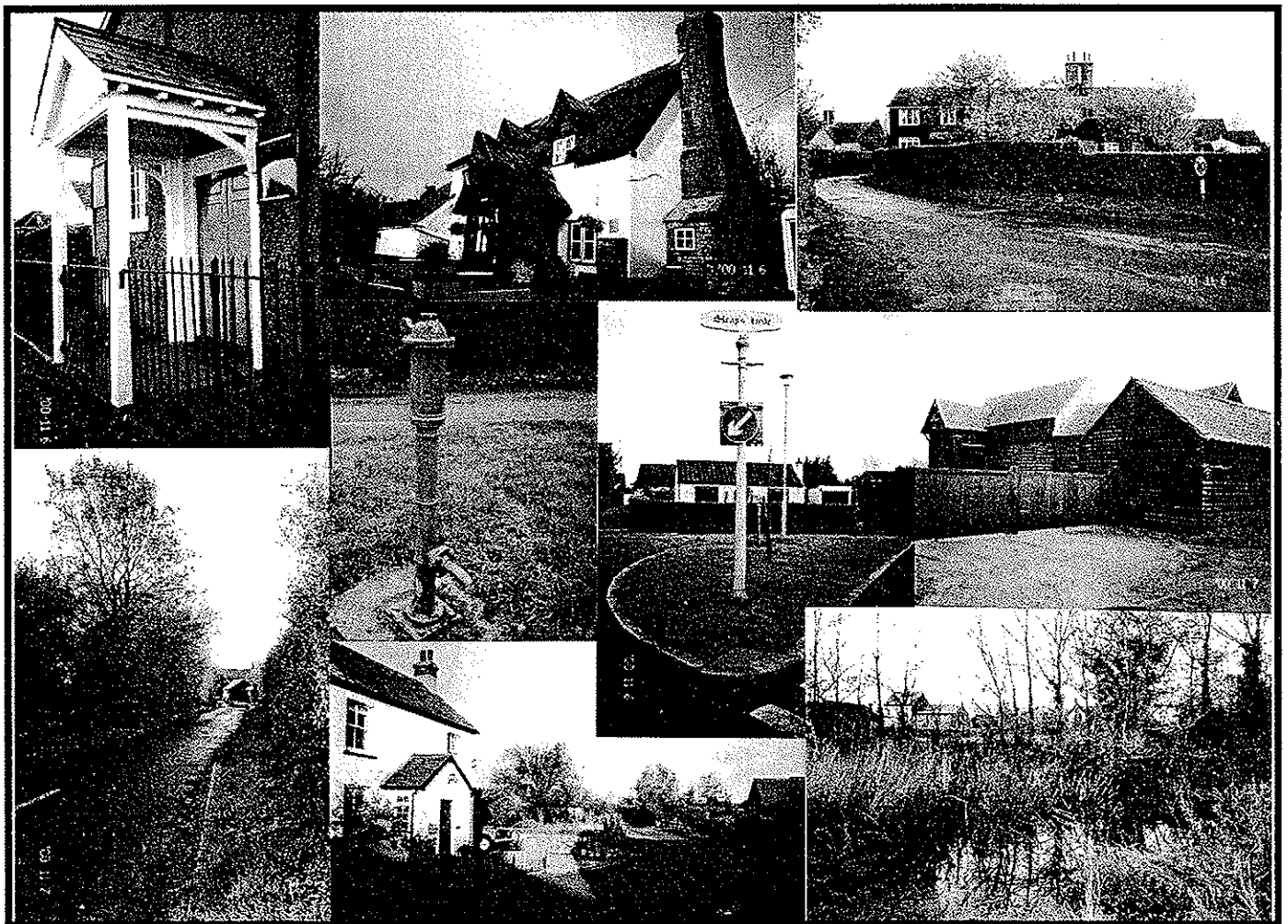


CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT FOR SLEAPSHYDE



July 2001

Conservation Area Character Statement for Sleapshyde

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Civic Amenities Act 1967 empowered local planning authorities to make provision for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of areas of special architectural or historic interest by designating them as conservation areas. Sleapshyde Conservation Area was designated on 31st March 1993.
- 1.2. Conservation should not be thought of solely as a process of preservation and an impediment to change. Designation represents an opportunity to formulate positive policies to enhance its environmental quality and to ensure the successful integration of any development or redevelopment necessary for its continued success as a living and working community. The District Plan Review sets out the general principles to be observed when dealing with applications for new development and redevelopment. Policy 85 deals with Development in Conservation Areas.
- 1.3. This leaflet aims to show the way in which the form of the conservation area has evolved, to describe its character and appearance, to indicate the principles to be adopted in considering planning applications in the area, and to form a framework within which any detailed proposals may be formulated.

2. Location and Setting

- 2.1. Sleapshyde lies on an area of Boulder Clay north of the River Colne. It is immediately north of the A414 dual carriageway, between St Albans and Hatfield, close to the District boundary and surrounded by flat agricultural land. The conservation area covers the historic, eastern part of the hamlet, which is rural in character. To the west, the mid-twentieth century, more suburban housing area of Sleapcross Gardens, Smiths Crescent/Sleapshyde Lane and Smallford Lane is not of special architectural or historic interest.
- 2.2. In the conservation area there are around twenty dwellings, a Chapel, public house and farm. There is a mixture of historic buildings (eight dating from the sixteenth to early eighteenth century, and three dating from the nineteenth) and buildings from the twentieth century, which are for the most part bungalows built from the 1940's onwards.
- 2.3. The hamlet is arranged along three lanes radiating from a small central green. The density of development is low and the layout is informal with no strong building line. Property boundaries generally have an informal appearance, and hedges, scattered trees, stained picket or post and rail fencing and gardens are predominant. On the small semicircular green, kerbed with granite, is a village pump (minus handle), the small oval village sign on a fluted column (which was previously the light column), a modern streetlight and a sapling. Unfortunately the fluted column has been used for attaching other signs at a high level which detracts from its appearance.
- 2.4. To the north east side of the central green is a small pond, set in scrub, alongside which runs the access to Farm Cottage. The pond is fenced off from the road by an informal picket fence and hedgerow. In Winter 2000/2001, the water level in the pond was high, and it was flanked with rushes including bulrushes. From the pond there are views through the hedgerow, and across a paddock northwards to the Chapel and public house.

- 2.5. Surrounded by hedging, including along the road frontage, the paddock (known as The Collect) adjacent to the pond is an important element in contributing to the rural ambience of the hamlet. It provides an open setting for the Plough Public House, which is the last building on the north east side of the northern spur of Sleapshyde Lane, before it narrows and then splits into a footpath to Wilkin's Green and a bridleway to Smallford Bridge.
- 2.6. The length of Sleapshyde Lane southwards from the pond to the A414 is particularly rural in character, being narrow and flanked on the west by high hedging, the farm, farm entrance and agricultural buildings, and on the east by tall hedging and the mellow brick, curved wall flanking the entrance to the garage/store of Rose Cottage.
- 2.7. An essential element is the green character of the hamlet. Hedgerow trees and some scattered trees contribute to this character, and, although trees within the hamlet are not generally very large, most properties have substantial front hedges which include privet, beech, holly and elm species. Before the onset of Dutch elm disease, elm trees were predominant. Elm was much used for coffins and at one time the hamlet was even nicknamed "coffin village"!
- 2.8. To the south of the historic hamlet is a belt of rough land with grass, trees, bushes and brambles, the southeastern most section of which was cut off from a larger field by construction of the A414. It is now separated from the dual carriageway by a fairly dense hedge, through which some of the buildings within the hamlet can be glimpsed. This belt of land buffers the hamlet from the dual carriageway, but the otherwise tranquil character of the hamlet does suffer from some road noise.
- 2.9. To the north and east of the conservation area there are large, flat fields flanked by hedgerows and trees, and there are some views out across the fields in this direction, particularly from the Plough, from where the District boundary which runs along a leafy byway is visible across the fields. The northwestern part of the conservation area is visible from Smallford Lane to the west, from where properties can be seen set behind mature gardens. The western part of the conservation area is separated from the residential area to the west by a playing field.

3. Origins and Development of the Settlement.

- 3.1. There is no archaeological evidence of dense prehistoric population. A Paleolithic flint handaxe c. 50,000BC has been reported south of the A414, but there have been no other prehistoric finds. The area may have been cleared and farmed by the Romans, as suggested by possible Roman field systems near Colney Heath, but no Roman Buildings have been found in the vicinity.
- 3.2. 'Slaep' is Old English for slippery or watery place. Hyde was originally a late Saxon word based on the amount of land farmed by one peasant family (usually 120 acres). It is probable that 'hyde' is associated in this area with the Abbey policy of the late 11th and 12th centuries of allowing clearings ('assarts') of 120 acres or more in formerly forested land. The settlement is not mentioned in the Domesday book and therefore it is likely to originate from the 12th century.

3.3. In the Middle Ages Sleapshyde was a small hamlet in the large manorial estate of Park, belonging to St Albans Abbey. The Abbot of St Albans' Court Book which recorded the Abbot's official dealing with tenants such as marriages, inheritances, and fines makes its first reference to Slape when Reginald of Slape exchanged land in the thirteenth century and it refers Roger and Agnes Slape's family from 1273 through to the end of the fourteenth century. To the west of Sleapshyde, beyond Smallford Lane, the Abbey owned the fishing rights in the Smallfordwater and there are occasional fines for poaching fish. One grandson of Roger Slape, Alexander, was frequently in court for grinding his own corn rather than using the Abbot's mills, and for felling trees. In the fifteenth century the Abbott granted land in Sleap to the hospital of St Anthony, London. From the fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century, there are other documents which refer to members of the Sleape family and other inhabitants of Slape or Slepe, e.g. the will of Phillip Sleape (1590) referred to him as 'yeoman of Sleapshyde'.

3.4. After the Reformation the former monastery lands were given by the Crown to the Denny family. Nineteenth century census data shows the main occupation of the population of 'Sleep' was agriculture. Two farmers are listed (Joice and Day), but most occupants are agricultural labourers and a number of women and children made straw plait and hats. There is no mention of the surname Sleape by this time. The Tithe Award Maps of the 1840's shows field names including Cangles, Home Meadow, Plough Field, Great Home Field, and Back Pightle.

3.5. During the twentieth century some of the old farm workers' cottages were demolished and replaced in the main with bungalows. A number of small dwellings built in the early part of the century from temporary materials were also extended and reconstructed. There was also a small amount of infilling at the centre.

3.6. A comparison between the attached Ordnance Survey 1896 (2nd ed. 25") and the current map indicates little change in the property boundaries or layout of the buildings.

4. Architectural and Historic Quality of Buildings

4.1. Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are buildings included on a list of 'Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' compiled by central government. The Council is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when considering any application for listed building consent or planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting, 'to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting'. Applications will be assessed against District Plan historic buildings policies and government advice. There are seven entries in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest for Sleapshyde (dated September 1984). These are shown on the attached plan. Outbuildings within the curtilage of listed buildings are normally protected under the main listing and are not separately indicated on the plan. There is currently no record of survival of buildings from the medieval period and most of the listed buildings appear to originate from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are scattered throughout the hamlet and are all of timber framed construction. Weatherboarding, plain clay tiled roofs and prominent red brick chimneys predominate.

4.1.1. Rose Cottage and Little Rose Cottage, comprises one long range dating from the seventeenth century (or possibly sixteenth), with dark weatherboarded elevations and a tall red brick chimney stack, set behind hedging and deep gardens, and facing north west towards the small central semicircular green. Rose Cottage has been extended to the side and rear in the 1970's and 80's using matching roof tiles, weatherboarding but also brick,

and although a little tall, relates quite well to the original. To the rear of Rose Cottage is a garage/store built in the 1970's using traditional and reclaimed materials in the form of a weatherboarded barn and attached brick built store with tiled roofs. A 30mph road sign to the front of the cottages is fortunately set on a short painted post, in a narrow grass verge, against the hedging, and is therefore fairly unobtrusive.

- 4.1.2. The Plough Public House an important landmark building, marking the entrance to the hamlet from the north, can be seen in views northwards from the central green and pond. It has a tarmac forecourt and small informal car park to the rear. Dating from the late seventeenth century, a record in 1760 attributes ownership to the Searancke family, Hatfield brewers. By 1840 it belonged to Alfred Pryor of Hatfield (brewers from Baldock). In the nineteenth century the publican not only farmed an adjacent field, but the pub had a shop attached and stables for two horses. Externally its main features are a thatched roof incorporating dormers, painted brick and plastered walls and a large external red brick chimney stack. A single storey, flat roofed 1960's extension to the rear, although fortunately subservient in height, is overlarge and not in keeping with the style of the historic building.
- 4.1.3. On the east of Sleafshyde Lane, marking the entrance to the hamlet from the south, is Sleafshyde Farmhouse (originally a hall house of early sixteenth century origin), and its group of listed traditional weatherboarded farm buildings. These comprise two large late seventeenth century barns, a seventeenth/eighteenth century granary, a nineteenth century stable, and a small barn (not individually listed) adjacent to the farmhouse. The farm has plastered elevations and the farm and barns have plain clay tiled roofs. The stable has a pantile roof.
- 4.1.4. Sited north of the farm at the end of an informal driveway is Farm Cottage, a small late seventeenth century timber framed house, in a nineteenth or twentieth century casing, plastered walls and plain clay tiled roof. The rear lean-to dates from the seventeenth century. The front porch and windows are modern.
- 4.1.5. Ye Olde House is mid to late seventeenth century, possibly with an earlier core, and has nineteenth or twentieth century casing. Its predominant external features are its plain clay tiled roof, weather boarded upper floor, four gables in a line, three with exposed timber framing purlins and a large mid seventeenth century red brick chimney stack. When it was restored in residential use in the late 1980's, a barn like garage, in traditional materials was erected within a gravel driveway.

4.2. Unlisted Buildings

The following unlisted buildings are considered together with the listed buildings to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are termed 'locally listed'.

- 4.2.1. The Methodist Chapel: Situated close to the lane in the northern part of the hamlet, opposite the Plough this is a very prominent building, of simple design. It is gable end on to the road and the front part of the chapel is of unpainted roughcast with regular shallow piers, a slate roof, red ridge tile and white painted timber windows (multi-paned double casements with a full width light over). The taller two-storey rear section is smooth rendered, partly painted white and it has a prominent brick chimney. The double, painted timber entrance doors and circular fanlight are covered by a pleasing open porch with a matching slate roof, on white painted supports, with a dentilled eaves and small slightly curved brackets. Simple railings on a blue bullnosed brick kerbing, retain a paved frontage of small blue stable paving and a red paved entranceway. To the north side of the chapel railings is a Victorian post box, dating from the period 1871-91, set into a red brick wall. The Chapel is also of social and historic interest to the hamlet. Opened in February 1840, it cost £210 to build. It seated 108, sufficient for the whole population,

because at that time the parish church was St. Peter, four miles away in St Albans. However, the congregation fell when St Mark's Church was built in 1845, in the newly created parish of Colney Heath. Methodists from Hatfield joined the congregation until they got their own Chapel in 1855. Sunday school was started in the 1860's boosting attendance and the chapel was extended. A club-room was added, which in 1907 boasted 50 members, providing an alternative venue to the Plough opposite. A proposal for a new chapel came to nothing and, fortunately, the original, one of the earliest in Hertfordshire, and the oldest place of worship in Hertfordshire Methodism, has survived.

4.2.2. Angel Cottage. This white painted, Victorian building set close to the lane, marks the entrance to the historic hamlet from the west. Formerly a beer house, it has a slate roof, an enclosed entrance porch and painted timber sliding sash windows typical of the nineteenth century. Set between the playing fields entrance to the west and a wide green verge to the east, it is seen together with Ye Olde House within a predominantly green backdrop. A court of modern garages to the rear of the wide verge has been demolished recently, giving a more open aspect. However, the area remains hardsurfaced and is secured by high chainlink fencing and gates.

4.3. Other Buildings

The remaining buildings dating from the twentieth century, are not of interest architecturally nor historically. With the exception of Thanet House and Avalon, all are bungalows, which has the advantage of allowing the historic buildings and landscaping to be more visually predominant. Some will have replaced historic ones, condemned and demolished in the twentieth century, for example, there were cottages opposite the Plough (now The Hyde Bungalow and Nicaron), Aylesford (1952) was built on a site occupied until 1938 by three cottages, where Buckland Bungalow (1973) stands there was a thatched house called Cockwicks, and Penlu built in 1948, lies on the site of four old cottages. Several of the modern bungalows replaced temporary buildings constructed in the mid-twentieth century.



Buckland Bungalow, Aylesford and the Methodist Chapel.

5. Design and Materials

- 5.1. To preserve or enhance the hamlet's historic character and appearance, it is important that any development is of a high standard of design, sympathetic to its surroundings and the conservation area as a whole. It should not detract from the setting of nearby existing buildings, its form should have regard to the surroundings and the existing balance of buildings and landscape, and should be of good quality, normally traditional and natural materials.
- 5.2. Predominant traditional roofing materials in the area are plain clay roof tiles for the high pitched timber framed buildings and natural slate for the lower pitches of the nineteenth century buildings. The Plough has a thatched roof.
- 5.3. Walling is predominantly dark stained weatherboarding for some cottages and agricultural buildings. Some have natural render/external plaster, although some render has been painted white. Some buildings include red brick chimneys, and red brick ground floors. At the Plough, the ground floor brick has been painted white.
- 5.4. The traditional windows are timber, with a painted finish, normally white. Most are casements and many are multipaned. Angel Cottage has more typically nineteenth century sash windows. Dormer windows are found at the Plough but are not a characteristic of the hamlet. uPVC windows and doors lack the finish and details of traditional joinery. They should be avoided and will not be acceptable for listed buildings and new development. Replacement windows in an unlisted existing dwelling may constitute permitted development, but their use is discouraged in order to preserve the traditional appearance of the hamlet.
- 5.5. Some of the recent buildings have natural or painted rendered walls which creates some unity with the historic buildings, but some are brick faced with modern roofing materials including some profiled sheeting and plain or profiled concrete tiles, on generally low pitched roofs. A proliferation of non-unifying materials should be avoided.

6. Trees and Landscape Characteristics

- 6.1. Although the historic buildings are scattered informally around the hamlet, they are nevertheless visually bound together and enhanced by the network of greenery: the open spaces, the hedges, the trees and gardens which overall provide an attractive countryside feel which is an appropriate setting for the buildings.
- 6.2. Most trees are protected under conservation area legislation. Six weeks' prior written notice must be given to the Council of any proposed surgery or felling. This enables the Council to consider the effects of the proposal on the appearance of the area, and to make a tree preservation order if necessary.
- 6.3. Front boundaries directly abut the un-kerbed, tarmac road and there is an absence of footways, which is an important element of the character of the hamlet. In line with this rural character, driveways are predominantly graveled. Traditional boundary treatments are hedging, picket fencing, and post and rail timber fencing, which all have an informal rural character. Some of the modern bungalows have front boundaries containing flowering shrubs, ornamental conifers, decorative metal gates, decorative brick walling and/or brick gate piers, and nearby the electricity sub-station is enclosed by close boarded fencing. However the

proliferation of these features, which are more suburban than rural in character, should be avoided.

7. Metropolitan Green Belt

- 7.1. The entire hamlet is part of the Metropolitan Green Belt and a Green Belt settlement, subject to Policies 1 and 2 of the District Plan. It is an established objective of the District Planning Authority, through the implementation of its policies, to ensure that proposals for development in the Metropolitan Green Belt do not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of that area. Only very specific types of development are acceptable, as set out in those policies, and any development should integrate with the existing landscape. Siting, design and external appearance are particularly important, and additional planting will normally be required.

8. Summary

- 8.1. Section 72 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in the exercise of planning functions. It is the Council's policy to encourage the retention of those features which it is felt make the conservation area special. These include listed and locally listed historic buildings; their historic and architectural features, their settings, trees and informal boundaries such as hedging, wooden picket and post and rail fencing, and the spacious and rural character and appearance of the area.

- 8.2. If further advice is needed please contact the Enterprise and Civic Environment Department, St Albans City and District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE. Tel. 01727 866100.

9. Bibliography:

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The Manor of Park in the 14th Century, M. Tomkins.

Sleapshyde, S.F. Page, Herts Countryside, Vol 14 1959/60 p.103.

Colney Heath Parish In Times Past, Colney Heath Parish Council 1994

Ordnance Survey Sheet XXXV.10, 1896, 2nd ed. 25" Courtesy Herts Archives and Local Studies

Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage March 1997.

Census 1841.

Victoria History of the Counties of England, 1908.

Statutorily Listed Buildings:

1, 2, and 3 Ye Olde House.
Rose Cottage and Little Rose Cottage.
Farm Cottage.
The Plough Public House.

Sleapshyde Farm.
Granary at Sleapshyde Farm.
Barns and Stables at Sleapshyde Farm.

Locally Listed Buildings:

Angel Cottage.

Methodist Chapel.

99
35-424

97
7-128

98
5-195

Plough
(P.H.)

Meth. Chapel
(Wesleyan)

Sleepshyde Farm

Sleepshyde

75
5-390

76
1-168

68
15-029

67
7-714

66
8-351

6-964

83
318

82
1-033

84
682

85
1-718

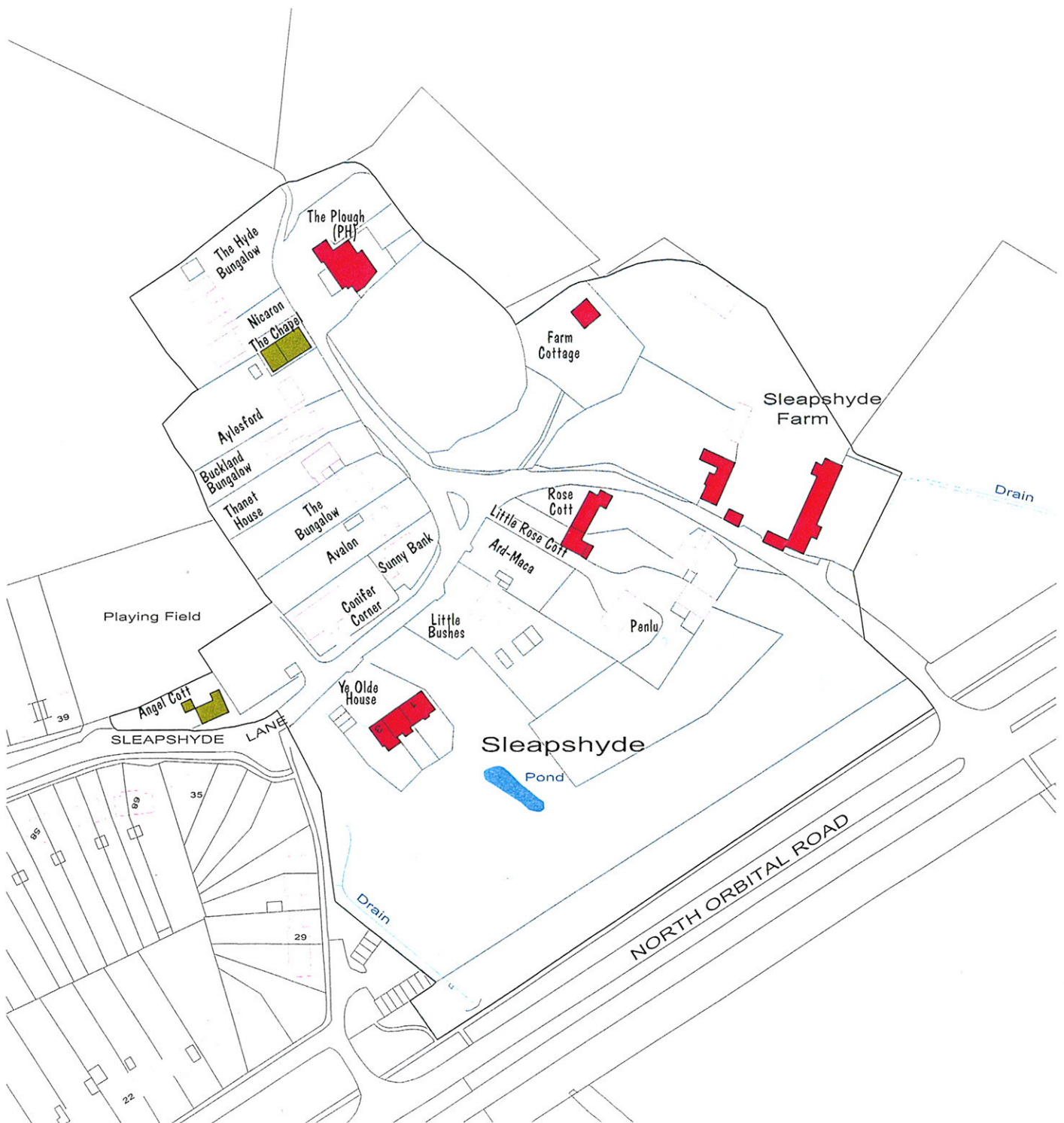
81
522

80
618

78
2-054

77
715

79
690



KEY



CONSERVATION AREA



STATUTORILY LISTED
BUILDINGS



BUILDINGS OF LOCAL
INTEREST



NORTH

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TITLE: SLEAPSHYDE CONSERVATION AREA

DRAWN: MJM

DATE: JANUARY 2001

SCALE: Not to Scale

