

Wye Village Design Statement



This document is dedicated to the late Catha Keegan who saw the long-term benefits that a Village Design Statement could provide for the local community. Her vision and commitment have been a source of inspiration to us all.

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Cover illustration: View down Bridge Street, Wye, from St Ambrose Green.

WYE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Wye Village Design Statement (VDS), although one of a village series, is unique to Wye. It is based on the views of the local community gathered over a two-year period from a series of public meetings, workshops and consultations.

Village Design Statements are the outcome of an initiative taken in 1996 by the Countryside Commission (now The Countryside Agency). The Commission's guidelines, set out on page 4 of the advisory booklet *Village Design*, give the following information.

Purpose

Unlike many other local initiatives, Village Design Statements are intended to influence the operation of the statutory planning system. They will provide a context for new development, based on local character and sense of place.

The purpose of Village Design Statements is to manage change, whether that change is major new development or just cumulative, small-scale additions and alterations. They are not about **whether** development should take place; that is a job for the local plan. Their concern is about **how** planned development should be carried out, so that it is in harmony with its setting and contributes to the conservation and, where possible, enhancement, of the local environment.

Objectives

- to describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside
- to show how character can be identified at three levels
 - the landscape setting of the village
 - the shape of the settlement
 - the nature of the buildings themselves
- to draw up design principles based on the distinctive local character
- to work in partnership with the local planning authority in the context of existing local planning policy, and to influence future policies

The purpose of Wye's Design Statement is to help guide change in ways that will enhance rather than detract from, the quality of life in the village and its environment. Although it particularly emphasises design it is also concerned with social and economic well-being. The VDS recognises that, while rooted in a long history, Wye must also seek a vibrant future.

The Wye Village Design Statement is approved Supplementary Planning Guidance to be used in conjunction with The Ashford Borough Local Plan.

How was the VDS created?

In 1996 Wye Parish Council received a copy of the Countryside Commission's booklet 'Village Design' and suggested that the community should produce a Village Design Statement. At the same time an exercise was initiated to find suitable projects to mark the new millennium.

Open discussions, meetings and exhibitions were held and the idea for a Village Design Statement was one of the 21 projects chosen for further evaluation. The 1997 Annual Parish Meeting decided to proceed with the Statement because of widespread concerns about traffic problems, housing and the lack of public discussion of future development in the village. A Design Group Committee was formed and letters were sent to every household and known organisation in the village encouraging them to participate in the project.

The consultation process

Over the following two years, the Committee collected information and views from the local community. Workshops were held during which participants were given specific tasks and were sent out to assess and photograph different areas and aspects of the village. The use of a one-hour film developing service enabled them to give short illustrated presentations and discuss the findings.

By June 1999 a draft text for the VDS was ready for consultation within the village and with officers from Ashford Borough Council. A copy was sent to all those who had already participated in the project and to the leaders of all known groups, clubs and societies with a possible interest. Further copies were available in the library and at a local shop. The Committee also took the opportunity to have a stall on The Green during one of the Wye Farmers' Markets: additional copies of the VDS were available and Committee members were present to discuss the issues with an even broader section of the population.

The many responses to the draft text were carefully considered and the document was substantially rewritten to take account of the suggestions from local people, together with comments from officers of Ashford Borough Council. Photographs were selected from the large collection resulting from the workshops, supplemented by some more recent ones taken by members of the community. Appropriate maps were chosen to illustrate the text, including a series which was specially hand drawn. The illustrated draft was then made available for local people and Council officers to read and the text was again adjusted in the light of the comments received from this further consultation. The final version was accepted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Ashford Borough Council before publication.



Studying a map of the village at one of the workshops.



A group of residents making notes outside Wye College during their survey of the village.



Another group assessing Wye's landscape.



Residents showing interest in the VDS stall on The Green.



A group leader presenting the group's findings to other participants at one of the workshops.

WYE'S DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

Setting

Wye is situated in Kent 1 mile to the east of the main road between Ashford (5 miles) and Canterbury (10 miles). The Great Stour River runs along the western side of the village, while to the east the land rises sharply up the west-facing chalk escarpment of the Downs which forms a backdrop to most views of the village.

From the top of the Downs, views extend over the village and the farmed landscape to the Downs on the opposite side of the river valley. To the south, the English Channel can be seen across an open agricultural landscape.



Above: *The Crown*, excavated by students of Wye College to mark the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, and the chalk pit below form a conspicuous landmark on the Downs behind Wye.



Left: *The dormouse Muscardinus avellanarius occurs in the coppiced woodlands around Wye.*



Above: *The Black-veined Moth Siona lineata found only on grassland near Wye.*

The local landscape, including the village, the Great Stour valley and the Downs, is protected within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The ecological value of the chalk grassland, including rare species of plants and insects, is also nationally recognised by the designation of parts of the Downs above Wye as a National Nature Reserve and as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Wye is on the North Downs Way, the Pilgrims Way, and the Stour Valley footpath, on a Sustrans cycle route and adjacent to a network of bridleways. Many people visit Wye to enjoy the landscape and its natural history - or just to walk.



Above: *The very rare Late Spider Orchid Ophrys fuciflora.*



Left: *View westwards from the Downs above Wye. The full extent of the village is not apparent but the College buildings on its northern edge, and the church tower, are clearly visible.*

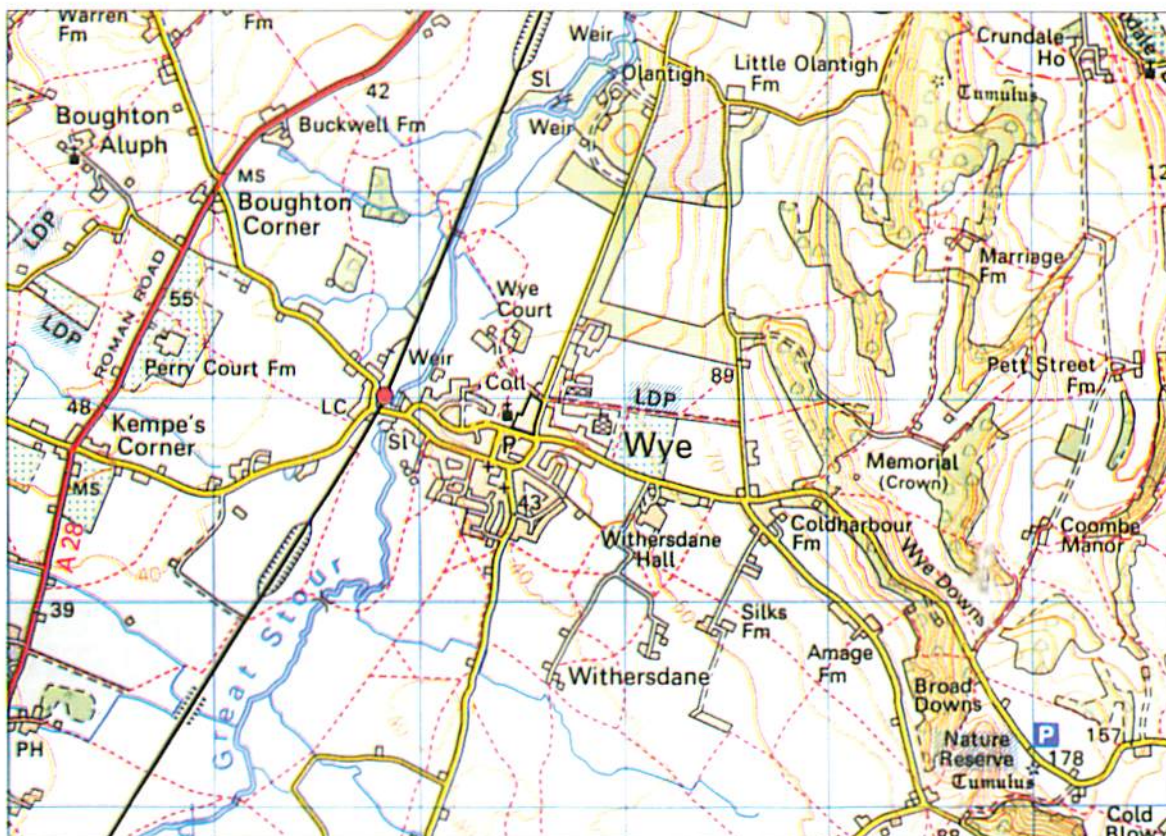
The continuation of the North Downs on the other side of the Stour valley can just be seen in the background on the right.

History

The valley of the Great Stour has been occupied and farmed since prehistoric times. For much of its history Wye was a market centre for the surrounding area, with local farmers supplying food, supporting local industries and crafts such as milling and black-smithing, and providing direct employment in agriculture. These important links between the village economy and farming began to decline by the late 19th century and have now virtually disappeared.



Above: View across the village from surrounding farmland .



Reproduced from the 1985 1:50,000 Landranger Series map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Wye Village Design Statement, Wye, Kent, Licence Number MC 029242

Above: Ordnance Survey map of the Stour Valley showing Wye in relation to the North Downs, the river, roads including the A28 between Ashford and Canterbury, long-distance paths and the railway.

Wye's proximity to important routes of communication has been a major factor in its growth and economic development since earliest times. The original settlement grew up near to where the ancient downland trackway from the south coast to Salisbury Plain forded the river. Traces of Romano-British roads and dwellings have been found and the medieval road layout still forms the street pattern of the village core. The railway came to Wye in 1846.

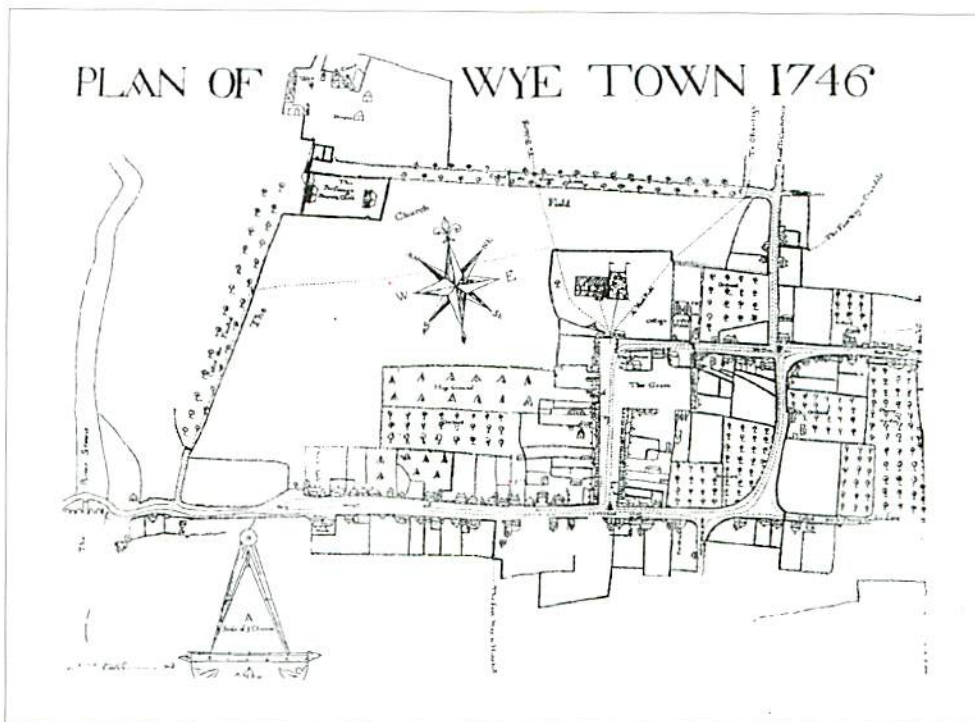


Above: The sturdy 17th century bridge, albeit with a 20th century decking, continues to carry traffic over the river.

Growth

The medieval street layout shown in Moon's map of Wye Town in 1746 forms the basis of the present Conservation Area.

Many of the buildings and land boundaries are still recognisable.



Wye c. 1900



The extent of the village's built-up area hardly expanded beyond the historic core until the late 19th century when some new buildings were added on the edges of the village. The railway line between Ashford and Canterbury was opened in 1846 and has been an important factor in Wye's growth.

Wye c. 1939



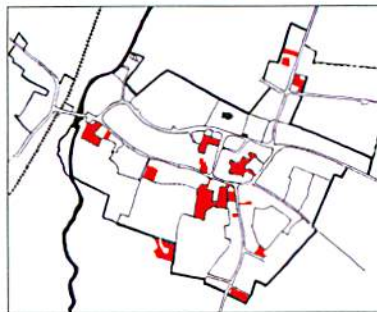
Appreciable growth began only after the First World War, when ribbon development took place along the four main routes out of the village. There was also some infilling on sites within the village.

Wye c. 1980



Forty years of rapid expansion after the Second World War has virtually quadrupled the built-up area of the village. During this period a number of large housing estates were constructed on fields surrounding the historic core.

Wye 2000



Planning restrictions on further expansion introduced during the 1970s saw additional sites for development having to be sought within the built-up area of the village. Most subsequent increases in the housing stock have therefore been concentrated on infill and previously-used (brownfield) sites, within the village.

WYE TODAY

The community

Wye's beautiful location and wealth of interesting buildings make it a desirable place in which to live, work and study. It has a strong community spirit and its organisations cater for many interests.

Wye is fortunate in retaining a range of amenities which have often been lost from other villages of comparable size. These include: the Parish and Roman Catholic Churches and the Methodist Chapel; the village halls with an adjacent substantial play area for children; a village school and an independent school; a small library, a post office, a garage and a fire station; a small supermarket and various other shops and businesses; two banks; three restaurants and three pubs; a thriving and modern medical practice and health centre, a dentist, an osteopath, a physiotherapist and a pharmacy; four sheltered housing schemes, almshouses and a residential home; its own railway station and regular train and bus services. There are a number of important open spaces: The Green, The Church Field, the cricket field, a recreation ground and allotments.

The survival of many of these amenities depends on the support of local people. Although an increasing population should mean a continuing demand for local services, small businesses and shops find it difficult to survive and tend to be lost to competition from larger enterprises or out-of-town stores. The Wye Business Association aims 'to keep the heart in the village' by promoting local businesses and community activities long term.



St Ambrose Roman Catholic Church



Wye Methodist Chapel



Playground behind the village halls



Wye fire station



Surgery and health centre



Wye station showing the level crossing



The Tickled Trout public house



The Wye Hill restaurant, now Froggies



Leppers - ironmongers



Geerings (now Spearings) stationers



Wakelins - butchers



The Co-op supermarket



Blackford's stores known as 'Danny's'



The Gift Horse and the Motley Shop

Wye College

For many centuries Wye was a religious and administrative centre for much of Kent. An important landmark in Wye's development and subsequent history was the founding, in 1447, of a college for secular priests (the College of St Gregory and St Martin) and a boys' grammar school on a site to the east of the churchyard. During the 18th century the medieval buildings also housed the primary school for local children founded and endowed by Lady Joanna Thornhill. In 1893 the old buildings were acquired by the newly-established South Eastern Agricultural College (SEAC) and the primary school moved to its present site in Bridge Street.



Left: *The 'Latin School' today. This building housed the grammar school founded by Cardinal Kempe in 1447 for poor boys. It later became a private school which moved to Cumberland House in Church Street when the SEAC was founded.*

Below, top: *The entrance to Wye College on the High Street.*

Below: *A wing of the College seen across the garden, an important open space.*

Below left: *The College library and learning resource centre, Olantigh Road.*

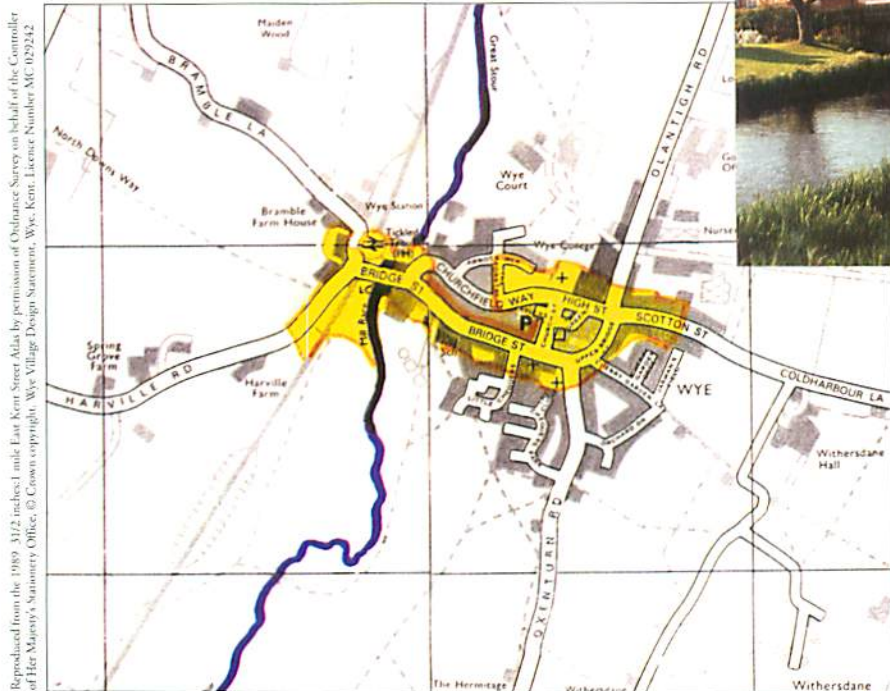
The presence of Wye College, which became part of London University in 1900 and merged with Imperial College London in 2000, has made Wye a miniature university town. Its importance to the local economy has steadily increased throughout the 20th century. Visitors and students from all over the world are attracted by the College's international reputation; some spend several years in Wye with their families and become part of the community.

As the College has grown in size, new buildings have been added for residential and academic purposes mainly at Withersdane or along Olantigh Road, the most recent addition being the prize-winning library and learning resource centre.



The Conservation Area

This covers the medieval heart of Wye (Bridge Street, Upper Bridge Street, Church Street, The Green, the High Street and the lower end of Scotton Street). It also includes the river bridge and mill, the station and an area of the fields and road west of the railway.



Above: **Wye Bridge**, listed Grade 2 starred, was built in 1638. A plaque bears the names of the men involved in restoring the bridge in 1684 'at the charge of the County'.

Left: Map showing the **Conservation Area** (yellow) in relation to Wye's street plan.

Listed buildings

There are 86 buildings listed as of special architectural interest in the village: two of the 13th/14th centuries; six of the 15th; thirteen of the 16th; ten of the 17th; thirty-six of the 18th and nineteen of the 19th centuries. The majority of these buildings are located on the original medieval streets: three are listed grade 1, and six grade 2 starred. A Norman undercroft in Bridge Street, opposite the end of Church Street, and the original medieval buildings of the College of St Gregory and St Martin at Wye, founded in 1447, are scheduled ancient monuments.

Some of Wye's listed buildings.

Right, clockwise from top left:

Listed Grade 1:

The parish church of St. Gregory and St. Martin, c.1200, rebuilt and enlarged by Cardinal Kempe in 1474 as a collegiate church. The tower collapsed in 1686, demolishing most of the eastern end, and was rebuilt on the south side.

The cloisters in Wye College.

Listed Grade 2 starred:

The Bailiff's House, view from The Green showing the Tudor gable at the rear.

The Old Flying Horse public house on The Green. A medieval hall house, now student accommodation.

Swan House in Bridge Street, a much altered and subdivided Tudor hall house.



Building in the Conservation Area

It is the juxtaposition of the buildings in the Conservation Area, with their variety of heights, roof pitches, window patterns and construction materials (see pages 23-25), that gives Wye its individuality. Most of the buildings are grouped 'cheek-by-jowl' and open directly onto the street. However, quite large gardens, many of which were yards for earlier business premises or were farmed, are hidden behind this frontage and are not apparent from the street. Where access has been possible, larger yards have been developed for housing since the 1970s; and outbuildings have been converted to dwellings.

Over the centuries the character and uses of buildings in Wye have altered in response to the needs and changing fortunes of the inhabitants. Some buildings were demolished, others were updated in the latest style; new fronts, extra storeys or outbuildings were added; new houses replaced old and spaces between buildings were filled in.

As the supply of traditional building materials, such as wood, ran out, alternatives had to be introduced. Construction methods evolved to make buildings that were more comfortable and efficient, and to take advantage of contemporary innovations such as chimneys, glass windows, kitchen ranges, indoor plumbing, gas and mains drainage.

Church Street is the commercial centre of Wye. There are two banks, several shops, a public house and a restaurant. Many of the houses have ancient cellars and have been altered and updated over the years, eg Georgian fronts were added to older buildings. Outbuildings behind some of the buildings are now dwellings. Taylor's Yard, once a brewery, then a garage, was developed for housing in 1978.



View up Church Street from Bridge Street.



Frontages on the west side belong to many periods, including modern houses (right).



Bridge Street has many ancient houses (eg Swan House - 16th century with Norman foundations, and 123 Bridge Street - c.1400 Wealden Hall house) with mainly Victorian and Georgian infilling. Wye's tradespeople had premises here and a few shops do remain. Lady Joanna Thornhill School and the almshouses founded by Cardinal Kempe are set back from the road on the bank on the southern side of Lower Bridge Street.



Primary school (left) and almshouses.



View up Bridge St. with Swan House (right).



Much altered cottage on Bridge Street.



The Green and the Old Flying Horse, a medieval hall house, once a pub, now accommodation for postgraduate students.



Medieval houses on the High Street which belong to Wye College have Georgian fronts.



The present library (left) and the Wife of Bath restaurant (right) in Upper Bridge Street. During the first half of the 20th century these were the Vicarage and the doctor's house. The garden behind the library has been developed for sheltered housing.



Semi-detached Victorian houses in Upper Bridge Street. On the left is an older building which was a butcher's shop.



Upper Bridge Street from Golden Square looking towards Rural Terrace.

Post-war estates

The pattern of growth and change seen in the Conservation Area has also occurred in the newer parts of the village; houses have been altered or extended and the gaps between have gradually filled with more homes.

Wye expanded rapidly after the Second World War with the development of estates round the perimeter of the village. The design of these estates reflects both their era and the purposes for which they were built.



Left: *The Churchfield Way estate (A)* built in 1947/48 as a local-authority housing scheme on part of the church field, now has many privately-owned properties. The development surrounds a large public green. A new road was provided through the estate to link the lower end of the High Street to the village entrance at the bridge and forms an alternative route through the village.



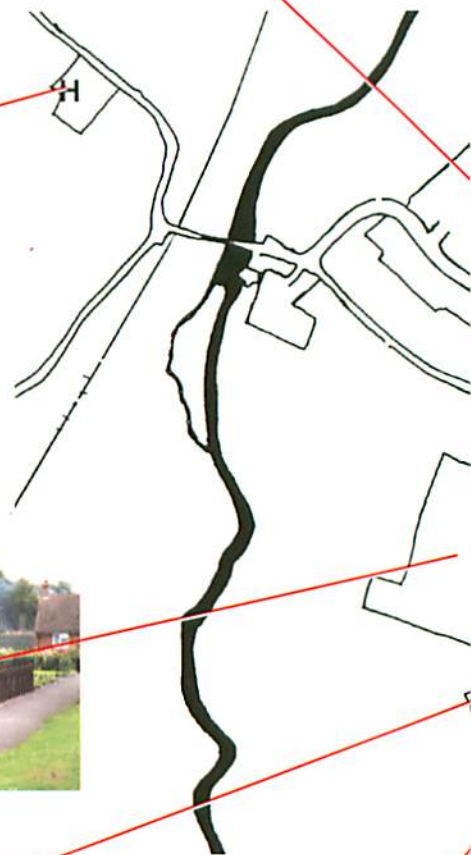
Above and right: *Bramble Close (H)*, a group of 5 detached houses with garages and parking, was completed in 1985 on Bramble Lane.



Above: *Little Chequers (G)* was developed in two stages during the 1960s and 1970s for local-authority housing although some houses are now privately owned. Short terraces of houses or bungalows, each with its own front garden, flank a winding access road. There are flats and bungalows for sheltered housing.



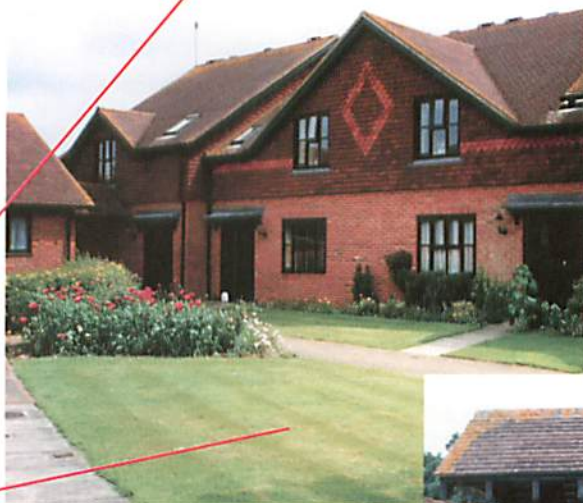
Above: *Long's Acre (I)* A group of 12 low-cost houses built on the initiative of the Parish Council, in 1992, on part of a field belonging to Miss Hilda Long. This is the only low-cost housing scheme in Wye.



Below: **Gregory Court (B)**. This local-authority block of flats was built c.1960 at the top end of **Churchfield Way**. There are garages and a large public car park behind.



Right: **Cherry Garden Crescent (C)** was the first of the post-war estates. A group of 5 semi-detached houses for ex-service men and their families was built in 1947 off **Cherry Garden Lane** by the local authority.



Left and below: **Jarman's Field (D)**, a private sheltered-housing scheme built in 1983 on Jarman's Field on the eastern edge of the village. This development of bungalows, and several two-storey houses is set in well-maintained landscaped grounds.



Left and below: **Orchard Drive (E)**, a private development of houses and bungalows built in two stages between 1960 and 1975. All dwellings have their own drives and garages.



Left and above: **The Chequers Park estate (F)** was built for private housing in the late 1960s on the southern edge of the village. The estate is in an open landscaped setting and consists of a series of culs-de-sac joined by curving roads. A footpath leads to Little Chequers but there is no direct access to the centre of the village.

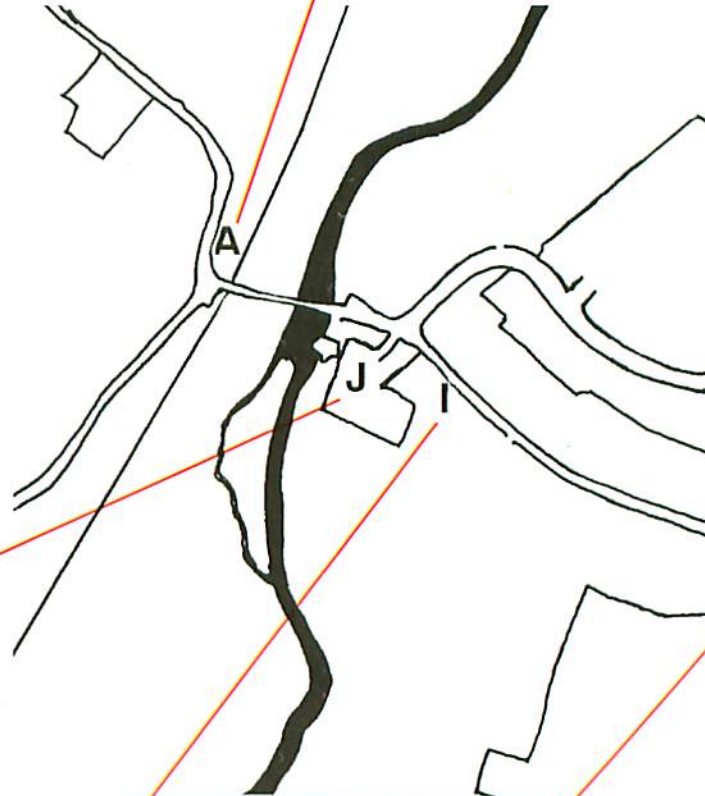
Infill development

Although the total of Wye's post-war expansion was substantial, its effect on the village core was not intrusive and left the historic elements of the village relatively undisturbed.

By contrast, most recent developments have been on infill and previously-used (brownfield) sites within or on the edge of the Conservation Area. They have therefore had a much greater impact on the older streets and buildings. Most of this development has been for housing, with a high proportion for older people or for student residential accommodation.

Development for other purposes has included the library and learning resource centre and laboratories for Wye College but, there has been little new building specifically for commercial purposes except for the workshop units on Bramble Lane.

Right: *One of six workshop units (A) built on the station yard in Bramble Lane.*



Above: *Denne's Mill Close (J)* This was developed in 1996 on land beside the Mill in Lower Bridge Street at the entrance to Wye. There are 11 detached houses approached by a wide 'suburban-style' road. (The office building, front right, is a reconstruction of the former granary and is not part of the development.)



Above: *Two detached houses (I)* were built on the former bus station site in Lower Bridge Street, opposite Blackford's general stores.

Above right: *Dwellings for mobility-impaired people (H)* built on Bridge Street when Headley's Yard was developed in 1978.



Right: *Stonegate (G)*, developed in 1997 on the Stonegate egg-packing site behind the Methodist Chapel, Bridge Street. This private 'secure' sheltered housing for the over 55s has no footpath through to Chequers Park.





Below and left: *Taylor's Yard (B)* is a private development of 14 houses, completed in 1983 on a former garage site behind *Church Street*. It is served by a private road from *Church Street* and has provision for car parking. Three houses front the street and relate well to older buildings.



Above: *The College library and learning resource centre (C)* built 1997 and left: *(C')* laboratories along *Olantigh Road*.



Above: *Old Vicarage Gardens (D)* built in 1998 on the site of the former *College* car park behind the *High Street*, *Church Street* and *Upper Bridge Street*. This is a high-density development of 2- and 3-bedroom houses approached by a wide 'suburban style' road.



Left and above: *St Ambrose Green (E)* developed in 1994 on land belonging to *St Ambrose Roman Catholic Church* at the corner of *Upper Bridge Street* and *Oxenturn Road*. Private houses with a large landscaped garden and mature chestnut trees in front. Car-parking areas are provided at the back.



Left: *Kempe's Place (F)*, a sheltered-housing scheme built in 1984 on land behind the library in *Upper Bridge Street*, comprises a terrace of cottages leading to flats at the rear.



WYE'S CONCERNS

SUMMARY

Public consultation

Planning applications and the Local Plan

Traffic problems

Congestion
Parking
Speed
Problems at Wye's bridge and level crossing

Expansion of the village

The lack of affordable homes
Enough private sheltered housing
Expansion on to greenfield sites
Loss of open space within village
Cramming and loss of privacy
Increased traffic
Effect on infrastructure

Appearance of the village

Entrances
Building design
Inappropriate roads
Street furniture

Sustainability

Design and construction of buildings
Building materials
Resources

Public consultation

The statutory consultation for **planning applications and reviews of the Local Plan** is often seen by the community as being both too late and ineffective. Local people have felt that their carefully-considered and argued views, frequently resulting from public meetings, have been ignored. They would like to feel that their ideas are respected and seen to be taken into account in the decisions made by the Borough Council.

It would be desirable that those bringing forward proposals for any major development in Wye should, before making a planning application, hold preliminary discussions with the community. This would allow local knowledge and ideas to be considered at an early stage and would reduce the risk of local hostility leading to delays in the planning process. Participation of the community would also help to increase both awareness of the importance of the Local Plan as the basis for development decisions and understanding of the relative roles of the Planning Authority, developers and the Parish Council.

A very positive outcome of the consultations with the Borough Council for this VDS has been a better accord between the Parish and the Borough and has resulted in the following commitment by Ashford Borough Council:

- To discuss each review of the Borough Local Plan with local people in Wye before draft proposals are produced.
- To involve the Parish Council in drawing up Development Briefs for important development sites before a Draft Brief is published.
- To attend Parish Council meetings to answer questions on major planning applications.
- To answer queries the Parish Council might have about the reasoning behind any decisions taken by the Borough Council where the decision conflicts with the Parish's views.

Traffic in Wye: the problems

Wye shares with other historic villages the seemingly intractable contemporary problems of car parking and traffic congestion. The difficulties are largely concentrated within the Conservation Area where the roads are narrow and the buildings abut the pavements. There are few garages and little space for off-street parking. The presence of Wye College and its staff and students, many of whom commute into Wye daily, add considerably to vehicular movements and parking. Within the village there is a growing parking problem due to multi-occupancy of houses by car-owning students.



Congestion at the lower end of Scotton Street.



Congestion outside the primary school in Bridge Street.

Wye has three notorious bottlenecks within the Conservation Area: Scotton Street, Bridge Street, and at the crossing of the river and railway. All three are on roads which carry a considerable load of local and through traffic, including buses and other heavy vehicles.

Scotton Street is an important through route and, in addition, carries traffic to and from the College premises at Withersdane. **Bridge Street** has to cope with the additional traffic for the primary school and village halls, and provides the only route to and from the fire station. The **bottleneck at the river and railway** is initially due to the level crossing at the station, now compounded by increasing traffic, and the 'temporary' traffic lights at the bridge. The level crossing and the traffic lights together are responsible for frequent delays to traffic entering the village and for serious congestion in Bridge Street and Churchfield Way.

"There is enough development in the village. Better to build a bypass from the oil depot, up Occupation Road to Coldharbour. It would relieve the congestion in the village and lessen the pollution." ...resident



Above: Approach to Wye bridge. In the early 20th century the side walls were removed to accommodate a wider carriageway. More recently, the modern structure was found to be too weak to bear two-way traffic, the carriageway was narrowed and lights installed to control one-way movement.



Above: Double parking on both sides of Church Street often occurs during working hours as people visit the shops, hairdressers, banks, offices, the pub or the restaurant. Many businesses have living accommodation above and residents also have difficulty in finding space to park. There is, however, a public car park behind the Co-op supermarket in Churchfield Way.

"I would be against a new bridge over the river and railway because it would encourage more through traffic and make Wye more convenient for commuting, increasing its dormitory role." ...resident

"I would urge that design objectives should include planning guidelines relating to Wye village road systems, so as to control traffic flows and congestion, with the aim of restoring to some extent the former quality of village life."...resident



Cars queuing on Bramble Lane and Harville Road.

The people of Wye are united in a desire to 'do something' about traffic and parking. Although listed-building consent has been given to provide a second carriageway alongside the existing bridge, this is only a partial solution. It will help to alleviate congestion at the entrance to the village but does not address other issues.



Traffic held up leaving the village.

Wye needs a co-ordinated traffic management plan that takes into account the needs of the village, its hinterland and possible future developments. In devising such a plan, local government should fully involve those who will need to make it work - the local people.

Expansion of the village

Residents are concerned about the possibility of future developments and their location. They are unhappy at the prospect of further outward expansion and the consequent loss of countryside but, at the same time, feel that any more infilling in the village centre, increasing the density and losing more open space, would not be welcome.

Affordable and low-cost housing

Many people also recognise that there is a need for more affordable general-needs housing in the village and for more low-cost schemes such as that on Long's Acre. It is felt that the trend for private developments specifically for older age groups, together with rising property prices generally, make it difficult for local people to remain in the village.

Brownfield sites

While it is desirable to improve the appearance of the village by tidying up 'brownfield' sites, such as the Taylor's Garage site and the former oil depot, people feel that any development should be designed to keep a feeling of openness and avoid 'cramming', maintain privacy and freedom from excessive noise and provide adequate off-street parking.

Implications of more development

Although there are differences of opinion on the location and type of new developments, there is general concern in the village that more development of any kind would mean an increase in population, resulting in additional traffic in, and through, Wye and other possible infrastructure problems such as water shortages and failure of the sewage system. For example, it is felt that the implications of increases in student residential accommodation in recent years were not sufficiently taken into account in the preparation of the new Local Plan.

"I would like to keep Wye separate from the enormous building programmes for Kent, with the danger of shortage of water, crowded roads and subtopia at its worst."
...resident

"People live in a village because they do not want to live in a town. People should be allowed to have the facilities of village life. The boundary must not be extended." ...resident



Left: *The rear of Taylor's Garage.*
Below left: *The forecourt of the garage provides welcome open space at a narrow point in Bridge Street.*
Below right: *The former oil depot site on Bramble Lane - ripe for redevelopment.*



Open spaces

The closely-packed arrangement of buildings in the village centre emphasises the importance of the greens and other open spaces. People feel strongly that these open spaces need to be protected and, where appropriate, they should be enhanced with trees and places to sit.



Two popular open spaces; The Church Field (left) and The Green (right).



The three allotment areas are a resource for the village.



Valuable open space on Bridge Street in front of the primary school.



Open space on Orchard Drive: view across the Oxpond to the cricket field.



The community would like to be able to use part of the riverside meadows for public enjoyment.

Appearance of the village

The approaches to the village

are considered to be very important. They should be welcoming and in keeping with Wye's rural and historic character. Many residents would like to see the 17th century bridge revealed and restored, which would give back to Wye its historic entrance. The ugly 20th century superstructure and crude traffic lights on the bridge, the wide access and 'suburban-style' architecture at Denne's Mill Close, and the damaged verges in Churchfield Way have all attracted criticism.



Above left: *The Ticked Trout* pub marred by the temporary traffic lights.
 Above right: 'Suburban-style' at *Denne's Mill Close*.
 Below left: *Street verges on Churchfield Way* degraded by car parking.
 Below right: By contrast, the carefully-tended verges and hedges on *Scotton Street* provide a pleasing entrance to the village.

"I think the approaches to settlements are so important - the most often seen view. Wye has a wonderful location but a poor approach over the bridge - the concrete kerbs are a jarring element - and the muddy parking spots in Churchfield Way, before you reach the church, are not appealing." ...visitor

Street furniture



Far left :
Street furniture in keeping with the traditional surroundings: outside the churchyard and near the New Flying Horse.
 Left:
A multiplicity of signs: at the station and in Upper Bridge Street.

Lighting, seats, signs, bus stops and some property boundaries demonstrate the mish-mash of styles and materials that has appeared over the years. The use of utilitarian designs which result from the choice of vandal-proof, cheap or standard options, detract from the appearance of the village. Particular care is needed in the siting of street furniture, signs and fascias and in the selection of designs appropriate to Wye's character. (More information on boundaries is given on page 24).



Right, clockwise from top left:
Street furniture at the entrance to the village spoils the corner of Churchfield Way.
Is this an appropriate site for large waste bins?
Five different boundary treatments at Dennes Mill.
The white-painted 'Wealden-style' fencing at St Ambrose Green contrasts with the natural-wood boundary fence which is more traditional for Wye.



Sustainability

Most households in Wye already 'think globally and act locally' through their support of WyeCycle, a local kerbside collection company promoting the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.

People are concerned about the need to conserve resources, such as water and energy. These considerations come under the umbrella of 'sustainable development', which is now a nationally accepted concept and will increasingly influence the location, layout, design and materials used for new buildings. Measures to conserve resources can be designed in from the beginning. Buildings can be located to take maximum advantage of the sun for heat and light and be provided with high levels of insulation, solar panels, dual flush cisterns, and rain and used (grey) water collection systems. Materials with lower environmental costs in their extraction, production and transportation can be chosen; and construction and site management can be planned to reduce waste and minimise energy and water use.



Above: WyeCycle collecting garden waste for composting. In addition to its recycling activities WyeCycle promotes the use of bio-degradable products and instigated the successful farmers' markets.



Above: The farmers' markets held on **The Green** encourage the purchase of local produce and crafts. They also foster community spirit and help local shops by bringing trade into the village.

Footpaths and cycleways

To reduce the need for people to use cars within the village, and to help foster the feeling of community, residents would like to see the development of a people-friendly network of footpaths and cycleways. All new developments should ideally be linked to their surroundings and to the village centre by footpaths that are accessible to everyone. These new paths should be designed so that they are safe for use at any time of day. All paths should well surfaced for ease of use and be properly lit and maintained. Provision should be made for cycle storage in all new buildings.

Below, left to right:
Narrow enclosed path behind Old Vicarage Gardens; the blind corners make it feel unsafe, particularly in the dark.
Well-used open footpath between Churchfield Way and Bridge Street, the school and village halls.
Footpath linking Cherry Garden Lane, Jarman's Field and Orchard Drive with Withersdane and the countryside.
Cycle racks outside the Co-op in Churchfield Way.



WYE DESIGN – PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

The background to these guidelines is set out on pages 2 to 18 of this Design Statement. Specific matters relating to design and materials are illustrated on pages 22 to 28.

Wye Village Design Statement is approved Supplementary Planning Guidance to be used as an extension to the Ashford Borough Local Plan (2000). The Local Plan sets out guidelines and principles for development in the villages and countryside. The Wye VDS reinforces the Borough's policies by setting them specifically within the Wye context.

Wye is one of three villages in the Borough with a good range of local services and reasonable public transport and where limited further housing development is proposed in the Local Plan. Anyone planning new development in Wye should take into account the guidance given in both the Local Plan and the Wye VDS.

Basic principles

- 1 Each development proposal should include a statement and illustrations demonstrating how these principles and the following guidelines have been addressed.**
- 2 The landscape setting of Wye, its historic centre and more recent extensions add together to give the village its present sense of place. (See pages 3-13) New developments should make a positive contribution to the environment and the community. (See pages 22-28)**
- 3 Developers should be encouraged to involve local people in early discussions for any proposed new developments of significant size or impact. (See page 14)**
- 4 Environmental sustainability should be considered in decisions on the design, materials, construction and site management of all new buildings. (See page 18)**
- 5 The question of vehicle parking and movement should be specifically addressed for all developments. (See pages 14-16)**
- 6 Particular care should be taken in the Conservation Area to ensure that alterations and new buildings relate in architecture and scale to their surroundings and make a satisfactory contribution to the historic core of the village. (See pages 8-9 and 22-26)**

Guidelines for development

Design

- 1 The design of new buildings should conform to the Wye context by avoiding anonymous 'pattern book' designs and 'Wealden' or other styles alien to Wye's locality. Equally, designs based on a confused mixture of architectural styles and decoration, that mimic but lack the integrity of genuine historic buildings, should not be considered. (See pages 17 and 22-28)
- 2 High-quality contemporary architecture and designs which complement their surroundings and incorporate variations in geometric form, mass and scale will be encouraged. (See page 22)
- 3 Features to conserve natural resources such as energy and water should be encouraged in the design of new buildings, when and wherever feasible. (See page 18)
- 4 Designs should consider flexibility of internal use and external space, to allow for changes of use and additions over time. (See pages 9-10)
- 5 Design layouts should incorporate traditional local treatments of boundaries such as walls, fences, verges and planting. (See pages 17 and 24)
- 6 Shop fronts and signs should not be intrusive or mutilate parts of existing buildings. Standard fascias should be avoided. (See page 17)
- 7 In the Conservation Area most future development is likely to be limited to minor alterations or small-scale infilling. Groups of buildings should aim to reflect the variations in geometric form, mass, scale and architectural styles of their surroundings; roof heights, spans and pitches should also be in keeping. (See pages 8-9 and 23-26)
- 8 Maintenance in the Conservation Area and of listed buildings: original details should be retained and repaired where feasible; as far as possible traditional techniques and sympathetic materials should be used. Particular care should be taken with the designs and materials used for extensions and for alterations such as replacement doors and windows. (See pages 22 and 23-26)

Materials

Building materials play an important part in determining local character.

- 1 All materials, whether modern or traditional, should be suitable and of the highest quality feasible. (See pages 22-28)
- 2 Materials that harmonise with neighbouring buildings should be used for both new developments and alterations. (See pages 22-28)
- 3 Principles of sustainability should be encouraged in the choice and source of materials. (See page 18)
- 4 For older buildings and for new ones in the Conservation Area, materials should be strictly limited to those which closely match the traditional fabric of the contemporary buildings in colour, texture and appearance. The use of salvaged materials may well be appropriate. (See pages 8-9 and 22-26)

Guidelines (continued)

Layout

- 1 Particular care should be taken to design the layout and density of new developments so as to ensure privacy and freedom from excessive noise for residents in surrounding gardens and dwellings, especially in backland and infill sites. (See page 16)
- 2 The design and materials used for boundaries and street furniture, including signs, lighting and seats, should be selected with care to reflect Wye's traditional styles and to reflect the rural nature of the village. (See pages 17 and 24)
- 3 Roads in new developments should be appropriate to the rural character of the village. (See pages 12-13)
- 4 Adequate off-street parking should be provided for all new developments, particularly those within the Conservation Area. (See pages 14-15)

Access and mobility

- 1 Easy, safe access by foot and bicycle should be incorporated in plans for new developments. (See page 18)
- 2 All new development should make provision for a people-friendly network of safe routes within the village suitable for non-car users, those with prams, wheelchairs or having limited mobility. (See page 18)
- 3 Consideration should be given to the provision of cycleways and links to local and national cycle routes where feasible. (See pages 3 and 18)
- 4 Convenient cycle storage space or facilities should be included in the design of all new buildings. (See page 18)

Landscape

- 1 Entrances to the village should be visually welcoming and avoid a stereotypical suburban look. (See page 17)
- 2 Existing green and other open spaces should be preserved and enhanced. Any significant new developments should incorporate new green spaces and recreation areas. (See pages 6, 9-11 and 16)
- 3 Full advantage should be taken of the land form for any significant new developments on the edges of the village, particularly when visible in long views. Attention should be given to the impact on landmark features such as the Crown and riverside, and to sensitive views within the village, for example the Parish Church and the village greens. (See page 3 and 4-13)
- 4 Designs for new development should provide details of hard and soft landscaping. A variety of appropriate (preferably native) trees, hedging and border plants should be used, and a sustainable maintenance plan should be provided as an integral part of the design where appropriate. (See pages 24-28)

The importance of good design

This Statement encourages good design in the future and does not propose to stifle innovative and imaginative proposals by dictating solutions in advance. In turn however, the community expects all development proposals to be well researched, responsive to context and always of a high standard of design and materials.

Quality

The quality of many of the buildings in Wye is high, not only in the extensive Conservation Area where the majority of the listed buildings are located, but also in the achievements of previous eras. The post-war Churchfield Way estate and the 1990s Wye College library and learning resource centre are both award winning schemes and the design of residential developments such as Chequers Park and Taylor's Yard have continued the tradition of high quality buildings to the present day.

The common denominator of the best 20th century development in the village is that their designers have taken considerable care to build with high-quality materials and to study the context of their site. Where schemes have not met these high standards they have been the subject of much local opposition. One of the purposes of Wye's Village Design Statement is to inform developers and property owners of the issues affecting quality which are held to be important by the local community.

Context

The starting point for all good building design is a clear understanding of the specific context of any proposed development. The importance of context applies whether the proposal is for alterations, extensions, individual buildings or larger scale development.

What is meant by 'context' and what is expected of designers in this respect? Context includes all the existing environment of a site such as the lie of the land, ground levels, the scale, form and appearance of nearby buildings and the characteristics of the spaces between them. It includes the number of storeys, the heights of roof ridges and eaves, roof spans, the appearance of chimneys, rooflights or dormer windows, the building materials used for roofs and walls and their colours, the details of windows and doors and their surrounds. It also includes the landscaping of the surroundings such as the enclosures of external spaces with garden walls, hedges, fences and gates, the surface materials of roads, drives and paths, the layout of grassed or planted areas and the presence of trees and open countryside.

The context of each site will be different. The onus is on the designer to establish the facts for each site and to demonstrate how the proposals take account of them. The safe design solution might be simply to attempt to render any new development 'invisible' as though it had always been there, or to resort to pastiche. However, the opportunity should be taken to produce contemporary designs which are equally, if not more, appropriate to their surroundings. The character of Wye has been created through the use of a local range of building materials for a wide variety of styles over past centuries. In the same way designers today should be encouraged to produce buildings that "...will reflect our time for posterity".

Examples of distinct Wye contexts



Buildings predominate over landscape in village core (Bridge Street).



Buildings set in landscaped surroundings (Churchfield Way).



Hedges and trees predominate over buildings (Cherry Garden Lane).

Glossary of building features in Wye

Different areas of the village (see map on page 24) differ widely from one another but all contribute to the character of Wye. To assist designers in understanding the context within which they are working, the following pages give 'thumbnail sketches' of the materials and key features of the buildings found within each of the main areas of the village as starting points for site specific context studies.

Materials in the Conservation Area

"Wye should remain a patchwork in which buildings of varying though congenial styles are held together by smallness of scale and use of suitable building materials"... resident.

Until the 20th century the buildings of Wye had mostly been built of materials which were available from nearby sources. The most common were timber, clay, ragstone, flint, sand and lime. This relatively small range of building materials, shaped and put together by hand in a variety of different ways, has largely generated the present character of the Conservation Area.

Timber was widely used for the structures of the medieval buildings in the village, many of which have survived until the present day. Since the 13th century, roofs were finished with locally made plain clay tiles which were fixed with timber pegs. Brick became increasingly important from the 16th century onwards and was initially used alongside timber framing and lime plaster infilling. From the 18th century, the tiling of timber framed walls became common with reddish clay tiles and mathematical tiles (which give the appearance of brickwork) and these remain strong visual elements in the Conservation Area.

A few buildings and walls are constructed of flint and ragstone and these are a precious subsidiary ingredient of the Wye scene. Timber weatherboarding is far less common than tile-hanging or white-painted lime plaster, and where it has survived for any length of time it has often been preserved by many layers of black tar. Although not a local material, Welsh slate was introduced for the roofs of some buildings constructed in the 19th century but it is far less common in the village than clay tiles.

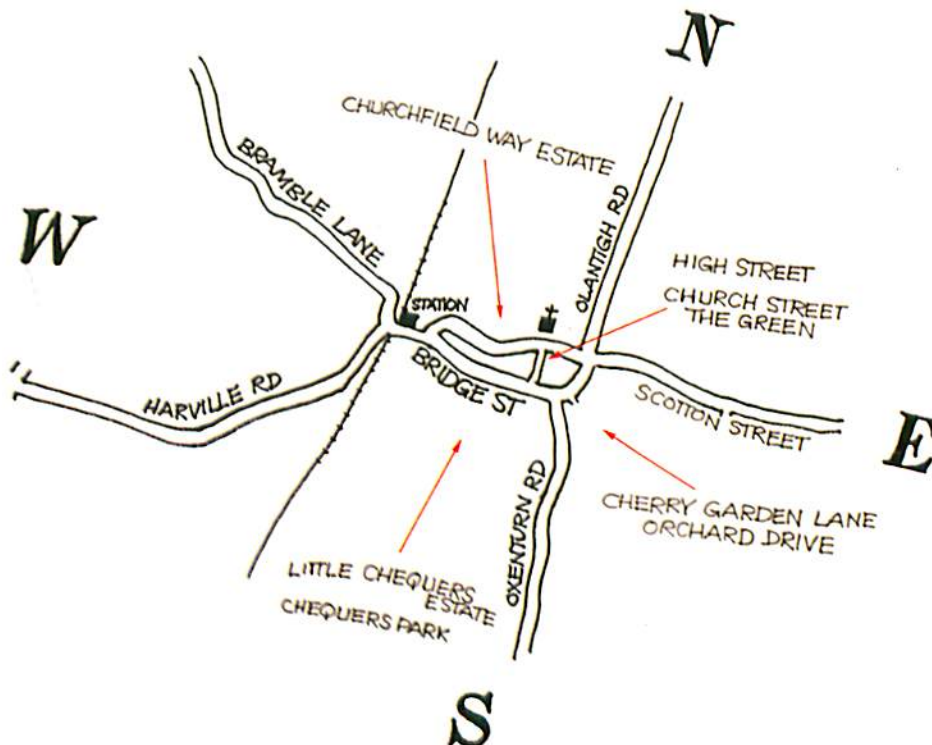


Traditional local boundary treatments

Within the historic centre of Wye the external spaces belonging to individual properties have traditionally been enclosed and divided from each other by high garden walls built mainly of Kent red brick but sometimes of ragstone and more rarely of flint. Where these walls are in prominent positions their tops are often finished with conical brick copings and elsewhere with bricks laid on edge.

Beyond the centre of the village the use of brick and ragstone walls continues but they tend to be lower and extend only along the frontages of properties, with hedges and occasionally railings rising above them. Gardens are mainly divided from each other by timber fences and hedges.

This pattern continues to the edges of the village, gradually giving way to the rural setting where high hedges, grass embankments and tree shelter belts characteristically mark the divisions between the built settlement of the village and the open countryside beyond.



Above: Key map of character areas described on the following pages.

Character areas

Church Street, The Green, High Street, Lower Scotton Street.

Scale: Two-storey with some three-storey in Church Street and Upper Bridge Street. Mainly terraced (varying eaves and ridge lines), a few detached houses next to The Green. Wye College listed buildings and the Church flank the northern side of High Street.

Roofs: Kent peg tiles with occasional lead-cheek dormer windows and rooflights, a few slate roofs.

Walls: Mainly Kent red brick (natural and painted white) with sprung arches, clay tilehanging (natural and painted white), isolated instances of grey-painted render, black-painted weatherboarding, pebbledash, exposed timber framing with some jettied first floors and decorative Victorian brickwork. College buildings in dressed ragstone, red brick and flint.

Windows: Multi-pane sash windows and casements mainly painted white.

Doors: Mainly four and six panel, some Georgian doorcases, some with decorative fanlights.

Gardens: Very few front gardens, buildings mainly next to pavement, access to rear gardens and yards via archways and alleys and under buildings. Varying sizes of traditional brick-walled rear gardens and yards.



Bridge Street and Upper Bridge Street

Scale: Mainly two-storey with a few three-storey, short terraces of houses at eastern end giving way to semi-detached and a few detached houses at the western end set on high embankments above road level.

Roofs: Kent peg and plain clay tiles with a few rooflights, small amount of slate roofing.

Walls: Mainly Kent red brick (natural and painted white) with sprung arches, clay tilehanging (natural and painted white) isolated instances of flint walling, with some jettied first floors, dark stained and white-painted weatherboarding and a small amount of natural-finished pebbledash.

Windows: Multi-pane sash windows and casements mainly painted white.

Doors: Varying designs.

Gardens: At eastern end buildings mainly next to pavement with few front gardens, access to rear gardens and yards via alleys. At western end front gardens with hedges, some on high embankments with low retaining walls in brick and ragstone.





Harville Road and Bramble Lane

Scale: Two-storey, mainly detached houses with some semi-detached.

Roofs: Kent peg tiles, slate, clay plain tiles, some dark profiled concrete tiles, a few rooflights and dormer windows.

Walls: Kent red brick (natural and painted white) with sprung arches, traditional oak framing, some clay tilehanging and multi-coloured red brick.

Windows: Sash windows and casements mainly painted white, some modern ones dark stained.

Doors: Varying designs.

Gardens: Mainly large front gardens enclosed by hedges and fences with rear gardens backing onto open countryside.



Churchfield Way Estate

Scale: Two-storey with a few single-storey, mainly terraced houses with a few semi-detached houses. Some forward-projecting brick gables at ends of terraces.

Roofs: Plain concrete tiles with a few rear-facing rooflights.

Walls: Mellow red brick with concrete open lattice porches and concrete lintels.

Windows: Casement windows, some original white-painted metal, many replaced with white upvc.

Doors: Varying designs.

Gardens: Small front gardens enclosed by low brick walls with footpaths and wide grass verges to roads and many of the rear gardens backing onto open countryside or allotments.



Little Chequers Estate

Scale: Two-storey and single-storey arranged in short terraces.

Roofs: Plain and profiled red and dark-coloured concrete tiles.

Walls: Multi-coloured red brick with some plain tilehanging to upper storeys. Russet-coloured concrete blockwork.

Windows: Generally white-painted casements with dark stained joinery to the more recent Longs Acre houses.

Doors: Varying designs.

Gardens: Small open-aspect front gardens with private rear gardens.



Chequers Park

Scale: Mainly two-storey terraced, detached and semi-detached houses all set in open landscaped frontages. Some bungalows.

Roofs: Profiled dark-coloured concrete tiles.

Walls: Multi-coloured red and yellow brick with white-painted weatherboarding and plain dark-coloured tilehanging to upper storeys.

Windows: White-painted casements.

Doors: Varying designs

Gardens: Front gardens are open aspect thereby creating a parkland setting for all the houses. At the rear of all the houses there are fenced gardens some of which back on to open countryside.



Oxenturn Road

Scale: Mainly two-storey, with some three-storey houses, detached and semi-detached. There is a new, angled, two-storey terrace on corner with Upper Bridge Street.

Roofs: Plain clay tiles and profiled dark-coloured concrete tiles with dormer windows and exposed timber-framed gables to three-storey houses.

Walls: Plain and multi-coloured red brick, tile-hanging, white-painted render and white-painted weatherboarding.

Windows: White-painted sash windows and casements.

Doors: Varying designs

Gardens: All houses have front gardens mainly enclosed by hedges often rising above low brick walls with some ragstone walls.



Orchard Drive and Cherry Garden Lane

Scale: Mainly two-storey, with some single-storey houses, detached and semi-detached.

Roofs: Plain clay tiles and profiled dark-coloured concrete tiles.

Walls: Multi-coloured red brick, tile hanging, white-painted render and stained weatherboarding.

Windows: White-painted sash windows and casements.

Doors: Varying designs

Gardens: Most houses have front gardens mainly enclosed by hedges and fences of varying heights. The houses on the eastern side of Orchard Drive are next to playing fields and open countryside.



Olantigh Road

Scale: Mainly two-storey, with a few single-storey houses, terraced, detached and semi-detached. College buildings flank the western side of the road with the new learning resource building on the eastern side.

Roofs: Kent-peg and plain clay tiles. Roof of the learning resource centre in curved zinc.

Walls: Kent red brick, yellow stock brick with red brick quoins and tile hanging.

Windows: White-painted sash windows and casements. Large areas of glazing to College buildings in timber and metal frames.

Doors: Varying designs.

Gardens: Most houses have front gardens mainly enclosed by low hedges and fences. The last houses on the western side of Olantigh Road have higher hedges and overlook open countryside.



Upper Scotton Street

Scale: Mainly two-storey, with a few single-storey houses, detached and semi-detached.

Roofs: Kent peg and plain clay tiles, a small amount of slate and, more recently, profiled dark-coloured concrete tiles.

Walls: Plain and multi-coloured red brick, tile-hanging, white-painted render and stained weatherboarding. Some traditional timber framing with jettied first floors and herringbone brick infill panels.

Windows: White-painted sash windows and casements with some oak and stained timber frames.

Doors: Varying designs.

Gardens: Most houses have front gardens many of which are elevated above road level. These are mainly enclosed by hedges and fences. The houses at the eastern end of Scotton Street overlook open countryside.



The Wye Village Design Statement has been approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Ashford Borough Council and should be used in conjunction with the Ashford Borough Local Plan.



Wye with Hinxhill
Parish Council



rural action
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



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As part of the funding arrangements the Wye Village Design Group is liaising with other parishes in Kent who wish to benefit from the Wye group's knowledge and experience and also with communes in the Nord Pas de Calais Parc Naturel Régional.

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