



March 2021

GUILD LIVING EPSOM - SCHEME AUDIT



One

INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

This audit examines the most recent application for Guild Living at Epsom which has been amended following the refusal of planning permission for application P20/19/01722/FUL against the specific reasons for refusal as stated in the planning refusal notice dated 23rd November 2020.

From an analysis of the (previous) reasons for refusal, we consider the key townscape and urban design issues this audit should consider are:

1. The height, mass, scale and design of the proposed buildings harming the character and appearance of the area (reason for refusal 1 - failing to comply with Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007), Policies DM9, DM10 and DM11 of the Development Management Policies Document (2015) and paragraphs 122 and 127 of the NPPF (2019).
2. How successful the landscape proposals to the site edge are in regards to mitigating the 'hardness' of the proposed response (reason for refusal 2) where the scheme presents an over-developed and hard edge to the appearance to the development, which would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. Causing harm to the character and appearance of the area fails to comply with Policy DM5 of the Development Management Policies Document (2015) and the NPPF (2019).
3. How the proposed development responds to the acceptable amenity for the occupiers of 40/46 Woodcote Green Road (reason for refusal 3) by means of overbearing, loss of privacy and loss of outlook, failing to comply with Policy DM10 of the Development Management Policies Document (2015).

APPLICATION MATERIAL

Accompanying the application is a thorough Design and Access Statement that sets out scheme amends and approaches to amenity and massing as well as a Heritage Townscape Impact Assessment which identifies the impact of the scheme on heritage assets in the area.

STRUCTURE

Following a brief introduction this Audit is split into the following four sections before concluding with an overall summary;



1. INTRODUCTION & KEY CHANGES



2. BASELINE CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE



3. SCALE & MASS



4. FRONTAGE

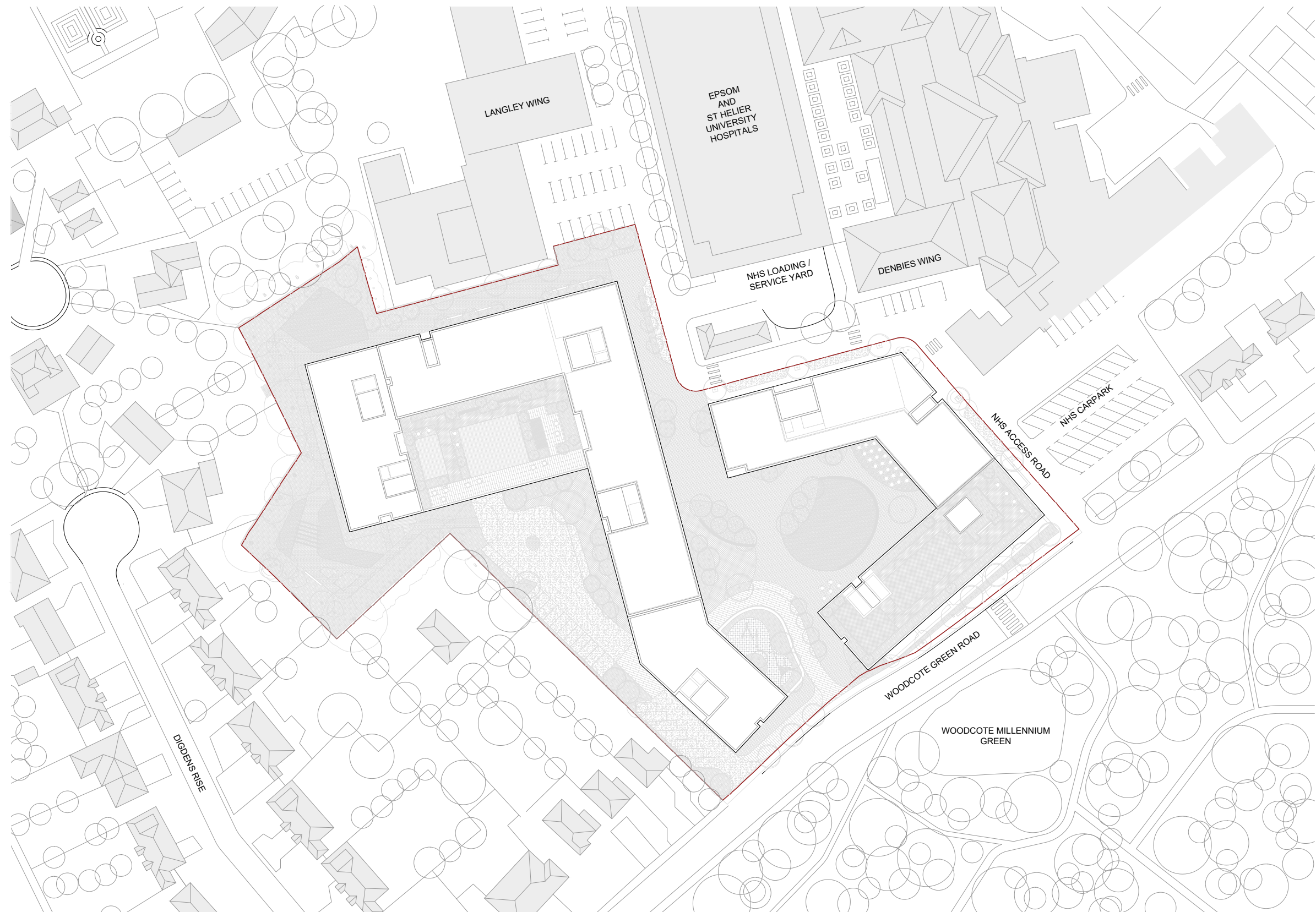


5. AMENITY

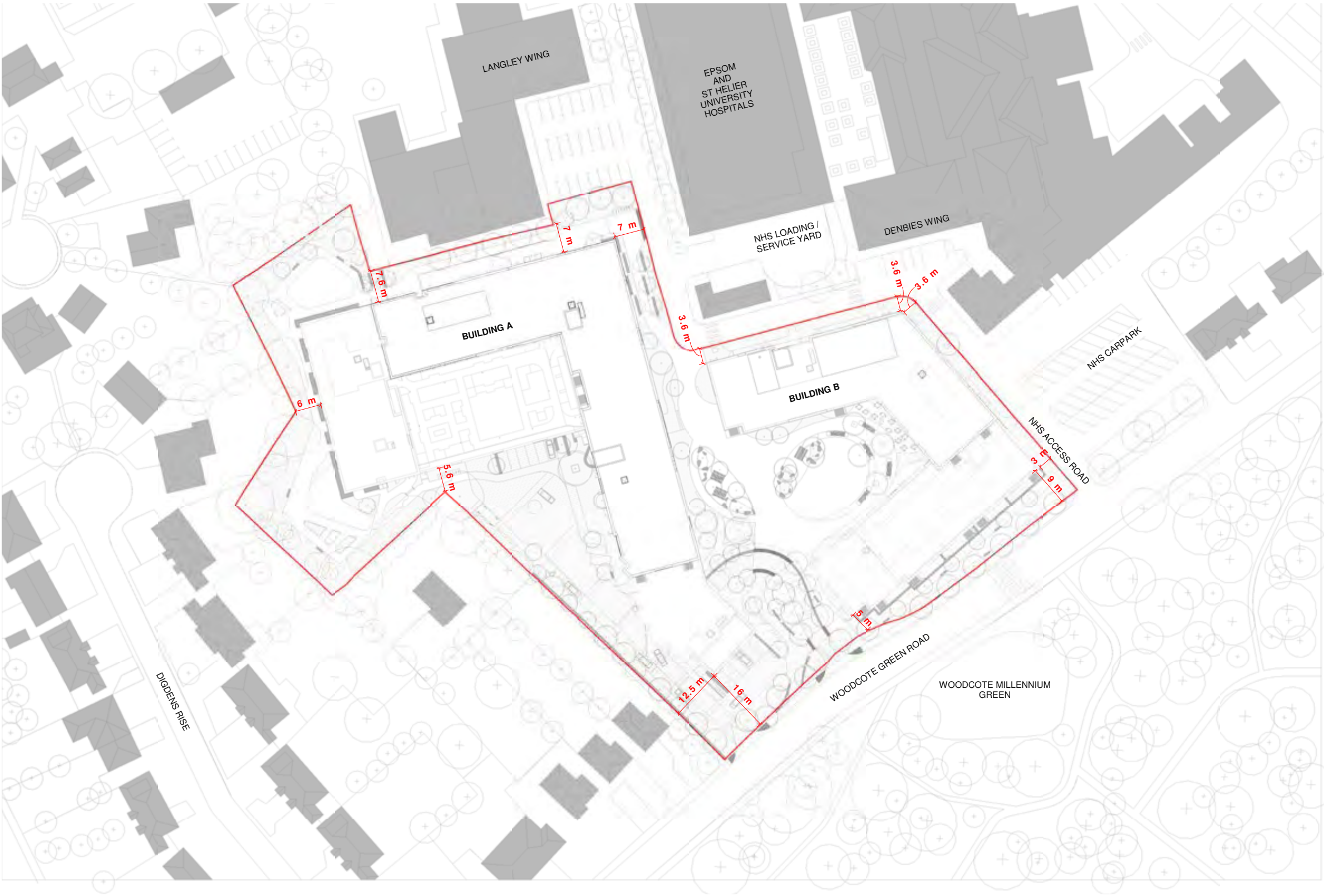


6. SUMMARY

P 19/01722/FUL - REFUSED SITE PLAN



AMENDED SITE PLAN





Two

TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL BASELINE

BASELINE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Whilst it is not the intention of this appraisal to carry out a full character assessment or visual appraisal, in order to identify if harm could be caused to the character and appearance of the area it is first essential to identify a baseline.

In 2008 Epsom & Ewell produced an Environmental Character Study as part of their evidence base for the Local Plan. Whilst this is dated it is not considered to have changed significantly since that time and is the only published character material covering this area. The conclusion of the study provided recommendations for the planning policy approach related to the character of the existing urban residential areas.

The Study set out a series of character areas, the extent of which can be seen on the adjacent plan.

CHARACTER AREA 35

The site itself and dwelling numbers 40-46 Woodcote Green Road are within 35E a sub-division of character area 35 which is considered to:

- Consist of an area of very mixed built form, height, scale and plot sizes as result of its proximity to the town centre, busy road thoroughfares, large institutional land uses and the railway as neighbouring areas.
- Have a busy character - both in terms of activity but also in terms of mixed visual characteristics,
- Have an eroded a sense of uniformity mostly from small scale cul de sac development.
- Contain localised areas of a uniform character, but the lack of a predominant style or form within other parts of the character area defy a summary description.
- Be largely flat with inclines around St Joseph that play an important role in the sub-areas.
- Limit views by built form, with some extensive views possible across playing fields and urban green areas.
- Borders Epsom Common at the western edge, with a sudden transition from urban to rural space.
- Be of very varied built condition and intactness is low.
- Have a varied quality and coverage of vegetation - in some places being of good quality, but as a general comment is in a poor or deteriorating condition and coverage.
- Be of medium low townscape quality overall as a result of the areas inter visibility on a busy through route.
- Contains a number of valued townscape elements such as landmarks, such as listed buildings or local amenities afforded the area a medium high townscape value overall.

- Have an ability to accommodate of change as a result of its lack of intactness.
- Have medium sensitivity with localised areas being of a much higher townscape value (eg listed buildings and landmarks along Dorking Road) and high inter-visibility.

CHARACTER AREA 36 WOODCOTE GREEN / SIDE

From No 48 Woodcote Green Road running west including, Hylands Road, Woodcote Side, Woodcote Park Road are grouped into Character Area 36 which is:

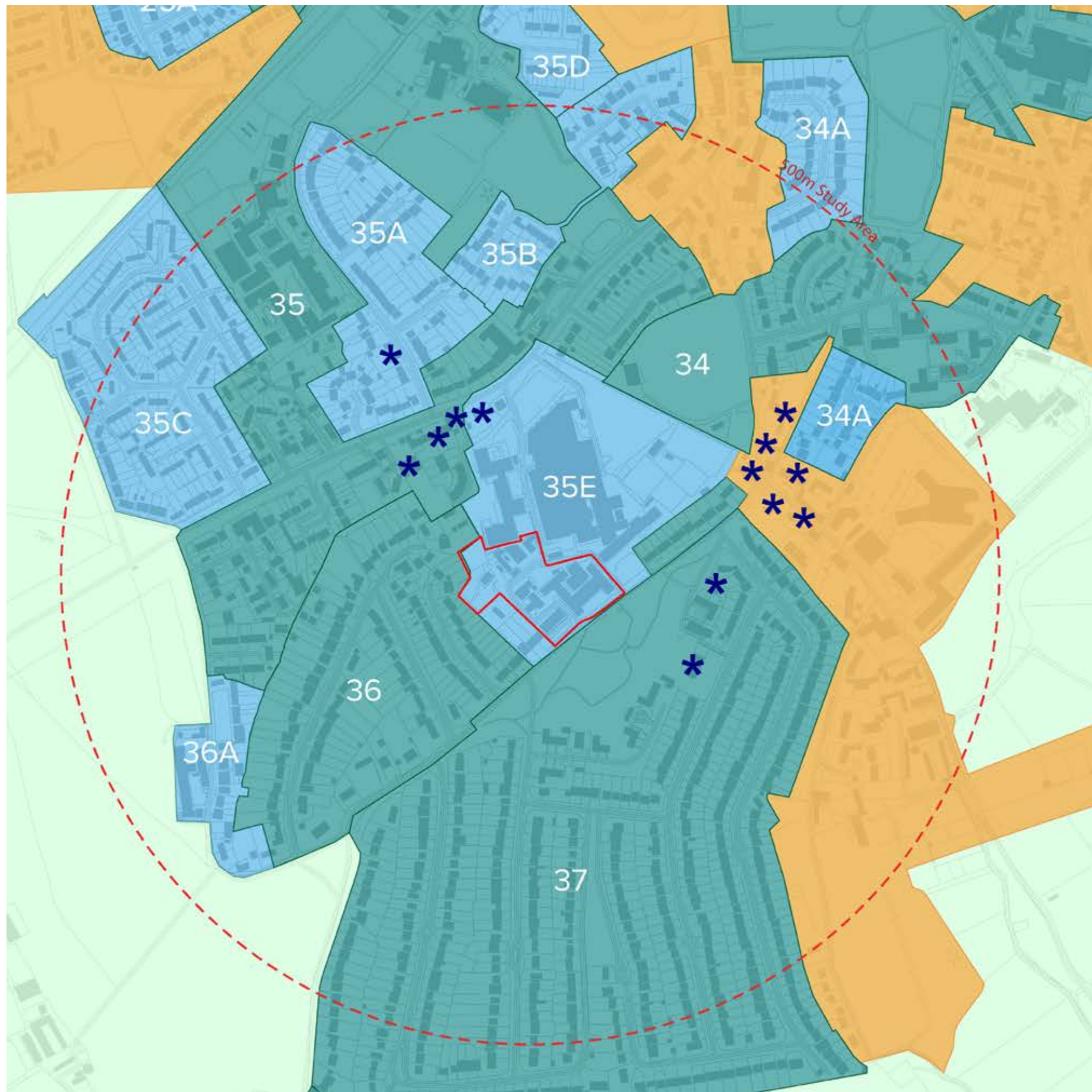
- Largely semi-detached or larger dwellings set back from the edge of the pavement with small front gardens. Some have a parking to the side.
- A high quality area reasonably intact with few infill dwellings.

The Atkins Report does not contain any information regarding this character area regarding sensitivity, value or quality.

CHARACTER AREA 37 WOODCOTE ESTATE

The 2008 Atkins report states that this character area is formed entirely of the private Woodcote Estate which is:

- An area of high quality residential townscape of detached properties set back from the carriageway with a mature integral landscape which blends streetscape and front plots.
- Is of an established character and a high build quality.
- Laid out on long unadopted drives with no footways resembling a country land character with grass verges and an undulating topography.
- Of a very high condition of both built form and vegetation.
- An area where views are general enclosed.
- Of high townscape quality in terms of condition, intactness and quality of built form and vegetation,
- Mature and established in character which is reinforced by the integration between front plots and streetscape with quality street vegetation.
- Of medium high townscape value given the area's location on the settlement edge and the distinctive characteristics of the individual properties despite being a mass built estate originally.
- Supported by its landscape in considered to be of high ecological value (and includes a concentration of TPO's), helping to form green corridors.
- As a result of its interactiveness, value and quality considered to have a high townscape sensitivity.



CHALK LANE CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

The Chalk Lane Conservation Area lies to the east of the site. It is regarded as one of Borough's most important conservation areas due to:

- The relatively high number of Grade II* listed buildings.
- Its semi-rural setting with the Epsom Downs which gently rises to the east and south, and provides a sense of rurality, otherwise unusual for Epsom.
- A variety of building types, including polite, grand residences set within private grounds and parkland (and with service buildings such as stables which attest to the areas link with horse racing) and modest vernacular cottages.
- High, red brick walls that also contribute to the character and appearance.
- Many of the buildings relating to the development of Epsom as a Spa Town from the 17th century onwards and the famous Epsom Race Course.

The HTVIA states that the significance of the Chalk Lane Conservation Area is primarily derived from the historic and architectural group value of the historic properties within the area, the morphology of the settlement which largely relates to ribbon development along the roads and its semi-rural setting to the south and east.

Given the limited inter-visibility with the study site the HTIA considers that the site makes a no contribution to the significance of the conservation area and no contribution to its character and appearance.

LEGEND

- ▭ Site Boundary
- ▭ Conservation Areas
- ▭ Green Belt
- ▭ Character Area
- ▭ Sub-character Area
- ✱ Listed Building

CHARACTER AREA PLAN
- AS PER EPSOM & EWELL
ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER
ASSESSMENT 2008.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER STUDY

The Study has identified a range of issues which have or could undermine local character in the immediate context of the site to be parking pressure and infill and backland development.

Recommendations include:

- To promote local distinctiveness throughout the urban area and protect or enhance townscape character.
- To require a high standard of design in all locations.
- In areas of lower sensitivity development should on enhance the townscape of the area - different layouts, scale and massing may be appropriate in an area if clear benefits in terms of townscape character can be delivered.
- In areas of mixed character such as 35 the Council should encourage development which reinforces the higher quality elements of the area and contributes towards creating character and local distinctiveness.
- Areas with higher sensitivity such as 37 should be protected, preserved and enhanced.

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Public Open Space
- Major Path
- Minor Path
- Pedestrian / Cycle Link
- Railway

MOVEMENT & OPEN SPACE PLAN



WOODCOTE GREEN ROAD CHARACTER

The character of Woodcote Green Road itself is formed by the coming together of the character areas described above of varying value and sensitivity. Whilst the site is within area 35E the perception of change will also be experienced from adjacent character areas. Aside from the views from individual properties, most change will be perceived by people using the street and public space itself and therefore it is important to understand what role the site plays when moving through the area.

In line with character area 35 the hospital buildings function as a general anomaly within the overall pattern of residential uses here however they also have a landmark presence which reacts and frames the widening of the landscape at Millennium Green to create a focal space with taller buildings defining the wider public space at this point.

The existing landscape elements along this stretch of street-scape dominate and unify the differing character elements and create an attractive cohesive space on the southern edge of Epsom. The boundary of the Woodcote Estate, and surroundings to Woodcote House merge with the Woodcote Millennium Green to line and frame the southern side of the road.

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- ⊙ Major Node
- ⊙ Minor Node
- ★ Landmark
- ⌋ Gateway

LYNCHIAN ANALYSIS
PLAN

FROM SOUTH TO SITE

At the western end of Woodcote Green Road a gateway is framed through a level change and boundary walls (see point 1 on plan opposite), where the footway and carriageway separate trees and hedges frame the gateway and the road becomes Woodcote Side and Wilmerhatch Road. Here there is an awareness of the large setback detached residential dwellings on the north side, and the of dwellings to the south side, but they do not play a large part in the view.

Around the junction with Sunnybank and Hylands Road (2) the character remain framed by landscape with glimpse views to houses emphasised by a level change to the north. Opposite Didgen's Rise land starts to widen to open space at the entrance to Woodcote Hurst on the south side (3). Two pairs of semi-detached dwellings with a setback of around 10m become visible akin to the character of area 36 with its semi-detached dwellings of larger massing.

To the south west of Woodcote Lodge (4) there are three repeated forms of detached dwellings (individually styled) on the frontage cat-slide roofs to the east over the attached with setbacks of around 15m (which are within character area 35).

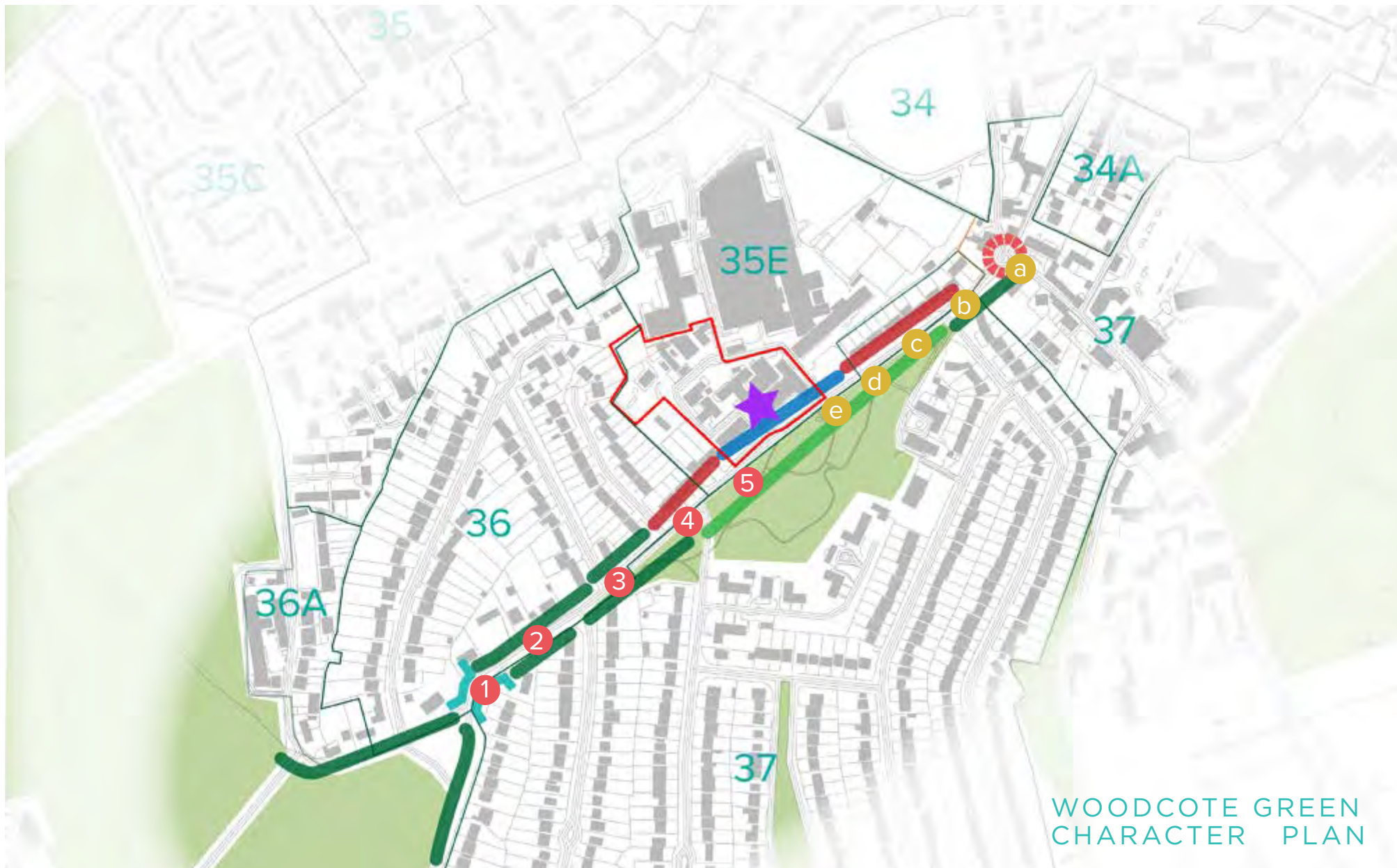
The dwellings immediately either side of the site are broadly consistent in their building line and setback, all with front gardens and off street parking areas with no boundary or a low wall and shrub/tree frontage adjacent to the driveway.

Woodcote Lodge itself (whilst screened and scaffolded at the time of visit) was more modern brick with a grey mansard roof) set back from the road following the existing building line with a row of small trees and a limited parking area. Land opens on the south side to a well used pond and woodland public space (5).

From the south, Rowan House (part of the site) is seen from Hylands Road. It appears to be a significant mass against the adjacent residential dwellings but entirely appropriate opposite to Millennium Green and in the landscape context which unifies this streetscape. The nearside projecting wing, encloses and frames the southern aspect of Woodcote Green Road from a distance but in near views the stepping up from Woodcote Lodge to Rowan House helps to assimilate the hospital buildings within the view. In close views the larger site buildings are seen against the open space and pond area and do not feel disproportionately scaled.



VIEW WALKING
FROM THE SOUTH
TOWARDS THE SITE
(SEE ADJACENT PLAN)



VIEW WALKING FROM THE NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Public Open Space
- Landscape dominated with glimpses to residential
- Tree and landscape dominated
- Residential with front garden hedgerow boundary
- Institutional with tree lined frontage
- ⊙ Node
- ✧ Gateway
- ★ Landmark

FROM NORTH TO SITE

At the eastern end a number of valued listed buildings and frame a node of pedestrian activity where Woodcote Green Road becomes Woodcote Road and meets Chalk Lane (see point a on plan on previous page). Here old brick boundary walls of Woodcote Green House, Woodcote Villa and adjacent larger set back semi-detached dwellings, with mature trees and front garden planting create a tightening of the streetscape leading towards the Epsom Town Centre. On the south side a boundary wall gives way to landscape dominated edges of the Woodcote Estate (b&c).

Moving away from the conservation area on the north side are a pair of villa style semi-detached units set back from the pavement by 17m (approx). To the south east of these are several large detached houses of a similar scale to the semi's to the south and set back by 9m (b).

To the north east of the larger Rowan House and hospital site on the north of Woodcote Green Road, there are three pairs of inter-war semi detached houses (c&d) with a setback of around 5m bounded by low brick walls and a grassed verge of 5m to the pavement. Dwelling style is largely complementary in scale and use of materials with red brick, white render, red tiles (hung and roof) with some timber detailing in gables. Dwellings generally have hipped roofs with projecting gables with bay or box windows.

Rowan House (part demolished at the time of visit) was a red brick 4 storey institutional building setback from the road with a small access way and poor quality tree line. The ground floor had a projection from upper floors with large arch topped Georgian style sash windows. At either end there are wings projecting forward of the normal buildings line.

Rowan House (and the site) plays a continuous part in the streetscape when moving through the space (from minor to significant). Where the view is seen largely in the context of the adjacent dwellings there are times where the bulk (emphasised in the photo by the white) appears incongruous with the residential nature of the area by virtue of its scale and projections and emphasised by the open car park area to the west. However this is in line with the institutional hospital use, and the Character Area itself which is an anomaly within the wider residential environment and currently functions with a different form and massing to its neighbours. This view is entirely typical of an institutional site and an increase in height or landmark functioning building seems entirely appropriate (and more balanced) where the site faces onto (or is seen in the context of) a public space and woodland area with paths and large pond. The principle of an increase in massing is appropriate within the character area and within Woodcote Green Road.

VISUAL BASELINE

A HTIA has been prepared to understand the impact of the proposed scheme on valued heritage elements of the townscape character, and the above explores the perception of change on the townscape and character in the views of people/pedestrians using Woodcote Green Road. Following an initial site visit it is anticipated that views of the site will be had from character area 36. Here land elevates providing glimpse view through gaps between buildings and as well as from the dwellings themselves. However, visual changes experienced will be within the existing context/character of the institutional/hospital context of the area and area 35.

SUMMARY

The only character area that will experience actual change is area 35E. The institutional nature and overall level of intactness of this area implies there is less sensitivity to change and that the emphasis is on reinforcing the higher quality elements of the area, and contributing towards creating character and local distinctiveness to enhance the townscape of the area where different layouts, scale and massing may be appropriate if clear benefits in terms of townscape character can be delivered.

The development of the site has the ability to influence the perception of Character Areas 36 and 37 in terms of both the proposed Massing and Frontage. These areas have more sensitivity to changes and are of a greater townscape value. However, by nature of their situation adjacent to institutional building buildings of scale should be expected.

The HTIA identifies that due to the limited inter-visibility the site makes no contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area and no contribution to its character and appearance.

Understanding the character of the space for the pedestrian highlights that the site plays a limited (but landmark) role in the view for much kinetic movement through. The impact is greatest when seen in isolation against the adjacent dwellings, but scale seems entirely in context with the setting of Millennium Green, the adjacent hospital buildings and the wider landscape setting of the space. The site is an anomaly in the wider residential environment but is representative of its institutional context. It should be recognised that any redevelopment of the site will include buildings of similar or greater massing as is representative of its use.





Three

SCALE & MASSING

B. SCALE & MASS

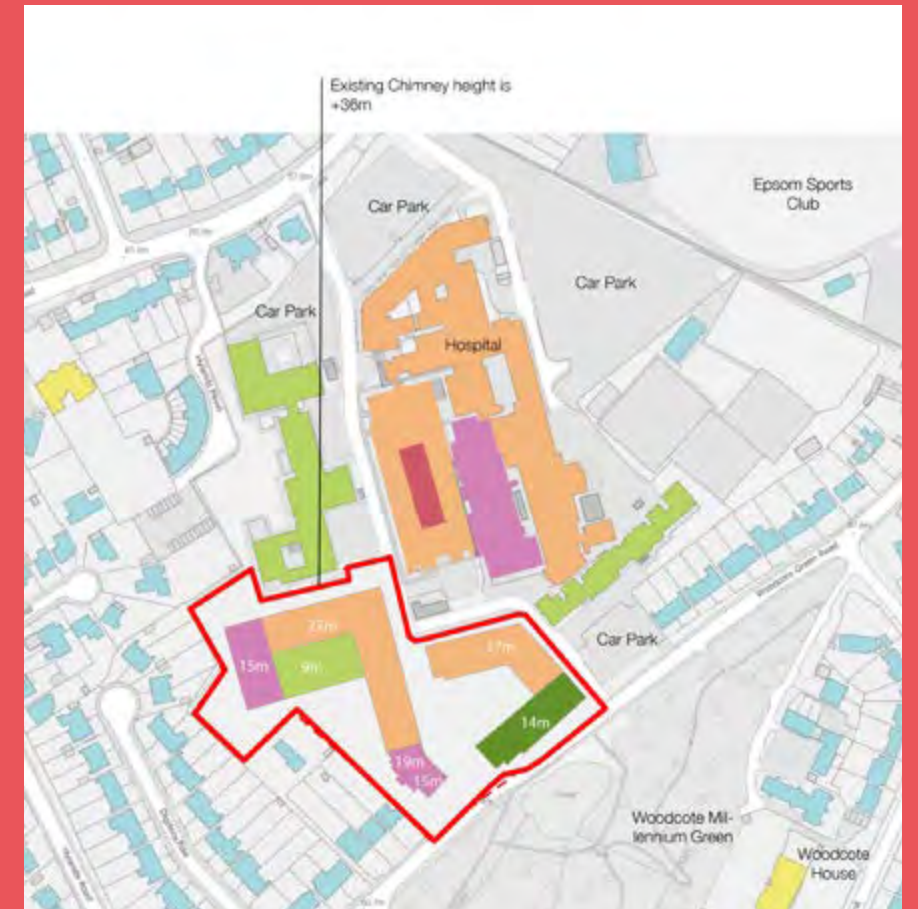
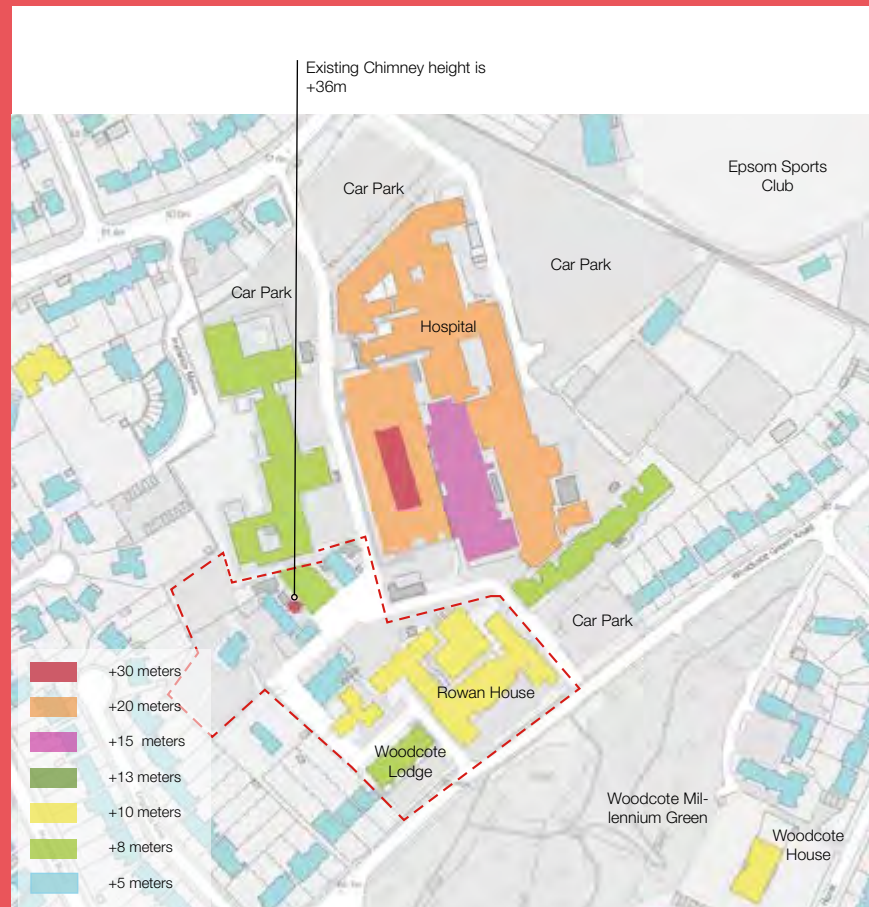
REASON FOR REFUSAL 1.

1. The proposed development by reason of its height, mass, scale and design would adversely impact and harm the character and appearance of the area (including the built environment and landscape setting), failing to comply with Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007), Policies DM9, DM10 and DM11 of the Development Management Policies Document (2015) and paragraphs 122 and 127 of the NPPF (2019).

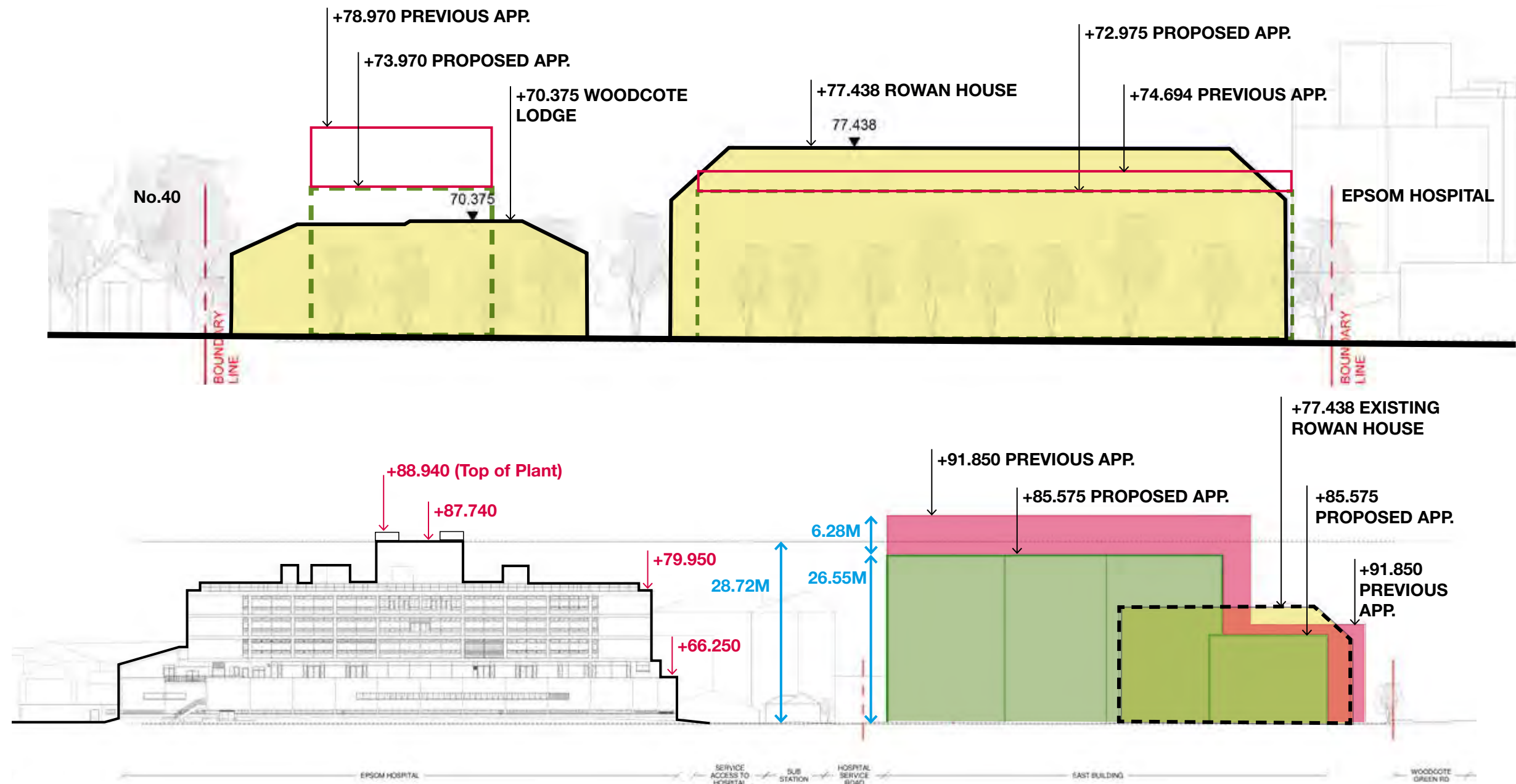
The impact of scale and massing on the character and appearance of the area should be considered in its impact on 1) the immediate street character around Woodcote Green Road as discussed in section 2 which relates directly to the frontage area, and 2) the wider townscape including character area 36 and 37 and the massing of the scheme as a whole.

SCALE

- The existing site represents a transition between the residential context around Woodcote Green Road, and the Hospital site itself, focused around Dorking Road.
- The Refused Scheme represented a significant increase to heights within the hospital site, with the rear wing of the development being of a similar height to the very highest recessed parts of the hospital building.
- The principle of height increase is to elevate within the central areas of the site away from the adjacent residential areas.
- The amended scheme is in keeping with the appropriate scale of the majority of the hospital buildings whilst stepping down to Woodcote Green Road and Didgens Rise.



AMENDED HEIGHT IN RELATION TO WOODCOTE GREEN ROAD & HOSPITAL



- A reduction in height of 6m on the taller elements of the scheme.
- A reduction of around 5m to the frontage of Block A and 3m to the frontage of Block B.
- Block A is still higher than Woodcote Lodge however the built form is set away from no 40 and is not as wide.