CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL


Cheltenham College


Cheltenham Hospital


Dean Close Grounds


Sandford Park

AUGUST 2026, VERSION 02

Character Area 6: Institutional Quarters

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 Institutional Quarters character area

The Institutional Quarters character area includes:

- Cheltenham College and its associated grounds
- The Cheltenham General Hospital site
- The eastern extent of Sandford Park
- Dean Close School and its associated grounds, alongside historic villas on the south side of Lansdown Road which are mostly in institutional use

The historic and current uses across the character area include educational (Dean Close School and Cheltenham College), healthcare (the Cheltenham Hospital complex and associated sites), recreational (Cheltenham Lido and Sandford Park) and residential.

1.2 Institutional Quarters: summary of special interest

The special interest of the Institutional Quarters character area is derived from:

- The survival of historic institutional buildings, which inform the historic formal character of the area and lend significant architectural interest.
- Generous houses and villas from the mid-late Victorian and Edwardian periods, many of which retain original features.
- Diversity of scale and style within the built form.
- The continued legibility of the historic street plan and characteristically loose urban grain.
- A strong association with Dean Francis Close.
- A significant number of street trees and greenery within both public and private grounds.
- Views of important streetscapes, landmarks, and the surrounding landscape.
- The continuation of a historic institutional and residential character.

The survival of historic institutional buildings.

The character area contains a number of substantial 19th-century institutional buildings, which inform the historic, formal character of the area and lend significant architectural interest. The neo-Classical block of the General Hospital occupies a prominent position on Sandford Road and is significant for its continued use as a healthcare facility since the 1840s. The various historic ranges of Cheltenham College and Dean Close School, along with their associated grounds and boarding houses, illustrate the evolution of Cheltenham into a leading educational centre during the 19th century. The concentrated presence of institutional buildings in this part of Cheltenham provides a contrast to the strong residential character found in other parts of the conservation area.

Larger houses and villas.

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

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Diversity of style and scale within the built form.

The character area was developed at a slower pace than other parts of Cheltenham and as such contains a variety of architectural styles and materials across all typologies. Earlier villas and the General Hospital were built in a neo-Classical style, villas constructed around the middle of the 19th century tended to favour an Italianate style, whilst variations on a neo-Gothic style are seen to Cheltenham College and later 19th century buildings. Pale coloured render is seen alongside richly coloured brickwork and exposed limestone. As well as illustrating changing architectural fashions over the course of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, this diversity in age, style and materiality creates a dynamic townscape.

Planform, configuration and urban grain.

The historic configuration of the roads within this character area remain legible, as does the characteristically loose urban grain.

Association with Francis Close.

The character area has a strong association with Francis Close, who served Cheltenham as a curate between 1826-1856 and was Dean of Carlisle from 1856-1881. Close was an important local figure, driving the development of Cheltenham into a leading evangelical and educational centre. As a member of the Church of England Education Society, he oversaw the construction of four district churches (each with its own infant and national schools), co-founded Cheltenham College and helped raise significant funds for the establishing of Cheltenham's Church of England Training School in the St Paul's character area.[01] Dean Close School was built as a memorial to him in the 1880s.

Open spaces, street trees and greenery.

The character area contains a significant amount of open space, both public (Sandford Park) and private (the grounds of Cheltenham College and Dean Close School). These spaces allow for long-range views towards historic buildings and across to the surrounding landscape, and lend a sense of spaciousness which draws a striking contrast with other more densely developed parts of Cheltenham. Mature trees provide a leafy character and channel long, linear streetscape views throughout the character area. Greenery in front gardens softens the urban environment.

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

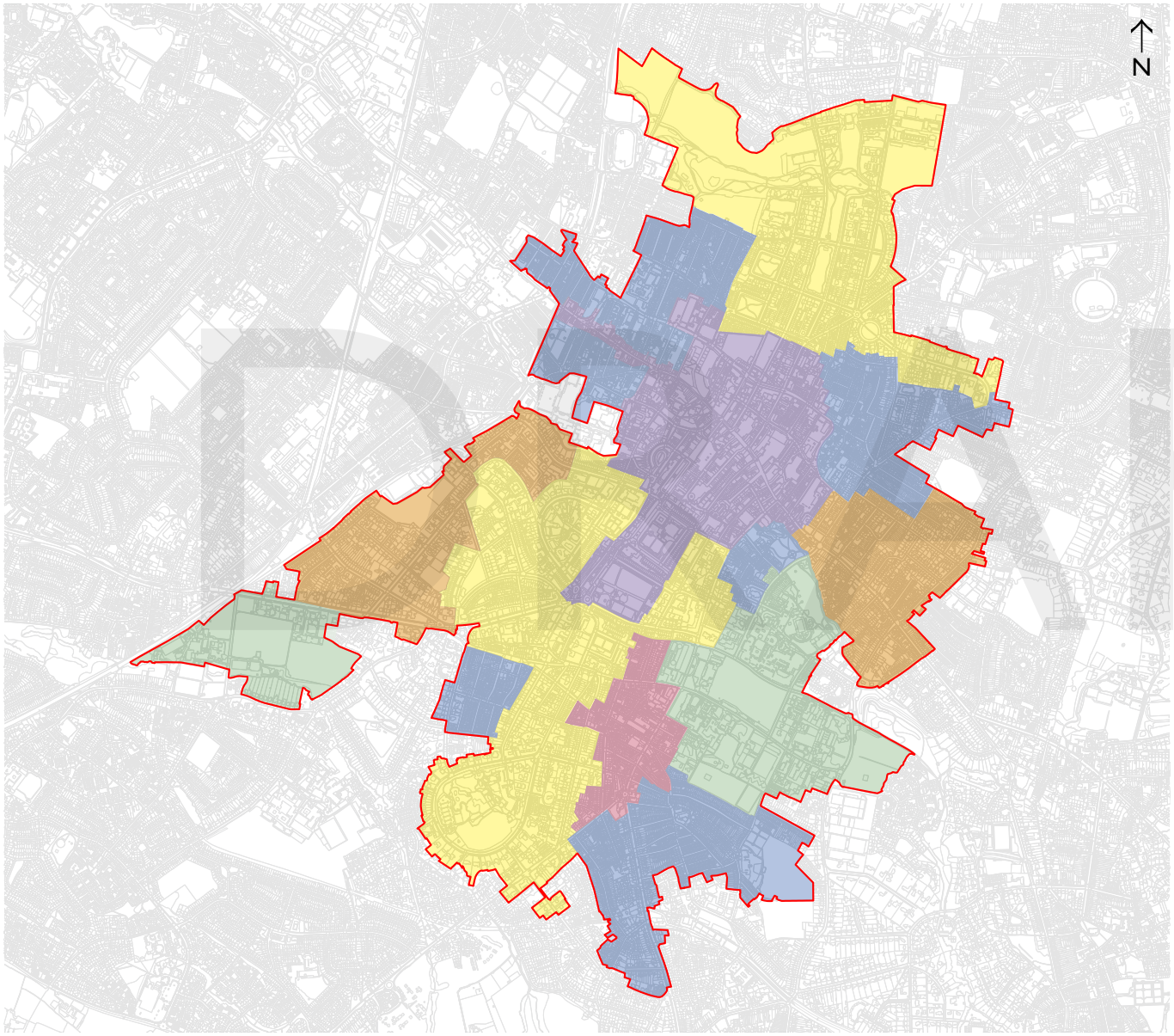
There are a range of streetscape views within the character area. The linear form of many streets creates long vistas (along Lansdown Road and Sherburne Road for example). In contrast, the gently curving proportions of other roads such as Old Bath Road reveal the streetscape in stages. There are important views out into the landscape (including the Cotswold escarpment and Leckhampton Hill) and of landmark buildings including Cheltenham General Hospital, Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham College, Dean Close School, St Luke's Church and Christ Church.

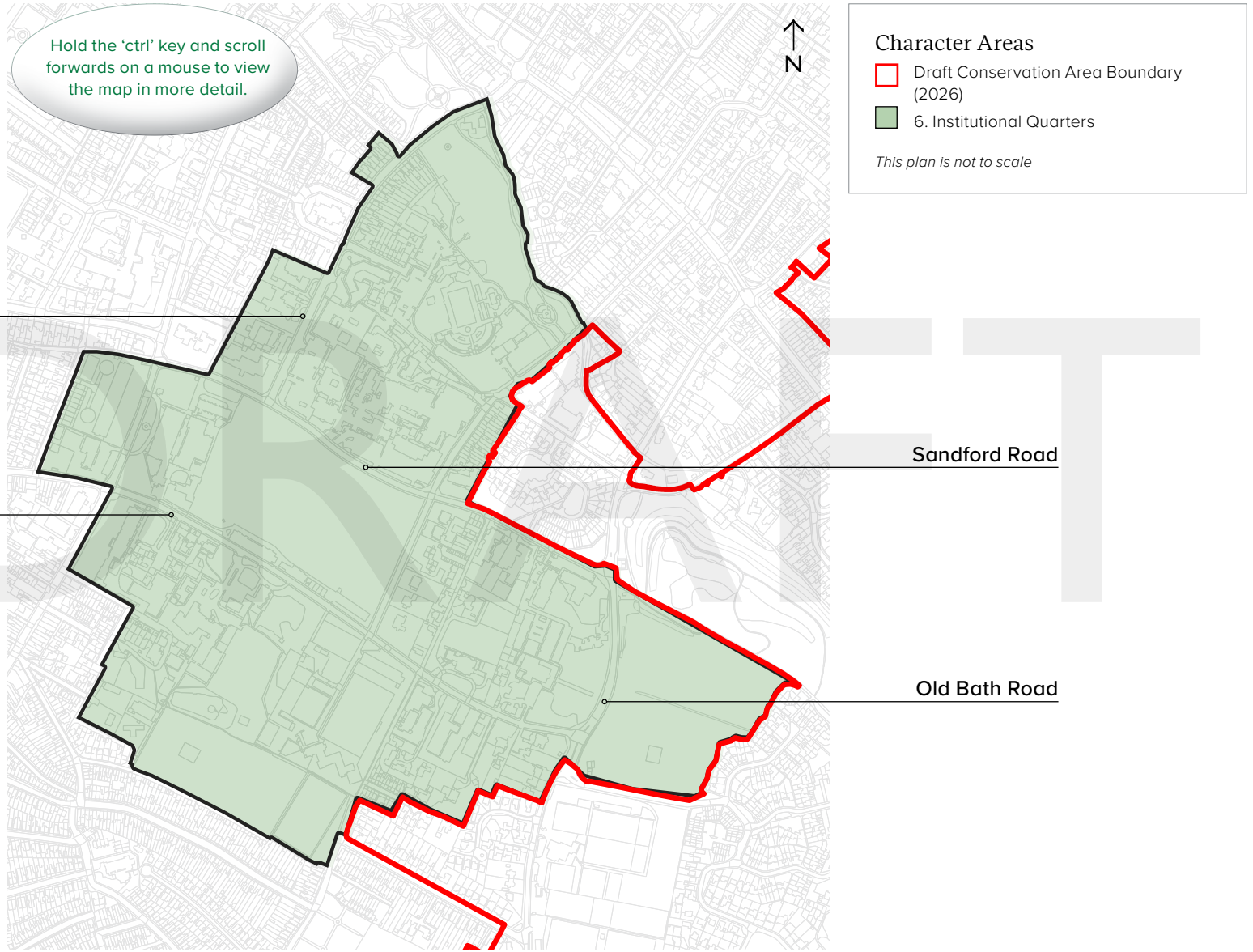
Continuation of institutional and residential character.

The Institutional Quarters character area was developed relatively slowly and provided primarily institutional and residential uses, with Cheltenham Lido arriving in the 1930s. The original uses of the buildings across the character area can generally be read today. Although many of the historic villas (particularly on Lansdown Road) have since been converted to institutional usage, their historic domestic character is still appreciable from the public realm.

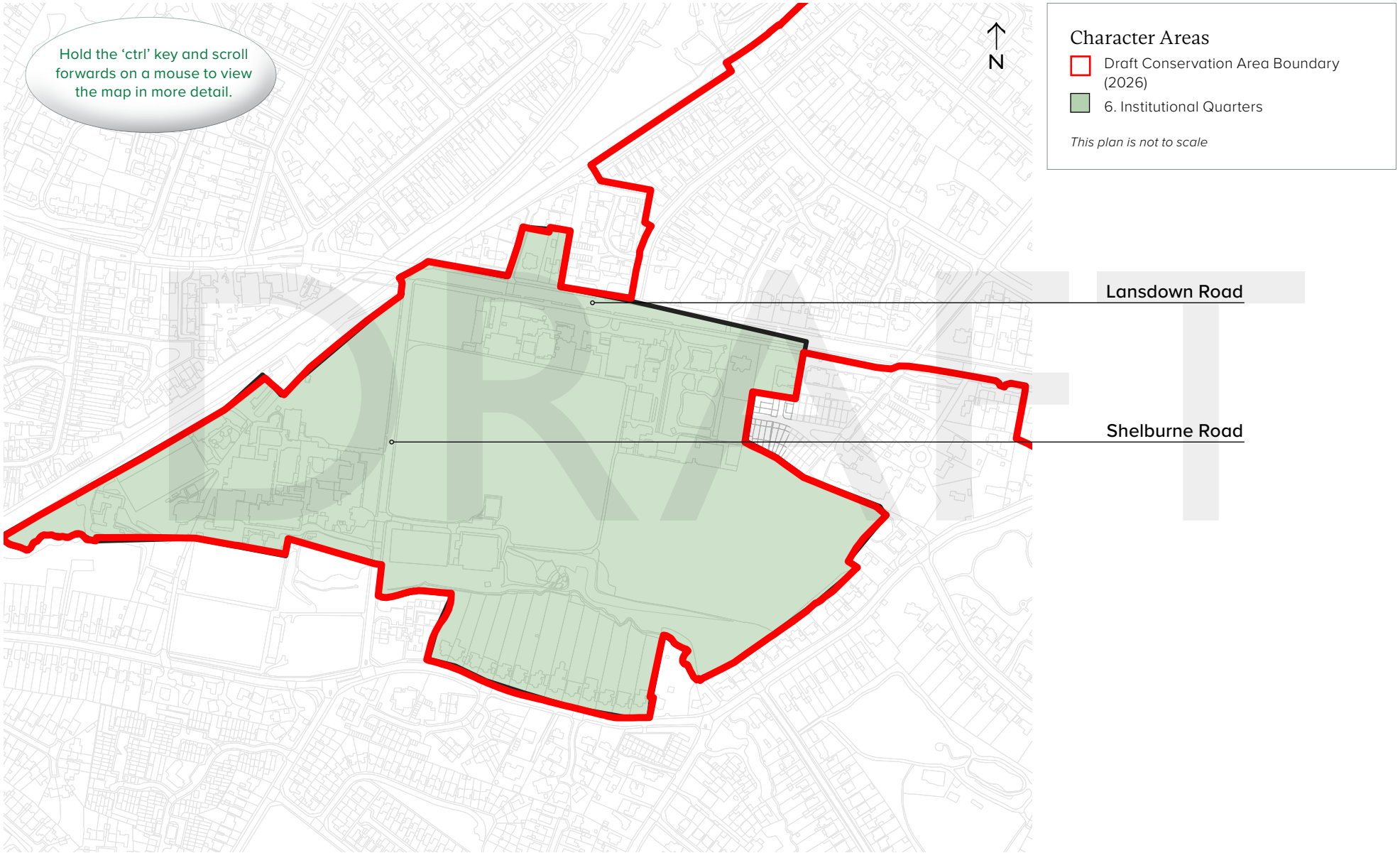
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01 Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Close, Francis (1797-1882).


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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


Hold the 'ctrl' key and scroll forwards on a mouse to view the map in more detail.
N
Character Areas
Draft Conservation Area Boundary (2026)
6. Institutional Quarters
This plan is not to scale
College Road
Thirlestaine Road
Sandford Road
Old Bath Road

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Hold the 'ctrl' key and scroll forwards on a mouse to view the map in more detail.
N
Character Areas
Draft Conservation Area Boundary (2026)
6. Institutional Quarters
This plan is not to scale
Lansdown Road
Shelburne Road
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2.0 Historical development

2.1 The Institutional Quarters within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area

This character area contains two of Cheltenham's historic educational institutions – Cheltenham College, which opened on Bath Road in 1843, and Dean Close School, which was built in the 1880s. It also contains the site of the Victorian Cheltenham General Hospital and some small pockets of residential development. The majority of the character area was developed during the mid-late 19th century.



The Bath Road frontage of Cheltenham College and the South African War Memorial, photographed between 1920 – 1939. *Historic England Archive*.

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2.2 Early history of Cheltenham

Roman activity is evidenced in the town through the discovery of Roman coins in Hanover Street, Pittville and High Street, a large quantity of Roman pottery behind St James' Square and Roman coins, pot sherds and field system ditches in Pittville.[01]

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 Institutional Quarters character area

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

The Institutional Quarters character area was largely developed from the mid-19th century. However, there are some early 19th-century buildings present including the Grade I listed Thirlestaine House (now part of Cheltenham College) and Pillar House on Bath Road, Chandos Lodge and College House on Thirlestaine Road, all of which are shown on Griffiths' 1825 map of Cheltenham.



An extract from Griffiths' map of Cheltenham, 1825, showing early development within the character area. *Wellcome Collection.*

Later site of Cheltenham General Hospital

Later site of Cheltenham College

College House

Thirelstaine House prior to extension

Chandos Lodge

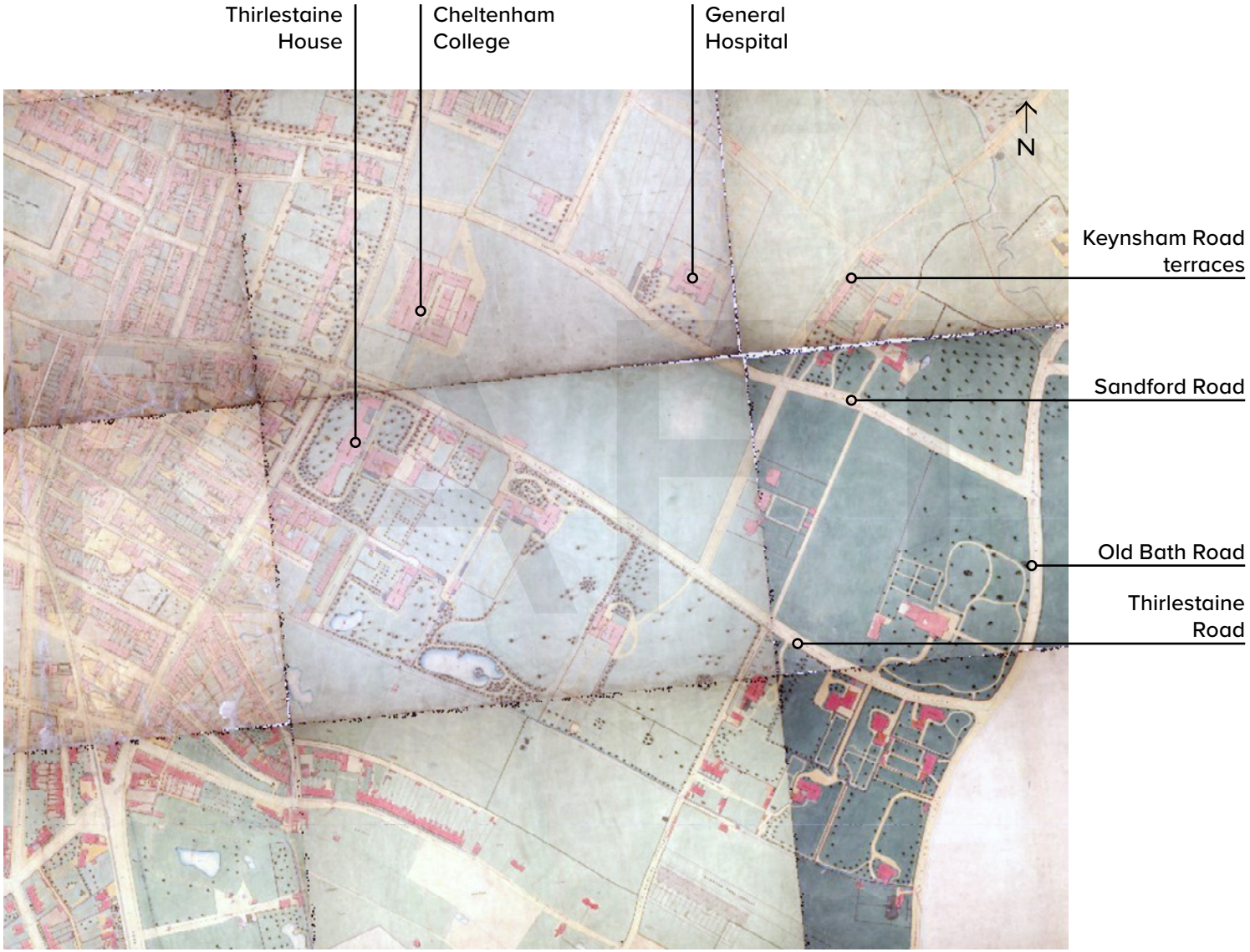
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There had been much development within the character area by 1855, including the construction of Cheltenham General Hospital (1842), the main block of Cheltenham College (1843) and a number of detached villas along Sandford Road, College Lawn, Thirlestaine Road and Old Bath Road.

Cheltenham College, which first opened in 1841, moved to the new buildings on Bath Road in 1843. The College was a proprietary grammar school for the sons of Cheltenham's growing genteel population. Revd Francis Close was closely involved with the foundation of the school, and ensured that it would be managed according to the principles of the Church of England.[02]

The Grade II listed terrace at 62-90 Keynsham Road had been built by 1855, and the artisan terraces at Whitecross Square were under construction. Thirlestaine House had been significantly extended by its second owner, Lord Northwick.

In the western part of the character area, the Birmingham and Gloucester railway had been laid out to the west of what would later become Dean Close School. Shelburne Road, which intersects the grounds of Dean Close School in the west of the character area, was constructed c.1869.



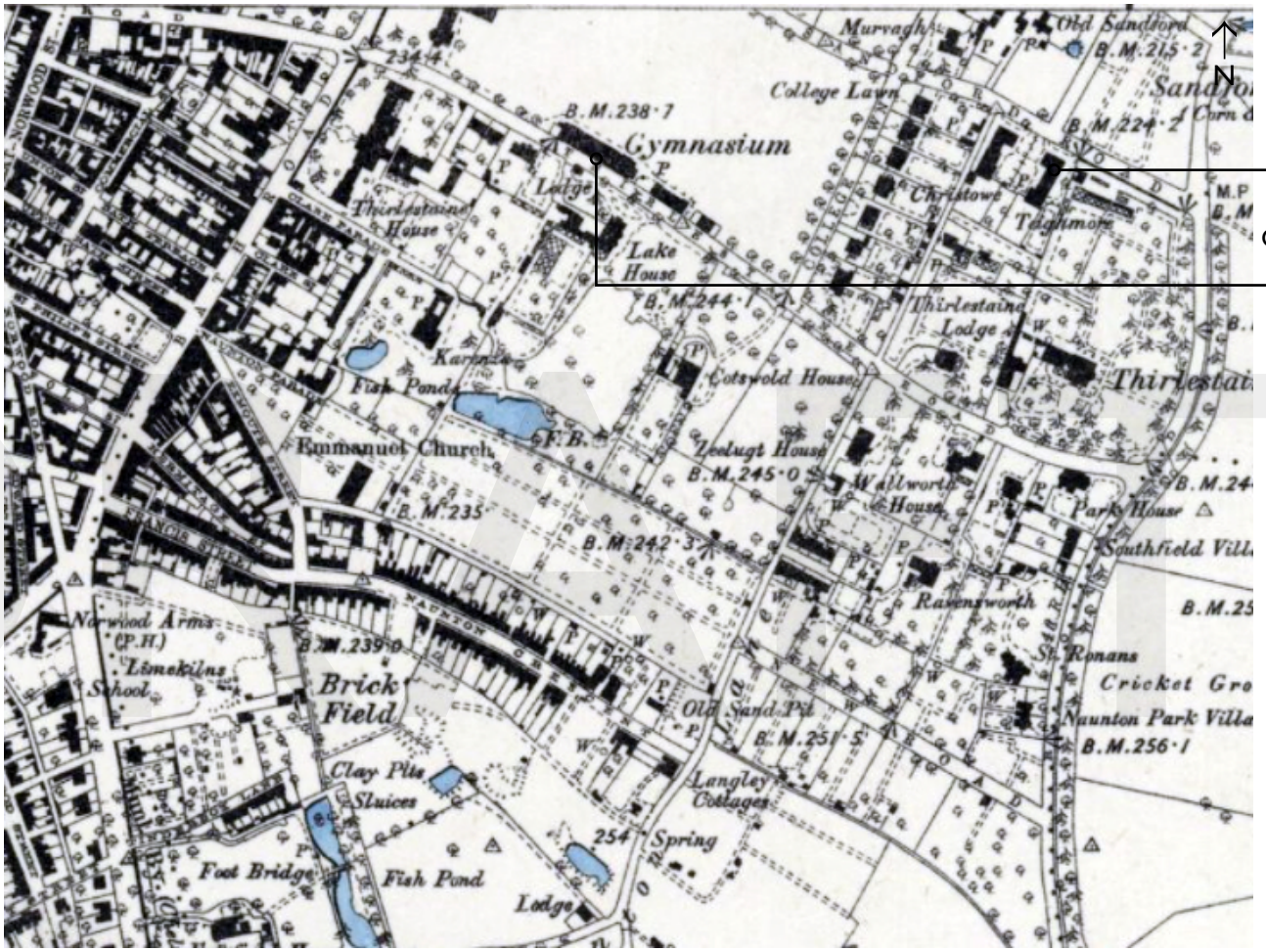
The eastern part of the character area, as shown in a map of Cheltenham from 1855. *Know Your Place*.

02 Victoria County History, Draft – *VCH Gloucestershire 15 [Cheltenham]: Education*, nd.

By 1885, additional residential development had taken place along College Road and Sandford Road. Cheltenham College Gymnasium, on the southern boundary of the grounds, was constructed in 1864.

Dean Close School was built between 1884 and 1886, as a memorial to Francis Close.

The 1885 Ordnance Survey shows additional villas along Lansdown Road, to the west of the junction with Queen's Road. These included Fortfield, Caynam (now Dean Close House), Shelburne Hall and Wilton House - which are now part of Dean Close Pre-Preparatory School - and Holland House, which is now a police station.



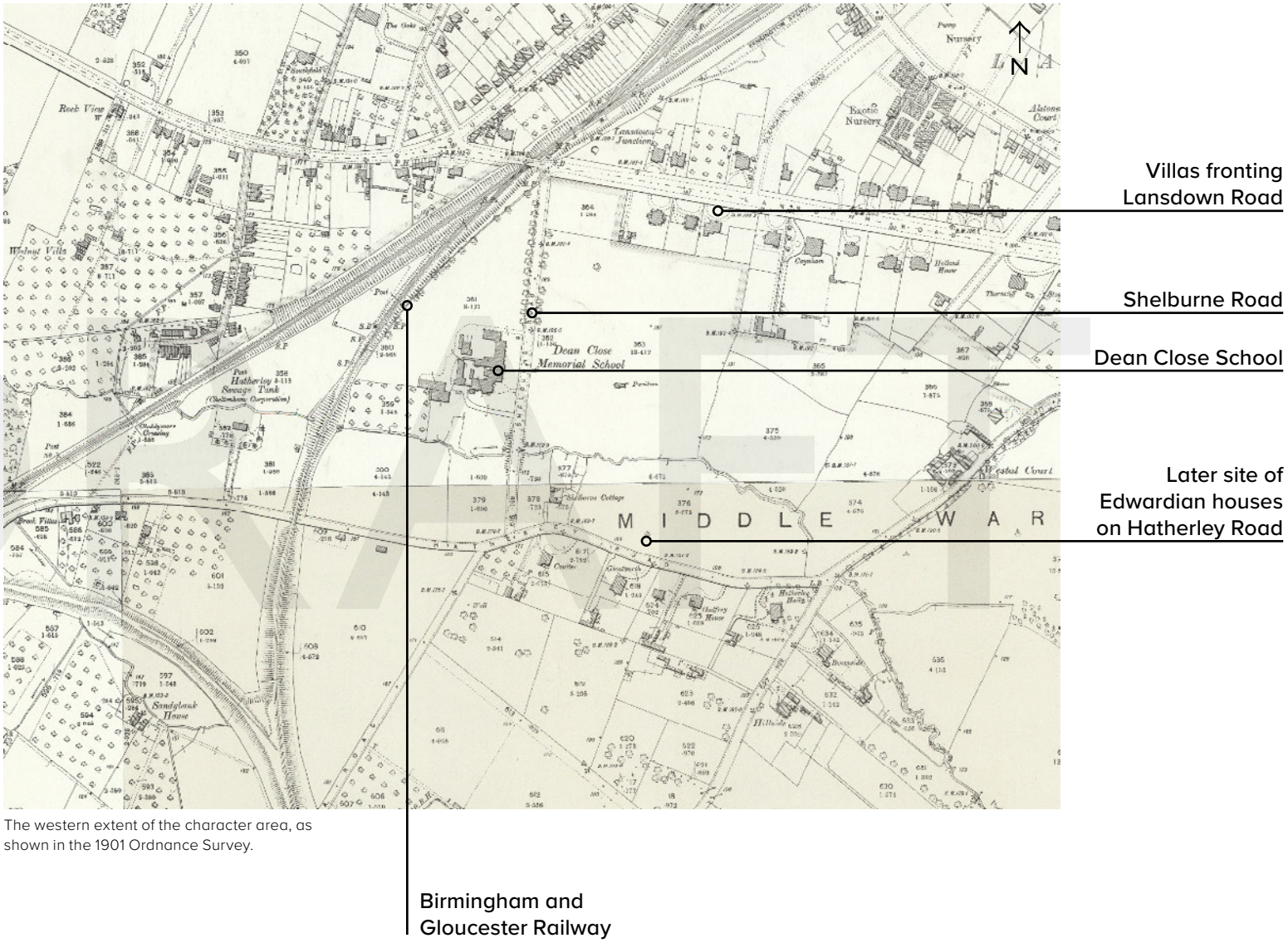
The eastern part of the character area, as shown in the 1885 Ordnance Survey.

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By the 1901 Ordnance Survey, Cheltenham College Chapel had been constructed to the north of the main college buildings. Cheltenham General Hospital had been further enlarged to the north.

The 1901 map shows the Dean Close School site in detail. The school opened in 1886 with 12-14 students. By 1888, the number had increased to 130 – which necessitated the construction of The School Room (now the Flecker Library) in 1887, and an extension to the main frontage the following year.

The Edwardian houses on Hatherley Road, to the south of Dean Close School, were built shortly after the 1901 Ordnance Survey was produced.



The western extent of the character area, as shown in the 1901 Ordnance Survey.

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Sandford Park was laid out in the 1920s under the direction of Cheltenham Borough Council, in a bid to promote the town as a leisure resort and enhance public amenities.[03] Sandford Park Lido was constructed 1934-1938 on the earlier site of the Cheltenham Water Works Pumping Station. The new lido was complete with all ancillary buildings including an entrance block, detached changing wings and shower blocks, sun decks, café with terraces and a plant house.

The Memorial Chapel at Dean Close School was built in the 1920s to commemorate former pupils lost in action during the First World War.

Development within the character area continued during the mid-late 20th century, with numerous extensions and additions to the hospital site, to the rear of Thirlestaine House and in the grounds of Dean Close School. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Thirlestaine Road was built in the 1960s.

There has been additional infill development along the principal roads within the character area during the later 20th and early 21st centuries.



Aerial imagery showing Sandford Park Lido soon after opening in 1935. Behind the lido is the hospital, which had continued to expand northwards since 1901. *Historic England Archive*.

03 https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1462183?section=official-list-entry

3.0 Assessment of special interest

3.1 Built form and architecture

Historic institutional buildings

Historic institutional buildings, including Cheltenham General Hospital, the Cheltenham College buildings and boarding houses and the 19th and early 20th-century ranges of Dean Close School, contribute to the formal, institutional character of the character area. As with the historic villas, institutional buildings within this character area utilise a range of architectural styles.

The main building at Cheltenham General Hospital, built in the early 1840s, uses the neo-Classical style and features a striking portico which is highly visible in views across the adjacent grounds of Cheltenham College. The principal Cheltenham College buildings utilise an elaborate Gothic Revival style, with ornate detailing including stone balustrades, bell towers and stone mullioned windows. A domestic Gothic style, similar to that used in some of the villas within the character area, was utilised for purpose built boarding houses along College Road and Thirlestaine Road.

The main ranges at Dean Close School were constructed in the eclectic revivalist style popular during the late 19th-century, with Tudor Gothic, 17th-century Renaissance, Classical and English vernacular influences.



The central block of Cheltenham Hospital is built in a neo-Classical style.



The imposing Gothic buildings of Cheltenham College.



Hazelwell, a purpose-built boarding house for Cheltenham College constructed in a domestic Gothic style.



Looking across the grounds of Dean Close School towards the eclectic revivalist buildings and the Gothic revival chapel.

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Villas and houses

Large detached villas are a prominent typology within the Institutional Quarters character area. Many date from the mid- to late 19th century, although some earlier villas survive on roads including Old Bath Road and Thirlestaine Road. These buildings are generally set within generous plots with landscaped grounds and are notable for their grand scale and architectural ambition, which lends a sense of grandeur and formality to the character area.

The Regency and early Victorian villas in the character area are generally built in a neo-Classical style. Examples include Thirlestaine House and Pillar House on Bath Road, Park House on Thirlestaine Road, Chandos Lodge and College House on Sandford Road. These buildings have rendered elevations, shallow-pitched slate covered roofs, symmetrical elevations, vertically-arranged sash windows with small panes of glazing and (in several cases) Doric porticos.

Villas constructed around the mid-late 19th century (such as those to College Lawn and the western end of Lansdown Road) tend to favour the Italianate style, which was characterised by deep bracketed eaves, quoins, tall square towers and round-headed arches.

The Gothic Revival style, which favoured the use of tracery and projecting elements such as bay windows and steeply pitched roofs, can be seen to later 19th-century villas across the character area (with Dewerstone House on Thirlestaine Road being the most prominent example). A simplified version of the Gothic Revival style is seen to the Edwardian houses along Hatherley Road.



The neo-Classical College House on Sandford Road.



An Italiante villa on Thirlestaine Road, now a healthcare facility.



An Italianate villa on Lansdown Road, now in institutional use.



Dewerstone House, a Gothic Revival villa on Thirlestaine Road.

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19th-century terraces

Terraced housing is present across parts of the Institutional Quarters character area, although it is less prevalent than the larger detached villas and institutional buildings which dominate the townscape.

The early Victorian terraces on Keynsham Road display features typical of Georgian and early Victorian terraces in Cheltenham, with a rendered finish, vertically sliding timber sash windows, simple Classical detailing (cornices and plat bands) and parapet roofs. No.64 retains its original iron balcony. A more modest variant of this style is also seen to the two-storey terraces at Whitecross Square.

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Early Victorian terraces at Keynsham Road.



Mid-19th-century terraces at Whitecross Square.

20th and 21st-century development

There is a small but noteworthy amount of interwar development within the character area, namely the Memorial Chapel at Dean Close School (which is built in a Gothic style to blend with the surrounding 19th-century architecture) and the 1930s lido in Sandford Park. There is also some mid-20th-century development visible within the Cheltenham Hospital site.

Later 20th and 21st-century development takes the form of modern healthcare buildings around the hospital, educational buildings within the grounds of Cheltenham College and Dean Close School, and some residential infill development along the primary streets within the character area.

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



Mid-20th-century range to Cheltenham Hospital, viewed from the bottom of College Road.



Modern healthcare facility at the top of Sandford Road.

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3.2 Materials

Common materials across the Institutional Quarters character area include:

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

Brick: red brick is widely used throughout the character area, both as a primary facing material or as the structural material beneath render or stucco. Exposed brick is more prominent in later Victorian and Edwardian development, notably at Dean Close School and the historic boarding houses of Cheltenham College. Decorative brickwork, including buff and black brick string courses and dressings, is a recurring feature in these later buildings in the western extent of the character area. Brick is also commonly used for chimney stacks and boundary walls.

Stone: the prominent buildings of Cheltenham College are finished with dressed Cotswold lime stone, as is Thirlestaine House. Dressed stone is also found to some villas (e.g. Chandos Lodge on Thirlestaine Road) and to gate piers and plinths across the character area. Regularly coursed rubble stone can also be seen in historic structures, such as Dewerstone House on Thirlestaine Road and Dean Close House on Lansdown Road.

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

Timber: timber is traditionally used for windows and doors, most notably in the form of vertically-sliding sash windows which are a defining feature of the character area. Timber can also be found to gable ends and bargeboards, notably to the Edwardian houses on Hatherley Road.

Iron: decorative ironwork is an important component of the historic streetscape, found in the form of railings and localised examples of balconies and door canopies. The railings around the grounds of Cheltenham College, which survive within their original stone plinth, make a particularly strong contribution to the special interest of the character area.

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.

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Pale render and dressed stone used in combination at Thirlestaine Hall.



Rendered terrace at Whitecross Square.



Rubble stone to Dean Close House, Lansdown Road.



Red brick with buff and black brick detailing to a historic boarding house on College Road.



Iron railings to the grounds of Cheltenham College.



Historic brick boundary wall and dressed stone gate piers, Thirlestaine Road.

3.3 Urban grain, configuration, direction of movement

The Institutional Quarters character area has a loose urban grain. It is characterised by the presence of large institutional buildings set within extensive grounds, wide roads, and substantial villas set back from the road in generous grounds.

The western part of the character area is characterised by broad, linear roads such as Lansdown Road and Shelburne Road. Here, as in the eastern part of the character area, large historic buildings are typically set well back from the road within generous plots, with front gardens contributing to a verdant and open character.

The terraces at Keynsham Road and Whitecross Square have a far tighter grain, providing a localised contrast to the open character of the area. Closely arranged terraces front directly onto Keynsham Road and line the narrow road behind small front gardens at Whitecross Square.

A small number of rear service lanes, including Naunton Lane and Christowe Lane, provide secondary access behind properties and reflect the historic servicing arrangements associated with larger residential plots.

Roads within the character area are generally linear, however where older routes (such as Old Bath Road and Sandford Road) are incorporated within the 19th-century street plan, these tend to have a more organic and gently curving profile.

Traffic and movement levels are generally high throughout the character area. Principal roads experience substantial vehicular activity owing to their strategic role within Cheltenham's road network, while Cheltenham General Hospital and Dean Close School generate significant levels of pedestrian and vehicle movement.

Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road, which form part of the A40 corridor through Cheltenham, carry high levels of vehicular traffic between Gloucester to the west and Oxford to the east. Old Bath Road joins this route and connects northwards to London Road, which forms another principal approach into the town. Bath Road and College Road form part of the A46, further contributing to the movement function of the area and the generally busy character of its principal streets.

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Looking south along Thirlestaine Road from outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thirelstaine Road is a broad street with sparsely arranged villas in generous grounds lending an open character.



Looking south-west across the broad junction where Thirlestaine Road, Bath Road and Suffolk Road meet.



The generous proportions and gently curving profile of Old Bath Road.

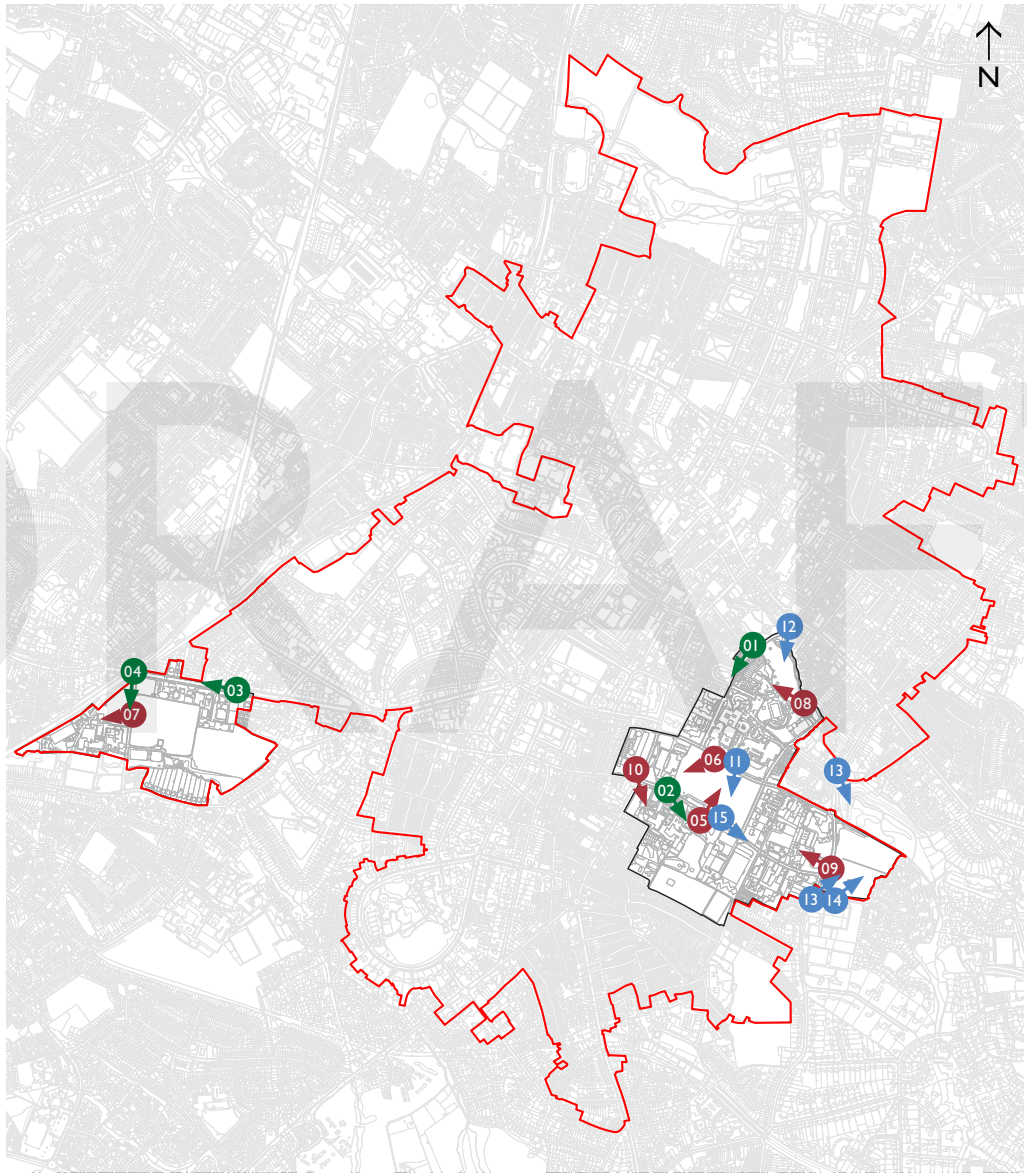


Naunton Lane, a narrower road on the western boundary of Cheltenham College sports field.

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3.4 Key views

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

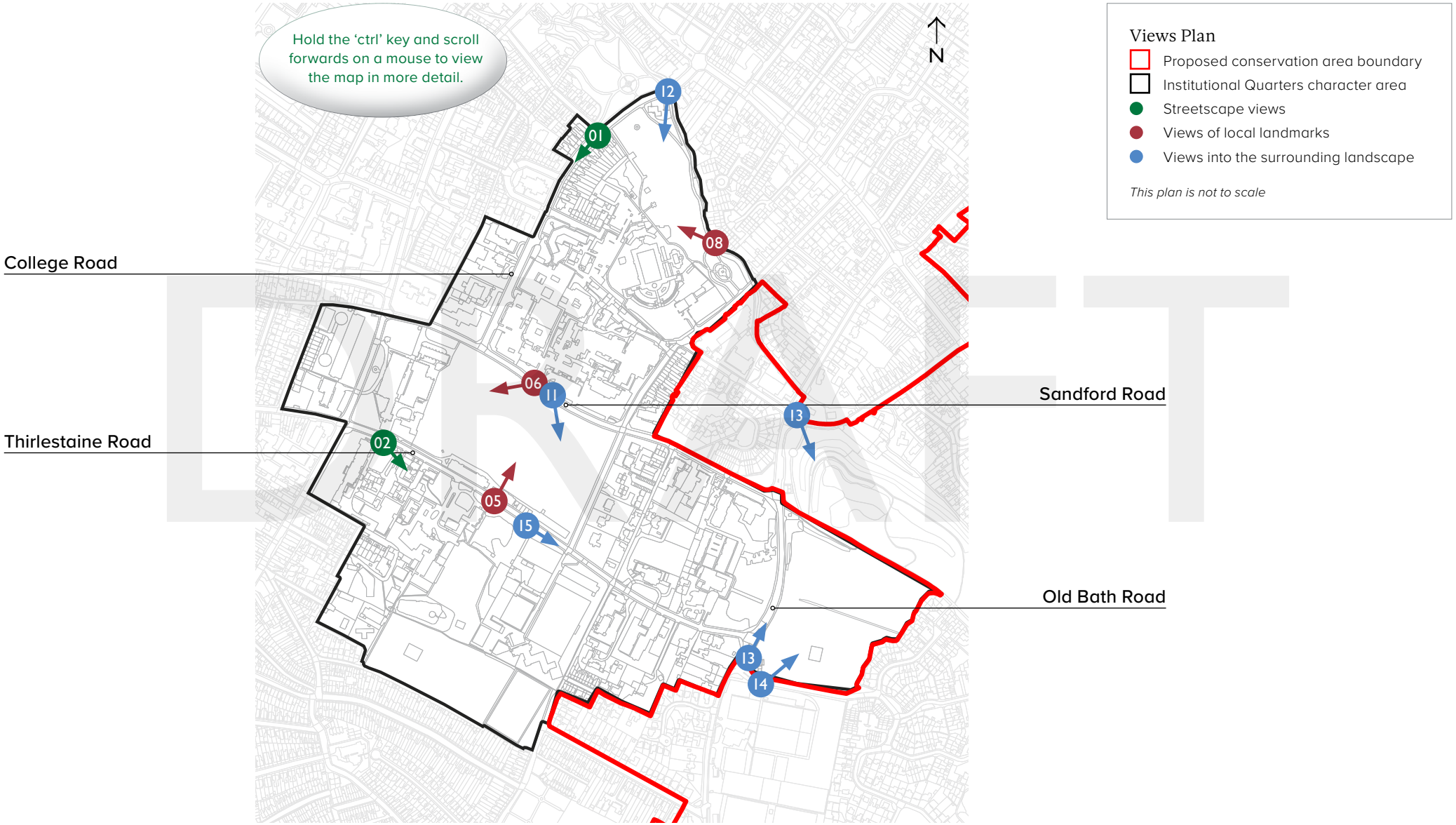


Views Plan

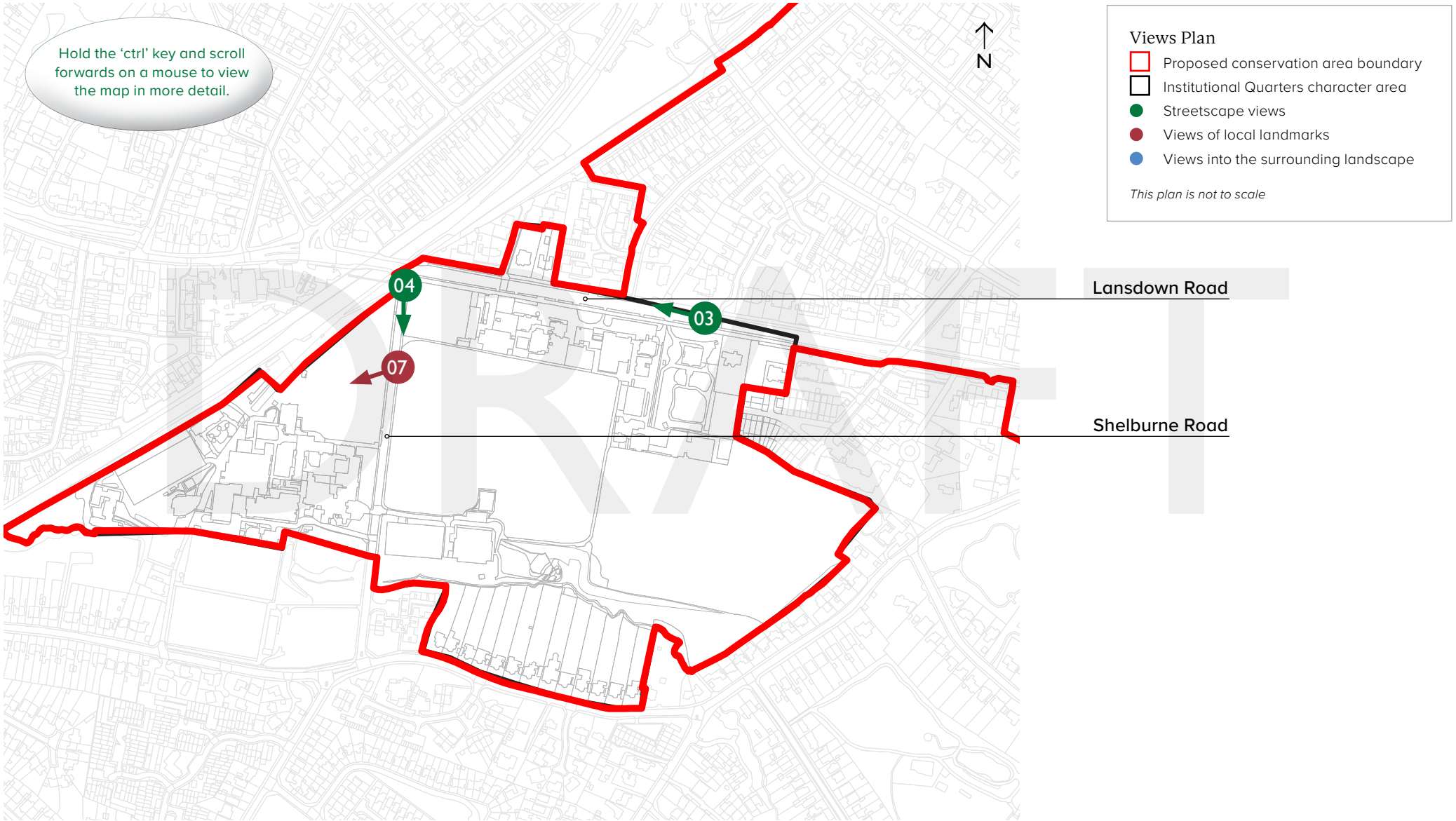
- Proposed conservation area boundary
- Institutional Quarters character area
- Streetscape views
- Views of local landmarks
- Views into the surrounding landscape

This plan is not to scale

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Plan showing a representative selection of key views in the east extent of the Institutional Quarters character area.



Plan showing a representative selection of key views in the west extent of the Institutional Quarters character area.

3.4.1 Streetscape views

The broad, linear proportions of the principal streets within the character area provide numerous vistas along the historic streets. Whilst the entire frontage of the historic villas are not always visible due to intervening boundary treatments and greenery, upper storeys are generally prominent and allow the opportunity to appreciate the diverse materiality of the character area and the historic roofscapes. Where groups of buildings were constructed together (as were the Edwardian houses along Hatherley Road, for example), these linear streetscape views facilitate an appreciation of their architectural uniformity.

Due to the loose urban grain - particularly in the eastern part of the character area - many streetscapes feature extensive views of open spaces and the boundary treatments which enclose them. Street trees also play an important role in defining the verdant character of the streetscapes in this area. The impact of street trees is particularly notable along Shelburne Road, which intersects the grounds of Dean Close School.

The majority of the streetscapes within the character area are linear, although others (particularly along Bath Road) are interrupted by the curving profile of the roads, meaning views of buildings and open space are revealed in stages.



View 01: The generous proportions of College Road allow extensive streetscape views of the Victorian houses and street trees.



View 02: More sparsely developed roads such as Thirelstaine Road make for a different type of streetscape view, with this small group of Georgian houses viewed against the backdrop of street trees and fronting the grounds of Cheltenham College to the north.



View 03: Looking west along the broad, linear Lansdown Road.



View 04: The view along Shelburne Road provides an open vista, framed by street trees and allowing long distance views over to the north elevation of Dean Close School and its Chapel.

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3.4.2 Views of key landmarks

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

- The central block of Cheltenham General Hospital.
- The 19th-century buildings of Cheltenham College, including the gymnasium on the southern boundary of the grounds.
- The 19th-century College boarding houses including Hazewell and Boyne House.
- Thirlestaine House.
- Thirlestaine Hall.
- The 19th-century ranges of Dean Close School and the early 20th-century Chapel.

There are also long vistas over the College grounds and Sandford Park towards Eagle Tower and St Luke's Church (within adjacent character areas) and across to St Luke's Church from College Road. The spire of Christ Church, within the Planned Estates character area, is visible from certain points along Lansdown Road.

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



View 05: Cheltenham General Hospital, viewed through a gap between buildings on Thirlestaine Road.



View 06: Looking south-west across the College Grounds towards the 19th-century buildings of Cheltenham College.



View 07: Looking south-west from Shelburne Road towards the Memorial Chapel at Dean Close School.



View 08: Eagle Tower and the spire of St Luke's Church, viewed from Sandford Park.

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View 09: Thirlestaine Hall, viewed from Old Bath Road.



View 10: Looking towards Thirlestaine House from the top of Bath Road.

3.4.3 Views into the surrounding landscape

Important views of the wider landscape – including the Cotswold escarpment, Leckhampton Hill and Churchdown Hill – are visible from a number of locations within the Institutional Quarters character area, creating a strong visual relationship between the town and its rural setting. These views are significantly aided by the loose urban grain, together with the extensive amount of open space within the character area.

Views of the Cotswold escarpment are particularly apparent in the eastern part of the character area, where glimpses of the rising landform are visible over rooftops and through gaps between buildings. These views are enhanced by the gradual rise in topography towards the south of the character area, allowing the escarpment to form a prominent backdrop within the townscape. The wider landscape provides an attractive setting for several landmark buildings, including Thirlestaine Hall and the Victorian buildings of Cheltenham General Hospital.

Views over extensive open spaces within or in the immediate setting of the conservation area, such as Cox's Meadow and Reeve's field, provide particularly expansive views of the escarpment.

The outlying hills to the south-west of the conservation area are also visible over Sandford Park from College Road.

To the west of the character area, views of Leckhampton Hill and Churchdown Hill are evident from open spaces and gaps between buildings. Particularly notable are the extensive views towards Leckhampton Hill from the upper part of Shelburne Road, where the open playing fields of Dean Close School allow uninterrupted views of the hillside beyond.



View 11: The escarpment viewed across the grounds of Cheltenham College from Sandford Road.



View 12: The hills to the south-west of the conservation area, visible across Sandford Park from College Road.

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View 13: The Cotswold escarpment visible in the backdrop from the top of Old Bath Road.



View 14: The Cotswold escarpment viewed across Reeves Field in the far east of the character area.



View 15: Views towards the Cotswold escarpment along Thirlestaine Road.



View 16: View towards the escarpment beyond Cox's Meadow from the corner of Old Bath Road and Sandford Road.

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 Institutional Quarters character area is generally high.

Historic boundary treatments form a particularly important component of the public realm within the character area, enclosing both public and private open spaces and front gardens. A wide variety of traditional boundary enclosures survive, including iron railings, low red-brick walls, stone walls and gate piers. These features contribute positively to the historic character and appearance of the area. The iron railings enclosing the grounds of Cheltenham College between Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road form a distinctive and prominent historic feature. Early 20th-century railings also survive around Sandford Park and along Naunton Lane. Traditionally styled railings are common along Lansdown Road and Shelburne Road, where they enclose the grounds of Dean Close School.

Hedging is also common throughout the character area and acts as an attractive soft boundary treatment, helping to soften the edges between public and private space and reinforcing the verdant character of the streetscapes.

Some historic street furniture survives, predominantly in the form of pillar boxes (on College Road and College Lawn) and street name plates (as on Sandford Road). Streetlamps within the character area are generally modern and utilitarian in design.

The South African War Memorial (c.1902) outside Cheltenham College on Bath Road also makes an important contribution to the public realm, as does the 19th-century drinking fountain at the entrance to Sandford Park off College Road.

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 in small public spaces or along wider roads. These features are typically modest in number and functional in design.



Historic iron railings in Sandford Park, which enhance the historic character of the landscape.



A historic red-brick boundary wall and gate piers on Thirelstaine Road.

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The late 19th-century drinking fountain which creates visual interest and a sense of grandeur at the entrance to Sandford Park off College Road.



The historic iron railings and stone plinth around the perimeter of the College grounds lend a historic formal character to the streetscape.

3.6 Trees and open spaces

Open space and mature planting make a particularly important contribution to the character and appearance of the Institutional Quarters character area, creating an open and verdant townscape and enhancing the setting of numerous historic buildings.

The grounds and playing fields of Cheltenham College and Dean Close School are especially significant, occupying substantial areas of land and contributing greatly to the character of the conservation area. These expansive open spaces provide an attractive setting for the historic buildings which surround them and permit long-distance views both to and from these structures. Cox's Meadow (in the immediate setting of the conservation area), Sandford Park and Reeves Field lend an open character and permit long-ranging views into the surrounding landscape.

The spaciousness created by these open areas is reinforced by the prevalence of large private gardens, often containing lawns, trees and shrubbery which soften the streetscapes and contribute to the leafy character of the area.

Mature street trees are a defining feature of the character area and make a major contribution to its character and appearance. Long avenues are present along Sandford Road, Thirlestaine Road, Charlton Drive, Lansdown Road and Shelburne Road, where they channel vistas along streets.

Trees within public open spaces, private grounds and gardens also make an important contribution to the verdant character of area. Key examples are the dense clumps of mature trees in the grounds of Thirlestaine Hall and Southwood (a large villa on Thirlestaine Road). The belt of trees on the western boundary of the playing fields off Old Bath Road significantly enhances the streetscape and softens glimpsed views of the modern development to the east of the conservation area boundary. The dense belt of trees along the route of the Hatherley Brook creates a natural boundary to the Dean Close playing fields and provides an attractive visual buffer between the open space and the Edwardian houses along Hatherley Road.

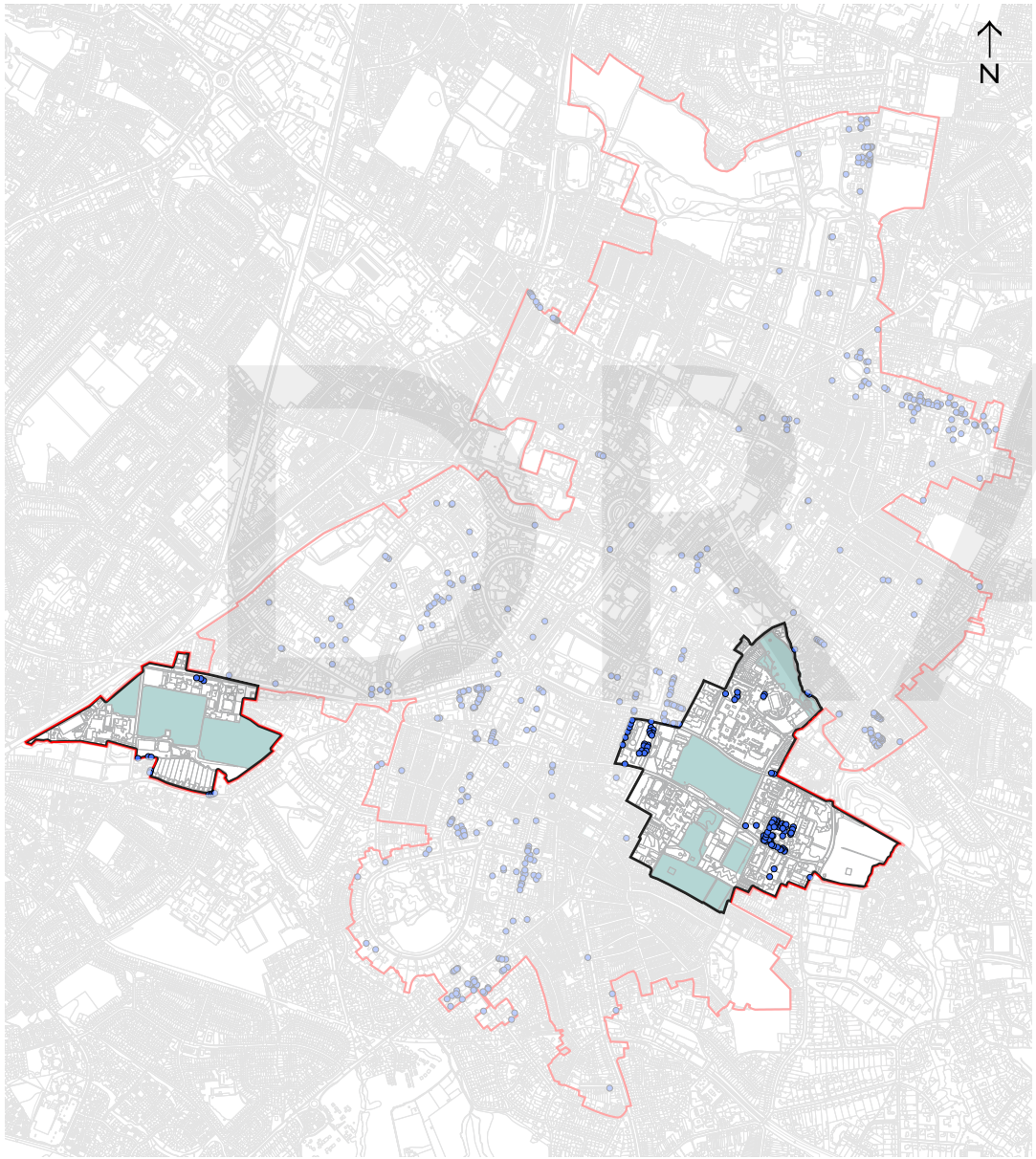


Looking across the lawned area infront of Cheltenham College from Bath Road.



Looking across Sandford Park towards the town centre.

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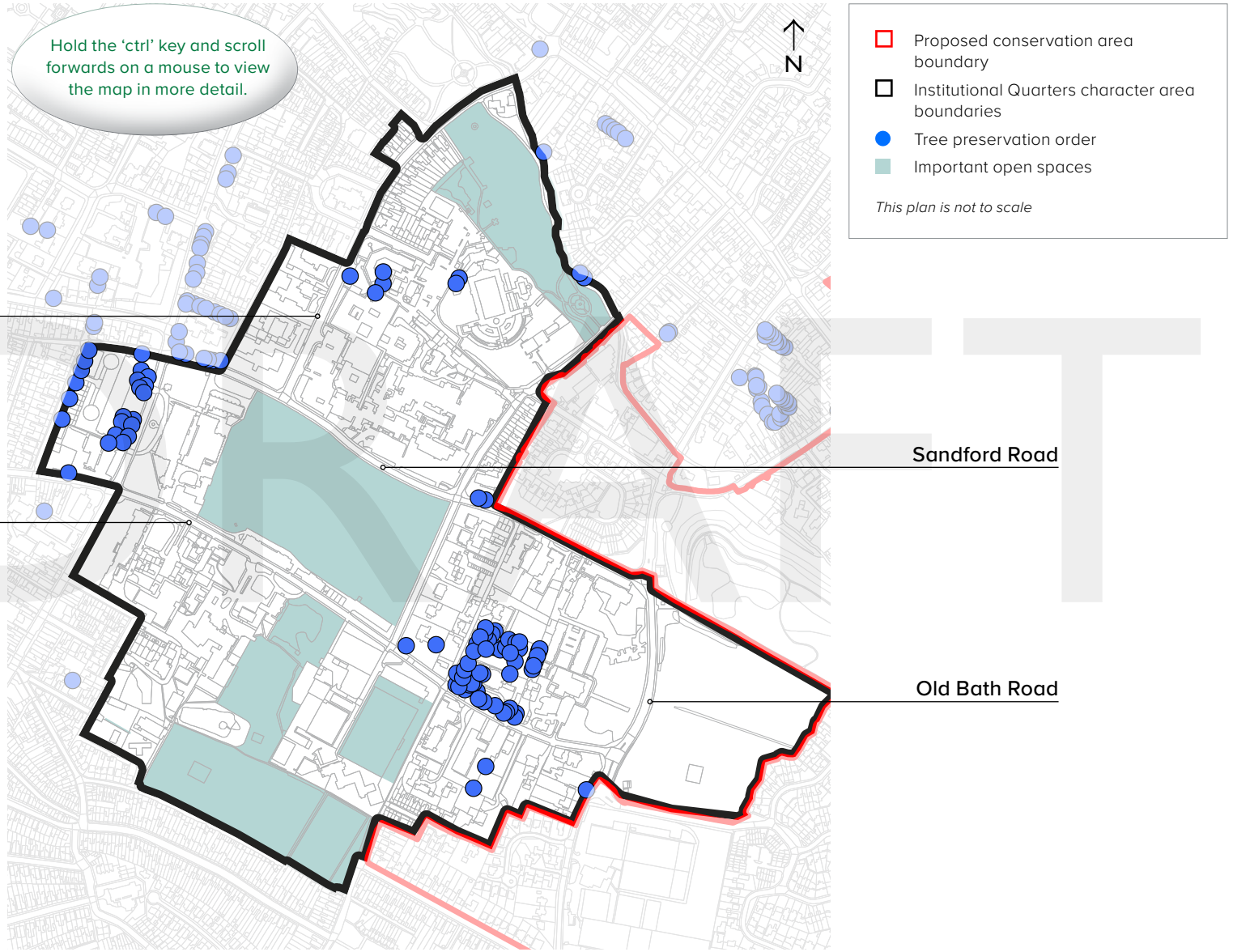


- Proposed conservation area boundary
- Institutional Quarters character area boundaries
- Tree preservation order
- Important open spaces

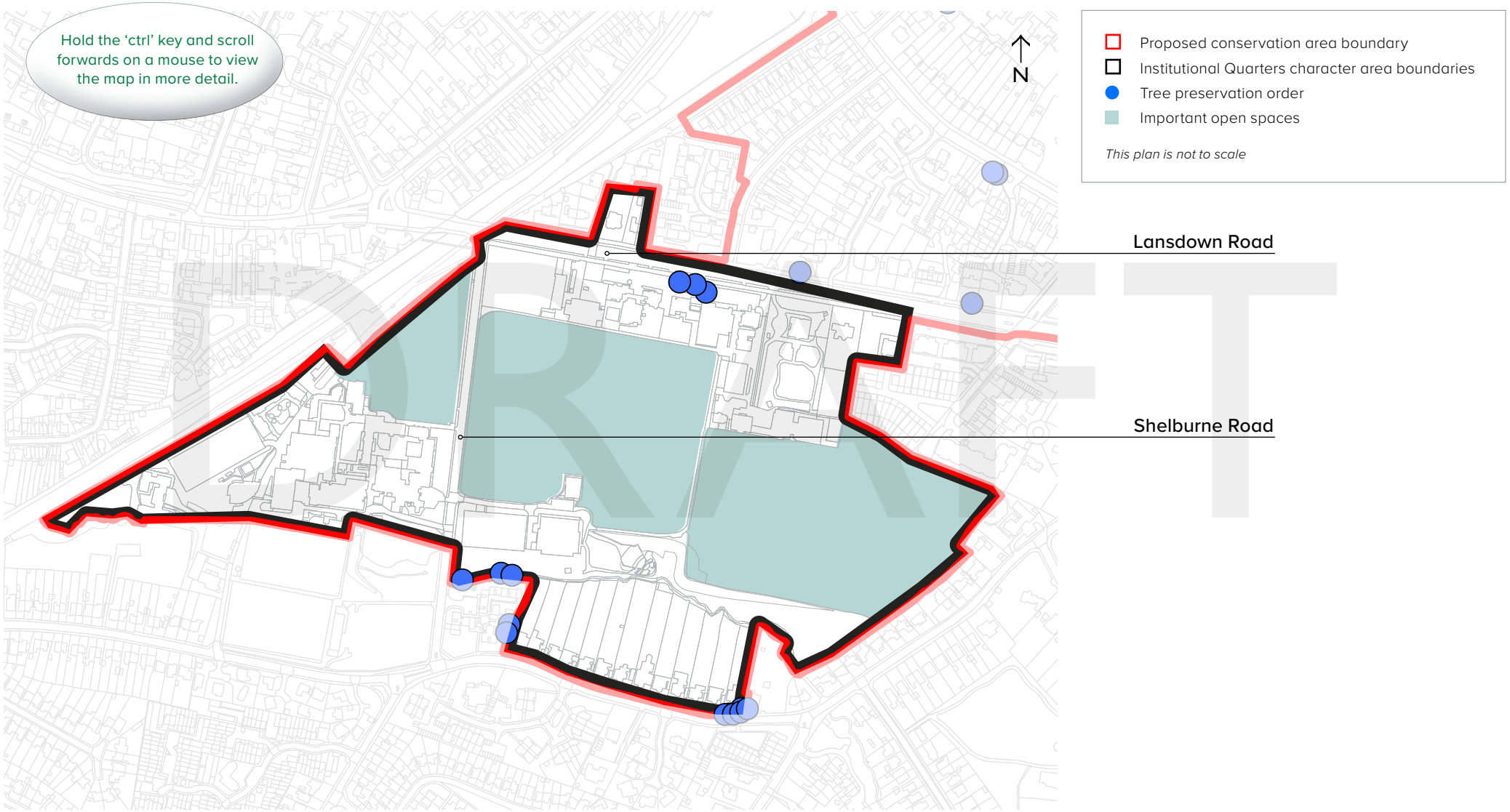
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The information provided in this map may not accurately reflect the existing data set. Up-to-date records can be found in the relevant interactive mapping resources, which are accessible via the Council's website



Plan showing Tree Preservation Orders and important open spaces in the east extent of the Institutional Quarters character area.



Plan showing Tree Preservation Orders and important open spaces in the west extent of the Institutional Quarters character area.

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.

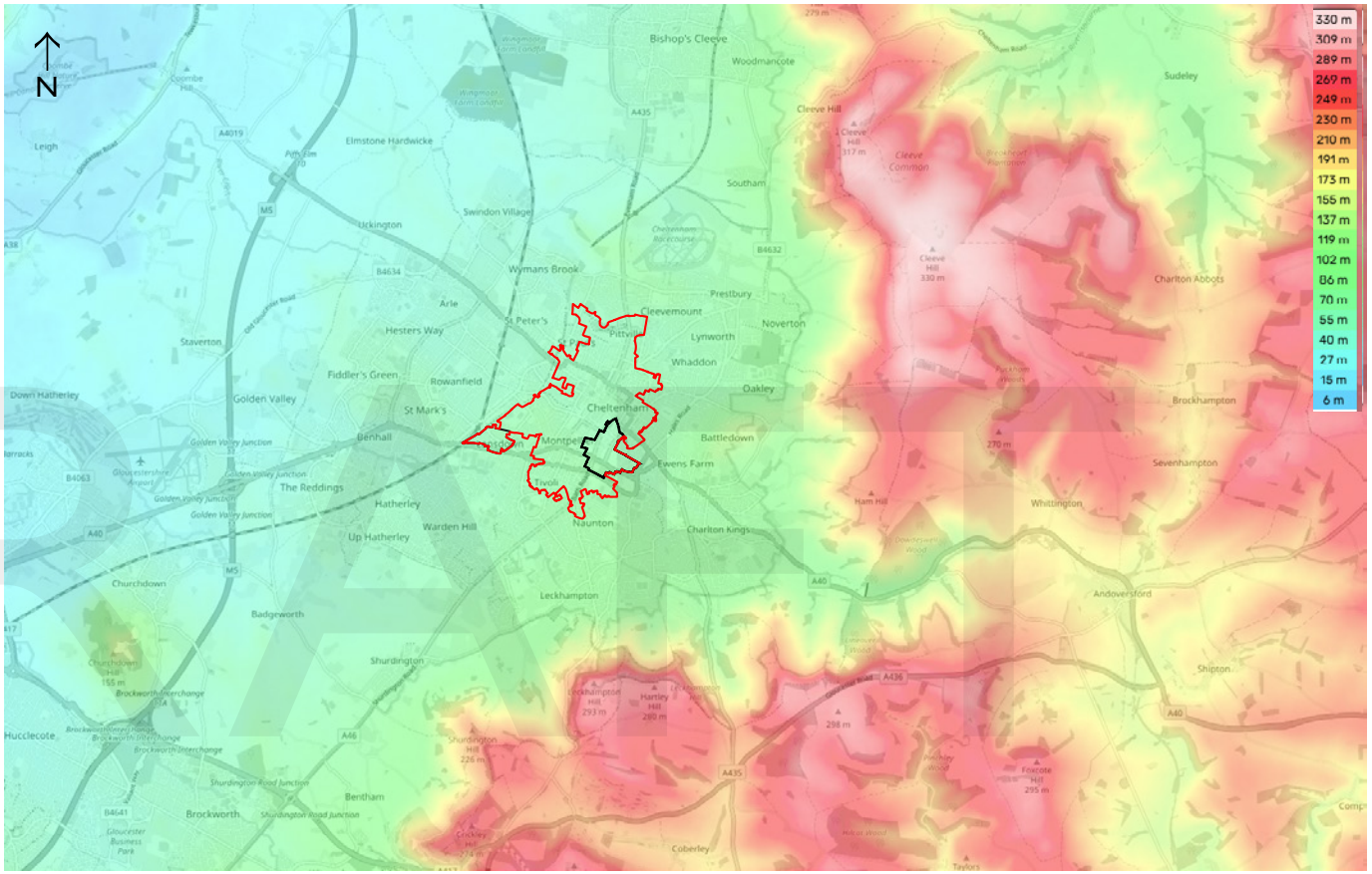
The land rises slightly towards the south of Old Bath Road, enhancing views northwards across the adjacent open spaces towards the Cotswold escarpment.

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 Institutional Quarters character area. However, there is some potential for below-ground archaeology to survive as indicated by limited finds 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 and in its wider setting. Source: OpenStreetMap (ODbL)

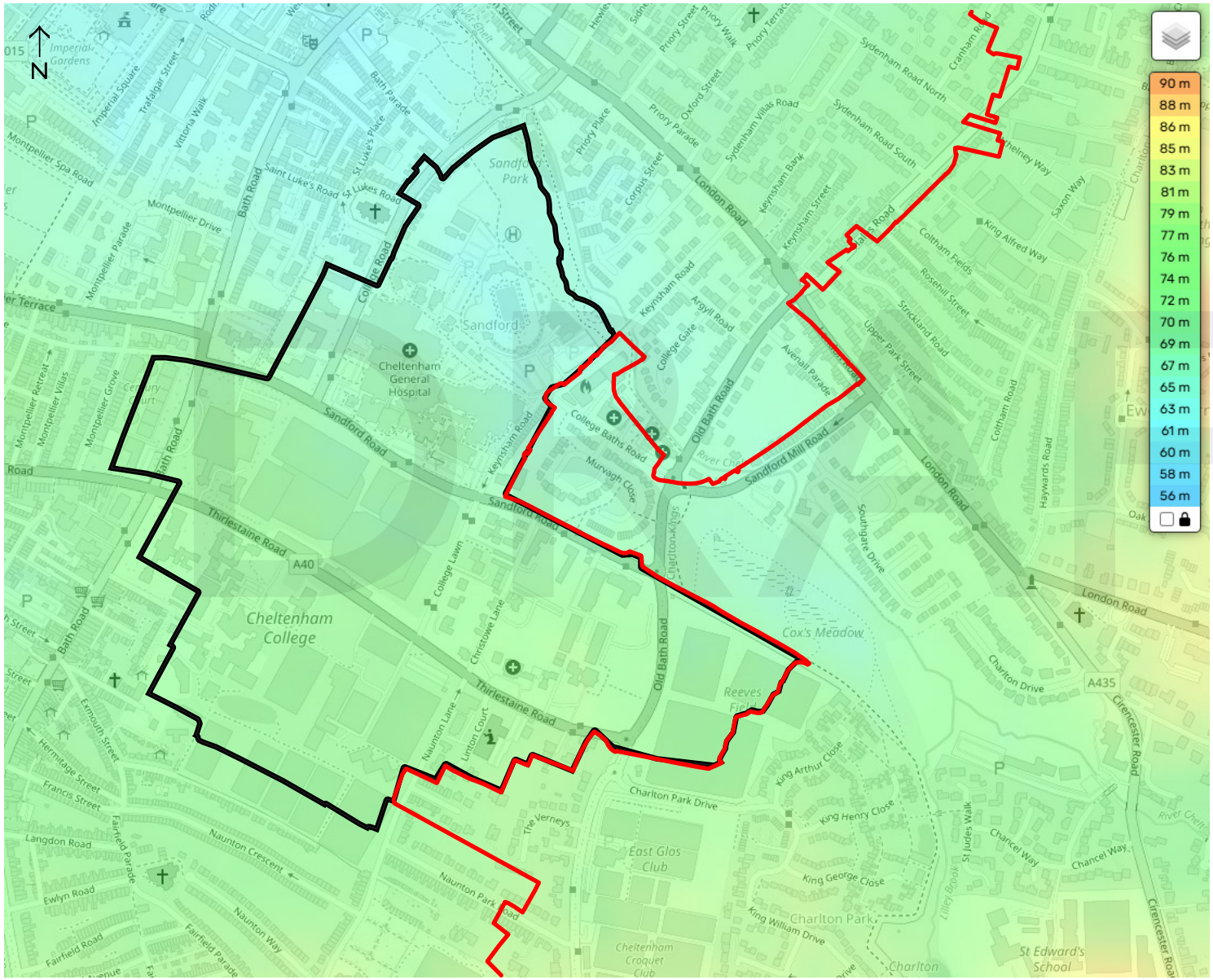
Proposed conservation area boundary

Planned Estates character area boundaries

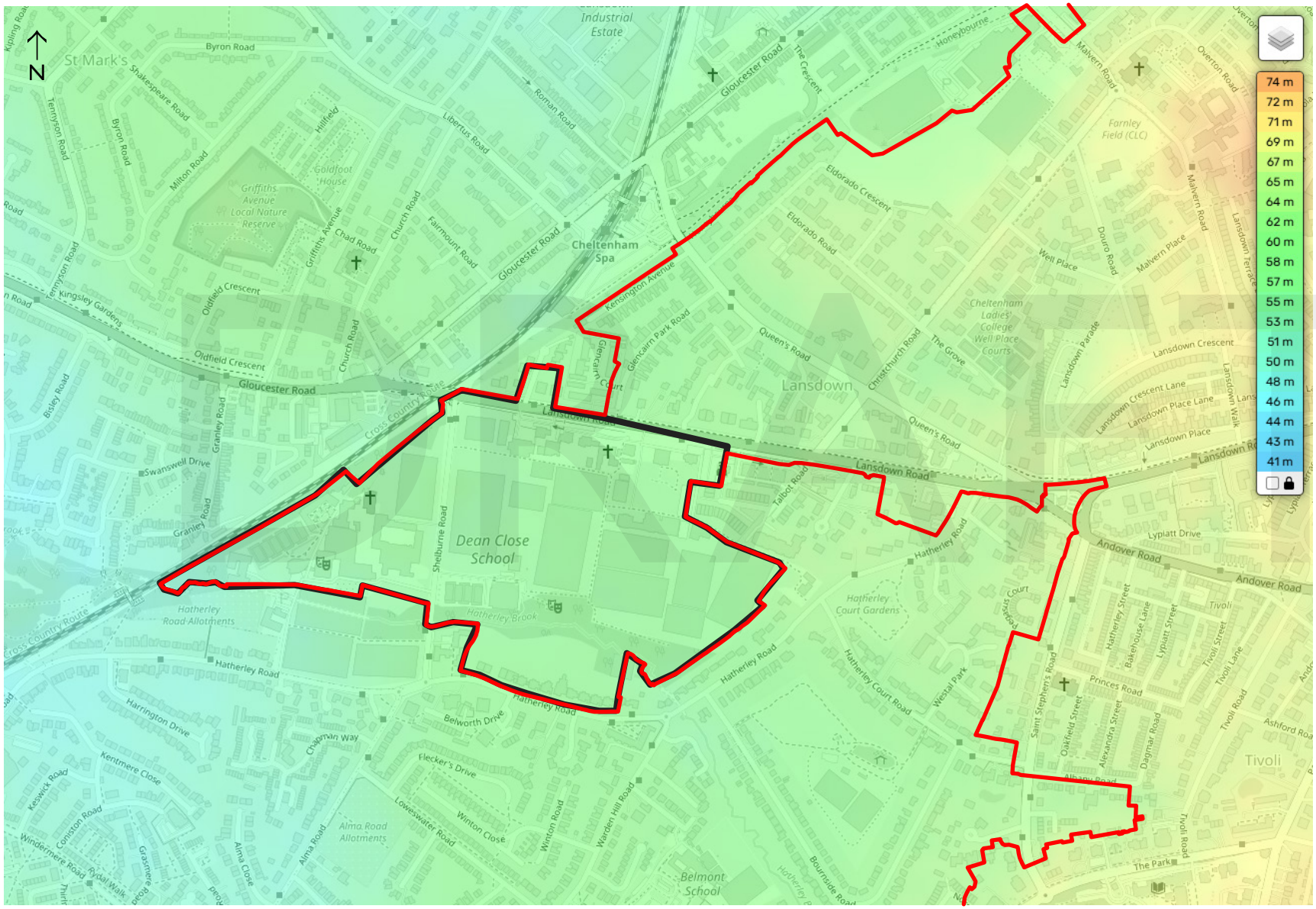
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01 Cheltenham Borough Council, *Central Conservation Area College Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan*, 2008.

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



Plan showing relative topography in the east extent of the Institutional Quarters character area. Source: OpenStreetMap (ODbL)



Plan showing relative topography in the west extent of the Institutional Quarters character area. 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 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.

4.1 Listed buildings

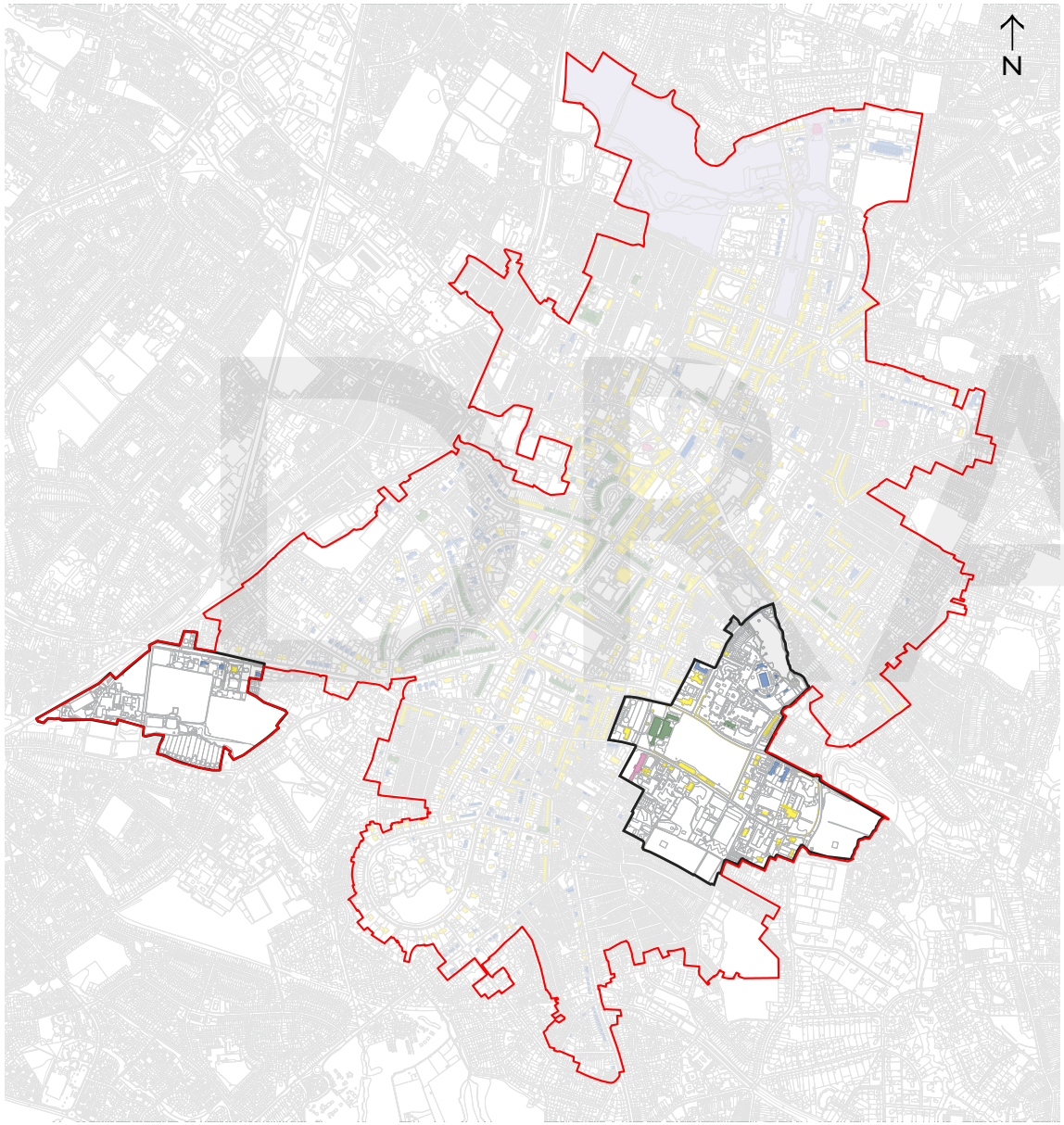
Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are designated for their architectural or historic interest. All listed buildings in England are designated at the recommendation of Historic England and details are recorded on the National Heritage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

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

4.2 Locally indexed buildings

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

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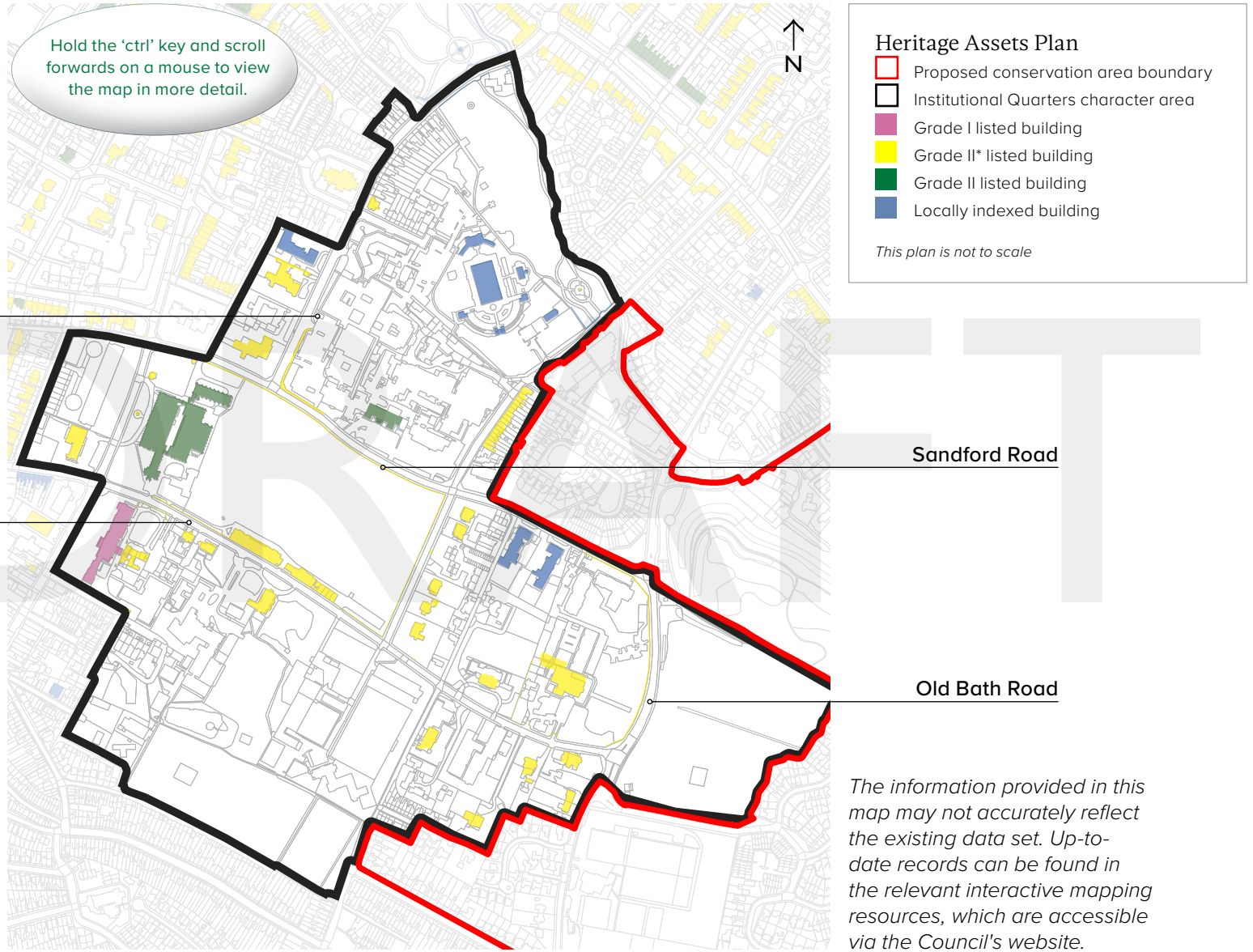
Heritage Assets Plan

- Proposed conservation area boundary
- Institutional Quarters character area boundaries
- Grade I listed building
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building
- Locally indexed building
- Registered park and garden

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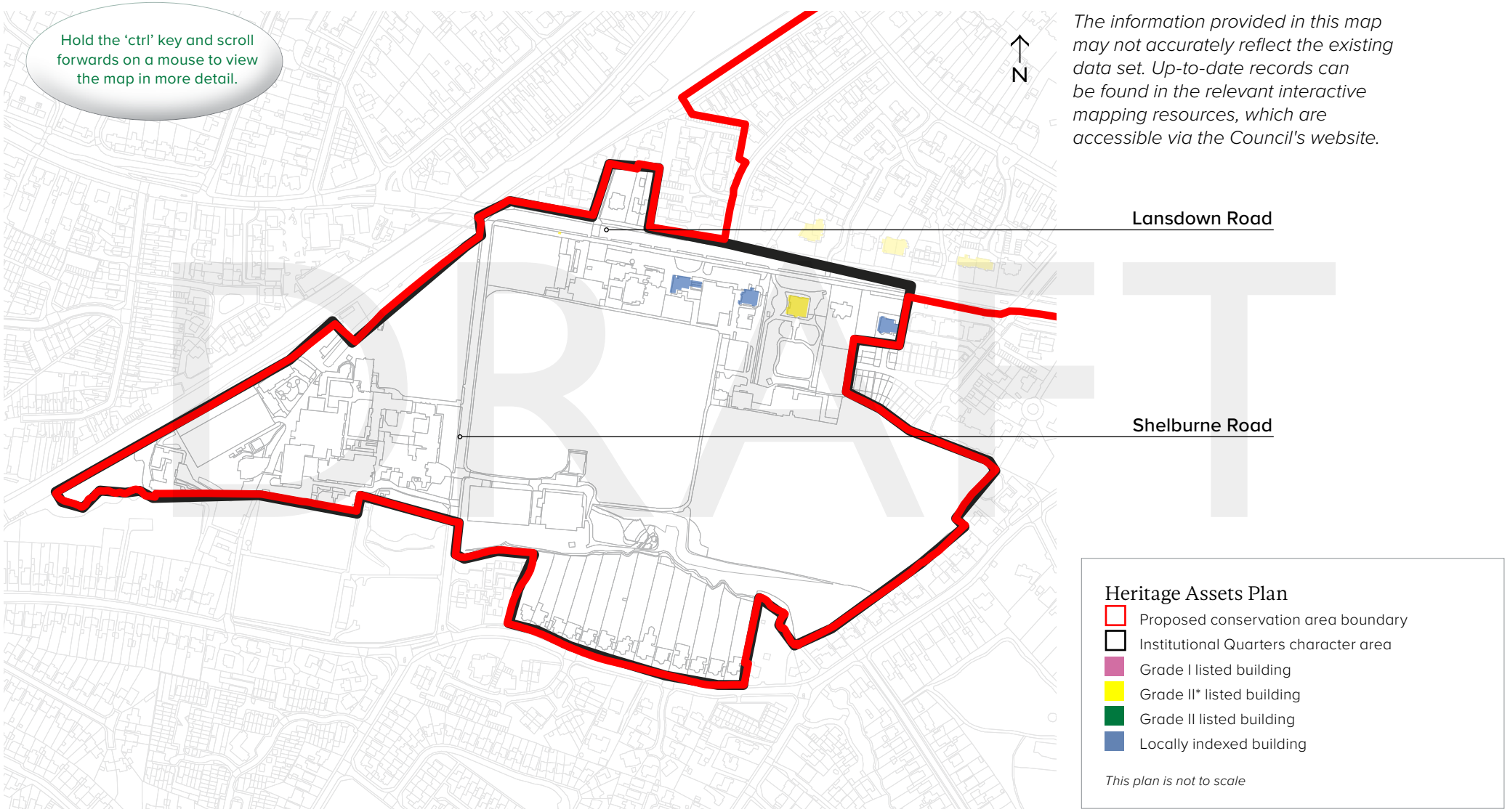
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The information provided in this map may not accurately reflect the existing data set. Up-to-date records can be found in the relevant interactive mapping resources, which are accessible via the Council's website.



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.

Plan showing heritage assets in the east extent of the Institutional Quarters character area.



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.

Plan showing heritage assets in the west extent of the Institutional Quarters character area.

5.0 Challenges

5.1 Condition

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

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

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

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

There are also examples of peeling paintwork and rusting to iron railings, which could benefit from the appropriate repair.

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



Detail showing peeling paint to historic iron railings.

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5.2 Detracting features and loss of historic details

Generally, timber sash and casement windows across the character area have been retained or replaced with suitable alternatives. However, there are localised examples where traditional windows have been replaced with uPVC alternatives (for instance at Whitecross Square). 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.

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

Where present, redundant satellite dishes and TV aerials detract from the historic character of the streetscapes.

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



Conspicuous uPVC windows to the end of a historic terrace at Whitecross Square.



The modern shiplap fencing to the right of the image detracts from the historic character of the streetscape, unlike the iron railings to the left and the red-brick boundary wall in the distance.

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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.

5.4 Development pressures

It is acknowledged that there are pressures 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 and wastepipes.
- Avoiding the loss of historic features such as sash windows and/or the introduction of unsympathetic uPVC windows.
- Avoiding bulky and insensitive box dormers and rooflights, which can appear overly dominant and disrupt the restrained character of neo-classical architecture.

In addition to the need for more residential development, there will likely be further pressure for intensification of development around Cheltenham General Hospital and the various educational institutions within the character area. 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.



Development pressure on the site of Cheltenham Hospital has seen significant additions and extension over the course of the 20th century, not all of which are sympathetic to the established character 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. There is a significant amount of street parking on streets around the hospital and Dean Close School, 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 typify the character area. For this reason, the retention of the small front garden plots at Whitecross Square is particularly notable and significantly enhances the historic streetscape.



Parked cars outside Cheltenham General Hospital depreciate its historic setting.

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.

6.2 Areas with sensitive development potential

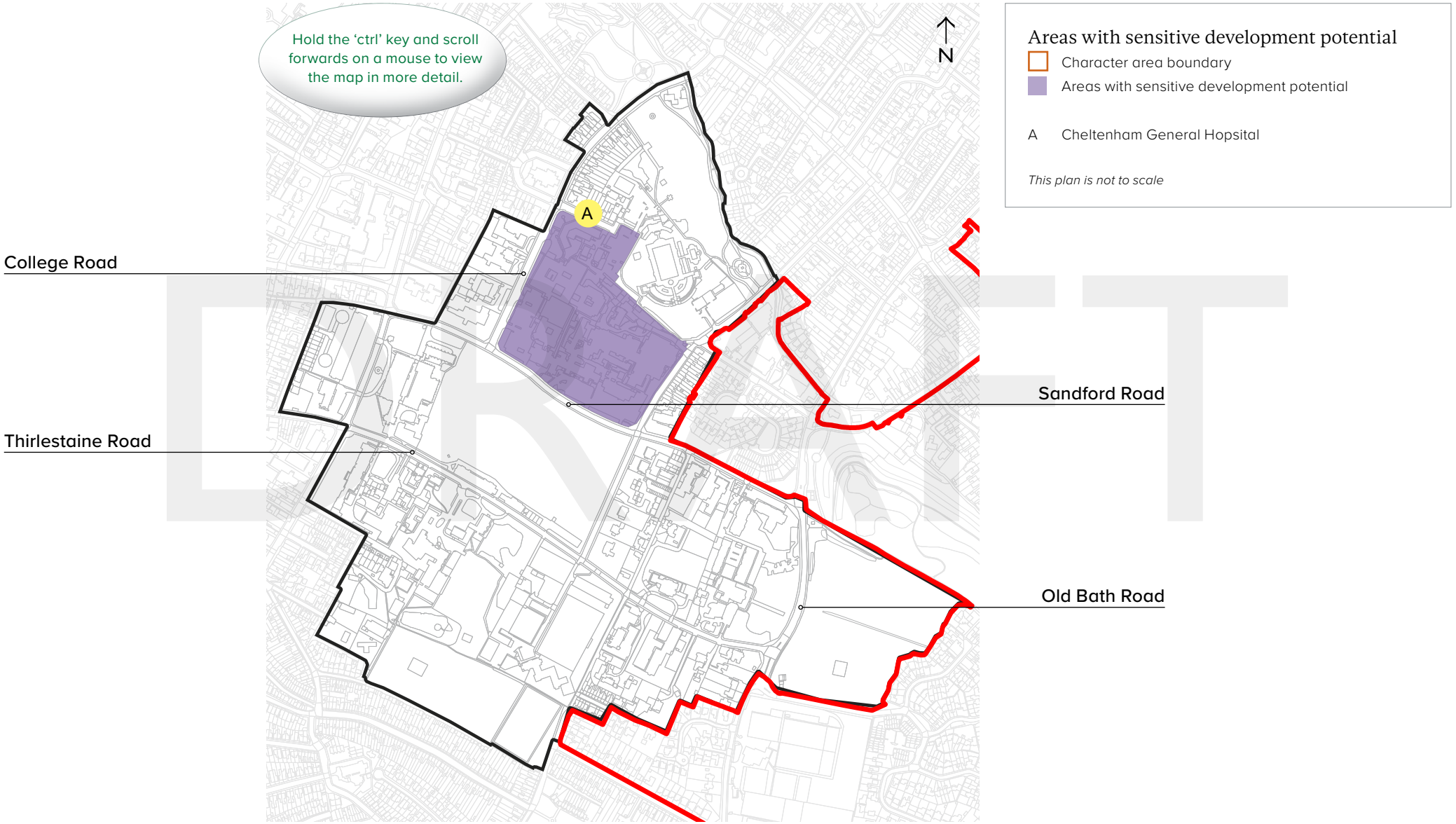
As well as the many minor and individual instances where there is opportunity to improve the character of the conservation area, there are specific sites within the character area that present opportunities for larger scale interventions that could have a correspondingly substantial positive impact. 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.

The Cheltenham General Hospital complex represents an opportunity for enhancement. Over time, additions and extensions of varying architectural quality have been constructed around the original Victorian building, eroding its historic setting and depreciating the historic character of the adjacent streetscapes. There may be scope here for sensitive adaptation or redevelopment on the site, in a manner that would benefit the character 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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Hold the 'ctrl' key and scroll forwards on a mouse to view the map in more detail.
N
A
College Road
Thirlestaine Road
Sandford Road
Old Bath Road
Areas with sensitive development potential
Character area boundary
Areas with sensitive development potential
A Cheltenham General Hopsital
This plan is not to scale

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7.0 Future Management of the Institutional Quarters Character Area

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

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

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BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Date	Revision	Issue
May 2026	First Draft	01
August 2026	Second Draft	02