

CHELTENHAM

# Local development framework

## 13. COLLEGE CHARACTER AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

JULY 2008





## Central Conservation Area

### 13. College Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan July 2008



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### **Key characteristics**

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

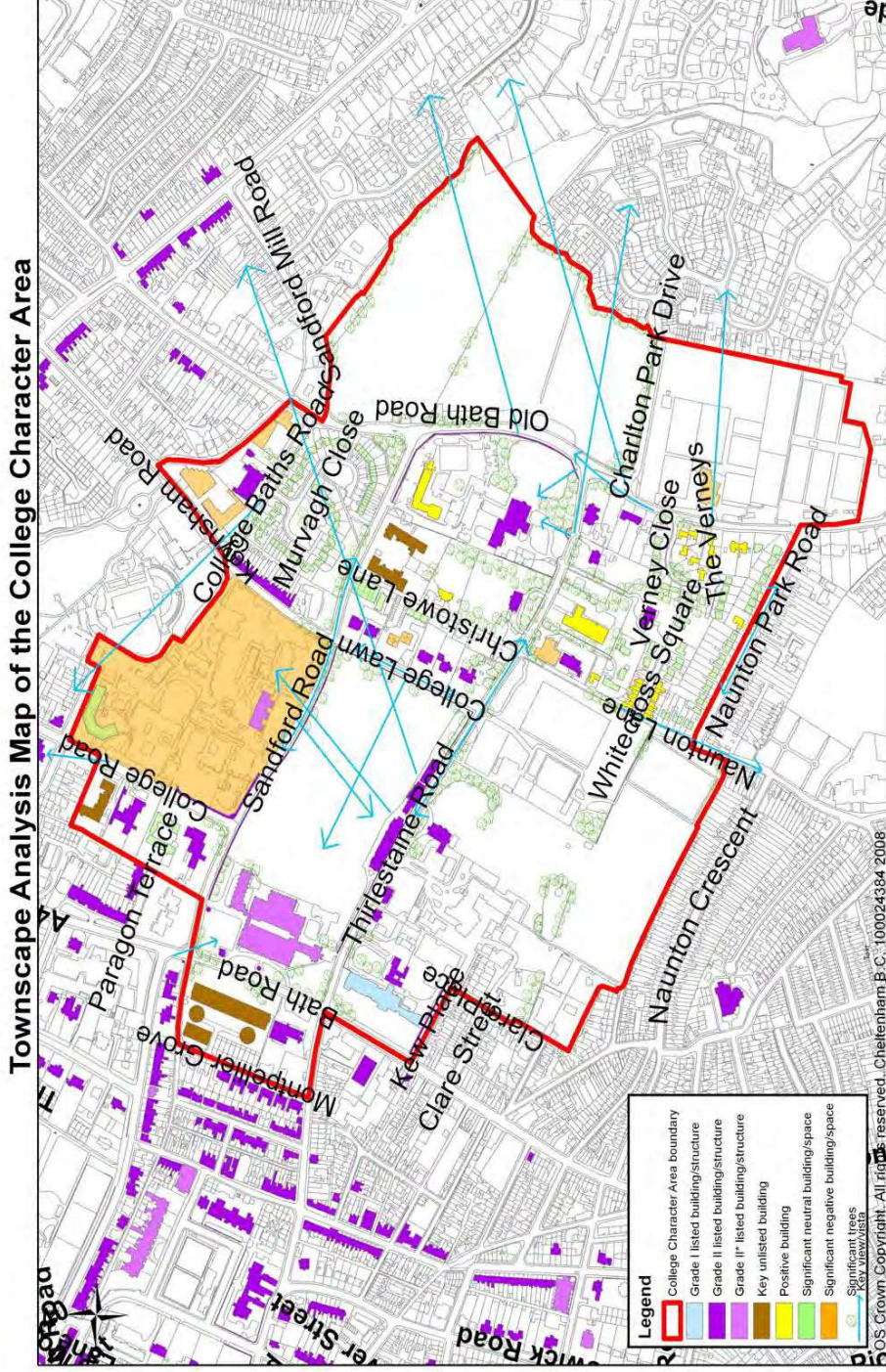
- The character area contains a high number of listed buildings, which enhance the special historic and architectural qualities of the area. Cheltenham College and the Victorian General Hospital building are particularly important in being Grade II\* listed buildings;
- Thirlestaine House is a highly valuable Grade I listed building, which is deemed to be of exceptional international importance. It is one of five Grade I listed buildings within Cheltenham;
- The extensive green space of the Cheltenham College playing fields and Cox's Meadow are important open spaces. They make a significant contribution to the prevailing sense of space within the character area, which is enhanced by its close proximity to more compact, built up areas in nearby parts of Cheltenham's town centre;
- The character area contains important civic buildings through the presence of Cheltenham College, Cheltenham General Hospital and Cheltenham Fire Station. These uses dominate the character area and are an important contrast to the strong residential character of other character areas within the Central Conservation Area.

### **Key issues**

A number of problems and issues have been identified and have a negative impact on the character of College 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 or satellite dishes;
- Poor street furniture;
- Drives and loss of front gardens;
- Busy 'A' roads run through the area;
- On-street parking;
- Tree management;
- Boundary enclosures;
- Setting and views;
- Enhancement of existing buildings and land.

# Part 1 – Character Appraisal



**Figure 1** Townscape Analysis Map of the College Character Area

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## **What is a Conservation Area**

- 1.1 A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is considered 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 planning 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 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 College 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 the 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. These have been appraised separately in-order to identify their individual key components and in turn establish how each area may best be preserved and enhanced.

### **College 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 College character area within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area have been largely based on the space occupied by Cheltenham College, Cheltenham General Hospital and Cheltenham Fire Station. Cox's Meadow and the extensive playing fields of the College form a

substantial part of the character area in the east. The character area contains a mixture of educational buildings, other civic buildings in the form of the hospital and fire station and a variety of ages and styles of residential dwellings.

### Summary of special interest

1.15 College character area is special because:

- a) The character area contains a high number of listed buildings, which enhance the special historic and architectural qualities of the area. Cheltenham College and the Victorian General Hospital building are particularly important in being Grade II\* listed buildings;
- b) Thirlestaine House is a highly valuable Grade I listed building, which is deemed to be of exceptional international importance. It is one of five Grade I listed buildings within Cheltenham;
- c) The extensive green space of the Cheltenham College playing fields and Cox's Meadow are important open spaces. They make a significant contribution to the prevailing sense of space within the character area, which is enhanced by its close proximity to more compact, built up areas in nearby parts of Cheltenham's town centre;
- d) The character area contains important civic buildings through the presence of Cheltenham College, Cheltenham General Hospital and Cheltenham Fire Station. These uses dominate the character area and are an important contrast to the strong residential character of other character areas within the Central Conservation Area.

College Character Area within the Central Conservation Area

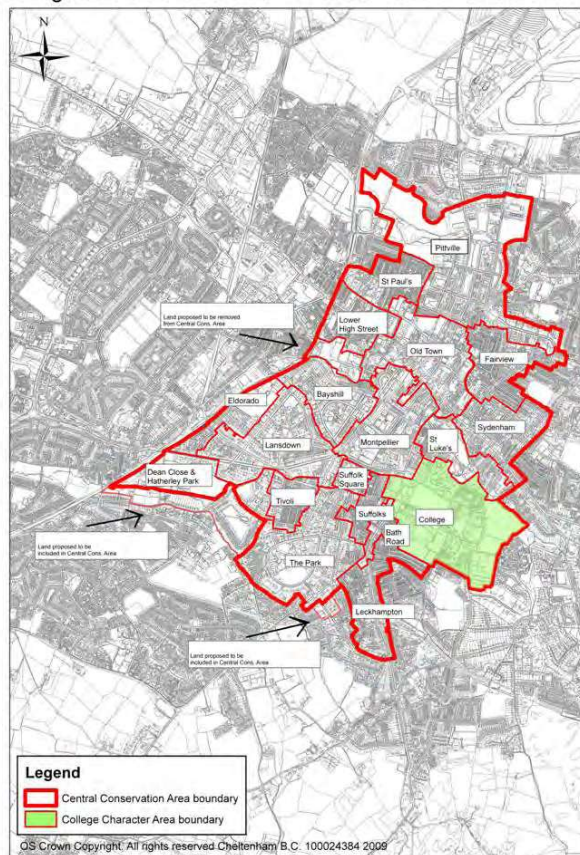


Figure 2 College Character Area within the Central Conservation Area

## 2 LOCATION AND SETTING

### Location and context of Cheltenham

- 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 College Character Area

- 2.2 The College character area is positioned to the south east of Cheltenham's town centre. It has a mixed character, with contained pockets of residential development in amongst the dominating land and buildings of Cheltenham College and Cheltenham General Hospital.
- 2.3 Large 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century villas frequently comprise historic College boarding houses located on College Road and Sandford Road. Two modern housing estates are located in the character area. These are Murvagh Close and The Verneys/Verney Close. Some semi-detached and terraced houses are positioned in the south of the character area, between tennis courts and a playing field of Cheltenham College.



**Figure 3** Newick House boarding house on Sandford Road



**Figure 4** Verney Close residential development



**Figure 5** Semi-detached houses along the north side of Naunton Park Road

- 2.4 There are a number of busy roads which run through the character area. Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road form part of the A40 which runs through the centre of Cheltenham and onto Gloucester in the west and Oxford in the east. The Old Bath Road is joined by Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road. Old Bath Road meets London Road to the north, which takes traffic in and out of Cheltenham to the east. College Road and Bath Road form part of the A46, a busy route which takes traffic out of town in a southerly direction. These 'A' roads mean that the character area experiences heavy through traffic along these routes.



**Figure 6** Traffic levels along Sandford Road



**Figure 7** Traffic and on-street parking along Old Bath Road

- 2.5 The College character area has a generally loose plan form. This is most apparent in the west of the character area where Cheltenham College and the General Hospital are sited. The Cheltenham College buildings and boarding houses are positioned within extensive grounds. The more recent residential developments of Murvagh Close, The Verneys and Verney Close and their access roads have a tighter plan form. The mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses in these developments sit in compact plots and there is generally a high density of building in these estates. Similarly, the 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced houses on Whitecross Square and the Whitecross Square cul-de-sac itself have a compact plan form and the cottages have a vernacular style of architecture. The changing plan form, type, age and style of building throughout the character area creates diversity and variety within street scenes.

### **Wider landscape setting**

- 2.6 The College character area is surrounded on all sides by the urban development of other areas within Cheltenham. This is shown in Figure 1 ('College Character Area within the Central Conservation Area'). The southern and eastern boundary of the College character area is also the boundary of Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area. Part of the southern boundary abuts the boundary of the Leckhampton character area. The northern boundary abuts the boundary of St Luke's character area and the boundary of the Central Conservation Area to the north-east. The western boundary of the College character area abuts the boundaries of Montpellier, Suffolks and Bath Road character areas.
- 2.7 Despite the surrounding development, views of the Cotswold escarpment are apparent from the extensive open spaces and long vistas, and also over roof tops and in gaps between buildings - particularly to the north and east of the area. Such views are enhanced because of the rising level of the land in the south. These distance views create a rural connection between the countryside and urban area. Views of the faraway 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 Thirlestaine Hall and the Victorian Cheltenham General Hospital building.



**Figure 8** View of the Cotswold escarpment over Cox's Meadow with Croquet Club in the foreground



**Figure 9** Cotswold escarpment provides a rural backdrop for the General Hospital

- 2.8 Within the College character area there are a large number of both historic and modern landmark buildings with varying building heights. These include the College boarding houses of Hazelwell and Boyne House, the main Cheltenham College building and Chapel, Thirlestaine House, Thirlestaine Hall and the extensive 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace on Keynsham Road. The buildings have a striking visual impact upon the street scene. Their presence enhances College's historic character and creates a sense of atmosphere and

architectural splendour.



**Figure 10** Landmark buildings within College character area

- 2.9 The linear form of the streets creates long vistas, whilst the presence of large, mature street trees create a strong sense of enclosure and the open spaces provide a spacious atmosphere.

### 3 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 College character area, a small number of finds have been made and recorded under the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record. These discoveries have included a 4<sup>th</sup> century “...bronze coin of the Emperor Constans...found whilst digging a post-hole at the cricket nets of Cheltenham College”.<sup>3</sup> The modern Murvagh Close housing development is positioned on the former “site of Sandford manor in the 16<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>4</sup> There is evidence of a “Medieval ridge and furrow...at Cox’s Meadow,”<sup>5</sup> which is partly within the character area; and a “Turnpike (dating from) 1818 (was sited) at the corner of Bath Road and Thirlestaine Road, where Thirlestaine House was later built”<sup>6</sup>.
- 3.3 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.

<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

<sup>3</sup> Gloucestershire Sites & Monuments Record – Summary Report for Area 22199 no pg. number given

<sup>4</sup> Gloucestershire Sites & Monuments Record – Summary Report for Area 10999 no pg. number given

<sup>5</sup> Gloucestershire Sites & Monuments Record – Summary Report for Area 27780 no pg. number given

<sup>6</sup> Gloucestershire Sites & Monuments Record – Summary Report for Area 6613 no pg. number given

- 3.4 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**

- 3.5 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 public 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 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 the College Character Area**

- 3.6 The historic development of the College Character Area, based on plans from 1820, 1834, 1897, 1923 and 2007 is shown on the Historic Development map (see Fig. 11).
- 3.7 The origin of the College Character Area was as open land with the only buildings being the 16<sup>th</sup> century Sandford Manor and Farm and Sandford Mill. Sandford Mill is located just outside the boundary of the College character area and Central Conservation Area. The Manor was positioned within large grounds and surrounded by open countryside. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this landscape had remained relatively unaltered. Soon however, the land had started to become developed with large buildings and roads running through the character area. The buildings of Cheltenham College started to become established with the construction of Thirlestaine House in 1823, and other substantial buildings. The Cheltenham General Hospital was an important addition made to the area in 1848. Sandford Mill, positioned just outside the boundary of the character area and Central Conservation Area, was an important corn and flour mill, and was one of "five (medieval) mills" within Cheltenham. Further amounts of development had occurred within the area by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This development took the form of more College buildings, an extensive terrace of housing, the East Gloucestershire Cricket Ground (now tennis courts and croquet ground) and College Playground. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, roads in the area improved and connected with other roads in the town. Today the area has become well

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<sup>7</sup> G. Hart A History of Cheltenham (1965) pg. 8

established as a mixed use area. However, whilst Cheltenham College, Cheltenham General Hospital and Cheltenham Fire Station are the most prominent uses, the College buildings and its playing fields dominate the area. Today a small amount of modern residential development is evident in the north and south of the area.

### **Development by 1820**

- 3.8 The 1820 Postmaster map of Cheltenham defines the College character area as being largely undeveloped at this time. "*Sandford Manor (and Farm which dated from at least) the 16<sup>th</sup> century*"<sup>8</sup> is depicted on the map. The Manor House and its accompanying buildings were surrounded by open land, with Sandford Road (then identified as *Sandford to Westall*) running to the south.
- 3.9 Old Bath Road is shown on the map, as *The Old Road to Cirencester and Bath*. Sandford Villas, consisting of three pairs of semi-detached houses, had been erected on the west side of Bath Road. A turnpike toll bar was shown on the junction of Bath Road with Thirlestaine Road.<sup>9</sup> A small amount of development had occurred between Thirlestaine Road and Kew Place. Thirlestaine House on Bath Road is shown as a planned building and some large villas constructed along Thirlestaine Road are all depicted on the map.
- 3.10 Other than the aforementioned development, it is likely that the land covered by the College character area was seen as being too far away from the main development in Cheltenham at this time, which was primarily occurring along the High Street and on the land stretching immediately north and south of the High Street.

### **Development by 1834**

- 3.11 Merrett's map of 1834 depicts the character area beginning to be developed, with development occurring mostly in the south. However, the area had developed little in comparison with the land in the west which was closer to the town centre.
- 3.12 Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road are shown connecting with Old Bath Road in the east, and it was likely this area was used at this time as a through route, between the town centre and Charlton Parish. The planned General Hospital is marked on the map, to the west of Sandford House and Farm, both of which are surrounded by open land with Sandford Fields in the north.
- 3.13 The land to the north remained as open field land with the exception of Sandford House and Farm. Thirlestaine House was constructed in 1823, on the east side of Bath Road. Pakenham states that it was "*...the most substantial private house the town was ever to see...*"<sup>10</sup> George Rowe states that "*Thirlestaine House, the residence of the Right Hon. Lord Northwick, is by far the noblest private mansion of which Cheltenham can boast...*"<sup>11</sup> Some buildings had been built along Thirlestaine Road (then named *Sandford Road*). Lake House, Park House and Clare Villa were built as substantial houses.

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<sup>8</sup> Gloucestershire Sites & Monuments Record – Summary Report for Area 10999 no pg. number given

<sup>9</sup> Turnpike Roads were well maintained roads that levied a toll on travellers in order to remain in good condition. They were popular from around the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the general condition of British roads was poor. Using turnpike roads was therefore a quicker way to travel. – 'The Turnpike Road: 17<sup>th</sup> Century', Highways Agency

<sup>10</sup> S. Pakenham *Cheltenham A biography* (1971) pg. 94

<sup>11</sup> G. Rowe (1845, reprinted 1981) *George Rowe's Illustrated Cheltenham Guide* pg. 78

### **Development by 1897**

- 3.14 Relatively large amounts of development had occurred within the character area by this time. An increased number of large, prominent villas had been constructed within substantial grounds.
- 3.15 East Gloucestershire Cricket Ground occupied a large site on the east side of Old Bath Road. A west “wing (was)...added (to Thirlestaine House) in 1840”.<sup>12</sup> This wing housed a “...fine collection of Holbeins, Titians and Poussins...”<sup>13</sup> which were displayed to the public. The main College building on Bath Road was built in 1843 and by 1897 other buildings belonging to Cheltenham College had been constructed. A “chapel (on its northern side was built in) ...1896”.<sup>14</sup> (Cheltenham College had previously been located in two houses in Bayshill Terrace, Bayshill Road). Another important building of the College was the College Baths, which were positioned on the future College Baths Road and constructed in “1871”.<sup>15</sup>
- 3.16 Sandford Mill (just outside the character area and Central Conservation Area boundary) remained in existence with *The Nurseries* occupying a large plot of land to the north of the Mill. Heath’s Nursery was positioned adjacent to the General Hospital. The Hospital had been built in “1848”.<sup>16</sup>

### **Development by 1923**

- 3.17 The character area remained relatively unchanged during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A small amount of residential development had occurred in the form of the cottage-style terraced houses on Whitecross Square. Further development had occurred in the grounds of Cheltenham College with the construction of a Junior School on the south side of Thirlestaine Road. The General Hospital had also started to expand by this time.

### **Development by 2008**

- 3.18 Cheltenham College and its various buildings for teaching and accommodation, along with its extensive playing fields continue to remain the prominent land use within the area. Pakenham states that “In 1947 the school (brought) Thirlestaine House, with the wings that once housed Lord Northwick’s pictures.”<sup>17</sup> This building is used to provide accommodation for students. The expansion of the buildings of the General Hospital also has a significant impact upon the character area.
- 3.19 A small number of historic houses were demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cotswold House and Zeelugt House were positioned to the west of Naunton Lane in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were demolished to expand the playing field and games courts of Cheltenham College.
- 3.20 Sandford Place, the villas opposite Cheltenham College on Bath Road, were demolished and replaced by Chelham House. In turn Chelham House and other buildings on this site were demolished as part of the planning

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<sup>12</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 160-161

<sup>13</sup> S. Pakenham *Cheltenham A biography* (1971) pg. 112

<sup>14</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 164-165

<sup>15</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 274

<sup>16</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 902

<sup>17</sup> S. Pakenham *Cheltenham A biography* (1971) pg. 167

permission granted in 1999 for the construction of Century Court. This is an award winning and calming contemporary development of flats and town houses set with spacious front gardens on Bath Road. It respects the building line on the Bath Road and also sits well in the more dense urban form of Montpellier Grove.

- 3.21 Large amounts of development have occurred on previously open land. Semi-detached houses on the north side of Naunton Park Road were developed in the 1950s and 1960s. New housing estates were also constructed in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Verneys and Verney Close were built on the site of St Ronans in the 1960s. Murvagh Close cul-de-sac was developed in the 1970s, on the site of the former Cheltenham College running track and originally the site of Sandford House and Farm.
- 3.22 The former cricket ground on land east of Old Bath Road is now used as tennis courts and croquet grounds. The College Baths have been taken over by the NHS.
- 3.23 Despite modern development, the grand historic buildings together with their uses remain dominant within the character area. This has ensured that the area has retained its special historic qualities and unique character.

# Historical Development of the College Character Area

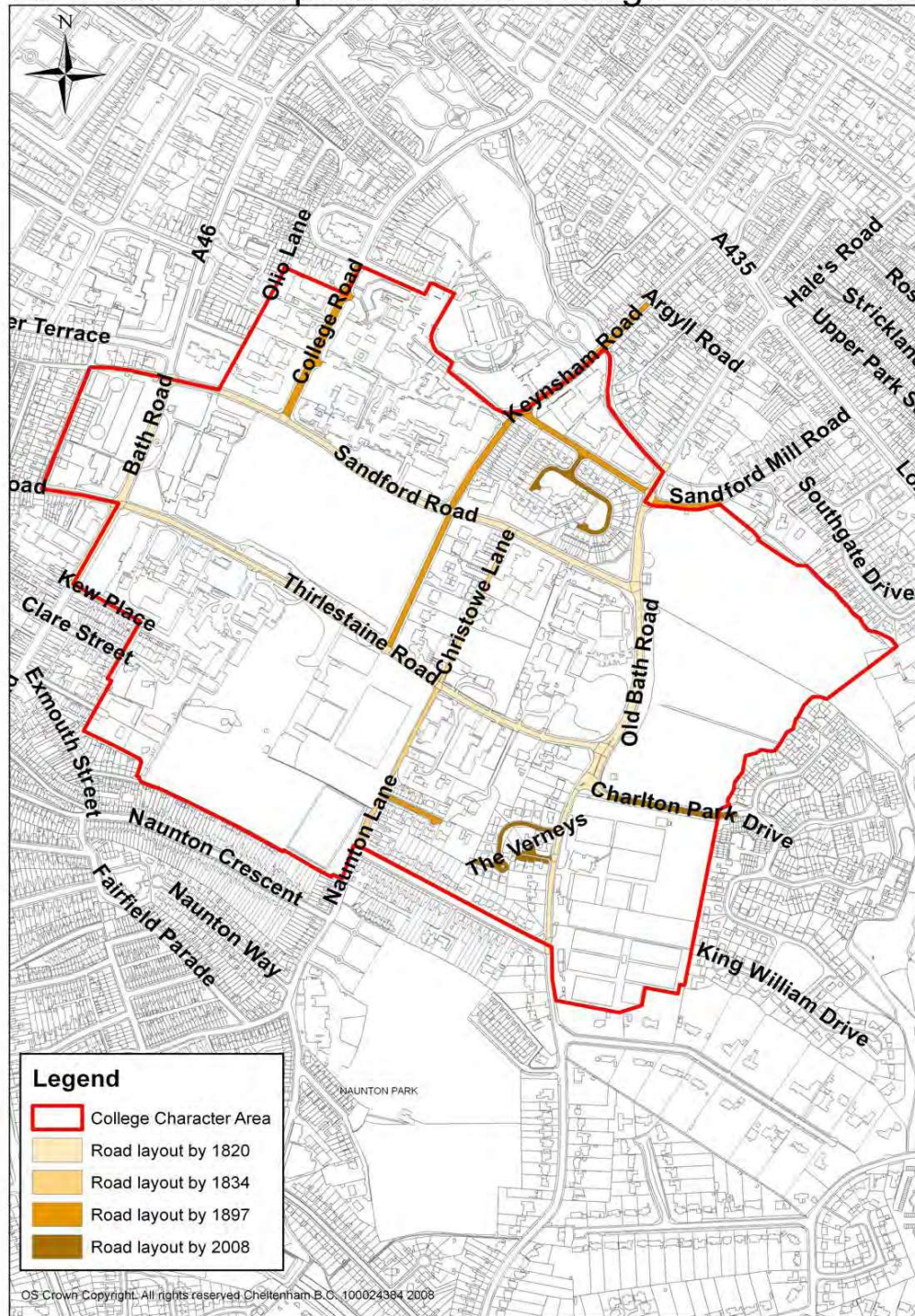


Figure 11 Historical Development of the College Character Area

## 4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

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

#### Public and private space



**Figure 12** Sense of space prevalent within character area



**Figure 13** Compact space within Whitecross Square



**Figure 14** Narrow plan form of Naunton Lane



**Figure 15** Buildings with contained frontages along Old Bath Road

4.1 Public and private spaces, together with views out of, into and within the College character area make a significant contribution to the area's character and appearance. There is a strong sense of space evident within the College character area, much of this being attributed to the large College playing fields and grounds, the presence of Cox's Meadow and a number of historic buildings set in spacious plots. This sense of space provides the character area with a spacious atmosphere and presents a grand setting for its buildings. In contrast to the overall space and openness apparent, the 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces in Whitecross Square are set in contained space. The modern residential developments of Murvagh Close, The Verneys and Verney Close also have a relatively tight plan form compared with that of the historic buildings.

4.2 Within the character area the imposing detached villas are frequently located along the routes of historic roads. These villas are set back from the road and are within large grounds. In comparison, the roads with a tighter urban grain including Naunton Lane, Murvagh Close and Whitecross Square have smaller residential dwellings and have a modest character.

4.3 Historically, the buildings address the street in a uniform pattern within different spaces of the character area. For example, the historic terrace on Keynsham Road fronts directly onto the pavement, so that the buildings create an enclosed space along this road. Many of the other historic and more modern buildings are set back from the pavement with enclosed front gardens. Such examples are the villas on College Lawn and College Road, the semi-detached and detached houses on

Naunton Park Road and the houses along College Baths Road. Buildings throughout the character area tend to follow a similar building line within their locality, which creates cohesion within the street scene.



**Figure 16** Playing fields provide a spacious setting the College buildings

4.4

The private space of Cheltenham College has a particularly significant impact upon the character and appearance of the character area. The buildings and playing fields occupy a substantial area of land in the character area which creates a strong sense of space. Both the historic and more modern College buildings are set within large, spacious grounds which give them a striking setting and permits distance views to and from them. The magnificent architectural quality of the Cheltenham College and Thirlestaine House buildings can be appreciated from some distance away.



**Figure 17** Attractive green space in front of Thirlestaine House on Bath Road

4.5

A small number of service lanes, including Naunton Lane and Christowe Lane are found at the rear of properties in the character area. Christowe Lane contains a small number of out-buildings and garages.

### Garden space



**Figure 18** Attractive gardens of Thirlestaine Hall on Thirlestaine Road

4.6

Gardens, historically and today, form an attractive, traditional frontage to both historic and more modern buildings. They provide a colourful, interesting setting and enhance the special qualities of properties and the street scene. Trees and shrubbery in gardens help screen properties from public view, creating privacy. There are front gardens along College Baths Road, College Road, College Lawn, Old Bath Road and Naunton Park Road. It is the wide plan form of the roads and the positioning of buildings along the road, which allows the presence of the front gardens.

## Boundary treatments

- 4.7 The majority of buildings employ boundary enclosures to act as a physical, distinct separation between the public and private realm. Boundary enclosures take a variety of forms including iron railings, low enclosing brick walls, fencing and hedging. The railings and historic brick walls enhance the historic interest of the College character area. The Grade II listed railings which enclose the main Cheltenham College playing field between Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road are historic and are a distinctive feature in the area. They permit views through them to surrounding buildings.



Figure 19 Gate piers and railings used as boundary treatments

- 4.8



Figure 20 Hedgerow used as boundary treatment along Naunton Park Road

Hedgerow acts as an attractive, natural boundary treatment, which softens edges between public and private space. Hedging also complements front gardens by enhancing the green environment.

- 4.9



Figure 21 Poor fencing evident on College Road

Both historic and modern brick walls are employed as a boundary treatment in some areas. A significant amount of high wooden fencing is present on Sandford Road for example, which acts as a poor, unattractive boundary treatment.

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

- 4.10 Views of the main Cheltenham College building and Thirlestaine House are prevalent from a number of vantage points both within and outside the character area, due to the dominating size and scale of these buildings. Views from Bath Road, however, are partially screened by mature tree growth. Distance views of the College buildings are particularly appreciated from College Lawn and Sandford Road across the playing field. The historic Gymnasium is a striking building within the grounds. The views from College

Lawn also feature Eagle Tower (in the Montpellier character area) which rises beyond the College Chapel.



**Figure 22** View of Thirlestaine House from Bath Road



**Figure 23** View of College buildings and landmark Eagle Tower across playing fields from College Lawn

4.11



**Figure 24** View of General Hospital building and Cotswold escarpment across playing field, from Thirlestaine Road

A particularly attractive view is looking from Thirlestaine Road across the College playing field, to the historic landmark Cheltenham General Hospital building. The hospital's entrance "*portico (with) giant fluted Ionic columns (and) full height supporting pediment*"<sup>18</sup> are striking architectural features. Although trees along the northern boundary of the playing field partially screen the hospital building. The view continues to an extensive panoramic view of the Cotswold escarpment, which wraps around the northern and eastern sides of the character area.

4.12 The extensive open space of Cox's Meadow and the College playing field to the south enables extensive distance views of the Cotswold escarpment to be seen from Old Bath Road. These views convey a sense of enclosure around the urban area.

4.13



**Figure 25** View of St Luke's Church from College Road

Views of the spire of St Luke's Church (in St Luke's character area) are presented in open spaces and gaps between buildings. The spire is presented from College Baths Road and College Road. It is a visually attractive and interesting feature within the street scene in these localities.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 902

## 5 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

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

- 5.1 The College character area has several different uses due to its close proximity to Cheltenham town centre. Mixed uses create activity throughout the day and contribute to the special interest of the area.

### Residential

- 5.2 There are pockets within the character area which contain residential dwellings, ranging from large historic properties to artisan style terraced houses to modern housing developments.
- 5.3 The 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced houses and detached houses along Keynsham Road, College Lawn and Whitecross Square enhance the historic value and interest of the area. The modest artisan style houses on Whitecross Square provide a valuable contrast to the grand architectural designs of some of the larger historic villas within the character area.



**Figure 26** 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced houses along Keynsham Road



**Figure 27** 19<sup>th</sup> century modest artisan houses on Whitecross Square

- 5.4 The 1960s houses on Naunton Park Road have similar characteristics which creates cohesion and unity within the street scene.
- 5.5 The modern residential developments of Murvagh Close, Verney Close and The Verneys are situated within contained land in the character area.

5.6



**Figure 28** Century Court residential development

The Century Court development comprises town houses and flats. It is located on Bath Road opposite Cheltenham College.

### Educational

5.7

Cheltenham College and its extensive number of teaching blocks, boarding houses, playing fields and games courts has a major impact upon the area in terms of its overall use, the type of buildings present and the overall



Figure 29 Cheltenham College

character and appearance of the area. The College buildings generate noise and activity levels throughout the day.

### Business

5.8



Figure 30 Chelsea Building Society, Thirlestaine Hall, Thirlestaine Road

A small number of businesses are located in the character area. An example is the administrative headquarters of Chelsea Building Society, sited in the historic Thirlestaine Hall on Thirlestaine Road. This building was originally a large house.

### Cheltenham General Hospital

5.9

The General Hospital has a significant impact on the character and appearance of the area. It generates high levels of pedestrian and particularly vehicular traffic at all times. The extensive car parking area at the front of the main hospital buildings has a negative impact on the setting of the hospital buildings and the overall character and appearance of the area. The hospital also generates significant parking problems on nearby streets.

5.10

The original Victorian hospital is now surrounded by uncoordinated modern additional blocks and units, some of which are of a poor quality.



Figure 31 Uncoordinated modern blocks on the Hospital site

### Cheltenham Fire Station

5.11



Figure 32 Cheltenham Fire Station

The Fire Station occupies a large piece of land to the north of the character area. Although much of the Cheltenham fire service has now been relocated in Gloucester, this still remains an important Fire Station which generates noise and activity levels. However, it is likely the fire service will totally relocate

soon and the land will become available for redevelopment.

### Road use

- 5.12 A number of main vehicular routes run through the College character area. All these routes experience significant levels of traffic throughout the day and into the evening. They can, at times, be difficult for pedestrians to cross.
- 5.13 Sandford Road, Thirlestaine Road, Sandford Mill Road and Old Bath Road form part of the A40 and are highly utilised routes which connect to the east and west of Cheltenham.



**Figure 33** Thirlestaine Road and Sandford Road are heavily trafficked routes through the character area

- 5.14 Bath Road forms part of the A46 which joins Shurdington Road in the south of the town, which takes traffic into and out of the town centre. This road in turn takes traffic out of and into the town centre. College Road also forms part of the A46. These roads experience high volumes of traffic and on-street parking which is exacerbated due to their proximity to the town centre.
- 5.15 The Cheltenham Urban Design Framework Transport Strategy aims to alleviate the high levels of traffic and congestion in Cheltenham’s town centre by redirecting traffic along other routes around the town centre. This work is being carried out as part of the Cheltenham Civic Pride project (see [www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk) for more details). The Cheltenham Urban Design Framework Transport Strategy (Traffic Impact Assessment) suggests that the implementation of the Strategy would cause “...a relatively significant increase in traffic on the northern section of College Road.”<sup>19</sup> Thirlestaine Road would also see a small increase in traffic levels during the peak morning period. The Traffic Impact Assessment also suggests an increase in traffic levels on College Road, Sandford Road and Thirlestaine Road during the peak evening period. The increases in traffic levels along these roads would be caused by the reassignment of traffic around the town centre.

### Recreation

- 5.16



**Figure 34** Recreational space of Cox’s Meadow

Cox’s Meadow provides a substantial area of recreational space in the east of the character area. The park and meadow enable distance views of the Cotswolds to the north and east and the presence of the park enhances the setting and appearance of the character area. Although Cox’s Meadow remains a recreational space, its form and function has changed over recent years with

<sup>19</sup> Cheltenham Urban Design Framework, Transport Strategy – Traffic Impact Assessment (March 2007) pg. 12

significant flood alleviation works taking place here.

### Other uses

5.17



**Figure 35** Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints is located in Thirlestaine Road.

5.18 All these uses bring varying levels of activity throughout the day which greatly add to the character and vitality of the College character area.

### Architecture and historic qualities of buildings

5.19 Buildings within the College character area comprise of a variety of ages, sizes and architectural styles of buildings. The historic buildings predominantly date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, although some earlier buildings which were started in the 1820s include the terrace on Keynsham Road and villas on Old Bath Road and Thirlestaine Road. According to the List Description, 'Southwood' on Thirlestaine Road was "built before 1820."<sup>20</sup> The grand size and scale of these historic buildings, many of which are statutory listed, dominate within the street scene. Modern developments are often located in contained pockets in the character area, and do not tend to detract from the special qualities of the older buildings. Some modern development, most notably Century Court, makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

### Historic terraces and villas

5.20 The extensive Grade II listed terrace on Keynsham Road is valuable in that it contrasts to the dominant form of the large detached villas located throughout the area. It dominates the east side of the street, rising two storeys to the south and three storeys to the north. The terraced houses are built of stucco over masonry and have a slate roof. Architectural features include a crowning band, frieze and cornice. Number 64 has a particularly attractive and ornate continuous first floor balcony. The List description describes this terrace as "A good surviving example of an artisan terrace".<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 36** Detailing on listed terrace in Keynsham Road



**Figure 37** Balcony on No. 64 Keynsham Road

<sup>20</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 996

<sup>21</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport 'Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 431

5.21



**Figure 38** Modest character of the terraced houses on Whitecross Square

In comparison, the terraced houses on Whitecross Square are of a small size and scale and have a modest character. They are almost vernacular in their style. The houses are constructed from red brick faced with stucco and have very low pitch slate roofs. Some of them contain a continuous cornice, parapets and brick chimney stacks. They have retained their front gardens which enhance the setting of the houses and are an attractive feature within the cul-de-sac.

5.22 Large, detached villas are situated throughout the character area. Many of these are Grade II listed. Although some of them are in residential use, a large number are either used by the General Hospital or as private offices and boarding houses for Cheltenham College. They generally dominate the street scene due to their grand size and scale. Many of the buildings date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar scales, detailing, materials and use of Christowe and Newick House on Sandford Road creates cohesion and unity within this locality.



**Figure 39** Historic villas within the character area

### **Architectural styles**

5.23 A variety of architectural styles can be employed in the design of buildings, and any particular style will reflect the influences and fashions at time of construction. The buildings belonging to Cheltenham College contain a variety of differing architectural styles. These include the Neo-Classical style employed on Thirlestaine House; the 'Oxford Collegiate style' of the main Cheltenham College building on Bath Road; the Tudor-Gothic style of the lodge to the north west of Cheltenham College; the High Victorian style of the former College swimming baths on College Baths Road and the symmetrical Gothic style of architecture of the gymnasium.

5.24 The Gothic Revival style is used on buildings including Hazelwell which is a purpose built College boarding house, and Dewerstone House which is a private residence. The main 19<sup>th</sup> century General Hospital building is a classical revival style and Thirlestaine Court and Thirlestaine Hall have employed the Italianate classical style of architecture.

### **Thirlestaine House**

5.25 Thirlestaine House is one of five Grade I listed buildings within Cheltenham. The List Description states that it originated as a house and gallery and was

“built in 1823...by JR Scott...”<sup>22</sup> The List Description reads – “Thirlestaine House represents the apogee of the Cheltenham villa and is the only surviving example of the grand villa within the town which compares well to the most outstanding examples of this type throughout the country.”<sup>23</sup> The wing to the left was added in 1840 by Lord Northwick. It was used as a picture gallery to store his famous collection of paintings. The main building has a Neo-Classical style and is constructed from ashlar over brick with a slate roof. Architectural features include “...crowning frieze, architrave and cornice (and a)...central giant portico with 4 fluted Ionic columns and pediment”.<sup>24</sup> The building, together with its spacious grounds, is a striking feature within the street scene and greatly enhances the historic character and appearance of the College character area.



Figure 40 Detailing on Grade I listed Thirlestaine House

### 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings

5.26 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings have taken the form of some infill development along roads, planned residential housing developments and some modern hospital and college buildings. These buildings have various impacts on the character and appearance of the character area. However, the modern buildings are situated in contained space which generally prevents them from detracting from the historic buildings. The Century Court development, constructed at the end of the 20th century is a well designed building within the street scene on Bath Road. Its architectural design and landscaping enhances the character and appearance of the area, whilst not detracting from the nearby Cheltenham College and Thirlestaine House.



Figure 41 Century Court residential development on Bath Road

### Listed buildings

5.27 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 over 43 listed buildings and structures within

<sup>22</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 160-1

<sup>23</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 161

<sup>24</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport ‘Revised List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest’ Borough of Cheltenham 1998, pg. 160-1

the College character area. Some of these buildings are listed as part of a group.

<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>DATE OF LISTING</b>
Thirlestaine House, No. 138 Bath Road	I	12/03/55
Cheltenham College, Bath Road	II*	12/03/55
General Hospital (central block) & attached railings, Sandford Road	II*	05/05/72
Lodge to north-west of Cheltenham College, Bath Road	II	14/12/83
South African War Memorial at entrance to Cheltenham College, Bath Road	II	14/12/83
Former Cheltenham College Swimming Baths, College Baths Road	II	11/01/90
Poolkeeper's Lodge, College Baths Road	II	26/11/98
No. 1 College Lawn	II	14/12/83
No. 2 College Lawn	II	14/12/83
No. 5 Queen's House, College Lawn	II	14/12/83
No. 6 College Lawn & attached balustrade	II	14/12/83
Hazelwell Boarding House, College Road	II	26/11/98
Boyne House, No. 41 College Road	II	14/12/83
Boundary walls & piers to Lindley, fronting College Road & Sandford Road	II	20/10/81
Boundary wall to Thirlestaine House & attached garden lodge to east end	II	14/12/83
Nos. 62-90 (Even) Keynsham Road	II	26/11/98
Nos. 101 & 103 (West side) Old Bath Road	II	26/11/98
Boundary walls with corner piers & gates to Thirlestaine Hall	II	26/11/98
Chandos Lodge with attached walls, railings, piers & gates, Thirlestaine Road	II	05/05/72
Cheltenham College Gymnasium, Pavilion, Five Courts & attached railings, Thirlestaine Road	II	14/12/83
Railings to Cheltenham	II	14/12/83

College grounds		
College House & attached railings, Thirlestaine Road	II	12/03/55
Dewerstone House, Thirlestaine Road	II	14/12/83
Gate piers to Dewerstone House, Thirlestaine Road	II	26/11/98
Eslington House & attached railings, Thirlestaine Road	II	04/12/81
Gate piers to Eslington House, Thirlestaine Road	II	26/11/98
Linton House, Thirlestaine Road	II	05/05/72
Park House & attached railings, Thirlestaine Road	II	05/05/72
Ravensworth & attached railings (including Darnley)	II	14/12/83
Southwood, Thirlestaine Road	II	12/03/55
Thirlestaine Cottages, Nos. 1-7 Thirlestaine Road	II	12/03/55
Thirlestaine Court, Thirlestaine Road	II	08/01/82
Thirlestaine Hall (excluding 1940s wing to north-east), Thirlestaine Road	II	05/05/72

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

- 5.28 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

- 5.29 A number of buildings are not statutory listed and are therefore less important. However they do 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 Conservation Area. All key unlisted buildings in the table below are on the Index of Buildings of Local Importance. Please see the Index for further details about these buildings. Key unlisted buildings include:

Leconfield, College Road ( <i>See Index of Buildings of Local Importance</i> )	Christowe House, Sandford Road ( <i>See Index of Buildings of Local Importance</i> )
Newick House, Sandford Road ( <i>See Index of Buildings of Local Importance</i> )	Century Court, Bath Road because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development is an award winning exemplar design.</li> <li>• The size and scale of the residential development is</li> </ul>





	<p>prominent within the street scene yet the building doesn't detract from Cheltenham College, located opposite;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The age, modern architecture and use of materials provides an interesting contrast to the historic architecture within this locality;</li> <li>• The setting of the development is attractive, being set back from the pavement in landscaped grounds.</li> </ul>
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**Positive buildings**

5.30 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**

5.31 Local details within the College character area collectively enhance the character and appearance of not just College but the whole of the Central Conservation Area. Interesting historic details include –

<p>Early 20<sup>th</sup> century railings in Sandford Road and Naunton Lane</p>	<p>South African war memorial at entrance to Cheltenham College</p>
<p>Early 20<sup>th</sup> century lamp posts in Naunton Park Road and Olio Lane</p>  <p><b>Figure 42</b> Early 20<sup>th</sup> century lamp post in Naunton Park Road</p>	<p>Historic boundary walls and gate piers – particularly valuable to demolished Lindley, on the junction of Sandford Road &amp; College Road</p>  <p><b>Figure 43</b> Historic boundary walls and gate piers to the demolished villa, Lindley</p>
<p>Late 19<sup>th</sup> century pillar boxes in College Road and College Lawn</p>  <p><b>Figure 44</b> Late 19<sup>th</sup> century pillar box on College Lawn</p>	<p>Historic street nameplates e.g. College Lawn and Sandford Road</p>  <p><b>Figure 45</b> Example of historic street nameplate</p>
<p>Iron balcony on No. 64 Keynsham Road</p>	

## **Materials**

### **Building material**

- 5.32 The use of building materials reflects the availability of materials at the time of construction of historic buildings. Cheltenham expanded rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the readily available Lias clay and local sand allowed enough bricks to be produced to build most of the original spa town. The majority of these houses were built of locally-fired bricks, and were faced with either stucco or ashlar dressed Cotswold limestone. The painting of stucco in a uniform colour gave the town cohesion. Stone was also used to front the buildings. Much of the stone used in Cheltenham would have been quarried at Leckhampton Hill or Birdlip. Unfortunately neither of the quarries continues to produce stone. Red bricks are also commonly used in the construction of boundary walls and in Georgian and Victorian properties, which are frequently faced in stucco. Within the College character area, bricks are also used in modern developments such as Verney Close and Murvagh Close.

### **Ground surface material**

- 5.33 There is a range of surface materials used throughout the area – few are original or have any historic value. Roads are tarmac, with concrete kerbs. Paving is predominantly concrete slabs or flags and tarmac although some blocks have been used on pavements and private spaces and enhance the character and visual appearance of the area. Forest of Dean sandstone plinths containing railings around the grounds of Cheltenham College are an attractive and significant streetscape feature. Both the plinths and railings are Grade II listed.

### **Street furniture**

- 5.34 There is little furniture but there are many traffic signs in parts of the College character area, which is typical of a built-up urban area within close proximity of the town centre. This signage is largely evident on main roads within the area such as Sandford Road, Thirlestaine Road, Old Bath Road and Sandford Mill Road (all A40) and College Road and Bath Road (both A46). They can be large and intrusive and occasionally are redundant or duplicate each other. The Council is currently reviewing directional signage throughout the town centre.

### **Contribution of trees and green spaces**

- 5.35 The College character area has significant amounts of private green space and one substantial area of public green space, which is Cox's Meadow – between them they make up about a third of the character area. The occurrence of public and privately owned trees and green spaces in the area greatly enhances its setting, character and appearance. Such spaces need to be well maintained and protected.

### **Impact of street trees**

- 5.36 There is a strong presence of mature tree-lined streets throughout the character area, particularly evident along Sandford Road, Thirlestaine Road, College Baths Road and Charlton Drive. Species include beech, lime, and some Lombardy poplar trees. The size of these trees helps establish grandeur and character within the area. The varying species and their colours also create interest and foster bio-diversity. The impact of trees upon the

street scene is particularly apparent from the ends of College Baths Road, Sandford Road, Thirlestaine Road and Naunton Park Road where extensive long distance views are prevalent. Along with enhancing character and appearance, trees perform another important function in screening properties from public space, acting as a 'soft' boundary treatment and establishing enclosure and privacy.



**Figure 46** Tree lined streets throughout character area

5.37



**Figure 47** Hedgerow acts as an attractive boundary treatment

Other forms of greenery such as hedges and grass verges are present and are attractive features and boundary treatments within the College character area. Hedging is used as a natural boundary treatment to soften edges and enhance the setting of buildings.

### Private green space

5.38 There is a significant amount of private green space evident within the majority of roads in the character area. Modern residential developments such as The Verneys, Murvagh Close and Century Court complement the historic plan form by being positioned within large grounds set back from public space. Neatly planted gardens enhance the setting of properties. Trees within the central space of Murvagh Close comprise of Pride of India trees. The extensive landscaped grounds of Thirlestaine Hall provide the building with an attractive setting.



**Figure 48** Trees within central space of Murvagh Close residential development



**Figure 49** Extensive landscaped gardens of Thirlestaine Hall

- 5.39 Today, many front gardens have been at-least partially converted to hard-standing for cars. This is evident within most of the roads in the character area. The older houses on Whitecross Square which have fully retained their frontages are a valuable exception to this. It is therefore important that front gardens are preserved where possible as their presence greatly enhances the character and appearance of not just the individual buildings, but the area generally.

#### **Grounds of Cheltenham College**

5.40



**Figure 50** Trees within grounds of Cheltenham College

Within the grounds of Cheltenham College there are several mature trees, which include Cyprus trees, cedar, beech, yew and Lombardy poplar trees. These statement trees enhance the setting of the historic College buildings and the overall character and appearance of the character area.

- 5.41 The extensive playing fields within the grounds of the College make a significant contribution to enhancing the visual appearance of the area and contributing to its special qualities.

5.42



**Figure 51** Grounds of Cheltenham College from Bath Road

The lawns and trees at the front of the College buildings along Bath Road are a particularly pleasant feature within this section of Bath Road. The greenery provides an attractive setting and frames the College buildings well.

#### **Cox's Meadow and Reeves Field**

- 5.43 This extensive piece of public land is divided between public open space to the north and a large playing field to the south. The River Chelt. runs along the northern side of Cox's Meadow. Cox's Meadow is an important area of recreational land, which is surrounded by residential development. Cheltenham College playing field and East Gloucestershire Tennis, Squash and Hockey Club and Cheltenham Croquet Club are positioned to the south of the playing field.
- 5.44 In around 2004 and 2005, the land of Cox's Meadow underwent extensive remodelling and flood alleviation works. These works have provided an important function for the meadow.
- 5.45 Varieties of tree species line the boundaries of Reeves Field and partially screen it from Old Bath Road, which creates privacy and exclusion. Species include maple, beech and holm beams. Along the west side, species comprise of lombardy 'style' poplar trees interspersed with holm oaks, with

creates a visual contrast and adds variety within the street scene. Cox's Meadow acts as a focal point for the surrounding area, where the local community may gather and activity is generated.



Figure 52 Trees and green space of Reeves Field

### Negative factors

5.46 Due to high levels of development of the College 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 –

- **Loss of traditional architectural features**, particularly alterations to windows, has occurred within some of the historic buildings;
- 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 public space which harms the character and appearance of not just the individual buildings, but the area generally;
- **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 College 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;
- **High traffic volumes** create pressure on road systems and pedestrian spaces. This is a particular problem along the main roads within the character area which form part of the A46 and A40. These roads are frequently difficult for pedestrians to cross;
- Some **residential and commercial development** dating from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is visually unattractive and does not sit well within the historic context of the area. Such buildings include Annexe House and Hammond Court. The architectural style, size, scale, footprint and

construction materials of these buildings contribute to them being visually unattractive. Their impact is particularly negative where they are within close proximity to historic buildings.

- Some **boundary treatments**, in particular some timber fencing acts as a poor boundary treatment. Its appearance has a negative impact on the street scene of buildings. In some locations timber fencing has been used as a front boundary. The use of a fence in such a location is inappropriate and has led to a visual deterioration of the road frontages. Poor railings are also present along part of the west boundary to Cox's Meadow and the College playing field where they are a negative feature enclosing the park;
- Some **historic railings have been removed** from a Forest of Dean sandstone plinth on the west side of College Road and replaced with unattractive wooden fencing;
- Some **historic gate piers have been damaged** outside Christowe House and Newick House on Sandford Road;
- A small number of **poorly maintained grounds of buildings** are evident and this can have a negative impact upon the street scene and provide a poor setting for properties by restricting views of them;
- Large amounts of modern **street signage** are evident on the main roads within the area, particularly at busy junctions. Although signage is clearly needed due to the high volume of traffic passing along these roads, their functional design and frequent high density does not complement the setting of historic buildings often within close proximity;
- A number of **utilitarian street lamps** are present along roads which do little enhance the appearance of street scenes;
- The **modern buildings on the General Hospital and Fire Station sites** are functional in design and detract from the historic character and appearance of the area. It is acknowledged, however, that the design of these buildings needs to be functional due to their uses.

### **Neutral areas**

5.47 Some areas within the College 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.

- The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints on Thirlestaine Road dates from the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is relatively plain in design with a steeply pitched tiled roof. It does not sit well within the historic context of the area. The church is however, set within landscaped grounds, away from the pavement which lessens its impact;

- The cul-de-sac of Murvagh Close occupies a substantial area of land, on the site of Cheltenham College's former running track. The houses do little to enhance the character and appearance of the area. They are however, set in contained space and the development is partially screened from public space by brick walls and tree and hedge planting.

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

- 5.48 Much of the building stock in the College character area is in good condition. It is very important that the physical condition of the historic buildings is preserved in-order to retain not just the College's, but Cheltenham's fine distinctiveness and identity.

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

- 5.49 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.
- 5.50 There is generally little capacity for new development on open land due to a very limited amount of suitable vacant land;
- 5.51 There is likely to be pressure for the intensification of the Cheltenham College and General Hospital sites and the redevelopment of the Fire Station;
- 5.52 The retention of Cheltenham College's playing fields and Cox's Meadow as open space used for sport or recreation is very important;
- 5.53 The replacement of some inappropriate modern buildings with a well-designed development which is in keeping with, and enhances the character of the area 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 the College 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 College 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 5.46 'Negative factors' and 5.47 '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 areas."*

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 College 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;
- d. and 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 CG1:** 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 the College 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.

Cheltenham Borough Local Plan policy CP 3 relates.

**ACTION CG2:** In order to preserve and enhance the character and setting of the College 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 College 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 judgment then needs to be made between this and the optimization of energy generation.

The Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan Policy CP 3 relates.

**ACTION CG3:** In order to preserve and enhance the character of the 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 are installed 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 CG4:** 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 Sandford Road, Thirlestaine Road, College Baths Road and Charlton Drive. 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 CG5:** 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 trees 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 appropriate and traditionally designed 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 Policies BE 5 and CP3.

**ACTION CG6:** 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 College character 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 College character area is very important. Any proposals for development will be required to demonstrate how the setting and long distance views, into, from and within 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 CG7:** The Council will ensure that all development respects the important views within, into and from the College 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 CG8:** 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 has a large amount of street furniture (in particular traffic signage). There needs to be a consistency of style to help create a cohesive identity for the area. The presence of excessive or redundant street signage causes street clutter and is visually unattractive. The potential for additional signage throughout the College character area is a cause for concern in respect of its impact on the character of the character area and overall conservation area.

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

**ACTION CG9:** The Council will lobby the Highway Authority to minimise signage, markings and other street furniture in its traffic management projects. Where it is safe to do so it will liaise with the Highway Authority to remove redundant signage and street furniture and ensure that any new signage and traffic management schemes preserve and enhance the setting of the College character area.

### **10 Development in the grounds of the General Hospital**

The Council is concerned about the inconsistency in the design of the modern buildings in the grounds of the General Hospital. Whilst it is appreciated that the hospital buildings frequently have a need for specialist functions, the overall architectural design and use of many varied materials of many of the buildings within the hospital complex do not enhance the character and appearance of the character area and overall Conservation Area. Many of the buildings on the site are of a poor quality.

**ACTION CG10:** The Council will work with the hospital authorities to embark on a masterplan exercise with an approved palette of materials for the hospital site, to enable future buildings to relate well to each other and generally improve the architectural quality of this important site.

## **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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