Folkestone conservation area appraisal – character area 4

In view of the size of the Folkestone Conservation Area and the wide variety of character areas incorporated within its boundary, it has been decided that a phased approach to the appraisal should be taken.

By taking a phased approach, Shepway DC will be able to afford more focus on the issues facing the particular areas when drawing up the appraisals. Not only is this necessary due to the areas differing characteristics from one another but it is also believed that this will make consulting on it far more manageable for SDC and, more importantly, easily understandable for the public.

The first character area to be dealt with is Folkestone Old Town (Character Area 4 in the CAA).

Introduction

1 A conservation area (CA) is, by law, an area of special architectural and historic interest. The purpose of this appraisal is to help us understand why Folkestone is special and provide a framework for keeping it that way. Its character, or specialness, needs to be defined. What is happening to it needs to be documented and analysed. What should happen in the future needs to be celebrated, guided and well managed.

2 This appraisal forms one of a series of 21 CA appraisals commissioned by Shepway District Council. The original CA designation came into effect on 28 January 1972 and was reviewed and extended in 1975, 1985, 1988 and 2005. It has been undertaken using the methodology of the English Heritage 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals', 2006. A companion guide, 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas', recommends a procedure to follow on from the appraisal.

planning policy framework

3 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the process of assessment, definition or revision of boundaries as well as the formulation of proposals for CAs and the identification and protection of listed buildings. Authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a CA, or in case of listed buildings, to have special regard for their preservation in the exercise of their powers under the Planning Acts.

4 Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5), for local and other public authorities, property owners, developers, amenity bodies and the public, sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic environment.

5 The underlying objective of the relevant legislation and guidance is the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance of CAs. Any proposed development that would cause substantial harm to the character of the CA should

normally expect to be refused. Sustainability is an important consideration and the embodied energy in historic buildings should be recognised and every effort made to adapt them rather than demolish. At the same time the need to accommodate change that respects or reinforces the character of the area in order to maintain its vitality is recognised. Regard must also be had t the requirements of other national guidance, including PPG16.

6 Many local planning policies, not just design and conservation, can affect what happens in a CA. For example, policies on sustainable development, meeting housing needs, affordable housing, landscape, biodiversity, energy efficiency, transport, people with disabilities, employment, town centres and many others all influence development and the quality of the environment in CAs. However, policies concerned with design quality and character take on greater importance in CAs. The adopted District Plan's chapter on Built Environment covers conservation and design matters. The key policies of this chapter state:

Policy BE3

7 When considering new CAs or reviewing existing CAs the following criteria will be taken into account:

The area is:

a. of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance;
b. includes sufficient buildings of historic and/or architectural interest, listed or unlisted, to give a strong character;
c. includes sufficient good quality hard and/or soft landscape;
d. shows strong relationships between buildings, and buildings and open spaces that create a sense of place;
e. one which either illustrates local architectural development or an area of one architectural period which remains largely in its original condition.

Policy BE4

8 The District Planning Authority will:

a. refuse CA Consent for the demolition of buildings which contribute to the character or appearance of a CA;
b. refuse proposals for infill or backland development which would adversely affect the character of a CA;
c. require the height, scale, form and materials of new development, including alterations or extensions to existing buildings, to respect the character of CAs;
d. seek to retain materials, features and details of unlisted buildings or structures which preserve or enhance the character or appearance of CAs;

e. seek to retain the historic patterns, plot boundaries, building lines, open spaces, footways, footpaths and kerblines which are essential to the character or appearance of CAs;
f. protect trees and hedgerows which enhance both the setting and character of CAs.

9 Other policies dealing with historic or built environment matters are BE 1, 2 and 5-19. The District Plan also includes a chapter on Folkestone Town Centre. Appendix 5 of the Plan addresses Shopfront design. In addition, Local Development Documents in preparation under recent legislation include an Action Area Plan for Folkestone Town Centre.

Development control

10 Greater restrictions on "permitted development" apply in CAs than elsewhere. Anyone contemplating alterations, extensions or new building should familiarise themselves with the policies set out above and consult the Council's Planning Department for advice on how to apply for permission and whether the proposal is likely to be acceptable.

Boundaries

11 The map shows the present boundaries of the CA. The boundaries of the area are widely drawn to take in a number of individually distinctive, yet contiguous areas. At the core is the Old Town, whose northwest boundary is formed by the rear of properties in Tontine Street. From there the boundary traces the Stade and the edge of the Inner Harbour, including the harbour wall. The southern edge, along the seafront, avoids the modern megalith of the Hotel Burstin and the beachfront fairground on its westward path, taking in the Cliffside pleasure gardens which rise towards The Leas above. North of this, the western boundary aligns with The Metropole, taking in the generously planned Victorian villas and semi-detached houses of West Folkestone before turning back towards the northern fringe of the Town Centre.

Summary of special interest

12. Folkestone is an ancient town in origin, which expanded over many centuries, eventually developing into a fashionable resort, with grand houses and facilities, and later a popular seaside resort. It was greatly helped in the 19th century by the building of a direct rail link to the harbour, pleasure seekers and serving cross-Channel demand, now greatly declined as a result of the Channel Tunnel terminal outside the town. The major engineering achievements of the viaduct, Harbour Bridge, inner harbour and other structures are important both historically and technologically.

13. The historic pattern and growth of development is evident in its layout and surviving buildings, many of which are listed or of special local interest. These include a collection of large stucco villas stretching westwards from the old core

along the famed Leas promenade, a feature in its own right. The seafront location and dramatic topography of cliffs and hills, together with designed and managed natural landscapes greatly increases attractiveness and interest.

14. As a tourist attraction and pleasant place to live, Folkestone has considerable potential for continued conservation-led regeneration; including ensuring that redevelopment of the largely defunct seafront amusement area properly reflects its historic location. Major conservation works are called for on many fine buildings around the Old High Street, Tontine Street and the town centre fringe to the north, together with matching enhancement works to the public realm in these areas.

Location and setting

15. Folkestone is located on the southeast coast of Kent. It is known as a Channel Port and resort town with beaches, colourful gardens and a population of approximately 45,000. It enjoys an excellent road network, linking with nearby towns of Ashford and Maidstone to the northwest, Canterbury to the north and Dover to the east. The M20, starting at Folkestone, is one of the UK's principal trading connections with the national motorway network. Rail connections are also excellent with the Channel Tunnel, almost at the doorstep, providing the country's foremost connection with France and continental Europe, bypassing the town itself. Lydd Airport is about 12 miles southwest.

16. Approaching from the sea, the town rises from the harbour basin, framed by the dramatic cliffs to both the northeast and southwest, part of the chain of cliffs that also characterise nearby Dover. On the landward side, the green rolling hills and distant North Downs form a highly attractive setting.

Landscape setting, topography and geology

17. The physical foundations of Folkestone were laid down long ago in the warm, shallow sea that covered this part of Europe in the Cretaceous period. Over nearly sixty million years, layers of rock were deposited on the floor of this prehistoric sea. First there was the Lower Greensand, which composes the plain on which most of Folkestone stands and which is visible in the rock outcrops above the Lower Sandgate Road or the East Cliff Sands. As the level and chemical content of the sea changed, a grey ooze was deposited, now seen as the Gault clay that forms the headland at Copt Point, and known for its abundance of fossil ammonites. Finally, came the chalk which forms the North Downs providing such a spectacle along the coast and the cliffs of The Warren.

18. Originally, these cliffs were downland overlooking a broad river valley that gradually became the Channel as the rising sea level at the end of the last Ice Age overwhelmed the valley floor. A reminder of those days has been found just off Folkestone: here there is still a sudden drop in the seabed where once a waterfall tumbled, with the accumulated gravel of a plunge pool at its base, evidence of the river that once flowed where now there is only sea. The coast has always been liable

to erosion by the sea, which greatly affected the settlement before the shoreline was consolidated when the harbour was built in the C19th.

Origin of place name

19. The name Folkestone was first recorded as far back as the late C17th in the guise of Folcanstan. The name probably refers to the 'stone of Folca', Folca being a common Old English man's name.

Historic development and archaeology

20. Traces of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age man have been discovered in the area while evidence that Belgic invaders were present during the first century BC have been found at Cheriton and on the East Cliff. S E Winbolt's Roman Folkestone (1925) gives a detailed account of the extensive archeological work that was done on a Roman villa discovered on the East Cliff in 1924. The site was finally covered over in 1954 by the Council.

21. Roman Folkestone was only a point on the road between Dover (Portus Dubrae) and Lympne (Portus Lemanae), both important ports, but the villa tiles and others found nearby suggest that it might have been the residence of a senior official of the Classis Britannica or soldiers serving with the Roman fleet, although originally it was almost certainly the residence of a British landowner. The departure of the Romans towards the end of the C4thAD and the Anglo-Saxon invasions, over the next century or two, brought Saxon and especially Jutish peoples to this part of England. In 1907, a Jutish burial ground was found close to the main road on Dover Hill.

22. An extensive archaeological assessment of Folkestone has been undertaken by Kent County Council in association with English Heritage, as part of the Kent Historic Towns Survey. This forms a valuable additional reference to this appraisal, in respect of archaeology, including the development of the town, locations of finds, and a range of maps which include known geology, historic buildings by date and medieval plan components.

Map regression and morphology

23. One early description of Folkestone's physical development reads '…a small fishing village, with a nearby religious community, which changed but little between the Norman conquest and the C19th.' However, this is an exaggeration in that it was calculated in 1729 that there were 450 houses and 2,000 inhabitants, making it three times the size of the Tudor town.

24. An early map (a manor survey) of Folkestone is the one dating from 1628 (see Appendix 1); this is then followed by a map of 1698 prepared by Abraham Walter of Larkfield within a year of Jacob des Bouverie acquiring the lordship of the manor of Folkestone in 1697. The town itself is found just to the right of the compass on this map, and consisted of less than a dozen streets. The road from Hythe, a part of

which was called Cow Street, later became Sandgate Road. Mercery Lane is today's Church Street while the Pent Stream played a larger part in the landscape than it does now. Note, too, the meadow up by The Bayle.

25. The 'Plan of The Town of Folkestone in 1782' shows considerable expansion over the intervening years. In the Victorian period, the shaded areas in the plan from S Mackie's Handbook of Folkestone for Visitors (1874) show where houses were being built at the time, again one of considerable expansion.

26. The 1st edition Ordinance Survey map of 1865 shows much of the present layout of streets and squares, as far as Clifton Gardens, which was to become ultra-fashionable Folkestone West. The Ordnance Survey map of 1907 shows a mature, fully consolidated Folkestone, virtually the one we know today. The shape of Folkestone old town was largely formed by the late C18th

Origins, development and historic significance of Folkestone

Foundation

27. Although there were early settlers, including the Romans, in and about Folkestone, the origins of it as a town perhaps lie in circa 635 when Eanswythe, daughter of King Ethelbert, founded a nunnery here. This was close to a fortress already established by her father, probably on what is now called The Bayle, and here the young Abbess soon established a reputation for miraculous works, healing a blind woman and, it was claimed, causing water to run upwards. These miracles are doubtless explicable, but it seems likely that Eanswythe was a genuinely caring woman, and a pioneer of such royal devotion; her nunnery is often described as the first sisterhood in England. After her death in 640 she was canonised, and her bones were preserved. The abbey did not long survive her, and a later monastery had an undistinguished history, with just the prior and one aged monk in residence when Henry VIII dissolved it in 1535.

28. The Domesday Survey indicates that the manor of Folkestone was both large and wealthy. Before the Norman Conquest it was held by Earl Godwin and was worth £110. In 1086 it was in the hands of William of Arques and a number of smaller landlords. Their lands comprised meadowland and woodland, with 11½ mills and a salt-pan. There were 8 churches, 230 villagers, 136 smallholders and 7 slaves and the total value of the manor was then £145 10s (source: Kent Archaeological Assessment, 2004).

29. When the present parish church was built in the C12th the relics of the young saint were brought here, and the church was dedicated to St Mary and St Eanswythe. The 12th September, the day on which a casket containing the bones was brought here, is celebrated as her festival.

30. Nevertheless, the church, high on the cliff overlooking the castle, survived, although by the mid-C19th it was in a poor state of repair. This neglect partly

stemmed from an unfounded fear that the cliff would eventually collapse, taking the church with it – a storm had destroyed two bays in 1705 – but from the 1850s a new incumbent, Canon Woodward, set about restoring and partly rebuilding the church, giving it a new west end.

31. Although the town was granted a charter of incorporation in 1313, it was not sufficiently important to rank as one of the Cinque Ports, which were Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, New Romney, Hastings and – added soon afterwards – Rye and Winchelsea. Instead, Folkestone was a 'corporate limb', or associate member, attached to Dover, with what prosperity it had largely due to smuggling and quarrying. By the C16th the population was around 500, and dreams of expansion were quashed by Henry VIII's decision not to build a major harbour here. Nevertheless, some minor cross-channel trade did develop from the C17th – not all of it legitimate, for smuggling continued well into the C19th, generally smiled on by local people – although the town remained subservient to Dover.

16th – 18th Century Folkestone

32. Fishing and stone quarrying were important until at least the C17th. During the C16th, however, fame came to Folkestone through the career and achievements of William Harvey, Physician to James I and Charles I and renowned for his work on the circulation of blood. Harvey was born in 1578 in a house off Mercery Lane (now Church Street), and his father was four times mayor of Folkestone. Harvey helped found the Harvey Grammar School at Folkestone and, on the national stage, helped pioneer work on gynaecology and embryology.

33. Folkestone's fortunes seem to have improved marginally during the course of the C18th. Saying that, Daniel Defoe in his Journey Through England (1725) commented thus: 'From Dover along the sea coast I passed a miserable fishing town called Folkestone, miserable in its appearance.' Perhaps the great outbreak of smallpox in 1720, which claimed 145 victims, had contributed to the town's unattractiveness. On the other hand, perhaps C Seymour's Survey of the Cities, Towns and Villages of the County of Kent (1776) was rather overoptimistic when the author described Folkestone as being 'wealthy and populous' and commented on the large size of the fishing fleet. Three attempts had already been made to do something about the erosion and deterioration of the Stade in 1635, 1654 and 1709, but it would be at least another century before the problem was properly tackled.

19th century growth and achievement

34. The town played a part, albeit a peripheral one, in the Napoleonic Wars, with Martello Towers being built nearby and a small but improved harbour by Thomas Telford. Bathing machines had been introduced in an attempt to attract visitors, and for a while army officers and their families visited from camps at Hythe and Shorncliffe. However, by the 1830s the town appears to have become a largely neglected and even squalid one. In 1841 the population was just 4,413, but the

arrival of the railway would lead to rapid growth and to the impressive development of the harbour, which for a while became more important than Dover's.

35. The South Eastern Railway's main line from London to Dover, engineered by William Cubitt, reached Folkestone in June 1843, with a temporary terminus just west off the magnificent Foord viaduct. The latter was completed that December, when trains continued to a permanent station, Folkestone Junction, to the east, continuing through to Dover the following year. The railway company had meanwhile acquired Telford's harbour, by now nearly derelict, and arranged for a daily packet service to Boulogne, although the harbour was scarcely adequate for this role, passengers having to transfer to rowing boats at low tide. The Harbour Branch from the junction, at the fiendishly steep gradient of 1 in 30, gave freight and, a few years later, passenger access to the harbour, with an adjacent road named the Tram Road alongside. At the harbour the railway built the Pavilion (later Royal Pavilion) Hotel, and in 1899 this was enlarged, using land formerly used for harbour offices; the hotel was lost in the 1970s to the over-scaled Hotel Burstin (1973-5).

36. Folkestone was expected to expand eastward, around and below the main station. In the event, it grew to the west, where further stations were opened, including Cheriton Arch, opened in 1884, renamed Radnor Park two years later, and acquiring its present name of Folkestone Central in 1895. It is a measure of the town's changing centre of gravity that a station initially thought of suburban should now merit the term 'central'.

37. The key factor in this westward expansion was the decision of the Earl of Radnor to develop his Folkestone Estate, employing the architect Sidney Smirke. Smirke designed the Gothic Revival Christ Church on Sandgate Road in 1850-1 – only the tower now survives following a hit by a German bomb – although John Newman (in The Buildings of England North East and East Kent, 1976) attributes much of the planning of the estate, in 1843, to Decimus Burton. Some of the first buildings were Albion Villas (1843-4), and it was here in 1855 that Charles Dickens stayed, writing part of Little Dorrit.

38. Development then moved steadily westward, culminating in the grand, four-storey stucco houses – some in terraces, but many in pairs of villas – either side of Sandgate Road. Many of these date from the early 1850s, and a good number of these survive today (although the west end of Clifton Crescent is marred by a block of modern flats, Madeira Court). The area was known as The Leas, previously Lees, generally taken to mean a piece of common land.

Fashionable Folkestone

39. The completeness of the development – in contrast to, say, Worthing, where such stucco blocks stand in isolation – shows how fashionable Folkestone had become, and before long the cream of society, including no less than royalty, were visiting to stay in the luxurious hotels and apartments. Private policemen were

employed by the Earl of Radnor to maintain standards and keep the riffraff out, and The Leas became the place to be seen, “taking the air”. By 1901 the western part of Folkestone was renowned as the most aristocratic seaside resort in the country.

40. Right at the end of the century, and with proper fin de siecle bravura, two grandiose London-style hotels were built at the western end of town, The Grand of 1899-1903, and The Metropole of 1895-7; the latter, part of which eventually became an Arts Centre, even had a lift built down the cliff in 1904 to take patrons to the shore. This lift was one of many features dating from the late C19th, when visitors began to seek rather more than a leisurely stroll along The Leas. The Leas Lift, just above the pier, was built by the Folkestone Lift Company in 1885, on the water-balance principle, and was such a success that a second pair of lifts was opened in 1890 immediately to the east. The 1890 lift closed in 1966 (the West Leas or Metropole lift had closed in 1940) but the original lifts survive, second in seniority only to those at Saltburn.

41. Close to the foot of the lift was a camera obscura – always a popular late-Victorian concept, although it seems curious that it should be erected at the foot of the cliff where the view would have been surely impaired. There was another camera obscura on the other side of the boating house, which itself was the venue for a major rowing regatta held every year.

42. Nearby were baths and a switchback railway, still a novelty when it was built by Thompson’s Patent Gravity Switchback Co. Ltd. in 1888. This was patronised by all sections of society – Lord Asquith is said to have ridden on it five times, spurred on by his wife, and there were optimistic suggestions that it was good for the liver – but it provoked irritation among the more staid members of the local populace, one lamenting “the screams and yells of the gay young trippers as the plunging cars rattled and dived, to the intense discomfort of the bath chair invalids promenading on the Leas”. The town council voted for its removal in 1900 but somehow it survived storms and politicians until WWI.

43. The main construction, as with so many seaside resorts, was, the Victoria Pier, built by the Folkestone Pier & Lift Company and opened in 1888. At 683 feet it was not one of the longer national piers, but it did have a theatre at the end. This highbrow operation did not really thrive until, during the 1890s and again in the Edwardian era, Keith Prowse was brought in to revitalise it. Many stars of the day appeared, including Lily Langtry in 1906, who so incensed a packed audience by refusing to give an encore, that she needed a police escort to escape the fray.

44. Piers were often used as landing stages for pleasure steamers, and in 1889 an extension to the pier was built for this purpose. But the Church Rocks were a hazard to shipping, and, with a perfectly good harbour just a few yards away, the landing stage closed in 1892 and was removed a few years later.

Seaside resort

45. Slowly but surely Folkestone was moving away from the staid gentility of the mid-C19th, and entertainments were brought in both to amuse the visitors and to provide recreation for the growing local population. These include Radnor Park, opened by Viscount Folkestone in 1886, and a large exhibition hall. This followed the mid-Victorian taste for exhibitions started by the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace (1851). Such was the anticipation of crowds that a short-lived railway branch was constructed to it from Shorncliffe (later Folkestone West) station. The complex included extensive grounds which were ideal for tourists and open air concerts, but the exhibition hall itself was soon abandoned and converted into the Pleasure Gardens Theatre, with seats for
1,500.

46. The 1906 OS map does not show the railway branch to the exhibition hall – indeed, it only appears to have lasted some five months – but it does include 'Fagg's New and improved Patent Bathing Carriages' launched in 1889. These ran into the sea near the Marine Gardens, the western one for men, the other for ladies. Each train consisted of two carriages with several compartments, together with washing facilities and an attendant to hand one a towel. At the end of the track was a sort of cage, for the safety of non-swimmers, though the more experienced had access to diving boards; as the rails were raised above the beach, on a small viaduct, the trains could reach a reasonable depth of water. The carriages, which complemented the more traditional bathing machines, appear to have been unique to Folkestone.

47. Another new venture was the quintessentially Edwardian Leas Pavilion (now the Leas Club), opened below pavement level on The Leas in 1902. This was essentially a tea-room, with wicker armchairs and a ladies' string trio. Character actor Arthur Brough, opened a theatre which became part of Folkestone's cultural scene. At matinees, alternate rows of seats were replaced by tables, so that patrons could enjoy their cucumber sandwiches and scones while watching the denouement.

48. In 1911 Folkestone staged an event that epitomised its move away from the age of gentility, when it held what is said to have been the first Beauty Contest, won by Nettie Bainbridge. The war accelerated the move towards seaside resort, with the departure of many German or Austrian waiters and musicians. Besides, Dover had by now reclaimed its position as the premier Channel port. Folkestone would never be the same again.

49. WWII saw considerable damage near the harbour, including parachute mines in 1940 and shelling in 1942. Yet the town retains a remarkable amount of its historic character, being especially rich in C19th architecture, and this is especially true in the narrow, twisting roads near the parish church, including the Old High Street/The Bayle, a charming counterpoint to the elegance of The Leas.

50. Growing affluence, cheap travel and the huge expansion of the foreign holiday market in the late C20th saw seaside resorts fall from favour, economic stagnation,

decay and vacancy in many buildings. Folkestone was no exception, added wounds being the replacement of handsome ships by catamarans and the opening of the Tunnel taking the spending potential away from the town centre. However, the relative lack of development, and natural absence of through traffic, means that the town has been able to retain many of its old buildings and streets. As a result they now have a charm that few inland towns, even the most historic, have been allowed to retain.

Archaeological significance and potential

51. Although there are no Ancient Monuments in Folkestone CA, there is considerable archaeological potential judging by finds in the wider area. The earliest substantial evidence of human settlement in the area has been uncovered by archaeologists along the foot of the Downs. It seems that numerous small settlements existed here, situated wherever there was a spring of clear, fresh water. Around 5,000 years ago, small farming communities started to appear, using the downland for grazing their livestock, and so creating over the centuries the grassland rich in wild flowers that characterises these hills today.

52. One particular settlement, evidence of which was uncovered during work on the Channel Tunnel project, existed at Holywell Combe, an attractive little wooded valley with a spring, ponds and fen that nestles between Sugar Loaf Hill and the A260 road to Canterbury. The Canterbury Archaeological Trust found that the village dated back some 3,800 years. There is evidence of human activity throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages on Sugar Loaf Hill and the Downs nearby in the form of numerous tumuli-burial mounds or barrows that resemble little rounded hillocks. They mark the graves of important people: chiefs, kings, queens, princes etc. Similarly, there is a mystery over the possible existence of an Iron Age hill figure that may once have graced the Downs near Cheriton. Coins have been found at various places in Kent dating to the late Iron Age (c AD30) that depicts a prancing or rampant horse.

53. More substantial evidence of Celtic activities around Folkestone has been found at East Wear Bay, where it seems that a major local industry producing milling stones called ‘querns’ was situated. Considerable numbers of these large, heavy, milling stones have been found and catalogued, and seem to represent the existence of a thriving industry in their production. There is considerable evidence of Roman occupation around Folkestone. Camden, writing in his book Britannia in 1610 says: ‘Folkestone was a flourishing place in times past, as may appeere by the peeces of Romane coine and Britaine brickes daily there found.’ More has been discovered since Camden’s time; in 1875 the foundations of a Roman hypocaust (for under floor heating or a bath house) and a church or chapel linked by a passage to a curious circular structure were discovered at Folly Road. According to a report in the Archaeologia Cantiana in 1876, some skeletons, Roman coins, brickwork and concrete were also discovered, so establishing an approximate timeframe for the remains. Unfortunately, subsequent building has buried the hypocaust, and the remains of the church were ‘broken up for reuse’. Although we only have C19th reports to rely on, this does suggest, along with other miscellaneous local finds, that

a Roman settlement was established at Folkestone. However, the major evidence for this, and on which detailed research has been carried out, is the East Wear Bay Roman Villa site. Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the special interest of the area

54. John Newman, writing in The Buildings of England North East and East Kent, 1976, thought that 'Without any doubt [the Railway Viaduct, c. 1843] [is] the most exciting piece of architecture in the town.' It is aptly symbolic, for the railway made Folkestone, but arguably, unfair. Grand residential mid-C19th developments, such as the four storey stucco Marine Crescent, dismissed by Newman, are extremely impressive and beautifully sited by the cliff. The juxtaposition of Marine Crescent's now restored stucco architecture and the green-clothed cliff backdrop is finely judged, aesthetically.

There are at least three strains to Folkestone's spatial and architectural character:

1) The picturesque, village-like quality of The Old High Street/ Bayle/Church Street area of the town centre, with its winding streets and emphasis on the individuality of buildings.

2) The more urbane stucco architecture of The Leas, Clifton Crescent and Sandgate Road; this fits into a national trend of C19th architecture: Brighton, Hastings, Cheltenham and so on.

3) The late C19th residential areas, such as Grimston Avenue/Gardens, Sandgate Road, Earl's Avenue, with its different palette of building materials (i.e. dressed stone, as opposed to stucco) and polychrome brick colours.

55. Folkestone has great architectural variety. A typical example of this would be at the corner of Sandgate Road and Bouverie Place, where there is an interesting architectural juxtaposition between the 1930s Moderne of Nos. 7072 Sandgate Road and 'O2' on Bouverie Place, which is early Victorian and stucco, though marred by the out of character modern ground floor shopfront.

Spatial Analysis

Character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

56. The range of spaces in this complex town of many ages and parts is naturally as diverse as can be imagined. These are framed either by the natural features of sea and cliff on the one hand and, on the other, by mainly medium rise building forms, apartments or commercial, and, in Folkestone West, a mix of low rise houses, the larger ones converted to apartments.

57. The broadest, most open and dramatic spaces are, unsurprisingly, along the seafront. These contrast with the organic, narrow streets of the Old Town and The Bayle. North and west of these, the layout is largely that of a planned development

on a generous scale. Many residential streets are furnished with trees. Numerous large, communal open spaces characterise Folkestone West.

58. Despite the appearance of Old Town, the original plan of Folkestone is difficult to discern as the main changes to Folkestone took place in the nineteenth century, after the coming of the railway and the development of the port. New streets have been inserted or older ones diverted, and there have been many changes in name. Nevertheless, old maps do show key thoroughfares in their approximate present day positions. Key views and vistas (both out of and into the area; view points)

1) All views from or along The Leas.
2) The view from the beach looking back on the town above.
3) The view towards Holy Trinity Church from Bouverie Road West.
4) The view up Sandgate Road from Guildhall Street, and vice versa, looking towards the Old Town Hall (now Waterstone's).
5) Up and down The Old High Street.
6) Looking up towards, from Harbour Street, The Eagle, No 1 The Parade, with its extraordinary tower, with lookout.
7) The view into Clifton Gardens from The Leas.
8) Castle Hill Avenue is a major artery through the historic residential part of Folkestone, as is Earl's Avenue, which runs parallel to it.
9) The views looking out from The Leas towards the Harbour and the White Cliffs to the east, and the panoramic views over Sandgate and Hythe Bay to Dungeness to the west.
10) From the Harbour Arm to the Warren and White Cliffs.
11) From the East Cliff looking down on the Harbour and towards Dover.
12) The panoramic view of Folkestone from Crete Roads East and West.
13) Augusta Gardens front crescent and the gardens themselves.
14) The view across Westbourne Gardens and the vista and tree–lined central path up Castle Hill Avenue.
15) Picturesque view from the harbour across to Martello Tower No 3.
16) View and setting coming into the CA from the Central Railway Station, greatly improved by Kingsnorth Gardens and trees around and in the Wyevale Garden Centre.

Key unlisted buildings - criteria

59. Key unlisted buildings are those which fall within one or more of the following criteria:
a. Age – the earliest buildings should merit greater attention towards preservation.
b. Authenticity - Buildings or structures should be substantially unaltered and should retain the majority of their original features.
c. Architectural Significance - Buildings or structures of local architectural significance for aesthetic merit or craftsmanship of any period; principal works of principal architects or designers of local importance; exemplars of key building types.
d. Local technological significance or innovation.

e. Historic Significance – Buildings/structures illustrating or associated with local architectural/social/cultural history or events, locally or nationally well known people.
f. Townscape Significance - Individual buildings, objects or groups of exceptional quality in their context - for example, landmark buildings, notable buildings marking or creating interesting places, vistas, or interesting skylines.

60. Key buildings are identified within each character area in the following sections and on the Historic Environment map in Appendix 2. These should be considered for inclusion on a new Local List to be adopted and regularly reviewed by the Council. The importance of a local list is twofold: to acknowledge and raise awareness of buildings of higher than average importance and to establish potential candidates for statutory listing, particularly where their significance may be diminished or through alteration or lost entirely through demolition. Those marked * are recommended as potentially suitable for consideration by English Heritage for statutory listing.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS FOLKESTONE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Character Area 4 - Old Town

Activity, prevailing or former uses, influence on plan and building types

61. This area was very much the commercial and retail heart of Folkestone, combining elements of the medieval core with layers and rings of development through later centuries. Although somewhat down-at-heal in places, the infrastructure, building and public realm improvements already in place signal readiness for an urban renaissance. In some places, this process has begun; an example being No 43A (Moda), Tontine Street, which serves as an exemplar of good practice. Architectural and historic qualities of buildings and their contribution

62. In many ways everything emanates from this, Folkestone's ancient fount. Here one can see the mediaeval street layout, which is organic, compared to the learned hand in the planned C19th layout of Folkestone West. Generally, Old Town is densely laid out with narrow plot curtilages crammed together, as is the case on The Old High Street. The epicentre of this area appears to be where The Old High Street meets Bayle Street. In contrast to the flat and spacious nature of Folkestone West, Old Town is characterised by its hilly and winding topography. There is a picturesque, village-like quality of The Bayle/Church Street area of the town centre, with its winding streets and emphasis on the individuality of buildings. It is also characterised by a multitude of non-chain store businesses and can be very busy (in that it is often very colourful) on the eye – such as The Old High Street. The following qualities can be identified:

1) The junction of The Old High Street and Tontine Street is of considerable interest and age – the outlines of early buildings can be detected here. The historic floorscape survives on The Old High Street, unlike most others.

2) The meeting point of Guildhall Street, Church Street, Rendevous Street and Sandgate Road is an important and historic town centre junction. There is a delightful street corner where Rendevous and Church Street meet. This area is probably the most conventionally 'picturesque' part of old Folkestone. The street market held in this area is at approximately the same site first recorded in 1313.

3) Note the view looking out from The Bayle. The Cottage, No. 5 The Bayle, is of interest with its inset/setback from the street frontage. The Bayle area is the historic core of Folkestone and is highly picturesque. It has a village-like quality and is the probable site of a castle, first mentioned in 1137.

4) Narrow lanes and flights of steps, leading off The Old High Street, testifying to its origins, providing tight, enclosed space and giving out onto wider streets or squares.

5) Confined, constantly changing views, with occasional glimpses between buildings to open spaces, landmarks or the sea beyond.

6) Sections of Tontine Street, which are three storeys high/stucco-fronted with good neo-classical detailing, do however have the potential to be Folkestone's answer to John Nash's Regent Street, London. The street as a whole has enormous potential for conservation led regeneration.

7) The Mill Bay cul-de-sac and The Wedge building at the end of Tontine Street help to pull the area back together again and have great character.

8) Rendezvous Street has, due to its architecture, considerable visual interest. winding descent and varied

Four typical views of Old Town and the High Street

Key building/areas for development or enhancement:

63.
1) The Princess Royal Inn, South Street (Bottom of Parade Steps) is at the junction of numerous covering vistas. Its peripheral position does not lessen the importance of this Victorian which could provide visual focus and interest.

2) 1-3 the Bayle (the old coach house located next to St Eanswythe's School) – this has a historic core and retains its cobbled courtyard. It is of definite local interest

3) Stones bar (Burtons), 24 Rendezvous street – with its elegant art deco faience façade this makes an important contribution to the street scene and is a focal point in views down rendezvous street, the ground floor frontage has been unfortunately replaced as have the windows

4) Former Millets Building, 20-22 the Old High Street – a listed building that is in serious need of renovation to bring it back into use. It is currently covered in

scaffolding. This building is architecturally and locally significant and will restore character to the area once it has been repaired sensitively.

5) Former Prince Albert Hotel, 29 Rendezvous Street – an old pub and hotel that has been empty for many years and is falling into disrepair due to neglect. Despite this its façade is reasonably well-preserved with elaborate glazed tiles and its original joinery

6) Mind Building, 24-26 Dover Road

7) Asbestos Shed, 14 Grace Hill Road – a derelict and potentially hazardous building located next to the Library and Chapel that has an extremely detrimental impact upon the appearance of the area. This plot is an ideal candidate for development and provides key views around the CA. The ground it lays on is an ideal candidate for development.

8) Open space next to Brewery Tap, Tontine Street – this area is the site of a First World War bomb explosion that claimed the lives of 71 civilians in 1917 (the 2nd biggest loss of civilian life on British soil in WW1). The historic significance of the sites makes it appropriate that it should be a place of memoriam.

Local details

64. Whilst there are a great many locally distinctive buildings, the enormous variations of detail do not appear to be locally peculiar to Folkestone. Note the cornice lost on No 4A, 'Curiosity Shop', Church Street. However, Church Street's modern road surface is somewhat incongruous with its historic buildings. Note on Church Street the '…lenburg College' lettering at the top of the Victorian stucco-faced building. Colorful employment of faience can be found at the Brewery Tap public house on Tontine Street. A stricter, monochromatic use of faience is to be found at the former Burton store (now Stones) on Rendezvous Street; this is a good example of the in-house designed corporate architecture of the Burton chain during the 1930s. Prevalent local and traditional building materials and the public realm

65. Pre-19th century Folkestone has a great variety of building materials, as is to be seen in The Bayle/Church Street area of town, where one will find buildings constructed of either stone, brick and occasionally faience. The Portland type stone of the fine Old Town Hall on Guildhall Street is a comparatively rare facing material for Folkestone. As elsewhere in the CA, fenestration tends to be painted softwood, with some exceptions being original fenestration to 1930's Art Deco style buildings and the occasional 1950s survival. Traditional roofs, where visible also vary in this area, but are mainly slate and clay tile.

Greenery and green spaces and ecology/biodiversity value

66. This area is marked not so much by its greenery and green spaces but by its varied, and often steep, topography. Street tree planting in this area helps to soften an otherwise almost entirely hard public realm, though it fails to compensate for poor quality spaces or surfaces.

Negative factors

67. The following buildings are considered to have a negative impact on the character of this area:
1. 18-20 Grace Hill
2. 1-27 Grace Court, Rendezvous Street
3. 44-46 Rendezvous Street
4. 18 Rendezvous Street (corner element)
5. Princes Gate, George Lane
6. Glendale, Bayle Street and The Bayle
7. 29 The Old High Street (gap site needing a suitable infill scheme)
8. 24-38 The Old High Street
9. Church, The Parade
10. Car park and Tourist Information Centre, Harbour Street
11. 1-3 Rendezvous Street
12. New Generation Bingo, Dover Road

68. As is evident on the ground and from comparison with old maps, the cutting of Forresters Way through the old street pattern has produced an environment that is alien in spatial quality, scale and in pedestrian circulation terms.

69. Several buildings and groups in Tontine Street cast a blight on the street due to their disrepair, vacancy and stripping of ornament. The situation is not helped by current traffic conditions. However, building condition here appears to be largely due to neglect and should not be an excuse for redevelopment. Lost detail can be easily reinstated by reference to intact surviving examples. Some restoration in the street amply demonstrates what can be done.

70. Despite some recent partial pedestrianisation, parts of the CA, particularly within the Town Centre area display pedestrian-vehicle conflict, noise, architectural discord or inferior design quality. There is disparity with the unimproved sections. Shop fronts are often at variance with the character of their buildings, and of poor quality. Building fronts are often altered and signage is excessively large and aggressive.

71. At interfaces within and at the edges of the CA, traffic priorities result in potentially hazardous and visually degraded pedestrian environments. The charm of some buildings and spaces often goes unrecognised and trade can suffer. Carefully designed traditional or modern shopfronts are crucial to both the character of a shopping street and its commercial success. Good design, including the right scale, detailing, materials and colour schemes is vital.

Neutral areas

72.

1) The Earl Grey, The Old High Street: note the wooden decking and the neutral surrounding area immediately next to the decking/public house (but see negative no 7)

2) No 27, The Picart Gallery, The Old High Street.

3) Super Pizza, 2-4 The Old High Street.

4) Merchants Place (a block of flats), 24 Rendezvous Street.

5) The Oriental Buffet, 18 -20 Rendezvous Street .

6) The building above Café IT, 5 Grace Hill.

7) No 63, RH Trading Co, The Old High Street, (negative shopfront.)

8) No 34, The Grapevine, The Old High Street.

9) No's 1-10 Prince's Gate Flats, Bayle Street, is a bland termination to the comparatively picturesque Old High Street.

10) The Parade has neutral buildings on the right (Bayle Court).

11) Ladbrokes, 3 Rendezvous Street, is a poor neighbour to the Old Town Hall, now Waterstone's, on Guildhall Street. There is a poor relationship between Rendezvous Street and Waterstone's. The view of wheelie bins in Market Place creates a somewhat negative impression.

12) The historic, surviving early-Victorian stucco architecture above the shops on Tontine Street is often in poor condition – The Furniture Gallery is a good example of this kind of decay, with its mutilated window architraves, general staining and so on.

13) Tontine Street generally conveys a neglected, declining impression, exacerbated by the flow of busy traffic. Poor shop front design and care further degrades the fundamentally interesting street. See paragraph above.

14) Priory Gardens, the terrace is of good quality but has been undermined by insensitive changes and the removal of external ornamentation.

General condition, BARs (buildings at risk), problems, pressures, need for any Article 4 directions and capacity for change

73. The main pressures come from insensitive development or alteration, poor quality or discordant shopfronts, neglect of existing properties, traffic problems and wide variation in the quality of the public realm. Any unauthorised material alteration to external appearance of all other buildings however should be strongly resisted and where necessary enforced against. This should include shopfront alterations.