



Ms Susan Smith  
Environment  
Cambridge City Council  
Cambridge CB1 0JH

5 August 2011

Dear Ms Smith

**Central Conservation Area (Riverside Review) and Newmarket Road Suburbs and Approaches study**

Thank you for inviting the Riverside Area Residents' Association to comment on these two consultations, and for distributing leaflets to households affected by the proposed Conservation Area boundary extension.

In general, RARA agrees with these assessments and welcomes the proposals. The area has suffered greatly from thoughtless and unsympathetic planning decisions in the past. We would like to see more protection in place to retain and improve what remains.

We wish to urge that the City Council will apply and enforce its own conservation policies robustly in future, however. We do not understand how it was possible for planning consent to be granted quite recently for large modern developments on Riverside – within the existing Conservation area boundaries – that are now considered so unwelcome and inappropriate that it is recommended that the boundaries be changed to exclude them.

We would hate to see a repeat of this or earlier decisions such as the mediocre buildings around Elizabeth Way roundabout (adjacent to the Conservation area and now identified as 'a blemish'), the ugly warehouses which replaced small streets east of Abbey Street and the demolition of a Grade II listed public house on the Coldham's Lane junction. We hope that the changes proposed here, in conjunction with the Eastern Gate SPD guidelines, will genuinely protect historic frontages and ensure appropriate future development.

**Central Conservation Area proposals**

Boundary changes:

- We think it would be useful to include the area around Elizabeth Way within Conservation Area boundaries as a 'zone of opportunity'
- We also strongly support the proposal to include Godesdone Road in the Conservation Area, together with historic frontages along south and north

**Riverside Area Residents Association**

Chair: Lynette Gilbert, 47 Riverside, Cambridge CB5 8HN  
Secretary: Suzi Shimwell, Riverside House, Cambridge CB5 8HL  
Treasurer: Tim Ensor, 21 Saxon Road, Cambridge CB5 8HS

sides of Newmarket Road. These buildings are inherently attractive and have the potential to be transformed and showcased within an active, pedestrian-friendly streetscape if Eastern Gate SPD proposals are implemented.

- We believe that the West's site next to River Lane (identified as a building which detracts) also merits 'zone of opportunity' status, given its visual prominence when approaching from the east.
- We understand the rationale for excluding modern blocks along Riverside, but wonder whether retaining them (perhaps also as 'zones of opportunity') would afford greater protection for the future should redevelopment be an option. It would be a pity to lose the landscaped green space in front of Riverside Place, for example.
- We support the inclusion of older terraced housing on Stanley Road. The green space and landscaping around Regatta Court is also attractive and worth protecting in some form.
- We support an extension of the boundary to include the north side of the river, Stourbridge Common and Ditton Meadows. These areas have a very significant impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

Visual improvement:

- We strongly support the adoption of Article 4 Directions to prevent inappropriate alterations to historic frontages. This appears to be an area where Cambridge lags behind a number of other authorities.
- We also support proposals to improve the entrance to Stourbridge common and to paint the railings along Riverside dark green or black. These are not attractive in design, and a darker colour would make them less intrusive.
- We welcome proposals to protect the mature trees in front of St Andrew's Church on Newmarket Road, to plant trees along Walnut Tree Avenue and to improve landscaping in front of Pepys Court and Water Street.

As a general point, we think it essential that residents affected by boundary changes and/or the introduction of Article 4 Directions should receive full information about the implications for them.

### **Suburbs and approaches proposals**

RARA agrees with the conclusions reached in the Character Area assessments that much development along Newmarket Road has been disjointed and unattractive. Fortunately some green vistas and historic buildings still remain to be protected.

We welcome and support the enhancement opportunities outlined in section 6, both to improve the public realm through tree preservation and new planting, and to ensure that future development is informed by and appropriate to the surrounding historical context.

#### **Riverside Area Residents Association**

Chair: Lynette Gilbert, 47 Riverside, Cambridge CB5 8HN  
 Secretary: Suzi Shimwell, Riverside House, Cambridge CB5 8HL  
 Treasurer: Tim Ensor, 21 Saxon Road, Cambridge CB5 8HS

We are particularly concerned that recent and current planning applications are inconsistent with the desire stated here (and in the Eastern Gate draft SPD) to redevelop the south side of Newmarket Road in a finer grain, and to re-establish visual and physical linkages. One long solid 5-storey block has already been consented, and another is under consideration. If both are consented, the opportunity for historically-sympathetic development that harmonises north and south sides of Newmarket Road in Character Area 3 will be lost. Surely emerging policy codified in both SPD and this review should inform advice to Planning Committee?

In Character Area 2, we believe that the logic of the assessment – that retail development along the south side of Newmarket Road has created a bleak and architecturally undistinguished landscape – should be carried forward into recommendations for new development. The ‘expanses of tarmac’ could, for example, be mitigated or hidden by encouraging attractive street-fronting retail development of a finer grain.

\* \* \*

We hope you find these comments helpful and we look forward to seeing the impact of both reviews.

Yours sincerely

Lynette Gilbert,  
Chair, Riverside Area Residents' Association.

**Riverside Area Residents Association**

Chair: Lynette Gilbert, 47 Riverside, Cambridge CB5 8HN  
Secretary: Suzi Shimwell, Riverside House, Cambridge CB5 8HL  
Treasurer: Tim Ensor, 21 Saxon Road, Cambridge CB5 8HS