

# STAPLEHURST CONSERVATION AREA

## Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



April 2024

Adopted – Nov 2024

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## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

### 1.0. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. The Definition, Purpose, and Effect of Conservation Areas

The concept of Conservation Areas was first brought into being by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, but the relevant legislation now is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This Act places a duty on local authorities to designate Conservation Areas where appropriate and defines a Conservation Area as “an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Designation as a Conservation Area makes additional controls available to the local authority. Briefly these include the control of demolition of unlisted buildings, more restricted permitted development rights for single dwelling houses and protection of trees.

In addition to these enhanced powers, the local authority is also required when dealing with applications for planning permission to have special regard to the question of whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area. (Section 72.1 of the Act). There is a presumption that developments which would not preserve or enhance this special character should be refused planning permission.

The designation of a Conservation Area and the protection of its significance, which includes its setting, is included within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF recognises that Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets, and therefore ‘great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation’ (2023 - para 199). This document is therefore designed to provide some understanding of the significance and a management framework to help protect or enhance the significance.



Figure 1 – High Street, Staplehurst.

## 1.2. Background to the Appraisal

Local authorities are required, by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to carry out reviews of Conservation Area boundaries (Section 69.2 of the Act). This is to consider whether the boundaries should be increased or decreased depending on the continued contribution that the area has to its special character. It will also assist in the process of making informed decisions on planning applications where it is important to value and consider the special character of conservation areas and to preserve or enhance them.

The most appropriate form for fulfilling these requirements is the production of a conservation area appraisal for each individual conservation area.

Historic England published an advisory booklet on the form which conservation area appraisals should take in February 2019 and this current appraisal has been prepared in accordance with these guidelines. It is intended to identify the key elements which combine to produce the special historic and architectural character of the conservation area, to analyse how they interact and impact upon one another and to explain how the area has developed into its current form. It will also seek to identify pressures and developments which threaten the special character of the conservation area and sites and features which detract from its character and appearance.

The clear understanding of the Conservation Area's qualities which the appraisal produces will provide suggestions for future policies and improvements as well as providing a framework against which decisions on individual proposals may be assessed.

## 2.0. HISTORY OF DESIGNATION

Staplehurst Conservation Area was designated by Maidstone Borough Council 26 November 1987. Despite development encroaching on the Conservation Area, the boundary remains unaltered.

The village has expanded from a linear, ribbon development along the Roman Road (now the A229), to a much wider development pattern. The historic core of the village remained relatively unaltered until the development in the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Conservation Area boundary is focused on the historic core of the village, incorporating Surrenden and the village centre to the north of Loddenden Manor, to the junction of Frittenden Road. To the east, the boundary follows the linear development along the High Street, to the eastern boundary of Loddenden Manor, and Chapel Lane, including the pond, along the Hodges Place, the churchyard and Staplehurst House. The south of the boundary is the northern side of the Frittenden Road and returns to the western boundary along the High Street, to include the listed buildings on the western side of the street and the new dwellings along Crowther Close which were built on the former curtilage of Surrenden, which also creates the northern boundary of the conservation area.

The Conservation Area contains a number of the listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Church of All Saints' and the Grade II\* listed Loddenden Hall.

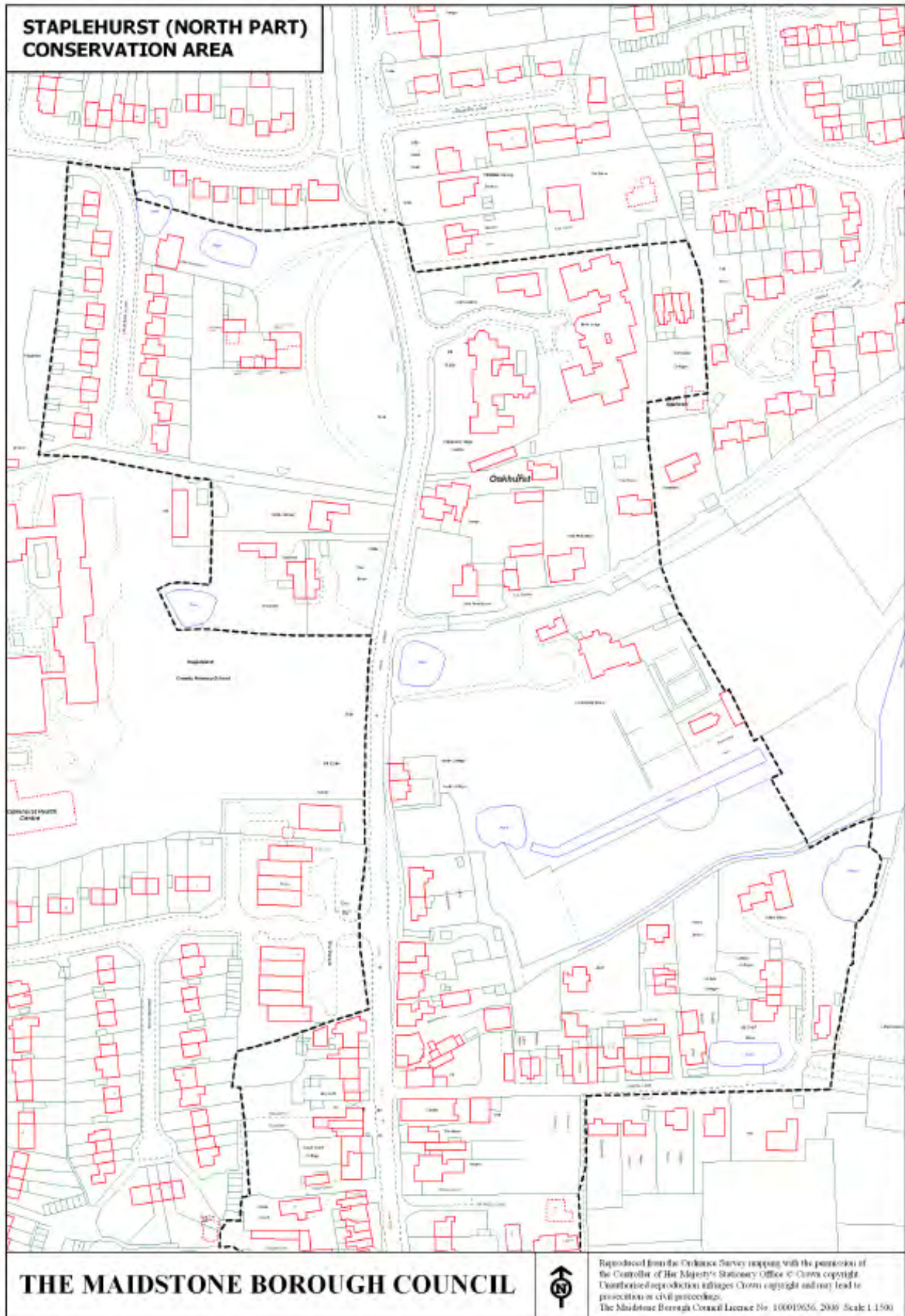


Figure 2 - Current conservation area boundary – north part



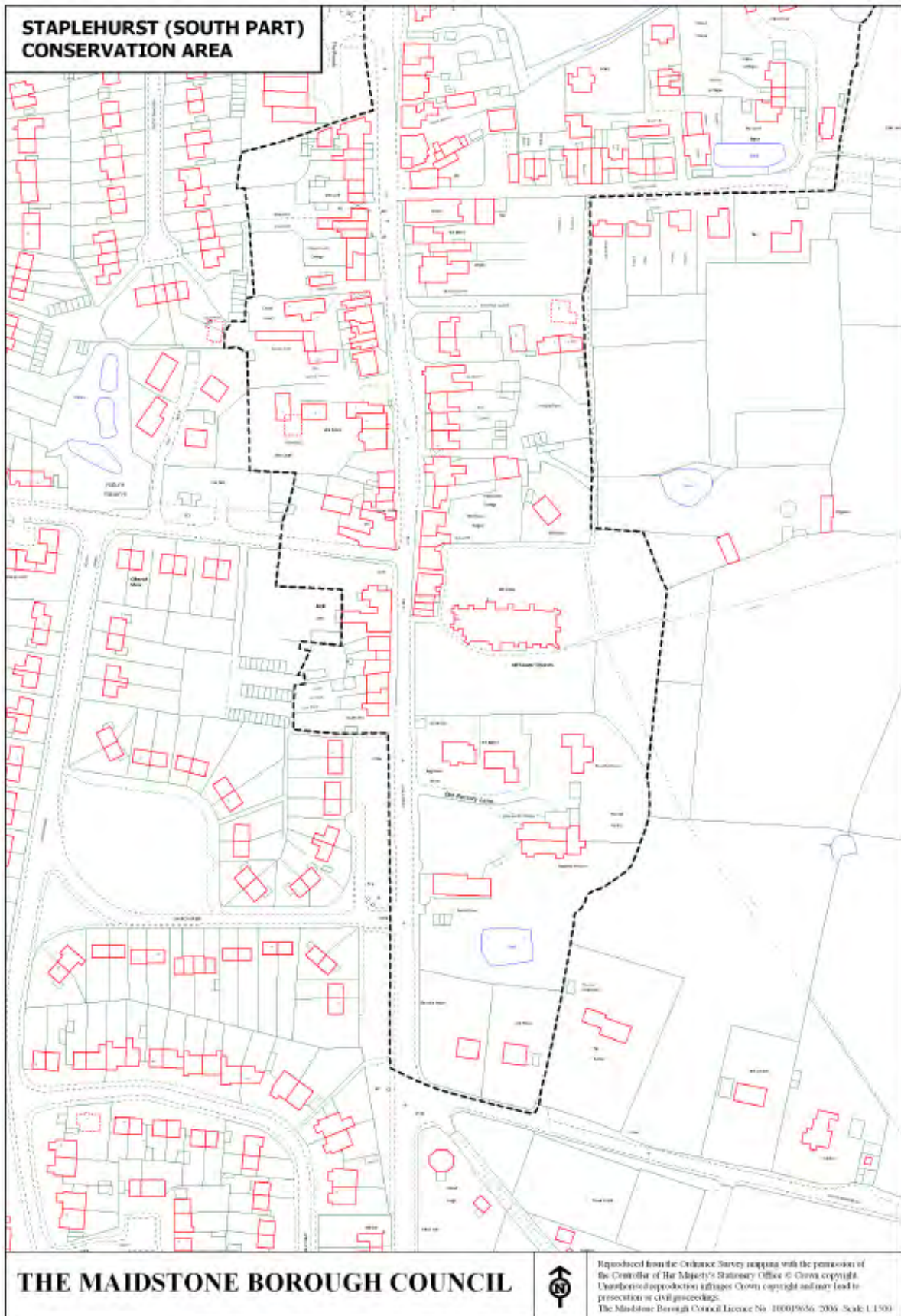


Figure 3 - Current conservation area boundary – south part

### 3.0. GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Staplehurst has two distinct parts, with the Conservation Area focusing on the southern area which is the historic core, and the northern part, sitting outside of the Conservation Area boundary. The northern part of Staplehurst was constructed following the arrival of the railway, and is dominated by Victorian buildings, including a number of attractive detached Villas, and some smaller terraces. The northern section has had further piecemeal infill development, which has impacted the Victorian character of Station Road. Just to the north of the Conservation Area boundary is a pair of attractive Victorian villas set within their own grounds, and they provide a positive contribution to the setting and character of the Conservation Area boundary.

The historic core is focused on All Saints' Church, the High Street, and the large houses of Surrenden (now converted into flats), Loddenden Manor and Staplehurst Manor. In between these larger houses are smaller domestic properties and the retail core of the village, including the one remaining and some former public houses. The village has developed and altered, which is reflected in the architecture, a combination of polite facades and vernacular cottages, which responds to a period of wealth in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that older buildings are screened by their polite façades, with only one building, Crown Cottages, still showing the close studding of the timber frame.

Within the Conservation Area, the northern part is formed of the green boundary treatments and the open spaces of the Staplehurst County Primary School to the west and the gardens of Loddenden Manor to the east. This section is characterised by the large, Victorian buildings, and in particular the Staplehurst Village Centre<sup>1</sup>, an impressive building which was built as the school.

The character has changes slightly as you move south, changing from the larger front gardens to the green verges, and smaller front gardens of the smaller cottages which introduces a more built form. The southern part of the Conservation Area is more focused, with uses dominated by shops and other facilities. Excluded from the Conservation Area is the vibrant and busy modern retail block, The Parade, and the carpark, which help keep the historic core active. The Parade has been excluded due to the architectural style being out of character for the historic core, but its function provides a positive contribution to the setting and character of Staplehurst.

The open space of the modern shops is partially screened by trees which line the main road before the loss of the verges with buildings either built on their front boundary line or with limited front gardens. The church yard brings back open green space, partially screened with trees, that then become dense screening the buildings on Old Rectory Lane. This dense tree and hedge growth continues to the east side of the road until the end of the Conservation Area, and up until the petrol station. To the West, past the historic buildings on the hill, the estate of houses (Church Green) is set back, which protects the longer views from the High Street.

To the south of the Conservation Area boundary is Cricket Lodge, and whilst this has been extended and screened from the road by a fence and hedge, it continues to provide a positive contribution to

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<sup>1</sup> Designed by London Architect T. Hayter Lewis, the ground was bought by the community in 1872 for £220. The construction of the school was over £4,000 and consisted of a Girls and Boys School, Headmasters house and a Head Mistresses house in the centre. The school could accommodate 320 pupils. In 1989 it was purchased by the community and converted into the Community Centre. The Air Raid Shelter within the grounds of the Community Centre was recognised as a NDHA in 2023.

the village. Opposite the Lodge is a small terrace of late 1800s, red brick cottages which provide a contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area.

The village, despite its growth and development, has retained a rural atmosphere, with views into and out of the Conservation Area retaining the agricultural connection to the wider environment. These views contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area by providing a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.



*Figure 4 – view of All Saints' Church from the High Street. The church is set back from the main road, and partially screened by the Grade II listed houses. There were buildings in front of the church with access via the existing path.*

Much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century development was due to Henry Hoare (1807-1866) and his son, William Hoare, following the purchase of Iden Manor in the 1840s. Henry Hoare was a wealthy Fleet Street Banker, and it was noted that 'his overpowering benevolence remoulded the village'. Development did not stop with Henry, as his son built the model cottages at the Quarter, currently outside of the Conservation Area. The Quarter is a group of one and a half storey & two storey, red brick dwellings, and form an attractive group, complimenting Iden Manor opposite. At the end of this group is the Grade II Fuller House, a house noted as having a 'special function' within the listing description and the core dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with early 17<sup>th</sup> extension and late 19<sup>th</sup> century alterations.

The earlier wealth of the village in the early modern period due to woollen industry, which collapsed in c.1650 and the Victorian development form two key periods that reflect the houses and buildings within Staplehurst.



*Figure 5 – The church tower peeps out from behind the terrace of mixed buildings (all Grade II listed). The architectural styles showing the development and wealth of the village.*



*Figure 6 – view of Cricket Lodge and view down Fritterden Road, retaining a rural feel to the approach.*



*Figure 7 – late 1800's cottages outside the conservation but provide a positive contribution to the wider setting.*

#### 4.0. LOCATION AND SETTING

Staplehurst is a village located 9 miles (14 km) south of the town of Maidstone. The village lies on the route of a Roman road, which is now incorporated into the A229.

The village is located on a geological area known as the Low Weald, with the geology formed on Weald Clay Formation, the higher ground near the church being formed of an outcrop of a bed of Limestone (Bethersden Marble). The local environment was previously dominated by swamps, estuaries, and deltas.

The area was originally cleared for the feeding of swine (on acorns from the Wealden Forest). It has subsequently proved to be valuable agricultural land, and this has been the basis of the economy ever since.



Figure 8 – view looking south along the High Street.

## 5.0. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1. Archaeology

There has been very little archaeological investigation carried out either within the conservation area or to the wider area. There has been a settlement near the All Saints' Church since about 1000AD, and records show that taxes were being paid in 1232.

The main road through the settlement is a Roman road, though at present no evidence of Roman settlement has been found. Like many small settlements in the area, Staplehurst is not mentioned within the Domesday Book, though the church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (with later additions), and the earliest dated dwelling dates from c.1390.

### 5.2. Development History

The name Staplehurst comes from the Old English 'stapol' meaning a 'post, pillar' and 'hyrst', as a 'wooded hill'; therefore, 'wooded-hill at a post', a possible reference to a boundary marker at the position of All Saints' church on top of the hill along the road from Maidstone to Cranbrook. Many of the houses surrounding the church are believed to date from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century and have been gentrified during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century with new facades and windows.

The Victorian County History, written in 1798, provides the following, rather unflattering summary:

*THE PARISH of Staplehurst, though healthy like its neighbourhood, is, excepting the village of it, an unpleasant situation, having a gloomy and dreary appearance; the country is low, flat, and miry; the houses dispersed at distances from each other, and along the broad green swerds, and small forstals in it.*

*The village, or street of Staplehurst, is built on each side of the great road, at the 47th milestone from London, being the only part of this parish which can be called tolerably pleasant and dry, being situated on the side of a hill, from the knoll of which it continues to the bottom of it, having the church at the south end of it, and the parsonage-house just below it. The houses are mostly old-fashioned and large timbered; most of them shops, but there are three or four good modern built houses interspersed among them, which stand pleasantly on the hill, having a fine view over the Weald southward,*

*The parish contains about eighty-eight houses, and not quite a thousand inhabitants. The rents of it are about 3000l. per annum. There are two meeting houses; one for the Baptists, the other for the Presbyterians.*

*At the entrance of the village, on the hill, at a small distance from the high road, on the east side of it, is a large antient manor-house, called Loddenden, situated within the borough of its own name. It was lately the property of Mr. Edward Osborne, deceased, and now of his widow, who lives in it.*

[\(Parishes: Staplehurst | British History Online \(british-history.ac.uk\)\)](http://british-history.ac.uk)

The Kelly's Directory's (1882) notes that Staplehurst was 'a parish and village and station on the South Eastern Railway... 5 miles from Cranbrook, 42 miles from London by rail' and provides details of the church and its restoration at the expense of Rev. Thomas Crick and H. Hoare Esq. Within the village there were numerous charities 'derived from land and stocks', together with an endowed charity from Messer's. Gibbons and Bathurst.

Iden, the seat of William Hoare, is mentioned, noting the house as 'a spacious mansion in the Italian style, standing in a park of 150 acres. The manorial rights are divided between Sir Edmund Filmer bart M.P. and St Bartholomew's hospital'. It was quite common for land to be owned by hospitals or colleges as land was donated or bequeathed as a sign of good cause.

bursar of that college. There are Congregational and Baptist chapels. There are charities amounting to about £19 a year, derived from land and stocks and distributed at Christmas and Michaelmas, in bread, coals and clothing; there is also an endowed charity of fluctuating value, given by Messrs. Gibbons & Bathurst, for the education and apprenticing of poor children, this is also derived from land and money in the funds. Iden, the seat of William Hoare esq. is a spacious mansion in the Italian style, standing in a park of 150 acres. The manorial rights are divided between Sir Edmund Filmer bart. M.P. and St. Bartholomews hospital. Viscount Holmesdale, Mrs. Briant, Henry, Charles and William Hoare esqrs. are the chief landowners. The soil is gravel and clay; subsoil the same. The chief crops are wheat, oats, beans and hops. The area is 5,855 acres; rateable value, £13,631; and the population in 1881 was 1637.  
*Parish Clerk, Thomas Bewley.*

Figure 9 – extract of Kelly's Directory highlighting the charities and ownership of the land, 1882.

The directory also shows how many businesses were established within the village, including farmers, hop growers, laundress, boot & shoemaker, and hatter. Among the list are Smith Brothers & Sisters, makers of red kiln and clamp bricks, Alfred Wood, surgeon, and John Jull, who had a variety of services including tea dealer and undertaker.

<p>PRIVATE RESIDENTS. Chapman Thomas, North lodge Clifford Mrs Dickson Capt. Edward, The Bower Gibbons Mrs. South villa Hoare William, Iden ; &amp; University club, St James' street, London s.w Lewis Rev. Isaac [Baptist] McGill Rev. John Henry M.A. [curate], Loddenden cottage Manning Robert Willsher, Slaney pl Oyler Henry, The Limes Reeves Thomas Reeves William Edward, Ely court Reyner Rev. Geo. Fearn D.D. Rectory Thatcher Rev. Thomas [Congregational] Tomsett Mrs Usborne Major Thomas Starling, Loddenden Walter William Hammond, Sussex villa Wildish Ranger, Sorrento Wood Alfred Stephen</p> <p>COMMERCIAL. Allingham William, <i>South Eastern hotel, family &amp; commercial posting house</i> (the night mails stop at this station &amp; letters can be posted till 10.15 p.m.), Railway station Austen John, farm bailiff to Henry Hoare esq. Pagehurst farm Barling Robert, coal merchant &amp; farmer, Fishers Barnes William, farmer &amp; hop grower, Mapleturst Beeching William, beer retailer Bixley Frederic, confectioner Bolding David, farmer &amp; hop grower Broad John, farm bailiff to Mrs. Butcher, Clappers Brooker Mary (Mrs.), laundress, The Quarter Burr Robert, farmer Burr William, beer retailer, Marden rd Buss Horace, boot &amp; shoe maker Chambers John, farmer, Monks farm Chantler J. E. &amp; D. frms. Bounds end Chantler Jesse, farmer &amp; hop grower, Mathurst green Chapman Thomas, farmer, North lodge Chittenden Emily (Mrs.), blacksmith Colgate Thomas, farmer &amp; hop grower, Sweetlands farm</p>	<p>Collison Stephen Loudwell &amp; Philip, farmers &amp; hop growers, Cross at Hand Collison Samuel, farmer, The Plain Cox John, farmer, Chickenden Dorman William, saddler, harness &amp; collar maker Ely William, grocer, baker, provision &amp; corn merchant, The Station Fuller Alfred, farmer, Milking Pail farm Gas Co. (James Walter, sec.) George Elizabeth (Miss), farmer, Little Slaney farm Grant Henry, watch &amp; clock maker Hades Thomas, gardener Greenfield James Wm. com. traveller Harris Edwin John, seedsman Harris John, coach builder, wheelwright, smith &amp; edge tool maker &amp; steam saw mills, Victoria works Hayward Thomas, beer retailer Joy Alb. frmr. &amp; hop grwr. Great Wadd Jull John, general draper, grocer, tea dealer, clothier, hatter, undertaker, insurance agent, stores for glass, china &amp; earthenware &amp; agent for Peak, Pean &amp; Co.'s biscuits Jull John, guano &amp; nitrate of soda mer. &amp; agent for Lawes manures Large James, miller (steam &amp; water), &amp; frmr. &amp; hop grower, Lovehurst mill Law Albert, farmer &amp; hop grower Link &amp; Harris, traction engine &amp; threshing machine proprietors; orders punctually attended to Lodder Henry Roberts, confectioner Manktelow Caleb, farm bailiff to Wm. Hoare esq. Iden farm Manning Robert Willsher, farmer, landowner &amp; hop grower, Slaney pl Milstead Alfred, blacksmith Moss George, farmer, Little Newstead Newington Jas. Baldwin, grocer, cheese-monger &amp; provision dealer, Station Norris Jesse, farm bailiff to Charles Hoare, esq. Sayenden farm Nunn John, tailor, hatter, bookseller &amp; stationer Nunn Martha (Mrs.), grocer Orpin George Robert, corn &amp; seed mer. miller (wind) &amp; farmer; &amp; at Frittenden Pope George Henry, smith, wheelwright &amp; mineral water maker, Crown works</p>	<p>Pearson Joseph, shopkeeper Reeves Ellen (Miss), preparatory school, Mill house Reeves Thomas, assistant overseer &amp; clerk to the school board Reeves Thomas, builder &amp; contractor, coal &amp; timber merchant, &amp; farmer &amp; hop grower Roberts James, farmer, Turley farm Roberts John, haulier Rofe George Vigor, <i>Crown inn</i> Rose Fredk. Chas. farmer, Clapper farm Samson Rebecca (Mrs.), frmr. Moat frm Samson Stephen, farmer, Dorn farm Samson William, farmer, Lit. Pagehurst Sharp Edward, farmer Shoobridge James, builder, contractor &amp; carpenter, Bly court Shoobridge James, grocer Shoobridge Robert, builder Shoobridge William, farmer &amp; hop grower, Chittenden Sisley George, carrier Small Alfred, beer retailer Smith Brothers &amp; Sisters, makers of red kiln &amp; clamp bricks, all kinds of tiles, agricultural drain &amp; socket pipes, &amp; farmers, South Eastern brick &amp; tile works Symonds John, farmer &amp; hop grower, Lovehurst farm Tipples James, farmer &amp; hop grower, Duckpit Tipples William, farmer, Hartsheath Tomlyn John L. timber merchant Tomsett Charles Ingram, <i>King's Head</i> Tomsett John, butcher Walter Charles, farmer &amp; hop grower, Henhurst Walter James, butcher Walter William Hammond, corn &amp; seed factor, cake, manure &amp; hay merchant &amp; agent for T. Chapman &amp; Sons, brewers, Ashford Watson Frederick, photographer Watts Edward, farmer &amp; hop grower, West end farm Weston Nathan, grocer Whitwick Edwin, boot &amp; shoe maker Wickings William, builder Wilson Stephen, beer retailer Wood Alfred Stephen, surgeon</p>
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Figure 10 – Kelly's Directory, 1882, listing the commercial services offered at Staplehurst, including farmers, hop growers, laundress, boot & shoemaker, and hatter.

### 5.3. Map Regression

Map regression is the process of working backwards from later maps to earlier maps of the same area to determine how a place has developed over time. The earliest map of Staplehurst, depicted by the church, and the wider area, dates from 1569.

The early maps from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, while not overly detailed, provide a useful insight into the town's position in relation to the wider area. Later maps, including OS maps from the 19th century, offer a much more detailed view of the town.

#### 5.3.1. Late 1800s

The village is mainly the High Street along with its extension to Bly Court along Chapel Lane. The pattern of fields is one of a patchwork of small plots which come right up to the rear of the properties lining the High Street.



The creation and arrival of the railway was a major change, along with the developments undertaken by the Hoares. The station came into use with the Tonbridge to Ashford section of the South-Eastern Railway's trunk line from Reigate Junction (Redhill) in August 1842.

### 5.3.2. Early Mid 1900s

The village retains the similar footprint, with limited development.

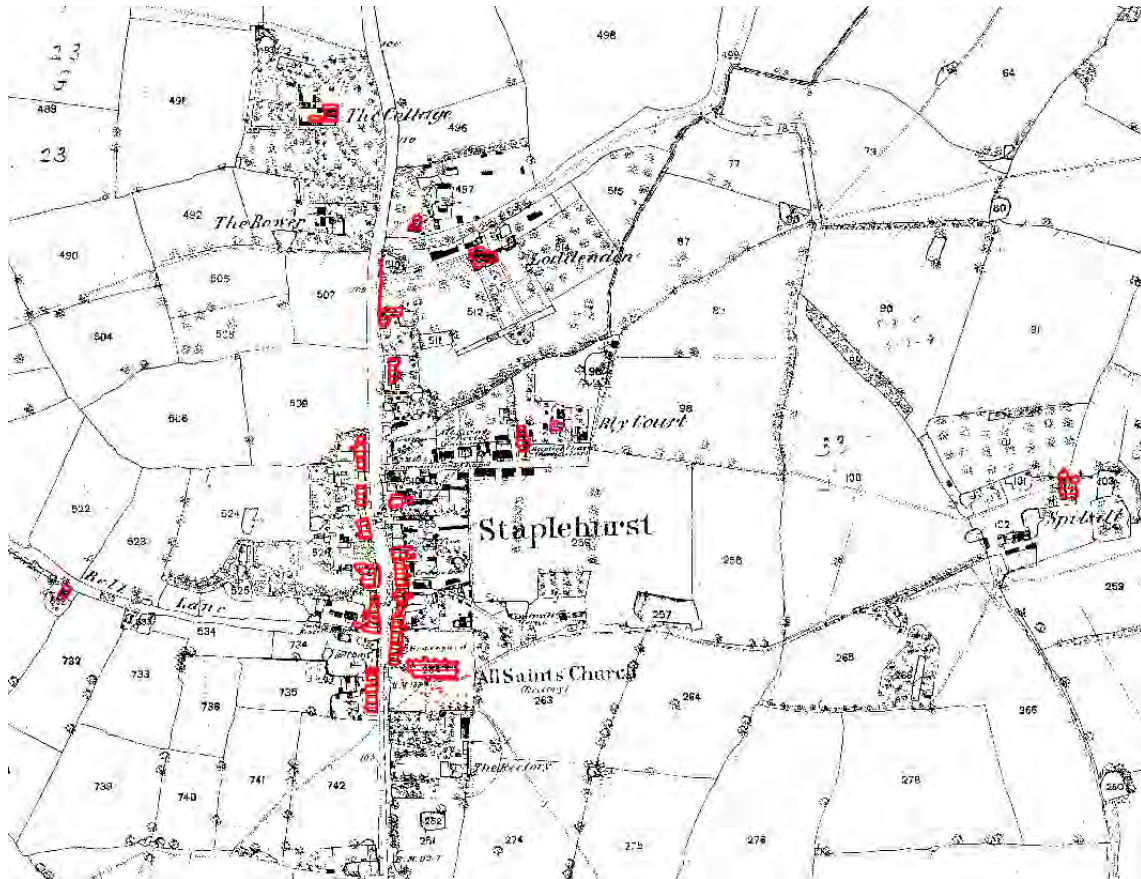


Figure 11 – 1876-1895 Map

Conservation Area Appraisal  
Staplehurst, Maidstone

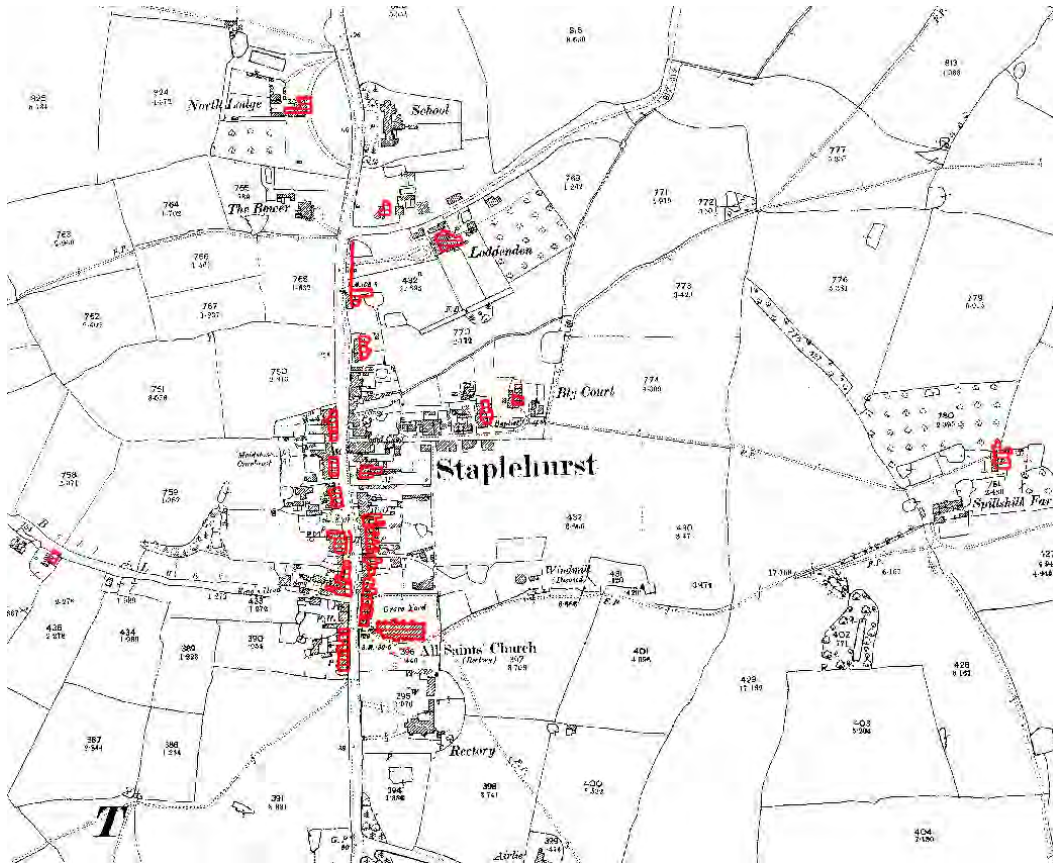


Figure 12 – 1896-1898 map.

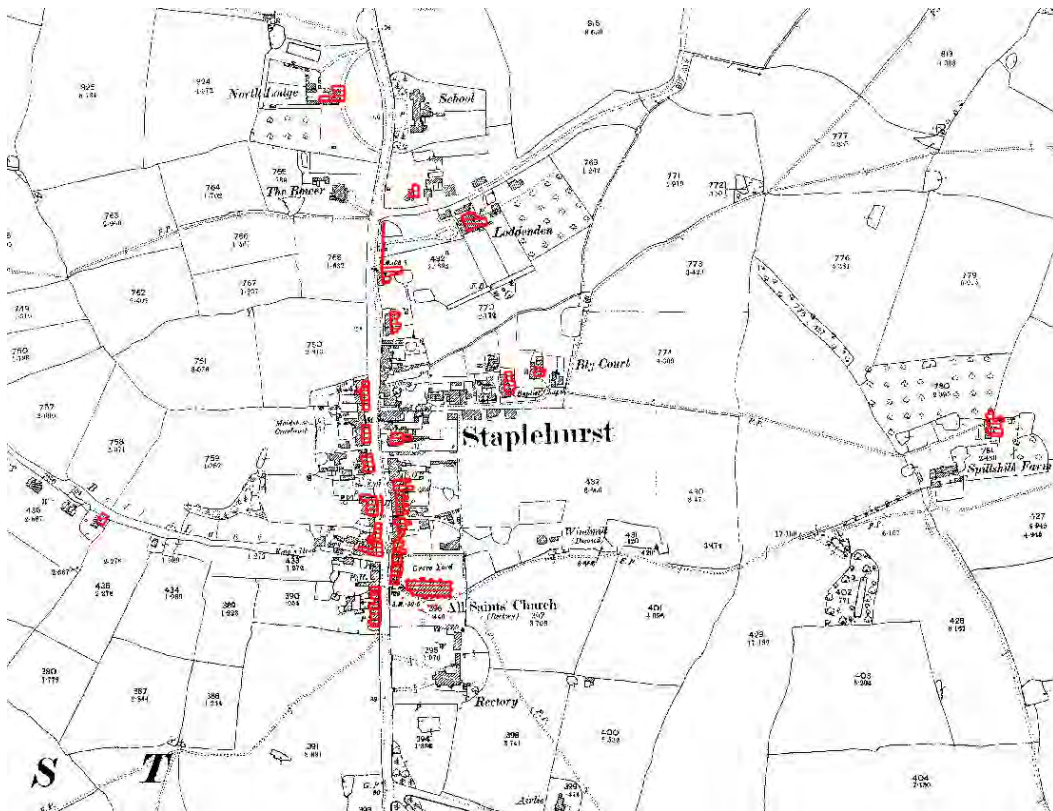


Figure 13 – 1908 map.

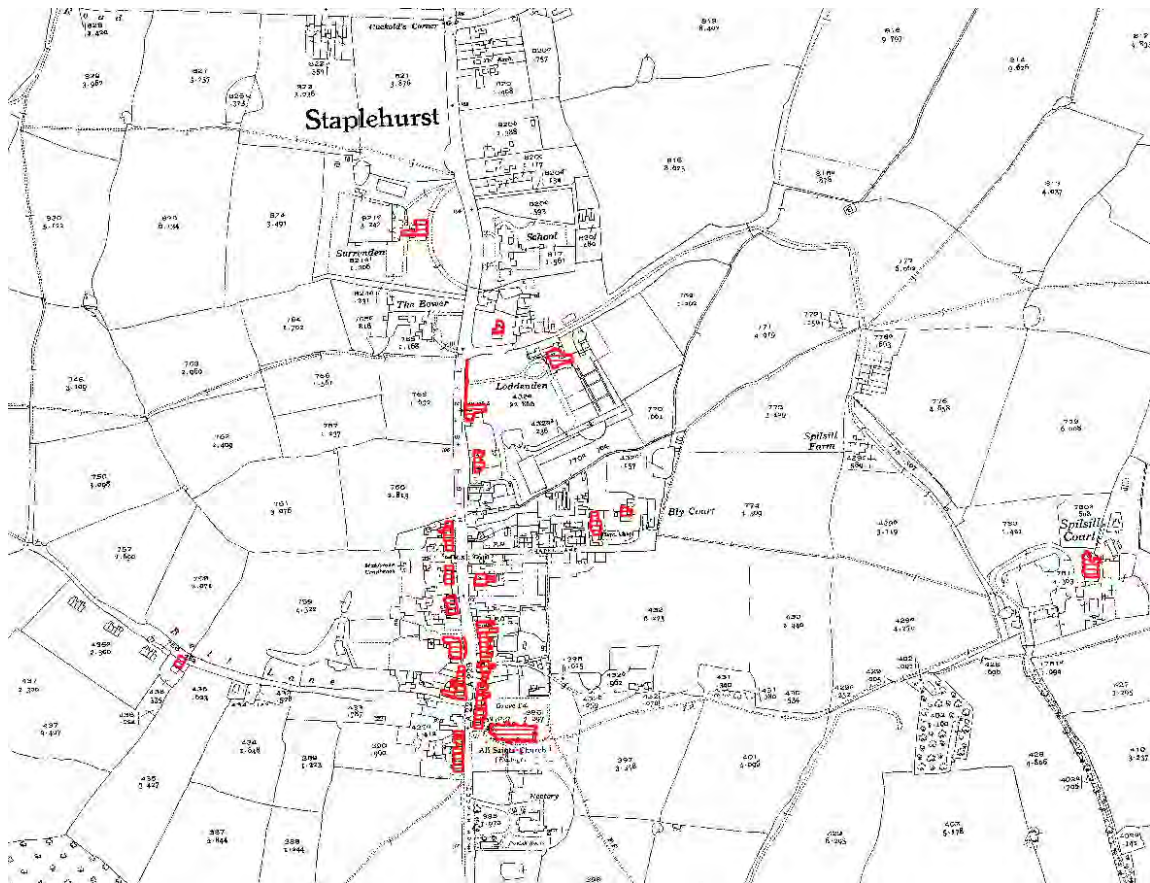


Figure 14 – 1936-1946.

### 5.3.3. Mid - Late 1900s

The 1960s and 70s saw much development within Staplehurst, with developments occurring off the main road through the village, including infill development between the station and Staplehurst Village Centre.

The development pattern focused on Cuckold's Corner, the junction between the A229 and the road that crosses the A229 which links Marden and Headcorn. However, the historic core remained the focus of the village services and facilities, such as the Post Office, health centre, library, parade of shops and public house.

Industrial and employment opportunities replaced the agriculturally based employment with the industrial site to the south of the station and the large supermarket (Sainsbury), which opened in 2022. The High Street retains several local and independent shops, including a butcher.

The High Street remains the main road through the settlement, with the new development occurring off this road. Some of the large houses have been converted into self-contained flats, and this has had an impact on the gardens and the setting of these assets. Iden Manor (not listed) is now under the ownership of a private company, with the Kent and Medway Adolescent Hospital being constructed within the grounds, with Iden Grange (not listed) and the Lake House (Grade II listed) under separate ownership.



Figure 15 – 2022 Google Earth Maps showing the development of Staplehurst and the rural setting. Taken from [Staplehurst - Google Maps](#)

### 5.3.4. Grain Map

A grain map is a good way to show the density of the properties and the built form, together with the open countryside to the east of the core. Loddenden Manor and its grounds can be seen to the north-east, with the Community Centre further north, and the open church yard to the south.

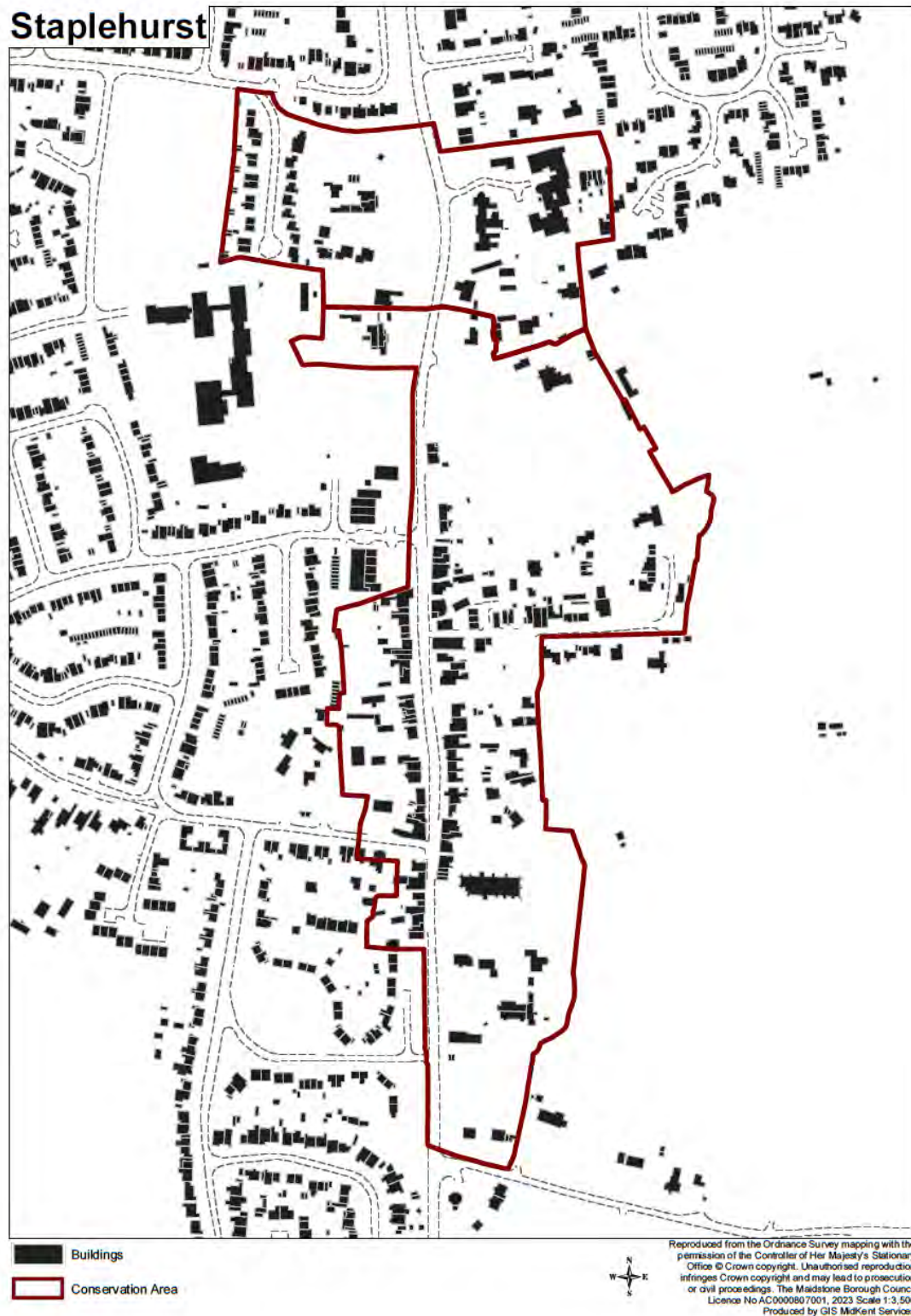


Figure 16 - grain map of Staplehurst

### 5.3.5. Neighbourhood Plan Character Areas

The Neighbourhood Plan provides a good map highlighting the different development period of the houses outside of the conservation area.

## CHARACTER AREAS

The different land uses and building layouts

4.10 The historic heart of the village is located between the crossroads and the All Saints Church on top of the hill. To the north, lies the Station Road character area of brick villas fronting the road. These two areas contain most of the village's essential services and facilities and can be described as the "spine of Staplehurst", providing a distinctive character, structure and definition to the village.

4.11 Attached to this spine, are various areas of predominantly residential development. These are the neighbourhoods that provide good homes for the residents of Staplehurst. New developments need to be of a high quality design that will also add new residential and mixed-use areas of distinctive character for the future.

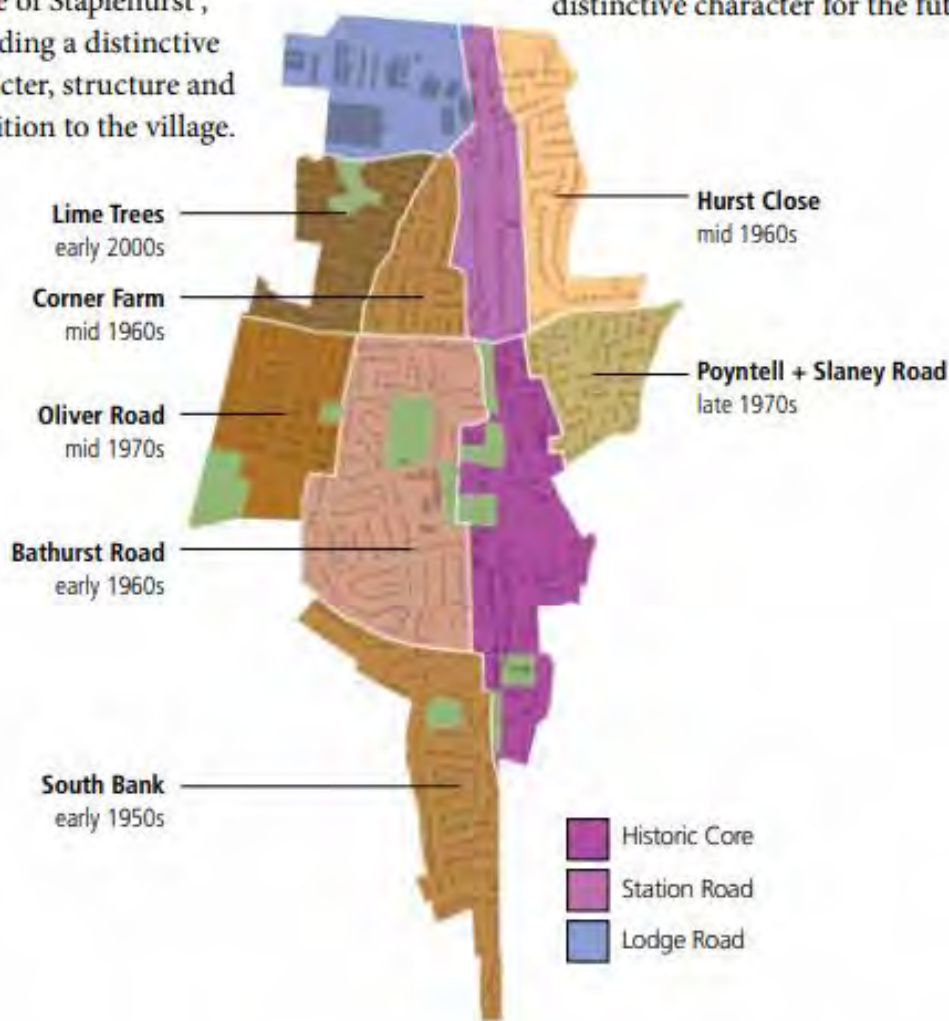


Figure 17 - [Staplehurst-Final-Neighbourhood-Plan.pdf \(maidstone.gov.uk\)](#)

#### 5.4. Now & then photographs



Figure 18 – Loddenden, Staplehurst (undated postcard)



Figure 19 – gates to Loddenden, Staplehurst



*Figure 20 – Identified as The Limes on the image, but is Vine House, along High Street.*



*Figure 21 – The Limes, along High Street. The level of the road has been raised, street lighting removed and a change of the end of terrace. Bomb damage has resulted in some new development. The gradient of the hill was altered in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when the height was reduced by c.600mm to make the hill easier for horse drawn vehicles.*





Figure 22 - The Limes, along High Street.



Figure 23 - High Street.



Figure 24 – High Street.



Figure 25 – High Street.



Station Road, Staplehurst.

*Figure 26 – Station Road.*



Figure 27 - Victorian Coach Works, Chapel Lane.



Figure 28 - Victorian Coach Works, Chapel Lane.

### 5.5. The Extension to the Conservation Area



Figure 29 – The Quarter, and Fuller House, the timber framed house opposite Iden Manor.



Figure 30 – Lodge to Iden Manor (at the time of the research was empty).



Figure 31 – Iden Manor.

## 6.0. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 6.1. High Street Character Area

This area is focused on the High Street, a linear road that follows the undulating landscape. When approaching from the south, along Cranbrook Road, the historic core of the village is screened by the topology, with the Quarter, to the west, though this is mostly screened by trees and the Lodge to Iden Manor introducing the built environment. Much of this is softened with established trees and hedges before the infill dwellings and the new development (Pinnock Lane) showing more substantial development. The main road continues with hedges and trees, but with more urban features as road markings and bus shelters, and then the Petrol Station. Past the petrol station, the more urban influence is replaced with the attractive Parkview and Hillside, the red brick Victorian dwellings, and the established trees and hedges up to the turning of Frittenden Road and the Cricket Lodge.

The boundary line to the conservation area starts on the north side of Frittenden Road and includes the first two properties, which are modern, Georgian inspired detached houses set within their own grounds and partially screened from the public realm by high, established hedges.



*Figure 32 – view looking north towards the Conservation Area boundary along Cranbrook Road.*



*Figure 33 - view looking north towards the Conservation Area boundary along Cranbrook Road.*

Cranbrook Road turns into the High Street. To the east is the former (Parish) Readings Room, a small, simple structure, set within its own grounds, which provides a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Continuing along the High Street there are views into the main core of the historic village, with the All-Saints Church to the east and terraces of two storey buildings to the west. The raised pavements to this section have handrails, which creates a linear vision along the road.



*Figure 34 – the first of the historic buildings and the crown of the High Street.*





*Figure 35 – The Parish Reading Rooms, and home to the Learning Tree Nursery.*

The Conservation Area boundary continues along the High Street with Kent Cottage forming the end of the terrace with the exposed timber frame gable facing the street. Adjacent to these is the Old Bell Inn, a Grade II listed (former?) public house. The area widens to the west to include Chapel Lane, with the former Coachworks which can be seen on the 1876-95 OS map and the Grade II listed buildings of Providence Strict Baptist Chapel and Bly Court Manor (16<sup>th</sup> century).

The terraces continue to the north of Bell Lane and the Conservation Area boundaries dissect part of the rear garden (formed into a car park) to the Grade II listed The Kings Head. The group of buildings continue, many of which are Grade II listed, apart from the modern, single storey unit (containing a Chiropractor). Within this group is the distinctive Vine House, formerly Lime House, a three storey, buff brick, five bay dwelling, and dates from the late 1700s or early 1800s, with later 1800s alterations. Since its construction, it has been converted into three properties.

The simplicity of the more vernacular appearance of the buildings have had minimal gentrification during the Georgian period, which contributes to the character with their mix of chimneys and roofs and fenestration details.

The pre-1896 building line is only broken when it approaches the modern (c.1960s) retail development, The Parade, with the parking in front. Whilst this is excluded from the conservation area, the complex should be recognised of development of its time and enables the village to remain a busy, active place.



Figure 36 – Bell Inn. Taken from [\*Bell Hotel, Staplehurst \(closedpubs.co.uk\)\*](http://Bell Hotel, Staplehurst (closedpubs.co.uk))



Figure 37 – Limes Terrace, with brick to the ground floor and hanging tiles to the first floor.

The east side of the High Street is relatively screened with boundary hedges until it opens with All Saints' Church and its church yard, both of which are set back from the main building line. The Old

Rectory is accessed via a single-track lane to the south of church. Old Rectory Lane has two new, detached houses on the north side, with the Old Rectory shown on the first OS map.

To the north of the church, and providing some screening, is a row of simple, two-storey cottages, whose back gardens are within the church yard. The first group of three is formed of red, handmade brick to the ground floor, with painted timber weatherboarding to the first floor. The side elevation to No 1. overhangs the footpath to the church. The pedestrian footpath along these cottages is raised from the road, and continues to Hill House, a two storey, red brick dwelling of 5 bays plus one recess bay with large overhanging eaves. This Grade II listed dwelling was formerly a house and post-office, and dates with the early/mid 1700s, though possibly with earlier core.

The properties to the north of Hill House are set back from the main road and have small front gardens with hedges forming the boundary treatments. These two properties have large central chimney stacks, indicating that they may be lobby entrance houses, older than the front elevation indicates. Tanyard House (GII) has been extended to form the Butchers shop. Linked to these buildings is a row of exposed timber framed, mid 1500s houses, with close studding and painted infill panels. Referred to as Crown Cottages, they were formerly an inn which was damaged in 1944 when a flying bomb-damaged a nearby farmhouse.

The next group of buildings return to sitting on the front boundary line, with a simple shop, with attractive shop front and an attached house.

To the north of these, the character changes again, with modern dwellings, Fir Tree Close, set back within their own plot. The front boundary is formed of a hedge and low-level brick wall, which protect the view of the hardstanding/ parking.

Opposite these, are a row of four, two-storey dwellings with brick to the ground floor and hanging tiles to the first floor. Adjoining these is a three storey, Victorian red brick house, an access to the rear. The ground floor is currently used as a hairdresser.

The style changes here from the small red brick and timber framed buildings to the painted render dwellings. The west side is lower, with external chimney stacks, indicating that there is an older building within the core, which contrasts with the two-storey, three bay house with pilasters, set within its own grounds.

### **6.1.2. General character**

There have historically been two key periods of development within Staplehurst. The first during the Early Modern period through the wool trade, which saw several important buildings constructed, not only along Cranbrook Road/ High Street, but within the wider area. Many of these have been subject to Gentrification, with the re-fronting of the façades and the insertion of the timber sash windows.

The second period was after the purchase of Iden Manor by Henry Hoare, where his beneficent works continued under his son, William. This development introduced several Victorian buildings, including the community buildings, such as the Reading Rooms and the domestic terraces.

From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, more extensive development has been undertaken, with the development of the surrounding housing, and the conversion of the larger houses either into flats,

or finding an alternative use, such as Care Home. This combination has created a mix of housing types and architectural styles, contrasting with the small vernacular and the larger polite houses. Fir Tree Close was built on the site of the farmhouse that was destroyed by the flying bomb in 1944.

The width of the main road forms an important role within the character of the area, allowing the heavy traffic to coexist with locals and visitors going about their business on foot without a feeling of congestion. The road is extremely busy and used by large lorries. However, due to the sections of hedges and the established trees within sections of the High Street it prevents the character feeling like an urban development.

The views through the Conservation Area are linear due to the development and the topology, but where seen, the longer views south is of open landscape and the fields that allowed for the initial growth and wealth of the settlement. The views north show the mid-1800s development, with the former school (Community Centre) and the Victorian Villas.

### **6.1.3. Materials**

The typical external materials used throughout the Conservation Area are generally a mix of red brick (sometimes chequered or painted), render, weatherboarding, with limited tile hanging.

Kentish Ragstone is common for boundary walls, and low-level plinths to dwellings and other buildings, such as the Kings Head and the Community Centre.

Roofs are almost universally red plain tiles, though with some of the later buildings, slate has been introduced. Chimney stacks are generally fairly modest features in red brick. The roof forms are generally simple pitched roofs, and it is the exception that gables face the road. Dormer windows to the front elevation are confined to a few properties, and these are small, generally pitched dormers, with either a lead or render sides. All have casement windows, showing that they were lower status spaces.

The materials show a distinctive divide between the social hierarchy of the buildings, and their placement along the main road. The small cottages are predominantly painted timber weatherboarding. The slightly larger cottages are a soft red brick or painted render. The Victorian development is a of a slightly larger scale, in a darker red brick.



*Figure 38 – examples of tiles, bricks, chimney stacks and weatherboarding.*

Windows vary greatly in size and proportions, but the pervading styles are Georgian multi pane or Victorian sash frames. It is impossible to identify a style of entrance doors as there is a huge variation in appearance of mostly modern replacements. Several properties have small projecting bay windows to the ground floor, some built under the jetties of the timber framed buildings, such as Lambs Inn Cottage. Within this older row opposite the church are a collection of oriel windows to the ground and first floor.

There is a very consistent building height throughout the village. Two storeys are the norm sometimes with attics. Single storey is rare. Unlike many of the rural villages, there are several landmark buildings within Staplehurst, with the church having a more discreet role when compared with others. The key buildings are The Limes, Hill House, Loddenden Manor, and the Community Centre.

The parish council has been very careful to ensure that the streets are not cluttered with signage, lighting, and street furniture. The result is successful as this element, so often intrusive, is very much in the background here.



*Figure 39 – hedges and boundary treatments*

#### **6.1.4. Hedges and Fences**

There is a combination of large, established gardens and smaller front gardens, with verges and boundary hedges providing some protection between the High Street and the smaller cottages and footpath. These are important and a positive feature within the Conservation Area and its setting.

Ragstone walls also contribute to the character of the area, particularly to the Loddenden Manor (which are Grade II listed) and the retaining walls for the footpaths, such as by the church. Low level brick walls and metal railings have also been used.

#### **6.1.5. Footpaths and Roads**

The footpaths are mainly laid to tarmac, with some areas retaining a stone paving slabs which have worn and weathered to give a softer appearance. The footpaths make an important contribution to the character of the area as they follow the linear views.

### **6.2. Church Character Area**

Set back from the High Street, the churchyard and church form a small private area of open space, away from the busy road and the domestic built form. Set on slightly higher ground, the church yard contains 14 Grade II listed monuments, one to the north of the church, and the remaining to the south.

Within the ground are a few mature trees, but perhaps most unusual is that the rear of Church Gate Cottages back directly onto the church yard, with the part of the church yard forming the back garden for these cottages.



Figure 40 – Church



Figure 41 – notice on the side of Church Gate Cottages to prevent obstruction on the pavement leading to the church.

### 6.3. Iden Manor Character Area

This was once a large, country estate, with the Lodge forming the entrance to the site, with the winding drive to the manor house, set within its own landscape and gardens. Opposite the Lodge is The Quarter. The character of Iden Manor still retains that of a country estate, complete with its former home farm (formerly Iden Farm).

### 6.4. Characteristic features of the Conservation Area

<b>Boundary Treatment</b>	<b>Area</b>
Picket fences	<i>Generally limited to side roads</i>
Brick walls	<i>Low-level walls common for smaller cottages</i>
Ragstone walls	<i>Common along High Street and Church yard</i>
Hedges	<i>Common along High Street</i>
Iron railings	<i>Limited in sections, such as raised paths and some dwellings</i>

<b>Materials</b>	<b>Area</b>
Red brick	<i>All</i>
Ragstone	<i>Walls and low-level plinths Higher status buildings</i>
Timber	<i>Exposed timber in some places, most has been covered</i>
Slate tiles	<i>Rear construction</i>
Clay tiles	<i>Much of the CA</i>
Plain tiles	<i>Much of the CA</i>
Weatherboarding	<i>Cottages</i>
Tile hung cladding	<i>Limited feature, Lime Terrace and some side elevations</i>



<b><i>Architectural features</i></b>	<b><i>Area</i></b>
Sash windows	<i>All</i>
Casement windows	<i>All</i>
Close studding	<i>High Street</i>
Venetian windows	<i>None</i>
Bay windows	<i>High Street</i>
Dormer windows	<i>High Street</i>
Leaded light windows	<i>High Street</i>

<b><i>Public Realm and Street Furniture</i></b>	<b><i>Area</i></b>
Asphalt	<i>Paths</i>
Planters	<i>High Street</i>

<b><i>Built Form</i></b>	<b><i>Area</i></b>
Detached properties	<i>All</i>
Terraced properties	<i>All</i>
Semi-detached properties	<i>All</i>

### **6.5. Setting of the Conservation Area**

Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023), the setting of a heritage asset can form part of the significance of a heritage asset.

The views into and out of the Conservation Area are discussed in Section 8, and these should be considered with any proposed future development to ensure that they protected.

The use of materials and design form can impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, and this is discussed further in Section 14.

## 7.0. AUDIT OF ASSETS


A detailed description of the significant buildings and sites within the conservation area follows. These descriptions are based on examination from the street and historic map analysis. Buildings have not been examined internally or from non-public viewpoints.

Buildings and structures have been assessed according to their value, historically or architecturally, to the character of the conservation area. They have been graded as follows:

- Essential - buildings/sites which, because of their high architectural or historic interest or townscape function, must be retained.
- Positive - buildings/sites which contribute positively to the character and interest of the conservation area and whose retention should be encouraged wherever possible. Some buildings in this grade may have suffered from unsympathetic alteration but could be restored to their original appearance relatively easily
- Neutral – buildings/sites which do not harm the character of the area but whose retention is not necessary. Replacement developments should be designed to enhance the conservation area
- Negative - buildings/sites which harm the area’s character where re-development would be advantageous.

A NDHA is a Non-designated Heritage Asset

Asset	Status	Description	Value
Staplehurst Village Centre	NDHA	Originally built as the village school, it was purchased by the village to become the village community centre. Strong architectural style.	Positive
Air Raid Shelter		Within the grounds is an Air Raid Shelter, and this has been recognised as a NDHA	Positive
Oaks Farmhouse	Grade II 1372044	Farmhouse, now house. C17 or earlier, with mid C19 addition and facade.	Essential
Oaks Farm barn	NDHA		Positive
The Stables (Oaks Farm)			Positive
Loddenden Manor	Grade II* 1040054	House. Built, probably in several stages, during mid-to-late C16 and early C17. Restored circa 1912.	Essential
Railing & Gates to Loddenden Manor	Grade II 1344401		Essential


North & South Cottages	Grade II 1060722	House or house row. C17.	Essential
Little Loddenham (1 & 2 High Street)	Grade II 1040049	House pair. C17, with late C18 or early C19 addition and facade.	Essential
Sycamore Cottage	NDHA	Simple, linear, weatherboarded cottage	Positive
Parade of 2 Shops (Little Loddington House)	NDHA	Simple, vernacular, two storey building, with painted render front, possible timber framed.	Positive
Chapel House and Providence Street Baptist Chapel, Chapel Lane	Grade II 1049056	House and Baptist chapel. House C17 or early C18, chapel C19.	Essential
			
Bly Court Manor, Chapel Lane	Grade II 1060739	House. Later C16.	Essential
URC Church	NDHA	Red brick chapel of 1825, extended west towards the High Street in 1889	Positive
The Manse	NDHA	Two-storey Victorian villa, typical of its period, provides a positive contribution to the character of the area.	Positive
Minton House (Former Surgery)	Grade II 1060721	House. Early-to-mid C19	Essential



Crampton	Grade II 1240415	House and shop. C16 or earlier timber framed building refronted in late C19.	Essential
1, 2, 3 Crown Cottages	Grade II 1372026	House row, possibly formerly an inn. Mid C16, restored early C20.	Essential
Butcher	Grade II 1344400	House and shop. C17 or earlier, possibly of 2 periods, with mid-to- late C19 facade.	Essential




Wimborne House	Grade II 1060720	House, formerly house and shop, now house. C16 or earlier, with C17, C19 and C20 alterations.	Essential
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Hill House, steps, and railings	Grade II 1187162	House, formerly house and post-office. Early/mid C18, possibly with earlier core, and with C19 alterations.	Essential
Aysgarth (Former Dixon's Stores)	Grade II 1344399	House and shop. C16 or early C17, with later alterations.	Essential
No 4, Peter Jones opticians, and premises to rear	Grade II 1187139	House, with shop and offices. Late C16 or early C17, with C18 wing, mid C19 facade, and later alterations.	Essential
1, 2, 3 High Street	Grade II 1060719	House or special-purpose building, formerly house and shops, now house row. Early C17 or earlier, with late C18 or early C19 facade, and later alterations.	Essential
All Saints' Church	Grade I 1060713	Parish church. Late C12, C13, C14 and C15, with alterations of 1853 and 1876.	Essential
			
Staplehurst House & The Old Rectory	NDHA		Positive
Parish Rooms	NDHA		Positive



South View, East View, and formerly Redbar Electrical Ltd.	Grade II 1060723	House pair and shop, probably formerly an inn. C16, with later alterations.	Essential
Rosemary, Hill Crest, formerly Craybrook Studios, and Kent Cottage (formerly separately listed as Two Cottages adjoining to the north of South Stores, and as Hilltop)	Grade II 1372033	House row with shop. Late C16 or early C17, with probably later single-bay addition (Rosemary) to left, and with C19 alterations	Essential
Bell Cottage, steps and handrail (Bell Inn)	Grade II 1060724	Part of public house, now house. Late C16 or early C17.	Essential
The King's Head Hotel (formerly listed as The King's Head Inn)	Grade II 1060725	Public house. C16, with alterations of 1671, C18 and C19.	Essential
No. 7 and former shop and house adjoining to south (formerly listed as premises occupied by Mather and premises occupied by E.G. Wood and house attached)	Grade II 1369992	House row with shop. C17 or early C18, with mid-to-late C19 alterations.	Essential

Formerly Page and Wells Estate Agents. (Formerly listed as premises occupied by C.E. Goodsell and house attached	Grade II 1060726	House and shop. C18 or early C19, with C19 and C20 alterations.	Essential
			
Vine House	Grade II 1045895	House. Late C18 or early C19, with later C19 alterations. Now three dwellings.	Essential
Railings about 3 metres east of Vine House	Grade II 1060727	Railings. Late C18 or early C19	Essential
Nos 1-3 Limes Terrace and formerly Dr. Davies Surgery	Grade II 1045873	House row. C17 or earlier, possibly with later additions to right, and with C19 facade. Ground floor red and grey brick, banded plain and fishscale tiles to first floor.	Essential
Green Court and Green Court Cottage (formerly listed as Green Court House and Green Court Cottage)	Grade II 1060728	House or house row, now house row. C17 or earlier, with C18 and C19 alterations.	Essential

Drey Cottages	Grade II	House pair, C18 or earlier.	Essential
			
Poppy's Day Nursery (formerly Saddlery Stores and Little London Cottage	Grade II 1060729	House pair and shop. C18, with C19 alterations.	Essential
Chestnut Cottage and Staplehurst (formerly Kingswood) Chemists	Grade II 1045826	House pair, now house and shop. Late C18 or early C19.	Essential
The Bower	NDHA		Positive
Surrenden	Grade II 1344402	House, formerly house pair, now apartments. Early-to-mid C19.	Essential



### Iden Manor and Extension

Asset	Status	Description	Value
Cricket Lodge	NDHA	Characterful, corner dwelling, with veranda, typical of the Picturesque or Cottage Orn�e.	Positive
Petrol Station & Garage		Modern development (excluded from the CA)	Negative
Victoria Lodge	NDHA	Mock-Tudor entrance lodge, brick to the ground floor, with stone surrounds and timber frame to the upper floor.	Positive
Maple Cottage & Oak Cottage			
Lake House	Grade II 1039872	House constructed late C17, with C19 alterations.	Positive
Winthrope Hall			
Iden Manor			
Iden Manor Farm			
Iden Grange Cottages			
Iden Grange			
Fuller House Fullers	Grade II 1060745	House, possibly with a special function, dated to the C16, with early C17 addition and late C19 alterations. Timber frame.	Positive
Shepherds House		Modern, two storey dwelling	Neutral
18 - 22 Cranbrook Road		Modern, detached, two storey dwellings	Neutral
14 -17 Cranbrook Road		Group of 3 terrace houses, with gable details to the front elevation.	Positive
11 – 13 Cranbrook Road	NDHA	Timber frame dwelling, now as 3.	Positive
Ashgrove – pair of Villas – 9 & 10 Cranbrook Road		Pair of simple, Victorian, brick built semi-detached houses	Positive
7 & 8 Cranbrook Road		Single storey, Victorian, brick semi-detached dwellings	Positive
5 & 6 Cranbrook Road		Single storey, Victorian, brick semi-detached dwellings	Positive
3 & 4 Cranbrook Road		Single storey, Victorian, brick semi-detached dwellings	Positive
1 & 2 Cranbrook Road		Originally ingle storey, Victorian, brick semi-detached dwellings but later, 2-storey extensions formed	Positive
1 – 4 Garden Close		Included due to historic boundary line	Neutral

## 8.0. APPROACHES AND VIEWS

The area around Staplehurst, known as the Low Weald, is an area of long gently undulating slopes with few significant hills in the distance. However, the views into the built form are limited due to the placement of the village and the surrounding topology. The open, agricultural nature of the wider setting and the contrasting landscape of Iden Manor to the south, forms a key part of the character of this lively, busy village. The wider setting to north of the village is formed with the twisting country lane, spotted with small groups of dwellings, farmhouses and the large 'The Towers'. Once in the village boundary, the northern part outside of the Conservation Area has been previously discussed, with the linear Roman road forming the link through from the station to the historic core and beyond.

Within the Conservation Area, the views are dictated by the linear road, with either the built form or the established trees and gardens. The subtle variety of the ridge and eaves heights add visual interest, where the built form is visible. Where the road offers gentle bends, the views are generally of natural form of the trees and hedges. The creation of some boundary treatments, such as solid timber fences, have had a negative impact and lower the impact (and its associated social status) of the boundary wall of ragstone and railings to Loddenden Manor.



*Figure 42 – view looking south from the High Street, the linear road very clear.*



Figure 43 – view looking from entrance to Iden Manor towards the village.



Figure 44 – from the modern retail space looking north. The width of the road provides some indication of the wealth of the village.

Heading from the south, the open agricultural land, and the grounds of Iden Manor form a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area. The Lodge and the Quarter form part of an important estate, though the cohesion and uniformity that these would have once had are now lost due to their being under separate ownership.

Approaching from the south, the petrol station provides a negative impact, but responds to the changing needs of the occupants, as does the Sainsburys to the north of the Conservation Area. Past the petrol station, the rural nature returns.

Views that include the views towards the Church, around and from the Church, and to Iden Manor are considered exceptionally, as these remain relatively unaltered since the major Victorian building works. These are long views due to the topology or the open countryside.

Within the Conservation Area, it is the mix of tree and hedges and the sections of built form that create the views which contribute to the character.

#### 9.0. ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

The character of a Conservation Area can suffer significantly from the cumulative impact of 'minor alterations' which can be carried out to single dwelling houses as permitted development under the General Permitted Development Order without the need for planning permission. Such alterations can include replacement windows and doors and re-roofing using inappropriate non-traditional materials.



*Figure 45 - UPVc double glazed windows change the character of the building, and cause harm to the Conservation Area.*

The Local Planning Authority can seek to bring such minor alterations under planning control using Directions under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order. Article 4 Directions can increase the public protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings. They are not necessary for works to listed buildings and scheduled monuments as listed building

consent and scheduled monument consent would cover all potentially harmful works that would otherwise be permitted development under the planning regime. However, Article 4 Directions might assist in the protection of all other heritage assets (particularly conservation areas) and help the protection of the setting of all heritage assets, including listed buildings.

At present there is no Article 4 Directive in place for the Conservation Area. This will be reviewed separately to consider whether there is a need for an Article 4 Directive to prevent the increased use of:

- UPVc double glazed windows
- Alterations to roof forms
- Creation of porches
- Gates and fence enclosures treatment
- Creation of hardstanding to the front elevation for parking.

### **9.1. Green Spaces and Tree Preservation Orders**

At present, a number of green spaces and trees have Tree Preservation Orders on them to protect some of the open space and established trees. This includes the verge to the northern approach to the conservation area, with the established trees, and this provides a separation between the newer development and the historic core. At the time of the survey, the garden to the front of Surrenden where overgrown and unkempt, and this gives the impression of rural space, rather than the grounds of a large house (though now flats, with the rear part of the former curtilage built upon – Crowther Close).

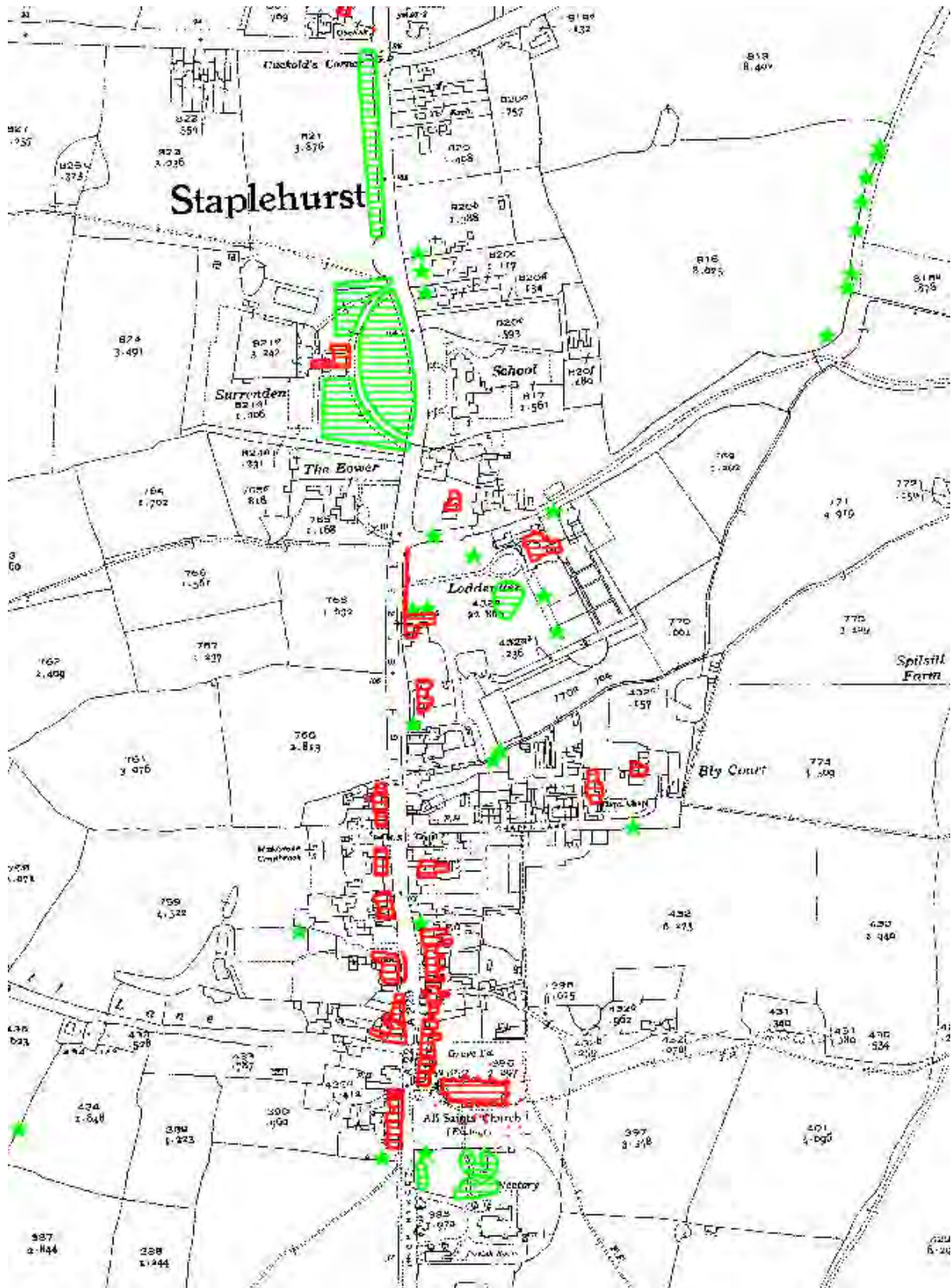


Figure 46 – TPO's within the core of the village.

## 10.0. PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTION AND GUIDANCE

The Staplehurst Conservation Area is of considerable historic and cultural interest. It has many listed buildings and many properties that have maintained a continuing use for a significant amount of time. Despite its historic importance it has not become fossilised and remains a vibrant and viable local centre. The Parish Council have recognised that to maintain its relevance there has to be development. It is also recognised that this development must be controlled to protect the nature of the historic core and the contact with open countryside. Listed and unlisted buildings make important positive contributions to the character of the conservation area and in many cases are essential to it.

Within the Conservation Area modern developments and redevelopments have not resulted in any serious loss of character, most being discretely sited or of inoffensive design and largely built of appropriate materials. In fact, the major agent of character loss has not been redevelopment but the cumulative impact of individual relatively minor alterations such as inappropriate siting of external electrical equipment and wiring, replacement windows and doors and works carried out to the boundary treatments with little strategic focus and a lack of awareness of heritage integrity and value. The loss of traditional shop fronts, and the shops themselves, will have an impact on the vibrancy of the historic core.



*Figure 47 – UPVc door (now replaced) and blanked window to a traditional building and poor shop front which forms part of a listed building.*

Staplehurst is generally a well-cared for village and problems of dereliction; dilapidation and disuse are rare. The detailed analysis carried out in this appraisal provides a basis for considering future proposals for works and development for which the scope appears to be very limited.

Those buildings or sites which are assessed as 'essential' or 'positive' will not normally be considered appropriate for demolition or redevelopment. Proposals for the redevelopment of 'neutral' sites will be required to match or to enhance the existing condition. No sites within the Conservation Area have been assessed as having a negative impact, so there are no areas that redevelopment will be actively encouraged. There is little scope for new development on undeveloped land or as infill which would not upset the essential spatial characteristics of the Conservation Area. The design style

of any replacement building is not predetermined. In this Conservation Area the focus will be on a high-quality response to the existing context rather than there being a requirement for a particular appearance.

The character of Staplehurst, seen today, is at least in part set by the consistent use of a generally limited range of materials used on mostly small-scale buildings. It is important that any future proposals for development or works should respect this. There are a few single storey buildings – most being two or three storeys and accordingly developments of less or more than two storeys will generally be inappropriate while there will be a base line of high quality and contextually positive design. Conversion/extension of single storey ancillary buildings may be considered acceptable.

The loss of character is likely to come about through lack of maintenance or inappropriate repairs, replaced components or the loss of hedges and trees, rather than through any larger scale of intervention for which there is little scope. It is in the public domain that attention is most needed since so many agencies have a call on this resource and the actions of just a few of the many property owners can subvert an otherwise consistent and reasonable policy. Further erosion of the quality of the streetscape needs to be avoided and opportunities taken to reverse some of the harmful practices that have taken place in the past. The focus needs to be on the use of appropriate shop fronts, signage, and the loss of timber windows for UPVc double glazing.



*Figure 48 – hedges and boundary treatments form a key part of the character of the area, separating domestic and commercial uses apart.*

Trees and landscape are significant contributors to the feel of Staplehurst and the quality of the environment. There are many well established specimens including some on the High Street. Trees play an important part in the visual quality of the village as it is approached from any direction and are a key feature throughout the village.



### **10.1. Setting of the Conservation Area**

There is also a high risk that the setting of the Conservation Area and views into and out of it will be adversely affected by ill-judged or inconsiderate changes to facades, boundary treatments and signage. Of particular concern are the number of fine and established hedges that line the approach roads and give a strong character to these routes into the Conservation Area. They are comparatively high maintenance but their contribution to the setting of the core of Staplehurst is fundamental.

Development of the Iden Manor site (in its historical context) would be considered harmful if not carefully designed including its impact on open space. Further research into the estate, including the gardens and wider grounds should be undertaken prior to any development proposals to gain a better understanding of this under-researched estate.

### **10.2. Existing Conservation Area Boundary**

The current boundary of the conservation area is still considered valid in terms of the area and assets it encompasses. The retention of Crowther Close within the Conservation Area is considered acceptable, as this protects the historic boundary of the former gardens of Surrenden, and the ponds and some trees, but it should be recognised that the houses offer little contribution to the character or significance of the conservation area.

Following the public consultation, the proposed extension to the Conservation area to include Iden Manor and a small section of the properties within the Quarter will be included.

Further consideration will be undertaken to extend to the north to include the Railway Station.

## 11.0. CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

### 11.1. INTRODUCTION

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Section 69 of the 1990 Act also imposes the duty on the local authority to determine from time to time whether any further parts of the borough should be included within a conservation area.

Guidance from Historic England (Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – 2019) suggests that proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas should take the form of a mid- to long-term strategy setting objectives for addressing issues and recommendations for action arising from a previously published conservation area appraisal and identifying any further or more detailed work needed for their implementation. Such a strategy is generally given the title of a conservation area management plan.



*Figure 49 – glimpse views through to rear of historic buildings.*

It is important to note that a Conservation Area Management Plan cannot introduce entirely new planning objectives. Instead, it will need to refer to the original legislation; to government guidance (mainly National Planning Policy Framework for heritage assets); to the adopted local plan policies; and to the emerging Local Development Framework. It can interpret established legislative provisions and planning policies and explain how they will be applied within the Conservation Area to ensure its preservation and/or enhancement. If any issues are identified which do require new policies to be drawn up, the management plan can indicate these and set a programme for their development as part of the Local Development Framework process.

This Management Plan for the Staplehurst conservation area sets out the means proposed for addressing the issues identified in Section 10.0 of the above Conservation Area Appraisal and outlines any proposals for boundary changes as also may be suggested by the Appraisal.

## 11.01. POLICY CONTEXT

### 11.01.01. National Policy

National policy and advice regarding conservation area matters is given in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is available to at the link given below

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> ).

Paragraph 191 of the NPPF points out that the quality and interest of areas rather than individual buildings is the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. Paragraph 190 sets out the benefits that accrue from preserving the historic environment whether it be the wider social, cultural, economic, and environmental advantages, the desirability of new development to make a positive contribution or the opportunities arising from an understanding of the intrinsic character of a place.



*Figure 50 -painted render to timber framed properties.*

The Historic England guidance document ([Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – 2016](#)) refers to the importance of keeping the boundaries of existing conservation areas under periodic review to ascertain whether any changes are required.

The document suggests that designation of a conservation area is unlikely to be effective without the formulation of specific policy guidance and reminds local planning authorities of the duty imposed on them by Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and for these to be submitted to a 'public meeting' in the area. Paragraph 4.16 points out that such proposals cannot realistically seek to prevent all new development and should instead concentrate on the controlled and positive management of change; indeed, it is suggested that there may be instances where redevelopment will be a means of enhancing character.

### 11.01.02. Local Policy

Maidstone Borough Council published its new Local Plan in 2004, and details can be found online - <https://localplan.maidstone.gov.uk/> .

A supplementary planning document to cover conservation areas has not yet been produced but there will be specific reference to heritage assets in the reviewed Local Plan, currently under review at the time of writing this appraisal.

While this Management Plan indicates how national and local policies will be applied in the on-going management of the conservation area, it is not in itself a planning policy document but Local Plan policy DM4 refers to conservation area appraisals and management plans as supporting documents, so they are material to planning considerations.



Figure 51 – attractive shop

## 12.0. PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES

The appraisal above records that the Conservation Area boundary is still relevant in the most part as it draws a clear line around the appropriate area which is deemed to be of special architectural or historic interest.

The boundary will be extended to include Iden Manor, and its former estate, as seen within the 1897 OS map in Fig. 53, together with The Quarter opposite. Whilst this will include a number of modern dwellings, these are considered to cause neutral impact on the character, and form part of the development of the village.



Figure 52 - 1897 OS map showing the extent of Iden Park, from Frittenden Road to the north, to past Iden Farm, now Iden Grange. .

Consideration was undertaken to exclude Crowther Close as these dwellings do not contribute to the character of the Conservation Area, but the existing boundary responds to the historic boundary of Surrenden and protects the ponds and trees that were associated with the main house.

At the next review, it should be considered to extend the Conservation Area boundary to the north to include some of the good examples of Victorian villas and terraces, however, due to the infill development and the extent of changes undertaken to many of these buildings, they were not

considered to be of special architectural or historic interest. The Victorian dwellings and buildings do form a positive contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area and respond to a period of major change to Staplehurst.

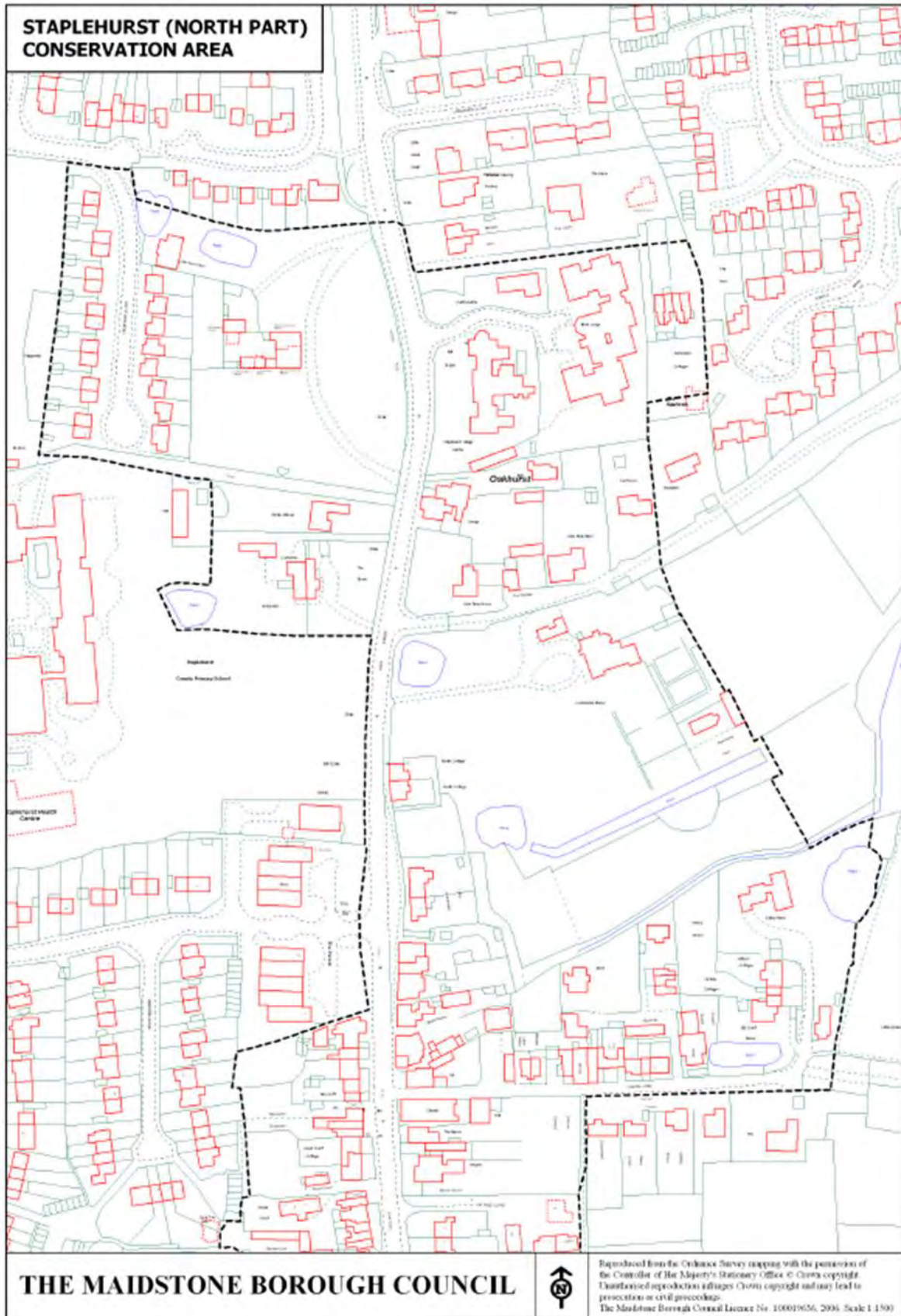


Figure 53 - north section of conservation area.

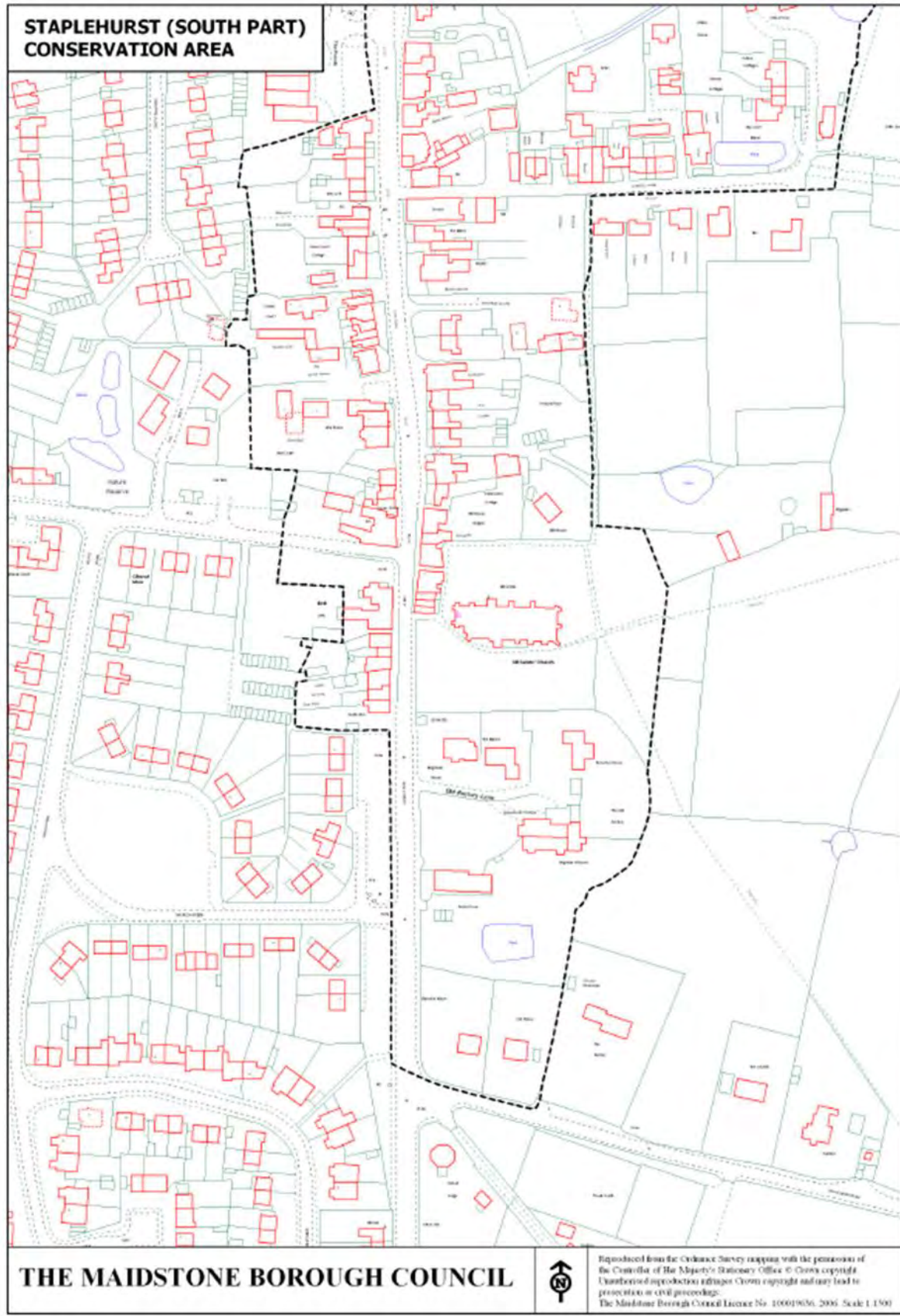


Figure 54 - southern section of conservation area.



## 13.0. DESIGN CODES

### 13.01. Neighbourhood Plans

Many Neighbourhood Plans have already considered design codes or principles, and these should be used as part of the overall Design Code for the settlement. Where a Neighbourhood Plan has not considered these or been created, a design code will be formed.

Staplehurst have produced a Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031 (September 2013, updated with minor revisions in August 2020, and currently being revised) which has a key list of vision points, including maintaining and enhancing the rural character, its immediate setting, and the wider parish; protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and enforcing the quality of new development through the use of materials, details and inclusive design that responds to context. The document also provides a summary of village character and architectural details.

### 13.02. Design Codes – Guiding Principles

Any proposed design within the Conservation Area or within the setting of the Conservation Area should comply with the Design Code Approach as per the National Model Design Code (NMDC) process (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>). The NMDC is based on a series of place characteristics from the National Design Guide, and places these in a wheel. These ten characteristics of a well-designed place form are explained further within the NMDC guidance.



Figure 55 - the National Model Design Code wheel showing the ten characteristics of a well-designed place.

## 14.0. PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

### 14.1. Planning Considerations

Sensitive and responsive management of development is required in order that new developments do not spoil the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas, its setting, or the approaches to it. To this end, the Council will adopt the following principles when dealing with planning applications within the conservation area or on sites affecting its setting.

The Council will apply the principles, guidance and regulations set out by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the further guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and any subsequent revisions, additions, or replacement government guidance.

The Council will apply the relevant policies from the Maidstone Local Plan 2017 until such time as these policies are replaced by a future Local Plan or by policies in the emerging Local Development Framework.

### 14.2. Information required for an application

The Maidstone web site gives advice on the content of a planning application – see [validations checklist](#).

The Council will require all planning applications and applications for listed building consent to be supported by a Design and Access Statement. This should be a brief but thorough document setting out the reasons for the development, explaining how the design has been evolved and showing how it will preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area; it should also cover any access issues which exist.

There is guidance on preparing a Design and Access Statement produced by CABE (CABE was merged with the Design Council in 2011) (<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/design-and-access-statements-how-write-read-and-use-them> ).

In some cases, a separate Heritage Statement will also be required. Historic England have published guidance on this aspect in 2019 (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/statements-heritage-significance-advice-note-12/>).

A simple template and guidance has been produced by Maidstone Borough Council for smaller domestic proposed works. This can be found <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/planning-and-building/heritage-and-landscape/heritage-statements>

Where proposed works are to be undertaken that could affect known archaeology sensitive areas, an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment should be provided. This information can be found via the Councils GIS System [[link](#)] or via <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>



*Figure 56 – High Street, looking south.*

Applications must be accompanied by clear and accurate **drawings** showing the proposed development in detail and illustrating how it fits in to its context. Drawings should clearly indicate materials to be used in producing the external finish and architectural details of proposed buildings.

Site plans should accurately depict the positions of trees on or adjacent to the site and clearly show those which will need to be removed and those which will be retained. Where trees are affected by the proposals the application should include a survey by a professional arboriculturist to comply with current British Standard BS5837, 'Trees in Relation to Construction – Recommendations'. It should also include details of any proposed works to, and methods for protecting, any retained tree. Photographs and other illustrative media are encouraged. Any applications which fail to provide adequate detail will not be validated.

The Council will make use of technically experienced and qualified officers in guiding the assessment and determination of all applications within the conservation area or affecting its setting.

The council encourages the use of the pre-application process which ensures that planning officers are aware of a proposal at an early stage and can give advice to ensure the appropriateness and quality of any design. See [pre application guidance](#).

Outline planning applications will not be accepted for proposals within the Conservation Area or on sites affecting its setting.

### **14.3. New Development within the Conservation Area**

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 states that the Conservation Area is appropriate for minor residential development as set out in Policy H27 – normally this would be restricted to proposals for one or two houses. It will be necessary for any new housing development proposals to illustrate that it is appropriate within the context of the Conservation Area and will not harm its special character.

It is considered that the scope for new developments within the conservation area is very limited, but in dealing with any proposals the Council will have regard to the vernacular building materials that dominate that area.

The overriding consideration in dealing with any proposal for development will be whether it would either preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area. Any proposal which fails to do so will be refused.

The Council will not insist on any particular architectural style for new building works, but the quality of the design and its execution will be paramount. The Council encourages the use of high-quality contemporary design, subject to proposals being appropriate to their context in terms of scale and use of materials; however, there may be instances where a traditional approach is appropriate – in such case, designs should be high in quality and well-researched, resulting in a scheme which accurately reflects the design, scale, massing, detail, and materials of local tradition. A mix of architectural styles and ethos within the area should not be used to create a single dwelling or building as this creates a poor quality, confusing design.

Buildings should respect the predominant scale, and not exceed two storeys. The social hierarchy of the buildings should be respected, responding to the scale and appearance of the building, together with the prominence or position within the street scene. The ridge and eaves line should work with the neighbouring buildings but be individual to ensure that variety is formed.

The Council will seek to protect the attractive peaceful environment of the Conservation Area. Special areas, such as church yards and protected gardens shall have extra consideration for impacts of harm to ensure that these spaces can continued to be enjoyed.

New developments should utilise building materials appropriate to the Conservation Area, these include: -

- Ragstone
- Red brick
- Clay plain Kent peg tiles for roofs or tile-hanging
- Weatherboarding
- Cast iron or aluminium rainwater goods
- Timber windows and doors, ideally slim-profile double glazing

In the case of red stock bricks and tiles it will be important for them to be made of Wealden clays or clays of similar geological formation. Any material selected will be required to be demonstrably used widely on nearby buildings.

Architectural details should respond to Vernacular styles and detailing. Consideration for the scale of the building is important to work with the existing buildings. Roof pitches are an important feature with the main street as they form part of the character.

Developments should preserve trees which are healthy and make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. All substantial trees within the Conservation Area are protected and a notice must be served prior to any works to a tree of the prescribed size. The Council will seek to protect the attractive peaceful environment of the Conservation Area.

In dealing with proposals for extensions and other alterations to existing buildings, the Council will have regard to the following considerations: -

- Extensions should normally be of sympathetic materials, design and detailing to the host building, and should be subservient in scale. See Extensions SPD.
- Dormer windows may be acceptable, depending on their position, number, scale, and design. No more than one or two dormers per elevation will normally be considered appropriate and should be subservient to ensure a large area of roof scape. Dormers should be covered by a pitched clay tiled roof, with a timber casement window. They should not appear crowded together or be located too close to hip or gable lines. Large 'box' dormers will not be considered appropriate; neither will dormers which extend above the existing ridge height.
- Roof lights will not be considered acceptable to front elevations. They may be considered acceptable to rear or concealed roofs and will be subject to the same provisos as dormers in relation to numbers, position, and scale. 'Conservation' roof lights which sit close to the roof slope should be used.
- Satellite dishes will only be considered acceptable when they cannot be readily seen from the streets or other public spaces.
- Boundary enclosures can have a significant effect on the character of the conservation area. The most appropriate forms are considered to be Ragstone walls, hedging, low brick walls or metal railings. Close-boarded fences or similar will not be considered appropriate in any situation.
- Signage whether in the public domain or as part of a commercial business frontage should respect the character of the conservation area and materials and typefaces should be appropriate to its historic nature.

#### **14.4. New development within the setting of Designate Heritage Assets**

New development within Staplehurst or the surrounding area that has the potential to impact on the setting of the Conservation Area or listed buildings should look to 'enhance or better reveal their significance' (NPPF, 2023- 206). In addition to the guidelines provided, the following should be considered.

##### **14.4.01. Layout**

The proposed layout of a scheme should recognise the existing, historical development pattern of the settlement. Where more modern development has introduced new patterns, this will not naturally be accepted for future development.

The formation of streets should look to consider the hierarchy of spaces, ensuring the central road through Staplehurst is the predominant road, with smaller, domestic scale roads off.

The proposed layout should provide connectivity with the existing settlement, ideally with pedestrian routes to the historic core and retail area.

#### **14.4.02. Trees and Landscaping**

Developments should preserve trees and hedges which are healthy and make a significant contribution to the character or setting of the Conservation Area.

New development should look to ensure that the tree cover is retained. Adding trees to act as screens will generally not be supported where the setting of the Designated Heritage Assets will be harmed.

New developments will be encouraged to use hedges as part of the main boundary treatments, mixed with some low-level Kentish Ragstone or brick walls. High boundary treatments within the public realm will be prohibited as this creates poor views which will impact the setting of designated heritage assets.

#### **14.5. Existing Buildings**

Except in the most exceptional circumstances, planning consent will not be granted for the demolition of buildings identified as being 'essential' to the character of the conservation area and is unlikely to be granted for those rated as 'positive'.

Buildings cited as 'neutral' may be considered appropriate for redevelopment, subject to the quality of any replacement scheme constituting an improvement over current circumstance. The redevelopment of sites and buildings judged to be 'negative' will usually be encouraged so long as any scheme is appropriate to its context.

In dealing with applications for the redevelopment of existing buildings, the Council will have regard to the detailed building assessments provided within a Heritage Statement.

#### **14.6. Non-designated Heritage Assets**

Where recognised, either before or during an application, weight will be given for the retention of non-designated heritage assets (NDHA), as per Policy DM4.

As within listed buildings, a NDHA could be of local interest through archaeological, architectural, artistic, and historic interest. It does not have to have all four areas of interest to be recognised as a NDHA.

We encourage nominations for NDHA. A guidance on how to nominate is available on our website [<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/planning-and-building/heritage-and-landscape/listed-buildings>]

#### **14.7. Window and Door Replacement**

Replacement Windows can have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of a conservation area. Where there is no Article 4 Directive (refer to Appendix 2), it will be encouraged that traditional and historic windows and doors are retained, and where there is a need to replace, these will be undertaken with timber, and of a design responding to the dwelling.

Dormer windows may be acceptable, depending on their position, number, scale, and design. No more than one or two dormers per elevation will normally be considered appropriate and as a general rule a dormer should not occupy more than about one third of the overall height of the roof. Depending on circumstances, dormers should either be covered by a pitched clay tiled roof or, in the case of smaller or shallower roofs, a flat lead roof above a traditionally detailed cornice. They should not appear crowded together or be located too close to hip or gable lines. Large 'box' dormers will not be considered appropriate; neither will dormers which extend above the existing ridge height.

Roof lights may be considered acceptable and will be subject to the same considerations as dormers in relation to numbers, position, and scale. 'Conservation' roof lights which sit close to the roof slope should be used. Rooflights should not be placed on principle elevations unless screened by parapet or similar.

#### **14.8. Extensions**

Extensions should normally be of sympathetic materials, design and detailing to the host building, and should be subservient in scale. See [Extensions SPD](#).

Any extensions should respect the spacing and character of the street scene, and not look to overcrowd or dominant the street scene.

#### **14.9. Boundary Treatments**

Boundary enclosures can have a significant effect on the character of the conservation area. The most appropriate forms are considered to be hedging, low brick walls or wooden open fencing.

Close-boarded fences or similar will not be considered appropriate in any situation.

Where there are existing ragstone walls, these should be retained as they form a significant contribution to the character of the area.

The demolition of boundary walls to allow for off-road parking will be refused where the loss of the boundary treatment will have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area.

Further details can be found in the Boundary Walls Guidance [\[link\]](#)

#### **14.10. Commercial and Retail**

Retail and commercial functions within many of the conservation areas offer many advantages and can often help create a vibrant and attractive street scene. The retention of shops and services will

be encouraged, though it is recognised that there has been a decline in the use of shops over recent years<sup>2</sup>. Creative change of these buildings can often find new uses, and by recognising that places need to be adaptable; it is able to adjust to changing retail and social trends and offer shoppers and visitors the experience they want and need.

Where there is a proposed loss of a shop, evidence must be provided to show that all efforts have been undertaken to retain the shop.

Shop fronts and signage should respect the character of the conservation area and materials and typefaces should be appropriate to its historic nature. Large scale signage and covering of principle windows will be discouraged as this provides a negative appearance.

Further information can be found in the Shop Front Guidance

[https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/your-councillors?sq\\_content\\_src=%2BdXJsPWh0dHBzJTnBJTJGJTJGbWVldGluZ3MubWFpZHN0b25lLmdvdi51ayUyRmRvY3VtZW50cyUyRnM4NzMOOCUyRINob3AlMjBmcm9udHMlMjBhbmQlMjBhZHZlcnRpc2VtZW50cyUyMC0lMjBtUUVOREVELnBkZiZhbGw9MQ%3D%3D](https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/your-councillors?sq_content_src=%2BdXJsPWh0dHBzJTnBJTJGJTJGbWVldGluZ3MubWFpZHN0b25lLmdvdi51ayUyRmRvY3VtZW50cyUyRnM4NzMOOCUyRINob3AlMjBmcm9udHMlMjBhbmQlMjBhZHZlcnRpc2VtZW50cyUyMC0lMjBtUUVOREVELnBkZiZhbGw9MQ%3D%3D)

#### **14.11. Parking**

The creation of parking for both domestic dwellings and for commercial/ retail/ business use can have a detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area. It is acknowledged that for many businesses to survive, especially retail, then ease of parking is important. A balance judgement will be undertaken to ensure that the parking does not have negative impact on the business.

Parking for private dwellings will be considered on a case for case basis. Where conversion of a building is proposed, parking will be taken into consideration for the impact on the harm to the significance and setting of the heritage asset. This will include incremental impact from previous development within the area.

#### **14.12. Traffic Management**

The impact of traffic within most Conservation Areas has a critical impact on the area. The build-up of traffic and congestion at peak times can be significant. However, this needs to be considered with the success of an area retaining a vibrant and viable core and therefore access to the centre should continue to be encouraged while reducing the number of cars involved.

The Management Plan alone cannot reduce traffic concerns, but additional consideration for the proposed conversion of buildings into HMO's or flats, and the associated car parking and traffic should be undertaken as part of the consideration for conversion.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/historic-towns-and-high-streets/>



The position of the carparking on a proposed scheme should be considered as parked cars (or the open hardstanding) can have a negative impact on the character of the area. It may not always be appropriate to locate the parking to the front of the building.

#### 14.13. Public Realm Improvements

The public realm is often managed by different organisations, including Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, and the parish council.



*Figure 57 – simple brick building, with architectural details formed in brick.*

Where practical and possible, consideration for improvements should be undertaken. These could include items such as:

- Resurface High Streets and key/ main road within the Conservation Area
- Mitigate against urban road schemes in rural areas, or where required, ensure that they are minimal or designed to respond to the character
- Parking controls within more sensitive areas
- Reverse process of inappropriate modifications to buildings
- Measures to ensure that property owners outside the conservation are encouraged to maintain and plant new hedges
- Improve quality and consistency of shop fronts, signage, and lighting
- Improve green and communal spaces
- Reduce clutter in some areas
- improve Highway's requirements, such as thinner yellow lines, reduction in signage, etc.
- improve front boundary treatments
- improve pathways and connectivity.

Historic England provide good guidance on improving public realm -

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/streets-for-all/>

#### **14.14. Demolition**

Where a building has been recognised as having 'neutral' or 'positive' contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, there will need to be justification to clarify for the loss of the building or structure.

Buildings cited as 'neutral' may be considered appropriate for redevelopment, subject to the quality of any replacement scheme constituting an improvement over current circumstance. The redevelopment of sites and buildings judged to be 'negative' will usually be encouraged so long as any scheme is appropriate to its context.

#### **14.15. Carbon Reduction Incentives and Schemes**

Within Conservation Areas, it possible to install carbon neutral or 'Green' initiatives, though they will require consideration. A holistic, whole building approach should be undertaken to the building, rather than a presumption of a single solution, such as double-glazed windows.

Where a planning or listed building consent application is submitted, it will be expected that the holistic consideration for the buildings has been undertaken by providing a simple statement, either within the Design & Access Statement or within the Heritage Statement.

There are numerous options available, many will be site specific, but the general considerations are:

- Solar panels should not be installed on buildings where visible from the public realm, or if the building is listed. Consideration for any associated plant, including the batteries should be considered, and should not be within the public realm.
- Double glazing is generally not permitted within listed buildings. With other buildings within conservation areas, it is preferred that it is not installed to primary routes or buildings of local or national interest. The installation of secondary glazing creates a strange reflection, and the additional weight of the glass requires a larger or chunkier frame, both of which can alter the appearance of the building in a negative appearance.

The manufacture of double glazing has a high carbon contribution due to the use of glass and UPVC, and therefore it is recommended that existing windows are overhauled, repaired and secondary glazing installed.

- Secondary glazing can be installed to improve the thermal efficiency of buildings. This often provides a better solution than installing double glazing. The use of shutters on buildings can improve the heat-loss of the building and could be found in many older buildings.
- Awnings to windows are generally associated today with shops, but they have been traditionally used on domestic houses to provide sun screening and to protect the glass from weather. The use of awning could be used, where appropriate, to assist against solar warming.
- Ground and Air Source Heat Pumps can be installed to buildings within the conservation area, with planning permission [?]. The external air source should not be visible from the public realm. Consideration for any potential archaeology should include within an application, with the expectation of where there is deemed to have potential, that a Watching Brief will be conditioned.
- External insulation will not be considered acceptable to a majority of buildings within the conservation area due to the visual impact on the appearance of the property.
- Retrofitting is a wide subject, with some aspects that would not need permission to be undertaken, such as loft insulation.
- External Electric Car Charging points should be formed via a pole, rather than connected to the wall. Where a pole or freestanding system is not practical, the unit should not be placed on the principle and/or front façade of the building and be positioned as discreetly as possible. The point should be a socket system and not a tethered (ie, with fixed cable). The cable connecting the socket to main supply should not be run where visible and it should consider the fabric and details of the building.

As these often require dedicated off-street parking, works to create the off-street parking should be considered. The demolition of front boundary walls or treatments will not generally be allowed within the Conservation Area due to the negative impact on the character.

#### **14.16. Ecology Measures**

Integrated biodiversity enhancements, such as bird/bat bricks/tiles/tubes, and bee bricks, should be included with any new builds or extensions.

With listed buildings, some consideration for these should be undertaken to enhance biodiversity. Alternative positions may be a more sympathetic solution, such as the grounds, existing boundary walls (if brick or stone), or associated outbuildings.

Where replacement roof coverings or alterations are proposed, then integrated biodiversity enhancements should be included if the building is not already hosting ecology (such as bats).

#### **14.17. Services**

There is a growing demand for services and the associated equipment to domestic houses. Consideration for the character of the area, and the setting of listed buildings should be undertaken.

- Satellite dishes (one per building) will only be considered acceptable when they cannot be readily seen from the streets or other public spaces.
- Air conditioning units (and associated plant) should not be placed where it can be seen from the public realm.
- Meter Boxes should not be placed on the front façade of the building but should be located within the grounds.
- Alarm boxes should be positioned with consideration to ensure that they do not form the main focus of an elevation or cover architectural details.
- Security Cameras will not usually be supported unless a strong business case is provided. Where they are needed, they should be sensitively positioned, with the minimum number of cameras required.
- Security measures, such as grills and shutters will not be permitted where visible from the public realm as these often provide a negative impact on the appearance of the street scene. Where there is a strong business requirement for shutters, these should be internal and open to allow for passive security protection. [Refer to shop guidance].

#### **14.18. Enforcement Strategy**

Unauthorised development may seriously harm the character of the Conservation Area as well as causing other problems. The Council is therefore fully committed to using its powers under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to serve enforcement notices, where expedient, to allay breaches of planning control. [Section 9](#) of the Act sets out the relevant offences.

Parallel powers to serve listed building enforcement notices regarding unauthorised works to listed buildings also exist by virtue of Section 38 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and these too will be used to their full. In suitable cases the Council may also exercise the

legal provision to seek a prosecution for unauthorised works to a listed building or the unauthorised demolition of an unlisted building.



*Figure 58 – generally two-storey, with the odd three storey building.*

Developments should preserve trees which are healthy and make a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area. All substantial trees within the conservation area are protected and a notice must be served prior to any works to a tree of the prescribed size.

The Council will seek to protect the attractive peaceful environment of the conservation area.

In dealing with proposals for extensions and other alterations to existing buildings, the Council will have regard to the following considerations:

- Extensions should normally be of sympathetic materials, design and detailing to the host building, and should be subservient in scale. See [Extensions SPD](#).
- Dormer windows may be acceptable, depending on their position, number, scale, and design. No more than one or two dormers per elevation will normally be considered appropriate and as a rule a dormer should not occupy more than about one third of the overall height of the roof. Depending on circumstances, dormers should either be covered by a pitched clay tiled roof or, in the case of smaller or shallower roofs, a flat lead roof above a traditionally detailed cornice. They should not appear crowded together or be located too close to hip or gable lines. Large ‘box’ dormers will not be considered appropriate; neither will dormers which extend above the existing ridge height.
- Roof lights may be considered acceptable to rear elevations and will be subject to the same provisos as dormers in relation to numbers, position, and scale. ‘Conservation’ roof lights which sit close to the roof slope should be used.



*Figure 59 – example of a flush fitting rooflight – ‘Conservation Rooflight’.*

- Satellite dishes will only be considered acceptable when they cannot be readily seen from the streets or other public spaces.
- Boundary enclosures can have a significant effect on the character of the conservation area. The most appropriate forms are considered to be hedging, low brick walls or wooden open fencing. Close-boarded fences or similar will not be considered appropriate in any situation. (Refer to Boundary Treatment Guidance)
- Shop fronts and signage should respect the character of the conservation area and materials and typefaces should be appropriate to its historic nature. (Refer to Shop Front Design Guidance).

#### **14.19. Enforcement Strategy**

Unauthorised development may seriously harm the character of the Conservation Area as well as causing other problems. The Council is therefore fully committed to using its powers under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to serve enforcement notices, where expedient, to allay breaches of planning control. [Section 9](#) of the Act sets out the relevant offences. Parallel powers to serve listed building enforcement notices regarding unauthorised works to listed buildings also exist by virtue of Section 38 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and these too will be used to their full. In suitable cases the Council may also exercise the legal provision to seek a prosecution for unauthorised works to a listed building or the unauthorised demolition of an unlisted building.

## 15.0. ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS

### **15.1. Buildings in Disrepair**

This is currently not a significant issue in Staplehurst Conservation Area. However, there are numerous powers which the Council can and will use should any building fall into a state of disrepair serious enough for it to significantly adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area or to endanger the future of a listed building. These powers are:

Urgent Works Notices (Section 54 and 76 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Such notices can be served in respect of any vacant building or, with the prior approval of the Secretary of State, a vacant unlisted building whose preservation is considered important to the maintenance of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Works specified can only be the minimum necessary to make the building wind and weathertight and are thus essentially temporary in nature. The owner must be given at least seven days' notice, after which the Council may carry out the specified works and reclaim the costs from the owner.

Listed Building Repairs Notices (Section 48 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. These can only be served in respect of listed buildings. Full and permanent repairs can be specified. If an owner fails to commence work on the specified works within 2 months of the service of a Repairs Notice, the Council may start compulsory purchase proceedings in relation to the building; no other recourse is made available by the legislation.

'Untidy Site' Notices (Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). Such a notice can be served in respect of any land (including a building) which the Council considers to adversely affect the amenity of the surroundings. The necessary steps to remedy the condition of the land and building need to be set out in the Notice and at least 28 days given for compliance. Failure to comply is deemed an offence and is punishable by a fine.

### **15.2. Trees**

Trees are identified as important contributors to the character of the Conservation Area. All trees in a Conservation Area with a stem diameter generally above 75mm at 1.5 metres above ground level are protected under Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and six weeks formal prior notice to the Council is required for any proposal to cut down or carry out other work to such trees (a Section 211 Notice). Anyone who carries out unauthorised work to protected trees is likely to be guilty of an offence punishable by a fine. There may also be a duty to plant a replacement tree of appropriate size and species in the same place as soon as can reasonably be done. This duty may also apply if the tree has been removed because it was dead or dangerous.



*Figure 60 – green spaces, boundary treatments and trees make a positive contribution to the character of the area.*

### **15.3. Traffic Management**

The impact of traffic within the conservation area is a critical factor. The build-up of traffic and congestion at peak times can be significant. This is partly due to the success of Staplehurst at retaining its vibrant and viable core and therefore access to the centre should continue to be encouraged while reducing the number of cars involved. This might involve parking provision on the fringes of the centre and more control of parking in High Street.

### **15.4. Reinstatement of Original Features**

There are examples, though thankfully not too many in the conservation area of damage caused to the character of the conservation area caused by injudicious alterations to properties. Such alterations include re-roofing in inappropriate materials, replacement windows and doors of inappropriate design, signage or materials and discordant surface finishes. The Council would like to see a process of reversal where this has happened. This can only be by persuasion as there are no provisions to enforce reinstatement where the alterations are covered by permitted development. Nevertheless, the Council will encourage property owners to reinstate traditional forms and materials as part of ongoing maintenance.

### **15.5. Public Realm Improvements**

There are a variety of options available that could help improve the public realm. A balance needs to be undertaken to ensure the character of the conservation area and the vibrancy of the settlement, this is especially important with cars and parking and the local amenities.

Consideration of improvements should include:

- Reverse process of inappropriate modifications to buildings
- Measures to ensure that property owners outside the conservation are encouraged to maintain and plant new hedges





*Figure 61 – local shops and facilities should be supported.*

#### **15.6. Article 4 Directions**

The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) enables local planning authorities to make directions to withdraw permitted development rights. The individual permitted development rights which can be removed are limited to specific classes of development. Government guidance on the use of Article 4 Directions is given in Department of the Environment Circular 9/95, which states that permitted development rights should only be withdrawn where firm evidence exists that damage to the character and appearance of a conservation area is likely to take place or is already taking place because of the exercise of such rights.

At present there are no Article 4's in place at Staplehurst.

#### **16.0. REVIEW AND PRACTICE PROCEDURES**

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be reviewed after an appropriate period of not less than five years and any required amendments will be incorporated.

## 17.0. ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
Street Furniture/building frontages	Improve quality and consistency of shop fronts, signage, and lighting	Maidstone Borough Council Parish Council
Traffic	Parking restrictions to High Street and vicinity  New parking provision walkable distance from the High Street to encourage visitors	Maidstone Borough Council Parish Council  KCC Highways
Inappropriate modifications	Take steps to encourage reversal of inappropriate modifications carried out to buildings and frontages	Maidstone Borough Council Parish Council
Shared surface	Resurface the central area of the High Street	Parish Council KCC Highways
Boundaries	Review conservation area	Maidstone Borough Council Parish Council



Figure 62 – local butchers and shops offer limited local parking within the High Street.

### Appendix 1 - Staplehurst CAA Bibliography

Author	Publication Date	Title	Volume No	Editor
Newman, John	2012	The Buildings of England Kent: West and the Weald	-	-
	2009	Archaeologia Cantiana	-129	-
Hasted, Edward	1798	The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent	V5	
KCC		Kent Historic Environment Record <a href="https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx">https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx</a>		
KCC Heritage Conservation Group	2004	Kent Historic Towns Survey Headcorn – Kent Archaeological Assessment Document	-	-
Dr Harris	1724	A History of Kent	-	-
Pernille Richards	2021	History on our doorstep – a walk in Headcorn		Ella Martignetti

## Appendix 2 - USEFUL CONTACTS

- Historic England Cannon Bridge House 25 Dowgate Hill London EC4R 2YA  
[customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk)
- Kent County Council (Heritage Conservation Group) Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone ME14  
Email: [heritageconservation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:heritageconservation@kent.gov.uk)
- Maidstone Borough Council (Heritage, Landscape & Design), Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6JQ.  
Email: [Conservation@Maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:Conservation@Maidstone.gov.uk)

## Professional Bodies

- The Arboricultural Association, The Malthouse, Stroud Green, Standish, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire GL10 3DL T: +44(0)1242 522152 Email: [admin@trees.org.uk](mailto:admin@trees.org.uk)
- Institute for Archaeologists, Miller Building, University of Reading, Reading RG6 6AB. T: 0118 378 6446 Email: [admin@archaeologists.net](mailto:admin@archaeologists.net)
- Landscape Institute 33 Great Portland Street, London W1W 8QG T: +44 (0)20 7299 4500 Email: [mail@mail@landscapeinstitute.org](mailto:mail@mail@landscapeinstitute.org)
- Royal Institute of British Architects 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD T: +44 (0)20 7580 5533 Email: [info@inst.riba.org](mailto:info@inst.riba.org)
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, RICS Contact Centre, Surveyor Court, Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8JE T: +44 (0)870 333 1600  
Email: [contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)
- The Institution of Structural Engineers, International HQ, 47-58 Bastwick Street, London, EC1V 3PS, United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)20 7235 4535
- The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) South East branch [SEBranch-Secretary@ihbc.org.uk](mailto:SEBranch-Secretary@ihbc.org.uk)
- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) 37 Spital Square London E1 6DY [info@spab.org.uk](mailto:info@spab.org.uk)
- Design and Access Statements  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101121172431/http://cabe.org.uk/files/design-and-access-statements.pdf>