

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
Draft Character Appraisal

# Grove Crescent Conservation Area

June 2007



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# GROVE CRESCENT CONSERVATION AREA

## CHARACTER APPRAISAL

### 1.0 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 Grove Crescent Conservation Area, designated in 1985 and extended in 1989. 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 designation report, states that this is “a planned mid Victorian estate of houses of various sizes and styles, the core of which forms the Spring Grove Estate, including St John’s Church, St John’s Primary School, Spring Grove Public House and local shops”. This description will be reviewed as part of the appraisal.
- 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 October 1984 and the original decision to designate in July 1985. This was followed by the first proposal to extend the area in July 1989, with the final decision to extend taken in September 1989. A published booklet by Isobel Robinson is a succinct guide to the buildings and people of Spring Grove (Birth of a Community 1865-1880).

### 2.0 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 government to demonstrate how they are complying with requirements for the designation and protection of conservation areas in Sections 71 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 2.2 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 11 August 2005.
- 2.3 Policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas are set out in 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 relevant UDP policies and the national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) *Planning and the Historic Environment*. The layout and content of this appraisal follows two sets of guidance produced by English Heritage in 2005. As recommended in PPG 15, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

### **3.0 Location and setting**

#### Location and Context

- 3.1 The Grove Crescent Conservation Area consists of 350 postcode properties in an area of 10 hectares and lies to the south east of Kingston Town Centre, approximately 750 metres from the Market Place (See Plan 1: Context).
- 3.2 It lies to the south of the Hogsmill River and Kingston University (Knights Park site) and to the east of Penrhyn Road, Surrey County Council offices and the University (Penrhyn Site). Penrhyn Road is one of the main access roads to the town centre from the south. In the immediate context there are five Conservation Areas together with Grove Lane Local Area of Special Character (LASC). Kingston Town Centre Area Action Plan (K+20) reflects future development opportunities, policies and proposals.
- 3.3 The Conservation Area extends from no. 3 Penrhyn Road in the west, to no. 5 Alfred Road at the eastern edge. The south of the area is defined by no. 26 Beaufort Road (the side of the Antoinette Hotel), whilst the Hogsmill River provides the northern most barrier to the area. (See Plan 2: Location Plan)

#### Street Pattern and Layout

- 3.4 Development within the conservation area consists mainly of short rows of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties located parallel to and fronting the street. In this respect 15 – 21 Grove Crescent and 6–18 Beaufort Road provide examples of detached buildings; 3-13 Fassett Road, 9–19 Denmark Road and 46-52 Grove Crescent provide examples of short rows of semis; and 4-14 Bloomfield Road and 21-35 Portland Road provide examples of terraced properties. Narrow plots, low front walls, footways and front gardens, generally enclose the principle elevations from the key spaces within the public realm.

#### Landscape and Setting

- 3.5 The setting of the houses reflects the topography of the flat land and the landscape is distinguished by buildings of a non uniform height and irregular roof pitch. The setting of the River Hogsmill is important to the character of the northern area, whilst the Blue Bridge and two footbridges connecting with Knights Park, establish links outwards. The location of houses and the areas around them play an important role in defining the landscape. It is noted that the setting of the houses to the west and south of the area (e.g. Grove Crescent) present a more imposing scale to the landscape than those to the north and east.
- 3.6 Skyline views out of the area are dominated by the University buildings along the northern, eastern and western edges of the Conservation area. Plan 1: Context shows the wider setting with the raised topography of Surbiton to the south and the Fairfield/Knights Park Conservation Area in the immediate north.

#### **4.0 Historic development**

- 4.1 Kingston upon Thames was historically an important river crossing point and has been a thriving market town since medieval times. Rapid change to the town in the mid-19th century was a result of an increasing population and the development of the railways.
- 4.2 Plan 3: Historic Development shows the approximate original dates of the buildings in the conservation area, according to a succession of Ordnance Survey maps from 1865 to 1956. Information has also been sourced from the local land register and council records. Evidence of Middle Stone Age and Bronze Age settlement in the immediate vicinity has been well recorded and it is likely that the existence of the Hogsmill River provided an attractive site for the manufacture of goods. In the Medieval period the area was farmed

on an open field system and was later enclosed between mid-15<sup>th</sup> and mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

- 4.3 The first part of the area to be developed was Grove Crescent, (See Plan 4: Character Areas) laid out from around 1863 as the new railway links to London made commuting an attractive option. Kingston became more built up and areas of housing started to radiate out from the new railway station. Evidence of the first housing, before 1865, is on the corner of Grove Crescent and Penrhyn Road (formerly Grove Road). The streetscape subsequently evolved in an easterly direction, in relation to the various interests of many builders.
- 4.4 In 1865, land south of the Hogsmill River in the area known as Spring Grove Estate (See Plan 4), was carved up into small scale speculative developments of modest two storey artisan houses. The purchased land site consisted mainly of meadow and was crossed by two existing roads, Grove Lane and Green Lane (now Bellevue Road). There were four cottages, which were probably demolished at the outset, as no sign remains of them on later maps. The two lanes were incorporated into the estate plan and four new roads Alexandra (now Denmark Road), Bloomfield Road, Springfield Road and Portland Road, were laid out in 1865. The Chelsea Waterworks pipe line, dating from earlier in the century, remained a noticeable feature on the estate, preserving a clear strip of land on which no building was permitted. The degree of control exercised by the land buyer, William Chappell (famous music publisher), over the character and quality of building was not stringent and builders would often use their own designs or something from a published manual.
- 4.5 After the first wave of development had been completed in 1871, W. Chappell stipulated that a minimum rental value (£20 per annum) be set, with the result that even the most modest terraced houses on the estate are solid and well proportioned. A handful of well established landowners and businessmen had seen the chance to create relatively cheap housing by releasing land for building without seeking maximum profit. The largest single purchaser from W. Chappell was Palmer Porter who brought the whole of the central area bounded by Springfield Road, Denmark Road and Bloomfield Road.
- 4.6 Alfred Road, which started in 1876, was the first development outside the original boundaries of the Spring Grove Estate and led to a wave of new houses arising in the rectangle formed by Grove

Lane and Bellevue Road. Shortly afterwards the built up area began to spread along Portland Road and Grove Lane southwards.

- 4.7 The idea of constructing the Blue Bridge, built by local landowner William Mercer, is central to an understanding of how the area started to identify itself at this time. The river crossing became a symbol of one man's social and engineering vision, hoping to elevate the new estate to a status equal to Knights Park (which was developed over the same period 1861-1871).
- 4.8 In the third distinct area south of Spring Grove Estate, land became available for development after the death of Mary Fassett in 1861, owner of Grove House (See Plan 4). Apart from an early 19<sup>th</sup> century house on the corner of Grove Lane and Beaufort Road, the buildings here date from 1877 to 1886 and development spread southwards down Fassett Road. The buildings in Fassett Road and Beaufort Road are substantial properties, generally offering more spacious accommodation than in the houses in the Spring Grove Estate and reflecting the ambitions of the developers to attract wealthy residents to the new expanding suburbs of Kingston.
- 4.9 The 1898 OS map shows the extent of this speculative development and the conservation area is substantially built up with a wide range of property sizes. The development in the 1880's of 1-23 Bloomfield Road with a pub, church and shops began to establish the area as a local shopping and community hub serving the new residential streets.
- 4.10 By World War I, nearly all the land between Penrhyn Road and Oil Mill Lane (deleted and now known as Villiers Road, to the east of the conservation area) was developed. The 1913 OS map shows few sites remaining for development and it meant future change would be based on redevelopment of existing buildings and the filling in of gaps, such as Springfield Court on Springfield Road. In the 1970's, further housing development was constructed with the erection of Hugh Herland House (37 retirement flats) on land bounded by Bellevue Road and Portland Road. A riverside walk and mixed housing was developed along the Hogsmill and in the 1990's, the University earmarked land on the light industrial site of Middle Mill site for development.

## 5.0 Spatial Analysis

### Interrelationship of spaces and key views

- 5.1 Understanding of the conservation area is influenced by the Hogsmill River to the north and the Class A Road (Penrhyn Road) running to the west. The Penrhyn Road boundary marks a change in character from the civic quarter (Surrey County Council, Crown Court, Kingston University) and main gateway into Kingston Town Centre, to the quieter residential area of Grove Crescent. Parking controls for residential use are widespread in the Conservation Area because of the proximity to the Town Centre and University buildings.
- 5.2 The north east and eastern edges are defined by a wedge of light industrial building and the Chelsea waterworks pipeline respectively. The southern edge of the conservation area is marked by the start of the hill gently rising to Surbiton.
- 5.3 The pattern of residential activity can be generally dissected at Springfield Road, with more single family dwellings to the east and greater multi occupancy to the west (See Plan 5 : Land Use). This reflects the historic use of the area, where workers cottages are mainly found in the east.
- 5.4 The street pattern is partly of a radial form, with one curving road (Grove Crescent) at the western end and several shorter linear roads to the central, eastern and southern ends. The layout of Grove Crescent Conservation Area is defined by its coherence hinging on the cross section and meeting point of many roads at Spring Grove estate and the junction of Springfield Road and Denmark Road. Springfield Road acts as a spine running north-south through the centre of the area, from which other roads join and townscape features become visible. In the south of the conservation area Fassett Road and Beaufort Roads also provide a linear dimension as they are both laid out in a north-south direction.
- 5.5 The width and openness of the streets is enhanced by the road junctions whilst an awareness of a limited open space is provided by views of a number of rear gardens. The setting allows for views to be taken of individual as well as groups of buildings. Indeed, strongly profiled front elevations are readily appreciated from the roadside.

## **6.0 Character analysis**

### Definition of character sub areas

- 6.1 The area provides a good example of mixed building forms in the Royal Borough of Kingston in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Kingston Town Centre has developed and changed, so Grove Crescent Conservation Area evolved to provide several sub areas of different but individually cohesive character. The Conservation Area can be subdivided into three character areas (See Plan 4), all of which are primarily residential and are based on historic context.
- 6.2 Character area 1, Grove Crescent, to the east side of Penrhyn Road and running as far east as the rear gardens on the west side of Springfield Road, has considerable grandeur of scale. It has two wide roads (Denmark Road and Penrhyn Road), a number of large villas and many trees. Properties fronting Grove Crescent (south) have good quality Italianate detail, which in places are marred by obtrusive wall-mounted parking signs. Grove Crescent (north) has a number of smaller Italianate style houses, but the western end of Denmark Road suffers from modern interventions. Character Area 1 broadly follows the boundary of the original conservation area designated in 1985.
- 6.3 Character area 2, Spring Grove Estate, is more modest and the vocabulary of architectural detail less established, as it alternates between artisan and Gothic.
- 6.4 Character area 3, Grove Lane South, has a more consistent scale and rhythm when compared to the other two areas. Areas 1 and 2 are distinct from 3 in that they have a very small element of office and retail/ community space, respectively.

### **Area 1: Grove Crescent**

#### Land Use and Activity

- 6.5 The area includes Penryhn Road, Denmark Road, Grove Crescent (north & south arms), of which the last pair converge in front of the University at Holmwood House. Grove Crescent is primarily in residential use whilst Penrhyn Road comprises a mixture of flats, single family dwellings, residential homes and offices. The area is typified by large villas, 3-4 storey buildings and cottages, with the majority fitted out to suit multi occupancy living, as shown on Plan 5: Land Use.

Architectural character (See Plans 3 and 6)

- 6.6 The area contains a number of well proportioned Victorian detached and semi detached houses. Many buildings display refined and interesting details and the well maintained yellow stock brick on painted stucco provides the area with its townscape quality.
- 6.7 The earliest buildings from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (pre 1865) are a group of ten semi-detached and detached three and four storey houses in the Italianate style on Grove Crescent (nos 1-9) and Penryhn Road (nos 9 & 19). These buildings link closely with the principle route between Kingston and Surbiton. Pelham Lodge (1881) on the corner of Penrhyn Road/ Grove Crescent (north) is an impressive gateway into the conservation area and it forms the start of the sequence of historic buildings to Grove Crescent South. The remainder of Grove Crescent was developed after the coming of the railway between 1865 and 1898. (See Plan 6: Building Character Analysis)
- 6.8 There is an interesting example of double sided, turn-of-the-century, housing type at 46-52 (even) Grove Crescent, which fronts on to Grove Crescent north and backs on to Denmark Road. These four two-storey semi detached properties date from 1898 and are decorated in the Arts and Crafts style providing fine examples of roof finial detailing, decorative gables, with a canopy over the door and a porch gate. Their prominent gabled roof form provides a strong rhythm to this part of Grove Crescent north, whilst the brick front boundary walls add to the street enclosure. However, poor management of the Denmark Road frontage has a negative effect on the Conservation Area.



46 - 52 Grove Crescent, 4 Denmark Road

- 6.9 Properties at 1-9 (odd) Grove Crescent (south) and 9 and 19 Penryhn Road are identified as Buildings of Townscape Merit (BTMs) on Plan 7: Townscape Analysis. However, 46-52 Grove Crescent discussed above, all make a positive contribution to the townscape and are recommended for possible inclusion on the BTM list. There are also several buildings on the south side of Grove Crescent South (8, 10, 12 & 20) worth recommending for inclusion as BTM's, due to their Italianate design and the positive contribution they make to the University frontage.
- 6.10 The Building Character Analysis (Plan 6) shows that most buildings in Grove Crescent (south) make a positive contribution to the area. However, most of those in Grove Crescent (north) have a neutral impact, being later buildings from the first half of the Twentieth century. Plan 6 also identifies buildings making a positive contribution which are in need of enhancement.

### Townscape

#### Views/ focal points/ landmarks (See Plan 7)

- 6.11 Grove Crescent (North) possesses an intimate character which is enhanced by the curved form of this street. This provides constantly changing views eastwards and westwards, which are enhanced by planting in the front gardens of most properties.



Grove Crescent (north) – views to the east

- 6.12 Grove Crescent (south) mirrors the curved form of Grove Crescent (north), as it twists gently into Penryhn Road at its western end.



Grove Crescent (south) – view to the west

- 6.13 Views of streetscapes in this area are also striking and in particular the view westwards from the intersection of Grove Crescent. An important landmark is the large Horse Chestnut tree located at the junction of the two Crescents, in front of Grove Court.



Horse Chestnut tree on Grove Crescent junction

- 6.14 Grove Crescent benefits from an interesting transition between the scale and mass of University buildings to the south and the more subtle connection with the Hogsmill River to the north. A side alleyway to the south of 46 Grove Crescent increases permeability between Denmark Road and Grove Crescent north.

#### Trees, Greenery and Open Spaces

- 6.15 Views between houses are also of interest, such as at 42 - 44 Grove Crescent (north) and 3-5 Grove Crescent (south), where trees and vegetation form a backdrop to frontage properties.



3-5 Grove Crescent (north)

- 6.16 The houses in the Grove Crescent area have reasonable sized front gardens which are around 5m deep and 10m wide. These have allowed the planting of trees and shrubs which in many places help support the sense of enclosure in the area. Additionally, interesting views into the backs of the houses on Penrhyn Road (Nos. 9-19), can be seen from Grove Crescent (north) (See Plan 7).
- 6.17 The growth of street trees (London Plane, Lime, Sycamore) on the south side of Grove Crescent make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area and help to alleviate the hardness of the University buildings and the junction with Penryhn Road. These mature trees also emphasis the predominantly residential character and add to the sense of enclosure in this street.

#### Public realm

- 6.18 Front boundaries between public and private space along both Grove Crescent (north and south) and Denmark Road are defined by a mix of brick walls, hedging and wooden fencing. The exception is on the south-west side of Grove Crescent (south) adjoining the University where a set of black iron railings and hedging has been erected. Parking restrictions are tightly controlled with only a shared use bay on Grove Crescent (south) and Denmark Road. Loss of front boundary walls are noted at 7-13, 21 Grove Crescent (south) and 32-38, 46-52 Grove Crescent (north) and shown on Plan 7: Townscape Analysis.
- 6.19 Whilst the street furniture is in good condition, there is a problem with excessive signage, particularly on the approach to the junction of Springfield Road and Denmark Road.

## **Area 2: Spring Grove Estate**

### **Land Use and Activity**

- 6.20 This predominantly residential area includes Springfield Road, Bloomfield Road, Denmark Road, Portland Road and Bellevue Road (See Plan 5: Land Use). Portland Road has the largest number of small scale (2-storey) worker's cottages that historically were rented out to poorer lodgers (Robinson. P.12-13) and most are still occupied as single family dwellings (See Plan 5). The northern boundary of this area is enclosed by the Hogsmill River giving it a tranquil and green edge. The Blue Bridge at Springfield Road, and the Jubilee Bridge accessed off Portland Road, both provide strong pedestrian only links to the north bank of the Hogsmill River, the Knights Park university campus and the adjoining residential area, which forms part of a conservation area.
- 6.21 Springfield Road, Grove Lane and Bellevue Road are characterised by larger detached and semi detached houses set further back from the road than on the other roads. This area contains a hub of community interest, including St Johns Church, St John's Primary and Nursery School, four local shops and The Spring Grove public house. These add significant pedestrian activity and visual interest.

### **Architectural character** (See Plans 3 and 6)

- 6.22 The Springfield Grove Estate is characterised by small scale artisan cottages built between 1865 and 1895. The smaller, terraced houses on Portland Road (nos 21-35) and Bloomfield Road (nos 4-14, 15-23) are built of yellow London stock bricks and finished with simple red dressings. Typical features include original sash windows and arched doorways with brick lintels around the arches.



4 – 14 Bloomfield Road

- 6.23 In contrast, the 4 storey semi detached villas on the west side of Springfield Road are good examples of Victorian grandeur, displaying elegant projecting bays and rounded porch canopies.
- 6.24 Impressive examples of Edwardian semi's are seen at nos 10 – 16 Denmark Road, where the first floor front elevations are decorated with white render and black timber. The protrusion of canopies from elongated iron console brackets serving the main entrances is a distinctive feature of this series of semi-detached buildings. The door arches in rubbed brick offers a soft touch to the finish of these properties. These buildings are recommended for possible inclusion on the BTM list (See Plan 7).



12 Denmark Road

- 6.25 The church of St. John (1872) is a grade II listed building and is constructed of squared ragstone under a tiled roof. The Spring Grove Pub in Bloomfield Road is a BTM, distinguished architecturally by the verandah over first floor bay and the ornate window and door lintels. The Pub relates well to the shopping parade it faces and the terraces either side. Other buildings of Townscape Merit are St Johns School (1871) on Portland Road and the Vicarage adjacent to St John's church on Springfield Road.
- 6.26 It is considered that the majority of buildings in this area make a positive contribution, although the shop fronts in Bloomfield Road are in need of enhancement.

## Townscape

### Views/ Focal Point and Landmarks

- 6.27 St John's Church is a key landmark/focal point for the area. It is well framed by the surrounding greenery and railings, whilst the approach to the building is impressive from any one of four roads that lead into this area. Views looking northwards frame the church against the striking vicarage building at No.15 Springfield Road. The former Vicarage of St Johns (1903) is an important part of the setting for the church.



View eastwards of St John's Church along Grove Lane



View of former vicarage besides church

- 6.28 Within Spring Grove estate there are also two additional focal points/nodes shown on Plan 7: Townscape Analysis. The junction of Springfield Road and Denmark Road, and the Public House at

the junction of Denmark Road and Bloomfield Road both retain a distinctive character.

- 6.29 The junction of Denmark Road and Springfield Road incorporates five roads. It is from here that St John's Church, St John's primary school; the Spring Grove Public House and Blue Bridge become visible features of the landscape. Also from this junction, there is a notable vista of the spire of Surrey County Hall on Penrhyn Road.



View of spire at Surrey County Hall, from Spring Grove public house looking eastwards down Denmark Road

- 6.30 The Spring Grove Public House is also an important focal point as it provides a termination to the view along Denmark Road at its junction with Bloomfield Road. It also provides an attractive setting for the shopping parade opposite and St Johns Church.



View of Spring Grove PH from Denmark Road/ Springfield Road junction

- 6.31 Finally, the junction of Bloomfield Road and Grove Lane is supported by St John's church, which adds to its importance and distinction.

## Trees, Greenery and Open Spaces

- 6.32 Apart from nos. 2-16 Springfield Road and nos 18–26 Denmark Road which have relatively large front gardens, the house frontages on other roads in the Spring Grove Estate are generally narrow. In particular, terraced properties often only have building plots 5m wide and 3m deep adding to the sense of street enclosure in this area.
- 6.33 There are five green spaces which are either semi private or in open public view and these are shown on the Townscape map. These contribute to either communal spaces or the public realm respectively. The Hogsmill River and St Johns church have a particularly strong public interface. The river has a link to the wider setting of Knights Park and the town centre, with public access on the south side. It retains a natural ambience as the river bank has only been urbanized long its northern edge.



Hogsmill River from Blue Bridge

- 6.34 The trees lining either side of Springfield Road leading to the Blue Bridge are important and attractive edges to the setting of the Conservation Area. They are also important in helping to screen and soften the height and bulk of the Kingston University campus from various points within the area. A tree survey carried out in July 2006, identified these trees worthy of retention with the possibility of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Despite the trees being on Council owned land it would be desirable if they were included within the Conservation Area and TPOs were placed on the trees.



Blue Bridge on Springfield Road

- 6.35 Mature trees in rear gardens (and seen as a backdrop or through gaps) are important. Such areas are particularly to the rear of properties in Springfield Road and Bloomfield Road/ Bellevue Road. The views through to the back gardens of these properties have a positive effect, and in some cases the trees form a backdrop to frontage properties.



View of rear gardens at Springfield Road (west) from Grove Lane

- 6.36 The existence of mature trees and shrubs in front gardens also dominate the approach along Springfield Road. Shrubbery and ornamentation has been thoughtfully laid out to the front of many buildings and compliment the low boundary walls.



Front gardens, 6 Springfield Road

### Public realm

- 6.37 Lighting and paving in the public realm are considered satisfactory. However, the security gate in front of the blue bridge and the associated road signage, have a negative impact on the area. There is also a lack of any seats at key focal points in the area such as Bloomfield Road/ Denmark Road junction. In addition, five areas have been marked on Plan 7: Townscape Analysis, where front boundaries have been replaced by car parking. Parking in the area is widely controlled with the only free vehicle bay on Bloomfield Road and a shared use bay on Bloomfield and Portland Roads.
- 6.38 Three small groups of street trees, which when fully grown will provide a major contribution to the public realm. These are shown on Plan 7, and located in front of St John's Primary School, on the corner facing the Spring Grove pub and in front of St Johns Church on Bloomfield Road.
- 6.39 The Blue Bridge over the Hogsmill River, linking Springfield Road to Knights Park, is a positive feature of the public realm. The route is pedestrian dominated and contributes to the ambience of the conservation area, particularly in the summer months. There is a good level of public information available on walking options from the Hogsmill and there is a Conservation Area notice board at the bridge. Opportunities exist to enhance this route with environmental improvements, including landscaped public seating, as well as the

Three walks are promoted from this point: London Loop, Hogsmill Valley Walk and Thames Down Link.

footpath along the Hogsmill River and its approaches, including surface treatment, lighting and seating.

### **Area 3: Grove Lane South**

#### Land Use and Activity

- 6.40 This area is predominantly residential (See Plan 5: Land Use). It can be seen that nearly all the houses nearest the university on Fassett Road (nos. 1-23) and Beaufort Road (nos. 2-20) have been converted to flats and are in multiple occupation. However, a small number of detached properties on the south side of Grove Lane are still single family dwellings, apart from the Parish Hall (adjacent to no.6) which is in civic/ community use.

#### Architectural Character (See Plan 6)

- 6.41 At the corner of Grove Lane, No. 1 Beaufort Road is the earliest building in this area, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century, part single/ two/ three storey house (See Plan 3: Historic Development).
- 6.42 The architectural character is established by the extended rhythm and pattern of the buildings and skyline along Fassett Road (1877-84) and Beaufort Road (1886). The development of this sub area continued along Grove Lane and detached houses were built at the turn of the century in the Arts and Craft styles, such as the Parish Hall for St. John (1903).
- 6.43 The two streets have a unified plan and building design, with a mixture of detached and semi detached buildings, characterized by Italian style dressings, defining front gables and ornate columns.
- 6.44 The buildings have decorative red brick dressings, rectangular crenellated bays, rectangular porches and projecting bargeboards. There are distinctive examples of Italianate (nos 3 & 5, 7 & 9 Fassett Road) and Victorian Gothic (1, Fassett Road) styles, which provide rhythm and decoration to the street.



7-9 Fassett Road

- 6.45 The southern section of Fassett Road and nos 6-20 Beaufort Road were developed in a series of blocks in Victorian Gothic styles with leaf foliage capitals. The majority of the buildings have kept their original doors and windows and a number of the later buildings are faced in off-white gault bricks.



14 – 16 Beaufort Road

- 6.46 Two properties (no. 1 Beaufort Road (The Coach House); 7-9 Fassett Road) are Buildings of Townscape Merit and shown on Plan 7: Townscape Analysis. Most of the buildings make a positive contribution to the street scene and only properties at the north end of Fassett Road (1, 3 - 5, 7 - 9 & 11 - 13) would benefit from enhancements.

## Townscape

### Views, Focal Points, Landmarks

- 6.47 The junction of Fassett Road/ Grove Lane provides an important focal place from which to appreciate this sub area. The view looking eastwards, is shown on Plan: 7 Townscape Analysis, and provides a strong indication of the character looking down Grove Lane, where the church, trees, some small scale cottages and wide roads blend into the landscape.



View eastwards: Grove Lane/ Fassett Road roundabout

- 6.48 Fassett Road has a more open character than Beaufort Road due to the larger modern University buildings set back on the west side of the road. These contrast with the regular form of the buildings on east side of Fassett Road looking south. The vista on the horizon of St Marks Church in Surbiton also provides an interesting focal point (See Plan 7).



Long View of St Marks Church, Surbiton; Grove Lane/ Fassett Road roundabout

## Trees, Greenery and Open spaces

- 6.49 A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is currently placed on a specimen pink horse chestnut on the corner of Beaufort Road, which helps frame the view of St John's Church. A view looking south from Grove Lane to the rear of the gardens in Fassett Road and Beaufort Road also makes a valuable contribution to the sense of green space available in the area, as illustrated on Plan 7. A TPO on a small cluster of birch trees to the rear of No 1 Fassett Road signifies the value of this space. Street enclosure on Fassett Road is improved by the canopy of trees fronting the University on the west side.



View of trees fronting University on west side of Fassett Road

## Public Realm

- 6.50 The ill effects of multi-occupation and parking controls, has resulted in the demolition of many front boundary walls and fences in order to provide off-street parking. This is particularly the case in Fassett



The loss of front boundary walls and off street parking in Fassett Road

Road and Beaufort Road, but extends across much of the Conservation Area, and has created some bleak street scenes entirely dominated by cars. Additionally, the University buildings on Fassett Road have a negative affect due to the lack of active frontages to the street, which also impacts on the setting of nos 1-13 Fassett Road. Along part of the southern edge of Grove Lane between Springfield Road and Fassett Road, the road narrows and there is no pavement. This causes pedestrians to either back-track or cross the road at a potentially dangerous point.

- 6.51 Street trees on Beaufort Road clearly add to the sense of enclosure. Views northwards to the church are framed by mature London Planes lining the street on its west side. At the north end of Fassett Road, three London Planes help to screen the University car park/ buildings. However, there is still potential for more planting here to help screen the University at the junction of Fassett Road and Grove Lane.

## **7.0 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### Summary of special character and appearance of Grove Crescent Conservation Area

- 7.1 The special architectural or historic interest that provides the character of Grove Crescent Conservation Area derives from the following features:

#### Historic interest

- A mid to late Victorian suburban environment that can be subdivided into 3 distinct character areas – Grove Crescent, Spring Grove Estate and Grove Lane South.
- A variety of building types, forms and styles which make a positive contribution to the diverse architectural character of this conservation area.

#### Character/ Land use

- A predominantly residential area with a close group of community facilities, which include a church, school, public house, and local shops at its heart.
- The proximity to the University stimulates pedestrian activity, movement and interest in the area.

#### Architectural interest

- The area contains a speculative mix of building styles, ranging from the larger houses and neat villas in Springfield

Road and Denmark Road to the tighter knit cottages of Portland Road, although there is no unified building plan.

- There is a strong Victorian Gothic style through the centre of the area, with smaller scale artisan dwellings to the east and grander Italianate buildings to the west.

#### Townscape features

- Three focal places, near St John's Church; the Spring Grove Public House; and the junction of Demark Road and Springfield Road, have created an attractive range of views and settings, based around some key landmarks and focal points;
- Elements of the public realm such as large plots and wide front gardens create a spacious character in some roads which contrasts with the narrow plots in others to provide a more enclosed street profile.

#### Summary

- 7.2 An early residential suburb of Kingston Town Centre dating from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Grove Crescent Conservation Area went through at least three distinct waves of development before becoming a local centre with a church, public house, shops and a school.

### **8.0 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.

#### Assets of Grove Crescent Conservation Area (Positives)

- (i) Most of the buildings make a positive contribution to the conservation area;
- (ii) There are good approaches to the conservation area, including the Blue Bridge crossing for both pedestrians and cyclists;

- (iii) The set back of some of the larger houses (e.g. west side of Springfield Road) has provided an opportunity for attractive front gardens.
- (iv) There is a strong visual contrast between the large detached and semi-detached properties and the smaller terraces;
- (v) There is a strong sense of community interface in the core of the area;
- (vi) The junctions with Grove Lane and Fassett Road, Denmark Road and Springfield Road, offer interesting long views outside the conservation area;
- (vii) Landmark buildings at the junction of Denmark Road/ Bloomfield Road and Grove Lane/ Beaufort Road offer focal points and visual interest within the area;
- (viii) The area is generally well maintained and there are no problems with litter, paving or road surfaces;

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

- (i) Poor views of the University building (Penryhn Road) from Beaufort/ Grove Lane roundabout and the flank wall of the Hugh Herland residential block from Bloomfield Road looking east toward Bellevue Road;
- (ii) The design of the University buildings on the Knights Park site to north of area affects its setting. (However, redevelopment could be seen as an opportunity to make a positive contribution);
- (iii) The disproportionate number of street signs at roundabouts/ intersections;
- (iv) The loss of boundary walls, gates and other features in order to provide off street car parking in some front gardens, has led to an erosion of special character in some cases e.g. Fassett Road frontages;
- (v) The addition of dormer windows and UPVC windows has led to an erosion of some of the original detail and character within the area;
- (vi) Gates at top of Springfield Road create a visual obstruction before the Blue Bridge;
- (vii) The economic viability of retail units affects the appearance of these buildings.
- (viii) Car parking on the pavement in front of the Spring Grove Public House causes an obstruction and is visually intrusive.

Examples of recent development completed or approved

- Recent proposals in the conservation area include the approval of 2 new houses to the rear of the Vicarage at 28-30 Bloomfield Road, a side extension to the shop at 26 Bloomfield Road and a new housing block between the two terraces on Portland Road (nos. 16-18);
- There have been a number of residential applications for small extensions to the side or rear of buildings;
- The largest block development is the extension at the back of Springfield Court on Springfield Road.

#### Key landowners and development issues: Problems and pressures

- 8.2 Royal Borough of Kingston has formerly owned a number of properties in the Spring Grove sub area and there are currently some buildings under Council Housing Association arrangements .
- 8.3 Kingston University is a key landowner in the area, responsible for the Penrhyn Road and Knights Park campuses and the Middle Mill site. The University is developing and renewing the infrastructure of all their estate between now and 2010. The University advise that the Knights Park campus will be required for educational purposes in the foreseeable future. Although the Knights Park campus is outside the conservation area on the northern bank of the Hogsmill, proposals for development could impact upon the setting of the conservation area.
- 8.4 A significant number of the larger properties within the conservation area are already subdivided into flats or are in multiple occupation. There appears to be a continuing pressure to further sub-divide and provide smaller units which may reflect the proximity to the University. This will inevitably put more pressure on front gardens to provide off street parking and further harm the character of the conservation area.
- 8.5 There is also increasing pressure from owners to alter the frontages of their buildings which has caused a cumulative impact on the appearance of the conservation area in some places. This has resulted in some unsympathetic alterations, such as the replacement of original period windows and front doors with untypical designs and modern materials and the replacement of front boundary walls with car parking spaces. Of concern is that CPZs may encourage residents to park in their front garden.

#### Potential for new development

2 Springfield Road; 13, 19, 21 Denmark Road; 4, 6, 10, 22, 26 Portland Road, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14 Bloomfield Road

- 8.6 There is no significant land available for new infill buildings; there are no gap sites and the opportunity to split sites or replace buildings is limited. It is possible that sensitively designed single/ two storey extensions or roof dormers might be incorporated to the rear/ side of some properties without detriment to the character of the conservation area.
- 8.7 In determining the impact of any proposal the Council will take into account the effect on any public view, together with the overall scale, layout and design of proposed work, as well as massing and day lighting issues.

#### Opportunities for enhancement

- 8.8 The townscape analysis has identified a number of areas concerning the built and non built environment where there is the potential to improve the character of the Conservation area. These are as follows:
- (i) There needs to be greater consistency in the treatment of front boundary detailing, with landscaping encouraged instead of car parking, especially on Beaufort and Fassett Roads and at incidental addresses on Grove Crescent, Denmark Road, Grove Lane and Bloomfield Road;
  - (ii) Introduce strategic landscaping in front of Kingston University at the junction of Grove Crescent/ Grove Lane to help screen the building particularly from the east;
  - (iii) Introduce landscaping and planting at the east end of Bloomfield Road in order to improve views;
  - (iv) The approach to the footpath along the Hogsmill River could be enhanced so as to be a more obvious option for pedestrians seeking to walk by the river;
  - (v) The footpath along the Hogsmill River could be improved;
  - (vi) Introduce paving on south end of Grove lane between Fassett and Beaufort roundabouts;
  - (vii) The shop front (no26) on Bloomfield Road needs enhancing and improvements should be made in accordance with the specification in the SPG on shop fronts;
  - (viii) Safeguard and maintain street trees.

#### Boundary Review

- 8.9 The boundary review is particularly relevant to the north of the area. Currently, only one quarter of the Blue Bridge is included within the

boundary of the Conservation Area, which is clearly an anomaly. However, the bridge provides an important approach into the Conservation Area. For the whole structure to be included, would help respond to its historic and recreation value. An extended boundary to contain the entire bridge, together with the north bank of the Hogsmill River and the important avenue of trees along the whole of Springfield Road (north and south of the bridge), would provide protection for the whole of this section of riverside environment and Springfield Road (See Plan 7).

- 8.10 Denmark Road (south) contains a group of mid twentieth century flats whose scale is disproportionate to the rest of the area. In particular, Priory Court, Weston Court and Provincial House face Grove Crescent (north) to their rear and are architecturally neutral, with little relationship to the rest of the Conservation area. However, it is considered that they form a link in the sequence of the area and provide a halfway house between the older distinctive buildings and the more contemporary developments such as Herland House just outside the boundary to the west.
- 8.11 The area to the east of the conservation area includes the remainder of Portland Road, Grove Lane and Alfred Road and the west side of Villiers Road and forms part of a Local Area of Special Character (LASC). The LASC was considered for inclusion in the proposed extension to the Grove Crescent Conservation Area on 25 July 1989. The report confirms that this section of the LASC was developed much later than the original Spring Grove Estate and, not being subject to the same minimum rentable value, is of a more mundane style and standard of construction. This later development took place by a series of steps as field after field was taken into the housing estate. The first part of Alfred Road was laid out by Alfred Nuthall in 1876 and sold off in small plots to speculative builders. The next field became Glenthorne Road and the associated section of Alfred Road in 1886 when Cleaveland Phillips set out the plots and funded the erection of Nos. 4-22 by selling off the other plots. This form of piecemeal development continued with the extension of Portland Road between 1895 and 1903 and Balmoral Road between 1904 and 1910, although some properties of the latter were rebuilt following bomb damage during World War II. Houses in Alfred Road, Glenthorne Road and Balmoral Road have been "improved" with the benefit of permitted development rights, resulting in unsympathetic alterations and additions. These include replacement of original period windows and front doors with uncharacteristic designs and modern materials, and alterations to original brickwork by the application of textured surfaces, stone cladding and paint. In conclusion

therefore, it was considered that this part of the LASC was of insufficient merit to contribute to the character of the existing conservation area.

- 8.12 This LASC will be reviewed as part of the LDF process and the Borough characterisation study at a later date.

## **9.0 CONCLUSIONS/ WAY FORWARD**

- 9.1 The assessment of the positive and negative indicators above concludes that most of the buildings within the Grove Crescent Conservation Area make a positive contribution to the area. However, the ill effects of multi-occupation and parking controls have contributed to the loss of boundary walls to provide off street car parking in some front gardens. This has led to an erosion of special character in some cases and created some bleak street scenes entirely dominated by cars. As a result the Grove Crescent Conservation Area would probably be graded as 3/4 for programming, on a scale of 1 (not important) – 5 (very important).
- 9.2 The Management Strategy, which will form part of Stage 2, will allow the Council to take a more proactive role in ensuring that the character of the conservation area is preserved and enhanced. In particular the Council will be in a position to consider the application of Article 4 Directions and Section 215 Notices in order to help any further deterioration within the Conservation Area. Stage 2 would also provide an opportunity to produce generic guidance for many of the conservation areas particularly in relation to acceptable forms of hard standing and landscaping.
- 9.3 A review of the boundary concludes that there is a strong case to make small scale boundary changes to include the whole of the Blue Bridge, the north bank of the Hogsmill River and the avenue of trees to the north and south of Springfield Road.