



Broadacre Hotel (left) and the 'Hall' (right)

73 There are several other C19th buildings that, whilst not outstanding in themselves, complement the building stock of the town. Nos. 52-58 High Street (Ward & Partners and W & E Rolfe and Son) comprise an early C19th row with modern shop-fronts beneath. The old Post Office at no. 73 has a good five-bay front with quirky asymmetrical gables. At the top of the street, Southland's School House looks Regency but has been much altered. The old National School building on Church Lane is a good example of its kind, a small Victorian National School with 'Queen Anne' windows and decorative barge-boards. The big stucco-fronted Victorian building known as The Elms (prominent more for its size than any great architectural quality) also has a scholastic look about it, although it is not marked as such on the early OS maps.



Clapton Cottages (left) and Baptist Chapel (right)



Old Post Office (left), Southland's School House (right) and The Elms (below)



- 74 In the Cannon Street area, Oak Lodge is a late-Georgian house of painted brick which makes a good pair with the similar Governor's House opposite. Next door on Dymchurch Road are two pairs of early C20th cottages in an Arts and Crafts style, the southernmost house (Jasmine Cottage) retaining its original multi-pane casement windows. Just beyond the edge of the CA is the Plough Inn, another late-Georgian building set at an angle to the road, which neatly marks the north-eastern boundary of the town.



Oak Lodge (left) and Jasmine Cottage (right)



The Plough

Prevalent local and traditional building materials & the public realm

- 75 New Romney exhibits a fairly narrow palette of building materials. A few of the oldest buildings (St Nicholas' Church, the Priory) are walled in stone, as are one or two more recent ones (Stone House). Sometimes stone is used together with brick dressings (Fairfield House) or flint galleting (3-4 West Street). Several additional buildings (44 and 85 High Street, Southland's Hospital) rest on low stone plinths.
- 76 The material used is a rough grey limestone rubble, supplemented here and there with flints, and in the case of the church with dressings of a finer yellow freestone, possibly imported from the Continent. Only on the little building known as Magpies is there any decorative stonework, consisting of a rough chequerboard effect of grey, yellow and orange-brown blocks.



Stonework details (left to right): freestone dressings on St Nicholas's Church; flint galleting on 3 West Street; chequer boarding on Magpies

- 77 The vast majority of the town's buildings, however, are brick-walled. This material probably began to replace exposed timber-framing in the C16th or C17th, and all of the timber-framed houses in the town now have brick fronts. The brick colour ranges from dark reddish-brown in some of the oldest examples, through deep red intermixed with grey glazed bricks in some Georgian houses, to buff or brownish-yellow. The Victorians introduced brighter orange-red bricks and there is some mathematical tiling in evidence. Many buildings have had their brickwork painted, rendered or pebbledashed. There is also some weatherboarding, probably also over brick.
- 78 Clay tile is the predominant roofing material. Most of the older roofs are clad in reddish tiles of variegated colour and texture, although the colour varies greatly with weathering, lichen growth and so on. From the early C19th a few buildings begin to be roofed in imported Welsh slate, although tile continues to be the dominant material. Tilework is also occasionally used as cladding, generally on the upper floors of buildings.
- 79 The street furniture of New Romney includes little of great interest. An exception must be made for the two old naval cannons which adorn the pavement outside the Town Hall, a touching reminder of the town's distant maritime heritage. Apart from these, there are some good boundary walls in brick or stone, some of which, like those belonging to Mulberry House, are separately listed.
- 80 The brick wall that fronts the High Street between High House and no. 90 is presumably a relic of Mabledon House, and contributes much to the streetscape, as do those along the northern side of North Road between the Baptist Chapel and Ashford Road, at the rear of the Broadacre site on Sussex Road, and fronting the old National School on Church Road. The old stone walls of the churchyard are of particular importance to the setting of St Nicholas' Church.



Old walls in North Road (left); naval cannon outside Old Gaol (right)

Greenery, green spaces & ecology

- 81 The principal green space within the town is St Martin's Field. This is both of historical significance, as the site of the town's once-famous livestock fair, and of great townscape importance as a relief from the constricted grid-plan of the town centre. It straddles both sides of Fairfield Road, allowing long uninterrupted vistas across its tree-lined expanses of grass towards the roofs of the old town centre. Today it is a recreation ground, and continues something of its original function by playing host to occasional visiting fairs. However, its character has changed greatly during the C20th. Parts of the field were enclosed to build houses like the villas to the north of Fairfield Road, and the views it must have afforded across open countryside have been largely closed off by new development.



St Martin's Field (left) and St Nicholas' churchyard (right)

- 82 The second major green space in the town is St Nicholas' Churchyard. This too is of great historic importance, being the sole survivor of the town's medieval burial grounds, and marking at its outer boundary the former line of the estuarine harbour. It also provides the setting for the church itself, allowing the great medieval structure to be viewed in the round and in fitting isolation. Unlike St Martin's Field, the churchyard is surrounded by sturdy walls, making it more of a secluded enclave than a public space, as befits its sombre function. There are tombstones of every age and design, and a variety of trees including yews and flowering cherries.
- 83 Smaller public green spaces include the grounds of the Methodist Church on High Street, the walled garden next to the Assembly Rooms, and the nicely-landscaped precincts of the old National School. Just as important, however, are the older private gardens visible over walls and hedges, which allow scope for the imaginative extension of the public realm. The gardens at St John's Priory are especially alluring when glimpsed over the romantically ruinous stone wall fronting Ashford Road, over which a tall Scots Pine leans ominously. The grounds of Mabledon Close facing High Street are also notable for their overhanging trees, this time a series of huge old evergreen oaks which dominate the townscape at this point. The far end of West Street is overshadowed by a huge old cedar in the gardens at Little Gables, which stands sentinel-like at the edge of the town.



Salient trees at St John's Priory (left) and Little Gables (right)

- 84 In the Cannon Street area, the drama of entering the narrow lane from the main road is mediated by the cluster of dark evergreen oaks beyond the Blue Dolphins Hotel, which shroud the entrance to Cannon Street in an aura of slightly sepulchral mystery. (The same cannot be said for the *leylandii* hedge that fronts the High Street at this point.) Further down the lane, more oaks in the gardens of the Governor's House repeat the effect, and frame a very picturesque view along Oak Lodge Road to Millside. Clipped yews in the front garden at Oak Lodge create a formal entrance to the area, whilst a taller yew at Frogs Hall helps to screen off what would otherwise be a rather banal view towards the end of Cannon Street where it peters out into the new housing around Sainsbury's.



Trees as boundary markers at Oak Lodge (left) and Frogs Hall (right)

Negative & neutral factors

- 85 Much damage was done to the fabric of the town during the C20th through demolition and insensitive development. The loss in the post-war period of a number of historic buildings has already been noted. Their replacements have rarely been of much quality. The Spar store at 32-34 High Street, which replaced a notable timber-framed house, is especially ill-adjusted to its environment: virtually blank above ground level (the upper windows have been whitewashed over), its squat bulk is relieved only with a little token tile-hanging.
- 86 The building opposite the Baptist Chapel known as The Centre is more recent in date but has most of the same faults, and is more prominent within its back-street setting. Even more out of scale with its surroundings is 12 High Street, whose half-hearted vernacular details are offset by its hulking outline and huge dormer windows. Probably the worst single most evident blot on the townscape, however, is the Shell Garage next door to the Ship Hotel: its bright-yellow plastic-coated forecourt canopy juts out obtrusively into the street, whilst the best that could be said of the adjoining building, once presumably a car showroom, is that it is of its time.



32-4 High Street (left), The Centre on North Street (right) and the Shell Garage (below)



- 87 Just as damaging are the gap sites, where colonisation by car parking has undermined the discipline of building-lines and eroded the boundary between public and private space. Perhaps the worst example is the parking area at the bottom of Church Close, where a sprawling expanse of pockmarked tarmac dotted with chaotic signage laps at the walls of St Nicholas' Church. The car parks at the ends of West Street and Rome Road are smaller, but similar in their harmful effects on the public realm, damaging the tight spatial character of the High Street. The light-industrial area on North Street is not as corrosive in its effect, but is at best a neutral space.



Car park on Church Road

- 88 Development around the boundaries of the CA's has further undermined their character. The Sainsbury's superstore is a case in point: although the High Street elevation has been treated with some thought, the remaining elevations are brutally blank, and the careful landscaping of the street front gives way to the usual tarmac wilderness behind. The character of St George's Lane in particular suffers as a result of this.
- 89 The Churchlands estate has brought an end to what was once a much-photographed view of St Nicholas' Church standing on its low mound with open fields in the foreground. At the extreme ends of the town, ribbon developments of bungalows along Dymchurch Road and Lydd Road have blurred what must once have been an unusually well-defined urban boundary. The bleak road junction opposite Springwood Court, where Station Road and Church Road meet Dymchurch Road/High Street, makes a particularly uninviting gateway to the town centre.
- 90 Insensitive alterations to existing buildings have been almost as damaging. The most glaring example has been the insertion of gaping modern shop-fronts into older frontages along the High Street. Even traditional shop-windows with their small panes and Classical surrounds look highly uncomfortable when cut into a fine Georgian façade like that of Priory House. Much worse are the huge expanses of plate glass and glossy fascias that have replaced the whole lower floors of modest Georgian fronts at nos. 39, 50, 56-58 and elsewhere.

- 91 Alongside these must be set the universal curse of uPVC windows. Whilst these are largely absent from listed buildings, many of the more modest C19th and early C20th houses have succumbed. Otherwise attractive groups like 1-4 Victoria Street, Laurel House and Gilberts Cottage on Church Road or Jasmine Cottage/Lyndale/Missenden/Sunnyside on Dymchurch Road have lost their multi-pane windows, replacing their subtle effects of depth and shade with stodgy plastic casements and large sheets of reflective glass.



Supermarket parking on George Lane (left) and town 'gateway' on Dymchurch Road (right)



Shopfronts at 56-58 High Street

General condition, problems, pressures and the capacity for change

- 92 Most buildings within the two CA's appear, externally at least, to be in good repair. Two of the most prominent buildings, the Town Hall and Old Gaol, have recently been outwardly restored and repainted. Priory House also shows signs of recent refurbishment. St Nicholas' Church is well-maintained and still hosts civic ceremonies as well as regular services and musical events. New Romney appears prosperous, both as a local shopping centre and as a minor tourist destination. Where problems arise, they are the result of the pressure for change rather than stagnation.
- 93 CA designation has had only a limited effect in warding off unsympathetic alteration and ill-designed new development. In contrast with the town's listed buildings, where historic external features have by and large survived, on unlisted properties the replacement of original doors and windows with visually unfortunate modern substitutes has been widespread. New housing developments in the area since the date of designation have occasionally been sympathetic, but more often bland and suburban.
- 94 Changing economic conditions have brought additional pressures to bear. Just as it lost its connection with the sea in the C13th, New Romney has lost most of its direct links with agriculture. It is one of many dormitory towns and villages serving Ashford, Folkestone or Hastings. This, and the resultant suburban expansion, increases car dependency. In St George's Lane and also the area by Sainsbury's, vacant space is given over to parking. The same factor drives a cycle of decline of smaller shops and increasing dependency on the big new supermarket with its large car park. So far the two still seem to coexist, like many aspects of the town's traditional and modern life, in uneasy balance.

SUGGESTED BOUNDARY REVISIONS

- 95 A number of extensions to the boundary of the High Street CA are suggested. At the north-eastern corner, it is proposed to extend the CA to include The Elms and Southland's School House. On the north-western boundary, extensions are proposed to take in the listed Fairfield House and the historic open space between Fairfield Road and Rolfe Lane. Other small amendments have been made to tidy up and neaten existing boundary lines.
- 96 Small extensions are proposed on St John's Road and Church Road to include a number of older properties including Malthouse Cottages, Butfield Cottage and Butt House. On the other hand, two exclusions are suggested to remove Yew Tree Lodge and the row of houses opposite The Churchlands – all of modern date – from the CA.
- 97 Three extensions are proposed for the Cannon Street CA: to the north, to include the listed C17th house called Brissenden and the Georgian Plough Inn; to the south, to include the listed medieval Frogs Hall; and to the east, to include the two pairs of Arts and Crafts semi-detached houses on Dymchurch Road.

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

- 98 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.
- 99 The questionnaire was sent to 9 groups and individuals as advised by the Council. Of these, 4 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.

Summary of issues raised by stakeholders

Comment	Response
<i>By allowing buildings that are unsympathetic in design, the edge of the CA has been eroded.</i>	This has been acknowledged above. Greater regard should be paid to existing policy and guidance in the control of development that affects the setting of the CA but lies outside its boundary. Identification of ‘views and vistas’ and ‘location and setting’ above should begin to address this issue.
<i>Development that has had a negative effect on the CA: The dentist surgery in George Lane, proposed modern town houses in Rome Road, Sainsbury’s supermarket (suitable for an industrial estate, not an ancient town).</i>	The shortcomings of a number of recent developments in the CA are highlighted above. Better understanding of the latter’s character should help achieve a higher standard of design in future.
<i>Modern plate glass shop fronts have replaced original ones. No attempt has been made to use styles suitable to the building.</i>	The erosion of traditional shop-fronts on the High Street has been noted above. Management policies for the CA should aim to preserve those that remain and encourage reinstatement of lost examples.
<i>The area between the two CA’s should be joined in order to stop unsuitable buildings being built between.</i>	Two separate CA’s were originally designated because the intervening area did not contain buildings then considered to be of historical note. This report recommends that the gap is narrowed somewhat, taking in such buildings as The Elms and Frogs Hall. Any proposals affecting the excluded area of modern housing can be assessed in relation to the setting of the CA.
<i>Old School House should be included in the CA, plus the listed buildings in Fairfield Road, Fairfield Road Recreation Ground and the Bowls Club.</i>	The Old School is already included within the CA (Old School House, immediately behind it, is a modern building.) Fairfield House has been recommended for inclusion in this report, as has the northern part of the Recreation Ground. Craythornes, the other listed house on Fairfield Road, lies too far outside the CA for inclusion.

NEW ROMNEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

<p><i>The New Romney Main Sewer, the likely site of the original beach, should be included in the area.</i></p>	<p>Although possibly of importance as a historical boundary, post-war development has largely negated the Main Sewer's visual and topographical relation to the town centre.</p>
<p><i>The two modern houses behind the Broadacre Hotel in Sussex Road should be excluded.</i></p>	<p>These two houses, within the historic property boundary of the hotel, are enclosed by old brick walls which make a definite contribution to the character of the CA. The houses themselves are of sympathetic design, perhaps partly due to the fact that they <i>are</i> within the CA boundary.</p>
<p><i>There seems to be limited control over development. There is no consideration of the design and suitability to the character of the area. The High Street is a Special Area of Darkness, but SDC has approved virtually every application for illuminated signs. Advertising signs, generally, have had a detrimental impact on the area.</i></p>	<p>Control over new works in the CA has, as is made clear in this report, not always been successful. Many of the poorest new buildings were built before designation. Some more recent designs have been more successful. The need for strong shopfront guidance is acknowledged.</p>
<p><i>Traffic volume is causing damage to historic buildings and 'improvements' by the Highways Authority have had a negative impact.</i></p>	<p>The volume of traffic on the High Street, and the extent of surface car parking within the town centre, have indeed damaged the character of the CA. This issue should be addressed in future management policies.</p>
<p><i>Parking is leading to congestion and restricted vehicle movement. The existing parking facilities are insufficient.</i></p>	<p>The existing car parks detract from the character of the CA. Any additional facilities would be likely to fail the statutory test of preserving character. The balance between avoiding congestion, maintaining vitality and preserving character must be addressed in future management planning.</p>
<p><i>Street furniture should be tidied up – there are too many different styles – all should comply to an agreed design.</i></p>	<p>Avoidance of street clutter, reinstatement of historic floorscapes and more sensitive new furniture could certainly <i>enhance</i> that character in the future.</p>
<p><i>SDC should provide a design statement that incorporates a typical design that would be acceptable for development within a CA.</i></p>	<p>Design guidance for new development in this and other SDC CA's would be helpful. Consideration should be given to drawing up public information material that provides such guidance.</p>

LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE

- 100 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 in Section 4.14 of PPG15, which refers to Section 73 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

Article 4 Directions

- 101 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

- 102 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 shopfront guidance and 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.
- 103 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
 - Shop front design guidance
 - How to make an application
- 104 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.
- 105 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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