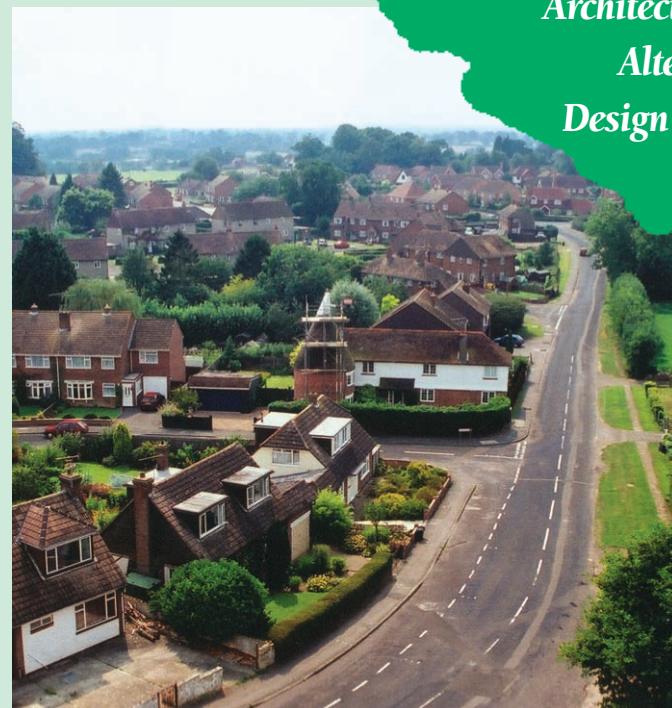
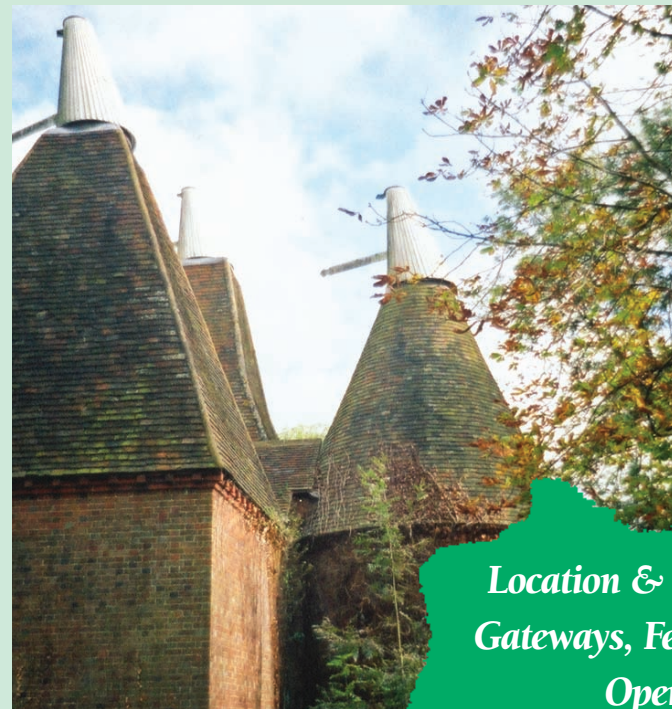


Bethersden Design Statement



Location & Communication
Gateways, Features & Layout
Open Spaces
Conservation Area
Architectural Details
Alterations
Design Guidelines

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What is a Design Statement

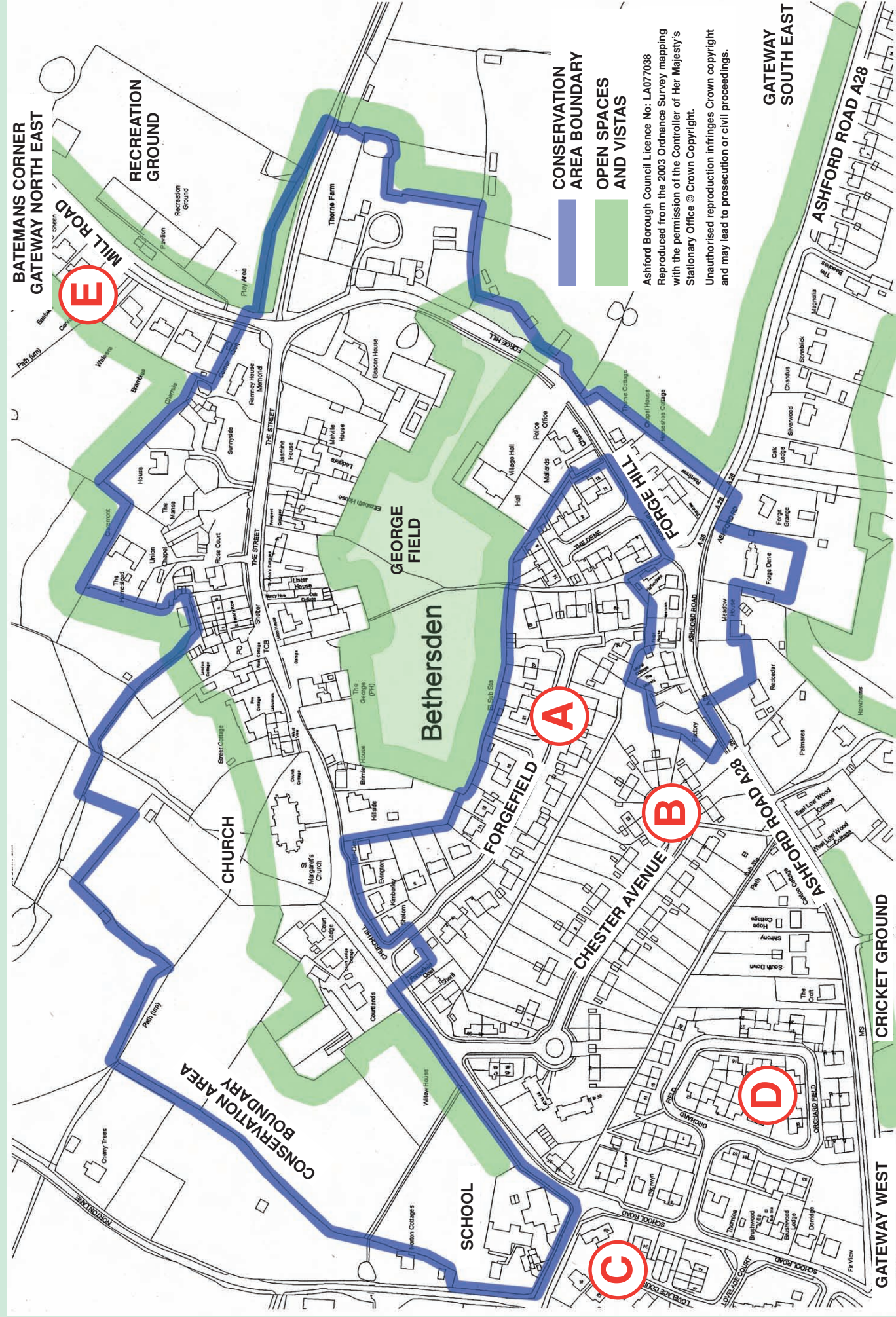
The Countryside Agency, which is a Government sponsored organisation, believes that the rich and varied character of rural settlements forms an important part of the beauty and distinctiveness of the English countryside. The Agency also believes that this varied character is being increasingly threatened by changes employing standardisation and poor design.

The purpose of the Design Statement is to help local people influence change, whether that change is a new development or just cumulative small-scale additions and extensions.

The Design Statement is not about whether a development should take place; that is the job of the Local Authority. The Design Statement is not intended to be a history of the village or to describe all its aspects in detail.

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

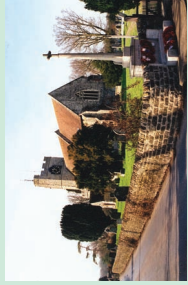
The guidance in this document is intended to supplement and support the policies of the Borough Local Plan.



The George Field



The George Pub



St Margaret's Church



Post Office & Store



The Street Looking East



The George Field



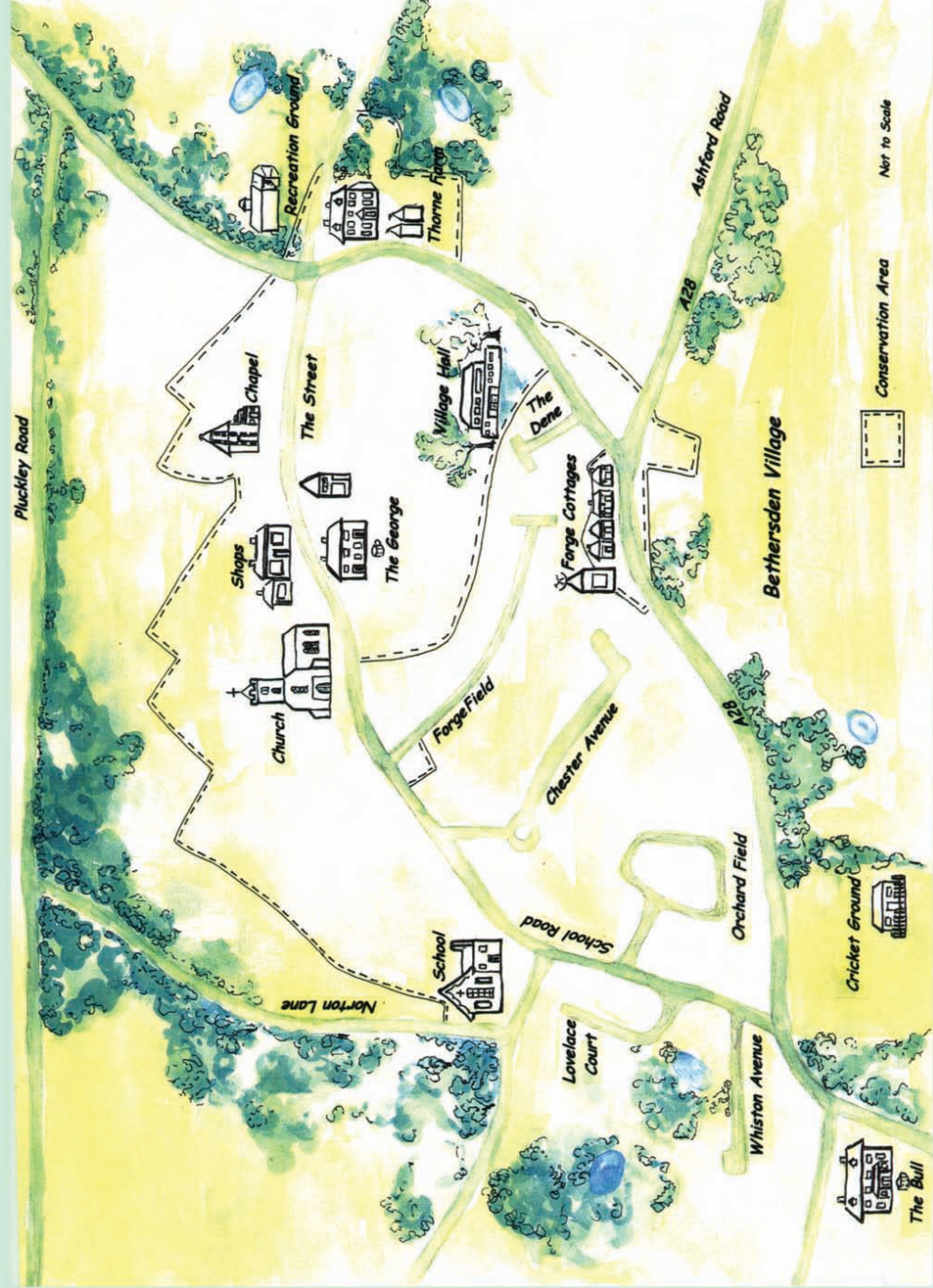
The School



Lovelace Court



The Bull Pub



The Recreation Field



Thorne Farm Oasts



The Village Hall



Forge Cottages

Bethersden Design Statement

INTRODUCTION

The Bethersden Design Statement describes the distinctive character of the village, the surrounding countryside, and the relationship of the village to neighbouring towns and communication links. It includes Design Guidelines for new developments which will help to ensure that local character is protected and can provide an inspiration for modern and locally distinctive design. The Design Statement has been produced following the involvement of many residents of Bethersden, and extensive consultation at public meetings, with displays of photographs and other draft content. Further details of the consultation process can be found in the appendix.

A brief history of Bethersden

Bethersden lies in the rolling wooded country of the Weald of Kent, about six miles south west of Ashford on the A28 road. The character of Bethersden today is based on a long history of being a small (closely knit) village, mainly agricultural in origin. First formally recorded in 1070, the village was known as Baedericedaenne the end of the name meaning that it was a cleared pasture in the Wealden woodland. By 1640 the population had reached 400, rose to over 1120 by the 1850s, and is now about 1700. The 1908 Ordnance Survey map shows the village in two parts, the larger part along The Street, linked by a well used footpath across open fields to a smaller group of buildings including the forge, at the point where Forge Hill joins the A28 at Forge Corner.

The Street was mainly the social hub and included the Church, pub, shops and main residential area. Forge Corner centred on more commercial activities with the blacksmith's forge and carpenters' workshops ideally placed on the main road from Ashford to Tenterden.

The green area (The George Field) that separates the two original parts of the village is still there as fields behind the George pub and other buildings on the south side of The Street. These fields continue across Forge Hill and form an important visual link through to the open countryside to the east of the village, known as Thorne Farm. Although it can be considered as a small village, the extensive parish records show that local families have had a significant influence on many areas of public life, both locally and further afield, including the Governorship of New York in the 17th. century!

Since the 1920s, agricultural employment has declined, but a surprising diversity of other businesses has developed, covering retail, manufacturing and service industries in and around the village, often in converted farm buildings. However the core of the village is mainly residential in character and mostly built before the 1900s, although there has been significant development of both council and private properties from the 1930s through the 1970s, with two smaller developments in the 1990s.



The Street



Church Hill



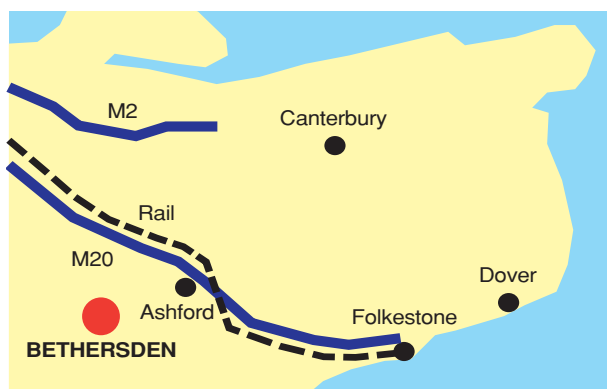
Church Hill c.1970



Hop Picking



Haymaking



Location and Communication

Bethersden, (which also encompasses the hamlets of Wissenden and Tuesnod to the north west, and Brissenden to the south east) is only six miles from Ashford, its International Station and the M20 motorway. These provide direct links to the UK rail and motorway networks, to Europe via the Channel Tunnel and to the ferry port at Dover. Regular bus services link the village to Ashford and Tenterden. Although Bethersden lies close to Ashford, they are separated by several miles of open country and the village has managed to retain its own identity and distinctive rural character.

Landscape Setting

Bethersden lies in the Low Weald, at the eastern end of the Beult river valley in east Kent, an area with many small field ponds, a particular feature of the Low Weald landscape. The whole village and the area to the south and west of the village is protected through Special Landscape Area designation which provides protection under policies in the Borough Local Plan.

Bethersden is fortunate that it is still surrounded by a wooded and agricultural landscape of small fields with well maintained hedgerows, many of which still have oak and other native trees as a major feature. At several points the fields and hedgerows reach into the village centre, ensuring that Bethersden retains close visual links with its rural setting.

The local woodlands and fields, while criss-crossed by footpaths and bridle paths, also provide an ideal habitat for many forms of wild life which also benefit from the many field ponds.

The parish as a whole supports a wide range of different agricultural activities, but most of the fields immediately around and in the village are used for sheep pasture due to the tendency of the local Wealden clay to be waterlogged and less suitable as arable land. This clay also produced the rich, glowing red bricks typical of this area.

Unique to the area is "Bethersden Marble", a type of palludina limestone formed millions of years ago, which was used for paths, chimney pieces in houses and in parish church walls.

Most of the older part of the village (The Street) lies along a gently sloping hillside, with the church in a prominent position on its western end. The ridge at the top of the hill is represented by the Pluckley Road while the bottom of the slope is the A28 road and the smaller part of the old village, and also most of the later development.

Apart from the A28 main road, the other roads outside the village have developed from the characteristically wide lanes which have broad verges and ditches, aimed at dealing with the wet conditions at a time when these lanes were used as drove roads. Increasing heavy traffic, and the activities of public utilities and communications companies are seriously damaging the verges and threatening the ditches and adjacent hedges.



Local woodland



Bethersden Marble Wall



Church Path, Bethersden Marble

THE GATEWAYS, MAJOR FEATURES AND LAYOUT (SEE VILLAGE PLAN)

Bethersden is a compact village, located largely on the north side of the A28 about six miles from Ashford, with School Road and Norton Lane on its western side, the Pluckley Road to the north, and Mill Road and Forge Hill to the east.

Although the village centre along The Street lies part way up a low hill, the whole area is well wooded, with individual trees, woods and plantations all effectively screening the major part of the settlement from view when approaching from a distance.

Apart from the groups of similarly styled dwellings developed since the 1940s in cul-de-sacs off School Road, most of the houses have been individually built and are set well back from the road, giving a pleasing open aspect particularly noticeable when travelling through The Street in the village centre. Property boundaries within the village are mostly a combination of hedges and picket fences, rather than brick or similar hard materials. Most of the roads through the village are bordered by pavements, although there are also stretches of grass verge. A wide variety of trees reinforce the strong links between the village and the surrounding country.



South Eastern Gateway



Cottage with Picket Fence

The south eastern gateway (see Village Plan), is at the village sign on the A28 main road, where it approaches the village from Ashford in the east, having run through open country with scattered farms and houses. Even from this point only the south side of the road has continuous development, mainly of well spaced private housing, plus a group of semi-detached council houses (Bailey Fields - 1930s) and one industrial operation, all of which back on to farmland.

On the north side, there is a woodyard and fencing supplier and a few houses, followed by open fields. The overall effect is a gradual transition from open country to the beginning of the main part of the village at the junction of the A28 with Forge Hill. A group of white weatherboarded houses and workshops includes the site of the original forge, sadly no longer working, which played an important role in the development of the older part of the village. The workshops in this group of buildings are now used by an important local craft business, making rocking horses.

The A28 main road continues along the southern edge of the village, with private houses on both sides, varying from small terraced cottages to larger detached houses with substantial gardens. Of particular interest is a large "Colts" timber framed and clad bungalow, since Colts was probably the single largest local employer, with extensive workshops on the Pluckley Road.



Timber Clad Cottages, A28/Forge Hill



"Colt" Timber Framed/Clad Bungalow

The main south western gateway (see Village Plan) to the village from Tenterden is at the crest of Bull Hill, the junction of the A28 with School Road. It is open in character with grass verges and hedges and is marked by The Bull pub and the cricket ground, where matches have been played for over 250 years.

School Road borders the village on its western side, with a secondary western gateway at the school, where Wissenden Lane joins School Road. Along this first section the road has a number of detached and semi-detached houses and two major developments, Orchard Field and Lovelace Court.

After the school, the road passes two more major developments, Chester Avenue and Forgefield. Together these four developments, all built since the 1940s, have more than doubled the size of the village.

School Road continues to the bottom of Church Hill, which in turn leads on to The Street. This runs through the main part of the old village, starting at the church at its western end and continuing eastwards to its junction with Mill Road and the top of Forge Hill.



South Western Gateway



Cricket Field opposite the Bull Pub



The Poplars

Mill Road runs northwards, with a mix of single storey houses some with roof conversions on its western side, including "The Poplars", a more recent small group of "local needs housing". Opposite these houses is the Recreation Ground, which provides for football, tennis and netball, and also has a well equipped children's play area. The Recreation Ground is bounded on its other three sides by trees, an important bridleway leading to the east, and open fields.



Recreation Ground



Mill Road

The northeastern gateway (see Village Plan) is at the top of Mill Road at Batemans Corner, an important crossroads which leads into the Pluckley Road to the north west and along the Old Surrenden Manor Road eastwards to Great Chart and Ashford.

Batemans Corner has a character all of its own and contains the old thatched saw mill building, which is now listed, where fence spiles have been made since the 1800s. Between the sawmill and the corner is a terrace of two semi-detached cottages and a very small single storey dwelling, all brick built, with Kent peg tiles. On the opposite corner is an irregularly shaped terrace of dwellings with varying designs, but all with lower levels of ragstone while upper elevations are tile hung. On the northeast corner is Mill House, a large farmhouse built of brick, with Kent peg tiles used for the roof and some upper elevations. The fourth corner is open fields, mainly for sheep grazing. The varying scale and variety of constructional materials give this corner of the village a particularly attractive character.



North Eastern Gateway



Batemans Corner Cottages

The southern end of Mill Road joins the top of Forge Hill which runs downhill to join the A28 at Forge Corner. Apart from Thorne Farm, a large house at the top, most of the houses are at its lower end, close to the Village Hall, including The Dene, a small group of bungalows for the elderly, similar to those in Orchard Field. Bethersden Village Hall, which was purpose built in the early 1970s, is a timber fronted brick building which can accommodate well over one hundred people and is regularly used for a wide range of social events. However its large tarmac surfaced car park, while convenient, would be considerably improved if screened with landscaping and planting.



Sawmill & Spile Maker Mill Road

Right: The Dene
Below: Bethersden Village Hall





The George Field

OPEN SPACES (see Village Plan)

Most of the open spaces in the village that reinforce its rural character lie within the Conservation Area, for example, to the west of the church, and particularly in the heart of the village, along the full length of The Street, behind the George pub and the houses on the south side. This important green space emphasises the open character of this part of the settlement, and it is linked to open country to the east, across Forge Hill.

Outside the Conservation Area, other important open spaces which are essential to preserve the character of the village include the Cricket Field at the southwestern gateway and the Recreation Ground in Mill Road, to the northeast.

THE CONSERVATION AREA AND VILLAGE CENTRE (see Village Plan)

The essential character of Bethersden is that of a small relatively self contained rural village. While it has individual features which are found in many villages in this part of Kent, it is the way these elements are combined, particularly in the Conservation Area, which gives the village its distinctive character, based on a harmonious mix of buildings of different styles and size, and with varying plot size and spacing from the road.

Most of the housing stock in the Conservation area was built in or before the early part of the last century, and many buildings are much older and are now "listed". Construction materials changed over the centuries in line with local customs and locally available materials and skills.

The Conservation Area covers an expanding area from the school in the west, along the northwest side of School Road and Church Hill, and to the eastern end of The Street. This then continues down Forge Hill to the group of old timber framed and weatherboarded houses at the A28 main road. These are unusual in this village, in being separated from the pavement only by their picket fences, whereas most of the houses and cottages in the rest of the village are set back from the road, the actual spacing varying considerably. Their attractive front gardens bordered by hedges and picket fences reinforce the generally "soft" character of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area also has several important open spaces and fields, and the fact that there is no "backland development", plus the vistas through the spaces between the buildings, both contribute to a general sense of openness in this part of the village.



The Street comprises a mixture of houses and other buildings originally supporting the traditional agricultural activities of the village.

At its eastern end there are several large houses, of varying construction and mostly built well before the 1900s, including a 15th. century yeoman's house and opposite, a large timber framed house (originally two cottages), the lower part rendered and the upper part tile hung. Close by is the Baptist Union Chapel, an interesting building which was started in the early 1800s, with brick lower walls and the upper part tile hung, with a slate roof. Further extensions have been made, with brick walls and tiled roofs and with design detailing different from the original part, although the actual material textures and colours provide a link.

The Street continues westwards with a mixture of weatherboarded or brick built cottages leading to the Post Office and general store, the butcher's shop, two other shops and The George public house. Behind this is the George Field, a large open green area, which has been used for village events. This area extends eastwards behind the houses on the south side of The Street, to Forge Hill and beyond.



Union Chapel



Bethersden Post Office



Terraced Cottages, The Street



The Butchers Shop



Timber Clad Cottage, The Street



St Margaret's Church

At the western end of The Street lies The Parish Church of St. Margaret's, which is the largest single structure in the village. It is a mediaeval church which was first mentioned in the Domesday Monachorum around 1100 and is built mainly of rag stone but also includes some Bethersden Marble. The church occupies a commanding position at the crest of Church Hill before the road slopes down to a lower level where it becomes School Road.

Bethersden Primary School marks the western end of the Conservation Area, where Wissenden Lane joins School Road. The original building, which dates from the late nineteenth century, now houses the junior school and has a typical Victorian brick and tile hung frontage. More recently a functional but less attractive building was added, housing reception and infant classes and a purpose-built hall. The attractive grounds consist of several play areas, a large playing field, and gardens.



Church Hill



School Playground



Bethersden Primary School

THE VILLAGE OUTSIDE THE CONSERVATION AREA

Major Developments from the mid 1900s

More recent developments have been outside the Conservation Area and include estates of privately owned houses and also council houses some of which are now privately owned. Much of this development adopted contemporary suburban housing designs, materials and layouts with regular spacings between buildings and to the road, rather than drawing on the attractive character of the built environment in the Conservation area. These developments are mainly on the south and west side of School Road, with ready access to the school and the village shops. Although they added a very large number of dwellings to the village, they are mainly infill developments behind existing buildings, each estate having a single access onto School Road. For the passer-by therefore, they have mostly had relatively little impact on the overall appearance of the village.

Forgefield (Village Plan, location A), a cul-de-sac off School Road, was privately developed in the 1960s, and is a typical suburban style of estate of that period, with open plan front gardens to the bungalows and houses, giving a pleasing open aspect at a relatively low density.



Chester Avenue (Village Plan, location B), also a cul-de-sac, was developed in four stages starting in the 1940s, the flats being of brick construction, close to the entry from School Road. The houses have precast concrete cladding with a profile similar to weatherboarding, with a pebble-dashed finish. Although by current standards the roadways are narrow, off-road parking is being increased, and this plus the fact that the houses are set well back from the road and have substantial back gardens, results in a building density which is generous by current standards. A number of these houses are now privately owned.



Major Developments from the mid 1900s

Lovelace Court (Village Plan, location C) is situated next to the school, on the western side of School Road. It is a successful mix of small terraced houses, semi-detached and larger detached houses which has much of the unstructured appeal of the older part of the village, achieved by varying the placing of the buildings in relation to each other and to the roads. Those along School Road have traditional wooden picket fences, in some cases backed by hedges. The developers have clearly made considerable efforts to use materials and design detailing which would be in sympathy with the location. Although the build density is quite high, generous planting of well maintained gardens leads to a pleasant open aspect.



Orchard Field (Village Plan location D), opposite Lovelace Court, is a mixture of council and private dwellings dating from the late 1960s. It includes small bungalows designed for the elderly and semi-detached houses on both sides of a circular roadway, with a spur out onto School Road. The open plan front gardens give an impression of space which offsets the relatively high density development.



The Poplars (Village Plan location E), is a small group of four "local needs housing" bungalows built in the mid 1990s. This is the only recent development on the eastern side of the village, up Mill Road, opposite the recreation ground.



OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE CENTRE

Domestic buildings are similar to those in the village, the majority built before the 1940s, ranging from large country houses to small timber framed and weatherboarded cottages built for farm workers. Agricultural buildings include both square and round oast houses, usually of brick construction. The village has a number of timber framed and clad barns with Kent Peg tiled roofs, some of which have been converted into dwellings or business premises. Some good examples are shown below.



16th Century Timber Frame House



Externally Built Chimney



Large Farm House with Kent Peg Tiles



Farm Outbuilding with Clock Tower



Oast Conversion



Barn Conversion



Timber Clad Farm House

Roadways, paths and verges

Much of the character of the village is shaped by its minor roads, footpaths, lanes and byways, irregular spaces and areas of grass verge. A good example of the latter is the wide grass verge below the church, with inset Bethersden marble path. In the centre of the village there are conventional tarmac pavements, but the effect is often softened by adjacent lawns and hedges.

There is no street lighting in any part of the village and road signs are of modest size and limited to locations at the gateways at the edge of the village.

Commercial and industrial development

Recent extension of the water treatment works at the western edge of the village will be screened by the new planting, and the development at the Belmont Business Park (see picture) demonstrates the benefits of screening with shrubs, as well as having an attractive blockwork roadway, and a mix of building types and sizes.



Belmont Business Park Bethersden

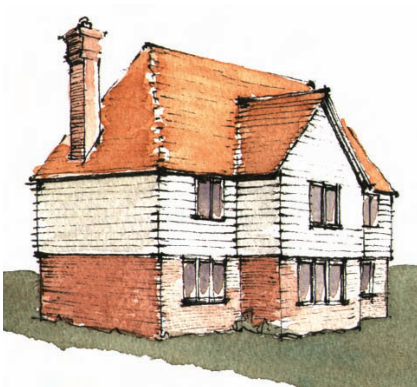
ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL

The following architectural details are drawn mainly from examples in the Conservation Area which encapsulates the essential character of the village.

Roofs

Most roofs are half hipped, and have Kent peg tiles, laid to a pitch of between 40 and 60 degrees, some of which feature a “catslide”. There is also some slate, and a few more recent buildings have machine made clay tiles of a similar colour to that of Kent peg tiles. Modern moulded interlocking and patterned tiles occur outside the Conservation Area, but are not generally characteristic. Eaves have a modest projection and black gutters. Many buildings have dormer windows, which are small in relation to the overall roof area, and have either hipped or gable end roofs and tile hung or timber clad sides.

Houses are generally limited to two storeys, not more than five metres to the eaves.



Hipped Roof Detail



Gable End Dormer



Dormer Detail

Chimneys

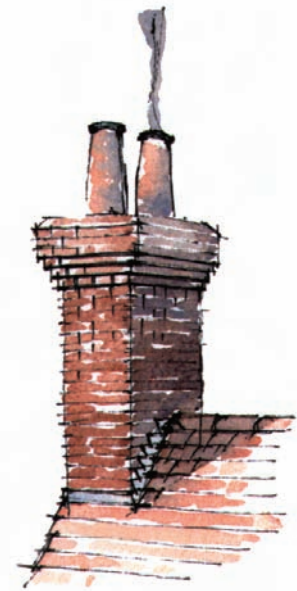
Chimneys are a significant part of the village skyline, generally of substantial size, rectangular in shape and built of brick with simple detailing of string course and corbelling. Where metal boiler chimneys have been used, they are generally not visible from the road.

Walls

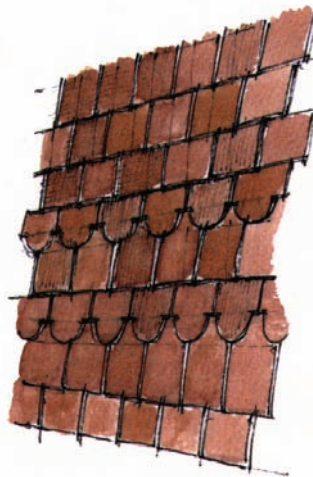
Timber framing was a common form of construction at the time Bethersden became established as a village. A number of buildings of this type still exist in the Conservation Area, with lime plaster rendering, brick infill or timber cladding.

Brick is now the most commonly seen material, having been used both as the primary structure and also as an infill or covering for timber framing. The local brick ranges from pale pink/orange to a dark red/brown in colour, and also includes burnt blue colours. A range of bonding styles have been used, including Flemish, Stretcher and Old English. Decorative detailing, generally relatively low key, includes corbelling to eaves, single string courses between floors and segmental arches over windows. Some brickwork has been painted, generally in white.

Weatherboarding for the whole wall surface has been used, but is often restricted to the upper levels, and generally painted white. More recently, particularly in barn conversions, the timber has been stained to achieve a naturally weathered look. Tile hung upper levels are quite common, generally of plain Kent peg tiles, but also with "fishtail" and other decorative detailing.



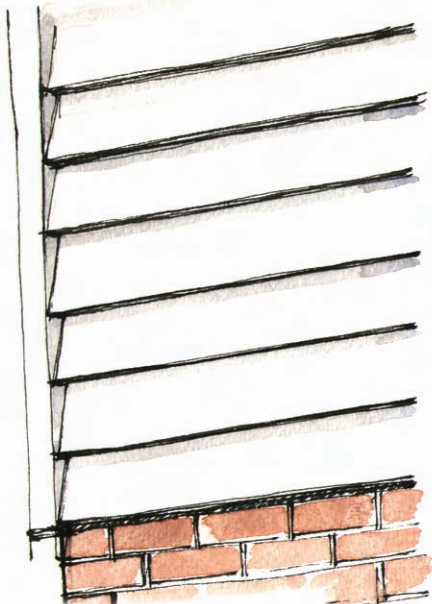
Chimney Detail



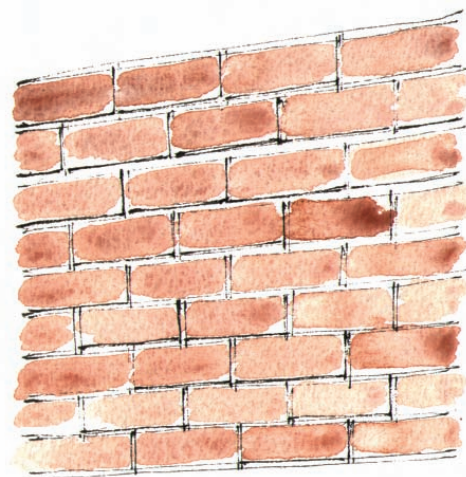
Tile Hanging Detail



Brick Bonding Detail



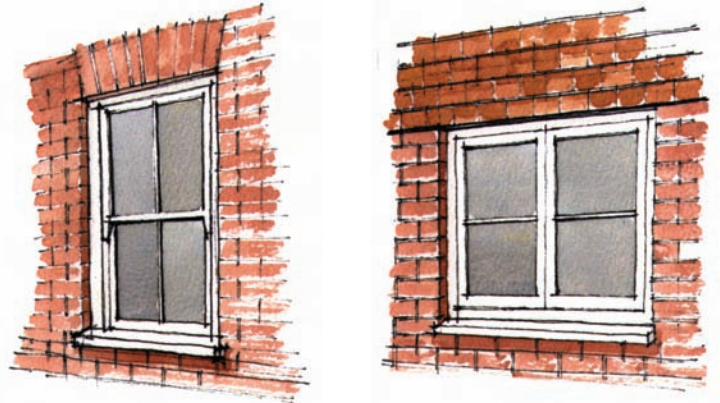
Timber Cladding



Stretcher Bond Brickwork

Windows

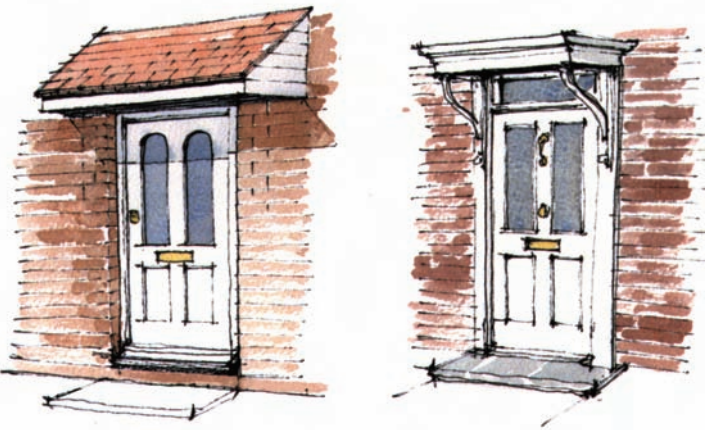
Domestic window frames are predominantly white painted timber, of either two or three light casement or double hung sash design. Glazing ranges from single panes to multiple small panes. Many houses have bay windows, with leaded or tiled roofs. In general, windows are of modest size in relation to the related wall area. With only four shops along The Street, their larger windows do not impact significantly on the village scene.



Sash Window and Casement Window Detail

Doors

The majority of doors are panelled, some with the top panels glazed. Many of the older buildings have solid hardwood vertical planked doors studded with iron nails. Doorhoods range from fairly elaborate designs with moulded edges and decorative brackets to simple flat hoods over cottage doors.



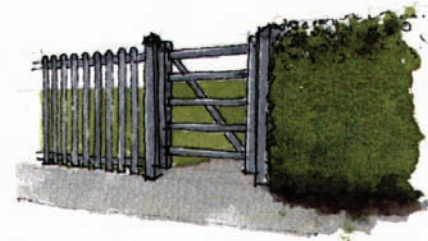
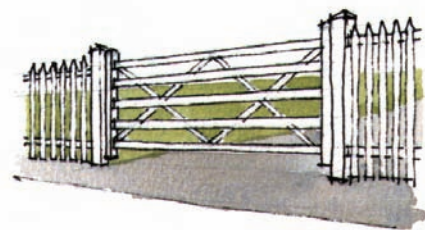
Door & Porch and Door & Canopy Detail

Gates and Fences

Boundaries onto the road are mainly seen as hedges, although these are often backed by picket fencing, and in a few cases by iron railings. Pedestrian gates are predominantly wood picket style or occasionally half panelled, while gates for drives are usually wooden and of the five bar traditional design. The use of ragstone boundary walls is limited to the church and some of the cottages at Batemans Corner, both of which use this material in their main structure, but brick walls are not typical.

Outbuildings

Outbuildings have been used for many purposes, including coach houses now used for garages, bakeries and storage buildings. Materials similar to those used for the associated house, with brick or timber framed and weatherboarded walls and Kent peg tiles being the most frequently used materials.



Gate and Fence Detail

ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS

A large number of existing buildings within the village centre and the outlying village areas have important and in some cases unique architectural features which need to be maintained and preserved by following the style of the original design, even where changes may have taken place in the use of the buildings. This is extremely important in the Conservation Area.



Semi Detached Bungalow Before Alteration



After the Addition of a Conservatory



Half Tiled House Before Extensive Alteration



After Unique Extension

If changes are being considered, make your own design assessment.

1. Look at the front and rear of the property from some distance. Note down the most distinctive features separately. Consider the impact they make on the building and surrounding properties, especially with more recent alterations which may be out of character with the original. This is particularly important with dormer windows, for example. Study the details of the windows, doors and eaves. Take photographs or make sketches where necessary.
2. Repeat this process for the other sides of the building, taking account of the recommendations in this booklet.
3. Now think about the proposed changes and consider whether they meet the recommendations and if not, what changes you could make, both to improve the new addition and any existing unsatisfactory features.
4. Get expert advice from your architect or builder and discuss the proposed changes with the Strategic Planning Team at the Borough Council. If you live in a listed building, consult the borough conservation officer before you apply for Listed Building Consent.

Redundant structures

Redundant structures which are architecturally important, for example old barns and farm buildings may have important features that should be preserved if the building is brought back into use.



DESIGN GUIDELINES

The focus of these guidelines is to maintain and where possible improve the diversity and distinctiveness inherent in Bethersden's culture and history.

While it is accepted that the facilities that buildings provide must be allowed to evolve to meet today's needs, it is vital that the essential character of the village is maintained. Development, particularly in the village centre Conservation Area, needs to be on a small scale. Design, detailing and choice of materials should be in sympathy with the style and character of the Conservation Area and should aim to retain the unstructured appeal of the old village by varying the spacing between buildings and in relation to the road. Although houses will generally face the road, outbuildings can be at different angles and sometimes even in front of the house. This diversity is a vital factor in the visual character of the village. A modern interpretation of the more desirable characteristics for new housing is the development at Lovelace Court, which meets many of the requirements, in terms of both design and materials. (See page 22)

Developers are encouraged to discuss their proposals at the earliest opportunity with the village and to show how the details of their proposals reflect this design statement.

Building Style and Architectural Detail

1. New buildings should have design features and use materials which are typically associated with the local Kentish styles found in Bethersden; for example red/brown multi facing bricks and roof tiling, part tile hung and or weatherboarded walls and pitched roofs with hipped or half hipped ends.
2. Groups of new houses should not use standardised layouts and spacing, which give a suburban appearance, but should reflect the irregular spacing and informal layouts as identified above.
3. The size and positioning of new housing should follow the style of those prevalent in the immediate area of the village, as should their relationship to the road and positioning within their plots.
4. New extensions and additions should be sympathetic in style and scale to the existing buildings, the setting within the village, and use materials and designs characteristic of the fabric of the original buildings.
5. Roof pitches of houses in the conservation area are usually between 40 and 60 degrees and new roofs should generally fall within this range. Pitches outside this range and flat roofs in particular should be avoided.
6. The eaves height of new buildings should be similar to those existing which generally do not exceed 5m.

7. Building density should be variable in line with that found in the Conservation Area where a mix of both detached and terraced cottages are combined.
8. Window and door shapes, types and proportions should reflect those already existing in the village. Dormer windows if proposed should be relatively small in relation to the main roof area. They should have gable or hipped ends and generally be set above the eaves line.
9. Access roads should be considered with care so as not to dominate developments. They should fit in with the scale and character of the local road network and existing buildings.
10. Commercial development should preferably blend in with the residential building style and use of material. Where this is prevented for technical reasons then extensive landscaping should be used to sensitively screen the development.

Walls, fences and boundaries

1. New developments should retain any existing hedges and trees, particularly along boundaries, and additional planting of native species should be encouraged. (see also Open Spaces and Vistas below)
2. The typical use of low fencing and/or hedging for front garden boundaries should be encouraged as it enhances the open feel of the village and often allows glimpses of the surrounding countryside. The use of brick or stone walling should be avoided as it is not typical in the village.

Open Spaces and Vistas

Open Spaces.

Most of the open spaces in the village that reinforce its rural character lie within the Conservation Area, for example to the west of the church and particularly along the full length of the street running behind the George pub and the houses on the south side. This important green space in the heart of the village emphasises the open character of this part of the settlement and it is linked to open country to the east across Forge Hill. Any consideration of new development should avoid compromising this vital part of the village landscape.

Views.

From its dominant position at the west end of The Street the church can be seen from most parts of the village, emphasising the open nature of the settlement and the modest height of existing buildings. Outside the Conservation Area other important open views which are essential to preserve the character of the village include the cricket field to the south west and the recreation ground to the north east. These views should be protected.

Planting. In communal areas existing trees and hedges are of native varieties which should also be used for replacements or new planting rather than introducing decorative or non-indigenous species.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Roads, footpaths and verges

Much of the character of the village is shaped by its minor roads, footpaths, lanes and byways, irregular spaces and areas of grass verge (see page 24). These are very desirable features that should be protected.

Existing ditches, hedges and trees should be preserved and if damaged during development should be reinstated.

New pavements and kerbs should reflect the style of adjacent properties and be of modest height.

Road signs should be kept to the minimum consistent with safety and their design and placement should be treated sensitively.

At present there is no street lighting but if deemed essential in the future from a safety point of view it should be restricted to low level lighting units designed principally to light the footways.

APPENDIX

Community Consultation

The Bethersden Design Statement is the result of extensive consultation with a large number of residents, from all parts of the village and surrounding areas of the Parish.

A Steering Committee began work in February 2001, and their proposals for a Design Statement and other elements of a proposed Parish Plan were supported by the Parish Council. An extensive questionnaire and its findings were discussed at public meetings in April and also in July, which culminated in the formation of three Parish Plan committees, one of which has produced this Design Statement.

The Design Statement Committee has ten members who represent a cross-section of village residents and cover the village geographically. Each member set up a team to help with recording the important buildings, vistas and general character of the village and its surroundings with photographs and supporting notes. An editing sub committee drew up an outline of the paragraphs needed for the design statement, based on the recommendations of the Countryside Agency, and members of the Committee wrote paragraphs and contributed comments from their own experience and based on discussions with other residents.

Wide publicity for the Parish Plan project has been achieved via Newsletters sent to all households, and also by entries in the Ashford Review and the local paper. The first newsletter also invited entries to a photographic exhibition for a characterful picture of the village. The winning entry, a picture of St. Margarets Church by Mrs G. Wratten, is featured on the top of page 30.

An open public meeting was held in Bethersden Village Hall in November 2001, at which all the photographs, supported by a number of sketches by local artists, were presented to over seventy attendees. The results of the photographic competition were also on display.

Committee members were able to collect a wide range of views on matters of design and character which were considered important to the future of Bethersden, and these were incorporated into a series of drafts, each of which has been reviewed by the Design Statement Committee. Later versions have been discussed and agreed with members of the Parish Plan Steering Committee, and formed part of the Parish Plan display at Bethersden's Jubilee celebrations on the 3rd of June 2002, attended by over five hundred people, a substantial number of whom visited and commented on the displays.

On the 11th October 2002 the latest version of the Design Statement was on display in the village hall as part of a public meeting which reviewed the records of the Jubilee celebrations in June.



Photograph: Mrs G. Wratten

