

Shepway District Council

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



ETCHINGHILL



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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 Etchinghill 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 14 such appraisals, commissioned by Shepway District Council. Original designation came into effect on 20th July 1973.
- 3 This appraisal has been undertaken using the methodology of the English Heritage consultative '*Guidance on conservation area appraisals*', 2005. Annual reviews and 5 yearly updating are recommended. A companion guide, '*Guidance on the management of conservation areas*', recommends a procedure to follow the appraisal.

PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the process of assessment, definition or revision of boundaries and formulation of proposals for CA's as well as 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 the case of listed buildings, to have special regard for their preservation in the exercise of their powers under the Planning Acts.
- 5 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 15, 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 buildings, CA's and other elements of the historic environment. Shepway Council's District Plan includes its statutory policies for implementing the Acts and applying the PPG. This Appraisal should be taken into account when considering, applying for or determining planning or listed building applications within the CA.
- 6 The underlying objective of the relevant legislation and guidance is the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance of CA's. Any proposed development which conflicts with that objective should normally expect to be refused. PPG 15 and local policy support a presumption in favour of preservation of any building or object which is considered to make a positive contribution to the character of a CA. At the same time, the need to accommodate change which respects or reinforces the character of the area in order to maintain its vitality is recognised. Regard must also be had to the requirements of other national guidance, including PPG16 covering archaeology and PPS 1, which includes policies on sustainable development and urban design.

- 7 Many local planning policies, not just those relating to 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 can all influence development and the quality of the environment in CA's. However, policies concerned with design quality and character generally take on greater importance in CA's. The adopted District Plan's chapter on Built Environment covers conservation and design matters. The key policies of this chapter state:

POLICY BE3

- 8 When considering new CA's or reviewing existing CA's 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

- 9 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 CA's;
 - d. seek to retain materials, features and details of unlisted buildings or structures which preserve or enhance the character or appearance of CA's;
 - 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 CA's;
 - f. protect trees and hedgerows which enhance both the setting and character of CA's.
- 10 Other policies dealing with historic or built environment matters are BE 1, 2 and 5-19.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

- 11 Greater restrictions on “permitted development” apply in CA’s than elsewhere. In CA’s any Article 4 Direction in force further restricts householder development without planning permission as well as the erection of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure. 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

- 12 The Etchinghill CA is centred on the Canterbury Road, the main north-south route through the village. Its northern boundary runs from the road along the property boundary between Whitegables bungalow and the Old Wool Barn, stretching back as far as the old railway cutting. The eastern boundary then follows the cutting as far as Badgers Bridge, then cuts west and south to follow the boundary between the old properties along the main road and the modern houses behind. At the junction between Teddars Leas Road and the Canterbury Road it turns west again, taking in Ivy Cottage but excluding the new estate built on the grounds of the old workhouse. It then zigzags north and west around the large gardens of Spicers Farm and Ridge Cottage, following the bank of the East Brook before rejoining the main road and returning north between the roadway and the bungalows on its left hand side.



SUMMARY of SPECIAL INTEREST

- 13 The hamlet of Etchinghill is a very ancient settlement, and exemplifies the scattered, informal layout of smaller rural communities which have grown up from a group of adjacent farmsteads into the semblance of a village. At its heart is a cluster of C16th and C17th buildings, originally farmhouses and cottages; since the mid C20th this historic nucleus has been infilled and largely encircled with modern dwellings, typical of the suburbanising impact of the motor car on rural life in south-eastern England. Despite this, the old core of the settlement preserves an integrity and, thanks to its situation in a hollow of the North Downs, a connection to the landscape that accounts for its designation as a CA.

Location & setting

- 14 Etchinghill lies at the head of the Elham Valley in Kent, around a mile to the south of the large village of Lyminge and three miles north of the coastal town of Hythe. It is set within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is surrounded on three sides by chalk hills: the main ridge of the Downs rises steeply to the east, while the gentler slopes of Tolsford Hill enfold the settlement on the south and west.
- 15 A seasonal stream, the Eastbrook, rises in the hollow and flows out on the northern, open side to join the Nailbourne at Lyminge; the Canterbury Road approaches from that direction, passing through Etchinghill before leaving the valley through a narrow gap in the south-east, on its way to Hythe. As it leaves the village it is joined by a smaller lane, Teddars Leas Road, coming down the escarpment from Paddlesworth and, as the trackway known as Westfield Lane, continuing up to the top of Tolsford Hill. The surrounding hillsides, visible from everywhere in the village, are mostly open pastureland, although the southern slopes of Tolsford Hill are wooded, and there is a large golf course to the north. On the hilltop, high above Etchinghill, a telecommunications tower looms over the landscape.



Tolsford Hill BT tower

Historic development & archaeology

- 16 The earliest settlement in the area may have been on the hill rather than in the valley: there are three prehistoric tumuli on Tolsford Hill, along with some evidence of early iron-mining activity, and an ancient trackway runs along the top of the Downs to the north-east. However, the Saxon name of the village ('Tetinghelde', 'the hill of Teting's people', or perhaps 'babbling [stream] hill') indicates that it too is of great antiquity.

- 17 Although Etchinghill is thought to have been the older settlement, it was gradually eclipsed by its neighbour Lyminge, where a monastery was established in the C7th, the predecessor of the present parish church of St Mary and St Eadburge. Etchinghill never acquired a church or chapel of its own, nor did it develop a coherent centre as did Lyminge.
- 18 It nevertheless maintained a distinct identity: although not mentioned in Domesday, it was supposedly mentioned as a separate settlement ('Etynglyld') in the 15th century, while in the 18th Hasted says that the parish contains 'three boroughs...those of Liminge, Siberton and Eatchend', and later refers to 'the hamlet of Echinghill, or Eachand...the principal house of which belonged to the Spicers, of Stanford'. This last may be the building now known as Spicers Farm, which is mentioned in a family will of the C15th; there is also a Spicer Chalice, bequeathed to Lyminge parish church by a member of the family in 1558 and still in existence.
- 19 Three farmsteads once formed the core of the village: the aforementioned Spicers Farm at the southern end of the village, Ridgehill Farm to the east, the property of the Rigden family, and Watercress Farm to the north, which occupied the site of the modern bungalows where the road bends west towards Newbarn. As the third name indicates, there were once watercress beds on the Eastbrook, and almost within living memory people came from as far as Folkestone in the summer to gather and sell the crop.
- 20 Farming must always have been the principal occupation, however, although forestry too would at first have been of importance, as it was throughout this once densely-wooded part of the county. The northward road would have allowed the villagers to trade with the market town of Elham, and ultimately with Canterbury, while the southern road linked it with the former ports of Hythe and West Hythe.
- 21 Most of the older buildings in the village date from the C17th and early C18th, from the period following enclosure when the rise of agricultural labour made it necessary for farmers to construct accommodation for their workers, as well as a range of specialist buildings to house livestock and store produce. The effects of this kind of expansion are clearly seen in the buildings of Ridgehill Farm: the farmhouse itself was extended to both north and south, and labourers' cottages – now Ridgehill Cottages – were built adjoining the road.]
- 22 Alongside these were built a row of stables, and in the farmyard itself three barns: a large single-storied structure (now called Badgers Barn) for general use, then two specialist barns, one for shearing (now Ridgehill Barn) and another, the Wool Barn, built on two levels for the storage of fleeces; all have now been converted into dwellings. Some of the buildings further south, such as Tudor Cottage and Brook House, may have served a similar purpose in connexion with Spicers Farm.



Former stables and farmhouse at Ridgehill Farm

- 23 Modernity made a dramatic arrival in Etchinghill in 1835 with the foundation, on a two-acre site to the south of the village, of the Elham Union Workhouse. This institution, the result of the Poor Law Amendment Act which grouped parishes into collective 'unions' for the provision of poor relief, developed into a large sprawling complex with several quadrangles, stables and a chapel. Its physical impact on the landscape must have been considerable, although being largely self-contained it had little effect on the development of the village itself.
- 24 A second great harbinger of the modern age, the railway, similarly bypassed Etchinghill: while the opening of the Elham Valley line (connecting Canterbury and Folkestone) in 1887 fuelled a small housing boom in Lyminge, Etchinghill was seemingly too small to merit a station and experienced no comparable expansion. The temporary population of labourers digging the nearby cutting and tunnel no doubt helped sustain the two public houses that had opened in the village in the intervening years; the New Inn, which gained its licence in 1853, and the Ark Inn, which occupied one or more of what are now the Ark Cottages.



An early photograph of the Elham Union Workhouse

- 25 Although a few new houses went up in the 1930s, notably bungalows like Alameda and Cherry Tree Cottage, plus the neo-Georgian Ridgehill House, Etchinghill did not really begin to expand until after the Second World War. The western side of Canterbury Road, once the site of Watercress Farm, was developed into a string of widely-spaced bungalows. Further ribbon development spread east along Teddars Leas Road and south towards Hythe, where in the 1960s some ancient cottages in the outlying district of Upstreet were demolished to make way for the present semi-detached houses. However, the greatest expansion has been recent: several big detached houses have been built adjoining the railway cutting, another has replaced the old village hall, and the former workhouse (later St Mary's geriatric hospital) has lately been redeveloped as a large housing estate, with only the converted chapel remaining of its former buildings.



Upstreet Cottages

Map regression

- 26 The earliest detailed plan of Etchinghill – or 'Eachend' – is a Tithe Map of the 1840s (Appendix 1). It shows the village just after the construction of the Elham Union Workhouse, which is the large quadrangular block in the south-west corner. Several of the surviving older buildings can be readily identified: Tudor Cottage and Rock Cottages at the road junction and what is now the New Inn further north, with Spicers Farm opposite and the Ridgehill Farm complex above. Interestingly, the first house on Westfield Lane, which is now known as Ivy Cottage and appears quite modern, is shown on this map, suggesting either that it has since been rebuilt on the original plan, or that the existing building conceals older fabric.
- 27 Many of the buildings shown no longer exist, however: the complex at the northern end of the village is presumably the vanished Watercress Farm, and it seems that Spicers Farm was once surrounded by a considerable group of houses and outbuildings of which only Ridge Cottage and Brook House survive. Another interesting lost feature is the village pond, or ponds, shown just east of the road junction with the now-demolished Upstreet cottages a little to the left.
- 28 The two most visible changes by the time of the second-edition Ordnance Survey map (1898) are the great expansion of the Workhouse and the advent of the Elham Valley Railway. The former has filled in its own quadrangle and developed wings stretching north-east as far as the Canterbury Road and south into the

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adjoining field, now clearly annexed as part of its grounds, with the surviving chapel in the centre. The latter's huge cutting and tunnel are evidence of the enormous impact the transport revolution had even on this remote rural landscape. Perhaps in connection with the railway, Ark Cottages have by this time developed from a single building (the original Ark Inn) into the terrace we see today. A 'Mission Room' – presumably an outpost of Lyminge parish church – has appeared just opposite, on the site later to be occupied by the village hall.



Building the railway cutting

- 29 The next Ordnance Survey map, from 1907, shows almost no change. An area of open hillside south of the village has been turned into a plantation, which still remains, and the Mission Room has mysteriously disappeared, only to reappear again in 1938. By this time, other changes have become apparent. One at least of the village ponds has disappeared, as has the large building, perhaps a barn, in front of Rock Cottages. There has also been some thinning-out of the outbuildings around Spicers Farm. Meanwhile, the bungalow known as Cherry Tree Cottage has appeared, the first of the new houses along Teddars Leas Road can now be seen just beyond, and the workhouse (now retitled, in line with contemporary standards of political correctness, the 'Public Assistance Institution') has acquired a further wing.
- 30 The most recent map shows a far more comprehensive change than any previously experienced. The Elham Valley Railway is no more: passenger services were terminated in 1947, and the track taken up by 1953. The old farm buildings have been converted for residential use, and the largest farmhouse – Ridgehill – subdivided into four separate properties. Most strikingly, the old hamlet is now almost completely encircled by modern housing. This must have begun in the north with the redevelopment of Watercress Farm and the land opposite as a string of bungalows, one of which still bears its name, and in the south with the demolition of Upstreet cottages to make way for the present semi-detached houses. Later, the strip of land west of the railway cutting was developed as a cul-de-sac known as The Orchids. Most recently, the old workhouse has been demolished and an estate of around 40 detached houses built in its grounds. In addition, all the land to the north, between Etchinghill and Lyminge, has been turned over to a golf course.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

- 31 Etchinghill's setting in a fold or combe of the North Downs determines many of its spatial qualities. The contours of Tolsford Hill give the Canterbury Road its distinctive sinuous line, swinging in from the west around its lower slopes and weaving its way through the village before bending south towards the narrow gap at Combe Farm. Many of the older houses are set well back from the road, often behind hedges or trees, forming clusters around the drives and side-lanes that were once their farmyards. Only at the southern end of the CA do the buildings arrange themselves along the roadway to form anything resembling a street.
- 32 This series of curves and byways makes it all but impossible to take in the whole of the historic settlement at one glance without climbing one of the hills whose broad green slopes seem to hem it in on either side. The railway cutting is virtually invisible from within the village, but the dense thickets that now fill it further add to the sense of seclusion.

Key views & vistas

- 33 Approached from the Lyminge side, along the road or across the golf course, Etchinghill presents an unremarkable prospect. The ribbon of bungalows along the Canterbury Road completely mask the historic core of the village from view, and even once we are alongside the buildings of the Ridgehill Farm complex, trees and a high hedge largely hide them from view. It is not until we come to Stable Mews that leads into the old farmyard that we get a proper view of the older buildings grouped around the former farmyard – although as the latter is now used largely for parking, the view is much obstructed by cars.
- 34 A very different outlook is to be obtained if we follow the lane down to Badgers Bridge: ahead, the green hillside (albeit pockmarked with golf bunkers) stretches away to the skyline, while down below the old railway cutting yawns like a chasm.



Left: View from Badgers Bridge Right: The railway cutting below

- 35 Further into the village, the vistas become a little more rewarding. As it passes Ridgehill Cottages, the road makes a rather elegant double curve, with the building itself standing midway as a kind of punctuation. At the southern end, beyond The New Inn, the houses at last begin to front more or less directly onto the roadway, which contracts to a pinch point between Tudor Cottage and Rock Cottage. Seen from without, these two buildings act as visual 'gateposts', framing an inviting view up into the village.



Above: Ridgehill Cottage Below: Tudor and Rock Cottage



- 36 The view in the opposite direction is rather marred by the monotonous sprawl of the new housing estate, although the wooded slope of Tolsford Hill is still visible beyond. Looking east, however, the effect of the recent growth of the village is happier: although a ribbon of modern houses stretches up Teddars Leas Road almost as far as the summit of the escarpment, their haphazard arrangement among the trees makes them sit surprisingly comfortably within the landscape.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Activity, uses & influence on layout & building types

- 37 As previously mentioned, although there are no active farm buildings in Etchinghill today, the village’s origin as a group of farmsteads has had a decisive influence on its built form. As the early maps show, it once consisted of three distinct clusters of buildings, each grouped around its own yard, and with each building serving some specialised function within the farm complex – an arrangement which still survives, physically if not functionally, at Ridgehill.
- 38 Although Watercress Farm has now disappeared completely, and Spicers Farm has largely lost its outbuildings, the inward-looking character of the old farmsteads explains why so few of the older buildings appear to address the street, and why the life of the village appears to be going on not in the public arena but in some secluded private realm, hidden away behind fences and hedges and garden walls.



Secluded spaces: The Old Wool Barn



Ark Cottages

- 39 The effects of the decline of agriculture in the village, and the transformation of what were once working farmhouses into purely domestic properties, are very evident at Spicers Farm. In 1898, this was a dense cluster of buildings much like those of Ridgehill. As the farm declined, these gradually disappeared, leaving the ancient house standing alone in landscaped grounds like a miniature stately home. Ridge Cottage and Brook House, relics perhaps of the same complex, are now similarly isolated.
- 40 The southern end of the village, between the New Inn and Tudor Cottage, shows a quite different layout. The buildings here seem to have had a much looser association with the farmsteads, and hence turn outwards to face the street, rather than inwards towards each other. In the case of the New Inn, once perhaps a cottage in its own hedged-in plot of land but now emphatically a public house with a beer garden on the main road, this is a matter of practical necessity; the same was presumably true of the former Ark Inn, which in turn determined the street frontage of the row of cottages that developed alongside in the late C19th.

- 41 It is notable that Tudor House once served as the village shop and tearoom, a role that the more secluded dwellings would have been ill-suited to fulfil. All this may suggest function following form rather than the reverse, but whatever the precise reason for it, this part of the village forms a distinct character area, and is the closest Etchinghill comes to 'streetscape'.



Spicers Farm

Architectural & historic qualities & contribution to special interest

- 42 The architectural qualities of old Etchinghill are primarily those of the local rural vernacular, overlaid here and there with the polite styles of the C18th and C19th. The vernacular in its purest form is represented – albeit almost invisibly given the high hedge around the property – by Spicers Farm (grade II), a timber-framed lobby-entry house of the early C17th. The framing is in rectangular panels of irregular widths, reinforced by tension braces or horizontal rails; all the infill is now of brick. The house is of four bays and two storeys, jettied on the front and right-hand elevations, with moulded spandrel-brackets beneath and a dragon-beam carrying the corner. As with nearly all the old houses in the village, there is a big hipped roof of red-brown tile; a cluster of three polygonal brick stacks projects from the rear slope, with a much later single stack on the left. The windows, too, are a later insertion, this time of the early C19th: two- and three-light casements containing small square panes, the top row having cusped 'Gothick' heads.
- 43 The New Inn (grade II) shows this overlay of fashionable details upon vernacular buildings more clearly. Here the framing – heavier and more regular than in the farmhouse, and infilled with fine herringbone brickwork – is exposed only on the first floor; at ground level, at least on the street front, the building has been wholly encased in painted brick, with inserted casement and sash windows. (At an earlier time, the first-floor framing too was covered up with tile-hanging.) To the right, a brick extension has been added, its late-Georgian proportions markedly taller than those of the original building. At Tudor Cottage (grade II), the timber framing is almost completely hidden behind an early C19th brick façade.

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The New Inn in the late 19th century (with tile-hanging) and today



- 44 Vernacular building of a quite different order is shown in the surviving barns at Ridgehill Farm. All are now converted into dwellings, and the two-storey former Wool Barn is now of wholly domestic appearance, but the others (of which the oldest, Badgers Barn, is listed grade II) retain their distinctive features: huge half-hipped roofs sweeping down to low eaves on the front and rear elevations, the former being dominated by a towering cart entrance, now glazed in but once possessing huge double doors.
- 45 These vernacular traditions gradually gave way to the polite and artisan styles of the C18th and C19th. Brook House (grade II), said to have been built to house a farm bailiff, is a good example of the former: a perfectly regular early Georgian box, it presents a symmetrical three-bay front with a moulded doorcase in the centre, tall twelve-pane sashes in segmental-headed openings on either side, and three square nine-pane sashes on the first floor. Even the two chimney stacks are symmetrically placed on the rear slope of the hipped roof, which has a shallower pitch and less generous eaves than those of the older buildings.
- 46 The Nook is a smaller and rather later version of the same type, its symmetry upset somewhat by a mid-19th century bay-windowed extension in a matching style but strongly contrasting brickwork. Ark Cottages show the same development at its opposite – crude and an artisanal – extreme: although partial rebuilding and reroofing has given them a certain spurious unity, they look to have been developed *ad hoc*, perhaps by the landlord of The Ark Inn, with the last three – nos. 5-7 – on a startlingly different and more ‘urban’ scale than the rest.



Above: *Badgers Barn.* Below: *Brook House & K6 telephone box*



- 47 The only other listed building in Etchinghill is the K-6 telephone box (grade II) made to Giles Gilbert Scott's 1935 design. It stands outside the New Inn, neatly marking the centre of the village.

Contribution made by key unlisted buildings

- 48 Rather less than half of the pre C20th buildings in Etchinghill are listed. Of those that are not, those of the Ridgehill complex (of which only one building, the large barn, is listed) probably make the most significant contribution to the area, comprising as they do the best preserved of the former farmsteads from which the village developed. The farmhouse itself, now four dwellings, shows very clearly the gradual evolution of the site. The southern portion of the building is dated 1609, and appears to have been extended at least four times between the C17th and C20th, giving it its classic rambling outline. The smaller of the single-storeyed barns is similar in character and degree of preservation to its listed neighbour, and serves to enclose the farmyard on the north-east.

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Ridgehill farmhouse and barn

- 49 The same farm appears to have given rise to two other interesting buildings: Ridgehill Cottages on the main road, a pair of 18th-century farmworkers' dwellings in red and grey brick, and Ridge Cottage near Spicers Farm, a long low building of uncertain date, faced with a curious patchwork of brick, tile-hanging and rubble stone. Rock Cottage is another stone building of early appearance, possibly once a farmhouse in its own right; despite the rebuilding of its chimneystacks in modern brick, and the installation of double-glazed windows with false glazing bars, it preserves something of its former character, and also – with Tudor Cottage – serves to define the southern 'gateway' to the CA.
- 50 Finally, The Nook is an elegant if altered Georgian building with links to two local worthies, the Shillingford Sisters, who in the early C20th held village parties and dances in the house and its garden; Winifred Shillingford also built, or perhaps adapted, the little weatherboarded 'cottage' – lately much altered – at the end of the garden for use as a painting studio.



Above: Ridgehill Cottages and Ridge Cottage; Below: Rock Cottage and The Nook



Prevalent local and traditional building materials & the public realm

- 51 The predominant building materials in the CA are brick, timber and tile. The traditional local brick is soft-textured and of a warm orange-red colour; for mass walling it is laid in Flemish bond, often alternating with blue-grey burnt brick headers. Ridgehill Cottages are uniformly walled in this chequered brickwork, with segmental arches of moulded brick on the ground floor window-heads. A politer building like The Nook has a main façade of harder, more regular brick, with rougher work (and even some tile-hanging) at the sides, and the Victorian extension standing out in a much brighter orange hue. A building like Ridgehill Farm, composed of a series of accretions spanning several centuries, shows its complex building history in a patchwork of subtly different brickwork styles.
- 52 In the older buildings with exposed timber framing, notably Spicers Farm, the New Inn and Tudor Cottage, brick serves merely as an infill within the framework panels. Here it is laid in stretcher-bond, or even (as at the inn) in a showy herringbone pattern. Whether this is the original fabric, or whether it is a later replacement for lath-and-plaster or some other material, is unclear. 5-7 Ark Cottages, a late-Victorian building, shows a contrasting, sandy-coloured brick, perhaps brought in from further afield via the newly-opened railway. The mid C20th houses and bungalows are in a gritty, dull-brown brick, although the most recent have reverted to something closer to the local red.
- 53 Two other masonry types are to be seen in the village. Kentish ragstone, here a mid-grey uncoursed rubble, forms the main walls at Rock Cottage, and the side wings of Ridge Cottage and Badgers Barn are faced in the same material; in all three cases the quoins and window-dressings are of brick. There is also some very sparing use of flint: on nos. 2-4 Ark Cottages (much refaced in brick) and at Spicers Farm where it forms the plinth for the timber-framed building.



Studio at The Nook

- 54 Reddish-brown clay tile is the dominant roofing material. It is largely uniform throughout the village from the early C17th to the late C19th. The only exception is The Nook, which has a roof of what appears to be Welsh slate, possibly dating from the addition of the right-hand wing. Tile-hanging is also seen, in the central bays of Ridge Cottage and on the old Wool Barn. The two other barns are weather-boarded, as is the building that was once Miss Shillingford's studio.



Brickwork, timber framing, ragstone, flintwork, tile-hanging, weatherboarding

Greenery, green spaces & ecology

- 55 As previously noted, most of the older houses in Etchinghill are set well back from the roadway within mature gardens, and these last determine the visual quality of the CA as much as the architecture of the buildings themselves. Looking up or down the main street from almost any point, one sees more vegetation than masonry.
- 56 Ridgehill Farm and its associated buildings are partly hidden behind a dense screen of hedges and trees – largely beech – which accentuate their impression of privacy and inwardness. The Nook is even more thoroughly concealed within an enclosure of dark yew trees. Spicers Farm, Ridge Cottage and Brook House are virtually invisible from the road; even from the lane they are glimpsed only in the middle distance amid their broad lawns and clipped hedges, seeming to stand aloof from the village itself.
- 57 The green spaces that lie without the CA are as important to its character as those within it. The railway cutting, for instance, is a kind of secret forest, whose dense foliage forms a backdrop to the houses on the eastern side of the road, and whose hidden presence adds a certain sense of wildness to the domestic village scene. Above all, it is the sheltering slopes of green downland, seen over the roof-tops or at the ends of lanes, that form the broader setting for the village and give it its particular sense of place.



Houses on Teddars Leas Road

Negative & neutral factors

- 58 From the time of the earliest maps (and presumably for centuries before) up until the Second World War, Etchinghill was nothing more than a small hamlet, a little scattering of buildings set among fields in a green bowl of the hills. Today it is still possible with some selective vision to read this historic identity. In the last five decades the area around the CA has suffered from speculative building which has had an adverse impact on the setting of the CA.
- 59 This process had its herald or precursor at the end of the C19th with the development of Ark Cottages, nos. 5-7 being especially out of place in scale and materials. What the railway brought in the 1880s the private car brought back with a vengeance from the 1950s. The row of bungalows opposite Ridgehill Farm and the detached houses called Hythe and Magnolia Cottage, with their buff brick and cement render walls and their shallow roofs of concrete pantiles contrast with local forms and materials. The houses on The Orchids are faced in reddish brick and have steep tiled roofs, but their profiles and detailing are discordant and detract from the setting of the CA.



Left: Bungalows opposite Ridgehill Farm; Right: Detail of no. 7 The Orchids

- 60 The historic buildings themselves have suffered less than in many places from insensitive alteration. Most retain their timber window-frames and clay roofing tiles, and few if any sport inept extensions or accretions of satellite dishes and the like. However, some of the unlisted buildings – Rock Cottage, Ivy Cottage, Ark Cottages - have suffered the ignominy of UPVC double glazing. There have also been some unsympathetic conversions. The two big barns have clumsy rooflights and intrusive glazing in their cart entrances, and the old Wool Barn has been almost swamped by an enormous conservatory.

General condition, problems, pressures and the capacity for change

- 61 The condition of the buildings in and around the CA appears, outwardly at least, to be excellent. Though few serve their original purposes, all are occupied and well maintained. One or two, such as the old studio at The Nook, have been recently renovated – perhaps too thoroughly. Set within an AONB within easy commuting distance of Canterbury, Dover and Folkestone, the village seems prosperous. Like most villages, its institutions have dwindled in number – The Ark Inn is long gone, as are the shop and tearoom formerly at Tudor Cottage, however the village hall has recently been rebuilt with greatly expanded facilities.
- 62 In fact, the popularity of the area probably represents the greatest threat to its character. As the previous section shows, pressure for new housing is high, and with little control over design this has led to a deterioration of the village's setting. The historic core, which forms the CA, is very small, and its charm lies in its scattered form and close relation to the landscape; it is thus extremely vulnerable to being engulfed by inferior development.

- 63 Since 1973, designation has been effective in slowing unsympathetic new development *within* the area; but the unchecked development on new housing just outside its boundaries has been disastrous. It would be difficult to justify extending these boundaries to include the outlying areas of new housing, which so manifestly lack special architectural or historic interest; but if it is not recognised that the character of this CA is unusually dependent on its setting, and if steps are not taken to protect that setting from further erosion, then the special quality of the area will continue to be compromised.



View south towards Tolsford Hill showing new estate on right

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

- 64 In accordance with English Heritage advice, the Council's brief included a requirement to involve key stakeholders in the appraisal process. The principal means was by a questionnaire, the content of which was agreed with the Council, requiring careful consideration and in some instances detailed responses. Careful regard to the questionnaire responses has been paid in this text.
- 65 The questionnaire was sent to 3 groups and individuals as advised by the Council. Of these, 3 responses were received. These are reported upon at Appendix 3. Critical comments raised by stakeholders, with our responses, are set out in the table below.

SUGGESTED BOUNDARY REVISIONS

- 66 Other than minor adjustments to the boundary following the curtilage of the property, no extensions or deletions have been recommended.

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Summary of issues raised by stakeholders

	Comment	Response
1	Planning seems to ineffective as it allows buildings to be erected that do not preserve the character of the village and they are “crammed” in to make more use of the space which erodes the character of the place.	This appraisal should assist more effective decision making to preserve the character of the area, and defending decisions at appeal where necessary.
2	Volume, type and speed of vehicles are changing the whole area for the worse, with scant regard shown for speed limit. Too many HGV lorries coming through a very narrow road and far too fast	There is a case for examining whether a sensitive, self-enforcing traffic calming scheme should be introduced.
3	Any future development should include public parking spaces for people from out of the village, as we get a great many walkers and hikers following the village trails and there is no where for them to park their cars, other than on the road which causes a traffic problem.	There are no known proposals for future development within the CA. A survey of parking pressure during the high season might reveal whether there is a case for planned parking allocation or control within or outside the CA .
4	Some of the controls seem to stifle enterprise which should be encouraged in some way to ensure that people who live in rural areas can still make a living without commuting to the metropolises.	Control of development in this CA is common to all CA's in England. We do not consider there is any case for relaxation. Indeed, stricter control of external alteration may be desirable.
5	Westfield Lane, including old engineering works should be included in the CA as it is part of the original village/hamlet	Westfield Lane may once have had a close relation to the historic core of the village, but its built character is now dominated by late 20 th century suburban housing; the present day connection is too weak to justify inclusion.
6	The whole hospital wall curtilage should be included in the CA	In architectural and historical terms, the workhouse/hospital complex was only ever weakly related to the ancient village. Of its original buildings, only the chapel survives, the rest having recently been redeveloped as the Meriden Park housing estate.

ETCHINGHILL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

7	The Golf Course and the Cricket Ground should be included in the CA to stop indiscriminate over-development of the area at a later date.	If these areas are identified as important to the setting of the CA development can be controlled without inclusion within boundary, in accordance with government policy.
8	The old chapel in Meriden Park and the land belonging to the nursery adjoining Canterbury Road should be included in the CA.	The chapel has been drastically altered in conversion, and is now separated from the historic village by several blocks of modern housing. The land belonging to the nursery contains no historic structures; its protection is properly an issue of setting.

LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE

- 67 Threats to the character of the CA have been noted. The most common are erosion of detail, inappropriate alteration or extension and uncontrolled, disfiguring householder alterations such as UPVC windows. Control of development outside the CA boundaries affecting character or setting is already provided for by way of Government policy Section 4.14 of PPG15 which refers to Section 73 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

Article 4 Directions

- 68 The introduction of Article 4 Directions is recommended. Their purpose is to prevent further harmful alteration to the exteriors of single family houses by removing the rights to make changes allowed under permitted development rights. The following are examples of what can be controlled:
- a. Any changes to roof coverings.
 - b. Certain roof lights and solar panels.
 - c. The erection of fencing and boundary walls.
 - d. The removal of walls, fences or any other boundary treatments.
 - e. The erection of sheds, garages and outbuildings.
 - f. The erection of a hard standing.
 - g. Painting or rendering of natural masonry.
 - h. Any extensions or conservatories.
 - i. Any changes to doors and windows.
 - j. Any changes to elevations of the building that is visible from the public highway.

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS / STRATEGY

Design guidance

- 69 A local design guide is desirable in order to inform building owners of best practice with regard to maintenance, repair and reinstatement, as well as what the Council is likely to consider acceptable by way of design, alteration and extension of property. This could include topics on the design, layout and density of any new development as well as traffic, parking and circulation issues. Reference to the scope of a future Management Scheme and details of any Article 4 Directions is also recommended. In the interim, the IHBC/SPAB guide, *A Stitch in Time*, directed at householders and downloadable from the IHBC website, is recommended for publicising and distribution. Encouragement to reverse inappropriate changes to historic buildings is desirable.
- 70 The main problems and pressures identified above should be addressed in this guide. Topics could include:
- Description of principal design features
 - Extensions
 - Building materials and details
 - Roof conversions and dormers
 - Rain and foul water systems
 - Chimneys
 - Porches
 - Windows and doors
 - Garages and parking spaces
 - Garden buildings
 - Fences, walls and hedges
 - Trees and landscape
 - Communication aerials
 - Reinstating lost features
 - How to make an application
- 71 Issues concerning works within the public realm, which are within the control of the Council, should be grouped together for inclusion in a policy document for implementation by the Council or County Councils, as appropriate. Specific guidance on the importance of co-ordinated design of objects, installations and surfaces within the CA, and of collaboration between Council services to that end should be included. A comprehensive audit of street furniture and signs would be an essential preliminary towards de-cluttering the public realm.
- 72 Consideration should be given in the Management Plan Stage to the development of a detailed local evaluation tool which would be more objective in measuring development proposals, whether alterations or new build, against the key characteristics of the CA, or its character areas, as appropriate.

USEFUL INFORMATION

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Appendix 3

Summary of Etchinghill Stakeholder Consultation

1. **Please list any special qualities, distinctive features or areas, which you consider make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.**
 - *The mix of old properties at the road edge with areas of farmland in the vicinity and large undeveloped gardens.*
 - *Some houses in the centre of the village with large gardens help to preserve the rural feel of the area.*
 - *There are easy access to country walks.*
 - *It is a clean and tidy area, very peaceful and reasonably quiet with a low crime rate.*
 - *"Very strong community feel from the inhabitants – just like a country village should be"*

2. **Can you identify any key features that you feel have been eroded over time?**
 - *The over-development of housing and the indiscriminate building of properties in large back gardens.*
 - *The demolition of the old village hall.*
 - *The development of the old hospital chapel into a private dwelling at Meriden Park.*

3. **Can you identify any development that has taken place since designation, which you feel has had a negative effect on the Conservation Area?**
 - *Removal of old village hall and erection of oversized property, not in keeping with surrounding area*
 - *Construction of two properties behind listed building 6/198 which are oversized and construction materials not in keeping*

4. **Can you identify any areas on the attached map that you consider should be included or excluded from the Conservation Area? Please give your reasons.**
 - *Is any of Westfield Lane, including old engineering works included as it is part of the original village/hamlet.*
 - *Is the old hospital curtilage wall included? ? If not the whole wall should be included*
 - *The Golf Course and the Cricket Ground should be included to stop indiscriminate over-development of the area at a later date.*
 - *The old chapel in Meriden Park should be included.*
 - *The land belonging to the nursery adjoining Canterbury road behind Upstreet Cottages.*

5. **In your opinion, how effective do you consider the present controls over development to be? Please explain.**
 - *We believe there has been very little control.*
 - *It seems to ineffective as it allows buildings to be erected that do not preserve the character of the village and they are "crammed" in to make more use of the space which erodes the character of the place.*
 - *Some of the controls seem to stifle enterprise which should be encouraged in some way to ensure that people who live in rural areas can still make a living without commuting to the metropolises.*

6. **Are there any buildings or structures that you consider are of note for their architectural or historical importance? Please list.**
- *The chapel at Meriden Park*
 - *Spicers Farm*
 - *Rock Cottage*
 - *Ark Cottages*
 - *The New Inn*
 - *The Nook*
7. **Can you identify any open spaces, significant trees or hedges that you feel make a contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area? Please list.**
- *The green at the bottom of Teddars Leas Road*
 - *We believe all trees should be under a preservation order – especially the Yew Tree which stood in the grounds of the old Village Hall.*
 - *The houses and gardens of numbers 1 & 2 Rock Cottage, Canterbury Road, reflect the character of the hamlet. (Owners believe that the cottage is circa. 15th Century?)*
 - *The garden and land surrounding Spicers Farm, Brook House and Ridge Cottage*
8. **What would you say were the most significant views, vistas or panoramas, either within, into or from the Conservation Area? Please specify.**
- *We are grateful that the purchase of land by the MOD behind Meriden Park will preserve much of the beauty*
 - *The Cross-roads at Teddars Leas/Canterbury Road/Westfield Lane*
9. **In your opinion, what impact does road traffic have upon the Conservation Area?**
- *Volume, type and speed of vehicles are changing the whole area for the worse, with scant regard shown for speed limit. We have concerns for walkers, children, animals and the elderly especially at night. Too many HGV lorries coming through a very narrow road and far too fast.*
10. **Do you think that there are any areas that would benefit from being ‘car-free’? If so, please describe.**
- *The roads are narrow and parking outside properties does impact on both visual appearance and safety. However there is no alternative as there is no parking available. Any future development should include public parking spaces for people from out of the village, as we get a great many walkers and hikers following the village trails and there is no where for them to park their cars, other than on the road which causes a traffic problem*
11. **Do you feel that sufficient Conservation Area guidance exists to guide development proposals (however small or large)? If not, what would you like to see?**
- *Obviously not as developments are going on which are not suitable in a conservation area, see question 3 above.*