

Baldwins Green

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE



December 2003

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The historic environment is a social asset of immense value and one of the keys to the continuing prosperity of Sevenoaks District. Conservation Area Appraisals are part of the process of ensuring that we make the best use of our historic environment. They are tools for the positive management of change, not a means of preventing development. Conservation is focused on the entire historic environment, not just listed buildings. Trees, open spaces, buildings, uses, roads and streets all contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the District's conservation areas.

The man-made environment of our conservation areas has used energy and materials moulded by people both past and present. The District Council will creatively manage the fabric of these areas in a sustainable way as a legacy for future generations.

It is intended that this appraisal will inform the activities of the Council, the public and other bodies where these impact on the conservation area. This appraisal was approved by the District Council in December 2003 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition and Purpose of Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas first came into being as a result of the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and are intended to identify any valuable visual or historic characteristics in a locality that may warrant special measures in order to protect and preserve them.

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 recognises that there are particular areas of ‘architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ and charges planning authorities with a duty to designate any such locations within their jurisdiction as Conservation Areas. This designation then empowers the local authority to pay particular attention to planning considerations and development within them and gives greater control over such matters as demolitions, landscaping and trees, and the display of advertisements.

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

It has been recognised that designation, because of the responsibilities and obligations it places on both owners and the local authority, should only be imposed on areas that are demonstrably suitable. Where the criteria have been met, the area should then benefit from the additional control and protection that designation confers, and from official recognition of the special architectural and historic character of the locality.

The management of our national cultural and historic inheritance is of paramount importance and Conservation Areas are a vital ‘grass roots’ starting point from which to safeguard the continuing care of our environment.

1.2 Purpose of Appraisals

As their number grows, it has become even more important for local authorities to include a well defined and considered policy for their designated Conservation Areas in their Local Plans.

Planning pressures are such that any designation is likely to be subjected to detailed scrutiny and must be readily and demonstrably defensible against adverse criticism. The criteria for designation should be kept as uniform as possible and the public should be kept fully aware of the reasons for any proposed changes in their area.

The 1990 Act charges local authorities with the responsibility of undertaking a review of their Conservation Areas from time to time, both to consider the possibility of revising their extent, and to identify any past changes or future pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation.

English Heritage published an advisory leaflet on the subject in March 1997, which outlines the preferred approach to these appraisals and gives examples of the type of content that it would be useful to include.

The appraisals should define the key elements that together give the area its character, and objectively analyse how they interact to enhance their individual impact. They can then provide suggestions for future policies and improvements based on a clear understanding of the special architectural and historic qualities that highlight the area and give it its local distinctiveness.

These appraisals can also be used as a valuable means by which the impact of planning policies and the implementation of enhancement measures can be assessed.

1.3 Local Conservation Area Policies

The Sevenoaks District Local Plan (adopted March 2000) lists the following policies which relate to conservation areas:

EN21 In the designation and review of Conservation Areas the Local Planning Authority will assess all the following matters:

- 1) **The special architectural or historic interest of the area.**
- 2) **The cohesive character and integrity of the area including spaces round buildings their settings and trees.**
- 3) **The desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.**
- 4) **The pressures for change which may encourage piecemeal development which would threaten the character of the area.**
- 5) **The need to promote economic prosperity, through schemes of environmental enhancement, to overcome vacancy, neglect, decay or dereliction.**

EN22 Proposals to demolish buildings which contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted in the absence of overriding justification. Preference will be given to conversion and/or refurbishment as opposed to outright demolition of a building. Proposals to demolish extensions to original buildings or outbuildings will be judged on their contribution to the overall character of the area.

EN23 Proposals for development or redevelopment within or affecting Conservation Areas should be of positive architectural benefit by paying special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area and of its setting. The design of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings should respect local character, whilst the treatment of external spaces including hard and soft landscaping, boundary walls, street furniture and signs should be compatible with and enhance the appearance of the area.

Buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area are identified on the character appraisal plan at the end of this document . English Heritage national guidance on conservation areas sets out the criteria used to identify these buildings. The Sevenoaks District Local Plan states that the Local Planning Authority will undertake detailed assessments of designated Conservation Areas and will prepare proposals for their preservation. Development proposals will be judged against their overall contribution to the enhancement of the character and appearance of the area as set out in any scheme which may have been prepared.

This assessment and the detailed analysis of the area contained in the report are intended to fulfil this commitment and provide the background for enhancement schemes.

1.4 Other Local Plan Policies

The Local Plan also identifies specific policies designed to protect the natural environment and historic buildings.

Policy EN6 places restrictions on development within the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and EN7 gives priority to the enhancement of natural beauty, landscape, open space, geographical features and wildlife over other planning considerations within the North Downs and Greensand Ridge Special Landscape Areas. Other Areas of Local Landscape Importance where development may be restricted are noted in policy EN8.

Landscape features and wildlife habitats beyond the confines of the urban areas, towns and villages are also protected by policy EN11.

Important areas of greenspace within the built confines are safeguarded under policy EN9 and EN10 protects important areas of urban fringe.

Listed building policy is defined in sections EN18 and EN19 and the reuse rather than the demolition of unlisted buildings of local interest is promoted by policy EN20.

Trees over a certain size are automatically protected within Conservation Areas, with any proposed work to them having to be notified to the local authority in writing six weeks in advance.

Transport strategy for the District is summarised by the following section.

T1. A co-ordinated transport strategy will be implemented including:

- 1) Encouragement of the provision of appropriate public transport services and facilities.**
- 2) Use of traffic management to achieve a safer and more efficient use of existing roads.**
- 3) An integrated car parking strategy involving residents' parking, local enforcement and consideration of the need for park and ride facilities.**
- 4) New highway construction and improvements to the existing network.**
- 5) Encouragement of walking, and cycling.**

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 General Description

Baldwins Green Conservation Area, Fawkham covers some 2.8 hectares and contains one listed building. It was designated in 1992 and has not been reappraised since then.

The hamlet lies entirely within the Metropolitan Green Belt and within an Area of Local Landscape Importance.

The conservation area includes Fawkham Road, the main route through the village, with the Church, cemetery and associated grounds on the eastern side and to the west the buildings of Churchdown Farm and the private residences of The Shaws and Laurel Bank.

The Parish Church of St. Mary is Norman with many 13th and 14th Century details internally and a white painted, weatherboarded Bellcote.

2.2 Location and Geographical Context

Baldwins Green is located on the northern extremity of Sevenoaks District in Fawkham Parish. To the east is the village of Hartley and to the west the village of Horton Kirby.

The hamlet is served by Fawkham Road, a minor country road linking Fawkham Green to the south, with Longfield to the north. From Longfield access to the M25 is gained via the B260.

From Fawkham Green access to the A20 is via a series of minor country roads. The A20 leads to the M20 and provides access to the rest of the south-east. Access to major routes is not easy, due to the narrow rural nature of local roads, despite the relative proximity of the motorway network.



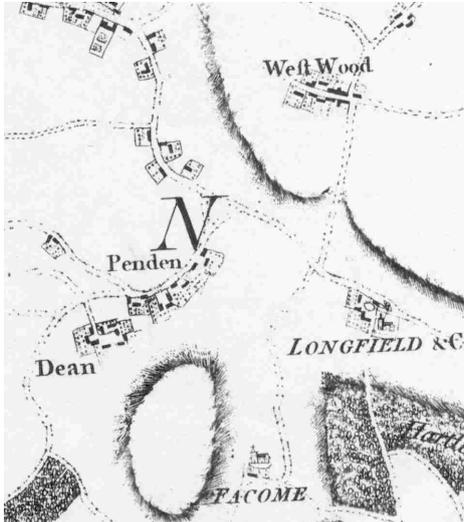
Map 1: Geographical location of Baldwins Green

The nearest railway station is Longfield, to the north, which is served by the main Dover to London line.

The hamlet has few local amenities of its own but is situated near Longfield and Hartley, both of which have shops, school, sports grounds and a club. Dartford offers a greater range of amenities and the major retail centre of Bluewater is fairly close.

2.3 Historical Development

Baldwins Green lies within the Parish of Fawkham. The Church of St. Mary is early English in style with one bell. Both the Church and the bell were completely restored in 1876 by H.B. Hohler, Lord of the Manor. That same year the lychgate was presented to the Church and in 1896 Mr. Hohler gave some of his land to the Church to enlarge the Churchyard.

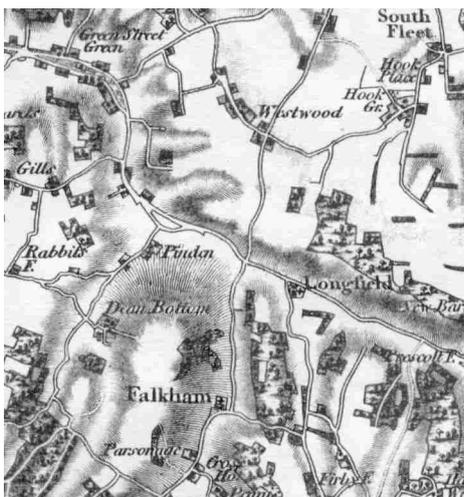


Map 2: Historical map 1769

Fawkham Manor, the residence of Mr. Hohler, was bequeathed to Thomas Beaumont Hohler. The house was set in well wooded parklands and the Lord of the Manor was the principal landowner, although several smallholdings existed within the area.

The principal crop was grain, although pulses and hops were also grown. Hop farming is still evident today.

In 1911 the population of Fawkham was 231.



Map 3: Historical Map 1816-19
Old Series Ordnance Survey Map

2.4 Architectural Description

Baldwins Green is comparatively small in terms of size and the number of buildings contained within the Conservation Area.

The development of the area has given rise to a small number of buildings from different periods each with its own architectural style.

The Parish Church of St. Mary is the earliest building, with much Norman detailing and artefacts both internally and externally; walls are rendered and painted white and a white painted weatherboarded bellcote is positioned on the ridge.



Fig 1: St. Mary's Church and lychgate

Generally the roofs are either slated with clay-ridge tiles, lead-hip and ridge-rolls, or (more commonly) covered with clay tiles hung on pegs or nibs. The degree of the roof pitches varies depending on the material used and the contrasting heights of the ridgelines often lend variety and interest to the street scene.



Fig 2: Outbuildings of Churchdown Farm

Catslide roofs which sweep down from the ridge to the ground floor ceiling level, have long been a popular way of covering a single storey extension to the side or rear of a building.

A variety of building materials and finishes have been used and most buildings retain their locally distinctive character.

The Shaws is constructed of flint with brick relief to the openings, brickwork quoins and bands of horizontal brickwork. The chimneys are also constructed of fairfaced brickwork.



Fig 3: The Shaws, Fawkham Road

Churchdown House is also constructed of brickwork, with brick flat arches forming the window heads and a curved arch above the door opening fanlight.



Fig 4: Churchdown House

The converted timber framed barn of Churchdown Farm, now a private residence, is weatherboarded with a brick plinth to the ground floor.

Traditionally, windows in this area were either timber casements or vertical sliding sashes which have largely been retained.



Fig 5: Converted barn, Churchdown Farm

3.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

3.1 Setting of the Area and Spatial Relationships

The first impression of the hamlet heading north along Fawkham Road/Valley Road, is the Church in its treescaped setting.



Fig 6: The Church and setting

As the road straightens, low brick boundary walls that envelop the houses on the western side of the road become visible.



Fig 7: View looking north along Fawkham Road

The Shaws, perhaps the most interesting of the houses in terms of architectural detail, provides the second focal point.



Fig 8: The Shaws, Fawkham Road

As the road continues, the outbuildings of Churchdown Farm become evident. Beyond the Church the car park encourages observers to stop and admire the superb views of the Church, houses and the countryside beyond.



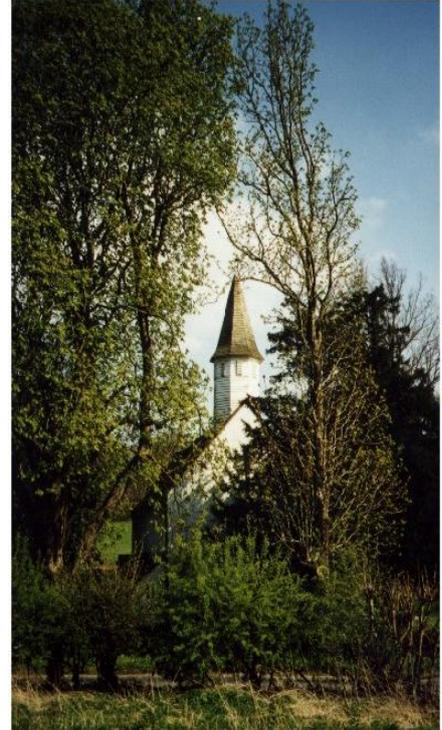
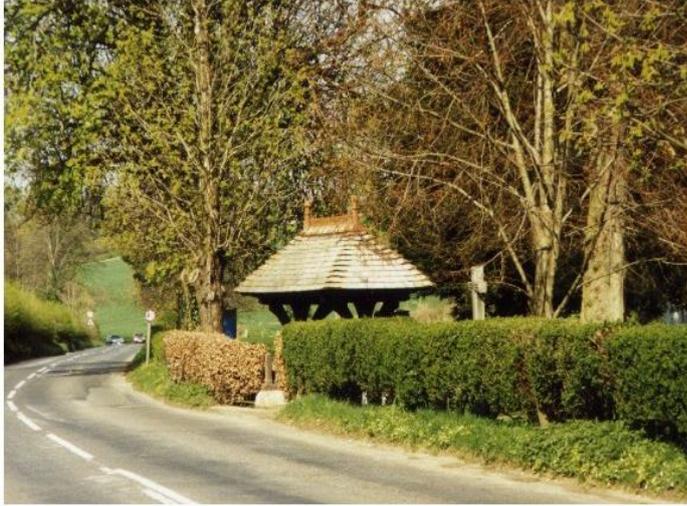
Figs. 9, 10 &11: Views from the east boundary of the Conservation Area

Boundary walls are generally low and constructed of either brick or stone with panels of ironwork placed between taller piers, which contribute to the openness of the hamlet.

Other boundary features are open fencing and hedgerows, all of which add to the rural qualities of the area.

3.2 The Impact of Individual Elements/Features/Groups of Building

The Church and its setting have the greatest visual impact on the conservation area. This ancient building is enclosed to the west by mature trees and hedgerows and accessed by an attractive lychgate.



Figs. 12 & 13 Treescaped settings of Church and lychgate

South of the Church is the village cemetery which, although open, has a lychgate entrance. The remaining grounds to the east of the Church were the site of the original medieval Manor House.

The village as a whole presents an idyllic rural scene, but the lack of pavements results in telephone cables and telegraph poles intruding into the visual context of the houses. The result is unsightly and consideration should be given to the resolution of this problem.



Fig 14: View looking west from the eastern boundary

4.0 FUTURE TRENDS

4.1 Current and Future Pressures on the Area

Whilst new development within a conservation area is not necessarily unwelcome, the impact that this can have on the traditional form of the village and its buildings has to be carefully considered before planning permission is granted.

The Green Belt status of the hamlet may come under pressure in future years in response to the need for new housing in the south-east but at present new development is constrained by tight planning policies.

4.2 Potential for Enhancement and Future Policy Recommendations

Consideration should be given to the re-siting or undergrounding of telegraph poles and overhead wires within the conservation area. Planting and tree screening around the church car park would reduce its visual impact from the north and east. The conservation area was designated in 1992 and no changes are proposed to the boundary as a result of this appraisal.

Acknowledgements:

The draft document was prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

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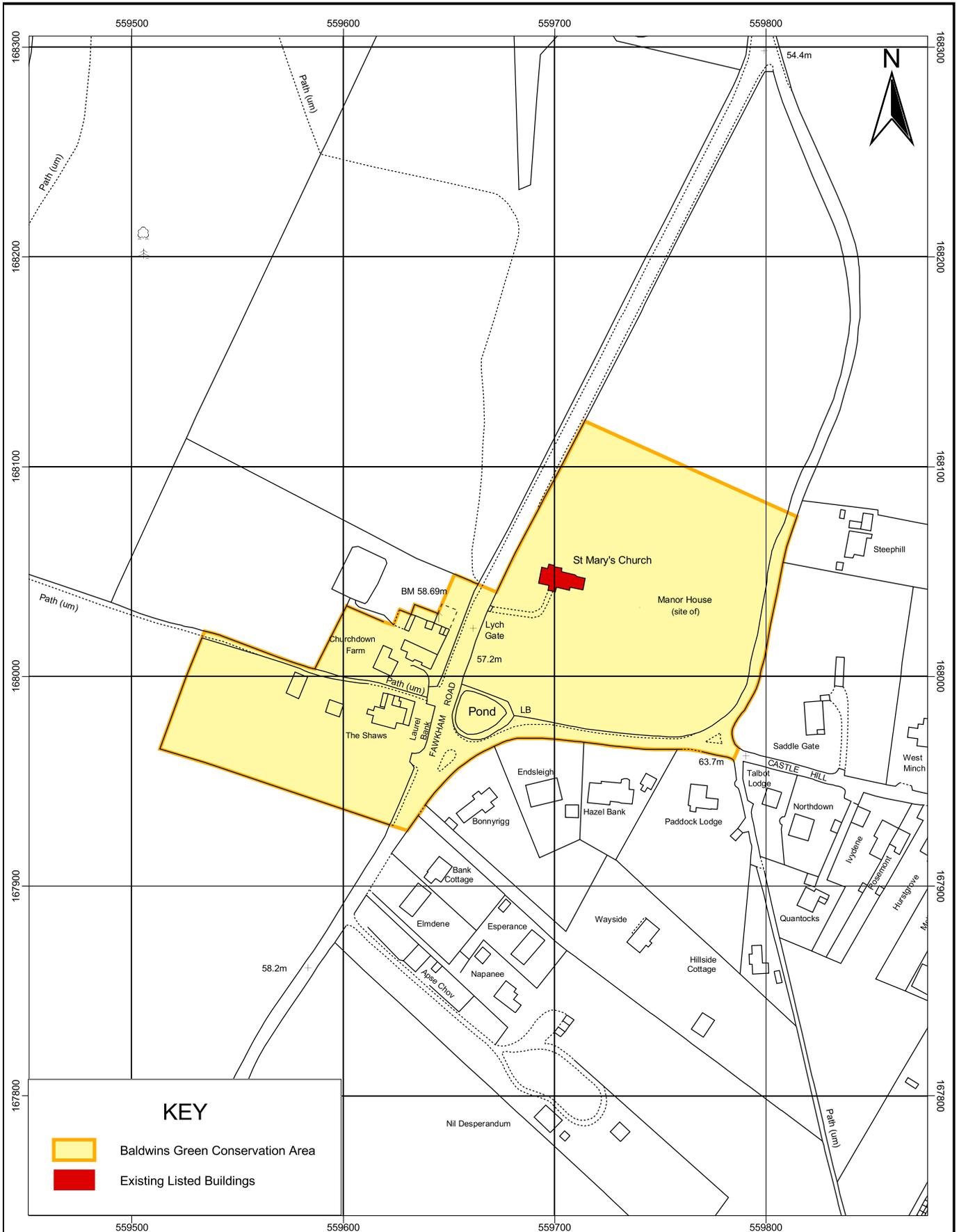
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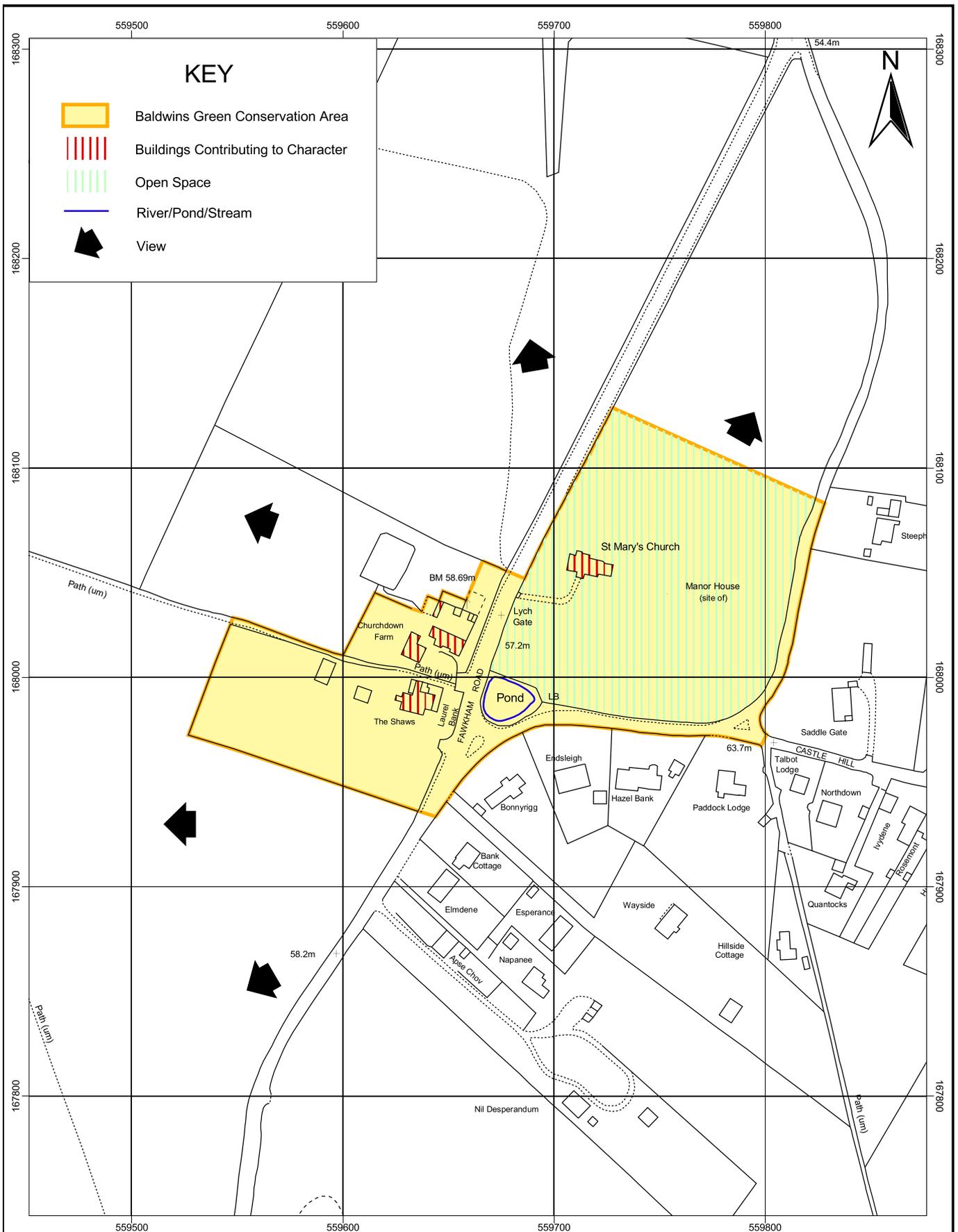
KEY

- Baldwins Green Conservation Area
- Existing Listed Buildings



MAP 4
Baldwins Green
Conservation Area
Designations

Scale	1:2500
Date	March 2003
Drawn By	SNM
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MAP 5
Baldwins Green
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Scale	1:2500
Date	March 2003
Drawn By	CW-T

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