

CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENT

LONDON ROAD, BOWER MOUNT ROAD, BUCKLAND HILL AREA

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Maidstone Local Development Framework
Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning
(Local Development) Regulations 2004



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Preface

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	Main Document	
1	What is the Supplementary Planning Document?	1
2	Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document	3
3	Policy Context	4
	3.1 National Planning Policies	4
	3.2 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) March 2001	5
	3.3 The Draft South East Plan 2006	5
	3.4 Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006	5
4	Methodology	6
5	Community Involvement	7
6	London Road Area Location, Landscape Setting and Evolution	8
7	How to use the Document	9
8	Character Area Assessments and Design Policies	11
	8.1 Tonbridge Road/London Road South Character Area	12
	8.2 London Road North Character Area	22
	8.3 Bower Street Character Area	30
	8.4 Bower Mount Road South Character Area	38
	8.5 Bower Mount Road North Character Area	46
	8.6 Somerfield Road Character Area	53
	8.7 Kingsdown Close Character Area	58
	8.8 Buckland Hill Character Area	63
	8.9 Brunswick House School Character Area	73
	8.10 Queens Road Character Area	76
	8.11 Rycault Close Character Area	81
	8.12 Carisbrooke Drive Character Area	84
	8.13 Greenwich Close Character Area	88
	8.14 Queens Avenue Character Area	93
	Appendices	
1	ByDesign - Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR 2000)	99

1 What is the Supplementary Planning Document?

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.

This supplementary planning document (SPD) develops design policies through extensive community involvement and has been adopted as part of Maidstone Borough Council's Local Development Framework. It provides further detail about how planning policies will be applied in a specific part of Maidstone town: the London Road area (see Map 1).

The SPD is a material consideration in determining planning applications in the London Road area. Developers, householders and the Borough Council should refer to the document in formulating proposals and in determining planning applications.

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 inappropriate in its context or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area, should not be accepted.



Map 1: London Road Area within Maidstone Town

2 Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document

This SPD aims:

- To identify the locally distinctive features that define the character of the London Road/ Bower Mount Road/Buckland Hill area of Maidstone town;
 - To raise the awareness and provide design guidance on the appropriateness of, and potential for, types of development within an area;
 - To supplement adopted design policies for assessing development proposals within an area;
 - To assist the appraisal of particular proposals (allocations or planning applications) within an area; and
 - To deliver improved designs on the ground which enhance the character of the area
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3 Policy Context

The SPD is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with regional planning policies as well as the policies set out in the development plan documents contained in the local development framework.

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 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. 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.

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 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) March 2001

This Supplementary Planning Document supplements adopted and emerging regional guidance.

Policy Q1 advocates that development plans should "...ensure that new development in and around urban areas is well designed and consistent with the overall strategy for urban renaissance and sustainable development..."

Policy Q2 urges that the quality of life in urban areas, including suburban areas, should be raised through significant improvements to the urban environment, making urban areas more attractive places in which to live, work, shop, spend leisure time and invest,

thus helping counter-trends to more dispersed patterns of residence and travel.

3.3 The Draft South East Plan 2006

This document will supplement the South East Plan when the regional plan is adopted.

Draft Policy CC6 Communities and Character of the Environment prioritises the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities by developing and implementing a real shared vision which respects and where appropriate enhances the character and distinctiveness of settlements and landscapes and promotes a sense of place.

3.4 Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006

The Structure Plan will eventually be replaced by the South East Plan once the latter is approved. In the meantime, this document supplements Structure Plan Policy QL1 (Quality of Development and Design) which stresses the importance of development responding well to the distinct character of each settlement.

This Supplementary Planning Document should be read in conjunction with the Kent Design Guide 2005/6 with which it shares a common approach to achieving high quality design appropriate to its context.

4 Methodology

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) advises local authorities to prepare robust policies on design which are based on an understanding and evaluation of the present defining characteristics of an area.

The evaluation of the London Road/ Bower Mount Road/ Buckland Hill area has involved

- an assessment of the development of the area through the review of historic maps;
- comprehensive street by street site surveys following the characteristics advocated in By Design – Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR, 2000) – see Appendix 1;
- identifying and mapping key characteristics using Geographical Information System (GIS) techniques; and
- engagement of local residents, representative groups and elected Members of the Borough Council throughout the process – 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.

The production of the SPD is included in the Borough Council's Local Development Scheme. Progress on its development has been publicised on the Borough Council's website in Council report agendas and through the September 2007, July 2008 and October 2008 issues of the Planning Viewpoint newsletter.

Prior to the preparation of the SPD, two local stakeholder events were held.

Firstly in September 2007, a series of walkabouts in the area were held involving Borough Council Officers, the local amenity group ⁽¹⁾ and local Ward Councillors. The area was sub-divided and smaller groups visited each sub-area to observe and record the key features which made up the character of the area.

As a second exercise, in October 2007 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.

Ward Councillors were kept informed from the inception of the SPD and participated in the process of assisting with the preparation of the consultation document.

The Planning Consultants preparing the SPD and the Borough Council would like to thank the individuals and organisations who contributed to the process.

Formal consultation on the London Road/ Bower Mount Road/Buckland Hill Area Character Assessment SPD took place in August and September 2008.

A staffed exhibition explaining the consultation document was held in the area on Saturday 13th September 2008.

Copies of the SPD were available for viewing at the Borough Council offices, in local libraries and on the website.

Statutory consultees as well as the existing network of resident, community and specialist interest groups known to the Borough Council and the information exchange group, Planning Viewpoint, were all consulted.

The SPD was publicised in the local press, on the Borough Council website and to the Planning Viewpoint group.

The responses to the consultation were reported to the Local Development Document Advisory Group on 8 December 2008 and to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration for adoption on 11 December 2008. The minutes are available from the Council.

1 Bridge Residents Group

6 London Road Area Location, Landscape Setting and Evolution

Much of Maidstone retains the character of a small country town with the undulating topography a distinctive feature which permits glimpsed views of the countryside beyond the London Road area, particularly the North Downs.

The town has spread along its main radial routes which extended from the centre into the countryside. This has given rise to the distinctive star shape of the town with green wedges penetrating between each urban expansion. The routes of London Road and Tonbridge Road are set on higher ground allowing views of the countryside even from an area close to the centre of Maidstone. The views are predominantly to the east and south often between buildings across development which spreads away from the main road on lower ground. Such views contribute positively to the character of this area, help orientation in this part of the town and are valued by local residents.

The oldest parts are at the centre of the town where the more substantial medieval buildings can be seen. During the 16th centuries the town prospered from the shipment and quarrying of ragstone in Allington and other parts of the town, a locally distinctive material which is still evident in parts of the London Road area today as a building material particularly for boundary walls.

Initial development to cater for the wealthier businessmen of the town took place in the London Road area because it was upwind of the increasing industrial pollution affecting the town centre and riverside and because of the

proximity of good spring water supplies. The greatest rate of population increase in the second half of the 19th Century took place in the West Borough and middle class suburban development was particularly prevalent after 1870. The Earl of Romney's land off Rocky Hill was developed 1874 – 1887 and the conditions for building were that houses had to be valued at least £800 and be provided with lawns, carriage drives and stables, with business development being prohibited. The opening of Maidstone Barracks railway station in 1874 seems to have been the impetus for development in Buckland Hill.

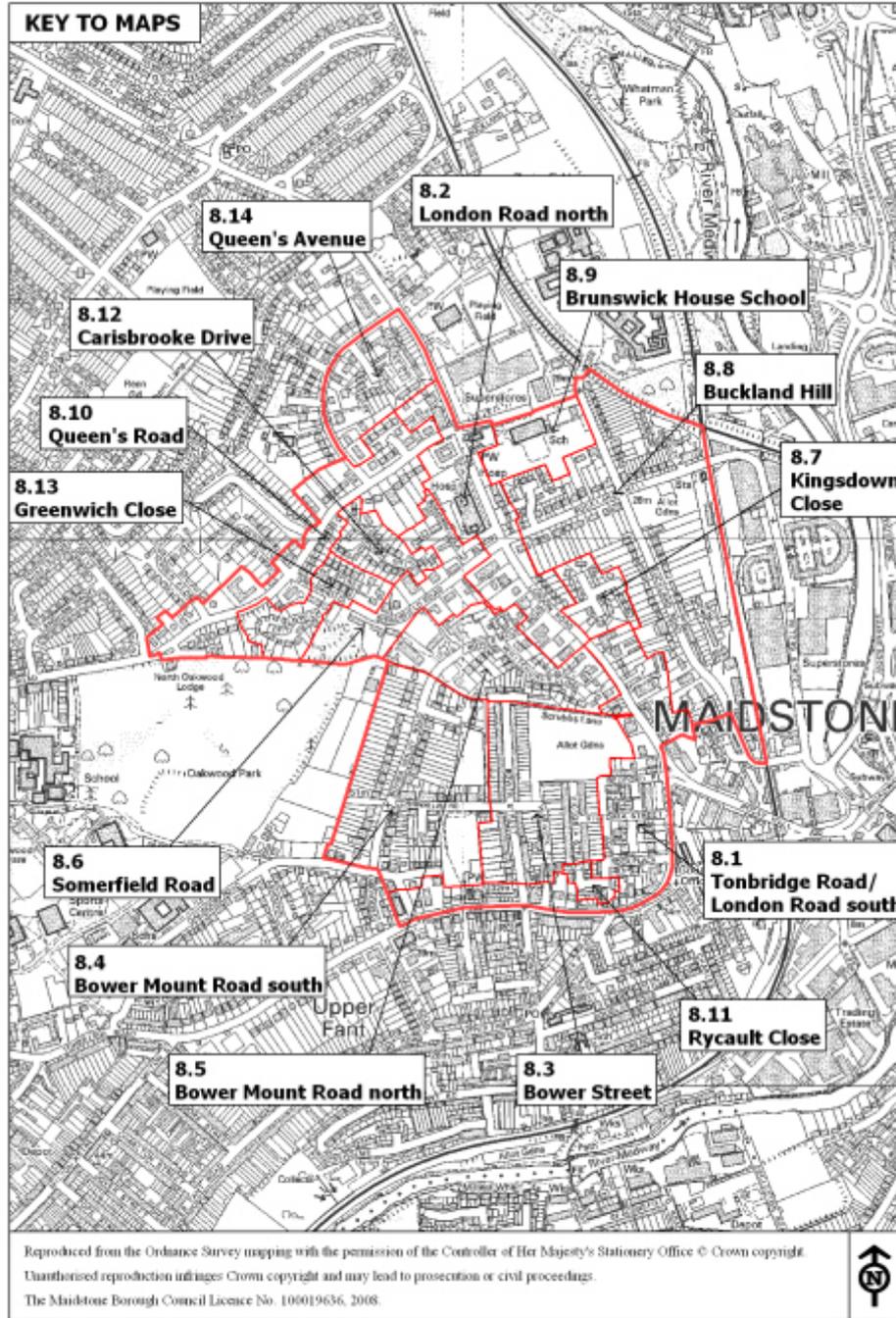
More recently in the last four decades a mix of higher rise flatted development has occurred and suburban development has spread back from the main roads. This development has generally respected the landscape features, in common with such periods elsewhere in the country, paid little regard to local vernacular designs or materials.

7 How to use the Document

Section 8 divides the London Road area into separate character areas based on the methodology set out above.

For each of the individual areas there is an assessment of the principal characteristic features and consequent design guidance.

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.



Map 2: London Road Area Character Areas

8 Character Area Assessments and Design Policies

The next sections of the SPD describe the principal characteristic features of each area.

Close analysis has been undertaken to identify the distinctive features that define the character of the different parts which form the London Road area of Maidstone town using recognised methodologies and with public involvement. The key characteristics of each Character Area are illustrated on a Townscape Analysis map and are summarised in table form. Photographs are also included to depict part of the character of the area.

Whilst the principal characteristics have been summarised, it has not been possible to illustrate each individual feature and consequently the absence of a feature from this document does not necessarily mean that it is unimportant to the character of the local area.

This Supplementary Planning Document is based on, and consistent with, adopted planning policies and guidance. From this, there are three design principles which will apply.

Design Principles

Proposals should be accompanied by a design statement that explains how the proposal:

1) Responds to the positive features of the character area identified in the SPD which contribute to the

local distinctive character and sense of place of the London Road area in particular, and in turn the town of Maidstone;

2) Improves the character and quality of the London Road area in particular, and in turn the town of Maidstone, by reinstating or reinforcing positive features of the character area identified in the SPD; and

3) Is of high quality which is visually attractive, based on the shared vision of this SPD, that places emphasis on the local context, good design, innovation⁽²⁾ sustainability and achieving a high quality of life.

Local analysis and consultation has been used to interpret the three design principles and develop appropriate design guidance for assessing development proposals within each character area. This guidance is consistent with, and supplement, the policies in development plan documents and are set out in detail in the sections below.

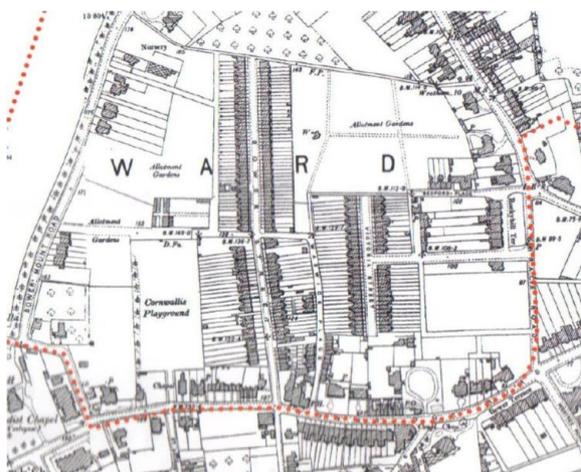
2 Smaller scale extensions and development should respect the immediate local character whereas a larger development presents a greater opportunity to respond more innovatively but the approach used should still ensure sufficient references to reinforce the local distinctiveness of the character area.

8.1 Tonbridge Road/London Road South Character Area

This character area comprises Tonbridge Road, London Road (south), Terrace Road and Bedford Place.

London Road and Tonbridge Road form two major routes into Maidstone town centre from the north and west respectively and are linked by Terrace Road. They both have a high proportion of Victorian buildings, some on a grand scale, indicating the prestigious nature of this area in the past. On the Tonbridge Road, three churches, a public park, public house, substantial villas and elegant terraces indicate the historical importance of this route. Together Tonbridge Road, Terrace Road and London Road form the curving spine around which the Character Area has developed.

This historic character has today been affected by the high levels of traffic and the incursion of post-war office blocks, car parks and apartment blocks.



Tonbridge Road/London Road South Area 1898

Tonbridge Road

At the western end of the Character Area the Tonbridge Road Methodist Church is set back from the road above a low ragstone wall and grassed bank. The church with its short spire is prominent landmark when viewed from further down the hill to the east. They appear against a backdrop of mature trees. The Methodist Church and St Michael and All Angels Church opposite were both built at the end of the 19th century and complement each other, with their uncrowded settings, similar scale and mellow yellow/grey stonework. Although outside the character area, St Michael and All Angels Church also acts as a local landmark building.



Tonbridge Road Methodist Church

From Bower Mount Road looking down Tonbridge Road to the east, the Club building by Warwick Place is a prominent local landmark and blocks longer views. The wide road curves downhill towards the town centre.

On the north side, the large car park in front of a training school creates a poorly defined space.

The entrance to Cornwallis Park has a formal civic character with marble plaques. An iron arch with the name of the park stands to one side. The bright yellow Borough Council sign is slightly discordant. The short tree lined entrance is very enclosed but opens out into an attractive green open space.

The neat single storey structure of the Spiritualist Church stands in flower gardens next to a 3 storey bay fronted Victorian semi detached property with an open tarmac frontage on the left hand side. This is followed by a charming group of listed terraced cottages, which stand back from the road behind landscaped gardens, partly obscured by trees. The cottages are constructed of red and grey brick with sharply pitched tiled roofs and tall chimneys. The two cottages at the western end are white weather boarded.



Listed cottages Tonbridge Road

More terraced cottages lie beyond, slightly closer to the road behind low brick walls. They have a shallower roof pitch and are yellow brick (one painted) with sash windows. On the corner of Bower Street there is a detached tile hung house on a generous corner plot. A small parade of shops lies opposite.

A house, club building and public house are situated between Bower Street and Warwick Place. The Club is a four storey solid red brick building with a low pink front wall. The public house has a traditional frontage with glossy green tiles and yellow bricks above. The mix of colours and materials in the part of the frontage lacks harmony.

The road narrows and is strongly enclosed. Tall trees on the northern side stand behind a brick wall obscuring the buildings. A row of terraced houses provide rhythm on the south side of the road. Further down a prominent brown brick 1960s building is a detractor. Around the bend, a small parade of shops comes into view in a Victorian terrace. The bright colours attract the eye.



Parade of shops Tonbridge Road

The road widens with Bower Place on the southern side. There are long views of countryside to the south east. A ragstone wall with hedge and trees above, strongly encloses the northern side of the road but the outer edge of the curve is currently a building site. Beyond, large, elegant Victorian villas line both sides of the road creating a good balance of scale. On the south side, outside the Character Area a row of listed Victorian Houses and street trees form an attractive vista. Only one

of the villas to the north is yellow brick, the others being pebbledash and painted. The third building has been converted to flats and the frontage is poorly maintained. On the bend red brick attached houses stand above the road.

Terrace Road

At the fork, Terrace Road goes off to the left and the road ahead dives down towards the town centre. A copper beech is an attractive feature in the fork. The junction is dominated by traffic and road signs. On Terrace Road, the high repaired brick wall to the west and Council Offices to the east create a strong sense of enclosure and the road constricts. The western side of the street is exclusively 19th century from this point to Scrubbs Lane but the eastern, more visible side, on the outside of the curve is unremarkable modern development. Gaps in the frontage create a poorly defined townscape, although a copper beech opposite Victoria Street is a feature.

The listed Rocky Hill Terrace runs between Victoria Street and Bedford Place. Set behind a screen of trees and a landscaped parking area with a small communal garden, the terrace is an elegant 4 storey building in grey and white with maroon doors accessed via flights of steps. A balustrade runs along the length of the building and the central section of the front elevation is set back.

Bedford Place

Bedford Place is designated as a Conservation Area. The entrance is off a major road intersection with a triangular pedestrian island in the middle. There are views east of the road down to the town centre and hills and trees beyond. The narrow entrance is

flanked by high walls and tall trees. On the northern side there is a group of elegant listed Victorian villas. The northern corner is marked by a late Georgian villa in yellow brick (listed Grade II). This is followed by the Church in Society building a 17 Century timber framed building, white painted with triple gables fronting the street which was moved here from the town centre in about 1840. It is 3 storeys in height with 2 storey addition to the rear added about 100 years ago. This building is also listed Grade II. Above it is a terrace of white painted late Georgian town houses (also Grade II listed) that have a pleasing rhythm. The setting of the conservation area is made less attractive by the pink modern buildings which cluster around a different street pattern, have a horizontal emphasis to the design with integral garages and on plot parking as a prominent feature. The surfacing is also very poor and the entrance to Rocky Hill Terrace detracts from the historical character.



Entrance to Rocky Hill Terrace

Looking back down towards the London Road, the uniformity of the yellow brick rear elevations of Rocky Hill Terrace is striking.



Bedford Place looking east

London Road

After Bedford Place, travelling north along London Road, the road constricts beyond the wide splay of the junction. Modern offices enclose the eastern side of the street and a wall with Victorian villas (now offices) above runs along the west. The bulky flat roofed 5 storey office buildings visible from the character area present a flat, monotonous frontage with grey concrete horizontal stripes separating the wide windows. The design neither takes visual clues from the historic buildings nor creates an interesting contrast.

Beyond the offices there is a glimpse of trees behind but no long views. The road curves and flattens and then climbs. On the eastern side there is a glimpse of industrial buildings, the town roofscape and wooded hills beyond. A 4 storey terrace gives rhythm to the streetscene. The listed buildings on the western side of the road are screened by the wall and high hedges. The wall ends and the listed Bollingbroke House is raised above the road behind a grassed frontage. It is an elegant symmetrical building with a pedimented 3 storey central section and two symmetrical 2 storey wings with porches. A prominent tree and landscaped side garden enhance the setting of the building.

The road constricts again and rises. A seven storey apartment block on the eastern side is a detractor, visible from many points in the Character Area. Its square profile, height and pink colour contrast sharply with surrounding buildings and harm the historical character of the road. The space around creates a loss of enclosure but allows views to the east.

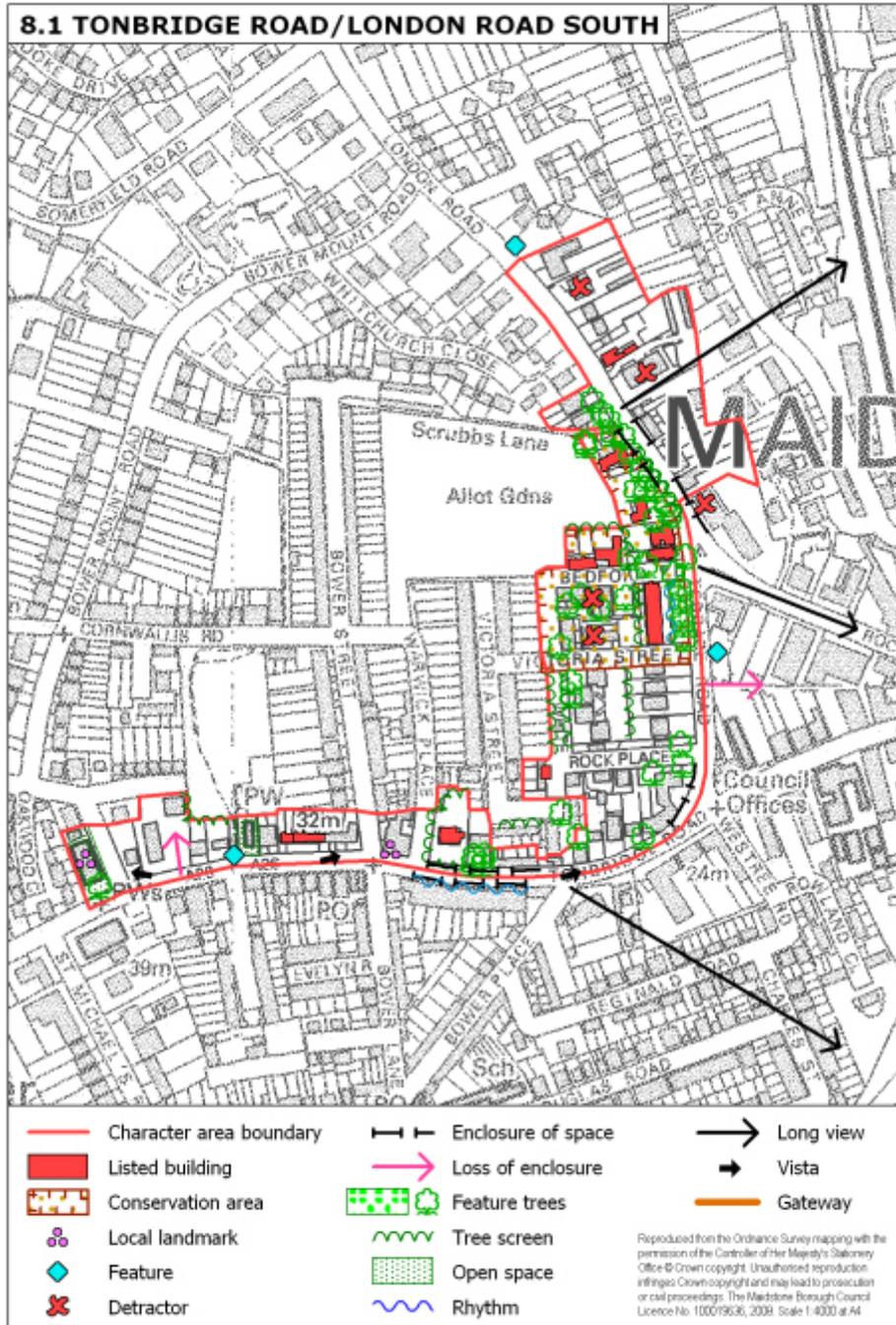
The western side of the road continues to be enclosed by walls and trees with semi detached Victorian villas barely visible behind the landscaping. The eastern side by contrast has an irregular building line. There is a small terrace, then a further high rise 6 storey block which similarly detracts from the character of this area, and a public house.

The road rises and curves north westwards. Modern red brick houses stand on the eastern side behind a ragstone wall. A prominent tree stands above the road. A car park above the wall on the western side creates a loss of enclosure.



London Road looking south

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached, semi detached and terraced
Main Uses	Residential, offices, retail and religious
Building Heights	2 - 7 storeys
Prominent Building Materials	Red and yellow brick, white render, ragstone, roof tiles, concrete
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Ragstone and brick walls with trees and hedges behind.



Townscape Analysis Map: Tonbridge Road/London Road South

Positive Features

- Retention of interesting range of Victorian buildings to the north of Tonbridge Road and West of Terrace Road
- Special historical interest of listed buildings and the Conservation Area
- Ragstone wall is a feature of this section of road
- Landscaping and individual trees
- Views of the countryside
- Tonbridge Road Methodist Church is a local landmark.
- Larger scale buildings appropriate to main route into town centre.
- Curving road creates attractive vistas

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views or landmark buildings and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Tonbridge Road/ London Road South Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Protect or enhance the character and setting of the conservation area and listed buildings

Many of the buildings along the London Road and Tonbridge Road are protected as listed buildings whilst others around Bedford Place are within a Conservation Area giving additional protection to the character of the area.

Designation of a conservation area introduces a general control over demolition of unlisted buildings and new development should protect or enhance the character and setting of the conservation area.

Listed building controls apply to all works, both external and internal, that would affect a listed building's special interest, whether or not the particular feature concerned is specifically mentioned in the list description. Consent is not normally required for repairs, but, where repairs involve alterations which would affect the character of the listed building, consent is required.

The design of new buildings intended to stand alongside historic buildings or along this strategic approach to Maidstone town needs very careful consideration. In general it is better that old buildings are not set apart, but are woven into the existing fabric. In relation to listed buildings in particular, the setting is often an essential part of the building's character, especially if a garden or grounds have been laid out to complement its design or function.

b) Respond to the scale, height, form, mass, alignment materials and character of historic buildings

In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, mass, height and alignment of the historic buildings within the Character Area and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors, boundary treatment and the skyline rhythms formed, for example, by gable ends or chimneys.

Following such clues when designing new development will help retain and enhance local distinctiveness and guard against inappropriate development with no local references.

There are a large number of Victorian and Edwardian buildings within the Tonbridge Road/London Road South Character Area to give reference points to the area's early history. Most of the grander buildings are located along the principal routes of Tonbridge Road and London Road. Most are 3 storeys high and are usually faced with red and yellow brick or white render.

The scale is appropriate for these strategic routes into town, reflecting the importance of the roads and the imminence of the town centre and, because the routes are well used, they play an important role in forming an impression of the area and the town itself.

It is also important that new buildings respect the alignment of buildings in order to fit well within the local context. This not only applies to the front building line but also to the width of the development within the plot. There should be sufficient width within a plot to locate the building(s) and provide

adequate separation between them. There are considerable pressures to maximise the use of sites but this should not be achieved at the cost of an erosion of the distinctive character of the area.

Good quality design also relies on the choice and combination of materials. This is crucial to the success of a scheme. A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful detailing and use of materials, and through a fine balance between variety and uniformity in a building or development. The number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum.

Enhancement should be achieved along the Tonbridge Road/London Road strategic routes by using a limited palette of locally prominent materials which are well represented red and/ or yellow stock, brick, or render (light colours) with ragstone boundary walls.

c) Protect local landmarks

The Character Area contains two local landmark buildings which help give reference points (the Tonbridge Road Methodist Church and St Michael and All Angels Church). Although outside the character area, St Michael and All Angels Church acts as a local landmark building. These buildings should be protected.

d) Retain traditional boundary treatment of walls and mature landscape

Ragstone walls are a prevalent feature along London Road. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Development should not erode this

unique feature along this strategic approach to the town through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls.

e) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the south and east from the Tonbridge Road/ London Road South Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development.

f) Protect Landscape Features

The trees along the principal route partially screen development, help enclose the space and create a verdant impression at this part of the entrance to the town.

The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

g) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Traffic noise and pollution
- Poor pedestrian environment.
- Road acts as a barrier with few safe crossing points
- Settings of listed buildings and Conservation Area
- Poor surfacing and street furniture
- Some unsympathetic high rise post-war buildings on the strategic route through the area
- Parking areas on frontages

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Tonbridge Road/London Road South Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Replacing or screening features which detract

A number of high rise apartment and office blocks on the eastern side of London Road detract from the character of the area from many points in the Character Area. Enhancement would be brought about if the development were to be enclosed, and partially screened at street level by the characteristic boundary treatments of ragstone walls

and planting. This would also help to create a defensible space around the buildings.

Parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the street enclosure and a loss of defensible space around the building. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosures should be reinstated.

b) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Tonbridge Road/London Road South Character Area this would mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone boundary walls.

c) Seeking streetscape enhancements

Opportunity should be taken as part of development proposals to ameliorate the negative features of an area noted in this Supplementary Planning Document. Reductions in street clutter of signs or improvements to street furniture or footway/road surfaces, would contribute to improving the character of the area.

d) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the amenity particularly of those situated on the main roads within the area.

8.2 London Road North Character Area

All the buildings on the western side of the road date from the 19th century up to Kingsgate in the north. The buildings on the eastern side are all 20th century and generally smaller scale.

Approaching from the south, the buildings on the western side are set above the road behind a ragstone wall. Ragstone walls are repeated to a large degree in front of the properties bordering the eastern side of the road.

At the entrance to Bower Mount Road, a substantial double fronted yellow brick villa, now offices, stands behind a tarmac parking area. To the north of the junction a 3 storey stone faced building with a decoratively tiled roof is very prominent and acts as a local landmark.

As London Road curves to the east, opposite Bower Mount Road, there are long views across town roofs to countryside beyond. A row of 2 storey 1970s detached houses on the eastern side with weatherboard upper storeys has little reference to the scale or materials of the properties opposite or the strategic purpose of the road at this point. Beyond them a hedge creates a verdant townscape. The road is wide and spacious.

On the western side, the listed South Lodge is a 3 storey grey stone Victorian house with a steeply pitched slate roof and projecting windows. The wide entrance is flanked by ragstone pillars. It adjoins another substantial 3 storey yellow painted mansion set behind tall trees with parking around. At the entrance to Somerfield Road, Somerfield House is a highly decorative 3 storey

yellow brick building with stone arches over the windows, columns and a stone balcony and balustrade.



South Lodge

There are views over Maidstone town roofs to countryside beyond at the entrance to Buckland Hill.

Beyond the junction, the listed Somerfield Hospital is a landmark feature. Originally constructed as army officer accommodation, the terrace is set behind a low grey stone wall and wide grassed area with silver birch trees. The building has a gentle rhythm and with the sash windows, slate roof and delicate wrought iron work it has retained its historical character despite its use as a hospital. To the northern end of the building a wide entrance to the car park creates a loss of enclosure.



Somerset Hospital



Porch detail Somerset Hospital

On the eastern side of the road, red brick 1970s 3 storey town houses set behind a ragstone wall and landscaped gardens blend harmoniously into the streetscene. Beyond, apartment buildings appear slightly cramped on the site by filling the width either side of an older building. The trees bordering the school playing fields create a verdant impression and help enclose the space.

At the junction with Queens Road, a further substantial listed red brick office building with a bow front and newer additions is a very impressive feature because of its bulk, symmetry and grandiose design. Its size and high

visibility make it another local landmark. A metal footbridge spans the road but appears to be little used.



Brachers Building at junction with Queens Road

Beyond Queens Road, a recent apartment block (Kingsgate) is a prominent landmark. Its scale and height are appropriate to its position on a major road junction and the striking yellow brick has reference points elsewhere in the character area.



Kingsgate

Opposite Kingsgate, at this important junction, there is a void of space formed by a large sunken car park set well below the road level. Although some trees are growing on the slope down to the car park, it will be a long time until

they enclose the junction at this point. There are long views north east and east of open countryside but the roofs of the retail warehouses set below the road to the north east are clearly visible and poor quality street furniture clutters the junction creating a poor setting for the listed building.

A further apartment block faces onto London Road. It is set behind an attractive ragstone wall. A private, enclosed small scale development of terraced houses lies behind the apartment blocks. The houses are red brick, part rendered, with porches, slate roofs and bay windows. The open frontages are planted with shrubs.

The Allington Baptist Church site currently presents a low rise modern building which is out of scale with surrounding development. Nor does it respond to contextual features such as prominent building materials or boundary treatment.



Queensgate

The traffic creates a hazardous and hostile environment for pedestrians.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached, semi detached and terraced
Main Uses	Residential, offices, medical
Building Heights	1 - 4 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Stone, yellow brick, red brick, slate and tiled roofs.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Ragstone walls, trees and hedges.

Positive Features

- Scale and grandeur of buildings on west side of the road.
- Local landmark buildings
- Special historical interest of listed buildings
- Ragstone walls
- Views to east of the North Downs
- Verdant landscaping
- Rhythm of hospital building

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views or landmark buildings and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the London Road North Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respond to the scale, height, form, mass, alignment materials and character of historic buildings

In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, mass, height and alignment of the historic buildings within the Character Area and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors, boundary treatment and the skyline rhythms formed, for example, by gable ends or chimneys.

Following such clues when designing new development will help retain and enhance local distinctiveness and guard against inappropriate development with no local references.

There are a large number of Victorian and Edwardian buildings within the London Road North Character Area to give reference points to the area's early history. Most of the grander buildings are located along the principal route of London Road. Most are 3 storeys high - some with tall steeply pitched roofs with gable ends facing the road giving greater scale - and are usually built from stone or yellow stock bricks with some examples of red brick.

The scale is appropriate for this strategic route into town, reflecting the importance of the roads and the imminence of the town centre and, because the route is well used, it plays an important role in forming an impression of the area and the town itself.

It is also important that new buildings respect the alignment of buildings in order to fit well within the local context. This not only applies to the front building line but also to the width of the development within the plot. There should be sufficient width within a plot to locate the building(s) and provide adequate separation between them. There are considerable pressures to

maximise the use of sites but this should not be achieved at the cost of an erosion of the distinctive character of the area. For example, elsewhere, some buildings appear to be cramped on the site.

Good quality design also relies on the choice and combination of materials. This is crucial to the success of a scheme. A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful detailing and use of materials, and through a fine balance between variety and uniformity in a building or development. The number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum. Enhancement should be achieved along the London Road strategic route by using a limited palette of locally prominent materials which are well represented along London Road such as stone, yellow stock, red or painted bricks (light colours) with ragstone boundary walls.

Many of the buildings along the London Road are protected as listed buildings. Controls apply to all works, both external and internal, that would affect a listed building's special interest, whether or not the particular feature concerned is specifically mentioned in the list description. Consent is not normally required for repairs, but, where repairs involve alterations which would affect the character of the listed building, consent is required.

The design of new buildings intended to stand alongside historic buildings or along this strategic approach to Maidstone town needs very careful consideration. In general it is better that old buildings are not set apart, but are woven into the existing fabric. In relation to listed buildings in particular, the setting is often an

essential part of the building's character, especially if a garden or grounds have been laid out to complement its design or function.

b) Retain traditional boundary treatment of walls and mature landscape

Ragstone walls are a prevalent feature along London Road. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Often the ragstone wall is topped by a hedge or mature tree screen which is similarly characteristic and assists with enclosure of the street and the private garden space. Development should not erode this unique feature along this strategic approach to the town through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls.

c) Protect local landmarks

The Character Area contains two local landmark buildings (one recently built) which help give reference points and prevent a monotony of appearance. These buildings should be protected.

d) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the North Downs from the London Road North Character Area. These views are important to the character of the London Road area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development.

e) Protect Landscape Features

The trees and hedges along this part of London Road partially screen development, help enclose the space and create a verdant impression at this part of the entrance to the town.

The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

f) Retain or create defensible space

Clear definition of space enables residents to exercise control over their environment and to know who should or should not be there. There are examples where open frontages are created to the road leaving no definition of the space, reducing security and in many cases a loss of pride in the maintenance of the space.

Wherever possible, private space should be defined by a boundary – characteristically a ragstone wall topped by hedge or trees in this area.

Semi-private spaces, such as parking courts or amenity areas are likely to be a problem if there is no clear sense of ownership or responsibility and these should be avoided unless they can be well defined, small in size, linked directly to the property they serve and are designed to be overlooked, well-lit and well-maintained to maximise the sense of ownership.

g) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council’s Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Traffic noise and pollution
- Poor pedestrian environment
- Loss of enclosure on Queens Road junction, views of retail warehouse roofs and poor quality street furniture
- Some modern buildings on London Road lack height and fail to use materials or details with local historical reference, another appears cramped within the site.

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the London Road North Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Replacing or screening features which detract

Road junctions form nodal points for the area where development is often given greater scale to signify the importance of the intersection. Opposite Kingsgate, at this important junction, there is a void of space formed by a large sunken car park set well below the road level. Although some trees are growing on the slope down to the car park, it will be a long time before they enclose the junction at this point. Enhancement would be brought about if the space were to be developed (provided

sufficient alternative parking was available and the new development was well designed and respected the character of the area). Similarly, the site of Allington Church is a low rise modern building which is out of scale with surrounding development and enhancement could be brought about by the redevelopment of the site provided the new development was well designed and respected the character of the area. The location at this junction makes these sites appropriate for new landmark buildings.

b) Focusing on areas of opportunity

There are parts of the London Road where the scale of development does not respond to the importance of the strategic route into the County town. Within London Road the scale of frontage development is generally 3 storeys in height sometimes exaggerated by high, steeply pitched roofs and gable ends facing the road. Many of the Victorian buildings are of this height.

There are a number of two storey modern properties along this section of road with no historic references or features where a three storey development would better complement the scale of surrounding development and enhance the scale of this approach to the town.

c) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the London Road North area this would mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone boundary walls.

d) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the amenity particularly of those situated on the main roads within the area.

8.3 Bower Street Character Area

This character area includes Bower Street, Warwick Place, Victoria Street and White Rock Place.



Bower Street 1875

A map of 1875 shows that the lower part of Bower Street and Warwick Place existed and a few villas had been built. The upper part of Bower Street up to Scrubbs Lane was open land. To the east Bedford Place and Rocky Hill Terrace were constructed but orchards lay where Victoria Street now runs.

By 1896, the full length of Bower Street had been constructed together with Victoria Street and White Rock Place. The allotments were laid out to the north.

The road layout and buildings in this area remain virtually unchanged from that date, with the addition of a few houses in White Rock Place. The character of the area remains of a high

density Victorian development (over 50 dwellings per hectare) of terraced houses and small villas.



Bower Street looking south

Bower Street is a straight narrow street lined with terraced and semi detached Victorian houses, most of which are two storeys to the street. There are some three storey houses and a four storey house stands by the entrance to Warwick Place. Bower Street slopes gently down to the south and the rhythm of the terraced properties and regular chimney stacks leads the eye towards long views over open countryside at the southern end. This view is marred by a plethora of telephone wires and parked cars lining the road.

The upper part of the street is characterised by two or three storey terraced properties (some with basements) in a variety of muted shades. Although the architectural details vary, the properties have a pronounced rhythm. Constructed of yellow brick, some of the properties are rendered and painted with steps up to the doors and small front gardens behind brick or stone walls or black railings. The properties on the western side have a decorative arch of red brick

over doors and windows, whilst those on the eastern side have decorative stone features.

Additions and alterations have been made including the addition of porches, replacement of sash windows, satellite dishes and loss of architectural details on some properties, but the rhythm of the design and scale of the buildings is still strong. The development is urban in character with long views of open countryside to the north east through gaps between buildings on London Road.

The lower part of the road is less enclosed with the properties on the western side being set back from the road. The semi detached villas are older than the terraced cottages but some of the original character has been lost through front extensions, loss of front boundaries and concrete frontages. The range of materials is more eclectic but the historic character is still strong.



Bower Street loss of front gardens and original features

Warwick Place

Warwick Place leads eastwards off Bower Street beside a four storey grey painted house. The tall side elevation on the north side and damaged ragstone

wall to the south give a strong sense of enclosure. Views ahead are blocked by the roofs of Victoria Street.

A path leads off northwards past the allotments before turning right towards Bedford Place. At this corner the view opens out with a near vista of the houses of Whitchurch Close and the rear of Bower Street to the north and west and long views over countryside to the north east. The absence of rear extensions on Bower Street gives a neat, rhythmic appearance.

Warwick Place turns south. The environment at this point is quite degraded with a collection of different garages, with the rear of properties and private back gardens exposed to public view, a leaning lamppost and barbed wire on gates.



Warwick Place

The road slopes gently south giving views of wooded hills and initially is lined by back gardens and garages. The first garden is unenclosed creating a poorly defined space.

Further down there is a small group of Victorian terraced cottages on the west side with walled front gardens, then more garages. A 1960s 2 storey semi detached house with garages

underneath is a discordant element. On the eastern side of the road a property has been recently renovated and forms a very attractive feature bringing frontage development and overlooking to the street and enclosure.



Warwick Place restoration

The road dips and narrows giving a strong sense of enclosure. Houses can be glimpsed at the end of the road and traffic noise becomes apparent. A tall wall topped with trees and shrubs lines the eastern side of the road whilst a complicated group of workshop type buildings stands on the western side. A blank rear wall at right angles to the street is a detractor.

Victoria Street



Victoria Street looking south

The north-south arm of Victoria Street is lined by Victorian terraced houses. The street is wider than Bower Street and more level. There are slight variations in roof height but the even width of the properties, original chimney stacks, porch details and sash windows give a pleasing regularity and rhythm. The glazing treatments on the bay windows vary but the overall effect is harmonious. A group of three 1970s town houses at the southern end are slightly taller but harmonise well with flat fronts and brick details. Their width matches that of the other houses in the street. The street has a generally peaceful residential character. The appearance of the street is harmed by very poor surfacing and one dormer roof extension is an obtrusive feature.

To the north there are short views over the allotments whilst to the north east longer views can be glimpsed beyond office buildings. Looking south down the street there are views of wooded hills over the rooftops of Rycault Close.

The vista down the eastern arm of Victoria Street is rather disappointing with obtrusive modern pink housing block and the Tonbridge Road. The first section of the road is lined by building side elevations and then treed gardens. To the north a rough access track leads to the allotments, the Sanctuary Housing and turns east towards the elegant housing of Bedford Place. There are vistas across the allotments.

On the western side of this section of Victoria Street, the pink housing development forms part of the Conservation Area and is discussed in the Tonbridge Road Area. On the eastern side 4 two storey apartment blocks in yellow brick with tiled low pitch

roofs are accessed via a wide wrought iron gateway. A weeping willow enhances the neat paved parking area.

White Rock Place

To the west, White Rock Place is an unmade track lined with tall, overhanging trees and garages. The track has a very rural, strongly enclosed character, contrasting strongly with the tight built up form of Bower and Victoria Streets.

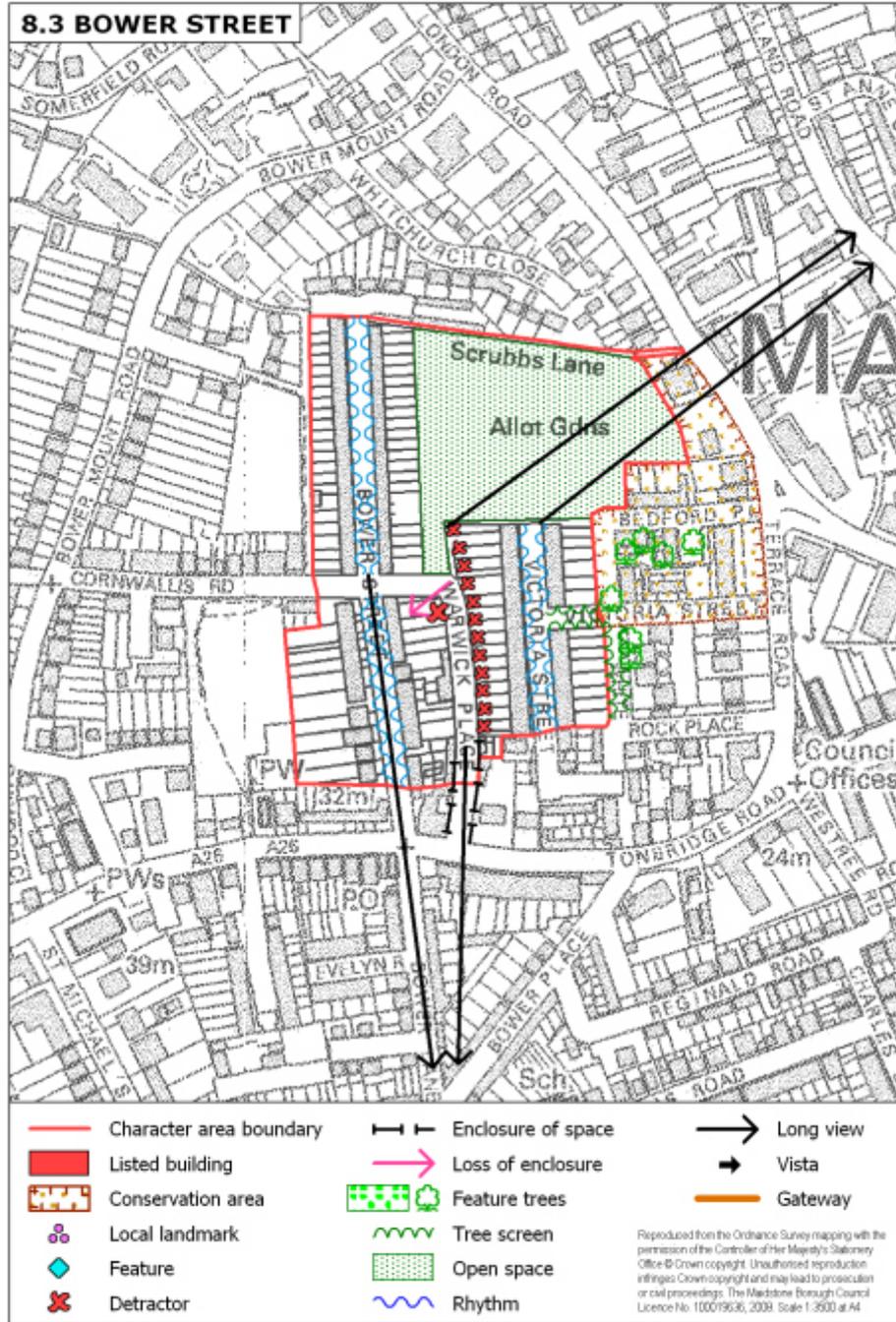
On the corner a listed semi detached property with later additions at either end forms the impressive White Rock Court. The yellow brick building with slate roof, attractive porch details and steps up to the doors has pleasing proportions and symmetry. The central section is 4 storeys high with the additions being two storey. The entrance is flanked by ragstone pillars and the forecourt is tarmac. Due to its height and colour, the building is noticeable through Rycault Court from the Tonbridge Road.

The three other properties in White Rock Place are more recent red brick low scale buildings set behind a high brick wall.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Terraced, semi-detached with some detached and apartment blocks
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	1 – 4 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Yellow brick with red details, slate and tiled roofs.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Brick and stone walls, railings



White Rock Court



Townscape Analysis Map: Bower Street

Positive Features

- Quiet residential character
- Small scale, intimacy
- Tight knit urban character (except White Rock place) with strong sense of enclosure
- Rhythm of features
- Open space of the Scrubbs Lane allotments
- Views of open countryside

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views or landmark buildings and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Bower Street Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respect the quiet residential character

The relatively narrow streets; distance from the main roads; and almost exclusively residential development have resulted in a quiet residential character. This character should not be adversely affected by new development.

b) Respond to the scale, height, form, alignment, materials and character of historic buildings

In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, mass, height and alignment of the historic buildings within the Character Area and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors, boundary treatment and the skyline rhythms formed, for example, by chimneys, porches, brick details and fenestration.

Following such clues when designing new development will help retain and enhance local distinctiveness and guard against inappropriate development with no local references.

There are a large number of generally 2 storey small scale Victorian buildings within the Bower Street Character Area which give reference points to the area's early history.

The density and terraced form of development give a strong sense of enclosure which should be retained and emulated in any new development.

The strong rhythm of repeated features, such as chimneys, porches, brick details and fenestration, should not be lost through unsympathetic alterations to properties.

c) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the north east (across allotment land) and south from the Bower Street Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

d) Protect Landscape Features

The appraisal identifies a number of individual trees and open spaces, including the Scrubbs Lane allotments which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

Negative Features

- Some loss of historical features through the introduction of a variety of materials, front extensions and dormer windows in Bower Street and Victoria Street.
- Exposed backs of properties and garages along Warwick Place
- Hard surfaced frontages and loss of boundary walls in lower part of Bower Street.
- Overhead telephone wires in Bower Street.
- Blank elevation at right angles to road.
- Some unsympathetic modern development in Victoria Street (east) and Warwick Place

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Bower Street Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

Warwick Place is currently fronted by a mix of housing and individual garages with a track leading on to a patch of unused allotments. Any development of housing to front the road would have to take into account the impact on car parking provision but new development could enhance the appearance of this road, bring overlooking to the public space and reduce the exposure of the

private backs of properties to the road. Already there has been a relatively sympathetic restoration development facing Warwick Place in terms of scale, materials and detailing. Such small scale linked development would best suit the character of this area. Standard road widths would be unlikely to fit the character of this street and a less formal arrangement would be more appropriate.

b) Seeking streetscape enhancements

Opportunity should be taken as part of development proposals to ameliorate the negative features of an area noted in this Supplementary Planning Document. Removal of overhead wires would contribute to improving the character of the area.

c) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Bower Street area parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the street enclosure and a loss of defensible space around the building. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosure should be reinstated.

d) In relation to extensions to buildings, ensuring development complies with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

8.4 Bower Mount Road South Character Area

This character area comprises Bower Mount Road (south), Deerhurst Gardens, Cornwallis Road, Cornwallis Park and Pembury Gardens.

In 1875 Bower Mount Road followed its current route from the London Road to the Tonbridge Road but the only building on it was Manor Villa which stood, and still stands, at the southern dog leg. By 1898, some semi detached properties had been built on the east side of Bower Mount Road and north side of Cornwallis Road and Cornwallis Park had been designated. However by 1908, most of the east side of Bower Mount Road and north side of Cornwallis Road had been developed with semi detached properties. The west side of Bower Mount Road was lined by conifers. With the exception of new properties at the northern end of Bower Mount Road, almost all of today's buildings were in place by 1936, including Pembury Gardens. Bower Mount Road and Cornwallis Road therefore contain an impressive stock of Edwardian houses giving rise to a cohesive townscape which is enhanced by the elevated position and wide sweeping curves of the road.



Bower Mount Road looking north



Edwardian property Bower Mount Road

The west side of the road comprises substantial semi detached 2 and 3 storey properties in red brick with projecting bay windows. The properties are all set well back from the road, with a uniform building line, behind red brick walls and deep landscaped front gardens.

In the central section between the trees and the long drive to the Kingdom Hall, the houses all have the same arched porches, half timbered gables and white rendered upper storeys, with some third storey dormer windows. On some properties the porches have been glazed and windows replaced, but the buildings are in good condition.

The properties at the northern end near Scrubbs Lane are newer and in a slightly different style with garage extensions.

South of the Cornwallis Road junction, the properties are larger. One is a residential home and another, with a large side extension, is a clinic.

On the east side, the properties are set closer to the road. At the northern end two recent detached houses are set

back from the road behind a high conifer hedge. The development harmonises with the surrounding properties being of an appropriate scale and plot size.

At the southern end of Bower Mount Road, a group of trees dominates the junction with Oakwood Court. This compact modern development contrasts strongly with the spacious character of Bower Mount Road. Off to the west, dense landscaping screens the properties in the narrow, winding Oakwood Road.

Bower Mount Road curves down between the Victorian Manor Villa and an attractive Edwardian property towards the impressive Methodist Church on Tonbridge Road.

Deerhurst Gardens

This development is built on former nursery ground. The entrance is flanked by wooden fences, shrubs and verge. There are long views of trees, rooftops and a church spire. Seven red brick, tile hung detached houses are clustered around the end of the cul de sac with open grassed or paved frontages and commanding views over town and countryside. Some gable ends are half timbered replicating a feature of the houses on Bower Mount Road.



Deerhurst Gardens

Cornwallis Road

Cornwallis Road runs eastwards from Bower Mount Road down to Bower Street. From the western entrance there are commanding views over the town to countryside beyond. The red brick turn of the century semi detached properties with Dutch gables on the north side give a strong sense of rhythm and lead the eye to the views beyond. The houses have recessed doorways, some with the name above and are set behind narrow frontages with red brick walls and iron or wooden gates. From the Bower Mount Road junction, the trees on the south side, screening Cornwallis Park, are a prominent feature softening the continuous red brick elevations of the buildings on the opposite side of the road. The newer development on the south side is not visible from the top of the road, giving the appearance of an intact historical townscape.



Cornwallis Road looking east

Moving down the road, Beaverbrook Mews comes into view on the south side. It fits well in terms of bulk and height but the architecture is unremarkable and the wide entrance creates a loss of enclosure.



Beaverbrook Mews

Towards the eastern end of Cornwallis Road, a detached infill property with a lower roof height and different proportions is a detracting feature. There are some 3 storey properties and a wider variety of styles and materials. A vacant commercial premises set back from the road behind an open frontage disturbs the rhythm of the street. On the south side 3 storey terraced 1970s town houses contrast with the historical character of the road. The concrete

frontage and poorly maintained garage doors on one property detract from the streetscene.

On the north side, a rough track leads to the allotments and Scrubbs Lane. The track has a haphazard, informal character and is lined by garages, parking, workshop buildings and allotments. It has a peaceful, almost rural, ambiance but the open space is again enclosed by development and is not visible to the wider area. Rear additions on the properties in Cornwallis Road are visible, disturbing the rhythm of the roofline.

The lower part of Cornwallis Road marks a transition between the formal stateliness of Bower Mount Road and the more compact urban form of Bower Street. Looking back up Cornwallis Road, the conifers on Bower Mount Road are a prominent feature.

Cornwallis Park

Screened by mature trees on three boundaries and shielded from views from surrounding streets by development, Cornwallis Park slopes down from Cornwallis Road to the Tonbridge Road providing grassed open space, modern play facilities and long views.



Cornwallis Park

Pembury Gardens

The south and eastern ends are enclosed by a high hedge and trees with no pavement. A wide pavement runs down the north side. Then there is a row of six inter-war houses of the same style constructed of red brick with white rendered upper storeys, bay windows, porches and garages. Some have been extended over the garages and some built forward, but the houses have a strong rhythm.

The entrance is spacious but the eastern end is constricted and shady.



Pembury Gardens

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached, semi-detached and terraced
Main Uses	Residential, medical and nursing home
Building Heights	1 – 3 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red brick, white render, tiled roofs, hung tiles and half timber.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Red brick walls, hedges, trees and shrubs. Some open plan



Townscape Analysis Map : Bower Mount Road South

Positive Features

- Spacious character of Bower Mount Road
- Rhythm and elegance of uninterrupted Victorian and Edwardian frontages
- Elevated position and views
- Tall tree groups and belts
- Open spaces- Cornwallis Park and allotments

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Bower Mount Road South Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respond to the scale, height, form, alignment, materials and character of historic buildings

In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, mass, height and alignment of the historic buildings within the Character Area and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors, boundary treatment and the skyline rhythms formed, for example, by chimneys, porches, brick details and fenestration.

There are groups of Victorian or Edwardian buildings of sufficient quantity to have impact, and quality (with substantially original features) to provide a strong distinctive character within the Bower Mount Road Character Area. The groups comprise substantial detached villas set back along a common building line in large plots behind walled mature landscaped gardens giving a spacious, verdant character and terraced and semi detached properties forming a tight knit urban character. A distinctive unity is retained. Such clusters are valued by local residents and provide a link with the past and visual clues which can be followed to reinforce the local distinctiveness of an area. The character of such groups of buildings should be protected.

Following such clues from past development when designing new development will help retain and enhance local distinctiveness and guard against inappropriate development with no local references.

It is important that new buildings respect the alignment of buildings in order to fit well within the local context. This not only applies to the front building line but also to the width of the development within the plot. There should be sufficient width within a plot

to locate the building(s) and provide adequate separation between them. There are considerable pressures to maximise the use of sites but this should not be achieved at the cost of an erosion of the distinctive character of the area.

Good quality design also relies on the choice and combination of materials. This is crucial to the success of a scheme. A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful detailing and use of materials, and through a fine balance between variety and uniformity in a building or development. The number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum. Use of a limited palette of locally prominent materials which are well represented in the Bower Mount Road North character area such as red bricks, white render, tiled roofs, hung tiles and half timber (with red brick boundary walls) would be appropriate.

b) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the east and south from the Bower Mount Road North Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

c) Retain traditional boundary treatment of walls and mature landscape

Red brick walls, hedges, trees and shrubs are a prevalent feature in the character area. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and

act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Development should not erode this unique feature through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls.

d) Protect Landscape Features

The appraisal identifies a number of individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

e) Retain or create defensible space

Clear definition of space enables residents to exercise control over their environment and to know who should or should not be there. There are examples where open frontages are created to the road leaving no definition of the space, reducing security and privacy. Wherever possible, private space should be defined by a boundary - characteristically a ragstone wall topped by hedge or trees in this area.

f) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Lower end of Cornwallis Road
- Loss of enclosure at Beaverbrook Mews
- Poor pavement surfacing
- Traffic associated with school or cutting between London Road and Tonbridge Road

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Bower Mount Road South Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

There are a number of isolated properties which are out of keeping with the general character of the area. These properties are likely to remain largely unchanged over time but there may be opportunities for new development. Development should respond sensitively to the scale of the surrounding development as well as the positive features. In addition, enhancement could be achieved in any redevelopment by selecting from a limited palette of locally prominent materials.

b) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Bower Mount Road South area this would mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and red brick boundary walls.

c) Seeking streetscape enhancements

Opportunity should be taken as part of development proposals to ameliorate the negative features of an area noted in this Supplementary Planning

Document. Improvements to footway/road surfaces would contribute to improving the character of the area.

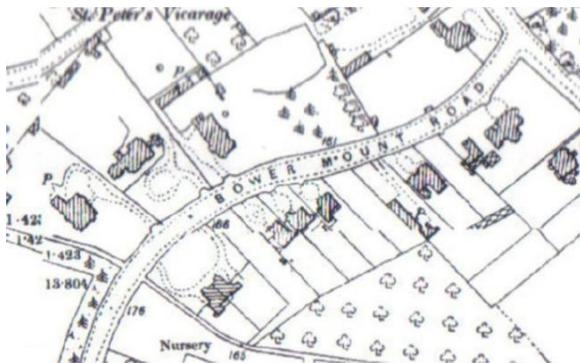
d) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the residential amenity within the area.

8.5 Bower Mount Road North Character Area

This character area comprises Bower Mount Road (north), Whitchurch Close and Bower Close.

Bower Mount Road followed its current route in 1875, as did Scrubbs Lane, but at that time only two large properties were constructed at the northern end. The rest of the road was lined by trees and open land. By the end of the 19th century all the large old properties on this section of the road had been constructed. Whitchurch Close, Bower Close and the infill development on the north side of Bower Mount Road are all post war developments.



Bower Mount Road (north) 1898

Bower Mount Road (north)

Bower Mount Road rises from the London Road. Ragstone walls with mature trees and shrubs behind, line both sides of the road and tall trees form a gateway at the entrance.

On the south side of the road, the substantial 2 storey yellow stone office building is an important feature. Adjacent to it, a recent yellow brick house, with red brick details and a white porch, is set back from the road behind iron gates and a paved frontage. It

blends well with the neighbouring Victorian villa and the spacious character of the historical properties in this part of the road.

By contrast the three 1980s properties by the entrance to Whitchurch Close are set much closer to the road and appear square and compact compared with the low, wide buildings characteristic of much of Bower Mount Road. Beyond Whitchurch Close, there are four large detached red brick Victorian houses set back from the road.

The character of the road changes at Scrubbs Lane becoming Edwardian in character. Scrubbs Lane itself is a footpath that runs across the Character Area from Queens Road to the London Road. It provides a pleasant pedestrian route into the town centre avoiding the London Road. The section east of Bower Mount Road is enclosed by high walls, but there are some glimpses of the allotments and long views to the south, partly blocked by office buildings.

On the north side of the road, three large Victorian properties have been converted to residential homes. Number 10 adjacent to the entrance to Scrubbs Lane has a wide frontage of ragstone wall with yellow brick stone capped pillars and hedges and trees above. The view through the entrance of parking, bins, a high wall and modern house beyond detracts from the elegant character of this part of Bower Mount Road. From this point north eastwards, the road descends and there are brief glimpses of countryside, quickly screened by the curving road and tall trees. The buildings are barely visible behind the dense landscaping. Two more residential homes are set well back behind verdant frontages.



Bower Mount Road looking north east from Scrubbs Lane

As the road curves northwards, there is a small infill development of three storey brown brick houses. This relatively high density development of Scandinavian style 3 storey houses with distinctive low pitched roofs and projecting windows contrasts with the scale and style of surrounding architecture. However the houses are partly screened by the high wall and trees and do not affect the spacious character.

Whitchurch Close

Whitchurch Close was constructed in the 1970s and 1980s. The attractive entrance is flanked by an old brick wall, shrubs, grass and trees. The entrance is level but the road dips and curves away. Wide verges and pavements and specimen trees give a spacious character. The yellow brick side elevation of the nursing home on the north eastern side is a prominent feature. A long extension in yellow brick with red detail to match the original property is reasonably successful. On the opposite side there is a small group of 1980s houses in the same style as those fronting Bower Mount Road. Constructed of red/brown brick with tiled roofs and half timbered

upper storeys, the houses have paved driveways and attractive cottage style gardens.

As the road curves, there is a change of character. 1970s houses constructed of lighter red/brown brick with detached garages are set back from the road behind open grassed frontages. As the road dips, trees provide interest and there are occasional glimpses of open countryside. Tall apartments on the London Road are a detractor. The houses are set at interesting angles to the road and the uniformity of style gives unity and rhythm to the development.



Whitchurch Close

Bower Close

Bower Close is built in an elevated position on former orchard land. It faces Bower Street with long views east over open countryside and backs onto Whitchurch Close. The four pairs of semi detached yellow/orange brick properties with tiled roofs and painted upper storeys have narrow frontages enclosed by brick walls. The character of the Close is harmed by a poorly maintained garage block.



Bower Close

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached and semi-detached
Main Uses	Residential and nursing homes
Building Heights	1 – 3 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red, yellow and brown brick, render, tiled roofs, weatherboard.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Ragstone walls with shrubs and trees. Some open plan.



Townscape Analysis Map: Bower Mount Road North

Positive Features

- Spacious, verdant character with substantial specimen trees
- Ragstone walls are a consistent feature of this section of Bower Mount Road.
- Curving road and topography create interesting views and vistas.
- Retention of large Victorian villas in spacious ground and historical character.
- Spacious layout and rhythm of Whitchurch Close
- Pleasant traffic-free environment in Scrubbs Lane

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Bower Mount Road North Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respond to the scale, height, form, materials, alignment and character of historic buildings

In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, mass, height and alignment of the historic buildings within the Character Area and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning and the shape and pattern of windows and doors, and boundary treatment.

Following such clues when designing new development will help retain and enhance local distinctiveness and guard against inappropriate development with no local references.

There are a large number of Victorian and Edwardian buildings within the Bower Mount North Character Area to give reference points to the area's early history. Most are 2 storeys high and are usually built from red or yellow stock bricks.

There is a strong building line set well back from the road to allow mature planting for much of the area from which a spacious character is derived. It is important that new buildings respect the alignment of existing buildings in order to fit well within this context. This not only applies to the front building line but also the width of the development within the plot. There are considerable pressures to maximise the use of sites but this should not be achieved at the cost of an erosion of the distinctive character of the area. For example, elsewhere, some buildings appear to be cramped on the site.

Good quality design relies on the choice and combination of materials.

This is crucial to the success of a scheme. A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful detailing and use of materials, and through a fine balance between variety and uniformity in a building or development. The number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum using a limited palette of locally prominent materials which are well represented in the area such as red or yellow stock bricks with ragstone boundary walls.

b) Retain traditional boundary walls and mature landscape

Ragstone walls are a prevalent feature along Bower Mount Road. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Often the ragstone wall is topped by a hedge or mature tree screen which is similarly characteristic and assists with enclosure of the street and the private garden space. Development should not erode this unique feature through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls or dominant on-site parking.

c) Protect and enhance Landscape Features

Within a large part of this Character Area, landscape features generally predominate over built form. Front gardens of sufficient size to contain specimen trees and shrubs, behind line the roads and give a verdant character

and strong landscape structure to the area and partially or completely screen development.

Should any development be proposed, good design will place emphasis on the local context. Landscape features should continue to predominate over built form and there should be scope within the plot for sufficient off-street parking without diminishing the quality of front garden areas. New landscape features associated with new development or enhancement measures should use species as set out in the Borough Council's most recent Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidance.

The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within a character area and which should be protected.

d) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the North Downs from the Bower Road North Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

e) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Nursing home curtilage
- Views of high rise apartments on London Road
- Garage block at Bower Place
- Traffic associated with school or cutting between London Road and Tonbridge Road

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Bower Mount Road North Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Replacing or screening features which detract

The garage block at Bower Place visually detracts from the character of the area. Enhancement would be brought about if the areas were to be redeveloped (provided sufficient alternative parking was available and the new development was well designed and respected the character of the area) or screened.

b) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Bower Mount Road North area this would mean reinforcing the verdant

landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone boundary walls.

c) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the residential amenity within the area.

8.6 Somerfield Road Character Area

This character area comprises Somerfield Road and Somerfield Lane both of which appear on a map of 1875 in a woodland/orchard setting.

Somerfield Road

In 1875, three properties stood to the north of the road which still remain. By 1898 the plot pattern was approximately as it is today and a small number of individual properties were gradually built on these plots during the twentieth century.

The entrance from London Road is narrow and Somerfield Road has a rural character with no pavements for lengths of the road. Trees line the southern side of the road and the buildings are well back from the road and are barely visible behind the dense landscaping. The character is in stark contrast to the busy, heavily congested London Road.

On the southern side a 3 storey yellow brick addition to Somerfield House extends along the road behind a high wall. A drive leads to Fairview Cottages. 1960s/70s properties occupy the next three plots. Old glasshouses with intricate metal details on the ridges stand in the curtilage of Butterflies. Beyond, a coach house topped with a weather vane form a local landmark. An old brick wall, the rear boundary of a Victorian house in Bower Mount Road, fronted by a wide grass verge add character to this ensemble.



Local Landmark Somerfield Road

Somerfield Road curves northwards in front of two wide 1970s houses with lawned frontages before, flanked by tall conifers, it reaches Greenwich Close.



Somerfield Road looking South west

Returning to the London Road, the north side is a similar mix of old and new with a number of trees prominent from the road. Again the vista of the coach house is the main feature of the road. A recent chalet bungalow with slate roof and dormer windows nestles behind a hedge and wide grassed verge with low wooden posts. On the corner a large detached red brick Victorian house

stands with pale yellow render and gravel drive. The former vicarage has been converted into a mews development. It is stone faced with red brick details and a slate roof. A sympathetic side extension does not detract from the historic character of the building.

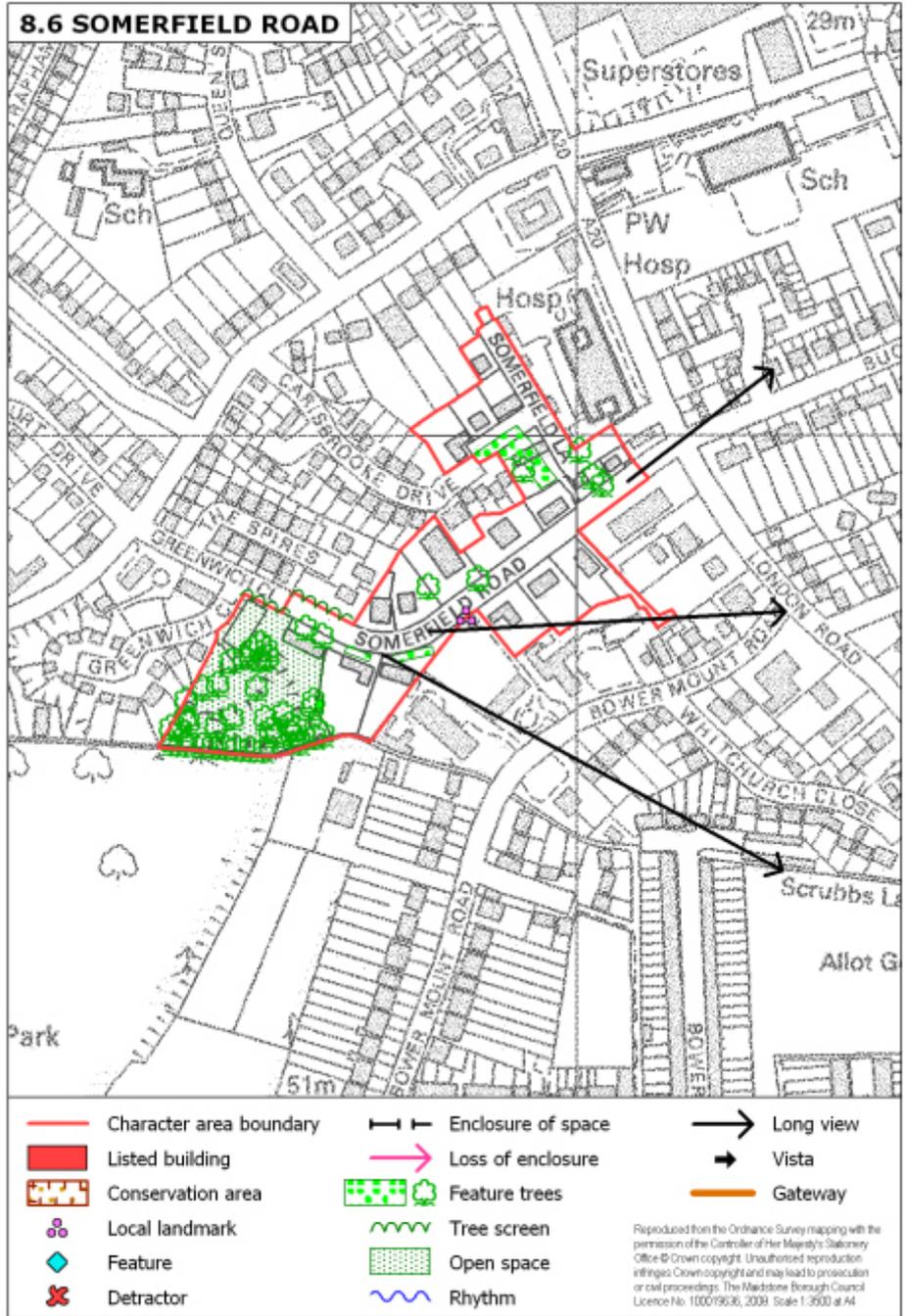
The remaining properties are set within a group of mature trees but are a mix of ages, materials and styles including a 3 storey stone faced house with weatherboard upper storey, a brown brick two storey 1980s house set much closer to the road , a cottage dating from before 1875 and a 1970s detached house.

There are views across the London Road of Maidstone and countryside beyond.

Somerfield Lane

Somerfield Lane is a narrow, enclosed gravel and tarmac unadopted track bordered by the ivy clad walls of the hospital grounds. It leads to a garage block and detached 2 storey 1970s houses. It is a quiet and unexpected backwater.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to 1980s
Type of buildings	Detached and mews
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	1 - 3 storey
Prominent Building Materials	None
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Rag stone and brick walls, hedges and open plan



Townscape Analysis Map: Somerfield Road

Positive Features

- Rural character acts as a quiet backwater off the main route
- Coach house topped with a weather vane forms a local landmark in Somerfield Road
- Verdant landscaping
- Attractive countryside views
- Sensitive conversion of historical building – St Peters Mews.

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Somerfield Road Character area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respect the quiet residential character

The relatively narrow and informal lanes; distance from the main roads; and almost exclusively residential development have resulted in a quiet residential character. This character should not be adversely affected by new development.

b) Respect the informal rural character of Somerfield Road

The eastern part of Somerfield Road is unique in retaining a rural character in stark contrast to the busy, congested London Road. The character is created through the informal layout of the road, with no pavements for lengths of the road, low key buildings set well back, often behind trees, and retained historic buildings such as glass houses and a coach house topped with a weather vane next to an old brick wall which forms the rear boundary of a Victorian house in Bower Mount Road.

Development should not erode these unique features through the loss of trees, or the generation of substantial additional traffic that would cause the erosion of the boundary features. New development should comprise unobtrusive buildings set well back from the road.

c) Protect local landmarks

The Character Area contains the local landmark of the coach house topped with a weather vane in Somerfield Road which helps give a reference point and the building should be protected.

d) Protect Landscape Features

The character area contains a number of mature trees, many of which are clustered to the south of the area. These trees partially screen development and create a verdant impression at this part of the town.

The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

e) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside principally to the east from the Somerfield Road Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

f) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Mix of styles and materials of new developments derive little from the historical character.

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Somerfield Road Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

The mix of styles and materials contain few historic place references in terms of design features or materials. Whilst most of the development in the character area is likely to remain largely unchanged over time, there may be opportunities for new development. Development should respond sensitively to the scale of the surrounding development as well as the positive features. In addition, enhancement could be achieved in any redevelopment by selecting from a limited palette of locally prominent materials such as yellow stock bricks, red or light painted bricks or red brick or ragstone for the boundary walls.

b) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Somerfield North character Area this would mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone boundary walls.

8.7 Kingsdown Close Character Area

This character area comprises Kingsdown Close, Cobham Close and Goudhurst Close.

This development occupies the site of a 19th century villa. The three closes are accessed via a single entrance from the London Road. The entrance is enclosed by a panelled fence and hedge. No properties front onto the road creating an uninspiring townscape. There are long views eastward over Maidstone and to countryside beyond.

The Closes are affected by traffic and school noise but have a secluded, residential character.

Kingsdown Close

Kingsdown Close leads off to the south side. Eight detached and semi detached 1 and 2 storey properties in a range of styles and materials cluster around a turning circle. The houses have lawned front gardens bordered by dwarf walls. Trees screen the view to the south, but a tall apartment block on the London Road is visible and detracts from the townscape.



Kingsdown Close

Cobham Close

A tall copper beech at the junction of Cobham Close and Goudhurst Close is a feature. The Close comprises detached and semi detached individually designed houses set behind lawned open frontages. The Close is enhanced by mature trees and shrubs. A screen of mature trees can be glimpsed past the houses at the northern end.



Cobham Close

Goudhurst Close

No houses are visible from the entrance of Goudhurst Close. Tall trees screen long views, allowing only occasional glimpses of countryside. Around the corner, a grassed area with trees adjoins the communal parking and garages. A footpath leads to three bungalows.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	1930s to present day
Type of buildings	Detached and semi-detached
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	1 – 2 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red, yellow and brown brick, render, tiled roofs, weatherboard, hung tiles.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Dwarf walls or open plan.



Townscape Analysis Map: Kingsdown Close

Positive Features

- Mature landscaping and tree belts
- Views of the countryside

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Kingsdown Close Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Protect Landscape Features

The trees principally act as a landscape framework around the character area.

The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts and individual trees which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which

perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

b) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the south and east from the Kingsdown Close Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

c) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- View of apartment block from Kingsdown Close
- Standard architecture lacking detail and local references in terms of design or materials
- Traffic noise

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Kingsdown Close Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

Parts of the Kingsdown Close area comprise suburban streets of standard architecture with few historic place references in terms of form, layout, design features or material or any landmarks or buildings of individual character. These areas are likely to remain largely unchanged over time but there may be opportunities for new development. New development should respond to the scale of the surrounding development and the positive features identified. In addition, enhancement could be achieved in any redevelopment by selecting from a limited palette of locally prominent materials such as yellow stock bricks, red or light painted bricks or ragstone for the boundary walls.

b) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the amenity particularly of those situated on the main roads within the area.

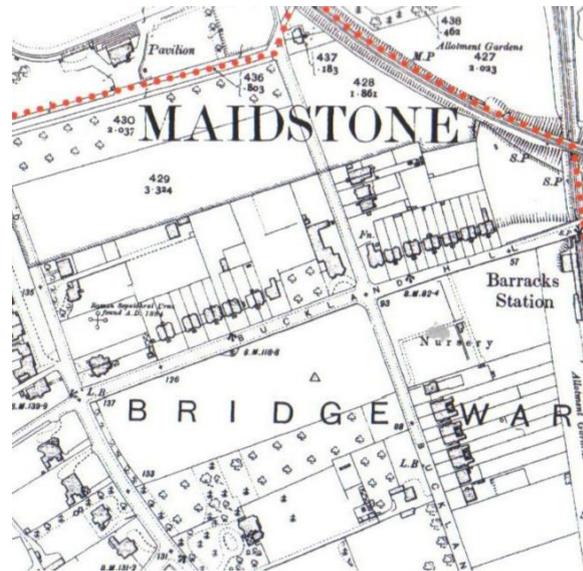
8.8 Buckland Hill Character Area

This character area comprises Buckland Hill, Buckland Road (north of St Anne Court), Doddington Court, Lesley Place and Buckland Rise.

Buckland Hill runs from the London Road eastwards to the railway line at the edge of the Character Area and is bisected by Buckland Road. Both roads are characterised by detached and semi detached properties in substantial plots.

Historical maps show that the current road layout existed in 1875 but that there were no properties in the area at that time. Great Buckland lay just outside the character area to the north east. By the end of the 19th century, the semi detached houses on the north side of Buckland Hill and east side of Buckland Road (north) had been constructed together with detached properties flanking the north side of the junction between the two roads.

These were followed by a row of semi detached and detached houses to the east of Buckland Road (south) prior to 1908. Local residents advise that the houses on the south side of Buckland Hill and west side of Buckland Road (south) were built from 1908 onwards in a progression, by the same builder, Clark and Epps, with the oldest being at the top of Buckland Hill and the newest at the southern end of Buckland Road. The area retains a strong historical character despite some more recent development.



Buckland Hill Area 1908

Buckland Hill

The entrance to Buckland Hill from the London Road is leafy with trees on both sides of the road. The entrance also features ragstone walls common along London Road. Buckland Hill is straight with wide pavements and falls away with panoramic views over the rooftops of Maidstone to the North Downs beyond.

On the southern side substantial semi detached and detached properties are set back from the road along a common building line behind landscaped front gardens enclosed by ragstone or original red brick walls with copings. The 2 and 3 storey properties vary in design but the regular building line and similar bulk and height of the houses, bays, half timbered gable ends, arched porches and other shared details are unifying features. Number 42 at the top of the road has a slate pitched roof and white painted wrought iron balcony which is an attractive feature adding variety

within the unity of the group. The properties are all red brick, some with rendered upper storeys.

Mature trees in back gardens can be glimpsed through gaps between the properties. At about the midpoint towards Buckland Road, trees at both sides of the road frame views, particularly to the open countryside to the east and ensure an impression of a landscaped street. Approaching the Buckland Road junction a tall Cupressus hedge stands behind a ragstone wall.

Additions and alterations have been made to some of the properties, but the original design remains intact on the south side. Street trees growing in large square blue planters appear slightly incongruous.



Buckland Hill south side

On the north side, modern red brick houses front onto the London Road. The entrance to Doddington Court leads off to the north but the 3 storey red brick Victorian semi-detached properties beyond draw the eye.



Buckland Hill north side

The five pairs of identical, symmetrical double-fronted properties, with steps up to the central doors, dominate the streetscene at this point providing a strong rhythm. Some however are in a poor state of repair and have inappropriate replacement doors and windows. Four properties have open tarmac frontages and no boundary walls which detracts from the character.

Beyond stands a detached yellow brick 3 storey tile hung house with red brick details and then a long narrow drive to Buckland House which is strongly enclosed by high hedges. Then a more modern semi detached house and a 3 storey red brick apartment block stands to the north of the Buckland Road junction. The apartments have a wide frontage, 2 storey bay windows and are set behind a ragstone wall. The yellow flagstone path and steps are flanked by neat lawns and shrubs. The size and style of the building blends reasonably successfully into the streetscene.



Apartment block at junction of Buckland Road

East of the Buckland Road junction, Buckland Hill narrows and descends more sharply. An overgrown hedge and trees screen the allotments on the southern side creating a verdant impression but no sense of open space for the area. There are views eastwards over an eclectic urban roofscape. A substantial 3 storey Victorian property with a basement and elaborate brick details stands on the north side. Below it, 6 pairs of double fronted Victorian 4 storey houses line the hill, each pair stepped down from their neighbours. The identical design, regular spacing and stepped roof line give a strong sense of unity and rhythm. Most of the properties are painted cream or white and are in a good state of repair, but some have open tarmac or concrete frontages, and modern metal railings which mar their historic character.



Tarmac frontages Buckland Hill east

Lesley Place

There is an abrupt change of character at Lesley Place. This uncompromisingly modern orange brick apartment block with brown brick detailing contrasts sharply with the Victorian properties to the west in terms of colour, fenestration, roof pitch and its flat elevations. An entrance to the side leads down to further apartments separated by a neat lawned area with trees, a shop with window grills and a car park. A third apartment building stands high above the road on the west side. The sunken position and stark brick walls of the car park create an uninviting townscape.

Beyond Lesley Place, the road passes over a narrow railway bridge and disappears from view into a commercial area.



Lesley Place

Buckland Rise

Built on backland in 2006, Buckland Rise is accessed via a narrow road, parallel to the railway line, which leads down steeply off Buckland Hill to two small light industrial/retail units and a car park. The untidy entrance is marred by builder's rubble and due to the overhanging trees feels dark and unsafe. The gated development with peach-coloured apartment block and car park occupies a sloping site on the former back garden land of properties in Buckland Road, which now overlook it. Due to the topography and high hedges of the adjoining allotment land the 3 storey block is not visible at street level from Buckland Hill or Buckland Road. The development forms an enclave completely unrelated in character to, and visually separated from, surrounding streets.



Buckland Rise

Doddington Court

The entrance is marred by the unenclosed frontage of 1 Buckland Hill on the right hand side. On the left hand side 3 storey red brick 1970s town houses with white pvc windows, corrugated tiled roofs and steps up to the front doors stand behind neat gardens. A detached 2 storey house with wooden porch, brown windows and white weatherboard stands where the entrance curves and dips. A group of trees (poorly maintained) come into view.

The red brick houses with hung tiles or weatherboard and open front gardens are arranged around paved parking and grassed areas planted with trees. There are no views. The development is private and quiet apart from background school noise. Tall green trees can be glimpsed between houses at the northern corners of the square. A communal parking area is tucked away in the south east corner. On leaving, 1 and 2 Buckland Hill appear tall and imposing at the entrance.

Buckland Road

The northern section of Buckland Road is a spacious no through road leading past Brunswick House Primary School to the extensive grounds of Maidstone Grammar School. There is a strong contrast between the east side of the road which has 5 substantial detached Victorian houses and then a row of rendered 2 storey inter war houses of the same design with red tiled roofs, which give a strong rhythm to this side of the road. Some of the frontages have been hard surfaced.



Buckland Road North

On the western side, all the buildings are post 2000. Two red brick apartment blocks stand behind a rag stone wall. Their bulk and colour is sympathetic to the Victorian buildings opposite and the open landscaped parking area between, mirrors the generous plot sizes of surrounding properties. From this point the west side of the road is landscaped with the playing field hedge boundary running towards a group of trees at the end of the road which form a visual full stop. A row of bollards is a negative feature. North of the playing fields Brennan Mews stands behind an open parking area at right angles to the road. The 3 storey housing looks out across the school playground and pitches. An attractive Edwardian red

brick semi detached house stands on the southern side just before the entrance to the grammar school. The traffic barrier and health club car park opposite detract from the scene.

This road had a quiet residential character at the time of survey, but local residents report severe traffic and parking problems associated with drop off and collection times for the three schools.

The southern arm of Buckland Road also has a spacious character. The section north of St Anne Court has a more uniform historical character than the section further south which is much more mixed.

The entrance to the road from Buckland Hill is level and green with street and garden trees on the western side and the high allotment hedge to the east giving a sense of enclosure. No properties are visible at this point. A copper beech is a striking feature. The allotment hedge screens views over Maidstone except in one section where it is cut lower. Trains can be heard on the railway line below.



Buckland Road looking south from Buckland Hill

Past the allotments, a row of substantial mainly detached Edwardian properties are set back from the road behind enclosed front gardens. The bay windows and half timbered gable ends give a sense of rhythm but the historical character of some of these properties has been harmed by provision of tarmac and concrete parking areas on the frontages and an eroded concrete and brick boundary wall. The gable end has been extended on one property and appears out of scale. Tall trees in the back gardens can be glimpsed through gaps between the properties.



Buckland Road Edwardian Properties

A pair of inter-war semi detached houses and a white painted detached house are set behind a hedge, before a terrace of 1970s town houses adjacent to St Anne Court.

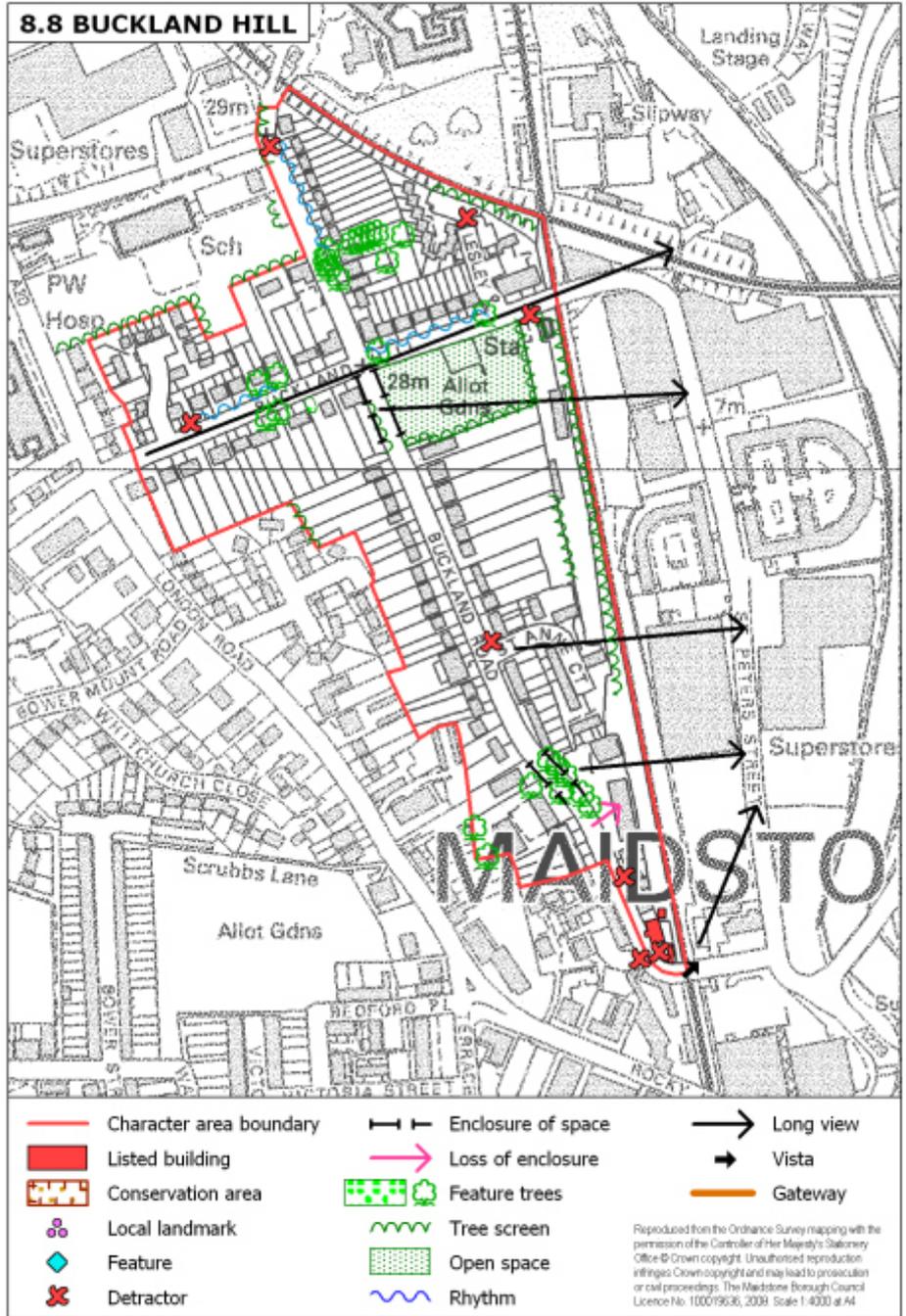
On the west side of the road, detached, and one semi detached, inter war Clarke and Epps houses are set back from the road behind landscaped front gardens. Design details and roof heights vary but the uniformity of building size, plot width and building line together with common design features including bow windows, tiled roofs, integral garages and casement windows are unifying

features, as is the attractive ragstone wall that runs along the front boundaries. A row of four similar white painted properties give a sense of rhythm.



Buckland Road West side

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached, semi-detached and apartment blocks
Main Uses	Residential and education
Building Heights	1 – 4 storey (including basements)
Prominent Building Materials	Red brick, rag stone, render, half timber gables, tiled and slate roofs.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Brick and stone walls, hedges and railings



Townscape Analysis Map: Buckland Hill

Positive Features

- Retention and predominance of Victorian and Edwardian architecture.
- Historical character.
- Spacious character created by wide straight roads, wide pavements and houses set back behind gardens.
- Elevated position and long views across Maidstone to the North Downs
- Verdant impression created by street trees, landscaped gardens, allotments and landscape framework

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Buckland Hill Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respond to the scale, height, form, alignment, materials and character of historic buildings

In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, mass, height and alignment of the historic buildings within the Character Area and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors, boundary treatment and the skyline rhythms formed, for example, by chimneys, porches, brick details and fenestration.

There are groups of Victorian and Edwardian buildings of sufficient quantity to have impact, and quality (with substantially original features) to provide a strong distinctive character within Buckland Hill. The 2, 3 and 4 storey properties which step down the hill are given a unity through the use of similar materials (generally red brick with some render on upper storeys or white painted), bay features and common building lines set back from the road.

Properties on the south side possess unifying features of a similar bulk and height, half timbered gable ends, arched porches and other shared details, and landscaped front gardens set behind red brick.

On the north side, two groups of pairs of 3 and 4 storey Victorian houses line the hill, each pair stepped down from their neighbours. Within each group, the identical design, regular spacing and stepped roof line give a strong sense of unity and rhythm.

A distinctive unity is retained. Such clusters are valued by local residents and provide a link with the past and visual clues which can be followed to reinforce the local distinctiveness of an area. The character of such groups of buildings should be protected.

Following such clues when designing new development will help retain and enhance local distinctiveness and guard against inappropriate development with no local references.

b) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the east (including across allotment land) from the Buckland Hill Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

c) Retain traditional boundary treatment of walls and mature landscape

Ragstone or red brick walls with copings are a prevalent feature along Buckland Hill. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Development should not erode this unique feature along this strategic approach to the town through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls.

d) Protect Landscape Features

The trees along the eastern edge of the character area partially screen development and set a landscape framework, whilst other trees help create a verdant impression. The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

e) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Loss of front boundaries and hard surfacing of front gardens particularly on properties which have been converted to flats.
- Poor condition of some of the properties and boundary walls.
- Entrance to Buckland Rise.
- Traffic and parking pressures associated with schools.
- Colour, fenestration and flat elevations of some blocks lack local reference

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Buckland Hill Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Buckland Hill character area this would mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone or red brick (with copings) boundary walls or hedges with railings, depending on the street.

Parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the street enclosure and a loss of defensible space around the building. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosure should be reinstated.

b) Replacing or screening features which detract

A number of apartment blocks which have used few of the visual clues from their surroundings are located at the southern end of the character area. Due to the topography and some screening, the blocks, whilst somewhat discordant within the character area, are not visible from the wider area. There is little that can be done to enhance these buildings.

c) Seeking streetscape enhancements

In Buckland Road a row of bollards is a negative feature. The traffic barrier and health club car park opposite detract from the scene.

Opportunity should be taken as part of development proposals to ameliorate the negative features of an area noted in this Supplementary Planning Document. Improvements to street

furniture such as bollards or the traffic barrier, would contribute to improving the character of the area.

d) Traffic

The issue of traffic, including school traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the amenity particularly of those situated on the main roads within the area.

8.9 Brunswick House School Character Area

The new primary school building was built on playing field land, allowing the former site at the Buckland Hill/Buckland Road junction to be developed as apartments.

The two storey school buildings, new housing, playground and playing fields are screened from surrounding roads on all sides by trees and hedges. The position of the buildings at the northern side of the site, parallel to Leafy Lane ensures that the open expanse of the playing fields is retained. Long views across the playing fields and Maidstone to open countryside can be glimpsed through the trees fronting the London Road. The position gives the school a spacious green setting, away from the busy London Road.

The new housing is set at right angles to Buckland Road behind a landscaped car park and is not visible from the Buckland Hill junction. It therefore has a low impact on the historical character of Buckland Road.

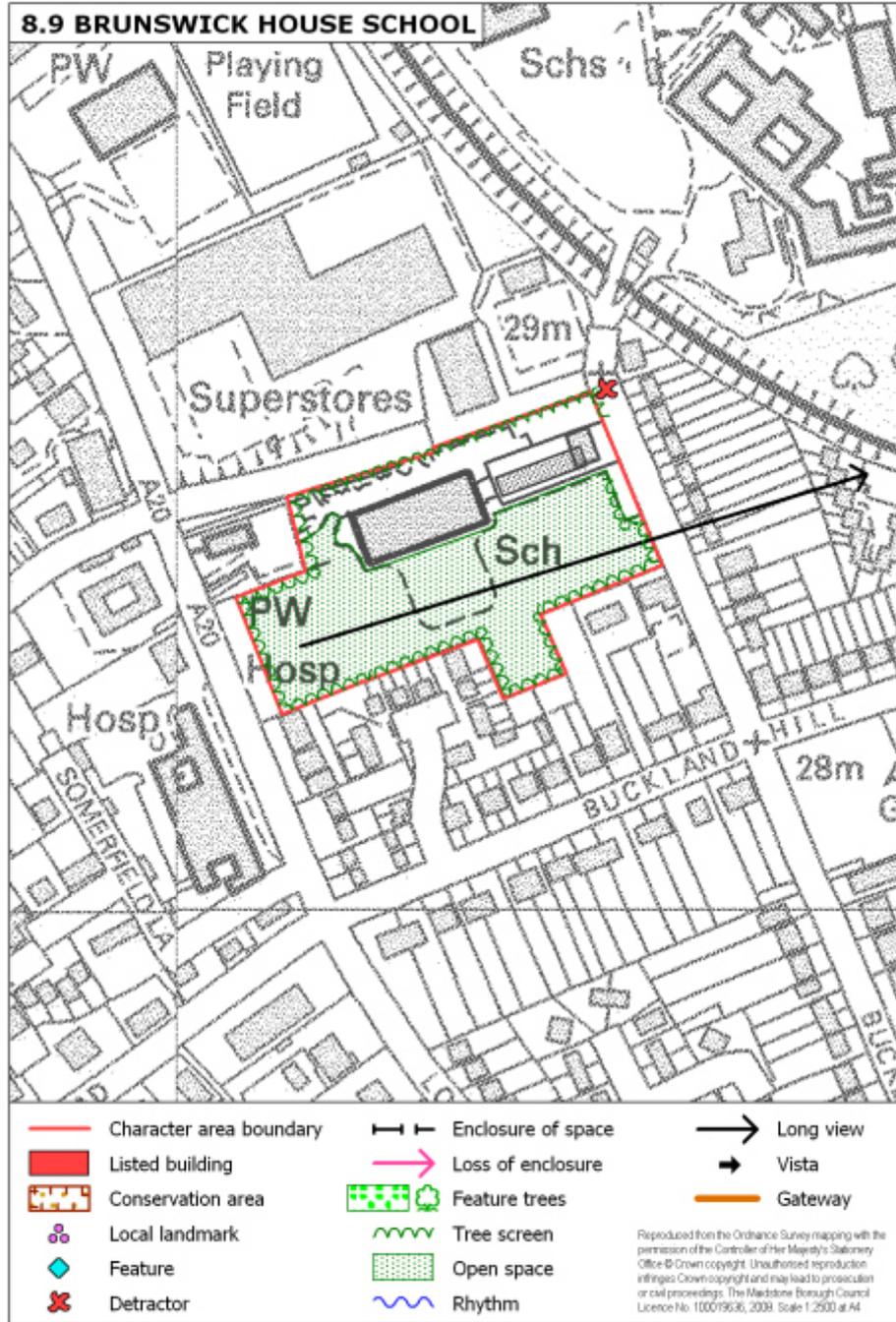


View from London Road

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	2000+
Type of buildings	Terraced and detached
Main Uses	Residential and educational
Building Heights	2 - 3 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red and buff brick, roof tiles
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Hedge, trees and wooden panel fencing.



New housing viewed from Buckland Road



Townscape Analysis Map: Brunswick House School

Positive Features

- Green, quiet setting for school
- Large area of open space retained
- Mature trees on boundaries are an important element in the landscape structure of the area.
- New development does not harm the historical character of Buckland Road.

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Brunswick House School Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the east (across the playing field) from the Brunswick House School Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

b) Protect Landscape Features

The trees surrounding the school site screen development, help enclose the space and create a verdant impression at this part of the entrance to the town.

The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

8.10 Queens Road Character Area

This character area comprises Queens Road and Greyfriars Close.

A map of 1875 shows Queens Road passing between woodland and quarries with small clusters of buildings at the current junctions with Queens Avenue and Court Drive. The red brick "Brachers" building stood at the junction with London Road. Further detached houses were built on the north side around the turn of the century but almost all the development on the south side is post war.

Queens Road

This wide, busy road rises gently from the London Road. On the north side the entrance to Queensgate a compact new development of houses and apartments. On the southern side there is a row of large detached 2 to 3 storey houses in large plots behind a ragstone wall and landscaped gardens. Two of the properties date from the 1930s, the others are more recent. Similar sized late Victorian properties line the north side of the road as far as Queens Avenue with some more recent infill. The buildings are obscured behind tall trees and shrubs creating a spacious verdant character.



Queens Road looking west towards Queens Avenue

Greyfriars Close

Greyfriars Close is a small backland development to the north of the road. There is a marked change of character on entering the Close. The seven detached individually designed tile hung and half timbered properties enclose the space creating a private, intimate character. Traffic noise from the London Road may be heard.



Greyfriars Close

Queens Road rises and curves south eastwards. On the north side substantial detached 2 storey 1950s

houses with white painted rendered upper storeys, tile roofs and bow windows give a sense of rhythm. The properties are wide and low, set back from the road behind a ragstone wall and front gardens.

The south side of the road is a complete contrast with chalet bungalows set close to the road with open frontages. The gable ends create a strong rhythm. Looking back towards the London Road there are wide views from this elevated position over town and countryside. A grassed area and backdrop of trees enhances the entrance to Landale Rise, which dips down into a former quarry.



Queens Road southern side

The road climbs quite sharply and a small group Victorian cottages face the entrance to Greenwich Close. Beyond, the entrance to Court Drive is rather stark, but from this point the south side of the road is lined by tall trees and a ragstone wall, with the buildings scarcely visible behind them. The road winds and the open aspect is lost. On the north side a 3 storey apartment block with gabled roof and brick details is an attractive feature. At Oakwood North Lodge, there is an access to the communal parking area and garages of a small group of 1970s houses. The poor quality surfacing and wire fence are detractors. Scrubbs Lane runs from here alongside the old boundary wall

and trees which border Oakwood Park, providing a footpath link to the London Road.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached, semi-detached and apartment block
Main Uses	Residential and nursing home
Building Heights	1- 3 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red brick, render, tiled roofs, weatherboard, hung tiles. Variety at south western end of the road
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Rag stone walls and trees



Townscape Analysis Map: Queens Road

Positive Features

- Spacious, verdant character
- Topography creates views and vistas
- Ragstone walls
- More compact recent development set back from frontage without harming spacious character

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Queens Road Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Protect Landscape Features

The trees along the principal route partially screen development, help enclose the space and create a verdant

impression of this part of the town. The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

b) Protect views of the open countryside

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the countryside to the north east and south east from the Queens Road Character Area. These views are important to the character of the area and also to Maidstone town which maintains visual links with the surrounding countryside. These should not be lost through future development within the character area.

c) Retain traditional boundary treatment of walls and mature landscape

Ragstone walls are a prevalent feature in the Queens Road area. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Development should not erode this unique feature along this strategic approach to the town through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls.

d) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Building line and height of chalet bungalows contrast with spacious character and scale of other properties in the road.
- Garage area at Oakwood North Lodge.
- Large tarmaced car parks in the frontages of properties
- Traffic

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Queens Road Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

There are a number of isolated properties which are out of keeping with the general character of the area. These properties are likely to remain largely unchanged over time but there may be opportunities for new development. Any redevelopment should respond sensitively to the scale and building line of the surrounding development as well as the positive features identified.

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Queens Road area this would mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone boundary walls.

b) Screening features which detract

The garage area at Oakwood North Lodge has poor quality surfacing and wire fence. Enhancement would be brought about if the development were to be partially screened.

c) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the amenity particularly of those situated on the main roads within the area.

8.11 Rycault Close Character Area

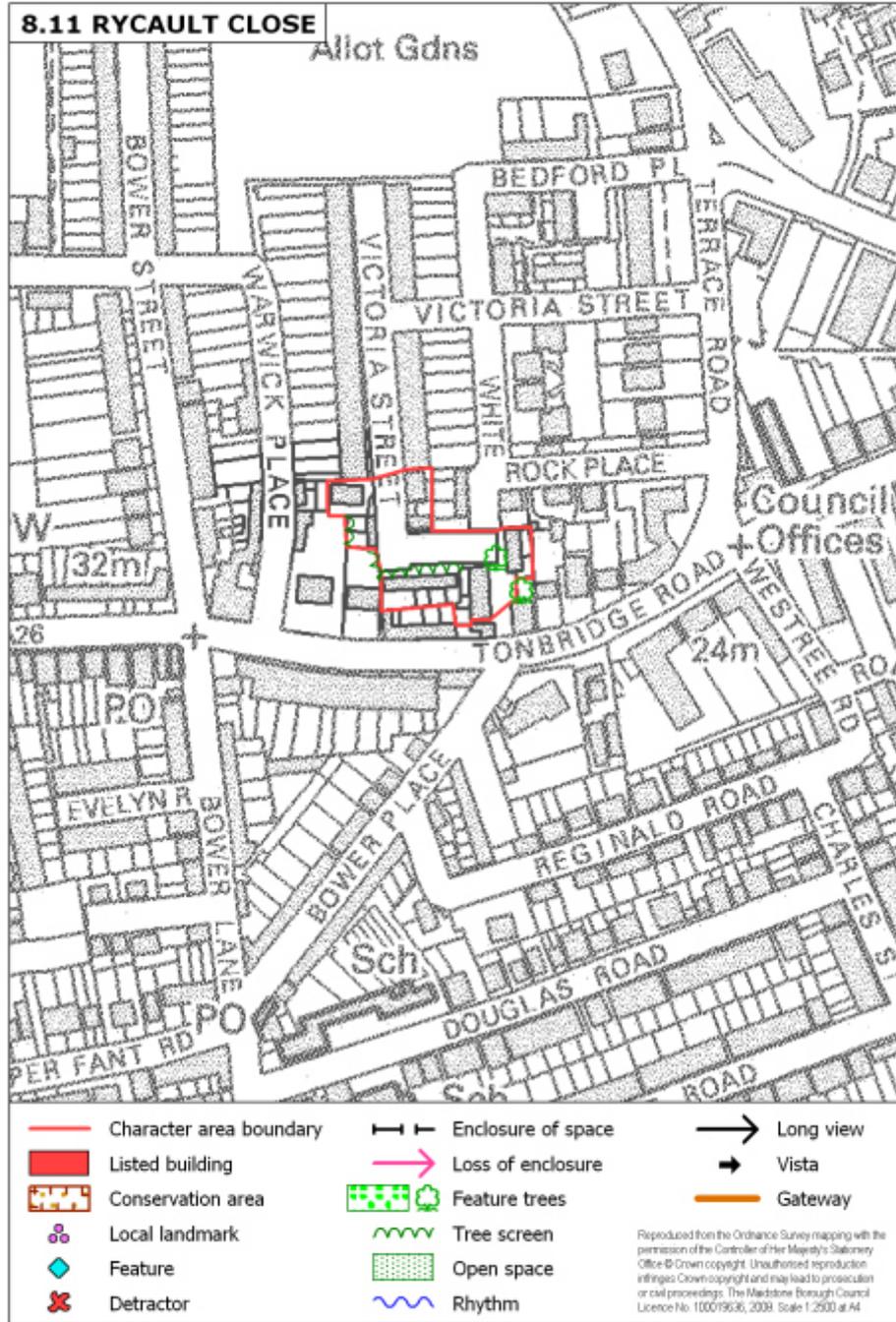


Rycault Close

Built on the site of a Victorian villa, Rycault Close connects Tonbridge Road and Victoria Street. At the entrance, a yellow brick building replicates the original Victorian gatehouse with slate roof and ornate ridge tiles which stands on the western side of the wrought iron gateway. There is a pleasant vista of White Rock Court to the rear of the development.

Beyond a small parking area, a footpath leads past red and buff brick bungalows to a further tarmac and paved parking area adjoining Victoria Street. The development has an intimate low scale enhanced by planting and a backdrop of mature trees to the east and north. Traffic noise from the Tonbridge Road is intrusive. There is an marked change of character on entering Victoria Street.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	1980s
Type of buildings	Terraced
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	1 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red and buff bricks, weatherboard, slate roofs.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Open plan



Townscape Analysis Map: Rycault Close

Positive Features

- Low scale development with intimate, private character
- Landscaping and backdrop of trees
- Attractive entrance from Tonbridge Road

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Rycault Close Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respond to the scale of development of the area

The low scale cul de sac development results in a small scale intimate character which should not be adversely affected by new development.

b) Protect Landscape Features

Groups of trees enclose the character area and should be protected.

Negative Features

- Traffic noise

a) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the residential amenity of areas affected by traffic noise.

8.12 Carisbrooke Drive Character Area

Carisbrooke Drive is a 1960s development on former orchard land.

The entrance from Queens Road is landscaped with a low brick wall, grassed bank and ornamental trees and shrubs.

The houses on the west side in the upper part of the development are 2 storey houses constructed in buff brick and hung with grey/green scalloped tiles on the upper storeys. The properties on the eastern side are chalet bungalows. Additions have been made including a large side extension and a dormer, but they blend successfully into the street scene. The houses in Amhurst Close enclose the space and the uniformity of design gives a rhythm and unity to the development, but the standard architecture has no connection with the locality.

The lower part of the road is newer. The red brick chalet bungalows on both sides of the road have decorative shutters on ground floor windows, tile hung upper storeys, attached garages, corrugated, steeply pitched red tile roofs and side dormers. The open frontages are lawned or paved and tall trees to the west and east screen the development blocking any views. The architecture is rhythmic but unexceptional. At the end of the cul de sac 4 detached houses with steep pitched roofs hung with hexagonal tiles face a row of tall trees. Shrubs and trees create a green vista at the eastern end.

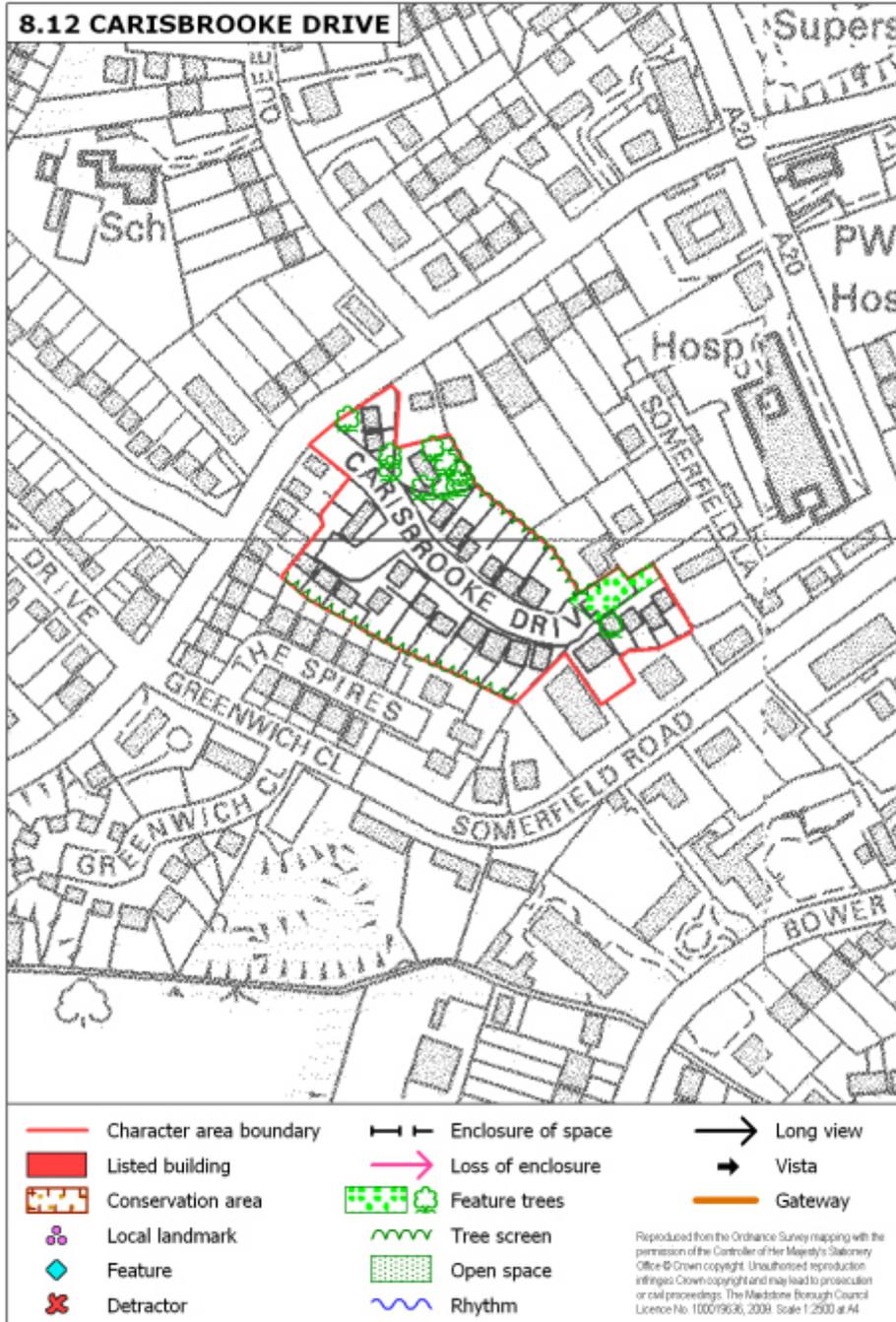
At the curve in the road, Brooke House is a recent detached pale red brick house faced with ragstone on the front projecting elevation. It has red brick

details and a slate roof and stands behind the Victorian yellow brick boundary wall of St Peter’s Vicarage.



Carisbrooke Drive looking towards Brooke House

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	1960s to present day
Type of buildings	Detached
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	1 – 2 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red and buff brick, red and grey/green hung tiles, roof tiles, painted render. Stone facing on Brooke House.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Dwarf walls, open plan and yellow stock bricks.



Townscape Analysis Map: Carrisbroke Drive

Positive Features

- Green landscape setting
- Quiet residential character
- Historical wall

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Carisbrooke Drive Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Protect Landscape Features

The trees surrounding the character area partially screen development and help enclose the space. The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts and individual trees which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform

an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

b) Respect the quiet residential character

The cul de sac residential development away from the main roads has resulted in a quiet residential character. This character should not be adversely affected by new development.

c) Retain historic boundary wall

The Victorian yellow brick boundary wall of St Peter's Vicarage is an important historic feature in the area which should be retained.

d) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Standard architecture with few references to place

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Carisbrooke Drive Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

Parts of the Carisbrooke Drive area comprise suburban streets of standard architecture with few historic place references in terms of form, layout, design features or material or any landmarks or buildings of individual

character. These areas are likely to remain largely unchanged over time but there may be opportunities for new development. New development should respond to the scale of the surrounding development and the positive features identified.

8.13 Greenwich Close Character Area

This character area comprises Greenwich Close and The Spires.

These developments are built on the intriguingly named Iguanodon Quarry, so named because it is where the Maidstone Iguanodon skeleton was found in 1834 and recovered by Dr Gideon Mantell. The skeleton is now kept in the Natural History Museum.

Access is from Queens Road as a barrier now separates Greenwich Close from Somerfield Road.

The entrance from Queens Road is very green and no properties are visible. A fence, hedge and trees run down the west side and a wooden fence on the east. The entrance to The Spires is enclosed by two wooden fences.

The Spires

The 1960s 2 storey houses behind low yellow stone or brick walls are of a uniform style with projecting front elevations with steep pitch gable ends. Some are tile hung and others weather boarded. Each property has a car port and flat roofed garage. Some additions have been permitted but do not detract from the rhythm and unity of the development. At the far end 3 detached houses are of a different style but similar era. One infill property is of a boldly different design with white painted elevations, grey brick details and blue windows. Its modernity contrasts with the classic 1960s design of the other houses, but it creates a point of interest in an otherwise uniform townscape. There are no long views but a back drop of trees to the west is an attractive feature.



The Spires

The roofs of The Spires also produce a rhythm when viewed from the rear from Greenwich Close.



The Spires seen from Greenwich Close

Greenwich Close

One property fronts onto the first section of Greenwich Close. It has bold design with a very wide low front elevation and gently pitched roof which sweeps down over the side garage. It is white with grey details and the whole effect is eye-catching.

Beyond The Foxes, there is an attractive near view of the entrance to Somerfield Road. There is a marked change of character at the barrier. Somerfield Road has a very quiet rural green character which contrasts with the more suburban character of Greenwich Close.



The Foxes, Greenwich Close

The entrance to the other section of Greenwich Close slopes down to the west. It curves creating an intriguing vista. Tall trees and high, rather bland, wooden fences create a sense of enclosure. On the western side there is a group of 2 storey detached houses which reflect the design of The Foxes, albeit on a smaller scale. The mainly white houses have shallow pitched roofs, wide horizontal windows, inbuilt garages and paved or tarmac hard standings.

The houses in the rest of the close are of a different design being square, red brick detached houses with hung tiles, more steeply pitched roofs and open grassed frontages. The juxtaposition of styles creates a curious effect.



Juxtaposition of styles in Greenwich Close

The space is low, tucked below Queens Road and Scrubbs Lane and surrounded by tall trees. It has a private, enclosed character although traffic noise can be heard in the background.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	1960s to present day
Type of buildings	Detached and semi-detached
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	2 storey
Prominent Building Materials	Red and some yellow brick, white render, tiled and slate roofs, hung tiles.
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Open plan and dwarf walls. Wooden panel fences to rear.



Townscape Analysis Map: Greenwich Close

Positive Features

- Enclosed inward looking developments create privacy and a sense of neighbourhood.
- No through traffic
- Green backdrop
- Individually designed houses

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Greenwich Close Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Respect the residential amenity of the area

The cul de sac development results in a private neighbourhood the character of which should not be adversely affected by new development.

b) Protect Landscape Features

The trees surrounding the character area partially screen development and form a backdrop to the character area. The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts and individual trees which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

c) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council’s Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Mainly standard architecture with few references to place with curious juxtaposition of styles in Greenwich Close
- Long stretches of wooden panel fencing
- Traffic noise

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Greenwich Close Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

The Greenwich Close area comprises streets of suburban character of standard architecture. These areas are likely to remain largely unchanged over time but there may be opportunities for new development. New development

should respond sensitively to the scale of the surrounding development and the positive features identified.

b) Replacing or screening close boarded fencing

The entrances to some roads are formed by long, high, blank walls or fences which give a monotonous appearance and mean that this part of the street is not overlooked. Where the opportunity arises, new boundaries should create some variety of appearance, possibly using patterned brick walls or walls topped by railings and planting.

Wherever possible, windows and door openings to dwellings should be situated in the side elevation so that they may overlook the street and increase the feeling of safety.

c) Traffic

The issue of traffic, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the residential amenity of areas affected by traffic noise.

8.14 Queens Avenue Character Area

This character area comprises Queens Avenue, Mountsfield Close, Clement Court and the western side of London Road from Kingsgate northwards.

Queens Avenue

Queens Avenue was constructed between 1875 and 1896. By the turn of the century four detached houses had been built together with Hill Place (now Shernold School) and Highfield House which fronted onto London Road. A few properties date from the interwar period, but the majority of other buildings date from the post war period.

Entering from Queens Road, the avenue is level with pavements and verges lined with tall limes. High walls on both sides give a sense of enclosure. On the east side red brick 1960s houses with green hung tiles are set back from the road. They have a rhythmic appearance but the open frontages contrast with the enclosing walls of the rest of the avenue.

On the western side a row of 4 detached 2 storey post-war Clarke and Epps houses stand behind a ragstone wall. The entrance to Shernold School creates an attractive vista of a 4 storey tile hung red brick Victorian building. A screen of trees forms a green backdrop.



Ragstone Wall Queens Avenue

On the eastern side of the avenue, there is a mix of housing styles and ages but all are substantial detached or semi detached properties in large plots. The road curves eastwards, slopes gently down and appears to narrow with tall trees on either side. Traffic noise increases on the approach to London Road. The curving road creates continuously developing views and the trees and verge unify the individually designed properties creating a harmonious townscape.

On the west and north sides of the avenue there are glimpses down Elvington Close and Vicary Way where mature trees enclose the view.

The avenue was quiet at time of survey, but residents report severe traffic and parking problems associated with school drop off and collection times and that Queens Avenue is used as a short cut at busy times to avoid the traffic lights on the London Road.

Mountsfield Close

The entrance is enclosed by the red brick side boundary wall of Woolly House and a ragstone wall and grass on the eastern side. This wall encloses the

entire eastern side of the Close. The eight detached 2 storey red brick 1970s houses with low pitch roofs, wide horizontal windows, prominent garages and open frontages enclose the space creating a small scale, private development. The curved window design is a striking feature.



Mountsfield Close



Clement Court

Clement Court is built on the site of Highfield House. The curved entrance is enclosed on the western side by a large half timbered property and wooden fence. Yellow/buff brick semi detached 2 storey houses stand on the eastern side behind open grassed frontages. The road curves and rises. The main development is centred around a parking area with grassed

areas planted with tall conifers. The terraced houses face over the parking area, enclosing the space. The uniformity of style gives rhythm but the style and materials are not characteristic of the area. A pink 3 storey apartment block contrasts with the other buildings and a poorly maintained garage block is a detractor. Trees along the London Road and to the south form a green backdrop. A footpath connects with the London Road.



Clement Court dominated by a large car park

London Road (north)

This stretch of London Road is enclosed by a ragstone wall and tall trees on the western side screening the buildings. To the east the land drops away.

Contextual Features	
Age of Buildings	Victorian to present day
Type of buildings	Detached, semi detached and terraced
Main Uses	Residential
Building Heights	1 - 3 storey
Prominent Building Materials	None
Predominant Boundary Treatments	Ragstone and brick walls and open plan



Townscape Analysis Map: Queens Avenue

Positive Features

- Enclosure of Queens Avenue by walls and mature trees
- Ragstone walls
- Landscape structure of mature trees
- Curving avenue gives continually developing vistas

Many of the distinctive local environments grew naturally in response to local circumstances. The positive features contribute to its special character and sense of place. Where such distinctiveness is ignored, new development may reflect only the corporate identities of national and international companies, the standard practices and products of the building industry, or the latest fashions among design professionals. Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast, is likely to create a place that is valued and well related to local character.

The SPD has set out a number of positive features for each Character Area which relate to the historic evolution of the area, its architectural or landscape heritage, townscape features such as local views and features which bring a unity and distinctiveness to an area.

When assessing development proposals within the Queens Avenue Character Area, the Borough Council will expect development to:

a) Retain traditional boundary treatment of walls and mature landscape

Ragstone walls are a prevalent feature of the character area. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and act as a strong link to the history of the area and the locally derived material. Development should not erode this unique feature along this strategic approach to the town through the loss, or reduction, of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment such as close boarded fences or brick walls.

b) Protect Landscape Features

Trees surrounding and within the area form a backdrop to buildings, partially screen and unify development and help enclose the space. The appraisal identifies a number of tree belts, individual trees and open spaces which are visible from the public domain (shown on the Townscape Analysis Map) which perform an important function within the Character Area and which should be protected.

c) In relation to extensions to buildings, comply with the Borough Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document

Negative Features

- Standard architecture of Clement Court
- Garage block and large car park in Clement Court
- Loss of enclosure at southern end of Queens Avenue
- Traffic noise close to London Road
- Parking and congestion problems at peak times

The SPD has set out a number of negative features for each Character Area which detract from the character of the area.

When assessing development proposals within the Queens Avenue Character Area, the Borough Council will seek improvements to the character of the area by:

a) Focusing on areas of opportunity

Claremont Court comprises a suburban character of standard architecture. The area is likely to remain largely unchanged over time but there may be opportunities for new development. New development should respond sensitively to the scale of the surrounding development and the positive features identified. In addition, enhancement could be achieved in any redevelopment by selecting from a limited palette of locally prominent materials such as yellow stock bricks, red or light painted bricks or ragstone for the boundary wall along the principal streets.

There is a garage court in the area and, subject to the impact on car parking provision, its redevelopment would represent a visual improvement in the area.

b) Reinstating or reinforcing positive features

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of the area. In the Queens Road Character Area this would mean reinforcing the landscape character with substantial specimen trees and ragstone boundary walls. In particular, there is a loss of enclosure along parts of Queens Avenue which could be rectified by adding stronger boundaries to the properties.

c) Traffic

The issue of traffic and peak time parking, whilst affecting the character of the area, is beyond the scope of this SPD. Wider proposals will be brought forward by the relevant authorities which should aim at improving the residential amenity within the area.

Appendix 1 ByDesign - Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR 2000)

The guide is intended as a companion to Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) [and subsequent Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)] and aims to encourage better design and to stimulate thinking about urban design.

The guide states that understanding the local context should be the prelude to drawing up the planning 'toolkit'.

A range of techniques is available, but the guide states that carrying out an appraisal is more important than the specific technique used and a simple assessment is better than none. The guide provides pointers to understanding an area in terms of its urban design.

The guide sets out a series of checklists to act as a guide to the assessment of an area. They are not meant to be followed slavishly. Understanding the local context does not require every item on the checklists to be examined on every occasion and in every place or in the same depth. The checklists provide pointers to understanding an area in terms of its urban design and the following elements have been particularly relevant to the London Road area of Maidstone town:

Character

A place with its own identity

Appraisals can include assessments of:

- the origins and development of the topography of the area, including surviving elements of historic street patterns, plot subdivisions,

boundary treatments and the relationships between buildings and spaces;

- the architecture and historic quality, character and coherence of buildings, both listed and unlisted, and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area;
- the character and hierarchy of spaces and their townscape quality;
- prevalent and historic building materials;
- the contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces, trees, hedges and other cultivated elements;
- the area's prevailing (or former) uses, plan forms and building types;
- the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside, including significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas;
- features which have been lost, or which intrude on or detract from the character of the area.

Continuity of building frontages and enclosure of public spaces

A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished

Techniques include identifying and mapping:

- gap sites and abnormal setbacks which interrupt the common building line of the street;
- instances where the backs of buildings are exposed to public view and access (as in the case of back gardens on to roads, alleys and public spaces);
- active and dead frontages at ground floor level: positive factors such as entrances, shopfronts and windows; and negative factors such as long blank facades and high

- boundary walls, and service entrances and yards;
- active and dead frontages at upper floors: positive factors such as windows of habitable rooms overlooking public space; and negative factors such as blank gable walls and unused space over shops;
- places where buildings meet the public realm: boundary treatments such as gates, railings, fences and boundary walls; front gardens and in-curtilage parking; and servicing;
- spatial enclosure: the relationship between the heights of buildings and the spaces they define;
- planting (such as trees and hedges), natural features, land form, and retaining walls which define and enclose blocks and spaces.

Quality of the public realm

A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas

Public realm audits can include assessments of:

- hard landscaping (paving materials, kerbs, walls, steps and ramps);
- planting (trees, planters, grassed areas, flowers and borders);
- street furniture (seats, bins, bollards and railings);
- lighting (pavement, pedestrian, highway, security, building and feature);
- shopfronts (thresholds, glazing, stall risers, signs, banners and shutters).
- advertisements (hoardings, kiosks and banners);

- traffic and highways installations (including highway markings, traffic signals and control boxes);
- public space use and management (informal use as well as formal, events, markets, graffiti removal, litter collection and street cleansing).

Legibility

A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand

Appraisals of:

- gateways and points of transition (at main entry points, between different areas and at transitions between different uses);
- nodes (important junctions and points of interaction);
- landmarks and features (important buildings, corners);
- views and vistas (seen from within the area and from the outside);
- edges, seams and barriers (including the boundaries between different zones and areas, and streets which integrate or sever).