



Symonds Green Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document



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1 Introduction

“Our built heritage represents the very best of our past. It provides a huge resource that can play an important role in the future of our towns, cities and rural areas in giving the stimulus provided to regeneration and the promotion of sustainable development” - Heritage Works.

1.1 Symonds Green Conservation Area was designated in June 1977. Its boundary was amended in 2007, removing an area of new housing to the north. Figure 1 illustrates the current Symonds Green Conservation Area boundary.

1.2 A conservation area is defined by the Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990 s.69 as being an “area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. English Heritage note that the area of Symonds Green has a definable character that warranted its designation.

1.3 The management plan is the next step after the designation process and preparation of the character statement. The plan provides guidance to enable the effective management of change and secure the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is in accordance with the Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990 s.71 and 72; s.71 specifically requires the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas and to submit these proposals for public consideration.

1.4 The character statement provides a comprehensive assessment of the physical character and appearance of the conservation area and defines what elements are of merit, what the key issues are, what opportunities exist for preservation/enhancement and which elements detract from the conservation area.

1.5 Its purpose is to provide a benchmark for assessing the impact of development proposals on the character and/or appearance of the conservation area.

1.6 The management plan is based on the Conservation Area Appraisal⁽¹⁾ and advice from English Heritage⁽²⁾.

1 Symonds Green Conservation Area Appraisal, BEAMS, 2009

2 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, 2006 and Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, 2011.



Figure 1 Symonds Green Conservation Area map (Green line denotes boundary)

2 Conservation areas and planning procedures

2.1 The Council has a duty to only allow developments in a conservation area that preserve or enhance its character or appearance. Demolitions, alterations, extensions and other works affecting the character or appearance of properties in a conservation area will probably require planning permission and/or listed building consent or conservation area consent.

2.2 At the time of writing, there were three listed buildings within the Symonds Green Conservation Area. You should confirm whether the property is listed prior to consideration of a potential scheme as listed buildings have more stringent management methods.

2.3 The Council generally requires more detail than usual with applications submitted for listed building consent or for planning permission and conservation area consent for buildings within a conservation area.

2.4 The following section provides a brief overview of applications in conservation areas but you should always contact the Council to clarify how your proposals might be affected by conservation area designations.

Building alterations

2.5 In a conservation area you sometimes need planning permission for changes to buildings which would normally be permitted elsewhere. This might include extensions, alterations, dormer windows, satellite dishes or altering the external appearance of a property. You should contact the Council to determine how your proposal might be affected.

Demolition

2.6 For any unlisted building within a conservation area, a planning application to demolish a building is not required, however conservation area consent will be necessary. Conservation area consent is required to totally or substantially demolish most buildings within a conservation area.

2.7 Conservation area consent is also required to totally or substantially demolish a gate, fence, wall or railing over 1m high where it is next to a highway (including a public footpath or bridleway) or public open space; or over 2m high elsewhere.

Works to trees

2.8 The Council requires six weeks notice in writing before felling or cutting back the majority of trees in conservation areas, even if they are not specifically protected by a tree preservation order (TPO). In giving notice it is necessary to specify precisely what works are to be carried out.

2.9 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are designed to protect important trees that make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Any works to trees covered by a TPO must be approved by the Council. At the time of writing, there are no tree preservation orders on trees within the Symonds Green Conservation Area.

Advertisements

2.10 Additional planning procedures apply to the display of advertisements within a conservation area. In particular prohibiting the use of advertising hoardings around building sites and the use of captive balloons for advertising.

Enforcement

2.11 The failure to comply with any of the special planning procedures listed above could lead to prosecution by the Council. It is therefore advisable to consult the Council before proceeding with any works, which might affect the character and appearance of a conservation area and/or a listed building.

It is always advisable to discuss any proposals with the Development Management team at Stevenage Borough Council at the earliest opportunity.

Please see our website for further information and direct contact details.

Alternatively you may telephone the Council on 01438 242159.

3 The aims

3.1 The management plan has four objectives:

Objective 1

To establish and define the significance of the conservation area as a whole and of the individual elements which contribute to that significance, building on the character appraisal.

Objective 2

To assess and define the threats and opportunities within the area and how these impact on the significance of the individual elements and of the conservation area as a whole.

Objective 3

To provide a benchmark for assessing and managing change.

Objective 4

To provide guidance to ensure that the character and appearance of the conservation area will be maintained through the effective management of change and that opportunities to enhance the character and appearance are maximised.

4 In context

Planning policy context

4.1 The management plan will support existing planning policy as adopted by Stevenage Borough Council.

Regional Spatial Strategy [RSS] – The East of England Plan

4.2 The management plan complies with policies ENV6 and ENV7 of the RSS as adopted May 2008.

4.3 It should be noted that the regional level of plans (The East of England Plan) is proposed for revocation.

Stevenage District Plan 2nd Review 2004 [SDP]

4.4 The management plan supplements the following saved policies within the SDP:

Policy number	Policy title
Town-wide	
TW2	Structural open space
TW9	Quality in design
TW11	Planning requirements
Transport	
T6	Design standards
T13	Cycleways
T14	Pedestrians
T15	Car parking strategy
T16	Loss of residential car parking
Environment	
EN9	Archaeology and development (EN9/10)
EN10	Green Links (EN10/7)
EN13	Trees in new developments
EN15	Ancient lanes and associated hedgerows (EN15/2)

Policy number	Policy title
EN17	Wildlife sites (EN17/3)
EN21	Other sites of nature conservation importance
EN32	River corridors and water meadows
Leisure and recreation	
L10	Principal open spaces (L10/11)

Table 1 - Policies of particular relevance in the Stevenage District Plan (2nd Review)

4.5 This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Emerging planning policy

4.6 Emerging planning policies within the Site Specific Policies document are also relevant as material considerations. The following policies are of particular note:

SSP10	Wildlife sites (SSP10/2)
SSP12	Green Lungs (SSP12/02)
SSP13	Ancient lanes and hedgerows (SSP13/02)
SSP14	Horse and pony route
SSP17	Areas of archaeological significance (SSP17/8)

Table 2 - Policies of particular relevance in emerging local planning policies (Site Specific Policies)

Wider planning policy framework

4.7 The following is a list of existing policy and strategy documents which are supported by the management plan:

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework
A Better Life - The role of culture in the sustainable development of the East of England Plan, 2006
The Biodiversity Action Plan, 2010
The Stevenage Green Space Strategy 2010

Table 3 The wider planning policy framework

4.8 For up to date details of relevant planning policy please refer to our website www.stevenage.gov.uk.

5 A brief history

5.1 The Symonds Green Conservation Area lies to the north west of the town. It covers a reasonably small area, with the A1(M) forming the western boundary of the site. The conservation area is largely open space, but also encompasses the relatively small number of properties along Symonds Green Lane, Newlyn Close and Southwold Close.

5.2 The conservation area is centred around the Green, which is made up of the common, the ponds and the Crooked Billet public house. These provide an attractive focal point to the area and effectively depict its rural character.



Figure 2 The green space in the Symonds Green Conservation Area

5.3 The area of the Symonds Green Conservation Area has been occupied as a small hamlet since the 11th century. By the 15th century the area was bought by a local landowner called Edward Symonde and it became known as Symes Green, probably the source of its name today.

5.4 A road which ran north from Old Stevenage to Titmore Green led to the development of housing in the 17th century. Willow Cottage and Thatched Cottage are still located at either end of the common today. Figure 4 illustrates the 1883 Ordnance Survey map with the approximate location of the conservation area boundary. Willow Cottage and Thatched Cottage are highlighted.



Figure 3 Willow Cottage (l) and Thatched Cottage (r)

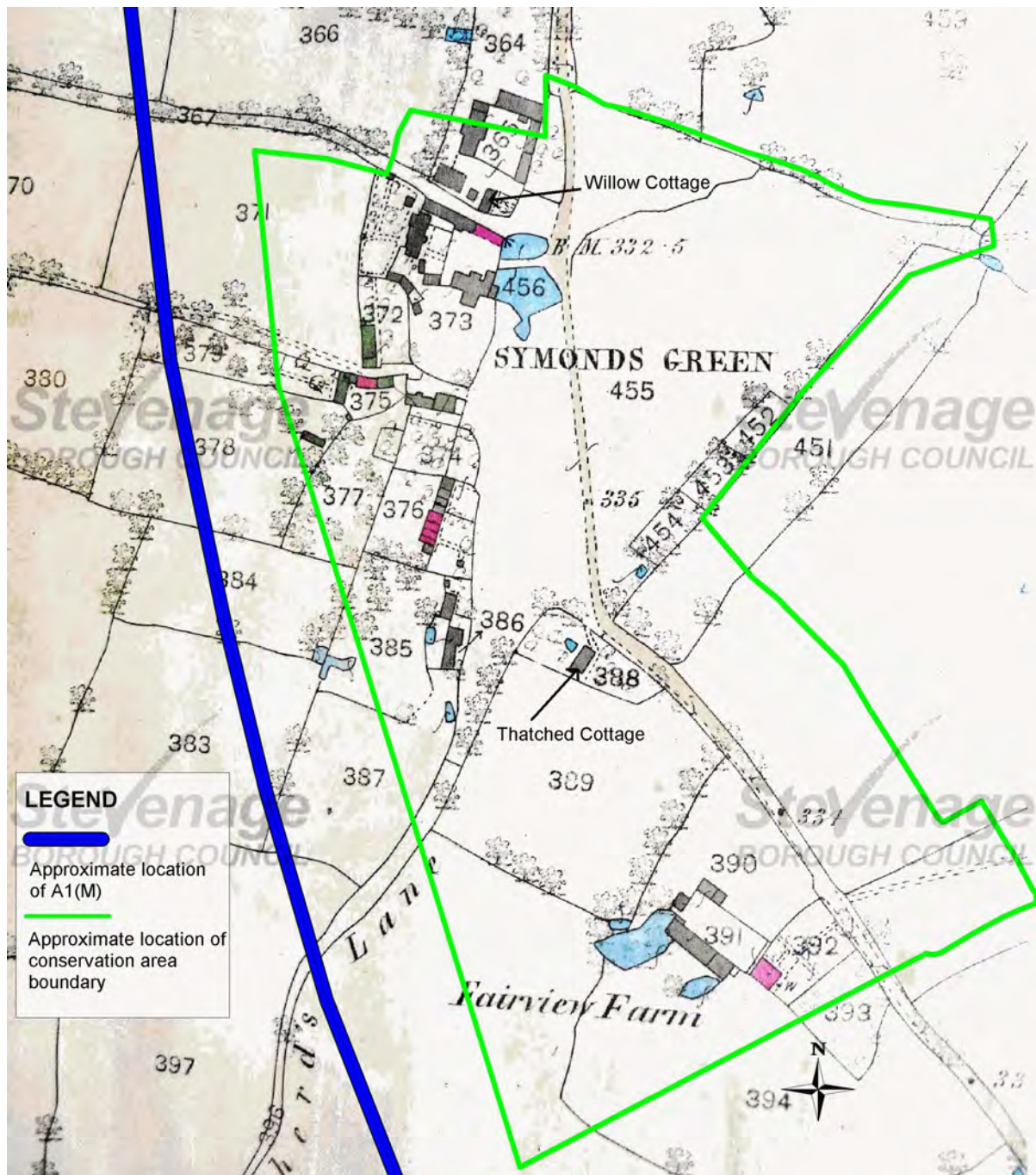


Figure 4 The 1883 Ordnance Survey Map with approximate location of the current conservation area boundary

5.5 By the 19th century Fairview Farm (known later as Oakfield Farm) had developed. The barn is probably the oldest structure in the conservation area dating to the 16th or 17th century, before the farm was even established. The farmhouse is still on site. The Crooked Billet Public House was on the common from around 1841, although the current building dates to around 1920.



Figure 5 The Crooked Billet Public House

5.6 Towards the end of the 19th century, Nursery Cottages were developed as part of the original Stevenage Nurseries site. The whole area was surrounded by open fields and green space but this has diminished since the development of the surrounding new town and the A1(M) in the latter half of the 20th century. However, the conservation area has retained its open common land and ponds, as Figure 2 illustrates.

5.7 In the latter half of the 20th century, Newlyn Close, Dunwich Farm and Southwold Close developed towards the south west of the area. There are also examples of New Town housing along Symonds Green Lane. Figure 6 illustrates some of the properties in this part of the conservation area.



Figure 6 Newlyn Close (l), Dunwich Farm (c) and Symonds Green Lane (r)

6 An analysis

"The character appraisal should provide the basis for developing management proposals for the conservation area." - Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006.

6.1 This section considers the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the conservation area. This information has been compiled from a number of sources including the conservation area appraisal, site surveys and previous consultation comments.

Strengths

6.2 The Symonds Green Conservation Area was designated in 1997 to protect the buildings and their historic context as a remnant of a small agricultural hamlet within the New Town area. There are a number of strengths which warranted its designation:

- The rural character of the area, in particular;
 - The common, with Symonds Green Lane running north-south through it
 - The ponds to the north west of the conservation area and the drain that feeds them
 - The hedges and trees which form the boundary of the conservation area. Although there are no tree preservation orders on trees within Symonds Green, there are a number of mature trees which form an essential part of its character
 - The range of wildlife living in the area
- The Crooked Billet public house as the focal point of the green
- The architectural and historic merits of the three listed buildings (see Appendix 1) and the three buildings of local importance (see Appendix 2)
- Significant views and vistas along Symonds Green Lane, looking out to the open space and the green, and looking onto the green from the north edges of the conservation area
- The retention of the layout and small village feel of the area as an early, historically significant settlement

6.3 This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Figure 7 illustrates some of the key features.

6.4 These individual strengths combine to establish an area worthy of its conservation area status. The area is in a good to fair condition and has a number of attributes and features which have a positive impact upon the character of the whole area. These relate to its open area of common land, ponds, drains, early land boundaries, hedgerows, listed buildings and buildings of local importance.

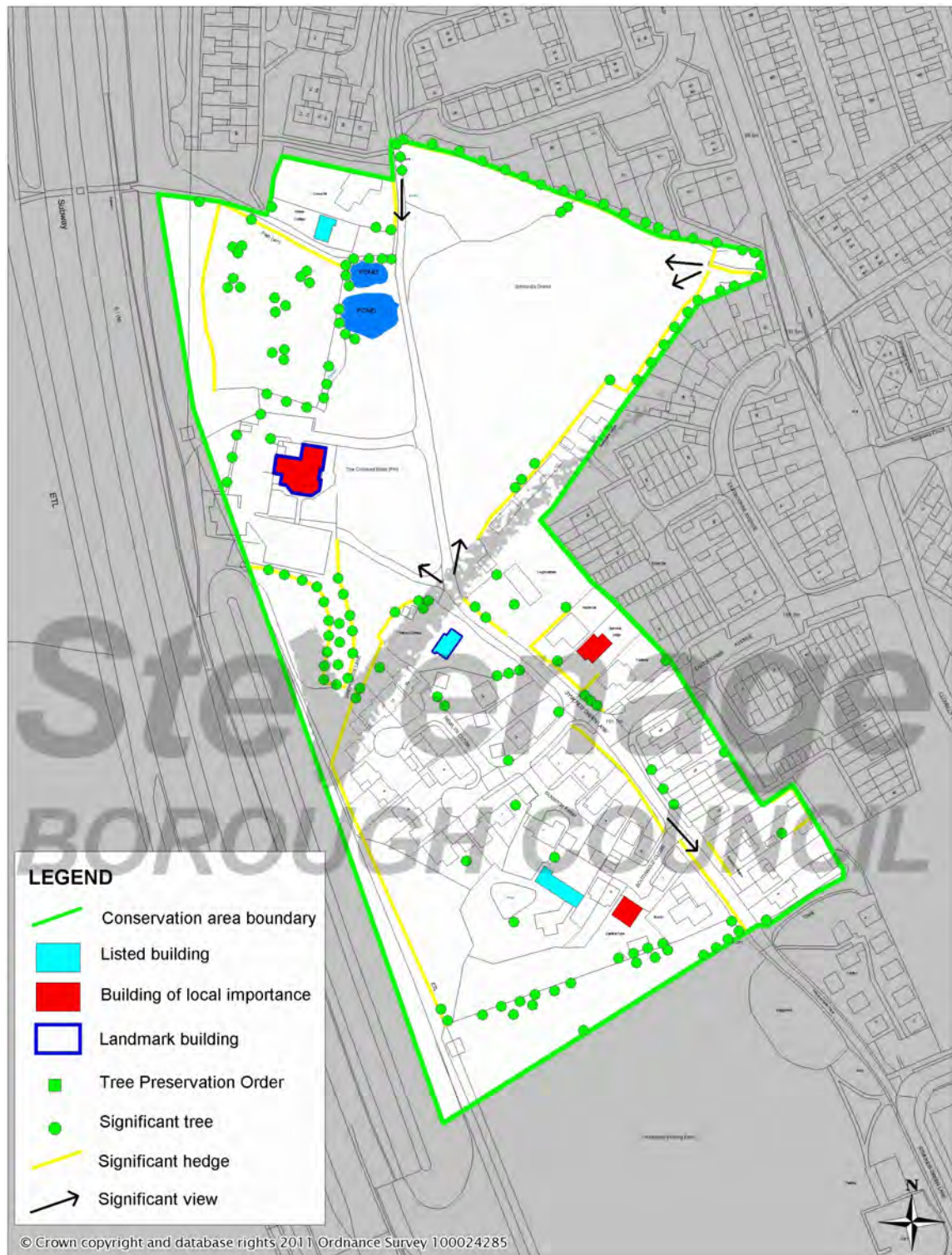


Figure 7 A character analysis of the Symonds Green Conservation Area

Weaknesses

6.5 The Symonds Green Conservation Area is generally well maintained. Many of the older houses have retained their original features; however the following issues have been highlighted:

- Although some traditional features have been incorporated, new properties generally do not reflect the character of the area;
 - Suffering from a lack of green space/trees
 - Not following existing building sizes and scale
 - Being developed at a much higher density than existing properties.
- A small section of the grass on the Green is being worn away by vehicle parking
- Municipal signage on the green is intrusive and in some cases now redundant
- Street clutter is having a negative impact on the character of the area

6.6 In combination, these weaknesses impact negatively upon the conservation area. Developments with limited green space and landscaping impact upon the rural nature of the Green. Smaller issues create a cumulative negative impact on the character of the area as a whole. A continuation of such practices could potentially lead to a reduction in the size of the conservation area, or complete removal of designation. If those special features are lost forever, future reviews of the area would determine that there are no points of special architectural or historic interest which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Opportunities

6.7 There are a number of opportunities which may provide solutions to some of the mentioned issues.

- Promotion of the historic qualities of the area.
- Strengthening connections to the past.
- Encourage use of traditional materials.
- Enforce breaches of planning law and legislation.
- Maintain the common and the green to a high standard.

6.8 These opportunities present options to promote the area to visitors and improve local knowledge of the historic qualities of the area. Improving the image of an area will encourage sympathetic repairs and development. A pro-active enforcement process will ensure that conservation is at the forefront of people's minds when considering alterations or home improvements.

6.9 In combination, they provide an opportunity to reduce the weaknesses of the conservation area and further strengthen those characteristics which make the area special.

Threats

6.10 The following threats have been identified:

- The cumulative negative effect of the continued loss of architectural features.
- The cumulative negative effect of the continued use of non-traditional materials.
- The possibility of future development. A shortage of available housing sites within the town could lead to increased pressure for development in the future.
- Improved road access onto Symonds Green Lane in the future may mean that cars dominate the area.
- Access proposals for Stevenage West.
- Oakfield Barn is a grade II listed 'building at risk'. This is currently under redevelopment, however, there is a risk of the original features being lost during this process.



Illustrative examples of the analysis: the open common is a significant strength of the conservation area. Redundant signage is a weakness. There are opportunities to encourage the use of traditional building methods and materials. Inappropriate development is a threat to the area.

6.11 These threats are potentially damaging to the conservation area in the long-term. The pressure for development alongside unsympathetic changes to the existing environment could lead to erosion of all the special local features. It will be necessary for various stakeholders to integrate their activities, to work together and ensure that these threats do not impact negatively on the conservation area as a whole.

6.12 Although there are no plans to develop the area, or to open Symonds Green Lane as a through route, these threats must be considered for the future. It will be necessary to ensure that the area is preserved or enhanced through future local planning policies and land allocations.

6.13 Access proposals to Stevenage West have been proposed for land outside of the conservation area, to the south, but this is sufficiently adjacent to warrant further consideration. The following management plan will consider how best to address these issues.

7 Development issues

"Sometimes the very qualities that make conservation areas appealing might lead to pressure for development." - Understanding Place, English Heritage, 2011.

7.1 The area of Symonds Green has little or no opportunity for further development, as most of the land has already been built upon, and there are no unused buildings within the area.

7.2 Any development which is likely to encroach upon, or negatively affect, the open spaces within the conservation area should be avoided.

7.3 As one of the key features of the conservation area, due to its prominent location, it is particularly important that any proposed developments, extensions or alterations at The Crooked Billet Public House are carefully considered, as these could significantly affect the character of the conservation area. This was also highlighted as a potential issue during a previous consultation⁽³⁾.

3 Conservation Area Consultation, Stevenage Borough Council, 9th July to 17th August 2007

8 Transport issues

"Many problems in conservation areas can arise from, or be associated with, the measures required for traffic safety, control and calming." - Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006.

8.1 Only one vehicle route into the Symonds Green Conservation Area exists, from Eastbourne Avenue. Not being a through-route, this means that traffic is not a particular issue in the area.

8.2 The signage for vehicles entering Symonds Green Lane is prominent, and does have a negative impact on the character of the area. This should be minimised as far as possible.

8.3 There are no significant parking issues within the conservation area. The majority of residential properties have adequate parking provision within their curtilage, and the public house has a reasonably-sized car park to accommodate it's customers.

8.4 There is evidence of erosion of a small part of the Green, where the lane leading towards the public house meets Symonds Green Lane. This is likely to have been caused by vehicles driving over the green, and has created a negative visual impact. Figure 8 illustrates this issue.



Figure 8 Erosion of the green

8.5 Pedestrian access to, and around, the Symonds Green Conservation Area is reasonably good, particularly as vehicular traffic is low. However, there are no signs to direct pedestrians as to where the lanes lead. An abundance of signage is not encouraged although one traditional finger post at each end of Symonds Green Lane could provide an effective solution to this issue.

8.6 Potential future issues are highlighted if proposed vehicular access is routed via Clovelly Way for development west of Stevenage. Although this falls outside the area covered by this plan it should be recognised that appropriate mitigation measures require careful consideration to limit increased road traffic noise.

9 The Management Plan

9.1 All development in the conservation area, or which forms part of its setting, must respond to its immediate environment and context, in terms of scale, alignment, form, materials and detailing. This plan sets out a series of design guidelines aimed at ensuring appropriately designed development in the conservation area.

Alterations and extensions

9.2 Alterations and extensions should not dominate an existing building's scale or alter the composition of its main elevations. Any alterations, including partial demolition, should respect an existing building and its materials. All new work should complement the old in quality, texture and colour as well as method of construction. Walls and stone detailing which have traditionally not been painted should remain undecorated.



Figure 9 Thatched Cottage and the Nursery Cottages

Layout

9.3 Building footprints provide a reference for how the conservation area has developed over time. Figure 10 illustrates the building layout for the Symonds Green Conservation Area.

9.4 The layout of the buildings follows an informal pattern surrounding the Green, with very few buildings, and a small number of homes in a linear formation along Symonds Green Lane. Modern development to the south is at a higher density and consists of two cul-de-sacs both with individual designs and layouts. Where possible, we will seek to encourage an informal layout which reflects the original rural nature of the Green.



Figure 10 The built form of Symonds Green Conservation Area

Materials

9.5 The predominant and traditional building materials are red/brown brickwork walls with some rendering. Red/brown clay tiles line the roofs, with Thatched Cottage being the only exception. For new planning applications, the applicant is provided the opportunity to illustrate how the predominant building materials will be incorporated in the design and access statement.

9.6 The cumulative effect of unsympathetic alterations can erode those features which support the special architectural or historic interest of the area. Article 4 Directions can be used to withdraw certain permitted development rights under the 1995 Town and Country Planning [General Permitted Development] Order. This might include a requirement for permission when

changing windows and doors. In order to implement such a Direction it is necessary to prove that works carried out under the Order have a direct and detrimental impact on the character and/or appearance of the conservation area.

9.7 The potential for an Article 4 Direction has been considered for the Symonds Green Conservation Area. There are resource implications in dealing with applications, appeals and planning enforcement investigations for Article 4 Directions. It is hoped that through the promotion of the historic values of the area an Article 4 Direction will not be required. We will continue to monitor this situation through future reviews of the conservation area.

Roofs

9.8 The roof is one of the most important parts of a property as it makes the building wind and watertight and can bring harmony to a landscape. The majority of the houses within the Symonds Green Conservation Area are two storey, with both hipped and gabled roofs.



Figure 11 A hipped roof at Oakfield Farmhouse (l) and a gabled roof at Symonds Lodge (r)

9.9 It would be preferable to retain, repair or replace (on a like for like basis) original roof material, ridge tiles and hip tiles. Within the Symonds Green Conservation Area, red/brown clay tiles are the traditional and predominant roofing material.

Dormer windows and rooflights

9.10 The conversion of loft space and the installation of inappropriate dormer windows and/or rooflights may have a negative impact on the appearance of a building and detract from the character of a roofscape. Proposals to add or alter roof windows which are inappropriately designed would be resisted.

Windows and doors

9.11 Windows and doors are important components of a building and any alteration or replacement can significantly alter its character and appearance. Wherever possible the original windows and doors should be retained and repaired in order to keep the integrity of the original design so preserving the character and proportions of the building. The energy efficiency of windows can be increased through the use of appropriate secondary glazing.

9.12 Imitation replacement window styles and inappropriate replacement window materials are poor alternatives for traditional single pane, timber, vertical sliding sash windows. Mock sliding sash windows generally have heavy top opening casements for the opening section, whilst UPVC windows have thicker, cruder frames than timber windows. These unsuitable styles and materials impact on the proportions and overall appearance of a window and a building. The character of a building is then changed, which has a detrimental impact on the overall appearance of the conversion area.



Figure 12 A uPVC (l) window is a much thicker frame than the traditional wooden frame (r)

Other architectural details

9.13 Chimney stacks can contribute greatly to the local character and should be retained and repaired. When retained they provide a dominant and attractive feature of the roofscape. In the Symonds Green Conservation Area the chimney stacks match the materials of the brickwork walls.

9.14 Functioning and decorative building features such as soffits, fascias, barge boards and porch brackets are attractive elements on many of the properties within the conservation area. Their maintenance and repair, with traditional materials, greatly adds to the attractiveness of the area.



Figure 13 Modern porches (r) can successfully immitate more traditional designs
(l)

9.15 Various sources offer guidance when dealing with the maintenance or restoration of period homes. English Heritage provide a great deal of information on heritage protection and understanding your property. It is recommended that you engage professional help to manage a project, such as an architect or building surveyor. Only a small proportion of qualified professionals specialise in the repair of old buildings. English Heritage offer advice on how to determine the most appropriate tradesperson for your property. See www.english-heritage.org.uk for further details.

Aerials, satellite dishes and alarm boxes

9.16 Aerials, satellite dishes and alarm boxes can have a detrimental impact on the appearance of a building. Where possible they should be situated inside or to the rear of a property or carefully located to minimise the impact on the character of the building.

Landscaping and open space

9.17 The Biodiversity Action Plan (2010) (BAP) contains policies and action for wildlife species and habitats which must guide management. The area of Symonds Green common is a grassland wildlife site and the BAP considers that no immediate action is required at this location.

9.18 The two natural ponds within the conservation area are joined by a small channel through the causeway that separates them. The BAP recommends a number of actions for the ponds and we have implemented those actions. We will continue to ensure that the action regarding the removal of debris from the ponds is completed on a regular basis.

9.19 The Green Space Strategy (2010) contains an action plan with recommendations on how green spaces across the town are maintained and improved. Of particular relevance for Symonds Green, there is an action to ensure that the future maintenance of lane hedgerows balances the needs of local residents, safer routes issues and the needs of wildlife.

9.20 The attractive rural setting of Symonds Green is a key feature and a key area of public open space. The Green is registered with DEFRA⁽⁴⁾ as common land⁽⁵⁾ and is owned by Stevenage Borough Council.

9.21 Common land requires favourable management and increased protection to conserve the variety of habitats and the species that rely on a diverse landscape. The Green has considerable local importance for wildlife. The Commons Act (2006) aims to protect areas of common land, in a sustainable manner delivering benefits for farming, public access and biodiversity.

9.22 The continued maintenance of this area will be monitored by the Council and emergency ad-hoc works will be completed as necessary. The area will otherwise be subject to a regular programme of maintenance.



Figure 14 Symonds Green

9.23 The potential presence of protected species associated with older buildings should be acknowledged. We will support the improvement of existing habitats and encourage the development of new nesting areas for protected species as appropriate.

4 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

5 DEFRA reference: TVG 264

Boundary treatments

9.24 The development of higher density homes has lead to a number of homes on smaller, less landscaped plots. There are limited opportunities for development within the conservation area but we will encourage the retention of existing trees and hedgerows and the addition of appropriate species where proposed.

9.25 Original boundary treatments such as verges and hedges play an important part in the character and appearance of the conservation area and they should be retained, maintained or reinstated where possible.

Street furniture

9.26 Street lighting improves night-time safety for road users and members of the community and can reduce crime and the fear of crime during the hours of darkness. Hertfordshire County Council are moving to a part-night street light operation to reduce carbon emissions and overall costs. There are some exceptions to this programme, particularly where safety is an issue.

9.27 Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for around 115,000 street lights across the County. In 2009 Stevenage Borough Council undertook a town-wide programme to highlight the importance of more traditional light columns in Stevenage. This process involved a recognition of the importance of particular lamp columns. Each one was painted a uniform colour (black) and a badge was attached to each signifying it's historic importance. There are eight of these columns in the Symonds Green area. Along with other street lighting, these will be maintained by Hertfordshire County Council.

9.28 We will continue to support the use of light fittings which are appropriate to their location in terms of material, scale, design and illumination, particularly for listed buildings and conservation areas.



Figure 15 Symonds Green

9.29 Signage in the area is generally well proportioned but poorly maintained. Some signage is illegible and appears redundant. As resources become available, we will seek to improve the quality of signage in the area. We will continue to encourage an approach which removes clutter from the area. It is recommended that signage is removed as it becomes redundant or is replaced to reduce visual clutter.

9.30 It is recommended that consideration is given to the siting of new signage. Where possible existing poles should be used. Where supplementary poles are required these should be dark in colour unless pedestrian safety is compromised. Signs should be grouped to avoid visual clutter. Street signs or finger posts should be carefully planned in a comprehensive manner and should consider a simple but bespoke design to create distinctiveness.

9.31 Benches can provide an opportunity for people to stop, relax and reflect upon their surroundings. The open space currently provides seating areas and we will retain and maintain this facility. The opportunity for people to sit and relax in the open space creates a feeling of safety for other users as they move through the area.

Pedestrian and cycle links

9.32 Symonds Green Lane is part of the main cycleway system for Stevenage. The route is publicised on the Stevenage Borough Council website. We will encourage the promotion of this route as it brings movement into the area, encourages sustainable travel and improves local knowledge of the special historical characteristics of the Symonds Green Conservation Area.

9.33 The Green is part of a Green Link between Meadway playing fields to the south and Fishers Green to the north. This forms an important green wedge along the western edge of the town providing a link between open spaces and opportunities for informal recreation. The link is an essential part of the urban structure of the town and protected through policy within the Stevenage District Plan (2nd Review). We will continue to protect this link through emerging planning policies.

Parking

9.34 Parking is not recognised as an issue within the conservation area. Should proposals come forward for new dropped kerb access points we will encourage the retention of key features such as hedgerows and trees.

9.35 Yellow lines for parking restrictions may have a negative effect on the visual character of a conservation area. If parking restrictions are proposed in the future we will consider the narrower 'primrose lines', although traffic regulations do not always allow this as an option.

Advertisements

9.36 For businesses, interesting and eye-catching advertisements play an important role in attracting customers but poorly designed advertisement displays can have a negative effect on the appearance of a building and its surroundings.

9.37 Enhancing the appearance of the street scene and making the best use of the existing historic features creates an attractive, readily identifiable environment and can improve the economic and social vitality of the area.

9.38 All advertisements within the Symonds Green Conservation Area should be sympathetic to its historic character. New advertisement displays will be strictly controlled. There will be a presumption against internally illuminated projecting fascia signs and advertising above ground floor level. Advertisement hoardings of any description will not be appropriate.

Pre-application discussions

9.39 Any proposed works within a conservation area require special consideration and all applicants are encouraged to seek pre-application advice prior to submission. For extensions, alterations and significant development proposals, applicants are advised to employ the services of an agent or architect with extensive knowledge of working in conservation areas.

9.40 Proposals for development which fall within the conservation area, or which affect its setting, including views into and out of the area, will not be permitted unless they include a detailed assessment which identifies how the proposals will preserve or enhance, or otherwise complement the special character and appearance of the area. We will pay particular regard to the Symonds Green Conservation Area Appraisal⁽⁶⁾ when considering development proposals in, or adjacent to, the area.

Enforcement

9.41 Local planning authorities have a duty to consider taking enforcement action where they believe there to have been a breach of planning control. Key aspects of the enforcement service are to investigate alleged breaches of planning control, listed building control and advertisement control. Wherever possible the Council will seek to resolve breaches without the need to take formal action.

Summary

9.42 In conclusion, we will seek to strengthen those elements of the built environment which warranted the designation of the area. The success of the conservation area will depend in some part upon the care which individual owners take with the maintenance and repair of their

6 Symonds Green Conservation Area Appraisal, June 2009, BEAMS

properties, and their surrounding plots of land. We will promote the conservation area to ensure that local residents are aware of the contribution they are able to make when considering even small alterations to their homes.

9.43 We will seek to remove redundant signage on the Green and replace with bespoke information boards where necessary.

9.44 Traffic flow through the area is not considered to be a significant issue but we will seek to monitor this situation through contact with local residents and Members.

9.45 The area can contribute to local historical knowledge and develop lifelong learning and improved health. The development of links which introduce people to the historic diversity of the town are encouraged. Strengthening connections to the past can be achieved through promotional literature such as the current Stevenage Cycle Map. These routes can bring movement into the area and encourage enjoyment of the Green.

11 Monitoring measures

"Changes in the appearance of conservation areas ... should be monitored regularly" - Guidance on the management of conservation areas, English Heritage, 2006.

11.1 The management plan will be subject to a five year review, subject to staff resources, commencing from the date of adoption. The conservation area appraisal and this conservation area management plan provide a benchmark for assessing change. This may result in a revision or expansion of the existing appraisal and management plan and will include:

- Recording changes;
- Re-assessing the definition of special interest that warrants designation;
- Identifying new issues affecting the conservation area and revising the management plan accordingly.

11.2 Reviews will, where possible, link with local planning policies so that development opportunities can be properly considered against the heritage interests of the Symonds Green Conservation Area.

11.3 The input of stakeholders including local conservation groups in this process, and in the wider management of the historic environment, such as monitoring buildings at risk, will be welcomed.

11.4 Stevenage Borough Council's Historic Environment Champion will take an active role in championing the importance of Stevenage's historic environment. Officers will meet the Historic Environment Champion and local Council Members as issues arise and these meetings will be used to monitor and review the Conservation Area Management Plan.

11.5 Future iterations of the appraisal and management plan will be subject to public consultation with the local community, relevant stakeholders, and others with an interest in the area. They will be made available on the Council's website and hard copies will be placed in local libraries. Adverts will be placed in local press. Comments received will be taken into consideration in the final drafting of these documents.



Appendix 1



Appendix 1

At the time of writing, the following buildings are listed:

Willow Cottage	Grade II
Thatched Cottage	Grade II
Oakfield Barn	Grade II

Table 4

For detailed descriptions of each listing, please refer to the English Heritage website at www.english-heritage.org.uk.



Appendix 2

Appendix 2

Further to the statutory listings as catalogued in Appendix 1, a number of the buildings could be considered of local importance to the conservation area:

Crooked Billet Public House, Symonds Green Lane	Partly two storey red brick building with tiled hipped roof and ridge decoration and finials. Flemish bond. Front gable tile hung. Gabled dormer and box dormer. Timber windows. Closed porch. Weather boarded single storey extension. Early 20th century.
Symonds Lodge, Symonds Green Lane	Partly two storey red brick building with tiled gabled roof. Flemish bond. Front gable decorative timber work. Gabled dormer also with decorative timber work. UPVC diamond lattice windows. Closed porch. Early 20th century.
Oakfield Farmhouse, Symonds Green Lane	Two storey red brick farmhouse. Flemish bond, some blue headers. Tiled hipped roof. Front two storey bays with tiled hipped roofs. Central door with open porch. Timber 2-over-2 sash windows.

Table 5

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

