

Lampen Stream Conservation Area Appraisal



Canterbury City Council

15 September 2009

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1. Introduction

This appraisal examines the key elements that contribute to the special architectural, natural and historic character of Lampen Stream Conservation Area. The character of any area is determined by its topography, location, buildings, natural features and open spaces. At Lampen Stream the combination of all these factors has created a rare watered valley unique in this area of Kent.

Conservation areas were first introduced in 1967 and are currently defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

The original conservation area was designated on 21 July 1992 to protect the Lampen Stream and environs. Rather than extending the Stodmarsh and Elbridge House Conservation Areas the City Council decided that it would designate the area bordering the stream as a new Conservation Area in its own right. This would provide protection to its special character, which stems from the mix of natural and man-made features bordering the Lampen Stream. These have survived despite the modern agricultural methods, which have been adopted nearby. Although there are few buildings within the Conservation Area, the designation gives recognition to the special quality of this strip of countryside. The Conservation Area includes the particularly attractive meadowland and woodland on either side of the lower stretches of Lampen Stream and groups of farm buildings some of which are listed.

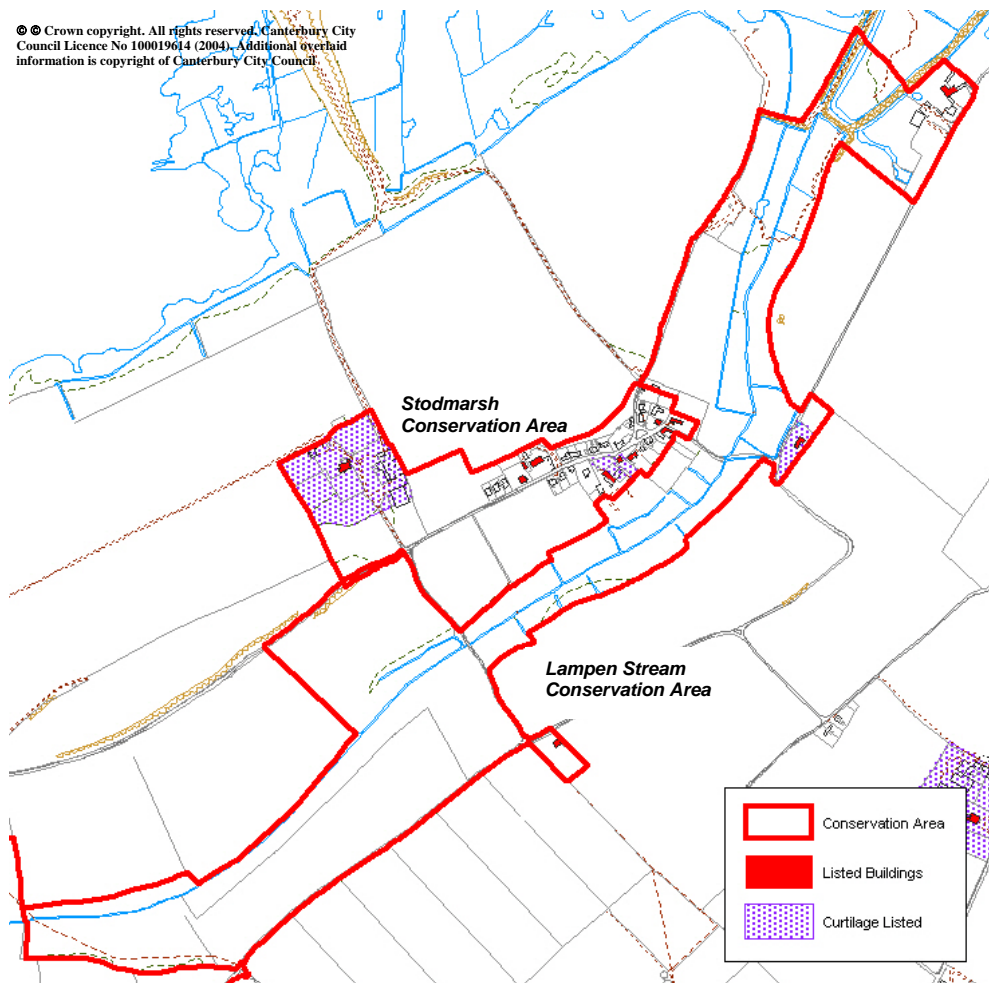


Figure 1: Lampen Stream Conservation Area

The City Council considers that the 'special interest' justifying designation of a conservation area should be defined and analysed in a written appraisal of its character and appearance. This document will be a background paper to the City Council's Local Development Framework.

1.1 Key Characteristics

This appraisal concludes that the most significant features of the Lampen Stream Conservation Area are:



- The small stream winding through a flat valley floor
- Man made features that border the stream
- Pockets of woodland and individual trees within the valley
- Meadows and fields sloping down to the stream
- Isolated listed farmhouses and associated buildings
- The historic division of fields and meadows
- Providing the rural backdrop to the Stodmarsh Conservation Area and providing farmland views from the Elbridge Conservation Area.
- Natural wildlife habitat and corridor value of the stream and associated vegetation

1.2 Planning Policy Framework

National Policy Guidance

Government advice on the control of conservation areas and historic buildings is set out in Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes 12 & 16, the draft South East Plan (March 2006), Regional Spatial Strategy, Kent and Medway Structure Plan policies and Kent Design Guide provide the general strategic policy context under which the policies in the local plan function.

Regional and County Guidance

The new draft South East plan places importance on the protection of the historic environment and acknowledges the role that the historic environment plays in contributing towards sustainable development, regeneration, tourism and social inclusion. Policy BE7 requires local authorities to adopt policies and proposals, which support conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. RPG9 sets out key principles for development in the South East Region.

The Kent & Medway Structure Plan policies also provide the general strategic policy context. It provides strategic planning policies for the whole county, and includes policies that are particularly relevant to rural areas. Policy QL6: Conservation Areas, sets out specific policy with respect to conservation areas.

The Kent Design Guide provides a starting point for good design that is well considered and contextually sympathetic amongst other things. It emphasises the need for the layout and appearance of new development to be based on an appraisal of the existing character.

Canterbury City Council Local Plan

The primary means by which the City Council ensures the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area is through the development control process and by applying the policies of the Canterbury District Local Plan (2001 – 2011). The Local Plan, adopted in July 2006, sets out the spatial strategy for the Canterbury District. It includes policies on housing, the economy, rural housing, the natural and built environment, community infrastructure and many others. A number of designations are particularly relevant to Elbridge, including those relating to conservation areas and protected natural areas.

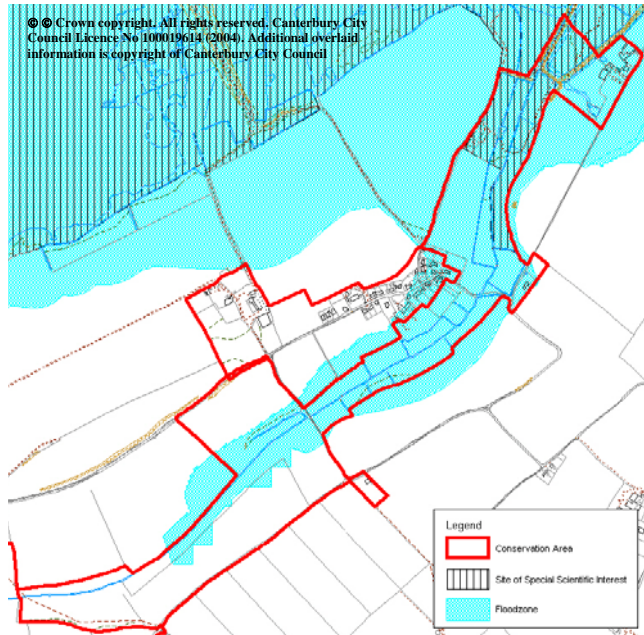


Figure 2: Excerpt from Local Plan Proposals Maps

Paragraphs 6.83-6.93 of the Local Plan deal with conservation areas and include policies BE7, BE8, BE9 and NE5. Policy BE7 provides the primary guidance to developers about conservation areas.

The planning system has recently changed and ultimately a Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the Local Plan. The LDF consists of a collection of Local Development Documents, including the Core Strategy, Proposals Maps, Area Action Plans, and other development plan documents, which may deal with conservation issues as well as Supplementary Planning Documents.

Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document

The Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document was approved in October 2007. Chapter 4 explains the features that make up a general conservation and are Chapter 5 provides detailed guidance for developments in Conservation Areas.

2. Location and Background

The Lampen Stream issues 700 metres south of the Canterbury Littlebourne Road and flows in a north-easterly direction to enter the Great Stour north of Stodmarsh. The stream flows through the Elbridge House and Lampen Stream Conservation Areas and is a very attractive natural feature. The stream leaves the Elbridge Conservation Area and flows through the valley between Stodmarsh Road and Hollybush Lane. It also flows past the present Stodmarsh Conservation Area and is important to the setting of this historic village.



The conservation area does not include any built-up areas or settlements. The built environment consists of three isolated farmsteads and cottages, the rest of the conservation area is fields and meadows bounding the Lampen Stream.

2.1 Topography

The Lampen Stream is a weathered valley landscape consisting of a wooded stream valley with fields sloping down to a shallow valley floor on either side of the stream. Narrow country lanes run along the top ridgelines on either side of the valley. The base of valley is flat and has obviously been formed by the stream changing course over many thousands of years.



2.2 Biodiversity Assessment

The Conservation Area incorporates 7 hectares of the 250 ha Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve and 623 ha Site of Special Scientific Interest. Units 10 (Standing open water and canals at Grid reference TR219613) and 11 (Fen, marsh and swamp - lowland at grid reference TR223617) of the SSSI both fall partly within the conservation area. The northeasterly edge of the conservation area is mapped in the 2003 Habitat Survey and there are good habitat linkages through swamp, grassland, pastureland, and broadleaved woodland and opportunities for species transgression (“green corridors”) throughout the conservation area.

The Trenleypark Wood and Swanton Aerial Site broadleaved woodland Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are situated 700 - 1000m to the west of the Conservation Area on the western and southern edges of Elbridge Conservation Area.

Stodmarsh SSSI/NNR

Stodmarsh is a wetland site located in the Stour valley, which contains a wide range of habitats including open water, extensive reedbeds, scrub, and alder carr which together support a rich flora and fauna. The vegetation is a good example of a southern eutrophic flood plain and a number of rare plants are found here. The invertebrate fauna is varied and several scarce moths have been recorded in recent years. The site is also of ornithological interest with its diverse breeding bird community. Two rare British birds cetti's warbler and bearded tit, regularly breed in nationally significant numbers. Unit 10 is mainly standing open water and canals where there has been extensive recent works to manage the ditches and control scrub encroachment. Bitterns, Marsh and Hen Harriers have all been identified in this habitat area. Unit 11 consists of extensive reed bed. The areas of SSSI and NNR habitat within the conservation area have been subject to extensive management works and are being maintained in favourable ecological conditions within the habitat terms for which it is designated SSSI. Natural England must be contacted on all “Operations likely to damage the special interest”. A list of these operations may be sourced from the Natural England website.

Preserving and enhancing the wildlife interest

The structural diversity and water quality of water bodies must be maintained in accordance with the adjoining grassland, scrubland and woodland habitats to provide plant and invertebrate abundance and diversity, both of which are important food sources for a range of birds and mammals.

The following must be carefully managed to avoid disturbance to the series of special habitats present in the conservation area, and should be considered as part of the management of any development (following relevant good practice where protected species (e.g. water voles) are present):



- Introduction of species
- Control of alien species
- Water table levels
- Management of scrub
- Field margins and hedges
- Sensitive public access
- Impact and management of leisure activities
- Use of chemicals
- Nutritional enrichment
- Control or removal of aquatic plants
- Provision of scrapes and ponds
- Coppice management

- Maintenance of ditches and water channels to provide shallowly sloping margins to provide habitat for dragonfly and damselfly species
- Sediments entering a nearby or connected water body
- Rotational cutting of reedbeds outside of the bird nesting season
- Rotational cutting or intermittent grassland grazing
- Frequency and extent of flooding providing beneficial impacts on habitats
- Maintenance of an identified balance between groundwater and floodwater levels
- Periodical removal of ditch sediment and vegetation
- Sensitive use of machinery (avoid ground compression in sensitive areas)
- Management of veteran and prominent trees in woodland areas and the landscape

All developments directly or indirectly having an impact upon valued habitats must obtain an ecological survey by a suitably qualified ecologist. Protected species should always be considered as part of any development. The impact of a development on biodiversity should always be considered and the biodiversity value enhanced where possible.

There are also a number of agricultural hedgerows within the conservation area that provide valuable habitat for a number of species. It should be noted that countryside hedgerows (those not associated with the curtilage of a dwelling) are protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. These hedgerows cannot be altered (beyond general maintenance) or removed without 6 weeks prior formal notice being given to the local planning authority. It should also be noted that the all trees are provided some degree of protection by the Conservation Area. Any tree located in the conservation area may not be removed without 6 weeks notice being given to Council.

3. Archaeology and Historic Development.

3.1 Archaeology/Evolution

There is an ancient pattern of fields, boundaries and shaves about the Lampen Stream Valley and a number of antiquities were unearthed in 1854 in a Saxon barrow in the south side of Stodmarsh Road opposite Stodmarsh Court just within the Lampen Stream Conservation Area. The objects included a spoon, several buckets and some ornamental objects. It has been conjectured that the spoon was used for magical purposes. There is a well-defined tumulus just west of the barrow some 40' in diameter and 4' high, which was also excavated in 1854. This is thought to be of Saxon origin.

3.2 Recent History

The configuration of fields, the presence of well-defined hedged boundaries and the interesting mixture of arable, pasture and woodland all indicate that this section of a rare

"watered" valley in north-east Kent has changed little over a period of time that may be measured in hundreds of years.

A comparison of the post 1843 maps with modern maps and aerial photos supports the assertion that little has been little change in this landscape in the last 150 years. Many of the natural and historic man made features that border the stream remain to this day unaffected by modern agricultural practices.

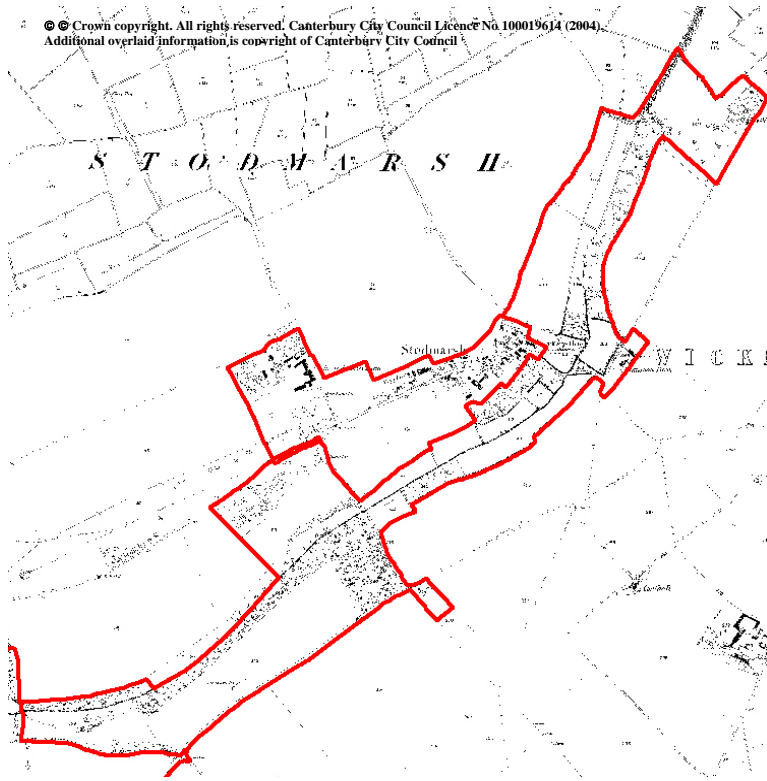
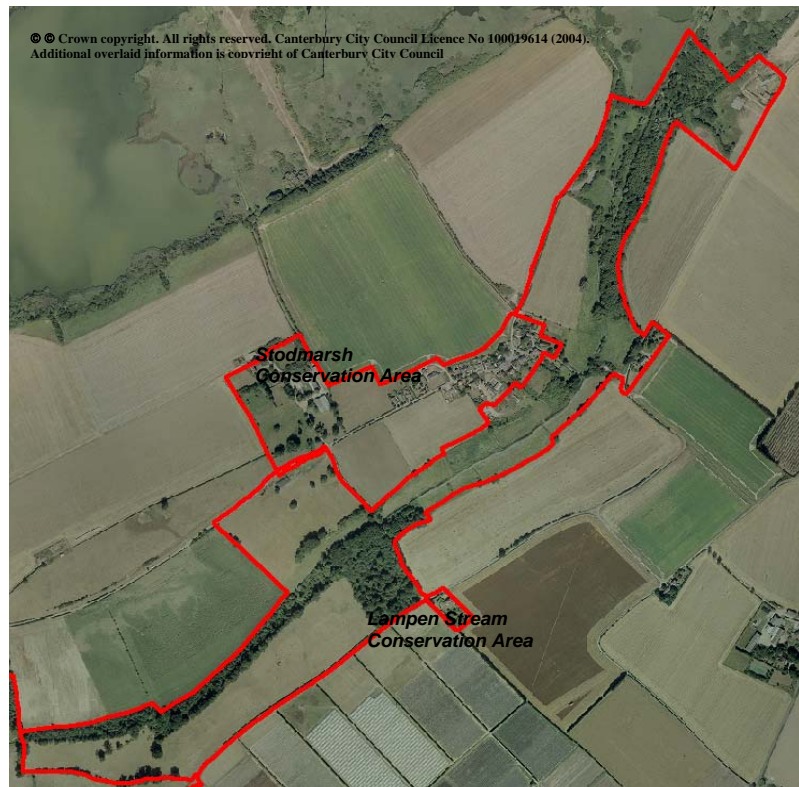


Figure 3: Historic map 1843

Figure 4: Aerial photo 2003



4. Character and Landscape Setting

The valley of Lampen Stream is a particularly attractive feature in this area especially by contrast with the arable land in intensive monoculture farming on the plateaus on either side of the valley. It is unusual in that it retains traditional meadows on the slopes into the valley and specimen trees as well as copses of woodland providing a traditional parkland landscape. The meadows are broken up into smaller fields with the boundaries defined by hedgerows and chestnut wood and wire fences. The ambiance and aspect of the conservation area is one of isolated rural farmland with all of the noises and smells that goes with it.



Once the stream leaves Elbridge Park it flows along the edge of sloping meadows dotted with specimen trees, the area is almost park-like in appearance. An attractive belt of woodland runs along the southern bank of the stream as far as Burnt House Hill. The meadowland on the slopes within the Conservation area boundary is particularly fine. The strip of woodland finishes at Burnt House Hill where the road bridges the stream, there is a more extensive area of woodland running up to Kingsley House. From this point onwards the land becomes marshier and below Waterham Cottage there are many willows.

The pastureland rises steeply towards Stodmarsh Court Farm with a series of bumps and undulations and scattered trees. Lampen Stream skirts the southern edge of Stodmarsh Village threading its way through a marshy area with pockets of trees as it approaches Waterham Cottage. Beyond this point there is a strip of woodland alongside and then the stream runs into an area of reed beds, dykes and flood walls with woodland, which is the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve and an area of Special Scientific Interest. Undertrees Farmstead overlooking the reserve is a typical marshland farmstead that sits attractively against the wood.



The area within the boundary is of particularly high scenic value and a large part of the streamside meadowland to the south of Stodmarsh is an important part of the setting to Stodmarsh Conservation Area. The trees, both specimen trees and wooded copses along the course of the stream and adjacent meadows, are particularly important in an area, which is otherwise rather bleak.

At the southwestern end of the conservation area the valley floor is not readily visible from the roads that run along the ridges due to the steep nature of the valley. The views tend to take in the meadows and treetops of the valley. As the stream flows toward Stodmarsh the land flattens out and the stream and adjacent marshes provide a visually attractive southern boundary to Stodmarsh Village. Views from within the valley take in the length of the stream and woods and the meadows on either side of the valley.



The Conservation Area has few buildings, just three clusters of farmsteads and rural houses.

Kingsley House on the junction of Burnt Ridge Hill and Hollybush Lane is a listed Grade II late C17 two storey red brick building home with a wooden moulded eaves cornice, a cellar and dormers in the attic.

Waterham Cottage (also Grade II listed) sits on the banks of the Lampen Stream in a very attractive well-treed garden. It is a C15 single storey hall-house refaced in C17 with a straw thatched roof.

There are some attractive unlisted buildings at Undertrees Farm in the northeast of the conservation area. The two linked timberframed aisled barns are the only listed structures on the site (Grade II) although the rest of the buildings sit within the listed curtilage.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Primary Issues

For a seemingly sleepy rural area there are a number of potential issues facing the Lampen Stream conservation area.

The primary issue facing the Lampen Stream would be the loss of the stream due to water take for domestic or irrigation purposes. This would impact on the surrounding vegetation and landscape changing the nature of the conservation area. Adjacent intensive farming practices (especially dairy farming) even outside of the conservation area could also impact upon the health of the stream through nitrification and topsoil run off. Protection of



water flows and the health of the stream is vitally important in protecting the values of this conservation area.

A more visible feature of the conservation area is the single specimen trees, hedgerows and wooded copses lining the valley slopes and floor. Retention of these trees especially the single standards is important.

A particular threat to this landscape would be the subdivision or amalgamation of plots causing the loss of field boundaries or more buildings.

Large-scale intensive farming and amalgamation of fields would result in the bare landscape seen on the plateaus surrounding the valley. Increasing pressure for expansion and modernisation from Canterbury's increasing population, and the general wish to live in the countryside not far from town and cities centres, may, in the future, put pressure on this area for building plots and reuse of farm buildings as dwellings.

5.2 Boundary assessment

The Lampen Stream Conservation Area is unusual in that it is not centred around the built environment or even a cluster of buildings, rather it affords protection for a primarily natural landscape that provides the setting for the two adjacent conservation areas of Stodmarsh and Elbridge House. In this respect, although the conservation area includes large areas of meadows, trees and rural hinterland, the boundary does appear to take in all of the area necessary to protect the stream, its banks and setting as well as the setting of the three listed buildings within the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent conservation areas.

6. Management and Improvement

There is a need to ensure that all future developments in the conservation area respect the local distinctiveness of Lampen Stream Conservation Area, hence some guidance has been provided below. The key issue is maintenance and improvement of those aspects that contribute to the character and quality of the scenery.

- The water flows and health of the stream and its immediate surrounds should not be impacted upon by removal of water from the stream and/or use of adjacent land.
- Protection of the stream and its environs including the meadows and swampland.
- Protection of the views into, across and out of all parts of this conservation area.

- The woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees within the Conservation Area should be retained and protected as they make up an important part of the setting.
- Any new development should have a visual understanding of the historic roots of the conservation area as a rural watered valley and all that that entails.
- Current field boundaries should be retained and maintained and fields and meadows should not be amalgamated or subdivided.
- Boundary treatments should be traditional such as hedges or wire and chestnut post fences where these are appropriate.
- It is important that any change or enlargement to buildings does not swamp the few existing buildings.
- Any new development should have close regard to the traditional building styles, forms, materials and techniques characteristic of this area, including the very low intensity of development. The height, size, design, roofspace, plot width and visual appearance of new development and the design of any new vehicle access should respect the character of the conservation area.
- The Land Drainage byelaws that apply to this stream must be adhered to.
- A management/maintenance scheme could be put in place to protect the health of the stream.

When considering new development this need not necessarily mean exact copying of earlier styles in new work though on occasion this may be the only way. But it does require developer and designer to come to an understanding of, and a respect for, the character of the area when drawing up their proposals. Every new proposal within the conservation area should be backed up by a thorough analysis of the site and its historic context. This exercise should 'inform' the design process and be part of a design statement submitted with a planning application.

7. Statement of Consultation

A copy of the draft Conservation Area Appraisal has been sent to the Parish Council, all residents, interest groups and local councillors. The formal period for consultation is 29 May 2009 to 26 June 2009 and responses were received up until 28 July 2009. Two responses were received.

The draft Conservation Area Appraisal was reported to the Canterbury City Council Rural Area Members Panel on 16 June 2009 for their comment. The Conservation Area Appraisal was then amended in light of the consultation and presented to the Development Control Committee along with a summary of any responses received on 15 September 2009. One speaker was heard at the meeting. The Development Control Committee formally adopted the document as a 'material consideration'.

All persons who responded to the consultation were informed of their right to attend and speak at the committee meetings.

Appendices

1. Listed Buildings details

Waterham Cottage	Grade II Listed	30.1.67
Kingsley House	Grade II Listed	
Barn at Undertrees Farm	Grade II Listed	02.10.00