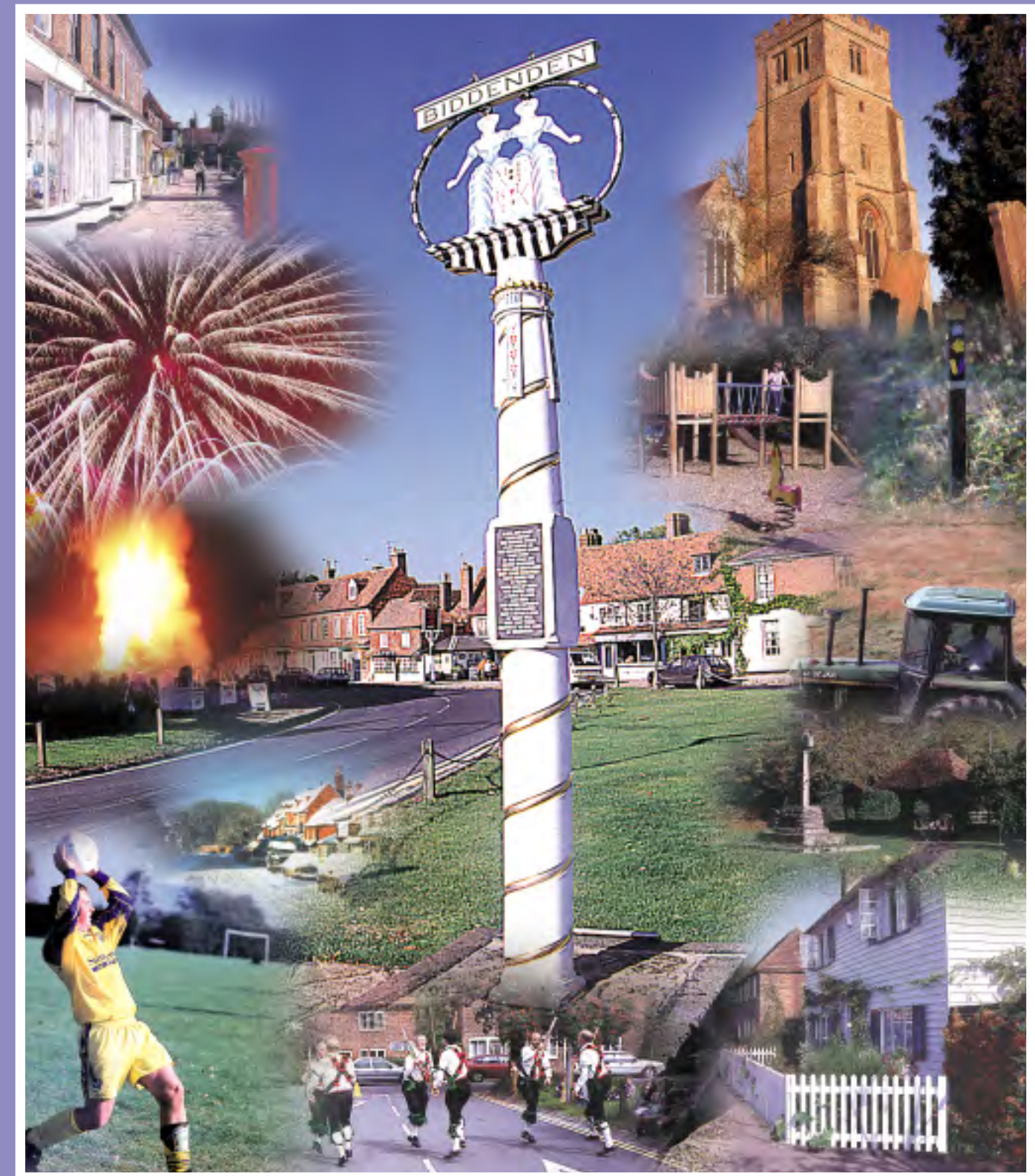


# BIDDENDEN DESIGN STATEMENT



THE BIDDENDEN PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT STEERING GROUP, BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL  
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[www.biddenden.gov.uk](http://www.biddenden.gov.uk)

*'Kent is a county of  
timber and brick, not stone,  
not slate and not thatch'*

CLIFTON-TAYLOR, 1972

*'New developments in and  
around Ashford are designed  
to fit naturally into the  
Kent vernacular and reflect  
the strong sense of place,  
characteristic of the local  
area. Red clay tiled roofs and  
walls in brick, hung tile,  
painted weatherboard and  
painted brick and render  
should dominate.'*

ATKINS - DESIGN, ENVIRONMENT & ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS  
(PLANNING, LANDSCAPE & HERITAGE DEPT.) 2002

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 points noted under 'Local Views' reflect the views of local residents expressed during the preparation of this document, and have not been adopted by Ashford Borough Council.

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## INTRODUCTION

In common with many other parishes and villages around the country, the residents of Biddenden greatly value the community in which we live and wish to protect its character and way of life. We are all aware of the great pressure for new housing in the south-east and we all know that change in the parish is inevitable. Our challenge is to manage that change to ensure that we protect the qualities and characteristics of the parish that we all appreciate.

The Design Statement helps us to achieve this, by giving residents a unique opportunity to express our views, register our concerns and identify our preferences. The Statement has been developed to achieve four key objectives:

- To provide an assessment of the character of the parish
- To give guidance on the design, and encourage sensitive maintenance, of both the built and natural environment
- To promote appropriate planning and good design
- To act as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Ashford Borough Local Plan

The Statement identifies the general principles of preferred design, the traditional features that might be incorporated, and the materials that could be used. For a better understanding of our preferences, the Statement refers to examples of thoughtful design and planning. Whilst we are not in favour of development that merely attempts to replicate the past, it is important that the defining historical qualities and character of the parish are taken into account.

The Statement is aimed at anyone who plans to build, extend or modify property, or in any way change an open space. We want to give practical, clear guidance to planners and developers, builders and architects, businesses, landowners and householders, so that they all understand the preferences and priorities of the local community, and the standards of design that we expect.

Any proposed development or change should be informed by an understanding of the history, status and character of Biddenden and the essential need to protect and enhance the quality of the built and natural environment.

We recognise that it is not just the larger developments that can adversely affect our environment. A small extension or alteration to a house or garden can change the character of a place, as can minor changes to open spaces, paths, roads, verges, hedges, fences and railings. As a result, we want this Statement to be used as guidance for all development, whether or not it requires planning permission.



We hope that the Design Statement will positively influence all decisions on the choice of design details that might have an impact on the quality and character of the parish.

## A DESIGN STATEMENT FOR THE WHOLE PARISH

The scope of this document covers the whole of the parish of Biddenden. Beyond the village and conservation area, much of the parish consists of agricultural land, and we acknowledge that there may be pressure to allow development on this land. Whilst protected by the designation of Special Landscape Area, these outlying localities, with surplus agricultural and other buildings, have already been the subject of planning applications for residential dwellings. We therefore think it is important that the Design Statement incorporates and represents the whole parish.



## INTRODUCTION

### THE VOICE OF THE PARISH

Development of the Biddenden Parish Design Statement has taken place over a period of 18 months, during which the Steering Group has canvassed a broad spectrum of residents' opinions, both formally through workshops and exhibitions and informally through individual discussions and debate. These include open evenings, displays in the Village Hall and stands taken at various parish functions such as the annual fête. We have also kept parishioners informed of our progress through regular presentations to the Parish Council, as well as reports in the Kentish Express and the Biddenden Parish Magazine.

These consultations have demonstrated that parishioners place great emphasis on those design elements that preserve the rural character of Biddenden. Parishioners are keenly aware of the details – both in the built and natural environments – that help to create a harmonious rural setting.

Several factors have been identified which parishioners feel are of particular importance to the character and quality of Biddenden. These include:

- The preservation of older houses in the parish, and the continuity of their architectural aesthetics in the design of new buildings
- Maintenance of the rural aspect through the creation and retention of verges, hedges, open spaces, access to rural views, footpaths, trees and living screens
- The application of sound design principles in all detailing, whether for signage, rubbish bins, commercial property, etc.
- The variety of design in old and new buildings

As a result, we believe that the views and recommendations expressed in this Statement most closely reflect the concerns, interests and values of parish residents.

To recognise the views and concerns of parishioners, we have included several paragraphs of 'Local Views'. Whilst these do not qualify as Design Guidelines, it is important that they are properly recorded and noted.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

It is the responsibility of every generation not only to preserve what is best from the past, but also to create its own architectural and design legacy. So we are not suggesting that new buildings should merely replicate what has gone before, which would be both impractical and pointless.

Instead, we are issuing a challenge to designers, planners and developers to apply their understanding of the traditional characteristics and merits of our local buildings and their environment to deliver good, contemporary designs that harmonise with the best of our existing features, materials and colours. Additionally, any new building should be in harmony with its surroundings, taking into account relative size and scale.

These principles apply equally to extensions, conversions and alterations, all of which should reflect the character of the existing building and its setting.

The Biddenden Parish Design Statement follows on from the Biddenden Appraisal, which was published in April 1998.

## ABOUT BIDDENDEN

*'Biddenden,  
with its many  
old houses and  
fine church, is  
undoubtedly  
one of the star  
attractions of  
the Weald'*

RURAL KENT, BOYLE AND BERBIERS  
(ROBERT HALE & CO, 1976)



## THE PARISH LANDSCAPE

The character of the parish is described well in the Biddenden Appraisal, which says: 'The parish of Biddenden lies in the Weald of Kent, and is characterised by small fields bounded by wooded shaws and hedgerows. In nearly every field there is a pond, while streams flow north towards the River Beult. Narrow winding lanes, bordered with herb-rich verges, lead to small farmsteads of medieval origin scattered around the central village.'

The small fields that surround Biddenden's village centre are typical of the Low Weald. Historically, these contained orchards, hops and coppiced woodland. Many small woodlands and roadside shaws remain throughout the parish, with the more substantial wooded areas to the south - along the roads to Benenden and Cranbrook - managed by the Forestry Commission.

The farm homesteads and their associated buildings form groups related to agricultural use. The mix of dwelling, barn and oast, surrounded by fields bounded by roadside hedgerows, forms a cohesive whole and creates the visual appeal that the community values so highly and that makes Biddenden especially attractive to visitors.

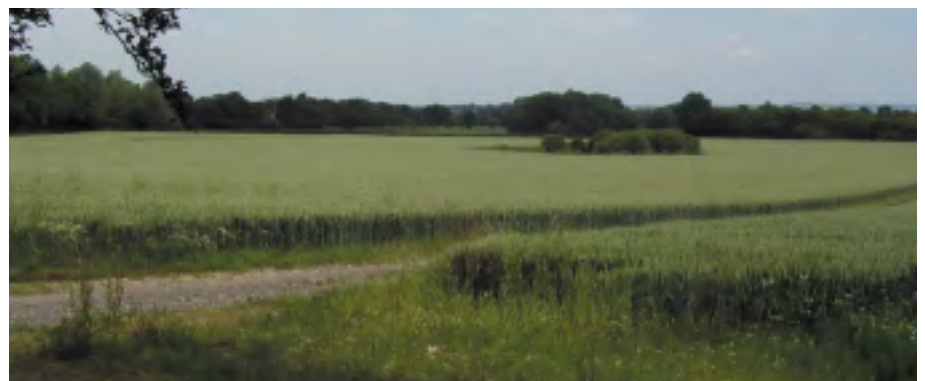
Dwellings built over many centuries stand scattered throughout the parish, along the lanes and beside the approach roads to the more closely built-up village centre. Although several groupings of houses have collective names, they do not qualify as hamlets as they are not closely grouped and there are no well-defined boundaries.

In recent Landscape Assessments and Guidelines for the Low Weald, the County Council views Biddenden as 'sitting comfortably in its local landscape', with wooded farmlands having fields of rough grassland and pasture and the traditional Kentish orchard, now sadly in decline. Local farmers consider that the soil is not suitable for many types of crops.

With farming in so much economic distress, the scattered farmsteads in the outlying areas are under great pressure to diversify. This includes selling off redundant buildings for dwellings and converting land and property for tourist or other commercial activities.

**LOCAL VIEW:** *Any change in use of redundant farm buildings, or the development of farmland, needs a sensitive approach to ensure that the character of the landscape and its relationship with the parish are not impaired. New building work should use materials which match or blend in with existing colouring, using old materials or those made by traditional methods where possible. As an example of a successful conversion, we encourage designers and planners to look at the work done behind River Hall.*

**DESIGN GUIDELINE:** As the predominant and preferred form of boundary treatment within the parish, the replanting and maintenance of native hedgerows should be encouraged.



## ABOUT BIDDENDEN



## VILLAGE APPROACHES

There are three main roads into Biddenden: from Headcorn to the north along the A274, from Sissinghurst in the west (4) and from Tenterden to the south, both of which constitute the A262 (see map on inside back cover). These highways run over relatively flat land with substantial hedgerows and, as the gateways into the village, are a critical feature of our community. They are linked by other winding roads which are ancient and attractively verged. The open, gently undulating ground offers good views over fields and woodland, interspersed with dwellings.

There are a number of commercial enterprises along the three main roads and nearby minor roads. These include two petrol stations, two car repair workshops, a restaurant, two vineyards, a timber business and stables, as well as the Chart Hills golf club, which covers a large area of former agricultural land. The spaces between these buildings are extremely valuable for the maintenance of the rural character of the parish, as well as being vulnerable to further development. Dwellings are mostly well-spaced and surrounded by gardens. Hedges, and occasionally low fences, maintain the essentially rural aspects of the approach roads.

From Tenterden, along the A262 at the boundary of the parish, there are sporadic signs of 'ribbon development' consisting of 20th century bungalows and houses, one row deep, some having been renovated, improved or replaced. There is also a large, well-maintained mobile home estate, which has plenty of open space and is well screened with trees. Between these dwellings and the centre of the village there is a considerable area of open land, with the soft edge to the village maintained by the many large gardens along this road. Open land has also been retained at the edge of the village centre along the other main roads, thus enhancing the sense of compactness.

**DESIGN GUIDELINES:** The attractive gateways into Biddenden must be preserved, with any new development to be set well back from them. Additionally, suitable screening – hedges and trees rather than closeboard fencing and brick walls – should be used. To ensure the compactness of the village, and to avoid further 'ribbon development', it is vital to retain the strategic gaps between buildings on the approaches to the village.

## BUILDINGS & THEIR ENVIRONMENT



Buildings reflect the history of the people who built and occupied them, the times in which they lived and the changes brought about by social, cultural, economic and political influences.

The rich heritage of period houses in the parish indicates the success and status of the enterprising yeomen farmers in the 15th and 16th centuries (5), who expanded into other businesses, especially weaving, wool and cloth exports, tanning and iron smelting. Many of the finest houses in the parish were built during this period. Vane Court (6), near the parish boundary with Smarden, was constructed around 1420, and is a particularly fine example of the timber frame construction typical of the Weald of Kent. River Hall, in the south-east of the parish, contains internal evidence of a house of a similar date, but the later additions are faced with mathematical tiles, imitating the more expensive bricks. Timber framing can also be seen in The Cot, to the north of the village, Great Batchelors, along the Sissinghurst Road, and at Standen, amongst many other examples.



The parish also contains houses built of brick from local clay, such as Biddenden Place, Henden Hall and Forge House. Tile-hung houses, such as Lilac House and Tow House on North Street, and the many examples of part tile-hung, part brick houses, all blend their glowing orange-red hues with the green of the surrounding land.

Biddenden's built environment bears witness to the great variety of local building styles used over the centuries to suit contemporary fashions and skills. The architectural importance of Biddenden is reflected in the fact that there are well over one hundred listed buildings in the parish, representing more than ten per cent of all dwellings.

## BUILDINGS & THEIR ENVIRONMENT



## THE CONSERVATION AREA

The historic core of the village, and the area immediately surrounding it, fall within the Conservation Area. This is defined as an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. This status was last reviewed by the Borough Council in 1996.

A Saxon church may have stood on the elevated site on which the present building (7), probably begun in the 13th century, was constructed. This site gave the centre of Biddenden its shape, marking the intersection of tracks leading to a number of scattered 'dens' or forest clearings in the Hundred of Barclay, e.g. Lashenden, Worsenden, Ibornden, Washenden and Standen. From the church the wide village street – described in Pevsner as being 'very short and very perfect' – led out eastwards to what had become one of the main routes leading from Rochester down to Tenterden and the south.

Whilst the buildings in the High Street – the historic core of the village – are not all of the same date and style, they form a cohesive whole. All the front doors open directly on to the pavement and there is some uniformity of the roofline. The Bethersden marble pavement, on both the north and south sides, is a prominent feature of the street.

The central part of the south side, uniform in height with 2½ storeys, probably built in the 17th century, forms a continuous run of timber-framed houses under one long roof, the huge chimneys and attractive curve (8) of its south face being notable features. It is possible that these buildings were used as workshops and might have been converted to houses after the decline of the wool trade (9).

The north side also includes early timber-framed buildings, such as the house nearest the rectory, and the Red Lion Inn (10) and its neighbours, as well as brick-fronted houses and late 19th century buildings. Despite the unplanned variety of building types and sizes, they blend together well (11). The continuity in the angle of roof pitch, construction method and the plain red tiled covering gives visual cohesion. As on the south side, the row is continuous. The different ages and treatment of the doors and windows make for interesting variety, while the colours blend well within their limited palette. From the centre core of the village the density of housing loosens out to detached and semi-detached houses in their own grounds.

A strong relationship between the Conservation Area and the open countryside exists to the south of the church, where land has been purchased for the parish. The approach into the Conservation Area along the Sissinghurst Road is marked by this large expanse of open space, described in the section on Public Open Spaces.

**LOCAL VIEWS:** *We are reluctant to see further development within the Conservation Area, but accept that it may be unavoidable. However, only development to the highest standard and quality of design and craftsmanship should take place within the Conservation Area. Alterations and improvements should be in keeping with the character of the Area, and there must be tighter application of planning controls for listed buildings to ensure that inappropriate work is not permitted.*

*At parish, borough and county levels, the councils must make greater efforts to maintain the Conservation Area, including as much of the Bethersden marble pavement in the High Street, and south of the Village Green, as is compatible with safety.*

**DESIGN GUIDELINES:** In support of the Borough Council's 'Caring for the Environment' policies, the special attention paid to Conservation Areas should include necessary consideration to all minor alterations within the historic core of the parish. These cover extensions, conservatories, replacement windows, new front doors and the addition of porches, which should reflect the character of the village as described in this Design Statement.



### BUILDINGS & THEIR ENVIRONMENT

#### SELF-CONTAINED ESTATES

The parish has several self-contained estates – both local authority and private – offering a variety of styles and layouts. These were almost entirely built in the period between 1950 and 2000 and reflect the designs of those decades.

With the exception of The Weavers and Townland Close, most lie in the north-west segment of the village centre, i.e. between North Street and Sissinghurst Road. This means that expansion of the old village 'footprint' has been relatively minor. Almost all the estates in the parish back on to agricultural land or public spaces (see *map on inside back cover*).

These estates provide a broad range of accommodation, including bungalows, terraced, semi-detached and detached buildings. The best of them have been thoughtfully planned and incorporate good design features, which include:

- Central open green spaces (Townland Close (12), The Meadows (13))
- Adequate provision for parking (Cheeselands (14))
- Proper maintenance and creation of public footpaths, linking developments to each other and the centre of the village (Mansion House Close to The Meadows, Glebelands and on to Cheeselands and Chulkhurst (15))
- Well-designed landscaping and planting of living screens, with ease of maintenance in mind (The Meadows (16))
- Positioning of individual properties to ensure they do not overlook each other (The Meadows)
- Positioning of development, set well back and screened from the road (The Meadows, Townland Close, The Nightingales (17))
- Sympathetic use of picket fencing on road frontage (The Musings (18))





## BUILDINGS & THEIR ENVIRONMENT

**LOCAL VIEW:** *We are not in favour of developments that adjoin other developments, such as happened with Spinners Close and The Meadows, which hint at suburban huddle and deny rural views. The green belt that surrounds the village and Conservation Area must be maintained.*

**DESIGN GUIDELINES:** We are particularly keen to ensure that the best elements of these estates are carried forward into any new development.

Additionally, we recommend that:

- Housing that faces a service road should be positioned at variable distances from the verge to create more visual interest.
- Access and service roads should be properly landscaped and designed to ensure they blend with the rural nature of the parish. Large surface areas of concrete or tarmac are inappropriate.
- Wherever possible, native species hedges should be established in preference to walls and closeboard fences. We encourage hedges consisting of native shrubs and trees e.g. hawthorn, hornbeam, beech, holly, hazel etc.



## BUILDINGS & THEIR ENVIRONMENT

### PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

As a result of gifts of land and cash from philanthropic parishioners, some far-sighted actions by past and present parish councillors and much local fund-raising, Biddenden has acquired an impressive estate of publicly-owned spaces. These are mainly to the south of the village centre and provide an imposing vista towards the Grade 1 listed church. These include three adjoining areas that form the lungs of the parish:



- The Gordon Jones Playing Field, covering some 5 hectares including a recreation ground;
- The Millennium Field, purchased in 1997 as an open space for the parish, planted with a large number of native trees and covering 8.5 hectares; (19)
- The Jubilee Meadow, bought for the parish in 2002 and covering 3 hectares.

Together with the school grounds, these three adjoining areas, which are on slightly rising ground, combine some 19 hectares and contribute very considerably to the open view of the centre of the village from the south. The informal nature of the space is emphasised by the fact that the Jubilee Meadow, for example, is still used for grazing. No buildings directly adjoin this area, giving a further impression of openness in the centre of the village.

There is a smaller recreation ground to the north of the Chulkhurst and Cheeselands estates, which is less well equipped and suffers from vandalism and poor maintenance. This detracts from the quality of the views available to the residents of these estates and the character of the parish of a whole.

The parish also has a substantial network of public footpaths fanning out from the centre of the village. These footpaths lead out of the centre and run across open land or through woods between farms and roads. Paths also link estates with each other and the village centre.

#### LOCAL VIEWS:

- *Reasonable and adequate budgets must be allocated for the maintenance of the playing fields, the Millennium Field and the Jubilee Meadow. At present, much of this work is undertaken by volunteers.*
- *Verges, which have been identified by parishioners as a key concern, must also receive greater attention. Where utility companies damage verges, for example, prompt and proper repair work must be enforced by the Council.*
- *The existing network of public footpaths must be well maintained: this includes ensuring that the paths do not become overgrown and inaccessible, and that stiles are safe and secure.*
- *Maintenance of the recreation ground behind the Chulkhurst and Cheeselands estates, which is the responsibility of Ashford Borough Council, must be improved.*

**DESIGN GUIDELINES:** Where possible, new developments should incorporate public footpaths that link to the existing network and to the centre of the village. It is essential that the southern and western aspects, which include the church, are protected.

## BUILDING MATERIALS & FEATURES

In planning and executing the design, repair and restoration of buildings, the most critical factor concerns the selection of materials that, even though they are modern, will blend well with those used in the past.

Although there is no predominant style of architecture particular to Biddenden, there are certain materials and features that give the parish its distinctive character.



20

**Bricks and Brickwork** - Biddenden has some excellent examples of the development of the use of bricks as facing material. Early on the bricks were small, thin and irregular in shape, size, colour and texture, lending great charm and character to built work but mainly being used as nogging infills in timber frame walls. Earlier brick was used as a decorative feature.

The most common brick used in old buildings in the parish is a hand-made red stock brick, often used with semi-vitreous blue headers. Diaper work, with geometric patterns of semi-vitreous blue headers and red stretchers, was also used, as seen on the front elevation of Henden Hall. (20)



21

**Roofs and Tiles** - With pitches that range between 50° and 60°, the older type of roof uses the traditional plain red Kent clay peg tile - some embrace fine examples of cat slide roofs (21) and gable ends, hipped or semi-hipped. As with brickwork, old hand-made peg tiles vary considerably in shape and shades of red and terracotta. These reflect and complement the colour of wall tiles and brickwork found in the parish, and soften the visual effect of the roof.

Modern housing uses the standard plain clay tiles of today. On some of the post-war housing estates there are a number of small banks of garages under flat or lean-to roofs. Similarly, there are a range of outbuildings with flat roofs, which can be difficult to maintain and are out of character with the typical parish style.



22

**Wall Tiles** have been used as a cladding since the end of the 17th century. Whilst plain rectangular tiles were commonly used, tiles were also shaped into one of many profiles for decorative effect, in a row or rows, or in conjunction with plain tiles, especially to the upper floor or to the whole of the front elevation (22). Usually, the tile hanging is to the first floor only, covering the original timber-framed walls. Decorative band courses of tiles (e.g. fishscale) are often used and provide an attractive variation in colour and texture.

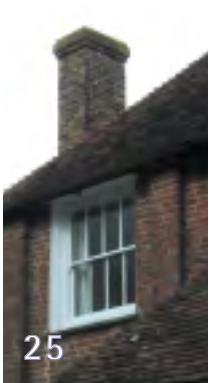
Mathematical tiles, also of clay, and formed as headers and stretchers to imitate brickwork, are found as cladding to timber-framed buildings. The upper floors to some High Street buildings have mathematical tiling but it is not always obvious, and this technique is unlikely to be used in modern day construction.

*'The subject  
of materials  
is the  
foundation of  
architecture'*

WILLIAM MORRIS, 1892



## BUILDING MATERIALS & FEATURES



**Weatherboarding** – Several notable properties in the parish are weatherboarded, painted white or cream (23). This is often confined to the first floor and/or to gable or semi-hipped ends. Similar cladding on farm buildings is often left to colour naturally or treated with a dark preservative stain in place of the earlier pitch. (24)

**Windows** – The character of a building is often strengthened by the sensitive positioning of windows and glazing bars and the relationship between windows and wall space. Some of the older houses in the parish have leaded diamond or square-paned windows but more have wooden sliding sashes or opening casements (25). Most post-war estates have the standard mass-produced casement-type joinery of either wood or uPVC manufacture. Dormer windows also feature in a number of the more substantial dwellings, and are a particular characteristic of the High Street.

**Chimney Stacks** can be large and powerful features that can dominate the building they serve. Many of the older buildings have examples of tall chimneys with strong patterned brickwork (26). The best examples are where chimneys requiring structural attention are repaired or rebuilt, rather than demolished or reduced, and metal flues are hidden.

**Front Doors** are again a noticeable feature of any house, giving character, elegance and variety to itself and its neighbourhood. Whilst no design predominates, the great majority are in keeping with the particular house and its surroundings (27), with only the occasional in appropriate colour and style or lack of maintenance.

### DESIGN GUIDELINES:

- Wherever possible, traditional building materials that blend in with the existing built environment – bricks and clay tiles of the local hue, and weatherboarding – should be used for new buildings, extensions, renovations and repairs.
- New brick buildings and extensions should use facing brickwork on external walls that matches local colours and styles. By using cut bricks this effect can be matched, even with modern cavity wall construction. Recommended modern manufactures include Cremer Whiting (of Faversham) and Kent Restoration (of Belgium). Pointing also needs to match the original flush pointing. When extending older buildings, a lime mortar mix, similar to the original, should be used so that the colour is consistent.
- The use of steeply pitched roofs in Biddenden is entirely appropriate and in keeping. On cat slide roofs, the use of flush conservation roof lights is preferred to modern Velux windows that protrude above the line of the roof tiling. Flat roofs are an anomaly on buildings in this area and are to be discouraged. We are also keen to see pitched roofs on garages and even porches where the angle should match the main building. Roof tiles, wall tiles and mathematical tiles should complement existing patterns and colours.
- Weatherboarding should be painted, stained or natural, after preservative treatment.
- Windows must be in scale with the other elements of a building. The rectangular glazed pane associated with buildings of the Georgian period is more in keeping than large sheets of plate glass such as are found in sliding sashes. In older buildings especially, the use of uPVC window frames should be resisted, as the section details are visually larger and out of proportion and the finish is incompatible with timber. It is unlikely that standard joinery will be acceptable in extensions or alterations to older properties as the design of the modern window is different to traditional design and the glazing bars are far thicker. Where double-glazed units are used, and intermediate bars are necessary, it is preferable that the size should match the original slim moulding (ovolo or lamb's tongue) and it is often necessary to fix this to the face of the glass.
- Unless impractical, chimneys should be retained on existing buildings.
- We favour traditional door designs with discreet paint colours. If made of hardwood, then oak should be encouraged. Metal or uPVC doors are inappropriate on older buildings, new buildings in the Conservation Area or within the setting of a listed building.

## LIGHTING & SIGNS



Street Lighting – Cut into 3 segments by the A262 and the A274, street lighting in the village is especially important. Low levels of lighting, which minimise light pollution, are a characteristic of the village, as exemplified by lampposts in North Street.

The current provision of street lighting is haphazard and of variable design quality. In the centre of the village, five Victorian-style street lampposts have been installed. Of the estates, only Chulkhurst, Cheeslands and Mansion House Close have any street lighting.

**DESIGN GUIDELINE:** Any new developments should incorporate suitable lighting of a consistent design which minimises light pollution. Additionally, lighting used to promote and identify businesses within the parish must be sympathetic to the area.

Street Furniture – This consists mainly of commemorative benches, with no common pattern. We recognise that, since these are gifts to the community, we cannot insist on standardisation.

**DESIGN GUIDELINE:** Any new addition should clearly fit in with its local surroundings, such as the donated benches installed in the Church grounds and along the High Street.



Road Signs – With the different types and designs in use, the complexity of road signs has led to a profusion of information that tends to spoil the character of the parish (28). The opportunity to consolidate information in better-designed signs does not appear to have been taken: more does not equal better. A number of signs are poorly sited, which is made worse by overhanging branches and poor maintenance.

**LOCAL VIEW:** We recommend an urgent audit of signage within the parish with the aim of reducing clutter, simplifying and consolidating information and rationalising the siting, therefore improving the appearance of the parish. (29)

**DESIGN GUIDELINE:** New signage should be kept to a minimum to avoid further proliferation.

## SHOPS, BUSINESSES & COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT



In common with many parishes, business activity in Biddenden is in decline. We are very keen to keep existing businesses and encourage new ones to establish themselves here. Shops in the High Street have developed from what trading activity had been carried on before and their design seems appropriate. Other commercial business is mainly undertaken away from the village centre, either in structures erected for the purpose or in redundant agricultural buildings. A recent business addition to the parish was the Chart Hills golf club, built to a high standard of both design and materials.

Whilst some commercial buildings are not in a good state of repair, the pressure exists to sell off these premises for housing, rather than to expand and create further facilities.

**DESIGN GUIDELINES:** The Design Guidelines in this Statement apply as much to businesses as to residential properties. Local businesses – whether retail or commercial – need to plan carefully to ensure that their premises do not adversely affect the character of the parish. Important design features include:

- Discreet shop signage (30)
- For commercial premises, good living screening with well-maintained grounds, gates, fences and entrances
- For new construction, low-rise buildings set away from residential development that do not adversely affect rural views. (31)



### DIY DESIGN ASSESSMENT

As we say in the introduction, this Statement is aimed at anyone who plans to build, extend or modify property, or in any way change an open space. Much of this work may not need planning permission, yet it is still important to think about the effect it will have on the surroundings and whether it is appropriate and in character. Garages, conservatories, extensions, porches, rooflights, dormers, doors, windows, roofs, garden sheds, fences, walls, railings, drives – all of these, for instance, need to be properly planned and designed so that they improve the quality of the environment.

Before starting any work, ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the distinctive features of my property? Will the proposed changes detract from these?
- What are the less attractive aspects? Will the proposed changes help to lessen or remove the impact of these?
- Will the proposed changes have any effect on neighbouring properties or open spaces? Are the changes in character and sympathetic to the setting of my property?
- Will these changes conform to the guidance and recommendations of the Design Statement? If not, what are the alternatives to meet my requirements and comply with best practice?

Take advice – from the Parish Council, Ashford Borough Council, builders, architects and others who have already been through the process. In the long run, everyone benefits from better design, so it is worth taking the trouble to get it right from the outset.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The Biddenden Parish Design Statement Steering Group thanks the following for their help, guidance and support in the production of this Statement:

- ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
- BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL
- BIDDENDEN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
- CHARING PARISH DESIGN GROUP
- THE KENT DOWNS AONB
- THE KENT RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
under the 'Community Initiatives in Rural Kent' grant scheme

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#### The Biddenden Parish Design Statement Steering Group

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KEY

- 1

CHULKHURST  
20s-50s
- 2

WORSENDEN  
COTTAGES 30s
- 3

THE MEADOWS  
50s
- 4

THE WEAVERS  
50s
- 5

GLEBELANDS  
60s
- 6

SPINNERS CLOSE  
60s
- 7

TOWNLAND CLOSE  
70s
- 8

CHEESELANDS  
70s
- 9

MANSION HOUSE  
CLOSE 90s
- 10

SHUTTLE CLOSE  
60s-90s
- 11

WOODLANDS MOBILE  
HOME ESTATE
- 12

THE NIGHTINGALES  
80s
- 13

SPILLAND  
CARAVAN ESTATE

- PARISH BOUNDARY
- CONSERVATION AREA
- ...

VILLAGE CENTRE  
FOOTPATHS

BIDDENDEN PARISH

