



OWGRA

Osterley & Wyke Green Residents' Association

SPRING GROVE CAA REVIEW - Comments from OWGRA, Dec 2018

Essentially, the conservation area assessment appears to be good and OWGRA support it subject to the following comments:

1. OWGRA note that there are **no plans to enlarge or reduce the size of the conservation area** since its original designation in 2002. We believe this is right as it includes the historic and architectural characteristics of the area. However, our understanding is that Spring Grove is not an urban area, rather more suburban in classification, given the nature of much of the residential development being houses with gardens or groups of mostly low-rise flats or conversions of larger homes, some original Davies buildings, with good open space provision. There is a school and college, both of which have good open space, plus several sports facilities. There is no industrial, office or warehousing in the conservation area.
2. We would be pleased if the **Campion House statue** of 'The Descent from the Cross' were reinstated within the Marbaix Gardens, Tigar Lodge, Blumenthal Close and Campion House development to acknowledge the 20th century history of the site in this well designed new development.
3. **Spring Grove has very little publicly accessible open space**, but the main benefit of building mini estates on the former Davies sites is that they are mostly well set back from the road, giving the impression of spaciousness, e.g. Aplin Way. OWGRA is keen to retain all this open space and pleased that it remains within the Conservation Area.
4. OWGRA agrees with the assessment of a '**more appropriate redevelopment of the judiciary buildings' i.e. the Crown Court** being needed. It is a disjointed mix of the retained 1960s 'minimalist' entrance way on Ridgeway Road and stark vertical, more modern block added facing The Grove with the loss of mature trees and shrubs. We look forward to seeing the planting grow and mature to help soften its appearance as its bulky built form is out of character in its prominent position in the conservation area.
5. **Traffic noise and pollution on the A4 and London Road:** given that vehicles currently have priority over pedestrians on these roads, OWGRA recommend a conscious traffic management scheme to improve pedestrian access and minimise harmful noise and pollution, though we appreciate there should be some improvement in the future with the introduction of electric-powered vehicles.
6. While this is not included in the CA assessment, of similar concern is the **noise and pollution generated by air traffic:** it is especially important that the current air traffic is limited by the alternation policy so that at least one part of the day is relatively noise-free within the Spring Grove area, directly under the northern flight path. It would be a source of great concern should flight patterns change to residents' detriment, particularly with the proposed third runway.

7. **Suburban roads, particularly those linked to/parallel to the A4:** we would support traffic management focused on discouraging their use to bypass the A4, Thornbury Road or Wood Lane and enforcement of 20mph limits. Osterley Road and Ridgeway Road are prime examples where this would be beneficial.
8. OWGRA supports planning enforcement to reduce **front-facing satellite dishes**. **Street furniture** makes a material contribution to the appearance of the Conservation area and we believe the design, installation and management of these need to be improved. All planned installation of new furniture, and its ongoing management, should be assessed as to whether it contributes to, and enhances, the Conservation Area
9. We agree with the statement about **poor quality shop fronts** especially on London Road. All such shops should be tested against their ability to contribute to the ambience of the London Road as a local town centre, with signage and usage controls appropriate for the maintenance of this. This should include
 - a. sensible limits over street signage (to reflect that this is a Conservation Area) to ensure they are in keeping with other signage and appropriate for the area in terms of style, size, etc. (e.g. no 6-foot high flashing neon signs)
 - b. guidelines to encourage usage of these facilities by businesses which both support the local neighbourhood as well as bring in customers from further afield (e.g. no businesses solely focused on serving customer from outside the area or over-supply of e.g. betting shops) and
 - c. limits over opening hours to reflect the residential and local nature of the area.
10. It seems to OWGRA that many of the **recent developments** in the area have caused the damage highlighted in the report, of tall blocks of flats on the London Road, though some copy architectural detailing of nearby buildings, e.g. Odeon Parade at the former film studio and the new development at the former DHSS office opposite. Others are outside the conservation area but clearly visible, e.g. Pears factory site and site of former Skoda garage, not awful but in a modern style. They have all been built since the original 2002 designation and most at least 6 storeys, but could have been worse, creating a tunnel effect along the London Road.
11. Many **street trees** have already disappeared especially on the London Road, Thornbury Road, College Road and Osterley Road, and have not been replaced as they conflict with vehicle crossovers etc. Nevertheless, most streets still have trees, some spectacular, e.g. in front of Champion House. Better management and replacement of street trees is necessary from LBH, in OWGRA's view.
12. Before the Residential Extension Guidelines (REGs) and the original conservation area designation, there were some badly designed roof and side **extensions to dwellings** causing a terracing effect plus loss of vegetation in front gardens **with vehicle crossovers**. Some more recent extensions and loss of gardens to vehicles have been much better managed and add to the street scene; OWGRA supports the Conservation assessment and the continuation and improvement to the REGs to that purpose.

Comments on the Draft Spring Grove Conservation Area Appraisal

These comments were prepared by David Pavett and Gina Richards and have been approved as part of the OWGRA response to the 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 suburban. 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...”.

Prepared by Gina Richards and David Pavett, 15 November 2018