

# **EPSOM TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA**

## **CHARACTER APPRAISAL & MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Description of Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area**

The Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area, as currently defined, is a compact area taking in the historic core of Epsom and most of its oldest buildings. It consists essentially of the High Street, but with short extensions westwards into West Street and South Street and eastwards into Waterloo Road, Ashley Avenue and the Upper High Street.

Traffic using the north–south A24 (Roman Stane Street), which connects Chichester to London, and the east–west A2022 used to pass through the conservation area, but this traffic is now routed to the south of the conservation area, leaving the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area free of all but local traffic.

A high proportion of the buildings lining the streets of the conservation area are listed and the historic character of the conservation area has been maintained despite the construction of some very large buildings, including car parks, covered shopping malls and housing blocks, behind these High Street frontages. These late 20th-century developments have been successfully integrated on the southern side of the High Street, where the Ashley Centre shopping mall is responsible for much of the bustling character of Epsom, but less so on the northern side where some of the more recent buildings lack architectural interest and are very large by comparison with the historic buildings that they overshadow.

The conservation area was designated on 23 February 1971 by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

### **1.2 The implications of conservation area designation**

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

### **1.3 Conservation area character appraisals and management proposals**

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Epsom Town Centre conservation area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in “*Guidance on conservation area appraisals*” (August 2005) and “*Guidance on the management of conservation areas*” (August 2005). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within “*Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*” (PPG15).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the conservation area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of the “Character Appraisal”);
- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement (in the form of the “Management Proposals”).

These documents provide a firm basis on which applications for development within the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area can be assessed. The omission of any feature in either the appraisal or the management proposals does not imply that it is of no interest, and because both will be subject to regular review, it will be possible to amend any future documents accordingly.

#### **1.4 Policy framework**

The Epsom and Ewell Local Development Framework contains a Core Strategy which was submitted in June 2006. This document identifies key issues and objectives for the future development of the Borough up to 2022, and a strategy to achieve them. Detailed Policies will be dealt with in later documents.

In addition, the following development plan policy frameworks have been produced and adopted by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, by Surrey County Council and by the South-East Regional Assembly:

- *The Epsom and Ewell District-Wide Local Plan* dated May 2000: Chapter 6 addresses the built environment. The management of conservation areas is covered by policies BE2, BE3, BE4 and BE5.
- *The Adopted Surrey Structure Plan 2004*: Provides strategic guidance for the built environment for the period to 2016;
- *The South East Plan Core Document March 2006*: Provides an overall framework for development in the south-east. Useful guidance is set out in Chapter 8 *Management of the Historic Environment*, and is detailed in Policy BE7.

#### **1.5 Key Characteristics of the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area**

This character appraisal concludes that the key characteristics of the conservation area are:

- The exceptionally wide High Street, unchanged in shape since the time when Epsom was a village with a pond at its centre (the pond stood west of the present clock tower and was filled in 1850);
- The survival of buildings that reflect Epsom’s late 17th-century development as a spa, including the Assembly Rooms, various taverns and properties associated with Charles II and Nell Gwynne;

- Buildings on both sides of the High Street that retain the character and appearance of a Surrey market town, whilst successfully hiding some very large modern shopping malls, offices, housing blocks, car parks and commercial service areas;
- The high proportion of buildings of architectural interest: of the 106 main buildings in the conservation area:
  - 47 are listed (47 per cent) and a further 8 are on the local list (8 per cent)
  - 11 are early to mid-Victorian buildings of architectural interest (10 per cent)
  - 19 are late-Victorian or Edwardian buildings of architectural interest (19 per cent)
  - 7 are inter-war buildings (7 per cent)
  - 11 are post-war buildings (10 per cent);
- Iconic buildings, such as the Clock Tower and Lester Bowden (aka The Spread Eagle), that help give Epsom its unique identity;
- The wealth of architectural styles, materials and details, which give character, interest and identity to the conservation area – and the sense of surprise and pleasure this creates when emerging from the bland uniformity of the indoor malls;
- Long views into and out of the High Street;
- The exclusion of traffic from the wide paved pedestrian area on the north side of the High Street;
- The contrast between the open character of the High Street and the narrower subsidiary roads; glimpses of greenery and trees down these subsidiary roads form a transition from the densely built urban environment to the more leafy suburbs.

There are five areas of distinct character within the conservation area:

- Area 1: The High Street
- Area 2: South Street
- Area 3: West Street

These areas are described in further detail in Chapter 6: *Character Areas*.

### **1.6 Summary of Issues:**

- While shoppers in Ashley Mall are well protected from the impact of traffic, the High Street suffers from traffic noise and pollution, and from intrusive street signage, traffic lights and metal barriers; this means that, despite the investment in pedestrian areas, the High Street is not an especially attractive or relaxing place to spend time.
- Illegal parking inhibits pedestrians and bus flows around the eastern end of the High Street, where drivers leave their cars in order to use nearby cash machines;
- The junction between the two halves of the High Street and Ashley Avenue suffers especially from traffic noise and pollution.
- The focus of shopping interest in Epsom lies in the covered malls, and this means the High Street often lacks life, especially when the weather is wet or dull. The market helps to draw people into the town centre, but only takes place two

- days a week. The metal stands for the market stalls are, however, left on the pavement permanently and are an eyesore and a potential hazard.
- The prohibition on smoking in the covered shopping malls leads to people smoking in doorways and around the entrances to shops on the southern side of the market place, and on benches in the pedestrian area; the smoke and smell are a hazard and a nuisance and interfere with other people's enjoyment of the conservation area.
  - The public realm in Epsom is uninspiring; the raised flower beds have no plants, there are few trees, few benches and little that would invite parents and children or office and shop workers to seek the High Street out as a place for eating lunchtime sandwiches or socialising.
  - West Street suffers from the use of pavements, front gardens and all available areas of free space for car parking. Litter is also a problem here, and the metal fencing that separates the street from the railway line is ugly and intimidating.
  - The merits of the listed British Legion Club in West Street are disguised by the rendered exterior and the neglect of its immediate surroundings.
  - Cars passing through the town heading west use Ashley Avenue and South Street as a race track, frequently breaking the speed limit in order to beat the pedestrian crossing lights at various points. South Street especially suffers from traffic noise and pollution.
  - The Albion pub at the western end of the High Street is a flamboyant neo-Tudor pub with colourful pargetting, but is at risk from neglect and lack of maintenance. In particular, the lead covering to roof of the projecting timber bay window is torn and damaged (as a result of attempted theft?), leaving this attractive feature of the pub at risk from damp and rot if the roof is not made properly weatherproof.
  - A number of buildings marked on the appraisal map are judged to have a neutral or negative impact on the conservation area and to detract from its character and appearance. Although only 15 per cent of the Conservation Area's buildings are post-war, some of them are very bulky and have a larger visual impact as a result: this is especially true of Nos 102 to 120 High Street (T K Max and Carpet Right).
  - Epsom has a number of alleys and vehicle entrances connected with older property boundaries and coaching inns. Too often what is glimpsed through these opening is the featureless monolithic wall of a large modern building or an untidy mess of waste skips. This is especially true of the area around the northern end of Ashley Avenue, though here too are some good examples of how to vary modern walling by the use of blank arcading and bricks laid in contrasting patterns and colours.
  - Some trees have had their roots covered by tarmac or concrete and are showing clear signs of drought and stress as a result.
  - A comprehensive assessment of the existing boundary was carried out as part of the survey work for this Character Appraisal and major alterations are proposed in the Management Proposals.

## 2 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 2.1 Historical development

The name of Epsom derives from 'Ebba's ham', meaning Ebba's farmstead or settlement, .Ebba being the name of the Saxon founder or landowner. By 933 AD the ownership had passed to the Abbey of Chertsey, where a charter confirmed by King Athelstan refers to it as 'Ebbisham'. In the Domesday Book of 1086, it is called 'Evesham' and has 38 households, grouped around the church of St Martin.

At some stage Chertsey Abbey laid out a new settlement further west, which developed into today's High Street. This had a large egg-shaped pond, dug partly to drain the land on which the surrounding houses were built and partly to provide water for cattle. Surrounding the pond were some 60 long narrow plots, fronted by a single row of farmhouses and cottages, backed by meadows. This settlement was largely agricultural, though brick making, based on local clays, began after the Dissolution.

The year 1618 proved decisive in Epsom's history: during this dry summer it was observed that cattle avoided drinking from a particular spring. The water, when analysed, proved to be rich in magnesium sulphate. When drunk, the water was mildly laxative and diuretic, and when used for bathing had the effect of soothing mild aches and promoting the healing of wounds.

The spring was formalised and Epsom rapidly developed as a spa town in an age that also saw the development of more distant Tunbridge Wells and Bath. Being only 18 miles from the capital, Epsom became a popular weekend resort for Londoners. William Schellinks, a Dutch visitor, recorded (in *The Journal of William Schellinks' Travels in England 1661-1663*) that Epsom was 'a very famous and much visited place'. Samuel Pepys visited in July 1667 with his wife and recorded the Epsom Wells ritual, whereby four pints of water were drunk in quick succession, after which drinkers would head for the bushes to relieve themselves (separate areas were set aside for man and women). The medicinal part of the routine finished, Londoners would head for Epsom's taverns.

Some would stay overnight, and the farmhouses and cottages on either side of today's High Street initially took in lodgers and were later redeveloped as taverns and hotels, giving a further boost to the local brick industry, which, based on the surrounding commons, expanded from 1663 to meet the demand for building materials.

Some of the buildings erected during Epsom's heyday as a spa still survive, and they make an important contribution to the conservation area's historical character. They include the Assembly Room of 1690, the Albion inn, built as John Livingstone's New Wells spa with a sober Georgian frontage, and given its more flamboyant plaster panels and timber framing in 1908, Nos 127-9 High Street, with an original 18th-century bow windowed shop front, and the Spread Eagle inn of 1700, named after the eagle from the Hapsburg coat of arms and then specialising in Rhineland wines.

*[Illustrate with 18th-century print of the High Street and pond, page 10 of Epsom: a history and celebration, by Jeremy Harte]*

By 1730, Epsom's popularity as a spa resort was already being eclipsed by the growing fame of Bath and despite the establishment of a popular racecourse on the nearby

downs. Production of Epsom Salts continued, however, made by boiling mineral waters to produce magnesium sulphate in powder form, which was sold for use as bath salts or to be drunk in water as a purgative.

Because of the speed with which Epsom grew during the 17th to early 19th centuries, many buildings were constructed hastily, of poor materials; around one-third were of weather-boarded timber design (of which some examples survive in South Street). Few survived 19th-century improvements, which saw the present town begin to take shape, with the rebuilding of the medieval church of St Martin's (outside the conservation area) in 1825, and the construction of a sewerage system from 1850, at which point the town pond was filled in and the present clocktower was constructed on the site of the stocks and an earlier Watch House.

The late 19th century saw the development of the north-eastern corner of the High Street, with the construction of the post office (1897), and the premises of the London and County bank and of Wm Dorset, agricultural and garden merchant.

*[Illustrate with 1850 print of the High Street and clocktower, page 32 of Epsom: a history and celebration, by Jeremy Harte]*

The late 20th century has seen further major developments, including the construction of the Ashley Centre, with its covered shopping malls, multi-storey parking and civic theatre, while the Spread Eagle and its former stables is now a shopping precinct. Further change within or on the fringe of the conservation area is almost certain because of the number of buildings currently on the market or awaiting redevelopment, including the former magistrate's court, principally on the corners of the High Street, the Parade and Ashley Avenue.

## **2.2 Archaeology**

Prehistoric and Roman settlers were attracted to the area by the springs that occur where the North Downs chalk meets the impervious London clay, though there is no evidence of pre-medieval archaeology within the conservation area itself, where the only find of any significance is 7th century brooch, probably from a burial, now in the British Museum.

### **3 LOCATION, ACTIVITIES AND SETTING**

#### **3.1 Location and boundaries**

The Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area is located at the foot of the North Downs which rise very gently to the south of the town, most notably to the Downs to the south west, where Epsom racecourse is located, and to the wooded hills of Epsom Common beyond. The town sits on the junction of the north–south A24 (Roman Stane Street), which connects Chichester to London, and the east–west A2022; the conservation area itself is largely free of traffic but the Upper High Street, immediately to the east of the conservation area, bears heavy traffic for much of the day. Epsom railway station (connecting London’s Victoria and Waterloo stations to Guildford, lies immediately to the north of the conservation area; the railway line encloses the conservation area at its western end.

#### **3.2 Uses and activities**

The conservation area is almost entirely commercial in character. The High Street itself is lined with smaller shops, such as newsagents and pharmacies, along with bank and insurance company premises, punctuated at intervals by the entrances to covered shopping malls or the frontages of larger stores, such as Marks & Spencer and TK Max. There is a marked hierarchy to the conservation area, with major chains and national retailers dominating the High Street and the covered malls to the rear, giving way to smaller convenience stores, clothing and CD shops and pubs and restaurants at the margins of the High Street.

South Street is part of the ring road system and has heavy traffic; along with the western end of the High Street, this is also the focus of the town’s night-time economy, being the location of the Playhouse theatre and a concentration of pubs and restaurants.

West Street marks the point at which shops give way to offices, housed in a mix of purpose built block and in converted town houses.

The eastern end of the High Street is dominated by traffic and pedestrian crossings, being the point at which traffic routed round the conservation area re-enters the Upper High Street. Ashley Road, also part of the ring-road system, is an area in transition, with several buildings scheduled for sale and redevelopment just inside or just beyond the current conservation area boundary.

#### **3.3 Topography and landscape setting**

The conservation area lies on flat land at around 50m above sea level. There is very little sense of a surrounding landscape, as tall buildings entirely enclose the conservation area.

#### **3.4 Geology**

Epsom lies on a spring line where the porous Upper Chalk of the North Downs meets the impervious London Clay and it was the exploitation of the clay for bricks and the springs and wells for water (latterly as a spa) that provided the engines for Epsom’s early development and prosperity.

## 4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Key characteristics of the conservation area

The Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area is currently very compact and consists principally of the historic High Street. This broad open space, lined with shops, reflects the origins of Epsom as an agricultural community with farmhouses grouped around a large pond.

Feeding into the High Street to the west and east are narrower roads, some of which date from the Roman occupation of Britain, while others developed as cattle droves and tracks linking Epsom to neighbouring villages. Some of these are sufficiently different in character from the High Street as to deserve being treated as separate character areas; hence the conservation area has been divided into three principal areas:

- Area 1: The High Street
- Area 2: South Street
- Area 3: West Street

These areas, including their key positive and key negative features, are described in detail in Chapter 6 *Character Areas*.

### 4.2 Open spaces, landscape and trees

Epsom is very much a built environment, with very few green spaces or trees.

Such trees as do exist are largely the result of deliberate planting in the High Street, now sadly neglected and in need of enhancement, or of neglect and wild growth along the margins of the railway at the western end of the conservation area.

The only mature trees in the High Street are nevertheless historically significant: the yew trees outside Nos 94 to 98 High Street (giving their name to Yew Tree Cottage, No. 98, now Café Rouge) are the last survivors of the clipped yew archways noted by Celia Fiennes, the author of a memoir recording her travels round Britain in 1702, as common in Epsom at the frontage of many of the town's properties.

The very few mature trees that do exist (horse chestnut trees alongside Nos 7 and 7A Ashley Road) are threatened by the redevelopment of this block and from the fact that their roots have been encased in tarmac; as a result they are showing the visible signs of drought and distress.

The western end of the conservation area is considerably greener, thanks to the trees and shrubs that have survived in former front gardens of town houses now converted to offices, including ash, Scots pine, cedar of Lebanon, ginkgo and holly. Here too is the only significant area of green space currently included in the conservation area: a small section of Mounthill Gardens consisting of a long narrow park, planted with silver birch and horse chestnut trees, threaded by paths that link the town centre to the Rosebank housing estate.

### **4.3 Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas**

Views and vistas are an important part of the character of the Epsom Town Centre conservation area. The view that greets anyone arriving in the conservation area is of the tall mid-19th century clock tower that rises from the centre of the broad High Street; the vista from either end of the High Street is of good historic shop fronts in a variety of historic styles, including Georgian and neo-Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian, though the monolithic bulk of the 1980s buildings on the northern side of the High Street is an intrusion into the small scale nature of many of the buildings in the conservation area.

Looking out from the conservation area, there are glimpses of trees and smaller scale domestic housing along West Street, South Street, The Parade and Ashley Avenue. Railway bridges stop the views at West Street and Waterloo Road. Looking east, the shop parades of the Upper High Street draw the eye out of Epsom towards the suburbs.

Several buildings within the conservation area have been marked on the Townscape Appraisal map as focal buildings by virtue of their position, flamboyance or scale. They are:

- the former Spread Eagle inn on the corner of Upper High Street and Ashley Road;
- the Post Office and its neighbours (Nos 66 to 74) on the north eastern corner of the High Street
- the Assembly Rooms, at the south western corner of the High Street;
- the clock tower in the centre of the High Street
- The Albion pub and its neighbours (Nos 126 to 134) closing the western end of the High Street.

### **4.4 Street pattern and building plots**

There is a clear hierarchy of street scale from the broad long High Street to the narrower subsidiary streets that feed into and out of the High Street at the eastern and western ends. On the whole the scale of the buildings lining these streets also reflects that hierarchy, with more flamboyant three or four storey buildings in the High Street and smaller scale two storey buildings in the secondary streets, though the High Street also has some domestic scale buildings.

A feature of Epsom's development as a spa was the number of hotels, inns and taverns that developed to cater for weekend visitors, with stables to the rear. Very few of these hotels survive, the High Street frontages are still very porous because of the number of covered entrances that once led to stable yards and that now lead into covered malls – for example, at Spread Eagle Walk, and at the various entrances to the Ashley Centre on the southern side of the High Street.

### **4.5 Boundaries**

The densely built up character of Epsom Town Centre means that physical property boundaries are rare: instead, buildings front directly onto the pavement, are built up against each other with no side divisions, and back onto yards whose boundaries are largely defined by the walls of adjacent buildings.

One exception is an isolated stretch of listed historic wall that forms the rear boundary to Nos 20 to 26 South Street, two metres high, and built of clunch and red brick laid in English garden wall bond. This dates from the 1680s and once surrounded a bowling green.

Paled timber fencing is used to demarcate the front gardens of Nos 96 to 98 High Street, now used as an eating area by Café Rouge; similar fencing is an attractive complement to the clapboarded restaurants and pubs at Nos 30 to 34 South Street. By contrast the boundary to the garden of the Marquis of Granby, consisting of a mix of post and chain fencing and evergreen shrubs planted in raised beds formed from railway sleepers, is fussy and out of keeping with the historic character of the pub itself.

Nearby buildings in West Street and South Street have the relics of privet hedging, mostly in a degraded state due to the use of the front gardens for parking. Perhaps the least attractive boundary in the whole conservation area is the grey steel fence with spiked tops separating West Street from the railway. Modern brick, breeze block, concrete post and steel tube barriers and painted rendered walls on the opposite side of the road forming the boundaries of the British Legion building together complete the picture of neglect that characterises this part of the conservation area.

#### **4.6 Public realm**

The 'public realm' covers street paving, lighting, furniture, signage, barriers, planting, benches and litter bins, sculpture and other features of interest within the public areas of the conservation area.

In the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area most of these are the responsibility of Surrey County Council, although the Borough Council also has a role in funding and specifying.

The roads within the conservation area are covered in black tarmac. The pavement surfaces are very varied. Side streets have grey concrete paving slabs used in some parts and red brick in others, with no apparent logic to the choice of one or the other (West Street, for example, has concrete slabs on the southern side, red brick on the northern side).

There is evidence of considerable expenditure on paving (in South Street, the concrete slabs are framed by paviours in contrasting dark grey to create a series of framed panels, for example) especially in the High Street where a generous area on the southern side has been pedestrianised and paved in its entirety with red-brown brick-sized paviours. This paving is itself enhanced by raised beds in a similar brick, seating areas, finger posts, interpretation panels with key facts about Epsom's history, trees and shrubs, but the overall effect is one of clutter and incoherence, not least because of the large number of bollards, railings and metal barriers that litter the High Street, especially at pedestrian crossing points and along the northern edge of the paved pedestrian area, where a low level barrier of raised brick has been created to deter people from crossing the road except at designated crossing points.

The effect, combined with the very large amount of highways signage, is such that the buildings of the conservation area, when viewed from the eastern end of the High Street looking west, are almost hidden by a forest of signs.

The one area of the conservation area that has some natural stone paving – the sandstone flags in front of the Spread Eagle – is similarly populated by an obstacle course of bollards, lamps and signs.

The raised paving in some parts of the conservation area – along the western side of South Street and the northern side of West Street – adds distinction to these streets but the pole and concrete post barriers have suffered from neglect and vandalism and are in need of repair (or replacement).

### Street lighting

There are several different styles of street lights in the conservation area. Those fronting the Spread Eagle are modelled on traditional lantern-shaped gas lamps, while those in the High Street are more modern, with single or double lights suspended from a tall green pole, but their brackets, decorated with curlicues, are traditional in style. Side streets have more functional steel or concrete columns and simple tubular brackets.

Street lighting is the responsibility of Surrey County Council, although the Borough Council may contribute to their costs if improvements are required.

### Public seating

There are three main areas of public seating in the conservation area. That at the eastern end of the High Street (on the corner of The High Street and Ashley Avenue) is set are small courtyard shaded by ornamental cherry trees; that at the western end is set within a circular seating area, surrounded by a brick wall, with cast iron and timber seating and more cherry trees. Both areas suffer from being located on busy traffic junctions. More tranquil are the seats along the northern edge of the paved area near the clock tower. There is further bench-style seating in the alley that separates Nos 100 and 102, on the northern side of the High Street.

### Litter bins

The green rectangular litter bins are shaped like a planter, with sides pierced by a pattern of circular holes to create a lattice pattern, with a curved lid. They are clean, modern, functional and relatively unobtrusive. There are also some older style green plastic litter bins with gold moulding and lettering.

### Other features

Among the positive features of the conservation area are

- The Spread Eagle emblem of the former Spread Eagle inn
- The Insurance sign hanging from a pole and bracket outside No 100 High Street
- The canopy over the pavement fronting No 143 High Street

- The granite horse trough at the eastern end of the High Street pedestrian zone, now planted with colourful annuals
- Wall plaques on No. 137a/139 High Street (recording a visit by Nell Gwynne and Charles II) and on No. 127/129 High Street ('SCC Building of Historic Interest 275').

## 5 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 5.1 Building types

The buildings of the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area consist largely of shops, banks, offices, pubs and entertainment venues and food outlets that were either purpose built or that have been converted from domestic properties.

Among the purpose-built structures are:

- Nos 1 to 9 Waterloo Road: a shop terrace of 1896 to 1901. The terracotta roundels, terracotta frieze and window head details, the central oriel window and the distinctive glazing pattern of the round-headed sash windows make this an unusual and distinctive building which deserves adding to the town's local list of architecturally and historically important buildings.
- Nos 66 to 74 High Street: a row of very late Victorian shops plus bank and post office in eclectic style, built in 1897.
- No. 100 High Street: a 1950s fish and chip shop
- The Marquis of Granby, the Albion and the Spread Eagle public houses
- The Assembly Rooms
- The clocktower and lavatories in the middle of the High Street
- Nos 33 to 35, a 1930s shop terrace, and another shop terrace of Edwardian date on the corner of South Street and the High Street (Nos 157 to 159 High Street)
- Nos 127-9 High Street, with an original 18th-century bow windowed shop front.

Among domestic buildings of some distinction converted to commercial purposes are

- Nos 105 to 113 High Street, now Waterstones, which has a late 19th-century shop front but late 17th century staircase within
- Ashley House in Ashley Road, a very fine Adam-style house of 1769, now offices
- No. 21 West Street, a substantial early 19th century house, now the British Legion club
- Nos 94 to 98 High Street, being an early 18th-century Surrey vernacular farmhouse, with surviving stable and forge to the rear
- Regency, Victorian and Edwardian town houses that are now used as offices in West Street and as restaurants in South Street.

In between these buildings are a number of more recent additions to the High Street designed to create modern retail space and shopping facilities. These include Nos 76 to 80 (Wilkinsons) and Nos 102 to 120 (Carpet Right, TK Max) on the northern side of the High Street and Nos 133 to 135 (Marks & Spencer), 123 to 125 (Boots), No.115 (NatWest) and 99 to 111 (Ashley Centre) on the southern side of the High Street and buildings on both sides of Ashley Road. None of these buildings is of any architectural merit, and they have been marked as neutral on the conservation area appraisal map, meaning that they could be replaced at some future date by better designed buildings.

There is very little residential accommodation in the conservation area. The exceptions are the new housing block at Nos. 37 to 43 South Street and Apex House (Nos 4 to 10 West Street) which has recently been converted to flats: the same future awaits Nos 7 and 7A Ashley Road.

the house at . It was difficult to tell how much of the accommodation above shops in South Street and the High Street is in use, but there were few signs (separate entrances, curtained windows) that this accommodation was in use.

## 5.2 Listed buildings

There are 41 listed properties or structures in the conservation area, representing 50 different properties, or 47 per cent of the 106 buildings in the conservation area. All are listed at grade II apart from Nos 127 to 129 High Street, with its original late 18th-century double bowed shop front, and the Assembly Rooms of c 1692, the earliest known surviving building of this type, and the Adam-style Ashley House, all of which are listed at Grade II\*.

A listed building is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by law and consent is required from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out.

All of the listed buildings in the conservation area are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map, and detailed descriptions are to be found in the listed building schedules, though the descriptions these contain are intended to identify the building, and are not a comprehensive or definitive description.

## 5.3 Locally listed buildings

There are 8 locally listed buildings in the conservation area; these are among some 80 buildings or structures on the borough-wide list that have been drawn up by the Borough Council and Surrey County Council. "Locally Important Buildings" are valued for their contribution to the local scene, or for their local historic associations, but are not considered to be of national importance, so they are not eligible for statutory listing. Policies to control them are included in the Local Plan (Policy BE15).

The buildings so listed are:

- No. 100 High Street, a 1930s fish and chip shop with modest art deco stepped gable and Crittall windows;
- No. 112 High Street, a modest 2-storey rendered building with largely modern features but with an attractive hanging sign in wrought iron suspended from a tall cast iron column with mouldings and a spirelet (possibly not made for this building but brought in from elsewhere since the style is 1930s, but the sign is not present in photographs of the town dating from the mid 1960s);
- The Symonds Well pub, at No. 30 High Street, a late Victorian public house with Edwardian timber frontage;
- Nos 93 to 95 High Street, comprising a group of much altered mid-19th century buildings on the south-eastern corner of the High Street / Ashley Road junction, with projecting moulded window heads supported on stone brackets and side architraves;
- No. 87 High Street, now Michael Everett, Estate Agents, which consist of a much altered timber-framed building with overhanging first floor supported on a timber

arcade, with a recessed shop to the west and carriage entrance alongside to the east.

#### 5.4 Positive buildings

In addition to the Locally Listed buildings, several unlisted buildings have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal map as being buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as having “townscape merit” will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded. Within the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area, these positive buildings are:

- Nos 1 to 9 Waterloo Road: a shop terrace of 1896 to 1901 with terracotta roundels and friezes, central oriel window and distinctively glazed round-headed sash windows;
- Nos 66 and 70 High Street which are unlisted, and are of a slightly later date than the post office (No. 74) and Nos 66 and 68 to either side, but which are built in a similarly distinctive eclectic style, including timber framing and neo-Tudor detailing;
- Nos 33 to 35, a 1930s shop terrace, and another shop terrace of Edwardian date on the corner of South Street and the High Street (Nos 157 to 159 High Street), of which No 33A (The Light Brigade) retains its original shop front.

Government guidance in PPG15 '*Planning and the historic environment*' advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area (paragraph 4.27). The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

#### 5.5 Architectural styles, materials and detailing

Brick and render are the dominant materials of the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area, especially on the High Street where the colours of the local brown brick alternate with the white of rendered facades or of painted brick. Some of the more successful modern buildings have blended with the historic buildings by virtue of their brickwork: the less successful ones present large blank monolithic walls of white render.

A number of buildings within the conservation area have hipped clay tile roofs or pitched roofs with a generous overhang. Windows, where the originals survive, are largely mid-Victorian 4 x 4 or 3x3 sashes, though some buildings also have tripartite sash windows. A distinctive feature of some of the earlier buildings is the decorative parapet, with balusters and urn finials (for example, Nos 126 to 32, Nos 143 to 145 and Nos 119 to 121 High Street).

The town has some classical 18th-century town houses with symmetrical pedimented brick facades and painted stone porticos, including Ashley House and the British Legion Club, both set in their own grounds and fronted by carriage drives, and several smaller scale town houses of similar date fronting directly onto the street, including Nos 17 and

19 West Street and Gwynne House (Nos 9 to 11 West Street), which also has an eaves cornice of paired modillions.

Projecting windows are a distinctive feature of the town, with oriels and canted bay windows on a number of buildings as far apart in date as the early 18th farmhouses at 94 and 96 High Street and at 34 South Street, and the 1930s shop terrace at Nos 33 to 35 South Street.

The town has several timber framed buildings clad in white-painted weatherboard, with sash windows and clay tile roofs. These relatively simple but charming vernacular buildings are found at No. 34 South Street, No. 29 South Street and the side and rear elevations of Nos 143 to 145 High Street.

Several buildings have very distinctive features that make them stand out from the crowd:

- The Spread Eagle with its massive door canopy topped by an emblematic eagle with spread wings;
- Nos 66 to 74 High Street with their half-timbered gables, their oriels and the distinctive glazing patterns of their upper floor windows;
- The tiled projecting 19th-century shop front to No. 2 West Street;
- The Marquis of Granby pub in West Street with its central two-storey projecting brick porch with Dutch-style bell gable and modillioned eaves cornice;
- The Albion pub with its moulded plaster floral panels and its projecting single storey timber frontage with leaded lights and stained glass, and the brick stables and hay lofts to the rear;
- The Clock Tower with its exuberant Byzantine-style brickwork;
- The Assembly Rooms, with their heavily dentilled eaves cornice and oueil-de-bouef gable window;
- No. 143 High Street, with its wrought iron Regency shop canopy with sweeping lead roof supported on openwork iron posts;
- Nos 127-9 High Street, with its original 18th-century bow windowed shop front;
- Nos 119 and 121 High Street, with their applied mock timber framing (dating from the 1950s or 1960s?), a late 17th century property where it is claimed Nell Gwynne might have lodged on a visit to Epsom
- Waterstones (Nos 109 to 113 High Street) with its handsome late 19th-century shop front.

## 6 CHARACTER AREAS

There are three areas of distinct character within the conservation area:

- Area 1: High Street
- Area 2: West Street
- Area 3: South Street.

### 6.1 Area 1: High Street

This character area consist of the High Street and that part of the conservation area that extends a short way into Waterloo Road, leading up to the railway station, and into Ashley Road. This constitutes the primary shopping area at the heart of Epsom, and almost all of the buildings within this character area are shops, pubs or restaurants. The exceptions are Ashley House, which is now used as the offices of the Gladedale Group, a residential house building and property development company, and Nos. 7 and 7A on the opposite side of Ashley Road, buildings that are shortly to be redeveloped as apartments.

#### Key negatives:

- Busy roads; illegal parking within the pedestrian zone;
- Intrusive signage, bollards, metal barriers and highways paraphernalia;
- Empty buildings including the large unnumbered building next to Ashley House, the key corner building at No. 66 High Street and the No. 143 High Street;
- Insensitive design, leading to views of the massive monolithic walls of the Ashley shopping centre;
- Messy alleys and yards containing overflowing skips and rubbish containers;
- Gardens, where they exist, used as car parks (eg Ashley House);
- Trees with roots covered in tarmac suffering from drought;
- Poorly maintained and poorly extended buildings, including the locally listed Nos 93 to 95 High Street;
- Over-scaled and insensitive development (notably Nos 102 to 122 High Street, which dominates the northern side of the High Street, but including recent developments, such as the Argos store on the corner of Ashley Road and the Parade, Nos. 76 to 80 High Street (Wilkinsons), No. 115 High Street (NatWest bank) and the entrance to Ashley Court with its witch's hat roof;
- Listed buildings with uPVC windows (eg No. 92) or sash windows without glazing bars (Nos. 124 and 126 High Street);
- Poor quality shop fronts and signage that detract from the character of listed or positive buildings (for example, Epsom Grill, No. 1 Waterloo Road, Vodafone, No. 68 High Street);
- Occasionally bleak and empty High Street, with neglected flower beds and disassembled frames for the market stalls left permanently on the pavement;
- The Albion pub is at risk because of leaking drainpipes (damp patches and plant growth on the side elevations) and damage to the lead covering to roof of the projecting timber bay window.

## 6.2 Area 2: West Street

This character area lies immediately to the west of the High Street, and marks a transition from the wide open High Street to the narrower edge of town streets, and from almost exclusively large retail buildings to small scale shops, pubs and residential buildings, some of which have been greatly extended to form offices.

### *Key negatives:*

- Large town houses have lost their gardens to car parking (including the listed buildings at Nos. 17 and 19 West Street);
- Even so, there is not enough parking space for those based at the offices, and every piece of vacant ground on the western edge of the conservation area is used as informal car parking, with much consequent clutter;
- This area also suffers from much litter and from the intimidating character of the spiked metal fence separating the road from the railway;
- The listed British Legion Club has been rendered and painted white to the detriment of its architectural details, and the surrounding car park is a bleak wasteland of litter, skips and concrete or breeze-block boundary walls;
- The messy front garden to the Marquis of Granby pub does not do justice to the considerable character of this listed building;
- There is much intrusive signage along the southern side of West Street, including advertising boards for local businesses as well as highways signage;
- Some listed buildings (e.g. Nos. 1, 5 and 7 West Street) have poor quality shopfronts and signage;
- The listed wall at the rear of the garage car park serving No.15 West Street (GP Motor Repairs) is in poor condition and is at risk from ivy growth; it is not clear who is responsible for the wall's maintenance.

## 6.3 Area 3: South Street

Again this is a narrow secondary street feeding into and out of the High Street. This street suffers from heavy traffic, being part of the town's inner ring road system, and speeding is a problem as cars try to beat the pedestrian lights at the junction between South Street, West Street and the High Street. The traffic mars what is otherwise a very attractive street, with a mix of small scale shops and numerous restaurants, made more attractive by the raised pavements on the western side of the street and the number of buildings clad in weatherboard or with weather-boarded side elevations. Adding to the appeal is the fact that some of the buildings are set well back from the pavement, some with a single storey front extension (e.g. Nos. 26 to 30). Finally, South Street has an almost rural aspect at its southern end because of the woodland and grass banks located just beyond the current conservation area boundary, surrounding Saddlers Court.

### *Key negatives:*

- Heavy traffic;
- Poor quality shopfronts and signage (e.g. Nos. 20, 22 and 24 South Street);
- Bent and unattractive concrete and metal tube barrier on the raised pavement in front of No. 34 South Street;

- Waste skips on pavements outside restaurants (e g to the rear of the Playhouse and alongside the Symonds Well pub (No. 30 South Street).

## 7 ISSUES

### 7.1 Summary of Issues

These issues have based on the key *negative* features identified in Chapter 6: *Character Areas*. They are:

#### High Street:

- The focus of shopping interest in Epsom lies in the covered malls, and this means the High Street often lacks life, especially when the weather is wet or dull. The market helps to draw people into the town centre, but only takes place two days a week. The metal stands for the market stalls are, however, left on the pavement permanently and are an eyesore and a potential hazard.

#### Spatial:

- Some inappropriate modern development, out of scale with the historic environment (notably the north side of the High Street).
- Epsom's alleys and carriage entrances often open onto featureless monolithic walls or unattractive yards.

#### Buildings:

- Unsympathetic alterations to listed, locally listed and unlisted buildings (eg the British Legion Club).
- Buildings and structures at risk from physical damage (e g the Albion), lack of maintenance (the listed wall), lack of a tenant (Nos. 66 and 143 High Street).
- Loss of front gardens to car parking.

#### Traffic and car parking:

- Traffic noise and pollution, intrusive street signage, traffic lights and metal barriers all mean that, despite the investment in pedestrian areas, the High Street is not an especially attractive or relaxing place to spend time.
- Illegal parking inhibits pedestrians and bus flows around the eastern end of the High Street, where drivers leave their cars in order to use nearby cash machines;
- The junction between the two halves of the High Street and Ashley Avenue suffers especially from traffic noise and pollution.
- West Street suffers from the use of pavements, front gardens and all available areas of free space for car parking.
- Cars passing through the town heading west use Ashley Avenue and South Street as a race track, frequently breaking the speed limit in order to beat the pedestrian crossing lights at various points. South Street especially suffers from traffic noise and pollution.

#### Public realm:

- The public realm in Epsom is uninspiring; the raised flower beds have no plants, there are few trees, few benches and nothing that would invite parents and

children or office and shop workers to seek the High Street out as a place for eating lunchtime sandwiches or socialising.

- The prohibition on smoking in the covered shopping malls leads to people smoking in doorways and around the entrances to shops on the southern side of the market place, and on benches in the pedestrian area; the smoke and smell are a hazard and a nuisance and interfere with other people's enjoyment of the conservation area.
- Some trees have had their roots covered by tarmac or concrete and are showing clear signs of drought and stress as a result.

#### **Statutory and Local List:**

- The shop terraces at Nos. 1 to 5 Waterloo Road deserves adding to the local list, as do the two rows in South Street at Nos. 33 to 35 and Nos. 157 to 159.
- Consideration should be given to removing local list status from Nos. 93 to 95 High Street, which appear to have suffered considerable alteration to the historic fabric, and giving local listed status to No. 91, which, though also altered, is a substantial early to mid-19th century house on a prominent corner.;
- The un-numbered building between Ashley House and 91 High Street is also a handsome Edwardian building whose monumental front and side elevations should be considered for possible local list protection.

#### **Conservation Area boundary:**

- A comprehensive assessment of the existing boundary was carried out as part of the survey work for this character appraisal and major alterations are proposed in the Management Proposals. If these alterations are approved and adopted, a separate character appraisal will need to be carried out for the new buildings areas brought within the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area boundary.

## **Part 2 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

### **8 INTRODUCTION**

Part 1 of this document, the *Character Appraisal*, has identified the special positive qualities of the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area that make the conservation area unique.

Part 2 of this document, the *Management Proposals*, builds upon the negative features and issues which have also been identified, to provide a series of recommendations for improvement and change, most of which are the responsibility of the Borough Council.

The structure and scope of this document is based on the suggested framework published by English Heritage in *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (2005).

Both the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the Management Proposals will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis, as set out in Chapter 9.

## 9 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Drawing on the range of principal issues identified in Chapter 7, the following are considered to be the most important matters which need to be addressed. Most of these are the responsibility of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Surrey County Council.

It is understood that an Epsom Town Centre Action Plan has been commissioned and will report on ways to maintain Epsom's status as a retail centre, so the following recommendations are additional to that plan and are intended to ensure that the historic and architectural character of the conservation area is enhanced, and that the local community is better able to appreciate the special qualities of Epsom.

### 9.1 Measures to enhance the town centre

- Consider a wider programme of outdoor events to bring the High Street to life and attract interest, including markets, musical performances and a range of seasonal events, such as the revival of the popular Victorian Christmas Evening. Such a programme would be assisted by the (re)appointment of a Town Centre Manager. The existing monthly Farmers' Market, held on a Sunday, could become a more regular event as a supplement to the normal Tuesday and Saturday markets.
- Consider incentives to attract small businesses to the High Street, selling more unusual products, as a way of bringing colour and interest to shops that are currently empty or dominated by estate agents and national retail chains. Pavement cafes and outdoor eating should be encouraged to create a continental piazza atmosphere. The market stall infrastructure and metal frames, currently stored on the pavement edge, should be removed altogether
- Consider more creative landscaping of the High Street's pedestrian areas, with new beds and more seating; enhance this wide area with a child friendly sculpture associated with the town's past. There is currently little in the town centre to remind visitors of Epsom's history as a spa or its worldwide fame as the source of Epsom Salts. A fountain or water-driven mobile could be commissioned as an appropriate form of commemoration.

### 9.2 Control of new development

Throughout the conservation area are examples of over dominant, poorly detailed post-war buildings that do not relate to their historic context and have a detrimental effect on the special character of the conservation area. In future, in order that the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area is protected, the Borough Council will need to be especially vigilant when considering applications for new development.

- Consider replacing those buildings deemed to have a neutral or negative impact with new buildings whose design reflects the history and identity of Epsom; in particular, replacing large bulky buildings on the northern side of the High Street with smaller buildings that reflect historic property boundaries, using the scale and character of the good Edwardian buildings at the eastern end of the High Street as a template for scale and variety. A design code, setting out the palette of

colours and materials to use in designing new buildings would ensure a more harmonious blend and restore the sense of Epsom as a distinctive Surrey town.

- Consider a design code for shop fronts and fascias to ensure higher quality design that enhances the town centres historic buildings.
- Continue the policy of using high-quality traditional materials for the maintenance or refurbishment of buildings in the conservation area, and encourage building owners to replace modern materials (such as the reflective glass in the upper windows of Barclay's Bank, Nos. 82 to 84 High Street) with more traditional forms.

#### 9.2.1 Recommendation:

- *The Borough Council will monitor applications for change within the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area in relation to advice about new development within conservation areas, as set out in Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15) and in policies contained within the Epsom and Ewell District-Wide Local Plan (particularly Chapter 8: Management of the Historic Environment, Policy BE7) dated May 2000; the Adopted Surrey Structure Plan 2004; the South East Plan Core Document March 2000 and the emerging Local Development Framework and Core Strategy 2006-2022.*

### 9.3 Unsympathetic changes to listed buildings

Listed Building Consent is required for all alterations or extensions to a listed building which the Borough Council considers might affect its special architectural or historic interest. This includes changes to internal features such as joinery, staircases and fireplaces, which are all included in the "listing", although they might not be specifically mentioned in the list description. It is a criminal offence to carry out works to a Listed Building and failure to obtain the necessary permissions can result in heavy fines or even a prison sentence. In the past, some of the listed buildings in the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area have been unsympathetically altered and the Borough Council will ensure that future changes are appropriately detailed and executed.

#### 9.3.1 Recommendation:

- *The Borough Council will ensure that, in future, all changes to listed buildings in the conservation area will adhere to policies within the Epsom and Ewell District-Wide Local Plan May 2000; within the Adopted Surrey Structure Plan 2004; within The South East Plan Core Document March 2006 and within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15).*

### 9.4 Boundary review and alterations to the statutory and local lists

The survey work for this document identified that the current boundaries of the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area are in need of substantial revision: some small scale changes are needed to the line of the existing boundaries to ensure that they follow property boundaries as far as is practicable, rather than cutting across buildings. In addition, there are large areas of the current town centre that are excluded from the conservation area that deserve to be included on the grounds of their architectural and historical character. These are shown in Appendix 2.

If the recommendation to extend the conservation area boundaries is accepted, this will double the size of the conservation area and require a new appraisal, during which it is likely that a number of buildings will be identified that might be eligible for either statutory and local listing. Further detailed survey work should therefore be carried out to draw up recommendations for both lists, possibly by the Borough Council in association with the local amenity societies.

#### 9.4.2 Recommendation:

- *That the boundaries of the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area be comprehensively revised to follow the new boundaries set out in Appendix 2.*

#### 9.4.1 Recommendation:

- *The Borough Council should instigate an assessment of the existing historic buildings and structures within the revised conservation area boundary to see if any might be eligible for either statutory or local listing, possibly in association with local amenity societies.*

### 9.5 Trees

It was noted that some of the trees in the conservation area are in poor condition, and appear neglected. It is recommended that the Borough Council monitor the condition of the mature trees of the conservation area and ensure that their roots have adequate access to water.

### 9.6 Buildings at Risk

Several buildings at risk were identified within the conservation area whose management and maintenance gives cause for concern. It is recommended that the Borough Council monitor the condition of these buildings and work with the owners to put repairs and improvements in hand to prevent further deterioration, especially too the Albion pub, the listed wall and to the environment around the British Legion Club.

### 9.7 Traffic management and signage

- Consider measures to calm traffic in Ashley Avenue and South Street.
- Consider a comprehensive audit of signage in the town with the aim of reducing the amount of signage and its prominence.

## **9 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of its formal adoption. It will need to be assessed in the light of the emerging Local Development Framework and government policy generally. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area including a full photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, and how successful this has been;
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

It is possible that this review could be carried out by the local community under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the Borough Council. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement.

**APPENDICES****APPENDIX 1****TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL MAP****Key:**

Blue line	Current conservation area boundary
Red	Listed buildings
Blue	Locally listed buildings
Yellow	Positive buildings
Star	Buildings of townscape merit
No colour	Neutral buildings
Orange	Negative buildings
Green	Trees and green spaces
Arrows	Vistas

## **APPENDIX 2            MAP SHOWING CHARACTER AREAS AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

### **AREA 1: HIGH STREET/UPPER HIGH STREET**

**Amendment no. 1 - Amend the boundaries to the north and south of the existing conservation area in High Street, excluding modern development and adding buildings or plots which clearly refer to the historic buildings facing High Street.**

These changes have been proposed to ensure that the conservation area boundary follows property lines as far as is practicable given that some historic buildings have been incorporated into much larger modern developments, and that in the complex network of alleys and yards on the northern side of the High Street it is not always possible to see precisely where the boundaries lie.

**Amendment no. 2 – Add properties in High Street (east) and Upper High Street, as far as No 57 Upper High Street.**

This would take in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development facing either side of High Street and Upper High Street. Many of these buildings appear to have been built as part of cohesive building phases (particularly Nos 12 to 64 High Street), providing attractive frontages of well detailed commercial buildings. Also included would be the former railway buildings, currently concealed behind the ground floor shops (Nos 47 to 57 Upper High Street) and the former Adult Education Centre, built in 1895.

The rationale for this extension is that:

- This part of the High Street is an important component of views out of the existing conservation area.
- Functionally the two halves of the High Street are linked: together they form the town centre's main shopping area, with a marked hierarchy from the national retail chains that dominate the older western half of the High Street to the smaller, cheaper shops of the eastern half facing Upper High Street.
- Architecturally, the shopping parades and terraces on both sides of the High Street and Upper High Street are handsome and distinguished buildings; the homogeneity of Nos. 12 to 64 High Street is what gives this part of the High Street its distinctive character; the more eclectic mix of building types, styles and dates on the southern side of the Upper High Street mirrors the northern side in terms of building height and the similarity of use, with shops on the ground floor and accommodation above.

A more detailed assessment of the Upper High Street area is included at Appendix 3.

### **AREA 2: WEST STREET**

Here the main change is to take in the Nos. 24 to 28 West Street, extending the boundary across West Street using the railway bridge as the western boundary. Nos. 24 to 28 might once have been a pub, judging by the fanciful architectural detail on the east-facing elevation, which includes a pointed head in a roundel, and a Dutch gable with nailhead decoration. To the front of the block is an attractive raised pavement, while

to the rear is the railway embankment, which here consist of well-laid monolithic blocks of granite.

### **AREA 3: SOUTH STREET**

Here the main change is to draw the boundary along the boundary of No. 34 South Street to exclude the small remnant of Mounthill Gardens that lies within the present boundary. There seemed no obvious reason why this portion of the park was included within the boundary. The choices are to extend the boundary to include the whole of Mounthill Gardens, but to do so would then beg the question why Rosebery Park, on the opposite side of the road should not also be included. Alternatively, the parks can be excluded, and this is the recommended course of action, based on the absence of special architectural or historical significance.

## **APPENDIX 3 HIGH STREET (EAST) AND UPPER HIGH STREET CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

### **1 Definition of the special interest**

This vibrant shopping area lies just outside the main town centre but forms part of it, mainly providing a range of smaller more local shops although there are some nationals, such as Woolworths. Most of the buildings date to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with one notable 1930s parade on the north side (Nos. 12 to 64 High Street), with its long neo-Georgian façade making a major contribution to the character of the area. Two of the buildings are Locally Listed, the former Adult Education Centre in Church Street (No. 1) of 1898 and the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century railway building in Upper High Street, now largely hidden from view by single storey shops. There are several terraces of well detailed Edwardian shops, often defined by tall gables which face the street. Overall, the buildings are of sufficient quality to be largely considered as 'positive', and there has been little modern infilling. Despite the busy traffic, the streets are pleasant spaces for the user due the wide pavements and the continuation of the public realm materials, details and colours from the town centre.

### **2 Historical development**

This part of Epsom Town Centre encompasses part of the historic High Street which continues the easterly line of the road from the historic core of Epsom around the former market place and village pond area. This area developed with small shops and other commercial premises in the 19<sup>th</sup> century although the northern side of the street was entirely rebuilt in the late 1930s or possibly immediately post-WW2. However, most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings survive along the south side of the road, with some mid-20<sup>th</sup> century infilling. The proposed new conservation area boundary also extends up the High Street to the East Street railway bridge where it adjoins the Adelphi Road Conservation Area.

Historic maps show that in 1896 Upper High Street was largely undeveloped along its northern side apart from a station which remains in the proposed conservation area although it is almost hidden. On the south side of the road, paired villas stretch from a Sunday School and an adjoining Public Hall must have created a focal point at the junction with Church Road. The north side of the road appears to have been developed between 1896 and 1913, when the groups of terraced houses with ground floor shops were built, including the row of shops in front of the former railway building. The paired villas on the south side of the road appear to have survived until the 1960s or later, and have now been replaced by housing development of the 1980s and 1990s (not in the proposed conservation area).

### **3 The buildings of the proposed conservation area**

The buildings in the proposed conservation area are mainly in commercial uses with ground floor shops, with either offices, storage or the occasional residential use above. The building styles vary, from two storey individual buildings to groups of late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century development, mainly three storeys high, some of it on a grand scale. The plots are shallow with the buildings sitting tight on the back of the pavement so there are no front gardens or other open spaces.

Nearly all of the buildings along the north side of both roads are considered to make a 'positive' contribution to the special interest of this part of Epsom. The principal group, which is extremely prominent, is the parade of shops which lies along the north side of the High Street from the Waterloo Road / Ashley Avenue junction eastwards (Nos 12 to 64). These are three storeys high and built in a robust 1930s neo-Georgian style with sash windows, pediments, steeply pitched clay tiled roofs and substantial brick stacks. Ground floor shopfronts are modern but all sit below a rendered cornice which contains the various shopfront designs. The parade was clearly conceived as one planned development but may have been built incrementally as there are some variations in detail. It is possible that the group was designed in the mid-1930s but completed after WW2 (they are not shown on the 1934 map but are on the 1955 map). A break in the frontages reflects the location of Derby Square with the recent library building behind it. The use of decorative urns, contrasting red and brown brick, tripartite sash windows, pilasters and gauged brick arches, all refer to the classical 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition, although the development is on a commercial not a domestic scale. McDonalds, no. 36-40, is clearly of the 1930s with its Art Deco parapet set above five Ionic pilasters which stretch from the ground floor to the top of the second floor. This building also has steel windows and acts as a centrepiece of this section of the parade, although it is not located in the middle. The survival of the original copper numbers for each building is notable. Overall, the buildings remain relatively unaltered and Local Listing might be considered appropriate.

Beyond the junction with East Street, the buildings on the north side of the road are more mixed and date mainly to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century – most of the buildings appear to have been completed by 1913. They include no. 10 High Street, a small 1920s infill building with its original neo-Georgian shopfront. Next to it, Nos. 2 to 8 High Street and Nos. 1 to 7 Upper High Street comprise well detailed three storey red brick buildings with an attractive neo-Classical doorcase (sadly no longer in use) on the canted frontage facing the road junction. This building is notable for its high gables, the use of stone for dressings to the first floor windows, and the survival of pilasters with giant corbels which define the shopfronts. It dates to c1900.

No. 9 Upper High Street (the Co-Operative) is a Queen Anne style building dated 1898. On the historic maps it is noted as the Conservative Club. Unfortunately the ground floor has been modernised and all historic interest removed. Nos. 11 to 33 Upper High Street is a cohesive group dating to c1900 with terracotta details to the first floor. Half timbered gables add interest at second floor level. This group has lost many of its original windows and the shopfronts are very varied although the separating pilasters with giant corbels remain. Beyond is a 1930s shop terrace at Nos. 35 to 45 Upper High Street, with its fine brick detailing, and the former railway building (Locally Listed) which is set back from the street and is now fronted by single storey shops (Nos. 47 to 57 Upper High Street).

On the south side, the new boundary includes the terrace of shops which occupies the corner of Upper High Street and Church Street, consisting of Nos. 2 to 14 Upper High Street. This group is three storeys high, each two window wide bay being defined by a gable. Polychromatic brick details to the window heads to nos. 10 to 14 add interest. The shopfronts are largely modern but again, the dividing pilasters and giant corbels remain in most locations. No. 12 retains attractive sign writing to the first floor. Nos. 2 to 8 are slightly different, with string courses and ball finials which mark the party walls. ,

Turning the corner into Church Street, a curved 1950s terrace of seven shops is an elegant solution to the problem, although the detailing is relatively plain. Next door, an infill building is relatively unobtrusive. The most historic and well detailed building in the proposed extension lies beyond, facing Church Street - No. 1 Church Street. Once a school, then an Adult Education Centre, the building is dated 1895 and is Locally Listed. Its ornate two storey front elevation of terracotta and brick in the Dutch Neo-Renaissance style is one of the area's most attractive buildings and it is of concern that it currently appears to be vacant. Beyond No. 3 is modern development which is reflected by some large and rather bulky buildings which are currently nearing completion on the opposite side of Church Street.

The final section of buildings along the south side of High Street from Church Street to Waterloo Road provides a more varied ensemble of mainly late 19<sup>th</sup> century shops and commercial premises. There has been some 20<sup>th</sup> century infilling, and not all of the buildings are therefore considered to be 'positive'. Whilst three storeys are the norm, and red or brown brick the most commonly used material, there is some variety in roof forms with gables or parapets facing the street. Some, such as the Victorian shops at nos. 1 to 5, have been extended at roof level. The revised boundary includes No. 2 High Street, the former Seeboard showrooms, with its restrained Art Deco front elevation, and then extends westwards to take in the southern side of the High Street, extending through Nos. 1 to 73, meeting the existing conservation area boundary at the rear of Spread Eagle Walk. Of note are the well detailed Edwardian shops (Nos. 17 to 31, Nos. 27 to 31, and Nos. 69 to 71), a neo-Georgian early 20<sup>th</sup> century building built as a bank (Nos. 61 to 63) and a Modernist shop (No.73), interspersed with recently built shops (Nos. 5 to 15, Nos. 59 to 69), all being three storeys tall with shops below and accommodation above.

This run of shops is interrupted by alleys, one of which (between Nos. 29 and 31) leads to two short terraces of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century brick houses, which are also included in the conservation area, as is the historic street lamp that lights the pathway.

#### **4 Public realm**

This part of Epsom continues the details and materials associated with the town centre further along the High Street. The wide pavements are generally covered in concrete paviors or slabs, with some granite kerbing. The 1930s-style railings which separate the double lanes of traffic along High Street are in keeping with the adjoining buildings and in the summer are decorated with hanging baskets. Street lighting is provided by tall, paired lamp standards with decorative metal brackets and large, reproduction 19<sup>th</sup> century lanterns. Square wooden planters contain well maintained flowers. Simple plastic litter bins are unobtrusive. All are painted or self coloured 'Epsom' green, which tones with the green of the railway bridge over East Street.

#### **5 Issues**

The following are considered to be the most important 'Issues' facing this part of Epsom:

- Effect of out of scale surrounding modern development, particularly along Church Street;
- The vacant condition of no. 1 Church Street, a Locally Listed building 'at risk';

- The former railway building is also Locally Listed and although in use, its long term future may be under threat;
- Nos. 22 to 64 High Street should be added to the Local List;
- Some poor quality shopfronts and signage, such as the Co-Operative Store;
- Fast moving, busy traffic although pedestrian crossings are provided;
- The Council should try and resist the further loss of original timber windows and their replacement with uPVC on the commercial buildings – planning permission should be required and should be refused;
- Prominent satellite dishes on some of the buildings.

## **APPENDIX 4            FURTHER READING AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### **Further reading:**

*Epsom: a history and celebration*, Jeremy Harte, Francis Frith Collection, 2005

*Epsom Past*, Charles Abdy, Philimore, 2001

Epsom, Martin Andrew, Black Horse Books, 2001

### **For further information regarding all planning and conservation related matters:**

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council  
Town Hall  
The Parade  
Epsom KT18 5BY  
Surrey

Tel: 01372 732000

Website: [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

### **For further information regarding local history:**

Jeremy Harte  
Bourne Hall Local History Museum  
Spring Street  
Ewell KT17 1UF  
Surrey

Tel: 020 8394 1734

Email: [JHarte@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:JHarte@epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

### **For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:**

English Heritage South-East Region  
Eastgate Court  
195-205 High Street  
Guildford GU1 3EH  
Surrey

General enquiries tel: 01483 252000

Website: [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

### **For technical guidance:**

#### **The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)**

37 Spital Square  
London E1 6DY

Tel: 020 7377 1644  
Website: [www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)

**The Georgian Group**  
6 Fitzroy Square  
London W1T 5DX

Tel: 087 1750 2936  
Website: [www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)

**The Victorian Society**  
1 Priory Gardens  
Bedford Park  
London W4 1TT  
Tel: 020 8994 1019  
Website: [www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)

**The Twentieth Century Society**  
70 Cowcross Street  
London EC1M 6EJ

Tel: 020 7250 3857  
Website: [www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)