

Pluckley

Parish Design Statement





Westfields



Thorne Estate & Lambden Rd



Fir Toll



Lower Station Road

Pluckley

Parish Design Statement

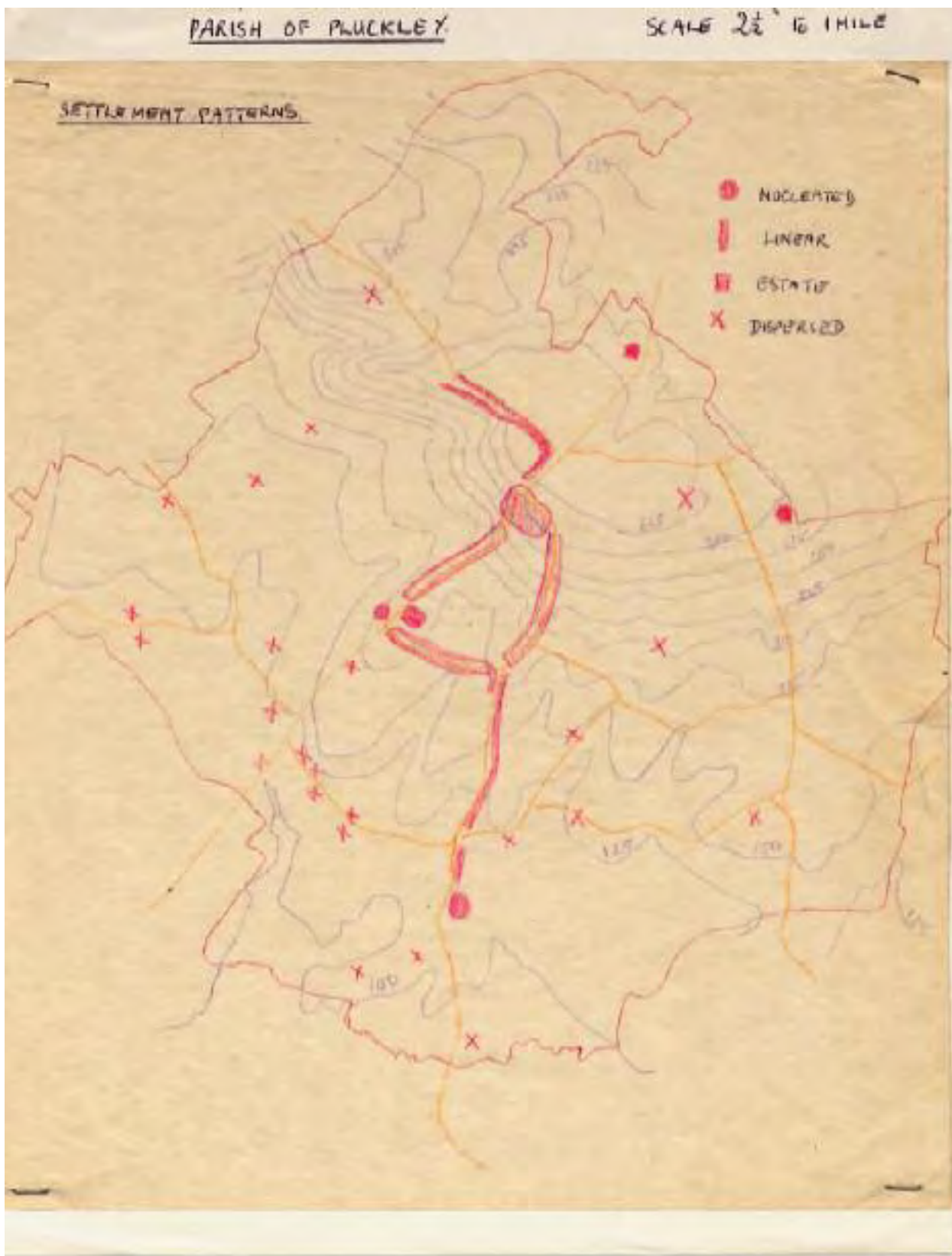
Contents

Introduction	5
Parish Design Workshops	5
The Result	5
The Parish	7
Village Conservation Area	8
Station Conservation Area	9
The Periphery	9
Trees and Woods	10
The main roads in Pluckley	12
Farming	13
Industrial and commercial buildings	14
Building styles	15
Old Pluckley	15
The nineteenth century began to change the village	16
Twentieth century innovation	17
Desireable Boundaries	19
Recent issues of controversy	20
Recommendations – Landscape	21
Recommendations – House Design Issues	21
Recommendations – Commerce and Industry:	21
Acknowledgements	22

This Design Statement has been formally adopted by Ashford Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The document expresses the many views held by Pluckley residents involved with its preparation. In adopting the Design Statement the council is not necessarily supporting all of these opinions, but is undertaking to take into consideration the design guidelines included when making planning decisions. The council does not have sufficient powers as a planning authority to require these design guidelines to be met in all cases and 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 Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000.

1950's Map drawn by WI showing the settlement patterns, from The Street at the top of the Greensand Ridge to the Station and Brickworks in the clay valley



contours in feet

Introduction

Pluckley Village Appraisal was published in April 2000 and well described village life and work. The first item in its action plan for the future was a 'Parish Design Statement' (PDS).

A group in the parish started to talk about a design statement in May 2001. Four people met informally and started to plan how it was to be carried out: three members of this group had previously worked on the village appraisal.

A leaflet sent to every household in the parish announced the project. A pre-meeting on 11 September, announced by posters and in the parish magazine, was attended by about 50 people from all parts of the village. The aims of a design statement were explained and the structure of a workshop day to be held on 22 September was described. In addition, another 35 households whose members had expressed an interest in PDS issues were sent letters containing a copy of an already published Parish Design Statement from another village.

Parish Design Workshops

Saturday, 22 September, turned out to be a perfect, sunny day. In the morning, seven teams of two, three, or four people were sent out to walk/cycle round and photograph specific parts of the village. A local bus took some to the start of their area and collected them at lunchtime. The films were processed while everyone ate a splendid lunch provided by the parish council. Then the groups were ready to lay out their photos, discuss their findings with others, and add their comments. Enthusiasm was enormous and it was difficult to persuade people to go home at the appointed time of 4:30pm. At the end of the day, some volunteers took away comments and photos to assist them to write simple outlines on landscape, settlement patterns, buildings, trees and woods, traffic and village signs.

On 11 October, following widespread publicity, the photographs, and comments were again displayed in the village hall

between 7:30 and 9:30pm. Interest was marked –

often from people who had not attended the original workshop. Further comments were written. Although these were not necessarily in planners' or architects' language, it was clear that villagers particularly valued the setting of the village but were critical of some of its newer buildings.

The views of a wide cross section of villagers have been expressed as fairly as possible in this Parish Design Statement. Phrases in inverted commas and italics in various parts of this document indicate typical examples of those views.

The Result

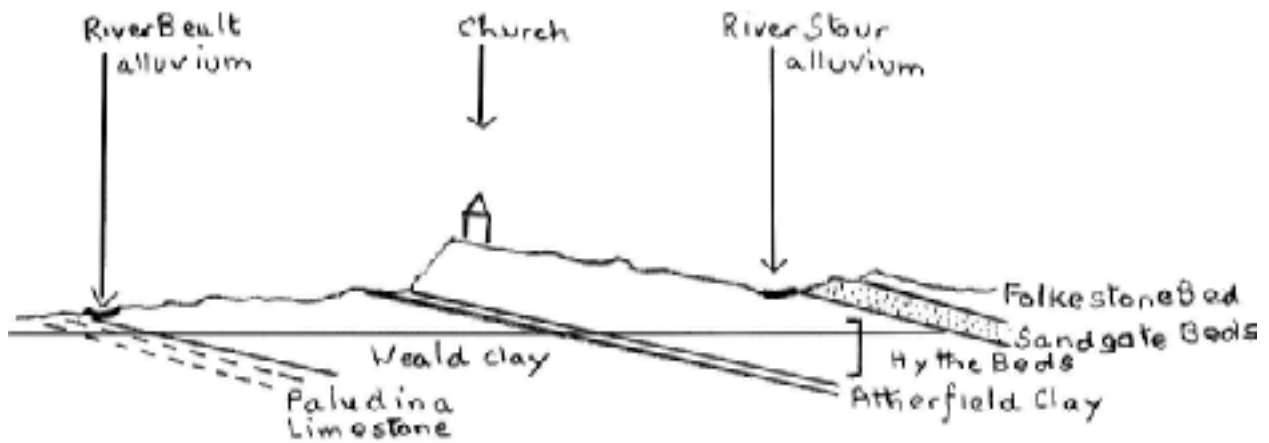
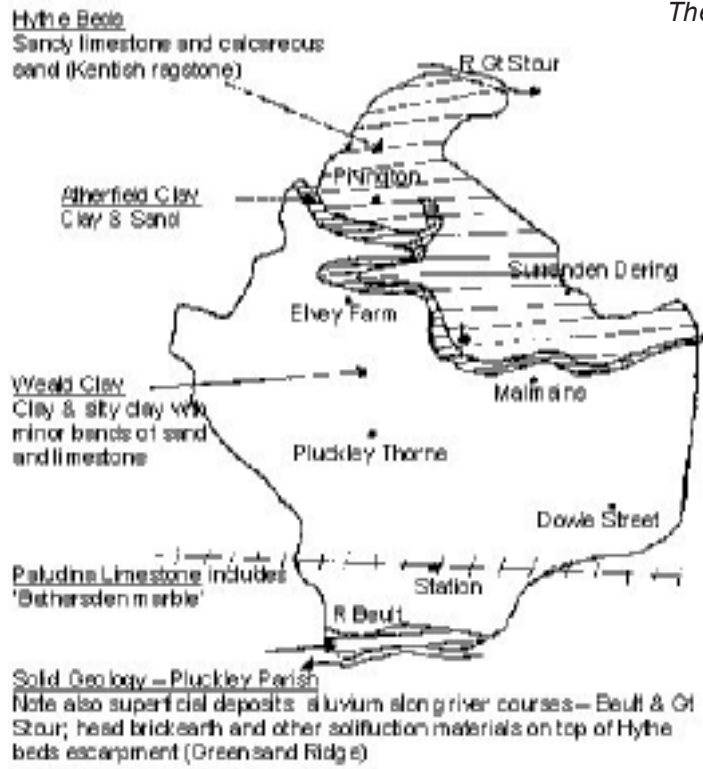
The draft was circulated to all parish councillors. Comments received were taken on board. A further public meeting was held to allow villagers to comment upon the recommendations.

The aims of a Village or Parish Design Statement are:

- *To reflect the views of villagers on the character of their village.*
- *To gain agreement from Ashford Borough Council so that its status is accepted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.*

The description of a PDS from the Countryside Commission Report called 'Village Design' is:

- To describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside.
- To show how character can be identified at three levels – all inseparable in Pluckley
- 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 policies.



Greensand Ridge from Munday Bois Road



North to Jennings and the Downs from Charing Road

The Parish

The village lies mostly on the crest and southern slope of the Greensand Ridge, overlooking arable fields and the extensive woodland of the low clay Weald. Seen from the low Weald, only the church spire, the tall Scots pines and the new estates of Westfields and Sunflowers noticeably break the soft line of the ridge top.

The parish falls into a number of differing parts: almost all is part of a Special Landscape Area; there are two conservation areas; peripheral development; and outlying settlements – scattered farms, and the linear development that loosely links some of the varied parts together.

Pluckley is a parish with distinct characteristics in differing areas – but all linked by a common theme. Almost everywhere views open up to the wider surrounding countryside or into more intimate green spaces close within the road network. This openness is largely achieved by the fact – part accidental and part by design of planning policy – that almost all roads are only built up on one side for long stretches.

Orchards of apple, pear, and plum, together with alder windbreaks are very visible on the northern approaches to the village centre. Now there are no hop gardens; the last was grubbed out in the 1970's.

The character of Pluckley parish is defined as much by its openness to the countryside as by its buildings. Views are greatly treasured by villagers and visitors alike. As drivers approach the village from Charing, Little Chart, or Egerton, the view down Forge Hill to a huge expanse of forest lies before them framed by historic buildings.

Greensand Ridge from Swarden Road



Malmains Oast



The same view can be seen from the churchyard. Footpaths from Forge Hill lead, within about 100 yards, to stunning views over farmland and the Weald. North of Lambden Road, countryside (un-built and grazed by sheep) forms a 'green heart' to the village. Seen from the Mundy Bois area, there is a clear view of the village, clinging to the hill of the Greensand Ridge.

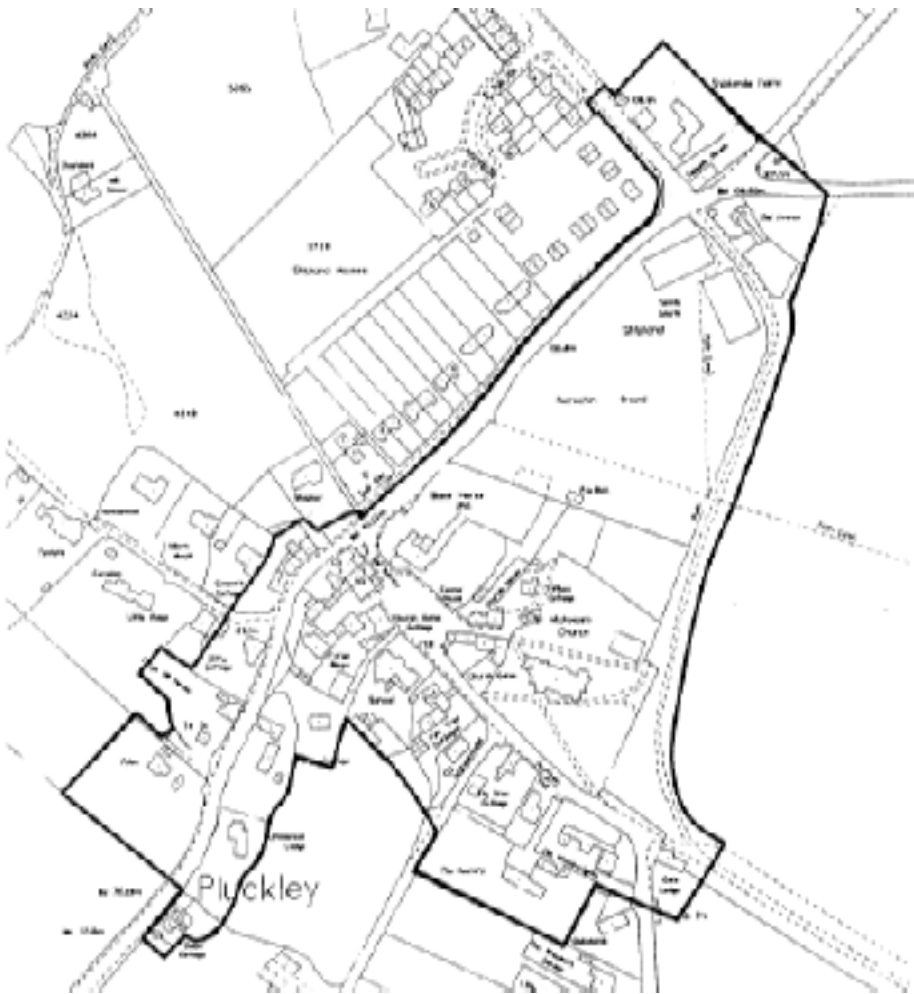
Green heart of the village from Lambden Road



'Preserve the open views'

Village Conservation Area

This area is compact with a diversity reflecting its history and use.



The Street remains the focus of community life with church, pub, general store, post office, butcher, school, and recreation ground. Industry and business has always flourished there, with shops once including a bake house, sweet shop, hardware shop, grocer, post office, newsagent, electrician, cobbler, saddler, cooper, blacksmith, wheelwright, and coffin maker. Today some business remains, with a silversmith, picture framer, woodworker, and B&B. A considerable number of the houses are old, but the twentieth century has seen sporadic infill and conversion from business to housing.

The Street remains a wide and welcoming space – if rather overwhelmed at times with cars. It offers easy access to open country as the Greensand Way runs close by. Via the recreation ground, a walker can pass through wonderful apple orchards and on to Little Chart.



*The Old Bakery & the Post Office (above)
The Butcher's Shop (below)*



*The Black Horse (above)
The Village Shop and Post Office (below)*



Station Conservation Area

There is another cluster of housing near the 1842 railway station. This includes brickworks terrace, former stationmaster's house, and railway workers' cottages. The pub and some of its nearby buildings are of impressive character.



Pluckley Station (built 1842)



The Dering Arms

The Periphery *(see photographs on inside cover)*

On Forge Hill, a line of mid-twentieth century housing at Shiplands and the later more landscaped estate of Westfields have filled some of the space between The Street and once scattered housing and oasts to the north of the village.

These developments have their counterparts in the settlement at Pluckley Thorne, close to a small group of older farmhouses, cottages, pub, and former blacksmith's forge.

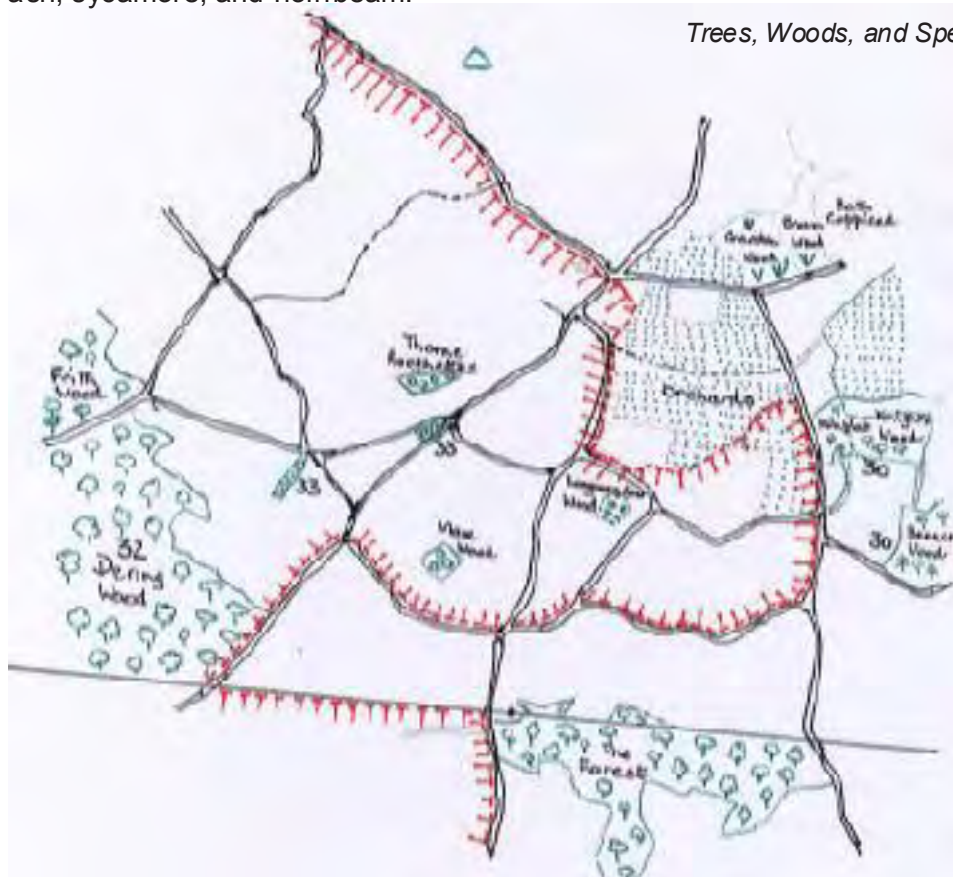
Some twentieth century housing on Station Road also links to Fir Toll, with another cluster of housing and the 1960's village hall.

Off Bethersden Road, the surviving remains of the ancient great house of Surrenden Dering has been turned into a fine country house, and derelict outbuildings into a compact little community of single storey modern homes that preserve some features of the old house.

Much of this scattered housing has been linked together by linear development – of sufficiently low density not to spoil the openness of aspect. Most roads are lined with grass verges and hedges. Where infill has taken place, there is usually a richness of trees, which either conceal or shelter houses from view.

Trees and Woods

Trees are essential to the character of Pluckley. The main roads through Pluckley are lined with trees. These are made up of oaks, old English and turkey oak, horse chestnut, poplar, ash, sycamore, and hombeam.



Trees, Woods, and Special Landscape Areas

Sites of nature conservation interest

- 30 Kilnplat Wood and Knights Wood, Benacre Wood
- 32 Dering Wood and Frith Wood
- 33 Pasture and orchard next to Thome House and small wood and neighbouring field next The Pinnock Stream.

Specially important are those trees near Middle House and Gwavas Vean on Station Road, the *Gingko biloba* at Cliffe Cottage, and trees near Enfield Lodge and the Spinney on Forge Hill, the oaks lining The Pinnock, specimen oaks and Scots pines on Egerton Road, and those approaching the railway bridge from the south. It is noticeable that most of these frame entrances to the village.

Scots Pines on Greensand Ridge



Longmeadow Wood



On the Greensand Ridge below Westfields and overlooking the Weald, there is a group of Scots pines, which are a landmark, noticeable from roads leading to Pluckley from the south. Twenty years ago there were about 25 pines on this ridge: today there are 10, but more have been planted as a Jubilee memorial.

Bluebell wood on Rushbrook Farm



There are three forests at the edge of the parish.

Dering Wood, an ancient woodland, is owned by the Woodland Trust, so it will be conserved. The major part of this wood is in Smarden parish. Frith Wood on the north side of Dering Wood is an extremely attractive essential continuation of Dering Wood. The Forest lies just south of the station; half of it is in the parish.

Smaller woods, identified on the map above, are significant features of the landscape.

Village Centre & Station Road



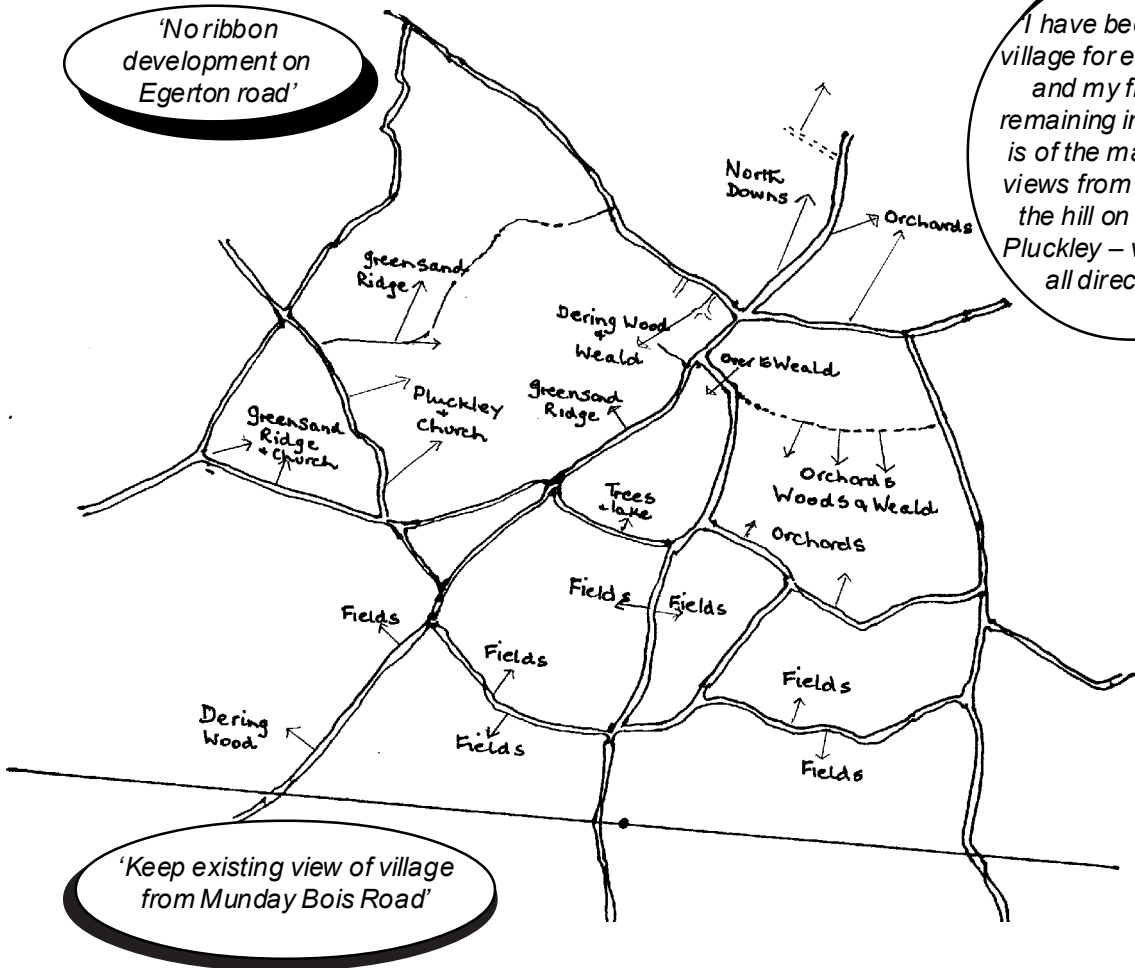
Scots Pines on Ridge (from Forge Hill)



Pluckley Parish – views to and from the village

'No ribbon development on Egerton road'

'I have been in the village for eight years and my first and remaining impression is of the magnificent views from the top of the hill on entering Pluckley – virtually in all directions.'



'Keep existing view of village from Munday Bois Road'

Fine Oak on Forge Hill



North from Chambers Green Road



The main roads in Pluckley

Forge Hill – the main road into Pluckley



Forge Hill



Bethersden Road



Dowle Street Road



Lower Swarden Road



Station Road



Trees with preservation orders

- 1 Two groups of oak trees, 13 have TPO's, around the fields there are 40 oaks
- 2 Two common oaks, each side of the entrance to 'Sunflowers.'
- 3 One cherry tree in the front garden of 'Little Aden.'
- 4 Two limes and two oaks in the southern end of 'South Garth.'
- 5 Four birches, one oak, one beech in the rear of 'Pilgrim Cottage.'
- 6 Six silver birch, three oaks in the rear garden of 'Cedar Breaks.' [not known if they are all still there.]
- 7 Three turkey oaks in the grounds of 'Mal-lards.'
- 8 One oak on the road boundary of 'Weston.'
- 9 One oak in the green space on the opposite side to the entrance to 'Stone Lodge.'
- 10 Fourteen oaks, one horse chestnut, on the south side of Chambers Green Road.

Large trees at the side of the roads

Tall hedges in the fields beside the roads

Farming

Scattered farms of much character surround the village. Some of these, such as Dowle Street, are no longer working farms but retain close-knit groups of converted farm buildings. Others still stand relatively isolated, such as Chambers Green, Brockton, and Honey Farms: their land worked by others. Elvey, Cooper, Lower Thome, and Sheerland still remain working farms, standing amid their own fields. Farms of some considerable size are Rushbrook, Frith Court, and Stanford Bridge: easily distinguished by modern barns.



Sheerland Farm (left)



Rushbrook Farm (right)



Daniels Farm (left)



Stanford Bridge houses & cattle courts (right)



Frith Court Farm Barns (left)

Industrial and commercial buildings

New industry is concentrated at Pivington, well concealed in a dip in the Egerton Road to the west of the village where an industrial estate has developed on the site of much older traditional industries. Three recently built warehouses however are visible from a distance, with their huge expanse of light coloured roofs.

The brickworks site near the station is closed, but remains identifiable with its tall chimney as a local landmark and water-filled clay pits. Adjacent, marked by its flues for venting methane, is the former household waste tip for Ashford Borough. Clay is still extracted from the western part of this site.

Saracens Dairy has been adapted for limited commercial activity, and Sheerland Farm has a range of redundant agricultural buildings available for light commercial use. Residents have for the most part resisted further development of industry because roads are highly unsuitable for the movement of large vehicles.

The two remaining village shops are in historic buildings that sit happily in the village centre. On Forge Hill, a new silversmith's workshop has replaced a disused shop: its brick, tile and style are in no way a copy of neighbouring older buildings – but it is not intrusive.

Of Pluckley's four public houses, three are excellent in their present state. Some people feel that the Blacksmith's Arms' 'fake' half timbering is unfortunate in distracting from the rest of a good building.

The group's comments on what they regard as important landmarks:

- Station • WW2 pillbox • Church •
- Stone wall round Black Horse • School •
 - Surrenden wall • Mill Lane •
- View from conifer tree in churchyard •
 - Millennium sign •
- Hump-back bridge over railway •

Pivington Industrial Estate



Sheerland Oasts



Pluckley Brickworks



Padgham & Putland, Silversmiths



Building styles

Old Pluckley

The highest part of the village is dominated by the Grade I listed church, of Kentish rag stone with Kent peg-tile roof and shingled spire, sets the pattern for some of the oldest buildings. A rag-stone wall mostly surrounds the churchyard.

Pluckley has 67 Grade II listed buildings, some in the main street and others all around the parish. Some premises in The Street are older than they look, having timber-framed interiors, with lath and plaster; some date from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. On the exterior many were 'modernized', mainly in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, with brick and/or rag stone facades, sometimes with tile hung upper stories, and hand made clay tile roofs. The most notable of these is the public house, the Black Horse, facing the school. These buildings create an attractive informal street, which is characteristic of Pluckley.

12th Century



16th Century



Buildings that belonged to the Surrenden Dering estate had 'Dering windows' inserted. These windows distinctive to the village and a few surrounding areas, are round-headed, with double, single or triple lights. The brick window surrounds are usually painted white, occasionally black, or left as unpainted brick. Over the arch are cambered brick head linings with key blocks at the angles and in the centre of the heads. These modernisations also frequently have heavy round-headed and studded oak doors.

Not all houses from previous centuries have the distinctive Dering characteristics. Many have rectangular windows and small dormers. For example: Thome House on Smarden Road and Coopers Cottage on Forge Hill. Many of the older houses also have picket fences, either white or left as plain wood.

Variety is a keynote of Pluckley architecture. One distinctive attractive half-timbered thatched house survives on Forge Hill, while close to the centre there are a few examples of other styles including mixes of rendering; weatherboarding, both painted and stained;

16th Century



brick and stone.

17th Century



Near the station, Dutch gables are used – in reflection of the style of the former Great House at Surrenden and the popular Dutch influences on Kentish Architecture during the 16th and 17th centuries. Some conversions, most notably, the 18th century forge on Forge Hill or the remnants of outbuildings at Surrenden, have recently become agreeable and acceptable modern homes.

The nineteenth century began to change the village

The coming of the railway in the 1840's and the opening of the brickworks in the 1870's encouraged more construction. The painted clapboard railway station had a nearby shop and workers' cottages using local brick with its variety of shades ranging from soft pinks and reds, to blue and black. These were joined half a century later by a large and imposing row of houses, with round-headed windows and Dutch gables akin to those of Surrenden Dering. They are mostly rag stone – but the finest, using some Bethersden marble, is now the Dering Arms. Together these houses form a pleasant hamlet and conservation area with a distinctive character into which some later twentieth century houses have been slotted.

The school in The Street, gift of the Derings, built in 1850, uses rag stone with brick quoins, door and window surrounds, clay tile roof and Dering features. In 2002, a new extension was built, using a non-traditional method and without Dering features, and fits in well with its historical context.

Some of the farmsteads were built with oak framed cottages and large splendid farmhouses that also pick up on the Dering theme. Most notable among these are Pevington Farm and Sheerland, which has an extremely fine six-cowl rag-stone and slate oast. Pleasant Edwardian villas at Fir Toll and Rose Farm Road are characteristic of their time, but also reflect older local features such as hanging tiles on the upper stories.

Reflecting distinct individuality, half way between the village centre and Fir Toll, stands Greystones built in the 1850's, which pays only minimal homage to the vernacular.

Greystones: 1850's



Sheerland: 1813



Early 20th century on Forge Hill



Fir Toll: 1907



School Porch: 1849



Twentieth century innovation

A number of housing experiments linked diffuse parts of the parish. After World War II, council houses at Shiplands on Forge Hill were built as concrete Airey Houses: a design also used for a row in Station Road. Some of the Station Road Airey houses have received internal repairs to deal with structural faults, but retain their cladding. Some present owners have faced theirs with brick. Other council houses built to the south of the present day village hall, with their location as an isolated island among fields, seem divided from the community as a whole. The Thorne Estate of much the same date happily links a cul-de-sac of unassuming but pleasant brick houses with its neighbours, and has a green space set aside for recreation which opens up a good view to the village on the ridge. The appearance of this area is offset by a dull row of garages grouped together in one spot.

Airey houses, Station Road



Among the many private houses built since the Second World War, a few are thought to be noteworthy. There were cedar 'Colt' houses, manufactured in Bethersden, erected in the parish. These have cedar boarded, or shingle walls, and wood shingle, or slate, roofs for the most part, and range from small bungalows to substantial houses. They usually sit well back among trees in large gardens. There is also a very interesting semi-detached pair of cedar homes in Lambden Road that were built as an experiment to show the possibilities of Colt design for council housing. The idea was not taken up. There are three other timber-framed homes (one built in 1999) on Forge Hill, with prefabricated parts of sustainable timber imported from Sweden.

Colt house: 1950's



Westfields, built in 1992, contains houses that are owner-occupied, tenanted from housing associations, or sold with shared equity. They have a variety of styles, reflecting the diversity found in Pluckley, and share common overall dimensions that keep a sense of unity, despite the suburban style road. Their well-maintained communal open space with one of the finest views to the south, make a pleasing development.

Westfields: 1992



Sunflowers Close, nearby and of very similar age, has three houses of larger scale, which are hugely preferable to the one they replaced. However they block off the view southwards for passers-by and do not have the good tree screen so common for other large village homes. A major drawback of both these developments is their impact on the skyline when seen from the south.

Renovated: the Old Forge



The village hall, dating from the 1960's, now requires

updating or replacement. Its façade is bleak.

'Although development is probably inevitable, good design of new buildings is essential. Good modern design

Recent issues

Tiled roofs, 'Dering' windows, other casement windows, tile hanging, brick walls, & studded oak door



'We must not lose the village atmosphere and yet we must maintain a variety of housing for all the people and their needs and circumstances. It would be good to see more sensitive design especially materials. Trees are always welcome to soften the hard areas.'



Desireable Boundaries

Ragstone walls, brick walls, yew hedges, hawthorn hedges, picket fences



*'Replace hedges'
'Hide ugly
features with
hedges or trees'*



of controversy

Not all modern buildings sit happily with their historic neighbours or with the character of their location. The failure to use bricks similar in colour and texture to local brick has made some late twentieth century houses seem less sympathetic to parish patterns. Infilling, especially in Lambden Road, with varied but standard designs of their time and little tree screening, has led to the much mourned loss of rural ambience. Good screening has enabled similar executive style homes on Forge Hill to be less intrusive and more acceptable.

In the last few years, a style of larger garages has been developed. The design of each is often acceptable, but the placement of them in relation to the house is not always felicitous. One or two appear bigger than the house; some are intrusive in the landscape.

Not all recent buildings have attracted criticism – for example, the conversion of outbuildings at Lambden on Lambden Road and at Dowle Street, the restoration of the oasts at Malmains, the use of high quality material at Stanford Bridge Farm and Lower Thome Farm, which has used recycled materials to good effect.

Another group at the meetings explained what they like and dislike:

- they like it dark and do not want streetlights •
- they dislike the traffic horrors •
- they want to preserve the views; these must not be obliterated or spoiled •
- they like oast houses, Dering windows, and Pluckley brick •

Some of the buildings, which people remembered

- Malmains Manor & Oast house •
- Sheerlands and large oast houses •
 - Dering Arms •
 - Black Horse •
 - Surrenden •
- Chart Court (not in Pluckley) •
 - Gore Court •
- any house with original Dering Windows •

Recommendations – Landscape

- 1) Open views, as identified within this statement, and roads with continuous housing on one side only, as defining aspects of the village character, should be protected.
- 2) The 'green heart' should be retained, as it is fundamental to the character of the village. It has potential to provide pedestrian paths that would avoid use of congested and fast roads.
- 3) All woodlands mentioned in the text should be actively managed. The planting of new woods, possible to extend or link up to existing ones, would be welcomed.
- 4) Continued protection for outstanding trees, especially on entrances to the village, is desirable.
- 5) The Sheerland Farm historic avenue, lined with trees, should be conserved.
- 6) The open aspect from Malmains Road towards the avenue should be preserved.
- 7) Key open spaces within groupings of houses should be retained, especially the green near the station and the recreation area at Pluckley Thome, as these are characteristic of the pattern of development in the village.
- 8) The top of the ridge (as seen from the south) should not be broken up by more buildings. Nothing should be allowed to obscure existing views of St Nicholas' Church.
- 9) Views of farmland and woodland, as seen from ridge top, should not be marred visually by development. [See map on page 11]
- 10) New, native hedgerows should be encouraged as part of new development.
- 11) Rooflines particularly must be screened from distant views and be of a matt colour to blend with their surroundings.
- 12) Street lighting is not greatly popular with residents, mainly due to light pollution, which could destroy stunning views of the Milky Way.

Recommendations – House Design Issues

- 13) There is no one style of the past that is necessary to mimic in the future. Short terraces are a common feature and the density and layout of each settlement within the parish is different: these patterns should be reflected in future developments, while it is also important that new homes reflect the size, bulk and roof levels of their neighbours. A completely different construction method (e.g. glass, concrete, straw) can be acceptable, provided that its quality is good; its scale does not dwarf its nearest neighbours; and – preferably – its style is simple as befits a rural setting.
- 14) Uniform layout of houses with equal openings, regular frontages, repetitious patterns, and roof levels are not recommended as are not characteristic of Pluckley.
- 15) The quality of brick and tiles is very important. They should match in colour as closely as possible the Pluckley brick patterns and Kent pegs of existing houses.
- 16) Wood stained weather-boarded or wooden homes, or extensions can sit well with the more recent traditions of the village. White weatherboarding is not generally a feature of Pluckley.
- 17) Conversion of unwanted barns or outbuildings should fit comfortably, both in size and visual impact, with other nearby dwellings.
- 18) Buildings, which are a poor quality historic pastiche of the village's past – e.g. modern 'Dering' windows or fake half timbering – are not recommended.
- 19) Home owners or developers of new houses should plant screens of native trees, hedging, or picket fences to soften the impact of large windows, garages, parking areas, etc. that face the roadside frontage.
- 20) Care needs to be taken to address parking needs so that the spaces or garages are not intrusive. Such an estate could be closely built, provided the design is sympathetic. Garages in particular often seem better when set behind the line of the house frontage

Recommendations – Commerce and Industry:

- 21) New industrial and business development should respect the small, intimate scale and characteristics of the village and should follow the guidelines set out in this document.
- 22) Industrial buildings should make use of the sort of heavy planting that is prevalent in many parts of the parish to help 'hide and disguise.'

Acknowledgements

The parishioners are thanked for contributing their thoughts and ideas, likes and dislikes, about the character of Pluckley at the pre-meeting, the workshop day, the drop-in exhibition, and the final exhibition 'Pluckley Past, Present and Future?' At this last meeting they considered and commented on, in particular, the recommendations.

Tania Broad, of Ashford Borough Council is thanked most warmly for helping us during the workshop day and all her subsequent help at the end of the telephone. The planning department is thanked for all their comments on the drafts.

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Pluckley Parish Council for running costs	£ 500



Thanks are also for

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Everyone consulted put 'Heavy Traffic' as the most important threat to the fabric and character of the village.



