ASHFORD
BOROUGH
LOCAL PLAN

Conservation Area Assessment

Little Chart

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.

THE LITTLE CHART CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

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

The Little Chart Conservation Area covers the southern half of the village of Little Chart as well as a small area of land just to the east of the entrance to the village from the south.

It is primarily urban in character with a mixture of residential and commercial properties. Included within the village is a small area of open space which is quite heavily planted which provides separation between Ford Mill to the west and the residential properties to the east of the road which passes through the village.

The presence of the paper works gives the village a more active feel than would be usual for a village of this size, and is a major feature of the Conservation Area.

It is a relatively small area which is linear in shape.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	The northern end of the Conservation Area is its highest point with the land sloping down to the river which passes through the Conservation Area. To the south and east of the river the land rises again. To the south lies the open parkland within the grounds of Surrenden which rises gradually away to the south and provides an attractive, historic setting to the southern village entrance. The part of the Conservation Area east of the Swan Inn is different in character, being relatively open and more rural in nature.
archaeological significance and potential of the area	There is an area of archaeological significance to the west of the village of Little Chart. This is too far from the current boundary of the Conservation Area to influence this assessment.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.	There is a significant proportion of Listed Buildings within this Conservation Area. Large houses are a prevalent feature with the Swan Inn being a landmark building at the entrance to the village. The bridge across the river is also an attractive feature which visually separates the Conservation Area to a slight extent. An attractive feature of the townscape is the curved road which passes in front of Ford Mill and which includes the very attractive Bank House. The planted area of open space is the central feature of the village. Unlike many Kentish villages, it is not an open green but acts solely as a natural buffer between the Mill and residential properties on the east side of The Street. An interesting feature is the difference in orientation between the buildings on the east side of the road passing through the village, which are generally set at an angle to the road, whereas on the western side, the buildings are parallel to the road. This is an important feature in the character of the Conservation Area.
the use of distinctive and traditional building materials	The majority of the residential buildings are red brick with Kent peg tile roofing. The Mill buildings are a mixture of older and modern structures, but the latter have successfully integrated into the Conservation Area despite the use of weatherboarding which is not prevalent in the rest of the Conservation Area. The local Dering window style is prevalent in the older buildings, and there are examples of Dutch gables too.
the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area	The green space in the village centre is very important to the distinctive character of Little Chart. The other green space east of the Swan Inn is simply a gap to the Listed Buildings at the eastern end of the Conservation Area.
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	The use of the Mill site for paper production originally and now paper reclamation and recycling has resulted in a fairly intensive development of warehouse-type buildings, out of keeping with the residential nature of development elsewhere in the village. The Mill and its associated ponds to the north contain the village on its western side and make a clear boundary.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
historical evolution	This settlement was originally named 'Ford Mill Street' until the mid 19th Century. This highlights the historical importance of the Mill in the evolution of the settlement, especially as paper making is a traditional industry of Kent. Although paper making is no longer a function of the Mill, it remains in use in the paper industry. For this reason, the historic association of the mill ponds, to the north-west of the Mill, with the operation of the Mill, is justification for their inclusion within a new Conservation Area boundary. To the south, St Mary's Church is a modern building which replaced the original (now ruined) Church at Chart Court - which was the original site of Little Chart. The settlement has grown northwards along The Street with modern 20th Century dwellings located north of the Conservation Area boundary.
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside.	There are open fields to the west of the Conservation Area which are in arable use. These are screened from the buildings within the Conservation Area by a long line of trees. There are no long range views into and out of the village centre (north of the river) as views are obscured by existing buildings and trees. To the south is the parkland of Surrenden, which provides the setting for the Conservation Area from this direction.
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	In general, the Conservation Area has not been badly affected by modern intrusions, except the large house north of the Swan Inn. The noise from the Paper Mill is not intrusive and vehicle movements are kept away from the main central part of the Conservation Area by virtue of the new access point. There is one unfortunate two storey flat roofed extension to The Cottage which is in a prominent location facing southwards down The Street.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	There are one or two small garage buildings which are detrimental to the character of the area. The Village Hall is also in a relatively poor state of appearance. The Swan Inn car park is the major feature which does not contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. It is an extensive area of tarmac next to Hothfield Road in a prominent location at the village entrance. There is one modern BT phone box within the area and a wirescape of cables also.
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	The green area to the east of the Swan Inn car park (which provides overflow parking) is a neutral area, as is the site of St Mary's Church opposite.
the existence of any threats to the area	Over-development of the Paper Mill site leading to traffic generation out of proportion with the scale of the settlement. Also, possible redevelopment of this site in the future for either new industrial uses or residential development, which would mean the loss of the main historical reason for the development of the settlement. Additional on-street parking.

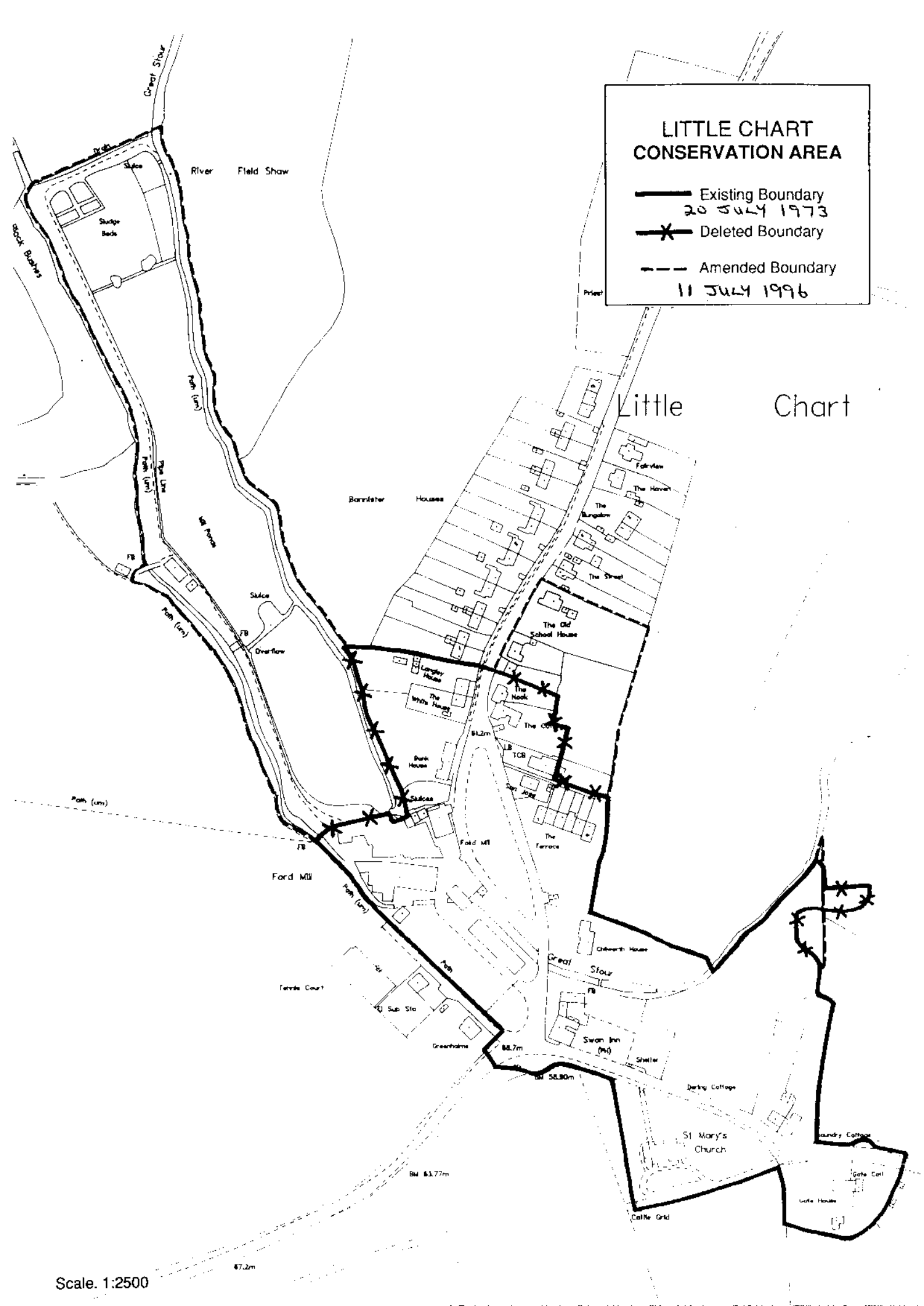
OUTCOMES

Area boundary	I recommend the extension of the Conservation Area at its north-west corner to incorporate the mill ponds which lie to the north of Ford Mill. This is a visually attractive area of which the part south of the weir can be seen from within the existing Conservation Area and helps to provide the setting for the Mill buildings and the attractive Listed Buildings on the western side of the road, as well as consolidating the historical role of the Paper Mill within the Conservation Area. At the north-eastern corner of the Conservation Area, the boundary needs to be extended slightly so that it can encompass the whole curtilage of the Village Hall and a larger part of the curtilage of The Cottage. An anomalous boundary at the eastern end needs straightening.
Potential Article 4 Directions	I do not believe that any Article 4 Directions are required in addition to the existing Direction which restricts extensions to the terrace of 6 properties on the eastern side of the road through the village.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	The Ford Mill site should be retained for employment use, given its historical importance as an employment site. Residential development here would not be appropriate.
Potential improvement schemes	A softening of the impact of the Swan Inn car park through a change of surface or incorporation of additional landscaping would greatly help the character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Officer: SIMON COLE

Date: 7 November 1995

5408548/NW


LITTLE CHART
CONSERVATION AREA
Existing Boundary
20 JULY 1973
Deleted Boundary
Amended Boundary
11 JULY 1996
Little Chart
River Field Shaw
Great Stour
Sluice
Sludge Beds
Path (um)
Bannister Houses
Fairview
The Haven
The Bungalow
The Street
The Old School House
The Nook
The Ferrace
Sluice
Overflow
Park House
Ford Mill
Fold Mill
Path
Tennis Court
Sub Sta
Greenholme
Chilworth House
Great Stour
Swan Inn (PH)
Shelter
Darking Cottage
St Mary's Church
Laundry Cottage
Gate Cott
Gate House
Cattle Grid
BM 58.90m
BM 63.77m
88.7m
67.2m
Scale. 1:2500