

 <p><b>Reigate &amp; Banstead</b> BOROUGH COUNCIL Banstead   Horley   Redhill   Reigate</p>	<b>TO:</b>	PLANNING COMMITTEE
	<b>DATE:</b>	9 March 2022
	<b>REPORT OF:</b>	HEAD OF PLANNING
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<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	11	<b>WARD:</b> Horley West and Sidlow

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Report Back on Comments received on the Meath Green Conservation Area following designation on the 17th February 2021</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:</b>	For the Planning Committee to consider the comments received following designation of Meath Green Conservation Area on the 17 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	
<p><b>1. It is recommended that there is no change to the boundary of Meath Green Conservation Area designated as a Conservation Area on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and as delineated on the plan in Appendix 1, under sections 69 and 70 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.</b></p>	
<b>Planning Committee has authority to determine the recommendation.</b>	

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Borough currently has 24 Conservation Areas. They are defined by the legislation as areas of special architectural or historic interest, which are desirable to preserve or enhance. The Council has a statutory duty to regularly review designations and boundaries, and a review of all boundaries took place in 2007, looking at identity areas and cohesive character groups as well as the age of buildings and their architectural interest. That programme of designations and extensions was completed in 2013. Following “Conservation Areas @ 50”, the Historic England study of Conservation Areas in 2017 which considered the practice of designations nationally, a review is currently taking place within the Borough in regard to boundaries of existing Conservation Areas and potential new designations for other areas as part of the regular review process. Meath Green Conservation Area was designated a Conservation Area at the Planning Committee meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## **2.0 STATUTORY PROVISION**

- 2.1 Public attitudes in favour of the retention and enhancement of local character and distinctiveness within the built environment are reflected in statutory legislation and guidance. Historic buildings and conservation areas are, therefore, vitally important to the environmental quality of life in this country. Consequently, local planning authorities have a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to determine and review which parts of their area are of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate such areas as conservation areas.

## **3.0 CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF THE MEATH GREEN CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATED ON THE 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

- 3.1 The settlement of Meath Green consists of a number of farms, architecturally dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, historically centred on the green where the pond still exists, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was strengthened by the building of a number of picturesque cottages and houses along Meath Green Lane and construction of farm buildings in local materials. Handmade tile roofs, tile hanging and handmade brick, sometimes with burnt headers are characteristic of the area as traditional windows including cast iron frames. The lane itself has a picturesque hedge lined character of a meandering nature with grass verges. The Lane has been protected from development in the north west sector by generally being set back at 15 metres and 20 metres or more where possible to retain the character of the lane as a country lane green corridor with hedgerows and tree lines strengthened. Footpaths have been placed behind the hedgerows where possible. It is considered that the area forms a cohesive settlement of local Wealden vernacular architecture centred around a hedged country lane threading through the urban area.
- 3.2 From south to north the following architectural elements can be noted. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Greenfields Farm forms the current Residential Area of Special Character on the east side and is characterised by local red brick with burnt blue headers. There is a large farm house (Greenfields and Greenleas) with a collection of estate cottages (Whipple Tree Cottages) and converted farm buildings including The Paddocks. Two farm buildings were converted by the notable local architect Blunden Shadbolt, Little Greenfields and Old Barn and he also designed Oakcroft. To the west is the former Meath Green where a large pond still exists and Landens Farm further west, a 17<sup>th</sup> century a listed farmhouse and 19<sup>th</sup> century model farm, cottage and granary, with blue header bricks. Cheswick Cottage is a 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage and Cheswick Farmhouse is 16<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, a grade II listed building, with later wing including Thurgarton Cottage. To rear is the farm yard of Cheswick Farm. To the north is Meath Green Farm, a 19<sup>th</sup> century blue header brick farmyard in need of repair. On the bend are a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century cottages and houses in local materials including Wick Farmhouse, Meath Green House, The Cottage, Meath Paddock and Saxley Cottage, with the hedge line lane leading up to Cinderfield, a listed 16<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse with Blunden Shadbolt converted farmyard.

#### 4.0 REPORT BACK ON COMMENTS RECEIVED

4.1 38 properties were notified of their inclusion in the designated Meath Green Conservation Area. Three properties responded in support of the designation, six against the designation, one was split and the North West Sector Consortium do not object but do not support the full extent of designation. The objections are considered below.

#### 4.2 The Coach House

The consultants for the owners raised a number of issues, including forms of Conservation Areas, NWH1 and footpaths. Their land is part of the NWH1 housing allocation

Officers would respond that there is not a statutory requirement to consult on the designation of Conservation Area. It is considered that the area meets the criteria for designation, the heart of the Conservation Area is of a traditional form of historic buildings clustered round the former Meath Green and that there are other former country lanes that are included in Conservation Areas in the Borough. Historic England note that Conservation Areas can include farmland as in the Yorkshire Dales and Norfolk and Conservation Areas based on linear features such as canals and railway lines. The proposed Meath Green Conservation Area is similar to other Conservation Areas that have been designated in the south east. RASC designation and local listing does not have the effectiveness of statutory controls. The NWH1 allocation recognises the importance of conserving the character of the Lane and at pre application stage it was noted the Lane was a heritage asset and that footpaths should be behind the hedgerow in any new housing scheme. It is appreciated that there are schemes for cycle routes and footpaths along other parts of the Lane and it is being considered how these can be proportionate and maintain the character. It is considered that Meath Green House and the Coach House contribute to the character of the Conservation Area and should not be excluded.

#### 4.3 Horley North West Consortium

The Consortium do not object to the principle of the Conservation Area but do not support the full extent of designated area. In relation to their comment about a Conservation Appraisal, an inspector has already noted in relation to another Conservation Area recently designated in the Borough, "the Planning Practice Guidance only guides that an appraisal may help a local planning authority decide whether to designate an area as a conservation area. There is no requirement to carry one out. In my judgement, for the purposes of designating the Conservation Area and consultation, the character assessment that was used was adequate." We have used the same approach for Meath Green Lane.

Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition) 2019 notes in paragraph 16: *"it is good practice to prepare a designation assessment to formally assess the special historic or architectural interest it may have and whether it is desirable to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. ... This often follows a similar format to a*

*conservation area appraisal and, indeed where this leads to designation it will inform future decision-making. Nevertheless, where a rapid designation is necessary to prevent harm and where proportionate consideration is given in decision-making, the special interest is relatively clear or the area has an easily defined boundary, it may be expedient to prepare a shorter report setting out how the area meets the statutory definition and how the appropriate boundary has been determined, thus ensuring the area's designation is robust."*

An assessment of the area including current condition, historic assets and map evidence base was carried out by the Council and used to assess the Meath Green as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Consortium is incorrect to state that open land cannot be regarded as Conservation Area. Open land including greens, parkland and fields are common features of Conservation Areas. The playing fields, open space and allotments were allocated to areas in the sector where it was important to retain the historic hedgerows of the field boundaries. The conservation of the historic hedgerows for the field boundaries and along Meath Green and the setting of historic buildings in the area were identified by the Council in the 1990's and form part of the Horley Design Guide (see appendix),

The Consortium suggest that the report fails to take account of allocations DMP NWH1 but NWH1 policy emphasises the need to conserve the character of Meath Green Lane and the importance of Green Corridors are emphasised in the Local Distinctiveness SPD 2021. The Horley Design Guide notes the importance of historic buildings and historic hedgerows in the area and the approach is no different to the retention of these features in the existing North West Sector. This would only be the same approach the Council has already taken with ensuring the survival of hedgerows and set back of development from the Lane when developing adjacent sites.

The Consortium have suggested removal of the Webber Street junction. Whilst this is a negative element it bisects Meath Green Lane and it is important to ensure that the impact is minimised by ensuring good management of the reinstatement of hedges and trees after the works. The Conservation Area status will also give greater strength to ensuring that hedgerows are restored that have suffered during building works in the vicinity.

The Consortium have suggested the exclusion of the locally listed Meath Green Barn but this is an important Locally Listed Building, the neglect of which has been raised by residents in the area. Conservation Area status would give greater powers to ensure that it is restored.

The Consortium have suggested exclusion of open spaces but it is quite legitimate to include open space within a Conservation Area (Chart Lane Conservation Area being a good example of this), as the historic hedgerows are part of the reason why school playing fields and allotments have been located in this area, and the heritage goes hand in hand with biodiversity as the former Meath Green is a Great Crested Newt Reserve.

The Conservation Area will have the advantage of focusing on the character of Meath Green Lane as it is evident that there are issues to address in terms of ensure that the landscape is not eroded.

Discussions on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan are exploring sympathetic ways of provide a cycleway including a suggestion for potentially closing this part of Meath Green Lane to through traffic. Roadside verges are important not only for conservation but wellbeing and biodiversity and a proportionate response is needed in terms of the extent of hard landscape. The principle of a footpath and cycleway along Meath Green Lane is not an issue and the Borough is in dialogue with the County as to how to achieve this and minimise the amount of verge lost to hardstanding. It is intended to provide a footpath running to the north end of Meath Green Lane with the junction of the riverside green chain. For the NWH1 housing areas it is consider that footpaths and cycleways should be provided behind the hedgerows when the sector come forward, to preserve the character of the Lane and considering the narrowness of the verges to the north. The principle of street lighting is not an issue from a Conservation viewpoint as this is provided in many rural Conservation Area.

The large group of buildings at the listed Landens Farm is an important part of the character of Meath Green. The Consortium have questioned why new housing has been excluded in Malthouse Lane but the emphasis has been on included elements of historic interest.

#### 4.4 Meath Green House

The owner had a split opinion, considering designation from Meath Green Farm southwards to be reasonable but consider area north of this affected by housing. Concern was expressed about the Consortium not keeping Meath Green Farm in good repair. Noted that Policy NWH1 required development to respect and enhance semi-rural character of Meath Green Lane but felt Conservation Area would restrict new housing.

Officers would note that the Conservation Area status will give additional powers for the Meath Green Farm buildings to be put in a proper status of repair. The NWH1 sector would take the same approach as existing development, of preserving trees and hedgerows and the Conservation Area designation will strengthen this approach and ensure this is appropriately managed to maintain the character of the Lane.

#### 4.5 Meath Paddock

The owners consider that it restricts the smallest stakeholders whilst giving free reign to the housing consortium and that the removal of the context of the rural landscape has eroded the intrinsic value of Meath Green Lane.

Officers in response would note that the proposal cover a significant area of consortium land and are intended to address issues of historic buildings at risk on that land. It is considered that Meath Green Lane has value in spite of the removal of the rural landscape and its recognition as a Conservation Area helps

to reinforce the conservation of this heritage asset. There is also no intention of not allowing footpaths along the Lane but where these can be placed behind the hedgerows this would provide a safer access than the narrow verge.

#### Old Barn

The owners and a house builder, Vulcan Ellis Ltd, have objected to the inclusion of Old Barn which is situated in the existing RASC. They consider the area is not worthy of Conservation Area status and that the North West Sector, Malthouse Lane, and Denoras Rest have significantly altered the area.

Officers would disagree and consider that the RASC is reflective of the character of Meath Green Lane. Denoras Rest is an enforcement issue in terms of a number of issues including the use of fences instead of hedgerow to the front boundary. Malthouse Lane is a high quality development that has retained the Listed Buildings and used handmade clay tiles and Flemish bond blue header brickwork typical of the historic buildings in the area as well as retaining trees and hedgerows, and a shared pedestrian and vehicular kerbless gravel network of drives that is an exemplar of development and retained the rural character of the area and is a valued pedestrian network in the area.

#### 4.6 The Saddlings

The owners are concerned future purchasers may be deterred, that it may affect their security in terms of strangers visiting the area and they did not choose to live in a Conservation Area.

Officer would note that it is unlikely that there would be an increase of visitors to the area due to the designation and planning designations are on the basis of meeting designation criteria.

#### 4.7 Thurgarton Cottage

The consultants for the owners consider that the adjacent development is underplayed. In response Officers consider that members are fully aware of the extent of development on the North West sector. (A plan showing all the approved layout including those areas not yet built is included in the appendix). The conservation of Meath Green Lane has always been an objective for the sector and with the passage of time the value of the Lane within the urban area and the need for its effective management and clear identification as an objective has become more apparent. Areas adjacent to the lane are subject to the housebuilding process and it will take time to ensure that the hedgerows are fully restored after such works.

They have argued that it is factually incorrect to state that "Cheswick Farmhouse is a 16th century farmhouse, a grade II listed building, with later wing including Thurgarton Cottage". The consultants state that Thurgarton Cottage abuts but was never part of Cheswick Farmhouse.

Officers would note that Thurgarton Cottage was converted from a wing of Cheswick Farmhouse in 1952 and therefore the statement that it is part of a later wing is correct. The building that became Thurgarton Cottage was built as an outbuilding to Cheswick Farm in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and incorporated into the wing of Cheswick Farm in 1935 as part of the domestic offices so was part of Cheswick Farmhouse.

It is correct to state that the list description states that Thurgarton Cottage is not included. Thurgarton Cottage was sold off separately in 1964 and Cheswick Farm was listed in 1984 so is not a curtilage structure. The law in relation to it as an attached structure to a listed building is unclear, but the fallback position under the Council local list criteria, is that where statutory protection does not appear to apply to a building which had been identified curtilage structure by the Council, that then local listing will apply as a building that contributes to the setting of the listed building. The Council consider Thurgarton Cottage forms part of the setting of the listed building being in the former grounds of the listed building and forming part of the later wing of the Farmhouse but now in separate ownership.

#### 4.8 Wick Farmhouse

The owners consider whilst it is a good idea it is too late to preserve the character. They consider that the Consortium have not maintained the hedgerows along the lane, and are concerned about the increased traffic and litter. They are concerned at the number of mature oaks were felled by the owners of Thurgarton Cottage. They are also concerned at the damage from the new junction with Webber Street. They question why their property has been included.

Officers would note that in the case of Thurgarton Cottage this was pre-emptive felling which the Council does not condone. If the Conservation Area had been in place this would have been controlled. The inclusion of Wick Farmhouse is to protect the green corridor of the Meath Green Lane. The Webber Street junction is damaging but embedded within the Lane and inclusion provides more potential for a more sympathetic junction if the opportunity arises.

### 5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Whilst heritage resources are limited, the greater certainty in the development management process will considerably reduce time spent on negotiation and discussion of proposals.

### 6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The local planning authority has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review the exercise of their functions in respect of the designation of conservation areas, and to consider the designation of

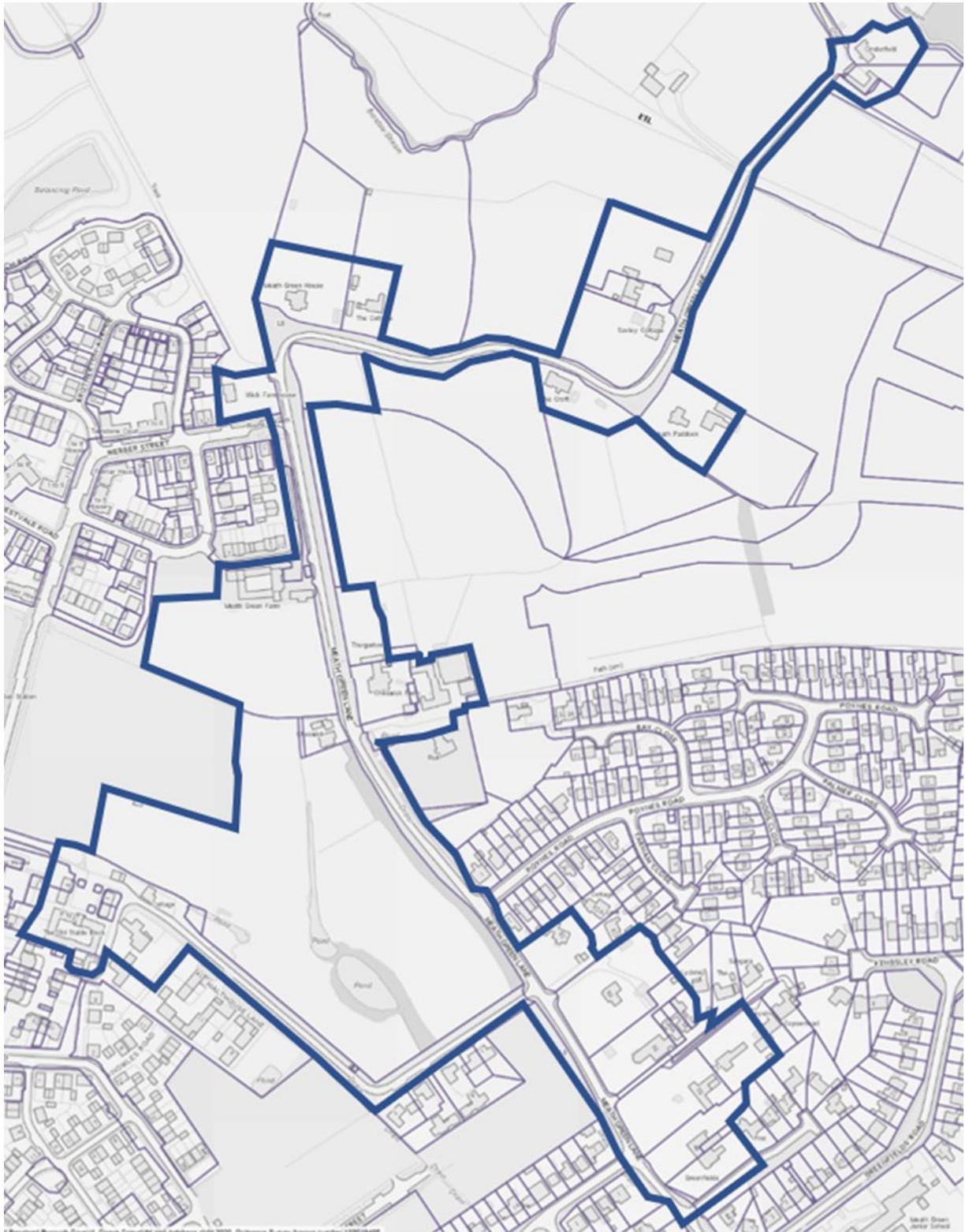
further parts of their area as conservation areas. The legal status of Conservation Areas is not expected to change in the near future.

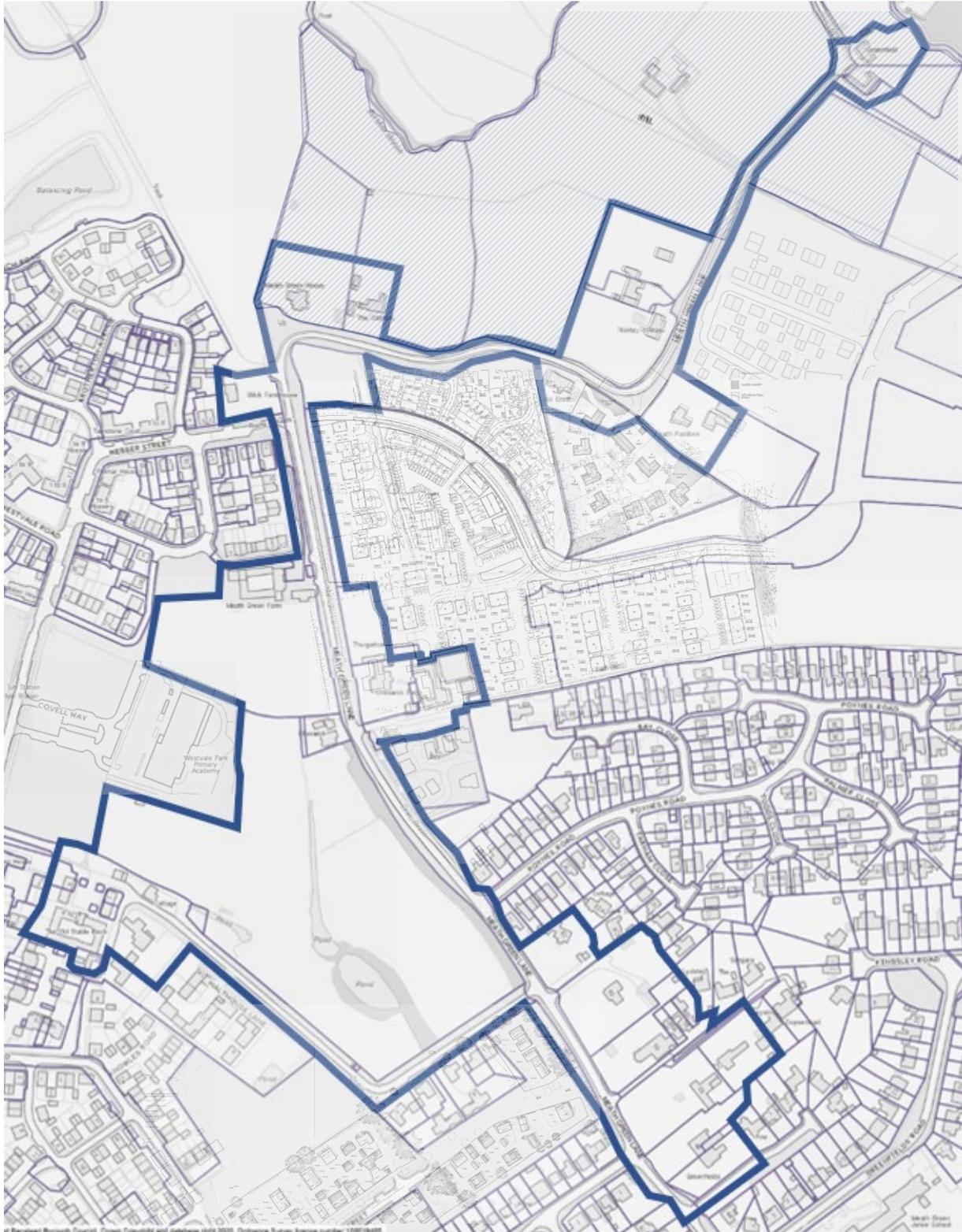
## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 Meath Green is an area of special architectural and historic interest that is desirable to preserve and enhance. It is considered that Meath Green was worthy of designation as a Conservation Area, as the group of buildings contribute significantly to the identity and character of the area.
- 7.2 It is recommended that there is no change to the boundary of the existing Conservation Area, as designated on the 17th February 2021 and as delineated on the plan in Appendix 1 under sections 69 and 70 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

**Appendix 1**

**MEATH GREEN CONSERVATION AREA as designated 17th February 2021**

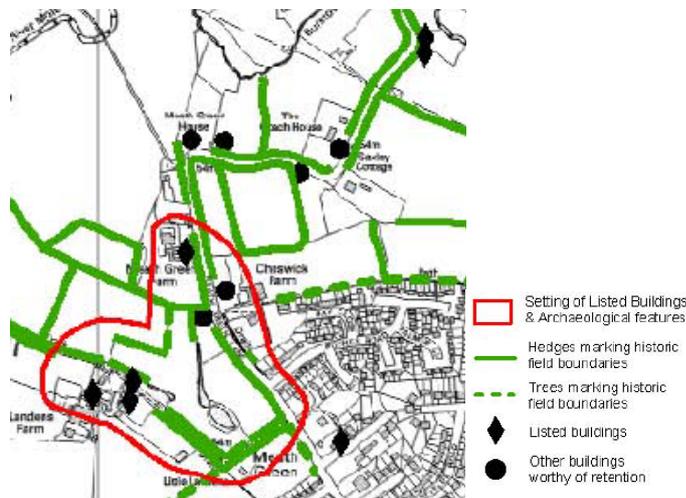




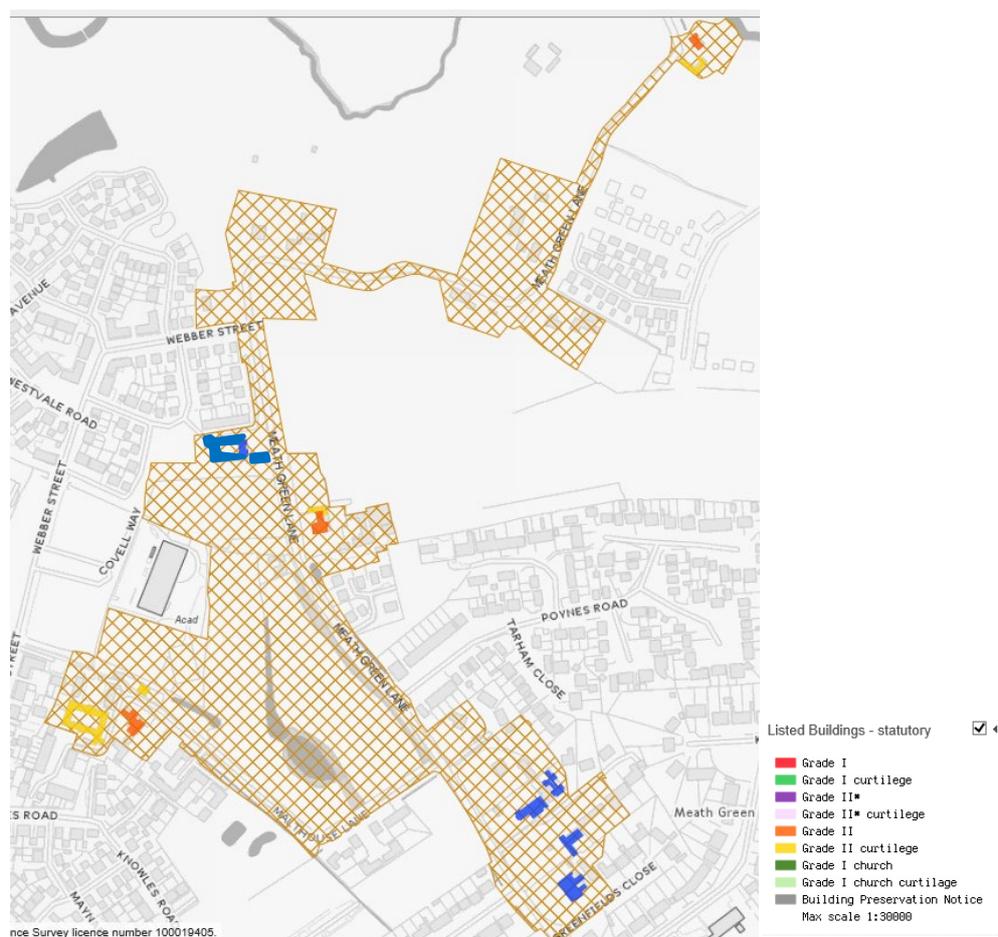
Ordnance Survey overlaid with recent development adjacent to Conservation Area and Sustainable Urban Extension hatched

## Appendix 2

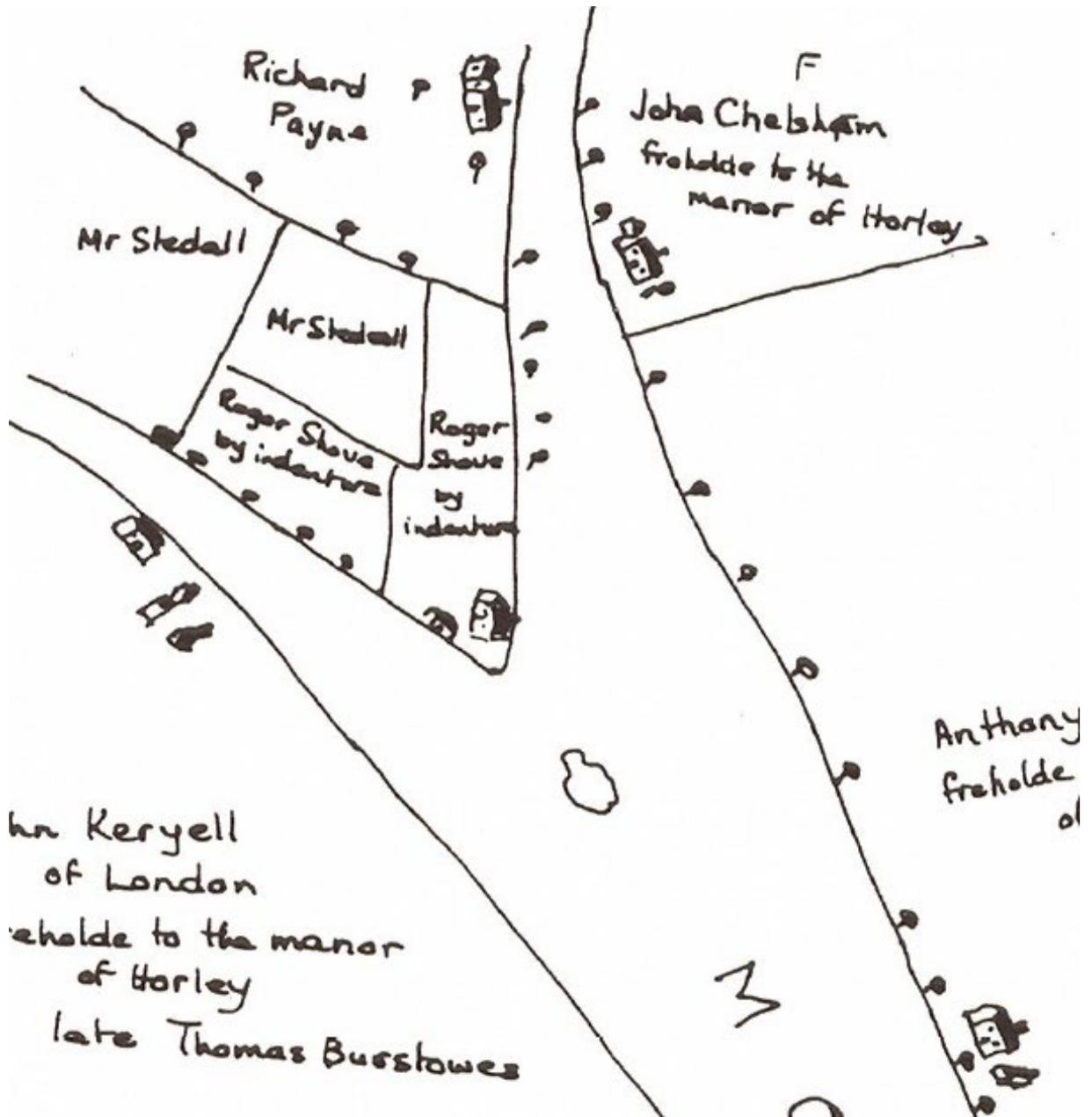
### Examples of Map Evidence used in the designation assessment



### Horley Design Guide 2006 Historic Environment Alert map



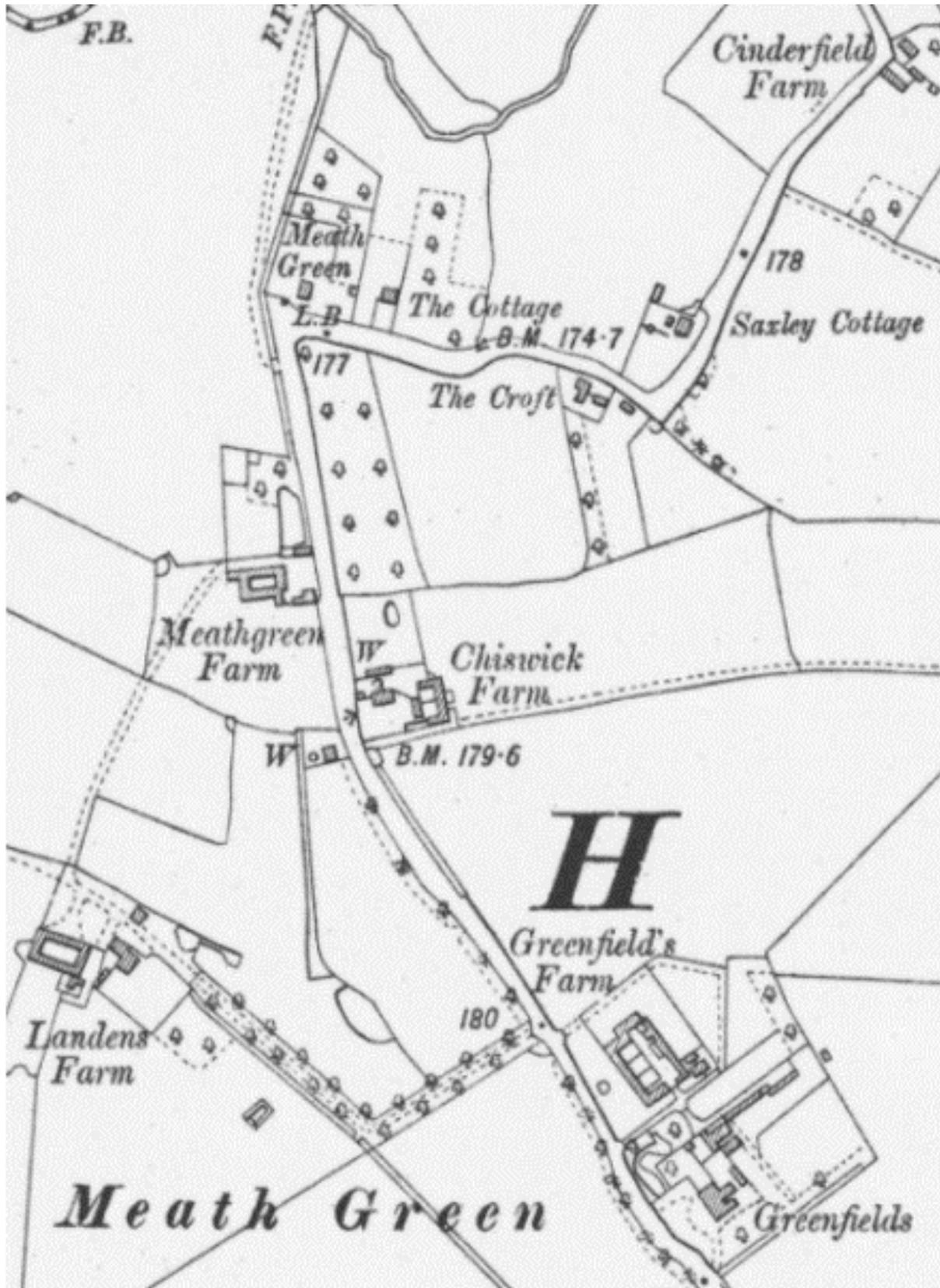
### Listed Buildings from GIS database



Meath Green 1602



**Meath Green ( from 1806-1810 survey)**



OS 1911