

# HAMSTEAD MARSHALL *VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT*



*the civil parish of Hamstead Marshall, outlined in red  
Ordnance Survey grid reference SU4165.  
Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. 100024151 2008*

## INTRODUCTION

The guidance in a Village Design Statement, following public consultation and adoption by West Berkshire Council, is a “material consideration” in determining planning applications. For Hamstead Marshall this statement considers the historical context, the landscape, the make-up of the parish, its character areas and the consultation process. It ends with planning guidelines.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In Old English *HAM* is a place by a river, and *STEDE* is a settlement. The Domesday Book records that both Hamstead and Irish Hill were held by a Norman, Hugolin the Steersman. During Plantagenet times William Earl Marshall occupied the manor, one of his duties being regent to the child king Henry III in 1216.

Generally, ownership changed as dictated by the Crown, with Edward III living here in 1350. Later, the manor was given to three of Henry VIII’s wives. In 1620 the wealthy widow of Sir William Craven (Lord Mayor of London 1610) acquired Hamstead for her son, who became the first Earl of Craven. This started the Craven family’s long occupancy, which continued until 1984.

## LANDSCAPE

Some three-quarters of the parish (to the west of Park Lane and Holtwood Road) lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (The Thames Basin Heaths). To the north runs the River Kennet (with ancient water meadows) and the Kennet & Avon Canal. There are considerable areas of woodland, most of which appears on the Rocque map of 1761.

In 2005 the Countryside Agency said:

*Concentrated around Newbury, this is a low-lying landscape of largely medieval origin. The varied geology of clays, silts and sands has resulted in a small-scale and intimate landscape with a mosaic of ancient woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland, with sunken winding lanes. The network of woodland, connecting hedgerows, areas of parkland including wood pasture, create considerable ecological interest.*

There are four SSSIs:

- 1) the pit in the quarry field, protected for geological reasons
- 2) Irish Hill Copse - ancient coppiced woodland
- 3) Redhill Wood - ancient woodland exhibiting a wide range of stand types and with particularly fine examples of birch, ash, lime, pedunculate oak-ash-hazel and valley-alder woodland
- 4) River Kennet and its water meadows.

**Scheduled Ancient Monuments** include two motte-and-bailey castle mounds in the garden of North Lodge (Berkshire 19010) and another in the north of Hamstead Park (Berkshire 19011), as well as Hamstead Park pale (Berkshire 19012).

2.5 hectares of walled kitchen gardens (now within the grounds of Craven House) are registered with English Heritage as a **Garden of Special Historic Interest**.

Roman brick kilns were found in the 1960s in a field off the north end of Park Lane.

## THE PARISH

Hamstead has about 750 hectares (1,850 acres) in all, mostly permanent pasture with some land under organic management. It is a very small rural settlement with a population of about 250 in some 117 households, of which just over half live in pre-war and much earlier vernacular properties. In addition to the park with its manor house and Craven associations, the village has a twelfth-century church, a very active village hall (formerly the school) and a freehold public house. Elm Farm, home to the Organic Research Centre, is organically farmed by a tenant, and Plumbs Farm accommodates the Dogs Trust (formerly NCDL) kennels. There are several other home-based enterprises, including woodland management and equestrian activities. Other land is mostly let, or on short-term grazing licences to neighbouring farmers from outside the parish.

### Road layout

The Newbury to Kintbury (unclassified) road runs roughly east-west through the village from the Craven Arms to Old Lane. The narrowest point is just east of Chapel Corner, where two cars can just pass, but larger vehicles must back up. A 30mph limit was introduced some years ago, but speeding traffic continues to be a problem. Lanes leading off this road are typically “sunken and winding” as described above, some of only single vehicle width.

There are no pavements (other than within Ash Tree Grove) or street lights in the village.

## CHARACTER AREAS

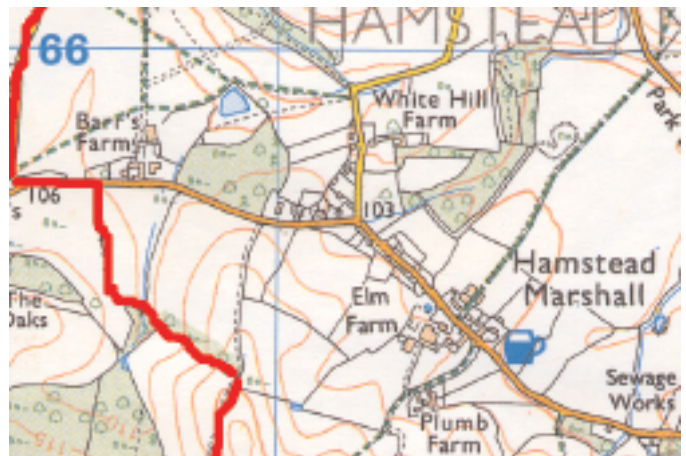
Five Character Areas are itemised below. Within these, the older dwellings are informally dispersed. They are mainly of local brick with clay tiles, although there are random variations including slate roofs and rendering. Features include hip-end roofs, dormer windows and some tile-hung elevations. Craven ownership of most of the properties for three centuries ensured there was only change as initiated by the estate. External influences were minimal until the arrival of incomers in the 1970s.

### 1 White Hart and Chapel Corner

The White Hart public house (rendered white elevations *circa* 1750) lies across the road from Plumbs Farm (*circa* 1750), the dog rescue centre. Next door is Elm Farm, which has a Grade II-listed brick and tile barn, the farmhouse itself being at right angles to the road, and with a rendered elevation. At the western edge of the village lies the eighteenth-century Barrs Farm, still a working dairy farm.

There are 28 other houses in this area, 11 of which are post-war, the remainder are mostly eighteenth or early nineteenth century, but four houses of sixteenth-century origin are Grade II-listed. Building materials are brick and tile, with a mix of facing brickwork, painted brickwork and rendering. There are some hipped roof ends and small dormer windows. The boundaries are mostly hedges, with some panel fencing.

The road here is narrow, with informal grass verges (vestiges of former common land) around Chapel Corner. Warwick Hill has a calm, secluded aspect, with cottages set back from a narrow, grass-verged lane, and fields to front and rear. There is a converted chapel, and another traditional farmhouse (White Hill) which is now an equestrian establishment. On the Kintbury Road running westwards towards Barrs Farm there are three 1970s detached houses, well spaced and mature in their partly wooded surroundings.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. 100024151 2008

### 2 Ash Tree Corner

This crossroads lies where Park Lane (the western boundary of Hamstead Park), the Kintbury Road and Holtwood Road meet. There is woodland on the north-eastern corner. With 35 houses on the other three, this is the most populous area of the village.

The village hall (the former school) is a good, late-Victorian example in brick, with a hipped roof, and a fine, rounded, north-facing window. There is an attached cottage, originally for the schoolmistress. Nearby are two eighteenth-century cottages, one with an interesting leaded light window. There is a Grade II-listed, sixteenth-century, timber-framed cottage at the south-eastern corner of the crossroads.

At the south-western corner there is a post-war housing association development of single-storey properties, neatly grouped in a close. The southern end has seven two-storey, brick and tile, semi-detached



houses built in 1992 (but in traditional style) to replace post-war prefabs damaged by fire. The whole implies a sense of community, with the benefit of adjoining farmland to the south and west.

Three further bungalows stand adjacent on the Kintbury Road. They blend well with the others, and have gated hedge boundaries. Opposite is a more formal line of local-authority, two-storey houses (some now in private ownership), dating from the 1920s and 1950s. The older have dormer windows and are of warm orange brick. All are sensibly set back from the road, again with timber gates, hedges and good-sized gardens backing onto countryside. Beyond these are a two panel-fenced 1960s bungalows.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. 100024151 2008

### 3 Hamstead Park, St Mary's Church and Craven Hill

The road runs southwards from the old canal bridge at Hamstead Lock. Beside the river bridge there is a Grade II-listed, converted mill, which was rebuilt after a fire in 1810. It has white-rendered elevations and an interesting octagonal slate roof. The view into the park is uninterrupted at this point, with wooden gates and post and rail fencing. The curve in the road, the waterways and rising ground make this area a notable and much-visited beauty spot.

Hamstead Park is a place of history, containing Saxon fishponds and one of the castle mounds. At its centre is the Grade II-listed manor house, converted in Regency times from a seventeenth-century hunting lodge. This replaced the original Craven manor house (destroyed by fire in 1718), of which seven pairs of listed gatepiers remain, some within the walling and others free-standing in open countryside.

The brick wall extends from North Lodge, the property after the park entrance, and continues to just beyond the gatepiers at Craven House, a modern residence largely out of view, set back behind the wall. North Lodge is a former keeper's cottage, extended in the 1950s for the dowager countess. It sits slightly above the road, with white elevations and a tiled roof.

St. Mary's Church is positioned on high ground within the park. Grade II\*-listed, it has a twelfth-century south doorway, and a substantial brick tower added *circa* 1622. There are panoramic views to the north across the Kennet valley towards Wickham and the downs.

To the west of the church there are the converted buildings of the Stableyard, now known as Craven Hill. These include barns, a farmhouse, cottages and a bothy. Most are listed, and together they are a fine example of sensitive restoration of a complete site.

Across the road, behind a brick and flint wall, is what may have been a sixteenth-century dovecote. Now known as Morewood House, it is Grade II-listed, well proportioned and set in 120 hectares (300 acres). Post and rail fencing, hedges and a small pond all add interest at this road junction.

The quality of the whole area is beyond doubt, and it should have all the protection available, particularly as there have been concerns regarding possible reactivation of the old quarry adjacent to Morewood House. The likelihood is that such activity would have a lasting harmful effect.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. 100024151 2008

## 4 Holtwood and Redhill

The south of the parish occupies slightly higher ground, generally quite wooded. It includes Redhill (SSSI) and a plantation on the east/west lane which runs from Redhill House to Smith's Bridge. There are some fine downland views to the south. Clustered informally around the crossroads at the centre are a farmhouse, a substantial village house and a pair of cottages now converted to a single dwelling. Facing bricks (probably local), tile roofs, the assorted, but striking chimneys of the house and the farm's tile-hung frontage all add interest to this area. Redhill House, a few hundred yards to the east, has similar features. These buildings are *circa* 1700s. Another cottage has been replaced with a modern, conservatively designed property. All have hedges and small gates, permitting discreet glimpses of garden layouts.

On Watery Lane lies Holtwood Farm, a listed sixteenth-century building which is now a riding stables. Further to the west a new house was built recently, permission being granted in connection with a pheasant-rearing business.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. 100024151 2008

## 5 Irish Hill

At the north-western corner of the parish, this was a small settlement, mentioned as a separate manor in Domesday. In the nineteenth century it had a whiting plant using the local chalk, and seven or eight houses. Now, just two houses face each in this secluded spot. One, converted from a couple of cottages is traditional, whilst across the track is a modern building on the site of former dwellings.

Just east of the junction of Irish Hill Road with Old Lane is the parish's only thatched cottage (Peartree), charming in its small plot, Grade II-listed and set in the valley south of Irish Hill.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. 100024151 2008

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

In October 2007 the Hamstead Marshall Parish Plan was presented to the Downlands Forum for adoption by West Berkshire Council. Preparation of the plan involved two questionnaires asking for views on the environment, transport, community services, youth activities, broadband provision, and general household information. Public meetings were held in the White Hart and the village hall, and at a summer event the young people of the village made a model of the village with their ideas for the future. Progress was publicised through noticeboards, the *Hamstead Hornet* and the village website. <[www.hamsteadmarshall.net](http://www.hamsteadmarshall.net)>.

Later, during the drafting of this design statement, there were regular meetings with the parish plan steering group and the parish council. Senior Planning Officer Paula Amorelli of West Berkshire Council monitored its progress.

## Some of the results from the questionnaires

*Q. How important do you think it is that new and extended building in the village should use traditional styles and materials?*

63% said it was very important, that is 48 replies from the 76 received.

29% said it was fairly important and 4% that it was unimportant.

*Q Hamstead Marshall has a number of sites of historic and scientific interest. How important is it to you that such sites should be protected and conserved?*

75% said it was very important, particularly the canal bridges and lock, the old mansion site (the park gatepiers) and St Mary's Church.

*Q At present Hamstead Marshall is designated as "open countryside", which means that planning applications for new houses are rarely granted. How important is it to you that this status is maintained?*

80% said it was very important, that is 61 replies from the 76 received.

11% said it was fairly important and 5% that it was unimportant.

*Q Which features do you think contribute most to the quality of the local landscape?  
farmland, woodland, hedgerows, spread-out housing, wildlife, historic sites and monuments, traditional old buildings,  
River Kennet and canal, footpaths, Hamstead Park and St Mary's Church*

Whilst all were appreciated, overall the farmland, wildlife and traditional buildings scored slightly more than the other choices.

## CONCLUSION

From a planning standpoint the area has no settlement boundaries, and is therefore designated as open countryside. As noted before, it is predominantly within the AONB. The controls of the West Berkshire District Local Plan are passing to the new Local Development Framework. This will have Development Plan Documents (DPDs), one being Rural Communities and the Countryside. Any new development should now conform to the Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document.

**The village values its rural nature and sense of history associated with the park, the waterways, listed buildings and ancient woodland. A clear majority wishes the "open countryside" status to be preserved.**

## PLANNING GUIDELINES

### The Landscape

- 1 Any future development should be sensitive to the rural character of the area.
- 2 Any proposal for future development should take account of the predominantly poor-draining London clay subsoil.
- 3 The conservation of wildlife and the open countryside should be material considerations for any planning application.
- 4 Any proposal must respect the constraints of the AONB status.

### New Development

- 1 The use of traditional materials and building design should be encouraged in any new or extended properties so they harmonise with their surroundings.
- 2 New developments should respect neighbouring properties in style, scale and siting.
- 3 Roof heights of extensions to existing buildings should not be higher than the original roof.
- 4 New buildings should not generally be more than two storeys high and should follow existing ground levels.
- 5 Any external lighting, including security lights, should minimise light pollution, particularly for neighbouring properties.
- 6 Boundaries should ideally be native hedges, low walls or post and rail fences.
- 7 The impact on historic sites\* must be a material consideration in any application.

\**The park and gatepiers, the canal, the lock and bridges, the castle mounds, St Mary's Church, the SSSI's, and the listed buildings*

### Streetscene

- 1 The existing road layouts should be undisturbed, as they have established the form of the village.
- 2 Street lighting should be considered inappropriate for all the country lanes and the stretch of road from the Craven Arms to the western boundary of the parish.

### Sources and Acknowledgments

*The Victoria County History of Berkshire*

Penelope Stokes. *Craven Country :the Story of Hamstead Marshall*

Hamstead Marshall Parish Council

Paula Amorelli. Senior Planning Officer, West Berkshire Council

Compiled by the Hamstead Marshall Parish Plan steering group, chairman Robin Tandy.