

8 Thorpe urban area characterisation

8.1 Introduction

- (i) Thorpe ward is bounded by the Egham urban area to the north and the River Thames to the west and is crossed and divided by the M25 and M3 motorways. To the south are areas of lakes which were formerly mineral workings.

8.2 Local Character Areas

- (i) Thorpe has separate urban areas, set in a gently undulating river meadow rural landscape with mature trees and hedging lining the roads and lanes. Those areas of housing off Chertsey Lane and Thorpe Lea Road are visually contiguous with the Egham urban area and are therefore included under the Egham assessment. The identified 'Thorpe Settlement Area covered by the Green Belt' has been included in this assessment because of its planning policy status. Thorpe divides into three broad character sub-areas as follows:

- o Thorpe village historic core – conservation area centred around Village Road and Coldharbour lane (part of the Thorpe Settlement Area covered by the Green Belt)
- o Area of mid - late C20 housing to the west of the village around Green Road and Rosemary Lane (part of the Thorpe Settlement Area covered by the Green Belt)
- o Thorpe Industrial Estate, Ten Acre Lane – building started pre-war but mostly post-war and later

- (ii) Much of the identified character derives from the period in which the areas were constructed, but other features such as built form and layout, densities, local details and public realm all contribute.

8.3 Historic development

- (i) Thorpe village Conservation Area forms the historic core of the area. Its distinctive local character is recognised in Pevsner's Buildings of Surrey as being "like a Middlesex village, with curving walled streets screening medium-sized houses in small parks; the only example in the county. Enlarged since 1945, but all the walls kept, hence the village has stayed intact." The village is centred on Church Approach and St Mary's church, dating from the C12. The west part of the village is included in the urban area.

Opposite - Cemax offices on Coldharbour Lane. A listed building and local landmark.

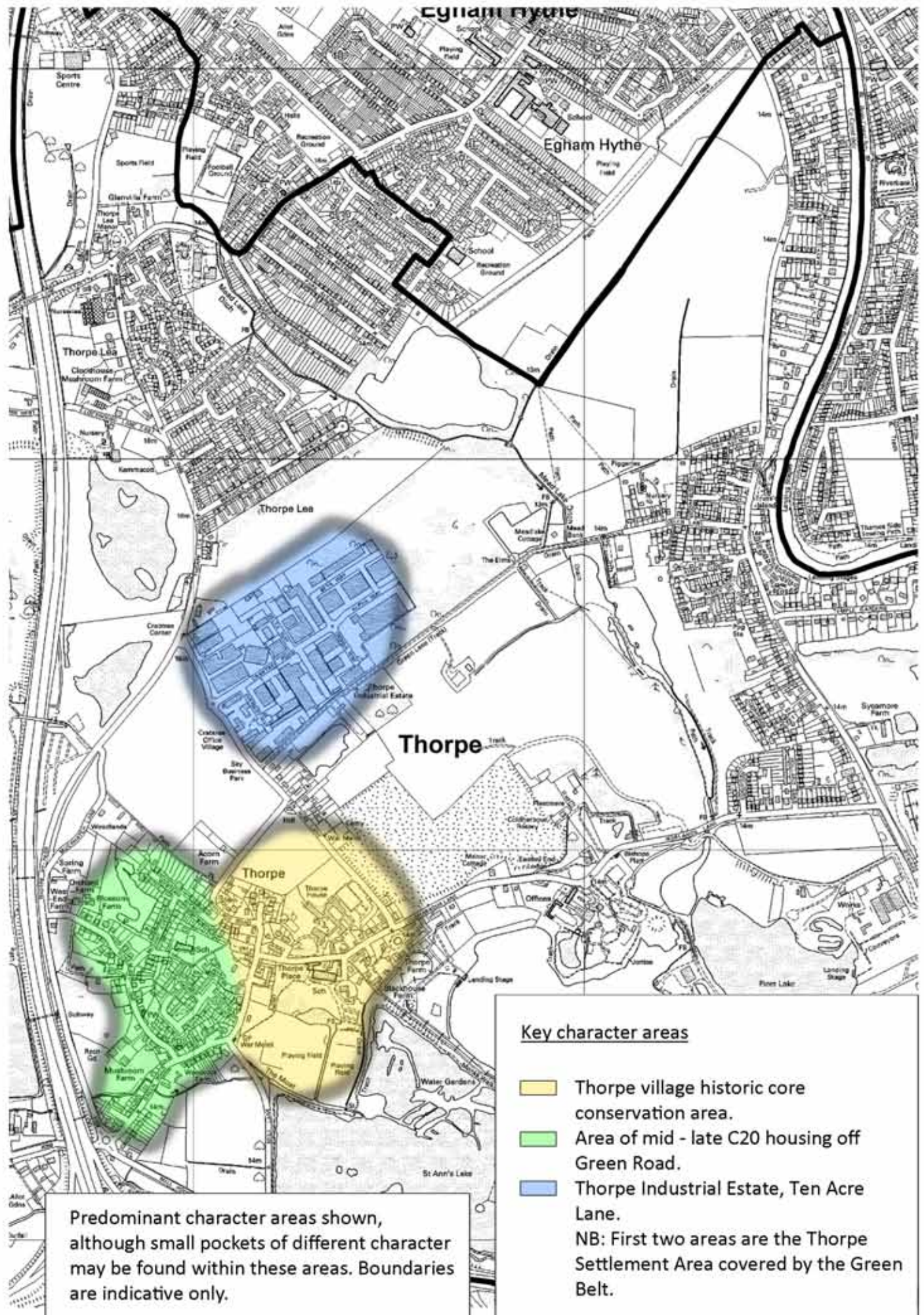


High brick boundary walls adjoining the roads add to local distinctiveness and character in the Thorpe Village Conservation Area

- (ii) Most listed buildings in Thorpe ward lie within the conservation area. Two structures of the late C19/early C20 are locally listed. The most visually distinctive historic buildings include the church and Thorpe House.
- (iii) Urban area housing is identified by historic character types on the accompanying map (refer to common features in the Appraisal Parameters). These are:
- (iv) [Housing Character Type 1](#)
There is no C19 housing in the area being assessed.
- (v) [Housing Character Type 2](#)
There is no interwar period housing in the area being assessed.



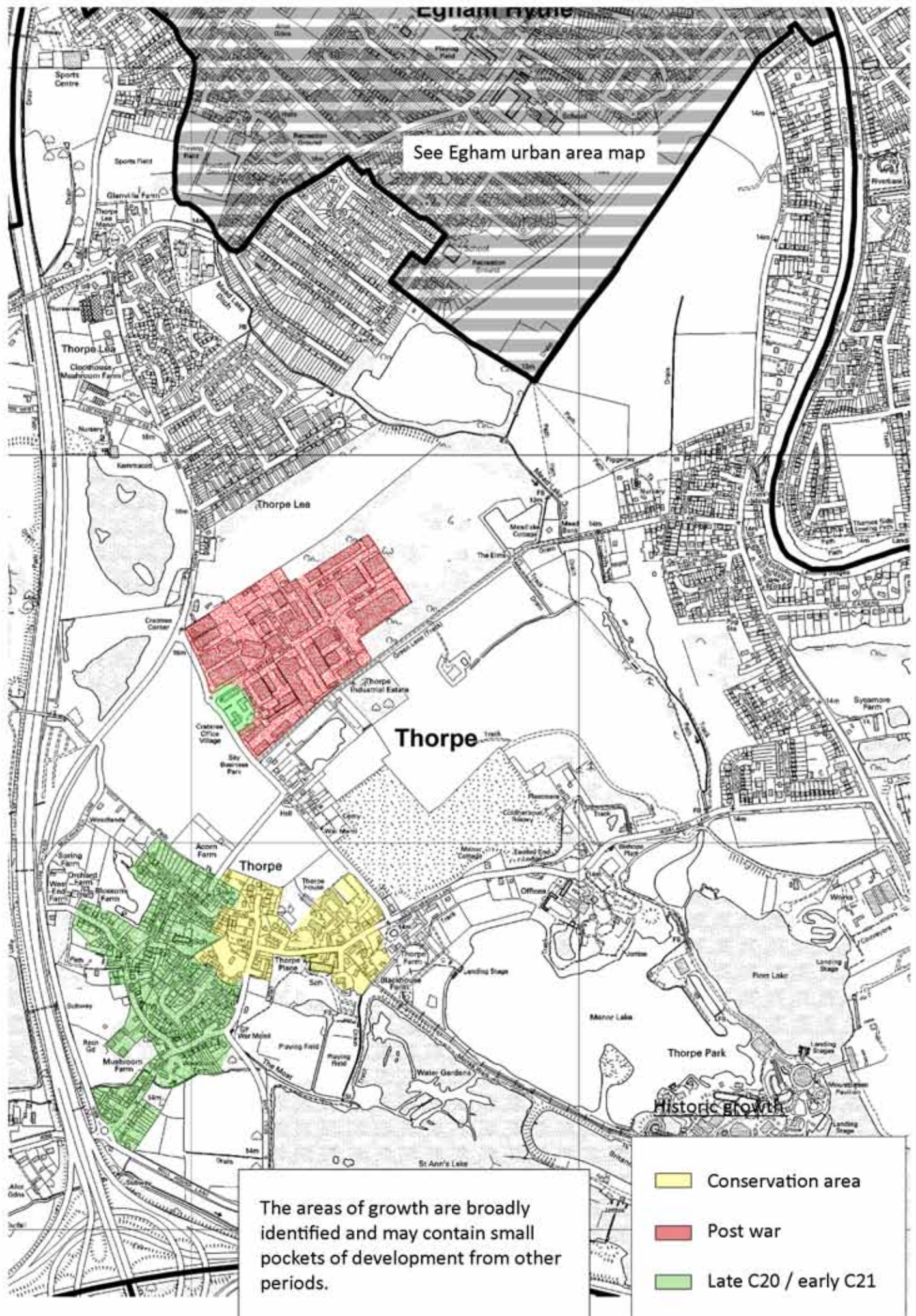
Thorpe Urban Areas - key character areas



Predominant character areas shown, although small pockets of different character may be found within these areas. Boundaries are indicative only.

- Key character areas**
- Thorpe village historic core conservation area.
 - Area of mid - late C20 housing off Green Road.
 - Thorpe Industrial Estate, Ten Acre Lane.
- NB: First two areas are the Thorpe Settlement Area covered by the Green Belt.

Thorpe Urban Areas - historic growth





Bungalow development at Cottage Farm Way

(vi) Housing Character Type 3

No post-war period housing is in the area being assessed.

(vii) Housing Character Type 4

From about 1970 new development was focussed on an area to the east of Thorpe Village off Green Road, including a village shop and post office which creates a village 'hub' and zone of activity.



Late C20 housing at Fleetway

8.4 Landscape setting, trees, views and landmarks

- (i) Within the relatively flat landscape of the River Thames meadows, the setting of the urban areas ranges from lakes to the south in the old mineral workings to the the river itself to the east. In between are winding green lanes with mature trees and hedgerows. This 'intimate' enclosed setting does not afford any significant long distance views, including any of the Thorpe Park amusement park which is well-screened by mature trees. The most recognisable landmarks are the church tower in Thorpe Village and the historic buildings associated with that area.



The core of the Thorpe Village Conservation Area includes the land mark tower of St Mary's Church.

8.5 Uses and activities

- (i) The predominant land use in the Thorpe urban areas is housing which has varying character as previously described. Further character and activity is contributed to by the small local shop and post office and the Thorpe Industrial Estate on Ten Acre Lane which also attracts heavier vehicles and traffic generation to the area. The recent prominent development fronting the lane successfully hides parking and servicing and has generous planting which softens its visual impact in this semi-rural part of the ward. Other development on the lane is fronted by parking and hard surfacing, lacking planting or screening. Entering the estate there is an unsightly proliferation of direction signage and a lack of assistance to guide the visitor.



The village shop and post office adjoining the local school, converted to residential use in the 1960's



Recent commercial development on Ten Acre Lane at the Thorpe Industrial Estate provides an attractive frontage to the lane.



Earlier development at the Thorpe Industrial Estate presents a less attractive face to Ten Acre Lane, dominated by parking and servicing areas.



Poor design signage and location at the Thorpe Industrial Estate is confusing for the visitor.

- (ii) The Thorpe Park amusement park is in close proximity to the urban areas, and any further expansion could impact on local character unless sensitively addressed.

8.6 Streets and buildings

- (i) There is a visually distinct historic street pattern within the village conservation area with a strongly identifiable sense of enclosure and local identity created by buildings and walls. Elsewhere, the routes to and between the separated urban areas are small scale local distributor routes and less distinctive, apart from the A320 Staines Road/Chertsey Lane which forms a main route between Chertsey and Egham with heavy fast moving traffic. Within the housing areas developed since the war road layouts and hierarchies have typical features, including many cul de sacs and street layouts which are often difficult to navigate, lacking any clear hierarchy or visual landmarks for the visitor.

8.7 Local details

- (i) Traditional materials, building and architectural forms and details within the Thorpe Village Conservation Area can be clearly defined and make an invaluable contribution to its distinctive character. The materials include red stock brick, painted brick, smooth render, clay tile and natural slate.



Above and below: locally distinctive materials, architecture and brick boundary walls – Thorpe village



- (ii) Elsewhere such local detail is eroded in later forms of housing development with design and materials used which are commonplace nationwide.

8.8 Public realm

- (i) The key areas of public realm are limited to Church Approach in the village with its shared vehicle and pedestrian environment, and the public access to the River Thames towpath which provides a visually wide and open area for the public. Open green belt countryside surrounds the urban areas and provides visual open space with limited public access. No opportunity for significant new public open space is evident as part of future development.
- (ii) There is a network of public footpaths throughout the area, although pedestrian access and permeability is noticeably less evident in the more recent housing developments, many of which are cul de sac dominated.

8.9 Traffic and parking

- (i) There are high traffic levels on the key distributor routes, including Staines Road and leading to the Thorpe Industrial Estate. Elsewhere there are no significant levels of traffic or parking issues, although consideration of traffic speed in the Conservation Area may need addressing.

8.10 Negatives – pressures, issues and threats to local character

- (i) Chapter 5 identifies those negatives common to all the urban areas. Issues and threats specifically impacting on Thorpe urban area and threatening local character are:
- Traffic levels and speeds – part generated by the industrial estate and potential expansion of the Thorpe Park amusement park.
 - The 'public' face of the industrial estate where it fronts onto Ten Acre Lane
 - Plethora of badly designed signage within the industrial estate, confusing for the visitor.

8.11 Positives – opportunities, enhancement and improvements to local character

- (i) Chapter 5 identifies those opportunities common to all the urban areas. Specific opportunities to reinforce and improve the Thorpe urban areas local character are:

Local Issue 1

Speeding traffic on key distributor routes

Potential for increased traffic volumes if the Thorpe Park amusement park expands.

Recommendation

Consider introducing local traffic calming measures

In liaison with Surrey County Council Highways.

Local Issue 2

Fast traffic in the historic village core area

Harmful to local character

Recommendation

Consider introducing a 20 mph speed limit in the village core

In liaison with Surrey County Council Highways.

Local Issue 3

Thorpe Industrial Estate

Poor signage and directions and an unattractive public face to Ten Acre Lane.

Recommendation

Prepare new signage for the Thorpe Industrial Estate

The Estate is privately owned. Opportunity to improve signage and enhance the appearance is therefore limited, but should be recognised when considering future planning applications on the Estate.

