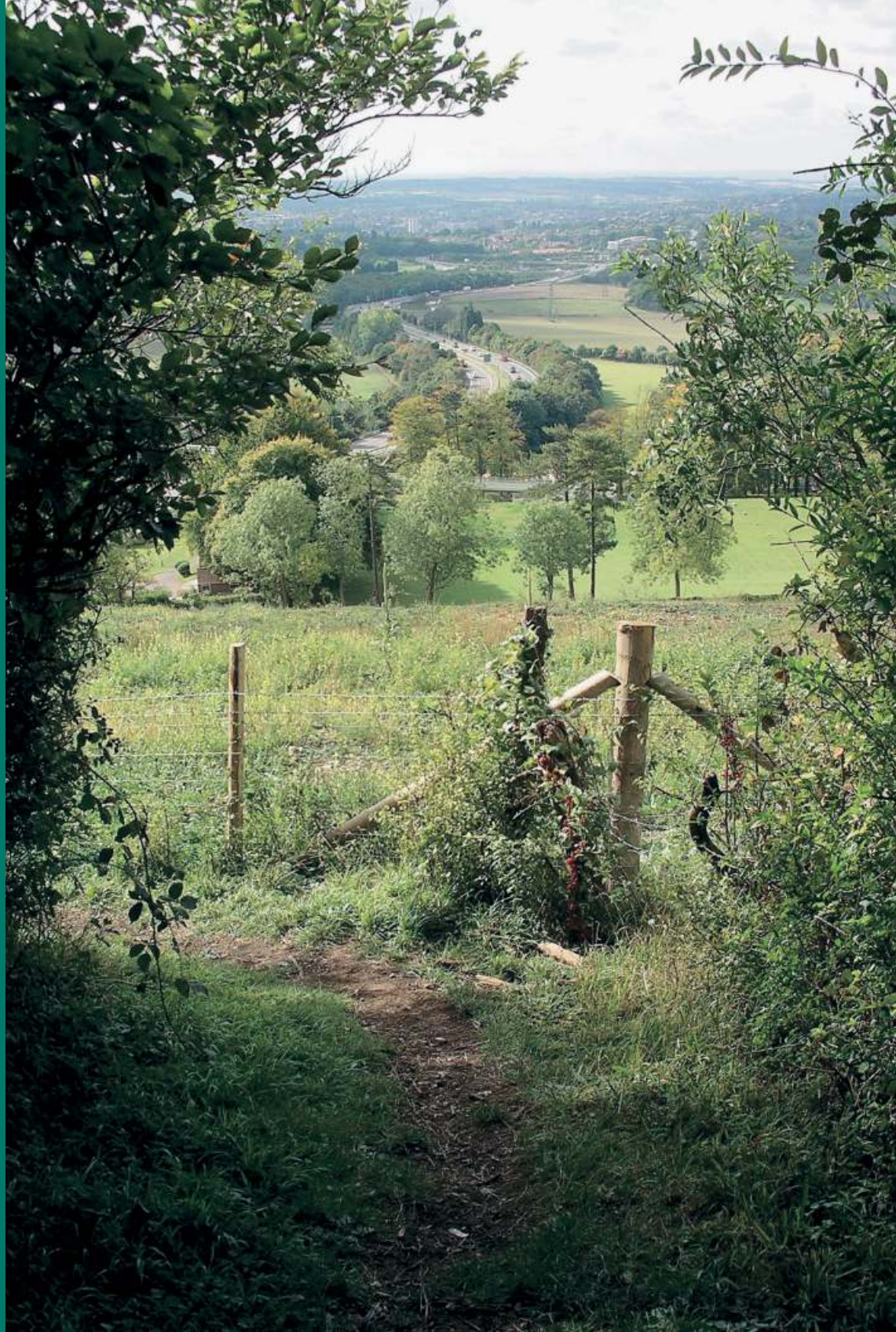




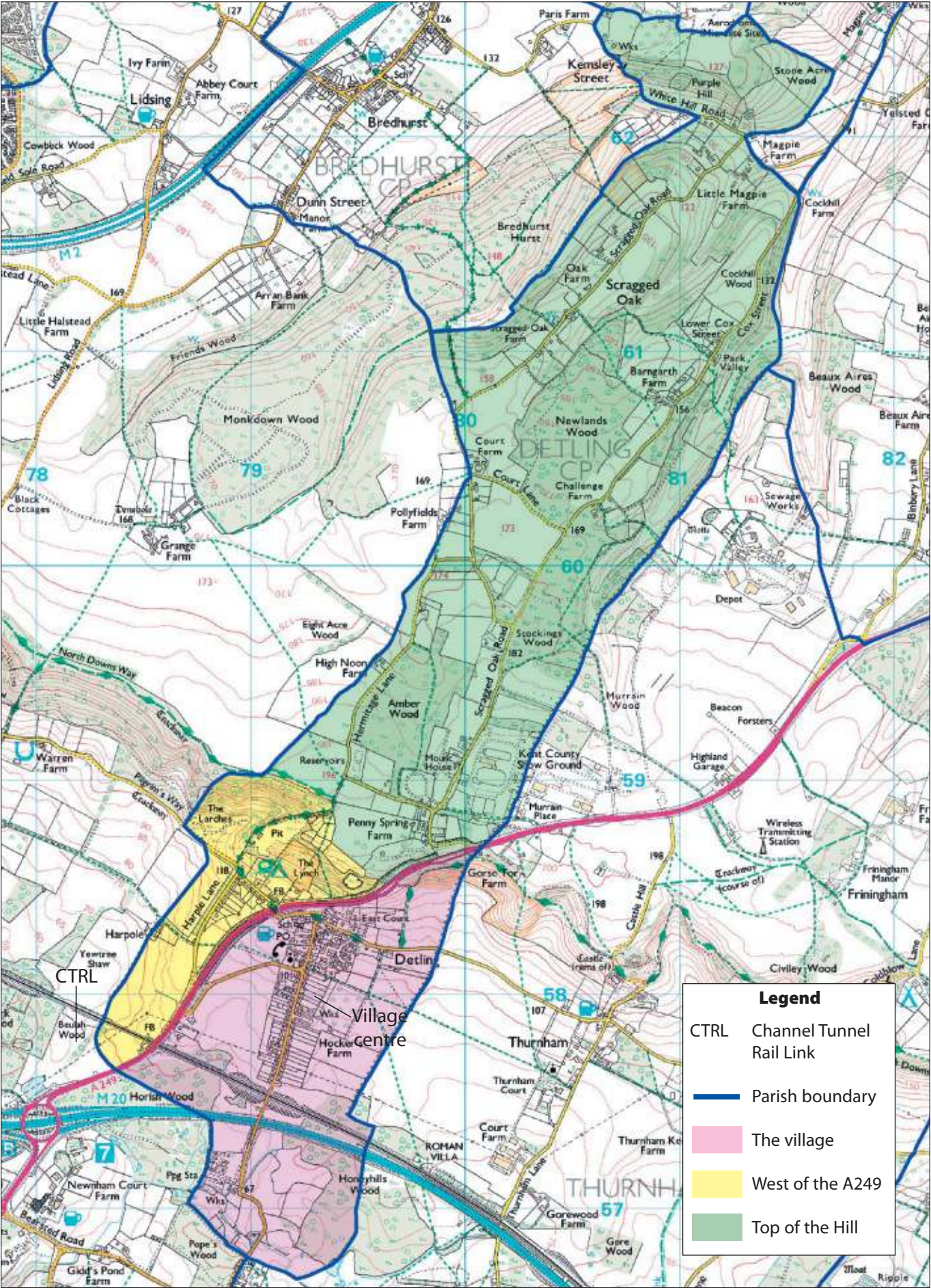
DETLING

November 2005



Detling Parish Plan

Map 1 Detling Parish with break-down into three parts



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Cover photo: A249 and Jade's Crossing from the North Downs Way

Preface

This, the Detling Parish Plan, presents the findings of the community appraisal conducted in Detling in the past two years. It develops a vision of what people would like Detling to be in the longer term and an action plan to take this vision forward. It contributes to the evidence base that informs the development plans, strategies and documents of local authorities and gives Detling a greater voice in shaping our future.

The study is community focussed, needs addressed, and prepared by a team of local people. We were delighted to get a 73% return of completed forms to our questionnaire survey, demonstrating the interest of residents in our future and the hard work put in by volunteers. We also used a number of less formal methods of enquiry for gathering information and for considering issues at greater depth.

Aside from the executive summary, the document is in four parts: (i) a brief background to Detling (ii) our community appraisal – what we did and what we learnt (iii) the issues of most concern to our community, and (iv) a framework for action.

Throughout we have gone to considerable length to take account of as wide a range of opinion in Detling as possible but inevitably cannot represent the views of all individuals on every issue of local concern.

The work was funded by The Countryside Agency, Awards for All Lottery Grants for Local Groups, Action for Communities in Rural Kent, Kent County Council Member Community Grant, and Detling Parish Council, to whom we are very grateful.

The Steering Group
November 2005



Executive summary

This document presents the findings of a community appraisal conducted in Detling and a framework for action developed from this. Its preparation has taken many hundreds of hours of sweat and tears (if not blood!) by a hard-working team of local people. The broad aim is to develop a vision of what people want for Detling and a plan for taking this forward. It is intended to give Detling a greater voice in targeting and shaping our future and contribute to the evidence base of our local authorities. The study is based on the findings of a questionnaire survey and other less formal investigations.

We found that:

- Detling has a population of 777 living in 323 households
- 61% have lived in Detling for over 10 years and 23% for over 30 years; 10% of adults were born or brought up here
- 65% of residents are 40 years or over and 29% 60 or over; only 21% are under the age of 20
- 78% of households have no dependent children
- 46% of the community are working, 17% in education and 25% retired
- 6% work from home and another 8% in Detling; 34% work in Maidstone
- 84% are either very or quite satisfied with Detling as a place to live.

We also found that people generally have a positive appreciation of the parish's countryside, community and institutions. They like the ambience of a rural village and the convenience of the location with its good road transport links and proximity to Maidstone. The aspects of Detling most appreciated are:

- Nearby attractive countryside, walks, woods and the Downs
- Friendly, caring mix of people
- Good community spirit and village atmosphere
- Quiet and peaceful village setting. Rather ambiguously, this contrasts with wide concern for noise pollution from roads and occasional events
- Proximity to town and good road transport links
- The village post office and store and the services it provides
- Other village facilities such as the church, pub, school and hall, and a range of informal institutions.

There is also agreement over the importance of a number of negative issues and what people dislike about living here:

- Fly-tipping, litter and poor street cleanliness including dog fouling
- Safety, access, lighting and other issues relating to the A249
- Noise pollution from highways, CTRL and Showground events
- Dangerous junctions on the A249
- Excessive vehicle speeds, particularly on village roads and country lanes
- Inadequate maintenance of roads, pavements, verges, hedgerows, trees etc
- Inadequate parking facilities near the village centre, church and village hall
- Lack of play area, football pitch and recreation facilities for the young.
- Lack of street lighting in village centre (others commended this aspect).



However the parish is not a single homogenous unit and in some cases there is a considerable disparity in views between different groups in the community. For example, noise from the A249 dual carriageway is given a particularly high priority by those living west of the highway, dog fouling by those in the village centre, and access to shops and fly-tipping by those in rural areas at the top of the hill. The issue of village lighting is another instance where more than one strong view is held.

One important conclusion coming from the appraisal is the high proportion of middle aged and elderly people in Detling, with 65% of the population aged over 40 and only 22% of households having dependent children. This age profile has implications for the long-term sustainability of our valued school, church, shop and pub, and many of the informal institutions run by local people. Already some of the latter have ceased to operate or are having difficulty in finding people to lead them. Some increase in people numbers including young families would appear necessary if our valued facilities and institutions are to survive and prosper.

We do not know the ideal size of Detling or the critical mass necessary to support our institutions, and for this and other reasons it is important that any development is appropriate to the existing scale and character of Detling, sensitive to the feelings of local people, and enhances Detling as a place to live. For these reasons a Village Design Statement is central to our proposals.

Recommendations for action have been developed from the study and are summarised below.

Design and development – built environment

- Prepare a Village Design Statement (VDS) for Detling
- Prepare a Landscape Design Plan (LDP), associated with the VDS
- Explore opportunities for improving safety, parking and appearance of Hockers Lane and The Street
- Explore need and opportunities for affordable (local needs) housing
- Explore need & opportunities for small-scale conventional housing
- Consider options for sensitive and unobtrusive village lighting

Design and development – natural environment

- Research possibility of village green/open space as a focus for the village
- Secure future of Scragged Oak Viewpoint site as a place to visit, learn and enjoy
- Promote the Larches SSSI as a place to visit, learn and enjoy
- Develop management and access plan for Horish Wood
- Explore possibility of regenerating and managing old cherry orchard
- Promote use /maintenance of public open spaces and footpaths in Detling

Traffic and road safety – highways

- Resurface sections of both M20 and A249 to reduce road noise
- Consider extending the 50 mph limit for remaining section of A249 in Detling
- Improve safety and convenience at Scragged Oak Road/A249 junction
- Provide interactive speed sign or camera at top of Detling hill
- Improve safety and convenience at Church Lane/A249 junction
- Tidy up, plant out and maintain central section of A249
- Reduce clutter of road signs and consider AONB gateway sign
- Ensure adequate traffic policing of Showground events
- Monitor progress in provision of roundabout on A249 that meets local needs
- Explore idea for A249 to be brought up to motorway standards

Traffic and road safety – minor roads, byways and pathways

- Consider removal of speed de-restriction signs on country lanes
- Consider the provision of cycle lanes and improving the safety of cyclists
- More generally, work with Quiet Lanes initiative to improve safety and appearance of country lanes and roadside verges
- Make provision for footway to bus stops at top of Detling hill

Facilities and institutions

- Promote use/support of the Post Office and village store
- Promote use/support of Detling school and its facilities
- Improve knowledge of crime & how to avoid it in Detling
- Endeavour to re-activate Neighbourhood Watch scheme
- End negative impacts of large/noisy Showground events
- Explore KCC dial-a-ride/shopping services and local benefits

Appearance and amenities

- Explore ways for ending fly-tipping and car dumping in Detling
- Explore possibilities for establishing medical clinic in village
- Educate dog owners, facilitate clean-up and consider fixed penalties
- Provide post box at top end of Scragged Oak Road
- Explore opportunities for local recycling and its management.

The Plan is by no means cast in stone and is expected to evolve over time as events unravel and new information comes to light, hence will require periodic updating. A Coordination and Monitoring Group is proposed to assist the Parish Council monitor and review progress, reporting to the Council on a regular basis.



1 A brief background to Detling

A bit of history

The parish of Detling (then Detlinges) was one of many lands stolen from the church by Bishop Odonem, a half brother of William the Conqueror, in the reign of William (1066-1087). After an assize held in Penenden Heath near Maidstone in 1082, the bishop was made to return most of his land to the church and for punishment was cast into prison in Rouen in France for five years (Cornfield, 1980).

The Street in the early 20th century (right) and as it is today



Some more history

Detling earned notoriety in 1252 when a local cleric called Hamon fell in love with a lady (from Adisham near Canterbury) called Juliana, who was the wife of a certain Ralph de Bubehurst. Their affair led to the murder of Ralph, whose dagger-hacked body turned up on a beach in Sussex and started a hunt for the killers. The guilty lovers fled, but Juliana was caught and imprisoned in the Archbishop's gaol in Maidstone from where she escaped and claimed sanctuary in Detling church. She could not stay there forever, though, and eventually she gave herself up, was tried and banished from the realm. After that, history lost sight of her and Hamon, who disappeared without ever standing trial.



Detling village is pleasantly situated at the foot of the North Downs about three miles from Maidstone. The village is a mix of architectural styles from over the centuries, with a fine Norman church, houses around The Street dating from the medieval period, and 1930s and post-war housing radiating out from the centre.

The parish is a narrow elongated strip some seven kilometres in length, spreading north eastwards from near the corridor formed by the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) in the south, almost to the M2 in the north. It lies between Thurnham parish to the east and Boxley to the west and, with Bredhurst, Hartlip and Stockbury to the north (Map 1 on the inside front cover).

Almost all the parish falls within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its attractive landscape contains arable farmland, pasture and large areas of woodland, much of it on the top of the escarpment where the parish rises to over 200 metres (about 650 feet) above sea level. At the southern and lower end of the parish the soils are mostly thin and chalky (though the southern extremity reaches heavy Gault clay) while at the top of the Downs the chalk is covered by a layer of clay with flints.

Our countryside

In 1797 one observer (Edward Hasted) wrote that the chalky stony soils are very poor and unfertile which makes Detling "exceedingly unpleasant, either to dwell in or pass through"!

Most observers consider Detling in a more favourable light. When Lady Longford's father (a surgeon in London) leased Lynchfield, Elizabeth felt that "the clouds opened on paradise". She later wrote of the "supremely romantic views from the Downs and the brilliant

chalk-loving flowers and butterflies of the Detling countryside."

She also wrote "The strangest character I remember from my childhood was known as 'the tramp' (Teddy Wells). Bearded, ragged and filthy he lived alone in the disused chalk pit along Boxley Lane (now Pilgrims Way). He was my first experience of a drop-out. My father told me he had got a first-class degree at Cambridge and had once been a county cricketer" (Cornfield 1980).



The parish includes part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (the Larches/Lynch Bank) of international importance for its beech woodland and chalk grassland, an area of ancient woodland (Horish Wood), and coppiced chestnut woodlands floored with bluebells in spring. It has an area of Downland managed under an Environmental Stewardship scheme which has an 'open access' designation. It has a major national trail, the North Downs Way, which traverses the parish near the crest of the escarpment, now dropping down to the village to cross the A249. It borders White Horse Wood, a 65 acre park where 20,000 trees have been planted as a millennium project.

Detling today is a thriving parish with a population of 777, an active church, primary school, pub, village hall, and post office with a general store. It has a good number of clubs and societies and a well-developed village identity. It has, however, an ageing population which makes vulnerable some of its valued facilities and institutions.

The A249 dual-carriageway linking the M20 and M2 motorways cuts through the heart of the parish, and with right-turn restrictions acts to split the parish into three parts. Despite the recent construction of a pedestrian bridge (Jade's Crossing), the road remains of local concern for reasons of access, safety and noise.

Detling in the 19th century

In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales wrote: "Debtling or Detling, a parish in Hollingbourn district, Kent; 3 miles NE of Maidstone. It has a post office under Maidstone. Acres, 1, 576. Real property, £2,369. Pop., 344. Houses, 76. The manor belonged to the Debtlings and the Polhills. There are lime-pits. The living is a vicarage in the diocese of Canterbury. Value, £195. Patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The church was renovated in 1861; and an old wooden bell-tower was then replaced by a stone tower and a shingled spire."

Memories of Detling

Lady Longford (née Elizabeth Harman), the well known biographer and historian, spent her summer holidays at Lynchfield, which stood on Pilgrim's Way across the road from the Cock Horse Inn. The large Victorian house was demolished in 1961 when Detling by-pass was constructed (the A249). Lady Longford was so saddened by this she refused to return to the village (Cornfield 1980).

Detling Hill

Lady Longford wrote "across the road from Lynchfield was the vicar, Canon Horsley, and his daughter Mildred. Sadly, she was knocked down and killed on that dangerous hill when on her voluntary milk-round during World War 1."

Another incident of that period (circa 1913) describes a car whose brakes failed on Detling Hill, hurtling down 'The Street' and turning over as it tried to take the corner by the church. The driver was taken to hospital in Maidstone and the car dragged away by horses (Cornfield 1980).

2 Our community appraisal – what we did and what we learnt

2.1 How the plan got going

In the summer of 2003 Detling Parish Council decided to support the development of a Parish Plan for Detling. This centres on an appraisal of who lives in the parish, what people see as locally important, what they like and don't like, and what they think should be done to conserve or improve things. The overall aim is to target and shape a vision of the future and give the community a greater voice in local affairs.

With assistance from Kent Rural Community Council (KRCC) and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC), we widely publicised the idea of the Plan and held a number of well-attended open meetings to discuss the aims of the Plan and encourage community involvement. At an early meeting we elected a Parish Plan Steering Group and identified a number of volunteer helpers.

In the first few months the Group prepared a constitution, terms of reference, a management plan (here called a logical framework), and several applications for funding. We also wrote to local businesses and voluntary organisations and widely published the Plan on notice boards, in Detling News and in the local press.

During the ensuing period we developed with the school a model of the parish, organised a Detling photographic competition, and held summer and winter walks to help residents get to know the parish, including visits to parts little known to most residents. We also held stands at parish events which we used to help identify and appreciate issues of local importance

2.2 How we went about our appraisal

We used a variety of formal and informal methods to inform our appraisal. The central tool was a questionnaire survey, a census of all parish households designed to capture factual information about households in the parish and give everyone (from 13 years upward) the chance of having their say. For the purpose of the survey we divided the parish into its three main parts (see *Parish divisions* – left). A plan for a follow up (second stage) survey was dropped for reasons of time and expense.

The survey was not sufficient in itself, however, and as encouraged by the Countryside Agency, we also delved into issues using less formal methods of enquiry. In our case we found useful having a Parish Plan stand at several village events, in-depth discussions with professional and knowledgeable people, strategically placed maps and notebooks, an Open Day workshop to present our survey findings, and detailed information obtained from many years of parish involvement. We also benefited from unsolicited written and verbal contributions made to the Steering Group from people with long-standing connections with the parish, not all present-day residents but all with an active involvement in Detling.

We used these early exercises to inform the questionnaire, which we designed in conjunction with OMB Research, a locally-based independent market research firm. The questionnaire took several months to prepare and went through numerous drafts. One problem was striking a balance between desired information coverage and ease of usage, and the fear that people would be unlikely to complete long forms.



The final questionnaire was in two parts, the first collecting factual information about Detling at household level and the second the views and opinions of individual family members (see *Individual survey* – right).

The survey was carried out in September and October 2004. A team of local volunteers personally delivered, explained and later collected the questionnaires from every household in the parish. This was a major undertaking especially in outlying and rural parts where there is considerable distance between properties and it is not always easy to make contact with householders. Up to three visits were made to properties for the purpose of collecting the completed forms (see *Survey response* – right).

We then fed the forms through to OMB Research who entered the data on their computer and undertook the analysis using professional software. We made provision for cross correlation between data sets, with the facility to consider the overall parish-wide figures and also deal separately with different categories of residents. This was done to capture differences of opinion there may be within the parish, including different age groups such as teenagers and those over 60, and residents of the three distinct parts of the village. All work was done in strict confidence and individual responses were (and are) not identifiable.

A large data set was produced in November 2004 which we considered in detail alongside information assembled in less formal ways. We drafted some preliminary findings and presented these at the Detling Christmas Fair in December 2004 and in more detail at a Parish Plan Workshop/Open Day in April 2005, with stands on individual issues. Over 100 people including the local MP attended this event, discussed ideas, and provided useful feed-back.

Based on these various findings, we asked eight volunteers each to draft an 'Issue of Concern' following a set of guidelines produced by the editor. The remainder of the document was drafted by the editor who was also responsible for overall co-ordination and consistency of style.

There followed a long process of consultation with all those involved in developing the Plan. At an early stage individual contributions were passed around for comment and, following collation and redrafting, the overall draft was circulated three times to all team members for suggestions and feedback, the final time as hard copy. The statistical data presented in the Plan were checked by OMB Research.

During this process many helpful suggestions were made and incorporated into the text as appropriate. The challenging task of bringing together different sets of information and opinions was met by considered analysis, argument and balance, and in this way controversy was kept to a minimum (but not eliminated). The final text was agreed by the Group in October 2005.

Individual survey

In the second part of the survey every individual in the parish aged 13 or over was asked what level of priority they give to a list of issues that had been identified in earlier studies. The issues included aspects of the parish that they judged important for good or bad reasons – things they liked and wanted conserved or disliked and wished to be changed. Responses could be at any level from top priority to no need for consideration.

Interviewing on the North Downs Way (above)

Parish Plan Open Day Workshop



Survey response

We are pleased to report a very encouraging response rate of 72.8% to our survey, with 235 households out of 323 returning completed forms by the cut-off date. This demonstrates the hard work put in by the team of volunteers and the keen interest residents have in shaping our future.

Unfortunately we have no means of knowing the factual details and views of the remaining 27% of the population. In at least three cases, women informed volunteers at the door that, although they themselves were interested in the Plan, their husband ruled that the forms should not be completed!

A Steering Group meeting



Parish divisions

To allow us to extract more detail from the survey we divided the parish into three parts: the village itself, the area immediately west of the village across the A249, and the extensive rural area stretching northwards into the North Downs which we call the top of the hill. The geographical breakdown is shown on the map of the parish in Map 1 on the inside front cover.



Detling's population

From 1801 to 1931 Detling's population stayed fairly stable at about 250 to 350 people. However in the thirty years around World War 2, the population nearly trebled, rising from 252 (in 1931) to 596 (in 1951), reaching 748 (in 1961), which is close to our present population.



2.3 What we learnt about our community

This section reports on the factual findings of our appraisal obtained from the 2001 Population Census and the household level survey.

i. Who lives in Detling?

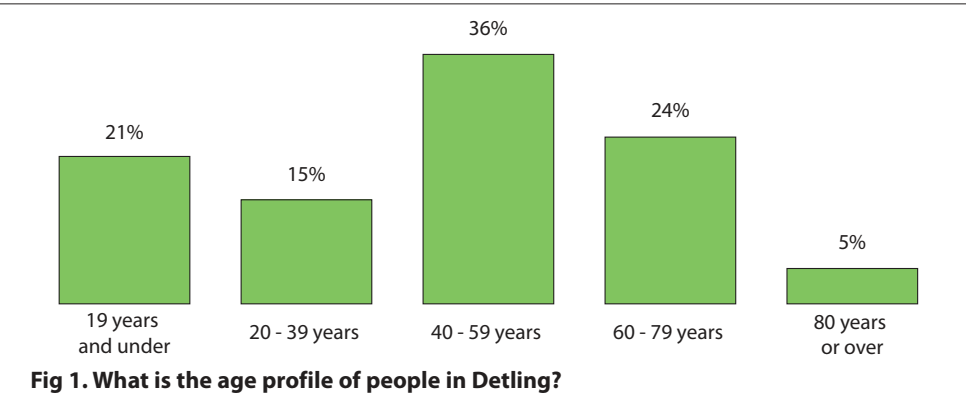
According to the Census, in the year 2001 Detling parish had a population of 777 persons, 49% (380) who are male and 51% (397) female. About 66% of adults are married, 22% single, and the remainder (12%) either divorced or widowed. The population live in 323 households, with an average occupation of 2.4 persons per household. 656 people are on the electoral roll.

Detling's population grew quite rapidly for a period before and after the Second World War but has since remained fairly stable (see *Detling's population* – left).

ii. What is our age profile?

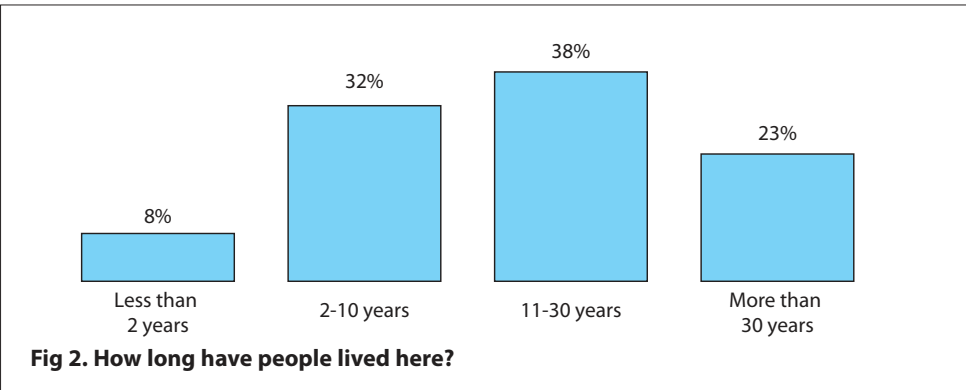
In our survey we found a high proportion of middle aged and elderly people, with over 65% of the population aged 40 years or more. 36% of these are between 45 and 59 years and 29% are 60 years or more. About a quarter of the population are retired (see Fig 1).

In contrast we found that only 12% of the population are children (12 years or under) and 9% teenagers. It is significant that we also found that only 52 of the 233 responding households, or 22%, have children living with and dependent upon them.



iii. How long have people lived here?

The survey revealed that a good proportion of residents have a longstanding connection with Detling parish and have been here for many years. We found that 61% of households have lived in Detling for over 10 years and nearly one quarter (23%) have lived here for over 30 years. Indeed, 10% were born or brought up in the parish (see Fig 2 and *Detling's community* – left).



Detling's community

Our appraisal shows that Detling is a mixed village with people of different backgrounds, occupations and ages rather than a typical suburban or dormitory village. However many people have a longstanding stake in Detling both as a community and a place to live and recent arrivals are relatively few.

iv. Where do people live in the village?

Some 70% of residents are concentrated in the village itself, defined as all households to the east of the A249, including The Street, Queensway, St Martins Close, Princes Way, Hockers Lane, Hockers Close, Orchard View and Pilgrims Way east.

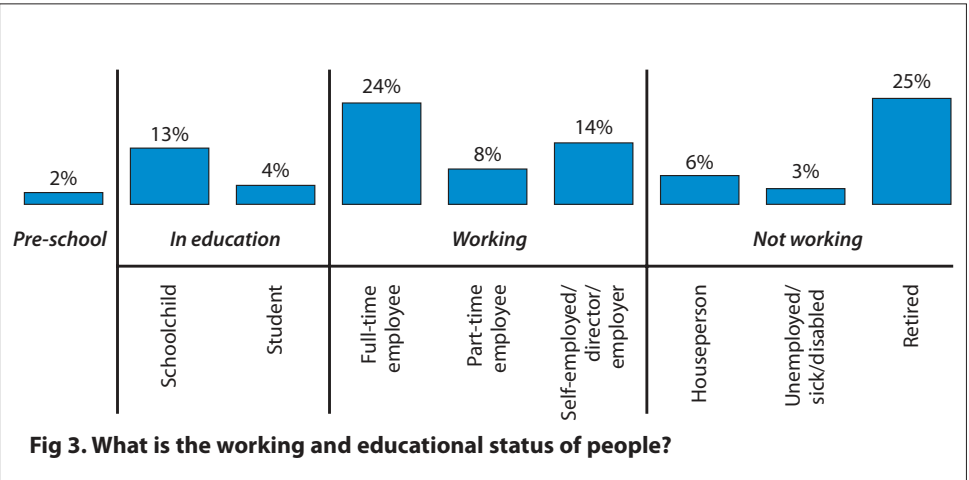
About 30% of residents live the 'other side of the A249' and 'at the top of the hill'. The other side of the A249 includes Pilgrims Way west and Harple Lane, while the top of the hill centres on the Scragged Oak Road spine, including Cox Street, Hermitage Lane, Broader Lane, and White Hill Road.

The vast majority of Detling residents (84%) live in 'owner occupied' accommodation, almost exclusively a house. The remainder are in tenanted accommodation, 10% rented from the public sector and 5% from private landlords.

iv. What do people do for a living?

In the survey 46% of respondents described themselves as working, 34% not working, and 17% in education; the remaining 2% are pre-school children.

Fig 3 shows that nearly one quarter of the population are full-time employees (24%), but numbers of part-timers, self-employed people and company directors are also significant (14%). Surprisingly low proportions of the population describe themselves as housewives or house-persons (6%), sick or disabled (2%), or unemployed (1%). The largest single category is the retired (25%).



Open Day workshop



Beech woodland, the Larches



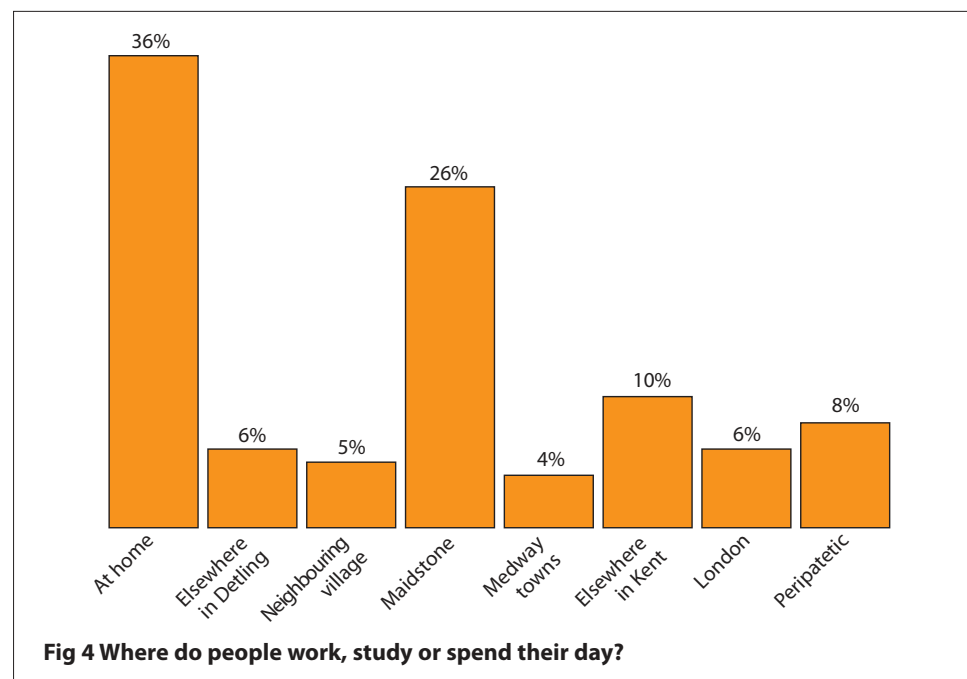
Millennium Party

vi Why do people live here?

The reasons why people live in Detling are complex. We found that 'finding the right property' is the single most common reason but many say they were specifically attracted to Detling as a place to live. Others stress their long-standing connections with family or friends in the parish or the convenience of the location. Only a small proportion (4%) gives employment in Detling as a reason for living here.

vii Where do people spend their day?

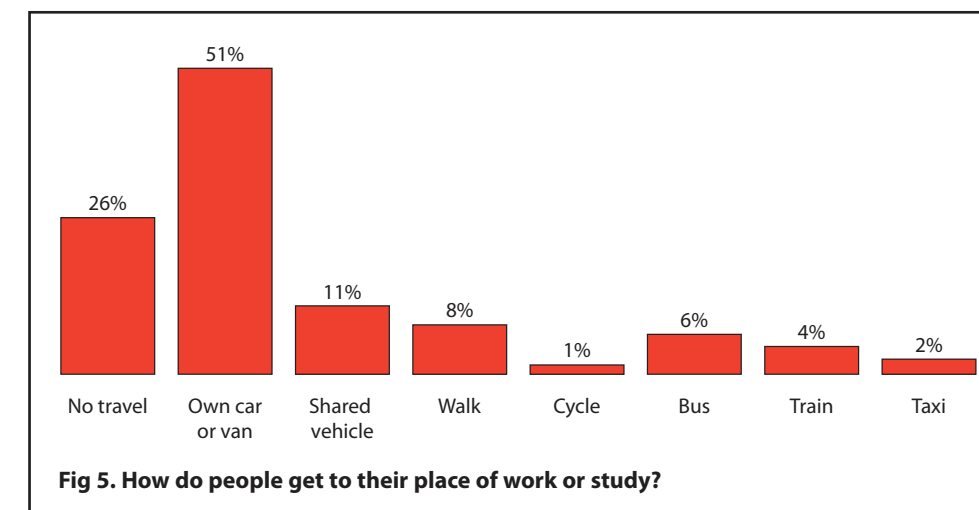
People were asked in the survey to describe where they normally work, study or spend their day. We found that 36% of respondents primarily do so at home, and after that the most common place is Maidstone (26%). Other places are shown in Fig 4 below.



vii What means of transport do people use?

The most common means used by residents to get to their place of work or study is by their own car or van (51%). 11% of respondents share the use of a vehicle with others, 10% use public transport (either bus or train), and 8% walk. Given that so many people (36%) usually pass their day at home, it is not surprising that over one quarter say that on most days they do not travel at all.

Note the figures add to over 100% as some people use more than one means of transport (e.g. car or bus to go to the station where they catch a train).



Appreciation of Detling

Generally we found that people much appreciate what Detling has to offer. The overall view (84%) is that people are either 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with living in Detling. Only 5% are either 'very or 'quite' dissatisfied' with Detling as place to live.



Plant sale: Garden Safari in Detling, 2005



2.4 What people think about Detling

The second half of the questionnaire survey sought the views and opinions of individual family members about Detling as a place to live and issues they considered important. This section of the document summarises the general findings of the enquiry while specific issues of concern are discussed in chapter 3 below. Generally we found that people much appreciate Detling as a place to live (see *Appreciation of Detling* – left).

i. What people like about Detling

The aspects of Detling most appreciated and what people most like about living here are very wide but the most common are:

- Proximity to countryside, walks, woods and the Downs (34%)
- Friendly, caring mix of people (27%)
- Good community spirit and village atmosphere (22%)
- Quiet and peaceful village setting (21%). Rather ambiguously, this contrasts with wide concern for noise pollution from roads and other sources
- Good road transport links (21%)
- The village post office and store and the services it provides (18%)
- Other village facilities such as the church, pub, school and hall (13%)
- Close to town but still in the countryside (12%).

ii. What people don't like about Detling

From the various consultation activities undertaken as part of this exercise there is also considerable agreement over the importance of a number of negative issues and what people dislike about living here:

- Prevalence of fly-tipping, litter, and poor street cleanliness
- Road safety, access, lighting and other issues on the A249
- Speeding vehicles on both major and minor (village and country) roads
- Noise pollution from highways (M20 and A249), railway (CTRL) and certain events at the Showground
- Poor maintenance of roads, pavements, verges, trees etc
- Inadequate parking facilities near the school, village centre, church and village hall
- Lack of play area, football pitch and recreation facilities for the young
- Lack of street lighting (others commended this aspect).



iii. Variation within the parish

Provision was made in the survey for cross correlation between data sets, with the facility to deal separately with different categories of respondents such as the young and the elderly and residents of different parts of the parish, knowing that parishes are seldom a single homogenous unit.

On many issues there is in fact little or no difference of view between respondent categories and, where this is the case, the matter is not referred to further. On some issues, however, there is considerable disparity of view, as discussed in Chapter 3.

For example, noise from the M20 and A249 highways is given particularly high priority by those living close to these roads, dog fouling by those in the village centre, and access to shops and fly-tipping by those in the rural area at the top of the hill. Similarly the absence of a football pitch is a concern to teenagers but less so to others. Generally speaking, the elderly tend to give higher priority to local issues than do younger groups, quite reasonably perhaps as they typically spend more time in the area and local issues assume greater importance.

In some cases the sub-divisions used in the survey are insufficient to bring out full distinctions in the parish: for example, it is known from detailed non-survey evidence that the concerns of people at one end of the 'top of the hill' can be very different from those at the other end some five kilometres away, and to an extent a similar situation applies in localised parts of the village itself.

iv. Remaining issues for the Plan

The final question in the questionnaire survey asked whether there are any other issues that need addressing in the Plan (good or bad). This produced a wide range of responses, the top group of which are reproduced without comment in Appendix 2.

Interpretation of findings

Care must be taken in interpreting the findings of any statistical survey of views and opinions as qualitative factors cannot easily be captured. While an issue may not be a high priority to the majority of respondents and therefore not register in the statistical results, there may be a minority group (e.g. disabled people) who are deeply affected by it and for which it is key.

A typical case where this can happen is affordable housing, which may not be of central interest to the majority of respondents who are adequately housed but vital to relatively few young people or families with modest incomes, and perhaps also important to the very elderly. Similarly, issues (e.g. noise or light pollution) may be very significant in one part of the parish but not be apparent in the overall figures. Clearly factors such as these have to be taken into account in determining what goes into the Plan (Brand, 2001; Boot, personal communication, 2005).



The issues of most concern to our community

We have shown above that most people like Detling as a place to live and value it highly for reasons associated with its location, environment and sense of community. However when issues are looked at in more detail a number of critical issues come to the fore.

Based on evidence from the various consultation activities undertaken as part of this exercise, this chapter looks in a rounded way at the challenges facing our community, what issues and concerns people think are important, and what should be done to move things forward.



3.1 Design and development

i. Introduction

Detling, one of the ancient villages lying along the spring-line at the foot of the Downs, has grown from pre-Saxon times. Life has evolved around the Street with the church, school, post-office and shop, pub, garage – and formerly the wheelwright, blacksmith and butcher – at the village centre.

Over the years the village has kept its considerable charm and character, though two large Victorian houses (Lynchfield and the vicarage) were lost in post-war developments. It has a variety of building styles including traditional timber framed, red and yellow brick, and weather boarded houses.

Hockers Lane and Pilgrims Way were natural lines of development before and after the war and houses were also built in Beech Grove (now Harple Lane) on the far side of Sittingbourne Road (A249). Queensway was developed as a council estate in the 1950s but the houses are now mostly privately owned. Princess Way was added in the 1960s and Orchard View most recently (1990s).



Jade's Crossing

The footbridge is the result of a twenty year campaign by the people of Detling. It was constructed following the deaths of Jade Hobbs and her grandmother who were killed while crossing the A249 at this point on Saturday 16th December 2000. This brought the number of people killed at the junction to four. Funds for the bridge were raised by public subscription, Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council. The bridge was opened by Caroline Hobbs, Jade's mother, and her family on Saturday 31st August 2002. The crossing is dedicated to those pedestrians who have died crossing the A249 in Detling.

Over two thirds of the surface area of the parish is at the top of the hill, where habitations are scattered dwellings and farm buildings, often in small groups. The Kent County Agricultural Society lies on the old airfield in this area, partly in Detling and partly in Thurnham parish (Detling aerodrome industrial estate in fact lies in Thurnham). Since the 1960s the Showground has helped put Detling on the map with its annual Kent County Show, and more recently a succession of increasingly frequent and sometimes controversial events.

A major local issue in the parish is the A249, a dual-carriageway constructed in the early 1960s. While the road provides excellent links with the surrounding motorway system it was not built to present-day standards and has become increasingly busy with a poor accident record. Safety at the village/Pilgrim's Way junction has been improved by the introduction of a 50 mph speed limit and the construction of a footbridge, Jade's Crossing, in 2002. This was built following intense community pressure and a tragic accident that gave it its name (see *Jade's Crossing* – right).

ii. Planning framework

Detling is subject to a borough-wide Local Plan prepared by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC, adopted December 2000), which runs for the period up to 2006, and the Kent Structure Plan, now the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, which sets the strategic background. While these are still current the system is under change and both plans are being phased out.

The Structure Plan is to be replaced by a regional strategy for south east England prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) in Guildford. The Local Plan is to be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF), which will provide the basis for determining the future development of the borough, including planning matters. Under this framework MBC is producing a series of documents on particular topics, the first being open spaces and affordable housing. Supplementary documents (which replace supplementary planning guidance) will also be produced which provide detailed guidance on how planning policies should be implemented on the ground. These potentially have considerable relevance to Detling as they give the opportunity, at least in theory, for considerable 'bottom-up' input.

A practical way of influencing local planning practice in the medium and longer term is through a locally-developed Village Design Statement (VDS), which potentially can be incorporated into local planning law.



Affordable housing

By affordable housing we mean a form of shared ownership or rental designed to help local people on modest incomes get a foot on the housing ladder. A local person is defined as someone linked to the village by birth or residence, or who has close family connections in the village. The initial stage of any scheme is an impartial survey of need conducted by an independent body.

Affordable housing is alternatively called 'local needs housing' which some consider a better name. Houses are built on 'exception sites' not allocated for housing development which helps reduce the cost of land. A property can later be sold (via the Trust) but only to other local people. The seller receives a share of the price proportionate to that he or she put in to its purchase.

The Rural Housing Trust

The Rural Housing Trust (RHT) is a charity and a not-for-profit developer of affordable housing in small villages. Through its creation and support for 18 rural housing associations and in partnership with social landlords, the Trust has developed 3,000 homes in 320 villages for shared ownership or rental in England. The average population of these villages is 500- 600 people (not very different to Detling) and the average size of a scheme is eight to twelve properties. The Trust has built houses in 24 villages in Kent including ten in Leeds and six in Bredgar parishes. Around 20% of the programme comprises bungalows for older people (RHT personal communication).

iii. Strategic designations

All of Detling parish north of the M20 falls within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. The primary objective of the AONB is to protect and enhance the area's natural beauty whilst (secondarily) recognising the needs of the local community and economy. SEERA have pronounced support for a high degree of protection against development in the AONB. While having no power of its own, the AONB designation provides the touchstone against which all development in Detling should be assessed (Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, 2004-2009).

At county level the area falls within a Special Landscape Area (SLA), a designation which highlights distinctive local landscape (MBC/Landscape Partnership, 2003). Detling also contains large areas of Nature Conservation Interest and part of the Wouldham to Detling Escarpment, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). An adjacent area along the A249 has Protected Roadside Verges status as does an area on Scragged Oak Road adjoining the Showground (see Map 2 on page 51). An area of Downland east of the village has recently been designated as Open Access land (Open Country) under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, 2000.

In the village itself, land from the A249 to the north down to Hockers Lane is a Conservation Area and the only area ear-marked for housing is the Allocated Housing Site east of Orchard View. Local residents, however, are concerned that unsympathetic developments have in fact been squeezed into the Conservation Area in recent years. Land to the east of Hockers Lane is set aside as Public Open Space.

The Local Plan shows Detling village to be completely surrounded by land with a Strategic Gap designation (Map 2 on page 51). While this is heartening the designation is by no means sacrosanct as recent MBC documentation raises the prospect of new developments at local motorway interchanges, not excluding the M20 junction 7 only a stone's throw from Detling (Maidstone 20/20, undated but issued in June 2005).

Tudor Gateway, Pilgrim's Way



iv. Housing development

The visual appearance of Detling is of major importance to local people, and in the survey 68% of all respondents give planning and development controls top or high priority. The concern of residents for the parish's form and character is strengthened by the survey finding that many people are attracted to live specifically in Detling and that 84% of householders live in owner-occupied houses or flats.

Regarding future development, views are somewhat mixed in the survey on the need for 'affordable or local' housing, 44% giving the matter top or high priority. However, evidence uncovered in the consultation process suggests that residents are generally more sympathetic when the issue is fully explained and people understand the aims and restrictions of the scheme (see *Affordable housing* and *The Rural Housing Trust* – left).

More widely, Detling's age profile suggests the need to attract young families to the parish to keep our community sustainable (see *Ageing population* – right). Although not specifically covered in the survey, some residents call for small-scale conventional housing development and this possibility also needs to be explored.

As with all housing, it is critical that great care is taken in the design, location and landscaping of any new development, which should be used as an opportunity to enhance the visual appearance and character of Detling as a Kentish village. This demonstrates the importance of preparing a Village Design Statement for the parish.

v. Recommendations

- 1 Promote the preparation of a Village Design Statement (VDS) and seek funds and volunteers for this purpose. The VDS would:
 - describe the distinctive character of the village and its setting
 - identify features of local architectural distinctiveness, traditional materials and modes of construction
 - in partnership with local planners and consultants, develop a design code that would be used to shape and guide any future development in the parish. This does not exclude imaginative and innovative architecture as long as it accords with the existing scale and character of DetlingSpecialist consultants may be required to provide professional advice and ensure that all relevant factors and opportunities are properly considered but local people would be centrally involved in the process (see *Village Design Statements* – right).

Village Design Statements

VDSs offer a framework for helping local people determine the shape, character and appearance of their parish. They do not aim to prevent change but manage change sensitively by ensuring that new developments are in local character and environmentally and socially sensitive. They provide a design code for work that potentially impacts on the village environment and thus are relevant to planners, architects, developers and individual householders alike.

Ageing population

We have indicated above the high proportion of middle age and elderly people in Detling. This proportion is likely to grow because the national trend is for people to live longer and the evidence suggests people stay in Detling late in life. Although there will be some natural replenishment (i.e. younger people moving in as houses are vacated), the situation contains the seeds for the demise of many of our facilities and institutions (discussed in Section 3.2 below).



An example of Affordable Housing, Lenham



Detling village from
Lynch Bank

Future development

We do not know the ideal size of Detling or the population able to sustain our facilities and institutions. It is thus particularly important that any housing development should initially be small and its impacts carefully monitored and reviewed. It vital that any development is appropriate to the character of Detling, sensitive to the feelings of local people, and enhances Detling as a place to live.

- 2 In association with the VDS, prepare a Landscaping Design Plan (LDP) for Detling, which outlines plans for the design, landscaping and planting of the parish. It would include plans for tree and shrub planting and a village green designed to serve as a focus for the village (see section 3.7). It would also provide guidelines for maintenance and management of natural features and landscapes.

The VDS and LDP could work either as a single entity or as two closely linked but separate entities.

- 3 Explore opportunities for improving road safety, parking and appearance of The Street and Hockers Lane (including the Church Lane junction) through street landscaping and use of good urban design principles as developed in recent years (including layout, planting and use of textures). Work would be closely linked to the VDS/LDP above

- 4 In conjunction with the Rural Housing Trust
 - undertake an up-to-date survey of housing need in the parish and explore potential sites for affordable housing. Three possibilities are identified on Map 3 on page 52.
 - prepare outline plans appropriate to local need and existing character.
- 5 In conjunction with the local authorities, examine the possibility of a conventional small-scale housing development. The aim would be to bring younger families into Detling and thereby assist the sustainability of our facilities and institutions, but it should also be taken as an opportunity to enhance (and help unify) Detling's architectural attractiveness and pride of place (see *Future development* – left).



3.2. Facilities and Institutions

Detling is extremely fortunate still to have a good variety of facilities and institutions that contribute to the dynamics of the community and which are much valued by residents.

i. The post office and store

A key facility in Detling is the post office and village store, which is given a very high rating in the survey. 69% of overall respondents put this in the top priority bracket and 87% in the top two brackets combined. This is second from top in the overall list of respondents' priorities.

The post office and store is particularly highly rated by those centrally located but as many as 59% of those at the top of the hill (for whom access is less convenient) give the facility top priority. The services offered are especially highly rated by the oldest age group who find the regular van delivery a virtual lifeline and of exceptional benefit in this day and age. That the shop and post office continue to flourish at a time when many have closed is something the parish is thankful for and must fight to maintain (with support from us all).

ii. The school

A second key institution in Detling is the Church of England primary school. Since its establishment in Victorian times, the school has drawn many of its pupils from outside the parish, in part a consequence of the low population of Detling up to the 1930s. However the present enrolment of less than 50 makes it vulnerable in the medium or long term.

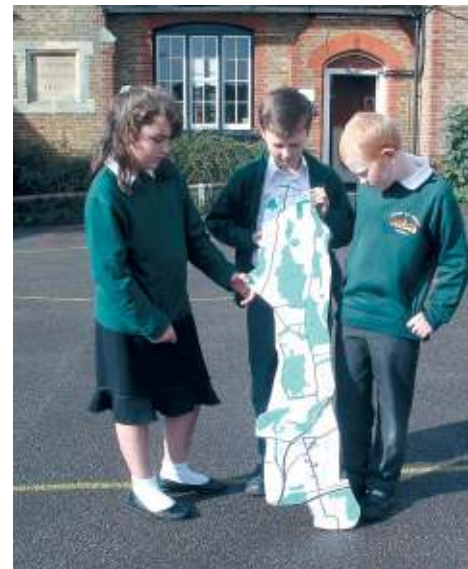
In the survey, only 52 out of 233 responding households (22%) were found to have dependant children and only a small proportion of these are of primary school age (between five and eleven). Furthermore not all Detling children attend the school because of (some) parent's educational concerns. Despite this, the school is given top priority rating by 45% of all respondents and top or high priority by 73%, demonstrating its importance to the parish.

Interestingly, the school's high rating in people's estimation is particularly important to the over 60s, who perhaps perceive that a school and what it brings is vital to village life. The present roll makes for difficulty in affording new equipment and materials but this is offset by the enthusiasm and dedication generated within an intimate school environment and small class sizes. Every endeavour is being made to attract more children and the school's educational difficulties are currently being addressed.

iii. The village hall

The village hall, rebuilt after a fire in 1997, is an exceedingly useful facility for a village of Detling's size, especially now toilets for the disabled and a new kitchen have been installed. The hall is widely used by a range of clubs, societies and formal and informal groups for meetings, gatherings and indoor sports and activities both by Detling residents and those in the surrounding area. Its value is demonstrated by the fact that it is fully booked for much of the year, which helps keep charges down.

The hall is given top or high priority by 68% of all respondents and is particularly valued by older groups for whom a local and congenial meeting place outside the home is appreciated.



School children with model of
Detling parish





Cock Horse pub,
from rear

iv. The Cock Horse

The value attributed to the village pub is slightly more mixed, with 53% of all respondents giving it top or high priority in the survey. With widespread car ownership many local people enjoy a variety of hostelries and often travel outside the village for food and drink. Those who support their ‘local’ or come to the Cock Horse from outside the parish, however, find a welcoming service, good ale and a non-smoking ambience..

Although serving good food, the pub has not gone the way of some other hostelries in the vicinity which now function primarily as restaurants. It would appear to be an institution that is somewhat taken for granted by residents but would undoubtedly be greatly missed if it were not there.

v. St Martin’s church

The 14th century Church of St Martin of Tours maintains its witness as the centre of Christian worship in Detling, although there are some who travel elsewhere to express their faith. The regular congregation of around 25 is significantly increased for Christmas and Easter, and for baptisms, weddings, funerals and other special occasions.

The church is however in a vulnerable position unless supported regularly and financially by a wider group of committed people. There would be a great sense of loss if the splendid building and the services of the clergy were no longer so easily available. Overall 56% of respondents gave the church either top or high priority.

The often invisible pastoral care provided by both church and non-church people to those in need continues throughout the parish, which many have had cause to appreciate. This is encouraged by St Martin’s newsletter, Detling News, which is distributed throughout the parish.

vi. The Parish Council

The work of Detling’s Parish Council is given either top or high priority by 55% of respondents, and rather more so by the 60 plus age group (64%). The latter perhaps are aware of the time given voluntarily by Detling’s set of councillors but it seems regrettable (at least to some!) that an appreciation of the positive influence the Parish Council can have on the local environment and quality of life is not more comprehensively shared.

The Parish Council has a sub-committee which reviews local planning applications although it is uncertain what influence this has on MBC’s decisions. It also produces a monthly newsletter, which forms part of Detling News, and an Annual Report. A parish website has been set up in 2005 that it is hoped will assist residents keep in touch with developments and contribute to the aim of becoming a Quality Parish Council www.detlingparish.co.uk.

vii. Local employment

It is clear from the survey that few people choose to live in Detling for reasons of work, and only 10% gave local employment top priority. This is not to downgrade the importance of those who provide local employment and services. These include Mid Kent Electrical, Mid Kent Water, and those involved in garage services, fencing, and the County Showground, though it is understood that these days most workers come from outside the parish. There is also a caravan club site that operates at the top of the hill throughout the summer months, though the future of this is uncertain.



St Martin of Tours

A good number of people in Detling also work from home (6%) running small businesses. These include land-based services such as farming, livery services and stabling, computer-based services and consultancies, and small workshops.

viii. The County Showground

The Showground is run by the Kent County Agricultural Society, a charitable body with extensive grounds traversing two parishes whose central purpose is to run an annual three-day County Show. Until a decade or so ago the Show was largely agricultural backed up by a relatively small steam fair, gymkhanas and Guide and Scout camps. These activities are well suited to the AONB environment and generally appreciated by local residents, despite the enormous numbers attending the Show (over 105,000 in 2005).

In recent years the Showground has moved from its agricultural base and now advertises itself as “Kent’s premier outdoor event and exhibition centre”. It has greatly expanded the number, range and scale of its activities, and its programme for 2005 lists a total of 27 events. This includes a Living Land event for over 3,500 primary school children and their helpers (in 2005), which is particularly appropriate to the Showground’s ethos and geographical situation.

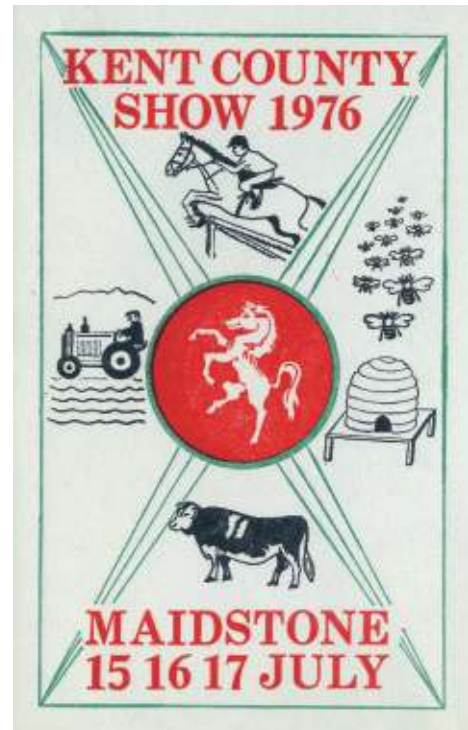
On the other hand what appears to be an increasing number of events are large, noisy and intrusive, with loud piped music, amplified announcements and various extraneous noises (e.g. from helicopters, gunfire, revving motor bikes, diesel engines, generators, and radios). Several intrusive events have taken place this summer (2005) but they can occur throughout the year; for example, a succession of themed parties around Christmas have discos, flashing lights and the sounds of revelry well into the night, when up to 1,000 people can be bussed in.

Most events are concentrated on the western side of the Showground close to local residences, where fields backing on to homes are sometimes used for ‘camping and caravanning’. Disturbance can be as great at the time of setting up and dismantling, as much as it is during the event itself. Local residents are anxious that these and other concerns are promptly addressed, and if large events continue they are moved to the unpopulated north-eastern side of the Showground.

55% of respondents at the top of the hill give noise from Showground events top or high priority, a proportion known from non-survey evidence to be much higher in the immediate vicinity of the Showground. Residents also expressed concern about noise from clay pigeon shooting which takes place on alternate Sundays, and 57% of those at the top of the hill give the matter top or high priority.

The Showground main gate has direct access to the A249 and when this is used local delays and disruption are kept to a minimum. However there appears to be a growing tendency to use entrances on Scragged Oak Road, a country lane signposted as “unsuitable for heavy vehicles”. The lane is certainly not suitable for carrying the massive traffic generated by some events, such as the reported 5000 caravans at one recent event, or the use of wide and articulated vehicles (e.g. for carrying military tanks at another event). There are many instances of confusion arising at the A249 junction at the time of these events endangering safety on the road (see Section 3.4).

Use of Scragged Oak Road can also lead to serious delays and a ten mile diversion for Maidstone bound traffic at events when traffic police are not employed.



Detling C of E
Primary School



ix. The informal sector

This review is not complete without mentioning the less formal organisations such as the Detling Players, the Detling Singers, the Detling Society, the Jade Appeal, the Women's Institute, and sports organisations such as the cricket, badminton and short-mat indoor bowls clubs. The list also includes the Friends of Detling Church who run events to raise money for the church, including concerts and a biennial Garden Safari.

A good number of dedicated individuals put a very substantial amount of time and energy into running such activities which contribute a sense of wholeness to the local community.

Unfortunately a cloud of uncertainty has arisen over these institutions. In recent years Detling has lost its gardening and over-fifties clubs and has difficulty finding people to support the Friends of the Heart of Kent Hospice, the Whist Drive, the local Neighbourhood Watch scheme, or the much-requested youth group. In the last election the Parish Council had problems in attracting a full complement of local people to stand as councillors.

x. Recommendations

- 1 Explore ways of encouraging greater use of the village post office and shop. A small group would be set up to publicise and promote the growing range of services offered and consider questions such as local parking for customers and delivery purposes
- 2 Promote the merits and achievements of Detling primary school through the Detling School Association (DSA) and Parish Council, and look for opportunities to support the school and encourage recruitment. Possible use of the school's excellent sports field and recreational facilities outside school time on a rental basis should also be considered.
- 3 Minimise disturbance from Showground events using established MBC procedures for planning and for pollution control, and setting up a system for liaison and consultation between the Showground and those residents directly affected (perhaps through a residents association). This would keep people informed of future Showground activities, the Showground aware of local concerns, and provide a forum for discussion.

One helpful suggestion made in consultations is that events likely to be intrusive should be advertised well in advance and held in a part of the grounds well away from local residences. Traffic should also be properly policed at all events of any size and use of Scragged Oak Road gateways and land backing on to properties should be kept to an absolute minimum.



3.3 Services and Access

The availability of public sector services and access to them are of major importance to a rural parish such as Detling, especially for the elderly or infirm and those living in outlying parts where public transport is difficult or non-existent.

i. Postal service

57% of survey respondents attach top or high priority to the postal service. As noted above, Detling's post office received particularly high ratings and opinions are widely voiced that we are fortunate to have retained this and the range of services it offers.

One concern for respondents at the top of the hill is that they have no post box of their own and have to make a five mile round trip (via the M20 roundabout) to post a letter. A post box at the north end of the parish serves the White Hill area but for the majority of residents use of this box similarly requires a 15 minute round-trip by car.

ii. Bus service

Public transport is of critical importance to those without vehicles of their own, which include many of the elderly and the young still in education. In the survey the local bus service is given considerable priority, 60% of all respondents placing it in the top or high priority brackets. It is significant that teenagers give it a particularly high rating, 71% giving it top or high priority.

People see the need for improvements to the bus service in terms of regularity and reliability. A problem to some is the fact the service stops at 6pm which makes it impossible for those without a car or able to get help from family members to travel to and from Maidstone in the evenings.

Those at the top of the hill to all intents and purposes have no bus service at all as the nearest bus stop is on the A249 beyond the main Showground gate. There is no footway or safety barrier on Detling hill beyond Scragged Oak Road.

iii. Related services

Access to shops and other facilities

Access to shops is accorded top or high priority by 58% of all respondents and by as many as 73% of adults aged 60 or more. It is a particular priority for those at the top of the hill where 50% rate it top priority alone. On the other hand local taxi services are not seen as being of major importance, with only 24% of survey respondents putting the matter in the top two categories.

Two KCC operated Kent Karrier schemes have come to our attention since the time of the survey. One is a weekly shopping service to Maidstone town centre catering for those with a medical condition or who live more than 500 metres from a bus route; the second is a dial-a-ride service that can take residents anywhere in Maidstone borough, such as to visit a doctor or hospital. Charges are reasonable but both have to be booked in advance. These schemes are of potential benefit to Detling's disabled and those living in more remote parts of the parish and, if they prove effective, deserve to be given more publicity.

Another scheme, in this case organised by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCC) and Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK), is currently being introduced to address rural transport issues in Maidstone borough. The idea is to recruit rural transport wardens who will "act as a link between local people, transport operators and planners", and helping to shed light on local transport needs and options.



Views along the
North Downs Way





Medical services

Access to medical or health facilities (e.g. GP, nurse and dentist) is widely seen as important in the parish, with 69% of respondents putting the matter in the top or high priority brackets. 61% of those at the top of the hill give the matter top priority alone.

Health considerations are particularly important for the elderly and as many as 81% of those over 60 years give the matter top or high priority. One significant suggestion made is for a regular clinic or surgery to be held in the village hall, but a mobile clinic could equally satisfy this need.

Internet services and web site

Overall there is only a moderate demand for improving internet services with 34% of all respondents rating it as a top or high priority issue. However there are marked differences within the parish. The comparative figure is 71% at the top of the hill, reflecting the problem of reliable internet services in outlying parts.

Although not covered in the survey we applaud the establishment of a Detling website, which is likely to greatly improve communication in the parish for the growing number of households with internet access.

v. Recommendations

- 1 Explore the possibility of establishing a medical clinic or surgery every week or two weeks staffed perhaps by a nurse or paramedic, possibly on a mobile basis. The need for this service is likely to grow as the number of elderly and infirm people in the parish rises.
- 2 Renew pressure on the Royal Mail to install a post box near the A249/Scragged Oak Road junction to alleviate the need for a car journey via the M20 roundabout to post a letter. The arguments should be well assembled beforehand as a similar request some three years ago was turned down on the grounds that Scragged Oak Road was "within 1 mile of the Post Office".
- 3 Local residents who qualify (see above) are asked to explore the operation of the Kent Karrier dial-a-ride and shopping services and report back to the Parish Council (and rural traffic warden if recruited) as regards their effectiveness and value. If successful the opportunity should be promoted in the parish.



3.4 Traffic and road safety

Despite its small size Detling has a considerable variety of roads, including a motorway (M20), a major dual carriageway (A249), village and residential roads, and country lanes covering a large part of the parish. KCC has the authority for the service of all roads apart from the M20, which falls under the national Highways Agency.

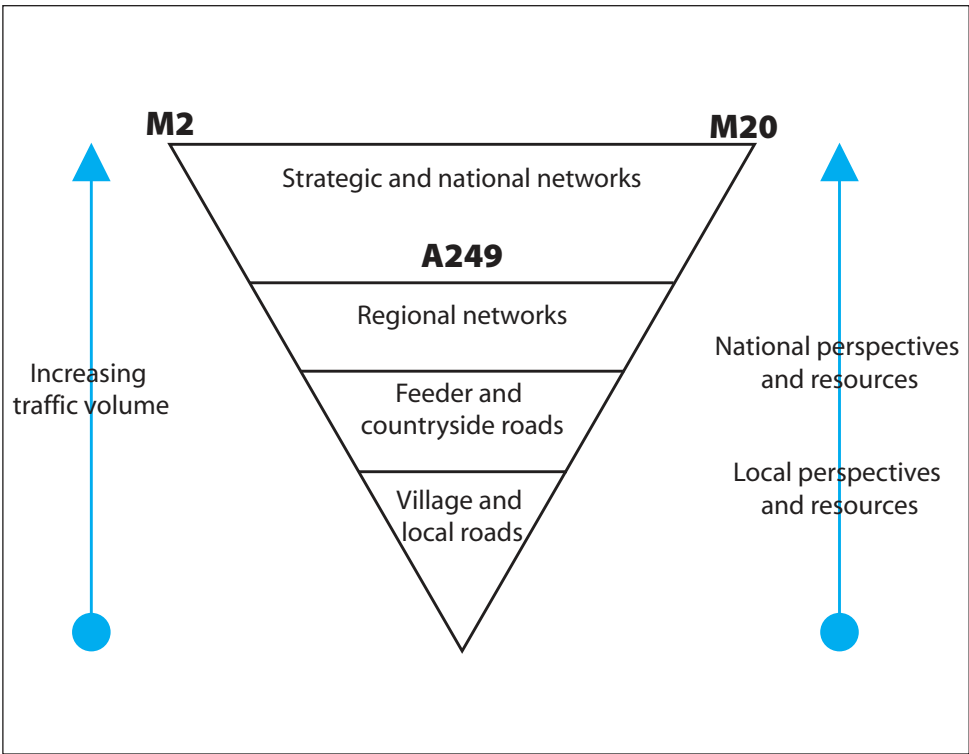


A249: Confusing signage at Scragged Oak Junction



A249 near top of the hill: no pathway and clutter of signs

Figure 3.1 Local to national considerations and tensions



A249: Scragged Oak Road intersection

A249 intersections

Vehicular access to and from the village is restricted at the Pilgrim’s Way intersection and it is now not possible to travel north from the village on the A249 without going via the M20 roundabout. This is disadvantageous not least to the bus company (and passengers) who make frequent daily journeys, and to those at the top of the hill who wish to visit the village, doubling the length of their journey. It also impacts on use of village facilities, making the shop in effect hardly more local than the nearest supermarkets.

The Church Lane intersection also comes in for criticism in the consultation process. Turning in and out of the village is not an easy manoeuvre particularly for the elderly, involving crossing or moving into fast-moving streams of traffic. Congestion on the A249 in the morning rush hour and whenever there are problems on the M20 encourages a ‘rat run’ through the village.

It is fortunately still possible, with great caution, to turn right into and out of Scragged Oak Road. When travelling southwards, this requires merging into traffic just below the brow of the hill at a point where many vehicles are travelling well over the 50 mph limit. The situation is not helped by the confusion and dangerous situations arising from the U-turn of vehicles heading for the Showground, generally unfamiliar with the junction. Visibility, road marking and signage are poor and the acceleration lane going north is almost non-existent.

When events are staged at the Showground, the Scragged Oak crossing can be closed, resulting in a diversion of nearly ten miles for vehicles travelling in the Maidstone direction. This situation is only relieved with the help of traffic police, when right turns at the junction are kept open but U-turns are banned.

i. Access and egress to the A249

The A249 is an increasingly busy dual carriageway which dissects the parish, attracting traffic near motorway levels. The road currently carries over 36,000 vehicles per 12 hour day (VPD), nearly 10% of which are HGVs, according to a traffic count conducted in May 2004 (Kent Highway Services, personal communication). Some comparative traffic flow figures for different highways are given in the table below.

Comparative average traffic flows on local highways, 2004

Highway	Location	Annual average daily traffic over 24 hrs (AADT)
A249	Three Squirrels	39,900
M2	Between junctions 5 and 6	50,100
M20	Between junctions 8 and 9	51,200
M26	Non specific	46,900
M20	Brands Hatch	50,500

Source: Kent Highway Services, personal communication. AADT is an annual average figure for two way traffic flows, including weekends, bank holidays etc.

The A249 has three main intersections in the parish, at Church Lane, Pilgrims Way, and Scragged Oak Road (see *A249 intersections* – left). It has a 50 mph speed limit on Detling hill, with speed cameras on both carriageways close to the bottom.

The single most traffic-related concern in the survey findings is that of safe and easy access to and from this road. 76% of all respondents give entrances and exits to the A249 either top or high priority *and as many as 82% of those at the top of the hill give it top priority alone*. People are acutely aware of the tragic accidents that have taken place on this route, the dangerous situations that still often arise, and the frequent delays and inconvenience that occur.

There are a number of aspects to this problem relating to the inadequacy of the road for meeting present day traffic demands. The problem also relates to the M20 junction 7 roundabout at the Maidstone end, where delays and accidents are common. This is outside the parish but problems commonly back up well into Detling.

In view of the fact that the A249 links two motorways and carries traffic that approaches motorway flow levels, there is good reason for the road to be managed by the national authorities and re-engineered to motorway standards. Radical changes on these lines is inevitable in the long run as traffic volumes continue to grow (at a rate estimated to be some 1000 VPD per year), and we urge the authorities to take a long term and holistic view of the situation. In the meantime urgent improvements are required for each of the three main junctions.

ii. New A249 roundabout

Outline proposals for a new roundabout near the Showground/White Horse Wood entrances (not Bimbury Lane) are welcomed by residents. A roundabout in itself is insufficient, however, and an integrated package of improvements to the road is required.

It is important to ensure that provision is made at an early planning stage for local access to the roundabout, and consideration of this issue is not left until options are restricted late in the day. This includes addressing the needs of public transport users,



pedestrians and cyclists, and also drivers accessing Scragged Oak Road from the Sittingbourne direction. It is important that vehicle journeys are not further extended through right turn bans that increase use of the already congested M20 roundabout. Full consultation with those directly affected will be required.

iii. Vehicle speed

The speed of vehicles on the A249 is also a concern in the survey. Despite the 50 mph speed limit on a substantial section and presence of speed cameras, the survey shows that 72% of all respondents consider that speed on the road is a top or high priority. The majority of vehicles do not sufficiently reduce their speed in the south bound carriageway at the top of Detling hill, and the section around the Church Lane junction carries no limit at all.

Concerns are even higher (79%) on minor roads, including village and residential roads and country lanes. Excess speed is an issue in the village on The Street and Hockers Lane where danger to pedestrians (including school children) is increased by roadside parking; it is also a danger in narrow country lanes with restricted visibility. Residents are concerned that signs indicating the de-restriction of speed on lanes leaving the village or A249 send entirely the wrong message to drivers.

We are pleased to note the launch (August 2005) of the Speed Watch campaign. In this Kent Police aim to work with parish councils to reduce vehicle speeds through a programme of education, engineering and enforcement. Volunteers will be recruited to record the speed of offending vehicles and report these to the police. The scheme will link with the local Quiet Lanes initiative being prepared for north east Maidstone.

iv. Road condition

70% of overall respondents indicate that the condition and surface of the M20 and A249 is a top or high priority. This is of particular concern to those immediately across the A249 where the equivalent figure is 82%. The condition and surface of minor roads and lanes is also a considerable concern to people, 75% of all respondents giving the matter top or high priority.

There is a related concern for road drainage and flooding, which apart from anything else can increase risks of accidents where vehicles faced with flooding take evasive action. Places which demand attention include village entrances/exits to the A249 and Holly Stud on Scragged Oak Road.

vi. Vehicle noise

There is considerable concern for vehicle noise and 64% of all respondents give noise from the M20 top or high priority, a problem apparent from non survey evidence to be particularly serious in parts of Hockers Lane. There is also considerable concern for



CTRL



Parking in the village

"I felt moved to write to ask if any consideration has been given to the provision of a car parking area for the village. On a day to day basis The Street is congested with parked vehicles and as a consequence traffic flow is frequently impaired. Furthermore the village plays host to a number of popular events such as the Garden Safari which attract visitors to the village and parking becomes a major problem, with parking on pavements, in bus stop bays and sometimes well down narrow Church Lane. Events in the village hall, school and church can cause similar car parking difficulties.

Could I therefore be bold and suggest the identification of a suitable site to provide car parking facilities for those visiting the village centre, perhaps on land adjacent to the village hall. At the same time a single yellow line on both sides of the road could be considered, from the bus stop in Church Lane round past the pub. This would have specified timing restrictions and safe parking for the disabled". July 2005. Name and address supplied.

noise from the A249, with 66% of all respondents giving the matter top or high priority. Some areas are especially badly affected and the equivalent figure across the A249 is a very high 92% indeed.

There is consequently much demand for reducing noise levels. Respondents mentioned the need "to reduce noise to a level where you can hold a normal conversation in the garden" or indeed "be able to hear the birds sing". It is understood that a very significant improvement could be brought about through road resurfacing with a suitable rubberised material. It seems odd that the section of the A249 just north of the parish has been resurfaced in the last two years but not so that part in Detling where most residents live.

Generally the priority given to noise from motorbikes in the parish is moderate with 39% overall giving the matter top or high priority, though the equivalent figures are higher across the A249 (56%) and at the top of the hill (50%) where visiting motorbikes can on occasion present a major problem.

vii. Facilities for pedestrians

52% of respondents give facilities for walking and people on foot top or high priority. Pedestrian access to the village has been improved at the bottom of the hill through the new bridge but some respondents complained about the condition of footpaths and stiles, and in general the priority given to cars over pedestrians (e.g. inadequate provision for pedestrians in residential parts of Pilgrims Way).

Others mentioned the absence of a footway on both sides of the A249 on Detling hill north of Scragged Oak Road, making the nearest bus stop virtually unusable to local residents and creating difficulty in accessing White Horse Wood. We believe it is imperative that the needs of walkers, cyclists and other non-motorised users are given central consideration in all further developments in the parish.

viii. Car parking

Survey results suggest that parking is a moderate concern for most people with only 38% giving the matter top or high priority. This however disguises the importance of the issue in certain parts of the parish particularly near the village centre. It is a serious concern outside the school and shop for reasons of safety, appearance and access (see *Parking in the village* – left).



Summer's day on the Downs

This matter certainly deserves consideration not least because of the road safety issues near the school when traffic is reduced to one lane. There is room to consider a range of measures to improve the management and control of parking in the centre especially when village events are held.

viii. Recommendations

In the absence of long-term radical plans for the stretch of the A249 between the two motorways, we suggest that the highway authorities consider the following improvements. All actions should address the needs of Detling residents, including those cycling, on foot, or by horse, and not solely vehicular or passing traffic.

Actions for highways include:

- resurface sections of the M20 and A249 with a suitable rubberised material to reduce traffic noise, and consider earth bunding and acoustic fencing
- consider extending the 50 mph limit to include the section of the A249 between Church Lane and the M20 junction 7
- improve safety and convenience at Scragged Oak junction by improving visibility, road markings and signage, and banning U-turns by Showground-bound traffic
- improve Church Lane junction to allow safe and easy access to and from the village
- press for provision of an interactive speed sign or speed camera on the south bound carriageway at the top of Detling hill to reduce traffic speed on the A249 at Scragged Oak junction and the bends on Detling hill
- explore opportunities for reducing the proliferation and clutter of road signs on the A249, and consider the possibility of an AONB gateway sign
- tidy up, plant out and maintain the central section of the A249 to improve appearance and the environment
- make traffic policing of all Showground events using the Scragged Oak Road intersection a contractual requirement of organisers
- monitor progress with the provision of a roundabout near the Showground/ White Horse Wood entrances as part of an integrated package of measures that improve safety and convenience of local residents and other road users
- explore and promote the idea for the A249 to be taken over by the national highway authority and re-engineered to motorway standard.

Actions for minor roads, byways and pathways include:

- consider removing unnecessary speed de-restriction signs on country lanes leaving the A249 and Detling village
- work with the Quiet Lanes initiative and rural traffic wardens (if appropriate) to safeguard the parish's rural roads in ways that improve safety and appearance for all users, including walkers, cyclists and horse riders/drawn vehicles
- consider the provision of cycle lanes and other means for improving the safety of cyclists on major and minor roads in the parish
- provide a safe footway and barrier from Scragged Oak Road to the bus stop on the A249, and consider a defined road crossing point for bus passengers and walkers to replace the present vague conditions and signage.





3.5 Security and crime

Crime and security is an emotive issue which affects rural communities in various ways. Detling is no exception, especially as the village has a number of entrances and exits and easy access to the motorway system.

i. Safety and security

The questionnaire survey found home and garden security to be of considerable concern and a high number of respondents (81% overall) give the matter either top or high priority. The percentage is even higher across the A249 (86%) and at the top of the hill, where people are relatively isolated, 70% give it top priority alone. Car security and theft from vehicles is also seen as important, with 72% of overall respondents giving the matter top or high priority.

Personal safety is marginally even more highly rated, with 77% of all respondents putting it in one of the top two priority brackets and 52% rating it top priority.

Judging from county statistics, however, Detling does not actually suffer badly from crime in comparison with equivalent places. Provided people take reasonable precautions to discourage opportunistic theft, such as keeping garden sheds and cars securely locked, few need be impacted by crime. Further information is available from the police surgery which we are pleased is now being held regularly in the village.

ii. Neighbourhood Watch

Considerable priority is given in the survey to re-activating a Neighbourhood Watch (NW) scheme in Detling, with 62% of respondents giving the matter top or high priority. When working effectively a NW scheme is the eyes and ears of the community, helps safeguard security and prevents crime from escalating.

Unfortunately the scheme has lapsed in Detling and it is currently without one or more local organiser/coordinator. This is no reason, however, why the principles of awareness and watchfulness cannot be applied by Detling residents.



iii. Lighting

There are strong but polarised opinions about lighting in the village. Some see the need for lighting to help negotiate roads and pavements in the dark, especially near the bus stop. Others say that lighting would add to the proliferation of street furniture, be intrusive and do little if anything to improve safety and security. They also ask questions about responsibilities for upkeep and maintenance.

In the survey a low overall figure of 37% give lighting top or high priority but outside the survey there continues to be much debate on the subject, and lighting was a major subject of discussion at the Open Day workshop. In fact lighting is not as 'black and white' an issue as often supposed, and nowadays can be unobtrusive and directional. It can be in the form, for example, of traditional style lamp-posts or low-level uplighting, and potentially be part of the plan to enhance the look of a village centre. It can also be environmentally sensitive and solar powered.

There is more general agreement over the adverse affects of lighting on the A249 which has recently been installed without parish consultation, but this is an environmental (and political) issue rather than a security concern.

iv. Recommendations

- 1 Work with local authorities to improve the knowledge of residents about the actual level and fear of crime, and measures to reduce its incidence. Measures include the encouragement of individual vigilance, and the reporting of unusual vehicles or persons to the police who are best equipped to tackle trouble. The police surgery in the village should be promoted and supported.
- 2 Renew effort to reactivate the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, or failing that, promoting the principles of safety and security through a workshop organised with the local police.
- 3 In association with the VDS discussed in section 3.1 above, empower an individual or small group to look into the options for sensitive and unobtrusive lighting in the village in ways that would satisfy the needs and anxieties of all residents. It is worth taking a look at the way street lamps have been used to help improve village centres elsewhere in Kent (e.g. Lenham and Whitstable centres).



Off-road activities

A related issue not directly covered in the survey is the use of public rights of way and green spaces by off-road vehicles (4x4s) and trail bikes. These illicit activities can be very intimidating to legitimate users of the land, including walkers and horse-riders. The activities can also give rise to soil erosion and seriously damage trees and environmentally important flora (such as orchids and blue bells).



3.6. Appearance and cleanliness

The general appearance and cleanliness of the village and the environment is another important and potentially emotive issue in Detling.

i. Fly-tipping

The questionnaire survey indicates that fly-tipping in and around roadsides, paths and by-ways is the single most important local concern of Detling residents. 91% of all respondents place the matter in the top or high priority brackets and 72% give it top priority alone. The figures are higher in the areas most immediately affected; 88% of respondents across the A249 give the matter top priority, as do a staggering 98% of those at the top of the hill. These concerns are not surprising given the extent of the problem; for example, one local lane was completely impassable in May 2005 owing to the illicit dumping of waste material.

Closely associated with fly-tipping (and also with crime) is the problem of abandoned and burnt out cars. This is seen as the third most important issue in the parish and is put in the top two brackets by 82% of respondents.

Such issues are not confined to Detling and are of equal if not greater importance in the neighbouring parishes of Bredhurst and Boxley. An Action Group has been established (summer 2005), authorities contacted, and plans for dealing with the problem are being prepared (including the clearing of sites, the temporary closure of by-ways and use of surveillance measures).

ii. Litter

Survey findings showed similar concern for litter in the parish, both in the village and in country lanes. The problem is also very noticeable along the verges of the A249, for example on Detling hill and at entrances to the village. Around three quarters of survey respondents give litter of any description top or high priority and about one third put it top priority.

Not surprisingly, litter in country lanes is particularly important to those residents who live across the A249 and at the top of the hill, where 81% and 84% respectively give the matter top or high priority. Litter issues in general are rated somewhat more highly by older age groups, including adults over 40 years, than by the young.



The problem of litter has different causes in different places, in part a consequence of casual behaviour by locals but is often dropped from passing cars or blows in from other sites. Whatever, it requires concerted action and regular collection by the authorities and prompt reporting of problems. In some parts of the parish local collection is organised by individuals or groups of neighbours and such local action should be encouraged.

iii. Dog fouling

78% of respondents place dog fouling in one of the two highest priority brackets and 49% give it top priority. The matter is of particular concern to those living in the village who are most impacted by this unpleasant problem (81% place the matter in the top two categories).

Dog fouling is best attacked by identifying the owners responsible and encouraging them to take personal responsibility, which is possible in a village the size of Detling. There are already collection bins in the village and MBC provide bags for the purpose. Residents suggest the provision of more bins but at present there is a bottleneck at MBC level which has difficulty in meeting the need for regular collection.

The new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 potentially has a direct impact on Detling as it allows parish councils to issue fixed penalty notices for litter and dog offences. Close monitoring of the situation is required to determine the extent of local dog fouling and litter problems and whether action of this nature is required.

Although not specifically covered in the survey, there is also a case for the provision of a bin for horse droppings near Jade's bridge.

iv. Paper waste

49% of overall respondents place paper waste mountains on arable farm land in the top two priority brackets. The equivalent figure in the village is 43% while at the top of the hill, where massive waste heaps are an eyesore for many months of the year, it is much higher (65%).

Concern about paper waste has several aspects apart from unsightliness; it includes health and safety issues, potential aquifer contamination, and the use of fleets of heavy vehicles for carrying the brought-in waste unsuitable to the area's narrow lanes. The issue is much wider than Detling alone and has been passed to Mid Kent Downs Steering Group to consider.

The cause of fly-tipping

The issues of fly-tipping and car dumping have two aspects, reducing their incidence and clearing up the mess immediately it occurs. It is unlikely that the problem will go away until it is cheaper and easier to take waste to authorised sites and the incentive to dump it in any old place is removed.



Useful legislation

Section 215 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act has recently been used to improve the appearance of towns and villages (e.g. Hastings) through attention to individual properties that are considered to be letting down the appearance of a neighbourhood. Under the Act local authorities can approach the owner if any building or surround is considered to be harming local amenities, including the look of an area. While ultimately the owner can be forced to make changes or carry out repairs, success is normally achieved with a letter informing the owner of his or her obligations.



Detling photographic competition winning entry – fruit and vegetable display at the village store

v. Telecom masts

Currently there are 1,114 masts in Kent and Medway with a further 500 applications at various stages in the planning process (June 2005). In Detling there has been a continual trickle of applications which DPC has largely succeeded in keeping away from private houses.

Telecom masts were not specifically addressed in the survey. However there is wide concern about the matter and the fact there appears to be no way of reducing proliferation.

vi. Other concerns

A suggestion list positioned on notice boards and distributed at the Open Day Workshop, as well as the unprompted survey question on issues that need addressing, shows concern for a number of topics not dealt with above (see Appendix 2).

The list includes noise from CTRL, the condition and upkeep of the village bus shelter, and burning bonfires at anti-social times. More positively, a number of residents identified the need to provide recycling facilities in Detling, a facility that is well-worth exploring.

Care of grass verges and hedges is dealt with in Section 3.7 below.

vii. Recommendations

- 1 Fly-tipping and abandoned cars are exceedingly important to Detling residents and incidents should be reported immediately to the authorities. The matter should be explored in a general way with MBC and other relevant parties with the possibility of further action. Experience from a similar process underway in woods adjoining Detling parish is likely to be helpful.
- 2 Owners of dogs responsible for fouling should be contacted and required to take personal responsibility. Consideration should be given to the provision of more receptacles (while noting the problem of collection) and, as a last resort, the use of fixed penalties under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. Consideration should also be given to the possible provision of a bin for horse droppings near Jade’s Crossing.
- 3 Consider opportunities for introducing recycling facilities in Detling, to encourage and facilitate environmentally-sustainable action by residents. Due consideration must be given to good management and the imperative of the site not becoming an eyesore.



3.7. Open spaces and leisure

i. Introduction

We have already noted the attraction of Detling’s environment, a feature much appreciated by local residents; there are plentiful opportunities to enjoy fresh air, beautiful countryside and a network of attractive pathways including the North Downs Way. Varying so much in geology and altitude, the parish enjoys a diverse range of landscapes including a Downland escarpment, an ancient wet woodland, chestnut coppices, chalk grasslands, hidden valleys and outstanding views over the Weald.

Apart from a cricket club and indoor sports (badminton and short mat bowls) in the hall, however, the parish lacks public facilities for sport and recreation. It has no play area for the young, swings and roundabouts, tennis courts or public football/cricket area of any description – two pitches formerly used (on water board and Showground land) have over time been lost to the community. While most of these facilities are available in the Maidstone area they cannot be accessed in say a spare half an hour, and all require motorised transportation.

ii. The natural environment

Proximity to attractive countryside, walks, woods, wildlife and the Downs stands out as the parish’s single best feature and what people most like about living here. This answer is given by 34% of respondents overall, by 58% of those at the top of the hill, and by 65% of those across the A249. These are very high percentages to such an unprompted question, particularly in the two rural areas.

Responses to questions about specific green (vegetation) issues are rather more mixed. 60% of all respondents give the upkeep of hedges and grass verges top or high priority, and the figure is 72% for those living across the A249. Somewhat bizarrely, the equivalent overall figure for trees and woodlands is a more moderate 52% and for landscape improvement and tree planting only 36%. That these are not rated higher may relate to the fact that the parish is predominantly rural and what is deemed important is good maintenance of what we have; enhancement of landscape features is either thought unnecessary or taken for granted.

We mentioned earlier that the parish covers part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (the Larches/Lynch Bank), an ancient wood (Horish Wood) which the DPC plans to acquire, and an area of Downland managed under Defra’s Environmental Stewardship scheme which has recently acquired ‘open access’ status. It also adjoins a major new woodland park, White Horse Wood.

Also included within Detling is a small triangular area of land between the A249 and Scragged Oak Road locally known as the Viewpoint, a site which has been improved with assistance from Kent Downs AONB. However the boundary fence put in has been damaged and anti-social problems have started to re-occur. The area requires regular cutting back of grassland and encroaching scrub to maintain its attractive appearance and fragile ecology.



A traditional village green

In line with Kentish village tradition, the Green could be bordered by attractive small-scale housing, which would assist drawing young families to Detling and improving the sustainability of our facilities and institutions. Examination of Kentish village greens and open spaces, including nearby Bearsted Green and Lenham village centre, would be a good starting point for planning. However it is noted that location of houses around the Green, while having its attractions, is only one of several potential sites for new housing in Detling (Map 3 page 52).



iii. Village green and recreation

The provision of a village green is seen as a top or high priority by less than one third of respondents and generally only moderate priority is given to recreational issues in the survey. 47% of all respondents accord a recreational area top or high priority, though the figure is 61% for families with children and as many as 40% of teenagers give top priority alone to an area for football.

Non survey evidence shows that these figures hide a range of opinions, particularly between those people anxious to improve facilities for the young and those concerned that doing so may attract anti-social behaviour. Done in the right way, the provision of an open space – or village green – could become a major parish asset that would provide a focus for the village, enhance attractiveness, and improve the recreation and sporting facilities available to families and the young (see *A traditional village green* – left). In a suitable open location it would be unlikely to attract the undesirable activities that residents are keen to avoid. The idea of a Green fits Maidstone’s Green Spaces Strategy and the ethos of Kent Downs AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

The keys to success are likely to be the location and appearance of any development and the involvement of local people in the selection process. Ideally the Green should be sited away from existing residential developments in a naturally attractive area improved as necessary with good landscaping and planting, with benches provided for sitting and watching. All in all this demonstrates the importance of a Village Design Statement (VDS) and associated Landscape Design Plan which are central to this Parish Plan and which are appropriate to Detling’s overall AONB designation.

iv. Landscaping and planting

The development of green open space for Detling relates closely to landscaping more widely in the parish. We have already recommended a plan for landscape design and planting (linked with a VDS) to enhance Detling’s appearance and extend pride of place. As well as providing social and environmental benefits, developments of this description are also likely to reflect on property values which have a premium where a location is known for its attractive green spaces (MBC Green Spaces Strategy, 2005).

The Parish Council have already ear-marked certain areas for improvement including outside the Cock Horse and around the War Memorial. Other possibilities worth exploration include the regeneration of an old cherry orchard off Orchard View (also see the proposals for The Street and Hockers Lane in Section 3.1). Options such as these would be considered in detail and, where appropriate, incorporated into the village design plan.

vi. Walks and pathways

The upkeep of pathways, public rights of way, the SSSI and the Viewpoint, and keeping these litter free, is shown in the survey to be a concern to local residents. This includes the maintenance of gates, fences, stiles, signposts and information boards.

Residents have mentioned the need to develop short circular walks or cycle routes which would be undertaken in conjunction with Kent’s Public Rights of Way and the North Downs Way offices. These would reflect the need for good access to the countryside by all, including the elderly and, where at all possible, the disabled.

vii. Lane verges and hedgerows

Attractive and bio-diverse grass verges bordering country lanes are increasingly damaged, particularly by heavy trucks and 4-wheel drive vehicles. In the survey 55% of respondents give the matter top or high priority, and 64% of those at the top of the hill (48% gave it top priority alone). This concern links with those of the Quiet Lanes initiative, which is currently developing ways of keeping country lanes safe, quiet and attractive in parishes around Maidstone. It also links with the paper waste issue and the use of unsuitably large trucks for carrying paper and other waste in the area.

A related concern is the irregular trimming back of hedgerows which can result in vehicles and other road users being forced into the middle of the road.

We do not wish to labour the point as roadside hedges contribute to the character and our enjoyment of the countryside, and over the years the natural course of events in many places is for lanes to widen as grass verges are damaged and often tarmaced over. However regular maintenance of bordering trees and hedges is vital particularly where visibility is restricted, such as the Z bends at the bottom of Hockers Lane near Honey End and near the Viewpoint on Scragged Oak Road, places where accidents are ‘waiting to happen’.

vii. Recommendations

- 1 Research the possibility of acquiring a suitable site for use as a village green, with facilities for leisure (benches), recreation and play (swings and slides etc) on the lines of Bearsted Green. A possible site is shown on Map 3 on page 52, the triangle of land between the church, school and A249 north of Church Lane.
- 2 Promote the use, maintenance and improvement of local footpaths and other public green spaces in the parish, with gates and stiles suitable to the elderly and infirm, and keep these well-maintained, sign-posted and litter free. Circular walks and cycle routes in the area would also be developed.
- 3 Establish an attractive enclosure such as a native hedge or robust fence to the Viewpoint to deter fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour, and prepare a budgeted management plan for the site. The information board has been neglected and requires attention and probable replacement.
- 4 In association with plans for its acquisition already underway, develop a management plan for Horish Wood that amongst other things caters for its changing hydrology. The plan would include cost estimates and arrangements for site access.
- 5 In conjunction with Kent Downs AONB countryside management project, explore the possibility of regenerating the old cherry orchard off Hockers Lane/Orchard View and preparing a management plan and budget.

The recommendation for developing a Landscaping Design Plan for Detling is detailed in Section 3.1 on Design and Development.



Waymarking and map of Countryside Stewardship Scheme



Cricket on Detling’s sloping ground

The framework for action

4.1 Introduction

This appraisal shows that people generally value Detling as a place to live and have a positive appreciation of the parish's countryside, community and institutions. They like the ambience of a rural village, one fortunate also to have good road transport links and connections. On the other hand residents are concerned about matters such as noise pollution, litter and fly-tipping, and traffic on both main and minor roads. The A249 is a major concern for reasons of safety, convenience and noise.

One important conclusion coming from the appraisal is the high proportion of middle aged and elderly people in Detling, with 65% of the population aged over 40 and only 22% of households having dependent children. This age profile has implications for the long-term sustainability of our valued school, church, shop and pub, and the numerous informal institutions run by local people. Already some of the latter have ceased to operate or are having difficulty in finding people to run them. It appears that some increase in people numbers including young families is essential if valued facilities and institutions are to survive and prosper.

We do not know the ideal size of Detling or the critical mass necessary to support our institutions, and for this reason (amongst others) it is important that any development is appropriate to the existing scale and character of Detling, sensitive to the feelings of local people, and enhances Detling as a place to live. For these reasons a Village Design Statement is central to our proposals.

*The Reading Room,
Pilgrims Way*



4.2 The Action Plan

In the table below we plot out the responsibilities, actions, time-scales and resource implications for each of the recommendations made in the previous chapter. In most cases these recommendations closely relate to the needs and priorities identified in the appraisal and discussed in chapter 3. However the list of concerns is long and we have not come up with a recommendation corresponding to every challenge. Thus we have no direct action points for important issues such as personal safety, the village hall, facilities for teenagers, and noise from CTRL, though this is an evolving Plan and these could be added at a later date.

The table itself is divided into parts relating to design and development (built and natural environments), traffic and road safety (highways and minor roads), facilities and institutions, and appearance and amenities. Under each heading we have assembled recommendations into three categories (immediate, medium or long-term) based on our assessment of the urgency of action rather than the strategic importance of the issue.

The table is by no means cast in stone and is expected to evolve over time as events unravel and new information comes to light – hence the Plan will require regular review and updating. Recommendations are in outline only and will require detailed consideration before implementation. Similarly time-scales are very provisional and dates are indicative rather than absolute.

The first item in the table is distinct from the others, namely the Co-ordination and Monitoring Group (CMG). The CMG is recommended to assist the Parish Council monitor and review progress and to keep the Plan up to date, reporting to the Parish Council on a regular basis. In certain cases the CMG may lead on taking actions forward but it will have no power or resources of its own except a small administrative budget. Consideration should be given as to whether or not the CMG is set up as a sub-committee of the Parish Council.

The Street



*Winter and summer on
Scragged Oak Road*



Table of recommendations for action, Detling Parish Plan, October 2005

Recommendation	Responsibilities	Links	Initial actions	Priority	Timescale	Resource implications
Set up a Coordination Group (CMG) to succeed/replace the present Plan Steering Group	DPC to set up CMG and agree TOR; CMG could be sub-committee of DPC	Across the board	Identify and elect volunteers; CMG to monitor/review / update the Plan and report to DPC	Immediate	Start late 2005. Committee selected/ re-appointed say every 2 years	Small administration costs
2. Design and development – built environment						
1. Prepare a Village Design Statement (VDS) for Detling (as a single entity or closely linked with the LDP below)	DPC/CMG; involve local residents; consultant inputs may be helpful	The VDS links with LDP and many Plan actions	Set up a VDS group; agree TOR; explore information/training/ funding need/ options	Immediate	Start end 2005; complete by end 2007	Circa £7,500; apply to Awards for All and other funding bodies
2. Prepare an associated Landscape Design Plan (LDP) for Detling	DPC/CMG; involve local residents; consider consultant inputs	LDP is equally part of Sect. 3 (Nat Env)	Set up LDP group; agree TOR; explore info/training/funding options	Immediate	Start end 2005; complete by end 2007	Circa £3,500; grants available
3. Explore opportunities for improving safety, parking and appearance of The Street & Hockers Lane	DPC/CMG; VDS; KCC; involve local residents;	VDS/LDP; Section 5 (Minor roads)	Contact KCC; research subject, possibly with consultants	Immediate	Start process late 2005; complete work by 2007	Possible cost of consultants
4. Consider need and options for sensitive and unobtrusive village lighting	DPC/CMG; involve local residents	VDS	Investigate & report (identify pros and cons); agree action	Medium	Early to late 2006	None for Detling
5. Explore need and opportunities for affordable housing, and take forward as necessary	DPC/CMG, with Rural Housing Trust (RHT) & MBC authorities	VDS/LDP; MBC; open spaces	Survey all households/locate areas for selection	Immediate	Research late 2005/ mid 2006	To be determined in conjunction with RHT
6. Explore need and opportunities for small-scale conventional housing in ways to enhance village	DPC/CMG; MBC planners	VDS/LDP; open spaces	Discuss options with MBC planners; if required, identify site and prepare plan	Medium	2006 to 2007	None for Detling
3. Design and development – natural environment						
1. Research possibility of village green/open space as a focus for village; if ok, prepare/ promote site plan	DPC/CMG; MBC Green Spaces Strategy; possible consultant inputs	VDS /LDP; MBC;	Identify site(s); contact owners; examine landscape options and plan	Immediate	Start late 2005; complete site plan by early 2007	Say £2500 for site plan. Approach KD AONB Sustainable Development Fund
2. Secure future of Viewpoint with robust enclosure (with access) and management plan with costs	DPC/CMG; KDAONB; involve local residents and appointed contractor	VDS /LDP; KDAONB	Secure ownership; fix boundary; agree plan; identify volunteer work; appoint contractor	Immediate	Work urgently required (2005) and regularly onwards	Upkeep circa £250/yr. Grants available for capital works + information board
3. Develop management plan for Horish Wood with costs; include access for parishioners	DPC/CMG, with KDAONB and other public bodies; possible employed consultants	LDP and KDAONB	Consider options for management and possible site improvement under changed hydrology	Immediate	Late 2005 to mid 2006; onwards depending on developments	Management and site improvement costs to be determined
4. Explore possibility of acquiring, regenerating and managing old cherry orchard off Orchard View	DPC/CMG; involve immediate neighbours	LDP and KDAONB	Draw up and cost proposal; develop management plan	Medium	2006 to 2007	Investment grant possible; upkeep/management cost to be determined
5. Promote access and use of public open spaces and footpaths in Detling, with appropriate maintenance	DPC/CMG; local volunteer(s)	LDP, NDW, KDAONB, PRW & EN	Prepare guidelines/ brochure with MKD project & PRW office	Medium	2006 to 2007	Cost of brochures etc

Recommendation	Responsibilities	Links	Initial actions	Priority	Timescale	Resource implications
4. Traffic and road safety – highways						
1. Resurface sections of A249 and M20 with appropriate material to reduce traffic noise	DPC/CMG; KCC Highways	Integrate with overall plans for road	Press KCC	Immediate	Start process late 2005; complete work by 2007	None for Detling
2.Consider extending the 50 mph limit for remaining section of M20 (to include Church Lane junction).	DPC/CMG; KCC Highways	Integrate with overall plans for road	Discuss possibility with Kent Highways	Immediate	Start process late 2005; complete work 2006	None for Detling
3. Improve safety and convenience at Scragged Oak/A249 junction (visibility, markings, signs)	DPC/CMG and KCC Highways; AONB authorities; involve local residents	Integrate with overall plans for road	Press KCC; consider options with local residents	Immediate	Start process late 2005; complete work by early 2007	None for Detling
4. Provide interactive speed sign or camera at top of Detling hill on south-bound carriageway	DPC/CMG; KCC Highways	Integrate with overall plans for road	Press KCC	Immediate	Start process late 2005; install by early 2007	None for Detling
5. Improve safety and convenience at Church Lane/A249 junction	DPC/CMG; KCC Highways; involve local residents	Integrate with overall plans	Contact KCC Highways; consult locally	Medium	Start process 2006; complete work by 2008	None for Detling
6. Tidy up, plant out and maintain central section of A249 from M20 roundabout up Detling hill	DPC/CMG; KCC	VDS/LDP; KDAONB	Contact KCC Highways; agree planting and maintenance plan	Medium	Contact KCC 2006; complete work by early 2007	None for Detling
7. Reduce proliferation and clutter of road signs and consider AONB gateway	DPC/CMG; Kent Highways; MBC	VDS/LDP and KDAONB	Press KCC and KDAONB	Medium	Start process 2006; complete work by 2007	None for Detling
8. Ensure adequate traffic policing of all Showground events	DPC/CMG; KCC	KCAS and Kent Police	Contact KCAS, MBC and KCC	Medium	Start early 2006; complete by early 2006	None for Detling
9. Make provision for pathway/crossing to bus stops on both sides of A249 at top of Detling hill	DPC/CMG; KCC. N.B. Path is partly in Thurnham parish	Thurnham PC; KCC Highways; Arriva	Contact KCC Highways	Medium	Start process in 2006; complete work by 2008	None for Detling
10. Monitor progress in provision of roundabout on A249 as part of a road improvement package of measures	DPC/CMG; KCC; A249 AG; Thurnham PC; residents at top of the hill. NB roundabout in Thurnham parish	Integrate with overall plans for road	Monitor developments; consult those most immediately affected	Medium	Late 2005 onwards	None for Detling
11. Promote idea/ explore opportunities for A249 to be taken over by national authorities and brought up to motorway standards	DPC/CMG with adjacent PCs and other public bodies	National Highway Authorities; KCC; SEERA	Promote idea; undertake exploratory investigations	Long term	Late 2005 onwards	No cost to Detling

Recommendation	Responsibilities	Links	Initial actions	Priority	Timescale	Resource implications
5. Traffic and road safety – minor roads						
1. Work with Quiet Lanes (QL) initiative to improve safety and appearance of country lanes	DPC/CMG; QL Steering Group	QL Group and Kent Highways	Encourage prompt developments (pilot work on Pilgrims Way)	Medium	Late 2005 onwards	None for Detling
2. Consider removal of speed de-restriction signs on country lanes exiting village & A249	DPC/CMG; KCC	Kent Highways; QL Group	Contact KCC	Medium	2006	None for Detling
3. Consider provision of cycle lanes and options for improving safety of walkers and cyclists	DPC/CMG; KCC	QL Group; Traffic wardens	Set up study group; report to DPC	Medium	2006	None for Detling
6. Facilities and institutions						
1. Promote use/support of the Post Office and village store	Group to report to postmaster and DPC/CMG	VDS	DPC to set up working group	Immediate	Report within 6 months	None
2. Promote use/support of Detling school and its facilities (e.g. play areas)	DSA; DPC/CMG Local police (surgery);	Head-master	DSA/DPC explore opportunities for support and action	Immediate	Report within 6 months	None
3. Raise awareness and knowledge of crime and how to avoid it in Detling	DPC/CMG	Local police; KCC/MBC	Prepare pamphlets and clinics; discuss with local police	Immediate	Start late 2005; run program through 2006	None for Detling
4. Bring to an end adverse impacts of Showground events (noise/traffic etc) in neighbourhood	DPC/CMG; KCAS; local residents group set up if necessary	MBC environmental health	Work though MBC procedures; improve liaison (KCAS/neighbours)	Immediate	Late 2005 to mid 2006, and onwards as necessary	None
5. Explore operation and local value of KCC dial-a-ride/shopping services; if ok, raise awareness	DPC/CMG to publicise; disabled and remote residents to test & report	KCC Kent Carrier services	Encourage qualified local residents to test the services and report	Immediate	Late 2005 to mid 2006	None
6. Endeavour to re-activate and raise awareness of Neighbourhood Watch	DPC/CMG; NNWA; Kent Police NHW liaison	NNWA; other parishes	Renew efforts to find local NHW coordinator(s)	Medium	From 2005 but continue for as long as it takes	None for Detling

Recommendation	Responsibilities	Links	Initial actions	Priority	Timescale	Resource implications
7. Appearance and amenities						
1. Explore opportunities for reducing incidence of fly-tipping and dumped cars, and ensure prompt clean-up	DPC/CMG; in conjunction with MBC and KAONB	MBC; local PCs e.g. Bredhurst	DPC to contact other parish councils and MBC	Medium	Start end 2005, onwards to satisfaction	None for Detling
2. Explore possibilities for establishing medical clinic in Detling (fixed or mobile)	DPC/CG; KCC; MBC	Local surgeries and parishes	Make enquiries/ explore options; look for examples	Immediate	Start late 2005. If promising, set target	None for Detling
3. Educate dog owners and facilitate clean-up; consider fixed penalties and bin provision	DPC/CMG; local residents; MBC	MBC	Source collection bags and explore options, including notices/signs	Medium	Late 2005 to end 2006	None for Detling
4. Work to get post box near A249 end of Scragged Oak Road	DPC/CMG; Royal Mail; involve local residents in choosing site	Royal Mail	Contact Royal Mail	Immediate	Late 2005; installation 2006	None for Detling
5. Explore possibility of recycling facilities and ways of good management	DPC/CMG; in conjunction with MBC	MBC/KCC	Consider need & options, possible sites, pros/cons	Medium	From early 2006	None for Detling

4.3 A conclusion

If progress is made with a fair number of these items, there is good reason for the Parish Council at some time in the future to consider entering the Kent branch of the Village of the Year competition. The categories of this competition are building community life, young people, environmental action, business, and old people. Considering its small size, Detling appears to be well placed in at least three of these areas.



Appendix 1

Responses to questionnaire survey, overall and by area.

(1a) Percentage of respondents giving issue either top or high priority.

Priority issues	Percentage 'Top or High Priority'			
	Total	Village	Across A249	Top of hill
Fly-tipping	91%	88%	97%	100%
The village shop & post office	87%	88%	86%	79%
Abandoned cars	82%	74%	91%	100%
Home and garden security	81%	77%	86%	81%
Vehicle speed on minor roads	79%	77%	81%	84%
Dog fouling	78%	81%	70%	60%
Personal safety	77%	75%	81%	74%
Entrances & exits to A249	76%	72%	73%	89%
Litter in country lanes	75%	72%	81%	84%
Condition & surface of minor roads	75%	73%	69%	80%
The village school	73%	73%	69%	67%
Litter in village	72%	73%	70%	60%
Car security	72%	69%	77%	72%
Vehicle speed on A249 & M20	72%	67%	76%	75%
Facilities for the elderly & disabled	71%	69%	72%	70%
Condition & surface of A249 & M20	70%	67%	82%	58%
Access to health facilities	69%	68%	62%	78%
Planning/development controls	68%	66%	65%	67%
The village hall	68%	67%	72%	61%
Facilities for teenagers	67%	64%	71%	70%
Noise from A249	66%	60%	92%	44%
Noise from M20	64%	65%	71%	29%
Facilities for young children	64%	64%	58%	61%
Road & junction layout	63%	56%	63%	88%
Noise from CTRL	62%	62%	67%	32%
Neighbourhood watch	62%	59%	61%	65%
Public footpaths & bridleways	62%	59%	67%	63%
Grass verges & hedges	60%	54%	72%	59%
Local bus services/bus stops	60%	57%	64%	57%
Access to shops	58%	58%	55%	61%
Postal services/post boxes	57%	54%	55%	58%
Flooding & road drainage	56%	55%	54%	62%
Detling church	56%	52%	67%	57%
Road verges on country lanes	55%	49%	59%	64%
The Parish Council	55%	54%	55%	52%
The village pub	53%	51%	62%	50%
Trees & woodlands	52%	42%	78%	51%
Facilities for walking/pedestrians	52%	50%	51%	49%
Clubs & societies (sports & social)	51%	50%	56%	52%
Minor road improvement	50%	49%	39%	52%
Paper waste mountains	49%	43%	55%	65%
Recreational area (swings etc.)	48%	49%	45%	60%
Recreation area	47%	50%	38%	45%
Open spaces	47%	41%	57%	56%
Affordable housing	44%	41%	44%	43%
Facilities for cycling	41%	37%	41%	45%
Noise from motorbikes	39%	31%	56%	50%
Parking	38%	41%	27%	20%
Street lighting	37%	38%	23%	37%
Landscape & tree planting	36%	31%	57%	29%
Broadband/Internet access	34%	33%	20%	71%
Football pitch	34%	33%	36%	40%
Availability of home or garden help	33%	28%	35%	35%

Table includes only issues receiving at least 30% top and high priority ranking by overall parish

Priority issues	Percentage Top Priority			
	Total	Village	Across A249	Top of hill
Fly-tipping	72%	65%	88%	98%
Village shop & post office	69%	70%	72%	59%
Abandoned cars	59%	51%	70%	89%
Entrances & exits to A249	55%	52%	40%	82%
Personal safety	52%	50%	46%	57%
Vehicle speed on A249 & M20	51%	47%	48%	62%
Home and garden security	50%	44%	51%	70%
Vehicle speed on minor roads	50%	46%	48%	64%
Dog fouling	49%	52%	45%	36%
Noise from A249	48%	42%	83%	30%
Surface of A249 & M20	47%	45%	53%	42%
The village school	45%	46%	38%	54%
Noise from M20	44%	48%	40%	11%
Condition of minor roads	44%	42%	30%	52%
Noise from CTRL	43%	43%	51%	18%
Access to health facilities	41%	36%	40%	61%
Litter in country lanes	39%	33%	46%	67%
Car security	39%	36%	37%	46%
Planning/development controls	38%	36%	42%	31%
The village hall	38%	36%	36%	41%
Facilities for elderly & disabled	36%	34%	38%	33%
Road & junction layout	36%	32%	25%	70%
Litter in village	35%	33%	44%	31%
Facilities for teenagers	35%	35%	38%	35%
Local bus services/bus stops	34%	33%	33%	35%
Facilities for young children	33%	33%	34%	33%
Neighbourhood watch	32%	28%	28%	37%
Access to shops	31%	27%	29%	50%
Postal services/post boxes	31%	29%	22%	43%
St Martin's church	30%	27%	32%	37%

(1b) Percentage of respondents giving issue top priority alone.

Table includes only issues receiving at least 30% top priority ranking by overall parish

Appendix 2

Responses to “other” issues: summary of answers to final (unprompted) question in the survey: are there any other issues that need addressing in the Plan (good or bad)?

• Improvements in access to A249	• Need for village green/focal point
• Control over village developments	• Support/retain the school
• Reduction in traffic noise from M20	• Improvements to public transport
• Facilities for teenagers/young people	• Noise levels/keep village quiet
• Trim road/path side vegetation	• Need for traffic calming measures
• Reduction in traffic noise from A249	• Maintenance of pavements and paths
• Need for street lighting	• Reduce traffic flows in village
• Provision of play area for children	• Better disabled access
• Build affordable/family housing	• Conservation of beauty/wildlife areas
• Support/retain the village shop	• Control/prevent bonfires
• Support/retain the post office	• Noise/nuisance from motorbikes
• Need more village activities/events	• Improve facilities for walkers/cyclists
• Traffic speed through Detling	• Do not need street lighting
• Traffic speed on A249	• Address problems of light pollution
• Regular road/pavement cleaning	• Provide football and sports facilities
• More/better facilities for children	• Support/retain local facilities (general)
• Parking	• Reduce noise from CTRL
• Poor road surfaces/maintenance	• Address problems from Showground

The list includes all answers receiving at least 2% response and is in order of support

Terms of reference of Parish Plan Steering Group and acknowledgements

Terms of reference

1. The purpose of the Steering Group is to initiate the preparation, production, publishing and distribution of a Plan for the civil parish of Detling as a whole.
2. The Plan will aim to enhance the sense of identity and belonging of Detling residents, provide an information base about the parish, identify what people feel is important including what needs to be conserved or improved, and provide an action plan for moving towards its targets. It will aim to contribute to putting Detling on the map and give Detling a ‘Voice’. It will also seek to contribute to the Parish Council’s endeavour to achieve the status of a ‘Quality Council’.
3. The Plan will be derived through survey, research and wide consultation within the Detling community; it will lead and present the views of residents on priority topics bearing on the developing nature and character of the village, its environment, and the facilities and services available to residents.
4. The Plan will be prepared by an elected Steering Group and be independent of influence by any individual, interest group or body inside or outside the parish.
5. The Steering Group will prepare a management plan (or logical framework) laying out in detail the goal, purpose, outputs and activities of the Plan. This will be used as the basis for managing the Plan preparation process, updated as necessary from time to time.
6. On completion an open event will be held to launch and promote the Plan findings.
7. The Plan will be submitted to Detling Parish Council for adoption and to Maidstone Borough Council for reference in all matters affecting the parish, including ‘supplementary planning documents’.
8. It is anticipated that the Parish Plan will be completed by Autumn 2005. At this time a new body with separate constitution and terms of reference will be established to oversee implementation of the Action Plan.

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The Steering Group
October 2005

Appendix 3

The Steering Group

Chair: Robin Grimble;
Deputy chair: Mike Tamsett;
Treasurer: Bryan Follett;
Members, helpers and report contributors: Colin Smith, Grahame Godding, Graham Twist, Hazel Grimble, Ian Rhodes, Jan Kennard, John Watson, Nigella Kent and Paul Green.

Photos: Gordon Richards; Graham Twist, Grahame Godding, John Owen, Nan Brown, Nigella Kent, Robin Grimble and Tony Gowers.

Co-ordinator/editor: Robin Grimble.

Appendix 4

Abbreviations and glossary

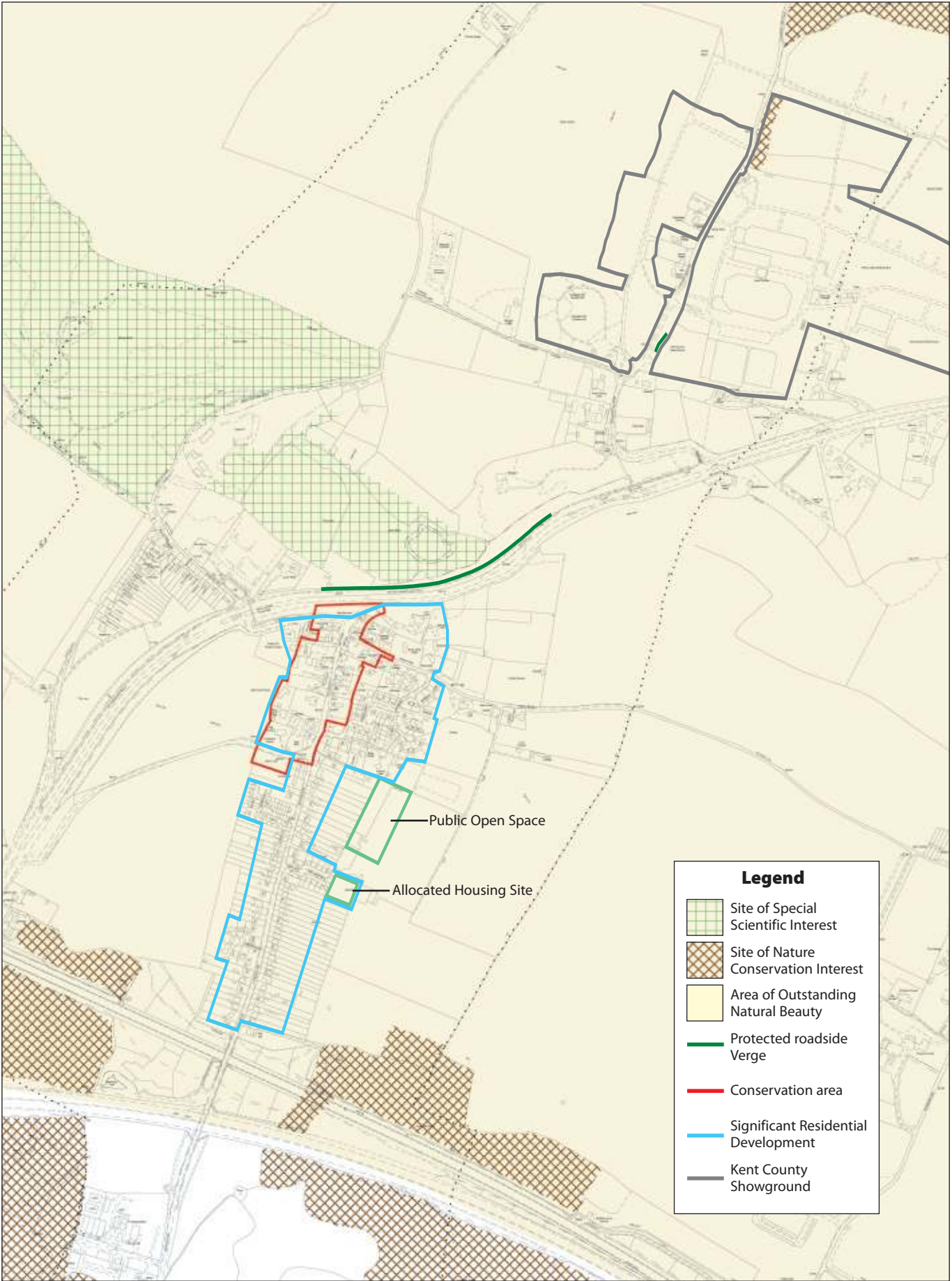
AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic (24 hour period)
AG A249	A249 Action Group
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CMG	Co-ordination and Monitoring Group
CTRL	Channel Tunnel Rail Link
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DPC	Detling Parish Council
DPP	Detling Parish Plan
DSA	Detling School Association (PTA)
KCAS	Kent County Agricultural Society
KRCC	Kent Rural Community Council (Action for Communities in Rural Kent)
KDAONB	Kent Downs AONB
EN	English Nature
LDP	Landscape Design Plan
LDF	Local Development Framework
MBC	Maidstone Borough Council
NDW	North Downs Way
NHW	Neighbourhood Watch
NNWA	National Neighbourhood Watch Association
PO	Detling Post Office and shop
PRW	Public Rights of Way
QL	Quiet Lanes
RHT	Rural Housing Trust
SLA	Special Landscape Area
TOR	Terms of Reference
VDS	Village Design Statement
VPD	Vehicles per day (12 hour period)

Appendix 5

References and relevant material

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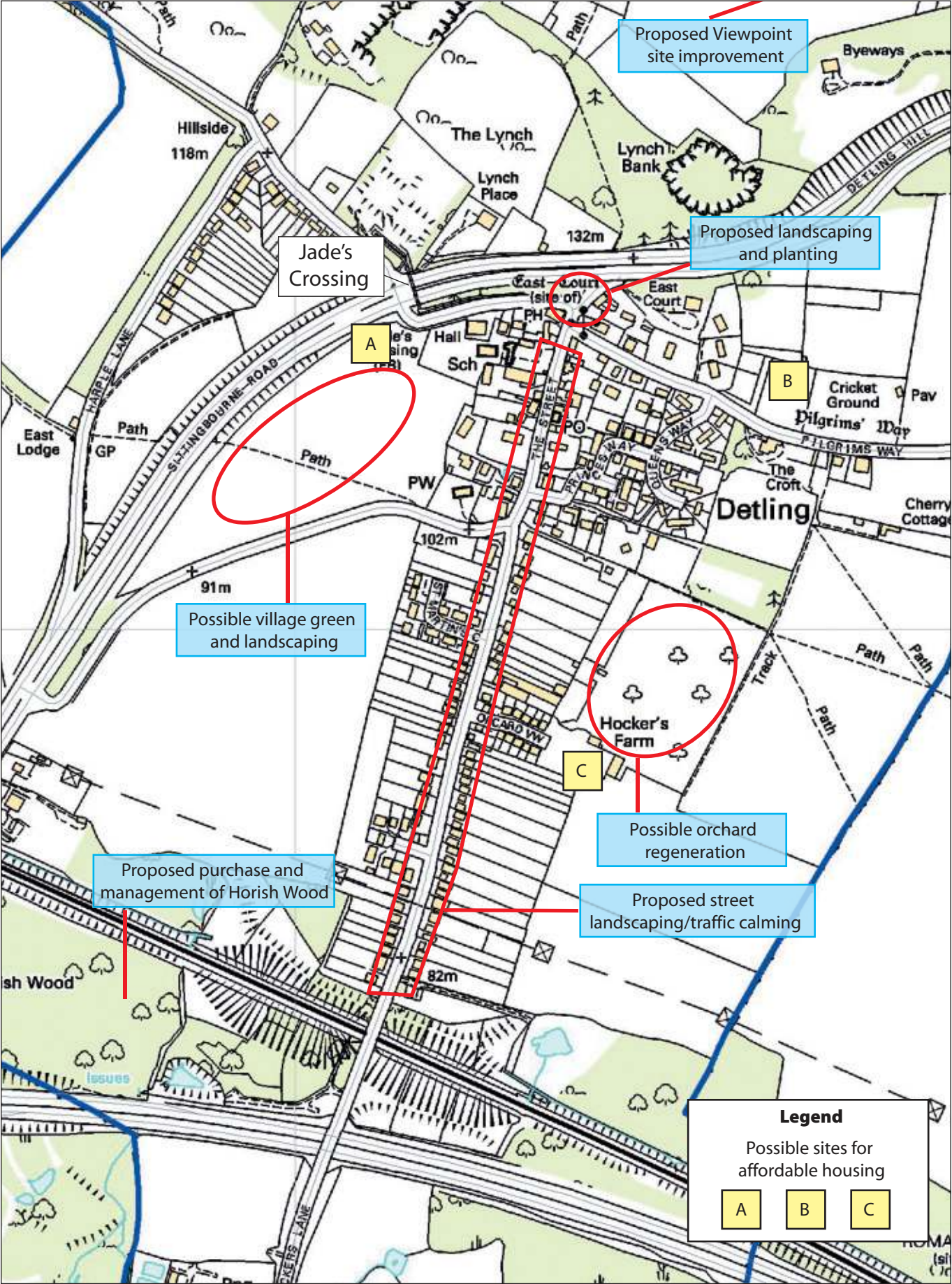
Map 2 Taken from the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan: Adopted December 2000



The whole area shown on this map is within the Strategic Gap.

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Map 3 Detling village with options for change



NB Location of options is approximate and dependent on ongoing plan development

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The Larches, SSSI



DETTING