

Tony Howe

24 Jan 2020, 16:32
(17 hours ago)

to me

Dear Jill,

Many thanks for your message below and the attached comments. I apologise for the delay in properly responding.

I am glad that you found my original response of use. My comments were based on highlighting a couple of gaps in the information I'd spotted in the Neighbourhood Plan. It's good to hear that you have these both well in hand however.

With regard to Views and Viewpoints: I personally think that Neighbourhood Plans have a role to play as being the location for considerations that national and district planning either ignore, or consider too location-specific. Protected Views often fall under this category so I would advise that if you have some Views that you'd like to see protected or enhanced through the development process, the then Neighbourhood Plan would be a good opportunity to highlight them. As you have indicated, the intrusive presence of the M25 nearby is going to mean that many Views to and from the village will be compromised, so it wouldn't be out of context to conclude that the few unspoiled locations left should be singled out for special consideration. There currently isn't an effective mechanism elsewhere for setting these concerns out.

The issue with building styles is more problematic. As you say, people are resistant to prescriptive and restrictive guidelines, but similarly, there are often special characteristics of a village or region (note – this would include nearby Chertsey or Egham) which are worth highlighting, to avoid creeping homogenised modern housing. My personal expertise in these areas is somewhat limited, but I do understand (for example) that Reigate stone is the appropriate material for kerbs in much of the County (rather than granite), or that Haslemere traditionally should have wooden street fence posts and/or bollards, rather than metal. It is these details that keep individual areas distinct from one another. Perhaps having a full-blown "approved styles" guide might be too rigorous to fit in with the aims you have set out in your letter, but I reckon some consideration of whether or not there are village or north-west Surrey materials or construction style characteristics that you'd like to see reflected or encouraged, will at least help to define further what kind of design features would be preferred, without making overly prohibitive pronouncements on people's freedom of choice.

We received an enquiry for information today that suggests that Runnymede Borough Council are about to start considering updating the conservation area for Thorpe. There aren't any details online at present, but such an exercise has already been carried out for Chertsey, Egham and Egham Hythe, the details and results of which are available at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/18761/Reviews-of-Conservation-Areas> and may be of interest if you're not already aware of them. It might be that a short review to identify regional building styles and materials (if any) to inform the Neighbourhood Plan, could be conducted in tandem with the forthcoming Conservation Area Review. However you would need to discuss this with Runnymede Borough Council rather than myself.

I hope this is useful. Many thanks for your correspondence. We have a copy of your book on Thorpe: A

Surrey Village in Maps in the Historic Environment Record, where it continues to be of use and a source of reference as and when any development is proposed in the village.

Kind regards,

Tony

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