

Church Street, Whitstable Conservation Area Appraisal



Canterbury City Council

2 March 2010



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1. Introduction

This appraisal examines the key elements that contribute to the special architectural and historic character of Church Street, Whitstable. The character of any town/area is determined by its topography, location, the layout of its streets and open spaces and the age, material and style of its buildings. The combination of all these factors creates the character of an area and in the case of Church Street Whitstable a special, 'sense of place'.

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 Church Street, Whitstable conservation area was designated on the 5th March 1991.

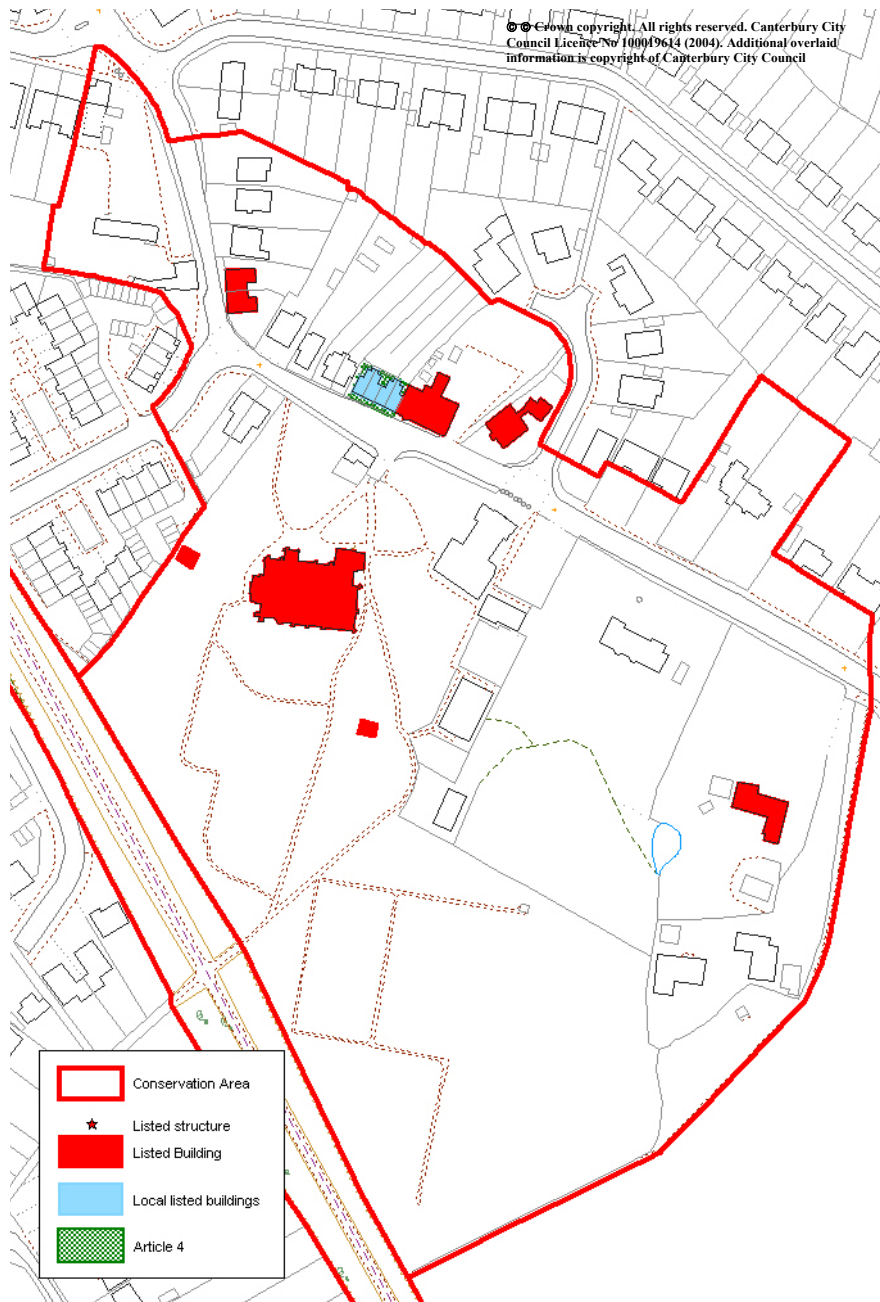


Figure 1: Church Street, Whitstable Conservation Area

1.1 The purpose and status of this appraisal

The principal purpose of this appraisal is to provide a firm basis upon which proposals for development within the Church Street, Whitstable conservation area can be assessed, through defining those key elements that contribute to the special historic and architectural character and which should be preserved. It supplements and provides clarity to policies contained in the Local Plan and the Local Development Framework, primarily those relating to demolition and development within conservation areas. It will therefore be a key document in maintaining character and promoting appropriate, sensitive proposals in the conservation area. This document has the status of a background paper to the City Council's Local Development Framework.

Other purposes include undertaking a review of the boundary in accordance with section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires local planning authorities – *“from time to time to determine whether any further parts of the area should be designated.”* The appraisal also highlights particular issues and some of the elements that detract from the appearance or character of the conservation area. These provide the basis for potential future actions for improvement.

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. The process of review has changed significantly since the first areas were designated in England under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and the current appraisal approach is one set down as a guideline format by English Heritage in various practice notes.

It is not just the local planning authority that has a role in protecting and enhancing conservation areas. The principal guardians are the residents and business people who live and work in the conservation area that are responsible for maintaining the individual properties, which together contribute to the character of the conservation area. Designation also raises awareness of an area's special attributes and can foster pride in the locality. Government planning guidance stresses that our built and natural heritage should be valued and protected as a central part of our cultural heritage and that everyone shares the responsibility for environmental stewardship.

1.2 Key Characteristics

This appraisal concludes that the most significant features of the Church Street, Whitstable Conservation Area are:

- The church and churchyard (including the listed monuments and mature trees)
- The historic buildings associated with the medieval hamlet
- The historic route of Church Street

1.3 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 15 & 16, the South East Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy, and the Kent Design Guide provide the general strategic policy context under which the policies in the local plan function.

Regional and County Guidance

The Secretary of State published the South East Plan (regional Spatial Strategy) on 6th May 2009. The 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 BE6 requires local authorities to adopt policies and proposals, which support conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Policy BE1: Management for an urban renaissance, is also relevant and states, inter alia, '*promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place, including the sensitive reuse of redundant or under-used historic buildings*'.

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, town centres, the natural and built environment, community infrastructure and many others. A number of designations are particularly relevant to Whitstable, including those relating to conservation areas, open space and flood risk. Proposed allocations related to housing, mixed uses, leisure and open space are also in the Local Plan. 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 Local Development Framework (LDF) will supersede the Local Plan in 2012. The LDF Core Strategy Options Report was published in January 2010 and was subject to public consultation until March 2010. The Core Strategy when adopted will provide the overall spatial strategy for the district until 2026. The Local Plan remains an important part of the planning framework for the district. Most of its policies were saved by the Secretary of State in 2009 and continue to be relevant in determining planning applications. 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 area and Chapter 5 provides detailed guidance for developments in Conservation Areas.

2. Location and Setting

2.1 Location and population

Whitstable stands at the mouth of the Swale opposite the Isle of Sheppey, and it is 10 kilometres north of Canterbury and 5 kilometres east of Herne Bay. The Church Street conservation area is located to the south east of Whitstable town centre. The conservation area is located in the Chestfield and Swalecliffe ward. There are some 24 houses within the conservation area indicating a population of approximately 70 persons.

2.2 Topography

The conservation area lies on the London Clay plateau that surrounds Whitstable's town centre. The conservation area varies between 19 and 22 metres OD. The London Clay is a marine sediment of Late Tertiary date that was subject to protracted fluvial erosion during the Quaternary period. The mix of the London Clay and alluvium enabled the soils within the conservation area to be utilised for arable cropping.

2.3 Biodiversity Assessment

The majority of the Whitstable Church Street Conservation Area is dominated by land associated with All Saints Church, the Vicarage and the Parsonage with approximately 40% of this land being covered in areas of well-established scrub mixed with mature trees, young woodland, hedgerows, thickets and individual mature trees, all providing significant biodiversity interest. The species diversity is rich, predominantly native in origin and offers a broad range of specimen ages. The areas of dense vegetation are well connected, and the whole site is adjacent to the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway and Whitstable Station Conservation Area, which is an important green corridor for wildlife and habitat. Although the majority of the grass within the Church grounds is intensively managed, small but valuable areas have been left longer, providing habitat for a wide range of invertebrates, and reptiles, such as slow-worms.

The presence of linear vegetation features within the area combined with the presence of mature trees provides viable roosting and foraging habitat for bats whilst the dense scrub, woodland and hedgerows provide both shelter and food sources for a wide range of birds. Species seen or heard include: greenfinch, blue tit, blackbird, robin, wood pigeon, chiffchaff, carrion crow, collared dove, magpie, chaffinch, long tailed tit, dunnocks (on the amber list of species of conservation concern), blackcap, great tit, wren, house sparrow and starling (both UK BAP species and on the red list of species of conservation concern). The presence of marginal habitats where the scrub borders grassland also provides good habitat for reptiles.

The current management regime of the All Saints Church grounds has created a valuable area for wildlife with the provision of a well-connected mosaic of habitats and to this end, continuation of existing management will be of most benefit to the site. Creating more areas of long grass where viable, managed as a hay meadows, would be beneficial, with the grass cut no earlier than the end of August, allowing invertebrates to complete their life cycle and letting flowers set seed to provide an additional food source for birds. The retention of some of these areas of long grass over the winter would also provide valuable hibernation sites for invertebrates and the provision of bird-nesting boxes plus bat boxes, appropriately placed and positioned would also be beneficial.

3. Historic Development.

Whitstable developed as a small market town formed by the amalgamation of three Saxon manors; Seasalter, Harwich and Nortone, (also known as Northwood).

In the Saxon period, a church was founded adjacent to the present day Church Street and a small community developed whose economy was largely dependent on agriculture. A track way to Tankerton, Swalecliffe and onto the Blean and Canterbury ran nearby, along which salt and fish were carried to the monastic establishments in the city. Whitstable developed as a coastal settlement but was separated from its church by about 1.5 km. This arrangement is relatively common in East Kent. Margate and Ramsgate both grew from small fishing settlements on the coast approximately 1 kilometre away from their original Saxon churches. In 1086 the Manor of Nortone included All Saints Church, 92 villagers and 40 smallholders. The church is dedicated to All Saints and the first recorded

rector was Walter de Alberiaio in 1257. The church was first mentioned as the church of Whitstable in 1271.

By 1290 a sea wall had been built in Whitstable, probably from the present day Beach Walk to the Horsebridge and land drainage began. The medieval settlement of Whitstable developed on the drained land behind the sea wall. The settlement at Church Street remained a small agricultural hamlet. In the 1500's the Manor of Nortone became the Manor of Northwood. The manor passed through the hands of several families and in 1394 it was given to the newly founded College of Pleshey in Essex. After the Dissolution in 1536 Henry VIII granted the manor to Sir John Gates and in 1553 it reverted to the Crown. Elizabeth I granted it to Thomas Heneage in 1571 and it then passed through various hands including the Company of Free Fishers.

The Monument Inn was licensed in 1731 and Feakins Mill was constructed close to All Saints Church. In 1824 the Canterbury Rail Road Company was established with the aim to construct a railway line from Canterbury to Whitstable. An Act of Parliament was granted in 1825 giving the powers to construct the railway. Construction work progressed through 1828 and 1829. The Canterbury to Whitstable railway line opened on 3rd May 1830. The Invicta railway engine struggled to cope with the incline up to Church Street and in 1832 an additional stationary winding engine was installed at Church Street to pull the carriages out of Whitstable. The engine was located within the area of the playing fields but there are no surviving remains above ground level.

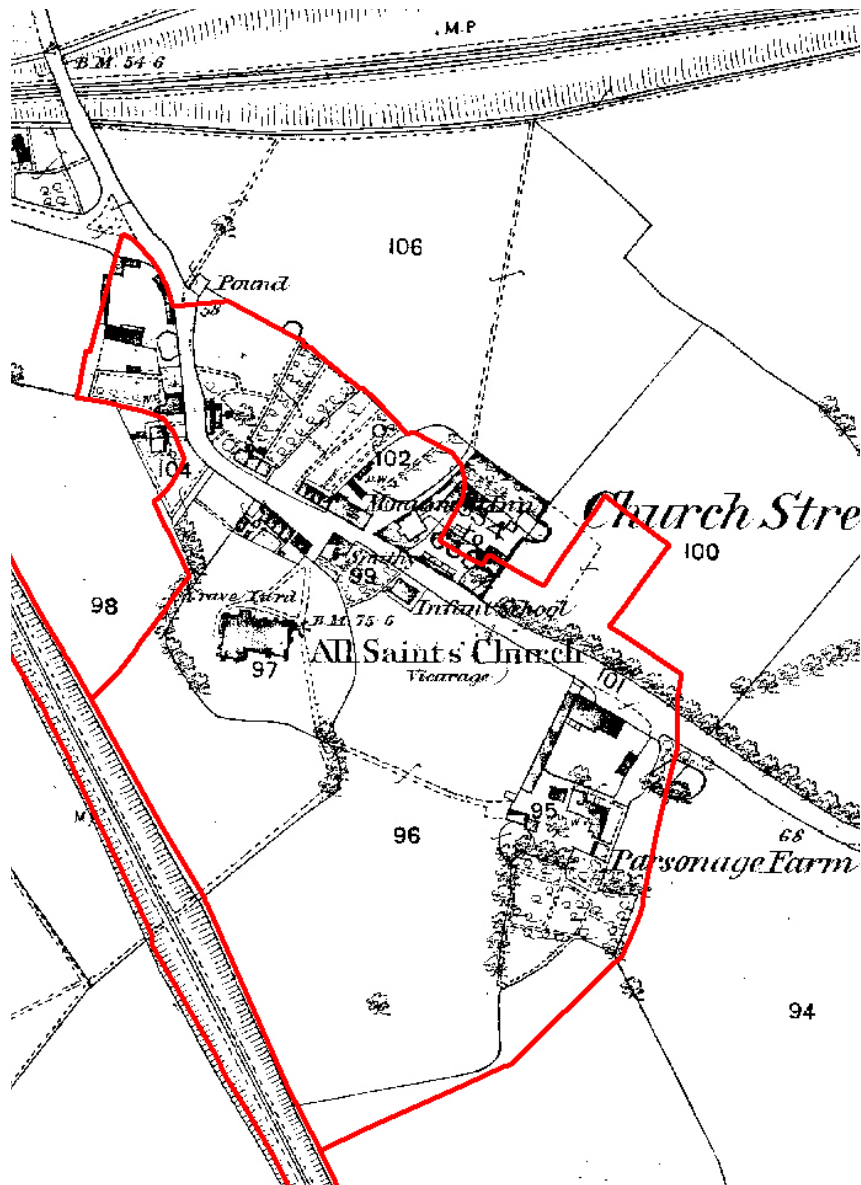
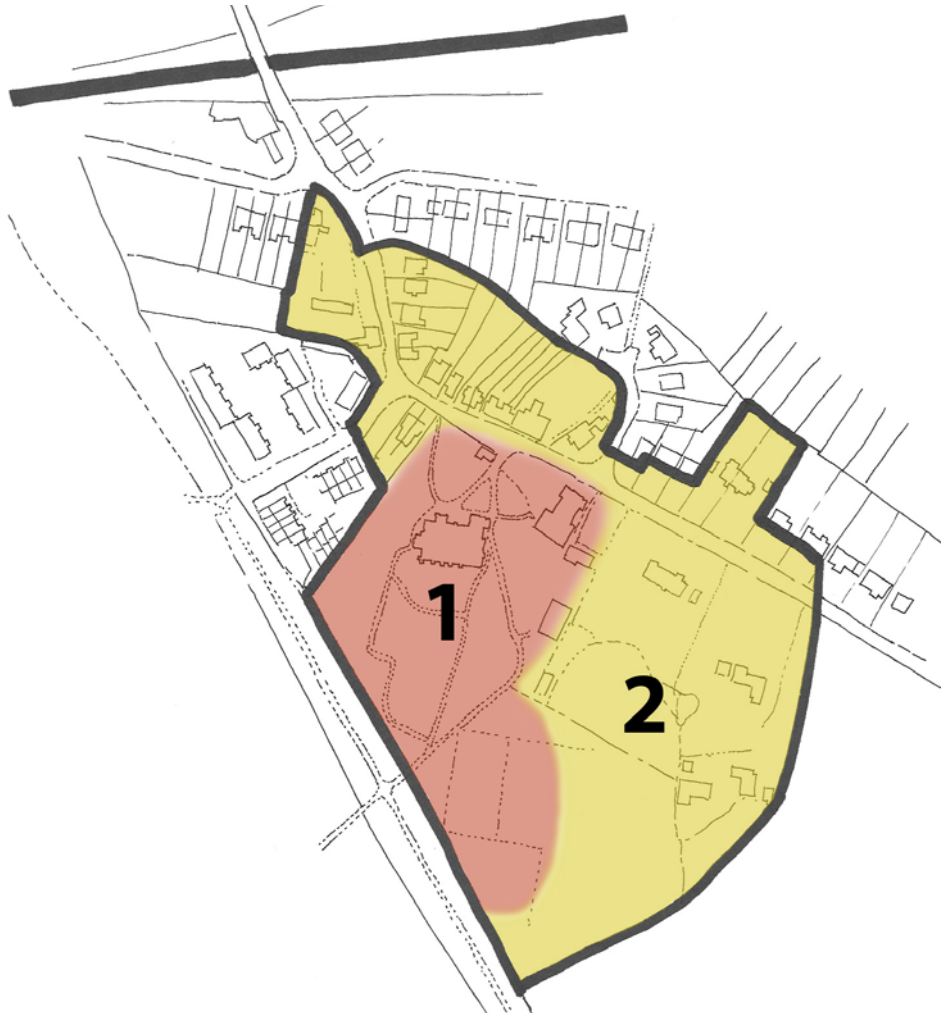


Figure 2: 1842 OS map of Church Street

The railway line runs along the western boundary of the Church Street conservation area. The line was designated as a separate conservation area on 5th March 1991, and is known as the 'Canterbury and Whitstable Railway and Whitstable Station conservation area'.

4. Character analysis

The Church Street Conservation Area can be usefully divided into two areas, each with its own character based on age, use and location. These areas are: 1) The Church, Churchyard and Cemetery, and 2) Church Street itself.



4.1 The Church and churchyard



All Saints churchyard

All Saints church was rebuilt in the 13th century. The tower and north aisle are in the Perpendicular style. Reused masonry from an earlier church (parts of capitals, shafts, window tracery and mouldings, and pieces of a font of possible Saxon date) was discovered when the west wall of the nave, and the northwest wall of the chancel, were being restored in 1875-76. The remains suggest that there had been a small stone church of eleventh or twelfth century date. A south porch

was added to the nave in the fourteenth century. The north aisle and northeast porch were added in the 15th century. The south aisle and chapel were added in 1962. The church is the main landmark of the conservation area. The landscape setting of the churchyard, and the mature trees, create an attractive place.

The churchyard has been extended on several occasions and is now the second largest in the Diocese measuring some 2.4 hectares in area. The churchyard contains many trees and shrubs and is an attractive green space. There are some 18th century headstones with skull, hourglass and bone motifs. There are three monuments of note. The War Memorial is a cross on a simple column and stepped plinth and dates from the 1920's. The Wynn Ellis Mausoleum located on the western boundary of the churchyard is a large structure constructed of Portland stone with a stepped pyramidal roof. Charles Barry Junior designed the mausoleum. He was the architect of new College, Dulwich and the Royal Academy in London. The St Pancras Ironworks made the railings surrounding the mausoleum in 1875. Wynn Ellis was a silk merchant and liberal MP who lived at Whitstable castle. The mausoleum was built following the death of his wife in 1872.

To the east of the churchyard is the Walter Goodsall Burial enclosure. This walled burial enclosure dates from 1913, The enclosure is formed by brick and flint walls with wrought iron finials on the corner piers. The entrance gates are wrought iron with repousse panels of copper. The monument was erected in memory of Walter Goodsall and is a distinctive and unusual Arts and Crafts movement memorial.



Walter Goodsall burial enclosure

The former railway line forms the western boundary to the conservation area and is at a lower level than that of the churchyard. A row of mature trees run along the boundary and create an impressive natural feature. A cycle way runs along the former line of the railway track however one is not aware of its presence because of the screen of mature trees. A footpath crosses the former railway track and is marked by two 19th century wrought iron kissing gates.

To the south of the churchyard are the Church Street playing fields. This large open grassed area runs up to the old Thanet Way and is an important formal open space. The playing fields are not included in the conservation area.

4.2 Church Street

The entrance into the conservation area from the south is along Church Street passing the playing fields to the east. The road is quite wide at this point and tends to dominate the view. The mature trees in the garden of the Old Parsonage mark the entrance into the conservation area. The Old Parsonage can be seen through the trees, and is one of the most historic properties in the conservation area. The conservation area includes numbers 46 and 48 Church Street on the northeast of the road. This is a two storey Edwardian building constructed with a red brick ground floor and a white rendered first floor under a clay tile roof. The building itself and the trees in the front garden help to create the character of the area. Beyond numbers 46 and 48 the road narrows and there is a view of the coastline. The appearance of the conservation area from this point has a

more of a historic grain or layout, with buildings (from the Monument to number 16) fronting direct onto the road. Opposite this group of buildings is the church and churchyard. The road then turns to the east and slightly drops in level, from 20 metres to 16 metres OD. The change in level is more noticeable when heading to the south. The trees in the churchyard that front the road are important in creating character.

The Old Parsonage was listed in 1951 (grade II) and dates from the 15th century. A date of 1461 is fixed to the front elevation. The building is the surviving farmhouse of Parsonage Farm and in the 19th century the current gardens formed the farmyard with a series of farm buildings forming a courtyard off the road. The house has been altered and extended over the years but retains its character as a rural timber framed farmhouse.



The Old Parsonage

The Vicarage is the neighbouring property on the southwestern side of the road. This is an attractive unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the area. The building has two two storey hipped gables at either end with a large roof sloping down to a single storey central section. The architectural style is 'arts and crafts' and it has retained its original features. The Village Hall and the All Saints Nursery School have been constructed on part of the original churchyard. The church hall dates for the 1950's and is a functional building that is neutral in the area. The hall was constructed on the site of a former infants school. The Nursery School is located in a portacabin set back from the road frontage by a small car park. The car park would benefit from additional planting screen it from the road. To the north of the Church Hall is the church car park set behind a low stone wall. The millennium cross for Whitstable is located at the northern end of the car park and makes an interesting feature in the street. Again the car park would benefit from tree planting to help reinforce the character of the churchyard. The lych-gate to the church dates from 1924 and is a copy of the one at St Martin's church in Canterbury. Walnut Tree Cottage is an attractive small Edwardian cottage fronting onto the road and is a positive feature in the area.

On the northeast side of the road is the 17th century Meadow Croft (Number 34). This is a grade II listed building, two storeys, with attic, in red brick to the ground floor and tile hanging to the first floor. The property has some mature trees to the rear but its historic garden to the south has been lost with the development of Juniper Close. The Monument public house is an 18th century building, two storeys with the ground floor in stucco and the first floor tile hung both painted white. Adjoining the Monument is a row of four two storey locally listed cottages, all painted white. This row forms an interesting group together with the listed Monument. To the north of this are a pair of semi-detached late 19th century houses with a pair of gables fronting the road. Further north at the bend in the road are numbers 12 and 14



Church Street looking south east

Church Street, a pair of listed, red brick, single storeyed cottages. Opposite these cottages is Smeeds Farm an 18th century two storeyed former farmhouse. The building is unlisted but is of local historic interest. To the north the former farmyard of Smeeds Farm forms the boundary to the conservation area. Numbers 43 to 50 Ivy House Road a three storey block of flats dating from the 1960's and overhead telephone wires adversely affect the view north towards Smeeds Farm from the millennium cross.

4.3 Materials

The predominant walling materials are red brick, tile hanging and render (or stucco) together with stone for the church and mausoleum. These materials are sometimes painted white. The roofing materials are peg tiles and slate.

5. Pressures and Boundary Assessment

There are a number of threats to the character of the area particularly the effect of the through traffic and the loss of traditional windows, doors and roof materials.

The existing boundary set in 1991 carefully used surrounding land uses, building character, natural features, roads and the former railway line to define its boundary. The boundary has been re-assessed and it is considered that it does not need to be altered.

6. Management

Following on from the appraisal several recommendations can be made in order to preserve or enhance the character of appearance of the Church Street conservation area.

There is a need to ensure that all future developments in the conservation area respect the local distinctiveness of Church Street, 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 street scene.

- Any new development should have a visual understanding of the historic development and architectural character of the conservation area.
- Use of traditional materials especially red brick, tile hanging, stucco, peg tiles and slates.
- Ensuring the scale of extensions and new buildings are in keeping with the grain and scale of the area.
- Protection of the views to the coastline and of All Saints church from within the conservation area.

When considering new development this need not necessarily mean exact copying of earlier styles in new work though on occasion this may be the best solution. Developers and architects should 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 context. This exercise would 'inform' the design process and should be part of the design statement submitted with a planning application.

7. Statement of Consultation

An article explaining the conservation area appraisal was published in the 2009 Winter edition City Council's magazine 'District Life'. The document was available to view at City Council Offices, the local libraries and on the City Council web site. The formal period for

consultation was 16th November 2009 to 22 January 2010. The draft appraisal was reported to the Canterbury City Council's Whitstable Area Members Panel on 4 January 2010. The appraisal was then amended in light of the consultation and will be presented to the Development Control Committee along with a summary of any responses received on 2 March 2010. The Development Control Committee formally adopted the document as a 'material consideration' on 2 March 2010.

Appendix 1

Listed Buildings

Church Street (North East Side)

Nos. 12 and 14
The Monument Public House
No. 34, Meadow Croft

Church Street (South West Side)

The Old Parsonage
All Saints Church
Wynn Ellis mausoleum at All saints Churchyard
Walter Goodsall burial enclosure at All Saints Churchyard

Locally listed buildings

Church Street (North East Side)

Nos. 24,26,28,30