

Quarry Hill Conservation Area: Proposed Additions and Deletions

Introduction

Since the original designation of Quarry Hill Conservation Area there have been a number of developments which now make the existing boundary illogical.

In addition, as landscape on both sides of a street forms the character of that space, it is proposed that, as a general rule, the conservation area boundary be amended to include both sides of a space.

Under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, the boundary should now be revised to reflect these changes.

Additions

Addition 1

The current boundary includes no land to the south of Brook Street which performs as much a part in the character of this part of the Conservation Area as the land to the north within the curtilage of Judd School. The boundary also now cuts through Judd School buildings which have been built since the designation of the Conservation Area. Landscape is one of the key characteristics of Brook Street and the treed school grounds form a strong part of this character and complement the treed and grassed verge to the south. The proposed boundary follows the boundary of the school grounds and includes the landscaped verge to the south of Brook Street.

Addition 2

The current boundary now bisects the gardens of properties fronting Brook Street. The proposed revision follows the recognisable rear boundaries of these properties to include the whole curtilage.

Addition 3

The current boundary includes only the eastern side of Waterloo Road. However, the street is framed by landscape on the western side which it is proposed to include as an integral part of the character of Waterloo Road. The proposed boundary also follows recognisable features.

Addition 4

The proposed revision results in the inclusion of the former vicarage with historic connections to St Steven's Church. The building, with its prominent south-facing half timbered gables and decorative brickwork, marks the edge of the Conservation Area and entrance to the High Street. The building now

incorporates incongruous shop fronts and advertising and the adjoining car park and sub-station are detracting features. Nevertheless, the historic associations, the remnant historic features and the townscape role which it plays justify its inclusion within the Conservation Area.

Addition 5

The proposed revision results in the inclusion of a tree group which helps frame the space which contains Brook Street/ Quarry Hill roundabout.

Addition 6

This addition allows the boundary to follow recognisable property boundaries and results in the inclusion of a complete curtilage.

Addition 7

Only the eastern side of Quarry Hill is included within the Conservation Area at its southern-most extent. The proposed revision results in the inclusion of a tree belt which helps define Quarry Hill at this entrance to the Conservation Area.

Deletions

Deletion 1

The existing boundary bisects a small area of new housing development which 'turns it back' on the Conservation Area in a cul-de-sac arrangement and which it is now proposed to exclude.

Deletion 2

This small deletion allows the Conservation Area to follow a recognisable property boundary.

Deletions 3 and 6

These areas are literally tarmac road space and contain no buildings or features of importance in defining the Conservation Area. For this reason it is proposed to exclude both areas.

Deletion 4

This revision deletes a new 'backland' property which has no strong relationship with the Conservation Area.

Deletion 5

This modern property has been unsympathetically altered and has a very limited relationship with the pairs of grand villas at this part of Quarry Hill or the character of this part of the Conservation Area. For this reason it is proposed to exclude the building from the Conservation Area.

Consideration of Woodside Road

Careful consideration was given to a possible extension of the Conservation Area to include Woodside Road. On balance it was decided not to extend the Conservation Area into this street for the reasons set out below.

The link between the Conservation Area and Woodside Road is broken at both entrances to the street by modern development which is neither characteristic of Quarry Hill or Woodside Road. To extend the Conservation Area into Woodside Road would mean including rather incongruous development which detracts from the key characteristics of both Woodside Road and Quarry Hill.

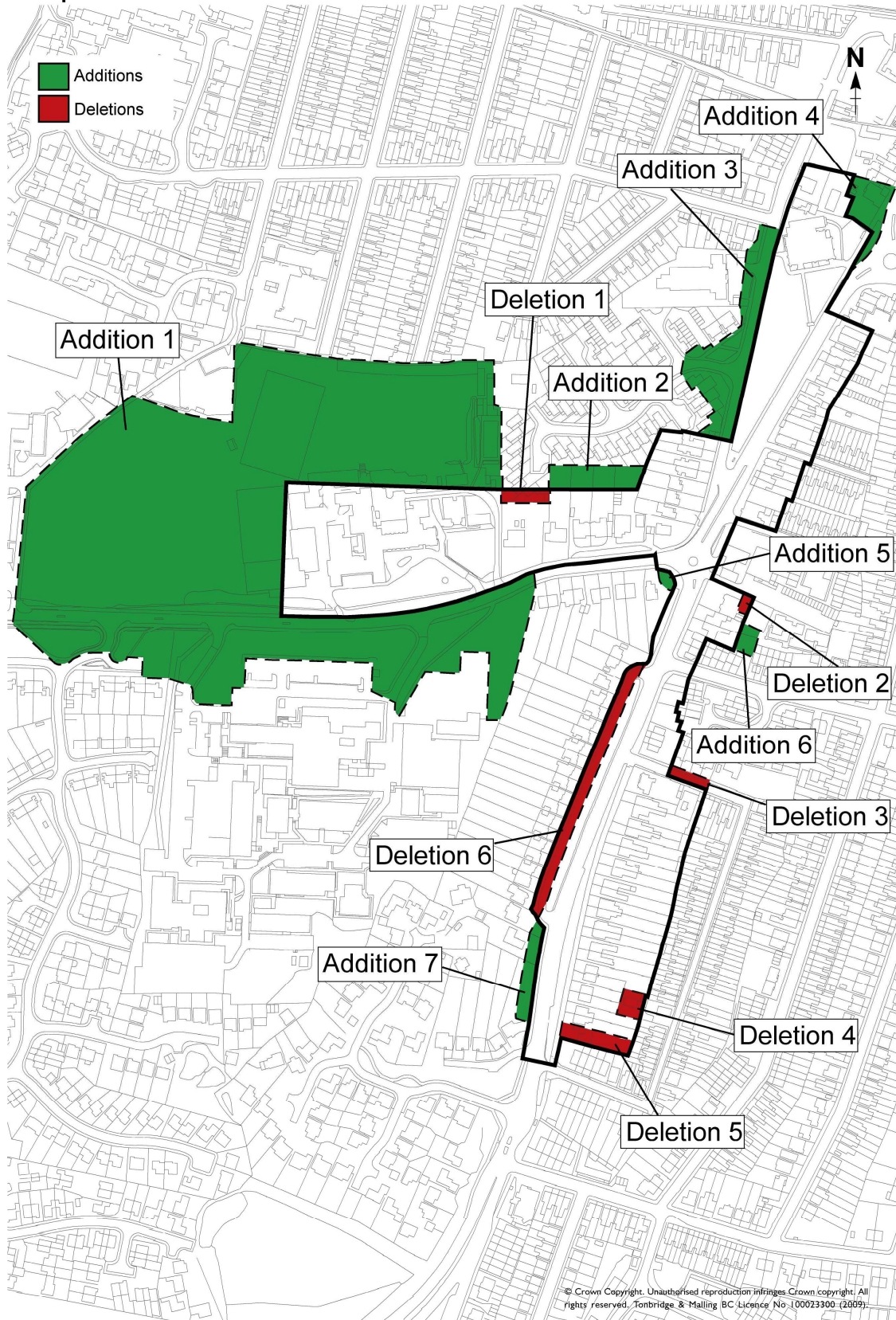
The question now arises whether Woodside Road is worthy of designation as a Conservation Area on its own merits. This is a single, tightly knit Victorian street of terraced properties which has common characteristics with many streets in Tonbridge. As a single street, the area would be relatively small to form a conservation area in its own right.

There is unity of character within Woodside Road although this is compromised in many instances by the introduction of new windows and doors of unsympathetic proportions or materials; roofs replaced by concrete tiles; front boundaries which have been demolished or formed with a variety of materials; satellite dishes and parked cars.

If this street were to be designated as a conservation area, there would be many other candidate streets within Tonbridge and a large portion of the town would become designated as a conservation area(s). A conservation area is an area of special architectural and historic character and there would be some danger in diluting the importance of the existing designated areas if a large proportion of the town were to be included. This is the approach normally taken by other local authorities in order to keep some areas 'special'.

The Borough Council is keen to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the area including its historical and architectural interest. However, in recognition that not all areas should be designated as conservation areas, the Council is to undertake the preparation of Character Area Assessments to record the distinctive characteristics of areas which are located outside conservation areas. Tonbridge will be the first area to be examined during 2009/10. The Character Area Assessments which will result will form a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This means that the distinctive characteristics of Woodside Road and similar streets will be included as an SPD which will be a material consideration in determining planning applications in a similar way to Conservation Area Appraisals.

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Not to scale