

Borough Green Character Areas

Draft Supplementary Planning Document



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Key to Maps



Views



Panoramas



Local Landmark



Visual Intrusion



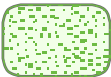
Protected Trees



Protected Woodland or Groups of Trees



Important Tree and Hedge Belts



Open Space



Listed Buildings



Conservation Area

1 What is the Supplementary Planning Document?

Good design is a key element of sustainable development, so the Borough Council will promote a high standard of design. A high quality, well designed, development can enhance the sense of place and identity of an area and can bring significant benefits to the local environment and economy.

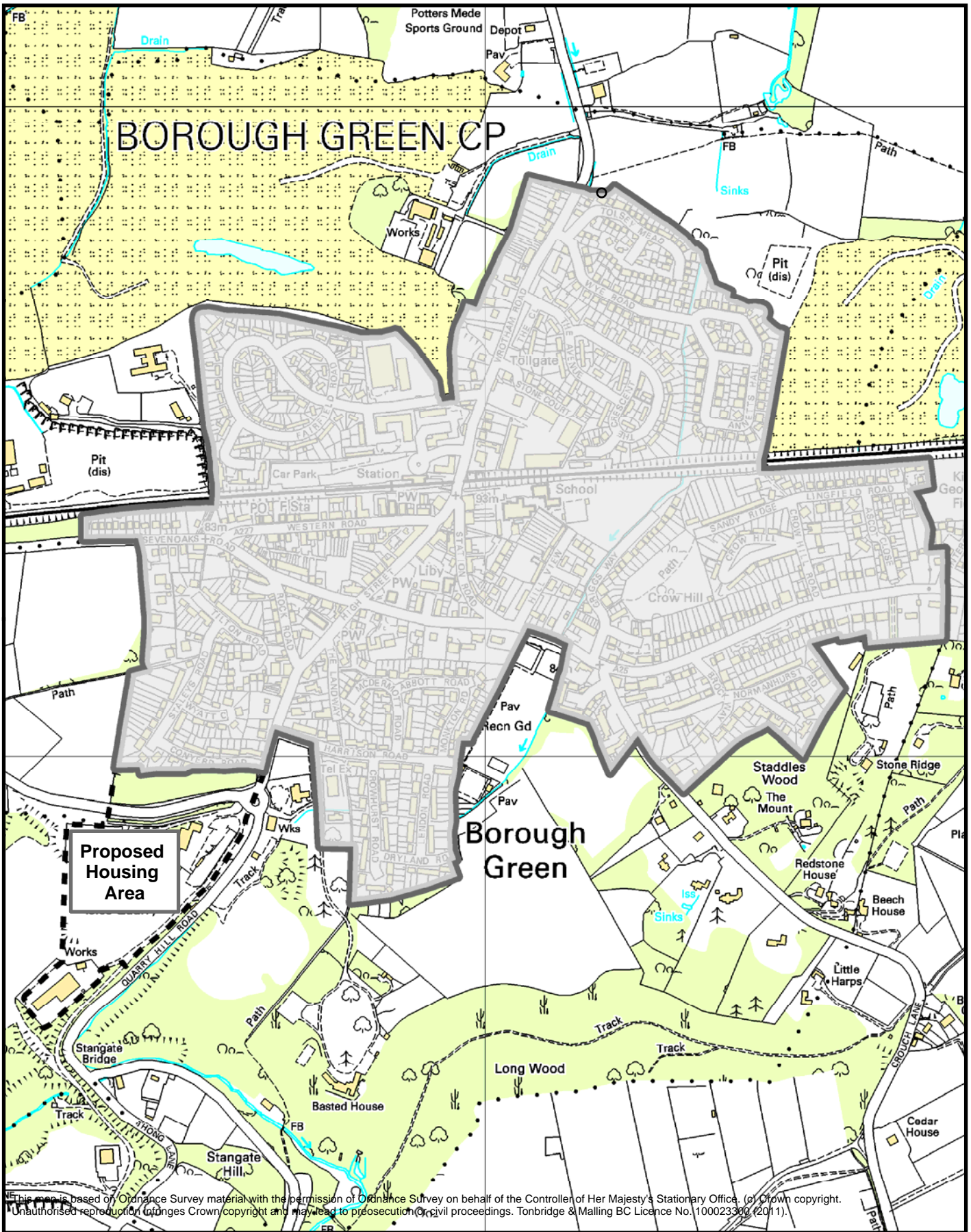
The 'character of an area' is often mentioned in the context of considering development proposals. What is often missing is a clear identification of, and agreement about, the locally distinctive features of an area that give it character that should be given careful regard in considering proposals for development. This Character Areas Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out to define the character of identifiable local areas across the Borough for that purpose.

The Managing Development and the Environment DPD states that it is important that unique characteristics of an area are identified and protected and where practicable enhanced having regard to the Character Areas SPD in order to strengthen this diversity rather than eroding its character and local distinctiveness. Government guidance (PPS3) advocates that Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area.

The Borough Council is undertaking character area appraisals of all of the main urban areas in the Borough, including the larger villages, defined in the Local Development Framework (LDF) as Rural Service Centres. The Character Area Appraisals SPD therefore comprises a number of separate volumes. Appraisals are being prepared for:

- the Tonbridge Urban Area;
- the northern urban areas (including the Medway Gap, Snodland and Walderslade) and
- the Rural Service Centres - Hadlow, Hildenborough (including Hilden Park), Borough Green, East Peckham, and West Malling

This particular part of the SPD sets out to define the character of, and appropriate design guidance for, the existing built up area of Borough Green as defined in the LDF Core Strategy (see Map 1).

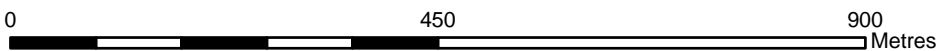


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Map 1: Borough Green Area Boundary



Borough Green Character Area Appraisal



The SPD will be adopted as part of the LDF. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in determining planning applications in the existing built up area of Borough Green to which it applies. Developers and householders should refer to the document in formulating proposals.

The document aims to raise the standard of design of new proposals such that they fit well with the locally distinctive character of an area. Design which is considered to be inappropriate in its context is unlikely to be acceptable and efforts will be made to improve the character and quality of an area through the preparation and consideration of development proposals.

2 Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document

This SPD aims:

- To supplement adopted design policies for assessing development proposals within an area;
- To identify the locally distinctive features that define the character of the existing built up area of Borough Green;
- To raise awareness of, and provide guidance on, the appropriateness of the design of development within an area in order to strengthen diversity rather than erode character and local distinctiveness;
- To assist the appraisal of planning and allied applications; and
- To deliver improved designs, in practice, which enhance the character of the area.

3 Policy Context

The SPD is consistent with national planning policy and is supplementary to the policies set out in the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) contained in the LDF.

3.1 National Planning Policies

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) states that the Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment, in both rural and urban areas. Planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole.

Planning authorities should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space.

Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people and take the opportunity to improve the character and quality of an area.

Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning documents on design.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) affirms that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.

The guidance advocates that Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area, aimed at:

- Creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.
- Promoting designs and layouts which make efficient and effective use of land, including encouraging innovative approaches to help deliver high quality outcomes.

Good design is fundamental to using land efficiently. Local Planning Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area.

Careful attention to design is particularly important where the chosen local strategy involves intensification of the existing urban fabric. More intensive development is not always appropriate. However, when well designed and built in the right location, it can enhance the character and quality of an area.

PPS3 states that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.

3.2 Core Strategy – September 2007

One of the prime aims of the Core Strategy is to ensure that new development result in a high quality environment by, for example, promoting and delivering new development that can positively contribute to the spatial quality of towns and maintaining or enhancing local distinctiveness.

Core Policy CP24 states that all development must be well designed and of a high quality in terms of detailing and use of appropriate materials, and must, through its scale, density, layout, siting, character and appearance, be designed to respect the site and its surroundings. Wherever possible, all development should make a positive contribution towards the enhancement of the appearance of the area.

3.3 Managing Development and the Environment DPD – April 2010

The DPD states that the diverse character of Borough Green should be protected and enhanced for its own sake as it is important for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Borough. It is important that the unique characteristics of the area are identified and protected and where practicable enhanced in line with Core Policy CP24 having regard to the Character Area Appraisals SPD in order to strengthen this diversity rather than eroding its character and local distinctiveness.

Policy SQ1 requires proposals for development to reflect the local distinctiveness, condition and sensitivity to change of the local character areas as defined in the Character Area Appraisals SPD.

All new development should protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance:

(a) the character and local distinctiveness of the area including its historical and architectural interest and the prevailing level of tranquillity;

(b) the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, the pattern of settlement, roads and the landscape, urban form and important views...

4 Methodology

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) advises local authorities to prepare robust policies on design. These should be based on an understanding and evaluation of the present defining characteristics of an area and that is the purpose and function of this SPD.

The evaluation of the Borough Green area has involved an assessment of the character of the development of the area through the review of historic maps; comprehensive site surveys using

the approach and characteristics advocated in By Design – Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR, 2000) – see Appendix 1.

An initial appraisal was undertaken of all areas of the village covered by this draft SPD and it was evident that a number of areas shared similar characteristics. From this assessment it was possible to identify a typology of character areas such as 19th Century Cottages, Inter-war Public Housing, Post-war Public Housing Schemes, Bungalows, Open Plan Housing, Clustered Cul-de-sac Development and Commercial Areas.

The main road frontage of Sevenoaks Road, Maidstone Road and Wrotham Road form the framework around which Borough Green has developed. As main frontages, accommodating the most journeys, they also have a disproportionate influence on the perception of the village. For these reasons, the Main Road Frontage is classified as a character area typology.

Although not necessarily physically adjoining each other, each character area typology generally grew up over the same period using layouts, designs and materials which were based on the technology, legislation and planning and design philosophies of that time. Thus these character area typologies share common generic characteristics which were recorded using the following matrices:

- Locally Distinctive Contextual Features (including the age, type and height of buildings, the main uses, the predominant building materials and boundary treatments, and the types of open space).
- Locally Distinctive Positive Features
- Negative Features worthy of Enhancement

Street by street surveys were then undertaken of each of the separate areas which made up the broad character area typologies. These surveys identified features which were specific to each area such as landscape features, landmarks, views and detracting features. Locally Distinctive Positive and Negative Features were recorded for each area as text and on a Townscape Analysis Map.

Identifying the generic and area-specific Locally Distinctive Contextual and Positive Features should assist in interpreting Core Strategy Core Policy CP24 and Managing Development and the Environment DPD Policy SQ1 which seek designs which fit well with the local context and protect and conserve the character and local distinctiveness of an area. By identifying the Locally Distinctive Negative Features, the SPD also indicates features which could, through the application of Policy SQ1, be enhanced particularly through development opportunities.

Representative groups and elected Members of the Borough Council assisted at each of these stages – see Community Involvement below.

5 Community Involvement

Community involvement in the preparation of the SPD has closely followed the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement which states that specific consultation will take place at an early stage on a draft of the document. Consultation is to be targeted at particular groups and individuals, depending on the specific nature of the issue or location dealt with by the SPD. There has been close stakeholder involvement in preparing this SPD in order to develop a shared vision with the local community of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and to develop appropriate design guidance.

Prior to the drafting of the SPD, three local stakeholder events were held.

Firstly, a briefing session was held involving local representatives¹ followed by a discussion on draft character area typologies and character area boundaries.

Secondly, a walkabout was held involving local representatives who visited a number of sub-areas to observe and record the key features which made up the character of the area.

As a third exercise the recorded features were then presented back as summarised text and photographs to the local representatives at a locally held workshop for review and discussion. Representatives were also asked about the elements of the environment they most valued about their local area and important detractors to the character of the town.

Ward Councillors have been kept informed from the inception of the SPD and have participated in the process of assisting with the preparation of the consultation document. Planning Consultants Tony Fullwood Associates preparing the SPD and the Borough Council would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have contributed to the process to date.

Formal consultation under Regulation 17 on the Draft Character Assessment SPD including a staffed exhibition in the village explaining the consultation document will take place during March and April 2011.

Copies of the SPD will also be made available during this time for comment at the Borough Council offices, local library and on the website. Statutory consultees as well as the existing network of resident, community and specialist interest groups will be consulted. The SPD will be publicised in the local press and on the Council's website and there will be a formal Public Notice under Regulation 17.

The Council recognises that it is important to report back to the community and other stakeholders the response to their comments. The Council will publish the feedback to all consultation on its website and in document format that will be available in all Council offices and libraries.

¹ Borough Green Parish Council, Fairseat Residents' Association and Woodlands Residents' Association

6 How to use the Document

Section 8 divides the existing built up area of Borough Green into separate character areas based on the methodology set out above.

For each of the individual areas there is an assessment of the locally distinctive contextual features such as age, height and types of buildings; main uses; prominent building materials and boundary treatments and open spaces. Locally distinctive positive features and negative features worthy of enhancement are also recorded.

Each separate character area is named and numbered on Map 2 below. If you are interested in a particular area, locate it on Map 2 and turn to the section on that character area in Section 8. The relevant page can be found by reference to the Contents page.

Design Guidelines based on the locally distinctive features may be found in Section 9.

In setting out the important features and overall character of identifiable areas of the Borough, a local context is provided for the preparation and consideration of development proposals. This forms a canvas within which proposals for development should be conceived and determined. Generic Design Guidelines based on the identified locally distinctive features may be found in Section 9. These will form the basis for decision making which will interpret the individual character area appraisals.