

Detling Conservation Area Appraisal



Maidstone Borough Council
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DETLING CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

I. Introduction

The Definition, Purpose and Effect of Conservation Areas

The concept of conservation areas was introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, but the relevant legislation is now contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. This places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate. Conservation Areas are defined in the legislation as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Designation as a conservation area brings additional powers to the local authority. Briefly these include the control of demolition of most unlisted buildings, more restricted permitted development rights for single dwelling houses and a notification system relating to works to trees not covered by a tree preservation order.

In addition to these enhanced powers, the local authority is also required when dealing with applications for planning permission to have special regard to the question of whether or not the proposed development would either preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area. There is a presumption that developments which would not preserve or enhance this special character should be refused planning permission.

The Purpose of the Appraisal

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time in order to consider the possibility of revising their boundaries and to identify changes and pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation. In order that informed decisions can be made on planning applications it is important to identify the special character of conservation areas which it is sought to preserve or enhance.

The most appropriate form for fulfilling these requirements is the production of a conservation area appraisal for each individual conservation area. English Heritage published an advisory booklet on the form which conservation area appraisals should take in February 2006 and this current appraisal has been prepared in accordance with these guidelines. It is intended to identify the key elements which combine to produce the special historic and architectural interest of the conservation area, to analyse how they interact and impact upon one another and to explain how the area has developed into its current form. It will also seek to identify pressures and developments which threaten the special character of the conservation area and sites and features which detract from its character and appearance.

The clear understanding of the conservation area's qualities which the appraisal will produce will provide suggestions for future policies and improvements as well as providing a framework against which decisions on individual planning proposals may be assessed. These will be further elaborated in the future in a separate Conservation Area Management Plan.

History of Designation

The Detling Conservation Area was first designated by Kent County Council on 7 August 1970. It comprises the whole of the main village street (The Street) between its junction with Hockers Lane to the south and the A249 (Detling Hill) to the north and extends a short way to the east along Pilgrims Way to encompass two outlying listed buildings. It includes almost the full extent of the medieval village.

There is no individual designation report surviving for the Conservation Area, so the precise reasons for its designation are unknown. However, it seems to form part of a comprehensive programme of conservation area designations carried out by Kent County Council between 1969 and 1970 which covered the major historic towns and villages throughout the county. It may be inferred that the reasons for designation would have related to the concentration of listed and other historic buildings surviving in the village centre, the generally attractive appearance of the village and the survival of the original form and pattern of development of the village largely unscathed within the original centre (as opposed to modern suburban development to the south and east). A predominance of traditional local building materials may also have been germane to designation.

Location and Topography

Detling village lies approximately four miles north-east of Maidstone town centre just off the main A249 Maidstone to Sheerness road. It lies on a gently sloping shelf at the foot of the North Downs chalk escarpment which forms a wooded backdrop to the north of the village. The village is underlain by the Lower Chalk, the oldest of the chalk formations. The main village street slopes gently upwards from south to north from a height of approximately 101 metres AOD at the junction of The Street with Hockers Lane to about 118 metres AOD at the intersection with Pilgrims Way.

Land immediately to the west of the conservation area remains undeveloped as open farmland. To the north, across the A249, the wooded slopes of the North Downs rise to a crest height of about 190 metres AOD. Southwards from the conservation area a long stretch of inter-war and post-war ribbon development extends along Hockers Lane as far as the railway bridge. East of the conservation area 19th and 20th century developments extend for a short distance along Pilgrims Way and later 20th century housing estates infill the angle between Pilgrims Way and The Street.

The conservation area boundary closely follows the rear plot boundaries of development on either side of The Street and to the north is formed by the A249. To the south the boundary excludes 20th century development beyond the historic village core but includes the modern graveyard extension on the

opposite side of the road from the Parish Church of St. Martin. Within the conservation area development is fairly intensive and continuous, although in general the eastern side of the street is more closely developed with narrower plots and most buildings erected up to the back edge of the pavement. Plots also tend to be less deep from front to rear than on the western side of the street. On the west side of The Street development tends to be larger in scale, more spaciouly laid out and set back from the road to a greater or lesser degree with trees forming prominent features in the street scene.

The entire village lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where planning policies seek to give priority to the natural beauty of the landscape over other planning considerations and which aim to ensure that development which would adversely affect this natural beauty will be strongly resisted.

Article 4 Directions

The character of conservation areas can suffer significantly from the cumulative impact of "minor alterations" which can be carried out to single dwelling houses as "permitted development" under the General Planning and Development Order without the need for planning permission. Such alterations can include replacement windows and doors and re-roofing in inappropriate non-traditional materials.

The Local Authority can seek to bring such minor alterations under planning control by the use of Directions under Article 4 of the General Planning and Development Order. A full Article 4 Direction requires the approval of the Secretary of State, but the Council can make an Article 4(2) Direction within a conservation area without the need for such approval. An Article 4(2) Direction can only relate to development fronting a highway, waterway or open space and is restricted to bringing under control specific forms of development within the curtilages of single dwelling houses.

There are no Article 4 Directions currently in force within Detling Conservation Area.

II Historical Development

Archaeology

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Conservation Area and no systematic archaeological exploration of the area has taken place. There are no major obvious archaeological features and knowledge is confined to chance finds or archaeological watching briefs associated with new development for the most part.

The earliest evidence of human activity in the vicinity of Detling is a Mesolithic flint working site just over a kilometre south-east of Detling church (actually in Thurnham parish). This is unlikely to indicate permanent settlement as Mesolithic society (of the period c.10,000 B.C to c. 4,001 B.C) was an essentially nomadic one of hunter-gatherers. The site's proximity to the Pilgrims Way and even closer association with the route of the "Green Way"

which parallels it at a slightly lower elevation may suggest that these acknowledged prehistoric routes were already established by this date.

The earliest farmers who settled permanently on land in Britain are associated with the Neolithic period (c. 4,000 B.C to c. 2,351 B.C). In 1936 evidence of this period was found in the grounds of East Court, just outside the present conservation area, in the form of flint flakes and a pottery shard. Lynchets (terraces formed by ploughing on a slope) were also observed in the vicinity and may date from the same period.

No evidence has come to light regarding Bronze Age activity in the Detling area but a number of sites and finds from the later Iron Age show that the vicinity was occupied in the period before the Roman Invasion of 42 A.D. When a new parsonage was under construction on the eastern side of the village street in 1831 a number of brown and black urns and two brooches of La Tene III type were found in digging the foundations. This presumably indicates a cremation-burial ground suggesting nearby settlement. The settlement may have been sited to the south and south-west of the present village as two sites have been identified in recent years. The first, to the east of the A249 just north of Horish Wood, comprised a series of ditches and pits and has been identified as a late Iron Age/early Romano-British settlement; the second, found as part of the archaeological evaluation of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, lies just to the east of Hockers Lane and included ditches, gullies, pits, postholes, pottery, animal bone and burnt stone. This site has also been assigned to the late Iron/early Roman period and is interpreted as being associated with occupation nearby. It is possible that these two sites form part of a single settlement complex. An enamel on bronze stud of Roman date found adjacent to Horish Wood when the Detling By-pass was being constructed in 1961 is further evidence of activity in the same vicinity at the same time.

There is also evidence of late Iron Age use of the Pilgrim's Way shown by chance finds of stater coins at two locations near it to the west of Detling village.

Further evidence of Roman activity in the area is shown by the villa at Thurnham, just over a kilometre to the south-east of Detling church.

Evidence of medieval settlement presumably lies to be found within the bounds of the village centre and in a few cases upstanding buildings remain from this period. One chance find, of an iron key of 13th-14th century date, was made in the grounds of the village primary school on 1977. Outside the village, to the west of the A249, a medieval ditched enclosure was found as part of the archaeological works associated with the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The precise nature of this monument is not fully understood but there is evidence of domestic occupation.

Evidence of post-medieval industry remains in physical form in the scarp slope of the North Downs to the north of the village in the form of large chalk pits which formerly contained a lime kiln.

Development History

The earliest written record of Detling is in the Domesday Monachorum of circa 1087 which lists estates held by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury and the Bishop of Rochester where there is an entry for Dytlinge. A church is recorded. The origins of the village, however, probably lie in the relatively early stages of the Jutish settlement of Kent in the 6th or 7th centuries A.D. There is known to have been an early Jutish estate based in Maidstone which included Boxley, Detling, Bearsted, Otham, Loose, Linton and Boughton Monchelsea, and it has been postulated that this may reflect an earlier Roman land holding. Maidstone was a royal estate centre of the Jutish/Anglo Saxon period and Detling was always closely tied to it, with the church remaining a chapel-of-ease to All Saints Maidstone until post-medieval times.

Detling was reputedly in the possession of the Archbishops of Canterbury prior to the Norman Conquest (as was the manor of Maidstone, a royal gift). It was seized by Bishop Odo immediately after the Conquest but recovered by the Archbishop in 1076.

Place-name scholars usually ascribe settlement names ending in "...ing" to the early Saxon period although not to the period of primary settlement. Opinions are divided as to the meaning of the place-name – the suffix "...ing" is often considered to be applied to a personal name, and Glover's Place-names of Kent therefore suggests "Dyttel's People", but other interpretations include "settlement of men of a lumpy, rounded stature" or a derivation from a topographical feature, possibly a hill name "people of the hill").

More certain, probably, are the reasons for a settlement growing up in this location. These are largely to do with communications and geology.

The upper and lower limits of the medieval village street are defined by the prehistoric trackways of the Pilgrims Way and the Green Way which cross it at right angles, and I.D. Margery suggested in *Archaeologia Cantiana* in 1946 that the latter of these may have been adapted and straightened by the Romans. These two important and long-established east-west routes were supplemented in the period between the Roman and Norman conquests by a plethora of routes trending north-east to south-west across the geological grain of the county – leaving aside the Roman Watling Street and modern motorways, these lines of communication remain dominant in Kent to this day. Their origin lies in the practice of transhumance which was an essential characteristic of farming in early Kentish society, particularly in the centuries preceding the Norman Conquest. Livestock (mainly pigs but some cattle) would be driven from their home villages north of the Downs (the earliest area of post-Roman settlement) during the summer months to detached pasturelands in The Weald. Detling grew up at a point where two of these drove routes met and crossed the east-west routes of the Pilgrims Way and the Green Way. The first of these drove routes linked the important royal estate centres of Maidstone and Milton Regis and is mirrored by the A249 today; the second ran from Rainham to the Staplehurst/Marden area. Both joined together at the Green Way and diverged again after crossing the Pilgrims Way – united they formed the basis for the village street of Detling. It is notable that until a relatively late date the manor

of Detling held various pieces of land in the area between Staplehurst and Marden, at the end of the old drove road.

Added to the importance of the location as the crossing point of various routes, the geological conditions made the vicinity conducive to settlement. Alan Everitt has noted that the two earliest settled areas of Kent in the post-Roman period were the lower dip-slopes of the North Downs and Holmesdale. Although, strictly applied, the term Holmesdale should only be attached to the feature west of the Medway, this narrow but fertile and well-watered vale running parallel to and beneath the escarpment of the North Downs continues east of the river and includes the settlement of Detling. Many of the other villages along Holmesdale are classic spring-line settlements, located where water which has percolated through the permeable chalk of the Downs reaches the surface again where the Gault clay strata are exposed. Detling appears to lie above the spring line now (streams currently emerging in Horish Wood to the south) although Everitt again suggests that many villages with the "ing" suffix in Kent are often associated with a spring location. It may be that Detling was sited close to the spring but on drier land above it where the stiff Gault clay was overlain by the chalk.

Apart from the place-name evidence, an early date for the foundation of Detling is also possibly suggested by the dedication of its church to St. Martin – there appears to have been an early Kentish cult associated with this patron saint of the oldest church in the county at Canterbury, founded in the 6th century by the Kentish Queen who was of Frankish background as was St Martin of Tours. The church's location immediately adjacent to the original manorial site of West Court may suggest that it was originally a private foundation. Given the manor's association with the Archbishops of Canterbury and possibly the Kentish royal family, it is feasible that its foundation may be the responsibility of either.

By King John's reign in the early 13th century the manor was held by knights service from the archbishop by William de Detling. The de Detling family later assumed the surname of Brampton and resided at Detling Court until the late 14th century. By the 15th century at the latest, given the evidence of surviving buildings, Detling had assumed the size which it was to keep until the late 19th century and which is reflected in the conservation area boundary.

In the early 16th century the lack of a male heir caused the division of the Manor of Detling into two – West Court and East Court. West Court was the original manor house and appears to have been rebuilt about this time from the evidence of the surviving building. East Court occupied a site just outside the present Conservation Area in the angle between Detling Hill and Pilgrims Way. Cave-Browne, the vicar of Detling, writing in 1880 suggested that it may have been converted from an old medieval hospitium on the Pilgrims Way. He describes it as having stood just inside the Tudor gateway which still fronts on to Pilgrims Way and says that it was an L-shaped building with an entrance door in the angle and windows in the south gable looking down the village street. This building appears to have been demolished in the mid 19th century and replaced by the present East Court.

The two manors were re-united in 1766 by the Foote family, who inherited East Court and purchased West Court, but were subsequently divided again and only finally re-united in 1850.

Detling may have experienced an increase in through-traffic when the Maidstone – Sittingbourne road was turnpiked in 1769. Turnpike Trusts were established by Acts of Parliament and enabled the construction of better roads with their maintenance financed by the collection of tolls.

In the 1790s, Edward Hasted in his History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, described Detling as follows: -

“The village of Detling is situated at the foot of the chalk hills, the turnpike road from Maidstone, over the hill here, to Key Street and Sittingbourne, leading through it; the manor of East and West Court are situated in it, the church stands near the west side of it. This street seems antiently to have been called Polley Street from the family of that name which had its original here, where they resided.

The soil of this parish, upon and below the hill, consists in general of chalk and is very poor and unfertile.

In the whole it is an unfrequented parish, and would be more so, and but little known was it not for the turnpike road through it. The air is very healthy, but the chalky stony soil makes it exceedingly unpleasant either to dwell in it or pass through it.”

The family after who Polley Street was named would have been the Pollehills and their house at Pollyfields on top of the downs on the old road towards Rainham still survives. In the early 19th century, Detling probably still had the essential character of the medieval village and had not expanded beyond its confines, but change and expansion were to follow as the century progressed.

In 1831 a grand new vicarage was built in substantial gardens on the east side of the village street, involving the loss of the old church farm including the original tithe barn which had been described in 1648 as “contayning three bayes, walde with borde and covered with thatche”.

The East Court estate was sold by auction on 10 June 1834 and the auction particulars survive at the Centre for Kentish Studies. These particulars include a map which shows that at that time the old manor house as described by Cave-Browne still stood just inside the Tudor gateway, with its formal gardens to the east adjoining Pilgrims Way and its farmyard to the north. The auction brochure describes a main dwelling house containing dining room, drawing room, a small study, 6 chambers, 3 attics, a front and back kitchen, wash-house and brew house, a dairy, store-room, cellars and offices. It also describes a nag stable for 5 horses with loft over and coach house and a dove house stacked with 200 couples of pigeons, a walled garden “planted with the choicest fruit trees” and excellent agricultural buildings including a large stable, a barn, an oast-house with 8 kilns, a cow house, piggeries and lodges. Three labourers’ cottages are also listed as being situated immediately adjoining the farmyard. Tellingly the brochure describes the property as being “a splendid

site for the erection of a Gentleman's Residence should the present not be adequate to the desires of a purchaser."

Such redevelopment did not, however, take place immediately, and the old manor house is still shown on the Tithe Map of circa 1843 although some redevelopment of the farmyard appears to have taken place. With the exception of the East Court site much of the rest of the village as shown on the Tithe Map is recognisably that which exists within the conservation area today – notable exceptions being the vicarage (demolished in the 1960s), some later 19th century redevelopment in the middle section of the eastern side of The Street, and the vacant site on the west side of The Street later to provide the site for the village school. However, it is clear that at this date the village houses all still backed on to open fields and the village had not expanded beyond its medieval limits.

Some impression of the character of Detling can be gleaned from Bagshaw's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Kent published in 1847, which lists tradesmen within the village. Apart from farmers (including those at West Court and East Court) the following trades were represented within the village:

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- Carpenter
- Innkeeper (The Cock)
- Butcher
- Corn miller and seedsman
- Baker and corn dealer
- Boot and shoemaker
- Grocer and blacksmith
- Wheelwright
- Shopkeeper
- Beerhouse keeper

Cave-Browne makes reference to an expansion of the village between 1830 and 1880 (when he was writing) by people attracted to its "healthy and picturesque" position. He refers to a number of houses which would probably qualify for the epithet "gentleman's residence" – East Court, Lynchfield, The Croft and Hillfield. The old manor house at East Court was probably finally demolished in 1850 when the manor was re-united and the present East Court house built on a new site – the Tudor gateway, the stables, a small barn and the dovecot remain to this day as reminders of the earlier dwelling. Lynchfield stood opposite The Cock on the north side of Pilgrims Way where it had been built before 1876 – it was demolished in 1961 to make way for the Detling Bypass. The Croft and Hillfield stand further out to east and west along the Pilgrims Way, well outside the Conservation Area.

By 1855 there were 68 children living in Detling Parish, and Robert Rugg of East Court bought a piece of vacant land on the western side of the village street for £150 and donated it to enable the provision of a village school. He gave a further £150 towards the cost of building the school, which was completed at a total cost of £600 on 14 October 1856. The school building was designed by the architect Martin Bulmer of Maidstone and as built provided a single schoolroom to the south end with a 2-storey master's house at the north

end comprising a living room, kitchen, scullery, pantry and three bedrooms. It was later enlarged in 1890 to provide a separate infants classroom and then expanded again in separate buildings in 1962 and 1970.

Other than the development of the school and Lynchfield House and the redevelopment of East Court, the 1876 Ordnance Survey Map shows little change within the village centre. A Post Office is shown in Holly Cottages in the west side of the street.

Cave-Browne, writing in 1880, says that: -

“Much of the present picturesque character of the village is due to the late Mr J S Rugg who with considerable antiquarian feeling delighted to preserve the old wooden cottages that were still left standing, and whose love for timber rescued many an ornamental tree from the woodsman’s axe.”

Perhaps it is in part due to this early conservationist that the 1896 Ordnance Survey Map shows only minor changes since 1876. Burleigh Villa has been built between these years, apparently within the vicarage garden, and the terrace immediately to its north has been extended to the north at a higher elevation. The original 16th century wing of No. 26 The Street appears to have been truncated at its northern end to provide a forecourt in front of a smithy building (a layout perpetuated today by the garage building set back from the street). On the western side of The Street there has been even less change, although the oast house at West Court Farm has developed a third kiln indicating an upswing in the hop market – this later kiln being demolished when the oast was converted to a dwelling in the 1970s. One interesting development concerns the road to Maidstone and the churchyard. Apparently the large yew tree in the churchyard was overhanging the road and causing an obstruction to traffic. The solution was to enlarge the churchyard into the road and swing the road slightly further to the south. Evidence of this churchyard extension can be seen today in the eastern boundary wall where there is a clear change in building materials at the former southern limit of the churchyard.

Outside the village by 1896 the large chalk quarry on Lynch Bank immediately above Detling Hill is shown to have fallen into disuse.

The years preceding the First World War appear to have left little physical mark on the village, although the development of the airfield at the top of Detling Hill was a product of that conflict and soldiers en route to Belgium and France camped in the fields adjacent to the village but left no permanent evidence of their stay. One development of the Edwardian period did have a lasting effect on village life – the opening of the Detling Reservoir by the Maidstone Water Works Company in Pilgrims Way in 1908 superseded the various private wells in the village which are a feature of earlier maps and also resulted in the removal of the public pump outside Well Cottage at the top end of the village street.

The inter-war years saw the first major expansion of Detling village beyond its medieval confines. Perhaps surprisingly this did not take place along the main

Maidstone Road but to the south along the quieter Hockers Lane where it took the form of classic ribbon development. Little change, however, appears to have taken place within the conservation area where properties on both sides of the street still backed on to open fields. Further development took place towards Pilgrims Way to the junction with Harpole Lane. The top end of The Street was widened in 1938 on its western side after a road traffic accident.

In the years after 1945, however, change has been more rapid and widespread than at any other time, although within the conservation area it has been relatively limited. Most development has taken place to the east of the original village in the angle formed by The Street and Pilgrims Way. The earliest of these developments appears to have been Queens Way, formed at least partially on the vicarage grounds and apparently developed in the early/mid 1950s. The early 19th century vicarage was itself demolished and a replacement erected in 1963, closer to The Street – further development of its former site and grounds took place in the late 1960s (Princes Way).

Meanwhile, in 1961-62 through traffic was finally removed from the village street by the construction of the Detling Bypass to the west of the village. The benefits of this in traffic terms and to the quality of life in The Street were off-set by the demolition of Lynchfield House and the severing affect of the busy dual carriageway road on that part of the village stretching westward along the Pilgrims Way.

In the 1970s development of a number of substantial detached houses took place in the grounds of East Court, just outside the conservation area boundary. Fortunately this development included the conversion of the old stable buildings and the retention of a number of old outbuildings associated with East Court, although the style and layout of the new houses is somewhat out of character with the established village pattern.

Within the conservation area change has been limited in the post-war period to a small number of infill plots and the conversion of some agricultural buildings and shops to residential use, none of which have had a major impact on its character or appearance.

III Character Appraisal

General Village Character

The original pattern of development of the medieval village is a simple linear one along The Street which until recent years formed part of the main route from Maidstone to Sittingbourne. A small amount of development also took place along the Pilgrims Way, particularly to the east, but the concentration of buildings along The Street indicates that this formed the main route from the earliest time of the village's development.

Behind this ribbon of development remained open fields until the latter half of the 20th century. Now only the western side of the village exhibits this sharp interface between the original built-up area and open agricultural land and it is important to the setting of the conservation area that this open land be preserved. Viewed from the south-western approach from the A249 it is still

possible to visualise the historic appearance of the village as modern development is largely hidden and the dominant elements are the church tower, the white caps of the oast kilns at West Court Farm and the trees of the village against the backdrop of the wooded North Downs.

The Street itself is more or less continuously developed between the parish church at its southern end and the cross roads with the Pilgrims Way at its northern end. However, there is a marked difference between the character of development on its eastern and western sides, probably explained by the fact that the west side of The Street comprised the original manorial site. Consequently, the western side of The Street is generally developed at a lower density with buildings set back from the road and with trees forming dominant features. The more intensively-developed eastern side of The Street features generally smaller properties on smaller plots, set either right up to the road or behind small forecourts.

The north-western quadrant of the junction of The Street/Pilgrims Way/Detling Hill remains underdeveloped, although originally it formed part of the grounds of the Victorian mansion of Lynchfield, demolished circa 1960 to make way for the Detling Bypass. It now forms an attractively wooded area whose trees close the view northwards along The Street and also screen the busy A249 from view; it also contains the recently-erected RAF War Memorial which forms a small focal point at the north end of The Street.

Another minor focal point is formed by the Cock Horse Inn, which partially closes the view into the village centre from the eastern arm of the Pilgrims Way, but the only major focal building in the village is the parish church which dominates the south-western approach to Detling and forms a most effective gateway feature at the entrance to the Conservation Area.

The part of the conservation area which extends into the Pilgrims Way again has a different character on each side of the road. On the south side are the two listed cottages, Caresend and The Cottage, set back from the road behind low hedgerows, whilst the north side of the road is strongly-defined by the old flint, brick and ragstone boundary wall to the former East Court from behind which peep the roofs and gables of modern houses built in the grounds of East Court.

Within the conservation area there is a wide range of building age, ranging from work of circa 1100 in the Parish Church to houses built within the last few years. However, the dominant periods from which examples of buildings survive are the 15th-17th centuries and the 19th century. With the exception of the church, buildings in the village are small in scale, two storeys being the norm. Again, except for the church, a vernacular form of architecture predominates with hardly any examples of "polite" architecture –even the manor house at West Court is a relatively modest vernacular building. A fairly wide range of building materials are exhibited within the conservation area, but for the most part they are of local provenance or appropriate to the locality; for walls there are examples of red and yellow stock brick, painted brick, ragstone, flint, render, weatherboarding (dark-stained or white-painted), clay hanging tiles and exposed timber-framing; roofs are consistent, being predominately clay-tiled, although there are some examples of slate and of modern concrete

tiles, the latter of which are visually unfortunate. The predominance of steep roof pitches means that roofs are major elements of the character of the conservation area. Some roofs contain dormer windows to light attic accommodation, but with a couple of exceptions these are of appropriate scale and design and are not visually intrusive.

The individual merit of a number of the buildings in the Conservation Area has been recognised by Central Government and a total of 19 structures are protected from unauthorised alteration or demolition by being statutorily listed as buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Most other buildings in the Conservation Area make some positive contribution to its character and there are only isolated cases of buildings which detract from it. However, most of the unlisted buildings in the village centre have been subjected to minor changes such as the replacement of windows and doors in UPVC, the cumulative effect of which has been to erode the character of the Conservation Area. Such changes in the case of single dwelling houses have occurred with the benefit of permitted development rights under the planning acts and thus were not subject to planning control.

Small details elsewhere can also impact on the character of the Conservation Area, either for good or for bad. Street furniture, for example, where it is historic or of good design, can make a positive contribution and add to local distinctiveness. A good example of this is the listed K6 telephone kiosk in The Street, but it is a solitary one. A major detraction to the character of the Conservation Area is the existence of a large amount of overhead wiring and the associated telegraph poles – there is a particularly obtrusive one outside the Post Office, and another one behind the Cock Horse is an unfortunate feature at the northern entrance to the Conservation Area. The crash-barrier at the junction of The Street with Hockers Lane is another unattractive feature, made all the worse for being at a focal point at the entrance to the Conservation Area.

There is no historic paving within the Conservation Area – pavements are almost exclusively black tarmac and kerbs are standard concrete ones. Around the listed telephone kiosk is an area of recently laid brick paving carried out as an environmental improvement by the Parish Council.

There are a variety of boundary treatments within the Conservation Area. Some of these are attractive – examples are the boundary wall to East Court along Pilgrims Way, the flint wall between nos. 38 and 40 The Street, the picket fence in front of East Court Cottages and the brick walls in front of Vine House and Well Cottage and the Primary School in The Street. Elsewhere there are examples of unfortunate modern enclosures of inappropriate materials or detail which detract from the character of the Conservation Area such as close-boarded fencing, concrete blocks or modern bricks and railings.

Mention must also be made of the important contribution of trees to the character of the conservation Area. This is particularly marked on the west side of The Street where Tree Preservation Order No 4 of 1973 protects an area of trees between West Court Farm and the Primary School, (as well as another group on the opposite side of The Street to the south of the old vicarage). Just outside the Conservation Area trees in the grounds of East Court are protected

by Tree Preservation Order No 10 of 1975. Other important groups of trees are those between the western arm of Pilgrims Way and the Detling Bypass, behind Well Cottage and the churchyard. Single trees which make a particularly positive contribution can be found in front of Tithe Barn, behind the wall adjacent to the Tudor gateway to East Court and in the grounds of the Primary School.

Land uses within the Conservation Area can have a bearing on its character. Detling is predominately residential in character but within the Conservation Area it still has the feeling of a village centre with the activity that goes with it. Although the variety of shops listed in Victorian directories no longer exists there is still a well stocked local general store and Post Office providing for the convenience needs of local residents. Other social facilities are provided by the village primary school, The Cock Horse public house and the Parish Church. Employment opportunities are also offered by the Mid Kent Electrical Engineering Company at Chiltern Works. All of these facilities add to the vitality of the Conservation Area, an essential part of its character, and deserve to be protected as far as possible. However, Detling Primary School is currently threatened with closure from July 2007.

Finally, mention must be made of noise. It is an unfortunate feature of the Conservation Area that there is considerable intrusion of traffic noise from the A249. At night the street lighting of this major road also results in significant light pollution.

Village Analysis/Approaches and Views

There are four major approaches to the Conservation Area; from the A249 to the south-west, from Hockers Lane to the south, and from east and west along the Pilgrims Way.

The approach from the south-west probably forms the most attractive of these. Having turned off the busy A249 onto a country lane, the church tower of Detling becomes an immediate focal point seen in a landscape of open arable fields as the only built element overtopping a horizon generally formed of trees. It acts as a beacon beckoning onwards and announcing the presence of the village, which is otherwise suggested by the kilns of West Court Oast and glimpses of other roofs. The importance of the openness of the foreground in this view and the sharp demarcation between farmland and village cannot be overstressed, and this is the only approach to the Conservation Area where the original setting survives. Views out of the Conservation Area in this direction are also important in maintaining the feeling of a rural setting, only the glimpses of traffic on the A249 detracting from it.

From Hockers Lane the approach to the Conservation Area is via a long straight road lined with uninspiring development of 20th century date. Character changes abruptly at the Conservation Area boundary where the large Tithe Barn (now a dwelling) forms a focal point at the entrance to the historic village street, forming a group with the Parish Church behind it.

Approaching from the east along the Pilgrims Way the first sign of the village is the Victorian outlier of The Croft, a large detached villa in substantial grounds

on the south side of the road. This is followed by the 1950s development of Queensway with its incongruous suburban layout and then two modest detached dwellings of mid 20th century date. At first the northern side of the road remains undeveloped, lined opposite The Croft by a row of trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order; then, set back from the road, a group of large detached houses developed in the grounds of East Court in the 1980s which do not reflect traditional village forms or layout. Beyond and above these can be glimpsed the attractive Victorian building of East Court itself.

The entrance to the Conservation Area is signalled on the north side of the Pilgrims Way by the start of the long, tall wall which originally bounded the formal gardens of the now-demolished original East Court. This wall of ragstone, flint and brick is probably of 18th century date and forms a strong enclosing feature built up to the highway boundary and drawing one in to the centre of the village, which can be glimpsed by now because of the partial closing of the view by the Cock Horse public house. The strong built form of the wall is balanced by the trees and shrubs which appear above it, although closer to the village centre the roofs of modern houses can be seen behind it.

On the south side of the Pilgrims Way the road edge as it enters the Conservation Area is marked by low clipped hedges behind which lie the listed vernacular cottages Caresend and The Cottage which represent the edge of the medieval village.

Views out along the Pilgrims Way towards the east are dominated by the wall of East Court, beyond which trees and shrubs hint at the open countryside further along the road.

From the west, the approach along Pilgrims Way is initially disappointing – firstly there is the proximity of the Bypass, the noise of whose heavy traffic is unpleasant; the Bypass has formed an unnatural break in the original organic growth of the village in this direction resulting in severance of the development along Pilgrims Way so that much of this is now divorced from the original village centre. The new pedestrian bridge forms a valuable practical link between the two parts of the village but at the cost of a degree of visual intrusion. The Bypass has also resulted in the loss of one of the important 19th century village houses, Lynch House.

Once the Bypass has been crossed, the first section of Pilgrims Way as it enters the village has a very weak character – to one side it is dominated by the steps and ramp of the footbridge whilst on the other there are the modern village hall with its substantial forecourt car park, then two 20th century bungalows, then the open car park of the Cock Horse Public House. It is only when the Cock Horse itself is approached that the special character of the village centre begins to assert itself. The white-painted gable end of the Cock Horse with its bold and contrasting brick external chimney stack forms a strong feature and the converted 18th century stable block of the old East Court closes the view attractively. As the road turns the corner into The Street one of the best views within the Conservation Area is revealed with the group of listed buildings to the south of the Pilgrims Way junction forming the centrepiece.

Views out along the western arm of the Pilgrims Way are the least satisfactory of all the views out of the Conservation Area, being dominated by the footbridge over the A249.

Detailed Analysis and Description

A detailed description of all buildings and sites within the Conservation Area follows. These descriptions are based on examination from the road and historic map analysis. Buildings have not been examined internally or from non-public viewpoints.

Buildings and structures have been assessed according to their value to the character of the Conservation Area. They have been graded as follows: -

- Essential - buildings which because of their high historic or architectural interest or townscape function must be retained.
- Positive - buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and interest of the Conservation Area and whose retention should be encouraged wherever possible. Some buildings in this grade may have suffered from unsympathetic alteration but could be restored to their original appearance relatively easily.
- Neutral - buildings which do not harm the character of the area but whose retention is not necessary.
- Negative - buildings which harm the area's character and where redevelopment would be advantageous.

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|--|------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Parish Church of St. Martin of Tours, The Street | Listed Grade I | Church comprising an early Norman nave and chancel of flint with tufa quoins, a 13 th Century north aisle in flint and ragstone extended in 1887, a north chapel and south porch of 15 th Century date of ragstone and a bold west tower with a lower stage of ragstone of 15 th Century date, heightened and given a broach spire by the architect R C Hussey in 1861. Roofs generally of plain clay tiles but spire covered in timber shingles. | Essential |
| Churchyard Monuments, The Street | Listed Grade II | Within the churchyard are two listed monuments, a mid 18 th Century headstone and the an early 18 th Century table tomb. | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| Tithe Barn, The Street, | Unlisted | A large timber-framed barn, probably of 16 th or 17 th Century date, converted to a house in the 1970s. Clad in dark-stained weatherboarding with a plain clay-tiled roof. Prominent hipped canopy above wagon entrance facing The Street. Unfortunate replacement windows and an inappropriate modern panelled brick wall to the street boundary. This building forms a focal point to the southern entrance to the Conservation Area. | Essential |
| West Court Cottage. 5 The Street | Unlisted | Probably circa 1890-1900. A modest 2 storey cottage, built at right angles to the street. Ground floor red brick, first floor tile hung. Plain clay tiled roof. Modern small-paned windows in timber. Moulded bargeboards with finial. | Positive |
| The Granary, The Street | Unlisted | A converted farm building, formerly part of West Court Farm. Probably 18 th or early 19 th Century. Ragstone and brick ground floor with weatherboarded upper floor. Hipped clay tile roof. | Positive |
| West Court Oast, The Street | Unlisted | A converted oast house. Building probably dates from mid 19 th Century (pre 1876) and comprises a twin stowage of two parallel ranges each with a round kiln. Walls now rendered, roofs of plain clay tiles. Kiln roofs important in views of the village from the west. | Essential |
| 7 The Street | Unlisted | A modern chalet bungalow built in 1966. Red brick with concrete tile roof. | Negative |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|--|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| West Court Place, The Street | Unlisted | A low, spreading modern house. Not traditional in form, but discretely sited. | Neutral |
| West Court, The Street | Listed Grade II | The site is that of the original medieval manor-house but the present building is a rebuild of the 16 th Century with 18 th Century and 19 th Century additions and alterations. A rendered timber-framed building with a continuous jetty and a plain clay tile roof. Only glimpsed from The Street through trees and shrubs. | Essential |
| Outbuilding to north of West Court, The Street | Unlisted | This apparently timber-framed building is largely covered in vegetation. Probably 18 th Century or earlier – seems to be shown on the Tithe Map of the 1840s. | Positive |
| 1,2 and 3 Holly Cottages, The Street | Listed Grade II | Probably early 19 th Century with No 1 being a slightly later addition. Terrace complete by Tithe Map of the 1840s. Brick ground floor, rendered timber frame to first floor. Plain clay tile mansard roof with 3 dormer windows (that to No 1 larger than the others). Sash windows with glazing bars but No 2 has later two storey canted bay window. Panelled doors under simple pedimented doorhoods. | Essential |
| Chiltern Lodge, 23 The Street | Unlisted | Early 19 th Century yellow stock-brick front with parapet to probably 16 th Century timber-framed building behind with steep hipped plain clay tile roof and massive central chimney stack. Original sash windows replaced by inappropriate modern double-glazed top-hung | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|---|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| | | windows. Modern porch with inappropriate modern panelled door with integral fanlight. | |
| Chiltern Works (Mid Kent Electrical Engineering Co), The Street | Unlisted | Frontage probably circa 1890, brick with plain clay-tiled roof and parapetted gables. Strip glazing to first floor. Modern additions behind | Neutral |
| Primary School, The Street | Unlisted | Yellow stock brick with plain clay-tile roof. Majority is single storey but with two-storey master's house to north end. Single storey section has gabled entrance porch, projecting stack to front elevation and bellcote. Small-paned casement windows. Set back considerably from the road but edge of road defined by attractive brick wall. School built 1856, architect Martin Bulmer of Maidstone. | Essential |
| Temporary classroom in forecourt of Primary School, The Street | Unlisted | A timber-clad temporary building which has been on site since before 1974 and detracts significantly from the setting of the original school building. | Negative. |
| Vine House, The Street | Listed Grade II | Probably mid 19 th Century. Clad in white-painted weatherboarding with hipped clay plain-tile roof. Two ground floor canted bay windows with single windows above. All windows are sashes. Central gabled porch with boarded door. | Essential |
| Well Cottage, The Street | Listed Grade II | Timber-framed building of 15 th /16 th Century date. Rendered infill to ground floor, white-painted weatherboarding above. Plain clay-tile roof. A long building with a flush crosswing at the southern | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|---|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| | | <p>end. Massive chimney stack at junction of crosswing with main range. Leaded casement windows. Attractive low brick wall to street edge and boundary with forecourt of The Cock Horse Public House. Until the early 20th Century a public well stood in front of this building.</p> | |
| The Cock Horse Public House (and cottage to rear), The Street | Listed Grade II | <p>The public house fronting The Street is of 18th Century date, with a late 19th Century addition to the north end on the corner of Pilgrims Way. The ground floor is of red brick, with the northern addition being painted. First floor is tile-hung with alternate bands of plain and fishscale tiles. Complex plain clay-tiled roof. Fenestration of small-paned casements probably of late 19th Century date. Cottage to rear is of 17th Century date, underbuilt in brick but with exposed framing to first floor. Hipped clay-tile roof. Large projecting chimneystack on stone base to western gable.</p> | Essential |
| 42 and 44 The Street | Listed Grade II | <p>Probably 16th Century or earlier. Exposed timber framing with arch-bracing and painted brick infill. Hipped plain-tiled roof. A prominent building forming the corner of The Street and Pilgrims Way, being built right up to both roads. Continuous jetty to The Street. Modern windows to ground floor. 19th Century casements with glazing bars to first floor of No 44; tall modern casement with fanlights and glazing bars to first floor of No 42.</p> | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|---|------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Coopers Cottage, 40 The Street | Listed Grade II | Abuts nos. 42/44 with which it shares a common eaves line, but steeper-pitched roof results in a higher ridge. A timber-framed house of 15 th or 16 th Century date. Ground floor painted brick, first floor rendered. Plain clay-tiled roof with a single small hipped-roof dormer. Jettied to The Street. | Essential |
| Boundary wall between Nos 38 and 40 The Street | Listed (curtilage structure) | A flint wall on the back edge of the pavement. | Essential |
| 38 The Street / The Homestead, 36 The Street | Listed Grade II | A complex structure, previously two buildings. The northern part is of late 17 th /early 18 th Century date with an early 19 th Century façade which is rendered and has a parapet and moulded cornice. A symmetrical design with a central panelled door flanked by reeded pilasters and with a small moulded hood. Two sash windows with glazing bars to each floor and a blank recess above the central door. Plain clay-tiled roof with two flat-roofed dormers. This part of the building fronts directly on to the pavement. The southern part of the building is L-shaped. The oldest part is set back from the road behind a hedge and is a timber-framed structure of 15 th -17 th Century date, rendered with a plain clay-tile roof and mullioned and transomed leaded-light windows. Linking this to the northern building and projecting forward to the road is a late 18 th / early 19 th Century addition in render with a moulded eaves cornice and a plain clay-tile | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|--|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| | | roof with a single flat-roofed dormer-window. The ground floor elevation has a fine 19 th Century shopfront with a continuous flat canopy above it. First floor has a single sash window with glazing bars. | |
| Barn End, 32 The Street | Unlisted | A modern house erected in the late 20 th Century, set back from the road by a considerable distance. Brick and tile-hung with a tiled roof. | Neutral |
| 28 and 30 The Street | Unlisted | A simple pair built circa 1840, presumably as shops since both retain matching shopfront surrounds with reeded pilasters and fascias. Unfortunately all glazing (including first floor sashes) has been replaced in UPVC, as have both doors. Brown brick with slate roof. Doors in round-arched recesses. Set back slightly from street behind low modern brick walls with modern railings of inappropriate design. | Positive |
| Garage building to north of No 26 The Street | Unlisted | A modern garage building of unattractive design set back behind a forecourt. Only of interest because it occupies the site of the village forge. | Negative |
| 26 The Street | Listed Grade II | A 16 th Century block set back from the road with a 19 th Century addition to the front of the northern end jutting out to the pavement edge. Whole building is of render to ground floor with tile-hanging above. Plain clay-tile roof. Largely modern casement windows. Unfortunate late 20 th Century door to return elevation of 19 th Century wing. | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| 22 and 24 The Street | Unlisted | Probably circa 1880-1890. A brick pair now with concrete-tiled roof. No 24 possibly originally a shop as it has a large ground floor window. Windows are mullioned and transomed casements except for first floor of No 22 replaced with fixed pane and small fanlight. Both have large over-scaled dormers to front elevation. Bold central chimneystack. | Positive |
| Post Office, The Street | Unlisted | Formerly a terrace of 3 houses, early 19 th century. Red brick with slate roof and prominent chimney stacks. Northernmost cottage now has shopfront; all other window and door openings maintained as original but windows all replaced with modern double-glazed units. Set back behind small open forecourt with brick pavements. Old photographs show a picket fence to the back edge of the footpath. | Positive |
| Burleigh Villa, The Street | Unlisted | Built 1880 and converted to a shop in the 1950s. Converted back to a house in 1980s. Yellow stock brick with concrete tiled roof. Pentice roof above previous shopfront which was completely lost in residential conversion and substituted by poorly-proportioned windows – originally ground floor had two canted bay windows with lead roofs. First floor sash windows replaced by modern double-glazed units to match ground floor. | Neutral |
| K6 Telephone Kiosk, The Street | Listed Grade II | Traditional red telephone box as designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935. | Essential |

| Address | Listed/Unlisted | Description/comments | Value to Character |
|---|------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| The Old Vicarage | Unlisted | Built in 1963. Only glimpsed from The Street because of dense tree screen on frontage. | Neutral |
| New houses to South of The Old Vicarage, The Street | Unlisted | Two recent detached houses. | Neutral |
| 1-3 East Court Cottages, Detling Hill | Unlisted | Probably circa 1890. Estate cottages associated with East Court Manor house. Red and yellow brick with tile hanging and applied half-timbering to upper floor. Mullioned and transomed windows with glazing bars. Each has a door under a gabled hood supported on straight braces. Nos 1 and 3 are gabled to the road with roof projecting beyond walls finished with bargeboards with tie-beams. Clay tiled roof with tall brick chimney-stacks. Attractive picket fences to front gardens help maintain unity of the terrace. | Essential |
| RAF War Memorial Pilgrims Way | Unlisted | A recent memorial consisting of a low ragstone obelisk surmounted by the RAF crest. | Positive. |
| Tudor Gateway and Boundary Wall, Pilgrims Way | Listed Grade II | The gateway formerly gave entrance to East Court manor house and dates from the 16 th Century. The ragstone, flint and brick wall is of 18 th Century date. Mounting block beside gateway. | Essential |
| The Cottage, Pilgrims Way | Listed Grade II | A modest 15 th Century timber-framed building with a modern extension to the east end. Single storey with attic to original part. | Essential |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| Caresend, Pilgrims Way | Listed Grade II | Probably 16 th or 17 th Century. Built at right angles to the road and set back from it. White painted weatherboarding with a plain clay-tiled hipped roof with central brick chimneystack. Sash windows with glazing bars. Lean-to additions at each end | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---|--|

IV Conclusions

The Conservation Area represents a good example of a traditional Kentish village which has retained a high proportion of its historic development and has not suffered to an appreciable extent from redevelopment in modern times. Those modern buildings which do exist for the most part are either discretely sited or are self-effacing in design and built of appropriate materials. In fact the major agent of loss of character has not been redevelopment but the cumulative impact of individually relatively minor alterations such as replacement windows and doors and changes of roofing materials. In the case of single dwelling houses these alterations have been “permitted development” in the absence of any Article 4 Direction and thus outside of planning control. As single dwelling houses comprise the vast majority of buildings within the Conservation Area the damage has been great, and very few unlisted buildings within the village centre have remained immune from such changes. Having said this, most of the alterations would be easily reversible.

The detailed building analysis carried out in Section III of this Appraisal provides a basis for considering future proposals for redevelopment. Those buildings or sites which are assessed as “essential” or “positive” will not be considered appropriate for demolition or redevelopment. Proposals for the redevelopment of “neutral” sites will be required to constitute an enhancement over the existing situation. Redevelopment of sites rated as “negative” will be positively encouraged wherever possible.

The current character of the Conservation Area is strengthened by the consistent small scale of building and the dominant use of a limited palette of appropriate largely local materials – red and yellow brick, tile hanging, render, plain clay tiles, etc. It will be important for any proposals for new development to respect these aspects and also to take account of the existing pattern of development, particularly the differences between the two sides of The Street. Generally, therefore, proposals for development of more than two storeys will be considered inappropriate; bungalows, too, will be out of character. A high standard of architectural design will be required.

Within the Conservation Area it is necessary for 6 weeks notice in writing to be given of any proposed works to trees with a trunk diameter greater than 75mm measured at a height of 1.5 metres above ground level. In the case of any sites coming forward for redevelopment the Council will require tree surveys, assessments and protection measures to be submitted with any planning

application wherever trees are present. Where expedient it will seek to protect suitable trees by the making of Tree Preservation Orders. In relation to significant trees existing within the Conservation Area it will be important to seek their retention or replacement if appropriate as trees are major contributors to the character of Detling. This is true both within the existing conservation area and in its surroundings – the landscape setting of the village is an essential part of its character, with views out of and across the Conservation Area, particularly towards the wooded backdrop of the North Downs escarpment, being important. Equally, views down to and over the village from the crest of the North Downs are cherished.

The production of this Appraisal has suggested a number of areas for investigation regarding the enhancement of the Conservation Area. These include: -

- i) A programme of re-instatement of original features, especially windows and doors. This may include the use of an Article 4 Direction to give greater control.
- ii) The undergrounding of wires – currently the overhead wirescape and associated poles is a major factor detracting from the character of the Conservation Area.
- iii) Improvements to some areas of paving and forecourts.

Studies carried out in connection with the historical development of the village and with the villagescape appraisal have also suggested that some adjustments to the boundaries of the Conservation Area may be justified. A case could be made for the inclusion of East Court and the new dwellings within its original grounds – the current boundary of the Conservation Area in this area does not relate to any physical feature on the ground and actually cuts through buildings. East Court itself is an attractive large house of circa 1850 which retains its original character and stands in attractive grounds and is visible from Pilgrims Way and Detling Hill. An extension would also include the remaining converted historic buildings associated with the earlier East Court such as the stable block as well as the listed dovecote which either feature in attractive views from the village streets or form features of intrinsic architectural or historic interest.