

**ELSTREE VILLAGE  
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**December 2014**



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## INTRODUCTION

The appraisal of Elstree Conservation Area was carried out by BEAMS Ltd, the trading company of the Hertfordshire Buildings Preservation Trust, in conjunction with Hertsmere Borough Council in 2013 and completed by Hertsmere Borough Council in November 2014.

### Conservation Area Designation

A 'conservation area' is a statutory designation intended to conserve the historic environment of a settlement. It is defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance." Local planning authorities have a duty to designate and review conservation areas under Section 69 of the same Act. Section 71 requires them, from time to time, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas. Section 72 requires them to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of their conservation areas in the exercise of their planning functions.

Conservation area designation requires a local planning authority:-

- to preserve and / or enhance the area, in accordance with legislation and national planning policies
- to adopt local planning policies which pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area

Conservation area designation gives a local planning authority:-

- control over demolition of unlisted buildings
- control over work to trees
- more control over advertisements - fewer can be displayed with deemed consent
- more control over development - fewer types can be carried out without the need for planning permission.

Elstree conservation area was first designated in August 1976, and its designation was published in The London Gazette of 22nd April 1977. At the time, Elstree was divided between Hertfordshire and Greater London, and accordingly, the conservation area was designated by three local authorities, the London Boroughs of Barnet and Harrow, and Hertsmere Borough Council. Boundary changes in 1993 abolished this subdivision and united both parts of Elstree within Hertfordshire.

The area was reviewed and extended by Hertsmere Borough Council in 1979, when a short section was added on the north side of Barnet Lane, from Oak Tree Court eastwards to the last house in the settlement. The area and its boundaries were reviewed again for Hertsmere Borough Council during 2012/13 by BEAMS Ltd, part of the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust. This document was drafted as part of the review. It offers guidance intended to assist all those involved in the management of development in Elstree, including residents, architects, developers, council officers and members, and planning inspectors. Part 1 appraises the special character of the conservation area which justifies its designation, while part 2 makes management proposals intended to preserve and enhance that character. It amplifies the policies protecting the historic environment in Hertsmere Borough Council's Core Strategy 2013 and Local Plan (under review 2013).

## **Summary of Special Interest**

Elstree is a historic English village which retains its identity despite its close proximity to London and the M1 motorway, and the growth of nearby settlements of Borehamwood and Barnet. Many of its historic buildings were demolished between c.1880 and c.1970, and replaced by new residential development in small pockets, and by a widened crossroad. These changes have eroded but not effaced its character. Elstree has a distinctive linear layout along the Roman road of Watling Street, which bore medieval pilgrim traffic to St Alban's Abbey, and coaches in the turnpike era. Its historic buildings are varied, including a scattering of timber-framed structures from the 15th to 17th centuries, two imposing Georgian town houses, a number of inns, a Victorian parish church, and modest cottages. It has a number of striking Arts and Crafts buildings, built under the patronage of the 1st Lord Aldenham, including the former school, alms-houses and cottages, as well as Arts and Crafts houses and villas on its later fringes.

## **Location and Surroundings**

The village of Elstree is located on the southern boundary of Hertfordshire, in the Borough of Hertsmere. It is a discrete settlement surrounded by countryside currently protected by Green Belt designation. It lies between the larger settlements of Bushey to the west and Borehamwood to the north-east, from which it remains just separate. To the north is a band of agricultural land, and to the north-east some woodland survives at Abbotsbury. About a mile to the south are the M1 motorway and the boundary dividing Hertfordshire from London (Boroughs of Harrow and Barnet). To the west and south-east is the managed countryside of Elstree Open Space.

The village is formed by a crossroads. The main north-south road, part of a key Roman thoroughfare, is successively called Watling Street, Elstree Hill North, High Street, and Elstree Hill South. The principal east-west road is Barnet Lane to the east and Watford Road to the west. They north-south and the east-west road are respectively designated the A5183 and the A411. The conservation area includes most of the village, but excludes a section to the south-west, consisting of a housing development, and a substantial business park built in the 2000s named Centennial Park.

## **Historic Buildings in the Surrounding Area**

Elstree has an interesting setting with several buildings significant for the history of the village. To the north-west is Aldenham House (listed grade II\*), built c.1672, altered in the 18th and 19th centuries, and converted to Haberdashers' Aske's School since the mid twentieth century. It has a famous early 20th century garden, and its landscape park (both registered grade II) overlaps with the conservation area to the west of Elstree Hill North.

To the north-east on Allum Lane are Nicoll Farmhouse, a timber-framed hall-house dating from c.1500 although much altered, and Elstree Manor House, now a community centre, principally 18th and 19th centuries (both grade II listed). To the east, on the south side of Barnet Lane, is The Leys (listed grade II\*), now St Edmundsbury Hotel, but built as a country house in 1901 by the Scottish arts and crafts architect George Walton. Its presence is indicated on the road by the gateway with round piers and tall wooden gates.

## **Topography**

The village of Elstree is located on high ground c. 140m above sea level, on the crest of a ridge which runs eastward to the A1. The soil is clay. The land around it falls from the highpoint, creating long views over landscape. The distant vistas west from Elstree Hill North, over Aldenham Park, are the finest of many. The views along the green lanes leading to and from the village help preserve its character as a discrete rural settlement. Elstree Hill

South maintains this rustic feel with the help of a tree belt on the west side separating it from a modern housing estate. Equally important to the character of the settlement are the views of the spire of the parish church from the surrounding land.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Etymology

There are various accounts of the significance of the name Elstree. According to some authorities, "Elstree" derives from the Anglo-Saxon phrase "Tidwulf's Tree", which is mentioned as "Tidulfres treow" in an 11–12th century manuscript of an A.D. 786 charter. John Norden notes in *Speculum Britanniae* (1598 and 1723 editions) that in the country of Hertfordshire (sic) was one "ELSTREE in OFFAES grant EAGLESTRE. *Nemus aquilinum*: a place wherit may be thought Eagles bredd in time past, for though it be nowe hilly and heathy it hath beene replenished with stately trees, fit for such fowle to breede and harbour in. It is parcell of the libertie of *S. Albans*". *Nemus aquilinum* is the Latin for *grove of eagles*.

Daniel Defoe, in *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain* (1748), mentioned "Idlestrey or Elstre, is a Village on the Roman Watling-street, on the very Edge of Middlesex; but it is chiefly noted for its Situation, near Brockly-hill, by Stanmore, which affords a lovely View cross Middlesex, over the Thames, into Surry." Daniel Lysons in *The Environs of London* (1811) wrote "The name of this place has been variously written; — Eaglestree, Elstree, Ilstrye, Idlestrye, etc. Norden says that it is called, in Offa's grant to the Abbey of St. Alban's, Eaglestree, that is, says he, "*Nemus aquilinum*, a 'place where it may be thought that eagles bred in time past'." It has been derived also from Idel-street, i.e. the noble road; and Ill-street, the decayed road. May it not have been, rather, a corruption of Eald-street, the old road, i.e. the ancient Watling-street, upon which it is situated?"

### History

The road running north-south through Elstree is a defining feature of the village and has been important throughout its history. First it was a major Roman road which preceded the inception of the settlement, then it became a route for medieval pilgrims visiting the shrine at St Alban's Abbey, later it was as a turnpike road for coaches in the 18th and 19th centuries, and now in modern times it gives access to the M1 motorway. It shaped the linear form of the settlement, which remains an important characteristic, although eroded by back land development.

The north-south thoroughfare is the major Roman road of Watling Street, which linked the cities of *Verulamium* (St Albans) with *Londinium* (London). In fact it was probably established as a trade route, running to a crossing point of the Thames, before the Roman invasion of Britain (44 AD). However at about the end of the 1st century AD the road may have been straightened, adapted and metalled, and most of it has been in continuous use ever since. It formed the parish boundary between Elstree to the east and Aldenham to the west until the boundary was moved further west in 1993. In 1947 a Roman kiln was unearthed behind the Holly Bush inn.

For most of its history, Elstree was a small village in a rural parish composed of pasture and woodland and the hamlet of Borehamwood. No manor of Elstree is recorded in Domesday book of 1086, nor does the village appear in the Hertfordshire Lay Subsidies, a tax listing of the early 14th century. However documentary and archaeological evidence suggest that it was a thriving settlement from the late 12th century. Matthew Paris, medieval chronicler and monk at St Alban's Abbey (d.1259), mentions Elstree, or 'Tidulvestre.' Pottery sherds of the 13th century were discovered at 12 High Street in 1981-82, and quantities of 13th and 14th century pottery have been found elsewhere in the village. It was owned by St Alban's Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries, when it passed into a series of private hands.

It became a resting place for pilgrims visiting the shrine at St Alban's Abbey. The Venerable Bede suggests that there was already a church and a shrine on the site of St Alban's martyrdom when he was writing in the early 8th century. The flow of pilgrims probably reached greater heights in the early 14th century, when the Abbey erected a shrine (c.1308)

and completed a new Lady Chapel (1327). Many of the inns recorded later in Elstree were owned by the Abbey and established for this traffic. Elstree was initially a chapelry of the Abbey, but became a parish before 1424.

The north-south thoroughfare was a turnpike road in the 18th and 19th centuries. Six inns were active in the 18th century, including the Artichoke, the Holly Bush, the Green Dragon, the Plough, the Red Lion, and the White Horse. All are extant except the Red Lion (demolished 1936), although the Plough was rebuilt c.1830-40, and the Green Dragon has been re-converted into a house. In 1833-34 four major stage coaches called at Elstree. The London to St Albans coach, the Self Defence, called at the Green Dragon, and the Accommodation and the Safety called at the Plough, the London to Birmingham coach, the Crown Prince, stopped at the Artichoke, while the London to Shenley service halted at the Red Lion. Turnpike traffic helped sustain Elstree as a commercial centre, and at this time it had two bakers, butchers, carpenters, carriers, and grocers, and a harness maker, a smith and a wheelwright. However it remained relatively small, and Daniel Lysons in 1796 recorded that the number of houses in the parish was fifty.

The Sellars Map of Hertfordshire, dated 1676 shows the former Roman road and the village, with the surrounding area dominated by woodland. The parish included brick and tile making fields. The common of Borehamwood was enclosed in 1781, following enactment of a bill in 1776. Land on the edge of Aldenham common, west of the conservation area, was excavated during the 1790s by Napoleonic prisoners of war to create Aldenham Reservoir. It was to supply water to the Grand Junction Canal in north London, and to maintain the water levels on the rivers Gade and Colne for local millers, in order to compensate for water diverted into the canal. John Hassal, in *Tour of the Grand Junction* (1819), notes that "This noble sheet of water occupies a space of considerable extent on the verge of Aldenham Common, which thirty years ago was a barren waste; here the improvements in agriculture are indeed conspicuous, for at this place a poor, sandy, meagre, wretched soil has now by good husbandry been converted into rich pasturage."

The population of Elstree remained low until a rapid rise following the arrival of the railway in 1868. It grew as follows:-

- 286 in 1801
- 525 in 1871
- 662 in 1881
- 805 in 1891
- 1,323 in 1901

Borehamwood became a separate parish in 1909. The village lost its self-sufficient nature and took on the character of a commuter settlement. In the late 19th and early 20th century the village expanded south along Elstree Hill South and east along Barnet Lane with residential development consisting of detached and semi-detached villas in arts and crafts styles, set back from the road and standing in ample grounds. On the High Street, shops were converted to housing, and outbuildings and farm buildings lost their function and were demolished. In the later 20th and early 21st centuries the outbuildings on the land behind many historic buildings were replaced by small modern housing developments. Houses turned into offices, inns converted to restaurants, buildings such as the school and the almshouses changed function. By 2011 the population was 5,110.

The layout of Elstree's crossroads was staggered, making them very awkward to negotiate by modern traffic. In 1967 they were widened, causing the loss of further historic buildings, and creating a hiatus in the densely knit pattern of the High Street.

Elstree was long divided by its four roads into two counties and four parishes. The southern half was in Middlesex, the western quarter in Harrow and the eastern in Barnet, while the northern half was in Hertfordshire, in Aldenham parish to the west and Elstree parish to the east. It was united within Hertfordshire and in Elstree parish in 1993.



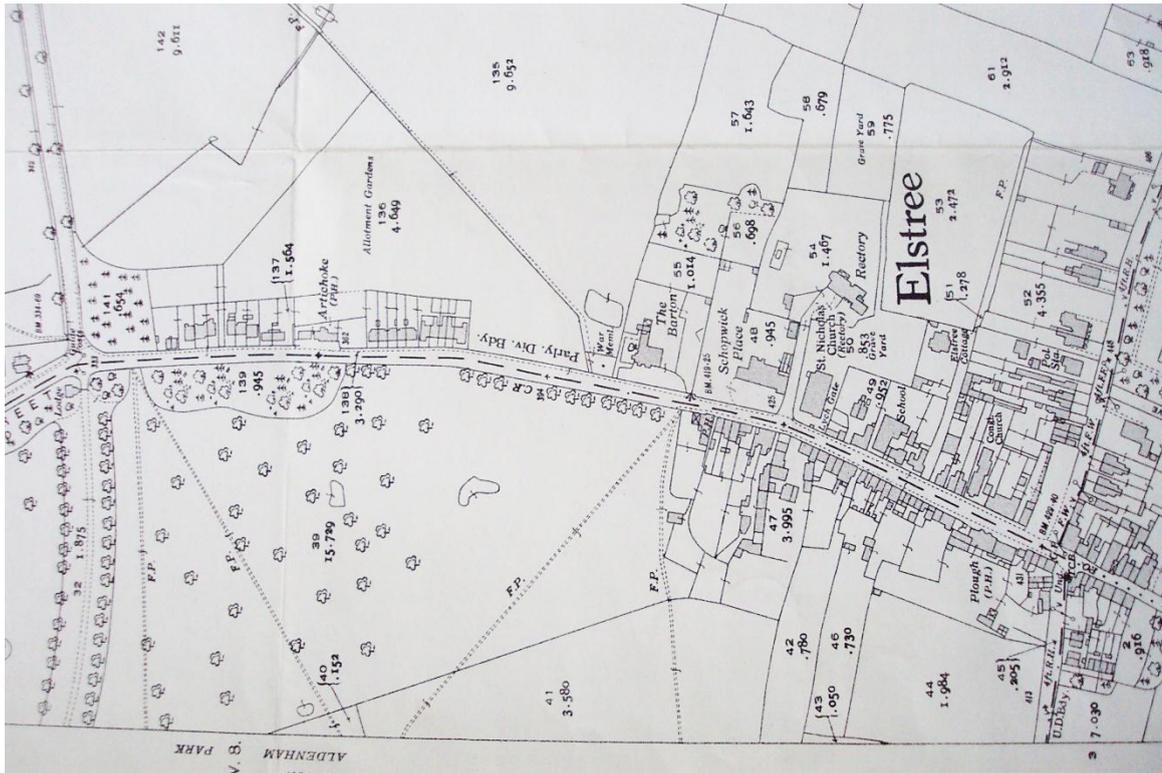


Figure C: O.S. Map 3rd Edition 1914 (northern half of village)



Figure D: O.S. Map 3rd Edition 1914 (south and east of village)

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS

### Introduction

The conservation area has considerable historic and architectural interest, with more early work than might appear at first. This has not always been recognised, for example the Hertfordshire volume of the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (1910) mentions only one Elstree building, the parish church, although it purports to cover all buildings before 1700. Elstree has four late-medieval timber-framed hall houses, the Holly Bush inn, and numbers 12, 9 and 1-3 High Street, and three timber-framed buildings of the 17th century at 18 High Street, Old St Mary's on High Street, and 1 to 3 Barnet Lane. There are substantial Georgian houses of Hill House and Schopwick Place, reflecting Elstree's desirable location close to London, and lesser Georgian houses at 15 to 17 and 19 High Street.

More recent interest is the building patronage of Henry Hucks Gibbs (1819-1907), the first Lord Aldenham. A South American merchant and banker, he inherited Aldenham unexpectedly from a cousin in 1842, but did not take up residence at Aldenham House until 1869, when the railway had arrived. Lord Aldenham was an active patron of architecture on his estate and in Aldenham and Elstree villages. He was a supporter of the Tractarians, and a leading member and president of the Club of Nobody's Friends, a High Anglican group to which the leading Victorian church architect William Butterfield also belonged. He enlarged Aldenham House after 1868, work which is attributed to Sir Arthur Blomfield. He commissioned Butterfield to build house, dairy and cottages (1878-81) at Home Farm, Aldenham Road (grade II). He also instigated work in Elstree, where he built alms-houses, a school and cottages c.1890 in Arts and Crafts style.

However the conservation area does not survive well, and the historic buildings it has lost are too numerous for more than a selection to be mentioned. The rectory was demolished 1836, and its replacement was demolished in turn in 1968, to be superseded by the modern primary school. North of Schopwick Place was the 16th-century Elstree Hall, demolished in 1881. The Red Lion Inn, a 17th-century timber-framed structure, mentioned in 1656, on the north corner of High Street and Barnet Road, was demolished in 1936. Many timber-framed cottages were removed between c.1880 and the 1960s, when the widening of the crossroads caused further losses, although most are recorded in historic mapping and early photographs. Their locations are marked throughout the area by pockets of 20th and 21st century housing of mixed quality. Many of the surviving historic buildings have been much altered, and two of the four timber-framed hall houses have lost some of their bays. Very little timber framing is evident on building exteriors, as most is encased in later brickwork.

Elstree retains a distinct character as an ancient settlement on a historic thoroughfare, with ample architectural interest, which justifies its designation as a conservation area. Nonetheless the many demolitions have undermined the tight-knit grain of its historic form and left a vacuum at the crossroads, giving the village an unresolved character. Accordingly, Elstree's significance depends more on underlying character than on immediate appeal.

The following account of the conservation area's historic buildings proceeds from north to south, and from west to east. It also indicates buildings which are listed or of local importance, with a full list in the Annex. The conservation area has two main parts of different character and date: the High Street, with medieval and later historic buildings, and Elstree Hill North and South and Barnet Lane, which represent later extensions of c. 1900. The strange numbering system of the High Street is no doubt a legacy of the time when Elstree was divided north-south between two counties.

## Watling Street

The first buildings of the conservation area are associated with Aldenham House and located near the south-east entrance to the estate. Slightly north-east of the entrance are Corner Cottage and Elm Cottage (local importance). They were built c. 1800, probably as estate workers cottages, and their plain late-Georgian style provides a striking contrast to the gate lodge of nearly a century later.

Elstree Hill Lodge (local importance) is a former gate lodge to Aldenham House, and provides an interesting visual connection between the village and its surroundings, and a reminder of its manorial past. It has lively architectural interest, built of c.1890 of red brick in Arts and Crafts style. Its roofs are variously half-hipped and gabled, with decorative ridge tiles, and tile hanging in the gables, and it has wooden casement windows with stone lintels and aprons, a west range with chamfered corners, and a timber porch with hood on the south side. It was extended northwards in 1903 to accommodate an early bathroom. It is marred by rebuilding of boundary wall, but the gate piers with stone caps survive.



*Figure 1: Elstree Hill Lodge, Watling Street (Above)*

## Elstree Hill North

Elstree Hill North slopes up toward the High Street, flanked by Aldenham Park to the west. Until the 20th century there was a gap between its buildings and the village proper.

It begins with two groups of cottages, numbers 5, 7 and 9, and numbers 11, 13 and 15 (both local importance), which were built c.1896, under Lord Aldenham's patronage, for estate workers. They are Arts and Crafts in style, with a battery of features characteristic of medieval vernacular buildings such as English bond brickwork, an upper storey set in the roof and jettied out, big chimney-stacks, cat slide roofs, and prominent gables with timber-framing, braces, tile-hanging, and barge-boards. Their fenestration includes hoodmoulds, brick transoms and mullions, and quirky details such as buttresses between windows. Some suffer from replacement doors and windows unrelated to their architectural interest.

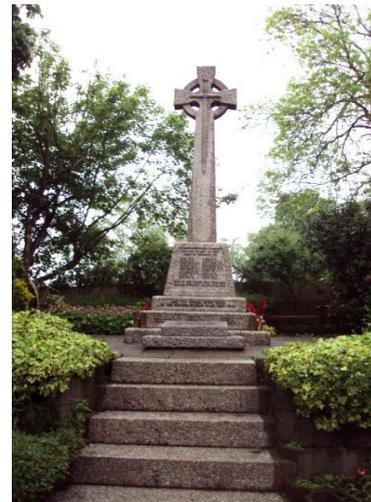


*Figure 2: 5-9 Elstree Hill North (Left)*

The Shtiebel synagogue (local importance as Artichoke public house) is interesting as one of the many historic public houses in Elstree, reflecting the importance of the north-south thoroughfare, which bore pilgrim traffic and was later a turnpike road. An inn is mentioned on this site in 1750, and recorded in early photographs, but extensively rebuilt in 1870 following a fire. It retains a low-key symmetrical design and shallow-pitched slate roof characteristic of a Georgian building. It has a green setting flanked by long views to the east.

Further cottages at numbers 23 to 41 share the vernacular style of numbers 5 to 15 although with a lesser degree of architectural ambition, featuring gables, tile hanging, and prominent chimney-stacks, some marred by upvc windows. At one time the village school (opened 1831) and alms-houses stood here, before they were rebuilt on a new location on High Street.

The war memorial (local importance), unveiled in 1921, is a simple Celtic cross in stone, inscribed with the dead of two world wars. It is well set off by densely-planted verdant background.



*Figure 3: War Memorial, Elstree Hill North (Right)*

### **High Street (north of crossroads)**

Here at the entrance to the village proper is a high point of the conservation area. The three contiguous structures to the west form a continuous building line rising from the pavement edge, a characteristic medieval pattern and a feature of the conservation area. There were many buildings and groups of the kind in the village before modern demolitions.

The Holly Bush inn is the only grade II\* listed building in the village, significant as a hall house of c.1450, although altered, with much of the street front now 19th and 20th century. The main range, lying parallel to the street, originally contained a two-bay hall open to the roof, but now has a 17th-century floor and chimney inserted. At the north end of the hall was a one-bay service range, demolished in the 1920s, revealing the timber frame and roof truss previously within the building. This has a robust arch-braced tie-beam with jowled posts, filled with brick nogging, a fine site on entering the village from the north. The two-storey cross-wing contained a parlour below and solar above, with the upper floor formerly jettied out but now underbuilt. The rear three bays of the cross-wing are weather-boarded and probably date from the 16th century. They formerly contained kitchen and stables. The building was converted into two cottages in the 18th century but is now an inn again.



*Figure 4: The Holly Bush Inn and cottages, High Street (Above)*

No. 18, Ridleys, and Clodhuddle Cottage (grade II listed) was a four-bay weather-boarded and timber-framed house of the early 17th century and later, with a Queen strut roof with straight braces. It is now three cottages, each with a dainty pilastered door case and hoods of the early-19th century, while Ridleys also has a shop front with entablature, pilasters and stall riser. The rear elevations have hips and gables.

No. 19 (grade II listed) is a late Georgian double-fronted house with characteristic end chimneystack and sash windows presenting a charming symmetrical front to the street. Nos. 15, 16 & 17, The Office on the Hill (local importance), was probably built in 1820 as a butcher's shop, but its shop window has been removed. Its street front forms a nice complement to numbers 19 and 12, and contrasts its rear elevation, which has two cross wings with hipped tile roofs.



*Figure 5: The Office on the Hill, 15-17 High Street (Left)*



*Figure 6: 19, 18, Ridleys, Clodhuddle Cottage, High Street (Right)*

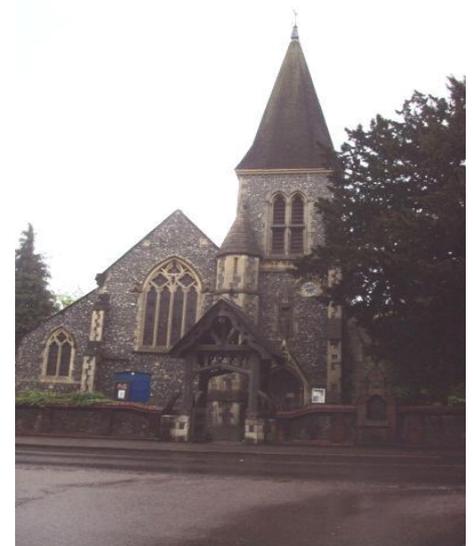
Opposite this group to the east are the extensive brick garden walls of Schopwick Place, a fine feature of the High Street, continuing into St Nicholas Close, an inviting lane which once led to the rectory. Schopwick Place (grade II listed) was built c.1720 by Samuel Nicoll, Lord of the Manor of Titburst and Kendals (d.1723), probably replacing an earlier structure, as Schopwicks is mentioned in a title deed of 1528. The plan is double pile, as the twin lateral chimney-stacks indicate. The main elevations are symmetrical designs of five bays and two storeys, plus an attic with dormers behind a parapet. The entrance front has a central classical doorcase composed of engaged Doric columns and open pediment, while the garden front has two full-height polygonal bay windows. The main block has single-storey extensions either side, joining outbuildings on the cross-axis which consisted of stables and coach house. Originally the flanking bays were blank walls with a single doorway, and the

pavilions had two arched openings, but by c. 1800 windows had been introduced in the walls and the pavilions were enclosed. The whole is an idiosyncratic form, a sort of Palladian country house in miniature, and creates an imposing street front.



*Figure 7: Shopwick Place, High Street (Above)*

Two more medieval buildings follow. St Nicholas's church (grade II listed) has been the site of a place of worship since at least 1188. In 1360 a new church was built and made a rectory independent of St Alban's Abbey. The medieval church was rebuilt in 1853 by Philip Hardwick, although the 15th-century south aisle, font and three roof trusses remain, as well as the south doorway of 1460, with the arms of St Alban's Abbey and the rose of Henry VI. The Victorian church has an appealing street front, with a staircase turret, and a tower and broach spire, while the material of knapped flint gives the church and its perimeter wall a distinctive black exterior. The lych gate of 1909 commemorates the son of Sir Trevor Dawson, of Edgewarebury House on Barnet Lane.



*Figure 8: St Nicholas's Church, High Street (Above)*

No. 12 (grade II listed) is a two-bay timber-framed house behind a modern refronting with vermiculated keystones. It was originally part of 12-15 High Street, a long timber-framed hall-house of six or seven bays, dating from c.1500. In the 18th century number 12 was divided off, and nos. 13-15 became the Green Dragon public house, which was demolished c.1966-70. Number 12 retains one of the two bays of the hall, with a roof truss formed of a tie beam and an arch-braced collar, and an original window with wooden mullions in the rear wall.

Opposite, on the east side of High Street, is a trio of buildings erected in the 1880s for Lord Aldenham. They are interesting both for his patronage, and for their design in a striking Arts and Crafts style, which is reflected in many buildings in the area.

St Nicholas's school (grade II listed) is now the Progressive synagogue, reflecting Hertsmere's large Jewish population (one in seven). It was built 1882-83, in a glowing orange brick laid in English bond, with tile-hanging and mock timber-framing in the gables and the centre of upper storey, and external chimney-stacks. The charming asymmetry of the two

wings suggests that each belongs to a different date, as frequently seen in medieval buildings. Timber-framed cottages and a barn were demolished to make way for it.

The Alms-houses (grade II listed) were erected at same date as the school. They have mock timber-framing with brick-nogging, steeply pitched roofs with decorative ridge tiles, and prominent gables in contrasting render. They are a rebuilding on a new site of alms- houses built for three women in 1840 by George Byng MP.

Adjacent to the alms-houses is a small green lane called New Road, leading to Elstree Cottage. It has prominent chimney-stacks, and gables with timber-framing, although it has been unsympathetically extended. On the opposite side of New Road was one of the two smithys recorded in in the village in 1898.



*Figure 9: Progressive Synagogue (former St Nicholas's School) and Almshouses, High Street (Left)*

*Figure 10: Elstree Cottage, New Road, off High Street (Right)*

Beyond a modest group of Victorian cottages on High Street is Elstree free church (local importance), built 1876 as a Congregational church. Its rectangular plan, simple massing without projections or tower, and its entrance front on the street, are typical of non-conformist buildings. It has a well-integrated rear extension, continuing the form of the main structure, but contrasting its rendered walls with natural wood shingles.

Adjacent is Old St Mary's house and shop (grade II listed), which has a three-bay 17th-century timber-framed core in an 18th-century brick casing with a large chimney-shaft. The outbuilding to the rear (grade II listed), timber-framed and tile-hung, was probably a small coach house or barn, and is a rare survival among the village's many historic outbuildings.

Returning to the west side of the road, The East restaurant (local importance) was originally of a continuous built-up frontage, but now stands isolated following the demolitions associated with the widening of Watford Road to the south, and the building of Watling Court to the north on a different building line. The first inn recorded on the site was the Swan in 1637, also mentioned in the Hearth Tax in 1670. The Plough inn was first recorded in 1753, and a deed of sale of 1797 records that it included "houses, outhouses, edifices, barns, stables, yards, gardens, orchards, ways". The substantial outbuildings no doubt provided stabling when the inn was a coaching stop on the turnpike road. It was rebuilt c. 1830-1840, and its double-pile plan, symmetrical elevations and low-pitched roof are characteristic of a late Georgian date, although the bay windows and five pairs of lofty chimney-stacks are no doubt later additions.



Figure 11: The East restaurant (former Plough Inn), High Street (Above)

### High Street (south of crossroads)

Loss of buildings on three sides of the crossroads have left a vacuum in the village centre, but the building on the fourth side, the south-east, survives. Nos. 1 to 3 (grade II listed) is an early 16th-century three-bay timber-framed structure with a 17th century chimney-shaft. Its architectural interest is most evident in its interior, while its exterior consists of a mid-18th-century brick refronting, and modern shop fronts.

No. 9, 9a and Cloud Cottage (grade II listed) has an early-19th-century stuccoed front with a tall parapet, suggesting a classical structure, with a cart entrance to the south, and a brick building behind. Within, however, is a medieval timber-framed house of c.1500 with a two-bay hall, as shown by the smoke-blackened roof timbers. The hall retains an original window with wooden mullions in the rear wall. The third bay of the house to the north was a service bay with a solar above. The floor and chimney were inserted later, probably in the 17th century, when a three-bay 17th-century timber-framed cottage, with a roof truss of tie-beam and lower king strut, was built to the rear of the hall. The contrast between the classical front and the medieval building behind is clearly seen on the north side elevation, and nicely epitomises the different phases of Elstree's history.

Further south, Manaton House (local importance) is a well-preserved early-19th-century cottage with good detailing, including original windows, porch, and chimney-stacks. It is interesting historically, as it formed part of a farmyard reaching back from the High Street, which was demolished in the years before the First World War.

High Street from this point southwards has a more rural character, preserved by green screening despite modern development either side. The last building is Hill House (grade II listed), built as a country residence for John Rudge 1779 (see rainwater head). His descendant Edward Rudge left it to the Rev. Evan Rowsell for a few pupils in 1842, and it became Elstree Preparatory School from c.1847 to 1939, when the school was evacuated to Berkshire and did not return. The headmaster from 1860, the Rev. Thompson Podmore, lived at Schopwick Place. After many changes of use, Hill House is now a nursing home.

It is a red brick structure of two storeys with attics on a double-pile plan. It has a distinctive street elevation, with two-full height bay windows rising to a parapet, and flanking the central entrance bay with Venetian window above and a later porch below. The large site has buildings of various dates and a tall and imposing brick boundary wall to the south. To the left

of Hill House is a flanking block of similar late-18th or early-19th century date, and to the rear is a three-storey 19th-century block. To the right is a long two-storey wing with steeply-pitched roofs and irregular fenestration which suggest an earlier date, as well as a 19th century cottage and outbuildings.

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### **Elstree Hill South**

The main village terminates at the end of High Street, and the tree-lined downward slope of Elstree Hill South has a contrasting, rural character. Appropriately its building begin with Edgewarebury farm, including a farmhouse of c. 1900 and, directly behind it, a 19th-century timber-framed barn (both local importance).

The land further south on the east side of the hill was first offered for sale as building plots in 1904 and 1905, and accordingly the houses post-date these years. They are a series of semi-detached houses in vernacular styles with features including large gables with token timber-framing and barge-boards, recessed porches, bay windows, steeply-pitched roofs

and prominent chimney-stacks. They are enhanced by their setting, although marred by the hard surfacing of their forecourts.

## Barnet Lane

On the south corner of Barnet lane is the 19th-century stable wing of 1 to 3 High Street, forming a long low line, with taller gabled blocks at either end. It is an important feature beginning Barnet Lane, and valuable to the conservation area where many outbuildings have been demolished.

To the north are Nos. 1, 2 and 3 (grade II listed), which was a three bay timber-framed house of the 17th century or earlier, with central chimney stacks of the 17th and 18th centuries. It is now three dwellings, with the original entrance as the centre of the three doorways, and the timber-frame hidden within a later brick and weather-boarded exterior. The rear wing is 19th century.

The buildings of Barnet Lane hereafter are of c.1900 or later. To the south are two interesting pairs of villas of c.1890, The Haven, The Garth, Brightwell and County Corner, in vernacular style, of good red brick, set back from the road in a green setting. They have very good original detailing, including prominent chimney-stacks, projecting gables with tile-hanging and bargeboards, integral bay windows and entrance porches, original doors, and casement windows of varied design and size in white-painted timber. Their very steeply-pitched roofs contain attics in two tiers.

Summer Grove, a short turning off Barnet Lane, has five pairs of semi-detached villas built 1886 (date stones), of considerable architectural interest within a small compass. This lies partly in their materials, particularly polychromatic red and yellow brickwork, and partly in features such as hood moulds and decorative bargeboards. Their interest is enhanced by their excellent state of preservation, marred only by roof lights.



*Figure 12: The Haven, The Garth, Brightwell and County Corner, Barnet Lane (Left)*

*Figure 13: Summer Grove, off Barnet Lane (Right)*

On the corner of Barnet Lane and Fortune Lane is a white brick wall with gate piers and railings which is a formal entrance to a substantial villa, Summerfield House, built before the First World War. It consists of a two-storey cubic block, built of polychromatic brick, with a lantern above, extravagant eaves treatment, and a very tall lateral chimney-stack. Further south, along Fortune Lane, its former stable yard has been converted into residential units, with the addition of new development. Its original function is commemorated in the name Coach House.

Also on Fortune Lane is St Mary's Croft (local importance), a substantial Arts and Crafts design of c. 1904 notable for the quality of its materials, including glowing orange brick on the ground floor, and tile-hanging of similar hue on the first and attic floors. It is closely

related to the c.1890 villas on Barnet Lane. Fortune Lane is named after a house called the Fortune which was destroyed by a bomb in 1940. It originally continued south to Edgewarebury Common, but the enclosures of 1850 diverted the course of its southern end.



*Figure 14: Summerfield House, Barnet Lane (Left)*  
*Figure 15: St Mary's Croft, Fortune Lane, off Barnet Lane (Right)*

On the north side of Barnet Lane are nos. 4 and 5, a pair of Victorian cottages. The former Metropolitan Police Station dated 1892 (local importance) is an unusual four-square building with a pyramid roof & flanking chimneystacks. It is now flats, no. 8 & 8b.

Three houses of c.1890 are built in a sober Queen Anne style. Broseley and Claremore have steep roofs and gables, prominent barge boards and eaves, recessed porches, bay windows, windows with segmental arched heads, and brown brick. Elstree Lodge is notable for the line of three gables on its west elevation.

Further east are villas of a later date and lesser architectural interest. They are Rhondda and Burbank (north side), with board school windows and dormers, Stoneycroft House, Pelham, with a huge catslide roof and two tiers of dormers, Cotswold and Pennimead, and Stowe March (south side).

## **NEUTRAL AND NEGATIVE BUILDINGS**

Most of the modern development in the conservation area is unrelated to its historic character and architectural interest. At the same time, however, its impact is limited by its discreet location on back land, by its modest scale, consisting mainly of houses of two or three stories and bays, and by its division into a series of different groups of varied dates and styles, which prevents it dominating the historic settlement. Accordingly, most recent building has a neutral rather than a negative role in the conservation area.

New development on Elstree Hill North (east side) includes numbers 17 to 21 (Field House), numbers 43 to 63, The Bartons, ten flats which replaced a Victorian villa of that name of c.1881, three detached houses south of church, and more houses south of the school and almshouses. On the west side is Romeland Court, apparently a modern terrace of three houses, actually six flats. South-east of the crossroads is an eighteen-house development called West View Gardens and Court, built on the site of a farm yard, composed of outbuildings arranged on a U-plan, demolished before the First World War. On Barnet Lane (north side) is a modern staggered terrace, and backland developments of Yew Tree Court,

Oak Tree Court, and George's Mead. Barnet Lane (south side) has new housing on the corner of Summer Grove, and at May Gardens on Fortune Lane. These developments are frequently accompanied by utilitarian garaging, prominently located on the street front, with flat roofs, and double doors opening up and over.

The best of the new housing is in May Gardens, south of Barnet Lane, although it has a neutral role in the conservation area. The houses have steeply-pitched tile roofs with chimney-stacks and projecting gables, windows with glazing bars, mixed materials including dark brick quoins and lintels, timber porches, green planting and front gardens. The best example is number 8, while some are marred by garages at the front and clumsy giant dormers.

Two developments however have a negative impact on the conservation area. One is Watling Court, a block of flats on the west side of High Street, set back from the established building line. It is a long block of nine bays and three stories, its length exacerbated by a flat roof, partly raised on pilotti above an open ground floor, in cheap brick with upvc windows, it detracts from the character of the conservation area in almost every respect. Its appearance is worsened by the litter of estate agents' signs which very often line its street front. Another, lesser negative group is Romeland, opposite the school, a backland development which disrupts the traditional layout of the village, with houses to the north disfigured by enlarged mansard roofs and dormers.



*Figure 16: Watling Court, High Street (Left)  
Figure 18: Romeland, off High Street (Right)*

## **INTERESTING CHARACTERISTICS**

Elstree's greenery, although not extensive, is pervasive, and important for its character. The village is approached and left on all four sides along green lanes, which sustain its character as a rural village and a discrete settlement, despite all the change it has undergone. The greenery is particularly effective looking south along Elstree Hill South and into the sylvan distance. Elstree Hill North has a fine verdant setting, with long views east and especially west, through a mature chestnut tree belt opening into the green space of Aldenham Park, and reaching to a distant horizon.

Within the village there are appealing small green lanes between buildings, for example between 5 to 9 and 11 to 15 Elstree Hill North, and between Schopwick Place and the parish church. There is sporadic greenery providing a good setting for interesting buildings, for example around the church and the war memorial, while trees and hedges on both sides of High Street south of the crossroads provide partial screening for modern housing.

Elstree Hill South has a different character from the village, with grass verges, ash and other mature trees, and houses set slightly above road level, against a backdrop of greenery and open sky. Barnet Lane is similarly green although more urban in character.

Views into the conservation area from the surrounding land are limited, but Allum Lane yields inviting views of the church spire, the rear elevations of cottages on Elstree Hill North, and Elstree Hill Lodge.



*Figure 18: Greenery on New Road, off High Street (Left)*

*Figure 19: Greenery and boundary wall on Fortune Lane, off Barnet Lane (Right)*

Elstree's buildings include the variety of traditional materials to be expected in an English village: walls of timber-frame and brick, with some weather-boarding, stucco, render, knapped flint, timber-framing with brick nogging, predominantly wooden sash windows, roofs of tile and slate, brick chimneys, with clay chimney pots still common. Striking materials include the high quality soft orange brick of Lord Aldenham's and other buildings of c.1890, the glossy black knapped flint of the parish church and its perimeter wall, and the polychromatic brickwork of Summerfield House and the Summer Grove villas.

## **NEGATIVE FEATURES**

### *Road Signage and Markings*

Perhaps the most obvious negative feature of the village is road signage. At time of writing this included strident street markings, for example double white line in the centre of the High Street, while the crossroads were littered with highways signs, traffic lights, and railings, with similar paraphernalia on Elstree Hill South.

Recent highways improvements at the crossroads have however now rationalised the road system. This has included corresponding improvements to road markings and the removal of railings. This has greatly improved the character and appearance of this section of the conservation area.

All principal roads have very tall modern lamp posts, and the bus stops are modern designs at variance with their historic context. The railings by the war memorial and the signage by Elstree Hill Lodge are placed without regard to the character of the area. There is more clutter before the church.

### *Commercial Signage*

Much of the commercial signage in the area is over-sized, for example on the shop adjacent to St Mary's House, and at 1-3 High St.

### *Alterations to historic buildings*

The character of many historic buildings is undermined by alterations in modern materials and inappropriate design and scale. Shop fronts with plate glass and large fascias mar 1-3

High Street and 11, 13 and 15 High Street. An outside dormer window on the front roof slope disfigures 5 & 7 High Street, and replacement doors and windows in main elevations mar many cottages and houses on Elstree Hill North and South.

#### *Private paraphernalia*

Many buildings suffer from prominently located ariels, including the Holly Bush inn and adjacent structures, while The Bartons have particularly intrusive satellite dishes and ariels. Burglar alarms on main elevations and prominent boiler flues also detract from the character of the area.

#### *Boundary Treatment*

The modern boundary walling of the area is formal, and inconsistent with the vernacular character of the buildings and area. This is particularly true at St Mary's Croft, where it is exacerbated by the contrast between the brick of the boundary wall and the glowing orange of the brick and tile of the house. Similarly the boundary walls of Elstree Hill Lodge have been rebuilt in a low quality brick which does not match the dwelling. At Schopwick Place, the railings of the boundary wall are a lame modern replacement, in steel instead of iron, and the forecourt is covered by a hard surface, which both detract from the house's setting. The entrance to New Road has metal gates of urban character.

#### *Landscaping*

The setting of many buildings is harmed by the loss of boundary structures and the introduction of hard surfaces for parking before front elevations. Examples are the cottages on Elstree Hill North, and the houses in Barnet Lane. Such treatment can be very effectively mitigated by generous hedging and planting, and designed surfacing and good maintenance, as shown at Redlands on Elstree Hill South.

Old hedgerows consisting of local species are becoming rarer in the village, and species associated with urban screening, particularly Leyland Cypress and Laurel, have been introduced.

#### *Traffic*

Elstree is subject to heavy traffic, which undermines its character as a rural village, and detracts from the environmental quality and attractiveness of the area. This is the most difficult to remedy of all the various phenomena which have a negative impact on the village, although it is understood that a by-pass was considered in the mid-1990s among HCC's highway proposals.

However, improvements to the crossroads have recently been completed. These have significantly improved traffic movement. They have also enabled further enhancements to the conservation area to be introduced. These include the introduction of more sympathetic pavement finishes and curbing, along with new street furniture. These have made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation. It is recommended that further opportunities to improve the public realm are taken based on the new standards introduced.

## **MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

### *Boundary Review*

In the main the boundaries of the conservation area are rationally drawn to include the settlement as a whole, except the modern housing development and business park to the south-west. However, the exclusion of the end south side of Barnet Lane east of Fortune Lane appears inconsistent with the inclusion of the north side east of Fortune Lane. The architectural interest of this section, based on Arts and Crafts villas of the post First World War period, is lesser than that of High Street, but it equals, and possibly exceeds, that of the north side of the Lane.

### *New Buildings*

The interest of the conservation area has been undermined, but not destroyed, by the loss of many historic buildings in the 19th and 20th centuries. The existing mix of historic and new building should not be further altered significantly. However the replacement of Watling Court would be welcomed, as the main building which has a negative impact on the conservation area. Its relatively large size and its prominent location on the High Street exacerbate its impact, and a good new building in its place could greatly enhance the character of the area and the setting of the surrounding historic structures.

### *Buildings of Local Importance*

The architectural and historic interest of Elstree is well protected by the designation of buildings of local importance. One further addition, Summerfield House on Barnet Lane, is worthy of consideration.

### *Article 4 Directions*

Many buildings which contribute to the architectural interest of the conservation area have had detrimental alterations, particularly new doors and windows in styles and materials which conflict with the area's vernacular character. It is recommended that Article 4 Directions are considered to prevent further incremental loss of interest. Their scope would require careful consideration but should probably include further example of Arts and Crafts design such as 5 to 15 Elstree Hill North and St Mary's Croft on Fortune Lane.

### *Tree Preservation Orders*

It is recommended that Hertsmere's Tree Officer undertakes a survey of the conservation area to assess whether any trees warrant further protection.

### *Street Furniture and Signage*

It is recommended that the road signage of the conservation area be regularly reviewed by the Highways Authority. Some of it appears to be redundant (following changes of use for example) or unnecessary. At time of writing HCC was proposing to modify the crossroads. This has been done and has made a significant improvement to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Management opportunity's to maintain and rationalize the approach to the use, and wherever possible, reduction of signage is recommended.

### *Public Consultation*

It is recommended that consideration be given to submitting the draft appraisal to public consultation.

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    Third Edition 1914  
    Fourth Edition 1935

## ANNEXES

### Statutory Listed buildings (14):

All are grade II, except the Holly Bush Inn which is II\*

High Street	Holly Bush Inn No. 18, Ridleys and Clodhoddle Cottage No. 19 Schopwick Place Church of St Nicholas No. 12 Hertsmere Progressive Synagogue, formerly St Nicholas's school Nos. 1, 2 & 3 Alms-houses Old St Mary's & shop to north Outbuilding to rear of Old St Mary's Nos. 1 to 3 Nos. 9, 9a & Cloud Cottage
Elstree Hill South Barnet Lane	Hill House Nos. 1, 2 & 3

### Buildings of local importance (19)

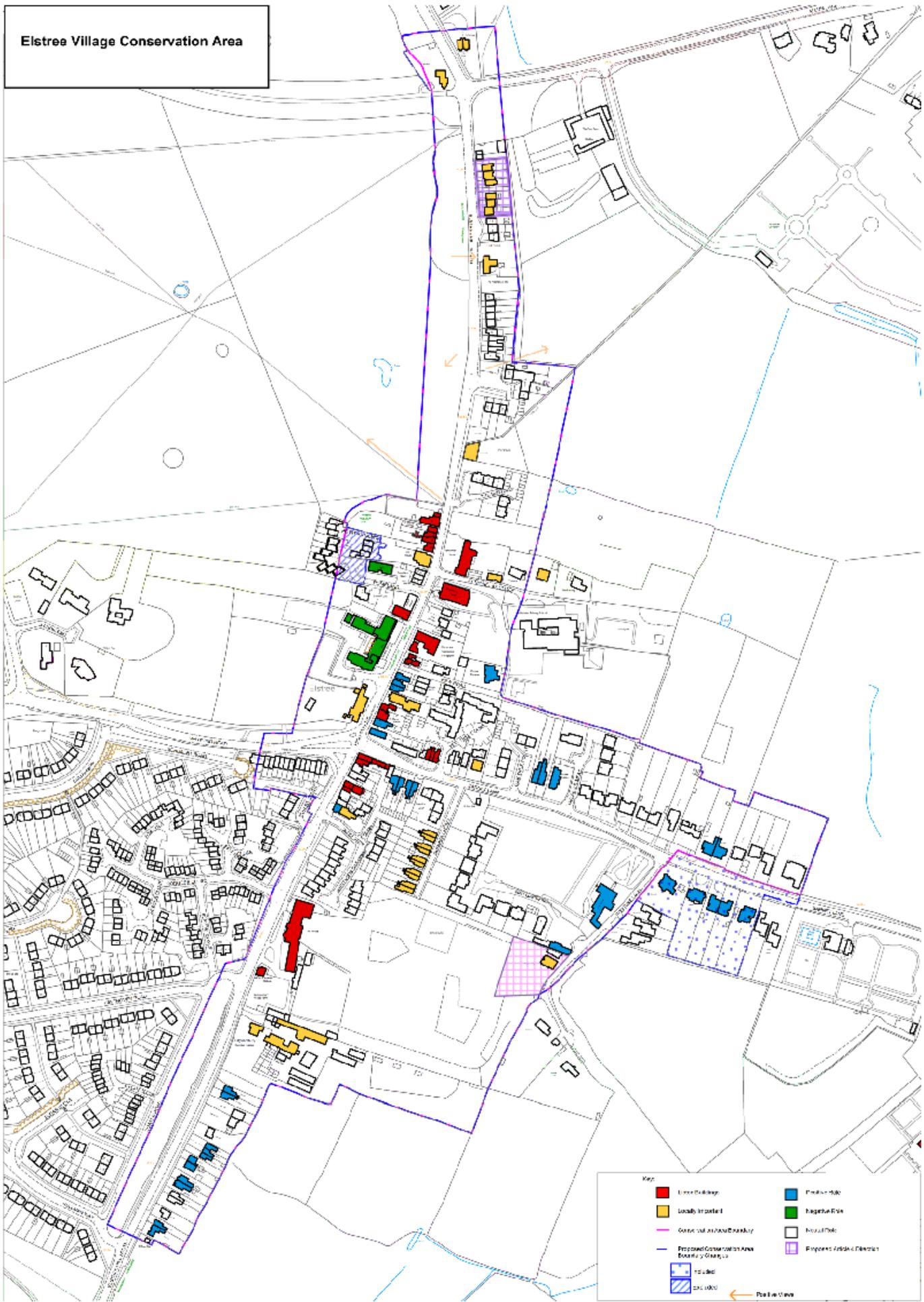
These buildings are regarded as of local importance, and appear on the adopted *List of Locally Important Buildings in Hertsmere* (Hertsmere Borough Council, July 2009).

Watling Street	Corner Cottage and Elm Cottage Elstree Hill Lodge
Elstree Hill North	Nos 5, 7 and 9 Nos 11, 13 and 15
High Street	Artichoke public house (now the Shtiebel synagogue ) War memorial Wall of Schopwick Place on St Nicholas Close Kiln House, nos. 15, 16 & 17 (now the Office on the Hill) Free Church Plough inn (now the East restaurant) Manaton House, West View
Elstree Hill South Barnet Lane	Edgware Bury Farmhouse and buildings Nos 8 & 8b, former Metropolitan Police Station Nos 1 & 2, 3 & 4, 5 & 6, 7 & 8, 9 & 10 Summer Grove St Mary's Croft, Fortune Lane

### Buildings affected by Article 4 Direction (9)

An Article 4 Direction introduced by Hertsmere Borough Council in 1987 applies to the ten houses on Summergrove, off Barnet Lane, and to County Corner, Brightwell, The Garth, and The Haven on the south side of Barnet Lane. The Direction means that planning permission is required for enlargement, alteration, works to gates, fences, walls, and access, and advertisements affecting these houses.

Elstree Village Conservation Area



Key:

<span style="color: red;">■</span> Listed Building	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Timber Frame
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Locally Important	<span style="color: green;">■</span> Timber Frame
<span style="color: purple;">—</span> General Conservation Area Boundary	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">□</span> Brick/Tile
<span style="color: purple;">—</span> Proposed Conservation Area Boundary	<span style="background-color: #FFDAB9;">□</span> Proposed Article 4 Direction
<span style="background-color: #ADD8E6;">□</span> to be lost	
<span style="background-color: #ADD8E6;">▨</span> to be added	<span style="color: orange;">→</span> Proposed Views