





## Foreword

Otford is under threat, like many villages up and down the country. Within the village there is a constant flow of applications for new building developments and a consequent growth in traffic levels.

But also beyond the village boundaries, major regional changes are under way. At the time of preparing this Village Design Statement (January 2008), the Thames Gateway development looks likely to have a massive impact upon all the communities within the Darent Valley over the next 12 years. Otford will be no exception.

The exact nature and scale of that impact remains to be seen, but the potential threat to the integrity of our rural village is enormous. It is essential that this change be monitored and managed with great care if it is not to damage our village and its community irrevocably. All parties involved need to commit to understanding how such damage can be caused and therefore how it may be best avoided.

Communities within the Valley must work not only individually but also collectively in this regard. If this Design Statement, representing as it does the clear and authoritative voice of Otford residents, is to make its full contribution to this essential work, it must continue to be relevant. To do so, it is essential that it be updated regularly – perhaps every three years – to take account of and respond to new pressures, opportunities and changes in planning processes as these emerge.

We have begun a process for others to follow.

*Rod Shelton  
Chairman of the Otford VDS Design Team  
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