

Meopham

Parish Design Statement 2006



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GUIDE TO THE DESIGN STATEMENT:

This statement is intended to provide a description of the characteristics of the parish, together with concerns, guidelines and recommendations where appropriate - viz.

CONCERNS

Current problems, past mistakes

RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific planning aims

Meopham Parish Design Statement

15 December 2006

Herewith is the finalised Parish Design Statement, completed as far as we can as per our original brief.

We have now been advised for certain by GBC planners that there has to be a Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out by consultants and included in this PDS in order that the PDS can be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the new Local Development Framework. (The timing of which has now been delayed until 2008).

GBC, through Malcolm Doyle, is to arrange a meeting for us with their consultants early in 2007, to discuss the content and cost implications of this work, which hopefully can be met from existing funds.

In the meantime GBC have advised that the PDS, in its current form, should not be formally published. However, we do suggest that it is made available on the Parish website and possibly displayed for reference at chosen locations in the Parish at your discretion. GBC are also consulting internally regarding MPC taking the PDS to the GBC Cabinet Advisory Panel as a precursor to full Council, in order to get the PDS adopted as a background document to the existing local plan. (See pink section bottom page 1)



Pat Luxford
Chairman, Parish Plan Committee



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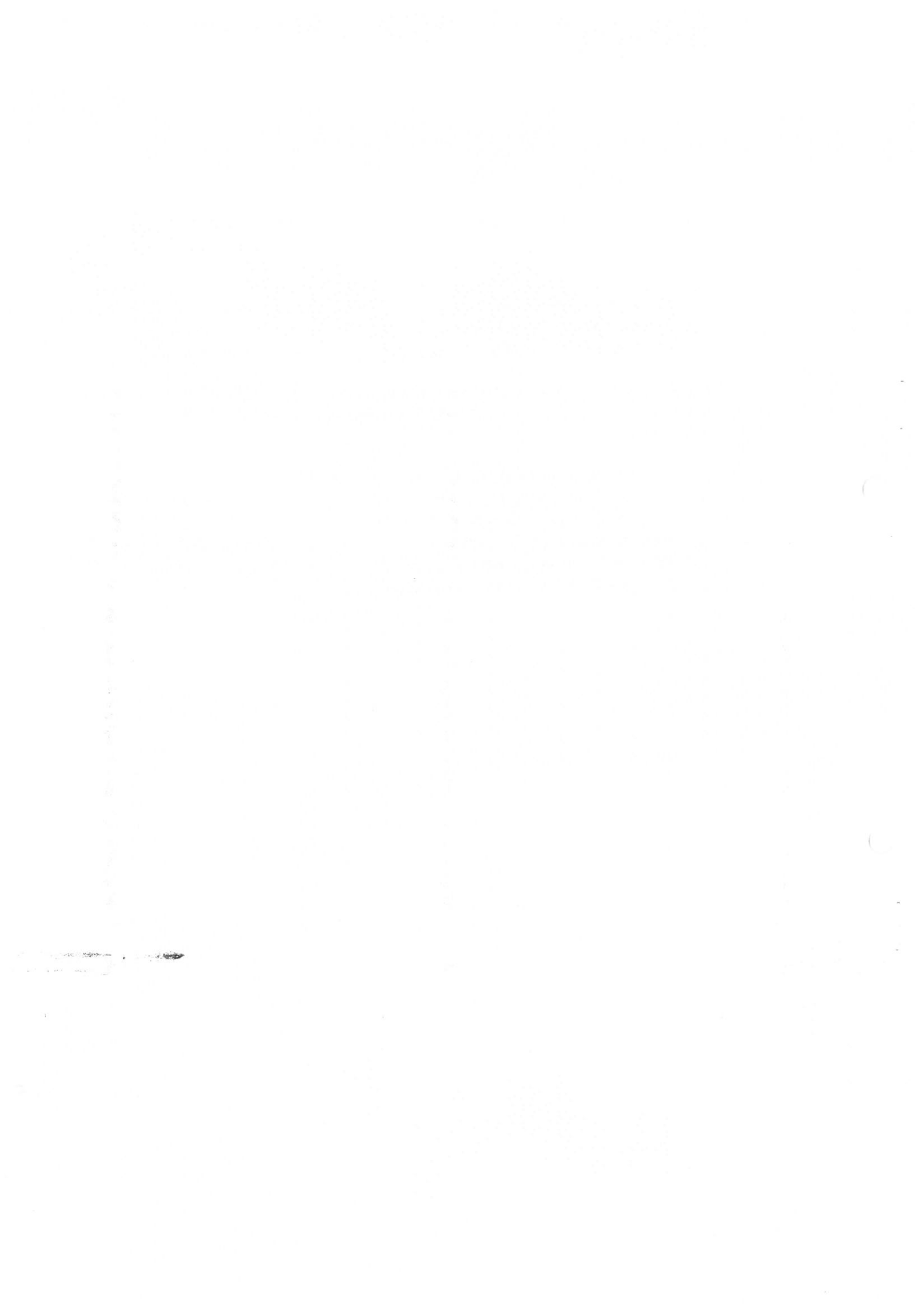
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Pat Luxford
Chairman, Parish Plan Committee

22nd / Thursday





MEOPHAM PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS DESIGN STATEMENT:

The Meopham Parish Design Statement has been prepared to describe the parish as it exists in 2006 to draw attention to in particular design and other features which give Meopham its character. The views expressed in it are the result of consultation and contributions of residents, through exhibitions, workshops, steering committee and individual input. It represents the beliefs and feelings of local people who took part in the consultation process including public days and questionnaire responses during 2005/6, and describes the concerns and qualities which they consider important to living in Meopham.

The Parish Design Statement is an advisory document produced by the community, not by the planning authorities.

Its primary purpose is to be a source of reference for future development decisions.

WHO WILL USE THE DESIGN STATEMENT:

- The local planning authority as a Supplementary Document to the Local Development Framework.
- Meopham Parish Council, particularly when asked for their comments and recommendations on planning applications.
- Kent County Council as County Planning and Highway Authority.
- Builders, developers and architects, wishing to carry out building works in the parish.
- Residents and owners of existing buildings in the parish who want to alter, extend, or change the use of buildings.
- Prospective residents interested in the future of the parish.

It is intended that this Design Statement should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SDP), as part of the emerging Local Development Framework process but it does not yet meet the requirements set down in recently issued (Autumn 2006) planning regulations. As an interim measure the Borough Council will be requested to adopt the Statement as a background advice document, which can be referred to alongside policies in existing Structure and Local Plans and used in conjunction with other design guidance. It can therefore perform a valuable role for development control purposes, as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, planning and planning appeals.

BACKGROUND TO THE DESIGN STATEMENT

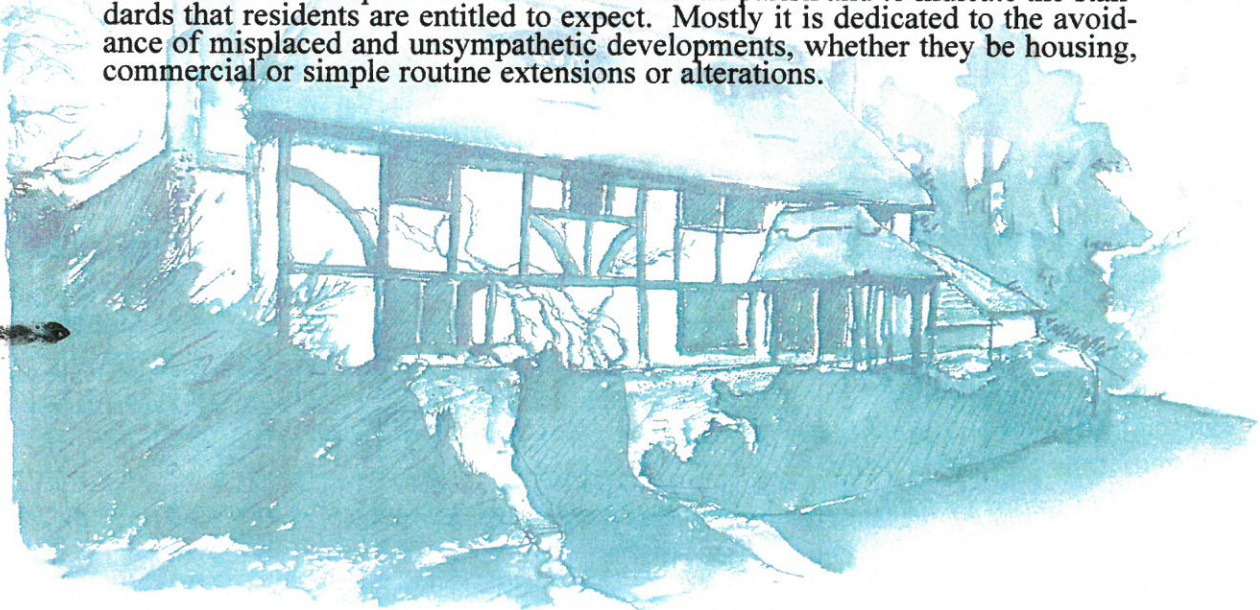
Design Statements are the outcome of a 1996 initiative by the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Agency), intended to encourage and influence local participation in the planning system. They are usually known as Village Design Statements (VDSs).

The parish of Meopham, in the north west Kent borough of Gravesham, decided that it was more appropriate to refer to a Parish Design Statement (PDS), as it contains not only the principal settlement of Meopham, but also Culverstone, Harvel, Nurstead and a number of smaller settlements and isolated properties, which are a feature of the parish. They all share the same environment and rural landscape.

Those inhabitants who took part in our consultation process were almost unanimously against any major housing or industrial development, although nearly 58 % supported small housing development if it were for affordable housing for both young families or older people wishing to downsize. There was also support for more shops and offices. 61% felt that no more building was sustainable. Generally people felt that further developments would threaten to destroy our essentially rural character and way of life. Over 75% like to live in the parish because of its trees and open green landscape and many were concerned by the possible threat to village life. The need to preserve the Green Belt was also a major theme expressed by most people.

Although fears of increasing urban influence and encroaching pressures are implicit in the statement, it is important to emphasise that its main purpose is to manage any change and not necessarily prevent it. Hopefully preservation of the Green Belt will help to ensure that. The PDS is therefore less about whether development should take place and more about how it should be shaped, so as to harmonise with the existing physical character of the parish and its natural surroundings. It is therefore mostly concerned with appearance and the desirable consequences of sensitive planning and good design. It is not involved with facilities and services as such, but with how their provision can alter the look and feel of the parish for better or worse.

This PDS seeks to raise public awareness of our built and natural environment as something inherently precious. It aims to assist planners and developers, builders and architects, landowners and householders when they are planning new buildings or alterations to influence the choice of details which are likely to affect the visual qualities and amenities of the parish and to indicate the standards that residents are entitled to expect. Mostly it is dedicated to the avoidance of misplaced and unsympathetic developments, whether they be housing, commercial or simple routine extensions or alterations.



CURRENT PLANNING POLICY

Meopham Parish lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the North Downs Special Landscape Area. On its eastern side, part of the parish is also within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Green Belt

Outside the villages of Culverstone Green, Meopham Green and Hook Green, the Green Belt is of key importance. The relevant policies are SS2, SS8 and HP5 in the adopted Kent and Medway Structure Plan (KMSP, 2006), GB1 and GB2 in the adopted Gravesham Local Plan First Review (GLPFR, 1994) and RA1 and RA2 in the Gravesham Local Plan Second Review (GLPSR, 2000).

Government guidance on Green Belts is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2), Annex B of PPG3, which relates to affordable housing and Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3).

Within the Green Belt, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. Very special circumstances are needed to justify inappropriate development because it is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Nevertheless, planning applications are submitted to the Borough Council from time to time for agricultural dwellings, the re-use of rural buildings and the replacement or extension of existing dwellings, all within the Green Belt. The First and Second Reviews of the Gravesham Local Plan contain policies dealing with these types of application; reference should be made to C10 - C13 in the First Review and RA3 - 6 in the Second Review.

In the case of rural affordable housing, Government advice is set out in Annex B of PPG3. This states that rural housing provision may be the subject of an "exception" policy. This enables local planning authorities to grant planning permission for land within or adjoining existing villages, which would not normally be released for housing, in order to provide affordable housing to meet the local needs in perpetuity. It should be noted that PPS3 will apply from 1 April 2007 (see para 30).

There has to be a genuine local housing need and this is identified by a Parish Housing Needs Study. Such studies have been carried out in 2001 and 2004 and the latter identified a need for 23 to 35 properties in Meopham Parish.

North Downs Special Landscape Area

The relevant policy in the KMSP is EN5 and this is reflected in C4 and NE2 respectively in the GLPFR and GLPSR.

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The relevant policy in the KMSP is EN4 and this is reflected in C3 and NE1 respectively in the GLPFR and GLPSR.

Villages

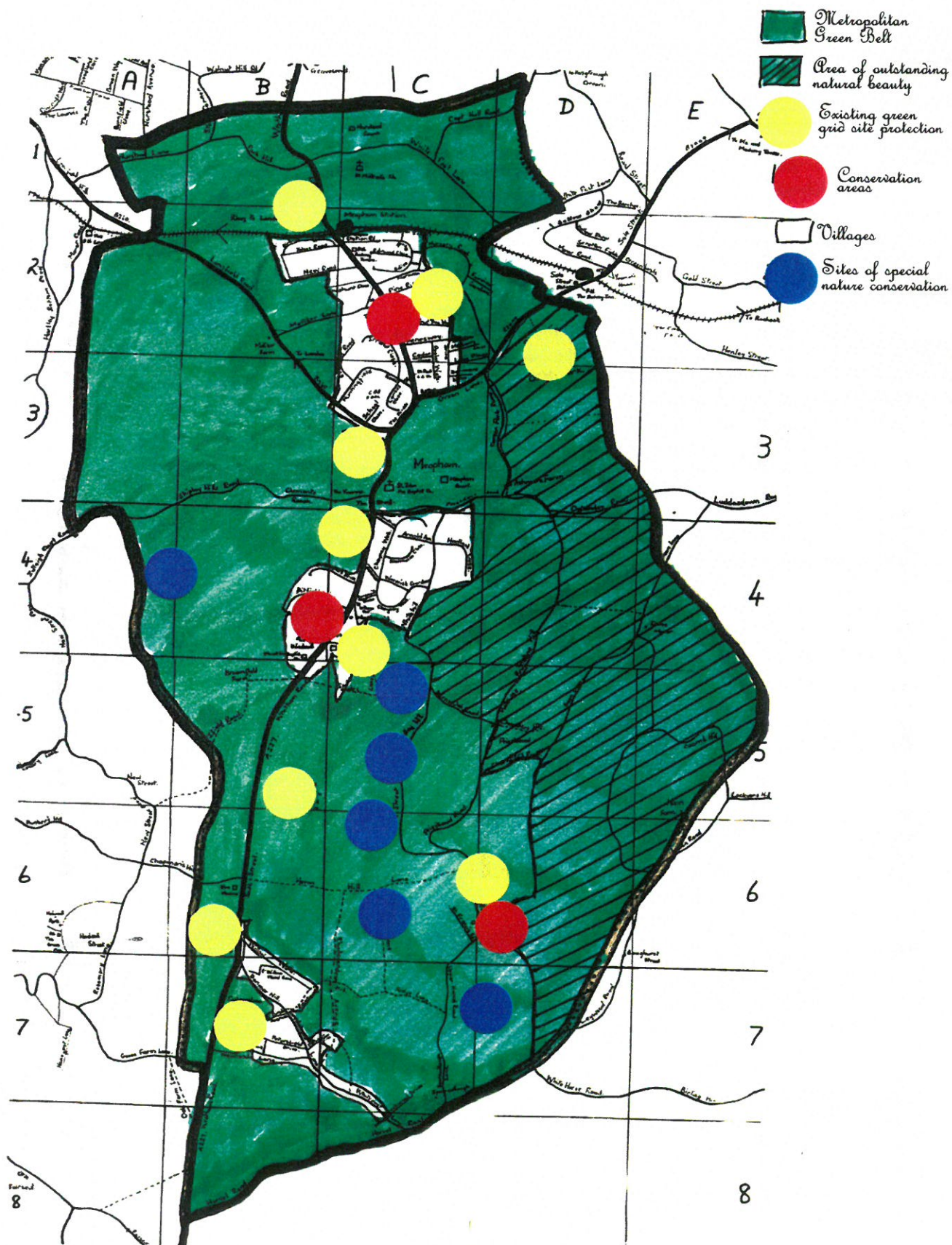
With regard to the nature of development which will be considered appropriate in the villages of Culverstone Green, Meopham Green and Hook Green, Policy SS7 in the KMSP sets out criteria for development at Rural Service Centres (not Meopham) and smaller rural settlements. Reference should also be made to Policies V1, 2 and 3 in the GLPFR and RA9, 10 and 11 in the GLPSR. It is important to note that parts of the villages of Hook Green and Meopham Green are identified as being of exceptional conservation importance.

Future Planning Policy

The Borough Council is in the process of preparing the Gravesham Local Development Framework which will replace the old Local Plan.

At the regional/sub-regional planning level, the South East Plan will supercede the Kent and Medway Structure Plan.

MAP DETAILING SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS



HISTORY OF MEOPHAM

Proof that this area was inhabited in the Stone Age has been established by the finding of a flint knife in a field north of Camer Park. Positive evidence of more recent times was the discovery of a Romano-British farmstead just south of the original village centre.

Several archaeological digs yielded ditch boundaries and artefacts dated to AD 80-120. The original name "Meapa-ham" shows that an early settler was Meapa, probably a Jute, and this name appears in a deed of AD774. By the tenth century, the manor of Meopham was owned by Byrhtic, a very rich Saxon, who owned many other manors in Kent and Surrey. He made his will in Meopham and established the connection with Canterbury.

About 1272 a boy was born, named Simon, and in due time he entered the Church, finally becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. Surnames were not in use at that time so he was known as Simon de Mephram and Simon recorded that his parents were buried in Meopham churchyard. Also well known Meopham men were the two John Tradescants, father and son, who were gardeners and plant explorers. Between them they introduced many species to this country, and they are commemorated by the street name "Tradescant Drive". In 1723, a workhouse was established in every parish and Meopham was no exception. The building still stands in The Street as a private house.

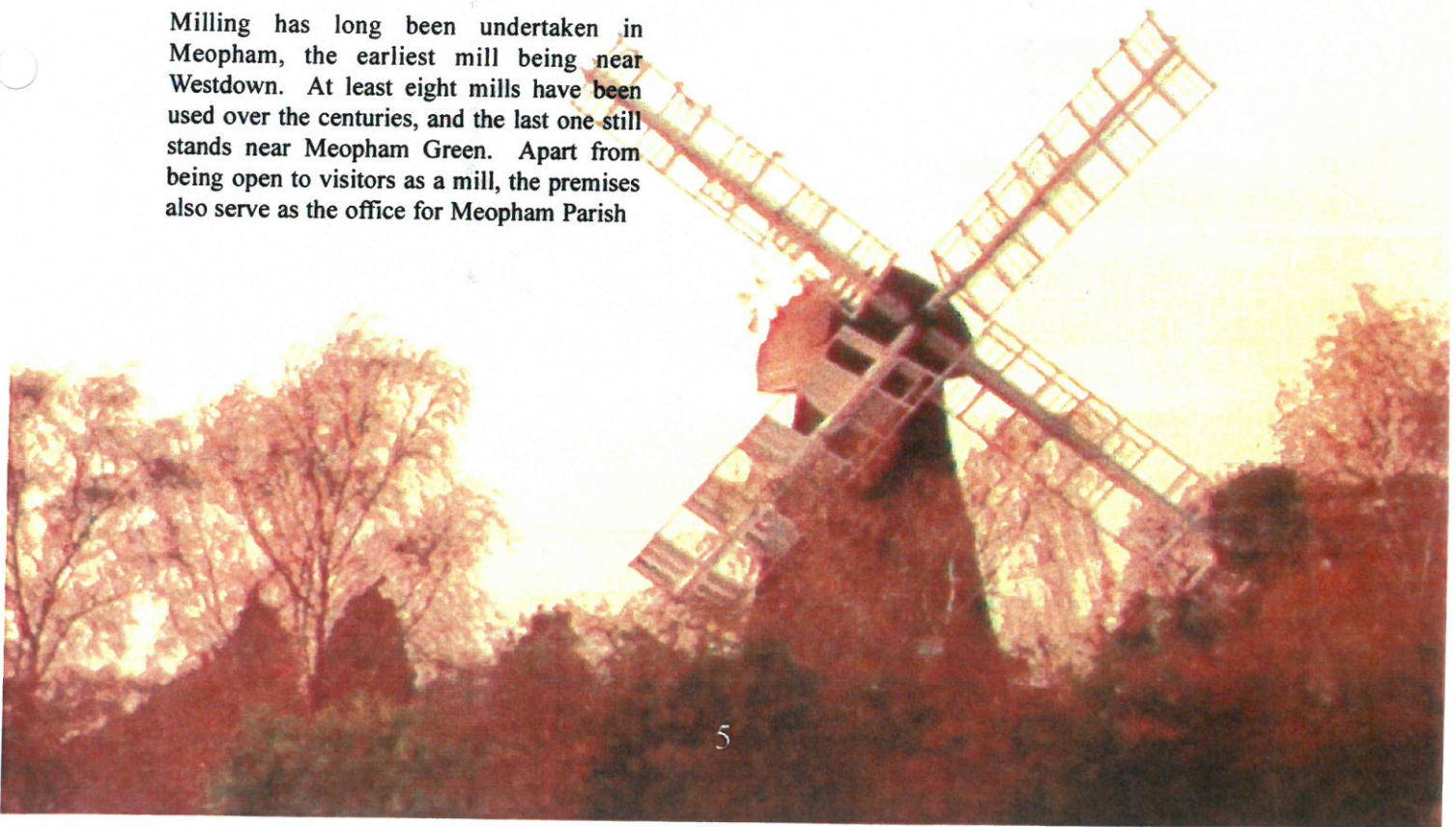
Milling has long been undertaken in Meopham, the earliest mill being near Westdown. At least eight mills have been used over the centuries, and the last one still stands near Meopham Green. Apart from being open to visitors as a mill, the premises also serve as the office for Meopham Parish

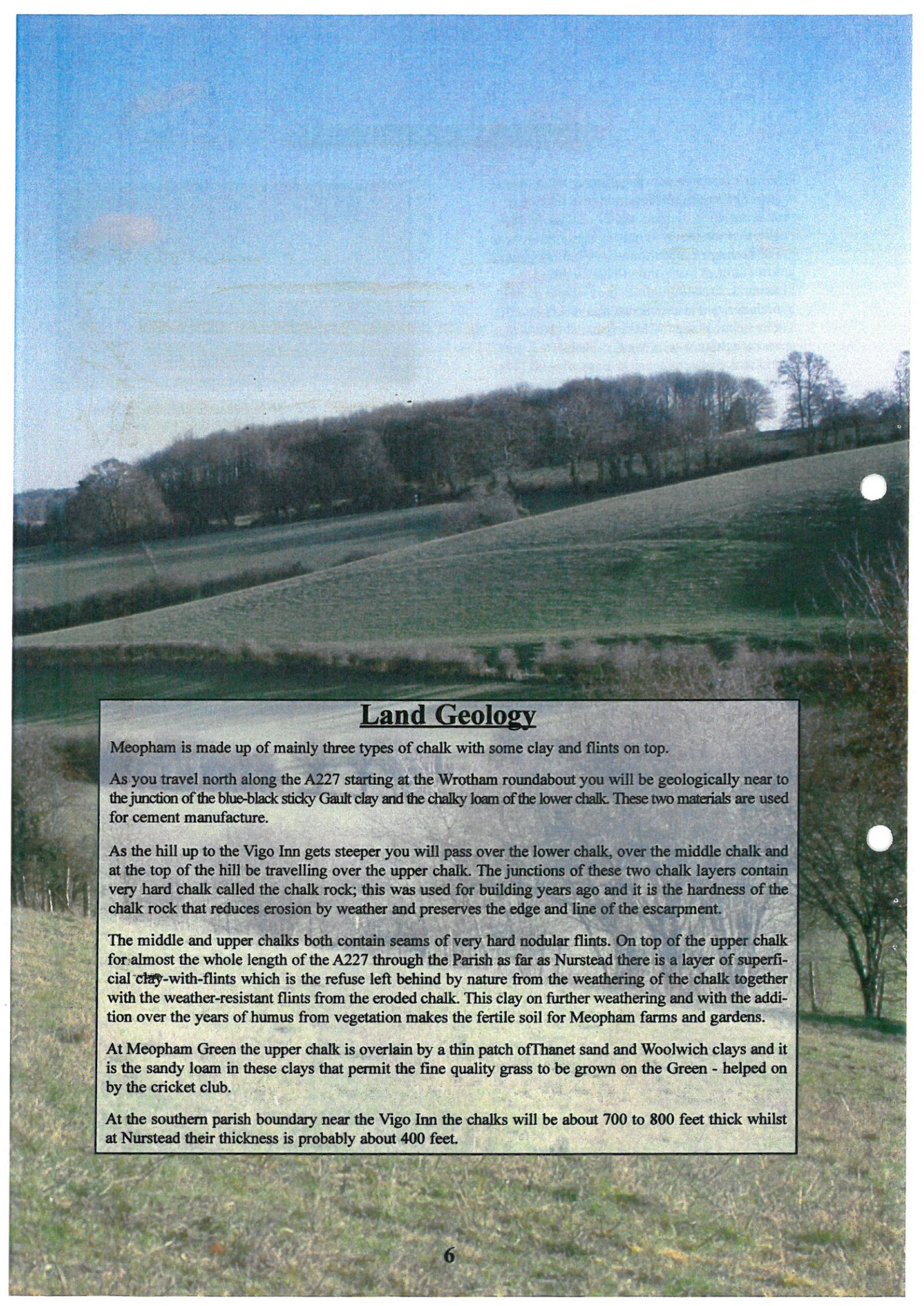


Council. Meopham Green is also the ground of Meopham Cricket Club, which has been in existence for well over 200 years.

The turnpiking of the road from Gravesend to Wrotham in 1825 led to the operation of the first bus service, Green's Omnibus, which left Plaxtol at 6am and reached Gravesend at 08.30, returning at 6pm. The railway station opened in 1861, starting the London commuter process, as well as providing access to the coastal resorts of Kent.

Schooling in Meopham started in the middle of the 18th century, under the will of Thomas Copland, probably at Well House. In 1839 the National School was built with funds raised by appeal. Now Meopham has four schools. In the past Meopham has been well supplied with Public Houses, six have closed down but five remain in business.





Land Geology

Meopham is made up of mainly three types of chalk with some clay and flints on top.

As you travel north along the A227 starting at the Wrotham roundabout you will be geologically near to the junction of the blue-black sticky Gault clay and the chalky loam of the lower chalk. These two materials are used for cement manufacture.

As the hill up to the Vigo Inn gets steeper you will pass over the lower chalk, over the middle chalk and at the top of the hill be travelling over the upper chalk. The junctions of these two chalk layers contain very hard chalk called the chalk rock; this was used for building years ago and it is the hardness of the chalk rock that reduces erosion by weather and preserves the edge and line of the escarpment.

The middle and upper chalks both contain seams of very hard nodular flints. On top of the upper chalk for almost the whole length of the A227 through the Parish as far as Nurstead there is a layer of superficial clay-with-flints which is the refuse left behind by nature from the weathering of the chalk together with the weather-resistant flints from the eroded chalk. This clay on further weathering and with the addition over the years of humus from vegetation makes the fertile soil for Meopham farms and gardens.

At Meopham Green the upper chalk is overlain by a thin patch of Thanet sand and Woolwich clays and it is the sandy loam in these clays that permit the fine quality grass to be grown on the Green - helped on by the cricket club.

At the southern parish boundary near the Vigo Inn the chalks will be about 700 to 800 feet thick whilst at Nurstead their thickness is probably about 400 feet.

2006



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The parish of Meopham lies on the northern face of the North Downs around 6 miles to the south of Gravesend. It is approximately 6 miles long and at it widest almost 3 miles east to west. It rises from north to south from approx 285 feet at Nurstead to 640 feet near Vigo. Very little of the parish is on the flat and the clay and flints typical of chalk Downland make the tops not very fertile but give rich tillage in the valleys. At Meopham Green the upper chalk is overlain by a thin layer of Thanet sand and Woolwich clays which sandy loam features in giving Meopham its fine central greens, which also feature elsewhere in the parish. The village is also blessed by many mature trees, which are much appreciated and are a particular feature at Hook and Harvel Greens and Camer Park.

The majority of the parish surface area is made up of agricultural land, with numerous small patches of woodland or shaws. These feature a wide range of deciduous trees including oak, ash, beech, birch, field maple, coppiced sweet chestnut and cherry. Here many woodland plants can be found. In spring as well as the usual bluebell spectacular, wood anemone, wood sorrel, celandines, primroses, violets and ladies smock flourish. Many chalk downland plants grow in local fields e.g. rockrose, mignonette, agrimony, common centaury, devil's bit scabious, houndstongue, marjoram and cornmint. Spindle, dog wood and hawthorn along with wild honeysuckle are a particular feature of the many hedgerows.

Several species of orchid, some growing abundantly, thrive in woods and fields locally e.g. common spotted, early purple, pyramidal, twayblade and bee orchids. Rare grasses feature at Harvel pond and a successful commercial vineyard is found at Happy Valley.

The area is also rich in woodland birds and although it lacks running water or marshland is home to medium sized flocks of lapwing in winter at which time large numbers of fieldfare and redwings can also be found. In summer, many blue butterflies are found including Holly, Chalkhill, Adonis and Common blue. Common mammals include hedgehog, badger, fox, rabbit, stoat, wood and field mice, grey squirrel, and the less common and elusive dormouse.

Village Greens Meopham Parish

(Working North to South.)

Station
Edmund Green
Hook Green
Melliker
Pitfield Green
Meopham Green
Pond
Culverstone
Beechwood
Horns Oak
Priestwood
Harvel Green
Millsole
Sparrowhough

(note. some are no more than traffic islands.)



Hook Green



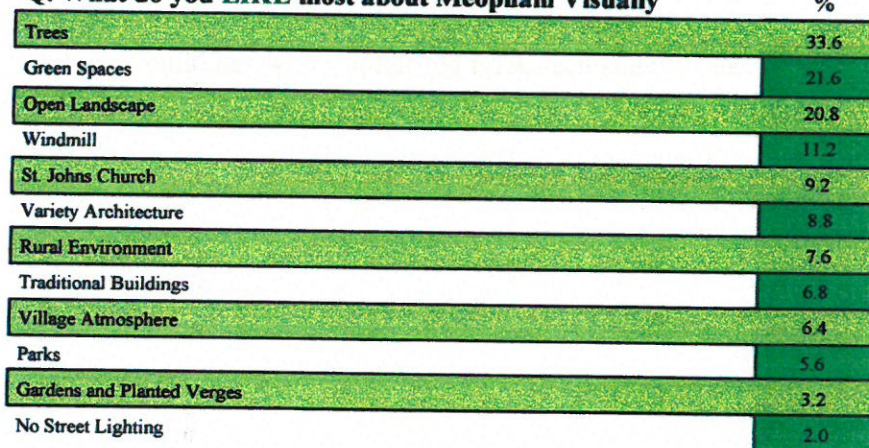
Meopham Green



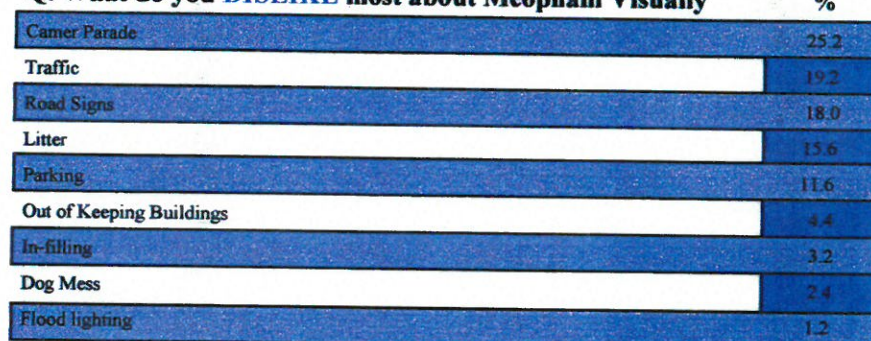
Harvel Green

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES SUBMITTED BY RESIDENTS IN 2005

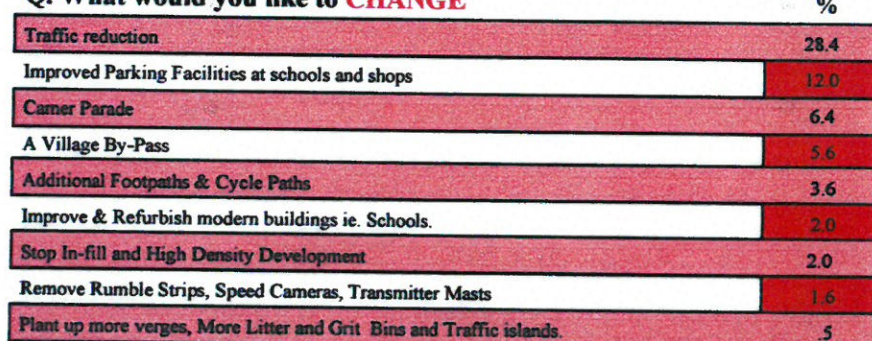
Q. What do you **LIKE** most about Meopham Visually

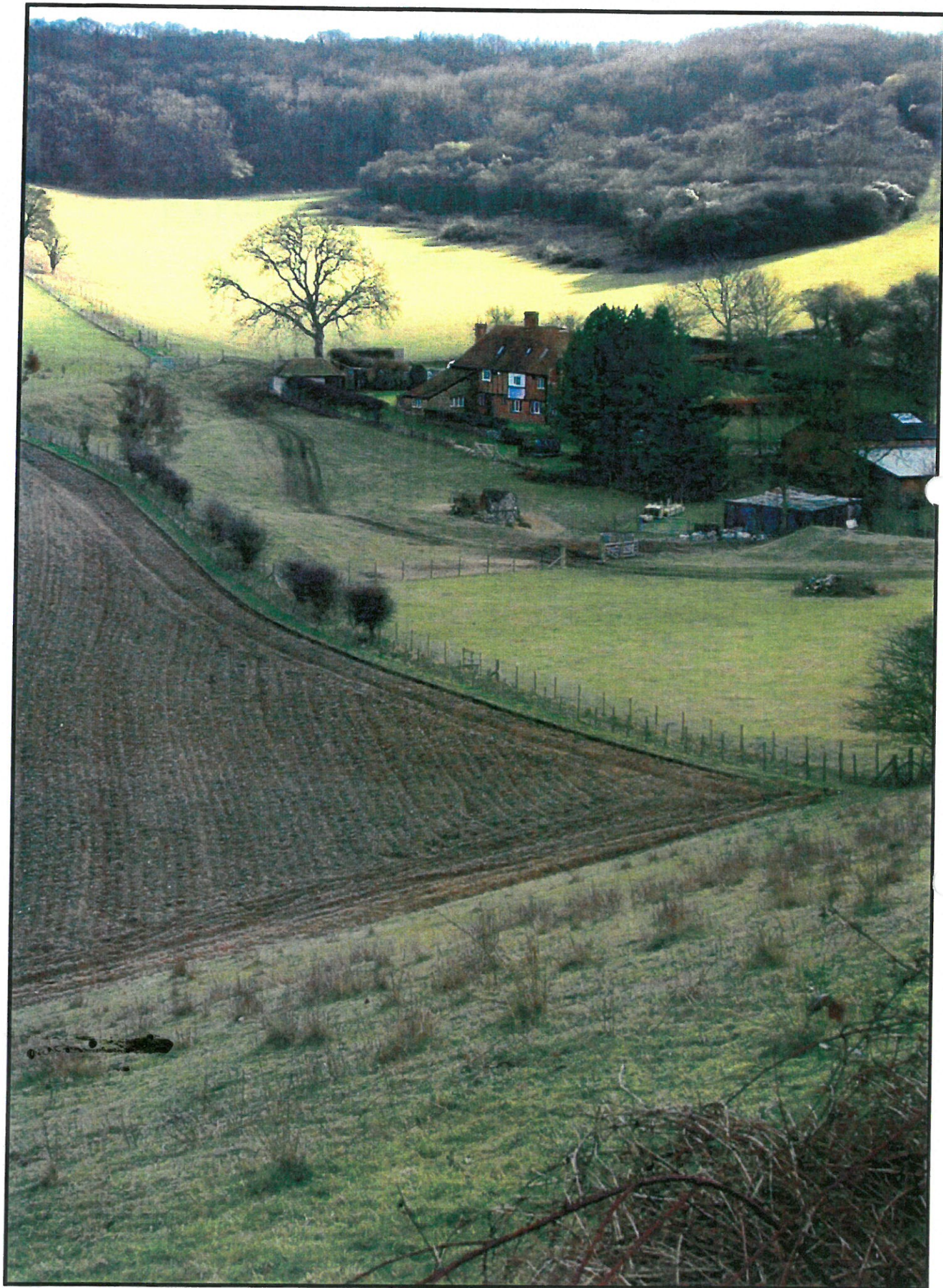


Q. What do you **DISLIKE** most about Meopham Visually



Q. What would you like to **CHANGE**





OUR INHERITANCE

THE ENTIRE PARISH IS SITUATED WITHIN THE METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT, ABOUT ONE THIRD, IN THE SOUTH EAST, IS DESIGNATED AS AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB), PLUS SIX FURTHER AREAS LISTED AS SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST.

MEOPHAM HAS **4** CONSERVATION AREAS.

MEOPHAM HAS **47** LISTED BUILDINGS.

IN 1999 GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL PROPOSED SERVING AN ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION ON ALL RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS, AREAS. THIS WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF REMOVING CERTAIN PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AND WHICH WOULD CONSEQUENTLY REQUIRE PLANNING CONSENT. TO DATE THIS PROPOSAL HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED.

RECOMMENDATION:

- IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE GREEN BELT AND THIS NATURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IS FULLY RECOGNISED WHENEVER PLANNING DECISIONS ARE MADE.
- THAT THE BOUNDARY OF THE "AONB" BE EXTENDED TO THE WESTERN BOUNDARY OF THE PARISH

CONSERVATION AREAS

The Parish contains four designated Conservation Areas. Moving from north to south along the A227 and providing a welcome visual break from modernity, these are at Hook Green, The Street and Meopham Green, with the fourth, Harvel, being at the south-eastern extremity of the Parish. Not surprisingly, these are all the oldest parts of the Parish and each formed a separate hamlet which, through later development, with the exception of Harvel, were joined into one village through ribbon expansion along the A227.

Apart from The Street, each is based around a village green and with their many mature trees and open green spaces, all contribute considerably to the rural feeling of the Parish. Altogether they contain 17 listed buildings but also many older buildings of note and architectural merit, linking the Parish to its agricultural past.

All the buildings in the Conservation Areas display the range of material and styles typical of the south-east. These include oak or elm timber framing, timber cladding (weather boarding) and the use of flint for walls, particularly seen at The Street. Clay peg tiles, usually made locally, feature on many roofs, later to be usurped by Welsh slate. Peg tiles are also often seen as wall hangings. Brown stock bricks feature in many 19th century buildings with a softer red brick seen slightly later. Most of the older houses have large gardens.

Today Hook Green hosts the village sign and is mostly surrounded by modern developments. The main road, however, affords excellent views of the seven listed buildings of which the Old Forge, which contains part of a 14th Century timber frame building, is the oldest.

The Street Conservation Area encompasses a wide stretch of land on either side of the A227 and includes the parish church of St John the Baptist, which dates from the 14th Century and the former manor house of Meopham Court, which cannot be seen from the road. This area is believed to be the oldest part of the Parish originating in the 8th Century from a Saxon named Meopa, although Iron Age and Roman remains have also been found nearby. The conservation area contains seven listed buildings, including The George public house, the old post office and village shop, which are sadly now closed. These will have formed a key focal point of the original hamlet, which also used to boast an open market. This area, although architecturally very interesting is blighted by the amount of traffic on the main road which is particularly narrow at this point.

Meopham Green is notable for the green itself, which, has also doubled as a cricket pitch for over 220 years, but most importantly for the fine listed smock windmill, which was built in 1801. Although there are a large number of buildings of note, only Barnside to the north of the green is also presently listed.

Harvel Conservation Area, although relatively small, provides a haven of tranquillity being, away from the main A227 and its constant traffic flow. The small green contains an attractive duck pond and within the conservation area are three 16th century timber frame hall houses.

CONCERNS

- A large number of buildings within the Conservation Areas are also worthy of listing. They are all locally listed but without protection and could be altered without planning approval.
- Historically, little concern has been shown for developments in close proximity to the Conservation Areas

RECOMENDATIONS

- Article 4 (2) Directions should be served on all residential buildings in the Conservation Areas not statutorily listed.
- Planning applications within Conservation Areas and effecting them should be carefully considered with regard to the character, appearance, interest and historic form of the Conservation Area as described in the Parish Design Statement

LISTED BUILDINGS OF MEOPHAM PARISH

At 2006



Camer House	Camer Estate
Building west of Camer House	Camer Estate
Bailiffs House	Camer Estate
5 & 6	Camer Street
Somers (No. 7)	Camer Street
Camer Green Cottage (No. 8)	Camer Street
9 & 10	Camer Street
Merryweather	David Street
Parker's Cottage	David Street
Rabbit's Corner	David Street
Dene Manor	Dean Lane
Barncote Cottage	Harvel Lane
Harvel House	Harvel Lane
Crickfield Farmhouse	Harvel Street
Forge Cottage	Harvel Street
Old Pond Farmhouse	Dean Lane
Coombe Hill Farmhouse	Leywood Road
Melliker Farmhouse	Longfield Road
Hook Green Farmhouse	Melliker Lane
Mulberry House	Melliker Lane
The White House	Melliker Lane
Norwood Farmhouse	Norwood Lane
Nevill House	Norwood Lane
Waterditch	Norwood Lane
Nurstead Court	Nurstead Lane
Church of St Mildred	Nurstead Lane
Nurstead Hall	Nurstead Lane
Nurstead Lodge	Nurstead Lane
West Down Farmhouse	Shipley Hills
Well House	The Street
Dorrington Cottage	The Street
Elizabeth House	The Street
Parish Church of St. John the Baptist	Wrotham Road
Ivy House	Wrotham Road
The Old Forge & Old Forge Cottage	Wrotham Road
Evenden Farmhouse	Wrotham Road
The George Inn	Wrotham Road
Church Cottages	Wrotham Road
Barnside	Wrotham Road
Meopham Windmill	Wrotham Road
Leylands Orchard	Wrotham Road
Leylands Barn	Wrotham Road
Leylands Farm Cottage	Wrotham Road
Owls Castle	Wrotham Road
Owls Castle Barn	Wrotham Road

EXPANSION OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The 1896 Ordnance Survey map showed that, despite the opening of the railway in 1861, very little development had taken place other than the original hamlets, which are now Conservation Areas. In 1901 the population of the Parish was 1323 and by 1921 this had only grown to 1514 with small developments south of Meopham to the Second World War, in addition to minor infilling, saw the first new small estates St. Johns Road and New Road and the initial buildings at Camer Parade, although the parade was not completed until the early 60's. Apart from further small infilling, little development took place in the 1940s except for social housing at School Close, Arnold Avenue, and along the Longfield Road.



By 1951 the population had almost doubled to 3005 and the 50s saw new developments at Hadley Close, Orchard and Pitfield Drives, more social housing in Huntingfield Road and the initial development of the Nursery Estate. The 1960s, however produced the biggest expansion. This saw further growth of the Nursery Estate, the building of the Tradescant and the Cheney Walk Estates, plus numerous other smaller but significant developments, including Cricketers Drive, Birrick Drive, Meadfield Road, Evenden Road, the Catholic Church, sheltered accommodation at Chinnery Court and the first major development in Culverstone in Silver Birch Avenue. By now the

population had reached 4956. During the 1970s the pace of building declined, but there continued to be backfilling and infilling, a major example of which are the mock Georgian houses in Edmund Close. Further development also took place in Culversone at Mountfield Close and a site for mobile homes at Southfield Shaw. It was not until the mid eighties that the last major developments took place just south of Hook Green, with The Russets and The Pippins, but development continued in Culverstone Valley. Since then most new building has been either backfilling and infilling usually where older houses have been demolished. A particularly prominent site can be seen opposite the Village Hall, where a terrace of farm cottages was replaced by a gated close of large executive style houses - out of keeping in a rural community. In 2005/2006 land at the end of Evenden Close was used to build ten starter homes.

Existing large scale, mainly post-war, developments while Meopham was part of Strood Rural District Council, largely typify a disregard of context, being essentially autonomous in style, with little regard to older provisions. Later developments effected subsequent to the County Design Guides of the last 10-15 years are less urban with better landscaping. Building types are however quite similar although with better variation in external treatment and parking provisions tend to be quite prominent to their overall detriment. With these larger developments being mainly away from the main through road, they are not overly intrusive; they do however, impact significantly on traffic, especially at peak times. Some of the earlier and inter-war medium to large developments on the main road have their impact reduced by being accessed from parallel service roads, allowing retention/provision of tree and shrub screening.

CONCERNS

- Any building within the parish could change the nature of its environment.
- Pressure for more housing, even smaller affordable housing, puts pressure on the Green Belt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ANY NEW BUILD/EXTENSION SHOULD TAKE FULL CONSIDERATION OF IMPACT ON DENSITY.
- NEW BUILD/EXTENSION SHOULD PROVIDE ADEQUATE OFF ROAD PARKING PROVISION FOR SIZE OF PROPOSED BUILDING.
- RIBBON DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

The majority of buildings are from the last 150 years, with no dominant type or period, or distinctive character. Interest derives largely from their various periods. Those at the early cores, The Street and in the regions of the Greens, are of significant age. Harvel, a small hamlet more typical of a village, comprises many period mainly timber frames buildings.

Frontages

Although much of the build have walls of varying materials fronting the highway, they are largely softened by hedges or shrub planting. Where the walls are prominent viz. the flint enclosures by St. Johns Church, the consistency of material itself is an attractive feature flanking the road, reinforced by trees arching over and creating a distinctive presence.



Walls

The predominant wall finish is plain render. There are some textured, some with facing brickwork and occasional vertical tiling, timber boarding, or flint - which is a stone found locally. Some, mainly post-war, brick type finishes are not particularly appropriate. Around the conservation areas there are examples of authentic timber framing, examples of authentic timber framing.



Windows

Windows are mainly white finish whether painted, stained, or pvc-u replacements, predominantly casement type, but with vertical sashes or simulated replacements to the Victorian parts.

Roofs

The principal tiling material is clay, mainly small, plain in format with slate still on many of the Victorian buildings. Most roofs have fairly simple forms with some additions of dormer windows.

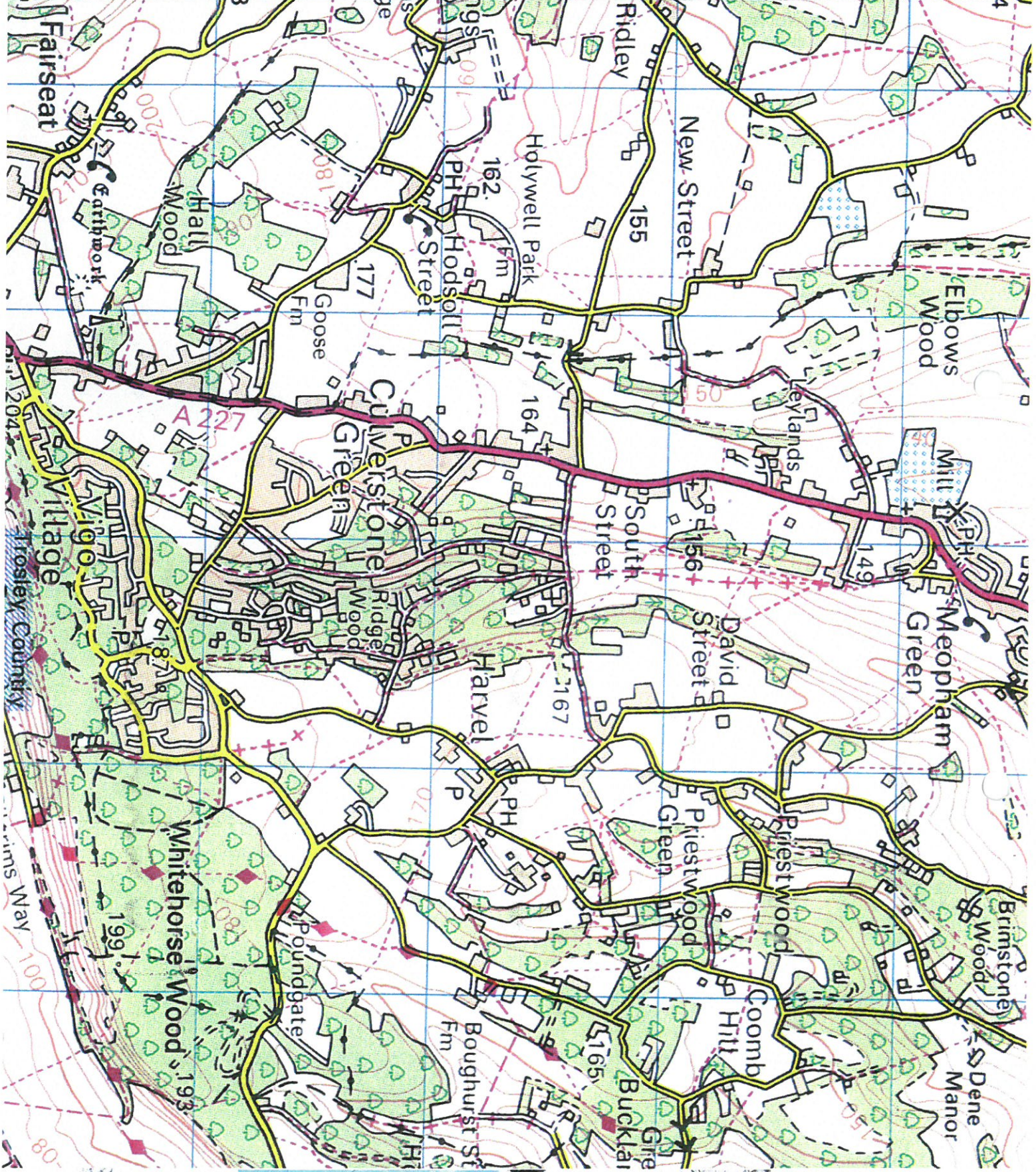


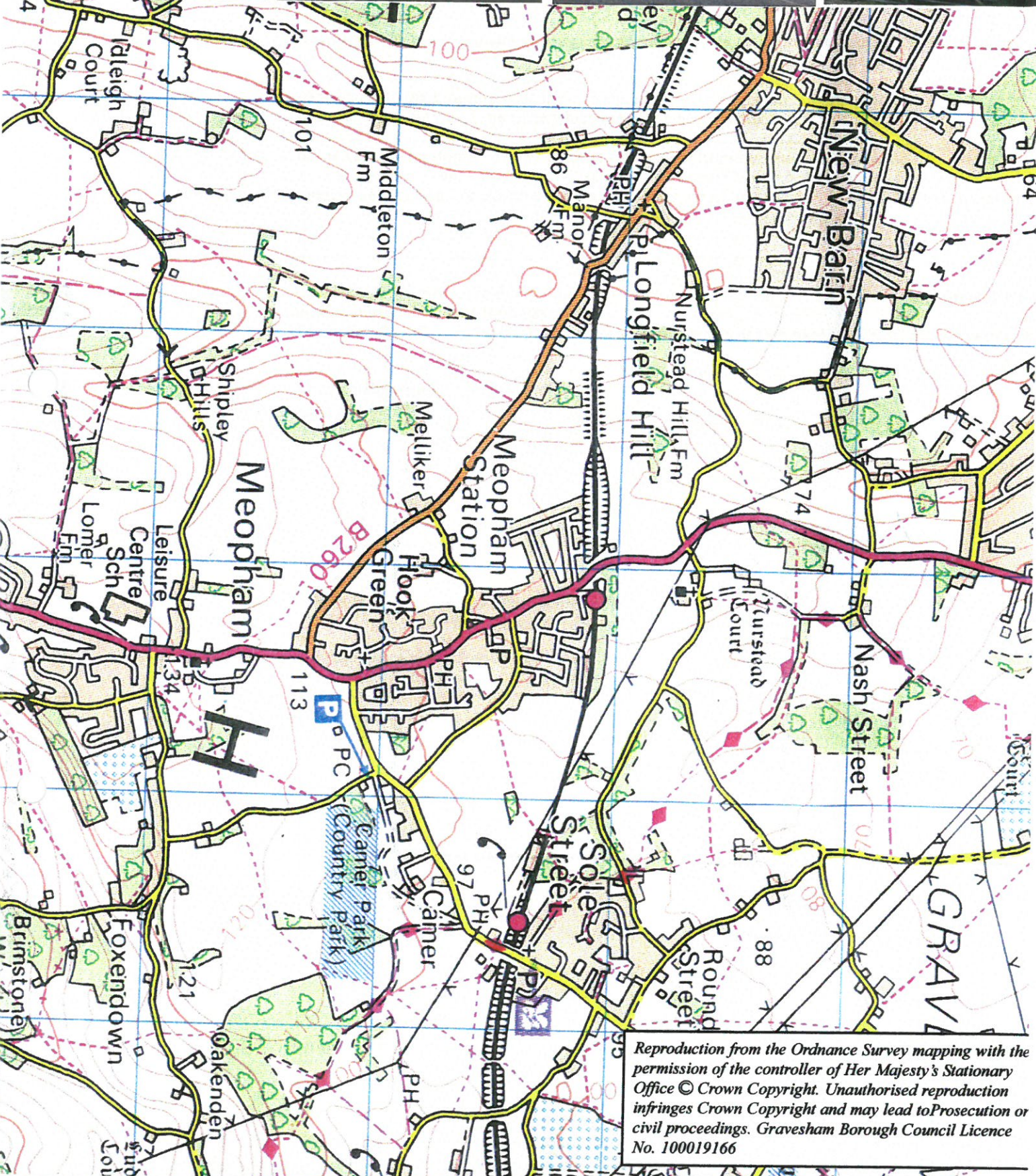
Boundary Treatments



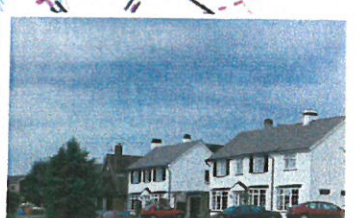
On the various estates, boundary walls and fencing appears to be well controlled and in keeping with the estate concept. The hedges and fencing of farmland even when a little run down tends to be in keeping with the rural ideal. There is a growing amount of post and rail which although often attractive can give the impression of one great park or zoo and is indicative of the removal of old style farming. The most obtrusive, poor in appearance, and in some cases unnecessary, fencing is mainly erected by local authorities.







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COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY

The majority of shops and businesses are located along the A227, Wrotham Road, but the industrial sites are not so prominent.

There are two main groups of retail shops. Those near the Station include a post office, baker, and chemist. Further south at Camer Parade the shops are more extensive, quite varied, and include a small supermarket. A motor accessories, exhaust and tyre replacement centre is incongruously situated on the south corner of the Parade. A car sales and repair unit is situated just south of The Street Conservation Area. There are a few shop premises near Meopham Green. Culverstone has a post office and general store, plus the only petrol station. Amongst these shops we have five estate agents and an art gallery. Other interesting businesses include a residential home, a dental practice, two taxi services, a fencing company, a cattery, a veterinary practice and numerous riding establishments. Two farms sell home grown fruit and vegetables. We can also boast a fully productive vineyard, which offers retail sales.

We have 5 public houses all of which serve food, 5 restaurants, some with takeaway facilities, one takeaway (Chinese) and a fish & chip shop.

There is some limited light industry within the parish, located at 4 sites, none of which has more than six businesses. These are situated at the Station Sidings (off Norwood Lane), Lomer Farm (opposite the village hall) with two smaller sites just south of the windmill on either side of the A227. None of these can be easily seen from the road, except in the case of the lorry breakers at Longfield Hill, the appearance of which has been cause for complaint from local residents.

The community facilities provided in the parish include a purpose built medical centre, scout and guide huts, the Hope Hill Scouting Centre, a recreation ground with youth pavilion, an active allotment site, church halls, village halls, a country club and tennis club. A public library and sports & leisure centre share the site with the secondary school, and a new nursery school. Sheltered housing is provided near Hook Green.

There are two primary schools, one senior school, and a special school for autistic children. Recycling facilities are located at the senior school and Camer Park.

The main visitor attractions are Camer Country Park, and Nurstead Court (an historic house supported by English Heritage) which holds weddings and other events. Popular in the summer is our restored Windmill, and Meopham Green (for the cricket season). Also, there are 5 churches all of which hold regular services. Two Parish churches - St Johns Meopham and Nurstead church, are both Listed buildings. There is a modern Catholic Church, and two Baptist Chapels.

● The move from traditional agriculture may effect the character of the area in particular the fencing and subdivision of fields

● A review of current legislation covering field division and boundaries should be undertaken to maximise protection of hedges and the visual impact of post & rail type fencing on the landscape.

MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

The parish contains a number of municipal buildings, few of which enhance its appearance. There are two primary schools, one at Camer Parade and one at Culverstone. The main municipal complex is at Meopham Senior School which also houses the public library. On the same site are a leisure complex built in blockhouse style, which fortunately cannot be seen from the main road, a health centre and a very recently built nursery. The latter two buildings are more in style with a rural setting.

All three schools have flat roofs and are in various states of disrepair. Their design and general appearance, especially the two Meopham schools, show no consideration for their close proximity to two Conservation Areas, although the more recent extension to the primary school at Camer demonstrates what can be achieved.

There have been recent (March 2006) indications that there is a proposal to rebuild the senior school.

To the south of the windmill and just outside the Conservation area are two former police houses of basic 1950s design, now used as offices by the Kent Constabulary.

There is one utilitarian public lavatory at Meopham Green.

- That cost considerations in the construction of municipal buildings over-ride the context in which those buildings are to exist.
- The poor design and structure of municipal buildings set a bad example for other structures around them and now add to the disrespect of Authority demonstrated through littering and graffiti.
- The possible rebuilding of Meopham Senior School represents a threat as well as an opportunity for the residents of the parish.

- Cost solutions and designs that suit an urban environment should not be used in a rural environment.
- Consideration of context especially in respect of existing Conservation Areas, must always be a priority.
- Municipal buildings should be designed as an enhancement to the community.
- Any plans for the rebuilding of the senior school or similar sites should be well publicised, so that full consultation takes place within Meopham and consideration given to residents' views. Particular care needs to be taken in regard to design, parking facilities, security fencing, light pollution, and future impact on traffic flows throughout the parish.
- A green travel plan should be a condition of any such planning approval.
- These plans should not provide an opportunity for building additional houses/commercial premises.

HIGHWAYS

Ancient Routes

The topography of Meopham leads to a reasoned assumption that the major ancient route was broadly along the present line of the Gravesend to Wrotham road. It was the construction of the Turnpike Road in 1827 which resulted in the now familiar A227. It may well be that Pilgrims took the route through Meopham to gain access to the Pilgrims Way. In C. H. Golding-Bird's 'History of Meopham' we read of a row of fine yew trees in the vicinity of Dene Lane which may have been planted as a guide to Luddesdown Church indicating an early pilgrim footway. A similar line of yews was seen to ascend Heron Hill Lane on the opposite side of the valley. The storms of 1987 unfortunately caused considerable damage to trees in the area.

A local historian, James Carley, recorded Former Roads of Meopham in a booklet. Many items of pertinent interest are included, for example the Camer Bypass, which in 1838 replaced the old road, which ran through the hamlet. Another example is Ifield Road, just south of Meopham Green, recorded on a map published in 1801, which is no doubt well in excess of 200 years old. The old road, leading down from Meopham Green, to Ryarsh and on to Birling is also doubtless of ancient origin and the route still exists as a combination of footpaths, bridleways and byway as far as Harvel. Only from the Tithe and Ordnance Maps of the 19th Century can we reliably follow historical routes across the Parish but assuredly some routes we still use locally existed well over 1000 years ago.

There are 67 Definitive Public Rights of Way in the parish, with a total length of 55 kilometres, including byways, bridleways, and footpaths.

Traffic Signage

There are approximately 478 signs along the A227. Approximately 60 are speed camera signs and some 88 are speed limit signs. 185 of these are along the rural stretch between Meopham Green and Culverstone Greens, which is still a high accident zone.

Advertising Signs

Shop signs are generally sympathetic to a rural location. However, some heavy fluorescent signage is out of keeping within a rural setting and proximity to Conservation area.

Lighting

Street lighting is not evenly spread, and has grown considerably in recent years against many peoples wishes. The newest estates are fully lit and most of the northern end of the parish has amenity lighting. The lighting is sparse south of Camer Parade, Harvel has no public lighting, and both retain a country village atmosphere. So far there are no areas where lighting has become excessive and it appears to be adequate to maintain the character of the village. There is an increasing use of intrusive private security lighting.

Street Furniture

The street furniture generally blends well into its surroundings but whilst we have to accept that certain items need to be visible, some, bright yellow grit bins in particular, can be a visual assault on the rural setting.

Telephone masts are currently discreet and adequate

- Proliferation of signage, especially traffic signs.
- Use of brightly (fluorescent) painted/printed signage

- A review made of traffic signage along the A227 and removal of excess signs.
- No further traffic signs to be erected without Parish Council approval.
- Any advertising signage inappropriate to a rural or Conservation location to be removed or replaced (SPG3 Advertisement Control- Policy Guidelines enforced)
- No further street lighting to be installed. Public floodlighting at schools and sports facilities to be minimised. Monitor use of private (security type) lighting.
- Promote landscape conservation: verges, soft boundaries etc.

ROADS AND FOOTWAYS

Meopham lies along the A227 running north / south from Gravesend to Wrotham. At most times very busy, the road is with a few notable pinch points at Meopham Green, The Street and Meopham Station Parade, mostly wide, fairly straight and offers good visibility. However, despite its being designated a trunk road, the volume and speed of traffic often exceeds its capability and are a major concern to most inhabitants. Along most of its length there are footways on both sides, but especially at Hook Green and both north and south of Meopham Green, it is necessary to cross from side to side in order to walk its length.

There are very few connecting roads and these mostly run east to west. Only two of these roads are B roads, the B260 runs west to Longfield and Dartford and the B2009 Green Lane east to Sole Street. All other connecting roads are no more than country lanes mostly only wide enough for vehicles to pass with caution. With the exceptions of parts of Longfield Road and Green Lane, they have no footways, are rarely straight and have limited passing places. Consequently many verges, roadside banks and overhanging trees are compromised by vehicle erosion.

The remaining side roads lead either to farmland or serve post war housing developments, which comprise the majority of the community, both in Meopham and Culverstone where the main access road (Whitepost Lane) is less than adequate and largely devoid of footway. Most roads are narrow by modern standards but footways are universal, mostly on both sides of the highway. Many pavements and roadside footways are very uneven or overgrown and there is a marked absence of dropped pavements at junctions making wheelchair and pushchair access very difficult.

- Safety and ease of movement of pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, people with prams or pushchairs and horse riders is affected by speed and volume of traffic.
- Parents are not encouraged to walk children to schools and thus reduce traffic volumes by pavements which are unsafe and non-user friendly.
- Abuse of the no entry sign at the end of Whitepost Lane Culverstone is dangerous.
- There is much physical erosion of verges and hedgerows throughout the Parish, both in the country lanes, and along the A227 south of Meopham Primary School.

- Footways on all main routes to schools and shops should be better maintained and drop down pavements built at all junctions/corners.
- Review of the one way system at Whitepost Lane
- Provision of a continuous pedestrian footway on one side of the A227 from Meopham Senior School to Culverstone Green.
- Schools to organise more walking buses

TRAFFIC

The volume and speed of traffic on the A227 were the cause of major concern to almost everyone who responded to our questionnaires. As a result we undertook a small traffic survey and counted approx 2900 vehicle movements between 7.30 am and 9.30am and approx 2500 between 2.30 pm and 5.00 pm, between Meopham Green and The Street Conservation Areas

The A227 Wrotham to Gravesend road forms the backbone of the village. It is one of the few major roads in Kent running north to south with most motorways and trunk roads running east to west. As a consequence, with the whole of Kent to the south and the Dartford Crossing, and Bluewater Shopping Centre to our north, it is used increasingly as a cut through.

This, added to use by local traffic, make it extremely busy and dangerous causing extreme noise intrusion to local residents.

The residential and building plans for the Kent Thames Gateway will severely increase traffic volumes north to south.

In addition to the morning and evening rush hour, of great concern and disruption are the constrictions, hazards and illegal parking that result twice a day at the three schools along this road. In the morning this coincides with the late rush hour causing huge congestion between Green Lane and Meopham Village Hall in term time.

Safety issues have also been raised by the Kent Messenger newspaper (March 06) following a number of accidents on the A227 between Meopham Green & Culverstone.

- Noise and Air pollution caused by traffic volumes on the A227 are unacceptable.
- Further substantial housing and transport developments especially in the Thames Gateway threaten to destroy the rural character and quality of life previously enjoyed by the village especially due to increased traffic volumes.
- The A227 is now an alternative through route from the M20 and M26 to the A2/M2, the M25, the Dartford Crossing, and Bluewater Shopping site. With the opening of the Ebbsfleet International Railway Station, Ebbsfleet housing and commercial development, and International Exhibition Centres traffic volumes will further increase.

- The possibility of building a relief road from Ebbsfleet/Northfleet to meet the proposed Borough Green bypass should be continually reviewed with KCC Highways Unit (KCC-HU).
- Short term, discuss with KCC-HU means to encourage large earth/ballast lorries and cement vehicles to use the M20 and M25 - rather than routing through Meopham. Also, a high volume of similar vehicles using the A227 via the 'B' road, Longfield Road.
- Long term, Introduce weight restrictions on vehicles using the A227 (apart for access or for emergency vehicles).
- KCC-HU to regularly monitor traffic volumes, noise and air pollution along A227.
- KCC should increase the use of school buses.
- All planning applications for change of use or new development within, or impacting upon, Meopham to include a Section 106 Green travel/transport plan, and KCC-HU to give careful consideration to impact on use of A227.
- KCC-HU to take urgent action regarding the accident " black spot " on the A227 between Meopham Windmill and Culverstone Green.

PARKING

Parking was another subject for major concern of residents .

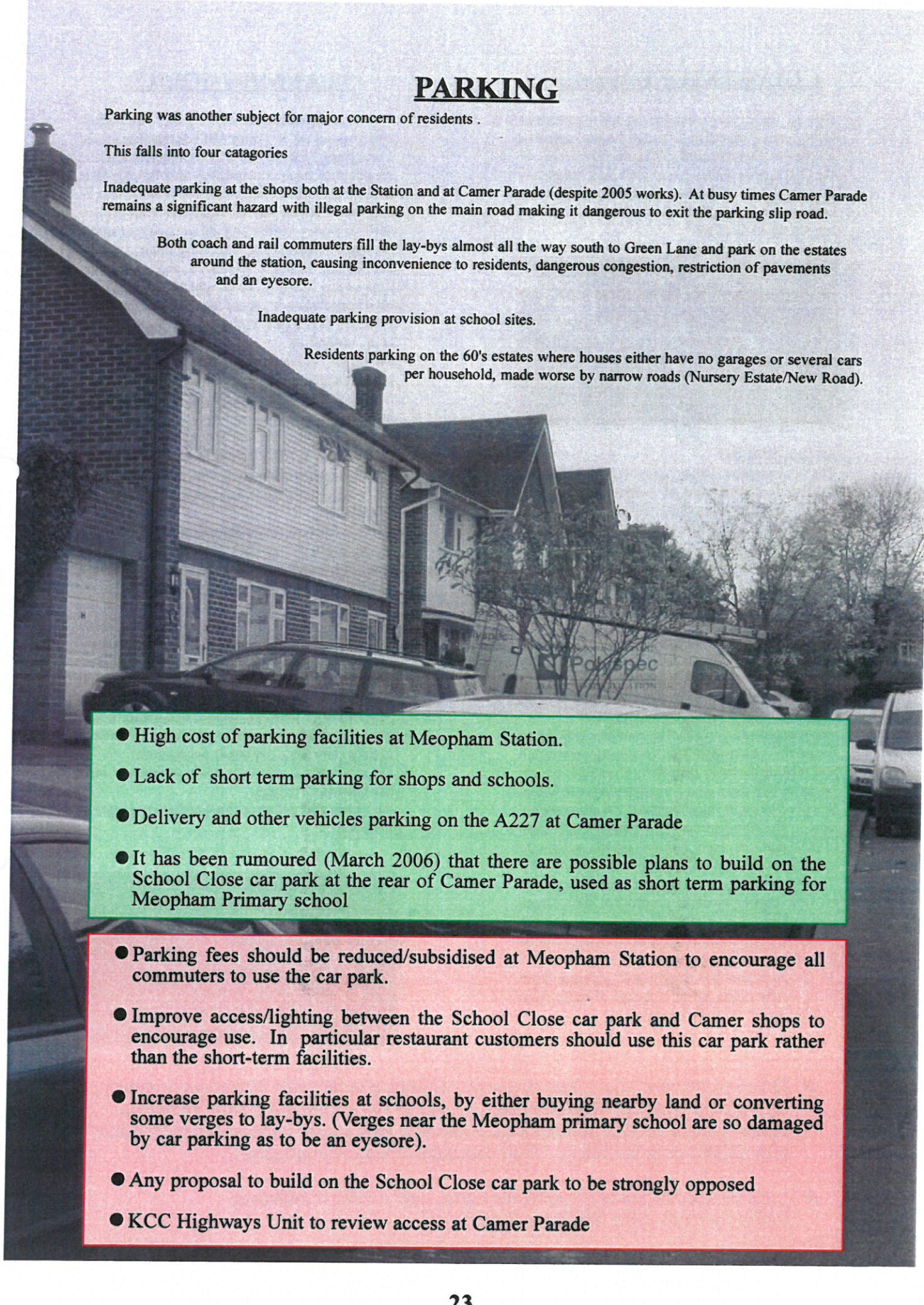
This falls into four categories

Inadequate parking at the shops both at the Station and at Camer Parade (despite 2005 works). At busy times Camer Parade remains a significant hazard with illegal parking on the main road making it dangerous to exit the parking slip road.

Both coach and rail commuters fill the lay-bys almost all the way south to Green Lane and park on the estates around the station, causing inconvenience to residents, dangerous congestion, restriction of pavements and an eyesore.

Inadequate parking provision at school sites.

Residents parking on the 60's estates where houses either have no garages or several cars per household, made worse by narrow roads (Nursery Estate/New Road).

- 
- High cost of parking facilities at Meopham Station.
 - Lack of short term parking for shops and schools.
 - Delivery and other vehicles parking on the A227 at Camer Parade
 - It has been rumoured (March 2006) that there are possible plans to build on the School Close car park at the rear of Camer Parade, used as short term parking for Meopham Primary school
 - Parking fees should be reduced/subsidised at Meopham Station to encourage all commuters to use the car park.
 - Improve access/lighting between the School Close car park and Camer shops to encourage use. In particular restaurant customers should use this car park rather than the short-term facilities.
 - Increase parking facilities at schools, by either buying nearby land or converting some verges to lay-bys. (Verges near the Meopham primary school are so damaged by car parking as to be an eyesore).
 - Any proposal to build on the School Close car park to be strongly opposed
 - KCC Highways Unit to review access at Camer Parade

CULVERSTONE VALLEY

Due to the unique situation in the Culverstone Valley area, Gravesham Borough Council prepared a separate Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Culverstone Valley Area which was Adopted in October 2002. A detailed booklet is available at Gravesham Borough Council offices and the following taken from this



BACKGROUND

The Culverstone Valley Area (CVA) originally consisted of 250 acre of wooded countryside, which was subdivided into plots and sold off to individuals in the 1930's. An assortment of weekend and holiday chalets, caravans and shacks were subsequently erected. The North West Kent Town Map (approved in 1978) extended the Green Belt and Special Landscape Area notation to include the then Culverstone Chalet Area and designated some 125 acres for weekend and holiday camping. Within the Culverstone Chalet Area, planning policies sought to control the size and design of structures. Outside the Chalet Area, planning policies sought to restrict further development.

The weekend and holiday status of the Chalet Area meant that much of the accommodation was small and lacking in basic facilities. Over time people began to live there on a permanent basis, resulting in a need to improve and upgrade the accommodation. The Borough of Gravesham Local plan (1987) and the First Review (1984) sought to guide and control development in the Chalet Area. The aim is to maintain a general policy of restraint on new development in accordance with Green Belt policy but also to enable existing authorised chalets and caravans in acceptable locations to be refurbished or redeveloped.

As development has progressed, pressure from local residents has led to a change of name from "Chalet Area" to "Valley Area"

PLANNING POLICY

The CVA lies within the Green Belt. Green Belt policy as set out in Policy GB2 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) contains a strong presumption against permitting new development in areas subject to Green Belt policy other than in accordance with Kent Structure Plan Policy MGB2. Policy MGB2 contains a strong presumption against permitting new development except that related to open recreation and agriculture. This policy has now been superseded by Policy MGB3 and takes on board the advice contained in PPG2 on Green Belts, allowing the limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings. In the case of extensions, they should not be disproportionate above the size of the original dwelling, while replacement dwellings should be no larger than the dwellings they replace.

The CVA also lies within a Special Landscape Area where Policy C4 of the First Review seeks to provide long term protection and gives priority to landscape considerations over other planning considerations.

Given the history of the growth of the Valley Area and its Green Belt and Special Landscape Area status, the adopted policy is seeking to achieve a number of objectives. These are as follows:

To maintain a general policy of restraint on new development consistent with the Green Belt and Special Landscape status of this area

To improve the overall environment to a level commensurate with the permanent residential occupation of existing authorised development.

To improve existing authorised chalets and caravans in appropriate locations to a standard appropriate for permanent occupancy.

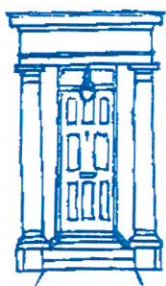
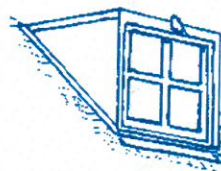
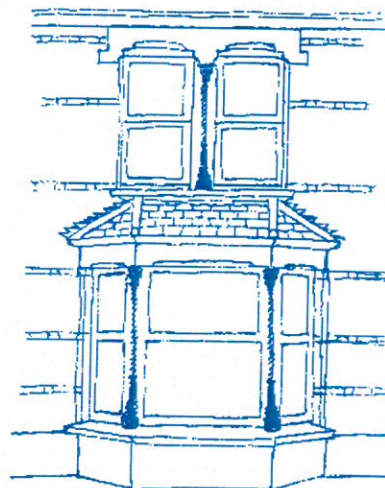
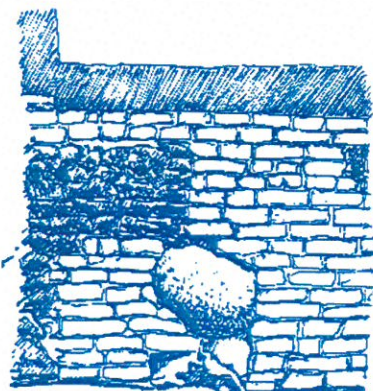
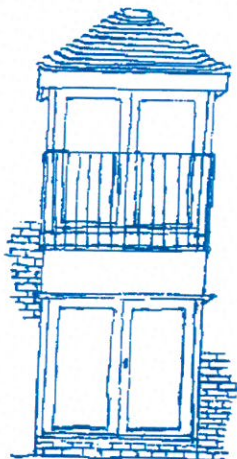
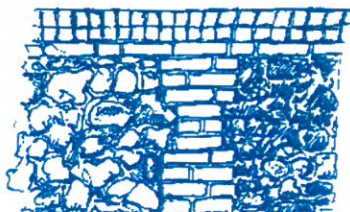
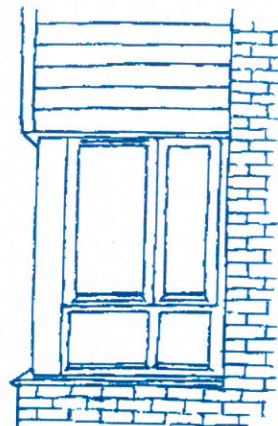
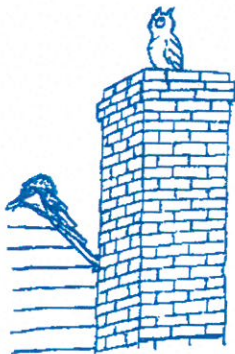
To retain the dominance of the landscape over the built environment.

To retain and enhance the wooded character of the area.



- This now being a large residential area, resulting in a radically altered environment, Gravesham Borough Council should engage in full consultation with Meopham Parish Council as well as Residents of the area with regard to policy changes either now (2006) or in the future. (Full consultation is now in progress.)
- Improve vehicle access to the Valley area, with a view to reducing traffic volumes using Whitepost Lane.

EXAMPLES
OF BUILDING FEATURES
FOUND IN MEOPHAM





INFILL DEVELOPMENT

MINOR

These generally pose fewer problems and are easier to manage than larger schemes. They do not need to copy existing surroundings, but should have regard to them in respect of scale, form and planting. Contrasts can work well if other aspects are satisfied and can give life to an established area. A limited palette of materials is normally appropriate, usually similar to those existing in the area.

Infilling usually has road frontage, being thus quite visible and important to get right.

Potential replacement of large houses with a number of smaller units needs to be carefully considered in order to not unduly change the scale of the area, particularly at the outskirts of the Parish, to maintain a transition to countryside. Maximum site coverage is rarely appropriate.

MAJOR

These are generally residential and have frequently been in the house style of the developer, or pseudo period. The rationale for such lazy approaches is usually given as economics. The County Design Guides have necessitated a reappraisal of the old approach and changes in highway requirements have more recently allowed layouts better suited to rural settings. Led by these requirements, developers have become more conscious of local features. Relating developments better to the locality can improve speed of sale and thus their return

Vigilance and persuasion is very necessary from Planning Authorities in pressing for good quality appropriate developments and to maintain a balanced range of accommodation appropriate to the needs of the overall community.

In public areas more emphasis should be given to site planting, boundary treatments and landscaping and with due regard to existing on-site features and enclosures. Proposals should be designed around them and to avoid unnecessary breaching or removal wherever feasible, relating back to the appropriate degree of site coverage.

Occasional non-residential schemes should take a lead from suitable buildings in the area and pay heed to settings.

PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Scale and form are most important, but what do these terms cover?

Buildings should not appear cramped on the site, contrary to the fairly open feel of the village, or over-large and bulky compared to their neighbours; neither should they lack interest, provided for example by bays, insets/changes in roof line and variation in materials.

Infill and backland sites are under increasing pressure and cannot be automatically disregarded. They can sometimes be usefully developed provided due regard is given to access, existing character of the area, and privacy of existing properties.

Planting and boundary treatments should be appropriate for a rural area, to avoid "creeping urbanisation". Proposals are often over-large for their plot, to their own detriment and that of their neighbours and the area generally, with inadequate separation from adjoining properties.

Copies or pastiche frequently dilute the genuine. Proposals should harmonise with existing structures, although it is accepted this may be a subjective judgement. Informed change perhaps having similar form, and possibly materials should be an aim.

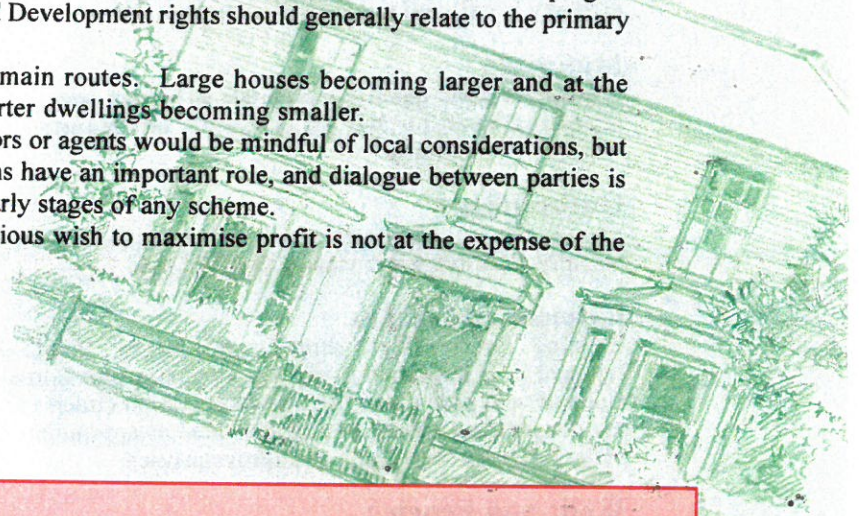
Parking provisions, although necessary, should not dominate, or have undue visible prominence. Where they cannot be subsidiary, keeping the area to a minimum and in a sympathetic surface material can alleviate the impact. Similar principals should apply to other hard landscaping.

Outbuildings erected under Permitted Development rights should generally relate to the primary building.

Current trends appear to have two main routes. Large houses becoming larger and at the opposite end of the range, small/starter dwellings becoming smaller.

It is expected that professional advisors or agents would be mindful of local considerations, but clients and locally based organisations have an important role, and dialogue between parties is to be encouraged, especially at the early stages of any scheme.

It is important that a developer's obvious wish to maximise profit is not at the expense of the community long term.



- That Local Authority planners strictly control developments. This should include breaking down a proposed massing, restricting size/site coverage (albeit not popular with applicants) and implementing policies for minimum requirements.
- Context needs high emphasis, relating proposals to existing adjoining properties, comparative levels and planting and boundaries.
- Consideration taken of the long views of a build from outside the immediate area. Some schemes are prominent from further away, especially from higher ground.
- That planning applications (unless for small extensions) include a Design Statement and "streetscene" or "scenic" impact drawings. (Now adopted.)
- Any development to conserve existing landscape, trees, soft boundaries.
- To maintain high standards, Planning Compliance needs to be monitored and if necessary enforced following completion of works

GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Understanding and respecting context is important whether for alterations, extensions, one-off buildings, or larger developments. Context issues include:

Massing (Density of build)

Should be appropriate to the area and neighbouring buildings. Maintain adequate space relative to the building type.

Style

Consider features such as bays, porches, chimneys.

Appropriate joinery details viz. Window type / size, decorative barge boards.

Some variation in eaves levels / ridge lines/heights can provide interest.

A well designed contemporary scheme can be suitable.

Shop fronts, general signage and all aspects of commercial premises should suit the building but also the surrounding locality, with particular sympathy to the conservation areas.

Position on the plot

Consider with regard to adjacent spaces, separation, levels, sunlight, views, overlooking and existing landscape features, such as slope of site, trees / shrubs, boundary walls. Consider not only how a proposal might affect the immediate surroundings, but whether it is visible in medium / long view and from higher ground around the area. Extra concern should be taken when property is adjacent to a conservation area.

Materials

Must be of good quality, appropriate to but not necessarily repeating existing and general area, but maintaining reasonable continuity.

Outbuildings

Should not be disproportionate. Garages should not be visually intrusive when viewed from the road.

External provisions

Existing mature trees, shrubs, and hedges, should be retained (it is important to check with Gravesham Borough Council who hold details of Tree Preservation Orders) This mature planting should be supplemented as appropriate by suitable "green" screening to improve privacy.

Walls and Fencing

If this is considered necessary, boundary and internal enclosure to be suitable for a rural context



MAKE YOUR OWN ASSESSMENT

Extensions/Alterations

What are your requirements?

Mindful of the foregoing, see Pages 24/25/26, are they suitable for your dwelling or site ?

For residential schemes, although easy to propound but not always to effect, might moving be a more viable option overall? Remember, it is desirable to maintain a variety of accommodation in the area, not to keep increasing smaller buildings. It may also result in a detrimental effect on the overall appearance of the property.

If your decision is to proceed, considering all external aspects should help define the best way of solving or progressing your requirements. Are there any good precedents around for what you would like to do and why/how do they work?

It is often effective to have a step in line or (subject to site) level between original parts and additions and makes a change in new/old materials less obvious.

It is not in your interest to upset or unbalance the building or setting. Be mindful of what attracted you to the property in the first place and how unsuitable alterations, even if adding floor space, could spoil it and may even detract from overall value. Safeguard or in some cases improve the features and inherent attractions.

Although cost is a significant factor it pays overall to use good quality materials, both for appearance and long term value.

Could your requirements be partly met by re-organising the existing building layout, perhaps resulting in a smaller addition becoming necessary? This approach might also improve/optimize use and outlook where the existing is not ideal.

Consider the position of the building on the plot. What is the path of the sun relative to the principal rooms, and effect on adjacent properties.

How can a scheme respect existing features on the site, such as trees, walls, slope of the land?

Consider the long views of the building from outside the immediate area. It is disturbing how some schemes are prominent from further away, especially from higher ground.

Your views, resulting from such a assessment, can help establish options and form an important initial brief to a professional advisor. They may also be included to support an application to the Council, explaining the

- Seek professional advice on the structures
- Seek professional advice on plantings and hedging

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. It is essential that the natural and architectural heritage is fully recognised. (Page 11)
2. Planning applications within Conservation Areas and effecting them should be carefully considered with regard to the character, appearance, interest and historic form of the Conservation Area as described in the Parish Design Statement. (P12)
3. Any new build/extension should take full consideration of impact on density. (P14)
4. New build/extension should provide adequate off road parking provision for size of proposed building. (P14)
5. Ribbon development should not be permitted - in any circumstances. (P14)
6. Cost solutions and designs that suit an urban environment should not be used in a rural environment. (P19)
7. Consideration of context especially in respect of existing Conservation Areas, must always be a priority. (P19)
8. Municipal buildings should be designed as an enhancement to the community. (p19)
9. Any plans for major rebuilds of large existing sites (school or similar) should be well publicised, and/or referred to the Parish Design Statement Committee, so that full consultation takes place within Meopham and consideration given to residents' views. Particular care needs to be taken in regard to design, parking facilities, security fencing, light pollution and future impact on traffic flows throughout the parish. Such plans should not provide an opportunity for building additional houses/commercial premises. (P19)
10. All planning applications for change of use or new development within, or impacting upon, Meopham to include a Section 106 Green travel/transport plan where appropriate. (P22)
11. Any proposal now or in the future to build on any car parking locations to be referred to the Parish Design Statement Committee for wide consultation with residents. (P23)
12. Culverstone Valley now being a large residential area, resulting in a radically altered environment, Gravesham Borough Council should engage in full consultation with Meopham Parish Council as well as Residents of the area with regard to policy changes either now (2006) or in the future. (Full consultation is now in progress.)(P24)
13. That Local Authority planners strictly control developments. This should include breaking down a proposed massing, restricting size/site coverage (albeit not popular with applicants) and implementing policies for minimum requirements. (P27)
14. Context needs high emphasis, relating proposals to existing adjoining properties, comparative levels and planting and boundaries. (P27)
15. Consideration taken of the long views of a build from outside the immediate area. Some schemes are prominent from further away, especially from higher ground. (P27)
16. That planning applications (unless for small extensions) include a Design Statement and "streetscene" or "scenic" impact drawings. (Now adopted.) (P27)
17. Any development to conserve existing landscape, trees, soft boundaries. (27)
18. To maintain high standards, Planning Compliance needs to be monitored and if necessary enforced following completion of works. (P27)
19. Residents considering building works should seek early professional advice on the structures. (P29)
20. When designing building works residents should seek professional advice on plantings and hedging. (P29)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS **TO ACHIEVE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARISH**

1. That the boundary of the "AONB" be extended to west of the parish. (Page 11)
2. Article 4 (2) Directions served on all residential buildings in the Conservation Areas not statutorily listed. (P12)
3. A review of current legislation covering field division and boundaries should be undertaken to maximise protection of hedges and the visual impact of horse fencing on the landscape. (P18)
4. A review made of traffic signage along A227 and removal of excess signs. (P20)
5. No further traffic signs to be erected without Parish Council approval. (P20)
6. Any advertising signage inappropriate to a rural or Conservation location to be removed or replaced (SPG3 Advertisement Control- Policy Guidelines enforced). (P20)
7. No further street lighting to be installed. Public floodlighting at schools and sports facilities to be minimised and monitor use of private (security type) lighting. (P20)
8. Promote landscape conservation: verges, soft boundaries etc. (P20)
9. Footways on all main routes to schools and shops should be better maintained and drop down pavements built at all junctions/corners. (P21)
10. Review of the one way system at Whitepost Lane. (P21)
11. Provision of a continuous pedestrian footway on one side of the A227 from Meopham Senior School to Culverstone Green. (P21)
12. Schools to organise more walking buses. (P21)
13. The possibility of building a relief road from Ebbsfleet/Northfleet to meet the proposed Borough Green bypass should be continually reviewed with KCC Highways Unit. (P22)
14. Short term, discuss with KCC Highways Unit means to encourage large earth/ballast lorries and cement vehicles to use the M20 and M25 - rather than routing through Meopham. Also, a high volume of similar vehicles using the A227 via the 'B' road, Longfield Road. (P22)
15. Long term, introduce weight restrictions on vehicles using the A227 (apart for access and for emergency vehicles). (P22)
16. KCC Highways Unit to regularly monitor traffic volumes, noise and air pollution along A227. (P22)
17. KCC to increase the use of school buses. (P22)
18. KCC Highways Unit to take urgent action regarding the accident " black spot " on the A227 between Meopham Windmill and Culverstone Green. (P22)
19. Parking fees should be reduced/subsidised at Meopham Station to encourage all commuters to use the car park. (P23)
20. Improve access/lighting between the School Close car park and Camer shops to encourage use. In particular restaurant customers should use this car park rather than the short-term facilities. (P23)
21. Review parking facilities at schools, with a view to effecting some improvements. (P23)
22. KCC Highways Unit to review access at Camer Parade. (P23)
23. Review vehicle access to the Culverstone Valley area, with a view to reducing traffic volumes using Whitepost Lane. (P24)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The PDS Document was produced by a Committee of 11 in full consultation with Meopham Parish Council, Gravesham Borough Council and with the residents of Meopham. To this end, the Committee held 5 public consultation days, a Focus Group day, and circulated questionnaires throughout the parish.

The document has taken two years from blank page to finalisation.

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MEOPHAM PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT

Finalised - 2006

It is intended that this Design Statement should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SDP), as part of the emerging Local Development Framework process but it does not yet meet the requirements set down in recently issued (Autumn 2006) planning regulations. As an interim measure the Borough Council will be requested to adopt the Statement as a background advice document, which can be referred to alongside policies in existing Structure and Local Plans and used in conjunction with other design guidance. It can therefore perform a valuable role for development control purposes, as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, planning and planning appeals.

