

Comments on the Draft Spring Grove Conservation Area Appraisal

General. This new appraisal is very welcome. It is vastly better than the previous one. It gives a good general description of the area and explains well why its many strong features are worth conserving. The photographic evidence of the area's character is excellent and makes it much easier to appreciate what is argued in the text. Our overall feeling is that a final appraisal written broadly along these lines would be a helpful tool in (1) maintaining the distinctive features of the area, (2) in enhancing its distinctive character and finally (3) in resisting developments which detract from the areas special features rather than enhance them. Our remarks and points below are therefore made within a framework of general approval and agreement with the report. They are intended to sort out what we see as errors and omissions.

Photographs. Another general point is that the photographs, although generally excellently chosen mostly seem a bit dark. This may be a question of our printer but we have the same impression looking at the pdf document. That too could be to do with screen renderings and settings but we suggest that some consideration is given to making the pictures look as bright as possible.

1.1.2 *Last sentence.* Is it really true that the “buildings/structures” are all designated as heritage assets? When questions have been raised about the gutting of houses designated as of “historical interest” the response from the officers has been that it is only the *external visual aspect* that is of concern and not the structure inside the building. So can we say that “*all features* (listed or otherwise) ... are recognised as part of its character”?

1.2.3 This paragraph unfortunately refers to the wrong Conservation Area!

1.2.5 We are not clear about the final sentence “... omission from the text should not be interpreted as an indication of lesser significance”. The opening sentence says that the report deals only with the principle characteristics of the area. Those not deal with are therefore of lesser significance which is not to say unimportant. Perhaps this paragraph needs re-wording.

1.3.3 “The area is well-served by bus, train and, to a lesser extent, tube.” We think this paragraph is misleading since some parts of the area have a low transport (PTAL) rating. The problem is that developers intent on intensification will seize on this sort of comment and we have had experience of this in the past in which they have even tried to argue (unsuccessfully fortunately) that the PTAL values were wrong.

1.3.5 We think that the comments about sound need some refining. Aircraft noise goes well beyond 50m of the A4 and does not allow “bird song and general ambient noise to take over”. Indeed often, even more than 50m from the A4 normal conversation has to stop while aircraft pass overhead.

Maps **Page 7.** This map showing the contour of the Conservation Area is out of date. It does not show, for example, the current buildings for West Thames College.

2.1.1 We feel that this paragraph could be written in a more reader-friendly way. It sounds too much like the sort of officialese that causes eyes to glaze over.

2.4.2 Would it not be clearer to say “Demolition of all buildings whether listed or not within ...” rather than Demolition of an unlisted building within ...”?

2.4.4 Can a link not be added to where the specifics for Conservation Areas can be found. And won't the Portal send the enquirer back to the website of the local authority in question for this?

Maps Page 9. Could these old regression maps which are rather unclear not be subjected to some image enhancement? The acknowledgement could then say “Based on the Ordinance Survey map of xxxx”. Same for the maps on page 10. All of this series of maps could also be displayed larger by cropping (left/right of image) and enlarging to fill the page.

3.2.1.1 When did “Osterley House and Park to the north become a major formative influence ...”?

3.2.1.2 What is the 1745 mapping referred to (would this be the Rocque Map)?

3.2.1.4 It is said that the area's character shifted from rural to urban. Does this not need finessing given that elsewhere in Planning material the area is characterised as being mainly sub-urban. This has been a bone of contention with some planning applications. Should this not be clearer in the appraisal?

3.2.2.3 Given the references to the Davies Plan and the talk of its layout would it not be helpful to include an image of Davies' original street plan (as given in the Gillian Morris book). It might be helpful to superimpose street names on the image for ease of reading.

Map Page 15. We think that this map indicates a need for a more detailed area survey in that we believe that there are undesignated areas with as much claim to local listing and positive character as those which have been so designated. We suggest, for example the Arts & Crafts style housing along Church road. There are others we could mention. This needs, we think, further discussion and survey.

Map Page 17. Again, this map is out of date as shown by the West Thames College building.

Map Page 18. There is a possible mistake or oversight on this map. Some of the buildings along London Road which have not been designated as of special interest are older than adjacent buildings which have been designated. This applies to Nos 588 – 572 which are older than 532 – 556). We think that these older buildings may well be pre-Davies as are the cottages in Thornbury Road on the even side (which have been designated).

5.1.1 Last sentence. We think that the statement that “only very few blocks and streets have strong coherence and continuity” is a serious understatement. We think that it would be more accurate to say that “there are a significant number of blocks and streets which have a strong coherence and continuity”.

5.1.2 The description of the visibility Spring Grove House seems not right to us. The building is now visible from London Road and along much of Harvard Road. It is more visible than it was before the new college buildings were erected.

5.1.4 Superfluous “is” in first sentence. “... no broken by the Great West Road, has is a wide ...”.

Map Page 22. Houses 45-53 have not been designated even though they appear to be the same design as others which have been e.g. 86/88. (see map page 25)

Map Page 27. We believe there are some mistakes on this map. One of which we have raised repeatedly and have even had an acknowledgement that it is a mistake. It is unfortunately still repeated in this map. The designations shown along Thornbury Road don't make sense. Nos 91-101 are all Edwardian and built in 1904. It does not make sense to list one

of them, 101, and then 5 Arts and Crafts Houses, 103 – 111. These Arts and Crafts Houses are all post WW1, as is 113. 115 – 121 are pre WW1 (See regression maps!)

Church Road. Vine Lodge, shown on 1865/9 maps as half of a wider building. According to hearsay the building dates from significantly earlier.

1 – 11 are Arts & Crafts from the 1920s

11A is a classic 1930s domestic building.

- 5.5.1** We think that it might be worth mentioning that with the demolition of the old Jesuit student dormitory and Chapel the aspect of Campion House has been much enhanced and that generally the development has enhanced the frontage along Thornbury Road. When we have developments that clearly enhance the area we should perhaps say so.

Photographs on page 34. We think that a better picture could be taken of the houses leading up to Campion House along Thornbury Road. Perhaps the view looking towards Campion House would be better. It would also be good if the view from the road could be shown since that would show the open aspect of the development for those walking along the road.

- 8.2** Why not list all 5 open spaces?

- 9.2** We feel that the description of West Thames College as marred by incoherent and non-complementary features is too negative. From most angles what first meets the eye is buildings set in amongst a lot of vegetation.

- 11.4** Superfluous “the” in first sentence: “Precedent for **the** increasing the height...”.

Draft prepared by Gina Richards and David Pavett, 15 November 2018