

Cellar Hill, Lynsted and Greenstreet conservation area character appraisal

(Extract from report to Development Committee 22.11.2000 – Agenda item no. 6B(2) Annex D)

Location

1. Cellar Hill lies in the parish of Lynsted, immediately to the south-east of Greenstreet. Once a distinctly separate community, it is now joined to Greenstreet by virtue of the continued growth of both settlements.

2. Greenstreet (Teynham) is situated on the main London-Dover road (A2) approximately mid-way between the towns of Faversham and Sittingbourne. Although one continuous settlement, the buildings on the north side of the road are situated in Teynham parish whilst those on the south side fall within Lynsted parish.

3. Geologically, Cellar Hill and Teynham are sited on the border between a zone of Thanet Beds to the west and head brickearth to the east. This has resulted in fertile soils which have provided the basis for extensive fruit growing.

Historical notes

4. The ruthlessly straight alignment of the present day London Road through Greenstreet clearly owes much to the old Roman Watling Street; the strong linear form of current-day development might consequently be said to have been strongly influenced by the work of Roman road builders.

5. Despite the presence hereabouts of the line of the old Roman road, the nearest discovery of Roman remains has been some 900m north west of Cellar Hill. It is, therefore, the medieval and post medieval buildings which are the principal survivals, especially in Cellar Hill. These buildings provide the tangible evidence of the long-standing agricultural prosperity of the area, made possible by the rich soils of the north Kent fruit belt. The reputed site of the country's first cherry orchard lies approximately one kilometre to the north at Osiers Farm, Teynham.

Buildings in Cellar Hill

6. Cellar Hill is essentially a place of frontage development set along a winding road (aligned approximately north-south) for a distance of approximately 450 metres. At its southern end Cellar Hill continues to be distinctly rural in character with well-spaced houses dating from medieval times on the eastern side of the road which are interspersed with fields and orchards, and with more open fields on the western side. At the northern end, however, both sides of the road are now substantially built-up, a proportion of this being modern infill development.

7. The outstanding feature of Cellar Hill is the presence of a series of timber-framed houses which, rather remarkably for this part of Kent, continue to have thatched roofs. The use of thatch as a roofing material was discontinued in Kent quite early, because of the local availability of clay roofing tiles. The quality of these peg tiles was such that their use became almost universal throughout the area, and survivals of thatch are consequently rather unusual. A grouping of several thatched houses in close proximity is, therefore, quite special.

8. Tudor Cottage, which is timber framed and dates from the sixteenth century, is the most northerly of these buildings. The skewed positioning of the house in relation to the road is such that the northern end rather attractively encroaches onto the public footway. It is the large thatched roof, however, that is outstanding especially when

viewed from the north where it sweeps down to a low level so that it is an eye-catching feature in the street scene.

9. Just beyond to the south lies Cellar Hill Cottage, also timber framed, also dating from the sixteenth century, and also with a thatched roof. This house is, by contrast, set back from the road within its own garden plot; with its white-painted (part) weatherboarding the cottage is truly picturesque in appearance.

10. To the south again lies Cellar Hill Farm, an attractive eighteenth century house with distinctive brickwork in grey headers and with red dressings, and with a slated roof. The barn that adjoins to the north is an early eighteenth century structure now converted to residential use. The elevation to the road is clad in stained, waney-edged weatherboarding and the large roof is covered with thatch. The barn's position on the edge of the carriageway, separated only by a narrow grass verge, is such that the building has a significant impact.

11. The last of the thatched buildings, The Olde Thatched Cottage, marks the southern extent of Cellar Hill. This is another sixteenth century timber-framed house, although it is now substantially hidden from the road behind walls, gates and screen planting so that its contribution to the street scene is somewhat diminished. A tall evergreen tree screen along the southern edge of the plot creates a rather harsh boundary between house and countryside.

12. On the opposite side of the road lies Sunnybank, a property which contrasts sharply with the medieval houses on the east side of the road. Sunnybank is a small, single storey, prefabricated house, built in the mid 1930s, which is similar in appearance to standardised products offered in catalogues produced by Hurlingham and Universal. The bungalow appears to be fairly unaltered with, for example, original windows, roof covering, weatherboarding and mock tudor timber cladding. It is, therefore, an interesting local example of budget-priced accommodation of the period. The plot is attractively elevated above the road with a small, cottagey front garden bounded by a wall built from reject quality yellow bricks (which itself nicely matches the modest origins of the bungalow). The property is unmistakably a product of its time; its origins are interesting, and its modest appearance is engaging.

13. Nineteenth century building in Cellar Hill is represented by a row of small terraced cottages at the northern end of the road and by The Burrs. Both examples were built with locally manufactured yellow stock bricks, and the roofs were originally slated. The cottages in particular have suffered from unhelpful changes to their appearance but their position on the edge of the carriageway (with front doors opening directly onto the carriageway) is striking.

14. Post-war housing is a feature of Cellar Hill, and a number of the gaps between the older properties have now been developed; numbers 18-20 are the latest example. Most of the infilling is of fairly average quality, but the four pairs of houses to the south of The Walnuts (built by Swale Rural District Council) have for the most part survived without significant alteration and are a good example of public housing of the period. An effect of this infilling has been that Cellar Hill now merges imperceptibly with the eastern end of Teynham.

Buildings in London Road, Greenstreet

15. Buildings in Greenstreet are situated conventionally on either side of the London Road. Here, at the eastern end of Greenstreet, the road is relatively wide; this is in contrast to the section to the west of Station Road which is appreciably narrower.

16. The principal feature of the northern side of this part of London Road is the long and uninterrupted row of small terraced houses mainly dating from the late nineteenth century, although some are likely to be a little earlier. Some of these cottages have been altered in ways which have not improved their appearance individually, but the strong overall form of the group and the pleasing variations in designs and materials are such that the properties retain a very strong sense of cohesion and continue to make a distinctive contribution to the street scene. Their position on the back edge of the wide footway, some with front door steps projecting onto the public path, gives strong and positive definition to the street scene as the road rises to a high point at Cellar Hill. Yellow brickwork, weatherboarding, and clay roofing tiles, where present, all contribute to a strong sense of local identity.

17. To the east of this group, frontage development is a little more fragmented; three substantial Victorian properties are set back from the road, whilst the timber framed Orchard Thatch provides an attractive 'end' to development. The latter is a timber framed house dating from the seventeenth century underbuilt with red brickwork so that it is set up above the highway and partly clad with weatherboarding. The roof is thatched, and its survival here might be said to echo the survival of thatch on the buildings nearby to the south in Cellar Hill.

18. At the opposite (western) end of the row of small terraced houses is a small development of modern two-storey houses which continues the theme of frontage development. Adjoining is Alverley House, built in the seventeenth century and clad with brick in the eighteenth century. The corner of Station Road and London Road is attractively defined by a nineteenth century yellow stock brick building, with a traditionally designed shop front present on the ground floor. The rather bright appearance of the brickwork suggests that it has been heavily cleaned in recent times.

19. A memorial pump, dated 1897, is situated on the public footway near to Alverley House and provides an important point of interest in the street scene. The stone plinth is surmounted by a shingle clad 'spire', so that the structure is of sufficient scale and size to be a significant feature in its own right in the street.

20. Development on the south side of London Road is somewhat different in character to that on the north side, comprising a smaller number of generally larger buildings. The western end of this group is defined by the Dover Castle Inn, which is a large, early eighteenth century building with extensions added approximately one hundred years later. The roughcast rendering now results in a rather austere appearance but the building is of an entirely appropriate scale for this roadside situation and historically it has been one of the hostelrys serving the needs of travellers using the London-Dover road.

21. To the east stands The Grange, another eighteenth century building of substantial size but set well back from the road behind a brick boundary wall extending across this and the adjoining site (where a new dwelling is now present). Painted brick, plain tiling on the roof, and regular fenestration are key features. Yew trees and pollarded limes in the front gardens here provide greenery which contributes to the more spacious and relaxed character of this end of Greenstreet. The nineteenth century yellow brick cottages beyond to the east are, by contrast, small in size and set well forward - positioned in fact on the back edge of the footway. This brings shape and variation to the street scene on this side of the road, although the properties have suffered detrimental changes to windows and doors.

22. Four detached houses of widely varying ages complete the development on this side of the London Road. Number 8 dates from the early nineteenth century, whilst The Old Forge dates from the seventeenth century. The Walnuts lies on the opposite side of Cellar Hill and was built in 1825. Both The Old Forge and The Walnuts occupy key positions on the brow of the hill on either side of the Cellar Hill junction. Forge House, with its half-hipped peg tiled roof has a characteristically Kentish appearance, whilst The Walnuts has an attractively proportioned front in red brick approached via a short shingled drive. The brick outbuildings at the rear of The Walnuts, with their peg tiled roofs, are important to the appearance of the entry into Cellar Hill, being attractive in their own right way and defining the edge of the carriageway.

23. The section of London Road, Greenstreet extending from Station Road to Cellar Hill has a character and identity which distinguishes it in a number of ways from development further to the east. Here the carriageway and footways are noticeably wider than in the rest of Greenstreet, and many of the buildings (especially on the southern side) are set back from the road so that trees and shrubs become a part of the street scene. This separate visual identity is further enhanced by the road alignment as it climbs to a high point at the junction with Cellar Hill.

Landscape

24. The countryside around Greenstreet and Cellar Hill is widely known for its fruit growing; Ordnance Survey plans record that in the early years of the last century both settlements were completely encircled by orchards. Fruit growing is now rather less extensive, but orchards continue to be a major feature in the local landscape. A dry valley, known locally as the Lyn valley, runs along the eastern side of Cellar Hill and is an attractive feature in the local landscape although not generally visible from within Cellar Hill itself.

25. The southern end of Cellar Hill still retains the character of a rural lane, in contrast to the northern end which is now substantially built-up; the transition from a rural, to a more urban, character is consequently a feature of the place. The winding informality of the narrow road at its southern end between low banks and hedgerows, with remnants of traditional orchards comprised of standard fruit trees with grazing beneath, has an attractive traditional Kentish character. By contrast the northern part of the road is more urban in appearance with footways, kerbs, street lighting and where few trees are present. Overhead wires and distribution poles are intrusive at the southern end of Cellar Hill.

26. London Road, Greenstreet has a strongly linear form reflecting the alignment of the Roman Watling Street. The noise and intrusion of traffic is ever present (together with parking on the footway) and with relatively few gaps between the buildings the place has a much more urban feel, although the generous width of the street at the eastern end is an ameliorating influence. The rise to the brow of the hill at the junction with Cellar Hill adds drama to the street scene and decisively marks the end of Greenstreet and the resumption of the countryside beyond.

27. The presence of some greenery in the environment is one of the features which differentiates the eastern end of Greenstreet from the rest of the street, and signals the change to a somewhat more spacious residential area.

Other comments

28. Cellar Hill is special for its group of medieval buildings and the survival of roofing thatch in a locality better known for its clay tiles. Thatch, so clearly a building material of the countryside, strongly reinforces the rural character of the place. The remnants

of old orchards interspersed among the houses add to the strongly Kentish character of the lane and its immediate environment. By contrast, Greenstreet is characterised by a more built-up linear environment, with buildings which are somewhat more recent in date and which are closely associated with the A2 transport route.

29. Greenstreet and Cellar Hill now form part of one continuous area of development. The cluster of historic buildings around the junction of Cellar Hill with London Road identify, to some extent, with the environments of both Cellar Hill and Greenstreet and provide the physical evidence of the earlier link between two areas which have since developed somewhat diverging characteristics.

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