

**CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**PORTSMOUTH ROAD/QUEENS PROMENADE**

**FOR KINGSTON UPON THAMES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**November 2002**



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## KINGSTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

### Queens Promenade / Portsmouth Road

#### 1 Location

The appraisal area lies in the south of the Borough of Kingston along the east bank of Hampton Reach of the River Thames. Kingston-upon-Thames, a regional commercial center 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 Portsmouth Road from the west bank of the Thames. The medieval market place lies at Kingston's centre. The commercial centre has continually expanded, with major growth in the Victorian era following early railway development. The proposed conservation area is within a Strategic Area of Special Character and the proposed Thames Policy Area, and is visible from Hampton Court Palace Gardens, Kingston Bridge and the barge path on the opposite bank. Kingston scores high in quality of life surveys. Queens Promenade is described in the Thames Landscape Strategy as retaining

*“...much of its Victorian character with colourful flower beds, shrubberies , strips of lawn and cast iron railings.”*

The linear form, some 2000 meters long and up to 200 meters wide, includes half the width of the Thames, and Raven's Ait. The river is the principal unifying element, 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 center. The pathways are well used by walkers and cyclists. The sailing club is the oldest inland sailing club in the world. Sailing, rowing and canoeing all are centred on the basin, which separates the filter beds from Queens promenade.

Seething Wells, has taken on some importance for nature conservation on account of having been disused for some time. This area, together with the remnants of the Lambeth Waterworks, which are outside the borough boundary, form a visual gap between two developed areas. Waterfowl are present in large numbers and Canada Geese nest in the broom of the reservoir wall. Adjacent to the area are the Kingston Old Town and Cadogan Square Conservation Areas.

## **2 Origins and development**

### **Portsmouth Road**

Portsmouth Road was originally part of the turnpike road between London and Portsmouth. The initial section of the Portsmouth Road can be seen on the 17th-century 'bird's eye view' of Kingston (map1). On the inland side it was tree-lined. John Rocque's 1741-5 map (map 2) shows the road in great detail, with its origin at what is now the junction of the High Street (called West by Thames on 1741-5 map) and South Lane.

In 1741-5 there were very few buildings along this stretch of 'Road to Esher' (plate 2) In strong contrast to the regal sophistication of Hampton Court Palace on the other side of the Thames, the Portsmouth Road side merely had a few buildings and 'The Ravens Arle (or Ayte?)' (1741-5 map).

The 1762 map ( map 3) confirms its rural, undeveloped, nature as it enters Surbiton. The 1820s map of Kingston (map 4) seems to indicate the genesis of Queen's Promenade in two stretches of parallel road. The c. 1840 Tithe Map clearly shows the Portsmouth Road and the future Queen's Promenade.

Between c. 1840 and 1866, numerous villas were built along the riverfront and an inland residential development with streets running east, such as Uxbridge and Catherine Road. Queen's Promenade had an elegant appearance about 1900. Blocks of flats have replaced most the imposing mansions of that time.

### **Queens Promenade**

In 1838 Queen's Promenade, was just a swamp, used for gravel extraction. Until the 1850s, the river frontage had been dangerous and gravel working along the foreshore had weakened the base of the road. In the 1820s, Brunel was called in to strengthen the embankment, but his scheme was considered too costly for Kingston and the road was left to crumble. William Woods planned a raised walk between Ravens Ait and St. Raphael's Church for the exclusive use of residents of his houses, on land that he held on long lease from the Corporation. On meeting Frederick Gould, Chairman of Kingston Board of Surveyors, Woods undertook to pay for this Promenade and hand it and the lease to the people of the town, provided that the remaining stretch from St. Raphael's Church to the Anglers was accomplished at public expense. Between 1852-54, the bank and river bend were

infilled with the excavations from the reservoirs and filter beds from the construction of Chelsea Waterworks Co, and vast quantities of dirt removed from the roads. The City of London Corporation provided the necessary workboats, tackle and the services of their engineer S. W. Leath.

The promenade attracted many visitors but was neglected and collapsed five years after it was opened by Queen Victoria. Using stone from the old Blackfriars Bridge, it was rebuilt widened from six to nine meters.

In 1896 it was extended to join the High Street and terminate at the boathouses opposite Ravens Eyots. The improvement included a bandstand, since demolished, near the junction with Palace Road. The promenade was separated from Portsmouth Road by trees and railings, and access to Portsmouth Road laid out to coincide with the roads running east from Portsmouth Road.

The Rapheal family sold the land to the sailing club which had its home at that time on Ravens Ait. In 1870 The Thames Sailing Club built a timber framed clubhouse on the basing opposite Raven's Ait. The club pioneered sailing dingy design and the club is home to the unusual Thames "A" Rater sailing boat, only thirteen of which are in existence, dating from 1900, they can only be moved by river and therefore are intrinsic to the setting of building.

### **The Seething Wells Area of Special Character.**

Seething Wells occupies the site of a spring with supposed ophthalmic properties; plans for a spa on the site were abandoned. The spring is reputed to have been situated in a well house behind the old Fox and Hounds Public House, shown on the 1840 Tithe Map for Kingston, identified by plots of land numbered 1276 and 1277.

The Wells became the site of the Chelsea and Lambeth Waterworks, later the Metropolitan Water Board and now the Thames Water Authority. The solid Victorian masonry, an example of "Italianate Gothic," forms a notable landmark. Four of the original six castellated chimneys were pulled down in the early 1930s when the works were redesigned.

The Lambeth Waterworks Act of 1848 granted permission for the buildings and reservoirs, designed by the engineer, J Taylor. **NOTE** The list description names J. Simpson as the designer of the Lodge and coal stores, but J Taylor may have also

been responsible for these. Building commenced in 1849 and opened in 1851, supplying water to Chelsea and Pimlico.

In 1852 the Chelsea Water Company works and intake were moved to the land adjacent to the Lambeth Waterworks site and an Act of 1885 permitted the construction of waterworks to supply water to south London and Crystal Palace, designed by engineer Arthur Telford Smith. This group forms a prominent visual boundary between Surbiton and Kingston.

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

The area has a number of distinct elements:

- a. the former Seething Wells former filter beds and Water Works
- b. the residential strip along Portsmouth Road
- c. Queens Promenade - the river walk and associated riverside uses

#### **a. Seething Wells Water Works**

Whilst the former Water Works complex has been adapted as Kingston University student accommodation, the filter bed areas lie derelict, currently the subject of residential development proposals. They remain the best surviving example in the area of the Victorian approach to this type of essential Public Works project.

#### **b. The residential section**

No 28 Portsmouth Road was occupied during the 1870s by engineer John Dixon, who brought Cleopatra's Needle to London. Dr. Thomas Barnado, founder of the children's homes, lived (and died, in 1905) at St. Leonard's Lodge, 51 Portsmouth Road.

Alexander Raphael MP of St Albans, was patron of the Italianate Roman Catholic church St Raphael's; his remains lie beneath the high altar. Raphael lived at Surbiton Hall, which was surrounded by fine parkland, abutting Portsmouth Road and the river. On his death the developer William Woods purchased it in 1855 and built the houses in Surbiton Crescent, Uxbridge, Anglesea and Palace Roads. Woods

also developed Grove Road and constructed the first part of Queens Promenade, totalling some 300 houses.

### **c. Queens Promenade**

Queens Promenade, was laid out and constructed by William Woods, with the contributions of the Kingston Board of Works and the City of London Corporation, provided the setting for Woods' profitable housing developments. The boat house opposite Ravens Eyot belonged to Alderman Garrett, one time Mayor of London, he lived in an old house in Surbiton Road with grounds which extended to the Riverside. These boat houses are listed as buildings of townscape merit.

## **4 Archaeological Significance**

The Ramparts - an ancient relic of Roman wall extended 30 yards from the end of Surbiton Road to Kingston within the Queens Promenade boundary. Information on the Ramparts is limited to accounts by local historians such as G.W.Ayliffe in Old Kingston, describing the Ramparts as being used as a wharf for barges to land barley for Mr. Wadbrook's maltings. The maltings were on the corner of Surbiton Road. Roman relics were found at Seething Wells. Today there is an increasing awareness that industrial archaeology is being lost during the development of the post industrial society. This archaeology is valuable at many levels, and Seething Wells important because of the technology which was used to benefit the public health of the people within the city by providing a clean water supply. And the technological advances which engineers were making in building both underground and overground structures. Because many of these sites lie on valuable and desirable riverside sites they are in danger of being totally eliminated from the built environment. The Victorian Waterworks at Seething Wells will have many such artefacts together with written accounts and drawings. The site is therefore particularly sensitive.

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

**(Listed Buildings see Appendix for full descriptions)**

**The Church of St Raphael** , Charles Parker 1846 –1848 Listed Grade 11\* in 1968

The patron of this Italianate Roman Catholic church was Alexander Raphael MP of St Albans, whose remains lie beneath the altar. It has a square central tower in three stages over the west door, which leads to the central aisle of this three aisled church. It is faced in

ashlar, with a shallow pitch pantile roof. The church has flanked wings to the north and south, each are two storeys.

**Lambeth uncovered coal store** including tower and attached tunnels.

Listed Grade II in 2002. built in 1851 –2 , designed by James Simpson for Lambeth Waterworks in Romanesque style. Some minor C20 alterations. This comprises a roughly rectangular unroofed enclosure with a hydraulic accumulator tower at the NW end. It has underground tunnels which connect with the track underneath Portsmouth Road to a dismantled crane by a riverside wharf.

**Hermes Hotel**

Listed grade II dating from the C17 with C18 and C19 additions. Two storey brick building with tiled roof.

**No 3 Surbiton Road**

Listed Grade II early C18 or early C19 front. Two storey brick building with tiled mansard roof.

**Seething Wells**

**The Lodge**

Designed by James Simpson (? Taylor ) 1860 for Chelsea Water works it was listed in 1992 It is built from stock brick with hipped slate roof in Italianate style, the tall campanile tower, built in two stages, is possibly the ventilation shaft for the steam railway tunnel which serves the coal store. It has round-headed window arches. The lodge now serves as the porters lodge for the student accommodation.

**Chelsea Coal Store**

An Italianate design again by James Simpson (? Taylor ) for Chelsea Waterworks The main structure is single storey. To the northwest is a square tower rising in two stages .See list description for additional information. A tunnel runs from beneath the tower to the coal wharf by the Thames.

**Chelsea fountain.**

Listed Grade II 1992. Ornamental fountain again by James Simpson (?) Circular stone shaft on square plinth five concentric stone discs

**Chelsea Waterworks boundary wall and railings.**

These were erected circa 1854 and listed 1994. The stock brick panelled piers are linked by silled walls capped with stone copings. The cast iron railings have lotus leaf decoration to the uprights and the horizontal members are decorated with a series of pyramids – see map for location

## **6 Buildings of Townscape Merit**

Buildings currently identified are:

Single Storey building adjacent to Filter beds

Numbers 35 and 37 Portsmouth Road and 37 Uxbridge Road are included in the Cadogan Road Conservation Area and listed as Buildings Townscape Merit.

12 Anglesea Road

28 Portsmouth Road

60 Portsmouth Road (Fox and Hounds Pub)

Electricity substation, Portsmouth Road

85, Portsmouth Road (former Chelsea Waterworks Engineers House )

Lambeth Waterworks Lodge

Boundary Wall and railings on riverside from borough boundary to Harts boatyard

1-3 Dover Cottages, Seething Wells Lane

## **7 Contribution made by key unlisted buildings**

The wall to the filter beds, viewed from river and barge path.

63 and 64 Portsmouth Road,

1-22 South Lane.

## **8 The character and relationship of spaces within the area**

### **Seething Wells Area of Special Character.**

Seething Wells Water works and the filter beds occupy a total of 26.5 ha. Bisected by Portsmouth Road. The water works are now obsolete and the 7ha of filter beds provide a rich environment for wetland wild life. Distinctive turquoise railings on low brick walls prevent access to the Chelsea Waterworks filter beds and the riverside. The open aspect, protected by the presence of the waterworks, gives physical and visual separation between Kingston and Thames Ditton. The vacant land on this site has led to development pressure along the site at both sides of the Portsmouth Road. The recent development within the Seething Wells site, for Kingston University Halls of Residence, is low rise and constructed from soft yellow brick, which blends well with the bricks of the waterworks. The development is set back from the road and the original walls and railings form the boundary to the site retaining the visual continuity of the site.

### **Portsmouth Road and the Church of St Raphael**

This is a busy commuter route from Esher to Kingston Town Centre passing through Surbiton and Thames Ditton Portsmouth Road separating the mainly residential development from the Thames. It has an open aspect, a key characteristics of the area. Portsmouth Road terminates at the High Street, the density of the housing increases and buildings on either side of the road close the views to the river. Railings separate the road from the river along the side of the foot way.

The Church of St Raphael, which can be clearly seen from Hampton Court Palace, Kingston Bridge and many points along the opposite bank of the river overlooks the River and Queens Promenade. The residential areas adjacent to Portsmouth Road retain many fine examples of Victorian suburban development and the historical map sequence indicates that this type of house lined Portsmouth Road. Only a few examples of these houses remain, having been demolished and replaced with blocks of flats. This has unbalanced the scale and proportion of the streetscape.

The clubhouse and boathouses of the Kingston Rowing Club and a public house occupy the land opposite Ravens Ait, north of and adjacent to the filter beds. At this point access to Queens Promenade provides a pleasant riverside walk terminating at the High Street. Along its length Portsmouth Road has views to the river to Hampton Court Palace Grounds. It is

clearly visible from the palace grounds and the barge walk. The trees and the tower of St Raphael being a particularly striking feature when viewed from the distance.

### **Queens Promenade and the River**

Today the Promenade retains its Victorian character and is the backdrop to a lively scene, occupied by people of all ages and social groups, it is a popular recreational venue for walkers, joggers, sailors and people who simply wish to stop and eat lunch read or reflect on one of the many seats which line the Promenade –all donated and dedicated to the memory of people. Views to Hampton Court Palace Grounds and the barge path opposite increase the value and sensitivity of this linear open space. The boundary planting to the road provides a separation from the busy Portsmouth Road and is an important feature of the wider landscape. Landing stages advertise river boat trips, visits to Hampton Court or diner on the river. Geese, ducks and wildlife abound. Raven's Ait, once osier beds fringed with willow trees, became the headquarters of Kingston Rowing Club is now developed as Conference and Cooperate Entertainment centre and dominates the rivers scene.

### **9 Prevalent traditional building materials, textures and colours.**

Brick is the dominant building material with red clay tile or slate roofing. Stucco, white render and stone. On the later development, white or black painted timber boarding infilled with white render is a feature of first floor external finish. The roofs of the older buildings are steeply pitched with some mansards. The brick of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dover Cottages are a attractive soft red colour. The terrace of 22 Victorian cottages in South Lane has polychrome arches above the windows and doors, slate roofs and contrasting stringcourse. Railings form boundaries along the west side of Portsmouth Road, they are painted turquoise on the water works site and black along Queens Promenade. Footways are tarmac on both sides of the road as is the surface of Queens Promenade.

### **10 Contribution by green spaces, trees, hedges and other natural or cultivated elements to the character of the area.**

For much of its length Portsmouth Road has views across the river to Hampton Court Palace grounds and the barge path. When viewed from the barge path and Kingston Bridge the trees in the area contribute an important visual separation from the development to the east of Portsmouth Road. The planting of trees along some of the boundaries of the buildings on Portsmouth Road provide positive edges to the

development and are marked on the map. Queens Promenade is formally cultivated with areas of grass, flowerbeds, shrubs and hedgerows. Most of the trees lining Portsmouth road are indigenous deciduous trees, and are also planted up the side roads, which are viewed from the Conservation Area.

**11 The setting of the conservation area and its relationship with the landscape, including definition of significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas.**

There are important local and distant views. Views into the area from Kingston Bridge and the barge path are documented on the photographic record. This record illustrates that The Church of St Raphael is prominent from many points, having an intimate connection with its immediate surroundings while dominating from a distance. The trees lining Portsmouth Road form an edge to the developed area and blend into the tree lined landscape of the Surrey Hills. Houses along Portsmouth Road are glimpsed through these trees. The façade of the TA building is prominent from across the river.

**12 The extent of loss, intrusions or damage.**

- i. The scale and form of the high rise flats at Porton Court, Thames Haven, The Hermitage, Tynamera detract from the residential nature of the road and are an unwelcome feature and harm the composition of the landscape, particularly in the distant views where the rise above the tree line.
- ii. The buildings of The London River Yacht Club, The Conference Centre on Ravens Ait, Rivera Cafeteria and Snack Bar, are poorly cared for and of inferior design, with poor detailing and lack of maintenance. The disused petrol station surrounded in timber hoarding has a negative impact within its vicinity.
- iii. Public realm street furniture and lampposts on Portsmouth Road are out keeping with the area. The access and car park to sailing club and Queens Promenade, is particularly unfortunate, with the storage of rubbish bins, concrete fencing and general disrepair having a negative impact on the setting of a building of townscape merit and the access to Queens Promenade.

iv. Seething Wells filter beds, whilst it is recognised that the filter beds have an important role in providing open space, separation and a wildlife haven, it is at risk. The lack of care whilst its future is determined threatens the site in the long term. It is therefore perceived as being at risk.

### **13 The existence of any neutral areas**

All the areas, which are unmarked on the map, are considered to be neutral.

### **14 CONCLUSION**

Section 69(b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) 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 area as a whole is of special architectural and historic interest on account of:

- a- the importance of the setting of the river bank in relation to the historic landscape of Hampton Court Palace, including views in and out of that parkland, and other strategic views from the riverside cycle path.
- b- the importance and quality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century public works that established Queens Promenade as a place of recreation which has been in use for one hundred and fifty years.

- c- the presence of a number of buildings and structures of interest associated with river navigation and leisure.
- d- the industrial / public health heritage which is represented in the buildings and structures at Seething Wells Water Works.
- e- the domestic scale, rhythm and group or townscape quality of mainly pre-war or earlier buildings alongside or near the river front;
- f- its historic pattern of development, association with ancient riverside estates and later Victorian benefactors.
- g- The desirability of bringing any demolition within the areas under planning control and avoiding further loss of historic continuity in its buildings and structures.
- h- 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.
- i- The opportunities to develop and integrate conservation area proposals with the Thames Landscape Strategy and other relevant policy and guidance

The areas' linear form stems from the principal criteria influencing inclusion or omission of land and buildings within or without the proposed boundary. This is considered to be direct spatial and/or visual relationship with the river Thames.

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 Queens Promenade/ Portsmouth Road, dated November 2002 should be designated as a conservation area.

CAP STUDIOS November 2002