CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL



AUGUST 2026, VERSION 02

St Mary's Conservation Area

Conservation Area Appraisal

CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

PURCELL

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1.0 Introduction

The St Mary's Conservation Area is located within the Charlton Kings area of Cheltenham, to the southeast of the town centre.

The St Mary's Conservation Area was first designated on the 2nd October 1989, with subsequent reviews in September 2001 and June 2009, for its special historic and architectural interest. The St Mary's Conservation Area was last reviewed in June 2009.

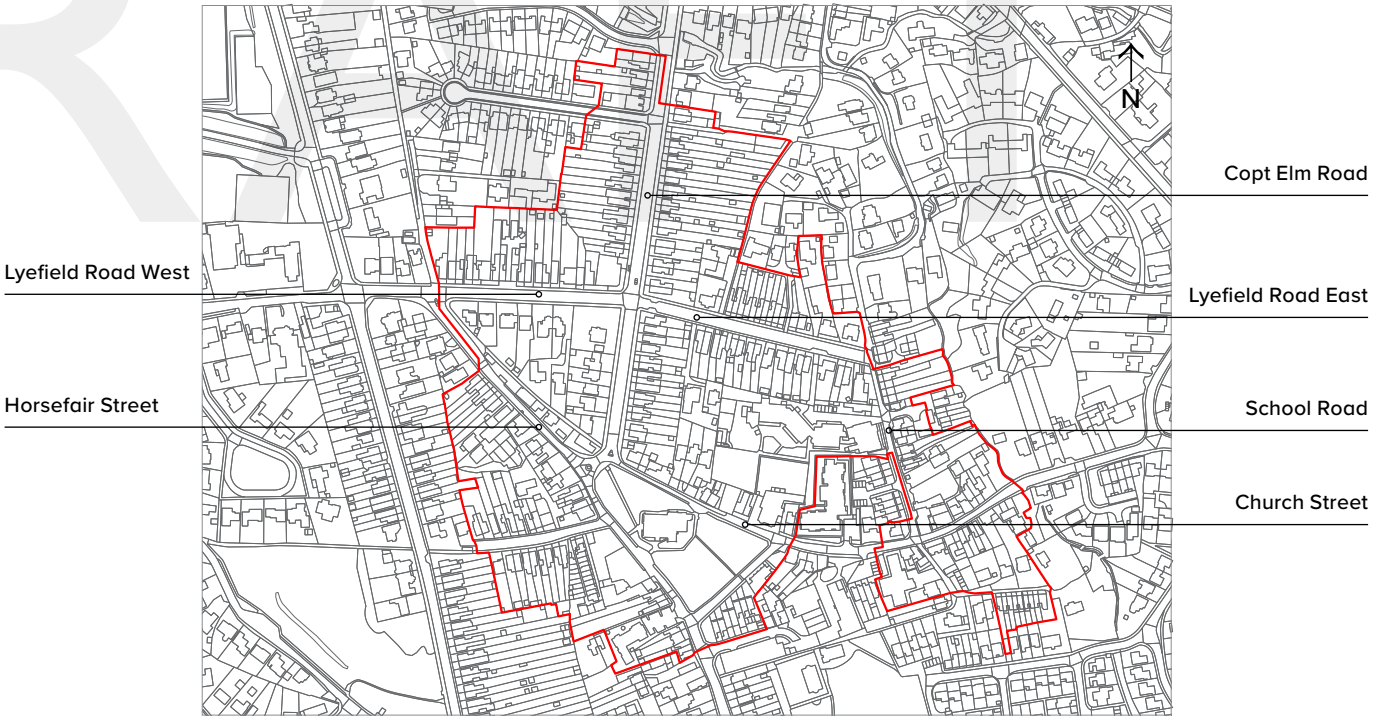
St Mary's is a distinctive residential suburb in Charlton Kings, in southeast Cheltenham. The early historic development of the area in the southern half of the conservation area around St Mary's Church has meant that there is a village characteristic, with narrow winding streets that have a variety of building sizes and types. The late 19th- and early 20th-century residential development in the north half of the conservation area has a distinct character which is emphasised through the road layout, size of plots, and consistency in the scale of the houses and the use of red brick as a construction material.

The origins of St Mary's as a medieval settlement can be read in:

- The road layout around St Mary's Church.
- The variety of building sizes and architectural styles in the southern portion of the conservation area.
- The prominence of St Mary's in views, both along streets and glimpsed between buildings.
- The survival of a medieval church cross in the churchyard, both Grade II* listed and a scheduled monument.

The evolution of St Mary's into a residential suburb can be read in:

- The formal road layout in the northern portion of the conservation area on Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East.
- The prevalence of red brick as a building material, with enhancements to individual buildings through decorative architectural detailing.
- The conformity of plot sizes and the scale and massing of the pairs of semi-detached housing.
- The layout of the development with a small collection of shops at the centre, on the cross roads of the principal thoroughfares.



The St Mary's Conservation Area, as proposed in 2026.

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1.1 Definition of a conservation crea

A conservation area is defined as an 'area of special architectural or historic interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'[01]

Conservation areas recognise the unique qualities of an area as a whole. This includes the contribution of individual buildings and monuments but also of other features, including topography, materials, spatial relationships, thoroughfares, street furniture, open spaces and landscaping. All these features contribute to the character and appearance of an area, resulting in a distinctive sense of place.

The extent to which a building, or group of buildings, positively shape the character of a conservation area derives not just from their street-facing elevations but also from the integrity of their historic fabric, overall scale and massing, detailing and materials. Rear and side elevations can also be important.

1.2 Purpose and scope of the Conservation Area Appraisal

It is a requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for all local planning authorities to 'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement' of conservation areas within their jurisdiction and for these documents to be periodically reviewed.[02]

It is important for local planning authorities to maintain an up-to-date strategy for the positive management of conservation areas so that they can be carefully adapted and continue to thrive. These public documents define and record the special interest of a conservation area and set out a plan of action for its on-going protection and enhancement.

Over time, conservation areas evolve and the integrity of characteristics which underpin their special interest may depreciate due to gradual alteration. It is therefore important to review and take stock of the character of a conservation area at intervals to ensure designation is still suitable and that the proper tools to manage change are in place.

Reviews often find that conservation area boundaries were previously drawn too tightly or include peripheral areas which do not contribute to an understanding of its character. Consequently, it is important to review the boundary and include/exclude buildings and spaces which do/not meet the requirements for conservation area designation.

This Conservation Area Appraisal seeks to:

- Record and analyse the special interest of the St Mary's Conservation Area;
- Recognise the designated and non-designated heritage assets which comprise the conservation area;
- Identify issues relating to condition and detracting features, as well as opportunities for enhancement; and
- Provide guidance for the positive management, preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

Although this document is intended to be comprehensive, the omission of any building, structure, feature or space does not imply that said element is not significant or does not positively contribute to the character and special interest of the conservation area. The protocols and guidance provided in Section 6: Management Plan are applicable in every instance.

The assessments which provide the baseline information for this Conservation Area Appraisal have been carried out utilising publicly available resources and through on-site analysis from the public thoroughfares within the conservation area.

01 Section 69 (1), Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

02 Section 71 (1), Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

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1.3 Planning policy

Conservation areas were introduced in the United Kingdom under the Civic Amenities Act 1967. They are now governed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The National Planning Policy Framework (revised December 2024) sets out the overarching requirement for local planning authorities to identify and protect areas of special interest (paragraph 204).[03]

1.3.1 Local Planning Policy

The Cheltenham Plan

The adopted development plan for Cheltenham has three sources; the Joint Core Strategy 2017, the Cheltenham Plan 2020, and the saved policies of the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan 2006.

Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted by Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council in December 2017. Of relevance to Cheltenham Central Conservation Area and the heritage assets located within the boundary are Policies SD7: The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and SD8: Historic Environment.

The Cheltenham Plan 2020

The Cheltenham Plan, which was adopted by Cheltenham Borough Council on 20th July 2020, provides the local-level development strategy for the borough. The policies relevant to the Bafford Conservation Area and the heritage assets within it are Polices D1, HE1, HE2, HE3 and L1.

Cheltenham Borough Local Plan 2006: saved policies

A number of policies from the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan (2006) are 'saved'. Those relevant to the St Mary's Conservation Area is policy RT 2.

Cheltenham Tree Strategy, February 2026

Cheltenham Borough Council published their revised strategy for the maintenance of trees across the town in February 2026. This strategy focuses on protecting, managing, and expanding the town's canopy cover to achieve net-zero by 2030, enhancing biodiversity, and mitigating climate change impacts

1.3.2 Emerging Local Policy – The Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic Local Plan

A Strategic and Local Plan (SLP) is under development by Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council. The SLP will provide an overarching planning strategy and cross-boundary strategic policies covering the whole area, and local policies for each authority.

Once adopted, the SLP will replace the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (adopted December 2017), the Cheltenham Plan (adopted July 2020) and the 'saved' retail policies within the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Second Review (adopted June 2006).

1.4 Guidance

There is a range of available guidance from Cheltenham Borough Council and Historic England regarding the management and maintenance of the historic built environment:

- Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Second Edition), 2019.
- Cheltenham Borough Council: Local Index Supplementary Planning Document, 2007.
- Cheltenham Borough Council, Regency Design Precepts.
- Historic England, Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading, 2017.

1.5 Consultation and formal adoption

As of April 2026, stakeholder consultation has taken place in regards to the St Mary's Conservation Area. Common issues and opportunities were discussed with the stakeholders present, along with a review of the existing conservation area boundary.

03 When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

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2.0 Assessment of special interest

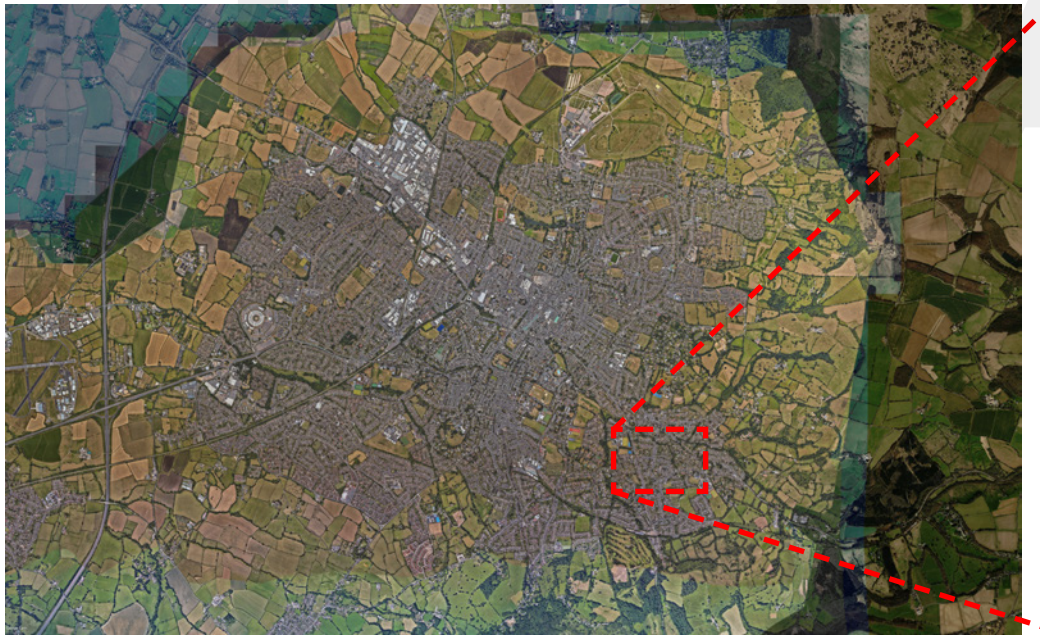
2.1 Location and setting

Cheltenham, and with it the St Mary's Conservation Area, lies at the foot of the Cotswold Scarp, which forms the western edge of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The steep topography to the east of the town means that a strong sense of the town's setting is retained and illustrated by multiple views within the conservation area.

The conservation area is within the Charlton Kings area of Cheltenham, a suburb in the southeast of the town. The area is characterised by the late 19th-century and early 20th-century residential developments on Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East, the distinctive architectural character of which contrast the earlier settlement which surrounds St Mary's Church.

The boundary of the conservation area itself is surrounded by a mixture of suburban developments, some of which date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries also. There is some open green space in the form of Charlton Kings Cemetery and playing fields to the south, but this is outside of the conservation area boundary.

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Aerial image of Cheltenham.



The St Mary's Conservation Area.

2.2 Summary history of Cheltenham

Cheltenham has a distinctive history, with evidence of Roman activity found through coins and pottery discovered across the town. The first written reference to Cheltenham dates from 803 AD, although archaeological evidence suggests it existed as a farming settlement long before then. By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Cheltenham had five mills along the River Chelt, and in 1226 it became a market town, with the market playing a central role in its economy for centuries.

For much of the medieval and early modern period, Cheltenham consisted primarily of a single High Street lined with narrow plots, orchards and fields. St Mary's Church, rebuilt in the 12th century on the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon church, formed an important focal point for the settlement.

Cheltenham's transformation began after the discovery of mineral springs in 1716. The development of the Royal Well by Henry Skillicorne and the visit of King George III in 1788 established the town as one of Britain's leading spa resorts. During the early 19th century, rapid expansion created fashionable estates such as Pittville, Lansdown and Suffolk Square, while the population grew from just over 3,000 in 1801 to around 20,000 by 1826.

The arrival of tramways and railways encouraged further growth, industry and education, including the founding of Cheltenham College and Cheltenham Ladies' College. Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries, Cheltenham expanded into a prosperous town, while retaining much of its distinctive historic and Regency character despite modern development.

2.3 Summary history of Charlton Kings

Cudnall Street is within the Charlton Kings suburb of Cheltenham, formally its own separate settlement which was absorbed by the town between the 18th and 20th centuries.

Charlton Kings has its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period. Its name derives from ceorls' tun, meaning the enclosed settlement of a ceorl (an independent peasant landowner). The addition of "Kings" reflects its association with the royal manor and Hundred of Cheltenham. The settlement was recorded as Cherlton as early as 1160.

The village expanded significantly during the 16th century as demand for housing increased. New homes were built on former common field strips, while many older properties were rebuilt or upgraded between 1550 and 1650. From the mid-18th century onwards, brick became the dominant building material, supported by local brickyards, with housing gradually spread onto former agricultural land.

Charlton Kings benefited from the growth of nearby Cheltenham as a fashionable spa resort in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Visitors often stayed in lodging houses within the village. During the Victorian period, the area became a popular retirement location for military officers and attracted a prosperous middle-class population.

The 20th century saw rapid population and housing growth. The number of houses increased from 4,376 in 1921 to 4,759 in 1931, while the population rose from over 6,000 by 1946 to more than 10,000 by 1971. Today, Charlton Kings has a population of around 10,875.

By the mid-20th century, Charlton Kings had developed into a well-served community with schools, shops, public houses, charities, sports clubs, and social organisations. In the 21st century, it is an established and affluent suburb of Cheltenham, while its three conservation areas continue to preserve its historic character and distinctive identity.

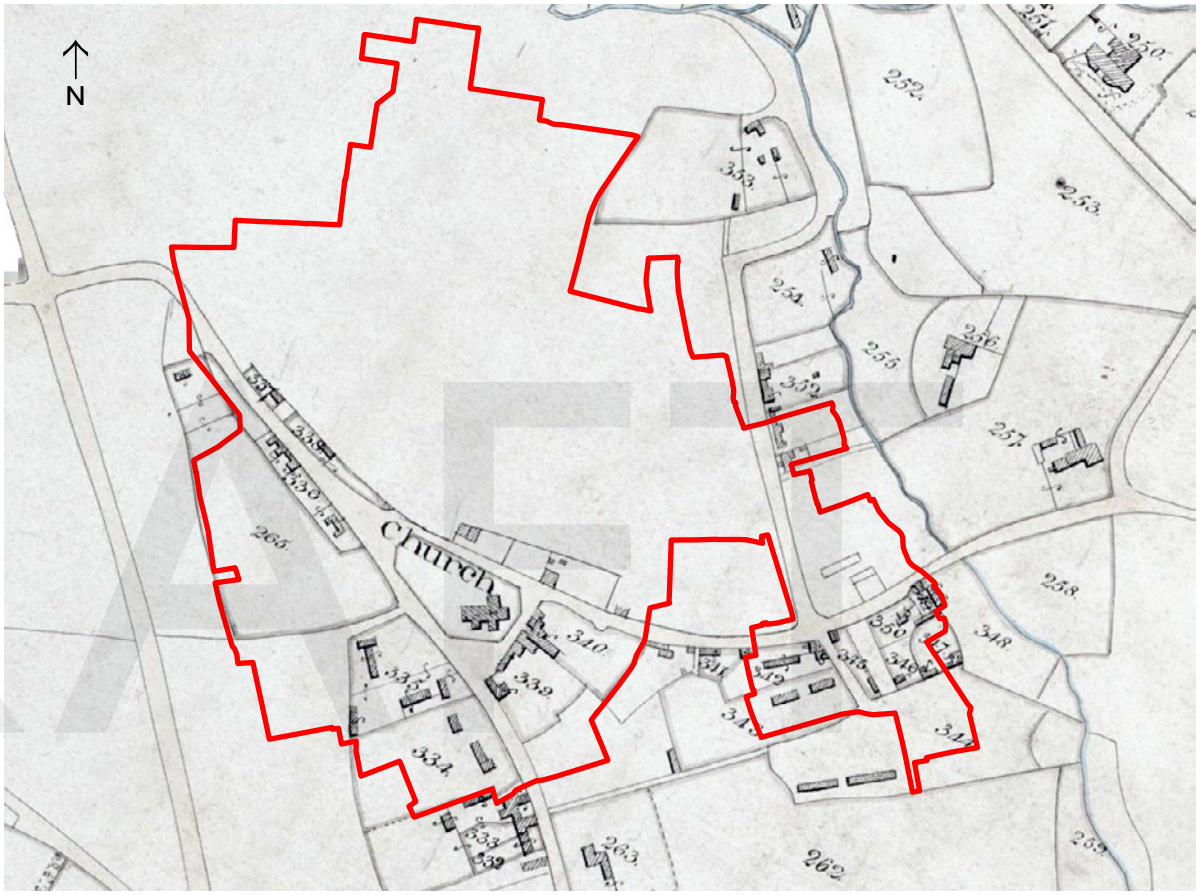
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2.4 Summary history of the St Mary's Conservation Area

The St Mary's Conservation Area is within Charlton Kings, a suburb of Cheltenham to the southeast of the centre of the town.

Charlton Kings is an ancient settlement with Anglo-Saxon origins, centred around an agricultural economy with homestead farms. St Mary's Church dates from 1190 and was founded by William de Vere, Bishop of Hereford, and the churchyard contains a cross which is both scheduled and Grade II* which dates from the 15th century but incorporates earlier masonry fabric.

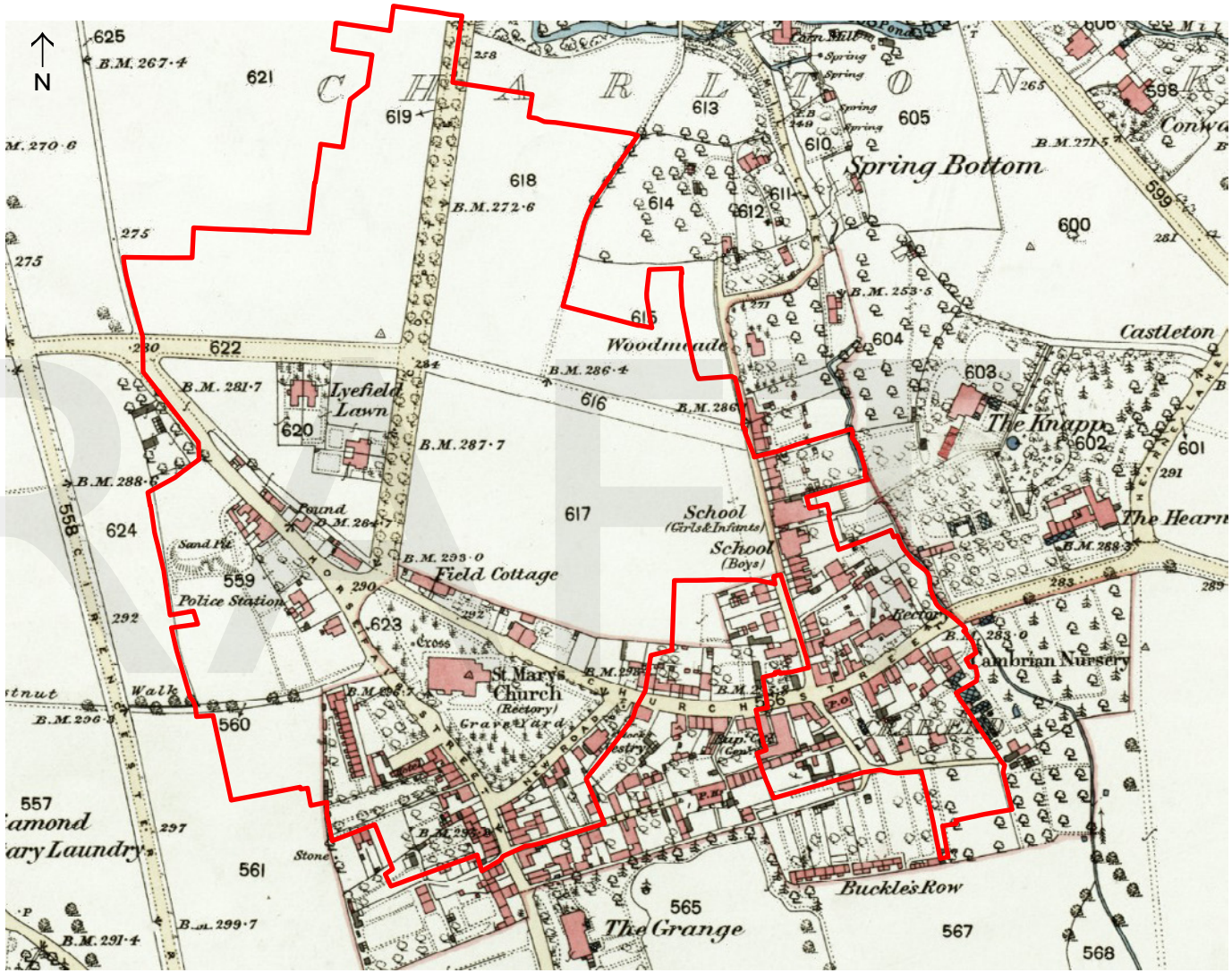
The area developed as Cheltenham grew as a town, establishing itself as an affluent suburb. By the 1840s Gloucestershire tithe map, the St Mary's Conservation Area had only developed in the streets immediately surrounding the Church; Horsefair Street and Church Street. The surrounding areas are shown as open agricultural land.



The 1840s Gloucestershire Tithe map, showing that the built environment within the St Mary's Conservation Area was limited to the principal streets, Horsefair Street and Church Street, with St Mary's Church at the centre. *Know Your Place*.

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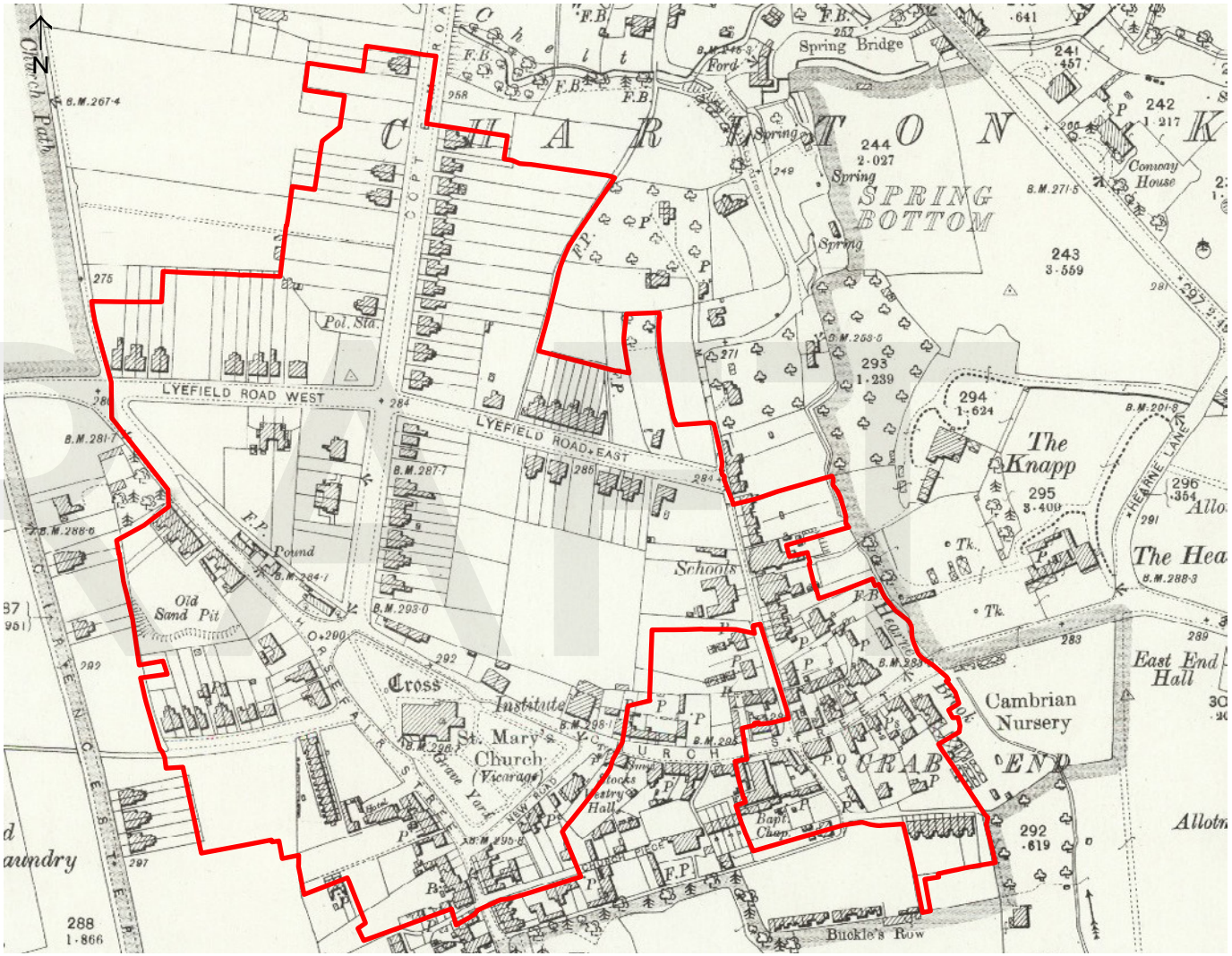
The first edition Ordnance Survey from 1844-88 shows that the area was being significantly developed in the mid-19th century with residential housing between large private houses. This included the terraced houses on Chestnut Terrace, two school buildings on School Road, a police station on Horsefair Street and the Baptist Chapel on Church Street. The road layout for the key thoroughfares to the north end of the conservation area, Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East, had been laid out across the previously open agricultural land. This map also shows that the churchyard to St Mary's had been extended to the southeast, which included the removal of historic buildings in this location and the construction of New Road and St Mary's Hall.



The first edition Ordnance Survey (1844-88), illustrating the development of the St Mary's Conservation Area into a residential suburb of Cheltenham in the mid-19th century. *Know Your Place.*

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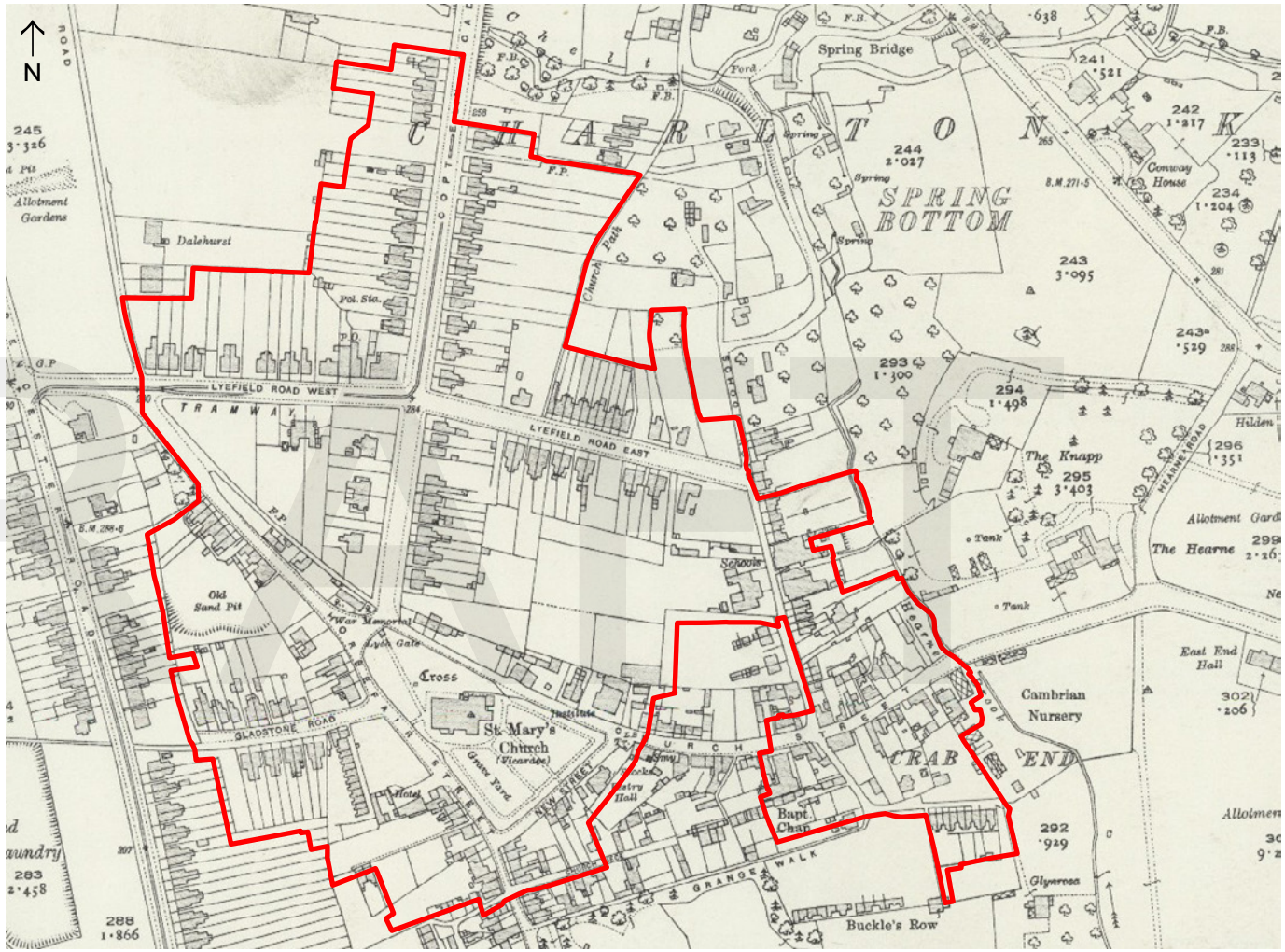
The second edition Ordnance Survey from 1894-1903 shows the laying out of Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East with pairs of semi-detached houses. A further school building is shown on School Road, and the north side of Gladstone Road is shown as having been constructed.



The second edition Ordnance Survey (1894-1903), illustrating the construction of the residential houses on Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East. *Know Your Place*.

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The third edition Ordnance Survey from 1898-1939 illustrates the completed development of Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East, as well as Gladstone Road and further housing built just outside of the conservation area boundary on Cirencester Road.

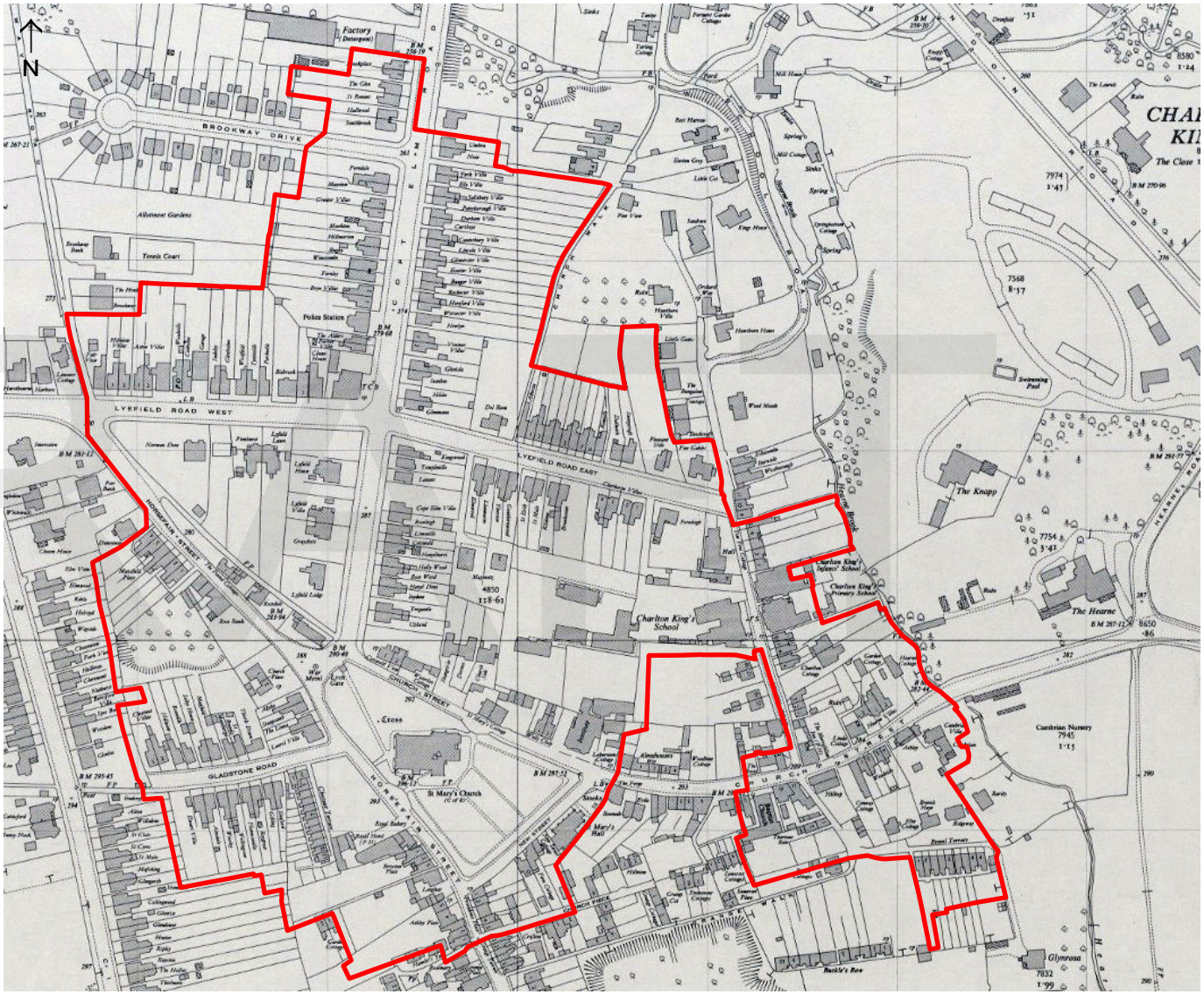


The third edition Ordnance Survey (1898-1939), illustrating the early 20th century developments within the St Mary's Conservation Area. *Know Your Place*.

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The fourth edition Ordnance Survey from 1947-1965 shows the mid-20th-century infill developments within the conservation area. These are predominantly single dwellings built between the late 19th-century semi-detached houses or in vacant plots of land. Further housing estates are shown just outside the conservation area boundary, such as Brookway Drive to the north. The development of Charlton Kings School on School Road in the area behind the houses on Copt Elm Road and Lyefield Road East is also shown. This map illustrates the establishment of Charlton Kings as an affluent suburb of Cheltenham by the mid-20th century.

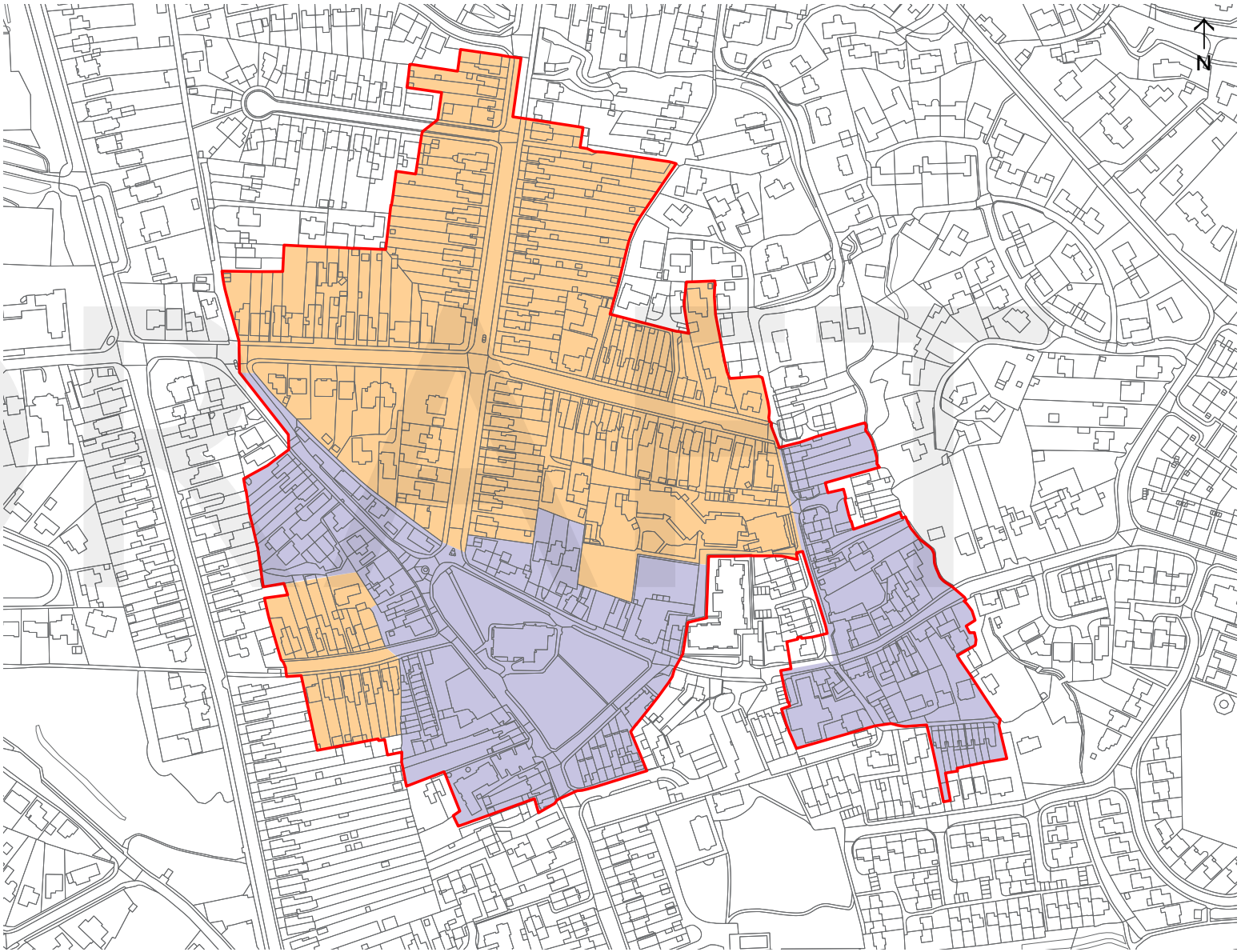
Further limited development has occurred in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This included the construction of individual dwellings to infill vacant plots which conformed to the established urban grain, massing and proportions of the existing buildings within the conservation area.



The fourth edition Ordnance Survey (1947-1965), illustrating the mid-20th-century developments within the St Mary's Conservation Area. *Know Your Place.*

2.5 Character areas

There are two distinct character areas within the St Mary's Conservation Area.



Character area 1: Early settlement

Character area 2: Late 19th- and early 20th-century development

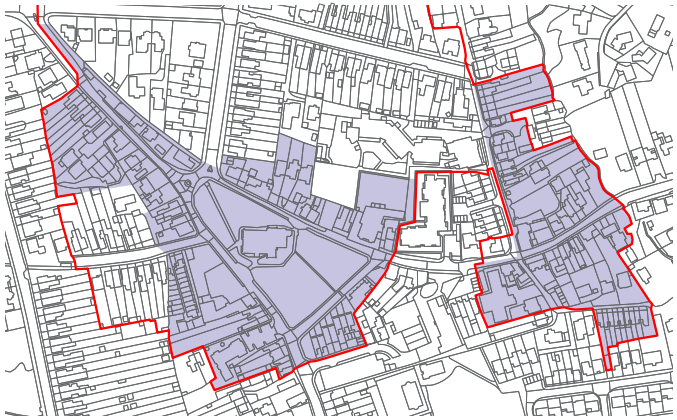
This plan is not to scale

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2.5.1 Character area 1: early settlement

Character area 1 encompasses the early settlement within the St Mary's Conservation Area, which is focused around St Mary's Church and the cross roads at School Road and Church Street. It is based around the medieval settlement pattern and the surviving ecclesiastical core creates a church-centred plan form which includes the distinctive churchyard setting.

This area has narrower, winding roads which have a distinct rural feel. The variety in plot sizes, building scale and style suggest an organic evolution rather than the planned residential development of the late 19th- and early 20th-century housing within the conservation area.















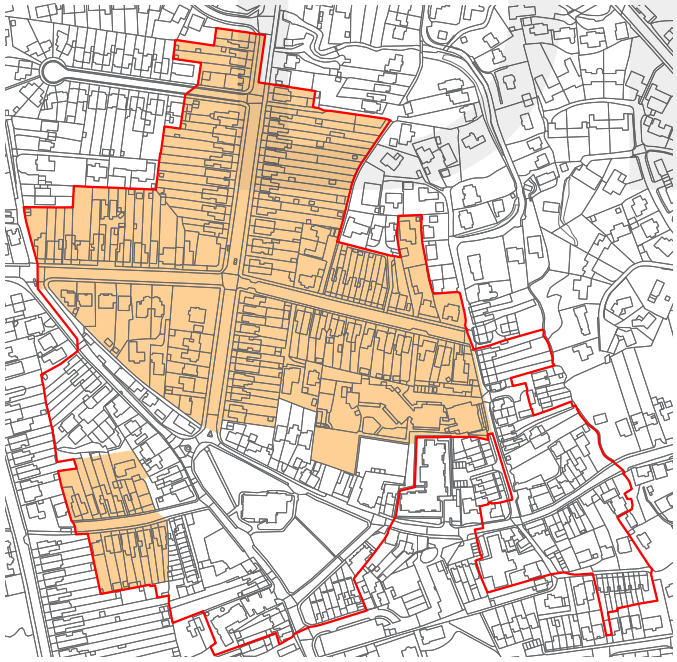
The winding, narrow streets that are centred around St Mary's Church, which gives character area 1 an organic, rural characteristic.

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2.5.2 Character area 2: late 19th- and early 20th-century development

Character area 2 encompasses the late 19th- and early 20th-century planned residential developments within the St Mary's Conservation Area, located on Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West, Lyefield Road East and Gladstone Road.

These roads are wider than the older streets around St Mary's Church, laid out with front gardens to each pair of semi-detached houses. The plot sizes are regular and evenly spaced, with a consistency of scale, massing, roofscape and use of materials cross each building. This Victorian suburb expansion affords key views out into the surrounding landscape of the Cotswold Scarp.















The red brick houses, which include terraces, semi-detached houses, and individual large dwellings, which characterise the Victorian suburb of character area 2.

2.6 Built form and architecture

2.6.1 Residential buildings

The streets around St Mary's Church within character area 1 are narrow and the curving form of Church Street follows the line of a historic lane. The buildings front directly onto the street and the building development is spatially dense. Together, this gives the area an informal, organic character that reflects the gradual evolution of development around St Mary's Church and its churchyard, which dominates the southern portion of the conservation area. The building sizes and use of materials vary, giving the area a vernacular village character, particularly along Church Street and Horsefair Street. Materials include brick, either left exposed or externally painted in white or neutral tones, with some stone used in architectural detailing or in boundary treatments. Roofs are generally simple pitched roofs with chimney stacks and covered with either clay tiles or slates.



Semi-detached housing on Church Street.



Terraced cottages facing St Mary's Church on Church Street illustrating the vernacular appearance of character area 1.



Semi-detached and terraced housing on Horsefair Street adjacent to St Mary's churchyard, illustrating the diversity of style and use of materials within character area 1 of the conservation area.



Terraced housing on School Road illustrating the modest scale of some of the residential buildings within character area 1.

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The late 19th- and early 20th-century housing of character area 2 have common characteristics which make the area particularly distinct. These include the positioning of semi-detached pairs of houses in their own plots, the use of red brick, and the regular size and height of the houses. Whilst being somewhat uniform in character, individual buildings have individual architectural features such as carved stonework above door and window openings which add interest and diversity amongst the planned development. Modest but attractive, the planned development has houses set behind small front gardens, some of which have been converted into parking spaces. There are also larger, villa-type houses amongst the modest semi-detached houses which add visual interest and variety amongst this character area. Common features across the planned development include bay windows at ground floor level, red brick chimney stacks and some timber sash windows.



Semi-detached housing on Lyefield Road West illustrating the planned development of the character area 2 within the conservation area.



Semi-detached housing on Copt Elm Road demonstrating the individual architecural detailing of each pair of semi-detached houses, some with modern development.



Terraced housing on Lyefield Road East illustrating the conformity of design within character area 2, particularly the roofscape and use of materials.



Semi-detached housing on Lyefield Road East demonstrating the planned development of character area 2 within the conservation area.

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The row of semi-detached houses on the south side of Lyefield Road East is particularly distinctive in its architectural detailing, having black and yellow brick string courses, fascia and barge boards and timber panelling to the prominent front roof gables. 19th-century terraced houses, such as those on Horsefair Street and Brevel Terrace on Grange Walk, also contribute to the 19th-century character of the conservation area through their use of red brick and architectural detailing and illustrate the diversity of building size throughout St Mary's.



The distinctive semi-detached housing on Lyefield Road East with gable timber panelling.



The terraced housing on Horsefair Street which as a group positively contributes to the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Brevel Terrace on Grange Walk which illustrates the use of red brick with contrasting coloured brick to highlight architectural features.

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2.6.2 Ecclesiastical architecture

St Mary's Church is the principal landmark building within the conservation area. The church and its corresponding churchyard are on a triangular island site with two roads, Horsefair Street and Church Street, funnelling traffic to the north and south. Buildings are clustered around the church in character area 1, forming a central focus upon St Mary's Church and the green space of the churchyard surrounding it. St Mary's originates from the 12th century with later additions and was heavily remodelled in the late 19th century. It has a distinctive east elevation with three gables and a large central rose window which is clearly visible from Horsefair Street and positively contributes to the streetscape. The scale, use of limestone ashlar and slate for the roof, and positioning within the churchyard emphasises its presence.

To the south of St Mary's Church is St Mary's Hall, a parish hall that forms a group alongside the principal church and its churchyard. It was constructed in the 1870s, during the same period that St Mary's was heavily remodelled. The architectural detailing echoes that of the church across the road; large arched windows with moulded tracery, a pitched roof porch to the principal entrance, use of limestone ashlar, and iron railings to the boundary to the street.



The southern approach to St Mary's Church through the churchyard from the entrance on New Street.



The northeastern approach to St Mary's Church through the churchyard.



St Mary's Hall on New Street to the south of St Mary's Church.

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On Church Street near the junction with School Road is a nonconformist Baptist Chapel. This building is unlisted but is included within Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of locally important buildings and positively contributes to the streetscape of the St Mary's Conservation Area. The building is constructed in red brick, with the window and door openings on the principal elevation that faces Church Street articulated with blue and yellow bricks and moulded stone arched detailing. The principal elevation retains two historic arched windows with red and blue stained glass detailing. A date stone at the centre of the elevation dates the building to 1875.

A small early 20th-century chapel, now in use as a community hall and pre-school nursery, is located on the corner of School Road and Lyefield Road East. Built in 1932 as a chapel for the Charlton Kings Brotherhood and Sisterhood, a Christian non-denominational movement, the building is a simple modular structure with red brick piers, a slate pitched roof, and rendered walls. The principal north entrance facing Lyefield Road East has a red brick archway and corresponding fanlight. This building has local historic and architectural interest and could be eligible for inclusion upon Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of locally important buildings.



The Baptist Chapel on Church Street.



The former chapel for the Charlton Kings Brotherhood and Sisterhood, on the corner of School Road and Lyefield Road East.

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2.6.3 Civic architecture

School Road has two historic school buildings that are both included in Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of locally important buildings.

On the east side of School Road, is the former Boys' School building. This appears on the 1888 Ordnance Survey as a pair of school buildings; the Boys' School to the south, and a Girls' and Infants School to the north. The Girl's School appears on the 1840s tithe map of the area, but was demolished in the late 20th century. The surviving Boy's School has been converted into two private residences. The building is constructed in red brick with ashlar stone and blue brick detailing with slate pitched roofs, which is characteristic of the 19th-century development within the conservation area. Its modern conversion has successfully preserved the historic character of the building and it can clearly be read as a former educational building.

On the west wide of School Road is Charlton Kings Infants' School. The principal building that faces School Road is a historic building, built between 1888 and 1894. The building is a large red brick structure with a pitched slate roof with a central spired cupula, blue brick detailing and tall windows. The front elevations have two single storey extensions which have been constructed to match the architectural detailing of the principal building. The front boundary to the street is marked with a low red brick wall and topped with modern black railings. The style of the building and use of red brick as the primary building material is in keeping with the established historic character of the St Mary's Conservation Area and positively contributes to the appearance of the streetscape on School Road.

Charlton Kings Social Club is located to the west of St Mary's Church on Church Street. It was constructed between 1888 and 1894 and is labelled as an 'Institute' on historic mapping. The building holds a prominent location within the streetscape and forms part of long range views along Church Street. It is a red brick structure with a deep hipped roof with clay tiles and dormer windows. The roof has a central cupola with a weathervane. The ground floor of the building facing Church Street has two large bay windows and a central door, flanked by two circular terracotta windows, one blocked with a shield the other with stained glass. The front of the building facing Church Street has a highly decorated cornice beneath the roof, painted white with moulded wreath motifs. This building has a local historic and architectural interest and could be eligible for inclusion upon Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of locally important buildings.



Charlton Kings Infants' School on School Road, within character area 1 of the St Mary's Conservation Area.



The former Boys' School on the east side of School Road, within character area 1 of the St Mary's Conservation Area.



Charlton Kings Social Club on Church Street.

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2.6.4 Commercial architecture

The St Mary's Conservation Area has a short section of high street, located on the northeast side of Lyefield Road West at the junction with Copt Elm Road. The shopfronts are all modest in size and utilise modern materials and signage.

This stretch of commercial buildings includes a locally Indexed building on the crossroads of character area 2. This building occupies a corner plot in a prominent position. It is two storeys, constructed in red brick with ashlar stone detailing, with a hipped slate roof behind a parapet. The ground floor is in use as a shop, with a corner entrance with agapanthus leaf capitals to the doorcase. A date stone above the doorway which reads 'Branch No. 15 A.D. 1901' and historic mapping confirms that this building was constructed as a post office. The building appears to have been extended to the west along Lyefield Road West in a corresponding style and use of red brick, with commercial units on the ground floor.

There are two pubs within the St Mary's Conservation Area; the Royal on Horsefair Street and the Merryfellow on Church Street. Both of these buildings are included in the Index of locally important buildings, and are both within character area 1 of the conservation area. Both buildings appear on historic mapping of the area: The Royal is visible on the 1840s tithe map, and the Merryfellow on the 1888 Ordnance Survey.

The Merryfellow is a historic public house, made up of three smaller buildings of differing phases of construction that have been accumulated into one larger building. The pub has retained its historic proportions, timber framed windows and architectural detailing such as a arched moulded doorcase with corresponding fanlight and a historic timber framed shopfront facing Church Street. The building commands a prominent position on the corner of Church Street and School Road and faces directly on to the streets both to the south and west. This positioning, along with the narrow winding nature of the streets, mean the Merryfellow positively contributes to the historic character of the conservation area.



The locally Indexed building on the corner of Lyefield Road West and Copt Elm Road.



The shops along Lyefield Road West.



The Merryfellow on the corner of Church Street and School Road within character area 1 of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

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The Royal is located on Horsefair Street to the southwest of St Mary's Church. Likely built as a coaching inn, the building appears on the 1840s tithe map and is later labelled as a hotel on historic mapping. A date stone at the centre of the pediment on the principal north façade dates the building to 1830. The site has a collection of buildings around the central pub, which is made up of three bays under a hipped slate roof with a central pediment. The first floor of the north elevation retains its historic casement windows which all have moulded window hoods. This building stylistically is of higher status than the Merryfellow, likely being purpose built as a coaching inn in a prominent position adjacent to St Mary's Church, but demonstrates the early 19th-century development along with the Merryfellow within the St Mary's area.



The Royal on Horsefair Street, opposite St Mary's Church, within character area 1 of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

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2.7 Materials

The predominant construction material across the St Mary's Conservation Area is red brick, concentrated within character area 2 in the north section of the conservation area in the late 19th- and early 20th-century housing developments along Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East. These buildings are also finished with limestone or ashlar decorative detailing, particularly around doors and windows. Some buildings have been rendered or painted, but generally the majority of the semi-detached houses have been left with the red brick exposed which creates a cohesive appearance to the conservation area.



A pair of semi-detached houses on Copt Elm Road demonstrating the use of red brick, slate, render and stone detailing.







The variety of buildings that used the same material pallet of red brick, stone ashlar detailing and slate roofs across character area 2 of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

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The character area around St Mary's Church in the south portion of the conservation area also utilises red brick but there is a much greater variety of building materials which represents the organic development of the area over a much longer period of time. There is a higher proportion of rendered buildings and older structures incorporate some instances of timber framing.

Roofs are generally blue Welsh slate or Cotswold stone slate, with some examples of clay and concrete tiles on 20th-century buildings or on replacement roofs.

Public roads and footpaths are tarmac with concrete curbs. Driveways vary between brick, concrete slabs, tarmac and gravel, with the use of brick and gravel being the most in keeping with the established historic character of the conservation area.



Externally rendered and painted buildings in character area 1 of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

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2.8 Boundary treatments

Boundary treatments vary across the conservation area but the most common are red brick masonry walls. These vary in height but a significant proportion of the front gardens in character area 2 have low front boundary walls. Some of these walls are topped with hedges and iron railings. These walls also vary in age, with instances of replacement brick walls across the Conservation Area. The listed boundary walls of St Mary's Church are constructed in limestone ashlar with iron railings and gates, and contrast the common boundary treatments across the conservation area to emphasis the status of the Church as a landmark building.

The most characterful boundary treatments are low red brick walls and hedges, which are in keeping with the historic character and appearance of the conservation area. Several boundary treatments have been incrementally removed to create car parking with hardsurfacing.



Red brick boundary walls paired with hedging are most characterful within the St Mary's Conservation Area, as demonstrated at this large villa on Copt Elm Road.



Low front boundary walls with front gardens behind, as demonstrated by these semi-detached houses on Lyefield Road East.



Surviving historic red brick walls to a building off Church Street.



Low boundary walls and hedging to front gardens on Copt Elm Road. I

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2.9 Urban grain, configuration, direction of movement

The urban grain, configuration and direction of movement within the St Mary's Conservation Area differs between the two character areas. This is due the contrast in their historic development an older, more organic evolution of settlement around St Mary's Church, and the planned 19th- and 20th-century construction of consistent residential streets to the north.

Character area 1, focussed around St Mary's Church, has a fine urban grain where buildings and plots are loosely set along tight, winding historic streets within narrow plots. This creates an informal rural village character which is focussed on the Church as the focal point, the literal and figurative centre of the settlement, with the direction of movement funnelled along either side of the churchyard.

Character area 2, to the north of St Mary's Church and based around Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West, Lyefield Road East, is formally laid out with a steady, planned rhythm in the pattern of the plots, which are long and narrow in form. This form of the streets is representative of the late Victorian formally planned mass development. The direction of movement is less organic in character that around the Church, forming a grid pattern instead.

2.10 Public realm

Street signs and road markings are the most visually prominent forms of street furniture within St Mary's Conservation Area. They are very noticeable at the busier road junctions, particularly the junction of Church Street with Horsefair Street and the junction of Copt Elm Road with Lyefield Road East and Lyefield Road West.

The war memorial sits on a traffic island, at the junction of Horsefair Street and Church Street, which divorces it from the surrounding built environment. Despite this, the placement of the monument within the centre of character area one, adjacent to the churchyard, contributes positively to the appearance of the conservation area and emphasises the village characteristic around St Mary's Church.

Other forms of street furniture include utilitarian designed streetlamps, a small number of benches, bus stops and shelters, litter bins and pedestrian railings. Although these items of street furniture are modern introductions, they do not tend to detract from the nearby historic buildings.



Road markings at the crossroads between Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road East and Lyefield Road West.



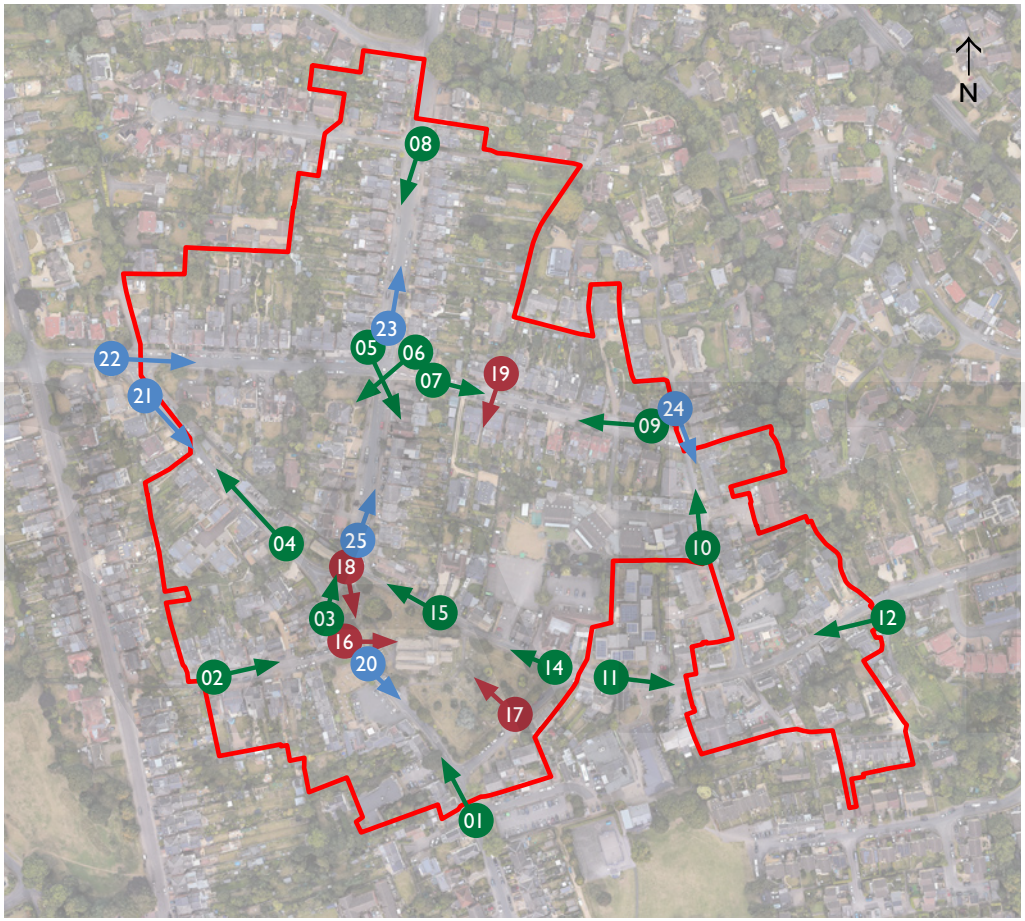
The war memorial isolated on a traffic island at the junction of Horsefair Street and Church Street.

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2.11 Key views

There are several types of views which contribute to and enhance the special interest of the Bafford Conservation Area. 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.

Streetscape views are dynamic perspectives of the collective built environment that demonstrate the characer and appearance of the conservation area, whereas landmark views are focussed on individual key buildings. Landscape views are views of the landscape beyond the boundary of the St Mary's Conservation Area that allow for appreciation of the Cotswold scarp to the north and east in particular.



Views Plan

- Proposed Conservation area boundary
- Streetscape view
- Views of local landmarks
- Views into the surrounding landscape

This plan is not to scale

2.11.1 Streetscape views

The key streetscape views within the conservation area emphasise the contrast between the two character areas; the older medieval settlement and the late 19th- and early 20th-century developments.

Views along the road are dynamic and the selection included here are not representative of all the significant views within the conservation area. Other views along the direction of travel along the principal streets are also acknowledged as important in establishing the character and appearance of the conservation area.



View 01: looking north along Horsefair Street.



View 02: looking east along Gladstone Road.



View 03: looking northeast at the crossroads of Horsefair Street and Church Street.



View 04: looking northwest along Horsefair Street.

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View 05: looking south along Copt Elm Road at the crossroads with Lyefield Road East and Lyefield Road West.



View 06: looking southwest, at the crossroads with Lyefield Road East and Lyefield Road West.



View 07: looking east along Lyefield Road East.



View 08: looking south along Copt Elm Road at the north boundary of the Conservation Area.



View 09: looking west along Lyefield Road East.



View 10: looking north along School Road.



View 11: looking east along Church Street.



View 12: looking southwest along Church Street.



View 13: looking northwest along Church Street.



View 14: looking northwest along Church Street.

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2.11.2 Views of key landmarks

St Mary's Church is the key landmark within the conservation area and is a feature within many streetscape and long-range landscape views.



View 15: looking east at St Mary's Church.



View 16: looking northwest at St Mary's Church.



View 17: looking south at St Mary's Church and the lychgate.



View 18: looking south at St Mary's Church between houses on Lyefield Road East.

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2.11.3 Views into the surrounding landscape

Due to the flat topography of the conservation area and the wide layout of the late 19th- and early 20th-century streets, there are dramatic long-range views out to the surrounding Cotswold Scarp beyond the boundary of the conservation area.



View 19: looking southeast along Horsefair Street with long-range views of the Cotswolds Scarp to the south.



View 20: looking southeast along Horsefair Street with long-range views of the Cotswolds Scarp to the south.



View 21: looking east along Lyefield Road West with long-range views of the Cotswolds Scarp to the east.



View 22: looking north along Copt Elm Road with views of the gentle topography to the north of the conservation area boundary.



View 23: looking south along School Road with long-range views of the Cotswolds Scarp to the south.



View 24: looking north along Copt Elm Road towards the hillside to the north beyond the conservation area boundary.

2.12 Trees and open spaces

Trees and open space make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

The churchyard at St Mary's Church is significant as the only open green space in the conservation area. It provides a break in the built historic environment and is populated with several large, mature trees and sections of hedging between the burial plots. The planting positively contributes to the setting of St Mary's Church and is well maintained. There is a wide variety of tree species within the churchyard which adds interest to the open space. The boundary of the churchyard is marked with low stone walls with piers and iron railings and lined internally with tall trees; this creates a sense of separation from the surrounding streets and a secluded character from within the churchyard.



St Mary's Churchyard, looking northwest.



St Mary's Churchyard, looking northwest.



St Mary's Churchyard, looking southwest.

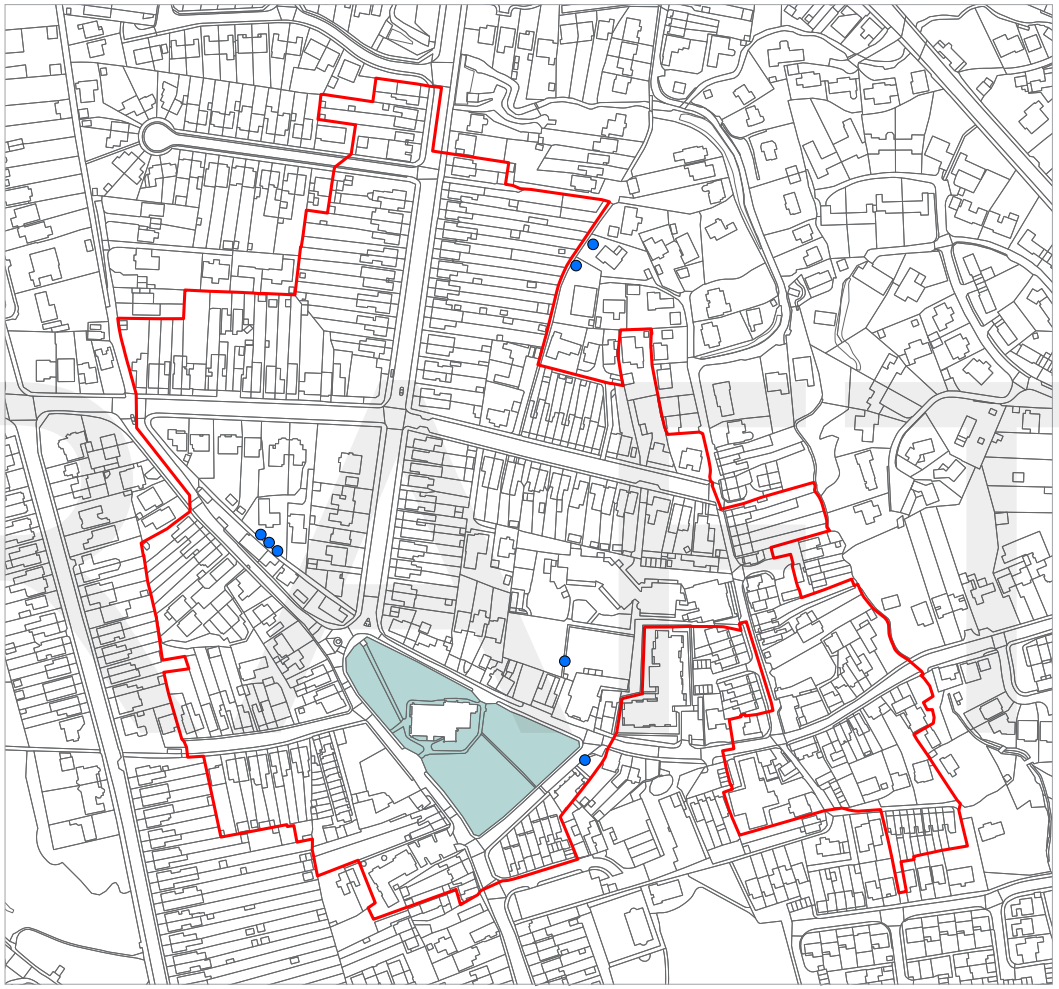


The view of Horsefair Street looking northwest, with the boundary of the churchyard with the tall trees on the left, separating the open space from the public road.

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The late 19th- and early 20th-century housing development in the north section of the conservation area has the houses set back from the road with small front gardens. Some of these have hedgerow which form natural, soft boundaries which create a sense of privacy and separation from the public roads. These all contribute to the historic suburban character of the conservation area. Some of these front gardens have been converted into hardstandings which detrimentally impact the conservation area.

The wide streets of Copt Elm Road, Lyefield Road West and Lyefield Road East have trees planted in places which soften the streetscape and contribute additional greenery within the built environment. These compliment the natural boundary treatments also in place along these streets. Other large, mature trees are confined to the rear gardens of the residential houses within the conservation area, some of which have Tree Preservation Orders.



Proposed Conservation area boundary
Tree preservation order
Open spaces

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.

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2.13 Topography

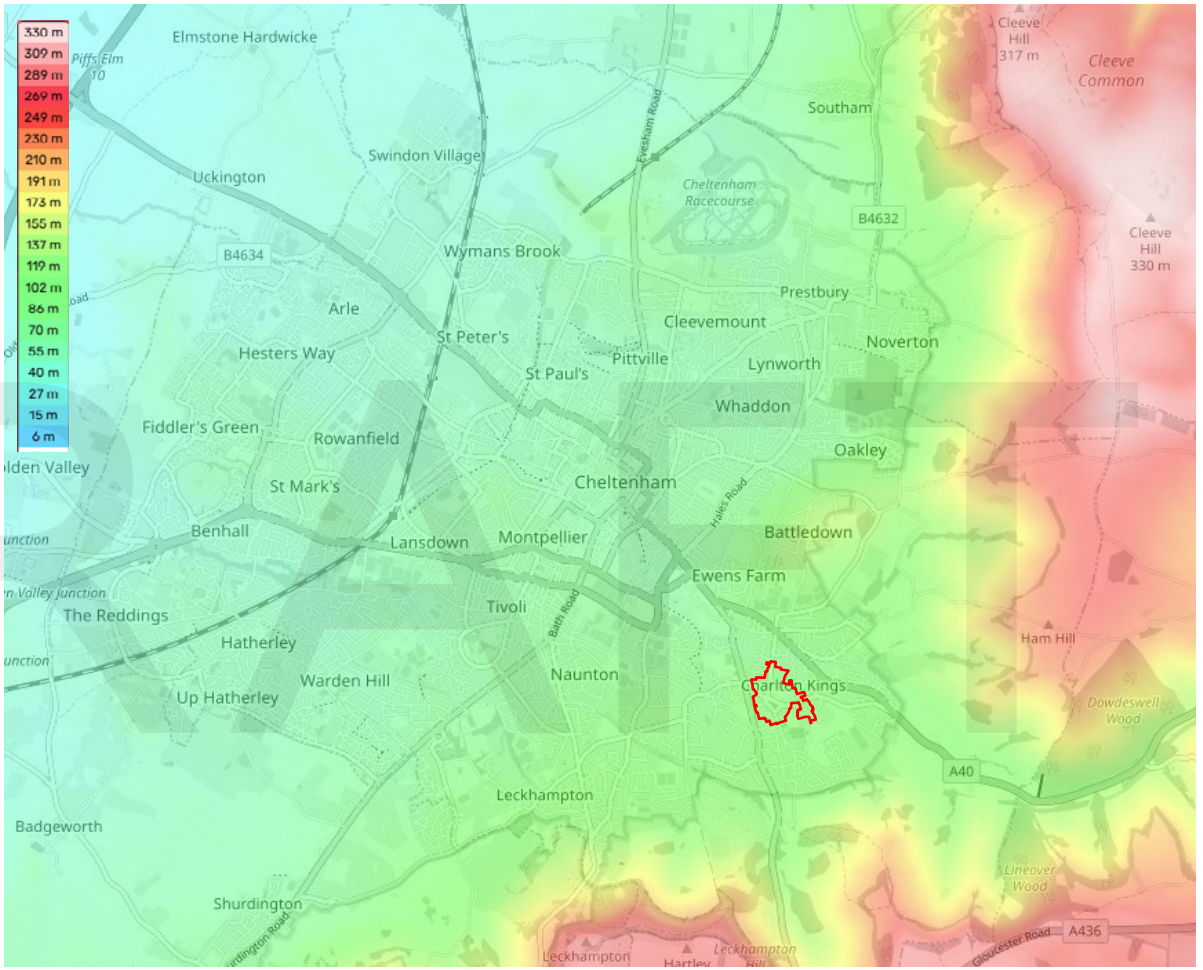
The St Mary's Conservation Area is on a flat plateau with minor undulations in the topography. This is most pronounced at the northern end of Copt Elm Road which dips lower when travelling out of the conservation area to the north. This affords a view of the hillside to the north of the conservation area boundary.

2.14 Archaeology

Archaeological remains have been discovered within the wider Charlton Kings area, which date from the Roman and medieval periods respectively. All recorded finds were discovered outside the boundary of the St Mary's Conservation Area but illustrate the historic development of the wider Charlton Kings area.

The medieval churchyard cross to the north of St Mary's Church is both a scheduled monument and a Grade II* listed building. This illustrates the archaeological significance of St Mary's Church as a historic place of worship and the origins of the Charlton Kings settlements.

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.[01]



Map showing relative topography in and around the Cudnall Street 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).

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

3.0 Heritage assets

The St Mary's 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 at the time of writing. However, please consult the National Heritage List for England via https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search/ and consult Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of Buildings of Local Interest for the most up to date records.

3.1 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.

There are several listed buildings within the St Mary's Conservation Area boundary. These comprise two private houses and a cluster around St Mary's Church, including the Church, the boundary walls, several monuments within the churchyard, and the adjacent St Mary's Hall.

3.2 Scheduled monuments

Scheduled monuments are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Scheduling protects nationally important archaeological sites, which can be above or below ground, and the register is managed by Historic England.

There is one scheduled monument within the St Mary's Conservation Area; the churchyard cross to the northwest of St Mary's Church within the churchyard, which is also a Grade II* listed building.

3.3 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. The index is reviewed and updated from time to time.

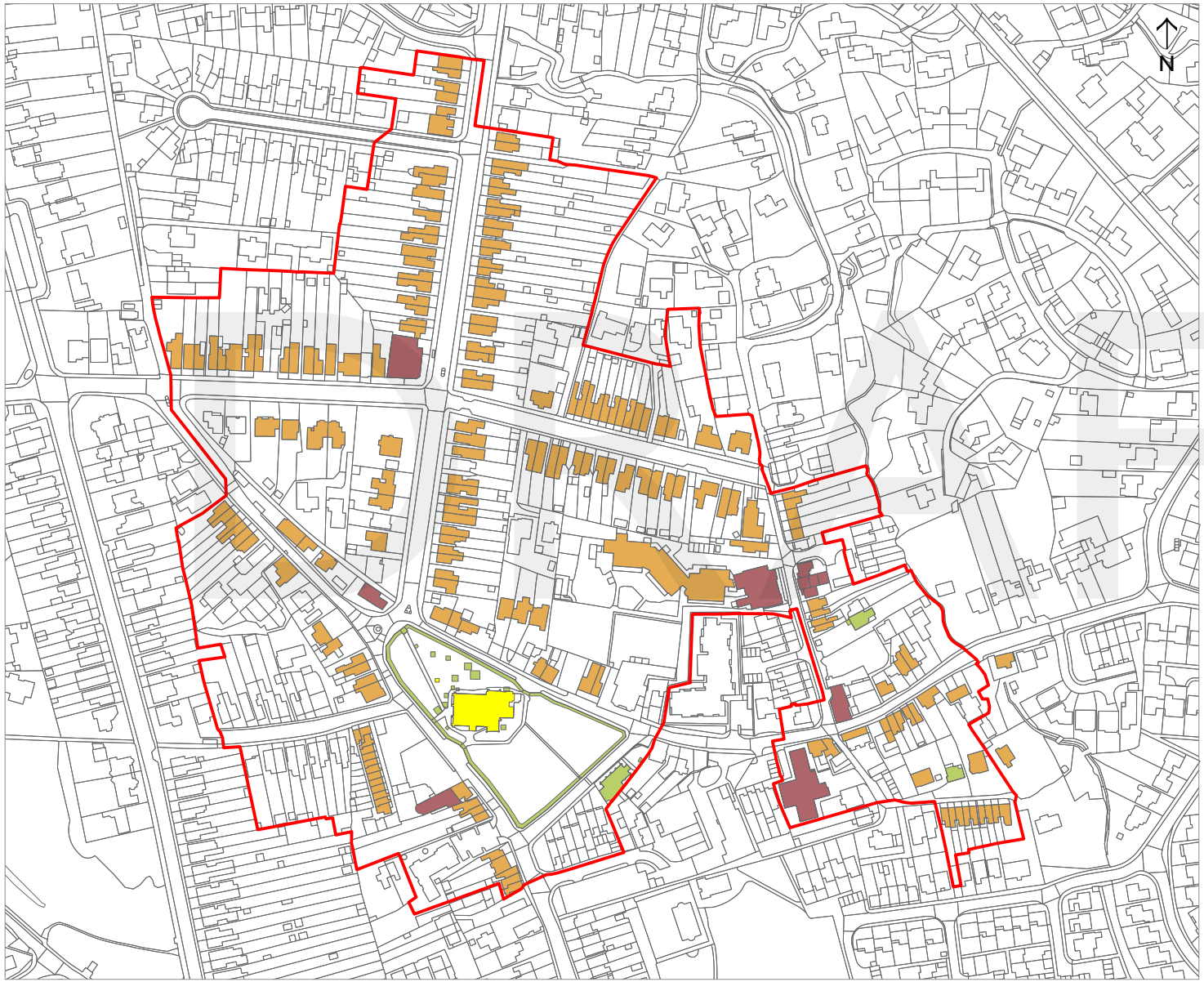
However, the Council will give careful consideration to the local importance of the property and its setting when considering any applications for planning or other consents. The Council may consider action to protect the building if it is considered to be under threat of demolition or damage. The index is reviewed regularly and the public are consulted on proposed inclusions.

There are several index buildings within the St Mary's Conservation Area, including the historic school buildings on School Road, the Baptist Chapel on Church Street, and the Merryfellow and the Royal pubs. The proposed extension to the conservation area would include another index building on the corner of Church Street and School Road.

3.3 Positive contributors

Buildings identified as positive contributors are unlisted buildings that are not on Cheltenham Borough Council's index of buildings of local interest but are recognised for their contribution to the special historic and architectural interest of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

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Heritage Assets Plan

- Proposed Conservation area boundary
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building
- Index buildings
- Positive contributors

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.

4.0 Alterations to the conservation area boundary

4.1 Reasons for review

In accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework and Historic England best practice guidance, the boundary of a conservation area should be periodically reviewed and suitably revised in accordance with findings made during this exercise.

The need to review the boundary can be in response to a number of factors: unmanaged incremental changes which have, over time, diluted the character of an area; the boundary may have been drawn too tightly originally; or the special interest of a feature may not have been evident to a previous assessor. Although it is principally the built structures that are recognised in amending the boundary, their accompanying plots often provide an important historical context which should be incorporated together with the building(s).

The boundary of Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area was last undertaken between 2007 and 2008. Some recommendations regarding boundary alterations were made at this time, although none were taken forwards.

The following pages detail the proposed boundary changes to the conservation area. When considering the boundary changes, the following questions were asked:

- Does the location contribute to the identified special interest of the conservation area and/or the character area of which it is a part?
- If so, what is the particular contribution it makes? Does it:
    - demonstrate the architectural style?
    - illustrate an association with an important person or event which helped shape Cheltenham's history?
    - contribute to an understanding of the town's historic configuration?
    - form part of a wider architectural development, such as a group of terraces built at the same time, or a historic planned estate?
    - facilitate or form part of a key view within the town?
    - enhance the visual interest of the conservation area, for instance by providing open green space or mature tree cover?

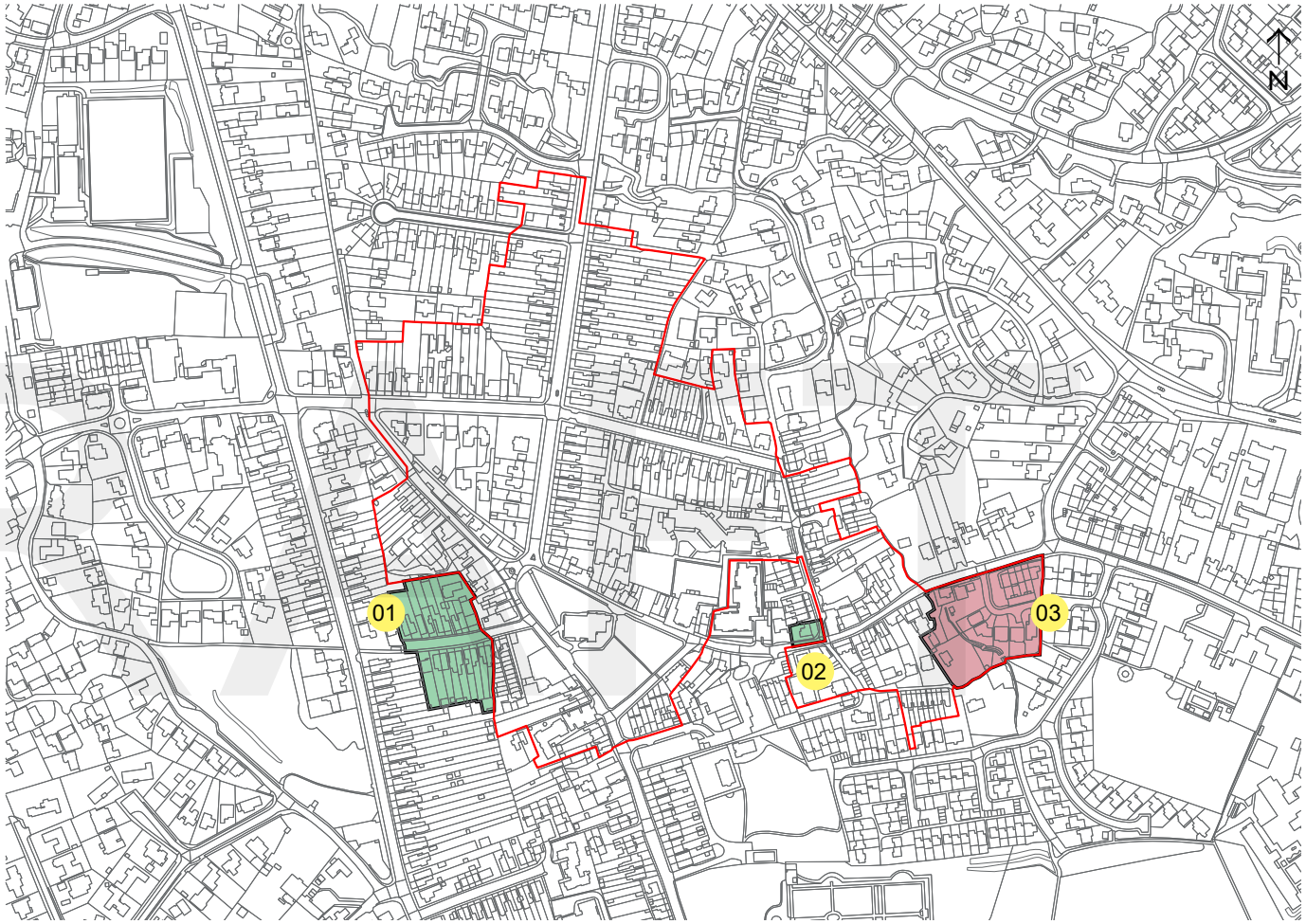
A location which continues to enhance the special interest of the conservation area in one or more of the above ways is likely to be retained within the conservation area boundary, or brought into the boundary if it is not already included. Where the special interest of a location has been heavily eroded - perhaps through significant loss of historic buildings or features or significant modern development which has fundamentally altered the character of an area or severed it from its historic setting, there will be scope for removing an area from the boundary.

Where an area contains both contributing and non-contributing or detracting elements, these factors will be balanced to determine whether the location makes a sufficient contribution to warrant retention within the conservation area boundary without depreciating the integrity of the designation.

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4.2 Map of proposed boundary changes

A number of minor amendments to the boundary are recommended within this Conservation Area Appraisal. These are identified on the adjacent plan.



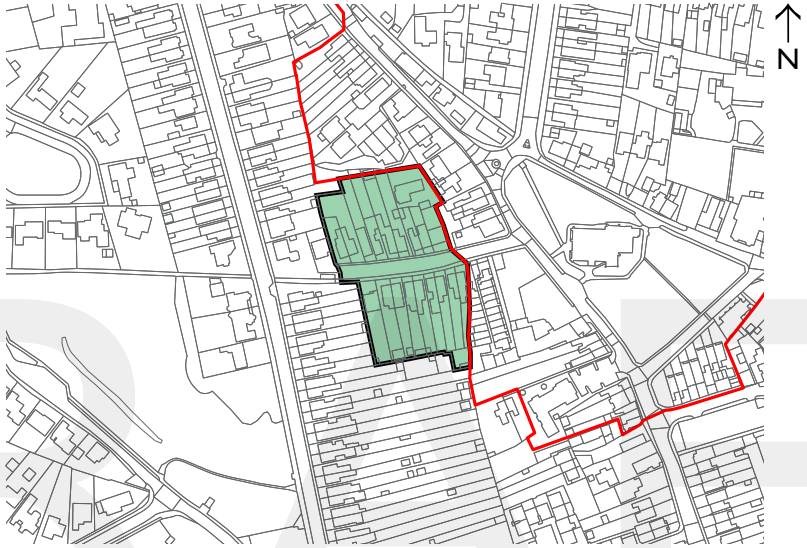
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4.3 Proposed inclusions

01 Gladstone Road – 19th-century semi-detached housing

It is proposed to include Gladstone Road within the St Mary's Conservation Area. This road is a 19th-century development of residential housing which is similar in scale, use of materials and architectural detail as the other 19th-century housing which is characteristic of the conservation area. The buildings are in good condition with a high rate of survival of architectural detailing, and no detracting later development (dormer windows, inconsistent extensions).

The view from the public footpath to the east end to Gladstone Road would constitute a key view of St Mary's Church, the landmark building within the conservation area.



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The semi-detached houses on the south side of Gladstone Road.



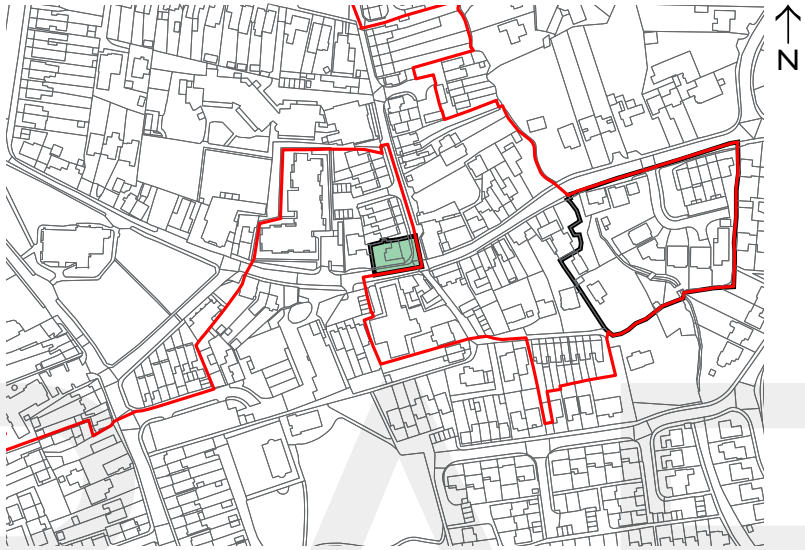
The semi-detached houses on the north side of Gladstone Road.



The approach to Gladstone Road from the east from the public footpath, which affords a key view of St Mary's Church, the landmark building at the centre of the Conservation Area.

02 The inclusion of an index building on corner of Church Street and School Road.

It is proposed to extend the St Mary's Conservation Area boundary to include a historic residential building on the corner of Church Street and School Road. The house appears on the 1894 Ordnance Survey, suggesting it was constructed in the early 1890s. It is a characterful late 19th-century building, utilising red brick with sandstone architectural detail which is prevalent across the conservation area. The building is in good condition and positively contributes to the streetscape in this section of the conservation area. Its value is already recognised in its inclusion on the Council's Index of locally important buildings.





The house on the corner of Church Street and School Road, included on the Council's Index of locally important buildings.

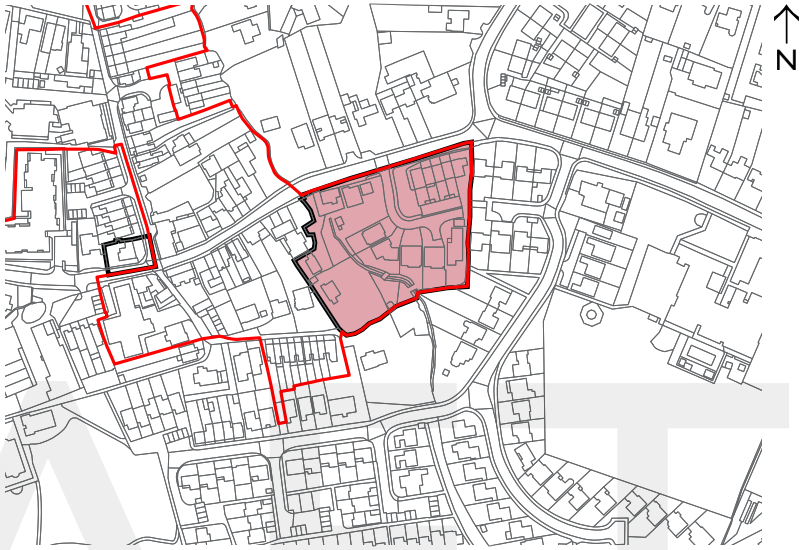
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4.4 Proposed exclusions

03 The removal of late 20th-century houses and early 21st-century housing development.

A small modern housing estate, Coates Gardens, has been constructed at the southeast corner of the conservation area, on land that was historically used as a plant nursery. The early 21st-century buildings do not contribute to the overall character and appearance of the conservation area, and the layout of the modern street does not reflect the historic development of the wider St Mary's area. The building and plot sizes also do not reflect the established and consistent form of the late 19th- and early 20th-century developments elsewhere within the conservation area.

It is also proposed to take the opportunity to remove two late 20th-century buildings adjacent to the Coates Gardens development. These buildings do not reflect the established form of the historic development of the St Mary's Conservation Area and do not positively contribute to its character or appearance.





Coates Gardens from the existing southeastern boundary of the St Mary's Conservation Area.



The early 21st century housing development, Coates Gardens.



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5.0 Challenges

5.1 Detracting features and loss of historic detail

The road markings throughout the conservation area are very prominent, negatively impacting the historic character and appearance of the conservation area and the nearby historic buildings. The road markings and associated traffic paraphernalia at the junction of Horsefair Street with Church Street combine are intrusive and unattractive features within the streetscape, and provide a poor setting for the nearby war memorial, the lych gate and the gate piers and railings around St Mary's Churchyard.

There have been instances of the loss of traditional architectural features such as the loss of and alterations to original timber sash windows and doors in prominent locations. Their replacement with uPVC windows negatively impacts the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.

There is a prevalence of telephone wires across the St Mary's Conservation Area which are visually intrusive, particularly where these are present within key views of the streetscape, landmarks and the wider landscape setting. As modern technology develops, it will become likely that telephone wires will begin to be decommissioned where they are no longer required.

The short strip of shops along Lyefield Road West have shopfronts which utilise modern materials. The inconsistency of design and use of materials has a negative impact upon the historic character of the area. This is particularly felt on the locally Indexed building located on the corner of Lyefield Road West and Copt Elm Road which has a variety of signage, boundary treatments, shop fronts and awnings which gives a cluttered appearance and does not correspond to the architectural interest of the historic building.

There is a prevalence of uPVC windows, doors and rainwater goods in unlisted historic buildings across the St Mary's Conservation Area. First generation uPVC double-glazing is visually intrusive and negatively impacts the historic character of the conservation area, whereas later uPVC units can be better designed and more in keeping with the established special historic and architectural interest of the area.

5.2 Modern development

Generally, modern development has conformed to the established urban grain and settlement pattern within the St Mary's Conservation Area. The variety of the architectural style follows the established mix of historic design. There has been some construction of modern housing as infill between larger houses and in sections of land behind the principal streets; this is particularly evident with the development of Charlton Kings Primary School that now occupies a significance proportion of the land behind Church Street, School Road, Lyefield Road East and Copt Elm Road.

There have been some poor-quality boundary treatments in the conservation area, which are mainly close-boarded wooden fences and concrete block walls. These are not traditional forms of boundary treatment and do not complement or enhance the setting of historic buildings.

Some traditional buildings have had inappropriate modern porches added to front entranceways. This is particularly noticeable on historic terraced housing and negatively impacts the character and appearance of the buildings as a group.

Modern tarmacked roads and pavements, with concrete kerbs, have been laid throughout the conservation area. These, along with modern materials used for driveways and paths to front door, have incrementally impacted the overall historic rural character of the conservation area.

Many of the buildings and boundary treatments within the conservation area utilise historic masonry and brickwork which add to the variety and interest of the area. Some of these unlisted historic structures which make a positive contribution to the conservation area are at risk of potentially being repointed in inappropriate materials, such as impermeable cement mortars, which will damage the historic fabric and be visually obtrusive.

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5.3 Traffic and parking

The loss of front gardens and low front boundary walls for off-street parking spaces is a common occurrence across the conservation area. The incremental loss of these features has accumulatively harmed the character of the conservation area, particularly within the late 19th- and early 20th-century housing development on Lyefield Road West, Lyefield Road East and Copt Elm Road.

The loss of front gardens has resulted in less green space within the streetscape of these roads. The removal of the low brick walls and the installation of hardsurfacing has negatively impacted the setting of the individual historic houses which all contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

5.4 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]

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

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6.0 Opportunities for enhancement

The key opportunity for the St Mary's Conservation Area is to ensure the continued preservation of the established historic character and appearance of the two distinct character areas; the organic, vernacular character of the streets around St Mary's Church and the contrasting planned late 19th- and early 20th-century residential housing.

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 historic buildings. Incrementally addressing these issues will have a positive impact and enhance the conservation area by preserving its historic character and appearance.

Although many of the uPVC windows and doors 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.

There is an opportunity to encourage the reinstatement of front gardens which have been converted to off-street parking spaces. The loss of traditional front boundary walls and the replacement of the modest green spaces with hardstandings has had an incrementally negative impact upon the appearance of the conservation area. The reinstatement of front gardens could soften the streetscape with the introduction of trees and planting and positively enhance the historic residential character of the conservation area.

The small number of shops within the conservation have a range of shopfront treatments, including modern materials, signage and advertising. There is the opportunity to introduce traditional shopfronts to these buildings as the existing units reach their end of life cycle. This would enhance the historic character of the conservation area, including improving the appearance of the locally Indexed building on the corner of Lyefield Road West and Copt Elm Road.

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7.0 Management plan

7.1 Control measures

In order to protect and enhance the conservation area, any changes that take place must conserve its character and special interest. Statutory control measures are intended to prevent development that may have an individually or cumulatively negative effect. Control measures within include:

- Planning permission will usually be required to totally or substantially demolish buildings or structure (including walls, gate piers and chimneys). This will also need a heritage statement (sometimes called a heritage impact assessment) as part of the application.
- The extent to which permitted development (i.e. changes that are allowed without requiring consent from the local authority) may be restricted. For example, replacement windows, different elevational finishes or the installation of satellite dishes may require planning permission.
- Trees with a diameter of 75mm or greater, measured as 1.5m above the soil level are protected. Any work proposed to these trees require permission from the local authority by means of a planning application. This allows the authority to determine whether a tree preservation order (TPO) is necessary.
- Advertisements and other commercial signage may be subject to additional controls and/or require planning permission.

7.2 Conservation aims and best practice

There is no generally accepted detailed definition of 'best practice' in conservation: it is a term used to describe the management of change (including repair) so that the integrity and character of a historic site is not eroded or compromised. It is not the intention of conservation best practice to prevent change from happening: alterations can still be carried out but should be subject to additional scrutiny to ensure that the special interest of the conservation area is protected.

It is the purpose of this document to provide guidance that will help achieve these aims. Overall, any change in the St Mary's Conservation Area should seek to:

- Preserve its historical features;
- Enhance, where possible, its special interest;
- Positively contribute to its established character; and
- Be high quality.

7.3 'Like-for-like'

A term that is frequently used in conservation is 'like-for-like' replacement or repair. This is frequently – and mistakenly – taken to mean that a modern alternative that generally echoes the style of the element removed is acceptable. However, this is not accurate or acceptable. Like-for-like should always be interpreted as an alternative that matches the historic element removed in terms of its material, dimensions, method of construction, finish, means of installation and any other feature specific to the original element, such that the modern replacement is hardly discernible from the original (accepting that its condition will be greatly improved where the original has failed beyond repair).

For example, modern uPVC windows in imitation of Georgian or Victorian-style sash windows but with false glazing bars and a top-hung casement opening mechanism do not constitute a like-for-like replacement for traditional timber-framed Victorian sliding sash windows, although they may appear stylistically similar.

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7.4 Repairs and replacement

Repairs and replacement are inevitable with any building or site, regardless of age; however, within a conservation area, it is especially important that this is carried out sensitively to protect the historic fabric of its buildings and respect the character of the wider area. Key points to remember when looking to carry out repair work or install replacement features are:

- A method of repair that was suitable for one building may not be suitable for another. Repair and replacement should always be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Repairs using appropriate materials and techniques are always preferable over wholescale replacement.
- Red brick is the prevalent building material within the St Mary's Conservation Area that significantly contribute to the distinctive historic character of the area. Opportunities to enhance the conservation area through the reinstatement of appropriately detailed red brick is encouraged.
- Where a historic feature has degraded beyond repair, replacement should be carried out on a like-for-like basis.
- Where seeking to improve failing modern features, a traditionally-designed alternative using appropriate materials is preferable. For example, the replacement of uPVC gutters and downpipes with lead, cast iron or coated aluminium alternatives that better reflect the traditional character of the conservation area.
- Cement-based mortars and/or ribbon pointing are harmful to historic brickwork and masonry. Repairs to any pointing should be carried out in a lime mortar after any cementitious mortar has been raked out. This will ensure the longevity of the historic built fabric.
- Due consideration should be given to the sustainability of the repair or replacement, i.e. what is its lifespan? What maintenance will be required to prolong this?
- Reversibility is an important consideration as better alternatives may become available in the future.
- Historic external detailing should be retained or, where damaged beyond repair, replaced on a like-for-like basis. This includes (but is not limited to): the texture and colour of render; size and colour of bricks used, and the bond in which they are laid; stone dressings; and chimneystacks.
- The reinstatement of historic features that have been lost is favourable. For example, re-exposing brickwork that has been rendered or painted over.
- The repair and replacement of windows can have a notable effect on the character and special interest of the conservation area, both positively and negatively. The aim should always be to retain historic windows wherever they survive, carrying out refurbishment work where needed to make sure they remain usable. Timber frames are preferable over uPVC for a number of reasons, mainly their comparative slimness and breathable quality which has a positive knock-on effect on the overall condition of the historic building. However, it is recognised that modern double-glazing is becoming increasingly well-designed to suit historic contexts and may be permitted, subject to their appropriateness.

7.5 Preservation of historic character

The St Mary's Conservation Area has two distinct character area which reflect the historic development of the area. Future development should keep the key characteristics of each area in mind to prevent the erosion of the visual appearance of these character areas. Priorities should be as follows:

Character Area 1: Early settlement

- Retention of village character
- Retention of the informal spatial qualities
- Protect of church views

Character area 2: Late 19th century and early 20th century development

- Protection of front gardens and associated boundary walls
- Retention of brick detailing
- Resistance of cumulative parking erosion

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7.6 Maintenance

Maintenance differs from repair in that it is a pre-planned, regular activity intended to reduce instances where remedial or unforeseen work is needed. The higher the levels of maintenance, the less need to carry out repairs. Regular maintenance activity should include annual gutter clearing, seasonal vegetation control and repainting external joinery with an oil-based paint. This is not an exhaustive list and each historic building will have its own specific needs.

Larger historic buildings and those which are listed may benefit from occasional condition surveys (usually around every five years) to highlight their individual maintenance and repair needs.

The maintenance requirement of a building will depend on its age, materials and susceptibility to wear. Historic England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and other heritage bodies publish specialist guidance on the suitable maintenance and repair methods for different historic buildings.

7.7 Trees

Trees are afforded protection within the conservation area and there are hundreds of tree preservation orders in place around Cheltenham (both within and outside conservation areas). Any tree surgery work should be carried out only once the relevant permission has been sought.

Good arboricultural management can help to maintain the safety of trees and reduce potential conflict with the built environment around them. Such works should be undertaken in line with industry best practice in order to protect their physiological and structural health, as well as their amenity.

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.

7.8 Modern and new development

It is not the intention of conservation area designation to prevent new development or entirely exclude existing modern development where this is woven into a surrounding historic space. Instead, it puts in place a process whereby any proposals are more thoroughly studied to ensure that the special interest of the conservation area is protected and opportunities to improve its character are identified.

New development can range from entire new buildings to the introduction of new features, however small, on existing buildings.

New development within the setting of the conservation area should also be carefully managed as it has the potential to detract from its character and special interest. Any proposals will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and take account of:

- The significance of any existing building affected;
- The impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, key buildings of individual heritage interest and/or positive contributors;
- How local features and materials can be incorporated into the new design;
- Whether or not any historical plot boundaries survive or could be recoverable;
- The impact of the overall scale, massing and design on the wider streetscape;

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

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- The loss of any important rear/side elevations or views of these;
- Characteristic boundary treatments and planting;
- The potential for below-ground or built archaeology; and
- Any other heritage or conservation constraints identified.
- The addition of new features on existing buildings can be detrimental to the individual buildings as well as the overall character of their wider setting if unmanaged. Specifically:
    - television aerials and satellite dishes should not be fixed to principal or highly visible elevations, or chimneystacks.
    - features such as external lighting and security cameras should be as discreet as possible.
    - solar panels should be restricted to rear or secondary elevations, especially where a building forms one of a group.
    - internal alterations can have an external impact; for example, staircases cutting across windows or the removal of chimneybreasts necessitating the removal of the associated chimneystack.

7.9 Sustainability

Maintenance and continued use of historic buildings is inherently sustainable. However, there are growing pressures to improve the energy efficiency of the country's historic building stock in order to reduce carbon emissions, particularly from heating which uses fossil fuel sources. Pressures to increase sustainability performance can be accommodated within the conservation area but will require a bespoke approach to ensure that the measures needed can be viably implemented without harm to its special interest.

Straight-forward measures to improve building performance include:

- Refurbishing historic windows and doors to prevent drafts.
- Re-pointing external walls to prevent damp and air leaks.
- Maintaining rainwater goods.
- Improving and/or expanding green spaces.
- Inserting breathable insulation in loft spaces and suspended floor voids.
- Installing thick curtains or internal shutters.

Double-glazing is now available in slimline, timber frame units which are considerably more sympathetic within historic contexts than earlier versions. It will be necessary to obtain the relevant permissions to install double-glazing. Best practice will always be to retain historic windows wherever possible, with the installation of secondary units being an alternative to full replacement.

The installation of solar panels and other infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging points and heat pumps in a conservation area is generally acceptable, however they must not be installed in a location that is visible from any public highway and their physical and aesthetic impact will need to be carefully considered and mitigated.

Historic England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Royal Institute of British Architects and other bodies publish extensive guidance on the sensitive adaptation of buildings in response to climate change and sustainability challenges.

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Appendix A: Useful contacts

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Appendix B: Glossary

Terminology	Definition
Baroque	A highly decorative and theatrical style of architecture popular in England during the 17th century. It experienced a revival in the early 20th century.
Classical	Architecture inspired by the buildings of ancient Greece and Rome - characterised by the use of columns and pediments.
Corbel	Stone, wood or metal bracket, often structural but sometimes decorative.
Cornice	A horizontal decorative moulding.
Fanlight	A small semicircular or rectangular light above a doorway.
Fascia	A horizontal band beneath the eaves of a building or over a shopfront.
Fenestration	Architectural terminology for windows and doors.
Finial	Vertical decorative element found on roofs, towers, spires and gables.
Gothic	Architecture inspired by the style of medieval churches - featuring pointed arches and tracery.
Key stone	A wedge-shaped stone found at the apex of a masonry arch.

Terminology	Definition
Massing	Refers to the shape, form and size of a building.
Mullion	A vertical glazing bar on a window or window opening.
Patina	Visible signs of historic use.
Polite building	A building designed with regard for architectural fashion, often by an architect.
Portico	A projecting porch supported by columns.
Quoins	Masonry blocks to the corner of a wall - can be structural or aesthetic.
Rubble stone	Unfinished stone.
Stallriser	A platform below a shop window.
Tracery	Division of openings with stone bars or moulded ribs.
Transom	A horizontal glazing bar on a window or window opening.
Urban grain	The pattern of building plots in an urban environment.
Vernacular building	A building constructed using local materials with limited or no regard for architectural fashion.

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Appendix C: Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions

Do I need planning permission for demolition and new development with a Conservation Area?

Planning permission will usually be required to totally or substantially demolish buildings or structures within a conservation area (including walls, gate piers and chimneys). Applications for demolition will also need a heritage statement (sometimes called a heritage impact assessment) as part of the application.

Consult with Cheltenham Borough Council to confirm whether planning permission will be required ahead of any new development.

Are there any additional restrictions on permitted development rights?

The extent to which permitted development (i.e. changes that are allowed without requiring consent from the local authority) may be restricted. For example, replacement windows, different elevational finishes or the installation of satellite dishes. Always confirm any restrictions with Cheltenham Borough Council before carrying out any works to the exterior of a building within the conservation area.

What are the implications of Conservation Area designation for tree works?

Trees with a diameter of 75mm or greater measured at 1.5m above the soil level are protected. Any work proposed to these trees require permission from the local authority by means of a planning application. This allows the local authority to determine whether a tree preservation order (TPO) is necessary.

Are there restrictions on advertising and commercial signage?

Advertisements and other commercial signage may be subject to additional controls and/or require planning permission. Contact planning@cheltenham.gov.uk before installing any advertising infrastructure or commercial signage.

How do I seek pre-application advice?

For pre-application advice on major developments, contact planning@cheltenham.gov.uk. A pre-planning application will provide guidance on what permission is required.

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