Character Assessment

Character Area: Montagu Road and side roads (The Paddock, The Drive, Saffron Close, Elm Croft)

Assessors: MC, FC, AC, EL, NG. Two residents HJ, HC. Date: Saturday 13 January 2018, 10.30am-12.30pm

Setting
Montagu Road is a no-through-road which extends for about half a mile from the village centre. The Victorian section, closest to the centre, is fairly straight and then the road curves gently. There are four side roads; these are The Paddock, The Drive and Saffron Close to the south-west, and Elm Croft to the north east. At the far end of Montagu Road, in the Lombardy Park development. There are several side-road spurs, also called Montagu Road. The south-west side of Montagu Road backs on to properties in other residential roads. The north-east side backs on to the railway station car park and the railway line. At the far side of the railway line is the Portland Business Centre, the Recreation Ground and Willowfields.

Areas
For the purposes of this assessment, Montagu Road has been divided into areas:
- **Area 1**: Victorian/Edwardian development, closest to the village centre.
- **Area 2**: Early to mid-20th century development, central section.
- **Area 3**: Mid- to late 20th century development, Lombardy Park, furthest from the centre.
- **Area 4**: Saffron Close
- **Area 5**: The Drive
- **Area 6**: The Paddock
- **Area 7**: Elm Croft
**Topography and zones**

**Topography:** Montagu Road is on flat land in the River Thames floodplain.

**RBWM Townscape Classification**

Montagu Road falls into two RBWM area types, (see RBWM Townscape Assessment, Classification for Datchet):

- 6c Victorian and Edwardian Suburbs
- 13c Leafy Residential Suburbs

**Conservation Area:** Part of Montagu Road (Area 1) is in the Conservation Area, indicated in brown on the map, right. The Conservation Area extends from The Avenue to 34b and 43a Montagu Road.

**Green Belt:** Area 3 backs on to Green Belt land at Southlea Farm to the south.

The map, right, shows the Green Belt, coloured green. The Conservation Area is also outlined in red.
Flood zone: All except the newer houses in Area 3 are in flood zone 3 (1:100+). The area was subject to ground-water flooding in 2014, particularly Elmcroft, and flooding in 1947. Area 3 backs onto Southlea Farm which is the site of the proposed new River Thames Scheme, a flood-relief scheme.

Flight path: Like most of Datchet, Montagu Road is under the flightpath from Heathrow.

History

From Janet Kennish’s Datchet History website:
“Montagu Road and The Avenue were developed on farmland which until 1875 had belonged to the Goodwin family of Goodwin House in the High Street. It was the first land beyond the old village centre to be sold for housing as Datchet’s Victorian population boom began. By the late 1870s speculative developers had bought plots from the original land sale purchasers on which they built fashionable but generally modest ‘villas’ in a variety of styles, materials and configurations, which gives the road its continuing attraction. There was always a marked social mix of owners or occupants here, unlike in some other areas of the village. Local people who had done well, particularly those in the building trades, moved into the new houses alongside middle-class incomers many of whom were London commuters.

“Generally, the earliest houses are closest to The Avenue as development spread eastwards. Later, and further down the road, it seems that one or two wealthier clients commissioned more ambitious houses in larger plots. Since then, more development has continued to the east, with Lombardy Park built in recent times as part of the 1970 Bucks Plan, while every possible gap in the original road has been infilled and several older houses have been demolished and rebuilt.”
**Land uses**

The road is mainly residential with mainly single-occupancy houses but a few houses have been converted into flats. One business operates from commercial premises behind the houses on the ‘south’ side of Montagu Road. This is Tognola Engineering at the rear of 32 Montagu Road. This plot was formerly a boat yard. The numbers of people operating businesses from home is unknown.

**Layout**

**Area 1:** the layout of these Victorian and Edwardian houses in the Conservation Area is linear and compact. The plots are long and narrow, with short front gardens and long back gardens. There is a consistent building line, most often with gable ends fronting the road.

**Area 2:** In this central, mixed area of houses and bungalows, the early 20th-century development of less uniform housing is slightly less linear, the road curves slightly, the plots are wider, often with garages, and not as deep. These dwellings are spaced further apart from each other so this area is less compact. The building line is further back from the road than in Area 1, and slightly more erratic. Garden sizes vary.

**Area 3:** This late 20th-century development, Lombardy Park built by Charles Church, was built as a result of Buckinghamshire’s 1970 Development Plan for Datchet. (See: [http://www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org/the-bypass-which-was-never-built.html](http://www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org/the-bypass-which-was-never-built.html) ) It was named after the Lombardy Poplar trees which were here. It is set in curves and cul-de-sacs which spur off a winding road. The houses are set back, on large squarish plots, with front gardens of various sizes, integrated garages and hard-standing for on-site parking.

**Area 4:** Saffron Close has a spacious modern layout.
Area 5: The Drive – similar to Saffron Close

Area 6: The Paddock -7 two-storey houses are evenly spaced around a cul-de-sac, in generous plots with front and back gardens.

Area 7: Elm Croft - 6 mainly single-storey houses set around a cul-de-sac, some in angular but spacious plots.

**Buildings**

**Area 1:** Predominantly tall semi-detached Victorian and Edwardian houses (with at least two converted to flats) built in a compact layout on long narrow plots, with those on the north side generally having longer back gardens than those on the south side. The roofline is inconsistent. There are some three-storey houses but most were built with two storeys. Many have been extended to provide additional accommodation in the roof space and have been extended at the rear. Where there is sufficient space on the narrow plots, garages and driveways have also been built. There is a variety of roof styles, some with gable ends, some pitched, some with hip ends, some sash windows, some casement and some with side porches. The houses are mainly built of yellow London brick with decorative red-brick patterns, and slate or tiled roofs, some with decorative barge boards and finials, some with timbered gables. Some houses have been rendered or pebble-dashed. Properties are generally well-maintained with much, mainly sympathetic, refurbishment with double-glazed windows and large rear extensions. A couple have been sub-divided into flats. There is occasional infilling of newer detached houses and garages which become more frequent after No 43 (boundary of the Conservation Area). There are two modern bungalows on the corner of The Avenue/Montagu Road.

**Area 2:** The plots in this section are wider, and mostly 1950s/60s. The orientation of the houses changes from gable-end frontage to wider frontage and the height is lower. There is a variety of styles, some mock Tudor with leaded lights, some rustic Arts and Crafts touches. The materials are mainly red brick/timber/tiles. The sizes are less uniform too, with occasional multi-occupancy and individual smaller houses. Gardens feature trees, high hedges and driveways. The condition of properties good although some remodeling has been unsympathetic. It is believed at least a couple of these properties have been converted into flats.
**Area 3:** The Charles Church estate, Lombardy Park, (1970s/80s) is entered through brick gate-posts topped with statues of lions. This is a neat and tidy modern estate of detached, two-storey houses featuring several repeated designs – rustic/mock-Tudor, mock-Georgian and semi-tiled villas – with window designs in keeping. Materials used include red brick, brick with timber, yellow/pink brick, mixed-colour bricks and tiles (some in patterns similar to Victorian houses). Gardens are landscaped and open-plan. The condition of houses and gardens is generally immaculate with no on-road parking. The houses are single occupancy. The houses are raised above the road level (flood zone).

**Area 4: Saffron Close** Two-storey detached 1970s’ houses, of mixed-coloured brick with cladding or tiles. Completely remodeled 2016 house on corner.

**Area 5: The Drive** Detached 1970s’ bungalows and one two-storey house. Pink brick and tile.

**Area 6: The Paddock** On the west corner, a semi-detached Victorian house decorated with red tile and black and white upper story with decorated barge board, four gables and two small bays. On the east corner a 1950s’ house. The rest of the houses are modern, either yellow brick with buff-coloured tile decoration or red-brick Georgian style. Willow House also has some mock-Tudor decoration.
Area 7: Elm Croft, red-brick bungalows, with tiled roofs and a rendered dormer bungalow. Windows of mixed unrelated styles. Garages.

Streetscape

Road surface: The road is surfaced with bitumen except for The Drive which is a private gravel road. The pavements are also bitumen with granite kerbstones.

Benches and seating: There are no benches or seating.

Signage: There are some parking restriction and residents’ parking signs.

Verges: There are grassed verges along the road in areas 1 & 2, some with silver birches. Some verges have been damaged by car tyres. Some have been covered with hard standing. (See comments on each area.)

Substation: There is an electricity substation near the railway footbridge.

Area 1: Parking with restrictions on both sides of the road. No garages. Small front gardens bounded by mixture of walls, iron railings or wooden fences, about 50% have replaced plants with hard standing for cars and some boundaries removed for car access. There are Tarmac pavements on both sides with granite sets and many dropped curbs. After the initial 10 houses, there are some small grass verges, with trees. Some damage to grass has occurred by cars and one verge has been covered in hard core. Lamp-posts are modern LED, providing footpath lighting on alternate sides of the road.

Area 2: Most of the houses here have garages so fewer cars are parked on the road. The verges peter out and there is no pavement in places on the south side. There are no trees in the verges here but there are many mature trees in gardens, with fences and high hedges.

Area 3: These houses are set higher (to reduce flood risk). There are no boundary fences – lawns and shrubs border the houses, with broad pavements and some areas without pavements. There are no roadside trees or parking on the street. Some garages are separate from houses, others are integral or connected.

Area 4: Saffron Close, One low lamppost. Houses have garden walls and drives, one gated property. There are pavements in this section.

Area 5: The Drive, Bungalows with garden walls and drives, detached house gated. Private road, no pavements.

Area 6: The Paddock, Modern footpath lights. The Tarmac road has grass verges on the side, and some anti-parking rocks. On the west side, there is a cobbled area by the Victorian house for parking, otherwise there appears to be ample parking space in drives and garages. There are some well demarked boundaries with hedges, fences and shrubs although one or two are more open plan.

Area 7: Elm Croft, Houses here have garden walls. There are also pavements.

Road use (non-motorised)

Pavements

There are pavements on both sides in Area 1, this reduces to one side in Area 2, after Saffron Close, and returns to both sides in Area 3. Area 4 Saffron Close and Area 7 Elm Croft have pavements, Area 5 The Drive and Area 6 The Paddock do not.
Footpaths: There is a pedestrian footpath from Montagu Road, over the railway bridge (with wooden steps) to Green Lane, Horton Road and the Recreation Ground. For many residents, particularly those at the furthest end of Montagu Road, this also offers a shorter walking route to the doctor’s surgery and the Scout Hut in Green Lane, the Council Offices and Village Hall in Allen Way, and Datchet Library, Tesco Express, the two fish and chip shops and Turkish restaurant on Horton Road, and the cemetery on Ditton Road. Horton Road is also on the local bus route. The steps on either side of the bridge mean this is not an easily-accessible route for bicycles, push chairs, or wheelchairs, or people with limited mobility. This footpath and bridge are not lit which may deter residents from using it in the evenings. (There is an electricity sub-station by the bridge.)

Another footpath links Saffron Close with Beaulieu Close. From here it’s a short walk to Southlea Road and the riverside/Thames Path. This is a flat, accessible path which can also be used by cyclists. Lights on Beaulieu Close help to illuminate this footpath at night.

Cycle paths: There are no designated cycle paths on this road.

Traffic & parking
Montagu Road is ‘closed’ i.e. a no through road, which leads off The Avenue. It is two-way although the narrow width of the road means that parked cars can restrict the flow of traffic to one lane. At the time of the character assessment (Saturday morning) there was very little traffic but there were several cars parked on the road in Area 1 and Area 2. There have been some complaints from residents about speeding cars travelling along Montagu Road.
Side roads along Montagu Road are all cul-de-sacs. The Paddock is a private road.

Onsite parking and garages
Area 1: There is limited onsite parking and the narrow plots allow only limited parking space on the road.
Area 2: This section offers more onsite parking and most houses have garages so there is very little on-street parking.
Area 3: These houses have large drives and garages, providing plenty of onsite parking space.
Areas 4, 5, 6, Parking is mainly onsite. Area 7, There was some roadside parking at Elm Croft.

Roadside parking restrictions
At the entrance to Montagu Road, there are double yellow lines on both sides. There are then restrictions on both sides up to The Paddock from Mon-Sat between 8am-11am. This restriction continues on the north side of Montagu Road to The Drive but there are double yellow lines on the south side. Thereafter there are single yellow lines on both sides up to the Lombardy Park area, with parking restrictions from Mon-Sat between 10am-11.00am. There is a single yellow line around Saffron Close. It does not extend into Elm Croft.

Green and natural features
The modern housing development backs on to Green Belt but there is no access. Small trees have been planted in the grass verges and mature trees, hedges, shrubs and flowers are planted in the generally well maintained gardens. There is a very old pear tree on the corner of The Paddock.

Views
Views are internal and from the Avenue dominated by parked cars at lower levels with steeply gabled tall Victorian houses on both sides. The historic suburb looks orderly and prosperous and opens out into views of landscaped open gardens as one progresses south-east to the modern
suburb. Rear gardens on the north side look out to the railway line and the recreation ground beyond, and on the south side to suburban gardens of Beaulieu Close. Modern houses in the far south overlook the farmlands in the Green Belt.

**Spaces**
There are no public spaces on Montagu Road. A footpath over the railway footbridge leads to the Recreation Ground.

**Landmarks**
As a ‘classic’ Victorian middle class suburb most of Area 1 is a landmark itself and is designated within the Datchet Conservation Area.

**Summary of key defining characteristics / other observations**
- Montagu Road is a pleasant, well-maintained, prosperous residential road, with an interesting and attractive variety of houses; a classic Datchet middle-class mix.
- With a few exceptions, the houses are arranged in roughly chronological order from the Victorian and Edwardian development at the ‘west’ end to the 1980s’ development at the ‘east’ end.
- The character of the road is defined by the Victorian villas seen in the approach and there is a mainly sympathetic blending with newer properties from ‘west’ to ‘east’.
- The grass verges and trees also create a sense of continuity along the length of the road.
- A lack of onsite parking has resulted in a dominance of street parking in the Victorian sector.
- There is no through traffic but residents complain about the speed at which some cars travel along Montagu Road.
- A residents’ parking scheme has reduced commuter parking.
- There is some noise from the railway line to the north and from aircraft.
- It is a known flood-risk area.
- The grass verges are damaged and neglected in some areas.

**Additional feedback from the Drop-in Session on 27 January 2019**
- Important row of poplar trees bordering the field [at far end of Montagu Road, Lombardy Estate]
- Railway bridge needs lighting in the evenings
- Enforcement of parking restrictions
- Driving too fast
- Inconsiderate parking
- Concerned about the scale of some new developments
- No pavement on either side before Elm Close – pavement grassed over or has bedding
- Reduce speed to 20mph down Montagu Road
- Agree – speed limit is too high for narrow road.