

# Maresfield Conservation Area



The Chequers Inn

Wealden District Council has designated part of Maresfield village as a Conservation Area - an area of special architectural or historic interest - so that its character and appearance may be preserved and enhanced.

This booklet explains why the designation has been made and what it implies for residents and landowners in the area.

## Introduction

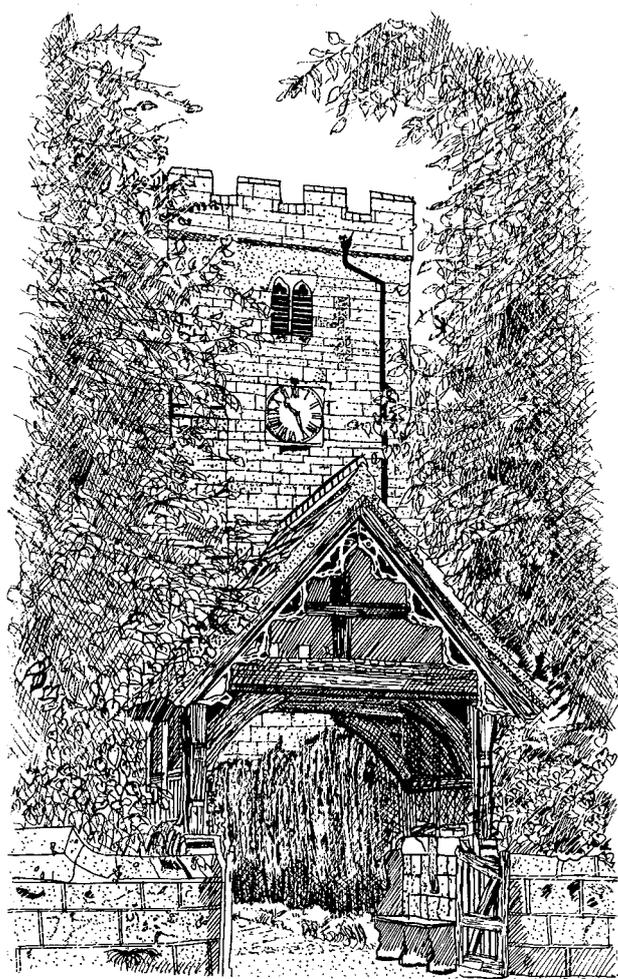
The village of Maresfield is primarily residential in character and has developed to the north and west of the former A272 and A22 routes, now bypassed. Although new housing areas have been developed in recent years, the historic core of the village is along London Road and the junction with Batts Bridge Road where several of the fine old buildings date from the 17th and 18th Centuries. The centre of the village is dominated by the Parish Church of St Bartholomew.

## History

Maresfield's history can be traced back about 5,000 years. In 3000 B.C. the Bronze Age reached Europe and part of a bronze axehead was found near Flitterbanks Farm on the line of the old Roman road. Roman occupation commenced in A.D. 43 and coins have been found near Fairwarp and traces of a Roman bloomery at Park Farm, Maresfield.

Maresfield became an important centre of the Sussex iron industry and there were at least five known forges in the area with nearby ponds for cooling the smelted iron. The name of the Parish is thought to derive from the old English word for open land with a pond or pool, "Meres-feld".

The ending of the iron industry coincided with the development of Maresfield Park, then owned by John Newnham who resided in the hunting lodge opposite the church, originally known as Stretehouse. In 1814 Sir John Shelley and his wife inherited the estate and made significant improvements to the main house, The Cross (now The Manor House). Queen Victoria visited the Shelleys in 1845 and a fine avenue of Oaks was planted in commemoration of the visit, some of which remain today. The Duke of Wellington visited the village in 1819 after the Battle of Waterloo. Sir John passed the estate to his son, Sir John Villiers Shelley, Baronet, MP. The Park became a military camp for the duration of the Great War.



St. Bartholomews Church

The village school is named after the Reverend Richard Bonner who was buried in the chancel of the church in 1692, having left money for educational purposes and whose cottage is the site of the school. Underhill was the industrial area, where the tannery and forge flourished.

# Appraisal

In order to determine the boundary of the Conservation Area, a study was made of the features which contribute to the special character of the village:

1. **Listed Buildings:** There are twelve buildings in the village included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. The Parish Church of St Bartholomew, listed as Grade I, was built at the end of the 13th Century upon the site and foundation of an earlier church with the tower added early in the 15th Century. Although enlarged and restored during the period 1875-79, the building retains much of its 13th Century fabric.

Opposite the Parish Church is the Chequers Inn, a fine three-storey Grade II\* listed building dating from the 18th Century, and originally a coaching stop on the route to London. It has a distinctive Georgian style and because of its prominent location at the road junction, it is an important landmark in the village.

Maresfield Park Lodge, built in 1847, is also in a prominent location at the road junction. Although not listed, the Lodge with its gothic archway makes a significant contribution to the character of the area. There are a number of other notable buildings which, although not listed, are important features which contribute to the character of the historic core of the village.

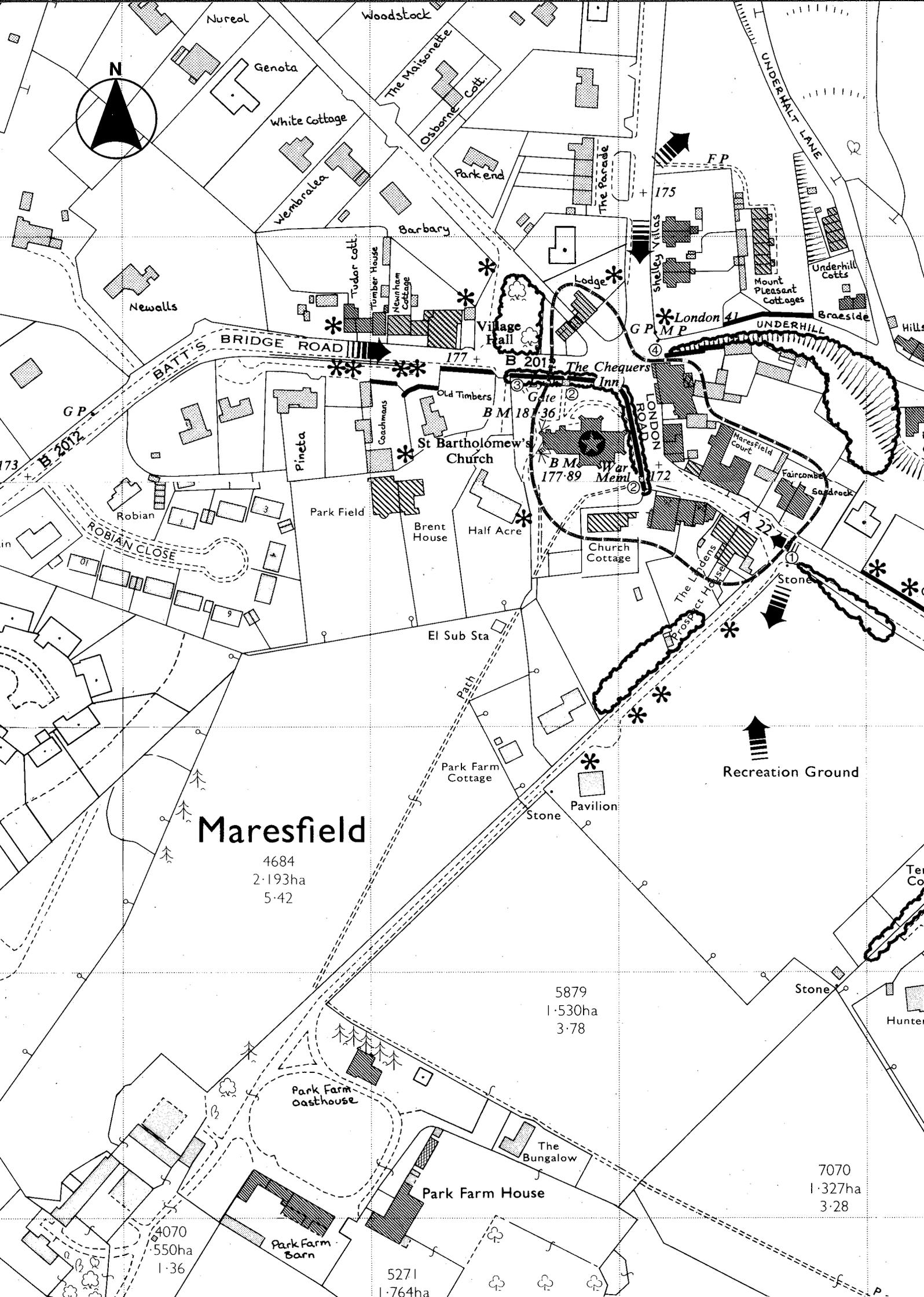
As well as being significant in their own right, a number of these buildings along London Road and Batts Bridge Road have a coherent "group value". In contrast, the loose-knit nature of properties in Underhill and mature tree cover creates more of a semi-rural character.

2. **Trees:** The centre of the village has extensive tree cover which is a dominant feature in the landscape. There are prominent tree groups in the graveyard, along the boundary of the recreation ground, along the Parish Church frontage and within the village hall car park. Along Underhill a belt of trees extends eastwards out of the village and form particularly dominant features because of the sandstone embankment along part of the lane and steeply sloping land that rises to the rear of properties on London Road. The tree-lined approach to the village from Uckfield is emphasised by the roadside embankments and sandstone outcrops. Elsewhere, individual trees enhance both the setting of many buildings in the village centre and the approach to the village along the main roads.

3. **Views:** The main roads through the village provide clear views of the historic core with the Parish Church as a focal point, particularly its tower. The special character of the village centre becomes apparent as the winding nature of the road system reveals the variety of historic buildings along London Road and Batts Bridge Road. The Chequers Inn is a particularly prominent landmark when approaching the village from the west. Long distance views of the village centre are available from the countryside to the south across the recreation ground, whereas from elsewhere the village centre is largely obscured by surrounding development and relatively dense tree cover.

From within the recreation ground, attractive views are found of the historic village core to the north and to the south-west, of Park Farm House, other related buildings and the countryside beyond. Along Underhill, the view from the east reveals the semi-rural character of the area which is emphasised by the dominant backcloth of mature tree cover. To the north of Shelley Villas there is a fine view of open countryside.

4. **Other Features:** The graveyard, originally the location for the village stocks, is now the resting place of Sir John Villiers Shelley. The laying of the recreation ground in celebration of Queen Victoria's 60 years of reign in 1897 is recorded by a commemorative stone at the entrance and smaller ones at each of its four corners. Within the churchyard important features include the lych gates, the iron gate, the war memorial, the iron lamp, stone wall and the iron tombstone. On the corner of Underhill and London Road, an iron milestone depicts Bow Bells and the distance to London. Elsewhere there are a number of important brick and stone walls.



# Maresfield

4684  
2.193ha  
5.42

5879  
1.530ha  
3.78

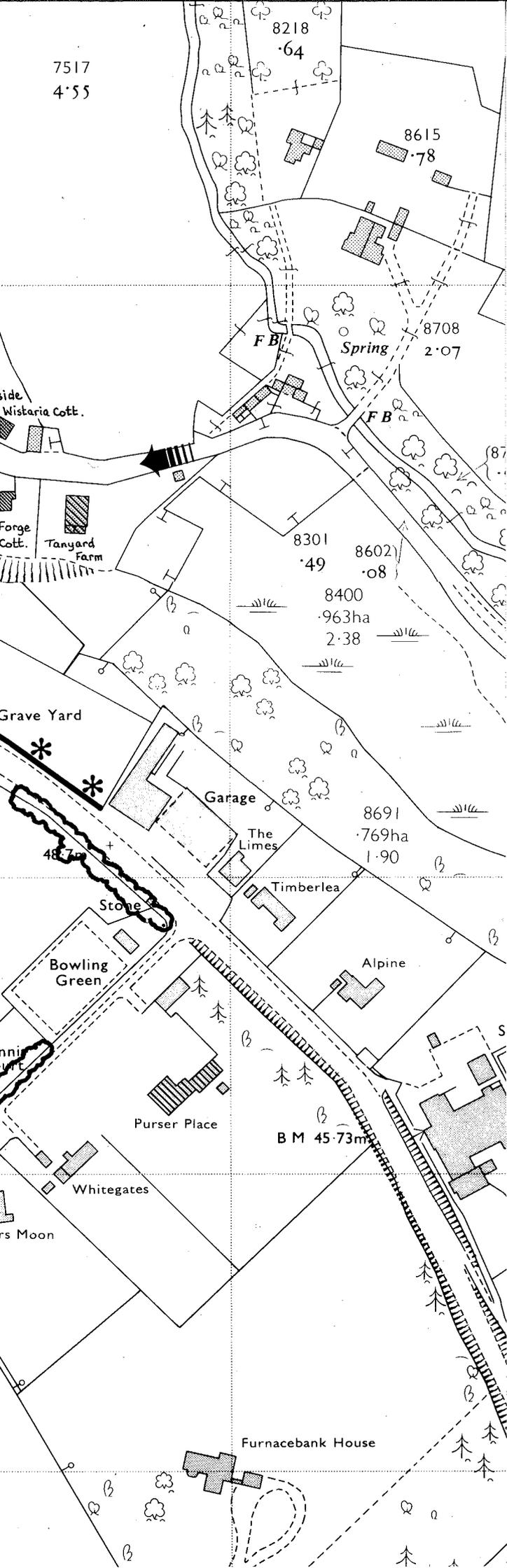
7070  
1.327ha  
3.28

4070  
.550ha  
1.36

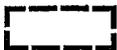
5271  
1.764ha

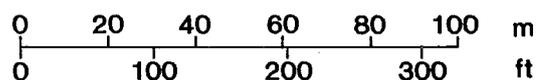
Map labels include: Nureal, Woodstock, Genota, White Cottage, Membrala, The Maissonette, Osborne Cott., Parkend, The Parade, FP, 175, Shelley Villas, Underhill Cottages, Mount Pleasant Cottages, Braeside, Hills, UNDERHILL, London 41, G P, M P, Lodge, Village Hall, Tudor cott., Timber House, Newham Cottage, Barbary, Old Timbers, B 2012, The Chequers Inn, Gate, B M 181.36, B M War 177.89 Meml, Church Cottage, Church, St Bartholomew's Church, Pineta, Coachmans, Park Field, Robian, RObIAN CLOSE, Park Farm Cottage, El Sub Sta, Path, Stone, Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Stone, The Ladies Prospect House, Maresfield Court, Faircombe, Sandrock, A 22, Stone, Hunter, The Bungalow, Park Farm House, Park Farm Barn, Park Farm oasthouse, 5271, 1.764ha, 4070, .550ha, 1.36, 7070, 1.327ha, 3.28, 5879, 1.530ha, 3.78, 4684, 2.193ha, 5.42.

7517  
4.55

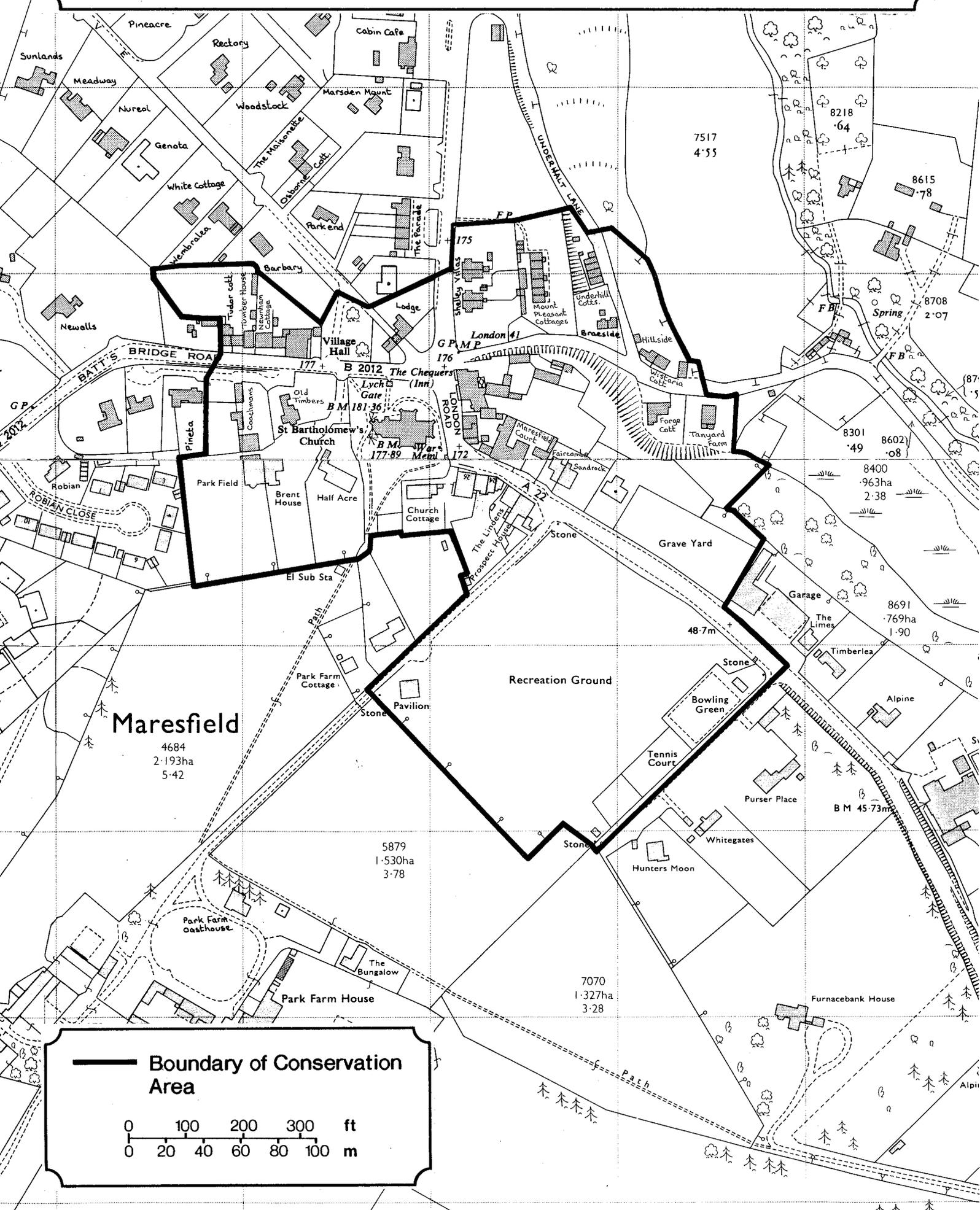


## VISUAL APPRAISAL

-  Listed buildings
-  Other notable buildings
-  Focal point
-  Buildings of group value
-  Important trees
-  Important tree groups
-  Important walls
-  Important features
  - 1 Commemorative stone
  - 2 Lych gates, war memorial
  - 3 Iron gate, iron lamp
  - 4 Iron milestone
-  Attractive views



# Maresfield Conservation Area



**Maresfield**  
4684  
2.193ha  
5.42

5879  
1.530ha  
3.78

7070  
1.327ha  
3.28

8691  
.769ha  
1.90

8400  
.963ha  
2.38

8708  
2.07

7517  
4.55

8218  
.64

8615  
.78

**Boundary of Conservation Area**

0 100 200 300 ft  
0 20 40 60 80 100 m

7159  
2.841ha

## The Conservation Area

On the basis of the "Visual Appraisal", the District Council considers that the Conservation Area should encompass the following main elements:

1. St Bartholomew's Church and churchyard.
2. The historic core of the village along London Road and Batts Bridge Road.
3. The Underhill area and prominent tree belt.
4. The graveyard.
5. The recreation ground.

These principal elements, as a whole, contribute to the special historic character of Maresfield and form the basis of the designated Conservation Area.

Park Farm House, Park Farm Oast House and Park Farm Barn are listed buildings which are very attractive features in the countryside to the south of the village, but are in a relatively isolated location in relation to the architectural and historic core of the village, being separated by the Recreation Ground and farmland.

The setting of a Conservation Area is equally important as the elements contained within it and particular regard is had to the relationship of adjacent areas to the special character of the Conservation Area.



Tudor Cottage

## Protection of Buildings and Trees

Within a Conservation Area the following controls apply in addition to the normal planning controls:

1. Conservation Area Consent is normally required from the District Council for the demolition (or partial demolition) of buildings in a Conservation Area. The demolition of a listed building requires Listed Building Consent.

2. Six weeks notice must normally be given to the District Council of any intention to top, lop, cut down or uproot any trees in a Conservation Area. During this time, it is open to the Council to serve a Tree Preservation Order.
3. Planning applications which, in the opinion of the Council, would affect the character or appearance of the Conservation Area must be publicised and opportunity must be given for public comment.

## **Enhancement**

The immediate aim of the District Council is, by designating a Conservation Area, to afford protection under current legislation to an area considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, and specifically the buildings within it. However, following designation, consideration will be given to schemes for the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area. Any such proposals would be subject to prior public consultation.

The completion of the Maresfield Bypass has relieved the village centre of a large volume of heavy through traffic. However, an appreciation of the architectural and historic character is adversely affected by the traffic continuing to use the village centre. Further traffic management and "traffic calming" measures are worthy of investigation.

There are a number of features which are detrimental to the overall character of the area including overhead wires, inappropriate road signs, traffic bollards, waste paper bins and areas of tarmac surfaced footpaths. Any enhancement schemes should look to the replacement or improvement of these features.

## **Planning Policies**

The District Council has approved a number of planning policies to help in determining planning applications in Conservation Areas. There is a presumption against development proposals which would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of such areas. Any development proposals should respect the historic settlement pattern as well as the layout, character and setting of existing buildings. Accordingly, particular regard will be paid to the scale, height, form, grouping, density, materials and detailing, including boundary treatment, of proposals.

Even in a Conservation Area many small extensions and alterations do not require planning permission, although works to listed buildings may well still require listed building consent. Owners are advised to contact the Planning Department to ascertain whether their proposals need statutory approval.

Householders and builders are encouraged to take special care to ensure that their proposals are in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. Advice on the design of proposals is available from the Planning Department.

## **Further Information**

For further advice and information please contact:

District Planning Officer, Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1DH  
Telephone: (0892) 653311

## **Acknowledgement**

Historical references are mainly extracted from a Country Weekly article on Maresfield by Betty Turner.