



Staines Conservation Area Appraisal – Draft

Spelthorne Borough Council



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1.0 INTRODUCTION



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1.1 Introduction

Staines Conservation Area was designated in 1975 by Spelthorne District Council as an area of special architectural and historic interest. On ?? 2022 the Staines Conservation Area Appraisal (this document) was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It follows advice given by Historic England as set out in '*Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management*' published 8 February 2019.

This Conservation Area Appraisal seeks to analyse the special architectural and historic interest of the Staines Conservation Area. It will also identify opportunities for beneficial change and the need for additional protection. The Appraisal also seeks to consider and review the Conservation Area boundary which has been in place since 1975.

The review of the Staines Conservation Area and the production of the Conservation Area Appraisal are part of a wider aim by Spelthorne District Council to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It will also enable sustainable decisions to be taken about its future management.

1.2 Planning policy Context

Section 69 1(a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that a Conservation Area is an '*area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. It goes on to state that the duty of Local Planning Authorities is '*from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section (Section 69(2)) and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as Conservation Areas*'

Section 72 of the 1990 Act further states that, '*with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area*' (in the exercise of the Local Planning Authority's planning function). In order to carry out this duty the character of the Conservation Area needs to be clearly defined and understood (character appraisal).

The appraisal set out here, together with the management plan (Section 6 below) comply with government guidance on the management of the historic environment through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as amended July 2021. The appropriate conservation of heritage assets is one of the 'Core Planning Principles' that underpins the planning system.

Further details of the conservation of heritage assets are set out in the NPPF at Chapter 6, *Conserving and enhancing the Historic Environment*. Para 189 states that '*[Heritage assets] are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations*'.

Para 192 states that '*Local Planning Authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environment record. This should contain up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area...*'



The Staines Conservation Area Appraisal follows the latest guidance provided by Historic England as set out in '*Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management*' published 8 February 2019.

The broad principles of government guidance are included in the Spelthorne Local Plan 2009. Of especial relevance are Policies EN5, Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest (p.60) and EN6 Conservation Areas, Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens (p.61). At the time of writing the emerging Local Plan currently carries no weight.

1.3 Summary of Key Elements

The key elements which define the special character and appearance of the Staines Conservation Area are

- Its' location adjacent to the Thames on its southern boundary together with Church Island;
- The number of rivers, tributaries and channels which run throughout the Conservation Area creating boundaries, views and a number of riverside settings within a largely built-up environment;
- The high level of interconnection between spaces and visual permeability throughout the Conservation Area due to a plethora of glimpsed views and openings;
- The presence of a few pivotal, landmark buildings such as the listed buildings in Market Square, Brewery Tower, St Mary's Church etc...and the multiple views of these buildings due to extensive visual permeability within the Conservation Area;
- Important civic and commercial buildings including the Town Hall, Fire Engine Shed Staines West Station, War Memorial and Debenhams building etc.. reflecting civic pride in the 19th and 20th centuries;
- There a several Coaching Inns throughout the area which, even where they are converted, are easily recognised and reflect the importance of Staines as a Coaching stop from the 18th century onwards;
- The high number of valuable trees and specimen trees, particularly in the St Mary's Church Character area, and along the Thames;
- The small-scale, village-like appearance and quiet character of St Mary's Church Character Area;
- By contrast the more built up, busier, grander and larger-scale historic development centred around the Market Square, High Street, Church Street and Clarence Road junctions.

2.0 ASSESSING SPECIAL INTEREST

2.1 Location and Setting

Staines Upon Thames is located in the south-east of England, to the west of London and within the M25 motorway. It lies in the far north of Surrey on the left bank of the Thames. Its setting adjacent to the River Thames lends the town some open views and attractive riverside spaces. Staines' location close to good national and international road, rail and air transportation links and within easy commutable distance of London, means that it is subject to considerable development pressures. Lack of available land for development means significant pressure exists to build upwards and this can create difficult juxtapositions of old and new.

2.2 Origins and Historic Development

Archaeological evidence suggests that the area around Staines was settled as far back as the Neolithic period. It suggests that during the Roman period a settlement had grown up around the crossing of Thames and Colne rivers and along what is now the western end of High Street. This then formed part of the Devil's Highway, a principal Roman road from Londinium (London) to Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester). It is likely that the area was chosen as a crossing point of the Thames because the subsoils are gravel rather than alluvial and therefore provide solid foundations for bridge structures. It is believed that flooding may have caused the Roman town to decline around the 2nd century and shift its focus to Binbury Island, the site of the current parish church of St. Mary's.

The Domesday Book of 1086 references Staines as 'Stanes' and lists it as being held by Westminster Abbey and a market was established in 1218. Also notable in the history of medieval Staines is its role as the place of residence of King John's barons during the period of negotiation prior to the signing of the Magna Carta, just across the River Thames at Runnymede on 15th June 1215. During the medieval period development appears to have concentrated to the south of the church and close to the bridge around what is now Market Square and the western end of High Street.

The position of Staines close to Windsor Castle and on the main road from London to the South-West ensured its strategic importance. The town was a stopping point and over the centuries many coaching inns grew up in the town. Examples include The Angel on the High Street which occupies the site of a former medieval inn and The Bells in Church Street, elements of which date from the 17th century.





The Bells, Church Street, an early example of a Coaching Inn

Rivers have had a significant impact on the history of Staines and were important for transportation, communication and for industry. The town marked the western-most extremity of the City of London's jurisdiction over the River Thames. The Rivers Colne, Ash and Wraysbury were important for the establishment of several mills within the town. In the late 18th century Thomas Ashby established a brewery in Staines which utilised the water from the River Colne. The brewery was located in Church Street and although closed in 1936, the 19th century brewery tower still survives and forms a major landmark in Staines' skyline.

There have been a number of bridges built across the River Thames, the first post-Roman reference to a bridge dates from 1222. In 1791 a stone bridge was constructed, but collapsed soon after completion. All the bridges prior to the construction of the present structure in 1832 were located between what is now the Memorial Garden and The Hythe on the opposite riverbank and were accessed via the High Street which stretched across the site of the present Town Hall. The present stone bridge, designed by George Rennie and John Rennie the Younger, was opened in 1832 by William IV and is located a short distance to the north-west of the former bridges.



Staines Bridge constructed in 1832

By the late 16th century, the area around the church known as Binbury, appears to have declined in population and the church became isolated from the main concentration of development around the bridge and High Street. In the following century, John Ogliby



describes Staines as a 'well-built town' (Britannia Atlas, 1675) and by 1723 a market building had been constructed in the middle of High Street, effectively dividing the western end in two. By this period, development is believed to have stretched east of Thames Street, but very few pre-19th century buildings survive to give clarity to the appearance of Staines during and prior to this era. Those pre-19th century buildings that do survive are primarily concentrated along Church Street. Development during the 19th century significantly altered, much of the earlier town. The construction of the existing stone bridge in 1832, saw some reconfiguration of road layouts with the creation of Clarence Street and Bridge Street.



Stainton House, 101 Church Street



View looking west towards early 19th century buildings lining northern side of Clarence

During the same period improvements were made to the western end of the Staines, with the demolition of older and smaller cottages to create larger, higher status properties such as Stainton House, Church Street.

There were relatively few roads outside the town that extended through the parish prior to 19th century. Kingston Road approaches the town from the south-east and was turnpiked in 1773. Wraysbury Road (now the B376) which approaches Staines from the north-east, was originally located a short distance to the south and aligned to its present position in 1841-2. Moor Lane also approaches Staines from the north-east and was straightened in 1891. Laleham Road, (which also forms part of the B376) approaches Staines from the south-east and for a short distance runs along the line of the River Thames.

In 1848 the railway came to Staines and forms part of the Waterloo to Reading line. There were three stations serving Staines; Staines Central, Staines High Street and Staines West. Only Staines West Station today lies within the Conservation Area.

The arrival of the railway led to the establishment of a number of industries in the town. Frederick Walton opened the internationally recognised Linoleum Manufacturing Company in Staines in 1864 and it became the principal employer in the town. The main industry factory occupied a large area of land a short distance to the north of the High Street, just outside the present Conservation Area. When the factory closed in 1970 all the original buildings were demolished and the land redeveloped as the Two Rivers Shopping Centre.



A reminder of the Lino Industry in Staines, (High Street)

Another major employer during the mid-19th century was Finch, Rickman & Co who made mustard at a former flour mill located in the same area as the linoleum factory. The mustard factory went into decline during the late 19th century eventually closing in 1900 and was eventually demolished. All that remains of this industry Mustard Mill Road which runs to the north-west and north-east of the Two Rivers Shopping Centre.

With the arrival of the railway, development initially occurred around what had been the hamlet of Knowle Green. Development here mostly took the form of villas and smaller terrace housing. Following the construction of Linoleum Manufacturing Company in 1864, terraced housing was built on the area to the south of the factory, but this has now largely been demolished. During this period housing also developed north-eastwards along London Road, around the western end of Gresham Road and along Kingston Road. Between 1871 and 1880 the Town Hall was constructed. This involved the demolition of the existing market house and a number of buildings to the east of the current Town Hall which created the Market Square and made space for the Memorial Gardens which were laid out in 1897.



No. 24 Hale Street, a Victorian dwelling whose setting has been harmed by the Two Rivers Retail Park

Between the two World Wars most development was concentrated along the London Road to the north and to south around Kingston and Laleham Roads. Post Second World War the majority of the remaining land in the south of the parish has been developed. The development of Heathrow Airport has also had a major impact on Staines. First established in the 1930s as a private airfield, Heathrow has now become one of the World's busiest international airports and its proximity to Staines has created development pressure in the Staines area.

2.3 Archaeological Potential

Every settlement holds archaeological evidence of its development, of the economy and industry of the community and of the lives and lifestyles of past inhabitants. Designated Sites and Areas of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP) are most likely to contain archaeological remains which will shed light on the origins of the settlement. Where a new development is proposed, the impact that it might have on these remains is a material consideration within the planning process. This may occasionally result in the need for archaeological recording prior to development commencing.

Approximately two thirds of the Staines Conservation Area is covered by an AHAP. There is therefore the potential for the remains of earlier buildings and structures relating to the settlement of Staines to survive beneath existing buildings and streets. Very early burials may also remain intact in the churchyard surrounding St Mary's Church.

2.4 Built Form and Architecture

There are almost 40 buildings within Staines Conservation Area that have been included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. St. Mary's Church and The Blue Anchor are both listed Grade II* and the remainder are listed as Grade II. The oldest known surviving buildings are 118 High Street, which is believed to contain some 16th



century elements and 21 to 27 Church Street which are a much-altered short row of buildings with 17th century origins. A handful of 18th century buildings survive which are mainly concentrated along Church Street and close to the church. Examples include Corner Hall, Bosun's Hatch, 57 and 59 Church Street and 114 Church Street. The majority of the buildings of 18th century origin are either detached or form short rows and are constructed of red or buff-coloured bricks; others are rendered. In height they range between two and three storeys and present relatively regular, principal elevations with timber sash windows. Roofs are gabled or hipped and laid in slate or tile. A number have parapets.



111 to 113 Church

The majority of the surviving historic building stock in Staines dates from the 19th century which was a period of significant growth for the town prompted by the construction of Staines Bridge in 1832, the arrival of the railway in 1848 and the establishment of a number of industries. The construction of Staines Bridge resulted in the creation of Clarence Street which is lined on its northern side by a fine row of three-storey, buff-coloured brick buildings with similar architectural elements and a strong vertical emphasis. Almost all of the buildings date from between 1824 and 1830 and despite the assortment of modern shop fronts is arguably the most homogenous street frontage in Staines.

There are other smaller pockets of 19th century development which have a strong sense of uniformity including 45 to 55 Church Street, which is a curved terrace of two storey buildings with repetitive gables and gothic brick arches infilled with hung tiles. Other 19th century buildings such as 18 to 26 Hale Street form a cohesive group because the buildings have similar mass, form, materials and are surrounded by modern development.



45 to 55 Church Street

During the 19th century a number of civic, ecclesiastical and industrial buildings were constructed which were deliberately designed as statement buildings reflecting the Victorian aspirations and prosperity of the town. The Town Hall, located in Market Square, is a good example of this civic pride and was designed by John Johnson and built between 1879 and 1880 following a public competition.

The building, which is exuberant in its design and confident in its mixture of Italian Renaissance, Baroque and French influences, is unique within the town, and therefore demands attention as a landmark building in the Conservation Area.



The Town Hall 1880

Unfortunately, little remains of the industrial architecture that brought prosperity to the 19th century town. Perhaps the most evocative and important building from this time is the former Staines West Station due to the influence of the railway on Staines which shaped the development of the town.

Adapted from an early 19th century building, the station was opened in 1885 and is constructed of buff-coloured bricks. It is L-shaped in plan and is two to three storeys in height with a central box porch and shallow-pitched, hipped roofs laid in slate. Today it is symbolic that this former Station sits



Former Staines West Station



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adjacent to a small green, marooned in a pinch point of land between a road and a waterway, the two other forms of transport that have strongly influenced the history of the town.

The most visually dominant reminder of 19th century industry is the six storey Brewery Tower on Church Street. This building, constructed of bricks with a hipped slate roof, is a local landmark and vies with the tower of St. Mary's Church as the visual focus to so many views within the historic core of Staines. The building originally formed part of a brewery founded by Thomas Ashby which eventually ceased production in the 1970s and has subsequently been converted to offices and residential use.



The Brewery Tower, Church Street

St Mary's Church provided the religious focus to the rapidly developing town. Designed by John Burges Watson in the Victorian Gothic style, the main body of the church is constructed from buff-coloured bricks, and dates from 1828. The red brick western tower is earlier and is believed to date from the late 18th century. It has been attributed to Inigo Jones, although there is no definitive evidence proving this. The Church is located on elevated ground at the western extremity of the town. The construction of the Church during the 19th century was a physical expression of the perceived spiritual health of the town at a time of significant development and would have complimented the equally confident expressions of civic pride and industry represented by the Town Hall and the now demolished Linoleum Factory.



St Mary's Church

Close to the Church towards the western end of the town, the historic buildings are more domestic in appearance than those bordering the commercial areas of town such as the eastern end of Church Street, Clarence Street and High Street. Despite the area having an eclectic mix of buildings of varying dates and uses, an overall sense of homogeneity is achieved here. This is primarily realised through a general unity in terms of the buildings'

small-scale, massing, materials, position in plot, orientation to the street and repeated architectural forms and motifs. The historic streets here are typically narrow in comparison to later roads and are generally lined on both sides by a mixture of some detached, but primarily terraced or short rows of buildings. The position of these buildings at the front of their plots results in strong building lines which help reinforce a sense of continuity and enclosure. The overall dominance of classical architecture means that most buildings present relatively symmetrical principal elevations to the street, with similar numbers of bays articulated with regular window and door patterns and repeated architectural details.

In more recent times, the character of Staines has changed following the decline in manufacturing and the growth in tertiary industries. Staines lies within the London commuter belt with a resulting pressure for space. This has brought about the redevelopment of significant areas of the historic core of Staines including the Island Close development between the Church and the River Thames, the western side of Bridge Street, the southern side of Clarence Street and the Two Rivers Shopping centre to the east and north of Hale Street. In many cases the siting of new development adjacent to historic buildings is uncomfortable, with significant differences in scale, height and massing and materials.

However, the juxtaposition of new and old does work successfully in Staines where care has been taken to reflect elements of the historic built environment. An interesting example of such a relationship is the modern 'Service Now UK&I building' on Bridge Street which, although large in scale and dominant in the streetscape, has a strong emphasis on the horizontal line and a white elevation which picks up the same characteristics of its neighbour, 46 Church Street, a former early 19th century public house.



46 Church Street and ServiceNow UK&I, Bridge Street

Similarly, the Island Close which stretches along the river frontage and a section of Church Street does respect the scale of its historic neighbours. The development is broken down into modest units built on similar building lines, with narrow, regular elevations that set up an architectural rhythm to the streetscape similar to the historic buildings along Church Street.

Pressures of development can often bring with it smaller scale changes, such as the loss of original architectural features like windows and doors or the insertion of incongruous shopfronts. Such changes will have negative impacts on the character, interest and appearance of an individual building, but cumulatively they can adversely impact the visual quality of the entire streetscape. Pockets of historic building have become subsumed within more dominant modern development of the town. Continued pressure will potentially

result in the loss of buildings which, although not of nationally listable quality, do nevertheless make positive contributions to Staines' visual quality and sense of place

2.5 Trees and Open Spaces

There are five significant open areas within the Conservation Area; the churchyard at St Mary's; the Thameside Walk along Island Close, the area at the junction of the rivers Colne and Wraysbury to the east of the lower part of Church Street; Market Square and the Memorial Park.

The churchyard to St Mary's is extensive and verdant with a relaxed informal character. It contains a substantial number of mature and specimen trees which can be appreciated in the skyline for some distance and which contribute to the verdant character of the area when viewed from Staines Bridge and Bridge Street. The green backdrop of the Lammas recreation ground with its trees enhances and reinforces the sense of green space and of being at the edge of the town and transitioning to the countryside.

The verdant, treed walk along the Thames, along Island Close is a small, informal, linear open space which is significant to this part of the Conservation Area. It allows the opening up of views along the river in both directions and creates a sense of space in an otherwise built up, urban environment.

The area where the two rivers meet has been open space since the first edition Ordnance Survey map in 1869 which shows no development between the two rivers at their conjunction and a clear break in development along the eastern side of Church Street. There is no public access into this space but its open qualities and the views of the river it affords contribute to the sense of place and provide an attractive and informal oasis in such close proximity to the busy traffic-dominated-environment immediately to the north. Views across this space from Mustard Mill Road allow one of the best and most attractive opportunities to appreciate the rivers within the Conservation Area, although lack of management and maintenance currently project a neglected and run-down appearance. The trees here grown along the line of the rivers making them more legible.

In contrast, the open space in Market Square is an urban, open space with extensive hard landscaping surrounded on three sides by predominantly three storey buildings creating a sense of enclosure. The large gaps between some of the buildings means this enclosure is very loose, but development of a similar scale beyond those gaps reinforces the sense of enclosure. This key civic space creates an intended public arena and place to gather in front of the Town Hall. It also provides a transition to the Memorial Park by virtue of the fact that the spaces to either side of the south of the Town Hall are not enclosed by buildings beyond them but instead provide glimpses out to open space beyond.

The Memorial Park was the original home of the War Memorial. This is an attractive, open, riverside park which allows for an appreciation of the river and a different perspective of the town that is not obtainable from the urban core. Formally planting provides structural shape to the park whilst informal tree areas along the bank of the Thames adds greenery to this urban area.

Throughout the Conservation Area tree lines grown along the numerous rivers and tributaries and are important to making the presence of the water courses visible in the streetscape.

2.6 Views and Vistas

The Historic core of Staines is remarkable for its extensive visual permeability. Glimpsed views of key historic buildings, in particular the brewery tower, St Mary's Church Tower, and the Town Hall are obtained throughout the Conservation Area both within and between character areas. This visual permeability creates a strong sense of place and legibility with repeated views and glimpses of the easily-recognisable, key landmark buildings.

Where they exist, views along river channels are attractive and often dissect character areas. However, many views along rivers channels are glimpsed, foreshortened, or partial due to extensive overgrowth and lack of management of vegetation. This gives a neglected air to these waterways which, as the arteries of the town and fundamental to its historic significance and development, could be enhanced through a programme of management for visual and biodiversity gains. Such a programme would also offer the opportunity to further enhance visual permeability.

The expansive view over the west of Staines obtained from the southern end of Bridge Street and the western end of Clarence Street is significant. This vista affords full appreciation of the very clear and distinct change in character between the high density built form and urban grain of the town centre and more verdant, looser grain and lower built density to the west. This vista and clear change in character is also clearly appreciable on the important historic route into the town over the bridge from the south on what is now the A308.

Views into and out of the Conservation Area are less significant than the degree of intervisibility when within the area. The topography is relatively flat and does not afford long distance or significant views into the area. The verdant tree and hedge lined approach from the west along Wraysbury Road is important to appreciating the village like character of Character area 1 and in providing a semi-rural and verdant backdrop to the setting of St Mary's.

3.0 CHARACTER AREAS

Most Conservation Areas do not have a uniform character and appearance across the area. In many cases different 'character areas' or 'sub areas' can be discerned which have their own unique appearance and characteristics. Their varied character tells a story about the history of the Conservation Area and contributes to the special character and appearance of the whole. Three distinct Character Areas have been identified for the Staines Conservation Area. These can be seen at Appendix 2, the Map of the Conservation Area

3.1 Character Area 1 – St Mary’s Church

Overview

St Mary’s Church Character Area has the appearance and secluded, quiet atmosphere of a small village centred upon its Church: a building which dominates the character area. It has small-scale houses, mostly of two storeys which line narrow streets, some of which have small front gardens and plot boundaries which are important to the character and appearance of the area, creating a domestic appearance. The strong building line here create a sense of enclosure. The Church has a relatively large churchyard with longer views down to the Thames and to the treed island in the river. There are also longer views into Lammas Park which, though lying beyond the Conservation Area boundary, are important to its sense of openness and space. The Church and its churchyard are similar to a traditional village green in that they provide a foil to the otherwise tight grain of development in this area and provide a degree of open space.

There are many small, domestic, historic houses in this part of the Conservation Area most of which are terraced and of red or buff brick or render with slate or tiled roofs. The character of the area here is residential and small-scale.

Local Features

- Strong sense of enclosure along roads;
- Small front and rear gardens with plot boundaries reinforce the tight urban grain;
- The raised Church above local roads is dominant in the streetscape;
- The large, open churchyard provides a village-green appearance;
- Topography of the area slopes down to the Thames;
- Verdant Thameside Walk adds interest;
- Views open up at the Thames in both directions;
- Presence of Church Island;
- Use of red or buff brick and render;
- Largely narrow plots, strong building line and small-scale buildings;
- Quiet, secluded atmosphere;
- Many specimen trees.

Streets

Church Street: West of Junction with Wraysbury Road

- Church Street is narrow where it runs to the west and south of the churchyard and is bordered by a defining, retaining wall;
- There are attractive trees within and outside the Conservation Area which are visible from Church Road and contribute to its green appearance;
- Views are important where the road slopes down to the Thames across to the island;
- The very small park on the north side of the road contributes to the quiet atmosphere of the area;



- As the road heads north towards the junction with Vicarage Road it curves and includes important views to the Tower of St Mary's;
- Past the junction with Vicarage Road the street curves to the east with tight knit development, much of which is historic;
- Once past the curve and still heading east towards the junction with Wraysbury Road and Bridge Street, the view of the 6-storey Brewery Tower becomes an important landmark at the end of the road;
- This is a quiet street whose appearance is partially marred by parking;
- There are key trees in the streetscene which soften the hard lines of development and provide a backdrop on the north side of the road behind Cambria Court;
- The north side of street is more cohesive than south side which has views through to modern development in Staines Business Park – this slightly spoils the building line of the street;
- The north side of Church Street has an attractive, tightly-knit grain and a strong building line. There are several, small historic piercings in the building line to historic yard areas behind (some of which are now developed (i.e Cambria Court);
- The view up and down the road unfolds gradually due to the curve in the line of the road.

Vicarage Road

- This is a short, straight road dominated by the raised, open Churchyard on west side and the proximity of St Mary's to the residential houses on the east side;
- Larger, detached residential homes on east side create a tight grain in this area with small front gardens and plot boundaries;
- The Church boundary wall, red brick with stone capping, is a key feature;
- There is a strong building line here.

Wraysbury Road (B376)

- The churchyard wall runs along south side of this road and forms the boundary of the Conservation Area;
- The wall is red brick and cement rendered with attractive iron railings and gates which form the northern entry into the churchyard;
- Traffic noise is harmful here.

Church Island

- The Island is accessed by an attractive bridge over the river;
- The western half is heavily treed;
- The eastern half is populated by buildings partly obscured by trees;
- There is a prominent Edwardian building on the south-east end of the Island;
- The Island has an attractive and distinctive riverside frontage with small boats



Island Close

- This is a modern, 1980s terrace of two storey houses of small scale, mass and height facing the Thames;
- It is verdant and quiet; a treed walk along the Thames which forms a narrow, linear open space important to the Conservation Area;
- It has narrow plots with small, green front and rear gardens which are important to the character of the area;
- Simple, tiled roofs without intrusive dormers keeps the development low-lying;
- The rear of the road is strongly enclosed by the high, brick wall boundary to Staines Business Park.

Staines Business Park

- Although the Business Park covers a large space within this character area it is contained behind the high wall of Island Close and is largely hidden behind the buildings that line the southern side of Church Street;
- It has far less impact on the Conservation Area than its size would suggest;
- Glimpses of its modern buildings can be seen but they do not dominate the Conservation Area.

3.2 Character Area 2 – The Two Rivers

Overview

The Two Rivers Character Area stretches from the former Staines West Station and Hale Street in the north of the Conservation Area, southwards to the rear of the buildings that face onto Clarence Street. It includes the small island of Victorian development at the junction of Hale Street and Wraysbury Road, Bridge Street and the south-eastern end of Church Street. Its main focus is the River Colne which flows into the area from the north-east as two branches, that to the west is called the River Wraysbury. The two branches coalesce just to the north of Church Street and then flow as a single channel the short distance to the River Thames. The character area is also dominated by roads, which cut through it from north to south and form a triangle at its centre. Wraysbury Road (B376) approaches from the north-west but sweeps around in a gentle curve through the character area eventually exiting Staines across the bridge in a south-westerly direction. Wraysbury Road effectively dissects the Conservation Area in two. The area to the west of the buildings fronting Wraysbury Road has a quieter, more domestic feel and the area to the east of the road is busier and has a more commercial and civic character.

Within the overall commercial feel of the Two Rivers Character Area, there are minor variations which primarily result from the flow of traffic. The south-eastern end of Church Street, although lined with commercial buildings and close to the junction with Clarence Street, nevertheless feels quiet because there is no heavy traffic flow along it. In contrast the endless succession of vehicles along Wraysbury Road and Bridge Street provide a constant background noise. Also important in the general character of the area is the scale of modern buildings and their relationship to the street and their surroundings. Modern



buildings along the western side of Bridge Street are substantial in mass in comparison to their historic neighbours. This breaks up the more regular rhythms established by the relatively narrow principal elevations of the historic buildings that line Church Street and High Street.

Local Features

- Good visibility of the River Colne and its branches due to trees and vegetation growing alongside the water courses;
- Many local variations in atmosphere and noise caused by levels of traffic along different roads;
- Area dominated by roads;
- Historic buildings tend to be overwhelmed and dominated by modern development;
- Open spaces are particularly important for the visibility and permeability of the area;
- Pockets of vegetation and lines of trees contribute greatly to softening the modern development of this character area;

Wraysbury Road

- The most northerly part of the Two Rivers Character area focuses around a small area along the eastern side of Wraysbury Road and includes the former Staines West Railway Station and a short section of the Wraysbury River which forms the western branch of the River Colne;
- The dominant feature within this area is Wraysbury Road which runs in a north-west to south-east direction. It is a busy road with three lanes of traffic approaching the junction with Hale Street;
- Wraysbury Road acts as a visual and physical barrier which dislocates the former train station and row of Victorian buildings along Hale Street from historic buildings elsewhere within the Conservation Area;



The former Staines West Station with tree line to the east

- The former Staines West Railway Station is visually prominent, particularly in views looking north-westward along the street from the junction of Wraysbury Road and Hale Street;



- The former railway station, a substantial 2-3 storey building in buff-coloured brick, is set at an angle to the carriageway behind a small, grassed public open space with a large metal sculpture at its centre. The building is viewed with trees and vegetation to the east, which line the banks of the Wraysbury River;
- The western side of Wraysbury Road is dominated by the brick boundary walls to the rear of buildings along Church Street, the small mid-19th century brick malthouse with its unusual central pavilion roof and the adjacent run of steeply pitched gables and dormers of the red bricked 4 to 8 Wraysbury Road.
- Views looking south-westwards across and between the wall and buildings on the western side of Wraysbury Road are dominated by the Brewery Tower and the stark white elevations of 46 Church Street and 45 to 55 Church Street.

Hale Street

- Historic development is confined to a small area on the south-eastern side of Hale Street marooned between the eastern and western branches of the River Colne;
- All the buildings in this area are late Victorian and similar in scale, height, massing and articulation;



Number 24 and 26 Hale Street.

- The buildings are set back from the road behind a small grass verge planted with trees. The verge and trees act as a partial buffer to the constant noise and traffic associated with the Two Rivers Shopping Centre;
- Buildings here are two storeys in height. Roofs are gabled or hipped, in tile or slate, with ridgelines running in parallel to the carriageway;
- Windows are wooden sashes and fenestration patterns are regular;
- There is a homogeneity to the buildings created by their similar, scale, mass, material and position in relation to the street.
- They are enclosed to the north, north- east and south-east by large areas of parking and generic modern buildings including Travel Lodge and Two Rivers Shopping Centre;
- Nos 24 to 26 Hale Street is the most visually prominent building within the group, due to its height and because it is positioned at the end of the road, closest to the bridge over the eastern branch of the River Colne;



Numbers 24-26 Hale Street with the backdrop of the Two Rivers Shopping Centre affecting its setting

- Views south-westwards along Hale Road back towards the historic core of the town are dominated by the Brewery Tower;



Views looking south-westwards from Hale Street towards Brewery Tower

- The eastern branch of the River Colne has a strong visual presence in this part of the Conservation Area because of its open surroundings;



River Colne with number 24 Hale Street

- The views from the footpath along the eastern branch of the River Colne affords views across the currently undeveloped area of open space behind Hale Street and across to the south-western end of Church Street. Trees and vegetation in this area provide a welcome visual contrast to the hard edges of buildings in Church Street and the hard spaces created by the Two Rivers carpark.



View from River Colne across to the Brewery Tower

Church Street: East of Junction with Wraysbury Road

- To the east of the Wraysbury Road and Bridge Street junction, Church Street forms a short, straight section of road running south-eastwards to meet Clarence Street;
- Flow of traffic along the road is light and, although close to the commercial heart of the town and lined at its south-eastern end with shops, Church Street feels like a side street;
- Nos 45-55 Church Street are a row of Neo-Gothic buildings with a roofline punctuated by regular gables articulated with hanging tiles;
- The section from Wraysbury Road to the River Colne is dominated on the south-western side by two, four storey modern blocks, Charta House and Church House. Both blocks maintain a strong building line but are tall in relation to their historic neighbours and overbearing within the streetscape;
- With the exception of 45 to 55 Church Street the north-eastern side of Church Street, from Wraysbury Road to the River Colne is undeveloped and, at the time of writing, hoarding fronts the plot. This partially restricts views into the site, but clearly visible above it and from vantage points close to the footbridge, are the trees that line the water channel. These trees help to mask views



View looking north-westwards along Church Street including Church House and Charta House developments

of the Two Rivers shopping centre development to the north-east;

- Here, as elsewhere within the character area, trees grow adjacent to the channels of the River Colne and increase the visual legibility of its course through the town;
- The view south-eastwards along Church Street from the road bridge over the River Colne encompasses the 17th and 19th century buildings that line both side of the carriageway and beyond these to the rear elevations of the early 19th century buildings fronting onto Clarence Street. The view takes in an assortment of roofscapes of modest but varying heights and orientations, indicative of a tight-grained, urban environment;
- The flowing water of the river and the large trees growing from the bank provide an attractive foreground to views looking south-west from the road bridge towards the rear elevation of 25 and 27 Clarence Street;
- To the south-east of the bridge, historic buildings line both sides of the carriageway creating strong building lines and channelling views;
- Buildings are primarily 19th century in date with the exception of 21 to 27 Church Street which is a row of four much-altered buildings with 17th century origins; Buildings range in height between two and three storeys and sit beneath hipped and gabled roofs
- Although the historic buildings that populate the street are of both national and local value, some are poorly maintained or vacant, others have suffered unsympathetic alterations;
- Poor signage and visually-dominant shop-fascias along with the artwork on the London Stone public house vie for attention and result in an overall incoherent



View along the River Colne to the rear and 25 and 27 Clarence Street



View along Church Street towards Market Place

streetscape. This is further compounded by the poor quality of street surfaces and furniture and the negative visual impact of on-street parking.

Bridge Street

- Bridge Street runs in a north to south direction from the junction with Church Street to Staines Bridge. It rises gradually as it approaches the bridge.

- Both sides of Bridge Street are dominated by modern development. The buildings on the eastern side maintain a tight building line established by 41 Clarence Street, the Literary and Scientific Institute, which faces onto Clarence Street, but which extends around onto Bridge Street forming an attractive visual focus to the entrance to both streets when approaching Staines from across the bridge.



41 Clarence Street

- The modern buildings on the eastern side of Bridge Street, provide definition to the street and create enclosure. This is in contrast to the western side of the street, where the Bridge Street carpark, built partly below the level of the road, allows wide views towards modern buildings on both sides of the River Thames.
- A line of trees planted along Bridge Close provides enclosure and soften the visual impact of the car park when looking from the north-east.
- Located on the western side of Bridge Street is the Service Now UK&I building. It is a substantial, detached building that,, in terms of its scale and mass, dominates its historic neighbours. This building is a deliberate architectural statement that embraces its modernism. In its design it acknowledges the strong horizontal emphasis of its neighbour 46 Church Street and, although significantly taller than the historic buildings along Church Street, it does not dwarf the Brewery Tower or spire of St.Mary's Church.
- Views looking north along Bridge towards the junction with Church Street and Wraysbury Road are dominated by the Brewery Tower, but channelled by the white elevations of 46 Church Street and 45 to 55 Church Street.



Junction with Church Street showing Brewery Tower and

45 to 55 Church Street

3.3 Character Area 3 – Market Square and Memorial Garden

Overview

This is the civic core of the town and saw a rapid and extensive period of redevelopment in the early to mid C19. This included the creation of Clarence Street, construction of the high-status buildings along its northern side, the construction of Staines bridge and the Town Hall. The redevelopment of this part of the town in such a relatively short timeframe has created a strong and cohesive character with a synergy between the buildings in terms of their age, scale, materials and architectural style.

The high social status and build quality of the historic buildings along Clarence Street is echoed in the civic pride exhibited by the the Town Hall, creating an area of high architectural quality and historic interest.

This character and quality is undermined by the presence of the busy and noisy A308 which runs through the Character Area on an east-west axis and which separates the Market Square to some extent from the rest of the townscape. The junction between the A308 and Church Street is particularly harmful to the Character Area due to the volume of traffic and the plethora of visual and physical barriers separating pedestrians and traffic. No 1 Clarence Street rises serenely above this chaotic activity, however, and directs the eye towards the civic core at Market Square to its left and the quieter, narrower Church Street to its right.





View towards the Town Hall



Number 1 Church Street

Local Features

- The civic core of the town from the early C19 onwards with an important historic function;
- High social status and civic importance of Market Square and Clarence Street reflected in the polite architectural language, the high built quality and degree of architectural embellishment of the historic buildings. This contrasts with the more vernacular character of buildings in the other character areas;
- Market Square is the only urban, purpose-built public space within the Conservation Area;



Regular, late Georgian Buildings along the north side of Clarence Street

- The terrace along the northern side of Clarence St has a grander character due to a strong built rhythm, shared void to solid ratio and shared eaves and fascia levels. This is further reinforced through the repetition of shared architectural features, notably sash windows under square heads and a change in the material at ground floor;
- Materials in this character area include buff brick which dominates, render and (with the exception of The Blue Anchor, which was a high-status town house when built in the early C18) red brick used at the lower end of the spectrum and in C20 buildings;



The Blue Anchor

- Loose and open urban grain to the Market Square in marked contrast to the high density continuous built frontages along Clarence Street and into Church Street and the High Street;
- The urban grain of this area is characterised by blocks of development with continuous building lines tightly abutting the street. There are large gaps between blocks created by the river to the north and south of Clarence Street and by the open space of Market Square creating a somewhat cellular character;



View looking south down Clarence Road towards the Thames

- The Thames is not readily legible from the town centre but is fully appreciable, once within the Memorial Park;
- The historic buildings within the town turn their back on the river and face into Market Square or directly onto the High Street / Clarence St / Thames St;

- Some vestiges of the pre C1820's layout of the town survive; nos. 5-15 High Street, which run along the north-eastern edge of Market Square and denote the former line of the High Street which terminated in a wharf at the riverside;
- The high levels of traffic and associated noise detracts from the quality of this environment;
- High volumes of traffic and the wide road along the A308 (Thames Street and Clarence Street) separates Market Square and the rest of the historic town to the north.

Streets

Clarence Street;

- The terraces along the northern side of Clarence Street are of high status. This is the most imposing run of terraces within the Conservation Area. The shared scale, built form, strong rhythm and architectural details of these terraces which run in two groups, one either side of the river, collectively give the northern side of Clarence Street a very strong character and high-quality appearance.



Buildings on the south side of Clarence Street

The early C20 infill in the centre of the two historic terraces (No's 19-23) detracts from the architectural cohesion in the street but these are, nevertheless, subservient to the existing historic buildings and maintain the strong building line onto Clarence Street.



Nos 19-23 Clarence Street

- The southern side of the road is less cohesive with large gaps between blocks and with the majority of development being late C20. Thames Court at the corner of Bridge Street and Clarence Street is set back from the road and presents its service or 'back of house' frontage to Clarence Street, at odds with the polite frontages close to the road opposite. This elevation of Thames House is poorly executed in comparison to the river frontage and detracts from Clarence Street;
- There is a substantial gap between Thames Court and the next modern building to the east, in part because of the river, which is poorly legible within the street scene here.



The River Colne on the south side of Clarence Street which can be seen by the row of trees

- Views along Clarence Street from west to east are terminated by the former Debenhams building. This building shares many of the features characteristic of the historic buildings in this Character Area in terms of scale, string rhythm, architectural

language and detail and reinforces those characteristics. For these reasons, and due to the fact that it forms a landmark termination to those views, it contributes positively to the street scene and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



View from Bridge Street looking down Clarence Road

- Cygnet House forms an island at the mouth of Market Square but due to its similar age, scale, and architectural language, has a strong affinity with the terraces along the northern side of Clarence Street;



Cygnet House in the Market Square

- The river and Memorial Gardens are not readily appreciable from Clarence Street and are largely concealed from view by buildings.

Market Square;

- In the midst of the Market Square is the Town Hall which is visually prominent in views on the approach from the east but concealed by buildings on the approach from the west. For this reason the Town Hall and Market Square have a strong inter-visual relationship with the High Street and junction of Church Street which forms a key juncture at the heart of the town.
- Views beyond the Town Hall to the south are terminated by development on the southern bank of the river which in itself is screened by vegetation on the north bank.



The 1880s Town Hall now converted to flats

- As in Clarence Street, the river itself is again not clearly appreciable from within Market Square, although the entrance to the Memorial Gardens successfully creates legibility and permeability, directing the eye, and pedestrians, into the gardens and towards the river. Memorial Park is very important to the setting of the Town Hall and Fire Engine Shed;
- The listed fire engine shed attached to the Town Hall would have used water from the river Thames and its location is key to its significance. The building is visually prominent and adjoins the primary civic building in the town, the grand Town Hall;
- The War Memorial was moved to its present location from the Memorial Park in 2002 and is almost tucked away behind Cygnet House but its status and presence is fully appreciable once within the Square.



War Memorial

- The Memorial Park has been deliberately laid out so that it is the focus of, and terminates views into, Market Square on the approach into the town from the park.



View from Memorial Park to the Market Square

- The lack of through traffic in Market Square provides a marked contrast to the busy, noisy A308 which dominates Clarence Street.

Memorial Park;

- The river is most appreciable from within the Memorial Park where attractive views across it to The Hythe. Development on the southern bank impacts directly on the character of the Conservation Area due to its visibility from the northern bank;
- The park is an attractive open space and one of the few spaces within the Conservation Area where the river is clearly evident. The width, power and importance of the river are celebrated, within the park. The park has significance for

that reason alone but also for its social and evidential value as it was created as a memorial to the men of the town who gave their lives in the first World War;



Canopy and steps leading to the boat deck



Wildlife on the Thames

- The car park to the east of the Memorial Park is an integral part of the landscaping and open space that allows wide, uninterrupted views of the river to be obtained and appreciated;



- Memorial Park makes a fitting setting for the public art which it contains;
- The former Debenhams building is clearly visible from Thames Street and the from the carpark on Thames Street, adjacent to Memorial Park. The view from the Thames Street shows the long and undulating side elevation of the Debenhams building which is not visible from Clarence Street. It shows another aspect of the high architectural quality of this large building that influences so much of the Conservation Area;



The Thames Street elevation of the Debenhams building

Bridge Street (southern part);

- The southern part of Bridge Street from 41 Clarence Street up to and including the bridge are located in this character area;

The bridge is of comparable age to the buildings along the northern side of Clarence



Staines Bridge

Street and is part of the extensive redevelopment of this part of the town in the early to mid C19. It has a simple robust form, is constructed in a light-coloured granite ashlar. It has a simple detail to its segmental arches;

- The bridge itself is most readily appreciable as a structure from the riverside and is prominent in views from both upstream and downstream. Glimpsed views of the

river are obtained on the approach to the bridge at the western end of Clarence Street and the impressive scale and width of the river is almost a surprise in these views due to the lack of appreciation of it along the A308.



View across the bridge

- The increasing elevation to Bridge Street on approaching the bridge allows for a sudden 180° panorama to the west at the junction between Bridge Street and Clarence Street.

4.0 Alterations to Boundary

4.1 Inclusions

- The four storey, former Debenhams building was built in 1956 by George Coles, the renowned art Deco architect. This landmark building is an important building of high visual quality which terminates the long views along Clarence St and from Thames Street. It is of good architectural quality and it reinforces the historic built character of character area 3.
- The Memorial Park; the park and adjacent car park have been included in its entirety because of the importance that this high quality open space has within the character area and also as one of the few public, open spaces from where a full appreciation of the river Thames and its relationship to Staines town can be obtained.
- A section of riverside bank and the river to the west of Church Island; this area is important in allowing an appreciation of the context and character of both character area 1 and Church Island, their relationship with each other, and with the river.

- Minor changes have occurred to the boundary of the Conservation Area to follow the line of the footpath and include its green riverbank along the eastern side of the River Colne.

4.2 Exclusions

- Minor changes to the boundary of the Conservation Area have occurred around its northern periphery to ensure that the boundary line is legible on the ground and does not dissect buildings or plots. The modern Travelodge, built after the Conservation Area was designated, has been excluded.

5.0 Summary of Issues

- Unsympathetic new development; given the predominantly low level of buildings in the town, Staines Conservation Area is particularly negatively affected by higher-rise development dwarfing existing buildings and streetscapes;
- Lack of maintenance to properties;
- Unauthorised and poorly-designed outdoor advertisements;
- Poorly coordinated public realm including visual clutter from the overprovision and mix of types of parking and street signage, street furniture, bollards and, poor floorscapes;
- Prominence of traffic and traffic noise, particularly Character Areas 2 and 3;
- Prominence of parking in the narrow streets in Character Area 1, St Mary's Church;
- Lack of integration of the rivers in the town with the streetscape.

6.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

General

- Through the development management process retain existing road frontages, building lines, plot boundaries and front gardens which are typical of each character area;
- The open spaces and trees that have been identified as being important to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area should be preserved;
- Staines Conservation Area has relatively low buildings, the majority of which are two, three or four storeys in height. Any new development should respect the heights of existing buildings in order to protect the Conservation Area;
- The design and materials of any new build should generally accord with those traditionally used, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that an exception should be considered;
- The siting of new development should be carefully considered to ensure that it preserves or enhances the existing grain of the Conservation Area;
- No new development should obstruct views of importance into, out of and within the Conservation Area;

- Maintain the riverside verges, walks and paths that characterise the Staines Conservation Area, where possible improving them through the Development Management process and conditions imposed on new development.
- Protect the setting of the Conservation Area through the development management process; the significance of the setting of the Conservation Area varies from different vantage points.

Character Area 1 -St Mary's Church

- Any new buildings or extensions should reflect the small-scale, low height, simple forms of the existing historic buildings in this part of the Conservation Area;
- Use materials which reflect the predominant palette of materials in this area – red brick, buff brick, render, slate or tile;
- Where they exist retain soft front gardens and resist hard-surfaces in gardens;
- Resist additional on-street parking through the development management process;
- Retain the strong building line and plot boundaries;
- Development which blocks or impedes views of the Church will be resisted;
- Resist the use of box dormers through the development management process since these would alter the small-scale appearance of the buildings in this area.

Character Area 2- Two Rivers

The environmental quality of this Character Area has suffered with a wide variety of inappropriately sized and scaled signage, the use of materials of poor visual quality and poor maintenance. To prevent further degradation the following should be adhered to:

- Prevent inappropriate advertising and signage through the development management process;
- Properties should only have one main fascia sign; multiple fascias will not be permitted even if there are additional businesses within the building;
- Existing fascias of architectural and/or historic interest should be incorporated into design proposals and not be covered by a new fascia sign;
- Fascias on historic buildings should be timber with hand painted signage;
- Fascias which extend across multiple buildings, even when incorporating a number of commercial units, should respect the depth and proportions of the historic fascia;
- Where large modern fascias may be covering earlier timber fascias of appropriate proportions. Proposals for the changing of signage should investigate the potential to restore traditional shopfronts, and where they survive, their restoration should be encouraged;
- Hanging signs should respect the character of the individual building and adjoining properties. Businesses should adapt their corporate style to preserve and enhance the integrity of the shopfront and the wider streetscape;
- The design of the sign should complement the colour scheme and design of the fascia, so that it appears as part of the existing shopfront;
- Projecting and hanging signs should not be located above fascia level;

- Projecting and hanging signs on historic buildings should be timber with hand painted signs;
- Improve the riverside properties, verges, walks and paths that characterise this part of Conservation Area, where possible improving them through the development management process and conditions imposed on new development;
- Enforce against unauthorised works to listed buildings.

Character Area 3-Market Square and Memorial Gardens

- Development which negatively affects the loose grain and visually permeable character of this part of the Conservation Area will be resisted through the development management process;
- Views to and from the Thames will be protected through the development management process;
- Views across the Thames towards the Egham and Hythe Conservation Area (Runnymede District Council) will be protected through the development management process;
- Any new shopfronts within numbers 1-23 Clarence Street shall retain and reuse any architectural features of historic interest and shall be a traditionally detailed shopfront in all respects. Stallrisers, columns, consoles, fascias and materials shall be of a form, detail, scale and appearance appropriate and proportionate the host building and taking precedence from remaining historic examples within this group. Any proposals which would result in the loss of any traditional or historic shopfronts or remaining elements of shopfronts should not be permitted.

Appendices

1- Map of Conservation Area with Character Areas

2- Asset Pages





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