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St Helens Conservation Area

Appraisal

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Introduction

Local Planning Authorities have a duty under The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate as conservation areas any areas considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to protect or enhance.

The Character Area boundaries are inevitably subjective in complex environments, and are based not only on architectural, land-use or historic attributes, but on the dynamic experience of walking or driving through an area. Map based boundaries are taken into consideration, but sensational qualities such as the awareness of enclosure or openness and degrees of noise and activity are also important in defining edges to Character Areas and the Conservation Area.

In coastal areas, the boundaries may follow the line of the mean low water mark which is the extent of the jurisdiction of the Council and so is used for consistency.

The legislation also makes provision for schemes to enhance the area, so the inclusion of areas of potential allows for schemes to be put forward which will improve the Area in keeping with its own individual character, and to the same high standard.

Designation does not mean that development cannot take place within the proposed Conservation Area or within its setting. Designation means that special consideration is required for applications in the Conservation Area to ensure that any demolition is justified and that schemes (which are acceptable on all other planning grounds) are of a suitable design and of a high enough standard. This additional level of consideration allows Members to insist upon the best possible standards of design for the new developments within a Conservation Area, and allows them to refuse the poor and mediocre with confidence.

ST HELENS CONSERVATION AREA



AREA 1 'THE GREEN' CHARACTER STATEMENT

Character

The surrounding landscape, prominent through small lanes off the Green and as the backdrop to the gabled roofline, provides a rural atmosphere. The unadorned Green is the dominant element in this decorative relaxed village. There is a vitality exhibited in occasional shops, modern buildings and quirky decoration.

NB this expression of 'character' is derived from the study below.

History of development

St Helens initially lay within the manor of Eddington and was first recorded as *Sancta Helena* in 1104. To begin with the earliest settlement may have been concentrated nearer the coast where the remains of the 11th century Priory and Church are located. By the 14th century, taxation records suggest that St Helens was a thriving medieval settlement with prosperous landowners and a variety of trades. The local springs were extensively used by mariners for victualling during the 16-18th centuries and there are references to a local fleet from the 14th century.

The village grew confidently around the Green; the layout and form may suggest it was a planned settlement. The principal street, Upper Green Road, was formerly known as St Helens Street. The oldest surviving houses date from the 18th century.

Lower Green Road was populated later in the 19th century. Surviving placenames suggest how the settlement away from the Green consisting mainly of residential properties, was laid out in reference to old field boundaries (e.g. The Diggings and Westfield). The early 19th century housing was serviced by numerous wells, shops, pubs and craftsmen including a blacksmith in the west corner, all of which allowed the settlement to be self-sufficient.

Following the end of the WWII, many of the Green's business premises became residential. Linear development and infilling expanded the village in the late 19th and early 20th century along The Diggings, the north edge of the Green, east of the Smithy and at the north east corner. The Green originally incorporated a pond, and a stream is visible in old photos from the 1900's. More recent development has occurred further down the hill south of the Green (St Michaels Road, which now encroaches upon the historic Green) and to its north (Westfield Road).

Archaeology

Small enclosures, probably prehistoric, survive as cropmarks northwest of the village. It has been suggested that the unlocated Domesday settlement “Etharin” may have been the original name of St Helens. A small priory dedicated to Saint Helena was founded in the late 11th century on the coast. Records suggest that the French may have landed and been engaged at St Helens (near Hill Farm) in 1340 although there is no known archaeological evidence to support this.

Setting

St Helens is located on the mouth of Brading Haven in the rural north east coast of the Island. The village straddles an undulating hill crest some 50m above sea level and overlooks the Duver, a coastal plain one mile to its west and the low lying Brading marshes.

The Green is sited on the interface between drift geology of marine gravels and solid clays, resulting in numerous natural springs. The open space of the Green is delineated by two small roads, Lower Green Road and Upper Green Road, the later of which provides the main access and runs to the church and down to the shore.

Wooded and quiet winding roads from the north edge of the Green connect the settlement to Seaview and eventually to the towns of Ryde and Brading. The character away from the central Green in Eddington Road and on the West Green changes upon leaving the village to one of the pasture fields bounded by hedges and mature trees.

Materials

Brick is the predominant material either in soft sand or reds and the employment of opposing colours to stress the quoins make an impact in this character area. Local coursed stone also adds a warm natural hue to the area. The occasional use of paint and render is in keeping with these neutral tones. Both red and grey plain tiles are common roofing materials, as is slate.

Height, mass & form

Typically, 2 storey properties abut and edge the Green. A particular emphasis on large windows and views across the Green is representative of this character area. The settlement pattern is mainly linear, following the two main roads. This horizontal emphasis is reflected by some of the older long and low properties and blocks of terraces edging the Green. There is no dominant building in terms of height although the former Chapel (now a youth club) has an impact.

Typical details

No style overtly dominates the Green. The most striking feature is a complimentary variety of decoration and occasional contrast. Gable dormers sit happily with deep revealed Georgian sashes, shop front bays and an oriel window. Shop fronts are simple with undecorated fascias and pilasters. Small red roofed porches occur on terraces and these provide a utilitarian character in contrast to wrought iron fences which allow the gardens to spill out onto the pavement. Individual touches of decoration including a delftware style tile string line on the Vine Inn, a shell mosaic and occasional carefree “Victoriana” detailing add to the overall character. The later settlement at Newlands and the Diggings incorporates more overtly decorative elements including dogtooth denticulation and string lines of contrasting colours.

Paving

The pavement winds around the building frontages in Upper Green Road and is of aged tarmac. Tables and chairs spill onto the pavement outside the restaurants and the Inn. In contrast to the general feel of the area, the Green car park is newly surfaced and the black tarmac is very intrusive. Gravel of the unmade tracks on the southern edge of the Green and in the north east corner are a better palette, but these look untidy and unfinished.

Trees and open space

A very open area in general, the greenness is equally provided by the rural setting as by the expanse of the Green. There are very few trees, not even on the Green edge and none of these are of quality. Historically the southern edge of the Green was bordered with trees. Lower Green Road consists of more generous plots with larger gardens, but the smaller street fronting gardens of Upper Green Road are equally important to the character.

Sound and smell

The area is generally quiet although it bustles with local traffic for the school and the shop. The area is brightened by the noise of children and animals exercising, and cricket on the green. During the tourist season, the traffic in the general area increases and the streets become busier with visitors.

Positive Elements

- Open space, dominance of the Green, quietness, calmness
- Gardens spilling out onto the street
- Links to the history of the area from old shop fronts preserved in dwellings, streetnames and the historic buildings themselves
- Rural setting and lack of ribbon development on the outskirts
- Views out to countryside
- Muted palette, variety of decorative elements
- Glass (see through) bus shelter

Negative Elements

- Unmade roads (Guilford Rd, Westfield Road and the western extremity of Lower Green Road)
- Visual clutter caused by telegraph wires and poles
- Unsightly wastepaper bins and unattractive bus shelters
- Bright primary colours of this type of children's play facilities and newness of the black tarmac clash with generally muted palette
- The Car Park on the Green and its embankment which interrupts the views across and the feeling of greenness
- On street car parking and the high level of traffic on Upper Green Rd
- The run down cricket pavilion (soon to be renovated in a more complimentary style)
- The frequency of UPVC replacement windows
- Reconstructed stone used in garden walls, rather than traditional materials
- Gradual erosion of the historic Green by modern development



AREA 2 'THE VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS' CHARACTER STATEMENT

Character

Away from the village core, Eddington Rd and the West Green exude a feeling of history and tradition. The tucked away houses on the winding roads of West Green and Duver Road are richly decorated and have a sense of secrecy and prosperity. The surrounding natural scenery provides both a gentle transition from countryside to village and stunning dramatic views.

NB this expression of 'character' is derived from the study below.

History of Development

The farmhouse at Eddington and its associated barns and walls are some of the oldest structures in St Helens and date to the 17th century. It is probable that what is now known as Eddington Manor was originally a simple two storey coursed rubble farmhouse, with the now converted "Corner Cottage" one of its original barns. There are references to a mill stream as early as the 13th century, but the present building dates from early 19th century.

This Character Area is typified by later 19th century expansion with its focus on the surrounding rural countryside and sea rather than the Green. Alongside the older stone properties are two 19th century mansions (St Helens House built for a sea captain in 1848 and the castellated villa Castle House (c.1830, set in landscaped grounds)). Several attractive well-built Edwardian villas were established in large plots for the new upper middle class including Duver House (built by Stephen Salter). Similar though less opulent houses were built along the edges of the West Green in the early 20th century.

Castle House was originally built in 1842 by a floor cloth manufacturer and later occupied by the Dentist to Queen Victoria. Its garden consisted of a greenhouse, a formal garden and orchard, a pond and individual oak, elm and ornamental trees in open ground in 1866. By 1899, the estate comprised over 16 acres. A sale catalogue in 1902 shows this had been reduced to 11 acres incorporating a kitchen garden, Gardeners cottage, Lodge, lawned terraces, Fernery, Peach House and Stables. The Gardens are listed on the Local Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes, although the estate has since been subdivided with various key buildings in different ownerships.

Setting

These areas are on the very edge of the Green and incorporate the main entry/exit routes for the village. The settlement is linear, following the main roads. Sited on the cusps of the hill, the rural, natural landscape forms an important frame to the village and provides properties in Duver Road and on the West Green with an "edge of countryside" location and dramatic views, particularly those over the tree tops to the harbour and sea.

Materials

Soft yellow brick and traditional local stone dominate (the later particularly amongst the historic buildings in Eddington Rd). The walling material is frequently carried through to the garden walls and pillars. Vernon House uses the same materials (stone and slate) but employs glass in a complimentary modern design. At Eddington Manor and its former barn, the presence of coping and kneelers suggest that it was originally thatched. These older properties have since been re-roofed with plain clay tiles. Slate roofs are equally common in the Area particularly the West Green. A new slate roof has been applied to the Eddington Manor barn.

Height, mass & form

There are a variety of larger properties in larger plots, ranging from the extensive grounds of the Castle House mansion, the three bay Eddington Manor and detached houses along West Green and Duver Road, many of which are three storey with tall decorative chimneys providing an emphasis on vertical height. The more dispersed settlement contrasts with the less substantial dwellings nestled in terraces along the Green.

Typical details

The detailing is typical of the periods; a planked door, stone finials and stressed quoins on Eddington Manor which also exhibits lattice decorative brickwork on the chimneystack; Victorian detailing is prevalent along the yellow brick semi's on the West Green and Eddington Road which incorporate timber sliding sashes, and projecting bay windows under gable roofs with some mock tudor framework. Duver House was designed by Stephen Salter in the Art Nouveau style and exhibits decoration to the leadwork, substantial cornice, chimney stacks, tile roof, window panels and lattice porch.

Paving

No traces of historic surfaces survive in this area, although the unmade surface of the track across the West Green is probably historically accurate. Paving is not provided here on the West Green although elsewhere in the character area a black tarmac cover with kerb stone is standard. The majority of this is in good condition, except for areas in Eddington Road where different colour materials and repairs are noticeable, telegraph poles interrupt the pavement and the double yellow lines are quite invasive to the streetscene.

Trees and open space

Numerous tall trees in various private gardens are dominant and important to the character of the area and this contrasts with the scarcity of mature specimens around the Green. Mature trees in the locally listed garden at Castle House reflect the line of Eddington Road as it turns westwards. Cypress and Yew trees along this road are important in providing focal points. The line of conifers on the corner of Eddington Road does little to enhance the Conservation Area. Hedges top short stone walls and provide a green feel to the Area. The proximity of the National Trust owned St Helens Common (also called Hangarwoods) is very important to the eastern edge of the character area, providing properties in Duver Road with an idyllic sylvan setting and rural views. The rural character of the area is formed in the west by the sudden change to farmland and hedged fields upon leaving the village.

Sound and smell

This character area is much quieter than the Green with less traffic and congestion. The proximity of the woods and the sea on the eastern edge of the character area influences the sounds and smells of this area.

Positive Elements

- Quietness, calmness
- Proximity of woodland, discreet National Trust benches etc
- High level of original detailing surviving
- Visible links to the area's historic past
- The lack of linear development and modern infill along the entry/exit road
- Dominance and decorativeness of key buildings
- Tall, mature trees in Eddington Road
- Winding nature of the road, providing a feeling of discovery and secrecy

Negative Elements

- Variety of paving treatments including red/brown tarmac and light stone setts in Eddington Road
- Surface treatments in Eddington Road including painted brick and cladding
- Dominance of road markings and signs in Duver Road
- Gradual erosion of the historic extent of the West Green by modern development
- Stand of tall Conifers on the western boundary which interrupt the views into the village
- Tall fences blocking views over to historic buildings
- Disrepair of road and intrusive highway works in Duver Road

Background note to the St Helens Conservation Area

The reasons for the boundary being in the location shown on the map are outlined below.

In the case of Area 1 of the St Helens Conservation Area ('The Green') the reasons for the proposed boundary being in the location shown on the map attached are as follows :-

- The northern boundary of the Character Area follows the boundary of West Green Lodge eastwards along the rear of the properties fronting Upper Green Road, on the rear boundaries of the property plots until Westfield Road when the character area boundary turns north along the centre of Westfield Road for some way before turning right along the rear boundary of Keston and 2 Woodbine Villas.
- At the junction of the rear boundary of 2 Woodbine Villas and the western boundary of property plots fronting The Diggings, the boundary turns north up to the centre of Field Lane, to turn east and follow through to the northern boundary of Hillgrove and south the rear of this property to exclude Southfork and Skidaw.
- The character area boundary follows the southern line of the Southfork and Skidaw property plots before turning towards the Green along the rear of number 9-12 Broomlands Close to meet with the northern boundary of number 2 Old Chapel Lane and run east via the rear of the Vine Inn and along the boundaries of the rear properties fronting Upper Green Road until it reaches the centre of Broomlands Close and turns northwards for a short way following the centre line of the Close.
- The character area boundary turns eastwards again to run along the rear of the property plots fronting Upper Green Road from the northwesterly boundary of The Old Cottage where it meets Broomlands Close. The boundary continues along this line in a general north-easterly direction until turning northwards for a short way to encompass the large irregular plot of The Smugglers.
- Turning south for a short distance at the north east corner of The Smugglers, the boundary picks up the south west corner of the outbuilding north of Ricksons and runs east to the north west of the adjacent property, 1 Rickson Villas. Following the northern boundary of the property plot north eastwards towards the Medical Centre, the boundary turns south to exclude the Centre and eastwards to take in Lilac Cottage. It traverses the access to the Medical Centre from the north east corner of the Lilac Cottage plot to pick up the south west corner of Nab Cottage which fronts onto Guildford Road.
- The boundary turns north at this point continuing along the rear of the properties on Guildford Road but stops short of Guildford Camp and turns east along the northern boundary of Karukera to continue across the road before turning north along the front (western) boundary of Guildford.
- The boundary follows the line of this plot and runs south excluding the allotment gardens along the rear of Guildford Road and turns eastwards to follow the northern line of the boundary to the church to meet with the Village Outskirts character area in the centreline of Upper Green Road.
- At this point, the boundary runs westwards along the centre of the road before turning south parallel with the north western corner of Castle House grounds to take in Castle Cottage on Lower Green Road.
- The character area boundary follows the rear boundaries of those plots fronting Lower Green Road in a general south westerly direction, excluding the modern Castle House Bungalow and Mill Lake House from the Conservation Area.
- From the southern corner of Elismore, the boundary turns south a short distance to encompass the rear gardens of Mia Mia and Clairvaux, and doglegs south again to run between Iona and Glenlyn and Mill Lake House. Upon reaching the eastern edge of the Fairholme plot, the boundary turns south east to the end of the rear garden before tuning west to follow the southern boundary of Lichfield to Mill Road.
- The character area boundary doglegs up the centre of Mill Road to a point parallel with the shared wall of the two garages south of Belmont, from where it runs west to the rear boundary of properties fronting Newlands, and then turns southwards to take in Drayton and Harbour Villas. At the south east corner of 2 Harbour Villas, the boundary turns south along the centre line of the road to exclude Doon and Zenah and take in the decorative Victorian terrace from Greenwood.
- The boundary follows the property line curving around Greenwood and returning northwards along the rear of the Newlands properties, doglegging to take into account the slightly longer garden of Primrose.
- The boundary continues towards Lower Green Road until it joins with the rear property boundary of Crosby Cottage, excluding from the Conservation Area the modern and varied properties on both sides of Latimer Road.
- At the rear of Crosby Cottage, the boundary turns westwards for a short distance before following the property plot north to the smaller garden of Weymouth Cottage and cutting along the boundary between it and Ramsar, to cross the top of Latimer Road to meet the north eastern corner of the garage frontage which is removed from the Conservation Area.

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- The boundary turns south on the northwest corner of the garage frontage to take in the adjacent historic stone property Rose Marie and then south again along the east boundary of the Kenwood plot to turn west and cross Daish's Lane to the south east corner of the Elim plot.
- From this point, the character area boundary runs west to Outfield along the straight rear boundary of these properties and into the centre Downs View Road where it turns northwards and follows the roads westerly course round the southern edge of the Green and north up the centreline of Station Road. The Conservation Area does not incorporate those modern developments along Station Road or St Michaels Road.
- The character boundary turns west from the centre of Station Road to join the northern boundary of the Corners plot, excluding it from the character and turning southwards to incorporate Marshalls Farm, a historic stone building. At the rear of Marshalls Farm, the boundary turns west to exclude Joywood and modern properties along St Michaels Road. The boundary follows the central line of the top of St Michaels Road to the West Green and in so doing joins with The Village Outskirts character area (Area 2) before crossing over Upper Green Road to the (front) north eastern corner of West Green House boundary.

In the case of Area 2 of the St Helens Conservation Area ('The Village Outskirts') the reasons for the proposed boundary being in the location shown on the map attached are as follows :-

- The Village Outskirts boundary commences at the rear (south of) Hill View cottage running west to the centre of Upper Green Road as it comes up the hill to the edge of the West Green. The boundary turns westwards to follow the southern boundary of the grounds of Hilltop then doglegs north and east to take in the garden and property called Acorn House. From here it curves southeast along the northern boundary of the plot until meeting the small track crossing the Green in a north east direction which it follows to the edge of West Green road.
- The character area boundary follows the route of West Green road north to encompass the Well House and associated boundary wall and outbuildings to the rear. Traversing round the northern and eastern boundary of this property plot and excluding Sapele, the character area boundary then crosses over Westfield Road to join with the north eastern boundary of Sheepstor Cottage.
- The boundary turns southwards towards the Green and running along the edge of West Green House, picks up and follows the boundary of Area 1, along the north edge of West Green turning further south on Upper Green Road to follow the centre line of St Michaels Road before turning westwards along the northern boundary of the Number 2 St Michaels Road plot.
- From the northwest corner of number 2, the character boundary continues westwards and south west on an irregular line formed by the edge of the Green south of Upper Green Road until it meets the north east corner of Hope Cottage, at which point it turns to the south to run along the eastern edge of Hill View Cottage.