

# Elbridge House Conservation Area Appraisal



**Canterbury City Council**

**15 September 2009**



# **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS	3
1.2 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK	3
<i>National Policy Guidance</i>	3
<i>Regional and County Guidance</i>	3
<i>Canterbury City Council Local Plan</i>	3
<i>Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document</i>	4
<b>2. Location and Setting</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 TOPOGRAPHY	4
2.2 BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT	5
<i>Trenleypark Wood</i>	5
<i>Swanton Aerial Site</i>	5
<i>Preserving and enhancing the wildlife interest</i>	5
<b>3. Archaeology and Historic Development.</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 ARCHAEOLOGY/EVOLUTION	6
3.2 RECENT HISTORY	6
<b>4. Character Landscape Setting and Connections</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Recommendations</b>	<b>9</b>
5.1 PRIMARY ISSUES	9
5.2 BOUNDARY ASSESSMENT	9
<b>6. Management and Improvement</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7. Statement of Consultation</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>11</b>
1. LISTED BUILDINGS DETAILS	11

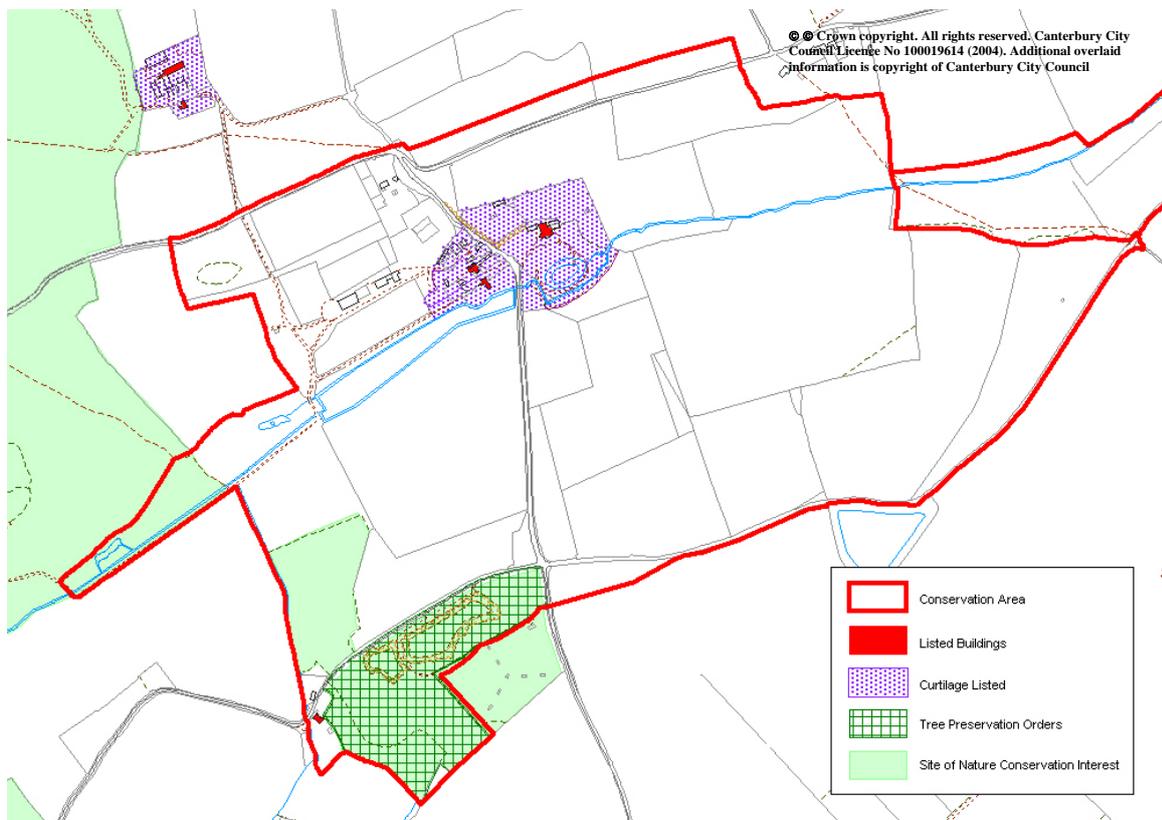
# 1. Introduction

This appraisal examines the key elements that contribute to the special architectural, natural and historic character of Elbridge House Conservation Area. The character of any area is determined by its topography, location, buildings, natural features and open spaces and the age, material and style of its buildings. The combination of all these factors creates a rural atmosphere of a country park and in the case of Elbridge House Conservation Area a unique, special, 'sense of place'.

Conservation areas were first introduced in 1967 and are currently defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).



The original conservation area was designated on 28 April 1992. Elbridge House Park was one of the districts country parks included in the list of parklands that were considered for designation in the early 1990's. The houses and their landscaped settings were included within the conservation area to provide protection to their special character.



**Figure 1: Elbridge House Conservation Area and Excerpt from Local Plan 2006 Proposals Maps**

The City Council considers that the 'special interest' justifying designation of a conservation area should be defined and analysed in a written appraisal of its character and appearance. This document will be a background paper to the City Council's Local Development Framework.

## **1.1 Key Characteristics**



This appraisal concludes that the most significant features of the Elbridge House Conservation Area are:

- Historic Elbridge house and its rural parkland setting including the pond formed from the Lampen Stream
- Elbridge farmhouse and the associated historic farm buildings especially the Oast House and Granary
- Lampen Stream and its associated vegetation
- The protected woodland in the southwest of the conservation area adjacent to Swanton Farm
- The mainly unimproved meadows, fields and farmland setting, which are bordered by tree belts and hedgerows and dotted with specimen trees
- Pockets of woodland and individual trees

## **1.2 Planning Policy Framework**

### ***National Policy Guidance***

Government advice on the control of conservation areas and historic buildings is set out in Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes 12 & 16, the draft South East Plan (March 2006), Regional Spatial Strategy, Kent and Medway Structure Plan policies and Kent Design Guide provide the general strategic policy context under which the policies in the local plan function.

### ***Regional and County Guidance***

The new draft South East plan places importance on the protection of the historic environment and acknowledges the role that the historic environment plays in contributing towards sustainable development, regeneration, tourism and social inclusion. Policy BE7 requires local authorities to adopt policies and proposals, which support conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. RPG9 sets out key principles for development in the South East Region.

The Kent & Medway Structure Plan policies also provide the general strategic policy context. It provides strategic planning policies for the whole county, and includes policies that are particularly relevant to rural areas. Policy QL6: Conservation Areas, sets out specific policy with respect to conservation areas.

The Kent Design Guide provides a starting point for good design that is well considered and contextually sympathetic, amongst other things. It emphasises the need for the layout and appearance of new development to be based on an appraisal of the existing character.

### ***Canterbury City Council Local Plan***

The primary means by which the City Council ensures the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area is through the development control process and by applying the policies of the Canterbury District Local Plan (2001 – 2011). The Local Plan, adopted in July 2006, sets out the spatial strategy for the Canterbury District. It includes policies on housing, the economy, rural housing, the natural and built environment, community infrastructure and many others. A number of designations are particularly relevant to Elbridge, including those relating to conservation areas and protected natural areas.

Paragraphs 6.83-6.93 of the Local Plan deal with conservation areas and include policies BE7, BE8, BE9 and NE5. Policy BE7 provides the primary guidance to developers about conservation areas.

The planning system has recently changed and ultimately a Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the Local Plan. The LDF consists of a collection of Local Development Documents, including the Core Strategy, Proposals Maps, Area Action Plans, and other development plan documents, which may deal with conservation issues as well as Supplementary Planning Documents

### ***Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document***

The Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document was approved in October 2007. Chapter 4 explains the features that make up a general conservation and are Chapter 5 provides detailed guidance for developments in Conservation Areas.

## **2. Location and Setting**

The Elbridge House Conservation Area is within the Lampen Stream valley between Trenleypark Wood in the west and Stodmarsh in the east. The Lampen Stream rises about half a mile south of the Canterbury to Littlebourne Road and flows in a north-easterly direction running west to east through the conservation area from Trenleypark Wood past Elbridge Farm and Elbridge House and on into the Lampen Stream Conservation Area to enter the Great Stour north of Stodmarsh.

The Conservation Area includes the former park to Elbridge House, the ornamental grounds north of Elbridge farm and wooded areas to the north, south and west. Elbridge House is situated on the south-facing slope of the Lampen Stream Valley and is one of a small group of attractive historic buildings. The house is set within a small park and there is other ornamental tree planting in the area. The valley at this point is well wooded.

Most of the land was laid out as formal parkland setting for the two major houses and the remaining areas included within the boundary are mostly old un-improved pasture, woodland and land bordering the Lampen Stream.

The conservation area does not include any settlements. The built environment consists of a cluster of buildings near Elbridge House and Elbridge Farmhouse and an isolated farmstead and cottages, the rest of the conservation area consists of woods, fields, meadows and the Lampen Stream.



### **2.1 Topography**

The Lampen Stream valley is a relatively rare watered valley. It has a weathered landscape consisting of a wooded stream with fields sloping down to a shallow valley floor on either side of the stream. Narrow country lanes run along the top ridgelines on either side of the valley and the land flattens out in the south onto a plateau. The base of the valley is flat and has obviously been formed by the stream changing course over many thousands of years.

## **2.2 Biodiversity Assessment**

To the west of this conservation area is Trenleypark Wood, the beginning of a large ancient woodland complex, which has been declared a Local Wildlife Site by the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation.

Another Local Wildlife Site is the Swanton Aerial Site part of which is within the conservation area and is covered by an extensive Tree Preservation Order. This is partly wooded and forms a prominent skyline feature when viewed from Elbridge House.



The Trenleypark Wood and Swanton Aerial Site broadleaved woodland Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are situated 700 - 1000m to the west of the Conservation Area.

The southeasterly edge of the conservation area is mapped in the 2003 Habitat Survey and there are good habitat linkages through swamp, grassland, pastureland, and broadleaved woodland and opportunities for species transgression ("green corridors") throughout the conservation area.

### ***Trenleypark Wood***

Trenleypark Wood (grid reference TR 191585) was first notified a Local Wildlife Site in 1988. A large ancient woodland complex – one of the few large woods on Tertiary Sands in the north-east of the county, the site consists of broad leaved woodland, running water, standing water, scrub, and grassland. It was designated for its ancient woodland on acid soils with 55 ancient woodland indicator plants recorded. Some former sand pits are also included for their wildlife interest. There are good nightingale, warbler and woodpecker populations. Generally, the dominant tree species within the woodland is sweet chestnut, but other species occur in the relict mixed coppice, including hazel, hornbeam and ash. Oak standards occur in some parts, while other areas are pure coppice. The state of management of the woodland varies, with some areas being actively managed and others being unmanaged overstood coppice.

### ***Swanton Aerial Site***

Swanton Aerial Site (grid reference TR 202590) was first notified in 1988. It consists of acid grassland (which provides habitat for a range of invertebrates) and a mostly unmanaged relict ancient broadleaved coppice woodland with oak standards. Although the dominant coppice species is sweet chestnut, hornbeam, holly, hazel and birch are other species present. Alder and ash coppice occurs along the lowest slopes near the stream at the western end, and several wild service trees are found at the southern end. A small larch plantation at the northern end of the site is retained for the interest of its ground flora. Various ancient woodland indicator ground flora species are present on site, including wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, the native bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*. Badgers are also known to be present on site.

### ***Preserving and enhancing the wildlife interest***

The structural diversity and water quality of water bodies must be maintained in accordance with the adjoining grassland, scrubland and woodland habitats to provide plant and invertebrate abundance and diversity, both of which are important food sources for a range of birds and mammals.

The following must be carefully managed to avoid disturbance to the series of special habitats present in the conservation area, and should be considered as part of the management of any development (following relevant good practice where protected species (e.g. water voles) are present):

- Sediments entering a nearby or connected water body
- Control or removal of aquatic plants
- Introduction of species
- Control of alien species
- Use of chemicals
- Nutritional enrichment
- Maintenance of ditches and water channels to provide shallowly sloping margins to provide habitat for dragonfly and damselfly species
- Impact and management of leisure activities
- Water table levels
- Management of scrub
- Provision of scrapes and ponds
- Rotational cutting of reedbeds outside of the bird nesting season
- Rotational cutting or intermittent grassland grazing
- Frequency and extent of flooding providing beneficial impacts on habitats
- Maintenance of an identified balance between groundwater and floodwater levels
- Periodical removal of ditch sediment and vegetation
- Field margins and hedges
- Sensitive public access
- Sensitive use of machinery (avoid ground compression in sensitive areas)
- Coppice management
- Management of veteran and prominent trees in woodland areas and the general landscape

All developments directly or indirectly having an impact upon valued habitats must obtain an ecological survey by a suitably qualified ecologist. Protected species should always be considered as part of any development. The impact of a development on biodiversity should always be considered and the biodiversity value enhanced where possible.

There are also a number of agricultural hedgerows within the conservation area that provide valuable habitat for a number of species. It should be noted that countryside hedgerows (those not associated with the curtilage of a dwelling) are protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. These hedgerows cannot be altered (beyond general maintenance) or removed without 6 weeks prior formal notice being given to the local planning authority. It should also be noted that the all trees are provided some degree of protection by the Conservation Area. Any tree located in the conservation area may not be removed without 6 weeks notice being given to Council.

### **3. Archaeology and Historic Development.**

#### **3.1 Archaeology/Evolution**

There are no known sites of archaeological interest within the proposed boundaries and those, which exist nearby exhibit no recognisable above ground features.

#### **3.2 Recent History**

Elbridge House (Listed Grade II) was built about 1803 probably within the site of an earlier building. Elbridge Farmhouse dates from the 15th century, and includes an 18th century

granary and three 19th century oast kilns. In the 19th century ornamental grounds were laid out to the north and west of this complex and some tree belts and woodland were planted to the south on Shepherds Bank. This indicates that the area has been used for farming and a grand family home for at least 600 years.

A comparison of the post 1843 maps with modern maps and aerial photos supports the fact that little has changed in this landscape in the last 150 years beyond some additional farm buildings.

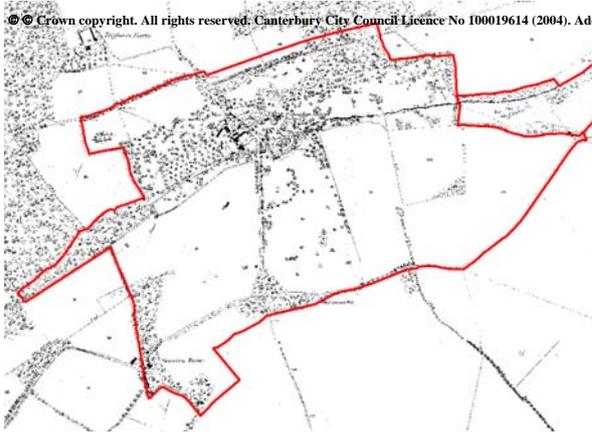


Figure3: Historic map 1843-



Figure 4: Aerial photo 2003

#### **4. Character Landscape Setting and Connections**

The valley of Lampen Stream is a particularly attractive feature in this area especially by contrast with the arable land in intensive monoculture farming on the plateaus on either side of the valley. It is unusual in that it retains a few historic buildings with traditional meadows on the slopes into the valley and specimen trees as well as substantial copses of woodland providing a traditional parkland landscape. The meadows are broken up into smaller fields with the boundaries defined by hedgerows and chestnut wood and wire fences.



The ambiance and aspect of the conservation area is one of isolated farmsteads and a grand house set in rural park and farmland with all of the activities noises and smells that go with it. The roads in the area are narrow with soft edges and the boundaries are generally defined by hedgerows.

The conservation area includes the former park to Elbridge House, the ornamental grounds north of Elbridge Farm all contained within the Lampen Stream valley as well as wooded areas to the north, south and west. The whole of this Conservation Area has an unspoiled rural parkland atmosphere. Hedgerows, areas of woodland, shelterbelts and specimen trees, punctuate the landscape. Much of this planting was designated to compliment and set off Elbridge House and to improve the views from within the house. The woodland along the ridges to the north and south is very important to views into and out of the conservation area providing a visual screen from the more intensively developed farmland beyond.

Lampen Stream creates interest along the valley floor its winding path is bordered by trees. The small artificial lake created as part of the Elbridge House Park provides a focus in the centre of the Conservation Area. There are particularly attractive views from the north-south road, which dips into the valley and from Hollybush Lane and Swanton Lane across the valley. Elbridge House and its park setting are also very visible from Swanton Lane. Also of note is the wooded area of Shepherds Bank, which provides an attractive backdrop to the conservation when viewed from the east.



The Conservation Area has few buildings just two clusters of farmsteads and rural houses. The majority of the buildings are located in the north of the conservation area adjacent to Lampen Stream on the valley floor.

Elbridge House (Listed Grade II) was built about 1803 by the Denne Family. The house is of buff brick with a Tuscan porch. Ornamental grounds were laid out to the south and east with considerable tree planting including specimen trees on the slope to the south, tree belts and clumps as well as Longshop Wood. The Lampen Stream flows through the grounds and has been widened to form a small lake with an island below the house.

Elbridge Farmhouse on the west side of Elbridge Hill is listed grade II\* and is a 15th century timber framed and close-studded 'Wealden'-hall house. To the north is an 18th century weather-boarded granary on 16 staddle stones, and a tiled roof 18th Century weather-boarded outbuilding with three 19th century cylindrical red brick oast kilns attached. Both are listed grade II and form an important group with the farmhouse. In the 19th century ornamental grounds were laid out to the north and west of this complex and some tree belts and woodland were planted to the south on Shepherds Bank.



Of additional interest within the meadow which runs down to Lampen Stream from Hollybush Lane is a World War II blockhouse or pillbox which marks one of the proposed lines of defence" in case of invasion.

Swanton Farmhouse is located approximately 800m to the south of Elbridge farm in Swanton wood. It is an 18th century grade listed II red brick property. Swanton Cottage is adjacent and is locally listed.

## **5. Recommendations**

### **5.1 Primary Issues**

For a seemingly sleepy rural area there are a number of potential issues facing the Elbridge House conservation area.

Large-scale modern development in the conservation area would compromise the character and appearance of this area. The use of inappropriate materials and building methods would also impact substantially. The scope for new buildings or extensions is limited due the impact they would have on the setting of the current buildings and within wider parkland/rural landscape.



The most visible feature of the conservation area is the single specimen trees, hedgerows and wooded copses lining the valley slopes, floor and ridgelines. Retention of these trees especially the single standards and woodlands is important.

A particular threat to this landscape would be the subdivision or amalgamation of plots causing the loss of field boundaries or more buildings. Large-scale intensive farming and amalgamation of fields would result in the bare landscape seen on the plateaus surrounding the valley. Increasing pressure for expansion and modernisation especially from Canterbury's growing population, and the general wish to live in the countryside not far from town and city centres, may, in the future, put pressure on this area for subdivision for the creation of building plots and reuse of farm buildings as dwellings.

An important feature of the conservation area is the stream valley. The primary issue facing the Lampen Stream would be the loss of the stream due to water take for domestic or irrigation purposes. Adjacent intensive farming practices and land uses could also impact upon the health of the stream through nitrification and topsoil run off. Protection of water flows and the health of the stream is important in protecting the values of this conservation area.

### **5.2 Boundary Assessment**

The Elbridge House Conservation Area is unusual in that it includes large areas of woodland, meadows, trees, rural hinterland and a stream. The current boundary takes in all of the area necessary to protect the parkland setting of the listed buildings near Elbridge House, as well as the setting of the other listed buildings within the conservation area and the stream and woodlands.

## **6. Management and Improvement**

There will be a presumption against any further development within the Elbridge House Conservation Area and in future, applicants will have to demonstrate that; not only have they complied with the general conservation area policies, but, that the proposal does not involve the loss of woodlands, trees or hedgerows or the widening of roadways or junctions. In addition, in order to be successful, any new development proposals will need to be prepared by knowledgeable and sensitive designers who can satisfy the City Council that their proposals will positively enhance the Conservation Area and can be achieved without the loss of gaps, views, or more significantly, open spaces.

There is a need to ensure that all future developments in the conservation area respect the local distinctiveness of Elbridge House Conservation Area, hence some guidance has been provided below. The key issue is maintenance and improvement of those aspects that contribute to the character and quality of the parkland setting and scenery.

- Any new development should have a visual understanding of the historic roots of the conservation area as a rural farmstead and grand house with associated parkland in a watered valley and all that that entails.
- Protection of the current built environment in particular the grade II and grade II\* listed buildings.
- Use of in keeping construction materials.
- Ensuring the scale of extensions and new buildings are in keeping. It is important that any change or enlargement does not swamp the few existing buildings.
- Any new development should have close regard to the traditional building styles, forms, materials and techniques characteristic of this area, including the very low intensity of development. The height, size, design, roofspace, plot width and visual appearance of new development and the design of any new vehicle access should respect the character of the conservation area.
- Protection of the views into, across and out of all parts of this conservation area.
- The woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees within the Conservation Area should be retained and protected as they make up an important part of the setting.
- Current field boundaries should be retained and maintained and fields and meadows should not be amalgamated or subdivided.
- Boundary treatments should be traditional such as hedges or wire and chestnut post fences where these are appropriate.
- The water flows and health of the stream and its immediate surrounds should not be impacted upon by removal of water from the stream and/or use of adjacent land.

When considering new development this need not necessarily mean exact copying of earlier styles in new work though on occasion this may be the only way. But it does require developer and designer to come to an understanding of, and a respect for, the character of the area when drawing up their proposals. Every new proposal within the conservation area should be backed up by a thorough analysis of the site and its historic context. This exercise should 'inform' the design process and be part of a design statement submitted with a planning application.

## **7. Statement of Consultation**

A copy of the draft Conservation Area Appraisal has been sent to the Parish Council, all residents, interest groups and local councillors. The formal period for consultation is 29 May 2009 to 26 June 2009 and responses were received up until 28 July 2009. Two responses were received.

The draft Conservation Area Appraisal was reported to the Canterbury City Council Rural Area Members Panel on 16 June 2009 for their comment. The Conservation Area Appraisal was then amended in light of the consultation and presented to the Development Control Committee along with a summary of any responses received on 15 September 2009. One speaker was heard at the meeting. The Development Control Committee formally adopted the document as a 'material consideration'.

All persons who responded to the consultation were informed of their right to attend and speak at the committee meetings.

## Appendix 1

### 1. Listed Buildings details

Elbridge House (formerly listed as Elbridge Hill House)	Grade II GV	Listed 29.9.52
Elbridge Farmhouse	Grade II* GV	Listed 29.9.52
Oasthouses at Elbridge Farmhouse	Grade II	
Granary at Elbridge Farm	Grade II	Listed 14.3.1980
Swanton Farmhouse	Grade II	Listed 14.3.1980