

New Dover Road, Canterbury



Design Guidance

20 April 2006



INTRODUCTION

This document assesses the existing character of New Dover Road from 15 New Dover Road near the corner of Lower Chantry Lane to the end of the conservation area at Stafford House on the corner of St Lawrence Road. Due to the generous size of the plots in this area they are coming under increasing pressure for redevelopment, subdivision into flats and from infill housing. A number of developments have been approved that have allowed demolition of more modern buildings and construction of apartment buildings and for conversion of many of the large period houses into intensive accommodation complexes either for apartments, student accommodation or holiday accommodation.

New Dover Road presently runs the risk of becoming just another arterial road lined with apartment blocks and fronted with hard-standing and parked cars. This would be a regrettable loss of what is still a unique stately entrance into the historic city of Canterbury, on what is an important approach to the city.



This document highlights the main themes and features of the current buildings and plots, including the conservation area. It should act as a guide to assist persons intending to undertake development to design schemes that are in keeping with the character of the area and that make a positive contribution to the street scene.

LOCATION

New Dover Road is located within Canterbury, Kent just beyond the city walls. During the late 1780's Canterbury was 'improved' and got a Georgian make over. At this point in time New Dover Road was formed. New Dover Road dates from 1792 when it was constructed to give a more direct quicker route for stagecoaches from Dover Road (now the A2) to St Georges Gate and the City. The plots along the road were developed from this time onwards into a Victorian suburb on the fringe of the city.



***Aerial photograph of Canterbury Town Centre and New Dover Road.
The purple line indicates the design guide area. Also note the degree of established tree cover in 2003.***



New Dover Road provides an entrance to Canterbury City from the southeast. The road is a main thoroughfare from the A2 highway into the city centre making it a busy road that carries a high volume of traffic. The street itself is wider than most other Victorian streets in the city. The grand period homes set well back from the road on large plots with established trees and gardens give a sense of spaciousness and the feel of a more open affluent Victorian suburb. A large length of the street also benefits from a continuous sequence of vistas of Canterbury Cathedral's tower (Bell Harry Tower), which is a rare treat. The combination of this, the age and detail of the buildings, the size of the plots, the garden settings and the vast quantity of mature trees (a dominate features of the street scene)

make this area unique in Canterbury City.

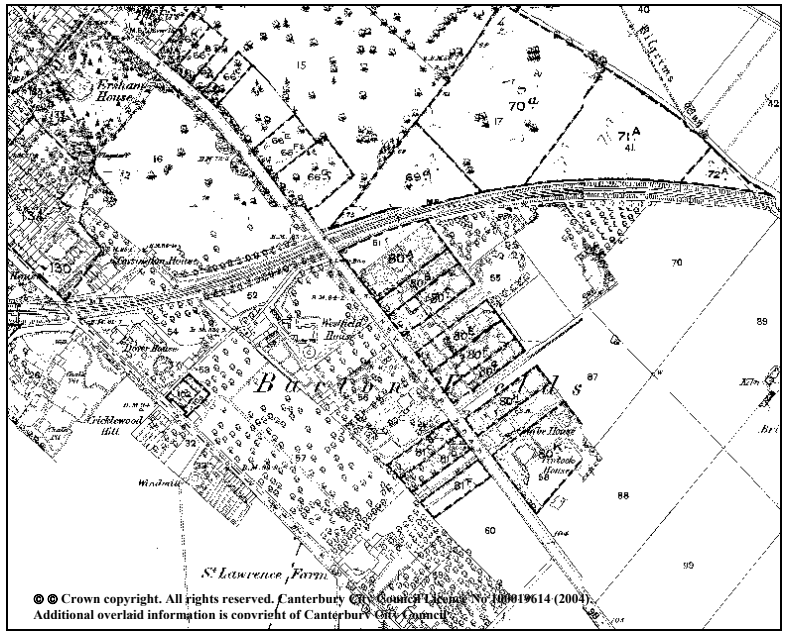
The buildings along New Dover Road, vary from large grand Victorian detached villas set in extensive landscaped garden plots and semidetached pairs on very large plots now in both residential and commercial use to nearer the city where smaller interwar detached homes dominate although still on relatively large plots again in both commercial and residential use. The commercial uses range from hotels and hostels to a veterinary clinic, doctor's surgeries, educational facilities, a driving school and British Telecom offices.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA

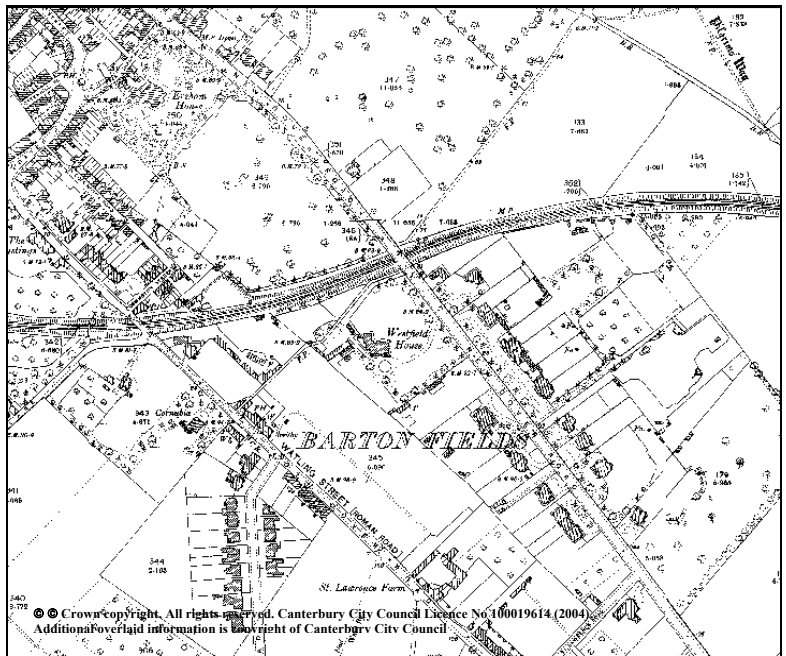
The character of the area is that of a Victorian suburb on the fringe of the more urban city. In 1801 Hasted noted "several genteel houses already built" along the road. None of these houses survives in the conservation area. The oldest building and in many respects the most interesting is 71 The Canterbury Hotel, which dates from 1850, yet has a Georgian classical front elevation. Number 54 the Youth Hostel was built as a speculative development. 73 Luxmore House was originally built by an Army General for his own use. All of these are large red brick properties with stone dressings and decoration. Towards the southeastern end of the area are a number of late Victorian buildings with Gothic or Italianate detailing built between 1870 and 1890. Near the City is a mix of speculatively built Edwardian villas and interwar dwellings with a sub-Georgian appearance built and designed on the picturesque concept. Properties 55-69 show the exclusiveness and spaciousness of the Victorian suburb at its best. Most of these properties are detached or semi-detached, set in large gardens with established trees and were originally built as houses although most are now in use as hostels, offices or commercial institutions. The large plot sizes in which many of the properties sit, the views between buildings into gardens beyond and the number of mature trees and shrubs creates an "urban in rural character". This atmosphere is enhanced by informal hedgerow boundaries and trees along the street frontage.



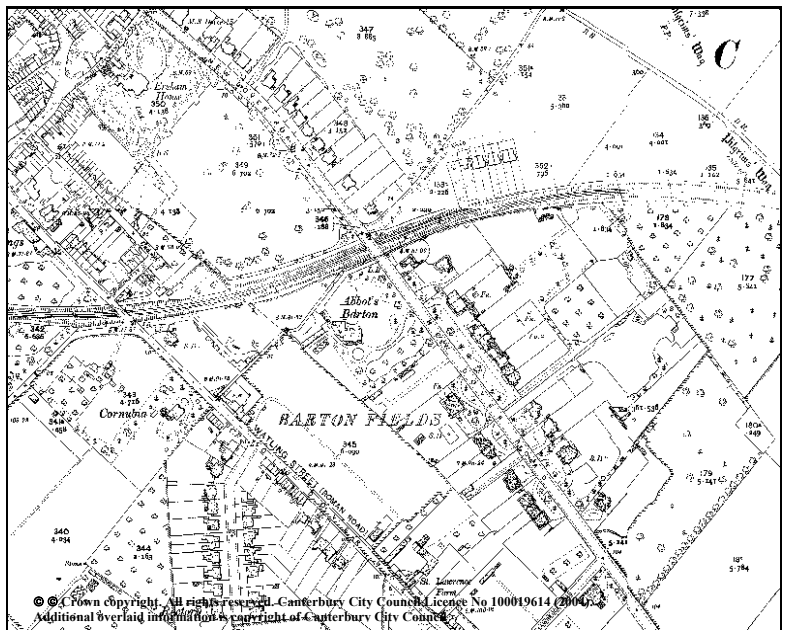
**Historic Maps of
New Dover Road**



1843-1893



1891-1921

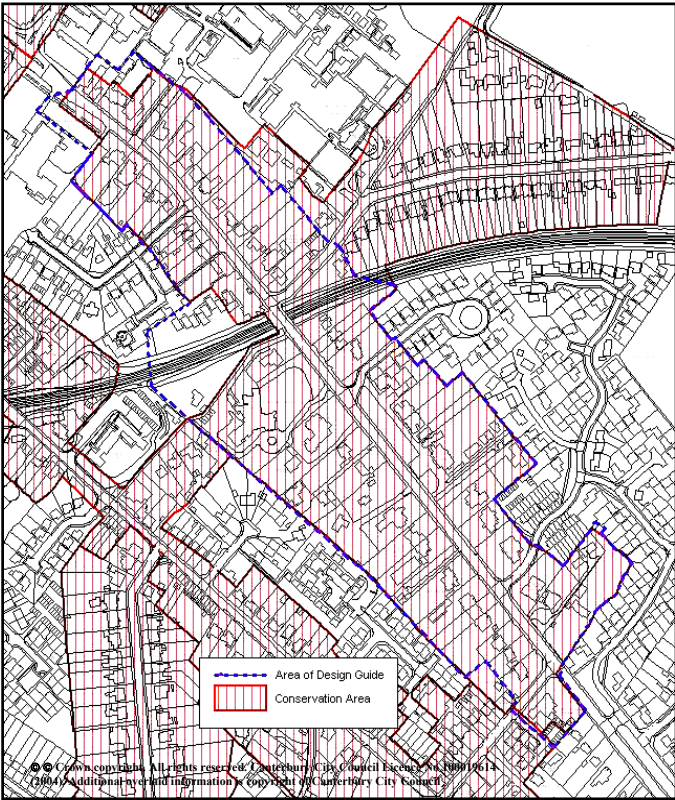


1904-1939

Since the late 1990's the area has come under increasing pressure for infill development and many planning applications have been received and granted for back-land development, conversions, extensions and demolitions as well as new buildings, which have slowly eroded the character of the area despite its conservation area status.

CONSERVATION AREA

The New Dover Road, Conservation Area was designated on 4 August 1982 when the A2 was diverted as it was considered that the area would come under increasing pressure for development. The conservation area includes properties from 8 to 68 (Stafford House) on the south west side of the street and 15 to 79 on the north east side of the street. Properties of particular significance include within the interwar properties 16, 29, 31 and 37 and further up the street from the Victorian era Abbots Barton Hotel, 48, 50, 54 and 56-60 and the front garden of 52 on the south west side of the street, and all of the houses between 55-79 (not including Rochester Court) on the north east side of the street. The trees also play a vital role in the streetscape and in the ambience of the area.



Policy BE7 of the Draft Local Plan states that developments affecting the setting of or views into or out of conservation areas should preserve or enhance all of the features that contribute positively to the area's character or appearance. Any development in the area would have to respect and protect the character and appearance of the conservation area. Building design that complements and ties in with the adjacent buildings in the area would be vital to any successful development proposal. Of particular importance in this instance will be:

- the retention of the historic building line,
- the rural to suburban characteristics of the area,
- utilisation of architectural details that contribute to the areas values,
- the scale of the buildings,
- large visual spaces between buildings,
- the retention of trees and front landscaping, and,
- the avoidance of large hard surfaces areas.



MAIN THEMES

Style

The character of the area is derived from the large homes built in the Victorian Gothic style (except number 70). The beauty of the street is derived from these substantial homes set back from the street on sizeable plots with significant visual gaps between buildings and large gardens surrounded by established trees. Closer to town this leads on to smaller scale interwar buildings still substantially built and located in the centre of plots framed by trees to the northwest of the rail tracks and into more commercial buildings including Becket House just before Upper and Lower Chantry Street. New Dover Road contains many large houses of the Victorian period, notably the Ebury, Abbots Barton Hotel, the old Canterbury Hotel, St Christopher’s School and the YMCA. This character should be retained and new developments or redevelopments of existing properties must respect the grain and density of the area.

Scale



The buildings vary from single storey bungalows, to chalet bungalows, grand 3 ½ storey Victorian homes to a 1939 five storey office building. Buildings in the commercial area in the vicinity of Becket House are largely located closer to the road frontage in more of a terrace style. However, these buildings still incorporate features of the remainder of the area including detailed brickwork, window and door styles.

The buildings between Becket House and the railway are predominately two storey interwar buildings set back from the road on reasonable sized plots. The houses are generally substantive detached and were predominately large single-family dwelling houses set in large gardens, although some are now commercial premises.



Beyond the railway the buildings are generally larger Victorian houses with substantial footprints, which are now in a range of uses. These properties are generally 2 storeys high with living space in both the loft and basement areas giving the impression of a three storey building. The buildings are located within substantial plots of land with large landscaped spaces between buildings and establish trees.

In the 1960’s-1970’s some less than suitable developments were undertaken in inappropriate contemporary styles. The City Council has required more recent development of the older properties to be in keeping with the materials and architectural language of these original Victorian buildings.

Roofs

The buildings all have pitched roofs either hipped or gabled often with front and rear gables. The roofs on the more modern properties are quite similar in form and are generally tiled. The

rooflines on the Victorian properties are generally highly ornate with decorative tiling and carved finials, pediments and bargeboards. The houses generally have large chimneys.



Exterior Walls and Decorative Features

The walls in the area are all high quality brickwork although some have been rendered over. Most buildings use some form of red brick. The front faces of the buildings have decorative features whether in stone, brick or tile. On the interwar houses the decorative features are more simple being balconies, window lintels and front door features. On the Victorian buildings the design is highly ornate using stone, bricks, tiles and sometimes wrought iron.



Windows

There is a predominance of decorative bay windows some of which extend up to three storeys in height. The majority of buildings in the street have these. The older buildings have large wooden sash windows generally painted white, with some arched sash style feature and casement windows. The window surrounds are generally elaborate with stone or brickwork. The more modern buildings tend to have wooden side opening casement windows although some have metal frames or in some regrettable instances have been replaced with plastic windows.



Although dormer windows are not a predominate feature of the area some of the buildings have front facing dormer windows. These are generally small and understated with hipped and gabled roofs tiled and clad to blend into the roof.

Doors

A predominate feature of buildings is the front door. These are generally made into a feature with built-in porches and ornate surrounds around a panel door.



Parking, Access and Refuse Storage

In the past vehicles would have been located/parked to the rear of buildings. Many of the more modern properties have attached or integral garages. Unfortunately many of the commercial and apartment style developments which have taken place in the past 5 years have converted the majority of the front garden into hard-standing to provide car parking. This has a significant adverse impact on the street scene that should be avoided where possible. All of the properties have a vehicle access.



These and the hard-standing are generally finished in a yellow gravel aggregate although to the northwest they are often asphalt, which is not visually appealing. It is also noted that all refuse storage is generally located out of view of the street.

Building Lines and Side Set Backs



A predominant and important feature of the street is the front and side set backs, which have led to a reasonably consistent building line and substantial visual gaps between buildings. These spaces along with the associated trees and gardens are the main feature of the street scene. The distance that properties are located back from the road varies depending on the age and location of the building.

The set backs are generally between 7 and 24 metres, with most properties to the north of the railway having smaller set backs of 9 metres (on average) and those to the south of the railway generally having set backs of between 17 and 24 metres.



When the properties are detached they tend to be set away from the boundary by at least 2 metres and normally 3-5 metres. The interwar properties are closer together with the Victorian properties often having visual separations of 10 metres plus. Some recent developments have not respected the visual separations and have in-filled close to side boundaries, which has made them incongruous in the street scene.

It is noted, however, that back land developments often retain visual gaps through the provision of tree lined access drives.

Boundary Treatments

The front boundary treatments are generally simple being predominately trees and hedgerows sometimes with low brick walls with planting behind. In some places higher non-brick fences have been erected in place of trees that are incongruous with the street scene. It is also noted that the front boundary between semi-detached properties is not usually obviously defined.

Plot Sizes, Curtilage and Gardens

The other predominant feature of the street are the large plots sizes and substantial gardens. The smallest site is approximately 370m² but sites that small are very rare with most properties having plot sizes in excess of 1000m² and the largest being the Abbots Barton Hotel site which is approximately 6670m². Front gardens were traditionally landscaped and planted with trees and hedgerows to provide a frame to the house from the street, many of which remain.



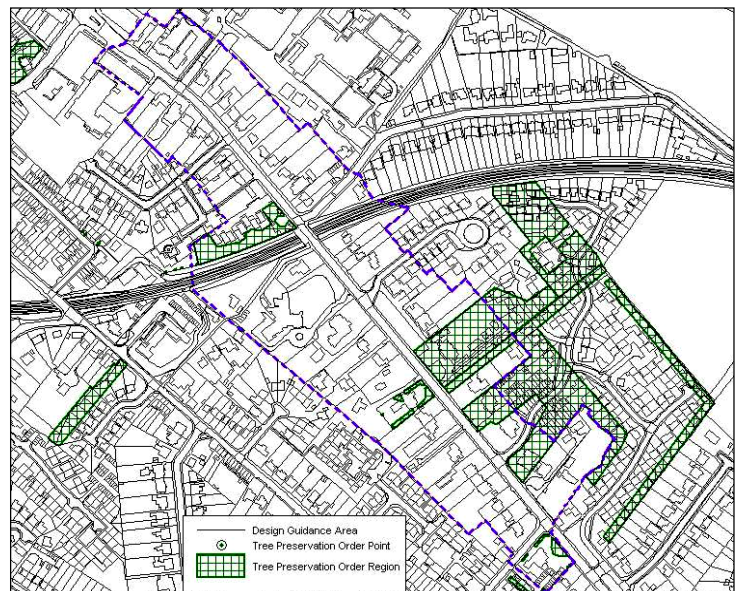
The properties originally had large front and rear gardens. The size of these gardens is being eroded in places by the development of apartment style buildings and back land developments that aim to maximise density and parking. However, the majority of properties still have relatively substantial curtilages.

Trees



Another important and distinctive feature of this road is the contribution to the character of the street made by mature trees located close to the front boundaries of most properties. These trees attractively frame the long view to the Bell Harry Tower and provide a green corridor into town effectively linking and blending the rural outskirts into the town centre. Several of the sites are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) (see site plan below) and all trees are provided some degree of protection by the Conservation Area. It is noted that those trees which do not have TPO's but are located in the conservation area may not be removed without 6 weeks notice being given to Council.

Plan showing the design guide area and the land covered by Tree Preservation Orders



STYLE OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

It is considered that any new housing development, redevelopment or extension needs to be sympathetic with the varying range of ages and styles of developments in the street. Designs should compliment the character of the area and should incorporate the following elements:

- Any development should have a visual understanding of the style and grandeur of the original Georgian and Victorian suburb and the 'picturesque' concept behind the interwar dwellings (note this does not preclude modern design).
- The character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the protection of the trees within the Conservation Area and by Tree Protection Orders must be respected.
- Retention of all trees and hedgerows especially in property frontages is vital. If trees do need to be removed, the City Council must be informed first and the trees must be replaced within the site and should be able to be viewed from the street.
- New development should respect plot identity. Plot amalgamation will be resisted.
- All new buildings and extensions should generally face the street and have an active street frontage.
- All extensions, new developments or buildings should respect the front building line, being set back between 9 and 24 metres from the road frontage depending on their location.
- Side boundary separations of at least 3 to 5 metres (depending on the location) should be retained at all levels. A substantial visual gap must be retained between buildings on adjacent plots.
- Replacement buildings should have a similar footprint and massing to that which they replace.
- In some instances it may be appropriate for replacement buildings or extensions to extend slightly further to the rear of the site than the original building. In these instances buildings shall not compromise the rear facing view or access to light of neighbouring properties. The horizontal and vertical 45° sight lines from adjacent properties should be respected.
- Buildings should be between 2 and 3 storeys high in the older Victorian area with living space often located in basements or attics and 2 storeys high amongst the interwar houses. The scale and height of new developments and extensions should be in keeping with the scale of the buildings in whichever area they are located. For example it is noted that properties to the northwest of the railway have a lower profile and are of a more domestic scale in massing so larger apartment blocks would not be at all suitable here.
- Extensions should be subservient to the existing building but in a manner that allows them to tie in with the style, form and design of the existing building.
- Exterior walls should be finished in red brick with the potential for small amounts of wooden, tile and stone decoration.

- **Decorative tiles, stone and woodwork should be included around front windows, doors and along rooflines.**
- **Roofs should generally be pitched and hipped although a collection of gable ends would also be appropriate (flat roofs are not acceptable except in the curtilage of the BT building). Consideration should be given to incorporation of gablets.**
- **Roofs should be tiled with Kent peg, handmade clay plain tiles or slates and should include decorative brick chimney stacks. Existing chimneys should be retained.**
- **Main entrance doors should be facing the street. They should form a focal point of the building through the inclusion of decorative surrounds, associated windows and front porches.**
- **Inclusion of bay windows at ground, first and second floor levels would also act to tie new developments in with surrounding properties.**
- **Windows should be wooden sash or casement style.**
- **Large gardens front and rear shall be retained and back land development will only be allowed in limited circumstances where it does not affect the amenities of surrounding properties and where all resulting properties retain substantial curtilages.**
- **Front gardens should be provided with lawns, plantings and trees. Where hard-surfacing for car parking in front gardens is necessary it should be screened from view of the street by trees and hedges.**
- **Mature trees and hedgerows should be used to define the front boundaries of the sites. In some instances a low brick wall with planting behind it may be appropriate.**
- **Sufficient parking shall be provided on site especially for intensive residential housing or apartments. Parking should be provided behind the buildings or out of sight of the street, and should be landscaped and designed in such a manner that it does not dominate the curtilage nor impact on the amenity values of neighbouring property owners.**
- **Areas of hard-surfacing should be kept to a minimum. Where hard-surfacing is required it should be in a loose yellow gravel aggregate finish (this may be bonded), large areas of asphalt should be avoided.**
- **Refuse storage should be provided to the rear of buildings. Discrete out of sight secure storage with easy access to the road frontage is particularly important for intensive housing and commercial developments.**
- **Views of Bell Harry Tower should be protected.**
- **New development will not be allowed to impact upon the amenity values of neighbouring properties anymore than present buildings on the site. This is particularly critical with respect to visual amenity, existing building relationships and access to light and solar energy.**
- **Design statements to be submitted with planning applications to show how proposals conform to this Design Guide.**