

Westerham & Crockham Hill

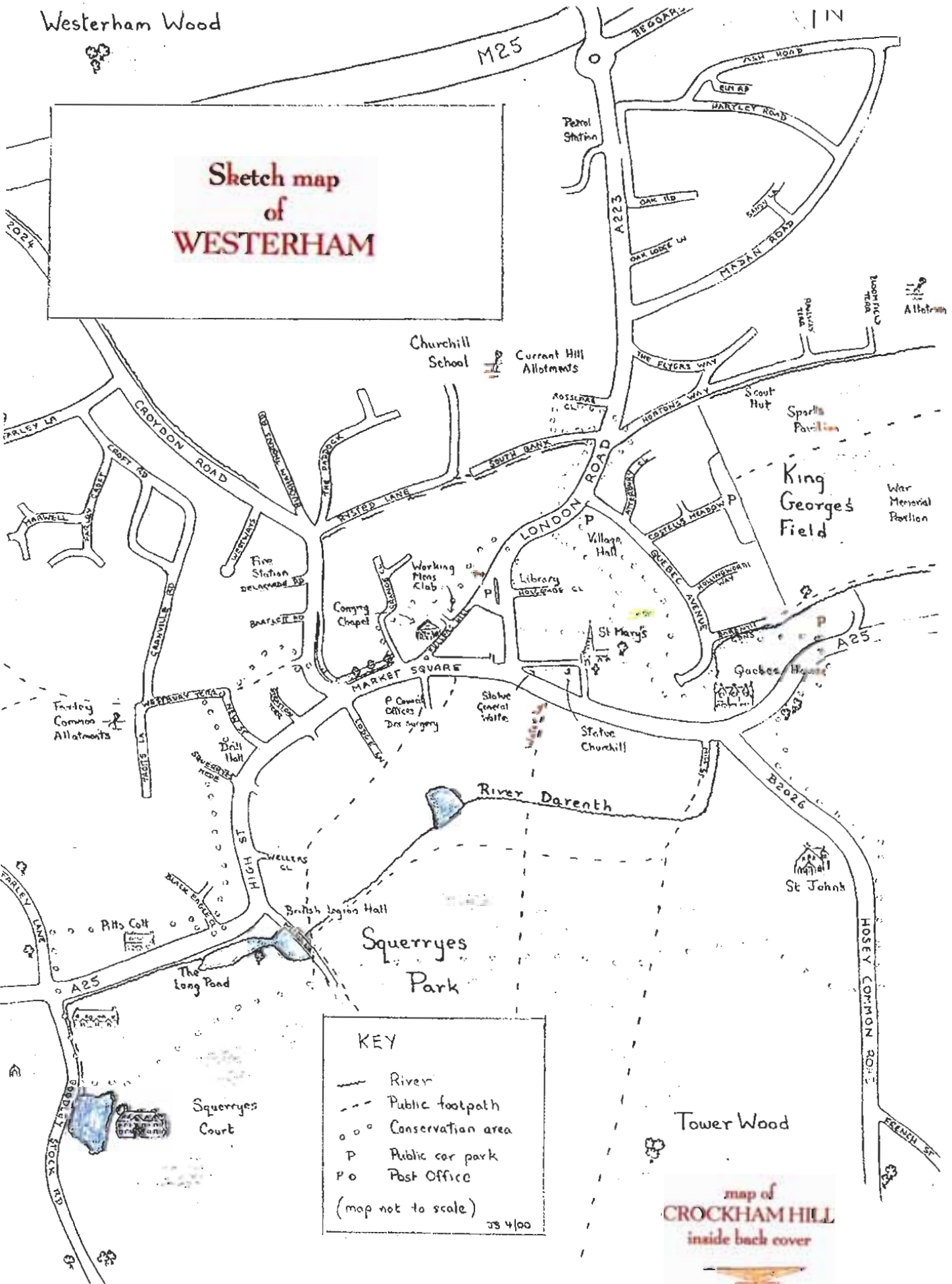
Village Design Statement

2000



Westerham Wood

Sketch map of WESTERHAM



KEY

- River
- Public footpath
- Conservation area
- Public car park
- Post Office

(map not to scale)

35 4/00

map of CROCKHAM HILL inside back cover



1: INTRODUCTION

What is the Design Statement?

It is a description of the Parish of Westerham and Crockham Hill as it is known, observed, valued and loved by the local population in the year 2000, together with guidelines on how any future alteration or development should be managed.

Who created it?

It has been created by the people who live and work in the Parish - a task force of some forty volunteers, aided and guided by the comments and views of the local population. The volunteers carried out simultaneous surveys and consultations in both Westerham and Crockham Hill; the Crockham Hill findings appear in Chapter 9.

What are its aims?

To promote an understanding of the character and qualities of Westerham and Crockham Hill, and to indicate some guidelines for any change or development which may be proposed in coming years. It is not about resisting change - it's about managing change in a sensible and sensitive way.

Who will use it?

Anybody concerned with the enhancement, development, construction or demolition of any part of the Parish in the next twenty years.

Which means:-

- * National and local authorities responsible for approving future development and planning applications.
- * Local parish councillors, when asked for their views on planning applications.
- * Architects, designers, developers, planners and others concerned with the submission of planning applications.
- * House-owners and businesspeople considering changes to their properties which will involve submitting planning applications.

The Design Statement will also be of crucial interest to everybody who wishes to see that the beauty and historical legacy of Westerham and Crockham Hill are protected.

Is it really going to be effective?

The Department of the Environment, Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council have all assured us that this Statement will be a valid project to be submitted for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Guidance - meaning that its recommendations would be taken into account when all future planning applications were considered.

Accordingly the Statement will be submitted to Sevenoaks District Council for adoption as their Supplementary Planning Guidance for the next ten years, in support of the Local Plan as it affects the Parish. It will be renewed at the end of that time, even if no changes are needed, to coincide with the timing of the local plan.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to:-

- * Maj. Alan Taylor Smith for initiating the project and Mr. Ronald Dunkley as author.
- * The volunteers from all sections of our community who surveyed and photographed our environment, analysing and reporting the results.
- * The residents of Westerham and Crockham Hill who inspected the volunteers' work and added their comments and contributions to be incorporated in this final document.
- * The many other individuals who have given time and thought to the project, and the organisations who have donated funds or material assistance to see that the volunteers' work was published - and especially Kent RCC's Community Initiatives in Rural Kent Grant Scheme, which partly funded the project, and Sevenoaks District Council, who provided a generous grant.



Westerham from the South

2: SOME HISTORICAL NOTES

WESTERHAM IS AS OLD AS CIVILISATION ITSELF. The Pilgrims Way, which crosses to the north of the town, is arguably the oldest track in all England, first trodden some 5,000 years ago.

In the grounds of Squerryes Park is a clearly defined Celtic hill fort which has stood there for more than 2,000 years.

But it was from the Saxons that the community first began to take the shape we see today. Their first settlement followed the very lines which now define The Green and Market Square. St Mary's Church tower was originally built as a Saxon



Westerham from the Pilgrim's Way

watchtower, looking out across the Holmesdale Valley for hostile invaders, and the church itself is recorded from around 1115AD.

Squerryes Lodge, too, dates from the 12th Century; the monks used its ancient chapel by the River Darent for four hundred years until Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in 1539.

If we say that it was the Saxons who provided the very foundation of Westerham, then this



The Green

is no more than literal truth; for it is on those Saxon footings that successive generations have continued to build their houses, each introducing its own architectural heritage. You can find traces of old Tudor cottages inside the houses on Vicarage Hill, The Green, Market Square and the High Street, houses which themselves were often enlarged in Cromwell's day and then refronted in Queen Victoria's.

Nowhere is this succession of designs better seen than in Lodge Lane - a living catalogue of styles from the 14th Century to the 20th. At the bottom of Vicarage Hill, and again at 49 High Street, are fine examples of mediaeval timbered hall houses. From 1591 onwards, timbers were hacked out and assembled at Spout Farm in Crockham Hill by Durtnells (based now in Brasted), then numbered and disassembled for delivery on site.



Lodge Lane

Westerham and Crockham Hill today are especially rich in Tudor and 17th Century buildings - the latter including Squerryes Court, Wolfelands, and The Pheasantry on The Green.

So the history of this community reflects the history of architecture itself - some five or six hundred years of successive styles which have left us with a town that is a delight to the eye, with widely diverse designs which yet sing in harmony together.

And these are buildings of quality; for as early as the 17th Century the Parish had an unusually high proportion of freeholders, rich enough to own their own houses and to show off their wealth by the standards to which they were built.



Wolfelands

The first John Warde bought Squerryes Court in 1731, and the Wardes still live there; for many hundreds of years the Squerryes Estate has owned a very large proportion of the land within the Parish boundaries, and has exercised a crucial influence on its development.



Until the mid-thirties most of the people of Westerham worked on the land, in domestic service or in the local Black Eagle brewery; most of them married into families living within ten miles of their own birthplace. It is an interesting reflection of changing times that the average now is more like fifty miles!

3: THE PARISH TODAY

WESTERHAM IS SET IN A BROAD EAST-WEST VALLEY some twenty miles south-east of London, bounded by the North Downs to the north and the Greensand Ridge to the south. The River Darent rises in the Greensand and flows through the town; to the north the countryside is mainly farmland, while the south, except for Squerryes Park, is mostly woodland. The Parish as a whole covers slightly over nine square miles, and is home to something in the region of 4,250 people (the 1999 Electoral Roll listed 3,937 individuals of voting age).



Local geology provides a rich variety of small hills and valleys, with a range of soils yielding a profusion of types of trees and plants.

As market gardening and hop growing have declined, much of the land they used has gone over to new housing estates and industrial use, especially in the last five to ten years - driven by development pressures created by the motorway, and by the demand for more commercial premises and homes in the South-East generally.

These pressures are here to stay, and will probably intensify; so there will be a need for even tougher and more determined planning policies to manage them in the future.

Westerham's railway station was closed nearly forty years ago, and the M25 motorway now follows much of the old track route. With no higher school surviving in Westerham today, students now commute to Sevenoaks, Oxted or further.

There are two routes into Westerham from the north, the B2024 Croydon Road and the A233 (which leads into London Road), while access to the south is by the B2026 Hosey Hill; this leads to Crockham Hill, which lies about two miles away, high on the southern slope of the Greensand Ridge.

Westerham's principal road, bisecting the town, is the A25 - until the 17th Century the only east-west hard-surfaced road in southern England (the other route, through Hythe and Haywards Heath, being only a track which was often impassable in winter). The A25 runs parallel with the M25 and serves as its relief road in the event of motorway hold-ups.



Many of the town's oldest buildings (some of them are six centuries old) line the route of the A25 and thus limit its width. Any widening that might have been possible has been achieved long ago by reducing pavements and front gardens.

This leaves us with a situation in which the sheer size of the commercial vehicles permitted under EU regulations makes it impossible for them to pass other

traffic, unless somebody stops to give way or even mounts the kerb.

The results, in terms of accident risk, traffic congestion and pollution, pose one of the largest unsolved problems facing the Parish.

However, since we appreciate that highway and traffic issues are not considered relevant to the main body of a Design Statement, this document will discuss them in a little more detail in a separate Appendix.



4: THE TOWN CENTRE

WESTERHAM IS A PARADOX OF GEOGRAPHY - perched on a hill, yet at the same time nestling in a valley. Look along virtually any street from the centre, and you'll see the road falling away down-hill while a back-drop of verdant countryside climbs up and away beyond.

The countryside crowds in on Westerham. Turn off Vicarage Hill and walk the short length of Mill Street - fifty yards, perhaps? - and you're amongst the buttercups bordering the River Darent. And The Green boasts more grass than you'll find in many an entire village.

Much of this town's character lies in what might be called the inner entrances or gateways to the centre - at London House

in the north, the Manor House in the west and Yew Tree Cottage on Vicarage Hill in the east, each one providing a distinct and pleasing feeling of 'having arrived' in the heart of the town.

Architecturally, the heart is healthy - thanks to those five or six centuries of building designs and styles and the melodious mix they have given us. Let us remember that it is changing fashion that has created this interest and variety; so let's continue to welcome change. We need to manage development, not hold out against it.

However, any future construction should be planned in a way that respects the historical value and interest of the town's ancient buildings; no new structure must



A Westerham Backdrop



The King's Arms, Market Square

be allowed to dominate these, detract from them or obscure them, or to block out the backdrop of countryside at the end of Westerham's streets. And the height, volume and overall appearance of any new building must be kept in proportion to what is already there.

The town's shopping area has contracted in recent years, with relatively little retail activity west of the Croydon Road. The shopfronts are generally of a high standard, although we would prefer to see less use of metal.



The simplest elements can work wonders for shopfront design; the small supermarket on the corner of London Road, once done up in a glaring red, has been vastly improved by the use of gentler colours.



Greater restraint in the number of road signs in the town centre would be welcomed; there is surely a case for rationalising and reducing these.

Paving design has been handled imaginatively in many streets - such as on the north side of The Green, where old-style ironstone cobbles at the sides flank a smooth pathway down the centre. The traditional stone pavement outside the King's Arms and Winterton House is also felt to be excellent.

The brick paving used in Market Square, on the other hand, is both inappropriate and, in wet or icy weather, slippery as well; and in places there are rough patches of tarmac in the pavements which should be scheduled for replacing.



Grange Close Shops



Marlborough Court

Westerham's roofscapes are an outstanding feature, pleasing the eye with an immense range of pitches, heights, traditional materials and colours. Amongst all this profusion a flat roof, like that of the Grange Close shopping block, is out of keeping. Compare this with the Marlborough Court block next door, which has undoubtedly been improved by the recent addition of a pitched roof in place of its previous flat top.

A great deal of thought has obviously gone into design details and features. Arches, alleyways, finials and stone walls, to add interest; old hanging tiles, to beautify a new building; judicious use of soft landscaping to create harmony; sympathetic variation of materials to break up the starkness of a large structure.



Imaginative touches like these, provided always that they are in keeping with neighbouring styles are particularly welcome because they help to perpetuate those qualities of individuality and original thought which already make the centre of Westerham so uniquely pleasing.

Guideline 4/1.

New construction which may dominate or detract from historic buildings or block out the countryside vistas at the end of the town streets should not be permitted.

Guideline 4/2

The height, volume and overall appearance of any new building must be in proportion to what is already there. (Squeezing in three floors, for example, where neighbouring structures of similar height have only two, should not be permitted.)

Guideline 4/3.

Shopfront design should be kept simple, restrained in its use of colour, and in keeping with the surroundings; original design features, where these exist, should be kept.

Guideline 4/4

The profusion of road signs in the centre should be rationalised and harmonised.

Guideline 4/5.

Imaginative paving design, such as along the north side of The Green, is very welcome, and so is the old-style stone paving. The present brick pavement, however, is both inappropriate and slippery. Rough tarmac patches in some pavements need to be replaced.

Guideline 4/6.

Flat roofs are not acceptable; any future buildings should have pitched roofs, in keeping with the existing roofscapes of the town.

Guideline 4/7.

The imaginative use of design details - in windows, finials, barge-boards, hanging tiles, shaped bricks etc - should be encouraged so long as these do not clash with those on neighbouring buildings.



5: DEVELOPMENT

MADAN ROAD, A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT to the north-east of the town centre, consists mainly of older property with many traditional features - hung tiling, red scalloped tiles on upper storeys and gable ends, sash and bay windows. The estate has also suffered more modern infill development, and for the most part this has not been designed to blend in or to incorporate these features.



There are pleasant green spaces in the Madan Road, Hartley Road and Ash Road areas, and many of the houses are well set back from the road. There is a wide variety of fencing between the properties, including chain link; hedges would certainly have been preferable.

The Moreton's Court Almshouses and the former infants' school in London Road set a shining example of the use of Kentish ragstone (one young contributor to our survey wrote of the school that it is "old-fashand and nice"), but it's an example which has been followed too seldom by housing developers.





The same holds true in areas of the Parish where flint is a naturally available material - too little use seems to be made of it in new construction.

Wherever a wall or building containing ragstone is demolished, the stone should be saved for re-use.

Atterbury Close is a particularly good example of the use of materials of appropriate colours, and has replicated in its walls, windows, tiling etc. the character of the area. This is in sharp contrast to some other developments which have used materials which are not sympathetic to the overall nature of the town and don't reflect any of its intrinsic features.



St Mary's Court is commended as a good and well landscaped use of a central town site for sheltered housing - catering as it does for residents who need to be near the shops but own few or no cars.



Squerries Mede and Black Eagle Close are two developments in the western part of the town which blend well with its character. The Marwell-Farley Croft-Granville Road development to the north-west is sited on the side of a wooded hill, and this reduces the impact of its modern style housing. It also proves the importance in estate planning of preserving existing trees and, where necessary, planting new ones.



Any future construction work along the western A25 approach into Westerham - the Long Pond area - needs to be planned with regard to the risk of flooding.

We consider it essential that any future development where occupants or visitors may own cars, particularly in or near the town centre, should be provided with generous off-street parking. And given the vital importance of improving public transport in the future, space should also be allowed in new developments for the necessary facilities - bus stop laybys, turning circles, bus shelters etc.

Guideline 5/1.

There should be greater use of hedges as boundaries between properties in future developments.

Guideline 5/2.

A wider use of Kentish ragstone (and flint, in appropriate areas) should be encouraged. So should design features such as hung red tiling and coloured bricks. Ragstone should be salvaged from future demolition projects for re-use.

Guideline 5/3.

Any future infill development should be designed to be in keeping with the overall nature of the town (cf the colours and materials in Atterbury Close).

Guideline 5/4.

Preservation of existing trees and planting of new ones needs to be a central part of estate planning - cf. the softening and screening achieved in the Marwell development.

Guideline 5/5.

Any construction work along the western A25 approach into Westerham must have regard to the risk of flooding.

Guideline 5/6.

We think it essential that any future development liable to attract cars should be provided with generous off-street parking.

Guideline 5/7.

Future developments should also allow space for bus-stops and other public transport facilities.



6: OPEN SPACES

KING GEORGE'S FIELD is the largest of the town's open spaces. Lined with natural beech hedges on the north and south sides, it suffers from a less attractive line of conifers on the eastern boundary. The War Memorial Pavilion, never of a very pleasing design in the first place, has suffered further from the measures which had to be taken against persistent vandalism. The water features surrounding the park are not well kept.



The Bloomfield and Currant Hill allotments provide attractive rural settings as well as a good balance of land use between recreation and horticulture; this is important because it makes sure of a buffer between farmland and built-up areas.

The Darent car park brings effective design to a utilitarian space - with shrubs, rustic fencing, and block paving in which parking spaces have been delineated with coloured blocks instead of painted lines.



The restoration of the Long Pond (where in dry weather they soaked the wooden wheels of the drays from the Black Eagle brewery opposite, to swell and tighten them) is currently under way and will do much to beautify the western end of the town, while the Round Pond has long been popular as a place to feed the ducks and catch minnows.

Farley Lane, a fine example of a 'holloway' or sunken lane, was formed by the passage of livestock being driven to graze on Farley Common - a semi-wild open space of about five acres with some rare grasses and flowers.

The Common is an unusual and beautiful area which deserves to be kept with care.

Wherever the land is available, future developments should aim to follow the example of estates like Madan Road and Granville Road, in providing generous space within their borders for both private gardens and communal use.



Guideline 6/1.

Trees and hedges used for screening should be of a type that is in keeping with the area; there are varieties (e.g. beech) more appropriate to Westerham than conifer.

Guideline 6/2.

Water features, where they exist, deserve to be maintained and exploited to the full. They should not be culverted and built-upon.

Guideline 6/3.

The preservation of allotments should continue to have a high priority, acting as they do as a buffer between countryside and town.

Guideline 6/4.

Block paving, although more costly, is felt to be more appropriate than tarmac in the town's car parks.

Guideline 6/5.

Farley Common deserves special care for its grasses and flowers.

Guideline 6/6.

Generous open spaces should be allowed where possible within new housing developments.



7: COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

WESTERHAM'S MAIN INDUSTRIAL AREA lies just off the London Road to the north of the town, and is centred on the site of the old railway station.



Apart from some of the old station buildings which are now in use as business premises, the area consists of units built in the 1980s and 1990s. Those to the north of Hortons Way are used mainly by light industry, and those to the south are mostly offices.

Construction methods have varied from brick with metal cladding, to mostly metal clad. Some of the more

modern buildings use more brick and have shorter elevations, with a general colour in keeping with the overall character of the town. But the larger warehouse units have substantial metal elevations which give a sharp and not always welcome contrast with other buildings in the area.

A number of office buildings in the Churchill Court area have been designed with more imagination, but display few features typical of the architecture of the town; and the colour of materials is often in stark contrast to Westerham's more usual red brick.

Areas of detail such as air conditioning units are poorly, and in some cases barely, concealed; and the tinting of windows and the colour of blinds sometimes give a less than pleasing effect.

In future there should be more use of hedges, walls, fences, trees and shrubs in order to break up the outlines of larger buildings.



There is commerce outside this dedicated industrial area, an important example being the extraction of sand at the Squerryes sandpit between Farley Common and the M25. Here, more excavation is planned between the present workings and the motorway; but the pit, while large and very deep, is well sunken and not easily seen, and where landscaping has been completed to the west, the result is not at all unattractive. (Residents nearby are concerned about subsidence, however).



In a few places (Squerryes Court Farm, for example, and Betsoms Farm on Westerham Hill), old farm outbuildings have been converted for use by other businesses.

When this sort of conversion is done with skill and sensitivity, as it was in these instances, and so long as the new use doesn't significantly increase road traffic, it seems an excellent way of giving a new lease of life to ancient buildings of real beauty and character.

Where a number of firms share the same renovated premises, a single shared directory signboard is less likely to be intrusive than a proliferation of individual companies' boards.



Guideline 7/1.

Any new industrial building should reflect the features and colours of the town's existing architecture.

Guideline 7/2.

In particular, colour and texture should closely mirror those of more mature buildings in the area (such as the former infants' school).

Guideline 7/3.

Greater use of hedges, walls, fences, trees and shrubs should be considered, to break up the outlines of larger buildings. Unsightly details like air-conditioning equipment should be concealed.

Guideline 7/4.

So long as residents' fears about subsidence can be answered and re-landscaping done with the same care as hitherto, there seems to be no problem about the continuing excavation at Squerryes Sandpits.

Guideline 7/5.

The skilful and sensitive conversion of old redundant farm buildings for use by other businesses is welcomed.

DESIGN

Arches, Alleyways & Walls down to the finest details



FEATURES

- Finials, Windows, Tiles, Coloured & Shaped Bricks etc.

- all these can add interest and individuality



8: THE APPROACHES

OF THE FIVE MAIN ROAD APPROACHES into Westerham, the routes from the west along the A25 and from the north down Westerham Hill are undoubtedly the most attractive.

However, the area suffers from a surfeit of roadside signs. Advertising needs to be more strictly controlled, while traffic signs everywhere (including the town centre, as we mentioned earlier) should be rationalised and made clearer - especially those which direct drivers to the car parks and the industrial estate.



Perhaps the least attractive approach into the town is that provided by the Croydon Road. While Marlborough Court has been improved with the recent addition of a pitched roof, as we have reported elsewhere, still there remains some anxiety that it, and its neighbour the Grange Close shopping block, might one day be cited as precedents to allow similar big block buildings elsewhere in the town.



The Green Belt has generally preserved the beautiful and un-spoilt setting of the Parish. The walks round about are deservedly popular, being well marked, maintained and documented; and replanting and regeneration have done much to preserve the beauty of the woodlands in the face of catastrophic damage caused by the October 1987 hurricane.



However, we would stress that hedges are infinitely preferable to fences both for footpaths and roadsides.

The sheer proximity of the M25 presents Westerham with a constant problem of ambient noise. The task of solving this, by using noise reducing surfaces or any other means, should be given high priority.

Guideline 8/1.

The number and size of advertising signboards should be controlled more strictly, while road signs need to be rationalised and reduced outside the town as well as in it.

Guideline 8/2.

The existence of big block buildings like Marlborough Court should not provide a precedent for building similar structures in the future.

Guideline 8/3.

Hedges are preferable to fences for roadsides and footpaths.

Guideline 8/4.

The reduction of traffic noise from the M25 must have a high priority.

9: CROCKHAM HILL

CROCKHAM HILL IS SITUATED IN GREEN BELT LAND and designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A part of the area belongs to the National Trust, as a result of original purchases by its co-founder Octavia Hill together with later bequests. Chartwell ranks as one of its most visited properties.



On the high ground of the Greensand Ridge are some hundreds of acres of common land, through which winds a section of the Greensand Way. Lower down is farmland, whose use has changed over the years - from yesterday's hops, orchards and soft fruit to the sheep, cereals and oilseed rape of today.

The local farmers do excellent work in preserving the rich diversity of plants and animals indigenous to the area; and since their farmland edges into the very heart of Crockham Hill, it forms a major part of the village character - the genuine character of a living, working country community.



A number of farmhouses and oasts have become private dwellings, and pairs of farm cottages are now single houses. Older buildings are made of local stone, and many are tile hung. By the 1870s the spread of the railway had encouraged the building of larger houses, many of them sited on the slope to make the most of the spectacular view. By the beginning of the twentieth century the village had extended north and south with pairs of houses, built mainly for the staff of these large new properties.



In the twenties and thirties, individual houses with large gardens went up along Goodley Stock and Dairy Lane; in 1934 the first social housing appeared in the form of brick houses built in five pairs next to the Royal Oak, to give better accommodation to families living hitherto in cramped farm cottages.

Three more pairs followed at the end of the last war, then a block of flats for older people in the 50s and three pairs of bungalows in the 60s, also for the elderly.

The church, school and original vicarage are mid-Victorian, as are the local-stone cottages facing the main road. The recent school extension used stone with brick in a sympathetic colour; the Village Hall, too, blends well with the surroundings. Other notable groups of buildings include Froghole, which follows the curve of the Greensand Ridge and was the subject of many Rowland Hilder paintings, and Pootings, a settlement with some older houses (some of them clapboard), and some brick built homes.





Crockham Hill teaches some excellent lessons in the use of local materials and imaginative design features. The village centre and the few pre-1900 outlying farmhouses are of local golden brown sandstone/ragstone with chip stone pointing, slate or clay tile roofs, large brick chimneys and small casement windows.



New buildings or extensions should follow these examples. Their scale should be domestic - with small upright windows, in proportion to larger wall areas with a maximum of two storeys. Where double-glazing is used it should have external glazing bars and sight lines, and should match existing windows.

House roofs should be steep-pitched (47-50 degrees) and tiled with one-third/one-quarter hips at the ridge and tile-hung upper walls. Dormers should be kept small, and where renovation or extension are being carried out, brick chimneys should be retained.





Boundaries should ideally be of local stone or indigenous hedges (not woven timber panels), while gardens should aim to retain and enhance the features of the countryside - with use of mixed hedges, indigenous trees, ponds and local stone.

Crockham Hill is well served with open spaces - indeed it could be described as an open space itself, lying high on its south facing slope and protected by the Ridge from the chill northerlies.



There are three principal open spaces within the area - Crockham Hill Common, the War Memorial Playing Field and the Village Garden.

The Common forms part of the Squerryes Estate, and is criss-crossed with paths and bridleways - a mecca for dog walks and horse riding, with clearings for picnics. An open air church service has even been held there.



School Sports on the Playing Field

On the War Memorial Playing Field (bought and developed by local subscription along with Ministry of Education grants) there is football in winter, cricket in summer and tennis all year round. The children's play area is a great attraction, and annual events include the Parish Church Fête with its stalls and sideshows, and the Crockham Hill School Sports Day.

The Village Garden was donated to the villagers - an especially precious space, set right in the centre. Local people have been taught to do an expert job of pruning the trees, which provide a beautiful canopy under which villagers and visitors can rest.



There are more open spaces round the Primary School, which also has a tarmac area large enough for netball, Maypole dancing etc., while below it is a field owned by the National Trust but not quite big enough for team games. Open pasture below the church - another gift to the community - provides a pleasant picnic site.

Spaces like these are fully used for country sports by a very wide range of local people. They are all vital to the open character of Crockham Hill, and thus to its very personality. They deserve to be strictly protected from the threat of any future infill development.

Guideline 9/1.

Any future construction, extension or alteration must follow the good examples already set - with maximum use of local materials and traditional methods on a domestic scale - e.g. small upright windows in proportion to wall areas, a maximum two storeys etc.

Guideline 9/2.

Any new house-roofs should be steep-pitched (47-50 degrees) to blend with those of existing houses.

Guideline 9/3.

In any renovation or extension the size of new dormer windows should be restricted, and brick chimneys retained wherever possible.

Guideline 9/4.

Boundaries should be marked by local stone walls or indigenous hedges - not by woven timber panels.

Guideline 9/5.

Gardens should aim to retain and enhance the features of the countryside - e.g. with variegated hedges, indigenous trees, ponds and local stone.

Guideline 9/6.

The open spaces of Crockham Hill are central to its open, spacious character. They are in continual use by the community, and deserve to be strictly protected from any future infill development.



APPENDIX: TRAFFIC & PARKING

WE MENTIONED IN AN EARLIER SECTION that Westerham's shopping area has already contracted very considerably, with little retail activity west of the Croydon Road.



We must at least hold the line at that point if the town is to continue to thrive. That means learning to manage the motor car. That, in a perfect world, means keeping out the vehicles we don't want, and welcoming in the vehicles we do.

The Air Quality Review and Assessment published in March 1999 by Sevenoaks District Council records traffic flows of 125,000 vehicles a day on the M25 between Junctions 5 (Sevenoaks) and 6 (Godstone), and 25,500 a day at Westerham Rd/Worships Hill, Sevenoaks.

The Review goes on to predict that in five years from now those flows will have grown to 160,000 and 32,200 respectively - an increase of 28% on the M25 and 26% on the A25.

The A25 is already the relief road for the M25, as we see all too clearly when a motorway holdup occurs: a hiccup on the motorway equals a thrombosis in the town. So if the District Council's predictions are even halfway correct, Westerham must surely be in line for total cardiac arrest.

This prospect, together with the continuing threat to safety, health and the environment posed by today's ever heavier lorries, provides a strong argument for bypass surgery. A way must be found to divert through traffic round the town, and make room for the cars of those who actually want to drive into it - for shopping, for refreshment and for tourism.



When the people of Westerham were asked to comment on the initial reports produced by the survey teams, the extension of the Beggars Lane bypass was one of their most oft-repeated requests.

However, we have to recognise that the Squerryes sandpits are a formidable obstacle which may make it difficult for an extended bypass to reach the A25 to the west, and may force it to stop instead at the Croydon Road. In that event only traffic between Sevenoaks and the Croydon direction would be able to bypass the town.

Alternatively, a complete bypass might be achieved by using land already owned by the Council, close alongside the M25.

While we hope that the authorities will continue to strive for a solution to relieve the problem of through traffic, we suggest that far tighter control could be exercised on the vehicles which stop in the town. There should be a greater insistence on the use of the existing public car parks through tougher policing of parking regulations. There should also be a requirement that any new housing liable to attract residents' cars (i.e. not sheltered housing) includes in its plans a reasonable provision for those cars to park.

Although the town is not particularly short of public car parks (the Darenth facility, for example, is seldom if ever full), these are not well sited for the visitor who wants to eat, drink or shop in the centre. If Westerham's commerce is to survive, it must be kept attractive and convenient to the visiting motorist.



We appreciate that official policy does not favour making car parks entirely free of charge, since this would remove any sanction against dumping. But long term parkers might make more use of the Darent and Quebec Avenue car parks if the charge were reduced to a merely nominal sum to make up for their inconvenient siting.

For shoppers and others who need to park for shorter periods, we recommend that pay-and-display facilities should be installed on the north side of Market Square and in the thirteen public spaces to be contained in the new development behind the Kings Arms. The pay-and-display system is simple to enforce, and yields a revenue which could surely cover all or most of the cost of the warden required.

In Crockham Hill the principal cause for concern is speed. It is generally accepted that there is no solution to the increasing volume of traffic and the size of commercial vehicles, since these are problems endemic to the South-East generally.

It is felt - and strongly felt - that control of unnecessary speed should be possible, that the present traffic calming measures are not working, and that new methods to protect this vulnerable community - living as it does on fast downhill stretches of main road - are most urgently needed.

Guideline A/1.

While we acknowledge that there may be difficulties in planning a complete town bypass for Westerham, we hope that efforts will continue to find relief from the problem of through traffic.

Guideline A/2.

Given that the existing car parks are under-used, more rigorous policing is needed of the existing parking regulations in the town.

Guideline A/3.

We suggest reducing the Darent and Quebec Avenue car park charges to a nominal level, to compensate for their inconvenient siting and encourage long-term parking in them.

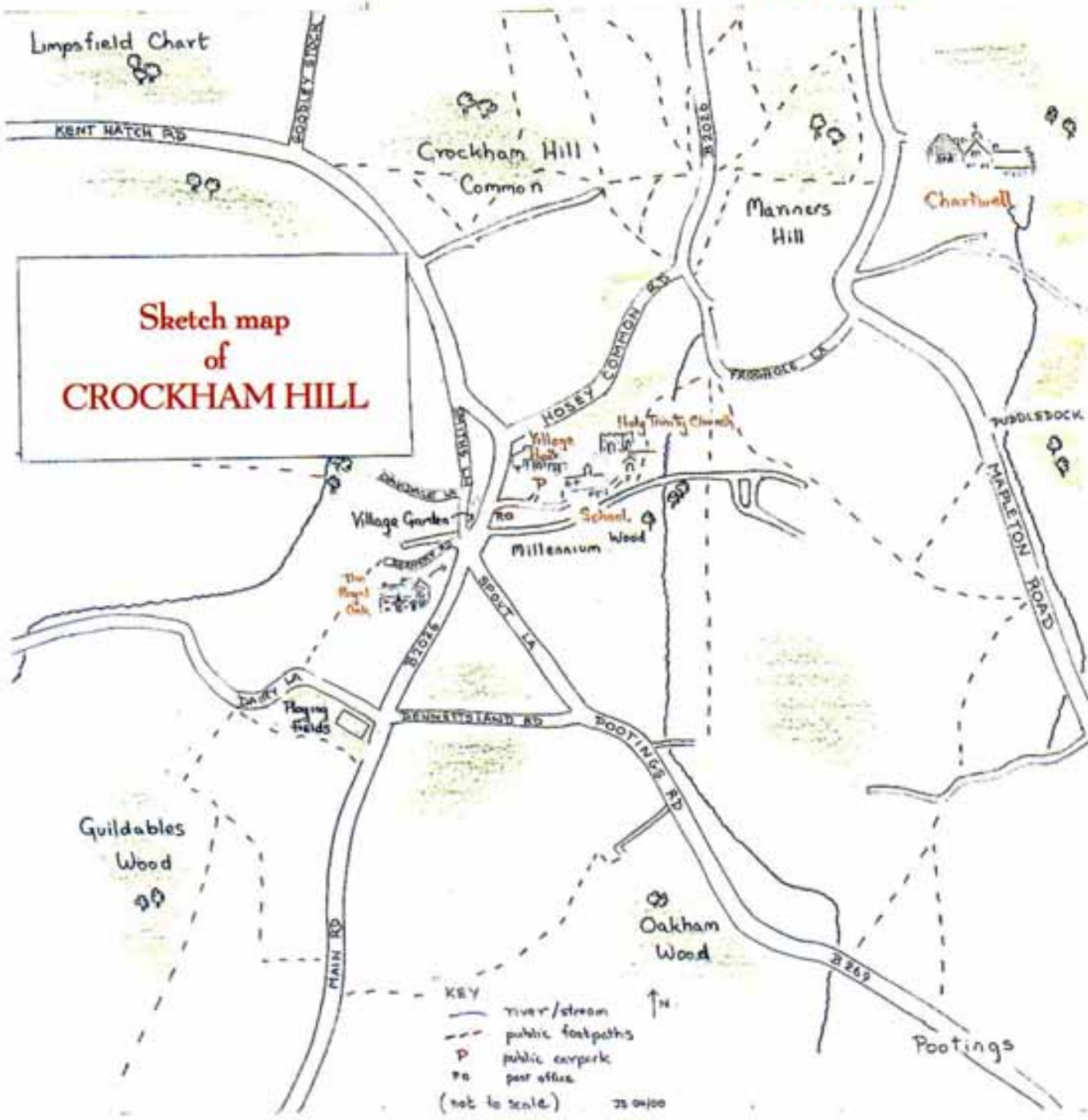
Guideline A/4.

We recommend charging on a pay-and-display basis for parking in Market Square and in the thirteen public spaces behind the Kings Arms, to provide parking for short-stay shoppers.

Guideline A/5.

The Crockham Hill community faces a particular problem of speeding traffic on fast downhill stretches of main road. Existing calming measures do not seem to be succeeding in reducing speeds, and new methods to protect the community are urgently needed.


 map of
WESTERHAM
 inside front cover



**Sketch map
 of
 CROCKHAM HILL**

