

## 5. Town Centre Urban Design

### 5.1 Introduction

The urban design review is intended to examine the extensive and ongoing design work which has been undertaken within the Civic Pride study area. The intention is to assess the implications of this work for the Public Realm and Urban Design Strategies, which are to be developed in forthcoming phases. The focus is on the character areas; the function of streets and street scene; public art, cultural and heritage assets; urban green space; public spaces; and signage and way finding.

### 5.2 Town Centre Character Areas

#### 5.2.1 The Character Area Concept

The division of Cheltenham into character areas is a theme which occurs in a number of assessments relating to the Civic Pride study area, in particular:

- Cheltenham Spa Urban Design Framework - Consultation Draft, Latham Architects, May 2001;
- Cheltenham Spa Civic Pride Initiative— Pre-Consultation Working Draft, Latham Architects September 2002;
- Character Area Assessments – Final Report, Cheltenham Urban Character Area Partnership (CUCAP), January 2005
- Conservation Area Assessments and subsequent Sub-Character Assessments – First Drafts, Cheltenham Borough Council, 2006 and on-going

In recognition that the urban grain of Cheltenham varies from area to area, the Latham Urban Design Framework (2001) identified a number of character areas within which a reasonably consistent grain can be discerned. The classification of areas according to their similarities and differences enables the formulation building blocks for an urban design policy, which can:

- reinforce the quality of each area's urban character;
- remedy, or improve upon, the deficiencies; and
- enable a better understanding of the capacity of each area to accommodate change

The Latham Report (2001) recommends that surveys are undertaken for character areas, with the purpose of analysing capacity for change and recommending policies for development and control, with the highest priority given to those areas likely to experience most change. This report identifies 26 potential character areas for further investigation, of which 3 are almost wholly located within the study area (see Drawing 3: Character Areas):

- Cheltenham Central;
- Montpellier;
- Suffolk Square.

Latham's Cheltenham Spa Civic Pride Initiative report (2002) reiterated the importance of character areas, and recommended that further work should ensure that "the distinct character of each could be articulated and enhanced and that their connectivity and inter-relationship re-enforced". Furthermore, Latham recommended that individual communities / residents are involved in the character analysis of individual areas

Since then, Cheltenham Borough Council has made

significant strides forward:

(i) The Council is implementing guidance under PPG15 which requires all conservation areas in the Borough to be assessed. These assessments will provide guidance on preservation and enhancement of the conservation character of each area, and will be used for development control purposes. Work on the Cheltenham Central and Montpellier Conservation Character Areas is well advanced and the Suffolk Square assessment is underway. The latter will be completed in time for the inclusion of recommendations into the Urban Design Strategy in Phase 2.

(ii) The Cheltenham Urban Character Area Partnership (CUCAP) was formed in March 2002 in response to the Urban Design Framework recommendations. The overall purpose was to produce detailed character appraisals of 45 character areas of the Borough, in partnership with key stakeholders and local communities. Of the 45 character areas reviewed across the town, 2 overlap with the study area and 1 abuts the study area boundary:

- St Paul's (No.26) (overlaps study area);
- High Street (West End) (No. 27) (overlaps study area);
- Sandford (No.30) (abuts study area).

The importance of the CUCAP initiative was the level of community involvement in the process. The boundaries of the CUCAP character areas did not necessarily reflect those set out in the Latham reports and the boundary concept was recognised as being somewhat artificial with the large potential for overlaps acknowledged. Boundaries of the Character Areas are shown in the accompanying drawing.



The 1834 map of Cheltenham illustrates the strength of the east-west High Street axis, and the development of the Regency suburbs on either side. There is no equivalent north-south axis, with the result that the High Street acts as a barrier between the southern and northern parts of the town.



The outcome and recommendations of both the CUCAP and the Conservation Area Guidance initiatives have implications for Civic Pride, and the nature of intervention to be proposed in the next stages. These implications are set out in more detail below under the character area headings. The boundaries of the individual character areas are shown on Drawing 3: Character Areas.

## 5.2.2 Cheltenham Central

The Central Sub- Character Area forms the northern part of the Civic Pride study area, and covers the ancient settlement and forms the retail core of the town, predominantly along the High Street but also encompassing some residential and commercial development in adjoining streets.

Features of the character area which will be addressed as part of the urban design strategy include:

- Views of Cleeve Hill through open spaces and gaps between buildings;
- Landmarks including St. Mary's and St. Gregory's Church spires;
- Typically high density, with dominating historic (Regency) terraces;
- Typical historic building set backs, surrounding public squares;
- Strong boundary treatments – encompassing railings and brick walls;
- Bowling Green as an important urban green space;
- Local materials: slate roofs, ashlar, painted render, stone or plaster walls, sash windows, iron railings on Regency buildings; Cotswold stone and red brick Victorian buildings;
- 6 Grade II Listed Buildings; St. Mary's Church on Church Street, St. Matthew's Church on Clarence Street, Masonic Hall on Portland Street, St. Gregory's Church and Synagogue on St. James' Square, St. Margaret's Terrace on St. Margaret's Road;

- 6 key (but unlisted) buildings identified; Boots the Chemist on High Street, The Crescent Bakery on St. George's Place, Bradford and Bingley on High Street, Dowty House on St. Margaret's Road, St. James Hotel on Clarence Street / Ambrose Street corner, Fire Station and Engine House on St. James' Square;
- Significant TPOs include; limes on Clarence Street, a beech at St. George's Place and St. James' Square corner, a silver birch on Warwick Place.

Considerations that have implications for the public realm and transport strategies include:

- Heavy traffic and noise on Cheltenham Inner Ring Road;
- A mix of street furniture styles;
- Very few public or private green spaces;
- Loss of architectural features such as erosion of traditional windows;
- Building clutter such as poor fascias, signage and satellite dishes;
- Loss of front gardens to parking;
- Suggested tree planting along Fairview Road, North Place, Rodney Road and Regent Arcade;
- Suggested boundary improvement around Jenner Gardens;
- Public open space improvements at St. Mary's Church (already underway);
- Building maintenance along High Street.





## 5.2.3 Montpellier Character Area

The Montpellier Character Area covers the majority of the southern part of the study area. Montpellier is characterised by a significant element large amounts of Regency development, with several significant historical buildings and streets of this era. It consists of a mix of residential and retail areas. Features of the character area which will be addressed as part of the urban design strategy include:

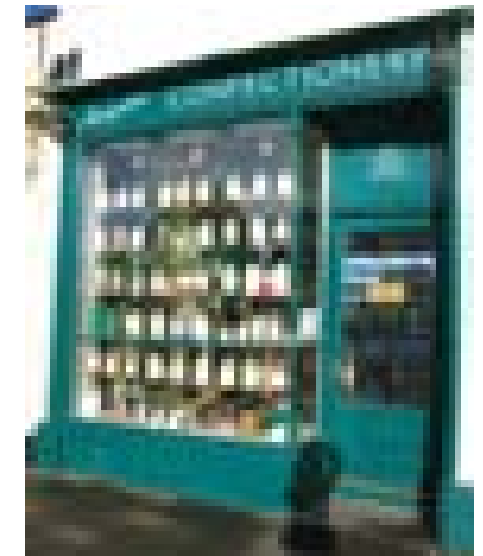
- Historic buildings, with a dominance of terraces, crescents and villas, set in wide roads, spacious gardens and large plot sizes;
- Views of Cleeve Hill through open spaces and gaps between buildings;
- Landmark buildings, such as Queens Hotel;
- Varying boundary treatments, including red brick walls;
- Extensive views and vistas along main streets;
- Specialist users and independent retailers;
- Several listed buildings including
  - Rotunda and Pump Room
  - 1-34 Imperial Square
  - Montpellier Arcade
  - Claremont Lodge
  - 23-25 Vittoria Walk
  - Bayshill Lodge
  - 1-19 Rotunda Terrace
  - 81 Montpellier Terrace
  - 1-23 Montpellier Walk
  - 1-4 Oriel Terrace, Municipal Offices
  - 99-119 Promenade
  - 6 & 8 St George's Road
  - 121-133 (odd), Promenade
  - Queen's Hotel
  - 73 Rodney Road
  - 1-18 Royal Crescent;
- Other significant buildings on the Broad Walk, Montpellier Spa Road, Royscot House, The Courtyard, Montpellier Parade, Rodney House, Rodney Road, Ellenborough House, sports pavilion, public convenience, park lodge, refreshment kiosk and many statues and monuments;



- Buildings generally faced with painted stucco or Roman cement, with Cotswold stone slate roofs;
- Presence of mature trees and small scale green spaces enhances setting;
- Montpellier Gardens and Imperial Gardens identified as significant areas of public open space.

General improvements that have implications for the public realm and transport strategies include:

- Heavy traffic and noise on Cheltenham Inner Ring Road;
- Cluttered vehicle signage and lighting styles, although pedestrian signage and street furniture generally good;
- Building clutter such as poor fascias, signage and satellite dishes;
- Loss of front gardens to parking;
- Introduction of softer boundary treatment;
- Enhancement of Royal Well bus station





## 5.2.4 Suffolk Square and Suffolks

This small character area is located at the southern end of the study area, and consists of the streets of Suffolk Square, Suffolk Road and Suffolk Parade. The area is predominantly residential, mainly characterised by Regency buildings set within large plots, set back from the road, although Suffolk Parade is characterised by smaller residential properties. A key focal point is Suffolk Square a semi-public enclosed green space, currently used by the Bowling Club. Conservation character area guidance is being prepared by CBC, and will be completed in time for the next Phase of the Civic Pride project.



## 5.2.5 St Paul's

A small part of the Civic Pride study area, located to the north west falls within the St Paul's character area, as defined by CUCAP. This character area is within the land bordered by Brunswick Street to the west, Monson Avenue to the east, St Paul's Road to the north and Swindon Road to the south. Although largely outside of the study area, St Paul's is considered a deprivation hotspot – being the most deprived area within Cheltenham and ranking within the 10% most deprived areas in the country. (The Manser Street / Hudson Street / Granville Street area of St Paul's is ranked 2138 out of 32,482, with particular problems of income deprivation affecting children and older people, where this area is the most deprived in the County. St Pauls Ward is also characterised by high levels of social housing at 23.68%). Future Civic Pride proposals will need to address priorities within this community, focussing on improvements which will have wider regeneration benefits.

Opportunities or improvement priorities identified in the character area by CUCAP which have implications for the study include:

- Gateway at St Paul's Road / Clarence Square junction, enhanced through signage, art and planting;
- Retention of key views northwards along Brunswick Street;
- Traffic calming for St. Paul's Road and Swindon Road (e.g. raised crossing tables and junctions), as perceived as barrier to town centre;
- New housing development must include off-street parking;
- Regulation / enforcement of parking to be explored further;
- Introduction of Home Zones to be explored further;
- Street management for environmental enhancement and community safety;
- Street trees where appropriate;
- Creation of an active frontage onto Swindon Road and Brunswick Street;
- Extension of St. Paul's Parade as a link road;
- Maximum of 3 storeys to the north and west and 5 storeys to the south and east;
- Building line appropriate to the recently widened Swindon Road.

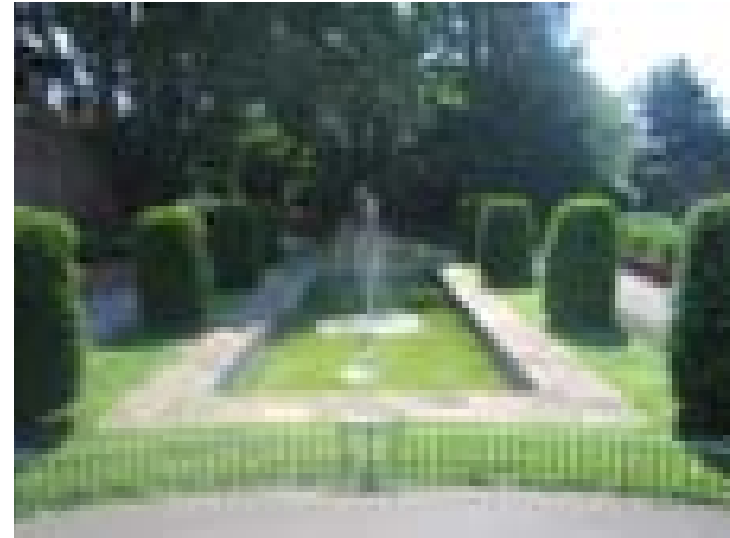
## 5.2.6 High Street (West End)

A small part of the High Street (West End) character area falls within the study area. This character area is also one of three that was earmarked by CUCAP due to specific problems and has been subject of a regeneration strategy. Opportunities or improvement priorities identified in the character area that affect the study area include the following:

- Bowling Club identified as key open space;
- Retain key views north and southwards along Ambrose Street;
- Gateway on High Street, close to southern end of Henrietta Street;
- St Gregory's Church identified as landmark building;
- Strategic traffic flows, congestion and resulting pollution, particularly along High Street;
- Environmental enhancement along Lower High Street. Measures could include new landscaping, lighting and paving;
- Small scale improvements to properties fronting St. George's Square;
- Redevelopment or change of use of run down industrial buildings / workshops in streets off High Street (unspecified).







## 5.2.7 Sandford

The north western corner of the Sandford character area abuts the study area, along Bath Road and London Road. Opportunities and improvement priorities identified by CUCAP that have implications for the study area include the following:

- Sandford Park identified as key open space;
- Gateway to Sandford Park on Bath Road and at the London Road / College Road junction;
- Retention of mature trees along London Road, along with clear maintenance strategy;
- Strategic traffic flows, congestion and resulting pollution, particularly along Bath Road and London Road;
- Retain linkages through the park into the town centre;
- Strategic policy to reflect and encourage pedestrian and cyclist movements is required;
- Strategic on-street parking policy required.



## 5.2.8 Review of parts of study area that are not covered by character area assessments

In addition to the above review of previous work, there are parts of the study area that have not been assessed. These include:

- East of Bayshill Road;
- South of Royal Well Place;
- West and south west of St. James' Square;
- Between St. George's Street and Henrietta Street;
- South of St. Paul's Road;
- South of Clarence Square;
- West of Hewlett Road.

A brief assessment of each of these areas is set out below;

### i) East of Bayshill Road

The eastern side of Bayshill Road is mainly residential.

### ii) South of Royal Well Place

This area consists of small parts of St George's Road, St George's Place and Royal Well Place. Properties on St George's Road are Regency terraces, many of which have been converted to offices. On St. George's Place, it is mainly residential Regency terraces. On Royal Well Place, it is mainly smaller scale peripheral commercial uses (restaurant and garage etc)

### iii) West and south west of St. James' Square

The area west of St. James' Square consists of 4 and 5 storey office development. The area south of St. James' Square is currently a surface car park, subject of one of the potential development sites of this study.

### iv) Between St. George's Street and Henrietta Street

This area consists of properties on the eastern side of St. George's Street and the western side of Henrietta Street and a parking area in between. In general, properties that front the High Street are peripheral, small scale retail uses.

### v) South of St. Paul's Road

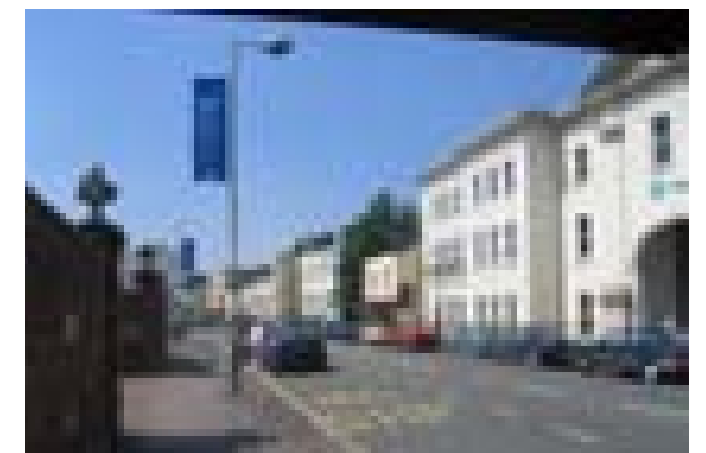
This area consists of mainly 2 storey, Victorian, terraced residential properties located on small parts of St. Paul's Road, St. Paul's Parade, Brunswick Street and Dunalley Street.

### vi) South of Clarence Square

This area consists of mainly 2 storey, Victorian, terraced residential properties located on the south side of Clarence Square, on Northfield Terrace and Northfield Passage and on Monson Avenue.

### vii) West of Hewlett Road

This area consists of mainly 3 storey Regency style residential properties. On Berkeley Place, these properties are set back from the main London Road behind public green space.



## 5.3 Function of Streets & Street Scene Review

### 5.3.1 Purpose

In order to inform an Urban Design Framework for Cheltenham and offer a planning context for decisions on development, design, transportation and public realm intervention it is necessary to review the existing environment. The street function and street scene review are intended to provide an understanding of the uses of key streets within the study area, to set out a general assessment of the quality of key streets, providing a starting point for public realm improvement projects.

The street function is defined by the activities on a particular route, which contributes to the pedestrian activity and street scene. The street scene is experienced visually, physically and culturally in and along public routes within the built environment. Combinations of the following elements make up the street scene of an area:

- Transport and traffic
- Adjoining uses
- Buildings/ architecture
- Pedestrian activity
- Street Furniture
- Surface materials
- Public Art & signage
- Variety
- Landscaping and trees
- Amenity (Including noise and micro-climate)
- Lighting
- Colour

### 5.3.2 Review of work already undertaken

A desk top study of all relevant information and reports produced to date was carried out to establish what data is already held and its currency, assess where further work is required, and to set out recommendations to be taken forward in the next phases of the study. The key documents reviewed with relevance to the street scene were:

- Cheltenham Spa: Urban Design Framework, Latham 2001
- Civic Pride in Cheltenham, Latham 2002
- Approach Studies, Latham 2002
- Cheltenham Town Centre Access Audit, Foxley Tagg Planning Ltd 2003

#### i) Cheltenham Spa – Urban Design Framework

Section 3 of the report covers the current urban form of Cheltenham. Under Townscape Structure the following elements are considered:

- Routes and Corridors
- Nodes and Connections
- Green Spaces
- Urban Grain: Character Areas

Plan 16, Existing Land Uses, is useful to refer to as land use contributes to the function of a street, however the plan does not cover the southern half of the study area so further assessment was necessary required. Plan 19 of this report illustrates Street Quality and offers a rating of Very Poor, Poor, Average, Good, and Outstanding. The streets have been analysed in relation to their urban form and streetscape to assess their relative quality. However the information shown on the plan is only of partial use as it does not include a key and covers only part of the study area. Therefore it was considered that a more comprehensive assessment of the street scene (or what Latham refers to as Street Quality) is required.

#### ii) Civic Pride in Cheltenham

This report includes a useful constraints and opportunities chapter. It initially highlights the problems in accommodating the motor car into a town designed for the promenading pedestrian. The accompanying constraints plan emphasizes areas of vehicle pedestrian conflict, on street parking clutter, highway clutter, poorly defined building lines, and spaces that are poorly related to buildings. The report also singles out the High Street and its surrounding areas as not adhering to Regency town concepts of visual planning with long continuous frontages of similar scale and character.

Latham identifies a range of routes in need of improvement, and an analysis of pedestrian movements through the town is illustrated with diagrams although the method of analysis. However, conclusions and justifications for the recommendations (which would have been useful for advancing the baseline studies to the next phase of this study) are not given.

Since 2002 when the report was commissioned, several issues highlighted in this section have already been addressed or the infrastructure put in place to facilitate the improvement in the future.

#### iii) Approach Studies

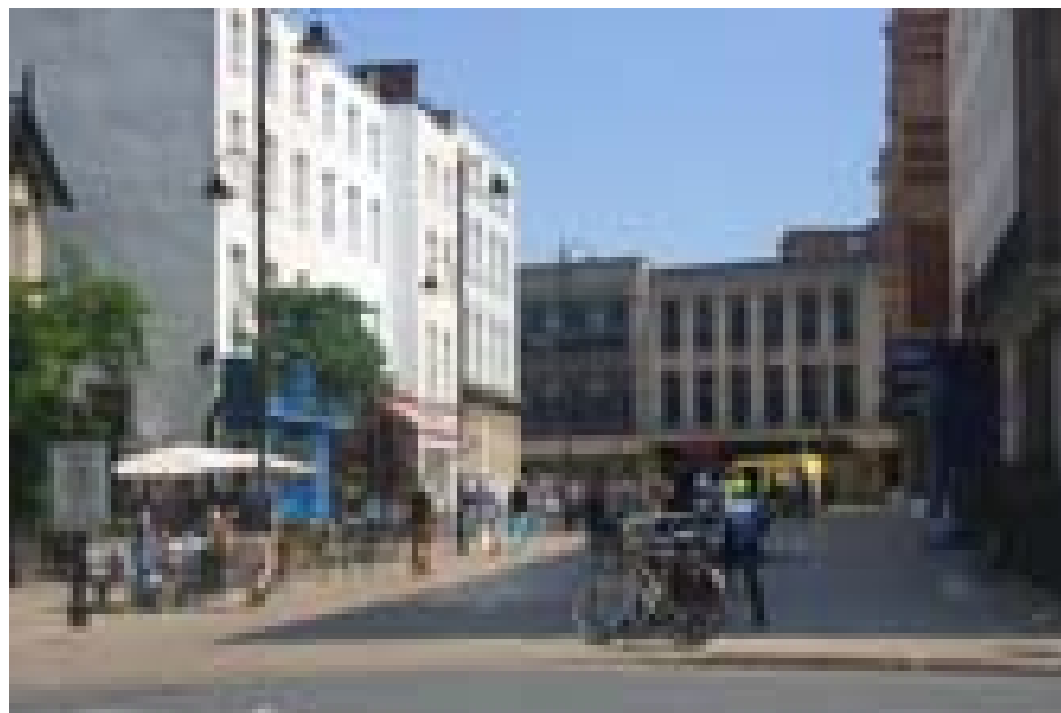
Of the 7 principal approaches into the town centre, 3 have been studied by Latham. The focus of these studies is generally outside of the study area. However, the function and quality of these approach routes contributes to the public realm, to impressions and sense of place of the study area.

The four remaining approach studies are being completed as part of the Phase 1 works and should be read in conjunction with the Street Scene Review.

## iv) Cheltenham Town Centre Access Audit

The audit supplies a valuable set of data highlighting pedestrian use of key routes and user surveys reflecting the concerns / issues of people that use the streets, and numbers of people using particular routes. The street audit was carried out on 19 key routes. The quality of the street environment was evaluated from the perspective of a pedestrian user. Any barriers to movement were recorded.

The report focuses on specific areas and is quite detailed and therefore doesn't consider wider improvement options that encompass more elements at a strategic level. However with an understanding of where individual problems occur it is possible to inform wider proposals. Results of the surveys as these relate to key routes within the study area are recorded on Drawing 5: Quality of the Street Scene.



## 5.3.3 Function of Streets

A site visit formed the basis for a thorough assessment of key street functions across the study area. The street functions have been defined and mapped onto Drawing 4: Function of Streets.

Clearly, some streets that fall into more than one of the categories (for example it is common to have residential flats above shops on a High Street). However, it is the predominant contribution to function of the street which has been captured. It is not the purpose to single out individual buildings but to consider the street scene or significant sections of a street scene as a whole. The following five categories define the function of the main streets within the study area:

- Residential Street: predominantly residential in use and character
- Main Shopping Street: Key retail location, with shopping being the main activity of people using the street
- Business / Office Street: Predominantly use is employment, mainly offices or businesses
- Leisure/ Entertainment: Mainly leisure uses, with people attracted to these areas by bars, restaurants, cafés, night clubs, theatre, cinema etc
- Main Vehicle Access: Key streets around the town centre dominated by the through movement of vehicles, predominantly, the ring roads

The sequence of key public spaces (baseline) is included on the drawing as an aid to understanding pedestrian desire lines which are not currently satisfied by the existing street layout. The close correspondence between pedestrian desire lines, public spaces and shopping activity versus the main vehicular accesses within the study area is notable. Inevitably, areas of pedestrian/ vehicular conflict arise in areas where there is a juxtaposition between main vehicular accesses, shopping streets and public spaces.

Conflict also occurs on the edge of the study area where the pedestrian desire lines between the town centre and the station/ Sandford Park are not accommodated. Note that Drawing 4 represents the baseline situation. With the potential redevelopment of key sites within the study area, the incidence of conflict is likely to increase and intensify.





## 5.3.4. Quality of Street Scene

Based on the preceding assessment, and building on previous studies, site surveys were undertaken at key locations in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the street scene and to inform future phases of intervention confidently.

Survey teams comprised individuals who know Cheltenham very well and people who are unfamiliar with the town. The aim of this was to provide a balanced assessment of the various aspects of this part of the study. Team members walked the area, recording impressions on base maps, note books and in photographic form. Taking into account the criteria identified in section 5.3.1, street scene along key routes was classified as being good, unsatisfactory and poor. This is shown on Drawing 5: Quality of the Street Scene. In addition, on certain days at prescribed times, team members recorded numbers of pedestrians at selected points. The pedestrian counts are illustrated on Drawing 5: Quality of the Street Scene, together with other pedestrian counts undertaken as part of:

- Cheltenham Retail Study, DPDS Consulting, - Survey date February 2006. The average was taken between a morning and an afternoon survey.
- Cheltenham Town Centre Access Audit, Foxley Tagg Planning Ltd, - Survey date March 2003.

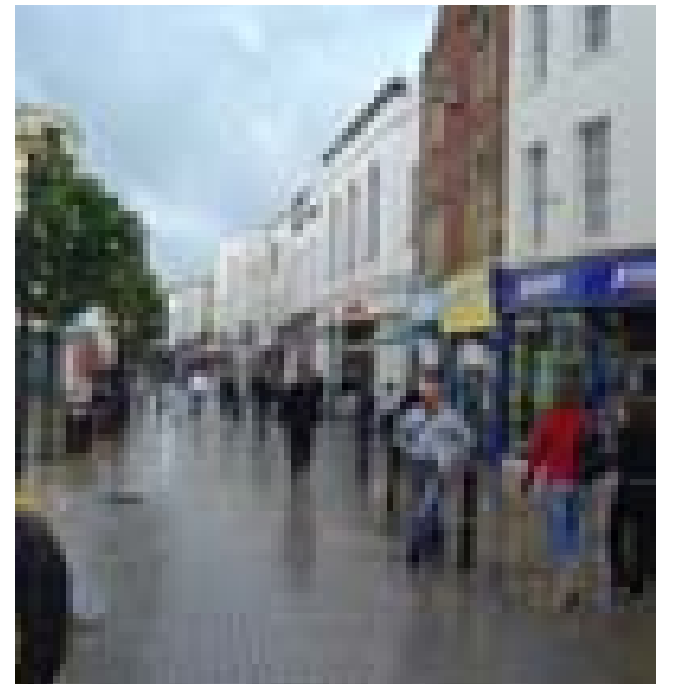
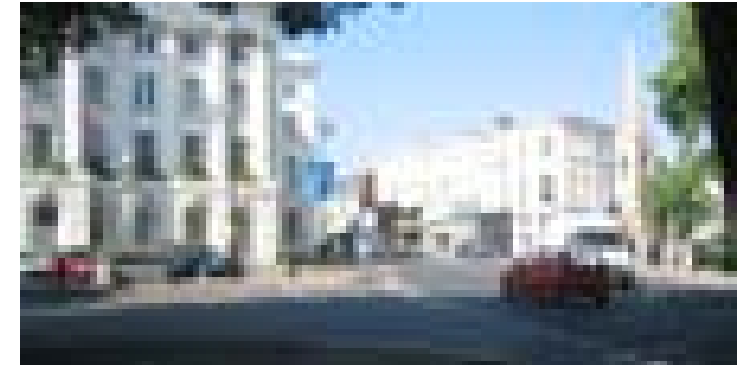
The assessment indicates that poor quality street scene is generally synonymous with high levels of traffic and a poor pedestrian environment, as is the case along much of the ring road. Focal areas, which relate to potential development sites and whose quality will need to be addressed as part of future development include:

- Royal Well Road/ Crescent Place and St Georges Street surrounding the Royal Well Site, as well as Royal Well Place which suffer from conflict between traffic and pedestrians, and generally poor environmental quality
- St Margaret's Road and Portland Street which abut the North Place/ Portland Street Car Parks

In addition, the street scene associated with Albion Street, High Street East, Clarence Street/ North Street, St James Street and Grosvenor Street, and the northern section of the Promenade at Boots Corner is generally considered to be poor.

A number of key streets were considered to exhibit characteristics which rendered their street scene less than satisfactory, although not as bad as those previously discussed. Generally, these streets accommodate pedestrian activity, but tend to be let down by quality of paving, street furniture, landscaping, signage, on-street parking and/ or street clutter. These streets include the High Street, Winchcombe Street, Rodney Road, the southern part of the Promenade, St Georges Road, Ambrose Street, St George's Street, and parts of the Suffolk, Imperial Square, Oriel Road and Bath Street.

In general, the street scene in the south of the study area was generally considered to be better than much of the study area, owing to planting, ease of pedestrian access, levels of activity and interest, architecture, quality of paving and street furniture. A number of key nodes were also identified (shown on Drawing 5), based on current use, levels of pedestrian activity, pedestrian desire lines and survey results, as well as the quality of the streets which intersect them. These nodes are proposed as a focus for intervention and discussed in more detail under section 5.5 which considers the usage and quality of public space, and future public realm improvement projects.





## 5.3.5 Recommendations

It is clear, that street scene improvements along those routes which suffer from the poorest quality of street scene are highly dependent on the removal or reduction of traffic from these routes, and improved pedestrian priority. A fundamental requirement of the transport strategy in the next phase will be to demonstrate that the ring road can be re-arranged to divert traffic away from the study area, and that this is feasible in terms of road capacity and impacts on other areas.

Priorities for street scene improvements should include those routes adjacent to future development sites. In most cases, redevelopment will not only provide a critical opportunity for improvements to the street scene (through the re-organisation of space and through potential funding opportunities) but it also likely to be a pre-requisite for the future success of proposed development. Other aspects such as planting, on street parking, street furniture, paving, signage, uses and built form play an important role in determining the quality of the street scene.

Secondary priorities are those streets which currently carry high levels of pedestrian traffic, exhibit poor quality, which are fundamental to town centre activities and uses and/ or are located on key approaches to the town centre. These include parts of the High Street, Royal Well Place, Portland Street and Bath Road.

Finally, colour plays an important part in the street scene, although it is rarely treated as a separate topic. A plethora of different, uncoordinated colours contributes to a visually confusing, chaotic environment. Methods exist that provide a range of appropriate colours for specific areas and this would make a significant difference to the aesthetics and visual aspects of the street scene in Cheltenham, ensuring that the vision of Cheltenham becoming “the future most beautiful town in England” can be realised and sustained.

If adopted, this method or system, known as Environmental Colour Assessment or ECA, should be carried out initially as a baseline assessment with the brief and scope being agreed with CBC and other stakeholders. Colour charts for each area would then be drawn up and would form part of the Urban Design and Public Realm Strategies. In other areas, colour charts produced as a result of ECA are now being adopted as planning guidance to ensure control over the use of colour in the built (and natural) environment.

The colour charts would be used to specify colours for buildings, structures, surfaces, street furniture, shop fronts, signage, public art etc. and is the one element that unifies all of the disparate elements of the street scene.



## 5.4 Public Art, Cultural and Heritage Assets

### 5.4.1 Cheltenham's Heritage Assets

*"A successful place 'fulfills itself not by master plans but through an attentiveness to the processes that have created it and an awareness of its possibilities. It achieves a heightened identity by giving form to memory and providing space for new life.' Robert Fulford"*

The history of Cheltenham has been well documented, and it is not the intention of this study to revisit these analyses. However, key events in the town's past are key to understanding Cheltenham's development and layout, its identity as a place, the town's valuable heritage assets. Cheltenham's identity and role in future history will be closely related to its potential which can be derived from its past evolution.

Originating in early Saxon times, Cheltenham began as a hamlet on the River Chelt, comprising a few thatched cottages, an inn, a blacksmith and a church, sited on the east-west route between London and Bristol. The medieval street pattern is evident today in the strong east-west axis of the High Street. St Mary's Parish Church, probably constructed in the 11th century, is the oldest surviving building in Cheltenham. The town's origins are closely associated with the River Chelt which played a key role in sustaining local agriculture including: cultivated fields, orchards and gardens. The Domesday book also refers to 5 water and grain mills located on the Chelt.

King Henry III granted the town the right to hold a market each Thursday (which is still held to this day), heralding the rise of the town as a market town. Cheltenham's market town status was a key factor in its growth and development from the 13th century. From the 13th century, the town was commonly referred to as Cheltenham Street, dominated by a linear route, the current High Street, with narrow paths and lanes leading from it. Key routes included Winchcombe Street, North Streets, St Georges Place, and Henrietta Street. The ancient borough remains the core of the present town, and has determined the form and arrangement of the present town, together with its strong east-west High Street axis.

Mineral springs were discovered in the town in the 18th century, and Royal Old Well was established in 1718. A visit by King George III who took the waters in 1788, heralded the growth of the town as a spa resort. By the early 19th century, Cheltenham had grown to one of the most successful and elegant spa towns in England.

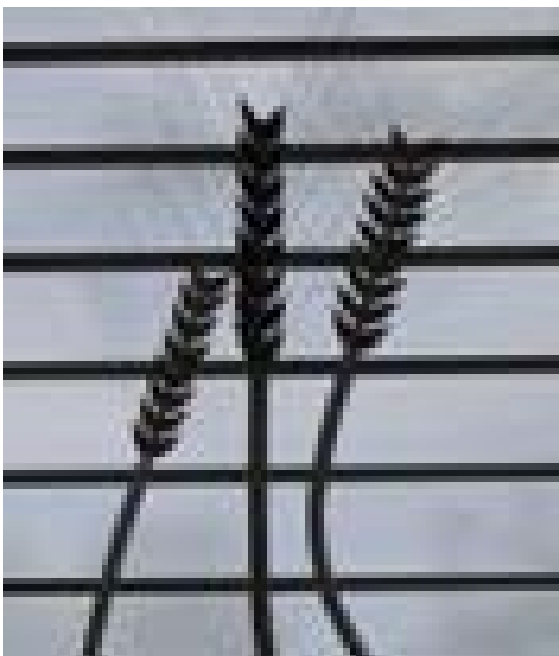
During the 19th century, improved accessibility, together with the increasing popularity of spas links led to significant amounts of building in Cheltenham. The construction of Evesham Road and Bath Road provided new routes into the town from the north and south. Taking the waters became a fashionable pastime and the leisured classes who partook, also required accommodation, and entertainment.

During the Regency period, the town expanded outwards on either side of the High Street, accommodating pump rooms, formal walks and drives, gardens and cultural buildings including the theatre and libraries. The main Regency areas which intersect with the study area: Pitville and Montpellier were laid out north and south of the old town, on the gentle slopes of the Chelt. The street layout of the 1820s is shown on the accompanying Drawing 7: Historic Environment. These developments underpin the present layout and street plan of the town.

Promenading, shopping and leisure activities were the main pastimes of the fashionable set. Visitors to the town would take the waters at the spas and then promenade through tree-lined walks, rides and gardens, often with a band of musicians in attendance. (Note that these were semi-public in that promenaders were required to pay for the privilege.) Regular public breakfasts, gala fetes, firework displays and other entertainments were held at the larger spas. Visitors would also attend balls, assemblies and concerts at the Assembly Rooms, plays at the Theatre Royal and horse races at the racecourse. They would shop along the High Street and in the fashionable new shopping areas of Montpellier and the Promenade.

The promenade routes linked spas, gardens and pump rooms, and were formally laid out and planted, providing shade for walking. The first walk was Well Walk (now the site of Cheltenham Ladies College), laid out in 1739 with formal paths and a tree lined avenue. The Montpellier Drives were laid out in 1809. The construction of the Imperial Spa (now the site of the Queens Hotel) coincided with the laying out of the Promenade and an garden which became Imperial Square in 1818. The Pitville Pump Rooms followed in 1830.

During the period of significant expansion of Cheltenham, between 1800 and 1830, the general taste in architecture and building conformed to a recognised Regency style. Construction tended to be of brick, rendered and painted. This had the added advantage of cheaper and quicker to construct than stone. Residential development was dominated by large villas set in gardens, crescents and terraces. The first crescent, Royal Crescent was laid out in 1810. Residential gardens associated with the terraces tended to be small, compensated by the provision of generous, parks and gardens, tree-lined avenues and drives.







One of the earliest prints of Cheltenham showing view of the original Cheltenham Spa from the Serpentine Walk, looking North, with St. Mary's Church in distance, 1786

The growth of the evangelical movement in the late 19th century coincided with the decline of the spa as a resort for the leisured classes. The growth in religion was accompanied by ecumenical construction, and a number of landmark churches were built in the town. This era also saw a change in the prevailing attitudes. The decadence of the spa resort countered by the more austere evangelical attitudes. Cheltenham gained a new reputation for the quality of preaching in its many churches and chapels and for its schools and colleges. Into the 20th century, Cheltenham's reputation grew as an educational centre, based on its 3 public schools, its private schools and academies.

The legacy of Cheltenham's medieval origins, Regency prosperity and ecumenical and educational reputation has endured and is evident in the town's layout, buildings, gardens and public spaces. Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area is one of the largest in England. Cheltenham also boasts over 2,200 listed buildings, many of which are associated with the town's Regency heritage. Policies in respect of Conservation Areas and Listed buildings are clearly set out in the Borough's Planning Policies.

The demolition of notable buildings on the High Street (Assembly Room, Gatehouse to the Brewery, Grammar School and hotel) has resulted in the loss of much of Cheltenham's heritage. However, this also opens up a number of opportunities for innovative intervention in the public realm, particularly as this area is less controlled by heritage listings than other parts of the town.



A key aspiration for the study is to mark the events, and reinforce the history which shaped the town through reinforcing key nodes, public spaces and routes through public realm and urban design strategies of the next stages. Part of this includes:

- Reviving key aspects of Cheltenham's history which remain pertinent to the current day: in particular, the "re-invention" of the promenade tradition, building on and reinterpreting and capturing its central tenets in the urban design strategy, including clear walking routes, linking public places and gardens with tree lined avenues which provide shelter and add to the sense of place.
- Celebrating the River Chelt, which is intimately connected to the town's history and development, through emphasising crossing points, and enhancing the river frontages through the town.
- Enhancing and reinforcing the rhythm of green spaces in the town and connections between them
- Celebrating land mark buildings, including ecclesiastical buildings, crescents and prominent heritage buildings, and preserving the many examples of Regency architecture which exist in the town through ensuring they are actively used and well maintained.
- Reinforcing the historic character of particular parts of the study area.
- Building on the "alfresco" traditions of Cheltenham's history as a summer resort



## 5.4.2 Cultural Assets

As alluded to in the previous section, Cheltenham has a vibrant cultural tradition, with cultural and leisure activity forming a central part of the historic evolution of the town, its character and reputation.

Cheltenham is well endowed with cultural facilities for a town of its size, including: museums, art galleries, 2 theatres, cinemas. Churches, places of worship and cultural centres add to the cultural vibrancy of the town. Culture is central to the town's community life and economy, with a different festival each month of the year: music, jazz, arts, literature, science. The town also supports excellent schools, colleges and the university. This strong educational tradition, dating back to the foundation of the grammar school by Richard Pate in 1578, adds to a very active cultural community and vibrant cultural scene. Cheltenham also benefits from a variety of public spaces and venues for cultural activity: outdoor and indoor. Cultural assets are shown on Drawing 6.

In a recent survey of residents undertaken as part of the Cultural Strategy development, 74% thought that the parks and gardens should be used for more events





Cheltenham is characterised by an active community which enhances the town's cultural profile with many clubs and societies and a high level of local support for festivals and events. At the same time, the town's reputation, historic origins, architectural qualities and geographic proximity to the Cotswolds, provide a draw card for visitors, making up for the town's lack of a single central attraction such as a river, cathedral or castle; which generally typify historic towns in England.

The Cultural Strategy recognises that Cheltenham has a cultural catchment of 500,000, which is significantly greater than the resident population. This provides a key opportunity for the development, enhancement and reinforcement of Cheltenham's cultural facilities and events.

While Cheltenham clearly has a good spread and variety of cultural institutions, facilities and buildings across the town centre, the co-location of the art gallery, museum and library at Crescent Place is provides a cultural "node" or focal point. However, the current arrangement and use of streets and spaces is such that this cultural cluster is hidden behind Royal Crescent, and cut off from the heart of the town centre by the ring road. As a result there is a sense that this vitally important cluster of cultural facilities is dislocated from other parts of the town centre.

The Latham Study Civic Pride in Central Cheltenham Pre-Consultation Working Document (2002) recognises that the juxtaposition of these cultural facilities and the Regency layout of Crescent Place presents a key opportunity for the creation of a cultural precinct, which relates to both the High Street and to Royal Crescent. Proposals for adjacent sites, and for the regeneration of St Mary's churchyard will contribute to the setting and profile of this cultural precinct and It is considered that this is a key project which should be pursued in the development of the urban design framework.

Leisure facilities, including restaurants, night clubs and licensed premises add to the vitality and culture of the town centre, particularly after hours when other town centre functions (such as retail and employment activity) close down. (Key locations for the night time economy are shown on Drawing 1). However, there are a number of key issues emerge from the Council's Cultural Strategy and from after hours visits to the study area which will need to be addressed as part of strategy development:

- Evening leisure and cultural destinations tend to be spread throughout the town centre and, with a few exceptions, are not clustered into clear "zones".
- This contributes to crime and fear of crime, with perceived safety issues in the town centre after dark.
- The dislocation between the leisure destinations and other facilities such as taxi ranks tends to provide further opportunity for anti-social behaviour and vandalism, further undermining perceptions of safety
- Evening leisure activities can affect the character and amenity of residential areas, and as such should be managed in the interests of safety and amenity.

The Cheltenham's Cultural Strategy "Never a Dull Moment" (2005) recognises gaps in cultural facility provision, particularly for younger people and it is important that the needs of this sector of the population are met. However, at the same time the thriving night time scene which appeals to young people should not exclude those who feel vulnerable, and who wish to enjoy other evening opportunities. Essentially this requires the organisation and management of night time activity into clear zones of activity, together with the application of specific policies and management principles. Benefits will include better regulation and policing of anti-social behaviour, improved safety and integration of taxi services with after hours activity.





## 5.4.3 Public Art

Cheltenham Borough Council has an established track record in managing the commissioning of public art works within the Borough. Since 1992, a public art panel has existed to oversee this aspect of cultural provision. In 2004, the Arts Development Officer, in association with the panel and Public Art South West, produced a strategy with the intention of placing “public art within the planning and development process; complimentary to good urban and building design; integral with new development schemes, as part of social investment in new and refurbished housing; improvements to public open spaces; and arts and health initiatives.”

The strategy is a compelling document which makes the case for public art. It draws reference from national, regional and the local contexts, defines public art activity in its broadest sense and redefines a role for the public art panel, in order to “clarify its operation, remit and membership.”

In particular, the strategy deals with the mechanisms of funding public art through percent for art schemes as part of section 106 agreements with developers. Cheltenham Borough Council has formalised its position on this through supplementary planning guidance, seeking 1% of the total building costs of a proposed development to be spent on integrating public art into that development. One of the objectives of the strategy was to extend this principle to the borough’s own building and landscape developments.



Above all else the document aims to focus public art activity within the strategic framework for development of the town as a whole. To this end an action plan spanning a three year period was drawn up, identifying the measures necessary to achieve this goal.

The stock of completed work on the ground represents a fairly broad range of approaches. (Note that the location of public art within the study area is shown on Drawing 6: Cultural Environment.) Thirteen works are illustrated in the strategy document, of which just under a half are civic historic pieces. Since publication other works have been commissioned around the town, notably works funded through the GCHQ redevelopment, both in the building (though hardly public) and in the local community (Hesters Way Park). The Brewery development also hosts a sculpture (though given the opportunities usually associated with this type of development, the result is underwhelming). A project currently underway sees a link up between the council and the IT department of the University of Gloucestershire to produce an interactive plan of public art works, giving details of location, content and authorship. This information will be accessed via the council website and through various departments.

What is more significant than location is, of course, the context and quality of the works. Very few of the existing examples can be regarded as the result of strategic initiatives, fulfilling the objectives set out in the strategy. This does not, of itself, mean the works are poor, rather it raises questions about the extent to which the strategy has begun to influence commissioning policy. Clearly some of these commissions were undertaken before the strategy was written, and developments in the town are not so numerous that opportunities for new work occur on a regular basis. However, it is fair to say that certain steps identified in the action plan have yet to be put in place.

Overall the relationship between the strategy and Latham’s UDF and Civic Pride reports of 2001/2002 remains relatively weak. Latham’s (2002) Civic Pride in Central Cheltenham report includes an assessment of routes and spaces in the town centre demonstrating how, primarily through radical traffic management, new public realm opportunities can be created. However, numerous references to public art opportunities as part of this vision are not referred to in the public art strategy, though the action plan and introduction does acknowledge the need for liaison with officers serving the Civic Pride steering group. The Urban Design Framework will need to address this in forthcoming phases.

At the same time, the specific recommendations of the strategy for reciprocal key officers’ membership to both the public art panel and Civic Pride steering group should be addressed, particularly in the light of planned future development on the key sites. Current changes to staff roles and responsibilities within the Art Gallery and Museum services, suggest this will be dealt with in the near future. The newly appointed Director will take on the public art portfolio, which elevates the activity to senior officer level. In addition the recent appointment of an officer for the virtual arts centre, charged with arts development in non traditional arts venues, may well generate new opportunities within the public realm.

(These positive steps offset to some degree the loss of funding for public art consultancy at County level, which was recently announced, and which will inevitably hamper public art development across Gloucestershire.)

The proposal to develop sites within the Borough’s ownership offers an excellent opportunity for the strong and creative integration of public art into the fabric of the town. The strategies outlined by Latham, and the action of identifying key sites outlined in the public art strategy need to be brought together.





The programme for new works should build upon the full range of practice that has taken place to date, including temporary installations and multi art form initiatives. It is essential that the public context is fully explored in all commissions including the community dimension, as part of the consultative processes for development as a whole.

For public art activity to really make a contribution to the town, it needs to be championed by all departments within the Borough, not just cultural services. Convincing developers to commission works is much easier when backed up by examples of Borough-led schemes which may include signage, landscape and highway works. Civic Pride embodies all these elements and offers the real chance for creative thinking and the processes of public art to help form the lively, safe, accessible, attractive and welcoming spaces which are a key priority set out in the public art strategy.

The first priority for the Urban Design Framework must be to more fully integrate public art activity into the local authority development framework. The corporate sharing and adoption of clearly defined objectives set out in Latham and subsequent reports can inform the agenda for new programmes of work. Issues of image, identity, branding and signage, referred to elsewhere in this baseline review contain specific references to the use of public art which requires further investigation.

Additional studies such as environmental colour assessment would support the policies on legibility and provide guidance for development, whilst also stimulating new opportunities for commissioning artwork. These issues will be returned to within the public realm framework, which will adopt a comprehensive approach to integrating all elements, both functional and cultural, into the built environment.



## 5.5 Green Space Review

### 5.5.1 Introduction and Purpose

The study area includes much of Regency Cheltenham, a characteristic feature of which is the sense of spaciousness, order and grace resulting from the juxtaposition of Regency buildings and their complementary formal parks, and gardens, as well as its broad tree-lined streets. Greenspaces are key public spaces within the Cheltenham townscape, providing a setting for the town's elegant Regency architecture, a venue for the numerous festivals and civic celebrations, generating a focal point for gathering, contributing to the health of the population by providing opportunities for exercise and flood risk mitigation. The 8,000 street trees of Cheltenham Spa are an integral ingredient and asset to the town which all contribute to the greenery, making a positive contribution to air quality.

The purpose of the Green Space Review is to consider the existing provision of green spaces both within and close to the boundaries of the study area and to assess their usage as key elements of the public realm. The provision, location, use, function and condition of the spaces is relevant as well as linkages and their role within the public realm. The assessment is necessary to ensure that use of these spaces is optimised and their character and contribution to the public realm is enhanced. This information will be an important element in progressing the various strategies under the Urban Design Framework.

### 5.5.2 Review of work already undertaken

The following documents were reviewed as part of the baseline assessment:

- Cheltenham Spa Urban Design Framework - Consultation Draft, Latham Architects, May 2001;
- Cheltenham Spa Civic Pride Initiative – Pre-Consultation Working Draft, Latham Architects September 2002;
- Cheltenham Green Space Audit – Draft Report, April 2006;
- HLF – Montpellier Gardens, Restoration Strategy, 2004
- St Mary's Churchyard – Position Statement, Wendy Jackson CBC / Mike Workman Church Manager. 2005

### i) Cheltenham Spa – Urban Design Framework

This report briefly mentions the main green spaces across the town and covers an area greater than the study area. It highlights key parks and gardens such as Pittville Park, Montpellier and Imperial Gardens.

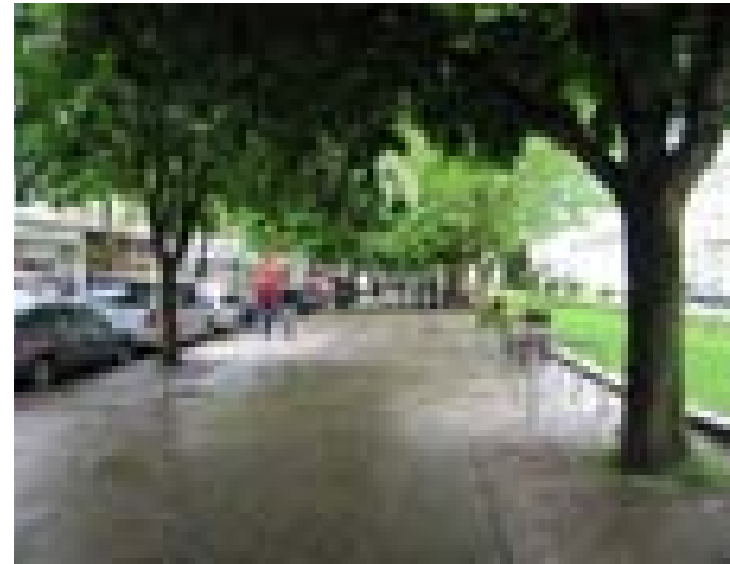
The report suggests that the existing avenues and promenades “can be identified, co-ordinated and extended into a network of ‘green’ streets, which together with ‘pocket parks’, could connect with existing parks and recreation areas to provide a green network that will extend the enjoyment of the pedestrian encouraging more journeys to be taken on foot”.

Suggested actions include:

- Identification of sectors of the town without convenient access to suitable green/recreation space and seek sites to rectify the situation;
- Environmental improvements, ‘greening’ streets in residential neighbourhoods to promote recreation and walking;
- Encourage the management of garden trees

Plan 14 from the study is useful as it plots many of the existing trees in the town centre. The plan shows a lack of tree cover within the areas north and south of the High Street compared to the older Regency areas to the south of the town. This illustrates the need to provide new trees, and connect existing avenues to parks and other green spaces.





## ii) Cheltenham Spa Civic Pride Initiative

This report does not specifically refer to existing green spaces nor propose any new green spaces. However, within the Routes and Spaces section, descriptions do include elements such as mature trees which are recognised as contributing to the quality of the space. Within the concepts and the outline proposals, urban tree planting is shown to help enclose spaces, form avenues and soften built form.

## iii) Cheltenham Green Space Audit

The Green Space Audit is currently being carried out by CBC and at the time of writing (July 2006) is still in draft. The draft document has been assessed as part of the baseline review but it is not intended to repeat the information contained in the audit at this stage, although the draft findings are referred to where appropriate.

The Green Space Audit has defined “green space” as:

- Amenity Green Space
- Natural & Semi-Natural Green Space
- Parks & Gardens
- Provision for Children & Young People
- Cemeteries & Churchyards
- Civic Space
- Green Corridor
- Outdoor Sports Facilities

For ease of reference in the future these definitions are used as the basis for the Green Space Review. The draft report arising from the review is intended for use CBC as a basis for consultation and the development of a wider strategic approach to the provision of green spaces in Cheltenham. It analyses the quantity and quality of green spaces in the town



and includes the findings of a consultation carried out in 2005, Household Survey for Parks and Green Spaces. The report compares Cheltenham’s 3.2 hectares of unrestricted green space per 1000 population with a sample of other local authorities and states that ‘it can be seen that Cheltenham has a fairly low average compared to most other local authorities’. However, the breakdown of green space (ha) per 1000 population at ward level indicates a disparity in the levels of provision across the borough. In the figure below, the darker the green indicates high levels of provision and the darker the red poor levels of green

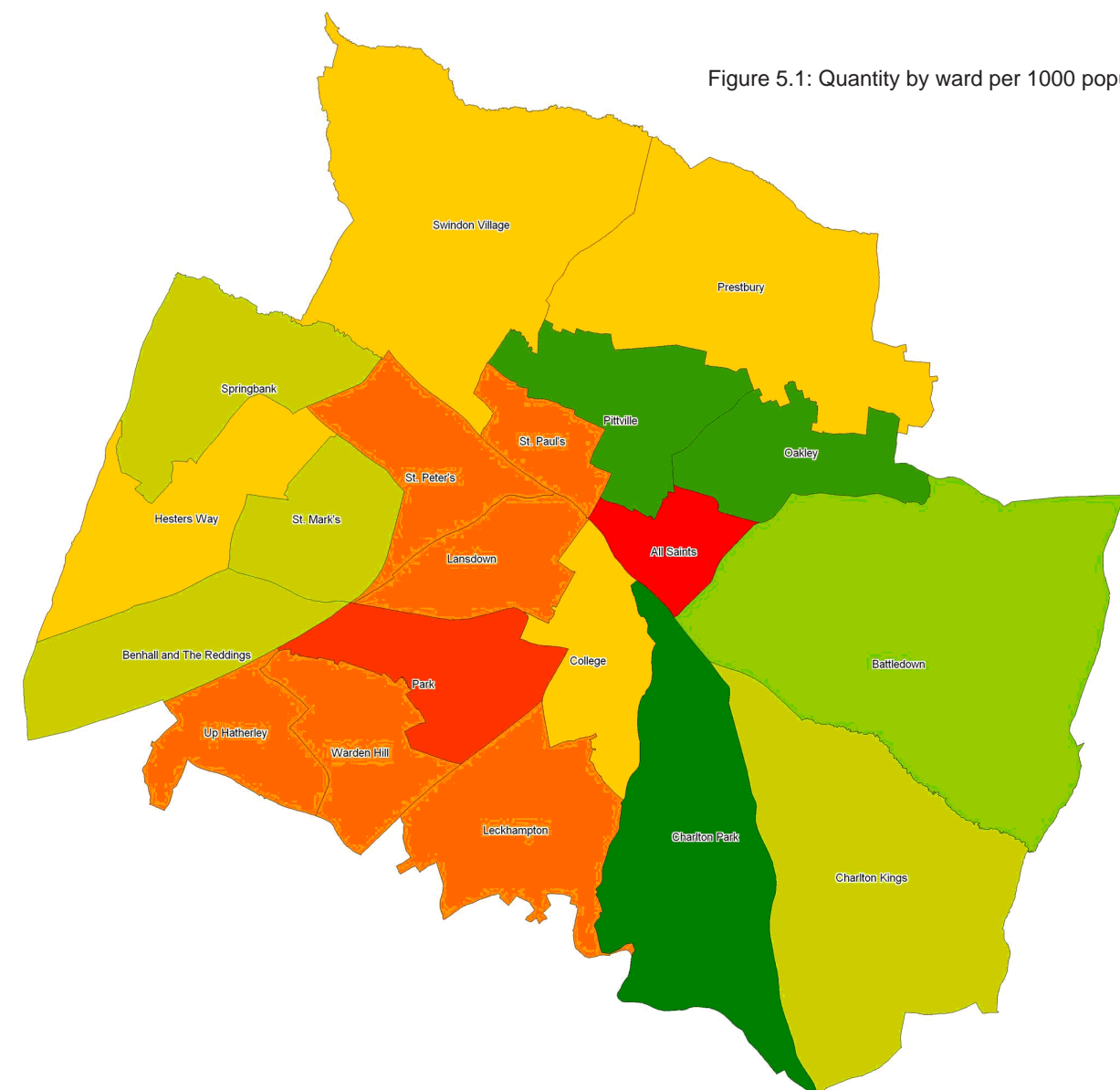
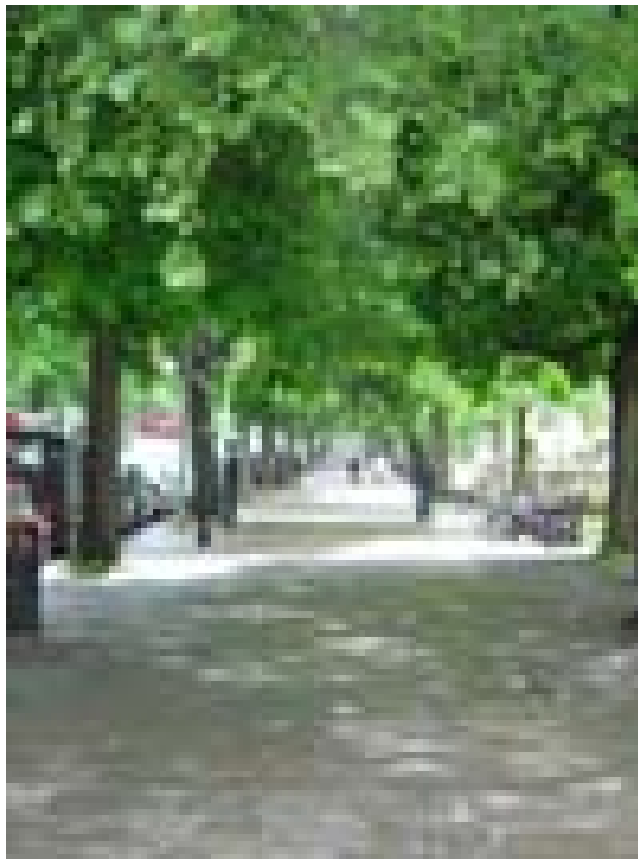


Figure 5.1: Quantity by ward per 1000 population





The assessment indicates a relative dearth of greenspace in part of the central area of Cheltenham, and levels of provision in surrounding wards abutting the study area including St Pauls are also comparatively poor. (This is supported by Drawing 8: Green Environment, which shows a dearth of green across a large swathe of the Study Area.) The data is useful but needs to go further to establish the type of green space required in each ward. This can only be accurately informed if further specific demographic analysis of existing green space is carried out..

The household survey was distributed to a random sample of 5,000 houses of which 921 were completed and returned. Key finding which should inform future green space provision include: 'too little outdoor facilities for teenagers / young people'.

The report does not provide quality scores for of the individual criteria associated with specific identified spaces, only the overall score. Thus, where a particular space scores low on a certain aspect it may not be picked up and rectified if other higher scoring aspects balance the overall score out. Nevertheless, the report is useful and comprehensive and will deliver a strategic set of findings.

#### iv) HLF – Montpellier Gardens, Restoration Strategy Stage 2 Submission

This report recognises the importance of Montpellier Gardens in Cheltenham and states that it should be 'conserved and enhanced for the enjoyment of local people and visitors.' The restoration strategy aims to retain the historic structure of the gardens and seeks to restore elements such as railings, seats, light columns, surface materials and gateways to the original style at the beginning of the twentieth Century.

It is likely to be useful to inform future conservation and enhancement of Cheltenham's other Regency parks and gardens by using similar materials and design details.

#### 5.5.3 On Site Assessment - Overall Provision

Cheltenham's green spaces were visited by the Halcrow team on several occasions during the assessment process. In addition the assessment draws upon knowledge of team members who live in Cheltenham. The study area was visited mostly during warm, sunny weather as in our experience these are the times when the green spaces are most well used and assists in understanding the value of the spaces and the contribution they make to informal recreation.

General assessments as to the level of use of the areas, the type of user groups and their general condition were made. The links between the green spaces were assessed and the Review was also considered alongside the reviews of Character Areas, Street Scene, Public Art, Signage and use of public space

Green spaces are a key element of the public realm in Cheltenham. Drawing 8 shows that there is a regular sequence of green spaces in a north-south direction, between Pitville Park to the north, via Pitville Lawns and the Squares, St Mary's churchyard, the Promenade and Imperial and Montpellier Gardens, and Suffolk Square. Tree groups and avenues reinforce this linear sequence of provision, which to some extent mirrors the historic promenade routes. However, there is a notable gap in provision to the north of the High Street.

The east-west sequence of provision follows the line of the River Chelt, with the Sandford Park forming a key part of provision. As the Chelt passes in culverts through the town centre, these opportunities for the celebration of water and greenspace are lost. To the west, where the Chelt resurfaces, the green corridor which runs alongside the river provides a strong east-west green element which could be further reinforced.



Findings indicate that green spaces are generally well-used, liked and valued. There is also efficient surveillance which minimises anti-social behaviour. There is little vandalism but a perennial litter problem.

The preliminary findings of CBC's Green Space Audit suggests a demand for additional green spaces apart from areas for youth / teenagers. Our assessment supports this. Inappropriate use of existing green spaces by youths and teenagers for cycling and skateboarding, for example, is in part attributable to the lack of alternative facilities.

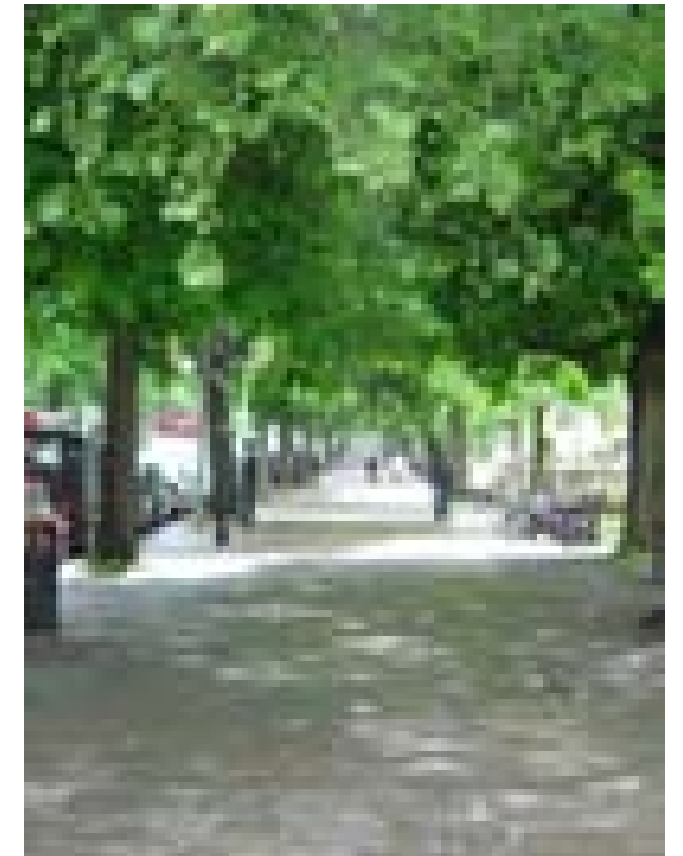


## Constraints

High maintenance and management costs  
Vandalism (although incidence is low)  
Physical access (kerbs etc.)

## Opportunities

Physical links between green spaces (e.g. through green corridors, boulevards and green streets)  
Good signage and interpretation, highlighting education and historical references;  
Public art  
Colour coordination  
Enhancement of surfaces, materials, structures, street furniture, planting, boundaries, interpretation and signage within the spaces  
Maximising use - catering for a wide range of activities and ages  
Building on the inherent character of the spaces in terms of use e.g. large, open public areas and intimate, quiet spaces





## 5.5.4 Green space usage

This section examines the usage of key green spaces which make an essential contribution to the public realm within the study area. Existing constraints and opportunities in relation to the contribution of these spaces to the public realm are set out in brief.

### i) Imperial Gardens

Currently a formally laid out park sited within a regal Regency square, this open space is used most intensively during the summer months when the beer garden facility is open. The garden itself has a rich history related to Cheltenham's emergence as a spa town, and formerly housed the winter gardens. Cheltenham Town hall is situated on the periphery of this garden. The garden is well used for recreation and leisure: sitting socialising passing through, exhibitions and for events.

#### Constraints

Formal layout floral beds require extensive maintenance  
History of garden not reflected in its design – steps of Victorian glass house not well utilised.  
Poor quality landscape features.

#### Opportunities

One of the best well used green open spaces in Cheltenham.  
Improved landscape design to withstand the high usage, and reflect history of the garden and tie in to the Promenade.  
More contemporary design that sits well within its context.



### ii) Montpellier Gardens

Used most intensively during the summer months, this park offers more facilities than Imperial Garden, with the tennis courts, public toilets and bandstand, there are often funfairs held on this park during the summer months. The Gardens provide a key access route between the Suffolks and the town centre. However, the formal paths and layout do not correspond to pedestrian desire lines as is evident from wear to the grassed areas.

#### Constraints

Park has started to become worn out and it is in need of restoration  
Grass areas are quite worn, tarmac paving is old, cracked and unsightly  
Tennis courts are quite rundown.

#### Opportunities

Restoration will enhance the landmark/ gateway role of the park, into Cheltenham from the Montpellier area  
Restoration will enable the park to reflect and enhance the high quality character of the surrounding area  
Creation of more direct routes across the park, corresponding to pedestrian desire lines, would reduce wear on grassed area

### iii) Promenade and Municipal War memorial

The Promenade provides a scenic route through one of the most prestigious shopping areas in Cheltenham. The route and seating under the large Sycamore and London Plane trees of the Promenade are extremely well used as a though routes, as a place to pause, and as a venue for the farmers' market.

Adjacent to the historic tree lined promenade is a formal civic garden surrounding the war memorial and fronting the council offices. During lunch hours, the grassed area is used for sitting and picnicking. However, the use of this area as a pedestrian cross-route is resulting in significant wear to the grass. The civic garden is punctuated at the southern end by Neptune's Fountain, marking the route of the subterranean Chelt.

#### Constraints

Formal floral beds require significant maintenance.  
Design and layout of beds and planting is somewhat dated.  
Furniture and paving is of the generic "heritage" type and does little to contribute to the unique character of Cheltenham.

#### Opportunities

Paving, furniture and planting should better define the function, usage and significance of the space.  
The space should remain as a grand promenade.  
Use of the area for sitting, gathering, performance and market activity to be considered in future public realm proposals



## iv) St Mary's Churchyard

The churchyard of the oldest church in Cheltenham this is a hidden sanctuary behind the hustle and bustle of the town centre. The churchyard provides a short cut pedestrian route for those who know the town well. The presence and significance of the church and the surrounding greenspace is not obvious to visitors.

The lawns, mature trees and an historic old graveyard provide an ideal location for sitting and informal gathering. The space is well used by people passing through or taking lunch breaks. However it also has a reputation for attracting undesirables (vagrants, drug users and others) and antisocial behaviour in evenings and at night time. The churchyard is a focus for proposed improvements, including lighting, furniture, landscaping, paving and improved security.

### Constraints

Setting for the oldest building in Cheltenham is dislocated from public space network  
hidden from main public  
Anti-social behaviour is a deterrent to users  
Landscape, furniture and paving in need of attention

### Opportunities

Clearer gateways and routes through the churchyard  
Restoration of the churchyard, improved landscaping and paving, and updating of street furniture  
Lighting and CCTV to deter anti-social behaviour



## 5.5.5 Recommendations and Implications for future phases

Previous and ongoing work indicates that Cheltenham would benefit from more green spaces, particularly in the north eastern part of the Study Area. This should be a consideration of future development proposals, which should aim at enhancing existing green areas, and where possible, creating new green areas, however small, as part of development proposals. In particular, the provision of appropriate areas for younger people should be a consideration.

Within the wider study area, emphasis should be placed on enhancing existing green spaces, and on reinforcing these by establishing new green links between them. This should be a key consideration of the Urban Design, Transport and Public Realm strategy development.

Any proposals in terms of new road layouts and the re-organisation of road traffic should include an assessment of opportunities for the development of green links and corridors.

The Green Space Audit covers many of the relevant aspects of the Green Space Review but because it is not yet complete, we suggest that the findings are considered and incorporated into the baseline assessment when the Audit is published. We understand that there will be an appendix that contains the detailed survey information for each park which will be most useful in informing the review and recommendations and will allow us to take the Audit further in terms of details for each green space within or near to the study area.

Ideally, a tree survey should be carried out (to BS 5837:2005 – Trees in Relation to Construction – Recommendations) within specific sites relevant to the study area. This information will be key to future development proposals by reporting the condition and life expectancy of individual trees and thus indicating whether they could or should be retained as part of the proposals. It will also help to ascertain whether important existing tree avenues should be retained and / or renewed.

The Civic Pride project places great emphasis on sustainability. The tree survey described above would contribute to a long term (50+ year) tree work and planting strategy to ensure the future survival and replacement when needed of Cheltenham's important specimen trees, avenues, parks and gardens. A maintenance and management regime for both new and existing planting should be set up if it does not already exist.





## 5.6 Public Space Usage and Quality

### 5.6.1 Introduction

Green space is an intrinsic aspect of the public realm in Cheltenham, and thus the public space usage should be considered in conjunction with the preceding section on greenspace. This section considers implications of previous studies, as well as the result of an on-site assessment undertaken in June 2006, which both broadens and brings up to date previous assessments

### 5.6.2 Review of previous studies

The purpose of the Review of Public Space Usage is to consider how public spaces are used throughout the study area and what can be drawn from the assessment to usefully inform future stages of the project. The review considers work already undertaken, notably :

- Cheltenham Spa: Urban Design Framework, Latham 2001
- Civic Pride in Cheltenham, Latham 2002
- Our future, our choice – CBC
- Cheltenham Green Space Audit – Draft Report, April 2006

Latham's Cheltenham Spa Urban Design Framework includes suggestions as to how public space should be provided, with relevance to developments and the treatment of existing streets. Latham suggests that

'A wide variety of street activity should be encouraged, including buskers and other street performers, special markets and fairs, a "Speakers' Corner", a "graffiti/news wall", parades and processions. A specific performance space with informal amphitheatre could be located along the main pedestrian spine with facilities for outdoor theatre/bandstand to be used by local groups, schools etc as well as professional troupes.'



The identification and creation of spaces for people to perform, to sit, meet and watch is recommended, as well as the provision of a new landmark in looking to the future. Latham suggest that Cheltenham requires an iconographic modern public building to pass onto the next generation as a representation of the current decade, and that suitable sites for landmark buildings should be identified. This is a key task to be pursued in the future phases of the study.

Latham's 2002 report, Civic Pride in Cheltenham, emphasises the need good cycle and pedestrian linkages to the town centre. It proposes the provision of new public spaces "with their own distinct sense of place, where there is a need and opportunity for a resting point or natural break ..."

### 5.6.3 Survey of key public spaces

In addition to the survey of green spaces, a survey of key nodes was undertaken. These key nodes were selected on the basis of their location on the intersection of strategic access routes, which correspond to areas with a high concentration of pedestrian movement / crossing of flows; areas of known conflicts in terms of movement; popularity / well-frequented spaces that represent key focal points. They included:

The key areas include:

- Boots Corner
- East end of High St
- West end of High St
- South end of Promenade (Nr Habitat and water fountain)
- Pittville Street/Albion St junction
- Portland St/St Margaret's Road
- Royal Well

The information was collated and analysed by the team and is presented in the following section, and illustrated on Drawing 5: The Quality of Street Scene. This assessment will inform the Urban Design Framework and Strategy (Phases 2 – 4).

### 5.5.5 Results of analysis and implications for future intervention

Building on the Latham "Nodes and Connectors" concept, and taking into account levels of pedestrian activity and the quality of the streets scene under the baseline situation, the analysis suggests that following nodes are key public spaces.







## Boots Corner:

Arguably the centre of Cheltenham, where the key north-south and east-west axes intersect, this node is bisected by the ring road. This key public space is characterised by conflict between large pedestrian flows and high numbers of vehicles. One of the busiest nodes in Cheltenham, the space is disadvantaged by highway clutter, poor signage and pedestrian barriers and lacks lack of a focal point or high quality features. Confusion is created as pedestrians move through shared surfaces, footways and roads and pedestrianised areas. The analysis concurs with the views highlighted in the Cheltenham Civic Pride Report. The key to successfully enhancing this space is the rationalisation of the vehicular routes. Not only does the space itself require major enhancement, but connectivity to otherwise separate streets of the Promenade, the Lower High Street and Clarence Street is essential to overall town centre improvements



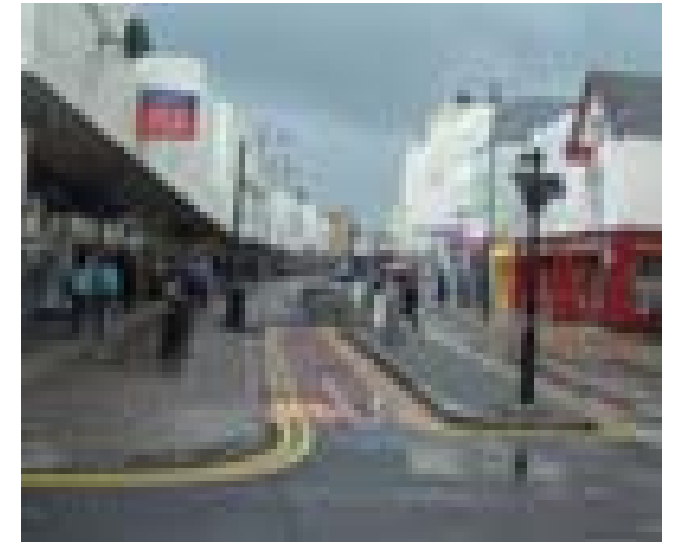
## Junction of Henrietta Street and High Street

The new Brewery leisure redevelopment is obscured behind a row of 1970's architecture between Tesco Metro and Lloyds pharmacy on the High Street. The development lacks a gateway onto the High Street, and as such, its location appears incidental to the High Street. Notwithstanding the qualities of the development itself, it is becoming a major attraction.

As further retail and leisure uses locate in within the development, Henrietta and Bennington Streets will be impacted, with increasing pedestrian footfall at the junctions of these streets and the High Street.

At present there is a zebra crossing across this junction, the road junction is narrow and the traffic is one way. While vehicles do not seem to have priority over the number of pedestrians moving up and down the High Street, pedestrians are confined to two narrow paths at this junction as the road takes up the majority of the street space. The materials and lack of street vegetation, cluttered street furniture and relatively poor architecture in this area generate poor visual quality.

There would be significant benefits to the redevelopment of the entire area to open up a gateway into the Brewery site by removing the existing shops and buildings between Tesco Metro and Lloyds Pharmacy. However the financial implication and realisation of doing so may well be unrealistic in the short term. An alternative to that would be to re assess the spatial arrangement of the streets to provide wider pedestrian walkways to allow for future increases in pedestrian numbers, using high quality hard and soft materials and the re-organisation of street furniture clutter would improve the current situation of this junction.



## High Street West End : Junction High Street, St George's St and Ambrose St

This mini roundabout junction forms a major pedestrian and traffic node within the town centre. It is the meeting of 3 roads and the point where the distinct character of the Lower High Street is transformed as the High Street widens out. Mature trees and the bowling green near the intersection with Ambrose Street lend a particular quality to this location, provide respite from the intense activity of the High Street.

The space itself has a different function at different times of the day on a Saturday afternoon the space mainly has people passing through it into and out of the town centre and into the residential periphery rather than being attracted to the facilities this area offers.

At night, the many pubs and clubs in this vicinity provide custom for the takeaway establishments in this location. The amenity of the surrounding residential area is impacted by noise generated by night time activity in this location. The street scene is of poor quality and CCTV cameras are an obvious intrusion. On summer afternoons, the bowling green is well used and is a focus for activity.

Despite provision for cyclists in this location, the space does not favour cycling. (We witnessed an accident involving a cyclist at the time of the site visit.) The area has some good street trees but could be improved with more vegetation and landscaping. There is a mix of architecture however some of the buildings individually are attractive but as a group they contrast and in some places conflict in a haphazard way. The street furniture and road barrier are quite cluttered, even though the style is coherent with street furniture throughout the town centre. The street has a very student feel as it borders a student area and has popular student facilities within it.

Reorganising street user priority with a view to pedestrian and cyclist comfort and safety over vehicle dominance would benefit the area. Improvements to the paving materials and road surface materials would contribute to this. Improved management of the night time economy would contribute to the quality and amenity of the surrounding environment. Improvements to street furniture and public facilities within this space would improve the use of the space. Improved landscaping and the development of a greener street scene could enhance the quality of the space.



## Junction of High Street and Winchcombe Street

The key issue in this location is the immediate transition from a wide pedestrianised area to a road crossing and two narrow footpaths, continuing up the High Street for approximately 50m before the continuation of the pedestrianised area.

The insertion of motorised traffic impedes the free flow of pedestrians on the High street, disrupting the continuity of public space. People are funnelled from an open car free zone onto narrow paths and traffic, causing confusion and change to the function of the space.

As pedestrians turn immediately right out of the Regent arcade onto the High street and into this junction they are faced with a clutter of street furniture (including fingerposts, and cycle racks), impacting the available circulation space, creating a pinch point, with high volumes of pedestrians. The junction is an awkward space in the busy High street. Landscaping along the majority of the High street is poor.

Reassessment of the need for vehicular access along this stretch is required. However at the same time it is recognised that access for taxis in the later hours as well as for police and public transport is a key consideration on the High Street, and adds to perceptions of safety at night. Further improvements would be to develop soft and hard landscaping materials and to consider the restructuring of street space and dominance of the vehicle over the pedestrian. The design of the street scene should bring the continuity of the wide open pedestrianised areas of the High street through this junction to link in with the existing pedestrianised area further up the High street.



## High St East End: Junction of Bath Road and High Street –

This junction dominated by heavy and fast moving traffic on the two lane, one way ring road. Traffic interrupts pedestrian flow at this location, and has dominance over the public space, providing a cessation of the pedestrianised High Street, and a hostile environment for pedestrians along the eastern end of the High Street. Although retail uses continue on down towards London Road, the insertion of the ring road along this section of the High Street creates an obstacle to pedestrian movement and perceived end to High Street activity. This potentially impacts on footfall and the businesses themselves.

Poor crossing facilities, narrow footways and the impacts of heavy traffic inhibit pedestrian flow through this location. Further east along the High Street, elements such as the pedestrian barrier on the corner of St James street and High street impedes crossing and jeopardise the safety of pedestrians at this junction who elect to walk in the road rather than half way up St James street to cross the road safely.

The pedestrianised area of the High street leading up to this junction has developed a mainstream brand café culture, whose quality is diminished by the intrusion of this road junction, lack of tree cover and poor paving and street materials. Clutter and street furniture outside Bella Pasta which marks the entrance to the pedestrianised section of the High Street includes cycle racks a telephone box, fingerposts and lamppost. The absence of good quality street trees and landscaping further undermines the quality of the public space.

The re-organisation of traffic on the Ring Road, addressing the division of the street space, and the prioritisation of pedestrians will positively impact the quality of public space provision at this location. By responding to pedestrian desire lines and improving the pedestrian environment will have benefits for retail units further along the High Street as well as for Sandford Park, and other facilities beyond this junction.

The 'Al Fresco' quality seen outside Taylors on Cambray Place, provides an example of high quality café culture just off the High street. Bentleys has made a great effort to bring its own individuality to the building façade by planting up window boxes above street level. Removing the street furniture clutter, improving street greenery and providing incentives for businesses to invest in contributions to the street scene e.g. higher quality street furniture, awnings, and plant pots, would contribute to a more visually stimulating environment.

## Promenade South Side: Junction with Imperial Lane & St George's Road

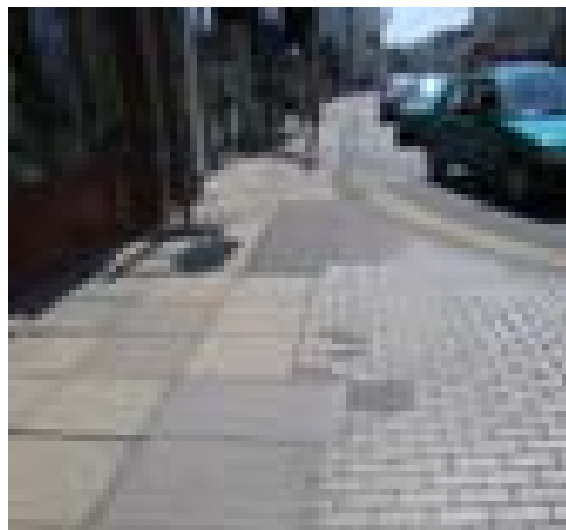
The Promenade is framed by elegant Regency buildings and has wide streets with ample pedestrian footways on both sides of the two lane road which runs through the middle of it, Mature street trees providing shade and interest. The high quality street scene is echoed by the expensive retail brands found along the promenade.

High volumes of traffic, poor crossing facilities and long waiting times impede pedestrian flows and undermine the public realm experience where 3 main roads meet at the end of this section of the Promenade. Restrictions on pedestrian flow at the Neptune's fountain corner as a result of the fountain and the barrier create a very narrow path for pedestrians to get down and cross the junction.

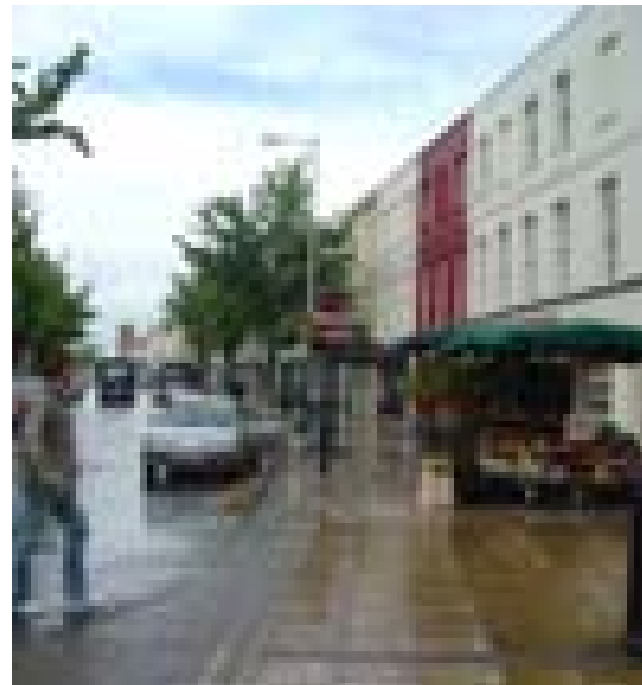
Changing the ring road and vehicular flows within the town centre and bus, taxi and cycle priority would improve the traffic flows and would significantly reduce congestion at this junction. This would have benefits in terms of pedestrian safety, and the quality of the public realm. Reassessing the structure, form and function of this junction with a view to introducing pedestrian priority, increasing drivers' awareness of pedestrians and safety.

Removing of barriers and unnecessary street clutter as well as addressing surface material will improve the comfort of this junction for public crossing.

Cracked paving where the roots of the mature London Plane trees have lifted the surface is a trip hazard on the south west side of the Promenade. Improving the quality of surfaces in particular would enhance the aesthetic quality of this area.







## St Margaret's Road and Portland Street

The pedestrian links north of the High Street are generally poor. In particular, St Margaret's Road is a barrier to pedestrian access north of the High Street. St Margaret's Road is a heavily trafficked dual carriageway, and important link in the outer ring road, with intermittent pedestrian crossings at awkward intersections.

The recent development of the Brewery site has been accompanied by the provision of wider pavements, and the road has been narrowed to a single carriage way at this location, with a pedestrian crossing and central island, linking to the multi-storey car park opposite. This treatment has been effective to raise driver awareness of pedestrian presence and safety and a development of a similar treatment at the Portland street St Margaret's road junction would benefit the area and all the new residential and future entertainment/retail and commerce developments that are happening in this area.

The streetscape of the routes radiating north from the High Street will also require re-assessment too enable the free flow of pedestrians and cyclists between any future development at this site and the town centre. Currently Pittville Street has narrow footways and is dominated by heavy traffic. Crossing is tricky, especially at the junction of Albion street. The character of this space is intimidating to the pedestrian. Significant improvements and enhancements to this main link from the High street to Portland street will need to be carried out to ensure the success of new development on this site.

Elements such as the reorganising the spatial division of the street, unifying surface material and developing a user friendly space, while accommodating vehicles and public transport will be a key challenge. The area route has little or no street greenery and future enhancements should include the provision of variety and visual stimulation and an overall development of a green street environment of high quality.



## 5.6.6 Focus for intervention in future phases

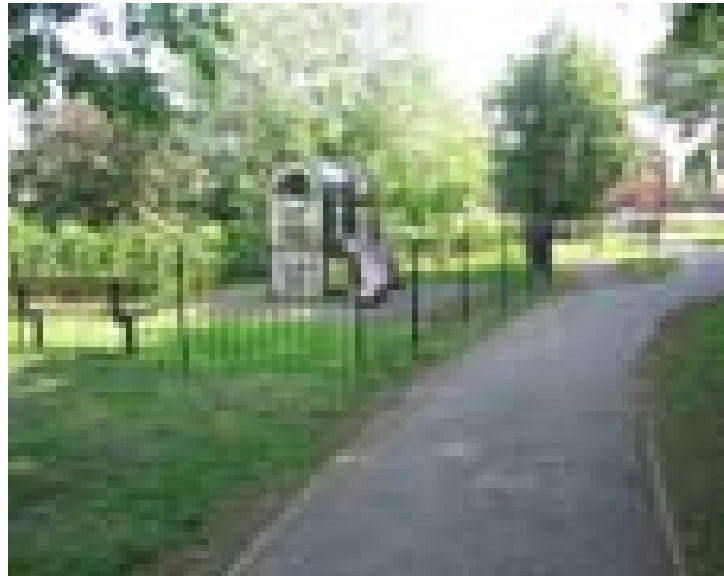
The underlying principles for the urban design, transport and public realm strategies in the forthcoming phases will be the establishment of a series of nodes and connectors across the study area, with a clear rhythm of public space provision.

Green spaces throughout the town also fulfil a critical role in terms of public space provision. Under the baseline, nodes which could play a key role in public space provision, and where intervention is required are set out in the previous section. Priorities for intervention, based on the baseline assessment include: Boot's Corner, High Street/ Henrietta St, High Street (West End); High Street/ Winchcombe St; High St East End; Promenade South Side; and St Margaret's Road/ Portland Street.

Furthermore, the potential redevelopment of strategically located, publicly owned sites will open up opportunities for further public realm enhancements and public space provision, addressing desire lines and improving the use, quality and provision of public space. Redevelopment of these sites will enable the sequence of public space provision to stretch north of the High Street, and west of the Promenade.

Based upon Latham recommendations, it is also considered that the development and consolidation of a cultural precinct requires significant public realm improvements at Crescent Place. Building on recommendations of the Approach studies, it is considered that further public realm improvements should be considered in terms of:

- Enhancement of the London Road and Bath Road entrances to Sandford Park
- Architectural statement at the Gateway to the town centre at Gordon Lamp



## 5.7 Signage and way finding

### 5.7.1 Types of Signage

There are three levels of signage information available on the street:

- Finger posts.
- Printed plans displayed in sign board cabinets.
- Printed plans available for purchase from car park dispensers.

These are discussed in turn below.

#### Finger Posts

Finger posts in the town centre are made from steel columns with bracketed arms indicating the general directions to various destinations. Some posts have relatively few signs, others have many- up to 15 in the popular High Street/Promenade areas. The typeface of the signage appears to be standard Times Roman, lettering is picked out in tarnished gold on a black background. The top of all posts carries a cast pigeon recalling the discovery of Cheltenham's springs.

The distribution of finger posts within the study area is widespread with a concentration in the most popular pedestrian areas- junction of the Promenade with the High Street, and with roads running north and south of the High Street.

#### Destinations identified on finger posts include

Sandford Park and Lido  
Holst Birthplace Museum  
Tourist Information Centre  
Beechwood shop mobility  
Axion Arts Centre  
Regent Arcade and Wishing Clock  
Everyman Theatre  
Playhouse Theatre  
General Hospital  
Town Hall  
Cheltenham Racecourse  
Pittville Pump Rooms  
Park and Ride bus stop  
Royal Well bus station  
The Suffolks  
Art Gallery and Museum  
Library  
Winston Churchill Gardens  
Neighbourhood Resource Centre  
Saint Georges Street  
Saint Georges Church  
Saint Marys Church  
Thursday market  
Bath Road shopping  
Railway Station  
High Street  
Municipal Offices  
Montpellier

#### Printed Plans in display cabinets.

Less numerous than the posts, these printed plans are located in prime pedestrian areas: Imperial Gardens, High street, Rodney Road, Promenade, Cambray Place etc.

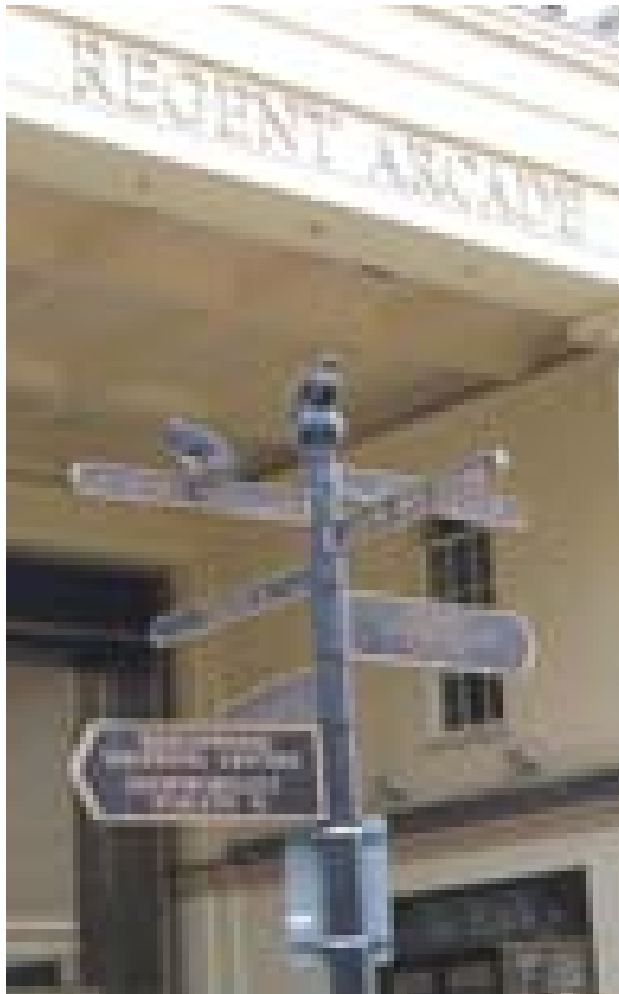
The cabinets are post mounted and contain block plans of the town centre with surrounding information about shopping, sport and recreation, theatres and entertainment, art galleries and museums. Other information consists of local telephone numbers, local radio frequencies and shop mobility services. The heading on the printed plan is Cheltenham Spa - Centre for the Cotswolds (though neither plan indicates where the Cotswolds are). Occasionally these cabinets are backed by another bearing information about events in the town.

The cabinets are in portrait layout and mounted at a fairly high position on the posts which could present some difficulty for wheel chair users. The livery on the posts is black and tarnished gold.

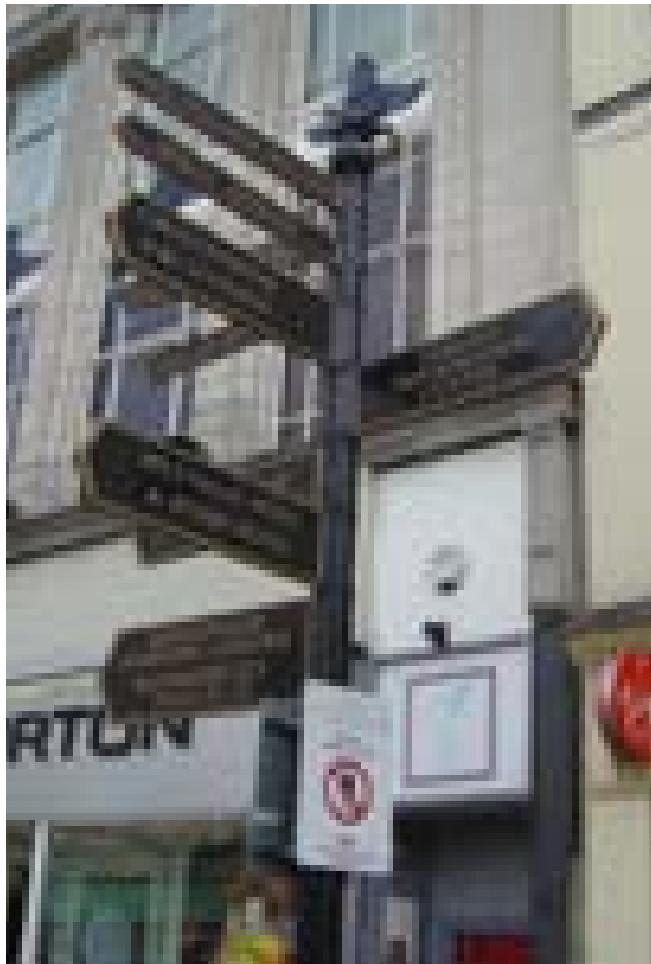
#### Printed plans for purchase from dispensers

These are located adjacent to car parks at Saint Georges Road, North Place, Portland Street and Lower High Street. A £1 coin placed in the Cityscape dispenser will deliver a folded town centre map and guide including a limited street index. The plan is presented as an axonometric projection, finished in water colour with main attractions and specific retail outlets named on the plan.

Most of the trees, e.g. on the Promenade are omitted for clarity of buildings. However, the result does not look resemble Cheltenham. A separate smaller plan of the Suffolks appears on the reverse, sponsored by the traders association. The remainder of the folded sheet is taken up by advertisements which tend to dominate the information. The dispensers are mounted on a variety of structures; North Place and Portland Street share three different types between them.







## 5.7.2 Assessment

The signage systems described offer necessary guidance to visitors, but has several problems:

- Although the distribution of finger posts in particular seems fairly comprehensive, overall legibility is poor and the systems are somewhat uncoordinated. At the same time, as the Civic Pride initiatives are implemented, creating new areas of public realm with new linkages to existing routes, there will be a requirement for additional signs.
- The effect of placing so much signage information on to single posts (15 directions on one sign) is so overwhelming that the effect is quite counter productive, the signs get in each other's way and the visitor has to make a journey around the post to locate the relevant information.
- The signage lacks any awareness of issues associated with disability in terms of mounting heights, contrast of colours and tactile surfaces.
- The nature of the bracket fixing is open to abuse with some signs turned to the wrong direction.
- Fingerposts are inherently inflexible, and are not readily updateable as destinations becomes redundant (as in Axiom, for example).
- The current signage, especially the finger posts, lacks legibility and presence on the street. The pastiche regency style lacks grace and authenticity and undermines the very qualities it seeks to emulate. The ubiquitous letter face and the contrast between the "gold" paint (inevitably tarnished under U.V. to a yellow/brown against the black), is not as strong as it should be. The application of this corporate scheme to both sign boards and finger posts compounds the problem and raises issues as to what image the town is communicating to the outside world
- Many of the current destinations are of debatable relevance to visitors: It may be of use for residents to know the location of the Municipal Offices, the General Hospital, the neighbourhood resource centre and the local churches, the chances are that this information already resides within the community. Yet as a visitor, knowing the direction to the "Suffolks", makes little sense, without an explanation as to what the "Suffolks" are.

If it is not possible to prioritise the quantity of destinations, then the options are to increase the number of posts, but reduce the number of signs per post, or alternatively reduce the dependency on finger post signage by operating a more accessible guide map system with dispensers clearly identified throughout the town.

Whilst the existing guides go some way to meeting this requirement, their location at some, but not all car parks, in sited some distance from the pay stations, mean they can easily be missed. If they are to offer benefit to the maximum number of visitors, they should be located consistently at all car parks including the park and ride, and at the railway and bus station.

The problem with the block plans displayed inside cabinets is that unless they present a particularly strong visual image, users' retention of directional information can be difficult. Cheltenham has many landmark buildings, notably its church spires, which could be graphically emphasised to aid legibility, and set visitors off in the right direction. The other major problem with printed signage inside cabinets is, of course, the complete lack of any tactile qualities, and the difficulties this will create for some people.

Furthermore, for many visitors, locating the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) is an early priority in planning a day out in Cheltenham. Whilst it is true that the TIC is sign posted from the town centre, the consistently high number of complaints received in the comments file at the centre regarding the difficulty of finding it implies that the signage is not working sufficiently well.

Greater visibility of the information centre will enable a greater number of visitors to be served with both verbal and visual information, including guidebooks and maps. This again decreases the pressure on the finger posts to solve every aspect of town signing.

## 5.7.3 Principles to be applied in signage development

Cheltenham has an enviable reputation as a locus for style and contemporary design, expressed through its elegant period buildings, its mature and gracious landscapes and its wide range of fashion and design shops. Cheltenham is also the home of a series of festivals, celebrating literature, music and jazz, where challenging work sits comfortably along side the more traditional. It is considered that same ethos should extend into the public realm with the development of an exemplary range of streetscape details.

A high quality environment from any period in history can always accommodate high quality design from a different era: this is how towns and cities develop their stock of material culture. Not to do so results in the stagnation and irrelevance of pastiche. Cheltenham, benefiting strongly from the quality of its environment, can move forward with confidence into the new century, encouraging the very best in contemporary architecture, urban planning and design.

The public realm and its constituent parts reveals much of how a place views itself; signs, along with public spaces, not only lead people, but also express corporate confidence, and project an image and identity which reflects the current values of its citizens. Applying these principles to the existing stock of signage opens the possibilities for a thorough overhaul of existing signage in the town centre. Clearly there is also the need to take on board the best practice recommendations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

Cheltenham's residents, businesses and visitors will all benefit from clear, elegant, well sited signage, which instructs, directs and presents itself without ambiguity. This process can begin with the very typefaces used on signs.



## The Cheltenham script

“Cheltenham” is the name of a particular font - a classic serif style of the old school, which could be developed as a sans style more fitting for the new century. A complete alphabet would be required such that the letter face could be used for printed material suitable for all western European characters. All signage material, permanent and printed would be presented through this script, creating a strong identity, unique to the town.

This would endow the town with a unique legacy, building upon the collection of typographical works of artists such as William Morris and Joseph Cribbs at the Art Gallery and Museum. The town of Cheltenham would become synonymous with fine public lettering, adding another layer to its national profile.

The review and replacement of sign structures should be focussed on strong, simple, elegant signage, durable and easy to maintain, which will perfectly complement the streetscape of the town centre. A co-ordinated suite of signage, encompassing fingerposts, signboards, dispensers, name panels and graphics, and ultimately the refinements of plasma screens and interactive public information displays, will greatly add to the experience of the pedestrian in the town.

Once a system of signage has been adopted, variations in detail can be introduced to add even greater legibility. As individual town quarters are developed, each with a distinct identity, so variations in background colour can reinforce the quarters concept. Potential development at North Place, for example, would add a sizeable new tranche of urban form to the town. To a degree, this differentiation within the town is already happening in the area of Jessops Avenue and the Waitrose store. Variations need to be introduced in a very disciplined way to maintain the integrity of the system.

The identity of parts of the town should be emphasised by the introduction of ‘gateway’ works of public art: in these cases the artwork effectively becomes the sign for an area. This issue also applies perhaps even more strongly to the entrances to the town. Sites with good potential for gateway treatments exist on the five main approaches to the town at points where the threshold into Cheltenham is crossed. These opportunity sites have been identified in the approach studies.

## Marking gateways and entrances

Signage and public art at gateways are interlinked with town branding. The form and content of structures at these key sites add up to more than the sum of their parts.

Gateways present an opportunity to project an image and express an aspiration for how the town wishes to be seen. The current branding of Cheltenham as a centre for somewhere else seems a little apologetic in relation to the obvious intrinsic qualities of the town itself.

Gateway treatments also offer the opportunity to familiarise visitors with a particular form or idiom which relates in some way to structures which will be encountered in the town. This helps to build up mental pictures which add to the legibility of a place, for example, a suite of contemporary spires, located at key approaches into the town would alert visitors to the array of landmark spires to be found within the town. Similarly the topographical setting of the town beneath the Cotswold escarpment, linked to the River Chelt, becomes a tangible image capable of recall, providing the river is better “signed” in the town. Such an image also makes better sense of Cheltenham’s claim to be the centre for the Cotswolds.





Opportunities also exist to create new strategic routes across the town, using public art signage as way markers which not only direct but also interpret the town. The River Chelt way, for example, offers an interesting west/east route to counter the predominant north south route. This route in turn, which becomes less legible north of the high street, could be more creatively marked as the Spa Promenade between Montpellier and Pittville.

These special routes not only provide pleasant walks for the visitor, but also unlock some of the town's history. Signage of these routes would be related to the general town signage, but would be identifiable as relating to a specific journey.

#### 5.7.4 Summary Conclusions

The signage provision within the study area is in need of redesign and renewal. The fingerposts need simplifying in terms of the amount of information they carry, ideally supported by more accessible town maps. As a minimum this information must be clearly sited at all car parks and entry points into the town centre as well as at key intersections throughout the town.

All elements of signage need redesigning to reflect a more contemporary and legible approach, which must also satisfy the requirements of DDA. Signage provision needs to be planned into the development opportunities outlined by Latham's study, promoting and reinforcing new public realm and the links between.

The design review of signage should be implemented as part of a review of the public realm as a whole, such that co-ordinated suites of street furniture including lighting, seating, signage, bins and bollards are designed as a piece.

New strategic signage opportunities need to be co-ordinated with the public art strategy, to ensure the effect use of resources.



## 5.8 Public Realm Management & Financial Implications

### 5.8.1 Budgets and Responsibility

Any viability of any proposed public realm intervention will need to be assessed in terms of both capital and maintenance costs. Public realm maintenance and management is a key responsibility of CBC. While highway maintenance currently falls within the remit of CBC, the transfer of Highways Agency responsibilities to the County will create a clear distinction between management responsibilities for highways versus other elements of the public realm. This is a key factor in considering any long term management and maintenance. A co-ordinated approach with clear implications for budgetary responsibility for public realm maintenance responsibilities between the County and the District will be key to the success of the UDF.

Any proposed streetscape and public realm will have implications for environmental maintenance budgets. CBC's combined environmental maintenance, environmental management and green environment budget for 2006/7 is extensive at £4.25 million. However, demands on this budget are high and maintenance spend is highly constrained. Considering capital costs of intervention only, without due regard for the long terms maintenance and replacement costs will serve to undermine the integrity of any proposed improvements over time. Ultimately this will erode the sustainability of the Civic Pride proposals. Essentially the UDF should be considered in terms of the opportunities that substantial re-organisation and capital investment in the public realm will present for reducing maintenance costs.

### 5.8.2 Implications for Public Realm Improvements

A key implication is for the study to consider whole life costs of any public realm proposals, with a focus on designing out maintenance liabilities such that longer term public investment commitments are kept as low as possible. This requires:

- Design and layout which is focussed on reducing ongoing maintenance costs (such as parking in paved areas and on grassed verges).
- The selection of materials that are durable and can easily be replaced.
- Targetted use of bespoke materials and street furniture at selected locations only.
- Recognition that in some locations (e.g. where access is required for servicing) low quality surfacing (e.g. tarmac) may be more appropriate than high quality paving.
- Special provision in "heavy wear" areas, (e.g. surrounding taxi ranks/ public conveniences) ensuring durable design and layout and the careful siting of vulnerable such as elements, landscaped areas, public art relative to these areas.
- Accommodating unanticipated uses (e.g. skateboarding) either through special provision or through ensuring the design and materials selection is sufficiently robust to accommodate these uses.
- Factoring in the potential for anti-social behaviour, with special provisions for designing out crime in areas of night time activity, including CCTV provision and vandal-proof materials.
- Ensuring layout, design and materials selection is sufficiently durable with the requisite load bearing capacity, to accommodate street cleaning and maintenance regime requirements.
- Close liaison with CBC's Environmental Maintenance Division in design of public realm improvements, to the costs associated with maintenance, cleaning, replacement are taken into consideration in detailed design and materials selection
- Memorandum of Understanding with statutory infrastructure providers (water, gas, electricity) to ensure like for like replacement of paving and materials in way leave areas is guaranteed.
- Application of sustainability considerations in the selection of materials and landscaping/ planting elements, ensuring that energy, water, and raw materials usage is minimised.



