

Village Study

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Section 1: Introduction

The village of Eastling is described by Arthur Mee in "The King's England" as a "hamlet of great delight in the high country of the North Downs". It is situated towards the northern extremity of the North Downs approximately halfway between Faversham and Lenham, and the road network connecting them provided routes between the radial arteries known as A2 and the A20 connecting London and the Channel Ports.

The parish has an area of some 3 square miles, and stretches from New York Larches in the east, and land adjoining Frith Farm in the west, and between North Eastling Hill in the north, and Pettfield Hill Lane below Huntingfield in the south. The major landowner is the Belmont Estate, which farms about 1,000 acres within the confines of the parish. The major industry within the area has traditionally been agriculture, particularly sheep rearing followed by fruit farming. Most of the cherry orchards dating from the mid 19th Century have been grubbed out, and converted to arable or other uses or replanted with the more modern miniature varieties of trees.

Historically the present village stands on the site of much older community. Its flint beds and chalk would have been a source of raw materials in Neolithic times, and artefacts have been discovered, indicating that there was some form of human activity here then. A trade route seems to have passed nearby, and historians have indicated that a permanent settlement was first built in the area in the 5th Century. By the time of the Norman Conquest it was well established. The "Domesday Book" of 1086 shows that the village was in the possession of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and that there were four manors within the parish - Arnold's Oak, Divan Court, Huntingfield and North Eastling.

In the 16th Century King Henry VIII appears to have been the driving force behind the introduction of orchards into Kent. Being concerned about the constant importation of produce from the Continent, he decided upon a serious "grow your own" project based at nearby Teynham. One of the end results of this policy was that Eastling was for years a provider of many of what are now considered to be traditional Kentish fruits: Apples, Cherries and Hops. Fruit growing was the major business of the landowners, or tenant farmers in the vicinity. There were a number of ancillary concerns - blacksmiths, livestock farmers and retailers. Again, Arthur Mee described the church spire surrounded by cherry blossom in May as "standing like a ship's mast rising from a sea of foam".

Since the end of World War II, most of the orchards have been grubbed out. Many of the old tenant farmers have gone, and the bulk of the land has reverted to the Belmont Estate. This is, at present, mainly an arable holding growing a variety of crops, largely cereal and oil-seed rape. Much of its acreage is made up of ancient woodland, which harbours an abundance of indigenous wild life, and is also used to rear game birds for the local sporting guns. The blacksmith and the retail outlets, which had survived until the 1990's, have closed. The public house remains.

The present trend towards agricultural mechanisation has greatly reduced the number of people who work on the Estate. The population of the Parish appears to have fluctuated considerably over the years. In 1569, it appears that there were 24 householders and 87 communicants. This number recorded by the Census had increased to 481 by 1881. Of the 263 people who appear on the 2003 electoral roll, probably less than 20 work in the parish. Of the 100 children in the village primary school, only 37 live within the parish. Apart from

the Estate, there are very few actual employers who operate within the confines of the parish. None could be considered to be a major employer of labour.

They can be listed as follows:

- The Estate
- Eastling Primary School
- The Carpenters' Arms
- Churchfields Farm
- BT Exchange
- The Water Pumping Station
- Newnham Lane Business park
- Belmont Timber Services

Eastling is largely a dormitory village, from which people commute out to work and return to sleep.



Eastling Manor House - The oldest dwelling in the Village



The Carpenters' Arms - The only retail outlet left

Section 2: Geography, Topography, Geology

The village lies in the North Downs, an east-west belt of small undulating chalk hills. A few miles to the north is the flat alluvial belt alongside the Thames Estuary. A few miles to the south is the Weald of Kent. Alongside these flat and fertile agricultural zones, on either side of the Downs, run the ancient roads connecting London to the Channel Ports.

In early times the poor Downland topsoils supported the grazing needed for sheep. Other cultivation was always more difficult than to the north and south, where horticultural produce was easily grown to supply the nearby towns. The introduction of railways in the mid 19th Century was followed by the agricultural depression: Eastling's surrounding rural landscape changed as it became economic for agricultural production to shift towards fruit growing - particularly cherries - and arable farming.

Materials for building were available from the earliest times. Roughly shaped flints were found near the surface; more regularly shaped ones could be quarried from the underlying chalk. Lime was made from the chalk, and sand was available from the coast or from Charing a few miles to the south. Timber (mostly oak) and straw for thatching were also locally available.

The unforgiving Kentish ragstone, had to be transported from the nearest quarries close to Maidstone and was little used. From the 18th Century fired clay bricks were produced from the brick earth deposits at Faversham. Later, the railways could bring other materials such as cheap softwood from the Baltic and the Colonies, slate from Wales, and easily worked stone from other regions.

The village is about 5 miles south of Faversham, 7 miles north of Lenham and on a north-south road which connects them. Eastling initially developed along this road's west side, then along incoming lanes from Throwley and Newnham. The present village extends to include the Church, Divan Court Farm, North Court Farm, and rural outposts at North Eastling and Kettle Hill. Further afield, and within the parish, are other farms, houses and cottages.

The village is surrounded by agricultural land, much of it part of the Belmont Estate. The current depressed agricultural economy has brought an increase in arable lands, while the area's traditional horticulture has declined.

The broad agricultural economy is in a period of transition, reflected locally. The financial underpinning is shifting away from food production quotas towards the land. Government-sponsored rural programmes now emphasise attractive landscape, and protection of the natural habitat for flora and fauna. There are financial inducements for setting-aside land from agricultural production, for planting trees and hedges, and for extending public access. There is also increasing regulation on the uses of chemical pesticides, weed-killers, fertilisers and feeds for livestock. The Belmont Estate is heavily committed to the "Countryside Stewardship" scheme.

Economically, farming is progressively unpredictable. Farmers are encouraged to diversify, and this has extended to the conversion of traditional farm buildings (oast houses, barns) to residential use, the provision of small industrial units on farms, and a shift to "horsey-culture" with stabling and livery yards. Although the Belmont Estate has no such plans, they are attractive possibilities for other smaller local landowners.

Thus, the appearance of Eastling's rural landscape is changing. Enhancement of the landscape, its walks and bridleways, seems assured. If the emerging policies are successful, they will result in greater access for larger numbers of people.



Part of the old cherry orchard at Churchfields Farm



Recently harvested wheat field adjacent to Divan Court

Section 3: Physical Fabric

The oldest building is the Church of St Mary, parts of which date from the 12th and 13th Centuries. It is built of local materials; flintwork walls with ragstone quoins and facings, with an oak roof structure. Handmade clay roof tiles have replaced the earlier thatching; the oak shingles on the tower roof were replaced by slates in the late 19th century when the architect R. C. Hussey repaired remodelled and extended the old structure, providing a new west porch, north aisle, and vestry.

There are several other key buildings in the village. Eastling Manor, also known as Gregory's was rebuilt early in the 17th Century. It is a three-storey close studded structure, at the corner of The Street and Kettle Hill Road. Close to the Church at the village's northeast edge is Divan Court Farmhouse, which like North Court Farmhouse to the north, has 18th and 19th Century construction superimposed on earlier building. The mediaeval Tong Farmhouse to the south, and the 17th century North Eastling Farmhouse to the north, are both relatively undisturbed. The Old Rectory, at the junction of The Street with Newnham Lane, is a brick structure with slated roof, a reduced survivor of the much larger mid-century building which replaced an earlier rectory on the same site.

The main concentration of the older buildings is along The Street between its junctions with Newnham Lane and Kettle Hill Road. The buildings are mostly the original timber-framed cottages, some dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, now typically with clay tiled roofs and refronted in brickwork from the 18th and 19th Centuries. This group of buildings now forms the core of the Eastling Conservation Area, which was designated in 1973, and extends north to include The Old Rectory, south along Kettle Hill Road, and east to include the Church and Divan Court Farm.

In the 19th century the village was extended southwards to include Prospect Place and, further south, Mill Cottages. These are both brick-built, two storey, short terraces of artisans' cottages. Also in the 19th century a small number of individual houses alongside Newnham Lane were built. In 1881 the new brick-built Eastling School was opened on Kettle Hill Road.

20th century developments include the local authority's post WWII old persons' houses to the south, a short single storey terrace. The Glebe Houses to the north were two storey "Airey" pre-cast concrete panelled family houses with large gardens. They were followed in the mid-1960s by the building of Meeson's Close on the remaining Glebe land north of the original Rectory: single-family bungalows built of brick and timber, with tiled roofs. In the early 1990s the earlier Glebe Houses were demolished and the site redeveloped by the local authority to a higher density, with two-storey family houses of brick, timber, and tiled roofs, with modest private gardens but with a generous shared open space between the houses and the road.

The village is fairly compact, visually varied, and generally attractive apart from a limited number of visual eyesores.

Most buildings in the village are served by electricity, mains water and telephone; broadband has recently been provided. Drainage is either by cesspool or septic tank, although within the last 25 years the local authority has twice proposed, but not built, main drainage schemes. The proposed costs of this project are reflected in the disparity of the results in the surveys published later in the document. Gas is available to buildings along The Street, Otterden Road, and part of Kettle Hill.



St Mary's Church

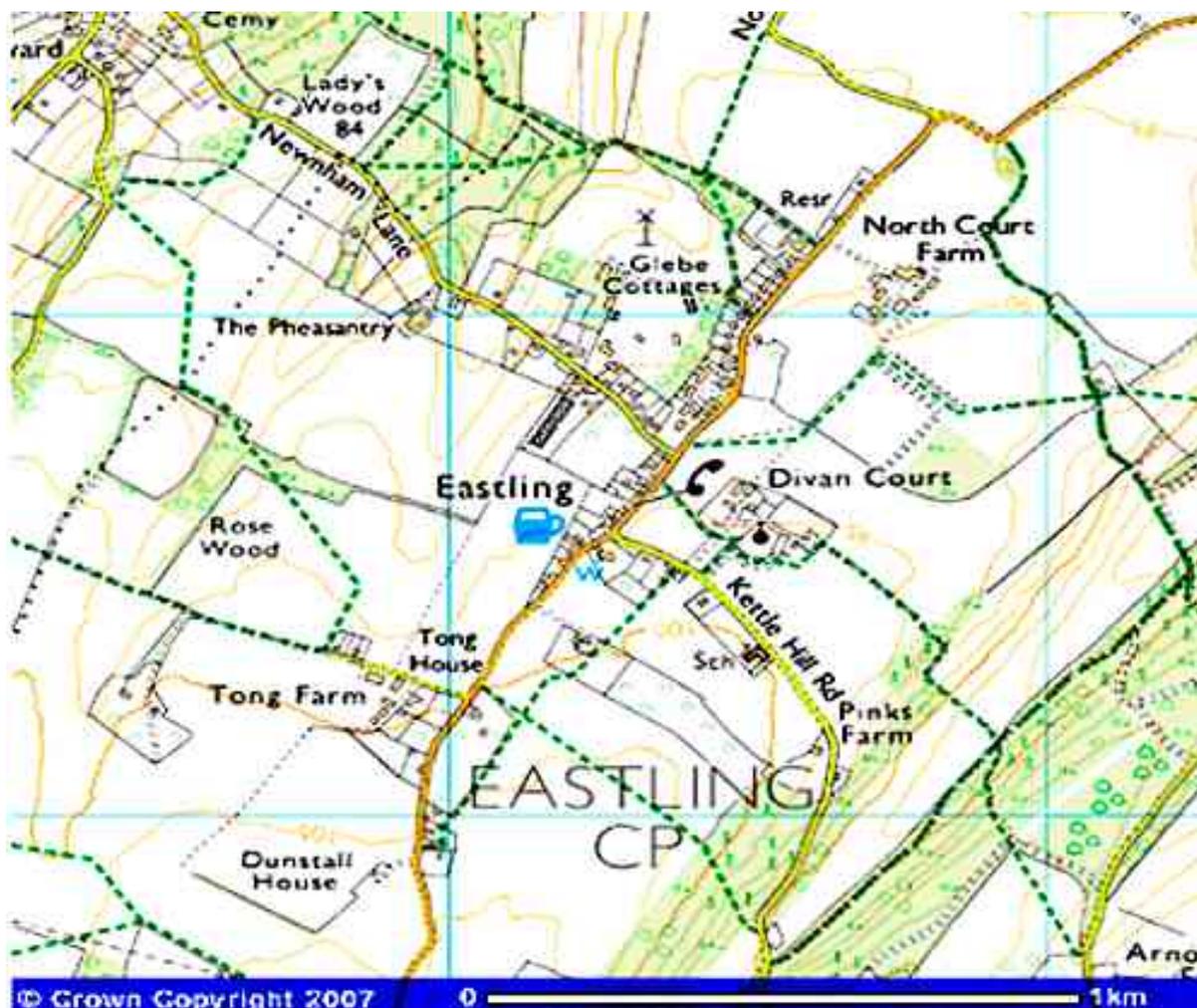


Tong House, Tong Lane, Eastling

Section 4: Social and Economic Character; Public Administration

Eastling is a small village, and most of its population have a sense of community, based on face-to-face recognition and contact with neighbours and other residents. These social relationships are reinforced by village facilities, chief among which are the Church, the School, the Village Hall and the Public House. The Church is also instrumental in issuing a monthly news-sheet to all houses in the Parish, keeping local people in touch with events.

The Civil and Ecclesiastical Parishes of Eastling are co-terminous, and are shown on the accompanying map.



The Ecclesiastical Parish falls within the Diocese of Canterbury. It is governed by the Eastling Parochial Church Council, which is an autonomous body operating under the direction of the Priest-in-Charge within the bounds of Ecclesiastical Law and Measures. It is responsible to the Diocese of Canterbury, and reports to the Canterbury Diocesan Synod.

The (Civil) Parish is governed by Eastling Parish Council, which has 5 elected members whose remit is to look after the well being of residents, to consider planning applications and ensure the overall well-being of the various aspects of village life which come under its control.

The local District council is Swale Borough Council, based at Sittingbourne but with a local office in Faversham. Eastling forms part of its Swale East Division, and the East Downs ward helps to elect one member to Swale Borough Council.

Swale Borough Council area forms part of the Faversham and Mid-Kent Parliamentary Constituency. It is also part of the UK (South East) European Union Constituency.

Very little employment is available in the village, and only a limited number of Eastling residents are employed within the parish. The School, the Public House and agriculture are employers on a modest scale; and a small number of residents are self-employed and can work from their homes. So the majority of the working population must find employment outside the village, some in Faversham, others in Canterbury, Maidstone, the Medway Towns, London or elsewhere.

The approximate percentage breakdown of occupations for those employed, as published in the Eastling Parish Appraisal 2001 was as follows:

- Lecturing/Teaching: 28%
- Management: 16%
- Financial Services: 12%
- Agriculture: 7%
- Architecture/Surveying: 7%
- Public Relations: 5%
- Law: 5%
- Police: 5%
- Gardening: 3%
- Computing: 3%
- Catering: 3%
- Boat Design: 2%
- Engraving: 2%
- Travel Services: 2%

The Parish Appraisal also indicated the approximate breakdown of employment for the population as follows:

- Retired: 15%
- Self-employed: 11%
- In full-time employment: 33%
- In part-time employment: 7%
- In full-time education: 19%
- Disabled and not in employment: 4%
- Otherwise employed: 12%

The Appraisal showed that about 19% of those employed were engaged in manual work, and about 50% were professionals

The Appraisal also showed that the majority of the parish's population were in the working age range between 25 and 64. The following are approximate percentages:

Under 5 years: 9%

5-10 years: 8%

11-18 years: 8%

19-24 years: 7%

25-44 years: 31%

45-64 years: 28%

Over 65 years: 9%

The majority of residents would describe themselves as UK citizens, and there is a small minority of residents from other EU countries (France, Netherlands, Ireland). The village is not popular with ethnic minorities.

For many people Eastling is clearly an attractive place to live notwithstanding its immediate lack of employment and other opportunities; most residents are here through positive choice. However, there has been little new development in Eastling since the redevelopment of housing at The Glebe.

As in the rest of south-east England, house prices in Eastling have risen in recent years far beyond the rate of inflation. Unless the village's future population is to be almost exclusively affluent, provision will be needed for affordable housing to accommodate those younger households on their first rung of the housing ladder. Sites for large developments may be limited. Modest new houses, flats formed from larger residences, possibly with conversions of non-residential buildings, could all play a part.

Section 5: Available Facilities

The Village Hall, completed in 1996, contains a large hall and a smaller room, with back-up provision of catering and lavatory accommodation. It is used for short-mat bowls, whist drives, snooker, classes, lectures, wedding receptions, Sunday School, sales etc. There is an adjacent car park. The building was designed bearing in mind the accessibility needs of disabled people. It is becoming increasingly well used by the community.

Recently an office facility has been installed intended to be used by the Parish Council, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Trustees and the Youth Group. A Computer has been provided, with access to Broadband, for use by all members of the Community.

At the (Anglican) Church of St. Mary there are regular services of worship on Sundays, major feast days, and at other times. The Parochial Church Council is currently considering ways to enhance accessibility for disabled people at the Church, and to provide lavatory and modest catering facilities.

There is a Methodist Chapel at Painters Forstal, but members of other churches must travel to Faversham, Sittingbourne or Canterbury for Roman Catholic, Congregational, Quaker, for other denominational services.

The "Carpenters' Arms" public house has a bar and restaurant, and provides a convivial social venue for eating and drinking.

A small number of residents provide bed and breakfast accommodation on an intermittent basis.

The Eastling Centre at Churchfields Farm, just south of The Street, provides outdoor activities such as a sand school for horse-riding, a livery yard and grazing for horses and ponies. It is also a venue for visitors who wish to bring their horses with them on holiday to use the existing network of bridleways.

There are limited public facilities available in the village for recreation and leisure pursuits other than walking and horse-riding on the extensive network of rural public footpaths and bridleways.

Football, cricket and rugby clubs and facilities exist in Faversham, Sittingbourne and Canterbury. Eastling Cricket Club uses the ground at Otterden but few if any of the Club members are Eastling residents. Faversham Golf Club is based at Belmont, about 3 miles northeast of Eastling village centre.

Further afield a range of facilities is available. In Faversham, Sittingbourne, Ashford and Canterbury can be found cinemas, swimming pools, theatres, restaurants, fitness clubs, and societies for history, music and drama, and a wide range of other facilities.



Glebe Cottages, Eastling Road



Easting Village Hall

Section 6: Available Services

Eastling School in Kettle Hill Road provides primary school education for 5 to 11 year old children, under Kent County Council auspices. There are about 100 children on the roll, only 37% of which live in the village. The School, which originally opened in 1881, has been extended several times. At present (Spring 2004) a school hall is under construction. The school's catchment area extends as far as Faversham. Most Eastling children of primary school age attend Eastling School, but other local primary schools available to them are at Sheldwich, Ospringe (Church of England), and Painter's Forstal (Lorenden, a private sector school).

Secondary education available to Eastling's 11-18 years age range include The Abbey School (Faversham) and Swadelands (Lenham), both secondary modern schools: also the grammar schools: Queen Elizabeth's (Faversham), Borden (Sittingbourne), Simon Langton (Canterbury)

Adult education facilities are provided by Kent County Council and the Workers' Educational Association, and are available in Faversham, Sittingbourne and Canterbury. The University of Kent at Canterbury offers degree level courses of study for mature students.

For health services, the nearest general medical practitioners operate in Faversham where there is a choice between two health centres and a range of General Practitioners.

The East Kent Hospital Trust's Faversham Cottage Hospital has limited provision for short-stay convalescence and geriatric patients. Those needing more specialist attention must travel to a hospital at Canterbury, Margate, Ashford or Chatham.

Social Services are under the authority of Kent County Council.

The Ecclesiastical Parish is part of a combined Benefice along with Stalisfield and Otterden, and the Priest-in-charge is based at Eastling. She is assisted by a team of Eastling residents which is able to give practical help and support to the elderly and those in need.

In emergencies the nearest ambulance, fire and police stations are at Faversham, some 15 minutes away.

Royal Mail provides two post boxes in the village from which one collection is made on weekdays. There is one daily delivery. The nearest post office is in Faversham or Lenham. There is one public telephone box, in The Street, adjacent to the local exchange.

There are no shops in the village. The large supermarkets now provide a home delivery service for orders which are placed on-line.

Section 7: Transport and Communications

A bus service runs from Graveney to Faversham, then Painters Forstal, Eastling and Stalisfield. It is most heavily used by schoolchildren - coming from elsewhere (mostly the Faversham direction) to attend Eastling School, and Eastling children going to school in Faversham.

Individual children whose daily journeys to school do not coincide with accessible public transport are provided with a taxi service by the education authority. To the south the service extends no further than Stalisfield.

At times other than when used by schoolchildren, the bus service is limited, not intensively used; it would be uneconomical to provide a more extensive service - for example a "late bus" from Faversham - for the limited number of potential passengers.

The bus service may be useful to Eastling residents employed in Faversham, but is inadequate for making connections to other public transport for those needing to travel further afield.

Otherwise, those without access to their own private transport can use taxis which are available from Faversham, Sittingbourne and Ashford.

Those needing to travel by rail to London need to leave cars at Faversham or Sittingbourne, where car park spaces are rarely readily available.

Eastling has few opportunities for employment, services and facilities, and its public transport provision is limited. Most residents have access to private means of transport, and therefore rely heavily on making trips by private car. Those without access to private cars are very disadvantaged in their freedom and independence of movement, finding access to facilities difficult if not impossible.

At certain times of day, particularly between 8.30 and 9.00 a.m., The Street and parts of Kettle Hill Road are made extremely hazardous by the combination of parents driving children to school, and pedestrians walking with their children.

There are pavements alongside Eastling Road and Otterden Road, but not alongside The Street where the road is narrow and cars are regularly parked. The public footpath leading from The Street towards the church, through the church car park to Kettle Hill Road, is well-used at these times.



Eastling Primary School in Kettle Hill Road

Section 8: Problems

Eastling's problems include the following:

Lack of affordable housing for those waiting to get on the first rung of the ladder;

A limited sense of community, as people tend not to live and work in the village;

Poor public transport service;

Intermittent dangerous road conditions especially for pedestrians with young children;

Creeping municipalisation of suburban, not rural character - tarmac pavements, ugly street lights;

Erosion of natural habitats for wildlife; although it is noted that the Belmont Estate has made a great impact with the planting of miles of hedgerows.

Lack of opportunity of greater socialisation; although the village hall is at last becoming a focal point for the community;

Lack of public open spaces/playground;

Opportunities for development are limited by planning /conservation policies;

Localised visual blight.

Section 9: Possibilities

Wider use and appreciation of landscape, nature trails etc., - leading to more sustainable bed and breakfast provision;

Expansion of the role of Eastling School in the community; extra facilities/services;

Provision of public open/playground space;

Mutual help transport system;

Restraint in the use of private cars;

Enhancement of the public transport system;

Provision for modest employment opportunities;

Modest provision of low-cost housing;

Tree planting - possibly including fruit trees traditional to the area - to overcome visual blight;

Continuation of existing planning policies to enhance the built environment.

Section 10: Strategies - Into the Future

Aims to which Eastling could plan are as follows:

Identify possible locations for affordable housing, including conversions of existing buildings;

Continue those existing planning policies which ensure that any necessary development enhances the character of the village;

Encourage the role of Eastling School in the community;

Identify possible locations for public open space/playground;

Enhance the relative attractiveness of the public transport system to encourage its wider use;

Discourage inessential journeys by car; where they are necessary encourage sharing by publicising planned trips to others;

Install a traffic management scheme to provide better safety in The Street and Kettle Hill Road (consider possible reduction in speed limits, traffic lights, chicanes, sleeping policemen etc.);

Develop a strategy for planting hedges and trees of native species to camouflage visual eyesores, enhance the landscape and improve habitats for wildlife;

Develop with local farmers, an open discussion about the appropriate use of agricultural herbicides and pesticides, and the merits of genetically modified crops.

Conclusions

Analysis of the Character of the Parish

Retain and Enhance

The Parish of Eastling is a rural parish dominated by agriculture and steeped in the history of Kent. The area is served by a network of foot paths, bridleways, narrow lanes and roadways linking to the main road between Faversham and Lenham.

Eastling village boasts a rich variety of ancient buildings which include a 12th century Church, an early manor house and a part Tudor inn. Additional properties of particular interest are Tong House, Porch House, Divan Court, and The Old Rectory. There are many old and lovely houses which adjoin the main street.

The diversity of style of the properties within the village results in a wide range of local materials being used in their construction. Timber clad buildings intersperse with brick and stone houses. Traditional Kent peg tiles are interspersed with slate on many of the older roofs.

The majority of the houses abut the main streets of Newnham Lane, Kettle Hill Road, The Street and Faversham Road. There has been a degree of infilling of the years but all properties enjoy open views of the countryside. Two small estates, Meeson's Close and Glebe Cottages, have provided more modern housing in the form of cul-de-sacs retaining open space and clear views.

Agriculture dominates the Parish. Formerly ancient cherry orchards covered much of the area but since the early 1960's age and changes in the market forces have resulted in most of the old orchards being grubbed out. Arable farming and grazing for sheep now lead with the large estates owned by the Belmont Trust, Arnold's Oak and the Coultrip family.

Eastling offers an attractive location for visitors. As it occupies a key position on the North Downs, bed and breakfast accommodation and an attractive inn should provide for the needs of tourists. The area is extremely popular with walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Swale Borough Council and the Environment Agency supported the parish with grants to build a new village hall, funding countryside stewardship schemes and the replanting of one of the few remaining old cherry orchards.

The Parish of Eastling naturally centres on the Church. Its beautiful surroundings remain the key to the heart of the Parish and must be retained.

The area is blessed with substantial hedgerows and trees. Sensitive management is required to ensure that they continue to provide a diversity of form to the countryside and support additional wild life.

Design Guidance

Development must be consistent with the Swale Borough Council's local plan and the principles and objectives of Kent Design.

New developments, alterations and extensions should reflect the rural nature of the village. Designs should be sensitive to residents' enjoyment of privacy, views and restrained noise levels.

Building material use should reflect the character of the area and changes should fall within current building guidelines regarding height and density.

Where older buildings are to be renovated or repaired such work should be carried out using traditional techniques and materials wherever possible.

Posters, Notice Boards, Street Furniture and Signage should be avoided, but where necessary should be sympathetic to the general area.

Eastling wishes to encourage environmentally friendly practices and conservation opportunities provided that they do not cause unnecessary problems.

Design for new properties must address the provision of access to and parking for motor vehicles with "off-road" facilities being promoted whenever possible.

Where development or alteration is proposed, the use of such premises should include the provision of building conditions, where relevant, to ensure that the intentions of the approval are guaranteed.

Building Materials

It is essential to ensure that the use of poor quality, non traditional and inappropriate materials in the construction, alteration or repair of new or existing properties does not adversely affect the character of the Parish

Development Pattern

The approval of affordable housing would modify the Community.

Infill along the main roads would allow further development but back fill should be avoided to ensure that the tradition of open views is maintained.

An increasing population brings with it the problems of increased traffic flow. A priority should be to address the problem of vehicles parked on The Street. With few pavements, restricted street lighting and a 40 mph speed limit the main street is a potential danger.

The attraction of the village to walkers, cyclists and horse riders must be enhanced, as nationally leisure opportunities become more extensive. The use of existing footpaths and bridleways should be encouraged and where possible landowners should consider providing additional access.

Landscape

It is essential to maintain the inherent beauty of the Parish by ensuring that the views across the open countryside are unobstructed. The trustees of the Belmont Estate and the Farm Manager in particular have made every effort to keep the footpaths, bridleways and hedgerows in good condition and their efforts are greatly appreciated by the Community.

Access throughout the area to the woodland, pastures and walkways are the core of the Community for its leisure pursuits and should be enhanced wherever possible.

The preservation, restoration and continued planting of trees and hedgerows should be encouraged. Local varieties of plants and trees should be used and the use of fast growing conifers discouraged.

It is essential that the skills and knowledge held by local people is not lost and that every opportunity is taken to document and disseminate this knowledge. Local interest groups have a vital role to play.

Highways and Paths

All new planning applications must be viewed with regard to the need for motor vehicle parking and movements.

Currently The Street of Eastling is unsympathetic to the needs of motorists or the safety of pedestrians.

Where street furniture is used its construction should be in keeping with the rural nature of the village

The safety of children is paramount and it is noted that there are few pavements and safe crossing points to access the village school. Increasing traffic movement worsens this potential problem.

The Development of the Statement with the Community

In 1996 the Countryside Agency launched a national strategy to encourage local communities to publish statements that captured the detailed characteristics that make their community unique. The publication on 28th November 2000 of the Rural White Paper ("Our Countryside: The Future. A fair Deal for Rural England") further reinforces the importance of local design statements in national planning strategy. The White Paper wants "people living in rural areas (to be) fully involved in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features, and shaping the decisions that affect them to identify key facilities and services, to set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how its distinctive character and features can be preserved." Throughout the development of a statement for the Parish of Eastling, support has been received from planning and conservation officers at Swale Borough Council.

Appendix A: Previous Studies

The North Downs Jigsaw Project - 1998-99

The KCC sponsored project was carried out in 1998-99 to gather information about rural settlements in the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Parishes within the AONB included parts of the District Council areas for Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone, Medway, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Swale and Tonbridge and Malling. Each Parish was contacted and asked to nominate representatives to be responsible for forming a critical photographic record of their parish.

At the project's conclusion, the key issues identified in the survey of the North Downs parishes fell under the general heading of:

- Transport and traffic
- Planning and development
- Community issues
- Countryside conservation

Copies of the results, including the main issues highlighted for North Downs parishes now follow.

- Transport, Traffic and Infrastructure
 - Traffic volumes and speed, particularly on local roads and in settlements
 - General impact on roads - noise, light and air pollution, landscape intrusion etc
 - Road maintenance needs, - particularly during winter months
 - Paucity/No provision for public transport
 - Infrastructure development particularly the Channel Tunnel Rail Link
- Planning, Development Control and Building Design
 - General Development pressure, intensification and all resulting effects
 - Maintenance of identity, scale and setting of rural environment
 - Impact of telecommunication masts, pylons and similar
 - Planning for local needs; low cost housing, rural employment etc
 - Impact of quarrying, landfill, waste disposal and similar
 - Suburbanisation/Inappropriate conversion of old buildings
- Community Issues and Local Amenities
 - Provision/Maintenance of: village shop/PO/pub/dispensing service
 - Provision/Maintenance of: village hall/school/library (building or mobile)
 - Need to improve community involvement particularly of young people
 - Need to improve policing to fight crime, vandalism, fly tipping etc
- Countryside Issues - Land Management, Conservation and Recreation

Conservation - The way in which subsidy payments are paid to the agricultural industry is changing. The Common Agricultural Policy has just undergone the most radical shake-up since Great Britain joined the Common Market in 1973. The mid-term review (MTR) set to be implemented in 2005 will see subsidies paid on an Entitlement basis on the land, a definite shift away from a production based arrangement allowing more freedom and flexibility. (The difference being production based on crop area and entitlement on a single farm payment irrespective of what is grown.) The other important facet is modulation. This takes money away from traditional areas of support and increasingly is put into environmental schemes, such as the "Countryside Stewardship Scheme", in which the Belmont Estate is heavily involved. Agriculture is of little economic importance to many villages. The Industry is no longer perceived as being of any strategic importance in terms of continuity of food supply. Food is traded globally, so, therefore, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) can be removed from the food supply chain. There is a school of thought which argues that this may well happen post MTR on some of the less productive land in the first instance. The danger here is that great swathes of Countryside will appear unmanaged, untidy and eventually derelict. The various conservation schemes and rural development grants are the political will behind not allowing this to happen. Ultimately the fate of the face of the Countryside will be determined by the individuals that own and manage it, as it has been for generations.

The Impact of Modern Agriculture - There is probably less impact from modern agricultural methods today than there has been for thirty years or so. The changes highlighted above with the MTR, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the understanding of a moral obligation to the Countryside has made many landowners far more aware of their responsibility to the local flora and fauna. Within Europe, the UK has the strictest pesticide regulations of any state. The crop assurance schemes that exist are there to provide complete trace ability from field to table. Any producer who is not a member of a scheme will find it extremely difficult to market their produce. Originally sold as a premium market instrument (premium for having the assurance scheme) it is now the norm. Pesticides undergo strict evaluation that costs many millions of pounds before they get an approval licence. They are far more target specific, less persistent and consequently much safer for everyone than ever before and reassuringly expensive! People in Agriculture are better trained than they have ever been and better informed of the consequence of their actions especially when it comes to chemicals and fertilisers. Increasing use of computers and electronics has also helped to make things safer and more accurate. It is probably fair to say that farms will get bigger because the efficiency that size brings cuts costs. That, however, is unlikely to be at the expense of field size, woodland or other natural habitat that need to be preserved for future generations.

Loss of Tradition - In the single word "Globalisation" is the explanation for the loss of many of the traditional farming methods. More and more buying power is being placed in fewer hands. There is one grower of top fruit in South America who is able to provide as much as the entire English crop for one Supermarket's demand for pears of the right quality and at the right price. The logistics and the size of the figures show that it can be and is being done. Kent is famous for hop growing but it has recently been said that no hops (other than novelty) will be grown in Kent inside five years. Much of the production has been shifted to Northern Germany where the climate is ideal and the necessary labour readily available.

Horsey-Culture - Since farm incomes have come under pressure in the last decade it is noticeable that many have "diversified" by using redundant farm buildings for a variety of uses. The "classic" is the conversion of the "Oast house" into residential property. There has

been a move towards small industrial units as there is often grant money available for conversion costs (more will be made available from modulation as time goes on) and then there is diversified business growth such as horse livery yards. Where there is strong demand these can be quite successful. The Belmont Estate has little interest at present in pursuing any of the above.

Improve provision for walkers etc. - Eastling has a network of footpaths and bridleways which are relatively well maintained. Many farmers, however, do rely on the goodwill of the walking public to point out areas of weakness such as fallen trees, poor gates etc., so that problems can be brought to the attention of management and action taken. It is not practical to expect everything in what is a natural environment to be perfect all the time.

Sporting Facilities for the Young - There are none. The Belmont Estate offered the village for a commercial rent the 2½ acre in front of "The Carpenter's Arms". The people living in the vicinity did not wish this to happen and mobilised a very effective "no" campaign. The people who the facility would have benefited most did not really get involved in the debate and consequently the idea was dropped.

[The Eastling Parish Appraisal 2001](#)

The Appraisal was carried out by the Eastling Parish Council with support from the Swale Borough Council in the spring of 2001. It was wide-ranging, with objective and comprehensive information on the village's history, natural and built environments, economy, people, services, transport, facilities and useful contacts.

The Main Points:

Eastling residents put a lot of store on the attractive countryside surrounding the village

Traffic speeds on roads in and around the village are a major concern

Half the village are against more street lighting - but more than a third would like it

Opinion on whether main drainage would be a good thing found 50% in favour and 33% against

Almost nobody wanted to see more housing in Eastling

Reliance on the car has become a way of life

The village post-box is very well used by most people

Some other services - like the bus, the library van and the phone box - are not used by the majority of villagers. But for those who do, they are regarded as vital

When it comes to what is happening locally the "Good News" is THE source people rely on

Half the village still use the milkman

Television is the top leisure activity and (apart from going to work or school) visiting friends or family is the major reason for journeys out of the village

Faversham remains the main shopping centre for most Eastling residents - with Canterbury more likely to be the destination for big purchases

61% of villagers are into recycling and 42% compost their garden waste

Cats are the top pet in Eastling

Eastling Village Survey 2000 (Project by Ben Bromley)

Most people regarded Eastling as attractive with 40% saying "very attractive"

95% of residents agreed that there was a need to conserve the natural surroundings and protect the existing built environment

74% of residents would welcome a village shop - although the sad reality is that the local population is too small to support one

73% would like to see a village green created. It was discovered that this demand for a green was uniform throughout the village area

Demand for a more regular bus service came mainly from younger and older people - those who need it most

10% of people would have welcomed a children's playground, and there were calls for more sports and recreational facilities in the village

Many found that the speed of traffic through the village was a problem, and regarded speed humps or a lower speed limit as a solution.

Appendix B: The "P" Factor

Recently an article appeared in "The Daily Telegraph" which suggested that villages should be graded according to their "p" factor. These related to the facilities available in the village, which affected the quality of life and its relationship to the well-being of its inhabitants. Among these "p"s were:

- Parish Church
- Phone Box
- Play Ground
- Playing Field
- Police House
- Pond
- Post Office
- Primary School
- Public House
- Public Toilets
- Public Transport

Parish Church - The Parish church is dedicated to St Mary. The construction of the present building seems to have been started during the 11th century. It was placed close to a yew tree which was already approximately 1000 years old, and may have marked the site of a pre-Christian place of worship. The influence of the Church in the village has greatly diminished over the last Century. In 1890 the living provided some £490.00 per annum from tithe rent charge, and came complete with residence and 36 acres of Glebe Land. To judge from the size of what was The Rectory, the adjoining stable block now "The Coach House" and the adjacent Glebe Lands this must have been a comparatively rich parish. The incumbent in his role as village school master was paid £50.00 per annum

Phone Box - The village has a phone box, which is of the traditional red-painted type. Its proximity to the BT local exchange means that it is serviced reasonably regularly, and it is becoming less susceptible to vandalism, probably due to the current mobile phone culture. However mobile telephones are notoriously unreliable in the area.

Playground - Eastling does not have one. Many villages have playgrounds with climbing frames, swings, seesaws, roundabouts, and slides. They give children the opportunities to hone their gymnastic skills, and develop an element of body awareness. However, concern for the Health and Safety of the users, and an increasingly litigious society has led to the demise of many facilities. Local Councils are understandably reluctant to sustain the increasing maintenance costs and escalating insurance premiums.

Playing Field - The village has no playing field available for public use. In the past the school allowed children access to its playing field, but recent Health and Safety awareness and insurance restrictions mean that children in the village have no public field in which to play. Ball games on the land in front of the cottages at The Glebe are specifically forbidden. Ironically, in the past, this was the site of a bowling green, and the area where the Water

Works is now situated was a football pitch. Perhaps our ancestors were more aware of "Mens sana in corpore sano". A recent poll of the residents relating to the possible use of a piece of land from the Belmont Estate, in accordance with the wishes of the late Lord Harris, to provide a village green resulted in an overwhelming vote in favour of the project, which was to be established on the site opposite the Carpenters' Arms. However, concerns from the residents living close to the proposed site, led to the Parish council deciding not to proceed.

Public Transport - The village is serviced by buses to Faversham. Nonetheless the service is efficient, and usually seems to run on time.

As can be seen Eastling does not score well if the above criteria are used to measure the quality of life of its residents. However, for many living within the confines of the village, it is, indeed, a rural idyll. The built up area is family conscious, concentrated along the incoming roads and lanes and adjacent surrounds. There are, however, several houses outside the village. The surrounding area is honeycombed with footpaths and bridleways, which make exploration a constant delight.



Site of the proposed Village Green

Appendix C: Questionnaire circulated to Householders

The Eastling Design Statement Committee has delivered this questionnaire to you to seek your views on how you see the future design of the village. Every householder has been similarly invited to allow the Committee to collate the opinions of each resident.

The Committee asks you to be kind enough to complete the attached questionnaire and have it ready for collection in seven days time.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer "yes" or "no" to questions 1 - 9.

1. Do you feel that a 30 mph speed limit along The Street is advisable?
2. Are you concerned that vehicle parking in The Street creates a potential danger for vehicles and pedestrians?
3. Do you consider that the sight lines at the road junctions and at the Church Path in the village are satisfactory?
4. Do you consider that recycling facilities in the village are adequate?
5. Would you welcome the provision of affordable housing in the village?
6. Would you support such building near you?
7. Do you consider the public transport service is satisfactory?
8. Are you happy with the view from your property?
9. Do you consider that the provision of main drainage would benefit you and your household?
10. In terms of design what do most to enhance the quality of life for you and your household?

Responses - 13 sought a village green, 8 a farm/village shop, 3 mains drainage, 6 improved recycling facilities, 2 improved car-parking and 5 maintain status quo

Response

YES	NO
72	2
48	26
30	44
25	49
19	55
12	62
41	33
61	13
36	38

Appendix D: The Working Group

Julia Bailey, John Darlington, John Payne, Oliver Perks, Mike Thomas, Gill Tiernan, and Roger Turner.