



DEARDS END LANE, KNEBWORTH

CONSERVATION AREA
8 APRIL 2008

Deards End Lane Conservation Area was designated on 2 April 1984. This document forms part of a first comprehensive review for Deards End Lane and should be read in conjunction with the conservation area map and register of Buildings of Local Interest.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Deards End Lane Conservation Area was designated on 2 April 1984 and has not been reviewed since. This document assesses the setting, character and appearance of the conservation area. Areas where improvement opportunities exist are also identified.



Deards End Lane



No. 15 Deards End Lane - The Beacon

2 SUMMARY

The special interest that justifies designation of the Deards End Lane Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors, including:

- Deards End Lane and Park Lane are historic routes connected to the settlement of Old Knebworth;
- Deards End Farm, one of the historic farms of Old Knebworth, dating from the 15th century or earlier. There are a good group of extant farm buildings. The granary, barns and farmhouse are all grade II listed,
- Deards End Lane was included in Sir Edwin Lutyens 1910 plan for Knebworth Garden Village;
- There are three early 20th century buildings by Lutyens on the lane, all grade II listed: the Golf Club House; Wych Elms; and Beacon House;
- Further residential development on the lane, predominantly through the 1920s and 1930s;
- Built form is characteristically of one storey and attics or two storeys, large detached houses, constructed from brick beneath clay tile roofs;
- The 20th century residential development uses Neo-Georgian and Arts and Crafts stylistic motifs;
- Deards End Lane is bordered by high hedges and mature trees, creating an enclosed character;
- Visual links to open countryside from Park Lane.

3 LOCATION AND SETTING

Location, landscape setting and geology

Deards End Lane lies on the western edge of Knebworth Village, separated from Old Knebworth by the A1 (M) to the west. Knebworth lies 3km south-west of the centre of Stevenage and 15km north west of the county town of Hertford. London is only 40 km away.

The conservation area comprises Deards End Lane and a short section of Park Lane, where the two lanes meet. Park Lane runs east west, connecting Knebworth to the village of Old Knebworth. The conservation area has a rural setting to the west, of open fields. The course of Knebworth Golf Club lies to the north. The London to Cambridge/Peterborough railway line runs close to the conservation area's eastern boundary, and a railway bridge connects the northern end of Deards End Lane to the town centre which lies on the other side of the track. The railway bridge is a Scheduled Monument.

Geologically, Knebworth lies on chalk with flints. Over most of the parish the chalk is covered with clay with flints deposited by glacial action; this band of clay has been used for brick making.

4 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

History of the conservation area

The new town of Knebworth grew up from the late 19th century as a result of its proximity to the Great North Road, and more significantly the opening of Knebworth Station in 1884. The town developed on agricultural land containing scattered farmsteads, many of which were part of the Knebworth Estate. There has been a farm at Deards End since at least the 15th century when the land was associated with the Dardres family. The Dardres were related to another large farming family in the area, the Campes at Rustling End. On the estate map of 1731-2 the farm was held by the Dardres family, and had the biggest acreage in the parish. Deards End was taken over by George Muirhead in 1882 and the farm remained in the family until the 1960s. In the 20th century Deards End Farm had a large cattle herd, and grew potatoes as a principal crop.



Barn, formerly of Deards End Farm



Golf Club House

After an initial phase of organic growth of the new town, a development plan for 'Knebworth Garden Village' was presented in 1910. This estate of around 800 acres was to be laid out on land owned by the Earl of Lytton, according to a designed scheme with provision of recreation spaces and large gardens. Sir Edwin Lutyens was the consulting architect for the plan. Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) is considered to be one of the leading British architects of the 20th century and is well known for his designs of English country houses. In 1897 he married Lady Emily Lytton, hence his connection with Knebworth.

The 'General Estate Development Plan' from the 1910 proposal document shows Deards End Lane in detail. The historic farm of Deards End was to be retained, and the lane progressed northwards, flanked by detached houses to the Golf Club at the northern end of the lane. The full plan for the garden village was never realised, but at Deards End Lane part of Lutyens plan was carried out, including the Golf Club, Wych Elms and Beacon House.

The garden or village suburb movement was presented by Ebenezer Howard in his publication, Garden Cities of Tomorrow of 1902. Howard advocated the formation of garden cities interrelating country and town in rural settings. This idea formed the basis

for residential garden suburbs. In October of the following year, Earl Grey proclaimed the foundation of the world's first Garden City at Letchworth.

Development of street pattern

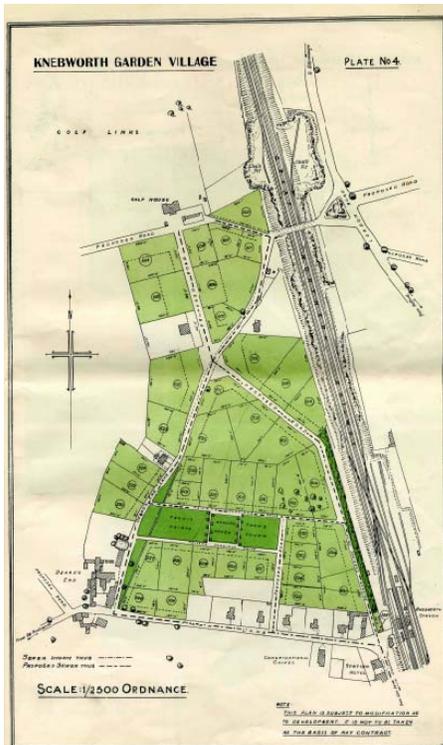
Andrews and Drury's Map of 1766 shows a group of buildings annotated as 'Dades End' arranged on either side of the lane which ran to 'Knebworth Green' in the north-west. A further lane ran northwards from Dades End, recognisable as Deards End Lane, and connecting to the principal route to Stevenage.

By 1884 and the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Map, the buildings comprising the farm at Deards End are clearly distinguishable, grouped around the junction of Deards End Lane and Park Lane. The buildings are shaded in red and black; the red indicates buildings constructed of brick or stone, and the black indicates buildings constructed of timber. A group of red-shaded buildings are marked on the south side of Park Lane, including the farmhouse, and on the north side a group of timber barns are arranged around a yard. The farmyard appears to extend across the lanes. By this date the Great Northern Railway had been constructed, and a bridge constructed across the track to link the northern end of Deards End Lane to the London to Stevenage road which lay on the opposite side. Close to this bridge, a pair of brick cottages had been erected.

It is not until the third edition OS map of 1923 that there was any development in the layout of streets around Deards End Lane. By this date many large detached houses had been erected along the length of the lane, and toward the northern end of the lane, a split in the route had been introduced, providing a short stretch of lane with one house set out, The Beacon. A further lane connected the historic route of Deards End Lane and the railway bridge to the Golf Club House. By the OS map of 1937, the short stretch of lane had been extended northwards from The Beacon to connect through to the forecourt of the Club House.



Extract from Andrews & Drury's map of 1766



Plan for the Knebworth Garden Village, 1910, Sir Edwin Lutyens

5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Relationship of buildings to spaces

The conservation area has an enclosed character along Deards End Lane, with the houses set back from the lane behind large front gardens and largely concealed by high hedges. Views along the meandering lane are restricted on both sides by the high hedges and mature trees. The character is the result of houses set out along the 'garden village' principle of large plots, along a historic lane. Apart from nos.20a and 20b being a pair of semis and Deards End Farmhouse & no.53 Park Lane being linked via a converted outbuilding, all remaining dwellings in the conservation area are detached with no consistent building line. Nos. 14 and 16 Deards End Lane, however, are arranged at oblique angles on opposite corners of the junction with Stobarts Close, creating a direct dialogue between these dwellings.

The character of the area becomes more open at each end of the lane, with the Club House at the northern end with a face to a courtyard and another to the course, and the buildings associated with Deards End Farm at the southern end ranged on both sides of Park Lane and grouped around former farmyards.



Deards End Lane



No. 7 Deards End Lane

6 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Present character: activities and uses

The conservation area can be divided into three distinct character areas: the former farm buildings associated with Deards End Farm, at the junction of Deards End Lane and Park Lane, together with some 20th century residential development; Deards End Lane itself; and the Club House of the golf course. The conservation area is almost entirely residential, with exceptions being Knebworth Golf Club and two electricity substations. Some of the former farm buildings of Deards End Farm are in storage use. Deards End Lane has a quiet residential character, although there is some through traffic to the golf club, and as a cut-through to the town across the railway bridge. Park Lane is busier, connecting directly to Knebworth Station, and being one of the principal routes eastwards out of the town, connecting directly to Old Knebworth village.

Architectural and historic character

The oldest buildings in the conservation area are those associated with Deards End Farm, and are grade II listed. The buildings form an important historic group, a reminder of the area's rural legacy, and are attractively arranged at the southern end of Deards End Lane and on Park Lane. The group comprises the farmhouse and various outbuildings, the oldest of which is the granary at 'The Barns'. This late 16th century granary is of timber-frame construction, close studded and with red brick infill. Its roadside position, in contrast to the common pattern within the conservation area of buildings set back behind large front gardens make it a focal building, particularly in views into the conservation area from the west. The two-storey section of West Barn, no.53 Park Lane replaced a previously listed barn. The replacement barn is considered to be listed due to its physical attachment to the remaining grade II listed stables. When turning into Deards End Lane off Park Lane, the 17th century timber-frame barn on the west side of the lane together with the barn on the south side of 'Trees', reflect this area's former agricultural character, however, the buildings belie the fact that the conservation area is now predominantly residential. Both barns are set on brick bases and are weatherboarded. The frame of the former is visible in the south gable end, inset with brick and flint work. Deards End Farmhouse is a five-bay, double-pile house, of mid to late 18th century date.



Former granary of Deards End Farm



Deards End farmhouse

There are three buildings in the conservation area designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and all of which are grade II listed: the Golf Club House; Wych Elms (no. 3 Deards End Lane); and Beacon House (no. 15 Deards End Lane). These buildings were the only structures erected on the lane as part of the scheme for Knebworth Garden Village, and fuse elements of Neo-Georgian style with Arts and Crafts devices. Wych Elms and Beacon House are both large detached houses of 1912.

The Club House, 1908, is in the Neo-Georgian style, constructed in two shades of red brick to distinguish the flat wall plane from the architectural detailing. It is of a single storey and attics; dormer windows project into the steeply pitched pantile roof. The building comprises a rectangular central block, surmounted by a glazed cupola, with quadrant walls linking to two square corner pavilions. The building has undergone some 20th century alterations and extensions.

Wych Elms is red brick with a steeply pitched plain tile roof and is single storey with attic rooms. The building has a distinctive tile-hung gable and large 4-light casements each side of the glazed door which is itself, surmounted by a simple moulded hood. Wych Elms is predominantly screened by a high hedge when viewed from the access drive but there is a partial view of this listed building when looking south-west from in front of no.5 (Holly Meadow).

Beacon House is in the Neo-Georgian style, with sash windows set beneath gauged brick headers, a Classical pedimented door surround, and a deep timber cornice. The left return has a distinctive design, with a shaped gable containing a round-headed window. The single storey and attic building is constructed with the two shades of red brick and a pantile roof, as used at the Club House.

No. 18 Deards End Lane (Woodlands, but originally Erindale) was erected during the same period of the Lutyens structures. It is a large detached dwelling in the Arts and Crafts style, with a principal rectangular range from which two gable-end projections extend. The interesting roofscape of steeply pitched slopes of plain clay tiles is further enlivened by the tile kneelers and the large chimneystacks. Windows are typically casements with leaded diamond lights, but are eclectic in their design, such as horizontal strips of small casements, a large staircase window, and large casements in angled bays.



No. 18 Deards End Lane



No. 5 Deards End Lane – Holly Meadow

The three Lutyens buildings and no. 18 Deards End Lane have provided a stylistic reference point for subsequent development along the lane. The lane is characterised by large detached houses, predominantly from the 1920s and 1930s, together with some infill from the later part of the 20th century. Neo-Georgian and Arts and Crafts detailing creates a generally cohesive character between buildings of varied designs and ages. Buildings are typically of two storeys, constructed from brick beneath steeply-pitched plain clay or pantile roofs. Casements, dormer windows and prominent chimney stacks are all distinctive features.

Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) and Positive Buildings

A number of unlisted buildings have been identified as being BLIs or 'positive' buildings and these are marked on the accompanying map. The criteria for selecting BLIs is given in the parish-wide Register of Buildings of Local Interest.

The criteria for the selection of 'positive' buildings is that they are buildings of townscape merit which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, both BLIs and 'positive' buildings contribute to the special interest of the conservation area.

Government guidance in PPG15 '*Planning and the historic environment*' advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area (paragraph 4.27).

The guidance states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

Prevalent and traditional building materials and the public realm

The prevalent building material within the conservation area is red brick. This is laid in Flemish Bond on the brick buildings associated with Deards End Farm; the farmhouse is an exemplar of the use of flared headers to create a chequerboard pattern. On some of the timber-framed farm buildings brick is used as infill material and not bonded, for example the granary has red brick infill to the close stud framing. The 20th century brick buildings have brick laid in Flemish Bond. The three Lutyens buildings have particularly fine brickwork, of two shades to distinguish the wall plane from architectural detailing. Window heads have fine gauged brickwork. Brickwork is not painted or rendered, with the exceptions being Woodlands (rough cast render coat) and nos.20a and 20b (pebbledash render).

Roofs are either pantile or plain clay tiles, although in some instances these have been replaced with concrete tiles. Tiles are also used for decorative effect as tile-hanging or for roof kneelers on some buildings. Tall brick chimney stacks are surmounted by terracotta pots. There are examples of timber framing with those buildings associated with Deards End Farm. The large barn on the west side of the lane is weatherboarded and the frame is only visible on the south gable. The granary has close-studded walls.

The public realm throughout the conservation area is modern. Where pavements exist, they are of tarmac, with concrete kerbs. Much of Deards End Lane has a rural character, with the road bordered by grass verges. Street lighting is thinly scattered along the lane, much of this is modern, but there are few examples of early 20th century decorative lamp standards, with attractive scrolled brackets.

High, metal security gates and red brick piers have been introduced to the front of some properties creating a more formal suburban environment. Whilst their design allows views through to the properties beyond, a lower timber gate alternative supported on timber posts would have maintained a more rustic character to the lane. Where the latter has been implemented, it has been relatively successful and no.9 Deards End Lane highlights this particularly well.



No.9 Deards End Lane

Open spaces, green areas and trees

The conservation area has a ‘garden village’ character, with large detached houses set in extensive gardens on all sides. These gardens are largely concealed by the high hedges and mature trees which surround the plots, but glimpses can be obtained through breaks in the planting, for example driveway entrances. Car parks with some landscaping exist to the south and east of the Knebworth Golf Club House, whilst the course lies further to the north.

Hedges and trees are an important feature of the conservation area. Deards End Lane is bordered on both sides by high hedges and groups of trees, characteristically native species. In views along the lane, this planting obscures much of the built form and contributes to the semi-rural appearance. This is enhanced by the grass verges, which are not formally bound by a kerb. This ‘green’ character is a key component of the ‘garden village’ aesthetic.

Significant trees or tree groups are marked on the Conservation Area Plan. Lack of a specific reference does not imply that a tree or group is not of value.



Driveway to Knebworth Golf Club



Deards End Lane

Opportunities for improvement

Buildings and their landscape settings are generally well-maintained, there are a number of buildings or other elements which detract from the area's special character. These opportunities for improvement are as follows:

- An electricity substation is located to the west of the The Granary on Park Lane. While the building has been constructed of a form and materials to reflect buildings in the conservation area, it is surrounded by an industrial wire-mesh fence which is in a poor state of repair and does nothing to enhance the setting of the adjacent grade II listed granary;
- Native-species of hedge make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, where these have been uprooted, particularly on front boundaries, the semi-rural character i.e. the garden village aesthetic, is considerably diminished;
- Houses on Deards End Lane are approached along driveways, which are typically not gated from the public highway. Gates are being introduced, and the most successful of these in conservation area terms are traditionally mounted timber gates, of a design which reflects the character of the building on the plot i.e. at no. 9. There are examples of high metal security gates being erected, and areas of hedge being replaced with brick walls; these introduce a 'hard' edge to an otherwise 'soft' boundary treatment common on the lane. These gates neither preserve or enhance the special interest of the area and are indicated on the conservation area plan;
- There are examples of grass verges being destroyed, for example if a private gravel driveway is extended into the public realm. Loss of grass verges is detrimental to the semi-rural character of the conservation area;
- New build garages should be of a scale and design to reflect the character and material palette of the traditional buildings along the lane. Garages should be located appropriately on the plot, preferably partially concealed from the lane, to

ensure that the 'green' character of the lane is not encroached upon by highly visible new structures.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND MAPS

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This review document is published by North Hertfordshire District Council working in conjunction with The Conservation Studio.

PLANNING GUIDANCE - APPROVED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES

STATEMENT OF CONSULTATION AND PROCESS

3 November 2007	Exhibition launch to public consultation
14 December 2007	End of public consultation
20 February 2008	Southern Rural Committee
8 April 2008	Cabinet Meeting

In addition, there was local publicity, entry on the District Council's website and letters were sent to various stakeholders, details of which are available from the address below.

If you would like a translation of this document please contact your local Council reception on 01462 474000.

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