

A response from Sutton Living Streets to the consultation *Sutton Town Centre High Street Crossroads: Proposed Conservation Area*

About Sutton Living Streets

Sutton Living Streets is a small group of Sutton residents who support the aims of the national charity Living Streets, which works to create safe, attractive enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Our vision for Sutton is for a borough that continues to develop in a way that will offer some of the best public spaces and most attractive streets in London, and that these will help make walking and cycling an obvious choice for many people when making short journeys.

Summary

Sutton Living Streets welcomes the proposal by Sutton Council to develop a new Conservation Area at the southern end of the High Street, as outlined in the *Draft Heritage Character Appraisal Sutton Town Centre High Street Crossroads: Proposed Conservation Area*¹. We support the recommendation to designate the High Street Crossroads area as a Conservation Area, and wish all involved every success in taking the proposal forward.

Key endorsements

In this concise response we would like to take the opportunity to highlight just one or two of the paragraphs in the draft character appraisal document which we feel are particularly worthy of endorsement. In Section Four, Character Analysis, for example, these include:

4.98 The High Street area outside Sutton Station and the east/west roads would benefit from an extension of the scheme using a range of compatible materials. **As a key town centre gateway, the area around the Station should be upgraded to improve the arrival experience to the town centre and the proposed conservation area.** The High Street outside the station is a busy vehicle road **and the pedestrian footways along this stretch are narrow and can become congested** which does not allow easy views of the surrounding historic buildings or allow space to dwell. The junction of the High Street with Grove Road/Sutton Court Road is busy and the **pedestrian crossing points would benefit from upgrading and removal of barriers.**

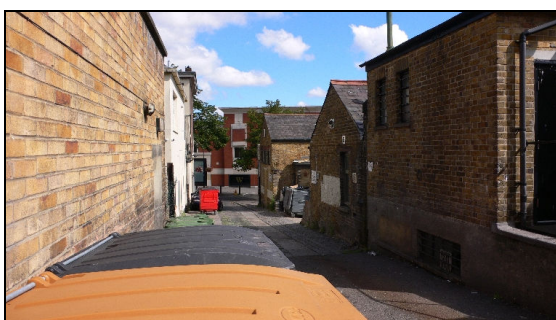
4.99 **Where possible, a reduction in street clutter is desirable. This includes posts, signs, railings, columns, apparatus, structures, advertisements and should be kept to a minimum in order to enhance views in the proposed conservation area and not detract from the detailing and features of the historic buildings and environment.** If designated as a conservation area, the existing street signs could be updated to indicate the extent of the conservation area and to bring attention to the special character and history of the area.

¹ Accessed on 11 January 2011 from: <http://www.sutton.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=668>.

Lessons from the past....

In Section Two, Archaeological and Historical Context, the recognition that “**in the last 50 years new development has given little consideration to the context and human scale of the historic High Street..**” (paragraph 2.13), is particularly welcome. Sutton Living Streets would suggest that walking to the High Street has become less attractive because many development decisions have resulted in a reduction in permeability and ease of access to the town centre and High Street by any mode other than the car.

Thankfully the High Street in Sutton does have a few remaining access points that provide some escape from the surrounding traffic-dominated roads. Two of these are Hill Road and Throwley Road situated on the northern edge of the proposed Conservation Area. Leading south from Hill Road (in Characteristic Appraisal Sub-area 4) is an example of one of the many service roads that provide access to the rear of shops and properties– see photos below. Sutton Living Streets would be interested to know whether there is potential for spaces like this cobbled, unnamed and presumably forgotten cul-de-sac to contribute more to the vitality of the town centre. Perhaps, through the creation of additional access points, they could be expanded and joined-up to provide filtered permeability and improved connectivity for pedestrians and, at the same time, further enhance the conservational aspect of the High Street.



Looking north towards Hill Road from unnamed cul-de-sac service road (Trinity Square ahead and to the right)
13 July 2008

...and looking to the future

Designation of the High Street Crossroads area as a Conservation Area will certainly help protect and enhance heritage buildings and structures in Sutton. But forthcoming redevelopment should help to create, sustain and build on a strong local identity too. Sutton Living Streets would like to see more evidence that the planning decisions that are being made today reflect the importance of ensuring that walking becomes a more viable option for people to make in the future.

In conclusion, Sutton Living Streets would like congratulate the authors and contributors of the appraisal document for the producing a very interesting and thorough assessment. The Draft Heritage Appraisal Proposal certainly contains aspects that suggest a step is about to be taken in the right direction, with new thinking which will help Sutton ultimately become an even more people-friendly town. We believe these are very appealing aspirations and would like to thank you for the consultation, and for giving us the opportunity to contribute.