

CHELTENHAM

Local development framework

10. THE SUFFOLKS CHARACTER AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

JULY 2008



Central Conservation Area

10. The Suffolks Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan July 2008



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Key characteristics

This Character Appraisal of the Suffolks Character Area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area concludes that the special interest of the area derives from the following key characteristics:

- The Suffolks contains both residential and commercial shopping areas. The mixture of the two uses shapes its character and allows the area is popular;
- The pattern and layout of streets and the form of the terrace buildings combine together to give the area its special qualities and distinctive character;
- Architect Derek Latham identified the Suffolks as a distinct urban quarter owing to its specialist shops. The Suffolks has become a self-sufficient 'village' on the edge of the town centre;
- The specialist shops provide the Suffolks with a unique identity. Traditional shopfronts with attractive canopies and metal guards particularly enhance the area's character and appearance;
- The Suffolks contains large numbers of Georgian and early Victorian formally laid out terraces and some villas. The uniformity of the extensive terraces forms a strong identity for the Suffolks area;
- This character area contains over 130 statutory listed buildings (some of which are grouped under the same listing) and some locally listed buildings and structures, giving it a rich architectural and historic interest.

Key issues

A number of problems and issues have been identified and have a negative impact on the character of the Suffolks character area. These form the basis for the Management Proposals of the Management Plan in the Part 2 of this document and are summarised below:

- Control of new development;
- Loss of traditional architectural features on some historic buildings;
- Negative impacts of the presence of equipment or installations on or around buildings, such as large aerials or satellite dishes;
- Drives and loss of front gardens;
- On street parking;
- Tree management;
- Boundary enclosures (including some poor hedging);
- Setting and views;
- Enhancement of existing buildings and land;
- Surface materials;
- Car park at the rear of Old School Court;
- 'Rat-running' of traffic along Andover Road, Great Norwood Street and Norwood Road;
- Street furniture (particularly Norwood Triangle).

Part 1 – Character Appraisal

Townscape Analysis Map of the Suffolks Character Area

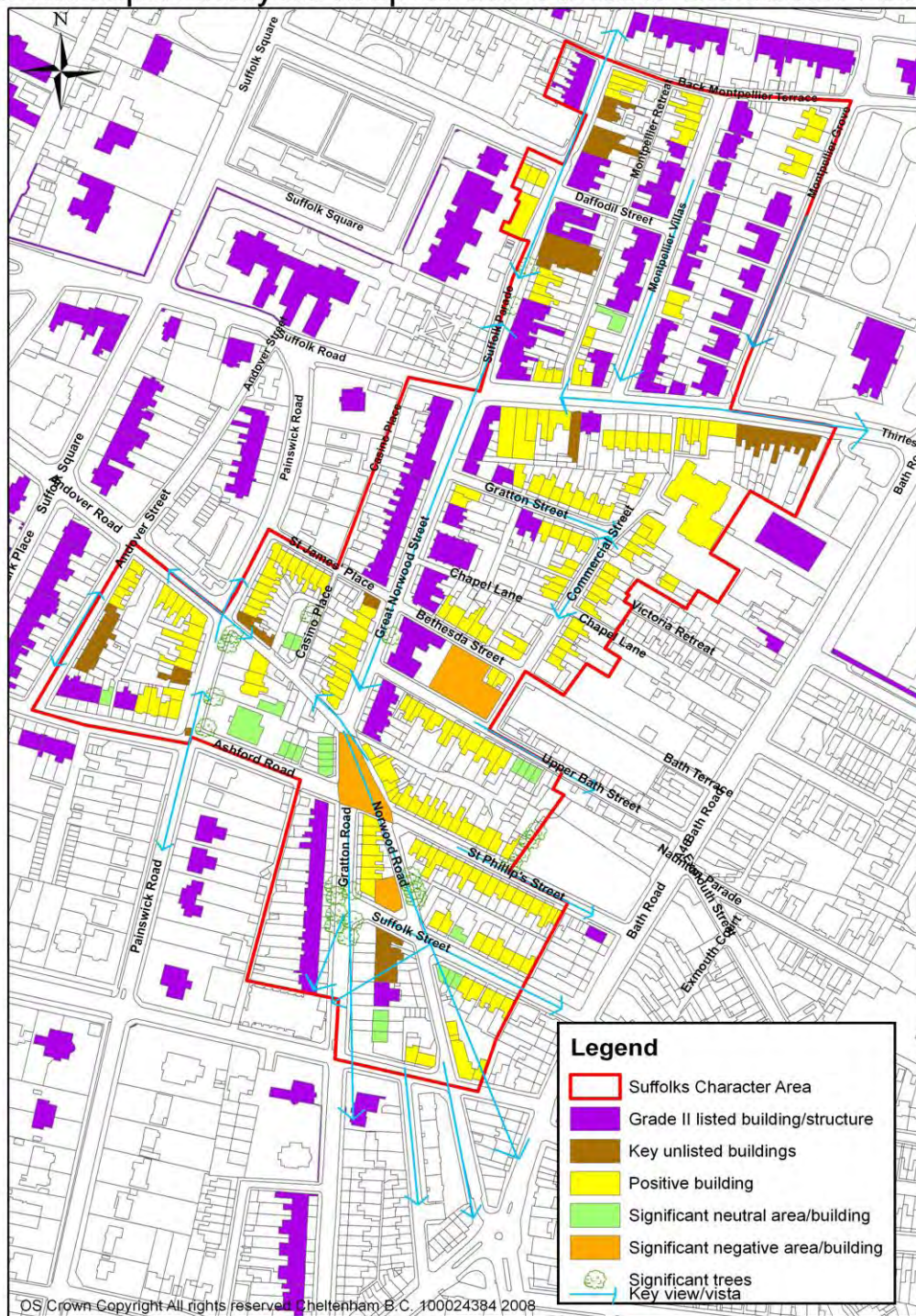


Figure 1 Townscape Analysis Map of the Suffolks Character Area

1 INTRODUCTION

What is a Conservation Area

- 1.1 A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, in which the character or appearance is considered to be worth preserving or enhancing. It is given special protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Government policy in relation to Conservation Areas set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15). This legal protection enables the best features of an area to be preserved and new buildings and street works to be designed in-order that they enhance the area.

- 1.2 Some building work which does not require planning permission (known as “permitted development”) can damage the special qualities of a Conservation Area. “Article 4” directions can be applied by the planning authority to limit permitted development rights and thus give extra protection to particular buildings.

The need for an appraisal

- 1.3 PPG15 stresses the need for local planning authorities to make an assessment of the special character and appearance of all Conservation Areas in their districts. The Government has also made the preparation of such assessment appraisals for all conservation areas a Best Value Performance indicator for local authorities. These assessments should be reviewed by local planning authorities every five years.

- 1.4 This document has been split into two parts. Part 1 of the document forms the character appraisal which provides an assessment of the character of a conservation area or parts of it. This appraisal provides the basis for Part 2, which comprises a management plan which gives guidance on how the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance can be achieved. It also provides a sound basis for development control decisions made by local authorities (such as the design of highways or the appropriateness of the design of new buildings or open spaces).

- 1.5 Both parts of this document were subject to public consultation between 3rd March and 14th April 2008. Following consideration of representations received it was adopted by Cheltenham Borough Council on 28th July 2008 as a Supplementary Planning Document. It will be used in conjunction with the Local Plan as a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Planning context

- 1.6 Cheltenham Borough Council has various adopted and emerging planning related documents. They can be found on the Council's website - www.cheltenham.gov.uk. Some of the documents are quite broad in their content, whilst others are thematic, site specific or area specific. However, all fall within the statutory planning framework and all are material considerations in determining planning proposals. All these documents together look at various aspects of the built environment and need to be read as a whole within a particular context.

- 1.7 This document is part of that overall framework. The Character Appraisal (Part 1) is one of a number of such documents each assessing the character

of parts of the conservation area and highlighting negative issues, which are then addressed through Management Proposals within the Management Plan (Part 2). In developing planning proposals, the Character Appraisal and Management Plan need to be considered along with advice, guidance and policy set out in other planning documents, be they general, thematic or spatially specific.

- 1.8 Cheltenham's Civic Pride project aims to regenerate specific areas within the town. The project intends to develop and deliver public realm enhancement schemes and redevelop under-utilised council land including car-parks. More information on Civic Pride can be found at www.cheltenham.gov.uk Although this project is largely outside the Suffolks Character Area, it is possible that there may be some consequential benefits (see Management Proposal 12 'Civic Pride' in the Part 2 Management Plan).

The Central Conservation Area

- 1.9 Cheltenham is known as the most complete Regency town in England. It lies at the foot of the Cotswold scarp, where the valley of the River Chelt meets the Severn Vale. Currently the whole of the Cheltenham Borough area has a population of approximately 112,000 people.
- 1.10 Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area was designated by Gloucestershire County Council on 28th May 1973 and its boundary was extended by Cheltenham Borough Council on 14th August 1987. The Central Conservation Area includes the whole of the town centre, most of the Victorian, Edwardian and some of the later 20th century suburbs. It covers commercial, industrial, retail and residential areas, as well as the University campus complexes, some extensive school campuses and the hospital complex.
- 1.11 There is a Government requirement for existing Conservation Area boundaries to be re-assessed from time to time. Due to the size of the Central Conservation Area (reputedly the largest Conservation Area in Europe covering 600 hectares), it has been necessary to establish approximately 19 character areas. These have been appraised separately, in-order to identify their individual key components and in turn establish how each area may best be preserved and enhanced.

Suffolks Character Area

- 1.12 In May 2001 Cheltenham Borough Council published a draft Urban Design Framework for Cheltenham, produced by Latham Architects (the "Latham" Study). It was never formally adopted by the Council, but has been a useful stepping stone for the development of a number of subsequent initiatives. It included a plan which divided the whole town into character areas and is the basis of the character area boundary used in this study.
- 1.13 The selection of the 19 character area boundaries has no impact on the overall boundary of the Central Conservation Area. However, as part of the work for the preparation of the character area appraisals, consideration has been given to possible boundaries of the Central Conservation Area being revised in the future as a separate piece of work.
- 1.14 The boundaries of the Suffolks character area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area (see Figs. 1 and 2) have been based on the "narrow

*(residential and commercial) area...between Bath Road and The Park (and Suffolk Square).*¹ The area has a distinctive mix of quiet residential streets and bustling retail areas. The built form of the streets and the individual buildings on these roads, together with their uses, largely contributes to the overall character and appearance of the Suffolks and provides its distinctive identity.

Summary of special interest

- 1.15 The Suffolks character area is special because:
- a) The Suffolks contains both residential and commercial shopping areas. The mixture of the two uses shapes its character and the area is popular;
 - b) The pattern and layout of streets and the form of the terrace buildings combine together to give the area its special qualities and distinctive character;
 - c) Architect Derek Latham identified the Suffolks as a distinct urban quarter owing to its specialist shops. The Suffolks has become a self-sufficient 'village' on the edge of the town centre;
 - d) The specialist shops provide the Suffolks with a unique identity. Traditional shopfronts with attractive canopies and metal guards particularly enhance the area's character and appearance;
 - e) The Suffolks contains large numbers of Georgian and early Victorian formally laid out terraces and some villas. The uniformity of the extensive terraces forms a strong identity for the Suffolks area;
 - f) This character area contains over 130 statutory listed buildings (some of which are grouped under the same listing) and some locally listed buildings and structures, giving it a rich architectural and historic interest.

¹ Cheltenham Borough Council Development Services 'Suffolks Conservation Area' draft character statement (1999)
no pg. number given

The Suffolks Character Area within the Central Conservation Area

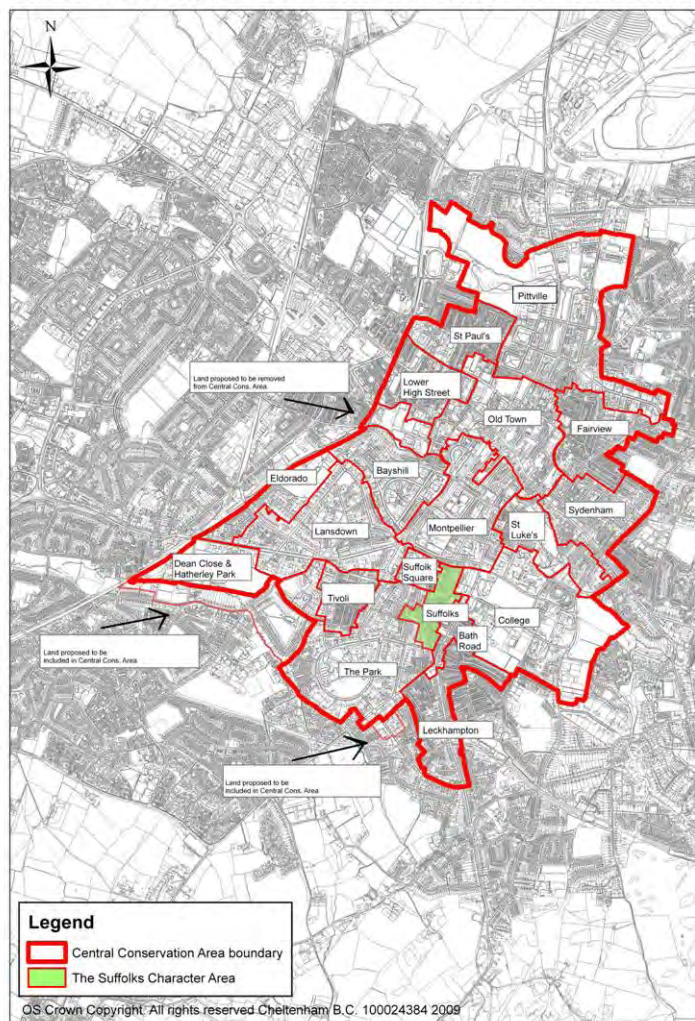


Figure 2 The Suffolks Character Area within the Central Conservation Area

2 LOCATION AND SETTING

Location and context of Cheltenham

- 2.1 Cheltenham is located in Gloucestershire. It is approximately 8 miles east of Gloucester, 40 miles west of Oxford and is immediately to the east of the M5 motorway. The town is set on low-lying land at the foot of the Cotswold scarp. Views of the Cotswold scarp from within the Conservation Area contribute to its character and setting. The town is surrounded by open countryside. Much of this is protected by the statutory Cheltenham/Gloucester Green Belt (to the west and north) and the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the south and east. To the west of Cheltenham is the River Severn, with the Forest of Dean and Wales beyond the Severn.

General character and plan form of the Suffolks Character Area

- 2.2 The Suffolks is positioned to the south of Cheltenham's town centre. It is a confined area between Bath Road and The Park/Suffolk Square. The A40 Suffolk Road runs through the character area on an east-west axis and

physically divides the area in two. The A46 Bath Road runs to the east of the character area.

- 2.3 The Suffolks character area contains predominantly Georgian and early Victorian residential terraces. The central and northern half also contains significant numbers of shops, restaurants, cafes and public houses. These dominant uses combine to establish the overall character of the Suffolks. The formal street plan and many historic buildings have been retained and are still very much in evidence today.



Figure 3 Residential terraced houses within the Suffolks Character Area



Figure 4 Shops, restaurants and public houses located along Suffolk Road

- 2.4 The plan form of the Suffolks character area is based on a deformed grid pattern. The streets are a mixture of wide and narrower roads which encompass a linear plan form. Service lanes are present at the rear of some of the terraces.

Wider landscape setting

- 2.5 The Suffolks character area is surrounded on all sides by the urban development of other character areas of the Central Conservation Area. However, views of Leckhampton Hill and other parts of the Cotswold escarpment presented from open spaces and gaps between buildings create a rural connection between the countryside and urban area. These long distance views of the hills in turn reinforce and enhance the spacious character of the area, and provide a rural backdrop for some of the set pieces of architecture such as the steeple of St Philip and St James (in the Park character area).



Figure 5 Views of the countryside from vantage points within the Suffolks Character Area

- 2.6 Some historic and modern landmark buildings with varying heights are present within the Suffolks character area. These include Old School Court, Bethesda Methodist Chapel, the Daffodil restaurant, Jubilee Court and the 3-storey terraces on Great Norwood Street. These buildings have a striking visual impact upon the street scene. Some dominate views of the skyline both

from within and outside the character area. Some of the buildings enhance the Suffolk's historic character and create a sense of atmosphere and rich architectural splendour. The linear form of many of the streets creates long vistas, whilst the extensive terraces create a strong sense of enclosure and the few open spaces provide a spacious atmosphere.



Figure 6 Landmark buildings within the Suffolk's Character Area

3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Archaeology within the town of Cheltenham

- 3.1 Some archaeological research has been conducted within the Borough of Cheltenham and in-depth research can be found in "Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey".² Many archaeological artefacts would have been lost during the expansion of the town in the 19th century, and so medieval and post-medieval finds have been very limited.
- 3.2 A few prehistoric remains have been found within the town, raising the possibility that people from Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age periods travelled or lived here. An Iron Age enclosure ditch was uncovered on the site of the present day Children's Library in 1986-87. This indicates that an area of Iron Age occupation was likely situated nearby.³ During the last 30 years, archaeologists have pinpointed several areas within the town which have been identified as likely areas of Roman occupation, and where Roman artefacts such as coins and pottery have been discovered. Within the Suffolk's character area, however, no finds have been noted under the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record. The "Chelt" element of Cheltenham's name is amongst a number of the very oldest names in the country – believed to be of pre-Celtic origin.
- 3.3 Archaeological remains unearthed provide a basis for researching the origins and early development of Cheltenham, and contribute indirectly to a sense of place evident in the modern era.

Summary of Historic Development of Cheltenham

- 3.4 The first documentary reference to Cheltenham itself occurs in an account of the Council of Cloveshoe held in 803. It is highly likely, given the archaeological finds and possible place-name derivation that Cheltenham was in existence as a farming village for a long time before the 8th century. Its status was raised to that of a market town in 1226 and the market played a key role in its economy for several centuries. From c.1247 Cheltenham was also a Liberty. Spa waters were discovered adjacent to the town in 1716 and

² 'Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey' Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, (1975)

³ 'Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey' Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, (1975)

after King George III's visit to sample the waters in 1788, Cheltenham grew rapidly as a fashionable spa resort. The popularity of the town as a summer resort resulted in Cheltenham having a wealth of tree-lined walks and rides, squares and gardens. Its popularity led to expansion of the town away from the ancient High Street, and many fine classical style buildings were built for the growing population. The popularity of the spa waters waned from the middle of the 19th century, and Cheltenham developed other roles in the form of its growing importance as a major educational centre during the latter half of the 19th century. In turn this led to the development well into the 20th century of some acclaimed public schools and churches. Before World War II, light industry boosted the town's economy. The establishment of GCHQ in Cheltenham immediately after World War II has had an enormous impact on employment in the town. Today, the town's attractions include fine shops and events such as the races and numerous cultural festivals as well as its legacy of Regency architecture, with trees, parks, gardens and public spaces.

General history of the Suffolks

- 3.5 The historic development of the Suffolks, based on plans from 1820, 1834, 1897 and present day is shown on the Historic Development map (see Fig. 7).
- 3.6 The Suffolks was developed as an area of attractive artisan housing, where many of the town's workers and trades people lived. It developed as part of South Town, an artisan community servicing the Cheltenham and Gloucester Tramroad. The majority of housing was developed in the 1830s to 1840s. The area around the Suffolks was developed partly by the Trye family and partly sold in sections to different individuals and developers. The character area therefore includes houses for the gentry, but predominantly terraces for the artisans. The Suffolks is positioned between the compact plan form of the Bath Road character area, and the grand and spacious character of the Park. In the 20th and 21st centuries, specialist retail and commercial premises have come to occupy some of the former residential buildings. These uses bring vitality to the area, enabling the Suffolks to be an attractive, popular and unique area within Cheltenham.

Development by 1820

- 3.7 The 1820 Postmaster map of Cheltenham depicts part of the northern area of the Suffolks. It shows the layout of roads being roughly established by this time. The Suffolks began to be established as an area where Cheltenham's workers and traders lived. Brooks explains that occupations of its residents included *"Stonemasons and milliners, shopkeepers and furniture makers, coal merchants and bread bakers..."*⁴
- 3.8 Suffolk Parade is present with some buildings defined on its east side. Suffolk Road (then named Commercial Road) is shown, leading into Thirlestaine Road. A stone yard served by the tramroad is featured on the eastern junction of Suffolk Road with Great Norwood Street.

Development by 1834

- 3.9 By the time the 1834 map of Cheltenham was produced, the road layout within the Suffolks had become further established. Roads had been constructed with a generally linear plan form.

⁴ R. Brooks 'The Story of Cheltenham' (2003) pg. 32

- 3.10 Further residential development had taken place, particularly along Suffolk Parade, Montpellier Villas, Montpellier Grove, Commercial Street, Charles Street (now known as St Phillip's Street) and Bethesda Street. Housing predominantly took the form of compact terraces with some larger semi-detached villas present in the north.
- 3.11 A stone yard was positioned on the junction of Norwood Road and Ashford Road, having been moved from its previous location at the northern end of Great Norwood Street. The stone yard later became Parry's Timber Yard. Its presence was a valuable contrast in terms of its use, to the overall dominance of residential housing in the area.
- 3.12 The Beehive public house dates from 1822 and adds to the historic character of the area.
- 3.13 Andover Road and Norwood Road run through the southern part of the character area. They are marked as 'Rail Road' on the 1834 map. The tram line ran from the quarries at Leckhampton to the Norwood Arms, and Hart explains how the tramline ran "...from thence down Norwood Street and across Park Place to join the main line in the lower High Street by the coal wharf."⁵ This rail road had a significant impact on the landscape of the Suffolks and timber and stone yards began to develop in the area to serve the rail road.

Development by end of 19th century

- 3.14 Further development had taken place within the Suffolks by the end of the 20th century. The majority of the buildings had been constructed along all the roads in the character area by this time. Extensive terraces had become further established along roads such as Gratton Road, St Phillip's Street, Painswick Road, Suffolk Parade and Great Norwood Street. The terraces had a very compact plan form, and houses were positioned in long, narrow plots. Semi-detached villas, with larger plan forms and plot sizes, had become further established along Montpellier Grove and Montpellier Villas.
- 3.15 The List Description for Bethesda Methodist Church states that it was built in "1845-6 (and) enlarged (in) 1867".⁶ It is positioned on Great Norwood Street. The Church replaced Bethesda Schoolroom, which was built in 1830. The Church is visually prominent and an attractive feature within the street scene. A school building was located at its rear and is shown on the 1884-93 map. It is presumed this school building was connected with the Church.
- 3.16 St James School is present on Great Norwood Street. A row of terraces is featured to its rear, along Union Street (now named Upper Bath Street). St James School was built in "...1865".⁷ The school was built as a 'National School' which was funded by parishes and supported by the Church of England National Society for Education.
- 3.17 Buildings at the southern end of Great Norwood Street included a public house named the Railway Inn and either side buildings were named Railway Buildings, which were constructed in the 1890s by Stroud Brewery. The public house was named the Railway Inn. Brooks explains how "*It was called the*

⁵ G. Hart 'A History of Cheltenham' (1965) pg. 147

⁶ Department of Culture, Media and Sport 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham (1998), pg. 350

⁷ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham (1998), pg. 351

Railway because a horse-drawn tramroad passed the front door on its way from Leckhampton Hill to Gloucester Docks".⁸ Tram trucks on their journey back from Gloucester docks carried coal to sidings off Norwood Road, on the south side of Upper Bath Street.

- 3.18 The List Description explains that Number 15 Suffolk Parade "...was occupied in 1892 by the Devonshire Dairy..."⁹
- 3.19 The British Union public house (renamed the Jolly Brewmaster in the 1960s) was built on Painswick Road in the mid 19th century. Suffolk Arms public house on Suffolk Road dates from c.1820-50. These public houses served the growing number of residents living with the area. Grafton Brewery was present on the junction of Grafton Road and Norwood Road. This was an important land use within the Suffolks at this time, the predominant land use being the residential artisan housing.

Development in the 20th and 21st centuries

- 3.20 Many of the larger terrace houses and villas have been sub-divided into flats. Some small levels of infill development have occurred within the roads. The sites of the 19th century coal and timber yards have been developed, in the form of terrace houses. Parry's Timber Yard was closed in the 1970s and the site developed into housing.
- 3.21 By the early 20th century, the row of terraces on the south side of Union Street (now Bethesda Street) had been demolished. The land was taken over by St James School and remained as open space. A car park now occupies this space. The school was converted into flats "c1985".¹⁰
- 3.22 The school at the rear of Bethesda Methodist Church has been turned into a church hall.
- 3.23 The site of Grafton Brewery at the junction of Gratton Road and Grafton Road is now occupied by three houses which have extensive, open gardens to their front.
- 3.24 Brooks explains how "At the end of the '90s the former Daffodil cinema in Suffolk Parade was imaginatively converted into a restaurant".¹¹
- 3.25 Specialist shops, bars, restaurants and cafes have become further established, particularly in the northern half of the character area. Their presence strongly contributes to shaping the character of the Suffolks today. The Suffolks now incorporates an attractive mix of "quiet residential streets and thriving retail areas".¹²

⁸ R. Brooks 'The Story of Cheltenham' (2003) pg. 32

⁹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham (1998), pg. 909

¹⁰ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Ibid. pg. 351

¹¹ R. Brooks 'A Century of Cheltenham' (2001) pg. 122

¹² Cheltenham Borough Council - Development Services 'The Suffolks Conservation Area draft character statement' (1999) no pg. number given

Historical Development of the Suffolks Character Area

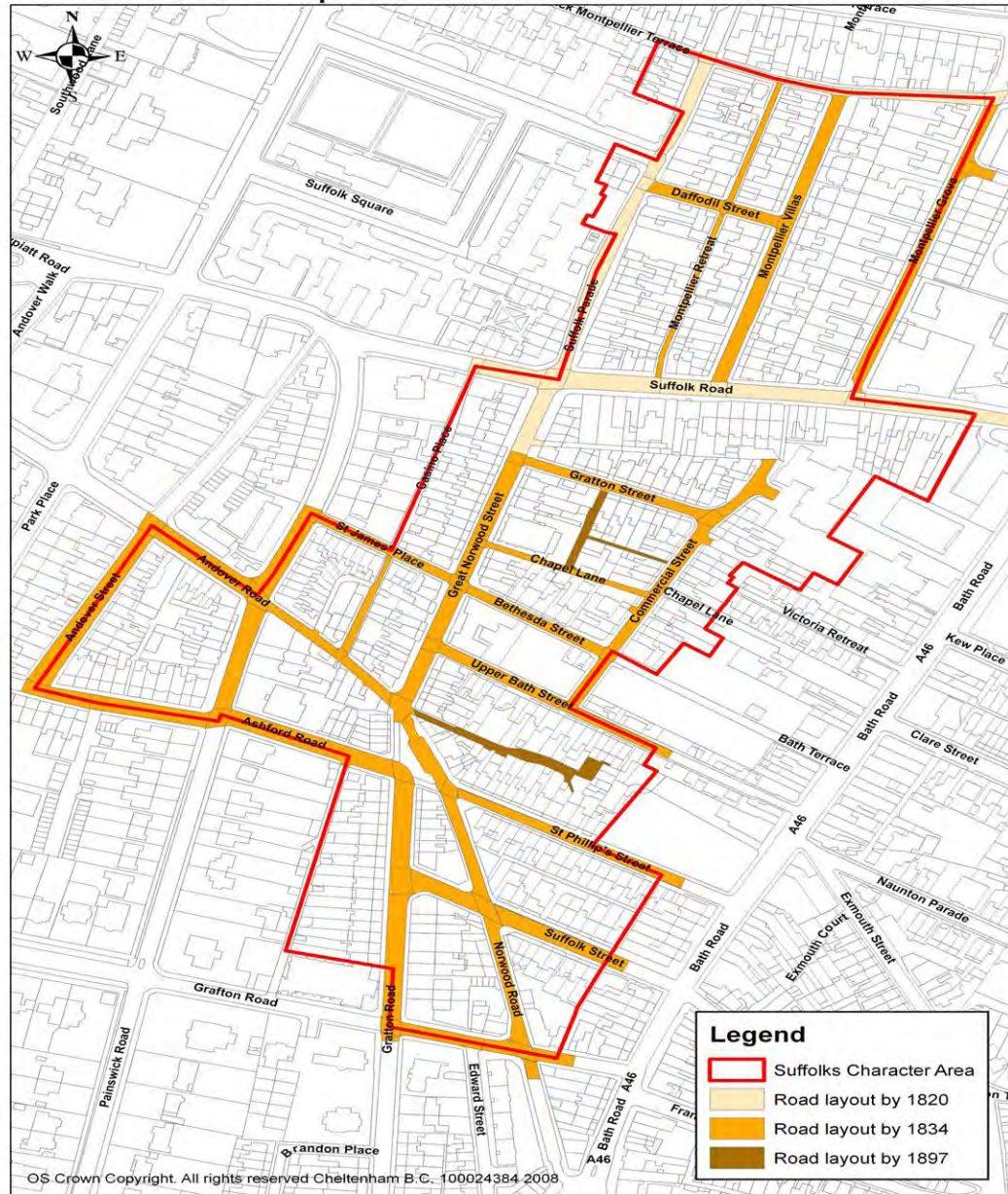


Figure 7 Historical Development of the Suffolks Character Area

4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area and key views and vistas

Public and private space

- 4.1 Public and private spaces, together with views out of, into and within the Suffolks character area, impact largely on the area's character and

appearance. Spaces are generally quite compact within the Suffolks, due to a tight grid pattern of streets and dense housing. This creates a sense of contained space. In contrast, the northern part of the Suffolks has a generally more spacious character. This is achieved through wider roads and larger plot sizes, which allows spaces and views to open up. This is also apparent within some of the wider roads in the southern part of the character area, for example, Painswick Road and Gratton Road.



Figure 8 Compact terraced houses and plan form of Commercial Street



Figure 9 Spacious character of Montpellier Villas

4.2



Figure 10 Change in terraces in Great Norwood Street

Within the character area there appears to be a hierarchy of larger, architecturally grander buildings towards main roads such as Suffolk Road. Spaces between buildings are more apparent here and roads are wider. Moving in a southerly direction, buildings tend to become smaller in the residential streets, where there is little space and narrow, frequently 'one-way' streets. There is virtually no green space apparent within these narrow streets. This changing hierarchy can be particularly appreciated along Great Norwood Street.

4.3



Figure 11 Buildings front directly onto back edge of footpath along Suffolk Road

Historically, the Suffolk's extensive terraces address the street in a uniform pattern within different spaces of the character area. For example, buildings along Andover Street and Norwood Road and the shops along Suffolk Road and Suffolk Parade front directly onto the street, with no separation between the public highway and private space.

4.4



Figure 12 Front garden space and similar building line evident in Montpellier Grove

The larger terraces and villas tend to be set back from the road and can therefore contain front gardens. Buildings tend to follow a similar building line, creating cohesion within the street scene.

4.5



Figure 13 Norwood Triangle

The Norwood Triangle comprises a number of utilitarian street bollards positioned on an 'island' between Great Norwood Street, Norwood Road and Gratton Road. The hard landscaping and poor design of this space currently has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the character area.

4.6 Service lanes at the rear of properties contain garages and out-buildings.

Garden space

4.7



Figure 14 Front gardens in Gratton Road

Gardens, historically and today, form an attractive, traditional frontage to both historic and more modern buildings. They provide a colourful, interesting setting and enhance the special qualities of properties and the street scene. Trees and shrubbery in gardens help to screen properties from public view, creating privacy. Front gardens are evident along Gratton Road, Painswick Road, Ashford Road and Montpellier Grove, for example.

Boundary treatments

4.8



Figure 15 Railings evident in St Phillip's Street

Some buildings employ boundary treatments to act as a physical, distinct separation between the public and private realm. Boundary treatments predominantly take the form of attractive and traditional railings, present in roads including Gratton Road, St Phillip's Street and Ashford Road. They enhance the historic interest of the Suffolks.

4.9



Figure 16 Hedgerow along Gratton Road

Hedgerows act as an attractive, natural boundary treatment, which softens edges between public and private space. Hedging also complements front gardens by enhancing the green environment.

- 4.10 Brick walls are employed as a boundary treatment in some areas. A small amount of wooden fencing is present, which acts as a poor, unattractive boundary treatment.

Key views and vistas (see Fig. 1)

- 4.11 Medium and long distance views within the Suffolks are enabled through the linear plan form of the streets. Extensive views are particularly prevalent down the streets which have a vertical, roughly north to south plan form. In comparison, distance views down roads which have a horizontal, roughly east to west plan form are frequently stopped by the presence of dense building on the adjoining roads at either end. Roads with shortened views include Gratton Street, Commercial Street, Daffodil Street and Upper Bath Street.
- 4.12 Views of the Cotswold escarpment and Leckhampton Hill are frequently evident from various spaces within the character area. Such spaces are evident from the junction of Great Norwood Street with Norwood Road, and from Suffolk Street and Montpellier Villas.



Figure 17 Views of Leckhampton Hill from the Suffolks Character Area

- 4.13



Figure 18 View from Great Norwood Street looking into Suffolk Parade

There is a long vista down Suffolk Parade into Great Norwood Street, due to the linear, vertical plan form of these roads which merge into each other. From Great Norwood Street looking into Suffolk Parade, views of the former St James's Church and the former Daffodil Cinema dominate within the street.

- 4.14



Figure 19 View of spire of St Phillip & St James Church along Great Norwood Street

The steeple of St Philip and St James in the Park character area is evident from various vantage points within the Suffolks. Such points are evident within Norwood Road and Gratton Road. The steeple is a visually prominent feature which rises into the skyline. The extensive vista down Suffolk Parade and into Great Norwood Street displays the steeple as a central focal point, with Leckhampton Hill rising in the distance.

- 4.15 Views open up in several directions at the junction of Great Norwood Street, Gratton Road and Norwood Road. This enables a sense of space to prevail, which is a valuable contrast to the enclosed space experienced within the surrounding terraced streets.

5 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Use of area and how use creates special interest

- 5.1 The Suffolks character area has several different uses due to its close proximity to Cheltenham town centre, but has developed very much as an urban village. Mixed uses create activity throughout the day and evening and contribute to the special interest of the area.

Residential

5.2



Figure 20 Residential buildings along Painswick Road

The Suffolks is and has historically been a principally residential area, which today accommodates a range of housing and tenure types from large semi-detached family houses to small flat conversions. Many of the large historic properties have been sub-divided into flats.

Commercial

5.3



Figure 21 Specialist shops in Suffolk Parade

There are many specialist shops located within the Suffolks, which strongly contribute to shaping its unique character. These shops occupy the ground floors of historic terraces and some contain attractive, traditional detailing such as canopies and traditional shop fronts.

5.4



Figure 22 Pioneer Garage site (14 Gratton Road) on junction of Gratton Road and Suffolk Street

The 19th century end of terrace building located on the junction of Gratton Road and Suffolk Street (14 Gratton Road) was occupied by the Pioneer car garage for a number of years. Space at its rear was used for car sales. The streets surrounding this site have a strong residential character. The historic building is a positive feature in the street, however the car garage was inappropriate in this setting and the cars in the rear yard formed an unattractive feature. There is now an opportunity for

enhancement of the rear of the site with a well designed, high quality development which improves the appearance and character of the site, makes good use of the space and complements the historic building.

- 5.5 There are a number of public houses, restaurants and cafes in the Suffolks. They are used not only by local residents, but also by people from throughout the town. They generate noise and activity levels during the daytime and evening, adding to the vitality of the area. The List Descriptions state that The Suffolk Arms public house dates from “c.1820-50”¹³ and the Beehive public house dates from “1822”.¹⁴ The Jolly Brewmaster public house (formerly the British Union) dates from the “mid 19th century”.¹⁵ All these public houses add to the historic interest of the area.



Figure 22 The Beehive public house



Figure 23 The Jolly Brewmaster public house

- 5.6



Figure 24 The former Daffodil Cinema

The former Daffodil Cinema occupies a large plot of land in Suffolk Parade. It was constructed in 1922 and “converted to a (popular) restaurant by Nurden Paxton Tilley in 1998.”¹⁶

Road use

- 5.7 The Suffolks character area straddles part of the A40 Suffolk Road and is close to its junction with the A46 Bath Road. Some traffic moves through the Suffolks in-order to reach these main roads into and out of Cheltenham and there are a number of ‘rat-runs’. The A40 Suffolk Road provides a strong physical divide, which almost splits the character area into two. The Cheltenham Urban Design Framework Transport Strategy aims to alleviate the high levels of traffic and congestion in Cheltenham’s town centre by redirecting traffic along other routes around the town centre. This work is being carried out as part of the Cheltenham Civic Pride project (see section 3 ‘Civic Pride’ within Part 2 Management Plan). The Transport Strategy

¹³ Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham (1998), pg. 917

¹⁴ Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham (1998), pg. 582-3

¹⁵ Cheltenham Local Index Item No. 408 – The Jolly Brewmaster, Painswick Road, record no. 280 and 422

¹⁶ Cheltenham Local Index Item No. 222 - The Daffodil and Woodward, 18-21 Suffolk Parade, record 389 out of 422

suggests that the implementation of the Strategy would cause a “...*relatively significant increase in traffic (levels) on Suffolk Road*”¹⁷ during the afternoon rush hour period. Some of the roads in the character area have a narrow plan form and are one-way. There are frequent high levels of on-street parking on these streets and congestion can be a problem.



Figure 25 Suffolk Road



Figure 26 High levels of on-street parking along Upper Bath Street

Other uses

- 5.8 In addition there are some other uses including:
- a) Bethesda Methodist Church, which acts as a focal point for the community;
 - b) Small scale businesses including an ironmonger, letting agents, Chinese takeaway, shoe repair shop and medical centre.
- 5.9 All these diverse uses bring varying levels of activity throughout the day which greatly add to the character and vitality of this area.

Architecture and historic qualities of buildings

- 5.10 Buildings which make up the original Suffolks area consist of artisan and more formal, grander terraces and semi-detached villas. Most of the building work took place in the 1830s and 1840s. There has been a small amount of infill development in the 20th century. The Suffolk’s architectural character is strongly based in the artisan terrace housing of the Georgian and early Victorian periods. The uniformity and architectural detailing of the housing gives the Suffolks a unique and distinctive character and appearance. This is particularly evident in the south of the character area.

Historic terraces

5.11



Figure 27 Grade II listed terraces on the west side of Gratton Road

The majority of terraces are not listed, but several are, including the attractive row of extensive terraces on the west side of Gratton Road, and the visually prominent row of terraces on the west side of Great Norwood Street.

¹⁷ Cheltenham Urban Design Framework, Transport Strategy – Traffic Impact Assessment (March 2007) pg. 18

- 5.12 The similar built form and detailing on the historic terraces creates unity and cohesion along the street. Terraces tend to be built following the same building line and are typically 2-storeys. They either front directly onto the street or have contained frontages, which are frequently enclosed by railings. Despite their length and strong uniformity, the window pattern and frequent use of pilasters (as shown in Figure 27 on the terraces in Gratton Road) gives a strong vertical rhythm which is characteristic of Regency architecture.

5.13



Figure 28 Grade II listed terraces on the west side of Great Norwood Street

The listed terrace on the west side of Great Norwood Street rises 3 storeys on basements. Its height allows it to visually dominate on this side of the road. The presence of wrought iron balconies is an attractive feature.

5.14



Figure 29 Shops occupying ground floor of 27 to 34 Suffolk Parade

Some shops occupy the ground floors of the historic terraces. Attractive metal guards, traditional canopies and signs are a striking feature of the Suffolks character area. The List Description states that Numbers 26 to 34 Suffolk Parade are *“noted as (being) a fine range of shop fronts by (the) Civic Society’s Shop Front Survey.”*¹⁸

Historic semi-detached villas

- 5.15 The semi-detached villas positioned in the north of the character area vary in terms of their size, age and architectural style.
- 5.16 However, the villas tend to be 2 or 3 storeys and follow the same building line along the street. Their differing sizes and styles create interest in the street scene. They have contained front gardens.

5.17



Figure 30 Historic villas designed by John Forbes in Montpellier Villas

The List Description states that the majority of the villas on Montpellier Villas were designed by John *“Forbes (who) was architect and surveyor to the Pittville Estate (in) 1835-6.”*¹⁹

¹⁸ Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham (1998), pg. 911

¹⁹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Ibid. pg. 584

Architectural styles

- 5.18 There are a variety of architectural styles employed within building design, which reflect the influences and fashions at time of construction. The predominant architectural style is Neo-Classical, which was the typical style of the Georgian and early Victorian periods. This is displayed on the terraces and on many of the villas. Gothic Revival style has been used on the former St James's School building, which has been converted into flats. The Picturesque early Gothic style of architecture is present on Bethesda Methodist Church. Regency Gothic detailing is found on villas in Montpellier Grove.

Historic construction materials and architectural detailing

- 5.19 Construction materials, typical of the town, are slate roofs and brick walls covered with ashlar or stucco. The stucco facing on many terraces has been painted in pastel colours which add to the special qualities of the Suffolks. Timber sash windows are frequently present and roofs are flat or low pitched. Tall brick chimney stacks are also a characteristic of the area. Viewing the brick chimney stacks on Gratton Road's listed terrace, with the red tile roof of the Church of St Phillip and St James behind, is a particularly striking, attractive scene.
- 5.20 Common architectural features on the terraces include Doric pilasters, rustication at ground floor level, tripartite windows, a continuous cornice, voussoirs over doors and windows, crowning frieze and copings. Common features on the villas include Doric pilasters, continuous frieze and cornice, tripartite windows, verandahs, solid porches with pillars and entablature and doors with fluted architraves.
- 5.21 Some of the front boundaries of the historic properties are defined by wrought iron railings.

Bethesda Methodist Church

- 5.22 In the late 1820s, various religious groups including the Church of England, Quakers and other Nonconformists decided to build a shared meeting room in the area south of the town. In June 1830 the foundation stone was laid for a building which was initially named the Bethesda Schoolroom as the Quakers would only contribute to a school. This was replaced by the Bethesda Methodist Church in "1845-6".²⁰ The Church was enlarged in 1867. It is constructed from pinkish-brown brick with an ashlar front and slate roof. The List Description states that architectural features include "*lancet windows...offset pilaster buttresses (and a)...coped verge*".²¹ Its size and scale rising above the neighbouring buildings, and the materials and architectural detailing makes it a dominant feature on the east side of Great Norwood Street. It is Grade II listed, and the List Description notes that "*in contrast to the surrounding development of neo-Classical terraces, this is a good example of the "incorrect Gothic" characteristic of many earlier 19th century nonconformist chapels in this style.*"²²

²⁰ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham pg. 350

²¹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Interest or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham pg. 350

²² Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Ibid. pg. 350



Figure 31 Building materials and detailing on Bethesda Methodist Church

Former St James's School

- 5.23 St James's School dates from 1865. It was converted into dwellings c1985 and is now named Old School Court. The building is constructed from rock-faced coursed squared Cotswold stone rubble, and has a decorative tile roof with grey scalloped tiles. Architectural features include end gables with three pointed windows, each having three-light stepped lancets with trefoil heads and quatrefoil above. The tall steeple with a weathervane is an attractive feature which can be seen from some distance away, rising above buildings. The Gothic Revival style of architecture, along with the building's size, scale and construction materials allows it to visually dominate within Great Norwood Street. Together with the presence of Bethesda Methodist Church, these buildings add historic and architectural interest to the character area, away from the predominance of the Neo-Classical terraces.



Figure 32 Former St James's School building

20th and 21st century buildings

- 5.24 Small amounts of infill development have taken place in the 20th century, taking the form of terrace houses and flats.



Figure 33 Part of 1980s residential development on Norwood Road

A development of eight houses, containing flats, is situated on Norwood Road and Ashford Road. They were constructed in the 1980s. Their size and scale is complementary to the near-by historic terraces and their facades have been painted in pastel colours to imitate the historic terraces.

5.26



Figure 34 Jubilee Court, off Commercial Street

Jubilee Court is positioned at the end of the Commercial Street cul-de-sac. It was constructed in 2001/02 on the site of a former garage. It is set back from public space and is not visually prominent within the street scene. The development of 27 retirement home flats has a large footprint and has been built on a grand scale. It is set in attractive, well landscaped grounds and contains traditional architectural features such as sliding sash windows.

5.27



Figure 35 Suffolk Villas (to left) development on Suffolk Road

Suffolk Villas consists of a development of six terraces which were built in 2002. They were constructed on the site of a former garage. Although they do not follow the same building line as historic properties along Suffolk Road, they are set back within attractive, enclosed front gardens. Their size and scale enables them to be subservient to the surrounding historic buildings and they fit well in the street scene. Their architectural detailing, which includes brick chimney stacks, sliding sash windows and other unifying features also complements their historic context, albeit that some of the architectural detailing is not strictly historically accurate.

Listed buildings

5.28 Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. All listed buildings due to their listed status are extremely important. There are over 130 listed buildings and structures within the Suffolks character area. Many of these buildings are listed as part of a group. All listed buildings are Grade II listed and displayed in the table below.

BUILDING/STRUCTURE	GRADE	DATE OF LISTING
Nos. 10-16 (Even) Ashford Road	II	23/04/82
Nos. 20 & 22 Ashford Road	II	14/12/83
Nos. 1-11 & 15-35 (Odd) Gratton Road	II	26/11/98
Nos. 24 & 26 Gratton Road & attached railings	II	26/11/98
Nos. 1 & 2 Gratton Street & area railings to No. 1	II	05/05/72
Nos. 16 & 17 Gratton Street & attached area railings to No. 17	II	14/12/83
St James's School, Great	II	25/09/86

Norwood Street		
Bethesda Methodist Church, Great Norwood Street	II	14/12/83
Nos. 2-10 (Even) Great Norwood Street	II	26/11/98
No. 12 Norwood House, Great Norwood Street	II	12/03/55
Nos. 18 & 20 Great Norwood Street	II	26/11/98
Nos. 19-39 (Odd) Great Norwood Street & attached railings	II	12/03/55
Nos. 22-28 (Even) Great Norwood Street	II	26/11/98
Nos. 30-40 (Even) Great Norwood Street	II	26/11/98
No. 2 Montpellier Grove & attached wall & area railings	II	05/05/72
Nos. 3 & 4 Montpellier Grove with attached area railings & walls	II	05/05/72
Nos. 5 & 6 Montpellier Grove & attached railings	II	26/11/98
Nos. 7 & 8 Montpellier Grove	II	26/11/98
Nos. 9 & 10 Montpellier Grove & attached railings	II	26/11/98
Nos. 11 & 11A Montpellier Grove & attached railings	II	26/11/98
Nos. 1, 2 & 3 The Beehive Hotel with attached coach house, Montpellier Villas	II	26/11/98
Nos. 4 & 5 Montpellier Villas & attached walls	II	26/11/98
Nos. 6 & 7 Montpellier Villas & walls adjoining	II	03/12/82
Nos. 8 & 9 Montpellier Villas & adjoining walls	II	03/12/82
Nos. 10 & 11 Montpellier Villas & attached area railings to No. 11	II	14/12/83
Nos. 12 & 13 Montpellier Villas	II	19/08/81
Nos. 16 & 17 Montpellier Villas	II	26/11/98
Nos. 17A, 18 & 19 Montpellier Villas with attached area railings	II	26/11/98
No. 21 Montpellier Villas	II	14/12/83
Nos. 22 & 23 Montpellier Villas	II	05/05/72
Nos. 27-32 (Consecutive)	II	05/05/72

Montpellier Villas & attached railings to Nos. 28, 31 & 32		
Nos. 33 & 34 Montpellier Villas & attached railings	II	05/05/72
Nos. 35 & 36 Montpellier Villas & attached railings to No. 36	II	05/05/72
No. 37 Montpellier Villas	II	14/12/83
Nos. 12, 13 & 14 Suffolk Parade	II	26/11/98
No. 15 Suffolk Parade	II	05/05/72
Nos. 16, 16A & 17 Suffolk Parade	II	05/05/72
Nos. 26-34 Suffolk Parade (Consecutive)	II	05/05/72
St. James's Terrace Nos. 1-6 (Consecutive) Suffolk Parade	II	26/11/98
Nos. 3, 5 & 7 Suffolk Road	II	26/11/98
No. 40 Suffolk Road, The Suffolk Arms Public House	II	14/12/83

Refer to www.cheltenham.gov.uk for full list descriptions and www.imagesofengland.org.uk for photographic records.

Index of Buildings of Local Importance

- 5.29 An Index of Buildings of Local Importance has been prepared for Cheltenham. Buildings and structures on the Index are protected by a Supplementary Planning Document.

Contribution of key unlisted buildings

- 5.30 A number of buildings are not statutory listed and are therefore less important. However they do encompass qualities of age, style and materials which are locally distinct and which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the character area and Conservation Area. Some of these buildings make a positive contribution as part of a larger group. All key unlisted buildings in the table below are on the Index of Buildings of Local Importance. Please see the Index for further details about these buildings. Key unlisted buildings include -

1 to 7 Andover Street (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)	16-22 Gratton Road (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)
41 Great Norwood Street (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)	The Jolly Brewmaster, Painswick Road (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)
28 Painswick Road (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)	GR VI pillar box, 43 Painswick Road (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)
Post box, Great Norwood Street (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)	As group – 5, 6 & 7 Suffolk Parade (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)
As group – The Retreat 9, 10 & 11 Suffolk Parade (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)	As group - The Daffodil and Woodward 18-21 Suffolk Parade (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)
As group – 2-16 Suffolk Road (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)	Bodyharmonics shopfront, 42 Suffolk Road (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)

	Importance)
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Positive buildings

- 5.31 Positive buildings are identified on the Townscape Analysis Map as those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of each character area. They often have a collective group value. Although a small number of buildings in the overall Central Conservation Area are in a poor condition, they may still be identified as positive if the building itself makes a positive contribution. In comparison to positive buildings, key unlisted buildings tend to have individual value and qualities which make a greater contribution to enhancing the character and appearance of each character area.

Local details

- 5.32 Local details within the Suffolks character area collectively enhance the character and appearance of not just the Suffolks but the whole of the Central Conservation Area. Interesting historic details include –

High number of specialist shops	19 th century public houses (The Suffolks Arms, The Beehive & The Jolly Brewmaster)
The former Daffodil Cinema	John Forbes – the architect and surveyor for the Pittville Estate in 1835-6 designed the vast majority of buildings on Montpellier Villas. He lived at no. 31 c1826-7
High number of specialist shops	High number of traditional railings
 <p>Figure 36 Traditional railings on Gratton Road</p>	 <p>Figure 37 Specialist shops on Suffolk Road</p>

Materials

Building material

- 5.33 The use of building materials reflects the availability of materials at the time of construction of historic buildings. Cheltenham expanded rapidly in the 19th century, and the readily available Lias clay and local sand allowed enough bricks to be produced to build most of the original spa town. The majority of these houses were built of locally-fired bricks, and were faced with either stucco or ashlar dressed Cotswold limestone. Much of the stone used in Cheltenham would have been quarried at Leckhampton Hill or Birdlip. Unfortunately neither of the quarries continues to produce stone. The painting of stucco in a uniform colour gave the town cohesion. Stone was also used to front the buildings.

Ground surface material

- 5.34 There is a range of surface materials used throughout the area – few are original or have any historic value. Roads are tarmac, with concrete kerbs. Paving is predominantly concrete slabs or flags and tarmac.

Street furniture

- 5.35 There is generally little furniture within the Suffolks. Of the street furniture which does exist, there are a number of A-board signs relating to shops along Suffolk Road and a small number on Great Norwood Street.
- 5.36 There are a number of road signs present on 'one-way' residential streets, taking the form of 'one-way', 'no entry' and 'no right/left turn' signs.
- 5.37 A large number of bollards are situated on the Norwood Triangle, at the junction of Great Norwood Street/Norwood Road/Gratton Road. They aim to protect pedestrian spaces and cycle routes but are very intrusive and have an adverse impact on the character of the area. There are proposals emerging to improve the quality of this space through the removal of the majority of bollards and the introduction of planting. Bollards are also positioned on part of the pavement along Suffolk Road.
- 5.38 Within the residential streets, particularly, there is frequently a large amount of overhead telephone wires, which are a visually unattractive feature in the street scene.

Contribution of trees and green spaces

- 5.39 Within the Suffolks character area there are generally significant amounts of private green space but very little public green space. This is due to the distinctive residential and commercial character of the Suffolks and its compact grid-like plan form. The overarching lack of street greenery is important in contributing to the Suffolk's distinctive character as an historic urban suburb.

Street trees

- 5.40 Within the residential streets of the Suffolks there is virtually no street planting apparent. This is due to the narrow plan form of many of the streets where many buildings front directly onto the street. The lack of large street trees reflects the 'modest' character of many of the residential streets.

5.41



The presence of mature street trees on Gratton Road is enabled through its wider plan form. The greenery provides this road with a leafy character.

Figure 38 Leafy character of Gratton Road

5.42



Figure 39 Two street trees in Suffolk Parade

Two young street trees have been planted along the pavement in Suffolk Parade. They are an attractive feature in the street scene.

Private green space

5.43 The villas and some of the grander terraces have contained front gardens which enables the presence of planting. Well maintained gardens provide an attractive setting for properties.

5.44



Figure 40 High hedging around Old School Court

High hedging around Old School Court (formerly St James's School) acts as a soft boundary treatment. A large and prominent tree within its grounds is an attractive feature. The greenery restricts views and provides privacy for this residential development.

5.45 Jubilee Court is set in landscaped grounds. Planting provides an attractive setting for the retirement home flats.

Negative factors

5.46 Due to high levels of development of the Suffolks character area, modern changes and intrusions have, to a degree, negatively impacted on the area's overall character and appearance. Negative factors include significant negative buildings and spaces, which are identified as those buildings and spaces that detract from the character and appearance of the area but offer potential for enhancement. This identification may result from the visual prominence of the site, or the development's inappropriate scale, design or materials, amongst other factors. The identification of buildings as negative factors in this section and as significant negative buildings or spaces on the Townscape Analysis map is an indication of a need for improvement, not necessarily demolition. Negative changes and intrusions include –

- a) **Loss of traditional architectural features**, particularly alterations to windows, has occurred within some of the historic buildings;
- b) The presence of large, projecting **Velux roof lights** on historic buildings has eroded the visual quality of the historic roofscape. Where there is evidence of historic roof lights or where new conservation roof lights may be appropriate, each case will be considered on its own merits;
- c) Modern intrusions in the form of **satellite dishes and large aerials** are also harmful to the overall appearance of buildings and detract from their special historic and architectural qualities. These additions can often be

seen clearly from public space which harms the character and appearance of not just the individual buildings, but the area generally;

- d) A **small number of the historic buildings are in need of minor maintenance** e.g. re-facing and re-painting;
- e) **Some front gardens have been changed partially into hard-standing** for cars. This is evident on Montpellier Grove and Commercial Street, for example. This change has reduced the area of green and soft landscaped private gardens, and generally increased the hard urban appearance of the Suffolks character area. It has resulted in a negative impact on the appearance of the area. However, where properties have retained their front gardens, there has been a continuing enhancement to the street scene;
- f) The **A40 Suffolk Road** experiences high volumes of traffic movement throughout the day. The road acts as a strong divide between the northern half of the Suffolks and the southern half. At times it can be difficult to cross, despite the presence of a pedestrian crossing;
- g) A large amount of **on-street parking** is particularly evident within most parts of the Suffolks character area. The historic houses do not accommodate cars; hence people are forced to park on the street. High levels of parking creates active streets, but focuses attention and activity on the road rather than the historic buildings and the open spaces between buildings;
- h) The **car park at the rear of Old School Court** (previously St James's School) is an unattractive feature, which is particularly prominent from the end of Commercial Street. It is a large, bland space which does nothing to complement the surrounding historic buildings. It also provides an unattractive setting for the rear of Old School Court. Similarly, the Bath Terrace car park (located in Bath Road Character Area) forms part of the eastern boundary of the character area. It is a large, bland, unattractive space which has a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- i) The developments of **Berea House** and **Denning Court** have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Suffolks, in terms of their size, scale, footprint, architectural detailing and impact upon the street scene;
- j) The **Pioneer Garage and its rear space**, located on the junction of Gratton Road and Suffolk Street (**14 Gratton Road**), forms a visually unattractive site in this predominantly residential part of the character area.
- k) Some **boundary treatments**, in particular fencing, have a negative impact on the street scene and buildings. Some fencing is in need of maintenance. Fencing is in evidence around part of the car park at the rear of Old School Court, where it acts as a hard and bland boundary treatment;
- l) There has been some **loss of historic railings** which are an attractive and traditional form of boundary treatment;

- m) There is a strong visual presence of aesthetically unattractive **overhead telegraph wires** throughout the area, particularly in the residential streets;
- n) There is a sense of **street clutter** on the junction of Great Norwood Street, Gratton Road and Norwood Road ('Norwood Triangle'). A high number of bollards and street signs are positioned on this junction. Their presence detracts from the near-by historic buildings;
- o) Some **pavements** are in a poor condition, with cracked slabs resulting in uneven surfaces in places;
- p) There is a serious **lack of street nameplates**, which causes confusion to visiting motorists and drivers of service vehicles.

Neutral areas

- 5.47 Some areas within the Suffolks character area neither enhance nor detract from the character or appearance of the character area but have the potential for enhancement. They tend to be visually prominent within the street scene. The identification of buildings as being neutral in this section and as significant neutral buildings or spaces on the Townscape Analysis map is an indication of a need for improvement, not necessarily demolition.
- 5.48 The row of five terrace houses, containing flats, which date from the 1980s. They are positioned on part of a former timber yard on Norwood Road. Three buildings as part of the same development are numbers 30-34 Ashford Road. The buildings sit well in their historic context, in terms of their size and scale. Their painted exterior in pastel colours also fits well with the colours of the surrounding historic terraces. The roof shape however, with its high pitch, is a little alien to the flat and low pitched roofs of the historic properties;
- 5.49 Number 18 Ashford Road generally fits well with the listed terrace it adjoins. Its size and scale is complementary to the historic properties. However, its windows have been altered and it has very plain architectural detailing compared to that displayed on the listed terrace;
- 5.50 Other neutral buildings include: numbers 11 and 13 Suffolk Road, 26a Montpellier Villas, 7 and 9 Andover Road, 18 Ashford Road, 36 Painswick Road, Eclipse Terrace on Upper Bath Street, 7a-7c Suffolk Street and 28-32 Gratton Road.

General condition of area

- 5.51 Much of the building stock in the Suffolks character area is in good condition, reflecting high property values and the prosperity within this popular and affluent commercial and residential area. However, there are some spaces in need of attention, such as the car park at the rear of Old School Court and the surface treatment on some back lanes.
- 5.52 It is important that the physical condition of the historic buildings is preserved and maintained so that the distinctiveness and identity of the Suffolks is retained.

Pressures and capacity for change

- 5.53 The designation of the Conservation Area is not intended to prevent change, especially that which would enhance the character or appearance of the area. It seeks to ensure that future development is appropriate to the character of the area.
- 5.54 There is generally little capacity for new development on open land due to a very limited amount of suitable vacant land;
- 5.55 The replacement of some inappropriate modern buildings with a well-designed development which is in keeping with, and enhances the character of the area may be an option but careful consideration would need to be given to this. Some spaces such as the car-park at the rear of Old School Court would also benefit from enhancement.

Part 2 – Management Plan

1. Introduction

Purpose of the management plan

The purpose of Part 2 of this document is to present proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the Suffolks character area's special historic character and appearance. It has been subject to public consultation. Part 2 was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document on 28th July 2008. It will inform the planning and other decisions of the Council.

The special qualities of the Suffolks character area have been identified in the Character Appraisal which forms Part 1 of this document. The Management Plan draws upon the themes identified in sections 5.45 'Negative factors' and 5.46 'Neutral areas'.

The proposals are written with the awareness that, in managing Cheltenham's conservation areas, resources are limited and therefore need to be prioritised. Financial constraints on the Council mean that proposals may take longer than is desirable to implement. However, the Council will continue to encourage improvements to the conservation area in co-operation with property owners, groups and local businesses. As such, the management plan can be considered to have three broad functions:

1 **a control tool** - its action points will be material considerations in decision making on applications for planning and related consents;

2 **a project development tool** - it identifies proactive work which can address some of the negative factors identified in the Character Appraisal. The responsibility for the work falls within the remit of various agencies (primarily Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council). Many of the projects do not yet have resources (funding, staffing etc) and few are programmed. However, their inclusion in this document is important because as an adopted document, the management plan can form the basis for bids for resources and programmed works;

3 **a best practice guide** - it establishes a series of action points to preserve and enhance the area's character. They should be considered in the design and implementation of all projects regardless of the need for permissions and who is undertaking them (public bodies, corporate bodies or private individuals).

Both the Character Area Appraisal and accompanying Management Plan will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis.

Legislative background

This document satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 namely:

"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas."

The document reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' and policies set out in the Cheltenham Local Plan.

2. Article 4 directions

There are some buildings within the Suffolks character area which, although not listed, have qualities of age, style and materials which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the character area and Central Conservation Area. These properties are however vulnerable to future change. Some of which have already suffered from modern intrusions by way of alterations and inappropriate additions e.g. uPVC windows, large aerals and satellite dishes.

There are a number of categories of minor works for which a planning application is not normally needed. This is known as *permitted development*.

Permitted development rights are more restricted in conservation areas and permission is required for works including:

- a. the addition of dormer windows to roof slopes;
- b. various types of cladding;
- c. erection of satellite dishes fronting a highway; and
- d. there is a reduction in the size of extensions which have permitted development rights.

In order to protect the character of conservation areas, legislation allows local planning authorities to remove permitted development rights in parts of conservation areas facing on to the highway or open space by using Article 4 (2) Directions. These cannot be introduced through this conservation area management plan – the Council will need to embark on a separate process. However, it is advisable that the Council uses this document to identify areas of concern, where it may apply Article 4 (2) Directions. If introduced, these will provide long-term protection against unsympathetic alterations which have the potential to adversely impact on the character of the conservation area. The effect of a Direction would be that certain alterations to unlisted residential properties which formerly did not require planning permission would then need planning permission.

If introduced to cover this character area, an Article 4 (2) Direction will mean planning consent is required for a range of external works fronting a public space, including:

- a. changes to windows, doors, chimneys and roofs;
- b. the painting of previously unpainted walling;
- c. the construction of external porches; and
- d. the provision and removal of walls, gates and fences.

3. Civic Pride

As part of the work carried out by Civic Pride, proposals have been drawn up to improve the public realm within the Suffolks area of the town. Such proposals include:

- the implementation of public art work to create a gateway located at the junction of Suffolk Parade with Montpellier Terrace;
- tree planting;

- provision of parking spaces and tree planting on Suffolk Parade;
- creation of a local square across Suffolk Road between Great Norwood Street and Suffolk Parade in order to reduce severance, calm traffic dominance of the area, ease pedestrian movement and provide an enhanced environment;
- footway and kerb treatment.²³

The work carried out by Civic Pride also involves the design and implementation of a Transport Strategy, as part of the Cheltenham Urban Design Framework. The Traffic Impact Assessment of the Transport Strategy (produced in March 2007) suggests that the implementation of this strategy would cause a 'relatively significant' impact on Suffolk Road by increasing the traffic flow along Suffolk Road during the afternoon rush hour period. This is shown to be caused by the reassignment of traffic from the town centre to this section of the A40.²⁴

4. Management proposals

The management proposals have been divided into two sections, comprising of: Development control proposals and project proposals which relate to specific areas.

Development control proposals

1 Control of Development

It is essential that any development should preserve the setting of any adjacent listed buildings and the existing landscape features and trees and preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the site including historic context and distinctive site features; as well as the size, scale, urban grain, layout, design, massing, height, plot width, frontage activity, landscape and materials in any such development. This does not dictate architectural style but helps deliver proposals which respond positively to their context with high quality design. Pastiche architectural styling, in which architectural historic elements are taken from different sources without being applied accurately, is not acceptable. However that is not to say that a variety of architectural styles, materials and forms of construction are not able to give interest within the conservation area and provided the new buildings are carefully designed it should be possible for them to have a harmonious and positive presence.

Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan policies CP3, CP7, BE1, BE2, BE3 and BE5 relate.

ACTION SF1: The Cheltenham Borough Local Plan states that new development shall preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. The policies of the Local Plan set out a general approach to the consideration of planning and related applications for development in conservation areas – they cover a range of issues including:

²³ Cheltenham Urban Design Framework, Public Realm Strategy Draft March 2007

²⁴ Cheltenham Urban Design Framework, Transport Strategy – Traffic Impact Assessment (March 2007)

new build
extensions
loss of green space
impact on views
demolition

In applying Local Plan policies, the Council will use the assessment of character set out in the appraisal accompanying this Management Plan as a basis for establishing the important aspects of context.

2 Loss of traditional architectural features on some historic buildings

Some of the older buildings within the Suffolks character area have been adversely affected by the use of inappropriate modern materials or details such as the replacement of original timber sash windows with uPVC, the loss of original timber front doors and introduction of roof lights which all erode local building detail and fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The Council's document Living and Working in a Conservation Area – Some Questions You Might Ask gives advice to building owners on their responsibilities.

Cheltenham Borough Local Plan policy CP 3 relates.

ACTION SF2: In order to preserve and enhance the character and setting of the Suffolks character area, the Council will:

- a. Keep under review the need to bring in additional planning controls over minor works in the Conservation area through Article 4 directions;
- b. Use its powers to enforce against unauthorised development;
- c. Encourage owners to repair rather than replace original;
- d. Consider producing detailed design guidance and information regarding materials appropriate for use in the Central Conservation Area;
- e. Consider producing guidance to highlight to property owner's the importance of regularly maintaining gutters to ensure they function to their full potential, thus preventing ceilings and roofs collapsing due to heavy rain and blocked gutters.

In undertaking any works to buildings in the character area, owners should consider the implications for sustainable building practices. This could take a number of forms, including sustainable sourcing of materials and use of energy efficient designs. Additional information is available in the Council's supplementary planning guidance on Sustainable Buildings (www.cheltenham.gov.uk).

3 Equipment or installations (for example satellite dishes, large aerials, small scale renewable energy schemes and other such features)

The presence of various types of equipment or installations on or around buildings, such as large aerials or satellite dishes, can detract from the character of the Suffolks character area and in some cases the special architectural qualities of the buildings. There is also the potential for domestic

wind turbines and other elements to impact similarly. To minimise their visual impact, they should normally be positioned away from public view or prominent positions; a judgment then needs to be made between this and the optimization of energy generation.

The Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan Policy CP 3 relates.

ACTION SF3: In order to preserve and enhance the character of the character area the Council will:

- a. Keep under review the need to bring in additional planning controls over equipment or installations in prominent locations in the character area through an Article 4 direction;
- b. Use any planning powers to ensure that equipment or installations are installed away from public spaces and views, so as not to detract from views within the street scene and the overall character of the character area. This will look at balancing the visual impact against energy generations. Where the Council has no powers property owners are encouraged to position such equipment with regard to this guidance;
- c. Consider producing guidance regarding the design and siting of renewable energy infrastructure in the Central Conservation Area.

4 Drives and loss of front gardens

Very often the frontage of buildings in conservation areas is essential to the character of the conservation area. Historically, some of the buildings in the character area had front gardens with enclosing low railings, hedges or walls. Their gardens would be planted. The loss of front gardens to parking detracts from the historic setting. This can result from the nature of the materials used, the loss of boundary treatments, the intensity or volume of the parking or the loss of soft garden features which can cause a reduction in biodiversity and 'wildlife corridors'. The loss of front gardens in this manner is also an unsustainable form of development – increasing run off, reducing planting available for carbon fixing and encouraging car use. Where it is considered acceptable the use of brick or gravel instead of tarmac, with the retention of some garden space and the use of appropriate boundary treatments would reduce run-off, offer a more attractive setting for buildings and give a more sustainable approach than some current practice.

Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Policy BE 7 states that 'Development which introduces or extends the parking of vehicles on forecourts or front gardens of buildings in conservation areas will not be permitted.' Where there is existing frontage parking which adversely impacts on the character and setting of the conservation area, a new planning application may give opportunities to renegotiate a more sympathetic solution.

ACTION SF4: The Council will seek to limit the adverse impact of on-plot frontage parking by using its powers under planning and other legislation to secure the use of appropriate, traditional and complementary boundary and surface treatments which will in turn greatly reduce levels of surface water run-off.

The Council will prepare a guidance note on sustainable design of front garden parking.

5 Tree management

Although there are relatively few trees within the character area, where they are in existence, they contribute to enhancing the character and appearance of the street scene. They are a particularly striking feature in Gratton Road. Trees play an important role in reducing the effects of climate change through climate fixing, absorbing carbon dioxide and providing shade. They need to continue to be well protected and managed in the future.

ACTION SF5: Cheltenham Borough Council will continue to maintain and protect trees by implementing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) where appropriate, and replant with new trees when old trees die. Trees located in pavements or grass verges at the side of roads and which are designated as within the public highway are maintained by Gloucestershire Highways. Trees located in parks or green spaces within the conservation area are managed by Cheltenham Borough Council in accordance with best arboricultural practice.

When a tree dies or is removed from land within the conservation area, because it was dead, dying or dangerous, the land owner has a legal obligation under section 213 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to plant a replacement tree of an appropriate size and species. The Council will require owners to fulfil their legal obligation for replanting with new trees, especially where the old trees have made a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. Where appropriate the Council may decide to serve a tree replacement notice under section 207 of the Act.

6 Boundary enclosures

At present, some poorly maintained boundary treatments harm the character and appearance of buildings and the overall street scene. Increased use of railings or hedgerow as a 'soft' boundary treatment would enhance the historic qualities, character and appearance of the area. Additionally, trees and hedgerow contribute to biodiversity by providing wildlife habitats. If the same sympathetic boundary treatment were to be implemented along the length of a street where possible, this would enhance its character and appearance, by uniting properties within it.

See Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Policies BE 5 and CP3.

ACTION SF6: The Council will use enforcement and other powers under Section 215 of the Planning Act to secure the repair of poorly maintained boundary treatments and the reinstatement of traditional and historic boundary treatments to enhance the historic character of the Suffolk character area.

The Council will require the use of contextually sensitive boundary treatments on new developments where appropriate.

7 Setting and views

The setting of the Suffolk character area is very important. Any proposals for development will be required to demonstrate how the setting and long

distance views, into, from and within the character area have been taken into account. The important views are identified on the Townscape Analysis map. The Council will seek to ensure that all development serves to respect these important views.

ACTION SF7: The Council will ensure that all development respects the important views within, into and from the Suffolks character area. These views are noted but not exclusively identified on the Townscape Analysis map. The Council will ensure that these remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and redevelopment and that due regard is paid to these views in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes in accordance with the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan.

8 Enhancement of existing buildings and land

Some land and buildings fail to contribute to the preservation or enhancement of the conservation area. In some cases, these are poorly maintained historic buildings. In other cases, these are modern buildings which have some aspect which fails to respond to its historic context. In the case of historic and modern buildings, the Council will, where necessary, use enforcement or other planning powers (e.g. Section 215 notices) to achieve repair and preservation. Some land in the curtilage of buildings is poorly maintained and in a prominent location – here, it may be appropriate to use powers to achieve improvement.

Action SF8: The Council will use enforcement and other powers under Section 215 of the Planning Act to achieve the enhancement of poorly maintained buildings.

Project proposals

9 Surface Materials

Surface materials in the public realm are an important part of the character of the area. Whilst generally the most appropriate paving material would be a large format flag, ideally in stone, there may be opportunities to use alternative materials. This must be done as part of a considered approach to the use of the location and the heritage context. Jointing is an important element in the impact of paving materials. Traditionally it would be at right angles to the kerb line, and any deviation from this approach needs to be properly considered and justified.

Footpaths in various parts of The Suffolks area are in a poor condition, with cracked slabs in evidence. The Civic Pride project will address appropriate surface materials and their use in parts of The Suffolks character area.

Action SF9: The Council will require developments to adopt a considered, contextually sensitive approach to the selection and use of surface materials. Where appropriate, these materials should be sustainably sourced. It will lobby the Highway Authority to adopt such an approach in the implementation of capital and maintenance schemes. The Council will also lobby the Highway Authority to repair the cracked slabs in The Suffolks character area.

10 Car park at the rear of Old School Court

The car park at the rear of Old School Court (previously St James's School) is an unattractive feature, which is particularly prominent from the end of Commercial Street. It is a large, bland space which does nothing to complement the surrounding historic buildings. It also provides an unattractive setting for the rear of Old School Court. The Bath Terrace car-park forms part of the eastern boundary to the character area. It is a visually unattractive site which has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the character area and its setting.

ACTION SF10: The Council will continue its programme of enhancement schemes where appropriate to soften and improve the visual appearance of car parks. It is important, however, that future enhancement schemes maintain the number of parking spaces and do not involve the removal of any spaces in car parks.

11 Norwood Triangle

The junction of Great Norwood Street, Gratton Road and Norwood Road (Norwood Triangle) is one of the few public spaces of any size in the area. Historically it was a nodal point on the Cheltenham and Gloucester Tramroad. It is now heavily engineered to enable a complex traffic management system and restrict illegal parking. As a result it is a hard space, cluttered with bollards and other street furniture. It has great potential to become a pleasant small urban space which could greatly enhance the character of both the character area and the immediate neighbourhood.

ACTION SF11: The Council will work with Gloucestershire County Council, other agencies and local people to implement works to provide a high quality public space at Norwood Triangle. The space is close to the Civic Pride boundary and the principles of the Civic Pride Public Realm Strategy could be applied to any proposals.

12 Civic Pride

The Council, in partnership with the South West Regional Development Agency and Gloucestershire County Council, has commissioned the preparation of an Urban Design Framework for central Cheltenham, including parts of the Suffolks Character Area. It will develop a comprehensive set of proposals for the area and will consider the following topics:

- a. Urban design
- b. Public realm enhancements
- c. Public art
- d. Street furniture
- e. Surface materials
- f. Traffic management

The Civic Pride Urban Design Framework is being developed as a Supplementary Planning Document alongside this Character Appraisal and Management Plan. It includes parts of other character areas making up the town centre. Its brief ranges from a strategic overview to detailed issues,

including development briefing and advice on public realm treatments. Part 1 of this document, the Character Appraisal, has been used to inform the emerging Civic Pride proposals.

Some of the Actions in this Management Plan will be developed further through the Civic Pride project and will be the subject of more detailed work – where this is thought to be the case, it has been identified. The Civic Pride project has been developed in a manner which responds positively to the requirements of this Character Appraisal and Management Plan.

<p>ACTION SF12: The Council and its partners will ensure that the detailed design and implementation of Civic Pride projects will preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area in a manner compatible with the Character Appraisal for those parts of the area affected by it.</p>
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Annex 1:

Cheltenham Central Conservation Area – list of Supplementary Planning Documents

19 character areas make up Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area. Each has a separate character appraisal and management plan. These comprise –

Title of document	Status
1). Old Town character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 rd February 2007
2). Montpellier character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 rd February 2007
3). Bayshill character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 rd February 2007
4). Lansdown character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
5). Suffolk Square character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
6). Eldorado character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
7). Dean Close & Hatherley Park character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
8). Tivoli character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
9). The Park character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
10). The Suffolks character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
11). Bath Road character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
12). Leckhampton character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
13). College character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
14). St Luke's character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
15). Sydenham character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
16). Fairview & All Saints' character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
17). Pittville character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
18). Lower High Street character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008
19). St Paul's character area appraisal and management plan	Due to go to Cabinet 22 nd July 2008

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