

The Street, Borden conservation area character appraisal

(Extract from report to Development Committee 11 August 1999 Agenda item no. 6B Annex B)

Location

1. Borden village lies some two miles south west of the centre of Sittingbourne. Whilst it remains physically separate from Sittingbourne town the intervening gap along Borden Lane is now very small. The village has itself been significantly enlarged by a series of housing developments completed during the last forty years.

Physical setting

2. The village lies on the Thanet Beds which overlay the very gently rising land of the North Downs dip slope. From here there are extensive views to the north over Sittingbourne and beyond to The Swale and the Isle of Sheppey. Orchards were, until recently, a major feature of the surrounding countryside, but arable land is now becoming more significant. Field amalgamations, especially to the south of the village, have resulted in a more open landscape. The small area of undeveloped land to the north east of the village, which separates it from Sittingbourne, displays some characteristics of the urban fringe.

Historic interest

3. The history of Borden and its vicinity has been traced back to the Iron Age. Archaeological evidence shows that Belgic people occupied a hill fort on land immediately north of the present day site of the Playstool. Other evidence shows that the countryside around Borden was subsequently settled by the Romans: Sutton Baron, some ½ mile to the south of Borden village, was the site of a Roman villa and other Roman finds have been made in the village itself. After the Roman occupation it is likely that much of the area reverted to forest and that centuries later it was slowly reclaimed, with separate settlements and farmsteads gradually being established.

4. Mediaeval times were a period of particular prosperity in Borden and its vicinity, with many houses being rebuilt and extended. A number of houses from this period still survive and are a special feature of the parish.

Buildings

5. Borden village is centred on the parish church of St Peter and St Paul, a large flint building strategically sited at the western end of The Street (the main village thoroughfare). The slightly elevated position of the building in relation to The Street reinforces its prominence, and the adjoining churchyard (similarly elevated) is also an important feature of the village layout. A flint boundary wall encircles the churchyard and is an attractive feature in its own right.

6. The churchyard's position at the western entrance to the village causes Pond Farm Road to wind tightly around its edge before joining The Street at a T-junction. This pronounced winding form creates an attractive, and very individual, entrance into the village from the adjoining countryside.

7. Opposite the churchyard to the south lies a pleasing range of buildings comprised of Street Farm Cottages and House, Apple Tree Cottage and The Cottage. These buildings are all timber-framed and infilled with a mix of plaster and red brick; they are covered with a jumble of clay, peg-tiled roofs. They stand on the edge of a

narrow footway and form an important and historic group defining the space around the church. A passageway between these cottages reveals a further range of old buildings, again with an appealing mix of materials and roof forms. Beyond again to the south is a small, boarded barn with thatched roof.

8. Appletree Cottage was used for many years as the Parish Poor House, until the Milton Workhouse was built in 19th century. There is also some evidence to suggest that Street Farm House and Street Farm Cottages may in the past have been occupied by monks, perhaps connected with Leeds Priory as an outlying farm or grange. These two Borden buildings are physically joined which is unusual for their size, and stonework is present in the rear windows of the farm.

9. Borden Hall, formerly the parsonage, is a large timber-framed building which stands to the north of the church. Whilst set well back from the public highway in its own grounds, it is prominent from within the churchyard. Dating from the 15th century, the central portion is clad with brick but the wings on either side still reveal timbering. A substantial dove cot building stands in the grounds, although the nearby tithe barn was demolished during the second world war. Large mature trees line the boundary with the church and also the frontage to Wises Lane and are an attractive and prominent feature of the village. The frontage to Wises Lane is marked for most of its length by a simple iron railing, but an interesting timber-built shelter is also present.

10. On the opposite side of Wises Lane to Borden Hall the frontage is defined for a short distance by a small range of cottages, but the historic character here is short lived as the development quickly changes to a ribbon of modern bungalows and houses.

11. The western end of The Street continues to display much of the character and appearance of a traditional village street, reinforced by the substantial presence of the church which terminates the view. The houses and cottages grouped along the south side of the road have a pleasant, fairly modest, character, but their real importance lies in the form which they give to the village street. There have been piecemeal changes to the cottages, such as replacement windows and doors, but the overall form and character of the group continues to remain substantially intact.

12. Barrow and Forge Houses at the western end of The Street are particularly important to the definition of the village layout, providing substance to the corner with Pond Farm Road. These 19th century yellow brick houses bring a measure of elegance to the street picture. The adjoining single storey forge is an important survival of a key village activity and the yellow bricks and slated roof are characteristic of its time.

13. On the north side of The Street, the Playstool public open space occupies a large part of the frontage. The name suggests that the land might have historic origins as such sites were used to stage mystery plays in the Middle Ages. Now owned by the Parish Council, the front section has been laid out as a semi-formal garden, whilst the remainder is open in character with extensive views to the north across to the hills of the Isle of Sheppey.

14. The Maypole public house has a white rendered front elevation and slate roof. Its traditional appearance enlivens the village street although the building is of no great age. The adjoining timber-framed Holly Tree Cottage has an attractive elevation to the street despite heavy refurbishment.

15. To the east of the Playstool the old village core ends rather abruptly at Homestead View where there is a new cul-de-sac developed on a plot-by-plot basis with a diversity of house designs and building materials.

16. On the opposite side of the road The Barn is a substantial building set at right angles to the road. Its traditional form, massive roof, and traditional materials make a substantial statement and visually define the boundary between the main areas of old and new development at Borden.

Landscape

17. The proximity of the countryside is, inevitably, important to the character of Borden. The western approach to the village along Pond Farm Road retains a strongly traditional feel, with the countryside continuing right up to the village edge. This simplicity has been lost from the other entrances into the village, which have been much changed by modern development and are now rather more suburban in character.

18. The open space of the churchyard is a key feature in the village, particularly so as it includes a mix of mature trees including oak, ash, pine, and birch. The trees are at their largest and grandest, however, around Borden Hall where their massive presence helps to terminate the view looking west along The Street, and is an important component in the village scene. Other trees along the southern boundary of the village make a useful contribution as a background to the street scene.

19. The Playstool is substantial in size and consequently comprises a large open space in the village but the frontage to The Street is well defined by a row of chestnut trees.

The local economy

20. The close proximity of Borden to Sittingbourne means that the village is now largely within the influence of the town. A shop/post office and a public house continue to trade, but inevitably the village now looks to Sittingbourne and elsewhere for many of its requirements.

Character

21. This conservation area contains the key elements of the traditional village scene: an historic church, an old 'manor house' surrounded by large mature trees, picturesque timber-framed buildings and other cottages grouped along the village street, a public house and a village greenspace. Each one of these elements makes an important contribution to the character of Borden,