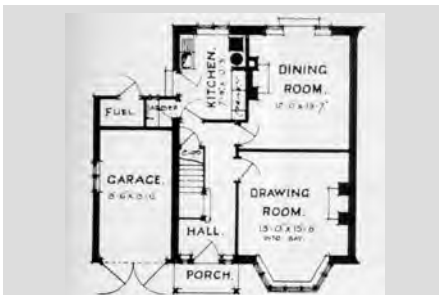


Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework



Typical Urban Character Area Appraisal

April 2009



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1 Introduction

Foreword

1.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough comprises a number of towns and villages set within attractive countryside, stretching along the Kent High Weald. This pleasant environment, which adjoins Greater London just to the south of the M25 motorway, results in considerable development pressures. The Development Plan must seek to protect and enhance the character of the area and the amenities currently enjoyed by residents and to balance this against the need to meet the Borough's development needs. The Development Plan sets out within which areas development is acceptable and ensures that the impact of a proposal on the surrounding area, including its effect on local character, will be taken into account.

1.2 There has been much local concern in recent years about design quality, density and the "one design fits all" approach to development. This appraisal responds to this concern by highlighting the settlement pattern and locally distinctive qualities of the Borough's built environment. At a time when there are ever more demands nationally for additional housing, all those involved in the design process, whether their proposals require planning permission or not, are encouraged to use the Appraisal in order to reflect the Borough's distinctiveness in their proposals. It is also important to identify particular issues that detract from overall character. This can then provide a basis for possible enhancement opportunities, which can be addressed either directly or as part of, and through, development opportunities.

Purpose of the Appraisal

1.3 The purpose of this document is to provide baseline evidence to further the understanding of the local distinctiveness and the characteristics of the various urban settlements within the Borough.

1.4 Characterisation aims to bring together as many aspects of a place as possible, in order to appreciate and understand it better.

1.5 The appraisal fulfils the following objectives:

- defining context, or 'place', in the sense of how buildings, landscapes or habitats relate to each other and to other aspects of the historic and natural environment
- understanding the past, the trajectory of change and/or continuity, which has brought the environment to the state we have inherited and which provides the springboard for future change
- providing a big picture, which can serve as a base for future inclusivity, a frame into which others can add their perceptions and views

1.6 It provides an evidence base for understanding the characteristics of environments. Just as importantly, however, characterisation provides information to help everyone affected to discuss the form and implications of proposed changes to the environment and to help shape the future environment. It is a tool of positive spatial planning. Through its application, the Borough Council intends to promote better standards of urban design for both residential and mixed use developments in Tunbridge Wells Borough.

1.7 This Appraisal provides guidance on how specific types of development can be carried out in accordance with Development Plan policies. It appraises character types, identifying their key characteristics and common design failings and suggests general design principles. It supplements the principles set out in national guidance and amplifies the Regional and Local Plan design policies.

1.8 It fulfils a number of purposes, including:

- providing evidence to inform the Local Development Framework (LDF), including the Core Strategy, alongside other characterisation evidence
- providing a guide to assist in the application of policy through the determination of applications
- informing future allocation policies in Development Plan Documents (DPDs)
- providing for better standards of urban design
- supplementing principles set out in a range of national design guidance

Status

1.9 This Appraisal provides a background document on urban character analysis that has informed, and is referred to in, the Core Strategy. The Borough Council will therefore take account of the evidence it provides in exercising its planning role and in other situations where applicable.

1.10 The Tunbridge Wells Borough Typical Urban Character Appraisal is a tool that has been specifically developed for all the urban areas in the Borough. Assessment began in the late 1990s, initially for the Urban Capacity Study, and it has now evolved and been refined into an evidence base for the LDF. It has also provided a base against which to plot housing completions and has in turn provided greater understanding of the geography and typologies of new residential developments.

Policy Context

1.11 Planning at the local level by local authorities takes place within a framework of policy set by central government. The planning system itself is one of many influences on the design of buildings and spaces. Achieving good design requires an understanding of these influences and an appropriate response.

National Guidance

1.12 The Government's policy for design in the planning system is provided by Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) and expounded further in other PPSs. The challenge in PPS1 is clear: *"High quality and inclusive design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process."*

Regional Guidance

1.13 Regional guidance is found in the South East Plan, primarily Policy BE1, which sets out to *"Promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place, including the sensitive reuse of redundant or underused historic buildings."*

Local Guidance

1.14 At the local level, current planning policy is provided by Saved Local Plan policies, principally Policy EN1. Core Policy 5 of the Core Strategy Submission document will seek to take forward the principles of good design in the future by stating that: *"The unique character of the Borough will be maintained..., by applying sustainable design principles"* and in the application of the policies *"Within the urban areas more generally, the Typical Urban Character Area Assessment represents a useful assessment against which to consider the form, layout and density of future development in that area."*

Contents of this Document

1.15 Chapter 2: Background explores local distinctiveness and character, setting the framework for development within a clear understanding of the Borough's geology, landscape character and their influence upon built form. This chapter also briefly sets out the key periods of historic development of the Borough's settlements.

1.16 Chapter 3 defines and sets out a series of 29 character area types that have sufficient differences in their character and are individually distinctive based on their attributes, which include age, primary land use, density, building typology, sense of place, etc.

1.17 Each character area is briefly described through key features that help define their uniqueness. This is normally accompanied by a photo and map to provide a visual description. An analysis on issues faced by each character area is offered, together with key design considerations to be taken into account in encouraging development that is sensitive to local character.

1.18 For completeness, a summary of the methodology in the defining of the appraisal is set out in Appendix 1.

1.19 Character area maps for each of the individual settlements that have Limits to Built Developments (LBDs) are contained within Appendix 3.

How to Use This Guidance

1.20 This Appraisal is intended as a useful source of information to all involved in the development process. It seeks to inform Development Plan Policies and should therefore be used in conjunction with the Local Plan. The Appraisal is not intended to be prescriptive and cannot substitute for the use of qualified architects, landscape architects, planners and urban designers. It sets out contextual principles within which design creativity can be explored. The particular circumstances of each site must also be appreciated and respected.

1.21 It is intended to be used in conjunction with other characterisation assessments such as the Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment 2001 and, where within a conservation area, the particular Conservation Area Appraisal.

2 Background

Local Character Overview

2.1 As a means of introducing the Character Areas, which form the basis of this appraisal, this chapter gives an outline of the main influences in the development of the major settlements within the Borough, concentrating on those aspects that have shaped the towns and villages as they appear today.

Topography and Geology

2.2 Topographically, the Borough varies, from the flat clay vale of the Low Weald in the north to the rolling plateau uplands of the High Weald in the south. Geologically, it is predominantly underlain by Wadhurst Clay and hard sandstone strata known as the Hastings Beds. These have been affected by faulting and water, whose influences have resulted in a smooth, rolling landscape with ridgelines, strongly incised by deep ghyll valleys that cut through the landscape and, ultimately, open out to wide valley lowlands with broad, flat floodplains.

2.3 Agricultural development and settlement was slow because of the dense woodland cover and the difficulty in working the heavy clay soils. The area was originally used to move livestock across from the North Downs and into the forest of the Weald and in order to take seasonal advantage of the autumn forest grazing or pannage.

2.4 It was not until relatively late in Roman times, when trees were cleared to smelt the iron deposits of the Wadhurst Clay, that the area started to be opened up. Iron working continued on a small and sporadic basis up until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when, with the introduction of water power, the High Weald became a centre of heavy industry. In addition, the need for charcoal led to the management of woodland for coppice, which remains one of the characteristic features of the area.

2.5 The decline of the iron industry in the area corresponded with the arrival of Flemish weavers, who introduced the cloth trade and sheep-raising.

2.6 The increasing importance of agriculture led to further woodland clearance and established a pattern of arable land on flatter areas, with pasture fields found on the steeper, marginally productive valley slopes. Further agricultural developments included the introduction of fruit orchards and hop gardens in the sixteenth century. By the late nineteenth century these were the dominant land uses over much of the area. The late twentieth century saw the decline in the hop industry, it being replaced to some degree by vineyards.

2.7 The fuller analysis of the character of the countryside is set out in detail in the Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment 2001.

Settlement and building character

2.8 The general settlement pattern is of small nucleated and linear villages dispersed throughout the Borough, with a scattering of outlying farmsteads, hamlets and isolated rural dwellings, separated by private parks and woodlands. Many of the village settlements are located on the ridge tops and have commanding views over the landscape. Settlements are connected by a dense network of rural lanes, which dip into the intersecting ghylls and cross the plateaux.

2.9 Certain types of individual buildings are also characteristic within the landscape. Scattered medieval half-timbered houses and Wealden Hall Houses remain throughout the wider countryside. There are a number of historic estates, such as Finchcocks, Scotney and Sissinghurst Castles and Bayham Abbey. Perhaps of all the buildings, oast houses are the most evocative. Clusters of their white-cowled roofs can be picked out across the agricultural landscape. Oast houses, together with hopper huts, are relics of the historic links of the area with hop picking.

2.10 The abundance of raw materials, including woodland to provide timber, and the presence of clays which make good quality bricks and tiles, has resulted in a highly picturesque and distinctive vernacular. A variety of traditional materials and styles occur. White painted weather-boarding, often with the windows picked out in dark shades, is common; for example, at Cranbrook. Elsewhere, the warm, rich orange/red of the brick and tile-hung buildings predominate; for example, at Goudhurst. Sandstone also occurs, predominantly associated with more prestigious buildings such as churches and in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Many villages are a jumble of different styles, whereas in some settlements one particular form dominates. This variation introduces a sense of diversity within a unified whole, with the vernacular buildings greatly contributing to the strong sense of place found within the Borough.

Urban Settlements

Royal Tunbridge Wells

2.11 Royal Tunbridge Wells is the main town in the Borough. It developed initially as a fashionable spa resort from the mid seventeenth century due to its proximity to London. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, 'The Wells' had changed from a village with a very seasonal patronage into a rapidly growing population residing in fashionable villas in the distinctive 'parks', such as Calverley Park and Camden Park, which were developed for the wealthy and genteel classes.

2.12 The town continued to expand rapidly from the mid nineteenth century with the coming of the railway in 1845, with major new areas of residential development being created due to the improvements in communications. The town centre, serving the wider community, also grew up and new housing estates in the 1930s and 1950s attracted commuters. Recent developments have been more modest in extent, or redevelopments of existing areas. The character of the town today still reflects the periods of development, but retaining the attractiveness of distinctive features such as the Pantiles and the Common.

Southborough

2.13 Historically, Southborough had its early origins as a royal hunting estate. Industries based on iron smelting and then, in the eighteenth century, the production of high quality gunpowder followed. In the seventeenth century, Southborough was a fashionable resort based on recreations such as bowls, cricket and equine pursuits. Until recently, the town had a particular association with cricket ball manufacture. It now lies within the main urban area and still has a separate, smaller town centre providing independent shopping facilities, as well as local services.

Pembury

2.14 Pembury is a ridgetop settlement, retaining its character as a 'forest village' with tree cover extending up to the settlement edge. Although Pembury is adjacent to Royal Tunbridge Wells, it has an individual character and sense of separateness, which is also accentuated by physical severance from its surroundings by the road bypasses. Historically, the local economy was based on agriculture, clay manufacture and transport, being on the London to Hastings turnpike, now the A21. The settlement is based on a collection of hamlets, but now subsumed within a number of small infills and residential estate developments.

Paddock Wood

2.15 Paddock Wood is a town that has grown up mainly since the 1950s around the railway station. Initially it was an agricultural centre, with buildings including the grain drying store and hops marketing board warehouse adjacent to the railway. The small late Victorian/Edwardian core is now surrounded by red brick suburban developments, which now extend to the south of the station, with large-scale warehouse and industrial development to the north abutting the orchard landscapes.

Cranbrook

2.16 Cranbrook is the main settlement of the rural area. It became a prosperous town based on the wool industry from the fourteenth century, with a number of cloth halls from the sixteenth and seventeenth century. It declined to an extent with the railway going instead to Staplehurst in 1842, but its picturesque setting was still attractive to the late nineteenth century colony of artists. Cranbrook is still a thriving town centre, supported by extensive twentieth century estates to the north and south and popular local education establishments.

2.17 Occasional glimpses of the town reveal a cluster of white weatherboarded or rich earth-toned buildings set within a picturesque framework of trees, particularly Scots Pine, which are a feature of the town. Newer housing estates on the outskirts lack these interesting townscape characteristics. One of the major landmarks of Cranbrook is the Union Mill, built in 1814. The white and weatherboarded image of the windmill silhouetted against the sky over an intricate red brick roofscape is one of the defining characteristics of the town.

Hawkhurst

2.18 Hawkhurst is located on a broad, high plateau on the main ridgeline between the Rother Valley and the Hexden Channel. Hawkhurst dates from before the thirteenth century. The village appears to be small with clusters of white painted, dark-framed, weatherboarded houses nestled around a small green. In fact, the settlement is

considerably larger. Smuggling became an important influence during the 17th and 18th centuries with the exploits of the notorious Hawkhurst Gang. Employment has historically been in agriculture, hops and on the large local estates.

Key Periods of development

2.19 The following key periods of development have influenced the Borough and the character we see today. These key periods are described further in each individual character area.

Historic centres including village centres

2.20 Most of the villages and towns in the Borough area based on pre-Victorian settlements which date back to the 17th century and earlier, these centres containing buildings which reflect the local Kent vernacular. This traditional form of architecture also influenced numerous later builders and architects who by the end of the 19th Century were applying the local vernacular to their residential designs. The pioneers in this were George Devey in Benenden and Norman Shaw in Cranbrook. Also the chief inspiration for the new type of small country home and estates that were appearing was the Wealden house.

2.21 These centres usually still contain local pubs and community facilities, although their retail and service roles have often reduced.

Retail and Town Centres

2.22 These are usually Victorian in origins and associated with the expansion of settlements and development of new neighbourhoods.

2.23 Town centres have been extensively redeveloped with department stores restaurants and larger offices, in a blend of architectural styles and scales. Provides retail on a district scale.

2.24 Smaller neighbourhood developments of linear parades are usually still intact sometimes retaining residential accommodation over.

2.25 Expansions of town centres into previously residential areas now present a mix of uses, building styles and ages.

Victorian/Edwardian residential

2.26 This period was most influential upon the form of settlements at Tunbridge Wells and Southborough. As described earlier the new wealthy residents, generated by commuter railways, from 1840s onwards, created a great demand for the building of medium size houses. The 1835 Calverley Park principles pioneered by the architect Decimus Burton, were particularly influential on the development of Tunbridge Wells. The low density layout, set within a parkland setting, where housing was more exclusive, created a defined landscape character type and influenced many subsequent park developments and large villas carried on by William Willicombe and others throughout the town.

2.27 There were also a whole range of associated and subsequent development types from this period, ranging from the family villas through to the middle class and smaller Victorian semis and short terraces. Stucco, brick and slate typify the materials which were heavily influenced by architectural pattern books. Italianate styles particularly predominate.

2.28 The later Edwardian developments were more influenced by Queen Anne style and the use of red brick. Although this period is not strongly represented, Molyneux Park is a good example.

Inter war, 1930s Suburbia

2.29 Latterly, in the 1920s there was plenty of cheap land available and developers bought the land, designed a layout, put down the infrastructure of roads and services, and sold off plots to builders.

2.30 There tended to be uniformity in the architectural design with bay windows and material choice was almost totally render and tile, gable, dormer and hip. The type of house made famous as Arts and Crafts, became the typical form and built in their hundreds. They ranged from very low density, continuing the local tradition in area

such as Royal Chase and Byng Road which were developed serving affluent commuters, to the typical geometric planned semi detached estates such as Ravenswood Avenue. The inclusion of small garages became a feature to accommodate the motor car. Few community facilities were provided in these speculative estates.

Post war, 1950/60s estates

2.31 The Housing Boom slowed down in 1935 and the Green Belt was established in 1938. Expansion undertaken by councils in the 1950s resulted in large-scale estates such as built at Sherwood and Ramslye, to provide decent housing and to accommodate the rising population.

2.32 With the rise in home ownership there was also the introduction of more speculative developments into the area. Some continued with the large and more spacious developments, but there were significant areas of typical estates of mock Georgian with shallow pitched roofs. Many of the villages in the Borough saw expansions to their historic core during this period. Examples include Allington Road/Cogate Road developments at Paddock Wood and the Wheatfield estate in Cranbrook.

2.33 With relatively cheap land, estates of bungalows are also a particular feature from this period, e.g. Warrington Road.

1970s/1980s Estates and more recent development

2.34 More recent housing has taken the form of infill development which has tended to be higher in density, or where larger properties have been demolished to make way for newer ones.

Specific land uses

2.35 Each of these has its own characteristics reflecting the particular land use. Industrial, workshops and railways comprise large sheds, and open areas. Community health and education uses are typified by public buildings, often flat roofed. Leisure and recreation characteristics are invariably areas of open space with only incidental buildings, if any.

3 Analysis of Character Areas

Typical Urban Character Area: A1 - Historic Centre

Number of Areas: 6
Area: 20.04ha

Description

- Invariably a linear form, focused on a pre-1820 historic street pattern. Tight to path and road
- Composed of narrow, deep plots with narrow passages/alleyways linking main street to rear service areas, car parks
- Originally residential uses, now converted to commercial/retail at ground floor. Mixed uses on upper floors
- Infill and backland developments have occurred over time with new developments in areas backing onto High Street. Much of original quality and scale of buildings still existing
- Architectural and historic quality of buildings usually extremely good. Many listed buildings and within designated conservation area
- Two/three storeys, up to four in places. Composed of individual buildings, pairs or some short terraces. Variety of styles and materials reflecting architectural fashions prevalent at time of construction
- Mixture of materials; brick, tile hanging, weatherboarding. Steep roofs – usually still some slate
- Traditional casement windows, sash windows on upper floors. Small-scale, high-quality shopfronts. Domestic scale generally still retained
- Parking on-street, some in curtilage of properties, otherwise public car parks



Current Issues

- Loss of historic detailing and loss of traditional shop fronts on retail properties.
- Scale of replacement developments can be out of character with smaller scale grain.
- Existing character subsumed with introduction of visual clutter such as traffic signing, out of scale street lighting, insensitive street furniture.
- Addition of vents, boiler flues, air-conditioning units satellite dishes introducing clutter detracting from appearance of the buildings,
- Mixed uses areas are part of the character – retail, business, residential whilst lively and active can lead to conflicting needs.
- Access/servicing parking requirements can be in conflict with high pedestrian footfall and other activities,
- Loss of non-residential uses eroding activity and vitality and loss of valuable local services/facilities.



Design Considerations

- Retention of retail/commercial uses – vitality and viability in sustainable locations.
- Retention and enhancement of historic, well mannered shopfronts should be promoted (see shops and ads SPG).
- Restoration of rhythm and details of shopfront – stall risers and subdivision principles of good design.
- Buildings should normally front directly onto back edge of footway.
- A flexible approach to forecourts/gardens size may be encouraged.
- Parking should be reduced and managed where possible whilst respecting residents' amenity and access needs.
- Development should respect existing landscape features such as walls, trees, hedges, railings.
- Development should take account of ratio between building heights and width of streets.
- Rhythm and proportion of openings in new building and extensions should reflect surroundings

Typical Urban Character Area: A2 - Retail Road Frontage

Number of Areas: 5

Area: 8.83ha

Description

- Linear developments usually associated with Victorian expansion to town. Approximately 1870-1900. Mixed retail, office, residential, workshop uses in local centres. In small rural towns, will include the main centre
- Often purpose-built developments/groups of buildings/local centres adjoining main roads
- Width of plots standard and narrow – may be fairly deep. Servicing and access constraints to rear yards, through alleyways or through premises themselves
- Workshops/outbuildings to rear unless ground floor extended as part of retail use. Some limited redevelopment
- Generally three storeys high or mixed heights – two/three storey. Retail on ground floor with residential and other mixed uses over. Access to upper floors alongside shop unit or through it
- Buildings in brickwork – occasional use of stucco rendering. Slate roofs. Vertically sliding sash windows to upper floors
- Original ornate shopfronts sometimes still exist, often beneath later alterations; otherwise later inserts, often in aluminium
- Density in terms of footprint/total accommodation is medium/high. Residential density is variable; probably in range of around 20 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Scale and form of redevelopments can be out of character.
- Erosion of detailing.
- Mixed uses with residential, retail and business can lead to conflicting needs.
- Servicing problems with rear deep sites or where from road they are often busy thoroughfares.
- Secondary retail areas can be subject to fluctuations in economic health



Design Considerations

- Retention and enhancement of historic/distinctive shopfronts should be promoted.
- Restoration of detailing of new shopfronts should be consistent with buildings architecture– including stallrisers.
- Buildings would normally front directly onto back edge of footway.
- New developments should take account of existing ratio between building height and width of streets.
- Rhythm and proportion of openings in new build/ extensions
- Materials and detailing of any new developments conversions and restorations should reflect immediate surroundings
- Retain uses consistent with character
- Encourage retention of retail/commercial use as part of vitality and visibility of mixed use areas.

Typical Urban Character Area: A3 - Town Centre

Number of Areas: 4

Area: 31.16ha

Description

- Originally Victorian, possible earlier areas. Mostly redeveloped providing sub-regional central business and retail area for surrounding hinterland
- Uses mixed, mainly retail, eating and drinking, office and leisure uses. Also 'civic' uses
- Mostly large-scale buildings, including shopping centres, multi-storey car parks, office blocks. All on grand or civic scale and large 'grain'. Sometimes surviving enclosures of original properties – some still in residential use
- Busy commercial and retail areas with high volume of vehicular/ pedestrian, public transport movements. Pedestrian precincts and service areas often evident
- Buildings an eclectic mix in terms of ages, types and materials. Original two and three storey properties – brick and slate with retail use on ground floor. Large bulky stores, car parks, office blocks, three storeys and above. Brick faced, concrete panels, large glazing
- Overall, these areas have a high plot ratio with large footprints on sites and height
- Residential use distributed in pockets – generally low, around 15 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Character area undergoing some changes with loss of large office uses to residential conversions.
- Changes in retail patterns and economy have influence on the character of shopfronts.
- Pedestrian permeability can sometimes be ignored in larger developments.
- Long range or elevated views of roofscapes are often ignored.



Design Considerations

- Important areas for maintaining the retail health of centres – encourage the retention of retail and business uses.
- Encourage developments which respect existing character of area but exhibit innovation and quality to maintain overall attractiveness.
- Buildings should front directly onto back edge of footways and pedestrian areas, with a good level access which will be required under Disability Discrimination Act.
- Scale of new developments should take account of predominant building heights, and width of streets.
- The siting and design of plant and equipment must be taken fully into account.
- Access and servicing to be adequate but discrete.

Typical Urban Character Area: A4 - Edge of Town Centre

Number of Areas: 13

Area: 31.30ha

Description

- Classic transition zone between town centre character area and residential areas. Mixed uses usually predominate: offices with workshops, depots, yards, vestigial industry, some residential
- Some redevelopment has taken place in the past, with original buildings often converted to other uses. Area also characterised by parking in front gardens (of older properties, now converted to, for example, offices), on roads and on cleared sites
- Very poor appearance from road, fragmented by the mixed scale of buildings, indeterminate space between buildings, vacant sites, altered buildings
- Building styles also an eclectic mix, often reflecting uses
- Areas originally similar to B2/B3 Character Areas – Victorian houses three/four storeys high, often now converted into commercial uses, offices in particular. Character in these areas often retained apart from increase in parking and loss of gardens – both front and sometimes rear
- Some buildings still in residential use on upper floors or pockets of infill
- These buildings are brick, stucco with slated roofs
- Redeveloped sites with 1960s offices. Large depot buildings – out of scale/context
- Intermittent or underused/vacant sites
- Density varies for buildings – residential density of a low range – 5 to 15 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Pressure to convert to residential, losing business vitality.
- Areas undergoing changes often with larger bland redevelopments with large car parking areas have eroded character.
- Previously residential now in mixed uses
- Eroded townscape with a mixture of building scale, materials,
- Spaces invariably given over to obtrusive parking



Design Considerations

- Integrity of redevelopments and conversions should respect form, and rhythm of surroundings and re-establish and strengthen character
- Important areas for the retail health and growth of centres – encourage the retention of retail and business uses.
- Encourage developments which whilst responding to existing character of area should, where appropriate consider potential for good innovative design
- Front boundaries treatments, forecourts and crossovers should be carefully considered in any scheme to restore the character of the townscape and public realm.

Typical Urban Character Area: B1 - Victorian Detached Villas

Number of Areas: 17

Area: 78.04ha

Description

- The Arcadian character of low density Victorian villas in parkland setting is a distinctive feature of Tunbridge Wells. Built between the 1830s and 1870s, areas comprised large individual detached villas on large plots, often in association with lodges and cottages
- Well hidden behind high walls or shrubberies. Entire estates often enclosed or gated
- Large plots with very low coverage of buildings. Buildings set well into the sites, usually within mature landscaped gardens of typical Victorian exotic planting. Rear garden depths – substantial distances between rear elevations
- Mature hedging to boundaries, narrow entrances to sites. Areas typically with 'soft' detailing to wide roads, i.e. no kerbs or street furniture. Parking within sites usually low-key and hidden within the site/behind buildings
- Buildings generally two storeys, large footprint. Occasionally attics or basements
- Normally stucco rendering to walls with some buildings in red brick/buff brick. Slate roofs
- Detailing – ornate chimneys, belvederes, etc. Strong detailing to architraves. Sash windows common
- Very low original density. Five buildings/hectare



Current Issues

- Mid late C19 arcadian character eroding through loss of mature trees, which are not being replaced, or by inappropriate species
- Overly large and poorly sited incidental structures, e.g. garages, intrusive extent of hard surfacing and parking in new developments
- These areas are key urban green spaces which contribute to green infrastructure and biodiversity and habitats
- Fragile character relying on simple and low density of urban form.
- Some over-development could easily erode with much larger schemes than the original villas.
- These areas often comprise the historic Arcadian 'Parks' which are distinctive to Tunbridge Wells.
- Lack of innovative/sensitive architectural designs.
- Wider driveways and sight lines resulting in removal of hedging and opening up of sites.



Design Considerations

- Needs to be appropriate balance and relation between buildings and landscape, maintaining pre-eminence of landscape over buildings.
- New buildings should not be dominant in form and bulk.
- Views of buildings should be controlled to very restricted to glimpses in landscape context
- Tandem and backland infill development often inappropriate.
- The footprint of villas/blocks should be restricted and respect distinctive scale and density of development.
- Planting scheme should be robust with forest trees and shrubbery, e.g. laurel.
- Proposed development should be designed to respect existing landscape including retention inclusion of extensive lawns
- Parking garages and hard surfaces should not dominate the layout
- Use of high security boundaries such as high walls, gates and railings should be avoided.

Typical Urban Character Area: B2 - Victorian 'Middle Class'

Number of Areas: 16

Area: 87.94ha

Description

- Mid to late Victorian developments originally for the new professional and entrepreneurial classes
- Usually composed of a series of semi-detached or detached houses. Uniform and consistent scale and massing, but with a variety of materials and detailing
- Two and three storeys, including attics and basements
- Consistent building lines with, on average, 30 metres between front elevations. Adequate and sizeable back gardens, usually from 15 to 30 metres deep
- Front gardens large enough to accommodate trees and hedges. Side access to rear of each dwelling, but buildings still often closely spaced. Large rear gardens
- Car parking on-street or in front garden/forecourt/drive
- Mixture of materials, often individual houses/pairs reflecting desire for ornamental exteriors based on Italianate or Gothic styles
- Stucco with moulded architraves. Red brick with buff brick banding and quoins. Slated roofs
- Backland industries and other mixed uses sometimes in evidence
- Low densities – around 10-20 buildings/ha



Current Issues

- Original large family villas often now in multiple occupation situations
- Invariably now with forecourt parking, the loss of garden and boundaries walls/hedges have removed important incidental settings and opened up frontages.
- Alterations to roof profiles through insertions of large dormers or roof extensions can appear discordant
- Satellite dishes, flues, soil pipes and occasionally escape stairs add clutter to buildings
- Verdant gardens are important wildlife corridors in urban context. Loss to parking and subdivision of gardens



Design Considerations

- Scale and rhythm of built form is a strong feature, width of the gaps between are important
- Dealing effectively and sensitively with car parking including water run-off.
- Robust boundary and edge treatments should be respected, retained and reinstated.
- Mid late Victorian texture of detailing, e.g. the proportion of openings, bays. Render often is the preferred material.
- Generally strong building line to front and rear should be taken into account.

Typical Urban Character Area: B3 - Victorian Three- and Four-Storey Terraces

Number of Areas: 7

Area: 26.69ha

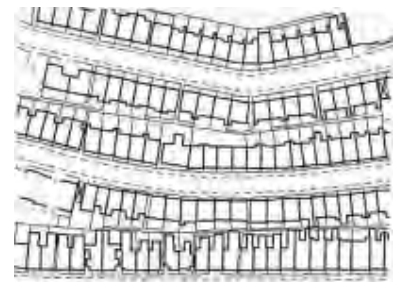
Description

- Mid to late Victorian town houses in uniform blocks in continuous terraces. Usually three storeys or more – basements and attics. Set out along consistent building line
- Generally some 16 metres distance between principal front elevations (can be as low as 12-14 metres). Shallow front gardens or areas with steps down to basement and up to ground floor. Small distances between rear elevations – down to 10 metres. Rear courtyards
- Terraces composed of individual town houses, 5.5 metres wide and 8 metres deep. Some types with small rear service extensions
- Principal materials – rendering for earlier, brick for later Victorian
- Medium to high densities – about 50 buildings per hectare being typical. Number of dwellings may well be higher, depending on extent of conversions which have already taken place



Current Issues

- Town Centre locations often now in multiple occupation.
- Already dense development.
- Management, ownership and maintenance issues, particularly front gardens and areas.
- Bin storage can invariably be an eyesore.
- Number of satellite dishes, redundant wires
- Parking on street difficulties.
- Some forecourt parking with removal of boundaries, vehicles overhanging footway.
- Areas to basement flats.



Design Considerations

- Strong building line and shallow gardens/areas should be respected
- Relationship to street with railings or hedging is consistent
- Restrict forecourt parking
- Innovative, integrated and sensitive solutions for waste storage required, not as an afterthought.

Typical Urban Character Area: B4 - Victorian Small Town Houses

Number of Areas: 34

Area: 127.17ha

Description

- Mid to late Victorian speculative suburbs. Uniform two-storey blocks set out along consistent building lines. Mostly in pairs and short terraces, very occasionally detached. Usually laid out in a tight-knit gridiron layout
- 16 metres distance between principal front elevations. Between 10 and 21 metres between rear elevations
- Shallow front gardens. Narrow gaps between for communal passageways to rear. Pairs/groups. Rear yards and small back gardens
- Street parking
- Terrace composed of individual dwellings, usually made up of two up-two down with rear 'service' extension. Typical 'class 4'. The half-width rear extensions are set back to back with neighbouring house to allow sunlight to penetrate to the main block. 4.5 metres wide x 7.5 metres deep
- Principal materials red brick or render, depending on if they are Gothic or Italianate in style. Some polychromatic brickwork. Occasionally bay windows. Slated roofs
- High density in range of 40 to 60 dwellings per hectare, 55 per hectare being typical



Current Issues

- Mixed variety with group – semi-detached, terrace, even detached.
- Some mixed uses such as workshops and non-residential uses within character area– intensity of redevelopment proposals.
- Small gardens key characteristic but loss of consistent boundaries with a disparate variety of treatment – erodes this linking feature, hedges, picket fencing, area railings.
- Heavy on street parking problems. Impact on street character and safety
- Paving front gardens to provide parking – loss of hedges.
- Loss/erosion of architectural detailing through replacement windows.



Design Considerations

- Proportion of openings and fenestration is linking feature which should be respected in new development.
- Use of materials and detailing consistent – render; red brick with bandings and use of bays in some situations.
- Boundaries and edges containing each site
- Two storeys 'domestic' scale consistent.
- Street pattern, urban grain and vernacular should provide contextual indicators to guide form of any new development and extensions.
- Parking requirements should not be fulfilled at the expense of streetscape and existing landscape features. On street parking can be an effective traffic calming measure as part of an integrated solution.
- Parking reduced in appropriate locations – alternative travel modes provided.

Typical Urban Character Area: C1 - Edwardian Villas

Number of Areas: 4

Area: 22.70ha

Description

- The influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement and aesthetic fashion exerted considerable influence on homes and aspirations
- Strong consistency of character – variations within the style
- Interest in the countryside and the adoption of more vernacular styles
- The layout of houses was quite tight within the plots. Houses not deeply set back from the front, usually by 4-6 metres. Plots were wider (usually) at about 18 metres, with 30-40 metre plot depths containing shallow rear gardens
- Well treed, reflecting interest in gardening, with strong boundary treatments of hedges and walls. Wide, generous road, expressing affluence of area
- The buildings were usually substantial, detached, three-storey or two-storey and attic. Basements disappeared completely, with plans based on squarer layouts, which allowed both more light and more efficient layouts. Greater interest in the relationship between the house and the garden – dining rooms featured french doors
- Buildings are generously scaled. Strongly influenced by Queen Anne Revival and Aesthetic Style
- In red brick. Following English vernacular detail with characteristic white-painted woodwork. Square-leaded windows
- Eaves, cornices, rubbed brick ornaments and plaques. Rooflines broken by gables and domes. Chimneys were large, moulded and carefully sized to add to the varied roofscape
- Road parking, some on-site. Landscape between villas. Strong use of paving material for footways, boundaries and street furniture
- Low density, between 10-20 buildings per hectare range, 12-15 being typical



Current Issues

- Large buildings on average garden plots.
- Pressure to give over to forecourt parking even though often generous roads
- Buildings with strong and distinctive characteristics with typical arts and crafts and Edwardian detailing.
- Loss of landscape character on new developments, and existing eg replacing hedges with railings, gates and general loss of vegetation.
- Original footprint can be increased.
- Hierarchy of fenestration in new builds often lacking.
- 'Flat' detailing not responding to existing architecture, e.g. deep window reveals, moulded bricks, strong gables.



Design Considerations

- Layouts should be designed to take account of the existing character, urban grain and rhythm. Including the space between buildings,
- Massing, form and modelling should be suitably robust.
- Attention to proportion of gables, bays, use of porches and hierarchy of fenestration
- Use of materials – strong enough detailing. Red brick and clay tiles and ornamentation.
- Boundary treatment – hedging preferred
- Any parking/forecourts/garaging should not dominate the road frontage.

Typical Urban Character Area: C2 - Edwardian Terrace

Number of Areas: 14

Area: 24.81ha

Description

- 1900-1918. Edwardian short terraces or small semis. Set out along consistent building lines, still typically following bye-law housing practice
- Closely spaced development with few gaps between
- Shallow front gardens, generally small rear gardens
- Car parking on highway
- Still followed previous Victorian layout with front to back corridor. Narrow plot widths of 5.5 metres
- Detailing of buildings, influenced by Queen Anne Revival, of red brick, tile and slate roofs
- Bay windows, stone dressings and cement ornaments
- Recessed entrances between projecting bays
- Strong, simple and aesthetic detailing
- Density typical – about 50 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Strongly consistent residential areas – generally little change
- Small gardens are key characteristic, but with some losses and changes to the consistent boundaries erode this linking feature.
- Heavy on street parking problems. Impact on street character and safety
- Paving front gardens to provide parking – loss of hedges and walls.
- Some evidence of loss/erosion of architectural detailing through replacement windows.



Design Considerations

- Proportion of openings and fenestration is linking feature which should be respected in any new development.
- Strong detailing followed, otherwise discordant and, to maintain character, use of materials and detailing should be consistent, e.g. brick with bandings, joinery particularly of doors and use of bay windows and recessed porches in some situations.
- Two storeys 'domestic' scale consistent.
- Street pattern, urban grain and vernacular should provide contextual indicators to guide form of any new development and extensions.
- Parking requirements should not be fulfilled at the expense of streetscape and existing landscape features. On-street parking can be an effective traffic calming measure as part of an integrated solution.
- Parking reduced in appropriate locations – alternative travel modes provided.

Typical Urban Character Area: D1 - Inter-War Spacious

Number of Areas: 2

Area: 15.25ha

Description

- Large, 'rambling' properties on large plots
- Buildings set well into site in large, lush gardens, sometimes with tennis/croquet lawn. High hedges, tree planting to front boundaries – often woodland in character. Gardens with geometrical layout
- Arts & Crafts influences
- Curved drives, gateways, affording only glimpses of houses, which are well hidden behind shrubberies/woodland
- Rear gardens of substantial depth – large intervals between properties
- Parking all within site in courtyards. Wide roads. Distances between frontages of 40 metres
- Rear garden depth around 40 metres
- Individual houses; white render and brick are typical wall materials
- Use of red tiles, large overhanging eaves supported on brick corbels or wooden brackets to give detail to an otherwise simple roof, which was intended to give interest and mass of an old Sussex cottage
- Sweeping roofs in Voysey/Arts & Crafts style gave the origins to the Mièrve style
- Large chimney stacks were used as a feature and as punctuation
- Horizontal leaded windows, simple canopy porch set against white render. All arranged in a loose asymmetrical form
- Low densities – 5-10 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Vulnerable to developments consequential loss of valuable landscape and biodiversity.
- Uncoordinated and sporadic infill 'estates' in large gardens.
- Characterless, inconsistent development.
- Large replacements exceeding footprint of original houses on infill estates. Original plots split to two or three houses. Pressure for subsequent extensions
- Large garages and crossover dominating new developments.
- Loss of hedges, trees and intervening screen planting.
- Lack of innovative or contextual designs which could be anywhere



Design Considerations

- Although of existing varied character – often based on arts and crafts idioms and may be a good original house worthy of incorporation in new scheme.
- Seek contextual cues from surrounding buildings.
- Degree of separation and space between dwellings should respect grain to retain existing character of the area.
- Parking, garages and paved surfaces should not dominate.
- Promote the use of low key boundaries, planting belts – trees should be of appropriate scale and species to reflect context.

Typical Urban Character Area: D2 - Inter-war Detached

Number of Areas: 22

Area: 88.95ha

Description

- Developed estates in a 'pseudo' Arcadian layout. Usually gently curving roads bounded by individual speculative housing
- Wide road zone, usually with grass verges and trees, with 30 metres between frontages
- Average to deep depth of gardens – typically in order of 40 metres
- Wide, 14 to 22 metres type plots. Front gardens with fencing, walls and hedging. Space between plots
- Garaging on-site – vehicle crossovers
- Houses usually detached, wide and double-fronted. Shallow plan. Some L-shaped. All two-storey
- Designs individualised by varying types and use of materials within estate
- Tudor detailing, Mièrve. Stock brick, white render, minimal use of mock beams
- Concrete tiled roofs. Use of hips and gables producing complex roof patterns. Fine detailing on the gables
- Horizontal cottage-style windows
- Density low. Range 12 to 20 dw/ha



Current Issues

- At risk due to often generous gardens
- Combined sites – developed as mini estates, particularly where larger gardens or adjoining sites involved.
- Characterless, inconsistent new development.
- Large replacements exceeding footprint of original houses on infill estates. Original plots split to two or three houses. Pressure for subsequent extensions
- Large garages and crossover dominating new developments.
- Loss of hedges, trees and intervening screen planting.
- Lack of innovative or contextual designs which could be anywhere



Design Considerations

- Strong use of materials such as rough cast render, red tiles – typifies this character area.
- Although of existing varied character – often based on arts and crafts idioms and may be a good original house worthy of incorporation in new scheme.
- Seek contextual cues from surrounding buildings.
- Degree of separation and space between dwellings should respect grain to retain existing character of the area.
- Parking, garages and paved surfaces should not dominate.
- Promote the use of low key boundaries, planting belts – trees should be of appropriate scale and species to reflect context.

Typical Urban Character Area: D3 - Inter-war Semi-detached

Number of Areas: 30

Area: 64.74ha

Description

- Estate plans, which produced a series of large, unbroken street blocks, often of substantial width
- Layouts based on the '70 foot rule' Tudor Walters recommendation, which was universally adopted
- 'Ribbon' or estates in crescents and culs-de-sac typical of this development type
- Wide roads with grass verges and trees; brick paved footways
- Side access – allowed rear access and parking of car/sometimes garaging. Gaps between often tight, however, as designed for small cars
- Style of 1930s housing used mock Tudor 'Jacobethan'
- Standard elevations used, but with applied variations so that they were not uniform and monotonous
- The semi-detached form gave weight and importance to the whole structure
- Symmetrical hipped roofs a strong feature of the semi – concrete tiled
- Two-storey square or round bay to front reception and bedroom was standard detail. Leaded lights invariably to front door
- The rectangular plan of the standard 1930s semi varied little: two receptions, hall, kitchen, two bedrooms and box room, bath and separate w.c., french doors to garden, side door to/from driveway
- Materials: red brick, pebbledash, white render to walls
- Some half-timbering, leaded lights, tile hung bays. Usually hoods to front door – recessed were particularly popular
- Density typically about 24 dwellings/hectare (after Tudor Walters)



Current Issues

- Rhythm of semi detached and hipped roof form is strong characteristic.
- Areas of desirable housing – wide and varied designs of extensions and loft conversions, eroding character
- Changes to General Permitted Development Order have relaxed planning control and compounded this
- Extensions up to boundary closing gaps and creating a terraced effect.
- Demolition of one or two houses to create backland development. Where Long gardens or at cul de sac
- On street parking can be an issue and eroding grass verges



Design Considerations

- Protect distinctive hipped roof form from excessive and poorly designed over large dormers and loft conversions – particularly to public view.
- Grass verges should be protected.
- Strong rhythm and height and form to be maintained.
- Prevailing frontage depth should be maintained where it is a significant street feature.
- Visual separation between dwellings should be retained.
- Building height and general roof form should reflect ex dwellings.
- Careful consideration to front boundary treatments –historically usually timber picket fencing

Typical Urban Character Area: E1 - Post-war Spacious Detached

Number of Areas: 13

Area: 60.51ha

Description

- 1946-70 low density developments, characterised by wide roads and usually significant grass verges
- Offer quite open character, with some trees and shrubberies to front of properties
- Large plots with the buildings usually set towards the front – with rear garden depths between 50-90 metres and substantial distances between rear elevations. Large intervals between properties
- Generally, the houses are substantial, built as individual dwellings or as a small group
- Buildings themselves are a variety of architectural styles – no strong distinguishing features – pretentious and up-market image
- Parking all within site
- Low density (5-10 dw/ha)



Current Issues

- Large gardens under threat from redevelopments – woodlands and biodiversity value in particular.
- Uncoordinated designs and infills.
- Existing varied character therefore not easy to object.
- New developments close to boundaries. With loss of hedging, tree groups and woodland
- Lack of innovative designs.
- Scale, height, massing of new developments out of character with surround.
- Existing low density characteristics could make this character area vulnerable to inappropriate over-development.



Design Considerations

- Assimilation of new requires understanding and exploiting of existing context to produce something new and with character.
- Degree of separation and space between dwellings should retain a reasonable proportion of space and landscape to respect character.
- Retention of existing vegetation within layouts should be maximised.
- Parking and garages and hard surfacing should not dominate.
- Avoid urbanising walls, gates, rails – priority for- low key planted boundary treatments.

Typical Urban Character Area: E2 - Post-war Speculative Estate

Number of Areas: 60

Area: 249.02ha

Description

- The character of estates were invariably traditional, following well-trying precedents, limited only by the 1947 Act and the stopping of ribbon development
- Houses were two-storey detached and semi-detached. They followed a strong building line, but with very open frontages with no fences or boundary treatment. Houses set well back from the highway, following the 70 foot rule for privacy. Garaging alongside or integral. Highway dominated layouts with sight lines, splays and large radii on junctions/bends
- Distances became standardised
- Houses also were increasingly standardised, with only minor differences exploited to convey identity and individuality. Only the distinctive facade and garden distinguished speculative estates from council housing
- Smaller sizes of dwellings reduced number of rooms
- Buildings described as 'functional' and were characterised by flat wall surfaces, with large square or oblong picture windows, with individual casement windows
- Low pitched gabled roofs and straight eaves took the place of hips
- Detailing usually a texture with the use of contrasting panels of brick, with render, tile hanging or weatherboarding
- Evolved into the 'Anglo Scandinavian' style, a functional, international style
- Density 10-20 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Suburban estates – usually distant from local facilities. Culs-de-sac layouts typical and access other than by car is poor.
- Featureless open frontages
- Drives and cars dominate street scene
- Poor surveillance with houses and rear fences backing onto streets
- Poor public transport accessibility. Limited facilities
- Limited development opportunities for infill or extensions



Design Considerations

- Unsustainable locations.
- Ensure successful integration of facilities.
- Encourage improved links as part of any proposal to improve integration and access to existing cycle, pedestrian and public transport routes.
- Ensure pedestrian access is safe and well lit and overlooked.
- Safeguard existing amenity areas and ensure maintenance of new open space.
- Ensure new development respects scale, and massing of existing built form. Unless there is an urban design reason to introduce focal points. Also consider introducing complementary range of dwelling types and sizes to provide more mixed communities.

Typical Urban Character Area: E3 - Post-war Council Estate

Number of Areas: 4 1

Area: 150.79ha

Description

- Public authorities made a great contribution to total housing provision immediately after the war. Much followed the Dudley Report Housing Manual. Usually in the form of estates, they were laid out as a series of linked spaces in an attempt to provide better townscape with curved streets, resulting in closed vistas. The spaces took the form of greens set irregularly about a neighbourhood centre
- Simple front gardens to properties with no fencing, or often grassed fronts
- Small communal spaces/informal play areas
- Fragmented layouts had wide grass verges and road designs were dominant, with splays, junctions and sweeping layouts
- Garaging arranged in garage blocks, as they were expensive to set alongside houses and costly in frontage. Allotments were also set behind the houses and placed out of sight
- Quality of housing was high, with improved designs, use of architects by local authorities following positive lead by MHLG through official design manuals. The 70 foot rule still prevented improved townscape
- Distances: front to front 27 metres; back to back averaged 40 metres
- Early 1950s estate housing was arranged as mainly two-storey semis and short terraces. To attempt to alleviate monotony, the introduction of mixed development with the occasional three-storey flats and bungalows was used to vary the scale and the roofline
- Standardised house plans from Housing Manual often arranged as mirrored pairs – typical character of municipal suburbia
- Buildings of simple form and profile, gabled roofs with straight eaves
- Factory-produced brick, concrete tiled roofs
- Timber windows of square proportions
- Very few architectural details
- Density usually around 24 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Public housing although itself good is simple, functional and characterless.
- Often has a poor external garden environment with minimal, poor boundary treatments.
- Poor or non-existent landscape.
- Large featureless grass verges, visibility splays and 'amenity spaces' -Space Left Over After Planning (SLOAP)
- Garage courts offer a feature but can be underutilised due to security, vandalism and remoteness.

Design Considerations

- Improved good landscape and boundaries should be considered in any proposals.
- Integrated parking with new developments
- Designs could introduce focal points and stronger urban design features to improve orientation in 'featureless' estate developments.



Typical Urban Character Area: E4 - Post-war High Density Terraces and Flats

Number of Areas: 33

Area: 38.10ha

Description

- 1950s and 60s developments, often associated with public housing or small estate developments
- Set in open space, communal parking areas or garage blocks
- Two general types of residential blocks, three-storey (sometimes more): 'walk up' flats with stair or balcony access; long blocks enclosing a central area or a series of point blocks set in open space and accessed from a central lobby and stair
- Both types are of brick or concrete construction with large picture windows and shallow pitched roofs or flat roofs
- Density is around 30/35 dw/ha
- Dwelling dependent on number of floors/ area



Current Issues

- Blocks of flats with often poor integration to context.
- Public housing although itself good is simple, functional and characterless architecturally.
- Communal parking areas present a poor current environment and layout and are a lost opportunity.
- Featureless communal spaces with negligible landscape – no boundary treatment to define public/ private ownership



Design Considerations

- Improved parking and integrated into public/shared spaces.
- Stronger landscape, hedging and boundaries.
- Enhancement of existing buildings

Typical Urban Character Area: E5 - Bungalows

Number of Areas: 60

Area: 66.46ha

Description

- From the 1930s through to the 1960s, the single-storey bungalow became a popular form of development; built on relatively cheap land which could accommodate low density and with subsidies. Often bungalows formed a component part of larger estates
- Later in the 1960s, compromised form evolved into chalet bungalow with bedrooms in the roof spaces, with dormers
- Bungalows usually enclosing a rectilinear plan of streets and culs-de-sac. 8-10 metre plot widths with 25 metre deep garden depths and 50 metre back to back distances between rear elevations
- Off-street parking, garages, open frontages providing poor townscape
- The original 7.5 x 7.5m bungalow simple ground plan only permitted modest accommodation – 2/3 person unit and often proved popular with retired people no longer with families at home. Often led to numerous rear extension and roof additions to increase accommodation
- Brick, some render, shallow concrete tiled roofs
- Large picture windows
- Density – around 24 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Strongly characterised built form but can be monotonous and featureless areas.
- House type no longer being built - ageing population and access-friendly housing.
- Higher demand for such areas. Retention therefore needs careful consideration.
- Relatively stable character area.

Design Considerations

- In any intensification – retention of existing disabled friendly and elderly provision.
- Improved legibility would benefit townscape with some targeted redevelopments or enhancements
- Any new proposals could introduce focal points and stronger urban design features to improve orientation in 'featureless' estate developments
- Also consider introducing complementary range of dwelling types and sizes to provide more mixed communities



Typical Urban Character Area: F1 - Modern Detached

Number of Areas: 36

Area: 82.57ha

Description

- By the early 1970s, speculators decided that the simple 'anglo scandinavian' style did not meet their customers' demand and that the more 'functional, international influences' should give way to something new. They adopted a neo-Georgian style, as Tudor and Miervé styles were now unfashionable
- These developments were loosely handled, not having the grace and proportions of true Georgian. Casements were used instead of sashes and low pitched pantiled roofs
- Windows were squarer in proportion and small paned
- Usual emphasis was placed on the entrance, with a panelled door and stick-on pediment
- All larger detached dwellings. Few semis, no terraces
- Road-dominated layouts, informal layout of cul-de-sac, footways and turning areas, large parking areas/driveways, double garages. Same fragmented floorscape and poorly defined spaces as F2 areas
- Buildings exhibit the 'monster house' phenomenon of large building on a small plot. Small gardens – back to back distances 21 to 25 metres
- Varied and restless shapes to buildings, often with applied mixture of materials to individualise dwellings, although similar floor plans. Usually based on brick and tile, easily maintainable materials. Fussy and confused with no strong character
- Density in the low/medium range. 15-24 dw/ha

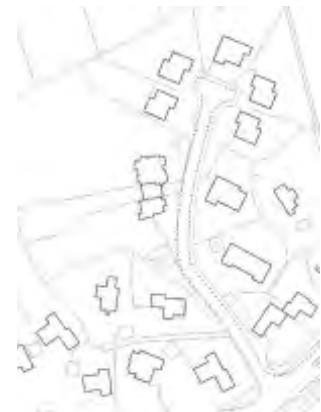


Current Issues

- Varied architectural character usually poor interpretation of historic styles.
- Suffered from poor designs in past unrelated to character
- Car dominated driveways and garaging
- Recent uncoordinated backland developments.
- This is an area that has recently in some parts, been subject to 'garden grabbing' where larger gardens permit or through the amalgamation of sites.
- Poor appreciation of context has resulted in a further variety of shapes which has attracted criticism on design quality and the density mis-match.

Design Considerations

- Stronger appreciation of area required including masterplanning better design and access statements or guidance. Stronger design skills required.
- Application of lower density developments to respect existing density characteristics and better integration.



Typical Urban Character Area: F2 - Modern Semi/Linked

Number of Areas: 51

Area: 176.60ha

Description

- Follows the same evolution as F1 Character Area. Higher density version
- An important characteristic of these developments was still the spaces and lack of front boundary treatment, as in the 1950s and 1960s. The boundary between public and private notionally marked by a dwarf wall of brick or artificial stone. There was still the fragmented floorscape; poorly defined spaces between front facades and the dominance of highway, pavements and parking
- This key type of estate layout was strongly influenced by traffic publications such as Roads in Urban Areas, with road hierarchies and the use of culs-de-sac
- From the late 1970s, design guides, notably the Essex Design Guide, were being adopted. These guides were an attempt at encouraging more visually satisfactory environments with local identity. Tighter road forms. Although the guides advocated a low density Arcadia or a higher density urban approach, with terraces, the developers almost entirely left out terraces in preference of detached houses. Became an informal layout of culs-de-sac and mews courts enclosed by two-storey houses and flats
- Materials were a mixture of render, brick with boarding and tile-hanging
- Steeper roofs were often used
- Vernacular references were employed, with hoods, little dormers and small bay windows
- Density low/medium. 20-30 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Highway dominated estates with lack of innovative or strong urban design structure and relying on cul de sacs and parking courts for public spaces.
- Although designed to approved standards – car ownership now increased and parking now often dominant.
- Anywhere architecture – standard house types with nominal variations to distinguish from each other, and could be pastiche/traditional design attempts.
- Tightly packed earlier – poor structured layout with small open front areas
- Often limited landscape/squeezed into left over areas and poorly managed.
- Usually small back gardens.



Design Considerations

- Maximise retention of existing trees, hedges, landscape and introduce new trees and structured vegetation.
- Layouts should provide a series of new connections to the existing areas.
- Provide and use safe and direct access to pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Define key public spaces and stronger public/private distinction.
- Integrate special roads and social housing.
- Ensure good surveillance of the street.
- Incorporate a range of house types and designs which take into account their location and respond to local traditional character of the area. Avoid repetition of house styles.

Typical Urban Character Area: F3 - Modern High Rise

Number of Areas: 9

Area: 7.89ha

Description

- From the 1970s to present day, these higher density flatted developments tended to be small estates and one-off developments. Later developments have tended to respect existing character better than earlier ones
- Purpose-built flats served from lobby and stair, usually three and four storeys in height
- Small communal utility spaces and gardens. Poor external space definition
- Parking in open courts or garage blocks
- Variety of designs, reflecting architectural fashions prevalent at time of construction or 'market' properties were intended for. Brick walls predominate, usually with shallow pitched roofs, occasionally flat roofs
- Density medium. 20-40 dw/ha



Current Issues

- Design details often treated as 'add ons' purely to break up frontage and enliven standard blocks.
- Roofscape can be long, monotonous and unbroken, particularly when viewed from distance or higher ground. On deep plans, roofs can appear particularly bulky and dominant
- Small back gardens.
- Prominent garaging – prominent parking courts – dominant highway and extensive parking areas.
- 'Weak' landscape not in scale with buildings.



Design Considerations

- Avoid monotonous, unrelieved roofscape and designs.
- Respect the scale and layout of surrounding dwellings and avoid sudden change in scale, grain, height and massing.
- Details should be integral to design and style of development – not as add ons applied purely to break up frontage. Honesty, integrity and innovation in design.
- Parking – garages and hard surfaces should not dominate street frontages and 'public' spaces.

Typical Urban Character Area: G1 - Mixed Age Detached/Semi

Number of Areas: 28

Area: 71.58ha

Description

- Areas still primarily in residential use, but have evolved incrementally or have been the subject of redevelopments
- Primary building type is often single, detached or semi, e.g. Victorian villa or 1930 detached in Arcadian landscape setting (similar to Areas B1 and D1 originally)
- They have, however, been subject to some infill developments in original grounds, or redevelopments and conversions. The areas therefore now comprise a wide variation of building styles and periods. The essential character, however, is still evident, with trees and landscape being dominant, car parking within the sites/plots and single/semi detached buildings. Occasional blocks
- Varied building materials, depending on period/fashion. Two-storey scale still dominant
- Density varies – usually 20 dw/ha

Current Issues

- Lower density mixed use areas of varied building architectural character makes these areas vulnerable to uncoordinated and varied changes.

Design Considerations

- Existing landscape boundaries should be maintained and respected as providing key linking features and consistent framework.
- Immediate context should inform new developments.
- Seek contextual clues from surrounding buildings but there may be scope for more innovative solutions
- Biodiversity value of sites can be high due to lower existing density and should be respected.
- Parking, garaging and hard surfaces should not dominate.

Typical Urban Character Area: G2 - Mixed Age Medium/High Density

Number of Areas: 7

Area: 19.62ha

Description

- These areas are characterised by being previous residential areas (usually low density Victorian or open land), which have been infilled or redeveloped by new small estates of terraces, two/three storeys high, blocks of flats, etc
- The result is an amorphous area of mixed age, mixed form developments. The original more open character has also been lost
- They are rather characterless areas, a result of development which has compromised the original visual qualities by not respecting the original character
- Key element in these mixed age areas is the higher densities that have been achieved
- Blocks of flats, terraces and small, tight estates are the usual building forms, with only the occasional original building
- Density varies, but medium/high. 30-40 dw/ha about average

Current Issues

- Character area that has undergone redevelopment or infill, often of varied styles, scale and typologies.
- Landscape framework compromised, often pressure on remaining landscape from overshadowing, erosion.
- Limited opportunities for new developments remaining.

Design Considerations

- Where possible encourage improvements to landscape and boundary treatments.
- Integrate any new proposals into immediate context for continuity to bring integrity to locality.
- Reduce impact of vehicles, parking and access and dominance of roads designed to now inappropriate standards.

Typical Urban Character Area: H1 - Industrial/Commercial

Number of Areas: 21

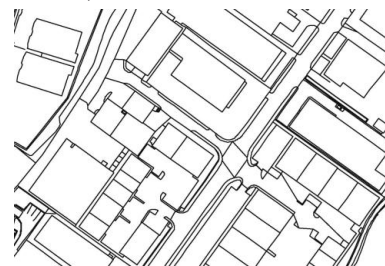
Area: 181.72ha

Description

- Areas characterised by mix of industrial type uses. Older factories, business parks and DIY sheds. Also depots, yards and railway land. Also mixture of commercial premises. Large car parks
- Size of buildings varies from large stores, showrooms, distribution warehouses to starter units, small workshops. Also storage, compounds, depot land
- Panel materials dominate, some bricks, shallow roofs

Current Issues

- Industrial areas with incremental redevelopments and additions – variety of scale, orientations and colours.
- Landscape structure often ignored in earlier developments.
- Poor attention to design of boundaries.
- Dominance of access and parking with little screening or visual containment
- Apparent lack of clarity of layouts and bleak public realm
- Lack of economic development land locally makes these character areas important



Design Considerations

- Reinforce landscape framework in new proposals and link to wider green infrastructure.
- Clearer layout of built form, parking, access within developments.
- Seek innovative and distinctive design solutions that add to particular character of areas.
- Good clear boundary treatments – consistent to area.
- Improve quality and efficiency of existing areas to add economic value

Typical Urban Character Area: H2 - Community/Health

Number of Areas: 6

Area: 12.97ha

Description

- Uses can be wide-ranging, but in the main will comprise large institutional type uses, e.g. hospital sites and nursing homes
- Usually comprise two/three or four-storey buildings; late Victorian, 1930s, 1960s and collection of 'temporary' buildings

Current Issues

- Incremental variety usually larger buildings.
- Lack of master planning and clear vision.
- Different architectural styles.
- Often poor legibility, movement and parking layouts within site

Design Considerations

- Seek master plan/vision as part of new developments.
- Encourage clearer/movement strategy to aid better integration.
- Incorporate improvements to public realm /landscape designs

Typical Urban Character Area: H3 - Education

Number of Areas: 29

Area: 69.32ha

Description

- Comprises schools and colleges with directly associated land
- Range of building types, from brick built early 20th century education buildings to 1960s building, including sport halls, mobile classrooms
- Associated sports fields if they are within the Limits to Built Development

Current Issues

- Usually lack of master plan has led to incremental approach to developments.
- Variety of architectural styles, usually to a basic standard.

Design Considerations

- Seek master plan/vision as part of new developments.
- Encourage clear movement strategy to aid better integration and clearer definition of spaces between buildings.
- Reduce impact of parking and access through screening etc.
- Encourage innovative and environmentally sustainable designs.

Typical Urban Character Area: H4 - Leisure/Recreation

Number of Areas: 57

Area: 168.39ha

Description

- Primarily open space with few built structures
- Uses comprise parks and public open space, private parks/communal gardens, sports and recreation fields, allotments and woodlands
- Can be open, grassed areas, mown for recreation/leisure use or parkland and dense woodland

Current Issues

- Integration into green infrastructure not always clear.
- Management issues to improve biodiversity.
- Integration and potential for improved access poor on occasions.
- Value for health and well-being under exploited.

Design Considerations

- Improve access, remove barriers
- Improve links to adjacent habitats as part of green infrastructure, biodiversity, improvements.
- Encourage improved management planning and enhancements

Typical Urban Character Area: V1 - Historic Village Centre

Number of Areas: 19

Area: 83.61ha

Description

- Village developments were often originally centred on historic road patterns and incorporated village greens and ponds. In the case of this Borough, for ease of movement and security, village settlements are usually located on ridgeline sites
- Buildings are often tight to the road, with rear garden areas. Also interspersed with a few larger 'manorial' houses and grounds
- Typical eclectic range of village buildings, including church, vicarage, village school, pub and shops, some remnant workshops, as well as a range of artisans' and farm labourers' cottages
- Collectively, in most cases buildings have a strong architectural and historic character and invariably comprise a significant part of any conservation area
- Two-storey, composed of individual buildings, usually in grounds, pairs and short terraces
- Variety of building styles reflecting architectural fashions prevalent at the time. Domestic scale
- Traditional use of materials of brick, clay tile and timber, with later use of stucco render and slate. Traditional casements and sash windows
- Mix of uses originally. Invariably now residential, with most original commercial retail uses having given way to residential
- Residential density variable between the areas and within each area. Depend on extent of incidental space, size of plots, proportion of non-residential uses. Generally, however, 10 to 30 dw/ha

Current Issues

- Small scale village character threatened by larger new developments
- Pressure to infill any larger gardens, and to redevelop smaller properties.
- Loss of village character with the introduction of urbanising elements such as street lighting, traffic signs, furniture and kerbs
- Addition of vents, boiler flues, air-conditioning units satellite dishes introducing clutter detracting from appearance of the buildings, adding to urbanised appearance
- Loss of non-residential uses eroding activity and vitality and loss of valuable local services/facilities.

Design Considerations

- Any development should respect historic plot boundaries, listed/locally distinctive buildings respect ex building lines and ratio of height/width of streets.
- Development should reflect surrounding urban form and consider both the use of local materials and the potential for contemporary design.
- All development should respect and enhance landscape features – significant walls, trees and hedges where appropriate.
- Consideration should be given to design and windows and building proportions to reflect local materials.

Typical Urban Character Area: V2 - Residential Village Expansion

Number of Areas: 41

Area: 201.72ha

Description

- Usually planned or allocated estate expansions onto original settlements. Some minor redevelopments of original village gardens and incidental plots
- Typical 20th century geometrical layouts, based on standard highway estate road parameters
- Examples of 1930s, both lower density and semi-detached (see D2 & D3), 1950s council estate (see E2 & E3) and c.1980s expansions (see F1 & F2)
- All two-storey, reflecting architectural style prevalent at the time
- Materials and detailing standard to the period, with invariably no particular reference to local vernacular materials or context
- Uses fully residential, relying on the original village or hamlet, or the nearby town, for services
- Parking often within curtilage and garaging
- Density according to type of estate development, but often around 24 dw/ha

Current Issues

- Usually standard estate extensions to original village core with little recognition of local character or context
- Particular issues usually reflect the 'urban' equivalent
- Urban solutions applied in most situations
- Edge treatment and transition with surrounding countryside poorly integrated visually and ecologically

Design Considerations

- Coalescence of settlements should be resisted with attention to design of the countryside edge.
- Greater use of landscape to aid integration into landscape framework and to retain green infrastructure
- Consideration of strategic views
- Parking should be reduced wherever possible and sensitively located or at the rear
- All development should respect and enhance landscape features – significant walls, trees and hedges where appropriate.
- Consideration should be given to design, particularly windows and building proportions to reflect original local vernacular and reinforce local distinctiveness

Appendix 1 Methodology

1.1 In late 1998, to assist in assessing the potentials for urban intensification, the Borough Council developed a characterisation tool using Typical Urban Character Area technique (TUCA). This was considered necessary as a major component of new dwellings in the Borough were being achieved through 'windfalls' on previously developed land.

1.2 The technique of townscape assessment and urban morphology analysis was adopted in order to understand, in a more structured way, the distribution patterns and future development potentials from this key source. This analytical tool has enabled the morphology of the separate character areas to be more fully understood and described, and trend data for new residential consents to be captured and ascribed to the character areas.

1.3 This characterisation tool has also been recognised as having other values, in this instance its application to understand local distinctiveness and to encourage improved design quality.

1.4 The characterisation technique identified areas within the major urban settlements that exhibit general homogeneous characteristics and which are also significantly different from each other. This approach followed similar studies that had been carried out at the time, e.g. West Sussex 1996; Hertfordshire 1995; and Yorkshire/Humberside 1998. This methodology was subsequently verified as useful practice by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in Tapping the Potential. The original windfall study informed part of the Urban Capacity Study, which was published by the Borough Council in June 2001. More recent work on characterisation, notably by English Heritage and several County Councils, has built upon the technique: although using a similar approach, they have concentrated primarily on characterisation of historical and archaeological aspects.

1.5 The Tunbridge Wells Borough characterisation survey and analysis work was originally applied to the major settlements in the Borough: of Tunbridge Wells; Southborough; Paddock Wood; Cranbrook; and Hawkhurst. This was on the basis that the significant majority of new dwellings were being derived from these existing major urban areas.

1.6 Following HLAA guidance, the remaining larger settlements of Pembury, Langton Green and Rusthall were added to the characterised areas. Historic housing completion data has been plotted against them.

1.7 It was, however, noted that trying to apply the same TUCAs to the villages and smaller settlements, with their own Limits to Built Development, led to less meaningful morphology. The resultant areas were too fine-grained, with often only a small sample of buildings within them. Also, as relatively few developments occurred in the smaller, less sustainable settlements, it gave less meaningful statistical information. In these instances, two simpler TUCA categories were developed and applied.

Appendix 2 Definition of Typical Urban Character Areas

2.1 The definition of the typical urban character areas was originally based on historical, townscape and urban morphological studies, detailed site visits in all the settlements and application of local knowledge. This was then tested through officer discussions/peer review and then, where necessary, refined.

2.2 The original work was published and formed part of the evidence base to the 2001 Urban Capacity Study and subsequent Local Plan Inquiry.

2.3 The Character Areas were defined using a number of criteria/variables, the relevance and 'weighting' being unique for each area.

2.4 Principal criteria included:

- Age – the period when areas were originally developed. Usually these are divided up on the basis of historic sequence of development and the development of residential estates
- Use – Structural typology, predominant land use, e.g. residential, commercial, leisure and transport
- Density – layout, texture, grain (plan) plan form, spatial qualities; in the case of residential areas, the geometry layout and patterns of roads and original buildings/ha
- Type and design of buildings – this reflected architectural influences, building styles, use of materials, narrow/wide frontage
- Height and form of buildings – single, two, three storey, assertive or passive forms, use of gables, bay details
- Homogeneity/cohesiveness of areas vs. variety/diversity and the completeness of areas

2.5 Other factors also had relevance, e.g:

- Spatial characteristics – viz open, enclosed
- Landscape – extent of trees, roadside verges, gardens
- Sense of place – thresholds, landmarks, edges which defined enclaves
- Materials and details – bays, render, brick, consistency and particular architectural details and fashions, use of materials
- 'Identity' – community perception of area, history – existence of residents associations/amenity groups, school catchments, churches

2.6 The TUCAs were determined on the basis of consistency and completeness of character. The areas were defined at a level having regard to being sensitive, not being too coarse-grained so as to become meaningless, but on the other hand not too small so that any patterns were difficult to discern and analysis meaningless.

2.7 In delineating the various areas, the approach was to define homogeneous areas. Occasionally this may include 'intrusions' and some minor later developments or different uses. The judgement of these was based on a commonsense/practical approach, rather than one that would have resulted in too many areas.

2.8 A number of data sources/expertise were applied to the defining of the TUCAs, including:

- Historic mapping, including field boundaries which tend not to change when subsequent development occurs
- Aerial photographic evidence, both recent and RAF photographs from WW2 period
- Publications on suburban development (see bibliography) and other published and unpublished works
- Understanding of urban morphology and residential layouts
- Understanding of building typologies
- Knowledge and experience of the areas
- Kent County Council Townscape and Conservation Study 1979 and background research
- Sites and Monuments Records, etc
- Extensive fieldwork to verify

2.9 It should be noted that the primary purpose of the characterisation approach was to develop a robust planning tool, rather than an academic treatise on the history or urban morphology of the areas surveyed. The historical evolution of the settlements, periods of development, architectural style, etc, did, however, play a significant part in the defining of the character areas.

2.10 It has been noted that some other similar studies have defined estate housing as a single typical urban area. The Borough Council has retained its approach as it is considered that its various residential areas have sufficiently different morphology and intensification potentials. The study technique therefore retains an appropriate level of sensitivity, which provides more precision in the analysis and therefore more accuracy to the outputs.

2.11 This assessment resulted in some 29 character area types being identified, primarily residential.

2.12 In the case of the smaller settlements, two village character areas have been identified.

Character Area	Typical Development Type (not exclusive)	Age	Area use/ characteristics
A1	Historic town centre , e.g. Royal Tunbridge Wells High Street, Pantiles, Cranbrook	Pre-1820 with areas of redevelopment	Mixed residential/retail/commercial
A2	Victorian commercial , shopping area, e.g. St Johns , Paddock Wood	1821-1900 with some areas of small-scale redevelopment	Mixed uses, mainly retail with residential over
A3	Town centre , e.g. Royal Tunbridge Wells, Mount Pleasant area	1821-1900 with areas of large-scale redevelopment	Mixed use
A4	Edge of town centre	Mixed	Mixed
B1	Victorian detached villas / low density, e.g. Calverley Park; 'Arcadian'	1821-1900	Residential
B2	Victorian detached/ semi three-storey, e.g. Upper Grosvenor Road, Frant Road	1821-1900	Residential
B3	Victorian three-storey terraced , some semis, e.g. Princes St, Dudley Rd, Mountfield Gardens	1821-1900	Residential
B4	Victorian terraces . Small, two-storey, e.g. Royal Tunbridge Wells, Camden Rd area, SO west of the A26	1821-1900	Residential
C1	Edwardian villa / low density, e.g. Molyneux, Madeira Park	1900-1918	Residential
C2	Edwardian terrace , e.g. Whitefield Road	1900-1918	Residential
D1	Inter-war spacious , large detached, e.g. Warwick Park	1919-1945	Residential
D2	Inter-war detached , e.g. Royal Tunbridge Wells Byng Road	1919-1945	Residential
D3	Inter-war semi-detached , e.g. Southborough Yew Tree Rd area, Ravenswood Ave	1919-1945	Residential
E1	Post-war spacious detached , e.g. The Crossway	1946-1970	Residential
E2	Post-war detached , e.g. Sandown Park	1946-1970	Residential
E3	Post-war semi-detached /short terraces, e.g. Ramslye, Sherwood	1946-1970	Residential
E4	Post-war flats , e.g. Royal Tunbridge Wells Sherwood/ Greggswood	1946-1970	Residential
E5	Bungalows	1946-1970	Residential

Character Area	Typical Development Type (not exclusive)	Age	Area use/ characteristics
F1	Executive detached houses , e.g. Finches Estate Paddock Wood	1971-present	Residential
F2	Modern semis/terraces/flats , e.g. r/o Council Offices, Cranbrook, Barnetts Wood	1971-present	Residential
F3	Flats	1971-present	Residential
G1	Mixed age detached/semis	Mixed	Mainly residential
G2	Other mixed age high density	Mixed	Mainly residential
H1	Industrial/Commercial	Mixed	Industrial, retail, commercial
H2	Community	Mixed	Hospital/community health
H3	Education	Mixed	Education – large schools/colleges
H4	Leisure/Recreation	Mixed	Parks, gardens, POS, leisure centres, allotments, natures reserves
V1	Historic village centre	Pre-1900 with some minor areas of redevelopment	Mixed uses
V2	Residential village expansion	Post-1900 residential, usually estate housing	Residential

Table 1 Summary of defined Typical Urban Character Areas

(Revised 21 March 2001)

(Village TUCAs added June 2007)

Sources

Suburban Style. (British Home 1840-1960). H Barrett & J Phillips

The Design of Suburbia. Arthur Edwards

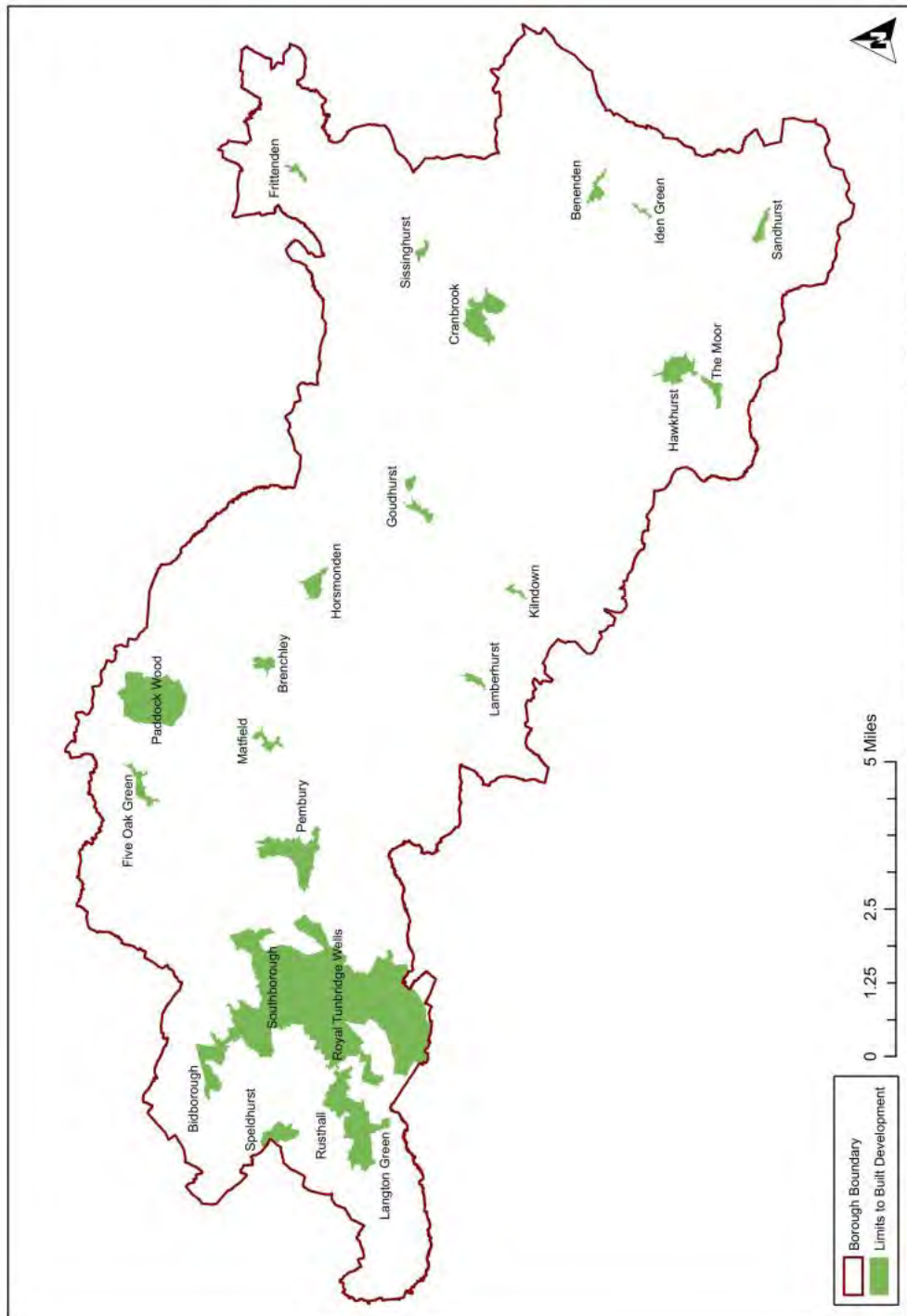
The English Terraced House. Stefan Muthesius

Royal Tunbridge Wells. Alan Savage

Royal Tunbridge Wells. Roger Farthing

Appendix 3 Character Area Maps

Borough map showing Limits to Built Development



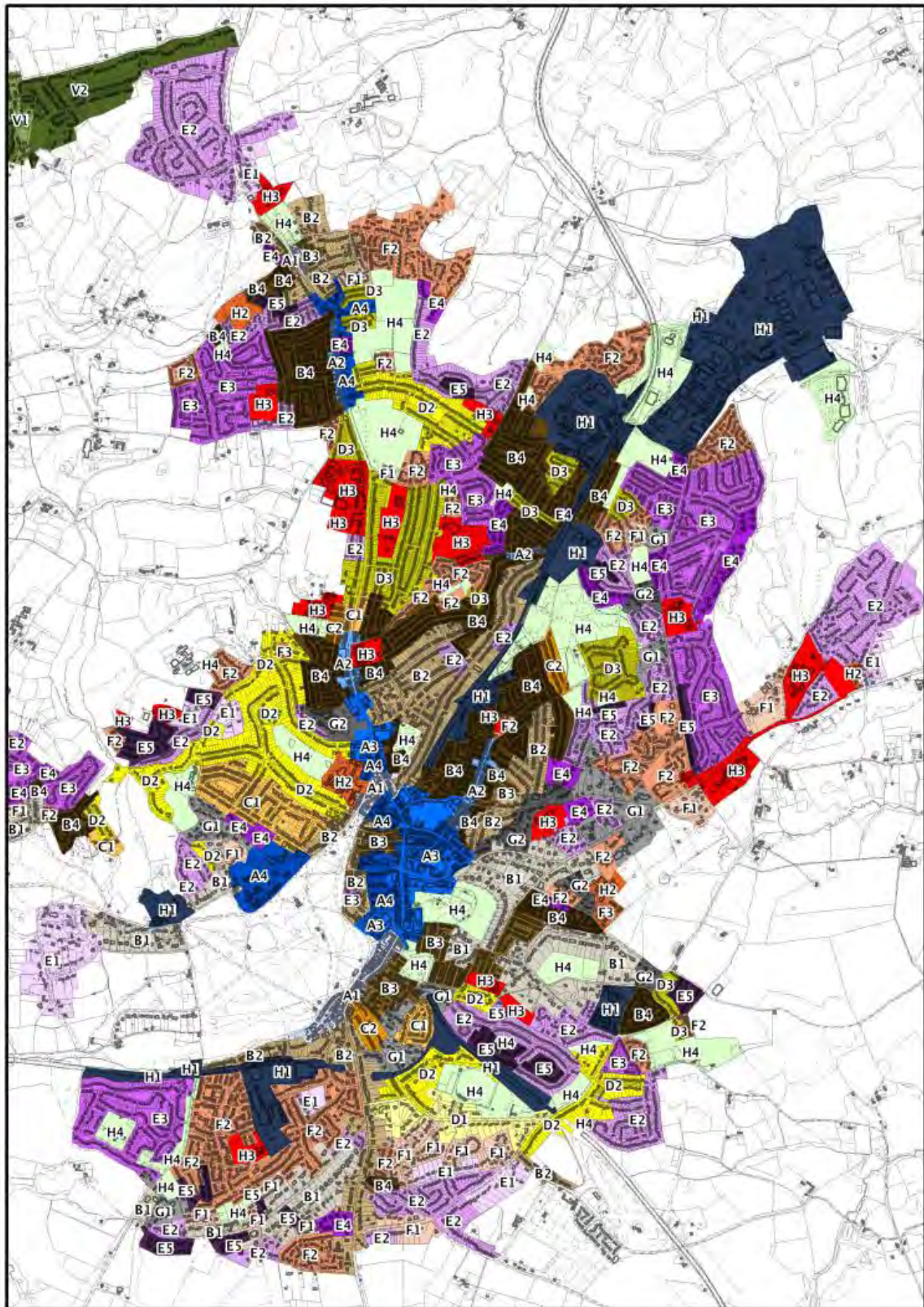
Legend

Please note: the following maps are not to scale.

Typical Urban Character Area

	A1 Historic Centre
	A2 Retail Road Frontage
	A3 Town Centre
	A4 Edge of Town Centre
	B1 Victorian Detached Vilas
	B2 Victorian 'Middle Class'
	B3 Victorian Three and Four Storey Terraces
	B4 Victorian Small Town Houses
	C1 Edwardian Vilas
	C2 Edwardian Terraces
	D1 Inter-war Spacious
	D2 Inter-war Detached
	D3 Inter-war Semi-detached
	E1 Post-war Spacious Detached
	E2 Post-war Speculative Estate
	E3 Post-war Council Estate
	E4 Post-war High Density Terraces and Flats
	E5 Bungalows
	F1 Modern Detached
	F2 Modern Semi/Linked
	F3 Modern High Rise
	G1 Mixed Age Detached/Semi
	G2 Mixed Age Medium/High Density
	H1 Industrial/Commercial
	H2 Community/Health
	H3 Education
	H4 Leisure/Recreation
	V1 Historic Village Centre
	V2 Residential Village Expansion

Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough



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