

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Draft Character Appraisal and Management Strategy Programme

Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area

January 2008



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DRAFT SURBITON TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY PROGRAMME – (Draft January 2008)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A conservation area is defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.
- 1.2 This character appraisal defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area, designated in June 1991. It also provides a sound basis for developing proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area at a later stage. The description of the special character of the area, as set out in the published general planning information leaflet, states it to be “part of the Surbiton “New Town” following the relocation of the railway station to its current site in 1838. Early houses in Victoria Road and Brighton Road were converted to commercial use around 1870, and the area now forms a substantial part of the district shopping centre”.
- 1.3 A leaflet on this conservation area was published as general planning information in February 2002. Other relevant background information includes the original designation documents of June 1991, the Surbiton District Revitalisation documents of 1992 and Essential Surbiton¹. Documents on the original proposals to designate the adjoining conservation areas of Claremont Road (October 1987), St Andrew’s Square (March 1971) and Victoria Avenue (July 1988) also contain background information.

2 Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The legal basis for conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) *Planning and the Historic Environment* and PPG 16 *Archaeology and Planning*. Local planning authorities are required by the government to demonstrate how they are complying with requirements for the designation and protection of conservation area in sections 71 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 2.2 The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Unitary Development Plan (UDP, first alteration) contains the Council’s policies and proposals for development, regeneration and land use in the Borough. The Council adopted the UDP on 11th August 2005

¹ A Heritage Walk by John Pink (1999)

- 2.3 Policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas are set out in the UDP (Policies BE3 – BE4). Other relevant UDP policies that relate to conservation areas are Listed Buildings (BE5-BE7), Buildings of Townscape Merit (BE8) and Areas of Archaeological Significance/ Scheduled Ancient Monuments (BE19-20).
- 2.4 This appraisal should be read in conjunction with the national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) *Planning and the Historic Environment*. The methodology behind this appraisal, and the layout and content, follow two sets of guidance produced by English Heritage in 2006². As recommended in PPG15, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

3 Location and setting

Location and context **Plan 1: Context**

- 3.1 The Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area is located in the south west of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 13 miles south east of central London. The area consists of 311 postcode properties in an area of 5.2 hectares and forms the centre of Surbiton, one of several district centres within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (see Plan 1: Context).
- 3.2 The current boundary of the Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area resulted from the reconfiguration of various parts of existing conservation areas in 1991. The boundary of the newly designated area was planned to incorporate the commercial parts of three existing conservation areas; Victoria Avenue (designated 1988), Claremont Road (designated 1987) and St Andrew's Square (designated 1971) shown on Plan 2.
- 3.3 The three adjoining conservation areas were considered to be individually homogenous in character. Claremont Road represents the historic core of Surbiton, based upon it being a mid-19th century new town created around the station. Whilst St Andrew's Square generally represents the late 19th century residential development, and Victoria Avenue and Brighton Road form a coherent development of residential and commercial properties of a similar design, built between 1890 and 1905.
- 3.4 The Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area includes Brighton Road (1-73, 18-68), Surbiton Baptist Church, Balaclava Road; St Mary's Road (1-9) and the site of the former sorting office; 41a Cottage Grove; Victoria Road (1-48,84-88) and Surbiton Station; St. James Road (1-15, 2-34 including St Johns Court and the Club); St Marks Hill (1-7);and Claremont Road (1-29, 2-26).

² Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, February 2006

Street Pattern and layout

- 3.5 Surbiton Town Centre comprises a main high street (Victoria Road) with two roads (Brighton and Claremont) joining it at either end. Claremont Road is an important transport route to Kingston, whilst Victoria Road and Brighton Road contain the majority of Surbiton's shops. The linear road layout which is defined on Victoria Road by a long terrace of shops and on Brighton Road and Claremont Road by shorter terraces creates a strong rhythm and sense of enclosure.
- 3.6 The Victorian street pattern of narrow plots remains and defines the layout of the conservation area. The majority of the buildings front directly onto the footways, except where there are private forecourts.

Landscape and Setting **Plan 2: Location**

- 3.7 The main landmark feature is the railway station (built in 1937) to the east and provides a sense of enclosure, as well as an arrival point to and termination point from the conservation area. The station entrance is located at a busy roundabout formed from the junction of four roads, which creates a focal point in the conservation area. Radiating out from this important space are views rising up St Marks Hill, along Victoria Road, St James Road and Claremont Road linking the space with more distant townscape features. Victoria Road, Brighton Road and Claremont Road contain some imposing buildings which form the dominant townscape element in the conservation area. There is a gradual change in the topography to the east as the land rises up St Marks Hill and gently drops along Victoria Road. The commercial character of the area is predominant and reflects the previous interests of three different conservation areas.
- 3.8 In the surrounding area there are several other conservation areas and The Mall Local Area of Special Character (See Plan 1: Context).

4.0 Historic development **Plan 3: Historic development**

- 4.1 Surbiton Town Centre is part of the Surbiton New Town, formed following the relocation of the railway station to its current site in 1838. Claremont Road and Victoria Road were first laid out at the time that Thomas Pooley³ was building houses in the 1840's around Claremont Gardens⁴, to the north of the area. From 1870, following the conversion of houses in Victoria Road and on the east side of Brighton Road to commercial uses, it became an important district retail area.

³ Pooley had a national presence and one of his designers, Elmes, worked on civic buildings in Everton (AJ: 8 October 1998)

⁴ Claremont Road was part of the first phase of the new town started in 1838 and set around the communal landscaped Claremont gardens.

- 4.2 The Surbiton estate map of 1847 is useful for dating buildings⁵, although many plots were not actually built upon until much later and the road system in and around St James' Road was laid out differently. The first edition of the OS map⁶ demonstrates that by 1865 both sides of Victoria Road, Claremont Road and the north side of Brighton Road were lined with terraced and semi-detached houses, giving the town a residential dormitory character. The only commercial and industrial premises were to be found in the rear yards of buildings on the south side of Victoria Road adjacent to and probably benefiting from close proximity to the railway lines.
- 4.3 By the turn of the century Surbiton had changed its character to a commercial centre⁷, with purpose built commercial units on the west side of Brighton Road and the redevelopment of existing houses for commercial use as seen on the east side of Claremont Road and on the ground floors of houses on Victoria Road. A post office was built at 38 Victoria Road in 1898 and remained in this location until re-locating to 2 Victoria Road in the 1990's.
- 4.4 The buildings on the west side of Brighton Road (known as the Electric Parade) are of historic interest as the street was lit by large electric lamps from Surbiton Electricity Works in 1904, which was a great innovation at the time. Although the name 'Electric Parade' actually refers to a small lane to the rear of the parade. By 1913 the tram had arrived and the area was developing as a self contained residential suburb supporting its own commercial centre.
- 4.5 Just outside the conservation area, and leading from Brighton Road are Cottage Grove and Victoria Avenue. Part of the original Pooley estate of the 1840's, Cottage Grove is comprised of an harmonious group of modest two storey semi-detached artisan cottages. Victoria Avenue, built between 1893 and 1904, is characterised by several cohesive groups of substantial red brick semi-detached houses.
- 4.6 The south side of Victoria Road developed more slowly and the historic maps demonstrate that the majority of this side was rebuilt from the 1920's onwards. The small plots were often amalgamated, resulting in buildings which do not respect the scale, height, frontage widths, and general proportion or architectural styles of the buildings on the north side of Victoria Road. However there is a strong building line that today adds to the enclosure of the street, a key element of the areas character.

⁵ The map confirms the presence on Claremont Road of 2 semi detached villas set back from the road on the east side.

⁶ 1863/65

⁷ The prosperity of the town at this time owes much to the "Surbiton Improvement Commissioners".

5 Spatial Analysis

Interrelationship of spaces and key views

- 5.1 Surbiton Town Centre comprises three main streets lined with parades of shops which enclose the streetscene on the back edge of the pavement. The junction of Victoria Road with Brighton Road, and St James' Road/Claremont Road/St Mark's Hill comprise key focal points. There are several terraces, each of a strong architectural composition and featuring fine detailing. The railway line, embankment and bridge provide a strong edge to the area on the south side of Victoria Road. The modern buildings of St Marks House (DST House) and the YMCA at each end of Victoria Road provide bookends to the boundary of the conservation area. The areas to the north and east are defined by linear streets lined with coherent groups of Victorian dwellings.
- 5.2 Key views are taken out of the conservation area into the residential elements of the three adjacent conservation areas forming focal points, which are enclosed by avenues of street trees. The rising topography of St Mark's Hill provides dramatic views down into the Victoria Road junction that is dominated by the buildings on the north side of the street.

6 Character analysis

- 6.1 The predominant historic character of the area is Victorian, although it has undergone a number of evolutions, principally with dwelling houses being converted to shops in the 1870's, which commonly involved the addition of shop frontages to some of the original houses. Surbiton Railway Station and the buildings around the Victoria Road, Claremont Road, St James Road and St Marks Hill junction form an important gateway into the conservation area offering a distinctive mixture of styles and interest. The conservation area has an enclosed and uniform character defined by strong building lines, and rooflines. This is also reflected in the surrounding pattern of planned roads to the north west, including St James Road and St Andrews Road. The character of the area has been analysed below under five headings, these are; land use and activity; architectural character; Views, focal points and landmarks; trees, greenery and open spaces; and the public realm (spaces between buildings, such as streets, roads etc.).

Land use and Activity **Plan: 4 Land use**

- 6.2 Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area is primarily a mix of commercial uses and shops. Financial and professional services predominate on Victoria Road, with shop and food and drink uses most prevalent on Brighton Road. Plan 4: Land use shows that Claremont Road has a greater mix of commercial uses. Residential accommodation is more common on the upper floors in Brighton Road and Claremont Road where it is often within purpose-designed flats with separate access from the street. Victoria Road has more varied uses on the upper floors including residential, office and storage. The upper floor uses are

not shown in Plan 4, and a comprehensive survey is required to understand the character and any under-use present in the upper floors. Similarly vacant ground floor units are not shown, and the incidence and impact of vacant or short-term lets to charity shops should be monitored over a number of years. There is a mix of purpose-built and traditional pubs, one church, and retailers include high street chains as well as many independent shops. There is a marked difference in the use of the area over the course of a day with Claremont Road and the roundabout being the busiest in the daytime, and Brighton Road generally attracting more people in the evening with its high proportion of restaurants, takeaways, bars and pubs.

Architectural character **Plan 5: Building Character Analysis**

- 6.3 The conservation area generally has a vertical grain with 4 storey buildings on Brighton Road (27-63) and Claremont Road (nos 6-22) and 3 storey buildings on Victoria Road (nos 1-33, 58a-88) and Brighton Road (18-58, 15-25) establishing a strong pattern and rhythm of roofscape.



Strong horizontal roofline and vertical rhythm in Victoria Road

- 6.4 The architectural style was influenced locally by the architect Philip Hardwick in the mid-19th century. Examples of late Regency style buildings decorated in stucco survive on the dominant 3 storey frontages on the northern side of Victoria Road (nos. 2-8⁸). The classical style and detailing of nos 2-8, 9-14 and 18-24 creates strong rhythm and roofline interest. Only nos. 15-17 (previously Somerfields/now M&Co, built in 1971) and 26-27 are weaker elements on this northern frontage as their horizontal emphasis breaks up the vertical rhythm⁹. The first floor building line changes at nos 36-45 Victoria Road as the buildings were converted to shops in the late 19th century, with the construction of single storey front extensions projecting from the original facades. The scale reduces at this point from 3 to 2 storeys and provides a memory of the early shopping street. These buildings (nos 36-45) are a positive addition to the conservation area in height, scale, style and materials, although have been poorly maintained

⁸ C 1840, grade II listed buildings

⁹ Although the building (now M&Co) is an example of modernism being finished in grey concrete with long vertical windows, it does however retain certain features that are in keeping with the streetscape such as its height and style.

and are currently in a poor condition. The former post office building is an attractive and prominent feature of the street scene, as it is decorated in red brick and topped with Dutch gables.



Somersetfield (Nos 15-17 Victoria Road)



Old Post Office (nos 38 Victoria Road)

- 6.5 Examples of a slightly later architectural style is seen in the group of buildings at nos 6-24 Claremont Road (built between 1906 and 1912) and nos 15-63 Brighton Road (built between 1865 and 1895). These corner turret features at 13 & 15 and 63 Brighton Road are distinctive. Both terraces on Brighton and Claremont Roads were purpose-built, comprising ground floor shops with residential units above, and are examples of the Flemish style with rich terracotta details and ornate gables.



Claremont Road

- 6.6 Nos 2-4 Claremont Road form an attractive curved corner building which blends well with No 1 St Marks Hill to form a small terrace. The terrace of 1-13 Brighton Road also has a strong corner feature which balances with the turret on 15 Brighton Road at the entrance to Victoria Avenue.



Brighton Road (nos 1-13)

- 6.7 There are a number of traditional shop fronts on Victoria Road. NatWest bank (nos 10-11), built in 1924 and faced in Portland stone, is a good example of the bankers 'classic' style. The Abbey National (no 12), which was previously Hudson grocers in the mid-19th century, is a fine example of the Art Nouveaux style dating from about 1900. There are two businesses on Victoria Road that have survived in their current premises from the 19th century with good traditional shop fronts, these are the Victoria Public House (No. 28) and FP Turner Jewellers (no. 31). On Claremont Road there are three buildings (No. 8, 10 and 15) whose shop fronts appear to be in the original design. Other key buildings in the area include the Coronation Hall public house, built in 1911¹⁰, Woolworths¹¹ on Victoria Road and the red brick and stone building of Surbiton Club on St. James Road (1898).



No's 10 & 12 Victoria Road



31 Victoria Road

- 6.8 On the west side of Claremont Road, Waitrose¹² is a modern replacement of a cinema and is of contemporary architectural interest. The frontage of the supermarket integrates well with the adjoining terraces of purpose built 1930's shops and flats in Claremont Road and on St James's Road (nos 6-16).

¹⁰ The building was originally The Coronation Cinema before becoming the Roxy and the Ritz. After falling into disrepair in the 1960's it was recently acquired by Weatherspoons and became a public house.

¹¹ Built in the 1930's and fine example of Art Deco style with shutters on first floor window.

¹² The site had originally been occupied by the Surbiton Odeon (1934), with a peach/ gold auditorium and an orchestra. After it closed in 1975 it became a B&Q store until it was demolished in 1998.

However the South and west façades of the Waitrose building are less attractive with large areas of inactive brick frontage, roller shutters and venting. These facades impact negatively upon the Surbiton Club building, which is a positive addition to the streetscene and has been proposed as a building of townscape merit. There are a number of shop fronts on Claremont and Brighton Roads that need replacement, such as the reinstatement of vertical divisions and treatment of fascia design and stall risers.

- 6.9 The main part of the Brighton Road terrace (even nos 22-38) forms part of a formal composition of early houses in Surbiton Town Centre dating from 1868-85. The houses were converted to shops at around the turn of the century with the addition of front extensions. The terrace has a strong classical rhythm and roofline but has suffered some unsympathetic alterations including replacement window frames and loss of architectural ironwork and architectural detailing on the upper floors. Nos 18-20, dating from 1915, are in the Arts and Crafts style and provide a handsome corner feature to the Victoria Road junction.
- 6.10 There is a small group of three early cottages (c. 1840) at 65-71 Brighton Road, one of which retains a small front extension added when converted to a retail unit. Adjoining these cottages is 'The Lamb', an attractive pub from the 19th century that was rebuilt in 1914 in the "free Tudor" style with red brick dressings. This small-scale group of buildings is reflected by the properties on the other side of Brighton Road, and marks a transition in scale from the imposing properties on the main part of the shopping street to the small-scale development lining the road leading to Portsmouth Road and the river.
- 6.11 On the south side of Victoria Road, outside the existing conservation area boundary, the frontage contains mainly early 20th century buildings of limited architectural interest and of little group value. The degree to which these buildings affect the conservation area varies between three specific groups of varying building grain. Buildings 78 to 84 are, as the north side of Victoria Road, three storeys in height and have the most regular plot widths that complement the historical buildings opposite. At the other end of Victoria Road, buildings 49 to 58 are not as fitting. These properties now form just two large units, Sainsbury's and the YMCA, and their height and plot width is largely out-of-scale with other buildings along Victoria Road. In between these two groups of buildings, numbers 58 to 78 have a mixture of plot widths and heights creating interest in the street scene but weakening the rhythm and enclosure of Victoria Road.
- 6.12 The surviving mid-Victorian cottages at nos 74-77, on the south side of Victoria Road, represent the earliest phase in terms of frontage width, height and roof design. The area occupied by Sainsbury's and the YMCA hostel has a wide frontage and harsh red brickwork in a dense and bulky form that creates conflict to the frontage of the buildings on the north side of Victoria Road. This frontage lacks the visual interest and detail found in the majority of buildings in the conservation area and although the frontage of Sainsbury's includes a large amount of glazing at ground level, few active frontages makes this section of the

south side of Victoria Road less vibrant. Some of the return elevations (58-58a, 65 & 67, 68-70, 74-75) are unattractive in the street scene, by virtue of the excessive mass and lack of architectural detailing that impinges on views through the gaps between buildings.

Townscape Plan 6: Townscape Analysis

Views/ Focal Points & Landmarks

6.13 The railway station and forecourt provide the key point of arrival in Surbiton Town Centre and as such form a key landmark and focal point in the streetscene, from which three positive views can be taken. These views are shown on the Townscape map and are as follows: View 1 shown on the plan provides a vista to the east looking up St Mark's Hill where St Marks church can be seen in the background, with the former 1911 cinema building in the fore. View 2 (on plan), in a south westerly direction presents the rhythm and unity of the buildings on the north side of Victoria Road. Looking to the north of the railway station, in View 3 (on plan), there is a strong group composition of three corner buildings enclosing the junction, and there exists long views through the enclosed foreground to the Clock Tower and Claremont Gardens behind it.



Surbiton Railway Station and forecourt



View 1: St Mark's Hill. Eastwards from Station



View 2: Victoria Road, Westwards from station



View 3: View along Claremont Road

6.14 On Brighton and Claremont Road, key views are focused on the regular symmetry of the upper floors and roofline, and the alternate movement between

the pairs of gables and chimney stacks. From the YMCA hostel at the junction of Victoria Road and Brighton Road, three corner turret features (at nos. 13,15 & 63 Brighton Road) come into view looking northwards. The south side of Brighton Road also presents strong horizontal lines evolving from the fascia and shop front rhythms, originally lines with innovative electric lanterns.

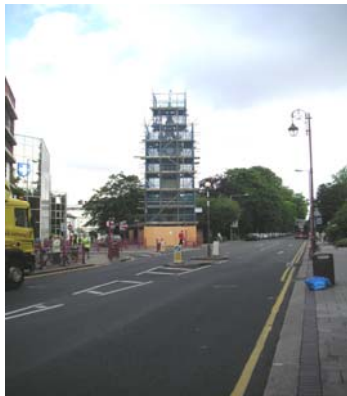


View A: Turrets on Brighton Road,



View B: Corner turret on Brighton Road

- 6.15 Views out of the conservation area are enclosed by landmark buildings, including St Marks Church (built in 1844)¹³ to the north east, the Clock Tower and Nuffield House to the north (View 3 and View C on plan) and St. Andrews Church to the north west (View 5 on plan). Views of St Andrews Church tower are prominent from the St Andrew's Road/ Victoria Road junction. The tower forms a dominant feature in the skyline.



View C: Clock Tower from Claremont Road



View 4: St Andrews Church from Victoria Road

- 6.16 Views out of Claremont Road to the north reveal a dynamic relationship between Nuffield House and the clock tower, with the change in land use and mature trees framing the approach. Views down Victoria Avenue and Maple Road also mark the link between the commercial and residential areas (View 8 and View 10 on plan) and the view of the former is emphasised by mature trees on either side (View 8 on plan).

¹³ The church was enlarged in 1854-60 only to be badly damaged by a bomb in 1940. It was restored in 1960.



View 10: View down Maple Road



View 12: Cottage Grove with St Andrews church tower in background

- 6.17 The Railway bridge to the south of Brighton Road, although not in the conservation area and currently in a poor state, provides a key entry point into the conservation area, acting as an important gateway.

Trees, Greenery and Open Spaces

- 6.18 Street trees, both mature and younger specimens growing along Victoria and Brighton Roads, make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area, especially those that have been planted on the wide pavement on Victoria Road in front of the shops. The young trees have a vertical form that compliments the vertical rhythm of the buildings on the north side of Victoria Road.
- 6.19 Due to the hard edge of the railway line on the south, and the tight development of large Victorian villas to the north, there are not many glimpses east and west between buildings, or into rear garden areas. However, there are some rear service areas on Victoria Road, St James Road (Waitrose loading bay) and St Mark's Hill. Just outside the conservation area the rear car park and servicing space behind the properties on the south side of Victoria Road, reached by an alley way and service entrances¹⁴, is not attractive and characterised by litter, a variety of paving surfaces and exposed cabling on the return. Security bars, refuse, graffiti, and car parking occupy the sides of 69-70 and 71-72 Victoria Road, producing unattractive return elevations and having an overall negative impact on the street scene.
- 6.20 Views of tree canopies, planting and open space, identified in Plan 6 as green space, are limited from public vantage points within the conservation area. A small number of green spaces that lie outside the conservation area can be viewed from St Mary's Road to the north, looking out over the gardens of houses on Cottage Grove. These green spaces are also viewed from the Brighton Road and Cottage Grove junction. There are also several green spaces made up of yards and gardens that can be viewed from the public realm to the rear of shops on Brighton Road, and between St Andrews and St James' Roads.

¹⁴ This alley was probably a way to the stables or possibly to one of the coal yards adjacent to the railway

Public Realm

- 6.21 The public realm is generally in a reasonable condition and provides a distinctive character. Street furniture (bollards, refuse bins and street lights) were installed in the early 1990's as part of a revitalisation scheme, and are co-ordinated by a uniform colour code (maroon). The roundabout features a multi lantern lamp column enclosed with railings that compliments the focal point created by the surrounding buildings and prominent station building. During the Christmas period a large Christmas tree forms an attractive feature in this space.
- 6.22 The station forecourt area forms part of the main gateway into the conservation area and the wide pavements fronting Victoria Road are a positive feature. However, areas around the forecourt, as shown in the Plan 6: Townscape, have a negative impact on the setting of the station, a listed building, and on the area generally. The car parking and taxi queues in front of the station at peak times also have a negative impact on the overall appearance on the area. A combination of soft and hard landscaping would help improve the visual impact of this area.
- 6.23 The popularity of the area for shopping and the role of Surbiton Station, the twenty ninth busiest station in the UK (2005), as a key public transport node have led to high pedestrian and vehicle flows along Victoria Road, the latter detracting from the character of the conservation area. The increase in traffic has also become a perceived threat to the safety of pedestrians especially with regards to crossing Victoria Road and entering the station forecourt. Adding to this perceived threat is the narrowness of the pedestrian footways along Victoria Road. These pavements can become quite congested, which has a negative impact on the use of the retail area and the character of the conservation area.



View D: Cycle parking from station forecourt



Heavy flows of traffic along Victoria Road

- 6.24 There are three off-street car parks serving Surbiton Town Centre which are all just outside the conservation area. The whole area lies within a controlled parking zone. Lorry loading, pedestrian crossing points, and bus stop clearways take up large areas of the highway, and require prominent identification markings and signing. Kerbside parking on the three main streets is set out in marked spaces, and uses pay and display machines with the associated

signing. The public realm is therefore dominated by modern highway markings and signing that detracts from the setting of the Victorian facades.

- 6.25 Increased cycle parking was provided in the Surbiton station car parks as part of an exemplar scheme in 2004. The cycle parking is located to the south west of the station forecourt and tends to be full on weekends. Additional cycle parking is required and should be encouraged in the retail and business areas as well as at the station. Careful consideration should be given to both the design and location of this cycle parking.
- 6.26 Several priorities have been identified with regards to improving the public realm in the vicinity of Victoria Road. These priorities include the maintenance and reconstruction of sections of Victoria Road, tackling the current congestion and subsequent delay of buses, upgrading the pedestrian environment focused on improving pedestrian crossings in Victoria Road and at the station roundabout junction, consideration of current parking provision with regards to the viability of trading, redevelopment of the Old Post office site and the improvement of Surbiton Station centred on the station providing a rail/ bus/ taxi public transport interchange. Although a number of shorter term initiatives have been approved by the Council to address these priorities it is the intention of the Council to prepare an improvement strategy containing clear objectives and an implementation plan to deliver those objectives. It is felt that the proposed improvement strategy will assist in tackling the appearance of the station forecourt, increasing pedestrian safety, and reducing the amount of traffic in front of the station and the domination of road markings and signage, which have been identified as issues in this appraisal.
- 6.27 The improvements to Victoria Road include three ongoing projects although due to the redevelopment of the Old Post office some highway works are currently delayed. The existing programme of work includes a study of the Victoria Road junction with Brighton Road, which examines possible improvements to the junction layout to aid buses turning left into Brighton Road, the reconstruction of the whole carriageway along Victoria Road, and the relocation of the bus stop at St Marks Hill by Surbiton Station.
- 6.28 Whilst the proposed enhancement scheme provides opportunities to improve the environment of the conservation area, possible negative effects will also warrant consideration. With respect to this Surbiton Town Centre's Conservation Area designation has been identified as a key consideration to address in planning the future for Victoria Road and the surroundings.
- 6.29 Current redevelopment of the Old Post Office site includes funding for environmental improvements to St Mary's Road. The details of these improvements have not yet been considered.

7 Assessment of Special Interest

The assessment of Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area shows there to be a number of interesting and important features which contribute to the special character of the area, and which therefore require enhancement and preservation. A summary of these features is presented below.

7.1 Key Features of special character and the appearance of Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area

Historic interest

- *An attractive Victorian environment with 2 key historic phases (1840's-1860's and 1900-05);*
- *A fundamental link between the evolution of the town centre and the growth of the railway station.*

Character/ Land use

- *Retail uses on the ground floor with a mix of residential and office/business premises on the upper levels.*
- *An example of a planned town development with a distinctive and mixed character.*

Architectural interest

- *A strong line of Flemish style on the eastern and western edges of the conservation area on Brighton and Claremont Roads*
- *Examples of the earliest Mid Victorian buildings found on Victoria Road.*

Townscape features

- *A skyline distinguished by individual landmark buildings such as the Brighton Road turrets and Old Post Office. Vistas are also created by group compositions such as the banks on the roundabout, 2-9 Victoria Road and the Flemish style buildings.*
- *A number of key views into adjacent conservation areas often focused on important landmark buildings, which help to improve legibility.*

Summary of Character

“Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area forms a substantial part of the District shopping centre, having originally been developed by Thomas Pooley as part of a “New Town” established following the relocation of the station in 1838, rebuilt again in 1937. Early Victorian houses in Victoria Road and Brighton Road were converted to commercial use from 1870 onwards, and at the turn of the century purpose built shopping parades in the Flemish style were constructed in

Brighton Road and Claremont Road and survive as a disparate but harmonious group within a unified commercial townscape.”

8 Management Strategy Programme

8.1 A set of indicators are set out below to take forward the character analysis, from which further decision making and priorities can be set. The assessment of positive and negative effects, help determine the urgency of moving forward the work of a management strategy. The management strategy would contain ideas and proposals for the further preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

8.2 Assets of Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area (Positives)

- Architectural and historic interest of the majority of the buildings.
- Example of Flemish influence as typified through ornate gables, and faience and terracotta detailing.
- Some traditional shop fronts on Victoria Road and Brighton Road, with consistent pattern of stall risers, columns, frames, fascia and projecting signs.
- Strong unity of composition created by the building lines and heights;
- Short views from the pavement frame the architectural detail of each building.
- Long views from Brighton Road and the railway station of important groups of attractive key buildings.
- A range of shopping, from chain stores to independent outlets.
- A variety of parking options.
- Street trees dominate the public realm, with co-ordinated street furniture.

8.3 The extent of intrusion or damage to the Conservation Area (Negatives)

- The setting is impinged by the poor condition and boundary treatment of rear yards on the south side of Victoria Road outside the conservation area;
- The size and scale of Sainsbury's and YMCA is out of proportion with the historic buildings in the conservation area. The lack of active frontages and façade detailing make this section of Victoria Road lack interest and vitality;
- The loss of stall risers and erosion of traditional shop front detailing and proportions has diluted the ground floor interest in parts. The condition of many shop fronts and entrances are also poor.
- The condition of several individual buildings, and the loss of architectural features such as cornices, has resulted in a loss of architectural richness in some stretches;
- The irregular height and width of many buildings on the south side of Victoria Road undermines the cohesiveness found on the north side of the road;

- Plant extractor units at the back of buildings on the south side of Victoria Road and Brighton Road;
- Shop vacancy at the west end of Victoria Road (Nos. 37, 40 & 41), creates a gap in street level vitality (under development)
- Few public open spaces within the conservation area offer an attractive area away from the road;
- Unattractive public realm is found at Waitrose loading bay, station car park and approach road to Sainsbury's car park;
- Neglect of a number of buildings, namely no's 39 to 45 Victoria Road, has allowed them to fall into disrepair. Although these buildings are positive assets to the conservation area, in their current state they are unattractive and not only detract from the conservation area but are under immense pressure to be redeveloped;
- Increased traffic flow around the station and along Victoria Road detracts from the character of the conservation area and poses a threat to pedestrians, especially those wishing to cross Victoria Road and enter the station forecourt. (This is to be addressed by the Victoria Road Improvement Strategy)

Examples of recent development completed or approved

- 8.4 Demolition of the sorting office and refurbishment of the vacant Old Post Office (phase 1) is currently under construction (shown on Plan 5) and will lead to the creation of three new buildings containing 58 flats, 7 live/work units 4 retail units, a new mews street and underground car parking. The second phase of this development was permitted by the Development Control Committee on the 12th December 2007 subject to conditions and a legal agreement. It consists of 36 flats, 2 retail units, 3 live/work units and a basement level car park.

Key landowners and development issues: Problems and pressures

- 8.5 Most of the land in this conservation area is privately owned, apart from a small property (45 Victoria Road) and Highways land (Sainsbury's car park approach) falling within the Council's interests.
- 8.6 There is commercial pressure from changes in retail occupation for new occupiers to install new shop fronts with features such as projecting signs, fascias and advertising. There is also pressure for change of use to A3, takeaways or café, which creates the need for external extraction equipment, or for single storey extensions to kitchen and storage areas. The vacant buildings at the western end of Victoria Road communicate a negative image of the area.
- 8.7 In general there is pressure on upper floors for owners to extend or convert their properties for accommodation purposes, causing pressure on the roofline and the loss of original timber sash windows to uPVC frames. The greatest pressure is on extending and building on rear yards and gardens. There have been applications (Claremont Court, 26-27 Victoria Road) for mansard roof extensions to provide additional roof accommodation. The cumulative effect of

relatively minor individual changes to the front of the terraces could weaken the unity and undermine the historic character of the area.

Potential for new development

- 8.8 The unity of form and design of the three major terraces is such that new development would be intrusive. New development would be encouraged to replace the buildings that make a negative contribution to the character of the area only.
- 8.9 However, there is potential for enhancements to some frontages and improved maintenance to some rear yards. Replacement of some shop fronts might be realised on the basis that upper glazed clerestories are maintained, and stall risers are incorporated to the original height for the unit. The traditional shop fronts at no 21 & 31 Victoria Road provide good design templates to other shops hoping to upgrade their frontages, offering a correct lesson in proportions, scale and detail with stall risers, signage and canopy designed to a pleasing effect.

Opportunities for enhancement

- 8.10 Minor enhancements to buildings and public spaces could include:-
- Some harmony on the south side of Victoria Road (67-84) could be achieved by a more intimate treatment of the shop fronts to closely reflect the typical frontage widths. This could be done through the installation of straight blinds, the remodelling of some weak upper floors and some concealment and improvements to flank elevations.
 - Remodelling of the upper floors at 49-65 Victoria Road (Sainsbury's and YMCA) to create vertical emphasis in the street scene rhythm.
 - More consistent treatment to ground floor frontages, including embellishments to the Sainsbury's frontage, such as improvements to the canopy and enhancements to the forecourt of YMCA.
 - The redesign of shop fronts to be made within existing openings and of correct scale and character, so as to enhance the overall character of the terraces;
 - Retaining and replacing the uniform window style on the upper floors and as examples of Edwardian style on Claremont Road and Brighton Road;
 - Limiting the number of premises operating as A3 café/restaurant in order to maintain a balanced mix of uses;
 - Enhancing a number of the key views within the conservation area.
 - Low level landscaping to areas of the Railway station, such as behind Surbiton Flyer, on the wide pavements of the forecourt and on the western corner of the station building;
 - Shrubbery being introduced between the bicycle rack and the fence so as to soften the relationship with the railway edge.
 - More landscaping on south side of St Andrews Road, opposite the slip road to the Sainsbury's car park, would help frame the approach to St Andrew's Church.

- The renewal and refurbishment of buildings currently in a state of disrepair (in particular no's 39-45 Victoria Road) in order to ease pressure on redevelopment.
- Environmental improvements along St Mary's Road (funds available).
- Retaining the plot widths and frontage modelling and resisting larger ground floor retail units that are proposed to avoid examples like 15 to 17 Victoria Road.
- Enhancing the forecourt area in front of the former Post Office.
- Redevelopment of the station car park to the south of the conservation area to ease the pressure on the redevelopment of buildings in the conservation area and improve the setting of the conservation area.
- The widening of the footpath along Victoria Road in conjunction with other public realm improvement programmes to ease pavement congestion and provide a safer pedestrian environment.
- Improving on-street cycling facilities and cycle parking in conjunction with other public realm improvements to encourage cycling to and through the town centre. This would also aid in easing the increased traffic flows along Victoria Road.
- Repainting the railway bridge and tidying the adjacent areas on Brighton road would strengthen the bridges role as a gateway to the conservation area and provide an attractive focal point.
- Enhancements to the station forecourt to provide a safer pedestrian environment and a more attractive arrival point into the conservation area.
- Informing shop owners of and enforcing the shop front SPD in order to make the shop fronts more complementary of the historic fabric and more attractive.
- Actively pursuing shop owners to keep their shop fronts and entrances clean and tidy, and in good condition.
- Continuing an active sign strategy to ensure minimal clutter and consistency of street signs, and ensure that shop keepers adhere to the externally illuminated signs policy.
- Reinstating the architectural details lost on the upper floors of 22-38 (evens) Brighton Road

The Victoria Road Improvement Strategy

8.11 The Victoria Road Improvement Strategy is currently under preparation with the prime aim to improve the transport interchange based around the station forecourt. This is likely to involve changing the relationship between car, bus and pedestrian at the roundabout at St Marks Hill, Claremont Road and Victoria Road convergence. Opportunities being addressed by the Victoria Road Improvement Strategy include: -

- Improving the transport interchange based around the station forecourt;
- Improved information and signage on bus and train services;
- Improved lighting at the roundabout for pedestrians;

- Improvements to pedestrian crossings on the west and east side of the roundabout;
- Improved paving outside the Old Post Office;
- Street scene improvements such as painting, removing redundant signs and other unnecessary street furniture.

Boundary Review

- 8.12 Plan 2 shows that three other conservation areas already immediately join the boundary of this conservation area. The boundary review has given detailed consideration to the south, north and west edges of the conservation area, where the south side of Victoria Road backs onto the railway track, at the Brighton Road/Maple Road junction and to Cottage Grove that sits to the east of Brighton Road.
- 8.13 The south side of Victoria Road does not in its current form make a strong positive historic contribution to the conservation area. It contains a group of early twentieth century buildings with a common land use but whose massing is disproportionate to the rest of the area. However these buildings, on the opposite side of Victoria Road, form a key part of the conservation area providing the enclosure to Victoria Road and most influential setting. The YMCA building and DST House form strong bookends to the edge of the conservation area, although it is considered that they detract from the areas of architectural and historic interest. In the past the design of the facades on the south side of Victoria Road have at times been poor, failing to recognise the key role that they play as a setting to the conservation area. In order to ensure consistency and upkeep of Victoria Road, and to maintain the building line and enclosure, and to have more control on the design of facades on the south side of Victoria Road, it is proposed that the boundary is extended to the building line on the south side of Victoria Road. The buildings themselves are not included within the boundary as they make little historic contribution and architecturally are neutral.
- 8.14 As stated earlier in the appraisal, the buildings along Brighton Road on the North West side of maple road (60-73 Brighton Road) mark a transition in scale from the imposing properties on the main part of the shopping street to the small scale development lining the road leading to Portsmouth Road and the river. Although the buildings this side of Maple Road are of a smaller scale, the character of these properties is still one of commercial activity provided by shops at ground floor (60 – 68 evens, Brighton Road) and ‘the Lamb’ public house (73 Brighton Road) and therefore the properties are more appropriately placed in the Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area than the surrounding conservation areas that are predominately residential.
- 8.15 Cottage Grove, on the other hand, is a wide and handsome residential street composed of semi detached white stucco houses under hipped pitched roofs. It is logically connected to the first phase in the historic development of the retail district in the 1840’s. The early occupants of the cottages on Cottage Grove are most likely to have been workers servicing Chelsea and Lambeth Waterworks,

or the railway services. As it is a “No Through Road” with access gained only via Brighton Road, it is most clearly connected to Surbiton Town Centre. However, as it is in solely residential use and is of a smaller scale and different architectural style it might be better to consider linking it with the St Andrew’s Square Conservation Area, which has existing diversity in its architectural and historic interest, but is predominantly residential.

9 Conclusions and Way Forward

- 9.1 The assessment of the positive and negative indicators above concludes that Surbiton Town Centre Conservation Area is not a major priority for progressing on to Stage 2. The key priorities of the area are currently being addressed by the Victoria Road Improvement Strategy and therefore any further improvement or management of the conservation area is considered to be marked as 3 for programming, on the scale of 1 (not important) – 5 (very important). There are only a few buildings and slightly more public spaces that have a negative impact on the immediate area, for which design and remodelling would offer solutions. Several of these spaces have been identified in the Victoria Road Improvement Strategy for improvement and the remodelling of other spaces and buildings may be addressed as part of future development.

- 9.2 The review of the southern boundary concludes that the building line and facades of the buildings on the south of Victoria Road play a vital role in the enclosure of Victoria Road and the setting of the conservation area. Extending the boundary to this building line will enable special attention to be given to preserving the character and appearance of both sides of the street, which contribute to the townscape, in all development control and other planning decisions made by the council. It will also automatically enable the Conservation Area Advisory Committee to be consulted on applications. Although Cottage Grove offers an historical link to the existing conservation area it is predominately residential in character and therefore recommended that due consideration be given to extending St Andrew’s Square Conservation Area as part of its character appraisal.