



Braintree District Council

Sible Hedingham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan March 2011



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SIBLE HEDINGHAM CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

- 1.1** The historic environment cannot be replaced and is a resource that is both fragile and finite.
- 1.2** Braintree District has a rich and vibrant built heritage, featuring many fine listed buildings displaying a variety of styles representative of the architectural and historic designs of many centuries. There are also other buildings of quality that are not listed but are worthy of recognition. In addition to the District's market towns there are a variety of villages displaying a rich character of architectural form in rural settings where generally the clear distinction between built form and open countryside has been maintained. The District also has an important industrial heritage where a number of famous companies first established their presence in the area during the 19th Century. These companies and their products together with associated housing built for their workforce has left an indelible and distinctive architectural mark.
- 1.3** Braintree District is situated within an economically buoyant region where an attractive environment, employment opportunities and good transport links make it a popular destination to live and work. It is inevitable, therefore, that the built environment will change in response to the economy and population growth, as a result of inward-migration. It is therefore important to continue appraising the qualities of the District's conservation areas and to develop practical ways of protecting and enhancing them.
- 1.4** Sible Hedingham Conservation area exists in two parts as shown in figure 1 and 1a. It was originally designated in 1969 by Essex County Council. Conservation areas are built environments which are considered worthy of protection as a result of a combination of factors such as the quality of design and setting of the buildings or their historic significance. In addition to the individual qualities of the buildings themselves, there are other factors such as the relationships of the buildings with each other, the quality of the spaces between them and the vistas and views that unite or disrupt them. The relationship with adjoining areas, as well as the quality of trees, boundary treatments, advertisements, road signage, street furniture and hard surfaces, are also important features, which can add or detract from the conservation area.
- 1.5** This appraisal recognises the importance of these factors and will consider them carefully. The resulting document will be regarded by Braintree District Council as a 'material consideration' when exercising its statutory development control function. The document

will also put forward simple and practical management proposals capable of being implemented at local level as and when resources permit.

1.6 The Conservation Appraisal will:

- Identify the special character of the area;
- Identify elements that should be retained or enhanced;
- Identify detracting elements;
- Review the existing boundary;
- Put forward practical enhancement proposals;

1.7 This appraisal has been prepared in partnership with the local community and has been subject to public consultation. There are a wide range of active voluntary groups organising annual and other spontaneous events.

1.8 The Council would like to record its thanks to the Parish Council and to the members of the local community who provided useful information to officers when the survey was being undertaken. Particular thanks are due to Mr Adrian Corder Birch, the Parish Clerk, who provided the historic photographs and whose local and historical knowledge was of great assistance. His book 'A Pictorial History of Sible Hedingham', contains a wealth of additional historical information.

1.9 This document is written in three parts:

- Part A - Appraisal;
- Part B - Management Proposals,
- Part C - Legal and Policy Framework.

PART A

APPRAISAL OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

General Character and Setting of Sible Hedingham

2.1 Sible Hedingham consists of three main parts:-

Swan Street, Potter Street and Queen Street form a long continuous busy main road (A1017). This in part forms one of the two separate conservation areas consisting of Queen Street, Potter Street, part of Swan Street and Alderford Street. The second separate conservation area consists of Rectory Road and Church Street. These two conservation areas are separated by the commercial heart of the village.

2.2 Sible Hedingham, along with many rural communities, has lost some of its original supporting services, including the recent closure of the Swan Public House. There were at one time twelve PH's in the parish and now there are only three, two of which are in Church Street (the White Lion and the White Horse). A number of shops once existed in the historic core whose location can easily be determined by those properties with large windows to the ground floor. Such windows are part of the architectural and historic content and it is important they remain.



Picture 1 Early photo, Swan Street (note shop windows)

2.3 Despite such losses the community is still vibrant with an active Parish Council, a wide range of shops, including a chemist, a Post Office and two filling stations, a primary school, a large secondary school, significant open space and recreational facilities, football clubs, a youth

council, an active church and chapels and a wide range of clubs and organisations, including an active heritage society.

- 2.4** In terms of its wider setting, Sible Hedingham lies within the Colne river valley area of the Landscape Character Assessment produced and adopted in 2006 as part of the Council's Local Development Framework evidence base information. The village is surrounded by land designated as being a Special Landscape Area (SLA) where policy RLP79, set out in Part C seeks to protect such areas from inappropriate development. Some of the waterside meadows are particularly attractive as are the number of sunken protected lanes approaching the village. Within the village and linking with the countryside beyond, there is an extensive network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways. The Parish Council have provided a riverside walk and propose extending it in the future and are actively working towards this end.
- 2.5** The character of Rectory Road and Church Street conservation area is defined and dominated by St Peter's church on its elevated position overlooking a charming juxtaposition of buildings and walls of fine quality.
- 2.6** In terms of the general character and plan form of the main village, Sible Hedingham has been the recipient of considerable expansion in the 20th century and parts of Swan Street and the commercial centre are of limited architectural or historic interest where some commercial elements detract from the adjoining conservation area to the south.
- 2.7** There are over 120 listed buildings in the Parish as a whole. All centuries between 14th and 20th are represented. The 17th century dominates with about 43% of this stock followed by the 18th century (22%); the 16th century (14%) and the 19th century (10%). All are grade II except Alderford Mill, St Peter's Church, Gray's Hall and the Old Rectory, which are Grade II*.
- 2.8** As set out above, the church and its extensive churchyard on its elevated open position represent a particularly fine setting which together with its groupings of quality tombstones and mature trees dominates the local scene. Nearby the Old Rectory and its boundary walls are particularly fine. The grouping of buildings at the junction of Swan Street and Alderford Street and the manner in which they create the sense of an historic centre make a significant contribution to this area.
- 2.9** Numerous trees add to the quality of both conservation areas. Some have previously been made subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

- 2.10** In summary the two designated conservation areas are of the highest quality with a rich diversity of quality buildings, trees and open spaces and interesting and diverse historical associations.
- 2.11** On a general point, Sible Hedingham with its rich heritage as described above together with other surrounding quality environmental assets including a varied valley landscape and riverside meadows, sunken lanes and an extensive network of footpaths, provides a rich basis for the Parish Council to develop further initiatives to attract more visitors to the village.

Origins and Historical Development

- 2.12** In 1929 some Bronze Age finds were discovered near Tower House providing evidence of settlement in the general areas, since early times.
- 2.13** There is evidence of some Roman settlement in the area as small amounts of Roman brick have been incorporated into the construction of the church and according to records available via 'Heritage Gateway', 2 no. Roman course ware sherds were found at 'Woolcombers' in 1984.
- 2.14** Evidence of Medieval occupation is more apparent because the remains of medieval pottery kilns have been found in the appropriately named Potter Street and elsewhere. Haingheham(1086), Hegham (1243), Hythingham (1349), Hynnyingham (1486) are a selection of the many different spellings identified in 'The place names of Essex' by Reaney. Morant's History of Essex, 1763-1768 notes *'from what woman named Sybil this parish had its distinguishing appellation is unknown.' Tis otherwise written Sibille, Sybile, Sihill, Sively, Sevil'*. Morant's History of Essex also refers to Sible Hedingham's most illustrious son Sir John Hawkwood born in the village during the reign of king Edward II, describing him as being *'of honest parents, his father... by occupation being a tanner.'* Morant continues *'His general, Edward, the Black Prince, highly esteemed him for his valour and conduct, of which he gave extraordinary proofs at the famous battle of Poitiers'...* *'His fortune and forces being increased, and hating an inactive life, he fought new adventures'...* *'At length this valiant knight laden with honor and riches dyed in a very advanced age at Florence in 1394. The Senate, out of gratitude...deposited his body in the cathedral of Santa Maria Florida, under a sumptuous monument.... A great part of his wealth being conveyed to England, his friends and executors erected for him an honorary cenotaph in the Church of this parish'*. Unfortunately only the canopy of this memorial remains.
- 2.15** A few buildings, including the church, date from the 14th century. The 15th century showed further growth in the village which accelerated in the 16th century, peaking in the 17th century as 43% of the existing listed building stock dates from this time. Significant growth continued

in the 18th century because 22% of existing historic buildings date from this period. During these times agriculture dominated and the hop was one important crop. The cloth trade existed as did malting and tanning. The earliest brick works were in production by the 18th century.



Picture 2 Early view of church

- 2.16** White's Directory of Essex 1848 describes Sible Hedingham thus: it *'is an extensive and pleasant village on the western side of the vale of the Colne... It has a fair for toys and pleasure on Easter Tuesday, and in its two principal streets are many neat houses, and several good inns and well-stocked shops. Its parish contains 2322 inhabitants...Some of the best Essex hops are grown here in small plantations in different parts of the parish'*.
- 2.17** In addition to the many farmers, White's Directory of Essex of 1863 lists the following selection of resident occupations; brick and tile maker, station master, saddler, nursery and seedsman, corn miller and maltster, several higglers (itinerant hucksters who bargain in commodities), coal agent, fruiterer, gent, miller, dealer, cooper, pig dealer, railway contractor, plumber, gas manager, blacksmith, iron founder, coach builder and toy maker. The 1896 Ordnance Survey map shows two Maltings near present day Wash Farm, Tower Windmill off Lamb Lane, a smithy opposite Swan Street/Alderford Street junction, a nursery west of Swan Street , several sand and gravel pits and four brickworks. Clearly the village at this time was diverse and self sufficient.
- 2.18** The 1922 Ordnance Survey map is very instructive in illustrating the structure of the village in the early 20th century. For example Church Street was completely separated from the rest of the village by open

land and the existing commercial centre had not been built up. Conversely Alderford Street, Potter Street and Queen Street remain almost the same as today. The village was dominated by the Colne Valley and Halstead railway running along the valley bottom. The Sible and Castle Hedingham station goods yard and cattle pen was at the northern end of the village and close by was the substantial Rippers joinery works, the Gas works and coal yards. The railway also provided access and transport facilities to the Maiden Ley brickworks south of the station and also to the Sible Hedingham Red Brick Works in the valley bottom south of Alderford Street. There were also the Tortoise Brick Works in Wethersfield Road and Southey Green Brick Tile and Pottery Works at Southey Green. Bricks from the area were used in construction elsewhere in the country including in a number of churches in north London. Not surprisingly a number of local properties are built in local brick including some non listed buildings identified as making an important architectural or historical contribution. It is important that such local materials are preserved. The brick making industry was significant and believed to have employed up to 500 people and was producing up to eight million bricks a year at its peak in about 1900.

2.19 The railway closed to passengers in 1961 and to freight in 1964. The last brickworks closed in 1954. As the brick industry declined so the Ripper Joinery Works expanded. The impact of this latter company was considerable in the 20th century, because from 1924, they built large numbers of houses for their employees. The site of the former Ripper works (now Premdor) is currently unoccupied. The 2001 census population of 3665 has increased by nearly 60% since the mid 19th century and yet during the same period the local employment bases have been decimated by economic forces. Despite these factors much of the historic and architectural qualities of the village remain intact. As set out at the beginning of this document, the historic environment cannot be replaced and is a resource that is both fragile and finite. Against this background of significant change, it is particularly important to cherish and protect the existing heritage assets and historic identity of Sible Hedingham.

2.20 Figure 1 and 1a illustrate the present Conservation Area boundary superimposed on the 1898 Ordnance Survey base.

Character Analysis

2.21 There are three distinct areas to the conservation area . Area 1 - Swan Street, Potter Street and Queen Street; Area 2 - Alderford Street and Area 3 - Rectory Road and Church Street.

2.22 There is one designated Scheduled Ancient Monument in the village, located south of Rectory Road and consists of a dry rectangular homestead moat dated between 1066 and 1539AD.

- 2.23** Archaeological sites. There are 8 such sites in the conservation area and a number elsewhere in the Parish.
- 2.24** Individually listed buildings have been identified, plotted and very briefly described, such abbreviated descriptions being based on the English Heritage list. Full descriptions can be obtained on line at English Heritage's web site, Images of England (imagesofengland.org.uk). Such listed buildings are protected from unauthorised demolition, alteration or extension. Structures, including railings and walls, within the curtilages of listed buildings, if they are pre-1948, are subject to the same controls as listed buildings. There are a great number of such walls and railings in Sible Hedingham that are very important to its visual, architectural and historic heritage.
- 2.25** There are also other non-listed buildings and structures that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the conservation area and these are separately identified. The basic questions asked in identifying such buildings/structures are:
- (a) Is the non listed building/structure of sufficient architectural or historic interest whose general external appearance remains largely unaltered?
 - (b) Does it contain a sufficient level of external original features and materials?
 - (c) Has it retained its original scale without inappropriate modern extensions that destroy the visual appearance particularly in respect of the front elevation?
 - (d) Is the building visually important in the street scene?
- 2.26** Buildings within the Conservation Area which are not highlighted are considered neutral in character and neither enhance or detract from the street scene. Some are from the late 20th century reflecting principles set out in the 'Essex Design Guide'.
- 2.27** The basic criteria for identifying important trees and hedgerows are:-
- (a) They must be in good condition;
 - (b) They are visible at least in part from public view points
 - (c) They make a significant contribution to the street scene or other publicly accessible areas.
- 2.28** Open spaces or gaps of quality that contribute to the visual importance of the conservation area where development would be inappropriate and which accord with the aims of Local Plan policy RLP4 have been identified. The basic question asked in identifying such areas is:
- (a) Is the space/gap an important landscape feature contributing to the general spatial quality and visual importance of the conservation area?

Private open spaces forming an important setting for an historic asset and unkempt spaces that have the potential to be enhanced are candidates for selection subject to (a) above.

- 2.29** Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution are noted and shown diagrammatically. Of importance in this respect are the numbers of walls and railings within the curtilages of non - listed buildings. Currently some of these are unprotected, a situation that is unsatisfactory and resolved in Part B of this document, Management Proposals. Other distinctive features are noted.
- 2.30** Features that detract or are in poor repair have been identified.
- 2.31** Important views are identified. The dominance of St Peter's Church has previously been noted. Others include views of the centre of the historic core at the junction of Alderford and Swan Streets and views across the Colne Valley from public vantage points at Potter Street and Swan Street.
- 2.32** In revising the conservation area and recommending which areas are suitable for inclusion or exclusion, consideration has been given to whether or not the land or buildings in question form part of an area of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance should be conserved.

Area 1- Swan Street, Potter Street and Queen Street.

- 2.33** This part of the conservation area is characterised by a rich and varied architectural heritage, extensive tree cover and important gaps on the eastern side providing long expansive views across the Colne Valley, adding to its character and diversity that provide long expansive views across the Colne Valley. The tight grouping of listed buildings immediately south of Alderford Street is in contrast with the more loosely knit character on Potter Street and Queen Street. The important gaps of agricultural land that separate these long established historic groupings of built form, have remained largely unaltered since the beginning of the 20th century and earlier. The changing undulating levels of the main road adds to the quality and dynamics of the area whose charm and quality is only eroded by the intensity of traffic, particularly at peak times (up to 880 vehicles per hour).

East Side

- 2.34** Listed buildings (all are grade II):
 - (a) In total there are 20 individually listed buildings or groups of buildings. The 16th - 19th centuries are represented with 15%

- buildings originating from the 16th century; 35% from the 17th century; 35% from the 18th century and 15% from the 19th century. With one exception most are in a good state of repair.
- (b) Moving from south to north, no. 43 Queen Street, 17th century or earlier with date plaque to front reading 1682.
 - (c) Milestone, 18th century, diamond plan with inscriptions, partly hidden in vegetation at time of survey.
 - (d) Barn at Wash Farm, 16th century, timber framed and weather boarded, red tiled roof.
 - (e) Potter House, nos. 27-31 Potter Street, a contiguous group of 18th century date, timber framed with tiled roofs.
 - (f) 5 no. individually listed buildings or small groups, all 17th century with the exception of no.9, Tokat House, which dates from early/mid 19th century and is of red brick with slate roof.
 - (g) No. 18 Swan Street, The Bays, an impressive 18th century or earlier timber framed and plastered with plain red tiled roof.
 - (h) No 20, Hill House, early mid 19th century brick and slate roof.
 - (i) The remaining grouping south of Alderford Street includes the charming 19th century Webster's Almshouses with inscribed panel reading *'To the Glory of God and the dear memory of Maria Webster these almshouses were dedicated and declared free forever. June 2nd 1884.'* Additionally nos. 40 and 42 are 17th century or earlier with 18th century and later alterations including former shop windows. The front elevation to no. 42 is dilapidated and in need of repair and redecoration. Its appearance detracts from the street scene and proposals to deal with the current situation are set out in Part B. The remaining elements of this group are the former public house, The Bell Inn of 16th century or earlier origin and attached Alderford Grange that together with its rebuilt return wall into Alderford Street sets off the outstanding quality of this group and its varying ages, types and styles.
 - (j) North of Alderford Street are two free standing 17th century or earlier properties namely the large house called 'Davenants' and smaller property known as 'Acacia'. Both are timber framed and plastered.



Picture 3 The Almshouses

2.35 Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution:

- (a) Monroe House and no. 92 Swan Street form a pair of late 19th/early 20th century 2 storey cottages constructed of red brick with slate roof, 2 no. chimney stacks and decorative ridge to roof. There is a 4 window range to upper floor and 2 no. bay windows to ground floor with unusual decorative iron detailing above bays. This pair is currently beyond the existing conservation area that on balance is proposed to be extended so as to include it.
- (b) Nos. 88-90 Swan are a pair of high quality 19th century gault brick cottages with slate roof and central chimney stack; distinctive doors and surrounds with decorative railings to front on dwarf wall; a 5 window range to upper floor (one blocked up) and 3 no. windows to ground floor. This pair is also currently beyond the existing conservation area that is proposed to be extended so as to include them.
- (c) Nos. 56 and 56A, 19th century, formerly a Constitutional Hall and prior to that a non-conformist chapel, a single storey building of red brick construction and tiled roof laid with simple decorative pattern. Distinctive protruding entrance and arched windows with gault brick surrounds and detailing.
- (d) No. 16 Swan Street. Of 19/early 20th century origin, rendered with tiled roof. Bay windows at ground floor extend to first floor with decorative dormer detailing above. Central chimney and distinctive side chimney to south; original rainwater goods.

- (e) Former garage building, once part of the former Eley's Maltings complex. Single storey timber boarded with tin roof. In need of renovation.



Picture 4 Monroe House and no.92 and nos. 88 – 90 Swan Street, proposed for inclusion in extended Conservation Area

- 2.36** Trees and hedgerows: The mixed deciduous hedge to the frontage of the agricultural gap south of no.16 Swan Street makes a significant contribution to the quality of the conservation area in this location. Elsewhere as indicated on Figure 2 deciduous trees and hedge south of 'High Garth' together with a group of conifers to its north make a worthwhile visual contribution.
- 2.37** Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution:
- (a) Several short lengths of walls and railings within the curtilages of listed buildings are identified and these are already protected by this LB designation.
 - (b) Additionally two other short lengths are identified; one to the north of no.16 Swan Street and the other, a 2m flint wall, south of former garage at Queen Street has added importance as it has a Victorian Post Box inserted in it.
- 2.38** Open spaces and gaps:
There are three important gaps on the eastern side of Swan/Potter and Queen Streets.

- (a) The most southerly between 'High Garth' and the grouping of listed buildings to the north has a low deciduous hedge to the front through which extensive views over the nearby asparagus beds and countryside and valley beyond can be had.
- (b) The middle gap to the south of Tokat House separates two groups of listed buildings and introduces the countryside into the conservation area in this location.
- (c) The importance of the hedge fronting the third gap south of no.16 Swan Street has been noted above. The public footpath that runs along its northern side provides extensive views over the open countryside and valley beyond.

Collectively these agricultural gaps and their prominence and visual qualities and the expansive views they provide together with the functions they perform by bringing the countryside into the village and by continuing to separate established groupings of ancient buildings are important both from a visual and historical perspective.



Picture 5 Important gap; the open countryside and asparagus beds from Queen Street

2.39 Important views:

The views across the open countryside and the valley to the east, particularly via the gaps referred to in the preceding paragraph are of considerable importance being visible from the public realm and worthy of protection under Policy RLP 95 as set out in Part B of this document.

2.40 Detracting elements:

- (a) Braintree Corner is a busy road junction that is poorly defined with a collection of road signs that may be capable of some limited rationalisation.
- (b) Overhead cables on utility poles detract to a limited degree but these are often obscured by trees that disguise their impact.
- (c) Former garage site referred to above. Although identified as being a building that makes an important architectural or historic contribution it has a detracting and shabby appearance in the street scene with its general untidiness, loss of guttering and tin roof.
- (d) Dwarf wall forming boundary to street frontage at Wash Farm. The street face to this is in poor condition with many spalled bricks and is in need of repair.
- (e) No. 42 Swan Street. As set out previously, the front elevation to this property is dilapidated and is in need of repair and redecoration. Its appearance detracts from the street scene and from one of the most interesting groupings of buildings in Sible Hedingham.



Picture 6 Detail of no. 42 Swan Street

2.41 Proposed Boundary Revisions:

- (a) As described above the qualities of Braintree Corner road junction do not add to the conservation area. 'Pleasant View' is a modest mid 20th century property of no architectural or historic significance. The area is therefore proposed to be excluded from the conservation area.

- (b) Conversely, Monroe House and no.92 Swan Street and 88-90 Swan Street are properties of adequate architectural or historic merit that are proposed for inclusion.

West Side

2.42 Listed buildings: all are grade II.

- (a) In total there are 15 listed buildings or groups of buildings. The 15th - 20th centuries are represented with nearly 15% of buildings originating from the 15th century, 40% from the 16th century and 25% from the 17th century. Whilst most are in a good state of repair there are two that are not. One of the latter is of particular concern and described below.
- (b) Moving from south to north, Brickwall Farmhouse, The Old Half Moon (former PH) and Wash Farm House (Bridge House) on Queen Street are late 15th/early 16th century properties of distinction, timber framed with red tiled roofs.
- (c) On Potter Street there are 4 individually listed buildings and one 19th century pump. The White House dates from the 17th century, timber framed and plastered; Grove House is late 18th/early 19th century, timber framed with slate roof and included in the listing are the forecourt railings. Hawkwood Manor and no.2, Lamb House (The former Lamb Public House) are both 16th century or earlier, timber framed and plastered with red tiled roofs.
- (d) No 9 Swan Street dates from the 17th century being timber framed and pargetted. Wyngates and the Old Bakery both date from the 17th century, both having red tiled roofs.
- (e) The impressive former PH, the Swan Inn dates from the 15th century being timber framed with brick facing and slate roof. The building ceased use as a PH several years ago and currently appears to be vacant. Some works have recently been undertaken and others appear to be pending. The condition of the rear of the building is of concern as it has been subject to some vandalism. The building along with its neighbour no. 49, form a very prominent pair in the street scene.
- (f) A mid 20th century telephone kiosk, type K6, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott with domed roof and crowns.
- (g) No 49 dates from the 16th century with exposed timber frame and plaster infill. It is a very large building in perhaps the most prominent position in the centre of the conservation area. It is the building that is of greatest concern resulting from this appraisal because of its deteriorating condition with plaster falling off the south end elevation and deterioration to various aspects of the rear elevation. The plot in which it sits is untidy and unkempt to front back and sides and proposals to deal with the current situation are set out in Part B. Brick boundary wall to southern boundary with Swan Chase.



Picture 7 No. 49 Swan Street

- 2.43** Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution:
- (a) Lamb Cottage is a small scale 19th / early 20th century two storey cottage, tiled roof of brick construction to front with flint walls to side elevations. Range of sliding sash small paned windows.
 - (b) 'Straw Yard' is a charming 19/ early 20th century single storey brick cottage and red composite tiled roof. Original decorative features to front and dormer window to side. Unfortunately 2 no. smaller modern sash windows have replaced original shop windows but despite this, the resultant change has been well executed. An unusual building that together with an unlisted pump in wooden housing to front makes a worthwhile contribution to the street scene in this location.
 - (c) Hilton House Surgery. Late 19th/early 20th century 2 storey brick and slate building now used as surgery. Brick (advised locally manufactured) with slate roof and deep eaves overhang. 5 vertical sliding sash window range to first floor. Extension to side and rear and modern porch to front (allegedly based on original) do not detract from the frontage that makes a sufficiently positive contribution to the street scene to be included in this category.
 - (d) Eden Cottage is a 19th century painted brick with slate and tiled roof and chimney stack, vertical sliding sash windows with 19th/early 20th century 1.5 m brick wall of quality to side adjacent to footpath.
 - (e) Eden House is a two storey building rendered with tiled roof, 19th century or earlier with decorative entrance extending to

protruding window and decorative wooden feature above to first floor. Vertical sliding sash windows and original chimney stacks.



Picture 8 Straw Yard

2.44 Trees and hedgerows:

Parts of Swan Street, Potter Street and Queen Streets on the western side are characterised by extensive mature tree cover in some locations that significantly add to the quality of the street scene by providing a verdant environment with vertical emphasis that frequently links individually listed buildings to enclose the street frontage, thus providing a continuously high quality and variable environment. Of particular note in this respect are the mixed deciduous hedge and trees south of 'Straw Yard'; mixed deciduous and coniferous trees to the front of no.9 Swan Street; trees within the curtilage of 'Kimberley'; a strong and prominent group of deciduous trees north of 'Grove House' together with prominent specimens within the curtilage to the south of the same property and an important deciduous hedge and trees to the south of 'The White House'. These trees make a significant contribution to the high quality of the street scene and their retention is essential.

2.45 Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution:

- (a) Several walls and railings add to the quality of the street scene. For the most part these lie within the curtilages of listed buildings and are therefore protected. Another is the wall

adjacent to Eden Cottage and the means of achieving its future protection is set out in Part B.

- (b) The restored pump to the front of 'Straw Yard' is not protected and should be considered as a candidate for an individual listing.
- (c) Other distinctive features such as the Gilbert Scott Telephone kiosk and a 19th century pump are protected by virtue of their individual listing.

2.46 Archaeological sites. Several archaeological sites are identified. Records at www.heritagegateway.org.uk are limited but indicate previous medieval pottery finds.

2.47 Detracting elements:

- (a) Braintree Corner is a busy road junction that is poorly defined with a collection of road signs that may be capable of some limited rationalisation.
- (b) Former PH, the Swan Inn. The rear of the building is in an untidy state with several windows to the property vandalised. Paint is peeling and the surface of the plot needs attention due to some limited accumulation of rubbish and self set vegetation and weeds. A modest effort now may pay future dividends as the situation will continue to decline if left unattended.



Picture 9 Rear elevation of the Swan Inn

- (c) No. 49 Swan Street. As set out above, this property gives cause for concern and all its elevations are dilapidated and in need of repair and redecoration to varying degrees. The plot in which it is situated seriously detracts, particularly to the front elevation

that is one of the most interesting and important buildings in Sible Hedingham.



Picture 10 No. 49 Swan Street

Suggested action to rectify these detracting elements is set out in the management proposals.

2.48 Proposed Boundary Revisions:

As previously described Braintree Corner is a busy road junction whose qualities do not add to the conservation area. The area is therefore proposed to be excluded.

Area 2 - Alderford Street



Picture 11 An early photo of Alderford Street

2.49 This part of the conservation area is characterised by a delightful tightly knit mix of historic buildings on the northern side of the street, overlooking open space and a heavily treed area opposite. Further east, the grouping of historic buildings is dispersed and the vista is closed by the tall and impressive Alderford Mill building. The River Colne and open watercourse on parts of the southern side of the street add to its diverse qualities.

2.50 Listed buildings (grade II except Alderford Mill)

- (a) In total there are 10 listed buildings or groups of buildings. 20% of buildings originating from each of the 16/17 and 19th centuries whilst about 40% originate from the 18th century. All are in a good state of repair.
- (b) The Yellow House, 17th century or earlier, timber framed and plastered with red tiled roof.
- (c) Woolcombers, 16th century or earlier with exposed timber frame and red tiled roof
- (d) Alderford House, 18th century with possibly an earlier core, timber framed and plastered with red tiled roof, whose distinctive style and semi- circular bays provide delightful contrast and diversity with neighbouring properties.
- (e) The Old Bakehouse, 17th century or earlier, timber framed and plastered with exposed frame to gables and red tiled roof.
- (f) No.41, 18th/19th century, flint with red brick quoins and red tiled roof. Flint adds to visual diversity of materials in the street scene.

- (g) No. 47, 16th century or earlier, timber framed and plastered with red tiled roof. 1m wall, probably 19th century defines boundary to south.
- (h) Alderford Mill unusually survives unconverted to alternative uses and is Grade II*, mainly timber framed and weather boarded with red tiled roof. Restored by Essex County Council. Heritage Gateway describes it as being nationally significant '*in that it still retains much of the historical apparatus/technology original to the building...*'. It is occasionally open to the public.
- (i) Searles, 18th century façade with earlier core, timber framed and pargetted with red tiled roof.
- (j) 19th century cast iron pump, moulded spout and balled handle. Stem damaged to rear.
- (k) Alderford Maltings barn 18th century timber framed, brick and weather boarded with red tiled roof, converted to dwellings.
- (l) Alderford Grange, attached to former Bell Inn referred to earlier is accessed from Alderford Street, dates from the 16th century, timber framed, painted brick façade and red tiled roof.



Picture 12 Woolcombers and Alderford House (compare detail with historic Picture 11)

2.51 Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution:

None have been identified

2.52 Trees and Hedgerows:

Central to the street on its southern side is an extensive treed area, the density and quality of which adds significantly to the quality of the conservation area.

2.53 Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution:

- (a) The river to north and south of Alderford Mill and nearby river side walk represents a clear break between edge of village and open countryside. Together with the exposed watercourse running along the south of Alderford Street, these provide distinctive features in this part of the conservation area.
- (b) A 19th century 2-2.5m brick and part flint wall to the south of no.28 fronting the street and exposed watercourse, returning to enclose the north boundary of the treed area, is important in the street scene.



Picture 13 The River Colne near to Alderford Mill

2.54 Open Spaces :

The open area fronting the Maltings, together with the grass sward on the northern side, owned by the Parish Council, forms a visually important open space in the centre of the village.

2.55 Important views:

Views in both directions along the street towards Alderford Mill and secondly towards no. 49 Swan Street are important and visually pleasing.

2.56 Archaeological sites:

The site to the south of Alderford Street may be a medieval moated site although no building remains have been discovered. A distinct depression consistent with the remains of a moat encloses part of the site. The site to the north is believed to be the area within which several Roman sherds were discovered.

2.57 Detracting elements:

- (a) Selected overhead cables and supporting poles are very intrusive at the junction with Swan Street and should an occasion arise to underground them through a planning agreement mechanism for example, the opportunity to achieve this must not be missed.
- (b) Other signage on the green sward owned by the Parish Council would benefit from rationalisation and removal.
- (c) The low key industrial building and yard (see below) seriously detract from the mill and its setting.

Suggested action to rectify these detracting elements is set out in the management proposals.

2.58 The future of the industrial site opposite the Mill:

As set out above this site and its dilapidated buildings, seriously detracts from the setting of the adjacent Mill. The site lies mostly within the flood plain. The Parish Council had advised that the County Council, exercising its powers to alleviate flooding to highways here and elsewhere, was in the process of detailing remedial proposals through a compulsory purchase mechanism and they anticipated such measures could be in place within 5 years. This matter has been discussed with the Environment Agency whose detailed response considered, inter alia, that *'The site is classified as being predominately in Flood Zone 3 and therefore any proposals must comply with Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 25. The source of flooding has not been established however it is likely that the site is at risk directly from fluvial flooding of the River Colne in addition to the culvert. Therefore the proposed works on the culvert under Alderford Street would not alter this classification.* In the circumstances it is suggested that discussions take place with the owner to consider the future of the site and any visual improvements to it.



Picture 14 Dilapidated buildings at industrial site

2.59 Proposed Boundary Revisions.

Very modest changes to the north of Alderford Mill are proposed to reflect existing features on the ground.

Figure 2 shows these features.

Area 3 - Rectory Road, Church Street, Prayers Hill and School Road



Picture 15 Early view of church from White Lion PH

2.60 This separate conservation area is dominated by the 14th century church of St Peter that overlooks Rectory Road and Church Street. It can be divided into two distinct areas. Firstly there is the church and

environs within which are 3 grade II* listed properties and where important open spaces and boundary walls and railings make such an important visual and historic contribution. Secondly there is the southern section of Church Street and School Road whose character differs being principally characterised by its tightly knit concentration of listed buildings centred around the White Lion PH.

- 2.61** Listed buildings (all are grade II except the church, Grays Hall and the Old Rectory, which are grade II*)
- (a) In total there are 24 listed buildings or groups of buildings. Most originate from the 17th century (45%) with 30% from the 18th century. The 14/15 and 16th centuries are also represented. All buildings appear to be in a good state of repair with the exception of the individually listed railings and wall to Grays Hall, forming the boundary with the churchyard.
 - (b) Area 1. St Peter's church is listed Grade II* and dates from the 14th century with 16th century rebuilt tower and much 19th century restoration. Canopy within the building and external bird feature symbolise Sir John Hawkwood. Constructed of flint rubble with small amounts of Roman tile and tiled roofs. The retaining wall to Church Street/Prayors Hill is an important feature in the street scene whilst a simple 19th century railing forms the boundary between the church and Prayors Farmhouse.
 - (c) The Old Rectory is an imposing grade II* early 18th century residence constructed by Rector Moses Cooke and is of brick construction with tiled roof. The separately listed carriage house within its ground dates from 18/19th century as do the important railings and wall that dominate the street scene and form boundaries to Rectory Road and Church Street.



Picture 16 The Old Rectory

- (d) Grays Hall is an imposing early 18th century brick with tiled roof building also commissioned by Moses Cooke. Within its curtilage is an earlier barn and wall and railings forming boundary with the churchyard that are separately listed. The piers, dwarf wall and some of the railings to the latter wall are in a poor condition.



Picture 17 Grays Hall

- (e) Prayers Farm House and the separately listed barn within its grounds date from the 17th century and are timber framed and plastered and timber framed and weather boarded respectively; both with tiled roofs. The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments mentions the date of 1678 *'being carved on a moulded wall-post inside the building.'*
- (f) The White Horse PH dates from the 15th century and is timber framed and plastered with red tiled roof.
- (g) To both north and south of the above PH are 4 other listed properties, all dating from the 17th century, timber framed with tiled roofs.
- (h) Area 2. The White Lion PH dates from the 15th century, is timber framed and render with tiled roof.
- (i) The grouping of 7 other listed properties surrounding the above PH principally date from the 17th century as do the 2 individually listed properties on School Road. Most are timber framed with tiled roofs although 2 have thatched roofs that add to architectural and historic diversity of the street scene. It is important that materials such as thatch are not replaced with alternatives.

2.62 Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution:

- (a) No.14 School Road, 19th /early 20th century 2 storey of brick construction with slate roof and 2 no. chimney stacks, simple decorative lintels to lower windows and central doorway.
- (b) No.11 School Road, 19th /early 20th century render with tiled roof and 2 no. chimney stacks and decorative ridge tiles. 3 window range to upper floor, distinctive central porch to front and simple iron railings to front and side.
- (c) No.2 School Road, 19th/early 20th century constructed of brick (advised locally sourced) with tiled roof and 2 no. chimney stacks, 3 window range to upper floor. Also single storey brick outbuilding with tiled pyramid roof.
- (d) No 35 Church Street (Red Cottage), attached to The Old Bakery, 19th century or earlier, 2 storey building of brick construction with tiled roof and single chimney stack. Single storey extension of similar construction to north. Distinctive windows and original rainwater goods.
- (e) Nos. 47-49 Church Street with inscription 'Victoria Terrace TW 1904. 2 storey of brick construction (advised locally sourced) with slate roof and single chimney stack. 2 no. recessed door surrounds and 5 no.windows, all with decorative floral detailing.



Picture 18 Victorian Terrace Church Street

- (f) No 53 Church Street, 19th century or earlier, 2 storey pargetted with hipped tiled roof and central chimney stack. This building is important for its mass and roovescape and the manner in which it encloses the street scene and introduces the village when viewed from Prayers Hill and also when seen from the elevated churchyard.



Picture 19 No. 53 Church Street, view from War Memorial

2.63 Trees and Hedgerows:

Throughout this conservation area, trees in groups and as individual specimens play an important role in adding to its high environmental quality.

- (a) Of particular note are the traditional mixed deciduous and coniferous specimens of trees in the historic church yard and hedgerow to northern boundary of graveyard extension that add considerably to the setting of the church.
- (b) A linear hedge and grouping of mature deciduous trees on the southern boundary of Prayers Hill is very important and tightly defines the entrance to the village in this location.
- (c) A third most important grouping is the row of trees in the grounds of the Old Rectory immediately behind the listed wall forming the eastern boundary to Church Street.
- (d) Trees to the north west of Rectory Meadow form an important backdrop.

2.64 Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution:

- (a) There are significant lengths of walls and some railings that are important to the character of this part of the conservation area. Some are of sufficient importance to be individually listed. Most are within the curtilages of listed buildings and are therefore already protected. However there are several walls that are currently unprotected and the means of achieving their protection is set out in Part B.
- (b) There is a 19th century directional metal sign post with 2 no. directional signs immediately south of the White Horse PH. A third directional sign is missing. It needs restoration and is interesting from an historic perspective.



Picture 20 Old Rectory boundary wall

2.65 Open Spaces :

There are three important open spaces that make important contributions to the general spatial quality and visual importance of the conservation area.

- (a) The churchyard on its elevated position provides an expansive setting for the dominant church building, the most important historical asset in the village. As noted above it contains many fine trees, the traditional species of which complement a range of interesting gravestones generally located in groups. Of particular interest is the war memorial consisting of a simple stone cross on a three tier octagonal base; a gravestone

marking John Redwood Anderson, an English poet (1883-1964) and 3 no. gravestones of members of the Home Guard who were killed in 1944, the latter being recognised as the biggest home guard accident of WW2. Discussions with the Parish Council and the church have established an urgent need to provide additional burial space and in this respect there are two options. Firstly provide additional space on parish land (currently in possessory ownership only) beyond the existing graveyard extension or secondly utilise open space within the historic graveyard setting. However the Parish Council, The Rector and Parochial Church Council rejected this idea and therefore burials will continue within the existing graveyard for as long as possible. In this respect it is important that care is taken in the locations of future burial spaces and the manner in which they are detailed and landscaped. The overall consideration should be respect for the high visual qualities of the historic grave yard, officers can provide further advise if requested. Within the church yard several detracting elements have been identified and are described below.

- (b) The open space to the south of Rectory Road (the scheduled ancient monument site) is visually important by virtue of its undulations and mixed levels and the manner in which it separates the historic part of the village from the modern development to the east.
- (c) Church Street village green is owned by the Parish Council, and although very small is visually important in the street scene and complements the listed wall in this location.

2.66 Important views:

Views looking down Prayor's Hill and the churchyard and views looking along Church Street to the elevated church are particularly important.

2.67 Scheduled Ancient Monument:

This is located south of Rectory Road and as noted above, separates the historic core from modern development. The relevant entry at Heritage Gateway describes the site as being '*a dry rectangular homestead moat*'... and notes... '*there was no trace of building foundations inside the central area*'. Surprisingly little is known about this monument.

2.68 Archaeological sites:

The scheduled ancient monument site above lies within a more extensive archaeological site. St Peter's Church and churchyard are also identified where some Roman tile can be seen in the fabric of the church construction. The site of an old kiln was discovered in a sewer trench on land near Rectory Meadow.

2.69 Detracting elements:

- (a) Selected overhead cables and supporting poles are very intrusive particularly around the junction of Church Street and Rectory Road, seriously detracting from the fine views of the church. The opportunity to underground them through a planning agreement mechanism for example, must not be missed should such an opportunity arise.
- (b) Signage and salt bin, junction Prayors Hill/ Wethersfield Road, are respectively in need of repair and relocation. An enhancement of this area at an important entrance to the village is recommended.
- (c) Graveyard extension, the serried ranks of tombstones and associated eastern boundary fence detract to some degree from the historic nature of the original graveyard. An enhancement of this area is recommended.
- (d) The wall and railings listed in their own right and forming boundary between churchyard and Grays Hall are in urgent need of repair and detract from Grays Hall and the churchyard.



Picture 21 Listed wall and railings, Grays Hall

- (e) 2 sarcophagi in the churchyard east of the church building are completely covered in ivy which hides their architectural and historic qualities and associations.



Picture 22 Sarcophagi covered in ivy in church yard

- (f) Elsewhere in the churchyard are a number of prostrate tomb slabs with sycamore saplings and growth that detract and that will ultimately destroy the monuments unless dealt with.
- (g) The general condition of the entrance steps to the churchyard at Church Street detract and are in need of modest repair.
- (h) The modern wall constructed of 'decorative' concrete blocks that forms the boundary to 'Centurys', a listed building, detract from the architectural and historic qualities of both the building and street scene.



Picture 23 Inappropriate boundary detail

- (i) The concrete posts and metal fence to the north of Rectory Road opposite the scheduled ancient monument site, on land owned by the Parish Council, detract.

2.70 Proposed Boundary Revisions.

Two locations are proposed to be excluded from the conservation area.

- (a) The junction of Prayers Hill and Wethersfield Road should be slightly modified by excluding a small area to the west within an adjacent residential curtilage thereby better reflecting boundaries on the ground.
- (b) An area, principally to the south of Alexandra Road and including 2 bungalows to the north, consists of neutral 20th century development whose character and identity has insufficient special architectural or historic interest to be included.

2.71 Figure 2a shows these features.

PART B

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Revised Conservation Area Boundary

- 3.1** The revised boundary is shown on Figure 3 and 3a. Revisions include the following:
- (a) Exclude Braintree Corner as its qualities are of insufficient special architectural or historic interest.
 - (b) Modify boundary at the junction of Prayors Hill and Wethersfield Road and at Alderford Mill to better reflect boundaries on the ground.
 - (c) Exclude an area at Alexandra Road, consisting of neutral 20th century development whose character and identity has insufficient special architectural or historic interest to be included.
 - (d) Extend the northern extremity of the existing conservation area to include Monroe House and no. 92 Swan Street and 88-90 Swan Street, being properties of adequate architectural or historic merit that merit inclusion within the conservation area.

Planning Control and Good Practice within the Conservation Area

- 3.2** The national legislative and planning policy framework is set out in Part C and it is against this background that the Council's planning officers and process planning applications, currently considered against policies set out in the Braintree District Local Plan Review adopted in July 2005. This document is available on line at www.braintree.gov.uk. Several key policies are set out in Part C. Policy RLP95 Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas is the most relevant. Policy RLP90 Layout and Design of Development which is a generic policy covering development in all areas is also pertinent.
- 3.3** Good practice for applicants considering submitting planning applications is to carefully consider the content of the relevant policies and if necessary to seek additional advice from the Council's officers who will be pleased to assist. This advice is free regarding small scale or minor development. Larger schemes that require a pre-application meeting with a planning officer are subject to a fee. Please contact the Planning Department for further advice:

Telephone on 01376 552525;
Email planning@braintree.gov.uk

Or write to:

Braintree District Council

Causeway House
Bocking End
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB1

Planning Control and Good Practice Listed Buildings

- 3.4** The individually listed buildings are shown on Figure 3 and 3a as are walls and railings of quality within the curtilages of listed buildings.
- 3.5** Policies RLP99 - Demolition of Listed Buildings and Policy RLP100 - Alterations and Extensions and Changes of Use to Listed Buildings, set out in Part C are the most relevant.
- 3.6** The identified listed buildings in Sible Hedingham are numerous and make significant contributions to the street scenes with their rich variety of architectural detailing, use of materials and historic importance. Good practice for applicants will be to carefully consider the content of the above policies. Perhaps the most important considerations relate to the scale of extensions and use of materials. The former generally needs to be subservient and properly articulated with the original structure whilst the materials should always be of the highest quality. Replacement of the limited number of thatched roofs with alternative materials will be entirely inappropriate as will be the use of plastic replacement windows. A pre-submission discussion with one of the Council's officers is advised.

Other Buildings that make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution

- 3.7** Unlisted buildings in conservation areas above a size of 115 square metres cannot be demolished without consent. Policy RLP96 Demolition in Conservation Areas is set out Part C.
- 3.8** This appraisal identifies 15 other buildings or groups of buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution and these are identified on Figure 3 and 3a. Any application involving their demolition is likely to be refused.
- 3.9** The degree to which some of these buildings have been altered varies. The most common detrimental alteration relates to windows and in some cases original windows have been replaced by inappropriate modern ones. Additional powers exist to restrict 'permitted development' but these should be used sparingly and this principle will be followed. Nos. 88-90 Swan Street; Lamb Cottage, Hilton House Surgery, Eden Cottage and Eden House all on Swan Street; nos. 2, 11 and 14 School Road and nos. 35 and 47- 49 Church Street all have good quality windows, and /or doorways and associated decorative

detailing that remain largely unaltered that adds to their respective architectural and historic merit. Planning Officers therefore suggests introducing an Article 4 direction to remove the existing right to alter/replace windows, window surrounds and associated decorative detailing and or doorways and surrounds as may be appropriate in each case in respect of the front elevations of these properties only. It will be necessary to consult owners separately in due course where it will be necessary to define more detail.

Important Open Spaces and Trees

- 3.10** Policy RLP4 Prevention of Town Cramming will apply to areas of open space which make a positive contribution to the character of an area within a defined settlement, whether a conservation area or not. Details are set out in Part C.
- 3.11** This appraisal has identified the following important open spaces: the churchyard, the scheduled ancient monument site to the south of Rectory Road, land on Alderford Street at its junction with Swan Street, the small Church Street village green and 3 agricultural gaps to the east of Swan and Potter Streets. These spaces are protected either by a Scheduled Ancient Monument designation or by virtue of lying beyond the Village Envelope or by ownership by the Parish Council and together with the diagrammatic locations of trees that make a particularly important contribution to the conservation area are illustrated on Figure 3 and 3a.
- 3.12** Good practice guidance suggests owners making regular inspections as necessary to check the health of trees in the interests of amenity and health and safety. Consent to carry out works to trees in the conservation area either in the front or rear garden of a property requires consent. Subject to exceptions, any proposal to fell or carry out works to trees in a conservation area has to be notified via the appropriate procedure, which gives the Council the opportunity to make the tree/s subject to a Tree Preservation Order. The Council's Landscape Section is able to offer advice and can be contacted via the above-mentioned details. They are also able to give general advice.

Protecting Important Views

- 3.13** Policy RLP95 refers to preserving '*views into and within the constituent parts of designated areas.*' The principal views, some relating to the dominance of the church, others in respect of views of important groups of buildings and others from within the village looking out across the Colne Valley are shown on the appropriate plans. In considering planning applications, officers will take this aspect of the policy into account.

Other Distinctive Features that make an Important Visual or Historic Contribution

- 3.14** In addition to the many walls and railings already protected by virtue of being within the curtilage of listed buildings and constructed pre-July 1st 1948 or of the prescribed height, there are other that are currently unprotected. Planning Officers suggest considering the option of introduction an Article 4 Direction to remove the right to remove these walls so identified. These are indicated on Figures 3 and 3a.

Potential Need to Undertake an Archaeological Evaluation

- 3.15** There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument site and several archaeological sites identified.
- 3.16** In addition to its importance as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the site south of Rectory Road is an important open space and performs the function of separating the historic core from the modern development to the east. Development here would be entirely inappropriate.
- 3.17** Policy RLP104 Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance reproduced in Part C set out the criteria for development affecting such sites.
- 3.18** Good practice for applicants will be to obtain advice from the Council via the contact details set out above.

Speed Management Plan

- 3.19** The appraisal has noted the concerns voiced by the Parish Council in relation to speeding traffic on Swan, Potter and Queen Streets. Field Officers undertaking this appraisal appreciate these concerns. The Parish Council continues to have discussions with Essex Police and Essex County Council that hopefully will have the desired outcome.

Enhancement Proposals for Sible Hedingham Conservation Area as revised

3.20 The appraisal identified a number of detracting elements which the table below summarises and proposes a course of action. Council officers can provide the parish with assistance where appropriate.

Detracting element	Location	Proposed action.
Overhead cables on utility poles.	Throughout the conservation areas.	Several poles at two key locations, namely at Church Street near the White Horse PH and at Swan/Alderford Street junction particularly detract. Should finances become available through planning agreements to implement enhance schemes, the under grounding of cables and removal of poles should be undertaken as a priority.
Partially hidden milestone marker	Queen Street	Regularly remove surrounding vegetation, examine marker to identify any necessary action.
Dilapidated former garage site with tin roof.	Queen Street.	Identified as a building that makes an important architectural or historic contribution; make contact with owner to seek to resolve issue and repair building.
Dwarf wall with spalled brickwork.	Street frontage at Wash Farm, Queen Street.	Attached to a listed building and in need of repair, make contact with owner to seek a resolution.
19th century listed pumps in need of restoration.	Potter Street, west side and Alderford Street, south side.	Both pumps require attention. The stem to the one in Alderford Street is broken at the rear. Commitment to restore and maintain at local Parish Council level would be an ideal outcome.
Dilapidated front window and front elevation in key location.	No. 42 Swan Street , a 17th century or earlier listed building.	The repairs needed are relatively modest and from an external inspection only, do not appear to be structural. Make contact with owner to firstly seek an amicable resolution. Monitor on at least an annual basis. If problem not resolved, consider placing on Buildings at Risk Register (see below).
Dilapidated rear	The former	Some repairs have been

elevation and rear yard and car park.	Swan PH, an important 15 th century listed building.	undertaken in the recent past. The dilapidation does not affect the important frontage or street scene. Make contact with owner to establish intentions before pursuing further. Monitor on at least an annual basis. If problem not resolved, consider placing on Buildings at Risk Register (see below).
Dilapidated elevations and associated untidy/unkept setting in key village location.	No. 49 Swan Street, an important 16 th century listed building whose condition gives particular cause for concern.	This is a key building in a key location whose probable circumstances and condition has deteriorated to a degree that it should be placed on the Buildings at Risk Register now and monitored.
Inappropriate signage.	Greensward, Alderford Street, owned by PC.	Remove. In association with removal of poles and cables referred to above, suggest a simple landscape enhancement scheme be prepared, involving limited tree planting to co-ordinate with open space opposite.
Dilapidated industrial buildings.	Near Alderford Mill.	See paragraph 2.58.
Intrusive highway salt bin and dilapidated road signage.	Junction Prayors Hill/ Wethersfield Road.	The salt bin is prominently intrusive and the directional sign needs repair. In association with ECC draw up a simple enhancement scheme for this area involving repair of sign, relocation of salt bin, tree planting and possible new seat.
Graveyard extension.	Adjacent to historic graveyard.	In association with the church authorities (with whom preliminary discussions have been held) draw up simple landscape plan involving planting against existing eastern boundary fence and free standing trees within the graveyard extension to break up monotony.
Tombs damaged by ivy and tree growth. The	Historic graveyard.	Remove ivy from 2 no. sarcophagi east of the church and destroy sycamore saplings

future of the historic graveyard.		damaging a number of prostrate slabs. One approach to the church is defined by an avenue of lime trees, some of which are missing and need replacing. To best achieve this existing lime trees need pollarding. Officers can advise further if requested.
Boundary railings and wall, partly in state of dereliction.	Boundary between Grays Hall and graveyard, listed in their own right.	This is a key architectural feature in a key location adjacent to the public domain whose condition in part (especially the supporting piers) gives sufficient rise to concern that it should be placed on the Buildings at Risk Register and monitored.
Unkempt/ uneven entrance steps.	Entrance to churchyard from Church Street.	Modest repairs need carrying out and schedule of works prepared and implemented.
Inappropriate modern 'decorative' concrete panels forming street boundary to listed building	Centurys, Church Street.	Initiate discussions with owner with view of seeking a more appropriate solution.
Inappropriate metal fence.	Land in Parish ownership, north of Rectory Road.	Suggest repair and inter-plant with appropriate native hedge.

Figures 3 and 3a show these features.

PART C

This section sets out the legal and policy framework relating to development in conservation areas.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Development

- 4.1** The legal background for designating a conservation area is set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act). This states that the local planning authority (The Council) shall from time to time designate conservation areas, which are defined as being ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to conserve or enhance’.
- 4.2** Section 71 of the Act requires Councils to *‘formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement’* of conservation areas and hold a public meeting to consider them.
- 4.3** Within conservation areas there are additional planning controls and if these are to be supported it is important that the designated conservation areas accord with the statutory definition as set out above and are not devalued by including areas that lack special interest.
- 4.4** One of the most important additional planning controls that applies to conservation areas is set out at section 74 of the Act which states that *‘a building in a conservation area shall not be demolished without the consent of the appropriate authority’*. This requirement is known as ‘conservation area consent’ and is subject to certain exceptions. For example it does not apply to listed buildings but may be relevant to other non listed buildings in the conservation area if it is considered that these are of sufficient merit to warrant identification and protection. Looking for and identifying such buildings is therefore a priority of this appraisal.
- 4.5** The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 (as amended), defines the range of minor developments for which planning permission is not required and this range is more restricted in conservation areas. For example the Order currently requires that the addition of dormer windows to roof slopes, various types of cladding, satellite dishes fronting a highway and a reduced size of extensions, all require planning permission in a conservation area whereas they would not require permission beyond.
- 4.6** However, even within conservation areas there are many other minor developments that do not require planning permission. So as to provide further protection the law allows Councils to introduce

additional controls if appropriate. Examples of such controls can include some developments fronting a highway or open space, such as an external porch, the painting of a house or the demolition of some gates, fences or walls. The removal of important architectural features that are important to the character or appearance of a conservation area or individual buildings within it such as distinctive porches, windows or walls or railings to non-listed properties could be specified by a legal process known as an 'Article 4 Direction'. The use of such Directions can only be made in justified circumstances where a clear assessment of each conservation area has been made. In conducting each appraisal the Council will consider whether or not such additional controls are necessary. If it is so considered then a separate consultation exercise with the owners of such properties will be necessary.

Works to Trees

- 4.7** Another planning control relates to trees located within conservation areas. Setting aside various exceptions principally relating to size and condition, any proposal to fell or carry out works to trees in a conservation area has to be 'notified' to the Council within 6 weeks of the works. The Council may then decide to make the tree/s subject to a Tree Preservation Order. This appraisal will only diagrammatically identify the most significant trees or groups of trees that make a particularly important contribution to the character of the conservation area. However trees that are not so identified may still be considered suitable candidates for tree preservation orders in the process referred to above.

PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Policy

- 4.8** Planning Policy Statement 5, Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) published in 2010, sets out the Government's national policies on the conservation of the historic environment and its policies are a material consideration to be taken into account when determining whether development should proceed.
- 4.9** PPS5 states that the *'Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations'*.
- 4.10** PPS5 also states that *'the historic environment provides a tangible link with our past and contributes to our sense of national local and community identity. It also provides the character and distinctiveness that is so important to a positive sense of place...'*
- 4.11** PPS5 refers to Article 4 Directions previously mentioned, stating that if Permitted Development Rights would undermine the aims to protect

the historic environment then Councils should consider the use of an Article 4 Direction.

- 4.12** PPS5 importantly states that *'At local level plans should consider the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment ...'* Such plans, the advice continues *'should include consideration of how best to conserve individual, groups or types of heritage assets that are most at risk of loss through neglect, decay or other threats'*.

Regional Policy

- 4.13** The East of England Plan Policy ENV 6 offers similar advice for protecting and conserving the Region's historic environment, conservation areas and other heritage assets.

Local Plan Policy

- 4.14** The Braintree District Local Plan Review (BDLPR), adopted in July 2005 already follows advice now set out in PPS5.

- 4.15** Policy RLP4 - Prevention of Town Cramming

Within Village Envelopes and Town Development Boundaries development of open areas, which are important visually, which contribute to the character of the settlement, or which are used for recreational, social, or community purposes or which are of importance to nature conservation will not be permitted.

- 4.16** Policy RLP78 Countryside

The countryside will be protected for its own sake, particularly for its landscapes, natural resources and areas of ecological, historic, archaeological and recreational value. This will be achieved by the restriction of new uses to those appropriate to a rural area, and the strict control of new building in the countryside outside existing settlements to that required to support agriculture, forestry or other rural uses or development. Development should be well related to existing patterns of development and of a scale, siting and design sympathetic to the rural landscape character.

- 4.17** Policy RLP 79 Special Landscape Areas

Development likely to cause permanent loss or damage to the traditional rural qualities of the countryside, or its essential landscape character will be refused, especially in Special Landscape Areas. Special Landscape Areas are defined as a series of areas of distinctive scenic attraction: The Stour Valley, The Pant Valley, The Colne Valley, The Upper Blackwater, The Chelmer-Blackwater Ridges and Terling, The Pods Brook Valley and the Brain Valley, as defined on the Proposals Map. Any development that is permitted in

Special Landscape Areas will be expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting and layout with materials appropriate to the character of the area, with appropriate landscaping. The conservation and maintenance of features important to the local landscape such as trees, hedges, copses, woodlands and ponds will be encouraged. Planning obligations will be sought to secure the management of new landscape areas.

4.18 Policy RLP 90 Layout and Design of Development

The Council seeks a high standard of layout and design in all developments, large and small, in the District. Planning permission will only be granted where the following criteria are met:

- (i) The scale, density, height and massing of buildings should reflect or enhance local distinctiveness;
- (ii) Buildings, open areas, circulation spaces, and other townscape and landscape areas shall be of a high standard of design and materials;
- (iii) There shall be no undue or unacceptable impact on the amenity of any nearby residential properties;
- (iv) Designs shall recognise and reflect local distinctiveness, and be sensitive to the need to conserve local features of architectural, historic and landscape importance, particularly within Conservation Areas and in proximity to parks and gardens of historic interest, ancient monuments and sites of archaeological importance;
- (v) The layout, height, mass and overall elevational design of buildings and developments shall be in harmony with the character and appearance of the surrounding area; including their form, scale and impact on the skyline in the locality;
- (vi) Both the overall planning and detailed design shall incorporate measures to ensure the maximum practical environmental sustainability throughout the construction, occupation and demolition of the development, in relation to energy conservation, water efficiency, waste separation and the use of materials with low overall energy requirements. Supplementary planning guidance will be prepared on these aspects;
- (vii) Use of the most sustainable modes of transport is promoted in the design and layout of new development, and the resultant traffic generation and its management shall seek to avoid significant increases in traffic movement, particularly in residential areas;
- (viii) Designs and layouts shall promote a safe and secure environment, crime reduction and prevention and shall encourage the related objective of enhancing personal safety; with the maximum amount of natural surveillance of roads, paths and all other open areas and all open spaces incorporated into schemes;

- (ix) Landscape design shall promote and enhance local biodiversity;
- (x) The design and level of any lighting proposals will need to be in context with the local area.

4.19 RLP95, Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas states:

The Council will preserve, and encourage the enhancement of, the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas and their settings, including the buildings, open spaces and areas, landscape and historic features and views into and within the constituent parts of designated areas. Built or other development, within or adjacent to a conservation area and affecting its setting, will only be permitted provided that:

- (a) The proposal does not detract from the character, appearance and essential features of the conservation area;
- (b) Any new development is situated in harmony with the existing street scene and building line, and is sympathetic in size, scale and proportions with its surroundings;
- (c) Architectural details on buildings of value are retained;
- (d) Building materials are authentic and complimentary to the building's character.

4.20 RLP 96 Demolition in Conservation Areas states:

Demolition involving the destruction of (the whole or part of) an unlisted building in a Conservation Area will only be permitted if:

- (a) The structure to be demolished makes no contribution to the character, or appearance, of the conservation area; or
- (b) The building is demonstrably beyond reasonable repair due to its structural condition, and clear evidence of efforts to secure viable alternative uses is available and no other forms of community ownership or preservation is possible; and
- (c) Consent for demolition will only normally be granted in any case where a contract for the redevelopment of the site has been let;
- (d) Redevelopment proposals preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

4.21 Policy RLP 99 Demolition of Listed Buildings

Consent for the partial or total demolition of a listed building will only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances, where:

- (i) The demolition of the building is demonstrably unavoidable for structural safety reasons; and/or
- (ii) All reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses, find viable new uses, or secure preservation through a form of charitable or community ownership, and that these efforts have failed; and

- (iii) Redevelopment will produce substantial benefits for the community, which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition;
- (iv) Demolition works are made conditional upon planning permission being granted, and a contract agreed, for redevelopment; and
- (v) At least one month is permitted to record the listed building before demolition.

4.22 Policy RLP100 Alterations and Extensions and Changes of Use to Listed Buildings, and their settings

Development involving internal or external alterations, extensions and partial demolitions to a listed building or structure (including any structures defined as having equivalent status due to being situated within its curtilage), and changes of use will only be permitted if the proposed works or uses:

- (i) do not harm the setting, character, structural stability and fabric of the building (or structure); and
- (ii) do not result in the loss of, or significant damage to the building or structure's historic and architectural elements of special importance, and include the use of appropriate materials and finishes. The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the development, design and use of adjoining land.

4.23 Policy RLP 104 Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance

Where development would adversely affect the physical preservation of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other nationally important archaeological remains, and their settings, whether scheduled or not, there will be a presumption in favour of their preservation in situ. Other areas of archaeological significance (i.e. those which, although important locally, are not of national significance) will be preserved. When development affecting such sites is acceptable in principle, mitigation of damage will be sought through the preservation of the remains in situ as a preferred solution. When in situ preservation is not justified, the developer will be required to make adequate provision for excavation and recording before or during development.

4.24 The Local Plan also refers to the potential of the Council withdrawing permitted development rights where developments are cumulatively detracting from the special character or appearance of a conservation area (Article 4 Directions).

4.24 The Local Plan contains more detailed policies relating to conservation areas and many additional ones relating to other heritage assets. Attention is also drawn to other policies relating to development in

Town Development Boundaries and Village Envelopes (RLP3) and policy RLP136 protecting recreation sites. The existing Braintree District Local Plan will ultimately be replaced by a Local Development Framework.

- 4.25** In summary it is considered that the policies of the adopted Braintree District Plan are robust and in accord with national legislation and current government advice. The process and format of this conservation area appraisal and its key elements also take account of advice set out in English Heritage's advisory document 'Guidance on Conservation area appraisals'.

Buildings at Risk

- 4.26** The Council has no specific policies contained within the District Local Plan Review that deal with Listed Buildings at Risk but it is the responsible body that is authorised to perform the various powers available under the Act.
- 4.26** Essex County Council have prepared an Historic Buildings at Risk Register in collaboration with the local planning authorities, produced in line with expectations of positive management of historic assets. The Register contains details of buildings, highlights their condition with the aim of initiating action to secure their long term. Within Braintree District there are currently 23 buildings on the Register in varying degrees of neglect.
- 4.27** Under the Act it is possible to serve an 'Urgent Repairs Notice' and recover costs through the courts or by placing a charge on the property in the Land Charges Register. Such notices can only be served on unoccupied properties or if the building is occupied, only to those parts not in use.
- 4.28** In addition a 'Repairs Notice' can be served on an occupied listed building, setting out a schedule of repairs for its proper preservation. However this may lead to compulsory purchase and the potential of compensation and thus placing the District Council in a potential situation of financial risk, legal processes and costs associated with the appointment of specialist consultants to draw up the detailed schedules of work.
- 4.29** The Mid Essex Historic Buildings Trust has recently approached BDC with a view of setting up an informal partnership to deal with buildings at risk. This organisation has access to funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund and has expressed an interest in assisting the Council. Such a partnership arrangement could work with the Council serving the relevant notices and the Trust underwriting the financial commitment.

- 4.30** The Planning Committee considered a report on the above subject in December 2009 and resolved to support the principle of the partnership arrangements set out above.
- 4.31** Braintree District Council have now decided to take the matter further by monitoring the buildings on the Register on an annual basis, noting any deterioration to them and devising an annual priority partnership programme with the Mid Essex Historic Buildings Trust.
- 4.32** This appraisal for Sible Hedingham has identified a further 2 listed buildings/structures that are of sufficient concern to be placed on the Buildings at Risk Register. These are 49 Swan Street and the listed railings and wall in the curtilage of Grays Hall, forming the boundary with the graveyard.

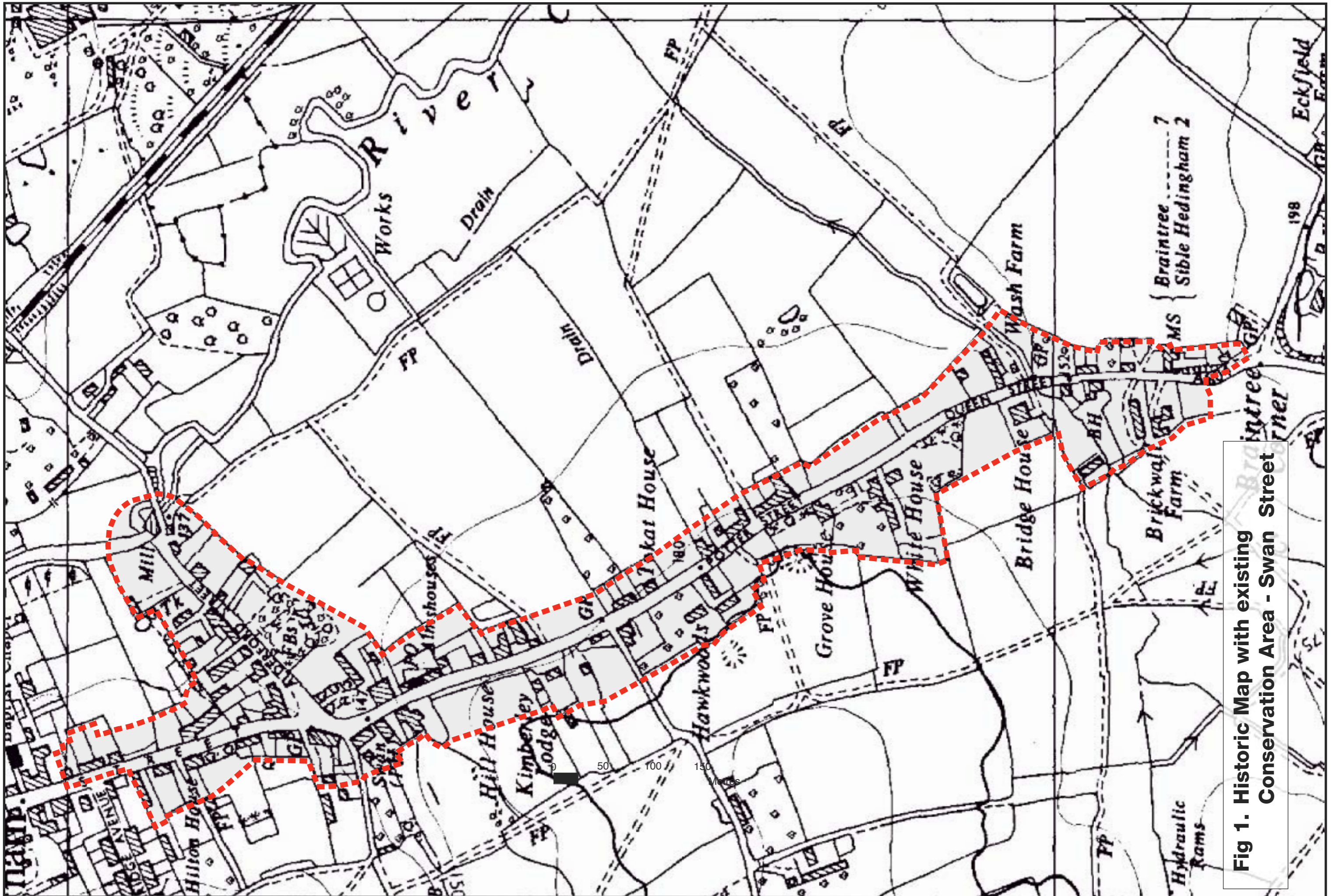


Fig 1. Historic Map with existing Conservation Area - Swan Street

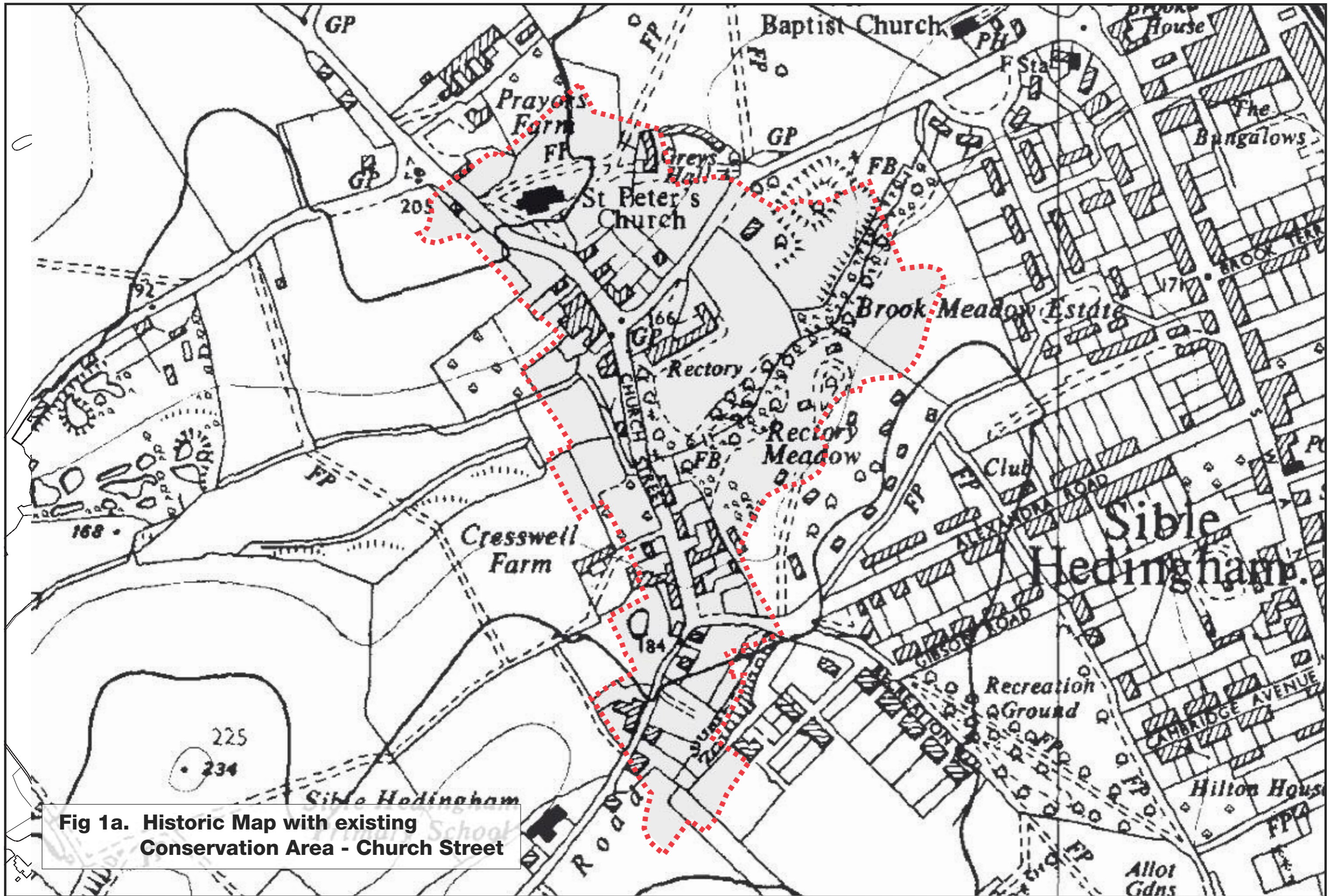


Fig 1a. Historic Map with existing Conservation Area - Church Street

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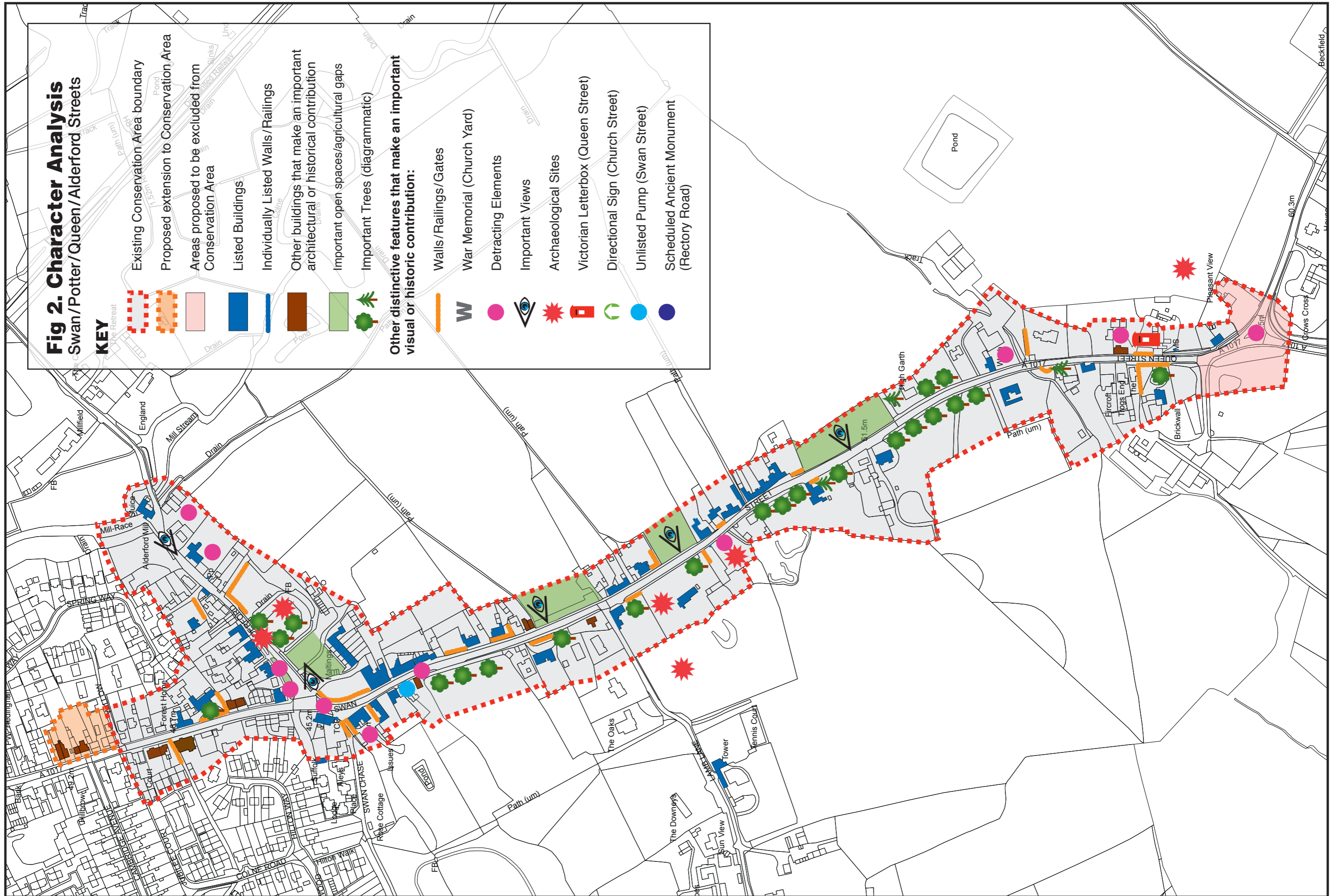




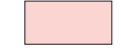














Fig 2. Character Analysis
Swan/Potter/Queen/Alderford Streets

KEY

- Existing Conservation Area boundary
- Proposed extension to Conservation Area
- Areas proposed to be excluded from Conservation Area
- Listed Buildings
- Individually Listed Walls/Railings
- Other buildings that make an important architectural or historical contribution
- Important open spaces/agricultural gaps
- Important Trees (diagrammatic)
- Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution:**
 - Walls/Railings/Gates
 - War Memorial (Church Yard)
 - Detracting Elements
 - Important Views
 - Archaeological Sites
 - Victorian Letterbox (Queen Street)
 - Directional Sign (Church Street)
 - Unlisted Pump (Swan Street)
 - Scheduled Ancient Monument (Rectory Road)

Fig 2a. Character Analysis
Church Street

KEY

-  Existing Conservation Area boundary
 -  Proposed extension to Conservation Area
 -  Areas proposed to be excluded from Conservation Area
 -  Listed Buildings
 -  Individually Listed Walls/Railings
 -  Other buildings that make an important architectural or historical contribution
 -  Important open spaces / agricultural gaps
 -  Important Trees (diagrammatic)
- Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution:**
-  Walls/Railings/Gates
 -  War Memorial (Church Yard)
 -  Detracting Elements
 -  Important Views
 -  Archaeological Sites
 -  Victorian Letterbox (Queen Street)
 -  Directional Sign (Church Street)
 -  Unlisted Pump (Swan Street)
 -  Scheduled Ancient Monument Rectory Road

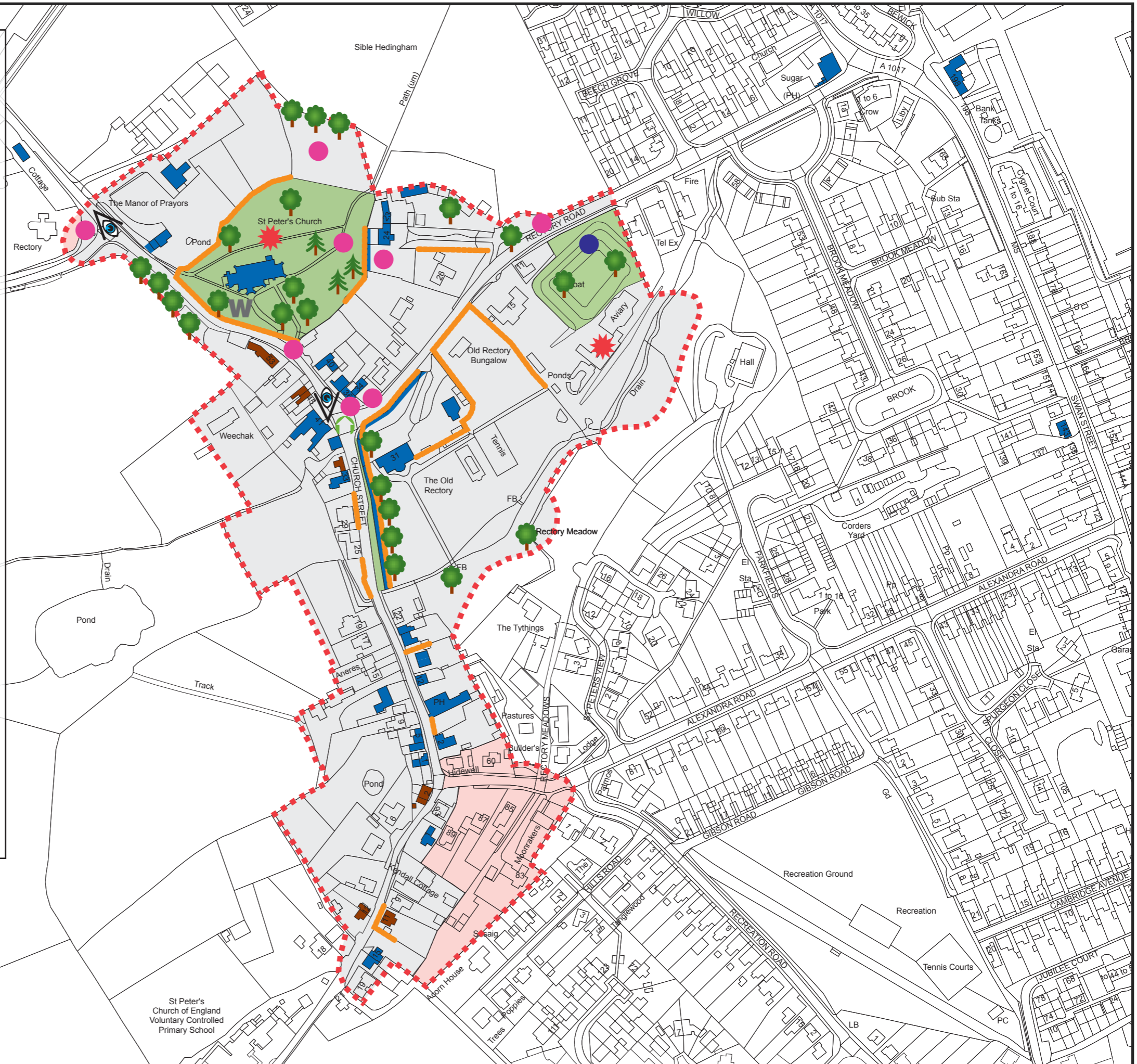


Fig 3. Management Plan
Swan/Potter/Queen/Alderford Streets

KEY



Revised Conservation Area, adopted policies RLP 95, 96 particularly apply



Listed Buildings, adopted policies RLP 99 and 100 particularly apply



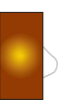
Individual Listed Walls/Railings



Old Rectory boundary wall, status to be clarified with English Heritage.



Other buildings to be protected from demolition, adopted policy RLP 96 applies



Buildings affected by proposed Article 4 Direction removing existing rights to alter/replace windows/other details to be specified



Walls/Railings/Gates to be retained & protected by virtue of (a) being within the curtilage of a listed building or (b) if not listed by virtue of being of the specified height (1metre abutting a highway; 2 metres elsewhere).



Walls/Railings/Gates subject to proposed Article 4 direction removing existing right to demolish

Other distinctive features worthy of Protection



Important open spaces/agricultural gaps to be protected



War Memorial



Important Views, Policy RLP 95 applies



Archaeological Sites, Policy RLP 104 applies



Directional Sign



Unlisted Pump (representation to list will be made)



Victorian Letterbox (representation to list will be made)



Scheduled Ancient Monument, (Rectory Road) Policy RLP 104 applies



Proposed enhancements

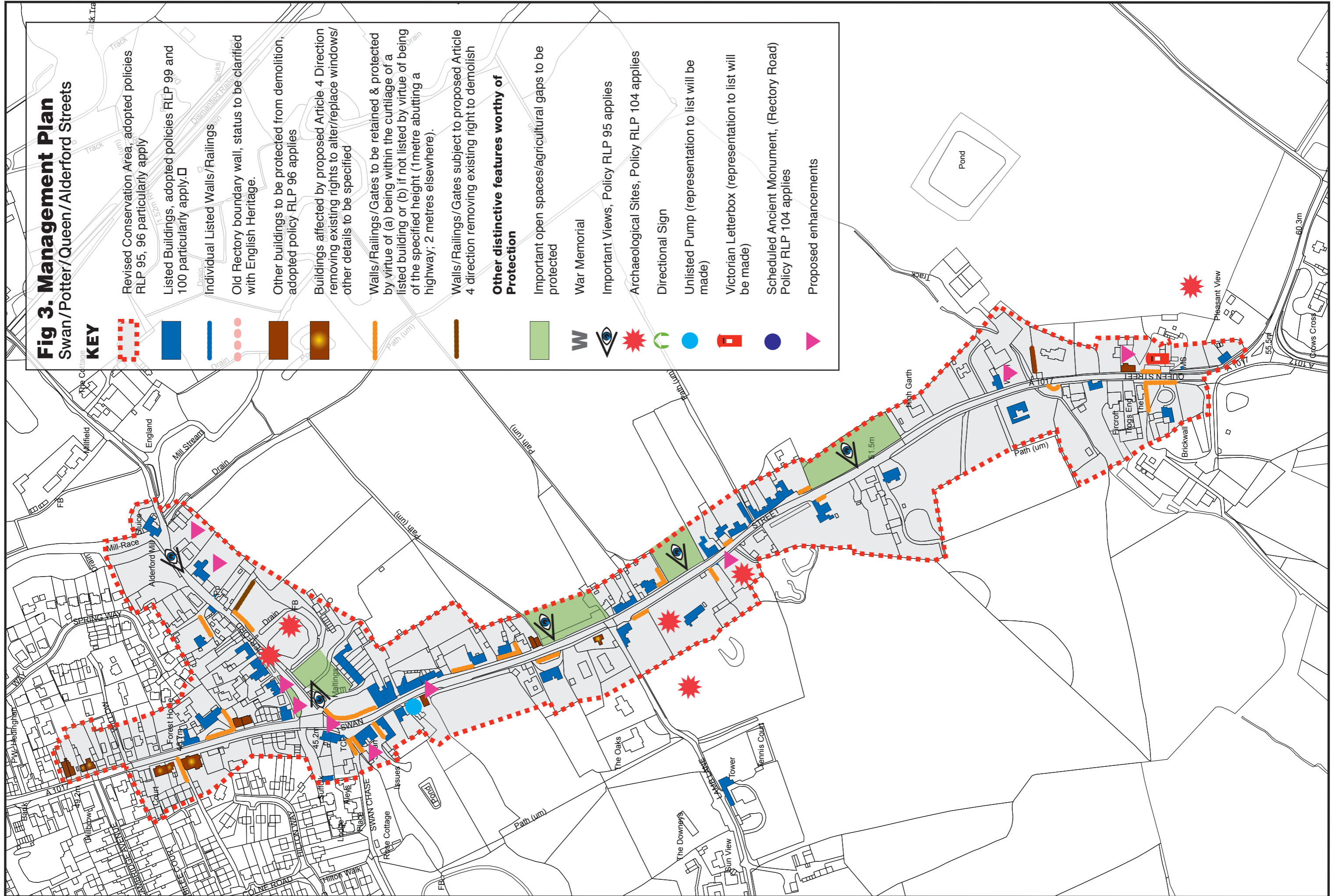


Fig 3a. Management Plan
Church Street

KEY

-  Revised Conservation Area, adopted policies RLP 95, 96 particularly apply
-  Listed Buildings, adopted policies RLP 99 and 100 particularly apply.
-  Individual Listed Walls/Railings
-  Old Rectory boundary wall, status to be clarified with English Heritage.
-  Other buildings to be protected from demolition, adopted policy RLP 96 applies
-  Buildings affected by proposed Article 4 Direction removing existing rights to alter/replace windows/other details to be specified
-  Walls/Railings/Gates to be retained & protected by virtue of (a) being within the curtilage of a listed building or (b) if not listed by virtue of being of the specified height (1metre abutting a highway; 2 metres elsewhere).
-  Walls/Railings/Gates subject to proposed Article 4 direction removing existing right to demolish
- Other distinctive features worthy of Protection**
-  Important open spaces/agricultural gaps to be protected
-  War Memorial
-  Important Views, Policy RLP 95 applies
-  Archaeological Sites, Policy RLP 104 applies
-  Directional Sign
-  Unlisted Pump (representation to list will be made)
-  Victorian Letterbox (representation to list will be made)
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument, Policy RLP 104 applies
-  Proposed enhancements

