

**SHEPHERD NEAME LTD – SITE ADJOINING THE WHEEL INN PH,
WESTWELL, ASHFORD**

HERITAGE STATEMENT

1. Introduction

1. In support of the full planning application proposals for 2 pairs of semi-detached houses, a heritage statement has been prepared to assess the impact of the proposals on the Westwell Conservation Area, designated in 1996.

2. Planning Policy Context

2. In accordance with ABC's requirement to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, NPPF Para 137 states that *'Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas'*. Adopted Ashford Borough Local Plan, 2000: Saved Policies, June 2014 – Policy EN16: Conservation Areas states that:

'Development or redevelopment within Conservation Areas will be permitted provided that such proposals preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. Proposals must fulfil each of the following criteria:

- a) the scale and detailed design of new work has respect for the historic, architectural and landscape criteria of the established character of the area;*
- b) the materials proposed to be used are appropriate to the locality and in sympathy with existing building;*
- c) the following are retained – buildings and streets of townscape character, trees, open spaces, walls, fences or any other features which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area; and*
- d) the use proposed is appropriate'*

3. Against this background, the Westwell Conservation Area Assessment, 1996 does not specifically identify the site as making a contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It does nevertheless refer to *'the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges or other organic elements to the character of the area'*. This description of the Conservation Area's character and appearance is taken into account when assessing the development proposals.

3. Relevant considerations

1. Existing use of the site – The site falls within the curtilage of The Wheel Inn PH and constitutes former beer garden land. Importantly, it is evident that this private open space is largely hidden from view by tall trees along the site's road frontage and, as such, is not integral to the layout of the village. It is not a key feature within the historic environment which contributes to its overall character and appearance – EN16 – Criteria c).

2. Replacement of trees – The scheme proposals do not impact on the small cluster of TPO trees located within the grounds of the Old Vicarage but straddling the boundary of the proposed development site in terms of RPZ's / crowns. In terms of the frontage trees, it has been discovered that most of these are either dead or diseased and are in a very poor condition. Whilst the majority of these trees could be retained as part of the scheme proposals, it has been decided to replace them with native species which will provide a new trees screen along the road well into the future – EN16 – Criteria c).

This is in accordance with the aspirations of the Westwell Conservation Area Assessment. It states that *'The majority of trees are mature'*. It questions whether *'there is a need for some trees to be planted now to follow on in the future'*.

3. Townscape Pattern – The proposed development follows the pattern of small domestic scale residential building within Westwell village by fronting onto the road. In many respects, it mirrors Forge Cottages to the north at the centre of the village (a row of terraced houses) in which the current proposals will be screened in part by new tree planting to retain the wooded nature of the prevailing townscape – EN16 – Criteria a).

4. Materials – The village largely evolved during Victorian times with buildings constructed of red brick predominating. In this regard, the proposed housing will reflect the local building style and materials of existing buildings at the centre of the village including the adjoining Public House, the old School House and Forge Cottages – EN16 – Criteria b).

5. Proposed use – It is evident that the proposed residential development is an appropriate use of a surplus infill site at the centre of a village adjoining a Public House. The proposed houses will be a low traffic generator which will not give rise to any amenity considerations that are likely to detract from the character and appearance of the village. As such, it is considered that the proposed housing will serve to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area to the benefit of future generations to come – EN16 – Criteria d).

4. Conclusions

6. In accordance with the NPPF and local plan policy, it is considered that the proposed infill site represents a suitable site for development within the Westwell Conservations Area.

SM/1 23.8.17