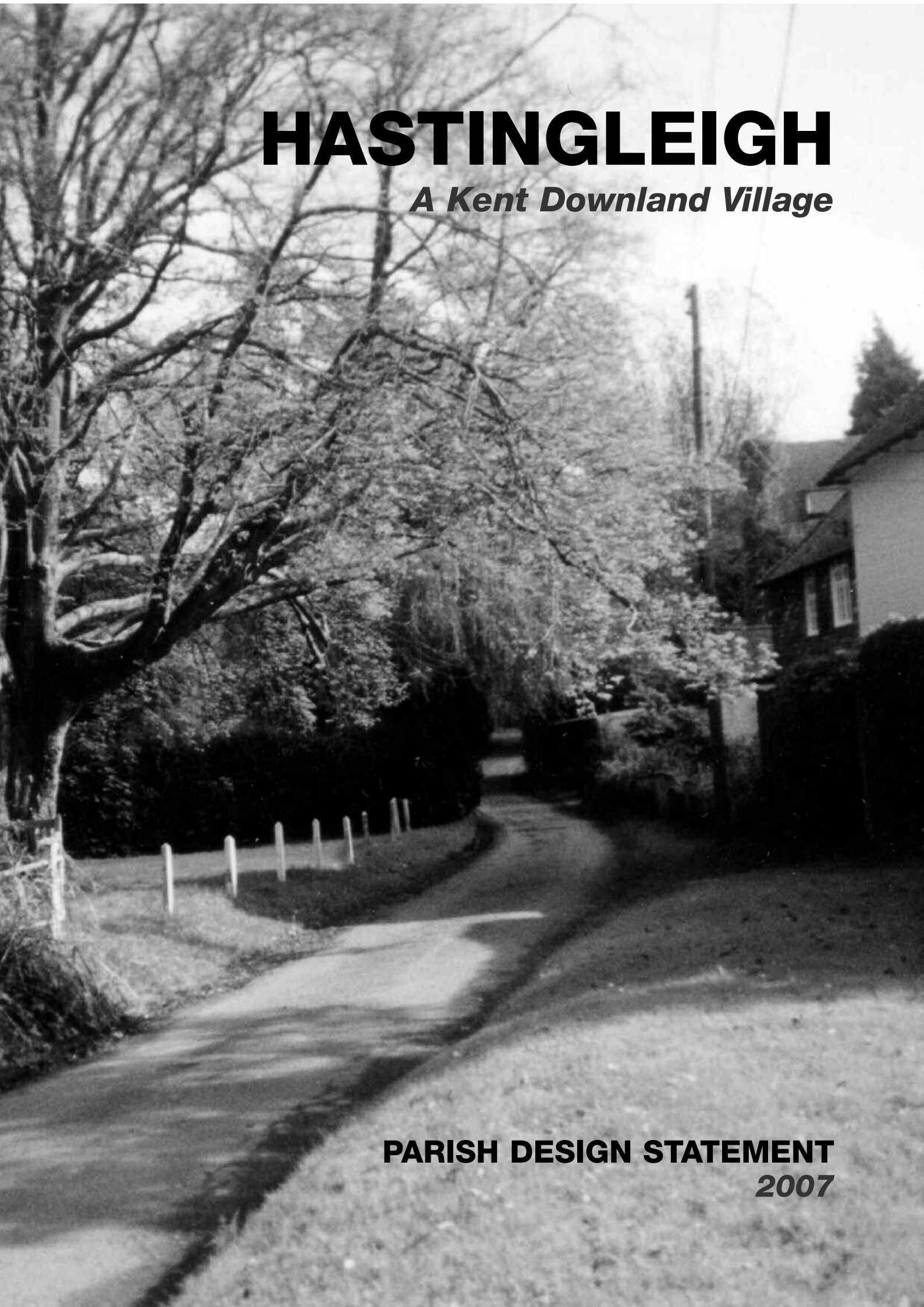


HASTINGLEIGH

A Kent Downland Village

PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT

2007

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Acknowledgements

The members of the Parish Design Statement Group:-

Will Day (Chairman), Rosamund Bacon, Gordon Etheridge, Bill Gardener, Ben Gunn, Jane Hill, Chris Pell, Michael Rust (Treasurer).

We would like to thank the Hastingleigh Parish Council, Ashford Borough Council and the Action with Communities in Rural Kent for their financial support.

In addition, the Group would like to thank Bernard Farrant for his support whilst he was our Borough Councillor.

We are happy to acknowledge that the buildings section has drawn significantly from the booklet 'Hastingleigh in the County of Kent 2000' by Rosamund Bacon.

Above all we would like to thank the many members of our community who filled in forms, attended meetings, took and admired photos and read through and commented on our drafts.

Finally, many thanks to Sue Brooke for allowing us to hold our meetings at The Bowl Inn.

The Hastingleigh Parish Design Statement was approved on 26 July 2007 as Supplementary Planning Guidance to be used in conjunction with The Ashford Borough Local Plan.

1. Objectives

1.1 The objective of this document is to provide the planning authorities with as thorough a reflection as we can of the views of the inhabitants of Hastingleigh as to the design elements of the village they wish to live in.

1.2 It is hoped that the process that we have been through (details of which are recorded in the appendices of this document), and the conclusions that we have drawn, will enable planners, architects, designers, landowners, businesses and homeowners and all those who have responsibility to oversee the future of our parish and village design to take into account the wishes of our community.

1.3 It has been recognised throughout that this is not intended to be a barrier to future development, but that any planning decisions should incorporate the design criteria described in this statement.

2. Background

2.1 Historical

2.1.1 The village and settlements that comprise Hastingleigh Parish were in existence prior to the recording of the Domesday Book and, considering its position on the North Downs (OS Ref. TR 097 449), is quite likely to have been on the travellers' route east from the continent.

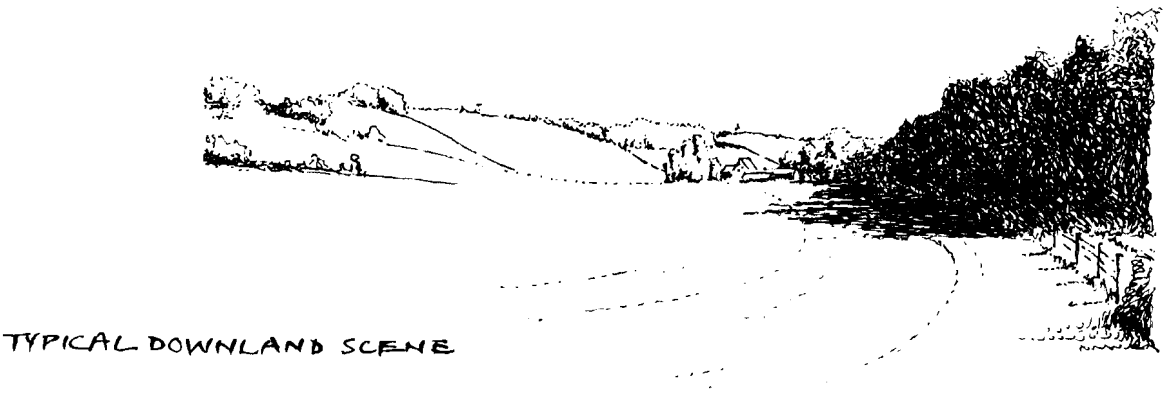
2.1.2 For well over a thousand years all the evidence points to the community being small and, although the number of dwellings has grown today to comprise some 98 households, demographic changes have ensured a relatively stable population and it remains one of the less densely populated parishes in the area. In earlier times land ownership was in the hands of a few landlords, notably St. Thomas' Hospital in London, resulting in many villagers living in tenanted houses. In contrast today, farms, holdings and houses are almost exclusively in the hands of owner occupiers. For the last 100 years, local democracy has been served by the Parish Meeting and the Parish Council, operating within the jurisdiction of Ashford Borough Council and the Kent County Council.

2.1.3 The layout of the village and its hamlets within the Parish and the design of the older buildings reflect an agrarian background, and the use of local materials of clay brick and tiles, together with timber, plus wooden doors and window frames, show the traditional designs of Kent vernacular architecture. The infrastructure of earlier times evolved to support such an agrarian community but rapid change over the last 50 years, has seen the demise of many of the smaller holdings. Despite these changes, a surprising proportion of residents still earn their living in the Parish, engaged in small businesses, working from home or practising arts or crafts. It is also true that a good proportion of the population have chosen to move to the village for its tranquillity, proximity to Wye, Ashford and Canterbury, and access to London by rail, combined with its relative isolation and strong sense of community. This brings with it links and contacts with other communities, greater awareness of the benefits of the amenities of the village and a considerable sense of what is desirable for the future design of Hastingleigh.

It is from such a background that this Design Statement arises.

2.2 The Community

2.2.1 With a current population of about 200 persons distributed among 98 households, the population of Hastingleigh is not much larger than it was 100 years ago, but the proportion of children is much lower these days. Some people commute to work on a daily basis, and we have a fair sprinkling of retired



people, but there is a surprisingly large number of people who work within the parish boundary. This helps considerably in keeping rush hour traffic within reasonable bounds on our narrow, winding roads. Hastingleigh is by no means, and has no wish to become, a dormitory village, and has a vigorous life of its own during the day.

2.3 Social amenities and activities

2.3.1 Hastingleigh is fortunate to have its own football and cricket grounds, as well as a well-appointed village hall: the latter being situated just over the 'border' in Elmsted, and shared with that village. There is a wide range of village-based social organisations, many of which attract participants from villages up to ten miles away.

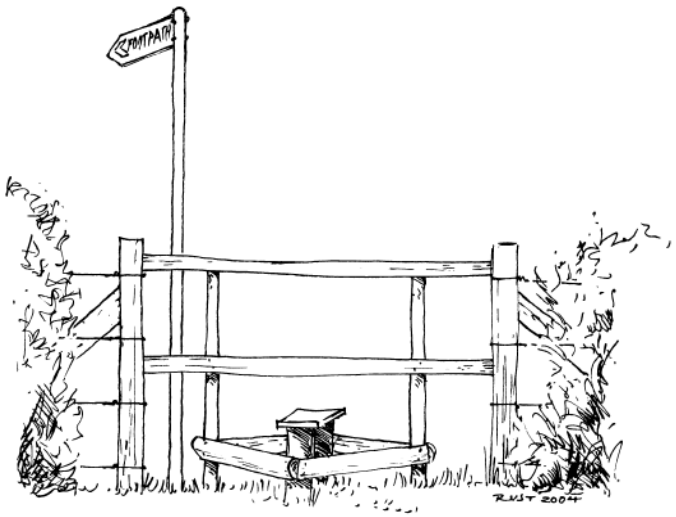
2.3.2 Our footpaths and bridle-paths are in constant use by residents and visitors alike.

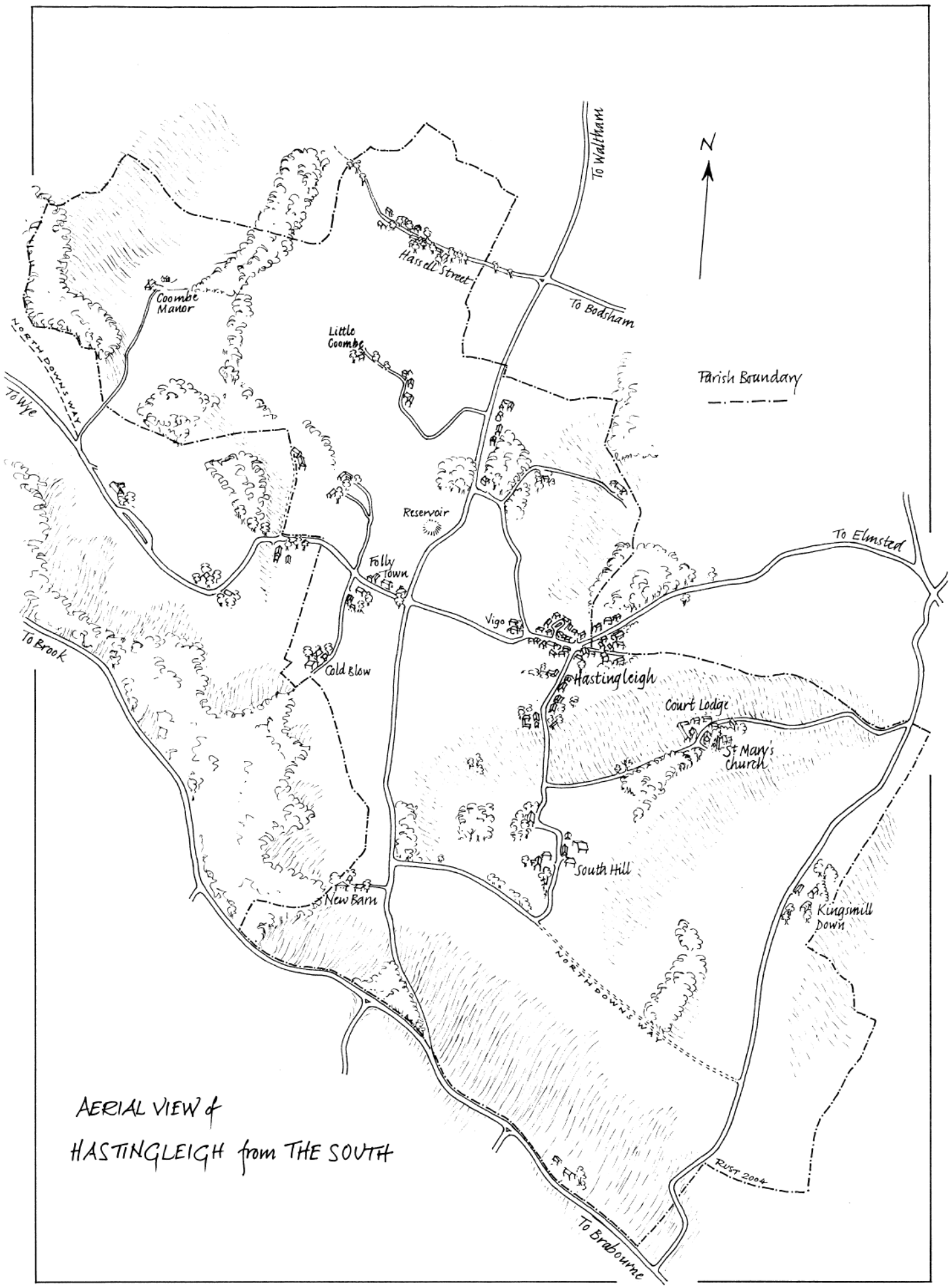
2.3.3 The public house, garage, church, cricket ground, sports field, shared village hall, village pond and surrounding area are all prized and valued by the community.

2.3.4 It is hoped that any changes in the future will respect the existing social mix and layout which reinforces the characteristic core design elements essential to the continued feeling of well-being within the community.

2.4 Businesses and Commercial activities

2.4.1 Farming is no longer a major source of employment in the parish. In addition to the garage and pub (both run and staffed by local residents) Hastingleigh has, for its size, a surprisingly large number of commercial activities, many of them one-man enterprises run from the family home. They include such diverse activities as a riding school, music school, wood and stone carving, building, printing as well as several artists, self catering holiday cottages and homes offering bed and breakfast accommodation.





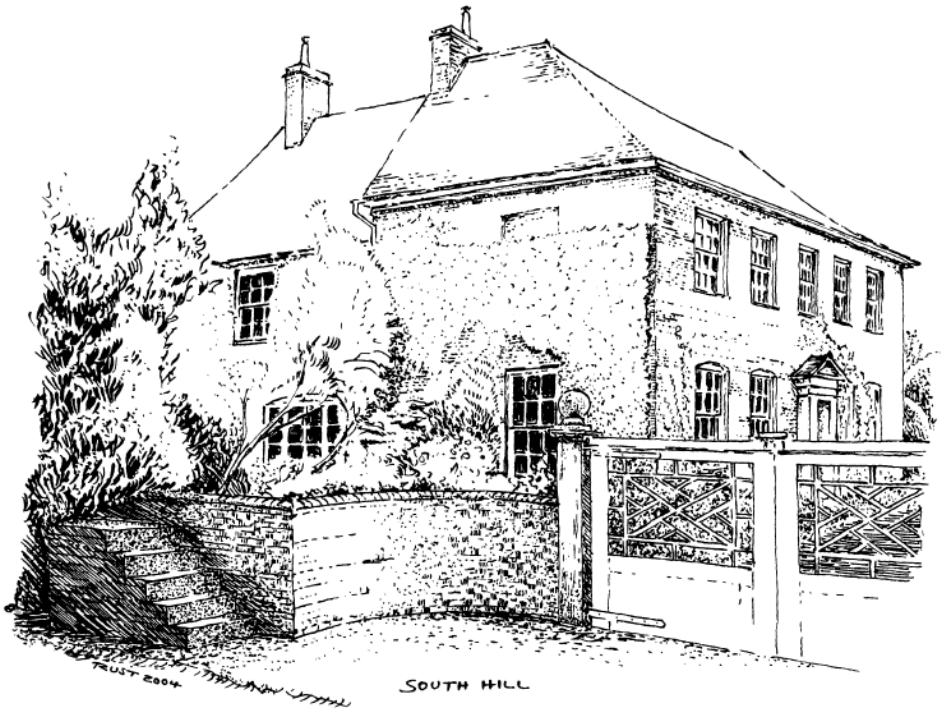
AERIAL VIEW of
HASTINGLEIGH from THE SOUTH

3. Analysis of the Character & Design of the Parish

3.1 Landscape Setting

3.1.1 Covering an area approximately 4.5 km by 1.5 km, Hastingleigh Parish sits atop the North Downs up to 185 metres above sea level, mostly on the dip slope, but with its southern boundary spilling down the scarp slope to the east of Cold Blow Farm. The soil is clay-with-flints over chalk: very thin in places, coupled with plateau drift on the tops, which is naturally acid.

3.1.2 Much of the land is given over to agriculture: principally pasture and arable forage crops for sheep, cattle and, increasingly, horses; but also with barley, wheat, oats, maize, linseed, beans and oilseed rape. With no permanent streams within its boundaries, Hastingleigh valleys are characteristically dry, and the vegetation rain fed.



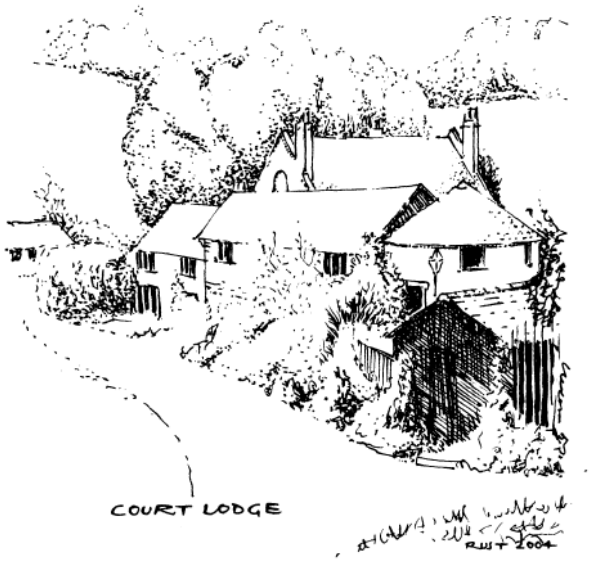
3.1.3 Access to the village and travel within it is by narrow, winding roads, often sunk by long use a metre or so below the surrounding terrain. Steep hills are also a problem for road traffic, as are snowdrifts in severe winters. Nevertheless, at other times of the year, verges and hedgerows are a delight to the eye, as are the woodlands, especially when the many species of wild flowers are in bloom.

3.1.4 Hedgerows that border most of the roads are generally of mixed native species (such as hawthorn, field maple, blackthorn and elder) and afford welcome shelter for many small birds and rodents. Larger animals, including deer, badgers and foxes find shelter in woodlands and field margins, as do rabbits and hares. Hastingleigh is well endowed with public rights of way. They include eighteen officially recognised footpaths, three bridleways and five by-ways, all of which are well used by locals and visitors alike. Not surprisingly so, because they offer some magnificent views of downland scenery and typical chalk land vegetation in all its botanical richness.

3.1.5 Hastingleigh is not a ‘picture postcard’ village. Its houses and buildings are generally too widely dispersed for that, but it has a charm of its own, much appreciated by its residents. This adds significantly to the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) of which it is a part.

3.2 Settlement Pattern

3.2.1 From every direction the approach to the village is along winding rural roads and lanes, bordered by hedges and trees until one comes to the centre of the parish where the greatest concentration of houses (about one third of the total) is around the pub and garage. Although situated at the border of the Parish with Elmsted, this has the feeling of being the core of the village, with groups of older buildings of traditional design, together with subsequent developments, reflecting the architecture and design popular at those times, particularly during the third quarter of the 20th century. Garden boundaries are marked with hedges of natural species, or low picket fences.



3.2.2 The Parish also contains a number of small hamlets.

3.2.2(i) South Hill: A cluster of five houses adjacent to South Hill Farm, the farmhouse being a large red brick building with an accompanying working farm yard and buildings. This, together with some farm workers' cottages and the Old Rectory lies on a high point across the valley immediately south of the village centre.

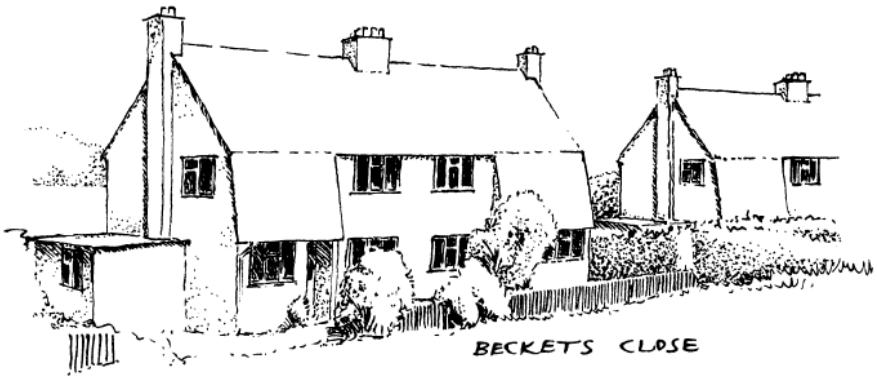
3.2.2(ii) Court Lodge: A large brick house of Tudor origin but with Georgian and then 20th century additions and alterations and an accompanying set of traditional and more modern farm buildings (some converted to housing and others awaiting development) and workers' cottages clustered in the dry valley bottom adjacent to the ancient Parish church of St. Mary the Virgin. This is built largely of flint and stone with a Kent peg tiled roof. The earliest architecture of the church is clearly Norman with subsequent additions and alterations down the centuries.

3.2.2(iii) Hassell Street: A ribbon development of houses of varying ages, including some old houses and farm buildings. Set along the side of an old track through the Downs, they include brick and tile hung buildings as well as some of flint and stone.



3.2.2(iv) Folly Town: A loose grouping of smaller houses of varying ages by the crossroads leading to the village on the road from Wye.

3.2.3 In addition there are isolated houses and farmsteads throughout the parish. The overall atmosphere of the community is generally one of unostentatious, uncrowded tranquillity.



3.3 Buildings and Street Furniture

3.3.1 The village has a great variety of building styles and materials. In view of its centuries-long history, it is not surprising that the domestic and agricultural buildings of Hastingleigh comprise a wide range of old and modern styles. We have 15th to 19th century structures cheek by jowl with 20th century post-war council houses and more recently built bungalows and houses as well as houses of neo-Georgian style. All in all, it is a mixture that works surprisingly well, and is generally in harmony with its rural surroundings: not least because, where older buildings have been converted or extended, traditional Kentish architectural styles and materials have been used. There is thus no identifiable core design to this eclectic mixture of style, shape, height and plan to the buildings within the parish.

3.3.2 As noted above, the oldest building is St. Mary's church, in the valley, which is built of flint. Flints are found in bands in the chalk around the village. The upper part of the church tower is red brick, and the roof is of Kent peg tiles. These probably came from Ashford or Westwell, but they are now made in Elmsted. The porch is old oak, and the lych-gate of newer oak, which fell in the great storm of 1987. There are other houses in the village made of flint, as are a number of old barns and stables.

3.3.3 The oldest houses, Coombe Manor and Rose Cottage were built with timber frames and wattle and daub infill and have Kent peg tiled roofs. Most of the 18th century farmhouses are also timber framed and beamed inside (Vigo and Crabtree are examples). At Vigo, the three front rooms are 12' x 12' – the height of a typical oak before it spreads its branches.

3.3.4 Georgian red brick additions were made to Coombe Manor and Kingsmill Down. South Hill is entirely made of red brick, as is Court Lodge, which was built around the original Tudor House – Tudor roof timbers can be seen inside the present roof. Lyddendane is of attractive 18th century brick from Bavinge.

3.3.5 Brick predominates in the newer houses in the village and the 1950s village hall. Beckets Close (late 1940s council houses) and the Bowl Field (1970s 'executive' development) are both red brick with clay roof tiles. Hawksdene is made of yellow brick, which came from Young's of Wye (Naccolt) using the gault clay. Older buildings like the Bowl Inn were once rendered with lime mortar and then whitewashed with fired lime and 'beastings' (the first milk from the cow). Nowadays cement based paint is used, mostly white, e.g Cleveland.

3.3.6 Hanging tiles are found at the Old Rectory Parish Farmhouse, Hassell Street and Staple Lees, Basque Close, Bishops Cottage and Myrtle Cottage (now part of the White House) and there is painted weatherboarding on some buildings.

3.3.7 There is a fine 16th century timber framed barn at Court Lodge, and a repaired and rehabilitated flint and timber barn comprising 23 oak trees at Vigo. At South Hill, Kingsmill Down, and next to the Bowl Inn, there are old flint barns. Other farm buildings are of the Atcost metal-framed types, with concrete block infill with asbestos sheeting roofs.

3.3.8 Most of the village houses are two storey, although there are four chalet type bungalows and a few other bungalows. A number of the tiled roofs, particularly the Kent peg tiled ones, have projecting eaves allowing a decent overhang.

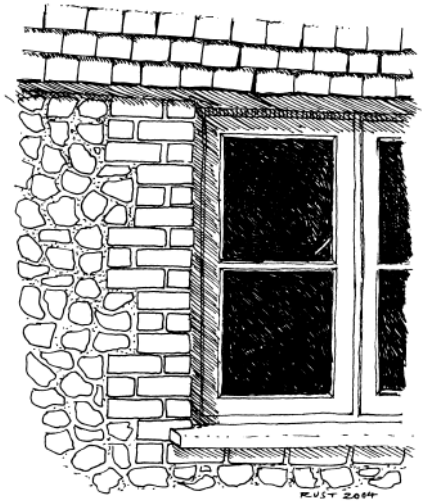
3.3.9 Window design varies greatly. Most are timber-framed, either stained or painted and there are a number of dormer windows in the older tiled roofs. There are thankfully very few plastic window frames.

3.3.10 As befits its rural setting, Hastingleigh has little in the way of street furniture: this being restricted to a few lampposts at strategic points in the centre of the village, regrettably of varied design according to the styles in vogue at the time they were individually introduced. Some kerbstones have been installed in places to protect the verges from traffic damage or to prevent the flooding of neighbouring properties by the run-off of surplus water from the road. Vital drains to take water in parts of the road that regularly flood have recently been installed.



4. Hastingleigh Parish Design Statement

4.1 What has consistently come out of the various questionnaires, and the photographic survey, is the villagers' strongly held wish to sustain characteristics of our village, namely an unostentatious, uncrowded, rural style; coupled with a vigorous economic and social life, led by locals and drawing others to us. Additionally, clear views have been expressed through the consultation process strongly favouring traditional and local building materials.



WOODEN WINDOW, FLINT WITH BRICK AND HANGING TILES

4.2 We are concerned about the potentially harmful consequences that large-scale expansion of Ashford could have for our village, but equally we recognise that if it is to survive in a sustainable form, it must continue to evolve and adapt. Future developments in Hastingleigh need to be conservative in principle and consistent with maintenance of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To that end we offer the following observations and recommendations to future planners, architects, land and home owners for this area.



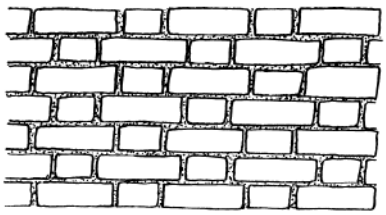
DORMER WINDOW

4.3 Basic principle:

4.3.1 It is preferable that development proposals include a design statement and illustrations indicating how this Parish Design Statement has been addressed. This will be a valuable adjunct in managing future changes in the parish.

4.4 Buildings:

4.4.1 The present settlement pattern and diversity of style is valued as an important design element of the parish. There should be no densely packed estates of uniform houses. Any new development should be of individual houses of a design in keeping with the density and character of the area or small groups which blend in with the existing variety of styles, sizes and types of buildings in this rural setting. Any future developments arising from commercial and business activity should respect the existing design elements of the nearby dwellings, buildings and street layout.



TYPICAL BRICK BOND

4.4.2 The design of buildings, extensions or modifications should take full account of the increasing need for sustainability as regards energy and water requirements.

4.4.3 In general, buildings development and extensions should harmonise with traditional styles typical of Kent. Roofs should normally have clay tiles (preferably Kent peg style), a substantial pitch, and have eaves with a good overhang. Walls should be of mellow red brick to match or harmonise with traditional Kent Red type, or tile hung or weather-boarded or rendered and painted white or cream. Use of flint features is welcome.



4.4.4 Although the sizes of gardens within the village vary, the general impression is of a green and spacious environment. It is important that any new development should reflect and maintain that characteristic.

4.4.5 Window frames and doors of timber are preferred to plastic or metal; it being a natural and recyclable product which reflects the historical core design principles evident throughout the village. The design of joinery, glazing bars and proportions of doors and windows should harmonise with those in existing nearby dwellings.

4.4.6 Boundaries (hedges, fences or walls) should match the rural setting. Hedges should comprise plant species native to the area. Other boundaries should be made from materials and design traditionally used in the area, namely timber, red brick or flint. Any new development should include appropriate landscaping and the planting of individual trees.

4.4.7 Whilst having regard to the above constraints, innovative architectural design and ongoing design development should be encouraged, particularly as regards long term sustainability through the use of suitable materials, energy and water conservation.

4.5 Rural setting:

4.5.1 The predominately agricultural nature of the area needs to be preserved to safeguard the mix of fields, lanes, hedgerows, that form the historical basis of the parish layout.

4.5.2 Any new development should preserve, as far as possible, the present balance of woods, trees, flowers, footpaths and ponds. Any development should minimise the loss of habitat or access to the surrounding countryside to safeguard the essence of the rural nature of the parish. Infill between existing hamlets should be resisted.

4.5.3 Our narrow lanes, together with their verges and hedges, are valued as a distinctive design feature strongly influencing the appearance of the parish. Any proposed development would need to reflect this. In addition, its impact on traffic levels would need to be carefully considered, as there is little additional capacity.

4.5.4 The village is surrounded by a series of spectacular open views, too numerous to mention. Any development spoiling or blocking existing views should normally be rejected rejected in order to ensure the continuation of the core rural landscape design which is of value to all residents, visitors and holiday makers.

4.6 Street furniture:

4.6.1 The current lack of kerbs, pavements, and the limited street lighting is valued as a design feature which maintains the rural character of the parish and should be kept to a reasonable minimum. When replacement is due, every consideration should be given to introducing a consistent design of street lighting for the village which is suitable for such a rural location and might be of a non-standard design to achieve this objective.

4.7 Amenities:

4.7.1 The village enjoys a range of open ‘public’ spaces, including the area around the pond, the green in Beckets Close, the football field and cricket pitch. These existing areas should be protected, and the creation of additional public open space encouraged.

Appendix 1: Design Group Constitution

Name The name of the organisation shall be the Hastingleigh Village Design Statement Group.

Purpose

The purpose of the group shall be to:
Investigate and identify the support for a design statement.
Be as representative of the parish as possible.
Determine the area, the survey method, the content of the statement and sources of funding for the statement.
Be responsible for the analysis of any survey, the production and distribution of the final report.
Identify priorities and timescale for local action in the report.
Seek broad community participation, and ensure that the process is widely publicized.

Membership

Selection of Group members will take place at an open public meeting.
Any resident of the parish may participate.
The Parish Council may nominate a representative to serve on the Group.
In between public meetings, the Group may co-opt additional members at its discretion.
A person shall cease to be a member of the Group having notified the Chairman or Secretary in writing of his or her wish to resign.

Officers

From its members the Group shall elect the following officers; Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and an Auditor. The Auditor shall not be a member of the Group.
The Chairman and officers shall continue in post until successors are elected.

Meetings

There shall be an annual public meeting on a date agreed by the Group to report progress. The notice calling the meeting must detail the business to be transacted, including the election of any members; financial statements and auditor's report; a report on the year's activities and a report on any proposed activities for the forthcoming year.
The Group shall meet every three months as a minimum, or as may be required. At least three days notice shall be given to members.
At meetings of the Group, the Chairman shall take the Chair. In his absence, the Group shall elect another member to deputise.
Every matter shall be decided by a majority of votes of Group members present and voting. In the case of equality of votes the Chairman of the meeting shall have a casting vote.
The quorum shall be five members of the Group.
The Secretary shall keep a record of meetings.

Finance

The financial year will run from August 1st to July 31st.
The Treasurer shall keep proper books of accounts, shall report to each meeting of the Group and shall prepare a final statement of account for independent audit.
The Group shall open a bank account at LloydsTSB.
All cheques for payment shall be signed by any two members who are agreed signatories. The Group shall agree which of its members shall be authorised to be signatories.
All Group members have the right to inspect the books.

Changes to the constitution

The constitution may be altered and additional clauses may be added with the consent of two thirds of the group.

Dissolution of the Group

Upon the dissolution of the Group any remaining funds shall be disposed of by the group in accordance with the requirements of the grant-givers. No individual member of the Group shall benefit from the dispersal.

Will Day
Chairman 21 July 2002

Appendix 2: Village consultations

Design Statement Working Group

Following two open public meetings in the village hall at which representatives from the Borough Council spoke to residents, a core working group was established to co-ordinate further consultation with the community, and to draft the Design Statement. The Group fluctuated in size and composition, but deliberately included a couple of Parish councillors and has a non-councillor as its Chairman.

At every stage, the group took considerable care to ensure that the process being planned encouraged wide participation in the identification of issues. It was recognised that for the final article to be credible and effective, it would need to be the product of community-wide effort and engagement.

Questionnaire

One of the first practical activities by the Group was the preparation and distribution of a questionnaire to every household in the parish. It asked four questions:

Why did/do you choose to live in Hastingleigh?
What do you feel is most important in defining the special characteristic of the village?
What features of the village and parish do you value and wish to preserve?
If there were changes or improvements in the future, what would you wish them to be?

The responses (see appendix 3) were used as the basis for the preparation of the statement.

Photographic survey and exhibition

Later, all residents were invited to take part in a photographic survey of the village as an additional means of getting their views on any aspect of the village that they considered worthy of comment in the Statement. Disposable cameras were issued to 31 volunteer households, together with forms to log comments on each photograph. Participants were invited to comment on any of the following:

Buildings that have an architectural style that appeals to you.
Materials used that you are comfortable with.
The layout or grouping of buildings you feel are suitable for the village.
Public notices that harmonise with their surroundings.
Fencing, gates, hedges, stiles and boundaries that could be encouraged or preserved.
Planting of trees or the layout of open spaces that you feel are appropriate for the village.
Individual features of buildings that are noteworthy.

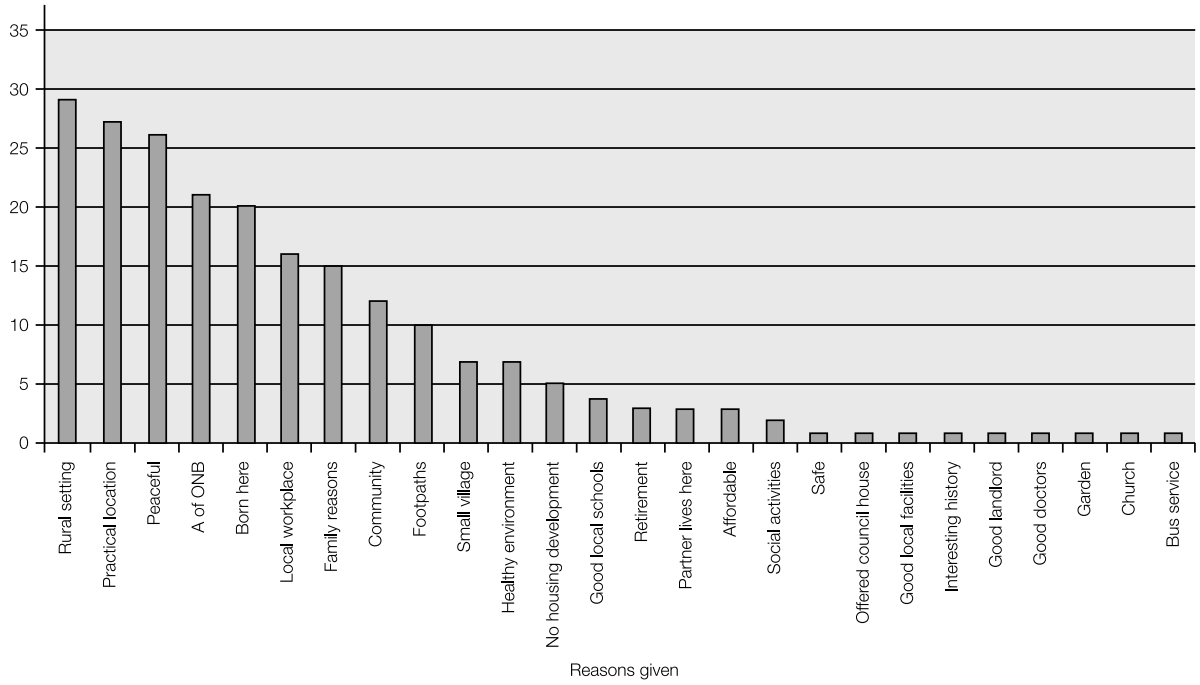
All of the photographs, together with their photographers' comments were put on public display in a day-long exhibition in the village hall. It was attended by 56 visitors. The photographs were grouped into four categories – buildings, environment, amenities and others, against which forms were left for visitors to add their comments. All of the information, together with that from the earlier questionnaire, was taken into account in drafting the first version of the Statement.

Community feedback

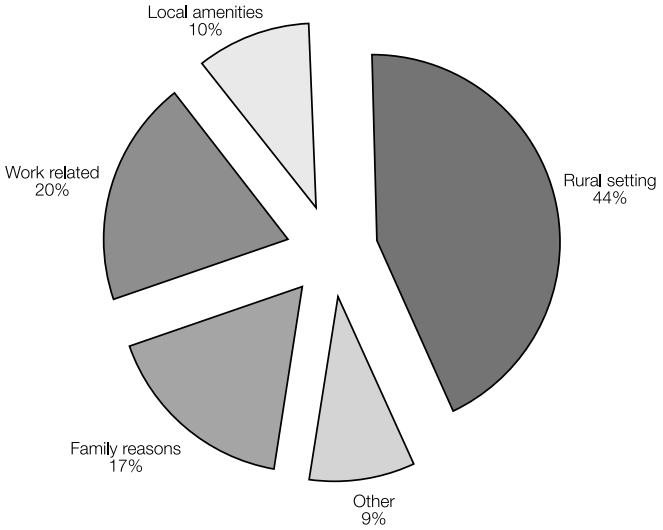
The first draft of the statement was made available for all residents to see and comment on before a final version was prepared incorporating that feedback, and agreed by the Group.

Appendix 3: Summary of community feedback

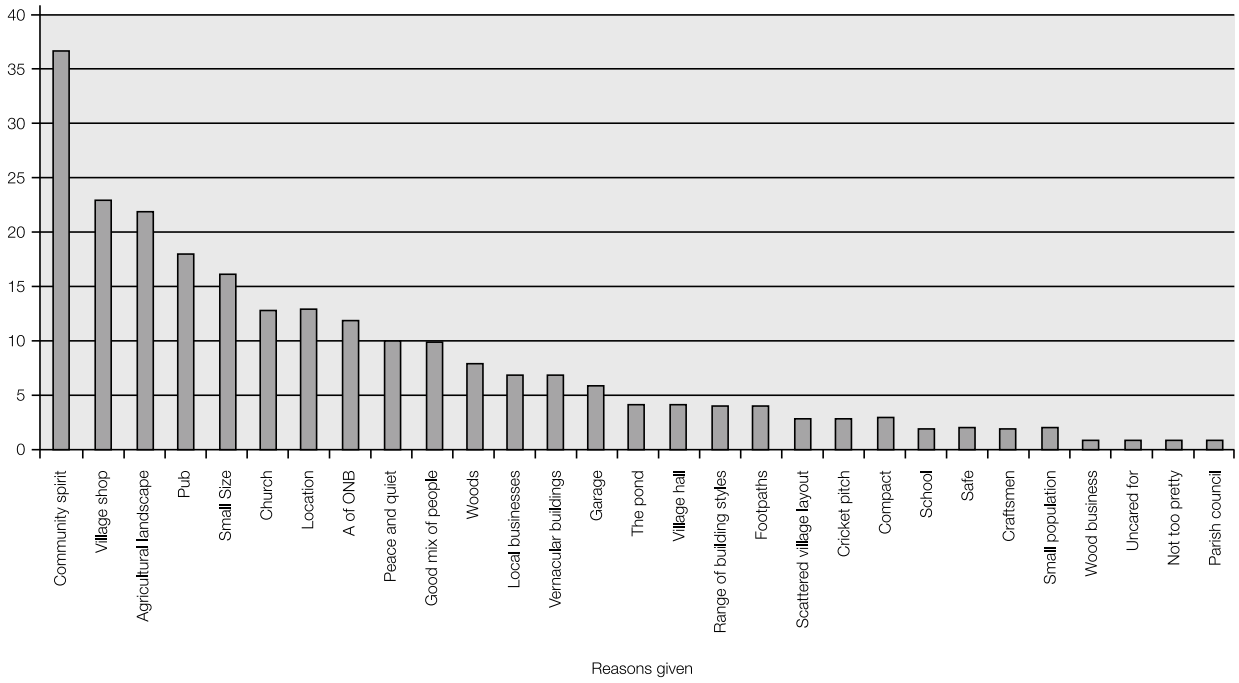
Why do/did you choose to live in Hastingleigh?



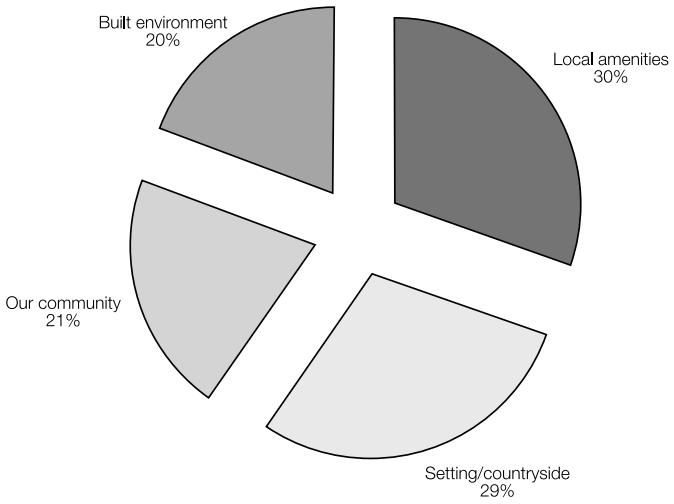
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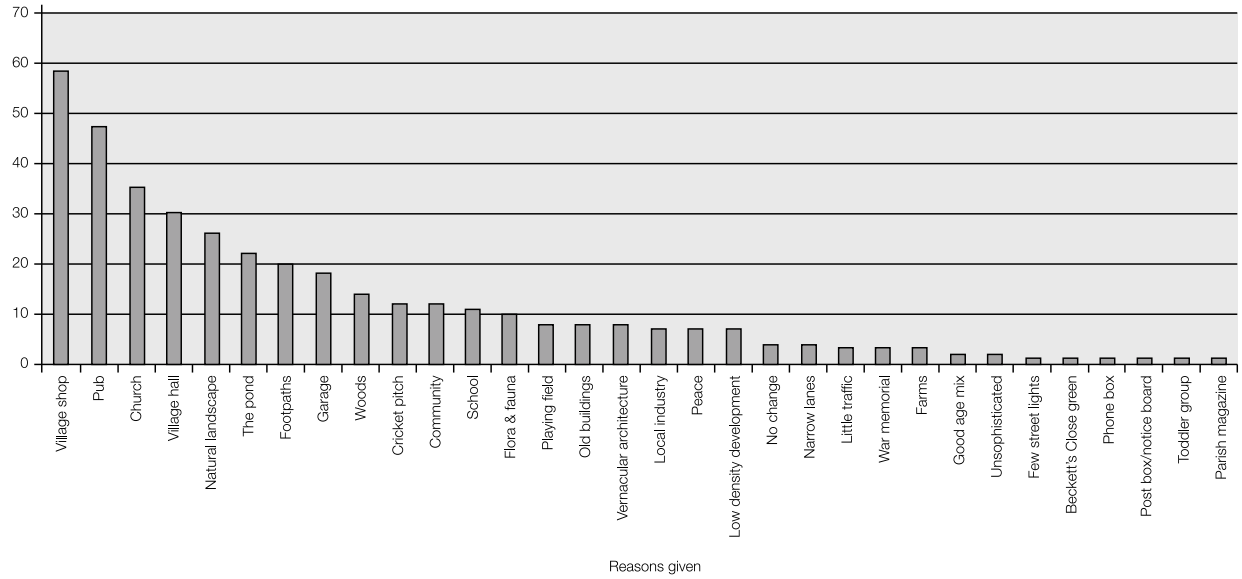
What defines the special characteristic of the parish?



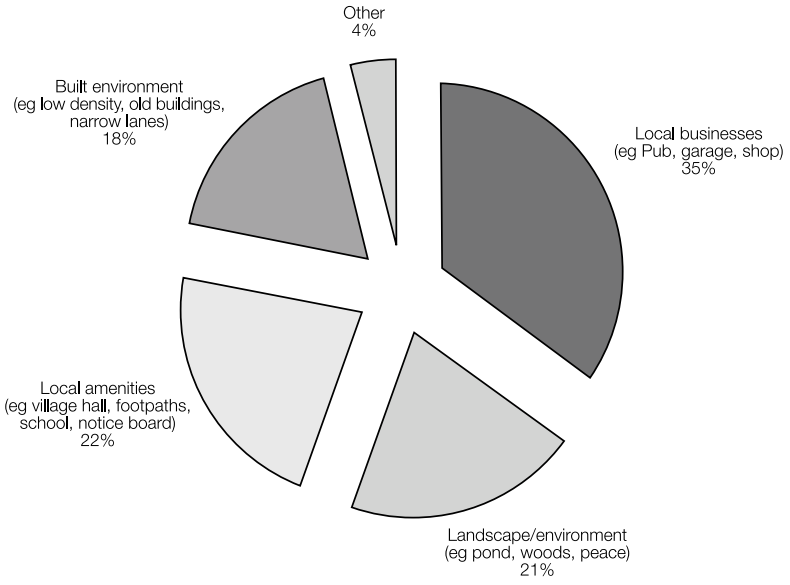
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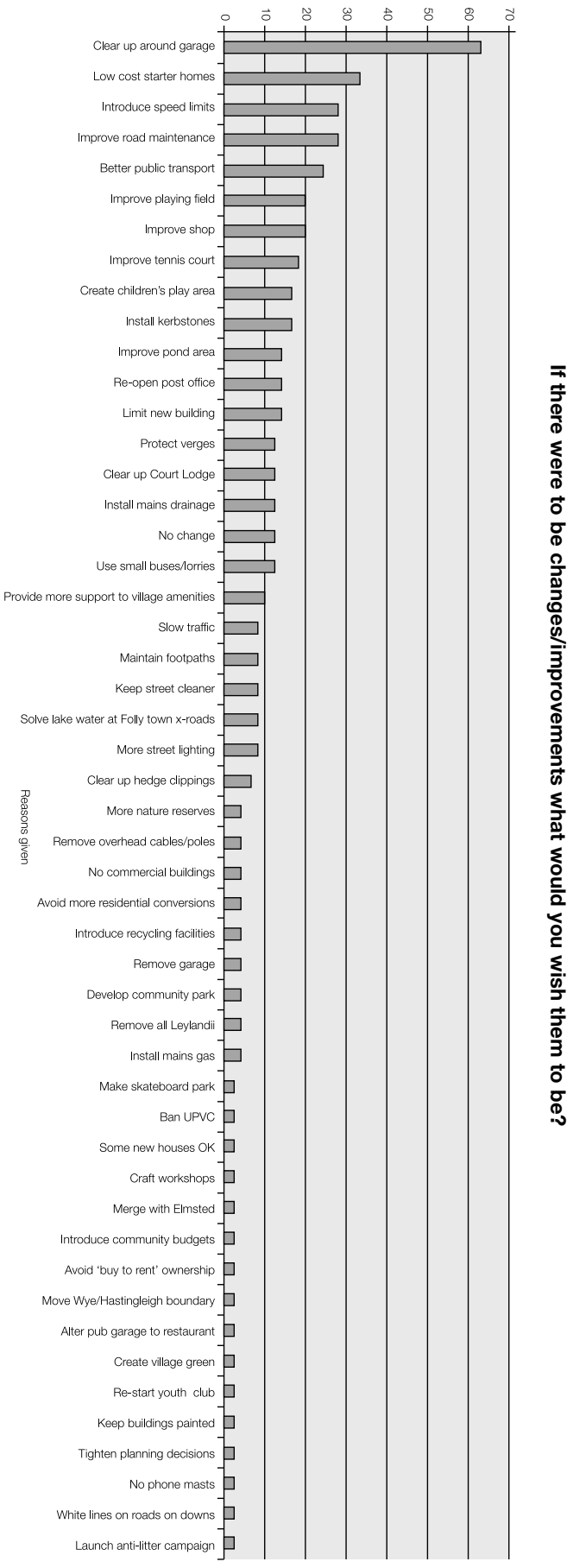


What village and parish features do you value and wish to preserve?



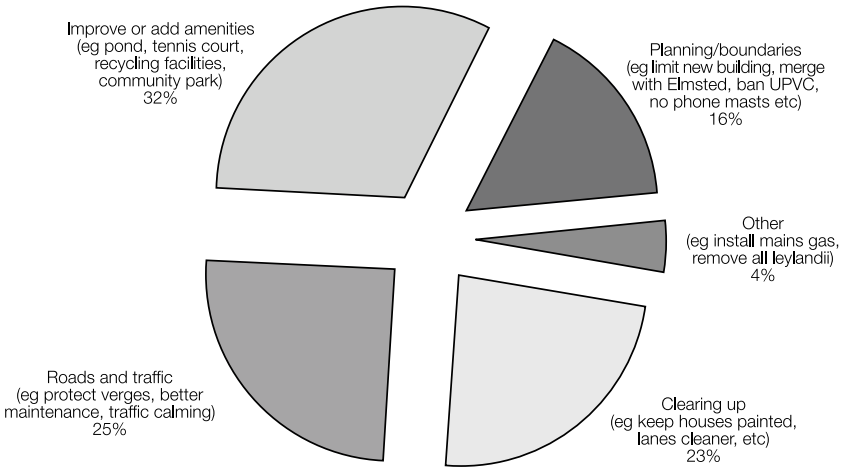
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If there were to be changes/improvements what would you wish them to be?

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Designed by Alison Clothier Tel: 01233 861254

Printed by Crown Print & Design, Wye Tel: 01233 812983