

St Peters Conservation Area – Appraisal of Issues

Following the development of the document by interested Community Groups 'Protecting and Enhancing Reading's Conservation areas' submitted to RBC on 31st August 2015, representatives of the Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) with the Friends of Caversham Court Gardens (FCCG) set out below some issues and potential pressure points in respect of the St Peters Conservation Area. St Peters is a small Conservation Area and whilst it may not have some of the extreme issues of some central Conservation Areas, there are increasing causes for concern.

1. Flats or HMOs have resulted in deterioration on the north side of Church Road. (No 37 & 33 garden replaced by gravel/ paving, bins in front garden, no greenery; No 31 multiple cars, bins left out) In contrast, the corner of St Anne's Rd is well managed, with a garden, parking & bins at the rear.



The front gardens and garden walls of these 4 substantial semi-detached houses are under pressure. There is a potential risk to the remaining garden walls which are characteristic of the period in Reading.



Gravel/paving frontage, removal of greenery, bins in front

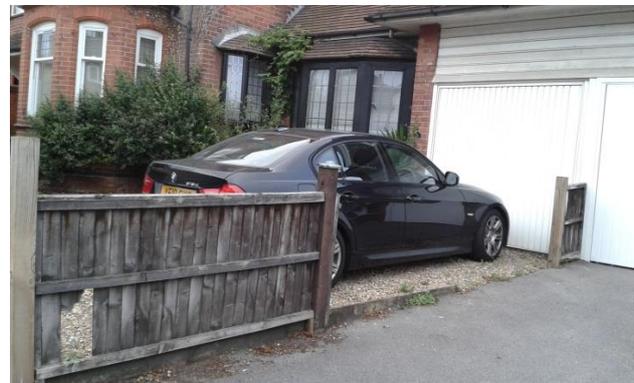


Velux roof lights would be preferable on rear roof slopes

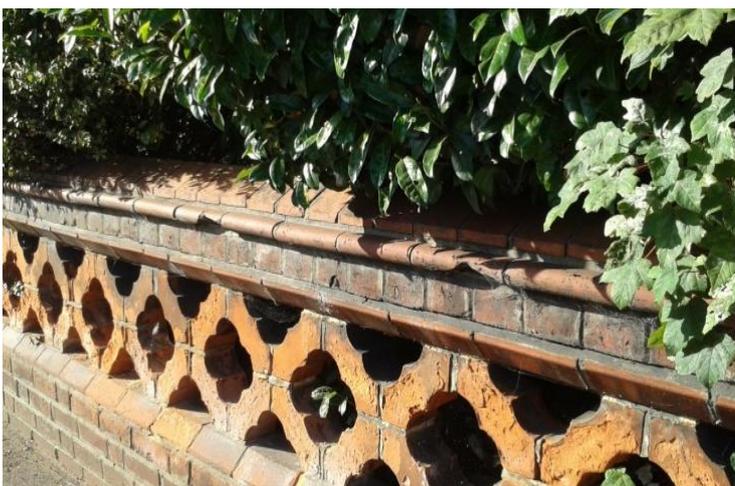
2. Character – Walls and Railings: some walls in a poor state; one fence badly deteriorating; stretches of railing appearing in place of walls up St Peter's Hill beyond Woodrow Court (No 47 Church Road).



Railings replacing flint walls, St Peters Hill



Fences in disrepair, Church Street



Traditional walls at risk



Brick boundary wall to Caversham Court Allotments on The Warren in disrepair



The Warren. The road gutter nearest to the wall is being increasingly eroded by heavy rain creating a river effect. This, in turn is eroding the ground between the wall and the road.

3. Street furniture and surfacing. Ill-assorted street furniture (bollards, litter bins, crash barriers, signposts); pavements of patched tarmac following utilities work; camber on pavement on south side very difficult for pedestrians, and narrow; parking on pavement in front of Caversham Court, obstructing pedestrian movement.



Trip hazards – poorly maintained pavement surface on north side of Church Street (technically outside CA)



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/ replacement is required. Advantage should be taken when development occurs. E.g. 13 – 17 Church St where 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 narrow pavement and detract from the listed building behind.

4. Vistas towards the Conservation Area. The RBC appraisal plan reproduced at the end of this document highlights several important vistas (yellow arrows) which look towards the Conservation Area from Caversham Bridge and the Thames Promenade on the South Bank of the river. These views give the impression of a green escarpment rising from the river and are important. Recent developments have started to impinge on these views. The new canoe club, at its eastern end detracts from the setting of the restored gazebo in Caversham Court Gardens. This particular problem could be simply ameliorated by the planting of 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 RBC when proposals for development are brought forward in the Warren and Upper Warren Avenue (although those areas themselves may be outside the Conservation Area)



Views towards the Conservation Area from Caversham Bridge and the Promenade

5. Heritage sites. St Peter's Conservation Area is the site of Caversham's oldest church, dating from 12th century or earlier. Caversham Court is a tourist and entertainment venue. Visitors arrive from the nearest hub: railway station, Thames Prom car park, Caversham centre car parks. They then walk along a very narrow and obstructed pavement 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 are often forced into the very busy road.



Parking on pavement outside Caversham Court, obstructing footpath

6. Development adjoining or close to the Conservation Area.

Reference was made in item 4 to the importance of considering the effect of potential development outside the Conservation Area or close to it, on the perceived quality of the Conservation area. The recent development in Church St. attempts to relate to the gables of adjoining buildings. However the extra height of this new building and the quality of architectural detailing on the upper floors do not enhance the Conservation Area and the listed buildings on the other side of the road.



