



**Somers Road  
Conservation Area  
Appraisal**

**Draft June 2014**

# **Somers Road Conservation Area Character Appraisal & Management Proposals**

June 2014

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## **Introduction**

### **What is a Conservation Area?**

Conservation areas were first designated as a result of the Civic Amenities Act 1967. They are defined in the legislation as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: Section 69(1)(a)). The Borough contains some 20 Conservation Areas at present.

Designation gives the local planning authority greater control over extensions and demolition, the display of advertisements and works to trees. Special consideration has to be given to proposals for development or redevelopment within them, to ensure that the character or appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced. In most cases, however, conservation areas are living and working communities with both residential and commercial uses. The purpose of designation is not to stifle or prevent change and evolution, but to control it in such a way as to maintain and enhance character and local distinctiveness.

### **Purpose of Appraisal**

Local authorities are advised by English Heritage to carry out appraisals that should identify the key features of the area and how they combine to give a place its particular character. By establishing what makes a place special and distinct, the local planning authority can more effectively ensure that change through development, or through other changes resulting from its own actions or those of other statutory authorities, do not undermine this character and can in fact enhance it.

As well as identifying the positive features of a place, an appraisal can also highlight areas where there is scope for improvement. This could be in terms of new development or redevelopment, or more small-scale improvements to, for example, the appearance of street furniture or signage. The results of appraisals can also be used to help prioritise available resources for environmental enhancement. This appraisal also sets out the Enhancement Scheme for the area, which makes reference to potential areas for enhancement, as well as providing guidance for use in the development control process.

The Planning (Listed Buildings And Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets in sections 71 a duty to formulate policies for preservation and enhancement. The 2005 Borough Local Plan Policy Pc 14 reinforces this objective. English Heritage guidance states that policies are needed that clearly identify what it is about the character or appearance of an area it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and the means to achieve this. A clear assessment and definition of an area's special interest is needed.

The structure of this Conservation Area Appraisal is based on the English Heritage documents "Conservation Area Practice" and "Conservation Area Character Appraisals" and the RTPI's 'The Character of Conservation Areas' document. It follows the urban morphology approach of cascade from large to small elements.

## **Main Character and Basic structure Topography and Geology**

### **Main Character & Basic structure**

Somers Road is located on the gault clay and is relatively flat due to the east west orientation of the road, though the land to the north rises to the ridge of the chalk North Downs. To the south is the greensand and Reigate town centre. The special interest of a conservation area is derived from the interrelationship between the particular townscape and landscape features and it is this character, which the local planning authority will seek to preserve or enhance through statutory and discretionary controls. The special interest of the Somers Road conservation area is derived from the interrelationship between the Victorian houses and their gardens. The predominant character of the houses is Victorian and there is a need to ensure the cohesiveness of the buildings is not eroded by insensitive development. The Conservation Area was largely built in the 1860's and 1870's.

### **Topography & Geology**

Somers Road is situated on the gault clay between the North Downs and the greensand of Reigate town. The Reigate Stone mines between the road and the North Downs provided the predominant building material for the area.

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Somers Road is relatively flat following the contours of the Gault Clay boundary  
Geological Map



## **Land Use & Activity**

The majority of the Conservation Area is residential, with larger houses divided into flats. There is also the school, some offices and the church. The area is close to the offices of London Road and the Train Station, with the town centre a short walk away.

## **2) History and evolution**

The Somers Road area was developed over a relatively short period. In 1847 the railway arrived in Reigate. Samuel Relf, a local businessman started building properties up Reigate Hill in the 1850's in stucco and slate . In 1860 St Marks Church was built to the designs of the architects Field and Hilton and the houses in Birkheads Road also appear to be by these architects in a gothic style of Reigate Stone. Around 1870 Somers Road was laid out and most of the houses built in the 1870's and 1880's. The early houses are of Reigate Stone, whilst the later houses are of brick and tile hanging in the old English style.

### **KEY DATES**

1847 Arrival of Railway

1850's Samuel Relf develops Reigate Hill

1860 St Marks by Field & Hilton

1870 Somers laid out

1870's & 1880's houses built in Somers Road



## 2) History Illustrations

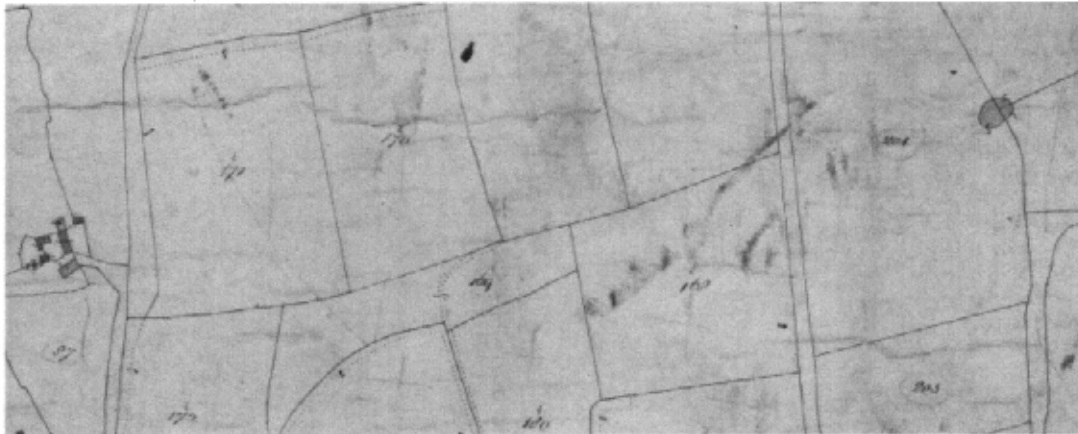


**St Marks Church 1861**



**Somers Road circa 1900**

## Somers Road History in Maps

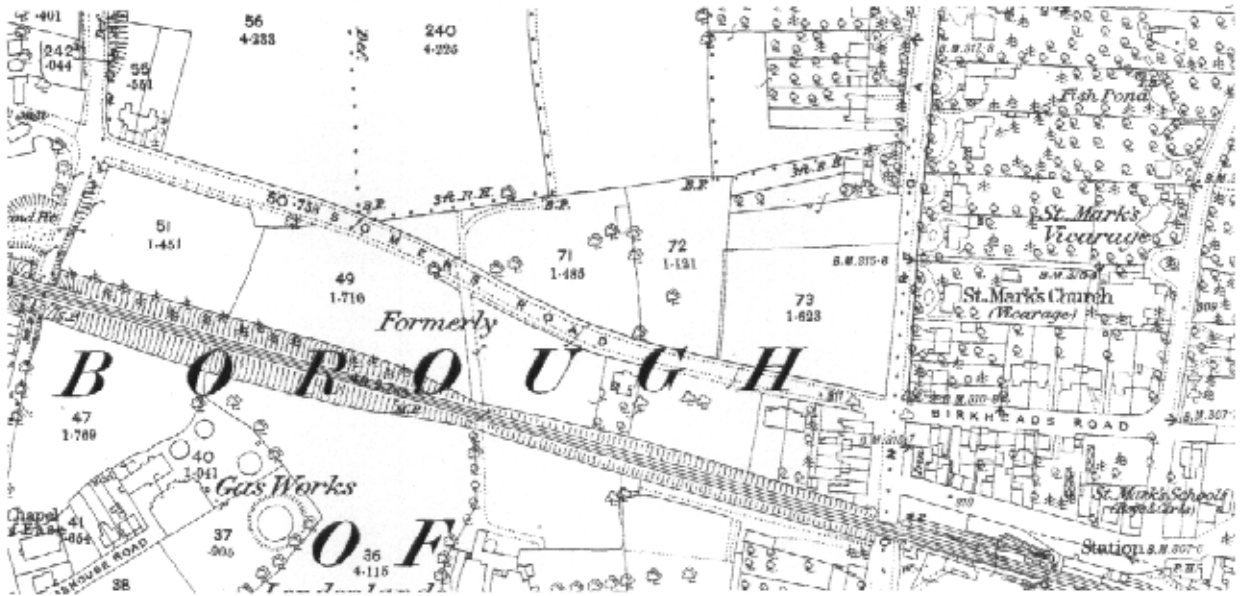


1845 Tithe Map

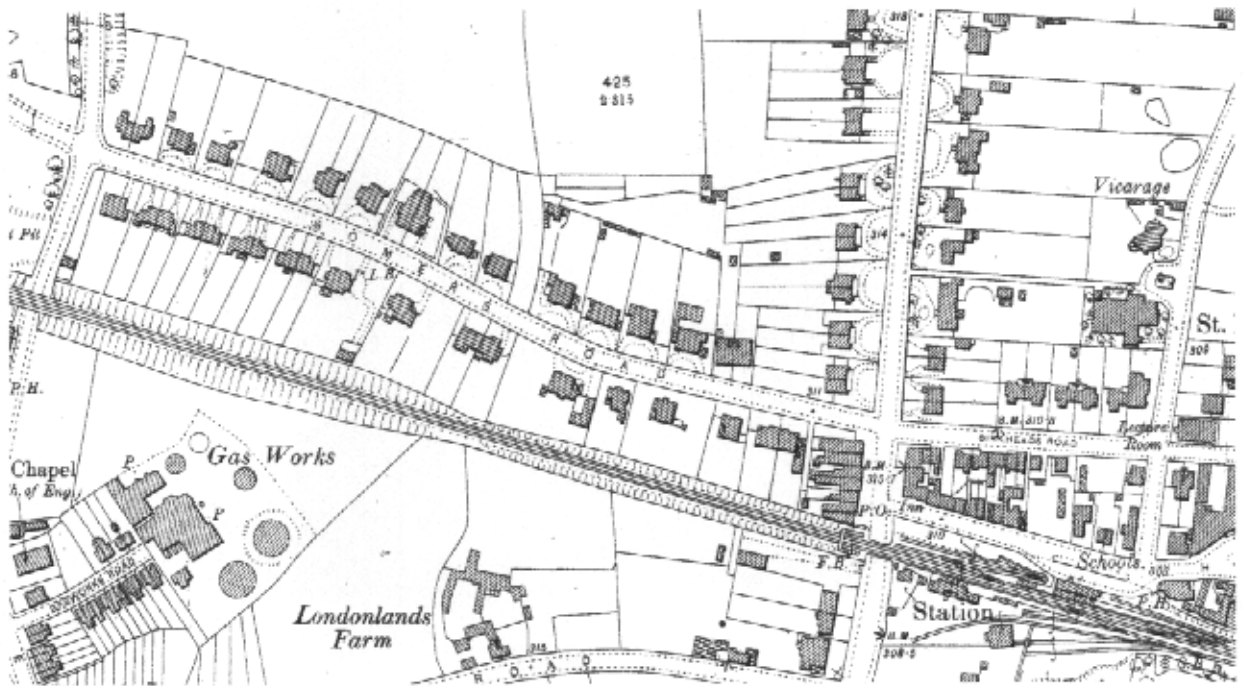


1860 Tithe Map

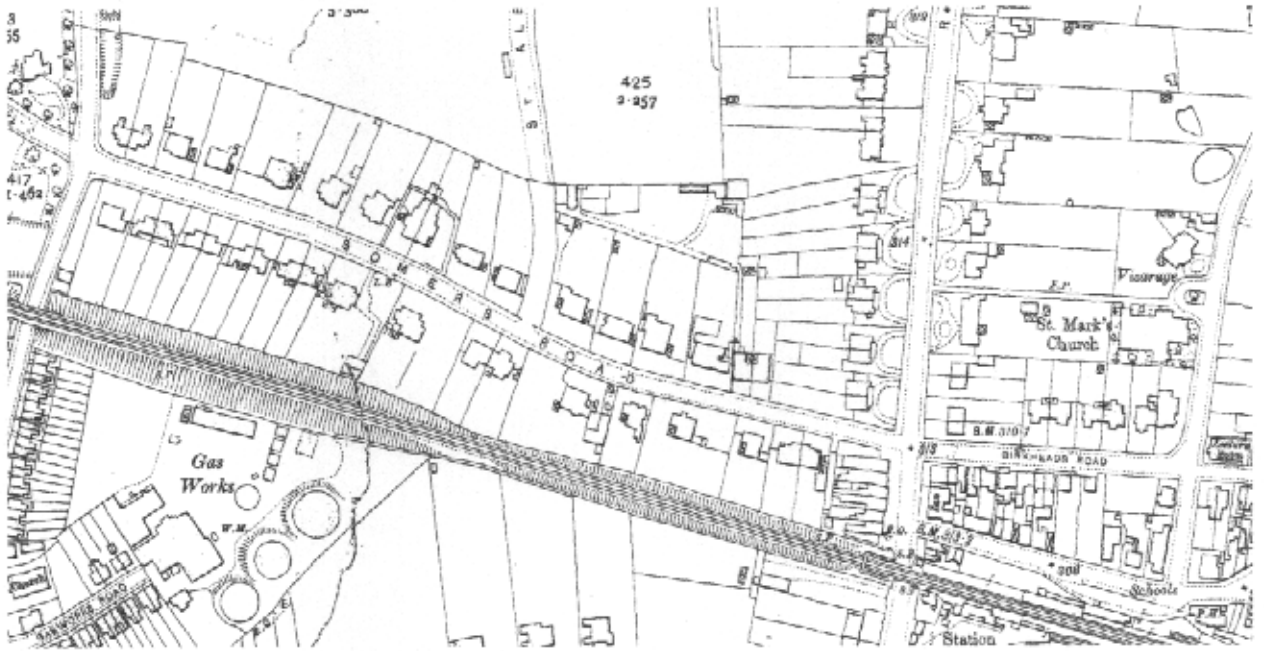
# Somers Road Conservation Area



**Surveyed 1870**



**Revised 1895**



**Revised 1912**

### **3) Spatial Structure & Pattern: Identity Areas, Rhythm: plot size, unit size**

An identity area is an area which has an identifiable character. Conservation Areas can have composite characters as well as cohesive character. In both cases it is usually possible to split such areas into smaller identity or character areas. A number of sub-identity areas can be identified in the case of Somers Road.

The principal identity area of Somers Road is that it is a group of substantial Victorian houses in spacious gardens. This can be split into several smaller identity areas; Somers Road itself as a group of substantial Victorian houses with similar form, footprint and grounds, dividing into a sub-group of tile-hung houses between St Albans Road and Pilgrim's Way, the earlier stucco villas of Reigate Hill and the Wray Park Estate, the Reigate stone church and house in Alma and Birkheads Road.

#### **Prominent buildings**

A key landmark is St Mark's Church of 1860, though the loss of its spire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century diminishes this.

#### **Views in & Out**

A number of views can be identified which are memorable and help define the character of the area. The key views are along Somers Road looking north and the views of the church from St Albans Road.

#### **Rhythm: plot size, unit size**

The area has a domestic suburban character. The houses generally have substantial grounds, and building lines generally set back, with wide plots.

## Townscape analysis

The following is a perambulation around the Conservation Area giving a brief description of the buildings and layout, by identity area.

### Alma Road & Birkheads Road

Scale, height, rhythm, form, layout & material summary ;  
Gothic church and houses, with steep roof pitches. Houses well set back from Birkheads Road and semi detached. Materials are Reigate stone with Bath Stone dressings and handmade clay plain tiles. Mullion and transom windows.



### Reigate Hill

Scale, height, rhythm, form, layout & material summary ;  
Stucco houses with slate roofs, well set back from road, with sash windows



### Somers Road North side east to 16 Somers Road

Scale, height, rhythm, form, layout & material summary ;  
Reigate Stone houses with Bath stone or brick dressings, steep handmade clay tile roofs and mix of mullion and transom and sash windows/ Houses well set back from road with lofty floor to ceiling heights.



**Somers Road North Side West**

Scale, height, rhythm, form, layout & material summary ;  
1880's Old English style tile hung houses with mullion and transom windows set back from road in spacious grounds with gap and space to sides



**Somers Road South Side**

Scale, height, rhythm, form, layout & material summary ;  
Reigate Stone houses with Bath stone or brick dressings, steep handmade clay tile roofs and mix of mullion and transom and sash windows/ Houses well set back from road with lofty floor to ceiling heights



## **Materials, Architectural Conventions & detail**

### **Architectural Conventions**

The area is typified by three types of building;

#### Mid Victorian Stucco

Stucco houses with slate roofs, well set back from road, with sash windows. These are located on Reigate Hill.

#### Mid Victorian Gothic Reigate Stone.

Reigate Stone houses with Bath stone or brick dressings, steep handmade clay tile roofs and mix of mullion and transom and sash windows/ Houses well set back from road with lofty floor to ceiling heights. These are located in Somers Road and Birkheads Road

#### Late Victorian Tile Hung

1880's Old English style tile hung houses with mullion and transom windows set back from road in spacious grounds with gap and space to sides. These are on the western end of Somers Road on the north side.

### **Fenestration**

Fenestration is determined by age. The stucco houses of the first phase are sash windows in the classical tradition. The gothic Reigate Stone houses that follow are a mix of mullion and transom, sash and casement. The later tile hung houses are mullion and transom. Joinery is of white painted timber. There are wrought iron casements in the tile hung houses.

### **Materials & Detail**

The area are typified by groups of Reigate Stone, Tile Hung and Stucco buildings. The Reigate Stone buildings have Bath Stone or red brick dressings. Handmade clay plain tiles are typical of the area. Natural slate is found on the stucco houses. Joinery is of white painted timber. There are wrought iron casements in the tile hung houses.



**Illustrations of Materials, Architectural Conventions & detail**



Mid Victorian Gothic Reigate Stonewith brick or bath stone dressings and handmade clay plain tile roofs



Mid Victorian Stucco with sash windows and slate roofs



Late Victorian Tile Hung Old English style properties with handmade clay plain tile roofs and mullin and transom windows

Typical Materials



Reigate Stone Bath Stone dressings



Tile Hung



Handmade Clay Plain Tile



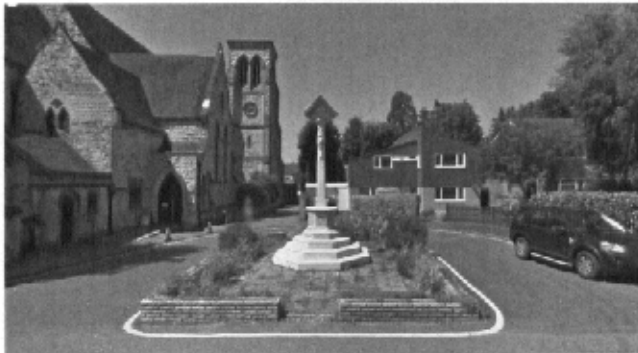
Stucco with slate

## 5) Highway issues, Street furniture and Footscape

Somers Road has high levels of parking. The negative effects of this in terms of impact on the tranquility of the area are noticeable. Street furniture is not prominent and largely neutral in its impact. The area is relatively free of intrusive traffic signs.

The Borough Council will seek to influence the design of highway works affecting the conservation area. It will also seek to encourage the implementation of other improvements identified in this appraisal.

Gravel is a traditional finish used in the area, and reflects the character of gravel drives in the area.



The space around the War Memorial in Alma Road offers opportunity for improvement



Wear to the grass verge in St Albans Road has been recently addressed by the use of small bollards



Parking on pavements is noticeable in Somers Road.

## 6) Greenery: Trees, Shrubs

The area is characterised by a number of native tree species local to the area including Oak and Yew. Scots Pine, a native tree is also present. Pollarded Limes are common as a single avenue of trees between neighbouring boundaries. Ornamental trees such as Cedar of Lebanon and Corsican Pine are evident as well as small ornamentals. Some boundaries have a mix of Victorian shrubbery.

### Boundary Treatment/ Enclosure: Walls & Hedges

In terms of boundary treatment the predominant character is privet, mix shrubbery, holly and hawthorn. On the north side of Somers Road dwarf walls of brick with thin low brick piers are found on the west end. On the south side of the road, hedge is predominant with some low brick walls and piers are largely absent or around the height of the walls. At the east end of the road, some Reigate Stone walls are found.

Care must be taken to carefully consider any future tree planting in terms of both character and vistas.

#### Trees



Pine



Yew



Mixed shrubbery boundary



Cedar of Lebanon



Oak

Boundaries



Privet hedge



A Reigate Stone wall



The south side of sSomers Road is characterised by hedges



Low brick wall south side of Somers Road in mid part



The tile hung houses on the north side have low brick walls with medium size brick piers

## **7) Development Management & Statutory designations: Listed Buildings & Article 4 Directions**

### **Controls operating in the Conservation Area**

#### **Designation of the Conservation Area**

The original Conservation Area was designated by the Borough Council on the 13 December 1990.

#### **What is the Effect of Designation?**

The principal differences from the normal form of planning control include:

- a) Control over demolition. Conservation Area Consent is required for demolition
- b) Greater control over works which would require planning permission. As many properties in the Area are not dwellinghouses and therefore do not have permitted development rights, external alterations such as changing windows or roofing materials would be controlled. 'Permitted development' rights for dwellinghouses are also more controlled.
- c) Wider protection of trees. Six weeks notification to the Council will be necessary before the intended lopping, uprooting or felling of trees. (Trees less than 7.5 centimetres in diameter, at a height of 1.5 metres above the ground are exempt). (Works to trees the subject of a Tree Preservation Order will continue to need formal consent.)

When considering proposals requiring Planning Permission or Conservation Area Consent regard will be had to whether they 'preserve' or 'enhance' the special character of the area. It should be remembered, though, that designation is not intended to stop change but to better manage new development so that it does not harm the area and even brings improvements.

#### **Article 4 (2) Directions**

Article 4(2) Directions control the following changes to dwellinghouses in the Conservation Area (It would be intended to serve an article 4(2) Direction on the area). All alterations or extensions facing an open space or highway will require planning permission, unless they are like for like repairs. Changes requiring planning permission would include, for instance, changing from timber to uPVC or Aluminium windows/doors or changing the style or design of window/door, changing from natural slate or handmade tiles to machine made, concrete or synthetic slates or tiles, or the insertion of rooflights or solar panels.

All Commercial Buildings and Flats that are in Conservation Areas or Locally Listed, already require planning permission for these material changes, as they do not have permitted development rights.

#### **Listing**

There are a number of statutory and locally listed buildings in the area, which are set out in the appendices. Where planning permission is required for a locally listed building Policy Pc10 of the Local Plan and PPS5 would be a material consideration. There are also some local listed historic garden designations.



## **Development Management & Principles of Control**

The area is largely one where the individual buildings mostly contribute to the character of the area and are desirable to retain. The general presumption therefore is in favour of retention, the only exception being some of the post war redevelopment.

The overall objective in terms of elevational treatment will be the encouragement of the reinstatement of original materials and detailing. This includes original window detail, plain clay tiles and well detailed boundary treatments and discouraging their replacement with inappropriate details such as aluminium and upvc windows of various forms, concrete tiles and alien boundary materials such as larchlap fencing.

## **8) Enhancement & Improvements**

*No extra funding is proposed for the enhancement of the Conservation Area but a number of the objectives can be achieved in part by the Development Control process.*

The potential for enhancement appears to be Townscape elevational treatment.

The need to encourage retention and reinstatement of traditional detailing is important. Somers Road has suffered less than many of the Conservation Areas in the Borough, but the loss of traditional painted timber windows in some prominent locations is regrettable. There is no retrospective control so any improvements must be by persuasion or negotiation.

### **Resource Implications**

Enhancement of the Conservation Area can be achieved in part by the Development Control process and encouragement to have respect for traditional forms, materials and detailing.

## **Review of boundaries**

The boundary of the area was subject of review at the time of production of the appraisal and no revisions are proposed to the boundary.

## **Other Statutory Authorities**

Statutory authorities are not generally subject to control by the local planning authority, although the provision and maintenance of their services can have an impact on the conservation area. A copy of this Appraisal will be forwarded to the relevant service providers to highlight the need for sensitive treatment within the conservation area.

## **Responsibilities of Owners and Occupiers**

This Appraisal has identified the buildings, open spaces and individual features that define the character of the conservation area. The siting and design of new development should be such that the appearance and character of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced, and this Appraisal will be used to assess whether development proposals achieve this aim.

It is hoped that residents and other occupiers will, through this Appraisal, be made aware of the contribution that they can make to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. This can be achieved through the retention of features such as chimneys and chimney pots, boundary walls and traditional windows, the use of appropriate materials in new build and repairs, and the general maintenance of properties and land. Alien materials such upvc windows and concrete tiles should not be used.

## **Statement of Consultation**

The draft version of this Appraisal will be issued for public consultation. Letters will be sent to all residential and business premises in the conservation area. These will outline the purpose of conservation area designation and invite comments on the draft appraisal.

Copies of the Appraisal will be sent to English Heritage, Surrey County Council and Local Societies. Their comments are invited. A press release will be issued and the Appraisal was publicised in the local press . A public meeting will be held to consider the study. The responses made to the draft Appraisal will be considered and reported to the Council's Planning Committee