

## CHARACTER AREAS

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## 7.0 CHARACTER AREAS



Primary street



Secondary street



Linked spaces and areas



Existing Park Farm

### Introduction

7.1 The development at Park Farm South and East is divided into a number of character areas. Each character area takes into account the following:

- key issues raised in the urban design strategy;
- the proposed land uses and in particular the location of new facilities;
- adjacent buildings and landscape setting; and
- the relationship of the character area to the overall Master Plan, their location within the development area and relationship to the existing urban area and countryside.

7.2 A clear hierarchy of spaces, as illustrated in the hierarchy of spaces plan shown as Figure Seven, is a result of studying traditional forms in the local area. The result is a network of linked spaces which progress in townscape terms from traffic dominated to pedestrian dominated, from primary to secondary, from street to court. All frontage streets are spatially dominant over rear court areas. Within each of these is a hierarchy working from the main street through squares and greens to secondary streets and gateways to rear courts. Each of the spaces in the hierarchy reacts to the surrounding character areas to strengthen the sense of place. Each character area will have a distinct identity which combine to create the place that is Park Farm South and East. The character areas are shown as Figure Eight.

7.3 Figure Nine comprises a detailed 1:500 layout of Park Farm South, showing how the development principles could be implemented at a detailed level. Figure Ten shows the broad principles of development that could be adopted at Park Farm East. The development will implement the concept of a compact walkable neighbourhood by creating a place which is distinctly urban in comparison with existing phases of Park Farm. The basic organising principle for a walkable neighbourhood is to locate facilities associated with a local centre within a 10 minute walk (800m radius) for the majority of the development (see Figure Two). The resultant urban form responds to the traditional pattern of development in the area between the Downs and Weald. This typical form is in evidence in a number of existing settlements in the area such as the historic core of Ashford and the nearby village of Wye.

7.4 Each of the character areas is described in more detail opposite.



## Mixed Use Urban Centre

- 7.5 The core of the development has the most urban characteristics and ties together Park Farm South and Park Farm East. This area is dominated by public space and is a focus for pedestrian activity. Key urban forms are located in this area such as live/work units, rail halt, main street and urban square which raise the profile and importance of the centre. The village square is located at an important intersection and is framed with 3 storey live/work units. Although the live work units will initially be entirely residential in use, they are designed to facilitate a change of use to either B1 office use or retail use, and back to residential, subject to the submission of planning applications for determination by the Local Planning Authority. The square is key to providing a location for social interaction and informal activities which add to a sense of place and community. Materials and finishes chosen in this area will reflect the importance and formality of this area.



Mixed use urban centre

## Local Centres

- 7.6 Although Park Farm South and East are linked and should be viewed as a whole, within this whole distinct local identities are proposed. Two local centres are shown as a focus for this identity and are closely linked to the mixed use urban centre. Each local centre will be different in character to convey the particular opportunities in the surrounding context. The local centre at Park Farm South will be smaller and less formal in comparison with that at Park Farm East which will link to the rail halt and serve a wider local area. A pub could be provided as part of the square, subject to the general provisions for architectural and design quality set out in this brief. Both integrate uses in the street for limited vehicular access, parking and pedestrians/cyclists.



Sense of locality and community



Buildings overlooking a central green

## Streets

- 7.7 The streets link key spaces and are often important movement corridors for pedestrians and vehicular traffic alike. This mixture of use is important in order to create lively well used streets which are naturally safer and deter crime by the constant throughput of people. Streets are generally linear and contained within a strong building frontage. The distance between building frontages will vary to create interest and diversity in the street scene. Buildings can be as close as 9 metres between frontages in appropriate locations in order to provide enclosure. Long sections of parallel frontages are avoided as this tends to be oppressive to users and forms little spatial interest.



Landmarks terminating street vistas





Footways detailed with pedestrians in mind



Pedestrian priority over vehicular traffic



On-street parking, Ashford

- 7.8 Changes in direction and alignment of streets are introduced in order to create a varied townscape. An urban character will be created by placing buildings at the back of the adoptable highway with a proportion located no more than 2 or 3 metres from the back of the adoptable highway. Built form will be densest towards the centre of the development therefore set back distances should be minimised to reflect this situation. Buildings should however be set back by a minimum of 500mm to avoid interference or obstruction of the public highway by rainwater goods, porches, eills, steps etc. Frontage spaces may be open and paved, walled, fenced using low railings or planted. Private curtilages should be marked by careful detailing of hard surfaces.
- 7.9 Footways will vary in width from 1.5 metres up to 3 metres according to situation. In general footways will widen to form spaces at key intersections or places where high footfall is anticipated. Footways are minimised elsewhere to maintain tight urban spaces. Vehicular turning areas will be provided in widened sections of the street in order to avoid creating traffic dominated infrastructure. The widened spaces have other uses and are generated in response to townscape requirements as well as traffic movement patterns. The road and building alignment will combine to achieve the appropriate design speeds for traffic although the aim should be a design speed of 20mph within the development.
- 7.10 Traffic speeds will generally slow towards the centre of the development as the balance between traffic / pedestrian dominated streets is addressed. Traffic calming measures in pedestrian dominated areas should be integrated into the design of the space as a whole by utilising natural pinch points and road alignments to slow traffic. Additional traffic calming should be predominantly hard landscaped.
- 7.11 The widening of carriageways will provide space for on street parking in appropriate locations. These on street parking areas will normally be part of the adopted highway and have a clear need for use such as visitor parking or stop off points for local shops. All streets within built form will be pedestrian and cyclist priority spaces. Opportunities could be taken for a small number of car free streets. They will act as main pedestrian and cyclist links through the development. Additional footpaths and cycleways will be provided through open space areas to complete the strategic network. A number of sections of the development are particularly prominent and critical to the impact and appearance of the development. These include the bus routes and main pedestrian / cycle routes. Particular attention will need to be paid to the treatment of the buildings lining the spaces to ensure that the quality of the 'face' of the development is achieved.



## Gateway

- 7.12 Gateways are key features in marking transitions between character areas. The main gateway is from the A2070 Hamstreet Road and comprises a street with key frontages and landmark buildings. These landmark buildings could comprise offices, sheltered housing or flats and particular attention will be required to their design. This gateway has been radically redesigned to incorporate the suggestions of the Enquiry by Design process to scale down the impact of the new road and to integrate the entrance into the urban form by the creation of a more traditional street with built frontages on both sides.
- 7.13 Whilst this has extended the built footprint beyond that shown on the Local Plan it is considered that the solution adopted for Park Farm South makes best use of the opportunities presented by the site and thereby makes best use of urban land in accordance with government policy as expressed in PPG3. The gateway with the existing Park Farm development utilises existing trees to form a green link with Parklane Wood to show a clear distinction between the two places. Gateways are also formed at intersections on connections to the Cheeseman's Green development to the north-east.



A gateway utilising built form and a bridge



Entry street example, Boughton

## Local Park

- 7.14 The local park provides accessible open space incorporated within the centre of the development. The park will be formally laid out in response to its location and will be overlooked by surrounding buildings which frame its edges. The layout of the park and the location of uses will be designed in order to minimise any impact on the adjoining railway lines. Surrounding roads will be calmed suitably to enable a strong pedestrian connection. The park will provide a mixture of opportunities for both quiet and active pursuits. The interface with the railway boundary fence will be sensitively landscaped and any safety requirements (fencing or otherwise) will be met.



Example of local park in existing Park Farm

## Urban Courts

- 7.15 Areas behind main streets will have traditional characteristics of rear courtyards such as mews courts and stable blocks. These areas will have a distinctly informal appearance and be finished with materials to reinforce this character. Squares are smaller and less rigid than those on main streets and include the opportunity for informal casual parking to be incorporated with other uses in the same vane as Home Zones. It is not proposed to introduce formal Home Zones, but rather areas with home zone characteristics. Home Zones were pioneered in the Netherlands and Germany and are described in the recent Urban Task Force report 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' as:



Urban court incorporating parking





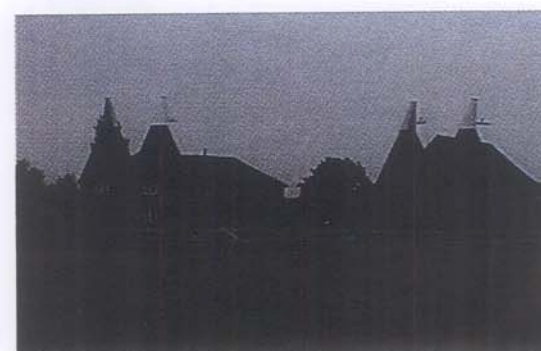
Rear court garages with accommodation above



Park edge formally laid out



Rural edge with buildings set into landscape



Historic setting

**'Home Zones are groups of streets which create living spaces, where pedestrians have absolute priority and cars travel little more than walking pace.'** (Urban Task Force July 1999)

- 7.16 Suitable street furniture and changes in hard landscape materials will identify these areas. The palette of materials and furniture will be agreed prior to the commencement of the development in a set of Environmental Minimum Requirements. On entering, drivers become responsible for the injuries they cause forcing them to drive at sensible speeds. Raised tables, extended pavement areas and other landscape elements will further help to reduce vehicle speeds. It will be necessary for the effective management of these areas to have the full support of the new community.
- 7.17 The main design considerations in the creation of areas with home zone characteristics are:
- The reduction of through traffic and vehicle speeds via road narrowing;
  - Clear changes in hard surface materials;
  - Echelon parking in designated areas;
  - Use of bollards and street trees to divide streets and provide safe pedestrian areas. Street trees should also be used to enhance street vistas;
  - Bicycle parking should also be considered in the local centres with secure fixing points in highly visible areas; and
  - Design considerations should relate to the character of the area being created and assist in the creation of a sense of place.

## Existing Edge

- 7.18 The edge formed with the existing Park Farm development is split into three areas including a gateway feature and two edge areas. These areas display similar characteristics and respond individually to their respective locations. The eastern edge will have existing and new buildings overlooking a shared landscaped area. The western edge will have new properties fronting Park Lane Wood and will be connected to the eastern edge by a pedestrian and cycle priority route linking the urban centre to local schools.

## Rural Edge

- 7.19 The character of these edges will create a positive blend between the urban area and rural landscape. Rather than trying to hide the development, there will be views of small groups of buildings which will be carefully designed to fit within the landscape structure. Visible from the open countryside, the design needs to be sensitive by working with the existing hedgerows and trees and enhancing them where necessary with structural planting.



This rural character will be reflected in the urban form, road design, open space and architectural treatment. The perceived picture is one of individual houses and clusters of buildings within a landscape setting. Access to the countryside is a key factor in the design of this area. The area provides the transition from the open countryside to the other parts of the development. With this in mind existing public rights of way have been retained close to their current alignment and new points of access provided.

### Park Edge

- 7.20 This character area is similar to the rural edge but is more formally laid out in response to overlooking a more urbanised piece of landscape. Buildings are more detached than in urban centres but the continuity of the edge is to be reinforced using walls and gates to avoid breaks other than connecting streets. A formal landscape feature links the edge into the local centre of Park Farm South to compliment the character of the place and act as a key linkage.

### Sports Area

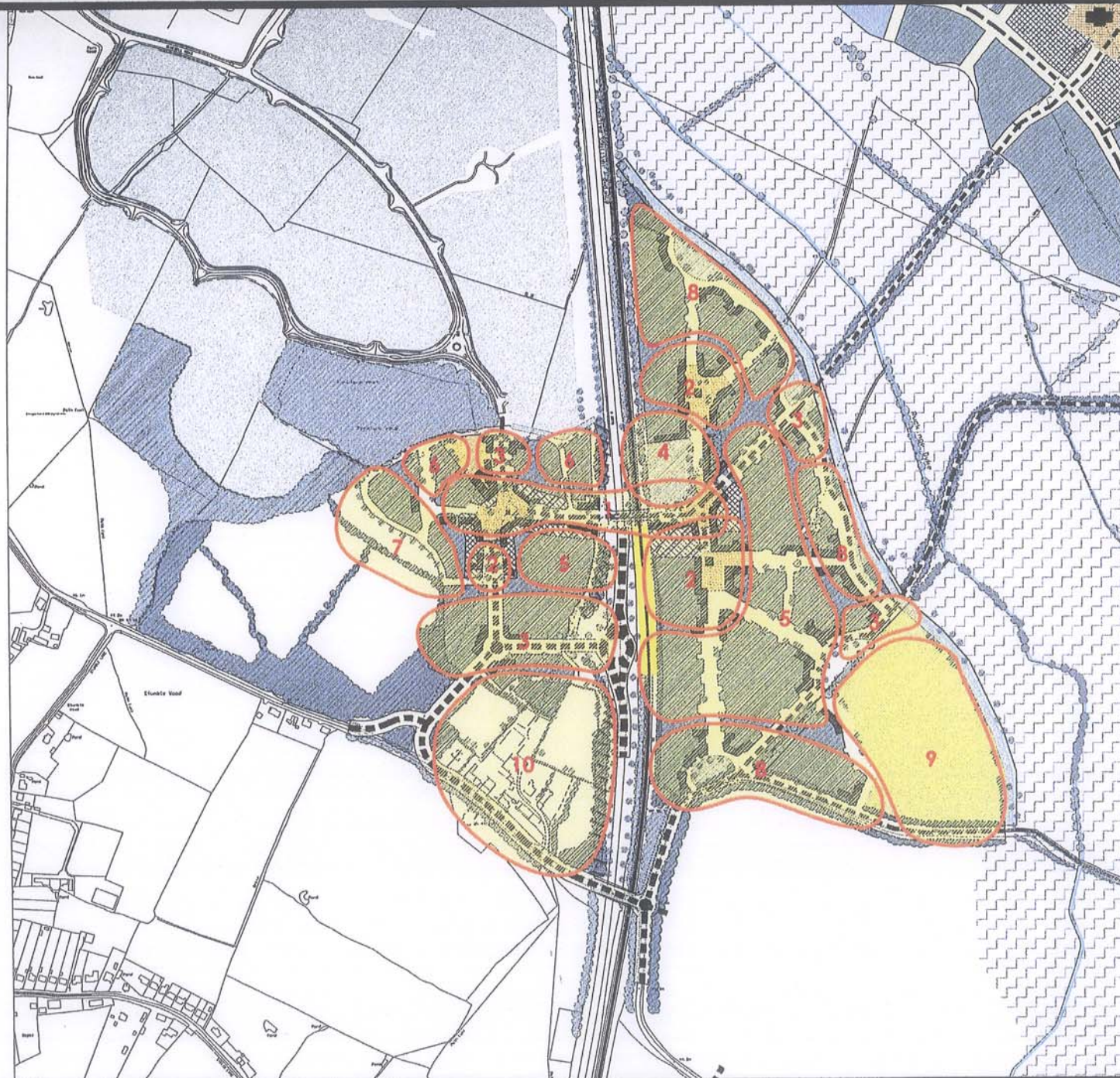
- 7.21 The sports area provides a number of functions including providing a suitable edge to the countryside as well as a key facility for local recreation. The character of this area will be less formal than the local park but still identifiable as an urbanised area.

### Historic Setting

- 7.22 This area includes a number of important historic buildings including converted traditional Kentish oast houses and barns. The character of these buildings is still rural and must be respected. The inherent characteristics are to be strengthened by the proposals which include new buildings to form the gateway into the development. These buildings will focus onto the new gateway. The area between these buildings and the existing Finn Farm houses will be laid out with paddocks, hedges and trees in order to protect their setting.







# CHARACTER AREAS

Figure eight

- 1 Mixed use urban centre
- 2 Local centre
- 3 Gateway
- 4 Local park
- 5 Urban court
- 6 Existing edge
- 7 Park edge
- 8 Rural edge
- 9 Sports area
- 10 Historic setting



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DENSITY AND MIXED USE

Density  
Mixed Use  
Flexible Buildings

8

8.1

8.3

8.8



## 8.0 DENSITY AND MIXED USE



Traditional higher density centre



Typical housing at 35 dwellings per hectare



Mixed use such as traditional local pub



Variations in building height add interest

### Density

8.1 Figure Nine comprises an indicative layout for Park Farm South which illustrates the kinds of principles which might be acceptable to the planning authority. The layout gives an indication of the distribution of densities across the site. The average density for Park Farm South is 35 dwellings per hectare, and this is the preferred average density for the entire development. The pattern of densities responds to design objectives, in particular the use of traditional urban form. In addition, the location of the local centre, movement pattern including linkages between the two areas and the relationship with the surrounding countryside is also reflected in the pattern of densities.

8.2 The overall aim is to achieve development densities averaging 35 dwellings per hectare across the site as a whole. This will ensure that the overall net residential density for the development will be higher than most recent residential schemes and will deliver government planning objectives as set out in PPG3, namely to promote good design whilst making more efficient use of land.

### Mixed Use

8.3 The mixed use area is located within the local centre and has been positioned to provide the greatest accessibility to the rest of the development. The road through the local centre provides the opportunity to attract passing trade and will provide access to public transport. The direct footpath and cycleway links to the surrounding area will add to the vitality.

8.4 The diversity of uses are generally compatible with potential conflicts designed out at the detailed level. High density housing helps to support the non-residential uses and adds to the vitality. A mix of building types and tenures are possible within the local centre. The pepper potting of different tenures both in the Local Centre and via the provision of affordable housing throughout the development encourages social diversity and avoids the creation of exclusive enclaves.

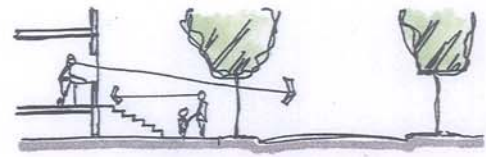
### Building Height

8.5 The mixed use centre will accommodate a range of building heights with predominantly three storeys. All flexible live/work units will be 3 storey in height. The building heights should relate to the width of the square creating an appropriate level of enclosure. The mass of the built form positively frames the public space emphasizing its importance as the main civic space in the development. 3 storey buildings can also be used as highlights throughout the development.



## Building Width

- 8.6 Narrow building widths of 5 – 7m as stated within the urban design compendium provide a flexible form which allows for changes of use depending on demand, such as from residential use to shop use or vice versa. A narrow building width helps to animate the edge of the built form by providing more entrances and less blank walls along the façade and encouraging active frontage to the centre. Views out onto the street also helps contribute to safety through natural surveillance or 'eyes on the street'. Changes in ground level could be considered within buildings providing surveillance without a loss of privacy, taking care not to preclude disabled access.



Natural surveillance without loss of privacy

## Vertical Mix

- 8.7 Mixing uses vertically creates vitality within the local centre. Buildings of 3 storeys can accommodate several different configurations of residential types from town houses to a mix of flats and/or maisonettes.

## Flexible buildings

- 8.8 It is important that the live/work units are designed with flexibility in mind. Flexible buildings allow for the use of the building to be adapted for a change in lifestyle or a complete change of use over time. A building form should be used which allows for ease of conversion, extension or changes in the internal arrangements for different activities to take place. Flexible buildings allow for easy conversion when the balance of end uses for the local centre may not be finalised for several years.



Three storey building with flexible ground floor

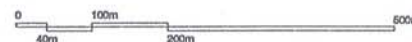






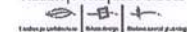


INDICATIVE LAYOUT  
PARK FARM SOUTH  
Figure nine



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INDICATIVE LAYOUT  
PARK FARM EAST  
Figure ten

- Access roads
- Street
- New rail halt
- Proposed housing
- Square
- Proposed tree planting
- Sports area
- Village greens and local park
- Flood plain
- Landmark features



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## ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

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Materials  
Details

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9.1  
9.2  
9.5





Variation in materials within a framework



Walls and paths considered as part of the composition



Traditional finishes like weatherboarding

## 9.0 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

### Introduction

- 9.1 Ashford lies between the High Weald and North Downs. This part of Kent has a particularly strong and distinctive local building character or vernacular architecture. Indeed Ashford itself, although containing significant modern development, has a core of impressive high quality historic fabric. Development within Park Farm South and East will respect the best of these architectural traditions to inform the creation of a distinct sense of place and local identity. Development will include a wide variety of designs to echo the diversity of these architectural traditions. Vernacular architecture does however need to be interpreted in a modern way to avoid mimicry of historical building styles, which would give the development a false, pastiche and contrived appearance. In order to achieve this balance between tradition and modern interpretation, the following architectural principles will be used as references.

### Materials

- 9.2 Materials in individual buildings should be used to respond to and enhance the particular urban design objectives of the place in which that building is located. More elaborate detailing of buildings enclosing a main square for example would be appropriate. Connector streets should be carefully detailed, but with the emphasis on simplicity, in order to form sensitive 'back-drop' architecture which does not compete with the 'special' buildings. The overall objective is to balance variation in materials and utilise this to highlight special places. This is the backbone of creating urban character and a full palette of materials will be set out in the Environmental Minimum Requirements document. Within this framework, use can be made of the rich and diverse range of traditional materials to be found in this part of Kent including:

- Bricks from the wide range of Wealden Clay bricks from red brown to bluish colour, or a material bearing a close resemblance;
- Weatherboarding which can be either painted white or stained black;
- Plain or ornamental tile hanging;
- Occasional render or stucco including Kentish ragstone; and
- Weathered plain orange red tiles and slate for roofs or a material bearing a close resemblance.



9.3 It is important that a variety of materials are appropriately used within any group of buildings. It will be appropriate for a mix of materials to be used in buildings between first and ground floor elevations and occasionally between the front and back. For example, tile hanging at first floor with stucco or brickwork below and possibly weather boarding to gables at first floor. The junctions of materials will need to be carefully detailed and occur at logical places on building elevations.

9.4 Changes in use of the ground floor of live/work units should be undertaken sensitively and alterations to the façade should retain the balance and proportion of both the individual building and its relationship within the street. Any additional signage or publicity boards should be appropriate and aim to balance the need to attract the attention of customers with maintaining the quality and composition of the street scene.

### Details

9.5 The following details should be used:

- Roofs will be varied in their pitch, style and materials and should be simple and symmetrical, gabled, hipped, half-hipped or mansarded;
- Houses should generally have a fireplace and chimney and chimneys should be of brick and not necessarily limited to that required by building regulations;
- Windows should be of the rise and fall sash or side hung casement type and should not open out onto the public realm. Windows to bathrooms should not open out onto the street;
- Window frames will have a predominantly white finish;
- Occasional use should be made of bay windows in locations where views can be gained;
- External doors should be appropriate in style and pattern to the style of elevational treatment to the property;
- The following items shall not be located such that they are visible from the street – meter boxes, air extractors, roof top solar connectors or soil pipes;
- Flue terminals and extract ventilation terminals will not be permitted in walling on front elevations or elevations facing public areas. Vent stacks should be enclosed within chimneys. Where this is not practical, vent pipes should be clad in appropriate materials where they emerge from roofs or should be terminated within the roofspace by an air admittance valve wherever acceptable to Building Control;

- The position and type of street lighting shall be designed to minimise the number of lamp columns by incorporating lighting units on and cable runs within buildings, wherever possible;
- Building design should include all elevations, and should not be limited solely to the design of the front elevation;
- Boundary treatments should be integrated into the design of the whole space between buildings with a consistent approach within character areas; and
- Centralised television and radio reception points will be provided to avoid the need for external aerials.



Special materials for landmark buildings



Boundaries integrated into the whole



