

# St Peters Conservation Area

Appraisal November 2017



Re-appraisal presented for the approval of Reading Borough Council, developed by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) and the Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) together with local residents

## **St Peters Conservation Area, Caversham**

### **A community-led Conservation Area Appraisal**

**April 2017**

#### **Initial Statement**

Reading has fifteen Conservation Areas. They should be appraised every five years to ensure that they reflect the up-to-date situation and are continuing to do the job they are designed for – to protect areas ‘the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

A new community-led, Reading-wide Conservation Area Advisory Committee has been set up to advise Reading Borough Council when preparing conservation area appraisals or policies for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas, Heritage Sites or other areas of historic importance.

The St Peters Conservation Area was last appraised by the Council’s external consultants, The Conservation Studio of Cirencester. Their report dated April 2009 was formally adopted by the Council at that time and, as many of that report’s findings and recommendations have been found to remain relevant today, they have been carried forward in this Appraisal where appropriate.

This Appraisal has been prepared by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee in conjunction with Caversham and District Residents Association and interested local community representatives, using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit as advised by Historic England.

The Council acknowledges the advice and assistance of Historic England, particularly by providing, in February and April of 2016, training workshops in conservation area appraisals for the Council officers and local community representatives taking part in the appraisal process.

The first part of the Appraisal comprises a Statement of Special Interest, which summarises the key qualities and features which give the area its character and which justify the special protection afforded by a conservation area. This is followed by a more detailed analysis of each of the key elements and areas.

The Appraisal provides details on the historic and architectural interest of this area and positive features of its character, as well as highlighting issues that are negatively affecting the Conservation Area.

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# Statement of Special Interest

## SS1 Introduction and Summary

St Peters Conservation Area, north of the River Thames in Caversham, includes the church of St Peter, founded in the 12th century, and Caversham Court Gardens, a historic riverside garden refurbished in 2009. It also incorporates the medieval core of the original Caversham village, running from the end of Bridge Street, along Church Road and up St Peters Hill. This was the old pilgrim route from Reading Abbey towards Oxford, and linked the agricultural hinterland with the village, the economy of which was based on the River Thames.

Views into the Conservation Area from the river, especially from Caversham Bridge, and out of the area across the Thames, show its riverside setting and the green escarpment which rises above it. Fine mature trees, especially Victorian conifers, are particularly prominent. The green spaces of Caversham Court Gardens and St Peters churchyard are tranquil havens alongside the busy Church Road, and the wall of trees rising up the slope at the area's western end provides an important backdrop to the Conservation Area.

Several listed cottages in the Conservation Area date from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century development along Church Road retained the two- and three-storey scale, using the traditional local materials of brick, stone and flint, with characteristic architectural features including brick and flint boundary walls. There is a continuous flow of space, architecture and history down from the church along Church Road to the bridge.

Caversham Bridge is an important historic structure which is prominent in views from the Conservation Area. A group of listed buildings at the junction of Church Road and Church Street form an integral part of the original bridgehead village.

For this reason the boundary of the Conservation Area has been proposed for extension, to include both these elements and the area linking them. Detailed reasoning for this proposal is set out in this Appraisal.

## SS2 Key Characteristics

The key characteristics of the Conservation Area are:

- St Peters church and its tower, together with Caversham Court, dominate the Conservation Area, both historically and in the present day. Caversham Court is included in the Historic England "Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England".
- Tree cover and green spaces, especially around St Peters and in Caversham Court, with specimen trees in the latter, are important. Individual street trees and those in gardens contribute strongly to the area.
- Along Church Road the built form of the original bridgehead village is still apparent. A core of listed 16th and 17th century buildings is present in sufficient numbers to make this still readable. The irregular building line along the road, often at or close to the back of the footpath, and its winding character leading up to St Peters Hill, also reflect the historic village. The early village is overlaid with mainly late Victorian and Edwardian buildings constructed over a short time period. There is a consistency of scale and materials

between these buildings and the earlier ones. Early red brick and timber framed domestic buildings with plain roof tiles combine with well-detailed later brick buildings with slate roofs to form a coherent whole and an attractive and consistent roofscape.

- The use of red brick and flint for boundary walls down St Peters Hill and into Church Road also serves to unify the area.
- The vistas and views from Caversham Bridge towards and across the Conservation Area, and also along the Thames Promenade on the south bank of the river, are a unique component. There is an important view of a green escarpment rising from the river, with glimpses of the Church tower, from both the bridge and the south bank. There are also important views of the river and the bridge from Caversham Court Gardens, and glimpsed views of the river from elsewhere in the Conservation Area.
- The junction of Church Road and Bridge Street includes some distinguished banks and similar commercial premises. The importance of Bridge Street as the visual corridor linking the village core with the bridge outweighs the poor treatment of some of its buildings, which nevertheless have a consistent scale and style.

### **SS3 Issues and vulnerabilities**

- Traffic noise, pollution and traffic queuing from the A4074 down St Peters Hill, Church Road and Bridge Street all have major negative impact, both directly and in prompting inappropriate changes to buildings to mitigate noise and pollution. Only long-term measures such as a third Reading Bridge or weight restrictions on traffic might reduce this impact.
- The loss of original architectural details, particularly front elevation and boundary wall features, is a cumulative and damaging problem.
- The shop fronts along Church Road and Church Street, including those on the otherwise less successful Caversham House development, are consistent and well-detailed. Any changes will need careful attention. The varied treatment of some of their upper floors is regrettable.
- Tree cover and greenery is vulnerable. Pre-2009 aerial photographs show significant loss of tree cover since then, both in the public domain and private gardens.
- The views towards and across the Conservation Area from the bridge and the Thames promenade are vulnerable to insensitive development. The Reading Canoe Club, at its western end, detracts from the setting of the restored gazebo in Caversham Court Gardens. Although outside the Conservation Area, a recent house in the area of the Warren breaches the tree line and the white gable emphasizes the intrusion. The north bank of the river is principally soft to the water's edge, but one property within the Conservation Area has sheet piled the river bank, damaging its appearance. If other properties were to follow, the character of this north bank would be at risk.
- The design of new development within and adjoining the Conservation Area was highlighted in the 2009 Appraisal and remains an important issue, given the small size of the Conservation Area. Developments immediately outside the Conservation Area which ignore their proximity to it can have a negative effect. For example, the flats opposite Caversham Court Gardens, with their horizontal windows and concrete interlock tiles, demonstrate why care is needed to secure consistency of scale and materials.
- Access to the heritage site of Caversham Court Gardens can be difficult via a narrow and obstructed pavement with heavy traffic passing.

- Ill-assorted street furniture, including bollards, litter bins, crash barriers and sign posts, together with poor quality surfacing in some areas, contribute together to diminish the quality of the public domain.
- Situated around the junction of Church Road, Church Street, and Bridge Street are three well-detailed banks. One has already closed as a bank and evolving banking practice may continue to threaten their future. Care will be needed with design details, with ground floors being especially vulnerable to changes of use.
- Close to the junction of Church Road, Church Street and Bridge Street there are four key gap sites which provide both threats and opportunities: adjoining the Priory Avenue corner; adjoining the telephone exchange; the tyre workshop in Bridge Street; and the advertising hoarding site on the Bridge Street and Church Road junction. Redevelopment or improvement of these would be welcome but would need a sensitive approach.

## **SS4 Recommended measures**

In order to address the issues and vulnerabilities set out above, Section 8, The Conservation Area Action Plan, on pages 36-38, sets out in tabular form a series of measures with timescales which should be undertaken to ameliorate these issues.

## **SS5 The 2017 Boundary Adjustment**

This appraisal extends beyond the current boundary of the Conservation Area, to include the junction with Church Street, the whole of Bridge Street and Caversham Bridge. There are strong reasons for this extension.

- The group of listed buildings at the junction of Church Road and Church Street form part of the core original bridgehead village and are vital in closing northward views on entering Caversham across the bridge. The surviving 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings were one of the reasons for the Conservation Area designation, yet were not previously included in it. This is illogical and both the potential treatment of the listed buildings themselves and the Conservation Area itself would benefit from their inclusion.
- Caversham Bridge and the views from it across the Conservation Area are central to the appreciation of the Conservation Area. These important views have been noted in previous appraisals. The bridge itself of concrete and stone with some Art Deco detailing was completed in 1926. It incorporates purpose-designed viewing places on the central buttress. It is an interesting structure in its own right and the Panel for Historical Engineering Works of the Institution of Civil Engineers has included it in their lists which record and promote historical structures.
- There are several unlisted buildings of townscape merit within the proposed extension. These include the three early 20<sup>th</sup> century bank buildings at the junction of Church Road, Church Street and Bridge Street, which have group value: the former Lloyds Bank building in particular stops the vista down Church Road. Other buildings of merit include the Crown Public House and the Priory Avenue Surgery with its Arts and Crafts detailing. The surgery forms a group with the adjoining pair of grey and yellow brick semis which marks the eastern end of the extended Conservation Area. On Church Road, opposite the Griffin Public House, Nos 9 and 11, a pair of Victorian brick semis with original shopfronts and a gated passageway between them, stand out as being of townscape value.

- The height and scale of buildings in the area contribute to a uniform roofscape and skyline. A recent building in Church Road which has breached the skyline has a jarring effect on both the street scene and the roofscape, demonstrating how important it is for new buildings to respect the existing scale of the area.
- The bridge and the Church Road and Bridge Street junction form an important visual axis which is key to the proposed extension. However, while the buildings which link them, along the western side of Bridge Street, have a consistent age, scale and style, many have suffered unsuitable alterations, for example in clashing shop front details and in the changes to the former Thames Valley Hotel adjoining the bridge. Designation will help resist further deterioration.

Some other minor anomalies to the boundary of the Conservation Area have been resolved in this review. Where the boundary of the Conservation Area previously ran down the middle of the road in St Peters Hill and Church Road, it has been adjusted to the back edge of pavement on the far side of the road.

The existing boundary and the proposed boundary extension are shown on Map 1 on page 5.

St Peters Conservation Area



Map 1 Proposed Conservation Area boundary



# Conservation Area Appraisal

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Policy context

The purpose of an appraisal document is to ensure that the special interest justifying designation of the conservation area is clearly defined and analysed in a written statement of its character and appearance. This provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development plan policies and development control decisions, and also forms the basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals.

This Appraisal describes and defines the particular historical and architectural character and interest of the St Peters Conservation Area, highlighting those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced and identifying negative features that detract from the area's character and appearance, and issues that may affect it in future.

The Historic England Good Practice Advice Note on the Historic Environment in Local Plans clarifies advice as given by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for the management of conservation areas as designated heritage assets. It notes that the NPPF states that planning should '... conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'. It further states that local planning authorities within their Local Plan framework should '... have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to the environment'. This Appraisal is charged with providing the up-to-date evidence as needed for the establishment of the Local Plan in regard to the management of the fifteen Conservation Areas within Reading.

### **Sustainable development in conservation areas**

The government has outlined a presumption in favour of sustainable development and clarifies the purpose of the planning system in achieving these goals. Sustainable development must, amongst other things, perform a role in protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. In relation to conservation areas the NPPF states: 'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance and better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.' This means that proposals that fail to fulfil these requirements should not be accepted and the NPPF explains that where a proposal involves harm to a designated heritage asset, it should only be allowed if the public benefit of the proposal outweighs the harm.

In order to make these judgements clear with accuracy, evidence must be laid out detailing the importance of the historical, heritage and cultural significance of the conservation area and its assets.

This Appraisal provides that evidence, in as reasonably detailed manner as possible. This Appraisal cannot hope to mention every building or feature within the Conservation Area that might be of value. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is not of any interest or value to the character of the area.

This Appraisal serves to advise the implementation of policy guidelines as established by the Historic England Good Practice Guides for the Historic Environment and the Setting of Heritage Assets which have been put in place to support the NPPF of March 2012. It provides the needed background advice for the maintenance and delivery of a sustainable historic spatial vision for the area and to justify the protection and enhancement of the area. It defines the qualities and local distinctiveness that provide baseline evidence for the development of local policy with Local Plan documents, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Article 4 directions as needed.

Its description of the area further lays out the background evidence needed for enforcement and also serves to advise investment and development within the area. It is meant to aid in informing proposals for new development and provide the solid evidence necessary to base the determination of planning applications on: either for new development or alterations to the existing historical fabric.

### **Policy Changes and the 2017 Local Plan**

It is notable that 2017 is the 50th anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 which created conservation areas in the UK. It is also notable that budgets for planning departments are under their greatest financial challenge since the implementation of that Act, and have greater challenges in being able to meet the lofty ideals for the development of conservation areas set forth in 1967. The Council's statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is to identify those parts of their area that are considered to contribute positively to '... special historic or architectural interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate these as conservation areas. St Peters Conservation Area was formally designated on 29 April 1988 following a period of public consultation. The 1990 act further requires the Council to have 'special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area' when exercising its function as a local planning authority.

Unlike listed buildings, conservation areas are not assessed against national criteria standards. In accordance with the NPPF and guidance standards set forth by Historic England, the Local Planning Authority sets its own standards within its Local Plan guidelines for how their conservation areas are to be maintained, protected and enhanced. Historic England recommends a re-evaluation of a conservation area once every five years. This conservation area has not been reappraised since 2009, and is overdue for reappraisal, and much has changed since then in terms of policy on a national and local level. Nationally, the revocation of Conservation Area Consent and the introduction of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act of 2013 caused a lessening of planning restrictions that, as noted earlier, have led to some harm to the historic fabric of the area and could continue to do so without additional controls being put in place and implemented.

Locally, the Reading Core Strategy was adopted as policy in 2008, the Reading Central Area Action Plan followed in 2009, and finally the Sites and Detailed Policies Document was adopted in 2012. At time of writing, the maintenance of the Conservation Area is set out in the Core Strategy Plan adopted in 2008 which was last altered in January 2015. Certain SPD's (Supplementary Planning Documents) such as the Residential Conversions SPD and the Sites and Detailed Policies SPD aid in the implementation of the Core Strategy plan.

Proactively, in the Spring of 2016, the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee of Reading Borough Council, following national policy guidance, advised the creation of the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC), which is a non-statutory body formed

of conservation sector professionals and other interested individuals throughout Reading to advise on the overall protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas in Reading.

In 2017, it is expected that Reading Borough Council will adopt a new version of its Local Plan, which in terms of conservation areas and the historic environment, will be the overarching document that informs the Council on the management of Reading's fifteen Conservation Areas. It is largely anticipated that this document will enhance and make more specific policy provisions in the fulfilment of the Council's statutory duties in regard to the protection and enhancement of conservation areas.

## **1.2 Public consultation**

This Appraisal is in a format recommended by Historic England. It has been prepared in conjunction with the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) and Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) and interested local people. Public consultation has been aimed at engaging with residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the area to help define what continues to be of special significance and worthy of protection and/or enhancement.

In 2016, following a two-day appraisal training workshop, sponsored and led by Historic England, a Launch Public Participation Afternoon was held on Saturday 16 July at St Peters Church, Caversham. Following an illustrated presentation on using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, teams of people carried out a visual audit of the Conservation Area. This was a useful exercise in terms of gathering the opinions of the local community about the area. The information gathered has informed the findings in this Appraisal. Information on the Launch Event is set out in Appendix One

A six week period of public consultation on the Draft Appraisal which was subsequently prepared was held during July and August 2017, following extensive local publicity. Details of the consultation process and the responses received are set out in Appendix Two. Very strong support was demonstrated for both the proposed extension to the Conservation Area and also for the proposed actions and policies which seek to either retain or enhance the key characteristics of this Conservation Area.

## **2. Landscape setting**

The Conservation Area lies on the north side of the Thames, to the immediate west of Caversham's shopping centre. It lies on the back slope of the Chilterns where the underlying geology is chalk. A steep ridge rising to the west, including Woodcote Road and the rise up to the church, provides a strong backdrop to the area and makes the church a prominent landmark in views from within and outside the area. Its steep southern slope, almost a river cliff, results from the Thames eroding into the back slope of the Chilterns, while the north-eastern slope of the ridge is formed by the Hemdean valley. The ridge is capped with gravels, supporting the dense tree cover which terminates western views from the area: this Chiltern-like scenery is supplemented by specimen tree planting from the Victorian and Edwardian development phases. The dense tree canopy conceals much of the development within it and, though outside the Conservation Area, is an important component of it. The tree cover on this ridge is also very important in longer views across and along the Thames.

At the foot of the ridge the ground flattens out and the tree cover diminishes. Here, where several ridge and valley routes converge into Bridge Street and onwards to the bridging-point, Caversham's historic core grew up. Its layout strongly reflects this origin.

### **3. History of the area**

#### **3.1 Archaeological heritage**

St Peters Conservation Area has early origins, and archaeology (also known as buried heritage assets) provides an important insight into its growth and development through prehistory and historic times. The majority of the information about buried heritage assets is held at the local Historic Environment Record managed by Reading Borough Council and is publicly accessible. There are no scheduled monuments within the Conservation Area. There is potential for further discoveries within the Conservation Area when future ground works take place, and it is therefore recommended that all below-ground applications should be referred to the Council's advisory archaeologist for a view on whether archaeological investigation should be undertaken prior to development taking place.

##### **Before the 12<sup>th</sup> century**

In early times the riverside setting of the Conservation Area was open and accessible. It was a prime location for short-term settlement, with the river gravels providing much needed raw materials for making flint tools. Much of the evidence to date comes from sites which have been disturbed, and therefore provides limited information about how people lived. Only one human burial has been identified. Any future discovery of undisturbed archaeological remains would enable an expansion of understanding about why the area was attractive to people in prehistory and how they used the natural resources around them.

##### **Medieval settlement focal points**

Caversham is mentioned in the Domesday Book as a settlement in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It was independent from Reading, separated by marshlands on the south side of the River Thames, but connected by Caversham Bridge and a toll road. The settlement was associated with St Peters parish church, the Chapel of Our Lady (location unknown), the Chapel of St Anne on the bridge and a manorial holding. The western centre of the manor was around the present-day Caversham Court, with land holdings extending westwards towards the beginning of Mapledurham Manor, near Chazey Court Farm.

Archaeological investigations at present-day Caversham Court identified activity of medieval date, and trade with other important settlements, such as Maidenhead and Denham in Buckinghamshire. The medieval manor was held by the Priory of Notley from the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. St Peters parish church, both Chapels and St Anne's Well were all important religious sites. The Chapel of Our Lady was one of a number of important sites of pilgrimage during the medieval period and would have generated a rich source of income. St Anne's chapel on the bridge was demolished at some time before the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a ferryman's cottage was built on the site.

As it was next to a manorial holding, the medieval settlement was likely to have been organised into plots which focussed on the street frontage. Small scale craft activities would have been located to the rear. These plots within the Conservation Area have archaeological potential, unless they have been truncated by later medieval development. After the Reformation the settlement would have grown in a more organic way.

Caversham played a role in the Civil War during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. A section of the bridge was taken down by the Parliamentarians, and a redoubt was located on the southeast corner of Caversham Bridge. The gazebo, in what was then The Rectory, had a commanding view over the river, providing a strategic viewing point.

After the Reformation the manor was given to the Dean and Chapter of Christchurch College, Oxford, which rented the land. In 1588 the Caversham estate was described in Chancery proceedings as having a house, barn, stable, brew house and malt house. Beyond the house there were tenements and further associated buildings, including the dove house, the barn adjoining the churchyard, the orchard and gardens. The estate also held adjoining land: all glebelands, the mount, the warren, the chancel, the churchyard, the hides and the Great Mede. From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the estate was rented and parts of it were sold off.

### 3.2 Historical Development



1761 Map

The 1761 map shows Caversham as having two distinct parts, east and west. In medieval times, the eastern part was of great importance: it was the site of the fortified manor house of William Marshal, Regent to Henry III, and of the shrine of Our Lady of Caversham, a pilgrimage site of national importance. The western part was clustered round St Peters church (consecrated in 1162), the medieval holy well of St Anne and Caversham Bridge, with its chapel to St Anne. Very little of the eastern village remains, so the conservation importance of the western area is as the sole remnant of an important medieval settlement, as well as its own intrinsic merit in townscape terms.

It is centred round the church of St Peter, the bridge and the river, with the winding lanes and field structure of an agricultural economy. The existing listed buildings on what is now Church Road are the remnants of a country lane following the main trading route and the medieval pilgrimage way from Reading, across the river and westwards towards Wallingford. The first mention of a bridge at Caversham was in 1231, but pilgrims are known to have travelled from Reading Abbey to St Anne’s Well and the Shrine of Our Lady in Caversham. St Peters church was an Augustinian foundation linked to Notley Abbey in Buckinghamshire, rather than to Reading Abbey. The original clergy dwelling was replaced by a Tudor house, The Rectory, with extensive grounds and estate cottages.



1877 Map

The 1877 map shows the rapid expansion of Caversham, after a new iron bridge was built across the Thames in 1869. The eastern side of Bridge Street is already built up from the Crown Public House along to Church Street. The south side of Church Road is built up, with the Griffin Inn and stabling a prominent feature, opposite the smithy necessary for servicing the carts and horses needed to get up the steep hill past St Peter's church. Cottages forming part of the Old Rectory estate cluster down Buckside, leading to the river and the eel bucks. A new rectory was built in 1840 and the Old Rectory remodelled into a fashionable gothic mansion by the owners, the Simonds family of bankers and brewers. The terraced riverside pleasure gardens were planted up to follow Victorian fashion, and the large productive grounds extended into the old chalk pit opposite the church.



**Early 20<sup>th</sup> century map**

From the 1880s the western side of Bridge Street was built up, the last building being the Thames Valley Hotel, opened in 1891, catering for the growing number of people arriving in Caversham for the boating, fishing and other leisure activities offered on the riverside. The traders expanded to meet the tourist demand, adding a stationer, coffee tavern, a watchmaker, plumber and apartment houses on the western side of the street to the wine and spirit merchant, baker and confectioner, boot and shoe maker, corn dealer and coal merchant on the east; and after the turn of the century an auctioneer and estate agent opened, dealing in residences and estates in Caversham and Reading. In Church Road, the New Police Station was built on the north side. In the 1890s, work on improving the sewerage, lighting, road surfaces and pavements was under way. The site of the former Lloyds bank was known as Berry's corner, where saddler and harness-maker Arthur Berry had a shop from the 1880s until 1915. By 1911, when Caversham Urban District became part of the Borough of Reading, the row of shops on the north side of Church Road included a tailor, hardware store, coal merchant, bootmaker, draper and milliner, confectioner, tobacconist and hairdresser. Amongst the better-known inhabitants of the western side of Caversham, William Wing, architect and developer of much of Caversham Heights, lived at No 11 Bridge Street, while opposite, at No 20, lived the descendants of the Havell family of artists, distinguished for their 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings of the views from Caversham Bridge.

The rapid development of Caversham meant that the 1869 iron bridge was already inadequate by the turn of the century. A new Caversham Bridge was built in 1926, following the construction of a completely new Reading road bridge further east.

Parts of the Old Rectory estate were sold off in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the house, by 1920 known as Caversham Court, was purchased by the local authority and demolished in 1933. The pleasure gardens were retained as a public park and the productive grounds below the church turned into public allotments. A Heritage Lottery funded refurbishment, completed in 2009, recreated the 'footprint' of the earlier houses, restored the listed 17<sup>th</sup> century gazebo and reinterpreted the pleasure grounds and its listed features to show the landscape history of the gardens and the stories of the families who once lived there.

Map 2 on page 14 illustrates the area's historical development by showing, in general form, the ages of its main groups of buildings.

## **4. Spatial analysis**

This section, and those which follow, analyse the characteristics which define the area's qualities and justify its designation as a Conservation Area. All this is summarised in Map 3 on page 15.

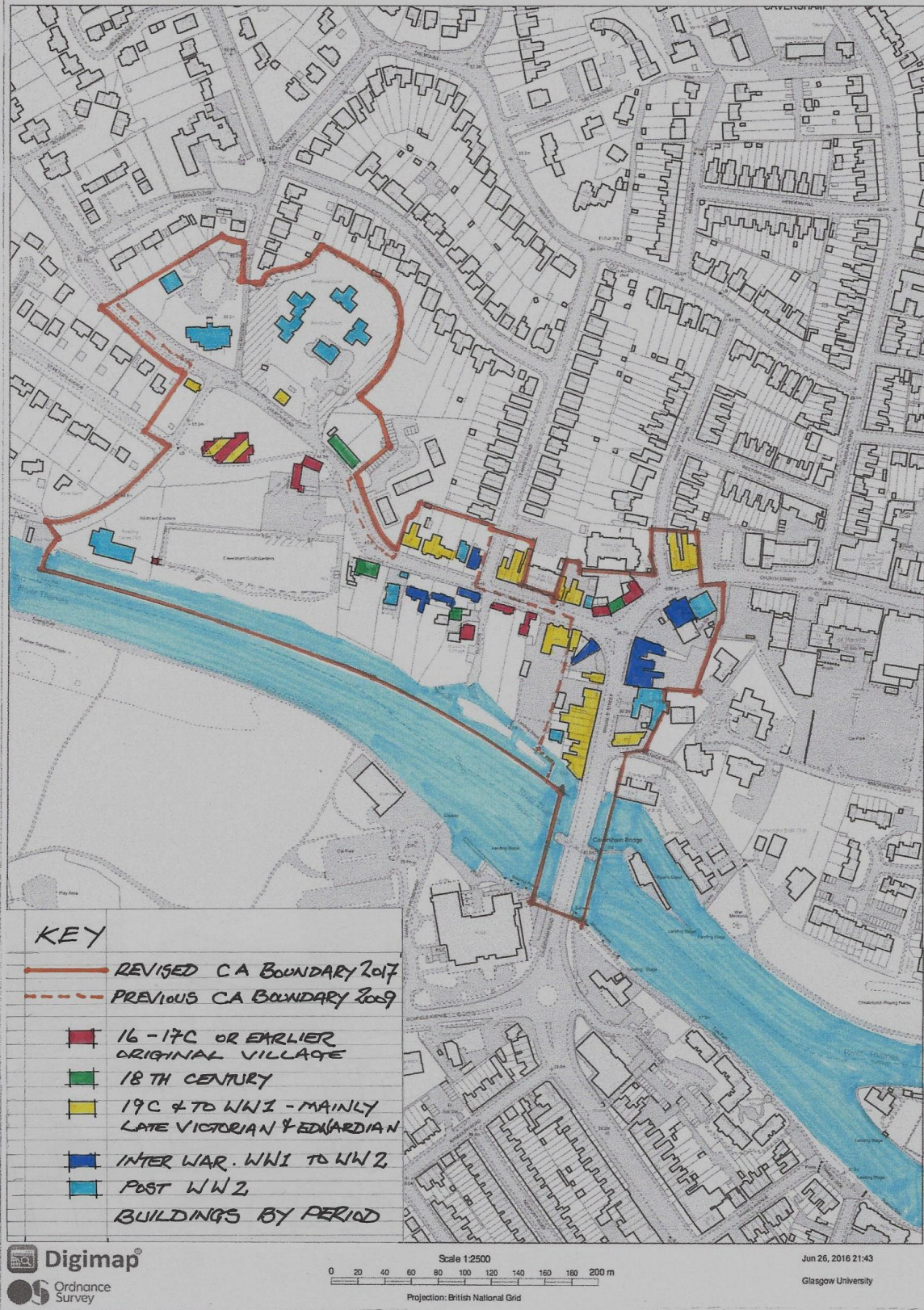
### **4.1 Key characteristics and plan form**

The layout and largely two-storey scale of the Conservation Area reflects its origins as a bridgehead village, where the Oxford, Peppard and Henley roads diverged beyond the Thames crossing. It has a T-shaped plan form, with continuous building frontages clustered tightly along the back of pavements around this junction. Significant timber framed buildings survive in this area, which not only add character, but make this historic origin legible (as, indeed, do the continued high levels of traffic). Other older buildings survive alongside roads. The western arm of this T-shape rises to the church and becomes more open: while buildings are close to the back of the footpath on its south side, the Victorian homes on the north side are set back further. The slope rises toward the site of the former 'big house' to the west, now comprising the green oasis of Caversham Court Gardens, with the green 'wall' of the tree-clad ridge rising behind it. This western arm of the historic settlement defines the present Conservation Area, while the proposed extension encompasses the whole 'T-shape', up to and including Caversham Bridge. Victorian and Edwardian additions are complementary and follow similar alignments, set back somewhat within the current Conservation Area, but at the back of the footpath in the extension area. The combination of earlier timber frame and plain tile with later brick and slate is harmonious, producing a strong roofscape. Surviving boundary details, such as walls in brick and flint and metal railings, add to the area's character.

The Conservation Area has been subject to limited development pressures in recent years, affecting only three major sites: Woodrow Court, Treetops and the Reading Canoe Club. The first two retain the spacious wooded scale and character of the area and other key linking features, in particular boundary wall details, but the Reading Canoe Club building, whilst retaining important boundary walls, is less respectful of the character and appearance of the area. In the proposed extension area, the Caversham House development on Church Road has had mixed results: materials, design detail and shop fronts have been sympathetically handled, but its height is out of scale with the character of the area.

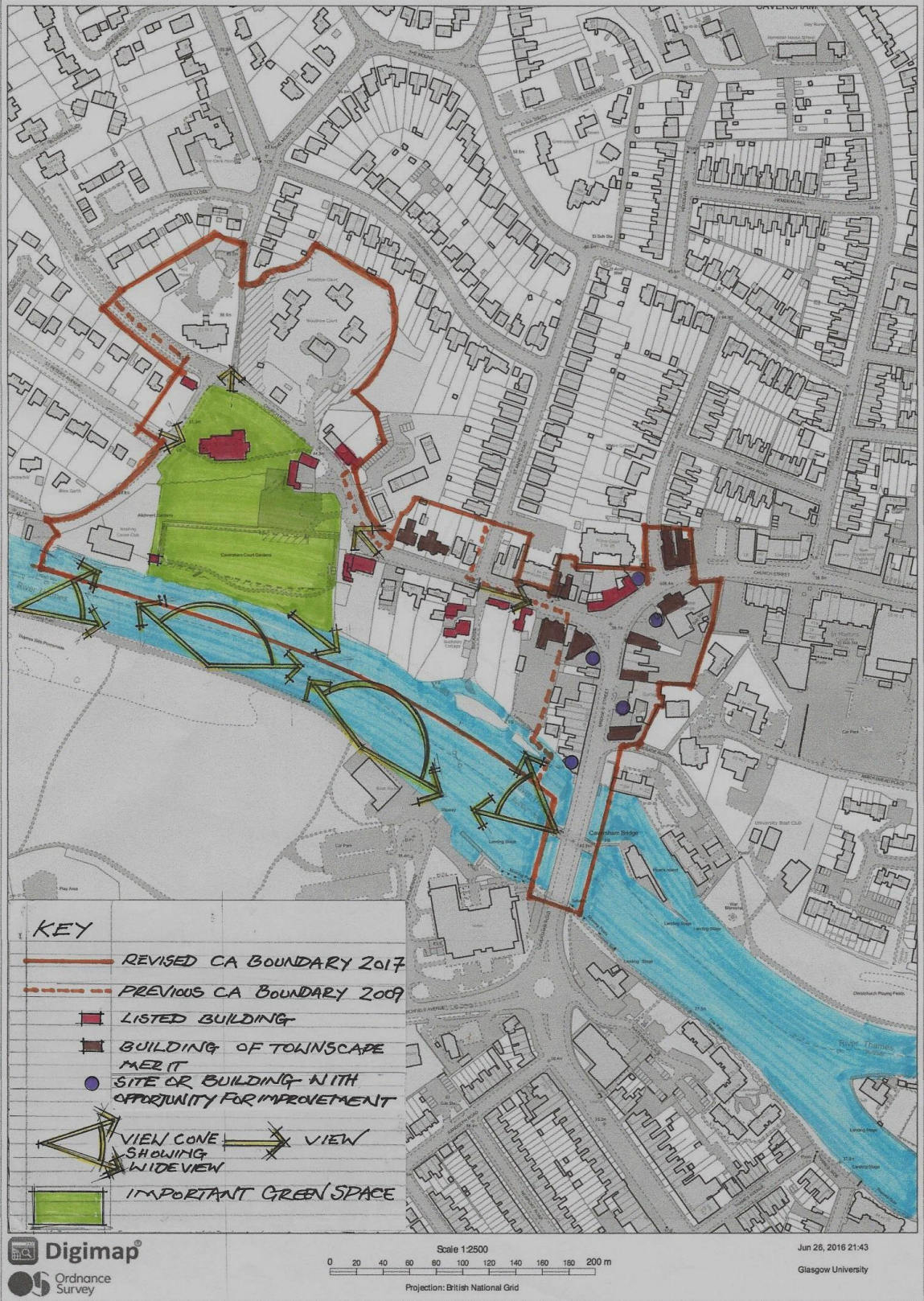


St Peters Conservation Area



Map 2 Buildings by age

St Peters Conservation Area



Map 3 Features of the Conservation Area

## **4.2 Views into the area**

From the south, St Peters church on its heavily-wooded ridge is a key landmark, glimpsed among the trees in views from the bridge, the River Thames and its south bank, as well as from the east and west along the river. The view of Caversham Court Gardens is also particularly important from the south, across the river, as are the spacious and wooded gardens of houses on the south side of Church Road.

Views when passing over the bridge into Caversham are important, both east and west along the river and ahead into Bridge Street, where a significant group of listed buildings closes the view and makes Caversham's historic origins as a bridgehead village clearly readable. Except for some well-detailed bank premises, the buildings lining Bridge Street are not distinguished, but their spatial form is important in defining the linear character of this corridor. The former hotel abutting the west side of the bridge, though insensitively altered, creates an important portico to the area as a whole.

## **4.3 Views within the area**

St Peters church is also prominent when viewed from Church Road and St Peters Hill. The double bend as the road ascends the slope means that the church and the gates and remaining buildings of Caversham Court close westward views within the area, supplemented by the Rectory, by the timber-framed buildings tucked into the hillside on the north side of the road, and by the massive backdrop of trees. While views into Caversham Court from the road are limited by its boundary walls, the reverse views looking down from St Peters churchyard are also attractive. The redeveloped site of Treetops, at No 2 St Peters Hill, also continues to dominate views towards the top of St Peters Hill, especially views from the south and east within the Conservation Area.

Views eastwards into the main shopping street are also important, punctuated by the large magnolia at the foot of Priory Avenue.

## **4.4 Views out of the area**

Only the churchyard and Caversham Court Gardens have significant views out of the area, across and along the River Thames. The gazebo in the Gardens was built to take advantage of such views. Although the Thames-side Promenade is an attractive walk on the opposite side of the River, the buildings in this view are unattractive. There is currently permission for a new swimming pool adjacent to Rivermead Leisure Centre which will be visible from Caversham Court Gardens, and it will be important that sufficient tree planting takes place to screen the building as much as possible. Immediately to the west of Caversham Court the Reading Canoe Club building blocks off views to and from that direction, and is detrimental to the setting of the Conservation Area.

Elsewhere, views out of the Conservation Area are very limited, apart from a few glimpses of the river from Buckside and Bucks Eyot, and the view south along Bridge Street, which is closed by the rising arch of the road as it crosses the bridge.



*Views towards the Conservation Area from Caversham Bridge and the Thames Promenade*

### 4.5 Trees

Caversham Court Gardens, the main significant area of formal green space in the Conservation Area, has many fine specimen trees. Elsewhere within the Conservation Area there are mature gardens with mature trees, which give the area around St Peters a verdant feel. Street trees make an important contribution to the street scene, especially near to Caversham Court, although there have been recent significant losses.

The heavily wooded escarpment beyond Caversham Court, towards and beyond The Warren, provides an important green backdrop to the setting of the Conservation Area, with mature trees providing effective screening of most buildings. It would be advantageous to consider using Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) to protect individual trees sited outside the Conservation Area, but which make a particular contribution to the setting of the Conservation area.

In the proposed extension to the Conservation Area there are few trees. The large magnolia outside the Priory Road Surgery and the tree behind the former Lloyds Bank make important contributions and there are some small street trees at the junction of Church Street, Church Road and Bridge Street.

Some trees are protected by TPOs because of their importance to the character and appearance of the area. For other trees within the Conservation Area it is necessary to give the Local Planning Authority six weeks' notice of any intention to cut down, top or lop any tree. This also enables the Authority to consider whether to formally protect the tree with a Tree Preservation Order.

There are currently six TPOs in the Conservation Area: at Buckside (Bucks Eyot Islands); 16 Church Road; 20 Church Road (the Rectory); 31 Church Road; 47 Church Road and Woodrow Court, and 2 St Peters Hill, Treetops. There is one TPO in the proposed extension to the Conservation Area, at 2 Priory Avenue, the Surgery.

Street trees and those within Caversham Court are in Local Authority control.

Aerial photographs show significant loss of tree cover since 2009, when the last Appraisal was prepared, as the image indicating trees lost in the vicinity of Caversham Court Gardens shows. Because the majority of the mature trees which contribute to the character of the area were planted many years ago it will be very important to plan for succession planting.



Map 4 on page 19 shows the location of trees in the street scene.

St Peters Conservation Area



Digimap  
Ordnance Survey

Scale 1:2500  
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200 m  
Projection: British National Grid

Jun 26, 2016 21:43  
Glasgow University

Map 4 Trees in the street scene

## **5. Buildings and Public Realm**

### **5.1 Key positive characteristics**

St Peters church and its tower, together with Caversham Court and the associated boundary walls, form the character of the western end of the Conservation Area. The use of red brick and flint for boundary walls down St Peters Hill and into Church Road serves to unify the area. Further east along Church Road, the built form of the original bridgehead village is still apparent. There is a core of listed 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings which are present in sufficient numbers to make this still readable. The winding nature of the road to St Peters Hill, together with its irregular building line and pavement width, visually demonstrate the unplanned nature of the rural historic village. The extension of the Conservation Area eastwards now includes the group of listed buildings at the junction of Church Road and Church Street (1, 3 and 5 Church Road and 4, 6, 8 and 10 Church Street) which together as a group form an important remnant of the original core bridgehead village.

The early village is overlaid with mainly late Victorian and Edwardian buildings constructed over a short time period. There is however a consistency of scale and materials between these buildings and the earlier ones. There are several unlisted buildings of townscape merit within the extended boundary area. These include the three Edwardian and late Victorian bank buildings at the junction of Church Road, Church Street and Bridge Street which almost form a group in their own right. The former Lloyds Bank building already makes a contribution to the original Conservation Area because it stops the vista down Church Road. Other buildings of merit include the Crown Public House and the Priory Avenue Surgery with its Arts and Crafts detailing. The surgery and the adjoining pair of grey and yellow brick semis form a group which marks the end of the extended Conservation Area. On the other side of the road the original 1930s neo-Georgian telephone exchange also makes a restrained contribution to the street scene. On Church Road, opposite The Griffin Public House, Nos 9 and 11, a pair of Victorian brick semis with original shopfronts and gated passageway between, have strong townscape value.

### **5.2 Building types and forms**

The western end of the Conservation Area has historically been, and currently remains, residential in character, fronting what was originally a country lane out of the village centre. The majority of buildings are two or three storeys in height, of traditional construction with pitched roofs.

Most buildings in this area are in a good state of repair. There has been some deterioration on the north side of Church Road, with gardens replaced by gravel and paving, with bins visible and some off street parking. These issues may be due to conversion to flats or Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's). The result is that there is a potential risk to the character of these buildings. Of particular concern are the remaining garden walls of the four substantial semi-detached houses which are characteristic of the period in Reading (Nos 37, 35, 33 and 31). Apart from the church itself, the Reading Canoe Club and Caversham Court stables are the only non-residential uses in the western part of the Conservation area.

In the proposed extension to the Conservation Area commercial uses increase and then predominate. Uses include banks, two public houses, the Griffin and The Crown, estate agents, small shops and restaurants. Upper floors are a mix of offices, residential or in some cases are vacant. The scale of building remains domestic, of two or three storeys and pitched roof

construction. In this eastern area some of the buildings are not well maintained. Many have suffered unsympathetic alteration and window replacement.

### **5.3 Materials, styles and features**

The Conservation Area contains properties from several periods, but retains a 'village' character with buildings from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century overlaid and complemented by buildings predominantly from the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. With the exception of some rendered and half-timbered cottages, and St Peters church itself, the buildings in the Conservation Area are generally of brick. Brick is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture and there are examples of good quality brickwork throughout the Conservation Area. It was a popular building material in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian and Edwardian Reading. The town had several brickworks, the most notable being S & E Collier Ltd at Water Road and Elgar Road and two brickworks in the Tilehurst area. Pitched roofs prevail in the area, and a mixture of clay tiles and slate predominate.

### **5.4 Buildings of local historic interest and positive buildings**

There are many listed buildings and structures within the Conservation Area and buildings of townscape merit within the proposed extension to the Conservation Area.

#### **5.4.1 Listed Buildings**

- 43 Church Road (Banksfoot). 2 storey early to mid C18. Colour washed brick. Old tile roof.
- 14 Church Road (Valentine Cottage). 1/2 storey late C17. Red brick. Old tile roof (hipped).
- 16 Church Road. 2 storey. Timber framed. Pebble dash front. Old tile roof.
- Buckside, Church Road. 2 storey. Mid C18. Painted and rendered brick. Old tile roof.
- Buckside Cottage, Church Road. 2 storey. C16. Timber framed. Colour washed. Brick infilling. Old tile roof.
- 20 Church Road (The Rectory). Including garden walls. Built 1840. 2 storey detailed villa. Red brick, stone details. Slate roof (hipped).
- NE end Caversham Court. Screen wall. Early to mid C19 flint on ashlar/brick base. About 10ft high. Stone coping and occasional pinnacles.
- Caversham Court Stables, Church Road. Mid to late C17. Once part of now destroyed Caversham Court. 2 storeys. Brick. Old tile roof. Cobbled courtyard surrounded by flint wall with ashlar/flint gate piers.
- Riverside Garden Pavilion, Caversham Court (The Gazebo). Early to mid C17. Reached by raised walk. 2 storey square plan. 1st floor timber framed. Ground floor brick. Early example of Flemish bond. Hipped old tile roof.
- Retaining walls to raised walk to Riverside Garden Pavilion. C17. Mostly brick. Part flint with brick banding and buttresses. Intermittent. Reconstructed 2009.
- Retaining walls of east-west terrace walk, Caversham Court. C17. Probably rebuilt C18. Supports yew hedge behind wall. Red brick. Stone gate piers to steps, incorporating stone corbel heads said to be from Reading Abbey.
- Retaining wall of St Peters Churchyard. C18/early C19 red brick. Interesting design of piers linked with concave sections. 14 bays.



- Church of St Peters, Church Road. Grade II\*. Of various dates from C12. Principally C15 and High Victorian. Flint with stone dressing and old tile roof.
- St Peters Churchyard, Church Road. 11 tombs. Irregular layout against side of hill. Numerous head and slab stones. C17 to mid C19.
- 1 St Peters Hill (lodge to The Warren). Early C19. Picturesque 'cottage ornee'. Lint/ashlar details. Tiled roof (formerly thatched).
- 2-4 Church Street, C18 altered and refronted, 19C tile roof with 3 gabled dormers and crested ridge. Good group value, currently poorly maintained and first floor windows replaced with UPVC. Chimneys important to skyline.
- 6-8 Church Street, C17 two storeys, colour washed brick and plaster, original window frames to first floor. Chimneys important to skyline.
- 10 Church Street, C17 two storeys timber framed, old tiled roof. Chimneys important to skyline.
- 1, 3 and 5 Church Road, late C17, two and a half storeys, painted brick with old tiled roof with chimneys and 3 dormers. The listing notes indicate that 1 and 3 retain the original cross casement windows to the first floor, however those to No 1 have been removed.



*The listed buildings at 1, 3 and 5 Church Road, and 4, 6, 8 and 10 Church Street together form an important group at the junction with Bridge Street.*

### 5.4.2 Buildings of townscape merit

The eastern part of the Conservation Area contains several individual or groups of buildings of townscape merit.

- Two pairs of Edwardian semis, Nos 31, 33 and 35, 37 Church Road, red brick, ground floor bays, slate roofs. These four dwellings with typical red brick decorative boundary walls of the period for Reading complement the older buildings of the original village.
- The Griffin Public House, 10 -12 Church Rd, 1906, 2 storey, render and brick with polygonal bays, tiled roof with terracotta decorative griffins to two subsidiary gable ends.
- 9 and 11 Church Road, Edwardian, brick two and a half storeys, slate roof, gabled second storey, and brick end piers capped by terracotta balls. Gated cart way to centre. No 11 with original upper floor windows and both having original timber shopfronts.
- Former Lloyds Bank, 15 Bridge Street, 1928, grey and red brick, stone dressings to ground floor, two storeys plus a second storey set in a mansard slate roof, original sash windows to upper floors. The building is set on axis with Church Road and together with large tree in the garden behind makes a positive townscape contribution.
- Barclays Bank, 2 Church Road, circa 1928, 2 storey, red and rubbed red brick with stone dressings, central dressed stone pediment and balustrading at roof level, symmetrical facade.
- Nat West Bank, 7 Bridge Street, possibly 1890 and renovated during early C20, red brick with stone dressings, gabled facade with projecting stone dressings, part 3 storey, strong frontage to ground floor.
- The Crown Public House, 3 Bridge Street, C19 with early C20 reworking, buff yellow brick with pebbledash upper storey, strongly modelled street facade with 2 storey bay and projecting chimney work either side of a free style porch with black baluster columns and a semi-circular canopy, hipped tiled roof.
- Caversham Bridge, 1926, concrete and stone, some Art-Deco detailing, purpose designed viewing places on the central buttress. Noted as a structure of interest by the Panel for Historical Engineering works of the Institution of Civil Engineers.
- Telephone Exchange, 15 Church Street, first half C20. The original neo Georgian telephone exchange with a symmetrical facade of its period, brick with stone door dressings, makes a good if restrained contribution to the street scene.
- Priory Avenue Surgery and 14 to 16 Church Street. Group value. The Priory Avenue Surgery, 1902, with Arts and Crafts detailing and a mature magnolia, on the corner of Priory Avenue and Church Street, forms a group with the two and a half storey buildings, 14 to 16 Church Street, of grey and buff brick typical of the late C19 in Reading. These buildings together form a group of similar scale and height which marks the limit of the proposed extension to the Conservation Area.



*Buildings of townscape merit  
The three banks at the junction of  
Bridge Street and Church Road form a  
group*

*Two 20<sup>th</sup> century public houses, the  
Griffin and the Crown, contribute to  
the character of the area.*





*At the eastern end of the enlarged Conservation Area, 14 and 16 Church Street form a corner grouping with the Priory Avenue Surgery. On the opposite side of the road is the neo Georgian telephone exchange*

## **5.5 Public Realm - Floorscape, street lighting, street furniture and local detail**

Road and footway surfaces are predominantly modern, with tarmac and concrete kerbs. Whilst generally in average condition, these surfaces are not attractive and not 'traditional' in conservation area terms. There is evidence of repairs to utilities throughout the area and some pavements are poorly maintained.

Signage and street furniture are modern. This is an area with considerable potential for improvement and rationalisation. There are no cast iron street lighting columns remaining in the Conservation Area, unlike in other areas of Reading. However there are 8 bronze decorative fittings with glass lamp protectors mounted on the stone parapets of Caversham Bridge. These are of a period with the bridge and make an important visual contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area, both unlit during the day and lit at night. Any conversion of these fittings to LED type lamps needs to be done with design sensitivity so as to maintain their visual appearance and light quality. Properties in the Conservation Area rely on individual telegraph poles for telecoms provision, with wires radiating out to individual buildings.

Brick and flint walls and metal railings are found throughout the area and contribute to its character. A local detail in the western residential part of the Conservation Area, and unifying it, is the presence, with few exceptions, of brick and flint boundary walls, some including metal railings.

## **6. Character Areas**

The Conservation Area has two distinct character areas and the proposed extension two more. They are described in this section and shown on Map 5 on page 27.

### **6.1 Caversham Court and the Church**

This is the most historic and attractive part of the Conservation Area and the chief justification for its designation. As Church Road runs westward, it curves sharply to the right and then left as it begins to climb the deeply-wooded slope. The high walls and gates of Caversham Court

Gardens, in mellow stone and flint, close this view, and the road beyond passes between a group of attractive historic buildings: timber-framed to the north and brick and flint to the south.

Above these walls and gates rise the rich variety of specimen trees in the Gardens, and through them can be seen the church, on a small plateau part way up the slope, nestling among more trees. Through the gates lies the green oasis of the gardens, which appear on the national "Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England". Their importance is further reflected in the recent award of National Heritage Lottery funding for extensive improvements. Their character is defined by terraces rising up from the river, fine specimen trees, river views, attractive walls and interesting small buildings, and the footprint of Caversham Court which is set out in the paving.

## **6.2 Church Road**

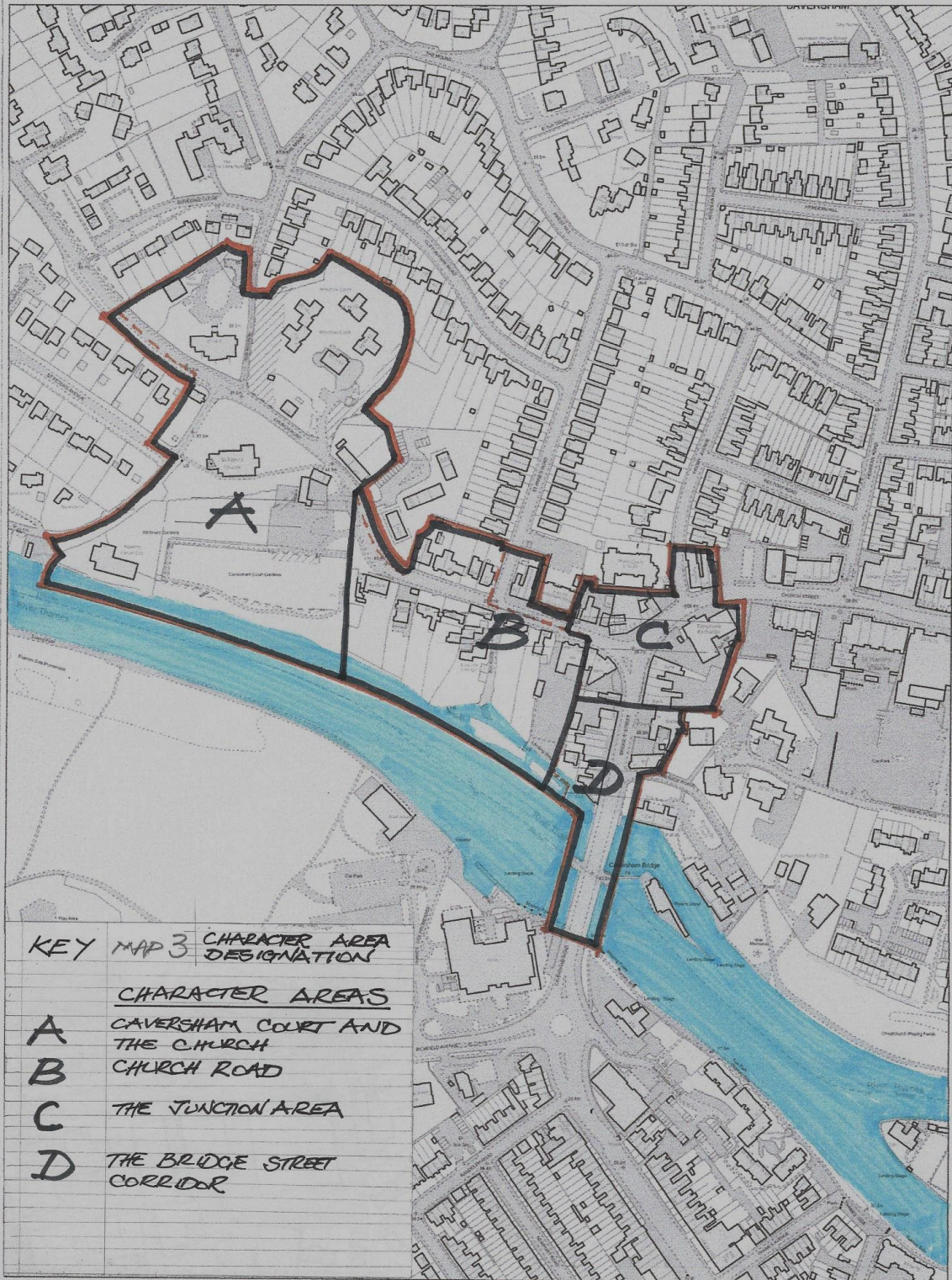
This corridor links the gardens area with the Bridge Street junction. On the south side, the large red brick Rectory is set forward and complements the garden walls in closing westward views. East of it, three unobtrusive recent houses are set back from the road before the corridor narrows markedly, with a recent brick building two ancient cottages and the Griffin Public House all set at the back of the footpath. Only two gaps penetrate this entire frontage: Buck Side, a private lane affording glimpses of attractive timber-framed cottages, and Bucks Eyot, which runs down the side of the Griffin to provide limited glimpses of the river. Apart from those glimpses, the nearby river is completely sealed off from Church Road. Though very disparate in style and age, all these buildings hang together well as a group because of their similar two-storey scale and the limited palette of wall and roof materials.

## **6.3 The Junction Area**

This area is the historic meeting point of roads converging on Caversham Bridge, which is reflected in still being totally dominated by traffic and the accompanying clutter. But beneath this busy surface are features of real interest and merit. On the north side, closing long views from the bridge, is an important group of timber-framed buildings. They are of two storeys, though some have a third floor with dormers. They show a mixture of render and exposed attractive retained shop fronts, mellow plain tile roofs and a rich variety of chimneys. This group forms the core of the proposed extension. To their east the extended area terminates at the pleasant Arts and Crafts building which is now the Priory Avenue Surgery, with its splendid magnolia tree: to their west are two groups of three-storey Victorian shops, their gables lying end-on to the street to create a pleasing rhythm, though the western group has been badly altered above shop front level. In Church Road, opposite the Griffin Public House, a new building, Caversham House, has been inserted. While making efforts to reflect the materials and rhythm of its neighbours, its four storeys make it too bulky to fit in successfully. Nevertheless, all the shopfronts along this stretch, including these new ones, have a consistent and original character which is important in the townscape.

The south side of the junction has a consistent scale and range of materials. It features three well-detailed older bank buildings and some well-detailed shop buildings now used as estate agents and a restaurant.

St Peters Conservation Area



KEY	MAP 3	CHARACTER AREA DESIGNATION
<u>CHARACTER AREAS</u>		
A		CAVERSHAM COURT AND THE CHURCH
B		CHURCH ROAD
C		THE JUNCTION AREA
D		THE BRIDGE STREET CORRIDOR

Digimap®  
Ordnance Survey

Scale 1:2500  
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200 m  
Projection: British National Grid

Jun 26, 2016 21:43  
Glasgow University

Map 5 Character Areas

## **6.4 The Bridge Street Corridor**

The significance of this corridor lies in the way it links the important buildings around the junction with the bridge and the riverside, rather than in any intrinsic merit in the buildings themselves. On the western side is a mainly three-storey range of Victorian commercial buildings. They are well-proportioned, with an interesting rhythm of gables and dormers, but have fared badly over the years through unsympathetic ad hoc alterations and poor shopfronts. Nevertheless, they maintain a consistent scale and character which encloses and defines this corridor linkage. The former hotel on the riverside has been particularly mistreated, but it is a very important entry-point to the area. A sympathetic restoration would bring huge benefit in wider views across and along the river.

The eastern side has a pleasant two-storey public house, but then a large gap site occupied by a single storey garage set back behind a forecourt. Its sympathetic redevelopment, probably at three storeys at the back of the footpath, would hugely enhance this corridor as an entry-point into Caversham as a whole. A second gap site, on the corner of Bridge Street and Church Road, is an unsightly poster location and would greatly benefit from more sympathetic treatment or, preferably, a redevelopment of a scale and frontage complementary to its neighbours.

## **7. Negative features, Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement**

The general state of repair of the properties in the western part of the Conservation Area is good, with some exceptions set out below. There are wider deficits in the repair and maintenance of buildings in the proposed eastern part of the Conservation Area, including to listed buildings. Both give some cause for future concern. In common with many of Reading's Conservation Areas, the area is lacking in the quality and the state of repair of the roadways, footways and street furniture. The overarching negative feature of the area is however the presence of the heavily trafficked main A4074 through the heart of the area and the noise, pollution, disturbance and visual intrusion which this brings.

### **7.1 Loss of original architectural details and features**

Flats or HMO's have resulted in deterioration on the north side of Church Road. Replacement of walls and front gardens with gravel and paving can lead to loss of greenery, visible bins and parked cars. The house at the corner of St Anne's Road is well managed, with a garden at the front and parking spaces and places to store bins at the rear. There has been some replacement of original wooden window frames with UPVC frames. In some cases this has happened in listed buildings, probably without the required consents.

There is some further loss of original features elsewhere in the Conservation Area, compounded in some instances by poor maintenance. Whilst this may be small scale and incremental it is cumulative, which is progressively damaging to a small Conservation Area such as St Peters.



*The front gardens and garden walls of these four substantial semi-detached houses in Church Road are under pressure. There is a potential risk to the remaining garden walls which are characteristic of the period in Reading.*



*Examples of gravel and paving frontage replacing the garden, with bins stored in front*



*Velux roof lights would be preferable on rear slopes rather than on the road frontage*





*UPVC replacement windows in a listed building. This building is currently the subject of a planning application which represents an opportunity to reverse this damage and enhance the building and the area.*



*Some maintenance issues on a listed building*



*UPVC window replacements in the listed buildings at 1 to 5 Church Road. In the foreground utilitarian masts, pole and cabinets have been positioned without thought of the impact on the listed buildings and the character of the area.*

## 7.2 Character: walls and railings

Along Church Road some walls are in a poor state and require repair and some fences are badly deteriorating: one has been replaced by a modern low wall. At No 47 Church Road, on St Peters Hill beyond Woodrow Court, stretches of railing have inappropriately replaced walls. The fine historic walls along the Warren, behind the Caversham Court allotments and the Reading Canoe Club are in need of sympathetic renovation.



*Railings replacing flint walls, St Peters Hill*



*Vulnerable brick boundary wall to Caversham Court allotments on The Warren*



*Traditional walls at risk*

## 7.3 Street furniture and surfacing

There is a poor assortment of street furniture within the Conservation Area, and little unity between the bollards, litter bins, crash barriers and signposts which are required as part of the street furniture.

Pavements are patched following work by various utilities and are poorly maintained in places. The pavement on the south side of Church Road is narrow with an awkward camber, creating difficulties for pedestrians, especially people with difficulty walking or those using buggies or wheelchairs. This is unfortunate as it is the pedestrian route into Caversham Court Gardens. Parking on the pavement in front of Caversham Court also obstructs pedestrian movement.



*Pavements poorly maintained in Church Street*



*Three different bollard types within a few metres of each other. Rationalisation to suitable cast iron bollards shown to the right could take place as and when maintenance or replacement is required, or when redevelopment occurs. At 13 – 17 Church Road unsightly concrete filled steel pipe bollards remain in front of the new development.*



*There is scope for the rationalization of street furniture. The lamp post next to a bin attached to a redundant pole crowd the pavement and detract from the listed building behind.*

## 7.4 Vistas towards the Conservation Area

There are several important vistas which look towards the Conservation Area from Caversham Bridge and the Thames Promenade on the south bank of the river; the views give the impression of a green escarpment rising from the river. Recent developments have started to impinge on these views. The Reading Canoe Club, at the western end, detracts from the setting of the restored gazebo in Caversham Court Gardens. This could be simply ameliorated by planting some small trees or large shrubs when an opportunity arises. Further back a recent house in the area of the Warren breaches the tree line and the white gable emphasizes the intrusion. The effect of development on these important views should be considered by the Council when proposals for development are brought forward in The Warren and Upper Warren Avenue. It is vital that development in the vicinity of the Conservation Area is considered in terms of the effect it could have on views from within the Conservation Area.



*Buildings visible through tree cover on the Warren embankment*

## 7.5 Heritage Sites

St Peter's Conservation Area is the site of Caversham's oldest church, dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Caversham Court Gardens are popular with local residents and visitors to Caversham. They provide a well-used tea kiosk and a venue for a variety of events. Visitors arrive from the nearest hub: the railway station, the Thames Promenade car park or Caversham centre car parks. They then walk along a very narrow and obstructed pavement with an awkward camber and with heavy traffic passing. Parking on the pavement frequently obstructs the footway outside Caversham Court. Those with wheelchairs, walking aids or pushchairs experience real difficulty and can be forced into the very busy road.



*Parking on pavement outside Caversham Court, obstructing footpath*

## **7.6 Development close to the Conservation Area**

It is important to consider the effect of potential development outside the Conservation Area, or close to it, on the perceived quality of the Conservation Area. Whilst a recent development in Church Road attempts to relate to the gables of adjoining buildings, the extra height and the quality of architectural detailing on the upper floors do not enhance the Conservation Area and listed buildings on the other side of the road.



*Recent development in Church Road which breaches the roofline*

## **7.7 Treatment of the river bank**

The north bank of the River Thames has a visually 'soft' treatment with greenery and gardens descending to the river edge and this adds to the quality of the setting. One household has sheet steel piled the river edge, adding a hard and discordant element. Further sheet steel piling of other parts of the river bank should be discouraged. Sympathetic edge treatments should be sought where work is required to stabilise the river bank.



*Steel piling of the river bank*

### **7.8 Key gap sites**

Close to the junction of Church Road, Church Street and Bridge Street there are four key gap sites which provide both threats and opportunities. These sites are shown on Map 3 on page 15.

- a) adjoining the Priory Avenue corner
- b) adjoining the telephone exchange
- c) the tyre site in Bridge Street
- d) the advertising hoarding site on the Bridge Street Church Road junction.

All of these sites demand sensitive development solutions.

### **7.9 Traffic noise and pollution**

The character and environmental quality of the Conservation Area is spoilt most by noise and pollution of traffic using the main A4074 Church Road and St Peters Hill, particularly during the rush hours. There appears to be no immediate solution to this problem. In the longer term traffic management solutions such as a Third Thames Bridge or weight restrictions on large vehicles could make significant changes to both the volume and type of traffic.

### **7.10 Tree Loss**

Tree loss has been recorded both in the Conservation Area itself and in the backdrop to the Conservation Area on the Warren escarpment as set out in para 4.5. Better monitoring of loss, identification of visually significant groups of trees and succession planting is required.

## 8 Action Plan

**Table 1 – All Conservation Areas**

Policies, attitudes and actions which need to be applied to all of Reading's Conservation Areas if the town's remaining historic character is to be protected and enhanced as it should be. These apply to the St Peters Conservation Area as fully as they do to all, particularly with regard to the careful protection of architectural detail in any building alterations.

<b>TABLE 1 ISSUES (a Borough wide response for all CAs)</b>			
ISSUE	ACTION	WHO	TIMESCALE
Loss of original architectural features and details (see 7.1). Insensitive change and development not requiring planning permission, permitted development	<b>Guidance:</b> Provide guidance document on 'approved' methods for common small scale alterations. <b>Awareness:</b> Provide householder information on the added value of 'period detail' and detail on economic alternatives for energy efficiency savings	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year
Loss or change to original boundary features (walls and railings see 7.2)	<b>Awareness:</b> Provide householder information document on the added value and visual importance of boundary walls and railings	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year
Insensitive development undertaken without permission (see 7.1 e.g. window replacement in listed buildings)	<b>Guidance:</b> Provision of property owner guidance on legal requirements for alterations/development/treeworks in conservation areas. <b>Enforcement:</b> Legal enforcement by RBC to secure reversal of changes	RBC and CAAC RBC	Within 1 year Immediate and ongoing
Redevelopment within or adjoining the Conservation Area should respect the general height, massing and alignment of existing buildings and use a palette of materials which reflect its existing character (see 7.6)	<b>Guidance, Policy:</b> Supplementary Design guidance planning document for development in historic areas. <b>Support:</b> Use CAAC to gain informed comment on planning applications affecting Conservation Areas	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year Immediate and ongoing
Poor street furniture, clutter and surfacing (see 7.3 and 7.5)	<b>Training/Awareness:</b> Council officers responsible for street signage, furniture and repair should have appropriate guidance on their impact on the Conservation Area and take this into account in planned maintenance	RBC	Within 1 year

**Table 2 – St Peters Conservation Area**

Policies and actions which are specific to this Conservation Area, to retain and enhance its important contribution to the life of Caversham and of Reading as a whole. They may require some limited revenue resources, which it is recommended should be given high priority, but little or no public capital expenditure.

<b>TABLE 2 ISSUES (Specific to St Peters Conservation Area)</b>			
<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>TIME SCALE</b>
The Conservation Area designation should be extended to include Caversham Bridge and Bridge Street (see SS5 the 2017 Boundary adjustment)	<b>Adoption:</b> Approve extension of Conservation Area	RBC	2017
Any redevelopment of the gap sites adjoining the Priory Avenue corner, adjoining the telephone exchange, the tyre workshop in Bridge Street, and the advertising hoarding site on the Bridge Street and Church Road junction, should not proceed without the preparation and agreement of a design brief taking into account their setting in the Conservation Area.	<b>Design Brief:</b> Preparation of Design Briefs for these sites	RBC and CAAC	To be agreed
Any work to existing or former bank premises should respect the architectural character of their elevations, including those at ground floor	<b>Development Control:</b> Owners and applicants to be made aware. <b>Communication:</b> Write site owners	RBC	Ongoing  Within 1 year
Any analysis of the costs and benefits of a further Thames crossing must include the benefits of relieving the intense impact of traffic on this Conservation Area (see 7.9)	<b>Communication:</b> RBC to make 3 <sup>rd</sup> Bridge Study team aware that this issue should be included in any Cost Benefit Analysis	RBC	Immediate
Trees of visual importance in views from the Conservation Area, but lying outside it, should be identified, surveyed, and the most visually significant protected with Tree Preservation Orders. This applies particularly to trees to the west of the Conservation Area and at the southern end of Caversham Bridge. (see 4.5)	<b>Survey Work:</b> Identify trees and groups of trees and the area where they stand	RBC and Local Community Groups CADRA and GLOBE	Within 1 year



<b>TABLE 2 ISSUES Continued:</b>			
<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>
Development materially altering the view west from Caversham Bridge, particularly any penetration of the tree canopy in The Warren area or substantial remodelling of the river edge, should be considered with careful regard to its wider impact. ( see 7.4 and 7.7)	<b>Development Control:</b> Owners and applicants to be made aware	RBC	Ongoing
The quality of shop fronts on the north side of Church Road, including recent ones, should be recognised and protected from inappropriate change	<b>Development Control:</b> Consider Article 4 direction of Supplementary Design Guidance <b>Communication:</b> Contact building owners to advise them of the visual value of their shopfronts	RBC RBC and CAAC	As soon as possible
At the earliest opportunity, the large advertisement hoardings on the north-west corner of the Bridge Street/Church Street junction should be discontinued. In the meantime, an arrangement should be brokered between the site owners and local amenity groups for the latter to install and maintain a suitable amenity planting scheme	<b>Communication:</b> Contact site owners to discuss. Contact Caversham Globe to check out possibility of amenity planting	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year

## Appendix One

Initial Public Consultation      16 July 2016

A Launch Event to publicize the Appraisal of St Peters Conservation area was held on Saturday 16 July 2016 in St Peters Church. 2000 copies of a flyer were printed:

**WE WANT  
YOUR VIEWS  
ABOUT ST PETER'S CONSERVATION AREA**

**What makes this area special?**

Following input from Historic England, a Community-led appraisal is to consider issues and problems, boundary extensions, future enhancement and management. This will be formally adopted by Reading Borough Council, subject to agreement.

If you live or have a business nearby or have an interest in preserving and enhancing the Conservation Area, please come along to the

**Launch Event (with cake!)**  
on **Saturday 16 July at 4pm**  
at **St Peter's Church, Caversham**

to learn more and give your views. Those interested are most welcome to join us in walking the area and recording what makes it special.

If you would like to participate but cannot attend on 16 July, please let us know. Contact details and further information at [tinyurl.com/hxvh7cf](http://tinyurl.com/hxvh7cf).

Design by Anke Ueberberg · [www.ueberberg.co.uk](http://www.ueberberg.co.uk)

Map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

Prior to the Launch Event a section of the CADRA website was set up to provide the background to the Appraisal, including historical maps, photographs and other relevant information, and members of the public were invited to make their own contributions.

<http://www.cadra.org.uk/conservation-areas.php>

The event was listed on the CADRA Facebook page, which was accessed 371 times. An email was sent to all CADRA members, which covered around 500 households. And the event was publicized via the local Round and About magazine, the Caversham Bridge newspaper and The Friends of Caversham Court Gardens.

Flyers were delivered to houses and businesses within and near to the Conservation Area and the proposed extension to the area, and opportunities were taken to have discussions with interested members of the public at local events. In distributing flyers:

- Visits were made to all the businesses open on Bridge Street and Church Road, and contact was subsequently made with four business owners who were not available to tell them about the project (one email response).
- Leaflets were left with Walmsey and Masons estate agents.
- Leaflets were provided for the Lloyds staff room and the NatWest for community noticeboard.
- Eggleton Framers, Rowan carpets and Caversham Hardware store displayed flyers in their windows. Flyers were posted on the Caversham precinct noticeboard (repeatedly because they were removed), at Woodcote Way PO and on the noticeboards at St Peters church and St Andrews church.
- Leaflets were left in Central and Caversham libraries (plus one for the noticeboard), and at Alto Lounge, Delicious, Waltons Jewellers, Priory Avenue surgery, Caversham Court Tea Kiosk and St Peters Church.
- We knocked on doors and left leaflets at all the houses in the Conservation Area, plus nearby streets: St Annes Road, The Mount, Clifton Park Road, lower part of St Peter's Avenue, part of The Warren nearest St Peters, Priory Avenue, and Rectory Road. There was a high level of interest on Church Road, St Annes Road and St Peters Avenue in particular.
- We talked to the members of the public at Caversham Parish Fete on July 9th, the non-ticketed area of the Readipop Festival on July 10th and at First Sundays on 5 June and 3 July in Caversham Court Gardens.
- Permission was sought and obtained for people involved in the Launch Event to go into the precincts of Woodrow Court sheltered housing on 16 June to see the site; the manager informed residents about the meeting.

28 people attended the Launch event, where soft drinks and cakes were served.

The background to the new Appraisal was explained, and two illustrated presentations were given. These are both available on the CADRA website: <http://www.cadra.org.uk/conservation-areas.php>

The first showed the history of the Conservation Area and the proposed extension. The second introduced the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit. Following the presentation those people who wished to take part in the Assessment divided into groups, and then walked around their assigned section of the area to complete the Character Assessment forms. The information gained during this exercise helped to inform the work subsequently done to prepare the draft Appraisal

During discussions before and during the Launch event it was explained that consideration could be given to extending the area covered by the Conservation Area, to include Caversham Bridge, Bridge Street and part of Church Street. The suggestion was favourably met, and we were not made aware of any objections to the proposal.

## Appendix Two

### A: Public consultation on the Draft Appraisal of St Peters Conservation Area 8 July – 19 August 2017

The six-week public consultation on the Draft Appraisal was launched at St Peters Church Fete on 8<sup>th</sup> July and ran until 16<sup>th</sup> August. To ensure that the maximum number of people were aware of the Review and had the opportunity to comment, it was extensively publicised before and during the consultation period, and a wide range of ways were offered to respond.

Publicity in advance included information on the CADRA website and the CADRA and Caversham Traders Facebook pages, together with articles in the CADRA newsletter, the Caversham Bridge newspaper and Round & About magazine. Emails were sent to all CADRA members and forwarded by The Friends of Caversham Court Garden to all their members. Posters were displayed at 11 locations throughout Caversham, advertising both the launch event and the consultation campaign. Prior to the launch, flyers were delivered to all residential and business properties in the existing Conservation Area and its potential extension, and were also placed in over a dozen public and business locations. Councillor Page of Reading Borough Council wrote to all property owners within the proposed extension area to inform them of the proposal and the consultation process.

The CADRA stand at St Peters Fete was devoted to the Appraisal, which was summarised on a high-quality presentation board. A consultation leaflet summarised the Appraisal and asked for comments on nine key issues, on a spectrum running from strong disagreement to strong support.



At the launch, and throughout the six-week period, the public were offered the following means of response:

- To complete the leaflet questionnaire at the fete
- To complete it later and return it by post or by leaving it at Walton's Jewellers (who also kindly agreed to hold copies of the leaflet)

- To complete an on-line Survey Monkey facility set up for this purpose
- To read the whole draft Review, either on-line on the CADRA website or in copies held in Caversham Library, and then to respond as above

The presentation board from the fete was displayed at Caversham Library throughout the consultation period and a number of sessions held there at which volunteers spoke to library users. Copies of the consultation leaflet were left in prominent locations within Central Caversham throughout the consultation period.

The historical sources used in compiling the Review and a summarised version of the Oxford Toolkit analysis undertaken by volunteers at the inauguration event in July 2016 were posted on the CADRA website

Reminders of the consultation process and the closing date were provided during the consultation period by emails sent to CADRA members and members of the Friends of Caversham Court Gardens, and via Facebook posts by CADRA and the Caversham Traders.

As a result of this open and extensive process, a total of 161 responses were received to the consultation leaflet, and these are analysed in the next section of this appendix.

In addition six email responses, all positive, were also received. These are displayed on the CADRA website.

<http://www.cadra.org.uk/conservation-areas.php>

### **Conclusion**

The Public Consultation on the Draft Appraisal described above demonstrates very strong support for the proposed extension to the Conservation Area and also for the proposed actions and policies which seek to either retain or enhance the key characteristics of this Conservation Area.

**B: Responses to Consultation Forms, Draft Appraisal of St Peters Conservation Area, 8 July – 19 August 2017**

**161 responses to the consultation leaflet were received:**

76 from St Peters Fete  
50 from Caversham library, Caversham Court Gardens and Waltons  
35 online

80 %, 129 respondents, lived within the RG4 postcode area  
5%, 8 respondents, lived within other RG postcode areas  
1%, 2 respondents, were from outside Reading  
and 14%, 22 respondents, didn't state where they lived.

A list of streets and also a map showing the where respondents lived can be found on the CADRA website. <http://www.cadra.org.uk/conservation-areas.php>

5%, 8 respondents, lived in or owned property in the existing or proposed Conservation Area  
4 %, 7 respondents, worked in or owned businesses in the existing or proposed Conservation Area

The results for the individual questions were as follows:

**Question 1 Do you agree with extending the Conservation Area?**

Strongly agree and agree	98%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%
Strongly disagree and disagree	2%
No response	1

**Question 2 Any changes made to the older bank premises around the junction must respect their character**

Strongly agree and agree	97%
Neither agree nor disagree	1%
Strongly disagree and disagree	2%
No response	1

**Question 3 If any of the small undeveloped sites at the Priory Avenue corner – adjoining the telephone exchange, the tyre workshop on Bridge Street and the advert hoarding site on Bridge Street/Church Road – are considered for development, careful design briefs should be prepared for them**

Strongly agree and agree	94%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Strongly disagree and disagree	1%
No response	1

**Question 4 Any evaluation of the third Thames Bridge must take into account the potential for relieving the intense traffic in the Conservation Area**

Strongly agree and agree	92%
Neither agree nor disagree	5%
Strongly disagree and disagree	1%
No response	2

**Question 5 Trees which lie outside the Conservation Area but which benefit it visually, should be surveyed with a view to protecting them**

Strongly agree and agree	90%
Neither agree nor disagree	8%
Strongly disagree and disagree	2%
No response	0

**Question 6 Any development affecting views west from Caversham Bridge, especially if it affects the tree canopy or the river edge, should be very carefully considered.**

Strongly agree and agree	94%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%
Strongly disagree and disagree	1%
No response	0

**Question 7 As soon as possible, the large advert hoardings at the Bridge Street/Church Street junction should be discontinued and ways found to landscape the area in front of them**

Strongly agree and agree	80%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Strongly disagree and disagree	4%
No response	1

**Question 8 Householders and other owners should be offered advice on the legal limits and design aspects of carrying out common small alterations in ways which support and improve the character of the Conservation Area. This should particularly include advice on the importance of boundary walls, railings and trees**

Strongly agree and agree	94%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Strongly disagree and disagree	2%
No response	0

**Question 9 Council officers responsible for street signs, street furniture and repairs should have guidance on their impact on the Conservation Area and take this into account in routine maintenance**

Strongly agree and agree	98%
Neither agree nor disagree	1%
Strongly disagree and disagree	1%
No response	1

Non-responses to individual questions mean that not all totals reach 100

## **Appendix Three**

### **Supporting Information on the CADRA website**

The CADRA website contains the supporting material which was put together to provide background information for use in preparing the Appraisal. Contributions from members of the public were invited, and it is intended that additional material will be added if it becomes available.

<http://www.cadra.org.uk/conservation-areas.php>

#### **Resources include:**

Map and key for existing Conservation Area

2009 Appraisal document

Initial appraisal of some of the issues facing St Peters Conservation Area

Historic England Advice Notes

Oxford Toolkit

Results of Oxford Toolkit Exercise in Caversham, July- August 2016

Map links

Photos link Reading Library

Listed buildings in Caversham

Heritage Gateway

List of historical sources used for the Appraisal

#### **Public Consultation, 8 July – 19 August 2017**

Consultation leaflet

Display board used at the fete and in the library

Consultation Results

Streets where respondents live

Map of where respondents live

Emails received at [Appraisal@cadra.org](mailto:Appraisal@cadra.org)