CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL


Bath Road



Suffolk Parade


Montpellier Grove


Great Norwood Street

AUGUST 2026, VERSION 02

Character Area 4: Bath Road and Suffolks

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 Bath Road and Suffolks character area

The Bath Road and Suffolks character area includes the neighbourhoods of Bath Road and Suffolks. It comprises a collection of residential and commercial streets which grew up around the Cheltenham-Gloucester tramway and a number of high-status terraces and villas built to the south of the town centre during the early-mid 19th century. It includes the southern section of Bath Road between Shurdington Road and Cheltenham College, the northern extent of Shurdington Road, a portion of Suffolk Road, Montpellier Villas, Montpellier Grove, Suffolk Parade, Great Norwood Street and numerous modest residential streets in and around this area. Norwood Road, which cuts north-west to south-east across the character area, denotes the line of the historic Cheltenham-Gloucester tramway.

The historic and current uses across the character area are varied, including residential, commercial and recreational, alongside active places of worship.

1.2 Bath Road and Suffolks: summary of special interest

The special interest of the Bath Road and Suffolks character area is derived from:

- The enduring combination of residential, commercial and recreational uses which has characterised this part of Cheltenham since the early 19th century.
- Notable groups of uniform, artisan terraces with shared architectural details, materiality and building lines lending a strong sense of coherence.
- Formal terraces and villas which illustrate the expansion of Cheltenham during the Regency era and contribute significant architectural interest through their uniform appearance and architectural features including Georgian sash windows and historic ironwork.
- The survival of the the historic street plan the ability to read the line of the Cheltenham-Gloucester tramway which follows the line of Norwood Road.
- An association with John Forbes who designed the majority of buildings on Montpellier villas.
- Views of important streetscapes, landmarks, and the surrounding landscape.

Continuation of mixed-use character

The special interest of the Bath Road and Suffolks area is informed by the enduring combination of residential, commercial and recreational uses which has characterised this part of Cheltenham since the early 19th century. Historic and traditional commercial frontages to shops, pubs and cafes, particularly along Suffolk Road, Bath Road and Great Norwood Street, greatly enhance the character and appearance of the streetscapes and illustrate the evolution of South Town as a self-contained district to the south of the town centre. Although evidence of historic industrial activity is largely lost, this element of South Town's history is illustrated by Norwood Road, which preserves the line of the Cheltenham-Gloucester tramway.

The tramway was laid out in 1810 to transport stone from the quarries in Leckhampton coal from the Gloucester Docks into the rapidly development spa town at Cheltenham. The continued legibility of the tramway route enhances the historic interest of the character area.

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Groups of artisan terraces

The character area preserves coherent groups of modest two-storey terraces fronting narrow streets. These terraces were developed to support the industrial activities of the Cheltenham-Gloucester tranway and to accommodate various tradespeople and domestic servants serving wealthy residents and visitors on the formal streets to the north and west of the area. The distinctive character of these terrace groups is informed by:

- Architectural uniformity, with the repetition of modest details (such as timber sash windows, projecting cornices, parapets and brick chimney stacks).
- Shared materiality (generally pale-coloured render to the earlier terraces and with some examples of exposed red brick to later 19th-century examples).
- A shared building line.

Formal terraces and villas

The survival of several highly coherent formal terraces and groups of villas in the north and west of the character area affords a high degree of architectural and historic interest. As with the artisan terraces, these buildings are generally faced with render but have a higher degree of architectural detailing including rustication, decorative mouldings and historic ironwork in the form of railings and balconies. The retention of historic timber sash windows, timber doors and decorative fanlights is particularly notable and makes a strong contribution to the special interest of the conservation area.

Planform, configuration and urban grain

The historic planform of the South Town area is well preserved, with only minor changes evident since the 1855 survey of Cheltenham – namely the creation of the Bath Terrace and Commercial Street carparks. The ability to observe the historic line of the Cheltenham-Gloucester tramway, which follows the line of Norwood Road and connects Leckhampton Road in the south-east and Andover Road in the north-west, makes an important contribution to the special interest of the character area.

Association with architect John Forbes.

John Forbes, architect to the Pittville Estate and St Paul's Church in the Artisan Quarters character area, designed the majority of the buildings on Montpellier Villas. Forbes also lived at No. 31 Montpellier Villas for a short period in the 1820s.

Views of important streetscapes, landmark buildings and the surrounding landscape

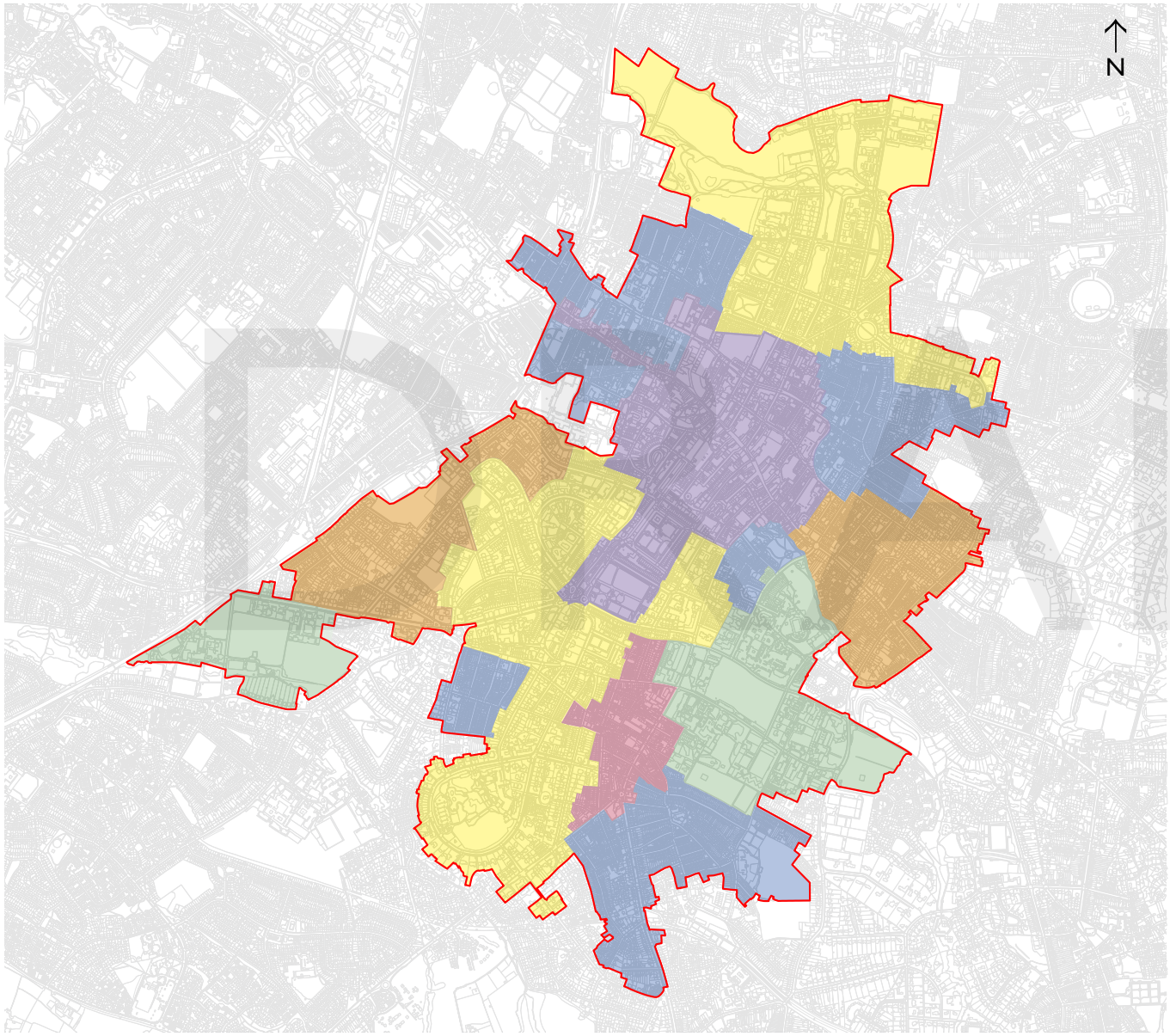
The Bath Road and Suffolks character area is characterised by linear streetscapes that create medium and long-distance vistas. These views allow appreciation of the area's cohesive terraces and semi-detached houses alongside historic commercial frontages and and prominent landmark buildings. Important views also connect South Town to landmark buildings beyond the character area, notably the Church of St Philip and St James, Eagle Tower, Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham College and the former Church of St James, which provide visual interest, reinforce historic character and aid orientation.

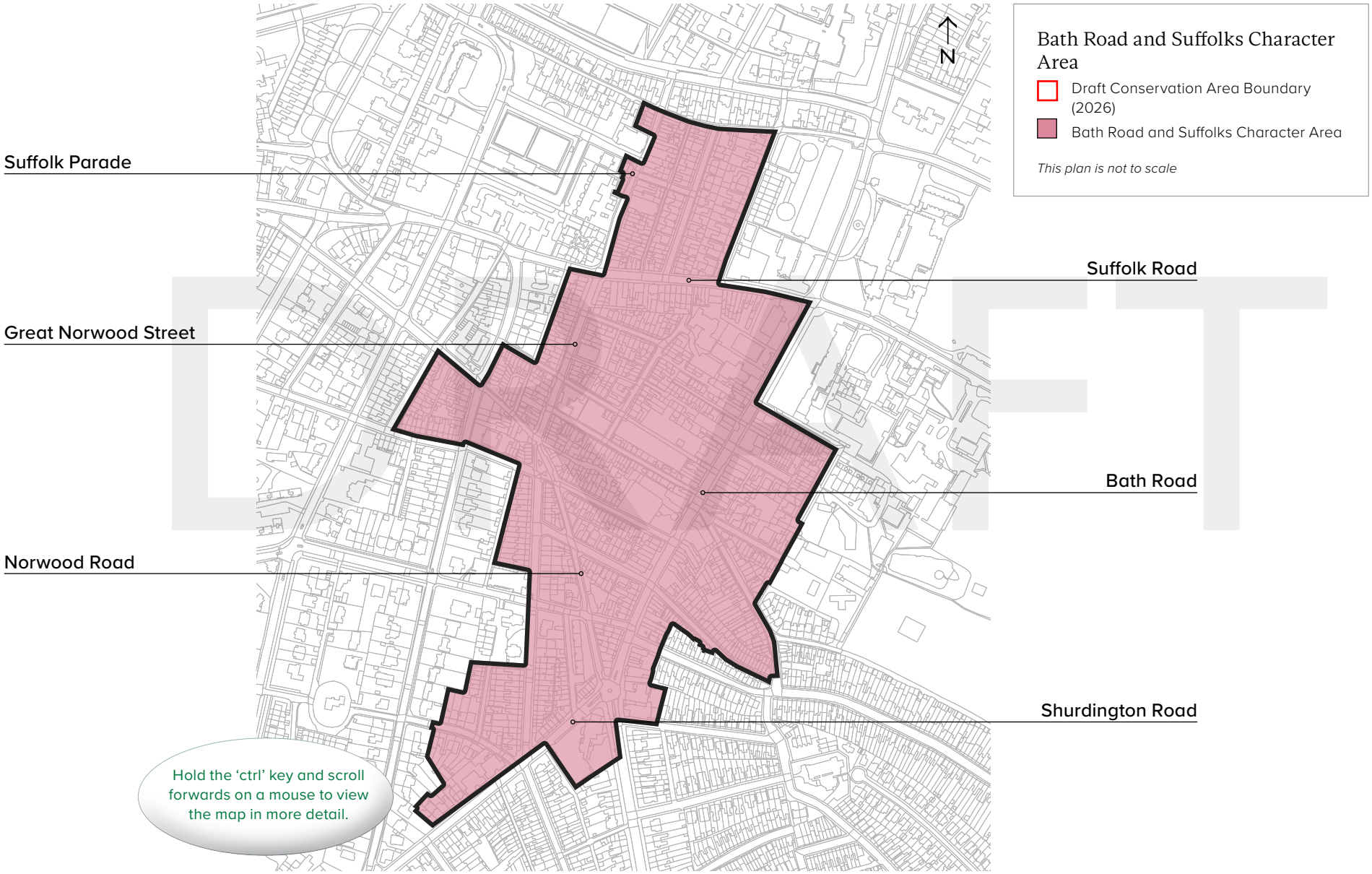
Equally significant are views of the wider landscape, particularly the Cotswold escarpment and Leckhampton Hill, which establish a strong relationship between the urban townscape and surrounding countryside.



Bath Road, c. 1905.

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Character Areas
Draft 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


Suffolk Parade
Great Norwood Street
Norwood Road
Suffolk Road
Bath Road
Shurdington Road
N
Bath Road and Suffolks Character Area
Draft Conservation Area Boundary (2026)
Bath Road and Suffolks Character Area
This plan is not to scale
Hold the 'ctrl' key and scroll forwards on a mouse to view the map in more detail.

2.0 Historical development

2.1 The Bath Road and Suffolks character area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area

This character area contains the district historically known as South Town, a distinctive collection of formal terraces and villas, shops, cafes, churches and artisan terraces to the south of the main town. The development of South Town was partly driven by the arrival of the Cheltenham-Gloucester tramroad, which transported quarried material from Leckhampton into Cheltenham and beyond and supported associated trades. Modest terraces were also built to house workers serving residents and visitors of the formal villas and terraces in this part of Cheltenham.



Bath Road, viewed from the south in aerial imagery from 1928, with awnings extending over the ground floor shopfronts.

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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]

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.*

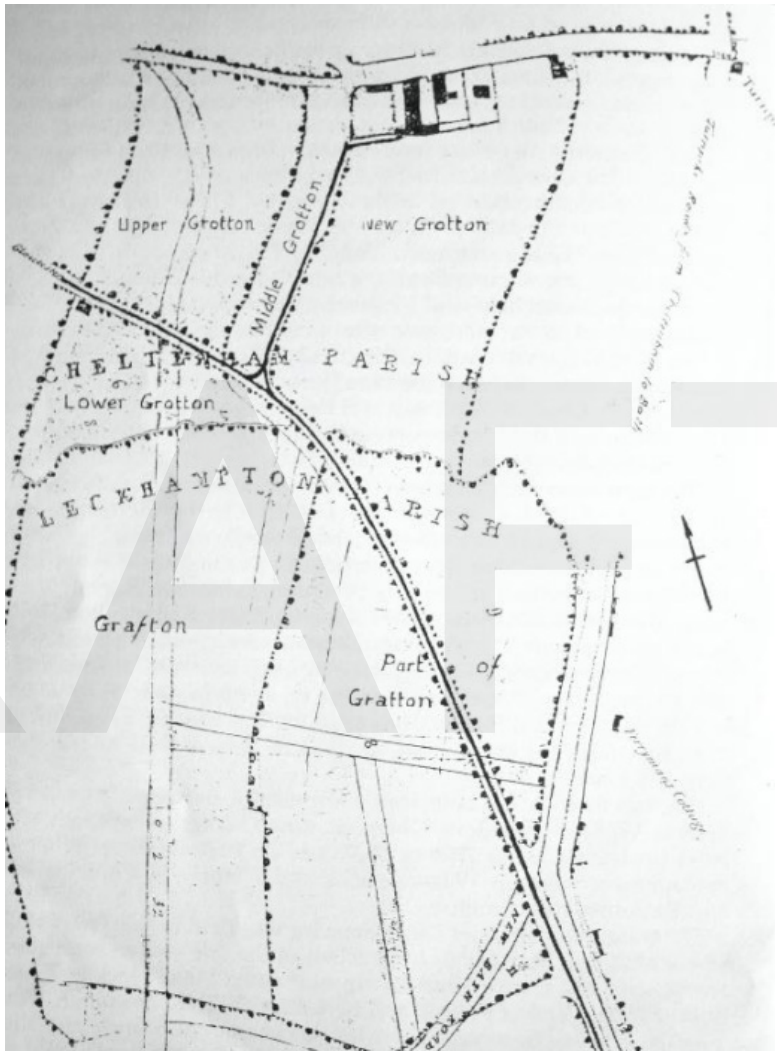
01 Gloucestershire County Council Historic Environment Record, Monument Nos. 5436, 5472 and 5475; Cheltenham Borough Council, *Central Conservation Area Old Town character area appraisal and management plan*, 2007.

2.3 Historical development of the Bath Road and Suffolks character area

To satisfy the need for building material during Cheltenham's rapid expansion in the early 19th century, a new horse-drawn tramroad was constructed to the south of the town, leading from the quarries on Leckhampton Hill along the line of Leckhampton Road, Norwood Road, Andover Road and Queen's Road, eventually connecting with the Gloucester Docks.

As the centre of Cheltenham began to expand, parcels of land to the south of the town were sold off to large landowners including Henry Thompson and John Howards, the 15th Earl of Suffolk. This saw the development of high-status housing developments in the north and west of the character area. Suffolk Parade was laid out by Henry Thompson around 1813, with plots on the east side of the street sold for development in 1820. Some of the first houses along this street contained street-fronting shops at ground floor level.[02] Park Place (in the Planned Estates character area) was laid out by Pearson Thompson in 1822-23, with the first houses built in 1824. Great Norwood Street was built in 1825.

To serve the genteel population of these exclusive streets, a proliferation of artisan housing grew up along and to the west of Bath Road, which had been laid out as a turnpike road in 1820. By 1834, a number of narrower roads containing artisan terraces had been constructed to the east and west of Bath Road, including Suffolk Street, St Phillip's Street, Upper Bath Street, Bath Terrace, Clare Street and Victoria Retreat. Bath Road itself developed as a commercial district over the course of the 1830s.



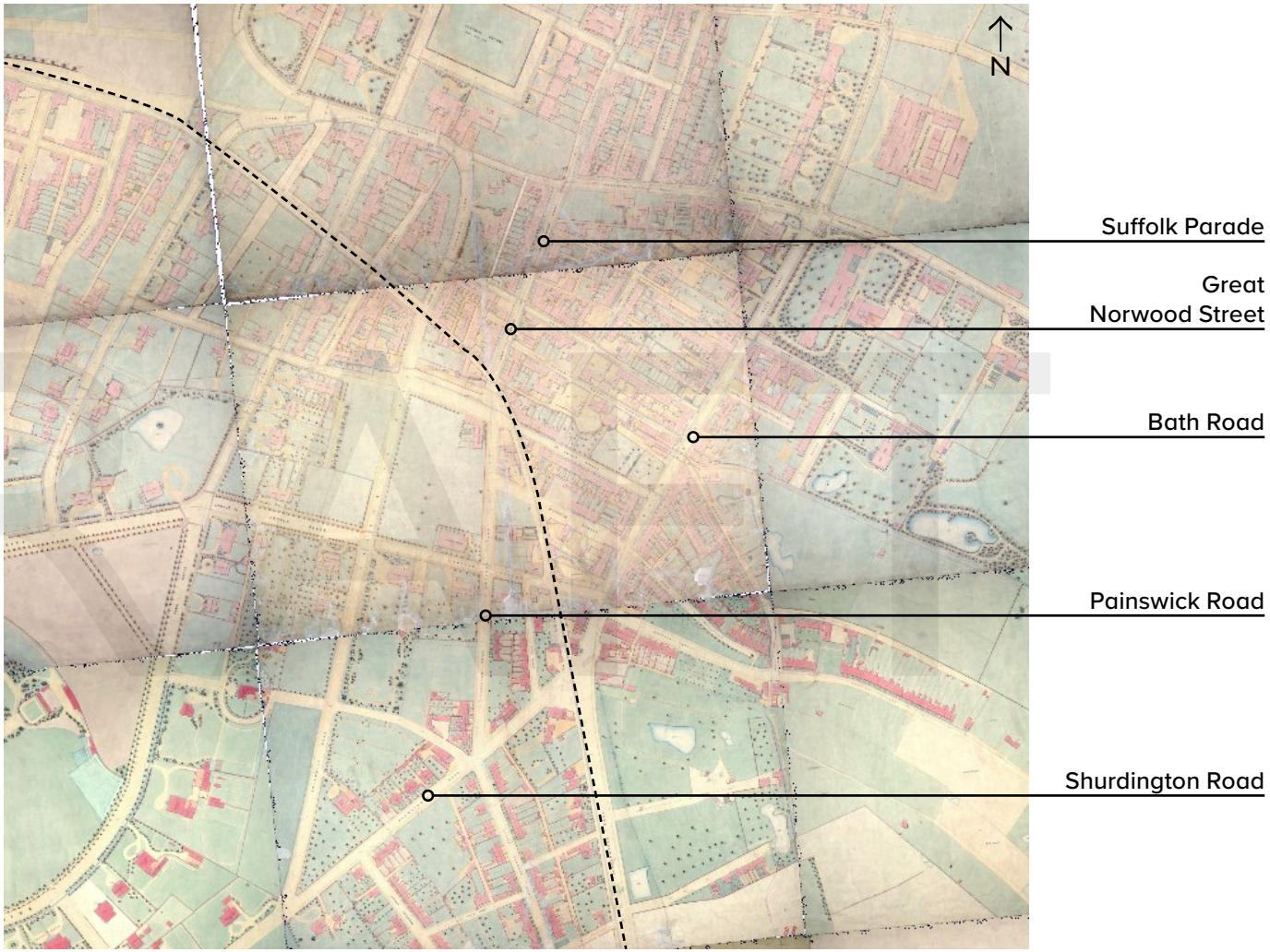
The South Town area shown in an early 19th-century map, after the tramroad was laid out but before the majority of the streets in the area were built. https://cheltenhamsouthtown.org.uk/

02 https://cheltenhamsouthtown.org.uk/home/southtown/

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By the mid-1840s, the Upper Bath Road area was fully developed with modest housing, shops, bakeries, brew houses and inns alongside workshops, stonemason's yards and coal and timber wharfs associated with the tramway. The district served the wealthy houses around The Park estate, supplied goods and services to Cheltenham College, and transported materials along the tramroad towards Cheltenham and the Gloucester Docks.

Bethesda Methodist Church on Great Norwood Street was built between 1845 and 1856. St James's School was constructed in 1864. The tramroad, the line of which can be seen on the 1855 map of Cheltenham closed in 1861.



The Bath Road and Suffolks character area as shown in a map of Cheltenham from 1855. *Know Your Place*.

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Historic maps show the South Town area remained largely unchanged over the second half of the 19th and into the early 20th century. Changes include the construction of the Daffodil Cinema and the expansion of St James's School along Bethesda Street in the early 1920s.

During the second half of the 20th century, there has been some residential infill development, and the sites of remaining 19th-century coal and timber yards have been developed into terraced houses. In the later 20th century, a number of residential terraces on Bath Terrace were demolished to make way for the Bath Terrace Car Park.

In recent decades, the commercial character of the area has been reinforced through the emergence of specialist shops, bars, restaurants and cafés.



The Bath Road and Suffolks character area as shown in the 1955 Ordnance Survey.

3.0 Assessment of special interest

3.1 Built form and architecture

19th-century terraced housing

The Bath Road and Suffolks character area contains a high proportion of modest 19th-century terraced housing. The terraces are generally two storeys in height and two bays wide. Terraces along the residential streets tend to have a more unified appearance, whilst those to Bath Road have a greater variety in terms of age, height and massing. Throughout, terraces generally follow a consistent building line which creates a strong sense of visual cohesion.

The artisan terraces are generally characterised by:

- Simple, compact plan forms and narrow plot widths.
- Consistent building lines with terraces either fronting directly onto the street or set back behind small gardens.
- Façades finished with pale render.
- Shallow pitched roofs, frequently concealed behind parapets.
- Linear roofscapes.
- Brick chimney stacks.
- Vertically proportioned timber sliding sash windows (many now replaced with modern alternatives).
- Continuous cornices and string courses.
- Low brick boundary walls, railings or small front gardens, where terraces do not front directly onto the street.

The character area also contains some formal, historically higher-status terraces built during the Regency era, most concentrated to the west where South Town meets the Park Estate. Examples of these coherent terraces can be found along Suffolk Road, Montpellier Villas, Suffolk Parade, Grafton Road, Gratton Road and Great Norwood Street. They are characterised by a higher degree of architectural detailing, including rusticated ground floors, decorative fanlights and (in the case of Great Norwood Street) iron balconies at first floor level.



Artisan terraces on St Philips Street.



Formal terraced housing on the west side of Great Norwood Street.

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Semi-detached houses

Although terraced housing is the dominant typology within the character area, there are also a number of semi-detached houses within the character area. These are predominantly located along Montpellier Villas and Montpellier Grove. Montpellier Villas contains numerous houses designed by John Forbes, architect and surveyor to the Pittville Estate, in the 1820s. These houses exhibit typical Regency features including stucco and ashlar finishes, six-over-six timber sash windows, moulded cornices and decorative ironwork in the form of railings, balconies and door canopies.

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Semi-detached houses on Montpellier Grove.

Historic commercial frontages

Historic commercial frontages make an important contribution to the character of South Town, and are found in many areas including Suffolk Road, Suffolk Parade, Great Norwood Street, Bath Road and the top of Shurdington Road.

Historic and traditional shopfronts tend to incorporate a stallriser (a platform below the shop window), glazing articulated by mullions and transoms (horizontal and vertical glazing bars) and a fascia which advertises the name of the business. The fascia may be flanked by corbels at either end and may sit under a projecting moulded cornice. Traditional shopfronts follow the proportions established by the host building; fascias in terraced buildings generally respect party wall divisions and are situated well below first-floor window cills so upper windows are not obscured.

The Bath Road and Suffolks area also contains many historic public houses which would once have served the artisan populations in this part of Cheltenham. The Five Alls and the Exmouth Arms (Bath Road), the Suffolk Arms (Suffolk Street) and The Beehive (Montpellier Villas) all retain large timber-framed windows at ground floor level, which enhance their historic commercial character.



A 19th-century terrace incorporating historic shopfronts at the top of Bath Road.



Detail of a traditionally styled shopfront on Great Norwood Street.



Shopfronts and a historic public house (The Five Alls) on the east side of Bath Road.



Traditional shopfronts on Suffolk Parade.

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Institutional and ecclesiastical buildings

The Bethesda Methodist Church on Great Norwood Street (1845-46) occupies a prominent position in the streetscape. It is constructed in a Gothic Revival style, with tall lancet windows fronting Great Norwood Street, and is faced in ashlar. A few metres south is the former St James National School of 1864, which is also a Gothic Revival building constructed with regularly coursed rubble limestone.

The Providence Baptist Chapel on Naunton Parade (1870) also uses a Gothic style, but has a more domestic character due to its diminutive scale, timber bargeboards small, pitched porches.

The Gothic Church of St Philip and St James, located just within the Planned Estates character area, is also a prominent ecclesiastical building and functions as a local landmark across South Town.



The former St James National School.


Looking down Great Norwood Street, with the ashlar clad façade of the Bethesda Methodist Chapel on the left.

20th and 21st-century development

Although not characteristic of South Town, there are a few interwar and mid-20th-century buildings, notably the former Daffodil Cinema (1922) on Great Norwood Street and the semi-detached houses along Tryes Road in the south of the character area.

There is some modern infill development along Bath Road, and some small groups of modern houses (e.g. Suffolk Villas on Suffolk Road).



The former Daffodil Cinema, built in 1922, on Suffolk Parade.



Suffolk Villas, built on Suffolk Road c.2002.

3.2 Materials

Common materials across the Bath Road and Suffolks character area include:

Render and stucco: often applied over brick, is the most prevalent finish across the character area and is 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. In some locations, painted render in soft pastel tones enlivens the streetscape. 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 most commonly seen in historic boundary walls and chimney stacks. However, there are some instances where exposed red brick is visible on principal elevations – to a run of terraces on St Philips Street and the Exmouth Arms on Bath Road, for example. Exposed brick to principal elevations illustrates later 19th-century development and contrasts to the characteristic pale render found across most of the character area.

Stone: stone is also less prevalent than render but can be found in the form of ashlar to some of the formal villas and terraces in the character area and Bethesda Methodist Church. Rubble stone is found to the former St James School and the Church of St Philip and St James (in the Planned Estates character area). The Regency terraces at 19-39 Great Norwood Street appear to be constructed of rubble stone, which is visible to the side elevation of No. 39.

Slate: Welsh slate is the dominant roofing material across the character area and is a unifying feature of both domestic and institutional buildings.

Timber: timber is traditionally used for windows and doors, most notably in the form of vertically-sliding sash windows which are a defining feature of the character area – particularly to the formal terraces and villas to the north and west. Timber is also found to historic and traditionally styled shopfronts throughout the character area.

Iron: decorative ironwork is an important component of the historic streetscape, found in the form of railings, balconies and to a lesser extent door canopies. The continuous iron balconies along the three-storey terrace on the west side of Great Norwood Street makes a particularly strong contribution to the special interest of the character area.



Iron balconies and historic timber sash windows on Great Norwood Street.

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, render and glass.



Rendered façades to a formal terrace on Suffolk Parade.



Rubble stone to the former St James School on Great Norwood Street.

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3.3 Urban grain, configuration, direction of movement

The Bath Road and Suffolks character area is generally characterised by a tight urban grain formed by dense terraces along on narrow streets. This density is relieved in places by wider roads (notably Suffolk Road, Great Norwood Street, Bath Road and Shurdington Road).

Bath Road, which runs north-south across the eastern edge of the character area, has a broad and generally linear planform. The street is lined predominantly by terraced buildings, which front directly onto the pavement on the eastern side of the road. Some of the residential properties on the western side of the road are set back behind small gardens. Suffolk Road and Shurdington Road, also principal historic thoroughfares, are also wide and linear. The buildings on Suffolk Road directly front the pavement, creating a sense of enclosure which is alleviated by glimpsed views of mature trees to the north and south. Shurdington Road has a more open character, with a number of buildings set behind planted front gardens and views of the outlying hills terminating the view to the north.

The residential streets leading east and west off Bath Road are narrow and linear, and lined with dense terraced housing. In around half of the streets, the majority of buildings front directly onto the highway, with the other half set behind small front gardens. The sense of enclosure is strong across these residential streets, with the effect of this most keenly felt where the streets are narrowest (Victoria Retreat and Upper Bath Street).

Where historically higher status villas and terraces predominate - as at Suffolk Parade, Great Norwood Street, Montpellier Villas and Gratton Road, for example - more generous thoroughfares and deeper front gardens (many containing greenery) provide a looser grain. Casino Place, the narrow service lane behind Great Norwood Street, illustrates historic servicing arrangements for the high-status Regency terraces.

The planform of the Bath Road and Suffolks character area preserves the line of the former tramway, which ran along Leckhampton Road, Norwood Road and Andover Road and runs north-west to south-east across the character area. The ability to read the line of the tramway, which stimulated early development around South Town in the late Georgian period, enhances the special interest of the character area.

Movement levels throughout the Bath Road and Suffolks character area are generally high owing to the presence of two principal routes into Cheltenham via Shurdington Road/Bath Road from the south-west and Suffolk Road from the east and west. Commercial activity also generates significant foot traffic, particularly on Bath Road.

Traffic movement within the residential streets is typically more limited owing to their narrower plan form and, in some cases, one-way traffic arrangements, although these streets continue to experience regular pedestrian activity associated with the mixed residential and commercial character of the area.

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The generous proportions of Bath Road alleviate the impact of the tightly arranged terraces which often front the highway directly.



Along with Bath Road and Shurdington Road, Suffolk Road is a principal thoroughfare and has correspondingly generous proportions.



Looking down Hermitage Street from Bath Road. This is a typical example of a street containing early-Victorian artisan terraces in South Town - with relatively narrow proportions and many properties fronting directly onto the highway.

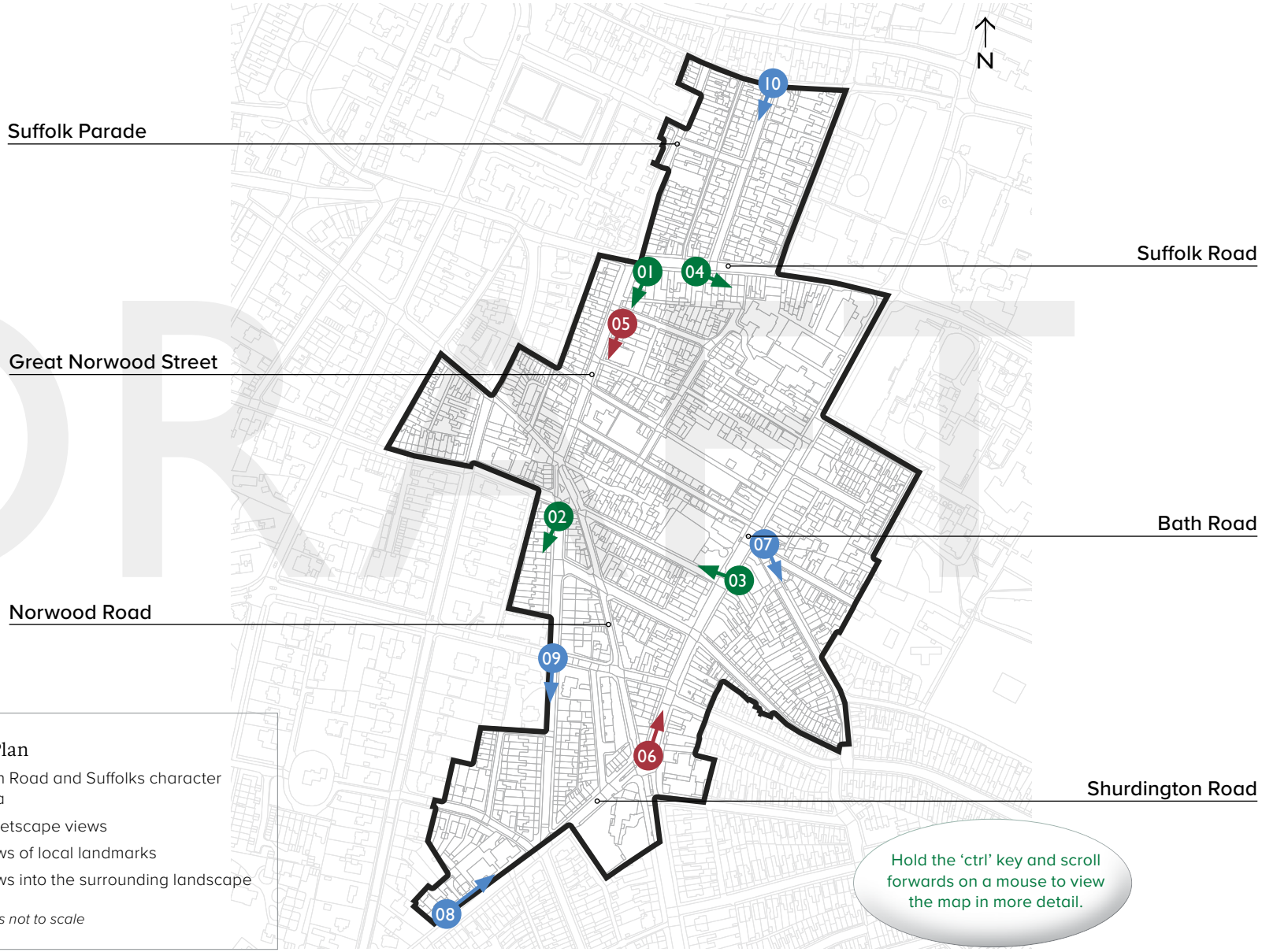


Chapel Lane, one of several very narrow lanes around Bath Road.

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3.4 Key views

There are several types of views which contribute to and enhance the special interest of the Bath Road and Suffolks 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.



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3.4.1 Streetscape views

The streetscapes within the Bath Road and Suffolks character area are predominantly defined by a strong linear form, which creates a series of medium and long-distance vistas. Groups of terraces lining many of the streets establish a strong sense of enclosure, which is alleviated where multiple streets converge at junctions (e.g. Norwood Road, Great Norwood Street, Gratton Road and Andover Road) and by occasional pockets of open space and greenery in small front gardens. Streetscape views allow for an appreciation of the architectural cohesion across groups of terraces and villas, as well as the many historic and traditional shopfronts which lend a strong commercial character.



View 01: Looking south along the coherent Regency terraces on the west side of Great Norwood Street from the junction with Suffolk Road.



View 02: The historic integrity of the terraces along Gratton Road is appreciable in this streetscape view. The copper-clad tower of the Church of St Philip and St James is also prominent in the background.



View 03: A streetscape view along St Philips Street, illustrating the architectural coherence of the artisan terrace.



View 04: A streetscape view along the south side of Suffolk Road, incorporating various historic shopfronts and illustrating the historic commercial character of the townscape.

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3.4.2 Views of key landmarks

The Bath Road and Suffolks character area contains several structures which are particularly prominent within local streetscape views. These include Bethesda Methodist Chapel, the former St James School, the three-storey terraces on Great Norwood Street and the former Daffodil Cinema on Suffolk Parade.

There are also a number of important views incorporating landmark structures within other character areas, including:

- The Church of St Philip and St James, in the Planned Estates character area. This structure is highly prominent from various vantage points within the Bath Road and Suffolks character area, with particularly notable vistas southwards towards the church tower along Suffolk Parade and Great Norwood Street.
- Eagle Tower, within the Planned Estates character area, which is highly prominent in views northwards along Bath Road.
- Thirlestaine House and the Cheltenham College buildings, within the Institutional Quarters character area, which are visible from the top of Bath Road.
- The former Church of St James, in the Planned Estates character area, is prominent in streetscape views along Suffolk Parade.

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



View 05: A key vista along Great Norwood Street towards the Church of St Philip and St James, with Leckhampton Hill rising behind.



View 06: Looking north-north-east along Bath Road towards Eagle Tower.

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3.4.3 Views into the surrounding landscape

Important views of the wider landscape, particularly towards the Cotswold escarpment and Leckhampton Hill, are experienced from a number of locations within the Bath Road and Suffolks character area. These views establish a strong visual relationship between the urban townscape and the surrounding countryside, contributing significantly to the character of the area and enhancing the setting of historic buildings (particularly the Church of St Philip and St James).

Views of the Cotswold escarpment are particularly evident in views eastwards along Naunton Parade, Exmouth Street, Hermitage Street, and Suffolk Street.

A particularly attractive vista is experienced at the junction of Bath Road and Leckhampton Road, where mature trees frame the entrance to Leckhampton Road and allow distant views of Leckhampton Hill to form a focal point within the townscape.

Leckhampton Hill is prominent in views along Leckhampton Road at the junction with Bath Road, at the junction of Norwood Road and Great Norwood Street and along Upper Norwood Street, Moorend Crescent, Montpellier Villas and Edward Street. In views along Great Norwood Street, Leckhampton Hill forms the backdrop to the steeple of the Church of St Philip and St James.

The Cheltenham escarpment is also prominent in views north-east along Shurdington Road and Bath Road.



View 07: Looking east along Exmouth Street from Bath Road towards the Cotswold escarpment.



View 08: Looking north-east along Shurdington Road towards the outlying hills.



View 09: Looking south-east along Edward Street towards Leckhampton Hill.



View 10: Looking south along Montpellier Villas, with Leckhampton Hill visible over the terraces on Suffolk Road.

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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 Bath Road and Suffolks character area is variable.

There are many traditional boundary treatments which make a strong contribution to the historic character of the area. Historic red brick walls are found in multiple areas, including Shurdington Road, Gratton Road and St Philips Street. Historic and traditionally styled iron railings are also a consistent feature within the streetscapes and can be found along Gratton Road, St Philips Street and Great Norwood Street, for example. Low hedging is common to small front gardens throughout the character area and softens the streetscapes where it is present. There are localised examples where historic gate piers survive (e.g. along Gratton Road).

Some historic street furniture survives, predominantly in the form of pillar boxes (for instance on Bath Road and Shurdington Road) and street name plates. Traditionally styled streetlamps on Bath Road enhance the character of the conservation area, whilst the more utilitarian examples found elsewhere are less sympathetic.

Surface materials across the character area are predominantly modern, with roads generally finished in tarmac with concrete kerbs and pavements formed from concrete slabs, flags or tarmac.

Street furniture such as benches and bins is relatively limited and generally concentrated along the wider roads, with seating also provided at the 'Norwood Triangle' off Nowrood Road. These features are typically modest in number and functional in design.

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A historic brick boundary wall topped with traditionally styled iron railings on Great Norwood Street.



A historic cast iron nameplate on Chapel Lane.



A traditionally styled streetlamp on the Bath Road roundabout.



Historic pillarbox on Shurdington Lane.



Traditional iron railings to terraced houses on the east side of Gratton Road.

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3.6 Trees and open spaces

The Bath Road and Suffolks character area is generally characterised by its compact urban grain, which restricts the provision of both public and private green space.

The garden of the Exmouth Arms on Bath Road and the allotments to the rear, shown in the 1855 map of Cheltenham as a landscaped green and bowling green respectively, provide the most prominent green space within the character area. The space creates a welcome break in the dense urban grain, with greenery glimpsed over the brick boundary wall and railings which enclose it to the east and south. Mature trees on the south-western boundary of the allotments soften the streetscape along St Philips Street and Bath Road.

Another important open space within the character area is the Norwood Triangle, at the intersection of Norwood Road and Gratton Road. This space, which is located adjacent to the line of the historic tramway, provides street trees and planting and effectifvely softens the streetscape in this densely developed part of the town.

Private gardens also make an important contribution to the character of South Town. Whilst front gardens are generally limited in size due to the compact arrangement of terraced housing, they frequently contain planting, shrubs and hedging which soften the streetscapes. Larger front gardens are evident along Gratton Road and Montpellier Grove, where they contribute to a greater sense of spaciousness and enhance the setting of the formal villas and terraces. Elsewhere, long and narrow rear gardens often contain substantial greenery, with trees and vegetation visible above boundary treatments and between buildings in longer streetscape views.

Street tree planting within South Town is generally limited due to the density of the urban grain and the tendency for buildings to front directly onto the pavement. However, more generous streets such as Gratton Road and Suffolk Parade are able to accommodate mature trees, which creates a comparatively leafy and formal character in these locations. Mature trees on the southern boundary of the Norwood Arms car park are also prominent in views along Shurdington Road on the approach to Bath Road.

The extensive green space and mature trees around Cheltenham College and Thirlestaine House enhance the setting of the character area and mark the transition between the dense urban character of South Town and the formal, verdant character of the Institutional Quarters.

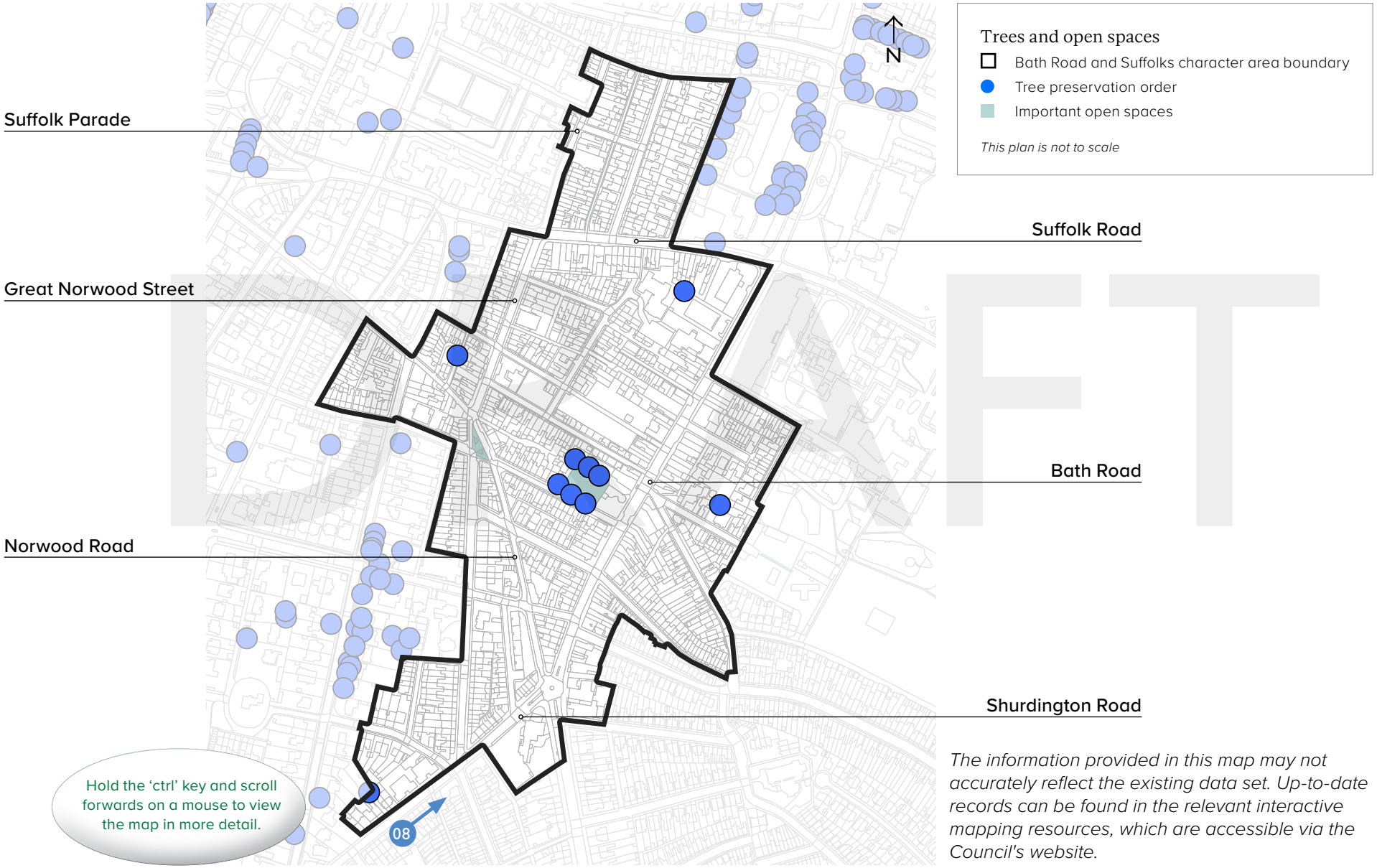


Trees in the allotments off St Philips Street soften the streetscape.



Mature trees in and around the grounds of Cheltenham College are highly visible in long vistas down Bath Road.

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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.

3.7 Topography

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

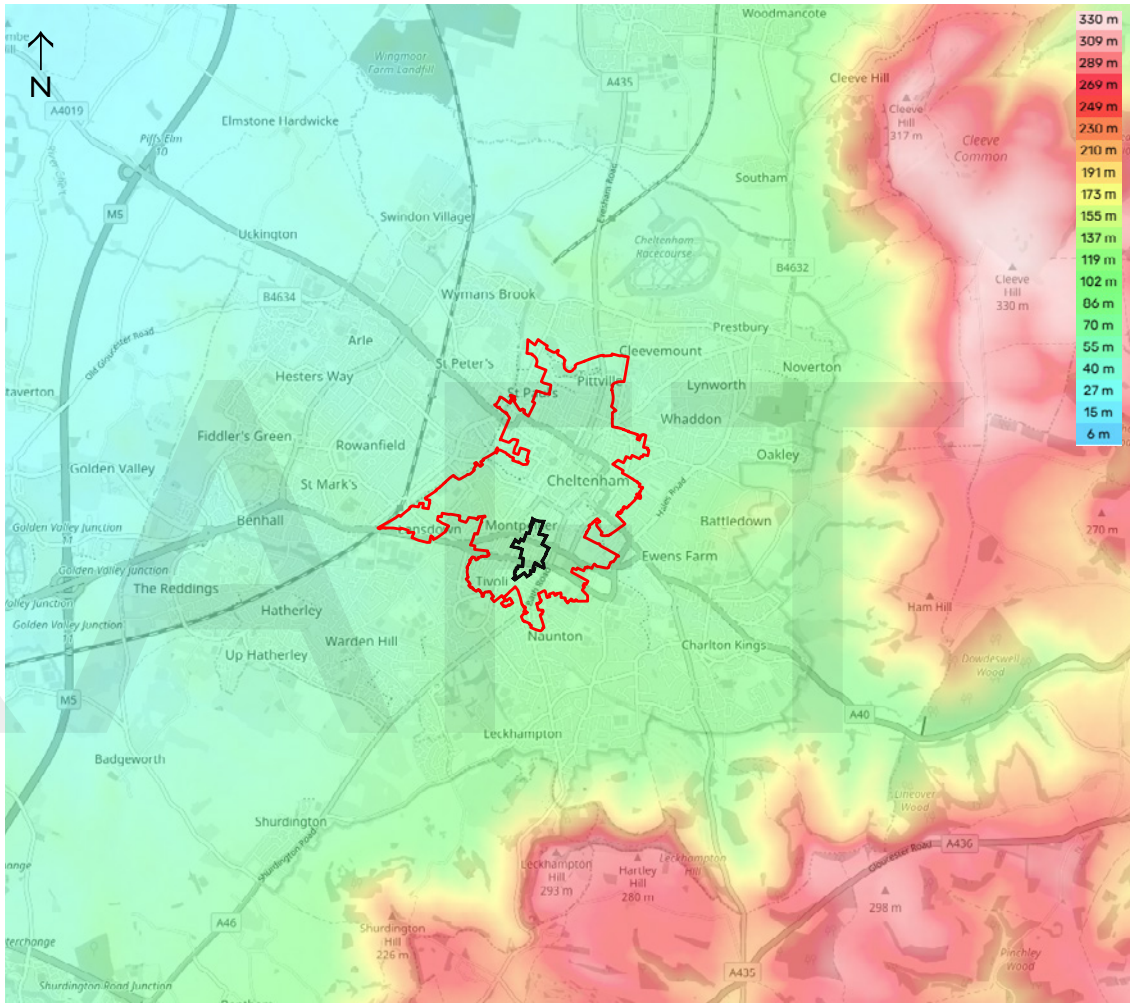
The land rises slightly towards the north of Bath Road, enhancing the prominence of the mature trees around Cheltenham College. Suffolk Parade is also on slightly higher ground, making for sweeping views southwards along Great Norwood Street towards the tower of St Philip and St James against the backdrop of Leckhampton Hill.

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 Bath Road and Suffolks character area. However, there is some potential for deeper below-ground archaeology to survive as indicated by limited finds within the surrounding area including a Roman coin in the grounds of Cheltenham College.[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 topogrpahy in and around the Central Conservation Area. The coloured key represents the relative elevation of the terrain both within the Conservation Area boundary in its wider setting. Source: OpenStreetMap (ODbL)

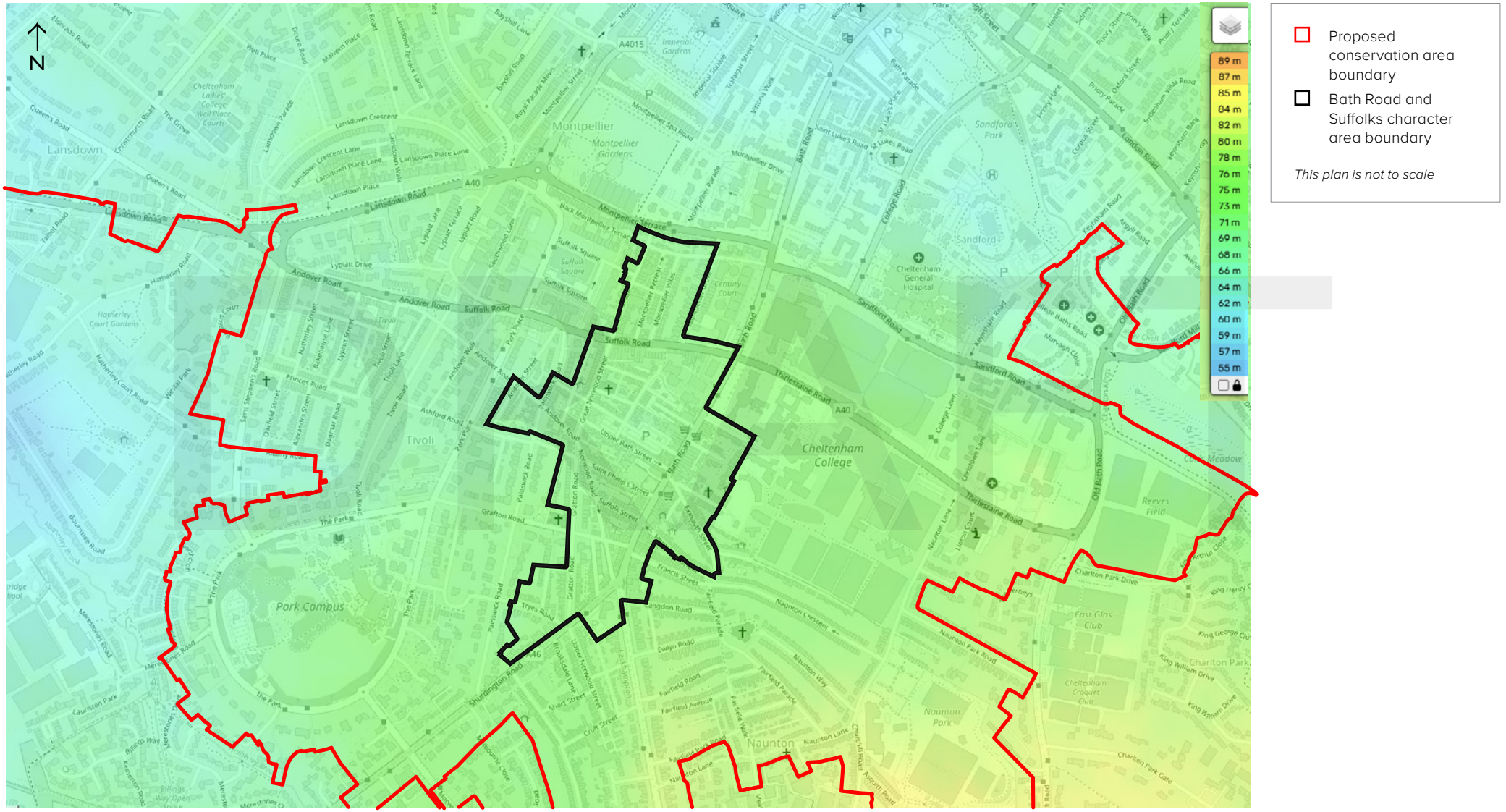
Proposed conservation area boundary

Bath Road and Suffolks character area boundary

This plan is not to scale

01 Cheltenham Borough Council, *Central Conservation Area College Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan*, 2008.

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



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 May 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 be consulted for the most up to date records.

4.1 Listed buildings

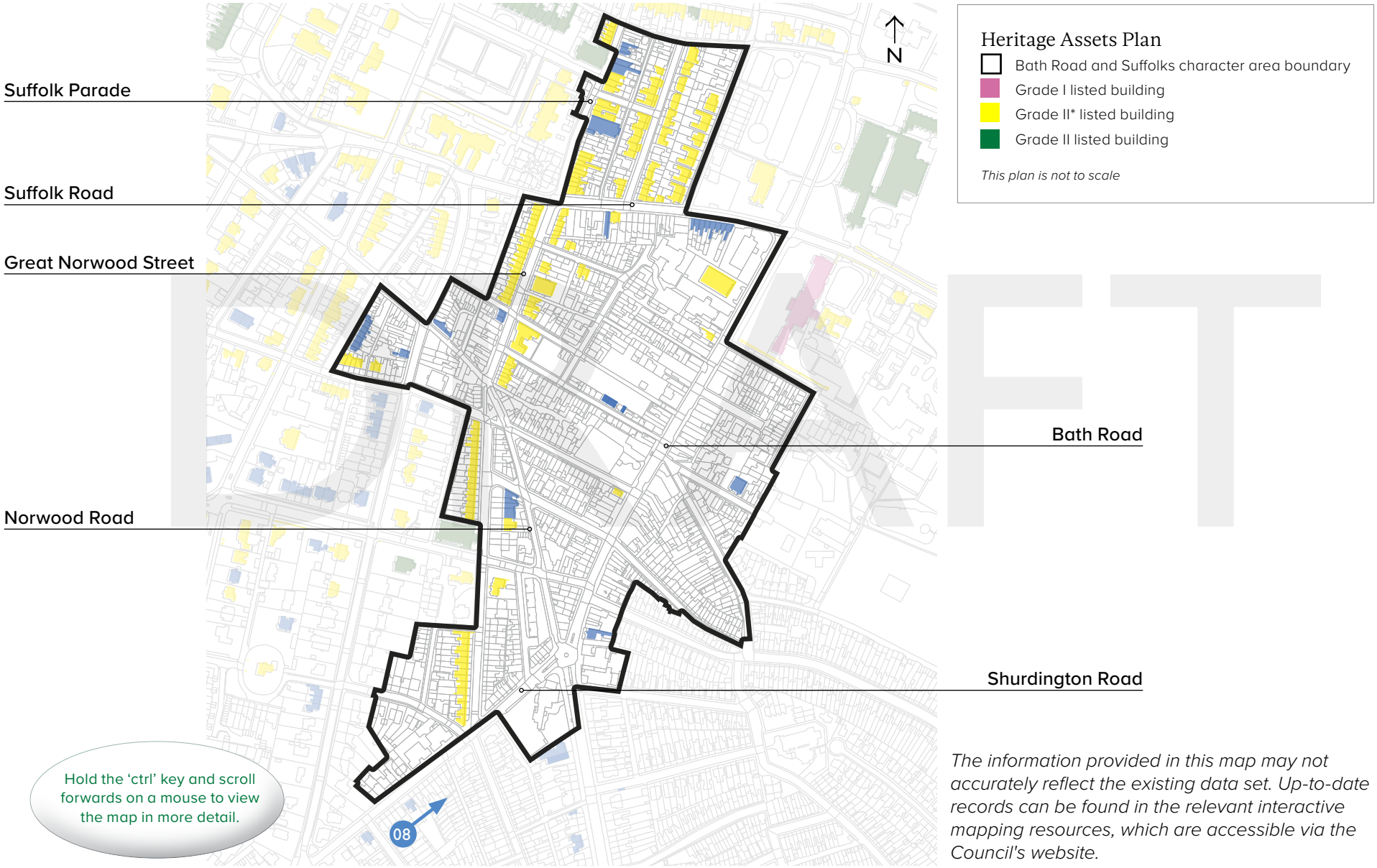
Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are designated for their architectural or historic interest. All listed buildings in England are designated at the recommendation of Historic England and details are recorded on the National Heritage 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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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

The condition of buildings and spaces within the character area is variable. A high proportion of the buildings are well looked after but there are some areas where lack of regular maintenance and/or inappropriate repair has seen a depreciation in condition. This includes occurrences of poorly maintained joinery, failing render and peeling or stained 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 help prevent further deterioration.

There are also localised examples where poorly maintained road surfaces (e.g. Montpellier Retreat) detract from the appearance of the character area.

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 some 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.



Example of a poorly maintained road surface and peeling paintwork around Montpellier Retreat, a historic service lane in the north of the character area.

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If not regularly cleaned and updated, interpretation boards can deteriorate and depreciate the appearance of a streetscape.


Degraded paintwork and water staining to a prominent building on Bath Road.


Vegetation to gutters and downpipes reduces their ability to manage rainwater effectively, leading to staining and issues with damp

5.2 Detracting features and loss of historic details

Although many historic timber sash windows and timber doors have been retained across the character area, a high proportion (particularly along Bath Road and to the narrower residential streets) have been replaced with uPVC alternatives. 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.

Where present, redundant satellite dishes and TV aerials detract from the historic character of the streetscapes. Within residential streets in particular, there are a high number of overhead telegraph wires which create a cluttered appearance and detract from the historic character of the roofscapes.

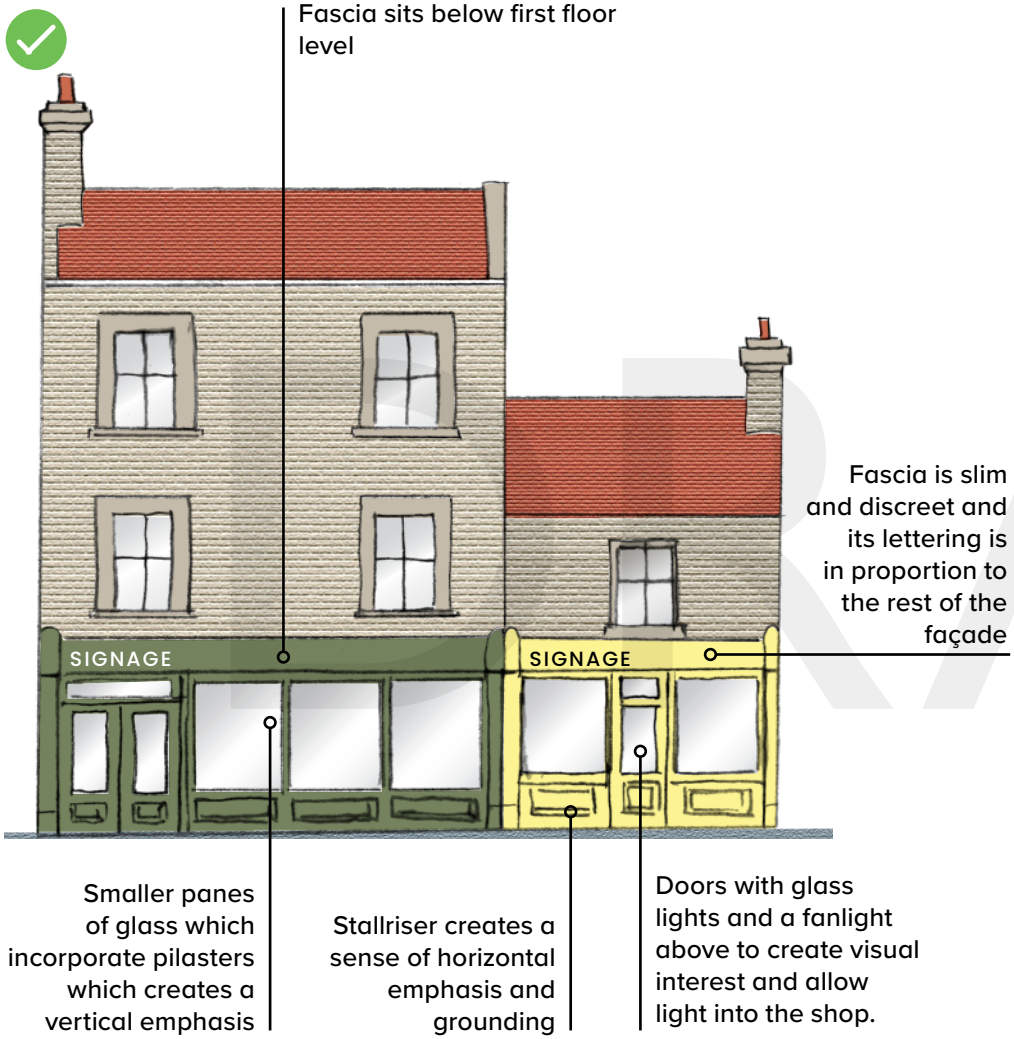
In many locations, particularly along the narrower residential streets, historic boundary treatments such as low brick walls or railings set in stone plinths have replaced with modern shiplap fencing or concrete walls. This dilutes the historic character of the street scene and obscures glimpsed views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

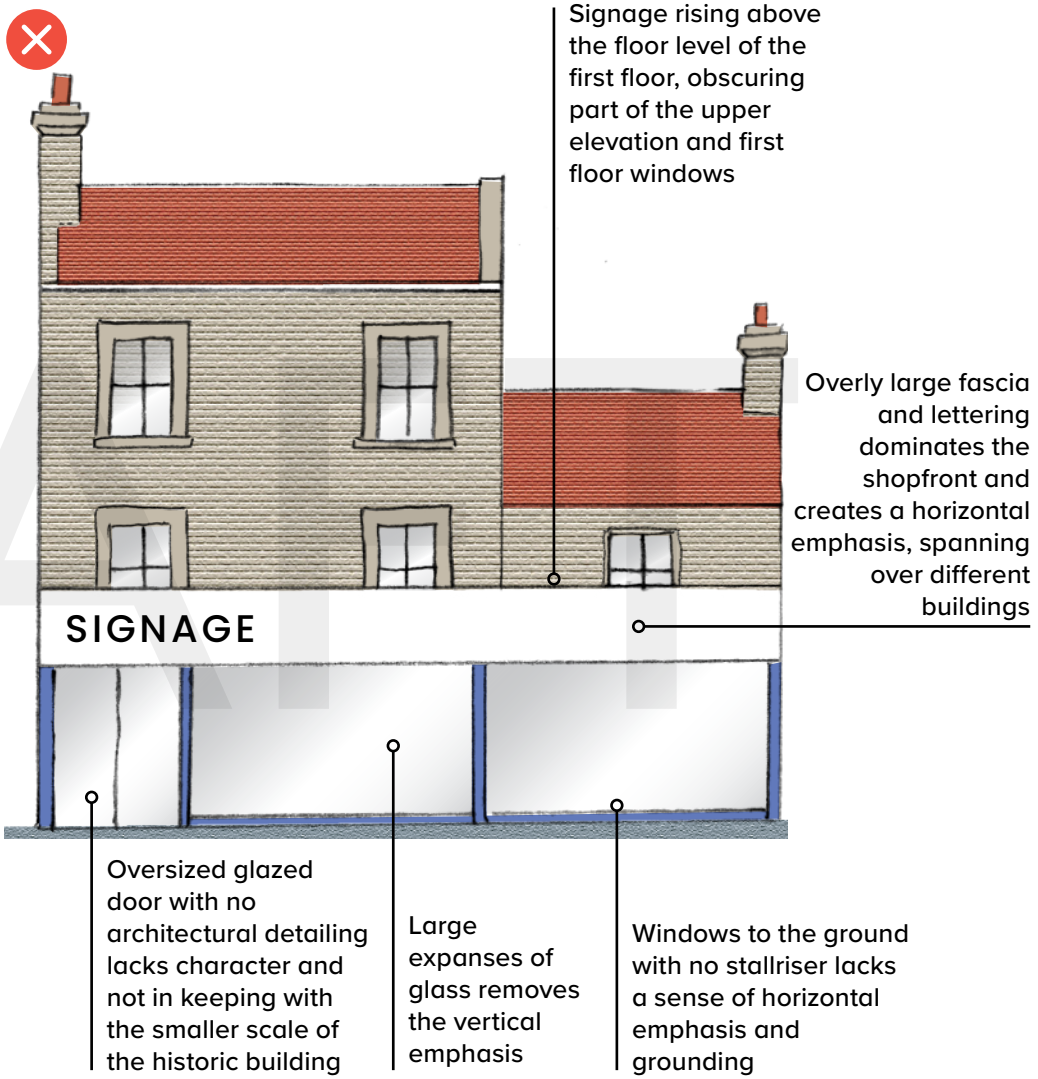
Many shopfronts retain or incorporate traditional features, particularly along Suffolk Road, Suffolk Parade, and Great Norwood Street. However, a high proportion of the shopfronts along Bath Road have been altered with inappropriate additions such as box fascias and expansive float glass frontages which are overly prominent and do not respect the proportions of the host building. Incorporating traditional features such as a stallriser (a platform below the shop window), glazing articulated by mullions and transoms (horizontal and vertical glazing bars), and a fascia which respects the proportions of the host building can greatly improve the character of modern retail units in the conservation area.

Retail advertising also creates significant visual clutter along Bath Road. Poorly designed signage lettering (such as freestanding uPVC lettering or applied transfers rather than handpainted lettering), and internally illuminated signage detract from the aesthetic interest of the building in which the retail unit is located as well as the wider streetscape.

Cheltenham Borough Council's supplementary planning document, 'Shopfront Design Guide: A Guide for Owners, Designers and Shopfitters', provides further information on both adapting existing shopfronts and designing new ones.

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Fascia sits below first floor level
Fascia is slim and discreet and its lettering is in proportion to the rest of the façade
SIGNAGE
SIGNAGE
Smaller panes of glass which incorporate pilasters which creates a vertical emphasis
Stallriser creates a sense of horizontal emphasis and grounding
Doors with glass lights and a fanlight above to create visual interest and allow light into the shop.


Signage rising above the floor level of the first floor, obscuring part of the upper elevation and first floor windows
Overly large fascia and lettering dominates the shopfront and creates a horizontal emphasis, spanning over different buildings
SIGNAGE
Oversized glazed door with no architectural detailing lacks character and not in keeping with the smaller scale of the historic building
Large expanses of glass removes the vertical emphasis
Windows to the ground with no stallriser lacks a sense of horizontal emphasis and grounding



A very small number of neo-Classical terraced houses have added pitched porches with modern uPVC doors and windows. These additions disrupt the architectural uniformity of the terraces and erode their historic character.



Trailing surface mounted wires and services detract from the historic character of buildings across the conservation area.



Detracting uPVC windows and shopfronts with oversized fascias on Bath Road.



Redundant satellite dishes and aerials disrupt the historic character of the roofscape, as do overhead telegraph wires.

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5.3 Inappropriate modern development

There are some examples of modern development within the character area which does not sit comfortably within its historic setting and detracts from the special interest of the conservation area. This is most evident towards the northern end of Bath Road, where there are several examples of late 20th-century infill development. which do not respect the style, massing or materiality of the adjacent historic buidlings.

5.4 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, vents, flues and wastepipes.
- Avoiding the loss of historic features such as sash windows and/or the introduction of unsympathetic uPVC windows. Historic shopfront features should be retained in any conversion of retail buildings to residential use.
- Avoiding bulky and insensitive box dormers and rooflights, which can appear overly dominant and disrupt the restrained character of neo-classical architecture.
- Ensuring internal changes (such as new staircases or partitions) do not cut across windows or deaden elevations when viewed from the street.

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.
- Respecting the established urban grain.
- Enhancing the setting of surrounding heritage assets.

The conversion of retail premises to residential use can have adverse affects on the character of streetscape through the loss of active commercial frontages. Conversions of this type can be appropriate in certain circumstances, but success usually depends on ensuring that historic features (such as shopfront windows and joinery) are retained in situ so that the original function of the shopfront remains legible.



The rear elevations of buildings are often highly prominent and their treatment can significantly enhance or depreciate the special interest of the conservation area.

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5.5 Traffic and parking

The principal roads within the character area carry a significant amount of traffic through the character area and result in areas of congestion and noise. The Commercial Street and Bath Terrace car parks create significant gaps in the characteristically dense urban grain and depreciate the setting of adjacent historic buildings. There is a significant amount of on-street parking along the residential streets, which detracts from the setting of the historic buildings. Many front gardens have been partly lost to hard standing for car parking, reducing the pockets of green space which would once have softened the urban environment.



The Bath Terrace carpark creates a distinct gap in the dense urban grain and introduces a large expanse of hardstanding to the character area, which depreciates the setting of surrounding historic buildings.



An example of extensive car parking in narrow residential streets within the character area.

5.6 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.

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 replacement or alteration of unsympathetic shopfronts would greatly enhance the special interest of the conservation area, as would the rationalisation of street furniture.

6.2 Areas of opportunities

As well as the many minor and individual instances where there is opportunity to improve the character of the conservation area, there are specific sites within the character area that present opportunities for larger scale interventions that could have a correspondingly substantial positive impact. These range from areas where a high concentration of relatively minor individual issues could be collectively addressed to particularly positive effect, or where more substantial development may possible (subject to sensitive proposals). In some instances, these sites align with allocations made within existing planning policy and could continue to inform future site allocations.

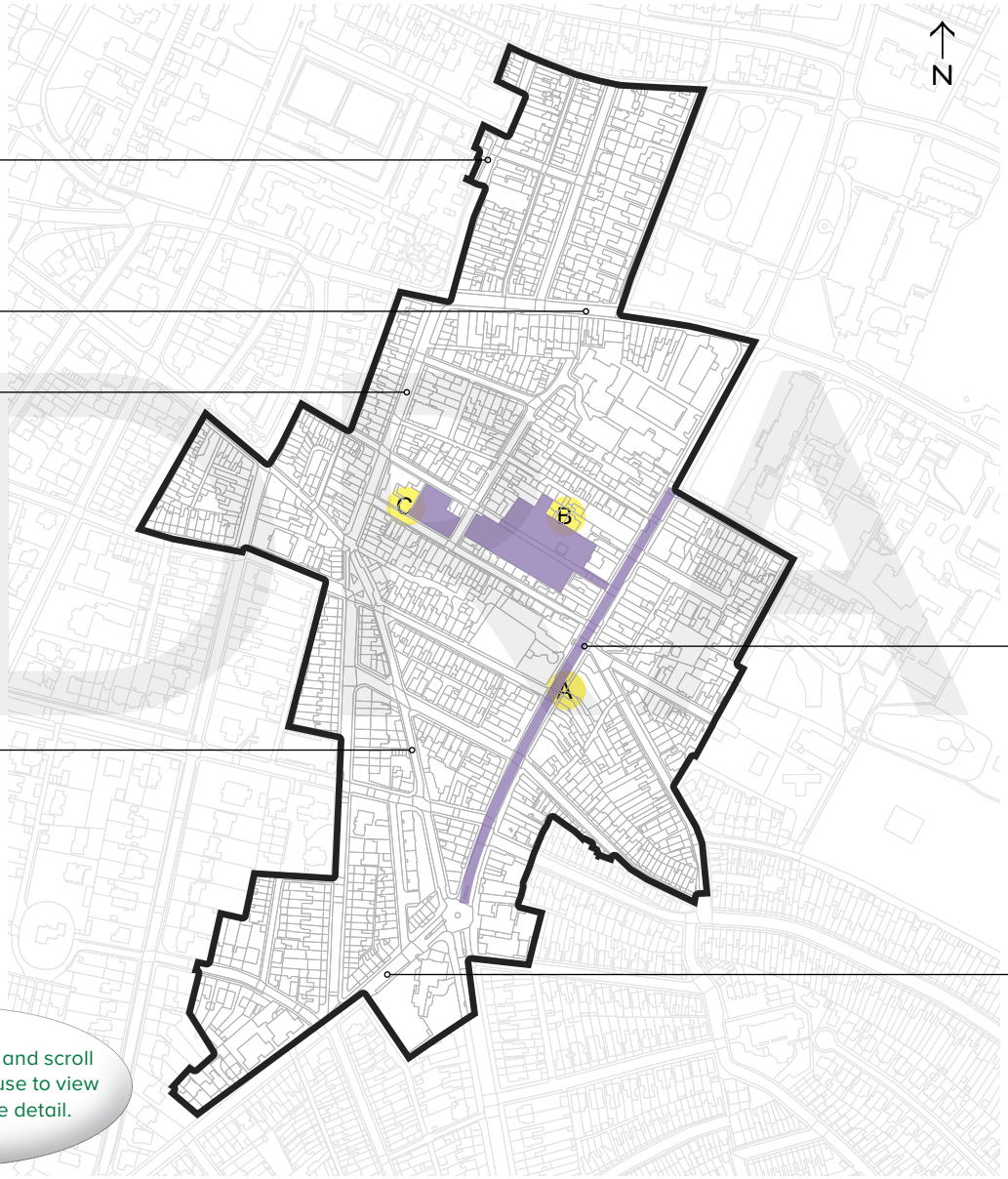
There is significant opportunity to enhance Bath Road. This would improve the appearance of the conservation area, encourage investment in the upkeep of buildings, and reduce vacancy. Carrying out maintenance work to buildings, cleaning façades, replacing or altering insensitive shopfronts, removing surface mounted fittings and reducing internally illuminated lighting and vinyl advertisements would greatly enhance the character of Bath Road. The ground floor commercial unit at 147-151 is particularly detracting in its current form.

The Commercial Place and Bath Terrace car parks present opportunities for future development to replace large areas of hardstanding which make no contribution to the special interest of the conservation area.

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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Opportunities for enhancement

- Bath Road and Suffolks character area boundary
- Opportunities for enhacement

A Bath Road
B Bath Terrace carpark*
C Commercial street carpark*

*Areas with sensitive development potential

This plan is not to scale

Hold the 'ctrl' key and scroll forwards on a mouse to view the map in more detail.

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.

7.0 Future Management of the Bath Road and Suffolks Character Area

A management plan for the conservation area, including the Bath Road and Suffolks 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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Date	Revision	Issue
May 2026	First Draft	01