

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The top half of the image shows large, rectangular fields of golden-brown crops, likely corn, with distinct rows. A road or path runs through these fields. Below the fields is a cluster of buildings, including houses and a larger white structure, surrounded by green trees and grass. The bottom half of the image shows more fields, some of which are brown, suggesting they have been harvested or are fallow. The overall scene is a mix of agricultural land and a small community.

Hilltop Community Association (Canterbury)

Community Design Statement

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AN INTRODUCTION TO VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS

Many people feel that they have no say over what takes place in their community; but Village Design Statements (VDS's) offer a constructive solution to that dilemma.

Local communities have a unique appreciation and understanding of their own situation and needs. A VDS builds on this knowledge. It describes the qualities that residents value in their village and its surroundings. Around 200 English communities have completed Design Statements to date.

A Village Design Statement sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in a village, based on its character. It is an advisory document produced by the village community, not by the planning authority. It will not stop change from happening, but it can help effect how any new building fits into the village. VDS's are intended to influence the operation of the statutory planning system, so that new development is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the immediate environment.

What does a VDS cover?

It describes the distinctive character of a village and its surrounding countryside;

It shows how character can be identified at three levels:

1. The landscape setting of the village.
2. The shape of the settlement.
3. The nature of the buildings themselves;

A VDS sets down design principles based on the distinctive local character;

Production of a Statement fosters working in partnership with the local authority, engenders understanding of current planning policies, and offers the chance to influence future policies.

Design Statements have been and are being completed by villages and communities such as ours in all parts of England. They are of value to residents, planners, designers and developers. There should be broad involvement of local interest so that the finished design statement is a representative document, and one that presents ideas for stimulating and sustaining community involvement in planning issues. It is important that the parish council, plus planning authority councillors and officers are drawn into the VDS process. Preparing a Design Statement doesn't demand design or planning knowledge – the only requirement is an interest in the future well-being of your community. But it will need time, energy, imagination and determination.

An effective Village Design Statement:

- is developed, researched, written and edited by local people;

- reflects the representative views of a community ;
- involves a wide cross-section of residents in its production;
- describes the visual character of the village;
- demonstrates how local character and distinctiveness can be protected and enhanced in new development;
- is compatible with the statutory planning system and its local application;
- should be adopted as supplementary planning guidance (and thereby influence developers and decisions on individual applications);
- is relevant to all forms and scale of development, and;
- is about managing change in the community, not preventing it.

A Village Design Statement is unlike any other planning document. It gives planning advice directly applicable to the statutory planning system and is entirely community based.





ABOUT THE PLANNING SYSTEM

The laws governing planning are very complex and Planning Permission is required before most forms of development can legally be undertaken.

Development is defined in The Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 as: the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land". Planning Laws are made by Central Government but administered by Local Authorities, who are obliged to work within these laws. They have no ability to vary the rules to suit either themselves or a particular applicant.

The old system of local plans, structure plans and regional planning guidance has been replaced by a new planning system under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the accompanying regulations. The new system consists of a Local Development Framework prepared by the Local Planning Authority and a Regional Spatial Strategy prepared by the Regional Planning Body. The Local Development Framework is the non-statutory term for the portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDDs) which will comprise the spatial planning strategy for District. There are two types of Local Development Documents - Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Village Design Statements (VDS) fit into the system as an adjunct to the Local Plan, which is prepared by the District (in our case City Council). The VDS is meant to clarify the plan as it applies to a particular village or community and will be adopted for development control purposes as a Supplementary Planning Document. It cannot change the Local Plan but it can make it clearer what is meant, within that village, by a particular clause in the plan.

Town and Parish Councils are 'Local Councils' and hence are not Planning Authorities, though many of the larger ones would like to be. They are not even Statutory decision makers for planning applications, they merely have the right to be consulted on their opinion and have no power either to grant or refuse consent. Their opinions are expected to be based on what are called material considerations, i.e. they must refer to planning matters and not to personal matters relating to the applicant. If someone asks for consent for a large building to house a new business, the fact that the person concerned has a bad reputation as an employer is irrelevant but the fact that the building is too large; will generate heavy traffic, or generally does not fit in with the Local Plan are material considerations.

Local Councils receive a copy of the plans for proposed development within a few days of the application being made and can make them available for inspection by villagers.

Thus, with an approved Design Statement there is stronger protection for our most valued landscapes in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty through improved funding and management; and better understanding by all decision-makers of the distinctiveness and diversity of the settlement in the wider countryside context.

Local village design statements will ensure that development is sited and designed to conserve and enhance valued landscape and heritage features of the countryside. Increased measures can then be taken to promote tranquillity.

THE DESIGN STATEMENT FOR HILLTOP

Why does Hilltop need a design statement?

Almost all communities in the South of England are under pressure to allow more development. When properly enforced, the guidelines in this statement will help balance these pressures against the desire of the residents of our community not to stop, but to help manage future building and development in a manner that helps preserve the character of our community in which we are justifiably proud.

What is the Hilltop Community Design Statement?

The Hilltop Design Statement has been produced to illustrate the distinctive character of the area, as seen by residents, and to provide a set of guidelines that will help to preserve this character for future generations.

This document was adopted by Canterbury City Council on 16th - February - 2006. As Supplementary Planning Guidance, the statement must be used by all parties in the planning process as an active planning document when making or reviewing planning applications. The document should also be referred to when changes are proposed that may not require planning permission, but nevertheless will affect the appearance of the community.

There is other Supplementary Planning Guidance used when making planning decisions that affect Hilltop. In drawing up this statement, we have often referred to such guidance in our work, but our aim here is to give the local view by describing how our community seems to those that live and work here.

Community Design Statement Aims and Objectives

The objective of the Design Team given all this, has been to produce a comprehensive, high quality Community Design Statement (CDS) that reflects the consensus of opinion of local residents, and that it will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Guidance by Canterbury City Council.

The purpose of the CDS is therefore to influence the planning process so that any further development and building within the community and the surrounding countryside will be managed in a way that protects and enhances the qualities that give our community its special



and unique character, by taking into account local knowledge views and ideas. This document identifies those qualities that are valued by residents so that planners, developers, landowners, architects, builders and local home owners contemplating alterations, can make informed decisions on their designs.

Who is the design statement for?

The statement has been written with two groups in mind:

- those who propose any changes that may affect the appearance of the community area or the quality of the environment, such as land and property owners, developers, public utilities, commercial organisations, government bodies and agencies.

“Hilltop should not become significantly larger so that it loses its character. We need to encourage people to build on and use the facilities we already have”

Public Opinion Comment

- those who assess and decide on proposed changes, for example, members of the Thanington Without, Lower Hardres and Chartham Parish Councils, who are consulted on all planning applications affecting our community which straddles all three parishes; Canterbury City Council, as the local planning authority, whose officers and Development Control Committee decide on applications; and the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State, who have the final say about the outcome of planning appeals.

How to use the design statement

Those who are proposing to make any changes that will affect either the appearance or the quality of the environment within the community should review them with this document in mind.

Such changes may include new development (including roads, access, lighting, parking and associated works), changes to a building, changes to site boundaries, changes to site lines, loss or planting of trees and hedgerows, features, and structures or change of use, particularly as ours is predominantly a rural area.

Ask the question *“Will such a change go against any of the guidelines?”* If in doubt, read the description and look at the photos, drawings and maps that appear in the document, read the guidelines to see what is meant or implied, and why it is there.



If the proposed change conflicts with any of these guidelines (or there is a chance of a possible conflict), seek advice from the local planning authority or try to redesign the change so that it fits the guidelines. By doing so, you can avoid having to withdraw the application or having it rejected. You will also help keep Hilltop Community a special place in which to live and work.

How was the design statement compiled?

The statement was drawn up during 2004 – 2005 by a group of volunteers (“the team”), led by Sarah Guest, using feedback provided in many different forms, by local residents. An initial draft was then submitted for vetting by the City Council prior to circulation to all residents along with a short questionnaire to be completed. Following this a revised version was then compiled incorporating those amendments requested by the Canterbury City Council Planning Department and also incorporating the findings resulting from the final consultation questionnaires completed by the residents. The final draft document was then lodged with Canterbury City Council for formal acceptance and adoption.

Public Consultation

The statutory consultation for planning applications and reviews of the Development Plan Documents is often seen by communities across the country as being both too late and ineffective. Local people have therefore felt that their carefully considered and argued views, frequently resulting from public meetings, have been ignored. They would like to feel that their ideas are respected and are seen to be taken into account in any planning decisions made by the local planning authority.

In order to comply with all of the above conditions the team both drew on local input in preparing the draft and then embarked on a systematic consultation of all residents.

Section 11 of this document gives full details of this extensive consultation process

LANDSCAPE

Hilltop is located South of Canterbury, approx 1.5 km from the A28 Canterbury – Ashford road and Wincheap

The main settlement is situated between the two minor roads of **Iffin Lane** which forms part of the Roman Road known as Stone Street extending from Canterbury to Hythe, **and New House Lane** which joins the Downs Road and links to Chartham/Petham.

It also encompasses residences on Upper Hollow Lane, Merton Lane; New House Close and includes those at Upper Horton Farm, New House Farm; Iffin Farm and Stuppington Court Farm



Its natural northern boundary is the A2 Canterbury by-pass, while the southern boundary could be taken as the Bridle Path that links Iffin Lane westwards to New House Lane and onwards to the Nature Reserve at Larkey Valley Woods, approx 1 km away.

The deeply incised Hollow Lane from Wincheap passes under the A2 By-Pass and the land rises from the flood plain of the River Stour to a height of 52 metres at the junction of Merton Lane and Iffin Lane and continues to rise steadily southwards to reach 91 metres at the bridle path that follows the outline of Hand Wood

Apart from the main body of residences lying between New House Lane and Iffin Lane, the cul-de-sac of New House Close contains a major concentration and also some dwellings are to be found lying back from these on cross pathways that link the two minor roads

There are extensive views in all directions; North East towards Canterbury urban area and the Cathedral; Westwards over the Stour Valley to Bigbury and Chartham Hatch; Southwards to the Petham Valley and Eastwards right over to the East Coast of Kent and Pegwell Bay/ Richborough area.

In the main the residences of New House Lane face north-westward giving them unrestricted views across the Stour Valley. Research has found out that the initial reason there is no building on the city side of New House Lane is due to a KCC order of 1937 under the then 1935 Restriction of Ribbon development Act.

The Hilltop area is surrounded by agricultural land on all sides which is either used for Arable and/or Market Gardening crops or for the grazing of livestock. Hedgerows or wooded areas containing native vegetation types line New House Lane/Iffin Lane/Merton Lane and the Bridle Path. In some areas of Hand and Iffin Woods conifers have been planted, possibly to conceal bomb damaged areas.

There are also extensive areas of hard and soft fruit orchards embedded within Hilltop in particular on the western edges and south of New House Close.

The area is well served by a network of Public Footpaths that link to Larkey Valley Woods, Wincheap via Hollow Lane and Stuppington Lane and also to Hand and Iffin Woods.

The underlying rock/soil tends to be that of Chalk but in places the surface is covered by thin deposits of brickearth and clayey/loam material.

A landscape character assessment of Hilltop was carried out as part of the 'Canterbury Landscape Appraisal' (November 1999) prepared by the City Council and adopted as supplementary planning guidance.



LANDSCAPE (Cont'd..)

Guidelines for future development

- Existing unrestricted views across the surrounding rolling countryside should be preserved and protected in all directions, including in particular the views over the city from New House Lane and over open country from Stuppington and Iffin Lane.
- We would expect to be able to maintain the passage of linked footpaths that cross the area, especially those that link to the Nature Reserve at Larkey Valley Woods.
- Infill development or lateral extensions to existing buildings should not interfere with important views out of the village.
This is because this was a major concern raised by residents during discussions since most felt that 'Hilltop was about views'
- Any businesses established in Hilltop should be 'good neighbours' – not adversely affecting the community with unreasonable working hours, pollution of any kind, or generating significant extra traffic volumes.
Because the roads infrastructure cannot deal with a large increase in traffic
- The visual relationship between Hilltop and the surrounding countryside on its boundaries should be preserved such that its identity as a self-contained community is kept.
Because this is an essential feature in preserving Hilltop's character as a separate community rather than a suburb of Canterbury.
- New development applications should include adequate parking areas in accordance with current adopted standards
- The rural character of the lane network should be preserved. Within the reasonable requirements of road and community safety, creeping urbanisation through road signs, street lighting, pavements, use of standard town-style street furniture etc. should be discouraged.
- The open spaces within the community and views into and out of Hilltop (see map, page 14) are essential parts of the character. Any new developments (including infill or extensions) should conserve and, where possible, enhance these elements
- The Community Hall is the only public building in the Village. As such it is very important to community life, providing a venue for a variety of meetings, social gatherings and administrative activities. Any future development needs to respect this role by not blocking off access, and wherever possible helping to encourage its continued use.
- Entrances to the village should be visually welcoming and avoid a stereotypical suburban look. As this defines our community to the walker and motorist.

- Agricultural land that falls out of productive use should be considered for nature conservation or at least be kept free of ragwort and other invasive weed species
- In accordance with PPG2—We would reinforce the City Council's desire that there be no adverse visual intrusion on the natural landscape by any new buildings or developments including and in particular telecommunications masts, wind turbines and the like unless adequately screened and sensitively sited .



HISTORY

The area that we now know as Hilltop was in the long term past just an agricultural area belonging to a handful of farms, some of which go back to mediaeval times. By the late eighteenth century many of them passed into the hands of large scale Canterbury landowners, notably the Gipps estate based on Howletts, who were Lords of the Manor of Thanington and charged



feudal rents until the 1930s. Such landowners usually rented the farms out to locals who grew wheat, barley and oats. Then, as the railways came, they began to switch to soft fruit and even some hops. This led to the construction of a series of farm cottages. By the 1950s the area was largely one of orchards.

Residential development only really started after the First World War when, as part of a nation-wide sell off of farm land, the area between New House Lane and Iffin Lane was sold in ten acre plots for smallholdings. Some of those who bought the plots used the produce to support their greengrocer shops in Canterbury. This was not an easy option as there were no

services and water had to be brought up by dray for both market gardens and houses. The first houses were four ex army huts which were sawn in half and brought by cart from Shornecliffe Barracks.

Because making a living from the plots was so difficult, bits were sold off for housing, beginning in the late 1920s. The fact that some of the first occupants were also builders helped in this. Iffin lane may have developed first and there were seven houses there by 1927, while what was then called New House Road is only credited with that many a couple of years later. Development in New House Road and what was called the Lane (now the Close) continued apace in the next decade and overtook Iffin Lane. By 1940 there were 33 houses in the Road. This was to double by 1970 when New House Close had also been fully developed (and the Road renamed New House Lane at GPO request) and most main services were, at last, provided. By then there were about 130 houses in the area. At the same time much of the land in between the two sets of houses was brought together into a new and larger fruit farm.

Development has been much slower since 1970 so that by 2005 there were only about 30 more houses, mainly coming from infilling. Virtually all of them were on one side of the road. This was because the other side belonged to large farms and, in the case of the western side of New House Lane; there was a local authority bar on development under the 1935 Ribbon Development Act. The transformation of Stupington Court Farm at the end of the 1980s was a major element of this latest phase of new building. None of this, however, was able to save the local shop which closed in the early 1970s.

Despite this the area has developed a very active communal life. This is because the residents are united by three things: their relative isolation on the rural fringe of Canterbury with a consequent shortfall in services but an equal gain in views over open country; by being mostly in the South Ward of TWGPC; and by the shared use of St Faith's Hall by Hilltop Community Association (Canterbury) as a centre of social activity and community enterprise.

A short history of Hilltop Community Association



The first record found of the local community's wish to have a village hall was as early as 1936.

A Harvest Supper was held following on from a Harvest Festival held the previous Sunday

by the Methodists. A collection was held which raised the princely sum of £1 14s 9d in old money, which today equates to just under £1.80. Thus, the hall building fund was started.



Commitment and motivation was high, and fund raising continued even through the difficult war years. Indeed fund raising has never stopped, and still carries on today.

In those early years, there being no hall, events were held in peoples houses and back gardens. A small group of residents was formed and the wheels set in motion to go about the task of acquiring some land and erecting a hall.

Thanington Parochial Church Council (PCC) originally bought the land for £100 in 1946.

Eventually sufficient funds were raised by the residents and the hall, pretty much as can be seen today was finally built during 1951. The building was a huge voluntary local effort using labour and materials given by the community.

The hall has since those early times has been, managed, maintained and fully funded with exception of utility bills by bands of volunteers from Hilltop. Building on early successes of Hilltop Social Club, as it was then known, Hilltop Community Association (HCA) was formed in 2000, and were proud to be granted Charity status in 2002 their objectives being to continue offering a Community Association and services for all local residents, both for the current and future generations.

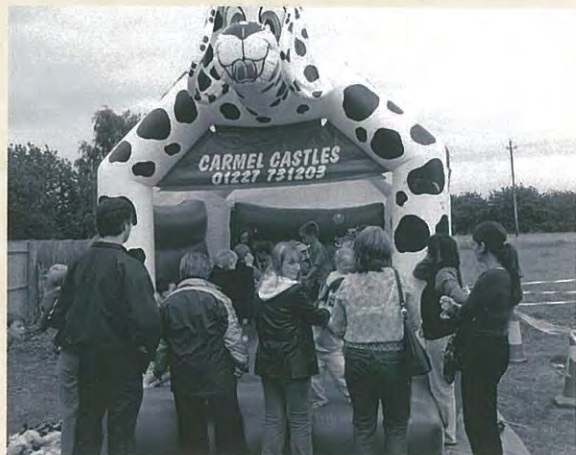
In this new millennia HCA would like to work in partnership with the PCC with the aim to continue with those objectives and thus the hall will be retained and owned for the use of the community as a whole. Just the same as all those years ago, when the seeds were sown at a Harvest Supper.

The HCA with the PCC are now pursuing various options on how best to preserve the hall with all its benefits to the local inhabitants.

The Community Design Statement and it's place in history

The Community Design Statement (CDS) is a natural community project to help protect the area and environment we live in and is of benefit to the whole community. The community commitment to the CDS and the Village Hall project is a reflection of the dedication and the unique nature of the members of Hilltop Community Association working for the community.

In conclusion, ours is an unusual community. It is neither a proper village nor even a true hamlet. Indeed it does not have a precise geographic name. Nonetheless it is a real social unit. And it cares very strongly about its environment. It is a small and relatively new community situated mainly in the V between what



is now Iffin Lane and New House Lane and rising up the southern valley wall of the Great Stour valley. In fact it is made up of three clusters of houses: the Stuppington Court Farm/Upper Hollow Lane grouping, the ribbon development on the west side of Iffin Lane and, most significantly, the New House Lane/Close complex. The last is in the South Ward of Thanington Without Civil Parish, while the other parts are overlap into Chartham and Lower Hardres.

ENVIRONMENT

Natural History

There are two areas of ancient semi-natural woodland adjacent to the Hilltop community:- Larkey Valley Wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest noted for its orchids, other woodland plants and a healthy population of dormice. It is owned and managed by Canterbury City Council for nature conservation and public access. A programme of coppicing is carried out each winter.

Iffin and Hand Woods are managed for pheasant shooting and remain in private ownership with no public access. They contain a Bronze Age tumulus and the remains of a mediaeval manor with chapel.

These together with the network of hedges, the orchards and gardens give a network of wildlife corridors and a substantial amount of "woodland edge" habitat. Resident birds include blue, great and long-tailed tits, all three woodpeckers, nuthatch (Iffin Wood), crows and jays, chaffinches, greenfinches, bullfinches, goldfinches, song and mistle thrushes, blackbirds, robins and wrens.

Migrants include chiffchaff, turtle dove, black-cap, nightingale, swallow. Fieldfares are common in winter.

These birds attract the attention of sparrow hawks and kestrels which are also known to breed in the area. The intensively farmed fields hold less wildlife but do attract lapwing and golden plover in winter and black-headed gulls at ploughing.

Mammals are represented by rabbits, hares, foxes, badgers, wood mice, yellow-necked mice, bank and field voles, common and pygmy



shrews, stoats, grey squirrels and bat species.

There are no natural ponds but those in gardens support populations of common frogs. Grass snakes are also known to be present.



Butterfly numbers are decreasing in line with national trends but include peacock, brimstone, speckled wood, small tortoiseshell, holly and common blues, small copper. Large, small and green-veined whites can all be found.



Surrounding Hilltop and in pockets through the community the land is used for arable and fruit farming.

Historically the land had orchards growing employing many local people, and indeed some of the oldest cherry orchards in Kent still survive. However much of these have now sadly been grubbed out and the land is now used for soft fruit cultivation, strawberries, blackcurrants etc. Other farm land

which with the passing of time has been sold in off in plots is now seemingly successfully supporting an ever growing equestrian community.



Guidelines for future development

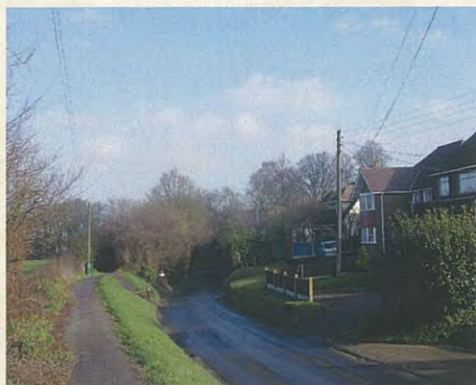
- We would wish to encourage traditional countryside and rural leisure and/or equine related pursuits wherever possible.
- We would hope to be able to maintain and preferably extend the network of hedgerows and agricultural boundaries that is a feature of the Hilltop natural environment and landscape.
- Future preservation of the areas of native woodlands that provide a variety of natural habitats for an array of birds and mammals should be encouraged.
- The presence of farm animals and pastureland close to the centre of the community is valued by residents, and should be maintained in the future.
- Wherever possible, concrete, brickwork walling or timber fencing over 1.5m height to property boundaries should be avoided. The preference being hedgerow planting.

SETTLEMENT

The area known as “Hilltop” falls within part of a Canterbury City Council designated ‘Area of High Landscape Value’ (AHLV). The views from both New House Lane and parts of Iffin Lane, across predominantly open farmland to the Cathedral are spectacular and unique, particularly at night, when the cathedral is floodlit.

Whilst being only about a mile and a half from the centre of the city, the area is surrounded by orchards, arable farmland and rolling countryside. As you drive out of the city, this area is a link between the outskirts of the city and the beginning of rich Kentish countryside, with views of oasthouses in the distance.

There are just over 160 houses in the Hilltop Community. These sometimes lie back from the road and with many of them enjoying extensive views over the surrounding countryside in a number of directions. There are a mixture of bungalows and houses, of varying sizes and ages, surrounded by gardens. New House Lane also has three small cul-de-sacs. The great variety of styles and a mixture of old and new houses helps in giving the area its unusual character and charm.



The small Hilltop Community Association Hall in New House Lane is the centre of this community, always providing a warm



and friendly meeting place. As well as twice monthly church services, there are many and varied events including for example, Friday evening Open House socials, coffee mornings, a weekly Family Group for children of all ages, holiday play sessions and many other social gatherings are regularly held. Many of the people living in the area attend these gatherings regularly, making the community a closely knit place.

There is the added benefit of a mobile library which visits New House Lane fortnightly and a post bus which collects residents to take



them to town and back once a day – reinforcing the feeling and the reality that this is truly a rural area nestling in the outskirts of the lovely city of Canterbury.

Guidelines for future development

- Development in the green ring surrounding the community that would adversely impact views and settings should be avoided. The natural features of the countryside around Hilltop should be protected, in particular old woodland and ancient hedgerows.
- Older buildings should be maintained using original or sympathetic materials and details. Existing features such as original window and door apertures should be retained whenever possible.
- New planting should be of indigenous species, and householders in particular should be encouraged to make their gardens wildlife friendly by providing native habitats. Leafy green lanes are a characteristic of Hilltop and should be conserved.



Settlement Guidelines for future Development (Cont'd...)

- Landscaping should wherever possible, blend in with the natural, country setting.
- It is the opinion of residents that any additional traffic through the community will have a detrimental effect on its character. Every effort should be made to minimise this effect.
- Light pollution at night should be minimised, without compromising safety. Lights should avoid glare and be directed downward.
- Street lighting using low pressure lamps, following The Institution of Lighting Engineers guidelines, is preferred. Low intensity, low energy time or sensor-controlled lighting should be encouraged, both for street lighting and household security lights.
- It is felt that efforts should be made in new building, extensions and refurbishments to echo some of the features of the existing built environment wherever this is appropriate. i.e. New properties and/or extensions should wherever possible and practicable, be in sympathy in both size and use of materials with neighbouring properties.



Public Consultation

Following input received from residents of the community, there was particularly strong feeling regarding not knowing what was happening.

The following is a possible solution which this Community Design Statement wishes to be incorporated into the planning process in respect of our unique community.

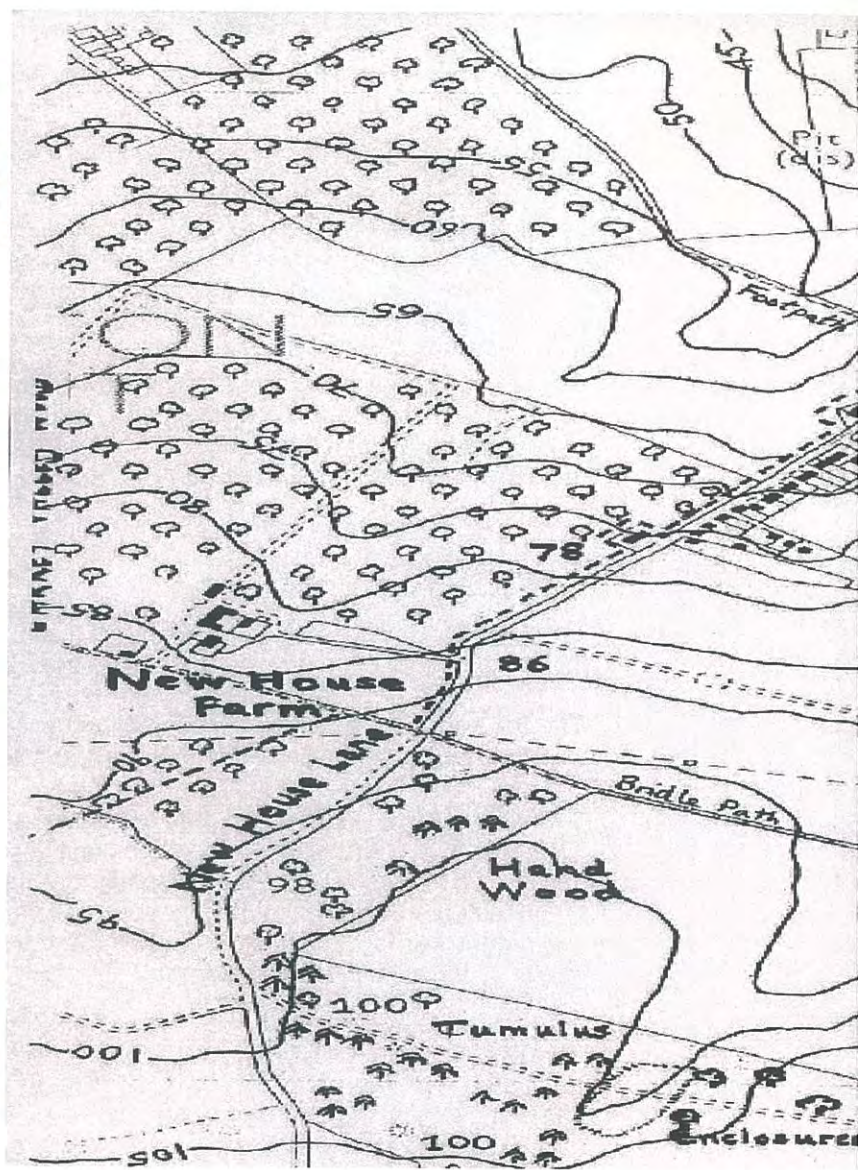
The statutory consultation for planning applications and reviews of the Development Plan Documents is often seen by any Community country-wide as being both too late and ineffective. Local people have therefore felt that their carefully considered and argued views, frequently resulting from public meetings, have been ignored. They would like to feel that their ideas are respected and are seen to be taken into account in any planning decisions made by the local planning authority.

“Hilltop Residents need to be kept informed about what is happening in our community”

Public Opinion Comment

It would be desirable that those bringing forward proposals should before making a planning application, hold preliminary discussions with the community. This would allow local knowledge and ideas to be considered at an early stage and would reduce the risk of local hostility leading to delays in the planning process. Participation of the community would also help to increase both awareness and importance of Development Plan Documents as the basis for development decisions and understanding of the relative roles of the Planning Authority, developers, the Parish Council, and the local community as a whole.

HILL



TOP



BUILDINGS

Introduction

Hilltop community has a large assortment of dwellings, which date from the end of the First World War through to the present day. They range from barn conversions, detached and semi detached houses and small terraced cottages. Typically the majority of properties enjoy an open aspect with uninterrupted views across the surrounding countryside.



The grouping of houses in the community are made up of both older and modern dwellings in broadly linear style developments. It comprises Iffin and New House Lanes , a cul-de-sac in New House Close mainly built in the 1960's, a terrace of older cottages in Merton Lane, and a collection of restored and new properties in Stuppington Court, developed in the late 1980's. There are also a small number of properties occupying individual plots on the south-east side of the top end of Hollow Lane.

There is a great diversity of building materials used in the community, brick of various colours, render and timber cladding being examples to be seen. As with any modern community the extension of existing properties has taken place over the years and these have generally been carried out sympathetically and in keeping with the existing buildings.

Although not formally classified as a village, the residents of the area still consider 'Hilltop' to be one. Up until the late 1970's a "village" shop operated in New House Lane serving the needs of all local people and St. Faith's Hall also in New House Lane has served the community for over 50 years as a place to meet, worship and enjoy the company of fellow individuals in the area, through social events and organisations and clubs etc. Further, the community has the facility of a privately run nursery school for children of pre-school age.

As suggested earlier, the first residents of Iffin Lane and New House Lane in the 1920's would have seen very few houses in the area but as with all modern environments the density of housing has increased due to the construction of infill developments. It has to be said, how-



ever, that these developments on the whole have been successful in retaining the character and crucially have

retained the space between developments so important to this rural community.

Development

Hilltop is a genuine community and unique in the Canterbury area. Set amongst working farms and smallholdings with wonderful landscapes and a rich mixture of buildings, it has the rare luxury of being somewhere its residents enjoy living. The community is rightly proud of the area and are involved heavily in events and organisations actively seeking to support both young and old that live there. It is exactly these qualities, sadly lacking in some societies that must be protected.



Policy D1 of the Adopted Local Plan (1998) and policies BE1 and BE2 of the Revised Deposit Local Plan (2003) set out a number of criteria for the design of new development. These include the requirement that the development is of a high standard of design which is sympathetic to the appearance and character of the surrounding area and appropriate in such matters as layout and siting and avoids unduly disturbing or interfering with adjoining users.

Thanington is not identified in Policies R20, R21 or R22 of the Adopted Local Plan or in policies BE1 and BE2 of the revised Deposit Draft Local plan as an area for further residential development.



Shown here is a prime example of whilst new development has taken place, this fits in well with the surrounding dwellings, and shows very importantly that little or no change has been made to the character of the buildings within the community in over 70 years.



The first picture was taken sometime in the early 1930's from a viewpoint approximately opposite from where the current community hall is sited. Note that there is no hard surfaced roadway, just what appears to be an earth type, or cinder track.

The second picture taken from approximately the same position is the view as can be seen today. The older houses are still there, and the roadway (New House Lane) has been constructed. However, the same community 'rural' feel is still very much in evidence.

Guidelines for future development

- Future development must always reflect the rural setting within which it must blend.
- Older buildings should be maintained using original or sympathetic materials and details. Existing features such as original window and door apertures should be retained whenever possible.
- There is a particular problem with the existing Foul Drainage which serves the 'Hilltop' area. It's diameter and condition is such that it continually blocks and overflows. Until such time that this has been rectified and renewed no further new development in the area should be allowed.
- It is felt that efforts should be made in new building, extensions and refurbishments to echo some of the original features of the property where appropriate to enhance the harmony of the village. However, this is not to say that the community would be opposed to any contemporary development of high quality and innovative design.
- Estates of standard housing design are not appropriate in the Hilltop Community. Linear development further extending the settlement into the countryside, regular house layout and regimented design should be avoided. The existing variety of house sizes, shapes and rooflines should be maintained. New developments should match the variation in plot shapes. Linked and partially linked buildings would reflect local examples.
- Encouragement should be made wherever possible for the re-use or replacement of existing buildings where feasible.

HIGHWAYS

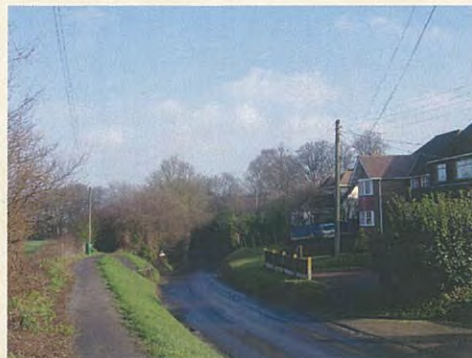
Road access to the community is by way of Hollow Lane, Merton Lane, Iffin Lane and New House Lane. These are all designated minor roads and are increasingly being used for through traffic as an alternative to using the main A28.

New House Lane and a large part of Iffin Lane are of single vehicle width, there is no space for parking vehicles on these lanes and there are very limited areas for turning round a vehicle without making use of private land.

The increasing use of the lanes highlights the difficulty for vehicles to pass without venturing onto adjacent private properties.

A speed limit of 30 mph exists throughout a large part of the community.

There are no cycle ways in Hilltop and the condition of the road surface makes it a particularly hazardous pursuit.



Guidelines for future development

- Whilst it should be understood that traditionally highways issues are principally the responsibility of the Kent County Council Highways Authority, the community would strongly recommend that any future planning should proceed only after consultation with the residents of the community, and with the support of the relevant parish councils.
- The existing road system and footpaths are adequate, but increasing traffic flows in the future should be regularly monitored to ensure that they do not detract from the need to provide a safe environment for the local community.
- Any major improvements to the road system could have an adverse effect on
 - It is the aim to make the speed 30mph throughout the community, because the rural nature of the lanes and safety for pedestrians and equestrian use necessitates this. This is a community for the residents and as such motorists should be aware of this when driving through Hilltop. The community also believes that this should extend beyond the immediate area covered by this design statement to include all those parts of New House Lane, Merton Lane, Hollow Lane and Iffin Lane which are currently delimited.
 - If there is to be resurfacing work undertaken by KCC, consideration should be given to cyclists.
 - Leafy green lanes are a characteristic of Hilltop and should be conserved. These include Green Lanes and Byways, which encourage access to all modes of transport, including 'off-road' type vehicles. These ancient rights of way are there for all to enjoy
 - Further. Any developers should be encouraged to enter into a Section 106 type agreement to assist in traffic and pedestrian management.



the character of the local community and is not desired. Roads should not be widened by 'creeping' as a result of resurfacing or repair work. It is the wish of the community that any road development is in full consultation with the residents of Hilltop

FOOTPATHS, GRASS VERGES AND STREET LIGHTING

Apart from New House Close, the only footpath with an accompanying grass verge is on one side of New House Lane between St. Faith's Hall and the junction of Hollow Lane and New House Lane. Iffin Lane is bordered by the walls and grass banks of private properties on one side and agricultural hedgerows on the other side.

Street lighting is restricted to a single light in Iffin lane, two lights in New House lane, one light at the Hollow Lane/ New House Lane junction and two lights at Stuppington Court Farm.



STREET FURNITURE

A large proportion of electricity and telephone services are fed overhead by means of shared poles. Whilst in Iffin Lane these are seen on the roadside, in New House Lane they are located on private land.

A telephone kiosk, a post box and a grit container are located at the junction of Hollow Lane and New House Lane. A road direction sign here identifies routes to Canterbury, Stone Street and Chartham.

A metal bench supplied by the Parish Council sits at the roadside opposite St. Faith's hall. There are several plastic waste bins in New House lane for the disposal of small waste, and there is one dog waste bin. All of these bins have been supplied by the Parish Council and are emptied by the City Council. A second grit container is found along New House Lane.



other fast growing conifers as a hedging plant should be discouraged.

Guidelines for future development

- Any provision of new telephone and electricity services should use underground cabling rather than overhead supplies.
- Any additional street lighting should not detract from the existing rural environment, should be consistent with the design of existing lighting and use white rather than yellow sodium lights.
- The tarmac surfaces of footpaths should be retained.
- Any new or replacement signage or furniture should be designed to limit any visual clash with the existing environment and especially to avoid any urbanising affect.
- Care should be taken to maintain existing hedgerows and large trees, particularly those of landscape value and to include new hedges and trees of similar indigenous species in any new development. The use of Cupressus, leylandii or other fast growing conifers as a hedging plant should be discouraged.
- Careful consideration should be made before new road signs and other items of street furniture are erected so as not to promote a mish-mash and 'jungle' type of poles, signs and the like; a good example being the Wincheap footpath signs recently designed, supplied and erected by the Thanington Without Parish Council.
- Residents would also welcome at the earliest possible juncture the resurfacing of the A2 utilising new surfacing materials technology with a view to a significant reduction in noise levels. Whilst this carriageway strictly is not in 'Hilltop', noise is still nevertheless still all too audible by the residents of 'Hilltop'
- Easy, safe access by foot and bicycle should be incorporated in plans for new developments, with the objective of integrating such developments into the existing community. Hard surfacing should be of an appropriate type to blend into the streetscape.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Compiling the Hilltop Community Design Statement

- **2003:** Following one of Thanington Without Parish Councillors having been a delegate at a conference on Village Design Statements, the importance and benefits of the Design Statements were brought to the attention of the Executive Committee of Hilltop Community Association.
- From meetings and discussions and following further investigation it was decided to ask the community for their views as to whether the issuing of a Statement for our community would be worthwhile. The response from residents of the community was a resounding 'Yes'
- The matter was discussed at various Hilltop Community Association main and Executive committee meetings, and the process commenced.
- **March 2004:** Initially we made contact with Canterbury City Council (CCC) principal conservation officer and invited him to come and speak about Village/Community Design Statements (VDS/CDS) at the Hilltop Community Association Annual General Meeting. This was extremely well attended and following questions from the floor and a show of hands it was agreed that we would get the village design statement off the ground.
- **May 2004:** The decision was made to 'kick start' the process with a 'Family Friendly' workshop. Each household in the community was then invited by means of a flyer posted through their door to attend a short morning workshop at the community hall.
- **June 2004:** The workshops main aim was to invite an early involvement of all the community in the Design Statement process. Taking the excellent Countryside Agency documentation on Village Design Statements as a guide, we then saw many people from the community eagerly wishing to take part in the activities detailed in the document. From these workshops, we were able to establish early examples of likes, dislikes and general thoughts for Hilltop.
- **July 2004:** We then held an exhibition to show the community the key areas we would be focusing on in the CDS.
- **September 2004:** Following on from the exhibitions and earlier showings of interest to participate, a core VDS team was assembled. An E-mail grouping system was established so that all involved may have immediate input and notification of where we stood in the process at any time. A dedicated E-mail address was set up on Hilltop Community Associations Website for enquiries from residents, and a page was made available on the website showing progress to date and a copy of our Presentation which had been adapted from one kindly given to us by Canterbury City Council.
- Each member of the team would in general take responsibility for one of the areas of the draft document. After preparation it was circulated around the team via email for comment.
- Monthly meetings were held where the draft documents were continually amended as necessary, collated and then finalised in preparation for submission to Canterbury City Council and all members of the community.
- Running concurrently with the above process is the community newsletter. This is published every 3 months and always has a feature on the Design statement progress. Within each edition contact details are published for the community for continued feedback and an invitation to join the team.



The Design Team

Sarah Guest : Chair

Sarah Guest has been a resident of the community for five years. She works as a Registered Nurse. She is also a member of the executive committee of Hilltop Community Association

The Team, and their General Responsibilities:

Richard Armishaw : Maps, Photography and Walks

Richard Armishaw is a retired Teacher and School Bursar. He has lived in the community for 35 years and is a member of the Executive Committee of Hilltop Community Association.

Clive Church : History

Clive Church is a retired academic and former Chairman of the Parish Council. He has been carrying out research on the history of both the Civil Parish Council and the Hilltop area.

Geoff Fell : Highways and Footpaths

Geoff Fell is a retired telecommunications engineer. He has subsequently been active as a Citizens Advice Bureau advisor and as a teacher of English to foreign business executives.

Maureen Gould: Settlement

Maureen Gould is a resident in New House Lane. She has recently retired from being an Administrator. She is a part-time Counsellor for The City Church Canterbury.

Alan Jeanes : Landscape

Alan Jeanes has resided in the community for 16 years and has taught Geography at the local Simon Langton Boys School for 30 years. He is a very keen Walker and Rambler.

Terry Maple : Introductions, Design, Layout and Collation

Terry Maple, a resident of the Community for 30 years, is a Civil Engineering Quantity Surveyor, sits on the Executive Committee of HCA, and is one of the Councillors on Thanington Without (Civil) Parish Council.

Martin Roche : Editing and Proofing. Input to all sections

Martin Roche has over 20 years experience in corporate and marketing communications consultancy. He lives at Stuppington Court Farm.

Dave Sackett : Buildings

Dave Sackett has been a resident of the community for 28 years and is a Technical Manager for a local concrete company. He is an Executive Committee member of HCA and is one on the team involved in renovating and maintaining the hall to it's current standard.

Glen Sharman : Environment

Glen Sharman is an honorary warden of Larkey Valley Woods Local Nature Reserve.

Public Consultation and Participation

Towards the end of the process a draft copy of the Community Design Statement, along with a short questionnaire for residents to complete and return, was delivered to every household in the community for their continued vital input to the completed statement.

A copy of this questionnaire is reproduced below, and the findings of the survey were then incorporated into the final document.

165 No. Questionnaires sent out : 15 – Oct – 2005

60 No Questionnaires returned by : 01 – Nov – 2005

36% response

The returned results are entered below

The Questions

Your views and opinions are vital to the success of our CDS and this is your chance to comment. We welcome your valuable contributions by asking you to complete the questions below.

Please tick ONE and only ONE box for each question you wish to answer. You do not have to answer all the questions. If you wish to add comments, please do so on a separate sheet(s) of paper making sure that you put the question number clearly alongside your comment.

1. How important do you believe it is to maintain a separate identity for the community?

Vitally important	35	Important	20
Not very important	4	Doesn't matter	1

2. How important to the character of the community is the visual isolation provided by the surrounding farm land along with the uninterrupted views towards the Cathedral?

Vitally important	52	Important	8
Not very important	0	No importance	0

3. How much does the "rural" nature of the principal roads in the community contribute to its character?

Significantly	53	Somewhat	4
Not Much	1	Not at all	0

4. There are many footpaths through and within the community. How important are they to Hilltop?

Fundamental	38	Important	19
Nice to have	3	Irrelevant	0

5. The general absence of street lighting in the community is a significant feature. This should be maintained.

I strongly agree	30	I agree	15
I disagree	14	I strongly disagree	1

6. How strongly do you feel that where they are in public view, native trees and hedging plants should be used within the Hilltop rather than fast growing, imported species such as leylandii?

Very strongly	46	Strongly	6
Slightly	3	Not at all	4

7. Do you believe that there is a case for further housing development including "starter" homes or "affordable housing" within Hilltop?

Strongly agree	0	Agree	10
Disagree	17	Strongly disagree	33

8. To what extent do you agree that such housing should be dispersed through the community rather than "tucked away" at the back of a development?

Strongly agree 12 Agree 22 Disagree 5 Strongly disagree 10

9. Should redundant farm buildings within Hilltop be used (subject to access and traffic considerations) for residential purposes?

Strongly agree 8 Agree 28 Disagree 4 Strongly disagree 17

10. Should any new planning approvals be limited to sympathetic development and extensions to existing properties only?

Strongly agree 6 Agree 30 Disagree 21 Strongly disagree 3

Please could you complete the following for our records:

1. Male Female

2. Age Group :
 Under 25 25 – 50 51 – 65 Over 65

3. How many in your household :
 Adults Children :

If you have any comments relating to this questionnaire or the draft Community

Design Statement document please use the box below or continue on separate sheet(s).

Comments: Sample below of the most common response:-

Most common response was made regarding the rural aspects. A typical example is reproduced below:

“I overlook farmland so do not wish to see any major housing development”

Public Opinion Comment

As can be seen from the returned questionnaires. The most common ‘wish’ is the need to retain Hilltops Rural status and it is vitally important to retain the views over the open countryside

Thank you for taking the trouble and for helping us to have your input to the Community Design Statement

So that we can complete the next process promptly, could you please return your questionnaires

by 31/Oct/05 thank you

**PLEASE DELIVER or POST YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE ASAP TO SARAH GUEST AT:
55b NEW HOUSE LANE, CANTERBURY, KENT CT4 7BH**

GENERAL INFORMATION

The community provides many amenities and services for the residents. Many of the activities being organised by Hilltop Community Association (HCA). HCA is a registered charity the executive and general committee consisting of elected members from the community.

The main focus of community life is the community hall, historically known as St. Faiths. This hosts many events throughout the year including Easter and Christmas fairs, wine and wisdom quiz evenings, a Harvest supper, family festival, to name but a few.

The Hall is also used in alternate years for the Annual Parish Meeting of Thantington Without Civil Parish. It also serves as a polling station for European, local and general elections. Church services will continue to be held there as well.

The area is not used simply by residents of the community. Many other outside groups also enjoy the benefits of our unique rural environment. The Canterbury half marathon uses Hilltop for the majority of its route and ramblers are often seen walking along the network of paths and tracks around the community enjoying the uninterrupted views to Canterbury and the Downs. Cyclists are also regularly seen as a regular sight in its lanes.

Equestrian activity has seen an increase in the past few years with livery and training yards becoming part of the rural economy since Hilltop is well served with public and permissive bridleways.

Examples of other businesses that operate within 'Hilltop' area include bed and breakfast accommodations, a busy nursery school, and we are surrounded by working arable, fruit and livestock farms.

There are numerous small self-employed businesses also operating successfully within and serving the area.

There is a community newsletter produced quarterly. 'Hilltop News' this reports on community life past and present, also keeping the community informed of forthcoming events. It features local history and articles written by the residents.

Hilltop Community Association now has its own website

www.hilltopca.co.uk

providing information about Hilltop Community Association and links to Hilltop community design statement, Parish Council news and information,

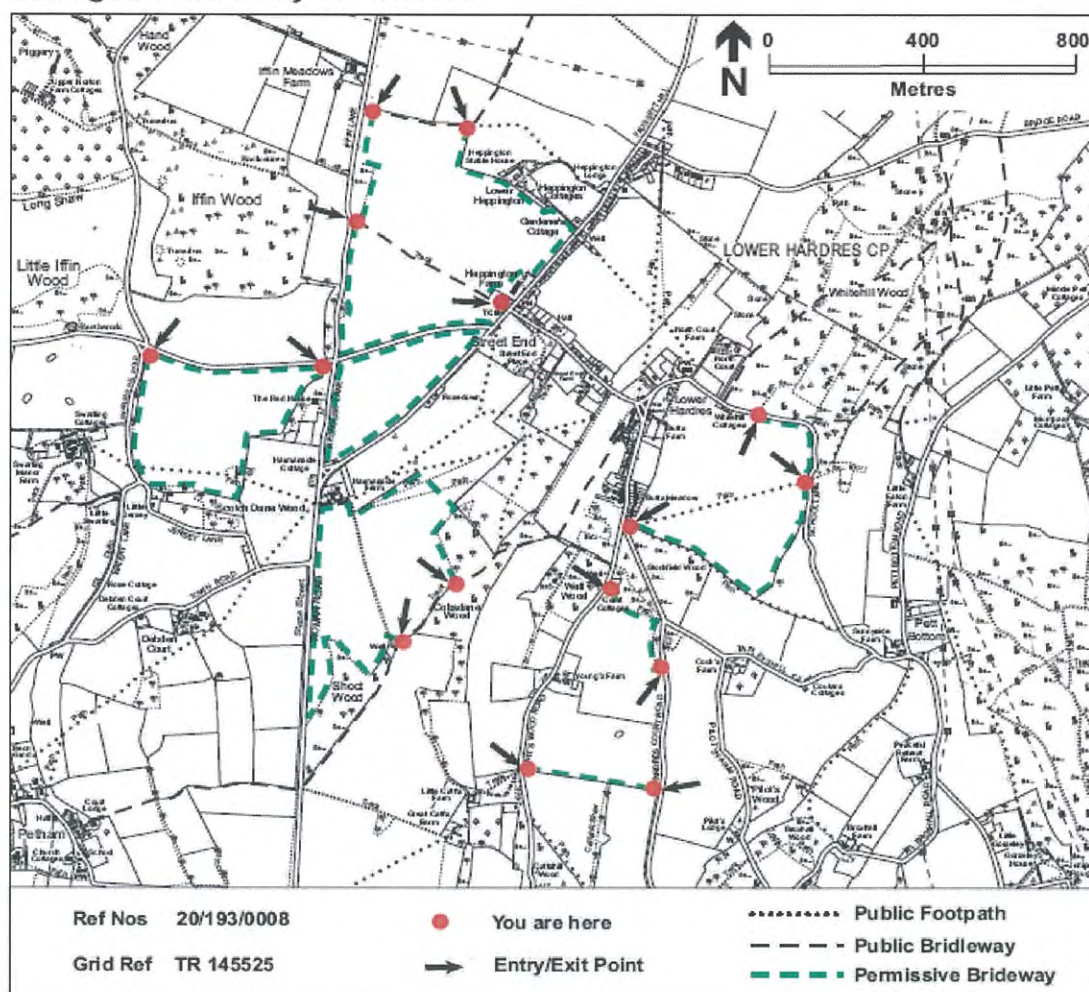


virtual tours of local footpaths, community photographs, links to local businesses and places of interest.

Surrounding our community there are several very interesting walks, green lanes and permissive brideways. An example of one of these is reproduced below.

CONSERVATION WALKS

Welcome to Street End Farms. These permissive bridleyway routes have been created to provide a variety of 'off road' circular and linking paths for horseriders and walkers. The paths follow field edge margins which have been established for the benefit of wildlife, providing an important habitat and 'corridor' for birds, mammals and insects. A number of hedgerows are being restored and some areas of grassland are being re-established and managed sensitively for wildlife.



This access has been provided under the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' farm conservation schemes, which help farmers and land managers protect and improve the countryside, its wildlife and history. It is permissive access and no new rights of way are being created. Existing rights of way are not affected. Please follow the Country Code and observe any other requirements shown above. Do not disturb wildlife, livestock or other visitors and in particular keep dogs under control. This is working farmland so please take care; people using this site do so at their own risk. Access ends in September 2011.

For more information contact DEFRA: 020 7238 6907 (Office hours).

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**COUNTRYSIDE
STEWARDSHIP
SCHEME**

**ENVIRONMENTALLY
SENSITIVE
AREAS**

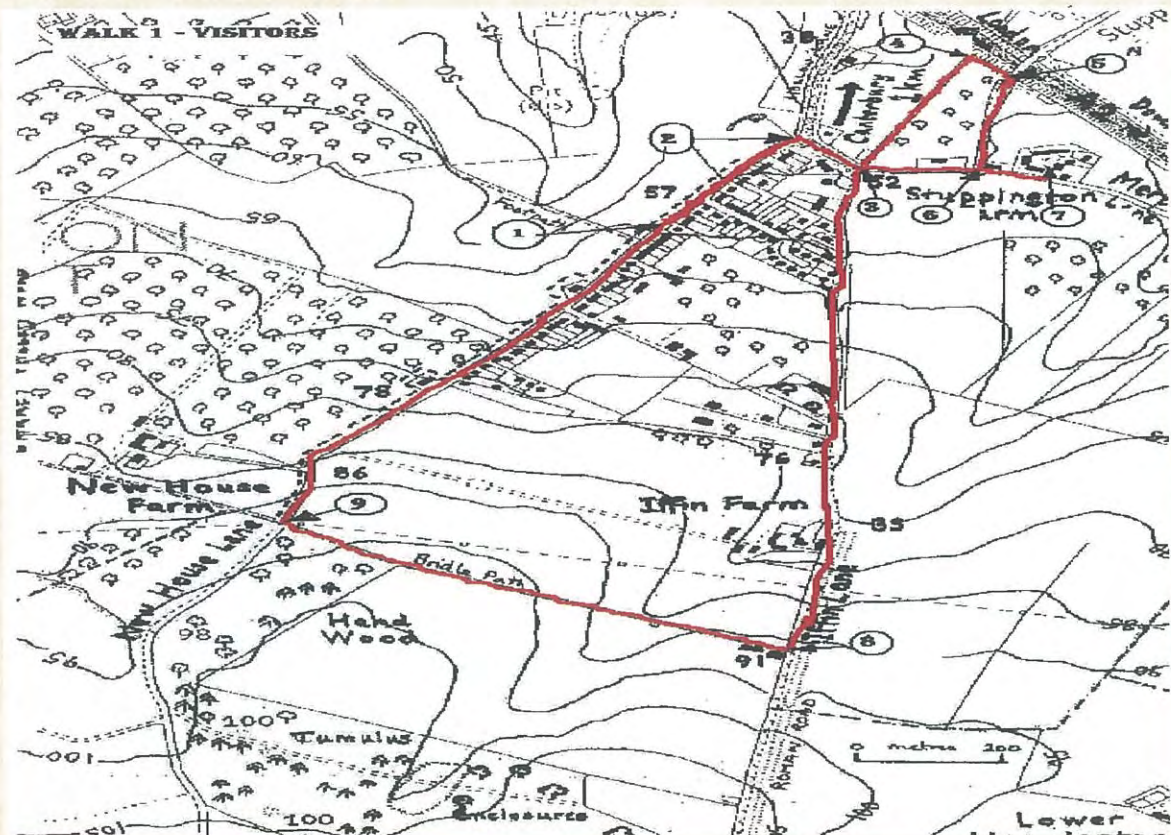


WALKS and POINTS OF INTEREST

There are a number of very interesting and picturesque walks, bridle ways and green lanes in the area, which are vitally important to the character, and their retention should be encouraged.

For interest to those planning to relocate to the area or as information to developers, an example of one such short walk is reproduced below:

WALK 1. VISITORS' WALK



Allow 1 hour or so for this introductory walk around the Hill Top Community.

- A. Across the Stour Valley from the Community Hall there is open farm land. Beyond this you can see Canterbury Cathedral and further away the University of Kent (note the telescope), St Edmunds' School (note the Water Tower).
- B. From the Community hall turn right down New House Lane until you reach the Telephone Box (Point 2) (Road Junction New House Lane/Hollow Lane). At the Telephone Box turn right. After 30 metres you come to another road junction (Point 3) (Iffin Lane/Merton Lane).

- C. At the road junction do not take either of the roads but follow an enclosed footpath to your left.
- D. Just before you reach the main A2 road the path turns right above and parallel to the main road to join Stuppington Lane at Point 5.
- E. Turn right on to Stuppington Lane (i.e. away from the main road). Soon you come to a T junction (Point 6).
- F. Turn left along Merton Lane and almost immediately left again to the restored houses and barns of Stuppington Farm (Point 7).
- G. Retrace your steps to Point 6, go straight on at the T junction to the next junction of Merton Lane/Iffin Lane (Point 3).
- H. Turn left up Iffin Lane which you follow for half a mile. To your left there are extensive views of Canterbury and the Cathedral, to your right is a fascinating variety of styles of housing of various ages. Pass under the electricity transmission line and look for a track to your right just before a farm sign advertising free range eggs.
- I. Turn right along the track which runs between high hedges. Note the boundary stone at the beginning of the track which marks the boundary of Thanington and Lower Hardres.
- J. The track emerges on to New House Lane. Turn right and follow New House Lane back to the Community Hall. On the way you have fine views across the Stour Valley and of the City itself.



Acknowledgements

The 'Design Team' would particularly like to offer acknowledgment to the following, without whose kind and most generous help this document could not have been produced:

The help and advice and support of Canterbury City Council and in particular David Kincaid

All members of Hilltop Community Association

Residents of Hilltop for their participation in the workshops along with their generous offers of help along the way, and all of those who completed and returned their questionnaires.

The support of Thanington Without (Civil) Parish Council

The support of Chartham Parish Council

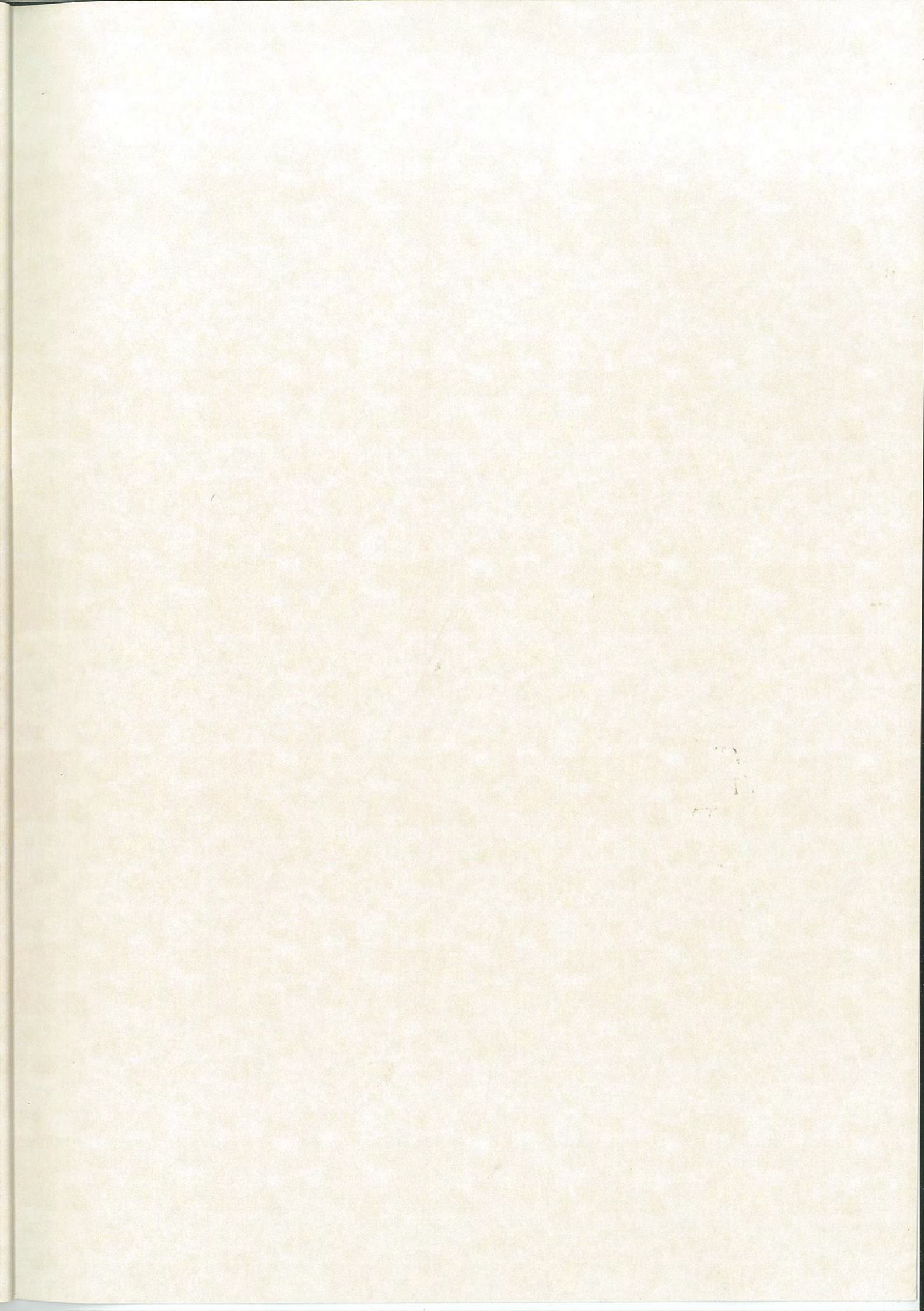
The Countryside Agency for permission to reproduce their permissive bridleways document.

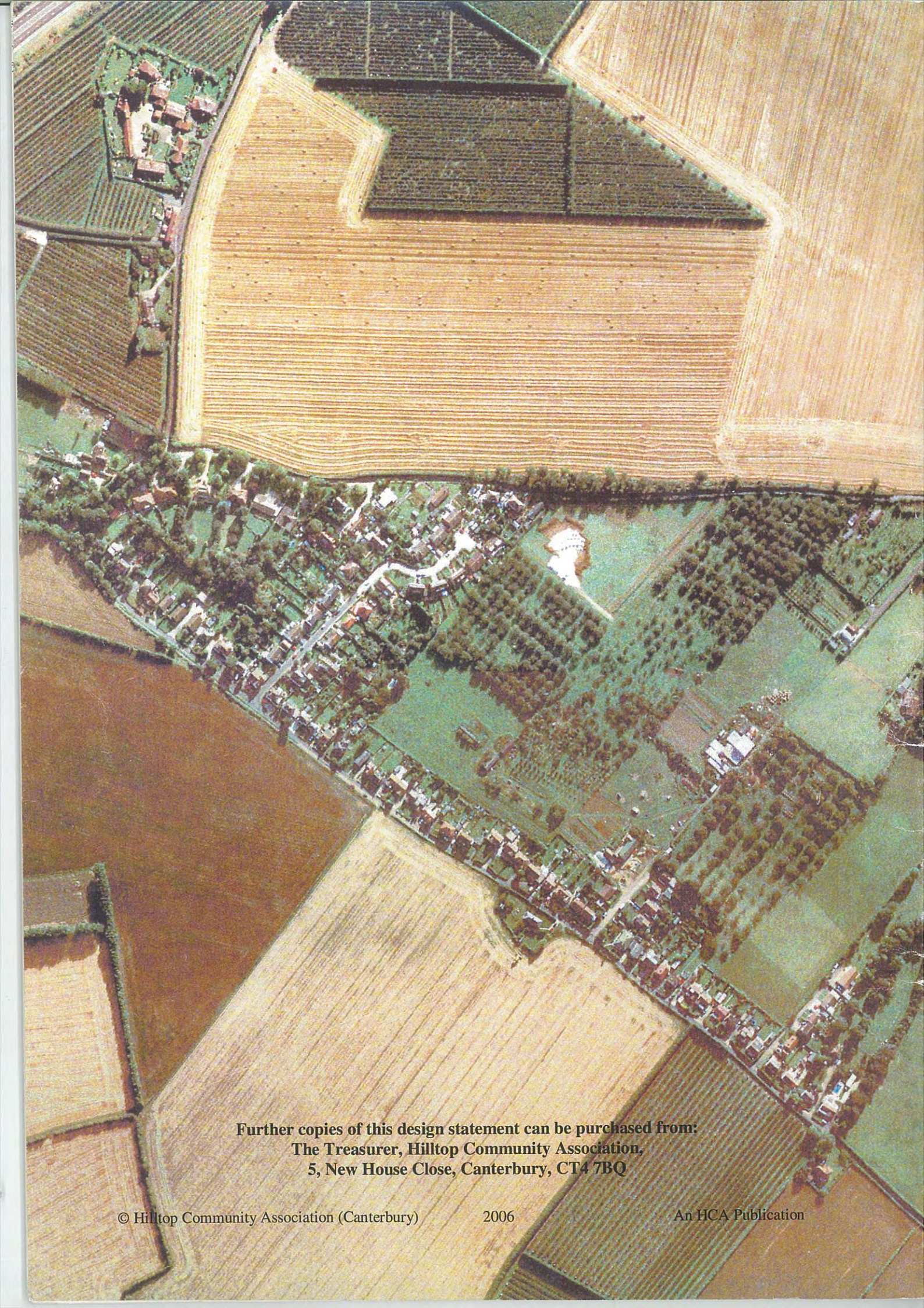
Simon Langton Boys School, Canterbury for kind assistance with copyright matters

Mickle Print for kind assistance with printing matters

University of Kent at Canterbury for assistance with our data analysis requirements

Due to the very nature of this type of document, the information contained within the introduction and instructions of use sections have by necessity been gathered from many similar design statements and guides both in printed form and published on the internet. We hereby acknowledge all of the authors of these extracts who are too numerous to individually mention.





**Further copies of this design statement can be purchased from:
The Treasurer, Hilltop Community Association,
5, New House Close, Canterbury, CT4 7BQ**