

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

CANBURY GARDENS

FOR KINGSTON UPON THAMES BOROUGH COUNCIL

November 2002



CONSERVATION
ARCHITECTURE
& P L A N N I N G

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KINGSTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS Canbury Gardens / Ham Lands

1 Location

The appraisal area lies in the north of the Borough of Kingston along the east bank of Hampton Reach on the River Thames. Kingston-upon-Thames, a regional commercial centre with Saxon origins is situated ten miles south west of central London. This stretch of the Thames developed as a place for recreation as wealthy people moved to the area to escape the pollution and heat of the city. This migration into the countryside is epitomized by the building of Hampton Court Palace, which overlooks Kingston from the west bank of the Thames. The medieval market place lies at Kingston's centre. The commercial centre has continually expanded, with major development in the Victorian era due to the development of railways and its proximity to the river and open countryside. Kingston scores high in quality of life surveys. The Canbury Gardens area is described in the Thames Landscape Strategy as:

Has unique landscape of parks, palaces and working communities. Centuries of settlement have left a legacy of architecture, public access and nature conservation value unparalleled in the rest of the capital. "

This linear appraisal area, some 2000 meters long and up to 200 meters wide, includes half the width of the Thames, and Stevens Eyot and boathouse. The area is already designated a Strategic Area of Special Character and is also within the proposed Thames Policy Area. The neighbouring Borough of Richmond upon Thames at Ham Common forms its northern boundary. At the southern end it includes all of Canbury Gardens identified in the Greater London Development Plan as a major open space and area of high landscape value, contributing to the wider landscape of London as a whole. Its nature conservation importance is reflected in Kingston's UDP policies, currently at modification stage. The central portion adjoins the Richmond Road Conservation Area, a late Victorian development of substantial red brick houses. The river is the principal unifying element of the area, its broad openness, peaceful ambiance and easy access both underpin and reflect

its role as a place for passive leisure and active river recreation, contrasting with the busy, congested town centre. The pathways are well used by walkers and cyclists. Waterfowl are present in large numbers.

The intimate nature and small scale of older development along this stretch of the river make it entirely suited to leisure activities, rowing boats, barges and pleasure boats creating a lively scene as anglers patiently sitting beside the river. The river is still tidal at this point and presents an ever-changing landscape, adding to the complexity of the area, reminding people that the sea is not far away.

2 Origins and development

'KINGSTON-CANBURY, (Canonbury, xiv cent.) held (VCH) by Merton Priory from at least the fourteenth century, probably represented the early endowment of the church, and followed the descent of the advowson (q.v.) until 1786, when George Harding sold the right of patronage, but retained the manor, which seems to have disappeared by the beginning of the 19th century. The name is preserved in the Canbury Gardens and Road.

Canbury Gardens

Please note

Due to the varied quality of the maps referred to here, they have not been reproduced for viewing on the web. This report, and the maps referred to here, will be available in conjunction with the display at Kingston Library and the Guildhall 2 on the dates noted on the web page. Historic OS maps have been reproduced digitally and placed on the web page for reference.

Map sequence

The earliest map discovered is a 17th-century 'bird's eye view' of Kingston [**MAP 1**].

Canbury Gardens is to the north of Kingston Bridge and continues along the path of the Thames to Steven's Eyots (previously known as Tathim's Island, refer to **1898 & 1913 OS**, and then eventually to Ham Lands - refer to **MAP 2**. The Canbury area appears to have been considerably larger (refer to **MAP 2**). In 1741-5 there was a Canbury Lane and Farm and a further 'Canbury' north of Norbeton Street, which ran through the middle of Kingston-upon-Thames. By 1866 (Ordnance Survey map), the area was reduced to 'Canbury Field' (below the Gas Works) - refer to 1898 Ordnance Survey map the name appears to have

been somewhat revived in the form of a general 'Canbury Ward' over the area to the east of the present Canbury Gardens (as it was anyway in the eighteenth century) and a 'Canbury Place' above the Railway Station. By 1912 the OS, **MAP** there can also be found a 'Canbury Passage' above the Railway Station.

John Rocque's 1741-5 map (**MAP 2**) shows that at least half of the present Canbury Gardens to have been woodland. By 1762 (**MAP 3**) there were a series of buildings, of an indeterminate purpose, next to the strip of Thames-side woodland. By the 1820s (**MAP 4**), the area seems to be largely clear of woodland and ripe for development. However, it is not until 1865 OS Map that we can really follow the development of Canbury Gardens. By this date it is possible to follow the strip of land from Kingston Bridge; along Barge Walk (the Towing Path), parallel to the Thames, past Barge Walk Cottage and finally culminating in the distinctive tapering corner junction of the Barge Walk and Lower Ham Road - the latter binding the site to the east.

Following his election to the Council, In 1884 Samuel Gray, whose family had been prosperous maltsters and lightermen in Kingston, proposed to layout a public garden on land known as Cooperation Eyot, plans were prepared by Borough Surveyor Henry Macaulay. The first section of the gardens extending 1,000 feet from new Downs Hall Road was completed in February 1890 at a cost of £404. The Mayor opened the Gardens on 8 November 1890, Extensions including turfing and landscaping continued for the rest of the decade.

The next map dates from 1898 when Canbury Gardens had been in existence for eight years. By now a Sewage and Gas Works had been built in the rectangular area of land north-east of Kingston Bridge; between the Barge Walk and Lower Ham Road. Above it, to the south, the narrow strip of Canbury Gardens widens to fill the roughly triangular site between Barge Walk and Lower Ham Road. In 1897, paths and a bandstand had been added to the gardens. The OS of 1913 shows more formal gardens with trees dotted along the paths. There were also tennis grounds, a bowling green and a second bandstand or pavilion. By the mid twentieth century the Gardens had become much simpler with fewer paths and trees. On the OS c. 1960 the hexagonal bandstands/pavilions had been replaced by a shelter and Barge Walk Cottage had become a lavatory complex.

Bank Grove Estate

Formerly known as Bank Grove Estate, the triangular area occupied by the estate was bounded to the east by Upper Ham Road, now Richmond Road, to the west by Lower Ham Road and river and the south by Bank Lane. The mansion was built in the 18th century and renovated by Sir Charles Freake, who added extensions in red brick and stone in the 19th century. The grounds were heavily wooded rose gently from the river and contained glasshouses, conservatories, paddocks and a summerhouse adjacent to the Thames in the shape of a Doric temple. The estate was offered for sale in 46 lots in 1888. The major plot had a frontage to the river and to Richmond Road and contained all the outbuildings. On this site a new Bank Grove Mansion was built and most of the outbuildings and greenhouses, including the Doric Temple retained. This site is now occupied by Albany Mews a modern development built following the demolition of Bank Grove in 1982. (See Map 1864 OS and 1895 OS) six houses were built on the plots adjacent to the river, now 102 -112 Lower Ham Road and some houses in the area now known as Richmond Road Conservation Area.

The Albany Estate

The original Bank Grove mansion was renamed the Albany Club and the Estate around it named the Albany Park Estate. Thirty plots of this estate, excluding The Albany Club, were offered for sale in 1892. The estate was described as 'heavily wooded and having picturesque beauty. It is believed this club was a sailing club, the boathouse built by Turk in 1893, is now a BTM. The only house, which was built in this subdivision to remain, is 84 Lower Ham Road. The Albany Club was demolished, rebuilt and finally demolished before the building in 1960 of three blocks of high-rise flats York, Ulster and Brunswick Courts. A substantial house was built on the corner plot bounded by Lower Ham Road, Albany Park Road and Bank Lane, this was demolished before the building of Mornington Court (1964) and Riverview House (1958).

3 The prevailing former uses within the area and their historic patronage, and their influence on the plan form and building types.

The appraisal area has three distinct elements each dominated by the river:

- a) The Riverside Path
- b) The Lower Ham Road Residential Area
- c) Canbury Gardens

a The Riverside Path

The riverside path for much of its 750 meters length is at two levels; the towing path at the lower level is sheltered from views to and from the promenade path on the higher level and focuses the views onto and beyond the river. The towpath was originally built to separate the promenade from the barges. The barges eventually gave up their cargo to the railways and the towpath and the upper path now form part of the extended Thames Path National Trail, opened in 1996.

b The Lower Ham Road Residential Area

i The northern section

The Bank Grove Estate / Albany Estate, occupied this northern section terminating at Bank Lane. This country estate was bounded on west by Lower Ham Road and the river and to the east by Richmond Road. Development of estate land has taken place over the course of almost a century and this is reflected in the variety of buildings forms and layout, which are indicative of development pressures and stylistic influences of the period in which they were built.

ii The southern section

Lower Ham Road gently curves inland forming the boundary of Canbury Gardens on the landward side. Here Edwardian semi detached and detached house of the Woodside Road / Eastbury Road Local Area of Special Character form a grid running east from Canbury Gardens. The roads follow the plot divisions of Wood side and Eastbury House which were demolished to make way for this housing in the early twentieth century.

c **Canbury Gardens**

Canbury Gardens was created from an area of drained land, once a tract of marshes and osier beds with a towpath and barge cottage. After the building expansion that followed the arrival of the railway in 1863, the site became a tar factory and rubbish dump before being transformed into the Gardens. The bandstands at both Canbury Gardens and Queen's Promenade, Surbiton featured regular mid-week and weekend performances. In the early 1900s the gardens were extended towards the east and a bowling green and tennis courts were laid out on raised ground, adjoining Lower Ham Road. A chalet teahouse opened in 1906, at the Ham end of Canbury Gardens. Kingston Corporation's boathouse and cafeteria, winner of an architectural commendation, has replaced this. By 1933 a pavilion, a second bowling green and further tennis grounds had been added, infilling the land bordering the Corporation Depot and Sewage Works, the extent of the Gardens remaining unchanged to this day.

The first section was completed in 1890 and comprised 1000ft of land running parallel with, but raised above, the barge towpath to the west of the sewage works. This was planted with an avenue of London plane trees. Kingston power station was screened from the park by a line of Lombardy Poplars. The bandstand built in 1891, as gift from Alderman Charles Nuthall was the venue for weekly concerts. It was removed in the 1950's. A new bandstand has replaced this as a result of the efforts of the Canbury Gardens Project Committee.

4 **Archaeological Significance**

In the early 19th century, human burials, assumed to be Roman, were discovered in Canbury Field, near the old Gas Works, between Richmond Road and Skerne (previously Lower Ham) Road. An account of the burials written in 1832 mentions 'several layers of bodies' and that the skeletons' occupied a considerable portion of the fields'. The skeletons, buried with pieces of broken pottery and some ornaments, were apparently those of young males, and it was thought that they were of Romans killed in battle. None of the finds now survives, and Victorian antiquarians - like those of earlier centuries - tended to call all ancient discoveries 'Roman', so it is impossible to say for sure to which period the burials belong. However, one brooch, which apparently came from near the bodies, and of which a drawing survives, appears to be a mid-late 1st century type, and indicates an early Roman

date for some of the burials.

Romano-British occupation near to this possible burial ground is suggested by finds made on the Electricity Power Station site (Downhall Road) of Roman pottery and of a roof tile of the type manufactured (probably not later than the early 2nd century AD) at the Ashted Villa 'factory'. Roman pottery has also been found in Canbury Passage and in Wood Street. The Canbury Field area was referred to in 14th century documents as 'Walehulle', an Old English name meaning 'hill of the Britons'; this name reinforces the notion of a Romano-British presence in the area.

5 Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area.

There are no listed buildings in the area. The buildings on the Lower Ham Road are mainly 20th century. The one notable exception is the Albany Boathouse built in 1893, for RJ Turk and Son, boat builders. It is the only surviving historic boathouse within the Borough of Kingston and is in the Borough's list of buildings of Townscape merit. It is now used as an interior design studio and workshop. The dominant materials are white painted timber, brick and tiles with balconies overlooking the river.

6 Contribution made by key unlisted buildings

Four substantial houses 102, 104, 108 and 110 Lower Ham Road built in approx 1895 are the oldest on this section of road and contemporary with twelve houses in the Richmond Road Conservation Area (CA leaflet 13) also built on the land of Bank Grove Estate. The materials used for these houses are a combination of red brick, planted timbers, white render and painted brick. Steeply pitched tiled roofs, tiled roofs and large central chimneys. Number 108 is white render. They have white painted timber balconies and bargeboards, sash windows and square bays. The style and form is entirely suited to their location overlooking the river. Further individual detached houses were built on sites along the Lower Ham Road in the early years of the C20 and 106, 112, and number 84 were built using similar styles and materials. The final addition to this group was 100 Lower Ham Road, this white rendered, half timbered house, with a steep pitched roof and timber balcony is on a large plot, it was built between the wars.

Edwardian semi detached and detached houses in the lower section of Lower Ham Road. Many of these have been much altered and the density of this housing is much greater than that in the northern section. Their form and scale together with the dense tree lined boundary of Canbury gardens create a sense of enclosure but still remain peaceful and free of traffic and noise.

7 The character and relationship of spaces within the area

The unifying factor and strongest influence on the pattern, scale, density and form of development is the river. Lower Ham Road developed from a track, which occupied the higher land of the riverbank. This tarmac road with a pavement on the developed side, links the barge path with Canbury Gardens, the very light traffic on this road contributes to its tranquillity and sense of pedestrian supremacy. Views across the river include riverside chalets, accessed only by boat, with a variety of river craft moored at their jetties.

Buildings on the eastern side of the road form a quiet residential area of which the north and south sections have contrasting characters. The northern section has river views and openness; the exception to this is 100 Lower Ham Road, which is hidden behind a high brick wall. The southern has a sense of enclosure created by the planted boundary of Canbury Gardens, which screen it from the river. The hedge separates the road from Canbury Gardens and the river. From within Canbury Gardens the river is glimpsed through the chestnut grove on the elevated path or fully viewed from the barge path. Victorian mansions with riverside jetties and boathouses and the open gently rising landscape of Broomgroves recreation ground and the new flats at Reptons Point lie on the bank opposite. The barge path and the park paths merge to exit the park north of Kingston Rail Bridge, which forms an entrance arch to the town centre in the near distance. Beyond the bridge lies The Slug and Lettuce Public House a dominant boathouse style building that is clearly visible from Kingston Bridge. The listed, now derelict premises of the Turks boat builders lies on the east of Thameside and is the final remnant of Turks boat builders 1740 site, which occupied the waterfront at this point all its associated buildings have been demolished and is the subject of a planning review.

8 Prevalent and traditional building materials, textures and colours.

The dominant building material is red brick. Tiles and slates are used for roofs. The older buildings have white painted timber bargeboards, fascias and timber balconies. There is some render, which has been painted white. Footway and roads are tarmac, whilst boundaries are a mixture of low brick built walls, fencing and hedges. The wall, which retains the elevated site of the Albany flats, is a remnant of the wall of The Albany Estate built in 1924 and is registered as a feature of townscape merit.

9 Contribution by green spaces, trees, hedges and other natural or cultivated elements to the character of the area

a The riverside path and barge walk to Ham Lands

The barge walk and footpath to Ham Lands is informally managed landscape, a contrast to Canbury Gardens. An unforgiving wire fence interspersed with hedgerow planting and self seeded trees separates the path from adjoining playing fields. The site of the former Hawker Siddely factory has been partially developed with medium density housing. Open space separates this development from the riverside walk.

The barge walk and footpath from Lower Richmond Road to Ham Lands is managed grassland, shrubs and trees, the paths are compacted sand providing a firm natural surface for walking and cycling. The long grass management along the boundary with the land to the east, provides an ideal environment for wild flowers and wildlife to thrive. The upper path creates a different perspective with the view linking the built environment with the River.

b Lower Ham Road Residential Area

The trees within the grounds of the high-rise flats are good specimens of Cedar. The main tree types along the entire route are indigenous deciduous species, Sycamore, ash, chestnut, oak, and willow. Rough grass banks form the edge of the road where it meets the riverbank.

c Canbury Gardens

From their inception Canbury Gardens have been a popular recreational space for the public, and easily within walking distance of Kingston Town Centre. The barge walk leading from Kingston Bridge is planted with a Chestnut Grove and is an important feature that may be seen from the Kingston Bridge and the opposite bank of the river. The grove leads to the open spaces of the park, with a bandstand, intertwining walkways and mature broad leaf trees. The park is subdivided into a series of linked spaces each with their own character providing the opportunity for different activities. Formal areas containing sport facilities, which include all year tennis courts, two bowling greens and a pavilion are adjacent to the Lower Ham Road. Overlooking the river is a public house, built on the site of a barge cottage, and boathouses. The park is screened from the houses in Lower Ham Road by trees and dense thicket hedging. This boundary hedge is more unruly in its planting and upkeep than the tranquil gardens which it protects. The hedge closes the views to the river from the houses and forms a barrier to access from the roadside with access pathways leading from the road.

Note The appraisal was undertaken in the summer months, the skeletons of these trees in their winter state will contribute to the changing nature of the landscape.

10 The setting of the conservation area and its relationship with the landscape or open countryside, including definition of significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas

The setting is dominated by the river, an ever-changing element, sometimes calm and reflective, and then set into motion by the wake of a passing riverboat. The river provides recreational facilities for anglers, rowers, barges and motorboats. It separates the area from the Richmond conservation area and overlooks the riverside buildings on the opposite bank, which include Victorian boathouses and large Victorian houses with landscaped grounds reaching into the river. On the islands are riverside chalets, only accessible by boat. The river links the elements described in section 9 together with Lower Ham Road. The meandering nature of the river at this point sets up a series of views and vistas, which can alternate between the distant and intimate within the distance of a few footsteps.

11 The extent of loss, intrusions or damage.

The present buildings are relatively recent and comprise only a small element of the total appraisal area. Fringe development comprising low and high-rise flats occurred between 1958 and 1984. The three highly visible eight storey blocks, York Court, Brunswick Court and Ulster Court are incongruous in scale, form, proportions and materials. The cedar trees in front of the flats helps to soften their appearance. Many of the older buildings in Lower Ham Road have undergone significant alteration but there are opportunities for enhancement. The Sea Scouts Boathouse lacks any design references, which would link it to its purpose or location. The Hawker Siddely Social Club provides an opportunity for enhancement.

The street furniture and concrete lampposts along the residential road are particularly out of keeping with the area. Fourscape is equally poor.

12 The existence of any neutral areas

The attached map of the area highlights positive and negative features of the appraisal area. The unmarked buildings are considered to be neutral.

13 CONCLUSION

Section 69(b) of the Planning Act 1990 requires local authorities to review their functions, determine whether any further areas should be designated as conservation areas, and, if so, to designate them. This area has been appraised, following instructions from the Royal Borough of Kingston, in accordance with the English Heritage methodology as set out in *Conservation area appraisals*.

Evaluation of physical and available documentary evidence, with advice and information provided by Kingston's conservation officers, suggests that, while relatively few individual buildings of architectural or historic merit are present, the character of the areas as a whole is of special architectural and historic interest on account of:

- a the intimate relationship with the River Thames;
- b its historic pattern of development, association with ancient riverside estates and later Victorian benefactors which represents an incremental
- c the importance and quality of the 19th century public works that established the municipal parklands, river embankments, walks and their associated built structures which are still used and maintained.
- d The presence of a number of buildings and structures of interest associated with river navigation and leisure.
- e The desirability of bringing any demolition within the areas under planning control and avoiding further loss of historic continuity in its buildings and structures.
- f The greater opportunities for enhancement of sites of negative or neutral impact through a higher level of design guidance and control than might otherwise be possible
- g The opportunities to develop and integrate conservation area proposals with the Thames Landscape Strategy and other relevant policy and guidance

The intimate nature and direct spatial and/or visual relationship with the river Thames has dictated the linear form of conservation area.

The principal benefits of designation are the enhanced control over substantial demolition and certain forms of alteration that would otherwise be "permitted development," the statutory weight that can be given to the decision maker in determining whether development proposals would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, and the corresponding weight given in relation to relevant UDP policies where the authority is obliged to defend decisions in appeals

In view of the above we conclude that the area outlined on the proposal map named Canbury Gardens / Ham lands, dated November 2002 should be designated as a conservation area.

CAP Studios 22nd November 2002