CHARACTER AND DESIGN · SUMMARY SHEET

Character and design

What we mean by character and design, the nine hamlets, and what makes East Peckham recognisable

1 Nine hamlets, one village

East Peckham is not one place but nine. Each hamlet grew up separately, around a farm, a crossroads, a mill or a green, and the fields and orchards between them are part of what makes them distinct. Together they make up the parish.

Ten character assessments have been carried out, one for each hamlet, with Beltring and Branbridges assessed separately because they are so different in character. Each one describes what the area looks and feels like, lists its strengths and weaknesses, and sets out what is sensitive to change and how new building should respond.

1. The Pound
2. Chidley Cross
3. Peckham Bush
4. Roydon
5. Little Mill
6. Snoll Hatch
7. Beltring and Branbridges
8. Hale Street
9. Goose Green

2 What do we mean by character?

Character is the identity of an area. It is how it makes us feel. It is the sum of everything we notice, often without thinking about it: the way a lane bends, how close the houses sit to the road and to each other, the gaps between them, the hedges and the orchard trees, the views out across the fields, the quiet or the bustle, how dark it is at night.

Every hamlet has its own character. The Pound feels like a village centre; Peckham Bush feels like open countryside with a few farms; Branbridges feels like a working riverside yard. East Peckham as a whole has a character too, made up of all of these and of the countryside that separates them.

Design is the things you can point to. Kentish peg tiles and tile hanging, red and ochre brick, timber weatherboarding, oast roundels and cowls, brick chimneys, pitched roofs, the arched brick over a door, cottages that open straight onto the lane, and the walls, hedges and gates at the front.

The assessments pick out the design features in each hamlet that are worth protecting, so that new buildings and alterations fit in with their neighbours instead of looking like they could be anywhere.

3 What makes East Peckham distinctive?

Set against any other village nearby, these are the things that make East Peckham and its hamlets recognisable and special, and what the Plan needs to look after:

Hamlets with gaps between them

Separate groups of buildings with fields, orchards and hedgerows in between, rather than one continuous built-up area. Lose the gaps and you lose the hamlets.

A hop-growing past

Oast houses, barns and farmsteads, from the Whitbread Hop Farm at Beltring to converted farm buildings in every hamlet. Our logo is an oast for a reason.

Kentish materials

Red and brown brick, clay peg tiles, tile hanging, weatherboarding, chimneys and simple pitched roofs, repeated from the 1500s to the 1900s, so that old and new sit together.

Water everywhere

The Medway and the Bourne, the Coults Stream, mill sites, lakes and wet ground. The rivers shaped where the hamlets grew and still limit where building can safely go.

Dark, narrow lanes

Single-track lanes with no kerbs, little lighting and long views across farmland. Urban kerbs, lighting columns and estate roads would change them for good.

Historic depth

Buildings from the 1500s at The Pound, the Bullen Corner Conservation Area at Chidley Cross, Roydon Hall and the medieval church, Victorian terraces at The Freehold.

A village hub at The Pound

The shops, chemist and takeaways serving every hamlet, around the crossroads at Pound Road and Old Road.

Domestic scale

One and two storeys almost everywhere. Small groups of homes, not estates, so that nothing dominates its neighbours or the skyline.

Why it matters. The assessments on the ten character assessment sheets will become the Plan's design guidance and design policy. Once the Plan is made, anyone applying to build or alter a property in East Peckham will have their proposal tested against them. Tell us today if we have missed something that makes your hamlet special.