

Southborough



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Conservation Area Appraisal

*Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
in partnership with
Southborough Town Council and other local
representatives*

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1 Introduction

Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas

- 1.1** The first conservation areas were designated in England under the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and more than 8,000 now exist. Under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, local planning authorities have a duty to designate as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.
- 1.2** Conservation areas are diverse in size and character, but in general it is the quality and interest of the area that is of importance, rather than the individual buildings within it. Such designation gives the authority greater control over demolition, minor development, works to trees and advertisements in the conservation area. However, it also brings certain responsibilities. Under the terms of the 1990 Act, local authorities have a duty to review the extent of designation from time to time, to designate further areas if appropriate, to bring forward proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas (with public consultation) and to pay special attention to the character or appearance of conservation areas in exercising their planning powers.
- 1.3** It is not just the local planning authority that has a role in protecting and enhancing conservation areas. The principal guardians are the residents and business people who live and work in the conservation area who are responsible for maintaining the individual properties, which together contribute to the character of the conservation area.
- 1.4** Designation also raises awareness of an area's special attributes and can foster pride in the locality. Government planning guidance stresses that our built and natural heritage should be valued and protected for their own sake as a central part of our cultural heritage and that the responsibility for environmental stewardship is shared by everyone.
- 1.5** New development and change can take place in conservation areas but designation should ensure that such proposals will not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the area.

Purpose of this Appraisal

- 1.6** This document attempts to define some of the key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character of the Southborough Conservation Area.
- 1.7** The character of a settlement is determined by more than just the age and style of buildings. It is also influenced by the positioning of the buildings, their use, the shape, size and use of spaces between them, the materials, colours and textures employed and the relationship between the built form and the landscape elements.
- 1.8** In addition, the Appraisal records some of the principal elements that detract from the appearance or historic character of the conservation area. These detractors include development which is out of keeping with the character of the conservation area, unkempt buildings and spaces, poor surfacing, inappropriate street furniture, clutter of street signs and inappropriate advertisements on business premises.
- 1.9** This Appraisal has been prepared in close partnership with Southborough Town Council and a team of local people over a number of months. It will guide the Local Planning Authority in making planning decisions and, where opportunities arise, preparing enhancement proposals. The Appraisal will also inform other agencies and individuals whose activities impact on the fabric of the Southborough Conservation Area, such as the County and Borough Councils and local traders and householders.

Southborough Conservation Area

- 1.10** The Town of Southborough lies within the Kentish High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape in this area is generally one of undulating ridges and gentle valleys lying between the North and South Downs; with scattered copses with fields and more extensive deciduous woodland. There are also historic parklands associated with major landowners.
- 1.11** It lies some 3km (2 miles) north of Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- 1.12** The boundary for the Conservation Area was originally designated in June 1969 and centred on the Common and its immediate bounding development. It was extended slightly in September 1990 to include the northern approach/ Bounds area and the southern approach/ commercial area of the Parade.

Boundary Review

- 1.13** As part of this Appraisal the boundaries of the Conservation Area were critically reviewed.
- 1.14** Some changes have been made, with extensions to include additional areas and buildings, which contribute to the special architectural and historic character, eg The Park Road and Pennington Road area, together with a minor adjustment to the rear of Modest Corner.
- 1.15** The wider landscape setting, which is important to the character of the Conservation Area, remains outside the boundary as it is currently protected through Local Plan policies and other designations, particularly the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2 Policy Background

Local Plan Conservation Area Policies

- 2.1** There are two policies in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (adopted 1996) which relate to conservation areas. These will be updated by policies in the first review. Policy EN4 seeks to control the demolition of buildings within conservation areas.

POLICY EN4

Proposals for the total or partial demolition of unlisted buildings which contribute positively to the character of a conservation area will not be permitted unless an overriding case can be made against all of the following criteria:

- 1 The condition of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and to the value derived from its continued use;
- 2 The adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use, including efforts to find compatible alternative uses;
- 3 The merits of alternative proposals for the site; and
- 4 Whether redevelopment will produce substantial planning benefits for the community, including economic regeneration or environmental enhancement.

- 2.2** Policy EN5 sets out criteria for determining whether a development is appropriate within a conservation area.

POLICY EN5

Proposals for development within, or affecting the character of, a conservation area will only be permitted if all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- 1 The proposal would preserve or enhance the buildings, related spaces and vegetation which combine to form the character and appearance of the area;
- 2 The siting of the development would be similar to adjoining building frontage lines where this is important to the character of the conservation area;
- 3 The layout and arrangement of the building(s) would follow the pattern of existing development and spacing of adjoining plot widths where this is important to the character of the conservation area;
- 4 The scale, massing, use of materials, detailing, boundary treatment and landscaping would preserve or enhance the character of that part of the conservation area in which the proposal would be situated;
- 5 The use, or intensity of use, would be in sympathy with the character and appearance of that part of the conservation area in which the proposal would be situated;
- 6 The proposal would not result in the loss of trees, shrubs, hedges or other features important to the character of that part of the conservation area in which the proposal would be situated; and
- 7 In meeting the parking and access requirements, the character and amenity of the area would not be adversely affected.

- 2.3** The detailed character appraisal contained in this document will assist in the interpretation of these policies.

Other Local Plan Policies

- 2.4** There are a number of other general and specific policies in the Adopted Local Plan which are relevant to the Southborough Conservation Area. Specific policy designations are set out in detail in the Local Plan and the proposal maps. They are shown as Figure 1 and can be summarised as follows:

Limits to Built Development

- 2.5** Under Policy LBD1, the Limits to Built Development define the built up edge of the Town of Southborough, beyond which countryside policies apply.

Landscape Protection

- 2.6** Policy EN23 protects the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the High Weald Special Landscape Area, which applies to areas outside the Limits to Built Development of Southborough.

Metropolitan Green Belt

- 2.7** Within the Green Belt, which covers the Common, the presumption is against new development unless related to open recreation or agriculture.

Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

- 2.8** Proposals affecting areas designated under Policy EN8 will only be permitted where the nature conservation interest of the site would be protected.

Areas of Important Open Space and Areas of Landscape Importance

- 2.9** Policies EN18 and EN19 recognise the visual significance of open and landscaped areas within the settlements.

Local Shopping Areas

- 2.10** Policy SP3 seeks to maintain the vitality and viability of the local shopping area and resist significant loss of further shops.

Shop Fronts

- 2.11** Policy EN15 seeks to ensure that traditional shop fronts are retained in the conservation areas and any new ones are in sympathy with the character of the area.

Advertisements

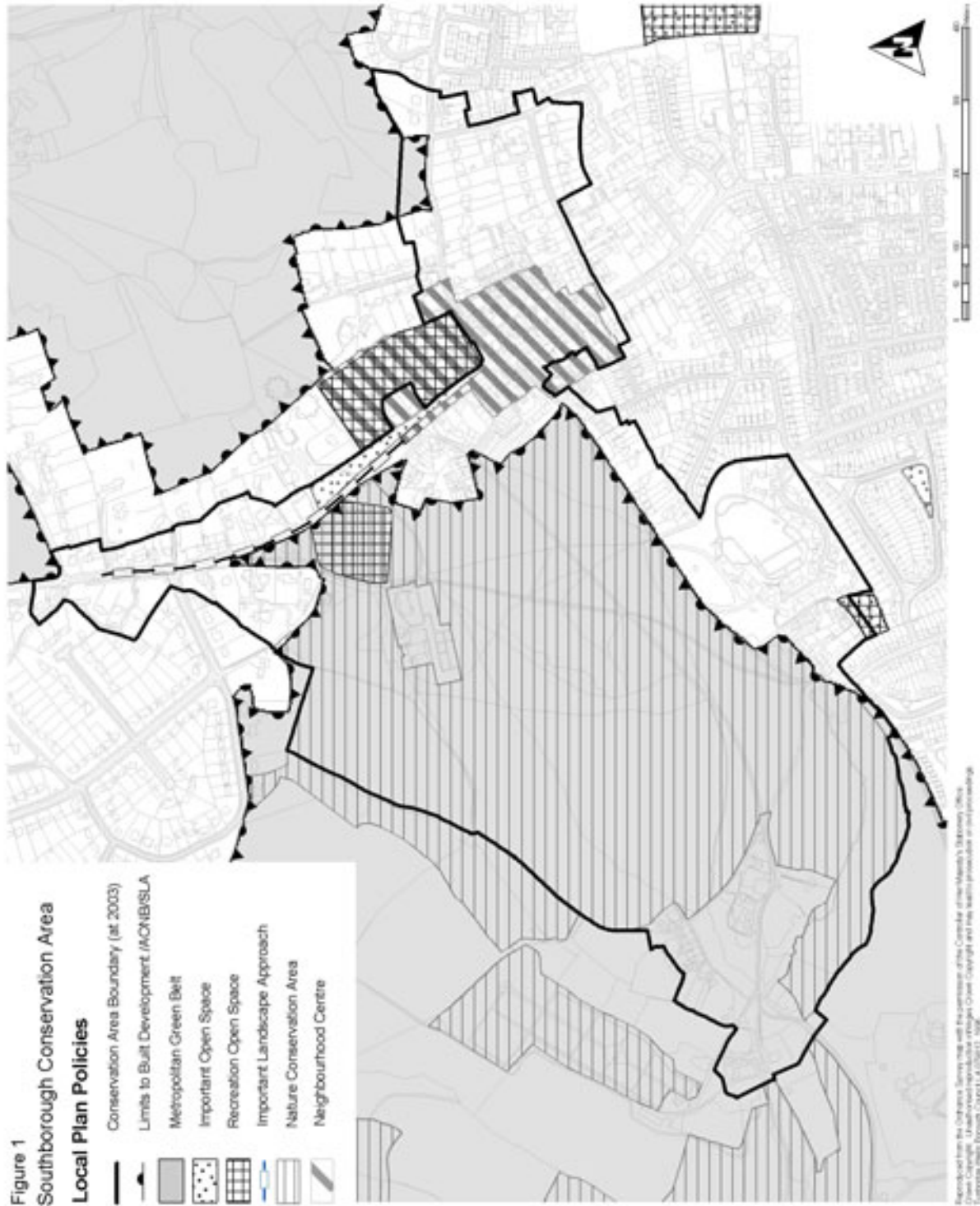
- 2.12** Policy EN16 seeks to ensure that advertisement proposals would not be detrimental to the appearance of the conservation area.

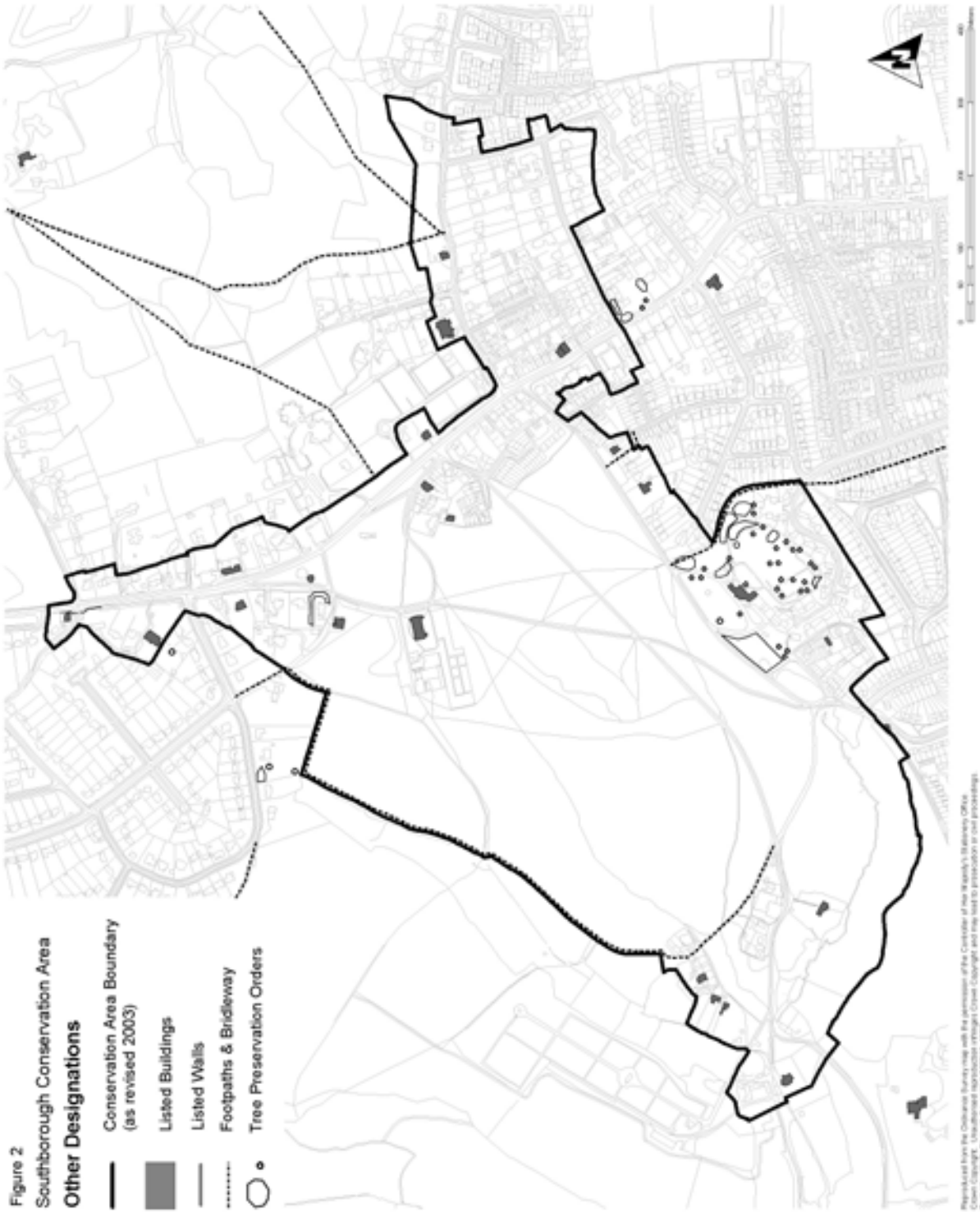
Recreation Open Space

- 2.13** Policy R1 seeks to protect areas of open space for recreation use.

Other Designations

- 2.14** Finally, there are designations which are made through other legislation. These are illustrated in Figure 2 and include listed buildings and tree preservation. It is advisable to check with the Borough Council on detailed enquiries, as these designations are subject to changes.





3 Evolution and Form of Southborough

Pre-Conquest

- 3.1** Southborough lies on prehistoric trackways running north to south and linking the hill forts of Oldbury, near Wrotham, Castle Hill nearby to the east, and Saxonbury, near to Frant, to the south. These in turn linked to the east west routes at Pilgrims Way and across the High Weald.
- 3.2** The finding of flint arrowheads and stone axeheads provides evidence of people being in Southborough, and in the Conservation Area in particular, from the prehistoric period onwards. This may well have been closely linked to Castle Hill Iron Age fort which dates back to 315 BC and which also has Neolithic and Mesolithic links.
- 3.3** Like many other settlements in the Weald, the area was used as seasonal pasture for pigs. Herdsmen came from the north side of High Weald, probably from the Wrotham and Meopham area. This activity was a key component in the development of the Weald.
- 3.4** The area was, however, still sparsely populated with very little permanent settlement until after the Norman Conquest. Surrounded by heavy forests and being on a sandstone ridge, it made the woods easier to clear and cultivate than those on the Wealden Clay.

11th Century

- 3.5** Richard de Fitzgilbert, for his part in the Conquest, was rewarded with lands which became the Lowy of Tonbridge. Southborough was the southern borough of the manor.
- 3.6** By the mid-14th century several settlements existed around Southborough. Some of the earliest documentary evidence relating to the town records the name of Bounds Manor at the northern end of Southborough, in a document dated 1272, and the names of Holden, Bentham and Bounds in taxation records dated 1334.

1500 – 1800

- 3.7** Until the middle of the 16th century, much of the area south of the Medway still formed part of a great hunting chase – the Royal Forest of Southfrith. The earliest occupied hamlets would have been established outside that royal preserve.
- 3.8** With the area being good for iron smelting due to ore being close to the surface and the abundance of timber for fuel, the royal forest gave way to industry. By the end of the 16th century the use of timber for charcoal resulted in the establishment of clearings which could then be used for agriculture. This provided work locally up until the early years of the 20th century.
- 3.9** Ivy House, to the east of the Conservation Area, was formerly known as Kippinghalle. The name suggests that it may once have been the property of John Kipping, Constable of Southborough and ironmaster, who is named as one of those joining in Jack Cade's rebellion against Henry VI in 1450.
- 3.10** It was said that the iron from the forges in the area produced the finest knife blades. They continued working until the mid-18th century, when ironmaking became less economical owing mainly to the lack of timber. Gunpowder manufacture began in 1771.
- 3.11** The local gunpowder was a superior quality and of the type used for fowling pieces. This was a dangerous industry, however, with the Old Forge Farm Powder Mill blowing up shortly after being established. Rebuilt and enlarged, it continued in production until the mid-19th century when the milling of corn took over. Powder Mill Lane to the east derived its name from this activity.

- 3.12** To the west of Southborough were two mills – part of the Bentham Farm which were worked in shifts, Morning Mill and Afternoon Mill. For a short time there was also a windmill on the Common itself.
- 3.13** Great Bounds appears to have been rebuilt in the early 1600s with Little Bounds built shortly after 1610 as the dower house.
- 3.14** The Manorial Rental of 1622 indicates that there were by now a few houses scattered around the Common, or Shearth, as it was referred to.
- 3.15** These were probably in the form of scattered hamlets which made up Southborough, at Holden Corner, Modest Corner and Nonsuch Green, which was possibly once called Wachlingstone Green, lying to the south of the Conservation Area at the corner of Powder Mill Lane.
- 3.16** In 1639, Southborough is referred to as a hamlet of timber cottages, with reference to a bowling green having been laid out by then. The area became very fashionable for visitors, with Southfryth/Southborough generally frequented by gentry and was also Royalist in the Civil War. Nearby Rusthall was chiefly for ‘citizens’ and had Parliamentarian sympathies. By 1663 it had become the royal choice for holidays, with Queen Catherine, the wife of Charles II, spending over three months at Bounds, along with her entourage, who were housed in a tented encampment.



Andrews, Drury & Herbert map 1769 (courtesy, Centre for Kentish Studies)

- 3.17** Luttrell's account of a journey and Celia Fiennes' diary in the 1680s, both refer to the attractions at Southborough, with bowling, walking in the Grove (which equates to the Common, specifically the northern part) and dancing. This took place outdoors as well as in the grander private houses around the Common.
- 3.18** Southborough had become fashionable for taking the waters, which were based on similar but milder chalybeate waters as Tunbridge Wells. As fortunes waned, some of the houses were apparently moved to Tunbridge Wells, although lodgings still remained at Rusthall and Southborough.
- 3.19** In the early 18th century, Southborough still seems to have remained quite popular as a residential place for people visiting the Wells.

1800 – 2000

- 3.20** When the ecclesiastical parish was formed in 1831 and St Peter's Church built (by Decimus Burton), the village started to grow.

- 3.21** In 1832, Southborough was described as a pleasing, scattered hamlet of houses dispersed around an open common and the church, although it had gone out of fashion by then, with visitors preferring Tunbridge Wells and with the shift in royal patronage.



Cricket on Southborough Common

- 3.22** The bowling green had by then become a cricket ground and so also began the particular association of Southborough with cricket ball manufacture. From the early 19th century until 1978, when the last factory closed, the manufacture of cricket balls took place in various premises around the town, including to the rear of the Parade, Modest Corner and even the eastern end of Park Road. One location, used by Twort, is still standing to the rear of 37/39 London Road, on Draper Street. The raw materials of leather and hop twine were readily available locally.
- 3.23** The allied industry of leather tanning was also a major part of the area. The tanyard, which can be dated back to at least 1720, occupied a swathe of land to the south of Holden Road and bounded to the west by Tanyard Lane. It later traded as two separate businesses, finally closing in 1922. The evil smelling effluent from the tannery flowed past the front of Holden House and into Holden Pond.
- 3.24** Other industries over the centuries included forges, coach works and horse dealing. The famous picture by John Frederick Herring in 1857/8 of 'An English Horse Fair on Southborough Common' captures one of the local activities which used to be staged every March. The horse ring is thought to have been near the junction of Victoria Road and Modest Corner. Associated trades were also prevalent, including horse keeping, colt breaking and carriage building (transport connection). Some buildings still have evidence of their use in stabling/workshops.



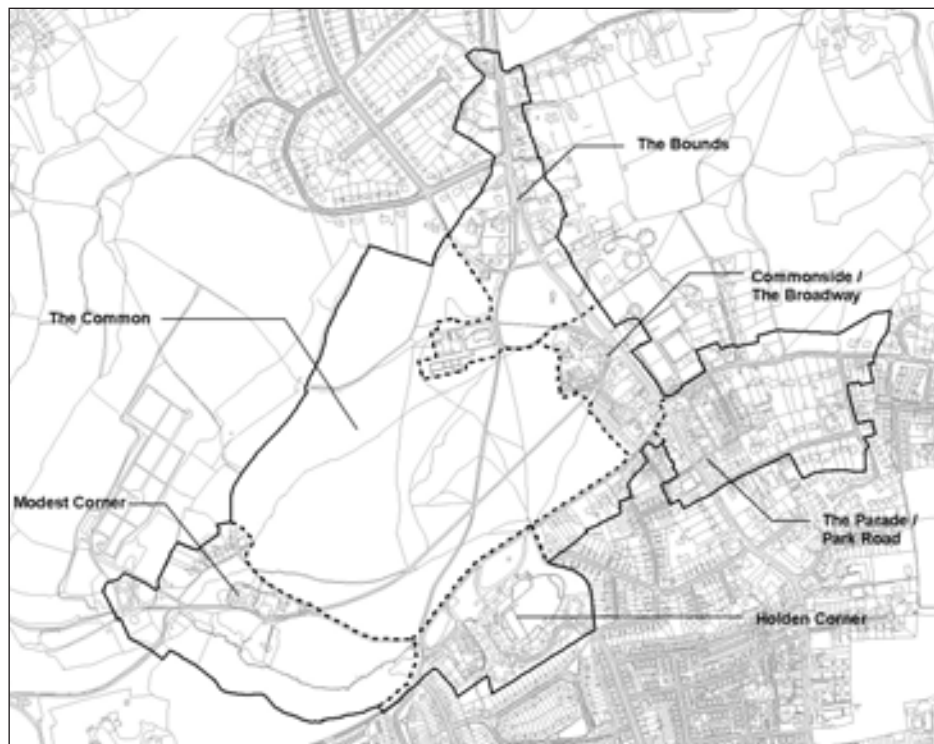
*An English Horse Fair on Southborough Common
J F Herring 1858*

- 3.25** In 1840 the advent of the South Eastern Railway to Tonbridge, and to Tunbridge Wells in 1844, increased the value of land and led to major expansion, with Southborough station (High Brooms) opening in 1893. This also coincided with the height of the brickworks' output.
- 3.26** The area had always catered for travellers and visitors, mostly on the Broadway. Catering for the new residents led to further commercial expansion centred mainly on The Parade which dates from the mid to late 19th century. Park Road and Pennington Road, immediately to the east, accommodated the rising middle classes as well as wealthier residents.
- 3.27** By 1880 Southborough was more or less a self-contained town with its own full range of industries and services and in 1894 was formed into a civil parish. Many of the inhabitants still lived in very modest cottages around the Common and often in poverty and ill health. Indeed, there was a typhoid epidemic in 1851 in tenements in what is now the Heathview area and which eventually prompted better provision of water and sanitation for the town. The fountain at the corner of Victoria Road and London Road, erected in 1886, records the campaign for safer water by Dr William Fairlie Clarke.
- 3.28** Many community celebrations took place on the Common. Maypole dancing can be seen in an illustration of 1908 and is a tradition still taught at the local school. Races also took place. This indicates the importance of the Common to the life and character of the town.
- 3.29** Education over the centuries has seen a number of private as well as state schools in the area. The first was 1786, Holme Foundation School, now Windie Edge and Wesley Cottage on the north east side of London Road.
- 3.30** St Peter's School was built in the mid-1830s, extended in the 1850s and was used until the 1960s. This important building is now partly in use as a nursery school with potential residential use for the remainder. Other large premises around the Common were used as holiday homes.
- 3.31** Building of The Bounds estate to the north was begun in the early 1930s, but the greater part of it was built post-1950.
- 3.32** The break up of the Southfield Park Estate in the mid-1920s and the Broomhill Estate in the mid-1940s led to the gradual expansion of Southborough to the east and the west between the 1930s and the 1970s.
- 3.33** In recent years there has been redevelopment of existing land and buildings due to planning constraints, Green Belt, etc. This has led to the erosion of some parts of the area such as at Pennington Road and Park Road and the south east side of the Common. Future care is required in order to preserve the character of such sensitive parts of the area.
- 3.34** The change to character, with greater pressure for residential (the larger shopping being available in neighbouring towns), is also potentially eroding the once mixed character and uses in the area, although in the 20th century, Modest Corner had still managed to retain some links with its more industrial past – laundry, printing works and vehicle repairs.

4 Character Appraisal

Context

- 4.1** Southborough is set in a topographically distinct landscape of high ridges intersected by a complex network of valleys and steep-sided ghylls. The town itself occupies the high ground adjoining the principal route of the A26, with lush woodland in the valleys to the east and west.
- 4.2** Central to the Conservation Area is the Common, which sits on a smooth sandstone spur running south west from the ridge. The Common supports an acid heathland habitat which is now becoming more wooded as it is not grazed as in the past. Due to the elevated position, extensive and panoramic views are available out across surrounding countryside and open hill tops.
- 4.3** The distinct landscape character of sandstone ridges, ghylls and vegetation that make up the landscape context of Southborough and the surrounding area is described in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 4.4** The Common has been a major determinant in the layout of Southborough, surrounded by a series of informal edge settlements: now best described as a polyfocal plan comprising a series of discrete hamlet groups linked through the Common, its roads and footpath network. More recent infill and expansion in the last century have served to amalgamate some of these, blurring the characteristic pattern of development.
- 4.5** The Conservation Area covers the Common and these various enclaves of development, which themselves exhibit a rich contrast in ambience. There is also an eclectic mix in building style, although there is still generally a consistent theme of scale, form and materials which provides a cohesion in overall character. The Conservation Area also represents what was historically quite a self-contained social and economic entity with a full range of trades and social groups working and living in close proximity.



Southborough Character Areas

4.6 For the purposes of the presentation of this part of the Appraisal, Southborough Conservation Area is described in six character areas, which in part reflect their differing geographical, historic and physical relationships.

4.7 These are:

- The Bounds
- The Common
- Modest Corner
- Holden Corner
- Commonsides/The Broadway
- The Parade/Park Road

The Bounds

4.8 The approach from the north is through a fairly well-treed area with glimpses of steep slopes to the east. The entry to the Conservation Area is punctuated by Bounds Lodge, the mid-19th century former lodge to Great Bounds. Its Tudor detailing, particularly the tall, slender stone chimney stacks and pinnacles are key features that contribute to the building's important silhouette. Adjoining it, the associated stone wall and piers to the former estate, set back from the road, provide an end stop to Vauxhall Lane opposite.



Bounds Lodge and walls to former Great Bounds

4.9 At the corner of Vauxhall Lane is the 19th century Manor House (formerly Manor Farm) with a prominent cypress tree balancing the Bounds Cottage opposite.

4.10 The view southwards is fairly well-contained by the frontage trees although it is fragile due to the few numbers. They mainly comprise evergreens, with conifers, laurel and holly. The vista is focussed on the distant skyline with the group of oak trees at the top of the Common and a significant Scots Pine on the east side of London Road (Birchwood Garage).

4.11 The view back, on leaving the Conservation Area, opens up suddenly and dramatically at Vauxhall Lane, with expansive and elevated views to the north and east with the North Downs in the far distance and Somerhill House and its park across the valley.

4.12 Moving south, the west side of London Road opens out into a wide grass verge backed by stone wall and fencing and behind which is significant greenery. The various properties behind, therefore, are not readily visible and only accessible from a shared drive to the west.

4.13 The only property of particular interest is Little Bounds, a 17th century house with an early 18th century stuccoed front and tile-hung sides. It has classical wooden modillion eaves cornice and a steep clay tiled roof and fluted columns to porch. John Wesley preached here on several occasions between 1762 and 1774. The driveway to this is shared with the other properties and is the only punctuation to the frontage, retaining a modest entry within a lush green setting.

- 4.14** On the opposite (east) side, the boundaries are more of a mixture with fencing, open fronts and trees. The buildings themselves are varied and indifferent in character and contribute little to the area, mainly dating from the 1930s and 1950s. It is the boundary treatments which are the main element which form the character at this point. Their retention and reinforcement is therefore important in order to maintain the fragile character.
- 4.15** No 3 Pond Cottage with its high, pantiled roof and characteristic 1950s detailing, stands just behind a small verge, formerly the site of the manorial pond. To the rear is Rocks Hollow set in an excavated area.
- 4.16** High Ridge House is a modern (1980s) house with a high brick wall to the front and close boarded fence to the south side, both out of character.
- 4.17** At this point the scene opens out more, with Nos 9 and 11; a three-storey, late Victorian rendered building, appearing to sit quite forward in the streetscene providing a punctuation, with the wide junction of Birchwood Avenue opposite.
- 4.18** The remaining east side at this point is weak in townscape terms with The Copse, an infill dwelling with open frontage and the adjoining petrol filling station with canopy, car display and petrol price sign – all detracting elements. The Scots Pine between the properties is a significant feature in alleviating the worst effects and drawing the eye away, particularly from the price totem. This tree is also a significant reference point and fulcrum at the brow of the hill when approaching from the south.
- 4.19** The close group of cypress trees opposite, on the corner of Birchwood Avenue, provides a transition point to this part of the area. The cluster of chimneys to Little Boundes can be glimpsed behind.
- 4.20** Beyond the petrol station is a statuesque beech tree, another landmark tree, with No 19, the old Holme Charity School behind it and close to the road (Now Windie Edge). Of painted brick under a mossy clay tiled roof, it was built in 1786 of simple proportions of domestic character with a single storey extension to the south. The simple picket fence and hedging to the front boundary is an important character that is being lost in other parts of the Conservation Area.



Former Holme Charity School

- 4.21** On the west side of London Road is Birchwood Avenue, a standard highway grass verge, a wide entry to the residential area, further marred on the south west corner by a couple of unsightly poster boards and Day-Glo posters.
- 4.22** A low, close-boarded fence and hedge lead to a pair of early 20th century Edwardian cottages, with red brick to ground floor and harling to upper floor level. St Catherine's is a listed building with a pink painted 18th century brick front to an earlier house, set behind a lush hedge, which complements the beech tree in front of Charity School.

- 4.23** It is at this point that the topography reaches its highest point, and over the brow it is now apparent that the road southwards drops away to the left, revealing in front the copse of oak trees and the apex of the Common, and the first glimpses of the vast panorama to the south. To the west, the side road veers right at the busy junction with Church Road between the cluster of oaks.
- 4.24** A notable feature on the west side is still the wide grass verge with red brick footway behind, which comes on into Church Road. Sadly, the section of verge at Birchwood Corner (opposite the filling station) has been tarmacked over and the next section prettified with white painted boulders, both imparting a negative, urbanising character.
- 4.25** Behind, the high hedging continues in front of Cranworth Cottage. This is a pleasant, Gothic gabled building of two and a half storeys, covered in club and diamond shaped tiles, black and white timbering, but with a rather open, newly constructed parking area to the right. The rear of the building, however, reveals a probable 18th century origin, with a mansard roof, tall chimneys and the late 19th century front applied later.
- 4.26** An access on the left leads past a sadly neglected gate of some character to an almost unnoticed group of outbuildings to the rear. The garage/workshop on the north side appears to have previously been stables. Opposite is a pleasant, half-timbered building lying to the rear of Childersleigh.
- 4.27** At the end of the drive is a pair of semi-detached houses. Wood Lea Cottage is tile hung at first floor, with tall chimneys and white rendered lower floor. Wood Lea itself is red brick with yellow brick quoins. The garden of this particular property faces onto the Common on the south west with a distinctive brick boundary wall. This is a typical detail found elsewhere in the Conservation Area.
- 4.28** Moving south along Church Road there is a group of three large villas. The first is Childersleigh, somewhat obscured by a two metre close-boarded dark brown stained fence which presents a rather negative element to the Conservation Area.
- 4.29** There is then Carrsleigh and its complementary neighbour, Beth Holme. Both are rendered villas with details such as four centred arches, string mouldings and label moulds but with replacement sash windows. Beth Holme on the corner is more dramatically, vertically proportioned: late Victorian/Edwardian with soaring diagonal chimney stacks and club and diamond shaped tile hanging.
- 4.30** This forms the northern edge of the cricket ground and it is at this point that the full drama of the panorama to the south is revealed, framed by St Peter's Church on the west. The road sweeps in front of it, encircling the cricket ground and providing a foreground to the view beyond.
- 4.31** Back on the eastern side of London Road south of Windie Edge are a couple of nondescript 1960s houses, now more visible since the recent felling of a tree which stood in the verge. This tree was a key landmark feature and should be replaced. Next, and immediately to the north of the Hand & Sceptre car park, is a 1970s bungalow which again contributes little to the character of the Conservation Area, nor does its open rustic ranch fencing.
- 4.32** The Hand & Sceptre (now The Harvester) is a key building, which has historically played an important part in the social and sporting life of the area, standing at the corner of London Road before the road dives down into the centre of Southborough.

- 4.33** The War Memorial provides a punctuation point at the apex triangle of the Common, backed by a visually indispensable grove of oak trees. Continuing down the London Road into Southborough, on both the wide grass verges to the east and west side is a very distinctive avenue of alternate lime and plane trees. Behind the boundaries immediately outside the Conservation Area to the east are a number of dramatic Scots Pines and other trees that form a strong containing edge at this point.
- 4.34** The cricket green itself almost forms a natural amphitheatre, bounded on the west by trees, both within gardens and on the Common, and St Peter's Church. On the east side are the two old oak trees and the avenue of trees on the London Road and those beyond – all provide a strong bit of containing geometry. On the south edge the Common itself and the changes in ground levels bound it, with the panoramic view beyond. Affording views of rooftops, chimneys and a skyline of trees, even as far as St John's Church in Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- 4.35** Off Church Road, past Beth Holme, is the interesting Cats Castle, with its white rendered front and white weatherboarded rear. With first floor level doors, remnants of workshop, and large windows, Cats Castle almost seems isolated on the Common. A footpath runs round to the front of Wood Lea with its almost manorial feel, tile hung, with Gothic windows and turrets and a distinctive brick wall with the cross feature to its upper part. The brown fencing of Beth Holme continues right round on the southern boundary as well, which is actually the main elevation of that property. Beyond this is Whortleberry Wood.
- 4.36** The sweep of Church Road leads round to St Peter's Church, past the well-used parking area, with the old school buildings to the rear: it is almost a little enclave carved out of the woodland. At this point is the view back from the church to the Hand & Sceptre, with the fairly 'basic' cricket pavilion in the foreground, thankfully partly disguised by planting. This is a lost opportunity for a distinctive landmark feature to the area. South eastwards is the Vicarage Road area in the background with the belvedere of Broomfield in the distance. There is a mix of trees (various species including Scots Pines, limes and oak), then a cluster of properties to the south east and south immediately adjacent to the Common.
- 4.37** The southern edge of the cricket ground has a footpath in brick leading directly from London Road to the gates of the church. Note the contrast between the cricket ground and the more wild area of the Common itself to the south with its acid grassland and gorse. Note also that the graffitied close panel fencing of the properties on the island group of buildings present an unsightly urban intrusion into the area. Church Road then dives off into the more wildly wooded area of the Common, with the heavy traffic continuing on London Road into the more commercial part of Southborough.

The Common

- 4.38** This is referred to in old maps as the Shirth, thought to derive from Scerte, which is an old English word only found in Kent. It means a short, cut off piece of land.
- 4.39** Commons are usually found on poorer quality land. This is the case for Southborough Common, which is surrounded by farms and estates at Bentham, Bounds, Honnington, and Holden, for example, with the heavier more productive clay soils.
- 4.40** In the case of Southborough the Common occupies a spur with an underlying geology of Tunbridge Wells Sands. The soils are therefore usually thin, free draining and acidic in nature.

- 4.41** It also follows the typical form of commons with a straggling outline, funnelling out by 'horns' into the roads which cross the Common. The houses surrounding the Common front directly onto it and back onto their own small gardens. Fences in the past kept grazing animals at bay. Commonside and Modest Corner particularly exhibit this characteristic.



*Open part of the Common with
Glenmore Place in the distance*

- 4.42** Southborough Common has a very long history of economic land use. However, it has undergone significant changes over recent decades. It was probably originally grazed, at least from the early Middle Ages when it was probably heathland. The wood pasture, which is still evident, probably arose from a period of less intense grazing in the early 19th century. This is inferred from current vegetation and trees which are about 180 years old.
- 4.43** The Common has a rich variety of characters, from open woodland to denser areas, ponds, grassland, etc. There appears to be two main woodland types which are now present on the Common.
- 4.44** The first area is wood pasture. This is located immediately to the west and south west of St Peter's Church.
- 4.45** It is dominated by large oaks, together with beeches and some silver birch. These trees form a high, even and fairly open canopy, allowing light to reach the woodland floor. The character is very open, allowing long views. North of the church is similar, although gaps here are now being filled with scrub and other weedy plants.
- 4.46** There is almost a seamless transition between the Common and the churchyard with only the change in tree species to generally Cypress marking the difference. A few oaks indicate that the large churchyard was possibly carved out of the Common with the oaks retained. The rear of the old school building and master's house and St Peter's spire can be viewed through the trees. The unkempt appearance is quite charming and characteristic. Care will be required in any future refurbishment of these buildings.
- 4.47** The woodland area south west of the church provides a much more structured environment. The High Weald walk traverses the area with a labyrinth of secondary footpaths.
- 4.48** There is a gated entrance at the church corner. Note the significant clump of Scots Pines to the west, just over the scarp.
- 4.49** The open character allows long views up and down the paths and allows free movement between the standards, albeit there being holly bounding the edges of this compartment.



Woodland area of the Common

- 4.50** The area is on the crest of the spur, generally flat, with the land falling gently away to the south west and east and paths leading off to other parts. There are many 'clearings' with seats, probably taking advantage of more open, panoramic views which existed in the past, particularly at 'crossroads' of the footpaths. This central area to the Common is quiet and tranquil in character.
- 4.51** Patches of sedge and heather among the grass and leaf litter provide the ground cover.
- 4.52** To the west is Whortleberry Wood, which to some extent is similar in character. It has enormous beech trees, which provide a quite spectacular character with tall, statuesque trees interspersed with oak. This is appreciated more when the invasive holly is not evident.
- 4.53** The separate character is delineated by the distinct ditch, which forms an important boundary between the central area and Whortleberry Wood. This continues south and emerges on the western boundary of the Conservation Area and Common.
- 4.54** Whortleberry Wood is on the western slope of the spur. At the western extremity the land falls very steeply to the stream marking the edge of the Conservation Area.
- 4.55** This part is very rural, with the bracken on the slopes opposite leading up to a row of oaks and the field beyond. Visible through the trees to the north however, are the backs of properties to Birchwood Avenue, which compromise the feeling of solitude.
- 4.56** The second main character area of the Common is one which historically was heathland. Indeed, photographs of the area in the early 20th century show a more open character, with gorse and bracken.
- 4.57** This area occupies the steeper parts south of the first area and the change is quite noticeable. It comprises more scrubby vegetation with a mixture of some very large trees, oak and beech, but with dense, impenetrable areas of silver birch, lots of holly and young oaks. Other areas are also colonised with brambles, laurel and even knotweed, more associated with residential margins of the Common, eg Modest Corner. This possibly indicates the previous influence of nearby habitation and the dumping of rubbish.
- 4.58** Footpaths that traverse this area are fewer and twist and wind between the vegetation and the slopes.
- 4.59** It is noticeable that, within this area, the area abutting Modest Corner is particularly very scrubby and dense, apart from the wide southern path.
- 4.60** The compartments to the east of the area are bordered by Victoria Road, Constitutional Hill Road and Holden Road and are virtually impenetrable. In many ways this keeps the trafficked areas separated from the other parts used by walkers and for recreation.

- 4.61** In the 19th century, much of this area was open heathland with some grassland. With the decline in grazing over the last 100 years, the tree seedlings and scrub have been allowed to establish, certainly in the heathland and now encroaching even to the wood pasture and Whortleberry Wood.
- 4.62** There is a danger of the rare species and habitats that exist on Southborough Common being lost. This visual, historic character and recreational value are also being compromised.
- 4.63** Between the central 'wood pasture' and Constitutional Hill Road is the Old Gravel Pit. Oak trees with lots of birch and scrub in the bottom now inhabit its steep slopes. There are also some very large trees to the south east of the pit area.
- 4.64** The southern end seems a lot wetter and old plans indicate a pond. Historically there were also others on the Common.
- 4.65** Some unfortunate tipping has occurred in this area.
- 4.66** One emerges suddenly into the traffic of Constitutional Hill Road at the junction with Victoria Road. On the triangular corner there is a very old oak tree set back from the corner on the north east side, with a younger one on the apex. This area seems to have some particularly large, and possibly much older, tree specimens.
- 4.67** Other areas of note on the Common comprise grassland which is in three sections (apart from the manicured cricket ground):
- Modest Corner
 - 'South of France' – west of Heathfield, north of Holden Road
 - Acid Grassland – between Victoria Road and Church Road
- 4.68** The Common is a key feature of the Conservation Area and a Management Plan is currently in preparation. This should provide an appropriate mechanism to address the various and sometimes competing issues, but importantly to protect the fragile character and significant value of this part of the Conservation Area.
- Modest Corner**
- 4.69** Approaching along Bentham Hill from the west this provides elevated views into the steep valley and to the north across fields and woodland. The road curves and dips suddenly down which affords glimpses of Bentham Farm and its oast, Spring Cottage, in the dip and the chimneys and white render in the distance of the enclave of Modest Corner itself. This provides, with the turn in the road and the change in level, a key entry point to the Conservation Area.
- 4.70** On the right at the bottom is Spring Cottage, a compact red brick, late Victorian/Edwardian house with slate roof, some nice brick details and label moulds over windows. The plot is bounded on the road by characteristic boundary railings with cast iron coping surmounted by short panel railings. Adjoining Spring Cottage is the Old Pump House, now converted, with unfortunate new close-boarded fencing and garden paraphernalia (greenhouse, shed, etc) on show giving a rather suburban intrusion.

- 4.71** On the left, and opposite the Pump House, is the entrance to Bentham Farm and Bentham Oast. They frame the entry to the valley and site of two historic mills. Crossing the stream at the bottom (although not readily visible) one becomes aware of Modest Corner, now sitting high above the road with filtered views of buildings between the trees. Sitting in this bowl surrounded by trees is very much a woodland type setting. To the left the lane runs up to the turn-of-the-century cemetery. Note the early 20th century railings bounding the approach road. From the vantage point of the cemetery are absolutely spectacular views back to Modest Corner sitting on the opposite slope of the valley bounding the western edge of the Conservation Area and with the backdrop of the trees to the Common. There are views back southwards to Bentham Oast and the opposite side of the valley.



Modest Corner viewed from the cemetery

- 4.72** From the stream, a footpath climbs steeply to the west side of the Modest Corner hamlet. Note, however, the detractors of a transformer on telegraph poles and pair of 'sheds'. Bounding the path, the Common at this point has become a scrubby area of brambles and elder. Historically Modest Corner was more open. The view up the path is terminated by the silhouette of corbelled chimney pots, gabled roofs and holly hedges on the left, with weatherboarded cottages behind.
- 4.73** Suddenly the path begins to open out at Nos 21 and 20 Mary's Cottages, which are a pair of late 19th century cottages with unfortunate PVC windows, white applied shutters and doors in new porches. One now becomes aware of further buildings in the locality as the area opens up more. Tucked back and almost hidden at the southern end is No 22. Although listed as being 18th century, it was previously known as the Old House or Cheynes Court and is documented to the late 16th century.
- 4.74** No 18 is a 17th century red brick and tile-hung cottage with appropriate white timber casement windows.
- 4.75** Nos 16 and 15, set back in the corner, are a three-storey, tall, early 20th century pair. Unfortunately this prominent building is marred by an unsympathetic square dormer extension to the right hand side of the pair. Also varying styles of windows have disrupted the symmetry of the pair. Between Nos 16 and 18 one glimpses back to the chapel of the cemetery and the conifers on the skyline.
- 4.76** Derna Cottage, a small weatherboarded cottage with unusually tall proportioned casement windows at the first floor, contributes positively to the area. Then there is the Beehive, formerly two 18th century cottages and, until recently, a pub: two storeys, weatherboarded with a pair of neat dormers and large central chimney stack. The gravel forecourt parking is somewhat at odds with the generally planted up and hedged front gardens of adjoining properties.

- 4.77** Then there is a group of three 1915/1920 houses: brick ground, harling rendered upper floors, steep tall roofs, dormers and an assortment of corbelled chimney stacks. The varied roofline and intricate detailing is quite pleasant. Note the plaque manufactured by the High Brooms Brick Company on the north elevation of the right hand property. At this point there is a wide gap with a footpath leading back northwards up along the western edge of the Common. Bounding the footpath is a white picket fence, which borders the white weatherboarded Celvert Cottage and to the left is a crisp brick cottage, No 8, a simple, well-proportioned pair of cottages with timber sash windows, almost appearing to be in the middle of a wood. Beyond and turning the corner, however, a further building is revealed – a converted stables with large casement doors. The form of the building, with the evidence of the arches over the original openings, indicates previous use of this area and the link with horse trading and stabling.



Nos 7 & 8 Modest Corner

- 4.78** The footpath then disappears off into the Common. At this point there are glimpses westward through the trees back across to the cemetery with its geometric tree planting and also the back elevations of the previous properties of Modest Corner with gardens and their various sheds, fences, etc.
- 4.79** Completing the northern group of buildings at Modest Corner there is the little white weatherboarded cottage on the corner with the adjoining Riverhead Press building. Previously an industrial building, it seems to have been ineptly refurbished with stick-on lattice leadwork to plastic windows and modern doors, which somewhat compromise its character. As a fairly prominent building it does not contribute positively and there is much room for improvement.
- 4.80** Opposite is a wider green area, with the trees set fairly well back. The front edge is bounded by a series of concrete bollards, concrete litterbins, stop valves and timber posts. This foreground clutter mars the setting of the group of buildings. Also the eroded edges, particularly on the eastern side of the access road and caused by car parking, all adds to a rather unkempt appearance.
- 4.81** The lack of satellite dishes in the area is worthy of note.
- 4.82** The other southern part of Modest Corner comprises a more eclectic collection of buildings. This was probably the more industrialised area of Modest Corner. Bracken Bank is a modern bungalow with concrete tiled roof - part of a little island of properties on the bank side mainly fronting down onto Victoria Road. There is then Modesty Motors, a yard with a slate roofed building and then one with a corrugated asbestos roof, a green container which is visible and a felt-roofed garage. Although not pretty, it is fairly self-effacing, being contained behind a wall of render and brick. Note: a section of tile hanging on to one side indicates a previous outbuilding.
- 4.83** Pineys and Sintra are 1960s houses with vertical cedarwood boarding. Prominent garages stick forward with low walling, rendering the gardens on show. There is a large double garage with concrete tiled roof. The road narrows, bounded by a high three metre wall leading back down onto Victoria Road.

- 4.84** Nos 1 & 2 Birch View are situated on the corner. This assertive gabled building forms an entry point/fulcrum at the entry to Modest Corner and, opposite, the bridleway that leads down to Holden Pond. Note the view back up Victoria Road onto the Common. It is a straight linear vista at this point. The car parking area and the recently constructed bland and tall red brick wall somewhat mar this important point and detract from the character of the area. It imposes itself and adds a strongly urban flavour. Salt bins, signs, erosion of edges, dilapidated fencing, hydrants, signs and lighting all add again to the feeling of clutter. The section of Victoria Road that runs back down to the Pump House at the bottom of Victoria Road is bounded on the upside by laurel hedges, yew and an embankment.
- 4.85** The 1960s semis of Pineys and Sintra are just visible peeping over the top. There are then a group of buildings tight to the footway: Laurel Cottage with its blue shutters and sash windows with margin lights. This is a pleasant little building, although basically compromised by lack of maintenance. South Bank House – a 1920s building with tight red brick at ground floor level and rough rendering at the first floor is another indication of the industrial past of this area.
- 4.86** On the opposite south side of Victoria Road is the listed 16th century Wood Cottage down in the valley side. This is a picturesque setting with the slopes of Bentham House rising up on the opposite side of the valley and a series of spectacular trees and woodland behind. This building has associations with Queen Victoria. Car parking on the roadside, however, mars the whole setting of this area together with bins and oil tanks being visible.
- 4.87** Moving down, various footpaths run back from the road up the grass verge to cottages, eg Woodside View and Gable End, onto the road. These are late Victorian, red brick buildings with the yellow banding, but mixed with the typical Edwardian half timbering detail at the apex of the gable and finial to ridge tiles. A path runs past the right hand side of this back up onto the green. Sharp Thorn – a more recent building with a dark multi-brown brick and banding – has attempted to blend in. However, the unfortunate choice of big square plastic windows hasn't quite worked. The excavation for a parking bay is crudely done and only adds to the uncared-for appearance. Altamont is again a building with a gable to the road, of red brick with tile hanging at the gable. Unfortunate plastic windows and 'Spanish' door have eroded the quality of detailing. Then there is Browns Cottage, a modest cream rendered building fronted by a wide verge. This whole group on Victoria Road is a relaxed yet dramatic collection. The quality, however, is beginning to be eroded by unsympathetic 'improvements', both to the buildings and their curtilages.
- 4.88** To the left are glimpses through the trees back up onto the upper buildings of Modest Corner. The road then drops down to the pump house and the cemetery entrance with the access leading straight down to Bentham Mill.
- 4.89** There have been some areas where attempts have been made to cut back the area of bramble and undergrowth. On the downside, into the valley, there are tall, drawn trees covered in ivy and the sound of birds – a very idyllic rural setting. One would hardly be aware that you're within about a mile of the A26 London Road.
- 4.90** The bridleway between Modest Corner and Holden Corner is a historic route and is wide and generous. Woodland to the low (valley) side provides a series of oak standards and beech trees, with a lot of holly understorey starting to be visible, rendering this area impenetrable in places. It seems to be a well-trodden path with brick and ragstone and tarmac in places which drops down to Holden Corner Pond.

Holden Corner

- 4.91** The approach from the south to the Conservation Area and Holden Corner is via Kibbles Lane. The road twists and drops down to one of the lowest points on the edge of the Common, squeezing past the east lodge to Bentham Hill House.
- 4.92** This is a 1830s Tudor Gothic lodge, probably by Decimus Burton, whose family lived in the early 19th century at Mabledon, just to the north.
- 4.93** You then enter the 'bowl' of Holden Corner itself, contained by the trees on the western and northern sides and by the buildings on the south east.



Holden Pond

- 4.94** This part of Southborough was probably one of the earliest of the scattered enclaves, due in part to the existence of the pond itself and one of the older tracks – Holden Road. It is more modest in terms of its industries than other parts of the Conservation Area and probably with a more agricultural bias.
- 4.95** Indeed, a painting by Charles Tattershal Dodd of 1865, entitled 'Southborough Common', shows a scene of Holden Pond with idyllic and rustic charm – cattle, geese, horses and various hovels and thatched sheds fronting onto the pond. The group is still evident as such, but now with more substantial buildings than existed in the mid-Victorian period.
- 4.96** The scene is still much the same, however.
- 4.97** The replacement buildings on the south side of the pond are generally undistinguished in themselves. It is more the group value and a general similarity of form and scale that is the main characteristic.
- 4.98** At the southern end, Nos 1 and 2 Holden Corner are a delightful pair of turn-of-the-century Edwardian cottages, with bay windows under a pentice roof which stretches over the two houses.
- 4.99** A small area of scrubby grass immediately to the right provides an opportunity for enhancement and to mark the entry into the Conservation Area. Similarly, improvements could be made to the triangular green area in front of Nos 1 and 2 which has been eroded by parked cars. The pond has been 'upgraded' and provides a superb habitat and visual amenity. The southern edge and the bottom of the bridleway from Modest Corner with its gate are, however, also candidates for enhancement.
- 4.100** The next three houses in the group facing the pond are a terrace of 1970s houses: brown brick, brown tile hanging and horizontal windows. They sit back from the general building line to allow garages on show and parking in the forecourt. This gives a negative contribution to the character of the area.
- 4.101** An alleyway squeezes between this trio and No 5 to a central open area of the block with steep slopes with garages and a plateau of land leading to buildings at the top. It is a somewhat ill-defined and untidy area offering potential for improvement.

- 4.102** No 5 is a two storey, 1960s house with gable end onto the road. The access road is unmade and separates the hedge to the pond area from the properties. Boundary treatments vary with bins and cars being one of the principal 'features'.
- 4.103** The next group of buildings dates from the turn-of-the-century and is terraced, red brick with buff arches and boarding. The buildings are simple, self-effacing and well proportioned. These occupy the site of the smithy shown on both the 1870 and 1898 plans.
- 4.104** The remaining buildings on the pond side are probably mid-Victorian, but have been improved somewhat.
- 4.105** The section comprising Nos 16-17 has had a 1960s makeover with horizontal windows. The left hand, 18-20 section, still has its late Victorian sash windows with margin lights at the first floor, but has had Georgianised casements inserted at ground level in lieu of an old shop window and applied half-timbering to first floor. The result is a confused medley of periods.
- 4.106** The section of Holden Corner running up the hill is an intimate lane, mainly distinguished by picket fences and car parking.
- 4.107** A stepped terrace of late Victorian cottages, with an assortment of replacement windows, is terminated by No 28, a pleasant end-on white weatherboarded building set back from the building line. There is a further pair of cottages, beyond which the lane turns the corner to reveal a further little enclave. A footpath leads onto a play area, which shows on old plans as a former orchard.
- 4.108** The mixed group at the top at Modest Corner comprises a terrace of four small brick cottages under slate roofs with door hoods.
- 4.109** There are two modern houses with red tiled roofs and gates leading up onto the recreation ground through an important dividing hedge. These properties and the adjoining Nos 8 and 7 are confused in terms of front and back as they have parking on the inside area of the Holden Corner block.
- 4.110** Visible to the east is the rear of some of the Prospect Park development with fences and a treed embankment bounding the other side of the lane. A 1970s development in the rear park of Holden House has retained a number of trees and kept the more intimate and closely associated pleasure garden and trees intact.
- 4.111** The main characteristic feature of Holden Corner is the pond, still a picturesque area, despite some of the indifferent buildings which form its backdrop. The simple railings bounding the edge do not detract and the recent path works and fishing stands, although rather 'engineered', will soon soften and blend in.
- 4.112** The traffic route from the steep approaches of Constitutional Hill Road and Kibbles Lane is a popular one, much as in previous centuries. Pedestrians only use the trackway/bridleway to Modest Corner. The gates at either end and the general state of the area are less than desirable along with the outfall from the pond.
- 4.113** The majestic trees on the Common provide a strong backdrop, with Holden Road almost squeezing out to the north east between lush greenery. The wild and dense area of the southern section of the Holden House garden is very important in providing a context to the pond and as a visual link to the Common opposite. The landscape frames Holden Road, giving it an intimate character. The brick footpath is almost the only clue to something beyond, and glimpses of roofs to the east.

- 4.114** The Common opposite slopes up, providing a strong northern edge to Holden Road. Holden House itself then suddenly appears on the opposite side, set well back in a slightly elevated position and complemented by a sweep of open lawn in front. Recent driveway alterations look confused and the fence is not an ideal boundary. These are slightly negative characteristics.



Holden House and front lawn

- 4.115** Holden House itself is a mid to late 18th century, three storey, five bay, red brick house. Classically proportioned and set in its associated landscape of lawns, pleasure gardens and woodlands, it remains as one of the few large houses and garden that once existed in Southborough. It also reflects the manner in which the mix of social classes and wide variety of building types existed in relatively close proximity.
- 4.116** The sculptural conifers, Scots Pine, Wellingtonia and Cypresses, are important specimens, adding to the general scene but also acting as visual markers from surrounding areas, particularly the east.
- 4.117** Trees linking over still contain the vista to the east. It is only on reaching Tanyard Lane that a transition to a more open, developed aspect emerges. A key enhancement action is therefore how the Common is managed in the future, to maintain and reinforce the different characteristics such as between Holden Corner and Commonsides.

Commonside/The Broadway

- 4.118** Tanyard Lane forms a natural boundary between the Holden Corner area and Commonsides. This now wide footpath historically formed the edge to a large tannery industry in Southborough, which stretched as far as 27 Holden Road. The western portion of this site is now occupied by Nos 37 & 39, a pair of grand Edwardian houses, with strong detailing, white windows and joinery.
- 4.119** The characteristic brick footpath runs in a straight line along Holden Road, rising gently up to the more built-up centre of Southborough with the Common on the left, punctuated by an atypical clump of Scots Pines. There are a trio of 1930s houses, which are modest and unassuming primarily due to their neutral/natural materials and white, vertically proportioned windows. The single storey May Cottage which sits forward with its crisp red brick was formerly the office to the previous tannery operation. Set back behind is a 1950s house which seems to have been extended onto a previous building, with a large garage with double-width doors. Thankfully this is set back so far it doesn't impinge too much on the character of the Conservation Area.
- 4.120** Boundaries at this point generally comprise of low walls, low railings and hedging which complement the soft edge of the Common on the north side opposite. There is then a tight fence about 1.5m high with a lattice detail to the upper part, directly to the back edge of the pavement, which bounds No 27. This is a beautifully proportioned late 18th to early 19th century building, possibly originally a farmhouse, but notably was the house of the company director of the tannery. It is of red brick under one of the few clay tiled roofs in the area, now set back in its grounds behind hedging of a mixed variety including conifers, yew, etc, and a statuesque Wellingtonia tree. No 25 adjoining it is called Fern Lodge, slightly more modest but, again, well proportioned, but with a shallow slate roof and round headed door centrally located.

- 4.121** At this point, the Common both opens out to the north and in front of the properties on the south side which are set back behind the green sward. These houses are all accessed only by narrow, unassuming footpaths running across the grass, hardly interrupting it. Although the boundary treatments to the properties are an eclectic mix of railings, white picket fencing, white ornate railings and hedging, this does not at all detract from the overall character which is held together by the setting of all these properties. The properties themselves are of mixed ages and styles but are held together by the use of traditional materials and vertically proportioned white windows.
- 4.122** Nos 23 and 21 are a pair of three-storey rendered, late Victorian houses with slate roofs. No 19, also late Victorian, is painted render, with consoles and string course under a slate roof. At this point a narrow footpath leads through to the back of Vale Road.
- 4.123** There is then an early 20th century gabled building, with strong bay detailing and hedging to the front and a pleasant little pair of listed 18th century cottages; No 15 called Peace Cottage and the adjoining Clair Cottage. These are three storeys with small casements and dormer windows, sash windows, margin lights and, finally, Nos 11 and 13, a pair of early 20th century Edwardian cottages: red brick, buff quoins, etc, with tiled footpaths behind swirly white railing detail and beautiful stained glass doors, albeit of two different styles.
- 4.124** No 9a then breaks forward at this point, with a large, slightly odd picture window to the side facing back down towards Holden Corner and, together with the garage doors, probably indicates a previous stable or industrial-type use. The three-gabled elevation facing to the Common is clad at upper level in tiles with diamond, club and straight patterns and a waney-edge barge board and timber finials. There is a pentice roof over the remaining part of No 9. No 8 is a three-storey, vertically proportioned, tall building with a square bay, almost squeezed into its plot.
- 4.125** Nos 5 (the Cottage) and 7 adjoining appear to be quite old, two-storey, with tiled roof, small tiled dormers and a pentice roof punctuated by a gabled porch marking the front doors. Early 18th century documentation suggests it may have even been a pub – the Horseman and Charger, with a collection of various outbuildings and yards.
- 4.126** An alleyway to the side leads to rear buildings called the Old Fire Station (name of unknown origin) and another little house, indicating again the self-contained, industrial past of this particular area and the association with horses and livery.
- 4.127** Nos 1 and 3 are an elegantly proportioned, late Victorian pair of town houses, two-storey and basement, with a steep flight of steps leading up to the front doors, steep slate roof, with gabled, timber dormers, red brick with gault quoins, string courses and architraves. They still fortunately retain the spearheaded railings and plinth wall to the front boundary.
- 4.128** Finally, next to No 1 is a detached, three-storey gabled building turning the corner into Vale Road, with interesting chevron tiles.
- 4.129** At this point the scale is obviously building up to a more urbanised character and a tighter 'grain'. It is at this point that Holden Road narrows down with Heathview on the left (north) and one becomes more aware of the central area and the Parade area of Southborough itself, beyond. In front of this group of properties, in the eastern corner, the Common is more open with a grassed area providing a setting for the properties. Its elevated position also affords good views westwards to the treed area of the Common and area beyond the Holden Pond itself with recent housing developments also visible in the distance.

- 4.130** The fairly undistinguished Heathview is a 1960s development with nothing much to commend it. Its single monolithic form is at variance with the general character of the Conservation Area. It is further compounded by sitting rather too starkly on its site with no front boundary to provide definition and transition between building and Common. The path running in front of it carries on northwards towards St Peter's Church and at this point there are picturesque views across the green area to the acid grassland beyond with the spire of the church itself. There is the area known as the South of France, a local sun trap populated by a number of well-used benches. Behind is Ruscombe Close which was redeveloped in the 1960s as a series of individual houses in a stepped plan arrangement, although the horizontal emphasis to the windows and the buildings themselves are not an ideal architectural style for the area. Their form and townscape value has at least respected the character of the area, through the serrated skyline and use of chimneys. The boundary wall to the previous house has been retained and also provides a mature and strong linking element.
- 4.131** The view back to the Holden Road area demonstrates the eclectic mix of building ages and styles. The linking theme, however, is the vertically proportioned buildings, generally with sash windows and the use of red brick tiling with, in places, render.



Holden Road viewed from Victoria Road

- 4.132** Moving north along the footpath to Victoria Road, hedging and trees enclose the view again, providing a transition point to the 'island site'. The blank side of the Ruscombe Close development is thankfully softened to some extent by an area of grass and a couple of trees. However, the awful estate road to the back with its unresolved boundaries, extent of concrete surfacing and dominance of cars is one of the main detractors of the area.
- 4.133** Further along on Victoria Road, on the south side, there is a series of Edwardian properties with gables and a more recent building, all fronted by substantial hedging and then leading up through the narrow section of road onto the A26 London Road itself.
- 4.134** On the opposite north side is a mixture of properties. The red brick, buff quoins and arches of Holme Croft, the white render and bay windows of the next pair, Nos 14 and 16. No 18 is white weatherboarded, with waney-edge barge board and enormous gable finials, sitting almost directly onto the Common. There are shallow front gardens to Nos 16, 14, 12 and 10. No 18 and beyond link directly onto the Common itself. Nos 22 and 24 are a pair of very small-scaled cottages, almost dolls house in their proportions.
- 4.135** White wall colouring, shallow gardens and slate roofs are a strong linking characteristic of the island block facing the Common. Also there are glimpses into the huddle of tightly packed cottages. This is one of the older parts of development in the area and although Victorian in-filling and alterations to the earlier cottages has taken place, the group still retains the strong characteristic of intimacy and scale.

- 4.136** Turning the corner at No 24, St Peter's pops into view again behind a bank of gorse and trees and an expanse of grass. On turning the corner, there is Woodlands, a three-storey, late Victorian, gabled building and a trio of terraced buildings, three storeys high under a slate roof. These all possess the distinctive brick wall boundary treatment and shallow front gardens directly onto a small path. Note that the left hand one still retains its blinds above the ground and first floor windows, a small scalloped detail. The upper attic floors have unusual horizontally proportioned sash windows. Remarkably, all these timber windows are intact throughout this terrace and, indeed, other buildings nearby and are a very distinct feature.
- 4.137** Passing a yew tree, there is a small picturesque group of buildings – in the angle are two weatherboarded buildings: Woodcote, a listed Regency cottage, and the second, Inglenook, with a gabled elevation. Again, they have the detail of the finials and drop pendant details at upper floor level. Shutter blinds are at first floor and casement windows with glazing bars to both of these cottages. They have hedges and picket fencing.



*Kintore, Inglenook and Woodcote
fronting the Common*

- 4.138** The back of Kintore contains the northern angle of the group. This is a stone building with painted render, under a slate roof and ornate chimney stacks with corbel detail, vertically sliding sash windows, and distinctive white picket fencing directly onto the Common. Again there are glimpses between these buildings of cottages, chimneys and roofs beyond in the densely packed little area.
- 4.139** The view then opens out to reveal the cricket green. The vertical panelled fence is rather intrusive, its saving grace at this western corner is that it is hidden to some extent behind holly, bramble and trees. The area then opens out to the more manicured area of the cricket ground and the area of grass below it, forming the foreground to St Peter's Church with the strongly linear brick path leading from the Commons side directly to the church. The fence is now quite prominent at the corner and has attracted graffiti.
- 4.140** At this point the ambience of the area changes dramatically. One is acutely aware of the traffic, the visual intrusion in stark contrast with the west side of Commons side. Note the views up to the Bounds area with the Hand & Sceptre and houses sitting in their elevated position and the cricket pavilion, with its unfortunate garage door and orange-brown stained boarding.
- 4.141** Facing north and almost hidden, Fountain House and Kintore are set back from Church Road, with their entrance drive and main garden areas. Sitting forward, No 10 is a large, three storey 'pile' with red brick at ground and first floor and an assertive white overhanging second floor gable with ornate barge board detail. With rare tiled roof it dates from the early 20th century.

- 4.142** Nos 11, 12 and 13 are a unified group, symmetrical, with a central gable with a fret-cut, pierced barge board and finial, flanked by brick bay windows under a large steep slate roof rather than the normal shallower form. Note the front boundary treatments, gate piers in brick and stone to this group of properties. No 14, Henry Baines Antiques, is an elegant shop front with 18th century gate, tile hanging at upper floor levels, sash windows and glazing bars. Adjoining is the interesting 'Right on the Green' restaurant, with round headed, ground floor openings, quoins, painted brick work and the central round headed window at first floor under a slate roof. There are hair pin railings to the front boundary. Note again that, with few exceptions, slate roofs predominate in this area. The rear property is built in modern brick with fairly unsympathetic off-the-peg doors.



Nos 14 & 18 London Road (The Broadway)

- 4.143** Nos 16, 17 and 18 are a three-storey, symmetrical group: late Victorian with rusticated ground floor rendering, architraves mouldings, console brackets, small spear railings to the central one, brick wall to the right and a picket fence to the left.
- 4.144** The triangle on the corner is punctuated by the fountain and lamp. On the opposite side of the A26 is the swathe of Common and the distinctive avenue of London plane and lime trees bounding both sides of the road, leading up to the Hand & Sceptre. The unfortunate brick wall at Spring Grove adds a rather pretentious element, which disrupts this soft green edge. Spring Grove itself is a 1920s house, tile and render with square bay windows. Adjoining is the Stuart Cottage, one of the oldest buildings in the area: 16th century with earlier sections, providing a link with the more rural agricultural origins. It has a distinctive steep Kent-peg roof, white weatherboarding, black windows with leaded lights and a small pentice roof at ground floor. The rickety picket fencing adds to the rustic quality.
- 4.145** Opposite Stuart Cottage is the entry to Victoria Road. A pair of clapboarded cottages with fleur-de-lis ridge cresting to the slate roof, remnant ragstone spall footway at this point, hedging and big footways on the south side give a very strong village feel to this part of the Conservation Area. There is a massive yew tree on the corner and an elevated footway on the north side. The planting is lush. Guthrie House is red brick with grape vine string course at first floor, the chevron detail to the fascia and pentice roof and brackets are classic Victorian 'rustic' detail.
- 4.146** Recent building on the south side blends in reasonably well (Yew Tree House). Cosack House, on the corner of Victoria Road and London Road, is a large Edwardian pile surrounded by a high brick wall. The pavement at this point and the wide entrance to London Road leave a little bit to be desired in this area with its indeterminate layout and raised planters. There is then an interval to No 18 – white rendered, fine door with deeply moulded panels and fanlight. The slate roof still has lead detail to hips and ridge.

- 4.147** 20/22 London Road, on the corner to Still Lane, is in office use; rather over-restored with plastic windows. Still Lane itself has an assorted collection of buildings. The distinctive and 'busy' building on the inside corner and the industrial building to the rear of No 28 are particularly noteworthy. The remaining buildings are either derelict or inappropriate. The area does represent an opportunity to redevelop and infill, providing development respects the scale and intimacy, maintains the industrial character, and deals with the parking which currently over-dominates.
- 4.148** On the southern entry to Still Lane is another rather bland refurbishment, which has replaced any character with plastic windows, cheap-looking doors, conspicuous meter boxes and bleak forecourt. Adjoining at No 26 is Hair Workshop, an 18th century brick building, white painted, sadly again with plastic windows. The left hand property, No 28, is still of unpainted brick but with a plethora of plumbing and satellite dishes to the south facing flank elevation. Then there is a pair of 1950s houses, Meadow View and Fair View, which are still in residential use. Finally, on the corner is No 30, a rebuilt 18th century elevation with blue headers and replacement plastic windows, roofed in concrete tiles, not the characteristic slate.
- 4.149** Turning the corner into Holden Road, at the rear is a gabled outbuilding with what looks like a sub-station behind a brick and stone wall. Then there is Magnolia House, a 1950s building tucked back behind a conifer screen and on the opposite south side, a quartet of flimsy looking boxes in buff London brick with plastic windows – totally out of character. The rear of Heathview on the north side is an equally disastrous piece of townscape, the very open bleak appearance at variance with the general character. The only compensation is the view over its garage court, to Ruscombe Close and across the island site and spire of St Peter's Church beyond.
- 4.150** The subtle alignment of Holden Road then allows the view to open out to reveal the Common, with the tightly scaled streets of the Vale Road area to the south.

The Parade/Park Road

- 4.151** The approach from the south and the other part of the settlement of Southborough passes by a series of properties generally set back from the road and fronted by trees and hedging. This arcadian quality then gives way at Park Road to a change in character. On the west side, opposite to, and terminating the view from, Park Road is a large, yellow/gault brick Victorian building. This has stone lintels, the ones over the door and to the right hand window carved in ecclesiastical capitals. The right hand section is raised up with a four-storey 'tower' element, with crested railings on the slate pyramid roof. Unfortunately the building is divided into two halves, with a fence down the middle of the forecourt. There are some big trees in the garden.
- 4.152** Between this and Vale Road is St John's Methodist Church, dedicated 1937, of a rather bland appearance to Vale Road, it has a series of flying buttresses and a steeply pitched, pantiled roof. The setting of the church is, however, its worst feature being somewhat bleak and surrounded by an area of plain grass with a couple of insubstantial fruit trees in the front and edged by a low brick boundary wall. It all presents a rather forlorn appearance to the area at this point. To the rear of this, at the bottom of Vale Road, is a yellow brick cottage.

- 4.153** On the north side of Vale Road is an even less successful church, St Dunstan's Catholic Church. Although its boundaries are treated slightly better with shrubs, etc, it is, however, bounded by a chain link fence. The building on the corner is flat-roofed covering the hall area. The church itself has a very steep roof, plain tiles in a neutral brown colour which comes down to within about three feet of the ground. It is unfortunately surrounded by car parking to the front, side and rear. Together, these two church buildings are weak and with their poor settings have currently lost the opportunity to make a statement and adequately contribute to a visual focus to this part of Southborough on the west side.
- 4.154** The east side is somewhat more successful. Running along from Park Road northwards is a red brick terrace, three storeys high. Two floors are residential over a number of retail units. At first floor there is a continuous balcony with railings serving the residential portions, which are a distinctive feature. There is an unfortunate replacement by plastic windows, however. The ground floor retail units are somewhat varied in appearance, with plastic fascias and Dutch blinds which present a rather uncoordinated aspect to this terrace, weakening its architectural impact. Missing sections of balcony railings and mixed coverings to the canopies also detract.
- 4.155** Next is a simple assertive, short terrace called Sheffield Place, dated 1865. The applied plastic fascia and sign to the left shop front, No 63, detracts from the central and southern sections, which have recently been restored and do at least attempt to raise the standard of the area. The upper floors have guilloche detail over the windows, with hood mouldings, cornice, string course and also rusticated quoins. Note the lay-by at this point. A little alleyway runs back at this point – Sheffield Road – leading to a tightly knit residential area.
- 4.156** On the north side of Sheffield Road is what appears to be a turn-of-the-century Edwardian building (1911), the major portion of which is a pub, with brown-glazed tiles and cream arches. The next group are the only clay tiled buildings on the Parade – the first is a 17th century range, with central stack. The right hand part has a rather large dormer and large modern shop front, an unsympathetic rebuild of 1970. The left hand section has a gabled porch above the door and arched bay windows set down from the road. Note the flue visible behind. The rest of the group is a pleasant little terrace with three gables in red-brown brick with cream brick returns and, again, typical gable finials. The right hand baker's shop front is pleasantly proportioned. The remainder is a rather historically erroneous Georgianised insert. Of particular note on the left hand section is an alleyway leading to the rear, over which is constructed a rather idiosyncratic balcony. This is tiled, again with the finial detail to the apex of the gable facing north and rather swirly barge board with timber balcony with a lattice detail as the support posts.
- 4.157** Nos 45 and 47 again form a large late Victorian, three-storey building with applied pilasters at first and second floor. Sadly both the ground floor shops detract. Nos 41 and 43 are two storeys, now as a single shop. The shop front has attempted to respect the building. Unfortunately the first floor windows are plastic under a slate roof.
- 4.158** Nos 37 and 39 form another large, imposing late Victorian building with consoles and bracketed head detail. The right hand portion has an elegant tall shop front. The left hand premises retains its original windows, which are a pair of sashes with margin lights. Peter Hoare Antiques, No 35, is a two-storey building and is one of the better shop fronts in the area with slender mullions, pilasters, consoles and a canted fascia. Again, unfortunately the first floor is compromised by insertion of plastic windows. At Nos 31 and 33 London Road there are again two poor shop fronts. The first floor windows are, however, original, the left hand and central one having the blind boxes still in place. Plastic is on the upper and right hand sections with a replacement concrete roof.

- 4.159** On the corner is the Imperial public house. This building forms a termination to the view down from the Common and turns into Pennington Road. Note that the little area of garden alongside the Post Office, between it and the Imperial pub, adds an incident of greenery in this area. From the Imperial you get a long vista back up the slope to the Hand & Sceptre and the avenue of lime/plane trees. The view is also across to the belvedere of Broomfield, the property in Vicarage Road and the bell tower of St Thomas' Church.
- 4.160** On the opposite side of the Parade, ie the western side, adjoining St Dunstan's Church, is the Presbytery. No 34a is a rather indifferent 1980s building, its saving grace is that it is set back and hidden by trees. Nos 32c and 32b, a rather plain London stock brick building with shallow roof and large picture windows, altogether contributes little to the area. No 32 itself, on the corner with Holden Road, is a rendered Victorian villa with consoles and chevron blind boxes that are still intact, although car parking fills the open fronted forecourt. There is a fence on the Holden Road side. This unharmed building is marred somewhat by its setting.
- 4.161** Pennington Road itself is one of the more historic roads in Southborough, at one time linking to Vauxhall Lane to the north east. At the rear of the Imperial is a black weatherboarded extension indicating some link with stabling or industry. An outbuilding to the rear was previously used as a public convenience.
- 4.162** Draper Street, a little alleyway to the rear, affords rear access to London Road properties. It comprises a series of car parking areas, outbuildings and workshops. It is still a thriving little industrial area. The outbuilding to the rear of No 35 was associated with cricket ball manufacture and is probably the only such building surviving in the area. Not all is visually attractive though, for example, the pub with its rear stairs, car park, dustbins and big industrial warehouse-type building. The rear of Comptons is also unfortunate. Alongside to the north are outbuildings of white weatherboard with slate roofs which may be older than the shops (behind the three-gabled building of Nos 49-53). At the southern end of Draper Street one turns into Sheffield Road with, in the London Road direction, a largely altered building and courtyard which was a stables until as recently as the 1940s.
- 4.163** Turning eastwards is a building called Sheffield Hall which was Southborough's first public hall and then a series of late Victorian cottages, semi detached, two-up-two-down, quite close to the street. There is parking in forecourts with garages in between. This obviously could get a bit congested at times.
- 4.164** Castle Street is a charming, tight little street of generally two-storey terraces and pairs. At the southern end, No 15 and adjoining building are three-storey, presenting gables to the street. The modern house opposite (Nos 24 and 26) are presumably flats. One can glimpse through to the three-storey warehouse with metal windows, round arches and parapet.



Castle Street

- 4.165** Nos 22 and 20 have blue headers on an early 19th century building, with an interesting blind window to centre and three more at upper level. The remaining parts of the street are characterised by a complete mixture of windows and cladding, concrete tile-hanging, weatherboarding and plastic shiplap. There are also a variety of boundary treatments, a mixture of porches and a variety of windows. On the west side there is again a pair, Nos 16 and 18, with a blind window at first floor. They have top hung windows and lattice windows that are plastic. There is a series of short terraces, some with painted brickwork, others original. All are red. Although there is a mixture of boundary treatments, it does have a strong linking character. This is a nice intimate street. At the northern end is Southborough Coachworks, a site that has had a continuous link with the transport industry.
- 4.166** The view north out of Castle Street is terminated by a Cypress tree in the grounds of St Thomas' and its bell tower. The church itself is small and unassuming, with polygonal ragstone walling and slate roof. There is an important view across to St Peter's Church from this point with a series of trees at the high point of the Common and on the eastern side of London Road there is a mixture of Scots Pines and Oaks.
- 4.167** Nos 2-22 Pennington Road is a terrace of cottages, a number of which have an assortment of bay windows. These were formerly shops as most of this terrace was originally commercial premises. Most still have their timber sash windows intact at first floor and small gabled dormers.
- 4.168** There are then a couple of modest late Victorian villas, two storeys with bay windows and slate roofs which are set fairly well forward with short gardens up to the front. The road suddenly becomes verdant at this point with high hedges on the south side and complementary greenery to the north side. At the corner of Vicarage Road is a Gothic lodge, with render, hood mouldings, pierced barge boards and drop gable finials. The view back up Vicarage Road is one of grass verge and neatly trimmed hedges and greenery. The cottage on the opposite corner, No 3 Pennington Road, again has the dropped finials and scalloped tiling – very much designed in an Arts and Crafts style.
- 4.169** No 34 on the opposite side is set back behind a drive. There is a big Beech tree and Yew hedging. The frontages are pretty impenetrable, except No 36. There is a modern block of flats called Dennington Court with unsuitable ranch fencing. This a two storey building with a mansard which is fairly undistinguished with a rather bleak front, is an example of what can happen in this Pennington/Park Road area. On the opposite (north) side is a small cottage tight to the road and gable-end on as it originally fronted onto the road that linked to Vauxhall Lane at Honnington. This is a 17th century, tile-hung building although apparently now much altered. Adjoining is the open area of Hilly Fields with its spectacular views over to the north, framed by trees. There are sporadic buildings dotted in the landscape. One is aware of backs of Vicarage Road properties to the west.
- 4.170** On the south side of Pennington Road the overriding characteristic is of stuccoed Victorian villas of a fairly consistent form and rhythm. No 40, as with others, is set back from the road, with a Scots Pine in the front garden. The characteristic Southborough brick wall with the cross detail also appears again at this point, with gate piers at both ends. The Wellingtonia and Cedar in the grounds of No 40a are important trees. No 42 is a new development which has at least tried to keep the scale and proportions of its older neighbours. Most of the frontages and boundary treatments are intact with the Laurel and Holly hedging. They are a unifying element also defining Pennington Road. No 44, is an imposing three-storey Victorian villa, with pedimented detail over first floor and plastic windows. There is a strong wall at this point, rendered with a large, heavy moulded coping, generally surmounted by shrubbery and planting, which continues all the way down to Park Road Corner with its wall-mounted Victorian post box.

4.171 No 44a, Highview, a rather domestic-scaled, suburban type house has slipped into one of the visually necessary gaps between the villas. At the corner are Nos 46 and 48, a pair of properties, again Victorian, with mouldings, consoles and quoins and bracketed detail – it is quite imposing. This is balanced on the opposite corner by a similarly imposing pair with a significant tree on the corner. Finally, there is an agreeable terrace of four brick cottages with blue headers and substantial chimney stacks.



Nos 50 – 60 Pennington Road

4.172 The road visually narrows in again beyond Hilly Fields. On the left is No 9, a two-storey, large Victorian house set down from the road. Also tucked in the trees is No 11, Heathdene, an almost ecclesiastical building with moulded chimneys, red brick, white render architraves. At this point the hedging crowds in and actually forms an entry point and gateway onto the estate, a modern development further down Pennington Road. Looking back, note that all the trees in the gardens to the front of Pennington Road make a significant feature.

4.173 Turning into Park Road, the entry is framed by No 36 and the property on the west side. A section of brick pavement still exists on the west side, with Holly hedge bounding the garden. There is a rather disparate collection of two storey buildings of various dates on the east side. This was historically an area of cricket ball manufacture amongst residential villas. No 21 is a small, two-storey pair of lodges: red brick, buff quoins and central arched opening leading through to a yard at the back with heavy Laurel hedging.

4.174 No 26, a rendered, typical 1880s Victorian villa terminates the view along the main part of Park Road. Apart from the front of Vale Court, properties along here are bounded by significant hedges and piers. The south side has a number of individual villas. There are trees on the corner of Park Road. Although there have been pockets of redevelopment, the essential character of large, later Victorian villas set in lush gardens still exists. The Cedar tree at No 11 is quite a landmark at the slight bend in the road. Note the view back westwards terminated by the yellow brick tower house.



No 20 Park Road typifies the area

- 4.175** Collectively the Park Road and Pennington Road area represents a fairly cohesive group of 1860s villas built to house the rising middle classes and wealthier residents. Its layout of buildings similarly located in larger plots within a well-landscaped setting is a key distinction to other parts of the Conservation Area. The scale and architectural style of buildings is also fairly consistent despite one or two less successful redevelopments. Other elements such as the green boundaries around plots, large-scale specimen trees, front boundary walls with piers and narrow entrances, and paving, all provide a strong linking function.
- 4.176** Woodlands Court is an unfortunate 1960s development on the south side with an open front. Similarly the Harmer Court development has its car parking and green desert on show. There are a few intervening inappropriate 'twee' little detached houses and the large Southborough Court with its majestic Lime trees on the corner of London Road and Park Road.
- 4.177** The punctuating chimney stacks to the rear of the Parade are very visible from Park Road. The positioning of air conditioning units and use of plastic windows are, however, an unfortunate intrusion.

5 Summary of Elements that contribute to Southborough Conservation Area's special character

Topography

- 5.1** The Conservation Area sits on a south west spur of the Bidborough Ridge and is strongly bounded by valleys and watercourses to the west and south. The extensive tree cover often hides the steep slopes, but the nature of the topography is more readily evident in the more open areas and where visual reference points are available. The main A26 London Road follows the higher ground to the east edge of the Conservation Area.

Views

- 5.2** The Conservation Area has a rich variety of classic sequential townscape views, which are ever-changing and dynamic. With its elevated position the area affords broad panoramas particularly to the north east and to the south. There are also more contained vistas along roads and paths. This is contrasted by more enclosed views within spaces with occasional glimpses to areas or features beyond.

Enclaves

- 5.3** The Conservation Area is made up of distinct quarters of development all bounding the Common but physically separated from each other by it:

- Modest Corner – a separate hamlet
- The Bounds – on the crest
- London Road – more densely developed commercial area
- Holden Road – a quiet, low key area to the south.

Architectural Variety

- 5.4** The Conservation Area has an eclectic mix of architecture reflecting continuous evolution and changes in architectural fashion.
- 5.5** There is a variety of sizes and types of buildings, with cottages, workshops, and retail with residential over, and the larger houses. They exhibit differing styles, materials and ages. All, however, have a human scale and are well proportioned.

Materials

- 5.6** Traditional materials dominate the area including render, brick and tile hanging. Slate roofs predominate with few examples of clay tiling.

Spatial Relationship

- 5.7** There is a rich variety of ways in which the buildings relate to space and to each other.
- 5.8** Some are in tight-knit groups; others are more open with plenty of space and generous settings. The relationship of buildings to spaces and each other is, however, often informal. The area is made up invariably of individual buildings, which are facing roads, paths or even the Common.

Trees

- 5.9** These are a prominent element in the Conservation Area and play an important role in containing and defining space. They provide a general backdrop with some notable skyline trees.
- 5.10** In townscape terms they provide edges and avenues of various woodland types as well as garden trees.

Green Spaces

- 5.11** There are an interesting variety of types, their individual character being an important consequence of management. They include the manicured cricket ground, more informal roadside verges and spaces such as at Modest Corner and South of France, as well as the important acid grassland areas.

Contrast

- 5.12** The Conservation Area is one of quite stark contrasts in character and activity.
- 5.13** There is the commercial bustle and tight character of London Road with its noise and constant traffic movement.
- 5.14** The less urban feel of the cricket ground and church, set only slightly away from the A26, provides a more village green quality.
- 5.15** This is contrasted again by the tranquillity of the more wooded parts of the Common and Modest Corner, which seem completely rural.

Circulation Network

- 5.16** Apart from the hard edge of the A26 the intricate network of paths and roads is very soft in character.
- 5.17** Roads generally have no kerbs, occasionally only marked by stones or posts. Where kerbs exist they are usually blue pennant stone with brick footways. The soft informal road edges do not detract but rather reinforce the particular characteristic.
- 5.18** There are a large number of footpaths, most well trodden, some with tarmac, some wide and long established, together with more informal routes through the wooded areas. There are also some attractive mown grass routes through the sward.

Boundaries

- 5.19** There are varieties of low height, unassuming and low-key boundaries, allowing the buildings to be related to the space and area.
- 5.20** They comprise picket fencing, low railings, hedges and occasionally no apparent boundary. There are, however, one or two notorious exceptions.



Characteristic low boundary treatments

Shop fronts

- 5.21** There are a number of strongly detailed and elegant shop fronts; often, however, these are subsumed under modern alterations and other clutter.

Lack of Signs

- 5.22** Apart from the A26 corridor, the character of the area benefits from low-key lighting and a general lack of road signs.

6 Summary of elements that detract from Southborough Conservation Area's Special Character and Opportunities for Enhancement

A26 London Road

- 6.1** Relentless traffic on the busy A26 severs the area.

Management of Common

- 6.2** The Common, with its trees and green spaces, is a major component in the character of the Conservation Area. It has the appearance, however, of a lack of care and a loss of distinction between the various vegetation types. It has become more unstructured and, for the observer, more disorientating.
- 6.3** Whilst the natural character is intrinsic to its appreciation, it still would benefit from a management plan.

Way Marking

- 6.4** With such an outstanding asset as the Common, consideration could be given to promoting it and improving access, interpretation and way marking.

Boundaries

- 6.5** Low height, unassuming boundary treatments or simple hedging characterise much of the Conservation Area.
- 6.6** There is, however, a worrying trend for introverted, high, close-boarded fences which present a blank, negative aspect to the area. There are also examples of the introduction of urbanising brick walls at variance with the soft character, eg the east side of the A26 introduces a particularly pretentious and discordant feature.



Recent Developments

- 6.7** It must be a concern that the design quality and attention to detail of more recent developments have generally not achieved the standard, nor fully respected the character of the Conservation Area, eg churches on the west side of London Road which are rather plain in the way they particularly lack attention to the space around them and their site boundaries.
- 6.8** Prospect Park is a rather typical estate development, which represents a lost opportunity.
- 6.9** The rear of Ruscombe Close presents a confused environment of parking and paving; the side facing the Common, however, is more successful.

- 6.10** Heathview Flats is a bland monolithic development with a particularly poor relationship to the Common and Holden Road.



Footpaths

- 6.11** An important feature of the Conservation Area is the number of footpaths, which are a major recreational asset. Whilst the majority are appropriately designed and maintained for their use, some can be muddy and impassable, eg the bridleway between Holden Pond and Modest Corner.

Erosion of Edges

- 6.12** The characteristic soft edges to roads are subject to erosion by parked cars. Victoria Road and an excavated parking area in the verge at Modest Corner are prime examples.
- 6.13** The use of rocks has attempted to control this. These could possibly be improved upon and laid out more tidily.

Visibility of Rear Gardens

- 6.14** The layout and configuration of built development in the area means that rear gardens can be open to view, occasionally from some distance. The design and siting, therefore, of rear additions, garden outbuildings and other domestic clutter has the potential to intrude and therefore requires sensitive consideration.

Alterations

- 6.15** Within the Conservation Area there are a significant number of replacement windows. These are usually PVCu double glazed units which have a flat appearance and which invariably have altered the proportions and detail of the windows. Changing the style, materials and dimensions of these can have a negative effect not only on the individual building but also cumulatively on the character of the area.
- 6.16** Other alterations and additions have not always paid attention to correct detailing and use of materials. This 'bodged' approach is eroding the quality of the Conservation Area.

Advertisements

- 6.17** The Conservation Area has so far remained relatively free of the plethora of road traffic signs.
- 6.18** There is, however, an unfortunate preponderance of A-boards and other pavement clutter on the east side of London Road (the Parade).
- 6.19** This is compounded by a few shop fronts, which still have brash signing and internally illuminated fascias, which compromise the quality of the buildings. Some recent attempts have improved the area but the image still has the potential of being improved further.

- 6.20** There are three particular locations in the Conservation Area where advertising takes the form of Day-Glo posters. These are prominently located for maximum attention but their brashness cheapens the area.

Utilities Clutter

- 6.21** There is a pole-mounted transformer and tin shed at the bottom of Bentham Hill, Modest Corner.

7 Next Steps

7.1 This Character Appraisal will assist the Borough Council's decision and policy making in the following ways:

- The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan was adopted in March 1996 and is being reviewed. This Appraisal will feed into the review process and help in drawing up any new policies for the Southborough area;
- The Appraisal will help in the interpretation of Policy EN5 of the Local Plan. Under this policy, development must meet certain criteria in terms of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in which they are situated; and
- The Appraisal will form the basis and focus for any future enhancement proposals in the Conservation Area.

8 Further Information

- 8.1** For queries on planning matters or general conservation advice you are encouraged to consult the Borough Council's planning officers who will be pleased to assist.














Telephone: 01892 526121
Fax: 01892 544746
Or write to: Head of Planning and Building Control Services
Town Hall
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN1 1RS

- 8.2** For enquiries regarding the Parishes of Benenden, Brenchley, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst, Sandhurst and Sissinghurst contact:

Telephone: 01580 712771
Fax: 01580 712649
Or write to: Head of Planning and Building Control Services
Cranbrook Council Offices
High Street
Cranbrook
Kent TN17 3EN

9 Character Appraisal Maps

**Lamberhurst Conservation Areas
Townscape Analysis
Key**

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | Enclosure of space by buildings |  | Rhythm – group of buildings with similar proportion or details |
|  | Enclosure/partial enclosure of space by walls, fences etc. |  | Landscape Framework – tree/shrub belt that makes a significant contribution to the structure and character of the Conservation Area |
|  | Enclosure/partial enclosure of space by hedges, trees |  | Locally important area of open space |
|  | Landmark – Key feature visible from many viewpoints |  | Loss of enclosure |
|  | Panorama |  | Intrusive elements |
|  | Focal Point – Significant element (e.g. building, trees) which forms the focus of a view |  | Conservation Area boundary (revised 1997) |
|  | Vista – view stopped by significant feature | | |







10 Consultation

Introduction

- 10.1** This document has been prepared in accordance with the guidance set out in PPG12 regarding Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 10.2** The relevant Local Plan Policies are set out in this document at Section 2. This document is intended to support these policies.

Consultation Process

- 10.3** The initial preparation of the document was through a working party made up of Borough Council officers together with representatives from local organisations, which included the Southborough Town Council, The Southborough Society, the Kent High Weald Project and local Ward Members of the Borough Council.
- 10.4** The process included a walkabout of the Conservation Area and a follow-up workshop session. The resultant informal draft was then subject to scrutiny and input from all members of the working group, together with other key Borough Council officers.
- 10.5** The draft document was then reported to the Borough Council's Cabinet on 10 April 2003 and approved as the basis for public consultation (item 030410/CAB222).
- 10.6** During the consultation period of four weeks the consultation draft was sent to the Town Council, Southborough Society, English Heritage, the national amenity societies, CPRE, Weald of Kent Preservation Society, Enterprise Agency of West Kent, GOSE, Kent County Council, senior officers in Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- 10.7** The consultation draft was also reported to the Borough Council's Western Area Planning Committee for comment and was made available to all Borough Councillors.
- 10.8** Additionally those properties directly affected by proposed boundary changes were written to, informing them of proposals.
- 10.9** Finally, a two-day manned exhibition on the Appraisal was held in Southborough.

Response to Consultation

- 10.10** All responses were recorded with recommendations for change where considered appropriate.
- 10.11** The report, with details of the responses and changes, can be found in papers from the meeting of the Council's Cabinet for 21 August 2003, which is available from the Council or can be viewed on the website.
- 10.12** The Cabinet resolution was to approve the Appraisal as Supplementary Planning Guidance and that the Conservation Area boundaries be modified as proposed. This decision was subsequently confirmed at Full Council on 8 October 2003.

Notices

- 10.13** Relevant notices were placed in the London Gazette on 24 October 2003, and the Courier Newspaper 24 October 2003 in accordance with Section 70 of the Act.

