

Shepway District Council

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



DUNGENESS



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK	1
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	4
BOUNDARIES	4
SUMMARY of SPECIAL INTEREST	5
Location & setting	6
Historic development & archaeology	8
Map regression	9
SPATIAL ANALYSIS	11
Key views & vistas	11
CHARACTER ANALYSIS	
Activity, uses & influence on layout & building types	12
Architectural & historic qualities & contribution to special interest	13
Contribution made by key unlisted buildings	18
Prevalent local and traditional building materials & the public realm	19
Greenery, green spaces & ecology	19
Negative & neutral factors	20
General condition, problems, pressures and the capacity for change	20
INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY	21
Summary of issues raised by stakeholders	22
SUGGESTED BOUNDARY REVISIONS	23
LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE	24
Summary of issues	24
MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS / STRATEGY	25
USEFUL INFORMATION	27
Contact details	27
Bibliography	27
Appendices	
Appendix 1	Historic Maps
Appendix 2	Analysis Maps
Appendix 3	Stakeholder Consultation
Appendix 4	Design Guidance Leaflet

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 Dungeness 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 such appraisals, commissioned by Shepway District Council. The original designation came into effect on 26 June 1985. It was reviewed and extended on 25 August 1989.
- 3 This is the first appraisal of Dungeness CA. It 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 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

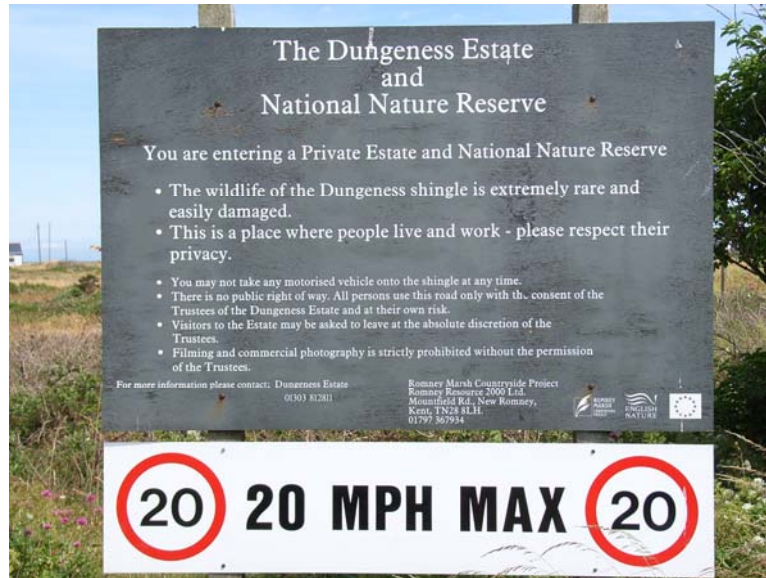
- 9 The District Planning Authority will:
- refuse CA Consent for the demolition of buildings which contribute to the character or appearance of a CA;
 - refuse proposals for infill or backland development which would adversely affect the character of a CA;
 - require the height, scale, form and materials of new development, including alterations or extensions to existing buildings, to respect the character of CA's;
 - seek to retain materials, features and details of unlisted buildings or structures which preserve or enhance the character or appearance of CA's;
 - 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;
 - 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.



Dungeness is designated as undeveloped coast. Development is restricted unless overriding need can be demonstrated.

- 11 Policy CO4 cites Dungeness as a Special Landscape Area. The Council will not normally permit development which is in conflict with the objective of protecting or enhancing the natural beauty of the area. Dungeness is also

designated as undeveloped coast, where Policy CO6 restricts development unless overriding need can be demonstrated. The area's status as a National Nature Reserve is reinforced in Policies CO8-11 and 14.



DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

- 12 Greater restrictions on “permitted development” apply in CA’s than elsewhere. In Dungeness CA an 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. An early guidance leaflet briefly describing the CA, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Article 4 controls and basic design advice is reproduced in Appendix 4. 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

- 13 The map shows the present boundaries. The area can be approached by road only from the north. The northern boundary, extending from the Dungeness Estate entrance gate, separates it from the town of Lydd on Sea. From there the boundary sweeps southward, curving round the south eastern

shoreline of Kent, the western boundary being the security fenced eastern edge of the Dungeness Power Station complex. A hooked shape and return northwards, following part of the line of the miniature Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, brings the boundary back to its starting point.

SUMMARY of SPECIAL INTEREST

- 14 Dungeness is a unique combination of stark, open, coastal landform, the world's largest expanse of shingle, a protected nature reserve of some 8000 acres and of course a large and varied collection of characteristic 'beach house' type buildings. Superficially, few of these buildings - nearly all of them houses - have intrinsic architectural interest in a conventional sense. Instead they endow this natural canvas with the physical manifestations of 'individualists' escaping the torments of the outside 'civilised' world,' a quirky, sometimes charming evocation of eccentric, independent ideas, and healthy disrespect for authority.



The unique landform of Dungeness with its varied collection of characteristic 'beach house' dwellings

- 15 The small, often fragile, transient-looking buildings represent a singular response to the social and economic forces of a short period in the early C20. They are the reason for Dungeness being a CA, which would otherwise be unnecessary and inappropriate for the protection of the natural environment. The special interest is thus made up of this unique combination of natural and built environment, the latter being a particularly interesting expression of a historically significant socio-economic movement.

DUNGENESS CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

- 16 The Nature Conservation Area is designated under Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (the Habitats Directive) as Dungeness Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SAC is designated for its vegetated shingle. The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The SSSI is designated for the geology of the shingle ridges, and for the plants, invertebrates and birds that depend on the shingle habitat.



Location and setting

- 17 Dungeness lies at the southeastern tip of Romney Marsh in Kent, projecting out into the English Channel. The A259 which connects with Ashford to the north via the A2070, is reached by an unclassified road leading to Lydd and the B2075. This connects with New Romney, from which the A259 runs northeast towards Folkestone and southwest towards Rye and Hastings.
- 18 The landform is a wide peninsula. The general character and setting is that of a broad coastal landscape made up of shingle and marshland, sparse, ground hugging vegetation and low, small scale buildings. The exceptions are a small number of conventional two storey houses, the old and new lighthouses, and the massive backdrop of the Power Station. The lighthouses and power

station, together with the pylons that stretch out across the marsh are the area's only built landmarks, highly visible for many miles.



View of Dungeness power station and lighthouse

- 19 The Old lighthouse, one of the area's four listed (Grade II and II*) buildings, is open to the public and provides 360 degree panoramic views of the area and a wide setting around. The other listed building is the base of the second lighthouse of 1792, converted into lighthouse keeper's dwellings. The New Lighthouse, built in the early 1960s as a result of the new nuclear power station partly obscuring the beam of the existing one, is listed Grade II*.

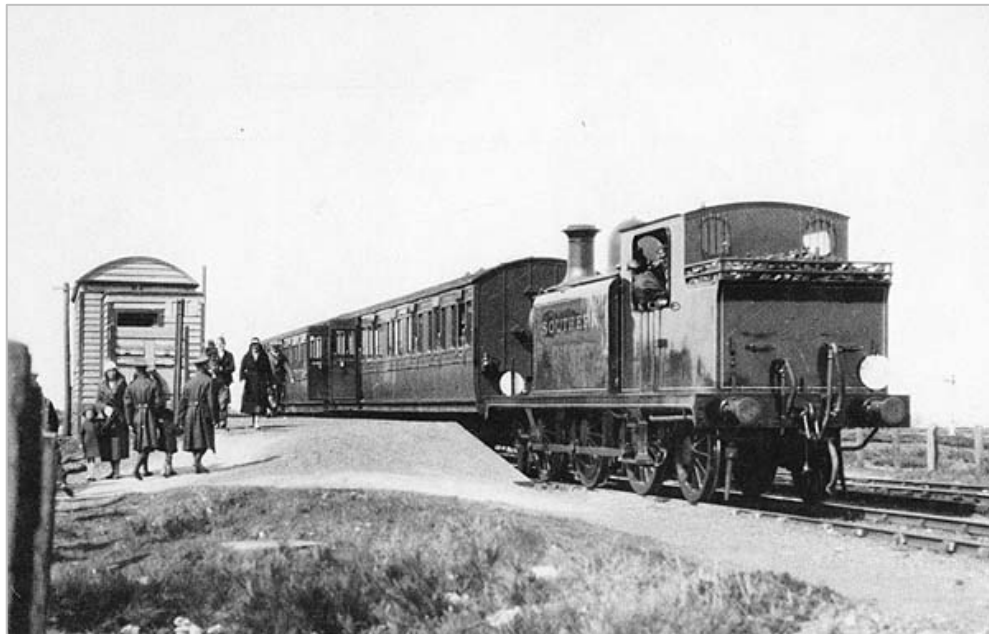


The 1792 lighthouse (left) and remaining base (right)

- 20 Information from the local community website asserts that the promontory owes its origin and present form to Roman reclamation. However, Gabbé in *Study of Domestic Beach Architecture*, (unpublished thesis, 1989) notes that there is some doubt, as the landform stayed fairly stable between 55 BC and about 1300.

Historic development and archaeology

- 21 Originally owned by the Tufton family, the land which the Dungeness Estate now occupies was sold to the Southern Eastern Railway, later part of British Railways, who operated a branch line to Dungeness. This line closed to passengers in 1937 and to all traffic in 1967, a part of it remaining to serve the Power Stations. British Rail later sold it to a Mr G T Paine. The estate is now in the Paine family trust.



Train arriving at Dungeness Station, early 20th century

- 22 Apart from lighthouse dwellings, old coastguard cottages and lifeboat stations, development of a settlement of any significance only began after the First World War when workers employed by Southern Railway purchased old carriages and set them up as beach houses or, where necessity dictated, began to adapt and extend them as homes, at the southern end of the area.

- 23 Prior to this some houses had been erected, mainly at the northern end, from the late C19 to house the family who provided fresh water to passing ships, and from the beginning of the C20 for the Tart and Oiler fishing families, allegedly the first beach house residents. It is likely that the single paved road off which most houses lie, began as a track.



The post office circa 1918 and present day

- 24 Main services, telephone, electricity and water, only arrived gradually, the water main only in 1946. There is still no mains drainage. All services are supplied by overhead lines.
- 25 Up to the death of Mr Paine in 1985, beach house dwellers only had 3 month leases. The subsequent offer of 99 year leases (finally granted in 1999) prompted Shepway Council to anticipate pressure for new development, further, uncontrolled extensions of existing dwellings and enclosure of plots. Consequently, a report recommending the designation of a CA and an interim Article 4 Direction (under the then Statutory Instrument) was adopted in June 1985. The Secretary of State approved the Council's application for a permanent Article 4 Direction in March 1986.
- 26 Local reaction to the CA appears to be mixed. On the one hand there were few objections to the original designation, and some of those were simply derogatory. The local website suggests some regret that the 'individualism' that created the settlement has come under official control.

Map regression

- 27 Matthew Pomeroy's (1617) map of Romney Marsh (Appendix 1) depicts "The Cabins" at Dungeness which were used by the local fishermen, probably Lydd

- men, in the herring season. “The Cabins” are shown on the east side of the peninsular which gradually accrues owing to the movement of shingle around the Ness, referred to as long shore drift. Archaeologists have calculated how far inland these buildings would have been and have made a great effort to trace them, with no success. This is probably because “The Cabins” would have been of a temporary nature using materials to hand such as flotsam and jetsam and easily transported light materials from local areas.
- 28 The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map shows very sparse development, the main building being the Old Lighthouse and the base of the earlier one, now converted to housing. By the time of the second edition, further houses have appeared. The third, pre First World War edition still shows scattered houses. Not until post-1930 editions does the pattern begin to resemble the present one. The spine road was laid in 1938.
- 29 Along one stretch of shoreline, just above high water mark, can be seen an apparently ad-hoc concentration of containers and sheds which do not appear on any map. These are however a significant intrusion in the natural landscape quality of the coastline.



The intrusive presence of ad-hoc containers and sheds can be seen along the shoreline

- 30 There are no scheduled monuments in the CA. The other main statutory designation is that of National Nature Reserve and, from April 2005, one of the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Directive 92/43EEC.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

- 31 Spatially, the whole of the CA can be read as a one, albeit recognising sections in which one or another dwelling type is prevalent. There is no sense of enclosure created by buildings, only the lighthouse towers (and the looming power station) interrupt an otherwise unbroken linear horizon.



Key views and vistas

- 32 Looking inward, key views tend to be those obtainable from the single roadway. Once off this route, only owners' vehicles are allowed to approach the houses, down barely defined tracks through the shingle. Thus, the best individual experience of the CA is probably on foot, perhaps setting off from one of the few car parking areas, across the shingle. With, typically no defined boundary to many of the houses, it is left to sensibilities of both visitor and resident how close a building can be approached.
- 33 Panoramic views can of course be obtained from the Old Lighthouse when it is open during the warmer months. Standing at the open walk at the top, a visitor will quickly appreciate the shape of the landform and the pattern of development. The church in Lydd, and France on a clear day are also listed in local feedback amongst significant views.
- 34 Many tourists arrive and depart via the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, famous for its collection of accurate small scale locomotives. The railway runs north to south, looping around the southern end of the area,

depositing and taking on passengers at the café station before making its return journey northwards. Tourists also arrive by car and park at the station, The Britannia PH or at the side of the road.



The Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway running just over 13 miles from the Cinque Port of Hythe to the fishermen's cottages of Dungeness

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Activity, uses and influence on layout and building types

- 35 The area does not lend itself to subdivision into character zones. The principal activity is weekend/holiday housing. The local community group report continuing growth in the proportion of full-time residents. Small fishing related and catering businesses and an art and craft gallery are also present.
- 36 The area is a considerable tourist attraction during the summer months and also attracts visiting fishermen. Most people simply come for a day out, to experience the unique qualities of the place, perhaps walk on the beach, refresh themselves at the café or the two pubs, and climb to the top of the Old Lighthouse. Others are drawn by the Nature Reserve wildlife and flora found there. The local community website advises that out of the 80 odd abodes here probably a third are holiday homes and a majority of owners rent their places out on a weekly basis. Litter deposited by some non-residents is alleged to be a problem.