ASHFORD
BOROUGH
LOCAL PLAN

Conservation Area Assessment

Westwell

Conservation Areas are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

There are 43 Conservation Areas in Ashford Borough.

WESTWELL CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

AREA APPRAISAL [Brief, objective description of Conservation Area - scale, location, other special characteristics]

Small compact village with mature tree cover. Area is dominated by the trees and is centred around the church and old farm buildings/mill and Court Lodge and the cross roads outside the public house. Buildings, apart from church, are mainly red brick, two storey set in large plots. Clear relationship between village and scarp of Downs to north and to its agricultural past.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	Site situated at base of escarpment of North Downs. It is probably a spring line settlement. Probably owes its position here to a ready source of water. This is reflected in the presence of the church, mill and main farm adjacent to the stream/spring form of village also reflects communications, ie trackway - now a road along base of scarp crossing a route down a valley in the scarp. Therefore form of village is very closely tied to the physical topography.
archaeological significance and potential of the area	There are no identified areas of archaeological safeguarding but the area around the church, Court Lodge Farm and the mill are relatively undisturbed and may have evidence of earlier settlement. (NB This is supposition only). The church is thirteenth century and Court Lodge was originally medieval.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.	There are three principal spaces a) in front of the Church; b) behind Court Lodge and the church c) at the cross roads by the Wheel Inn. Area also has strong visual links to the Downs to the north and west (open view from crossroads) and to open fields to the south between Westwell Court and Periton Court.
the use of distinctive and traditional building materials	Apart from the stone church and render façade to Court Lodge the principal building material is red brick. Some white weatherboarding also apparent especially on the mill and old Hall House. Much of this village reflects period of expansion in Victorian times - expansion to Court Lodge, Forge Row, Old Vicarage etc.
the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area	Trees, grass and hedges predominate. There are a large number of superb mature trees. Group of trees in garden of Periton Court, not within area, which contribute to the characteristics of the area. The majority of the trees are mature. Is there a need for some trees to be planted now to follow on in the future?
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	As stated above a spring line settlement and crossroads on communication network. Church, main farm and mill concentrated around the spring. Later expansion of farm buildings and housing in Victorian era - identifiable in building types - twentieth century infill. Therefore a variety of building types - Hall house, Church, barns, mill, stables, terraced, semi and detached housing.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
historical evolution	See comments above.
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside.	As described above this village has a very close relationship to its countryside setting. The village has a very enclosed feeling due, in part, to dominance of the trees. There are some important views out, ie across the recreation ground from the public house and south between Westwell Court and Periton Court. View here to Charter House, Ashford.
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	None
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	The village hall is a poor quality building but is low scale behind hedges therefore impact limited. Council houses to the north and west are out of character but because of enclosed nature of the Conservation Area and good hedges on south side of Gold Hill their impact is limited. The car park by the public house is an open hard surfaced area. Some soft boundaries would be beneficial.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	None.
the existence of any threats to the area	Loss of tree cover as existing forest trees become over mature.

OUTCOMES

Area boundary	Generally in the right place. Needs to include garden of Periton Court to keep the trees plus area between Westwell Court needs to be enlarged to protect from agricultural development in the fields.
Potential Article 4 Directions	Walls and fences are not a particular feature except close to Church. New walls/fences around the green by the church would detract from the car. No agricultural buildings in CA south of Court Lodge, Westwell Court.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	The area to north and east of the Church is very important. Development here would be a serious intrusion. Whilst current policies could probably protect it, it may merit a policy. Recreation ground should be kept open.
Potential improvement schemes	1. Public house car park. This needs careful attention to its edges. A good hedge with a well positioned access would be beneficial. 2. Encouragement to landowners to plant new forest trees to ensure replacement for the future.

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