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Introduction.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, sets out the overarching policies on the delivery of sustainable development. These policies need to be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities in the preparation of their Local Development Framework. PPS1 states that good planning: -

“....makes a positive difference to people’s lives and helps to deliver homes, jobs and better opportunities for all, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and conserving the countryside and open spaces that are vital resources for everyone.”

These factors contribute to the delivery of sustainable development including the opportunities to improve people’s quality of life.

Elmbridge is an attractive Borough and a pleasant place in which to live and work. The areas of architectural or historic interest, open spaces, trees, large areas of countryside, comprising Commons, farmland and woodland, and waterways such as the River Thames, Wey and Mole, all contribute to the attractiveness of the built and natural environment. However, Elmbridge is also an area that faces considerable pressure for new development, and as a consequence new development may impact on or lead to the loss of the beneficial features of the Borough.

Local Development Framework

Under the reforms introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Elmbridge Council is responsible for preparing a portfolio of Local Development Documents that will form part of the Local Development Framework for Elmbridge. The function of the Local Development Framework is to provide a robust and reasoned policy basis to guide and assess development against. Policy will have to be in conformity with national guidance, regional guidance and other strategies that have been prepared by the Council.

National Policy seeks to facilitate and promote sustainable forms of development by making suitable land available for development, create sustainable economic development, protect and enhance the natural and historic environment, ensure high quality of development, and create safe, inclusive and mixed communities with good
access to services. Planning is integral to the delivery of sustainability. It must have regard to all the aims of sustainable development - economic development, social inclusion, protection of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources.

**Elmbridge’s Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD)**

This is programmed to be one of the first documents to be prepared. It will comprise Elmbridge’s Vision as well as area-based local strategic policies to provide a spatial strategy for a 10-year period. It will provide overarching policies for the Borough of Elmbridge and will cover a wide range of issues and topics, including the natural and built environment, housing, economy, transport, climate change and sustainability.

In light of the pressures for development in the area the Council will need to plan ahead to ensure that there is adequate housing, jobs, community and health facilities as well as infrastructure to meet future needs, whilst ensuring that the environment is adequately protected and ensure that regard is also made to the issues such as climate change and the prudent use of natural resources.

**Environmental Audit**

This audit identifies and provides background information on the environmental designations within the Borough, including natural resources and the built heritage. It will provide an audit of the key environment constraints and resources in Elmbridge, assist in the preparation of the Core Strategy DPD as well as in the identification of policies for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the Borough’s natural and built heritage.

It is also recognised that the planning process is one element in the protection and creation of some of these areas and it works alongside other legislation and agencies. Furthermore designations are made at an international, national and well as at a more local level. However there is a common theme found in planning policy, from the national to the local level, that whilst there is a need to meet future demands for development, there is also a strong need to promote high quality and sustainable development, including the protection and enhancement of our environmental resources.
The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance requires the conservation of wetlands. Such sites cover wetlands of international importance.


Knight and Bessborough Reservoirs off Hurst Road, West Molesey, are classified as part of the South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) under the “Birds Directive” and as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site).

The heaths and woodlands in the Thames Basin Heaths is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive. The Thames Basin Heath comprises 13 sites of SSSI, 11 Local Planning Authorities and over 8000 hectares of land. This complex of sites is internationally important for woodlark, nightjar and Dartford Warbler. Part of the Thames Basin Heath is located within Elmbridge and includes Chatley Heath as part of the Ockham and Wisley Commons area. This is also designated a SSSI.
Ramsar/SPA Designations

Walton on Thames
Weybridge Queens Road
Walton Terrace Road
Walton on Thames
Walton Halfway
Thames Ditton
Oxshott
Oatlands Hinchley Wood
Hersham
Molesey Bridge Road
Claygate
Cobham
Esher
East Molesey
Civic Centre, High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD

KEY
RAMSAR/SPA Designation
Town & Village Centres
Open Water
Motorway
A Road
B Road

Scale 1:70000
Date 06/09/05
Division Town Planning
Dwg No Map 1
Produced By NJB

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Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- These sites range from national importance down to the local level, and even include individual landscape features. Such designated areas are the country’s best examples of our national heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms.


- Sites are designated as SSSIs by English Nature and those located in Elmbridge are:
  - Esher Common which also includes areas of West End Common, Fairmile Common and Osxhott Heath.
  - Ockham and Wisley, which is situated mainly in the adjoining Borough of Guildford, with only a relatively small area in Elmbridge.
  - Knight and Bessborough Reservoir, Hurst Road, Molesey. This is also classified as a SPA and Ramsar site.

- Over the past two years Elmbridge Borough Council, together with English Natures, have been working towards a management and restoration plan for the Esher Commons SSSI. It is intended that the Council will consider the final draft in 2005.
SSSI Designation

KEY
- SSSI Designation
- Town & Village Centres
- Open Water
- Motorway
- A Road
- B Road
- Railway
- Railway Stations

Scale 1:70000
Date 06/09/05
Division Town Planning
Dwg No Map 2
Produced By NJB

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Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SCNI)

- This is an area (non-statutory) that is designated by the Surrey Nature Conservation Liaison Group as being of county or regional wildlife value.


- The loss or damage to such sites would greatly reduce the diversity of wildlife in the area. They also contribute to the overall ecological network in the Borough.

- There are at present a total of 14 SNCIs in Elmbridge Borough. Surrey Wildlife Trust is currently reviewing this list of sites, which is at present an ongoing process.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

- These are established by local authorities in consultation with English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Local Authority will have a legal interest in the land.


- LNR designations provide opportunities for educational use and public enjoyment, as well as protecting wildlife or geological and physiographical features of special interest.

- The 6 LNR designated in Elmbridge are Molesey Heath, Stokes Field, Long Ditton, Claygate Common, Esher Common and West End Common.
THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

- These are of local importance. TPOs are made by the Borough Council and contribute to the character of the local area.


- Local Planning Authority’s have a duty to preserve trees which contribute to, or are capable of contributing to the character or amenity of the area.

- The Council has over 650 tree preservation orders which range from the protection of individual trees to area orders.

- The Council’s consent is required for any works to be carried out on these trees.

Protection and Retention of Hedgerows

- These are of local significance and the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 make provision for their protection.


- Hedgerows are protected under this legislation, if they meet specified criteria or if the Council identifies a hedgerow as “important”.

- The Council can issue a Hedgerow Regulation Order although there are no such orders in Elmbridge at present.
Ancient Woodlands

- English Nature has produced an inventory and maps of sites considered to have been continuously wooded since 1600AD. These are either areas of ancient woodland or ancient semi-natural woodland.


- Elmbridge possesses 874 hectares of woodland, of which 86 hectares is considered to be ancient woodland.

- A high proportion of woodland is in public ownership and makes a significant contribution to the appearance of the area. Removal of existing woodland will be resisted.
THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Listed Buildings

- These are buildings that are statutorily listed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural importance or historic interest. They are Graded according to their importance, either Grade I, Grade II* or Grade II.


- English Heritage is responsible for the administration of the listing system. If anybody wishes to have a building considered for listed, details should be sent to English Heritage. This will then be assessed against national criteria.

- Listed Building Consent is required for demolition or any alteration or extension which affects the character or appearance of the Listed Building. This application is submitted to and considered by the Local Planning Authority.

- There are approximately 750 buildings in Elmbridge that are statutory Listed Buildings. A total of 8 buildings are Grade I, and 24 buildings are Grade II*.

- At present there are no Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings that have been identified as being at risk.
Locally Listed Buildings and Features

- In addition to the statutory listed buildings, there are many individual and groups of buildings which are of considerable local interest. These are included on a Local List, this being a list that is approved by the Council.


- The buildings on this list do not have the same protection as buildings on the statutory list. The Council will however seek to retain these buildings and to ensure that new development does not harm their character, appearance or setting.
Scheduled Ancient Monuments, County Sites of Archaeological Importance and Areas of High Archaeological Potential

- The schedule of monuments is a list on which nationally important sites and monuments are placed on and given legal protection. This is the legal protection specifically for archaeological sites.


- There are a number of sites in the Borough which have been identified as being of archaeological importance. Some are of national importance and have been given statutory protection as scheduled ancient monuments. These include St. George’s Hill Camp, Oatlands Palace and Brooklands. Sites of potential national importance have been designated as County Sites of Archaeological Importance, with a total of 9 sites overall on these two lists. There is the presumption in favour of their preservation.

- In addition there are 55 sites and areas of High Archaeological Potential. Where possible remains should be left in situ.
Conservation Areas

- Local Planning Authorities have the power to designate conservation areas in any area of "special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance is worth protecting or enhancing."


- Conservation Areas vary greatly in their nature and character. The special character of the area does not come from the quality of the building alone. The special architectural or historic interest also includes road patterns, the type of buildings, open spaces, the landscape – the quality and interest of the area. The designation is assessed against local and regional criteria.

- Within a Conservation Area, the Local Planning Authority has extra controls over demolition, minor developments and the protection of trees. Any development within a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance its character, appearance or setting.

- In Elmbridge, there are 24 Conservation Areas, which cover more than 1800 properties.
**Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest**

- Since the 1980s there has been a national record of historic parks and gardens which is maintained by English Heritage. This is known as the Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England.


- The main purpose of this register is to ensure that the particular features and qualities of national importance are safeguarded. Sites on the register are graded Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II.

- In Elmbridge, 3 sites have been registered. Claremont and Painshill are listed as being of exceptional interest (Grade I) while Oatlands Park is noted as having special interest (Grade II).
LAND DESIGNATIONS

Green Belt

- There are five purposes to the Green Belt, to prevent urban sprawl, to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, safeguard the countryside from encroachment, preserve the setting of historic towns and assist in urban regeneration.


- The Green Belt covers 5543 hectares, some 57% of the total area of Elmbridge. This consists of largely unbuilt-upon land outside, and between, the urban settlements.

- This land resource is under constant pressure from people wishing to use it for recreation and leisure purposes, changes in agricultural practice and demand for new development including residential and commercial.

- One of the Council’s main policy aims is to protect the openness and character of the Green Belt.
Areas Liable to Flood

- There are a number of areas within Elmbridge that have been identified by the Environment Agency as areas liable to flood.


- Flood zones are graded and advice is sought from the Environment Agency when development is proposed within these Flood Risk Areas.

- New development, intensification of development, extension to existing development, or land raising in areas at risk from flooding will be refused if it would have a material impact on flooding.

Agricultural Land Classification

- Agricultural Land Classification comprises Grades 1-5. Grades 1, 2 and 3A in the MAFF (now DEFRA) Agricultural Land Classification are the best and most versatile land. It is the most flexible, productive and efficient land to support agriculture and is a natural resource for the future.


- There is just under 2000 hectares of agricultural land in the Borough and should be the predominant use within the Green Belt.


**Flood Zones**

- **Area Liable to Flood**
- **EA Flood Zone 2**
  - Low to medium risk with an annual probability of flooding of 0.1-1.1% from rivers and 0.1-0.5% from the sea.
- **EA Flood Zone 3**
  - High risk with an annual probability of flooding of 1.0% or greater from rivers, and 0.5% or greater from the sea.

**KEY**

- **Town & Village Centres**
- **Open Water**
- **Motorway**
- **A Road**
- **B Road**
- **Railway**
- **Railway Stations**

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Strategic Views and Key Landmarks

- These are identified by the Council by reason of their intrinsic character and amenity value.

- Policy Context: Policy LO2 of SSP 2004 and Policy ENV27 of the REBLP

- These best views and landmarks should be protected from unacceptable development.

- A total of 7 strategic views have been identified in Elmbridge, these are considered to be the most valuable vistas in Elmbridge. These are:

  1. River Thames meadowlands from St. Mary’s Church, Hampton – these vista lines are also identified in the Thames Landscape Strategy.
  2. Surrey Hills from Hampton Court – this vista line is also identified in the Thames Landscape Strategy.
  3. Talman vista from Hampton Court towards the former Surbiton Water Treatment Works - this vista line is also identified in the Thames Landscape Strategy.
  4. Broadwater Farm and Thames floodplain from the Terrace, at the Oatlands Park Hotel.
  5. Valley of the River Mole from the Ledges at Esher.

The majority of the strategic views also contain key landmarks. There is a total of 20 Key Landmarks that have been identified including 4 features outside the Borough, which have a significant bearing on Elmbridge.
Strategic Open Urban Land (SOUL)

- The designation of SOUL applies to land which makes a significant contribution to the structure and environment quality of the area, is of strategic importance and can be seen from a public vantage point.


- This land designation is located in the more urban and residential parts of the Borough.

- The purpose of this designation is to retain the environmental quality of the built up area and to retain areas of open land in the more urban environment.

- The total number of sites with SOUL designation equates to approximately 63 hectares.

Other Open Land in the Urban Area

- It is recognised that there are a large number of open spaces in the urban area and although they do not warrant SOUL status they contribute to the character, environmental amenity and quality of life.

- Policy Context – Policy ENV29 of the REBLP

- Development should not compromise a sites value as open space with development limited to a small part of the site and public access is maintained or enhanced.
Further advice can be obtained by telephoning the Town Planning Division on 01372 474474 or visiting the Town Planning Reception at the Civic Centre during normal office hours.

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