Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Conservation Area Appraisal

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1.0 Summary

The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Conservation Area follows the line of the former railway and stretches most of the seven miles between the city and the seaside resort apart from where it disappears into a tunnel underneath Canterbury University. The conservation area is divided into four sections, covering about 80% of the original route, which are separated by modern development, new roads, or fields. A fifth conservation area in Canterbury, around Canterbury West Station, also includes some remains, as does the land around Whitstable Harbour, not currently a conservation area.

The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Conservation Area is therefore a very long, thin succession of protected spaces that runs in an almost straight line between Whitstable and Canterbury. At either end of the line are the urban surroundings of the seaside town and cathedral city, but between is a stretch of attractive, mainly wooded countryside rich in wildlife and plants, with Clowes Wood and the adjacent valley created by Bogshole Brook, being particularly remarkable. The village of Tyler Hill, also given conservation area status, forms the eastern boundary to the central section and Tyler Hill itself forms an important landmark in the countryside with Canterbury University positioned on its summit.

The “Crab and Winkle Line”, as the railway was affectionately called, started operating in 1830 and is famous as being the first regular steam passenger railway in the world, as recognised in the Guinness Book of Records. The line and its first railway engine, the Invicta, were engineered by George Stephenson and his son Robert, the design of the Invicta being based on Stephenson’s better known “Rocket”. Initially the Invicta hauled the carriages for the first third of the journey from Whitstable Harbour, with two winding engines, situated at intervals by the side of the track at Clowes Wood and Tyler Hill, providing power for the remainder. However, the Invicta was somewhat underpowered and therefore struggled to cope with the gradient up from the harbour, so in 1836 it was replaced by a third winding engine, which was built at South Street in Whitstable. Horses were used around the harbour to negotiate the tight corners around the harbour walls. After 1846 the journey from Canterbury to Whitstable was entirely powered by steam locomotive. Passengers were carried until 1932 after which the line was used for goods only, finally being closed in 1952.

Sections of the former railway line were opened in 1999 as a cycle route between Canterbury and Whitstable. Sustrans, the Crab and Winkle Trust and the City Council supported the development of the cycle route.
2.0 Introduction

2.1 Location and regional context.

The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Conservation Area is about five miles long and divides into four sections (Map 1) that stretch along the line of the former “Crab and Winkle” line from Canterbury to Whitstable. The four sections are separated by modern development, or fields (where the trackway has disappeared), and by a tunnel that lies beneath Canterbury University.

Canterbury, one of the most important historic towns in the southeast of England, lies to the south with the former railway line terminating close to Canterbury West mainline station. Canterbury has had World Heritage Site status since 1988 and consideration was given to whether the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway (C and WR) should be considered as a possible world heritage site. However, the line was not included on the revised list of “tentative” sites published in 1997.

To the north, the line stretches towards the North Kent coast and the picturesque town of Whitstable, once an important 19th century port and holiday resort and now enjoying a revival of fortunes. Between the two settlements the land is the heavily wooded Blean forest.
2.2 Planning policy framework.

The principal purpose of this appraisal is to provide a firm basis upon which proposals for development within the Whitstable Town 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.

The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Conservation Area was designated in sections by the City Council between 1991 and 1999. A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 of the 1990 Act). This appraisal describes the special architectural and historic interest of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Conservation Area its future management.

**National Policy Guidance**


Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 and 16 (Archaeology and Planning), the draft South East Plan (March 2006), Regional Spatial Strategy, Kent and Medway Structure Plan policies 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 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 polices for the whole county, and includes policies on retail and tourism that are particularly relevant to Whitstable town centre. 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, town centres, the natural and built environment, community infrastructure and many others. 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 planning system has recently changed and the Local Plan is to be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF). 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.

3. Historical development of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway.

3.1 Origins and development.

The Canterbury and Whitstable railway was the first passenger railway in the south and the first in Great Britain to regularly carry passengers in trains hauled by steam power. The Canterbury and Whitstable was a pioneering early railway representing an intermediary stage between early mining wagon ways and the Liverpool to Manchester Railway, which was the prototype modern railway line. The Tyler Hill railway tunnel can claim to be the first
modern railway tunnel in history. The railway line is therefore an extremely important part of the history of railways in the United Kingdom.

Before the early 19th century, transporting passengers and goods was a slow, laborious job across poor roads that had only been marginally improved by the introduction of turnpikes (to pay for repairs and maintenance) in the 18th century. Water transport was another alternative and had been used since the Roman period. The construction of a national canal network, including localised improvements to existing rivers, from about 1750 onwards had provided a cheaper and much faster method of transporting large loads such as building stone or coal and throughout the country. However, the hilly terrain and the silting-up of the major rivers meant that very few canals were ever constructed in Kent. The River Thames remained the county’s major waterway. In the early 19th century a canal was proposed from Canterbury to St Nicholas Bay (east of Reculver). The project did not progress and in 1825 it was shelved in favour of a new project to make the Stour navigable to Sandwich. By this time the plan to build the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway had found favour and the canal project was dropped.

Initially, the idea of a railway line from Canterbury to Whitstable was the idea of just one man, William James of West Bromwich, who was described as a land engineer who visited Kent in the 1820’s. He saw the potential for a railway and managed to sell his vision to other local businessmen and in 1824 the Canterbury Rail Road Company was launched. Soon afterwards, James was declared a bankrupt and went to prison, eventually retiring to Cornwall where he died in 1837. However the Company survived and the directors eventually consulted George Stephenson on the development of a new railway. He suggested the most direct route between Canterbury and Whitstable that required a short (half mile) tunnel through Tyler Hill. Stephenson’s proposed route minimised the need for cuttings and embankments. The railway carriages would be pulled along inclined planes (or ramps) by a number of stationary steam engines, a technology already used in mining and quarrying.

Plan 2: Early sketch plan of Whitstable Railway
Following the Act of Parliament granting powers to construct the railway in 1825 Stephenson initially appointed John Dixon, who served his apprenticeship on the Stockton and Darlington Railway during the early 1820’s, as engineer-in-charge. Eventually Stephenson did travel south to view the site and to give advice although in the end he only visited Whitstable twice. Meanwhile, Thomas Telford was appointed to supervise the improvements to Whitstable Harbour, which would be needed once the railway line opened. Construction work on the railway had begun by 1826.

The railway line was built using wooden sleepers and wrought iron rails bought from the Bedlington Iron Works in Morpeth, Northumberland but the ground work progressed very slowly as the builders were working using largely untested technology. The construction of the tunnel was more difficult than first envisaged and it had to be strengthened at a later date by the addition of a new brick lining. In 1826 Stephenson’s son Robert took over his father’s responsibilities and Joshua Richardson became the resident engineer.

Construction work progressed steadily throughout 1828 and 1829. A new station was built at Canterbury on a farmyard on St. Stephen’s Fields, just outside West Gate. The new terminus buildings were rudimentary, with an engine house, forge, workshops, stables and a ticket office with a narrow entrance to North Lane. A steep inclined plane was built out of Canterbury towards Whitstable, and two stationary steam engines provided, one at Tyler Hill, to haul the carriages up the incline from Canterbury, and one at Clowes Wood, about half way between Canterbury and Whitstable. Both were 25 horse power and drove winding machinery that rotated cable drums 4 ft. by 5 ft. Each installation cost the Company £1,550. Because the winding engines could only haul along straight lines, they were located at bends in the track. From Clowes Wood the carriages descended by gravity to Bogshole Farm where a new steam locomotive, the Invicta, pulled them into Whitstable. Invicta was the 70th steam engine designed by the Stephenson’s and included several technical improvements to the prototype Rocket on which it was based.

Figure 2 – Historic print showing the inclined plane out of Canterbury
The railway line opened to a burst of public enthusiasm on 3rd May 1830 and regular passenger timetables were established although there was no proper station at Whitstable Harbour, just a crude platform and small hut. The line was always single track with loops to allow the trains to pass. The line carried both passengers and freight from its inauguration. In 1831 the improvements to the harbour were started, under the control of an engineer called E P Fordham, and the new harbour was finally opened in 1832. In September 1831 the brick-built bridge that took the line over Church Road in Whitstable collapsed. This was the first of many similar incidents caused by early cost-cutting and poor workmanship. For the first two years, *Invicta* struggled to cope with the incline from the harbour up to Church Street and in 1832 a further winding engine was installed at Church Street to pull the carriages out of Whitstable with four sturdy horses providing pulling power in the sidings and around the harbour. *Invicta* was still used but only on the level section between Church Street and Bogshole. The operation of the railway was a complicated labour intensive affair, utilising horse and steam power to move the carriages along the line.

Much-needed publicity was provided when Isambard Kingdom Brunel visited the line in 1835 to test the braking capability of the carriages in connection with work he was supervising on the Great Western Railway in Wiltshire, then under construction, and to inspect the tunnel. In 1836 the Company undertook much-needed improvements to Whitstable Harbour, including the clearing the basin of silt, and the provision of a regular steam packet to London provided more potential customers. Following a very wet summer in 1938 cracks and signs of subsidence were noticed in the northern portal of the tunnel. The arch of the tunnel exposed and a concrete ‘puddling’ applied. The parapet was lowered to improve drainage and buttresses were added. A bad accident in 1840 resulted in the death of a railwayman and public confidence in the line was slow to return so that for much of the time the Company was operating at a loss. By 1844 the South Eastern Railway (SER) had completed their new line from London to Dover, and soon afterwards they took over the Canterbury to Whitstable line on a 14-year lease. SER also provided the funds to build a backwater reservoir at Whitstable Harbour (now the Gorrell Tank car park), which meant that the harbour could be washed-out after every tide, and also to build a more permanent passenger station. This increased investment bought more passengers and overall growth in profits. Meanwhile, the movement of coal from Whitstable down the line to Canterbury also increased with over 50 tons per day being transported after being landed at Whitstable Harbour. In the spring of 1846 work was completed on the contract to replace the now outdated track from Canterbury to Whitstable. New rails and sleepers were installed and steam locomotives provided the method of propulsion throughout, replacing the old winding engines.
The old North Lane terminus in Canterbury was relegated to a goods yard and a new line built to connect the Whitstable line directly into Canterbury West Station. A month later SER completed the line into Ramsgate, providing a further impetus to passenger travel. In 1848 SER built a coking oven next to Whitstable Harbour and the twin chimneys from the works soon became a familiar part of the skyline although complaints were received about the sulphurous smell. In 1853 the Canterbury to Whitstable line was finally sold to SER who were faced with serious competition, when, in 1857, the North Kent line was launched by the East Kent Railway Company which later changed its name to the London, Chatham and Dover railway. This line was opened as far as Whitstable in 1860 with a new station just off Oxford Street and subsequently extended to Ramsgate.

From the 1860’s to the turn of the century passenger numbers on the Canterbury to Whitstable line were somewhat depressed until the introduction of statutory cheap fares and excursion trains brought additional traffic in the 1880’s. Generally throughout this period there were only five or six trains a day in the summer with fewer in the winter. However the
carrying of freight remained important, particularly coal and coke. In the late 1860’s a room was added to the railway building at Whitstable to provide a booking office and the platform was lengthened to allow three carriages to pull in at once. Fresh water was provided at various points around the harbour and the local atmosphere greatly improved by the closing-down of the coke ovens, as the locomotives could now be run on coal. The cleaner environment stimulated tourism and in the 1880’s and 1890’s Whitstable and nearby Tankerton became a favourite with visitors from Canterbury and even London. The rise in passenger numbers persuaded SER to invest in two new signal boxes and a new station building to the south of Tankerton Road, and in 1898 SER also paid for the construction of defensive walls following the disastrous floods of the year before which inundated the centre of the town. In 1899 SER formed a working unit with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, creating the South-Eastern and Chatham railway (SE and CR) and in 1901 a new loop was proposed to connect the two lines at Church Street, although following a public inquiry it was never built.

In 1909 the Blean and Tyler Hill Halt was opened to serve the increasing population of Whitstable. Improvements were also carried out to the signals around the harbour and new crossing gates installed. In 1911 the SE and CR decided to replace the old station on the London line with a new “Whitstable Town” station although it was not completed until 1915. Meanwhile, in 1914, a new halt had been built at Tankerton. World War I brought huge problems for SE and CR, with a lack of manpower and much lower demand for services. During the war the local bus services had improved and the competition was fierce. In 1923 the line became the property of the newly formed Southern Railway Company, which continued running the four existing steam locomotives on the Canterbury to Whitstable route and in the early 1920’s about 1,000 passengers a week were transported, a good average for a small, local line. The existence of Tankerton Halt, just a few minutes walk from the mainline Whitstable Town Station, no doubt helped to keep the more minor line in use. By 1928 the increase in bus use meant a fall in the number of passengers on the Canterbury-Whitstable line although freight transportation had if anything increased and in 1927 a new goods shed had to be built at Whitstable. In October 1930, just after the celebration of the Canterbury and Whitstable railway’s centenary celebrations in May, the line finally closed to passengers. Throughout the next year, the halts had their lamps and name boards removed and eventually the platforms were dismantled. The 1894 station next to Whitstable Harbour was boarded up, the Tankerton Road cabin abandoned, and all of the signalling was removed apart from a few shunting signals which catered for the three or four goods trains which ran each way every day.
Between 1930 and 1939 the line continued to be used for freight only, with a new bridge being built over the line to serve the newly constructed Thanet Way. During World War II the line was used to transport ammunition and supplies to the troops, and after the war, the transportation of grain became particularly important. In 1948 the railway system was united under the overall control of British Railways who finally closed the Canterbury and Whitstable line in 1952, due to the lack of freight. However, only a few weeks later it was temporarily re-opened to replace the mainline that had been rendered useless by extensive flooding. The final working on the line is believed to have taken place on 28th February 1953 and over the next year the steel rails were lifted and the wooden sleepers removed. In 1957 the British Transport Commission sold much of the land to the local authority and individual plots were also sold for new development or for farming. In 1968 the Whitstable Civic Society began a local campaign to save the old Church Road bridge, although the "requirements" of road safety meant that it was subsequently demolished. Subsidence in the Tyler Hill tunnel in 1974 resulted in damage to the buildings lying above on the Canterbury University campus and parts of the tunnel were filled-in to prevent further problems. In 1980 the 150th anniversary of the opening of the line was celebrated, concentrating on the Invicta, which is exhibited in the Museum of Canterbury. More recently, in 1998, the Crab and Winkle Line Trust has been formed to promote the reuse of the old railway line for public access and a section of the old line now forms new national cycle network promoted by SUSTRANS.

A full and detailed history of the development of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway can be found in:
‘The Canterbury & Whitstable Railway’ by Ivan Maxted, published by The Oakwood Press, 1970, and

3.2 Archaeological significance including industrial archaeology.

The archaeological significance of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway is due to its early construction in the late 1820’s and to its innovative use of steam power. It was the first passenger railway in the south and the first in Great Britain to regularly carry ordinary fare paying passengers in trains hauled by steam power. The frequent changes to the
arrangements for moving the carriages along the track in the 1830’s however demonstrate how its promoters were forced to adapt the early technology as the Invicta locomotive failed to produce the power needed to carry the carriages up the quite modest incline out of Whitstable Harbour.

The Tyler Hill tunnel is important for being the first tunnel to be constructed on a modern railway. It is one of the most progressive features of the railway and represents the inception of a more ambitious scale of railway engineering. The tunnel can claim to be the first modern railway tunnel in history, albeit marginally because the Edge Hill tunnel on the Liverpool to Manchester railway opened just four months later in September 1830. Tunnelling would become a striking feature of the railway age. The tunnel was listed grade II* on 24th December 2007. The higher II* grade designation was given in recognition of the tunnel’s more than special historic significance.

Additionally, the involvement in the project of a number of famous engineers in the project demonstrates how important the line was within the national context: George Stephenson and his son Robert, who largely designed the route and provided Invicta, the first steam locomotive to pull passengers; Thomas Telford, who was responsible for designing the new harbour at Whitstable; and, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who used the line to test the braking systems he proposed to use on the Great Western Railway. The involvement of these people, who contributed so much to the development of the railways in the United Kingdom throughout the early and mid 19th century, demonstrate how the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway, although only modest in size, was part of a much larger and ambitious scheme to bring cheap, convenient travel to the masses. In addition, other, less well-known professionals also contributed to the line’s early success: John Dixon and later Joshua Richardson as engineers-in-charge; and E P Fordham, who supervised the improvements designed by Telford at Whitstable Harbour.

3.3 Remaining features and details.

When the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway was built, new buildings were provided at either end of the line and other buildings and structures, such as the winding engines and signals, provided at various points along the tracks. Improvements to passenger facilities over the years meant that longer platforms and better quality booking offices and waiting rooms were added throughout the 19th century, and of course the development of the freight business at Whitstable Harbour required efficient management of the track. This was built as a single track with loops provided at intervals so that trains could pass each other, and although the track itself has long since gone the line of the railway can be easily plotted along a series of cuts and embankments and through the Tyler Hill Tunnel.

Regrettably, as each stage of its growth and eventual decline, the buildings and structures which had been provided along the railway were either altered or demolished and the virtual wholesale removal of old station buildings, stables, and signal boxes in 1931 and again in 1953 means that little remains apart from the features listed in Appendix 2. A map showing the location of the various features is included at Appendix 1.

3.4 Heritage merit.

Although some modern development has been allowed along the former C and WR track, particularly in the more urban areas of Whitstable and Canterbury, the line is easily discernible between the two towns and aerial photographs show how much of the original route remains. This railway line and its surviving features are important because:
• The C and WR was the first passenger railway in the south of England.
• The C and WR was the first in Great Britain to carry passengers in trains hauled by steam power.
• George Stephenson and his son Robert, Thomas Telford, and Isambard Kingdom Brunel were all involved in the formative years of the line.
• The Invicta locomotive was one of the first steam locomotives to provide passenger services.
• The Tyler Hill tunnel is the first modern railway tunnel in history
• The C and WR formed an important part of the national railway system that was developed in the Southeast in the 1830’s and 1840’s.
• Despite the loss of many of the 19th century buildings there are sufficient surviving features to interpret the line accurately.
• The survival of the Invicta locomotive and machinery from the line provides an opportunity for interpretation.
• The south end of the C and WR forms part of the group of railway buildings in Canterbury now protected by the designation of the Canterbury (West Station) Conservation Area (1986).
• The listing of the 1846 Canterbury West Railway Station, the Signal Box, and the adjacent Goods Shed draws attention to their architectural and historical importance and the Goods Shed provides opportunities for a possible visitor centre.

3.5 Ownership.

Ownership of the land that makes up the former route of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway is divided between Canterbury City Council, the Forestry Commission, Canterbury University and private owners. Currently about 50% of the line is open to the public, with good quality surfaces.

From Whitstable to Canterbury:

The land between the harbour and the beginning of the C and WR and Whitstable Station conservation area has been built over by the Oysters and number 1 to 14 Station Road. However the Sidings housing development retains the line of the railway in its road layout. The City Council and Sustrans own the land from the Sidings to Tynham Road. From Old Bridge Road to South Street the former railway line is privately owned and forms part of the cycle network. The cycle path is a ‘highway’ managed by Kent County Council. Outside the conservation area from South Street across the valley of the Bogshole Brook, and underneath the new Thanet Way, the track has largely been lost and the land is in use for agriculture. The track then passes into Clowes Wood the majority of which is owned by the Forestry Commission. From Clowes Wood the former track runs in a slight dip through privately owned fields and access is not possible. At Tyler Hill the entrance driveway to The Halt (a private residence) follows the line of the track and is privately owned. To the south of Tyler Hill Road the conservation area follows the line of the track and the land is privately owned so public access is not possible until approaching the northern portal of the Tyler Hill Tunnel. A rough pathway follows the line of the track northwards but this is currently very overgrown.

The University of Kent owns the North Portal of the Tyler Hill tunnel. The northern portal is sealed and public access is not possible. The southern portal is in private ownership and the brickwork has been restored (in 2009). The portal is accessible during the Heritage Open Days event. Access into the tunnel via the southern portal is possible for some 50 metres until one reaches the 1974 blocking up. From the southern portal of the tunnel the
Archbishop’s School owns the land. Beyond their school Canterbury City Council owns the embankment and there is an informal path on this section. South of Beaconsfield Road it is also possible to walk along much of the embankment although it too is somewhat overgrown with trees and shrubs. Canterbury City Council also owns this section.

4.0 Character and appearance of the conservation areas.

4.1 Overall description.

The four separate conservation areas that collectively make up the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway conservation area are:

- The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway and Whitstable Station Conservation Area
- The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: (Hackington and Blean) Conservation Area
- The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: (St. Stephens) Conservation Area
- The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: (Hackington) Conservation Area.

Between Canterbury and Whitstable lies seven miles of attractive undulating countryside with several notable features, the most important being the Bogshole Brook valley, Clowes Wood, the flattish open fields towards Tyler Hill village, and Tyler’s Hill itself. Each provides the former railway line with a completely different setting.

The railway line was deliberately built in as straight a line as possible to allow the winding engines to pull more easily and minimise the number of engines needed. To keep the number of changes in level to a minimum, Stephenson also designed the line with a series of embankments or cuttings which had to: transverse the valley of the Bogshole Brook to the north of Whitstable; the incline up towards Clowes Wood and Tyler Hill; and the incline down again towards Canterbury and the valley of the River Stour. These changes in natural levels resulted in the trackway both dipping and rising above the surrounding landscape.

The valley to the south of Whitstable dips slightly to the Bogshole Brook and then rises again towards Clowes Wood. From South Street views across this valley, which now includes the new Thanet Way, are important, with the coniferous forest marking the beginning of the Forestry Commission land. Fortunately, along the public paths in Clowes Wood deciduous trees have been planted which provide a pleasant environment. Views are restricted with the occasional opening up provided by fire breaks or the line of the electricity pylons. To the south of Clowes Wood there land is flattish with large open fields although a striking row of tall willow trees marks the line of the railway as it reaches Tyler Hill village. Between the village and the entrance to the Tyler Hill tunnel the line is concealed in a cutting although the mature trees that have grown signal the route. Its impact on the surrounding countryside is therefore minimal before it disappears into the tunnel, emerging in the more urban and built-up area on the edges of the city.

4.2 The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway and Whitstable Station CA.

The designated area follows the line of the former railway track from the Sidings (off Station Road) to South Street in Whitstable, with a small extension to the west to include Whitstable Station.
The station building is important visually because it sits at a higher level than the surrounding land. The line of the railway can be easily picked out and between the Sidings and Teynham Road and it is protected by a tree preservation order. Planning permission has been granted (in 2009) for the extension of the cycle way through this section of the former line. Where the line crossed Teynham Road and Old Bridge Road the bridges and Tankerton Halt have been demolished. A wooded embankment continues southwards, with the Teynham Road in particular dipping at the location of the former bridge. Post-and-rail cast iron railings, painted blue, provide an industrial character and there are also some simple wrought iron pointed railings on parts of the embankment. Teynham Road curves slightly at this point, and the tree belt provided by the embankment is a noticeable urban feature.

Whitstable Station was built in 1915. The principal building is single storey, and built from red brick with Portland stone capitals and plinths to the four pairs of pilasters that decorate the main elevation. Above is a deep cornice, also faced in stone. A canopy, somewhat dilapidated, protects the main entrance and the two pairs of windows on either side, although these openings no longer function. Slightly lower buildings stretch along the platform to east and west with typical station canopies, supported on cast iron columns, over the platforms, with a contemporary pedestrian bridge connecting the two sides of the station over the track. The substantial size of this, and its sister building on the south side of the railway tracks, is somewhat surprising. On either side the access roads are covered in part by attractive granite sets and to the north a station car park at a slightly lower level is relatively unobtrusive. To the south, on land more level with the station, is another larger car park. Negative features include modern lighting and inappropriate ranch-style fencing.
From the junction with Old Bridge Road the conservation area continues on a straight line southwards through inter-war and later housing. The track is slightly elevated on an embankment and covered in dense trees and undergrowth. Some 200 metres south of Old Bridge Road (off All Saints Close) one can join a surfaced public footpath and cycle track that is part of the Crab and Winkle Way. On either side of the track is 19th and early 20th century housing.

To the east is the medieval Church of All Saints, its extensive churchyard, and other historic buildings which form the Church Street conservation area. An appraisal for this conservation was prepared in 2009 and is to be adopted in 2010. The railway lies at a slightly lower level than the churchyard and forms its western boundary, with the mature trees of the churchyard along the former line creating an impressive screen of natural vegetation. A footpath crosses the line from the churchyard, marked by two 19th century wrought iron kissing gates. Views of the church tower, and across the churchyard from the entrance to the footpath, are important. Slightly to the south is a large playing field, once the site of the winding station built in the 1832 to replace the *Invicta* locomotive, although there are no remains.

The embankment then passes below the old Thanet Way at the 1936 concrete bridge. This structure has four prominent piers on either side, with Art Deco features, from which important views can be obtained north and southwards along the former railway track. These views confirm the earlier impression of the straightness of the line, with the trees on either side softening the bitmac pathway, here some two metres wide. Beyond the old Thanet Way the line remains surfaced although this ends when the cycleway joins with South Street. The housing development, known as the Halt, was designed to retain the line of the former railway.

Beyond the South Street crossing the line of the railway has been lost and modern industrial units (Jagow House and Units C, D and E of the Joseph Wilson Industrial Estate) have been constructed on the route of the railway line.

Between South Street and Clowes Wood the line passed originally over a valley and the Bogshole Brook, although a slight bump in the fields is all that remains of the track. However, views from South Street and along the cycle route, which diverts along a road slightly to the east at this point, are very pleasant with Clowes Wood in the distance although the A299 (Thanet Way), opened in 1998, bisects the valley.
4.3 The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: Hackington and Blean Conservation Area.

This is by far the longest section of conservation area and stretches some four miles from the Thanet Way through Clowes Wood and much more open fields, past the settlement of Tyler Hill, and finishing at the northern portal of the Tyler Hill Tunnel. The character of the area is rural with much of the northern section of the line forming part of the cycle route and therefore easily accessible.

Between the new Thanet Way and the site of the winding engine in Clowes Wood, the track used to run in a straight line up the incline, with the lower portion being in a slight cutting which is now a farm track crossed by an old bridge. On entering the wood, the track has now become very overgrown and the cycle route has been diverted to the east and over the main road by a modern bridge. The surrounding woodland is managed by the Forestry Commission, which has planted deciduous trees, such as silver birches, oaks and chestnuts, along the main route that partially shields the coniferous forest that lies beyond. The undulating nature of the land, with hidden valleys on either side, the firebreaks in the trees, and the beauty of the woodland, is special features of this section of the conservation area. However the electricity pylons, which cross Clowes Wood, are a far less attractive feature.

At a slight bend in the line is the former site of the Clowes Wood winding engine, now grassed over and featuring a modern sculpture representing a winding wheel. The circular pond, which provided water for the steam engine, is still extant although its original shape is concealed by tree growth. Before locomotive power, the carriages were pulled up the incline from the north or from the slightly more level land to the south where another winding engine at Tyler Hill provided power to pull the carriages up the incline from Canterbury and through the tunnel. This area is very popular with cyclists and with walkers, many of whom park in the public car park off the main road from Tyler Hill to Whitstable provided by the Forestry Commission. The wide pathways and pleasantly wooded surroundings therefore provide an important recreational facility, although just south of the winding engine site the Sustrans cycle route diverts westwards.

Between the former sites of the two winding engines (which each had a rail loop to allow trains to pass) the line of the railway can be followed as far as the edge of Clowes Wood, beyond which the land is privately owned and access is difficult. However, it is possible to see the former track in a slight dip, now heavily overgrown and in the winter, water-logged, as it falls slightly towards the village of Tyler Hill. The landscape here is quite bleak, with the willow trees which mark the boundary of the track providing a strong boundary to the large, open fields.
A modern bungalow, The Halt, now occupies the former site of the winding engine on the outskirts of Tyler Hill although the winding engine pond still exists and line of the old railway track is now used as an access road for the modern house. The boundary of the conservation area diverts slightly to include a small triangle of land (Lilac Cottage and St. Cosmus), once the site of the Tyler Hill and Blean Halt (again, there are no remains), and further land on either side of Tyler Hill Road. This is marked on the 1908 Ordnance Survey map as being the site of an “Old Clay Pit” and spring. Views across rather low-lying fields to the line of trees which mark the railway line, are important. To the south, between Tyler Hill Road and the entrance to the tunnel, the track ran in a slight dip, now heavily wooded and just accessible with stout boots.

The northern entrance to the Tyler Hill Tunnel marks the end of this section of the conservation area, as the former railway disappears into the hill below Canterbury University. The entrance, which is now bricked-up, can be accessed from the public car park at the university although the area is somewhat overgrown and the pathway slopes steeply. The brickwork is covered in graffiti and the condition of the structure is poor. The northern portal is included on the City Council’s Heritage at Risk register. A rough footpath leads along the line of the track, very muddy and somewhat difficult to penetrate. The contrast of this quiet, private place with the busy university campus just 100 metres away is very noticeable.

4.4 The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: St. Stephens Conservation Area.

This section of the conservation area stretches from the southern portal of the Tyler Hill Tunnel, past the Archbishop’s School and playing fields, to houses fronting Beaconsfield Road which now block the line of the old railway. Public access is difficult, especially to the north as the track now forms part of the school site.

The southern portal of the Tyler Hill Tunnel lies in a private garden about 150 metres site about 150 metres from Archbishop’s School buildings. The land surrounding the portal is well treed and has been fenced off from the school grounds by a tall security fence. The brick structure of the tunnel portal has been repaired (2009) and is in a good condition. The tunnel has been bricked-in about one metre from the entrance and a lockable metal grill provides access. The smoke blackening and poor condition of some of the brickwork is noticeable. To the south of the tunnel the track has been partially lost by modern access roads, playgrounds and playing fields.
The conservation area extends to include an attractive late 19th century house, Hillmead to the west of the former railway line. This is an attractive house with a large garden and tall, enclosing hedges. The conservation area also includes a small triangle of open land owned by the university through which a wide path crosses. The character of the area at this point is still semi-rural with an old lane winding through the landscape providing access from the housing to the east and south, which dates from the 1970’s and 1980’s. This housing surrounds the embankment which once contained the railway line on both the east and west sides. The embankment is now covered in trees and can be accessed by climbing over the old wrought iron railings and using an informal footpath that roughly follows the line of the track. Views of this high embankment, with its many mature trees, are important as it forms a dominant feature when glimpsed over the tops of the modern houses.

4.5 Canterbury and Whitstable Railway : Hackington Conservation Area.

The C & W Railway Hackington conservation area is a residential area to the north of Canterbury and comprises mainly late 19th century houses in a roughly triangular-shaped piece of land including properties in Beaconsfield Road, Hackington Terrace and St. Michael’s Road. Most of the houses have been re-roofed using concrete tiles but many retain their original sash windows and panelled front doors. To the northeast, and within the designated area, is the former C and WR line, raised on a slight embankment and now covered in trees and undergrowth.

Beaconsfield Road is a long straight road that leads westwards to Forty Acres and St. Dunstan’s and eastwards to St Stephen’s. Lighting is by modern streetlights and there are few street trees apart from where the former railway line abuts the road. The most cohesive group of houses are numbers 2 to 32 Beaconsfield Road which form a terrace of two storey houses, all late 19th century. Numbers 2 to 10 are built from buff brick with red brick string courses and quoins. The ground floor bays have nearly all been replaced using uPVC or
aluminium windows, but some of the original front doors remain such as number 6, with four recessed panels. A track between numbers 10 and 12 provides access to garages at the back of the houses.

Numbers 12 to 32 are constructed in red brick with one or two storey bays to the front, many of which retain their original sash windows. The front doors are recessed into small porches and some retain their original joinery, such as number 22. Number 34 is a modern house which replicates the bay window details of its neighbours. Next to this building, the former C and WR embankment provides a break in the built form with mature trees indicating the position of the former railway line behind the houses. A narrow path leads down the side of the embankment to Hackington Terrace, a group of six houses, also late 19th century, with generous gardens surrounded by high hedges. These houses are built from red brick with buff brick dressings to the windows, doors and corners, and ground floor bays most of which retain their original sash windows. The character of this part of the conservation area is different from Beaconsfield Road where busy traffic is obtrusive. Here, the public footpaths, mature trees, high hedges, and attractive gardens provide privacy and peace for residents and pedestrians. To the east the high bank of the former railway line further protects the area. Beyond and outside the conservation area are open playing fields. The former railway track is overgrown although a rough path provides dog-walking opportunities along the top of the embankment and there are pleasant views, although somewhat over-shadowed by the trees. Some examples of wrought iron railway railings remain.

On the west side of Beaconsfield Road there are two buildings of note within the conservation area. Numbers 11, 13 and 15 are one building and are built from red brick with a flint front elevation with half-timbered gables on either side. Stone quoins mark the corners and substantial red brick chimneys stacks provide townscape merit. The front doors to each house are recessed with ground floor canted bay windows below each gable. The whole building sits closely to the back of the pavement. Numbers 19 and 21 Beaconsfield Road are a pair of late 19th century houses, also built from red brick with double-height canted bay windows to the front and deep fascias to the gables above. These houses also sit on the back of the pavement but have gardens on both sides providing hedging and shrubbery. Their covering of Virginia creeper is notable. Next to them, on the corner of St. Michael’s Road are two 1930’s houses designed in the “cottage” style popular in the inter war period.

Turning into St. Michael’s Road is an unusual single storey building now used as a hairdresser (Cl’Haire Unisex Hair Fashions). It has asbestos fish scale tiles on the roof,
which are probably original, with an attractive shopfront and double entrance doors arranged centrally. It dates to circa 1900 and may have been built as an estate office or possibly as a shop. Between it and number 5 are several mature trees, important in views along the road.

Further along St. Michael's Road, numbers 7 to 15 are a red brick terrace (although some have been painted). They are two storeys high with square bay windows on the ground floor creating a continuous, linked roof along the whole terrace. The front doors are recessed into porches and some retain their original joinery (e.g. number 9). Number 5 is attached to the terrace but is quite different being three storeys high and set at right angles to the road with an almost blank brick wall facing the street. Number 17 is a modern house which has been added to the other end of the terrace relatively unobtrusively. The road contains some good examples of cast-iron lamp standards, now upgraded for modern-day use.

5.0 Conservation area management.

5.1 Loss, damage, intrusion of negative features.

Throughout the four separate areas which make up the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway conservation area many of the early 19th century railway buildings and structures have been lost as the inevitable result of changes required by a modern railway system. In Whitstable, the harbour area has undergone considerable changes over the last 180 years as it has been forced to adapt to modern-day requirements. Whitstable Station still remains although the earlier station that once stood on Oxford Street was demolished in the 1840’s. The original winding engines of the 1830’s railway have all been removed although fragments remain in store at museum store. The Invicta locomotive is on public display at the Museum of Canterbury. Nothing remains of the halts at Tankerton, South Street, or Tyler Hill, and after the line was closed in 1953 the railway sleepers and metal tracks were removed, along with what little remained of the signalling equipment. In Canterbury many of the former station buildings at North Lane have now been demolished although the Station Master’s house, Weighbridge Cottage and a small block of stables have survived. The Goods Shed, Signal Box and Canterbury West Station (all of which are grade II listed) also remain. However, damage to the former railway line has occurred in several locations with modern development encroaching on the embankments and in some cases building over the line of railway. Remaining features have been identified in Appendices 1 and 2.

Negative features within the four conservation areas include: the poor quality of the boundaries, with examples of the 19th century fencing being gradually lost to rust and...
neglect; the overgrown nature of much of the trackway and the consequent lack of public access; and vandalism (such as the graffiti on the northern entrance to the Tyler Hill Tunnel).

5.2 Neutral areas.

The Canterbury and Whitstable Conservation Areas are unusual in that designation covers a very specific area of line, most of which is the former railway line between Canterbury and Whitstable. The long, thin nature of the conservation area therefore excludes other pieces of land that may have a neutral effect on the conservation areas.

5.3 Boundary changes.

No boundary changes are suggested.

5.4 The Tyler Hill Tunnel.

Most of the records of the Canterbury and Whitstable railway were lodged in the Royal Museum, Canterbury (The Beaney Institute) but were unfortunately lost during World War II. Some records still remain in the British Rail Historical Records Department and in local press reports. From such information, it was clear that between 1826 and 1829, when the tunnel was being constructed that the work progressed very slowly, reflecting the various difficulties the builders encountered. The ground conditions varied from London clay and loose white sand to solid limestone. Subsidence in 1826 created delays and the Company struggled to find the necessary finance to complete the work. Tunnelling started on either side of the hill and the two separate tunnels finally met in May 1827, only one inch offset; a considerable achievement at the time.

The tunnel was constructed as part of the first inclined plane out of Canterbury using the technology previously gained from building canal tunnels. It was 2,400 feet long, 12 feet wide and 12 feet high above the position of the rails, and was lined with four courses of brickwork to give a total thickness of 18 inches. There was no need to provide a ventilation shaft in 1830 as the carriages were pulled through the tunnel by ropes. After steam locomotives were introduced in 1836 the lack of ventilation became a problem, with frequent complaints being made by passengers. The brickwork suffered from damage caused by smoke and soot. The soot staining can still be seen inside the tunnel. The restricted size of the tunnel meant that the steam locomotives had to be fitted with special funnels to stop them hitting the tunnel roof.

During the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries the tunnel required a variety of repairs although as the railway reports between 1846 and 1925 cannot be found the exact nature of these is difficult to ascertain. Reports from the period 1925 to 1962 refer to brickwork repairs and a survey in 1963 confirmed the uneven nature of the tunnel sides. Cracks in the tunnel lining were discovered in the same year when the architects Farmer and Dark surveyed the whole tunnel and noted movement in the walls of the Cornwallis Building of Canterbury University that lay above. More serious subsidence took place in 1974 and the tunnel was again resurveyed and a detailed report prepared by Professor Bishop of Imperial College, London, and Harris and Sutherland, Consulting Engineers. To prevent further problems, sections of the tunnel were then filled in and the entrances bricked-up.

The tunnel is a listed building (grade II*) and the northern portal is considered to be a ‘building at risk’. The southern portal has been repaired and is in a good condition although
public access is restricted. Interpretation of the tunnel would be useful and improving the appearance and condition of the northern portal would be desirable.

5.5 Improvements to buildings or structures.

Much has already been lost including a small bridge over the Bogshole Brook (as part of the Thanet Way). Now that a list of the surviving structures and features has been prepared (Appendix 2) it would be possible to consider some repairs and restoration. Repairing wrought iron fencing, gates, and signs would be beneficial.

5.6 Improvements to the landscape.

Much of the former line in the Hackington and St. Stephen’s conservation areas in Canterbury is on a raised embankment, overgrown with trees and shrubs, and subject to vandalism and litter. Clearing the undergrowth and providing safe steps up the embankment, and creating a well-defined path, would encourage more visitors and help to prevent illegal activities.

The Hackington and Blean Conservation Area runs through an area of natural beauty and little improvement is required. Any improvements to wooded or copsed areas should be undertaken after taking advice from an ecology and wildlife expert as some of the areas may be important for biodiversity.

The C and WR and Whitstable Station Conservation Area in lies mainly within an urban area although the northern section of the line is similar to the Canterbury sections in that it is rather overgrown. Improvements to provide more and safer public access, and a general tidying-up of the trees and shrubbery, would be welcome.

5.7 Cycle network.

The Crab and Winkle Way is a protected route for cyclists and pedestrians between Canterbury and Whitstable which uses two sections of the former C and WR line, most importantly from the former winding engine site in Clowes Wood to the bottom of the incline towards Whitstable, and again in Whitstable itself, rejoining the railway line at South Street and continuing along “Invicta Way” as far as All Saints Close. This route forms part of the National Route One of the Sustrans cycle network. The network was established to provide cyclists with safe, attractive routes without having to use roads. Where the former railway coincides with the cycle way, the track has been surfaced with a two metre wide path. Further enhancement of the C and WR railway line as a cycle route with links east and west through the Blean would encourage visitors and be consistent with the objectives of Canterbury City Council’s policy for sustainable tourism.

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Appendix 1

Map showing location of surviving features: Whitstable
Map showing location of surviving features: Tyler Hill
Map showing location of surviving features: Canterbury
Appendix 2: List of remaining features from north to south (Whitstable to Canterbury)

(1) Whitstable Harbour area (not designated as a conservation area).

Close to Whitstable Harbour along Harbour Street are iron railings formed out of old railway tracks. Some of these date to the 19th century, whilst some are relatively modern having been installed by Canterbury City Council in the 1990’s. A pair of wrought iron gates and railings outside the former engine shed date from the South Eastern & Chatham Railway years (1899 – 1923). On the south side of the road is the site of the reservoir, built in the late 1830’s to provide water to sluice out the harbour after each high tide, is now the Gorrell Tank car park.

Figure 15 The SE&CR gates at Whitstable Harbour

(2) The C and WR and Whitstable Station Conservation Area.

This conservation area starts at the southern boundary of the Sidings and includes Whitstable Station, and terminates in South Street. For this whole stretch the line is visible and marked by a row of trees with a public footpath/cycleway along most of its length. The sites of; Tankerton Halt, the winding engine close to the Thanet Way at Church Street, and the former South Street Halt, are not discernible.

Next to All Saints Churchyard through which a possibly ancient footpath crosses, are two wrought iron kissing gates which take the footpath across the line of the C and WR. Further south, the reinforced concrete Art Deco-style bridge takes the 1930’s Thanet Way over the line of the C and WR. Just outside the designated conservation area, along South Street, is a pair of wrought iron railway gates, relocated from the original line that passed slightly to the west from here. The embankment, which brought the railway, has been almost levelled but a small “bump” remains across the fields marking the route before it enters Clowes Wood.

(3) The C and WR and Hackington and Blean.

Most of this section of line passes through Clowes Wood and then, further south, through fields to the west of Tyler Hill. Just outside the conservation area towards Whitstable is a cutting with a bridge, and slightly beyond this, towards the new Thanet Way, was the site of the Bogshole bridge, which was demolished a few years in connection with engineering works for the road.

Within the designated conservation area, the line of the track can be easily traced through Clowes Wood and much of it is tarmaced and forms part of the cycle network. Remains of a drainage channel can be seen to the east. Where the track bends slightly is the site of the former winding engine and pond. The original circular outline of the pond can still be seen but all of the buildings have been removed. Further south, the railway cutting has been filled
and a crossing gate and rail post can be seen close to Well Court, with a brick culvert below
the line. Closer to Tyler Hill, there are crossing gates close to the former site of the winding
engine, which now has a modern bungalow, The Halt, built on it, although only part of the
pond remains.

In the section of line from The Halt to where the conservation area ends, there are several
features; a “Stop Look and Listen” sign, drainage channels, rail post, a culvert, two well
heads, three wrought iron gates, a vent grill and drain. These are all identified on the map in
Appendix 1. The conservation area terminates at the northern portal of the Tyler Hill Tunnel.


This conservation area stretches from the southern portal of the Tyler Hill Tunnel, past the
Archbishops’ School and playing fields and through a 20th century residential area, stopping
just short of Beaconsfield Road. For much of this route the line was on a raised
embankment, now covered in trees, although the school playing fields have encroached
slightly on this in places. A few features of interest remain; the Tyler Hill Tunnel entrance,
somewhat overshadowed by trees, and rail posts and fencing.


This lies within Canterbury adjacent to the Canterbury (West Station) conservation area and
includes 19th century housing and a section of railway line, now heavily wooded, on a
embankment. Beyond this the line has been lost to modern development. Underneath the
embankment is a brick-built pedestrian tunnel, in fair condition.

(6) Canterbury (West Station) Conservation Area

This area lies partly within the Canterbury (West Station) conservation area and partly within
the Canterbury City conservation area. The former C and WR railway sidings have been
lost and the site redeveloped as the Station West housing development. The surviving
buildings include: a red brick, two storey range which in the late 19th century was used for
stores and as a carpenter’s workshop; the Station Master’s house (on North Lane); the
weighbridge; and a small block of stables. The Station Master’s house (number 37 North
Lane) dates to the early 19th century and is three storeys high, with tile-hung elevations and
sash windows. Weighbridge Cottage is two storeys, built of red brick with grey headers
under a hipped slate roof. Both of these buildings are listed grade II.

(7) Canterbury Museum Store and Heritage Museum.

Various artefacts from the railway, including tickets, the company seal and shares are stored
at the Museum of Canterbury. A flywheel from one of the winding engines and various
sections of machinery are housed at the museum store in Gas Street. Gradient posts and
signs have been salvaged and are in private collections (notably Mr I Maxted). The Invicta is
currently displayed at the Museum of Canterbury in Stour Street. The locomotive was
presented to Canterbury Council in 1906 and kept in the open in the Dane John Gardens
until 1977 when a preservation trust was formed to ensure its protection. Later that year the
locomotive was sent to the National Railway Museum in York for restoration, and since 1980
the engine has been on display in the Museum.
Appendix 3

Map of Canterbury and Whitstable Railway and Whitstable Railway Station Conservation Area
Map of Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: Hackington and Blean Conservation Area
Map of Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: St Stephen’s Conservation Area
Map of Canterbury and Whitstable Railway: Hackington Conservation Area