

3.7 Public Realm

Floorscape in the Conservation Area consists predominantly of black tarmac to most public highways and pathways, often in combination with Pennant stone kerb setts. There are also a few areas where pathways are surfaced with small concrete paviours, for example, along the southern pavement to King's Street [245] and along Southgate Mews, linking Watermoor Road and the east end of Queen Street; these tend to compete with rather than enhance the textured stone and brick buildings they are intended to support.

Generally the floorscape has a neutral impact on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area although there is little floorscape which responds particularly well to its setting or enhances the public realm. Exceptions include Staffordshire blue paviours which can be found occasionally to private pedestrian routes between houses, and as thresholds to front gardens, often in combination with terracotta or blue clay edging bricks [183-185 & 243].

Informal areas of car parking, front gardens and pathways are often surfaced using hoggin, or similar gravel material [244 & 246]. The area of large concrete slabs at the southern end of Watermoor Road and its junction with Stepstairs Lane fails to enhance the quality of the space [249].



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For the most part the use of black tarmac within the conservation area is not problematic. There are several areas, however, where the tarmac is patchy and in poor condition, and detracts from the conservation area's special architectural and historic interest [247-251].



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Parts of the Conservation Area also suffer from a clutter of traffic-related street furniture and road markings, as well as security measures such as CCTV cameras. In particular, too many traffic signs have an unduly dominant impact on the special historic and architectural character of the area. Examples include the junction at the southern end of Watermoor Road [252], the junction of Purley Road with London Road [255] and the Beeches car park and environs [253 & 256]. Telegraph poles and wires add a further element of visual clutter to several parts of the area, including Chester Street [254 & 259] and Purley Road [258].



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Some barriers and boundaries treatments are in need of enhancement; for example, public pathways bordered by poorly-maintained post and chain fencing whose unkempt appearance fails to enhance the special qualities of the area [260-61], and unpainted, galvanised aluminium barriers terminating pedestrian exits from public places such as schools, are often poorly designed and maintained [262-64].



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Enamel road and property names in various forms create attractive detail in the Conservation Area [242] although some are in poor condition, and/or are barely legible [265-67]. Lighting is mostly limited to concrete lamp standards which have a neutral impact on the special architectural and historic character of the Conservation Area.



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Interpretation of the area is especially weak and poorly maintained, most notably at the northern entrance to St Michael's Park where the outline of the Roman basilica is marked out in artificial materials and accompanied by signage which is barely apparent and badly maintained, the whole within a space dominated by parking and punctuated by galvanised traffic bollards [268-71].



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Seating provision is limited but there are a handful of benches, mostly located in St Michael's Park, which combine practicality with robust modern design [272-73].



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