



(left) Eastham Mews housing; (right) Vicarage Row

6.2.2 Both Eastham Mews and Vicarage Row developments are apparently based around standard modern housing layouts and very little concession has been made regarding their choice of materials or detailing. Eastham Mews housing has slate roofs, but Vicarage Row has basic concrete tiled roofs. The brick chosen in both developments is neither of a high quality nor matching in colour and texture to the historic buildings in the village. Details such as fenestration and eaves treatment are also standard and not related to their locality. Whilst the materials and detailing detracts from the quality of the conservation area, the effect of this is mitigated by the small size of the developments, their visual detachment from most historic buildings and for the retention of older features such as stone front boundary walls. However, whereas Eastham Mews has pleasant grounds and the modern buildings nestle behind its boundary wall, visually separated from the village, Vicarage Row is at the prominent corner of Ferry Road and Eastham Village Road and has very few redeeming features

6.2.3 Other modern buildings in the conservation area are generally isolated. There are a few ‘one-off’ houses set back from the historic building line, often in the old gardens of other buildings. These do not have a particularly adverse effect on the area as the historic grain of the village is not interrupted and their visual influence is minimal. Should these types of developments significant grow in number, however, the village’s character will change as they will become a more noticeable feature. The way in which the modern buildings are accessed from the road is very important, as a long, bare tarmaced driveway can be more detrimental to the character of the conservation area than the building itself.

6.3 UNSYMPATHETIC EXTENSIONS

6.3.1 The terraced housing positioned directly onto the road allows little scope for extensions that make a significant impact on the character of the conservation area, although rear extensions can be still be unattractive when visible across open fields behind the houses. A greater threat to the area is the effect of extensions to the larger, unlisted buildings. Eastham Hall (formerly Hooton Mount) is sadly virtually unrecognisable from the building that was built in the middle of the 19th century. The symmetry of the main

south-west facing façade has been lost as a result of the significant extension to the north. Similarly the addition of a third floor within a modern mansarded roof has adversely affected the proportions of the façade. The quality of the modern materials used is not sympathetic with the original character of the building or that of the village as a whole.



Eastham Hall (Hooton Mount) today compared with a photograph taken in around 1920

- 6.3.2 Eastham House has also been extended and modified over recent decades, although it retains its overall form and character. However, subtle changes to the road-facing façade mean that it in parts reads as a modern building. The addition of a flat roofed dormer significantly detracts from the otherwise attractive roofscape. The extensions to the rear are less apparent when viewed from the road.



(left) the additional of a porch onto the front of a terrace can be damaging to the visual rhythm in the group; (right) a larger extension which changes the character of a building.

- 6.3.3 Extensions to dwellings that are detrimental to the character of a historic building or the conservation area as a whole are fortunately few in number. As the needs of a building's occupier changes it is inevitable that extensions and alterations will be needed. The sensitivity of a building to change will depend on its position, form and level of historical interest. Changes that affect not just the character of a building but the overall streetscape are most problematic. Most of the buildings within the conservation area affect the character of the streetscape as few are set within large grounds or at a

distance from the road. Poor quality extensions would therefore not only adversely affect the character of the building in question, but would also have a much wider impact.

- 6.3.4 Extensions to a terraced house, for instance, would alter the simple repeated form in such a way that the new part detracts from the significance of the architectural form of the whole block. The sides of most buildings are generally prominent in Eastham, particularly along the more narrow roads, therefore a side extension could have a greater effect on the street scene than in many suburban locations.
- 6.3.5 The form of the building will influence whether or not an extension is appropriate. Some types of buildings have a higher reliance on symmetry and rhythm to define their character, others have more emphasis on details and materials. This might mean that it is likely to be inappropriate to put a front or side porch onto a Georgian building, whereas a gothic-inspired building with a more complex plan form may visually accept an extension of the right design and position.
- 6.3.6 There are relatively few extensions to buildings within Eastham that can be seen from the road or other publicly accessible areas. Forming a significant part of the character of Eastham are the terraced houses which front directly onto the road.
- 6.3.7 A few unsympathetically constructed porches exist within the village. Where a porch or large side extension is added onto a building, unless carefully designed, it can change the character of a building and therefore potentially reduce its positive contribution to the conservation area. Some additions can completely overwhelm the original character and form of the building leaving the building to appear (at least at first glance) to be modern.
- 6.3.8 Roof extensions to provide attic space can have a detrimental effect on the conservation area as they can unbalance an otherwise rhythmic group of houses and also cause an interruption to the roofscape within a street scene. The degree to which this may be detrimental depends of the materials and design chosen. Flat roofed dormers are more likely to have a higher impact than a series of smaller dormers designed to match the style of the original building or conservation rooflights.

6.4 UNSYMPATHETIC ALTERATIONS

- 6.4.1 Unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings are probably the greatest current threat to the character of the conservation area. The following alterations are commonly seen and have a detrimental effect:
- Replacement of historic timber windows in UPVC, metal or poor quality timber. These changes almost always involve a large change to the configuration of the window panes and framing due to the different

properties of the modern materials. The way in which windows open are generally changed, also, with the characteristic feature of horizontally sliding sash windows being gradually lost. Modern doors are a similar issue.

- Insertion of new or changes to the shapes of existing openings. Picture windows are particularly out of character with the traditional, small paned windows.
- The addition of rooflights into roof slopes which project above the slates or tiles.
- Replacement of the historic roof coverings with modern poor quality, artificial alternatives such as concrete tiles.
- Changes to chimneys, most notably reduction in their height and loss of pots.
- Rendering of brick and stonework.
- Damage to historic building fabric as a result of changes to the traditional building materials. The use of hard pointing and impermeable coatings generally accelerate the rate of decay of the softer historic materials, most notably sandstone. In certain instances the effect of this phenomenon threatens not only the physical fabric but also the appearance of that part of the conservation area.
- The insertion of injected damp proof courses into stonework. This practice is generally ineffective and damaging to the appearance of the building.
- Painting of Victorian brickwork. This detrimentally changes the character of the building. Lime washing (or painting with a modern breathable alternative) of stone / older more friable brickwork is likely to be a traditional way of preserving the building's fabric and therefore may be appropriate in some instances.



(left) the visually detrimental effect of the insertion of an injected damp proof course and poor quality pointing; (right)

- 6.4.2 Within a terrace or architectural group of buildings, a relatively minor change to an individual unit can be detrimental to the rhythm of the group and affect the way buildings relate to each other. Different windows, along a terrace of otherwise identical houses, for instance, can make it appear that the houses do not belong together, acquiring different characters.

6.5 LOSS AND DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

- 6.5.1 There have been comparatively few buildings lost in Eastham over the past century. The village has not been blighted by wholesale redevelopment of areas or changes to its infrastructure; indeed it was probably saved by the decision to bypass the centre with the New Chester Road in the early decades of the 20th century.
- 6.5.2 The plan in Appendix E shows the buildings that have been lost in Eastham Village since 1909. These buildings are generally set back from the road and would not have played a great part in the visual character of the village. The largest building to be lost is the Vicarage. The smaller Park Cottage now serves this purpose.
- 6.5.3 Eastham Village has up to now resisted the pressure to allow larger developments of housing within the boundary of the conservation area. The area lies within the Green Belt. Under Wirral's Unitary Development Plan it is stated that Planning permission will not be granted for residential development within the greenbelt with the exception of the limited infilling in existing villages, including limited affordable housing subject to local community needs. Furthermore, Eastham is outside Wirral's priority regeneration areas in which, according to the Interim Housing Policy of October 2005, house building should be focused.
- 6.5.4 There is little evidence of a considerable threat posed by smaller scale developments, however there is of course some pressure on any available land within an attractive village with good transport links such as Eastham.
- 6.5.5 There are few large houses that would suit conversion into flats, therefore this phenomenon does not pose a threat to the character of the conservation area.

7.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

7.1 Eastham Village Conservation Area's special character can be summarised as follows:

- Historic village dating back to before the Domesday Survey.
- The village is centred around a church dating from the late 13th or early 14th centuries.
- Wider village important as a 18th century recreational destination, with many of the buildings in the village centre built or used to support travellers.
- The village has grown up gradually over time, with no one architectural style or historical period dominating.
- The historic village has retained a degree of separation from neighbouring suburban areas by means of a green 'buffer' of playing fields, landscaped grounds and agricultural areas.
- Roads are narrow and slightly winding, following a medieval street pattern.
- There is a mix of building types throughout the village with smaller cottages amongst more opulent villas.
- The intensity of buildings increases towards the village centre
- Primary views are towards and featuring the church, however a few secondary vistas towards other groups of historic buildings are also important.
- Most buildings are of two storeys with the building's original social status determining their height.
- Buildings are general simple in character, but there is very little repetition of building forms, other than within individual terraces.
- Sandstone boundary walls are an important feature within the area and along the roads leading to it.
- Red Cheshire sandstone is the most prominent building material in the village, however red brick is also widely used. A number of buildings are either painted or rendered. Most roofs with historic coverings are slated.
- Openings and features such as chimneys are generally simple in character. Horizontal sliding sash windows are a common feature with vertical sashes in the higher status buildings. Many simple multi-paned timber casements are old and visually appropriate.
- In the few areas where modern housing exists it is of a limited scale and is not visually prominent. Extensions to buildings that are detrimental to the character of historic buildings are fortunately few in number. However a greater problem is in the extensive loss of historic features such as windows and in the poor repair of original fabric.