

Dover District Council Ref. 22/01245

Historic and Archaeological Record of former Railway Cutting

Site: Land adjacent to Hours, Church Road, Coldred CT15 5AQ

1 Introduction

1.1 An informal hearing was held on 25th July 2023, by the Planning Inspectorate against the refusal by Dover District Council of a planning application for works for the 'reconstruction of original brick bridge piers (previously demolished) and boundary fence to Church Road frontage, partial infilling to section of former railway cutting, new planting and biodiversity enhancements including removal of temporary hoarding'. Planning Inspectorate Ref. APP/X2220/W/23/3318935.

1.2 The appeal was allowed and planning permission granted for the works, subject to a number of conditions. This report specifically addresses condition 11, which states that 'No development shall commence until an appropriate programme of historic and archaeological recording and analysis equivalent to level 3 in 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Practice (Historic England)' has been produced, submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority'.

2 Site Location, History and Description

2.1 The site relates to a section of land of a former railway cutting which is located to the north east of a property known as 'Hours' on Church Road, to the north east of Coldred. The site is bounded by Church Road to the north west, 'The Paddock' to the north east, 'Hours' to the south west and a public footpath (ER94) to the south east, the latter of which cuts right across the former railway cutting, (see plans 1 and 2 in Appendix A).

2.2 Following the discovery of coal in East Kent, in the early part of the C20th, the East Kent Light Railway (EKLR) was constructed, mainly between 1911 and 1916, in order to service the coal field. The network ran from Wingham in the north, south to Shepherdswell with a branch line to Richborough Port from Eastry and short branches to Guildford and Tilmanstone. The full extent of this network is identified in the Dover Heritage Strategy.

2.3 The railway cutting within the application site is a remnant of the short branch line that linked the station at Eythorne with Guildford Colliery. Work on the colliery was started in 1906, but due to practical difficulties it was abandoned in 1921. It is understood that the rails were lifted from the line in around 1937 but were partially re-laid during the Second World War. By the middle of the C20th the line had been dismantled with sections backfilled or given over to agriculture. The branch line therefore has historic and architectural interest as part of the EKLR and the exploratory industrial heritage of the area.

2.4 The branch line is still evident in satellite imagery despite sections being reclaimed by agriculture. Moreover, the line is shown on historic Ordnance Survey maps. The presence and route of the line is therefore reasonably easy to discern. Some sections are also evident on the ground. From Eyethorne Station to an area north of Brimsdale Barn, part of the line is apparent as a depression in the ground or marked by a linear group of trees. There is then a short gap before the line becomes discernable to the west of Brimsdale Barn, and then runs through to long lane. This surviving part includes an embankment, railway sleepers and an evident cutting.

2.5 The line is not apparent between Long Lane and Little Haynes on the ground, but its route can be traced in aerial imagery. Between Little Haynes and Church Road, a line of trees marks a curve that was probably an embankment that led into the cutting which went under Church Road. The cutting is only evident on the south-east side of the road, and it is this section which forms the site of the planning application. Beyond the application site the cutting is apparent in other land owned by the applicants before it disappears.

2.6 There is a photograph from around 1935 that shows what the section of the cutting within the application site was like, (see Fig: 1). It had straight sides cut into the chalk and was quite deep. The application site was heavily overgrown until recently when several Ash trees were felled. This has opened up views of the site. From these views, including from the adjoining public footpath, it is possible to get a sense of the original depth and shape of the cutting. Nevertheless, erosion has altered the shape and depth of the cutting so it now is more of a 'V' shape, (see plan 3 in Appendix A), which has reduced its archaeological significance.

2.7 Figs: 1-11, in Appendix 2 represent a photographic record of the site which were taken on 26th October 2023.

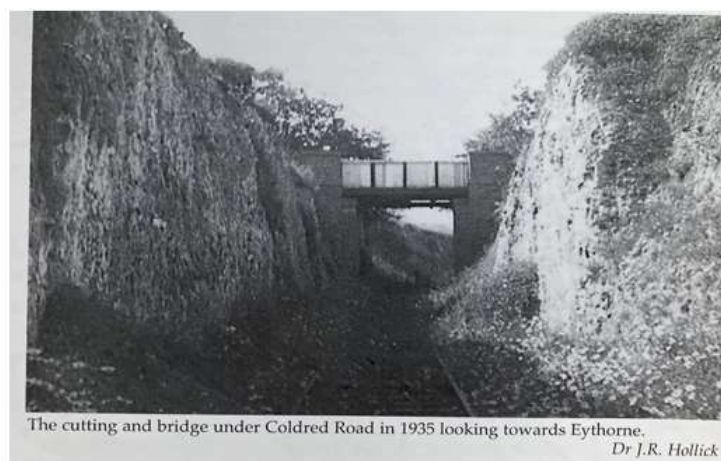


Figure 1 View looking north from the site, taken in 1935. Note the chalk walls had started to collapse, and scrub was taking over.

2.8 In summary, several sections of the branch line are still evident on the ground, and this provides evidence of its presence, route and construction. The cutting within the application site is a minor section of the route, it is not particularly well preserved and is not the only cutting that remains along the branch line.

2.9 The former railway cutting does not have any formal designations, but the remains of the East Kent Light Railway as a whole could be classed as an undesignated heritage asset.

3 Significance of the Asset

3.1 The East Kent Light Railway (EKLR) was largely constructed as a direct response to the discovery of coal in east Kent and its fortunes largely mirrored those of the coal field it served.

3.2 The cutting, which is the subject of this planning application forms part of the branch line that connected to Guilford Colliery, which was located approximately 1km to the east of the application site, and was abandoned in 1921. The only remnants of the colliery are the winding house and one other building which are both now in residential use.

3.3 Whilst the railway may not have had a significant impact on the economy of the coal field, it remains a distinctive part of the rural landscape of this part of east Kent. The remains of the EKLR are of industrial archaeological interest, both in their own right, and also as part of the story of the East Kent Coalfield.

3.4 The Dover Heritage Strategy looks at the evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal values of railways, including the EKLR and reaches the following conclusions.

Evidential Value

3.5 Buried archaeological remains associated with the light railway may provide some additional evidence of their construction, design and everyday running, however in general the evidential value is probably quite limited.

Historical Value

3.6 The surviving EKLR remains are illustrative of a period of expansion, both in terms of domestic travel, but also in the coming of industry and major construction projects. The EKLR is synonymous with Colonel Stephens, a major promoter of light railways in England and Wales.

Aesthetic Value

3.7 Overall the remains in their present form are of limited aesthetic value.

Communal Value

3.8 The preserved section of the EKLR has a strong communal value as a heritage railway and a reminder of the network of lost railway lines that crossed the District. The EKLR also provides a link with the coalfields, with sections of the line having been built specifically to serve the colliery operations.

3.9 The Dover Heritage Strategy reaches the conclusion that overall the railways, including the light railways, are of **moderate significance** from a heritage point of view in the district. It should be noted that although this assessment of significance was for the network as a whole, the planning application site forms only a very small fragment of the total network.

References

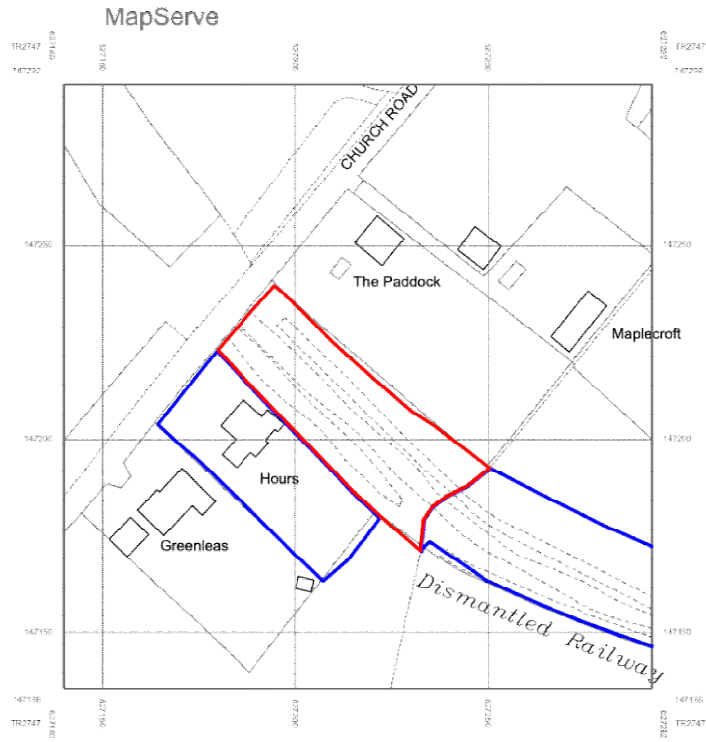
Dover Heritage Strategy 2013 (updated 2020)

Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (Historic England).

This document was prepared by Clive Alexander BA, Dip UD, MRTPI, IHBC

October 2023

Appendix 1



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LOCATION PLAN
1/1250 A4



01204 619233 0788 752385
info@theonearch.com
The One Building, The One Business Park, LT14 3BA

scale

Proposed earthworks, boundary treatments, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements

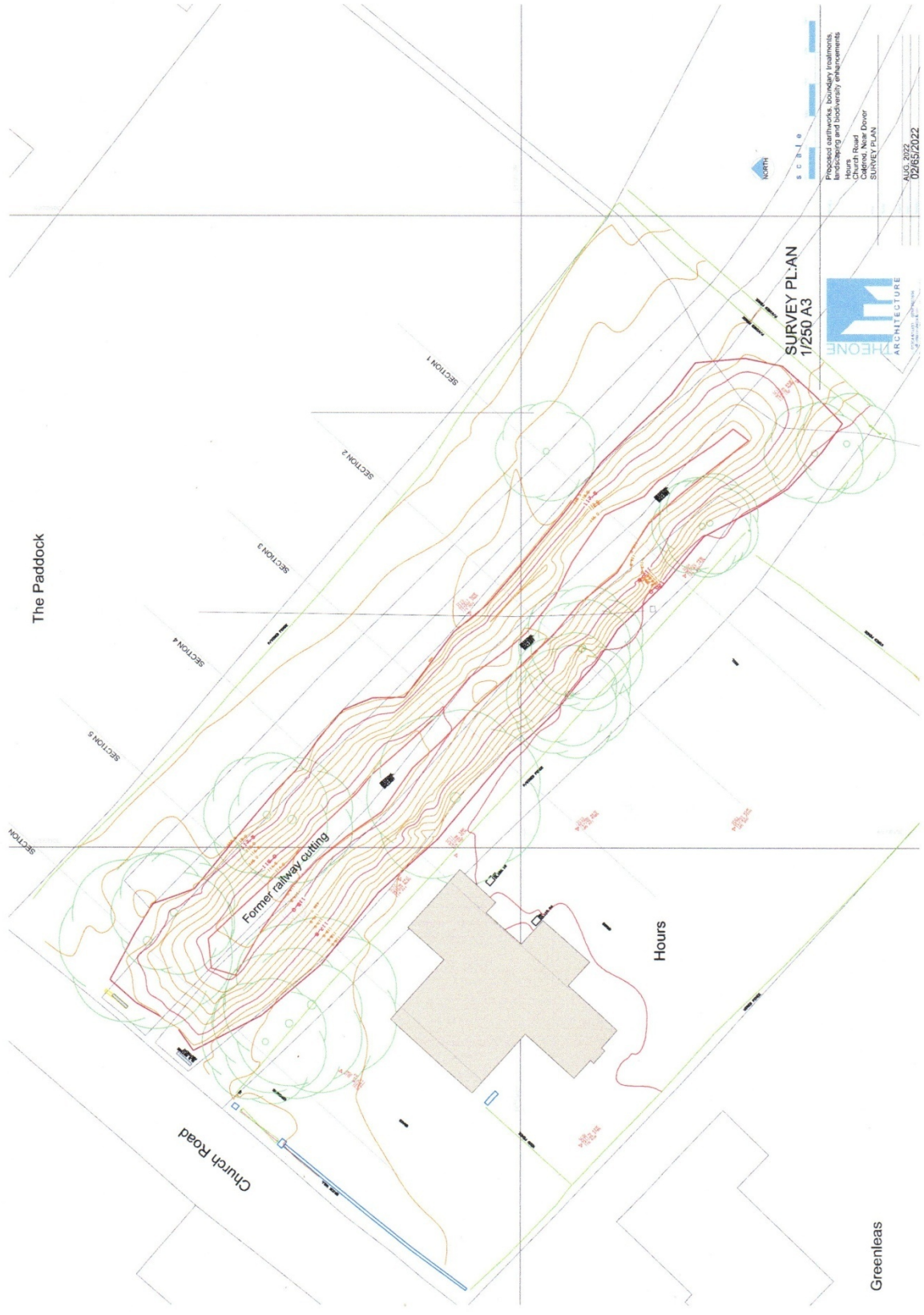
Hours
Church Road
Coldred, Near Dover

SEPT 2022

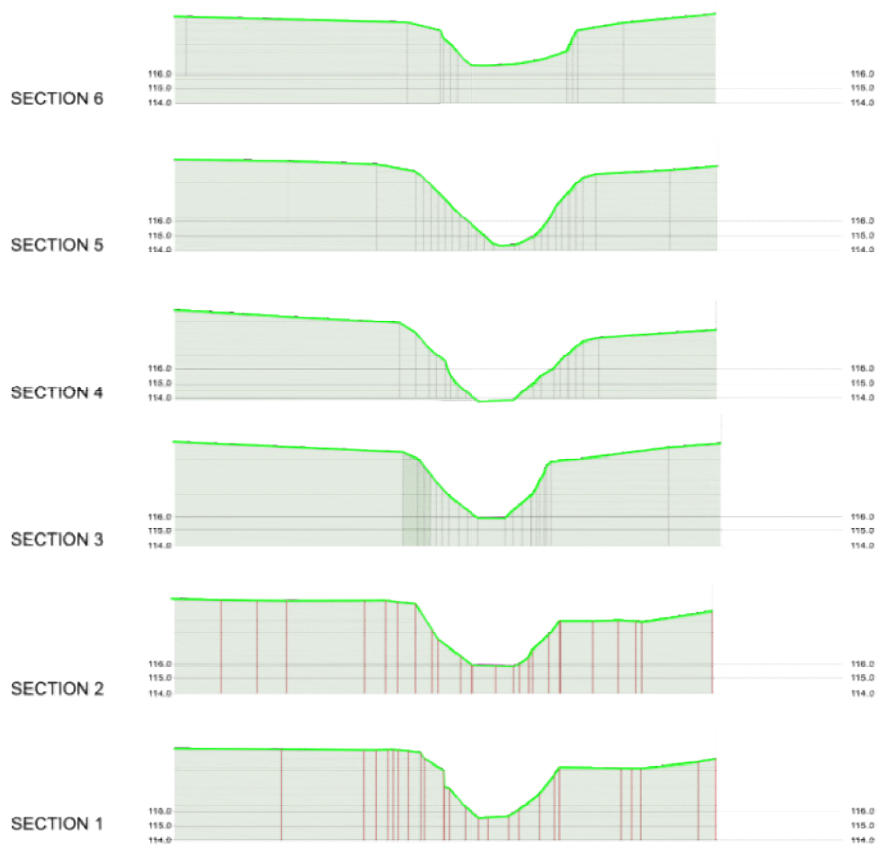
01/65/2022

N/A

Plan 1, Site Location



Plan 2, Topography



EXISTING SECTIONS
1/250 A3

THEONE
ARCHITECTURE

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SCALE	
Proposed earthworks, boundary treatments, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements	
North	
Church Road	
Cutback, Near Dover	
EXISTING SECTIONS	
DATE	AUG 2022
BY	06/05/2022
FILE	

Plan 3, Existing Cross Sections

Appendix 2



Figure 1 View looking north over Church Road, the line of trees denote where the cutting was.



Figure 2 View of the site from north, looking across Church Road. Note: the parapet of the original bridge over the cutting was where the fence is on this photograph.



Figure 3 View of the northern end of the site. Note: the cutting was back filled when the original bridge was removed.



Figure 4 View looking south along the ditch, from the northern boundary.



Figure 5 View looking north from the southern boundary of the site.



Figure 6 View looking at the southern end of the cutting.



Figure 7 View of part of the chalk face on the south western side of the cutting.



Figure 8 View of part of the chalk face on the north eastern side of the cutting.



Figure 9 View looking northwards, from within the cutting.



Figure 10 View looking southwards from the north-east side of the cutting; note the fragment of the chalk face.

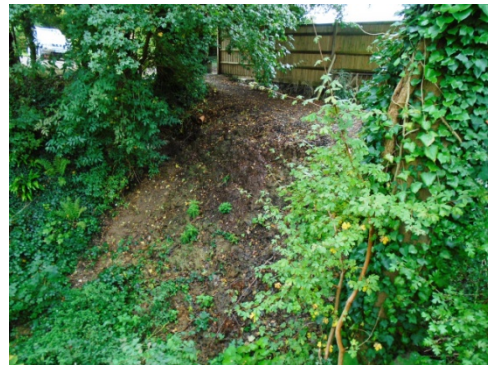


Figure 11 View of the northern end of the site. The parapet of the original bridge was where the fence is on this photograph.

Note; All photographs in Appendix B were taken on 26/10/2023 by Clive Alexander; see plan 4 for location of view-points.



Plan 4, Photographic Viewpoints