



Otford

Village Design Statement





Foreword

Otford is under threat, like many villages up and down the country. Within the village there is a constant flow of applications for new building developments and a consequent growth in traffic levels.

But also beyond the village boundaries, major regional changes are under way. At the time of preparing this Village Design Statement (January 2008), the Thames Gateway development looks likely to have a massive impact upon all the communities within the Darent Valley over the next 12 years. Otford will be no exception.

The exact nature and scale of that impact remains to be seen, but the potential threat to the integrity of our rural village is enormous. It is essential that this change be monitored and managed with great care if it is not to damage our village and its community irrevocably. All parties involved need to commit to understanding how such damage can be caused and therefore how it may be best avoided.

Communities within the Valley must work not only individually but also collectively in this regard. If this Design Statement, representing as it does the clear and authoritative voice of Otford residents, is to make its full contribution to this essential work, it must continue to be relevant. To do so, it is essential that it be updated regularly – perhaps every three years – to take account of and respond to new pressures, opportunities and changes in planning processes as these emerge.

We have begun a process for others to follow.

*Rod Shelton
Chairman of the Otford VDS Design Team
January 2008*

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Introduction

and Supporting References



▲ 'A village in Kent with a pond.' Otford's historic centre with its church of St. Bartholomew, the Green and the listed pond.

Why create a Village Design Statement?

Planning policies at national, regional and local levels all declare an intention to take account of the wishes of the community. A Village Design Statement (VDS) is therefore of great importance. It is the codification of the 'voice of the community' in a format that is readily accessible to all those involved in planning and development and presents a unified vision of how residents would like their village to develop.

Why is the Otford VDS important?

The pressures being exerted upon local councils to increase the quantity of new housing in their area and meet targets set by central government are fully recognised. However, Otford is a small historic rural village sited within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Protection of its intrinsic values is of major importance not only to its residents but to the task of maintaining the quality of the surrounding area and the heritage of the Kent Downs for future generations.

Who is the VDS for?

This document is directed at planners, planning authorities, architects, designers, developers, builders and residents who are considering development within the parish of Otford. It reflects the views of Otford residents and seeks to give clear guidance as to their wishes. The document does not contain technical specifications: rather, it attempts to encapsulate the opinion of residents on aspects of development that affect the village, with clear justification of the views expressed. The aim of this Design Statement is to ensure that future development and design within the parish reflect the wishes of residents.

If this aim is to be translated into reality as well as acceptable democratic practice, it is equally essential for authorities, and those in authority, not to make unilateral decisions or take action in matters affecting our village design without full and open consultation with Otford's residents and its Parish Council. There have been recent instances of (for example) land being sold by KCC as well as inappropriate roadside signage being erected, without any apparent consideration of either the principles of this Statement or the probable impact on the village environment and the right of its residents to maintain and enjoy it.

How was it drawn up?

The Otford VDS was prepared in line with guidance provided by the Government through the Natural England agency as set out in their web pages. A team of 12 volunteers, all of whom are Otford residents, met fortnightly and compiled the Village Design Statement.

The following steps were taken in its preparation:

- written questionnaires were sent to all residents and responses analysed;
- a full-day VDS workshop was organised in which participating residents visited all parts of the village in teams, photographing and noting key design elements and issues; each team prepared a presentation of its findings;
- an exhibition of the presentations, with the participants' comments attached, was held at the Village Hall;
- a well publicised and well attended public meeting was held at which residents were again invited to state their views.



▲ Workshops, meetings and exhibitions. All part of the Otford community's involvement in preparing their Village Design Statement.



▲ By water: The River Darent flows through the North Downs to the Thames.



▲ By road: The pleasant rural High Street joins the busy A225 at Otford pond.



▲ By rail: South Eastern Rail connects Otford to London and the Channel ports.

Where is Otford?

The village and parish of Otford, comprising 1346 households and a population of 3258 (2001 Census figures), sits at the southern end of the Darent Valley at the point where the river flows through the North Downs to the Thames. The village lies at the intersection of the Vale of Holmesdale and the Darent Valley. To the south is the Greensand ridge on which Sevenoaks stands.

Two road systems run through the village. The A225, a major road, runs north from Sevenoaks and down the Darent Valley to Dartford. Two minor but busy roads intersect the A225 at Otford. These are Pilgrims Way West, which becomes Otford High Street, and Pilgrims Way East, both on an east-west alignment. The High Street bridges the River Darent and a main line railway station connects Otford with London.

Why is Otford vulnerable?

The desire to find residential development sites in this popular region, with close proximity to Sevenoaks and within easy reach of London and the motorway network, puts an attractive rural village like Otford in the spotlight in the search for suitable building land. It is vulnerable to change which, if uncontrolled, will alter the essential rural character of this village (and the region) which are the very factors which make them so attractive. It is essential that the heritage of both Kent and Otford be conserved for future generations.

How can the Otford VDS help now and in the future?

A clear view of the impact that any development might have on the traditional appearance of the village, as set

out in this Design Statement, is intended to provide the local Planning Authority with grounds for resisting unsuitable proposals. The Conservation Area status, covering most of the village centre, provides additional protection. The Otford Village Design Statement seeks to inform developers and residents about good practice in development. It also seeks to provide the local Planning Authority with a support tool for use where necessary to refuse consent for poor, inappropriate or unsuitable design.

Now to the future. Change is inevitable both within and beyond the village borders. The Thames Gateway is a good example. The essential thing is for authorities and the village community to ensure that all future change is managed, planned for, and implemented in ways that:

- maintain those features of the village which make it what it is;
- foresee and divert those pressures which risk eroding the local environment;
- engage with opportunities for enriching the quality of life within the village and its appeal to residents and visitors.

The VDS is not just a document for the here and now. Its aim is not to fix the village permanently in its present form. Buildings and aspects of the village infrastructure inevitably reach the end of their useful life and constantly require maintenance and improvement. But that process must be done with sensitivity and in line with certain agreed principles, as set out here. Over time the VDS itself will need to be modified and updated to meet new challenges and needs, so that it can continue to be accepted and used as the first port of call by all concerned.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Since this document is a statement of community wishes and intent, it is important that the views expressed are clearly shown to have originated from members of the Otford community and not merely from the Design Team who collated the information. Therefore, throughout this document, many statements and propositions are followed by abbreviations indicating the origins of the original information.

In addition, a number of 'Design Principles' are set out at the conclusion of each section, reflecting the concerns expressed by residents. There are abbreviated references to government, district or association plans which support specific principles.



▲ Do these buildings really suit? New development must integrate comfortably with adjoining homes if the village is to evolve naturally.



The abbreviations used are as follows:

Sources of views expressed by Otford residents:

VQ	Village Residents' Questionnaire completed in May 2003
WS	VDS workshop held on 28th April 2007
WSC	Residents' written comments on Workshop team photo displays
PM	Public Meeting on the VDS held on 2nd June 2007

Public documents:

SDSAP	Sevenoaks District Sustainable Action Plan 2007-2010
KDG	Kent Design Guide
KMSP	Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006
SDLP	Sevenoaks & District Local Plan 2000
PPS1	Planning Policy Statement 1
PPS3	Planning Policy Statement 3
SFA	Streets for All - South East (English Heritage)
KDAONB	Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit: Streetscape Design Handbook - draft (publication late-2007/early-2008) Landscape Design Guide

◀ A sign of the times?
The essential rural character that makes our village so attractive also contributes to making it vulnerable.

1

The Landscape and Open Spaces



▲ 'This blessed plot, this earth, this realm...' The friendly landscape of the North Downs. Set in a tapestry of unspoilt rolling hills and well-tended, fertile fields, lies Otford.

Otford's rural setting

The individuality of Otford village and parish is characterised by its setting within the unspoilt rural countryside of the Darent Valley and Vale of Holmesdale. The spacing of housing and integration with the countryside, enabling views of fields and trees between houses, are of paramount importance to the majority of residents (VQ / WS). It should never be assumed that gaps in original frontages are automatically ripe for infilling. Such spaces often make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the settlement. Thus every site apparently offering infill opportunities must be considered in its context (KDG).



Designations applying to the area

The terms 'parish', 'village' and 'village envelope' are used in this document. The *parish* of Otford comprises the whole geographical area within the parish boundary (as designated by maps drawn up by Sevenoaks District Council). It covers the largest area since it includes not only the built environment but also many fields, woods, rivers, railway lines and roads. *Village* is used to refer to the main central area, largely consisting of the Conservation Area and including those dwellings and other buildings in or emanating from the original historical village centre, based on the east-west axis of High Street and Station Road as far as the rail bridge. *Village envelope* refers to the habitable area clearly designated by the SDC map and covering all the inhabited area within the parish.

Areas of Otford parish have already been designated as Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB), Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB – which is equivalent to a National



▲ The Garden of England. A November view across the Darent Valley – the countryside of which Otford residents are fiercely proud.

► The view that makes it home. Gaps between Otford properties integrate homes with our countryside. Infilling is not wanted.



◀ Holy water? A stone's throw from the centre of the village, the stream from Becket's Well meanders across Palace Field, part of our heritage.



▲ Designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The unique quality of the upper Darent valley, home to Otford residents.



▲ Central green space. A bird's-eye view of Otford's central Green. Four centuries ago this was the formal approach to the Palace.



▲ Southern pasture. The water meadows provide rich grazing for sheep and absorb excess rainfall, reducing the chances of flooding.



▲ Northern play space. The Chalk Pit was an early land-fill site. Today it is an essential ingredient of every Otford childhood.

Park in terms of landscape quality), Special Landscape Area (SLA), Area of Local Landscape Importance (ALLI) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is also part of the Kent Downs AONB area, and the North West Kent Countryside Project operates in the area. Most parts of the parish are covered by at least one of these designations, in some cases by several. The designations define Otford's special character and position and justify the clear wish of its residents to avoid any intrusion into the Green Belt or being overwhelmed by new housing. Otford's chalk downlands and their associated flora and fauna are already under serious threat, as highlighted in the Kent Habitat Survey of 2003, produced through the Kent Biodiversity Partnership. The residents have indicated (WSC) that protection of the local flora and fauna is a high priority.

Green areas

In historical terms Otford is a unique village site within the region. Evidence has been found of the beginnings of human settlement in this village millennia before Sevenoaks was even a clearing in the forest. As a valuable example of a nuclear settlement based on an agricultural hinterland, Otford merits a degree of precedence over other nearby villages. It still retains its central pond as well as extensive recreation grounds, allotments and playing fields within the central village area.

The fields, woods and water meadows located to the south of Otford, stretching to the M26 and the nearby parish boundary, are valued by all as a green breathing space establishing the village as an independent entity separated from the northern urban area of Sevenoaks (WS / WSC). Their role is essential to Otford as they absorb and hold heavy rainfall and reduce the risk of flooding by the River Darent. The rural character of the village is enhanced by the extent and variety of trees and hedgerows.

The importance of natural woodland

The managed wooded area in the east of the parish, known as Oxenhill Shaw and Meadow, is a unique

► Our green and open spaces. Top to bottom: a view of the village from Otford Mount; the solitary tower of Otford's palace, once a rival to Wolsey's Hampton Court; the wide, wooded avenues of Oxenhill Meadow and Shaw; traditional sports on The Rec in the village centre.



example in the South-East of a naturally regenerated woodland and a prime recreational walking site. It helps to maintain the separation between the communities of Otford and Kemsing. It is of vital importance to both communities as well as to the ecology of the South-East that these wooded areas continue to be maintained and protected at all costs (WS / WSC).

Open spaces and the identity of the village

The green spaces and open areas of recreational land of the village are held dear by all who live here (VQ / WS / WSC) and are essential to the character and quality of life within the village. They include the popular sports areas of the Recreation Ground, Hale Lane, the Chalk Pit, Otford Village Green, Palace Field and Approach, Station Field (Castle Farm Fields), Telston Park, Oxenhill Meadow and Shaw and Palace Park Wood.

The village allotment area is fully and actively used and enjoyed by many residents and considered to be of prime importance to the village amenities (WSC). It must be protected from any development.

Any form of development that reduces or harms the open spaces in the village would be to the detriment of the whole community.

Visually the North Downs escarpment, below which Otford is sited, has changed little since the last Ice Age. Any intrusion into this precious and protected downland area by, for example, wind turbines or additional radio masts would contribute to the destruction of the heritage of the village.

▼ A rambler's reward. A familiar sight to the many walkers who visit our popular village as they pause on their trek up Green Hill.



▲ Centre of the Universe. Our world-famous scale model of the universe extends as far as Los Angeles and New Zealand!



▼ ▲ The Allotment Association. Rated one of the most popular clubs in the community. Well-cultivated land on an extensive plot.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1a All remaining areas of permanent pasture, cultivated land and woodland within and adjoining the village envelope and which contribute to the sense of open space must be preserved. (KMSP Policy QL4.a)
- 1b The natural beauty and ecology of the area, including its flora and fauna, must be respected and nurtured, particularly in terms of the maintenance and/or replacement of the existing hedgerows and trees. Any proposals for new development must show details of how this will be done. (SDLP EN6 / EN7 / EN8)
- 1c Groups of trees within the landscape, particularly when forming boundaries, coppices or areas of woodland, are of high importance to Otford residents, and any felling without replacement is unacceptable. (SDLP EN12A)
- 1d Individual mature trees forming part of the familiar landscape, whether on public or private land, must wherever possible be protected with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). When such trees reach the end of their natural life, they should be replaced with locally indigenous species. (SDLP EN12A)
- 1e Applications to install overhead cables and telecommunication equipment should be rejected on principle. (SDLP EN29)

2

Building Design within the Village Envelope



▲ Traditional Wealden farmhouse. The warm colouration of locally made brick with tile-hung façade beneath a barn hip roof of hand-made Kent peg tiles. A typical Kentish yeoman's home.

The vernacular style of Otford's buildings

Most buildings in the village have two storeys and do not vary greatly in height. Roofs are covered in Kent peg or nib tiles with the occasional use of slate. Many have the traditional barn hip and gablet detail at the gable ends. Brick is the most common building material but there are examples of local ragstone and timber framing. In some cases the original timber framing has been encased in masonry.

Upper floors often have tile hanging matching the roof tiles, particularly in the case of the older timber-framed buildings. The preponderance of local brick and tile imbues the settlement with an overall warm colouration.

Windows are generally small wooden casements, often with leaded-light glazing. Sash windows are found on some of the grander properties.



▲ Wattle & daub on a timber frame. Though altered, this oak-framed building is one of Otford's earliest High Street properties.

Integration with the countryside

Buildings in the High Street are close to the road and the pavements are narrow, but views between buildings always provide a reminder of the countryside beyond. It is this area of open space behind them that emphasises the intimate infrastructure of the High Street. Elsewhere in the village, the spaces between the houses also promote this valued and essential sense of rural integration.



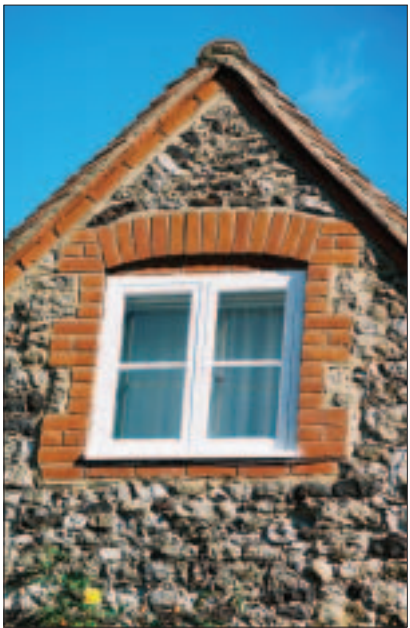
▲ Jettied beams and a tile-hung façade. Once the village court house, this home still reflects its traditional Wealden character.



▲ Tudor detail. A stone-carved doorway within the remaining Palace gate-house. Strange to think Henry VIII passed by this spot.



▲ Kent cottage farm-house. What everyone considers to be a typical Kentish cottage. Its tiles and bricks were made a mile away.



▲ Moving up in the world. Once a row of 19th century artisan cottages including the village poor house. Today, a variety of successful shops popular with visitors and residents.

▲ Flint facing. A popular locally-sourced stone from our chalk uplands.

Ribbon development

There has been some inevitable ribbon development of individual houses, both pre- and post-war, along routes radiating from the traditionally styled village centre. These buildings may reflect little by way of individual style, but with their traditional pitched roofs they still help to sustain the visual character of the village.

Despite the presence of major traffic routes in the village, this typical West Kent village has retained a sense of integration both within itself and in relation to the surrounding countryside, valued and much enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Development which has little respect for local housing styles

In terms of scale and character, some recent and planned development is grossly out of line with the range of design appropriate to the village. Residents have described the style of such houses and their groupings as inappropriate

◀ Local vernacular. Our wide variety of house styles contributes to the attraction of the village: brick-built cottage – barn hip roof – tile-hung façade – wooden weather-boarding. Modern, pattern-book or pastiche designs will always be out of place here.

and affecting the cohesive nature of the community (PM). At the time of writing (January 2008), and after numerous refusals, appeals and inspection visits, approval has been granted, subject to the usual conditions, for the construction of a 21-dwelling estate on a garden site leading off a residential road in a part of the village comprising a number of similar mature tree-lined roads. The existing dwellings here are a harmonious blend of bungalows and some large two-storey houses,



▲ Simple charm. The effect of care and style in a run of Victorian cottages in our High Street.

including some large semi-detached houses in a distinctive style. Most of the properties have larger-than-average gardens, creating an atmosphere of spaciousness.

The contentious nature of this proposed development, with its excessive number of presumably pattern-book houses, the need to build a new access road, and the impact on the local environment, has generated much resentment among residents. Even the council development committee finally and reluctantly gave approval only because it seemed that there were no further technical grounds for refusal. There is little doubt that this estate will be totally out of keeping with the village as a whole and constitute an example of precisely that kind of development which this Design Statement radically opposes.

Elsewhere a number of large houses with atypically high and steep roofs have been built closely together, forming an estate. Without the softening effect of trees, it remains a raw, out-on-a-limb development, not well integrated into the existing settlement. The quality of that part of the village is likely to be affected by this insertion (PM).

Elsewhere, earlier buildings have been demolished and replaced with one or more single dwellings completely out of scale visually with most other homes within the village envelope. They appear outsized, unsympathetic in design and untypical of neighbouring properties. Several rise to three storeys in height. This form of inappropriate development is vociferously opposed by many residents (WSC / PM). With their extended frontages, some of these individual developments may appear to be what the residents of Beverly Hills might consider 'Olde English', but they sit uncomfortably out of place and out of scale within the village (WSC). Residents have made it very clear that they do not wish for more of the same pastiche approach (WSC / PM).

Wrong precedents for planning

Residents are concerned (PM) that developers may in future seek to present designs similar to the above, claiming that their style and scale are typical of the village when they are not. It is important to residents that these pastiche designs do not set a precedent for others to follow (PM).

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 2a Respect for local building design, materials, vernacular style and general colouration maintains the natural evolution and character of the village and surrounding parish and should be evident in any planning proposals. (SDLP H5.4/ 13.4.iv)
- 2b Proposed housing designs should always be in harmony with the character of those in the local proximity. Infilling which diminishes spaces between properties, and hence their integration with the surrounding countryside, is not acceptable to Otford residents. (KMSP Policy QL 1.1 / 7.34 / QL. 1 / SDLP 13. iv)
- 2c Most houses within the village have individual designs or features. To reflect this, all proposed developments should comprise only dwellings which are individually designed or at least have distinguishing individual features, rather than pattern-book or mirror designs. (KMSP Policy QL 1. 2.a / .d SDLP H5.4 / 13.4 iv)
- 2d The scale of any proposed dwelling must be comparable to the majority of existing homes in the vicinity. (KMSP Policy QL1.2 .d / SDLP 13.4.iv)
- 2e The village fabric and character should not be further eroded by schemes involving the removal of one property and replacing it on the same site with two or more new properties which are unsuitable or out of scale with those nearby. (KMSP Policy QL1.2 .a / 4.a /c)

When assessing such designs in future, the Planning Authority should assess the degree to which the proposal is well integrated and complements the neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access (PPS3).

It is important to villagers that designs for proposed developments reflect the village's local vernacular styles exemplified in its Conservation Area, rather than copying the impersonal, untypical and unwelcome designs evidenced in some recent developments (PM).



▲ Using space. These 1970s homes have been designed to integrate with the countryside. The result is a harmonious balance.



▲ Losing space. These 2005 homes have been designed close together. They constrict the living environment. Space has a value.



▲ Using foliage. This 1960s development is made more attractive by its integration with local trees, communal space and curving road.



▲ Bricks not leaves. Unsympathetic development without consideration for landscaping and re-planting, leaves an unsightly scar.



▲ A sense of space. Unlike the rebuilt farm house opposite, these agricultural homes do not dominate the surrounding landscape.



▲ Big is not better! Planners and developers need to beware of unsympathetic bulk and height. Otford is a rural village.

3

The Otford Conservation Area

(Much of the information is taken from 'Otford Conservation Area Appraisal' – SDC March 2001)



▲ 'What's the use of a pond you might say
When it gets in modern life's way
Best fill it all in for cost saving
Now that the automobile has sway'

Extract from 'Village with a Pond' by Ken Gunderson

The contents and character of the Conservation Area

The Otford Conservation area covers some 16 hectares and contains about 40 listed buildings and part of the Scheduled Monument of the Archbishop's Palace. It was designated in 1969, reviewed and extended in 1976 and 1990, and again reviewed in 2006.

The Conservation Area includes residential, retail and public buildings - a true cross-section of village property and the historic nucleus of the settlement. The ages of the properties range from modern to medieval and there is plenty of open space. Otford Conservation Area is essentially the unspoilt heart of a typical West Kent village. The buildings are primarily domestic, with small retail outlets and public houses interspersed amongst the residential properties. There are a number of public buildings: churches, the Church Hall designed by Lutyens, a library, a Victorian primary school and the Otford Village Memorial Hall, all adding variety and bringing life to the street scene. The overall architectural style is an eclectic blend of the Kentish vernacular tradition. The remains of the Archbishop's Palace stand to the south of the Green, surrounded by open parkland. The ruined three-storied Tudor tower is attached to cottages formed from the remains of the only surviving range of the 16th century palace.



▲ A Tudor palace. Built by Archbishop Warham, Henry VIII stopped here with 8,000 men on his way to 'The Field of the Cloth of Gold'.



▲ An early Norman church. St. Bartholomew's was founded before the Conquest. Thomas à Becket would likely have prayed here.



▲ Otford's conservation centre. Its varied mix of early and later buildings still illustrates earlier settlement patterns.

The church, situated adjacent to the Green, is a mixture of styles from early Norman onwards with a spire and flint rubble masonry walls. The tower is rendered and has a fine 17th century timber porch. The St Bartholomew's Church Centre, attached to the church, is a recent modern addition.

The many mature trees within the Conservation Area add to its visual appeal. Residents value them greatly and appreciate their protected status.

Development and issues within the Conservation Area

In general, building and extensions within the Conservation Area have been sympathetically carried out, although one or two exceptions to this have unfortunately been permitted in recent years.



▲ The corrosive effect of traffic. Increasing congestion in the High Street steadily damages ancient brickwork of walls and buildings.

Traffic levels are already having an erosive effect upon the Conservation Area. Any additional development will make this problem worse. The focus in future should be on making pedestrian movement easier and safer rather than to give support for wider and faster roads.

Conserving our natural and built heritage is considered a local priority, of which the main aim has to be safeguarding the area from inappropriate development (SDSCAP Priority 8).

Enhancement of the Conservation Area

There are many opportunities for enhancement of the Otford Conservation Area which a number of residents feel would be to the advantage of the village (PM). These reflect a wider regional and national concern for such areas (SFA; KDAONB).

Examples are: unifying the pedestrian areas of the High Street to provide an attractive, cohesive design to the area; providing safer access – especially for children – to the central feature of the famous and popular village pond; a reduction in signage; use of suitable street furniture; styling shop frontages and signage to reflect the period feel of the location.



▲ The hub of the village. The Green with its many footpaths. The centre of the Conservation Area but cut off by busy road junctions.



▲ A place for reflection. The apparent peace of the village memorial cross belies the streams of traffic that continuously pass by it.



▲ Modern highway signage clutter – in no way reflects the history or ancient heritage of Otford's Conservation Area.



▲ A century ago – many of these shops were labourers' cottages with tiny bridges outside each to cross over a stream from the pond.



▲ A Lutyens church hall. Still in daily use and acting as a back-drop to Otford's Millennium mosaic of the village's long history.

It is hoped that as new ideas on traffic calming and street design become more generally accepted, Otford's conservation area can be in the forefront of the new process. Residents as well as retailers have indicated whole-hearted support for such improvement. 'Streets for all' - published in 2007 by the Department of Transport and English Heritage and The Streetscape Design Handbook, to be published in 2008 by Kent Downs AONB, explore the whole idea of facilitating pedestrian movement within a 'shared space'.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 3a** Extensions to buildings must be appropriate to the extant building and be in sympathy with surrounding / adjoining buildings. (KMSP Policy QL6 / SDLP H6. B)
- 3b** More should be done to give priority to the movement and safety of pedestrians and cyclists, especially here but also more generally within the village. (SDLP 7.86)
- 3c** Within the Conservation Area, visible new extensions, amendments and alterations, such as to gables or roofs, must be considered carefully as they affect the historic character of the village skyline. (SDLP 4.52 / H14A.4)
- 3d** Aerials, satellite dishes, masts, wiring etc. must not be visible from the street. (SDLP EN30)
- 3e** Any proposal for development of any kind within the Conservation Area must take cognisance of the role it plays in determining the overall nature and the essential character of the area. (KMSP Policy QL6)
- 3f** Mature trees within the Conservation Area which are over the specified size (over 7.5cm diameter, measured at 1.5m high on the stem/trunk) have protected status which must be respected.
- 3g** Any plan or recommendation for enhancement of the Otford Conservation area should not be undertaken without full consultation with the residents and parish council. (KMSP QL6. iii / 4.53 / SDLP EN21 .3 / .5)

4

Housing Developments



▲ Everyone benefits. The attractive 1990s development of Twiton Meadows demonstrates how generous use of space and thoughtful design benefits both home-owner and environment.

Maintaining the separateness of the village

Any development that takes place within the village envelope should utilise only the existing available developed area. Development should not, under any circumstances, extend into the Metropolitan Green Belt. The individuality of Otford as an independent and separate village is vociferously defended by the whole community as supported by all the VDS research (VQ; PM). Otford is not a suburb, nor must it become one in fact or appearance.

Development along the highways but outside the existing built area has the effect of extending the village envelope into the surrounding countryside and should be resisted. Applications to locate new development within any of the important green spaces already integrated within the village should also be strongly resisted.

The character of residential buildings

Outside the Conservation Area, the buildings are primarily domestic, the distinctive character created by a mix of individually styled one- and two-storey homes. There is universal agreement among residents (WS/WSC/PM) that houses in excess of two storeys or with atypically steep or shallow roof angles, or flat roofs, are out of keeping with the character of this small rural village.

Throughout the village there are well spaced homes of individual design, most containing gardens with attractive flower beds, grassed areas and trees, which enhance the sense of space and sustain the impression of Otford's rural environment. The most important benefits to residents of Otford (VQ) are the rural aspects and open feeling of the village. Thus in any planning application,

▼ Open plan. A private 1960s development used open-plan front gardens, supplying space and an attractive unity to the road.



▲ Closing the gap. Recent extension-building can result in some cramping of these attractive 1930s mock-Tudor properties.



▲ Breathing space. The attractiveness of a wide gap between properties is self-evident in this 1950's housing development.



consideration of the relationship between buildings and the space between them is of great importance when judging their appropriateness and suitability. Otford residents consider it important (WSC) that the current uncongested housing pattern, well integrated with the surrounding countryside, should remain unaffected. Otford's character lies in its physical structure and population size. Increasing the present density and size of the village will help neither to sustain nor to improve its current character as recommended by PPS1. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted (PPS 3).

Concentration of houses within new developments

It is clearly stated (SDSAP) that local planning should ensure that all development proposals maintain and enhance the quality of the environment, respecting its character and functions. PPS1 states that good design is intended to make things better for people. It also states that inappropriate design that detracts from the quality and character of an area should not however be accepted.

PPS3 also states that design (of a proposed development) should be well integrated with, and complement, the neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access. It is the clear intention of Government that suitability of design should equate to a combination of careful siting, building design and quality, and integration with surrounding houses. The people of Otford share this belief.

It is therefore the view of residents (WS; WSC; PM) that new developments which have concentrated a large number of new houses, often of a repetitive pattern, into a limited site, have created cramped estates that conflict with the village setting. The Otford community has made it clear that it does not wish this type of development to be repeated (WSC; PM) as it undermines the essential character of the village. Such developments neither integrate with nor complement neighbouring buildings. They do not reflect or enhance the local area in their un-typical scale, density or layout. Nor, in the community's view, do these cramped dwellings with small gardens meet children's needs.

The phenomenon of 'Intensive Infilling'

Residents have made it clear (WSC; PM) that the re-use of one or more single garden plots to build multiple untypically designed and closely packed houses is generally unacceptable, given that such developments tend to be out of keeping with the village as a whole.

SDC are asked, whilst having regard to the provisions of PPS3, to use the flexibility allowed to them within the policy to ensure that new developments are compatible in scale and character with current housing within the village.

If an untypical or unsympathetic design is approved, the concern of Otford residents (WSC) is that such a development may then be used to set a new precedent which can be quoted in justification of similar future developments nearby. A cycle can then begin which



▲ Innovative design. No matter how original, good design (left) will invariably sit comfortably with its neighbours and not stand out.



▲ Landscaping with trees. Too often compromised, the importance of generous layout and good landscaping is self-evident.

steadily changes the essential character of the village. Residents see that congestion caused by increasing housing density on one or two plots damages the character and quality of the area where substantial gardens remain a strong feature; such developments also reduce local biodiversity. It is therefore important both on environmental grounds and to preserve the appearance and character of the village that substantial garden areas remain a strong feature of this village.

Landscaping and garden requirements

Judging from the many written comments (WSC), it is clear that any form of new development should be

▲ Good use of central space – benefits the whole community. A 1960s development with housing for the elderly at its centre.

required to incorporate clear plans for soft landscaping, including (where appropriate) the use of natural foliage on front, side and rear boundaries to provide a more evolved appearance and soften the visual impact of a new development on the surrounding area. Two further factors emerging from discussion were the distaste felt by many residents towards covering entire front gardens with hard-standing for cars (WS; WSC) and the use of close-board fencing as a boundary material (WSC).

The suitability of any development proposal within Otford should also be judged on the space allotted to garden area as a proportion of the overall plot. Maintaining standards of high quality with sustainable environmental considerations of construction are of the utmost importance. Equally important is maintaining a balance between each proposed building and its plot size, and providing for adequate garden areas particularly where there may be families with children. These are all factors which Otford residents feel should influence every planning decision.

Innovative design

Taking into account the above considerations, the Otford community is not averse to appropriate innovative design outside the Conservation Area subject to its suitability in terms of scale to any surrounding buildings. The key

factor is that any proposed building, whether innovative or traditional, should be in harmony with surrounding properties.

Given the small size and intimate character of the village, opportunities for extreme innovation are limited. Highly innovative houses must be designed to harmonise with the surrounding area. However, new buildings designed as a pastiche of country mansions or baronial halls are not the answer. The better newer properties take an eclectic approach, using a range of traditional materials and features and being built to an appropriate scale. Natural planting helps them merge with the landscape. They show how careful location and sympathetic landscaping can promote acceptability and sympathetic harmony within the village.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a priority for Otford residents, many of whom have children who have grown up in the parish and wish to remain here. Otford also has a high proportion of retired persons, many of whom wish also to remain in Otford but in smaller affordable premises. The community restated (PM) its support for affordable housing within the village envelope if suitably styled and sensitively located.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of Otford is based upon a rural village community of some 1,300 houses. Concern has been voiced (PM) that any proposals for the introduction of multi-house estates will put an intolerable strain on the current services. It is the view of the VDS that when considering the suitability of any new development, large or small, the developer should be able to demonstrate that Otford's infrastructure is capable of supporting the proposed dwellings and that the layout allows for ready access by emergency service vehicles at all times.

To summarise this crucial section: proposed developments outside the Conservation Area should comply with existing district policies in full, as well as with the wishes expressed by the Otford community. Any proposed development should always integrate and harmonise with existing buildings in the vicinity by being drawn up in line with the Design Principles opposite.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

4a No new housing development should be located in such a way that the village appears to merge with neighbouring villages or with Sevenoaks. (PPS3 / KMSP Policy QL43 (a) / SDLP 13.9)

4b Any new multi-house development proposal found to be acceptable in terms of its density, height and scale in relation to the surrounding area should include provision for a significant percentage of affordable housing. (SDLP H2A .5 /13.10)

4c No proposed development should adversely affect the existing green spaces within the village. (KMSP Policy QL17 / SDLP EN9)

4d The appropriateness of any development must be judged by its prominence and/or intrusion within the landscape and the effects it will have upon the immediate vicinity and available services. (KMSP Policy HP5 / SDLP EN 1.3)

4e The suitability of any proposed development should be judged by the extent to which it is in harmony in terms of proportions, scale and form with other dwellings in the vicinity. (KMSP 7.21 / SDLP EN1 .1 / .3)

4f The ratio of building to plot size must always be in harmony with other homes in the vicinity. (KMSP Policy QL1:1 / SDLP EN1. 1)

4g Any proposed dwelling with two or more bedrooms, and thus likely to be a family home, should have a rear private garden with no less than the minimum area of the footprint of the whole dwelling.

4h No proposed development should be more than two storeys in height. The height of the roof ridge should be similar to others in the vicinity. The pitch angle of the roof should be between 35 and 45 degrees. (KMSP: Policy QL1:1 / EN1.1)

4j Every new building should occupy a proportion of its plot width similar to that of existing houses in the vicinity. Seen from the street, this should be at least one metre from one side boundary or both (depending on whether semi-detached or detached). (KMSP 7.34 SDLP EN)



▲ Roof pitches over 45 degrees and high eaves look out of place in Otford.

▲ Out-of-scale buildings with three storeys cannot integrate with other homes.

▲ Not allowing for landscaping can leave a raw scar on the community.

4k Proposals for more than one multi-dwelling sites should incorporate distinctive individual features in each house and not simply be repetitive or mirror-like designs. (KMSP Policy QL1:1)

4m In order to promote individuality in new housing, the inclusion of local vernacular designs such as gables and hips will be welcome as typical of the area. (KMSP Policy QL1:2 .a)

4n Wherever possible, natural materials should be used for or incorporated within structures. If modern materials are to be used, their selection and use should always be in tune with existing housing in the vicinity. (SDLP EN1.1)

4p All planning proposals should include clear plans for landscaping including, wherever possible, the planting of trees and the use of boundary hedging using traditional species and/or traditional fencing, to front, side and rear as appropriate. (KMSP Policy QL1:2c & d / SDLP EN1.12 / EN2 / EN8)



▲ Beverly Hills Housing? Overbearing size and 'retreat-behind-the-gates' contribute little to the warmth of Otford's character.

4q All proposed dwellings should have a proportion of natural front garden containing trees or shrubs and grass or other greenery. This area may contain a proportion of water-permeable hard surface for car parking, but no more than the minimum required for likely vehicle numbers. (SDLP EN2)

4r Within the proposed garden areas any mature trees removed during site clearance must be replaced by substantial native (traditional) trees of a similar type. (SDLP EN1.2/ EN12.B)

4s The contractor must ensure that all trees, hedges and shrubs extant along the boundary lines shall be preserved or replaced following building. (SDLP EN1 .2/ EN12. B)

4t Carbon-neutral housing is welcome within the parish if sympathetically designed and appropriate to surrounding properties. Those dwellings outside the conservation area incorporating solar or wind energy-collection devices should aim to be in harmony with others in the area in size, scale, proportions and colour. It is important to minimise any visual and/or aural intrusion to other properties. (KMSP: 7.34 / SDLP EN1 .1 / .3)

4u Innovative design is best suited to 'stand-alone' properties discreetly located and separate from other housing. (SDLP EN1 .3)

4v A list of key questions on essential design points is attached as Appendix 4. (KMSP: Policy QL1.2 c / SDLP EN1 .12)

5

Extensions and Alterations

outside the Conservation Area



▲ An extension should blend naturally – by using matching materials and colouration. The alternative can look very uncomfortable (especially in our Conservation Area).

Retaining the spacing between properties

As already stated, the spacing between properties and the integration of homes with the surrounding countryside are factors highly valued by Otford residents (VQ). For that reason, house extensions in particular should be designed to maintain the existing spacing between properties. By closing a gap, an extension can effectively erode one of the special qualities of this village.



▲ Retaining its cowl – ensures this converted Otford oast does not lose the integrity of its origins, to the benefit of all.

Extension design and appearance

Some planning authorities consider that an alteration or extension to any building should always appear as separate and independent from the original structure. This view is questioned by Otford residents (WSC). Throughout Otford architectural character is varied, and many of the older properties have evolved through changes of use and alterations over a considerable period. It is the clearly expressed view of residents (WS; WSC) that all forms of extension should blend naturally with the existing structure of a building by using similar materials and colouration.



▲ Out-growing the parent. When the extension looks as big as the original property, the result can appear discordant.



▲ Sensitivity to match. The renovated roof of this medieval hall house was painstakingly retiled in matching Kentish peg tiles.



▲ Colour mismatch. A recent example of an important extension spoilt because new tiling does not match the original.



Keeping front gardens 'green'

Gardens maintain the pleasing appearance of the village (WS), preserve wildlife and allow water to sink into the aquifers. There has been much local concern (WS; WSC) over the conversion of front gardens to hard standing for cars. In February 2008, DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) recommended to Parliament that home-owners be prevented from covering front gardens with impermeable paving or tarmac without first obtaining planning permission. We support such a move.

Preserving mature trees

Trees are greatly valued by residents, who strongly support Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and wish all mature trees to be retained unless there is sound reason for their removal (PM). The many mature trees within Otford form an intrinsic part of the local landscape. The removal of even one tree can affect the quality of the landscape significantly.

▼ Dappled light and shade. Preserving mature trees maintains the quality of the landscape and reinforces our village location.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 5a Any form of extension should always retain a consistency of style with the original building. (KMSP: Policy QL1. 2.a / SDLP H14A.4)
- 5b Materials should blend with the existing structure. 'Replace like with like' is the general rule. (SDLP H14A.4)
- 5c Materials should be chosen that will mellow with time and blend in to the natural environment. Inappropriate patching or new building using unsympathetic materials will be resisted. (KMSP: Policy QL1:2a / SDLP H14A.4)
- 5d The appropriateness of any application for an extension should be judged upon its being in harmony with neighbouring buildings. (KMSP: 7.19 / SDLP H14 A.4)
- 5e Any extension needs to be in keeping with the scale, design and character of the original building. As a guide, the floor area of any level of an extension should normally not be greater than half that of the corresponding level of the original building.
- 5f With the possible exception of garages, flat roofs are generally felt to be inappropriate to any extension as they are untypical of existing village buildings. (KMSP Policy QL2:a / SDLP H14B.4)
- 5g Attractive features like chimneys, gables and windows should be retained (or replaced with similar) as they contribute to the distinctive character of properties. (KMSP Policy QL2:a / SDLP H14 A.4)
- 5h Aerials, satellite dishes, masts and wiring should be as unobtrusive and discreet as possible. (SDLP EN30)
- 5j Permission to build barns, stables or stores on larger properties must be subject to the condition that these will not later be used for accommodation. (SDLP H14B)
- 5k Development of, or extensions to, a building should not be of a type or size that results in the structure becoming a dominant feature within the surrounding landscape. (KMSP HP5 / 7.34 / SDLP EN6 / EN8)

- 5m Only the minimum necessary area of the available front garden area should ever be replaced with hard-standing for cars. Suitable porous materials should be used for this purpose, rather than impermeable surfaces. (SDLP EN1 (5) / (6) / (11))



▲ Tough meshing – designed for parking on. Available locally. Enables year-round parking on a fully-grassed front lawn.

- 5n As many mature trees as possible should be preserved within this parish. Everything practicable should therefore be done by both residents and developers to achieve this. (SDLP EN12B)



▲ This blessed plot. Looking across back gardens in late-summer. Preserving our trees and shrubs is of considerable benefit to all.

6

Walking and Vehicle Movement

within the Village Envelope



▲ Traditional trackways. Today winding lanes following the old field contours. They control car speeds and encourage walkers and need protection from widening and straightening.

Busy roads affecting pedestrian movement

The village envelope is intersected both by an ancient east-west route (Pilgrims Way) and a major north-south trunk road, the A225. It also has many residential roads serving groups of houses. Technical transport issues such as traffic management and road maintenance are outside the remit of this document (KCC being the relevant highway authority). However, because they directly affect the safety of the community, they must be taken into account in deciding locations for future development within the parish. The impact of any development on pedestrian mobility and access and on traffic movement must be considered.

The importance of this issue across the broader local community is identified in the Sevenoaks District Community Action Plan 2007-2010. In the section



▲ Setting out on an afternoon's ramble. Otford is widely popular with visiting walkers as a hub of several national footpath routes.



▲ Retreat from the roads by pedestrians – is evident in the increase of local cars being used for even short journeys.

'Safe Communities', this Plan sets out as its third highest priority: 'Improve safety on our roads'. An associated action priority is to '...make roads and footways safer for pedestrians'.



▲ Pedestrians being squeezed out. On this narrow section of Otford High Street, traffic speeds can make walking hazardous.

Lanes and historic routes

The rural quality of Otford is enhanced by its attractive winding lanes. These have influenced the historic design of the settlement. Many of these historic approaches to the village originated as traditional tracks. These include Telston Lane, Rye Lane, Row Dow, Park Lane and Ivy House Lane. It is important to all residents (WS; PM) that

the character of these old roads be preserved and that no widening or straightening of them be allowed in future to accommodate higher and faster traffic flows. Any such action will seriously damage the rural character of the village and will be resisted by residents of Otford (PM).

Planning for ease of pedestrian movement

There are three schools located within the parish, including a popular primary school in the village centre, as well as a large number of houses located along all the roads and lanes converging on the village centre. The facility for safe movement of pedestrians from their homes is important to all residents (VQ; WSC; PM). All restrictions on pedestrian movement have an adverse effect upon the cohesion and integrity of the village as a community. Therefore there are implications for both the siting of new developments and the way they are designed. It is important to residents (PM) that developers and planning departments provide for the needs of pedestrians in Otford and weigh up very carefully the effect any new development will have upon freedom and safety of pedestrian movement and the volume of local traffic.

► Goodbye, hello. How can we reduce parents' reliance on cars to and from our village school?

▼ Increases in traffic – will eventually become unsustainable. Major proposed developments beyond our boundaries will contribute to this.



▲ Safe passage for children. Our only zebra crossing opposite the village school. Applications for others have been refused.



▲ Safer by car? More local pedestrians 'retreat from the roads' every year and take to their cars, increasing traffic congestion.

The environmental effect of the retreat from the roads

The poor state of much of Otford's public pedestrian facilities (in particular footways alongside main roads) has resulted in pedestrians retreating from the roads. Residents resort to the use of cars even for short journeys, with resultant parking congestion within the village (WSC; PM).

All this is not only detrimental to the village character but also environmentally undesirable. Consideration of any future planning proposals must include attention to these issues.

Increases in traffic and road signage

Every major new development creates an increase in local traffic volume, often with a consequential increase in road signage. Concern has been expressed by residents that increases in unnecessary signage and road markings are eroding the essential rural character of the village (PM).

Public lighting

Otford has no street lighting. This matter has been discussed at a number of public meetings in recent years. Minutes of an OPC meeting in 1997 record that a public vote was taken, with a majority voting against. There is no evidence that this community decision has contributed to any increase in traffic accidents or other safety hazards within the parish. No future developments should involve any requirement for street lighting to be introduced.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 6a** Narrow, winding lanes are an integral part of the rural nature of the village and must be protected. (KMSP Policy TP17 / SDLP EN34 / 7.133)
- 6b** Road straightening and/or widening, with a consequent increase in traffic volume and/or speed, are inappropriate and must be resisted. (KMSP Policy TP17 / SDLP EN34)
- 6c** Any new development application must supply plans for safe pedestrian access to the village centre. (SDLP 7.86 / EN1 (10) / (12))
- 6d** Any opportunity to enhance safety for pedestrians, including the development of pedestrianised areas and the provision of roadside footways, must be pursued. (SDLP 7.86)
- 6e** Any new development application should be supported by evidence, based on a reliable and proven statistical model, of how many additional cars will be using the village roads. (SDLP 7.2 / 7.62 / 7.132)
- 6f** All options for combining traffic management with aesthetically acceptable design features (as set out in the Kent Downs AONB Streetscape Design Handbook) should be explored, both at local authority and private developer levels. (SDLP 7.132)
- 6g** No new development should be dependent on the introduction of street lighting within the parish.



7

Boundaries and Street Furniture



▲ Listed and loved. The listed public telephone box on the Green. Traditional street furniture like this reinforces the village's sense of place and heritage.

Types of local boundary material

The character of Otford is reflected in the house boundaries bordering public streets. Historically, Otford house boundaries have generally been formed from traditional species of hedging, or traditional picket fencing. On some residential roads, open-plan gardens with trees have been preferred, providing the area with an unenclosed environment. A large proportion of residential roads have grass verges, often carefully maintained by local residents though in legal terms Kent County Council is responsible. Well-maintained hedgerows commonly bound agricultural land bordering our roads.

Close-board fencing

Some new (often large) single private developments have incorporated high fencing. This has an urbanising effect and gives the properties a stockaded appearance. It is regarded by most residents as highly unattractive, untypical and unsuitable to our village community, as well as encouraging graffiti (WS; WSC; PM).



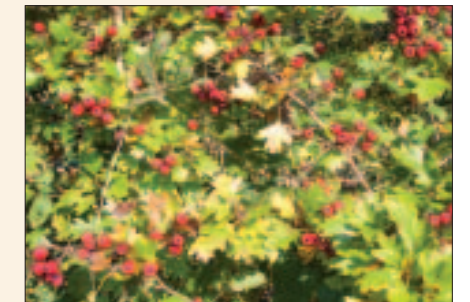
▲ The 'stockade' look – so enjoyed by developers and graffiti vandals. There are so many more natural and effective alternatives.



▲ Strong beech hedging – retains its warm leaf colouring.



▲ The shade of holly – offers essential shelter to many bird and insect species.



▲ Resilient hawthorn – with white blossom in spring and ripe red berries in autumn.



▲ Wicket fencing. A strong boundary fence which allows foliage to thrive – an ideal combination of tradition and security.



▲ Traditional beech hedging – combined with low fencing for additional security. Year-round variations of colour.

Verges

Although not strictly street furniture, trees are a feature of the verges in a number of residential roads. They beautify the area and are of ecological benefit to all. There is general concern about the fact that in recent years these trees have not been maintained and that many trees have been removed and not replaced. (WSC; PM).

Lighting

The residents of Otford have for many years resisted the installation of street lighting. Many properties have their own security or porch lights which can be helpful to road users and pedestrians at night. These must be carefully placed so that light does not spill on to neighbouring properties.

Planters and street furniture

There are several planters located within the village High Street, all presently maintained by local associations or retailers. It is the wish of the community for there to be more (WSC). There is also a number of well-maintained



▲ Trees or bollards? Tree roots do occasionally lift the paving. But once removed by request, they will not be replaced.

▼ Grass or asphalt? With reducing Council funding, our existing verges need our care if we are not to lose them.



▲ Small is beautiful. The little things that create the bigger picture.

public bench seats located within the open areas of the village. Some smart cast-iron waste-bins are located on the Green and the village centre. Well designed and selected elements of street furniture can help to enhance the character of the village and are encouraged in Otford.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

7a The use of close-boarded fencing, other than between neighbouring properties, should be discouraged. (SDLP 4.26)

7b Roadside trees are valued and should be replaced if removed. (SDLP EN12B)

7c For front boundary hedging, the use of traditional tree and shrub species or traditional picket fencing should be actively encouraged. (SDLP 4.26 / 4.27)

7d Planters, window boxes and hanging baskets are encouraged in public areas throughout the village. Members of the community should be encouraged to take responsibility for their maintenance. (KMSP Policy 4.53)

7e An excess of road- and direction signs must be avoided and redundant signs and posts removed. Signs should be of traditional design in keeping with the village character. (KMSP 4.53)

7f Within the Conservation Area especially, but also more generally in the village, pedestrian signage for directions, footpaths and walking routes should be sympathetically designed to match the village environment. (KMSP 4.53)

7g Exterior lighting should not be too powerful or create light spill to the detriment of adjoining properties or road users. (KMSP 4.68)

Signage

The centre of Otford forms the junction of two major highway routes. Residents comment (WSC; PM) that there is excessive signage that is having the effect of progressively urbanising the village. Signs both for traffic and for pedestrians should be designed to match the rural village context. Many of the concepts and ideas expressed within ‘Streets for All’ (Department for Transport / English Heritage) and the ‘Streetscape Design Handbook’ (Kent Downs AONB) are strongly supported by village residents (WSC; PM).

◀ Insensitive signage clutter – in our High Street. Over-large and badly-sited, masking the Lutyens-designed village hall.



8

Footpaths and Bridleways

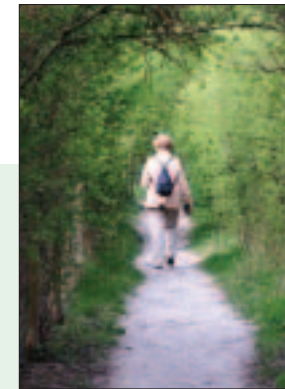


Importance to the community

Footpaths and bridleways within the parish are the pedestrian arteries of the community, much prized and used daily by the community (WSC). Most have been established for many centuries, providing a far safer route than along the busy main roads. There should be no diversion or obstruction of footpaths by encroachment from existing properties or new developments. The pedestrian railway crossings in the village are essential for ease of movement and for connecting the various parts of the village together.

Maintenance

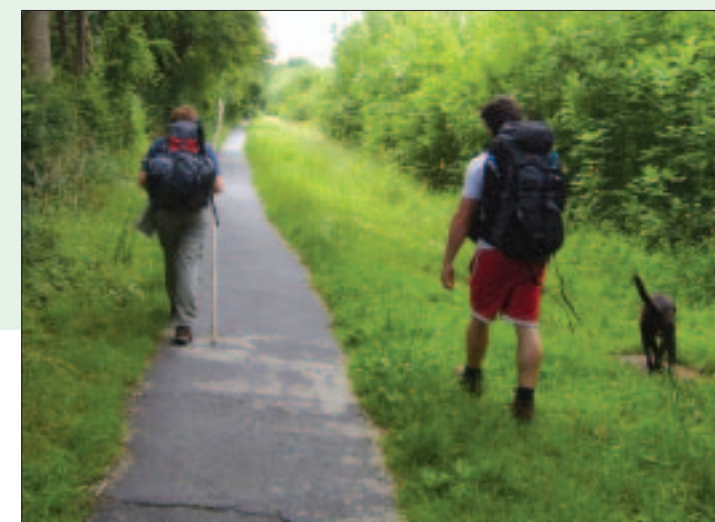
Typical of these important pedestrian routes, used by many residents to and from the village centre, are the ancient long distance footpath known as the Greenway, the path connecting Sevenoaks Road to Pickmoss Lane in the village centre, and that between Bubblestone Road and St Bartholomew's Church. Maintenance of these attractive established pedestrian routes is essential both for practical and environmental reasons. Residents have expressed great concern when those responsible do not properly maintain adjoining shrubs and trees (PM).



▲ An artery for pedestrians – within the village avoiding the busy roads.



► A pilgrim's way. Modern pilgrims can still be seen walking 'the way' to Canterbury. The start of their journey is Winchester.



▲ A coombe with a view. A footpath along the side of the Downs escarpment. Filston Farm can be seen in the distance.



Maintenance (contd.)

This needs to be sensitively done, but if these paths are not adequately maintained more people will take to their cars, leading to associated environmental damage (PM).



▲ From footpath to alleyway. Close-boarded fencing can turn a pleasant footpath into a defaced, urban alleyway.



▲ Crossover. The 'saved' pedestrian level crossing used daily by many Otford residents as a vital link to both station and village.

Private house boundary materials

Where a house boundary lies along a public footpath, security for the householders is clearly paramount. Residents have recommended (WSC) the use of robust open mesh fencing planted through with natural shrubs, hedges and trees, rather than employing panel- or close-boarded fencing that invites graffiti. In this way the pathway gains natural light and openness, and both householder and public benefit in terms of security and privacy.

Footpaths into the countryside

Much of the attraction of Otford lies in the access it provides to a wide range of footpaths (WSC) leading into the unspoilt surrounding countryside of the North Downs and Darent Valley, which draws many walkers to the area. Residents welcome the use of the Darent Valley as a recreational area. The North Downs Way, a nationally and internationally designated long-distance footpath, and the Darent Valley Path, a regional footpath, intersect at Otford. Residents would welcome more footpaths locally both within and outside the village.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 8a** Footpaths, bridleways, public rights-of-way and railway crossings must be kept open, safe and properly maintained. (KMSP QL17 (b) / (c))
- 8b** Properties adjoining established footpaths must not encroach upon them or in any way make them narrower. (KMSP QL17 (c))
- 8c** Mesh or unpointed railings (maximum 1.5m. in height), with associated well maintained plant-through, are preferred to close-boarded fencing as footpath boundaries.
- 8d** Trees should not be felled and natural shrubs and flora should not be removed from alongside these footpaths, unless to maintain the path itself.
- 8e** Otford residents welcome the creation of new linking footpaths (statutory or permissive) and support opportunities for these being explored with landowners. (KMSP QL17 (a))

9

The Trading Estate and Surrounding Area



▲ Raised from the ashes. *Becket House dominates the Vestry Estate, built on the site of earlier brickworks which were then used as Southwark's rubbish incineration site and dump.*

Location and history

The Vestry Light Industrial Trading Estate is located near the southern parish boundary, with access on the A225, Sevenoaks Road. On the south side, this Estate adjoins the Riverside Retail Park, which contains a variety of retail outlets and a supermarket, and which bridges the parish boundary at this point.

The Vestry Estate is built upon extensive earlier brickworks excavations that were used for 70 years as a rail-supplied landfill site for Southwark Vestry (Southwark Borough Council). The area was designated a trading estate in 1960.

It is largely separated from the residential area by the east-west M26 motorway and on the west side of the A225 by the expanse of attractive water-meadow land that acts as a water-retention area in the event of the river Darent flooding.

Siting of light industrial and warehouse structures

Apart from the siting of Becket House, the majority of structures (warehousing and light industry) are set well back from the A225 and do not intrude into the attractive rural quality of the local landscape, designated an Area of Local Landscape Importance. Any proposals to site new warehousing, light industrial buildings or dwellings closer to the A225 thoroughfare or the M26 should be resisted because of the effect and intrusion they would have upon the essentially rural nature of the area (WS).

The estate is highly conspicuous from distant footpaths on the North Downs, and Otford residents have asked whether it might be made less visually intrusive within the rural landscape (WS). Its profile should be softened by appropriate tree planting and by the use of suitable materials such as cladding in colours which blend with the rural background.

Opportunities for expansion

There is presently no easy opportunity for outward expansion as the estate is bounded by the railway line to the east, the A225 Otford-Sevenoaks road to the west, and the Riverside Retail Park to the south. These unbuilt areas are within the Green Belt. The existing road

network can barely support the current volume of traffic and any expansion of the industrial area with the inevitable increase in traffic would be contrary to the wishes of residents and to the detriment of those who travel on the A225 in this area.

Residential buildings

The small residential enclave close to the Trading Estate should be maintained in its present form. Any development or change here would be contrary to the integrity of Otford's role as a village community (WS). Any multi-house development would be clearly visible from the village and give the impression that the urban borders of Sevenoaks had been extended into the rural parish of Otford (WS).

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 9a** Any proposed siting of industrial buildings closer to the Otford-Sevenoaks Road than at present is undesirable.
- 9b** Any new development/usage of the Trading Estate should have its projected volume of traffic established in advance. Increases in the volume of heavy vehicle traffic through Otford village should be discouraged.
- 9c** The introduction of trees between the A225 and the Estate and throughout the Estate would help mirror the rural character of its surroundings.
- 9d** When developing or re-cladding industrial units or roofs, particularly on the margins of the estate, owners and developers should be required to use cladding and paint which will merge into the natural background.
- 9e** Agricultural buildings should not be changed or converted to retail use.
- 9f** Large-scale development of land adjoining residential properties close to the Estate should be resisted by the authorities, supporting its location within the Green Belt.
(PPG2 / KMSP 7.21 / 7.34)

10

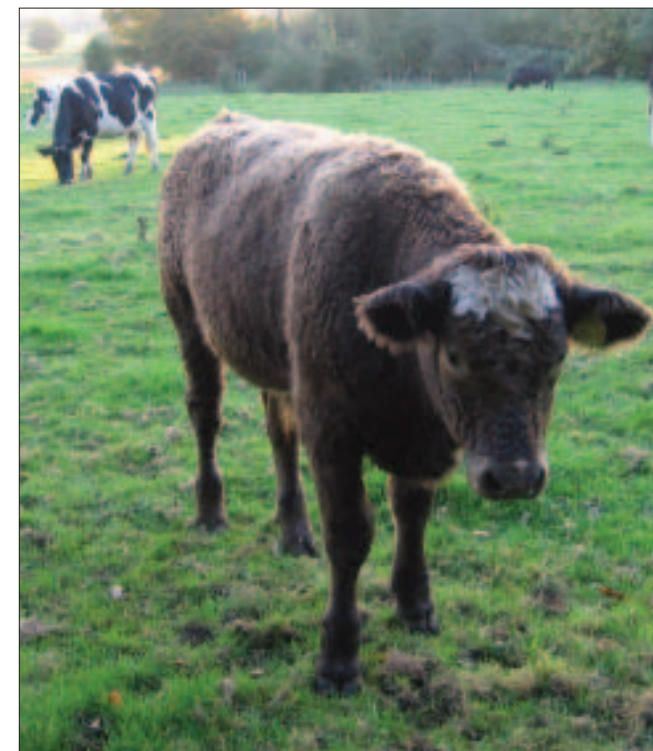
Agricultural Development



▲ In working order. Just a stone's throw from our village pond, Hilldrop Farm, though now a smallholding, still continues as a working farm.

Agriculture has been for millennia an essential and valued part of the life of the village and its surroundings. It is primarily arable in nature, though it also supports dairy herds and sheep on the North Downs pastures and sheep along the low-lying southern river plain. Well-established fields are mostly bordered by ancient hedging with native plant species. These traditional hedgerows act as essential wildlife corridors and support the natural and evolved nature of the countryside. Current legislation to protect them is welcomed. Coppices and mature trees add to the quality of the natural environment. The open, rolling, arable nature of the parish with its scattered woodlands ensures its popularity with residents, day-visitors and the many visiting walkers and cyclists.

There is limited agricultural building, none sited within the public open-space areas. Careful location and screening can help to reduce any negative visual impact that such buildings might otherwise make. Any new structures such as domestic stabling and field shelters should be similarly carefully placed. With changes occurring in agricultural methods and practice, seasonal workers may in future



▲ Friesians browse – on much of the valley's pasture. Milk lorries are a feature of our roads. Sheep are pastured on the upper slopes.



▲ Fresh thinking. Fields of lavender are replacing some traditional arable crops to compete with the French market for their oil.

be required to harvest local fields. Some temporary structures such as accommodation for these seasonal workers may be needed, in which case the same principles apply. Permanent caravan or mobile home sites should not be allowed within the parish.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 10a** The continuance of farming should be actively encouraged within the parish. (SDLP 4.29 / EN13)
- 10b** Traditional hedgerows need to be protected and maintained as a key feature of the rural landscape. (SDLP 4.26 / 4.27)
- 10c** Coppices and trees in agricultural areas are greatly valued and should be maintained and retained. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) should be sought and applied where possible and appropriate. (SDLP EN12A)
- 10d** Any new agricultural buildings should be so designed and placed as to minimise their visual impact.
- 10e** Any temporary accommodation for seasonal workers should be carefully and sensitively located. (SDLP H18)
- 10f** Applications for new caravan or mobile home sites should be resisted. (SDLP H16)

Conclusions



▲ A sundial in the village High Street. Villages take time to evolve naturally, and it is essential that new developments are not allowed to be pushed through against the wishes of the community.

The Otford Village Design Statement has been prepared with considerable care to set out the views expressed by the residents of Otford Parish. It seeks:

- to provide a clear statement to the local Planning Authority, developers, planners and residents about how strongly this community feels about the values it places on the integrity and character of the village and its local environment;
- to be positive in its observations but to indicate potential areas of major concern in order to provide future guidance to planners, developers and residents;
- to provide support for the maintenance of the heritage of Otford and of this part of Kent for future generations.

By promoting local distinctiveness and high quality design it appeals to the Planning Authority and potential developers to recognise the inherent distinctiveness of a small rural community such as Otford.

Otford's major priorities are as follows:

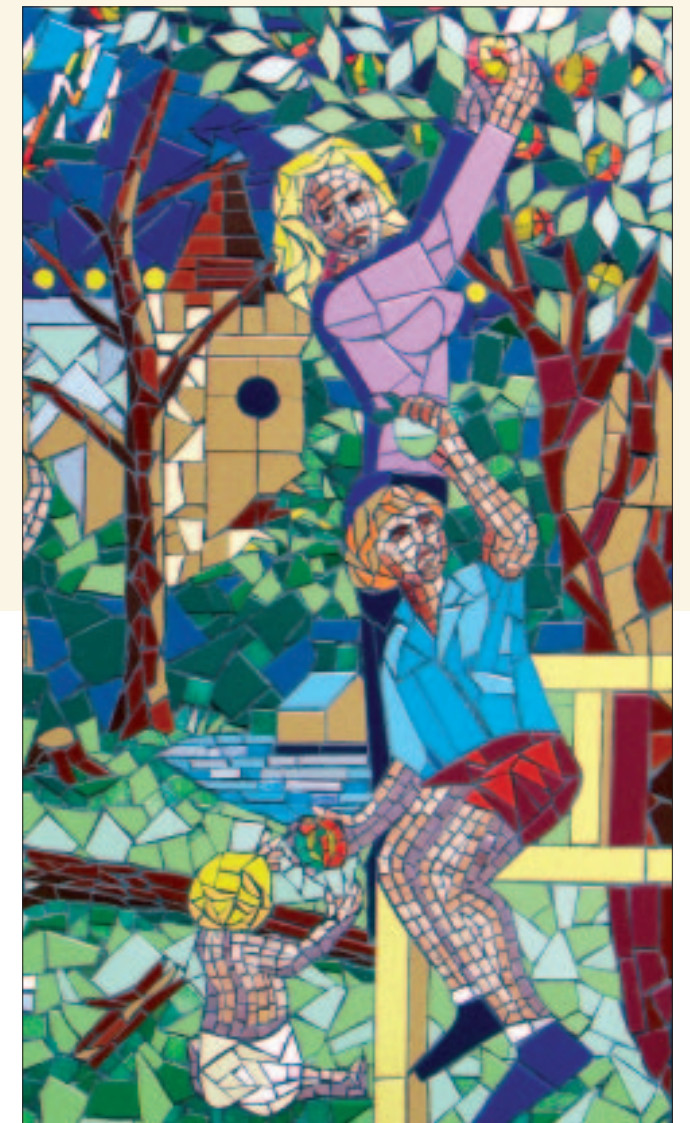
- the protection of the integrity of its rural and village identity. The residents of Otford are concerned that the existing green spaces within the village and those between Otford and other communities should be maintained and not eroded by development;
- maintaining its close, natural integration with the surrounding countryside of the Darent Valley and the Vale of Holmesdale;
- ensuring that all development is appropriate and integrates with surrounding property;
- protecting its individual and historic village identity;
- ensuring that any future development respects typical local design materials, features and colouration and incorporates items of the local vernacular style;
- preventing the introduction of inappropriate urban-style, pattern-book or town-house property designs;

- ensuring that all new development allows for the importance of safe pedestrian movement within the village envelope, with a consequent reduction in car transport;
- protecting our green environment, an integral part of our rural heritage.

This Village Design Statement and the Design Principles within it represent the voice of the community. The residents of the parish of Otford trust and expect that the views expressed in this statement will be respected by all whose actions would have an impact upon their village and their lives.

The Otford VDS Design Team, January 2008

▼ Passing on our heritage to the next generation. A detail from the Otford Millennium Mosaic, designed by Oliver Budd.



Appendices

OTFORD VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT - QUESTIONNAIRE

What about Otford
Is important to you?

(tick the boxes that indicate your degree of preference)

	Vital	Important	Neutral	Not important	Don't know
1. Views to surrounding countryside					
2. The trees and gardens					
3. Otford's rural character					
4. The local shops					
5. The centre of the village					
6. Your own street or road					
7. Public transport					
8. Churches					
9. Schools					
10. Public open spaces					
11. Sports facilities					
12. Medical and dental facilities					
13. The Pharmacy and Chemist					

14. The Bank					
15. The Post Office					
16. Pubs					
17. Social Services					
18. Footpaths and bridle-paths					
19. Organisations, clubs and societies					
20. Facilities for the elderly					
21. Events (fairs & fetes)					
22. The character of existing buildings					
23. The character of new buildings					
24. Local industry near you					
25. Safety in your home					
26. Safety in the village					

27. Which 5 items above are the most important?
(Only their numbers are needed)

28. What else do you like about Otford?

29. Are there changes you would like to see made?

30. What about Otford would you like to protect most?

31. Do you have any other comments or ideas?

32. What road do you live in?
(If a non-resident please give your reason for interest)

33. What is your age group?
(please tick)

Under 18 ☐

18 - 55 ☐

Over 55 ☐

If you would like to help in the preparation of the VDS, please telephone 523831.

▲ The questionnaire delivered to all 1300 Otford homes. 42% of the parish responded providing the initial priority guides to the VDS design team.

APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE VDS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Otford VDS questionnaire was distributed in 2003, to all 1300 (approx.) households in the parish. 546 responses were received, representing 42% of households. In 9 responses the respondent was aged under 18 years. In 160 responses, the respondent was aged between 18-55 years. In 377 responses, the respondent was aged 55 or older.

Numbered replies

Selecting from the printed options to the question: ‘What about Otford is important to you?’ respondents indicated the following priorities*:

Medical & dental facilities	54.4%
Otford's rural character	53.7%
The pharmacy/chemist	42.9%
Safety within the village	34.8%
Views of the surrounding countryside	30.0%
The local shops	25.5%
The centre of the village	25.5%

Written replies

Analysis of the written replies to the open-ended questions revealed the following priorities*:

What else do you like about Otford?	
Community spirit / local activities	23%
Friendly people	21%
Village / rural character / separateness	20%
Are there changes you would like to see made?	
Traffic slowed	19%
Reduced traffic, HGVs, through traffic	13%
Street lights / road improvements / signs	12%

What about Otford would you like to protect most?	
Its rural character / feel	21%
The pond	19%
Village feel / character / look / size	14%
Surrounding countryside / views	11%
Do you have any other comments / ideas?	
Speed control / cut speeds	10%

An observation from the Otford VDS team

The combination of detailed examples and open-ended questions in the 2003 questionnaire enabled residents to say what mattered to them personally and to identify more general features about the character of the village.

Two important facts emerged which informed the VDS:

- 54% of respondents felt that **Otford's rural character** was of the greatest importance to them;
- in the many written comments received, 20% of those who completed the questionnaire rated **the separateness, the rural character and the identity of the village** as being their most treasured assets and the factors which they most wished to protect.

These findings have been repeatedly supported in interviews, workshops and meetings, held throughout 2007 in Otford. To this day, those views reflect an integral underlying belief held by those who live here. Planning proposals which choose to ignore these views will inevitably be met with opposition.

* percentage of respondents shown

APPENDIX 2 – HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Historical summary

Otford has grown up at the point where the river Darent traverses the escarpment of the chalk North Downs at a river crossing of the ancient east-west trackway known today as the Pilgrims Way. The light soils of the valley sides were cultivated by early farmers, and there is evidence of late Neolithic/Bronze Age habitation some 4,000 years ago in the Coombe, a steep-sided re-entrant valley, today dry, overlooked by a round barrow on Otford Mount, itself the probable site of an Iron Age hillfort. Intensive Roman settlements including three villa/farmsteads, a 'township' (village) and a cemetery are known to have existed here.

Reference to a battle here in 775 provides the earliest mention of 'Otta's ford', though pagan burials indicate earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement. In 821 a gift of land by Cenulf, King of Kent, to Wulfred, Archbishop of Canterbury, formed the basis of a vast estate centred on Otford Palace, which became one of the most prestigious houses in medieval England, visited by virtually all the kings of England. The moated house was rebuilt and greatly expanded in Tudor times by Archbishop William Warham, the last of the great medieval prelates, and in 1537, at the desire of King Henry VIII, it was exchanged by Warham's successor, Thomas Cranmer, for lesser crown properties in east Kent. It thus became a royal palace. Queen Elizabeth I disliked the house and allowed it to fall into ruin by 1600, and shortly afterwards the estate was broken up after 800 years.

The Polhill family, with its seat at what is now Broughton Manor, was the principal landowner until the 19th century. From 1882 Otford station provided a direct link with London and the beginnings of commuting, and an incentive for expansion of the village and diversification of employment, hitherto predominantly agricultural and extractive (brick-making and chalk-quarrying).

The 20th century saw an expansion of the population from under 1000 to 3200, and the construction of business parks at the southern edge of the parish,

through Otford's incorporation within the officially designated Metropolitan Green Belt. Otford has also been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Special Landscape Area, and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, all of which has curbed indiscriminate large-scale housing development.

Close to the village but beyond its limits, there is in addition to Twitton (a settlement of ancient origin remote from the village) only one significant group of farm buildings, that at Long Lodge, formerly a lodge in the archbishop's deer-park. Today it comprises a single house and an imposing group of oasts, converted into a dwelling. The remaining farms are essentially a part of the village, whilst one large inappropriate milking parlour, which was inserted into Green Belt land in the centre of the valley, was ultimately re-located at the heart of the farm it served. A late-Victorian hunting lodge on the scarp slope of the Downs was converted in the earlier twentieth century into a preparatory school, and extensions to meet educational needs have been sympathetically designed and implemented.

Geographical summary

Otford is located at the point where the eastward flowing river Darent leaves the gault clay Holmesdale Vale and turns north, cutting through the chalk hills of the North Downs, one of only five rivers to do so between the English Channel and Salisbury Plain. Holmesdale is a low-lying valley with water meadows, in contrast to the steep-sided valley carved through the Downs. On each side of the river the land rises some 500ft (170 metres) above the valley floor. Springs at the junction of the chalk and underlying gault provide rivulet tributaries of the Darent, with water of purity sufficient to support a fish farm and watercress beds.

The Thames Gateway Project and Otford

By 2020, it is intended that there will be an additional 49,600 houses built in North Kent to support new businesses, with 15,700 planned for Dartford.



The Darent Valley has been designated as one of the 'Green Cluster' areas providing green open spaces for recreation for the new households. This raises many issues that all the communities of the upper Darent valley will need to address over the intervening period, not least the implications this development will have upon traffic and visitor numbers. The priority will be the protection of our communal heritage and the integrity of our villages.

▲ Map of Otford. The nucleus of the present village is evident in this 1844 Tithe Map – the first modern survey of the parish.

With this aim the villages of the upper valley have already (in 2008) commenced discussions in order to present a united front. The Otford Village Design Statement can begin to provide a basis for the defence of our village and its community for the future.

APPENDIX 3 – OTFORD ROADS GAZETTEER

CENTRAL OTFORD

This is the heart of the historic village, centred on the Parish Church and Green, with remains of the nationally important Manor House of the Archbishops of Canterbury (later Royal Palace) to the south.

Station Road (A225)

In the 19c this eastward extension of the High Street incorporated two farms, Hilldrop Farm and Moat Farm. In the early 20c a few large detached houses were built opposite the station, and a row of council houses was erected nearer the village.

Becket's Place

A speculative development of large houses erected in 2005 on the former coal yard adjacent to the Station Yard.

Colet's Orchard

The walled rear garden of Colet's Well, the principal house overlooking the Green, still abuts Station Road, but the grounds extended eastwards to include Friar's Pool, the weather-boarded house on the roadside, which was formerly the laundry. Colet's Orchard was developed on the adjoining land as a cul-de-sac of individually designed bungalows in the early 1960s, at which time the owners of Colet's Well ceded Otford Pond to the village.

Leonard Avenue

This cul-de-sac was originally built with terraced houses c1860. Several were destroyed by bombing in 1940, and semi-detached houses replaced them and also completed the development, with the surgery at its northern end dating from 1968.

The Green

With its famous pond, the Green has been Otford's focal point for more than a thousand years. The present fabric of the Parish Church, dedicated to St. Bartholomew, partly dates from c1050 but there was probably a place of worship here centuries before. The adjacent late 18c Colet's Well was built on the site of a Tudor mansion of similar name. By the church gate is the Chantry, formerly



▲ The Village Green and War Memorial.

Church Gate Cottages, originally built in the 15c as the village Court Hall. Other interesting buildings around the Green include Holmesdale and Pond House, an unusual pair of 18c semi-detached houses, and the Corner House - formerly Mount View, an 18c rebuild of an earlier timbered farm house, and having a substantial boundary wall from the earlier period.

To the south of the Green are the still impressive remains of Otford Palace, the Tudor north range being the only ruins still standing of an estate originally conveyed to the Church by a king of Kent in 821.

The north side includes commercial properties, formerly cottages, together with the Crown (16c) and Woodman public houses, the latter a farmhouse until the 1860s. The Green and High Street largely comprise the village Conservation Area.

The High Street

Still the only east-west route through the parish, this is the present-day guise of the prehistoric trackway linking Dover with central England. It is also part of the modern North Downs Way. The upper part is lined with a variety of smaller cottages, now mainly commercial. The Bull public house, formerly a Tudor dwelling, retains some original features as well as a fine weather-boarded barn.

The School and the adjoining Headmaster's House (now the Parish Office and Heritage Centre) were built in 1871. Opposite is the Church Hall (designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens), backed by the car park and Village Memorial Halls. The lower part of the High Street is filled with mainly 19c semi-detached and terraced houses. The Library (1980) and the Methodist Church (1935) are modern buildings in harmony with the street scene.

Pickmoss Lane

Formerly Worth Lane, this is a row of mainly 19c cottages. Pickmoss, a refurbished hall house with attached cottages in the High Street, faces the Horns public house, formerly three 16c cottages.

Mill Lane

This charming cul-de-sac, with its cottages and converted oast, leads to the site of the water mill (replaced after a disastrous fire in 1924), beyond which is Troutbeck, a much altered polygonal house dating from 1905. Opposite Mill Lane is The Grange (18c), a former vicarage on the site of a tannery.

At the bottom of the High Street is the modern Catholic Church of the Most Holy Trinity (1985), standing opposite the fine Broughton Manor, late medieval and later, and for many years the seat of the Polhill family, the local squirearchy. Next to School House is the imposing Old Parsonage, a 15c house once the home of the incumbents of Shoreham and Otford.

Park Lane, to the north, serves Park Farm and two dwellings originally a part of the farm.



▲ The High Street

Warham Road

This cul-de-sac contains mainly semi-detached houses erected in a variety of styles in the 1970s. Most have open-plan front gardens.

Footpaths

- **SR. 17:** Darent Valley Path to Shoreham from Mill Lane.
- **BR. 32:** a bridleway leading from Park Lane northwards to Shoreham.
- **SR. 729:** a new east-west path linking SR. 17 at Lower Barn with SR. 32.

EAST VILLAGE

This includes the northern and eastern entrances to the village. With only one or two exceptions, all the houses at this end of Otford resulted directly from the building of Otford Station in 1882, by which means commuting to London combined with a country lifestyle was made possible. All roads here with the exception of Row Dow are subject to a 30mph speed limit.

Shoreham Road (A225)

This forms part of the principal north-south road through the village. It was formerly the route of the Dartford-Sevenoaks Turnpike, with a toll-gate at its junction with Pilgrims Way East.

The earliest habitation along this road was the Warren Farm at its southern end, probably dating from Anglo-Saxon times. The Warren, broadly Otford Mount, was a possession of the Archbishops of Canterbury (and later the Crown), used for hunting. With the exception of the toll house and a pair of cottages all now demolished, the earliest houses were built c1905, with a scattering of individual houses and bungalows gradually lining the road during the 20c, and a brick-built telephone exchange constructed c1935. Since 2000, speculative builders have set their sights on demolishing properties with large gardens in order to build two or three 'pattern-book' houses on the site, with often disastrous visual consequences.

The Old Vicarage, a good Arts and Crafts house (Martin Shaw Briggs, 1923) was saved only after vigorous

campaigning by local people and others, though an additional house was erected in the garden. Opposite to it, the former oast storage has been rebuilt as flats, while the roundels remain as a separate dwelling.

Greenhill and Hillydeal Roads

This private horseshoe-shaped road system, entered from Shoreham Road, was laid down in the 1920s in the Coombe, a steep-sided re-entrant dry valley north-east of the station. It was originally bordered by 2-acre plots, developed largely between the wars. After World War II these plots began to be sub-divided, again for individual properties. This situation obtained until the 1970s when the first ‘pattern-book’ houses were introduced into Greenhill Road. Recent developments, some displaying architectural merit, are predominantly large houses replacing more modest dwellings

Station Road (A225)

East of the railway bridge, Station Road has two substantial semi-detached houses dating from c1895, and a building containing small business premises, originally a bank, dating from the 1920s. An access track immediately above the station gives access to the Chalk Pit, a public recreation ground, and to the brick-built Scout Hut (1963) and the Station Oasts (c1905), now sympathetically converted into substantial flats. The square Oasts have had their distinctive cowls replaced.

Coombe Road

This private cul-de-sac on a spur of the Downs overlooking the village incorporates part of the former farmyard of Warren Farm. As the mainly post-war properties were originally constructed to severe planning limitations, most have been extended. The most interesting houses are Warren House, originally Oxeneye, the former farmhouse of the Archbishop’s game preserve, and rebuilt with ragstone in the 18c; and the Old Kennels House, originally built in 1874 as the whelping house for the former West Kent Hunt kennels then based here.

Pilgrims Way East

Leading eastward to Kemsing and beyond, this is a section of the traditional Pilgrims Road, an ancient east-west long distance trackway along the foot of the North Downs. Since World War I it has been subject to ribbon

development of mainly smaller properties, though standing on larger plots than in the other roads in the vicinity. At its junction with Shoreham Road (Kennels Corner) is the **Chalk Pit**, today a public recreation ground surrounded by woodland.

Row Dow

This minor but busy country lane leads up the scarp of the Downs to the scattered rural communities on the hills to the north-east. It has a handful of early 20c houses enjoying wide views, and gives access to St. Michael's (preparatory) School, set in extensive parkland and housed in the former Otford Court, a gothic brick and terracotta mansion built c1895 as a hunting lodge for the Beechy Lees sporting estate.

St. Michael's Drive

This former carriage drive to Otford Court, with a lodge at its entrance, is a private estate of individual houses and bungalows, mainly pre-war, and having a sylvan aspect.



▲ A moment of calm on Pilgrims Way East.

Tudor Drive

This cul-de-sac runs down from Pilgrims Way and backs on to the railway. The upper part was constructed as a distinctive 'mock Tudor' estate of detached villas of two main types in the later 1930s, with uniform black and white detailing, though most have been enlarged subsequently. Building further down was continued post-war, with less uniformity, and included semi-detached houses, two ranges of terraced houses and maisonettes with detached garage blocks where the road gives access to **Oxenhill Meadow and Shaw**, 62 acres of publicly owned access land.

Tudor Crescent

This was added at the lower end of Tudor Drive, constructed with a variety of houses and bungalows from the 1940s onwards.

Footpaths

- Several public footpaths serve this part of the village:
- **SR. 14/15:** this section of the North Downs Way National Footpath ascends Otford Mount from the Pilgrims Way opposite the Chalk Pit. It dates from prehistoric times when it was a part of the long-distance North Downs Ridgeway linking the Channel coast with central England. Opposite is a pedestrian access to the Chalk Pit.
 - **SR. 47/60:** this path starts at Park Lane north of the Recreation Ground, crosses the railway and joins Shoreham Road, ascending the Downs at Greenhill from the Telephone Exchange.
 - **SR. 48:** this links the station with Tudor Drive and gives access to the Chalk Pit and Scout Hut.
 - **SR. 49:** this section of the Greenway, another ancient long distance trackway, dating certainly to Roman times and probably prehistoric in origin, links the villages of Otford and Kemsing. It crosses the railway by means of a level crossing south of the station and is metalled throughout in recognition of its contemporary importance. From Tudor Drive to Kemsing it is a designated bridleway (BR.49). Network Rail failed to divert its route over the railway in 2007.
 - **SR. 66:** this is the ancient track linking Otford with Greatness to the south, now crossing both the railway and the M26 motorway. It is accessible via several paths through Oxenhill Meadow and also from the bottom of Tudor Drive.

SOUTH VILLAGE

Castle House

This fine building was once the bailiffs' residence for the archiepiscopal manor, and later an important farm. It dates from Tudor and later periods with outbuildings and fields, woodland, lake and medieval stewponds fed from Becket's Well. It has a medieval stone-built subterranean conduit house, still fed by a spring, which supplied piped water to the moated manor.

Sevenoaks Road (A225)

On the east side of this main road leading south from the village is the Parade, a row of two-storey retail premises built just before WW II. It includes the Post Office, a bank and a convenience store. Further south is a row of individual, mainly post-war houses extending as far as Beadles car dealership (formerly Waite's Garage) beyond which is Palace Park Wood, a public open space, adjoining the new Otford Cemetery and Woodland Burial area.

To the west side of Sevenoaks Road are water meadows which are subject to flooding.

Long Lodge Lane

This leads to an ancient settlement originally in the middle of the Great Park of the Archbishops, and also to a poultry farm.

Old Otford Road

South of the M26 motorway bridge there is a small group of large houses on Ladds Hill. This was the course of the A225 before it was diverted for the M26 motorway.

Vestry Cottages

This row of Victorian cottages was originally associated with the former extensive brickworks. Nearby is Bartram Farm, which now houses a light industrial estate.

The Vestry Industrial Estate

The Estate is home to a wide variety of industrial companies both large and small. It was developed in the 1960s on the brickworks site, later the domestic landfill site operated by the Southwark Vestry.

Bubblestone Road

This is a road of detached houses commenced pre-war and occupying the site of the medieval manor, along with other houses and bungalows of the post-war period. It forms the sole entrance to the homogenous domestic estate comprising **Well Road, Evelyn Road, Sidney Gardens**, and **The Old Walk**, all of pleasing aspect with mature tree-lined roads mainly of bungalows but with some large two-storey houses. **The Butts** is an interesting Ministry of Defence (MOD)-designed estate of large semi-detached houses in a distinctive style. Most of the

properties have larger-than-average gardens, creating an atmosphere of spaciousness. A stream crosses the estate.

Footpaths

- **SR. 49:** this leads from Otford Pond and Sevenoaks Road to the station and anciently to Kemsing, Wrotham and beyond (the Greenway).
- **SR. 50/66:** this ancient track leads south from the Church to Greatness via the Old Walk and Long Lodge.
- **SR. 51:** Pickmoss (formerly Worth) Lane leads from the High Street to Sevenoaks Road.
- **SR. 56/66:** Long Lodge Lane leads from Sevenoaks Road to Long Lodge and thence to Oxenhill Meadow and Shaw.
- **SR. 59:** this runs from Well Road to the railway crossing south of Otford Station. It is a permissive footpath leading from SR. 66 south of the Old Walk to Palace Park Wood, and thence through the community woodland to Sevenoaks Road.

SOUTH WEST VILLAGE

Rye Lane

This ancient meandering lane which originally led to the medieval Rye House was central to a scheme to promote smallholdings c1900. Most of the original houses have been redeveloped, with some infilling, mostly in keeping with the area.

Shinecroft

This road comprises two distinctive opposing terraces of artisans' dwellings erected c1898.

Ryecroft Road

A small cul-de-sac of council-built houses dating from the 1900s and individual modern, detached houses.

Broughton Road

This is a private (unmade) road of pre-war semi-detached houses, linked by a footpath to the end of Rye Lane.

Willow Park

This speculative development of detached and semi-detached houses dating from c1960 was built on former



▲ Broughton Road

withy beds. It has achieved maturity, having well maintained gardens and a central grassed area planted with trees.

Flowerfield

This is a cul-de-sac off Willow Park, similar to and contemporary with it.

The Charne

This was a joint development between the Sevenoaks Rural District Council and MOD for Fort Halstead staff in the 1940s and '50s. It faces a substantial green and was completed by the addition of a group of bungalows on a part of the green in the 1960s.

Telston Lane

Originally a farm track, this road was developed between the wars as a mixture of local authority and private housing. Beyond Newbarns Farm it continued west of the railway as a footpath, developed on the south side with scattered houses built post-1945. **Telston Park** is a valued, partly wooded open space bequeathed to the village by a former resident and accessible from both Telston Lane and Willow Park.

Darnet's Field

This is a small cul-de-sac of semi-detached houses constructed in the 1970s.

Hale Lane

This cul-de-sac leads to the Hale Lane Recreation Ground. It was built by the local authority c1948, but most of the houses are now privately owned, leading to a greater diversity of exterior treatment.

Dane Road

This is a later small local authority development of semi-detached houses.

Saxon Close

This is a further local authority development which has attracted criticism due to the use of orange coloured (foreign made) bricks and roofing tiles unsympathetic to the village.



▲ Twitton Meadows

Knighton Road

This is a homogeneous private development built c1960 with semi-detached houses having open plan front gardens and bungalows built somewhat later at the top end of the road.

Orchard Road

This cul-de-sac dates from the 1970s and is reached from Knighton Road. Open plan front gardens are again a feature.

Footpaths

- **SR. 52/55:** this is a partial alternative to Rye Lane from Pilgrims Way West via The Charne.
- **SR. 58:** this is the North Downs Way & Darent Valley Path, leading from Telston Lane to Dunton Green.

NORTH WEST OTFORD AND TWITTON

Pilgrims Way West

The westward continuation of the High Street had a few habitations along it in medieval times, but the present

mixture of bungalows and two-storey houses on the south side dates mainly from the mid 20c. The Free Evangelical Church (c1980) replaced a temporary building.

Great Till Close

Built in 1996, this development was built as a speculative venture on the site of the former Fry's garage.

Ivy House Lane

At the western edge of Otford, the lane bounds Foxbury, today's Otford Boarding Kennels, an ancient site.

Wickham Field

This private road on the north side of Pilgrims Way West is the former local authority Isolation Hospital (1904), the main brick-built buildings, wards, etc., of which were converted into single-storey private dwellings and two-storey flats c1960.

Frog Farm

Formerly known as Wickham, this is one of Otford's ancient farms. The farmhouse was rebuilt in 2006, replacing the stark brick farmhouse of 1908.

Twitton Meadows

Built in 1991, this imaginatively designed social housing development was built by the North British Housing Association. It is grouped round a green and replaces a complex of prefabs dating from 1944.

Twitton Lane

The lane leads to the hamlet of Twitton, with Otford's parish boundary running along the middle of the road. Within Otford are, among others, Twitton House (a Victorian villa) and Twitton Farm with its prominent oasts and stowage, now a private house.

Footpaths

- **SR. 10:** from Twitton, this ancient route leads north to Filston Farm and Shoreham, and south to Dunton Green.
- **SR. 43:** this leads from Pilgrims Way West/Rye Lane to Sepham Farm and Halstead.
- **SR. 43/15:** this path leads from Pilgrims Way West/Rye Lane to Filston Farm and Shoreham.

APPENDIX 4 – WORKING WITH
THE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT:
KEY QUESTIONS FOR
POTENTIAL DEVELOPERS AND RESIDENTS

In order to promote good design within Otford, the Village Design Team has prepared a check list of key questions addressed to developers, builders and residents.

We believe we are aware of what the residents of Otford will and will not accept in terms of any development. They have contributed to this Design Statement and have made their wishes clear.

Evidence that these questions have been addressed will be of benefit to anyone putting forward applications for development.

Comparable density, scale and design

- Will your development be appropriate in terms of comparable density in relation to the surrounding houses? ‘Comparable density’ refers to the spacing between the proposed house(s) and neighbouring houses as well as the generous allowance for both front and rear garden.
- Will your development be appropriate in terms of comparable scale in relation to the surrounding houses? ‘Comparable scale’ refers to roof height, angle of roof pitch and number of habitable floors. It also includes the need for the footprint and overall mass of the building to be comparable with the majority of adjoining homes.
- Will your development be appropriate in terms of comparable design in relation to the surrounding houses? ‘Comparable design’ implies design which is in harmony with the majority of nearby houses. It is important for any proposed design to include the use of local vernacular design features and materials which are in sympathy with Otford’s village architecture. Individual thoughtful design will always be welcome. Pattern-book, mirror-reflection or pastiche designs will not.

Affordable housing

- If your proposed development involves affordable housing, will your designs have individual features and reflect the village character described in this VDS rather than a pattern-book approach? Given that affordable housing tends to be more closely packed than larger dwellings, how will your designs preserve the rural openness and access to rural views so valued by residents?
- Affordable housing is welcome in our community. However, we draw developers’ attention to the need for the ratio of building-to-plot size of all housing, affordable or open-market, to be in harmony with that of other homes in the vicinity.

Effect upon the green spaces or landscape

- Is your proposed development so sited that it is likely to have a negative effect by dominating or overlooking any of the traditional green spaces within the village or the community’s surrounding landscape? These areas are of great value to residents and comprise an integral part of the village’s unique identity. Any plans which appear to endanger them will be resisted.

Over-stretching the village infrastructure

- Otford is a rural community, surrounded by countryside. Much of our infrastructure will not be sustainable if it is required to support a significant increase in housing. Developers are advised to check carefully on the capacity of the existing infrastructure to support any proposal, before plans are submitted.

Parking and increasing traffic

- Although Otford benefits from a wide variety of shops there are currently only two small convenience shops and one post office within the village. The limited public transport facilities mean that cars are a necessity for most Otford residents. Will your development provide sufficient on-site parking for these new residents, without covering the front garden area with impermeable paving or creating a requirement for on-street parking? As a developer, have you weighed the effects of the additional traffic created upon local residential streets as well as the highways?

Landscaping

- Will your proposal include full landscaping details? ‘Landscaping’ refers to the planting of trees as well as hedging around all boundaries of the proposed plot so that the development does not appear, from any angle, as a raw scar within the landscape. High close-boarded fencing is not considered a suitable alternative.

Damage to verges and footpaths

- Some temporary damage to verges and footpaths can occur in any building process. Will you/your company accept that you are responsible for maintaining adjoining highways and verges, as far as possible, in a clean and undamaged manner throughout the building process and for replacing any breakages or verge destruction caused by you/your sub-contractors, prior to your quitting the premises?

Within the VDS document, we have sought to be as clear as possible about what features this community values about our village as well as what is disliked in terms of potential future development. The Sevenoaks Planning Authority has agreed to take into consideration the views expressed in the Otford VDS when considering future potential development within our parish.

Thank you for the consideration you are showing to this community.

Thanks and acknowledgements

This Village Design Statement is the result of much dedicated work by individuals and groups. Thanks must go to:

- the twelve members of the Design Team, who worked for over a year to collate the wide range of information and comments used in the preparation of this report and convert it all into the final text;
- in particular to Phil Clucas whose design talents led to the final preparation of the finished document;
- the whole community of Otford, who expressed their views, participated in workshops and meetings and commented on aspects of the VDS during its preparation;
- those outside the Design Team who offered the benefit of their insights, experience and specialist knowledge and thus enabled the accuracy, validity and potential for impact of the document to be enhanced;
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- Sevenoaks District Council
Otford Parish Council
The Otford Society
The Otford Historical Society
R.A.D.I.O.
The Otford Fete Committee
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▲ The Village Design team – six of the twelve members in mid-meeting

▼ Like our native species of bee orchid, our village heritage needs our protection and nurture if it is not to be damaged beyond repair.



