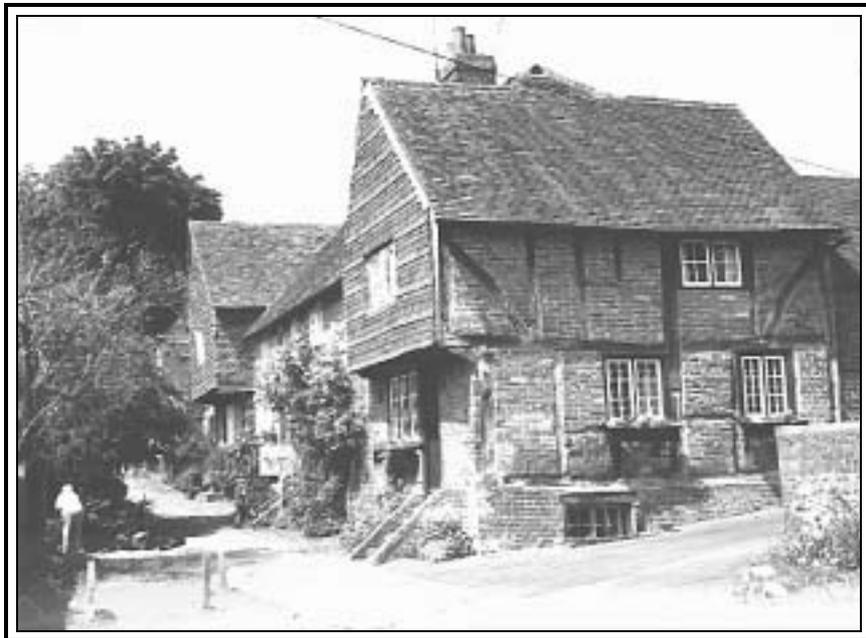


Bletchingley Conservation Area Appraisal



November 2002



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Tandridge District Council
Council Offices
Station Road East
Oxted Surrey RH8 0BT

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Part1: Background

What is a Conservation Area?

- 1.1 Conservation areas were first designated as a result of the Civic Amenities Act 1967. They are defined in the legislation as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: Section 69(1)(a)).
- 1.2 Designation gives the local planning authority greater control over extensions and demolition, the display of advertisements and works to trees. Special consideration has to be given to proposals for development or redevelopment within them, to ensure that the character or appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced.
- 1.3 In most cases, however, conservation areas are living and working communities with both residential and commercial uses. The purpose of designation is not to stifle or prevent change and evolution, but to control it in such a way as to maintain and enhance character and local distinctiveness.

Purpose of Appraisals

- 1.4 Under the 1990 Act, local planning authorities are required from time to time to undertake a review of their conservation areas. This is to ensure that their designation and boundaries remain relevant, logical and defensible. As the number of designated areas steadily increases at a national level, the criteria and justification for designation are coming under greater scrutiny and challenge. It is therefore important for local authorities to have confidence in the continued relevance of their conservation areas, particularly those that have been in existence for a number of years.
- 1.5 Local authorities are advised by English Heritage to carry out appraisals that should identify the key features of the area and how they combine to give a place its particular character. By establishing what makes a place special and distinct, the local planning authority can more effectively ensure that change through development, or through other changes resulting from its own actions or those of other statutory authorities, do not undermine this character and can in fact enhance it.
- 1.6 As well as identifying the positive features of a place, an appraisal can also highlight areas where there is scope for improvement. This could be in terms of new development or redevelopment, or more small-scale improvements to, for example, the appearance of street furniture or signage. The results of appraisals can be used to help prioritise available resources for environmental enhancement. However, whilst this appraisal makes reference to potential areas for enhancement, its main aim is to provide guidance for use in the development control process. Future enhancement schemes could draw upon the information contained in this document, but the implementation of such schemes is not being sought directly through this appraisal.

Part 2: Bletchingley Conservation Area

Location and geography

- 2.1 Bletchingley is a large village on the greensand ridge, to the south of the North Downs. The village centre straddles the main High Street (on the Reigate to Sevenoaks road – now the A25) with the historic core centred around the wide former market place near to the Outwood Lane/Church Lane junction. Inter and post war housing developments have extended the village to the east and west, though the tight linear form still endures in the historic core. In planning policy terms Bletchingley is a settlement within the Green Belt, its boundary now preventing further outward expansion into the countryside that surrounds the village (see figure 1).
- 2.2 The village has a total population of approximately 3000 (2858 in the 1991 census). There are a number of shops and services available in the village, though the range of goods available has radically altered reflecting changes in shopping and mobility patterns over the past three to four decades. The services offered are now of a more specialist nature (antique shops, designer clothes etc.) and this has a significant influence on the character of the village centre. Despite this change, these and other local businesses make a significant contribution to the character and vitality of the village.
- 2.3 The main road is also a dominant feature of the village with its high levels of traffic. The negative effects of this in terms of general amenity and safety are obvious. However, the village nonetheless owes its development to its location on this key east-west route.

Origins and development of the settlement

- 2.4 Bletchingley can first be traced in documentary sources as “Blachingelei” in Domesday (1086), though it probably has Saxon origins. For some 200 years following the Norman Conquest it was held by the de Clare family, whose castle was located at a strategic site on the edge of the greensand ridge, to the west of the village centre. Borough status was granted sometime in the later 12th or early 13th century during a period of population growth and increasing commercialisation of the economy. The physical development of Bletchingley, and the form in which it exists today, is a direct result of this early borough status.
- 2.5 Boroughs were created by the king or lords (such as the de Clares) to capitalise on the growing demand for trading centres to serve expanding settlements and their hinterlands. Land within boroughs was laid out in regular plots and let to burgagers for a money rent (as opposed to labour services which characterised the rural tenures of the feudal system) and the associated charter specified their various rights and privileges. These included the right to erect buildings and dispose of land and buildings without the lord’s permission. Though the Bletchingley charter has not survived, it seems likely

that the regular appearance of plots, particularly on the north side of the High Street, dates from the time of the borough's foundation. Successive changes to the buildings occupying the frontages have clearly occurred over time, and some subdivision of plots has taken place, but the original layout of long, narrow plots remains clearly visible and is a significant feature of the conservation area. Stone walls still separate the plots for the length of their gardens in many cases.

- 2.6 The market was a significant part of life in an early medieval town, and the market place developed in what is now the wide part of the High Street between Middle Row and the Whyte Harte Inn. Although the presence of the castle and the influential de Clare family (plus associated household) were presumably the reason for Bletchingley's economic ascendancy during this period, the market and burgage plots were laid out some distance away – probably on a flatter site than any closer to the castle. Bletchingley did not, however, flourish and fledge into a town that survived and expanded beyond this early medieval period. The de Clares had fallen out of royal favour in the mid 13th century and the castle was sacked in 1264. The market started to fail in the early 14th century, a process that may well have been accelerated by the reduction in population caused by the Black Death of 1348/49 and competition from neighbouring towns such as Reigate.
- 2.7 Despite the failure of the market, there appears to have been residual prosperity in Bletchingley into the 15th and 16th centuries, the evidence being the quality of the surviving buildings in Church Walk and the lower end of the High Street. Most appear to have been domestic hall houses, though it is likely that at least one of these buildings had some non domestic, civic use. It is possible that the island of buildings in Middle Row started as temporary market stalls, to be replaced by permanent structures. Many of the buildings still present at the lower end of the High Street were in existence by the 17th century though their rendered 18th and 19th century frontages in many cases disguise their late medieval origins.
- 2.8 Bletchingley periodically had strong ties with the Crown, the most notable event being the residency of Anne of Cleves following her divorce from Henry VIII in 1541. She lived at the now demolished Bletchingley Palace to the north of the village, the only surviving part being the gatehouse. The site (Place Farm) is covered by a separate conservation area (Place Farm and Brewer Street). As a result of its borough status Bletchingley also continued to return two Members of Parliament until the 1832 Reform Act when it was abolished as a 'rotten borough'.
- 2.9 Shortly after this abolition much of Bletchingley was sold at a public auction in 1835. The manor and town had changed hands numerous times since the 12th century as political and more latterly personal fortunes had risen and fallen, but this event is significant because of the surviving documentation. The sale catalogue and associated plan detail the lots, and the buildings, land and other features that they contain. It also lists occupiers and current use. It gives an unusually comprehensive picture of social and economic activity and physical layout of the village in the early 19th century.

- 2.10 Development during the 19th and 20th centuries has extended the village to the east and west, though to the north and south its extent has altered very little. Within and immediately adjoining the conservation area there has been some infilling and rebuilding on existing frontage plots, as well as larger redevelopment schemes. The largest of these was the redevelopment in the 1980s of the former Clerks Croft hospital (shown as the Union Workhouse on the 1869 map – see figure 5).
- 2.11 Bletchingley may have failed as a market town in the 1400s, but its legacy is still very evident in the centre of the village, and it is this that is central to the overall character of this part of the conservation area. The wide High Street and island of buildings between it and Church Walk, as well as the layout of plots on the north side of the High Street, are a direct result of this early town status. Ironically it is because of this failure and the virtual stagnation of the village in economic terms that so much of its medieval framework survives. Had it thrived and expanded as a town the strong linear form still visible would probably have been undermined or destroyed through redevelopment and expansion.

The Conservation Area

- 2.12 The Bletchingley Conservation Area was one of the first areas in Surrey to be designated following the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. These early designations were undertaken by Surrey County Council, and approval was given in 1969 for Bletchingley, then in the Godstone Rural District, to be designated. In 1977 the Secretary of State accepted that Bletchingley Conservation Area was of ‘outstanding architectural or historic interest’.
- 2.13 The designation encompasses approximately 18 hectares (45 acres) of the village centre (see figure 2). It is centred on the High Street and extends from Little Common Lane in the west to (and including) St Marys Walk in the east. It includes not only the buildings fronting the High Street and roads adjoining it, but the long rear gardens of properties on its north side and the grounds of Bletchingley House and adjoining open land to the south. Both to the north and south the boundaries follow long established paths that clearly divide the village from the countryside beyond.



Path forming the southern boundary of the conservation area

- 2.14 There are 51 listed buildings within the Conservation Area (37 separate listings). These are mainly buildings, but include also a K6 type phone box, the pub sign to the Whyte Harte PH and a number of tombs in the churchyard of St Mary's Church (itself listed Grade I). There are also a number of unlisted buildings noted as 'buildings of character' which also contribute to the character of the conservation area.
- 2.15 Most of the area covered by the conservation area is also identified as an Area of High Archaeological Potential. The County Archaeologist is consulted on planning applications within this area, and additional information regarding archaeological potential may be required of applicants (see Appendix 1).

Part 3: Townscape analysis

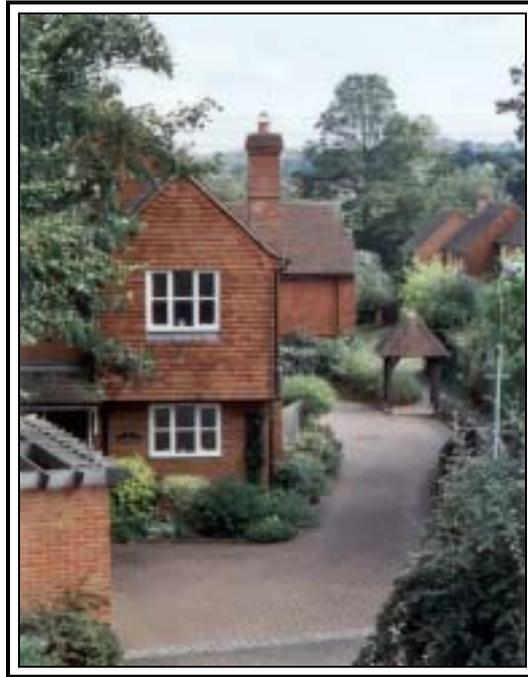
Background

- 3.1 Many of the buildings in the conservation area are listed. Architecturally, historically or both, therefore, these buildings have intrinsic merit and specific legislation protects them from inappropriate change. The special interest of the conservation area is derived from the interrelationship between the particular townscape and landscape features and it is this character which the local planning authority will seek to preserve or enhance through statutory and discretionary controls.

Approaches

Eastern End

- 3.2 Approaching from the east, the conservation area abuts Grange Meadow. The contrast between open space and built form is striking and immediately denotes a change in character from the remainder of the village to the east. This key view into the conservation area owes much of its importance to the 'roofscape', characterised by the use of clay roof tiles, a gentle variation in building heights and an abundance of chimneys and chimney pots. The roofs of much of the lower end of the village are visible at this point due to the rising ground level from east to west.
- 3.3 Prominent buildings are Grange Cottage, and the newer houses of nos. 3 and 4 Grange Close and Grange Meadow House. The combination of appropriate materials and features - tiled roofs, tile hanging and chimneys - (this has been particularly successfully achieved in Grange Meadow House) and outward facing position has helped the introduction of newer buildings to reinforce this particular view of the conservation area. Framing the view on either side and prominent both because of their height and contrasting material are the stone towers of the church and Tower House (see paragraph 3.16).
- 3.4 The importance of combining appropriate materials and careful design is also apparent in St Marys Walk on the northern side of the A25. This development has successfully achieved an enhancement to the conservation area, creating a view of the church where none was previously possible as the site was derelict and overgrown. It has also strengthened the 'gateway' effect on entering the village. The layout is deliberately reminiscent of Church Walk and reinstates as a feature the path that once formed the main route through the village. Historic maps also show a group of houses here prior to their demolition in the late 1800s. By echoing familiar materials in the village - red brick, clay roof tiles and tile hanging - and features visible in Church Walk, such as the jetties, these houses are a successful addition to the conservation area.



St Marys Walk development

- 3.5 Early maps indicate that the route of the main east-west road through the village changed sometime in the late 18th/early 19th century (see figures 3, 4 and 5)), and that until that time the market area was enclosed at its eastern end. This would explain the orientation of the Prince Albert PH, which faces directly onto Outwood Lane and makes no reference to the main road. Balancing it on the other side of the road is a relatively new house (no. 22) which was built on the same alignment as its predecessor, Forge Cottage. Angled slightly and built directly up against the footpath, this building performs an important function in reinforcing the relatively narrow gateway to the village centre, providing a distinct contrast with the wide high street it opens into. Looking back from the centre of the village, this gateway is also very marked. This view, with the Plough PH in the centre, is particularly significant.

Western end

- 3.6 Approaching from the west, a similar gateway effect is created by The Manse, Castle Corner and 71 High Street. The former, an early 17th century timber framed building (Grade II), is positioned gable end on to, and in an elevated position above, the main road and provides a striking entrance as the road curves and drops steeply to the village centre beyond. The elevated position gives distant views of the surrounding area – the spire of St Nicholas' church at Godstone can be clearly seen, and views of the North Downs are prominent. The two red brick, slate roofed, Georgian style shops on the opposite side of the A25 provide a complete contrast in style and materials, the overall effect being a striking one.
- 3.7 The conservation area itself begins slightly further west and includes within it the collection of cottages on the south side of the A25, and the Red Lion PH and Long Row on the north side. None of these buildings is listed, though many have early origins

(the Red Lion dates from the 17th century, though has been largely rebuilt), this part of the conservation area has a character all of its own. Long Row in particular is a significant building as it marks the start of the conservation area, its part tile hung frontage, side elevation and rear catslide roof making it particularly prominent when entering the village from the west. A development of seven new houses (The Old Yard) is currently under construction to the rear of Annesley Cottages and the Red Lion, in the far north western corner of the conservation area.

- 3.8 Significant changes were made to this part of the village in the late 1960s when highway improvements to the A25 necessitated the demolition of a terrace of cottages (Castle Cottages) which fronted the main road. Outline permission had been granted in 1965 for flats to be built to the rear of the cleared site, but the development had not taken place at the time of designation. The County Council Committee report prepared at the time anticipated the development and stated that there should be careful control over the flats' design.



Stychens Close

- 3.9 The flats (Stychens Close) unfortunately do not enhance this corner of the conservation area and do not provide a strong sense of enclosure. The character of this part of the conservation area has presumably changed significantly since it was assessed for inclusion, now feeling more like a square than the tight linear development of before (as shown on the 1869 map). Front boundaries are a feature of the area, and the introduction of a low picket-type fence or railings could improve the appearance of the flats. In the event of their redevelopment, the opportunity should be taken to improve this frontage and strengthen the sense of enclosure.

Church Lane

- 3.10 Approaching the village from the north, the ridge on which the village stands is particularly prominent. The tower of the church is clearly visible from many vantage points on lower land in the Brewer Street area and when approaching via Church Lane. It is this part of the village that has experienced the most change in terms of new development since it was originally designated as a conservation area in 1969.

- 3.11 Most significant is the Clerks Croft development which took place in the mid 1980s on the site of the former Godstone Union workhouse (more latterly Clerks Croft hospital). This development is outside the conservation area but adjoins its northern boundary. In terms of layout it makes a suitable transition to the open countryside beyond by using open plan front gardens to Church Lane and careful design of the houses on the northern edge of the development. This results from outward facing houses on Church Lane with their open front gardens, and similar careful design of the houses on the northern edge of the development.
- 3.12 However, the individual design of the houses and the materials pay little attention to the vernacular, there being a variety of different brick colours, external finishes and architectural features not found elsewhere in the locality. The open plan front gardens are not a feature of the conservation area, being more of a suburban feature. By contrast the St Marys Walk development demonstrates that more subtle variation in design, executed in building materials selected to reflect those found in the village, and using a familiar street pattern (as opposed to a modern suburban layout) can be a more effective means of visually integrating new development into a historic setting.
- 3.13 Physical evidence of social and economic change is also apparent at Court Lodge Farm. The diversification out of agricultural use has led to the conversion of land to a golf course and farm buildings to dwellings. Such changes can radically alter the character of an area by introducing suburban elements into a predominantly rural environment, and the golf course and its club house (just outside the conservation area) have had this effect to a certain degree. However the retention and sensitive conversion of many of the original farm buildings and adherence to the footprint of the former farm yard has ensured that the semi rural character of this corner of the conservation area still endures.
- 3.14 The importance of keeping to this footprint is particularly apparent when looking from the churchyard, as the gap between Court Lodge Farm house and the new dwellings allows an uninterrupted view of the countryside and North Downs beyond, and is one of the key views out of the conservation area. As such any further intensification of development in this part of the conservation area could have a negative impact on its character.



Court Lodge Farm – from churchyard

Outwood Lane

- 3.15 Arrival in the conservation area via Outwood Lane from the south is less obvious than from the other directions. The houses and open land to the rear on the west side of Outwood Lane (from Tower House) are almost completely hidden behind a dense screen of deciduous and evergreen trees. The conservation area boundary is staggered at this point, only beginning on the east side of the road at Town Mead. Unlike other parts of the conservation area, the character of this part of its periphery is less easily definable.
- 3.16 Tower House itself is a large, mid 19th century stone house of some considerable character though not listed. Its tower has recently been reinstated after having been taken down in the early 1930s, adding greatly to its character and stature. At the time of designation this building stood alone with its lodge (now named Beech Lodge), with no other buildings between them and Highbank Cottage/Bank Cottages some distance to the north. The loose collection of houses built here since the late 1960s make little contribution to the character of the conservation area. The impressive Tower House and its grounds remain the defining feature of this corner of the conservation area.
- 3.17 On the opposite side of Outwood Lane the strongest feature is the long, single storey slate roofed building structure (once a cow shed to Town Farm). This has been cleverly integrated into the Town Mead development (completed in the mid 1980s) and forms a strong, continuous line of buildings fronting the road between here and its junction with the High Street.



Former cow sheds – Outwood Lane

3.18 The two exceptions are The Grange, built around 1700 and imperceptibly converted into flats in the late 1980s, and the building next to it, No. 1 Grange Close. The former is set back only slightly behind a small hedge, the building's scale, detailing and former status entirely justifying its position and subtle enclosure. The modern house next to it (1 Grange Close) breaks the rhythm by relating more to the suburban style and form of the cul de sac behind than the street to which it faces. A far better solution was achieved virtually opposite here, next to Bank Cottages. Highbank Cottage was constructed in the early 1990s, and uses materials and features which echo other buildings in the group. Equally importantly, it has no front garden and opens directly onto the pavement.



**High Bank Cottages, Outwood Lane
(in the foreground)**

The village centre

Background

- 3.19 Within the central area of the conservation area almost all the buildings are listed, such as their individual architectural or historic importance. It is their relationship with one another, and with the wide open space onto which they front, that creates the key townscape features of this part of the conservation area. The surviving sections of ironstone paving are also a key feature of this central area.
- 3.20 Instead of wholesale change, many buildings have been successively adapted and extended as requirements, building techniques and tastes have changed. The medieval origins of some buildings are still visible, but it is also the continued use of the plots created when the borough was formed that has ensured the survival of this character. Change has been of a piecemeal nature, and only in places has the medieval layout been breached.

The High Street: south side

- 3.21 This combination of continuity and change is particularly well illustrated on the south side of the High Street. From Outwood Lane to Tower Cottages (33 to 47 High Street) the character is largely derived from differences in the style, age and materials of the building frontages, combined with the regularity and uniformity of the built form itself. This can perhaps be attributed to the original arrangement of burgage plots and the fact that replacement buildings have apparently been built directly over their medieval predecessors.
- 3.22 An example of this would seem to be Glenfield House (No. 29). Unlike other buildings, such as the Whyte Harte, its rendered frontage does not hide a medieval building. Dating from the early 18th century, it is the most impressive building in the group with its rhythmic fenestration, attic storey and ornate porch. It also gives the impression of being set back from the road behind a small hedged front garden. In fact the front garden protrudes into the road, the house being on the same alignment as the rest of the group, perhaps indicating the presence of an earlier building in the same position.



The Whyte Harte Hotel

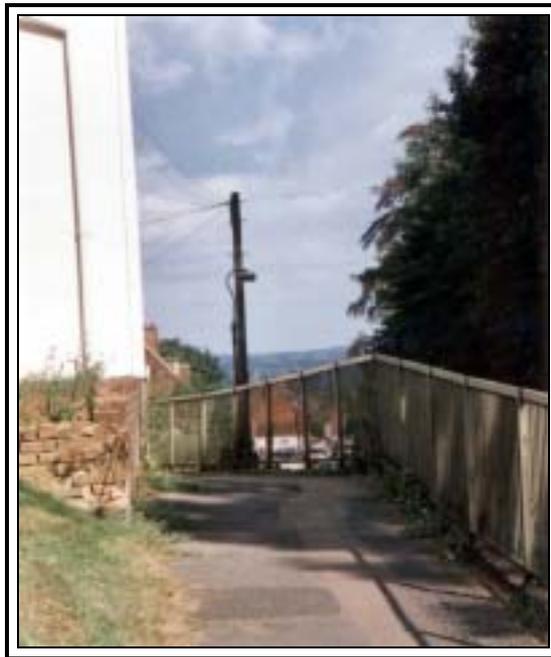
- 3.23 From Outwood Lane to Glenfield House there is a town like quality to the street scene. The climb of the road from east to west gives the impression of increasing scale though the buildings are all two storey. The bank of six gables comprising the frontages of the Whyte Harte flats (17 – 21 High Street) and Nos. 1 to 3 The Cobbles (23 – 27 High Street) further emphasises this sense of scale, and the general absence of front gardens and indeed any variation from the hard cobbled or tarmaced surfaces (apart from newly planted trees) serves to reinforce the town like feel. The presence of shops and the hotel ensures that the former commercial heart of the village retains something of its market town character. Any change of use to residential that involved the removal of shopfronts from the street scene would undermine and dilute this character.
- 3.24 Glenfield House marks the transition from the core to the periphery of the former market place, as the road starts to narrow and turn and the buildings reduce in scale to the cottages comprising 1 – 6 Tower Cottages (33 – 47 High Street). Significant development may have stopped at the last cottage (6 Tower Cottages) until the construction in 1900 of Bletchingley House (No. 67) and houses in its grounds in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It does not appear that the burgage plots extended any further west, though Rocques Map (see figure 3) seems to indicate one isolated building on the bank at the top end of the High Street.
- 3.25 The end of the former market area is still very distinct, as the 1960s/1970s buildings beyond make no reference to it. Set back slightly from the road behind a parking area is a terrace of four cottages (49 – 55 High Street), followed by a small estate of larger detached houses. There is very little reference to the vernacular in the design or materials of these houses, and the whole layout gives rise to a large, featureless expanse of tarmac which dominates this part of the village centre.

The High Street: north side nos 92 – 132

- 3.26 There is no obvious reason why development stopped on the south side of the High Street but continued on the north. The absence of evidence for burgage plots beyond

Tower Cottages suggests that the medieval settlement pattern did not extend any further, and only on the north stretched up almost to the Castle Square/Stychens Lane area. The defining feature of this part of the conservation area is the steepness of the original road (now the footpath) and its increasing separation from the current A25 as it climbs from east to west. It is because of this separation that the character of the old road is preserved, unaffected by the busy road below.

- 3.27 There are however opportunities for significant improvements in this area - there is a proliferation of road markings and the utilitarian railings could be replaced with a more suitable alternative. The brick steps from the road to the footpath are an attractive feature, but in places are in need of repair.



Railings outside 120 - 132 High Street

- 3.28 At the highest point are Brittens Cottages (120 - 132 High Street), a terrace of seven cottages, built of Nutfield stone. Their elevated position and uniformity make them a key grouping in this part of the conservation area. None of the cottages has had its sash windows replaced and the use of local stone (coursed to the front elevation and uncoursed to the side) with distinctive use of a band between the storeys also adds to their significance. The modern window on the west elevation of No. 120 illustrates the importance of avoiding inappropriate forms of fenestration, particularly on prominent parts of buildings (see paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9).



Brittens Cottages (120 – 132 High Street)

- 3.29 Generally an area of less prestigious domestic buildings than their counterparts further down the High Street, it is their relationships with one another and with the old road that are most significant. Some buildings open directly onto the path (Brittens Cottages) whilst others are set back behind small enclosed front gardens (Nos. 102 to 110 - Little Brittens Cottages; No. 100 - Wideways). This contrasts with the buildings around the former market place to the east. The group of buildings comprising Nos. 96 to 92 then opens directly onto the footpath. The resulting juxtapositions, and variety of architectural styles contribute greatly to the character of this part of the conservation area.
- 3.30 The exception to the relatively modest domestic scale is Poplar House (No. 114). Set back from the path behind a wall, this building's proportions, stuccoed front elevation and welsh slate roof distinguish it from its neighbours as fashionable Victorian. However, it has much earlier origins (probably 16th century) which are ironically clearly visible on its eastern elevation – and therefore from the footpath. An insight into changing tastes and fashion, this building adds to the interest of the area.

High Street: north side – The Clerks House (no. 48) to Norfolk House (no.82)

- 3.31 This group lies in the heart of the village, and is characterised by contrasting styles of building. Unlike the other main groups in the village centre, the buildings in this group are mostly unlisted. However, together they occupy a significant proportion of the High Street frontage and greatly influence the character of this northern section of it. Whilst the buildings themselves are of varying ages, the long, regular appearance of their rear gardens (approximately 90m in length) indicate that these buildings are successors to those on the burgage plots of the early town (plots being typically 300 ft x 50 ft). The survival of this plot layout is one of the most enduring and significant features of this part of the conservation area.
- 3.32 Dominant in this group is Camden House (No.50) (listed Grade II), a large white stuccoed house behind ornate iron railings, dating from the early 19th century, and occupied for

many generations by the village doctor. Its impressive porch rivals that of Glenfield House opposite and elongated by the integral carriage arch to the side, its dominant position in the village centre is reinforced further. It is flanked and complemented by two unlisted buildings, the red brick Clerks House (No. 48) to the right and Berry House (No. 52), a well proportioned house with town house qualities, to the left.



Area around war memorial

- 3.33 The war memorial and large horse chestnut tree (subject to a Tree Preservation Order since 1963) reinforce and enhance this part of the conservation area. It is one of the key public spaces and centres of activity in the village, as it would have been when the town well was in use. The pump survives having escaped removal since its redundancy as the village's source of water (though it has lost its handle). Railings have now been erected to protect it, though it is unfortunate that they add to the various other pieces of street furniture and signage along the side of the building. This area also experiences uncontrolled and haphazard parking, which undermines its sense of place.



Village pump

- 3.34 Between these buildings and Norfolk House to the west is a group of sheltered housing for the elderly, dating from 1965. The site was occupied by a medieval house until 1834, when it was replaced by almshouses. Though the design of these two storey flats is a fair attempt at integration into a historic setting, and they do not actually jar with their surroundings, they are nevertheless a neutral part of the conservation area. It is the use of a lighter brick than that which predominates in the village as a whole, the white weatherboarding – not part of the vernacular – and the shallow pitch to the roofs that together result in buildings that do not enhance the area. If the site were to be redeveloped at some point in the future, the opportunity could be taken to enhance this prominent central part of the conservation area. By using quality materials and design elements that echo and complement those the surrounding buildings, the appearance of this part of the conservation area could be markedly improved.
- 3.35 One of the oddities of the village is an imposing red brick extension to the rear of Norfolk House (Nos. 80/82), right in the centre of the village. This huge three storey structure was built in the late 1800s as a warehouse in anticipation of the Holmesdale railway line, which in the event was never constructed. It towers above the other buildings around it, and is visible from many vantage points within the village (notably from the east) and in distant views from the north. Its distinctively functional architectural style is characteristic of buildings constructed to support railway transportation at the time, this and its sheer bulk setting it apart from the mainly domestic style and scale of that which surrounds it.



Series of buildings behind Norfolk House

- 3.36 This building is a physical reminder of what might have been, had the railway brought new accessibility and prosperity to Bletchingley. Whilst the front part of Norfolk House is listed, this rear extension is not included in the listing. The loss of this powerful building would nonetheless be detrimental to the character of the conservation area, both in the location of the building and from the various views in which it is so prominent.

- 3.37 The steps in front of Norfolk House are rather incongruous in the centre of a village, but add grandeur to the already relatively imposing building. The low curved wall, capped piers and steps appear to have been designed to receive coaches though their date is unknown. They may be associated with the building's later commercial use rather than being an original feature of the 18th century house when the building's street frontage may have a more domestic appearance. Whatever their origin, they add to the interest of the building and the conservation area in general.



Steps in front of Norfolk House

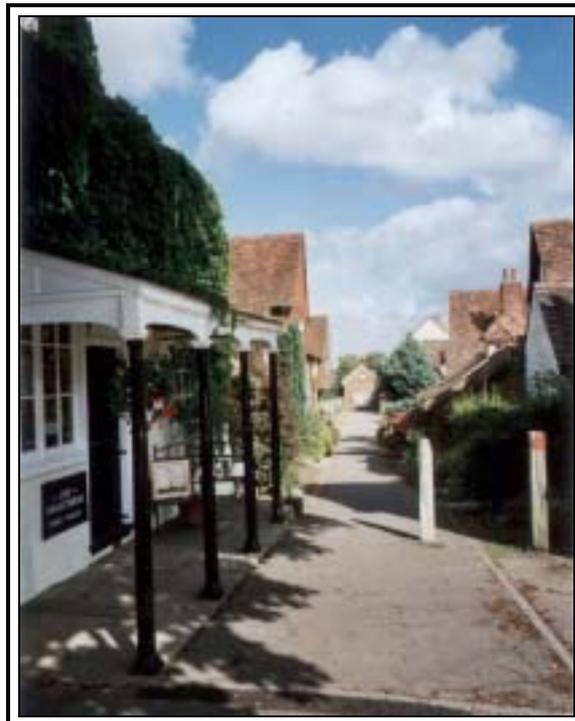
Middle Row and Church Walk

- 3.38 Perhaps the most distinctive part of the conservation area is that created by the island of buildings comprising Middle Row. The rear of the buildings form one side of the narrow Church Walk, whilst their frontages face out onto the wide High Street. It is probable that these buildings are the successors of temporary market stalls, and whilst their High Street elevations have been largely obscured by later tile hanging, their medieval timber framing can still be seen from Church Walk. Unusually, therefore, both front and rear elevations make equally significant contributions to the respective street scenes.



Rear of buildings in Middle Row (32 – 46 High Street)

- 3.39 Church Walk has the appearance of a backwater, contrasting greatly with the wide and busy High Street, though it was once one of the main routes through the village. Approaching from the west the sudden transition is particularly striking as the logical line of the road suddenly narrows into a path inaccessible to traffic and the main road veers to the right. The eye automatically follows the road as it slopes gently down towards the church and abruptly stops with the Clara Perkins Almshouse (built in 1973). Framed on either side by timber framed buildings of medieval origins, this key vista is further enhanced by distant views of the countryside beyond.



Church Walk (looking east)

- 3.40 Between houses in Church Walk and the churchyard, set back from the road, is a large workshop building most recently used for car repairs. At the time of writing the site appeared to be vacant and may therefore become available for redevelopment. The site occupies a prominent position in the conservation area, as it is visible both from the lower end of Church Walk (behind Nicholas Woolmer and 4/5 Church Walk), and from the church and churchyard. As it is possible that any reuse of the site would involve the replacement of the existing building, the design and siting of any new building should take account of the sensitive location and seek to enhance the key views mentioned above. In particular the removal of the flat roofed extension to the front of the workshop would improve the setting of the listed buildings backing onto, and facing into the site and any alternative future use for this sensitive location would have to take account of these close relationships. There may also be scope for introducing traditional paving as part of any redevelopment scheme.

The church

- 3.41 The church itself is Grade I listed and stands within the village centre but set back from the High Street, surrounded by a traditional churchyard with standing gravestones. This is a key open space, and one that affords many views of the conservation area. Because of the positioning of Church House the view of the church from the High Street is partly obscured, and in front of the churchyard wall is a rather featureless if functional parking area. This area is weakened by the flat roofed extension to No. 30 High Street which is inappropriate both intrinsically to the house (listed Grade II) and within the street scene. Overhead service lines are also particularly intrusive in this location.



The Church, Church House and 30 High Street

- 3.42 Opportunities exist to improve this area and give it greater prominence as a public space. This could be through the introduction of an element of ironstone paving (possibly as an edging to the grassed area adjacent to the churchyard wall) and improvements to the quality of the street furniture (bench and litter bin).



Area in front of church

- 3.43 Church House was built in 1900 on the site of an earlier, smaller building and is one of the only examples of 'Arts and Crafts' architecture in the village. As the Arts and Crafts movement was heavily influenced by medieval building traditions, it harmonises well with its surroundings.

Land south of the village centre

- 3.44 Between the rear gardens of buildings on the south side of the High Street and the path forming the southern boundary of the conservation area is an area of largely open land. The regular plot layout on the northern side of the High Street is not so visible on the southern side, though some demarcation does endure behind the Whyte Harte and Glenfield House. The remainder of this open part of the conservation area derives its character from the irregular subdivision of gardens and fields, and the rather meadow like quality that this gives.
- 3.45 Apart from Bletchingley House and its stables and ancillary buildings, this undeveloped area separates the collection of buildings clustered around Castle Square from those on the western side of Outwood Lane at the other end of the village centre. This latter group, which includes Tower House, Tower Lodge, Cherry Cottage and Rhu Ellen, has grown haphazardly over time and represents the sort of scattered development that can undermine the character of a village such as Bletchingley if allowed to proliferate on its outskirts. Had it spread into the open land to the west, the tight linear pattern of development which contributes so much to the character of the village would have been undermined.

The 'back path'

- 3.46 This path is just beyond the northern boundary of the conservation area and is a well used public footpath linking the church to the east with Stychens Lane to the west. It is a very strong feature, with a virtually continuous wall running along its south side for much of its length. The wall marks the end of the burgage plots on the north side of the High Street, and the conservation area boundary. Materials vary and the utilitarian concrete construction behind the Lawrences/village hall car park contrasts with the more appropriate and attractive stone and brick parts towards the churchyard end. A metal kissing gate at this end adds to the sense of transition from the narrow path to the churchyard beyond, and contributes much to the character of this peaceful corner of the conservation area.



Back path and wall



Back path and 'kissing gate'

- 3.47 The other end of the path has a very different character. Beyond the Clerks Croft development the aspect to the north of the path is open, allowing views over the golf course to the Pendell and Brewer Street conservation areas, over the M25 motorway to the North Downs beyond. Unlike other settlements of medieval origin that grew into modern towns, the distinction between the settlement and its hinterland has not been completely obscured through suburbanisation. This is a particularly apparent here.

Surface materials in the Conservation Area

- 3.48 There are a variety of road and path surfaces within the Conservation Area. Some ironstone paving remains, most comprehensively on the raised path in front of Middle Row but also in patches on the south side of the road, mostly directly in front of the buildings. Where it still exists it contributes greatly to the street scene, and adds interest to what could otherwise be a wide expanse of tarmac. In many places the

stones have been dislodged or removed, or have generally not been well maintained. This detracts from the general appearance of the conservation area.

- 3.49 The other main detracting feature is the poor standard of road surface between these patches of paving and the road. This is emphasised by its width, and the fact that the road itself is wide at this point. Some variation in surfacing material, providing a contrast between the carriageway and the adjacent area, would lift this whole area. It could also complement the newly planted line of trees, and create a feature out of an area that is currently no more than a car park.
- 3.50 The road surface and pavements elsewhere in the village are of varying quality, and could in many places benefit from the use of more appropriate materials. For example, Church Walk could be re-paved using a more distinctive surface, to include an element of ironstone paving, though due regard would need to be given to its suitability for pedestrians. In all cases, however, the materials used should be appropriate for the location and any variation in material should be subtly executed to ensure that an unduly 'busy' floorscape is avoided (see paragraphs 4.15, 5.3 and 5.4)

Street furniture and highway signage

- 3.51 The quality of the street furniture in the conservation area is variable, and there is scope for improvement. A number of opportunities for enhancement have been identified through the townscape analysis (see Part 5 – Future Action).
- 3.52 It is recognised that highway signs are required by the highway authority for safety and information purposes. However, in places the visual intrusion caused by multiple signs is very unfortunate. One of the worst places is the junction of Church Lane and the High Street where a clutter of signage completely dominates.



Signage at Church Lane/High Street junction

Part 4 – Defining Features

- 4.1 Part 3 of this document provided a detailed analysis of the conservation area, and identified the features that give it its special character. This section will draw together these defining features.
- 4.2 The purpose of conservation area designation is not to stifle innovation in design. Many conservation areas derive their special interest and character from a variety of building styles and materials, representing many different periods in history. New buildings need not slavishly copy those around them, but should be informed by the local context. Cutting edge architecture involving alien building forms and materials is, however, unlikely to be appropriate in Bletchingley. New buildings should acknowledge their historic setting, and draw their inspiration from styles, materials and detailing around them. Further guidance is available in the design guide for Surrey “Surrey Design” (see Appendix 1 for details).
- 4.3 The use of **brick** as a building and facing material is widespread. From the 18th century onwards it has been incorporated into existing buildings and used in the construction of new ones. In many cases it has been used to replace the plaster infill of timber framed medieval buildings (for example Nicholas Woolmer) or has obscured the framing completely. It has become one of the characteristic features of the village. Similarly the use of plain and decorative **tile hanging** is widespread, notably on the buildings comprising Middle Row.



Example of 'fish scale' tiling



Tile hanging in 'diamond' pattern

- 4.4 The local clay produced bricks and tiles with a rich orange hue, and this has become one of the defining features of the conservation area. Where new development involves the use of brick, it should be of an appropriate colour and texture to ensure successful integration with the townscape. Tile hanging can also be successfully integrated into new development, as demonstrated in the St Marys Walk development, though the use of shaped tiles should be kept to a minimum to avoid over elaboration. As with the use of brick, the colour and texture is important and the District Council in approving the use of materials will take this into account. In certain circumstances (ie. in new

buildings in particularly prominent parts of the conservation area) the use of hand made clay tiles may be required.

- 4.5 Plain clay tiles (as opposed to pantiles, which are not found locally) are also widely used as a **roofing material** and again it is important that where they are being used in new development, an appropriate colour and texture is used. Depending on the location, the District Council may require these to be handmade clay roof tiles. Slate has also been used, generally on those buildings which were extensively 'modernised' in the 19th century (for example, Norfolk House and Poplar House). It has not become a familiar part of the local scene, unlike other villages locally where the arrival of the railway brought about rapid expansion and mass use of imported slate.
- 4.6 **Stone** is a less commonly found building material in Bletchingley. The local green/grey sandstone (Reigate Stone or Nutfield Stone) has been mined or quarried from the Reigate area since the Norman period and despite its apparently wide use in the 19th century is now largely absent in the street scene. It can be found, hidden behind render (for example nos. 122 – 132 Brittens Cottages) and on less prominent parts of buildings (for example on the extension to Norfolk House), but its soft nature has meant that it is less favoured for exposed exteriors of buildings. This is illustrated by the extensive weathering of (and recent repairs to) the only non rendered cottage in the Brittens Cottage group (no. 120 High Street).
- 4.7 Nevertheless it remains an important local building material and forms the main component of a number of boundary walls. Where it survives its retention and maintenance is strongly encouraged, and any stone element of a new development (for example in the creation of boundary walls) should be of local sandstone. Flint is not a local building material and should be avoided.
- 4.8 **Windows** make a significant contribution to the appearance of buildings and to the character of the conservation area. A variety of window types is represented in Bletchingley, some of which are illustrated below:



Sash windows with glazing bars



Leaded casement window



Examples of windows with timber casements

- 4.9 Windows in new buildings and extensions should draw on the styles found locally. Windows in existing buildings should be repaired wherever possible, using matching materials. Replacement windows should be in the same size of opening, and respect other windows in the building in terms of design, materials and finish. Sealed, double glazed uPVC units should be avoided. Further guidance can be found in Surrey County Council's advisory leaflet 'Windows in Historic Buildings' (see Appendix 1 for details).
- 4.10 The retention of traditional shop fronts is important to the character of the village. Some are particularly distinctive, such as the Old Butchers Shop at the top end of Church Walk and, of a more recent date, Nos 1-3 High Street on the corner of Outwood Lane and the High Street.



Former Selmes' butchers shop, Church Walk

- 4.11 Generally the survival of shopfronts, even where any retail use has long since ceased, enables something of the former commercial importance of the village to be retained.



96 High Street

- 4.12 **Chimneys** and their pots contribute to the character of the conservation area. Where possible they should be retained and remain free from the clutter of aerials and satellite dishes. New residential development can be enhanced by the inclusion of chimneys, though their proportions should reflect those found in the village.



Chimneys and chimney pots

- 4.13 The relatively steep **pitch** of many of the roofs in the conservation area is also a characteristic feature. This should be respected where new buildings are introduced.



Typical example of roof pitch

4.14 Many houses open directly onto the road or footpath, some with brick steps. This is characteristic of the village. Where there is some form of enclosure, these **boundaries** vary from brick and stone walls, to iron railings. Picket fencing has been used at the western end of the village. These features add to the interest of the conservation areas and their retention and maintenance is encouraged. Wherever possible new or replacement boundaries should use of traditional materials. In particular the remaining delineation of the burgage plots, and the wall to the 'back path' (see paragraph 3.46) should be preserved and maintained.



Examples of walls and railings



4.15 The traditional **paving** material is ironstone which outcrops locally, usually in association with sand. The ironstone fragments are laid sideways on, embedded in sand, and tightly packed together. Its use in hard landscaping schemes for new development is encouraged, in conjunction with other suitable surfaces such as gravel dressed asphalt. Larger sandstone blocks are also used (for example in the cross overs either side of Norfolk House). Granite sets should be avoided, as should flagstones (for example York stone).



Ironstone pavement

In Summary

- 4.16 Central to the character of Bletchingley are the physical links back to the medieval market town it evolved from. The wide market place, and the survival of features such as the regular burgage plots and thoroughfares (Church Walk, back path, alleys or 'ginnels' between buildings) all contribute to this special character. The survival of so many medieval buildings, particularly in the central core (Middle Row and Church Walk) helps to reinforce the feeling of an early town that more or less stopped growing.
- 4.17 A whole host of small features together make a significant contribution to the individual character of the Bletchingley conservation area. The protection and maintenance of these sometimes vulnerable features is vital if the special character of Bletchingley is to be retained. The sensitive treatment of new development will ensure that this character is preserved and enhanced.

Part 5: Future Action

Review of boundaries

5.1 A number of additional areas for inclusion within the conservation area have been proposed through consultation on the draft Appraisal. These were:

- ✘ Grange Meadow and the Plough PH, east of the current designated area;
- ✘ The area comprising the castle, south west of the current designated area;
- ✘ The back path to the north of the conservation area; and
- ✘ The area containing Clerks Croft and Knights Cottages (either side of Church Lane, on north east corner of conservation area)

The Council does not intend to undertake a review of the boundary at this time. However if a need for review is identified in future, and the necessary resources are made available, these suggestions will be given full consideration.

5.2 It should be noted that no areas were suggested for removal from the conservation area, and none were identified as a result of the townscape analysis. The Council is therefore satisfied that the current extent of the conservation area remains reasonable and defensible.

Liaison with the highway authority

5.3 Surrey County Council has an ongoing programme of highway and other associated improvements along the A25 corridor. Through the A25 Route Management Study a number of projects have been identified for implementation through a phased programme of work. These include highway safety schemes such as the introduction of 'gateways', traffic management schemes and environmental enhancements, various improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and improvements to enhance use of public transport. Public consultation on these proposals was conducted in 2000, and some of the measures proposed for Bletchingley have been implemented.

5.4 The District Council will seek to influence the design of schemes that are put forward for Bletchingley, and in particular those affecting the conservation area. It will also seek to encourage the implementation of other improvements identified in this appraisal such as a reduction/rationalisation of highway signs, a rationalisation of parking and the repair/reinstatement of facilities such as the steps on the northern side of the High Street (see paragraph 3.26. Through this appraisal the highway authority will be reminded of the significant contribution that the ironstone paving makes to the conservation area and the importance of retaining and maintaining those areas for which it is responsible.

Other Statutory Authorities

- 5.5 Statutory authorities are not generally subject to control by the local planning authority, although the provision and maintenance of their services can have an impact on the conservation area. A copy of this Appraisal will be forwarded to the relevant service providers to highlight the need for sensitive treatment within the conservation area.
- 5.5 The visual impact of overhead lines has been highlighted in this Appraisal. The Council will encourage the relevant service providers to underground their services where possible, though it is recognised that this will incur additional costs. Undergrounding may also impact upon features such as the ironstone paving, and this would also have to be taken into consideration.

Responsibility for ironstone paving

- 5.7 Responsibility for the sections of ironstone paving on the south side of the High Street remains unclear. It is understood that in some instances the paved areas form part of the properties fronting the High Street, though the exact legal position has yet to be established. Initial research indicates that they are not the responsibility of the highway authority. The level of maintenance of the cobbled areas is therefore haphazard and variable. The highway authority has however confirmed that it is responsible for the pavement on the north side of the High Street, in front of Middle Row.
- 5.8 As identified in Part 3 of this Appraisal, the ironstone paving is a distinctive feature of the conservation area. Its retention through appropriate repair and maintenance is therefore a vital element of the overall preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. Further work is required to establish the legal position in respect of ownership and maintenance. An enhancement scheme involving the relevant individuals and organisations could then be undertaken, subject to the availability of funding. The possibility of funding through the Local Heritage Initiative scheme could be investigated.

Local Working Group

- 5.9 A local group comprising representatives of the Parish Council and Blechingley Historical and Conservation Society has been established. It is hoped that this group will pursue some of the enhancement schemes identified in this Appraisal and help to bring about their implementation. Where resources permit, this Council will support the work of this Group with officer time and advice.

Responsibilities of Owners and Occupiers

- 5.10 This Appraisal has identified the buildings, open spaces and individual features that define the character of the conservation area. The siting and design of new development should be such that the appearance and character of the conservation area

is preserved or enhanced, and this Appraisal will be used to assess whether development proposals achieve this aim.

- 5.11 It is hoped that residents and other occupiers will, through this Appraisal, be made aware of the contribution that they can make to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. This can be achieved through the retention of features such as chimneys and chimney pots, boundary walls and windows, the use of appropriate materials in new build and repairs, and the general maintenance of properties and land.

Part 6: Statement of Consultation

- 6.1 The draft version of this Appraisal was issued for public consultation in September 2001. The closing date for comments was 9th November 2001. Information leaflets were sent to all residential and business premises in the conservation area (approximately 200 addresses). These outlined the purpose of conservation area designation and invited comments on the draft appraisal.
- 6.2 Copies of the Appraisal were sent to Bletchingley Parish Council, Blechingley Conservation and Historical Society, English Heritage, Surrey County Council and the SE branch of RIBA. Their comments were invited. A press release was issued and the Appraisal was publicised in the local press in early October 2001.
- 6.3 Officers from Tandridge District Council met with representatives of the Parish Council and Blechingley Conservation and Historical Society on 22 July 2002 to discuss the Appraisal.
- 6.4 The responses made to the draft Appraisal have been considered and were reported to the Council's Planning and Environment Committee at its meeting on 14th November 2002. A number of changes were made to the Appraisal, in the light of these comments.
- 6.5 A summary of the comments and the Council's response to them is available as a separate annex to this document.

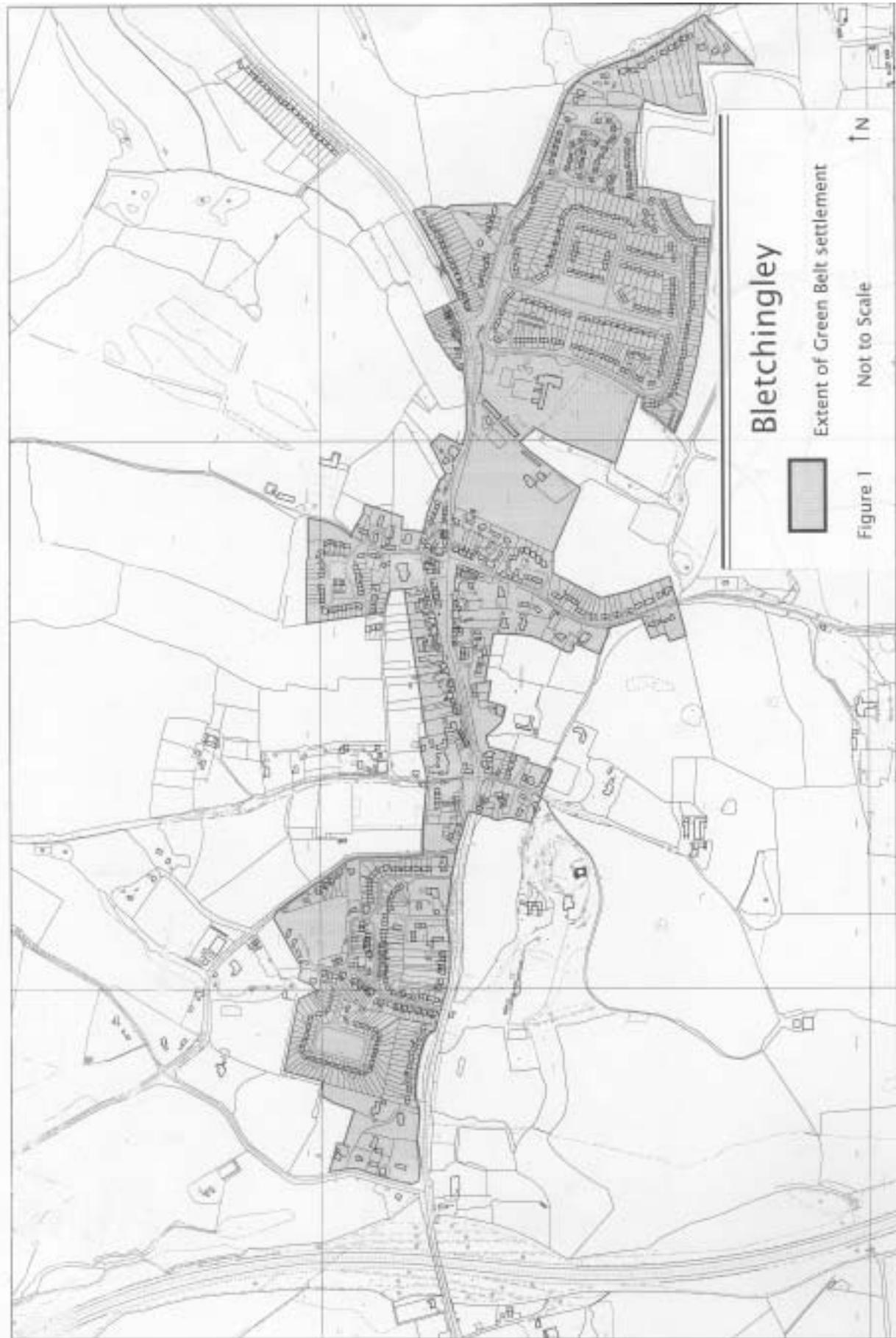






Figure 3 - Extract from Rocques Map 1770

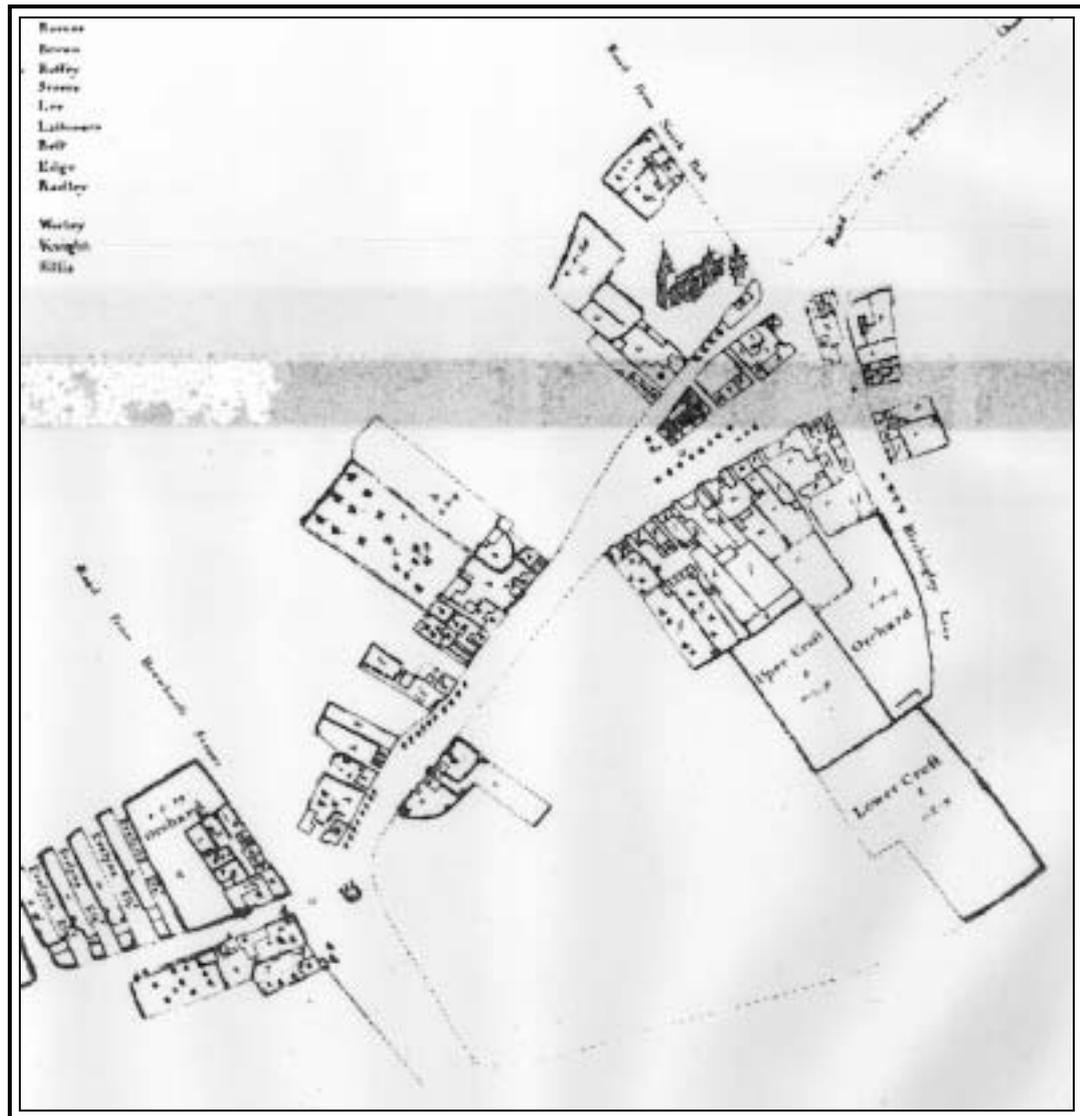


Figure 4 - Extract from Clayton Estate Map - C1760

Appendix 1

References/Bibliography

Conservation Area Appraisals – English Heritage (1997)
Conservation Area Practice – English Heritage (1993)
Tandridge District Local Plan 2001 – Tandridge District Council
Surrey Design – a design guide for Surrey – Surrey County Council (2002)
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Archaeology and Historic Landscapes – Surrey County Council (1994)
Blethingley Village and Parish – Peter Gray (1991)
Blethingley Explored – Joint Parish Councils Conservation Area Committee/Tandridge DC (Ed. Peter Gray and Kay Percy) (1975)
Blethingley – Uvedale H. Lambert (1921)

Sources of further information

Surrey Building Conservation Leaflets:
No. 4 – Windows in Historic Buildings
No. 9 – Repair and Maintenance of Stone Buildings
(both available from Tandridge District Council)

A guide to making an application for Conservation Area Consent
(available from Tandridge District Council and at www.tandridge.gov.uk – see below for details)

Useful contacts and websites

- ✘ English Heritage – SE Regional Office 01483 252000 - www.english-heritage.org.uk
- ✘ Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) – www.spab.org.uk
- ✘ Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation (IHBC) – www.ihbc.org.uk (contains links to other conservation/heritage organisations)
- ✘ Surrey Historic Buildings Adviser – 0208 541 9416

Tandridge District Council's website (www.tandridge.gov.uk) has sections on listed buildings and conservation areas – follow links via A – Z of Services