



HAMSTREET KENT



VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



HAMSTREET KENT: VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



An aerial view of Hamstreet looking north towards Ashford. The A2070 bypass can be seen on the left hand side of the photograph.

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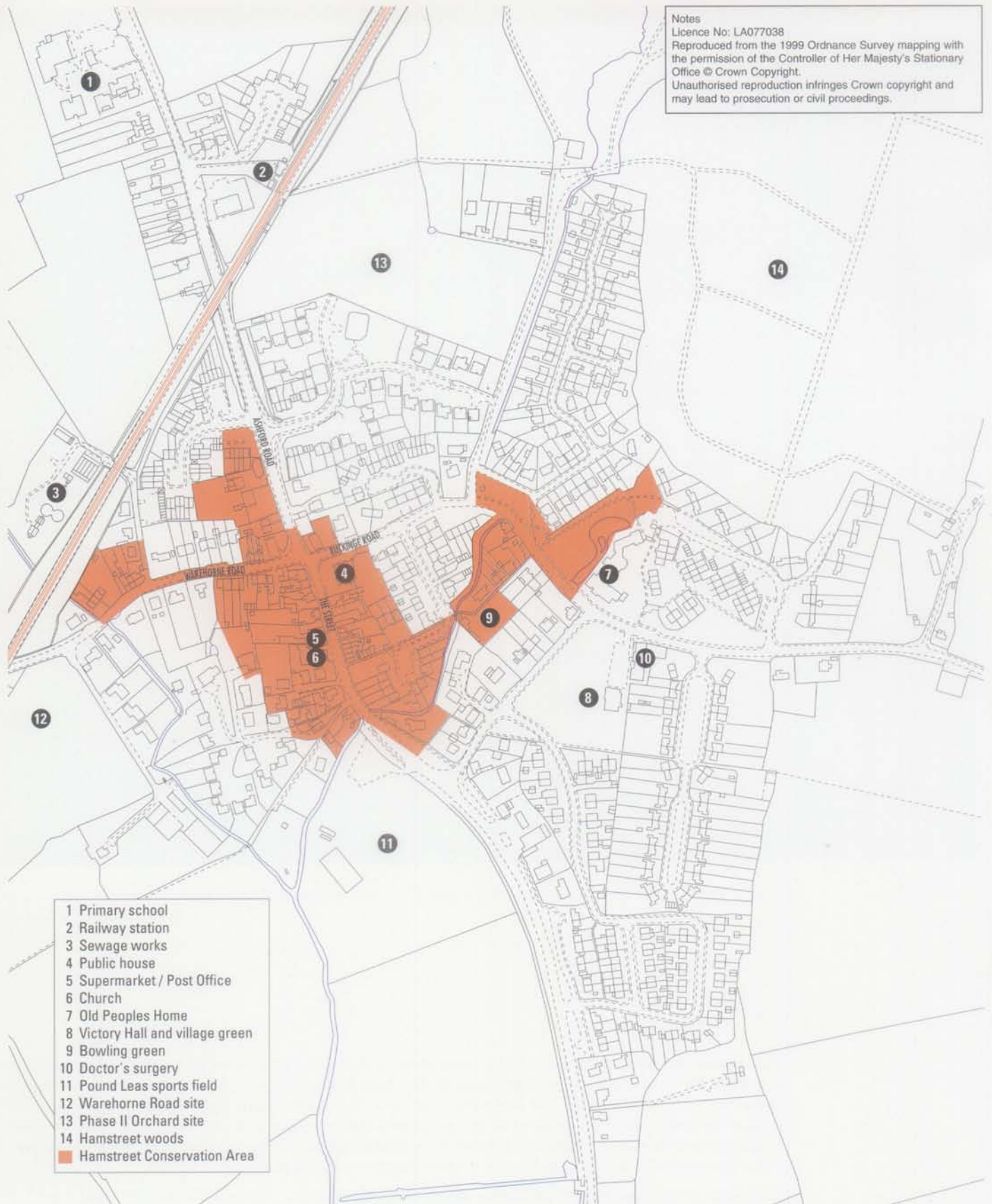
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This Design Statement has been formally adopted by Ashford Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The document expresses many views held by local people involved in its preparation. In adopting the Design Statement the Council is not necessarily supporting all of these opinions but is undertaking to take into account the 'design guidelines' included in the text when making planning decisions. The Council does not have sufficient powers as planning authority to require these 'design guidelines' to be met in all cases - the active support and commitment of developers, landowners and householders is also essential.

The guidance in this document is intended to supplement and support the policies of the Borough Local Plan.



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Notes
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- 1 Primary school
- 2 Railway station
- 3 Sewage works
- 4 Public house
- 5 Supermarket / Post Office
- 6 Church
- 7 Old Peoples Home
- 8 Victory Hall and village green
- 9 Bowling green
- 10 Doctor's surgery
- 11 Pound Leas sports field
- 12 Warehorne Road site
- 13 Phase II Orchard site
- 14 Hamstreet woods
- Hamstreet Conservation Area

INTRODUCTION

Hamstreet is identified in the Ashford Borough Local Plan (June 2000) as one of three villages in the Ashford Borough where limited growth is appropriate. The Plan identified one new site for housing (at Warehorne Road) and further release of land on the former orchard land just north of the village centre. There had already been several developments within the village in the preceding few years, and the production of a Village Design Statement (VDS) was proposed to give villagers a chance to have a say in how any further expansion should proceed. At a full Parish Council Meeting on November 23rd 1999 it was agreed that the village would produce a Design Statement.

After this decision, a letter was sent to every household in Hamstreet, inviting them to come to the inaugural meeting of the Hamstreet Village Design Group (HVDG) in December 1999. This was very well attended, by over 100 people, and everyone was invited to get involved. Thirteen of the villagers put themselves forward and the HVDG was set up under the chairmanship of the Parish Council Chairman with the specific aim of producing a VDS. These volunteers were all residents of Hamstreet, some since they were born, others for only a few years, and included two members of the Parish Council and the Borough Councillor. What has united them in their efforts has been a shared desire to try and protect the village in which they live from becoming developed in an inappropriate way. Regular open meetings of the HVDG were held throughout 2000 and 2001, and bulletins detailing discussions and plans for action were produced and delivered to every house in the village.

In March 2000 a comprehensive questionnaire was personally delivered to every house in the village and this produced a response rate of 74% from 557 houses canvassed. The results gave a detailed insight into how the villagers viewed past and recent developments. The overwhelming opinion expressed by the village was that 'the expansion of the village over recent years had been excessive' and that 'the quality of the design of developments had not achieved the standards which the village would like to see on any future developments'. Subsequent to the questionnaire the village was invited to take part in a Photographic Workshop whereby aspects of architectural design and local nuances considered important were recorded and analysed. A full exhibition of photographs was put on display at the Hamstreet Country Fair in June 2000 and June 2001 followed by an exhibition of the first draft of this

“ A Village Design Statement (VDS) sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in a village, based on its character. It is an advisory document produced by a village community, not by a planning authority. It will not stop change from happening, but it can help affect how any new building fits in to the village. VDSs are intended to influence the operation of the statutory planning system, so that new development is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the immediate environment.

The Countryside Agency

document for which comments were invited and salient points taken into consideration. Advice was sought from a retired Principal Planning Inspector, a doctor living in the village who was involved with community health care, the Countryside Agency, English Nature, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and there were frequent consultations with Ashford Borough Council's Strategic Planning Unit. Information from the questionnaire and the photographic evidence provided the source material for the VDS.



WHERE IS HAMSTREET?

Hamstreet lies six miles south of Ashford and the M20 motorway, seven miles east of Tenterden and seven miles north-west of New Romney. It has a population of about 1400 people, most living within half a mile of the centre of the village. The smaller villages of Warehorne and Ruckinge are within a mile, but apart from these developments the village is surrounded by open countryside. All three villages are within the Kent Special Landscape Area of Old Romney Shoreline, which officially recognises the natural beauty of the area and the need to protect it from inappropriate development.

There is considerable woodland in the area. The higher ground to the north includes Fagg's Wood, (Forestry Commission land,) and Hamstreet Woods, a Site Of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve managed by English Nature, with a very rich flora and fauna. The southern side of the village is bounded by low-lying farmland, the beginnings of Romney Marsh, and is subject to flooding. The A2070 bypass lies to the west of the village. The railway, providing a limited service to Ashford International, Rye and Hastings, passes NE to SW on the northern edge. The Royal Military Canal, (an Ancient Monument completed in the early 1800's for defensive purposes but now forming an integral part of the drainage system of the Marsh) lies to the south. These features act as natural constraints which have to be seriously considered for further development to satisfactorily fit into the existing village.



Footpath along southern bank of Royal Military Canal

Pound Leas sports field during the floods of February 2001



Hamstreet woods in Spring



A SHORT HISTORY OF HAMSTREET

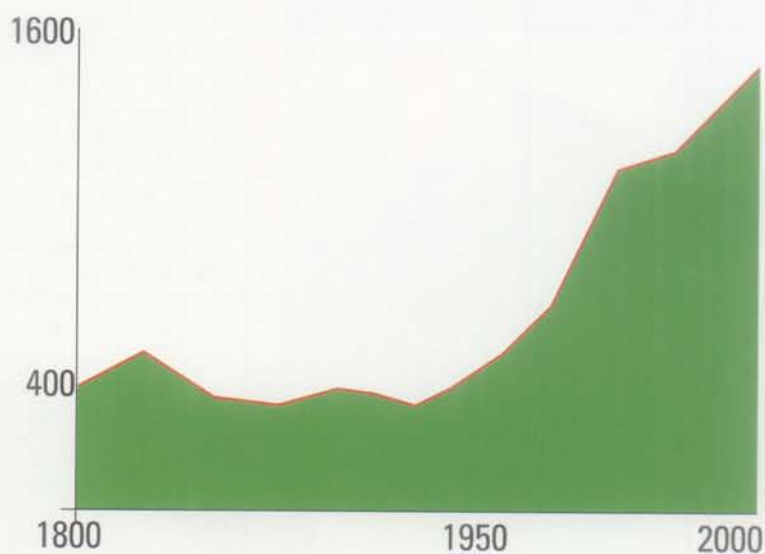
Hamstreet lies in the parish of Orlestone on what was originally the Saxon shoreline. People moving from the settlement of Orlestone (directly north on higher ground) established the village as the sea receded. The site had what was needed for a prosperous settlement: water, grazing land and access to markets for cattle and sheep.

During the 18th Century the village expanded after further drainage improved living conditions. In 1793 the Ashford Toll Road was built forming part of the turnpike road system for easier access inland. The population slowly grew to about 400 by 1800.

In 1804 the Royal Military Canal was finished, but together with the building of the railway in 1849, had little long-term effect on the population. It was not until after the Second World War that the village significantly began to grow again.

There were a large number of housing developments built on the edge of, or within, the original village centre throughout the second half of the 20th century. At the time of publication the population of the village has more than trebled since the Second World War.

The A2070 bypass was built in 1994 and took away the through-traffic to Hastings and Romney. However, all traffic towards Tenterden and Hythe still passes through the village along its almost unimproved original narrow roads.



Population growth in Hamstreet since 1800

Fairfield Terrace, the first modern estate built in the village





THE VILLAGE AS IT IS NOW



The centre of Hamstreet is still a relatively unspoilt Kentish village, and is largely protected by a conservation area designated in July 1996. The traditional buildings show quite a mixture of styles and are representative of many Kentish villages, including examples of houses from late Tudor half-timber to 18th and 19th century dwellings with brick, hanging tiles and white weather-board as prominent features. The character of the village is also added to by the network of drainage channels taking the surface water out through the village.

The major expansion of Hamstreet occurred after the 1950's, spreading out from the old centre, particularly noticeably on the main roads entering the village. Much of this development has had a negative effect on the appearance of the village, showing little regard for the local character, particularly when it has taken place in a conspicuous position. These areas are shown white on the map (left).

On the other hand, most of this development took place south of the railway, with all houses within walking distance of the high street shops, the surgery and the school, so Hamstreet still retains a compact, village atmosphere which is enhanced by a good network of footpaths.

It is essential that any further building should enhance the appearance of the village and contribute to the balanced social development of a living environment.

The section that follows describes the character of the areas that local people consider the most attractive and contribute most positively to the distinctive character of the village. New developments should reflect the positive characteristics that define these 'character areas'.

General view of The Street



Character Areas

It is helpful to look at the existing housing developments in Hamstreet which from the results of the questionnaire were found to be the most attractive and popular. These areas of housing are listed in order of age with an illustrative photograph for each.



The Street represents the old heart of the village which grew up around the crossroads and inn, and despite being a mixture of style and age, the houses retain charm and a cohesive element which should be sought in any future development. Most of these houses are only two storeys. On the whole, there are two distinct types of housing in this area: the generally smaller, tightly packed terraced style, with minimal front gardens; and the larger, detached or semi-detached houses with large front gardens which introduce greenery into the heart of the village.

Most of these buildings are constructed from the characteristic materials of the area i.e. slate or red-brown peg tiled roofs, stock bricks, complementing red-brown hanging tiles from first floor, full elevation white weatherboarding or tudor half-timbering. There are a number of other distinctive features which are described in detail with photographs in the design guidelines section.

Several buildings are fine examples of medieval timber-framed construction, such as The Old Bakery. Many buildings of this age have been refaced in 17th, 18th or 19th century with brick, hanging tile or weatherboard. Buildings of the 19th century such as the brick built terraces and the Old School House often have attractive detailing of cills, windows, chimneys and doors and flat or radius soldier arches. Roof pitches have traditionally been steep to accommodate peg or clay tiles. Hipped, half hipped and gable roofs can be seen – the attempts of some recent developments to replicate these can appear somewhat clumsy.



This mix of housing is what makes up the most attractive aspects of the village, although not all of them are in the Street; **Warehorne Road** combines similar styles with some fine medieval and later dwellings. (See also photo of Warehorne Road on page 12).



The Street



The Old Bakery, The Street

Warehorne Road

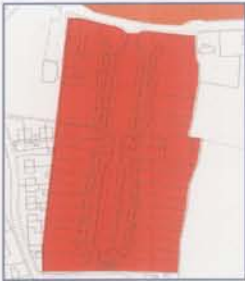




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Ashford Road, by the railway station, is a small area of Victorian buildings which incorporates the school and the station itself, both of which display very fine architecture. There are several semi-detached villas in red brick with slate or tiled roofs which blend in well with the older village houses. They are set above the road with attractive front gardens bordered by low hedges.



Fairfield Terrace (1938). This was built by the Local Authority and is a very good example of a modern design, despite being over 60 years old. There are 46 semi-detached houses in the road which is an elongated figure of eight with shrubs or trees in the two central ovals, and grasscrete parking places. This provides traffic calming and a green outlook from the front of all the houses. The houses are red brick and tiled in sympathetic colours. All the houses have large rear gardens. The formal layout and generous plots differ from the character of the rest of the village but the street has a quality of its own and is popular to live in.



Quince Orchard (old) is a row of six bungalows built in the 1950's set above the road with large sloping front gardens. Hamstreet has a large number of small bungalows and these are good examples of the style which can be attractive and are popular with the residents, particularly the elderly population. Their front gardens are a striking feature, particularly in the summer months.



Carter's Wood (1970's) and **Cotton Hill Walk** are built around the duckpond and the old people's home, Cotton Hill House. The 48 houses (semi-detached and terraced) and bungalows are spread out with many open green areas between the groups of houses. These open areas including the duckpond contribute positively to both the open character of the area and the woodland setting behind. Cotton Hill House itself was built of yellow bricks which are completely unlike anything else in the village but the duckpond is a popular feature. The trees in this area help soften the transition from the built area to the countryside at the edge of the village.





Bankside was built in 1992/3, and as its name implies, is on a slope. The use of the natural contours, with good variation of elevational treatments has given an interest to the site and has resulted in the most popular recent development. It has some parking at the front of houses, but there is also overflow parking to the rear out of sight. Some effort was made to introduce character features from the village, such as decorative brickwork and entrance porticos but the suburban road layout and uniform building pattern are not in keeping with its rural environment.



Cherry Close (1999). These four houses are admired for their traditional design (white weatherboarding and plain tiled roofs) but the front house in particular is taller and therefore out of scale with the neighbouring houses. Vehicle access and parking is difficult because there is very little space between each house.



Lancaster Close (1999) This estate of 35 houses includes a range of smaller terraced properties, through semi-detached houses up to large four and five bedroom houses. Its appearance is not as popular as Bankside, detracting features include excessive amounts of tarmac, large drives in front of the houses, inappropriate coloured tiles and very poor quality planting. It is considered by many as having a characterless suburban style with houses inappropriate to rural development. However, there are hanging tiles and chimneys which make up to some extent for the integral garages and interlocking roof tiles. The frontage of the houses could have been much enhanced by the planting of hedges rather than swathes of untidy-looking alien shrubs.



View facing east, with the village hall in the foreground, Fairfield Terrace and countryside beyond.





A mix of building styles in The Street (Guideline 1, 2, 3)



Tile hanging, chimney and barn-hip (Guideline 1, 2, 3, 4)



20th c. Half timber and render interpretation (Guideline 1); inappropriate velux window (Guideline 6)



Chimney construction (Guideline 2)

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design Issues

The following guidelines outline what the villagers consider would be acceptable if alterations are made to existing buildings or further development is allowed within the village

Any future development within Hamstreet should reflect strongly those character areas described in the previous section which are seen as the most desirable. This should incorporate the variety of accommodation and styles shown in The Street and Ashford Road, to strengthen the links to the historic heart of the village, a link that has largely been ignored by the designers of most of the estates since the 1950's.

Use of some of the details shown in the photographs and those guidelines set out in below will help in emphasising the character of Hamstreet.

- 1 Where brickwork is to be a major part of the elevational treatment of new building, red/brown stock bricks should be the dominant material with detailing being used to give interest as in the photographs shown. Alternative elevations should make use of tile hanging, weather boarding, Tudor style half timber and render and painted brickwork as shown in the detailed photographs.**
- 2 The older properties in the village have many brickwork details but in particular the use of flat and radius soldier arches in conjunction with stone cills at windows and doors, and details at eaves level are prominent and very characteristic of the local idiom. Brick chimneys where used should be constructed with strong profiles to ensure they do not appear as "tack ons"**
- 3 Roof materials should be of traditional materials as used in the older part of the village where in the main Kent Peg tiles and slate are in evidence. Clay plain tiles, e.g. as manufactured by Tudor, Keymer or Redland among others, are a suitable substitute as well as re-constituted slate; concrete plain tiles could be used on lower cost units, however interlocking tiles should be avoided.**
- 4 Hipped and barn hipped roofs are a feature of the older dwellings in Hamstreet and should be used to give variation to roofscapes together with varied roof pitches.**
- 5 Pointing should reflect traditional techniques used in the village and be weather-struck or a tooled joint.**
- 6 Windows and doors should incorporate styles seen in the historic centre, predominantly Cottage style, Georgian small pane, Edge-bar, and sliding sash with small gabled windows being used in some 1st floor elevations. Velux windows should be avoided.**
- 7 Porches and entrance porticos should reflect those seen in the historic village buildings.**
- 8 Densities of new developments should reflect those existing within the village at present, which range from those high densities typical in The Street to the more spacious areas of Ashford Road where the larger houses have larger gardens. Those areas of high density with small private gardens should have areas of communal access to encourage a sense of community and open space.**



Feature tile hanging using traditional kent pegs (Guideline 1, 3)

- 9 In order to avoid unsightly parking in the fronts of properties, parking areas at the rear of housing should be created with direct access to garages in rear gardens. Integral garages are not desirable as they distort the appearance of dwellings and are rarely used to house vehicles. Where garages are constructed they should be a minimum 5.5m long by 3m wide to make them practical to use.
- 10 The point of entry to a development off the main road is crucial to the appearance of the village and great care must be taken with the design and landscaping of this element to blend it in with its position in the village and enhance rather than detract from the scene.
- 11 Street furniture (signs, litter bins, streetlights etc.) should be sympathetic to the rural character of the village and not be the standard concrete or metal columns. No illuminated signs should be used.
- 12 Street lighting should be designed to avoid light pollution and to be energy efficient.
- 13 Design briefs should be prepared for any future development of four and above houses and the planning application should include a sufficient number of artist's impressions of the development drawn to scale, including existing buildings and other landmark features. A photomontage to scale would be preferable.



Traditional style of porch (Guideline 7)



Medieval timber frame with windows of later date (Guideline 1, 6)



Above and left: Roof pitches and materials (Guideline 4, 3)



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The village edge – Warehorne Road (Guideline 23)



The wooded setting of Hamstreet – Carters Wood (Guideline 18)



Parking area at Bankside (Guideline 9)

Road Safety Issues

- 14 New roads within developments must be designed in accordance with the Kent Design Guide using narrow roads where appropriate to decrease speeds and increase safety.
- 15 New developments should include the creation of new footpaths and cycle tracks to encourage the growth of walking and cycling to key points i.e. shops, school, surgery and recreation areas, and the enhancement of existing footpaths such as resurfacing and improved lighting.
- 16 Access roads to any new development should be designed with safety in mind, and should not be sited, where in the opinion of the Council and the Highways Authority, traffic safety problems are likely to arise.

Landscape Issues

- 17 The decorative front garden is a feature of most areas of the village and there is generally some private space in front of a house, often softened with a hedge and/or planting or containers. Ideally this will range from a depth of only a couple of metres on a terraced property to 5-10m on a larger semi- or detached property.



Above and right: Decorative front gardens (Guideline 17)



18 The wooded setting of Hamstreet suggests an informal landscape design not 'imported' landscaping. Developers should be obliged to provide adequate planting and screening, where appropriate of native species, which are more suitable in a village. Large beds of shrubs should not be included, unless they are species that will suppress weeds, survive hard winters and enhance the wildlife value of the site. (see Ashford Borough Local Plan policies DP1 and DP7).

19 Planting of native hedges should be encouraged to mark boundaries. Where there is no reasonable alternative to fencing, appropriate styles should be encouraged such as close boarding in preference to panel for 1.8m height, with picket or crossed split chestnut (a traditional Kentish style) for 1.0m or 1.2m heights.

20 All sizeable existing trees and hedges should be preserved if possible in new developments.

21 Important areas of public open space within the village, which include the village green, the bowling green, the duck pond area at Cotton Hill, the Pill Box Green and Pound Leas should be kept free of built development. Private areas of open space should be protected where their development would result in 'cramming' or excessive, inappropriate infilling.

22 There must be no new development on the 100 year floodplain, or any that increases the risk of flooding for existing buildings (see policy CF3 of the Ashford Borough Local Plan). Most of the southern side of Hamstreet is designated as being at risk of a one in two hundred year flooding by the sea.

23 Hamstreet has hills on three sides and it is important to protect views both in and out of the village from all directions. The edges of new development should be planted with trees or indigenous hedges rather than fenced to ease the transition from countryside to village. The use of front elevations and side elevations facing open countryside would also soften the impact of village edge development rather than an uninspiring row of backs of houses.



Screening and planting – Cotton Hill (Guideline 18)



Floodplain 2001 (Guideline 22)

The Bowling Green (Guideline 21)





This section is compiled from views expressed by Hamstreet residents as recorded in the results from the village questionnaire, March 2000

Villagers enjoy living in a country environment. They do not want to see new development spreading out into surrounding fields. The overwhelming view from the questionnaire was that the "green" areas within and surrounding the village should be protected at all costs.

The feeling in the village is that Hamstreet has had more than enough new housing in recent years which is supported by the population growth statistics. When the two sites already allocated in the Ashford Borough Local Plan are built on that will mean that the village will have had 175 new houses since 1990, representing an increase in excess of 30%. The majority of villagers want growth to stop, so that surrounding green areas, and the few remaining open spaces left within the village are preserved.

Aims for future development

The following aims are what the villagers would like to see considered to protect and enhance the existing village.

- 1 Any new development should have a range of house size, including a significant proportion of one, two and three bedroom properties.
- 2 Provision should be made for sheltered housing for elderly or disabled people, affordable homes and local needs housing, the latter under the control of the local parish. These properties should be pepper-potted within new developments.
- 3 There is sufficient demand for commercial premises, mainly offices, within the village, which should be incorporated into new development to encourage villagers to work close to home and reduce commuter pressure.
- 4 Generous parking to any new housing or commercial projects must be provided to avoid exacerbating the current problems within the village, with a minimum of two spaces per unit. This is necessary because the public transport serving the village is so limited that most people use private cars.
- 5 Environmentally friendly housing should be encouraged including for example, solar heating, locally sourced materials, rainwater

LIVING IN HAMSTREET

filter and storage, facilities for recycling and other features as described in policy HG2 for sustainable development.

- 6 New developments must include within them, or support financially elsewhere in the village, local open areas that allow leisure and sporting activities to be enjoyed by adults and children of all ages in a clean and safe environment.
- 7 Existing commercial premises should be supported to ensure that the village which serves several other local settlements should remain an active commercial centre in support of the aims of Local Plan policy RE2. Sympathetic conversions to provide commercial premises would be considered outside of the village centre.
- 8 The Conservation area covering the village centre should be extended to cover more historic houses e.g. the Victorian School and the Station, and other open areas such as the Village Green. In this Conservation Area the protection of existing street scenes and roofscapes is considered to be of importance.
- 9 Extensions should not be allowed where this would result in cramming of a site. Also, extensions to smaller houses should be discouraged to maintain the stock of starter homes.
- 10 No ribbon development should be permitted.
- 11 Village lighting should be improved so that pedestrians can walk round the village at night safely, allowing them not only to see their way but also to be seen by vehicles. Particular areas of concern are the car-park at Pound Leas, the Victory Hall and Cotton Hill.
- 12 All public transport serving the village should be preserved and enhanced to reduce the pressure on the village roads and the environment. An integrated transport system would optimise the existing services.
- 13 The quality of life of present residents should not be damaged by any future development

SUMMARY

From the results of the survey, which was carried out to provide the information on which the guidelines for the Orlestone and Hamstreet Village Design Statement were based, it is quite clear that there is a strong feeling that the village has taken more than its fair share of development since 1950. In view of this and the knowledge that a further 70 units are already included in the Ashford Borough Local Plan it is strongly suggested there should be no further developments within the Parish in the current period (to 2006), although suitable small parcels of land may be found in adjoining settlements which would still be within ten minutes travelling time of Hamstreet station and the main road, affording good access to the services of Hamstreet and employment centres.

We consider that whatever new building does take place in Hamstreet (including that currently planned) should comply with the guidelines of this village design statement. In summary those principles are:

- 1 Care should be taken not to adversely affect the quality of lives of the current residents;**
- 2 The infrastructure of the village (particularly roads, footpaths, and public transport) should be improved sufficiently to be adequate for current and future development;**
- 3 Any development must be designed and scaled to sit comfortably within a rural landscape and avoid stereotypical suburban features. The use of the Kent Design Guide will greatly assist in this aim;**
- 4 Buildings should be specifically designed to suit the local idiom and use traditional local materials and details as illustrated earlier in the statement.**

The rural setting of Hamstreet





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hamstreet Village Design Group gratefully acknowledges the help given by the following in drawing up the draft statement.

1. Ashford Borough Council, Strategic Planning Unit.
2. Kent Rural Community Council
3. English Nature
4. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
5. Dr. Andrew Burnett MRCGP, MFPHM, Medical Director of Barnett Primary Care Trust.
6. David John OBE, MA, FRTPI, FRSA, Former Principal Planning Inspector.
7. The People of Hamstreet

Ordnance Survey plans of Hamstreet obtained from Ashford Borough Council.

