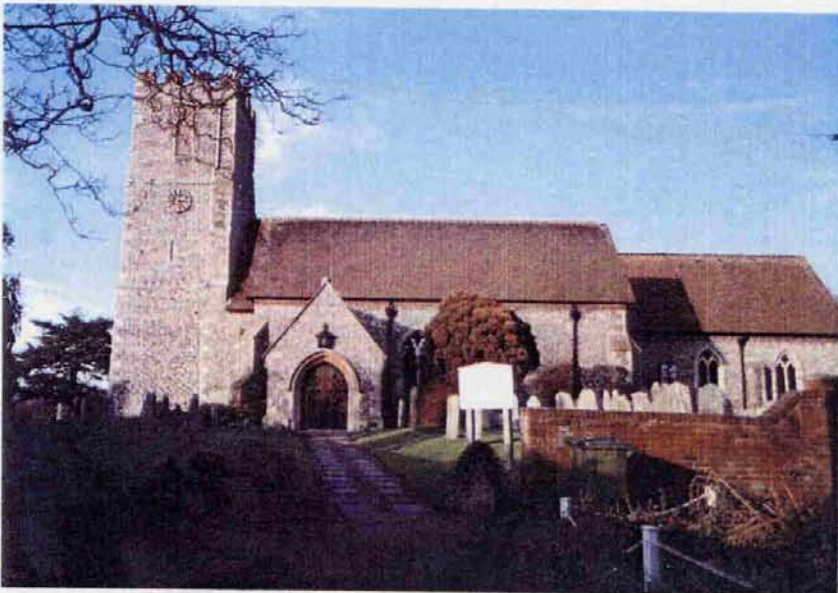


**SOUTHFLEET  
CONSERVATION  
AREA  
APPRAISAL**



**August 1998**

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## **Introduction**

Under Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, local planning authorities have a duty to review conservation areas from time to time.

The Southfleet Conservation Area was originally designated on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1970 and was extended on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1998.

Conservation area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest. It will be for the Dartford Borough Local Plan review to determine whether changes are necessary to the actual policies which apply to conservation areas.

The statement defines as fully as possible the character and appearance of the Southfleet Conservation Area including architectural and natural features.

Any omissions of particular buildings, features or space should not be taken to imply that they are of no interest or importance.

## Origins and Development

Southfleet is a small village set in farmland, close to the south eastern corner of the borough. The village has developed from a small hamlet with St Nicholas's church (Figure 1), a school (Sedley's Church of England Primary- Figure 2), and



**Figure 1- St. Nicholas's Church**

a Public House (The Ship) centred around the cross-roads of Hook Green Road, Red



**Figure 2- Sedley's Church of England Primary School**

Street, Warren Road and Dale Road. The founding of the church and associated Friary played an important part in the development of Southfleet as

both the church and Friary Court were built in the C14<sup>th</sup>. The

origin of the village seems to be to the west of Hook Green Road, as Court Lodge Farmhouse was built in the C15<sup>th</sup>, contemporary with Church Cottages (Figure 3). Church House and The Ship



**Figure 3- Church Cottages**

were built in the C16<sup>th</sup>. Sedley's School and Church Cottages, the post office, Danetre and Five Ways (Figure 4) are all C17<sup>th</sup>,



**Figure 4- Post Office, etc**

indicating a substantial growth in the locale. Later development includes Forge House, and Warren Cottages which were built in 1895, closely followed by the United Reformed Church in 1896 (Figure 5).

This all points to the central core of the village being established early and growing around the existing development over the centuries. The village has all the features expected to serve the local community; a school, a shop and post office, meeting



**Figure 5- United Reformed Church**

hall and a public house, as well as a parish church.

These facilities have been in the village for over 100 years as a minimum- most have been here for much longer.

Later, more modern development along Hook Green Road and Red Street has expanded the village considerably. However as most of the new development is not readily apparent from within the village (being to the south of Hook Green Road), the character of the village core has

not been lost.

## Character

The Conservation Area incorporates the core of a free standing village centred around the church, within a farming setting. The church spire is a major element in the landscape and can be seen from various vantage points in the surrounding countryside.

Entry to the village from the North is through farm land, and the church dominates the horizon (Figure 6). The vista



**Figure 6- St. Michael's from the north**

from the North is terminated by The Ship (Figure 7).

The village takes on a different character dependent on the approach route; entry from the south along Hook Green Road is



**Figure 7- The Ship from the north**

somewhat enclosed due to the boundary hedge to Court Lodge Farm and the wall to the properties in Sedley. The small green to the east of the road adjacent to the boundary wall offers a relief to the constraining influence of these boundaries. The roofs to Sedley's School and The Ship are a key element of this vista (Figure 8).

The small visual gap which appears between Sedley's and its



**Figure 8- Roofs and green space**

west boundary wall offers a good view of Church Cottages. The openness of the school boundary enlivens this space greatly when the children are at play. However, the quality of the fencing to this space does degrade it somewhat.

Warren Road is a small ribbon of mainly C19<sup>th</sup> housing which has grown away from the earlier core. The scale is domestic, with minimal

footpaths. Unfortunately modern window replacements, render over the original brickwork and modern roof tiling have somewhat eroded the architectural qualities of these later buildings (Figure 9), and the C17<sup>th</sup> post office on the corner of Warren Road (Figure 4). Together with the entry to the adjacent builders yard there is scope for improvement here.

However, the aspect opens



**Figure 9- Warren Road (looking west)**

further east and allows good views of the adjacent open farmland (Figure 10). Church Street is of a different character again, being very



**Figure 10- Warren Road (looking east)**

narrow and rising up to the Church. It is almost squeezed into the gap between Church House and Sedley's School (Figure 11). Church House on the corner of Church Street and Dale Road is a C16<sup>th</sup> house, refaced in the C18<sup>th</sup>, which indicates some wealth in the village at the time (Figure 12).

Church Cottages situated further up Church Street (Figure 3) are almost untouched externally. They represent a slightly unusual



Figure 11- Church Street

Wealden hall house due to the length of the service end. They are a very important complement to St Nicholas's Church, which is the dominant building in the village. This is mainly flint, with



Figure 12- Church House

ragstone quoins (Figure 1).

There is a large Cedar tree in the graveyard, which complements the scale of the Church (Figure 13). There are fine views to the north, (Figure 14) but the southerly aspect of the graveyard is bounded by a poor hedgerow which screens the agricultural buildings beyond in Court Lodge Farm. The churchyard is in need of improvement here.

Court Lodge Farmhouse is probably a C15<sup>th</sup> building, but has been covered by other works



Figure 13- St Nicholas's Church

(Figure 15). There is a small granary to the east of the oast house which is C16<sup>th</sup>.

The group formed by these buildings is important, as is the contribution of the stable block to the north of the granary and east of the main house.

However, these buildings need to be viewed as a group in their own right, being separated from the village core by various boundary walls and hedges.

These walls and hedges isolate the farm complex from the rest



Figure 14- Views to the north

of the village, but do help create a visual constraint in the various streets and help with the sense of enclosure, making the village more intimate as a result.

**Comment:** The graveyard is bounded to the southern edge by a hedge. This is particularly unkempt and needs maintenance and replanting to protect the graveyard from the adjacent agricultural activity.



Figure 15- Court Lodge Farmhouse

## Materials and Styles

There is a predominance of small scale buildings in the village, which are mainly of brick with steeply pitched, tiled roofs. The gables and tall chimneys to Sedley's, complete with raked brickwork are particularly fine. There is some good brick toothing apparent on Church House (Figure 12), and a remnant of more contemporary red quoins with yellow stocks to Forge House.

Examples of tile hanging on the post office and Danetre. Peg tile roofs abound on the listed buildings; the post office, Church House and Church Cottages, and The Ship offer a good selection. Some later C19<sup>th</sup> buildings such as the extension to the post office and part of Warren Cottages retain their slate roofs. More modern roofs or replacements are concrete tiled or artificial slate.

Some rendering to original brickwork has subsequently been painted, and does tend to over emphasise domestic buildings (Figure 9). This is in contrast to The Ship which is very prominent- however it has the scale to carry off this finish.

There are several timber framed buildings in the village; sometimes these are less apparent as in Church House and Danetre. In contrast, Church Cottages (Figure 3) retain their original form, with the timber framing clearly visible. This can also be seen with the little granary in Court Lodge Farm.

The lack of old road finishes has removed some of the potential charm of the village. Due to the width of the roads, no major extents of modern kerbed pavements (with the exception of Hook Green Road) are present, and this helps retain the rural character of the village along with grassed and treed embankments at the roadside on the immediate periphery of the Area.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

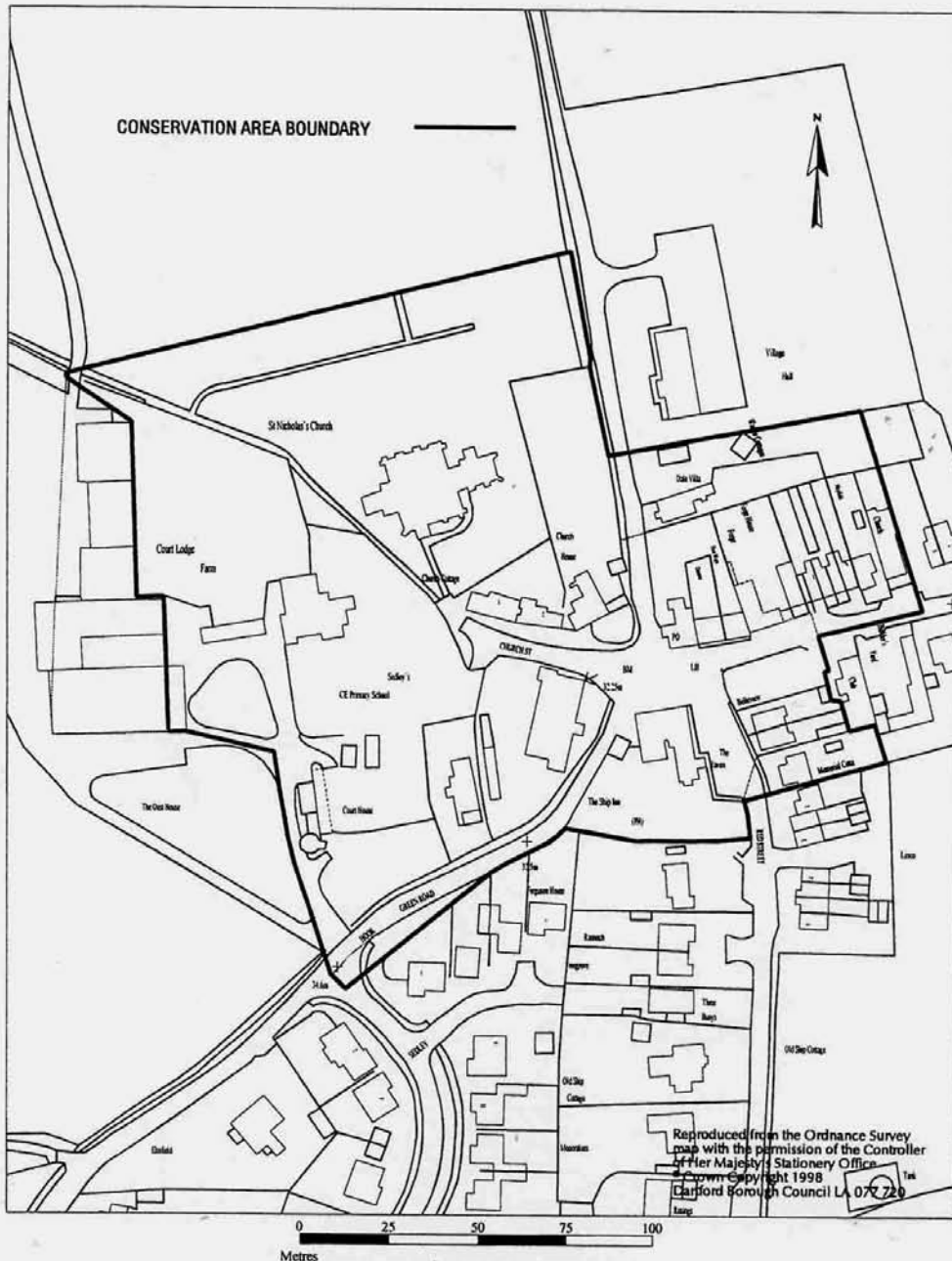
The key character of the Conservation Area is the central cross-roads, with the majority of the listed buildings forming this space. Other factors which play an important role are;

- . The long views from the surrounding countryside of the church tower, which acts as a marker to the village.
- . The strong axis south into the village terminating with The Ship.
- . The glimpse of Church Cottages through Sedley's playground from Hook Green Road- vital in this route through the village.
- . The glimpse over the rooftops of Church Cottages to the church.
- . The domestic properties in the village which contrast with the major buildings such as Sedley's and the church.
- . The lack of modern kerbed footpaths, which allows the central space to be more amorphous than if contained by hard road edges.

In terms of the materials, most are traditional, with some strident colours. Architectural forms are traditional, with pitched, plain tiled roofs, natural brickwork with relatively small openings for doors and windows. Trees within the Conservation Area around The Ship are a dominant natural feature, as is the ridge upon which the church sits. Any alteration to this ridge (such as tree planting or buildings of any form) would be highly visible from the surrounding landscape and should be very carefully considered.

Any new development needs to be domestic in scale, have steeply pitched roofs, and be of traditional materials. The importance of the architectural grain in the centre of the village must not be interrupted by the introduction of deep front gardens or on-site parking. Any road improvements need to take into account the rural nature of the existing arrangements, and not be simply upgraded to modern kerbed footway.

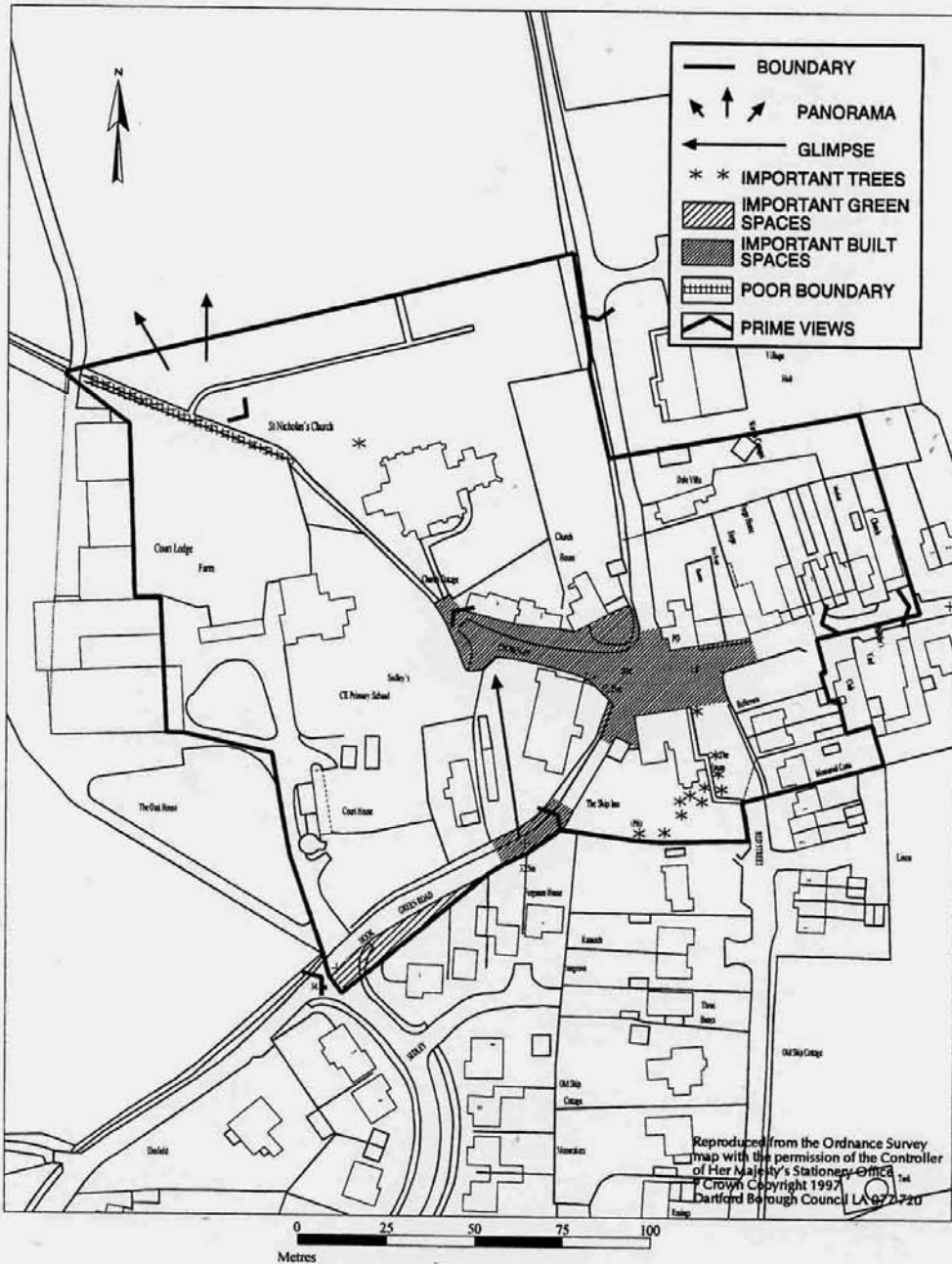
The reinstatement of original roofs, windows and doors to the domestic properties in Warren Road would enhance their character. Also any further change of materials should be avoided. Some improvement to the immediate vicinity of the builders yard and club would benefit the area.



**SOUTHFLEET - CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

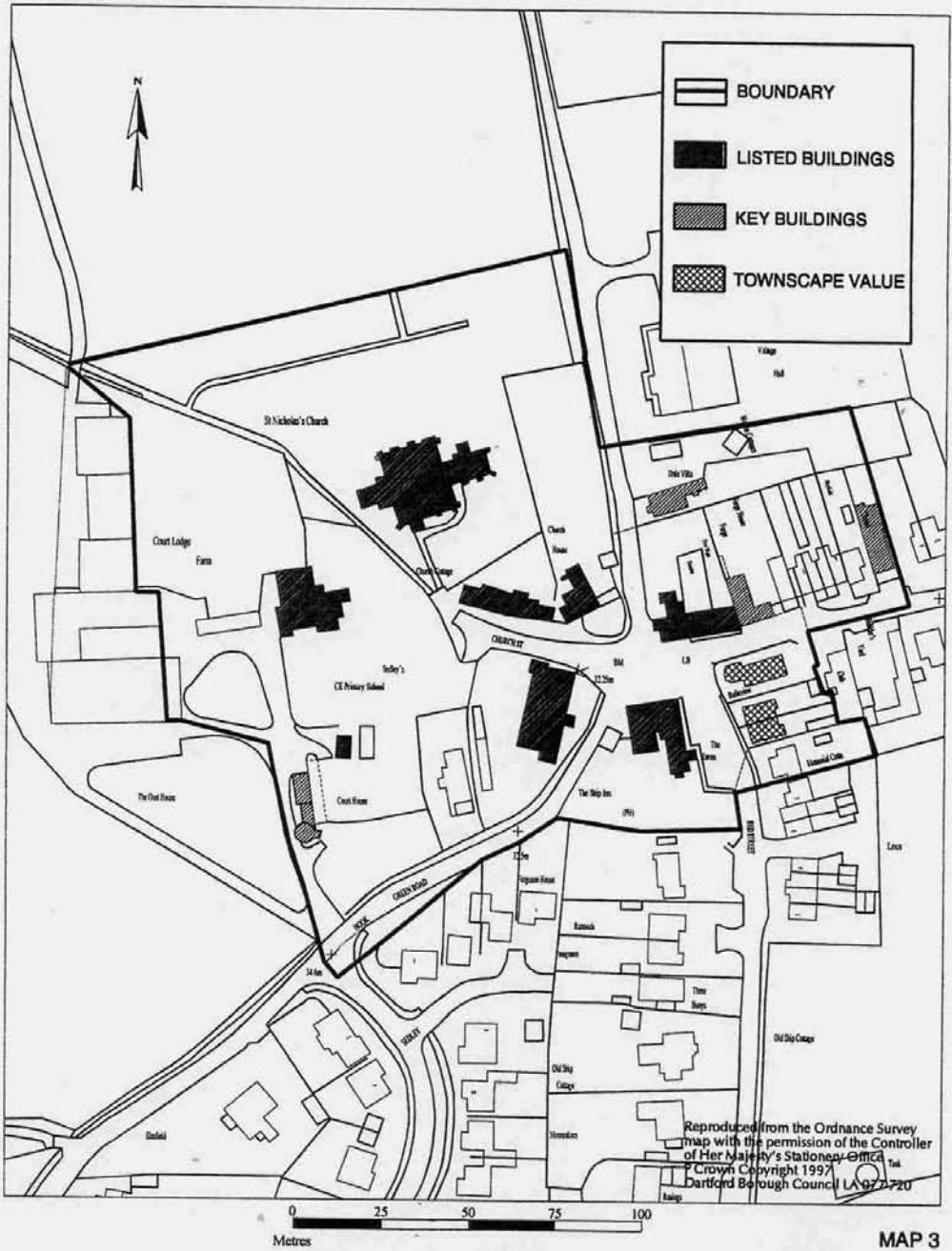
**MAP 1**

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**SPACES VIEWS AND NATURAL FEATURES**

**MAP 2**



**CONTRIBUTION OF BUILDINGS**

**MAP 3**