

# **DARBY GREEN CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

**Approved Document**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Darby Green Conservation Area

Darby Green is almost the most northerly of Hart's conservation areas, close to the Berkshire border and located on undulating former heathland. It forms a group of conservation areas (Yateley Green, Darby Green and Cricket Hill) which lie within one mile of each other in the parish of Yateley and are loosely connected by the Reading Road. Much of the Darby Green Conservation Area is also registered common land (Yateley Common - designation number CL24), the common now being woody heathland with some areas of open green space. This very large track of land stretches away to the south of the Conservation Area as far as the A30. Otherwise, to the east and north-east, the Conservation Area is surrounded by Post-war housing development with more open spaces, associated with a large comprehensive school, to the west. Today, because of this urban expansion, Darby Green forms part of the larger conurbation of the Blackwater Valley settlements, which connects Camberley in Surrey through to the parish of Blackwater & Hawley. Historically Darby Green would have been a more isolated agricultural hamlet set in heathland, within the ancient parish of Yateley.

Although the busy Reading Road runs through it, the Conservation Area still retains a rural character, as about 90% of the area is woodland or open green space. To the north, around the junction of Darby Green Road and Reading Road, there are three listed buildings, two of which were once farmhouses. The earliest of these is Pond Farm, a timber-framed building with a later brick casing, which dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Clarks Farm, of a similar date, lies about 300 yards to the west. These listed buildings are distinctive for their use of bright red brickwork and orangey-red handmade clay tiles. Yew Tree Cottage is locally listed and is located between Clarks Farm and Pond Farm – this timber-framed 'black and white' cottage retains an early, probably 15<sup>th</sup> century core, with substantial 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century additions.

The wooded area between Darby Green Road and Reading Road contains a large playing field, used mainly at weekends, and a modern sports pavilion (the Darby Green Centre). Footpaths cross the playing field connecting to Reading Road and then continuing southwards into Yateley Common proper, where there is very limited and somewhat scattered housing development along a series of narrow unmade tracks which weave through the woodland. The principal track is now called Stroud Lane, a modern definition to please the postal delivery service. This part of the Conservation Area is quite isolated and views into and out of it are severely constrained by the thick woodland. Away from the inhabited area successive heathland restoration projects have cleared trees and undergrowth to provide suitable habitats for ground-nesting birds such as night jays, Dartford warblers and woodlarks. Most of Yateley Common forms part of a Special Protection Area (SPA), designed to protect the habitats of these birds, and it is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the boundary of which includes a small part of the Conservation Area to the east of part of Stroud Lane. In total Yateley Common covers about 500 hectares, and has six different owners. The area included in the Conservation Area, and extending south to the A30, is owned and managed by Hampshire County Council. Another large area of common to the south of the A30 is owned by the MOD and managed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust.

The Darby Green Conservation Area was designated by Hart District Council in March 1988. A Conservation Area Proposals Statement for the Darby Green Conservation Area was published in 2002, and this appraisal draws on, and supersedes, this earlier document.

## 1.2 Summary of key characteristics and recommendations

This **Character Appraisal** concludes that the key *positive* characteristics of the Darby Green Conservation Area are:

- Historic rural settlement located between Yateley village and Blackwater in north Hampshire
- About 90% of the Conservation Area is green – either woodland, open green spaces, or grass
- Much of this green space is part of Yateley Common, a large registered common which stretches southwards to the A30 and Blackbushe Airport
- Most of the common is a Special Protection Area (SPA), designated under European Directives to protect the habitats of three specific species of ground-nesting birds, as well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – this also provides protection to a variety of other wildlife interests
- In Yateley Common, evidence for ancient fields boundaries is provided by ditches and banks - within the Conservation Area, this is most notably between Cuckoo Cottage and the school playing fields
- The boundary for these areas of special protection immediately abuts the south-eastern boundary of the Conservation Area, and in one place (along the southern section of Stroud Lane), incorporates land within the Conservation Area
- The northern and central part of the Conservation Area is somewhat dominated by the busy Reading Road which curves through the Conservation Area in a north-west to south-easterly direction
- A modern roundabout marks the junction of Reading Road and Darby Green Road, and it is close to here that three listed buildings and one locally listed building are located
- Two of these listed buildings were once farm houses (Clarks Farm and Pond Farm) and these both date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Pond Cottage is the third listed building, which is 17<sup>th</sup> century, and Yew Tree Cottage, a locally listed building, has origins to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with more evident timber-framing
- The use of bright red brick and orange handmade clay tiles is predominant on many of the historic buildings
- Between Darby Green Road and Reading Road is a small section of Yateley Common (managed by Yateley Town Council) which is now a large area of woodland and playing fields used by local football clubs
- The only buildings are a modern sports pavilion (with a large adjoining car park) and a semi-detached cottage dating to 1910
- South of Reading Road there are about 18 properties, mainly grouped along the main road but also scattered along the tracks across the common (including Stroud Lane) which lead off Reading Road
- These houses are very dispersed and often hidden by the woodland which surrounds them – they are mainly 20<sup>th</sup> century

- There are two locally listed buildings - Darby Green House, a substantial red brick Arts and Crafts house of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and The Old Cottage, a timber-framed cottage with exposed timber-framing which is a good example of a modest 16<sup>th</sup> century cottage which must have once been more ubiquitous in the locality

The **Management Proposals** make the following Recommendations (summary):

- *Protect Yateley Common and the other green spaces*
- *Improve pedestrian safety in the Conservation Area and strictly enforce any existing parking restrictions*
- *Ensure that all applications for change within, or on the edges of the Conservation Area, preserve or enhance its rural character*
- *Continue to protect all heritage assets, including the Listed and Locally Listed buildings, and their settings*
- *Do not allow uses within or on the edges of the Conservation Area which will not enhance the rural character of the Conservation Area*
- *New development must not generate additional traffic which might adversely affect the rural qualities of the Conservation Area*
- *Article 4 Direction:*
  - *Produce additional publicity and guidance for property owners in the Conservation Area*
  - *Undertake a building-by-building photography survey of all of the affected properties to aid possible future enforcement action*
  - *Produce detailed Design Guidance, to help property owners repair and alter their buildings in a sympathetic way*
- *Consider applications for change to ‘positive’ buildings extremely carefully*
- *Refuse applications to demolish ‘positive’ buildings*
- *Review the Local and the Statutory List for Darby Green*
- *Ensure that uses on the Clarks Farm site do not have an adverse effect on the locality, particularly on the setting of the adjoining listed buildings (Clarks Farm and Pond Farm)*
- *Ensure that Clarks Farm is adequately maintained and that any necessary repairs are promptly carried out*
- *Consider ways of improving the facilities at the Darby Green Centre*
- *Add properties along the north side of Darby Green Road, and Diamond Cottages in Reading Road, to the Conservation Area*

### **1.3 The planning policy context**

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.

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Darby Green 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 Statement 5 (PPS5)*, which has recently replaced *Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*” (PPG15).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Darby Green 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”)

#### **1.4 The local policy framework**

These documents provide a firm basis on which applications for development within the Darby Green 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.

It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework as set out in the South East Plan (Approved May 2009) and Hart District Council’s Local Plan, adopted in December 2002.

In the Local Plan, the proposals map confirms that policy ALTDEV 17 relates to land at Clarks Farm, most of which lies immediately outside the Darby Green Conservation Area. The policy states that Clarks Farm is considered suitable for redevelopment for employment uses (B1 and B2) in a landscaped parkland setting, subject to the removal of existing uses and a number of more detailed criteria.

Otherwise the Local Plan contains the usual policies relating to listed buildings, locally listed buildings, and conservation areas.

The 2002 Local Plan is being incrementally replaced by a new *Local Development Framework*. This new planning system was established by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which abolishes Structure and Local Plans and replaces them with *Local Development Documents*. More information about this important change to the planning system can be found on the District Council’s website: [www.hart.gov.uk](http://www.hart.gov.uk).

#### **1.5 Article 4 Directions**

There is currently an Article 4 Direction in the Darby Green Conservation Area. This is a matter which is further discussed in the Management Proposals

## **1.6 Community involvement**

This document was initially drafted following a walkabout with representatives from Yateley Parish Council, local stakeholders, and local residents on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2010. During this event, the extent of the existing Conservation Area boundary was discussed, along with some of the main problems and issues which face the community. A questionnaire was also provided to encourage more detailed responses before the document was drafted.

The first draft was subsequently agreed with the District and the document was then put on the District Council's website for six weeks from 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011. After the completion of this period of public consultation, the final draft was produced.

## **2 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING**

### **2.1 Location and activities**

Darby Green is located in the parish of Yateley in north Hampshire close to the boundaries with Berkshire and Surrey, with Sandhurst and Blackwater both close by. The name 'Darby Green' was once attached more concisely to the area of open common land which is now dominated by the roundabout at the junction of Darby Green Road and Reading Road, but in more recent times it has been used more generally to describe the hamlet of Darby Green which focuses on this open space. Historically this stretched as far as Blackwater, but this part of the Civil Parish of Yateley has now been renamed Frogmore, after the large mansion house which was demolished to make way for acres of Post-war housing. Until the 1960s Darby Green, along with Yateley village and Frogmore, therefore had more distinctive boundaries, but since WW2 they have been somewhat subsumed by this Post-war housing development which now stretches from Blackwater in the east to Yateley village in the west. The three settlements lie mostly on former heathland. To the north of the settlements the ancient water meadows in the floodplain of the River Blackwater now mostly consist of a complex of man-made lakes which have been formed from earlier gravel workings. The River Blackwater, which eventually joins the Whitewater, flows westwards through these lakes.

Much of the Darby Green Conservation Area is part of Yateley Common, a substantial swath of woodland and heathland which separates the settlements of Yateley from the A30. Further heathland (Warren Heath, Yateley Heath Wood and Hawley Common) lies between the A30 and M3. Two further conservation areas can be found nearby at Yateley Green and Cricket Hill.

The Conservation Area is almost totally in residential uses apart from a cattery which is located at No. 33 Reading Road (the 3C's Cattery). A large public sports field and adjoining sports pavilion lie between Darby Green Road and Reading Road. Clarks Farm forms part of a much larger site which largely lies outside the Conservation Area. This site retains a large open 'barn' which until a few years ago was used to make mushroom compost. The site is currently (October 2011) subject to a planning application for use as a materials recycling centre. However, alternative proposals for the residential redevelopment of the site are expected to be submitted imminently which would supplant that use. The listed building (Clarks Farm) is apparently used as

accommodation for staff of the materials recycling centre at the site. If the site were to be used for residential purposes it is not clear what use would continue for this building.

The listed building (Clarks Farm) is apparently used as accommodation for staff at the site. Frogmore Comprehensive School lies just outside the Conservation Area to the west of an area of playing fields which separate the modern school buildings from the edge of Yateley Common.

## **2.2 Topography and geology**

The parish of Yateley lies on a succession of terraces of Bagshot Sand which rise to the south of the valley of the River Blackwater, which flows through a number of lakes created by the flooding of earlier sand and gravel pits. The historic settlements of Darby Green, Cricket Hill, and Yateley Green are all located on gently undulating heathland, cut by small streams which largely flow northwards to join the River Blackwater. One such stream can be traced in the Darby Green Conservation Area through Yateley Common, under Reading Road, then beneath the modern playing fields, where it is culverted. The River Hart also runs in an east to west direction, bounding the large areas of heathland which lie to the south of the A30.

The Landscape Character Assessment 1997 for Hart District defines Darby Green as lying partly within Character Area 6, Firgrove (the western portion of the Conservation Area) and partly within Character Area 12 Minley (the eastern portion of the Conservation Area). The key characteristics area:

- A diverse patchwork of farmland, open heath, woodland and parkland with a mixed but pervasively 'heathy' character
- The extensive open commons of Yateley and Hawley, heavily used as a recreation resource
- A somewhat suburbanised and fragmented character created by the intrusion of roads and isolated buildings and installations, and its proximity to the urban fringes of Blackwater and Hawley

The underlying geology is of sand, which provides a poor soil for agriculture, so much of this area remained heathland or common land with a few dispersed farmsteads, such as Clarks Farm and Pond Farm. From the 1920s onwards pressure for new housing land resulted in the development of Yateley and its adjoining hamlets into a more continuous and much larger residential settlement.

## **2.3 Relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings**

The Darby Green Conservation Area forms part of a string of three conservation areas in the parish of Yateley (the other two are Yateley Green and Cricket Hill) which are all centred on large areas of open or wooded green space, usually with very dispersed historic buildings around them. These are loosely connected by the Reading Road (the

B3272) which joins Blackwater to Eversley – this road passes through Darby Green, Cricket Hill and Yateley Green.

The immediate surroundings to Darby Green are diverse and include the River Blackwater's valley floor, which is largely filled by flooded gravel workings (Yateley Lakes). The town of Sandhurst lies to the north on the Berkshire side of the Blackwater valley. To the west, a large school and its playing fields provide a certain amount of open space which abuts the Conservation Area boundary. The Cricket Hill Conservation Area and the Yateley Green Conservation lie further west along the Reading Road. Further south and east, Yateley Common wraps around the Conservation Area, continuing the woodland which lies within the Conservation Area boundary. The Common ends along the line of the A30, with further heathland beyond. Post-war suburban housing estates lie to the east and north-east.

## **2.4 Biodiversity**

There are two special designations for the natural environment within the Darby Green Conservation Area, both relating to Yateley Common which, in total, consists of 500 hectares of Lowland Heath. Lowland Heath is an internationally rare habitat protected by national legislation and European directives.

In 2005 much of Yateley Common was designated as part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). The SPA is a network of heathland sites which are designated under the European Birds Directive<sup>1</sup> and the Habitats Directive<sup>2</sup> and protected in the UK under the Habitats Regulations<sup>3</sup>. The SPA provides a habitat for the internationally important bird species of Dartford warbler, nightjar, and woodlark. These

birds are particularly subject to disturbance from walkers, dog walkers and cat predation because they nest on or near the ground.

Until the 1950s Yateley Common remained as the man-managed open heathland it had been for millennia. When active management ceased after WW2 the heathland (then consisting of low heathers and gorse) was overrun by scrub and trees, quickly creating young woodland. In 1978 the Yateley Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was notified, covering 218 hectares of Yateley Common. This was subsequently greatly expanded and now covers almost 1,000 hectares in both Hart and Rushmoor, stretching from the Castle Bottom National Nature Reserve in Eversley to Hawley Common. The SSSI was designated as supporting an international important population of rare birds, a particularly rich invertebrate fauna including a number of nationally scarce species, an outstanding dragonfly assemblage, and nationally rare reptiles. The government target that 95% of the nation's SSSI's should, by 2010, be assessed as 'unfavourable recovering', or better, has been met.

Particular rules apply to development proposals in the vicinity of the SPA designed to ensure that they are not likely to have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in combination with other developments. The duty to consider the

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<sup>1</sup> European Directive 79/409/EEC Conservation of Birds

<sup>2</sup> European Directive 92/42/EEC Conservation of Habitats

<sup>3</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

possibility of likely significant effects applies to all types of development, but it is residential development that has been most affected. Proposals for an increase in the number of dwellings within 5km of the SPA, without 'avoidance measures' are considered likely to have a significant effect on the SPA. Within 400 metres of the SPA 'avoidance measures' are unlikely to be effective and net residential development should be avoided. (Please see the Council's Avoidance Strategy for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area for further details).

Since much of the Darby Green Conservation Area falls within this restriction its effects are profound. Significantly these development constraints designed to conserve biodiversity interests on Yateley Common reinforce constraints sought in Conservation Area policies to preserve the dispersed rural settlement pattern in the Conservation Area.

The Common immediately surrounding, and partly included within both the Darby Green and Cricket Hill Conservation Areas, is owned and managed by Hampshire County Council. The so-called 'County Park' extends to some 193 hectares, and forms the north-eastern quadrant of the common. It is crossed by the A30 in an east-west direction and by Cricket Hill Lane, the former route of Vigo Lane, in a north-south direction. Since the 1970s the County has managed their part of Yateley Common as a Country Park accredited under the 1968 Countryside Act.

Following the notification in 1993 that much of Yateley Common, and all the 'County Part', would be designated a "Proposed Special Protection Area for Wild Birds", the County Council redoubled its efforts to balance the inevitable conflicts between maintaining public access to the common as a Country Park, and the requirements of the EU Habitats and Wild Bird Directives. Article 6 is one of the most important articles in the Habitats Directive as it defines how SPA sites are managed and protected. Paragraphs 6(1) and 6(2) require that, within SPA sites, Member States must:

- Take appropriate conservation measures to maintain and restore the habitats and species for which the site has been designated to a favourable conservation status;
- Avoid damaging activities that could significantly disturb these species or deteriorate the habitats of the protected species or habitat types.

As part of the SSSI recovery plan the County embarked on a heathland restoration programme including clearing parts of the woodland within the Conservation Area to create a suitable breeding habitat for the protected bird species. There is documentary evidence that Stroud Pond was managed for fish breeding in the reign of Elizabeth I. Situated just outside the southern-most tip of the Conservation Area, the County's Rangers use Stroud Pond as a focus for their education service to local schools and colleges, managing it as a wild-life pond. The Yateley Society has currently (2010) applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to provide a pond-dipping platform for Stroud Pond. This pond feeds the stream which eventually emerges close to Reading Road in the Conservation Area. A further wild-life pond can be seen to the south of Darby Green Road within the northern part of Yateley Common.

There are other similarities resulting from management objectives and practice. In order to achieve 'Favourable Conservation Status' for the SPA and SSSI, site managers must try to emulate the methods employed by the commoners historically. In Yateley in the

past commoners' animals, put out to graze daily and the annual burn of the common in February, controlled and renewed the heathland habitat, preventing the growth of trees and tall brush. Since grazing has ceased site managers must copy these traditional practices by tree-felling, mechanical scrub clearance and the deployment of volunteers such as from the Yateley Society. Traditional management methods are no longer practiced since the farms which exercised their common rights are now the listed buildings in private residential occupation, and their farmland is covered in new housing or in institutional use such as schools. Because of the new housing and schools the controlled burns are also no longer acceptable.

The legal origins of Yateley Common go back to the Statute of Merton in 1236, and in practice its origins may go back millennia. It could be argued therefore that Yateley Common is the oldest man-made 'heritage asset' within the boundaries of the Conservation Area, and that managing the Conservation Area to the benefit of the biodiversity of this oldest 'heritage asset' must be the main conservation objective both because it is legally required to obtain biodiversity objectives, and because those legal requirements sit neatly with the normal requirements for the preservation of heritage assets required by the 1990 Act. Modern site management of the SPA and SSSI is thus emulating the historic management which was exercised by the former residents of today's heritage assets within the Conservation Area.

### **3 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF YATELEY**

#### **3.1 Early development**

The earliest evidence for human activity in Yateley was provided by the discovery of a concentration of knapped flints on Yateley Common, dating to the Mesolithic period. Burial urns of early Bronze Age settlers have been also found on the river terraces to the north of Yateley Green, at Hilfield, and close to Minley Manor. Much later, evidence for pre-Conquest occupation is provided by the survival of Saxon place names and, most significantly, the Saxon north wall of St Peter's Church. The name 'Yateley' appears to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'yat' (gate) and 'ley' (forest clearing).

#### **3.2 Post-Conquest development**

##### *The development of Yateley*

Before 1066 the area lay within the Manor and Hundred of Crondall, part of the royal demesne. The Manor was granted by King Alfred in his will of 899 to his nephew Ethelm, but was soon under the control of the Prior of Winchester. At the Reformation the land holdings of the Prior passed to the Dean and Chapter of Winchester, then handed on to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and, much later, to the Church Commissioners, who remained the Lords of the Manor of Crondall until the 1950s, when the 'waste of the manor' was sold to Yateley Town Council. Meanwhile the Hundred of Crondall had effectively been removed by the Local Government Act of 1894 and by the 1920s Law of Property Act.

The medieval parish of Yateley included Blackwater, Hawley, Southwood, Bramshot, Cove and Minley. At this time Yateley was a loosely dispersed settlement with small

farms eking out a living on the poor heathland soil. A system of 'common land' was already established by the Norman Conquest, whereby peasants were allowed to settle on poor quality land and use it to graze their animals. They were also allowed to take bracken for roofing and animal bedding, as well as heather and wood for fuel.

It is surprisingly to learn therefore that in 1334, when a national tax was levied, Yateley returned the highest tax within Crondall Hundred, equal to the tax levied in Leeds. Some of this wealth may have come from income derived from its location close to what is now the A30, the historic route from London to Salisbury and the West Country beyond. St Peter's Church facing Church End Green in Yateley village was enlarged in the late medieval period and was partly rebuilt following a fire in 1979. A medieval mill is recorded on the river Blackwater.

A large medieval 'capital messuage' (called Hall Place) is recorded in 1287 on the site of what is now Yateley Manor School, about a mile to the west of Darby Green. By 1567 Richard Allen lived there and he had 23 tenants. During the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the property was owned by Sir Richard Ryves, a director of the East India Company. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was in the ownership of Thomas Wyndham who called it the Manor of Hall Place, effectively a sub-manor of Crondall Manor. Hall Place was then the principal house and estate in Yateley, and Thomas Wyndham soon expanded his property holdings by purchasing Minley Manor and the inn then known as the Red Lion at Blackwater. He also built a large pond in what is now Yateley Common as a water supply to fish ponds further down the valley – it was drained during WW2 and has been refilled since to create an important wildlife habitat in the middle of Yateley Common Country Park. Another substantial house, Yateley Hall, is located to the south of Yateley Green and is now listed grade II\*. Previously known as Calcotts, the garden is included on Hart District Council's Historic Parks and Gardens Register grade 'B' and includes the remains of a ha-ha and a short canal feature which may be the remains of a medieval moat.

The close proximity of Sandhurst, Camberley and Aldershot (by 1854, the 'home' of the British Army) ensured a constant demand for a variety of houses in Yateley and in the immediate vicinity. In 1942, when a major new airfield was built on Yateley Common at Hartfordbridge, most of the farmland in western Yateley was covered in hutments for the RAF – which on closing at the end of WW2 were used for squatter housing. When the time came to move these residents on, land owned by Yateley Manor was sold for new development. Despite this expansion the population of Yateley was only 4,469 in 1961 but by 1981 it was assessed at around 20,000 – demonstrating the type of growth experienced by the official New Towns.

The first National School was established in Cricket Hill in 1834 and transferred to a new school building opened on Yateley Green in 1866. This served as the village school until 1958 when it was replaced by a purpose-built primary school which was provided on land previously owned by Yateley Manor School. This has recently (August 2010) closed.

### *The development of Darby Green*

'Darby Green' is noted on the Historic Environment Record as a medieval settlement site, first documented in AD1227 as *Derby* (presumably as it was associated with the family of William de Derby). However, this attribution (from the Royal Commission on

Historic Monuments of England – RCHME) is dubious. What is more certain is that properties in the Darby Green area were held from the Manor of Hall Place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that this is confirmed by a record dated 1759 in the manorial court book (ref: *Place Names of Hampshire*). The derivation of the name may have been from the May family who lived in 'Darby House' and whose daughter Anne's baptism and early death are recorded in parish registers in 1661 and 1662. A more popular attribution of the name is to Parson Darby, said to have been a vicar of Yateley who was hanged as a highwayman from the yew tree in front of Yew Tree Cottage. However there was never a Yateley clergyman of this name, and no documentary evidence of the hanging.

The older of the two former farmhouses in the Conservation Area, Pond Farm, dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and not far away, Clarks Farm dates (according to the list description) to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Both were originally timber-framed and both have been altered including refacing in brick. Only Clarks Farm retains the character of a farmyard with land to both sides and the rear of the building, although from the road it appears that no historic farm buildings remain. Pond Cottage is close by and the listing also dates it to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as does Willows, a timber-framed house which was heavily restored in the 1930s and currently lies just outside the Conservation Area boundary. All of these buildings are shown on the Tithe Map of the 1840s, which shows dispersed buildings set back from the road around an irregularly-shaped open common, which today is recognised in the triangle of land between Darby Green Road and Reading Road.. The setting of these buildings is entirely rural, with differently shaped and sized fields surrounding the common. There was some further residential development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including the construction of two substantial houses - Heathcroft (now demolished) and Darby Green House (c1909), both of them located to the south of Reading Road off Stroud Lane. Heathcroft was lived in successively by a Captain Masterman and an Admiral Hawksley. Darby Green House was designed and lived in by John Duke Coleridge, a pupil of Sir Edwin Lutyens. Coleridge purchased the land in 1908 – the completed house is shown on the 1910 map. A small church (St Barnabas) was built on common land to the south of the old Darby Green Road, close to Yew Tree Cottage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but fell into disrepair and was demolished in the 1990s.

The greatest changes to the area came in the Post-war period when much of Yateley was developed for housing, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, when new estates were built which incrementally joined up Blackwater to the historic core of Yateley through Frogmore, Darby Green and Cricket Hill. The Darby Green Conservation Area was designated in March 1988.

## **4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Layout and street pattern**

The principal street in the Conservation Area is the east to west route of the Reading Road, which connects Blackwater to Eversley through Yateley. Otherwise, there is no coherence in the street layout of the Conservation Area, although there is some sense of focus to the north where Darby Green Road meets Reading Road. At this point, Darby Green Lane, Darby Green Road and Reading Road have all been realigned and short sections of the old Darby Green Lane remain, in a rather muddled layout, with areas of woodland and grass verges in between. The large modern roundabout and the

dominant overhead walkway are both detrimental features. A cul-de-sac made up of a small group of four detached houses (Sydney Loader Place), has been built between Yew Tree Cottage and Pond Farm, but is well screened from Darby Green Lane with a pleasant pond forming a centrepiece. These open green spaces are later described as 'Darby Green'.

Reading Road almost cuts the Conservation Area in two, and sweeps in a wide arc to the south-east through Yateley Common and then continues eastwards to the roundabout with the A30 at Blackwater. Part of the land between Reading Road and Darby Green Road forms the most northerly section of Yateley Common, although it is partly used as playing fields. South of the Reading Road, a long section of wooded heathland forms the more southerly part of the Conservation Area and is notable for the narrow unadopted tracks over the common which lead to the scattered houses which can be found down Stroud Lane and other smaller tracks leading off it.

Historical development in the northern part of the Conservation Area, facing Darby Green Road and Reading Road, is largely provided by the three listed buildings, two of which, Clarks Farm and Pond Farm, sit well back from the road with large plots. Pond Farm particularly has a very large garden, although a new house was built to one side (presumably on land which once formed the cartilage to the farmhouse) in the 1980s. A small group of houses can be seen to the south of Reading Road, of which one (No. 33) is a notable early 19<sup>th</sup> century stuccoed cottage. This part of the Conservation Area retains the highest concentration of historic buildings although their setting has already been compromised to a degree by the modern roundabout, overhead walkway, and road re-alignments.

## **4.2 Open spaces, trees and landscape**

With around 90% of the Conservation Area being wooded heathland, open green space or private gardens, the whole area is dominated by trees which form significant groups particularly to the south of Reading Road, where Yateley Common proper starts. Here the woodland is made up of both deciduous and coniferous trees, with many small self-seeded Silver Birch in the open areas which have been cleared for the wildlife. The area is also notable for the survival of a number of deep ditches and low earth banks which historically were used to denote property boundaries, particularly the boundary to the common itself – one such ditch and bank can be seen on the north-west side of Stroud Lane.

Further groups of trees can be seen to the north of Reading Road, next to the playing fields, and on the north side of Darby Green Road, where they shield the entrance of Sydney Loader Place and Yew Tree Cottage from the busy main road to the south.

The only open space of any note is around the junction of Reading Road and Darby Green Road, where there are areas of grass verges, their significance somewhat compromised by the busy traffic, modern roundabout and overhead walkway. The rural character of this space however is enhanced by the close proximity of areas of dense woodland and the large pond on the south side of Darby Green Road.

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

The only focal point in the Conservation Area is around the western end of Darby Green Road where it meets firstly, Darby Green Lane, and secondly, Reading Road. This series of spaces provides, in the east, a pleasant setting to Pond Cottage and Pond Farm and, in the west, to Yew Tree Cottage and Clarks Farm. Whilst this area is sometimes referred to as 'Darby Green', there is little sense of an historic village green due to the realignment of the older routes and the provision of the large modern roundabout and very dominant pedestrian walkway. Looking across these spaces, the low line of both Pond Farm and Clarks Farm provide some sense of focus, but both buildings are set back from the road so their impact on the street scene (particularly in the case of Pond House) is quite limited. Clarks Farm is more visible, which is why its current very poor quality setting and somewhat neglected appearance is a cause for concern.

A large playing field provides a useful facility between Darby Green Road and Reading Road, but it can only be glimpsed from the first and cannot be seen at all from the second due to the dense woodland which lines the north side of Reading Road. The adjoining sports pavilion is a low, modern building of little merit which appears to be suffering from vandalism.

South of Reading Road, the continuous woodland associated with Yateley Common means that there are no opportunities for focal buildings, and, indeed, the buildings which are located in these woods are usually well screened from the tracks which lead to them.

Views within the Conservation Area are therefore very contained due to the trees which line many of the routes through the area. There are short views across Darby Green towards Pond Farm and longer views from Stroud Lane over the clearings which have been made in the heathland. Walking around Yateley Common, additional longer views can be seen from the edge of the Conservation Area, looking over undulating land towards the A30, and over Stroud Pond and the adjoining school playing fields.

The most important views are noted on the Townscape Appraisal Map, but the omission of a view does not mean that it is of no significance.

### **4.4 Boundaries**

Nearly all of the boundaries to the properties facing the principal roads are natural – either hedging or trees. A high clipped yew hedge in front of Pond Cottage conceals the building from the road and is a notable feature in views along the street. Outside the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century properties in Darby Green Road are an assortment of modern boundaries such as low timber-panels (outside Chestnuts) or low brick walls. Small timber posts mark the edge of Darby Green, preventing vehicular overrun, although outside Yew Tree Cottage the grass has been worn away by vehicles parking on the verge.

### **4.5 Public realm**

The public realm is composed of the space between the buildings, largely in public ownership, which is made up by the streets, pavements, lighting, street furniture,

signage and other similar features. For most of the roads and lanes in the Conservation Area, the public realm is simple and very low key with pavements and streets covered in modern black asphalt. There are no examples of historic paving. Street lighting is provided by modern concrete 'hockey-stick' standards with glass lanterns, or, on the Reading Road, by tall slender steel poles with curved tops and glass lanterns. Street names are marked by modern white plastic signs with black lettering, on black posts, similar to the signage found throughout Hampshire.

Negative features include the occasional overhead wires and timber telegraph poles, which can be discordant, for example, across the grass areas in front of Pond Farm. The most obviously unsympathetic intrusion in the street scene is the elevated walkway across the roundabout junction over Reading Road. A plethora of traffic signs (lorry bans, speed limits and directions) and pedestrian barriers occur all around the roundabout. Some of the signs are dirty and in need of maintenance.

Because the tracks through Yateley Common are across registered common land they cannot be surfaced without the consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the Commons Act 2006 as an 'enclosure' of common land. They are thus not adopted, and are simply surfaced with hogging and gravel, without any street lighting or signage. Continuing maintenance, particularly after long spells of wet or frosty weather is often an issue for the Commons Rangers.

## **5 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

### **5.1 Building types**

All of the buildings in the Conservation Area were built for residential use apart from the modern sports pavilion off Darby Green Road. There are just three listed buildings in the Conservation Area, and three locally listed buildings, and these vary in age from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, there are a number of early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century properties, mostly along Darby Green Road and off Reading Road. Nearly all of the properties on Yateley Common are 20<sup>th</sup> century apart from The Old Cottage, a timber-framed Locally Listed house. The majority of these unlisted buildings are of no special architectural merit but are fortunately well screened from the public domain. None of the residential properties are of any size, the largest being Pond Farm, a long, low timber-framed house which was extended in the 1930s with a slightly taller cross-wing, and Darby Green House, built in the Arts and Crafts style.

It should also be mentioned that the Conservation Area is rural in character with relatively few buildings (about 30) which are often concealed by trees and other planting. This low density of buildings needs to be maintained if the green and leafy character of the Conservation Area is to be preserved.

### **5.2 Listed buildings**

There are just three listed buildings in the current Conservation Area, all listed grade II, as follows:

#### Pond Farm, Darby Green Lane

This long, low two storey building sits back from the road with a notable clay tiled roof. Originally timber-framed, and probably built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as to a lobby-entry plan,

the building became tenement cottages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was substantially extended in the 1930s, when a slightly taller cross-wing was added to the western end of the building, and another bay, utilising old timbers from a demolished barn, added to the east. The building has been encased in brick, probably in c1800, and the casement windows and wide front porch would appear to be largely of the 1930s. The northern elevation retains exposed curved timber tension braces.

#### Clarks Farm, Reading Road

Clarks Farm is another lobby-entry house with three bays. The substantial four-shafted brick stack, steeply pitched peg-tiled roof with a gablet on the western hip and a full gable on the eastern elevation, are all worthy of special mention. Although described as 17<sup>th</sup> century in the list description, it looks older, and its documentary history can be traced back to the Crondall Customary of 1567. It was refaced in blue and red brick, over the original timber-frame, probably in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. A central string course and evidence for blocked-up windows are both interesting archaeological features. The three light Gothic timber windows are probably late 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. Overall, this is a highly complex building which would benefit from a detailed archaeological evaluation.

#### Pond Cottage, Darby Green Road

Pond Cottage is another timber-framed building of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, two storeys high with a red clay tiled roof. A large brick chimney breast can be seen on the west elevation. The building is faced in red brick with some exposed timber-framing, filled-in with brick noggin. The casement windows are modern, as is the porch.

The Management Proposals contain a recommendation that small changes are made to the Conservation Area boundary, including the addition of Willows, Darby Green Road, which was recently listed at grade II.

Willows is a timber-framed two storey house which was (like Pond Farm) altered and extended in the 1930s in a 'picturesque' style which matched the original building. The timber-frame is exposed in places and infilled with red brickwork, some of it arranged in a herringbone pattern. There is a series of steeply pitched roofs, all of them covered in handmade clay tiles. The original building was described as thatched when it was enfranchised in 1907, and it appears on the Tithe Map of 1844, at about which time it became a beerhouse named The Greyhound. The building obtained a full alehouse licence in 1860, but after the bankruptcy of its owner the licence was transferred to another nearby building under different ownership.

### **5.3 Locally Listed buildings**

The District Council has produced a short list of locally significant buildings within Yateley Parish of which three lie within the Conservation Area and are marked on the Townscape Analysis Map. Two of them are early timber-framed properties and the third is a prestigious Arts and Crafts house – all three may be eligible for statutory listing. They are presently Locally Listed to provide them with a degree of additional protection, and policies for their preservation are included in the Hart Local Plan, adopted in December 2002. The following buildings in the Darby Green Conservation Area are Locally Listed:

- Yew Tree Cottage, Darby Green Road – a somewhat altered complex of low, one-and-a-half storey mainly late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings which include a small timber-framed cottage which may date to the 15<sup>th</sup> century
- Old Cottage, Yateley Common – a pretty ‘black and white’ timber-framed two storey cottage, possibly also 16<sup>th</sup> century in date – it was the home of a famous court painter to Queen Victoria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Darby Green House, Yateley Common – this substantial red brick Arts and Crafts House designed by John Duke Coleridge for his own use and built on land which he purchased by in 1908. The house is shown on the 1910 map, so it was presumably constructed between 1908 and 1910. Coleridge was a pupil of Lutyens, and is accredited as the architect of a number of other notable buildings before he left Lutyens’ firm.

Further information about the control of Locally Listed buildings is provided in the *Management Proposals*.

#### **5.4 Positive buildings**

In addition to the listed and Locally Listed buildings, a very small number of unlisted buildings have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as being *positive* buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as being *positive* 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 Darby Green Conservation Area, the ‘positive’ buildings are limited to two pairs of late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century cottages which face Darby Green Road and to a brick-built cottage (Cuckoo Cottage) in the most southerly part of Yateley Common, which appears to date to the 1930s. Pound Cottage, part of the 3 C’s Cattery, is an interesting symmetrical white-painted two storey cottage with casement windows and a slate roof. This property could, perhaps, be Locally Listed – its name relates to the adjoining village pound which still existed in 1976 but appears to have been lost when the road was widened. A building is marked on the Tithe Map of 1844 on this site and it appears to be Pound Cottage.

English Heritage guidance 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. The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings. Again, further information is provided in the *Management Proposals*.

#### **5.5 Building styles, materials and colours**

The overall character of the historic buildings in the Conservation Area is domestic and vernacular, so most of the buildings are modestly sized (mainly two storeys high) with steeply pitched roofs, often with substantial brick stacks, which are covered in handmade clay tiles. All of the four listed buildings off Darby Green Road and Reading Road have roofs like this. All of these buildings are also faced in bright reddy-orange

brick, which often conceals an earlier timber-frame which can also be exposed, as on the back elevation of Pond Farm, Pond Cottage and Willows. Clarks Farm appears from its roof shape and central chimney stack to be a probably 16<sup>th</sup> or even earlier timber-framed house with a lobby-entry plan, which was encased in red and blue brick, probably in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century – further analysis would be helpful. The core of Yew Tree Cottage is a single storey, possibly 15<sup>th</sup> century, timber-framed cottage of the type which would have been built on common land in a day to give the owner ‘squatters’ rights’ to live there.

Brick or painted roughcast is also used to infill between the exposed timbers. Yew Tree Cottage and Old Cottage (Locally Listed) provide attractive examples of early timber-framed cottages with white-painted roughcast infill panels, which contrasts with the black-painted timber-framing. There are no thatched roofs, although these may have been more common in the past. Windows are predominantly timber casements, which are sub-divided by glazing bars. Some of the properties, such as Yew Tree Cottage, have leaded-light windows, but again, these do not appear to be historic although they look in keeping. Clarks Farm retains some Gothic-style pointed windows to the front elevation which appear to be relatively modern.

Some of the unlisted ‘positive’ properties along Darby Green Road provide good examples of polychrome brickwork, such as Chestnuts, which is built using red brick with yellow brick dressings to the ground floor bays and first floor window openings. The windows are all sashes, which appear original. Almost opposite, a further pair of positive cottages (Hawthorn Villas) are dated 1910 and are faced in pebbledash to the first floor, with a similar bay-window arrangement as Chestnuts to the ground floor. The windows on the eastern section of Hawthorne Villas have been replaced using uPVC. Pound Cottage off Reading Road is an unusual early 19<sup>th</sup> century building with a symmetrical front, casement windows and a low Welsh slate roof.

## **6 CHARACTER AREAS**

The Darby Green Conservation Area divides into three Character Areas according to historical development; street pattern and layout; built form; and uses and activities. These are:

- Darby Green Road and Reading Road
- Yateley Common: Wooded area between Darby Green Road and Reading Road
- Yateley Common: Wooded area to south of Reading Road

### **6.1 Darby Green Road and Reading Road**

This part of the Conservation Area lies on the northern edge of Yateley Common and provides the highest number of quality historic buildings which face either Reading Road or Darby Green Road. The wide grass verges provide the character of a village green although modern road improvements have had a detrimental impact. The many trees, open green spaces and the close proximity of the northern part of Yateley Common all add to the rural qualities of the area. There are three important buildings – three listed (Clarks Farm, Pond Farm, and Pond Cottage) and one Locally Listed building, Yew Tree Cottage. Willows (grade II) also form part of this group though it is currently just outside the Conservation Area. A small estate of new houses (Sydney Loader Place) has been

allowed, but this is low density, set back from the road, and attractively landscaped, including a new pond.

Negative features or issues for this Character Area:

*General:*

- The continued maintenance and enhancement of the natural features – trees, grass verges, and watercourses
- The protection of the rural qualities of the area from the effects of new development and the busy traffic along the two main roads
- The control of the historic buildings which face onto the open green spaces, and the continuing need to ensure that they remain protected from unsympathetic alterations and/or new development which could adversely affect their setting
- The effect on the Conservation Area of the modern road improvements including the re-alignment of Reading Road and Darby Green Road, the creation of ‘left-over’ sections of somewhat neglected streets, and the dominant footbridge over the large roundabout at the junction of Reading Road and Darby Green Road
- The busy traffic which already uses Reading Road as a major east-west route

*Site specific:*

Clarks Farm – this site was used for a number of years as a facility for the production of mushroom compost, the owner utilising a large modern ‘barn’ which lies just outside the Conservation Area. The current owner is seeking permission to develop the site as a materials recycling centre, which potentially could have an adverse effect on the setting of Clarks Farm and the character of the Conservation Area. For this, and other reasons, a residential redevelopment of the area would be beneficial provided it did not adversely affect the Conservation Area and other interests of acknowledged importance. To this end it is considered that a number of the criteria set out in local plan policy ALTDEV17 would apply equally to that development proposal.

- Clarks Farm, a grade II listed building, appears to be somewhat neglected and in need of repairs and maintenance
- The poor condition of the former public house on Darby Green Road (just outside the current Conservation Area boundary), which is currently boarded up and vacant, though plans have been approved for its restoration and re-opening in a different usage.

## **6.2 Yateley Common: Wooded area between Darby Green Road and Reading Road**

This forms the most northerly part of Yateley Common but is divided from the larger tract of common land which stretches southwards by the busy Reading Road. About half of the space is used as playing fields and for the site of the Darby Green Centre, a probably 1980s building of no distinction which does however serve a useful purpose for the local community. The remaining space is thick mixed woodland, which contains the open green areas and hides them from view. An ancient pond has been restored facing Darby Green Road which is used as an educational resource and has been designed to provide a suitable habitat for a variety of fish, animals and birds.

Negative features or issues for this Character Area:

- There is only one issue for this Character Area, namely the on-going care and maintenance of the Darby Green Centre (which suffers from periodic vandalism), including the collection of rubbish from the Centre car park

### **6.3 Yateley Common: Wooded area to south of Reading Road**

This Character Area is primarily wooded heathland and stretches beyond the Conservation Area to a much larger section of common land. Narrow winding lanes, mostly single track width, lead to a small (about 13) number of properties which lie in relative isolation. Most of these are 20<sup>th</sup> century bungalows or smaller houses which date to 1920s onwards, but two (at least) have historic and architectural interest, namely The Old Cottage, a timber-framed property which is probably 16<sup>th</sup> century in date, and Darby Green House, dating to c1909. Both are Locally Listed. Part of this Character Area lies within the SPA and SSSI which seeks to protect the habitats of three species of ground nesting birds, as well as other internationally rare flora and fauna.

Negative features or issues for this Character Area:

- Pressure for new development, including the replacement of smaller houses with much larger properties
- The care of the trees and green spaces

## **7 ISSUES**

### **7.1 Summary of Issues**

Based on the Negatives Features summarised in Chapter 6, and on comments made during the initial public consultation/walkabout, the following are considered to be the most important Issues for the Darby Green Conservation Area at this point in time:

#### *Protecting Yateley Common and other green spaces*

- The protection of the common land and other open green spaces (and their setting) from unsympathetic new development
- The care of the natural features of the common land and other green spaces – the trees, grass verges, ponds, and watercourses
- The continued protection and restoration of the SPA and SSSI
- The general enhancement and protection of the rural qualities of the Conservation Area

#### *Traffic, pedestrian movement and parking*

- The effect of modern 'road improvements' on the surrounding Conservation Area
- Busy and fast moving traffic along Reading Road and Darby Green Road
- Lack of pedestrian crossings along Reading Road

- Untidy and possibly illegal car parking on the grass verge outside Yew Tree Cottage

#### *The control of new development*

- A general pressure for new development, including the redevelopment of existing buildings (where larger plot sizes exist)

#### *Building issues*

- The continued protection of all heritage assets, including the Listed and Locally Listed buildings, and their settings, from demolition or unsympathetic change
- The control of unlisted positive buildings possibly through the existing Article 4 Direction
- A thorough review is needed of the statutory and the Local List

#### *Site specific*

- Clarks Farm – any applications for the development of the site should ensure that they are not detrimental to the listed building, its setting, and the Conservation Area in general, if approved
- Clarks Farm appears to be in need of repair and maintenance
- The care and maintenance of the Darby Green Centre

#### *Conservation Area Boundary Review*

##### Additions

- Add properties along the north side of Darby Green Road
- Add Diamond Cottages in Reading Road

##### Deletions

- None

## **THE MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

### **8 INTRODUCTION**

#### **8.1 Format of the Management Proposals**

Part 1 of this document, the *Character Appraisal*, has identified the special positive qualities of the Darby Green Conservation Area which make the Conservation Area unique. Part 2 of this document, the *Management Proposals*, builds upon the negative features which have also been identified, to provide a series of Issues and Recommendations for improvement and change. Most, but not all, will be the responsibility of the Hart District Council, Yateley Town Council or Hampshire County 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 10.

### **9 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **9.1 Protecting Yateley Common and other green spaces**

Whilst only a small part of Yateley Common falls within the designated Conservation Area, it makes an important contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area because of its green spaces, watercourses, ponds, and, most importantly, its trees. These are looked after by the Common rangers who are employed by Hampshire County Council. The rangers work in a team of four people and are responsible for a total of 13 sites in all. A Management Plan for Yateley Common has been drawn up in past, and a partnership with DFRA has resulted in a Countryside Stewardship scheme which has a further three years left to run. This has provided some funding for a number of improvements and projects, such as the creation of the new pond on the south side of Darby Green Road, and the clearing of trees within the Common to create the open spaces favoured by ground-nesting birds. A new Management Plan has recently been approved by the Yateley Common Management Committee and it is hoped it will result in new funding partly from the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. The rangers use local tree surgeons – they do not carry out the tree work themselves. A principal concern of the rangers is to enhance the wild life opportunities within the SPA and SSSI in order to meet national and European Union targets, and to provide educational opportunities for children and the public in general.

The south-eastern quadrant of Yateley Common is owned by the MOD, part of their Minley Manor estate, and is managed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust. The Wildlife Trust has recently been asked to manage the south-western quadrant of Yateley Common, which is owned by the Calthorpe Estate. The north-western quadrant of Yateley Common is owned by Blackbushe Airport and is currently unmanaged with respect to wildlife interests. Watercourses to the north of the Conservation Area, beyond

Pond Farm, are managed by the former Environment Agency. An extensive area along the river valley of the Blackwater is administered by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, an authority made up from the three county councils and all the adjoining local authorities. The grass verges either side of Darby Green Road and Reading Road are looked after by Hampshire County Council (Countryside Services).

The greatest threat to Yateley Common comes from new development, either in the form of alterations to, or reconstructions of, existing properties, or from completely new development, which could have a detrimental effect on the peaceful ambiance of the majority of the Common. Any increase in traffic along the principal roads should also be resisted due to the impact on the Common (and the flora and fauna within it) and the more incipient effect on the Conservation Area in general.

*Recommendation:*

- *The District Council and Hampshire County Council will continue to protect Yateley Common and its setting through the strict enforcement of policies contained within the Local Plan and will resist applications for change which would have a detrimental effect on the land and properties within or on the edges of the Common.*

## **9.2 Traffic, pedestrian movement and parking**

It has already been noted that both Reading Road and Darby Green Road are subject to heavy traffic, particularly at peak times of the day. The close proximity of a large school (Frogmore Comprehensive) has also resulted in the generation of additional traffic through the Conservation Area. One of the results of this has been the provision of the modern roundabout and overhead pedestrian walkway within the Conservation Area, the later being largely built to provide a safer route for school children. However, other sections of Reading Road are not provided with any safe crossings for pedestrians, particularly for those wishing to access the Dalby Green Centre.

Whilst the County Council has provided low wooden bollards to prevent cars parking on most of the grass verges to either side of the principal streets, a small area outside Yew Tree Cottage suffers from illegal car parking which has resulted in the erosion of the verge.

*Recommendations:*

- *The District Council and Highways Authority will consider ways of improving pedestrian safety in the Conservation Area and will strictly enforce any existing parking restrictions. Any signage or traffic calming measures must, however, be carefully designed to fit in with the sensitive historic environment.*

## **9.3 The control of new development**

There are very few opportunities for new development within the Conservation Area due to restrictive Local Plan policies other than the extension or rebuilding of existing properties. In both instances, there is a possibility of the new development being too large and not in keeping with the modest, domestic scale of nearly all of the buildings in the Area. Additionally, new development must not be allowed which would generate

large amounts of new traffic, for instance at Clarks Farm or along Stroud Lane, where the rural qualities of the narrow lane track must be preserved by law. In accordance with existing Council policies, Conservation Area Consent should not be granted for the demolition of any building without an agreed scheme for the site being granted planning permission.

*Recommendation:*

- *The District council will continue to ensure through the use of its Development Control powers, that all applications for change within, or on the edges of the Conservation Area, preserve or enhance its rural character, taking the scale, general form and materials of the proposal particularly into account;*
- *The District Council will seek the continued protection of all heritage assets, including the Listed and Locally Listed buildings, and their settings, from demolition or unsympathetic change*
- *The District Council will not allow uses within or on the edges of the Conservation Area which it is considered do not enhance the rural character of the Conservation Area*
- *New development must not generate additional traffic which might adversely affect the rural qualities of the Conservation Area.*

#### **9.4 Building issues**

##### Article 4 Direction

Since 1998 the unlisted family dwellings in the Area have been protected by an Article 4 Direction which brings certain alterations to these buildings under planning control. This means that a changes to windows, front doors, roof materials, chimneys and front boundaries may require permission from the District Council (listed buildings, and unlisted buildings in other uses, are already protected by different legislation). There are only about 19 buildings in the Conservation Area which are affected by the Article 4 Direction, but there has been little publicity in the past about this additional level of control although the existence of an Article 4 Direction should show up on solicitor's searches when property changes hands.

*Recommendation:*

- *The District Council will consider producing additional publicity and guidance for property owners in the Conservation Area*
- *The District Council will undertake a building-by-building photography survey of all of the affected properties to aid possible future enforcement action*
- *The District Council will produce detailed Design Guidance, to help property owners repair and alter their buildings in a sympathetic way*

##### The control of unlisted positive buildings (including Locally Listed buildings)

As part of the Appraisal process, and as recommended by English Heritage and in PPS5, a number of 'positive' buildings have been identified and are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map for the Darby Green Conservation Area. Generally, these are individual or groups of buildings which retain all or a high proportion of their original architectural detailing and which add interest and vitality to the appearance of the

conservation area. Most of them date to the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but several, including some which are Locally Listed at present, are much earlier. Where they have been too heavily altered, and restoration is not easily achievable, they are excluded. It is assumed that all Locally Listed buildings are 'positive'.

As with listed buildings, there is a general presumption in favour of their retention. Any application for the demolition of a positive building will therefore need to be accompanied by a reasoned justification as to why the building cannot be retained, similar to that required for a listed building. The owner must also have made positive efforts to market the building, or to find a suitable new use, before an application can be determined.

*Recommendation:*

- *The District Council will consider applications for change to 'positive' buildings extremely carefully and will refuse any which adversely affect their architectural or historic interest.*
- *Applications to demolish 'positive' buildings will generally be refused.*

Local List and Statutory List

There are just three Locally Listed buildings in the Conservation Area but no review has been carried out in recent years. Additions may include some of the 'positive' buildings identified as part of the Character Appraisal process. Some of the existing Locally Listed buildings may be eligible for statutory listing.

*Recommendation:*

- Subject to resources, the Local and the Statutory List for Darby Green should be reviewed, ideally in partnership with the Yateley Town Council and the Yateley Society.

**9.5 Site specific**

Clarks Farm, Reading Road

Hampshire County Council is currently (October 2011) considering an application for the use of the Clark Farm site as a materials recycling centre. This use could generate large amounts of additional lorry traffic to and from the site, and might result in negative effects on neighbouring properties as well as on the Conservation Area in general. Alternative proposals for residential development may be able to ensure such harm does not occur, but any redevelopment for residential development will need to ensure that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is preserved or enhanced and the setting of the adjoining listed buildings (Clarks Farm and Pond Farm) is preserved or enhanced. In addition, the grade II listed former farmhouse (Clarks Farm) appears to be poorly maintained and may require upgrading and repairs. Any new development must ensure that the detailed aims of policy ALTDEV17 in the Hart District Local Plan are achieved.

**Recommendation:**

- *Hart District Council and Hampshire County Council should ensure that any development on the Clarks Farm site does not have an adverse effect on the locality, particularly on the setting of the adjoining listed buildings (Clarks Farm and Pond Farm).*
- *Hart District Council, through its development control powers, should ensure that Clarks Farm, a grade II listed building, is adequately maintained and that any necessary repairs are promptly carried out.*

Darby Green Centre

The Darby Green Centre appears to date to the 1980s and is in a poor state of repair. It is also subject to occasional vandalism. Whilst the building does not make a positive contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area, it does provide a useful social and cultural function for the local community. It is owned and maintained by Yateley Parish Council.

*Recommendation:*

- *The Parish Council could explore ways of improving the facilities (including the parking and rubbish recycling areas) on the site, and, in the long term, seek the replacement of the existing building with a new building which would be more appropriate to the sensitive location in the Conservation Area.*

**9.6 Conservation Area Boundary Review**

Additions

Add properties along the north side of Darby Green Road

- These include Willows, a recently listed timber-framed building with a steeply pitched clay tiled roof and exposed timber-framing, and Hawthorne Villas, a pair of two storey cottages dated 1910. The former public house (once called The Greyhound) is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century building which is currently in need of some restoration.

Add Diamond Cottages in Reading Road

- Diamond Cottages date to 1881 (date plaque) and are two storeys high. Each has a small porch with Gothic bargeboards which are original and face the road. The red and yellow brickwork is concealed at first floor level by modern white painted render.

Deletions

There are no proposed deletions to the Conservation Area.

## **10 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

10.1 As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of its formal adoption by Hart District Council. 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 District 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  
Character Areas Map
- Appendix 2 Existing Article 4 Direction
- Appendix 3 Bibliography
- Appendix 4 Contact details

- APPENDIX 1** Townscape Appraisal Map  
Character Areas Map

## APPENDIX 2 EXISTING ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

The Direction controls changes to the principal elevations and roofs (where they front a highway or other public space) of all unlisted family dwellings within the Darby Green Conservation Area which might otherwise have been allowed automatically under house owners' 'permitted development' rights. The aim of the Direction is to prevent the Conservation Area from being incrementally spoilt by a variety of unsympathetic changes such as plastic windows or concrete roof tiles. The Direction means that planning permission is required for a variety of works as follows:

- Extensions, improvements or other alterations to the dwelling house
- Alterations to existing boundaries, or the creation of new boundaries

A copy of the Article 4 Direction can be viewed at the Planning Department, Hart District Council, Fleet, and a more detailed summary of the Direction is included below.

This Article 4 Direction covers all unlisted residential properties in use as a single family unit i.e. not flats or in multiple occupation, where different legislation applies. The Direction brings under planning control the following works as specified in the General (Permitted Development) Order 1990 (as amended):

- Class A The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of the frontage\* of a dwelling or building within the curtilage of a dwelling, including works affecting a frontage\* roof slope (*In respect of side extensions, these are covered where they are in front of the rear wall of the dwelling*);
- Class B The erection, construction, alteration or demolition of a porch on the frontage\* of a dwelling;
- Class C The erection, alteration or removal of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure to the frontage\* of a dwelling;
- Class D The exterior painting of any part of the frontage\* of a dwelling or building within the curtilage of a dwelling (*This requires consent where it involves either a painting scheme dramatically different from the existing or involves areas of the building not previously painted*);
- Class E The erection, alteration or removal of a chimney or building within the curtilage of a dwelling;

\***Frontage** refers to the elevations or roof slope of the dwelling which face a highway, a footpath, a bridleway, a waterway or a public open space. In respect of side extensions, these need permission where they would be forward of the rear wall of the dwelling.

The **curtilage** is the contained area around the dwelling.

## APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY

<http://www.yateleysociety.org.uk>

#### **APPENDIX 4 CONTACT DETAILS**

For further information, please contact the following:

**Hart District Council,  
Civic Offices,  
Harlington Way,  
Fleet,  
Hampshire GU51 4AE  
Tel: 01252 622122**

#### **Listed Buildings within Darby Green CA**

<b>Clarks Farmhouse</b>	<b>Darby Green Lane</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>
<b>Pond Farm</b>	<b>Darby Green Lane</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>
<b>Pond Cottage</b>	<b>Darby Green Lane</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>
<b>Willows</b>	<b>Darby Green Lane</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>

#### **Locally Listed Buildings within Darby Green CA**

<b>Darby Green House</b>	<b>Stroud Lane</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>
<b>Old Cottage</b>	<b>Reading Road</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>
<b>Yew Tree Cottage</b>	<b>Darby Green Lane</b>	<b>Darby Green</b>