

**Site Allocations Evidence Base
Special Character Area Appraisal
for the Bushey Heath MOD area
2013**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Context*

1.1.1 Hertsmere is a Borough that is made of 4 main settlements with a number of smaller rural villages that are washed over by the Green Belt which makes up approximately 80% of the Borough. Consequently, each main settle has its own distinctive character in terms of appearance, function and interaction and connection with adjoining Boroughs.

1.1.2 Similarly, there are parts of some towns and villages within Hertsmere that are known to have unique historical and architectural significance which it has been considered to desirable to preserve or enhance by virtue of a Conservation Area designation such as is the designation that is afforded to The Lake (which incorporates The Lake, Warren Road, Rose Lawn and The Comyns) which was designated in 1998.

1.1.3 However, it is noted that some areas within Hertsmere's jurisdiction are of special interest by virtue of the environmental quality of an area. This could be because of the pattern, layout or landscaping although unlike designated Conservation Areas, the Special Character Areas would not include any groups of buildings with outstanding architectural quality or significant historical interest. Rather the buildings that would be located would be of high quality and hold some local distinctiveness which has not been significantly eroded over the course of time through extensions and alterations.

1.1.4 Whilst development within Special Character Areas would not be as tightly restricted as development that is located within Conservation Areas, the Special Character Area policy would create additional policy protection to ensure that any new development would respect or enhance the character, appearance of the area and environmental quality of the area.

1.2 *The purpose of this report*

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to review the character of the MOD housing development that is located to the rear of rear of The Lake Conservation Area (at a south westerly to south easterly relative location), Bushey Heath. This area has been considered as it is one of the very few areas of development which has remained largely unaltered since being built. Therefore, the area still appears to be a good example of a cohesive form of mid to late 20th Century planned development. This is because the areas appear to still be under MOD control rather than in the hands of private individuals.

1.2.1 The second function of this report is to make an assessment as to whether the contribution that some or part of this area makes to the area by virtue of its local distinctiveness or quality of the environment is special enough to merit further policy protection so that the environmental quality of the area can remain intact whether it remains to be used for the MOD purposes or not.

2. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

2.1 The Bushey Heath MOD housing area is a relatively new addition to Bushey Heath and therefore has relatively little history. Indeed figure 1 (below) shows a map of the undeveloped area in between Hartsbourne Road to the bottom of the map and Prowse Avenue which runs along the left side of the map in 1934.



OS Map

2.2 There is no planning history of the site due to the MOD status of the development. What is known is that land transfers from landowners occurred in 1929 and 1930 with an additional land transfer to the Secretary of State for Defence occurred during 1958, 1959 and 1977 (the latter refers to land to the southwest of California Lane).



3. AESSING THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

3.1. *Street Pattern*

3.1.1 The street pattern comprises a number of loosely semi-circular block types, interspersed with small cul-de-sacs. The longest road is Beamish Drive which turns into Finucane Rise. This 'spine' road is edged in blue on the map below.



3.1.2 The low-density development is considered to be relatively permeable regarding the interconnectness with the surrounding roads. There are six separate vehicular entrances and exits to and from the area shown on the map above.

3.2. *Plot sizes*

3.2.1 Due to the layout of the of the development of the area in which buildings follow curved roads and where there are a number of corner plots, the plots sizes are not rigidly identical. The plots sizes are however, similar in size to depending on where they are located and are overall considered to be very generous.

3.2.2 Most of the detached dwellings sit in a plot that is approximately 20m in width although there are examples of detached dwellings on corner plots that enjoy an overall width which is much wider at approximately 30m.

3.2.3 The semi-detached dwellings that are located along the western side of Robinson Road each enjoy a plot width of approximately 10m, which broadly reflects the larger plot width of the detached dwellings opposite whilst the semi-detached dwellings that are located along the Allard Crescent and Beamish Drive block enjoy plots of approximately 14m in width.

3.2.4 One notable feature of the area is the openness and greenery of the frontages – there are no examples of large areas of impermeable hardstanding, fences or railings within the area.

3.3. Buildings

3.3.1 The development comprises only detached and semi-detached dwellings which are of similar design. All of the detached dwellings within the area comprise a two storey, hipped roof front projection either centrally located, or located off centre. Most of the semi-detached dwellings have a two storey front projection located at the furthest side of each pair of dwellings that form a 'u' shape overall. The exception to this are the semi-detached dwellings that are located at the south side of Thorn Avenue. These semi-detached dwellings have a flat front elevation but a centrally located two storey hipped roof projection at the rear.

3.3.2 The main roofs of the dwellings are generally hipped with pockets of gable ended main roofs found within the area. There are two types of materials used within the area – A light yellow/brown brick and a dark red/brown brick.

3.3.3 Many of the dwellings have flat roofed garages which are located to the side of the dwellings. There are generally large spaces or 'sky gaps' between the buildings and the buildings are set from the main roads which enhances the overall feeling of spaciousness within the area.

	
House type 1	House type 1a
	
House type 2	House type 2a
	
House type 3	House type 3a
	
House type 4	House type 4a



Source: Google Streetview

3.4. Open spaces

3.4.1 As noted in paragraph 3.3.3, the housing estate retains a feeling of spaciousness. This is because of the loose sense of enclosure created by the building being well spaced, and set back from the road and by the lack of front fences and other means of enclosure. This is especially true of the larger open corner plots.

3.4.2 There are examples of pockets of green open space that have not been fenced off, but these largely comprise 'left over' pieces of land that are largely hidden from the public realm. Therefore, these pieces of land do not fulfil their function as public open space as well as they might if they were sited in a more prominent position within the housing estate.

3.4.3 The public spaces are shown as dark green on the map whilst the semi-public spaces are shown as light green



Source: GIS licence no.

3.5. Vegetation

3.5.1 This area is characterised by high number of trees that are located both at the front of the dwellings and behind. Because of the lack of additions to the dwellings, there is likely to have been less pressure to remove the existing trees. The high number and varied species of trees are considered to enhance the quality of the environment substantially.



Source: Bingmaps

<p>Beamish Drive/Robinson Crescent junction</p>	<p>Thorn Crescent</p>
<p>Giant Tree Hill</p>	<p>Prowse Avenue</p>

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The appraisal of the Bushey Heath MOD housing area shows that this area has a distinctly cohesive identity by virtue of the lack of individual alterations and extensions to the dwellings. The notable lack of hardstandings, fences or other means of enclosure coupled with the set-backs of the original buildings, generous plot sizes, sky-gaps between buildings and significant tree coverage enhances the special environmental quality of the area.

5. SITE ALLOCATIONS POLICY RECOMMENDATION

5.1 There are parts of some towns and villages within Hertsmere that are known to have unique historical and architectural significance and which it has been considered desirable to preserve or enhance by virtue of a Conservation Area designation.

5.2 However, it is noted that the Bushey Heath MOD housing area would comprise an area of special interest by virtue of the environmental quality. This is because of the following features:

- A cohesive feel due to the lack of individual alterations and extensions to the dwellings.
- Generous plot sizes, which are set back from the main road, and general spacing between buildings which enhances the feeling of spaciousness.
- A lack of unsympathetic hardstanding at the front of the buildings and numerous trees.

5.3 Whilst development within the Special Character Area would not be as tightly restricted as development that is located within Conservation Areas, the Special Character Area policy (**SA XX**) guides new development in order to respect or enhance the character, appearance and environmental quality of the area.

SA XX: Bushey Heath MOD housing area

In order to reserve the special character of the Bushey Heath MOD housing area as defined on the proposals map, new development will be assessed using the following criteria:

- i. Any new development must respect the pattern, rhythm, spacing and open setting of the area. New development should be sited on a plot that reflects existing plot sizes and new development must not result in disproportionate plot coverage.
- ii. Any new development within this area must not disrupt the rhythm of existing front building lines or significantly alter existing sky gaps.
- iii. Any new development within this area must compliment the design of existing buildings by virtue of height, scale, bulk, architectural features, materials and in particular roof design, front projections and ridge and eave heights. Any additions to the dwellings should not result in an overbearing addition to the original proportions of the dwelling.
- iv. Any new development should make provision for the retention of soft landscaping between the road and building and respect the open layout of front curtilages.
- v. Any new development must ensure existing trees that make a positive contribution to the character of the area would be retained.

SCHEDULE OF DWELLINGS THAT ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE MOD AREA

1-22 Allard Crescent, 1-16 and 18-34, 35 and 37 Beamish Drive
1-4 Bushell,
1-14, 16 and 18 Finucane Rise,
1-7, 9 and 11 Giant Tree Hill,
1-4 Gillan Green,
1-6, 8,
10 and 12 Gleed Avenue,
1-5 McKellar Close,
1-3 Mungo Park Close,
1-8 Nicholson Drive,
18 to 36 (even) and 51 to 57 (odd) Prowse Avenue,
1-13 (inclusive) and 15-19 (odd) Robinson Crescent,
1-4 Sequdn Close,
2 and 4 Stevens Green,
1-24 Thorn Avenue,
1-4 Treacy Close,