

Morelands & Riverdale Buildings, Lower Sunbury Road, Hampton, TW12 2ER: Heritage Assessment

Background

- 1 In the nineteenth century private companies supplied London's water, which was extracted from the River Thames and the River Lea. The expansion of London's population in this period led to the setting up of nine water companies each with a geographical monopoly.
- 2 One of these companies, the South London Waterworks Company, renamed the Vauxhall Water Company in 1834, extracted Thames water beside Vauxhall bridge. In 1845 the company merged with the Southwark Water Company to become the Southwark and Vauxhall Water Company. In 1845 the Southwark Water Company supplied water across a wide area including Battersea to Rotherhithe and south to Camberwell.
- 3 The water was unfiltered and untreated river water, and, following a cholera epidemic in 1845, the Metropolis Water Act was passed in 1852 with the purpose of providing the metropolis with 'pure and wholesome water'. It became unlawful to extract water from the tidal Thames and after 31 August 1855 filtration became compulsory, meaning that all drinking water had to be 'effectually filtered'.
- 4 To comply with the legislation new facilities were built in 1855 above Molesey lock at Hampton designed by the engineer Joseph Quick. These works included the construction of the Stain Hill reservoirs at Hampton connected to Battersea by a 36-inch main. The works also consisted of filter tanks using the slow sand settlement system still employed today.
- 5 These early buildings established the format later employed in the Morelands and Riverdale buildings, having a tall engine house with large windows attached to a lower single storey arcaded boiler house with a chimney.
- 6 The Southwark and Vauxhall Water Company expanded on to the site east of Lower Sunbury Road to construct first the Morelands building c.1867-70, to be followed by the Riverdale building c.1898-1900. The large filter beds were first built in 1867, contemporary with the Morelands building.
- 7 Most of the Hampton site is still operational, but the Morelands and Riverdale buildings were made redundant following the introduction of advanced water treatment works and a new pumping facility at Hampton in 2008/9.

- 8 The Morelands building was erected in two phases. The first part of the building, designed by the engineer Joseph Quick, was built between 1867-70 and it was extended and completed in 1885-6 by JW later Sir James, Restler.



Figure 1: Morelands building c.1886 (image copyright: Kew Bridge Steam Museum)

Heritage Significance

- 9 The Morelands and Riverdale Buildings are listed Grade II and lie within the Hampton Village Conservation Area.
- 10 Listed buildings and conservation areas are ‘designated heritage assets’, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF). Other buildings and structures identified as having heritage significance can be considered as ‘non-designated heritage assets’.
- 11 Heritage ‘significance’ is defined in the NPPF as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic’. The Historic England ‘Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2’ puts it slightly differently – as ‘the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest’.
- 12 ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment’ (English Heritage, 2008) describes a number of ‘heritage values’ that may be present in a ‘significant place’. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 13 Within the context of the Hampton Village Conservation Area, the waterworks are identified as standing at the entrance to the village both by the river and from Sunbury Road. The Conservation Area Statement notes ‘the monumental mid-Victorian gault brick pumping houses, a local landmark, stand in ample grounds behind handsome iron railings and perimeter planting, some in yew...these clean and floodlit buildings are particularly impressive at night.’

- 14 The buildings at the Hampton Waterworks have architectural interest as surviving examples of Victorian public infrastructure such as stations, hospitals, prisons and other infrastructure works that were largely new engineering functions requiring a suitable architectural expression. The architectural, as opposed to the purely engineering aspects of the buildings, were intended in part to give the buildings a recognisable appearance to reflect their importance as a public utility.
- 15 The surviving buildings have little remaining artistic interest other than the glazed tiles, patterned brickwork and terracotta wall decoration in the Morelands Engine House.
- 16 In terms of historic interest, the Hampton Waterworks was one of the first results of the Metropolis Water Act. Those involved in the development of the Hampton works as part of London's new water supply system were leading figures in the field. The engineers Joseph Quick (1809-1894) was closely involved in improvements to water supply. Following the Metropolis Water Act in 1852 Quick was entrusted with the building of the new Hampton Waterworks. Sir James Restler, who later designed the Walton Pumping station and reservoirs, became Chief Engineer of the Metropolitan Water Board between 1914-1918.
- 17 The boiler houses were the largest and most impressive spaces within the complex. This is reflected in the treatment of the Moreland Engine House with its glazed tiles, patterned brickwork and terracotta internal decoration. In the later and larger Riverdale Engine house the glazed wall tiling was given a simpler and more functional treatment.
- 18 The engine house interiors were as 'clean and polished' as the gleaming steam engines they housed, with large windows giving ample light to the interiors as well as glimpses of the machinery within.
- 19 The other spaces in the complex, consisting largely of coal stores and spaces housing the boilers, had a secondary role to the engine houses. Accordingly, the coal stores and boiler houses are lower in scale and more functional in treatment, with plain brick walls, with little internal decoration. The general form of these spaces is contained within the 'arcade' sections of the buildings, consisting of a single storey windowless space lit from above by a continuous lantern light.
- 20 In summary, the buildings are chiefly significant for their remaining building fabric as surviving Victorian infrastructure, having long since lost the steam engines and boilers that filled the internal spaces. Of the internal spaces, overall, the areas of primary significance consist of the Morelands and Riverdale engine houses, together with the Riverdale workshop, smithy and engine house including its basement – most of which has been subject to earlier conversion and re-use. The former boiler rooms and coal stores forming the lower 'arcade' sections of both buildings are of secondary significance.
- 21 The building had acquired a number of additions and extensions over the years that either had no significance or were negative factors that detracted from significance. These features were removed following the grant of listed building consent in 2012. The whole complex has also been subject to more recent planning and listed building consent for conversion to office/laboratory space, of which only the Riverdale buildings have been completed.

Proposals and their impact on heritage significance

- 22 This application comprises a number of minor changes to the Morelands Buildings and the installation of a new substation to facilitate the occupation of the buildings by Touchlight. These works are regarded as essential to the function of the laboratory spaces.

Central Arcade Entrance

- 23 There is currently a single entrance door into the central arcade of the Morelands Building. The proposal is for this to be amended to be a double door entrance. The entrance will be to a similar design as that installed in the adjacent Riverdale Building to not only provide a more appropriate central entrance, but also to provide continuity of design across the site.

Rooflights

- 24 It is proposed that 16 new conservation rooflights are inserted in the Morelands West Arcade Roof, and 12 new conservation rooflights are inserted to the Morelands East Arcade to provide additional light to the offices proposed at first floor level.

- 25 These will be positioned and detailed in a manner that is entirely appropriate for a building of this nature.

Proposed level of the arcade mezzanine

- 26 Permission has already been granted for the insertion of a mezzanine level within the arcades. Following more detailed design work it is necessary for this structure to be raised from the original proposed level by 950mm to ensure that the service zone and the laboratories can be incorporated at ground floor without impacting on the existing structure or roof of the listed building.

- 27 In light of the previously consented mezzanine, this will not have any further impact on the listed building.

New Substation and Enclosure

- 28 The proposed new substation and enclosure has been designed to match the design of the existing approved substation. This is required for the power upgrade works on site and is located discreetly in the northeast corner of the site, as discussed and agreed with Council Officers during the pre-application process.

- 29 The proposed substation sits away from the listed buildings. It is discreetly tucked away and should not have any detrimental impact on the setting of the listed structures.

Plant Enclosure

- 30 A larger plant enclosure is an essential requirement to service the new laboratory spaces at ground floor level. The most appropriate location for this in operational terms is along the northern side of the Morelands Building Arcade.

31 Mindful of the potential impact on the significance of the listed buildings, an options appraisal has been undertaken to firstly see whether there are other less-sensitive locations for this plant.

32 A number of possible locations were identified and the pros and cons of each considered including operational as well as physical/visual/heritage factors. These are discussed in the amended Design & Access Statement. This confirms that locating the plant on the north side of the Morelands Building Arcade is the optimum location.

33 The Arcade roof was also briefly considered; however, the elegant lightweight trusses and central lantern light form an integral part of the building's special interest and are perhaps the only elements of 'architecture' visible within the otherwise utilitarian Arcade spaces.

34 In summary, even in locations where the plant may be less visible from Upper Sunbury Road, there is the potential for the physical impact and interconnectivity within the building to be greater as well as further practical knock-on effects for servicing, parking and emergency services.

35 It should also be noted that the proposed location amounts to no more than approximately one eighth of the total length of the waterworks complex fronting Upper Sunbury Road – the vast majority therefore remains visually unaltered.

36 Whilst architecturally impressive, it should also be recognised that the buildings have always been updated, adapted and altered to ensure their practical and functional usefulness and purpose. This has required change throughout their lives – some of which has been more architecturally functional than others. Whilst clearly a visible, great lengths have been gone to, to ensure that this particular intervention is nevertheless as sympathetic as possible to the existing building.

Mitigation

37 In recognising that the preferred position is still likely to be regarded as causing an element of harm to the special interest of the listed building by reducing visibility of the building from Upper Sunbury Road, further efforts have been made to reduce the visual impact of the proposed plant and screen.

38 Whilst investigations have identified that it would not be possible to reduce the ground level of the plant enclosure, a detailed review of the specification of required plant has enabled the plant enclosure to be reduced in height from that previously proposed – considerably reducing the visual impact.

39 The acoustic enclosures will sit behind an elegant timber screen, stained to a colour that will complement the gault brickwork of the Morelands Building and designed to reflect the architectural rhythm and spring of the blind arches and pilasters along the wall.

40 The screen will be set in from the Engine House at either end to give an appropriate 'shadow gap' between the enclosure and the historic building.

41 Planting behind the iron railings will further lessen the impact of the screen.

Compliance with policy and guidance

- 42 This report has provided a description and analysis of the significance of the site and its heritage context, as required by paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In addition, the report also describes how the proposed scheme will affect heritage significance.
- 43 It recognises that whilst the majority of the proposed works will not have a detrimental impact on the significance and special interest of the listed building, there is the potential for the proposed new plant and screen along the northern wall of the Morelands Building Arcade to impact the ability to fully appreciate the architectural qualities of this elevation.
- 44 If it is regarded that this element of the proposal would cause some harm to the significance of the listed building this would need to be considered with reference to paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF. Clearly the scheme does not lead to ‘substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset’ and therefore complies with paragraph 195 of the NPPF.
- 45 With regard to ‘less than substantial harm’ as referred to in paragraph 196, this harm ‘should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’.
- 46 The Design & Access Statement has articulated in some detail the need for the plan and why this particular location has been chosen for the plant and enclosure screen, the extent to which its length is limited along the frontage and also the mitigation measures incorporated into the design to ensure that its impact is further minimised. This reduced impact ensures that at most ‘less than substantial’ harm is caused by the proposals.
- 47 In terms of the impact on the character and appearance of the Hampton Village Conservation Area, whilst the proposals will be visible, this should be considered in the context of the length and impact of the whole Waterworks complex, particularly now the proposed screen has been reduced in height, the materiality changed and a rhythm that reflects the architecture of the building introduced.
- 48 The policy requires the decision maker to weigh this against the public benefits of the scheme -which in this case are substantial.
- 49 The proposed works at the Morelands and Riverdale campus place Touchlight at the heart of a programme to develop not just vaccinations to combat global health crises such as COVID but also positions it to be able to provide rapidly deployed vaccines and gene therapy treatments on a globally unprecedented scale.
- 50 This has a strong resonance with the past and in fact the very reason for the development of the Waterworks themselves, which were constructed in direct response to the demand for clean water to help prevent then spread of disease, in particular cholera – which in itself forms part of the special historical interest of the listed building.
- 51 When considered in the round we therefore believe that any perceived ‘less than substantial’ harm to either the listed building or the conservation area is more than

outweighed by the public benefits and would allow the overall special interest of the listed building and character and appearance of the conservation area to be preserved.

- 52 In this regard, the proposals meet the requirements of London Borough of Richmond Development Management Plan Policy DM HD1 with regard to conserving the character and appearance of the conservation area and Policy DM HD2 relating to extensions and alterations respecting the architectural character, historic fabric and detailing of the original [listed] building.

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