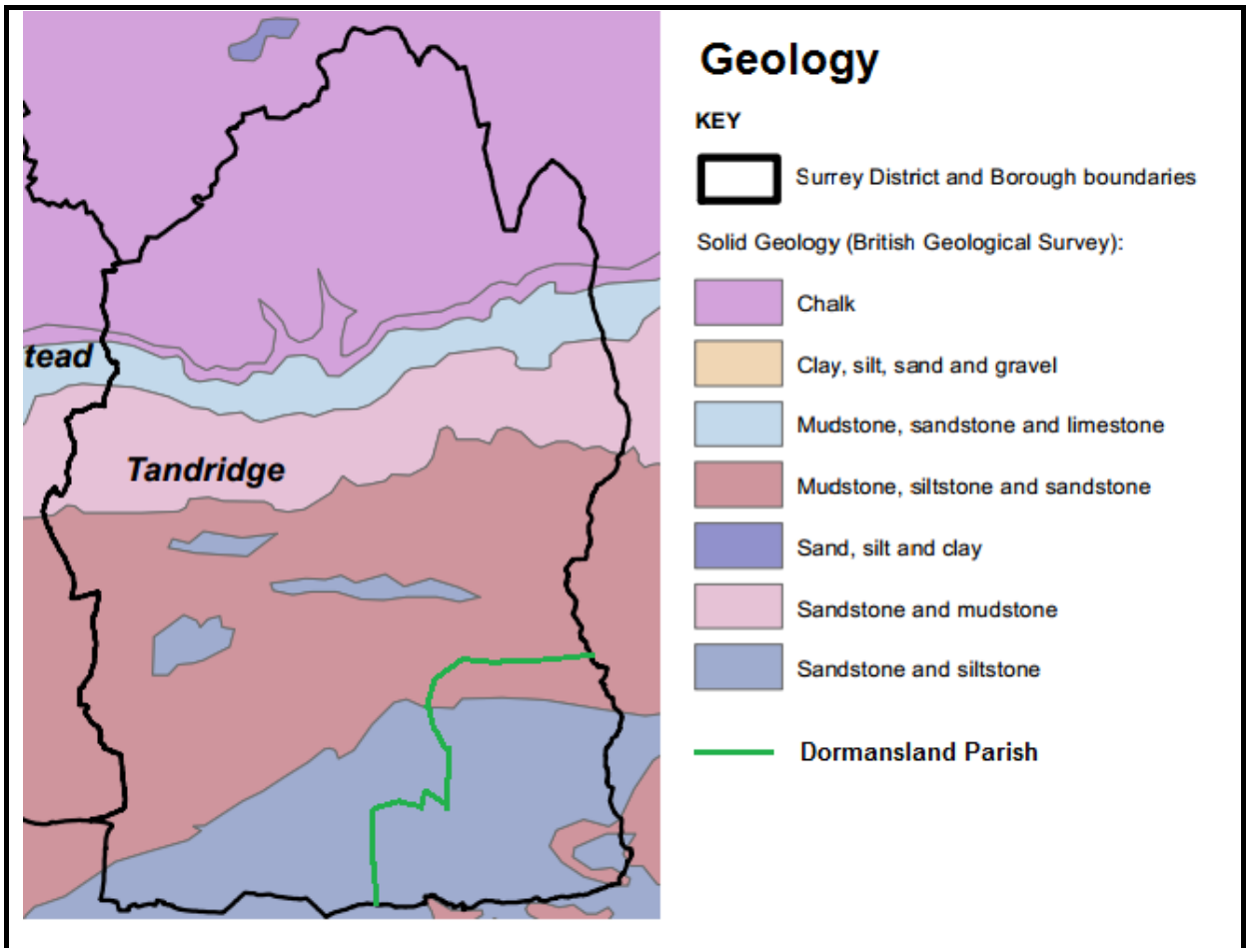
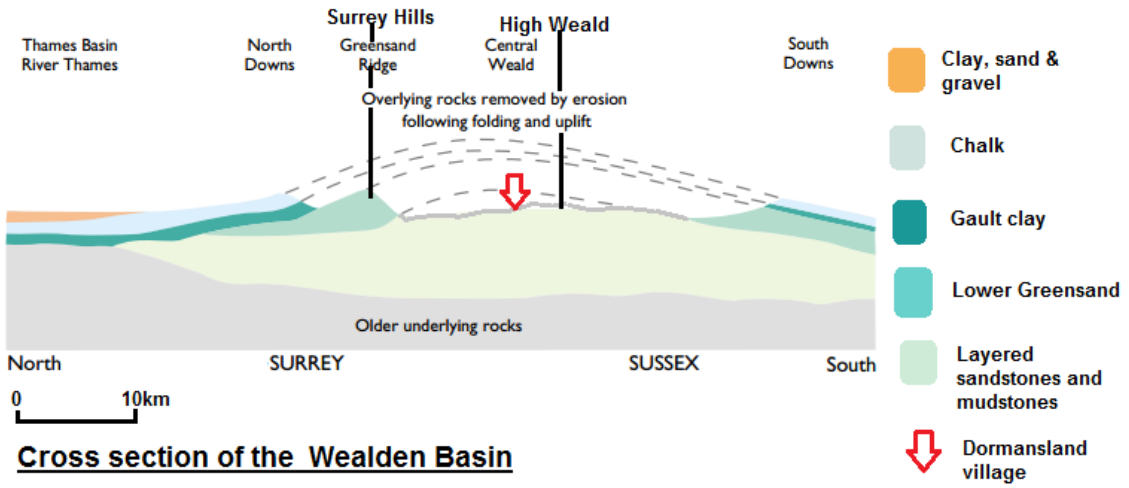
Character Appraisals of Dormansland and Dormans Park

The local geology and landscape have influenced the character of the early development of the village and the association of some notable characters in History along with the building of the railway through the parish, Dormansland and Dormans Park have reflected in some of the buildings, a rich and interesting variety.

Building Materials

Dormansland lies in the heart of the Weald, an area of sandstone, siltstone and clay between the high chalk escarpments of the North and South Downs. It is situated on the northern edge of the Tunbridge Wells Sandstone beds, where the land rises from the Wealden Clay of the River Eden flood plain.





Cross section of the Wealden Basin

This underlying geology provided the Parish its earliest building materials – timbers from the sandstone ridge woodlands, clay for roof tiles and bricks. Sandstone, mainly the harder Wealden type, was largely used for footings and early chimneys. Some buildings in the parish are made with local sandstones.

Greathed Manor and farm buildings, main house Ashlared sandstone

Starborough Castle (remains of castle), off Starborough Road

Littleworth Cottage, Moor Lane, sandstone with galetting lower course

Crowhurstland Cottages, West Street, sandstone with galetting

Lower Stonehouse Farm, stone lower course

The Old Vicarage & St John's Church, The Platt/High Street, Ashlared sandstone

Old Surrey Hall and Barn (part) with Horsham stone roof

Notable buildings in Dormansland constructed with local stone

Crowhurstland Dairy Cottages West Street above

Starborough Castle remains

Stone Buildings in Dormansland

Former Vicarage, now Colburn House, The Platt

There are some fine examples of timber framed houses, some with origins in the Fifteenth Century, in the parish. They are constructed with either the timber framing exposed or are covered with tiles on the upper course. The local stone is sometimes used in the footings, as rubble-stone or when dressed, for the lower courses. The timber is mainly oak, from the woodlands which covered the local sandstone ridges and the High Weald.

Old Surrey Hall

Lullenden Manor

Nobles Farmhouse

Village shop, formerly Potter's Stores

Timber framed houses in Dormansland

Local brick was used extensively, although sometimes covered in stucco. With the ample supply of clay outcropping locally, like the Wadhurst Clay, brickmaking was a widespread rural industry. This is confirmed in the local place names like Kiln Wood and Brick Wood. The nearest brickyard was in Wilderwick Road, which provided bricks and tiles until it closed in the Nineteenth Century. By then the two Crowhurst Brickworks had become the predominant local suppliers. The introduction of the railway allowed the import of Welsh Slate which was used extensively for roofing throughout the village at the time of the railway expansion.

Many of Dormansland's brick buildings are of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Particularly characteristic is the use of dark, almost purple brick made from the Wadhurst Clays, which was produced locally at the time and often used with contrasting red brick detailing, especially as quoins or around windows.

Since 1945 a wider range of non-local materials have been introduced for reasons of cost or fashion.

Contrasting construction materials, West Street. Victorian dark brick with the red detailing and slate roof, next door to newer pebble-dashed and London brick house.

Building Styles in Dormansland Village

Early development in the village was around the rural industries from the Fifteenth Century onwards, with agriculture, iron foundries and brickyards providing the majority of employment in the area.

The larger landholdings were based around Starborough Castle to the north of the parish and Blockfield Manor, (Old Surrey Hall) in the south[1]. Other key manors have well preserved timber framed hall houses at Puttenden and Lullenden. These houses have largely maintained their position as the grander houses in the area. Ford Manor was replaced by a stone mansion, later renamed Greathed Manor, built in the 1860s, although a newer Ford Manor House was built in the grounds in the 20th Century.

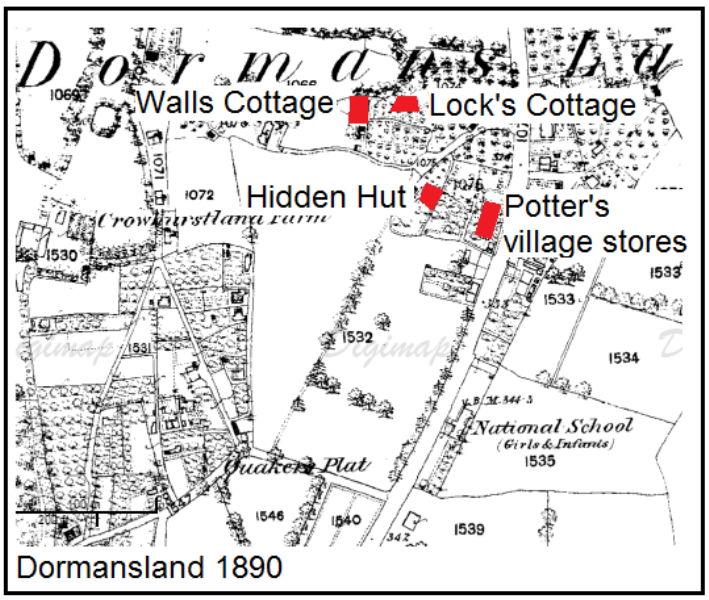
Greathed Manor, now a nursing home, built on the site of the old Ford Manor. Its setting is registered as a Historic Parkland and is Listed with Historic England.

[1] http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/surrey/vol4/pp302-311

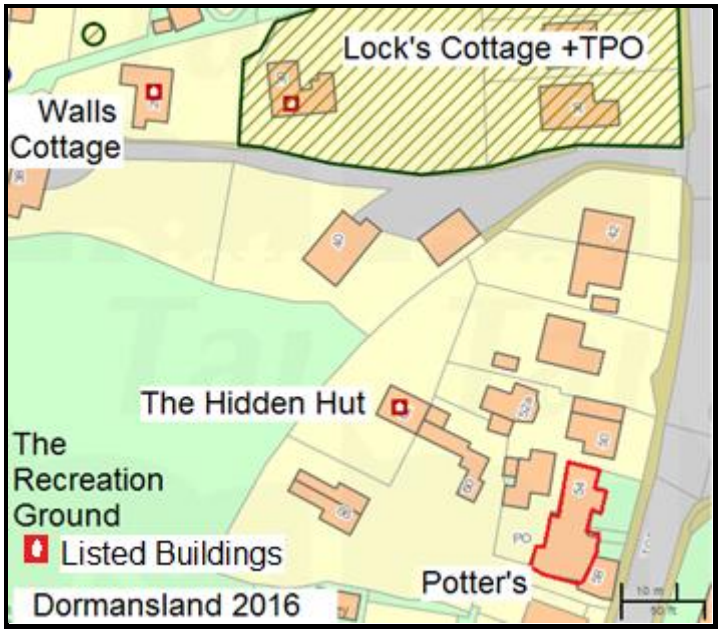
Some examples of the larger houses in the High Street, Dormansland.

Some older farmhouses, often with tile hung upper courses in the vernacular “Sussex Style” are scattered throughout the parish; many of these are protected by Historic England Listing. There are only a few examples of this type in the village. Potter’s Village Shop is the best example although this style was not a preserve of working class properties. Beacon Platt is an example of a grand Edwardian house drawing on the vernacular style.

There are several modest sized very old timber framed houses in the vicinity of the village shop, off the High Street. These are largely hidden from view because of the slope of the land. It is important the setting for these is protected from overlooking.



Location of some of the oldest buildings in the village.



The oldest Listed Buildings in the centre of the village.

Potter's Stores in the very early 20th Century. A planning application to demolish and replace with 10 flats was refused in 2014; its inclusion in the TDC list of Buildings of Character was a material consideration for refusal. There was significant local opposition to the proposal. It is still a village shop with a Post Office.

From the industrial revolution onwards, most domestic dwellings were built in brick, with a range of types including larger villas and terraced workers cottages. Some houses have detailed bargeboards or bay windows and many have the red brick detailing common in the area. Some of these houses line the High Street and

provide a degree of consistency of character. The village grew quite quickly at the end of the 19th/early 20th Century, with the spread of terraced and semi-detached workers cottages along West Street and Hollow Lane.

Dormansland has had several periods of significant housebuilding since then, forming areas of fairly uniform design, as in the council estate of New Farthingdale (1940s), the Wates chalet bungalows of Beacon Hill (1970s) and the family houses in Locks Meadow (1970s). These represent the architectural norms of the period and are laid out in such a way as to provide good amenity space as well as good sized gardens. The most recent developments have reverted to styles which try to replicate the traditional architecture of the wider area with pastiche Sussex farmhouse style (Lane End, off Hollow Lane and Mulberry Mews, High Street). Victorian style details have added some variety to new build, like the new extension of The Meades and the range opposite St Johns Church, on the old school site. These do not always manage to blend in with the adjacent properties, for example the houses at the Old Dairy Site on West Street (2003) fill the site on the edge of the village boundary with 2 and 3 storey terraces opposite detached bungalows.

New Farthingdale 1950s council housing with good sized gardens and well planned amenity space. Note the individual front gardens set the houses back from the road. Most retain their front hedges.

Beacon Hill, 1960s. A mixture of bungalows and houses with large gardens. Although the front gardens are open plan, the building line is set back from the road, allowing the open views, especially to the north.

Old School Site, High Street. The front line of the houses is closer to the road and although there is an allocated parking block adjacent to the houses, the residents still prefer to park in front of their houses.

Mullberry Mews, High Street (2010). The off street parking is mostly in front of the properties but with only one garage and one space in front of it, many residents still park on the road. The visual appearance of the houses is spoilt by the parking area dominating the street front.

Former Dairy site, off West Street. The hipped roofs don't manage to soften the outline of the new houses and if the colours of the wall bricks and the tiles had been reversed, they would have matched the Victorian terraces further up this street. With the front doors almost opening out onto the road and the allocated parking forming the front area, it is more typical of an urban street scene.

The Victorian style of the Meades, constructed in the 1990s has tried to replicate local vernacular style but has included flint in the facings, which is not a local material.

The mix of housing types is to a large extent a reflection of the village's rural situation. The proportion of detached houses in the parish is more than double the England average at 49.1% (England 22.3%) and less than half the proportion of terraced houses than England; 10.4% as opposed to England's average 24.5%[2].

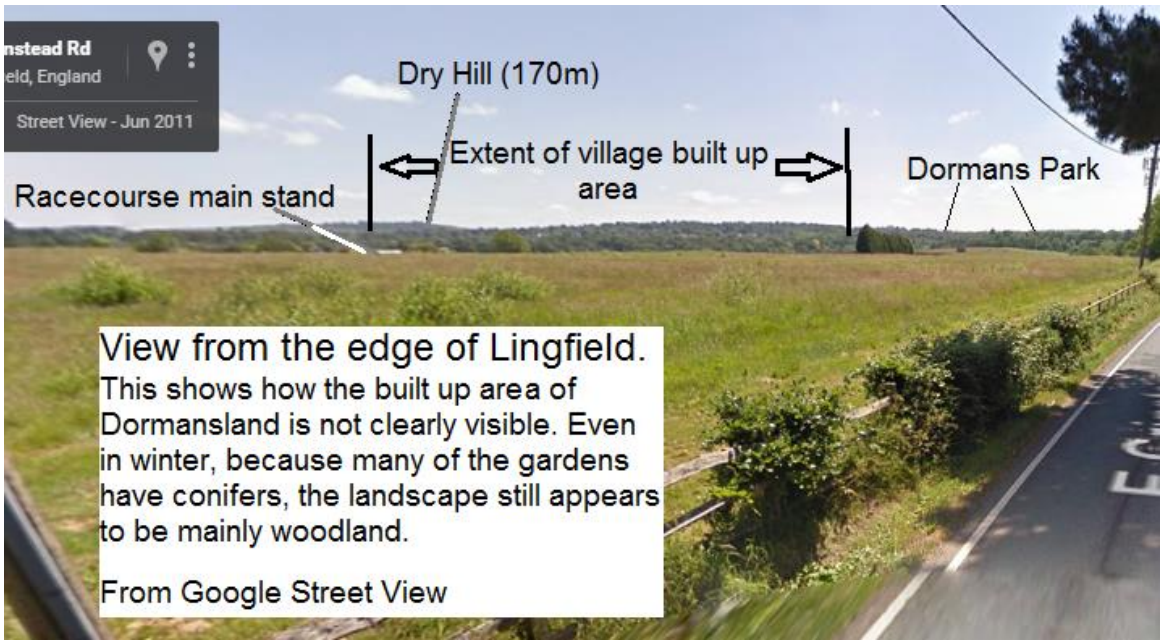
[2] 2011 Census (Table KS401EW).

There is a good proportion of bungalows, about 15% of dwellings in the village, many with gardens. These can be advantageous to residents with mobility difficulties due to age or disability. Some are located very close to the centre of the village.

The Wider Setting.

Dormansland is currently designated as a settlement washed over with Green Belt Policies. The current Core Strategy (2008) and Detailed Policies (2014) offers some protection of the existing character of the area in Policies CSP 18 and CSP 19 and DP12. Within the village of Dormansland there several area of open space, some are informal amenity land, including the wide verges and building lines set well back from the road, which enhances the setting of the residential areas and allows expansive views across and through the village to the countryside around it. This maintains its overall openness and makes a significant contribution to keeping the village as a Defined Village in the Green Belt (Detailed Polices Section 12) because of the open feel of the settlement.

The village is set on a gentle north west facing slope, so that views into the village from a distance give an impression of very little development as houses are wide spaced and have large plots, often with trees. The low number of rooftops visible helps maintain the appearance of the Green Belt washing over the village.



The view from the south and the east is again very rural as the development falls away on the slope of the land. From almost every road in the village there is a good view across towards the North Downs and the Surrey Hills which is also maintained by having concentrations of bungalows in some places, such as on the High Street and Beacon Hill.

Looking north from the High Street. Note the Victorian houses on the left are set back from the road and some of the front gardens now provide off road parking, which reduces congestion on the road. The Victorian villas' fine views have been preserved by putting bungalows on the other side of the road, so that even from the ground floor, they will get views towards the North Downs over the bungalows which are downslope. With some of these houses using their front gardens for parking, this has reduced the number of cars which could be parked on the road, improving the view.

This view is from The Meades, looking towards the village shop and hairdresser in the centre of the village. This is probably the most developed part of the village but there are far reaching views towards the Surrey Hills.

The Street Setting

Until the last couple of decades, the new development has continued to make the amenity open space and setting back of the building line from the road front maintain the openness of the whole village. The building line on Locks Meadow and the houses on West Street, for example, is set back to provide off road parking and space for garages. Amenity spaces are important open areas for residents and are used for informal recreation. They feature in village activities like the Dormansland Carnival scarecrow competitions. Some of these amenity spaces have been

identified as Local Green Spaces because of their value to the village and the villagers.

Dormansland Carnival Scarecrow Competition utilising the public amenity spaces

Amenity Spaces

Traffic island planted with cherry trees and maintained by volunteers. Cherry orchards were very significant in the local economy.

New Farthingdale Green. Used for informal recreation, children's football, exercising dogs, etc. The inclusion of such wide verges and open space at this location, keeps the overall housing density low and maintains the openness of the village in the Green Belt.

Nearly all the house in the village have front gardens or spaces to park their cars. These are mostly separated from the adjacent property's front garden with formal or informal boundaries, many of which form the front boundary and most of these are hedges. The High Street has a large proportion of houses with hedges at the front and this softens the visual appearance of the road fronts.

View of the High Street looking south. This is the “centre” of the village and there is sufficient vegetation to soften the street scene.

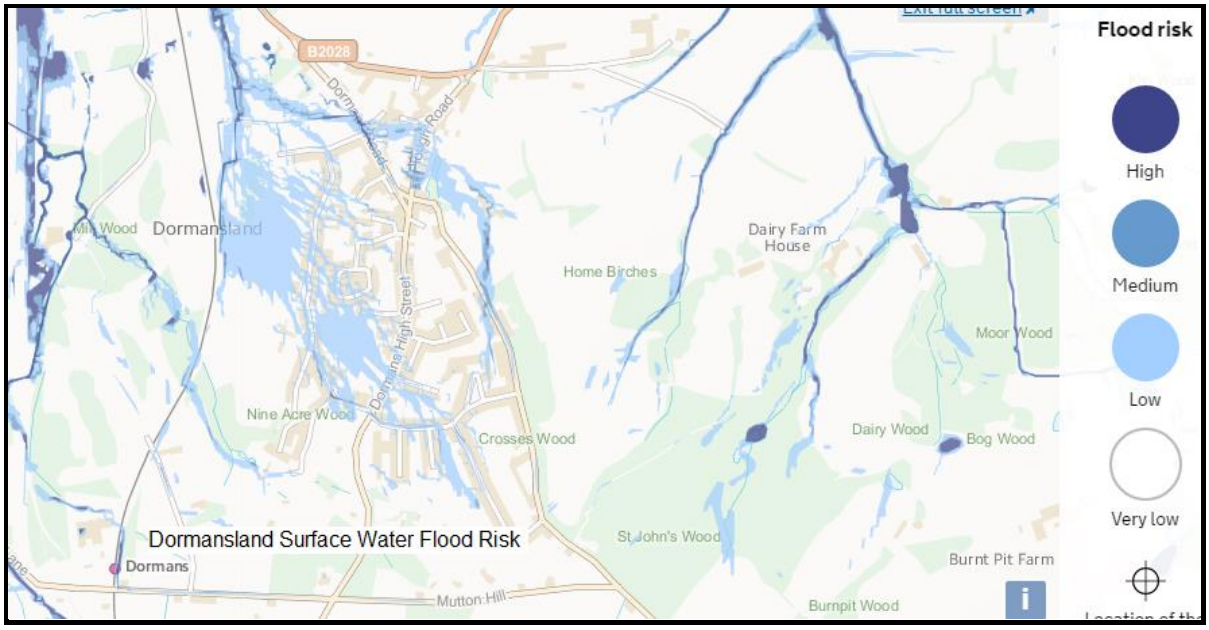
West Street demonstrates that with good hedge screening the amount of development can be masked and this helps merge it into the adjacent Green Belt. The lack of street furniture and road markings adds to the rural nature of the scene.

The setting back of the building line serves two purposes.

1. It allows for the off street parking, even if it means some loss of front gardens, thereby reducing the urban characteristic of very little off street parking.
2. It provides the overall aspect of a residential area to be open and generally in keeping with its countryside location. This accords with the Green Belt village status.

Another benefit of the large proportion of greenery, in the form of gardens and amenity spaces, is the value it has in controlling some of the rainfall run-off. Although the village of Dormansland is not as risk of flooding from rivers, it has the potential to produce large quantities of surface water flow. The village area drains into the catchment area for the River Eden which is prone to flash flooding throughout its upper reaches because of the clayey nature of most of the soils in the basin and the extensive areas of flood plain to the north of the village.

Any new development, including permitted development, which increases the run-off from a property, will cumulatively add to the surface water run-off speeding into the Eden Valley drainage basin, which is cannot cope with large volumes of rainwater. There is a duty for Dormansland not to add to the flood risk problem. Each new development, extension, paving area, shed or conservatory should ideally have its own individual sustainable urban drainage system in the form of ground drains or water tanks which slow the rate of flow into the Eden River system.



There is currently little conformity in the village for street furniture and signage but because the roads through the village are not main arterial routes, there is not the need for large directional signs. The streetlamps are mostly designed to reduce light pollution and the overall appearance of the street scene is well maintained. High levels of volunteer input to provide planting and cleaning or maintenance of the community areas helps to make the village more attractive. The village is well connected with footpaths linking its centre to the countryside, which is no more than a couple of minutes walking distance from anywhere in the village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

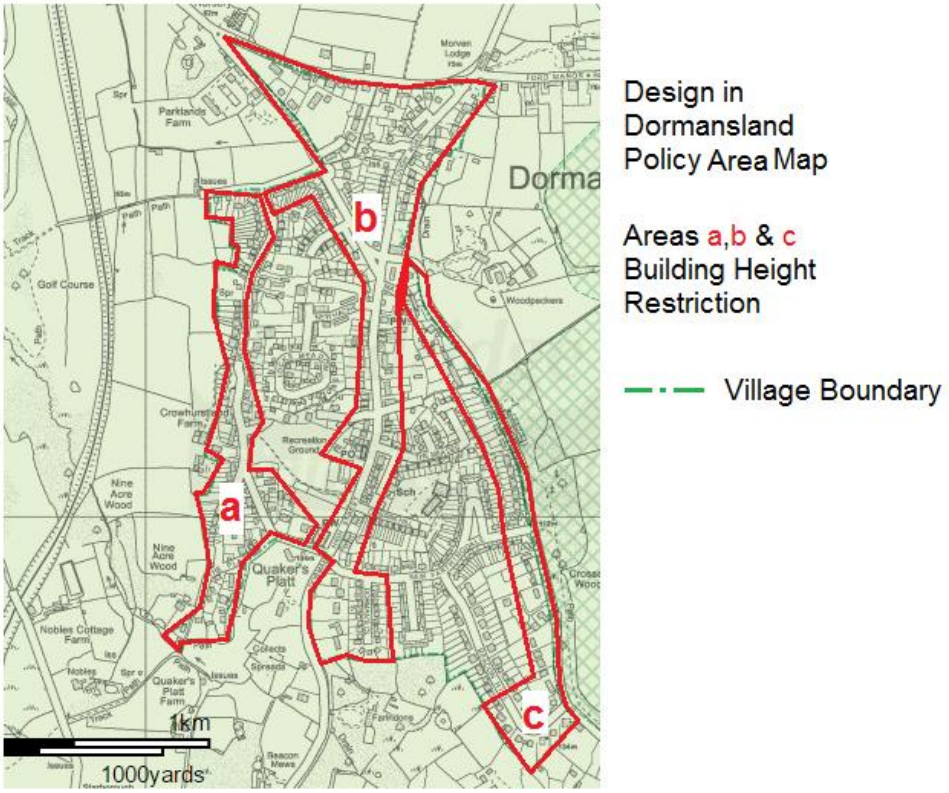
In addition to the prevailing polices for new development for Tandridge District Council[3], DNP would like to encourage good quality new design, where it respects the character and setting of its site. However, in order to keep some degree of cohesion of style through the centre part of the village, these recommendations should allow a coherent policy.

a) Materials for new buildings, alterations and extensions, should reflect and complement the texture and colours of those found locally and materials foreign to the area, such as flint, should be avoided.

[3] Core Strategy (2008); Detailed Policies (2014)

Reflecting and complimenting. Examples of a sympathetic and an unsympathetic extension. Note the replacement windows on the property on the right project beyond the original lintel, the original bay window has been removed and the extension, although set back, is not “subservient” to the original part of the house.

b) Decorative features should harmonise with existing styles and be simple and few.
c) Over decoration and the mixture of too many colours in the materials used should be avoided.
d) Restrained decorative brickwork echoing those styles found in the High Street/West Street, should be incorporated where appropriate.
e) Heights of any new developments will need to have consideration to preserve the openness of the village in line with its Green Belt designation. Where the slope of the land allows good views out of the village into the surrounding countryside, this should be maintained. The edges of the village boundary should be similarly restrained to reduce the impact on the adjoining Green Belt, especially in the areas of the village entrances. In the designated areas a, b and c height restriction policy (see Map) for new build and upward extensions of no more than 2 storeys with attic rooms with or without dormers.



f) To maintain the distinctive open aspect of the Dormansland street-view, any new residential developments must not open out directly onto the pavement but have either open-plan or individual garden space in order to maintain a building line set back from the road. Where possible to provide off street parking behind the houses or provide sufficient space in front of a new dwelling for the parking of the number of vehicles to the TDC Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance (2012)[4]. This must be laid out in such a way as to avoid the visual appearance large blocks of parking spaces on the side of the street.

g) In order to maintain the rural feel of the street scene, new developments will need to use hedging plants to form the front boundaries of the plots, and where the gardens adjoin the Green Belt, hedges instead of panel fencing should be established on the outer boundary (other methods of securing the perimeter inside the hedge such as mesh or panel fencing can be used). Adequate ongoing maintenance arrangements will need to be arranged as legal agreements.

h) Pedestrian access and cycling should be encouraged and all new developments will need to include adequate facilities for these by including cycle stores and links to public footpaths when these are appropriate.

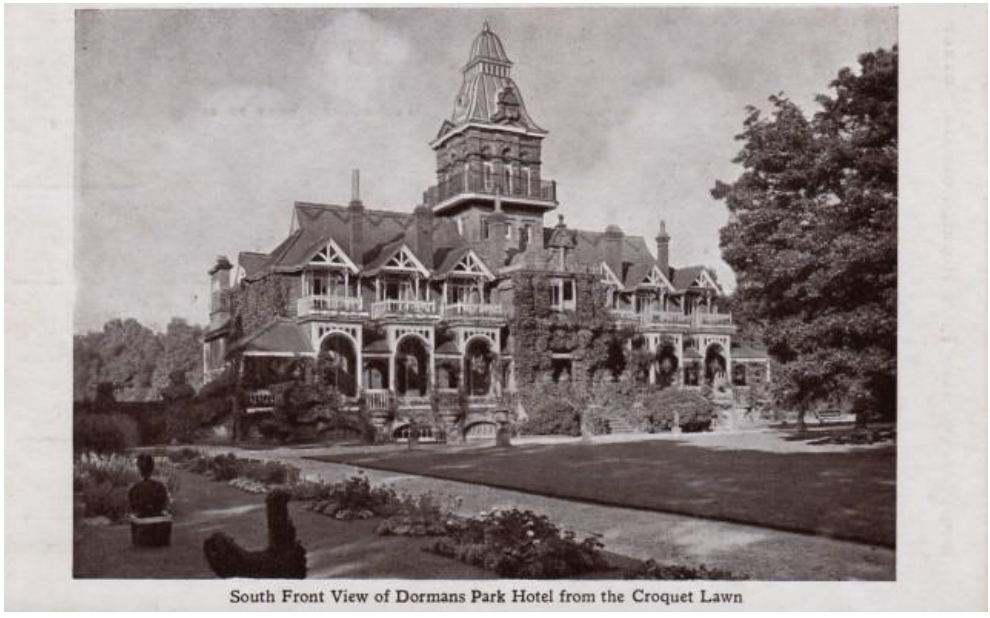
[4] TDC Parking Standards
http://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Planning/planningpolicy/currentpolicy/planning_supplementary_planning_guidance.htm

i) All new development will need to show how the rainwater run-off can be accommodated into land drains or tanks or other sustainable drainage scheme and not to flow directly into the mains drainage or road drains.

DORMANS PARK.

Building Styles in Dormans Park

The history of the Park has already been touched upon elsewhere (Introduction, Evidence Report) and its origins has shaped the growth of Dormans Park since its inception as a “gentlemen’s retreat”. It was centred on the Dormans Hotel and the concept was for large houses in generous plots to be built for wealthy families, mostly from London, to escape to the country. Several of the original houses still remain and retain their Edwardian splendour. A boating lake and riding school were built and a golf course and racecourse were planned but the scheme collapsed financially before they were started. The plots were sold on and over the years, the tradition of individual owners specifying the type of house they wanted has continued until the 1970s.



South Front View of Dormans Park Hotel from the Croquet Lawn

The Dormans Park Hotel, 1880s to 1960s. The hotel was demolished and the site split into 14 plots.

The range of house style is very varied and includes bungalows and houses which are considerably more modest than the decadent original houses and the much more recent trend for ostentatious houses. The key feature of the building style, especially in the earlier development period, is individuality. Since the change in the policy constraint of the Park, lifting the complete restriction on development to allow limited infilling, in the 1970s, the large plots have been subdivided as the new owner

took the attitude that it was buy one get one free, as planning permission was relatively easy to obtain for a new dwelling in part of the plot, making a sufficient return to rebuild the existing dwelling with something much larger. One-off developments of high specification homes is limited to a small number of local developers, so as a consequence a degree of repetition in the designs has emerged. This speculative building restricted the designs to what was considered “saleable” because the houses would need to be sold on quickly to keep the business going. The previous pattern of development emerged as the owner bought the plot first and then commissioned what they wanted or could afford, hence the wide range of styles and sizes.

Dormans Park. Range of houses 1890s to 1970s.

Dormans Park 1990s to 2010s. There are very few individually designed houses.

THE WIDER SETTING

Dormans Park is surrounded by rural landscapes, including the woodland it is a part of. There are very few places where any buildings in the Park are visible unless you go right up to the boundaries or entrance gates. Its impact on the Green Belt's openness is not visible but because of the relative surge in housebuilding in recent years, the perception is that it is a substantially built up area. It is not sufficiently provided with infrastructure to be considered a sustainable location for more housebuilding. It is not within reasonable walking distance of a shop, a school, a pub and for most of the houses a bus stop or railway station; and those that are, it does not have pavements or street lighting to facilitate a safe walk at any time of the year. What it does have is good access to high speed internet and an old phone box which is a community library.

Whilst as a Green Belt location, it does have about 200 houses, including those on the periphery, it is about one streets worth of houses spread over more than three quarters of a square kilometre. It's very low housing density and very high value homes make it a difficult location for a wider mix of housing types to meet local needs, so pragmatically, it would be sensible to make the Park maintain its current character which blends in with its surroundings.

THE STREET SETTING.

Street Scene in the Park. Furzefield Road being used for physical recreation (note the bicycle in the distance).

Despite the emerging sameness of the design of the houses over the last few years, the policy allowing infilling was removed in 2014, when the Green Belt washed over the whole area. This put a halt to the ‘one-down-two-up’ scenario and even pulling the one down and putting a much bigger version up, was stopped because of the increased footprints or bulk being inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This may have been on time to retain the key character of Dormans Park, which is its secluded and sylvan nature, with individually built larger houses in large plots is a park like setting.

The number of houses inside the Park boundary increased from 123 to 183 between 1970 and 2016, and there a few more with planning permission but not yet completed, making a staggering increase of nearly 50% over nearly half a decade. It is however less than one and a half houses per year and the crucial consideration is the impact on the character of the Park.

Dormans Park. St Margaret's Avenue in the centre of the Park with the highest density of houses on the left. The Approach where nearly all the houses have been replaced with two newer larger versions on the right side of the road (right picture)

The overall density of houses has increased over the 46 year period by the subdividing of plots from an average of 1 dwelling per 0.38 hectare to 1 per 0.26 per hectare. When compared with the average self-build size plot is 0.04 of a hectare (1/10 acre), these plots are still substantial. The other factor which has helped maintain the character of the area is there are tracts of Ancient Woodland and individual and blanket Tree Protection Orders. For example TPO number TA/47 was placed over the whole area subdivided when the Dormans Park Hotel was demolished and split into 14 plots in 1962. The majority of the houses are set well back from the private roads and most of these have wide verges as well. This improves the quality of the streetscape as most of the houses are screened with established hedges ensuring a very high degree of privacy.

The boundary within which infilling was allowed to take place was somewhat indefensible, as it did not follow road or rail tracks, which are pretty constant, around all of its edge. It used a mixture of those features with streams, field edges but randomly cut gardens in half or left clusters of houses outside the boundary. If it was considered to inset the Park from the Green Belt, as is suggested in the emerging Local Plan (Green Belt Assessment Part 2 and Appendix 1, 2016, TDC[5]) it would be very difficult to set a defensible boundary again and it would be open to continual challenge. However, it seems prudent for the Neighbourhood Plan to try to preserve the character of the Park from any large scale development and to encourage replacement dwellings to embrace modern design and produce energy efficient sustainable buildings, which enhance but not dominate the local landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As for the Dormansland village recommendations, these would be consistent with the prevailing polices in Tandridge (January 2017).

a) New development is to be treated as inappropriate, including the replacement of dwellings that are materially larger than the one they are replacing, in height, mass, bulk, volume. This is to maintain the equivalent of the Green Belt protection should it be removed. The replacement dwelling cannot be positioned further forward in the plot than its original footprint.
b) Trees protected by designations or orders should be protected from piecemeal erosion, where individual plots remove single or several trees with permission on an individual application basis causing the cumulative effect of the complete removal of tree cover. Applications for removal should only be allowed if there is a serious risk of damage which cannot be remedied. Allowing removal to let light into the garden or house is not appropriate if occupiers knew the trees were protected when they purchased the property.

[5] TDC http://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Planning/planningpolicy/emergingpolicy/technicalassessments.htm

c) No further subdivision of plots below 0.25 hectare. Should there be existing plots smaller than this, it is not a justification for reducing all plots to the smallest size. It will have the advantage of introducing a degree of price variation between the plots to allow for some slight increase in the people who may be able to afford to buy. Existing outbuildings used as ancillary accommodation cannot be separated from the main dwelling and sold as this could be contrary to the plot size limit and will increase the number of dwellings in the Park, which is an unsustainable location for more development.
d) Although the Park is still relatively wooded, the slope of the area has the potential for taller houses to project above the skyline, especially in the winter months and any development will be restricted to keep any upwards enlargement of the dwelling to the equivalent of a 2 storey house with an attic in the sloping roof (with or without dormers). Where a house is built on a slope, the restriction applies to the maximum ridge height on the side of the house highest up the slope.
e) Where possible replacement boundary treatments should avoid solid fencing and walls, but use hedging, especially if these are native species, to maintain the sylvan nature of the Park and increase the bio-diversity opportunities. This is especially valuable at the front of the curtilage.