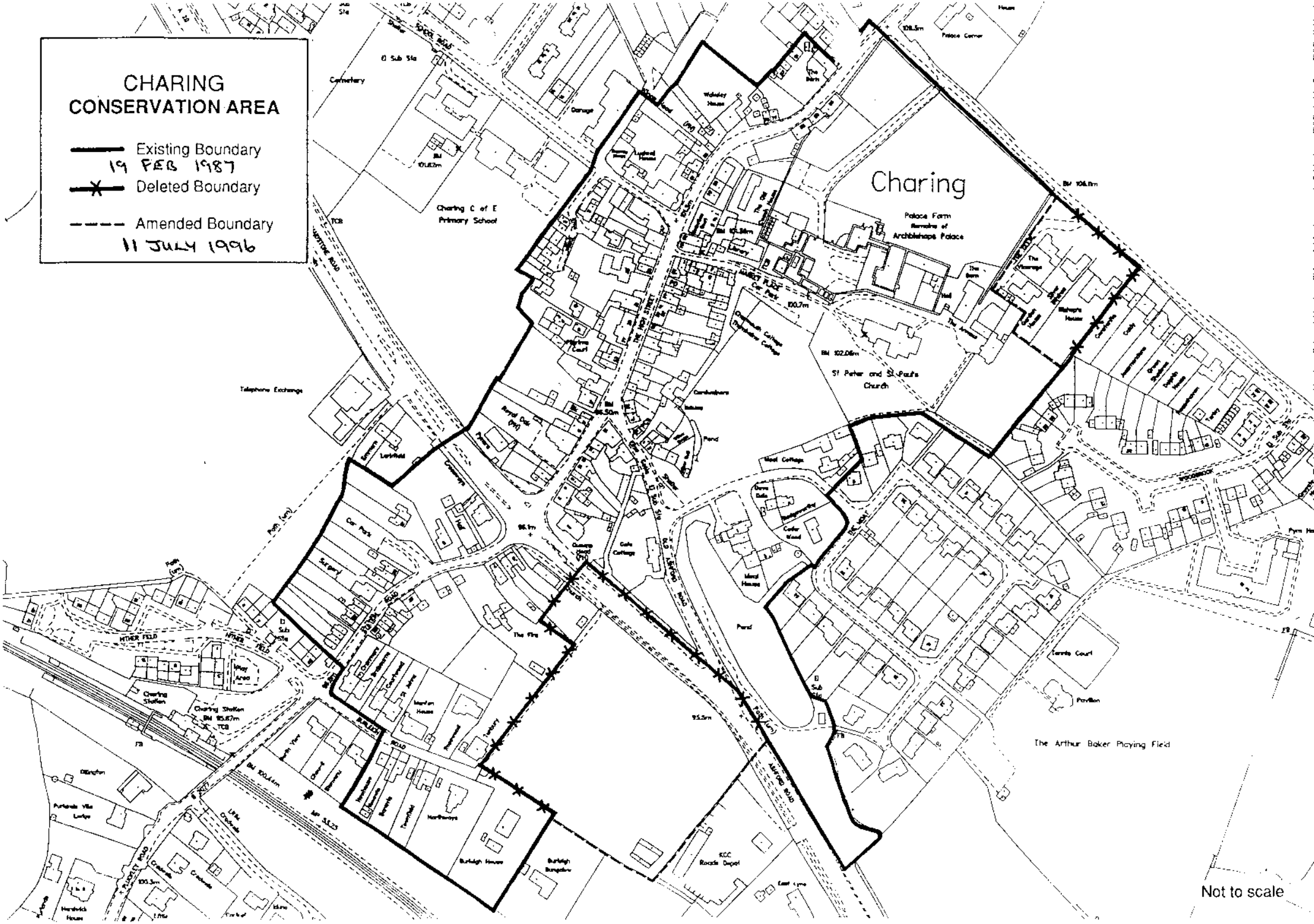
| ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION | COMMENT |
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| the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area | Main impact of green areas trees etc is Village Green and mature trees around it. Trees in Old Ashford Road and around the Pond. Trees adjacent to boundary north of Burleigh House and open area adjacent to Burleigh House.<br><br>Trees behind houses on west side of High Street are important part of views across the school playing fields. (See other comments above.) |
| the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types | Most of buildings appear to have been residential at some stage and some converted to other uses later, eg shops in the High Street.<br><br>Archbishop's Palace is area of agricultural buildings and the Palace range. Very specific uses and clearly very different buildings from the rest of the village. |
| historical evolution | This is complicated. There are residents of the village, eg Sarah Pearson of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England and Mrs P Winzar who are very knowledgeable about this. It appears however that it might have been in two or three stages. Firstly a small group at the crossroads of Pett Lane/Station Road/High Street and the establishment of the Archbishops Palace and the Church. Secondly, the extension of the High Street reflecting the medieval importance of the village and thirdly the extension towards the railway. |
| the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside. | Although clearly a farming and communication centre originally the Conservation Area is very inward looking. There are few views out. Links to surrounding countryside are limited therefore to the edges for example entrance from eastern A20 and across Pett Lane to countryside beyond. |
| the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area | Main damage to the area is the A20. This is a major physical and visual barrier.<br>Plot adjacent to the Methodist Church is scruffy - the sheds - mobile home detract from character of area. |
| identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged | 1. High Street itself. The road surface and footpaths are in need of repair. Suggest enhancement scheme to improve quality.<br>2. Market Place - dominated by the car park - visual barrier to views over the Green. Needs environmental improvement scheme.<br>3. Burleigh Road - poor surface modern buildings at entrance to road, suggest hedges planted and road surface improved.<br>4. Garage in School Road but only very localised. Is this a re-development site? |
| the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area | None. |

## OUTCOMES

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| Area boundary | 1. Burleigh House and field to the north of it should be included.<br>2. modern buildings north of the Vicarage excluded.<br>3. Include plot by the Methodist Church. |
| Potential Article 4 Directions | No, as most of buildings are listed in core area. |
| Site Policies (proposals and protection) | Protection of Village Green and of open field north of Burleigh Road? |
| Potential improvement schemes | 1. Market Place and Archbishop's Palace/Farm.<br>2. High Street paving.<br>3. A20 corridor. |

Officer: M Vink

Date: 20 November 1995


CHARING
CONSERVATION AREA
Existing Boundary
19 FEB 1987
Deleted Boundary
Amended Boundary
11 JULY 1996
Charing
Palace Farm
Remains of
Archbishops Palace
Charing C of E
Primary School
St Peter and St Paul's
Church
The Arthur Baker Playing Field
Not to scale