



# Gossops Green Neighbourhood Centre Draft Conservation Area Appraisal (February 2021)

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## Part 1. Introduction

### About This Document

This draft Conservation Area Appraisal has been prepared by Crawley Borough Council in order to support the proposal to designate Gossops Green Neighbourhood Centre as a Conservation Area, which was published for consultation in February 2021. It is intended to describe in outline for the special interest of the area proposed for designation.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation and a future decision to designate this area as a Conservation Area, a further Conservation Area Statement will be prepared, consulted on, and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. This will incorporate a more detailed appraisal, development guidance, and a management plan.

This document reflects survey work undertaken in early 2021. It draws on further sources including the Areas of Special Local Character Assessment undertaken by Place Services on behalf of Crawley Borough Council in 2020, the Crawley ASEQs and Locally Listed Buildings Heritage Assessment prepared for the council by Alan Baxter Associates in 2010, and other sources which are identified in the Bibliography.

### What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas are designated because they are recognised as areas of special architectural or historic interest which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The designation of a Conservation Area is determined by a number of factors, particularly the presence of buildings that are of historic or architectural interest, but also by the retention of a historically significant design form or settlement pattern.

Conservation Areas require careful management to protect their special character. This is not to say that all new development and change is prohibited, but rather that where development is proposed, that it should come forward in a manner that preserves or enhances the intrinsic features of the Conservation Area. Conservation Area status therefore brings with it additional planning controls that limit the works that can be undertaken through permitted development and place additional planning requirements on other developments such as new buildings, alterations to and demolitions of existing properties, and the management of trees. Development proposals that are outside but near to the Conservation Area should also consider how they may affect the setting of the Conservation Area.

### Planning Policy Context

The legal basis of Conservation Areas is [Section 69 of the Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#). This requires all local planning authorities to identify 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and designate these as Conservation Areas. It further requires local planning authorities to keep the Conservation Areas they have designated under review.

The [National Planning Policy Framework \(2019\)](#) sets out the overarching planning policy approach for England, with Chapter 16 specifically considering conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. The policies set out here must be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities in formulating planning policies and making planning decisions.



[Planning Practice Guidance ID: 18a-001-20190723 \(2014, with subsequent updates\)](#) contains additional guidance regarding the application of the national legal and policy framework.

The [Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030](#), adopted in 2015, is the development plan for Crawley, and sets out a range of policies and requirements that should be taken into account by development. A number of key policies within the Local Plan would be of particular relevance to development proposals within or adjacent to the proposed Conservation Area, if designated. This includes:

**Policy CH8** seeks to protect important views including, for Conservation Areas, more localised views. Local Plan Paragraph 4.45 provides additional detail, stating that ‘Important but more localised views and landmarks, i.e. less than approximately 200m, will be identified, protected and enhanced through Conservation Area, Area of Special Character or Locally Listed Building assessments’.

**Policy CH12** recognises Crawley’s heritage assets as a finite resource, and seeks to ensure that their key features or significance are not lost as a result of development. Where development affects a heritage asset or its setting, a Heritage Impact Assessment will be required to consider the significance of the heritage asset and the contribution it makes to its setting and the wider area. The Heritage Impact Assessment will also need to consider the impact of the development on the Conservation Area and its assets and will need to detail any measures that will be implemented to ensure that a heritage asset is respected, preserved, enhanced or, in exceptional cases, relocated.

**Policy CH13** is specifically concerned with development in Conservation Areas. It sets a general requirement that development in a Conservation Area ‘should individually or cumulatively result in the preservation or enhancement of the character and appearance of the area, and requires demonstration, through the Heritage Impact Assessment, as to how the proposal conforms to the relevant Conservation Area statement and character appraisal.

**Policy CH16** relates to Locally Listed Buildings. These are a separate type of designation which is also being consulted on concurrently with this draft appraisal through the review of the Local Heritage List. The Policy is, however, relevant as proposed Conservation Area contains some Locally Listed Buildings. Although Locally Listed Buildings are not considered to be of national significance, they possess local architectural or historical merit, and should be retained wherever possible.

The [Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#) provides general design guidance in relation to development within the Conservation Areas. A Heritage Impact Checklist can be accessed in Appendix A of the SPD to assist in the preparation of a Heritage Impact Assessment.

In addition Policies

During January and February 2021 the council has been consulting on an [updated Local Plan](#), which is due to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for formal examination later in the year. As the Plan proceeds towards adoption the policies it contains will have increasing weight in planning decisions. Regard should therefore be had to the policies it contains, of which the following in particular are relevant:

- Policy CL1: Neighbourhood Principle
- Policy CL4: Compact Development – Layout, Scale and Appearance
- Policy CL7: Important and Valued Views
- Policy DD6: Advertisements
- Policy HA1: Heritage Assets
- Policy HA2: Conservation Areas



- Policy HA5: Locally Listed Buildings
- Policy EC12: Neighbourhood Centres

## Part 2. General Character, Location and Uses



**Map 1. Conservation Area Boundary**

### General Identity and Character

The area comprises the neighbourhood centre of Crawley’s Gossops Green neighbourhood, together with areas of housing to the east, south east, and south (Map 1). In accordance with the

neighbourhood concept which defined post-war New Towns such as Crawley, the neighbourhood centre was created to provide a range of local facilities for shopping, recreation, education, religious worship, community needs and other services at the core of the neighbourhood, where they could be easily accessed by the surrounding residential population. The neighbourhood centre at Gossops Green includes shopping parade (with flats above), Church of England church, pub, school, park and community centre, although the last three of these fall outside the proposed Conservation Area. As with a number of other Crawley neighbourhood centres, it is located on a 'Drive', designed to take a higher level of traffic than the surrounding residential streets.

The surrounding housing consists of two-storey terraces of houses and flats, arranged around and connected by a hierarchy of roads, closes and pedestrian walkways. In many places the housing is set back behind grass verges and greens.

#### Townscape

The area was planned and built as a whole as part of Crawley's development as a New Town. The site of the proposed Conservation Area was comprised of fields before the development of the neighbourhood, and there is no above-ground evidence of earlier settlement either in buildings or roadways.

As with other such areas in Crawley the residential area is characterised by two-storey terrace housing of a fairly consistent character, with the neighbourhood centre providing a focus for a more varied range of building styles, sizes and uses. Provision of grass verges and informal amenity space is more generous than in some other neighbourhoods.

#### Place within the wider settlement or surrounding landscape

Gossops Green neighbourhood is located on the south western side of Crawley, outside the pre-war bypass (Crawley Avenue) which forms its boundary on the north eastern side. The neighbourhood centre is located on the western side of an area of high ground which falls away to the south and west to meet Broadfield Brook and Ifield Mill Pond, which remain recreational areas separating Gossops Green from Ifield and Bewbush Neighbourhoods. To the south east is Woldhurstlea Wood, a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. The topography of the area and the views afforded by its elevated position form a significant part of its character (see Part 8 below).

#### Geographic and historical context in relation to character and appearance of the whole settlement

Gossops Green neighbourhood takes its name from an earlier hamlet, to the northeast of the proposed Conservation Area, marked as Gossipsgreen on the 1909 Ordnance Survey map. It formed part of the original 1948 Anthony Minoprio Masterplan for Crawley New Town, and was the last of the nine originally planned neighbourhoods to be built, marking the final significant phase of the work of Crawley Development Corporation. Roads were built in 1956-7, and houses from 1958. The neighbourhood was regarded as complete by 1961. As such the neighbourhood can be considered as part of the original phase of Crawley's New Town expansion, as distinct from later developments which occurred from the mid 1960s onwards.

#### Economic profile

The neighbourhood centre continues to perform its economic function as a focus of local facilities and services catering to the local population. Outside of this the area is almost exclusively residential in character.

#### General Condition and existing or potential forces for change

The area appears in good condition overall, with the neighbourhood centre, housing and public areas seemingly well maintained. There is little evidence of significant development pressure, although housing need and associated developmental pressures remain a generalised issue across Crawley and the wider region. At a smaller scale, demand for space for parking has led to the conversion of many front gardens to hardstanding, with crossovers being created through grass verges. In addition, requirements for plant and machinery servicing the buildings in the neighbourhood centre and changing energy systems associated with decarbonisation are issues for the area.

### Part 3. Historic Interest

The historical interest of the area lies in its status as a New Town neighbourhood centre, and specifically as the last such centre to be developed by Crawley Development Corporation as part of the original Crawley New Town masterplan. These origins are reflected in the planning of the area in accordance with the 'neighbourhood' concept; the careful layout characterised by good pedestrian permeability; and various typical features of post-war architecture in terms of materials, detailing, design, construction techniques and design, including the re-interpretation of classical motifs.

In this broader context the planning Gossops Green is perhaps characterised by a greater emphasis on visual interest and amenity than some of the earlier neighbourhoods, reflecting an easing of post-war austerity, a greater appreciation of consumer preferences, and the fact that the neighbourhood was planned with a more affluent population in mind. This is indicated by the relatively generous provision of open amenity space and the application of certain traditional techniques, such as tile-hanging, in the decoration of the houses (see Figure 1). At the same time, as in other early neighbourhoods the planning of the area failed to anticipate the growth in car ownership which would come over the following decades, and the garage blocks have become unsuitable for their original use owing to the increasing size of vehicles.



**Figure 1. Examples of tile hanging on Gossops Drive**



## Archaeological Interest

As an area of twentieth-century development which previously consisted of fields the archaeological potential of the area is low. The nearest Archaeological Notification Area identified by West Sussex County Council is to the northwest, where the northern section of Ifield Mill Pond (beyond the railway) marks the site of Ifield Medieval Forge.

## Part 4. Architectural Interest and Built Form

### General nature of architectural interest

The area is considered to have medium to high architectural value overall, representing one of the more successful examples of the planning of a neighbourhood unit, with different components relating to each other in a visually satisfying way.

The shopping parade includes features characteristic of post-war New Town architecture in Crawley and elsewhere, including covered walkways supported by decorated columns and decorative brickwork (see Figures 8, 9 and 10 below). Such modern elements are complemented by more traditional decorative features such as hung tiles and weatherboarding. Simple shop signs are well suited to the architecture and the function of the parade as a local centre. Some aspects of the neighbourhood centre repeat details found elsewhere in Crawley, for example the covered walkways in the town centre and at Tilgate Parade, or the public toilets used elsewhere, such as at Northgate Parade.

Across the wider area a sense of cohesion is created by certain architectural features, including the red, brown and buff brickwork (see Figure 2), which often now has an attractive weathered quality; the repetition of brick detailing on boundary walls (see Figure 3), and certain architectural themes and spatial features of the residential areas, including tile-hanging, wide arched canopies (see Figure 4), oriel windows (see Figure 5), chimneys, front gardens, and covered footways (see Figure 6). The dominant shades of brick are complimented by the use of white for weatherboarding, eaves, gutters, windows, and supports for projecting areas over pavements (see Figure 7). There is reasonable survival of front gardens and low boundary walls, although many have been removed to provide additional parking.



**Figure 2. Varieties of brickwork on a walkway in Lavant Close**



**Figure 3. Detailing on a brick boundary wall on Medway Road**





**Figure 4. Wide canopies in Cobnor Close**



**Figure 5. Examples of Oriel windows on Rother Crescent**





**Figure 6. Covered footway, Rother Crescent**



**Figure 7. White boarding at Lavant Close**

#### Part 5. Locally Important Buildings

The area contains two Locally Listed Buildings:

The **neighbourhood parade** (see Figures 8-10) was built by Crawley Development Corporation in 1960-1 and occupies a prominent position within the area towards the crest of the slope on which it is situated. Ian Nairn, the topographical writer and contributor to the 1960s 'Sussex' edition of the Pevsner Buildings of England series described the parade as 'the best... in Crawley and perhaps the best... anywhere in the new Towns'.

The two rows are three storeys with shops at ground floor and residential units on the upper two storeys. The parade is set in an L-shape form with The Windmill Public House at the centre of the courtyard. The shops at ground floor level are recessed under a colonnade. The columns are simple concrete with black bands. The parade consists of cantilevered lintels and protruding decorative boxed bay windows at first floor level. Rusticated architectural detail in the second-floor level includes traditional clay fishscale tiles. The side elevation facing Gossops Drive has diapering brick detailing. The Windmill pub, in the south western corner of the shopping parade, with its low pyramidal roof, timber cladding and garden room extension, is somewhat at odds with the prevailing aesthetic of the area.





**Figure 8. Neighbourhood Parade and pub viewed from across Gossops Drive**



**Figure 9. Northern block of Neighbourhood Parade with columns and brick diapering**





**Figure 10. Eastern block of Neighbourhood Parade**

On the opposite side of Gossops Drive to the parade is the **Church of St Alban**, by the ecclesiastical architect T.F. Ford, and dated 1961-2. It is unusually set on a north-south axis, parallel to Gossops Drive and with a green to the north. It is a Composite structure of red brick, concrete and steel; the main roof has shallow pitch with aluminium sheeting and the low roofs are covered with bituminous felt. There is a bell tower and five stained glass windows in the north elevation by Goddard & Gibbs. The interior includes stations of the cross by M. Coles. The church is an important component of the neighbourhood centre and a landmark of local architectural and historic interest.



**Figure 11. St Alban's Church**





**Figure 12. St Alban's Church**

#### Part 6. Spatial Analysis

The area forms a loose square, falling within the larger circuit of Rother Crescent on the western side of Gossops Drive, and within the line of Capel Lane and Kidborough Road on the eastern side. This area has a semi-formal spatial character overall, with the main neighbourhood facilities and uses associated together, and with blocks of housing in terraced form organised around public green spaces elsewhere. Areas of compact housing, forming continuous frontages, alternate with relatively large areas of amenity space. The network of routes through the area is relatively dense owing to the use of pedestrian passages and walkways underneath first floor accommodation.

#### Part 7. Streets and Open Space, Parks and Gardens, and Trees

Greatest emphasis is given to the spaces within and immediately around the neighbourhood centre. The two main ranges of the parade enclose a central area of public space including walkways and grassland. This is, however, partly occupied by the Parade pub and its outdoor seating, in such a way that the status of this space and the relationship between the pub and the parade are not as legible as they could be (see Figure 13).



**Figure 13. Open space between the Neighbourhood Parade and Windmill Pub**

Immediately west of Gossops Drive a large, open grassed area occupies the corner between the Drive and Medway Road, next to St Alban's church. This is a successful and attractive space, with good views of the church and neighbourhood parade, representing an effective New Town reinterpretation of the concept of a 'village green' (see Figure 14). The sense of openness here is echoed by two smaller square areas of green, enclosed by housing, further down Medway Road on its southern side (see Figure 15), and by the grass verges and front gardens on the northern side. Another attractive 'green' enclosed by housing on three sides is located nearby in Lavant Close (see Figure 16).



**Figure 14. Green at corner of Gossops Drive and Medway Road**





**Figure 15. Verges and green areas on Medway Road**



**Figure 16. Green on Lavant Close**

A further attractive open area is found at the junction of Gossops Drive and Buckswood Drive, where the corner is left open (with some provision for parking) and the houses on the other side of Gossops Drive are set further back, to achieve a greater sense of openness (see Figure 17).





**Figure 17. Open area at junction of Buckswood and Gossops Drive**

More generally the character of the area is enhanced by grass verges, which are particularly spacious along Gossops Drive. Many of the original trees planted as part of the development are now well matured, and trees generally make an important contribution to the larger green spaces and verges.

The character of the area is also influenced by various open spaces outside the proposed Conservation Area boundary. To the east a sense of openness is created by the playing field of Gossops Green Community Primary School and by Gossops Green Park, and adjacent grass verges (see Figure 18). The presence of Woldhurstlea Wood is also apparent in views along Buckswood Drive (see Figure 28 below). Further afield the elevated position of the area affords views towards Ifield Mill Pond, Broadfield Brook, and south beyond the borough into the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see Figures 21, 24, 26, 27 below).



**Figure 18. Open area to the east of the Neighbourhood Parade**



On a more everyday level the area contains a number of garage blocks, which present a somewhat bare appearance and do not positively contribute to the character of the area (see Figure 19).



**Figure 19. Garages, Cobnor Close**

#### Part 8. Setting and Views

Setting and views represent an important aspect of the character of the area, particularly in light of changes in ground levels and the elevation of the area above the surrounding land to the south and west (see Map 2).



**Map 2: Significant Views**

Within the area important views are found along Gossops Drive. The course of the Drive reaches its summit in the southern part of the area, at a point which is marked by a first-floor projection of residential accommodation over the pavement with white supports beneath. This feature provides a focus for the view northwards from the southern end of the area, which is framed by the spacious verges and tree cover around the junction of Gossops Drive and Buckswood Drive (see Figure 20, showing view 1). This summit also provides an important viewpoint in its own right. The view southwards from here is identified as a long-distance view in adopted Local Plan Policy CH8: Important Views. This view includes the nearby Broadfield Brook, the more distant Bewbush



neighbourhood, and then the higher wooded ground of Target Hill and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty beyond (see Figure 21, showing view 2).



**Figure 20. View 1: northwards along Gossops Drive from southern edge of the area**



**Figure 21. View 2: southwards from the highest point of Gossops Drive**

From the same location the view north looks towards the neighbourhood centre, whose presence is signalled from this perspective by the opening out of the ground on either side of Gossops Drive, and the greater density of tree cover (see Figure 22, showing view 3). Further north, views northwards along Gossops Drive open out to include the neighbourhood parade and St Alban's Church on either side, highlighting their relationship as features of the neighbourhood centre. Beyond these the view is closed by the eastward curve of Gossops Drive as it exits the proposed Conservation Area (see Figure 23, showing view 4).





**Figure 22. View 3: north from the highest point of Gossops Drive**



**Figure 23. View 4: northwards along Gossops Drive to Parade & church**

Further significant views are provided by Medway Road. Westward views from the eastern end take in St Albans Church and the neighbouring Green, the subsequent length of the road, and at a greater distance the tree cover around Ifield Mill Pond, providing a sense of the proximity of space of a more rural character (see Figure 24, showing view 5). From the western end of Medway Road, meanwhile, the eastward view looks uphill to the neighbourhood parade, framed by intervening trees on either side of the road (see Figure 25, showing view 6).



**Figure 24. View 5: westwards along Medway Road**



**Figure 25. View 6: eastwards along Medway Road**

The view westward along Rother Crescent at its southern junction with Gossops Drive provides a similar suggestion of access to a more rural setting as the equivalent view along Medway Road further north (see Figure 26, showing view 7). A similar westward view is available from the eastern end of Lavant Close (see Figure 27, showing view 8).





**Figure 26. View 7: westward along Rother crescent**



**Figure 27. View 8: westward from Lavant Close**

The eastward view along Buckswood Drive from its junction with Gossops Drive includes the more densely wooded southern side, forming part of Woldhurstlea Wood, helping to reinforce a sense of the nearby presence of more rural spaces to counterbalance the suburban quality of the area (see Figure 28, showing view 9).





**Figure 28. View 9: eastwards along Buckswood Drive**

Other significant views extend into the proposed Conservation Area from outside. Of these the southward view along Gossops Drive as it curves southward towards the area is particularly important, framing as it does the neighbourhood parade, the church, the adjacent green, and, at a greater distance, the first-floor projection over the pavement at the point where the Drive reaches its summit. The relatively sudden revelation of this view as Gossops Drive exits its curve provides a powerful sense of arrival. (Figure 29, showing view 10).



**Figure 29. View 10: southwards along Gossops Drive from outside the area**

At the opposite (southern) extremity of Gossops Drive, where it crosses into Bewbush Neighbourhood, the view northwards uphill towards the summit of the road represents a more elongated variant of the equivalent view from the junction of Gossops Drive and Rother Crescent, referred to above (see Figure 30, view 11).



**Figure 30. View 11: northwards along Gossops Drive from outside the area**

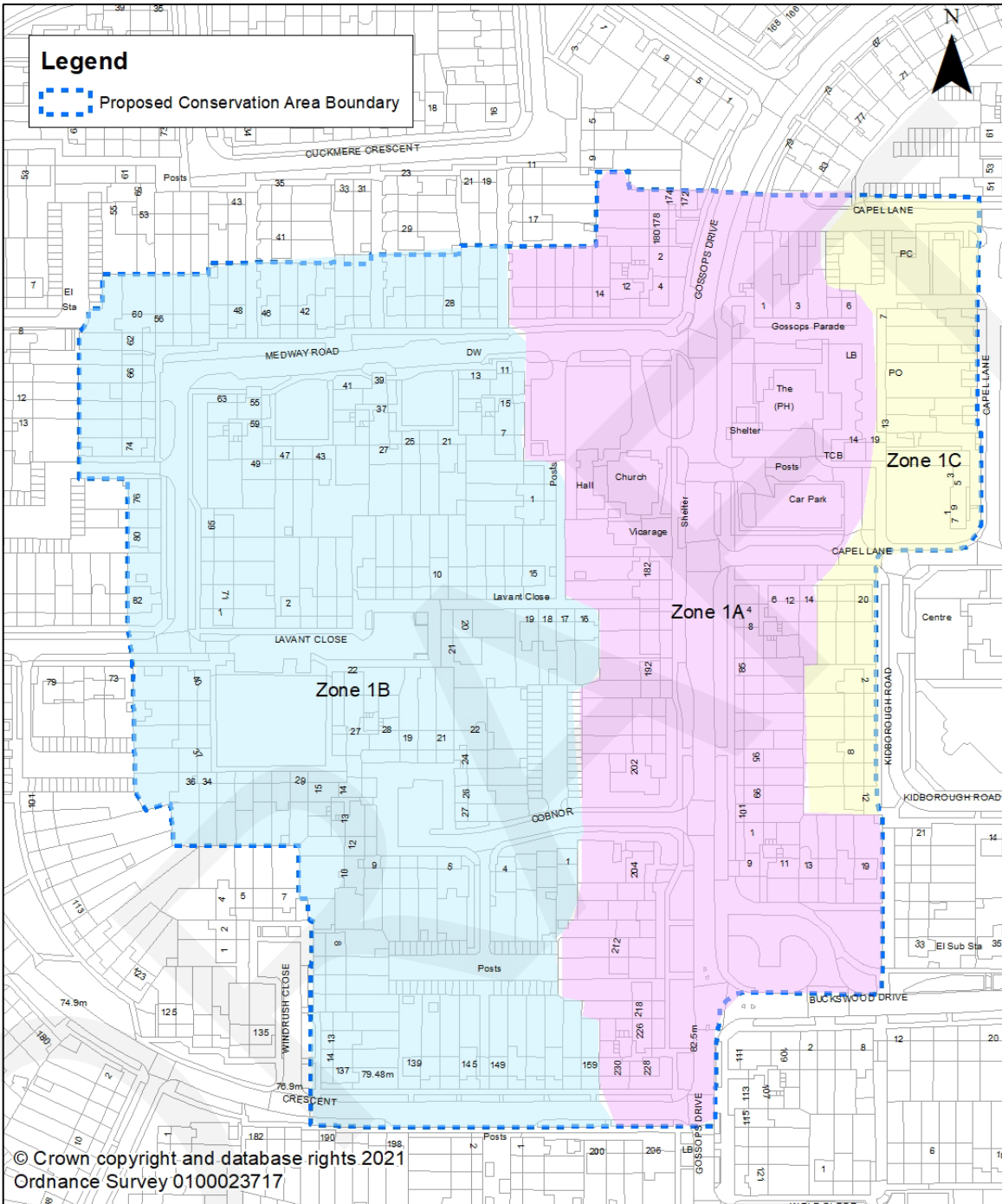
#### Part 9. Character Areas and zones

The planning of the area exhibits a high degree of overall consistency, meaning that there are no sharp distinctions in character. It is however possible to identify more subtle variations (see Map 3).

The route of Gossops Drive, opening out at the neighbourhood centre to include the neighbourhood parade, pub, church and green, represents a more spacious and slightly more formal and public area, marking the main route through the neighbourhood (Zone 1A).

To the west of Gossops Drive the area is characterised by a more close-knit network of streets, closes, green spaces and walkways (Zone 1B). This area is exclusively residential in character.

With these areas accounted for there remains a small area on the eastern side of the neighbourhood parade, west of the line of Capel Lane and Kidborough Road (Zone 1C). This is characterised by a mixture of residential uses and more commercial uses (including servicing to the rear of the parade), but the dominant presence is the area of open space formed by the primary school and park to the west.



**Map 3: Character Zones**



## Part 10. Assessment of Condition

The area is in a good state of repair overall, with both buildings and open spaces appearing well maintained. The general environmental quality is likewise relatively good, although traffic on Gossops Drive can be busy at peak times. The area remains an attractive residential neighbourhood with good pedestrian permeability and the neighbourhood centre appears to remain well-used by the local population. The garage blocks are now less suitable for parking and have a bare appearance, but may remain in use for storage.

In these circumstances, such threats as exist to the character of the area arise mainly from some of the development pressures which are evident in the locality.

One issue is the disjuncture between current needs for parking and the provision originally made in the planning of the area. As designed at the end of the 1950s the area did not anticipate the growth in car ownership which was to occur over the following decades. In consequence the visual impression of the area is marred by widespread on-street parking, and in many cases front gardens have been converted to hardstanding for additional provision, with crossovers being cut through roadside verges. This tendency has been reinforced by the extent to which the garage blocks originally provided have become unsuitable for this use as a result of the increasing size of vehicles.

The addition of porches and front extensions to houses in the area in place of the original simple canopies represents another area of change. Where these are present there is a tendency to dilute the original character, particularly where they are more bulky in form or include elaborate roofs.

A further issue with the potential to incrementally affect the character of the area is the installation of solar photovoltaic panels on the roofs of residential dwellings as part of efforts towards decarbonisation and the increase of renewable energy supply. While these imperatives may be given considerable weight in planning policy, it remains true that solar PV panels in many cases involve considerable alteration to dwellings' main elevations, with an incremental negative impact on the character of the area.

## Part 11. Identifying the Boundary

The proposed boundary (as shown in Map 1) is consistent with the boundary which was considered by in 2020 for potential identification as an Area of Special Local Character (ASLC) as part of the Crawley Heritage Review. The assessment of the area concluded that the area was of greater interest, and should be considered for Conservation Area designation.

The proposed boundary represents an enlargement of that which was considered as part of the 2010 Crawley ASEQs and Locally Listed Buildings Heritage Assessment, and recommended for Conservation Area designation at that time (though this was not implemented). This enlargement is mainly towards the south, taking in additional areas of housing.

The effect of the proposed boundary would be to include the core of the neighbourhood centre (the parade and church), the southern approach to it along Gossops Drive, and a wider residential area of residential housing where the townscape of the neighbourhood is considered to be particularly successful.

In the northwestern corner of the area the proposed boundary follows the northern and western sides of the block containing the neighbourhood parade and Windmill pub. Moving south it follows

the north-south line of Kidborough Road, enclosing properties on the western side, and then the continuation of this line along pedestrian walkway, as far as Buckswood Drive. The boundary then turns west along the northern side of the roadway of Buckswood Drive, thus including the open area at on the northern corner of Gossops and Buckswood Drives. Next the boundary moves south along the eastern side of the roadway of Gossops Drive and then west along the southern side of the roadway in Rother Crescent. After enclosing the housing on the northern side of Rother Crescent as far as Windrush Crescent, it turns north and passes through to the rear of the plots on the southern side of the green on Lavant Close. These plots and those on the western side of the green are included. Moving further north the boundary follows the line of the rear of the plots on the western side of Medway Road, and then, moving east, those on the northern side. Coming back to Gossops Drive the boundary also takes in the extension into the Drive of the frontage Medway Road frontage, before crossing the Drive to return to the neighbourhood parade.

## Part 12. Bibliography

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