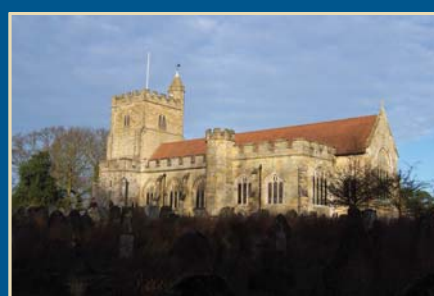


# Benenden and Iden Green

*April 2005*



# Benenden and Iden Green

## *Conservation Areas Appraisal*

*Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
in partnership with  
Benenden Parish Council and other local  
representatives*

**Tony Fullwood BA(Hons) DipUD MRTPI DMS MCM1  
Head of Strategy and Development**

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS**

**April 2005**

*Printed on environmentally friendly paper*

*Acknowledgements*

*The Borough Council would like to thank Benenden Parish Council and Benenden Amenity & Countryside Society for their participation in the preparation of this Guidance*

If you require this information in large print, Braille, on audiotape or in any other format, please contact us on 01892 526121

---

**Contents**

1	Introduction	1
	Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas	1
	Purpose of this Appraisal	1
	Benenden and Iden Green Conservation Areas	2
	Boundary Review	2
2	Policy Background	3
	Local Plan Conservation Area Policies	3
	Other Local Plan Policies	4
	Other Designations	4
3	The Evolution and Form of Benenden and Iden Green	9
	Pre-Conquest	9
	1200 – 1700	9
	1700 – 1860	10
	1860 – 1950	11
4	Landscape Setting	13
5	Character Appraisal – Benenden	
	Context	14
	Approach	15
	Western Landscape Area	15
	The Street	16
	The Green	20
	Eastern Approach	22
6	Summary of elements that contribute to Benenden Conservation Area's Special Character	24
	Key Characteristics	24
	Trees and Landscape	24
	Boundaries	24
	Spatial Containment	24
	Materials	24
	Tile Hanging	24
	Chimneys	25
	Architectural Punctuation	25
	Balance and Simplicity	25
	Architectural Detail	25
	Rear Elevations	25
7	Summary of Elements that detract from Benenden Conservation Area's Special Character and Opportunities for Enhancement	26
	Erosion	26
	Pub Forecourts	26
	Scout Hut	26
	Garages	26
	New Developments	26
	Cherryfields	26
	Recreation Field	27

Telephone Exchange	27
School Forecourt	27
Plastic Windows	27
8 Character Appraisal – Iden Green	28
Context	28
Approach	29
Iden Green Road/Mill Street	29
Coldharbour Road/Chapel Lane	33
9 Summary of elements that contribute to Iden Green Conservation Area's Special Character	37
Key Characteristics	37
Views	37
Spatial Layout	37
Green	37
Architectural Scale	37
Edges	37
Boundaries	38
Variety of Materials	38
Details	38
Chimneys	38
10 Summary of elements that detract from Iden Green Conservation Area's Special Character and Opportunities for Enhancement	39
Roofscape Clutter	39
Garages	39
Footpaths	39
Oakfield Cottages	39
Boundaries	39
Suburban Frontages	39
Bins	40
Traffic Signing	40
Church Forecourt	40
Yew Tree Farm	40
11 Next Steps	41
12 Further Information	42
13 Character Appraisal Maps	43
14 Consultation	45
Introduction	45
Consultation Process	45
Response to Consultation	45
Notices	

**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 do 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 Benenden and Iden Green Conservation Areas.
- 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 areas. These detractors include development which is out of keeping with the character of the conservation areas, 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 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 Benenden and Iden Green Conservation Areas, such as the County and Borough Councils and local traders and householders.

### Benenden and Iden Green Conservation Areas

- 1.10 The Parish of Benenden 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. Villages and hamlets are generally located on the ridges, or higher ground. There are also historic parklands associated with major estates.
- 1.11 It lies some 15 miles south east of Royal Tunbridge Wells and 15 miles from Ashford to the north east.
- 1.12 The main settlement of Benenden was originally designated as a conservation area in December 1974 with small extensions as part of a review in January 1992. Iden Green was originally designated in November 1973 and also reviewed in January 1992.

### Boundary Review

- 1.13 As part of this Appraisal the boundaries of the conservation areas were critically reviewed.
- 1.14 Some changes have been made, with extensions to include additional areas and buildings which contribute to the special character, eg the eastern approach to Benenden, tree groups which are part of the setting, together with minor adjustments to match identifiable features on the ground and to properly include other trees and curtilages.
- 1.15 The wider landscape setting, which is important to the character of both conservation areas, 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, and the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and 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 uses 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 Local Plan, which are relevant to the Benenden and Iden Green Conservation Areas. Specific policy designations are set out in detail in the Local Plan and the Proposal Maps. They are shown as Figures 1 and 2 and can be summarised as follows:

**Limits to Built Development**

Under Policy LBD1, the Limits to Built Development defines the built up edges of Benenden and Iden Green, beyond which countryside policies apply.

**Landscape Protection**

Policy EN23 protects the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the High Weald Special Landscape Area, which applies throughout the area.

**Sites of Nature Conservation Interest**

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**

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

**Shop Fronts**

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**

Policy EN16 seeks to ensure that advertisement proposals would not be detrimental to the appearance of the conservation areas.

**Schools**

Policy CS3 safeguards land for new primary school provision with Policy CS6 permitting alternative uses for long-term redundant school buildings.

**Recreation Open Spaces**

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

Other Designations

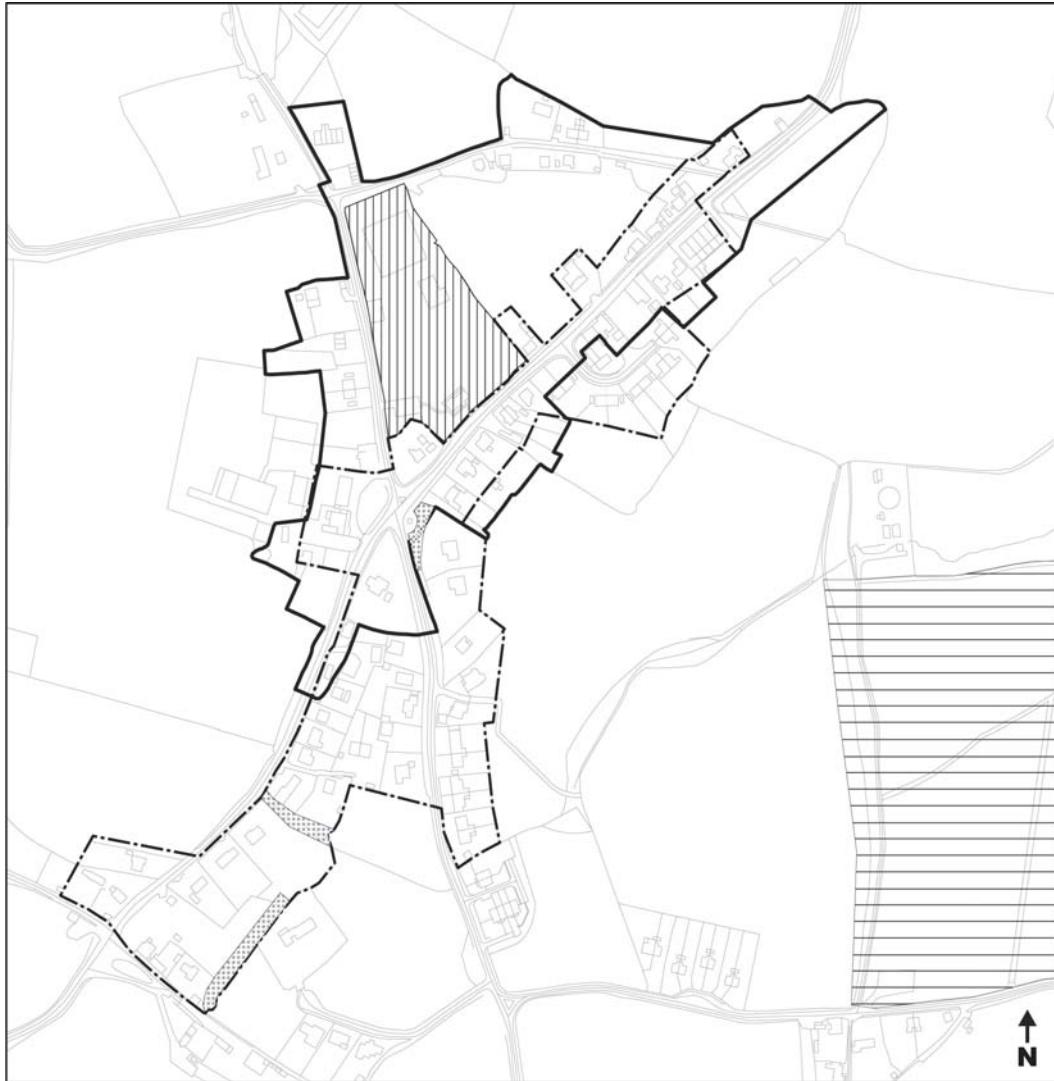
- 2.5 Finally, there are designations which are made through other legislation. These are illustrated in the map series set out in Figures 3 and 4, and include listed buildings and tree preservation. It is advisable to check with the Borough Council on detailed enquiries, as these designations are subject to changes.




**Benenden Local Plan Policies**

**Figure 1**

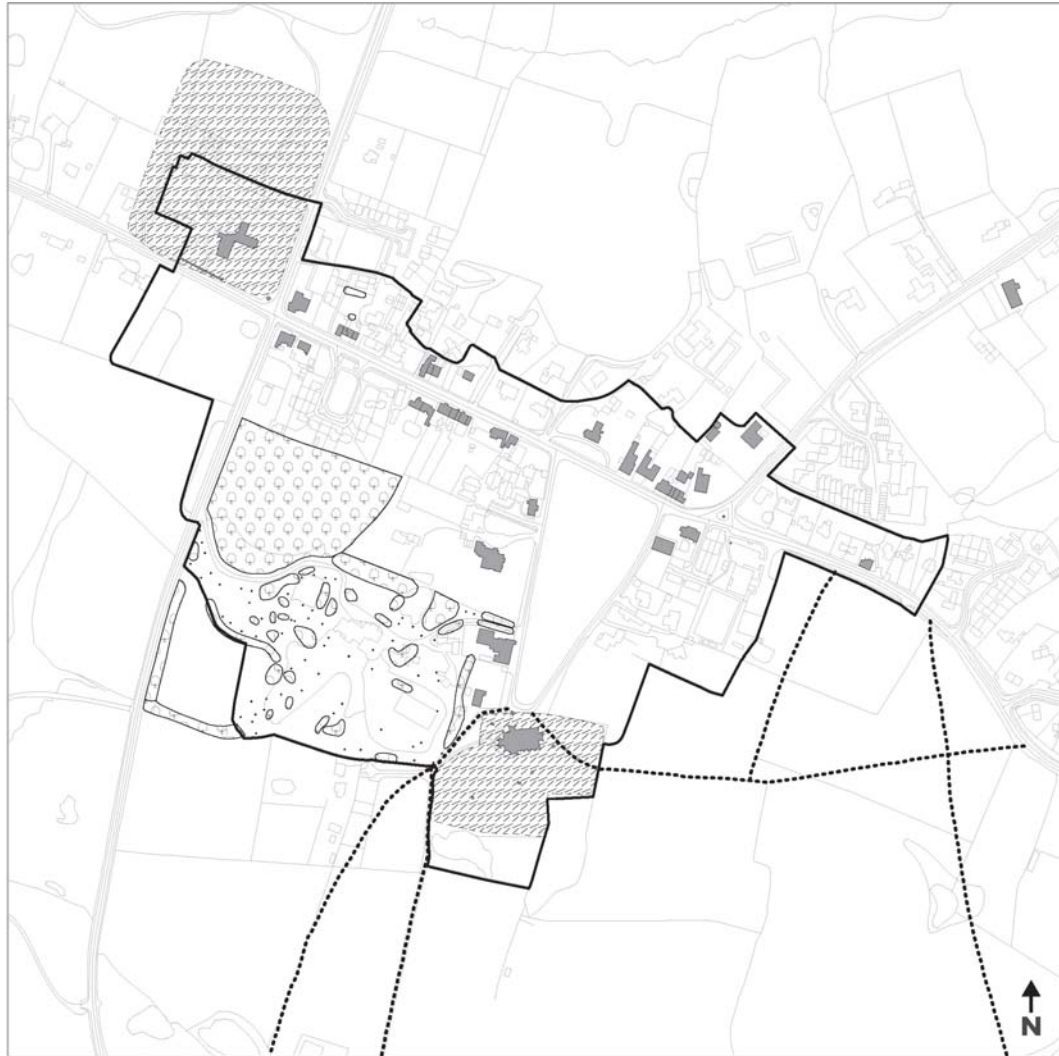
-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Limits to Built Development
-  Areas of Landscape Importance
-  Important Open Space
-  Recreation Open Space
-  Site with Nature Conservation Interest
-  Historic Park/Garden
-  Arcadian Areas
-  Footway Proposal
-  Important Landscaped Approach



**Iden Green Local Plan Policies**

-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Limits to Built Development
-  Area of Landscape Importance
-  Recreation Open Space
-  Site with Nature Conservation Interest
-  Historic Park/Garden
-  Footway Proposal
-  Important Landscaped Approach

**Figure 2**



**Benenden other designations**

-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Footpaths
-  Archaeology
-  TPOs

**Figure 3**



**Iden Green other designations**

-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Footpaths
-  Archaeology
-  TPOs

**Figure 4**

3 The Evolution and Form of Benenden and Iden Green

Pre-Conquest

- 3.1 During recent field-walking in the area of the Roman road at Bishopsden Farm, a few small fragments of pottery, thought to be Iron Age, were found, as well as much older struck flint flakes. Some of the geology in and around the parish contains iron-rich rocks suitable for smelting. Abundant iron slag has been found around Hinksden, together with (possibly associated) Iron Age pottery fragments.
- 3.2 These and other scattered finds indicate that some areas of the parish were probably settled as early as 3,500 years ago, contradicting the conventional view of the prehistoric Weald as a vast area of unoccupied forest crossed only by a few route-ways.
- 3.3 The parish is crossed by two Roman roads, with a settlement and iron-working site at Little Farningham Farm, just north of the parish boundary in Cranbrook. Excavations suggest another small settlement, close to the junction of the roads, near Benenden School. There may also have been minor roads linking settlements with local iron-working areas.
- 3.4 The north-south road left Watling Street, near Rochester, going south through Maidstone and Staplehurst to Benenden. Southwards, the road goes on to iron-working areas near Hastings. The paved ford at Iden Green, which is on this road, is reputed to be Roman. An east-west road led eastwards through Benenden to Tenterden and Ashford and on to Canterbury.
- 3.5 The Manor of Benenden was given by William the Conqueror to his half brother, Odo, Bishop of Baieux, in 1067.
- 3.6 Benenden is one of the few places in the Weald referred to by name in the Domesday Book in 1086 and possessed a church, even at that early period. It records the village as being owned by Osier. Afterwards the de Benendens occupied the land.

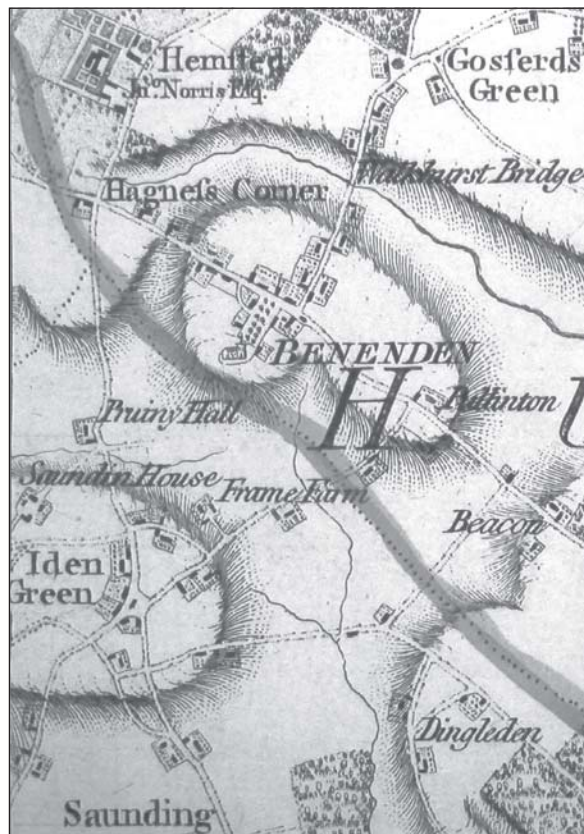
1200-1700

- 3.7 In 1388, Hemsted was granted to the Guldefords, who resided there for the next 300 years. The Guldeford family were prominent in the history of the parish. Richard Guldeford, of Hemsted in Benenden and Halden in Rolvenden, fought alongside Henry VII when he gained the Crown at Bosworth Field in 1485, and Hemsted became a great house with a hunting park. Richard Guldeford was active in draining Romney Marsh and East Guldeford took his name. He died on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but the Guldeford family flourished under Royal patronage for the next hundred years.
- 3.8 Hemsted was visited by Queen Elizabeth I in 1573, as a guest of Sir Thomas Guldeford and his wife, Elizabeth. On her progress through Kent in August 1573, Elizabeth and her entourage stayed locally at Bedgebury, Hemsted and Sissinghurst. Sir Thomas Guldeford of Hemsted was rewarded with a knighthood.
- 3.9 Over the years, the owners of Hemsted have been a great influence on the village.
- 3.10 In the parish, men prospered – many magnificent hall houses date from 1470-1500. Over 20 have survived, scattered through the dens – there were once many more. The source of this prosperity is not clear, but the great 13th-century steeple (later destroyed by fire) suggests that the parish had long been wealthy.

- 3.11 The cloth industry flourished in Cranbrook and in the parishes around. The Benenden clothiers now occupied the big houses – Watts at the Manor House, Gibbon at Pump (Pympne), Sharpe at Crithole (Crit Hall), Stace at Bishopsden – there were said to be over 50 cloth workhouses in the parish. The clothiers were entrepreneurs, coordinating the work of weavers, shearmen, fullers and dyers, while women worked as spinners. Many people combined farming with work in the cloth industry.
- 3.12 Dating from the 13th century, Benenden church had a detached bell tower built, with stone foundations and a wooden spire. Kilbane, in 1659, describes the steeple as being rare and remarkable, '.... a serviceable sea mark from Hyth to Dungenness point...'. On 30 December 1672 lightning struck – the steeple was destroyed by a fire so intense that the church was reduced to its stone walls and houses on the green were consumed.
- 3.13 The melted bell metal, iron and lead were salvaged and sold. The church itself was 'patched up' in 1677-78 (according to Newman). It took six years for the new church to be ready and 40 years before there was money to finish the tower. The cloth industry had ended and the parish was poor.

1700-1860

- 3.14 In 1702 Hemsted was sold to the Admiral of the Fleet, Sir John (Foulweather Jack) Norris. The house itself was modernised during and after Sir John's ownership. His grandson, John Norris, came to live there with his wife, Kitty Fisher. She is famed in a nursery rhyme as the one who found Lucy Locket's pocket (she lived at Babb's Farm, nearby).



*Andrews, Drury and Herbert map 1769 (courtesy of Centre for Kentish Studies)*

1860-1950

- 3.15 In 1858, Gathorne Hardy bought Hemsted. In 1859-62 he built a new house at Hemsted and restored the parish church in Victorian manner, both using the architect David Brandon. Hardy became the first Earl of Cranbrook. He later used the notable Victorian architect George Devey to build the lodges to the park.
- 3.16 Devey also designed many other houses for Lord Cranbrook, in the 'Kentish Vernacular' style, including cottages, lodges, the Bull Inn and St George's Hall. In contrast to the ancient Wealden countryside, with its hamlets scattered through the dens, these houses were now concentrated in the new village centre and helped to form its character. The village is, therefore, to a large extent, the creation of Lord Cranbrook. A previous owner of Hemsted, Thomas Law Hodges had also cleared some cottages and a public house at the top of the green, leaving the church at the top of the expansive slope of grass.
- 3.17 The settlement at Iden Green probably developed around existing farmsteads as part of the growing cloth industry. This may explain some of the more modest forms of buildings, occupied by cloth workers.
- 3.18 There was a marked expansion of Iden Green, particularly in the 18th century, with the older buildings often being re-fronted. It had been largely agricultural farmsteads before that. It now developed its own series of shops, stores and public houses, plus a chapel.
- 3.19 In Benenden, the crossroads were further west than today, on the old Roman road. A turnpike road was introduced with gates and a house/cottage in the late 1770s. The toll house and gates, which were located at the crossroads, were pulled down in 1876, when they were replaced by a well 11 years later, in 1887. St George's Club was built in 1881 opposite the site of the Toll House.
- 3.20 The commemorative wells were built in the parish to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 in Benenden, and the Diamond Jubilee in 1897 in Iden Green.
- 3.21 Cricket has been played in Benenden since the late 18th century. Notable early 19th-century players are buried in St George's churchyard. Other sports activities still play an important part in community life.
- 3.22 There are several Trusts in Benenden: the Gibbons and Ginders, donated a school house to the village in 1609; the Feoffee Charity of 1664, an 18th-century workhouse in The Street; the Thorn Almshouse Charity in Iden Green, with cottages on the west side; and the Harmsworth Memorial Trust from Viscount Rothmere which has donated a series of gifts to the Parish including recreation fields in both Benenden and Iden Green in the 1920s and other donations.
- 3.23 Benenden Chest Hospital was opened in 1905 to treat tuberculosis and for patients to take advantage of the clear country air.
- 3.24 Lord Rothmere bought Hemsted in 1912 and made some alterations. During 1923-24 the estate was dispersed. Benenden School bought Hemsted House and park; the farms were sold at auction in Maidstone. Symbolic of the end of an era was the felling of the great Hemsted Oak in New Pond Road, 'probably the finest specimen of an oak in the South of England'. The trunk, weighing eight tons, went to the Wembley Exhibition of 1924.
- 3.25 Like Lord Cranbrook, Lord Rothmere was a great parish benefactor – he gave to the village St George's Club, the War Memorial, two allotment fields, two recreation grounds (including the land on which the Village Hall stands), and a trust fund for their maintenance. Benenden benefits from these gifts to this day.



- 3.26 Agriculture had an influence on the land pattern in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the hop gardens were in their prime. Hop growing was quite an event, with the annual invasion of hop pickers, with shops emptying their windows and moving goods behind counters.
- 3.27 Fruit growing is now also in decline, and the land is now mainly used for arable farming and for livestock.
- 3.28 Milling took place in the area, with water and roller mills at Wandle Mill, south of Iden Green, and windmills on the sandstone ridge at Beacon and Rolvenden. There were also a number of forges in the area serving the agricultural community.
- 3.29 Wartime farming methods, the introduction of mechanisation and grant regimes for land improvement have all served to change the character of the area, and the decline in seasonal work.
- 3.30 The recent conversion of barns and oast houses to dwellings, and increases in equestrian activities, are continuing to change the character.

4 Landscape Setting

- 4.1 Benenden and Iden Green are situated in the north eastern sector of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The geology of the High Weald is comprised mainly of a series of hard sandstone strata, underlain by heavy clays, giving rise to a combination that occurs across the High Weald of sandstone ridges and clay vales. Combined with faulting and watercourses cutting into the rock sequences, this has led to the smooth, rolling uplands plateau and ridgelines, strongly incised by deep stream valleys (ghylls).
- 4.2 The pattern of land use, and historical influences, have also had an effect on the appearance of the landscape. Typically, the agricultural development and settlement of the Weald was slow because of the dense woodland cover and the difficulty of working the soils. It was primarily used as autumn forest grazing or pannage for pigs and no doubt other livestock from the north Kent area. This also created two principal drove routes in the area at Goddards Green Road and Rolvenden Road, east-west to manors in east Kent.
- 4.3 The area was opened up more in Roman times, when trees were cleared to enable the smelting of the iron ore deposits. The major Roman road crossing the eastern Weald running north-south lies immediately to the west of the two settlements. Later developments tended to be in the form of small settlements and farmsteads, criss-crossed by lanes and tracks connecting hamlets and farmsteads between the main routes.
- 4.4 The settlements outside the Weald, many later to become manors, typically owned dens scattered along their drove roads into the Weald. At some stage, it is not known precisely when, the dens became settled and farmed, although still attached to the manors outside the Weald. This early history of the Weald determines today's pattern of settlement, with isolated farmsteads and small hamlets reflecting the distribution of dens and often retaining their names.
- 4.5 Within this countryside of scattered hamlets, two dens, those of Benenden and Iden, became centres for larger settlements. Benenden, focused on the church, was much the earlier; the history of Iden is less certain, but it may have first grown as a centre for the cloth industry in the 16th century.



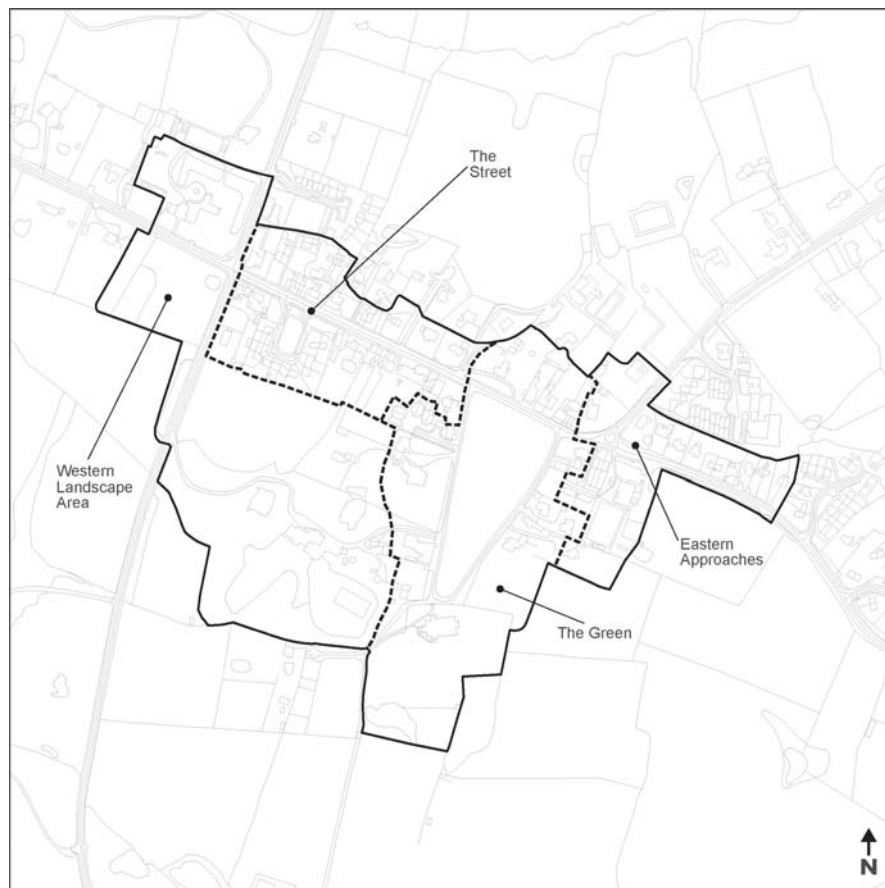
*Landscape setting of Iden Green viewed from the north*

- 4.6 The landscape now has a patchwork appearance, with poor soils as woodland and the more productive areas as farmland, arable or now becoming more grazed. Building types have been influenced by the agriculture. This is evidenced by oast houses dotting the landscape and with both wind and water mills still in existence nearby. Part of the character is also created by the long-distance views from the ridge tops, contrasted by a more intimate, smaller-scale experience within the ghyll valleys and narrow lanes edged by hedges and woodland shaws.
- 4.7 The result is a varied and complex landscape, which is described more fully in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance (August 2002).
- 4.8 The natural resources have also influenced the local building materials. Clay has been used for the characteristic orange brick and tile, timber for weatherboarding, with sandstone usually reserved for churches. The buildings themselves very much form part of the landscaped character.

**5 Character Appraisal – Benenden**

Context

- 5.1 Benenden sits on an east-west sandstone ridge following the typical Wealden pattern of ridgetop settlement and principal routes of communication. The ghyll valleys to the north-east and south allow views beyond to parallel ridges. This area is crossed by a main north-south road, running north to Sissinghurst and south to Sandhurst. This was an old drove route.
- 5.2 The conservation area covers the central core of the village between the crossroads in the west and the green in the east. The basic form of Benenden can be described as a linear row plan with a large, offset green. Originally developed to single depth and fairly sporadic in layout to the linear part, this has, over subsequent years, been gradually in-filled and built up. More recent 20th-century developments have been in the form of an estate in the 1950s and 1990s to the north west, with further single 'backland' in-fills to the north. These have broken with the tradition of single depth development. To the east and west, along the ridgetop road, beyond the Conservation Area, is also further 'ribbon' development.
- 5.3 The Green at the eastern end gently rises southwards to one of the highest points in the area, occupied by St George's Church. The Green is bordered by houses in larger grounds, with strong tree cover.
- 5.4 There are large parkland gardens to the north-west and south-west, which provide strong contextual landscape elements with some exotic tree species. There are also links to the adjacent landscape through hedgerows and the field pattern which are important to the setting of the conservation area. This is particularly relevant to the south-east of the area where there are more open views across the recreation field to the important backdrop of field trees on the rising ground beyond the conservation area.



**Benenden Character Areas**

Approach

- 5.5 For the purposes of presentation of this part of the Appraisal, Benenden Conservation Area is described in four character areas, which reflect their differing characteristics of layout, landscape and building typologies. These are:

- Western landscape area;
- The Street,
- The Green; and
- Eastern approach

Western Landscape Area

- 5.6 The western approach to the Conservation Area starts from way beyond the boundary. At the slight twist in the road at the Lodge to Benenden School, one gets a long vista eastwards, right through the village. The consistent railings, hedges bounding the properties and the avenue of trees to the south side of the western approach also provide a strong sense of enclosure and reinforce the linearity of Benenden.



*Linear approach from the west*

- 5.7 Upon entering the conservation area itself, the view opens up to the south across a field bounded by a significant row of lime trees, which are a continuation of the approach. There is a pond at the corner of the crossroads which is also punctuated by groups of Scots Pine trees beyond.
- 5.8 The Old Manor House on the north side, built for the Lord of Benenden Manor, dates from approximately 1390. It is a typical timber-framed 'Wealden' hall house with central recessed bay and curved braces, tiles hung on red brick plinth, with a steeply pitched, tiled roof. A large 16th-century extension has been added to the west, forming an L-wing. The building has been re-fronted with further 20th-century restorations. It lies within a moated site and with many trees to the northern edge, providing strong links to the historic park and garden to the north.
- 5.9 On the north side is a large copper beech tree, which marks the edge, behind which is the old manor house and moat. Behind hedging is a selection of trees, somewhat 'gardenesque' in quality, only punctuated by the driveway and a small lychgate to the front door, set back from the road. There is only a glimpse of the building, a large Wealden hall-style building to the back, backing on to the moat and not, unfortunately, readily visible, other than glimpses of the roof and a range of chimneys. The principal aspect is to the west, facing the range of garages.

- 5.10 The northern approach passes Hemsted parkland and woodland on the turnpike road. The original road was once further to the west of the Manor House. The park contains fine trees, many planted in the 18th and 19th centuries, complemented on the eastern side by woodland shaws forming a strong landscaped corridor.



*Mature trees to south-western edge of conservation area*

- 5.11 The southern approach from Iden Green skirts round the high spur occupied by St George's Church, which is now just discernible amongst the surrounding trees, which provide a strong perimeter setting, which crucially also shields the other buildings. Much of the south-western part of the area consists of the garden of Collingwood Grange (formerly The Grange). It is an informal, naturalistic garden created after the First World War by Collingwood Ingram. It contains plants collected from all over the world and therefore has horticultural interest, as well as a strong landscape character. It adds to the verdant tree cover with the exotic character of many tree species interspersed with more natural varieties.

The Street

- 5.12 It is at the current crossroads where the built up development of the village becomes more apparent, with, on the north-east corner, the assured St George's Club. Built in 1881 for Lord Cranbrook by George Devey in a Kentish vernacular style, this building gives a very contextual design to Benenden, with gables, diaper pattern brickwork and a variety of shaped, hanging tilework.
- 5.13 On the north-west corner, facing it, is the Queen's Well, built to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887. The Queen's Well consists of an open timber frame and bracing with hipped roof with some banding in the tiles and wooden finial. This is a locally distinctive feature, there being a similar one in Iden Green.



*Crossroads looking eastwards*

- 5.14 Trees figure prominently in the character of the conservation area. Allied with St George's Club, on the Cranbrook Road and The Street, are two fine specimens of copper beech trees. Queen's Well itself, is framed by a Scots Pine and an ash tree. The view further north, out of the conservation area, is immediately into heavily wooded countryside. Similarly, to the south, towards Iden Green, the road dips away. There is a large cedar tree on the western side. This eclectic mix of species is a noteworthy feature at this point.

- 5.15 On the south-east corner of the crossroads is the early 19th-century three-bay Fir Tree House, which is a mixture of clapboarding to the ground floor and first floor tile hanging. It has white sash windows. The right-hand section has a modest, open, pedimented hood. The section of the building to the east of Fir Tree House, which forms part of this property, is a long-standing butcher's shop which forms an important component in the character of the conservation area. This pair of buildings, and the property to the east, all have a pristine range of hipped roofs at the rear. Their chimneys and extensions comprise an important and complete element of roofscape, visible when approaching from the south.
- 5.16 The adjoining property to the east, Laurel House, is more classically-inspired on the front. It is clapboarded, with three symmetrical sash windows, two round-headed dormers in lead and dentilled eaves cornice.
- 5.17 Both these properties are noteworthy by having very low-key front boundary treatment of low hedges or nothing at all, mirrored by the St George's Club on the north side, which has low hedging exposing the building to view with its arcading, seating and lattice windows.
- 5.18 Back to the north side, adjoining the St George's Club, but set well back behind a hedge, is recent new housing with half-timbering, plain and scalloped clay tiles and, although recent, many of the prevalent materials and themes within the conservation area have been recognised. Next to it is Laurel Cottages, a row of four late 18th-century cottages. Nos 2, 3 and 4 are brick and tile hung elevations and dentilled eaves cornice. No 1, however, sits forward from the line of the others and presents its gable to the street, very close behind the hedge. It has a massive chimney stack with angles, flues, black and white timbering at first floor, chequered brickwork at ground floor with blue headers and diamond latticed windows: a very typical George Devey addition added circa 1890 with carved bargeboard, overhanging gables, etc. The group is also punctuated by a fine magnolia.
- 5.19 Adjacent is Shirley Cottage and Ashlawn Cottage, another building with tile hanging at first floor, blue headers at ground floor and, again, dentilled eaves cornice. This forms part of a range of buildings with a very typical and characteristic form and detailing with scalloped diamond club head tile hangings, casement windows with glazing bars similar to the first building and massive chimney stacks with oversailing brickwork. This whole range of properties also has characteristic low hedging and modest depth front gardens.



*The Street, north side.  
Shirley and Ashlawn Cottages with the  
Post Office and Westfield beyond*

- 5.20 There is then the Post Office and village shop fronting Poplars, with sash windows, various shaped tile hanging and, again, large chimney stacks. This is a busy little shop with forecourt and brickwork and goods on display. It provides an important activity focus in the conservation area. The Poplars sits back from the road and consists of white weatherboarding. Plastic windows have unfortunately been recently installed. The gap between it and the hairdressing shop, Westfield House, allows glimpses further northwards to roofscapes beyond of recent developments and the trees in the background, primarily oak and Scots Pine. This is one of the few important gaps in the otherwise complete frontage to The Street. Whilst these trees behind, and others on the northern edge, are outside the conservation area, they are nevertheless important to the setting.
- 5.21 The hairdressing shop sits forward, with scalloped bargeboards on gabled elevation, supported on cast iron columns, with large chimneys and ornate tile hanging. This is a late 19th-century addition to an earlier late 18th-century building, which is on the original alignment similar to the village shop. It has white weatherboard at ground floor, plain tile hanging at first floor, casement windows and a massive chimney stack.
- 5.22 On the south side, opposite this group, is the 1950s Cherry Fields development which comprises a series of one and a half-storey houses and bungalows around a green central area, which is a very typical development of its era. These are constructed generally with concrete tiles and buff brickwork and large-paned windows, rather than the local red brick and vertical windows. It is also somewhat bleak in its landscape, being set back from the road. The road bounding the estate contains a bare patch of grass. Its saving grace is the row of lime trees to the street itself, a visual continuation of those to the western approach, although one of these has been pollarded severely. This is certainly a case for possible enhancement to improve its currently weak contribution to the rest of the conservation area.
- 5.23 Alongside, almost tucked away, is the scout hut, hidden under a lime tree with the Old Forge behind, covered in clematis. Both buildings could play a greater role in the street scene. This should be done though without compromising their essential unassuming character. Gable Cottage is aptly named, with finials surmounting its gables above porches with projecting gables. The building has lozenge-shaped windows and is painted black and white on the first floor with brickwork and stone arches at ground floor and heavy wooden doors. It was built c1870 for the Earl of Cranbrook, probably by Cotman of Ipswich. This all sits behind a picket fence and shallow garden, typical of the area.
- 5.24 Adjoining this, further westward on the south side, is Dolphin Cottage and a range of properties known as The Barracks. This late 18th-century group of buildings is set quite tight to the pavement and consists of two storeys with blue header brickwork, cambered arches to ground floor with square, metal lights and a range of casements at first floor. There is an uncharacteristic mansard roof. There is a pleasant series of three little lobbies leading into doors that access the cottages either side behind. On the street they are complemented by gabled weather-porches with trelliswork surrounds, which provide a particularly noteworthy punctuation to the street-scene.
- 5.25 On the north side is the modest Cleveland Cottage, with its unusual mathematical tiling at first floor and simple casement windows. Central-paired doorcases and flat weatherhoods indicate that it was originally two cottages. It sits in an inherently domestic garden setting, backed by a number of statuesque Scots Pines with an oak tree in the cottage garden to the front.

- 5.26 Much of the remaining section of this northern edge comprises a series of private drives leading through to a newer development of three and four bedroom houses. Whilst the properties themselves contribute little to the character of the Conservation Area, their setting and the Arcadian quality and statuesque trees of various species are important features both within, and beyond the edge of, the Conservation Area. They are also visible in the wider landscape with particular long range views from the north. Again, Scots Pines figure highly with oak trees, horse chestnut and silver birch. The hedges on this northern side at this point become more dominant, hiding the properties behind by and large, apart from the tops of roofs and chimneys being visible. Tucked among this hedging is a quite discreet bus shelter, which blends in quite well.
- 5.27 On the south side is the open car park to the King William IV public house which introduces somewhat of a break in the generally built up or strong boundary treatment to the frontage. It does, however, allow views to be obtained of the back of The Barracks building: the gables and chimneys of this, and the building further to the west are still essentially unspoilt. The building itself is of 17th-century origin; a lobby entrance house, re-fronted in the mid-19th century. It is tile-hung at first floor and rough-rendered at ground floor. There is a series of white casement windows. Lighting and advertising are quite restrained and suitable for the building and the area.



*The Street, south side.  
Rose Cottage, and King William IV  
with the Barracks beyond*

- 5.28 Rose Cottage, next to the public house, c1830 is two-bay, two storey and is clad in timber to imitate stone, with margin sash windows. It retains its shop window to the right, maintaining a clear indication of a commercial function in the past.
- 5.29 Fordaways Cottage is a single-storey building, although deep-plan, and faces eastwards on to The Green across Wheelwright's Cottage. Wheelwright's Cottage has diamond latticed windows, black and white gables – a typical late-Victorian building. It faces The Street but also opens out on to The Green. Opposite, on the northern side of The Street, there is another private road with four modern properties off it.
- 5.30 At this point, the view back, westwards along The Street, emphasises the linearity of what was this turnpike road, crucially bounded by a mix of buildings, hedges and trees. Again, trees, particularly to the north behind, are prominent, providing a strong backdrop and generally Arcadian quality, interspersed with roofs and chimneys. The dominance of the landscape is a key aspect.



The Green

- 5.31 At this point, at the corner of Wheelwright's Cottage, the view opens up to reveal The Green of Benenden. It presents a typical English village scene, with the cricket square in the middle, mown grass, a church and various buildings nestling around the edge. On the northern edge, fronting The Street, are a number of horse chestnut trees and high hedging forming the front boundary to a significant property called Clevelands. It is a large, early 17th-century house; however, its contribution to the conservation area is somewhat lessened by the density of planting, as only the roof, dentilled eaves cornice and some of the first floor windows and chimneys can be glimpsed.
- 5.32 The remainder of the northern edge to The Green, and fronting The Street, comprises an outstanding and picturesque group of buildings. Chestnut House, which is a c1840 two-storey building with attic, was previously a post office. It has a rare use of slate to the roof, with white weatherboard and a galleried arcade to ground floor. It has large, vertically sliding sash windows, fluted columns and a paved area, and sits quite well forward in its plot. It has two rather 'lumpy' plastic dormer windows and rendered chimney stacks to either side. The building may benefit from some front boundary treatment.
- 5.33 Next to this, further eastwards, is the old school, the Edmond Gibbon School, dated 1609, with its orange scalloped tiles at first floor, leaded windows, long range of windows at ground floor on the left, and large sweep of clay-tiled roof and chimney stack. It has a modest front boundary treatment to an indifferent forecourt area.
- 5.34 Next is a small series of buildings, including Baldwin's General Store, which has plain tile hanging at first floor, red brick with white multi-paned casement windows and three dormers in a large sweep of roof. Probably early to mid 16th century and re-fronted in the 18th century, It may well have been floored over from the start. The building range next to it is a smaller scale version of it, comprising three small cottages with dentilled eaves cornice and all with picket fencing fronting cottage gardens.
- 5.35 Opposite, on the south-east corner of The Green, is the Bull Inn, c1608, heavily modified by George Devey in 1888. It has lattice window detail to a bay window and a projecting oriel window at ground floor, square leaded lights at first floor, with a pyramid bay window and small dormer. This building, associated with the livery stables, as they used to be, forms an extremely picturesque Arts & Crafts setting, with picket fencing, cobbles, roses, etc – a key focal point in the townscape. The livery stable itself is a single building comprising black and white timber at first floor level with sweeping roofs covering what is now a parking area for this converted building. It is matched symmetrically by a lean-to on the southern side.



*The Bull Inn*

- 5.36 On the eastern flank of The Green there is an ivy-covered brick wall, picket fencing and a series of coniferous trees allowing glimpses of gardens and outbuildings. This is an important eclectic mix of elements. Beyond, there is a new building called Timbers which has attempted to blend in by using tile hanging, dormer windows, gables and brick. The colours are, however, somewhat subdued, giving a rather brown appearance, accentuated by the brown windows. This property has the same low hedging that is prevalent in the area. There is a building behind and beyond this hedging.
- 5.37 Next is the Vicarage Coach House, set behind substantial brick piers and brick walling with a paved forecourt. This building, which was originally a coach house, is now converted to a single dwelling. It is a mixture of black and white timbering, red brick, scalloped gables and forms a small but picturesque scene. The Vicarage itself is a new building at the back. It is, however, much more visible when viewed from the eastern approach. The old Vicarage is a 'large rambling building' with an assembly of gables, bay windows, rendering, blue header brickwork, a porch, columns, interesting corner windows and distinctive ironmongery. The present building is early 19th century, re-fronted by Devey in 1879. It sits comfortably on The Green behind a scalloped hedge and gives a commanding view. Its garden runs back and up to the church and is bounded by hedges, park railing, and a range of trees (the majority of which are horse chestnut with glimpses of pines, with Wellingtonia behind in the garden).



*The Old Vicarage*



*The Green looking south*

- 5.38 At the apex of The Green is St George's Church, bounded by a wall and lychgate. Occupying a commanding position, a church has been on this site since pre-Norman times. The present building is 14th and 15th century, although damaged after a storm in 1672, which burnt down a separate bell tower. It was restored in 1676 and again in 1862 by Brandon (architect of Hemsted). Yew trees typically frame the entrance to the church itself. The view back down The Green at this point from the slightly elevated position, and the triangular nature of The Green, give a false sense of perspective of size. As it widens out, the buildings on the northern side form a picturesque group, with glimpses of countryside and Hempsted Forest beyond to the north, beyond Clevelands.

- 5.39 Views from the churchyard on the south side afford panoramas to countryside beyond. A lane and footpath lead downhill to Iden Green. Balmoral Cottage, a field and line of oak trees form the edge to the conservation area. The pond and copse of trees provide a localised feature. There are also some significant trees on this southern edge to the conservation area, forming the boundary to Collingwood Grange, with glimpses of exotic trees within the garden.
- 5.40 On the western edge of The Green are Church Cottage and Fig Tree Cottage. The former left section is 18th century, and the right-hand part is an addition by George Devey c1882, with blue header brickwork, clay tile with courses of fishscale tiles, timbered gable to the right with modillion bargeboards and a massive chimney stack.
- 5.41 There is a group of trees and then the Primary School building, the first in Benenden by George Devey, 1861. The building is built of red brick, stone quoins, gable, porch with half-timbered bell tower over and weathervane. It is an extremely picturesque building, and key local building due to its forward siting, although its setting is somewhat marred by the white and yellow lining, rubbish bins and general bits of railing and parking areas, rear extensions and the two-storey school building in the playground.
- 5.42 At the entrance to Collingwood Grange, the rest of this western edge of The Green comprises dense planting of mainly ash trees, giving a very rural feel. Collingwood House (formerly The Grange) sits somewhat deep into the site, and Ash Lawn is another building that is glimpsed behind vegetation: half timbered, gabled, dentilled cornices, white windows, canted chimney stacks into the gables at second floor, which is rendered, with black-painted bargeboards and white windows. Ash Lawn, another Devey building, is a large house built in 1869 in his Kentish Vernacular style.
- 5.43 Completing The Green, on the western side, on the south-western corner, is Fuggles Court, a recent development of peculiarly proportioned houses: a two-storey development, the upper storeys being within the roof which leads to a very large expanse of roof and a lot of garage doors on show. The Memorial Hall is a quirky little Queen Anne style building of harling, red brick buttresses surrounding the windows and porch and recently restored cupola. The building was originally donated c1910 by the family of Lord Cranbrook in his memory. The chimneys and rear elevation of Wheelwright's House/ Cottage on the corner are visible at this point.
- 5.44 The whole of The Green has a pleasing balance of buildings and trees with a scale that matches the space, gently dominated by the church tower at the apex of The Green. It exhibits a strong Arcadian quality, typified by low-density development in extensive grounds, dominated by the landscape, including exotic varieties, narrow entrances, with only glimpses of the buildings.

#### Eastern Approach

- 5.45 This area, eastwards beyond The Green, forms an eastern approach. Hurstdene is an early 19th-century house set back on the north-west corner of the junction of Walkhurst Road. It is tile hung with a large roof, with glimpses behind of workshops with large windows at first floor. The adjoining Nos 1, 2 and 3 are white weatherboarded buildings on their flank elevation. Yew Tree House is a classical 1840s house to the north and forms the edge of the Conservation Area.
- 5.46 On the south side is the Bull public house with its latticed windows and veranda. Adjoining there is a little estate road leading through to a new development and a series of three modest houses on the street front with picket fencing and more cottage gardens. Again, tile hanging and red brick have been used to emulate existing character.

- 5.47 At the corner, Walkhurst Road running off northwards to the Benenden Hospital area, is a small triangular green. It contains a war memorial and statue by Albert Toft: a bronze seated female on a large stone plinth, very much in a pre-Raphaelite style.
- 5.48 Set back on the north-east corner, at the junction, is the petite Walnut Cottage, although behind is a further range with the roof pitched front to back. A small porch, white weatherboarded with thick section casement windows.



*Eastern approach*

- 5.49 The approach to this junction from the east is punctuated by the quaint Tudor Cottage at the bend in the road with its blue headers, half timbering, scalloped bargeboard and massive chimneys. Beyond are the significant pair of Edwardian houses, Nairn and Bushey House. Their materials of red/orange scalloped tiles, red brick, half-timbered gables and white windows pick up many of the prevalent characteristics of the area. The same cannot be said, however, of the pebble-dashed bungalow which sits between.



*Nairn and Bushey House*

- 5.50 Set well back before Tudor Cottage are a pair of Victorian cottages – Clock and Grants Hill, with steep gables and club shaped tiles. Also Nos 1 & 2, with their red orange tiles and brickwork, form a charming pair, somewhat marred, however, by the indifferent Three Wishes. Landscape, including hedging, forms a crucial element, acting as a foil to the buildings and providing filtered views.
- 5.51 On the opposite, southern side of Rolvenden Road, some recent attempt has been made to plant up the edge to the recreation ground to provide much needed containment, although the car park in front of the village hall still needs some attention, as it is rather open and ill-defined. The views, though, across the recreation ground to the white boarding to the flank of the vicarage, the old vicarage and church tower, are an important aspect of the conservation area. This is punctuated by the significant oak tree on the south side of the road which is an major component in the townscape.
- 5.52 At this point, on the approach to the centre, there are also views to the Gibbons buildings with their chimneys. The eastern approach then rises gently up to The Green where one is suddenly aware of arriving in the heart of the village. At the bend in the road outside the Bull Inn, there is revealed the long vista right through The Street to the western end of the village, framed by the trees.

**6 Summary of elements that contribute to Benenden Conservation Area's Special Character**

Key Characteristics

**Trees and Landscape**

- 6.1 Trees are a particularly prominent element in the conservation area. They comprise large components such as at Collingwood and the Manor House, as well as individual specimens such as at the eastern crossroads. Others provide a backdrop to the buildings. There are a number of particularly statuesque, exotic specimens which provide a distinctive variety of shape and provide a Victorian/'gardenesque' feel to the conservation area.

**Boundaries**

- 6.2 With only a few exceptions there are good boundaries to plots. They comprise, in the main, hedging, but also estate railings and picket fencing. The height and privacy/openness are generally well balanced with only a few examples which are too high or too low.

**Spatial Containment**

- 6.3 The Street and The Green comprise the main spaces in the conservation area. They are both simple forms which are strongly contained by buildings and their boundaries. This provides no real opportunities for views out or even glimpses of the surrounding countryside. In the case of The Street it is through a well-balanced mix of landscape and built elements. In the case of The Green it is primarily through the landscaped edge punctuated only occasionally by building. This provides an interesting and characteristic contrast.

Materials

- 6.4 Traditional materials dominate in the area, even on newer developments. Roofing is primarily clay peg tile roofing with only a few examples of slate. Often the roof is the only element visible in the Arcadian setting.

Tile Hanging

- 6.5 There is a particularly strong theme of tile hanging, with a variety of special shapes including diamond and club scallop. There is even an example of mathematical tiling. The textures, colours and patterns of the tiles bring out the richness of the buildings and greatly add to the attractiveness and character of the area.



*Characteristic tile hanging*

Chimneys

- 6.6 These provide an important punctuation of the roofscape and architectural features amongst the trees. Many of the chimneys are substantial structures with stepped and projecting brick courses.

Architectural Punctuation

- 6.7 Within the fairly strong, consistent building materials and homogeneity, there are some distinctive punctuation points, which add to the character and provide crucial reference points and individual identity. They include white boarding, black and white gables, porches with columns and arcades, and the cupola. These introduce a small but appropriate variety to the strength and simplicity of materials.



*1 Laurel Cottages and magnolia*

Balance and Simplicity

- 6.8 The Street has a simple and strong linearity, which is complemented by the variety of containment types such as hedges with buildings set back in gardens, or the buildings in other instances located tighter to the footway.

Architectural Detail

- 6.9 White painted timber windows are a consistent theme throughout the conservation area. The use of dentilled eaves detailing is also a very evident feature.

Rear Elevations

- 6.10 When visible, rear elevations provide an interesting feature. Their strongly geometric/architectural forms are punctuated by gables, hips and chimneys. Many are still untouched by later extensions and alterations.

**7 Summary of elements that detract from Benenden Conservation Area's Special Character and Opportunities for Enhancement**

Erosion

- 7.1 The fairly recent installation of kerbs has not solved the erosion problem to the edges of The Green. It has only served to introduce a more visible element and urbanise the character. Placing of white plastic bollards in some areas to control parking have also not provided a sensitive solution.

Pub Forecourts

- 7.2 Although, in themselves, reasonable in the context of the conservation area, the openness of these frontages is at odds with the containment elsewhere in the area. The loss of enclosure is therefore particularly apparent. It also allows greater visibility of parked cars making them stand out.



Scout Hut

- 7.3 There is an opportunity to tidy up and improve this building and its plot. The characteristic forge building behind also appears to be an under-utilised building offering an opportunity for re-use and therefore enhancement of the conservation area.

Garages

- 7.4 The garages to the rear of The Poplars have a semi-derelict appearance.

New Developments

- 7.5 Whilst the design and use of materials have been a good attempt on recent developments, they are somewhat let down by the lack of definition in external space, with either ill-defined, or no boundaries, such as fences or hedges. This is very much at variance with the character of the conservation area.

- 7.6 The application of highway standards in the case of Hortons Close has produced a development dominated by road and footpaths and cars.

- 7.7 The use of materials in the buildings opposite the King William IV public house are rather sombre and dark, with use of brown tiles and brick.

Cherryfields

- 7.8 This is a 1950s development – very weak architecturally, with the use of bland materials such as concrete roof tiles on shallow pitch. This is a low-scale development and lacks the strong enclosure that is evident in the rest of the conservation area.

- 7.9 It is only saved by the frontage lime trees, which provide some enclosure to The Street. The large, and under-used grass areas to the street front and centrally to the estate, offer a significant opportunity for enhancement.



#### Recreation Field

- 7.10 This presents a rather bleak aspect on the eastern approach to the conservation area, with the only real feature of note being an oak tree. Although some hedging has been introduced on the north boundary adjoining the road verge, this landscape could be reinforced and also extended to treat the western edge fronting the village hall, to provide much needed visual enclosure.

#### Telephone Exchange

- 7.11 This building, together with the land to the rear, detracts from the setting of the conservation area. Careful management could improve the visual appearance whilst maintaining biodiversity.

#### School Forecourt

- 7.12 The George Devey school is a notable building in the conservation area. It is, however, let down by the forecourt area, which lacks definition and is an untidy area with lining and parked cars. The large white wheelie bins are a particularly obtrusive feature.

#### Plastic Windows

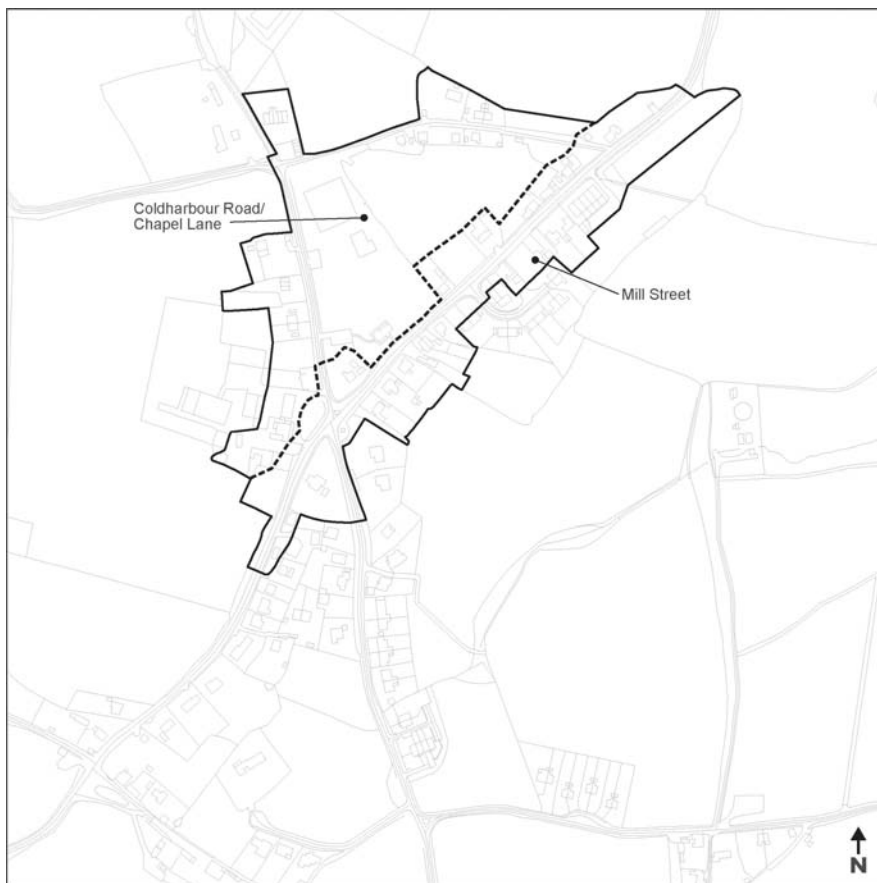
- 7.13 There are one or two which have been installed in the area. They invariably devalue the character of the area, particularly where white timber windows are a key feature, by introducing an alien material and having crude detailing.



**8 Character Appraisal – Iden Green**

Context

- 8.1 Iden Green sits on a spur to the south of Benenden with ghyll valleys falling to the west, south and east. This serves to provide a strong visual link to the adjoining countryside, with commanding views of the rolling landscape beyond, enabling distinctive buildings such as Beacon and Rolvenden windmills to be picked out to the north east.
- 8.2 ‘Iden’ means the yew tree wood pasture (den), presumably because there was a notable tree or trees there. The site of Yew Tree Farm within the hamlet may have some associated significance. Existing yew trees in the area therefore also take on a greater relevance.
- 8.3 Iden Green Road is the main thoroughfare through the village running north-south and linking Benenden to Sandhurst, with Mill Street running past Wandle Mill to the south, a local water mill which has recently been repaired.
- 8.4 The form of Iden Green can be described as an irregular agglomeration, loosely arranged around a central large triangular area. This is not a totally public area and therefore serves to separate the various component groups of buildings. The hamlet is therefore characterised by sporadic small groups of buildings, and has built up over the years with various in-fill and a 1950s estate grafted on to the east.
- 8.5 More recent developments have tended to take place to the south of the conservation area, linking up with other outlying buildings and groups. The conservation area is therefore focused on the more historic and coherent core of the village.
- 8.6 Historically, the scale of buildings in Iden Green has been quite modest, in contrast to Benenden, reflecting its distinct character.



**Iden Green Character Areas**

Approach

8.7 For the purposes of presentation of this part of the Appraisal, Iden Green Conservation Area is described in two character areas which reflect their differing characteristics of layout, topography and building typologies.

8.8 These are:

- Iden Green Road/Mill Street; and
- Coldharbour Road/Chapel Lane.

Iden Green Road/Mill Street

8.9 The approach to the village from the north winds down from Benenden and, at a bend in the road, is flanked by trees, marking the entrance into the conservation area. There is a particularly fine oak tree on the northern side, which is a key feature on the inside of the bend at the entrance. The road then rises gently up, with glimpses of white weatherboarded cottages beginning to appear in view.



*Iden Green Road – northern entry*

8.10 Moving further in, one is aware of more cottages tucked in amongst the trees. The first of these, on the north side, is the unusual Cotton Cottage dating from 1809, with its modern mansarded tiled roof, white weatherboarding, white picket fencing, shallow gardens and narrow grass verge. There is a series of extensions and outbuildings, which are fortunately subservient to the original.

8.11 Opposite Cotton Cottage on the south side there is a footpath with a steep grass bank and open field behind. Whilst open, the change in level still helps to define and contain the view into the village. On passing the public footpath linking back through to Chapel Lane, on the north side, both sides of the road unfold more, bounded by a characteristic collection of white weatherboarded buildings.

8.12 On the north side is The Cottage (formerly Bonbon Stores) and Cobwebs, two cottages of two builds, both 18th century. There is a mansarded roof to the eastern side with single dormers to the first floor. Cobwebs to the west is a two-storey, two-windowed building. The windows are replacement casements with diamond leaded lights. Its entrance door is framed by a pitched roof porch with latticed timber sides. Again, this pair of cottages have shallow front gardens, with no boundary treatment other than the mixture of garden flowers, including roses and shrubs.

8.13 Between Cobwebs and the next cottage, Lilac Cottage, is a small group of garages and an extension (former Dame School), all generally painted white and blending in quite successfully, through the consistent use of materials, albeit with varied architectural treatment.

8.14 Lilac Cottage is a modest, early 19th-century two-storey building with vertically sliding sash, multi-paned windows. It consists of white weatherboarding under a clay tiled roof. It has a flat-roofed porch with white lattice timberwork. It is distinguished by having no boundary treatment. This particular feature is a recurring characteristic, particularly on this group of buildings.

- 8.15 The next range of buildings on the north side is a pair of early 19th-century cottages, Nos 1 and 2 Coveney Cottages. The windows of this pair of cottages consist of a mixture of casements, side hung and some replacements, with top hung inserts as well. No 1 has a simple flat roof canopy and No 2 a simple pitched canopy. They are both white weatherboarded with clay tiled roofs of quite shallow depth, and again, no treatment to the road other than a low, tightly-clipped yew hedge to No 1 and simple, metal estate railing painted black to No 2. Adjacent to No 2 Coveney Cottages, whilst the drive itself is discreet, there is an inserted section of close-boarded fencing which is a rather alien feature, fortunately being fairly short in length.
- 8.16 This whole collection of buildings, whilst unconnected architecturally and historically, does form a very cohesive group, linked by scale, details, use of materials, subtle door colours, and front garden treatment. Many of these same elements can be found elsewhere in the conservation area.
- 8.17 On the opposite – south – side is a recent development on the former public house site, comprising five cottages – Beech, Elm, Maple, Yew and Mulberry. They have picked up the white weatherboarded theme, casement windows (albeit without glazing bars), though mechanical clay red tiles have been used, natural finish picket fencing and gardens with planting. This development generally blends in quite well and respects the context. Unfortunately, bins are prominently positioned to the exposed northern side and open parking area to the rear. The gardens at the rear are at least generally small, set down and backing on to open countryside and don't generally assert themselves. The introduction of standardised concrete kerb and brick-paved footway detail adjacent to this development though has urbanised the character of the hamlet somewhat.
- 8.18 Alongside is a 1970s development of Oakleigh and Well House, fortunately sharing a common access on to Iden Green Road, allowing only a glimpse into the site. The brown concrete roof tiles and brown windows impart a rather dark appearance in contrast to the white weatherboarding elsewhere in the area. There is substantial hedge planting and a couple of trees within the site, which also help to soften their effect, and their intrusion is therefore not so great.
- 8.19 At this point the road crests the rise with Merin Cottage sited very tight to the edge of the road on the rise providing a key punctuation to the townscape. It has a slate roof with vertical tile hanging at first floor and red and blue brick. The different materials also make it stand out against the adjacent properties and the general character of Iden Green. It has cream-painted, vertically sliding sash windows and the entrance is on the south side, facing its garden, although the main access is on the north side, where the parking is fairly discreetly positioned just behind a hedge and gate. There is a white-painted garage at the end, in keeping with other similar structures in the area.



*Merin Cottage and view south-east*

- 8.20 At the southern end of the garden to Merin Cottage are the Old Stores, a pair of cottages with four multi-paned, vertically sliding sash windows surrounded by black architraves in a weatherboarded elevation at first floor. The left-hand bay is a recent extension. The roof is slate pitched with a very shallow depth to the front portion. The building still retains its shop windows, with a central

door. It is good to see that the original shop windows have been retained as a link with the past and the retail uses that several buildings in this part of Iden Green had. The garden is shallow, planted in cottage style. There is a K6 (Giles Gilbert Scott) telephone box, which punctuates the street scene, to the south of the Old Stores.

- 8.21 On this general southern side the hedges are tight to the back edge of the kerb and provide strong containment.
- 8.22 On the south side is Oakfield Cottages, a 1950s estate consisting of red brick and concrete tiles. Whilst the scale and form of these cottages is well mannered, the monochrome materials and the simple stripped starkness of form do not fit in too well with the conservation area. They are, however, located outside the conservation area, but nevertheless have an impact upon it.
- 8.23 On the northern corner of the junction is a small, orange brick bungalow, its scale somewhat at variance with, and completely lacking in enclosure of, the street scene. Perhaps the other most unfortunate thing about this particular part of the conservation area is the large bell-mouth junction to Iden Green Road into Oakfield Cottages and the various forms of boundary treatments. They comprise sections of concrete posts and chain link fencing with generally unkempt gardens behind, with bits of larch lap fencing, hedging and, in some places, just open. Whilst this latter treatment might be a characteristic of the area, it doesn't quite look right in this context due to the level changes.
- 8.24 A key aspect of Iden Green is the constant awareness of the link with the countryside afforded by glimpses between and views over the buildings, particularly on the south side, to the orchards and countryside beyond.
- 8.25 Opposite Oakfield Cottages is the Iden Green Congregational Church, which is an existing building that has been recently extended. It has well-mannered architecture which is slightly classical in its elevational treatment, unfortunately, though, with most of the parking on view to the front. A good attempt, however, has been made in retaining the existing hedging and planting new trees and some sections of hand-forged, simple metal railings in oak posts. Hopefully this landscape will mature in time and soften the forecourt and its parking. The cupola to the church forms a local focal point, being on one of the highest and central points of this part of the conservation area.
- 8.26 Note also on this northern side the recent insertion of a wide pedestrian footway which, whilst probably desirable in safety and highway terms, has somewhat regularised and suburbanised the original meandering alignment of the road as well as its width and scale. Adjacent to the church on the north side is a large hedge and a gate to a farmed field with glimpses over to the rear of properties beyond in Chapel Lane. This field forms an important separating element, maintaining the sporadic character of Iden Green.
- 8.27 Adjacent to this field entrance is Sunny View, with blue header brick, porch and tile hanging at first floor and a slate roof. This is a pleasant little cottage, tight to the road but behind a neatly-clipped conifer hedge, which adjoins the playground area where there is beech hedging and the village hall. It is perhaps worth noting that many of the door colours in the Iden Green Road area are soft shades of colour. Ivy Cottage, on the south side, is also a typical example of this, although probably 19th century in age, but again respecting the context with white weatherboarding at first floor and shallow depth, slate roof and external brick stacks. The typical estate railing boundary and shallow garden provide the right level of containment.
- 8.28 Holly Cottage is again similar, semi-detached with Seerose Cottage; a fairly 'blocky', semi-detached pair which have been heavily modernised, however.
- 8.29 Between this pair and Grove Cottage is Beaumont Cottage, a modern building, more of a house than a cottage, with brown concrete tiles, brown shallow roof, brown brick with plastic top-hung casement windows and

- garage. This sits rather incongruously in the conservation area, saved by the fact that it is somewhat set back and does not impinge generally into the streetscene.
- 8.30 The property boundaries in this location are consistently characterised by shallow gardens with a variety of treatments, including planting, post-and-chain and estate railings and picket fencing, as typified by Grove Cottage. Grove Cottage itself is a larger, more assertive building, due to the orientation of gables to the road elevation. It is a late Victorian house with scalloped bargeboards and a series of finials painted green, with a mixture of both sash and casement windows. In this instance the weatherboarding is painted cream, instead of the prevalent white.
- 8.31 Opposite there is a pleasant little bus shelter in timber, tucked back amongst the hedging, with a wooden shingle roof. Rather strangely at this point, the recently installed footway terminates and a widening of the road/parking bay is prominent.
- 8.32 Wycherleys is the next house, a large Edwardian building with both scalloped and plain tiles at first floor and red brick to ground floor. This property has sliding sash windows, the upper sashes being typical multi-paned sash with glazing bars. There is half timbering to the attic gables and dormer. This is a typical turn-of-the-twentieth century building. The large, vertical boarded fencing is, however, somewhat at variance with the general soft, more open and low boundary treatments elsewhere in the conservation area.
- 8.33 Between Wycherleys and Grove Cottage there are again glimpses of the countryside beyond. Adjacent to these properties is Chaucer Cottage, again set behind hedges. Oak Cottage on the corner is a late 18th-century white weatherboarded property with brick at ground floor level, red tiles, with white casement windows and a pleasant garage/storeroom to the right. There is quite a pleasant pyramid porch with scalloped detailing and lattice fretwork to the porch itself, with a fine four-panelled door.
- 8.34 The crossroad junction is then reached, where the predominant character is a mixture of indigenous and various fruit trees with a very rural quality. The junction is punctuated by the traffic direction sign, a characteristic Kent sign – white timber with black lettering on a small grassed island. The well housing and pump built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Anniversary in 1897 forms a local feature. It has a stone base with random coursing, oak timber framing and pyramid roof with metal finial. The whole appearance at this junction is low-key and informal and expresses much of the fundamental character of the conservation area.
- 8.35 Standen Street continues for a short length to the south, bounded by hedging, and beyond which are more modern dwellings situated outside the conservation area. These are of a different character with wide open entrances, caravans, parked cars and neatly clipped lawns.
- 8.36 From the crossroads, Mill Street rises up to Weald House on the east side. This has a commanding view of the conservation area to its north. It comprises a range of buildings of various periods including 16th century and 19th century, but drawn together by the typical modest Iden Green forms, and through its materials of red brick ground floors, white weatherboard first floors and tiled roofs. It also has white-painted windows, porches with pitched clay roofs, white lattice fretwork, series of dormer windows, clay tiled pitched and oriel windows. On the opposite – west – side there is a large hedge, beyond which is a glimpse of Yew Tree Farm. Although occupying a high, commanding position, Yew Tree Farm's aspect to Mill Street is obscured by hedging and its contribution therefore is minimal.
- 8.37 At this point, there is a key view back down into Iden Green Road from Mill Street and its meandering road, with a glimpse of the cupola on the Methodist church as a reference point. The road meanders, presenting an unfolding view and with characteristic glimpses of buildings. Merin Cottage punctuates the view from this direction through its use of different materials and its more prominent location slightly set forward and on the slight rise.



*Wycherleys and Grove Cottage  
from crossroads*

- 8.38 Heading south on Mill Street, one comes across a further collection of cottages. Yew Tree Cottage is a south facing, white-rendered building with tile hanging and tiled roof, situated very tight to the road. The rather odd stairwell extension to Yew Tree Cottage in brick rather crashes into the original cottage.
- 8.39 Mill Street Cottage is early 19th century, and is built of blue header brickwork and white weatherboarding with a clay tiled roof and a simple pedimented doorcase on brackets. The garden is shallow with ranch fencing. Behind is Yew Tree Barn, a black weatherboarded building now converted to residential. There is an informal lay-by opposite Mill Street Cottage which is rather unkempt with some tipping of tarmac.
- 8.40 The road then starts to gently fall away and opens out more on the east side to a range of modest properties which, on the face of them, do blend in with the conservation area, through the use of weatherboarding and clapboarding. However, they are predominantly turn-of-the-twentieth century bungalows set back further from the road with more domestic gardens. Further down there are 1960s developments. This whole group of buildings, which, whilst in themselves are quite pleasant, perhaps does not represent the strong character of the main part of the conservation area.
- 8.41 Mill Street leads further down to Weavers and Weavers Cottages, listed buildings which are part of a separate group of buildings on the corner, with panoramic views southwards.

#### Coldharbour Road/Chapel Lane

- 8.42 From the main crossroads, Coldharbour Road runs to the north. This has very much the appearance of a rural lane, with no kerbs, footpaths or formalised edges. It is very soft in character. On the west side is a wide, concrete approach to the farm of Yew Tree Farm, presenting very much a utilitarian appearance reflecting the working environment. Tucked in the corner, behind high trees and hedges, is a corrugated asbestos barn, its outline softened by a collection of brambles and ash trees. There is a fletton brick barn alongside. There have been recent attempts to clear up, mow the grass and tidy up this overgrown area.
- 8.43 Behind is the working environment of Yew Tree Farm itself, with views of paletts, cars, corrugated buildings and farm machinery. There are some dead trees on the north side of the entrance from Coldharbour Road.
- 8.44 On the opposite side, to the east, the side elevation and rear of Oak Cottage can be seen behind a mixed hedge of holly, hawthorn and privet. The white weatherboarding and red clay tiles of the building are glimpsed over the hedge.
- 8.45 Moving northwards, the view between the enclosing hedging opens out, revealing on the immediate easterly side, a small car park area with the convex grassy area of the recreation ground beyond. There are a few large specimen trees and bushes further across to the north and Chapel Lane and Iden Green Road further beyond to the east, glimpses of rooftops and chimneys and the mixture of weatherboarding, tile hangings and slate roofs.

The cupola on the Congregational Church provides a useful reference point.

- 8.46 From this key elevated position of the recreation ground there are long distance views right around to the east, north and west. The stump of Beacon Windmill is even visible over towards Rolvenden. This rural relationship renders the buildings very much as secondary elements in the landscape, even within the heart of this hamlet. This area is therefore sensitive to any new development, both geographically and in height.
- 8.47 To the west side of Coldharbour Lane, opposite the recreation ground, there is a tall line of conifers which is at variance with the generally random character and indigenous mix of tree species elsewhere in the conservation area. Alongside is a pair of 1960s houses with sand-faced fletton brickwork and concrete tiled roof. At first floor they have rows of plain and ogee-shaped tiles. There are typical metal Crittal casement windows and a garage to the side. There is also a small pair of chimneys. Although architecturally indifferent, the scale, form and use of materials has tended to blend in more easily with the remainder of the conservation area and other properties in the immediate locality. The front verge comprises a grassy area with hedging typical of the area and which all helps to assimilate this successfully into the conservation area.



*Forge and Thorn Cottages*

- 8.48 There is a wide gap between Forge Cottages and Thorn Cottages which is important as it allows glimpses beyond, and provides a quite open aspect to, this part of the conservation area. The gaps between the properties are quite important in maintaining the open textured/sporadic character.
- 8.49 Thorn Cottages comprises a trio of almshouses made of simple red brick with tile hanging at first floor, with slight jettied detail. The roofs are steeply pitched and tiled with chimneys. There are cottage-style gardens and hedging to the front. This is a pleasant little group. Thorn Cottages occupies probably the highest point in the conservation area, with Coldharbour Road falling away both to the north and the south.
- 8.50 There is a further gap with trees beyond and then Nos 1 and 2 Hague Cottages. These are of red brick and white weatherboard with steep pitched roofs, with hip to the right and half hip to the left – an 18th-century re-front of an earlier 16th-century building. The garage and forecourts somewhat let the setting down, although it could be worse. There are bins on display and the area is perhaps in need of some rationalisation.



*View north terminated by Claremont Place*

- 8.51 To the north, the road now drops down and is enclosed again by hedging which contains the view to Claremont Place, a row of five mid/late 19th-century cottages. As the view opens out, Coldharbour Road veers to the west with the unique Culpeppers, a single-storey, horizontal shiplap-boarded building with a shingle roof. This is an interesting building, but is not of any great contribution in terms of the conservation area. Ahead is the narrow lane to Field Farm and, immediately to the east, Chapel Lane. The views to the countryside are beyond and to the north. This whole junction is slightly confused in its layout and is particularly marred by the forecourt and garages to Claremont Place.
- 8.52 Chapel Lane itself has a gravel surface, soft edges and, on the north side, opens up directly on to farmland with a significant group of oak trees on the boundary to the field beyond, with distant views. The south side abuts the recreation ground, with a high hedge and mixture of trees such as oak, birch and ash. There is a little dirt footpath running up to the back of the tennis courts. The character is very rustic and rural, with the quality almost of a private drive. There are views back to the end elevation of No 5 Claremont Place with sloping roofs, inset dormer and side view of gardens, which are relatively tidy.



*Chapel Lane*

- 8.53 Firle Cottage, on the south side of Chapel Lane, consists of blue headers and red brick, with horizontally-proportioned windows and soldier-course brickwork which are obvious inserts on to what was no doubt the original building. There is a large double garage with accommodation over, and a pair of farm gates, conifer hedges to the side and ranch fencing to the front. This gives a rather suburban character to this point. Chapel Cottage is somewhat similar, with brown windows and gate, stationed to the front. These two properties are both tight to their front boundaries.
- 8.54 On the north side is the garage to Ryecroft. The hedges then close in again, opening out on the south side to Chapel Cottage, or rather its double, white, raised and fielded panel plastic garage door, carport and red tarmacked driveway. Chapel Cottage itself has a balcony on the first floor, which is quite visible. Looking back, there are views of Claremont Place with a stand of trees beyond, and the Culpeppers timbered house.
- 8.55 Next on the south side of Chapel Lane is a tumbled down cottage with white weatherboarding throughout and a steeply pitched roof with vertically-mullioned white casement windows. This is quite a pleasant property with a picket gate and cars hidden behind – a small and well-mannered area.
- 8.56 On the north side is Ryecroft, unassumingly hidden behind a hedge and consisting of white weatherboard at ground floor, small pentice roof, red tile hung, sash windows and a very mossy red tile roof. This is another 16th century timber framed house, re-fronted in the 18th century. It is set further back from Chapel Lane and is extremely picturesque with a pleasant garden with a framed view of the path and front door.



- 8.57 Holly Villas alongside, is a pair of turn-of-the-twentieth century cottages of red brick at ground floor with dentil brick course, machine-made clay tiles, a pair of gables (both with extensions to the side) and matching porches. There are, however, different sash windows at ground floor – the left has a simple central bar and the one on the right has four-paned sashes, both with plastic windows at first floor. There is a small garage alongside No 1 Holly Villas.
- 8.58 The informal and rustic character of Chapel Lane is extremely fragile. Some of the recent, more suburbanising changes, such as block driveways, garages, and boundary treatments, are increasingly eroding the essential character.
- 8.59 At this point, the hedge on the south side and also the north side enclose in, terminating the lane itself, but beyond which is a footpath descending down into a wooded area. The backs of Violet Cottage, Cobwebs and Lilac Cottage on Iden Green Road can be seen with their steeply pitched clay tile roofs, dormer windows and some satellite dishes which are reasonably discreetly placed. Some aerials are visible, but they are at least not too intrusive. The footpath continues widening out slightly to give the view of Iden Green Road and Cotton Cottage on the left. There is a silver birch on the right. The view back along this footpath is enclosed by overhanging trees, with 'the light at the end of the tunnel', slowly opening out into the end of Chapel Lane.
- 8.60 It should be noted that the properties on Chapel Lane form the edge to the field in the centre of Iden Green. Similarly, the trees joining the tennis courts on the eastern side of the recreation ground form an edge to this central field. Whilst it is generally invisible, this is an important space in the middle of the Conservation Area. Thankfully, only glimpses are seen of the backs of Firle Cottage and Chapel Cottage, although the back of the Congregational Church is a bit more visible. Most of the other properties are more discreetly tucked around the edge.
- 8.61 At the recreation ground, the fencing and tarmac of the tennis courts is fairly discreetly sited, shrouded on three sides by trees and on the fourth side by a bank and hedge. It nestles within the landscape. There is a recently constructed pavilion building tucked in the trees. The playspace equipment is more visible, however.
- 8.62 On the south-east side of the recreation ground, the slate roof of Sunnyview with its white dormers and modest scale is readily visible. The pavilion is tucked on the fold opposite. Note again, the strong convex nature of the recreation ground. This is sensitive to changes – so far most of the built development has been kept to the edge or carefully sited, such as the car park, tennis court, etc.
- 8.63 Other buildings can be glimpsed from the car park, including the back of Oak Cottage.

9 Summary of elements that contribute to Iden Green Conservation Area's Special Character

Key Characteristics

Views

- 9.1 The position of the hamlet on a spur allows strong visual links out to the countryside through a series of glimpses and panoramas. There are one or two notable long views to distant landmarks, including St George's Church in Benenden and Beacon Windmill. Views into the area, however, are restricted by the surrounding topography and tree cover, making the buildings not readily apparent in the landscape.

Spatial Layout

- 9.2 The conservation area has a variety of spatial relationships, with some areas of tightly related buildings and other parts being much more sporadic in layout. This is an important feature. Also the relationship of buildings to the roads is varied where some buildings are tight to roads and others are set back. In most instances car parking seems to be discreetly located and therefore not intrusive.

Green

- 9.3 The central convex recreation ground and central field subtly dominate the conservation area due to their position and the nature of the topography. This serves to reinforce the visual separation and sporadic character of the area, with few cross views within the hamlet and most views forced outwards. This green area is particularly sensitive insofar as any changes would have the potential of wider effect.



*Recreation Ground looking west*

Architectural Scale

- 9.4 Buildings in the main comprise modestly-scaled artisans' cottages. Invariably these are of a simple, shallow depth plan, with recessive roof forms, that is front to back roof pitches. Grand, deep plan buildings are notably absent, as is the use of assertive gables and dormers.

Edges

- 9.5 The majority of roads and lanes still have soft edges, giving a very informal character. The alignment sometimes meanders, adding to the informality. Recent developments in the area and highway improvement works have compromised this in places.

Boundaries

- 9.6 Low-key boundaries predominate, whether they are the characteristic metal estate fencing, low picket fence, or hedging. Although there is a variety of enclosures, they are generally consistently low in height allowing the buildings themselves to be appreciated. Some recent examples of close-boarded fences have not acknowledged this essential character.

Variety of Materials

- 9.7 White weatherboarding is perhaps the most prevalent and strongest characteristic material in the conservation area, most noticeably in the eastern part. Otherwise there is no other strong theme of building materials, with a range of types being present in the area, often reflecting the age of building and fashion prevalent at the time of construction.



*North side. Iden Green Road*

Details

- 9.8 The use of pastel colours to front doors is noticeable, as are the latticed timber door surrounds which are very evident.

Chimneys

- 9.9 Although generally only modest in scale and height, the chimneys are invariably apparent amongst trees and through hedges and over the rise of the central green. They provide punctuation to the skyline and reference points, including the focal point provided by the cupola to the church.

10 Summary of elements that detract from Iden Green Conservation Area's Special Character and Opportunities for Enhancement

Roofscape Clutter

- 10.1 An assortment of TV aerials, satellite dishes and flues pervade the skyline. As the roofscape is often the only apparent part of the building, this requires careful consideration of need and siting.

Garages

- 10.2 Claremont Place garages and open forecourt detract somewhat from the area.



Footpaths

- 10.3 Soft edges and lack of kerbs are a key characteristic of the conservation area. Recent developments and highway improvements, which have introduced standardised footpaths have begun to erode this, imparting an alien urbanising feel.

Oakfield Cottages

- 10.4 This is a predictable 1950s development, open-fronted with visible gardens and poor boundary treatments – a variety of chain-link, high fence panels or none at all. Being at the heart of the hamlet, it is a particularly negative feature.



Boundaries

- 10.5 There are one or two instances of close-boarded fencing which adds to an urbanising and blank appearance. This is at variance with the general informal, low and open character of most boundaries.

Suburban Frontages

- 10.6 These generally occur outside the boundaries of the conservation area and give a more suburban feel to developments, with open lawns, wide drives and lack of boundaries.

Bins

- 10.7 Wheelie bins to new developments are unfortunately located, being very visible and in a somewhat confused area.

Traffic Signing

- 10.8 Whilst well designed in themselves, the use of traffic signing and other signs needs to be applied with sensitivity to avoid visual clutter and an urbanising influence.

Church Forecourt

- 10.9 The visible car park area and open section of boundary could benefit from a reinforcing of the planting.

Yew Tree Farm

- 10.10 There are overgrown trees, a broken concrete access road and an appearance of neglect at a key position in the conservation area. This is a key site within the conservation area which currently turns its back on the hamlet, with a potential for greater contribution.

**11 Next Steps**

- 11.1 This character appraisal will assist the Borough Council's decision and policy making in the following ways:
- The Tunbridge Wells Borough 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 Benenden and Iden Green areas;
  - 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.

**12 Further Information**

- 12.1 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**  
**e-mail info@tunbridgewells.gov.uk**

Or write to: Head of Planning Services  
Town Hall  
Royal Tunbridge Wells  
Kent TN1 1RS

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













**Telephone 01580 712771**  
**Fax 01580 712649**  
**e-mail info@tunbridgewells.gov.uk**

Or write to: Head of Planning Services  
Cranbrook Council Offices  
High Street  
Cranbrook  
Kent TN17 3EN

13 Character Appraisal Maps















**Benenden townscape analysis**

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | 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 (eg building, trees) which forms the focus of a view |  | Vista – view stopped by significant feature   |





**Iden Green townscape analysis**

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | 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 (eg building, trees) which forms the focus of a view |  | Vista – view stopped by significant feature   |

**14 Consultation**

Introduction

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

Consultation Process

- 14.3 The initial preparation of the document was through a working party made up of officers, together with representatives from local organisations, which included the Benenden Parish Council, Benenden Amenity and Countryside Society and local Ward Member of the Borough Council.
- 14.4 The process included a walkabout of the conservation areas 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.
- 14.5 The draft document was then reported to the Borough Council's Cabinet on 16 December 2004 and approved as the basis for public consultation (Report No 041216/CAB113).
- 14.6 During the consultation period of four weeks, the consultation draft was sent to the Parish Council, Benenden Amenity and Countryside 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.
- 14.7 The consultation draft was also reported to the Borough Council's Eastern Area Planning Committee for comment and was made available to all Borough Councillors.
- 14.8 Finally, a two-day staffed exhibition on the Appraisal was held in Benenden.

Response to Consultation

- 14.9 All responses were recorded, with recommendations for change where considered appropriate.
- 14.10 The report, with details of the responses and changes, can be found in papers from the meeting of the Council's Cabinet for 7 April 2005 (Report No 050407/CAB204), which is available from the Council or can be viewed on the website [www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk](http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk).
- 14.11 The Cabinet resolution was to approve the Appraisal as Supplementary Planning Guidance and that the conservation areas' boundaries be modified as proposed. This decision was subsequently confirmed at Full Council on 20 April 2005.

Notices

- 14.12 Relevant notices were published in the London Gazette 27 May 2005, and the Courier Newspaper 27 May 2005, in accordance with Section 70 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.





