CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL


Sydenham Road


Christ Church Road


Eldorado Road


Lansdown Road

AUGUST 2026, VERSION 02

Character Area 5: Historic Formal Suburbs

Character Appraisal

CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

PURCELL

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Navigation

The Conservation Area Appraisal for Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area is made up of seven separate documents to ensure the relevant information is presented succinctly and is easy to navigate. It comprises an overview document and an individual character appraisal for each of the six character areas which make up the conservation area.

The overview document explains the relevant policy context, summarises the special interest of the Central Conservation Area as a whole, identifies boundary amendments, summarises the challenges and opportunities within the conservation area, and sets out a plan for the conservation area's future management.

The six character area appraisals provide more targeted assessments of character, special interest, challenges and opportunities for the each character area within the wider designation.

Conservation Area Appraisal: Overview Document

1.0 Introduction
Explains how to navigate between the various documents which comprise the Conservation Area Appraisal, explains the geographical scope of the conservation area, summarises its special interest, explains the purpose and scope of the appraisal and identifies relevant planning policy and guidance documents.

2.0 Assessment of special interest
Summarises the key characteristics and the history of the conservation area and explains why it is special.

3.0 Character areas
Details the various character areas within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area.

4.0 Alterations to the conservation area boundary
Identifies proposed alterations to the boundary of the conservation area.

5.0 Summary of challenges
Summarises common challenges across the conservation area.

6.0 Opportunities For enhancement
Summarises where there are opportunities for enhancement within the conservation area.

7.0 Management plan
Identifies control measures associated with conservation area designation and provides recommendations for future management.

Character Area 1:
Town Centre

Character Area 2:
Planned Estates

Character Area 3:
Artisan Quarters

Character Area 4:
Bath Road and Suffolks

Character Area 5:
Historic Formal Suburbs

Character Area 6:
Institutional Quarters

Individual Character Area Appraisals

1.0 Introduction
Identifies which areas of the wider conservation area are included and explains the special interest of the character area.

2.0 Historical development
Explains how the character area relates historically to the wider designation and details how each part of the character area has evolved over time.

3.0 Assessment of special interest
Provides a detailed character assessment for the area, looking at elements such as architecture, materials, urban grain and configuration, key views, public realm, trees and open spaces, topography and archaeology.

4.0 Heritage assets
Identifies designated and non-designated heritage assets within the character area.

5.0 Challenges
Identifies common challenges within the character area.

6.0 Opportunities for enhancement
Identifies opportunities for incremental change which will enhance the special interest of the conservation area, as well as specific sites or areas which may could be enhanced or redeveloped in the future to the benefit of the designation.

7.0 Future Management
Signposting to the more detailed management plan in the overview document.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Areas included within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area

The Historic Formal Suburbs character area includes:

- The Sydenham area.
- Areas of mid-late 19th-century residential development to the west of Lansdown and Bayshill, including the top of St George's Road, Western Road, Christ Church Road, Queens Road, Eldorado Road and the western third of Lansdown Road.

The historic and current use across the character areas is predominantly residential, with some institutional use associated with Cheltenham Ladies' College to the west.

1.2 Historic Formal Suburbs: summary of special interest

The special interest of the planned estates character area is derived from:

- The retention of several formal, highly coherent terraces associated with Cheltenham's heyday as a spa town.
- A number of generous houses and villas which retain many original architectural features.
- Significant diversity of scale and style within the built form.
- The continued legibility of the historic street plan and urban grain.
- Street trees and private front gardens, which contribute to a verdant formal character.
- Views of important streetscapes, landmarks, and the surrounding landscape.
- The continuation of a historic residential character.

Regency and early Victorian terraces.

The character area preserves several formal, highly coherent terraces associated with Cheltenham's heyday as a spa town. These estates were developed in the 1810s, 1820s and 1830s along the eastern end of the High Street, London Road, Berkeley Street, Priory Street, Oxford Street and the bottom of Hewlett Road. They are characterised by their architectural uniformity, utilising neo-Classical detailing and often retaining ironwork in the form of balconies, verandahs and door canopies. Those to Berkeley Place and Oxford Place also retain the formal lawns on London Road, which form an intrinsic part of their setting.

Larger houses and villas.

Generous houses and villas, usually two storeys high and set in generous gardens, are also characteristic of the Historic Formal Suburbs. These were largely constructed during the mid-late Victorian and Edwardian periods, and many retain original architectural features including decorative mouldings, quoins, pilasters and string courses, variegated brickwork, timber sash windows, historic roof coverings, timber bargeboards and boundary treatments.

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Diversity of style and scale within the built form.

Many of the roads within this character area developed slowly over the course of the 19th century, with plots gradually being built on over the course of the 19th and into the early 20th century and interwar period. This has resulted in significant diversity in the age, style and materiality of buildings and a dynamic townscape.

Planform, configuration and urban grain.

The historic configuration of the roads within this character area remains legible, as does the urban grain – which is tighter along the terraced streets and looser where villas and semi-detached houses predominate.

Street trees and greenery.

Despite the relative lack of publicly accessible open space within this character area, the impact of street trees, verges and greenery in front gardens makes a significant contribution to the verdant, formal character of the streetscapes. Mature trees frame long vistas, soften streetscapes and enhance the setting of historic buildings.

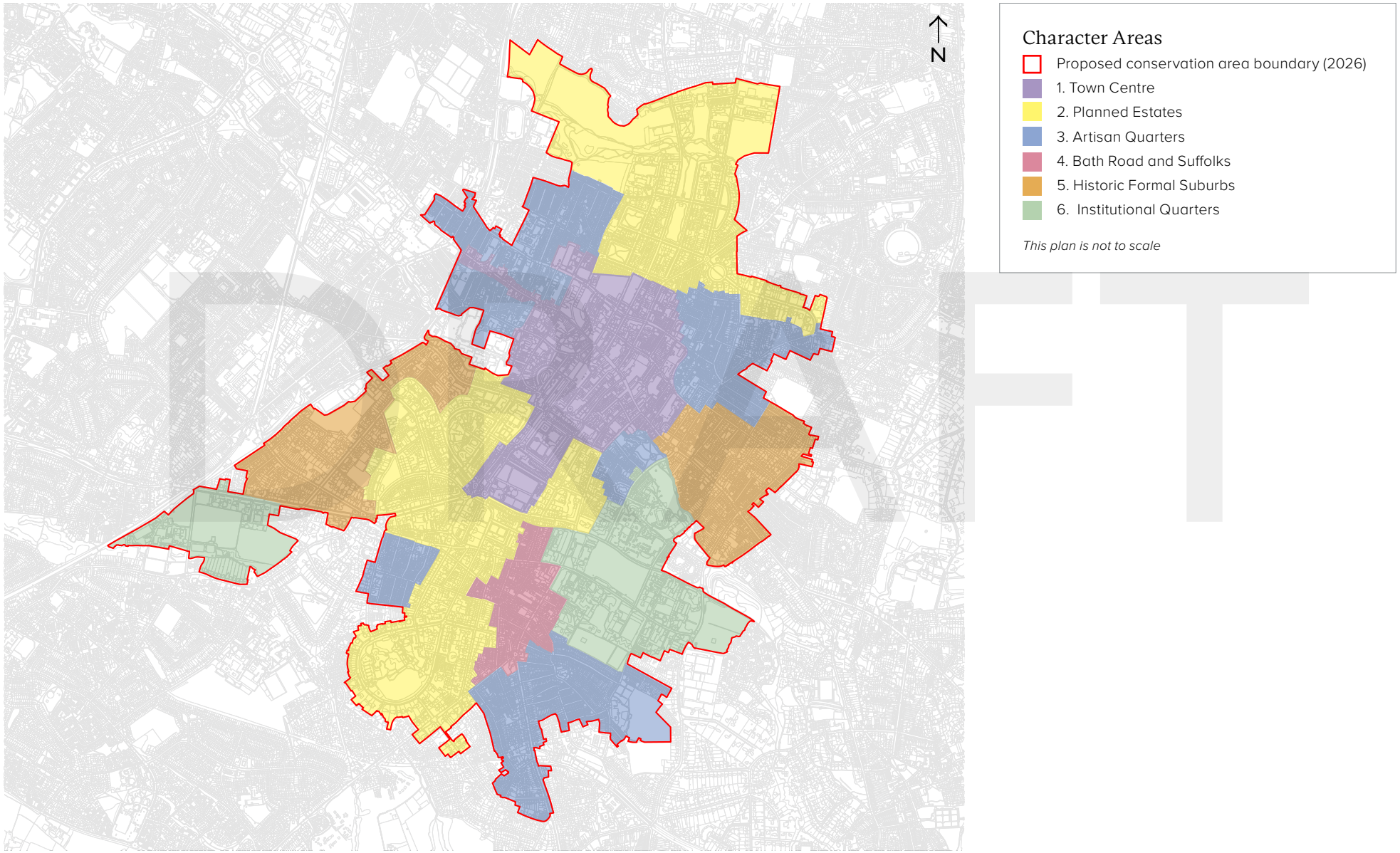
Views of important streetscapes, landmark buildings and the surrounding landscape.

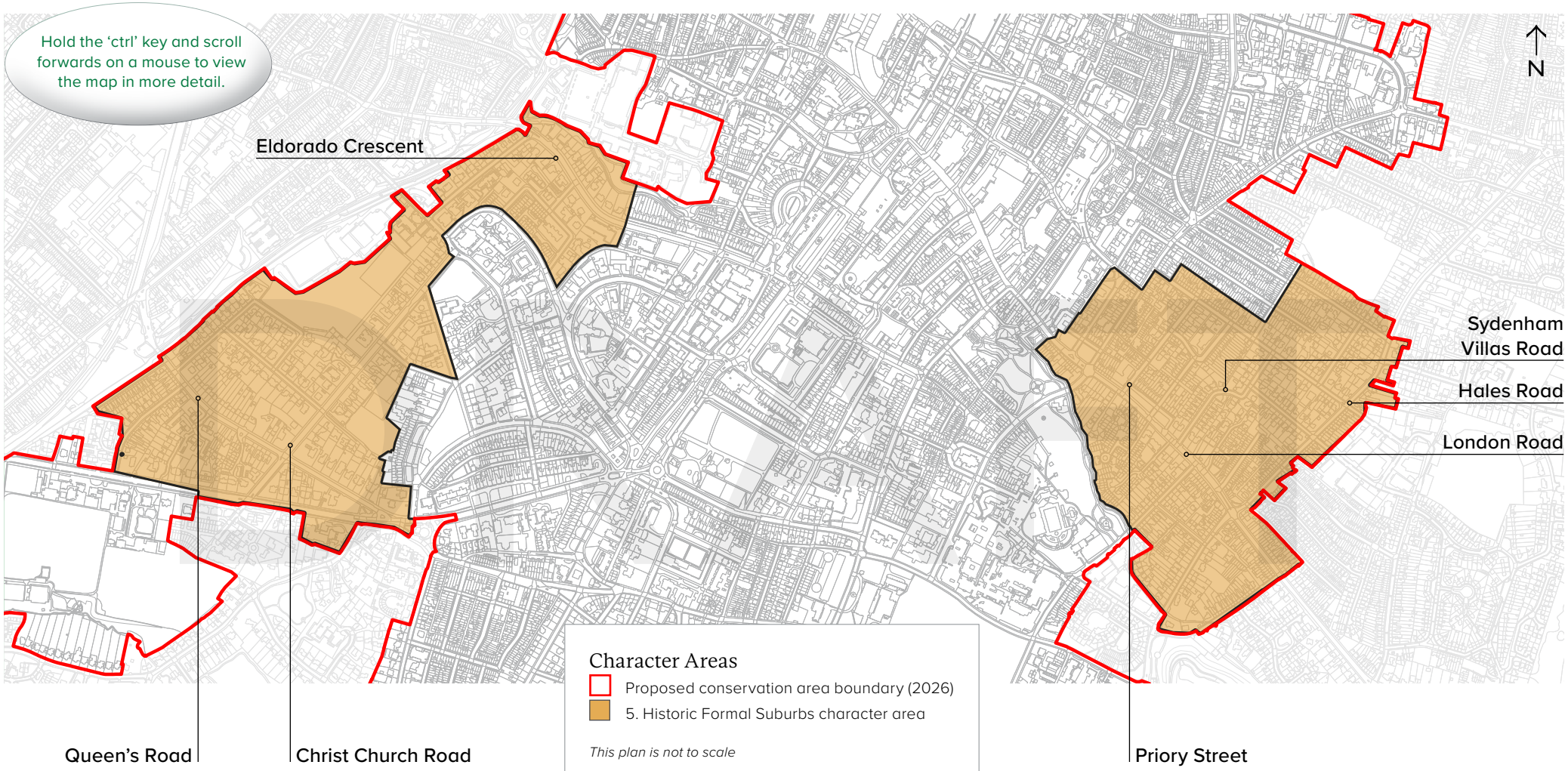
There is a range of streetscape views within the character area, enabling an appreciation of the architectural uniformity of early terraces and the diversity of later villas. The linear form of many streets creates long vistas (along Carlton Street, Eldorado Road and London Road for example). In contrast, the curving proportions of other roads such as Sydenham Villas Road and Glencairn Park Road create a series of changing views. There are important views towards Cleeve Hill and the Cotswold escarpment, and of landmark buildings including Christ Church, St Mary's Church and Highbury Church.

Continuation of residential character.

The Historic Formal Suburbs were developed largely as exclusive residential suburbs and can still largely be read as such today, despite the conversion of some buildings to institutional use.

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N
Character Areas
Proposed conservation area boundary (2026)
1. Town Centre
2. Planned Estates
3. Artisan Quarters
4. Bath Road and Suffolks
5. Historic Formal Suburbs
6. Institutional Quarters
This plan is not to scale


Hold the 'ctrl' key and scroll forwards on a mouse to view the map in more detail.
N
Eldorado Crescent
Sydenham Villas Road
Hales Road
London Road
Queen's Road
Christ Church Road
Priory Street
Character Areas
Proposed conservation area boundary (2026)
5. Historic Formal Suburbs character area
This plan is not to scale

2.0 Historical development

2.1 The Historic Formal Suburbs within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area

This character area contains Cheltenham's formal suburbs, which were largely constructed over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The first terraces in the area were built around the eastern end of the High Street and along London Road, followed by later terraces and villas in the mid-19th, late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Queen's Road, pictured in 1890. *Historic England Archive.*

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2.2 Early history of Cheltenham

Roman activity is evidenced in the town through the discovery of Roman coins in Hanover Street, Pittville and High Street, a large quantity of Roman pottery behind St James' Square and Roman coins, pot sherds and field system ditches in Pittville.[01] Further information on the archaeological potential of the character area is available in section 3.8.

The first documentary reference to Cheltenham itself occurs in 803. The Domesday Survey (1086) mentions five water and grain mills in Cheltenham, located along the River Chelt. Cheltenham became a market town in 1226 and the market played a key role in its economy for several centuries.

Mineral springs were discovered in 1716 in a field within the Bayshill area to the south of the High Street. In the 1730s, Bristol mariner Henry Skillicorne bought the land in this area and developed the site of the spring, building a modest pump room approached from the north by an avenue called 'Well Walk.'

In 1788 King George III visited Cheltenham to 'take the waters', residing for several weeks in Bayshill Lodge, a substantial building on the site of Sidney Lodge off Overton Road, which is now part of Cheltenham Ladies College. Skillicorne's spa subsequently became known as the Royal Well. The royal visit cemented Cheltenham's success as a leading spa town and initiated large scale development both within and around the historic core.



The Well Walk, Cheltenham, now the site of Cheltenham Ladies College, show in an engraving by J. Springsguth c.1800. The River Chelt is in the foreground. *Wellcome Collection.*

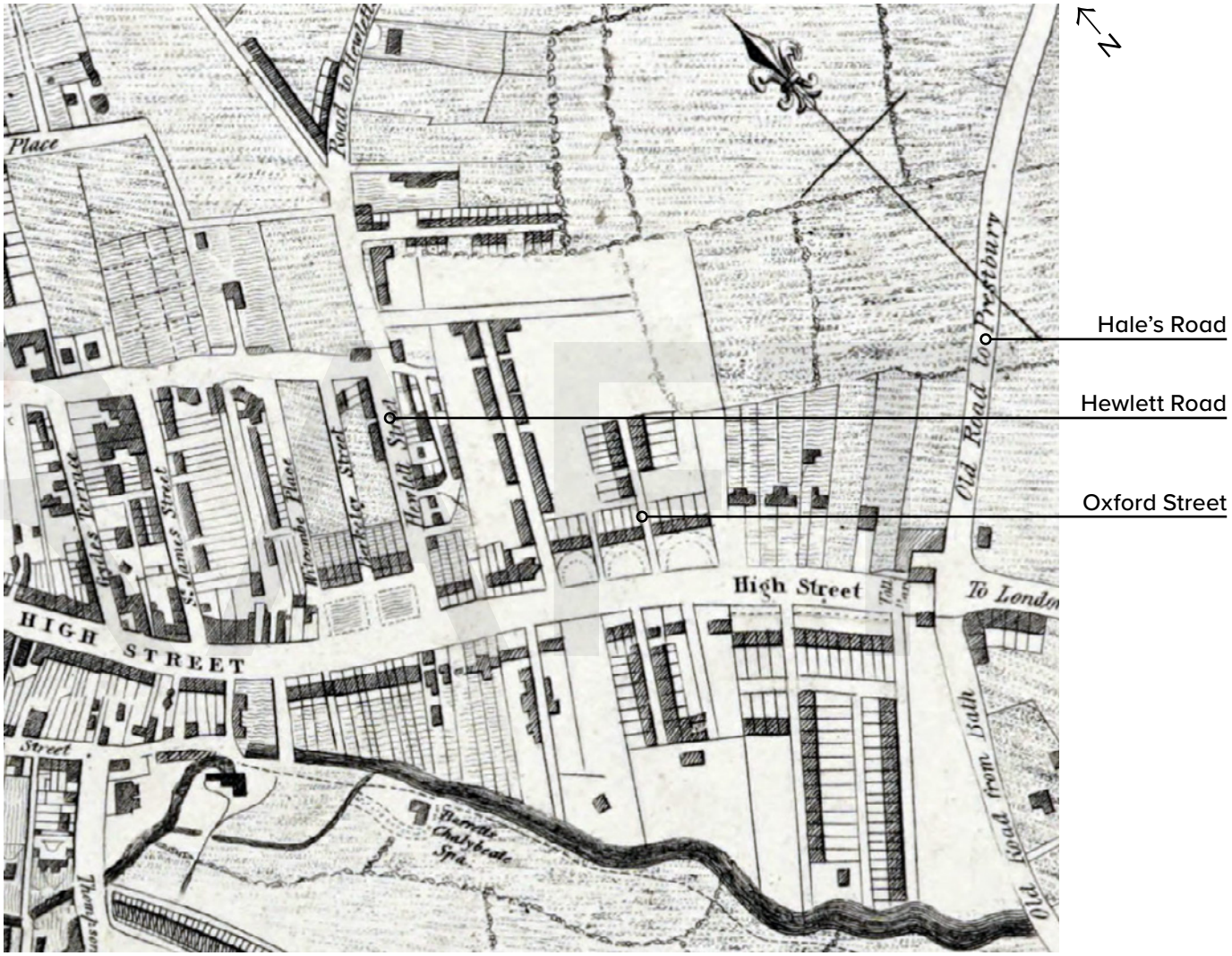
01 Gloucestershire County Council Historic Environment Record, Monument Nos. 5436, 5472 and 5475; Cheltenham Borough Council, *Central Conservation Area Old Town Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan*, 2007.

2.3 Historical development of the Historic Formal Suburbs character area

From the early years of the 19th century, piecemeal development occurred on the gardens and orchards at the rear of the High Street and in the narrow lanes which led into the fields.

The earliest development within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area took place along the eastern end of the High Street and London Road. The terraces at Oxford Parade on the north side of London Road were built c.1809, whilst Priory Lawn on the south side of London Road was built between 1790 and 1820. The majority of the villas and terraces east of Sandford Park along the High Street and London Road, Berkely Street, Priory Street, Oxford Street and the bottom of Hewlett Road were built in the 1810s, 1820s and 1830s.

In the latter years of the 1830s, Queen's Road was formed by the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway as a grand approach to Lansdown Station from the Lansdown Road. The line of the road followed the route already taken by the Leckhampton railroad.

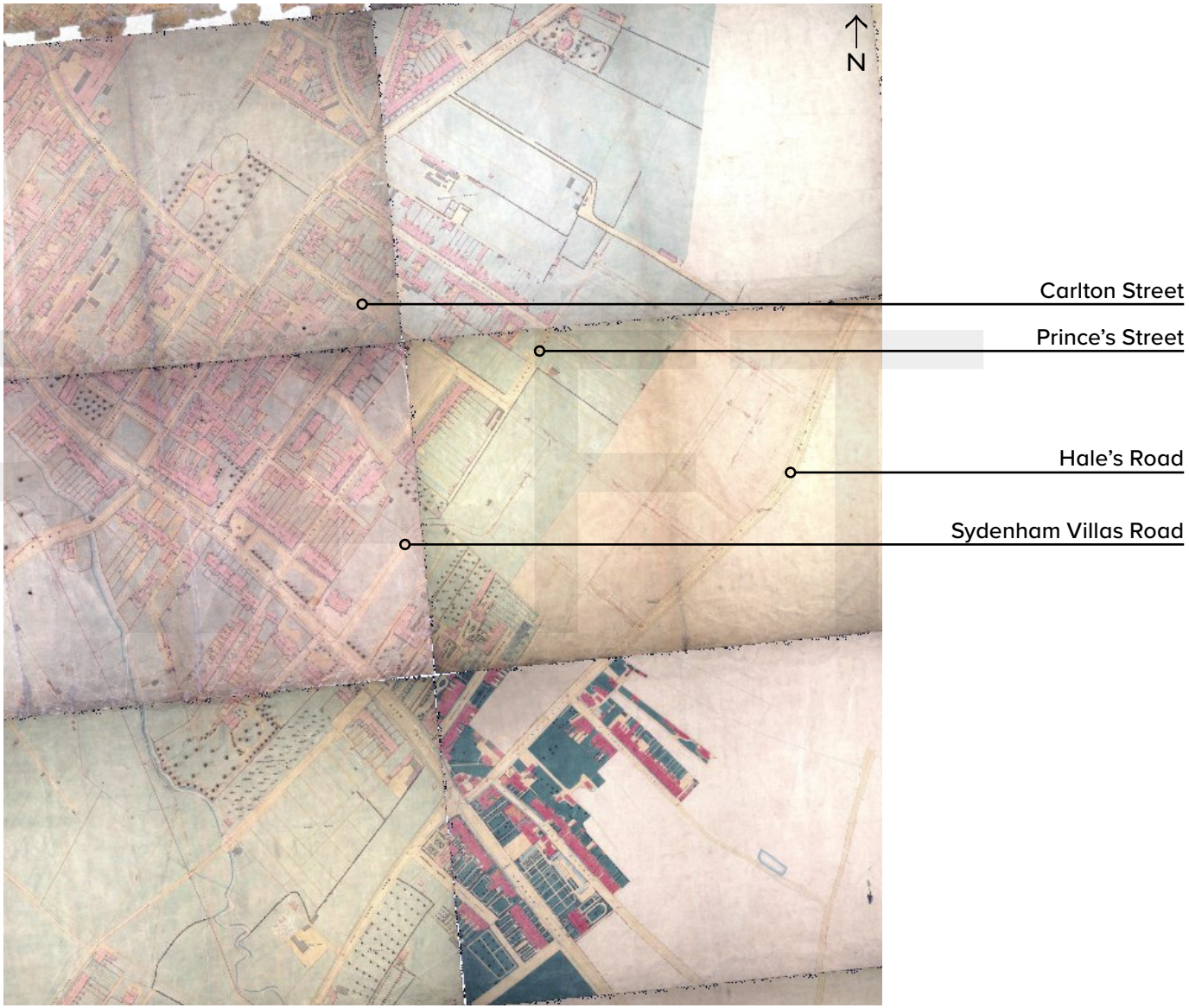


Regency development around the eastern end of the High Street, as shown in Griffiths' map of Cheltenham, 1825. *Wellcome Collection.*

By 1855, Priory Terrace, Keynsham Bank and Keynsham Street had been constructed and Sydenham Villas Road laid out (though not yet developed). The terraces on Carlton Street were under construction, and the grid of streets between Hale's Road and Prince's Street were laid out in anticipation of development. The terraces at Avenells Parade, to the south of London Road, had also been built.

To the west of Bayshill and Lansdown, Christ Church Road had been laid out, and there was some development on the north side of Lansdown Road (to the west of Talbot Road). Most of the land to the west of Christ Church Road was still occupied by fields. Western Road had been laid out in advance of development with generous plots laid out for houses.

The Sydenham Estate, as it was termed in 1868, developed in the parcel of land to the east of Carlton Street and north of London Road between the 1870s and 1900.[02]



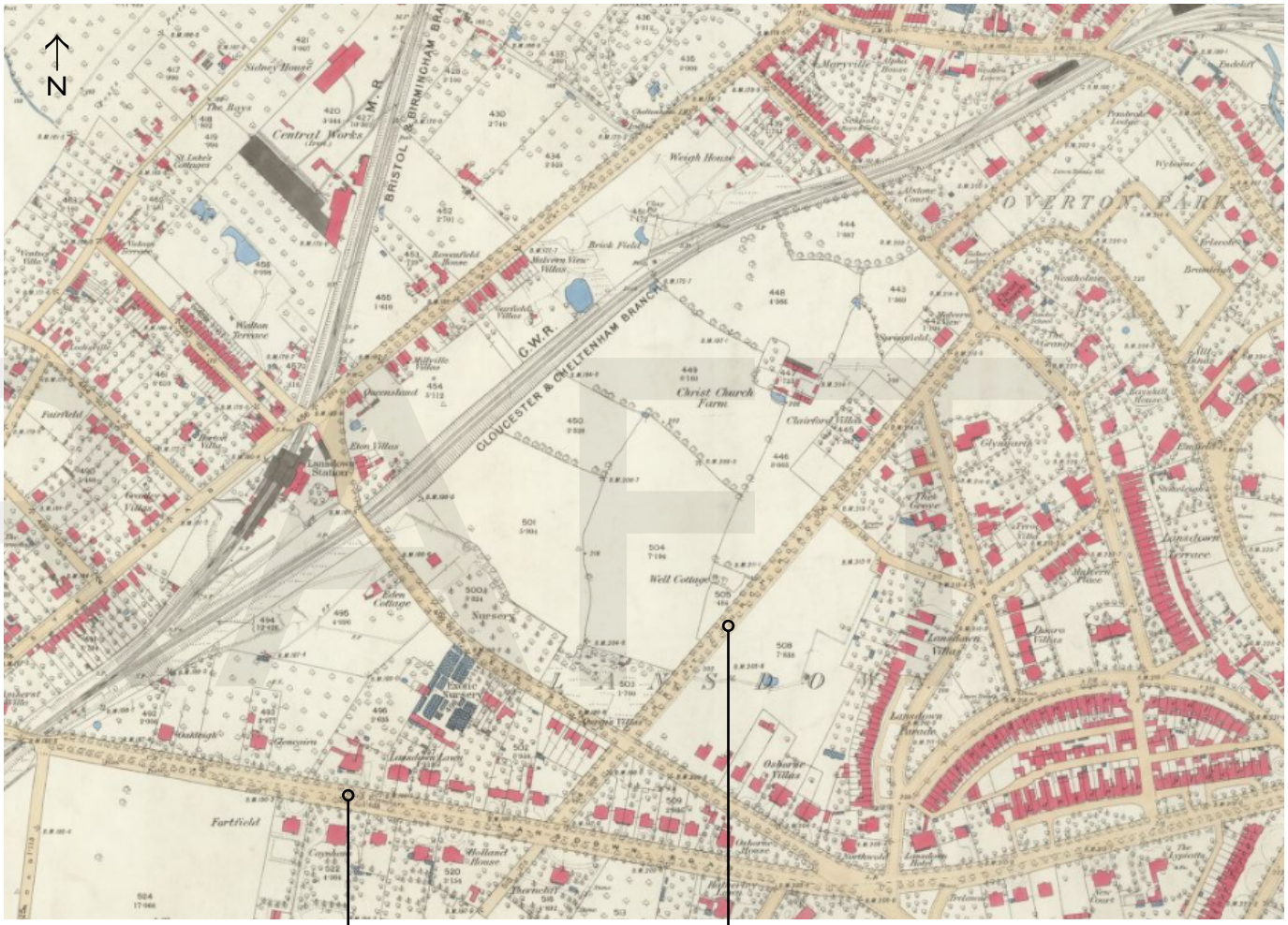
The Sydenham area as shown in an 1855 map of Cheltenham. *Know Your Place*.

02 https://www.bgas.org.uk/search-gazetteer?st%5B%5D=sydenham+&css_searchfield%5B%5D=text&fq=

The 1883 Ordnance Survey shows much new development in the Sydenham area, with terraces and villas on the west side of Hale's Road, terraces along Victoria Terrace and villas at the bottom of Sydenham Villas Road, along Sydenham Road North, Cranham Road and King Road North. Despite the extent of new construction since 1855, there were still many empty plots. Much of the east side of Hale's Road was still in use as fields.

To the south of London Road, Argyll Road had been laid out on former nursery grounds and some semi-detached houses had been constructed on the west side of Bath Road. Sandford Mill Road was not yet developed.

The 1883 map shows many more villas on the north and south sides of Lansdown Road and additional villas and semi-detached houses on the northern end of St George's Road, parts of Western Road and the bottom of Queen's Road. Overton Road had been extended northwards to connect with Malvern Road and Overton Park had been laid out. Christ Church Road was still relatively undeveloped. Eldorado Road, Eldorado Crescent and Kensington Avenue were yet to be laid out.



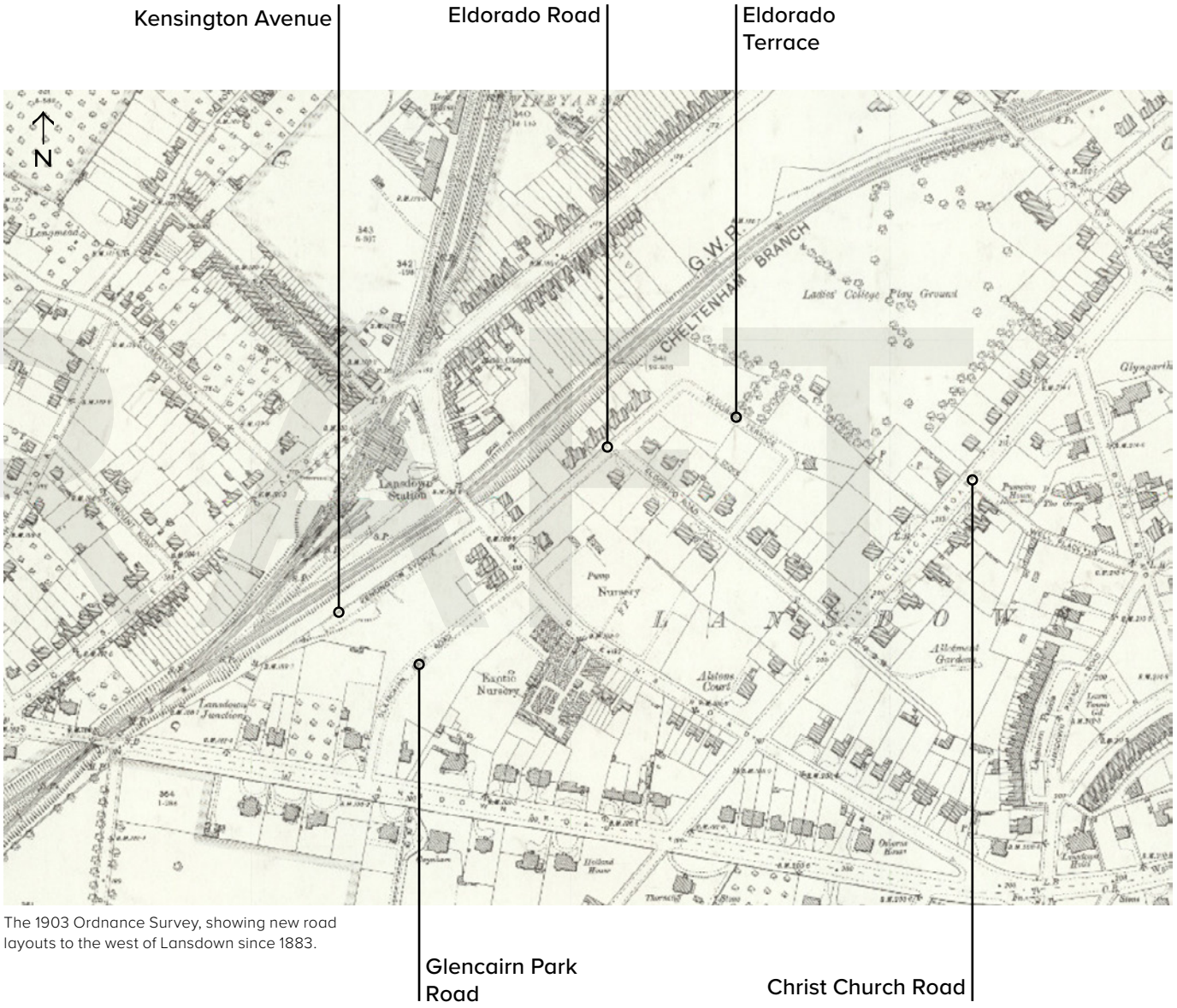
Extract from the 1883 Ordnance Survey, showing development to the west of Lansdown and Bayshill since 1855.

The 1903 Ordnance Survey shows little change in the Sydenham area. However, new development was occurring to the west of Christ Church Road around Lansdown. New roads laid out since 1884 included Glencairn Park Road, Kensington Avenue, Eldorado Road and Eldorado Terrace. Eldorado Road was being developed with new villas and semi-detached houses. There were also more properties on the east and west sides of Christ Church Road, along Lansdown Road and at the western end of Queen's Road.

The Ladies' College boarding house on Malvern Road had been built since the 1880s, with the playing field laid out to the rear.

The east side of Hale's Road and Sandford Mill Road were developed during the Edwardian period, alongside the rest of Eldorado Road, Kensington Avenue and Glencairn Park Road. The Caroline Strickland Homes at the bottom of Hale's Road were built in 1914.

There was some further development within the Formal Suburbs during the 20th century, with small housing estates built at Sandford Park Place, Keynshambury Road, Keynsham Bank and College Gate in the Sydenham area. Small estates around the Lansdown area include Queens Court, Skillicorn Mews and Wendover Gardens. Flats were built along Overton Park Road in the second half of the 20th century, and residential infill development was added along Keynsham Road, Western Road and Lansdown Road.



The 1903 Ordnance Survey, showing new road layouts to the west of Lansdown since 1883.

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3.0 Assessment of special interest

3.1 Built form and architecture

19th-century terraces

Terraced housing is a common typology within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area. Many are imposing, three and four-storey Regency terraces, using Classical proportions and displaying a high degree of architectural refinement. Such terraces are common at the eastern end of the High Street/London Road and Berkeley Place. Those to the smaller roads north of the main thoroughfare tend to be smaller in scale, being two storeys high and with more modest architectural detailing. A significant number of these early terraces retain historic ironwork in the form of door canopies, verandahs, terraces and railings.

The formal terraces are generally characterised by:

- Pale stucco render (exposed brick is sometimes visible to side elevations) or fine limestone ashlar to the principal elevations.
- Vertically-sliding timber sash windows with slim glazing bars, divided into small panes, usually three panes wide. Windows are generally of vertical proportions and recessed from the outside face of the wall.
- Low, pitched roofs hidden behind parapets.
- Classical entablature, comprising a cornice and frieze.
- Timber panelled doors under elegant arched or square fanlights.
- Brick chimney stacks.
- Doric columns and slender pilasters, lending a strong vertical rhythm.
- Projecting plat bands to create visual separation between different floors.
- First-floor balconies with wrought-iron railings and verandahs.

There are a number of terraces within the character area which are of a more modest design, of two storeys and with pared-back architectural detailing which is generally restricted to a strong course or cornice along the principal elevation. Examples of this more modest terrace style can be found in Keynsham Street and Corpus Street.

There are also a small number of short terraces (3-4 houses long) on the east side of Hale's Road. These two storeys high and are constructed with exposed red brick as was typical of late 19th and early 20th-century terraces.

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Neo-Classical terrace at 53-65 London Road.


Regency terraces at Nos. 1-9 Berkeley Place.


Regency terraces on the north side of London Road.


Detail of iron balconies to a terrace on London Road.


Two-storey formal terraces at Oxford Street.


Modest two-storey terraces on Keynsham Street.

19th and early 20th-century villas and larger houses

Villas and semi-detached houses are a prevalent typology within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area. They are generally two or three storeys in height and are set within larger plots with generous front gardens.

They are generally characterised by:

- Rendered or stuccoed elevations, with later 19th and early 20th-century examples often faced in red brick;
- Slate roofs, frequently hipped to earlier examples and steeply pitched to later Victorian and Edwardian houses, sometimes incorporating dormers;
- Bay windows, occasionally spanning multiple storeys;
- Decorative detailing including moulded surrounds, quoins, pilasters and string courses;
- Overhanging eaves and prominent chimney stacks; and
- Generous plot widths and landscaped front gardens.

The earlier examples of this typology draw on neo-Classical traditions, while later Victorian and Edwardian villas frequently employ red brick with more decorative detailing, including black brick string courses and elaborate chimney stacks, alongside more steeply pitched roofs with mock-timber framing to gable ends and decorative bargeboards. The Classical style predominates in the eastern extent of the character area, whilst the Gothic Revival and Arts and Crafts style is more prevalent in the west.



Mid-19th-century semi-detached houses on Sydenaham Villas Road.



Victorian villas on Old Bath Road.



An eclectic late 19th-century villa on Christ Church Road.



A detached 19th-century villa on Queen's Road.

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Late Victorian villas on Christ Church, constructed in a Tudor Gothic style.



Villas on Eldorado Road.

20th and 21st-century development

There is a small but noteworthy amount of interwar housing within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area, with small groups of detached houses found for example on Old Bath Road, Sydenham Road South and Sydenham Villas Road. These houses display typical features from this era including prominent hipped roofs with clay tiles, prominent chimney stacks and wide bay windows with large amounts of glazing. Highbury Church, built to replace an earlier church on Oxford Street, was also built in the 1930s.

Later 20th and 21st-century architecture is present across the character area, primarily in the form of infill development and occasional larger residential or mixed-use blocks.

The scale, form and architectural quality of these developments, alongside the degree to which they integrate within the established character of the conservation area, is variable.



Interwar house on Old Bath Road.



A group of three interwar houses on Sydenham Villas Road.



Highbury Church, built in the 1930s.



Mid-20th-century residential development on Overton Park Road.

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3.2 Materials

Common materials across the Historic Formal Suburbs character area include:

Render and stucco: often applied over brick, is a prevalent finish across the character area and is most commonly found on terraces and villas from the early to mid-19th century. Stucco is frequently used to articulate architectural detailing, including cornices, string courses, rustication and moulded surrounds. Historic rendered and stucco finishes to Regency buildings are likely to be made of Roman Cement - a hydraulic lime-based cement first patented in 1796.

Brick: red brick is widely used throughout the character area, both as a primary facing material or as the structural material beneath render or stucco. Exposed brick is more prominent in later Victorian and Edwardian development. Decorative brickwork, including buff and black brick string courses and detailed surrounds to openings, is a recurring feature in these later buildings. Brick is also commonly used for chimney stacks and boundary walls.

Stone: dressed stone is found to some terraces and villas, with regularly coursed rubble stone found to some later 19th-century villas along Christ Church. Stone plinths are also sometimes retained where historic railings have been lost.

Slate: Welsh slate is the dominant roofing material across the character area and is a unifying feature of both terraces and larger houses. Roofs are typically shallow pitched in earlier buildings, often concealed behind parapets, while later Victorian and Edwardian buildings may display more prominent pitched roofs clad in slate.

Timber: timber is traditionally used for windows and doors, most notably in the form of vertically-sliding sash windows. These are a defining feature of the historic terraces and villas. Timber can also be found to gable ends and bargeboards throughout the character area.

Iron: decorative ironwork is an important component of the historic streetscape, found in the form of railings, balconies and decorative detailing to porches and canopies. Although many original railings have been lost, surviving examples contribute significantly to the character and appearance of streets, especially where combined with low brick or stone boundary walls.

Modern materials: a limited range of modern materials is present within the character area, particularly in later 20th and 21st-century development. These include facing brick and concrete.

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Rendered finish to Priory Terrace.



Dressed stone to a villa on Christ Church Road.



Red brick with stone dressings and slate roof tiles to a pair of houses on Glencairn Park Road.



Detail of ironwork railings at the entrance to Sandford Park on the High Street.



Timber to gable ends and bargeboards on Eldorado Crescent.



Regularly coursed rubble stone to a villa on Christ Church Road.

3.3 Urban grain, configuration, direction of movement

Streets across the Historic Formal Suburbs character area are commonly arranged in irregular grid patterns, with a clear distinction between busy principal routes and quieter residential roads. Most streets are generous, with buildings set back from the highway, creating a spacious and open townscape.

London Road, Sydenham Road North, Old Bath Road, Keynsham Road and Sandford Mill Road are characteristic of this configuration, with buildings set back behind front gardens and an abundance of street trees making for a leafy, open character. By contrast, the narrow streets such as Hewlett Place, Keynsham Street, parts of Corpus Street and the bottom of Oxford Street have narrower proportions, with buildings or boundary walls fronting directly onto the highway.

West of Bayshill and Lansdown, the principal streets (St George's Road, Christ Church Road, Eldorado Road and Queen's Road) are wide and formal in character, with buildings arranged within spacious plots. The former Honeybourne railway, now a cycle route, forms a strong linear boundary to the west.

Roads within the character area are generally linear, but curved roads (notably Eldorado Crescent, Sydenham Villas Road, Glencairn Park Road and Overton Park Road) add contrast and visual interest.

Principal routes such as London Road, Hale's Road, Bath Road and St George's Road carry high volumes of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and form key approaches into the town centre. Berkeley Street, part of the Inner Ring Road, is particularly heavily trafficked. Secondary residential streets are generally quieter.



The generous proportions of Kings Road allow for numerous street trees.



Keynsham Road is leafy and broad, as is typical of the character area.



The narrower proportions of Keynsham Street contrast with the wide tree-lined streets elsewhere in the character area.

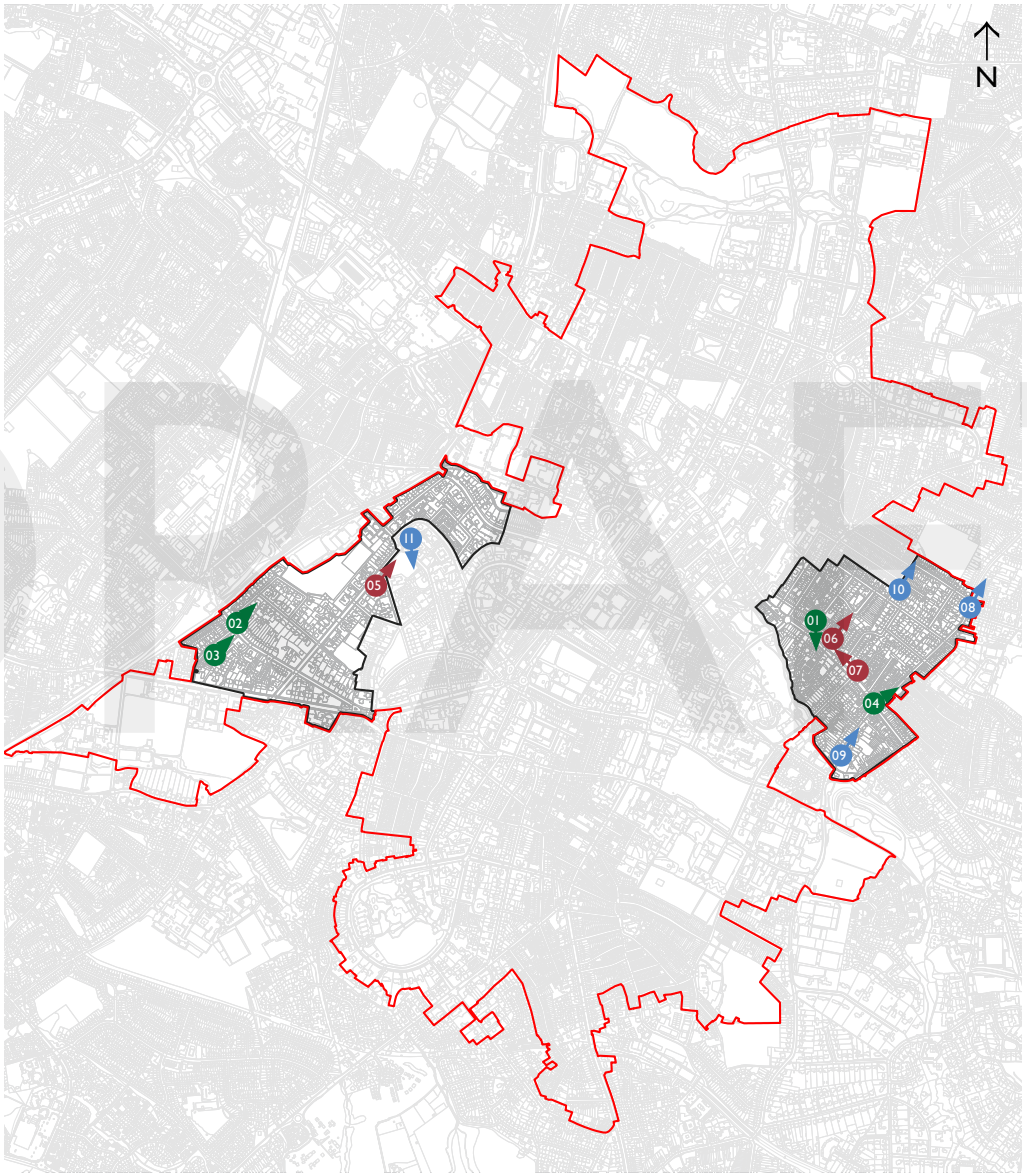


The distinctive cuve of Sydenham Villas Road, seen from the north.

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3.4 Key views

There are several types of views which contribute to and enhance the special interest of the Historic Formal Suburbs Character Area (and the conservation area more widely). An indicative selection of these key views is provided to illustrate the views analysis. The omission of any view from this selection does not imply that said view is not important.

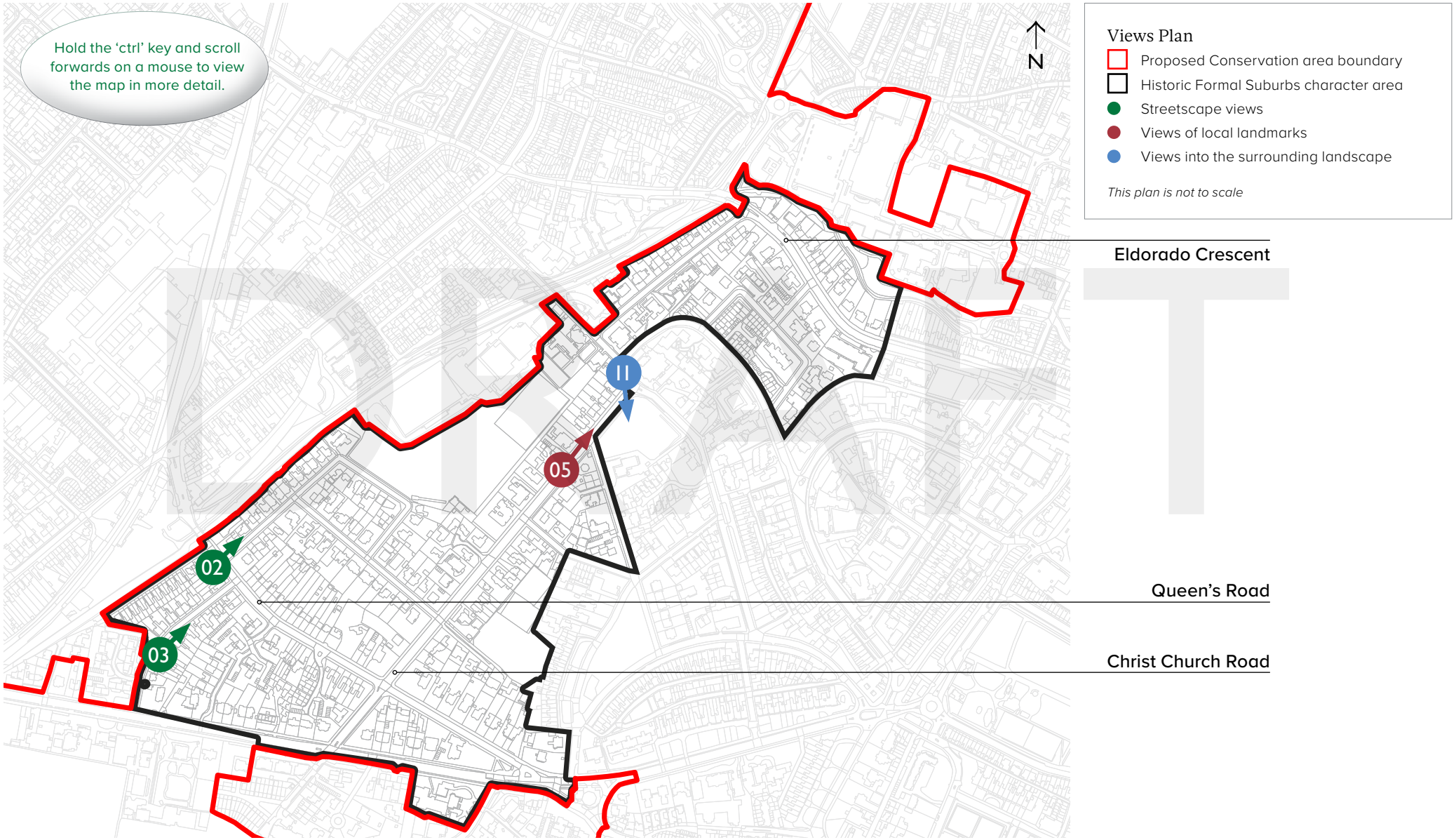


Views Plan

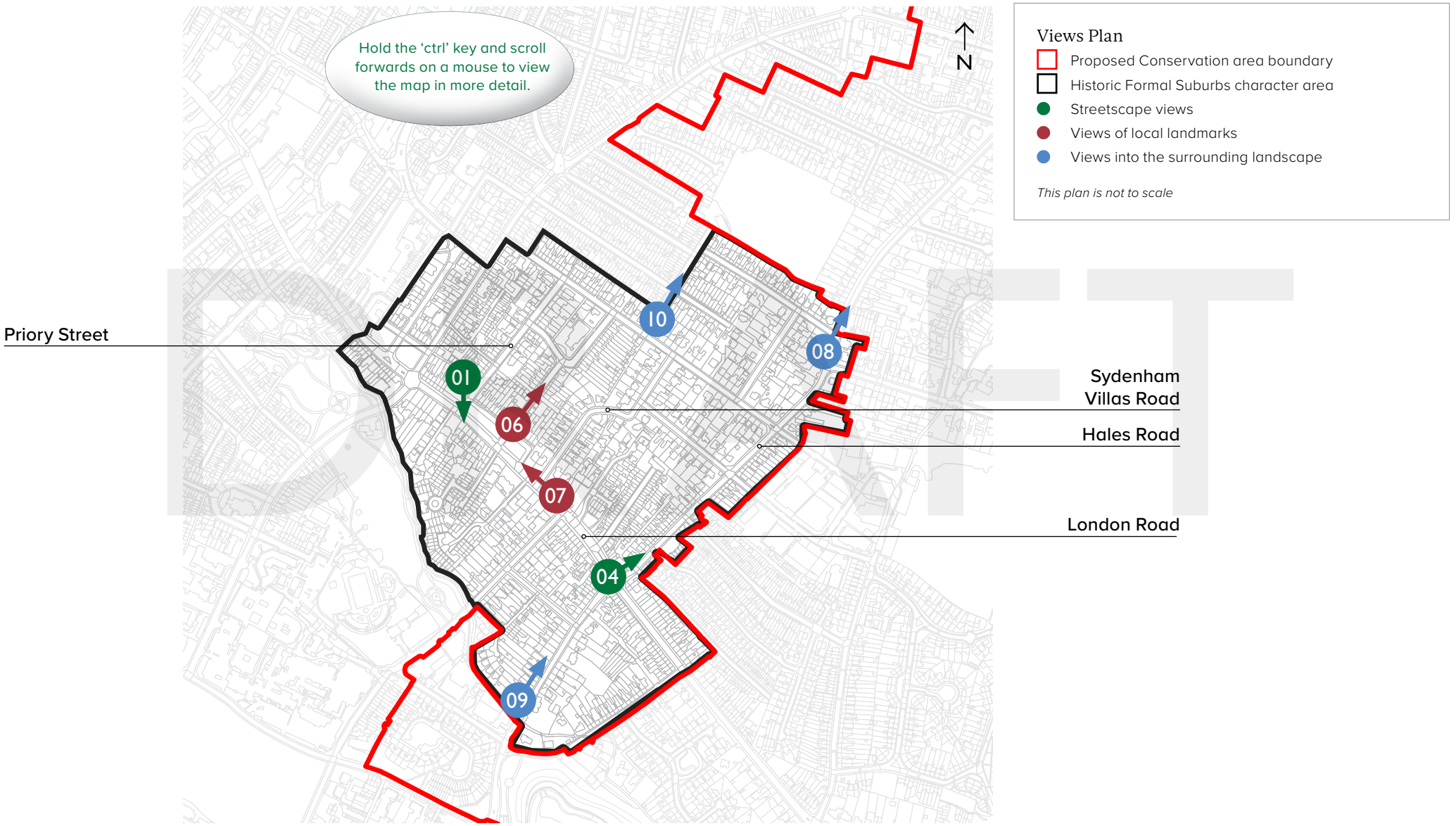
- Proposed Conservation area boundary
- Historic Formal Suburbs character area
- Streetscape views
- Views of local landmarks
- Views into the surrounding landscape

This plan is not to scale

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Representative selection of key views in the western extent of the character area



Representative selection of key views in the eastern extent of the character area

3.4.1 Streetscape views

The character area contains numerous streetscape views which allow for an appreciation of the uniformity and grandeur characteristic of the Regency terraces around the High Street and London Road. These terraces derive their architectural effect from their shared proportions, roofscape, materials and finishes.

In contrast to the architectural uniformity of the Regency terraces, many roads are occupied by villas of differing ages, styles and materials which creates dynamic and varied streetscapes. This is particularly evident along Christ Church Road. Despite the architectural variety displayed within these streetscapes, the uniform building line of the houses and villas lends a strong sense of cohesion.

Many of the designed streetscape views are linear – allowing for the entire frontage of a terrace or a line of villas to be observed together. Others rely for their effect on the curving proportions of the street, with views of buildings being revealed in stages.

Street trees play and important role in many of the streetscapes within this character area, providing a verdant character which softens the urban environment and enhances the setting of the historic buildings.

In addition to those annotated on the accompanying map, key streetscape views can be enjoyed along Sydenham Villas (particularly towards London Road and at the the junction with Sydenham Villas Road) Kings Road, Christchurch Road (towards Christ Church and from the junction with Queen's Road) and Queen's Road.



View 01: A designed streetscape view along the uniform Ashling Villas, London Road.



View 02: A combination of mid-Victorian, late Victorian and interwar development along Eldorado Road, creating a diverse streetscape.



View 03: The gently curving proportions of Glencairn Park Road means the villas are revealed in stages.



View 04: The long stretch of red-brick terraces and semi-detached houses on the east side of Hale's Road creates a uniform streetscape.

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3.4.2 Views of key landmarks

The Historic Formal Suburbs character area contains a number of landmark structures, which are prevalent in views within (and into) this part of the town. These include:

- Highbury Church, Oxford Street
- Christ Church, at the top of Christ Church Road

There are also long vistas eastwards down London Road / High Street towards St Mary's Church (within the Town Centre character area).

Views of these landmark structures enhance the variety of the streetscapes, reinforce the historic character of the area and provide orientation.



View 05: Looking north-east along Christ Church Road towards Christ Church.



View 06: Looking up Oxford Street towards Highbury Church.



View 07: The spire of St Mary's Church within the town centre, seen from London Road.

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3.4.3 Views into the surrounding landscape

Important views of the wider landscape - particularly the Cotswold escarpment and Cleeve Hill - are visible from a number of locations with the Historic Formal Suburbs character area, providing a strong visual connection between the town and its rural setting.

Views of the Cotswold escarpment can be appreciated from several streets within the Sydenham area, including Hewlett Road, Hale's Road, Oxford Street, Priory Street, Prince's Street and London Road, where glimpses of the rising landform to the north and east provide a distinctive backdrop to the townscape.

Around Bayshill and Lansdown, long and medium-distance views along streets such as St George's Road, Western Road, Overton Road and Bayshill Road often terminate in the escarpment, with Cleeve Hill forming a particularly prominent feature in views along Western Road.

Elsewhere, the slightly elevated topography of parts of the Historic Formal Suburbs allows for more expansive outward views. Around Eldorado Road and Western Road, for example, long-distance views of Cleeve Hill are visible over rooftops and through gaps between buildings. More distant glimpses of the outlying hills to the west of Cheltenham can also be experienced from parts Christ Church Road, where views open out across the Cheltenham Ladies' College playing fields to the west.



View 08: Looking northwards along Hale's Roads to the Cotswold escarpment.



View 09: The Cotswold escarpment visible in the view northwards along Old Bath Road.



View 10: The Cotswold escarpment are prevalent in views northwards along Prince's Street.



View 11: View over the playing field opposite Christ Church towards the outlying hills.

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3.5 Public realm

The public realm encompasses all the spaces and features which are accessible to the public and help bring together a sense of place.

The quality and consistency of the public realm across the Historic Formal Suburbs character area is variable.

Historic and traditionally styled streetlamps survive in a number of locations and make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Examples can be found along St George's Road, Overton Road and Keynsham Road, where they enhance the quality of the streetscapes. The majority of streets are lit by more utilitarian modern streetlamps.

Street name plates are generally discreet and are a mixture of modern and traditional in style. Traditional name plates, such as that to Keynsham Street, are in keeping with the character of the conservation area.

There are a number of historic pillar boxes located across the character area, including Sydenham Road North, Glencairn Road and Eldorado Road. These features enhance the historic character of the streetscapes. Decorative ironwork is also an important component of the public realm, particularly in Sydenham, where railings, balconies and canopies survive on buildings along streets such as Berkeley Place, Carlton Street, Priory Street and Oxford Parade.

Boundary treatments form an important component of the public realm, particularly where buildings are set back from the street. Traditional boundary treatments within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area include low red-brick and stone walls, iron railings, gate piers and low hedging – all of which enhance the historic character of the streetscape and permit views of historic buildings. Remnants of historic features, such as the stone plinth on Queen's Road which formerly supported railings, also contribute to an understanding of the historic streetscape.

Street furniture such as benches and bins is relatively limited and generally concentrated in small public spaces or along wider roads, reflecting the predominantly residential character of the area. Where present, such as in small green spaces in Sydenham, these elements are typically modest in number and functional in design.

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Example of a historic brick wall on Prince's Street.



Historic gate piers on Christ Church Road.



A historic nameplate on Upper Park Street.



A historic pillarbox on Glencairn Park Road.

3.6 Trees and open spaces

Publicly accessible green space within the Historic Formal Suburbs character area is limited to the small formal lawns in front of the terraces at Berkeley Place and Oxford Place on London Road. These lawned areas enhance the setting of the Regency terraces which front them and lend a sense of grandeur to the streetscape. The character area also abuts Sandford Park, which creates a welcome break in the dense urban grain along the High Street.

Despite the lack of public green space, the generous provision of private green space and street trees lends the character area an open, leafy character. Front gardens are prevalent across the character area, with much greenery retained even where the grounds of houses and villas have been partly given over to car parking. Incidental greenery, including hedging and trees within rear gardens, further contributes to the leafy character of the area.

Mature street trees are a defining feature of the Historic Formal Suburbs, channelling streetscape views, lending a formal, verdant character and providing seasonal interest.

The Cheltenham Ladies' College playing field forms a significant open space along the western edge of the area, contributing to a sense of openness and allowing longer-distance views across the surrounding landscape. The small playing field opposite Christ Church also permits glimpsed views of the open landscape south-east of Cheltenham.



Berkeley Garden is a crucial part of the setting for the Regency terraces which front it and lend a formal character to the streetscape.



The lawns separating the Regency terraces at Priory Parade and Oxford Parade from London Road form an important part of their setting and significantly enhance the streetscape.

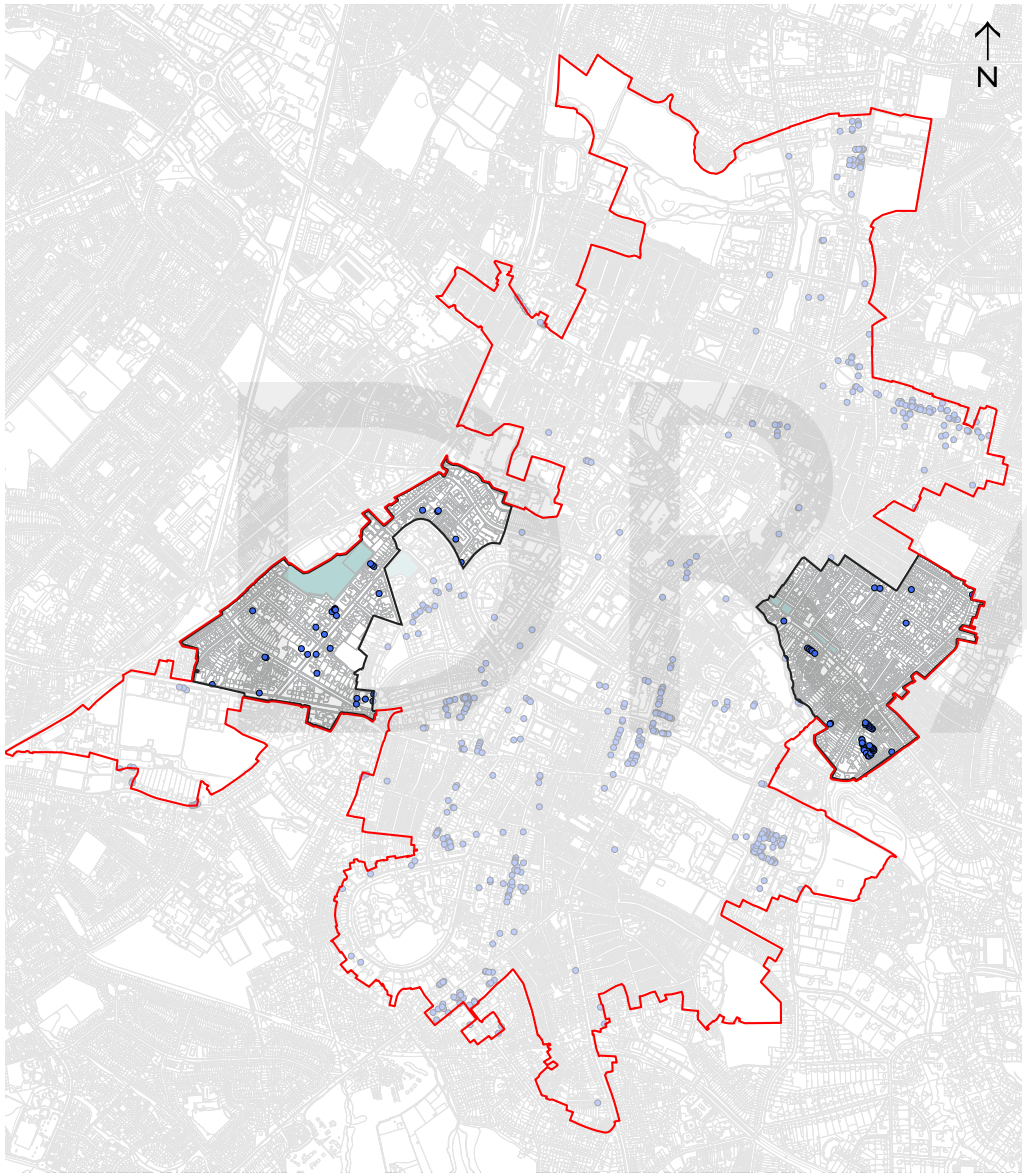


Mature street trees on Christ Church Road enhance the setting of the historic buildings and channel views towards Christ Church.



Sandford Park in the Artisan Quarters character area, viewed from the High Street.

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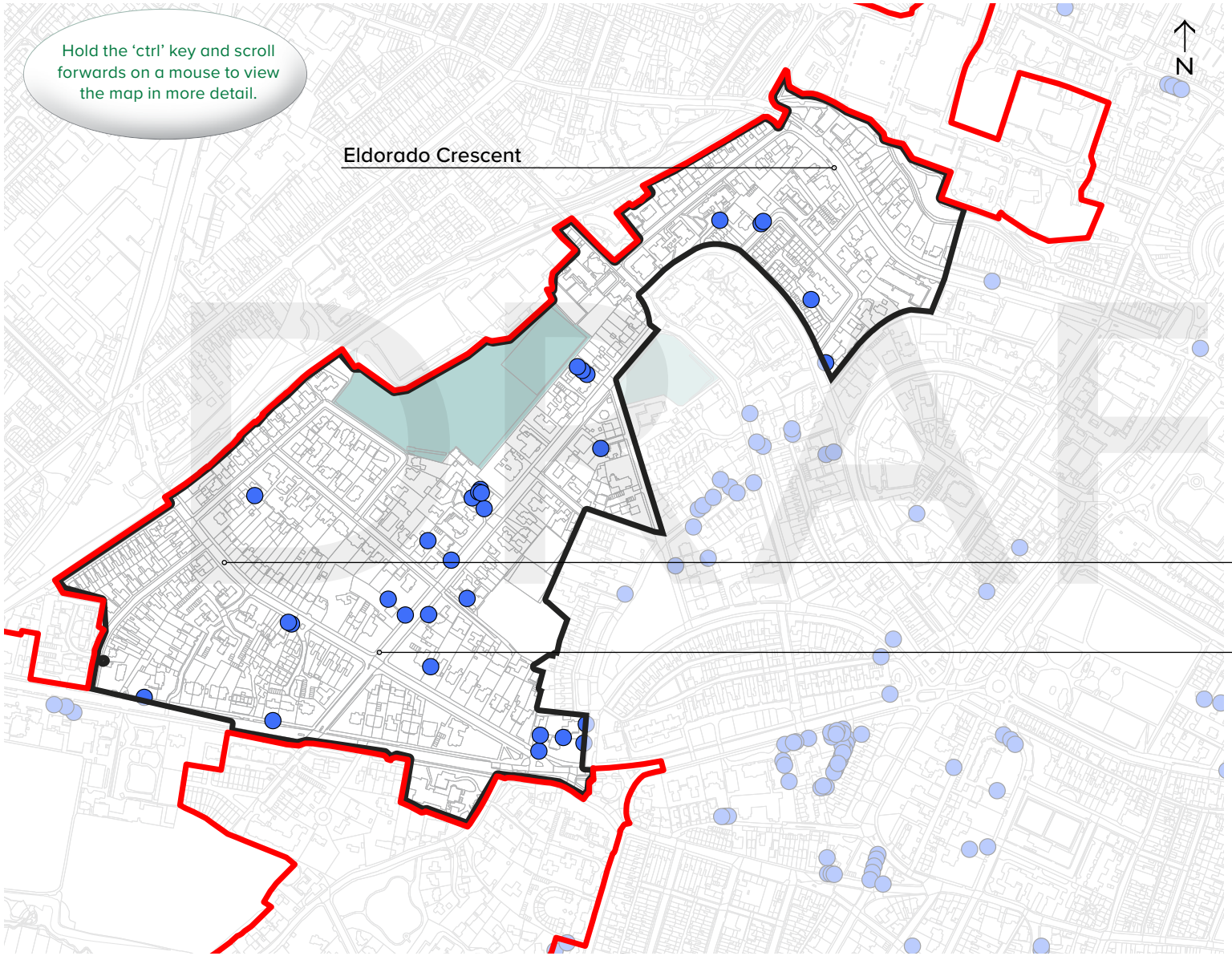
Trees and open spaces

- Proposed Conservation area boundary
- Historic Formal Suburbs Character Area boundaries
- Tree preservation order
- Important open spaces

This plan is not to scale

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The information provided in this map may not accurately reflect the existing data set. Up-to-date records can be found in the relevant interactive mapping resources, which are accessible via the Council's website.

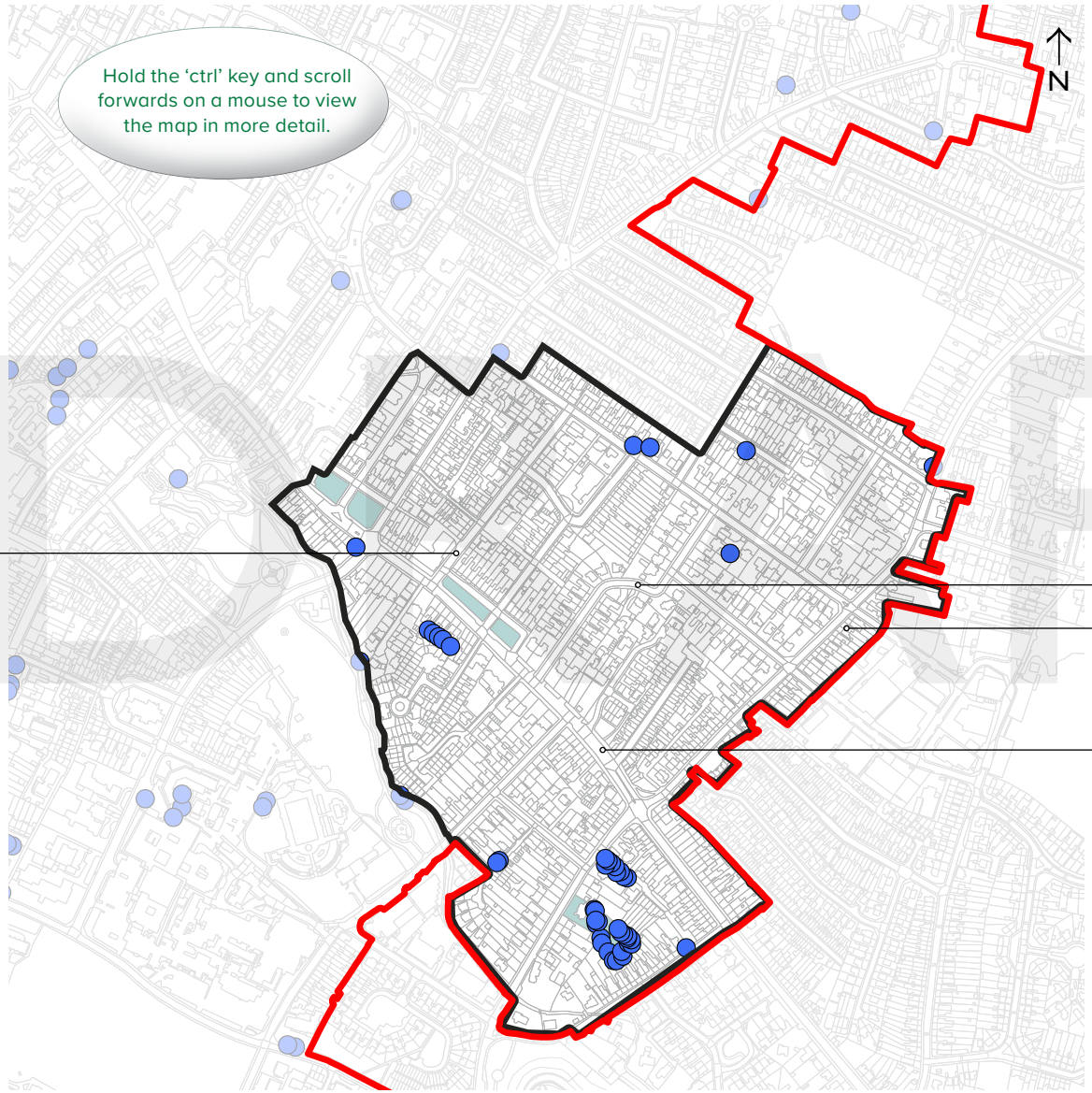


Trees and open spaces

- Proposed Conservation area boundary
- Historic Formal Suburbs character area
- Tree preservation order
- Important open spaces

This plan is not to scale

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3.7 Topography

The topography of the Historic Formal Suburbs character area is relatively flat, with subtle changes in level influencing the character of views within and beyond the boundary.

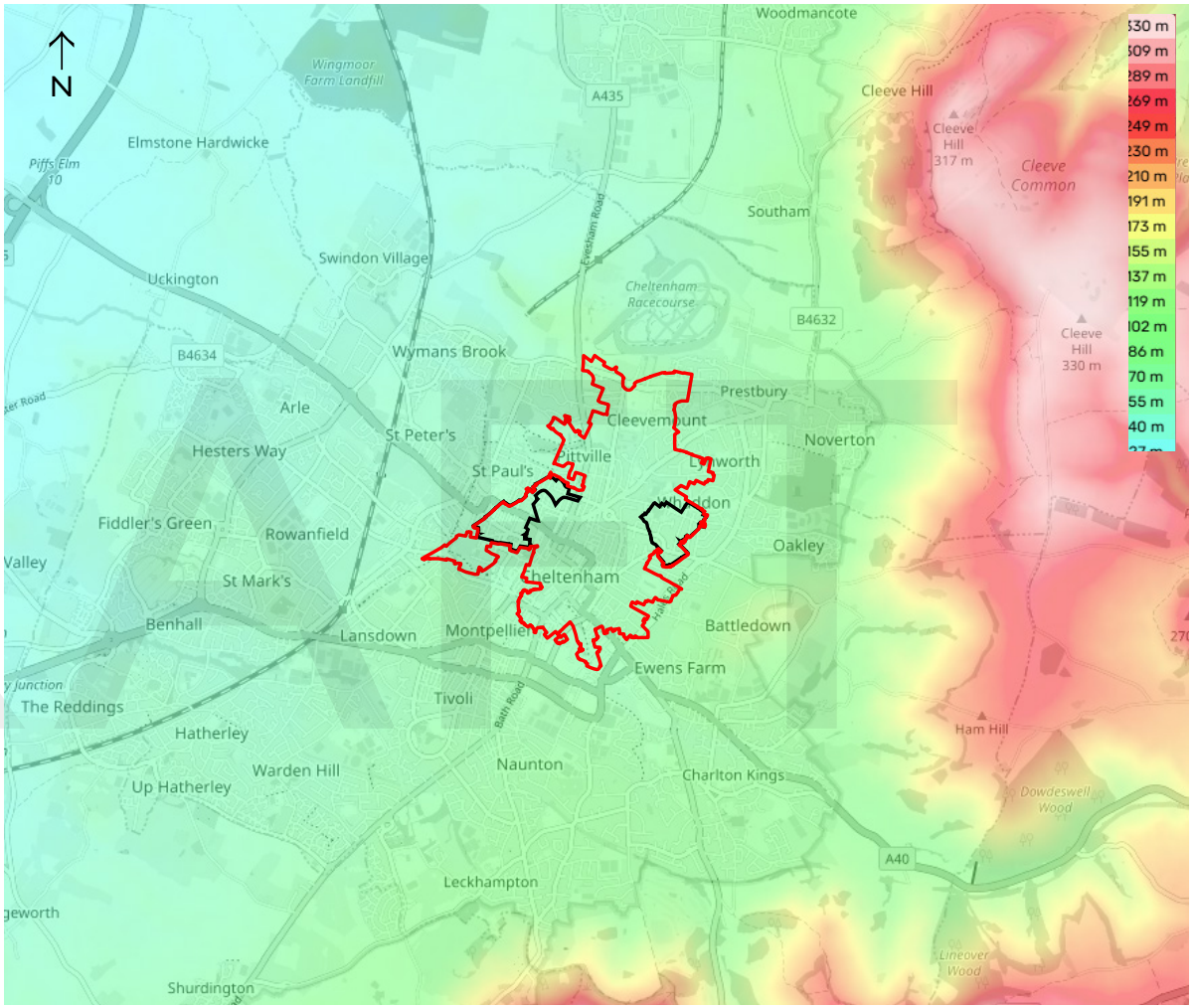
Overton Road and the top of Christ Church Road sit on elevated ground, affording long-distance views into the surrounding landscape to the south. The top of St George's Road is also slightly elevated, allowing for an appreciation of the street trees which flank this long, generous thoroughfare as it travels eastwards towards the town centre.

The dramatic topography of the surrounding landscape makes for striking views from various points within the character area into the landscape beyond. These views are discussed in more detail within Section 3.4.

3.8 Archaeology

The rapid expansion of Cheltenham during the 19th century likely resulted in the truncation of archaeological remains within the Planned Estates character area. However, there is some potential for deeper below-ground archaeology to survive as indicated by limited finds including an Anglo-Saxon iron spearhead on Sydenham Villas Road.[01]

Further information on the archaeological potential of the conservation area can be accessed via the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), which is maintained by Gloucestershire County Council. Portions of the HER database can be searched online via the website Heritage Gateway.[02]



Map showing relative topography in and around the Central Conservation Area. The coloured key represents the relative elevation of the terrain both within the Conservation Area boundary and in its wider setting. Source: OpenStreetMap (ODbL)

Proposed Conservation area boundary

Historic Formal Suburbs character area

This plan is not to scale

01 Cheltenham Borough Council, *Central Conservation Area Old Town Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan*, 2007.

02 https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/

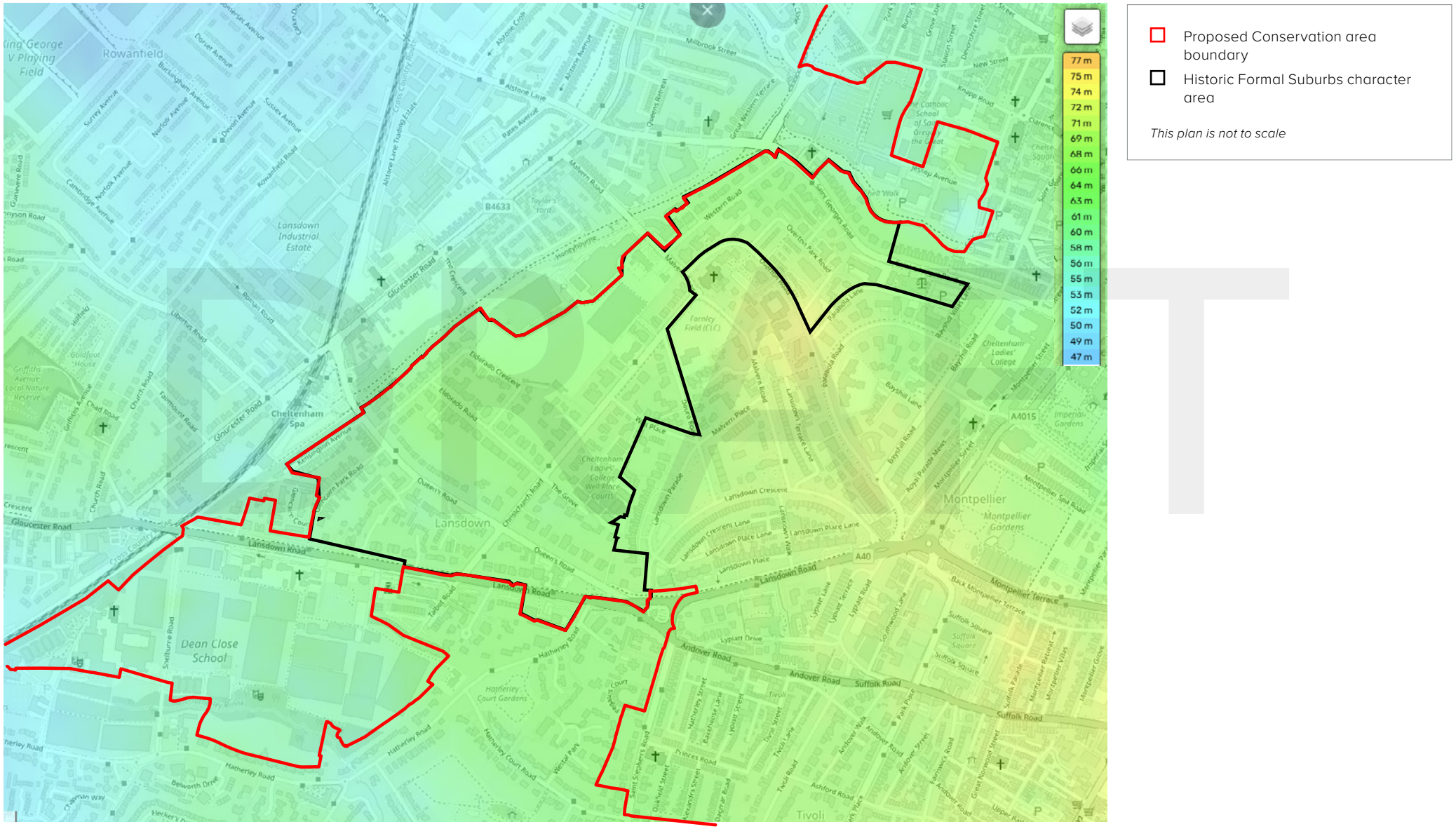


Relative topography around the Sydenham area. Source: OpenStreetMap (ODbL)

Proposed Conservation area boundary

Historic Formal Suburbs Character Area boundaries

This plan is not to scale



Relative topography to the west of Bayshill and Lansdown. Source: OpenStreetMap (ODbL)

4.0 Heritage assets

The Central Conservation Area is a heritage asset in its own right and contains numerous individual heritage assets. These include both listed and unlisted buildings and structures. A detailed assessment of heritage significance, specific to a building or site within the conservation area, should always be carried out prior to proposing any change.

The accompanying map shows the distribution of heritage assets as at March 2026. However, the National Heritage List for England via https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search/ and Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of Buildings of Local Interest should always be referenced for the most up to date records.

4.1 Listed buildings

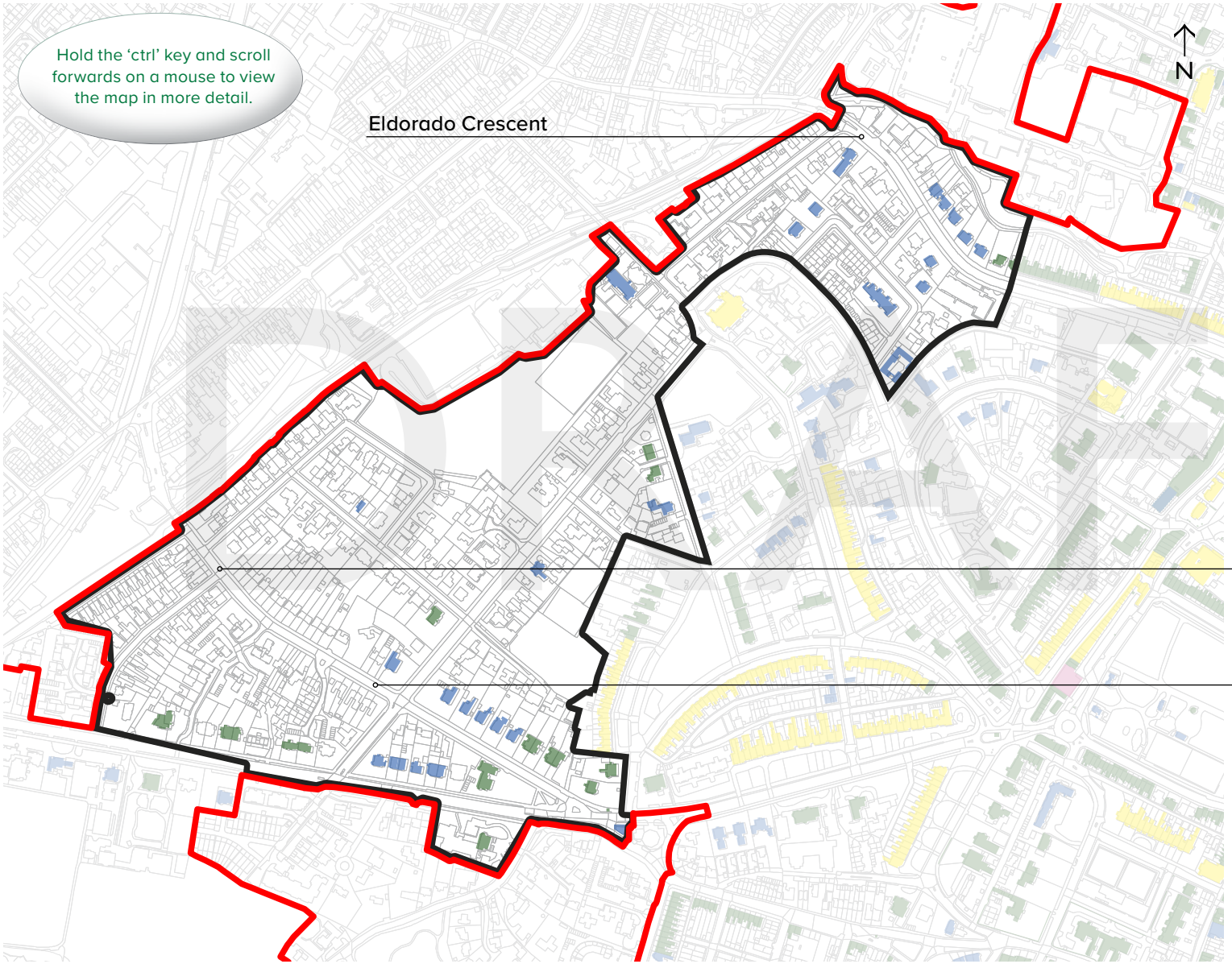
Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are designated for their architectural or historic interest. All listed buildings in England are designated at the recommendation of Historic England and details are recorded on the National Heritage List for England. Listings are ranked from Grade I (the highest level), Grade II* (in the middle) and Grade II (the lowest and most common level).

Statutory listing does not equate to a preservation order intended to prevent change. However, alterations to listed buildings will require listed building consent, which allows the local authority to make decisions that have been informed by an understanding of the building or site's heritage significance. Importantly, national and local planning policies also recognise that changes to un-listed buildings or sites in the setting of a designated heritage asset can affect its special interest.

4.2 Locally indexed buildings

Cheltenham Borough Council maintains an index of buildings of local interest. These are defined as buildings which do not meet the strict criteria for listing, but still make a special contribution to the history, appearance, character and cultural value of Cheltenham. Inclusion on the index does not affect any planning rights at the properties identified. However, the council will give careful consideration to the local importance of the property and its setting when considering any applications for planning or other consents. The council may consider action to protect the building if it is considered to be under threat of demolition or damage. The index is reviewed regularly and updated from time to time.

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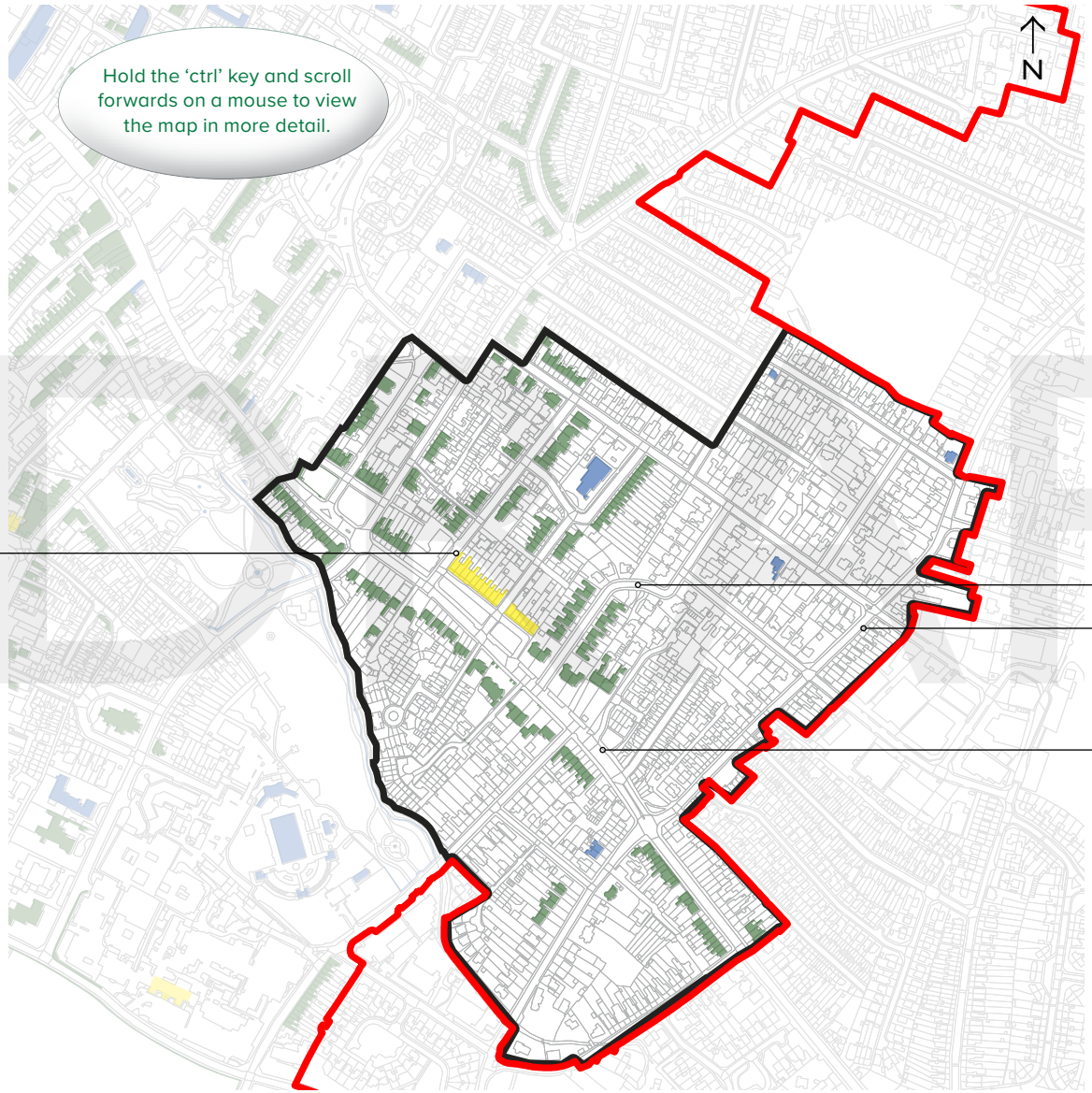


Heritage Assets Plan

- Conservation area boundary
- Historic Formal Suburbs character area
- Grade I listed building
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building
- Locally indexed building

This plan is not to scale

The information provided in this map may not accurately reflect the existing data set. Up-to-date records can be found in the relevant interactive mapping resources, which are accessible via the Council's website.



Heritage Assets Plan

- Conservation area boundary
- Historic Formal Suburbs character area
- Grade I listed building
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building
- Locally indexed building

This plan is not to scale

The information provided in this map may not accurately reflect the existing data set. Up-to-date records can be found in the relevant interactive mapping resources, which are accessible via the Council's website.

5.0 Challenges

5.1 Condition

Across the character area, a high proportion of buildings are generally in good condition and appear well maintained. There are some localised areas where lack of regular maintenance and/or inappropriate repair has seen a depreciation in condition. Many common problems could be easily addressed through regular maintenance or the appropriate repair.

There are isolated occurrences of poorly maintained joinery, failing render and peeling paintwork, which could be addressed through sensitive repair, the limited replacement of decayed elements and the application of appropriate finishes. Ensuring that rainwater is effectively managed, including keeping gutters and downpipes clear, will also help prevent further deterioration.

Render is common across the character area and there is potential for the use of inappropriate cementitous materials to stimulate or hasten the deterioration of built fabric. This is because traditional buildings (generally those built before 1919) utilised 'breathable' materials which facilitate the free passage of moisture through a structure. Although older buildings absorb more moisture than modern structures, this moisture should be able to evaporate in dry conditions. Modern cement-based renders and mortars are not breathable and prevent the evaporation of moisture from traditional buildings, thereby causing issues with damp and deterioration. Non-breathable paint applied over walls which were originally intended to be exposed can have a similar impact.

There are several instances throughout the character area where boundary walls are suffering from a lack of maintenance which manifests in vegetation growth, missing joints and deteriorating fabric. This could be remedied through the careful removal of vegetation and cementitious mortar and the localised replacement of masonry/brick, bedded in and pointed with lime mortar.



Inappropriate repairs to a historic masonry wall using hard cementitious mortar, which causes the masonry to deteriorate at an increased rate.

Where timber window units survive, these make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area and should be regularly maintained. Effective management of water run-off will also help to prevent timber decay.



Flaking paint to the side elevation of a historic villa.

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5.2 Detracting features and loss of historic details

There has been some replacement of traditional windows and doors with uPVC alternatives – for instance along Keynsham Road and to many of the interwar houses across the character area. The materials, style and position within the window reveal (i.e. flush with the elevation, rather than set back) of the uPVC replacements are detrimental to the character of the historic elevations and collectively detract from the special interest of the conservation area. Although they are often perceived to offer environmental benefits, the lifespan of uPVC windows is also considerably shorter than that of well-maintained timber windows and the units cannot be easily recycled. Similarly, the replacement of traditional timber doors with modern designs in uPVC result in features which are discordant with the character of the conservation area.

Rooflights on prominent roof slopes can also depreciate the special interest of the host building and wider streetscape.

There are instances where historic parapets have been clad with lead (for instance in Berkeley Street and sections of London Road) which detracts from the architectural integrity and visual uniformity of the formal terraces.

On some of the busier junctions within the character area, utilitarian street furniture detracts from the historic character of the streetscapes.

Similarly, the accrual of services such as security alarm boxes, satellite dishes and TV aerials detracts from the historic character of the streetscapes within the character area.

In many locations, historic boundary treatments such as low brick walls or railings set in stone plinths have replaced with modern shiplap fencing. This dilutes the historic character of the street scene and obscure glimpsed views of greenery in front gardens.



Utilitarian street furniture on the High Street.



Lost railings to a boundary wall on Sydenham Villas Road.

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5.3 Development pressures

It is acknowledged that there is pressure on housing numbers within the conservation area and that associated planning applications are likely to be submitted in the future. Providing additional residential units within historic urban environments, either by adding roof extensions or converting existing buildings, brings challenges including:

- Maintaining the character of the roofscape.
- Avoiding unsightly clutter to prominent elevations through giving careful consideration to the location and appearance of features such as fire-escape stairs and wastepipes.
- Avoiding the loss of historic features such as sash windows and/or the introduction of unsympathetic uPVC windows.
- Avoiding bulky and insensitive box dormers and rooflights, which can appear overly dominant and disrupt the restrained character of neo-classical architecture.

Where new-build development is proposed, the challenges will include:

- Preserving the integrity of views into and out of the character area and wider conservation area.
- Avoiding visual competition with key local landmarks.
- Incorporating landscaping improvements such as green spaces and street trees.
- Where relevant, ensuring continued legibility of historic plot boundaries.
- Responding to the proportions of historic plots and frontages, architectural details, roofscapes and materiality.
- Enhancing the setting of surrounding heritage assets.

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5.4 Traffic and parking

Parts of the Historic Formal Suburbs character area - notably Berkeley Street (which carries Cheltenham's Inner Ring Road), Hale's Road, Old Bath Road and Sandford Mill Road - carry a significant volume of traffic through the character area, resulting in areas of congestion and noise. There is considerable on-street parking on the residential streets, which detracts from the setting of the historic buildings. Many front gardens have been fully or partly lost to hard standing for car parking, reducing the small pockets of green space which would once have softened the urban environment.

5.5 Pressures on trees and green spaces

Trees and open spaces face a range of pressures within urban environments. Development proposals, including extensions, infill development, changes to access arrangements, and the installation of new infrastructure and services, can result in tree loss, root damage, or reductions in available growing space. Street trees may be particularly vulnerable where highway or utility works require excavation below pavements, while trees in private gardens can be affected by increased hard surfacing, subdivision of plots, and incremental development.

Climate change is likely to increase these challenges. More frequent periods of drought, higher temperatures, intense rainfall events, and storms may affect tree health, longevity, and resilience. The careful management and retention of mature trees, together with opportunities for new planting, will be important in maintaining the character, environmental quality, and landscape setting of the conservation area.

The Cheltenham Tree Strategy, published February 2026, provides further information and guidance around maintaining existing trees and planting new ones. The Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG) have also published resources on best practice to support the role of urban trees through the planning, design, construction and management of urban environments.[01]

Contact details for the trees team at Cheltenham Borough Council are provided in Appendix A.



Where front gardens have been given over to hard standing for car parking, as per this example at the top of Old Bath Road, this depreciates the setting of the streetscape.



Example of on-street parking along Priory Street.

01 https://www.tdag.org.uk/

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6.0 Opportunities for enhancement

6.1 General opportunities

There is scope to enhance the conservation area through addressing the minor but altogether detracting elements such as external accretions, management of rainwater goods and the appropriate repair of failing elements. Incrementally addressing these issues will have a positive impact and enhance the conservation area.

Although many of the uPVC windows which have already been installed are unlikely to require replacement in the near future, there is scope for any further replacement windows and doors to be carried out using styles, materials and methods that are better suited to enhancing the special interest of the conservation area. It would be especially beneficial for first-generation uPVC double-glazing, which is generally coming to the end of its life cycle, to be replaced with more suitable alternatives, rather than the more visually intrusive standard option.

The rationalisation of street furniture along busier thoroughfares would also enhance the streetscapes.

6.2 New development

When successfully delivered, new development within a conservation area responds to the proportions of historic buildings plots and frontages, existing architectural detailing, established roofscapes and materiality.

Successful, contextual design can be creative and contemporary, so long as it is rooted in a deep understanding of how a place develops and what makes it special. This also applies to developments within the setting of a conservation area.

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7.0 Future Management of the Historic Formal Suburbs character area

A management plan for the conservation area, including the Planned Estates character area, is provided within section 7.0 of the Cheltenham Central Conservation Area Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan: Overview Document. Please refer to this document for information on:

- Control measure associated with conservation area designation
- Aims and best practices in conservation areas
- Protocols for repair and replacement
- Maintenance
- Tree management
- New development
- Sustainability

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