

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF ISLEWORTH RIVERSIDE CONSERVATION AREA

Report by: Borough Planning Officer

Summary

1. To put forward an assessment of the conservation merits of Isleworth Cemetery.
2. To seek Member's approval for consultation regarding the extension of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee recommends:

- a) That consultation is undertaken with the view to extend the designation of Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area to incorporate Isleworth Cemetery;

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents to Members the history of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area and the Isleworth Cemetery, which currently bounds the Conservation Area to the northwest, a character assessment of both areas, and the value of extending the Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The report recommends an extension to the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area.

2.0 POLICIES

- 2.1 There is no standard specification for conservation areas, the statutory definition being "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".
- 2.2 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that every local planning authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas.
- 2.3 Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 15, Planning And The Historic Environment, (September 1994), paragraph 4.2, 'Assessment and designation of conservation areas' states, "...it is the quality and interest of areas, rather than individual buildings, which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas". It goes on to say "There has been increasing recognition in recent years that our experience of an historic area depends much more than quality of individual buildings – on the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on particular 'mix' of uses; characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; shop fronts; street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits the pedestrian use of spaces between buildings".
- 2.4 Paragraph 4.7 of PPG 15 states "There is no statutory requirement to consult prior to designation or cancellation of designation, but it will be highly desirable that there should be consultation with local residents, businesses and other local interest groups over both the identification of areas and the definition of their boundaries. The greater the public support that can be enlisted for designation before it takes place, the more likely it is that policies for the area will be implemented voluntarily and without the need for additional statutory controls. Local planning authorities should advise English Heritage and appropriate regional Government Office when conservation areas are designated".

- 2.5 The adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the Built Environment Chapter forming part of the UDP Review has policies to protect and enhance the built environment. Policies ENV.B.1.1 New Development; ENV- 2.2 (Conservation Areas); ENV-B.2.3 Reuse Of Redundant Historic Buildings; ENV-B.2.5 Development Affecting The Setting Of A Listed Building; ENV-B.2.6 (Identification And Protection Of Buildings Of Local Townscape Character); and ENV-B.2.7 (Alterations To Listed Buildings and Buildings Of Local Townscape Character).
- 2.6 The other local policy affecting the site is C.5.3 Recreational Open Space.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Isleworth Cemetery occupies an area of land that is clearly shown as the parcel adjoining Cut Throat Lane, a definition which could derive from Cut Through Lane, and is positioned to the north west of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area. The Cemetery is separated from Syon Park by Park Road to the east and southeast.
- 3.2 With the sites characteristics and evident historic and environmental legacy, when taken with potential development within the wider area cited in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a pressure on the area, it is recommended that the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area be extended to incorporate Isleworth Cemetery.

4.0 THE HISTORY OF ISLEWORTH RIVERSIDE CONSERVATION AREA

- 4.1 The Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area was designated on 11 November 1971.
- 4.2 The main purpose of the Conservation Area is to preserve and enhance the Riverside character of the area and the character, appearance and setting of the listed buildings within the area.

History

- 4.3 A riverside settlement from prehistoric times, Isleworth was well established by the time of the Norman Conquest in the 11th century. The earliest form of the name is Gislhaesuuyrth, meaning Gilhere's settlement. All Saints Church occupied its riverside site from the 13th century, being rebuilt in 1705 and 1970. Lower Square still has buildings dating from the 18th and early-19th centuries as well as the redevelopment of the 1980s. The area was anciently celebrated for a monastery called the Monastery of Sion, of the order of St. Bridget of Sweden, originally founded at Twickenham in 1414 by Henry V., but removed to this place in 1432. Edward VI granted the site to Edward Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector, who erected the mansion of Sion House. Syon House (as it now known) is the seat of the Duke of Northumberland. It is situated in the midst of a park, and has been considerably altered and enlarged under the superintendence of Inigo Jones. It is a spacious quadrangular and embattled structure, with towers at the corners. Isleworth House (now Nazareth House), Sion Hill, Wyke House, Redlees and Silver Hall, were the other principal seats in the locality. The village, which consists of two streets, was originally laid out with market gardens, which produced large quantities of fruit for the London market. There was an extensive brewery, cement works, and a corn-mill, believed to be one of the largest in England.

Appraisal

- 4.4 The conservation area extends along the Thames from the edge of the Syon Park estate to the borough boundary (as amended 1994) along the River Crane at Railshead Bridge on Richmond Road (now a Grade II listed building, and recently strengthened,) to include the riverside Nazareth House estate with its listed convent buildings. To the north it edges the historic route of London Road, to the southwest parts of Twickenham Road.
- 4.5 There are at least four character areas: Syon House and parkland; the old riverside settlement which itself includes the riverside working, urban and residential areas: leading towards the village commercial core; and the peripheral grand estates, often religious houses during much of their existence. Syon House and Park. (Listed under Park Road) The whole of this part of the conservation area is made up of the former Syon Estate. Syon House (Grade I) is approached through open parkland and gives the impression of open countryside. It also provides a natural river edge to the Thames.
- 4.6 Other buildings of interest connected with the Syon Park estate includes Bush House (Grade II), now a school, 69 London Road, the former farm house (Grade II) and Syon Lodge (Grade II*) said to be the former dower house.
- 4.7 Of particular interest is the reordering of the house and gardens to give a greater prominence to the area to the northwest as shown by Capability Brown's plan C.1976 and Sauthier's plan of Syon House and Gardens in 1786 looking out towards the area that was to become Isleworth Cemetery.
- 4.8 The riverside lake, which originally extended across what is now Park Road, was fed by canals that supplied water from the southwest. The lake original form further demonstrates the continuation of Syon Park beyond today's western wall boundary and highlights the shared relationship between the land to the west of Park Road, including the Isleworth Cemetery, and that to the west including Syon Park and House.
- 4.9 Various historic maps show the parcel of land that now contains Isleworth Cemetery belonged as part of one of the historic estates to the east.

Pressures on the area

- 4.10 The recent Conservation Area appraisals (draft) highlighted the following pressures upon the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area, that are pertinent to the cemetery.
- Cycles of repair needed for the historic boundary walls of the old estates (especially where in conflict with important trees).
 - Pressures from infill development, together with alterations of existing commercial buildings for dwellings, which can alter the grain by filling spaces, losing permeability through the area.
 - Pressures of parking and through traffic in conflict with needs of pedestrians and also on the historic character of narrow streets and narrow pavements.
 - Scale of proposed development, which even at a long distance can affect vistas and settings.
 - Effect of higher-density residential and tall buildings of alien bulk and mass on the existing character of small-scale buildings and small-grain layouts.
 - Loss of trees.

5.0 BUILDINGS AND AREAS OF NOTE RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION WITHIN THE ISLEWORTH RIVERSIDE CONSERVATION AREA.

5.1 Isleworth Cemetery faces northeast onto Park Road in Isleworth. The site is in use as a cemetery and comprises an area of 2.38ha. The site is currently owned by the London Borough of Hounslow and is managed by the Community Initiative Partnerships (CIP). The site is designated as local open space and it is open to the public.

History of the area

5.2 Isleworth cemetery was set up in 1879 when the Parish churchyard at All Saints was full. Isleworth Burial Board was formed to consider acquisition of a suitable site in 1877 and in 1878 purchase of land belonging to the Duke of Northumberland was approved by the vestry. A loan of £12,000 was negotiated and over 6 acres were purchased in April 1879 for £4,769 the remainder of the loan was used for building the twin gothic chapel with a central octagonal spire, designed by architect Mr Farnell, a small lodge at the entrance for the cemetery superintendent, the mortuary, the walls, fences and laying out the cemetery. The layout plan of 1878 shows a network of paths, planting around the mortuary and in two oases between paths and along the New Road boundary, the former name of Park Road until 1880, with mixed trees including conifers along the south. The first burial took place on 26 June 1880.

5.3 In 1909 the Burial Board transferred the cemetery to the Heston and Isleworth Urban District Council. Among those buried here are members of the Pears family of Spring Grove including Thomas Pears, a victim of the Titanic sinking in 1912. A red obelisk was erected by public subscription in 1885 to Alice Ayres who dies in a fire while 'she heroically rescued children committed to her charge'. Others include Sir Thomas Williams (d.1941), Director of a number of railway and canal companies, and Albert Baldwin (d.1936) who founded a coin-dealing firm in 1872. Meller refers to the cemetery as being the only one in London with a mature palm tree.

Buildings of note

5.4 1) Monument to Pears family (C.1902), Grade II Listed – An elaborate tall monument of grey granite, comprising a twelve sided base, rising up to a circular plinth, with three pilasters. Above the cornice are six projecting balusters, carrying a second cornice which projects over the balusters; above these are antefixes with ribs behind, rising over the domed superstore. The finial comprises a four armed cross. The inscriptions are to Andrew Pears d.1909, Andrew Pears junior d.1902, and Thomas Pears d.1912. The monument is described as the most elaborate in the cemetery, and serves to commemorate three members of the Pears family, the prominent soap manufacturers whose factory was located close by. An exuberant example of the commercial mason's craft, it is also of historic interest.

5.5 2) Isleworth Cemetery Chapel, a Grade II Listed building (1879) which comprises of a pair of cemetery chapels with central porte cochere. "A vigorously designed example of a cemetery chapel, designed in the High Victorian Gothic manner (influenced by Ruskin and Butterfield) retaining much of its decoration. The chapel dominates the cemetery. A lodge and mortuary were also designed in matching style. The Anglican chapel was last used in service in 1970 and has since been used as a council store. Repairs to the spire were carried out in 2000.

6.0 Reason for designation within Conservation Area

- 6.1 First and foremost Isleworth Cemetery should be included into the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area based upon its intrinsic merits. The site provides an integral component within the wider area, providing valuable open space and an attractive landscape. The high visual amenity of the site is enhanced by the number of mature trees located within the site that appear visually to be an extension of Syon Park both in appearance and character. The site has a tranquillity that further adds to its value as a potential Conservation designation.
- 6.2 The open nature of the site creates a sense of permeability through the area into the Conservation Area beyond, creating vistas towards the Riverside and Syon Park; it is these qualities that intertwine the site into the philosophy and individuality of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation area.
- 6.3 The site is historically linked into the wider legacy of Syon House and indeed the site was once part of the Duke of Northumberland Estate. Its shape and form can be traced back in history as shown in John Rocque's map of 1741-46, and has remained intact throughout the development of the area over the years. The site forms a recognisable continuation of Syon Park and the wider Conservation Area, in terms of its form, character and historic fabric.
- 6.4 The connection with Syon Park to the east of these is well established and highlighted in both John Rocque's map of 1741-46 and the Isleworth Survey of 1871 (Hounslow Local Studies Centre). The site that is now the Isleworth Cemetery can be seen as being defined by Cut Through Lane (later Union Lane) to the northwest and by the tip of the artificial lake within Syon park (now reduced in size) to the South. The historic northeastern boundary between the Cemetery and Cut Through Lane, abutting the West Middlesex Hospital site, also forms a potential natural barrier to the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area that would restore the historical perimeter.
- 6.5 These historic maps portray the site as being intrinsically linked both in geography and land use with the now Duke of Northumberland Estate. Its designation within the Conservation Area would allow this historic relationship to be reinstated and provides a natural and appropriate extension to the designation of the Conservation Area.
- 6.6 The site contains two examples of Grade II Listed structures, the Pear's Family Monument and the Chapel. Memorials and monuments comprise some of the most evocative and stirring memories of past lives. In terms of churchyard and cemetery memorials vast numbers of memorials survive. This further emphasises the historic importance and value of the two designated structures within the cemetery. The Listed Chapel, which dominates the cemetery, has a historic legacy that significantly influences the character and fabric of the cemetery and the wider area.
- 6.7 With future pressure from surrounding development, such as at the West Middlesex Hospital Site, it is considered appropriate that the Cemetery falls under the umbrella of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area to preserve an area of significant environmental and historic value. Development close to the existing Conservation Area could have an effect on its setting and the proposed boundary extension would further safeguard the existing picturesque riverside setting and historic legacy of Syon House and park and the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Isleworth cemetery as described above, is of special conservation, architectural and historic interest, and has a symbiotic, intrinsic relationship with the adjacent Conservation Area, which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. It is therefore recommended that it is designated as part of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The conservation of the Borough's architectural heritage helps to foster local distinctiveness and makes a contribution to the aesthetic quality of our townscape.

9.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

9.1 The protection of the Borough's architectural heritage will benefit all sections of the community.

Background Documents:

- Conservation Area Statement 1997 (Supplementary Planning Guidance)
- Conservation Area Draft Appraisals 2006
- Capability Brown's plan of Syon House and grounds C.1756
- Sauthier's plan of Syon House and gardens in 1786 (Syon House).
- John Rocque's map of 1741-46 (Hounslow Local Studies Centre)
- Isleworth Survey of 1871 (Hounslow Local Studies Centre)

This report has been or is due to be considered by:

Isleworth & Brentford Area Planning Committee 09.11.06