

Harman's Corner, Borden conservation area: character appraisal

(Extract from report to Development Committee 11 August 1999, agenda item 6B, Annex D)

Location

1. Harman's Corner lies at the eastern end of Borden village, which itself lies immediately to the south west of Sittingbourne. It is a small enclave of historic buildings situated around the junction of The Street with Borden Lane; it also includes the area immediately to the south, where development has spread a short distance down Bannister Hill.
2. Although it originated as a free-standing group of properties Harman's Corner is now surrounded by modern housing developments, so that it has become physically joined to the village of Borden. The gap between it and the urban area of Sittingbourne is also now minimal.

Historic Interest

3. The historic roots of Harman's Corner lie in two timber-framed, wealden hall houses: Bannister Hall and nos. 243/247 Borden Lane. These date from the 1600s and 1500s respectively. These two buildings are likely to have been built and owned by wealthy farmers during mediaeval times, and would originally have been relatively isolated. Later, however, other properties were built in close proximity so that the place grew to become the smaller counterpart to Borden village at the opposite end of The Street.
4. Whilst the cluster of buildings at Harman's Corner has recently become surrounded by new housing developments (which have spread out from Borden village) its separate historical origins have enabled it to maintain a physical identity of its own.

Buildings

5. The striking feature of the place is the contrast in character and appearance between the older environment of Harman's Corner and that of the modern housing developments now surrounding it.
6. The most prominent building is the 15th century timber-framed hall house which fronts onto Borden Lane, and which has a traditional black and white timbered front and steeply pitched clay tiled roof. It occupies a key position at the end of The Street, and terminates the street scene in an attractive way. The property, although altered at the northern end, retains an authentic character and appearance which is complimented by the simple, grassy front garden and neat boundary hedge marking the carriageway edge.
7. Buildings on either side are more recent in date but make important contributions to the historic character of the area. Physically adjoining to the north is a substantial, two storey yellow brick house built in the early 1800s, with a simple but elegant front elevation. The front garden treatment links nicely with its neighbour. To the south lies the substantial Bannister House, dated 1883 and built of brick (which is now painted white). A low, rendered wall, surmounted by a plain iron rail, continues the theme of front boundary treatment along the carriageway edge.
8. A small pair of cottages of similar date lies immediately to the south, although both properties have been rather poorly served by replacement windows and concrete roof tiles.
9. Two weatherboarded cottages, Broumfield and Harmans Corner, sited on the north side of The Street make an important contribution to the main building group. Although built at different times they have a linking similarity: both are clad in weatherboarding, both are

painted white, both have peg tiled roofs, and both stand close to the road with low timber palings along the front boundary.

10. The opposite corner is defined, rather less successfully, by three modern bungalows. These buildings are clearly suburban in character, but the front gardens do provide a linking green feature around the corner of the road junction so helping to define, visually, the limits of Harman's Corner.

11. To the south the road bends sharply as it drops down Bannister Hill with a change to a more rural character, with trees and shrubs growing on the roadside banks. Bannister Hall, set on the corner, is another substantial timber-framed building but its position well back from the road behind trees and shrubs results in its contribution to the street scene being more limited.

12. Lower Bannister Hill Cottages, set side-on to the road, comprises a row of four, fairly plain dwellings (plus a modern one at the north eastern end) which neatly mark the southern limits of Harman's Corner.

Landscape

13. Harmans Corner contains elements of both urban and rural character. Bannister Hill retains some of the qualities of a country road with banks covered in trees and shrubs, but the turn half way up the hill marks a change to a more urban environment. The yellow brick retaining wall on the south-east side of the hill is a major feature despite being of no great age.

14. Much of the street scene continues to have a reasonably green appearance, which helps to link the buildings into a more coherent entity. Some further cohesion is derived from the interesting sequence of boundary walls and fences.

15. Importantly, the road itself also still retains some elements of rural character: street lighting is absent, and the footways are incomplete, so that hedges and walls in places define the carriageway edge in an attractive way.

16. The weakest part of the area concerns the bungalows, the character of which is firmly suburban. Native planting and stronger boundary treatments to the front garden areas might strengthen the appearance of this part of the street scene.

17. A cast iron signpost survives at the junction of The Street with Bannister Hill, and is an attractive item of street furniture. Overhead wires are, in places, somewhat intrusive.

Summary

18. Buildings at Harman's Corner provide the physical evidence of wealthy past times in the parish of Borden. This enclave of historic properties is an important indicator of the parish's long history, and provides a pleasing contrast with the suburban character of much of the surrounding development.

