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# 1 Producing the Hersham Settlement Area Character Assessment

This companion guide forms an integral part of the Elmbridge Design and Character SPD. The guides provide a reference source for considering the character of an area as part of the design process for new development.

1.1 The following Character Assessment for Hersham has been developed in partnership with the local community assisted by design consultants (Forum Heritage Services and Context 4D) and Elmbridge Borough Council.

## Community Involvement

1.2 On 31 May 2011, a community workshop was held at Hersham Village Hall, which allowed local people to talk about the character of their local area and suggest ways in which that character might be maintained and enhanced in light of future development.

Community participants included:

- 1 member of the Burwood Park East Residents Association
- 1 local ward Councillor
- 3 members of the Hersham Residents Association
- 3 members of the Hersham Village Society

1.3 The first half of the community workshop focused on character. Community participants were involved in subdividing character areas and identifying key features on a map of Hersham. They provided a wealth of local information that has been incorporated into the character assessment.



## Discussing character at the Hersham Community Workshop

1.4 The second half of the day concentrated on the design process and allowed participants to see how the new SPD would work.

1.5 There was also the opportunity for community participants to appraise the context and setting of a site in practice using maps and townscape/site appraisal notation charts to assist them. The site chosen for appraisal was a large residential infill development and explored issues such as noise, massing and orientation. The site visit also enabled community participants to point out key characteristics, positive design solutions and potential areas for improvements when walking through the main centre of Hersham.

1.6 The last part of the workshop involved an extensive discussion on the design issues experienced in Hersham. These issues expressed at the workshop are contained within the community text boxes.

1.7 A feedback session held on the 15 September 2011 allowed participants to check the draft assessment, adding any additional comments and providing further information.

1.8 The photograph of 'Hersham Green viewed from above' featured in the Hersham summary in the main document is courtesy of Hersham Village Society.

## 2 How to use the settlement area and sub-area analysis

**Step 1:** Identify the settlement area and sub-area your development site falls within, using the character area map to help you. The maps also provide an overview of the wider context of the area.

**Step 2:** Read the introduction to the settlement area, which gives a brief overview and a summary of key features, providing you with a snapshot of settlement character and highlighting key issues identified from community workshops.

**Step 3:** Read the sub-area analysis, taking note of specific local concerns and where to find additional design guidance.

**2.1** In order to inform your design proposal, it is important to evaluate and understand the key characteristics of the settlements and their sub-areas. Understanding an area's character will help to deliver high quality development that contributes to the distinctiveness of the local area and sense of place. In order to do this effectively, the Borough has been subdivided into 8 settlement areas, reflecting those in the Core Strategy. Each settlement area has been further divided into sub-areas, derived from fieldwork and group discussions at the community workshops.

**2.2** The sub-area analysis describes its predominant characteristics such as building types, use, scale, grain, tree cover and any heritage assets. Reference may be made to specific design guidance you should take account of when considering your development proposal. In some instances, reference is also made to case studies that may be particularly relevant to the type of development likely to occur in the sub-area. These are contained within the main document and illustrate the process of understanding local character through context and site appraisal, which will generate a

design concept and indicative design. Each case study offers just one solution to how a site could be developed and there may be instances when other case studies are relevant, depending on the nature of the development.

**2.3** Where the community workshop identified specific issues affecting a particular sub-area, a box is included to highlight these concerns. This is intended to help you carefully consider the local context and the sensitivities of the site's surroundings. It provides an opportunity to show how you might address specific concerns highlighted in relation to sub-areas. These may not be exhaustive but are provided as prompts for consideration.

**2.4** For sites that fall on the edge of two sub-areas or settlement boundaries, you will need to take into account adjoining sub-areas, which may have an impact on the context of the site. In many ways the design requirements of these sites are more complex to resolve as they may be at a key transition between one type of development and another.

**2.5** You should use the settlement and sub-area analysis as a starting point to develop a clear context for your proposal. This should be considered in more detail through site visits etc, taking account of the specific location of the development site.

The analysis of character and context should be an integral part of a Design and Access Statement.

## 3 Hersham Character Assessment



### Introduction

**3.1** The village centre of Hersham sits to the south of the Hersham Bypass and Esher Road, a busy section of carriageway which links the larger towns of Walton and Weybridge to Esher and Kingston and the wider road network. Hersham is effectively bypassed meaning that people who use the Hersham facilities are generally local. The village centre is well served by a large supermarket and a number of independent retailers in addition to restaurants, cafés and public houses.

**3.2** There is a strong sense of community in Hersham, which is focused around Hersham Green. This area comprises the older core of the village with the Grade II listed church to the south, and the local listed school and the listed Watermans Arms to the north-east corner of the Green. There are further series of open spaces which lead from the main Green and all are characterised by mostly modestly scaled residential development to the edges.

**3.3** There is a very diverse range of house types across the settlement area, ranging from large housing estates built by the local authority in the 1940s through to the private estate of Burwood Park, set around the landscaped grounds of a Grade II listed country house. In addition, the unique and nationally important Whiteley Village is a contained village for older people built c1912 with designs from some of the most eminent architects of the period in a set-piece Garden

City inspired plan. It is designated as a conservation area with most of the buildings within the village being Grade II listed.

### Summary of Key features

- Well-used local centre of independent shops and services
- Attractive sequence of green spaces within the urban core, linked via well-used footpaths and cycle tracks to much larger green spaces (part of the landscape setting of the settlement) to the south
- Two very different and distinct private areas of housing; Burwood Park and Whiteley Village
- Strong tree presence throughout with mature broadleaf trees to front and back gardens and lining public green spaces
- Strongly defined by the River Mole to the south yet with limited public access to the river and no public crossing points (other than Esher Road)
- Somewhat divided by the busy Hersham Bypass/ Esher Road carriageway
- Very diverse mix of house types and large variation in terms of property values across the settlement area
- Participation in the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom initiative with the annual Hersham in Bloom community project, which enhances the settlement's green character.



**Hersham Village Green**

### Issues identified from the Community Workshops

- **No public bridges across the River Mole within the settlement area, restricting connectivity and accessibility to countryside**
- **Significant variation in property values and house types across the settlement area**
- **Sensitive management of trees is important given the numerous street trees in the area (most streets have trees set in narrow grass verges).**
- **Hersham station is considered to be of poor environmental quality and would benefit from enhancement**
- **New gated developments do not encourage cohesiveness**
- **On-street parking is a continuing issue throughout Hersham and is having a visual impact on the character of some parts of the area**
- **Keen on more varied, innovative and creative design solutions**



**St Peters Church**

### Local Landmarks

As featured in the map. Key landmarks E-F fall outside the settlement but are included on the map as they can either be seen or form part of the setting of the sub-area/settlement.

A. Spire of the Church of St Peter, Burwood Road

B. William Whiteley Memorial Statue, Whiteley Village

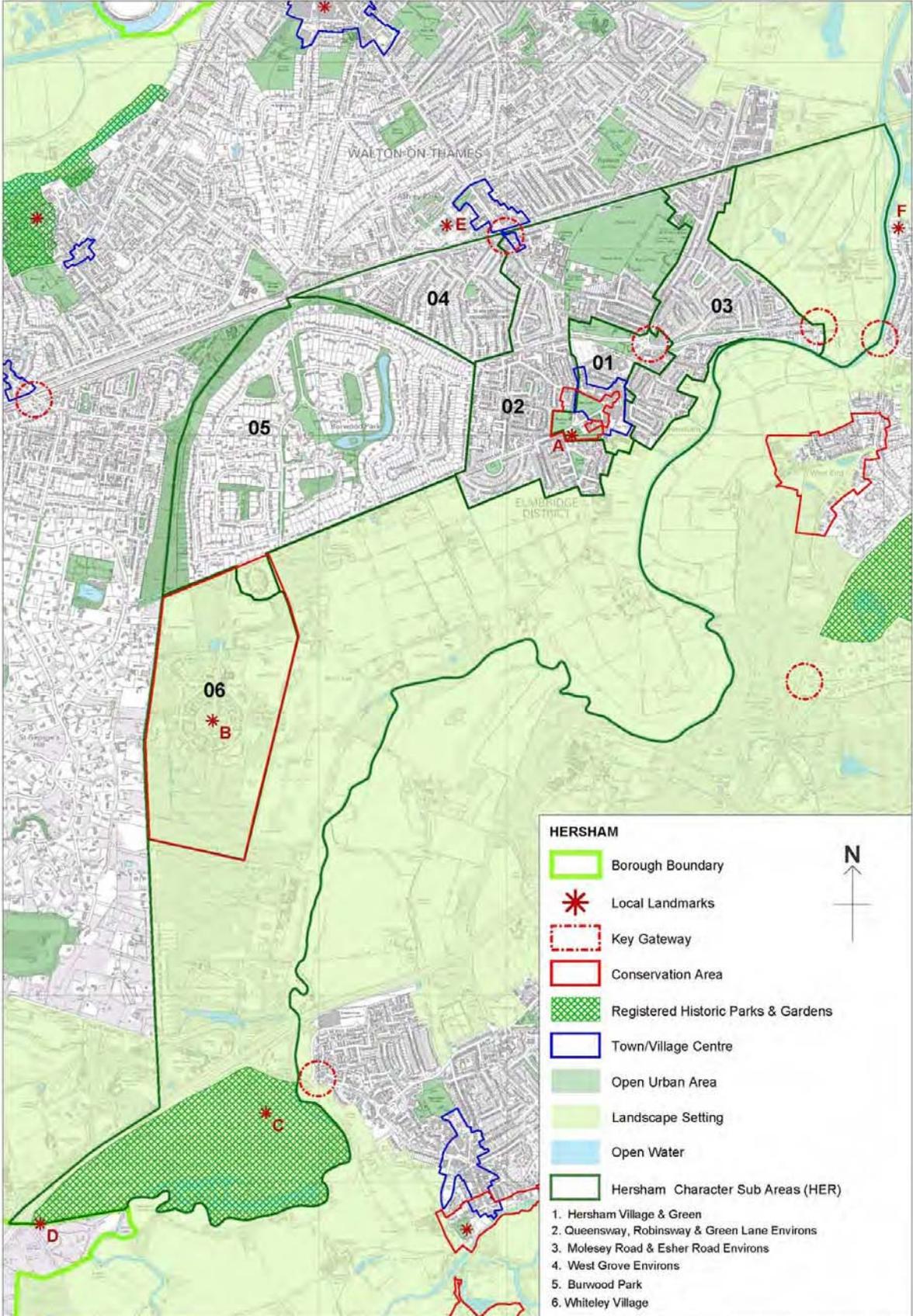
C. Painshill House, Painshill Park, Cobham

D. The Gothic Tower, Painshill Park, Cobham

E. Former Grade II listed Birds Eye Offices, Station Avenue

F. Wayneflete Tower, Wayneflete Tower Avenue, Esher Park

**3.4** The following map can be viewed in more detail using the Council's interactive mapping system 'My Elmbridge' which is located on the Elmbridge Borough Council homepage.



## The Sub-areas

### HER01: Hershams Village and Green

#### Overview

3.5 This sub-area comprises two sections.

3.6 The village centre which runs from the main Green up to the junction with the Hershams Bypass and Esher Road provides a diverse mix of shops with accommodation above; residential units and larger offices; and retail units with restaurants and a public house interspersed. This range of uses gives this area a sense of transition and there is some disconnectivity and gaps in the townscape with buildings set back from the roadside, not addressing the frontage and often set within areas of parking and hard standing.



**Molesey Road looking south to local centre**

3.7 The second part of the sub-area is from the Green onwards south and west. This area is designated as a conservation area based on the Green, Vaux Mead and the Memorial Gardens<sup>(1)</sup>. Here, the grouping of properties overlooking these spaces and the mature trees significantly contribute to the quality and attractiveness of this part of the sub-area.

3.8 The sequence of open spaces have important historic buildings to their edges such as the church and school, and are enclosed by two, three or occasionally four storey buildings.

3.9 A fine to medium grain has been retained for the most part but this is interspersed with large footprint buildings (particularly to the north side of the Green).



**The Green, Hershams**

3.10 The mix of uses and varied scale of buildings combined with this sequence of high quality open green spaces are perhaps the most defining features of this sub-area.

#### Opportunities

3.11 Given the mixed character of this sub-area, there are a variety of development opportunities that could add to the distinctive character of the area and its mix of uses.

3.12 **Case Studies CS5, CS6 and possibly CS4** will be of most relevance to potential development to this part of the Borough.

1 For more information on conservation areas please see <http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/heritage/ConAreas.htm>

## HER02: Queensway, Robinsway and Green Lane environs

### Overview

**3.13** This area is almost entirely residential but for Rydens Secondary School and Bell Farm Junior School which have extensive tree lined playing fields.

**3.14** Houses are generally semi-detached interspersed with some detached houses and modest in size. Heights vary between one and two storey with generally small gardens, often for parking.

**3.15** The occasional pair or small group of older houses are found within largely inter-war and post-war development.



**Snellings Road, looking north**

**3.16** Boundaries tend to be low brick walls with mature hedging and occasional ornamental trees.

**3.17** There are large trees to rear gardens which are often seen between or above houses softening what is a relatively high density urban area.

**3.18** Vaux Crescent is a notable set piece of housing layout with design cues taken from the Garden City Movement. Houses have a consistent plan and elevational treatment and are set in pairs around a long sweeping crescent. Narrow carriageways are complemented by grass verges and street trees, providing a very attractive public realm. On-street parking as well as front garden parking is prevalent in this area.

### Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- Loss of front gardens and boundary walls to parking spaces impacts on the character of some parts of this sub-area

### Opportunities

**3.19** Given the tight urban grain of this sub-area, it is unlikely that there will be significant development opportunities in the future.

**3.20** Where this does occur design guidance on specific issues of layout, massing and privacy are especially relevant given the high density of development already present here. **(See section 5 for advice)**

## HER03: Molesey Road and Esher Road environs (The Longmore Estate)

### Overview

**3.21** Lying to the north of Esher Road, this sub-area comprises former Local Authority built housing of the 1940s – The Longmore Estate.

**3.22** Houses are two storey set out as pairs or in short terraces, the latter usually defining open green spaces. Their cottage style and layout is related to the Garden City movement and there is a very generous and well-maintained series of open green spaces distributed across the estate.



**The green space to Southdown Road**

**3.23** Carriageways are narrow but are complemented by grass verges with some street trees adding to the generally high quality public realm.

**3.24** To the south of Esher Road, there is a more varied house type.

**3.25** To the northern section, there are modest two storey semi-detached and terraced houses built at a relatively high density with some flats also (Profumo Road). This is mostly post-war development but there are pockets of earlier housing to Old Esher Road (mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages but some larger houses as well).

**3.26** To the south, there is more variation with some larger detached Victorian and Edwardian houses, along Thrupps Lane.



**Thrupps Lane**

**3.27** The area is characterised by mature broadleaf trees.

**3.28** There is much variation, particularly to the southern section of this sub-area in terms of plot ratio.

**Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop**

- Retention and management of trees during redevelopment

**Opportunities**

**3.29 Case Study CS2** is most relevant to future development within this part of the Borough.

**3.30** In order to address the local community's issues with regards to trees, please read the design guidance on landscaping at **section 5**.

**HER04: West Grove Environs**

**Overview**

**3.31** This is an entirely residential sub-area comprising larger detached and semi-detached houses, mostly two storey but occasionally with additional rooms in the roofspace.

**3.32** There is a wide period span between the 19<sup>th</sup> century and late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The older houses are usually in groups of one or two pairs or a number of large individual houses (as seen to Burwood Park Road).

**3.33** Tree cover is particularly apparent to this part of the settlement area with mature trees to both front and rear gardens playing a very significant role in the townscape.

**3.34** Houses are often framed by large tree groups to the rear gardens which are glimpsed at, between or over houses.



**Trees to Woodside Avenue partially or fully obscure houses**

**3.35** Roads are generally narrow and mature boundaries to residential properties gives a wooded character to much of this sub-area.

**3.36** Narrow grass verges with some street trees add to the quality of the public realm.

#### Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- Existing houses are often replaced by new houses within a larger footprint which are built closer to side boundaries

#### Opportunities

**3.37** Given the close proximity to Walton Station (north of the settlement area boundary), there is a demand for higher density flatted development in this sub-area.

**3.38** **Case study CS1** will be particularly relevant to ensure high quality flatted development. The same case study will also help address community concerns with regard to replacement houses that have also occurred in the sub-area.

## HER05: Burwood Park

### Overview

**3.39** Burwood Park is one of three Special Low Density Residential Areas in the Borough.

**3.40** Much of the structural landscaping including the road layout, dense evergreen hedges, low grass embankments and green verges together with original sections of woodland that exist between and within plots date from the period when this area formed the grounds to Burwood House.

**3.41** The spatial qualities of the park create a peaceful residential setting and give the impression of an almost rural character and sense of containment.

**3.42** Mostly two storey but occasional single storey detached houses sit within well-landscaped semi-wooded plots and are often only glimpsed from the road.

**3.43** Trees and vegetation dominate the streetscape to the extent that, in views along roads, few buildings are clearly visible.



**Houses set in semi-wooded plots**

**3.44** The varied architectural style of houses within Burwood Park greatly adds to its character.

**3.45** Whilst there is an informality to houses set within their plots, for the most part these are regular and houses do generally share

building lines within roads. This is an important characteristic of the overall structure of the estate.

### Opportunities

**3.46** Due to the sub-area's special low density designation, most development takes the form of extensions and alterations to dwellings and replacement dwellings. Please see the **Home Extension Companion Guide** for advice.

**3.47 Case Study CS1** offers guidance with regards to designing a sustainable replacement dwelling.

### HER06: Whiteley Village

#### Overview

**3.48** Whiteley Village is a unique philanthropic retirement village built in the 1920s set within a 225 acre estate. The village is located entirely within the Green Belt.

**3.49** The buildings were designed by eminent architects of the period and retain many original features.

**3.50** Most of the buildings within the village are Grade II listed and the entire village is a designated conservation area.<sup>(2)</sup>

### Opportunities

**3.51** There may be limited opportunities for infill development but clearly these will need to take account of its Green Belt location, its conservation areas status and the impact of the numerous listed buildings located within the village. Elmbridge Borough Council is working in partnership with the Whiteley Village Trust to produce a Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, which is due to be finalised in mid-2012, providing detailed design guidance.



**Whiteley Village**

2 Please see the conservation webpages for further information - [www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/heritage/ConAreas.htm](http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/heritage/ConAreas.htm)