

CHELTENHAM

# Local development framework

## 6. ELDORADO CHARACTER AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

JULY 2008





# Central Conservation Area

## 6. Eldorado Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan July 2008



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### **Key characteristics**

This Character Appraisal of the Eldorado Character Area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area concludes that the special interest of the area derives from the following key characteristics:

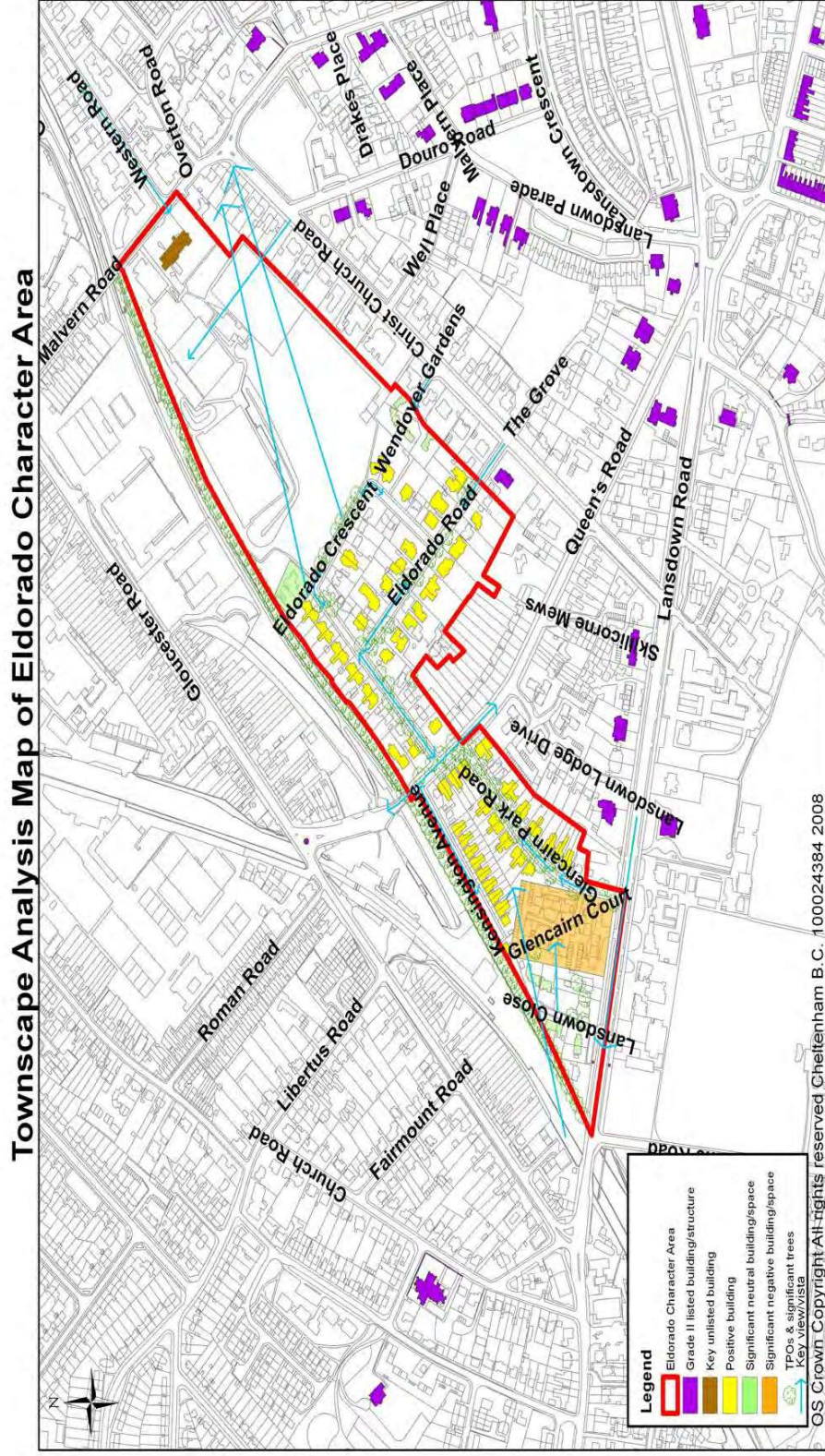
- Eldorado has a distinctive identity, provided through the uniform nature of red-brick Victorian and Edwardian properties. They create strong visual cohesion within the street scene and are an interesting contrast to dominant architectural styles of buildings (often Neo-Classical) found in other character areas;
- There are interesting and distinguishing architectural features found on the residential properties, which include gables, bay windows with sliding sashes and tiling. The frequent presence of this architectural detailing unifies properties and creates a striking visual impact upon the streetscape;
- Mature tree-lined streets are an important feature which strongly contribute to the character and appearance of Eldorado. They provide Eldorado with a leafy character;
- The contrasting green colours of the trees and the red-brick houses are a striking and attractive visual contrast in the street scene.

### **Key issues**

A number of problems and issues have been identified and have a negative impact on the character of the Eldorado character area. These form the basis for the Management Proposals of the Management Plan in the Part 2 of this document and are summarised below:

- Control of new development;
- Loss of traditional architectural features on some historic buildings;
- Negative impacts of the presence of equipment or installations on or around buildings, such as large aerials and satellite dishes;
- Poor street furniture;
- Drives and loss of front gardens;
- Tree management;
- Boundary enclosures;
- Setting and views.

# Part 1 – Character Appraisal



**Figure 1 – Townscape Analysis Map of Eldorado Character Area**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## **What is a Conservation Area**

- 1.1 Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, in which the character or appearance is seen to be worth preserving or enhancing. It is given special protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Government policy in relation to Conservation Areas set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15). This legal protection enables the best features of an area to be preserved and new buildings and street works to be designed in-order that they enhance the area.
- 1.2 Some building work which does not require planning permission (known as “permitted development”) can damage the special qualities of a Conservation Area. “Article 4” directions can be applied by the planning authority to limit permitted development rights and thus give extra protection to particular buildings.

## **The need for an appraisal**

- 1.3 PPG15 stresses the need for local planning authorities to make an assessment of the special character and appearance of all Conservation Areas in their districts. The Government has also made the preparation of such assessment appraisals for all conservation areas a Best Value Performance indicator for local authorities. These assessments should be reviewed by local authorities every five years.
- 1.4 This document has been split into two parts. Part 1 of the document forms the character appraisal which provides an assessment of the character of a Conservation Area or parts of it. This appraisal provides the basis for Part 2, which comprises a management plan which gives guidance on how the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance can be achieved. It also provides a sound basis for development control and other decisions made by local authorities (such as the design of highways or the appropriateness of the design of new buildings or open spaces).
- 1.5 Both parts of this document were subject to public consultation between 3<sup>rd</sup> March and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008. Following consideration of representations received it was adopted by Cheltenham Borough Council on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008 as a Supplementary Planning Document. It will be used in conjunction with the Local Plan as a material consideration in determining planning applications.

## **Planning context**

- 1.6 Cheltenham Borough Council has various adopted and emerging planning related documents. They can be found on the Council's website - [www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk). Some of the documents are quite broad in their content, whilst others are thematic, site specific or area specific. However, all fall within the statutory planning framework and all are material considerations in determining planning proposals. All these documents together look at various aspects of the built environment and need to be read as a whole within a particular context.
- 1.7 This document is part of that overall framework. The Character Appraisal (Part 1) is one of a number of such documents each assessing the character of parts of the conservation area and highlighting negative issues, which are

then addressed through Management Proposals within the Management Plan (Part 2). In developing planning proposals, the Character Appraisal and Management Plan need to be considered along with advice, guidance and policy set out in other planning documents, be they general, thematic or spatially specific.

- 1.8 Cheltenham's Civic Pride project aims to regenerate specific areas within the town. The project intends to develop and deliver public realm enhancement schemes and redevelop under-utilised council land including car-parks. More information on Civic Pride can be found at [www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk) Although this project is outside the Eldorado Character Area, it is possible that there may be some consequential benefits.

### **The Central Conservation Area**

- 1.9 Cheltenham is known as the most complete Regency town in England. It lies at the foot of the Cotswold scarp, where the valley of the River Chelt meets the Severn Vale. Currently the whole of Cheltenham Borough area has a population of approximately 112,000 people.
- 1.10 Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area was designated by Gloucestershire County Council on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1973 and its boundary was extended by Cheltenham Borough Council on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1987. The Central Conservation Area includes the whole of the town centre, most of the Victorian, Edwardian and some of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbs. It covers commercial, industrial, retail and residential areas, as well as the University campus complexes, some extensive school campuses and the hospital complex.
- 1.11 There is a Government requirement for existing Conservation Area boundaries to be re-assessed from time to time. Due to the size of the Central Conservation Area (reputedly the largest Conservation Area in Europe covering 600 hectares), it has been necessary to establish approximately 19 character areas to be appraised separately, in-order to identify their individual key components and in turn establish how each may best be preserved and enhanced.

### **Eldorado Character Area**

- 1.12 In May 2001 Cheltenham Borough Council published a draft Urban Design Framework for Cheltenham, produced by Latham Architects (the "Latham" Study). It was never formally adopted by the Council, but has been a useful stepping stone for the development of a number of subsequent initiatives. It included a plan which divided the whole town into character areas and is the basis of the character area boundary used in this study.
- 1.13 The selection of the 19 character area boundaries has no impact on the overall boundary of the Central Conservation Area. Although as part of the work for the preparation of the character area appraisals, consideration has been given to possible boundaries of the Central Conservation Area being revised in the future as a separate piece of work.
- 1.14 The boundaries of the Eldorado character area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area (see. Fig. 2) have been devised to encompass late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century late Victorian/early Edwardian residential development. This quiet suburb is positioned to the south west of Cheltenham's town

centre. The buildings and tree-lined streets largely contribute to the overall character and appearance of Eldorado and provide its distinctive identity.

### Summary of special interest

1.15 Eldorado character area is special because:

- a) Eldorado has a distinctive identity, provided through the uniform nature of red-brick Victorian and Edwardian properties. They create strong visual cohesion within the street scene and are an interesting contrast to dominant architectural styles of buildings (often Neo-Classical) found in other character areas;
- b) There are interesting and distinguishing architectural features found on the residential properties, which include gables, bay windows with sliding sashes and tiling. The frequent presence of this architectural detailing unifies properties and creates a striking visual impact upon the streetscape;
- c) Mature tree-lined streets are an important feature which strongly contributes to the character and appearance of Eldorado. They provide Eldorado with a leafy character;
- d) The contrasting green colours of the trees and the red-brick houses are a striking and attractive visual contrast in the street scene.

Eldorado Character Area within the Central Conservation Area

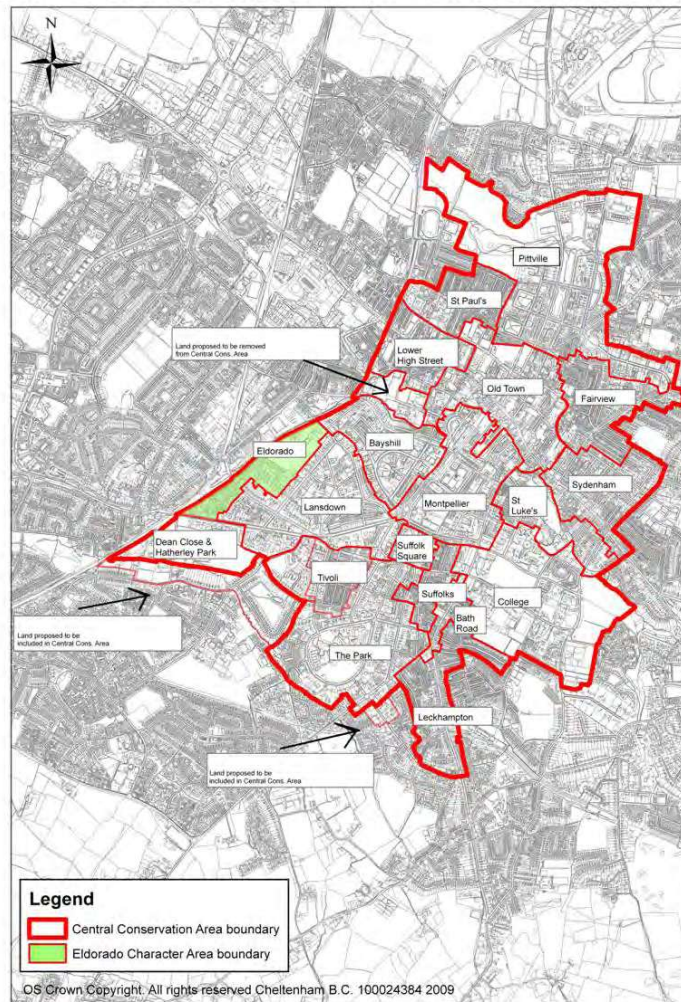


Figure 2 Eldorado Character Area within the Central Conservation Area

## 2 LOCATION AND SETTING

### Location and context

- 2.1 Cheltenham is located in Gloucestershire. It is approximately 8 miles east of Gloucester, 40 miles west of Oxford and is immediately to the east of the M5 motorway. The town is set on low-lying land at the foot of the Cotswold scarp. Views of the Cotswold scarp from within the Conservation Area contribute to its character and setting. The town is surrounded by open countryside. Much of this is protected by the statutory Cheltenham/Gloucester Green Belt (to the west and north) and the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the south and east. To the west of Cheltenham is the River Severn, with the Forest of Dean and Wales beyond the Severn.

### General character and plan form of the Eldorado Character Area

- 2.2 The Eldorado character area encompasses predominantly late Victorian and Edwardian residential development which allows the area to form a distinct identity. The dominance of semi-detached red-brick houses establishes the overall urban character of Eldorado. The formal plan form of the street grid is generally compact – however large plot sizes and buildings set back from the road combine to create a sense of space. The form of the roads was mainly established in the late Victorian period. By this time, large parts of Cheltenham town centre had long been established. The western boundary of the character area is a strong consistent line derived from the Honeybourne line. This historic railway line, which is now a cycle track, also forms the western boundary of the Central Conservation Area. The north, south and eastern boundaries about other character areas boundaries of Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area.



**Figure 3** Typical red-brick houses found within Eldorado Character Area

### Wider landscape setting



**Figure 4** Vista of the Cotswold escarpment from Eldorado Character Area

The Eldorado character area is positioned in a built-up urban area. However, long distance views of Cleeve Hill are presented over buildings and in gaps due to the raised elevation of the land. These long distance views of the far away hills in turn reinforce and enhance the spacious character of the area, and provide a rural backdrop for some of the set pieces of architecture such as the spire of Christ Church (in Lansdown character area).

- 2.4 The majority of late Victorian houses within Eldorado character area make a significant impact upon the street scene due to their size and uniform nature in parts of the character area. The more recent properties are generally of a smaller scale and size to the historic buildings. However, there is commonly a

consistent building height and building line among these buildings which gives them cohesion.

## HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

### **Archaeology within the town of Cheltenham**

- 3.1 Some archaeological research has been conducted within the Borough of Cheltenham and in-depth research can be found in “Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey”.<sup>1</sup> Many archaeological artefacts would have been lost during the expansion of the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and so medieval and post-medieval finds have been very limited.
- 3.2 A few prehistoric remains have been found within the town, raising the possibility that people from Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age periods travelled or lived here. An Iron Age enclosure ditch was uncovered on the site of the present day Children’s Library in 1986-87. This indicates that an area of Iron Age occupation was likely situated nearby.<sup>2</sup> During the last 30 years, archaeologists have pinpointed several areas within the town which have been identified as likely areas of Roman occupation, and where Roman artefacts such as coins and pottery have been discovered. Within the Eldorado character area, however, no finds have been noted under the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record. The “Chelt” element of Cheltenham’s name is amongst a number of the very oldest names in the country – believed to be of pre-Celtic origin.
- 3.3 Archaeological remains unearthed provide a basis for researching the origins and early development of Cheltenham, and contribute indirectly to a sense of place evident in the modern era.

### **Summary of Historic Development of Cheltenham**

- 3.4 The first documentary reference to Cheltenham itself occurs in an account of the Council of Cloveshoe held in 803. It is highly likely, given the archaeological finds and possible place-name derivation that Cheltenham was in existence as a farming village for a long time before the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Its status was raised to that of a market town in 1226 and the market played a key role in its economy for several centuries. From c.1247 Cheltenham was also a Liberty. Spa waters were discovered adjacent to the town in 1716 and after King George III’s visit to sample the waters in 1788, Cheltenham grew rapidly as a fashionable spa resort. The popularity of the town as a summer resort resulted in Cheltenham having a wealth of tree-lined walks and rides, squares and gardens. Its popularity led to expansion of the town away from the ancient High Street, and many fine classical style buildings were built for the growing population. The popularity of the spa waters waned from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Cheltenham developed other roles in the form of its growing importance as a major educational centre during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In turn this led to the development well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century of some acclaimed schools and churches. Before World War II, light industry boosted the town’s economy. The establishment of GCHQ in Cheltenham immediately after World War II has had an enormous impact on employment in the town. Today, the town’s attractions include fine shops and

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey’ Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, 1975

<sup>2</sup> ‘Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey’ Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, 1975

events such as the races and numerous cultural festivals as well as its legacy of Regency architecture, with trees, parks, gardens and public spaces.

### **General history of Eldorado**

- 3.5 Maps of Cheltenham dating from 1617, 1820, 1834, 1897 and present day have been studied and the map depicting the historic development of Eldorado character area accompanies this section (see Fig. 5). Eldorado forms a distinct and attractive leafy residential suburb to the south west of Cheltenham's town centre. It predominantly consists of late Victorian semi-detached red brick houses.

### **Development by 1617**

- 3.6 The area of Eldorado is not featured on the 1617 map of Cheltenham, suggesting the land was not of any major importance or significance at this time. It is presumed it would have remained as open fields.

### **Development by 1820**

- 3.7 Eldorado continued to remain as open undeveloped land in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is not featured on the 1820 Postmaster map of Cheltenham. Large amounts of development was occurring within the town centre at this time, during Cheltenham's hey day as a spa town.

### **Development by 1834**

- 3.8 The area of Eldorado continued to remain un-featured on Merrett's 1834 map of Cheltenham. Further formally planned development had occurred within the town by this time – notably the Imperial Square, Suffolk Square, the Promenade and much development along the medieval High Street. It is likely that the land where Eldorado is sited was too remote from the main focus of development at the time to be of any interest to developers. New Gloucester Road (the presently named Lansdown Road) was situated running to the south of the Eldorado character area.

### **Development by 1897**

- 3.9 An 1884-93 map details Christ Church Farm occupying land to the west of Christ Church Road, which at this time was surrounded by large areas of field. By 1897, the farm had gone and was replaced by the Cheltenham Ladies' College Recreation Ground. This recreational ground occupied a large site on land north of housing which was developing in Eldorado.

- 3.10 In the latter years of the Victorian period, high levels of development had occurred within the Eldorado character area. Eldorado Road and Eldorado Crescent had been laid out, with properties being constructed along the north and south sides of Eldorado Road. Part of the Great Western Railway Gloucester and Cheltenham Branch ran along the western edge of Eldorado.

### **Development in the 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries**

- 3.11 The dominance of the Victorian and Edwardian houses remains today, but some infill development has occurred in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This has taken the form of residential flats including Glencairn Court and Sedum House, and the sub-division of some large historic villas into flats. However, the distinctive identity and qualities of Eldorado remain, which make it a unique and distinguished area.

# Historical development of Eldorado Character Area

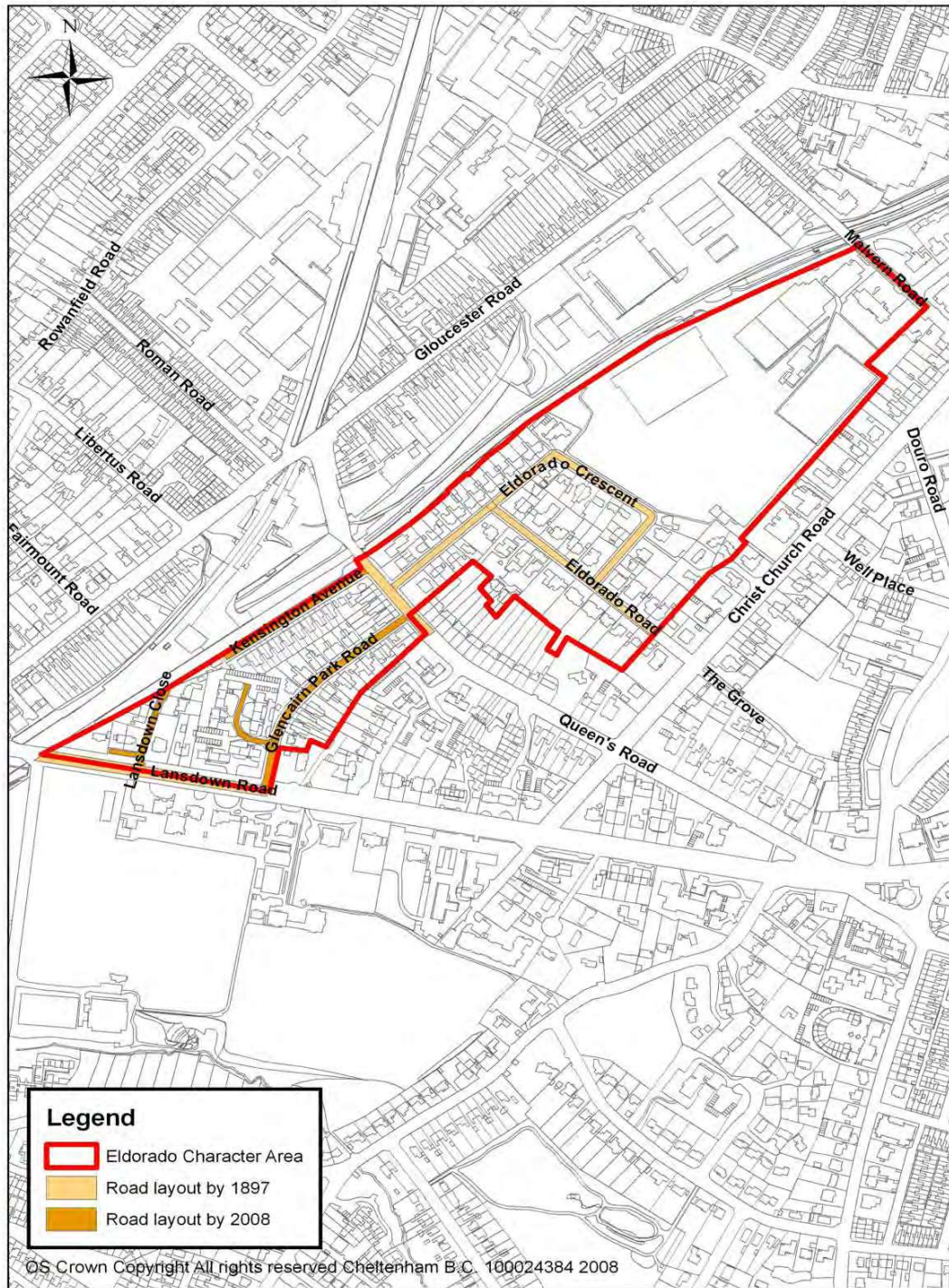


Figure 5 Historical Development of Eldorado Character Area

## 4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

### The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area and key views and vistas

#### Public and private space

4.1



**Figure 6** Trees frame the view looking into Eldorado Road from Christ Church Road

There is little public space within the Eldorado character area, other than streets and verges. Streets are broad and tree-lined, establishing a verdant suburban character. They occasionally frame views or form vistas.

4.2

Buildings within Eldorado are predominantly residential and tend not to be landmark. However, Glenlee boarding house for the Ladies' College situated on Malvern Road is landmark in terms of its size and scale, dominating the street scene in this locale. It partially closes the view at the end of Western Road. Views of the landmark Christ Church in Lansdown character area are apparent from Eldorado Crescent across the playing field and from Malvern Road.



**Figure 7** Landmark Glenlee boarding house



**Figure 8** View of Christ Church from Eldorado Crescent

4.3

The extensive playing field of the Ladies' College forms a large open space. It permits views across the field and creates a spacious atmosphere in this area.

4.4



**Figure 9** Victorian houses along Eldorado Road

Both modern flats and houses and historic properties are generally set back from the road in good sized plots with contained frontages. They follow a similar building line. Historic villas tend to be set in larger plots along Lansdown Road and Eldorado Road, where building is lower in density.

- 4.5 The Honeybourne line is a strong consistent boundary. It has high levels of tree planting which screens the residential buildings in Eldorado from the Cheltenham Spa railway station and industrial units on Gloucester Road. The trees also form a sense of enclosure.

### Garden space

4.6



**Figure 10** Garden space and hard-standing evident in Queen's Road

The combination of well-maintained front gardens and tree-lined streets strongly contributes to character within street scenes. Trees and hedging in front gardens screen properties from public view, creating privacy. Unfortunately, hard-standing has at least partially replaced many front gardens along roads.

### Boundary treatments

- 4.7 Various boundary treatments are employed within Eldorado character area. These include historic and traditional low red brick boundary walls outside Victorian properties which permit views of the houses and complement their setting. The walls also provide a unifying feature within the streetscape. Historic stone piers are present outside some villas, which provide an historic feature and boundary treatment.
- 4.8 Railings are an attractive, traditional boundary treatment which permit views of houses and gardens. High fencing is evident outside many properties and is a visually unattractive, modern and 'hard' boundary treatment. Fencing does little to complement the special historic character of the area. High hedging is used as a soft boundary treatment and is notable on Eldorado Crescent where it separates the public highway from the Cheltenham Ladies' College playing field and restricts views of the field.



**Figure 11** Boundary treatments found within Eldorado Character Area

### Key views and vistas (see Fig. 1)

- 4.9 Within the Eldorado character area there is generally a linear plan form which creates a sense of space by permitting medium and long distance views along roads. In contrast to this dominant plan form, Glencairn Park Road curves gently, restricting views and adding character and interest in the street scene.

- 4.10 Views of Cleeve Hill are presented from Eldorado Crescent looking across the Ladies' College playing field. Views of Cleeve Hill are also apparent outside Glenlee boarding house looking down Western Road. The long distance views of the countryside creates a rural connection with the built-up character of the area and forms a sense of enclosure.



**Figure 12** View of the Malvern Hills across the Ladies' College playing field



**Figure 13** View of the Cotswold escarpment from Eldorado Crescent

## 5 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Use of area and how use creates special interest**

- 5.1 The Eldorado character area has one predominant use, both historically and today. This principal use as a residential suburb creates a distinct character and identity for Eldorado.

### **Residential**

- 5.2 Eldorado is and has historically been a principally residential area, which today accommodates a range of housing and tenure types, from large detached family houses to small flat conversions. A small number of purpose-built blocks of flats date from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (such as Glencairn Court). The majority of houses date from the late Victorian period. A few Victorian detached villas have been converted into flats in multiple occupation.



**Figure 14** Residential semi-detached houses in Kensington Avenue



**Figure 15** Modern block of flats in Eldorado Crescent

- 5.3 Some of the larger houses have been converted to residential homes and nursing homes. Eldorado is clearly a popular location for such buildings, due to its attractive surroundings and relatively low noise and activity levels whilst still being located within close proximity of the town centre.

### **Cheltenham Ladies' College**

- 5.4 A large boarding house for Cheltenham Ladies' College is present within the character area, named Glenlee. This grand historic building enhances the

special qualities and interest of the area and generates noise and activity levels;

- 5.5 The Cheltenham Ladies' College playing field and courts occupy a large plot of land to the north of the character area.



**Figure 16** Glenlee boarding house



**Figure 17** Cheltenham Ladies' College playing field across car park

### Road use

- 5.6



**Figure 18** Traffic in Queen's Road

Part of Queen's Road falls within the character area boundary. This road is heavily trafficked, connecting with the A40 and Gloucester Road and leading into Cheltenham Spa railway station. The road generates high noise and activity levels within the vicinity. It also acts as a strong physical divide by almost splitting the character area into two on either side.

## Architecture and historic qualities of buildings

### Architectural styles

- 5.7 The built environment of Eldorado predominantly consists of late Victorian residential housing. These properties tend to have a common building height (being two storeys high and some with dormers) which creates cohesion and uniformity within the street scene. Various architectural features are also present on these buildings, which include tall brick chimney stacks, gables, tiling, ashlar window surrounds, Corinthian pilasters, quoins and keystones. These features unite properties and enhance their special interest.



**Figure 19** Unifying architectural detailing on houses

**Glenlee boarding house**

5.8 Glenlee boarding house for the Ladies' College is a visually prominent landmark building. It contains attractive and ornate detailing in the form of stone gate piers, stone balustrades, and iron gates which act as enclosure but permit views through them.

**Victorian villas**

5.9



Figure 20 Render fronted villa on Eldorado Road

Some large and historic villas are located within the character area, dating from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their painted render facades provide an interesting visual contrast to the dominance of the red-brick faced houses. Architectural features present on these villas include tall brick chimney stacks, sash windows, deep eaves, window and door surrounds and dormers.

**20<sup>th</sup> century buildings**

5.10 Some modern infilling has occurred in the area during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with varying degrees of success. Small scale modern residential houses and bungalows tend to fit into the context of their historic surroundings. They do not detract from the dominance and special qualities of the historic houses. A few blocks of flats are present, notably Glencairn Court off Glencairn Park Road. This development is relatively high density and was constructed in the 1960s. Landscaping has softened its 'hard' appearance. However, the scale and footprint of the development does not consider well its historic context.



Figure 21 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development



Figure 22 Glencairn Court off Glencairn Park Road

**Listed buildings**

5.11 Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. All listed buildings due to their listed status are extremely important. There are no listed buildings within the character area, nonetheless the buildings have strong group value and form a distinct character. There is one Grade II listed structure being a lamp post positioned on Lansdown Road. Details of this listed lamp post are shown below:

BUILDING/STRUCTURE	GRADE	DATE OF LISTING
Lamp post to east of Shelburne Road Junction, Lansdown Road (North side)	II	14/12/83

Refer to [www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk) for full list descriptions and [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) for photographic records.

### Index of Buildings of Local Importance

- 5.12 An Index of Buildings of Local Importance has been prepared for Cheltenham. Buildings and structures on the Index are protected by a Supplementary Planning Document.

### Contribution of key unlisted buildings

- 5.13 As already mentioned, there are no statutory listed buildings within the Eldorado character area. Buildings tend to have collective group value rather than value on an individual basis. This group value creates a strong and unique identity for Eldorado. These late Victorian and early Edwardian residential properties encompass qualities of age, style and materials which are locally distinct and which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the character area and overall Central Conservation Area.
- 5.14 There is one key unlisted building within the Eldorado character area which is worthy of noting –

**Glenlee** (Cheltenham Ladies' College boarding house) is seen as a key unlisted building because:



Figure 23 Glenlee

- The building has historic value, dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- It contains interesting architectural features such as stone balustrading, ornately detailed entrance porch, a Dutch style bell gable and pinnacles and string courses;
- It occupies a prominent position on land opposite the junction of Western Road with Malvern Road, partially closing the view at the end of Western Road;
- The size and scale of the building dominates the street scene within its locale thereby projecting its importance.

### Positive buildings

- 5.15 Positive buildings are identified on the Townscape Analysis Map as those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of each character area. They often have a collective group value. Although a small number of buildings in the overall Central Conservation Area are in a poor condition, they may still be identified as positive if the building itself makes a positive contribution. In comparison to positive buildings, key unlisted buildings tend to have individual value and qualities which make a greater contribution to enhancing the character and appearance of each character area.

### Local details

- 5.16 Local details within the Eldorado character area collectively enhance the character and appearance of not just Eldorado but the whole of the Central Conservation Area. Interesting historic details include -



**Materials**

**Building material**

5.17 The use of building materials reflects the availability of materials at the time of construction of historic buildings. The Eldorado character area consists primarily of red brick late Victorian and early Edwardian residential properties. Red bricks have also been used in the construction of boundary walls and in more recent residential developments. Roofs on late Victorian and Edwardian residential properties tend to be steeply pitched (typical of Gothic Revival architecture), and constructed from slate. Some roofs are also hipped.

**Ground surface material**

5.18 Public roads are tarmac, with concrete kerb stones at the edge of the public highway. Some driveways have been tarmac over with the partial or occasional total loss of front gardens.

**Street furniture**

5.19 There is little street furniture within Eldorado character area due to its distinctive residential character.

5.20 The street signage that is present is of a utilitarian design. It is largely evident on main roads within the area such as Queen’s Road and Lansdown Road (A40). There is very little pedestrian signage in evidence despite proximity to the railway station.

**Contribution of trees and green spaces**

5.21 Within the Eldorado character area there are generally large amounts of private green space but a very limited amount of public green space, due to Eldorado’s compact plan form. The occurrence of Council and privately owned trees and green spaces in the area, therefore, greatly enhances Eldorado’s setting, character and appearance.

**Impact of street trees**

5.22 There is a strong presence of tree-lined streets throughout the character area, particularly evident along Glencairn Park Road and Eldorado Road. Species include limes along Eldorado Road and smaller suburban trees consisting of flowering cherries, white beam and prunus along Glencairn Park Road. The presence of public and privately owned trees greatly enhances the appearance of the area.



**Figure 26** Street trees within Eldorado Character Area

- 5.23 The size of these mature, well-established trees helps establish grandeur and character within the area. The varying species and their colours also create interest. The impact of trees upon the street scene is particularly appreciated from the ends of Glencairn Park Road, Eldorado Road and Eldorado Crescent where medium and long distance views are prevalent. They can be seen stretching over the road toward each other, inhibiting light which in turn creates a sense of atmosphere.
- 5.24 Trees and their shade perform an important function in screening properties from the public realm, acting as a 'soft' boundary treatment and establishing enclosure and privacy. Trees positioned along pavement edges contrast well with the colours of the built environment, enhancing the overall appearance of the street scene.

**Other forms of greenery**

5.25



**Figure 27** – Conifer hedging in Eldorado Crescent forms southern boundary of Ladies' College playing field

As well as trees, other forms of greenery enhance the Eldorado character area. Hedging is used as a natural boundary treatment to soften edges and enhance the setting of buildings. High conifer hedging is evident along the southern boundary of the Ladies' College playing field in Eldorado Crescent, where it is broken up by the presence of lime, plane and horse chestnut trees. It forms a strong visible boundary, which enhances the green suburban character of the area.

**Private green space**

5.26



**Figure 28** – Private green space within Eldorado Character Area

Private green space is particularly valuable and extensive within the Eldorado character area. Neatly planted and well-maintained gardens enhance the setting of properties, promoting a sense of pride within the neighbourhood. This is despite the majority of front gardens being at least partially converted into hard-standing.

### Ladies' College playing field

- 5.27 The Ladies' College playing field occupies a large plot of land to the north of Eldorado character area. The private playing field creates a sense of space, although it is generally well concealed from public view. Attractive long distance views of the countryside are permitted across the field through gaps between buildings and trees on Christ Church Road (in Lansdown character area) and Eldorado Crescent.

### Trees along the Honeybourne Line

5.28



**Figure 29** – Trees to the right act as a soft boundary, screening the Honeybourne Line from the Character Area

There is a dense row of mature tree planting along the Honeybourne Line (originally the Great Western railway track, which forms the western boundary of both the Eldorado character area and the overall Central Conservation Area). These mature lime trees restrict views of the cycle track from Kensington Avenue and provide a soft boundary treatment and enclosure. They are a particularly important feature along this stretch of boundary.

### Negative factors

- 5.29 Due to high levels of development of the Eldorado character area, modern changes and intrusions have, to a degree, negatively impacted on the area's overall character and appearance. Negative factors include significant negative buildings and spaces, which are identified as those buildings and spaces that detract from the character and appearance of the area but offer potential for enhancement. This identification may result from the visual prominence of the site, or the development's inappropriate scale, design or materials, amongst other factors. The identification of buildings as negative factors in this section and as significant negative buildings or spaces on the Townscape Analysis map is an indication of a need for improvement, not necessarily demolition. Negative changes and intrusions include –

- a) **Loss of traditional architectural features**, particularly alterations to windows, has occurred within some of the historic buildings;
- b) The presence of large, projecting **Velux roof lights** on historic buildings has eroded the visual quality of the historic roofscape. Where there is evidence of historic roof lights or where new conservation roof lights may be appropriate, each case will be considered on its own merits;
- c) Modern intrusions in the form of **satellite dishes and large aerials** are also harmful to the overall appearance of buildings and detract from their special historic and architectural qualities. These additions can often be seen clearly from the public realm which harms the character and appearance of not just the individual buildings, but the area generally;

- d) **Glencairn Court** consists of a number of blocks of flats within a large plot of land in the south of the character area. The garage blocks are particularly utilitarian in design. The size, scale and footprint of Glencairn Court is alien to that of the historic residential properties. The development does not sit well within its historic context;
- e) **Many front gardens have been changed either totally or partially into hard-standing areas** for cars. This change has reduced the area of green and soft landscaped private gardens, and generally increased the hard urban appearance of the Eldorado area. It has resulted in a negative impact on the appearance of the area. However, where properties have retained their front gardens, there has been a continuing enhancement to the street scene;
- f) **On-street parking** is evident within the Eldorado character area. The semi-detached late Victorian houses on Glencairn Park Road and Kensington Avenue which do not contain garages experience the highest levels of on-street parking. High levels of parking creates active streets, but focuses attention and activity on the road rather than the historic buildings and the open spaces between buildings;
- g) Some **boundary treatments**, in particular fencing is in need of maintenance and currently has a negative impact on the street scene and setting of buildings;
- h) Some functional and modern **street signage** is in place which does not complement the historic qualities of streets within the character area.

### **Neutral areas**

- 5.30 Some areas within the Eldorado character area neither enhance nor detract from the character or appearance of the character area but have the potential for enhancement. They tend to be visually prominent within the street scene. The identification of buildings as being neutral in this section and as significant neutral buildings or spaces on the Townscape Analysis map is an indication of a need for improvement, not necessarily demolition.
- 5.31 Large, utilitarian blocks of flats dating from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are often out of context with the predominantly late Victorian and early Edwardian setting of the area, in terms of their size, scale, materials etc. The modern block of flats named Sedum House positioned in Eldorado Crescent – although this building does not enhance the historic setting of the area, it generally sits comfortably within its historical context. It is set back from the public space of the road in landscaped grounds and is a red brick construction which complements the red brick on the dominant late Victorian and early Edwardian properties.
- 5.32 Residential housing in Wendover Gardens and Lansdown Close is situated in contained cul-de-sacs. The positioning of these cul-de-sacs allows them to be physically separated from the dominance of historic housing. Trees assist in screening properties in these locales.
- 5.33 Some small-scale, residential properties dating from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are positioned on Eldorado Road and Eldorado Crescent. They follow a similar building line to the historic buildings by being set back from the road in good sized plots. Although some are not complementary to the historic

buildings in terms of their use of materials, they generally do not detract from the special qualities of the historic buildings and are subservient to them.

#### **General condition of area**

- 5.34 Much of the building stock in the Eldorado character area is in good condition, reflecting high property values and the prosperity within this popular residential area. Eldorado's distinct character is displayed through a combination factors including the dominant historic red-brick houses and mature tree-lined streets.
- 5.35 It is highly important that the physical condition of the historic buildings is preserved in-order to retain not just Eldorado's, but Cheltenham's fine distinctiveness and identity.

#### **Pressures and capacity for change**

- 5.35 The designation of the Conservation Area is not intended to prevent change, especially that which would enhance the character or appearance of the area. It seeks to ensure that future development is appropriate to the character of the area;
- There is generally little capacity for new development on open land due to a very limited amount of suitable vacant land;
  - The replacement of some inappropriate modern buildings with a more contextually appropriate development may be an option but careful consideration would need to be given to this.

## **Part 2 – Management Plan**

## 1. Introduction

### **Purpose of the management plan**

The purpose of Part 2 of this document is to present proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of Eldorado character area's special historic character and appearance. It has been subject to public consultation. Part 2 was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008. It will inform the planning and other decisions of the Council.

The special qualities of the Eldorado character area have been identified in the Character Appraisal which forms the Part 1 of this document. The Management Plan draws upon the themes identified in sections 5.29 'Negative factors' and 5.30 'Neutral areas'.

The proposals are written with the awareness that, in managing Cheltenham's Conservation Areas, resources are limited and therefore need to be prioritised. Financial constraints on the Council mean that proposals may take longer than is desirable to implement. However, the Council will continue to encourage improvements to the conservation area in co-operation with property owners, groups and local businesses. As such, the management plan can be considered to have three broad functions:

**1 a control tool** - its action points will be material considerations in decision making on applications for planning and related consents;

**2 a project development tool** - it identifies proactive work which can address some of the negative factors identified in the Character Appraisal. The responsibility for the work falls within the remit of various agencies (primarily Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council). Many of the projects do not yet have resources (funding, staffing etc) and few are programmed. However, their inclusion in this document is important because as an adopted document, the management plan can form the basis for bids for resources and programmed works;

**3 a best practice guide** - it establishes a series of action points to preserve and enhance the area's character. They should be considered in the design and implementation of all projects regardless of the need for permissions and who is undertaking them (public bodies, corporate bodies or private individuals).

Both the Character Area Appraisal and accompanying Management Plan will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis.

### **Legislative background**

This document satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 namely:

*"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation area."*

The document reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' and policies set out in the Cheltenham Local Plan.

## 2. Article 4 directions

There are some buildings within the Eldorado character area which, although not listed, have qualities of age, style and materials which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the character area and Central Conservation Area. These properties are however vulnerable to future change. Some of which have already suffered from modern intrusions by way of alterations and inappropriate additions e.g. uPVC windows, large aerials and satellite dishes.

There are a number of categories of minor works for which a planning application is not normally needed. This is known as *permitted development*.

Permitted development rights are more restricted in conservation areas and permission is required for works including:

- a. the addition of dormer windows to roof slopes;
- b. various types of cladding;
- c. erection of satellite dishes fronting a highway; and
- d. there is a reduction in the size of extensions which have permitted development rights.

In order to protect the character of conservation areas, legislation allows local planning authorities to remove permitted development rights in parts of conservation areas facing on to the highway or open space by using Article 4 (2) Directions. These cannot be introduced through this conservation area management plan – the Council will need to embark on a separate process. However, it is advisable that the Council uses this document to identify areas of concern, where it may apply Article 4 (2) Directions. If introduced, these will provide long-term protection against unsympathetic alterations which have the potential to adversely impact on the character of the conservation area. The effect of a Direction would be that certain alterations to unlisted residential properties which formerly did not require planning permission would then need planning permission.

If introduced to cover this character area, an Article 4 (2) Direction will mean planning consent is required for a range of external works fronting a public space, including:

- a. changes to windows, doors, chimneys and roofs;
- b. the painting of previously unpainted walling;
- c. the construction of external porches;
- d. the provision and removal of walls, gates and fences.

## 3. Management proposals

The management proposals have been divided into two sections, comprising of: Development control proposals and project proposals which relate to specific areas.

## **Development control proposals**

### **1 Control of Development**

It is essential that any development should preserve the setting of any adjacent listed buildings and the existing landscape features and trees and preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the site including historic context and distinctive site features; as well as the size, scale, urban grain, layout, design, massing, height, plot width, frontage activity, landscape and materials in any such development. This does not dictate architectural style but helps deliver proposals which respond positively to their context with high quality design. Pastiche architectural styling, in which architectural historic elements are taken from different sources without being applied accurately, is not acceptable. However that is not to say that a variety of architectural styles, materials and forms of construction are not able to give interest within the conservation area and provided the new buildings are carefully designed it should be possible for them to have a harmonious and positive presence.

Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan policies CP3, CP7, BE1, BE2, BE3 and BE5 relate.

**ACTION EL1:** The Cheltenham Borough Local Plan states that new development shall preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. The policies of the Local Plan set out a general approach to the consideration of planning and related applications for development in conservation areas – they cover a range of issues including:

- new build
- extensions
- loss of green space
- impact on views
- demolition

In applying Local Plan policies, the Council will use the assessment of character set out in the appraisal accompanying this Management Plan as a basis for establishing the important aspects of context.

### **2 Loss of traditional architectural features on some historic buildings**

Some of the older buildings within Eldorado character area have been adversely affected by the use of inappropriate modern materials or details such as the replacement of original timber sash windows with uPVC, the loss of original timber front doors and introduction of roof lights which all erode local building detail and fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The Council's document Living and Working in a Conservation Area – Some Questions You Might Ask gives advice to building owners on their responsibilities.

The Cheltenham Borough Local Plan policy CP 3 relates.

**ACTION EL2:** In order to preserve and enhance the character and setting of the Eldorado character area, the Council will:

- a. Keep under review the need to bring in additional planning controls over minor works in the Conservation area through Article 4 directions;
- b. Use its powers to enforce against unauthorised development;
- c. Encourage owners to repair rather than replace original features;
- d. Consider producing detailed design guidance and information regarding materials appropriate for use in the Central Conservation Area;
- e. Consider producing guidance to highlight to property owner's the importance of regularly maintaining gutters to ensure they function to their full potential, thus preventing ceilings and roofs collapsing due to heavy rain and blocked gutters.

In undertaking any works to buildings in the character area, owners should consider the implications for sustainable building practices. This could take a number of forms, including sustainable sourcing of materials and use of energy efficient designs. Additional information is available in the Council's supplementary planning guidance on Sustainable Buildings ([www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk)).

### 3 **Equipment or installations (for example satellite dishes, large aerials, small scale renewable energy schemes and other such features)**

The presence of various types of equipment or installations on or around buildings, such as large aerials or satellite dishes, can detract from the character of the Eldorado character area and in some cases the special architectural qualities of the buildings. There is also the potential for domestic wind turbines and other elements to impact similarly. To minimise their visual impact, they should normally be positioned away from public view or prominent positions; a judgement then needs to be made between this and the optimization of energy generation.

The Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan Policy CP 3 relates.

**ACTION EL3:** In order to preserve and enhance the character of the Eldorado character area the Council will:

- a. Keep under review the need to bring in additional planning controls over equipment or installations in prominent locations in the character area through an Article 4 direction;
- b. Use any planning powers to ensure that equipment or installations away from public spaces and views, so as not to detract from views within the street scene and the overall character of the character area. This will look at balancing the visual impact against energy generations. Where the Council has no powers property owners are encouraged to position such equipment with regard to this guidance;
- c. Consider producing guidance regarding the design and siting of renewable energy infrastructure in the Central Conservation Area.

### 4 **Drives and loss of front gardens**

Very often the frontage of buildings in conservation areas is essential to the character of the conservation area. Historically, many buildings in the character area had front gardens with enclosing low railings, hedges or walls. Their gardens would be planted. The loss of front gardens to parking detracts from the historic setting. This can result from the nature of the materials used,

the loss of boundary treatments, the intensity or volume of the parking or the loss of soft garden features which can cause a reduction in biodiversity and 'wildlife corridors'. The loss of front gardens in this manner is also an unsustainable form of development – increasing run off, reducing planting available for carbon fixing and encouraging car use. Where it is considered acceptable the use of brick or gravel instead of tarmac, with the retention of some garden space and the use of appropriate boundary treatments would reduce run-off, offer a more attractive setting for buildings and give a more sustainable approach than some current practice.

Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Policy BE 7 states that 'Development which introduces or extends the parking of vehicles on forecourts or front gardens of buildings in conservation areas will not be permitted.' Where there is existing frontage parking which adversely impacts on the character and setting of the conservation area, a new planning application may give opportunities to renegotiate a more sympathetic solution.

**ACTION EL4:** The Council will seek to limit the adverse impact of on-plot frontage parking by using its powers under planning and other legislation to secure the use of appropriate, traditional and complementary boundary and surface treatments which will in turn greatly reduce levels of surface water run-off.

The Council will prepare a guidance note on sustainable design of front garden parking.

## 5 **Tree management**

The presence of trees makes an important contribution to the overall character and appearance of the character area. They are particularly important features in the street scene along the length of Lansdown Road, Glencairn Park Road, Queen's Road, Eldorado Road and Eldorado Crescent. Trees play an important role in reducing the effects of climate change through climate fixing, absorbing carbon dioxide and providing shade. They need to continue to be well protected and managed in the future.

**ACTION EL5:** Cheltenham Borough Council will continue to maintain and protect trees by implementing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) where appropriate, and replant with new trees when old trees die. Trees located in pavements or grass verges at the side of roads and which are designated as within the public highway are maintained by Gloucestershire Highways. Trees located in parks or green spaces within the conservation area are managed by Cheltenham Borough Council in accordance with best arboricultural practice.

When a tree dies or is removed from land within the conservation area, because it was dead, dying or dangerous, the land owner has a legal obligation under section 213 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to plant a replacement tree of an appropriate size and species. The Council will require owners to fulfil their legal obligation for replanting with new trees, especially where the old trees have made a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. Where appropriate the Council may decide to serve a tree replacement notice under section 207 of the Act.

This proposed action will maintain the overall leafy character and appearance of the area. The creation of gaps within formal planted avenues of trees will also be avoided.

## 6 **Boundary enclosures**

At present, some poorly maintained boundary treatments harm the character and appearance of buildings and the overall street scene. Increased use of railings or trees and hedgerow as a 'soft' boundary treatment would enhance the historic qualities, character and appearance of the area. Additionally, trees and hedgerow contribute to biodiversity by providing wildlife habitats. If the same sympathetic boundary treatment were to be implemented along the length of a street where possible, this would enhance its character and appearance, by uniting properties within it.

See Cheltenham Borough Local Plan BE 5 and CP3.

**ACTION EL6:** The Council will use enforcement and other powers under Section 215 of the Planning Act to secure the repair of poorly maintained boundary treatments and the reinstatement of traditional and historic boundary treatments to enhance the historic character of the Eldorado area.

The Council will require the use of contextually sensitive boundary treatments on new developments where appropriate.

## 7 **Setting and views**

The setting of the Eldorado character area is very important. Any proposals for development will be required to demonstrate how the setting and long distance views, into and from the character area have been taken into account. The important views are identified on the Townscape Analysis map. The Council will seek to ensure that all development serves to respect these important views.

**ACTION EL7:** The Council will ensure that development respects the important views within, into and from the Eldorado character area. These views are noted but not exclusively identified on the Townscape Analysis map. The Council will ensure that these remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and redevelopment and that due regard is paid to these views in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes in accordance with the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan.

## 8 **Enhancement of existing buildings and land**

Some land and buildings fail to contribute to the preservation or enhancement of the conservation area. In some cases, these are poorly maintained historic buildings. In other cases, these are modern buildings which have some aspect which fails to respond to its historic context. In the case of historic and modern buildings, the Council will, where necessary, use enforcement or other planning powers (e.g. Section 215 notices) to achieve repair and preservation. Some land in the curtilage of buildings is poorly maintained and

in a prominent location – here, it may be appropriate to use powers to achieve improvement.

**ACTION EL8:** The Council will use enforcement and other powers under Section 215 of the Planning Act to achieve the enhancement of poorly maintained buildings.

### **Project proposals**

#### **9 Street furniture**

The character area presently has little street furniture evident within the street scene. Where it is present, there needs to be a consistency of style to help create a cohesive identity for Eldorado.

PPG 15 Section 5 gives additional transport measure in historic environments. The Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan Policy BE 18 relates.

**ACTION EL9:** The Council will lobby the Highway Authority to provide adequate levels of street furniture (in particular seating and litter bins to accommodate pedestrian needs), and ensure that it preserves and enhances the setting of the Eldorado character area.

## **Annex 1:**

### Cheltenham Central Conservation Area – list of Supplementary Planning Documents

19 character areas make up Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area. Each has a separate character appraisal and management plan. These comprise –

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Status</b>
1). <b>Old Town</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2007
2). <b>Montpellier</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2007
3). <b>Bayshill</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2007
4). <b>Lansdown</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
5). <b>Suffolk Square</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
6). <b>Eldorado</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
7). <b>Dean Close &amp; Hatherley Park</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
8). <b>Tivoli</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
9). <b>The Park</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
10). <b>The Suffolks</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
11). <b>Bath Road</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
12). <b>Leckhampton</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
13). <b>College</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
14). <b>St Luke's</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
15). <b>Sydenham</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
16). <b>Fairview &amp; All Saints'</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
17). <b>Pittville</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
18). <b>Lower High Street</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008
19). <b>St Paul's</b> character area appraisal and management plan	Adopted as a SPD on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2008

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