

Extract from Woldingham Character Assessment

Woldingham has a positive and distinctive character, which is a result of its location and siting, its strong landscape character and its historical pattern of development, from a small hamlet to a planned 'village' laid out and developed from the late 19th century onwards. Its character is created primarily by:

- a number of non-residential building groups and open spaces located in the centre of Woldingham influence the character of the whole village. These are:
 - The Green, the original hamlet, fronted by a terrace of small cottages and large properties;
 - The Crescent, a formal suburban parade of buildings, including shops and other businesses that serve the local community, set back from station road behind a small open space;
 - The Glebe, a significant recreational open space set at the heart of the village, yet tucked away from road frontages; and
 - The church, sited at the junction between station road, long hill and croft road;
- its landscape is the dominant feature, with buildings being subservient in terms of visual prominence;
- The oldest part of the village is located around the Green, which forms a distinct arrival point, when approaching the village from the south. The area is designated as conservation area;
- a sylvan character formed by tree cover, soft front, rear and side boundary treatments, consisting of hedges and mature shrubs, with only limited areas of hardstanding;
- buildings set far apart from one another in large plots, with little coalescence. They are informally arranged and set back inconsistently in their grounds and therefore do not impose a spatial definition on the roads.
- The village is characterised by large, detached houses that have been individually designed by a variety of architects;
- The area is characterised by the topography that offers glimpsed views between buildings to wooded hillsides or open countryside; and
- The roads are informal and defined primarily by planting, with few pavements or highway markings and no street lights.

Threats

Threats to the character of the area may arise through proposals for development that require planning permission, but they may also come about through changes that property owners make under permitted development rights, without the need for planning permission. Threats include:

- subdivision of existing plots that were established as part of the original Gilford layout and vision, leading to a significant and adverse change in the character of the area;
- localised loss of tree cover, which results in damage to the tree skyline, the tree covered setting and leafy character, leading to increased visual prominence of the built form;
- loss of woodland or tree cover, resulting in soil exposure and scars in the landscape;
- loss of trees and narrowing of gaps between buildings through redevelopment, so that trees and vegetation do not form appropriate screening;
- Fragmentation of unified frontage treatment through the removal of hedgerows, hedges, shrubbery and grassed areas;
- loss of the informal character with a strong semi-rural influence, through the introduction of hard boundary treatments and formal gate piers and gates and loss of informal grass verges to be replaced either by hard surfaces or formal 'front garden' planting;
- increased use of close boarded fences or new brick or stone walls rather than planted boundaries, so weakening the planted setting for buildings;

- large, bulky or prominently sited development that negatively impacts on views from the surrounding landscape setting, i.e buildings merging and no longer separated by extensive greenery;
- demolition of or extensive addition to smaller houses and replacement of smaller houses with large ones;
- development of larger houses that take up the full width of the plot and block views out between buildings; and
- ‘improvements’ to roads led by highway engineering design requirements (for example pavements, kerbs, over designed junctions and street lighting).

Opportunities

- The Crescent provides a focal point of activity, but there is an opportunity to revitalise it and strengthen its role for the local community, both in terms of the range of local services and the upkeep of buildings;
- To ensure that appropriate trees are planted over time, so that there is always a mature tree setting ad skyline for the village; and
- Woldingham has a tradition of high quality architect designed houses, in particular with arts & crafts influences. Where development takes place, there is an opportunity to encourage this spirit to continue with high quality imaginative designs, including contemporary architecture.