

# Underriver

## *Village Design Statement* **2012 Edition**

### **A Vision of Underriver**

On entering the village of Underriver from any direction the canopy of trees and narrow lanes heralds a peaceful and tranquil haven. Positioned astride and below the Greensand Ridge, the area has unparalleled views of the Kent countryside. The houses in the valley look out on the imposing wooded hillside, whilst those on the ridge have spectacular views of the patchwork fields and historic houses of the village and the valley beyond. For residents and visitors Underriver is a perfect rural setting, whatever the season or weather. Surrounded by busy towns and close to the main arterial routes of the South East, the beauty and serenity of Underriver, with its winding lanes, wooded paths, and open countryside should be treasured.

The aim of the recommendations in this Village Design Statement is to perpetuate this vision.



# UNDERRIVER VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

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In 2004 a committee of local people prepared The Underriver Village Design Statement as Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, now superseded by the Local Development Framework.

This edition has been revised by Seal Parish Council to reflect the views of local people from study of the Seal Parish Plan Questionnaire 2010 and to permit the design statements incorporation into the Sevenoaks District Local Development Framework. It has been through a full consultation process prior to publication.

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*This document has been prepared in conformity with the District Council's Core Strategy. Policy SP1 of the Core Strategy states that:*

*"All new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of Kent Design, local Character Area Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and guidance produced by the AONBs..."*

*The delivery mechanisms for the policy include:*

*"The Council will work with local communities to produce Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Character Area Assessments to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents to provide detailed locally-specific guidance to support the general policy."*

*This Village Design Statement for Seal is intended to fulfill the role identified for Village Design Statements in Policy SP1 in providing detailed locally specific guidance on the design of new development.*

In preparing this document, recognition has been made of the responses by people from the Underriver Ward to the Seal Parish Plan Questionnaire 2010, in particular the following:

- 77% of Underriver respondents have looked at the Underriver Village Design Statement.
- 86% think the Parish Council should consult with the Local Planning Authority to agree a policy to provide effective control of replacement dwelling in the area in the Village Design Statements.
- 75 % think planning rules should be used to protect local pubs and shops from closure and conversion to housing if at all possible.
- 81% think the Parish Council seek consultation with the local authority to improve facilities for cyclists to ensure their safety on the roads.

## The Purpose of this Village Design Statement

### Purpose

- 1) Village Design Statements are intended to provide guidance for development proposals and to influence the application of the planning system. The Statement provides a context for new development based on local character and sense of place. It is not about whether development should take place: that is a job for the Sevenoaks District Local Development Framework. 'Development' means the construction, alteration, extension or replacement of buildings or other structures, or changes of use of land or buildings that either require planning permission or else have a significant impact upon the Village community or the owners of adjoining properties.
- 2) This Village Design Statement describes Underriver as it is in 2010. It emphasises the qualities valued by all those who live or work there. Its aim is to protect Underriver's exceptional qualities by ensuring that any future development is based on a considered understanding of the Village's past and present and will contribute to the local community. It is addressed to statutory bodies, public authorities, planners, developers, designers, architects, builders, engineers, local community groups, householders, landowners, farmers and other businesses.

### Process

- 3) Seal Parish Council updated and amended the 2004 document to reflect policy and community change in the intervening period.
- 4) A consultation process has been undertaken
  - a. The document has been published on the Seal Parish Council's website and notice boards.
  - b. Copies have been placed in the local Pub, and the Church porch.
  - c. The Seal Advertiser has promoted its existence and where copies can be obtained.
  - d. The Underriver Village Association has been given copies for distribution and comment.
  - e. Sevenoaks District Council's planning staff was fully consulted.
- 5) SDC will conduct statutory consultation on this document before it can be adopted as Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It will take its recommendations into account when assessing future planning applications. This Statement will thus support the Sevenoaks District Local Development Framework as it affects Underriver; it will assist the work of Seal Parish Council and of the Underriver Village Association; and it will ensure that local knowledge, opinions and ideas are taken into account when development proposals are made. It will be updated as necessary in line with Reviews of the Local Plan.

### The Village of Underriver

- 6) The Village of Underriver (referred to as a 'Settlement' for planning purposes) comprises some 1500 acres (600 hectares) of farmland, woodland, orchards and gardens. It is situated in the southerly part of the Parish of Seal in the District of Sevenoaks, Kent. It covers part of the Greensand Ridge to the south of Knole Park, including the southern edge of Fawke Common, One Tree Hill and Bitchet Common. The border then runs south, encompassing Underriver House and on to the edge of Great Hollenden Farm. From there it runs northwest to St Julians. In this Design Statement the words 'Underriver' and 'the Village' mean the whole area and the whole community within the Underriver electoral boundary.
- 7) The whole Village is in the Green Belt and nearly all is in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape of the Kent Downs is special and is of outstanding quality and value. It should be conserved and enhanced; and the long-range views into and out of the village should be maintained. There are extensive Sites of Special Scientific and Nature Conservation Interest, as well as National Trust and common land. Refer to the map at the rear of this document, which shows the extent of the designations.
- 8) Some 350-400 residents, including some 90 children, live in approximately 130 dwellings. These include the apartments in St Julians Club. Local employment is provided by businesses such as St Julians, the White Rock Inn, the local farms, converted agricultural buildings and homeworkers with Internet connections.



Hop-picking in Underriver pre-1914



The Underriver Forge pre-1914



Millennium party, June 2000, & below Cricket in Underriver

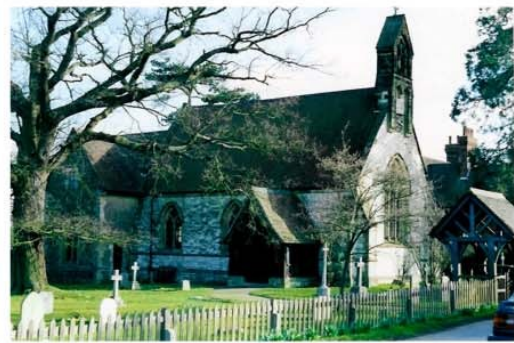


## History

- 9) The hamlet of Underriver is named in an ancient will as “sub le ryver” (i.e. “under the hill”). Although there is evidence of Saxon field names, the earliest settlements were probably Romschedde Manor and Shoads. Romschedde Manor was extant in the early 13th Century and the name survives in today’s Romshed Farm. At the end of the 13th Century, yeomen farmers established several substantial farmsteads, probably attracted by the abundance of spring water. Evidence of the original dwellings is still visible in the houses today. Five hundred years of undisturbed agricultural activity followed with crops, orchards and hop gardens. The hamlet was designated “The Golden Valley” by the 19th Century visionary painter Samuel Palmer.
- 10) At the beginning of the 18th Century the ancient manor of Shoads was replaced by Underriver House, probably built by Richard Goodhugh, High Sheriff of Kent. The Goodhughs, however, did not survive the century; and Henry Woodgate of Riverhill, whose heirs sold it to John Davison, the Judge Advocate General in 1862, acquired the estate. The other major estate, St Julians, belonged to the Herries family; J.C.Herries, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, had built the house in the 1830s. These two estates included most of the land in Underriver.
- 11) John Davison commissioned the building of St Margaret’s Church, which was finished in 1865 and consecrated in 1875, when a Church Elementary School was also established. In 1856 a post office receiving house was opened in a cottage in the Village; and, after several moves and two temporary closures, it was finally closed in September 1944. The White Rock Inn dates in part from 1820: the central section has been an Inn from at least the 1850s. The mid-19th Century extension of the railway to Sevenoaks (and soon afterwards to Tonbridge) gave greater accessibility to this hitherto remote hamlet. In the 1890s Lord Derby purchased most of the Davison estate.
- 12) In 1909 the Derby holdings were sold. This broke down the estate into individual freeholds; and some were purchased by people who wished to live in the country but to work in London. Over the last century the agricultural emphasis of the hamlet dwindled. Fewer people were employed on the land and there was a gradual increase in the number of residents who worked outside Underriver, either in local towns or beyond in London.
- 13) After World War II the pace of change accelerated. House prices rose sharply and properties changed hands frequently. In the mid-1970s the Village School was closed, as its roll was then considered too small to be viable. In 1980 the ecclesiastical Parish was joined with Seal St Lawrence.

## Community

- 14) Underriver’s beauty, location and strong community life make it an attractive place in which to live. About a quarter of its residents (including housewives) work in the Village; about a third are retired; and the remainder work in London or elsewhere. Others come into the Village to work. Many who live outside but close to the Village strongly support its activities.
- 15) Underriver has no shops, no post office, no State School and a limited bus service. It is unlikely that a shop or a post office would be viable. National supermarkets can deliver milk, newspapers and household shopping increasingly, and there is a regular postal service. Mains drainage is not available and mains gas is available in part of the Village only. Internet connection is available, but can be considered ‘slow’ in comparison to fibre optic connections available in urban areas of the district.
- 16) Community life is based around the Village Hall (opened in 1932), the Church, the White Rock Inn, the cricket ground and the recreation area. The Village Hall is a lively centre, in regular use by vigorous village societies including the Village Association, The Thursday Underriver Group and the Horticultural Society. There are regular Pilates and fitness evenings in the village hall. There is a playgroup in the Village Hall, and it is very popular for private hire for children’s parties, cookery classes and other social events.
- 17) The Cricket Club has regular summer fixtures at weekends and a popular social calendar.
- 18) Horse riding, walking and cycling are popular in the area. There is an extensive system of footpaths and bridleways maintained by Kent County Council.



**Examples of local architectural style**

## Buildings

- 19) Although Underriver has a wide range of interesting buildings the overall image is dominated by rural and woodland scenery. Within the village area of about 1500 acres (600 hectares) there are about 130 dwellings (some with associated farm buildings), the St Julians estate, a Church, an Inn, a Village Hall and a cricket pavilion.
- 20) The buildings are quite evenly spread along a network of narrow, winding roads. Many are fully screened by trees and hedges and very few are conspicuous. The more visible ones are the houses in the centre of the Village and some of the houses on the Greensand Ridge. Other houses on the ridge fit so well into the landscape that it is hard to see them from the valley.
- 21) The Village centre is small, comprising about twenty houses (including four managed by West Kent Housing Association), the Church, the Inn and the Village Hall. The houses in the village centre and the surrounding area were built over a long time-span ranging from the Middle Ages to more recent times and were occupied by farmers and craftsmen. They form an unusual settlement pattern of substantial buildings separated by short distances. Many of the houses, barns and walls in the area feature local ragstone, oak frames with wattle and daub, plaster or brick, red clay hanging tiles and roof tiles. There are a small number of fine buildings from the Georgian and Victorian periods. Oast and barn conversions add to the varied styles of dwellings in the village.
- 22) Except for Underriver House and St Julians, most houses were originally built of moderate size with two storeys, some with attics. Over the years many have been extended, reducing the number of small houses in the Village. There are, however, several pre- and post-war former council houses (now in private ownership) in the centre of the Village, together with modern timber-framed dwellings and other smaller houses within the Underriver boundary. Most buildings were designed in the style of the period in which they were built, although some of the more recent have incorporated styles from earlier periods. The use of Kentish materials and other features have allowed many of the more modern houses to blend satisfactorily with the earlier buildings.
- 23) There are a relatively high percentage of historic buildings in the area, including many which are listed. Examples are:
  - a. High House is a medieval hall house, which dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.
  - b. Black Charles is a medieval timber-framed four-bay hall house, with a high-pitched roof on the front and a cat slide on the reverse slope. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century brick and stonework on the ground floor were substituted for the medieval walling, with tile hanging above.
  - c. Catts Cottage is late medieval and dates from the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century. It has two bays with gable windows and a two-storey connecting section with a tall 17<sup>th</sup> Century chimneystack. It features Tudor timber and whitewashed plaster and local stone with hanging tiles.
  - d. Falcon Cottage on Fawke Common dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a compact cottage with ornate tile hanging to the first floor. A large Edwardian extension has been added in a well-matched style.
  - e. Underriver House is the largest private house in the Village. It is a three-storey Queen Anne house with 19<sup>th</sup> Century additions and a modern wing. Built of local stone in continuous courses with flint infilling, it has sash windows and a hip tiled roof with dormers.
  - f. The fine Church was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in a 13<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic style.
  - g. St. Julians was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a grand home with fine views over the Weald. It is constructed of yellow brick, with a steeply sloping slate roof behind three gables. It has white bargeboards and stone window-bays with abundant glazing. From 1951 onwards, adding extensions in the style that was then fashionable created a country club and flats.
  - h. Green Lane Cottage, originally the home of a pig farmer, was built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It has a symmetrical elevation, with three windows on each floor and tile hanging on the first floor.

- 24) *House replacements constructed within the curtilage of the original dwellings, where one dwelling replaced one dwelling and where the existing house was demolished before the replacement was built. Strict conditions exist to limit the size in context of the built form that existed prior to 1948. In the 2010 Parish Plan Questionnaire 86% of respondents urged the Parish Council to seek more effective control of replacement dwellings*
- 25) Residential conversions of redundant agricultural buildings of sound and substantial construction – i.e. excluding demountable buildings. Strict conditions exist to limit the size in context of the built form that existed prior to 1948.
- 26) *Dwellings constructed under an approved affordable housing scheme that met the strict criteria in Policy SP4 of the Core Strategy. These criteria include specific local housing need, proximity to local services and facilities, accessibility by public transport, acceptability of the site in landscape, environmental and highway terms and appropriate legal arrangement*
- 27) Planning permission is required to use caravans or mobile homes for residential or business purposes. These permissions are reviewed regularly to confirm that the permitted need continues. It is important to ensure that established planning rights are not acquired by default.
- 28) The main issue for development in this area may well be sustainable drainage. The village of Underriver and its surrounding areas appears has no current access to mains sewerage and so private treatment and disposal is the only option. With the majority of the area being underlain by unproductive strata these systems often discharge to the local watercourses, and so further development is likely to further add to this situation.
- 29) The following design guidelines are recommended where planning permission is needed and encouraged where such permission is not required.

**R1 Particular account should be taken of the visual impact of any new developments upon the appearance of the Village. New developments should be designed to intrude as little as possible upon the openness of the countryside by taking advantage of the lie of the land and natural screening. The appearance of a low-density settlement should be maintained. Large obtrusive buildings amidst fields should be avoided.**

**R2 New developments should be designed so as not to damage distant views from and to the Greensand Ridge (see photograph on back cover) as stated Core Strategy Policy SP1, from public road, footpaths, bridleways and other public rights of way and from neighbouring properties. Large walls, entrance gates and prominent roofs on the skyline and large windows reflecting the light should be avoided wherever possible. Solar panels should be sited discreetly. Artificial lighting should be no brighter than required for its purpose: it should be low-angled, discreet and focussed as narrowly as possible. It should not intrude upon the darkness of the night sky.**

**R3 New developments should be sympathetic with the general character of the Village, which has a wide variety of building styles, but innovative architecture might be considered in appropriate locations. Developers should be encouraged to use traditional local materials and features, such as local ragstone, weatherboarding, oak framing and red clay hanging tiles or roof tiles. They should generally be of single or two storey construction and not higher than neighbouring buildings. Replacement dwellings should be of very high quality, reflect local style and massing and be located within the curtilage to minimise their impact to the surrounding area. The area is characterised by one and two storey buildings. Higher buildings are likely to be out of character with the area and will not generally be acceptable.**

**R4 New developments should be appropriately landscaped and screened with native species of trees and hedges. Close-board fencing over one metre in height may need planning permission and should be screened from the road. Where it would be appropriate for planting to complement new development, a suitable planting scheme should be submitted with the planning application. Mature trees and hedges should not be felled without good reason.**

**R5 Residential conversions of redundant agricultural buildings of historic interest should be designed to conserve as much as practicable of the original character. Appropriate doors and windows should be used.**

**R6 The materials and styles of house extensions should match or be sympathetic with those of the original buildings but need not necessarily be of the same architectural style**

- R7** Wherever possible, non-residential agricultural buildings, domestic stabling and field shelters should be designed to minimise their impact upon the beauty of the countryside – for example by using subdued colours or cladding them with timber.
- R8** Wherever possible, non-residential agricultural buildings, domestic stabling and field shelters should be located away from neighbouring properties. This would be especially important if they were likely to be used for activities that could cause a nuisance (for example by noise or smell) or lead to clutter in the countryside. Where practicable, they should be sited in natural hollows, behind existing or new natural screening or close to existing buildings. Road access to new agricultural buildings should have good sightlines.
- R9** Caravans and mobile homes used for residential and business purposes should be made of good quality materials and painted in subdued colours. They should be well landscaped where practicable. Those used, as agricultural dwellings should be sited where a permanent agricultural dwelling would be sited if such a dwelling were approved in due course.
- R10** Measures to conserve resources should be designed into new development where practicable and consistent with the other objectives in this Design Statement. Developers should be encouraged to provide high levels of insulation, discreetly sited solar panels, dual flush toilets and grey water collection systems; and to plan construction site management so as to reduce waste and minimise the use of energy and water.
- R11** Any application for development must be accompanied by an adequate proposal to deal with the treatment of sewage and contaminated water to prevent land contamination.

Examples of sympathetic conversions and extensions.



## The local economy - employment

- 30) Underriver offers limited employment opportunities, but these help to balance the community and so add to the attractiveness of the Village. A number of Underriver residents have businesses there. Others come to work in the Village in various capacities.
- 31) Underriver has around 13 small farms of varying sizes and largely the farming community maintains the beauty of its countryside. Part time farmers outnumber full time farmers and the type of farming is almost entirely livestock, together with some fruit. One farm is in organic conversion and has a flock of free-range hens. Agricultural contractors are employed when needed. Farmers are experiencing the worst recession since the 1930s: in these difficult times they should have reasonable freedom to develop their agricultural businesses, including appropriate diversification. A number of properties have stabling and pasture; and many employ gardeners, home helps, handymen, etc.
- 32) The Underriver Under-Fives Nursery, Music Box, the St Julians Day Nursery and the White Rock Inn meet important Village needs and should be supported. The White Rock Inn and restaurant is a popular venue for both residents and visitors. St Julians provides recreational facilities for its club members, thus serving a wider community. It also accommodates a number of mainly hi-tech businesses. The use of private dwellings for business purposes also provides employment.
- 33) The Sevenoaks Local Plan makes it clear that proposal for the development of new businesses in the Green Belt, or for the expansion of existing businesses, is unlikely to be approved if they require the construction of new buildings on undesignated sites. Otherwise, there is a good case for encouraging business activities, provided that they do not intrude upon the quiet enjoyment of the Village and of the countryside. Any damaging business activities should not be permitted.
- 34) The following guidelines are recommended where planning permission is needed and encouraged where such permission is not required.

**R12 New business developments should be designed so as not to harm the character of the area. They should not add significantly to local traffic. Nor should they cause a nuisance to other properties through excessive noise, dust, vibration, noxious emissions, loss of daylight, visual intrusion, clutter in the countryside, excessively bright artificial lighting or security surveillance equipment. Artificial lighting should be no brighter than required for its purpose: it should be low-angled, discreet and focussed as narrowly as possible.**

**R13 In principle, businesses that meet these criteria and other statutory planning policies should be supported, especially where they provide valued services to the local community. Businesses that cannot meet them would be undesirable.**

**R14 Adequate provision should be made for off-road vehicle parking, which should be screened with native species where appropriate.**

The White Rock Inn and restaurant in the heart of the village





St. Julians club and business complex on the outskirts of the village.



Mixed Farming in Underriver



A 30mph speed limit is essential for Underriver's narrow lanes

A woodland path



## Roads and Transport

- 35) Underriver's winding roads contribute greatly to the character and charm of the Village. They are all in the "C" and "D" categories and most are very narrow. Some have high banks high hedges or deep ditches. Excessive traffic, travelling too fast, is an increasing danger to local road-users, including walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Passing vehicles drive on to the verges, causing damage and unnatural road widening, which encourages further speeding. The lack of resources prevents adequate road maintenance by the Local Authority; and this adds to the danger. Kent County Council has plans for a pilot study to assess selected rural roads in parts of the County for appropriate speed limits. Meanwhile, national criteria have to be followed.
- 36) There are buses twice a day between Underriver and Tonbridge on Mondays to Saturdays. There is no direct service to Sevenoaks or to Hildenborough Station for commuters. A better service would benefit non-car-owners.
- 37) The following recommendations are made to enable Underriver's roads to carry the present volumes of traffic without altering their rural character and to protect its bridleways and footpaths.

**R15 The Local Highway Authorities are requested to maintain Underriver's roads and verges to an adequate standard.**

**R16 Verge erosion caused by excessive rain should not be filled with tarmac, but should be rebuilt with natural sediment that hardens when it dries.**

**R17 Policies should reflect local people's desire to have safe local roads for use by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. The highway authority should discourage speeding traffic and 'rat running' and appropriate measures should be introduced wherever necessary and within the restraints imposed.**

**R18 Suburban signing, kerbstones, pavements and street lighting should be avoided.**

**R19 Road verges in the centre of the Village should be cut regularly. Elsewhere they should be cut regularly to one metre from the roadway where this is essential for road safety.**

**R20 Footpaths, bridleways and other public rights of way should be kept open and in good repair.**

**R21 Any proposals to close public rights of way should be rejected. Any proposals for minor diversions to public rights of way should be considered on their merits. Major diversions should be rejected, unless there are strong reasons for approving them.**

## Landscape, Wildlife and Recreation

- 38) Underriver is in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and includes Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), principally One Tree Hill and parts of Bitchet Common and Fawke Common and a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) on Rooks Hill. There are also ancient woodlands, including White Rocks, Rooks Hill, and Brimstonewell Wood, which have had continuous woodland cover since the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is important that the Green Belt, AONB, SSSI and Tree Preservation Order policies are enforced rigorously so as to preserve these priceless assets for the future. Refer to the map at the rear of this document for the extent of the designated areas.
- 39) The northern part of Underriver is mainly woodland, with a few orchards, on greensand. Some of Bitchet Common is being managed to recreate heathland. The valley land is mostly heavy clay used for pasture. Ragstone is present at the base of the ridge, which historically has been quarried for local building purposes. A number of springs feed watercourses that run through the village and eventually feed into Hilden Brook. Several older properties have their own reservoirs.
- 40) Underriver's open spaces, lanes, bridleways, footpaths and farmland provide good habitat for flora and fauna. They are also much used for walking, cycling, horse riding and other forms of recreation. They are in good order due to volunteer and Parish Council action. The bridleways need drainage and surfacing with natural materials to bring them to a satisfactory standard.

- 41) A wide variety of birds and other wildlife are commonly seen or heard. The woodlands contain many tree, shrub and undergrowth species. The heavy clay soil and improved grassland means that wild flowers are not special in the area, except at a few sites. The practice of coppicing is vital to the cycle of woodland flora and fauna.
- 42) The SSSIs, the Commons and other significant parts of the Village are managed with a strong wildlife emphasis. Romshed Farm and St Julians follow the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which supports wildlife and public access. Absalom's Farm has a significant habitat improvement element. A Village Wildlife Habitat project was started in 1996. New hedges have been planted and old ones are being renovated; woodland is being protected from stock; and wild flower patches are being developed. A beginning is being made on verge management for wild flowers.
- 43) Some of Underriver's landscape is adversely affected by overhead electricity and telephone wires and is at risk of further visual damage from new telecommunications developments, including masts and satellite dishes.
- 44) In the countryside, poorly aimed, over bright floodlights and security lamps have stolen the blessed night from humans, and countless other species which have evolved to the rhythm of light and darkness. The day-night cycles, behaviour, feeding and mating patterns of bats, birds, glow-worms, moths, and countless other species are disturbed, and millions are killed, by light going where it is not needed.
- 45) The historic pattern of roads, tracks, field boundaries and hedgerows that gives the modern landscape its character should be protected during development. Where possible, historic features should be enhanced and promoted as key components of the local environment.
- 46) The Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), provides a context for looking at possible changes and for seeking to ensure that countryside character is protected and enhanced, and where possible, opportunities are taken to create new and to protect and enhance existing habitats, wildlife corridors and stepping stones. An understanding of LCA will also help to ensure that planting outside settlements is in harmony with the character of the countryside.
- 47) The following recommendations are made to encourage practices designed to protect Underriver's landscape, wildlife and habitat.

**R22 Landowners and householders should be encouraged to protect existing wildlife environments and to create new habitats in the form of copses, hedgerows, ditches, ponds, field verges and open spaces of rough grassland. Excessive use of chemicals should be avoided. Excessive garden lighting should be avoided to protect dark night skies.**

**R23 Local Tree Preservation Orders, which are enforced by Sevenoaks District Council, should be respected. Landowners and householders should be encouraged to care for their woods and trees and to replace them when they reach the end of their lives. They should be discouraged from removing old farm hedgerows and encouraged to use native species for new planting in appropriate locations.**

**R24 New telecommunications developments, including masts, satellite dishes and other structures should be sensitively designed and sited. Sympathetic design and camouflage should be used to minimise the impact on the environment. A programme to relocate overhead wires underground should be encouraged. Proposals to improve broadband services to the community should be encouraged within the above restraints.**

**R25 Any impacts by development on the important designated sites and ancient woodland within the area are to be fully mitigated. The replacement of dead and dying trees should be avoided, unless they are a health and safety risk. Dead and dying wood provides important habitat for bat species and the special invertebrates found within ancient woodland habitats.**



Examples of wildlife found in Underriver

## Consultation and consideration for neighbours

- 48) It is important that the Underriver Village Association and Underriver residents affected by proposed developments should be fully consulted before any planning permissions are given for new developments in the Village.
- 49) Most residents wish to ensure that the ways in which they use their properties cause no avoidable nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours. It is a courtesy for those considering any building or change of use to consult their neighbours, whether or not the development requires planning permission. Consultation also helps to avoid problems over such matters as the size and location of garden sheds, play equipment, redundant machinery or other refuse, the height of boundary hedges or the installation and operation of security lighting. Good neighbourliness helps to make Underriver a happy as well as a beautiful place in which to live.

## **Appendix**

### **Extracts From Sevenoaks District Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Adopted February 2011**

#### **Policy LO8**

**The Countryside and the Rural Economy. The extent of the Green Belt will be maintained.**

**The countryside will be conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity will be protected and enhanced where possible. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings, will be conserved and enhanced.**

**Particular regard will be given to the condition and sensitivity of the landscape character and securing the recommended landscape actions in the proposed SPD to ensure that all development conserves and enhances local landscape character and that appropriate mitigation is provided where damage to local character cannot be avoided.**

**Development that supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy, including development for agriculture, forestry, small scale business development and rural tourism projects, and the vitality of local communities will be supported provided it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt, the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty conserves and enhances the value and character of the District's woodland and the landscape character of other rural parts of the District and that it takes account of infrastructure requirements.**

#### **Policy SP 1**

##### **Design of New Development and Conservation**

**All new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of Kent Design, local Character Area Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and AONB Management Plans.**

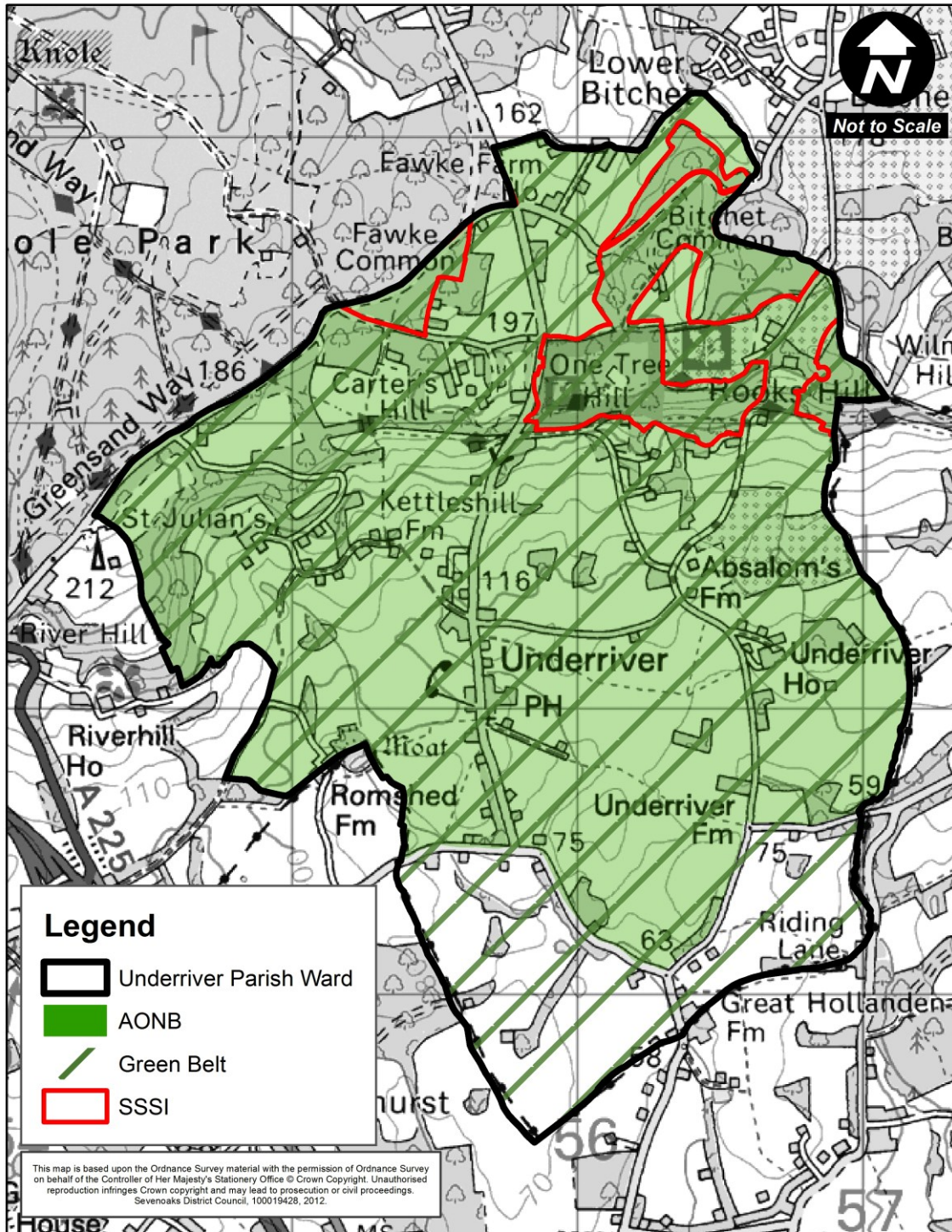
**In areas where the local environment lacks positive features new development should contribute to an improvement in the quality of the environment.**

**New development should create safe, inclusive and attractive environments that meet the needs of users, incorporate principles of sustainable development and maintain and**

enhance biodiversity.

**The District's heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, historic buildings, landscapes and outstanding views will be protected and enhanced.**

Map showing Underriver's boundaries, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (shaded green) and the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (outlined in red). Please note information is shown only within the boundary of Underriver Parish Ward.



The whole of the village of Underriver is in the Metropolitan Green Belt



**View of Underriver from the Greensand Ridge**