

# WOODCHURCH

## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016



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## **1.0 Introduction**

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The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. This draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is the first to be produced for the area and has been produced in collaboration with Borough Council Members and officers and Woodchurch Parish Council. Local authorities are required by law to regularly review their conservation areas and produce Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. These explain what is important about the area and what improvements are needed.

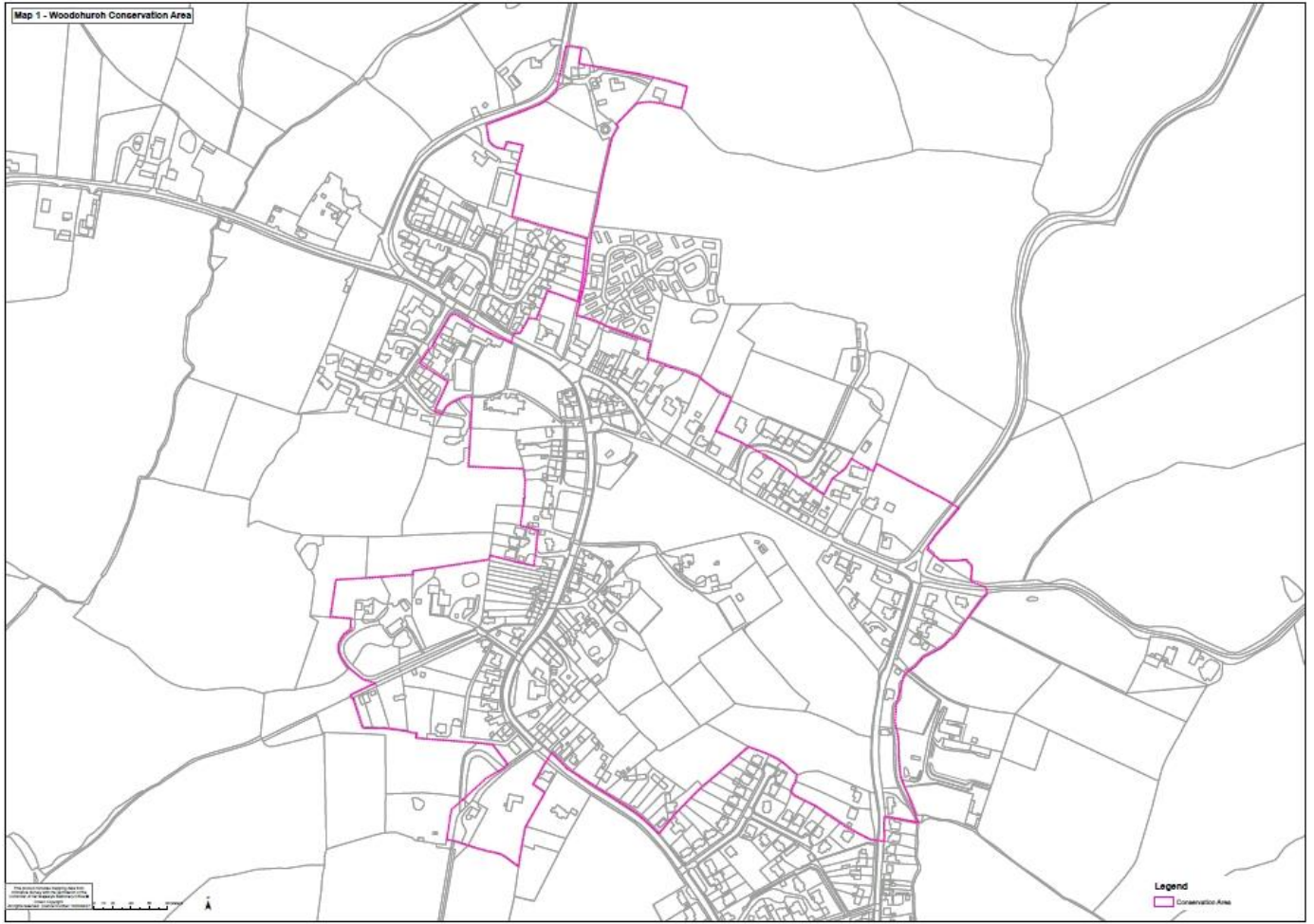
This Appraisal and Management Plan is based on best practice contained within the Historic England guidance on Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011, with Revision Note June 2012).

### **1.1 Conservation Area Boundary**

The evaluation of the Woodchurch Conservation Area has involved an assessment of historic maps and documents and comprehensive site surveys including a walkabout involving Ward and Parish Councillors where the group observed and recorded the key positive and negative features which made up the character and appearance of the area. This extensive process has informed the proposed boundary of the Conservation Area. A review of the boundary of the Conservation Area has been conducted in preparing this Appraisal in order to establish whether the boundary remains appropriate. In general, it has been concluded that the boundary is the correct one for defining the area of special architectural or historic interest but a number of amendments are recommended as a result of this Draft Appraisal.

Map 1 (overleaf) shows the proposed revised Conservation Area boundary.

MAP 1 PROPOSED REVISED CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



## **1.2 Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas**

Designation as a Conservation Area empowers the local authority to pay particular attention to proposed development within, and affecting the setting of, a Conservation Area and gives greater control over such matters as demolition, landscaping and trees, and the display of advertisements.

Designation also raises the awareness of local residents and businesses to the quality of their surroundings and is intended to encourage an active interest in the care and maintenance of their properties and surrounding land, thereby fostering a sense of communal pride.

The purpose of designation of a conservation area is to preserve or enhance an area of special architectural or historic interest - and enhancement measures are proposed in this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAMP).

## **1.3 Purpose of Appraisals and Management Plans**

The principal purpose of this Appraisal is to provide a firm basis on which proposals for development within and adjoining the proposed Woodchurch Conservation Area can be assessed, through defining those key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character and which should be preserved or enhanced. The Appraisal will be a key document in maintaining character and promoting appropriate, sensitively sited and designed proposals in the Conservation Area.

The appraisal and management plan defines the key elements that together give the area its character and objectively analyses how they interact to enhance their individual impact. It then provides management suggestions for future policies and improvements based on a clear understanding of the special architectural and historic qualities that give the area its local distinctiveness.

The plan will help the Borough Council, those proposing development and the local community engage in the conservation and enhancement of the local historic environment and help secure the long-term viability of the Conservation Area as an important heritage asset.

As an adopted CAMP, the plan is a material consideration in the determination of development proposals.

## 2.0 Planning Context

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### 2.1 National Guidance

Government advice concerning conservation areas and historic buildings is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. This states that one of the Government's Core Planning Principles is to conserve heritage assets, including conservation areas and listed buildings, in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. The Government states that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.

The Government advises local planning authorities to take account of the different roles and character of different areas and always seek to secure high quality design.

In determining applications, the Government advises that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a Conservation Area affected by a proposal (including by development affecting its setting). The Government states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on a Conservation Area, great weight should be given to its conservation.

### 2.2 The Development Plan

The Saved Local Plan (2000) policy - Development in Conservation Areas, and Ashford Core Strategy (2008) contains the following policies which apply to Conservation Areas.

**EN16** Development or redevelopment within Conservation Areas will be permitted provided such proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. Proposals must fulfil each of the following criteria:

- a) the scale and detailed design of new work has respect for the historic, architectural and landscape context of the established character of the area;
- b) the materials proposed to be used are appropriate to the locality and in sympathy with existing buildings;
- c) the following are retained – buildings and streets of townscape character, trees, open spaces, walls, fences or any other features which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area;
- d) the development does not generate levels of traffic, parking, or other environmental problems which would damage the character or appearance of the area; and
- e) the use proposed is appropriate.

#### **POLICY CS1: Guiding Principles**

Sustainable development and high quality design are at the centre of the Council's approach to plan making and deciding planning applications.

Accordingly, the Council will apply the following key planning objectives:

B. The conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and built heritage of the Borough...

### **POLICY CS9: Design Quality**

Development proposals must be of high quality design and demonstrate a positive response to each of the following design criteria:

- a) Character, Distinctiveness and Sense of Place
- b) Permeability and Ease of Movement
- c) Legibility
- d) Mixed use and Diversity
- e) Continuity and Enclosure
- f) Quality of Public Spaces
- g) Flexibility, Adaptability and Liveability
- h) Richness in Detail
- i) Efficient use of Natural Resources

This CAMP helps define the distinctive character of the different parts of the Woodchurch Conservation Area and the importance of its setting. In turn, this will help the Borough Council apply the above policies within the conservation area and its setting.

Development proposals will be judged against their overall contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area and its setting as set out in this Appraisal. Context and quality design is vitally important in reinforcing the character of this area and the character must not be lost through undue pressure for inappropriate or poorly designed development or redevelopment of an unacceptable nature.

## **2.3 Special Controls in the Conservation Area**

Designation of a Conservation Area does not mean that development cannot occur, but rather that any change should preserve or enhance the features which make up its special character.

Some minor development can be carried out without the need to obtain planning permission – generally referred to as ‘Permitted Development’. These are subject to the proposal meeting strict criteria, for example relating to size and detailed positioning. As the law relating to planning permission is complex, and the rules governing ‘Permitted Development’ are changing, you are strongly advised to seek advice from the Council before carrying out any development.

The Planning Portal: Information can be found under Do you need permission? section on the planning portal website (<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission>)

Nevertheless, the principles contained in this Appraisal promote good practice and should be relevant whether planning permission is required or not.

Within a Conservation Area, controls are imposed which are additional to normal planning restrictions, in order to maintain the character and appearance of the area. These are outlined here for information. However other planning controls may still apply and are not altered by conservation area status.

### ***Houses and their alteration***

The size of an extension that may be built without the need to apply for planning permission is more restricted within a conservation area. Any proposals should always be discussed with the Council at an early stage. Planning permission may be required for the erection of a building or structure within the garden of the house subject to size or siting, for example, a workshop, pavilion, greenhouse and so on.

Cladding of the exterior of a residential property with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles will require submission of a planning application. Any enlargement of a house by way of additions to the roof, e.g. a dormer window to the front elevation, will require a planning application to be made.

A planning application is needed for a satellite antenna where it is to be installed on a chimney, wall, or a roof slope which faces onto, and is visible from, a road.

### ***Other commercial premises and flats***

Any extension or alteration to other commercial premises or residential flats, which materially affects the external appearance of the building, will require a planning application to be made. This is particularly important within conservation areas, where even small alterations can materially affect the character and appearance of the area. For instance, such alterations can include rendering brickwork, replacement of slates with concrete tiles, and replacement windows.

### ***Demolition***

Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any building, whether in whole or in part, within a conservation area, except the following:

- any building with a total cubic content not exceeding 115m<sup>3</sup> or any substantial part of such building
- any wall of fence (or substantial part) less than 1m high fronting onto the street or less than 2m high elsewhere
- any building subject to a formal order requiring demolition

This consent is in addition to any planning permission which you may require to replace the building.

### ***Trees***

6 weeks written notice must be given to the Council of intent to cut down, top, lop, uproot or destroy a tree within a Conservation Area. The Council will then advise if it wishes to raise an objection. If a response is not received from the Council within 6 weeks of the notice being given, work may go ahead. This requirement does not apply to trees which have a diameter less than 75mm when measured at a height of 1.5m above the ground and trees already covered by a Tree Preservation Order, in which case any works will require consent.

### ***Unauthorised Works and development***

Sometimes, landowners and others carry out works without first obtaining any necessary consent from the Borough Council. The Council does have certain legal powers to deal with such situations, but can only take enforcement action once it is aware of any alleged unauthorised works and after detailed investigation.

### ***Maintenance and Repairs***

The Council has a duty to pay special attention to the character or appearance of conservation areas, in exercising its planning powers. However, these powers are limited. The principal guardians of the character and appearance of the area are the residents and business people who live and work in the conservation area and who are responsible for maintaining their individual properties.

The character of conservation areas can be altered or lost through the use of inappropriate materials, not only on the buildings themselves but also on the ground, roads, and along boundaries. The introduction of features, such as street furniture, signs, lights, and hard surfacing, can change an area's character. Within the conservation area the buildings are part of a wider street scene, often of buildings of similar style and size. Altering the appearance, form or size of any one building can affect not only the individual building, but the whole street. Unsympathetic replacement windows (particularly where the size of the openings are changed or inappropriate materials or designs are used) can alter the appearance of a building considerably. Where a number of different designs are used along a street, the rhythm and unity of its original appearance can be spoilt.

Painting or rendering over original brickwork is another alteration which can dramatically change a property's appearance and irreparably affect the street scene. As well as covering up attractive brickwork, it can obscure original architectural and brick detailing and requires regular redecoration to maintain an attractive appearance. In older buildings paint or render can also trap moisture which may cause damage to walls.

### ***Boundary treatments***

Boundary treatment, especially to the street, is an essential feature of any property. Original boundaries, whether a brick or ragstone wall, railings, white painted picket fencing, or hedge should be retained wherever possible and every effort made to reinstate missing boundary treatments with a sympathetic replacement. The particular design and the materials used should take account of the character of the property and the surrounding area.

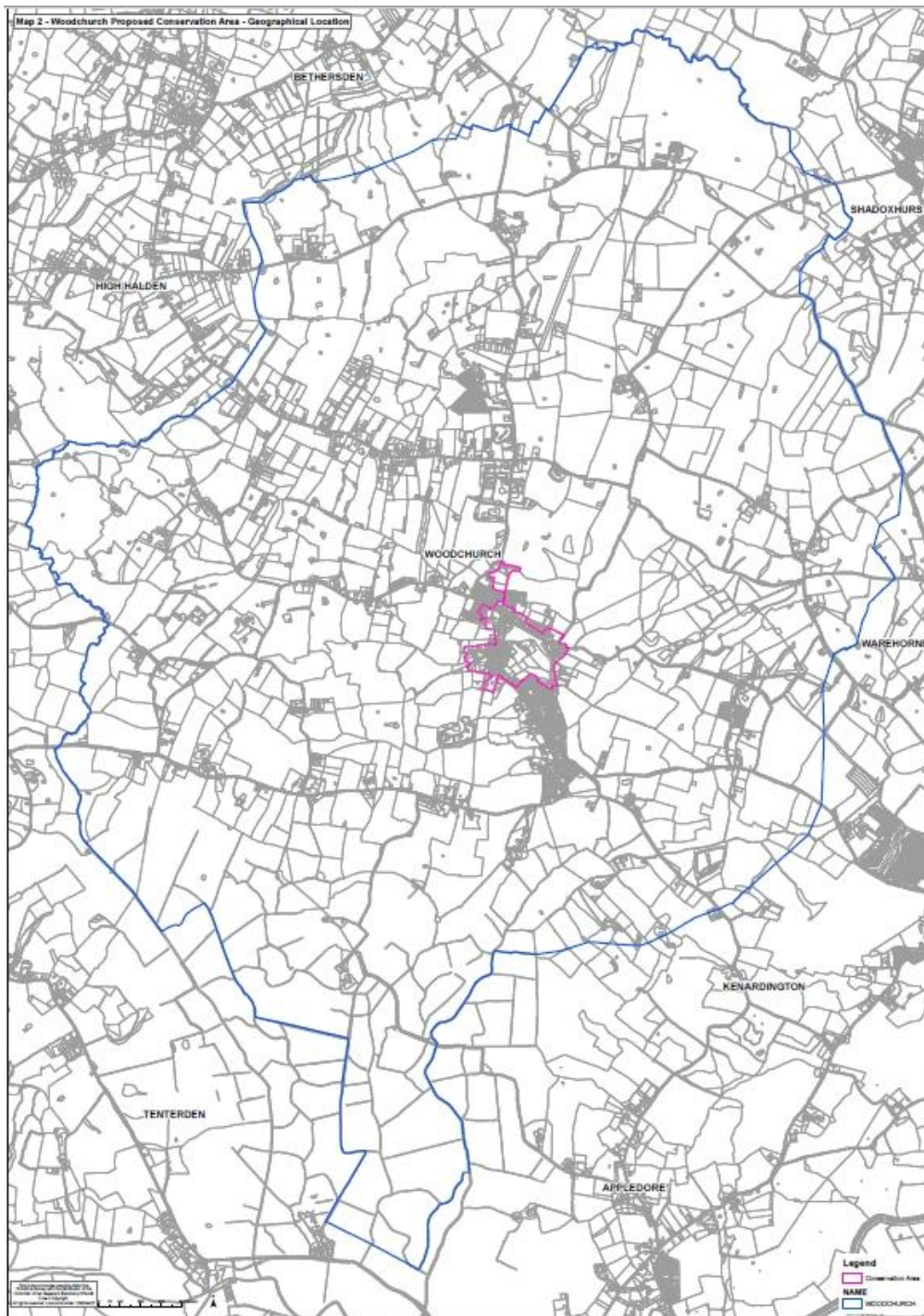


### 3.0 Context and Development

#### 3.1 General Description

The Conservation Area designation is 30 hectares and covers the entire village centre, including the Village Green, All Saints Church and the Windmill and includes 27 listed buildings.

**MAP 2 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**



### 3.2 Historical Development

Woodchurch would have developed as a small settlement in a clearing in the great oak forest that extended from where Tunbridge Wells is today to the coast. Old maps show the name of the village spelt in a variety of ways including Wudecirce (c.1100) and Wodechirche (c.1235). The village was firmly established in the 13th century when a baron named Raphe la Thun, whose duty it was to maintain a regular force of soldiers to protect Dover Castle held a manor at Woodchurch, known as Thunland or Townland. Townland Green within the Conservation Area, is one of the oldest parts of the village, with Townland Farm and Court Lodge Farm two of the remaining buildings from this early period.

The main body of the current All Saints Church was built of Kentish ragstone in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, although it is likely that an earlier church possibly built of wood was founded in Norman times in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. Located on relatively high ground, this large and complete Early English church with 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century additions, was restored in the 1840's with some Perpendicular enlargements and is now a Grade I Listed Building.

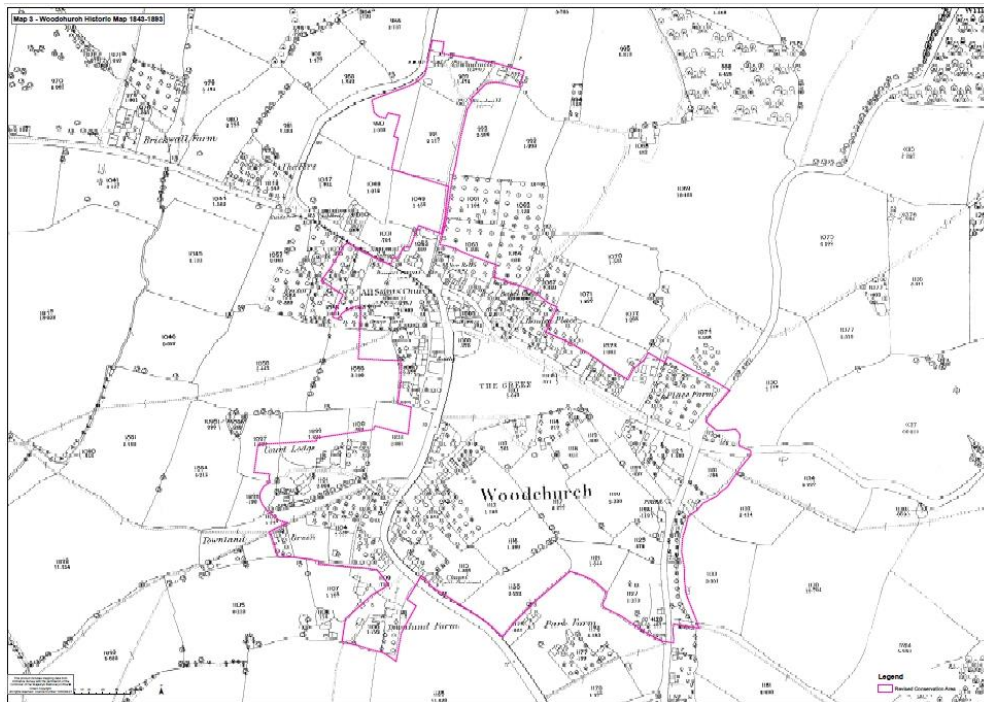
The village developed initially around the church and the Green to the east of the church, which now forms the heart of the village and the Conservation Area. The Green was originally open common land, which stretched south beyond the Conservation Area to Stonebridge before the lower green area was gradually fenced and removed from public access. Around the north-eastern edge of the Green, there are many notable listed buildings such as Henden Place and Place Farmhouse, both good examples of early Wealden Hall houses dating from the Medieval period (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century). Houses on this side of the Green developed along a common frontage line set back from the road and used typical materials of the Weald including Kent peg-tiled roofs, white painted weatherboard-clad elevations and the use of timber framing. Development of houses continued from the late 16th to the 18th centuries, including a row to the west of the Green just south of the church, along a public footpath called 'The Pavement' paved in blocks of Bethersden Marble, a local limestone also used in the church and outside the houses at 1 – 13 The Green. Most of these dwellings were built in Kentish style and several feature Georgian brick facades.

There are two notable Grade II listed farmhouses within the Conservation Area. The late Medieval Court Lodge Farmhouse is set well back from Front Road and surrounded by hedged gardens and fields. This timber-framed building, refaced with red brick and grey headers has a steeply pitched hipped tiled roof with distinctive massive brick chimney stack and an C18 north wing which is weather boarded on the first floor. Townland Farmhouse at 80 Front Road, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century is a two-storey L-shaped building is constructed from red brick with grey headers with part of the west wing being tile hung and a half hipped tiled roof.

Overlooking the village to the north of the church is a timber windmill built in 1820 and a good example of a Kentish smock mill with a ground floor of tarred brick, faced above with white painted weatherboarding. It was one of a pair of mills known as 'the twins', both brought here from other sites. The upper mill, dating from the early 18th Century and known as the 'Black Mill' was moved from Place Lane and was used as an observation post by the military throughout the first world war and survived until 1940. The only signs of its existence today are a few pieces of its brick base. The remaining lower mill, known as the

'White Mill' was relocated from Susan's Hill and continued grinding commercially until 1926 after which time both mills fell into disrepair. The mill has undergone several periods of extensive renovation since 1946 and is now almost completely restored to working condition by local craftsmen and enthusiasts and managed by a charitable Trust.

Two Listed public houses sit side by side opposite the church on Front Road. The red brick Six Bells Inn dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in typical Kentish style and the Bonny Cravat Inn from circa 1800, which has had more modifications over the years.

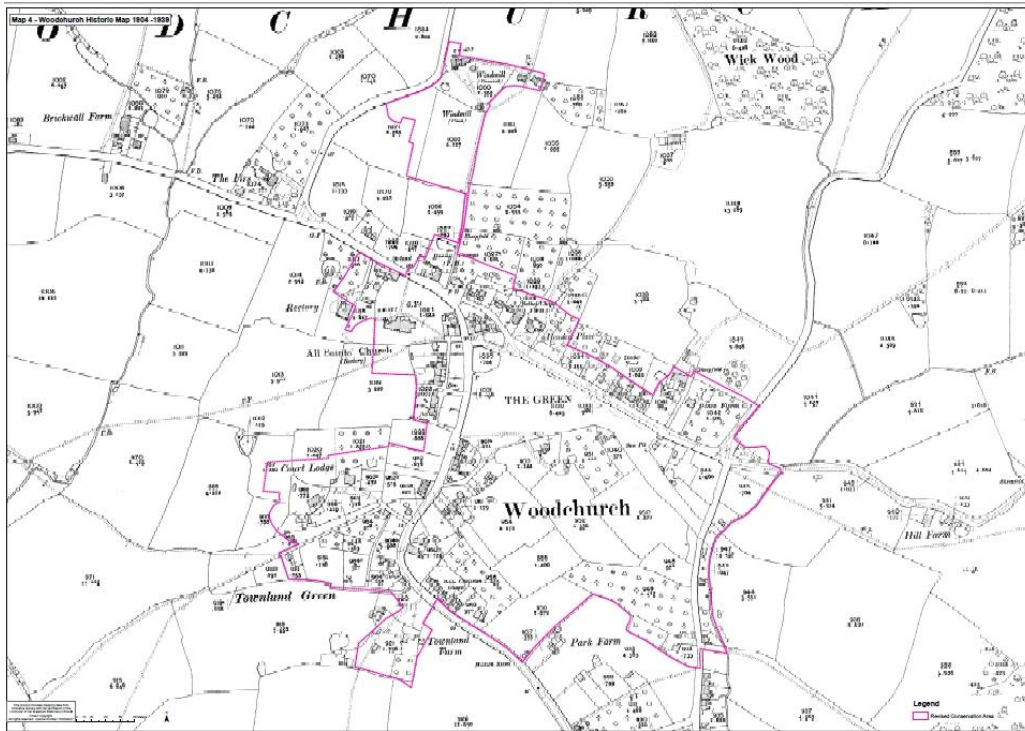


**MAP 3  
WOODCHURCH  
CONSERVATION  
AREA  
1843 – 1893**

In the first decades of the 19th century there was an increase of almost 60% in the village population from 698 to 1095 people and the village expanded with ribbons of development spreading first along Front Road, infilling gaps between the older buildings and later along Lower Road which is largely lined with Victorian and later dwellings.

The village primary school originally built in 1844 is situated immediately west of the churchyard and was a National School.





**MAP 4  
WOODCHURCH  
CONSERVATION  
AREA  
1904 – 1939**

Map 4 above shows little change within the Conservation Area from the 19<sup>th</sup> century maps apart from a few minor infill developments on Lower Road and Front Road. In the last 50 years or so, spurs of development have extended the settlement northwards and to the south, beyond the central diamond of roads in the Conservation Area with only a few further infill developments taking land from within the diamond.

### 3. 3 Setting and topography

Woodchurch is located in the Low Weald, surrounded by typical Wealden landscape of hedged fields and woodland. Viewed from a distance, the village is identifiable by the two prominent landmarks, the church and the windmill, both located in the Conservation Area.

Woodchurch Conservation Area is characterised by linear development surrounding the village green and enclosed fields. This single plot depth of development results in the surrounding countryside abutting the conservation area in all areas except immediately to the north west and south east of the village. The countryside surrounding the village therefore forms an important part of the setting of the Conservation Area.

Woodchurch is situated on land which slopes gently to the south. Land between 82 - 120 Front Road (add photograph) provides a gap in the linear development which forms part of the setting of the Conservation Area. The prominent site has a hedged road frontage and open character and allows views to the countryside



beyond from the Conservation Area and adjoining footpaths. Modern development is situated in the valley to the south west of the Conservation Area but, due to the topography and road layout, this development is not highly visible from the Conservation Area. In order to respect the rural setting of this part of the Conservation Area, any proposals for development in this area must retain the front hedge and have a sufficient degree of openness and visual connection with the countryside. In order to respect the adjoining Townland Green Character Area and the siting of properties opposite the site, development should be set well back from Front Road and not be of a scale or massing which would dominate this approach to the Conservation Area or the public views from it.

To the north the land rises and the windmill sits on an open hill high above the village. The open spaces around the windmill form an important part of the setting of the listed building and the Conservation Area allowing appreciation of the visual inter-relationship of the windmill and the church.

To the north west, some modern residential development has encroached close to the setting of the Grade 1 listed All Saints Church. Nevertheless, the church and rectory abut open fields to the south and these remain an important part of the setting of the listed building and this part of the Conservation Area. Views of the village and the church can be seen from the relatively high ground behind the Rectory and Rectory Close.

The rising hills to the east of the village are an important part of the setting of the Conservation Area and are important in enclosing the views from The Green (below)



## 4.0 Character Appraisal

Whilst Woodchurch Conservation Area as a whole represents an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, for the purposes of this appraisal, the Conservation Area has been split into six sub-areas which comprise distinctive character areas:

**1 Village Green**

**2 Front Street (south of the village green)**

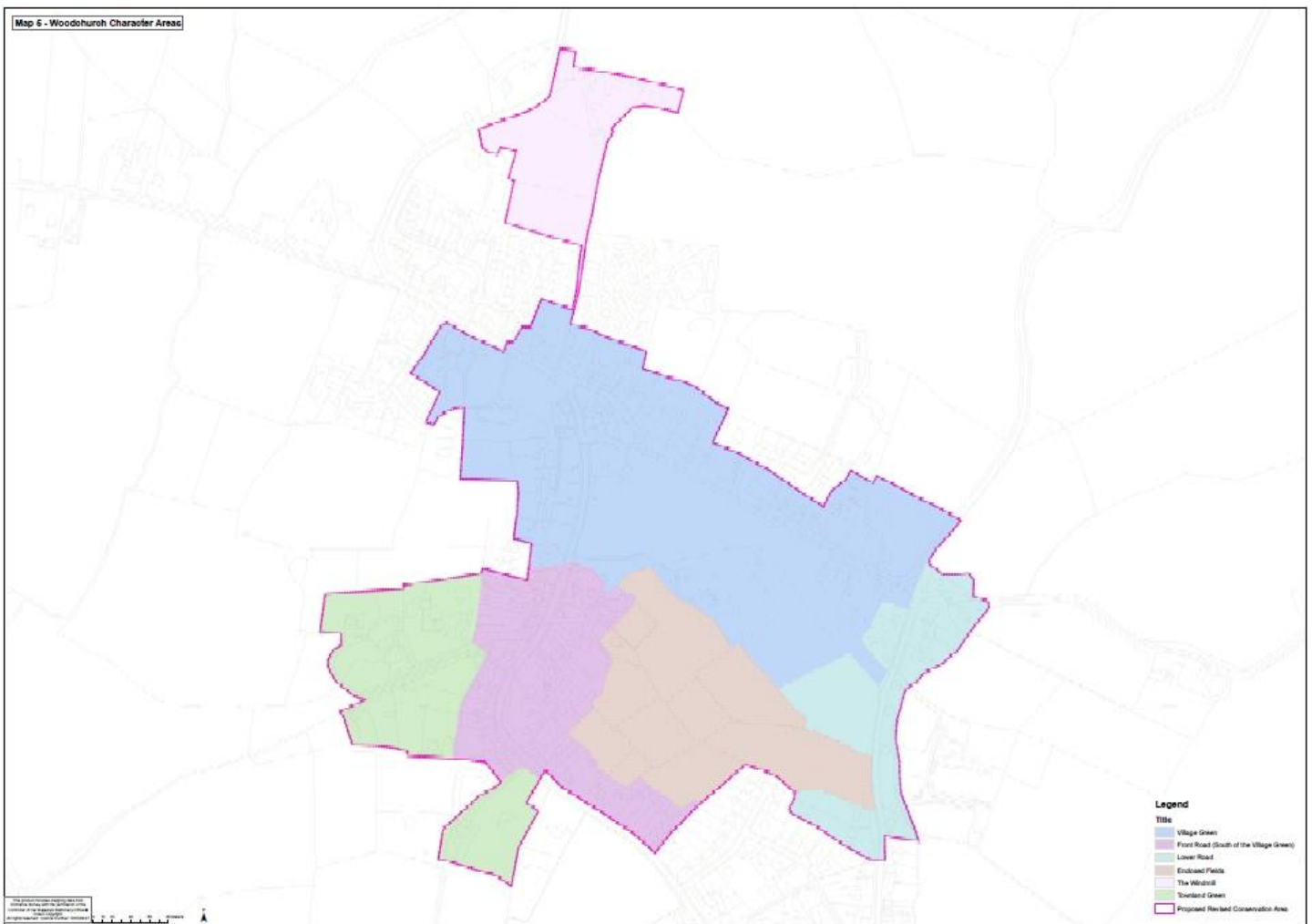
**3 Lower Road**

**4 Enclosed Fields**

**5 The Windmill**

**6 Townland Green**

**MAP 5 CHARACTER AREAS**







MAP 6 KEY FEATURES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA.

#### 4.1 The Village Green

The dominant feature of the Conservation Area is the wide expanse of the village green which slopes gently down towards the south east. A backdrop of woodland-topped hillside to the south helps enclose this view. It presents a typical English village scene, with the cricket square, mown grass, a church spire visible above properties to the west and various buildings nestling around the edge. Most buildings fronting on to the village green are listed buildings in their own right but their domestic scale, set back, hedged front boundaries and use of a limited range of vernacular materials unifies the group as a back drop to the green. Mature trees also contribute to the verdant character of this part of the Conservation Area. Soft grass verges and gravel paths and drives add to the informality of the street scene. The scale of the buildings and the trees cannot hope to enclose the wide space of the village green which consequently has a spacious and open character.



*Fronting The Green on the northern edge, a number of two storey houses are set behind a wide grass verge, hedged boundary and front garden. The informality is retained as the grass verge abuts the road, access drives and footpath without formal edging. The number of vehicular cross overs is limited to ensure that the green predominates.*



*Properties to the north side of The Green stand out with their light coloured appearance formed by white painted weatherboard and light painted render. The properties are all two storeys in height with orange plain tile or slate pitched or hipped roofs - with most incorporating chimneys extending above the roof line. A former shop with shopfront can be seen at the centre of the picture - left above. The trees at the entrance to Bourne's Place form an important backdrop to this side of The Green, contribute to the verdant character and screen the more modern development.*





*Limited infill development is located on the north side of The Green but the small scale, height, materials, set back and hedged frontage ensure that they have a neutral impact on the Conservation Area.*



*A row of evergreen trees at the north western edge of the Green give this area scale and adds to the verdant appearance of The Green. The row is a remnant of an earlier avenue which stretched along the whole northern edge of the Green. The early Wealden Hall house, Henden Place, is a well preserved feature on the eastern side of The Green*

Two single properties and associated trees help frame the eastern and southern views from the Green. The Green forks and narrows down to Lower Road around Chequer Tree Cottage but is due to be extended further to the south of Drayson House. The rising hills to the east are an important part of the setting of the village and are important in enclosing the views from the Green.



*The two storey white weather boarded Chequer Tree Cottage and associated trees (left) draws the eye and helps frame views to the east across the Green. The tall villa, Drayson House, and associated trees (right) help frame views across the Green to the south.*

All Saints Church spire dominates the western view from the village green rising above the adjoining roof line and acting as a landmark from many parts of the village.



The village green slopes down to Lower Road.



*The south eastern section of the green comprises entirely open space with some trees. The open space has a hedged boundary to the north which partially screens views of buildings (left) and a gappy hedge to the south – though this may be enhanced by new hedge planting associated with the permitted development.*



*The eastern section of The Green incorporates a road though the soft verges, lack of footways and some hedged boundaries retains the informality of other parts of The Green.*

*The church spire can be seen along the axis of The Green providing an important landmark feature from the junction of The Green and Lower Road (left).*





*Rising from Lower Road, properties on the west side of The Green are of a domestic scale in-keeping with the rest of the Conservation Area but the designs, materials and boundary treatment present a mixed character.*

The west side of the village green is also enclosed by two storey red brick houses with tall orange plain tiled roofs with dormer windows and chimneys set on higher ground. Trees which are generally located behind and between the properties add to this enclosure and the verdant character of the village green.



*The row of listed houses on the west side of the village green just south of the church are set well back behind deep, hedged front gardens, along a public footpath called 'The Pavement' paved in blocks of Bethersden Marble. Shared access drives have limited impact as a result of the limited number of openings and the use of gravel.*

The character of development changes at the north western edge of the Green, leading to Front Road. The wide grass verge disappears and properties, including terraced houses, are set closer to the curved road giving an enclosed character. Vehicle parking has encroached into some front gardens in this area.



*To the east of The Green in this area (left) hedged boundaries are less prevalent and vehicle parking has encroached into front gardens. More traditional white weather boarded houses with hedged boundaries occupy the western side of The Green (right)*

Beyond this area, All Saints Church, two pubs and the primary school face Front Road in a cluster of public buildings.





*The Grade I listed All Saints Church, built of Kentish ragstone, is located within an extensive church yard on relatively high ground. The church yard contains some mature trees which, along with the ragstone wall, contribute to the street scene. The windmill is visible from the church yard on higher ground to the north.*



*The original part of the primary school (above left) dating from 1844 is situated immediately west of the churchyard with the building in a prominent position located at the back edge of the Front Road pavement. The single storey brick building with plain tiled roof has three gables facing the road. Whilst not a listed building, the building is a prominent notable local building in terms of the character of this part of the Conservation Area and in understanding the historic evolution of the village. More modern buildings and playground are tucked behind the original building.*

*The adjoining village pubs (above right) are both listed buildings and are prominent in the street scene. One has a picket fenced front garden and the other has an open frontage and parking. Signage is fairly restrained and does not detract from the listed buildings or the character of the area. The individual buildings and active uses add to the character created by this cluster of public buildings in this part of the Conservation Area.*

The properties around the village green and the green itself are generally very well maintained and this part of the Conservation Area is generally in very good condition.

## 4.2 Front Road (south of the village green)

Away from the village green the verdant character initially changes to a more urban form of development with Front Road lined with generally two storey detached, semi-detached and terraced properties set close to each other and back from the road behind small front gardens - some hedged - replicating this boundary feature prominent in properties around the green. This part of the village is largely characterised by linear development along the road. The houses are generally of red brick or tile hanging to upper floors with plain tiled or slate roofs. A few gable ended properties front the road and punctuate the sloping pitched roof form of most dwellings. The urban character is accentuated by the width of the road, on street, and curtilage, parking and overhead wires. As Front Road extends further south east the development becomes looser knit with buildings set further back from the road.



*A shop with restrained signage is located in a cluster of properties close to the village green (left).*



*Terraced properties are part of the character of Front Road. These two storey groups each provides a unified appearance through the use of brick with tiled roofs, the pattern of window and door openings and brick arch detailing. In some cases replacement windows have not matched the original pattern and front boundary hedging has been removed diminishing the unity of the properties.*



There are glimpses of the historic Townland Green area from Front Road which help to visually connect the main road with the historic hinterland of farmsteads.



*There is a glimpse of Court Lodge Farm along an informal hedged track from Front Road – set behind a deeply set white painted brick detached house and a modern detached white rendered infill house (left). The siting, scale, materials and hedged frontage of the modern infill development respond to the character of this part of the Conservation Area.*



*There is a glimpse of the entrance to Townland Farm along a hedged track which accommodates a public footpath.*

*To the south of the entrance to Court Lodge Farm the character of the street becomes more mixed, with no regular building line, dominant building materials, front boundaries or house designs (right). A number of bungalows are also located along this section of Front Road.*



*The splayed single storey white rendered garage and car sales forecourt are prominently located on the corner of Front Road (left). A shop with restrained signage is located in a cluster of properties opposite the garage (left).*

A pair of tall brick villas set on higher ground are prominent notable local building in terms of the character of this part of the Conservation Area.



*The ragstone wall and railings provide an appropriate historic boundary to the villas.*

*The small crescent of inter-war former public housing 65 – 75 (odd nos.) Front Road is typical of the period, comprising ribbon development at the edge of the village. The development forms a ‘set piece’ crescent of semi-detached properties set well back from the road behind deep front gardens. Materials follow the local vernacular of brick and weatherboarded facades with plain tiled roofs and chimneys. Original windows and doors have been replaced and garages and drive ways have been installed.*



*The Mission Hall abuts 75 Front Road. Whilst not a listed building, the building is a prominent notable local building marking the start of the Conservation Area and in terms of the character of this part of the Conservation Area and in understanding the historic evolution of the village.*



A gap occurs in the developed frontage of the village to the south of Front Road and this site is allocated by the Borough Council for residential development (see Para. 3. 3 Setting and topography). The character of the south side of the road is loose knit linear development fronting the road behind hedged front boundaries.



Approaching the village green from the south, the church spire comes into view as the road turns sharply east. Views of this important landmark are available between buildings and above the tree line.



The properties and public realm in Front Road (south of the village green) are generally well maintained. Nevertheless, a number have inappropriate replacement of traditional roof materials and features such as windows and doors with unsympathetic modern materials, and front boundaries and gardens have been eroded to create parking spaces. Telegraph poles and overhead wires detract from the public realm. This part of the Conservation Area is generally in fair condition.

### 4.3 Lower Road Area

Lower Road is a winding narrow, hedge and tree lined lane with a strong rural character. Whilst a footpath runs along the west side of the road, a grass verge along part of its length and a grass verge on the eastern side of the road help retail an informal character. The small scale detached buildings along Lower Road and their discrete location behind hedges means that the landscape dominates the street scene. The properties are primarily of red brick with red plain tile or slate roofs and chimneys on the older houses.



Properties to the east of the lane south of the village green are set on shallow plots which are enclosed to the rear by a stream which forms the boundary to the Conservation Area. Consequently, the properties are pushed quite close to the road. Nevertheless, the properties are interspersed with large side gardens which create wide gaps between the buildings and retain a dispersed rural character at the edge of the countryside.



*Single and two storey properties situated close to the east side of Lower Road but interspersed with significant areas of open space.*

Properties on the west side of Lower Road and the simply designed bungalows on the east side - north of the village green - are discretely located back from the road through narrow entrances and behind hedges such that the landscape dominates the buildings.



The area is dominated by open spaces, be it garden land, fields or the publically accessible village green as it branches down to join Lower Road.

*Open fields abut Lower Road to the west. Development of a detached two storey dwelling along with an outbuilding, with a holiday let and linked office (B1) on part of the open land fronting Lower Road to enable the creation of an addition to the village green is under construction.*





*Views east from The Green towards Lower Road show a grassed triangular road junction with a stand of ash trees around the junction and rising land beyond enclosing views to the north. The open land to the east is an important part of the setting of this part of the Conservation Area.*

The properties and public realm in the Lower Road area are generally well maintained and this part of the Conservation Area is generally in good condition.



### 4.4 Enclosed Fields

This area adjoins the village green to the north but is otherwise surrounded by development – albeit limited dispersed development to the east. The area comprises a landscape of small fields enclosed by a network of native hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees including oak. This area forms an important part of the open character which is such a strong and distinctive feature of the heart of this village. The fields allow views of the church from certain vantage points.



*View of the church spire from Lower Road across open fields at the centre of the village (left)*

*View from the village green south east towards Lower Road across the central open fields (right).*



*View north eastwards towards the open fields at the end of Kirkwood Avenue (left)*



The landscape condition of the enclosed fields area is generally good with a managed network of native hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.

## 4.5 The Windmill

The white painted timber Windmill, set on a high point to the north of the village, is a landmark feature recognisable on the skyline from a distance. The well preserved listed building is good example of a Kentish smock mill.



*The church spire is visible from the windmill across the open fields to the west of the footpath (above).*

*The fields to the west of the footpath not only form an important part of the setting of the windmill but also allow the visual inter-relationship of the village's two historic landmark buildings.*

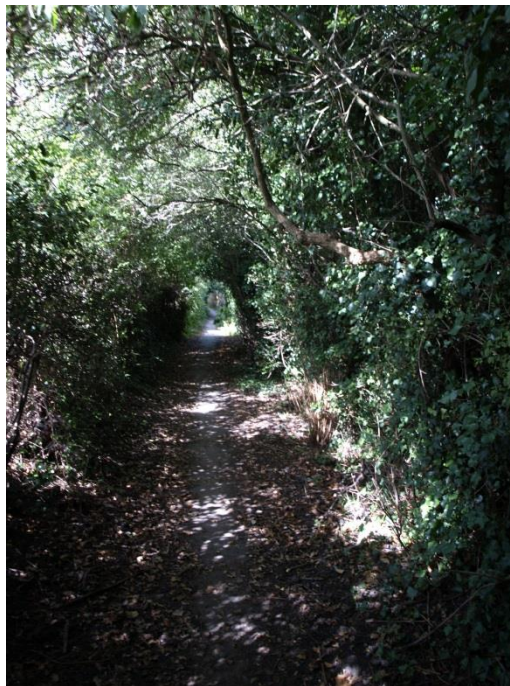






*Immediately to the north of the mill lie the two two-storey listed houses Mill Cottage and Fairview with a red brick and tile hung exterior.*

The windmill is accessed via a footpath that passes between the village pubs and along a narrow route between the backs of modern development before revealing dramatic wide views of the windmill across open fields.



The windmill is very well maintained and the adjoining fields are managed. The footpath sign is well maintained and, although narrow close to the village, the footpath itself is well used. Overall the windmill area is generally in good condition.



## 4.6 Townland Green

Townland Green is one of the oldest parts of the village with Court Lodge Farm and Townland Farm two of the remaining buildings from this early period. The large buildings sit in large plots containing mature trees. Each farm building is set with other buildings associated with the farmsteads. The two clusters are separated from each other by open land comprising their own grounds, long back gardens to properties facing Front Road and countryside around the south western fringe of the village. The rural character of the area is retained through the retention of the historic buildings and their undeveloped setting. Access is derived from unmade informal tracks bordered by hedges.



*Townland Farm (left) is a large detached listed house set in large grounds with mature trees.*

*The capped oast house (right) was associated with Townland Farm and is set close to mature trees on a ridge with long views to the south. Whilst not a listed building, the oast house is a notable local building in terms of the character of this part of the Conservation Area and in understanding the historic evolution of the village. The farm and oast buildings are set apart retaining a spacious character in a rural setting.*



*Court Lodge Farm (left) is a large detached listed house set in large grounds with mature trees.*

*The oast house (right) was associated with Court Lodge Farm and is set with a converted barn in large grounds surrounded by mature trees. Although of a large scale, the buildings are set far apart retaining a spacious character in a rural setting. Whilst not listed buildings, the converted oast and barn are notable local buildings in terms of the character of this part of the Conservation Area and in understanding the historic evolution of the village.*



*Access to the Court Farm Lodge farmstead is derived from unmade informal tracks enclosed by hedges and mature trees.*

*The historic open character of this area is retained with long back gardens extending to the hedge (left)*



*The open long back gardens (left) are an important characteristic of Townland Green. A pair of weather boarded cottages is visible across the gardens and from the footpath passing Townland Farm.*

The properties and gardens in the Townland Green area are generally very well maintained and this part of the Conservation Area is generally in good condition.



## 5.0 Negative Features

Overall the condition of the Conservation Area is good but there are a number of negative features which detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

- Overhead wires and telegraph poles are a characteristic of the Conservation Area and detract from the character of the buildings and the area as a whole. They are particularly noticeable in Front Road.



- Vehicle parking has encroached into some front gardens resulting in the loss of front gardens and traditional boundaries.



- Formal kerbed edging around The Green urbanises the informal setting.



- Modern development in the foreground of views of the listed windmill detracts from its setting



- The inappropriate replacement of traditional windows and doors with unsympathetic modern materials and designs has led to an erosion of the historic and architectural character of some properties and the integrity of groups of houses.



- Clutter to the rear of Front Road



- Whilst small in scale and unobtrusive in the wider landscape and views from The green, the building at the junction of Lower Road and The Green is dilapidated



## 6.0 Management Proposals for the Conservation Area

Historic England's good practice advocates that local authorities should prepare a management plan to address the issues arising from the Conservation Area Appraisal and set out recommendations for action. Some of these actions will be applied generally to Conservation Areas in the Borough, whilst others, such as enhancement proposals, are specific to the Woodchurch Conservation Area.

### 6.1 Management Proposals applicable to all Conservation Areas in the Borough

#### **Application of Planning Policy**

The Borough Council will consistently apply adopted and future planning policy to ensure high quality design which is appropriate to protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This will be applied to all development requiring planning or listed building consent including new development such as replacement or new buildings, small scale alterations and extensions to buildings, boundary treatment and, where applicable, surfacing front gardens. This approach will be followed for proposals both within the Conservation Area and those which affect its setting or impact on its character.

#### **Shop Fronts and Advertisements Supplementary Planning Document**

The Borough Council will bring forward a new supplementary planning document on shop fronts and advertisements which will have special consideration for Conservation Areas.

#### **Repairs to Buildings in Conservation Areas Good Practice Guide**

It would particularly assist home owners of the Borough Council's Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas if Good Practice Guides were complemented by an information leaflet on replacement doors, windows and roof materials considered to be suitable within Conservation Areas. This will have much wider application. It will recognise the need for replacement features and will also give practical guidance on design, acceptable materials and products. The Leaflet will be publicised and be available on the website.

#### **Building Regulations**

The Borough Council will continue to apply Building and Fire Regulations sensitively in Conservation Areas and to Listed Buildings to attempt to ensure that there is no conflict with the preservation of the character of the area or the building.



## 6.2 Management Proposals for Woodchurch Conservation Area

### **Housing Site Allocation - Land between 82-120 Front Road, Woodchurch**

The site is allocated for housing development and there is a clear opportunity for a development of this site to make a positive contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area. The site is close to the Townland Green character area and adjoins lower density development. In order to respect the rural setting of this part of the Conservation Area, proposals for development in this area must have a sufficient degree of openness and visual connection with the countryside. The design and layout of the scheme should allow for significant spaces between buildings to allow for long views through the site to the countryside beyond. In order to respect the adjoining Townland Green Character Area within the Conservation Area and the siting of properties opposite the site, development should be set well back from Front Road and not be of a scale or massing which would dominate this approach to the Conservation Area or the public views from it.

### **Reduce the number of telegraph poles and overhead wires by placing wires underground as opportunities arise**

It is recognised that the cost of replacing telegraph poles and overhead wires underground is normally high but opportunities to achieve this improvement to the appearance of the Conservation Area should be taken as they arise.

### **Extension and management of the village green**

The village green forms the heart of the village and its open, verdant aspect is a key contributor to the character of the Conservation Area and should be preserved.

Current plans to extend the Green into the field to the south-east provide an opportunity to consider the long term management of the whole green through a landscape management plan able to balance the heritage value with requirements for ecology, sport and recreation, landscape character and quality and visitor and community needs. As part of this plan, consideration should be given to future replacement planting of mature trees on the edges of the Green, particularly the conifers on the northern side which are a remnant of an earlier avenue.



Play and fitness equipment more recently added to the green provide valuable community facilities but their character, dominated by the use of brightly painted steel equipment, is somewhat at odds with the natural appearance of the setting. Any future play and recreational facilities should be designed to reflect the character of the green with high quality landscape design to ensure they fit well with their context.

**Avoid formal kerbed edging around the village green and the east side of Lower Road to avoid urbanising the character of the area.**

Soft edging should be retained to the road, access drives and footpaths to maintain the rural informality of the space.



**Retain side boundary planting and hedge screening when creating parking bays**

Where off street parking is proposed within front curtilages, hedged boundaries with neighbouring properties should be retained and enhanced and the maximum length of front boundary retained to help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and help reinforce the character of an area. Wherever possible permeable surfaces should be used which are in keeping with the character of the property and its curtilage.



**Churchyard boundary**

The boundary to the west of the churchyard near the rear of the adjacent school grounds is dilapidated and should be replaced.

**Sources:**

Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, Historic England (2011, with Revision Note June 2012)

Kent Historic Environment Record online

Woodchurch Village Design Statement 2002

Woodchurch Conservation Area Assessment 1996

'Then and Now 2006: An Illustrated History of the Village of Woodchurch Near Ashford, Kent' by Arthur Stroud (Editor), Jon Chaplin (Editor), John Hart (Editor)

<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk>