



STOCKENS GREEN, KNEBWORTH

CONSERVATION AREA
8 APRIL 2008

Stockens Green Conservation Area was designated on 2 April 1984 and amended on 5 July 1990. This document forms part of a first comprehensive review for Stockens Green and should be read in conjunction with the conservation area map. A register of Buildings of Local Interest for Knebworth Parish also exists but there are no such buildings located in Stockens Green Conservation Area.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 SUMMARY

3 LOCATION AND SETTING

Location, landscape setting and geology

4 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

History of the conservation area

Development of street pattern

5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Relationship of buildings to spaces

6 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Present character: activities and uses

Architectural and historic character

Positive buildings

Prevalent and traditional building materials and the public realm

Open spaces, green areas and trees

Opportunities for enhancement

7 ARTICLE 4 (2) RECOMMENDATION

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND MAPS

1 INTRODUCTION

Stockens Green 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.



Stockens Green – north side



Nos. 12-14 Stockens Green

2 SUMMARY

The special interest that justifies designation of the Stockens Green, Knebworth Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors, including:

- The Old Cottage, grade II listed, a 16th and 17th century building surviving from the area's rural past;
- An early 20th century co-operative housing development focused around Stockens Green, based on 'garden suburb' principles;
- A co-partnership tenants' society was proposed as part of the Knebworth Garden Village to be built on land owned by the Earl of Lytton. The planning was entrusted to Mr Thomas Adams in consultation with Mr Edwin Lutyens (later to be knighted);
- Further early 20th century houses associated with the growth of the new town of Knebworth;
- Buildings are two storeys arranged in pairs and short terraces, with details in the vernacular and Arts & Crafts manner;
- The palette of building materials is red brick, with plain clay tile roofs; some of the elevations are rendered and painted white;
- Houses are set in large gardens, with high beech hedges providing the boundary treatment to front gardens;
- Open, green character created by Stockens Green and the green at the junction of Gun Lane. Wide grass verges link these two spaces;
- Visual links to open countryside to the west of the settlement.

3 LOCATION AND SETTING

Location, landscape setting and geology

Stockens Green 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 has a rural setting to the west, of open fields bounded by native hedgerows and an urban setting of the town to the east. The London to Cambridge/Peterborough railway line runs parallel to the conservation area's eastern boundary, and an underpass connects Stockens Green to Knebworth Village which lies on the other side of the track. Within the conservation area the land rises gently from Gun Lane westwards to the green of Stockens Green.

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. After an initial phase of organic growth, 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. According to the Herts Express newspaper on 25th September 1909, “.....The planning was entrusted to Mr Thomas Adams, in consultation with Mr Edwin Lutyens, FRIBA”. Later to be knighted, 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. He designed several houses in the vicinity including Wych Elms and Beacon House in nearby Deards End Lane. In 1897 he married Lady Emily Lytton, hence his connection with Knebworth. The plan for the garden village was never realised, but some small-scale examples of ‘garden suburbs’ were built, of which Stockens Green is one.



The Old Cottage, Gun Lane



Nos. 16-24 Stockens Green

The Stockens Green housing development was started in 1912 when a co-partnership society formed to acquire an area of land to build houses. Knebworth Tenants Ltd. drew up a set of rules for the development and each tenant invested in the company. A £10 share was a minimum holding and rents varied from 6s to 10s 6d per week. It was considered that crediting the tenants with a profit share would encourage them to keep the houses in a good state of repair. The houses were laid out along ‘garden suburb’ principles and the style of the houses references vernacular house types.

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 encompassing country and town in rural settings. This idea formed the basis for residential garden suburbs. A garden suburb should be on the outskirts of the city, in rural settings, and with houses arranged on large garden plots, interspersed by public green areas, and having an attractive outlook. In October 1903, 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 the location and layout of farms and lanes surrounding Knebworth, and while Gun Lane and Stockens Green not named, they are discernable. The First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Map of 1884 shows these two routes in greater detail; at this date there were only a few widely scattered buildings and the remainder of the land was open fields. Gun Farm, from which Gun Lane takes its name, was located to the north of the current conservation area. The north-south line of the Great Northern Railway had arrived, running parallel to Gun Lane. The only buildings on the north side of the lane (Stockens Green) were two buildings arranged in an L-plan formation on a corner plot; one of these survives as The Old Cottage, Gun Lane. On the south side of the lane, a short track, with a building on the east side, terminated at a pond. This track was developed as Wadnall Way in the 20th century.

It is not until the OS map of 1923 that Stockens Green is depicted in recognisable form, and the streets named as Stockens Green and Gun Lane. Eight pairs of cottages had been erected on the east side of Gun Lane, at the southern end adjacent to the railway. The green had been formed, and the course of the lane connecting to Gypsy Lane altered. Twenty-seven houses had been laid out on the north side of the green, on a former field, and arranged as pairs and short terraces. No.38 being the exception and is a detached property and is understood to have been the original show house in 1912. A pair of houses had been laid out at the west end of the green and a further 10 houses set out on the south side.

By the OS map of 1937 further plots had been developed round the green, although at this date no further roads had been developed to connect the settlement to the centre of Knebworth which had by then developed around the railway station.

5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Relationship of buildings to spaces

The conservation area has a very spacious character. Much of the housing was laid out following the principles of the Garden City Movement, encompassing wide roads, areas of public green space, and large garden plots. A wide road, bordered by deep grass verges creates a green corridor connecting the green at the junction of Stockens Green and Gun Lane, with the large rectangular green of Stockens Green itself.

Stockens Green comprises the heart of the development, around which many of the houses are grouped. The houses are all set back equidistant from the street frontage behind generous front gardens. They are arranged as pairs and short terraces, and on some of the corner plots the final house projects forward to create a sense of termination to the composition. Nos. 17 and 19 Stockens Green are orientated at oblique angles on opposite corner sites and frame the junction with Wadhall Way, linking the two streets. The relationship of buildings to this junction is an important focal point within Stockens Green and this has been highlighted in appeal decisions (see bibliography).



Stockens Green – view south-east



Stockens Green – view east

6 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Present character: activities and uses

The conservation area can be divided into two distinct character areas: Gun Lane, containing The Old Cottage and the pairs of red brick cottages on the east side; and Stockens Green focused on the core of the pre-war planned development. The conservation area is almost entirely residential, with the exception of Knebworth Store, which occupies a former domestic building.

The area has a quiet residential character, with little through traffic part from morning and evening rush hours. Gun Lane has a heavier traffic flow, as it connects between Knebworth Station, and an underpass beneath the railway line to the southern part of the town centre.

Architectural and historic character

The oldest building within the conservation area is The Old Cottage on Gun Lane. This former farmhouse dates from the 16th and 17th centuries, with late 19th century refacing and 20th century alterations. The building is timber-framed, but this is largely concealed by brickwork, which is painted white. The prominent east gable and chimneystack form an important feature of the streetscene.

On the east side of Gun Lane are ranged seven pairs of early 20th century brick cottages. Each two-storey cottage is one bay wide, with a casement at each storey, set beneath a rowlock arch. Each pair of cottages has the front door located at opposing ends of the building, and a large chimneystack set centrally to the steeply pitched roof; these motifs create an attractive rhythmic pattern along the group. Some of the buildings are in brown brick, with red brick dressings. The buildings are arranged in a subtle convex curve along the historic route of Gun Lane. Although some of the cottages have single-storey, side additions, the existing spacing between each pair of cottages is an essential part of the area's character and should be retained.

The first phase of the Stockens Green co-operative housing development comprised 39 houses. These were erected in pairs and short terraces to a planned design, generally uniform, but with a few buildings of individual form and detail to create variety and interest. The detail of the houses referenced the vernacular tradition and the Arts & Crafts style, common to the Garden City Movement, with features such as dormer windows, prominent chimneystacks and casement windows. The houses are of brick, although the majority of houses facing onto the large green at the western end of the conservation area have been rendered and painted white. This has created two distinct visual groups in that the majority of dwellings to the east of the conservation area are facing brick. In both cases, the houses were orientated on the land to create an attractive outlook for each dwelling.

It is considered important to the character of the conservation area that this visual distinction is maintained i.e. that 'positive' buildings with an appearance of facing brick should not be painted, rendered or clad whilst alternative colour schemes are not introduced to 'positive' buildings that are currently white painted on the basis that this may harm the sense of harmony and uniformity at the west end of the conservation area.

The paired cottage form at Stockens Green comprises two-bay buildings, with a gable projecting forward on the front elevation, with a casement window at each level, and therefore the paired cottages have a distinctive paired-gable feature. Dormer windows break the principal roofslope in some cases. The short terraces comprise up to five houses, with the house at each end presented as a projecting gable. The houses in between have dormer windows, and there are some small casements tucked up under the eaves.

There are some circumstances such as that found at nos.28 and 54 Stockens Green, where semi-detached dwellings have been extended up to the side boundary with a continuation of the ridge line. This has resulted in the space between dwellings being significantly reduced and the visual balance at first floor being harmed. Similar extensions should be carefully considered in the future with a presumption against further two-storey side extensions to 'positive' buildings as indicated on the conservation area map.



Gun Lane



Nos. 60-64 Stockens Green

Positive buildings

A number of unlisted buildings have been identified as being buildings of townscape merit or 'positive' buildings. These are marked on the accompanying map. Buildings identified as having 'townscape merit' are good examples of relatively unaltered 20th century buildings, with a common design language. The style, detailing and building materials provide the streetscape with a cohesive appearance. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution 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, laid in Flemish Bond on nos. 23-51 Gun Lane, and Stretcher Bond on the planned development surrounding Stockens Green. Roofs are of plain clay tiles, although in some instances these have been replaced with concrete tiles. Tiles are also used to decorative effect for the roof kneelers. Some of the buildings have a white-painted render coat over the brickwork, and this contrasts attractively with the red tile roofs and red brick chimney stacks. Many of the chimney stacks are surmounted by tall terracotta pots. The Old Cottage is the only example of timber-framing within the conservation area, however this 16th and 17th century work has largely been concealed behind a 19th century brick face.

The public realm throughout the conservation area is modern. Pavements are of tarmac, with a mixture of granite and concrete kerbs, however the wide grass verges mitigate the impact of these hard features, and overall the character is relatively rural.

Likewise, while street lighting is modern, the lamps are thinly, and irregularly, placed, thereby avoiding imposing a more 'urban' symmetry on the appearance of the streets. A cast iron street sign for 'Stockens Green' is located on the green, and a post-mounted ER post box is found close to the centre of the conservation area.

Open spaces, green areas and trees

There are two notable public open spaces in the conservation area: Stockens Green and the green at the junction of Stockens Green and Gun Lane. These two spaces each have the appearance of a 'village green' with houses grouped around the central space, and they are linked by the wide grass verges on either side of the road. Stockens Green was created as part of the early 20th century co-operative housing development; it is a large rectangle of grass, surrounded by quiet residential streets. All of the surrounding houses face inwards across the space. Many of the grassed areas of Stockens Green are generally not bounded by a kerb, and this feature helps to enhance the appearance of the route as a semi-rural lane.

Trees and hedges are an important feature of the conservation area. Nearly all of the plots of Stockens Green are bounded by high clipped beech hedges; these hedges continue the length of the plots, creating a strong sense of enclosure on side streets, such as Stockens Dell. The hedges make a significant contribution to the character of the area, unifying the streetscene. There are a number of individual mature trees, located in front gardens, along the grass verges, and in a group of three at each end of Stockens Green. These are all native species, such as holly, plane and horse chestnut trees. The hedges and greens are a vital part of the garden suburb 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.

At the eastern end of Stockens Green, close-boarded timber fencing has been introduced to the front boundary of three relatively modern houses. It is considered that this type of boundary treatment disrupts the unity provided by hedgerow frontages and should be avoided where possible in the future.



Junction of Stockens Green and Gun Lane Wadnall Way

Opportunities for improvement

Whilst the general condition of conservation area is good, there are a number of buildings or other elements which detract from the area's special character. These opportunities for improvement are as follows:

- There are a group of electricity boxes located on the wide grass verge at the junction of Stockens Green and Wadnall Way. While these are functional objects, they have been located centrally on a prominent corner site rather than discreetly, for example at back of pavement line and impinge on an otherwise semi-rural outlook;
- Some properties have lost their traditional beech hedges to front boundaries. Where non-native species of hedge i.e. leylandii, have replaced Beech hedges. These appear visually incongruous in the streetscene;
- Some beech hedges have been replaced by brick walls and close-boarded timber fences, and in some cases the plot frontage has no boundary treatment. This disrupts the 'green' boundary line which is a key feature of the area;
- There is one non-residential building in the conservation area, Knebworth Stores. The signage does not accord with the character or appearance of the conservation area.



View to no. 19 Stockens Green



Knebworth Stores

7 THE CASE FOR AN ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION

Nearly all of the buildings within the conservation area have suffered from small-scale changes, such as the replacement of the timber casements with uPVC alternatives. Such changes have made a cumulative contribution to the erosion of the appearance and character of the conservation area. Commenting on a previous appeal (see bibliography), a Planning Inspector wrote, “... *the existence of some alterations which are not entirely compatible with the character of the area reinforces the need to maintain the essential character of the area which remains.....*”.

Consideration should, therefore, be given to the serving of an Article 4(2) Direction to prevent the erosion of the historic character and appearance of Stockens Green Conservation Area. The following aspects could come under the control of the planning system:

- The installation of solar panels to the wall or roof of a dwellinghouse where permitted under Classes A and C respectively of Pt 1 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order;
- The installation of rooflights or changing the roof material of dwellinghouse as normally permitted under Class C of Pt 1 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order;
- The construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse as normally permitted under Class D of Pt 1 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order;
- The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a hard surface for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as normally permitted under Class F of Pt 1 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order;
- The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse as normally permitted under Class A of Pt 2 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order;
- The painting of exterior facing brickwork of any part of a dwellinghouse or of a building or enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse or changing the paint

colour of dwellinghouses or of a building or enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse which are currently white-painted, as normally permitted under Class C of Pt 2 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order.

- The installation of a wind turbine on a dwellinghouse as normally permitted under Class A of Pt 1 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order or in the case of installing a wind turbine on a building within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse or freestanding within the garden of a dwellinghouse Class E of Pt 1 of Sch.2 to the 1995 Order would apply;
- Under Class A of Pt 31 of Sch.2 of the 1995 Order, permitted development rights are withdrawn for the erection, alteration or removal of a chimney on a dwellinghouse.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND MAPS

Drury and Andrews, A topographical map of Hartford-shire, 1766
O.S. 1st Edition 1884
O.S. 2nd Edition 1899
O.S. 3rd Edition 1924

The Knebworth Garden Village, Knebworth, Herts, London 1910.

Frank A. Richardson, Knebworth: The story of a Hertfordshire village, 1982.

04/01813/1HH - Two storey side extension following demolition of existing single storey side extension. (Appeal dismissed 27/05/2005)

06/01340/1HH - Two storey side extension following demolition of existing single storey side extension. (Appeal dismissed 18/05/2007)

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.

আপনি যদি এই নথিটির অনুবাদ চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে স্থানীয় কাউন্সিলের অভ্যর্থনা ডেস্ক এ 01462 474000 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Per ottenere una traduzione di questo documento, si prega di contattare la reception del Consiglio locale al numero 01462 474000.

Jeśli potrzebujesz niniejszego tekstu w tłumaczeniu, skontaktuj się z biurem przyjęć lokalnej Rady pod numerem telefonu 01462 474000.

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 01462 474000 'ਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਕੌਂਸਲ ਦੀ ਰਿਸੈਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کا ترجمہ چاہیں تو برائے مہربانی اپنی مقامی کونسل کے استقبالیہ سے
پر رابطہ کریں۔ 01462 474000

If you would like an audio cassette, braille or large print version please contact your local Council reception on 01462 474000.



North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire SG6 3JF

Tel: Planning Control and Conservation on 01462 474000
Email: planningcontrol@north-herts.gov.uk
Website: www.north-herts.gov.uk