

CHELTENHAM

# Local development framework

## 11. BATH ROAD CHARACTER AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

JULY 2008





## **Central Conservation Area**

### **11. Bath Road Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan July 2008**



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### **Key characteristics**

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

- It has a unique character, which is largely derived from the specialist shops and public houses, many of which are historic;
- The majority of the historic shops are located in terrace properties and therefore have a traditional size, plot width, scale and form, which adds to their distinctive qualities;
- Some of the shop fronts have traditional features such as canopies, signs and iron brackets, which unite shop fronts and enhance their special interest;
- The shops are well utilised and are a popular contrast to the 'mainstream chain store' shops found in the town centre;
- Bath Road is particularly important as the whole of the area, known historically as South Town grew around this road and the tram road.

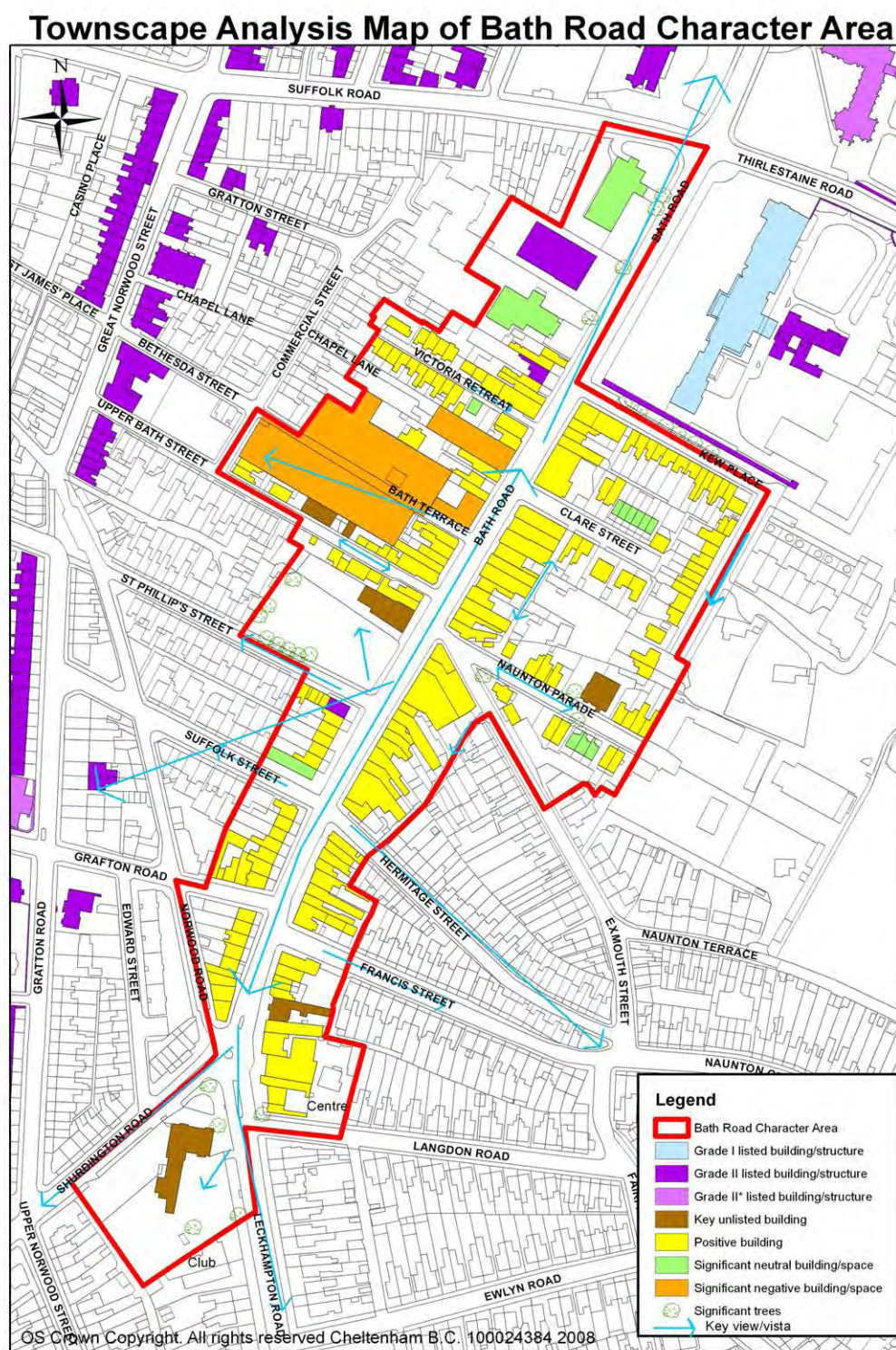
### **Key issues**

A number of problems and issues have been identified and have a negative impact on the character of the Bath Road 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 and satellite dishes;
- On-street parking;
- Difficulty in pedestrian movement and severance caused by the heavy traffic on Bath Road;
- Traffic congestion;
- Boundary enclosures;
- Setting and views;
- Enhancement of existing buildings and land;
- Poor car park;
- Long term derelict state of 161 Bath Road.



## Part 1 – Character Appraisal



**Figure 1 – Townscape Analysis map of Bath Road Character Area**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## **What is a Conservation Area**

- 1.1 A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, of 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 3<sup>rd</sup> March and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008. Following consideration of representations received it was adopted by Cheltenham Borough Council on 28<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk) Although this project is outside the Bath Road Character Area, it is possible that there may be some consequential benefits.

### **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 28<sup>th</sup> May 1973 and its boundary was extended by Cheltenham Borough Council on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1987. The Central Conservation Area includes the whole of the town centre, most of the Victorian, Edwardian and some of the later 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Bath Road 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. Although 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 Bath Road character area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area have been based on capturing the commercial heart of Bath Road, along its length from the junction with Suffolk Road and Thirlestaine Road, to the Norwood public house (see Fig. 2). The character

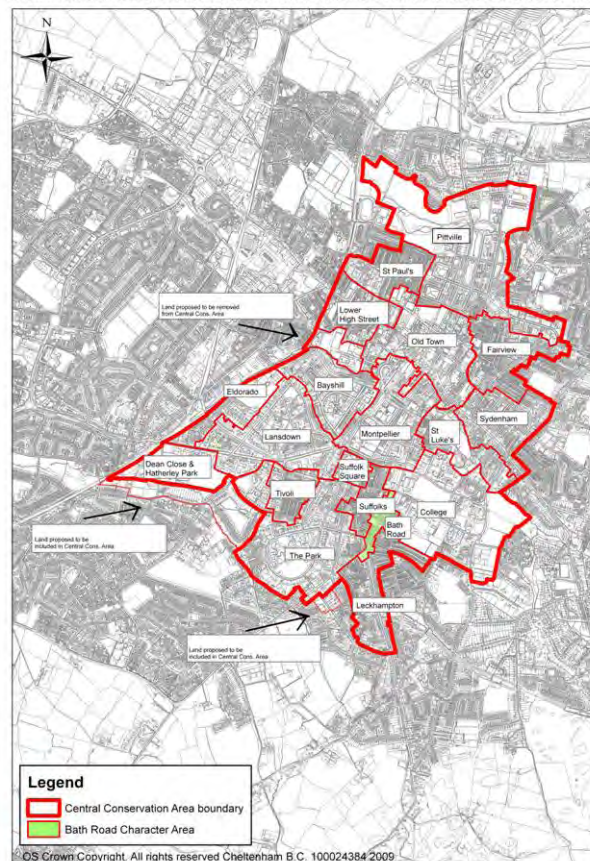
area is positioned between the spacious College character area to the east, and the compact Suffolks character area to the west. This part of Bath Road encompasses a popular and thriving historic shopping area which is well utilised and has a unique character. The built form of the streets and the individual buildings on these roads, together with their uses, largely contributes to the overall character and appearance of the Bath Road and provides its distinctive identity.

### Summary of special interest

1.15 The Bath Road character area is special because:

- a) It has a unique character, which is largely derived from the specialist shops and public houses, many of which are historic;
- b) The majority of the historic shops are located in terrace properties and therefore have a traditional size, plot width, scale and form, which adds to their distinctive qualities;
- c) Some of the shop fronts have traditional features such as canopies, signs and iron brackets, which unite shop fronts and enhance their special interest;
- d) The shops are well utilised and are a popular contrast to the 'mainstream chain store' shops found in the town centre;
- e) Bath Road is particularly important as the whole of the area, known historically as South Town grew around this road and the tram road.

Bath Road Character Area within the Central Conservation Area



**Figure 2** Bath Road 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 Bath Road Character Area

- 2.2 The Bath Road character area forms part of the main A46 approach road into Cheltenham from the south west. It is positioned to the south of the town centre. The area experiences high volumes of traffic throughout the day and into the evening.
- 2.3 The character area contains predominantly Georgian and early Victorian terraces, many of which along Bath Road are shops, restaurants, public houses and takeaways at ground floor level. These dominant commercial uses combine to establish the overall character of the Bath Road character area. Some residential properties are also apparent on Bath Road and in the streets leading off Bath Road on either side.



**Figure 3** Shops along Bath Road with residential accommodation above



**Figure 4** Terraced houses within the Character Area

- 2.4 The plan form of the Bath Road character area comprises a regular pattern of streets and terraced buildings, which is typical of Victorian housing. Bath Road itself has a wide, generally linear street form, whilst the residential streets on either side are narrower and smaller in scale. Some service lanes are found running between the residential streets.

### Wider landscape setting

2.5



**Figure 5** View down Naunton Parade towards Cotswold escarpment

The Bath Road character area is surrounded on all sides by the urban development of other character areas of the Central Conservation Area. However, views of the Cotswold escarpment presented from open spaces create a rural connection between the countryside and urban

area. These long distance views of the far away hills in turn reinforce and enhance the character of the area.

- 2.6 Some historic and modern landmark buildings with varying heights are present within the Bath Road character area. These include the HSBC building, Pillar House, 117 Bath Road, the Exmouth Arms, The Norwood and 'The Corner Shop'. 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. Landmark buildings such as Eagle Tower, the steeple of St Philip and St James and Old School Court are landmark buildings in other character areas, which are visibly prominent in various parts of the Bath Road character area. Some of the buildings enhance the Bath Road's historic character and create a sense of atmosphere and architectural splendour. The landmark Cheltenham College building and Thirlestaine House are positioned to the north east of the character area, located within the College character area. These buildings provide a grand and attractive setting for Bath Road character area. 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 Bath Road 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".<sup>1</sup> Many archaeological artefacts would have been lost during the expansion of the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 Bath Road character area, however, no finds have been noted under the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record. The "Chelt" element of

<sup>1</sup> 'Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey' Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (1975)

<sup>2</sup> 'Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey' Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (1975)

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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 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 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Cheltenham developed other roles in the form of its growing importance as a major educational centre during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In turn this led to the development well into the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Bath Road Character Area**

- 3.5 The historic development of the Bath Road Character Area, based on plans from 1820, 1834, 1897 and 2007 is shown on the Historic Development map which accompanies this section (see Fig. 7).
- 3.6 Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the land in this area was used for farming. The Bath Road character area began to develop during the 1820s. During this time, the area became known as South Town and comprised a *"self-contained district of shops, trades people and artisan dwellings"*.<sup>3</sup> South Town grew around the new Bath Road and the tramroad. The artisan community serviced the Gloucester and Cheltenham Tramroad which partially ran through part of the character area to the south. In 1809 an Act was passed which enabled the construction of the Gloucester and Cheltenham Tramway. The length of the tramroad from Leckhampton Hill into Cheltenham was opened in July 1810. Brooks explains that *"In 1811 a tramway was built that ran from the top of Leckhampton Hill down to Daisybank"*.<sup>4</sup> It ran along the west side of what is now Leckhampton Road and then Norwood Road. The tramroad then continued to follow the route of what is now Andover Road to Westal Green, then along Queen's Road to Gloucester Road where it joined the main Cheltenham to Gloucester tramroad. Many farm workers came to take up employment in the quarrying

<sup>3</sup> S. Rowbotham & J. Waller 'Cheltenham A History' (2004) pg. 48

<sup>4</sup> R. Brooks 'The Story of Cheltenham' (2003) pg. 36



industry on Leckhampton Hill. Terry Moore-Scott explains how “...many farm workers...had to move to other jobs such as quarrying and trades serving the burgeoning ‘big houses’ of Cheltenham.”<sup>5</sup> Growth predominantly occurred along the Bath Road, then in the streets adjoining it on either side. Buildings took the form of compact terraces, built with a high density. Today the Bath Road is a heavily used traffic route into Cheltenham from the south west, but it is also used as a popular specialist shopping and recreation area that attracts people from across the town.

### **Development by 1820**

- 3.7 Part of Bath Road and Kew Place in the north of the character area are both defined on the 1820 Postmaster map of Cheltenham. Some development is present along these streets in the form of compact terraces positioned in long, narrow burgage plots, whilst some detached buildings were constructed along the east side of Bath Road. At this time, Bath Road was known as the ‘New Road to Painswick, Stroud and Bath’ and was already a main road into Cheltenham. It was begun in 1813, and opened as far as the Exmouth Arms in 1819, and soon after up to the Norwood Arms public house (now named The Norwood).
- 3.8 The Exmouth Arms public house was built in 1816 and named after Admiral Viscount Exmouth. Its extensive garden was once, according to Brooks, called “*South Town’s village green*”<sup>6</sup> and was the area’s main pleasure ground. In the 1820s, Parker’s Swimming and Bathing Place provided outdoor bathing in the gardens. The Exmouth Bowling Club was later established in the grounds.

### **Development by 1834**

- 3.9 Much development had taken place in the Bath Road character area by the time Merrett’s map of 1834 was published. A number of shops and artisan houses had sprung up in the 1820s and the area became further established as South Town. Bath Road physically split the character area in half, creating an east and west side.
- 3.10 By 1834, extensive development had occurred along Bath Road and in the adjoining streets. The main built form was dense terrace housing, which followed a similar building line. Shops were located at ground floor level. Rows of terraces included Westall Place, Thirlestaine Place and Norwood Terrace which were positioned along Bath Road.
- 3.11 Several public houses are featured on Merrett’s map, which served the growing local artisan population.

### **Development by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

- 3.12 The 1884-93 map of Cheltenham shows that further development had taken place along Bath Road. By this time, virtually the whole length of the street within the character area had been developed on both sides. Further development had also occurred along the residential streets running either side of Bath Road.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://uk.geocities.com/llhs@btinternet.com/publications/publications.html>

<sup>6</sup> R. Brooks ‘The Story of Cheltenham’ (2003) pg. 33



- 3.13 The 1881 census for this area shows a large number of artisan workers, which included 53 laundry workers, 47 dressmakers, 29 gardeners, 26 coachmen, 18 cobblers and 12 carpenters/joiners.
- 3.14 Naunton Parade was formed with buildings including Providence Chapel evident on its north side.
- 3.15 A Mission Room is shown on Clare Street and a Mission Hall is positioned on Upper Bath Street. These religious centres were important resources, used by the local community.
- 3.16 Further public houses are also featured on the 1884-93 map.

### **Development in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries**

- 3.17 In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was generally little further development.
- 3.18 The 1902-03 map shows a number of services located along Bath Road. At this time, the character area had a well established role in providing shops, facilities and services for local residents. Its commercial character was an important contrast to the residential character in much of the surrounding area. Such shops included Newman's ironmongers which were founded in 1905, and situated at the corner of Upper Bath Street and Bath Road. This premises is now occupied by an estate agent's.
- 3.19 The gardens of the Exmouth Arms public house continued in use as a bowling green until World War II, when it was 'dug for victory'. After the War, the green space was then turned into a pub garden and used for fetes and other events.
- 3.20 A large nursery was positioned on the south side of Clare Street. Another nursery and the old Moorend post office (no. 248 Bath Road) were also featured close to the Norwood Arms public house (now named The Norwood). Author Heasman states, "*The shop (Moorend Dairy) stood next to the old Moorend post office*".<sup>7</sup> On the 1923 map of Cheltenham, a bank was situated on Bath Road.
- 3.21 In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of residential terrace dwellings on Bath Terrace were demolished to make way for a large public car park - Bath Terrace car park. Today, many shoppers visiting the Bath Road shops use this car park.
- 3.22 A number of the historic public houses are still in existence and functioning today, for example The Norwood and the Exmouth Arms public houses. However, The Fountain was demolished to make way for Somerfield's supermarket; The Brighton Arms is no longer on the corner of Suffolk Street and the Ten Bells between Exmouth Street and Hermitage Street is no longer in existence. Two other public houses ("*...King's Arms...and...the King William Inn...*")<sup>8</sup> have also been removed.
- 3.23 In 1900, six butcher's shops were located in the Bath Road, of which only two survive today. Robin Jenkins's premises at 160 Bath Road is one of these,

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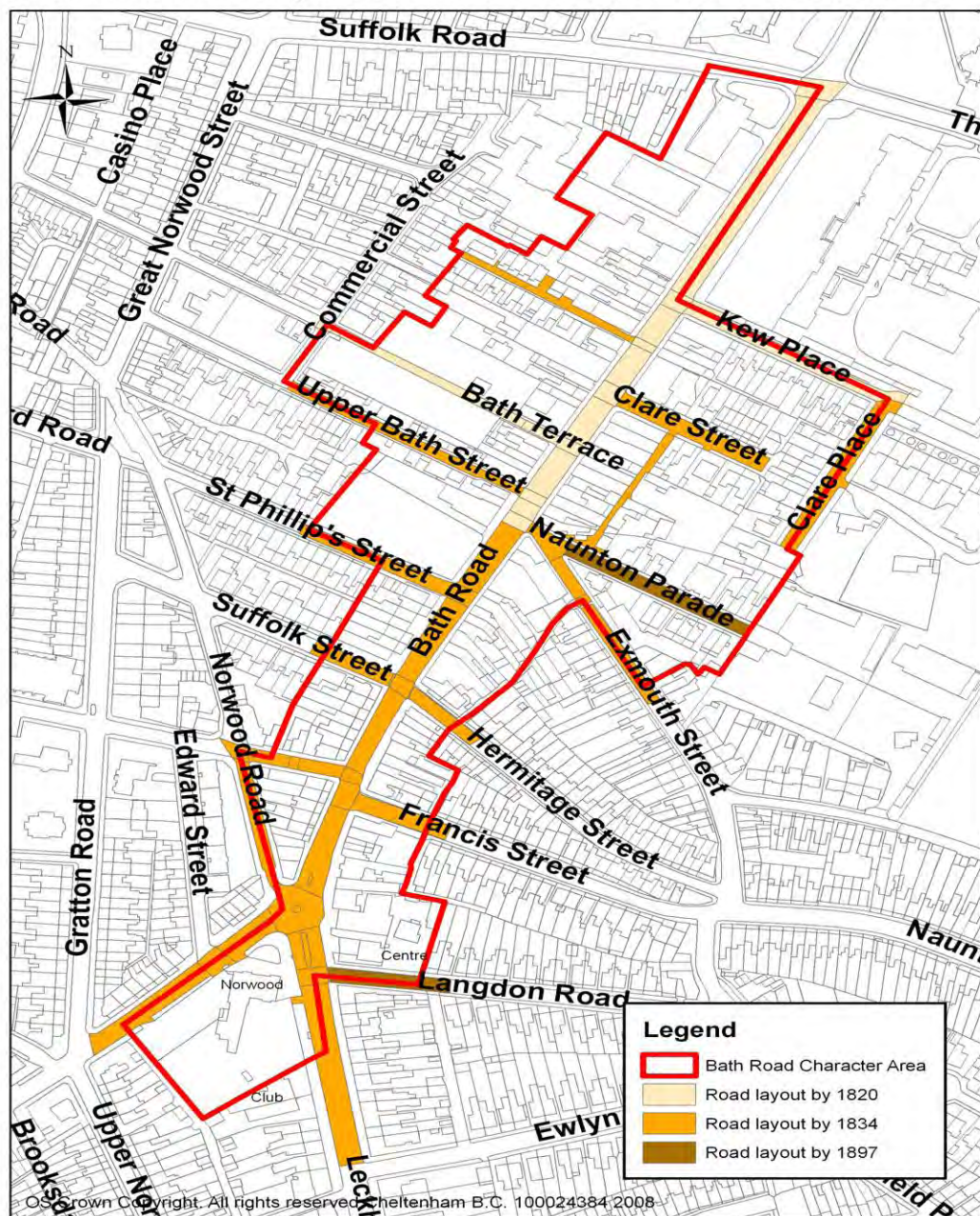
<sup>7</sup> E. Heasman 'Images of England Cheltenham Volume II' (2003) pg. 72

<sup>8</sup> R. Brooks 'The Story of Cheltenham' (2003) pg. 33

and this property has been a butcher's shop in various ownership since it was originally established by Leigh James in 1907.

- 3.24 Today the majority of buildings along Bath Road remain at ground floor level as shops, restaurants, public houses and other services with living accommodation above. Many of the ground floor shops project forwards from the rest of the building. The continued presence of specialist (and a small number of mainstream) shops, banks and other services, public houses and restaurants creates a distinctive community, which is different from any other area within Cheltenham. The buildings and their uses contribute positively to shaping the unique character of the Bath Road character area as it is today.

## Historical development of the Bath Road Character Area



**Figure 7** Historical Development of Bath Road 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



**Figure 8** Wider plan form of Bath Road to the north of the Character Area

Spaces are generally quite compact within the character area, due to a tight grid pattern of streets and dense housing. This creates a sense of contained space. Bath Road has a wider plan form, which contains some large commercial detached buildings on its west side, within spacious plots. This allows spaces and views to open up in the north. In contrast, the residential streets on either side of Bath Road have a narrow plan form, where dense terrace housing is prominent. A sense of enclosed space is apparent in these roads.

- 4.2 Historically, Bath Road's extensive terraces address the street in a uniform pattern within different spaces of the character area. Buildings tend to follow a similar building line in areas, creating cohesion within the street scene. Most commonly, the buildings along Bath Road itself front directly onto the pavement, with no separation between public and private space. Similarly, terraces situated in the narrow streets on either side of Bath Road are frequently positioned directly at the back of footpath. This is evident on Kew Place and Victoria Retreat, for example. The terraces on Clare Place have contained front gardens, which are enclosed by low brick walls. The front gardens provide an attractive setting for the houses. Larger commercial buildings in the north of the character area (on its west side) are set back from the road in spacious plots. Terraces at its southern end (on its west side) have contained frontages, enclosed by railings and low walls.



**Figure 9** Buildings are positioned at back edge of footpath on Victoria Retreat



**Figure 10** Terraces on Clare Place with contained front gardens

- 4.3 Although the extensive green space in front of Cheltenham College and Thirlestaine House is positioned outside the boundary of Bath Road character area, this private space creates a visually attractive setting for the character area.



- 4.4 The narrow service lanes which run between streets contain garages and out-buildings.

4.5



**Figure 11** Poor quality space of Bath Terrace car park

Some public spaces are poor in quality, in particular Bath Terrace car park. The hard landscaping of the car park is visually unattractive. It provides a poor setting for near-by buildings and negatively impacts on the character and appearance of the character area.

### Garden space

4.6



**Figure 12** The garden of the Exmouth Arms public house

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. There is little front garden space within the Bath Road character area, due to its commercial character and hard landscaping. The garden of the Exmouth Arms public house is an attractive and historic green feature within the highly developed Bath Road. However, the rear part of the garden is currently in a derelict state. Cheltenham Borough Council, in conjunction with community partners and the Exmouth Arms public house are implementing a scheme to improve the appearance and safety of the space (see Management Proposal BR13).

### Boundary treatments

- 4.7 In the residential streets, some buildings have boundary treatments to act as a physical divide between the public and private realm. They predominantly consist of low enclosing brick walls, low enclosing railings, and some fencing.



**Figure 13** Boundary treatments found within Bath Road Character Area

## Key views and vistas (See Fig. 1)

- 4.8 Medium and long distance views within the Bath Road character area are enabled through the linear plan form of streets.

4.9



**Figure 14** Vista of the Cotswold escarpment down Exmouth Street

Extensive distance views of the Cotswold escarpment, rising in the east, are present from Naunton Parade, Exmouth Street, Hermitage Street and Francis Street. Views of the escarpment from streets on the west side of Bath Road are stopped by the high density terraces on Bath Road.

4.10



**Figure 15** View of Old School Court across Bath Terrace car park

Bath Terrace car park opens up views of the surrounding area, which includes the rear of Old School Court, in the Suffolks character area. This building was originally a school, but has been converted into flats.

- 4.11 There are key views down Bath Road, in both a northerly and southerly direction. To the north, the landmark Eagle Tower (in Montpellier Character Area) is visually prominent as it rises into the skyline. Dense tree growth is also present further down Bath Road as it stretches over the road. To the south, an attractive vista is experienced from the junction of Bath Road with Leckhampton Road. Trees frame the entrance to Leckhampton Road and Leckhampton Hill can be viewed in the distance.

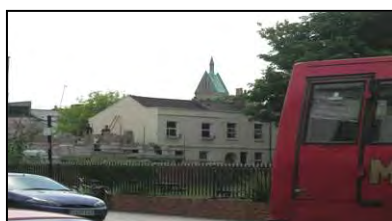


**Figure 16** View of Eagle Tower (in Montpellier Character Area) along Bath Road



**Figure 17** View of Leckhampton Hill down Leckhampton Road

4.12



**Figure 18** View of steeple of St Phillip & St James Church from Bath Road

The steeple of St Phillip and St James in the Park character area can be viewed from Bath Road and is a striking feature within the street scene.

## 5 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### Use of area and how use creates special interest

- 5.1 The Bath Road character area has several different uses due to its close proximity to Cheltenham town centre. Mixed uses create activity throughout the day and evening and contribute to the special interest of the area. Latham Architects believe this area of the Bath Road comprises “...a vibrant, mixed-use area with a significant commercial element”.<sup>9</sup>

### Commercial

5.2



**Figure 19** Attractive shop front of butchers on Bath Road

The area has a distinctive commercial character, which has been established through the high number of shops, services, public houses and restaurants positioned compactly along Bath Road. These buildings create a vibrant, bustling atmosphere within the character area. The shops tend to occupy the frequently projecting ground floors of historic terraces and some contain attractive, traditional detailing such as canopies.

5.3



**Figure 20** The historic Norwood public house

The recreational uses, in the form of public houses and restaurants, are not only used by local residents, but they attract people throughout the town. They generate noise and activity levels during the daytime and evening, ensuring the vitality of the area remains at various times of the day. The Exmouth Arms, The Norwood public houses and others date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and add to the historic interest of the area.

- 5.4 Overall, the commercial element creates a community within the character area and there is high pedestrian movement throughout. The diverse nature of the shops and services offered enables the area to be largely self-sufficient in terms of providing for the customer; therefore it takes on the character of a village.

### Residential

5.5



**Figure 21** Residential character of Clare Street

Roads either side of Bath Road have a predominantly residential character. The traditional housing type is 19<sup>th</sup> century artisan terraces, but some infill development has occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of semi-detached houses. Flats are located above shops and services on Bath Road.

<sup>9</sup> Latham Architects, Urban Design Approach Study – South Cheltenham (2001) no pg. number given



## Road use

5.6



**Figure 22** High levels of vehicular traffic along Bath Road

Bath Road, running through the middle of the character area on a roughly north/south axis, forms part of the A46 approach road into and out of Cheltenham from the south west. This section, located close to the town centre, is heavily used throughout the day and evening, by both through traffic and local shoppers. Sometimes pedestrians have difficulty crossing the Bath Road, due to the high volume of traffic on the road. This results in the road severing the shopping area into two sides.

## Other uses

5.7

In addition there are some other uses including:

- a) Providence Baptist Chapel in Naunton Parade, which acts as an important focal point for the community and is a valuable architectural and historic feature within the street scene;
- b) Bath Terrace car park which provides parking for the Bath Road shoppers. This car park forms an unattractive space and visual intrusion within the character area;
- c) Robert Young Garden Centre is an interesting feature within the street scene and diversifies the building type in the area, through the presence of a large greenhouse structure in its grounds and a greening of the environment through plant displays;
- d) Offices are present in the north of the character area, on the west side of Bath Road.

5.8

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

5.9

Buildings which make up the original Bath Road character area consist of artisan terrace houses, which predominantly date from the 1830s onwards. There has been some redevelopment and infill development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The area's architectural character is strongly based in the artisan terraces of the Georgian and early Victorian periods. In some areas, the uniformity and architectural detailing of the buildings contributes to giving the area a distinctive character and appearance. This is particularly evident in the residential streets adjoining the Bath Road.

## Historic terraces

5.10

Terraces vary throughout the character area. In the residential streets they tend to be modest in character, of 2 storeys with unifying characteristics. These characteristics include rendered facades, brick chimney stacks, often a continuous cornice and some sliding sash windows (although many have been removed and replaced with uPVC). They tend to follow a similar building height and line, which creates unity within the street scene.



**Figure 23** Historic terraced houses within Bath Road Character Area

- 5.11 In contrast, the terrace buildings on Bath Road often vary greatly in terms of their age, building height, construction materials, size and scale. However, they do tend to follow a similar building line. The ground floors of the buildings have frequently been altered to accommodate shops. The buildings are predominantly 2 storeys, and vary from being faced in render to exposed red brick. Roofs vary from flat, to low-pitch (often behind a parapet) to mansard. The overall diversity of buildings in Bath Road creates an interesting and diverse street scene.



**Figure 24** Mix of historic terraced buildings along Bath Road

### **Other significant historic properties**

- 5.12 Away from the historic terraces, other noteworthy historic buildings include the Providence Baptist Chapel and the Mission Hall with its adjoining minister's house. The Providence Chapel is constructed from red brick with buff brick dressings and has a gabled slate roof. Architectural features include decorative barge boards and there is a circular window above the main stone porch. The chapel is an attractive and striking historic and architectural feature within the street scene of Naunton Parade. The Mission Hall in Upper Bath Street comprises a simple, single storey red brick construction with gabled slate roof. The adjoining minister's house is similar in material and design, consisting of two storeys.

### **20<sup>th</sup> century buildings**

- 5.13 Modern developments in the Bath Road character area include Corinth House 117 Bath Road, the large HSBC building and the Natural Grocery Store on the Bath Road which has a mansard roof. These buildings have a significant impact upon the street scene in their locality, in terms of their size, scale, architectural design and construction materials. They follow a similar building line to the historic buildings. They fit into the historical context of the area with varying degrees of success.



**Figure 25** 117 Bath Road (to left) office block



**Figure 26** Modern HSBC building on Bath Road

### Listed buildings

- 5.14 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 three listed buildings within the Bath Road character area. They are Grade II listed and displayed in the table below.

BUILDING/STRUCTURE	GRADE	DATE OF LISTING
Nos. 113 & 115 Pillar House, Bath Road	II	05/05/72
No. 121 The Coach House, Bath Road	II	14/12/83
No. 177 Laburnham House & attached railings, Bath Road	II	14/12/83

Refer to [www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk) for full list descriptions and [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) for photographic records.

### Index of Buildings of Local Importance

- 5.15 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

- 5.16 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, with the exception of The Norwood public house. Please see the Index for further details about these buildings. Key unlisted buildings include –

The Exmouth Arms public house (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)



**Figure 27**  
Exmouth Arms public house

The Brown Jug public house (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)



**Figure 28** The Brown Jug public house

Providence Baptist Chapel, Naunton Parade (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)



**Figure 29**  
Providence Baptist Chapel

Mission Hall and adjoining minister's house, Upper Bath Street (See Index of Buildings of Local Importance)



**Figure 30**  
Former Mission Hall & adjoining minister's house

Norwood Arms public house:

- The public house occupies a visually prominent site on the junction of Shurdington Road and Leckhampton Road with Bath Road;
- The building partially closes the view looking south down Bath Road;
- The original building (comprising the main public house) has historic interest and value, dating from the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century;
- Although extended, the public house building contains original features such as sliding sash windows.



**Figure 31** The Norwood public house

## Positive buildings



- 5.17 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

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

Some specialist shops with traditional shop front detailing

Robert Young's Garden Centre

 <p><b>Figure 32</b> – Detailing on shop fronts (to right)</p>	 <p><b>Figure 33</b> – Robert Young's Garden Centre</p>
Horse trough, Leckhampton Road	High number of historic public houses, including the historic green space of the Exmouth Arms public house
Historic pillar boxes	Lamp post, Kew Place
Wrought-iron pillar outside No. 215 Bath Road (Aqua-Bella)	Cast-iron milepost outside Newman & Bloodworths, No. 158 Bath Road

## Materials

### Building material

- 5.19 The use of building materials reflects the availability of materials at the time of construction of historic buildings. Cheltenham expanded rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> 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. The painting of stucco in a uniform colour gave the town cohesion. 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 today. The tramway was opened in 1811 which contained a branch line running from the top of Leckhampton Hill, along the west side of what is now Leckhampton Road. The tramway then followed the route of what is now Norwood Road and Andover Road to Westal Green, then along Queen's Road to Gloucester Road where it joined the main Cheltenham to Gloucester tramroad.

### Ground surface material

- 5.20 Roads are tarmac, with concrete kerbs. Paving is predominantly concrete slabs or flags and tarmac.

### Street furniture

- 5.21 There is generally little furniture within the Bath Road character area. Of the street furniture which does exist, there are a number of A-board signs on pavements relating to shops.
- 5.22 On the Bath Road, there is a high level of on-street parking and consequent road markings. There is also a significant number of street signs on the Bath Road at both ends of the character area.
- 5.23 The horse trough in Leckhampton Road and traditional street lights in streets including Kew Place are interesting and attractive pieces of street furniture which have historic value.
- 5.24 Within the residential streets, particularly, there is frequently a high presence of overhead telegraph wires, which are a visually unattractive feature in the street.



## Contribution of trees and green spaces

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

### Street trees

- 5.26 Within the residential streets of the character area there are virtually no trees in the street. This is due to the narrow width of the streets where many buildings front directly onto the street. Also, the lack of large street trees reflects the modest character of the residential streets.

5.27



**Figure 34** – Statement tree outside The Norwood

There is a significant street tree outside The Norwood public house. This tree partially screens the building and is an attractive feature at the end of the long vista down Bath Road.

### Private green space

5.28



5.29

**Figure 35** – Greenery within front gardens of houses on Clare Street

There is some greenery present in the long, narrow rear gardens of the residential houses in the character area.

Some properties have contained front gardens where greenery is present. This enhances the setting of properties and the overall visual appearance of the character area.

- 5.30 The Exmouth Arms public house garden is an important historic green space within the character area. Trees within the garden partially screen it on two sides, establishing a sense of enclosure.

5.31



**Figure 36** – The Norwood public house garden

The Norwood public house garden is also important in providing an attractive setting for the building. Several trees screen the pub's car park. The green colour of the lawn and trees contrasts well with the colours of the built environment.



### Negative factors

5.32 Due to high levels of development of the Bath Road 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) **Some front gardens have been changed partially into hard-standing** for cars. This is evident in Clare 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 Bath Road character area. In places, 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;
- e) The **A46 Bath Road** experiences high volumes of traffic movement throughout the day. The road acts as a strong divide between the eastern and western half of character area. Gloucestershire County Council has identified it as an area for road safety works, in order to calm vehicle dominance and ease pedestrian movement. The character area also experiences high pedestrian movement throughout the day and despite three pedestrian crossings along Bath Road, pedestrians still experience difficulty in crossing in places due to the constant flow of traffic along this road;
- f) A large amount of **on-street parking** is evident within most parts of the Bath Road character area. The historic houses do not accommodate for the modern-day car, hence cars are forced to park on the street. High levels of parking are apparent on Bath Road due to the shops along both sides of the street. High levels of parking creates active streets, but focuses attention on the road rather than the historic buildings and, in places, the open spaces between buildings;

- g) The **Bath Terrace car park** is an unattractive, hard feature within the character area. It has a bland appearance and its high boundary walls create a poor, unattractive enclosure to the space. The car park also provides a poor setting for historic buildings such as Old School Court (in the Suffolks character area). A poor quality, unattractive toilet block is also situated in the car park;
- h) Some **boundary treatments**, in particular fencing, have a negative impact on the street scene and setting of buildings;
- i) On Bath Road, there has been some **loss of historic railings** which are an attractive and traditional form of boundary treatment;
- j) There is a strong visual presence of **overhead telegraph wires** throughout the area, particularly in the residential streets, which are aesthetically unattractive;
- k) The stretch of **grassland along the north side of Kew Place** has become overgrown which conveys a neglected appearance. In its current state it is a negative feature in the street scene of this road;
- l) Part of the **garden of The Exmouth Arms** is currently in a poor and derelict condition (see Management Proposal BR13);
- m) **161 Bath Road** is currently in a poor physical condition (see paragraph 5.38).

### **Neutral areas**

- 5.33 Some areas within the Bath Road 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.
- 5.34 The HSBC bank building, on the junction of Bath Road and Suffolk Road. The building is of a large size, scale and footprint, which does not complement the historic terraces along this part of Bath Road. The construction materials on the bank are also uncomplimentary. However, the building is set in landscaped grounds, back from the road and partially screened from public view by trees;
- 5.35 Number 117 Bath Road impacts similarly to the HSBC building, upon the character area. It has a large size, scale and footprint. However, the building is set back from public view within landscaped grounds, so as not to detract from the special historic character of Bath Road;
- 5.36 The Lloyds bank building, on the junction of Suffolk Street and Bath Road has uncomplimentary construction materials, but it follows the same building line as historic terraces and its size and scale does not detract from the historic buildings. The long narrow windows complement and emphasise the vertically sliding sash windows on the historic terraces;

- 5.37 Other residential buildings which have a neutral impact upon the character area include, numbers 1 to 6 Clare Street and numbers 12, 14 and 15 Naunton Parade.

#### **General condition of area**

- 5.38 Much of the building stock in the Bath Road character area is in good condition, reflecting high property values and the prosperity within this popular commercial and residential area. However, the Bath Terrace car park is currently a poor, unattractive space which is need of attention.
- 5.39 The 'Old Bakery' building, 161 Bath Road, is currently in a poor physical condition and a Section 215 notice has been served on the building.
- 5.40 It is highly important that the physical condition of the historic buildings is preserved in-order to retain not just the Bath Road character area's, but Cheltenham's fine distinctiveness and identity.

#### **Pressures and capacity for change**

- 5.41 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 or the area.
- 5.42 There is generally little capacity for new development on open land due to a very limited amount of suitable vacant land.
- 5.43 It is likely Bath Road will continue to experience high levels of vehicular traffic which places pressures on road systems and pedestrian spaces and can bring the two into conflict. There may be opportunities for a major intervention here, which could begin to address these conflicts and upgrade the quality of the public realm. However, this is likely to be costly and there is no plan for any work currently.
- 5.44 Some spaces such as the Bath Terrace car park would benefit from enhancement and the refurbishment of the 'Old Bakery' 161 Bath Road should be undertaken as a priority.

## **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 Bath Road 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 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008. It will inform the planning and other decisions of the Council.

The special qualities of the Bath Road character area have been identified in the Character Appraisal which forms the Part 1 of this document. The Management Plan draws upon the themes identified in sections 5.32 'Negative factors' and 5.33 '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 Bath Road 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;
- d. and 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;
- d. the provision and removal of walls, gates and fences.

## 3. 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 BR1:** 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:

- 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 Bath Road 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 BR2:** In order to preserve and enhance the character and setting of the Bath Road 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 features;
- 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](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk)).

### **3 Equipment or installations (for example satellite dishes, large aerals, 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 aerals or satellite dishes, can detract from the character of the Bath Road 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 BR3:** 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 BR4:** 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. 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 BR5:** 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 BR6:** 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 Bath Road 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 Bath Road character area is very important. Any proposals for development will be required to demonstrate how the setting and long distance views, into and from 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 BR7:** The Council will ensure that all development respects the important views within, into and from the Bath Road 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 BR8:** 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.

**ACTION BR9:** The Council will require developments to adopt a considered, contextually sensitive approach to the selection and use of surface materials. It will lobby the Highway Authority to adopt such an approach in the implementation of capital and maintenance schemes.

### **10 Bath Terrace car park**

The Bath Terrace car park is an unattractive feature within the character area. 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, in the Suffolk character area.

**ACTION BR10:** The Council will continue its programme of enhancement schemes where appropriate to soften and improve the visual appearance of car parks, including a landscape scheme for Bath Terrace car park. 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. In 2008, the Council plans to install CCTV and assess the lighting scheme within the car park.

### **11 Bath Road**

Bath Road is an area with considerable vitality, but has an unhappy tension between vehicular traffic and pedestrians in the commercial area. The Council will lobby the County Council to address issues of severance and ease of pedestrian movement through the area.

**ACTION BR11:** The Council will work with Gloucestershire County Council to pursue opportunities for the improvement of the pedestrian and shopping environment of Bath Road. A comprehensive project is preferred, but if it is not forthcoming, a series of incremental projects towards an agreed output will be acceptable.

### **12 On street parking and traffic management**

The residential streets contain a high level of on-street parking which creates a cluttered appearance in the street scene and a poor use of space. There is a possibility of creating a home zone in the area to target these issues.

**ACTION BR12:** The Council will work with Gloucestershire County Council to consider ways of improving parking regimes and traffic management in Bath Road character area. This will improve the environment and its visual quality and address traffic speed and volume in the area.

### **13 Land at the Exmouth Arms public house**

The large area of open land adjacent to the Exmouth Arms pub and garden is currently a poor quality and unattractive space. Cars frequently use the land to park on. Trees growing along its boundary with St Phillip's Street are poorly maintained and prevent the nearby street lighting from working effectively; this creates a safety issue along this stretch of St Phillip's Street. Part of the boundary wall along St Phillip's Street is in a poor condition.

**ACTION BR13:** Cheltenham Borough Council, in conjunction with community partners and the Exmouth Arms public house are implementing a scheme to improve the appearance and safety of the space within the grounds of the Exmouth Arms. The scheme will involve pollarding the trees along the eastern side of St Phillip's Street, which will allow the street lighting located close to the trees to work more effectively; demolishing and rebuilding part of the wall along St Phillip's Street and removing ivy from the wall; and re-turfing the open space to improve its physical appearance. The implementation of this scheme will significantly enhance the character and appearance of this important historic space.

## **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 –

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Status</b>
1). <b>Old Town</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2007
2). <b>Montpellier</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2007
3). <b>Bayshill</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2007
4). <b>Lansdown</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
5). <b>Suffolk Square</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
6). <b>Eldorado</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
7). <b>Dean Close &amp; Hatherley Park</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
8). <b>Tivoli</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
9). <b>The Park</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
10). <b>The Suffolks</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
11). <b>Bath Road</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
12). <b>Leckhampton</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
13). <b>College</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
14). <b>St Luke's</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
15). <b>Sydenham</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
16). <b>Fairview &amp; All Saints'</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
17). <b>Pittville</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
18). <b>Lower High Street</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
19). <b>St Paul's</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008



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