

Boughton Monchelsea Cock Street Conservation Area Appraisal



**Maidstone Borough Council
Approved 27th February 2009**

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BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA COCK STREET – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

I Introduction

The Definition, Purpose and Effect of Conservation Areas

The concept of conservation areas was first brought into being by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, but the relevant legislation now is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. This act places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and defines a conservation area as “an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Designation as a conservation area brings additional powers to the local authority. Briefly these include the control of demolition of unlisted buildings, more restricted permitted development rights for single dwelling houses and a notification system relating to works to trees not covered by a tree preservation order.

In addition to these enhanced powers, the local authority is also required when dealing with applications for planning permission to have special regard to the question of whether or not the proposed development would either preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area. There is a presumption that developments which would not preserve or enhance this special character should be refused planning permission.

The Purpose of the Appraisal

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time in order to consider the possibility of revising their extent and to identify changes and pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation. In order that informed decisions can be made on planning applications it is important to identify the special character of conservation areas which it is sought to preserve or enhance.

The most appropriate form for fulfilling these requirements is the production of a conservation area appraisal for each individual conservation area. English Heritage published an advisory booklet on the form which conservation area appraisals should take in February 2006, and this current appraisal has been prepared in accordance with these guidelines. It is intended to identify the key elements which combine to produce the special historic and architectural character of the conservation area, to analyse how they interact and impact upon one another and to explain how the area has developed into its current form. It will also seek to identify pressures and developments which threaten the special character of the conservation area and sites and features which detract from its character and appearance.

The clear understanding of the conservation area’s qualities which the appraisal produces will provide suggestions for future policies and improvements as well as providing a framework against which decisions on individual proposals may be assessed.

History of Designation

In a region rich with historical settlements, Boughton Monchelsea in particular has three designated Conservation Areas: The Green, Quarries, and Cock Street. The Cock Street Conservation Area is Boughton Monchelsea's third, designated by Maidstone Borough Council, on 17 January 1990 as a result of a request from Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council.

According to the East Area Planning Committee meeting report, the Cock Street area was deemed worthy of Conservation Area status because of its "special character engendered largely by a collection of listed buildings, although other buildings do contribute to the visual qualities of the locality. This area is readily identifiable, being bounded to the north and west by 20th century housing and farmland, to the east by a garage and farmland and to the south by farmland."

Location and Topography

The Cock Street Conservation area is located east of the main village of Boughton Monchelsea at the crossroads of Green Lane, Brishing Lane, Park Lane, and Heath Road (B2163). Transportation to and from the area depends on these roadways, as mainline railways do not pass through the vicinity. The setting is historically rural and agrarian. Today fields remain to the north, south and southeast.

The wider village of Boughton Monchelsea lies approximately 4½ kilometres south of Maidstone and is the largest settlement of development in the Parish of Boughton Monchelsea. The Parish comprises some 2000 acres lying on the Ragstone Ridge and overlooks the Weald. To the west are Linton Parish and Loose Parish and to the north lie Maidstone and Langley. On the east it is bordered by Chart Sutton and to the south by Staplehurst and Marden.

In terms of major highway infrastructure, the Parish is bisected from east to west by the B2163. This road led in the 18th century to the army camp stretching along the Heath Road from Coxheath, with its headquarters at Linton Park, to the West of the Cock Street Conservation Area. The very straight course of this road is the direct result of work by the military engineers. As it progresses east of the Cock Street settlement, the B2163 joins the M20 at Leeds.

The development of the settlement areas within the parish has covered many centuries and typically falls along roadways connecting up some early centres such as the Green and Quarries settlements. This long time scale has led to a wide variety of architectural styles of buildings throughout the area. In the main, most of the medieval half-timbered dwellings in the Parish are in the more rural areas such as the Cock Street development. Out of a total of 65 Listed Buildings in the overall parish, four fall within the Cock Street Conservation Area.

In summary, Boughton Monchelsea Cock Street Conservation Area is today set in a historically rural hamlet at a crossroads on the outskirts of a more developed village.

Article 4 Directions

The character of conservation areas can suffer significantly from the cumulative impact of "minor alterations" which can be carried out to single dwelling houses as "permitted development" under the General Planning and Development Order without the need for planning permission. Such alterations can include replacement windows and doors and re-roofing in inappropriate non-traditional materials.

The local Authority can seek to bring such minor alterations under planning control by the use of Directions under Article 4 of the General Planning and Development Order. A full Article 4 Direction requires the approval of the Secretary of State, but the Council can make an Article 4 (2) Direction within a conservation area without the need for such approval. An Article 4 (2) Direction can only related to development fronting a highway, waterway or open space and is restricted to bringing under control specific forms of development within the cartilages of single dwelling houses.

There are no Article 4 Directions currently in force within Boughton Monchelsea Cock Street Conservation Area.

II Historical Development

Archaeology

Settlement of the wider area around Boughton Monchelsea Cock Street Conservation Area is believed to go back at least two millennia. Currently available records provide no evidence of pre-Iron Age settlement, although a Bronze Age brooch was found in 1841 near Brishing Court, some distance from Cock Street Conservation Area.

However, just to the north-west of the Conservation Area lies the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Boughton Quarry Camp. Extensive archaeological investigation identifies this site as an *oppidum*, a type of proto-town, dating from the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. This would have been an important settlement and administrative centre.

In common with other such sites in Britain, such as Camulodunum near Colchester, the central oppidum had impressive earthwork defences encircling it. It was also protected by outlying linear earthworks which have been identified running for considerable distances to the north, south and east of the central site, partly extending towards Cock Street. Apart from studies of Boughton Quarry Camp no further systematic archaeological exploration has taken place in the immediate vicinity of the Conservation Area.

Still, there is some evidence that in the wider setting of the Cock Street Conservation Area was part of a major Romano-British estate with the nearby ragstone quarries being first worked at this time. The strength of this local industry must have attached some importance to the area now known as Boughton Monchelsea, as ragstone sourced here was not only used in the region but also to build London's Roman walls and other high status buildings.

Development History

It was in the 6th century that the gradual transformation of the natural landscape of this area began. Prior to this time, the thickly wooded area on the edge of the Weald was relatively unaffected until the invading Jutes took over Romano-British estates.

Evidence of the early history of the area comes from a variety of sources, starting first with its name, which has both Jutish and Norman origins. "Boughton" is believed to be the Jutish or Saxon place name *boctun*, which could mean either "a farmstead situated in a clearing in a beech wood" or, "a farmstead granted by charter". Little is known of the settlement or its occupants until immediately prior to the Norman Conquest when "Boltone", as it had become, was held by a Saxon landowner named Alcuin from Godwin, Earl of Wessex and father of Harold, who was defeated and killed at Hastings in 1066.

Boltone was by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 part of the estates presented by William the Conqueror to his half-brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux, whom he had made Earl of Kent. It was also a Norman Manor incorporated into the feudal system of government. The Jutish peasants – or *villeins* – were tied to the manor where they lived and required to work on their lord's home farm. In return, villeins held land granted by their lord and could be virtually self-supporting. Boltone's five villein families, roughly 25 people in all, shared approximately 600 acres of arable land and two acres of meadow. There was also a church and woodland for the pannage of 20 hogs. The manor house and park of the Norman knight lay at some distance from the Jutish hamlets.

The second part of the parish's name – "Monchelsea" – has Norman origins. When Bishop Odo was disgraced, his lands returned to the Crown and passed in the late 12th century to the family of Montchensie. By 1278, the parish was called "Bocton Monchansy", from which the current name emerged.

At this time, changes to the regional landscape accelerated. Although as late as 1842 562 acres – 25% of the parish – remained wood and wasteland, the 12th and 13th centuries saw the clearance of much of what remained of the natural landscape and the establishment of the medieval landscape. This land reclamation enabled Boughton Monchelsea to enjoy much of the general prosperity experienced by the county as a whole in the late 15th and 16th centuries. Kent's prosperity arose from its flourishing agriculture based upon pastoral farming, a favourable climate and fertile soils. In Boughton Monchelsea, this prosperity is reflected in the many late 15th- and 16th-century timber-framed buildings. Agricultural prosperity was enhanced by the productivity of the previously-mentioned quarries which remained a prolific source of ragstone until the 1930s.

The staples of Boughton Monchelsea's agricultural industry evolved over time. By the 1720s, its farms had developed substantial numbers of hop gardens and orchards. The 19th century saw hops, fruit and corn as the area's principle products for the Maidstone and London markets. Evidence of the Boughton Monchelsea's Victorian economy is found in the 1842 Tithe Apportionment and the 1851 census returns. These documents show that the local community was dominated by a governing hierarchy of landowners and clergy with most working people being employed in agriculture or the quarrying industry. Other important occupations covered a number of crafts and trades including blacksmithing and wheelwrighting.

The settlement now designated as Boughton Monchelsea's Cock Street Conservation Area represents these broader regional trends in miniature. The oldest buildings arose from the community's craft and farming origins: Martins Farmhouse and Swallows are both believed to date to the 15th century and the building which became the Cock Inn originated in the 16th century. This density of old, so-called high-status buildings in one hamlet is one indication of the area's relative importance. All three buildings are notable for their age and design. They represent three of the 12 remaining open-hall houses in the parish of Boughton Monchelsea. All are located on or near the crossroads.

The community's engagement in farming goes back at least five centuries. Although all three of the above buildings were likely to have been built as farmhouses, Martins Farmhouse is the longest-serving remnant of this history. A large, L-shaped building, its rear, right wing was added in the 16th century. It was only converted to three dwellings in the second half of the 20th century, adding the addresses of 1 & 2 Park Lane. As late as 1942, farmers here continued to cultivate 32 of the surrounding acres.

Other buildings which have been connected to the area's agricultural heritage are of more recent construction. Two of these were part of the Martins Farmhouse complex, now called "The Oast" and "The Barn". The original dates of erection of these and the oasthouse affiliated with the Cock Inn are not readily available. However, all three appear on the 1876 Ordnance Survey map so may date from the late Georgian to Victorian era.

The Cock Inn's prominent location is another indication of the importance of this crossroads. While it likely began as a smaller farmhouse, it was altered early on to serve as an inn for travellers from London to Canterbury. It is believed to have the earliest dated chimney stack in the parish, with related plasterwork dated 1568. The first written mention of "The Cock" is 1623. Until the mid-19th century, its only local competition was a beer shop in Church Street. "Cock Street" was an earlier local name for Heath Road, again highlighting the importance of this settlement around the Cock Inn along an important route.

The Inn's relatively high status is further indicated by its use as officers' residences for the military encampment mentioned in a previous section. Coxheath Camp had at any given time tens of thousands of soldiers based near Cock Street. Martins Farmhouse was used for overflow, as was the Knights House, formerly located in front of the Cock Inn right on the crossroads. Built in 1689, the main purpose of the Knights House is unknown, but it was deemed a road safety hazard and demolished in 1961. In the meantime, the hamlet's last use as a strategic military location was during World War II. After the start of the Blitz, it housed an anti-aircraft battery at the corner of Park Lane and Heath Road. It is unknown if remnants of this battery can still be seen.

Thus far we have seen how traces of the hamlet's role in farming, defence, and serving long-distance travellers can be seen in the Conservation Area. Swallows' link to blacksmithing perhaps played a role in all three. Alternatively known as "Forge Cottages", it was built roughly contemporarily with Martins Farmhouse and is also a half-timbered open-bay house. Historical evidence indicates that the hamlet has had a smithy for centuries. It is only in Ordnance Survey maps from the second half of the 20th century that the smithy located in front of the house along the roadside disappears. As it was located within the current driveway into the garage next-door,

it was likely demolished for that development. Interestingly enough, the conversion of blacksmith's shops to garages is not an uncommon pattern in recent history.

Swallows as a dwelling has had several known phases of evolution. In addition to reported 16th-century alterations and 20th-century restoration, it has at various times been a single dwelling, two and three cottages. This reflects the rise in population that began in the 18th century and resulted in a tripling in the number of local residents between 1701 and 1861. It was only in the 20th century that it reverted to a single dwelling.

In fact, the settlement began to develop its modern-day residential character in the 19th century. It is unknown who built 3 Park Lane, but we can see today that it is a late Georgian house of some status. Although less grand, 1 & 2 Stone Cottages – located between the Cock Inn and Swallows – are a pair of semi-detached dwellings of good quality which first appear on the 1896 Ordnance Survey map. The last development of residences in the hamlet was 4 & 5 Park Lane, semi-detached cottages built in the early 20th century. Since then, most buildings associated with agriculture have gradually been converted for domestic use, slowly evolving this crossroads from a working environment to a residential one.

Following a 19th-century peak, little growth in the population of Boughton Monchelsea occurred until the mid-20th century. However, between 1961 and 1971, the Boughton Monchelsea population grew dramatically due to the development of two major housing estates: Lewis Court Drive and Haste Hill Close. Despite this growth in the vicinity, the character of the Conservation Area has remained more or less the same for hundreds of years, with the most significant 20th-century development located on its fringes, including a car garage located immediately east and more suburban-style residential development to the west. With few modern interventions, Cock Street Conservation Area itself retains the historical character of a small rural hamlet located at a crossroads.

III Character Area Appraisal

General Hamlet Character

As previously mentioned, the part of Boughton Monchelsea designated as Cock Street Conservation Area comprises a small former hamlet clustered around a crossroads. Today, almost all buildings are domestic dwellings, the majority being detached. Most originated as farm houses and agricultural buildings, some dating back as far as the 15th century but structures were added throughout the centuries which have survived to today. The types of materials and architectural styles reflect this evolution over time. That said, the hamlet's three half-timbered hall houses dominate both by their size and positioning. They readily give the impression that the Cock Street settlement is one of some age.

The only commercial structure currently within the confines of the Conservation Area is the Cock Inn. No buildings in the vicinity are taller than three storeys. The low-rise residential nature of development leads to a sense of cohesion, despite the great variety of age and architectural styles of the building.

Some modern alterations to the nine main buildings within the boundaries of Conservation Area are apparent. Still, the only fixed reminder of the recent past is

provided by one early 20th-century semi-detached house (4 & 5 Park Lane), modern road signs and other improvements to the roadways. Some of the alterations to the Conservation Area's dwellings have been insensitive, which will be addressed below.

Hamlet Analysis / Approaches and Views

Today, the setting of Cock Street Conservation Area is mostly rural, both internally and externally. Some of the features that contribute to this character are the lack of pavements and street lights and the existence of just three relatively discrete clusters of overhead lines. There is one Tree Preservation Order in the Conservation Area, on the willow tree at the Cock Inn. The area's sense of community is enhanced by the presence of low walls and fences in front of most houses; few high hedges can be found within the Conservation Area.

Traffic has a noticeable impact on the historic hamlet of Cock Street. As the B2163 the Heath Road receives relatively heavy use; walking around the Conservation Area requires care and the sound of passing traffic does spoil to some degree the sense of being in a rural setting.

Approaches to the Cock Street settlement vary in their character. Entering from the north or south provides the best indication of what arriving to the hamlet may have been like historically. Emerging from an essentially agricultural landscape, one is "greeted" by the Cock Inn from both directions after passing a few residences. Entering the hamlet along the north-south axis, therefore, provides the stronger indication of the historical approach to the hamlet.

Arriving via Heath Road or Green Lane presents the greater challenge in identifying a unified character. From the west and northwest, the 20th-century housing developments of Boughton Monchelsea only end at the boundary to the designated Conservation Area seem. Entering the settlement from Heath Road in the east one passes modern farm buildings and then a sizeable garage before encountering the medieval Swallows and Martins Farmhouse.

The quality of views out of the Conservation Area also depends entirely on location. Views due north of the Cock Inn along Brishing Lane and south of Heath Road typify the rural, agrarian landscape of the area, giving a sense of historical countryside prior to 20th-century development. Unfortunately views east and west are not so pastoral. Views northeast along Green Lane or to the north side of Heath Road are suburban in character while the eastern view is dominated by the garage.

Detailed Analysis and Description

A detailed description of all buildings and sites within the Conservation Area follows. These descriptions are based on examination from the street and historic map analysis. Buildings have not been examined internally or from non-public viewpoints.

Buildings and structures have been assessed according to their value to the character of the Conservation Area. They have been graded as follows:

- Essential - buildings/sites which, because of their high historic Architectural interest or townscape function, must be retained.

- Positive - buildings/sites which make a positive contribution to the character and interest of the Conservation Area and whose retention should be encouraged wherever possible. Some buildings in this grade may have suffered from unsympathetic alteration but could be restored to their original appearance relatively easily.
- Neutral - buildings/sites which do not harm the character of the area but whose retention is not necessary.
- Negative - buildings/sites which harm the area's character and where redevelopment would be advantageous.

Buildings/Sites

Address	Listed/Unlisted	Description/Comments	Value to Character
Rivendale Oast House	Unlisted	Circular Kent ragstone oast kiln built prior to 1876 Ordnance Survey map. Plain tile roof with brick cogged eaves detail. Cowl no longer attached. Rectangular weatherboarded stowage with slate roof. Approved for conversion to a single dwelling in 1991 but never implemented. Included in the designation as important to the setting of the public house and the approach to the conservation area.	Positive
Cock Inn	Listed Grade II	Timber-framed public house with origins dating back to the late 16 th or 17 th century. Special character features include its hipped, steeply-pitched tiled roof, casement windows, and 2 red brick chimney stacks. Exterior walls are mostly brick and mathematical tiles painted white with some exposed timber frames. Some evidence of a continuous jetty to front elevation. The interior also includes exposed framing.	Essential

1 & 2 Stone Cottages	Unlisted	A pair of semi-detached late 19 th -century cottages in Kent ragstone. Recent ribbon pointing detracts from the character of the stonework. Concrete interlocking roof tiles detrimental to the buildings' vernacular, rural character. Matching gabled dormers. Regular fenestration, though insensitive window replacements have led to some loss of symmetry. Both have modern rear extensions.	Positive
Swallows (a.k.a. Forge Cottages)	Listed Grade II	A 15 th -century timber-framed house, once 2 and 3 cottages. Exposed framing with rendered infill. Steeply-pitched, hipped, plain tile roof and multiple chimney stacks. Since its 20 th -century restoration, the original 2-bay hall has been exposed. Leaded casement windows include one 3-light oriel window.	Essential
The Barn	Unlisted	Timber-framed, weather-boarded former agricultural building, now a residence. Built prior to 1876 Ordnance Survey map, possibly in the 18 th or early 19 th century. Plain tile, half-hipped roof. Modern extensions to the front elevation and plastic replacement windows fail to maintain the simple character and form of the building.	Positive
The Oast	Unlisted	Rendered and weather-boarded former oasthouse, now a private home. Irregular footprint mostly maintained over the past 125 years, though some related buildings have been removed. Single-glazed windows mostly appropriate to the historic setting on the road side; insensitive plastic windows to driveway. As with The Barn listed above, built prior to the 1876 Ordnance survey map.	Positive

Martins Farmhouse, 1 & 2 Park Lane	Listed Grade II	15 th -century farmhouse with alterations in the 15 th and 16 th centuries. 20 th -century restoration included its conversion to 3 dwellings. 2 stories with steeply-pitched, plain tile, hipped roof. Timber-framed with render infill and broadly-spaced studding. Leaded casement windows include 3 oriels with ogee bases. Jetty to 1 Park Lane. Hipped dormer to 2 Park Lane.	Essential
3 Park Lane	Listed Grade II	Late Georgian house of 2 stories and attics with 2 gabled dormers. Front elevation ground floor in Flemish-bond brickwork, patterned in red with grey headers; first floor weather-boarded. Right side also white weather-boarding. Sash windows, some replaced in the early 19 th -century. Plain tile roof, half-hipped to left, gabled to right.	Essential
4 & 5 Park Lane	Unlisted	Early 20 th -century pair of semi-detached dwellings with brick ground floor in stretcher bond. Upper floor rendered with thin applied timber frame features. Shared central gable. Timber-framed windows, mainly casement with top-hung fanlights. Central and gable-end stacks to each cottage.	Positive

IV Conclusions

Boughton Monchelsea's Cock Street Conservation Area is a heritage resource which continues to provide us with a historical record of the ca. 600-year evolution of a small rural crossroads in an agricultural setting. Within the designated area, it maintains a core of medieval timber-framed buildings surrounded by a modest infill of agricultural and residential buildings. All of the Conservation Area's buildings are viewed to have an essential or positive impact on the character of the area. The fact that most of the buildings of architectural and historical merit are listed makes a major contribution towards ensuring that the overall character is not eroded over time.

The main threats to preserving or enhancing the character of this small Conservation Area come from a variety of internal and external sources. All come as the result of 20th-century development and other trends. Perhaps most visible to the casual

observer is the impact of the commercial and residential development on the fringes of designated area. In essence, the garage on Heath Road to the east and residences along Heath Road and Green Lane to the west bind the Conservation Area. Such density negatively impacts the essential rural character of the community, introducing a more suburban “feel” to the area than is appropriate to its historic importance. Further encroachment on the historic environment should be avoided, particularly in the areas to the north and south which currently retain their agricultural setting.

The garage is a symptom of another threat to this historic environment: the density of traffic. On the one hand, the community can attribute its early importance to this crossroads; without Heath Road bringing travellers through the area, the hamlet may not have been sustainable to the present day. Yet undeniably, as the B2163, Heath Road cuts through the heart of the community. At a time when traffic moved at no faster rate than that achieved on horseback, a high density of traffic may not have eroded the character of the hamlet. At times the speed and number of cars, lorries, and buses passing through the crossroads means that many would be forgiven for being unaware that they are passing through one of Boughton Monchelsea’s historic environments. It also erodes the sense of unity between the different parts of this small Conservation Area. Considering the relative importance of the B2163 to commuters and other travellers, the volume of traffic is unlikely to decrease. Therefore, attention needs to be paid to balancing transportation interests with the need to preserve the heritage assets of Cock Street Conservation Area.

The response to managing the level of traffic passing through the area presents a further threat to the historical character, namely the clutter of signs. While these signs have clearly been introduced in the interests of health, safety, and efficiency of traffic management, their number and appearance intrude into the character of the area. As they are designed to attract attention, they detract from the buildings and open spaces that make up this Conservation Area. The problem is not limited to municipal signs but also to commercial ones; the Cock Inn and Texaco garage signs are among the most visible features on the streetscape. Other rural communities have begun addressing similar erosion to their special character by seeking alternatives to dense sign placement. Such an approach would be welcome with respect to the Cock Street Conservation Area as well.

Finally, at the building level, the greatest internal threat to the character of Cock Street Conservation Area is the use of insensitive materials and other “classic” examples of the gradual erosion of the historic environment. Some examples which are out of keeping with a hamlet of this age are the installation of satellite dishes, aerials, and alarm boxes in visible locations, the replacement of traditional windows with ones made of plastic or of an inappropriate design and colour, and the use of concrete roofing. The small size of the Conservation Area means that each example of character erosion has a noticeable impact. These changes should be monitored to determine if the imposition of an Article 4(2) direction might be the most appropriate way to provide the Council with greater power to prevent such alterations where they would impact upon the character of the Conservation Area.

Given the Conservation Area’s rural character, it is important to note the contribution of trees. Within the Conservation Area, it is necessary for 6 weeks notice in writing to be given of any proposed works to trees with a trunk diameter greater than 75mm measured at a height of 1.5 metres above ground level. In the case of any sites coming forward for redevelopment the Council will require tree surveys, assessments and protection measures to be submitted with any planning application wherever trees

are present. Where expedient it will seek to protect suitable trees by the making of Tree Preservation Orders, of which the Conservation Area already has one. In relation to significant trees existing within the Conservation Area it will be important to seek their retention or replacement if appropriate as trees are major contributors to the character of Boughton Monchelsea Cock Street.

Ultimately, a management plan for the Cock Street Conservation Area will help identify concrete steps that can be taken at the level of the individual, community, and local government to preserve what is special about this historical rural crossroads, such as:

- i. A consideration of traffic management approaches that can help reduce the impact of the B2163,
- ii. The reduction in density of signs at the crossroads, and
- iii. A programme of reinstatement of original features and details, especially windows and doors; this may include the use of an Article 4(2).