

# *St. Matthias & Sheen Road Study*

*Conservation Areas nos. 30 & 31*



# Introduction

This study has been prepared by the Planning and Building Control Division of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, in consultation with other departments of the Council. Its purpose is to take forward relevant policies in the Unitary Development Plan by formulating and publishing proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area's character. This will provide a framework for action by the Council, residents, developers and statutory bodies. The identification of the area's special character and problems provides a basis for specific proposals, including the improvement of less attractive areas.

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## Location

St Matthias and Sheen Road Conservation Areas lie on the plateau and northern scarp of Richmond Hill. They are bounded by the railway line to the north, Queen's Road to the east and south and the backs of properties to Richmond Hill to the west.

## History

The arrival of the London and South Western Railway at Richmond in 1846 led to substantial development in the form of new streets and high class villas on the slopes of the hill. The Church of St Matthias was consecrated in 1858 and early building took place around Friars Stile Road at Park Road, Marlborough Villas (now Marlborough Road), Montague Villas (Rosemont Road) and Cardigan Road. The subsequent pattern of development closely followed old field divisions. The oldest thoroughfares are Mount Ararat Road (previously Lane) which takes its name from a large house once standing in the area; Friars Stile Road, said to commemorate a route used by Carthusian monks from the Monastery (Shene Charterhouse), and Albany Passage which follows the line of a footpath that used to run between fields. The area to the north of Sheen Road (then known as Marshgate) was developed in the last half of the nineteenth century. St Matthias and Sheen Road Conservation Areas were designated by the Council on 5th July 1977 for the quality of their built environment, which represents the diversity of what is mostly mid and late Victorian architecture.

## Policies and Protection

The protection of the area through the Council's planning policies, in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the Richmond Town Action Area Plan (RTAAP), is shown on the map overleaf and referred to in the text of the study, specifically in the list of proposals. *The Council will strictly apply all UDP policies relevant to the study area.*

## Content of Study

Because of the distinct character of parts of the study area it has been divided into sub-areas. Character is identified by topography, uses, architectural qualities of buildings, landscape, materials, surfaces, spaces, and views; problems have also been identified. Proposals are stated for the whole area and guidance offered for future change, especially for residents.

*The text and map should be read in conjunction as both are equally important modes of conveying information for this study.*

## Townscape Analysis

The two conservation areas form a large irregular area of mixed building styles and forms, from terraced mews to large detached villas. These are unified by the dominant nineteenth century date and a consistently high quality of townscape. The study area can be subdivided into six smaller areas which correspond to the original field pattern as illustrated in Richardson's 1771 Map of The Royal Manor of Richmond and the way that the land was sold and developed during the nineteenth century. There are many short distance views and vistas due the rise in ground level and the Church of St Matthias forms a major landmark which can be seen from some distance.

# Present Problems, Constraints & Opportunities



## Church Road/Mount Ararat Road/King's Road

Mostly developed between the 1860s and the 1880s, the area is dominated by the three major roads, with a few cross streets, which climb the hill towards the Church of St. Matthias. In contrast, there are also interesting routes such as Albany Passage, which derive from the paths between former fields, and the mews development at Preston Place.

**Buildings:** Properties are large, often three storey, detached and semi-detached dwellings only occasionally interrupted by non-residential uses such as schools. Of particular interest and quality are those buildings identified on the map in Dynevor Road and The Vineyard.

**Landscape:** The vistas, especially those through Church Road and Mount Ararat Road are of significant value and these are accentuated by the way that the building line is set back from the mostly well defined plot boundaries.

### Problems:

- Church Road and Royston Road have been identified as needing tree planting.
- some front gardens have been unsympathetically used for car parking.
- the area at the bottom of King's Road has suffered from a loss of front boundary definition due to the development of the ambulance station and the school across the road as well as the still undeveloped area behind the garage.
- the Meadow Hall Day Centre in Church Road is a squat building which does not conform to the building line and has a poorly defined frontage.
- opposite St Matthias' Church the small area of open land would benefit from planting and maintenance
- Albany Passage is in need of repaving in traditional materials



## *Sheen Road*

Sheen Road forms part of the linear development which links Richmond and East Sheen. This is a mixed use area with small shops and businesses interspersed with residential dwellings. Nos 106–124 Sheen Road are identified in the UDP as key shopping frontages, indicating their importance to the local area.

**Buildings:** Sheen Road holds the concentration of listed buildings in the study area; these mostly date from the 18th Century and special interest is created by Hickey's Almshouses and Houblon's Almshouses, both of which were built in the mid nineteenth century. The setting of these buildings is noted as being of importance; for example, the wall of Christ's School, although outside the study area, should be retained in this respect. There are several interesting shopfronts which should be retained.

**Landscape:** This sub-area is dominated by Sheen Road itself which is subject to heavy traffic. The western part is characterised by narrow pavements often split between public and private ownership while to the east the pavements become wider. There are not many street trees, although those residential dwellings on Sheen Road are mostly set back with mature trees in their front gardens.

### **Problems:**

- the traffic is inevitably an intrusive feature in the local environment.
- there have been several unsympathetic shopfronts installed
- poor quality privately owned paving outside shops
- potential for improvement to the surfacing at the junction of Worple Way and Sheen Road by The Red Cow.

Sheen Road

## *Park Road/Marlborough Road/ Queen's Road*

Park Road and Marlborough Road are in a secluded part of the study area running down the back slope of the hill towards Richmond Park and bounded by the large detached dwellings of Queen's Road.

**Buildings:** There is a gradual reduction in the scale of the houses from the grand late Victorian red brick of Queen's Road and the bottom of Marlborough Road to the two storey domestic scale at the north end of Park Road.

**Landscape:** Front gardens are an important feature in the area, especially in relation to the Queen's Road frontage where tree cover is an integral part of the street scene and setting to the houses. Equally a part of the area's character is the pattern of long back gardens which creates a feeling of space between the buildings and which are well planted with mature trees.

### **Problem:**

- unsympathetic use of front gardens for car parking

## *The Alberts & Houblon Road*

The Alberts is formed by Albert Road, and the small culs de sac which run off it, which were sold for development in the 1870s. Houblon Road was a separate development but is of the same date as the Alberts.

**Buildings:** This area is characterised by its tight group of two storey terraced houses. Houblon Road and Albany Terrace are of particular interest.

**Landscape:** Because of the narrow streets there is no street tree planting but positive contributions have been made by residents who have installed window boxes and made the most of often limited space at the front of their properties. There is an attractive seating area at the bottom of Albany Passage which was the result of joint action between the Alberts Residents Association and the Council. There are important vistas in Prince's Road, Albany Passage and Houblon Road.

### **Problems:**

- extensive unsympathetic changes carried out as permitted development including the removal or replacement with modern versions, bow windows, the addition of shutters and the painting of the original brickwork.
- poor quality paving and seating in streets and Albany Passage
- poor quality surfacing and need for new facilities at recreation area between Albany Road and Worple Way.
- area adjacent to the existing seating scheme mentioned above is spoilt by parked vehicles and concrete surfacing.

## *North of Sheen Road*

This area is bounded by Sheen Road to the south and the railway line to the north. Between these two run a number of streets which were developed in the mid/late Victorian period.

**Buildings:** The area is characterised by sometimes large semi-detached dwellings with distinctive elevations. Of particular interest are houses on Dunstable Road, Townshend Terrace, Townshend Road, St Mary's Grove, and Sydney Road.

**Landscape:** The streets present views from Sheen Road down towards the railway and are mostly well planted with trees. The rear gardens of Alton Road and Sheen Park also represent important areas of visible green space in the conservation area.

### **Problems:**

- poor quality paving
- some unsympathetic changes to Buildings of Townscape Merit carried out under permitted development rights



Townsend Terrace

## Grosvenor Road to Rosemont Road

**Buildings:** While this is defined as a sub-area the building styles are noticeably different ranging from the three storey grandeur of Montague Road to the interesting brick detailing and symmetry of Rosemont Road. Buildings in Rosemont Road and Montague Road are of particular interest.

**Landscape:** Many of the dwellings have retained their front gardens and these form an important feature of this area. Several streets have been identified which would benefit from tree planting. The vista down Montague Road is of particular note.

### Problems:

- some front gardens have been eroded by car parking
- some footways need repaving
- many front walls have lost their railings, particularly in and around Lancaster Park.

## Friars Stile Road

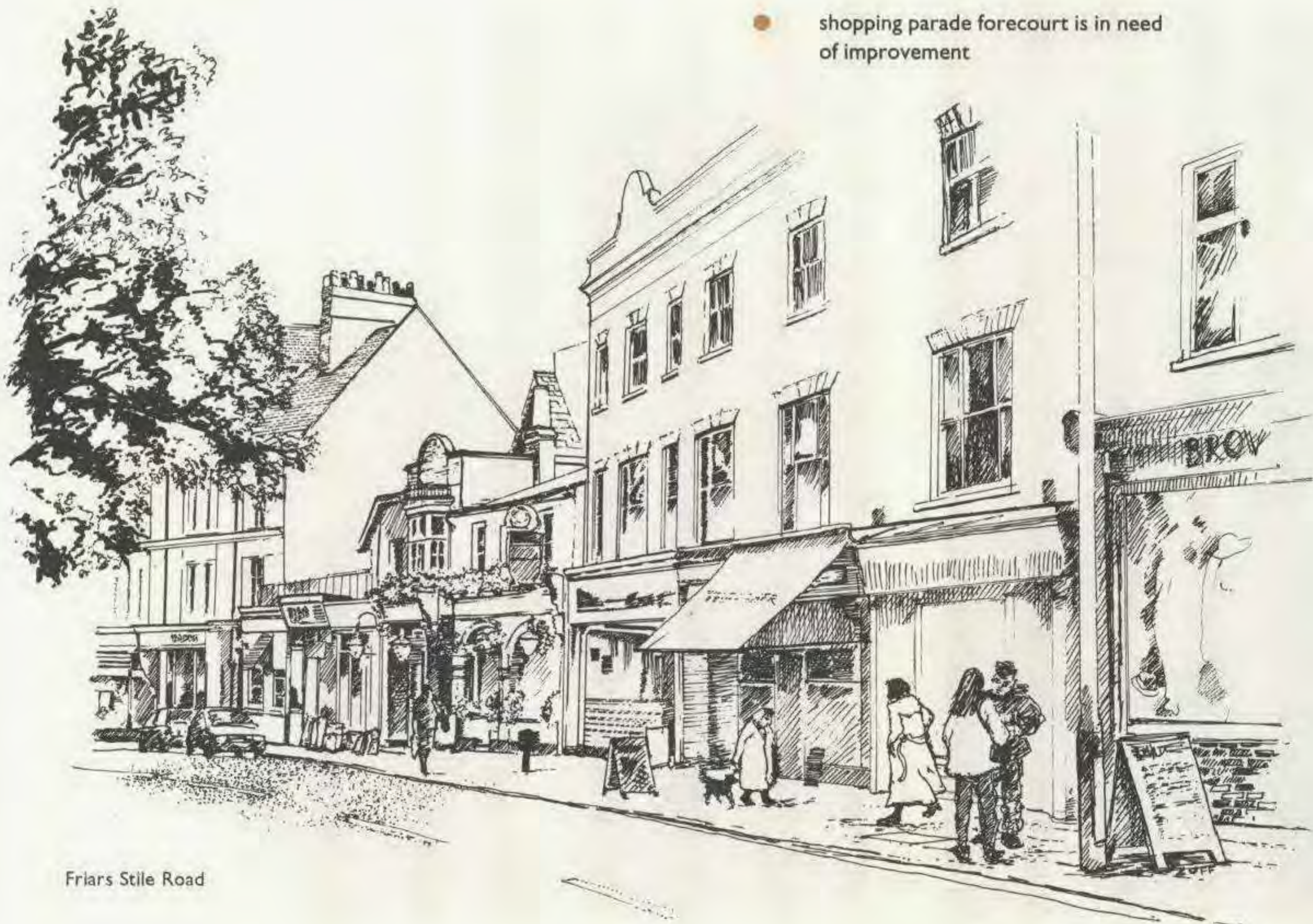
Lying at the top of Richmond Hill, Friars Stile Road is a mix of residential and business use which has retained its village atmosphere.

**Buildings:** Mid and late Victorian in date, the residential properties are large and set back from the road. The small business area is primarily centred between the Rosemont Road and Marlborough Road junctions and contains several interesting shop-fronts for retention while others would benefit from positive change. Nos 19–23a (odd) and 36–56 (even) are designated as key shopping frontages in the UDP. On the opposite side of the road there is a small modern parade set behind a private forecourt.

**Landscape:** Front gardens are an important feature of Friars Stile Road while it is the rear gardens of Cardigan Road and Montague Road which make a positive contribution to the streetscene and provide greenery.

### Problems:

- poor landscaping/screening to modern development
- shopping parade forecourt is in need of improvement



Friars Stile Road

# Proposals

Proposals can be summarised as being those for: public areas, including highways and paths, owned by the Council or other statutory bodies; private houses where change may require planning permission, and therefore be under the Council's control, or be permitted development and under the owner's; commercial sites, particularly those which are eyesores and may offer an opportunity for major change or re-development. Everyone involved in the study area, whether it be the Council, developers or residents, needs to contribute to achieving the proposals set out in this study. The Council will strictly apply UDP policies and the detailed proposals listed overleaf to preserve and enhance the special interest of the areas identified in the study. When, and if, money is available, the Council will implement proposals on its own land.

## Residential Property

### What the Council can do:

The Council is able to control new development through its powers under the planning acts and is always willing to give advice to those who want to undertake new work. There is a range of guidance leaflets available on development requiring planning permission and if you are in any doubt about the need to obtain permission for intended works you should contact the Planning and Building Control Division at the Civic Centre.

As illustrated on the map, many of the buildings in the study area are either buildings of townscape merit or on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

Where there is a particularly good group of single dwellings which would suffer if work were to be carried out which does not necessarily require planning permission (eg changing windows, demolition of front boundary walls) then the Council can apply to the Department of the Environment for an Article 4 Direction. This means that certain permitted development rights, as specified in the Direction, are then removed and owners would have to apply for permission to carry out these works.

Such an approach is considered appropriate for the following properties in the study area:

Dynevor Road 1-14 (incl)	Sydney Road 1-39 (incl)
Townshend Road 1-11, 17-27 (odd) 2-32, 38-48 (even)	Dunstable Road 1-25 (incl)
Townshend Terrace 2-16, 22-32, 38-50 (even)	Montague Road 1-8 (incl)
St Mary's Grove 2-50 (even)	The Vineyard 47-77 (odd)
Rosemont Road 5-43 (odd)	Mount Ararat Road 37 (only)
Houblon Road 1-74 (incl)	Albany Terrace 2-24 (even)

To help owners separate guidance will be published on properties covered by the Article 4 Direction.

### What residents can do:

Under the present legislation, residents are entitled to carry out certain minor works to their houses as 'permitted development', which means that permission does not have to be obtained from the Council. There is, therefore, a great responsibility on owners to consider the quality of the street and the area, not just their own needs, when carrying out work. There is plenty of opportunity to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation areas by paying attention to the small details of houses which can make a huge impact. For example, the study area has many fine examples of whole groups of houses which have retained their original fenestration only to be spoilt by the odd one or two which have installed aluminium or uPVC versions. Similarly, painting a house which is part of a brick terrace can have a negative impact. What constitutes permitted development can be a complex matter and residents should consult the Council in the first instance if in any doubt whether or not intended work requires consent. In any case, the Council's officers are always happy to give advice and guidance on permitted development work.

The study area is unfortunately too large to give advice on a street by street basis although a particular area of concern has already been identified in The Alberts. Local residents and groups can help by recording original features and passing on information about useful local joiners, builders and sources of particular materials.

When thinking of carrying out works which require planning permission the best approach is to contact the Planning and Building Control Division for advice. Of particular concern are proposals for large dormer windows and extensions, both of which can have a negative impact on the streetscene even on rear elevations which can be visible from the public domain because of the falling ground. Of equal impact is the breaking down of frontages and the destruction of front gardens for car parking. Supplementary guidance leaflets are available on these subjects from the Council.

## Commercial Premises

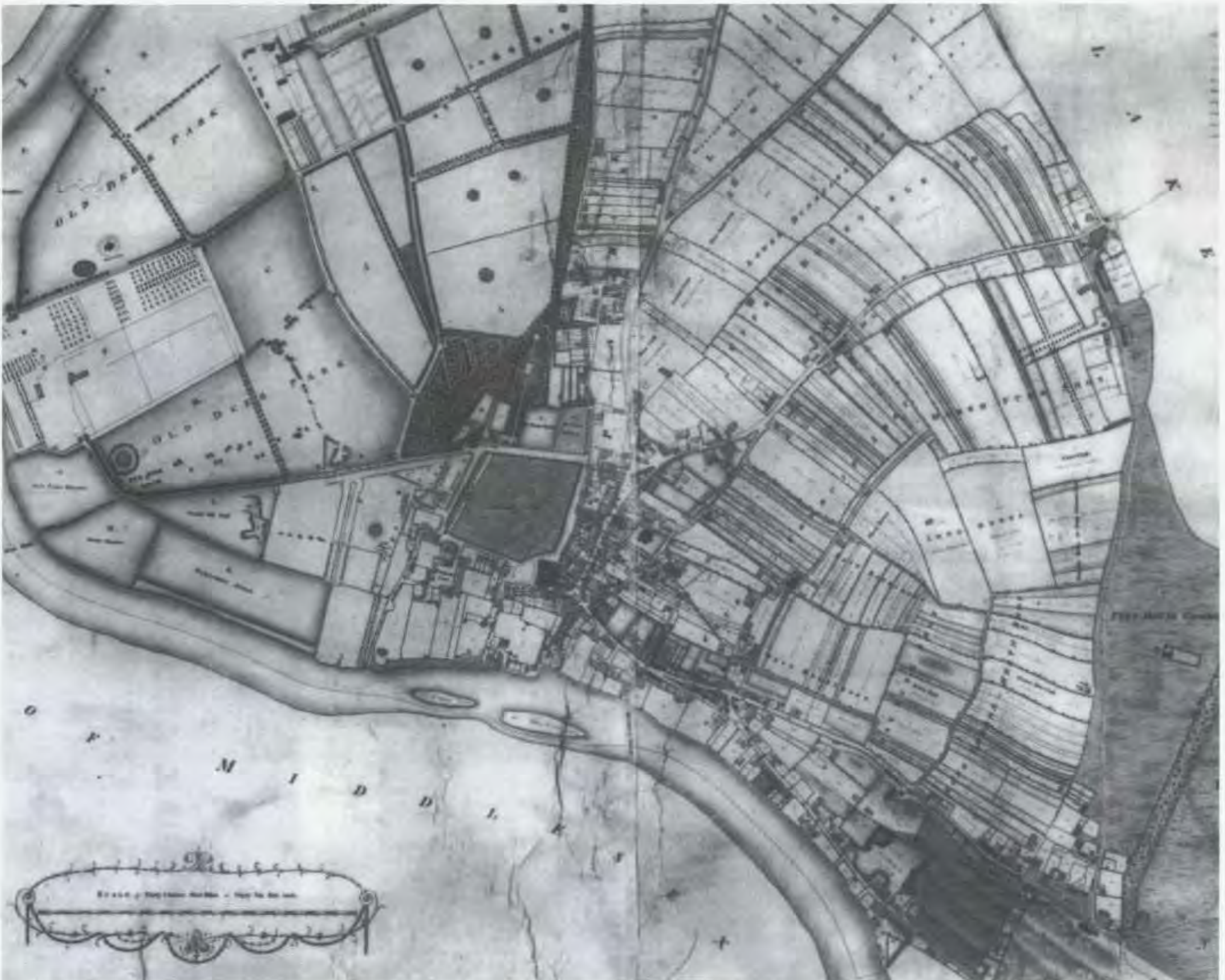
To retain and improve the quality of shopfronts is an important objective of the study. Shopfront grants may be available from the Council for those wishing to repair or positively replace a shopfront in a design sympathetic to the character of the conservation areas.

## Landscaping and Planting

In the absence of public open space, private gardens, both front and rear, have a significant role to play in the character of the conservation areas. There will be a presumption against backland development unless it can be demonstrated that there would be no significant harmful effect on amenity and the quality of the local environment. Of particular concern is the character of mature trees in the rear gardens which complements the built environment.

Throughout the study area streets have been identified both here and in the UDP which would benefit from tree planting. Existing trees in conservation areas, which are not already subject a Tree Preservation Order, are protected automatically since six weeks notice in writing must be given to the Council before any proposed works are carried out.

There are many opportunities for residents to restore front boundary walls and railings. The Council is happy to offer guidance on this.



extract from The Royal Manor of Richmond map by Thomas Richardson 1771

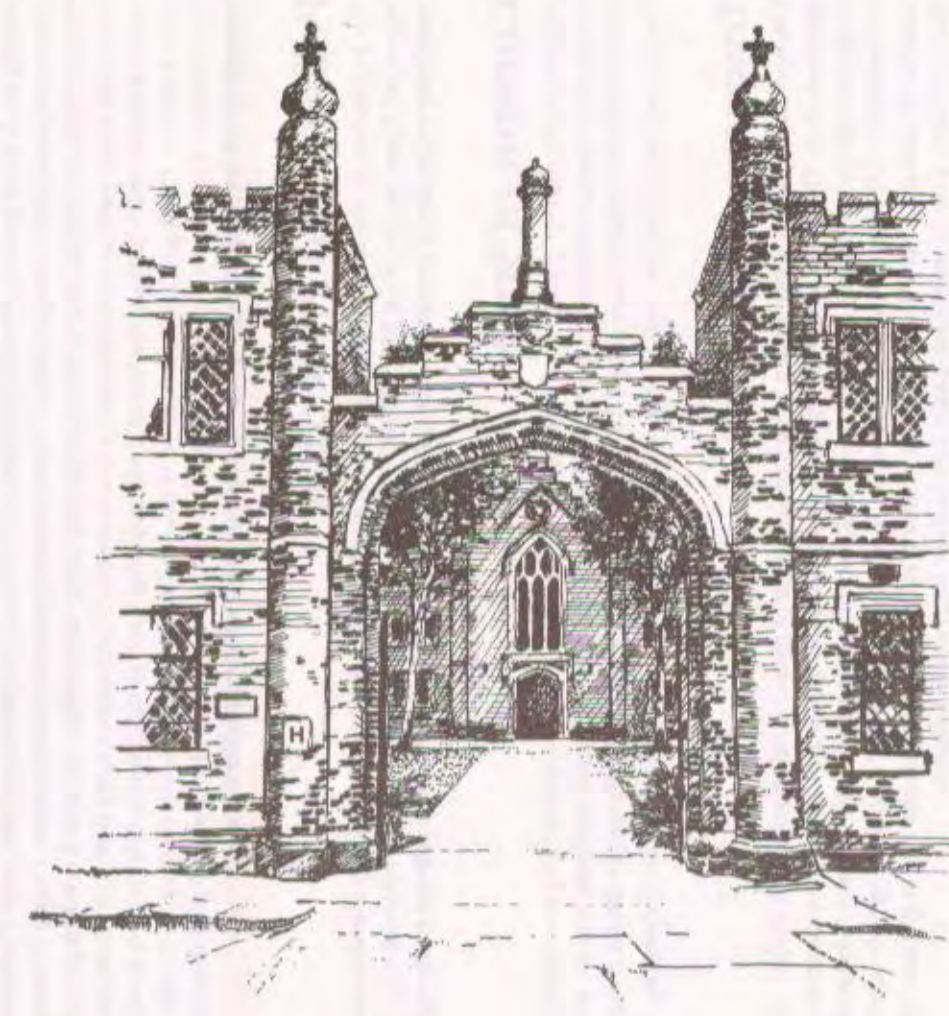
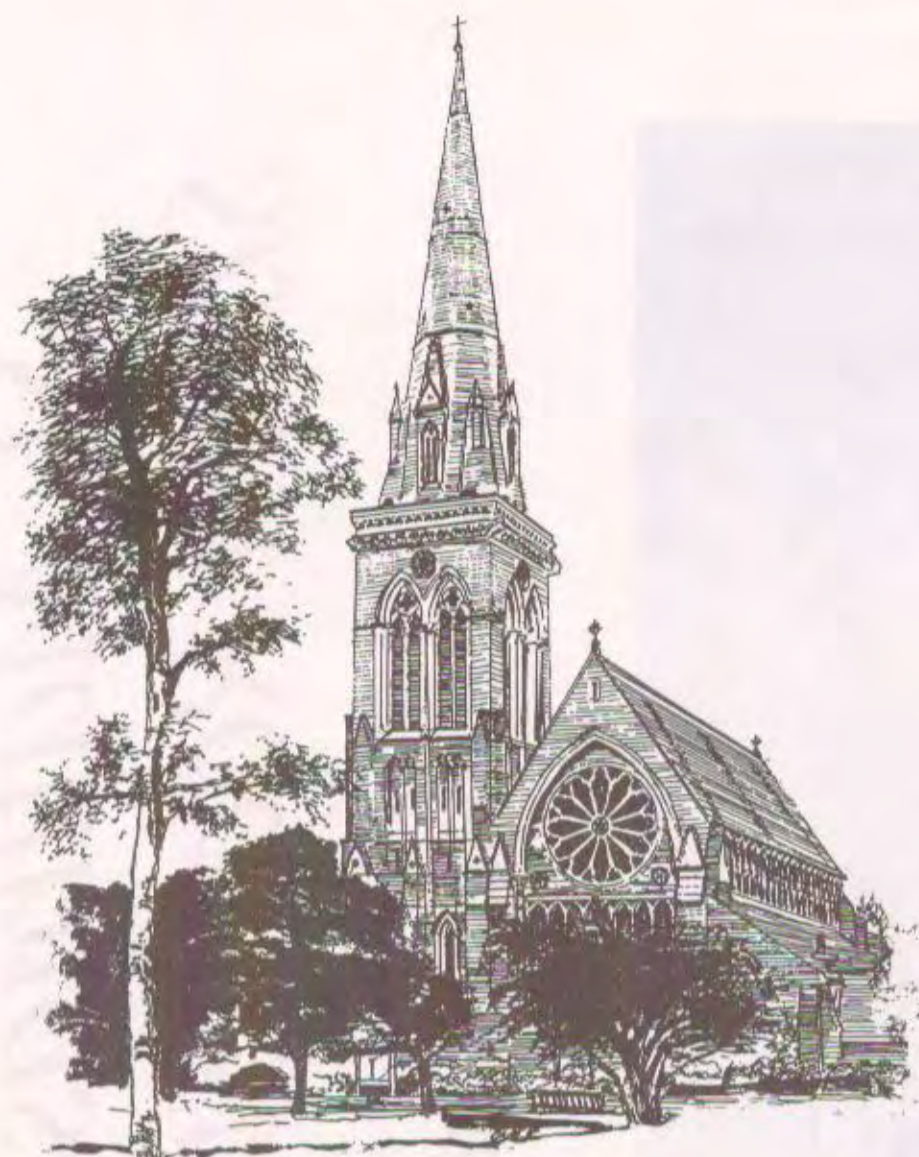


# St. Matthias & Sheen Road Study Conservation Area

## Proposals

This study of the areas' special qualities and problems concentrates on practical schemes for environmental and highway improvements, which will be carried out by the Council and others when resources permit, and on planning guidance for owners.

~This map and the key summarise the proposals~



Sheen Road



Onslow Road



Queen's Road



Junction of Worple Road and Sheen Road



Frisars Stile Road



Palmerston Court

- KEY**
- Boundary of Conservation Area
  - UDP PROPOSALS**
    - Public Open Space
    - Landmark
    - Proposal Site
    - Key Shopping Frontage
    - OOLTI
  - OTHER DESIGNATIONS**
    - Listed Buildings
    - Buildings of Townscape Merit
    - Article 4 Direction
    - Short views
    - Long views

### 1 IMPROVE HIGHWAY CONDITIONS (ENV 34, TRN 4)

- a improve footway paving with the use of traditional materials, especially in Albany Passage, the Alberts and the area north of Sheen Road.
- b improve area at junction of Worple Way and Sheen Road.
- c improve surface treatment outside shops

### 2 MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OPEN SPACES (ENV 5, ENV 8, ENV 34)

- a improvement schemes at Worple Way recreation area and adjacent to existing seating scheme at bottom of Albany Passage.
- b planting and maintenance on land opposite St. Matthias' Church and top of Albany Passage.
- c planting in culs de sac against end walls.
- d possible traffic calming measures.

### 3 ENSURE ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY IS PRESERVED, ENHANCED OR REINSTATED (ENV 10, ENV 11, ENV 13, ENV 21, ENV 30, ENV 31, ENV 32)

- a Article 4 Directions proposed; see map and overleaf details in 'proposals' paragraph.
- b reverse damage to architectural quality in the Alberts
- c retain and repair important shopfronts and replace inappropriate shopfronts in Sheen Road and Friars Stile Road
- d new Buildings of Townscape Merit at 3-17 Friars Stile Road & outbuilding adjacent to 55 Sheen Road

### 4 IMPROVE LANDSCAPE SETTING OF RESIDENTIAL AREA (ENV 8, ENV 37)

- a retain front gardens and their boundaries throughout the study area.
- b reinstate original or improved boundaries throughout the study area and especially at the bottom of King's Road and at the Meadow Hall Day Centre
- c street tree planting in native species according to Council guidance.
- d tree planting & boundary treatment at Palmerston Court

### 5 IMPROVE QUALITY OF STREET FURNITURE (ENV 34)

- a replace unsightly concrete lamp columns and replace with painted steel
- b repair seating and litter bins as appropriate
- c retain old signs, post boxes etc throughout the study area
- d remove surplus street furniture as appropriate