Hook Green, Meopham

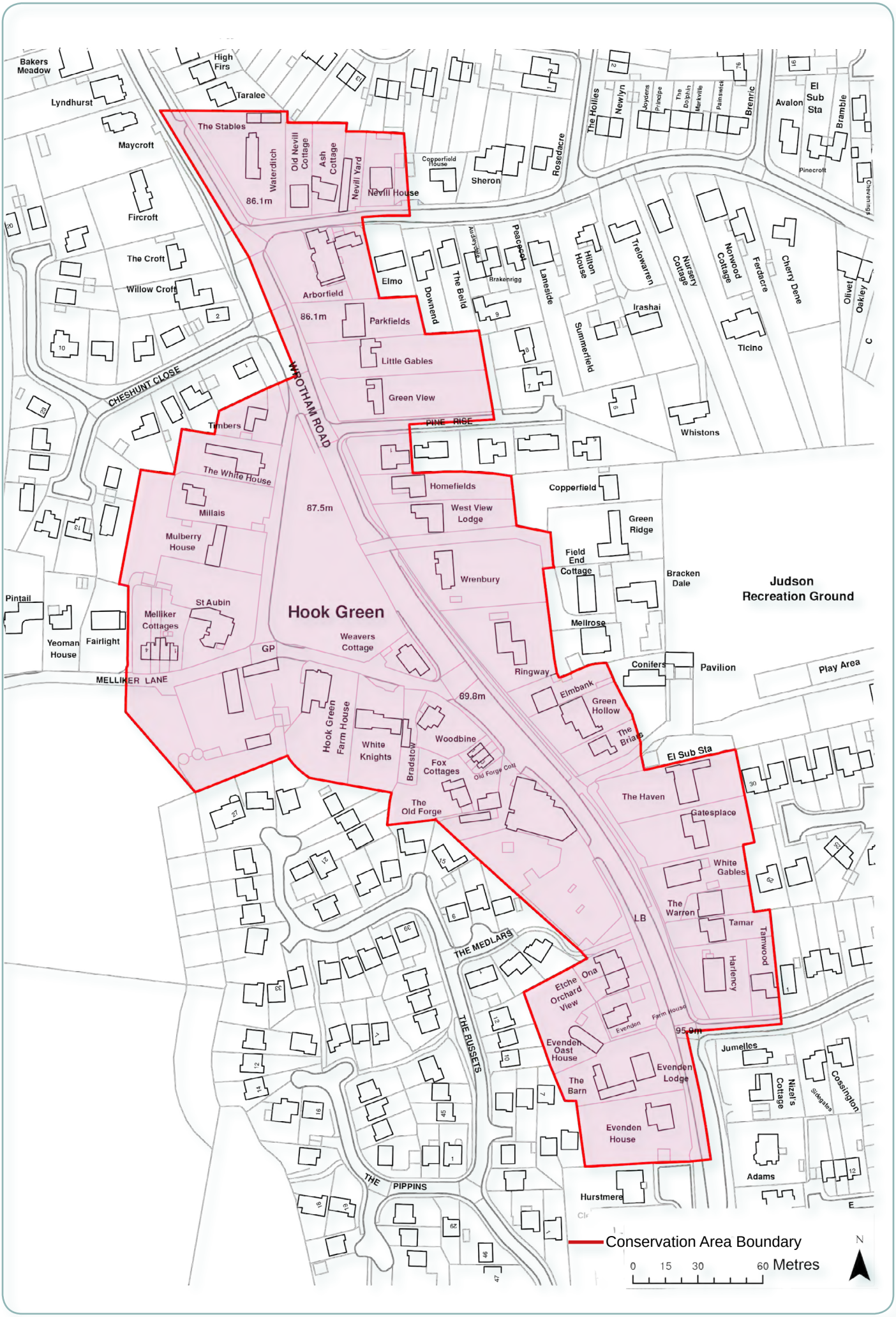
Rural Conservation Area Appraisal

Supplementary Planning Document

Delivering for the Community

Gravesham Borough Council

Hook Green, Conservation Area Boundary



HOOK GREEN, MEOPHAM, - RURAL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL 2016

1 STATEMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Hook Green Conservation Area 4
2.2 The purpose of the appraisal 4
2.3 Planning policy context 4
2.4 Community involvement 6

3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location, communications and local context 7
3.2 Activities and uses 7
3.3 Geology, topography and local building materials 7
3.4 Relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings 8

4 GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Early settlers in the region and the recent history of the Settlement 9
4.2 Water supply and the original siting of the village 9

5 THE VILLAGE'S HISTORIC LAYOUT, ITS FORM TODAY AND ITS ASSOCIATED PUBLIC REALM

5.1 The village's historic layout and its form today 10
5.2 The associated public realm 12

6 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

6.1 Building types 14
6.2 Building form 14
6.3 Listed, locally listed and key unlisted buildings; buildings making a neutral contribution to the conservation area; and buildings detrimental to conservation area character 15
6.4 Brief descriptions of some buildings contributing positively to conservation area character 15
6.5 Building materials 17
6.6 Local details 17

7 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

7.1 Spatial character and form of development within the Conservation area 19
7.2 Individual character areas 19
7.3 Landmarks, or key buildings, focal points and views 21

8 SUMMARY CHARACTER APPRAISAL 23

9 ISSUES

9.1 Definition of issues 25
9.2 Conservation area boundary review 25
9.3 Alterations to buildings 25
9.4 Uses and vitality 25
9.5 Locally listed buildings 25
9.6 Highways and traffic 25
9.7 Enhancement potential 25
9.8 Trees 25

APPENDIX 1
Epoch Maps 26

BIBLIOGRAPHY 29

FIGURES 30

1 STATEMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Hook Green Conservation Area is of special interest for its triangular village green with its mature landscaping, bordered on two sides by historic buildings, and for its offshoots to north and south along the Wrotham Road. The latter areas comprise small outlying collections of listed buildings and their settings.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Hook Green Conservation Area

Hook Green Conservation Area was first designated on 29th June 1970 and the boundary was significantly amended on the 1st February 1990. Following the preparation of a conservation area statement in 1999, this was approved by stakeholders and was subsequently adopted by the Council.

The conservation area's boundary contains parts of the historic streets of Wrotham Road, Melliker Lane, Norwood Lane and modern Pine Rise.

2.2 The purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal supersedes the conservation area statement referred to above. It identifies and defines the special architectural and historic interest for which the Hook Green Conservation Area merits designation. It also identifies the positive features that should be protected and highlights the negative factors that detract from its character and appearance. It will be used by the Borough Council in considering relevant applications for planning permission, including proposals for demolition or alteration of buildings, as well as for new developments. It will also help property owners and developers to take account of the importance of buildings, features, spaces and landscape within and adjacent to the Conservation Area.

The appraisal is to be included as a background paper in the Local Plan and, as such, will be a due consideration in the planning process. The appraisal was adopted as a separate Supplementary Planning Document within the Local Plan on the 21 February 2017.

Preparation of the appraisal involved an extensive survey of the conservation area. However, the omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Gravesham is managed by Kent County Council and can provide information for a wide variety of buildings and sites, from finds of prehistoric flint tools to medieval castles and Second World War pillboxes. For further information visit: www.kent.gov.uk/HER

2.3 Planning policy context

Conservation areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). Local planning authorities are required by the Act to identify the parts of their area that should be designated as conservation areas and to formulate and publish proposals to preserve or enhance them. Local authorities must submit proposals for the protection and enhancement of conservation areas for consideration at a public meeting within the relevant area. They should also have regard to any views expressed by people attending the meeting.

Broadly, the effects of designation are:

- Conservation Area Consent must be obtained from the local planning authority or Secretary of State prior to the substantial or total demolition of any building or structure within a conservation area, with some exceptions

- The local planning authority must consider the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area when assessing relevant applications
- Permitted development rights are slightly different in conservation areas

- Permission is required from the planning authority to fell or prune a tree over a certain size

As well as receiving statutory protection, conservation areas are afforded a degree of protection under the planning system whereby it is expected that proposed development will preserve and enhance heritage assets and their setting as an irreplaceable resource. The exception to this would be where any substantial harm or loss of heritage interest is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

In the case of Gravesham, the development plan effectively comprises the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and remaining 'saved' policies from the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994). In certain instances, the Kent Minerals Plan and Waste Plan will also be of relevance and a material planning consideration. Plans in preparation are also capable of being a material planning consideration with the weight accorded them depending on the stage reached, whether there are unresolved objections and the consistency of the emerging plan with national policy.

Amongst a range of other things, policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) and Planning Practice Guidance (2014) issued by the Government are also material planning considerations in the determination of planning applications. Of particular importance in this respect are paragraphs 126 – 141 of the NPPF which set out the approach toward conserving and enhancing the historic environment, with the weight to be accorded the conservation of designated heritage assets and their settings dependent on the significance of the asset, the degree of harm likely to occur as a result of development, and whether such harm is outweighed by any public benefits that would arise.

The importance of retaining the built as well as natural heritage of Gravesham is well recognised because of the contribution this can make through reinforcing local distinctiveness and the creation of sense of place. This document identifies both the special character of Hook Green Conservation Area and how that special character can best be preserved and enhanced.

In terms of the setting of the rural conservation areas, it is important to recognise that the surrounding landscape may also be of significance in determining impact or developing an appropriate design response. The reader's attention is therefore drawn to other documents available on the Council's website relating to landscape character appraisal in general and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural

Beauty (AoNB) in particular. In the case of the latter, the Council is under a statutory duty to have regard to the purposes of including land within the AoNB when taking decisions on applications that may impact on it or its setting.

2.4 Community involvement

Prior to its adoption by the Council, the conservation area statement of 1999, including the proposed boundary extension, was the subject of public consultation and support.

The present survey identifies in more detail the following:

- The special characteristics of Hook Green Conservation Area
- The key negative features and issues
- A range of possible actions that would mitigate or offset these detractors

3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location, communications and local context
Figure 1

Hook Green, on the A227 Wrotham Road, about 4 miles south of the centre of Gravesend, is on the dip slope of the Downs and stands at about 90 metres AOD. Some distance away to the south, are the heights of the chalk. To the immediate west of the village a system of dry valleys leads north to the Thames at Northfleet and Gravesend. East across the tableland Luddesdown's deep dry valley curves away north east, falling eventually into the Medway at Cuxton. The landscape around Hook Green is a balance of arable, hedge, copse and small woods, to some extent reflecting local geological conditions.

The A 227 provides a direct connection from Gravesend on the coast, due south up and over the more or less east/west running dip slope, and then the escarpment, of the North Downs. Below the Downs it traverses the vale of Holmesdale and the Chartlands from where it runs on to the Low Weald beyond. In the north it crosses the modern M2, Roman Watling Street. In the south, on reaching the base of the chalk escarpment, it links to a second set of major historic east/west routes, in this case following along the foot of, and below, the Downs. The A227's route is one of Kent's ancient droveways. In traversing the chalk dip slope it takes care to avoid the area's deep north and north-east running dry valleys, always following the line of the watershed between them and taking a gradually ascending route. Hook Green and Meopham Green, separate and church-less satellites of the original old Meopham (now Meopham The Street) stand today as 'incidents' along the road.

3.2 Activities and uses

Hook Green is within easy reach of Gravesend and Dartford, is close to the M2 motorway and even closer to Meopham station on the London Victoria line. This has long made it an attractive dormitory for London commuters. It has been swelled in modern times by extensive areas of suburban development to the south, east and north. In the recent past around the green it possessed at least one working farmstead, a few houses and cottages, a pub, a smithy and a former Parish Cottage pair, now Weaver's Cottage. Southward and separated from the green by orchards was a further farmstead. North from the green and also separated from it by fields was another small outlier of houses and cottages. What was the village pub, The Fox and Hounds, has become a restaurant, Bartellas; all other development in the conservation area appears to now be purely residential.

3.3 Geology, topography and local building materials
Figures 2 and 3

The conservation area within the modern village stands partly on Chalk of the Upper Cretaceous period and partly on much later Quaternary drift, 'head' deposits overlying this. Head takes the local form of silt, sand and clay with variable gravel and is chalky in places. Immediately north west and west of the conservation area the landscape is formed on more drift deposits and on a small outcrop of Thanet Sands of the Palaeocene period while to the east it is developed directly on the Chalk. Further south west, south and east, landscapes are formed on Clay with Flints drift overlying the chalk bedrock on the heights between its dry valleys. On the clay deciduous woodland often still dominates.

Within Hook Green Conservation Area the triangular green – around two sides of which historic development occurs – declines gently from a high point in the west to a very gradually northward-falling level along the A227. This gradual northward fall continues as far as the north end of the conservation area around Norwood Lane. South beyond the green the highway climbs gradually until it exits the conservation area just beyond the former Evenden farmstead.

The later form of hardwood timber framing which is plastered (or boarded) over and hidden externally is the typologically earliest vernacular walling form in the village. Flint from the chalk of the region also has a long history of use in the local building. Chalk was burned through the region for lime for mortar and plaster from very early times. Chalk and clay were mixed and processed locally from the late 18th century to produce various sorts of cement for exterior renders. Different varieties and mixes of local clay were used in brick-making. The reds came first, the yellow/browns following again from the late 18th century. The clay Kent peg roofing tile was made and in use in the region from the middle ages through to the mid 20th century.

3.4 Relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings (General setting and land-use characterisation. The village in the wider landscape)
Figure 4 – Conservation Area Surroundings
Figure 5 OS 1898 Historic Conservation Area Surroundings

As noted above, both the conservation area's centre disposed around the green, and its two outliers, are almost completely embedded within encircling modern residential development. This also fills the former 'agricultural' gaps between the historic areas. The approach to the settlement from the west along Melliker Lane is the only place where any historic part of the conservation area is visible from 'outside'. Even here the buildings marking the start of the conservation area - the short terrace of Melliker Cottages and the long slated roof of the now residential former barn of Hook Green Farm - are not visible from any distance.

4 GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Early settlers in the region and the recent history of the settlement.

North Kent has a long history of known settlement. Iron Age and Roman remains have been found at Meopham, The Street. This is a mile or so south along the road from Hook Green and it is where Meopham Church, vicarage and medieval manor house stood. The name Meopham confirms this original village as a Saxon settlement; Eckwall records its first mention as being in 778.

Outlying small village greens within the Kent down-lands such as those at Harvel or Hook Green are considered by Alan Everitt (Continuity and Colonisation – the evolution of Kentish settlement, LUP 1986) to often indicate 'early cattle stations or vaccaries..' developed within areas of 'wood-pasture' during the period of primary colonisation. Everitt notes that the Kent historian Hasted mentions houses and cottages '.. built round the little greens or forstalls, …' and says that Fore + steall seems literally to have meant a 'stall', 'enclosure', or 'standing place' in front of a farmhouse. He notes that in origin forstall 'no doubt referred to an enclosure for livestock, often perhaps a place where cattle were brought in to be milked' and says that this word eventually became interchangeable with 'green'. He also points out that over time, with the subdivision of farm-holding through Kent's partible inheritance system, further farmhouses might appear around these little farm-greens.

Meopham Hook Green in the mid 19th century remained no more than a hamlet, an outlier of Meopham proper (Meopham The Street), at a minor junction on the Wrotham Road. Then as now its distinguishing feature was its triangular green. This was developed sparsely on its west and south sides while most of its eastern side looked over the Wrotham Road to open fields beyond. Then it possessed four farmsteads and a smithy (now all lost or converted to residential use), one or two large detached houses, cottages and a public house (probably originally a farmhouse).

4.2 Water supply and the original siting of the village

Drinking water supply in Hook Green in the 19th, and into the early 20th, centuries was from wells and pumps driven down into the chalk aquifer. This will also have been the case in previous centuries; there appear to be no surface water flows, continuous or seasonal, in the immediate vicinity. The start of a narrow lane leads south along the west side of the former Fox and Hounds pub. This was formerly a route to a well, probably communal, that stood a little way off within the orchards that once lay behind the village here. The village pond was behind Waterditch Cottage at the junction of the main road with Norwood Lane. Rain water running northwards down the main road and westward down Norwood Lane was deliberately channelled into this pond. One modern authority notes that this road junction was notorious for its floods until recent times (Meopham in old picture postcards, Carley, J, 1986).

5 THE VILLAGE'S HISTORIC LAYOUT, ITS FORM TODAY AND ITSASSOCIATED PUBLIC REALM

5.1 The village's historic layout and the form today
Figure 6 – Conservation Are boundary
Figure 7/8 Historic Epoch maps c 19.

The central part of the village layout with the triangular green set to the west side of the Wrotham road, remains essentially unchanged since the 19th century but is much older than this. One of the two early buildings facing onto the green – Mulberry House, grade II listed – is of 16th century date, confirming that the road forming the western side of this triangular central open space was in place at least from that time. Across the green on its south side the façade of Hook Green Farm House, ostensibly of 19th century date – and also listed at grade II – conceals a second 16th century timber framed house. So the road to the south side of the green triangle was also in place by the 16th century. The Wrotham Road, once a drove road, is of course much older than either of these.

Again, in the 19th century as now, the west and south sides of the green were closed in by sequences of buildings. On the west side there was a farmyard and farm buildings around 16th century Mulberry House. The farm buildings have now all disappeared leaving Mulberry House and two more recent detached dwellings, St. Aubin (later 19th century) and The White House (earlier 19th century) widely spaced apart, set in generous gardens. The former garden spaces to each side of The White House are now occupied by modern detached houses. That immediately north of The White House visually links the historic development alongside the green, around the corner onto the Wrotham Road. There it joins up to the extensive modern residential developments to the north. Fortunately the other modern house, immediately south of The White House, is set far back into its site. Thus the original effect of generous spacing between The White House and its historic neighbour Mulberry House is more or less maintained. Sections of late 18th or early 19th century red brick boundary wall and dwarf wall with railings above, as well as mature hedges, edge this section of highway.

From the west end of the green, at the apex of its triangle of roads, Melliker Lane leads off westward to Melliker Farm a short distance away, where it joins Longfield Road headed north west for Dartford. The Lane first runs for a short distance alongside the south garden frontage of St Aubin with its low yellow brick boundary wall, succeeded further west by a section of full height brick boundary wall. Opposite stands the tall street-front brick and flint wall of one of the converted agricultural buildings of Hook Green Farm. These walls to each side of the road form a pinch point before a corner is turned and 19th century Melliker Cottages is seen on the right. Opposite the Cottages through a gateway in the hedge on the other side of the road, and up a bank, are the tumbled remains of Hook Green Farm's traditional oast house.

Continuing now eastward along the south side of the green, the tarmac-finished entrance way into the former farmyard of Hook Green Farm remains as it was in the 19th century. This, now a purely residential access, is closed on its east side by Hook Green Farm House itself. Through it converted farm buildings including the barn can be seen. East again, half the formerly generous farmhouse garden has been partitioned off to build a large modern detached house, White Knights. This is only partly concealed by street front boundary walling and mature planting. East beyond this again is Woodbine, a small early 19th century villa that has suffered alteration.

Both this and White Knights are masked from view from the north along the Wrotham Road by Weavers Cottage and the trees around it. This single storey weatherboard and flint, pantiled roofed cottage, built in 1832 as a pair of thatched parish cottages, occupies the south east corner of the green.

South again, and turning the corner onto the east side proper of the Wrotham Road is Fox Cottages, a group of three workers dwellings from the 1840s. Behind these was the yard to the village smithy now occupied by the Old Forge and Old Forge Cottage. These buildings date in part to the 14th century (from internal evidence) although externally they look Victorian. The smithy was backed by orchard grounds in the 19th century as was the village public house, the Fox and Hounds, which stood next to it to the south, at an angle to the road. The former pub building on this site, now Bartellas restaurant, is a much enlarged modern version and may contain something of its predecessor. The very extensive car park on the road frontage south of the former public house occupies a large part of the orchard site just referred to. It is open to view from the main road. South beyond this is a set back pair of modern semi-detached houses and beyond these again is Evenden Farmhouse. This is a 17th century timber framed building cased in brick with a prominent end stack to the road. Behind this, and partly concealed behind a high brick wall is a converted oast house. To the south a small, plain, converted 19th century farm building shares an entrance drive with Evenden Farmhouse and behind this again is another converted brick agricultural building. The last building in the conservation area here is Evenden House, a good quality late-19th century villa set back behind a tall red brick street frontage wall.

Opposite Evenden Farmhouse the conservation area boundary crosses the Wrotham Road. Its eastern boundary is then drawn northward to include the full plots of all the houses fronting the eastern side of the A227 as far as its junction with Norwood Lane. This area east of the road, much of it facing the green, was more or less open fields into the late 19th century. The main development here then was opposite the smithy and public house. Known at one time as Gates Place farm, all that remains of this is Elmbank, formerly a pair of 19th century farm cottages now one house. The farmstead here once comprised a farmyard with a substantial sized barn and other agricultural buildings all now disappeared. A large circular ‘tank’ also shown here on the 1896 OS map confirms that local water supply remained an issue then. This farmyard may have originally been linked to the former pub opposite.

Modern development along the east side of Wrotham Road comprises late 20th century houses in their own grounds. One exception, Arborfield, at the corner of Norwood Lane, is a substantial Edwardian house of some architectural interest. There are wide roadside verges, roadside tree planting and mature shrubs and trees in the front gardens of the houses within this part of the conservation area. Here and elsewhere, mature trees make a very important conservation area contribution. (This contribution is considered generally later under ‘character areas’.)

Development around the junction of Norwood Lane with Wrotham Road forms the northern end of the conservation area. In conservation area terms it links back to the green via part of the mostly modern development and its front garden planting along the east side of Wrotham Road. North across the junction of Norwood Lane and Wrotham Road is Waterditch, a grade II listed house. It is set back and down from the road in an attractive cottage garden. It is a 16th and 19th century house in brick and weatherboard with a peg tiled roof. Around the corner away from the main road, along the north side of Norwood Lane are a group of 19th century houses and outbuildings, slate roofed, stuccoed and brick walled. All are set back slightly and

have good street front walls, hedges etc. This is a surprising and interesting early Victorian enclave in a sea of 20th century 'streetscape'. Within this group Nevill House is in status terms a cut above the rest. Next to Nevill House is Nevill Yard. Along one side of this, at right angles to the road, is a long one and two storey building of the early 19th century. This may have been stabling and carriage housing but may also have formerly had storage, depot or workshop uses.

5.2 The associated public realm

The village's public realm centres on the triangular green, grassed and with single specimen, groups and rows of mature deciduous trees within and along its west and south sides. Public footways are restricted to the 'outside' of its east side only i.e. across the Wrotham Road where there is a footway fully kerbed to the highway. Elsewhere the grass of the green runs right to the road edge, allowing the 'soft', landscaped, area maximum impact. Along the green's east side, at the edge of the main road, the grass is retained by conventional highway kerbs. Its other two sides have the attractive informal rural kerb-less arrangement except at the triangle's apex where the road corner is again defined by a run of low kerbing.

The green's east side fronting the Wrotham Road is largely open to view from that highway as one passes by, with glimpses through the trees to each side of some of the houses surrounding it. Wide spaced low wooden bollards and a similarly low and simple single-rail post and rail fence mark the junction of the green's open side with the road. There is a similar timber railing along the road edge at the south side of the green. A number of seats provide quiet sitting places towards the west apex of the green, well away from the noisy road. Forward towards the Wrotham Road is the tall post carrying the Parish sign announcing arrival in Meopham. It shows St John's Church (Meopham The Street) and the windmill (Meopham Green).

Mature trees along with bushes, runs of hedges and some walls in and to the front gardens of the detached houses east of the green provide some screening to these modern incursions when seen obliquely, in passing, from the A 227. They also provide part of the east side setting for the green. The Wrotham Road footway here runs along the highway's eastern edge with a narrow grass strip between it and the front garden boundaries of the houses. Opposite the south end of the green it switches to run along close up to the house front gardens with a generous grassed verge between it and the road. Within this public-realm verge, a number of individual deciduous trees including oaks are planted, regularly spaced out along the roadside. Though they are still only semi-mature, these trees make an important contribution to local character. In summer at least they help to conceal the modern development lining the road to the east, having an almost woodland effect when viewed obliquely. Opposite, and as noted already, the car park to the rear of the former Fox and Hounds public house is arranged so that extensive views of it can be had in passing from Wrotham Road.

At the north end of the conservation area beyond the junction of Wrotham Road with Norwood Lane, the arrangement of wide roadside verge repeats in front of Waterditch. Low timber bollards at the roadside, similar to those on the green, are also in use here. There is a lay-by on the east side of the main road immediately south of the Norwood Lane junction. Yellow no-parking lines have been employed on all public roads throughout the conservation area – the narrow variety has been used around the green**.** There are various speed control signs and posts along the Wrotham Road; the scale and occurrence of these is such as to have little effect on conservation area character.

Street lighting along Wrotham Road consists of the tall wide spaced columns commonly used on important traffic routes in urban areas. These are not particularly obtrusive given their numbers and individual siting. A number of telegraph poles are prominent but again these do not seriously affect conservation area character**.**

6 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

A distinction is made between about one half of the buildings within the conservation area which are generally modern detached domestic properties and the other half, historic buildings built before the First World War. The former are considered to make a neutral contribution to conservation area character. Discussion of their typology and form is therefore omitted here. It is the historic buildings that give the local built environment its special character and it is these only that are considered in what follows.

6.1 Building types

The historic buildings of Hook Green now all have residential uses. Within this group Hook Green Farmhouse and Evenden Farmhouse are now severed from their lands. Mulberry Cottage was clearly at one time also associated with farming. Waterditch, divided into 5 separate dwellings in the late 19th century has now reverted to one dwelling, probably its original form. A few later individual 19th century/early 20th century houses are built as freestanding 'villas' set in relatively large gardens (Nevill House, The White House, St. Aubin, Evenden House) and there is one very large Edwardian house, Arborfield. Four short terraces of originally very narrow frontage 19th century workers houses are scattered through the conservation area, the longest, of 4 dwellings, being Melliker Cottages. Weavers Cottage in the south east corner of the green was originally two parish cottages for the poor. Converted examples of typical, later, Kentish farm buildings including an oast house are found in association with Hook Green and Evenden farmhouses. Another example of an early 19th century 'service' building, possibly originally stabling etc or maybe joiners workshops, stands adjacent to Victorian Nevill House in Norwood Lane. The once historic buildings of the former Smithy are now changed externally so as to appear modern. Lastly there is the former Fox and Hounds public house, now a restaurant.

6.2 Building form

St Aubin, Evenden House and The White House, and the smaller Woodbine, all of the earlier or later 19th century, are typical villas of the time, the plan of each main block approaching a square with key façade and entrance porch etc to the highway, and behind, a rear wing set to one side. The square plan of Neville House is the purest example of this arrangement. In four of these cases the roof is low pitched for slate and hipped at each end. In the other case, also low pitched for slate, gables are used along with tall bay windows on the front. As noted earlier, the 16th century interior of Hook Green farmhouse is disguised on the street by a later façade. This follows the mid 19th century design rules for the villa front. Only the Edwardian Arborfield breaks away from this symmetrical approach to façade design.

Evenden Farmhouse has a timber frame concealed behind a brickwork skin of more than one date. The only slightly 'improved' and earlier Mulberry House and Waterditch exemplify the old Kent timber frame and brick vernacular tradition of the long, narrow-width, plan with an accompanying long-ridged roof, in both cases with the ends hipped.

The conservation area's semi-detached or terrace runs of two storey workers cottages are all plain, utilitarian, examples of their kind. They have the minimum number of vertically proportioned wall-openings, brick or stuccoed facades and low pitched and hipped slate roofs. All this is typical of the first half of the 19th century. Weavers Cottage is in contrast to these with its brick and flint lower and weather-

boarded upper walls, its gabled ends and its pantiled roof. Its plan, however, again follows the Kent vernacular tradition of narrow width to length ratio. The same is the case with the plans of the agricultural/local industrial buildings surviving in the conservation area at the two former farmstead sites and on Norwood Lane. The former barn at Hook Green farm has a half hipped roof, a type rare in the village though common in similar Kent buildings of its period. It is also fully weather-boarded in black (originally tarred) boards.

Lastly, the form of the former Fox and Hounds public house is greatly affected by the number of rear and side extensions and 'makeovers' it has accumulated over time.

6.3 Listed, locally listed and key unlisted buildings; buildings making a neutral contribution to conservation area character; and buildings detrimental to conservation area character.

Figure 9 Buildings contributing, neutral or detrimental to Conservation Area Character

6.4 Brief descriptions of some buildings contributing positively to conservation area character

This list is not comprehensive. Other historic buildings not included also contribute to conservation area character. Descriptions are generally confined to the street façade of the building only. Comment is made without the benefit of internal inspection. Interiors invariably fill-out the picture and may sometimes change the emphasis of exterior descriptions.

The plastered or stuccoed, and white painted, front facades of The White House, Neville House and Woodbine Cottage make key contributions to the character of the conservation area.

The White House

Raised on a slight basement, this is reached up a short flight of steps. It has a stuccoed rectangular projecting front porch with stucco pilasters, entablature and cornice and a semi-circular entrance doorway with moulded architraves and keystone and a good door. The ground floor windows to each side have moulded architraves and cornices supported on console brackets. A stucco plat-band divides ground from first floor. The architraves to the three upper floor windows are plainer and simpler than those below. Windows are double-hung sashes with narrow margin lights. The hipped roof is of natural slate and there is a good overhang at eaves with a minimum depth fascia board.

Neville House

This is generally similar to The White House in most particulars including the margin lights to the windows, its chief difference being in the design of the front porch. In its case the porch is open, the good front door being set inside it with a glazed light over in the usual way. The porch roof is formed with cornice, entablature and architrave supported at each corner by slender Doric columns. In addition the upper floor windows have more substantial architraves and also have keystones, the plat band running through at cill level. Woodbine is a miniature version of the other two, without the raising-up and the decorative stucco-work. Its open porch might be termed an example of modern uninformed design. Its original timber windows have been replaced with plastic double glazed small pane ones.

Hook Green farmhouse

The front façade is divided horizontally with good yellow/brown facing brickwork above first floor window cills and cream stucco below. Three six over six paned sash windows with flat gauged brick arches above are matched below by a central front door with semi-circular fanlight protected by a stuccoed, Doric columned, open porch. There are single storey cant sided bay windows to each side, their double hung sash windows being undivided. It is likely that the first floor exhibits a late 18th/early 19th century re-facing while the ground floor (bays and stucco) shows an even later mid to late 19th century modernisation.

St Aubin and Evenden House

These are both built in yellow stocks, one with red and the other with grey brick dressings. Both belong to the end of the 19th century and show enjoyment in the use of brick and rendered brick (or pre-formed concrete) pilasters to bay windows and a certain amount of asymmetry. Window lintels and cills, both probably in painted stone, are heavily expressed. Deep gable overhangs pierced by chimney stacks and finished with bargeboards at St Aubin contrast with the neat minimal eaves overhang to Evenden House's hipped roof.

Mulberry House

Mulberry Houses's street façade is long and low and is plastered on a timber frame except at its north end which is brick concealed under more plaster. Its windows are mostly horizontally proportioned casements (although there are one or two double hung sashes) and this reinforces the long/low visual effect. Although the pink colouring to the walls is reminiscent of East Anglia, it has been found to have been used on occasion in Kent also. The plain appearance of the building facade contrasts well with its traditional hipped peg-tiled roof.

Waterditch

The house appears from the street outside to be a building of at least two periods. Half the original may have been lost due to fire. Although its lower parts are hidden from view by a high hedge, the tall wavy peg tiled roof of the south part of Waterditch has strong medieval or post medieval character. With a large step down this contrasts nicely with the utilitarian low pitched, hipped and pantiled roof of the cream weather-boarded first floor of the northern half of the building. A variety of chimneys adds further picturesque interest to the overall composition. The use of painted weatherboard to differentiate the lived-in building from the black tarred barn or other agricultural building has been typical of the Kent vernacular since at least the start of the 19th century.

Evenden farmhouse

This is another listed building. From the road the end gable of the building follows the classic 'cat-slide' or 'salt box' form of two storey gable ended front with a long back roof slope descending to cover a single storey 'outshut'. The way in which the unusually substantial brick end chimney stack is partly subsumed into the whole suggests quite a complex history of building development.

Four small 19th century workers terraces within the conservation area

These terraces were always very plain. Two have a version of smooth stucco on their outside walls suggesting this is how they were originally finished. One is pebble dashed externally, the dash possibly dating from the second half of the 20th century, while the last one remains fair faced local yellow stock brickwork. In many cases their windows, originally vertical proportion double-hung sashes, and doors, have been replaced by visually inferior modern designs, differing of course between neighbours. In some cases modern open porches also feature, again differing in design one to another. In the main the buildings appear to still have natural slate roofing in place though those at Fox Cottages may be an artificial composition version.

Weavers Cottage

The original body of Weavers Cottage is a long rectangle in plan. Its lower wall areas are of flint and brick and it has a gabled and orange-red flat, interlocking pantiled roof. Originally the building was thatched and the roof had hipped ends. The upper 600mm or so of it's street wall is of black weatherboard, as are its gable triangles – all of this indicates the later changes made to the original form. Behind the pitch roofed front section is a large well hidden flat, felt roofed extension. Windows are modern casements. It is difficult to make an assessment of significance here without detailed inspection inside.

The (former) Fox and Hounds public house

This public house, possibly of the 1920s/30s, retains its predecessor's odd angle to the road but is architecturally much more ambitious with wide wings, backward and forward end projections, striped first floor end panels and a front pent-roof over single storey canted-sided bays. All is cream painted render and brown woodwork and tiling. To the rear the complexity of the roofs of its various single storey extensions would do justice to a small village.

6.5 Building materials

The usual palette of Kent building materials is found within the historic buildings of the conservation area, tile hanging and exposed historic timber frame being the main items absent. Timber frames clad externally with weatherboarding and also finished with painted external lath and plaster, do occur. Flint walling is seen in a number of buildings and in boundary walling. Local plain red, and later yellow, brickwork also features as do the later smooth stucco over brick and modern pebble-dash. Roofs are clad either in local peg-tile or natural slate imported from Wales. In two cases pantiles are used. Like slate, these came late to the picture, probably first appearing in the rural parts of the region in the 18th century.

6.6 Local details

Local village detail follows the general tradition and development of Kent's timber, flint and brick vernacular architecture with no building or use of material that has a character unique to Hook Green.

Much original exterior joinery survives, but in places modern replacements damage the appearance of 'host' buildings. Erosion of character invariably results from the introduction of off-the-peg timber and plastic windows. The design, detail and appearance of these are almost always unacceptable in conservation areas. Similar

problems of character-damage can arise through poor brickwork re-pointing and the replacing of original exterior renders by different modern ones.

7 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

7.1 Spatial character and form of development within the conservation area
Figure 10 Spatial Character Areas

The village is divided up notionally into three separate, abutting, areas each with its own distinctive character. These are all shown on the Map, figure 10 The areas are:

1 The north part of the conservation area to the east of the Wrotham Road

2 The central part of the conservation area, east and west of Wrotham Road, where the great majority of buildings face towards the triangular green

3 The south part of the conservation area where buildings face onto the Wrotham Road

Note: Trees, mostly deciduous, are a key element of conservation area character at Hook Green. Environments are described below with the trees in full leaf. In winter, with leaves absent, more will be seen through their open canopies.

7.2 Individual character areas

Each character area is identified individually and its special character (as set out here below) briefly described. In Figure 11 the relationship of buildings to spaces, nature of spaces, contributing and detrimental features are all shown. Main contributing trees, garden areas, planting and important boundaries are shown. Discussion assumes an approach to the village along the Wrotham Road from the north.

1 The north part of the conservation area to the east of the Wrotham Road

Approaching from the north, development to each side of the Wrotham Road is linear in character, following the road line. The modern housing on the east side of the road is close-spaced right up to the north boundary of the conservation area. Here Waterditch on its large plot and especially with its surrounding mature planting, changes local character, marking the conservation area's start. Waterditch's road boundary as one turns the corner into Norwood Lane, is heavily screened by a very tall hedge with individual still taller garden trees behind it. Seen from the south Waterditch's south roof slope and chimney appear to one side of these trees.

The tall hedge continues right round the corner into Norwood Lane behind a low brick wall as far as the garden boundary of the first property on the north side of the Lane. The 19th century houses along this side of Norwood Lane form a distinct group standing together behind small front gardens with low garden walls, gateways, entrance drives, steps and hedges. As already noted all this is excellent streetscape.

The Edwardian bulk of Arborfield, set back and screened behind a group of very fine, tall, mature forest trees, carries some of the spatial quality just referred to around the south side of Norwood Lane and back onto the east side of the Wrotham Road. The group of tall trees in Arborfield's front garden makes an important visual link south west across the main road to a similar pair of tall deciduous trees at the north corner of the green in area 2. South beyond Arborfield modern detached houses are well set back from the road behind walls and mature planting, the buildings having a neutral and the planting a positive impact on the character of the conservation area.

2 The central part of the conservation area, east and west of Wrotham Road, where the great majority of buildings face towards the triangular green

Continuing south along Wrotham Road, entrance into the area of the green is obscured by the kind of visual 'gateway' formed diagonally over the road between the forest trees in front of Arborfield and the pair just mentioned at the north corner of the green. Once one is south beyond these the space of the green opens up to the west of the road. Seen from here, a second major tree group stands forward at the south east corner of the green, hiding Weavers Cottage. In the gap between this group and a third tree grouping towards the green's 'apex', uphill to the west, can be seen most of the façade of Hook Green Farmhouse. The tree group at the 'apex' includes a fine Copper Beech in the front garden of St Aubin's.

Reversing the view, and approaching the green along the main road from the south, The White House near the green's north east corner is prominent. It is framed to the east by the pair of forest trees on the green referred to above, as well as by mature background planting between it and these trees. To its west a further three forest trees, nicely spaced, form a screen along the west edge of the green that effectively hides all other development here. Between this group and the tree group at the green's 'apex' to the west, open sky is visible above the roadside hedge between the hidden Mulberry House and St Aubin's.

Travelling either north or south on the Wrotham Road in front of the green, the vista to the east, seen on the angle in passing, is of succeeding garden boundary walls and fences to the road, mature planting and garden trees, with modern houses hiding behind these. One very tall forest evergreen in particular makes a strong contribution to the local scene. So from this viewpoint landscaping predominates to the advantage of character. It is for these reasons that the modern development on this side of the road is included within the conservation area. Seen from west across the green the picture is different with a more equal visual balance between landscaping and modern houses.

There are two 'hidden' enclaves of development within area 2. The first is at the top of the green beyond its apex, where Melliker Lane leads off westward. As noted earlier, there is first a pinch point here between the street-side garden walls of St. Aubin's and the equivalent street frontage wall of one of the converted Hook Green farm buildings. This opens out around the corner westward to reveal Melliker Cottages on the right, where the conservation area ends. From here the view is of the road winding away uphill slightly, hedged on the left with trees in the distance. On the right beyond Melliker Cottages is a little more suburban development before open country is actually reached there. Travelling this route in reverse it is obviously the case that after passing the pinch point the green opens to view as a 'surprise' vista.

The second enclave is at the south end of the green where enclosure against the side road is produced between the rear of Weavers Cottages and its trees and hedge, and the properties opposite – White Knights and Woodbine. The effect of enclosure here is increased by the presence of boundary walls and substantial mature shrub and tree planting in the gardens of White Knights and Hook Green farmhouse. A further group of small garden trees around the south end of Weavers Cottage completely hides this from view as the green is approached from the south along the Wrotham Road.

3 The south part of the conservation area where buildings face onto the Wrotham Road

The east side of Wrotham Road here is a continuation of the modern 'detached-house with mature front-area-planting' environment further north along the road and described earlier. This section of suburban housing is also included in the Conservation Area for the contribution of its front garden planting to local character. In addition to this there is a further local dimension contributing to character – the row of spaced-apart young forest trees planted in a wide grass verge against the highway. In summer these are an additional attractive feature along the roadside.

The situation west of the highway here is much more complex. Starting from the north again just south of Woodbine, the setting of Fox Cottages and of the set back adjacent buildings of the former smithy is heavily confined by a stand of large, very tall and dark Leylandii. These are in Woodbine's garden and grouped to each side of Fox Cottages. They crowd against one side of the entrance way and front area of The Old Forge and Old Forge Cottage. The start of a narrow lane, once much longer, leads south past this entry into open space to the rear of the former Fox and Hounds pub.

Immediately beyond the old lane entrance the front, north facing elevation of the former Fox and Hounds is in full view of those approaching along the Wrotham Road from the north. In front of it is a low-walled sitting out area. As it stands, from this viewpoint the building's conservation area contribution can be described as positive. Immediately beyond it, further south and uphill, the sides of parked cars visible at the back of footway mark the wide, street-side lacuna of the building's rear car park. The view beyond this unfortunate visual incursion is closed by a curve in the road and a tall hedge at right angles to the road at the south boundary of the car park.

Beyond this things start to improve again, beyond some modern infilling, at the grounds of Evenden Farmhouse. The building itself set back and down from the road. Screening from the highway by means of walls and hedges here is so successful that it is easy to miss the former agricultural buildings and the two original houses focussed on the off road space of the old farmyard, as one passes. The last house in the conservation area here, late 19th century Evenden House, although again sheltering behind a high front wall, has a more conventional relationship to the road and is thus more noticeable.

Comment on the reverse approach to Hook Green, from the south, is restricted here to the effect of the car park of the former Fox and Hounds pub. Open to the road as it is, this large tarmac-finished space does not make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. Given that the car park is not a conservation area grade environment there is a question as to what might be done to ameliorate its negative impact.

7.3 Landmarks or key buildings, focal points and views
Figure 12 Landmarks, focal points and views.

As noted earlier, since the conservation area is almost completely embedded in later, 20th century, development there are no views of it from open countryside. Even the route in along Melliker Lane does not initially reveal much more than the back of a converted barn and Melliker Cottages. One has to wait until one has almost reached the head of the green before its character can be appreciated.

Within its wider suburban context certain features do act as markers or landmarks announcing the conservation area's presence. In the north, along the Wrotham Road these are Waterditch and its mature setting and the forest trees in front of Arborfield with their equivalents diagonally over the road around the northern corner of the green. South along the Wrotham Road the car park of the former Fox and Hounds, with the building itself beyond, is the first landmark when approaching from that direction. More visually satisfying is the next important feature, the shrub and forest tree group around Weavers Cottage on around the corner to the north.

Key diagonal views of the green from the Wrotham Road, looking north, feature the focal point of The White House which is embedded in trees, and looking south west, an equivalent composition within which Hook Green farmhouse is the focal point.

The third side of the green, to the east, is formed by Wrotham Road. Development along the east side of Wrotham Road here is all modern, some of it quite recent. As noted earlier, seen at an angle from the road localised planting helps to conceal and fragment views of some half dozen extensive modern houses. These, however, show their full effect when seen from directly opposite, on the green. From this viewpoint their contribution to character is at best described as neutral.

8 SUMMARY CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Including positive, neutral and negative features

The conservation area can be divided into three parts, northern, central and southern. Its special character is well developed in the central part around and including its triangular green. Here the overall composition centres on the very attractive open space of the green itself, falling towards Wrotham Road, with its various fine groupings of mature trees around its west and south edges. West and south beyond its perimeter lanes, a number of mostly historic dwellings face onto the green from behind well kept hedges, fences and boundary walls. With two important exceptions (The White House and Hook Green farmhouse) these are screened from the green by the various tree groups mentioned above. The apparent relatively low density of development around the green is an important feature of the place.

As noted earlier the contribution to conservation area character of the modern houses along the east side of Wrotham Road, where it forms the third side of the green, is at best neutral. Front gardens, however, make a very useful contribution with their trees and shrubs acting as a visual baffle to partly conceal what lies behind.

A converted former farmyard and buildings, a row of 19th century workers cottages and some boundary walling form a separate small enclave beyond the west 'apex' of the green triangle. A similar enclave occurs at the south end of the green with the perimeter lane there passing between development on its south side and Weavers Cottage on the green to the north. Here trees and shrubs in gardens as well as within the public space contribute greatly to local character.

The northern part of the conservation area divides into two; Waterditch and its setting mark its start. The houses along the north side of Norwood Lane form a separate group with many good townscape features such as hedges, walls, gates etc to the street. This group links across Norwood Lane to Arborfield on the Wrotham Road. In turn the mature trees in front of Arborfield correspond visually with, and provide a link diagonally across Wrotham Road to those at the north corner of the green.

Visual coherence west of Wrotham Road in the southern part of the conservation area is upset by the siting and character of the large open car park to the rear of the former Fox and Hounds public house. In addition, due to its position south of the car park and back from the road a little, the conservation area contribution of the excellent building group around Evenden farmhouse is best experienced on foot. From here east across Wrotham Road the semi-mature forest trees planted in the roadside verge and private tree and shrub planting in front gardens make a useful conservation area contribution by helping to mask the suburban style development there.

Positive features:

- The triangular green with its various groupings of mature trees
- The mature trees in the front garden of Arborfield on the Wrotham Road
- Numbers of mature trees and shrubs in the gardens of dwellings in the conservation area, including those in the front gardens to the modern developments along the east side of Wrotham Road

- The line of semi-mature trees in the east verge of Wrotham Road in the south part of the conservation area

- The rural character of the lanes on the west and south sides of the green

- The low density character of the immediate surroundings of the green

- The various historic buildings on two sides of the green and their settings including walls, fences, hedges and gates etc.

- The focal-point elevations of Hook Green farmhouse and The White House and their settings

- The landmark building of Waterditch and its setting at the north entry to the conservation area

- The early/mid 19th century building group and its settings on Norwood Lane

- The group of historic houses and converted agricultural buildings at the former Evenden Farm

Neutral features:

- All recent modern residential development in the conservation area

- The present character of the former Fox and Hounds public house

Negative features:

- The roadside car park to the south of the former Fox and Hounds public house

9 ISSUES

9.1 Definition of issues

The following issues form part of the means by which it is intended to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Some arrangements by which to manage change have already been adopted following public consultation, such as the Article 4 Direction explained below, whilst others have been identified by the appraisal process and represent proposals only at this stage.

9.2 Conservation area boundary review.

No amendments to the conservation area boundary are considered necessary.

9.3 Alterations to buildings

It is evident that some well-intentioned, but unsympathetic changes, especially to doors and windows, have had an effect that is damaging to the conservation area. An Article 4 Direction is now in force, applying to all building frontages facing the public highway and bringing many small scale incremental changes under the remit of the planning system.

9.4 Uses and vitality

With the exception of the restaurant at the former Fox and Hounds pub, the conservation area is today essentially a dormitory settlement.

9.5 Locally listed buildings

There is no adopted comprehensive Local List for the Borough and, subject to availability of resources, identification of buildings or structures for a local list is considered to be a priority once criteria have been agreed. Any Local List should be drawn up with the full consultation of the local community.

9.6 Highways and traffic

The level of traffic passing through the area has increased over recent years, with a noticeable increase in HGV's travelling between the M20 and A2. It may be worth considering some form of traffic management.
It should be noted that highways matters are the remit of KCC and subject to their funding arrangements and further consultation with GBC and the Parish Council.

9.7 Enhancement potential

The car park of the former Fox and Hounds public house has been identified as a negative feature within the conservation area. The planting of some form of tree or shrub screen along the back of pavement here would improve things considerably. Enhancement of the unfinished car park in front of Waterditch would also make a positive contribution to the house and conservation area.

9.8 Trees

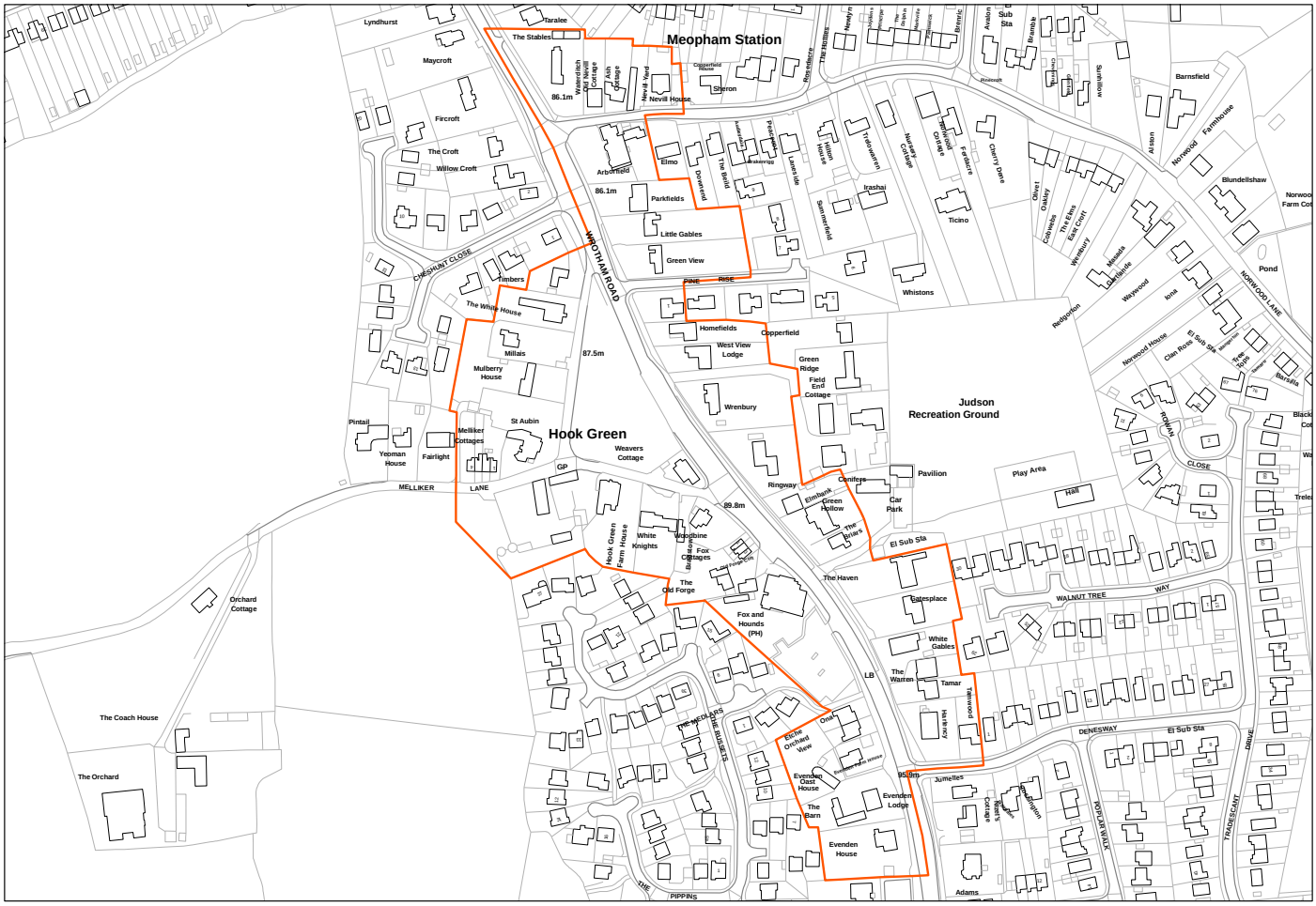
Subject to certain size restrictions, all trees within the conservation area benefit from a level of protection and permission is required from the Local Planning Authority to undertake works to them.

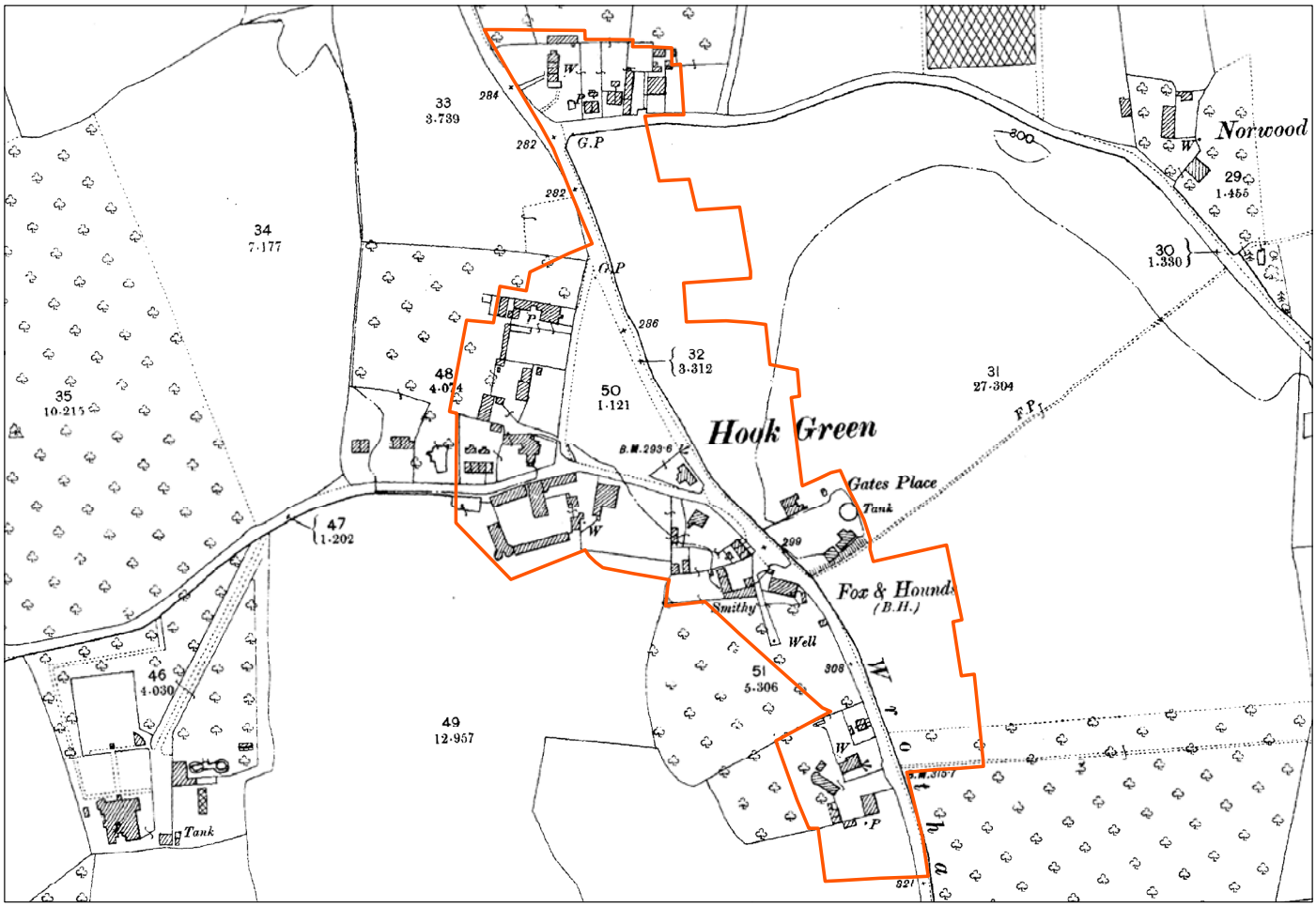
Mature trees within the Green make important contributions to its character.

9.9 Archaeology

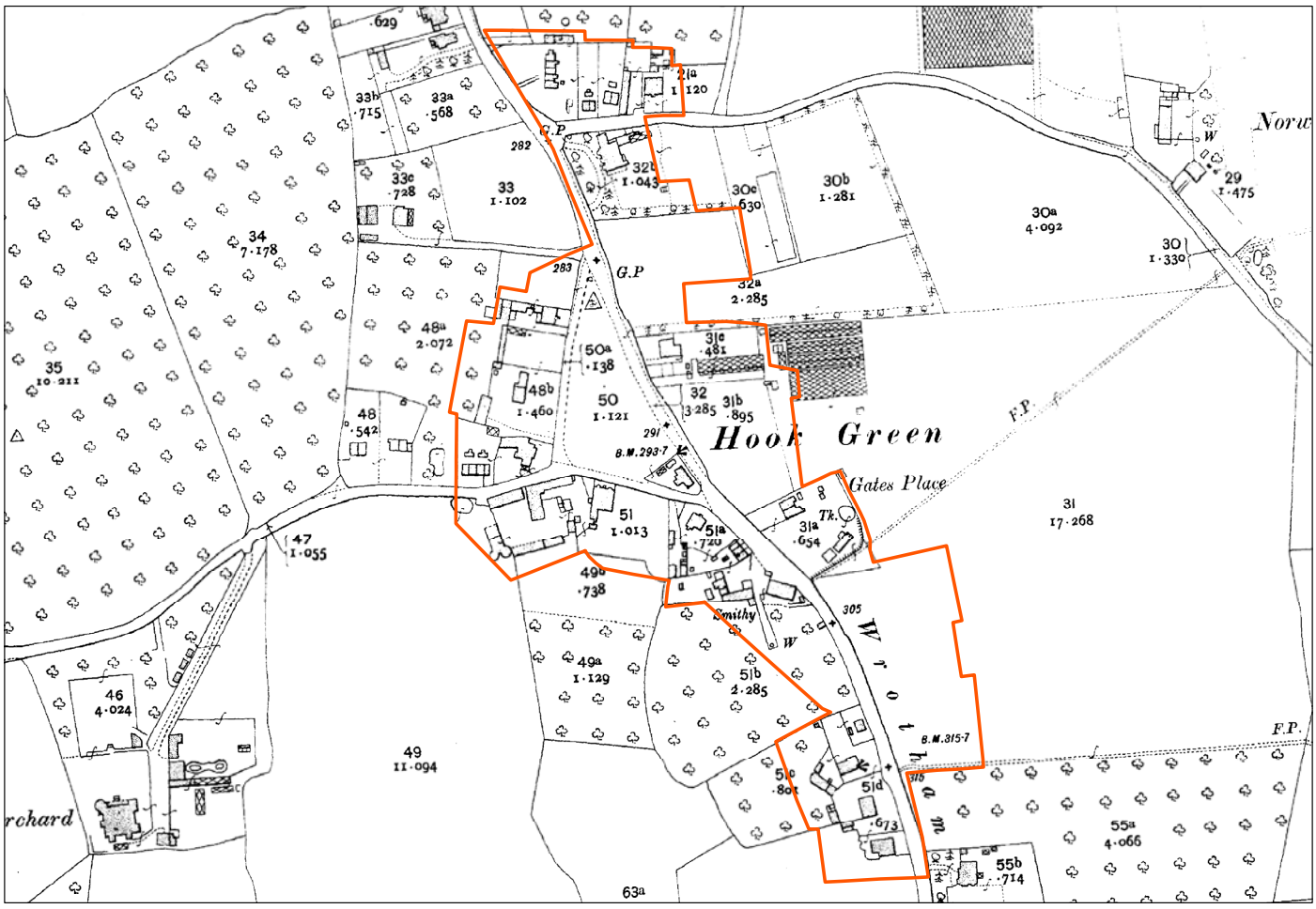
The Conservation Area has archaeological potential relating to Pleistocene deposits, medieval buildings and late medieval farmsteads. There is potential for further archaeological remains to be discovered and in the event of development proposals being submitted appropriate archaeological mitigation may be needed.

APPENDIX 1

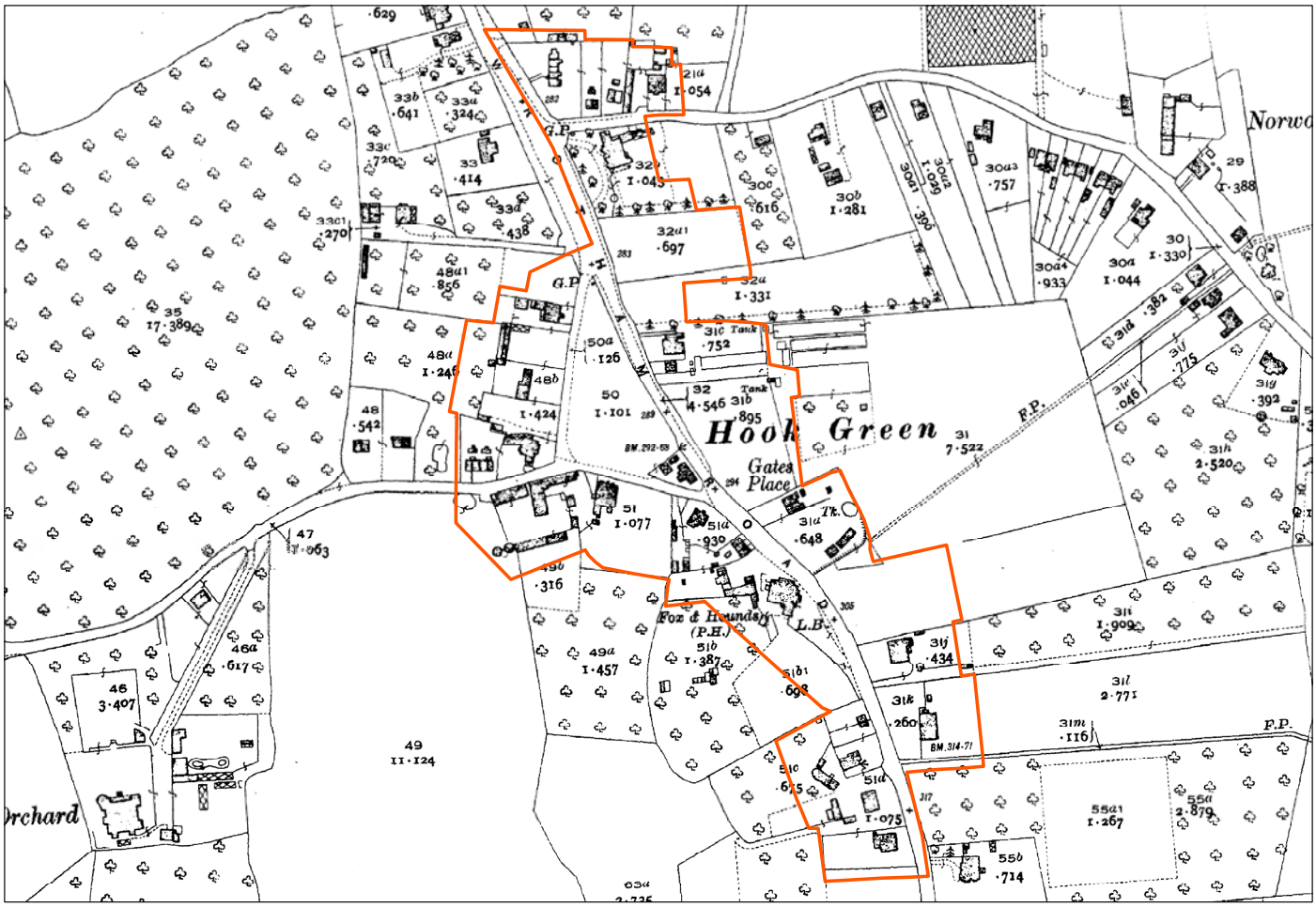

Meopham Station
Hook Green
Judson Recreation Ground
WROTHAM ROAD
NORWOOD LANE
MELLIKER LANE
WALNUT TREE WAY
DENESWAY
CHESHUNT CLOSE
Lyndhurst
Taralee
The Stables
Maycroft
Fircroft
The Croft
Willow Croft
Nevill House
Sherron
Arbenfield
Elmo
Parkfields
Little Gables
Green View
Timbers
The White House
Millais
Mulberry House
Pintail
St Aubin
Melliker Cottages
Yeoman House
Fairlight
Weavers Cottage
GP
Homefields
Copperfield
West View Lodge
Green Ridge
Field End Cottage
Wrenbury
Whistons
Ringway
Conifers
Pavilion
Play Area
Hall
Car Park
Elmbank
Green Hollow
The Briars
El Sub Sta
The Haven
Estersplace
White Gables
The Warren
Tamar
Tamarwood
Hook Green Farm House
White Knights
Woodbine Cottage
Fox Cottages
The Old Forge
Fox and Hounds (PH)
Orchard Cottage
The Coach House
The Orchard
Elche
Orchard View
Evenden Oast House
The Barn
Evenden Lodge
Evenden House
Jumelles
Adams
Barnsfield
Farmhouse
Blundellshaw
Pond
Norwood
Norwood House
Clas Rose
Redgorton
Waywood
Irona
Whitmuir
Oakley
Cobnuts
The Elms
East Croft
Ticino
Irashai
Sommerfield
Lees Hill
Tredownam
Mary Cottage
Fernacre
Cherry Dene
Arlsbn
Sunshine
Barnsfield
Farmhouse
Norwood
Blundellshaw
Norwood Farm Cot
Pond
Norwood Lane
Redgorton
Norwood House
Clas Rose
Waywood
Irona
Whitmuir
Jasada
Cobnuts
Oakley
The Elms
East Croft
Ticino
Irashai
Sommerfield
Lees Hill
Tredownam
Mary Cottage
Fernacre
Cherry Dene
Arlsbn
Sunshine
Barnsfield
Farmhouse
Blundellshaw
Pond
Norwood
Norwood House
Clas Rose
Redgorton



Hook Green Conservation Area Epoch 2 15/10/2010 N Scale: 1:1,896 Drawn by: AJC



Hook Green Conservation Area Epoch 3 15/10/2010 N Scale: 1:1,896 Drawn by: AJC



Hook Green Conservation Area Epoch 4 15/10/2010 N

Scale: 1:1,896
Drawn by: AJC

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. This copy has been produced specifically for Planning and Building Control purposes only. No further copies can be made. Gravesham Borough Council Licence No 100019405

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Conservation Studio. ‘Hook Green Meopham, Conservation Area Statement’, Lewes, 1999.
Carley J. ‘Meopham, in old picture postcards’, Zaltbommel, Netherlands, 1986

Figure 1

3.1 Location

Hook Green

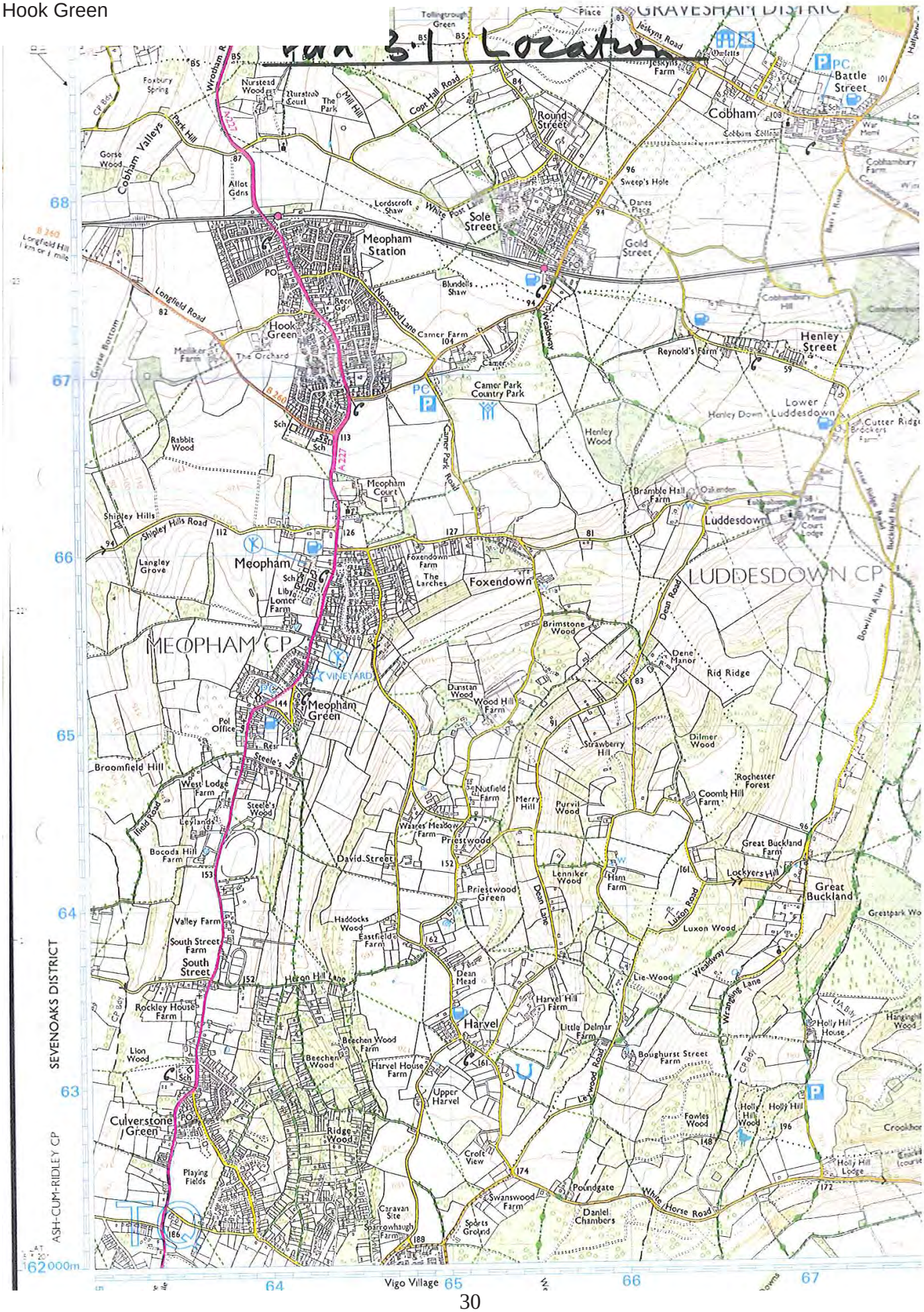


Figure 2

3.3 Geology
Hook Green

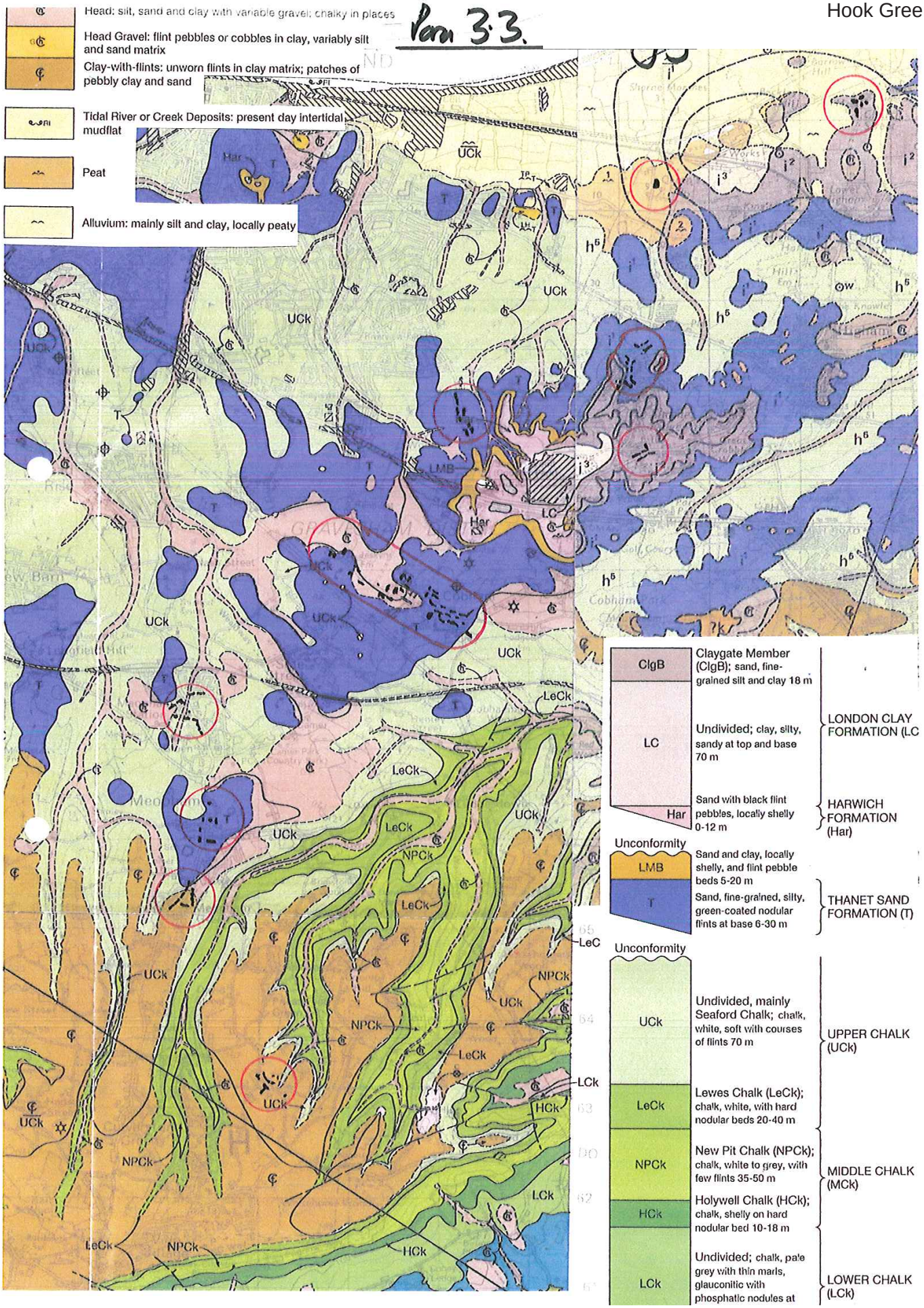


Figure 3

3.3 Topography

Hook Green

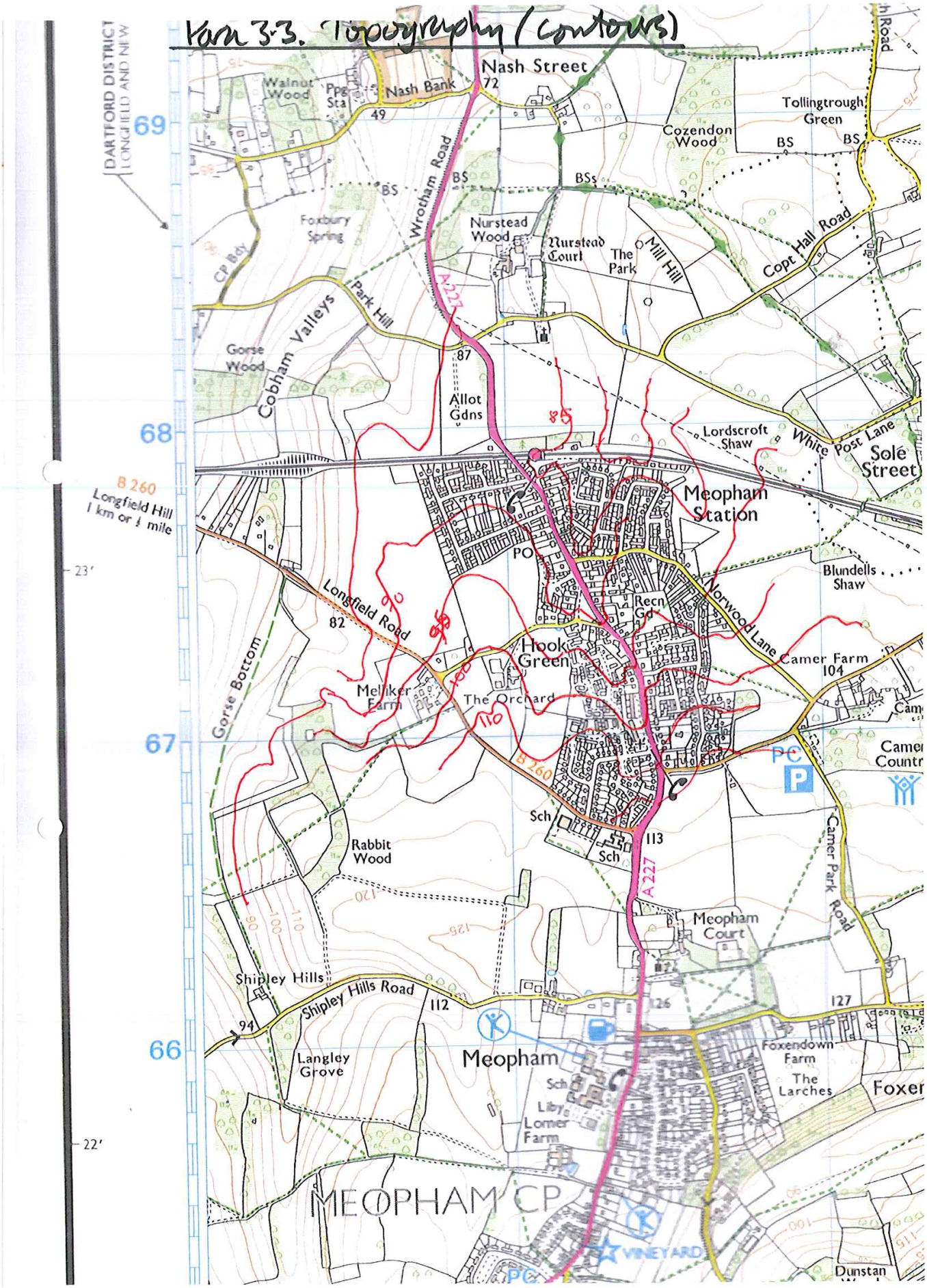


Figure 4

3.4 Conservation Area Surroundings

Hook Green



Figure 5

3.4 OS 1898 Historic Conservation Area Surrounds

Hook Green

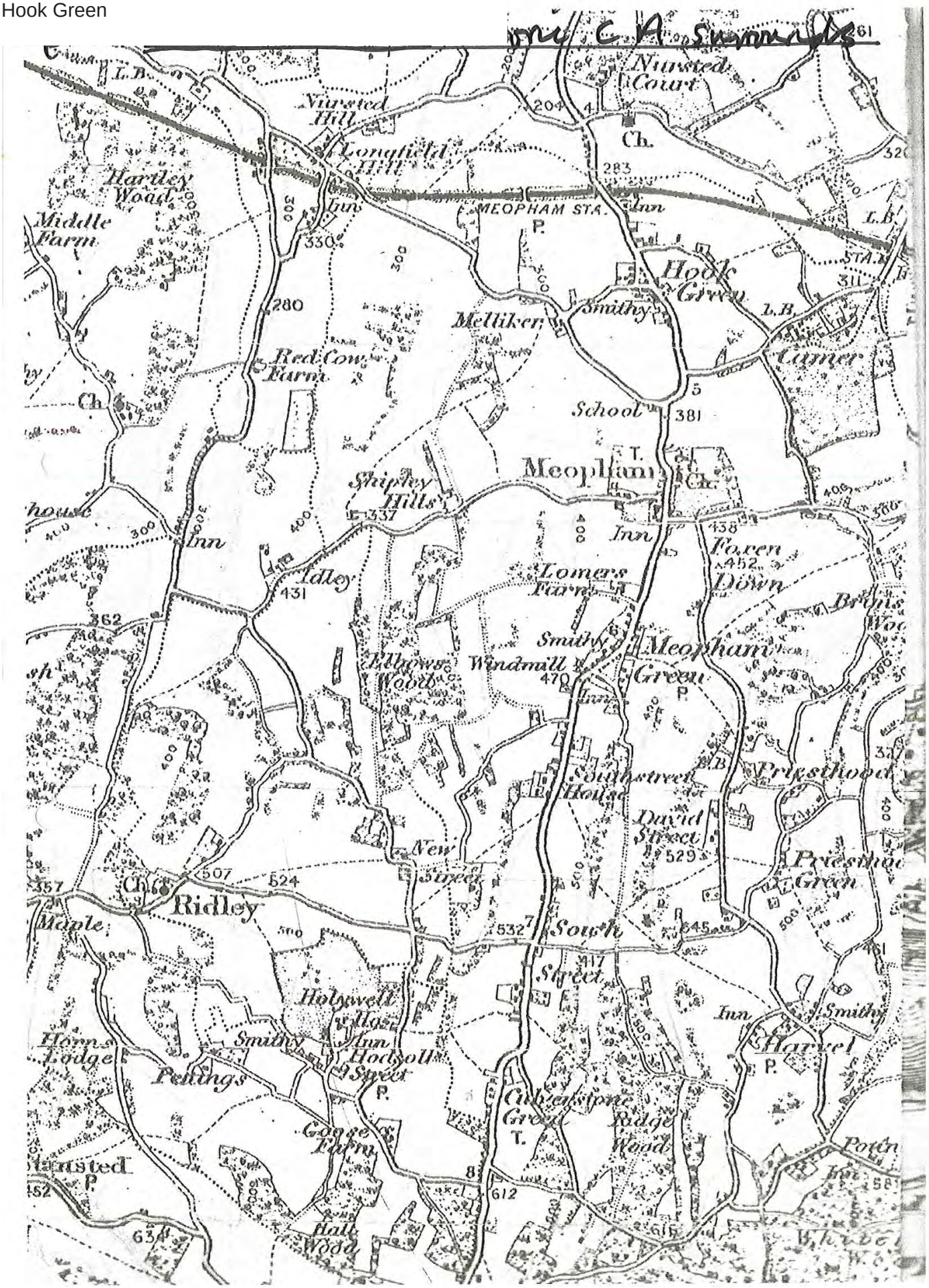


Figure 6

5.1 Conservation Area boundary

Hook Green

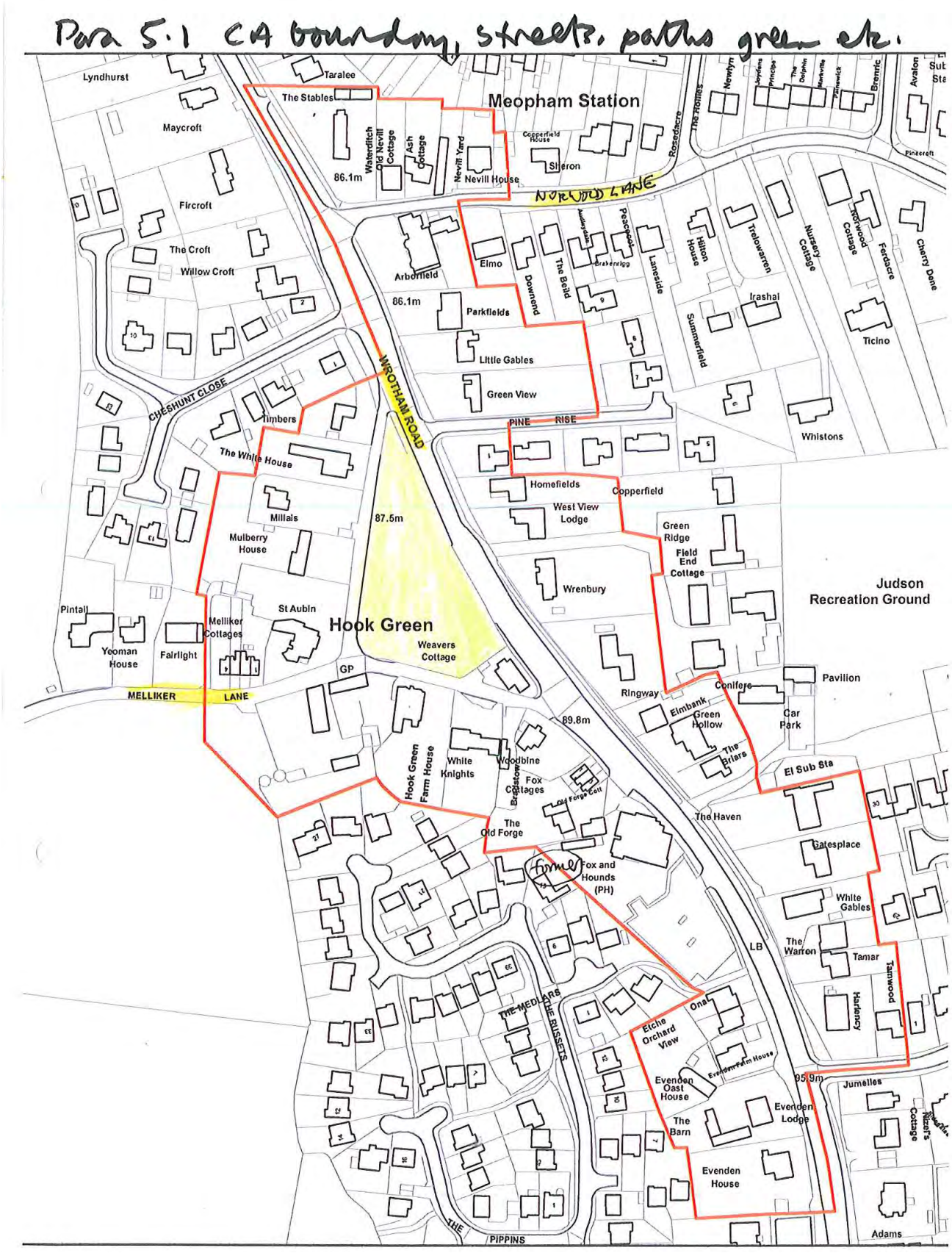


Figure 7

5.1 Historic Epoch 1
Hook Green

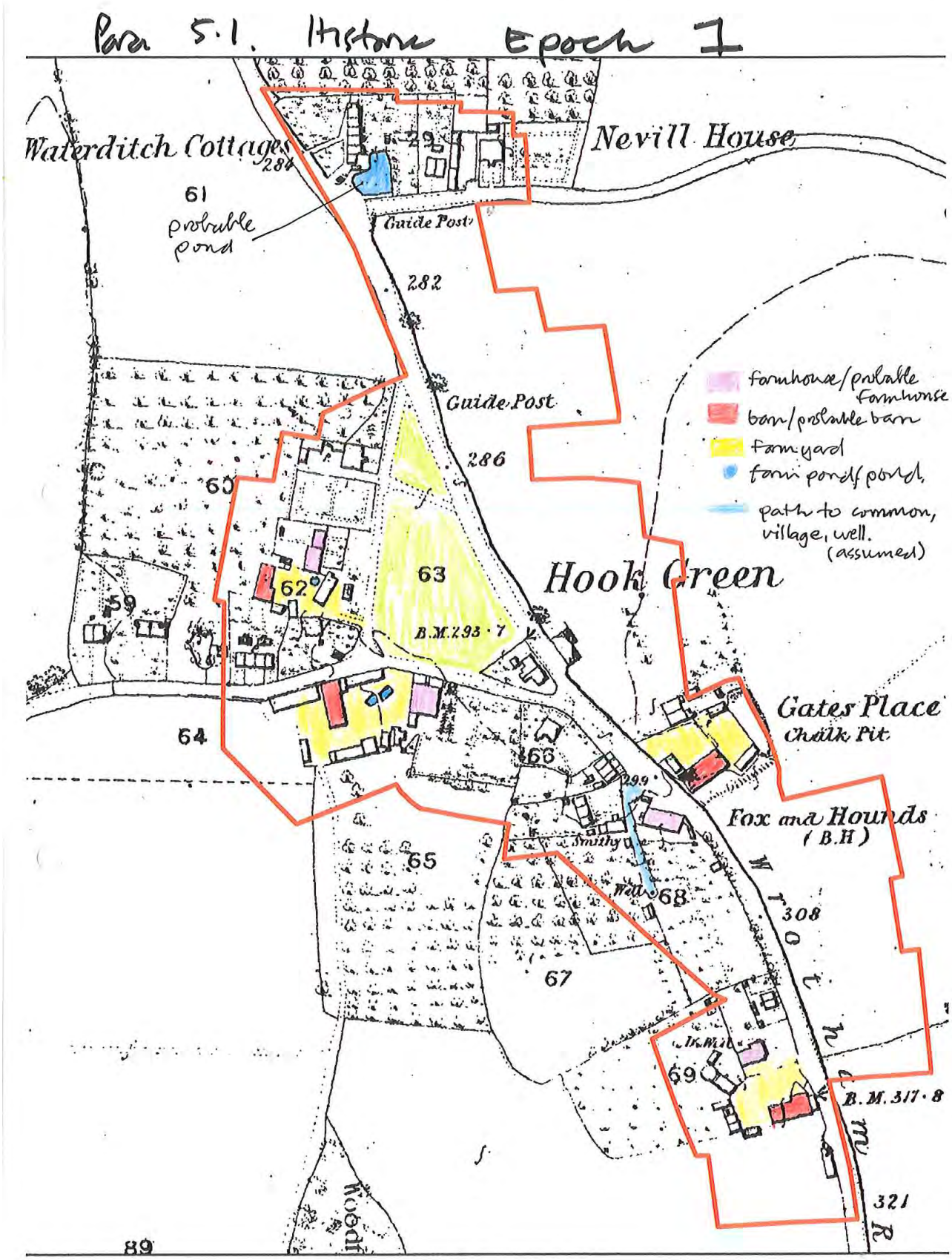


Figure 8

5.1 Historic Epoch 2
Hook Green

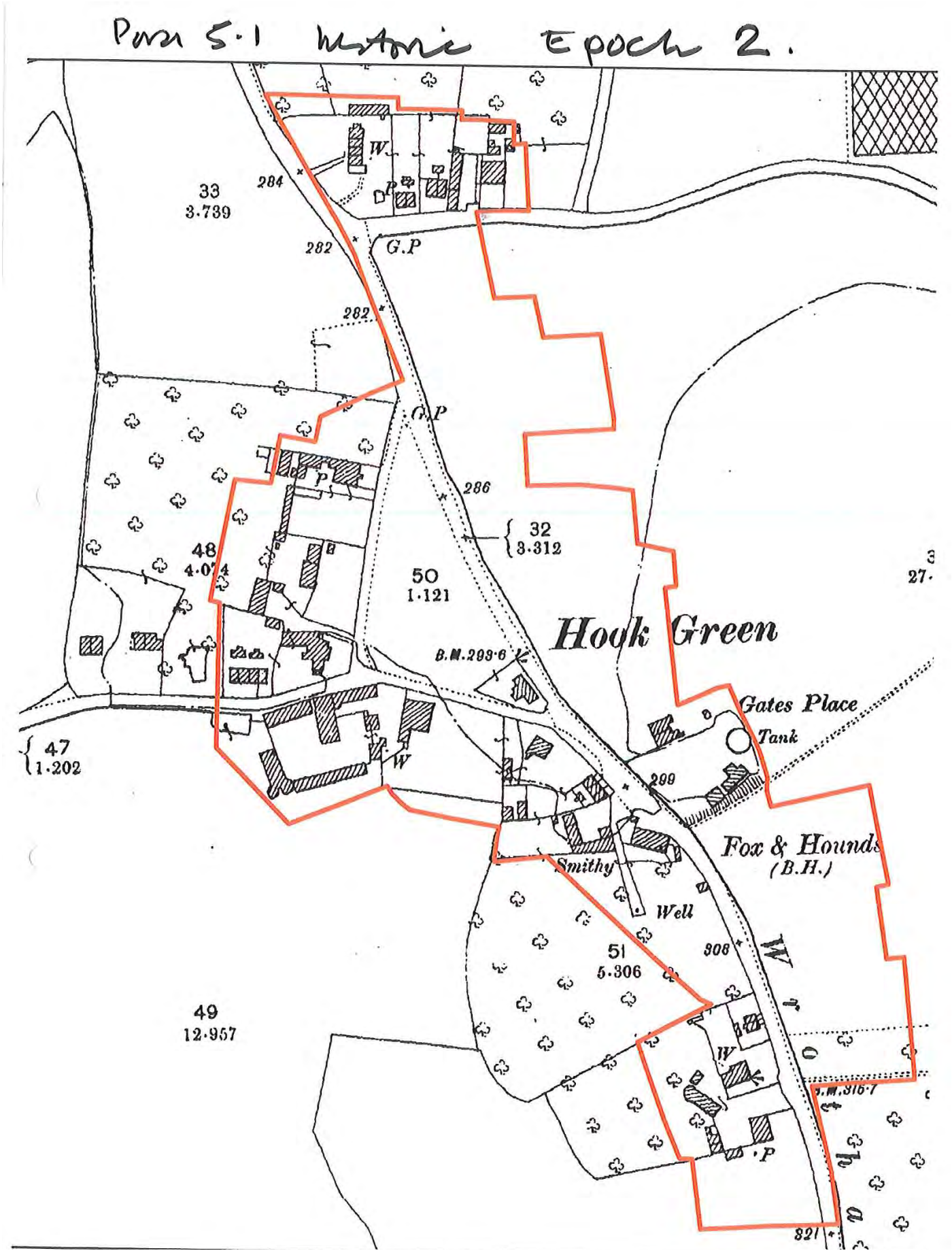


Figure 9

6.3 Buildings contributing, neutral or detrimental to Conservation Area Character

Hook Green

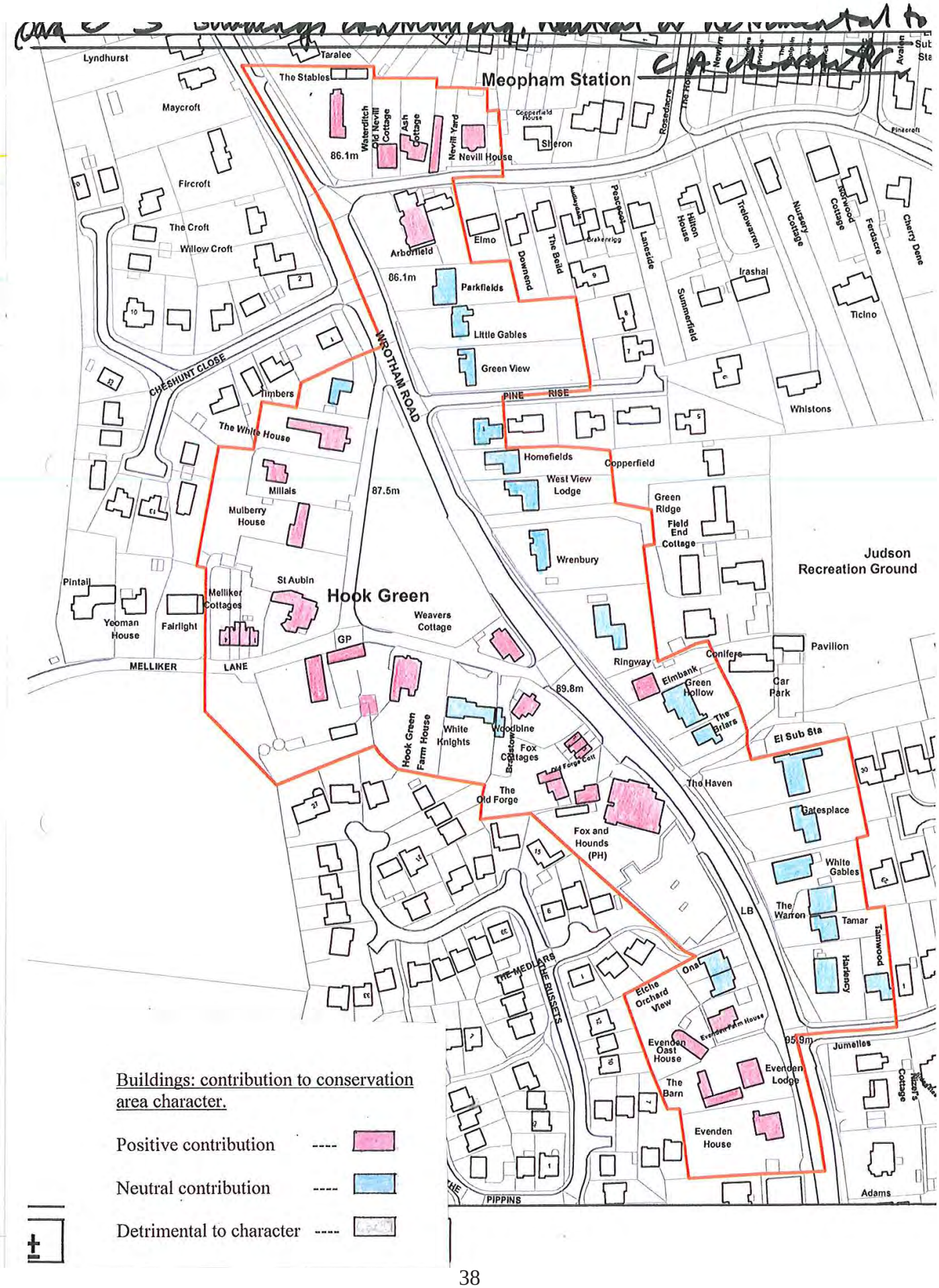


Figure 10

7.1 Spatial Character Areas
Hook Green

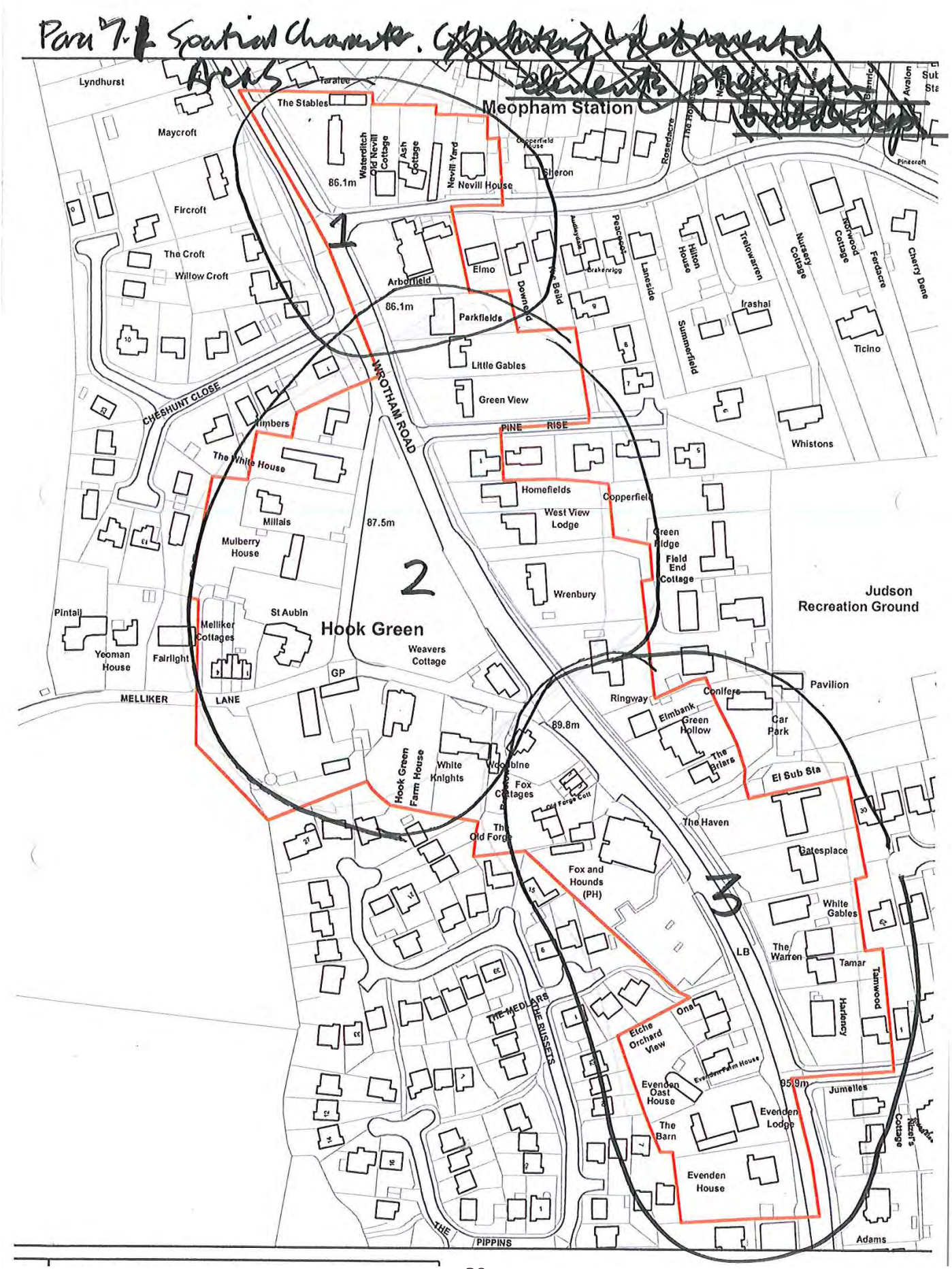


Figure 11

7.2 Village Character - contributing and detrimental elements other than buildings
Hook Green



Figure 11 - Key

7.2
Hook Green

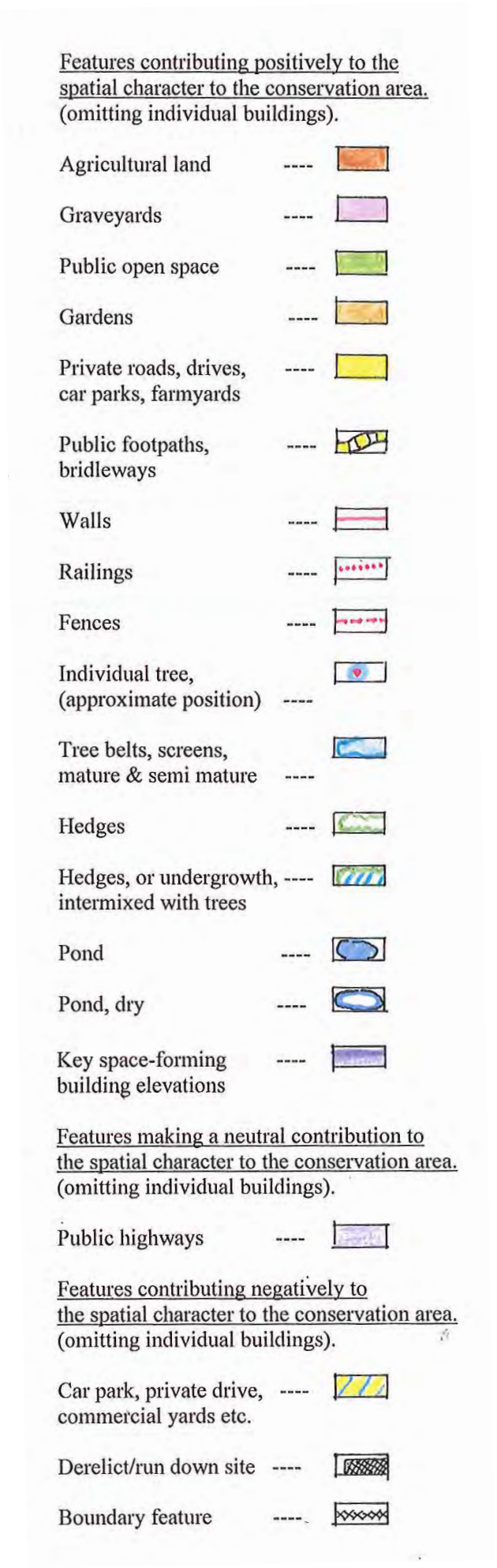


Figure 12

7.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

Hook Green

