ASHFORD
BOROUGH
LOCAL PLAN

Conservation Area Assessment

Willesborough Lees

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.

WILLESBOROUGH LEES CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

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

This Conservation Area is linear in form, located to either side of the B2164 Kennington Road on the outskirts of Ashford Town. It contains approximately 33 residential properties ranging from terraced cottages to large detached houses set in extensive grounds. The majority of properties are listed and several Tree Preservation Orders have been made. The Area was first designated in .

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	The topography is generally level, with properties predominantly lying to either side of the B2164, Blackwall Road and Silverhill Road. The majority are set back from the road frontages, with a fairly uniform building line. Most plots are regularly shaped and there is little evidence of later subdivision or earlier now defunct road patterns.
archaeological significance and potential of the area	There are no scheduled Ancient Monuments neither have any archaeological finds been recorded by the Kent County Council. However, some properties are of fairly early date ie. Nos. 93-97 Willesborough Road is C17 believed to be refronted earlier and therefore some potential may exist.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.	Notwithstanding the number of smaller terraced and semi-detached properties (about half the total) the character of the Conservation Area is uniformly spacious, with all properties having significant amenity space to either front and/or rear. There are significant, undeveloped gaps between properties and terraces which in the main are well treed, adding to the areas spacious character. However, the character is not particularly open as in the main, properties have heavily treed/hedged/fenced front and side boundaries and many properties can only be glimpsed in their settings from public areas. Development is predominantly two storey, with one or two larger properties having attic rooms. Other than the public highway all land is private garden.
the use of distinctive and traditional building materials	Properties are constructed in local brick with Kent Peg tile roofs of traditional pitch. Some feature the use of tile hanging.
the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area	As indicated above, there are significant landscaped spaces mostly private gardens, mostly well treed. Heavy boundary landscaping gives the appearance of seclusion when driving through the area. Well landscaped gardens to larger properties, ie. Lees House - important part of its setting is the layout of this. These spaces make an important contribution to the appearance and setting of the area.
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	All properties are residential. Lees Farm used to have some residual agricultural use, but land and house recently severed. This has heavily influenced plot layouts which in the main are regularly shaped. Lees Farm exhibits signs of former agricultural use including associated barns and lane leading to rear to agricultural land, and access of greater dimensions to usual house access and to one side to access farm buildings.
historical evolution	Earliest buildings are 16th Century (Shepway) and 93-97 Willesborough Road. (C17 refaced earlier building). Majority date from C18 and few C19 cottages, presumably for agricultural workers, plus Holly Tree House, a substantial 19th Century House.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside	The Conservation Area adjoins agricultural land to the south and west, and later residential development to north and east. It is visible from south (M20 Motorway) as the land falls away steeply to the Motorway embankment.
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	Area has few intrusive features. There have been some unsympathetic additions to Lees Farm house, and to No. 18 Blackwall Road. There are 4 new properties which in the main preserve the appearance of the Conservation Area, although the siting of a new bungalow to the rear of Nos. 2-8 Blackwall Road has a poor relationship with these properties.
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	Features that detract are predominantly small scale, built ones, such as the extensions to Lees Farm and 18 Blackwall Road, about which it will be difficult to do anything in the absence of development proposals. There is an old Ford Capri in the front garden of No. 54 Willesborough Road and the front boundaries of that terrace are in poor condition but improving. Floorscape and street furniture is standard but unobtrusive.
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	
the existence of any threats to the area	Future, approved road widening/straightening scheme, particularly at northern end could prove visually intrusive, particularly if accompanied by "upgrading" works such as railings to protect pedestrians and new traffic signs. Most significant "threat" is the designation of land to the west for housing development for up to 100 homes, 24 of which are currently under construction.

OUTCOMES

Area boundary	Four changes proposed. At southern end to include a landscaped area at entrance to new housing estate (Abbeys) on western edge as part of setting of area. To include sunken "green lane" (former farm access?) to west of Lees Farm which is attractive landscape feature. To delete an area of immediate residential curtilage of a modern bungalow - Kiltskin on the northern edge. to include a new property, 18a Blackwall Road which completes the developed frontage along this side. Part of setting of area and district, visual boundary formed by access to road to pumping station.
Potential Article 4 Directions	Should be considered to prevent changes in materials/windows of unlisted buildings.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	None suggested.
Potential improvement schemes	None suggested, although input to final road improvement scheme needed.

Officer: LOIS JARRETT

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