

SURLEY ROW CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



Reading Borough Council

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SURLEY ROW CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features which give the Surley Row Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map (Appendix 1) along with listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, significant trees and spaces, and important views into and out of the Conservation Area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by legislation.

This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in *PPS5 - Planning for the Historic Environment* and associated guidance, and local policy, as set out in the *Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006*, and provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Surley Row Conservation Area can be assessed. It also forms a basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals for the area.

This appraisal follows the suggested format contained in Appendix 2 of the English Heritage document "Guidance on conservation area appraisals" August 2005.

1.2 Summary of special interest

The Conservation Area comprises a linear lane running approximately north west from the top of Peppard Road hill across a valley now occupied by Rotherfield Way, which crosses Surley Row towards its northwestern end. It brings together a number of important listed buildings and more recent infill developments. The main part of the lane, southeast of Rotherfield Way lacks footpaths and the highway edge is generally defined by high brick walls. Part of the southwestern side here has cobbled gutters. The north eastern end possesses footpaths but is again defined by high brick walls. Traditional street lighting is absent from the area. There is no through route for vehicular traffic along the main part, which is prevented by bollards on the Surley Row hill just southeast of Rotherfield Way and signage at either end. The overall character of the area contrasts quite markedly with the modern housing developments which surround it, particularly on either side of Rotherfield Way and to the northeast. The area has the feel of a peaceful village street compared with its surrounds, and the busy Peppard Road (classified B481) at its south-eastern end.

The 1889 OS Map of the area clearly marks the area out as one of the oldest in Caversham. At that time, where it crossed the valley, it crossed a footpath following the line of the modern day Rotherfield Way. This footpath was a direct route from the village of Emmer Green, approximately to the north, to the Parish Church in Caversham Village to the south. It was not unusual for pall bearers to take this route, and possibly stop off at The Gardeners Arms in Surley Row, for a “rest”. The current public house is however of more recent date.



Former Caversham Hill from west (Osbert House)

The key features of the area are therefore:

- its focus on a narrow lane, lacking footpaths and bounded by high brick walls and other traditional materials, such as wrought iron;
- the varied and interesting buildings and building line sometimes including and sometimes behind the walls;
- a concentration of listed buildings adding a special interest to the area;
- a little altered historic street pattern, now protected by traffic management measures;
- the generally domestic use, scale and character of the area;
- an attractive entrance from Peppard Road, again defined by high brick walls but with an attractive green space with seats in front, “funneling” into Surley Row itself (note: when designated, this area contained a traditional red letter box built into the wall and a traditional K6 red telephone kiosk,

both adding to this area's character, but the telephone kiosk has since been replaced by a modern equivalent);

- significant tree cover throughout the area provides a backcloth to and enhances the area and also softens views within and into and out of the area;

Although a small area, it is quite distinctive within Reading Borough, and comprises features justifying its Conservation Area status. It also fits the concept that new Conservation Areas, i.e. those designated after the Planning Committee resolution of 20 February 1987, should be small, easily definable and manageable.

The boundaries of the area are indicated on the Appraisal Map appended to this report. It was formally designated after a period of public consultation on 2 November 1988. Although it was suggested that the area be extended to include "Rotherfield Copse" to the east of Springfield St Luke, this was considered to be otherwise protected and would make for an unnecessarily awkward extension to the Conservation Area particularly by adding an area of a different character and without any obvious links to it. Number 69 Rotherfield Way was however included, on the advice of the Council's then Conservation advisor because of it had some history about it and still made a small contribution towards the historic character of the location.

1.3 The Area described

The character and boundaries of the Surley Row Conservation Area remain unchanged since its designation, although development has taken place in the grounds of Caversham Hill (now called Osbert House) and Springfield St Luke within the area. These developments are considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and respect the listed buildings on each site and retain essential boundary features. The Caversham Hill proposals were a redevelopment of existing buildings on the site and are a considerable improvement on what was on the site previously, as well as respecting the character and setting of the listed building on site. The development of the Springfield St Luke site was the subject of a Planning Brief (drawn up in response to pressures to develop the site) which was adopted for the purposes of public consultation on 21 August 1987 and formally adopted on 23 October 1987. Although pre-dating the formal designation of the Surley Row Conservation Area, the parameters set out in the brief anticipated the imminent designation of the Surley Row Conservation Area, with a key element to preserve the character of Surley Row itself.

Environmental improvements, incorporating seats have taken place to the green space at the Peppard Road entrance to the Conservation Area, as well as the erection of conservation area street signs.

The designated area is therefore a compact area of mainly domestic scale and domestic use properties, the majority of which retain their original character, including the following listed buildings:

West side

Hill House and No 1 Surley Row (formerly listed as Hill House, Peppard Road). Large early 19th century villa. 2 storeys. Stucco. Parapet lined with urns. Victorian verandah. Slate roof. High brick wall facing Peppard Road and corner of Surley Row.

23 Surley Row (Farmcote). 18th century. Brick cottage. Catslide tiled roof. 2 storey. Taller mid 19th century extension. High brick wall on frontages.

37 Surley Row (Tudor Cottage). 16th or early 17th century. 2 storeys and loft. Timber frame. Colour washed brick infilling. Old tile roof. 18th century garden wall to south and east. Interior features. “Very picturesque”. High brick wall facing Surley Row. Lower brick wall with close boarded fence facing Rotherfield Way.



‘Tudor Cottage’ 37 Surley Row

Grove Cottage, Surley Row. Circa 1830s. Tudor Gothic cottage. 2 storeys. Painted brick with tiled roof and scalloped bargeboards to gable ends. Described in 1843 as “a neat red brick building in Elizabethan style”. High brick wall in front.

East side

Caversham Hill (listed as 91 Peppard Road). Early 19th century. Large 3 storey painted stucco house. 2 storey portico and verandah to south. Column feature. Hipped slate roof. Interior features. Later extensions and new (replacement) buildings in the grounds. Approached by short avenue of limes from Peppard Road. High brick wall to Peppard Road and Surley Row (part incorporated into building here).

2 Surley Row (Fir Tree House). 18th century. Stucco front. Old tile roof with end chimneys. Brick wall and hedge in front.

4 Surley Row (White Cottage). 18th century. 2 storey and attic with two dormers. Stucco. Old tile roof. Tile hung gable end. “Picturesque”. Building on back edge of lane.

Springfield, Convent of St Luke, Surley Row. Early 19th century villa. 2 storeys. Parapet. Tented verandah. Interior features. High retaining wall to terrace at rear. Brick walls on Surley Row side.

46 Surley Row. 17th or early 18th century. 2 storeys. Colour washed flint with brick quoins, window surrounds and strings. Old tile roof. Flaking chimneys. Exposed timbers in gable. Close boarded fence at front.

Most of the unlisted properties in the Conservation Area date from the turn of the 20th century, and apart from newer properties in Rotherfield Way (outside the Conservation Area) and those in the grounds of Caversham Hill and Springfield St Luke, are at least 50 years old. Again, these properties are epitomised by high brick walls and/or iron railings and gates to the front (e.g. 13 Surley Row) or buildings to the back edge of the lane. Springfield Mews, an attractive new development in the grounds of Springfield St Luke retains the original brick wall on its boundary with Surley Row.



13 Surley Row

All buildings within the Conservation Area, whilst of varied design, therefore recognise the character of the area in terms of scale and retain the essential linking feature of the area that is the high brick walls.

As has already been mentioned, the properties immediately surrounding the Conservation Area are considered to be of a different scale and character, and much more modern, and it is not therefore considered that any amendment to the Conservation Area boundaries is required.

There are several Tree Preservation Orders in the Conservation Area, and trees generally are an important element of the character and quality of the area, as can be seen on the Appraisal Map attached at Appendix 1 to this report. In declaring a Conservation Area however, no trees within it can be removed without prior notice being given to the local planning authority, thereby affording an opportunity if necessary to make such an order.

2.0 The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as *“an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*. It is

the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly *PPS5 - Planning for the Historic Environment*, plus associated guidance. The layout and content of this conservation area appraisal follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum 2005 published in February 2006.

2.1 Local planning policy

The Reading Borough core strategy was found to be “sound” in December 2007 and was adopted on 29 January 2008. Policy CS33 provides a strategic level policy that indicates that the historic environment including their settings will be preserved and enhanced. This policy will, in part, replace the Reading Borough Local Plan policies, including some of the saved policies discussed below. Proposals will have to have regard to the provisions set out in PPS5 and associated guidance.

The Local Plan policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of archaeological sites, historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in Chapter 6 of the *Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006* which was adopted on 14th October 1998, the majority of policies of which were “saved” by Direction of the Secretary of State on 24 September 2007 (with effect from 27 September 2007). The saved policies of particular note are Policies CUD 6 (Demolition of Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas) and CUD7 (New Development in Conservation Areas), which outline Reading Borough Council’s approach to development in Conservation Areas. Copies of these policies can be found at Appendix 2 of this document. With regard to listed buildings in the Conservation Area, Policies CUD 1 ((Works Affecting Listed Buildings), CUD 2 (Change of Use of Listed Buildings), CUD 3 (Maintenance of Listed Buildings) and CUD 4 (Setting of Listed Buildings) also apply.

The Local Plan’s conservation objectives are stated as:

(i) to conserve or enhance the Borough's stock of listed buildings and other buildings of architectural quality or historical significance;

(ii) to identify protect or enhance areas of character;

(iii) to identify and conserve areas of archaeological significance and to protect or enhance finds and sites for the education and enjoyment of Reading residents.

3.0 Location and setting

3.1 Location, topography and setting



West end of Surley Row above Rotherfield Way

The boundaries of the Surley Row Conservation Area are shown at Appendix 1. The area lies about 1km north of Caversham village centre and 2km north of Reading town centre. It lies immediately to the west of the B481 Peppard Road north out of Caversham. It is bounded by Peppard Road to the east and Rotherfield Way (which actually cuts through the western end of the Conservation Area) to the west. Peppard Road at the point of entry is on the line of the original/historic Peppard Road, but immediately to the north Buckingham Drive effectively by-passes the old Peppard Road and is an area of modern housing development. Rotherfield Way is similarly “modern” and was built on the line of an historical footpath between Emmer Green and

Caversham village centre. Again, this is an area of modern housing development.

The properties in the Conservation Area are of varying dates from the late 17th century, but form an identifiable group along the historical lane which is Surley Row itself.

Surley Row is entered from the east at the top of Peppard Road hill, and itself rises from the west to this point from the valley in which Rotherfield Way is situated. Indeed it slopes quite steeply at its western end, becoming more gentle before leveling out nearer Peppard Road.

The entrance from Peppard Road and views in to the Conservation Area are effectively closed off by the walls at the back of the green area here. Hill House and Caversham Hill are prominent at close quarters at this entrance, but not from any distance. Views out are restricted for similar reasons. By contrast, because the western entrance is via a quite steep hill, properties at the western end of the old lane are more prominent from longer views, not least Springfield St Luke itself. Views out from the top of this slope are similarly wide across the Rotherfield Way valley, but are to modern housing developments in the main.

4.0 Historic development

4.1 History

Reading is named after the Readingas, Saxon followers of Reada, 'the Red', who settled in the spit of land in the fork of the Thames and Kennet in the 6th century. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading belonged to the king and included a small borough and two manors. Reading Abbey was founded by Henry I in 1121. The abbey dominated the town and became one of the richest religious houses in England making Reading a wealthy place, and a centre of religion and pilgrimage.

Wool and leather were Reading's principal trades in the 16th and early 17th centuries, making good use of the town's road and river links. In the 18th century Reading was an important market and coaching town; new industries developed, notably brewing, iron-founding and brick and tile making. Early 19th century maps show the town had hardly extended beyond its medieval core but a fast town expansion was stimulated by the development of new transport links. The Kennet and Avon Canal was opened in 1810 bringing London and Bristol, two major sea ports, into direct communication by water. Of much greater significance, however, was the construction of the Great Western Railway which reached the town in 1840. The coming of the railway resulted in

a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley & Palmers and Suttons Seeds, which provided work for a rapidly increasing population.

Between 1850 and 1900 the population of the Borough more than trebled from 21,456 to 72,217 and the housing stock increased accordingly. Development eastwards was more normal as part of this post-railway late 19th century expansion of the town during which period large numbers of houses were built and growing civic pride was celebrated in the building of Reading's Town Hall (1875), the Concert Hall (1882), and the Museum and Library (1883-4). Reading Grammar School is of the same period, built between 1865-71, to the designs of Alfred Waterhouse, a local resident of Reading from 1868.

It is clear from the 1888/9 Ordnance Survey Maps that Caversham village was a free-standing settlement even at the end of the 19th century, and surrounding it was essentially open countryside in which were situated a number of hamlets, Emmer Green amongst them. Surley Row is however clearly discernable as a separate entity not only on these maps, but also on Thomas Pride's map of 1790. Caversham did not become part of Reading until 1911.

4.2 The effect of historic development on plan form

The designated Conservation Area is essentially defined by the country lane which historically linked the old Peppard Road with Caversham Grove (now Highdown School) - see 6.7 below.

5.0 Spatial analysis

5.1 Key views and vistas

Although most directly approached from the east at the top of the old Peppard Road hill, this entrance to Surley Row is relatively flat, but it then slopes down to the west towards the valley in which Rotherfield Way (quite steeply where it actually joins Rotherfield Way). Surley Row is quite well enclosed from views from the east, because of the high brick walls and buildings behind the green area at its entrance. Further, because of Peppard Road curves at this point, and because Surley Row slopes down somewhat from Peppard Road, no individual building stands out at this end of the Conservation Area. However at its western end, because of the steep slope up from Rotherfield Way, the buildings at the top of this slope are much more prominent particularly Springfield St Luke which is the largest building in this vicinity. In addition, tree cover is less at the western end, compared with the eastern end, which also has the effect of opening up views and vistas.

Views out of the Conservation Area are similarly limited to the east, but are more open to the west.

5.2 The character of spaces within the area

The Conservation Area comprises a tightly knit lane of domestic scale properties, the main part of which lane is epitomised by high brick walls and a lack of footpaths. Its appearance is however fairly informal despite these hard edges not giving a particular sense of space to the lane. Trees are however prominent throughout the area and provide a softening effect.



Gardeners Arms, Surley Row

In terms of actual open spaces, there are really only two in the area. The car park and gardens of The Gardeners Arms at the western end, and the attractive green at the Peppard Road entrance to the Conservation Area. The latter is an attractive entrance from Peppard Road, again defined by high brick walls but with an attractive green space with seats in front, “funneling” in to Surley Row itself. Note: when designated, this area contained a traditional red letter box built into the wall and a traditional K6 red telephone kiosk, both adding to this area’s character, but the telephone kiosk has since been replaced by a modern equivalent.

The area does however benefit from good tree cover, which provides a good setting for the Conservation Area as a whole.

Space around individual properties is less (particularly where they front the lane, although some have quite deep rear gardens) given the domestic scale of most of the buildings within the Conservation Area and relatively small plot sizes. Caversham Hill and Springfield St Luke are the main exceptions, but both benefit from good tree cover. From public viewpoints therefore, while not lacking in attractiveness and character, there is not a great sense of space along the lane.

The parking area in front of the Gardeners Arms is not however a particularly attractive element at the western end of the Conservation Area.

6.0 Definition of the special interest of the Conservation Area

6.1 Definition of the character of the area



Springfield St Luke

It is focused on a historic lane, which gives the area a quiet almost rural/village feel within the built up, mostly twentieth century built up urban area of which surrounds it. The lane lacks kerbs and pavements and is defined by high walls. The buildings along it are of domestic use, scale and character, many of which could be described as being of cottage style, but there are larger properties, e.g. at Caversham Hill and Springfield St Luke, which add to the variety and character of the Conservation Area. Newer developments in the area have sought to reflect this original style. Finally, the tree cover in the area adds to

the green and rural feel of the area and, particularly at its eastern end, presents an attractive approach to the area.

Generally.

Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area:

- Retention of listed original buildings and their settings with few detrimental changes by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;
- New developments generally respecting the scale of the original development in the area;
- Maintenance of brick walls and strong boundary lines to the frontage of properties;
- Lack of highway edges, giving a rural feel to the area;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties;
- Retention and maintenance of the green area at the Peppard Road entrance to the area;
- Traffic management measures and lack of casual parking in the area.



8/10 Surley Row

Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area:

- Some (limited) use of non-traditional materials: e.g. upvc windows;
- Some (limited) loss of front boundary walls;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Over-reliance on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses within it;

The Surley Row Conservation Area and the buildings within it have generally retained the charm which led to its original designation, despite some pressures to redevelop land since, including the development at Caversham Hill and Springfield St Luke. Developments here are thought to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the settings of the listed building on each site. Development of Springfield St Luke was guided by a planning development brief for the site, broadly contemporaneous with the designation of the Conservation Area.

Historically, the greatest pressures on the area probably arose from “rat-running” through the area, but this has been rectified by the introduction of traffic management measures, including bollards and signage.

6.2 Activities and uses

Historically and currently, the Conservation Area was/is essentially a residential area, saving for “The Gardeners Arms” Public House.

The area generally has a quiet residential atmosphere within its core, although the Peppard Road to the east is clearly a busy primary route. Traffic using the main road does however by-pass the Conservation Area, which is generally immune from the direct impact of traffic. Rotherfield Way is also a quite busy local distributor road, but again has little direct impact on the main part of Surley Row in terms of direct traffic impact and noise. Parking does not appear to be a particular problem in the area, as most properties appear to have their own parking provision. The area does benefit from reasonable accessibility to local amenities by foot and public transport.

6.3 Architectural and historic character: building methods and materials

The Conservation Area contains a core of Victorian and earlier properties with twentieth century infill. The surrounding areas are much more modern. The Area retains its historical character and special architectural interest.

The buildings in the Conservation Area are varied and do not pay obvious homage to the (patterned) brick, with clay tile roofs, which are generally the

distinguishing features of Reading's architecture in other conservation areas in the town.

6.4 Buildings of Townscape Merit

Buildings identified as having "townscape merit" will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered 19th century and later buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area.

Buildings of Townscape Merit help create a conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment "In considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations. This understanding should be used by the local planning authority to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposals."

Clearly, all the buildings within the Conservation Area are important to its "townscape", but it is generally unlisted corner buildings which strictly have a more commanding presence. It is difficult to argue that any in the Surley Row Conservation Area strictly meet this criterion, because of their small and generally discrete style and design, and the generally secluded (from outside view) of the Conservation Area as a whole. Springfield St Luke is however prominent at the top of the hill which rises up (to the south east) from Rotherfield Way.

6.5 Public realm. Floorscape, street lighting and street furniture.

Road and footway (where they exist) surfaces are predominantly modern i.e. tarmac, but are mostly epitomised by not having hard kerb edges. This is an essential feature of the character of the Conservation Area and should be retained. The exception is the short section of Surley Row on the west side of Rotherfield, where there is a footway, but the front boundaries of the properties remain demarcated by high brick walls. Front boundary walls are an important element of the public realm in this Conservation Area.

Generally the condition of the aforementioned surfaces does not, at the time of writing, give cause for concern. There is also not too much current evidence of repairs by "utilities" in the area. However, road surfaces are not particularly attractive and not "traditional" in conservation area terms, except for a short stretch of cobbles in front of numbers 1-13 Surley Row.



Hill House / 1 Surley Row from west to Peppard Road

The green area at the Peppard Road entrance to the Conservation Area is provided with seats and a waste paper bin for public use.

Street lighting columns, signage and street furniture are modern, and this is another area with considerable potential for improvement. There are no examples of traditional lighting in the Area.

Properties in the Conservation Area rely on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses.

6.6 Local details and features

As stated previously, the over-riding distinguishing and unifying feature in the Conservation Area is the high brick walls in front of properties, but the properties themselves are quite varied architecturally.

6.7 Historic associations

Surley Row leads to Caversham Grove, to the north west and outside the Conservation Area. Originally of early eighteenth century date, this was altered and extended in the late nineteenth century by Richard Norman Shaw,

an eminent Victorian architect, for Frederick Saunders, then Chairman of the Great Western Railway. A barn and stable block survive from the earlier buildings. These buildings are now part of Highdown School.

Springfield was famous for its spring waters, once bottled and sold locally. It was the home of Sir Rufane Donkin, distinguished soldier, politician, man of letters and one-time caretaker governor of Cape Province (where the newly-founded town of Port Elizabeth was named after his wife). He gives his name to Donkin Hill in Lower Caversham. An early nineteenth century villa, it became home to the convent of St Luke until being converted into old peoples flats in the late 1980s.



The green at the Peppard Road junction. Hill House beyond

6.8 Green spaces, trees and other natural elements

Apart from the green space at the Peppard Road entrance to the Conservation Area, there is no other public green space in the area, but the importance of this green space to the character of the entrance to the Conservation Area cannot be understated.

Trees also make a significant contribution in “softening” the hard, but attractive, edges to the lane which runs through the middle of the Conservation Area, and trees beyond the Conservation Area boundaries provide a backcloth

to this Conservation Area's special character and sense of identity. Significant tree groups are shown on the Appraisal Map at Appendix 1.

Because of their importance to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, where they are not already protected by a Tree Preservation Order (of which there are several in this Conservation Area), it is necessary to give the local planning authority 6 weeks notice of any intention to cut down, top or lop any tree in a Conservation Area, which also enables a local planning authority to consider whether the trees should be formally protected by the making of a Tree Preservation Order.

6.9 General condition of the area: The extent of loss, intrusions or damage i.e. negative features.

The general state of repair of the properties in the Conservation Area is good. There is however some (limited) loss of front boundary walls and the introduction of close boarded fencing.

The open space at the Peppard Road entrance to the Conservation Area is also a generally well maintained, and provides seats.

However, in common with many of Reading's Conservation Areas, the Area is lacking in the quality, if not the state of repair of the of the highway environment (roadways, footways and street furniture).

All of these areas would benefit from continued monitoring, and the seizing of opportunities for improvement as they arise.

6.10 Problems, pressures and issues

Design of new development

Within the Conservation Area itself there have been some recent developments, but these have generally respected the character, scale of buildings and materials used in the Conservation Area, as well as retaining front boundary walls, thus maintaining its character and appearance. A small number of elements within the Conservation Area detract from its character. Areas immediately outside the Conservation Area do not currently appear to be under pressure for (re)development, but should these come forward, they could potentially have an impact on the character and setting of the Conservation Area, given their context adjoining or near the Conservation Area and could have a negative effect on its character and appearance. The design of any new development within and adjoining/near the Conservation therefore remains a major issue.

Loss of original architectural details

In general terms the loss of original features, particularly front elevation and boundary features is fairly limited. Certainly there are very few examples of non-traditional windows in the older buildings in the Conservation Area. There is a clear issue here in terms of respecting the setting of individual buildings as well as enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, in accordance with policies contained in PPS5 and accompanying guidance and policies contained in the Reading Borough Local Plan/Local Development Framework.



2 Surley Row

Traffic noise and pollution

The character and environmental quality of the area are currently no longer spoiled by noise and pollution of traffic using the area as a “rat run”.

Street clutter

This is not generally an issue with regard to the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole.

Attention has also been drawn to the detrimental impact of individual telegraph poles and wires radiating out from them.

7.0 Areas for further work

7.1 Consideration of Conservation Area boundary changes

Given that there are no changes in circumstances since the Conservation Area was originally designated, and the generally more modern developments adjoining and surrounding the Conservation Area, no changes are recommended to the Conservation Area boundary.

7.2 Opportunities for enhancement

Floorscape and street furniture improvements should be considered in this area, including replacing telegraph poles.

If it were possible it would also be of benefit to replace the existing modern telephone kiosk with a traditional “K6” kiosk in order to restore the original ambience of the green at the Peppard Road entrance to the Conservation Area.

Notwithstanding the current quite varied appearance of the Conservation Area, it may however be expedient, as has been proposed in other Conservation Areas in Reading, and subject to the requisite publicity and the views of local people, to consider whether the local planning authority should consider using its powers to withdraw permitted development rights which affect the external appearance of dwelling houses in the Conservation Area, namely alterations to doors, windows, roofs and frontages, but particularly the last, which fortunately in this Conservation Area have generally been preserved, including where new development has taken place. A better approach would however be to seek mechanisms whereby original frontages can be repaired and/or restored, although inevitably this will have funding repercussions.

7.3 Monitoring and review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the area to identify changes in its character and appearance;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A detailed building/property condition survey;

- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

Appendix 1 - Townscape Appraisal Map



Surley Row Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal Map



Conservation Area Boundary



Listed Building



Tree Preservation Orders



Landmark building



Green space

Appendix 2 - Relevant Local Plan Policies

The following policies from the Reading Borough Local Plan (1991-2006) are relevant to the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area:

POLICY CUD 6: DEMOLITION OF UNLISTED BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

CONSENT TO DEMOLISH IN A CONSERVATION AREA WILL NORMALLY ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT IT IS WHOLLY BEYOND REPAIR, INCAPABLE OF REASONABLY BENEFICIAL USE, OF INAPPROPRIATE STRUCTURE OR DESIGN, OR WHERE ITS REMOVAL OR REPLACEMENT WOULD BENEFIT THE APPEARANCE OR CHARACTER OF THE AREA. DEMOLITION WILL BE MORE FAVOURABLY ASSESSED WHERE THERE ARE APPROVED DETAILED PLANS FOR REDEVELOPMENT AND A CONTRACT FOR CARRYING OUT THE WORKS HAS BEEN ENTERED INTO.

POLICY CUD 7: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

AS APPROPRIATE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS SHOULD MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE AREA BY RESPECTING OR ENHANCING ITS ARCHITECTURAL AND VISUAL QUALITIES AND ACHIEVING A HIGH STANDARD OF DESIGN. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS WILL NORMALLY BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE THE PARTICULAR HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA WILL BE PRESERVED AND THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD OF HARM BEING CAUSED TO THE AREAS CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE.

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL AS APPROPRIATE SEEK TO PRESERVE THE EXISTING BALANCE OF USES IN CONSERVATION AREAS.

Because of the high percentage of listed buildings in the Conservation Area. Policies CUD 1 ((Works Affecting Listed Buildings), CUD 2 (Change of Use of Listed Buildings), CUD 3 (Maintenance of Listed Buildings) and CUD 4 (Setting of Listed Buildings) also apply.