

Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Annexe 2 of Chippenham
Neighbourhood Plan

Submission Version
June 2023



CHIPPENHAM
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN

Chippenham Town Council



Front and back cover: St. Paul Street, Chippenham

Market Place, Chippenham c1905
Looking towards St Andrew's Church from the High St.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal provides a comprehensive explanation, description and analysis of Chippenham Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1973 and is a large, complex area, with the historic town centre at its heart. This Appraisal is an updated version of the Chippenham Conservation Area Appraisal produced in 2007 by the former North Wiltshire District Council.

This Appraisal is an Appendix to Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC4 (Development in Chippenham Conservation Area) and should be read in conjunction with this Policy. It should also be read in conjunction with the Chippenham Conservation Area Management Plan SPG (2010) produced by Wiltshire Council, which sets out development guidelines and enhancement proposals for the Conservation Area.

This Appraisal has been prepared by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Town Centre Topic Group and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, with acknowledgement in particular to Jack Konynenburg, for his work on updating this document.

HOW TO USE THIS APPRAISAL

Part 1 provides a general introduction to the Conservation Area, and Conservation Areas and Character Appraisals in general. This includes details of statute and policies affecting Chippenham Conservation Area and an explanation of Conservation Area designation. This section is intended to particularly inform residents, prospective purchasers and developers of the relevant planning and conservation policies, the background from which this is derived and the protection and statutory duties which result.

Part 2 divides the Conservation Area into a number of 'Character Areas' which are analysed in detail in terms of their contribution to the Conservation Area character. This includes the historical and economic background of the town, perceived current pressures and the relevance to its development.

Part 2 also includes a townscape analysis of the features which combine to create the general character of Chippenham and whereby key features which contribute to the Conservation Area are identified. This analysis gives a guide to parts and features of the Conservation Area which are considered to exhibit the greatest concentration of character.

Individual area analyses from this section may be used for distribution to those interested in specific sites, and for detailed reference by Development Management officers.

PART ONE: CONTEXT

General Policy Context

What is a Conservation Area?

A conservation area is defined as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’¹. It is the duty of local authorities to designate such areas in order to ensure that their unique character is preserved and enhanced. It is the quality and interest of an area as a whole, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

The contribution that Conservation Areas make to our quality of life is widely recognized. They are a link to the past that can give us a sense of continuity and stability and they have the reassurance of the familiar which can provide a point of reference in a rapidly changing world. The way building traditions and settlement patterns are superimposed and survive over time will be unique to the townscape of each area. This local distinctiveness can provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well-designed new development which brings economic and social benefits valued by both local planning authorities and local communities.²

What Legislation and Policies Apply to Conservation Areas?

There are three distinct tiers of planning legislation, policies and guidance applicable to conservation areas in general, and Chippenham Conservation Area. These operate at national, local, and neighbourhood level and the relevant legislation and policies are listed below:

National Legislation and Policies:

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes certain duties on Local Planning Authorities with respect to the designation, preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Section 69 imposes a duty to ‘*review their areas from time to time to consider whether further designation of Conservation Areas is called for*’.

Section 71 of the Act imposes a duty to ‘*formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas*’. This should be based on a clear assessment and definition of an area’s special interest and the action needed to protect it.

Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, ‘*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*.’

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

² Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management, Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition), Historic England, 2019, Para. 3

Government advice concerning heritage assets is set out in Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core principle of the NPPF. Conservation areas are defined as designated heritage assets in the NPPF and weight must be given to their conservation and enhancement in the planning process.

*The NPPF explains 'Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance such as World Heritage Sites... These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'*³

*It goes on to explain 'Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats...'*⁴

Local Plan Policies:

The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted by Wiltshire Council in 2015 and sets out the Council's spatial vision, key objectives and overall principles for development in the county to the year 2026. This document is currently being reviewed to guide development up to 2038.

Core Policy 58 of the Strategy is concerned with ensuring the conservation of the historic environment, explaining *'Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance...'*

Chippenham Conservation Area Management Plan was produced by Wiltshire Council and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in 2010. It provides development guidelines and enhancement proposals for Chippenham Conservation Area and should be read in conjunction with this Appraisal. It carries weight in the determination of planning applications.

Neighbourhood Plan Policies:

Neighbourhood Plans are developed by the local community to guide future development of their local areas and their policies can play a key role in protecting and enhancing the historic environment. To quote Historic England:

*'Neighbourhood plans contain 'non-strategic' policies which should be used to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development, such as policies that help to conserve and enhance the historic environment. At its simplest this might mean identifying the features of the area's historic environment that are valued by the local community and preparing policies to ensure the need for their conservation is given appropriate weight in decisions.'*⁵

³ National Planning Policy Framework, MHCLG, 2021, Para. 189

⁴ Ibid. Para. 190

⁵ Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment, Historic England Advice Note 11, Historic England, 2018, Section 1.3

Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan sets out local planning policies which guide development within Chippenham Parish. This Character Appraisal is linked to Policy TC4 of the Neighbourhood Plan:

Policy TC4 - Development in Chippenham Conservation Area

In considering proposals for development within Chippenham Conservation Area, or that affect its setting, account shall be taken of the relevant character area analysis as set out in the Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (Annexe 2).

Development proposals shall maintain or enhance positive views, and/or where possible eliminate or reduce the effect of negative views, identified in the Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

New development within Chippenham Conservation Area, or which would affect its setting, will be permitted where it:

- a) Is of high quality design that makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;
- b) Retains those heritage assets (buildings, trees and other features) which make a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area;
- c) Accords with the development guidelines for the relevant character area as set out in the Chippenham Conservation Area Management Plan SPG;
- d) Where appropriate, makes provision for the enhancement measures for the relevant character area as set out in the Chippenham Conservation Area Management Plan SPG.

What Level of Protection Is There in a Conservation Area?

Historic England are clear that conservation area designation introduces some additional controls over the way owners can alter or develop their properties.⁶ However, owners of residential properties generally consider these controls to be beneficial because they also sustain, and/or enhance, the value of property within it⁷.

These controls can include:

- the requirement in legislation and national planning policies to preserve and/or enhance, as discussed further in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) issued by the Government
- local planning policies which pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area
- restriction on the types of development which can be carried out without the need for planning permission (permitted development rights)
- limitations on the types of advertisements which can be displayed with deemed consent
- control over demolition of unlisted buildings
- control over works to trees
- support for the use of Article 4 Directions⁶ to remove permitted development rights where avoidable damage is occurring
- clarification of archaeological interest, thereby assisting its protection

Character Appraisal as a Key Tool

What is a Character Appraisal?

Many conservation areas have an accompanying character appraisal, which is defined below by Historic England:

‘A character appraisal defines the special interest of the conservation area that merits its designation and describes and evaluates the contribution made by the different features of its character and appearance.’⁶

‘The appraisal is the vehicle for understanding both the significance of an area and the effect of those impacts bearing negatively on its significance. It will form part of the local planning authority’s Historic Environment Record and will be part of the evidence base for the local plan and a material consideration in planning decisions.’⁷

Neighbourhood Plan groups can create or update Conservation Area Character Appraisals effectively. Character assessment is an important tool to articulate what is distinctive about a place. Such assessment can also identify opportunities for improvement, informed by the local community’s aspirations, and the challenges that will need to be faced.⁸ It can set out the area’s defining positive characteristics as well as identifying the features that contribute to local distinctiveness. It can be an important building block in a plan’s evidence base, particularly if the plan is expected to include policies that inform the design of new development.⁹

What are the Benefits of a Character Appraisal?

Historic England have identified a number of enduring benefits that a character appraisal of a conservation area will bring, which are summarized below¹⁰:

- Those considering investment in the area for new development, including developers, planners, Council members, the Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State, are able to assess the impact of proposals on the area’s special interest, character and appearance. The appraisal will be a material consideration in decisions affecting the area
- The area’s special interest is clearly demonstrated allowing robust analysis of the impact of proposals on its significance
- Opportunities to build and understand consensus on the character that it is desirable to preserve or enhance are taken, which can be used to inform robust planning decisions
- The local community is empowered to explore the sense of their place and express what they value about the place in which they live and work, providing an informative resource for decision- making, neighbourhood planning and educational use
- Communities are alerted to the cumulative effects of minor change on an area’s character and how they can contribute to maintaining and enhancing that character

⁶ Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management, Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition), Historic England, 2019, Para. 17

⁷ Ibid. Para. 10

⁸ Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment, Historic England Advice Note 11, Historic England, 2018, Box 2

⁹ Ibid. Section 2.4

¹⁰ Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management, Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition), Historic England, 2019, Para. 18

- Management proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the area will be informed by an understanding of positive features to preserve, negative features to be enhanced, and risks to the area's character or appearance through decay, neglect or other threats. This will help to identify necessary actions, such as additional protection and restraints (including the use of Article 4 directions) or support through intervention or partnership working
- The archaeological interest of the area is better understood, perhaps by identifying and mapping archaeologically sensitive areas, thus helping to guide development towards less sensitive locations'

Why is the 2007 Character Appraisal in Need of Updating?

In 2000 the former North Wiltshire District Council began the process of appraising Chippenham Conservation Area, setting up a local working group to progress research and analysis. This culminated in the production of Chippenham Conservation Area Statement in 2004.

The former North Wiltshire District Council subsequently used this Statement to prepare the Chippenham Conservation Area Appraisal, which was published in 2007.

Following the creation of the new unitary authority, Wiltshire Council produced a plan to manage the future of the Conservation Area, and to accompany the 2007 Chippenham Conservation Area Appraisal. The Chippenham Conservation Area Management Plan was subsequently produced and adopted as supplementary planning guidance in April 2010.

Whilst the 2007 Chippenham Conservation Area Appraisal can justifiably be celebrated as a detailed and comprehensive piece of work - it is also incomplete, out of date, contains some errors, and does not now form part of the Development Plan for Chippenham. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered it needed to be reviewed and updated to take account of:

- new developments and physical changes within the Conservation Area
- changes to planning legislation in the interim period
- changing attitudes to the historic environment and greater appreciation of Post-War architecture

This updated Appraisal also adopts a more positive tone when compared to the 2007 Appraisal - one which recognises the value of the best examples of more recent architecture, thereby celebrating diversity and interest in the historic environment.

What Methodology Was Used to Update the Appraisal?

Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Town Centre Topic Group, Jack Konynenburg - an experienced and qualified former local authority architect and long term resident of Chippenham - led the review and update of the 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal. He was assisted by Town Centre Topic Group Member Trudi Dewey, and Andy Conroy - qualified Town Planner at Chippenham Town Council. The review was conducted as both a desk-based review and by way of site visits - visiting those particular areas of the town where development has taken place in the intervening years.

Chippenham Conservation Area

What are the boundaries of Chippenham Conservation Area?

Chippenham Conservation Area was first designated on 10th January 1973. The first review of the Conservation Area boundary was undertaken in January 1989 and a later review in May 1996. The boundary was again reviewed on the 2nd December 2004 as a result of research carried out in the preparation of the 2007 Appraisal. The current boundary is set out in Figure A.

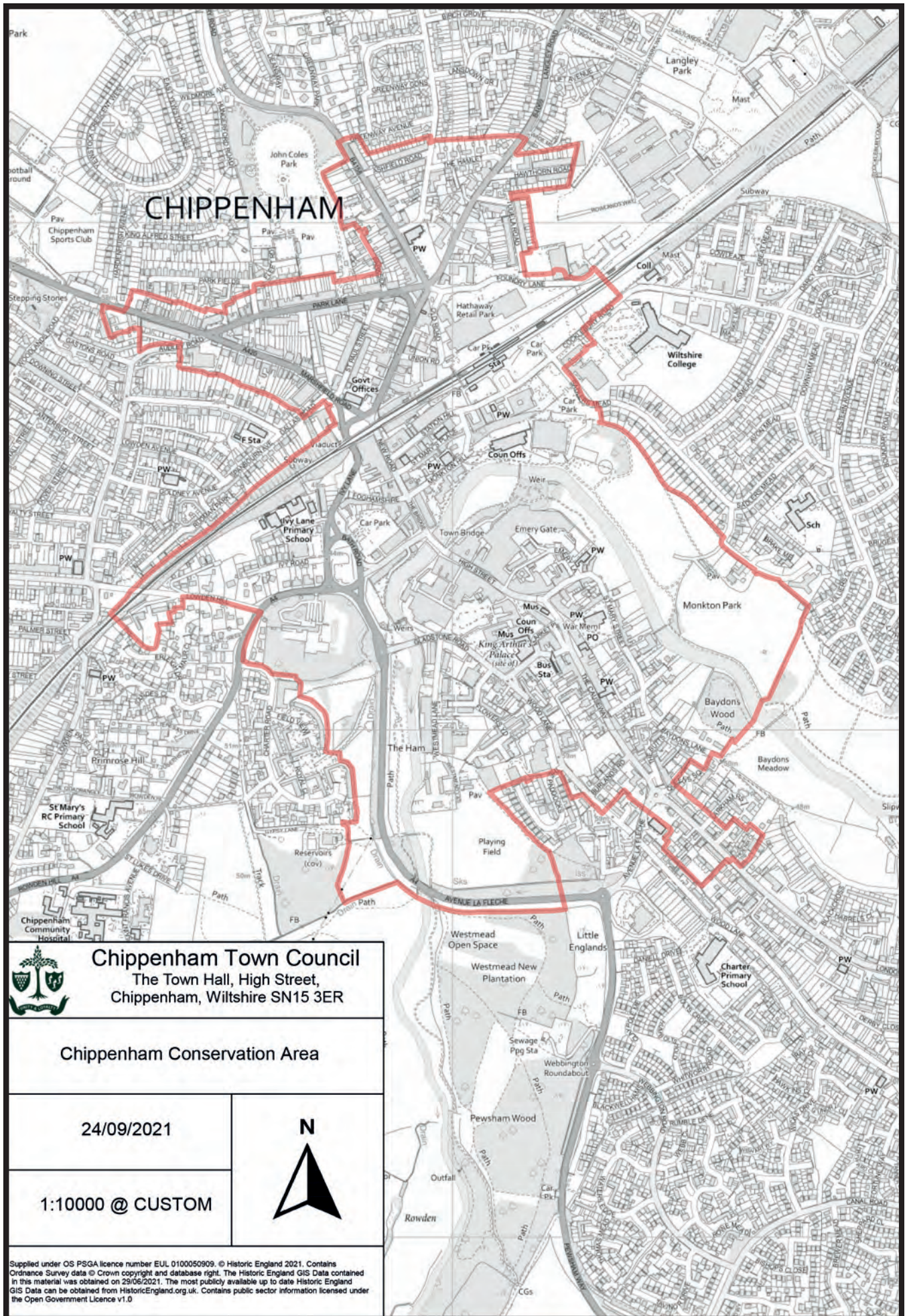


Fig A: Chippenham Conservation Area Boundary

Are there any Article 4 Directions in Chippenham Conservation Area?

An Article 4 direction is made by the local planning authority. It restricts the scope of permitted development rights either in relation to a particular area or site, or a particular type of development anywhere in the authority's area. Where an Article 4 direction is in effect, a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Article 4 directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area of acknowledged importance, such as a conservation area. They can increase the public protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.

In Chippenham, Article 4 Directions were introduced in the 1990s on residential properties mainly located within the Marshfield Road/Park Lane/St. Pauls Street part of the Conservation Area and remove permitted development rights for rear extensions, roof alterations, porch extensions, boundary treatment, exterior painting, and in some instances outbuildings.

There are Article 4 Directions on the following residential properties within Chippenham Conservation Area as shown on **Figure B**.

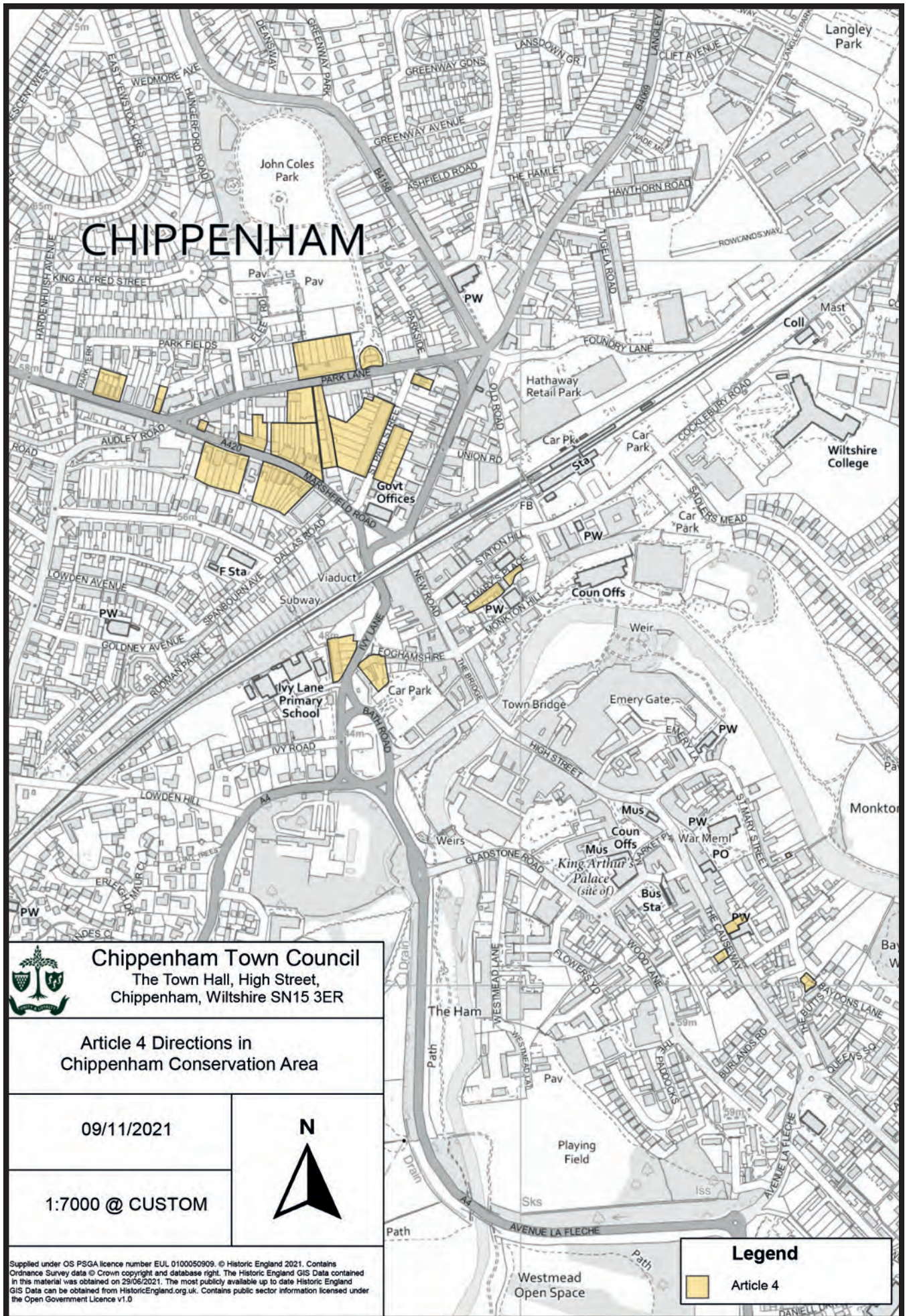


Fig B: Article 4 Directions in Chippenham Conservation Area

PART TWO: DETAILED CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Character Areas

Defining the Character Areas

Most conservation areas are large enough to exhibit areas of differing character within them, and it is therefore logical and more manageable to identify a number of sub-areas to analyse separately. To this end this Appraisal splits Chippenham Conservation Area into 18 geographical character areas, generally based on key streets, spaces or landscape features. Boundaries are notional, as the spaces and buildings will almost certainly have an impact on those in adjacent areas. The character areas, shown in Figure C, have been defined as follows:

Area 1:	Marshfield Road
Area 2:	Park Lane
Area 3:	Upper New Road
Area 4:	Railway Station
Area 5:	Malmesbury Road & Langley Road
Area 6:	Bath Road & Ivy Lane
Area 7:	The Bridge & Lower New Road
Area 8:	Station Hill & Monkton Hill
Area 9:	Ivy Road & Lowden Hill
Area 10:	Avenue La Fleche
Area 11:	Monkton Park
Area 12:	High Street & Emery Gate
Area 13:	Gladstone Road, Borough Parade & Wood Lane
Area 14:	Market Place
Area 15:	St Mary Street & The Butts
Area 16:	Flowers Yard
Area 17:	The Causeway
Area 18:	London Road

The character area analyses aim to describe how the features identified combine to give the Conservation Area its special character.

Significant Features

This element of the detailed analysis identifies particular qualities and characteristics of the sub-areas which are important in identifying the component parts of their character. These are drawn out from both the detailed and general character analysis of each area and are identified under separate headings. The headings range from large scale characteristics such as topography to the finer details such as building details and are as follows:

1. History, Archaeology & Morphology
2. Topography & Views
3. General Character
4. Buildings, Spaces & Townscape
5. Vegetation
6. Materials
7. Highway Infrastructure

Topography has a significant effect on the siting and plan form of a settlement. This also affects its accessibility, which in turn has an impact on its growth and development. The settlement pattern is also influenced by topography and access in addition to economic and social factors. The morphology and landscape characteristics describe how the buildings and spaces have evolved over time and relative relationship. Activities relate the social factors of a settlement to its built form. Space, buildings, construction and details are all related to the more detailed elements of the settlement's buildings and spaces.

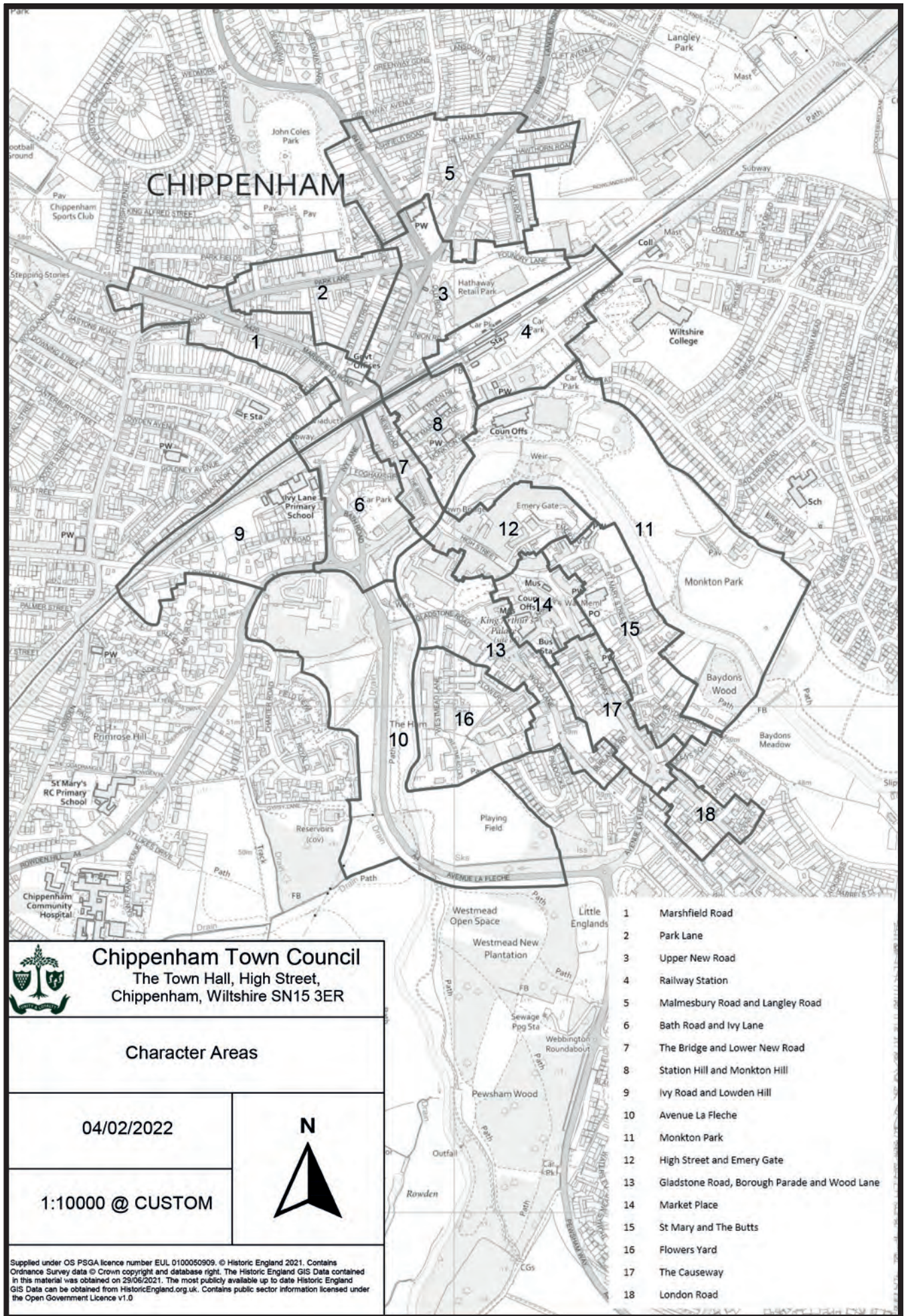
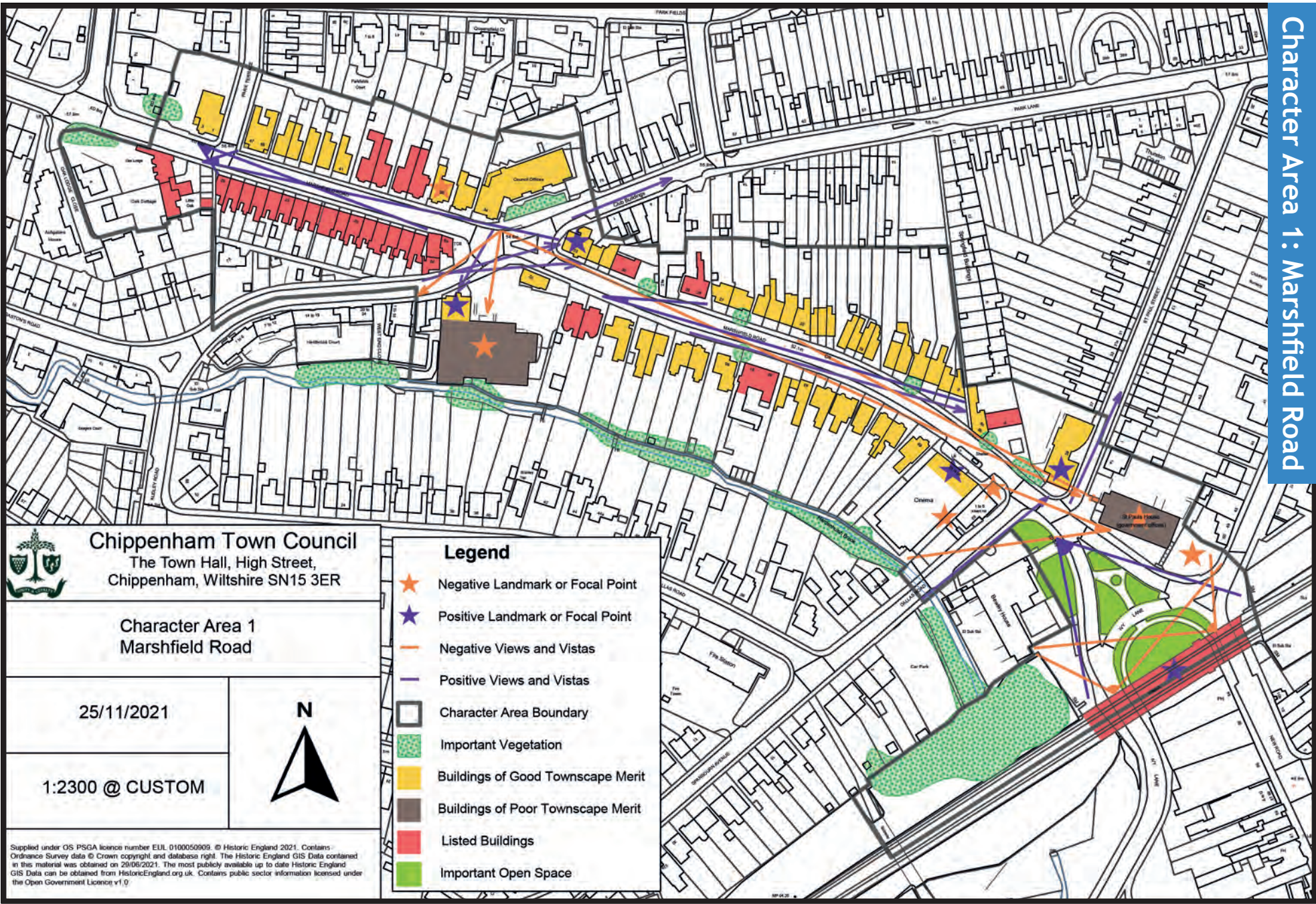


Fig C: Character Areas of Chippenham Conservation Area

Character Area 1: Marshfield Road



Chippenham Town Council
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 1
Marshfield Road

25/11/2021



1:2300 @ CUSTOM

Legend

- ★ Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- ★ Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Negative Views and Vistas
- Positive Views and Vistas
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
- Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
- Listed Buildings
- Important Open Space

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History, Archaeology & Morphology

Marshfield Road is named after the village of Marshfield on the Gloucestershire border, through which the road passes on its way to Bristol. Beyond the junction with Park Terrace the road is known as Bristol Road. Prior to the construction of the M4, Marshfield Road was part of the A420 trunk road from Oxford to Bristol. Despite its reduced status, the road is still a busy route from Chippenham to Bristol positioned between the A4 and M4.

The road has always been an important direct route to Bristol, avoiding the need to travel via Bath. The route into Chippenham was originally via Foghamshire, leaving the current alignment at Springfield Terrace, passing across the land now occupied by Bewley House and joining Foghamshire where it now meets Ivy Lane. The Chippenham Turnpike Trustees altered this route to its current alignment in 1792, with the turnpiking of the route into Chippenham. Joining Marshfield Road at around its midpoint are Park Lane and Audley Road (formerly Lowden Lane then Gastons Lane). This area was once known as Lands End and these roads are historic routes, part of a network of rural tracks which skirted around the town, stretching from Cocklebury Farm to Lowden and the A4.

The road remained largely undeveloped beyond the current junction with New Road until the coming of the railway in the 1840s. Prior to this the only buildings lining the road were the occasional cottage or inn. No. 8 (Vine Cottage), Nos. 68, 69 & 70 (former Horse & Jockey Inn) and Oak Lodge & Cottage are buildings which pre-date the railway. Following the opening of the railway, New Road began to be lined with villas loosely emulating the classical style used by Brunel for many railway buildings. Marshfield Road was developed slightly later and at a slower rate, the earlier buildings, such as the terrace at Nos. 52-67 retaining the classical simplicity and use of ashlar of the New Road buildings. Later buildings, however, show a greater variety of forms, being a mix of detached and semi-detached villas and short terraces. There is also a greater use of rubble stone and a stronger Victorian interpretation of the classical form.

Topography & Views

Topography

The road roughly follows the alignment of Hardenhuish Brook to its south and thus is generally on a gentle downward slope towards the town centre. The section from Oak Lodge to the one-way system is almost level, though the slight slope is acknowledged by the stepping down of the rooflines of the listed terrace at Nos. 52-67. Beyond Park Lane, on the outbound part of the one-way system, the gradient steepens noticeably towards the railway viaduct.

Views

The enclosed nature of the street confines most views to within the space defined by the tightly spaced buildings close to the street edge. Views beyond the confines of the buildings reveal themselves at the junctions with other roads - Park Lane, Audley Road, St. Paul Street, Dallas Road, and at the railway viaduct.

The terrace at Nos. 52-67 and the villas opposite define a very urban and formal townscape. The view of the terrace is framed at each end by the contrasting rubble stone buildings of Oak Lodge and No. 68, both of which sit slightly forward from it. The terrace draws the eye to the end of the street and focuses attention on the impressive façade of West End House and, to a lesser extent, the former inn at Nos. 68, 69 & 70. These buildings date, respectively, from later and earlier than the majority of the buildings in the street. Their differing form and materials, and their location at the road junction serves to pick them out as landmark buildings. This is particularly so with West End House, which is also prominent in the view from Audley Road.

At the junction with Park Lane and Audley Road the one-way system starts and there is a break in the building frontage. Traffic is directed along Park Lane which immediately reveals a long view to the steeple of St. Paul's Church on Malmesbury Road rising above the distinctive roofline of the terraces on the north side of Park Lane. On the south side of the junction, and just in Audley Road, is the pleasant and well-proportioned façade of the original West End Club.

Unfortunately, the adjacent functional, low-rise extension to the club is to the rear of the site with the car park in front. Similarly, on the other side of the original building, are two small single storey shop units and a car park. This reveals the blank side wall of a recently built terrace of flats. Thus the setting of the original club building is rather poor; the gaps in the street frontage leaving it rather isolated in the streetscape.

Moving into the lower part of the street, against the flow of the traffic, the buildings on the north side are more prominent, due to the curve in the street. This is most noticeable when facing west (Fig 1.1). As the road straightens it reveals a view of the sidewall of No. 72, standing isolated and prominent in front of the West End Club car park. Looking east from the south side of the street, the building line on the north side continues almost straight, revealing the sidewalls and roofline of Nos. 8 and 8a. Although not the front of the building, this is a generally pleasing aspect. Unfortunately this changes as one progresses eastwards along the street. Gradually the pleasant pitched roofs, in stone and slate, are overpowered as St. Paul's House, with its monolithic lines and blank side elevation, comes into view, a stark and dominating contrast to all around it. From the north side of the street next to West End House and from the position of traffic arriving at the one-way system, the discordant view of the side elevation of St. Paul's House is immediately apparent and dominant.



Fig 1.1: The attractive houses lining the lower part of the street. A variety of forms using a common palette of materials.

As the curve continues, the railway viaduct gradually reveals itself until it completely fills the now wide vista. This impressive and graceful structure is probably the single most important landmark in the town. It identifies the town, and can only be fully appreciated in its entirety when viewed from this direction. Unfortunately none of the many motorists using the busy one-way system get to see this view as the direction of the traffic is away from the viaduct. Thus the positive impact and image of this important landmark goes unnoticed by many, and unexploited by the town, due to the current way the traffic is managed.

At the widening of the vista, St. Paul's Church is again visible, this time framed more impressively by the buildings lining St. Paul Street. A large Yew tree half way up the street dilutes the full impact of the church. Looking in the opposite direction along Dallas Road reveals a somewhat nondescript suburban residential landscape. The view westward from the viaduct is dominated by two large 20th Century buildings: Bewley House and St. Paul's House, whilst the triangular space between is dominated by the one way traffic system. Bewley House has benefited from sympathetic refurbishment during the last decade.

General Character

The character of the area is primarily residential, with commercial expansion of the town centre evident in the vicinity of the viaduct. Only half a dozen houses have been converted either to offices, hotels or surgeries. There is a general uniformity of character that is derived primarily from the fact that the street was initially developed over a relatively short period with residential buildings using a similar palette of materials, and has seen little change since. There is also a general uniformity in scale of the buildings and their close proximity to each other, though individual detailing and roof forms vary within a limited range.

The street is a distinctly urban space and the transition to suburban character is apparent at the edge of the Conservation Area. Here building density, architectural style and building materials change directly, and vegetation becomes more of a dominant feature.

The road has altered little since it was first developed as an urban street and there are few buildings from the 20th Century, these being primarily situated around the railway viaduct and the junction with Park Lane and Audley Road. The most profound impact on the area has come from the effects of motor traffic and the attempts to accommodate it into what is essentially a 19th Century urban landscape. The area is suffering from incremental erosion of its special character due to inappropriate alterations to curtilage treatments and fenestration.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The dense vegetation of the gardens of Oak Lodge and Nos. 1-3 Bristol Road mark the entry into the Conservation Area and the transition from suburban to urban townscape. Oak Lodge, Little Oak and the outbuildings are best seen from the entrance to the rear courtyard, where there is a generally pleasing and informal aspect to the group. The garden area is somewhat suburban in character, a single domestic conifer being the dominant feature.

The informal nature of these buildings is in contrast to the formal character of the adjacent terrace at Nos. 52-67 (Fig 1.2). One of the earliest post-railway developments in the street, its simple elegance, use of sawn stone and lower pitched roofs of slate bear testament to this and relate more closely in style to buildings on New Road. The terrace was built by Rowland Brotherhood in 1858 for his workers. The gentle stepping down of the eaves, regular window openings, enclosed small front gardens and regular line of chimney stacks are key elements of the character of the terrace which give it a visual coherence and integrity in the street scene. Due to this, loss of such features are all the more noticeable, and the gap left by the one missing chimney stack is highly visible.



Fig 1.2: This fine listed terrace was built by Rowland Brotherhood for workers at his factory on Foundry Lane and many original features, such as sash windows, remain. Note the loss of a chimney stack, painting of stone window surrounds and the loss of railings for walls, all features detrimental to the character and overall unity of the terrace.

Despite the terrace being listed, some inappropriate replacement windows exist, along with the painting of many window surrounds. The original railings to the front gardens have been lost. Whereas modern replacement railings have been inserted at Nos. 63-66, other replacements are generally solid walls. These walls of large unsawn stone blocks are generally out of character with the style and scale of the terrace and disrupt the balance of proportion of the elements of the buildings, giving them a rather cumbersome appearance.

The opposite side of the street at this point consists of detached and semi-detached villas dating from between 1886 and 1900. They are larger in scale and far more imposing than the terrace opposite, though do not overpower them. They are primarily of coursed rubble stone with sawn stone dressings. In proportion with the larger scale of the buildings, the front gardens are slightly deeper and the boundary treatments more substantial. Large stone gate-piers with low stone walls between and railings above are the form of the original boundary treatment, with stone balustrades evident at Nos. 44-45. All original railings have now been lost and most have either been left, have had hedges planted or had modern railings or stone walls inserted to replace them.

Whilst there is variety in the individual elements and detailing of the buildings, they have a collective uniformity of character which gives the frontage a cohesive appearance. Materials, height, roof pitch and the regularity of chimneys and gate-piers are all elements that contribute to this. This is undermined to a degree by the variety of boundary treatments and the one painted house, which is highly noticeable (Fig 1.3). Most of the buildings are either listed or subject to Article 4 Directions and any planning applications made should take the opportunity to ensure that any proposed replacements are of a suitable design.



Fig 1.3: A fine group of houses on the upper part of the street. The painted house stands out as a prominent and jarring feature

Two distinctive buildings flank the entrance to Park Terrace. On the left at Nos. 1-3 Bristol Road is a veterinary surgery. This is a later building dating from between 1900 and 1923. It is an impressive and imposing building at the entry into the more urban townscape. Its warm brick construction, steep pitched roof and Edwardian windows mark it out as different from those around it. On the right, Nos. 46-47 contain an impressive stone portico running the full width of the façade. It is a mixture of materials with darker rubble stone subservient to a large amount of sawn stone dressings on the façade and warm orange brickwork on the sidewalls. The most distinctive feature, however, are the elongated first floor tile-hung jetties. The one facing Park Terrace is particularly prominent.

The tight enclosure of the street ends, briefly, for the junction with Park Lane and Audley Road. Here the space created by the junction provides punctuation in the street and allows the imposing and distinctive West End House, on its eastern side to be appreciated from a number of directions. This building is a dominant local landmark by virtue of its siting, scale, form design and distinctive façade and makes a particularly positive contribution to the character of the space around the junction. Originally the West End Club, it was sensitively converted to residential use in 1990. It included a novel three storey extension on its Northern elevation. The soft landscaping and railings surrounding the West and South elevations were then also added. Colourful aluminium windows in the appropriate historic style have enriched the Edwardian architecture, and strengthen the building's landmark status. On the opposite side of the junction with Park Lane is the recently built premises of the Probation Service, a modern building of appropriate scale and massing, which utilises an interesting palette of materials (Fig 1.4).



Fig 1.4: The junction between Marshfield Road, Park Lane and Audley Road. To the left is the elegant, recently built, premises of the Probation Service, and to the right West End House which was converted into residential in 1990. Most noteworthy is the over dominant highway design which makes crossing by foot or bicycle unpleasant and extremely challenging.

The frontages to the wider north and south sides of the junction are poorly defined, allowing the passing traffic to dominate the space and reinforce the impression of it as a highway junction rather than a focal point in the townscape. On the South side the recently constructed Probation Centre is well screened by large trees, which bring a welcome softening to the urban townscape.

Prior to the construction of the Post-War West End Club (now Snap Fitness), the corner of the junction with Audley Road was defined by a building at No. 71. Demolition of this for access to the extension and its car park has left the adjacent No. 72 a solitary building standing uncomfortably and rather awkwardly, close to the street and surrounded by clutter and car parking. The single storey rendered extension, fenced side garden, plain UPVC replacement windows and door, force an inappropriate suburban character on an otherwise attractive rubble stone town house, which is particularly jarring at such a prominent location.

Beyond the junction the topography steepens, both along the road down to the viaduct and across it to Hardenhuish Brook behind the buildings on the south side. On this section of the street the north side was developed first, with the buildings dating from the mid-19th Century, the buildings being almost exclusively faced in ashlar or sawn stone. The buildings are grouped either in short terraces or semi-detached pairs and follow a generally straight building line, taking it away from the road as it curves further to the south and revealing the side elevation of No. 8b abutting the pavement. The buildings on both sides of the street are almost exclusively faced in coursed rubble stone with sawn stone dressings. On the south side the buildings are detached and semi-detached large town houses and on the North side mostly short terraces. All remain in residential use except Nos. 81-82, which is now a hotel. The buildings curve gently with the road along a uniform building line. A uniformity of character is maintained by similar materials, building height and roof pitches whilst allowing a variety of detailing. Unfortunately there are many examples of unsympathetic UPVC windows.

The houses along the lower end of the street have lost much of their original boundary walls and railings (Fig 1.5).



Fig 1.5: These fine 19th Century houses have lost their boundary walls, railings and some of the piers to enable parking to be provided.

Originally the majority of the boundary treatments consisted of stone gate-piers and low stone walls with railings above. Many of these still remain in various states of completeness and repair, though much has been lost through removal of railings and subsequent neglect, and their removal for car parking. The loss of such details undermines the cohesiveness of the street by diluting the formal definition, hierarchy and proportion of spaces in the transition from street to front door. All the dwellings in the street are either listed or subject to Article 4 Directions. However, a number of unauthorised alterations are evident to boundary walls and railings and some cases inappropriate alterations have also been granted planning permission (Fig 1.6).



Fig 1.6: Reinstatement of original features such as railings is to be welcomed. However correct guidance is needed to ensure their design and appearance is historically accurate. These railings set behind the wall look odd and defeat the object of having the wall - the wall is for the railings to be set in or on.

At the eastern end of the street the space widens and is dominated by the Grade II* listed railway viaduct and three non-residential buildings - the Reel Cinema, St Paul's and Bewley House. The Cinema has, after decades of neglect, benefitted from an extensive refurbishment and restoration. The unsympathetic shops flanking the entrance have been removed and incorporated into a new foyer. Restoration of the stone façade and removal of unsightly signs have revealed a fine Art Deco building - one of only two in that style in Chippenham. It is now a fine landmark building as well as a welcome addition to the town's cultural offer (Fig 1.7). The building is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5.



Fig 1.7: The refurbished Reel Cinema is a fine Art Deco building.

Bewley House, built in the 1960s to house the offices of Chippenham Rural District Council, was used from 1974 as one of several premises for North Wiltshire District Council. In 2000 it was sold and developed into commercial offices, incorporating an overdue refurbishment of the exterior. This has revealed a fine example of mid-20th Century architecture, with a gentle rhythm of fenestration and a sculptural form. The setback of the building gives the best view possible of the complete viaduct (Fig 1.8).



Fig 1.8: The refurbished Bewley House which is set back from the road enabling the whole of the viaduct to be seen.

In contrast, St Paul's House is a monolithic and drab block built in the late 1970s for the DHSS, and dominates the street scene. Many fine buildings were lost for construction of these offices including the original Bewley House, three pairs of elegant villas on the site of St Paul's House reputedly built by Brunel for his staff and an attractive house terminating the view from through the main arch of the viaduct.

The viaduct itself is probably the most definitive building in the town (Fig 1.9). It is in two parts - the original Brunel structure, and a later increase in width to accommodate wider tracks. The former (on the Marshfield Road side) is in stone, and the latter (facing the town centre) in blue brickwork. For decades the fabric of the structure has been neglected, but a welcome refurbishment was carried out in 2019.



Fig 1.9: The viaduct is probably the most defining historic structure in the town. A welcome refurbishment of the stone structure was carried out in 2019.

Vegetation

Marshfield Road is an urban street and vegetation is generally not a dominant element in its character. However, in a number of places individual trees and groups make a positive contribution to the overall character of the street, providing screening, punctuating the space and bringing relief and colour to the urban townscape. Groups of trees and other vegetation mark the entry into the more urban environment covered by the Conservation Area at Oak Lodge and Nos. 1-3 Bristol Road. Views outward to the trees lining Hardenhuish Brook as it crosses the Bristol Road help to reinforce the more suburban character of this area in contrast to the Conservation Area. An attractive group of trees at the car park to the Social Services offices at No. 34 provide definition to the street edge and help soften the visual impact of the cars. Notable individual trees are to be found at Nos. 8, 30 and 80-81. Trees lining Hardenhuish Brook provide pleasant background vegetation, particularly noticeable from the junction with Park Lane and Audley Road.

Materials

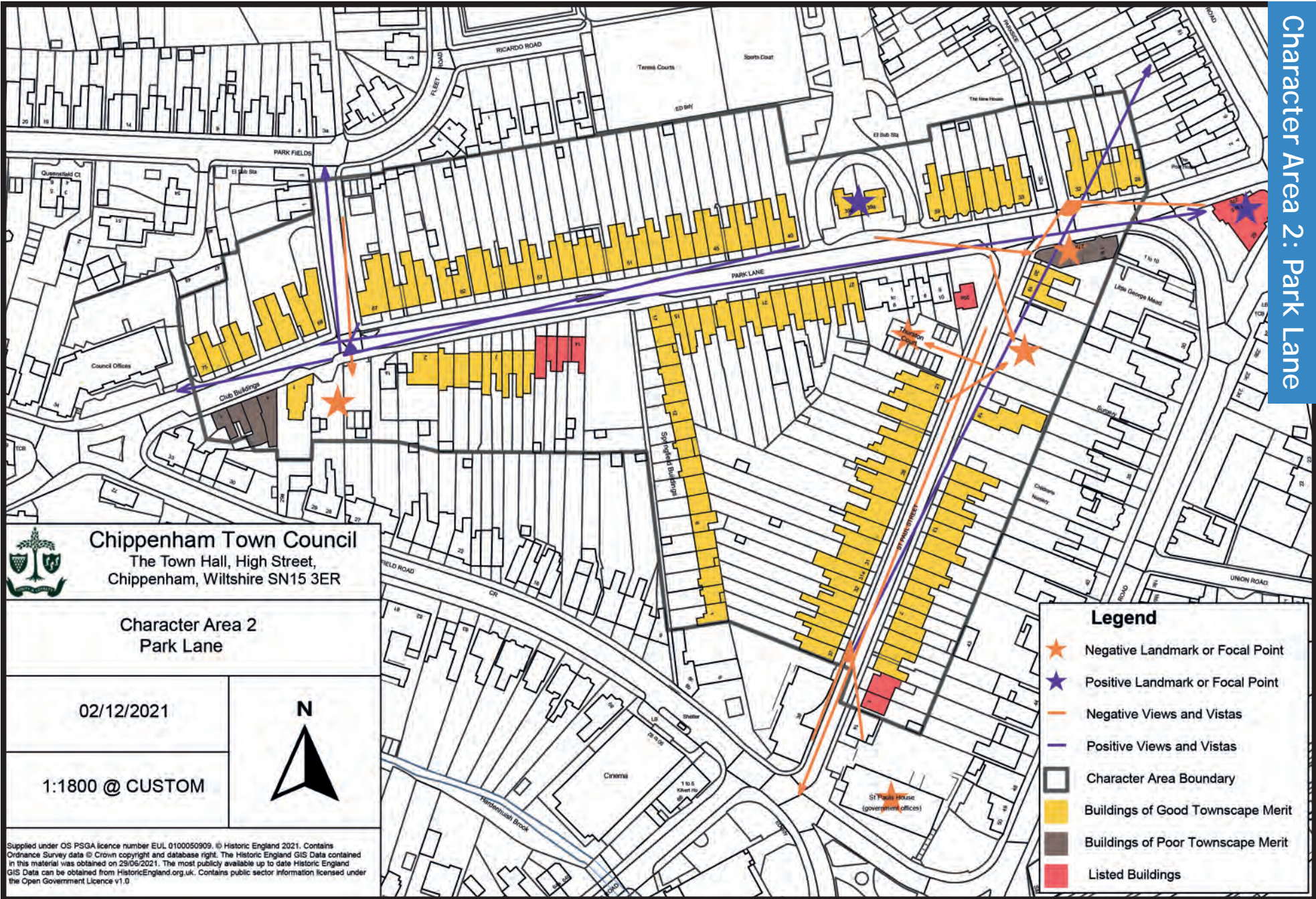
Stone is the dominant material. Almost all buildings are faced in either rubble or sawn stone, although side walls are usually of brick. The buildings predating the railway tend to use either graded stone tiles or Roman clay tiles with steeper pitched roofs. Buildings post-dating the railway use slate roof tiles and have lower pitched roofs. Brick, whether used for side elevations, dressings or main elevations, tends to be a warm orange engineering brick.

Painting and rendering is not characteristic of the area, the only exceptions being at West End House and Nos. 68-70, where limewash is the most appropriate finish. Where white painting or rendering exists it is particularly noticeable. Painting of the stonework at No. 36, rendered and white painted extensions to No. 72 and the white painted side elevation of No. 29a are examples of inappropriate finishes.

Highway Infrastructure

Marshfield Road is a busy one way street where traffic dominates. The triangular area between Bewley and St Paul's Houses, whilst incorporating a welcome planted grass area, is a point where several one way streets merge and are controlled by traffic lights. These are also used to enable pedestrians to navigate this hostile environment. Although marginally improved recently with new crossings, it is still an area where improvements in the public domain would be very welcome. This could be done by reinstating two way traffic to some of the streets. Also welcome would be some extensive tree planting in the green areas.

Character Area 2: Park Lane



 **Chippenham Town Council**
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 2
 Park Lane









02/12/2021

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Legend

-  Negative Landmark or Focal Point
-  Positive Landmark or Focal Point
-  Negative Views and Vistas
-  Positive Views and Vistas
-  Character Area Boundary
-  Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
-  Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
-  Listed Buildings

History, Archaeology & Morphology

Park Lane is a historic route, part of a network of rural tracks, which skirted around the town, stretching from Cocklebury Farm to Lowden and the A4. The John Powell map of 1784 shows the road named as Land's End Lane, after the name given to the area where the lane met what is now Marshfield Road. The street map of 1822 shows the lane named as Stewards Lane, probably after a local landowner. The First Edition Ordnance survey map of 1886 shows the lane named as Little George Lane, after the pub at the eastern end of the lane. The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900 was the first map to refer to the lane as Park Lane.

St. Paul Street first appears on the 1886 map. Both streets owe their development to the coming of the railway and the subsequent industrial development in the north of the town. St. Paul Street and the south side of Park Lane were the first to be developed, along with Springfield Terrace, in the mid-19th Century. The North side of Park Lane was developed towards the end of the Century. Named 'Lands End', the whole area was not fully developed until well into the 20th Century. Park Fields and John Coles Park were developed after the First World War. The area is primarily residential, consisting of terraces facing the street, behind small front gardens.

Topography & Views

The landform is generally sloping in a south-westerly direction down to Hardenhuish Brook. Both Park Lane and St. Paul Street are generally straight. These features, combined with the gently sloping land and terraces lining the streets, give long vistas along both streets. Unfortunately for motorists, these are limited to up Park Lane and down St. Paul Street as they are both one-way streets.

Park Lane

A key element in the long views both up and down Park Lane is the long terrace on the north side of the street, from Nos. 40 to 67 (Fig 2.1). From the west, the kink on the road accentuates this, focusing attention on the terrace. From the straight section the imposing bulk of the former Little George is a prominent feature in the distance, its roof form and dormers providing a positive silhouette on the skyline.



Fig 2.1: The long view down Park Lane, showing the kink in the street.

On the entrance to St Paul Street, Nos. 19 & 20 St. Paul Street (Fig 2.2) face Park Lane at an angle and are a prominent, well composed semi-detached pair with a positive presence in the street scene. Unfortunately the original windows and door in one of the houses have been replaced with modern designs. This is a clear example of how such 'improvements' can seriously damage the architectural integrity and appearance of buildings.



Fig 2.2: Nos. 19 & 20 St Paul Street, with unsympathetic windows to the house on the left. Also shown further left is the recently built residential development, which is alien and out of scale with its surroundings.

From the east the trees in the grounds of the Probation Service at No. 34 Marshfield Road are notable in the longer view. The kink in the street encloses the view and brings into prominence the houses at Nos. 68-75, particularly when viewed from the middle distance and closer. Of these, Nos. 70 & 71 stand out as a particularly fine feature. The huge projecting bargeboards on the gable, bay windows, porch and original doors and windows and gate-piers combine to give it a strong and positive presence in the street. The mature trees in the background enhance the setting.

The attractive stone gabled shop at No. 3 pleasantly terminates the view into Park Fields. The view out onto Park Lane is less coherent, being an undefined array of vegetation, garages and boundary treatments. From the junction with Park Fields, the low-rise nature of the retail units at Club Buildings affords a prominent view of the rear of West End House.

This has been converted to housing, having been the original West End Club. Unlike the former Little George, the view is attractive at close range with a steep roof profile, dormers, ornate chimneys and timber framed facades combining to create a prominent local feature. Unfortunately the shop units in the foreground have a somewhat temporary feel and offer a stark contrast in scale with West End House.

St. Paul Street

This quiet and secluded street is entirely straight and has a steeper gradient than Park Lane. The terraces lining the street provide a well-defined direction and focus for views. The view to the north contrasts strongly with that to the south. Northwards the view is of the large and imposing form of the tower and steeple of the Grade II* listed St. Paul's Church on Malmesbury Road (Fig 2.3). The rising gradient ensures that it is well defined against the skyline. The arrangement of roof forms in the immediate foreground to the steeple is both attractive in itself and also serves to emphasise the scale of the Church. A gap in the frontage of Park Lane ensures part of the nave is also visible which further adds to the effect.



Fig 2.3: Most of St. Paul Street is lined by fine terraces and has a dramatic view of St. Paul's Church.

The view to the south is terminated by Bewley House, which tends to give the impression of blocking the view beyond rather than it terminating at a single focus. As one moves further down the street the bulk of the St. Paul's House also begins to make its presence felt in the street. These two large monolithic buildings significantly dilute the otherwise positive contribution made to the townscape by the terraces in the street and the nearby railway viaduct.

The terraces stop short of the top end of the street and reveal the rear elevations of properties on New Road and Park Lane (Fig 2.4). These gaps offer unattractive views of car parking, storage areas, poorly defined boundaries and functional rear extensions and elevations. On the opposite side of the street the rear parking access to flats fronting Park Lane allows views of the stark rear elevation of the building. Such gaps and views undermine the visual coherence and attractiveness of the street.



Fig 2.4: The top end of St. Paul Street is less attractive, consisting of unattractive rear entrances to properties on New Road and Park Lane. The frontages are poorly defined and the sense of enclosure and human scale breaks down.

General Character

Whilst primarily a residential area, there are groupings of small-scale retail units at either end of Park Lane. There are also a number of other small businesses along Park Lane and St. Paul Street, which only become apparent to the pedestrian. The character of the area to the pedestrian is far richer than it is to the motorist. To the motorist it is part of the one way system to be negotiated as quickly as possible lest one gets 'lost' in it. To the pedestrian it is a place in its own right, a Victorian suburb, with its own shops, park and pub. The volume and speed of the traffic suppresses the perception of this, particularly to motorists. The high volume and often continuous flow of traffic ensure that it dominates the character of Park Lane for long periods of each day and has a significantly detrimental effect on the environmental quality of the street for other users. This marginalises the positive character of the buildings whereby they can become perceived as incidental to its current role as a conduit for vehicular traffic. However, as with many edge-of-centre locations, vehicular access is still important, the street has a number of on-street parking spaces and the shops at the western end of the street benefit from the adjacent parking. The traffic also has the effect of impeding and even deterring movement across Park Lane. There are two formal pedestrian crossing points on the road. John Coles Park provides a traffic free alternative for those walking or cycling into town.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The long terrace of houses on the north side of Park Lane creates a strong linear statement. The steep pitched roofs, chimneys and full height bays emphasise their vertical scale comparative to the buildings on the south side of the street. The slightly lower lying ground and smaller scale of the earlier dwellings on the south side ensures that the sense of enclosure created by the terraces allows a slightly more open aspect to the south. Other elements of the townscape also contribute to this. The terraces on the south side are somewhat shorter and are occasionally either set back more from the street or built at a slight angle to the street. At the western end of the street in particular, this has the effect of creating a series of small open spaces which form the front gardens of the houses. The openness of the aspect to the south is at its greatest half way along the street where there is a gap in the buildings. This gives access to Springfield Terrace and allows longer views to a tree-lined horizon.

The single story buildings and car park situated on the corner of St. Paul Street, Park Lane and New Road have been replaced by curved terraces of housing. The opportunity to create fine landmark buildings here has sadly been missed - the form and materials of the new terraces being out of character with the surrounding buildings (Fig 2.2).

Springfield Terrace is a continuous terrace of 17 properties accessed from a narrow pedestrian path. It has no vehicular access and from Park Lane becomes increasingly secluded as the gardens gradually widen, the path finally emerging unobtrusively onto Marshfield Road. The buildings themselves are modest and generally attractive. Their modest scale and the variety of vegetation in the gardens and fronting the path provide a constantly changing experience and add to the cosy, cottage feel of the terrace.

The core of St. Paul Street consists of terraces of attractive mid-Victorian houses in Bath stone with slate roof tiles. The roof lines step down the street with the slope and variations in design through restrained decoration and attention to detail adds interest to the facades. During the post war period most of the railings and piers have been lost, and there has been much personalization including the insertion of inappropriate UPVC windows. However Chippenham Civic Society has campaigned for homeowners to replace original railings and original window and doors in the more recent past, which has much improved the street (Fig 2.5).



Fig 2.5: Houses near the top of St Paul Street where some of the correct sash windows and railings were restored following a past campaign by Chippenham Civic Society.

Vegetation

Vegetation is generally limited to the domestic and small scale to be found in front gardens and a minimal amount of vegetation is part of the distinctly urban character of the area. The mature vegetation of John Coles Park is evident as background to views to the north, particularly into the park entrance and into Park Fields. The remaining impact of vegetation is largely limited to longer distance views, generally southward, of trees on the horizon or lining the railway embankment.

Materials

The predominant, almost exclusive, building material is Bath stone. On the earlier properties in St. Paul Street, Springfield Terrace and the south side of Park Lane buildings are generally roofed in slate, the buildings on the north side of Park Lane being clay tiles. Earlier properties tend to use sawn stone and later ones coursed rubble stone with sawn dressings. The semi-detached pair of houses at the entrance to John Coles Park are in roughcast render with plain clay tiles (Fig 2.6). Flank walls are often in brick and chimneys either of stone or brick, brick ones also occasionally replacing former stone ones. Personalisation of properties in recent years has seen some variations on this theme but not to such an extent to undermine the general character. Boundary treatments to front gardens offer the greatest variety of materials and are clear elements undermining the general uniformity of the built form.



Fig 2.6: This fine pair of 1920's houses were built as warden's houses for John Coles Park. They are the best 20th Century insertions in the character area. There are entrances into the park on each side.

Highway Infrastructure

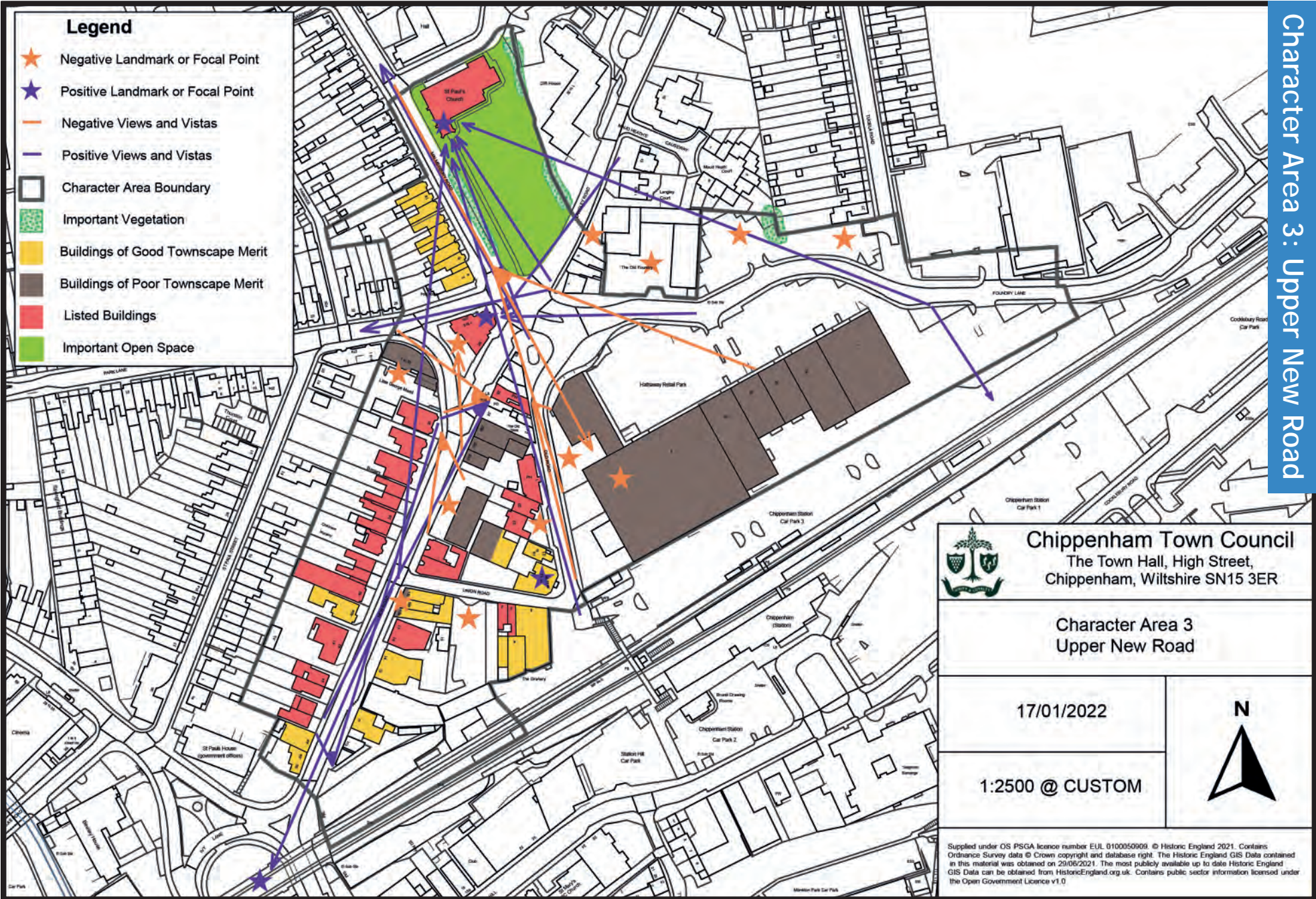
The character of Park Lane is also affected by highway infrastructure and utility equipment. Tall highway style lighting columns line the street, out of scale with the surrounding buildings and more suitable to a motorway environment than an urban street in a market town. The layout of the road space serves to emphasise the dominance of vehicles. The provision of a cycle lane, segregated from the traffic lane between Nos. 55-67, forces cars to be parked near the middle of the street. This makes them more prominent and necessitates a number of build-outs and bollards - all adding to the cluttered appearance of this part of the street (Fig 2.7).



Fig 2.7: Positioning a cycle lane by the kerb has pushed parked cars to a prominent position in the middle of the street and necessitated chicanes and road markings. The whole effect is to add an unnecessary degree of clutter into an otherwise attractive street.

Park Lane is a busy one way street where traffic dominates. It is a street where improvements in the configuration of the cycleway, car parking and public domain would be very welcome.

Character Area 3: Upper New Road



History, Archaeology & Morphology

New Road dates from 1792, when it was constructed by the Chippenham Turnpike Trustees to provide a new route into the town for the roads from Swindon (A420) and Malmesbury (A350) which converged at the Little George public house. Prior to this, the original route into the town was via Old Road and Monkton Hill. A road existed along the route of New Road prior to its construction in 1792, but is shown on the John Powell map of 1784 as a narrow path, and is marked 'old road now unpassable'. Development along either route into the town was limited, being primarily in the vicinity of the long established Little George public house and the West Side of Old Road.

The construction of the railway in the 1840s provided the impetus for major development. New Road was one of the first areas to be developed following the opening of the railway and the architectural style of the villas lining the west side of the street closely resembles the style adopted by Brunel for his railway buildings. The east side of the street was less completely developed with new houses due to existing uses such as the gardens of properties on Old Road, the junction with Union Road and the former Light's timber yard.

To the north, on Malmesbury Road, the imposing St. Paul's Church, by Giles Gilbert Scott, dominates much of the northern part of the town. It was built from 1853-1861 and consecrated in 1855. Development along the road followed this, the first houses being built opposite the rectory, reaching the Little George by around 1900 and Greenway Avenue by the outbreak of the First World War.

The land between Old Road, Foundry Lane and the railway was originally developed by Rowland Brotherhood. Brotherhood, originally from Middlesex, was employed in parts of the construction of the original London to Bristol Railway. Following the progress of the railway along its route, he arrived at Chippenham in 1842 and moved into Orwell House on New Road. He lived here until his death in 1869. Following completion of the railway Brotherhood became primarily involved in maintenance contracts for a number of sections of railway and established in Chippenham a shop to repair maintenance tools. This was the beginning of the Chippenham railway works. In the mid-1840s he took over a local iron founders in New Road. Soon after, he expanded into the production of railway fittings and erected workshops for this purpose on land known as 'The Wall Ground' purchased for this purpose. This is land now currently occupied by the Hathaway Retail Park on the east side of Old Road.

Wagons began to be made in 1849 and in the early 1850s the factory was extended. Lattice and girder bridges were also manufactured and more land was purchased in the mid-1850s as their size increased. The 1860s were a busy period that also saw further expansion. Unfortunately, the period was also one of financial instability, and Brotherhood was eventually made bankrupt in 1869. The works remained empty well into the 1880s and were eventually acquired by the signal manufacturers Saxby & Farmer in 1903 who, in turn, merged with Westinghouse Brake & Signal Company in 1920. Westinghouse continued to expand, with around 2500 employees in 1939, when it also acquired Pew Hill House as its head office. The earlier works, on land between Old Road and Foundry Lane, were gradually occupied by a variety of industrial uses until the site was completely redeveloped as the Hathaway Retail Park in the 1980s. The land to the north of Foundry Lane is still occupied by some large industrial uses, and more recently joined by retail and hotel buildings. Further residential development is planned for this area.

Topography & Views

The land is generally flat, except for New Road itself, which descends on an even gradient from the Little George to meet Marshfield Road and pass under the railway viaduct. On entering the road through the viaduct, one is presented with the bland side elevation of the monolithic St. Paul's House.

The view up the street from the east side is characterised by the imposing former Little George, (La Passione restaurant with flats over), the large steeple of St. Paul's Church rising behind the buildings on the west side, and by the way the roof line of the buildings, particularly the eaves, gradually step up the hill in accordance with the gradient. Mature vegetation in the grounds of flats on Langley Road terminate the view at the top of the street.

On the eastern side of the street the buildings are also generally of a pavilion form and respect the gradient (Fig 3.1). At the junction with Union Road, this is disrupted by No. 18, which is taller than, sits forward from the other buildings and is made more dominant by having a high parapet rather than a shallow pitched roof with large eaves. It is an uncharacteristic dominant form in the street that is characterised by a general uniformity of building form in the majority of its buildings. This building also blocks views of No. 19 and is just as intrusive when viewed in the opposite direction.



Fig 3.1: The fine buildings lining New Road, dominated by traffic.

The view down the street is dominated by the imposing and solid structure of the viaduct, which terminates the view. The full visual impact of the structure cannot be fully appreciated on entering the town along this route, as it is only partly visible until very close. However, the scale of the structure can be appreciated by comparison to the surrounding buildings. The mature vegetation behind puts it into a different context whereby the structure is a feature of the wider landscape.

Towards the top end of the street the uniformity of the buildings and street character is diluted by breaks in the frontage. Between the Little George and No. 30 a slip road exists as part of the one-way traffic system.

Between Nos. 20 and 23d is a site developed upon in an inappropriate manner for a conservation area (Fig 3.2). This site was previously occupied by a now demolished detached building and the gardens of Nos. 22-23, but is now occupied by No. 21 (Salvation Army) - a single storey building of no architectural merit that is set back too far from the other buildings in the street. The open aspect reveals views of some attractive buildings to the rear, also visible from Old Road. However, it is the openness and formless character of the space, which combine to undermine the character of the street as a whole, being uncharacteristic of the prevailing urban form.



Fig 3.2: The scale and form of No. 21 New Road is clearly out of character with the surrounding area. Its impact is detrimental to the Conservation Area.

The view from the Little George along Park Lane presents an attractive vista of buildings gradually giving way to vegetation and a tree-lined horizon. The view from Langley Road is dominated by the impressive front of the Little George building. Two key features dominate the views from and along, Malmesbury Road, Old Road and Foundry Lane. First is St. Paul's Church (Fig 3.3). This is the most notable building in the area and is one of the most dominant and positive landmarks in the whole town and visible from many parts of the town and beyond.



Fig 3.3: The impressive spire of St. Paul's Church dominates the area and is a landmark from numerous points across the town and within the character area. The quality of its setting is compromised by the standardised and over-engineered highway infrastructure of the road junction

The Church is a particular feature of views from Foundry Lane and the footbridge across the railway. The focus of the view from the junction along Old Road is indistinct and undefined, yet is directed at the important site at the corner of Monkton Hill and Station Hill, the plain form of the tyre depot currently occupying the site poorly terminating the view across the railway line. An opportunity exists here to provide a positive landmark to visually link both sides of the railway line.

Whereas the Church is a positive element in the townscape, and suitable as a landmark building due to its use, the second key feature dominating views in the area is Hathaway Retail Park, a negative feature in the townscape. The building makes little attempt to create a positive image,

or be more than simply a functional structure, yet it visually dominates the whole area around the Little George junction. The open parking area in front of the building serves to enable the whole building to be seen in a single view, thus further emphasising its scale and size.

On entering the town along Malmesbury Road, the bland, horizontal, and tall frontage of Hathaway Retail Park blocks almost all views beyond to the town centre, St. Andrew's Church steeple, and the countryside and woodland beyond at Bowood. This undermines the visitors' perception of where the town centre is as well as providing a poor quality and ill-defined entrance into the town (Fig 3.4). The building also undermines views of St. Paul's Church from the railway footbridge. One service yard for the Retail Park occupies most of the length of one side of Old Road, presenting a view of unattractive rear elevations and bin stores and severely eroding the perception of Old Road as a street.

Foundry Lane has also lost its street-like characteristics and form due to the construction of the Retail Park. The slewing of its historic alignment to accommodate the shape of car parks on either side of the Lane and the loss of buildings fronting the Lane has had a negative impact on the townscape. The view along Foundry Lane is terminated by the recent Aldi supermarket and Travelodge buildings. Beyond the Retail Park attractive views of the former Technical School building still exist on the other side of the railway line.



Fig 3.4: The over-scaled, dominant and incongruous Hathaway Retail Park presents a poor impression to those arriving in the town from Malmesbury Road.

General Character

The character area is a dynamic part of the town with a wide variety and range of uses. The area acts both as a local centre and also attracts people from further afield. This variety gives the area a vitality that is a key element of its character. The use of New Road as a one way traffic artery for through traffic is often at odds with this character, as it is a place and destination within its own right, rather than a mere conduit for vehicles. The 'highway' approach is clearly evident in the predominance of highway infrastructure and its standardised designs.

The more 'local' facilities are found around the top end of New Road, centred on a short terrace of shops including a post office, café and gift shop. There is also a public house (Old Road Tavern) close by and opticians, doctors and dentists across the road. The remainder of the western side of New Road consists primarily of offices and a number of properties still in residential use. The remainder of the eastern side of the street consists of high street shops and a number of takeaways. Union Road still contains some industrial uses.

To the east of Hathaway Retail Park new uses, including a supermarket and hotel, have been developed on the former Westinghouse site.

There is a distinct contrast in character between New Road and the Retail Park. New Road contains a high number and wide variety of uses in close proximity with only a limited amount of on-street parking. This produces a range of activities throughout the day and into the evening. The Retail Park occupies a similar area but only about 20% of the outlets to be found on New Road. With the exception of the convenience store, all units are closed by early evening. The Retail Park has only one main access each for vehicles and pedestrians. Thus the area becomes sterile in the evening, separated physically from the surrounding town by its perimeter walls and railings and in terms of the lack of passing vehicles and pedestrians.

The retail park's sterile character comes from it being designed primarily with vehicle access in mind and the quality of the environment of New Road suffers from the effects of high volumes of passing traffic. These effects are particularly apparent at the Little George junction, a place where many roads meet and the majority of the pedestrian activity is to be found. Fortunately the recent highway changes have created new pedestrian crossings across all roads.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The straight and relatively wide nature of New Road, with its even gradient, general uniformity of building heights, shallow pitched roofs and front 'garden' areas, gives the street a formal character with a pleasant open aspect. This is interrupted by the projecting three-storey form of No. 18, and to a lesser extent by Nos. 48-50.

On the west side of the street, Nos. 48-50 are former cottages, now shops. A bracketed canopy, door recess and window are all that remain at ground floor of the original residential frontage. The remainder of the ground floor is occupied by shopfronts that at No. 50 is particularly out of character with the modest scale of the building. The inappropriate size and poor positioning of the sign and the recessed nature of the shopfront at No. 48 have a detrimental effect on the character of the terrace, as does the painted frontage of No. 48 and the replacement UPVC windows at the first floor of No. 50.

Nos. 44-47, fine pairs of early 19th Century houses, have lost their boundary walls and their frontages have been replaced by concrete for vehicle parking (Fig 3.5).



Fig 3.5: Loss of front gardens and boundary walls for parking is detrimental to the character of these listed buildings. Opportunities to provide rear vehicular access should be taken where possible.

No. 46 has also lost its original sash windows. No. 41-42 is a larger semi-detached pair of villas now used as a veterinary surgery. It has retained its boundary wall almost unaltered. No. 40a is the old police station and is in a less refined and more imposing style than the surrounding villas. It retains its low boundary walls almost unaltered, and gate-piers. Nos. 38-40 is a similar terrace to No. 41-42. Though slightly larger in scale than the latter it has lost more of its original features. A modern plate-glass shopfront in an earlier surround and the loss of the boundary wall for a hardstanding disrupts the uniformity of the frontage. Nos. 38-39 remain in residential use, though No. 39 has lost its original windows, door and railings. No. 38 is the most attractive, having lost only its railings for a hedge. Restoration of original fenestration, boundary treatments, and a return to residential use for No. 40 would enhance the appearance of this group considerably.

No. 37 retains its original features intact except for some inconsistency in fenestration. The elegant simplicity of the façade of Nos. 35-36 is almost totally compromised by the loss of original windows and doors for modern replacements.

Gate piers remain and the low boundary walls are in poor repair, and railings have also been lost - replaced by a modern wall at No. 36. Nos. 33-34 are a dental surgery and opticians respectively, and retain matching, if not original, sash windows. The consistency is lost with the boundary treatment as No. 33 has a wall and No. 34 has railings. Original doors have been lost.

No. 32, a doctor's surgery, is the first of three detached villas at the top of the street and has an attractive and neat symmetrical frontage. The insignificant railings, bare garden area and hanging cabling on the frontage combine to give this otherwise attractive building a rather stark and clinical appearance. No. 31 also presents a generally attractive frontage, but would benefit from the replacement of the bland boundary walls with railings. Likewise, No. 30 would benefit from replacement of its modern boundary wall with railings on a low stone wall.

Large freestanding signs composed of modern materials have been unsympathetically erected within the front gardens of a number of commercial properties along the western side of New Road, detracting from the setting of these historic buildings and adding unnecessary commercial clutter to this part of the Conservation Area.

The east side of the street has a less uniform character. It most closely reflects the west side at the bottom end, between the viaduct and Union Road. The newer buildings at No. 11a-d and No. 12 reflect the pavilion villa form of the surrounding ones at Nos. 11, 13-14, 16-17 and 19-20. No. 11a-d is an infill site nestling below the railway embankment on a constrained triangular site and does well to extend the form of the townscape as close as possible to the viaduct. No. 12 is an infill building on the site of the former Light's timber yard. Here, the service bay on the street takes up the whole width of the pavement, passing pedestrians having to use private land of the former garden area. The detail of these modern buildings is poor and bland, and their contribution to the character of the street comes from their form and scale, although No. 12 is poorly sited - not being equidistant from adjacent buildings, and No. 11a-d would benefit from a pitched roof.

Of the original buildings, Nos. 11 and 14 contain inappropriate replacement UPVC windows at first floor level, and No. 11 an inappropriate projecting shopfront (Fig 3.6). The majority of shopfronts are of a poor quality and bear little relationship to their context, the only exception being the relatively unaltered, listed Nos. 16-17. This even retains some boundary treatment, if not original, though has unfortunately had the stone façade of the building painted. The formal coherence of the street is undermined by the loss of boundary treatments. The resultant variety of levels and differing surface materials create an untidy appearance and attract vehicle parking.



Fig 3.6: Replacement UPVC windows are out of character with most historic buildings, particularly in their obtrusive means of opening compared to sash windows. Compare with the central original window.

The high parapet frontage of No. 18 is highly noticeable. This consists of a collection of buildings turning the corner into Union Road, and the New Road frontage is a later, modern addition which projects uncharacteristically beyond the otherwise uniform building line (Fig 3.7). The shopfronts are of poor quality and the small, wide windows at first floor serve to emphasise the large extent of stonework and its linear form. With the exception of No. 18a, UPVC units have replaced all windows at first and second floor level. Their chunky frames and top-hung projecting openings give them a physical presence out of proportion with the rest of the building that they do not warrant, and severely compromise the character of the otherwise attractive original building behind.



Fig 3.7: The projecting addition to No. 18 is a particularly disruptive element in the building frontage and obscures buildings beyond, when viewed from either direction.

The white painted side elevation to No. 18c and the huge extractor shaft on the side of the building further add to the detrimental effect this building has on both New Road and Union Road. Nos. 19-20 mark the last of the pavilion villa form of buildings. Whilst this building has shopfronts projecting onto the former garden area, they do so only to half its depth and their scale is subservient to the main building. Unfortunately their basic design and application of bright paint detract from the appearance of this otherwise attractive listed building.

The huge gap in the street frontage created by the previous Peugeot garage and poor replacement warehouse building at No. 21, when viewed in conjunction with the projecting form of No. 18, gives a distinct sense of imbalance in an otherwise well-ordered and formally laid out street. Infill buildings on this frontage, of a similar form to those at the bottom end of the street, could dramatically improve the appearance of this part of the street.

At the top end of the street the building form is completely different. A short terrace of 2-3 storey buildings turns the acute angle into Old Road. The fronts of these buildings face New Road with the exception of the Old Road Tavern, which has a rear garden entrance into New Road. The buildings present a wide variety of frontages and roof heights, which are a key element of its character. Nos. 25 and 26 have attractive frontages, and No. 27 has a shopfront extending almost the full height of the building. It gives the impression of having been taken from a larger building. The effect, together with application of bright paint and large fascia signage, is rather poorly resolved, though has the potential to be made a far more successful feature. The more recent group at Nos. 23b-d and No. 24 are the least successful. The bland concrete roof of No. 24, the flat roof of No. 23b and the single storey flat roofs of Nos. 23c and 23d contrast poorly with each other and exhibit too great a range of scale and style compared to the other buildings. Generally the terrace contains a number of poor quality shopfronts which serve to have a detrimental effect on a varied and potentially attractive group of buildings that are the heart of the local facilities serving the area.

Prior to the development of the Hathaway Retail Park, Foundry Lane and Old Road continued separately to the Little George road junction. Buildings between these two streets continued the built frontage of the street across into Langley Road. The short terrace at Nos. 1-5 (odd) now sits rather forlornly at one corner of the junction. No. 1 is a pleasant building, though bright paint detailing, painted stone frontage, lost railings and air conditioning units do an effective job of hiding this. Poor quality shopfronts and modern windows contribute to giving Nos. 3 and 5 a rather nondescript appearance.

The Little George building (now a restaurant) dominates the road junction in front of it and is a major local landmark (Fig 3.8). It is seen to its best effect from Langley Road and Foundry Lane. Unfortunately, the existence of the slip-road gives it a somewhat isolated feel. The building is a fine example of Edwardian pub architecture and is listed Grade II.

The building is itself dominated by the imposing presence of St. Paul's Church. The terrace of houses fronting Malmesbury Road date from 1900 and use a darker stone as opposed to the more common Bath stone. This becomes more varied further along the street, with a greater variety of frontages. Most front garden boundaries remain in some form, with a variety of original features also remaining. However, these and original windows are gradually being lost and parts of the street could benefit from the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. The removal of overhead wires would also improve the character of the street as a whole.



Fig 3.8: The former Little George is a local landmark at the road junction, particularly when approaching from Langley Road, though its less attractive rear elevation is prominent approaching from Park Lane on the one-way system. Highway infrastructure also compromises the setting of this listed building.

Hathaway Retail Park faces away from the station and away from the road junction at the Little George. It is an insular and inward looking development with no contribution to any street frontage and all entrances facing inwards to the car park. The buildings form an 'L' shape enclosing the car park serving them and define it as the most important space. The Retail Park is a prime example of urban form built for vehicular access, with the car park being the focus of activity and little provision for pedestrians. The buildings are large, bulky and inward looking, and totally out of scale with surrounding buildings. The buildings also exhibit the large-scale 'building block' architectural details, which lack visual interest, and detail at the human scale. From an architectural and townscape perspective, the retail park offers nothing positive to the character of this part of the town. The bulky form of the building hides the presence of the railway station, a focal point and major pedestrian and vehicular destination. On arrival at the railway station, the high blank rear wall of the building presents an unattractive impression of the town to visitors and blocks views of St. Paul's Church.

Old Road is on the verge of becoming an extended service yard for the Retail Park (Fig 3.9). The service area and DIY store yard occupy the whole of the eastern side of the street, the only frontage being a blank wall and the only activity being the delivery of goods.



Fig 3.9: *The Hathaway Retail Park has reduced the east side of Old Road to a service area, with lorries often parking half on the street to unload. This is a major pedestrian route into the town centre and presents a poor image of the town.*

On the western side of the street, although it is well defined by buildings, only the Old Road Tavern and the former Georges Railway public house (now housing) front onto the road (Fig 3.10).



Fig 3.10: *The former Georges Railway pub is a notable and attractive landmark at the junction of Old Road and Union Road, particularly when viewed from the footbridge across the railway.*

The rear of Nos. 24-27a New Road provides Old Road with a frontage of often untidy rear elevations of painted brick and render facades and large refuse bins kept in the street. Nos. 22 and 23 New Road now also have sole access to their properties from Old Road, although originally the rear of these properties. This part of the street would benefit from coherent boundary treatment and enhancement of the space in front of the buildings, with consideration for refuse storage needs.

Union Road has a distinctly industrial character to it. The narrow street and high buildings at either end help contribute to this, as do the remaining industrial uses at Nos. 2-6. The two warehouse buildings at Nos. 2-6 and the former brewery building to the rear of the former Georges Railway pub (now converted into flats) are also part of the distinctive industrial character of the street, as is the listed former weighbridge at the top of the street. The brewery building is seen to best effect from Old Road. Halfway along either side of the street, derelict sites create large gaps in the frontage and weaken the definition of the street. Opportunity exists for sensitive infill development in the street to reinforce its industrial character and intimate scale.

Vegetation

Vegetation is not a dominant feature within the area, and where it does exist can be inappropriate in scale and species. Small scale planting between the roundabouts at the Little George and around the Retail Park does little to soften the harsh landscape of tarmac and scale of the buildings. However, the traditional domestic planting in front of the properties on the western side of New Road is predominantly of an appropriate scale and species. Unfortunately this has been lost on the eastern side where the former front garden areas have been replaced by tarmac.

The main positive impact of vegetation comes from views from the Little George junction along the roads leading out from it. The view along Park Lane consists of vegetation at the end of the street, trees lining Hardenhuish Brook and trees on the horizon. The view down New Road reveals mature vegetation providing a landscape setting for the viaduct. Vegetation on the embankment in front though, partially obscures the view of the viaduct. The view north along Malmesbury Road is terminated by the mature vegetation in the grounds of detached houses and by trees fronting John Coles Park. The graveyard of St. Paul's Church provides a pleasant open green space allowing good close-by views of the whole church. The space is enclosed on one side by buildings, and on the other by mature trees in the grounds of the adjacent flats, which also terminate the view up New Road.

The view along Foundry Lane is terminated by mature trees on the far side of the railway, along Cocklebury Road. The view south along Malmesbury Road is dominated by the bulk of the retail sheds at Hathaway Retail Park. This allows only very constrained views of the trees in Monkton Park, St. Andrew's Church steeple and the mature landscape of Bowood in the far distance. From the railway footbridge, the Little George and St. Paul's Church, together with the adjacent mature trees and those of John Coles Park, combine to create a fine skyline to the north, marred only by the bulk of the retail sheds in the foreground.

Materials

New Road is the most formal, planned street in the area and this is reflected in the materials used. Bath stone ashlar is the predominant facing material with either warm orange coloured engineering brick or rubble stone for side and rear elevations. Chimneys are of sawn Bath stone. Slate on shallow pitched roofs is the predominant and traditional roofing material. Windows are traditionally timber painted sashes, either 6-pane or with margin lights. Painted, artificial or reconstituted stone, large windows and ribbed or roman tiles are generally out of character with most buildings on New Road. At the top end of the street there is a more eclectic mix of materials, not all suitable to the buildings they adorn. Timber framing and painted and rendered facades may be considered not out of character here. The stone on many buildings is dirty under the eaves and would benefit from cleaning.

On Union Road and Old Road there is more variety, with greater use of brick as well as both sawn and coursed rubble Bath stone, and roman and clay tiles on the larger buildings. There is also a greater range of window sizes, but painted timber sashes or casements are still predominant. The houses fronting Malmesbury Road are generally of a darker facing stone with sawn Bath stone dressings. Roofs were originally of slate, but modern concrete tiles have now replaced many.

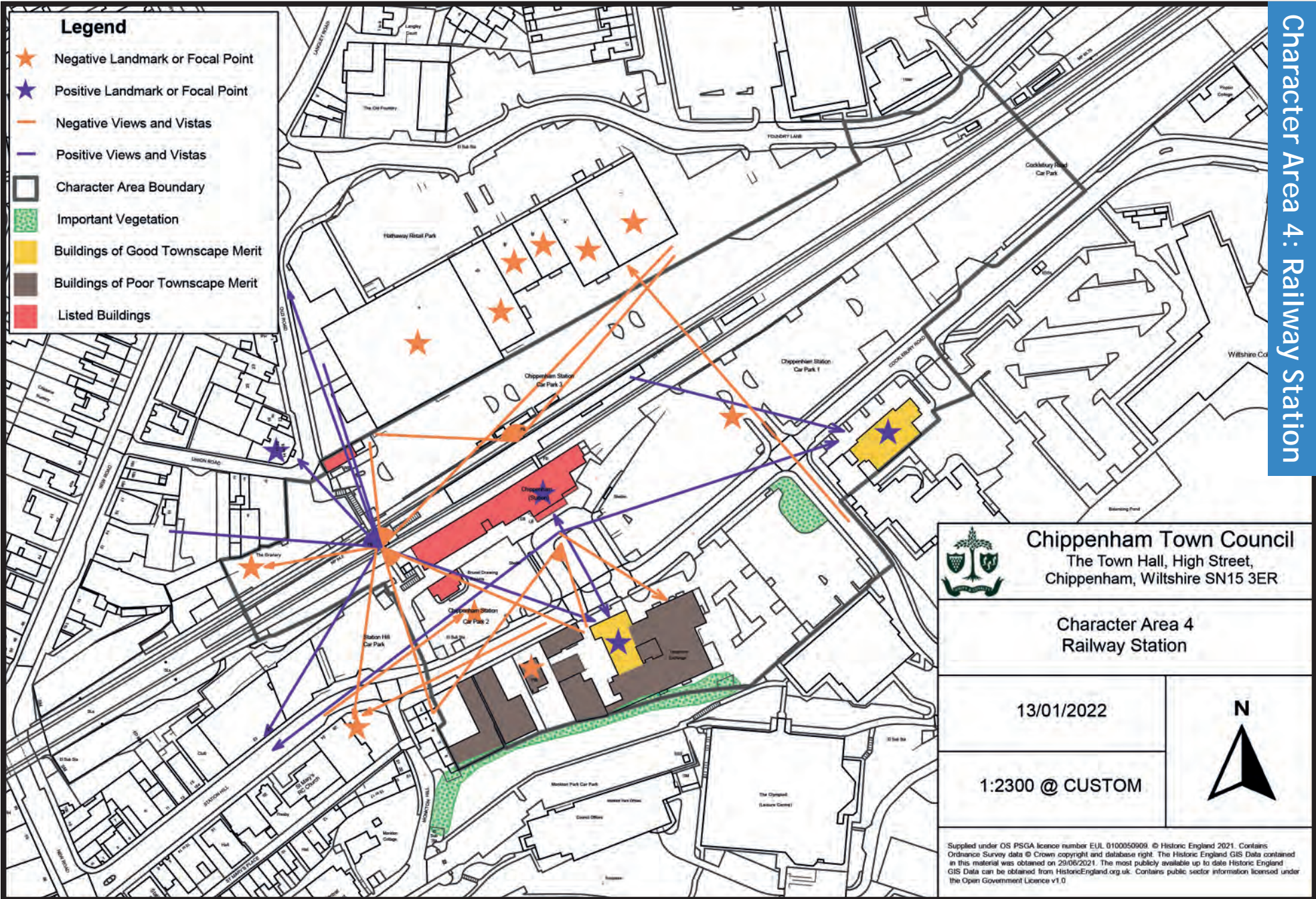
Highway Infrastructure

The Little George roundabout has recently been removed and replaced with a large area of highway, controlled by traffic lights and incorporating several pedestrian crossings. All of the traffic entering the town from Marshfield Road, Malmesbury Road and Langley Road passes through the junction and along the one-way system down New Road. This concentration of traffic on New Road has a major impact on the character of the area. However the removal of the pedestrian underpass adjacent to the viaduct has enabled several crossings to be created, giving improved access for pedestrians and cyclists.

New Road is a busy one way street where traffic dominates. It is a street where improvements in the public domain, such as narrowing the carriageway and improving cycling and pedestrian routes in both directions, would be very welcome.

Lighting columns are of a variety of designs and finishes. Many have large projecting light units necessitating high poles to ensure adequate clearance from high vehicles. Such designs are more suited to motorway use rather than an urban street environment. Alternative designs could avoid this and provide more suitably scaled units more in keeping with the character of the street.

There is an excessive and often unnecessary clutter of highway infrastructure at the top of New Road. Bright standard galvanised finishes, excessive numbers of poles, lighting and railings merely reinforces the dominance of vehicles in the street and the controlling of pedestrian movement for vehicular convenience. Little attempt appears to be made to integrate harmoniously into the streetscape the necessary highway infrastructure, which currently has an over-engineered and dominant character.



- Legend**
- ★ Negative Landmark or Focal Point
 - ★ Positive Landmark or Focal Point
 - Negative Views and Vistas
 - Positive Views and Vistas
 - Character Area Boundary
 - Important Vegetation
 - Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
 - Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
 - Listed Buildings

Chippenham Town Council
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

**Character Area 4
Railway Station**

13/01/2022

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History, Archaeology & Morphology

Prior to the coming of the railway in 1841, development of the town had largely confined itself to the south of the River Avon. The railway precipitated major development on the north side of the River, bringing new industry and associated housing. Construction of the railway forced the closure of the Malmesbury Road as a through route from its alignment along Old Road and Monkton Hill. Traffic was diverted along the newer turnpike route, constructed prior to the coming of the railway and consisting of what is now New Road. The railway also saw the construction of the viaduct, one of the town's major landmarks.

Station Hill was constructed to give access to the railway station. Beyond the station, Cocklebury Road was constructed to maintain access to Cocklebury Farm, the original access via Foundry Lane also having been severed by the railway line. The only physical evidence of the pre-railway alignment of Malmesbury Road is now a kink in the road as Station Hill becomes Cocklebury Road. This is where the road skirted around a terrace of houses once fronting Old Road and was demolished in the 1970s.

Development of land around the station since the opening of the railway has been slow, sporadic and unplanned. Industrial and commercial uses predominated until after the Second World War. Emjay Engineering on Union Road and the small warehouses between Monkton Hill and the telephone exchange are all that remain of these initial uses. These are mainly low-rise buildings, reflecting the then edge-of-town location of the station. More recently the telephone exchange has replaced the Wiltshire Creamery, Hathaway Retail Park has replaced the bacon factory and the railway goods yard has become the station car park.

Topography & Views

Views can form an important impression and defining characteristic of an area. The station is sited on high ground in relation to the town centre. This affords impressive views of the town to the south, but the large rear elevation of the Retail Park creates a stark and bland visual barrier to the north, blocking views of all but the spire of St. Paul's Church (Fig 4.1).



Fig 4.1: The monolithic blank rear façade of the Hathaway Retail Park is a particularly unattractive feature. It isolates the station from the north of the town and blocks views of the Grade II* listed St. Paul's Church.

The two key viewpoints in the area are the station entrance and the footbridge across the railway, which has been enlarged with the addition of lifts onto the platforms. Being higher up, the footbridge offers a wider range of views, but the station entrance is also important for the number of people using it. In general, the longer views are more positive and dramatic than the shorter ones – these being dominated by the incoherent agglomeration of buildings surrounding the station.

From the station entrance the main views giving a positive impression are the original telephone exchange building and the former Technical School building. A longer view down Station Hill affords a pleasant view of Rowden Hill and its dense mature tree cover. Negative views from the station entrance include the sea of cars parked around the station, the rather brutal telephone exchange extension, the plethora of small industrial buildings on the opposite side of Cocklebury Road and the garage at the corner of Station Hill and Monkton Hill. A positive recent development in views from the Station entrance is the conversion of the old sorting office into a Sainsbury store, utilising the existing concrete framework to create a fine modern elevation facing the car park (Fig 4.2).

From the footbridge long views to Rowden Hill, along the river valley towards Rowden Manor, over the town centre to Bowood Hill, and across the river valley to Bremhill all give positive impressions of the town and help reinforce its identity as a market town in a rural setting. Views of the large spires of both St. Paul's and St. Andrew's churches are visible from the footbridge. However the tall conifers growing on the embankment adjacent to the Wiltshire Council offices weaken the visual connection between these two significant landmarks on the north and south sides of the town. The large slab cladding of the rear wall of Hathaway Retail Park deflects attention away from and partly obscures the view of St. Paul's Church. The footbridge also allows a number of less pleasant views. Those from the station entrance are made more obvious by the higher vantage point and others also become apparent, notably the blank rear of the Retail Park and the rear of the industrial buildings fronting Union Road.



Fig 4.2: The old Post Office sorting office, where the concrete frame of the 20th Century part has been incorporated into the Sainsbury's store.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The area contains relatively few buildings, and only a few of these are of any architectural note. The main buildings of note are the railway station and drawing office (station completed 1848, current buildings 1856-8). These are probably the finest buildings in the Character Area (Fig 4.3).



Fig 4.3: The listed station building, missing some chimneys, with the footbridge to the left.

Other buildings of note, and not listed, are the telephone exchange (1935) opposite, and the former Technical School building (1898) (Fig 4.4). The telephone exchange building provides an important and prominent counterpoint to the station buildings.



Fig 4.4: The attractive Victorian frontage of the former Technical School building, with the unattractive 1980's extensions behind.

Planning consent was granted in 2018 for the demolition of the former Technical School building and all the other former College premises. The planned demolition of the former Technical School was strongly resisted by many people and organisations in Chippenham, on the grounds of its architectural quality and historical significance - it is understood that when built it was one of the first purpose built grammar schools in the country. There may therefore still be an opportunity for a more sensitive scheme which retains and incorporates this fine Edwardian building. Accordingly, the former Technical School building is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Policy TC5 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Other buildings of note are the disused former coal yard weighbridge office (listed Grade II) at the top of Union Road, the former Georges Railway pub and adjacent buildings, and the cottages at the top of Monkton Hill (listed Grade II), their setting being somewhat marred by a large tarmac forecourt. The main centre of activity is the station itself. The types of activity it generates define the character of the space in front of the station. The forecourt is a vibrant and dynamic space, particularly at the beginning and end of the working day.

Much of the space between the railway line and Cocklebury Road was originally part of the railway goods yard. As goods traffic declined and car travel increased, and the remaining buildings at the top of Station Hill were demolished, the area was gradually given over to car parking, and developed into its current state in a rather unplanned fashion.



Fig 4.5: The station building and approach has benefitted from extensive refurbishment in recent years, with further improvements in the offing.

In recent years substantial improvements have been carried out to the station buildings and their setting, and a further improvement scheme is in the offing (Fig 4.5). This will improve access to the station and the public domain, and reduce the current prominence of car parking. A new development is also planned for the opposite side of Cocklebury Road which would replace the existing industrial sheds.

Vegetation

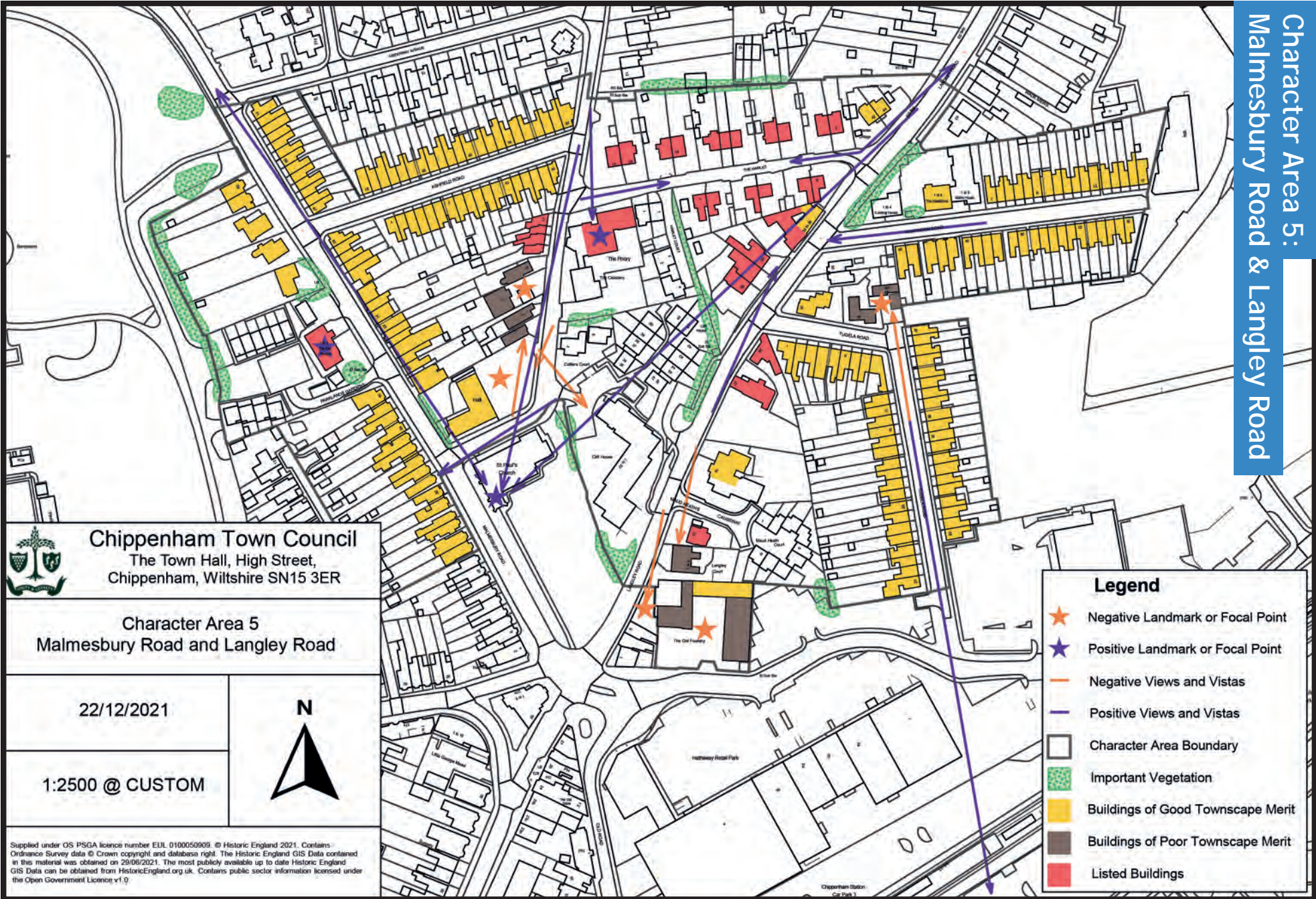
There has been some welcome formal tree planting within the station approach. Vegetation also exists on the periphery of the area, which contributes positively to its character. The densely treed embankment adjacent to Wiltshire Council offices helps define the space more effectively than the low-rise collection of buildings fronting Cocklebury Road.


Similarly, Cocklebury Road is lined with trees, some mature, on both sides beyond Sadlers Mead and this adds a degree of definition and enclosure to the area.

Materials

The industrial and commercial character of the area, which has developed slowly over a long period, has led to a wide range of prevalent building materials and styles. Building materials include concrete cladding, metal sheeting, brick in a range of colours and finishes, glass, smooth and rough painted render and sawn and rubble stone. Roofing materials include stone, slate, concrete and clay tiles and other modern cladding materials.

Character Area 5:
Malmesbury Road & Langley Road

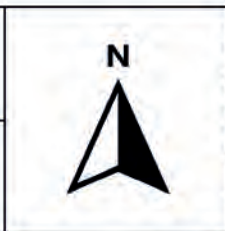


 **Chippenham Town Council**
The Town Hall, High Street,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER










Character Area 5
Malmesbury Road and Langley Road

22/12/2021

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Legend

-  Negative Landmark or Focal Point
-  Positive Landmark or Focal Point
-  Negative Views and Vistas
-  Positive Views and Vistas
-  Character Area Boundary
-  Important Vegetation
-  Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
-  Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
-  Listed Buildings

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History, Archaeology & Morphology

Until the coming of the railway and associated industry, Malmesbury Road, Langley Road and Greenway Lane remained rural roads in the countryside. Change came gradually, and during the latter half of the 19th Century and beginning of the 20th Century the area remained as the north-eastern edge of the town. Tugela Road, Ashfield Road and Hawthorn Road are a direct result of the industrial development following the opening of the railway, and date from the turn of the 20th Century. Langley Road is the start of Maud Heath's Causeway, laid out in the 15th Century, over 4 miles in length, to enable a dry route across the Avon valley to Tytherton and Calne.

Malmesbury Road remained undeveloped until the construction of St. Paul's Church, consecrated in 1855. Following the building of the Church and Rectory, most of the road became lined with terraces of relatively modest but attractive houses by the end of the 19th Century. Construction of the Church caused Greenway Lane to be diverted from its original straight course to Langley Road to its current alignment to Malmesbury Road.

Langley Road saw only sporadic development of a small number of houses during the 19th Century, the only planned development being The Hamlet. Almost all buildings from this era remain and are all listed. The main exception being Clift House, an aesthetically poor block formerly occupying large grounds adjacent to the Church. The grounds extended from The Hamlet and Greenway Lane to Langley Road. The northern part of the gardens were developed by The Priory at the beginning of the 20th Century, the house and remainder of the gardens were more recently redeveloped for sheltered housing, this non listed building is a positive contribution to the area. Many of the trees from the original gardens have been retained and help to screen and soften the bulk of the blocks of flats. The trees also define the open space of the graveyard and screen the flats from key views of the church.

Topography & Views

The land is generally flat and views confined to the spaces defined by buildings lining the streets. This occasionally breaks down, with both positive and negative effects. The most dominant feature of the whole area is the steeple of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's St. Paul's Church. From Malmesbury Road, Langley Road and Greenway Lane, there are impressive long views in to the steeple of the Church, and from Greenway Lane, of the whole of the Church itself. From the rear entrance to Clift House is a pleasant view of the parapetted frontage of No. 34 Malmesbury Road. In the opposite direction along Langley Road there is a pleasant view of the curving frontage of the gabled Inter-War houses with a backdrop of mature trees near the main entrance to Langley Park industrial estate. The view out along Malmesbury Road is also pleasant, being dominated by the mature vegetation of John Coles Park and surrounding private gardens. Thus the approach to the town is also generally attractive, though the overhead wirescape and Retail Park in the distance undermine this to a degree.

From Hawthorn Road there is a pleasant view towards the listed No. 32 Langley Road and adjacent listed buildings at Nos. 26-30 Langley Road. The buildings and surrounding vegetation combine to form an attractive general landscape, the most distinctive feature being the impressive evergreen oak projecting out into the street adjacent to Hawthorn House. The differing scale of the buildings and the gated entry gives both a sense of isolation and domination of the view.

The view south along Tugela Road is directly aligned with the steeple of St. Andrew's Church on St. Mary Street and provides an impressive focal point to the vista, best viewed from the north end of the street. Unfortunately the huge bulk of the Hathaway Retail Park intrudes into the vista, significantly diluting the visual impact of the steeple with its blank side elevation and being totally out of scale with the surrounding buildings (Fig 5.1).



Fig 5.1: Tugela Road is a typically urban street of solid terraced houses but the overhead wirescape is a notably intrusive feature.

The Hamlet retains its completeness and distinctive character and views along the narrow lane are particularly attractive in both directions. However, overhead wires and extensive double yellow lines detract from the view and undermine the otherwise strong rural character (Fig 5.2). On Greenway Lane, The Priory has a pleasant aspect from the north. Between The Priory and the Church the definition of the street breaks down with unattractive views of the rear access to Clift House, The Priory, parish hall car park and the stark side elevation of the adjacent house.



Fig 5.2: The Hamlet is an exceptionally picturesque lane with a rural ambience to it. Overhead cables and yellow lines are particularly dominant and intrusive features. Their removal would improve the character and setting of the street and listed buildings immeasurably.

General Character

The area is primarily residential in character. The most recent change being the conversion of the old rectory in Malmesbury Road into apartments, with a well-designed housing scheme at Parklands Gardens to the rear. The Priory on Greenway Lane and Clift House on Langley Road are sheltered housing developments. Other uses are limited, including offices and a veterinary surgery on Langley Road, and Parish Hall and dentist on Malmesbury Road. The latter and Langley Road are both busy traffic routes, and in peak hours queuing traffic can stretch beyond the boundary of the character area.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

Langley Road

Langley Road weaves a gentle curve through the character area. On entering the area from the Wootton Bassett direction, the uniform building line and density of the inter-war housing gives way to the older buildings and the uniformity of the street frontage breaks down, boundary walls, hedges and trees defining a less rigid and relatively open street space. This openness gives way to a greater degree of enclosure at Clift House where the narrowing and curving street (with the loss of one pavement) combined with the mature trees provides a sense of enclosure before the space opens out again at the Little George junction. The flats at Nos. 1-9 Langley Court, and the vegetation in front of them, help provide this enclosure. However, the enclosing effect of Langley Court is more than outweighed by the detrimental dwarfing effect it has on the setting of the adjacent Clift Cottage, an attractive listed cottage. Its bland roof and side elevation sits at an awkward angle very close to the cottage.

Rising behind the trees, St. Paul's Church steeple provides a significant and imposing landmark. With the listed buildings at Nos. 26-36 in the foreground, this is a scene of particularly high townscape quality, the unattractive wirescape being the only jarring element (Fig 5.3).



Fig 5.3: *The fine entry into the town from Langley Road is enriched by this lovely terrace of early 19th Century houses. Reinstatement of railings would improve them still further.*

Adjacent to Langley Court is an MOT centre with a nondescript forecourt. The forecourt is currently filled with large vehicles, giving the site a cramped and incongruous appearance in relation to the modest scale of the surrounding buildings. Between the garage and Langley Court the driveway reveals the attractive stone side elevations of industrial buildings, including a tall square brick chimney. These are the remaining buildings of a former Iron Foundry and possibly date from the original Brotherhood railway works (see Area 3 for more on this).

The flats of Clift House are of no particular architectural merit, but their scale is generally appropriate to the surrounding mature trees. Opposite Clift House, and between the veterinary surgery and Clift Cottage is a recently completed courtyard of houses. They generally reflect the style and scale of the surgery, which is an attractive Edwardian semi-detached pair of former houses (inappropriate UPVC windows being the only jarring element). Tree planting at the street entrance, with species which will grow to match the stature of those in the grounds of Clift House, would help to reduce the stark visual impact of this development.

At the entrance to Tugela Road, No. 31 has an attractive timber oriel window. At the entrance to Hawthorn Road is a new two storey block of four flats. It has a simple and attractive form turning the corner well. It is topped with a hipped roof of a simple, attractive form, and is clad in render and timber boarding (Fig 5.4). Adjacent is Hawthorn House, a simple but attractive building of Bath stone.



Fig 5.4: *This modern block of four flats turns the corner well, and is a positive insertion into the street scene.*

Opposite is a semi-detached pair of cottages in the style of those in The Hamlet. Though acceptable, they are not part of the original estate and have failed to pick up on the vernacular details found in The Hamlet.

The Hamlet

The Hamlet consists of a short straight lane lined predominantly with pairs of two and three storey former agricultural cottages in coursed limestone rubble. All the cottages are Grade II listed. The buildings are set well back from the lane and generously spaced apart, giving a feel of openness. A line of mature trees provides an attractive backdrop for the houses on the north side of the lane. Boundary treatments vary, though stone walls and hedges are most common and remain low, adding to the uniformity of the streetscape and feel of openness. A number of pairs have individual distinguishing characteristics, most notably the rustic timber columns at the entrance to Nos. 16 & 17.

Whilst the lane is clearly a space of high townscape quality, distinctly different from all surrounding development, a number of elements combine to erode this character. A number of the houses have inappropriate replacement window designs and some of the open porches have been enclosed with inappropriate modern doors and windows. Some boundary treatments are of inappropriate materials. As there is no on-street parking allowed, many properties have had driveways constructed. The generous grounds around the houses have allowed these to be integrated into the street scene relatively unobtrusively. The most successful ones are those of loose gravel with no gates retaining as much low stone wall as possible. Use of tarmac and gates and railings is an inappropriate and suburban intrusion into the generally rural character of the lane.

However, the most significant intrusion comes from the plethora of overhead wires and, at street level, the double-yellow lines. One positive effect of the ban on parking is to ensure no vehicles are parked in the street. It is hard to underestimate the positive effect this has on the general appearance of the street as a whole.

Greenway Lane

Each end of the lane, within the Conservation Area boundary, is characterised by attractive buildings, making a positive contribution to the townscape. At the north end is a short terrace of four listed cottages of humble scale forming a neat and attractive composition. Inappropriate replacement windows in No. 11 are the most noticeably discordant feature.

Opposite is The Priory. It is an attractive house in the arts and crafts style, dating from the early 20th Century (Fig 5.5). It is now extended and used as a nursing home. However, there is now a more recent extension, which partly obliterates the view of the house from Greenway Lane.



Fig 5.5: The picturesque, non-listed, Priory, a rare example of an Arts and Crafts style house in Chippenham, now a home for the elderly. It has been sensitively extended to the right.

At the south end of the street the Church is the dominant building. As on its south side, mature trees screen the adjacent Clift House flats from the Church, though the Parish Hall car park makes for a poor foreground setting. The north and west side of the Church is surrounded by a low wall with the remains of removed railings evident. Reinstatement of the railings would be a significant improvement to the boundary treatment of the Church. The Parish Hall itself is a simple attractive, unlisted building in unpainted roughcast render. Its relatively unaltered state, inscribed frieze on the frontage, foundation stone (laid by Sir Audley Neeld in 1917) and the original timber framed fenestration are key elements that make the building a positive feature of the street scene. The principal elevation is the Malmesbury Road entrance and the side elevation to Greenway Lane is dominated by the rather bland and large expanse of roof. This elevation could benefit from tree planting to soften the impact of the roof.

By contrast, buildings in the central section are generally of no particular architectural quality and distinctly suburban in character. The variety of angles to, and distances from the street of buildings, creates an ill-defined and amorphous space in this area. The houses on the west side of the street have been developed individually on the rear gardens of the older terraces fronting Malmesbury Road. This has been done with little reference to or acknowledgement of the street frontage or architectural reference to adjacent buildings (Fig 5.6). South of this is the large open area of the St. Paul's Parish Hall car park. Surrounded by a low modern blockwork wall, it is an expanse of tarmac devoid of any vegetation, with a stark and desolate feel. On the east side is the rear access to Clift House flats, the parking area to The Priory and two detached houses at right angles to the street sandwiched in between. The corner in the lane serves to accentuate the amorphousness and lack of strong street frontage.



Fig 5.6: *Across the road from the Priory are some modern houses built on backland that relate poorly to the street frontage and provide an incoherent mix of styles, materials and forms, blank side elevations being particularly prominent.*

Malmesbury Road

Malmesbury Road is more densely developed than Langley Road or Greenway Lane. The earliest houses were developed in the late 19th Century following the building of the Church and Rectory. These are a short terrace of simple cottages opposite the Rectory. These have been much altered over time by rendering, painting, roof-raising, porches and replacement windows, often to the detriment of their overall appearance. However, their relative informality and smaller scale marks them out as distinctive from the other more formal and elaborately decorated buildings in the street. Original features such as stone frontages, stone porch canopies and enclosed front gardens remain in places. Restoration of original appearance and features would be appropriate to some of the dwellings.

The Rectory used to be known as Parklands and was a residential care home for the elderly. It is of squared limestone rubble in the Gothic Revival style and is attributed to Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. This listed building has now been sensitively refurbished and converted to residential apartments (Fig 5.7). To the rear an elegant terrace of houses has been built which, in combination with a retained terrace of 1950s bungalows, form a fine courtyard with the rear of the listed building as its centrepiece.



Fig 5.7: *The old Rectory has been beautifully restored and split into apartments, with a well-designed housing scheme to the rear.*

Between Parklands and the Little George, the street is lined with short terraces and semi-detached pairs of houses and villas dating from around the turn of the 20th Century.

The houses consist of a variety of different frontages in late Victorian or Edwardian style. This gives the street a richness and diversity, which is given a sense of order by the common building line, closeness of the buildings and the continuity of the enclosed small front gardens. The terraces provide an attractive and fitting setting for the listed St. Paul's Church opposite. The character of the frontage is beginning to be eroded by the use of a variety of modern boundary treatments and the loss of original sash windows with inappropriate UPVC replacements.

To the north of Parklands are a group of three detached and two semi-detached houses dating from the early 20th Century. All are of a differing appearance, though the overall effect is of a high quality townscape of attractive houses. Wych Elm is a detached painted rendered house with clay tile roof and metal casement windows. It is set behind a high stone wall. The view through the driveway gives the impression of a sleepy and secluded country cottage.

No. 56 is stone fronted with full height bay enclosed by an open timber framed gable. Tall chimneys, decorative roof and ridge tiles and an attractive oriel window to the side are distinguishing features. Unfortunately the boundary wall has lost its railings and a wide opening has been cut in it to provide vehicle access, both disrupting the proportion and appearance of the building's setting.

No. 58 (Panolbion) is a somewhat grander house in warm orange brick with stone dressings. The roofscape is impressive, with timber framed and roughcast rendered gabled front, large barge boards and eaves overhang, decorative ridge tiles and two tall and slender chimney stacks. The boundary wall remains intact and gates and gate-piers have been retained in the access to the adjacent garage. The entrance consists of an open recessed porch with stone pediment arch and inscribed name. Unfortunately railings have been lost from the boundary walls and the original windows have been lost to UPVC replacements with chunky frames and inward opening lights.

Nos. 60-62 are a fine pair of Arts and Crafts style semi-detached houses with a central second storey gabled front. The roof form is the dominant feature and the second and first storeys are in rough cast render and the ground floor in warm orange brick with stone dressings to the wide single storey bays and door surrounds. Though an attractive and imposing building, its setting is compromised by the complete removal of the boundary walls and front gardens for vehicle parking. In addition both have replacement UPVC windows, their large chunky frames looking particularly incongruous in the narrow lights of the ground floor bays and disrupting the symmetry, proportion and balance of the pair.

On the opposite side of the street are two terraces of houses from the late 19th/early 20th Century. Unlike the houses opposite the Church, these are all built to a similar design. Whilst the houses have suffered somewhat from modern boundary treatments and loss of original windows, details such as stone dressings, solid chimney stacks, brick boundary walls give a sense of coherence to the group (Fig 5.8).



Fig 5.8: The attractive terraces along Malmesbury Road contain a number of distinctive features, including recessed porches with tiled dado panels.

Particularly notable are the castellated tops to the bays and open recessed porches with ogee arches and glazed tile dado panels. Such details are common to all the houses, raise them above the ordinary and ensure they are an attractive composition in the street scene.



Tugela, Hawthorn Roads & Ashfield Road

Ashfield Road precedes Hawthorn Road in its construction date and runs from east to west connecting Greenway Lane with Malmesbury Road. The street is fronted on either side by terraced houses in warm orange engineering brick. The terraces have yellow brick quoins and window and door surrounds, also as a chequerboard pattern to indicate the change in internal floors (Fig 5.9). A stone on the facade between the last two dwellings of the terrace at the junction with Greenway Lane states 1904. The street has seen a lot of incremental changes to its character over the years. A wide variety of PVC windows and doors vie with similar features made from alternative materials. Roof tiles have been replaced by different types and styles of material such as double roman clay tiles. The street appears to have retained its chimneys but has lost some of its party wall parapets. The addition of porches to some properties has also been done in an unsympathetic manner. Towards the west end of the road where the terraces end and the rear gardens to Malmesbury road begin a pleasant view of St Paul's Church is afforded.

Fig 5.9: Ashfield Road, this end of the terrace has lost some historic features such as the party wall parapet that separates the properties along the roof line, original roof tiles, replacement by PVC of windows and doors. However, there are recent examples of more sympathetic fenestration being reintroduced, such as at the end property

The entrance to Hawthorn Road is dominated by the simple block of four flats (see above). The houses across the street from Hawthorn House are the more distinctive in the street, reflecting their proximity to Hawthorn House and the main road, being of sawn Bath stone and coursed limestone or Bath stone. The remainder of the houses are of a similar design, being of orange engineering brick with Bath stone and glazed buff coloured brick dressings and open arched porch recesses. Although much personalisation has taken place to windows, roof materials and painting of surrounds, the street retains its coherence through its regularity of form, roof line, building line, chimneys, front gardens, simple decorative features and the lack of any major physical alterations to the dwellings.

Tugela Road has junctions with Langley Road and Foundry Lane, although the latter is no longer a through route for vehicles. The visual connection is important, however, as it allows easy pedestrian and cycle access to local shops and the town centre, also maintaining a strong visual connection to the town centre with an important and distinctive view of St. Andrew's Church. The street is rigidly defined by the terraced houses lining it, but this distinctive enclosure breaks down at Foundry Lane. Here the side effects of the construction of the Hathaway Retail Park and Aldi store have created large areas of car parking, dominated by tarmac. The houses are of a dark coursed rubble ironstone with Bath stone dressings.

Recessed open porches, Bath stone eaves course and decorative carved lintels to windows and porches provide distinctive common elements as do the regular line of brick chimney stacks. Such features help make this an attractive street despite the variety of replacement windows, roof materials and garden boundary treatments.

At the turn in the road, and terminating the view northward, is a rather bland house with a concrete forecourt and double garage. Adjacent is a modern bungalow. Both these buildings are out of character with the street, the house being set back from the road and the bungalow being out of scale and density with the surrounding terraces. Along the shorter section of the street, No. 31 Langley Road has a particularly attractive timber oriel window. The main negative element in the townscape is the plethora of overhead wires, as with Hawthorn Road, made particularly prominent due to the enclosed nature of the street.

Vegetation

Generally vegetation is an important element of the character of this part of the Conservation Area. Vegetation associated with large houses such as Clift House and Parklands is particularly important, as is that often to be found in the gardens of larger houses on Malmesbury Road both in and outside the Conservation Area. Background vegetation such as that in John Coles Park, to the north of The Hamlet, and by the entrance to Langley Park industrial estate is also important in providing enclosure and the setting for the wider landscape.

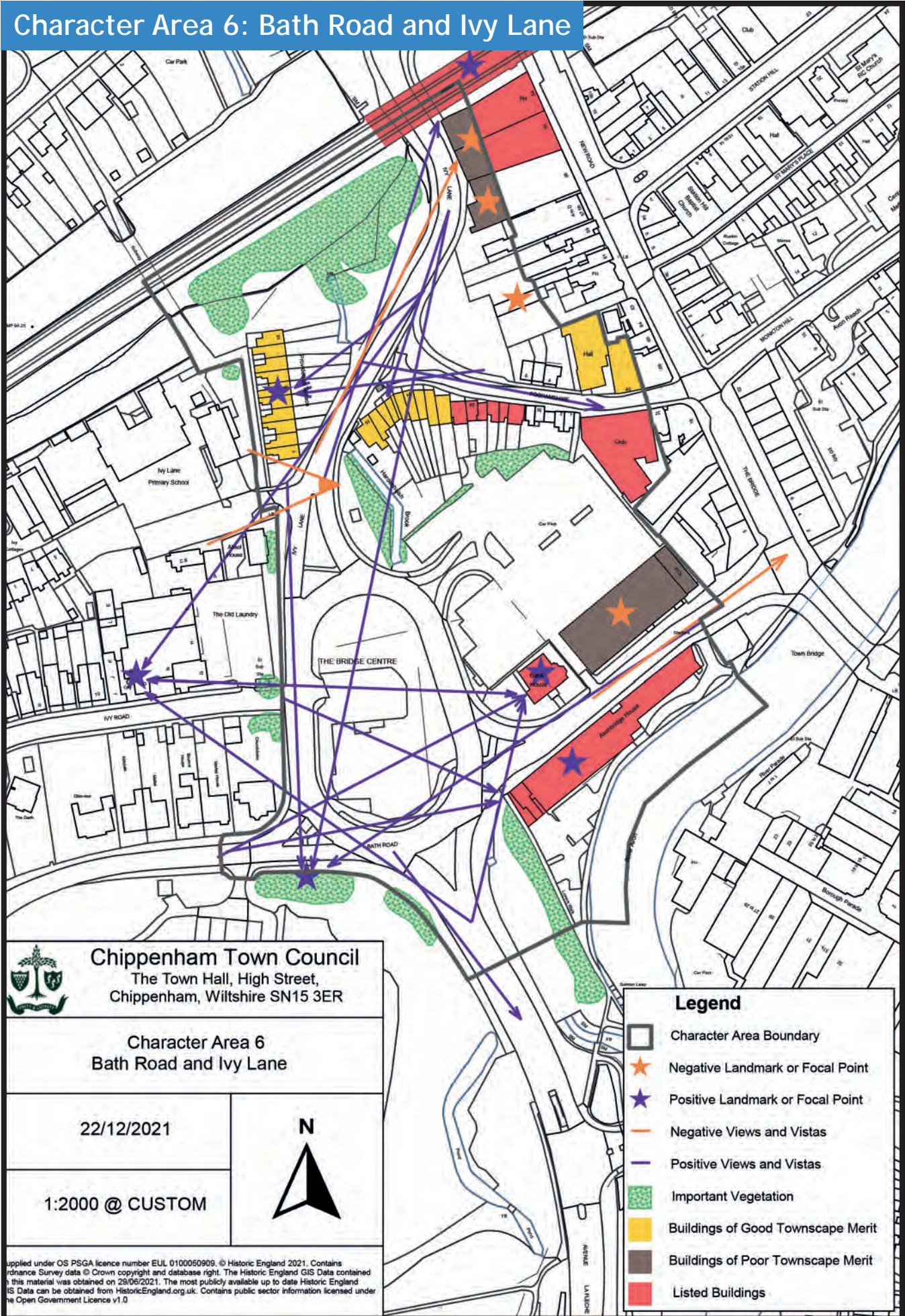
Materials

Over the whole character area a diversity of building materials are evident. However, individual developments such as The Hamlet, Hawthorn Road, Tugela Road or the terraced houses on Malmesbury Road at the junction of Ashfield Road and Greenway Avenue share a common palette of natural materials that are generally still predominant. Concrete roof tiles have frequently been used to replace slate on terraced housing and are considered an inappropriate material, often making the roof an unduly dominant element in the street.

Highway Infrastructure

Generally, highway infrastructure is not particularly intrusive in the area, the most intrusive elements in the streetscape being overhead wires and poles that proliferate throughout the character area. They are most intrusive in Hawthorn Road and Tugela Road and also particularly intrusive on Langley Road and Malmesbury Road. Whilst highway infrastructure is not particularly prolific there are at least three different designs of lighting column to be found and some potential for reduction in signage on Malmesbury Road.

Character Area 6: Bath Road and Ivy Lane



History, Archaeology & Morphology

The fortunes and character of this part of the town have changed from busy, to quiet, to busy over the past 200 years. Foghamshire once formed part of the main route into the town from what is now the A420 Marshfield Road. Its route originally passed from its present end, across Ivy Lane, past the western end of the viaduct and the forecourt of Bewley House to return to the existing alignment of Marshfield Road by the cinema. In 1792 the Chippenham Turnpike trustees constructed New Road and diverted Marshfield Road to a junction with it where it currently passes under the viaduct.

Key to the understanding of this character area is the two centuries of change to the area comprising the current Bath Road Car Park, former Bridge Centre site, and Avonbridge House. The Bath Road Car Park site has, since the early part of the 19th Century, formed part of the Nestle complex. Aerial views from the 1950s show single storey factory/ storage units, which would have served the main condensed milk factory facing the river on the opposite side of Bath Road. Bank House would have been the administration centre of the business. Since the 1940's the Bridge Centre site housed a NAAFI building, which in the 1960's was converted into a Youth and Community Centre. This building has since been demolished. In those days the sites were connected, with Ivy Lane being a two way street joining Bath Road.

After closure of Nestles their buildings remained derelict until the mid-1980s, when major road and building alteration works were implemented. The construction of Avenue La Fleche as an inner relief road led to the creation of the current gyratory system surrounding the Bridge Centre, separating the two sites. The main Nestle building was converted for offices (Avonbridge House), and the Bath Road Car Park was created. The existing metal roof structure over part of the car park was built for the Saturday market.

A few properties in the terrace on the south side of Foghamshire date from before the construction of New Road, as do a few in the terrace beyond Ivy Lane Primary School. This is an area once known as Barley Close and the School now occupies land which was once a road leading to these cottages, once known as Barley Close Lane. All other buildings post-date the coming of the railway, although the former Nestle factory on Bath Road is a conversion of an earlier former cloth mill.

Topography & Views

The landform is that of a shallow basin which, in the south, levels out onto the River Avon flood plain. This topography is due largely to the passage of Hardenhuish Brook through the area to where it joins the Avon at the weir just to the south of the character area, though the majority of it is now culverted. Other factors add to this to give a sense of enclosure. To the north the high embankment and viaduct carrying the railway terminate the view (Fig 6.1).



Fig 6.1: Mature trees on the railway embankment. Vegetation is an important part of the character of the area. Providing an attractive enclosure to much of the area.

To the west the land rises gently to a skyline of mature vegetation and to the east the backs of the buildings fronting Lower New Road and the Bridge provide a less pleasant and coherent view. Despite the construction of Avenue La Fleche, the mature vegetation in the remaining and former grounds of The Ivy provides a sense of enclosure to the south. As a result of this enclosure there are few opportunities for longer distance views which, for motor traffic, places a greater dependence on the numerous traffic signs. In the opposite direction, when viewed from the gyratory, is the round chimney of the former laundry on Ivy Road.

In general the longer distance views are the more pleasant. In addition to the views of the chimney, are views from Bath Road and Ivy Lane of an impressive Cedar tree in the grounds of The Ivy (Fig 6.2). The view from Bath Road is the most striking as the straight and enclosed nature of the street, particularly the imposing Avonbridge House, draws the eye to it. From Bath Road the former laundry chimney is also visible.



Fig 6.2: A fine Cedar tree is the focus along Bath Road, among the vegetation in the grounds of The Ivy. The north side of the street is a blank elevation of the former market sheds, an unattractive, unutilised and wasted street frontage.

The view from Ivy Lane offers a less impressive profile and vehicular traffic only gets a brief view as it is taken round the Bridge Centre gyratory. The view east along Bath Road is rather nondescript. Nothing distinctive terminates the view, it consists of the end of the rather bland low-rise parade of shops on The Bridge with tall lighting columns prominent in the foreground and the vegetation of Monkton Park in the background. Both the building and the scrub adjacent to it prevent more pleasant views into Monkton Park.

On entering the area from the north through the viaduct a pleasant vista gradually opens out of a skyline of mature vegetation with the Cedar tree, laundry chimney, Providence Terrace and the curved frontage of the terrace on Foghamshire all positive features in the scene. Looking up Ivy Lane offers a view of the rear of the retail units fronting Lower New Road and a glimpse of the rear of Nos. 54-55 Lower New Road (formerly the Brotherhood home and possibly stayed in by Brunel) with the viaduct behind it.

Half way along the straight section of Ivy Lane the space opens out to reveal pleasant views of the curved terrace of houses on Foghamshire on one side and, on the other side, Providence terrace set back behind large front gardens (Figs 6.3 & 6.4). Looking further down Foghamshire reveals pleasant views of the listed Constitutional Club and adjacent domed building at No. 19 The Bridge.



Fig 6.3: The western end of Foghamshire consists of an attractive curving terrace of cottages. These are humble in scale and at odds with the close proximity of fast moving through traffic.

The remaining views relate to the Bridge Centre site. The Community Centre has now been demolished, and the land used for a small car park and the remainder to a grassed area behind a low fence which is being left to develop naturally. This has created an open feel, with attractive long range views in particular of Avonbridge House.



Fig 6.4: Providence Terrace is an attractive row of houses set back from the traffic. Replacement windows and doors have undermined the visual coherence of the terrace.

General Character

The major traffic route of Ivy Lane and the gyratory dominate the majority of the character area. The size of the gyratory and the adjacent Bath Road surface car park take up a large amount of land and consequently the number of buildings in the area is very low compared to other parts of the town. The prevailing land use is primarily residential to the north and offices to the south. In addition there are community uses at the Constitutional Club and Salvation Army Hall on Foghamshire. Despite these uses the general impression is of an area which is something of a backwater in terms of activities and interest. The presence of the road and the negative effects of the heavy traffic are the primary reason for this situation, giving a mundane image to the physical environment.

The surrounding vegetation and the form of the terraced housing bring a picturesque quality to the northern part of the area though this is rather overwhelmed by the effects of traffic. The construction of the road has left a number of pockets of unused land and has seen the culverting of much of Hardenhuish Brook. The large Bath Road car park is hidden from view by walls, scrub and the blank side of the former market sheds. For an area so close to the town centre, the area is much underused in terms of activities and density of development and these elements mean the area has much potential for enhancement. Opportunities exist particularly to better integrate the busy road into, and interact with the townscape, rather than it just passing through the town. There is also the potential to better connect the southern part of the character area with the town centre by bringing in more town centre activities.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

Bath Road is a linear space. Bank House and the former Nestle factory (Avonbridge House) are positive elements in the townscape, the bulk and length of the former factory helping define the space and Bank House a distinctive free-standing building in the street (Fig 6.5). The former has been enhanced through recent sensitive refurbishment and additions, including new windows. These buildings, and the corner building at No. 5 The Bridge, help define an appropriate urban scale for this town centre street. The long and comparatively low-rise former market sheds serve to undermine the urban nature of the street. Although the height of the sheds helps maintain the linear character of the street, it does not do this to an appropriate degree, its relatively small scale compared to Avonbridge House giving the street a somewhat lop-sided feel.



Fig 6.5: Formerly part of the Nestle factory, Bank House once stood on the banks of the now culverted Hardenhuish Brook. A fine Victorian building, it now has a rather forlorn setting surrounded by a car park and the former market sheds.

The market sheds present a dead frontage to the street of some considerable length, and whilst the vegetation in front of them goes some way to softening their impact, their character is also distinctly suburban in scale and nature. The market sheds serve no functional purpose. They hide the car park from the town centre and provide a dingy and unattractive impression of the town to visitors, which also gives poor surveillance of the car-park from the busy Bath Road. Such a large amount of unused street frontage in the town centre clearly presents an opportunity for enhancement of the street and town centre in general.

At the end of Avonbridge House, Bath Road becomes part of the gyratory. The junction is huge, occupying nearly a hectare of land. This makes for a severely detrimental effect on the character of the Conservation Area. The junction creates a space of its own and the slow moving, heavy traffic ensures the environment is unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. Crossings are designed for vehicular convenience rather than pedestrian needs. The size of the junction, and the limited pedestrian routes ensure that it presents an obstacle to pedestrian movement. The tall lighting columns, short queuing distances, numerous lanes and signal controlled elements of the junction ensure the space is dominated by vehicles and highway infrastructure.

A great improvement to this area would be achieved by carrying out redevelopment of the Bath Road Car Park and Bridge Centre site, which has been in limbo for two decades. Please refer to Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC1 for details on indicative proposals for this site.

Mature vegetation is the dominant form on the south side of the gyratory, particularly to the south and west, with the attractive villas on Bath Road merging into the trees on the skyline. Churchdown is visually prominent on the corner and a positive element in the townscape. On the north side of the gyratory the space is ill defined and lacking in form or definition of space. Much suburban scale vegetation, with buildings only visible behind in the middle distance, give a disjointed and amorphous feel to the area.

North of the gyratory, Ivy Lane briefly takes on a more 'street like' character as Providence Terrace and the terrace on Foghamshire extend close to the street edge. However, rather than providing a sense of enclosure and giving the street some form, this simply marks the transition into another poorly defined space. Providence Terrace and Foghamshire provide a positive and attractive sense of enclosure to the south, the curved terrace of Foghamshire being a particularly positive element in the townscape. The northern part of the space consists of 'left-over' land apparently deemed unusable when the road was constructed (Fig 6.6). On the west side of the road the space merges into the railway embankment and forms part of this attractive backdrop to the area. On the east side of the road, single storey extensions with exposed steel frames and facades in need of cleaning, provide unattractive and dead frontage on to the street and detract from the setting of the listed Viaduct. Some mature trees have recently been removed further revealing the unattractive backs of the buildings on Lower New Road. A community garden is, and has further potential to, enhance the green space adjacent to Foghamshire.



Fig 6.6: Ivy Lane is devoid of buildings lining it and consists of a number of 'left over' spaces, uninspiringly grassed over, giving a suburban and underdeveloped feel to a town centre location. It also gives motorists few visual cues as to where they are, or a positive impression of the town.

At its eastern end Foghamshire is commercial in character. The two corner buildings, former Temperance Hall, Salvation Army Hall and Constitutional Club combine to form a group of particularly attractive and distinctive buildings (Fig 6.7). The curve in the street emphasises those on the south side when viewed from the west. Cleaning of stonework would further enhance their positive contribution to the townscape. Immediately beyond these buildings are two relatively recently built terraces. The one on the south side forms part of the longer terrace on this side of the street and its form, scale and level of detailing are all generally appropriate to its setting, making it a positive element in the street. The terrace on the north side is less successful, being more suburban in character with little depth to its façade, lack of detailing, fenestration and unenclosed front gardens all out of character with the street scene.



Fig 6.7: The eastern end of Foghamshire contains a number of fine buildings, being just off New Road. These are both listed and would benefit from stone cleaning.

Beyond, the south side consists of a long curving terrace which is an important and positive element of the character of the street, particularly prominent when viewed from Ivy Lane. Loss of original details and boundary treatment and some unsympathetic alterations over time mean the terrace would benefit from some enhancement. Walking west along the street gradually brings into view the attractive Providence Terrace. This terrace of 10 dwellings terminates the westward view and its boundary walls and long front gardens give it an attractive urban setting and serve to protect it somewhat from the effects of the heavy traffic on Ivy Lane. As such, they are designated as Buildings of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5. The houses would benefit from restoration of some original details and, as with the curved Foghamshire terrace, the removal of the unattractive wirescape. When viewed together from Ivy Lane, Providence Terrace and the curved terrace of Foghamshire forms a particularly attractive townscape.

Vegetation

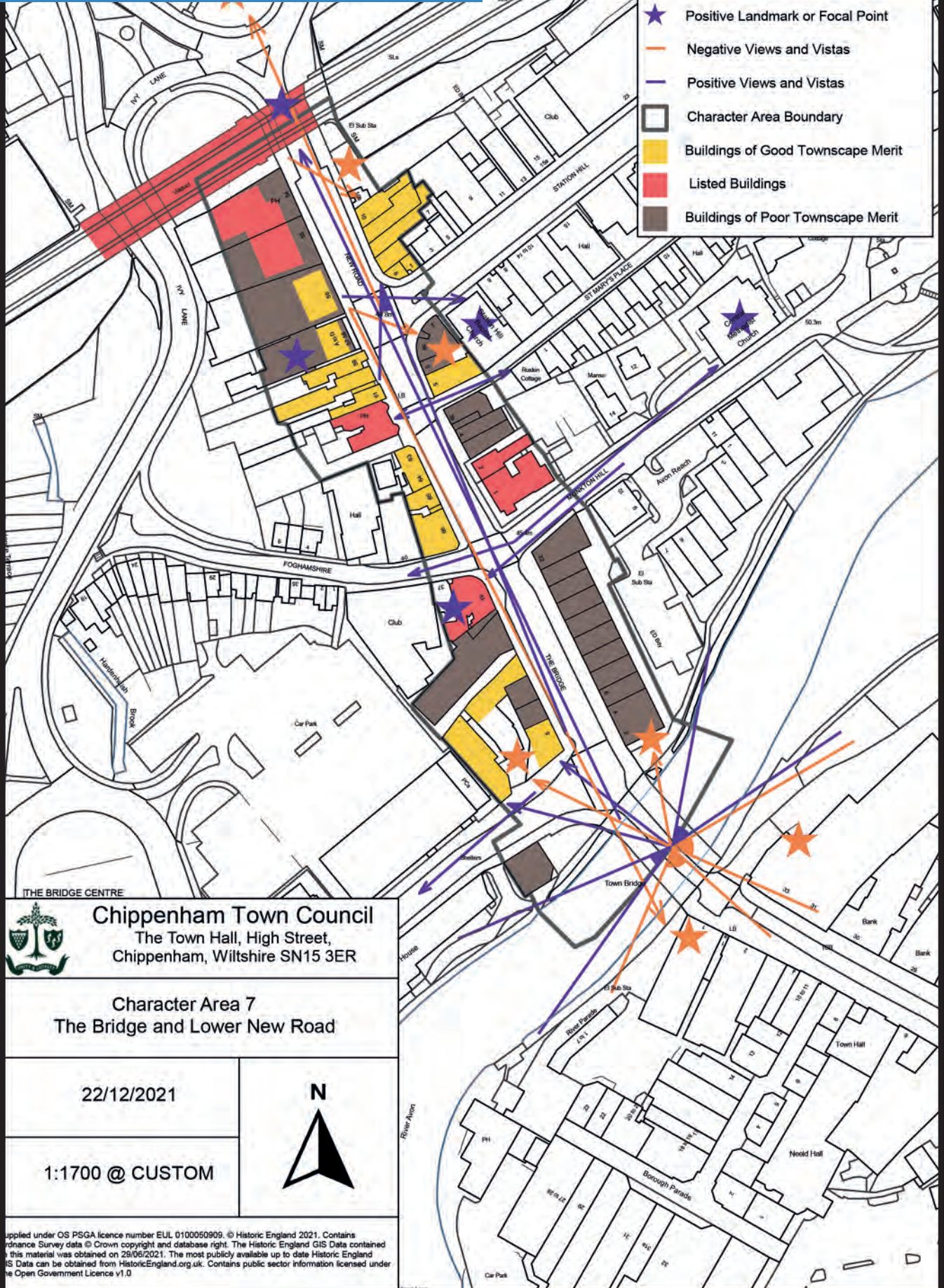
Vegetation is a key element in the character of an area that is dominated by a busy road and lacking in density of built form. The most positive and attractive vegetation is the skyline vegetation, consisting primarily of mature trees and giving a somewhat luxuriant setting to the area. Such vegetation is to be found to the north in the railway embankment, to the west on Lowden Hill and to the south in the grounds of The Ivy and in the river valley. This is the primary means by which the visual limits of the character area are defined in these directions. A few individual trees contribute to the character of the area: notably the Cedar in the grounds of The Ivy; a Lime in front of The Old Laundry, a Sycamore by the open section of Hardenhuish Brook, an Ash to the rear of Bank House and a Copper Beech and Sycamore in front of the railway embankment. Some semi-mature trees and vegetation also provide a good screen between the Bath Road car park and the housing on the south side of Foghamshire. The remaining vegetation is either suburban in scale or species, or consists of unchecked scrub, both of which have a negative impact on the townscape.

Some formal flowerbeds exist along Ivy Lane but are of such a scale that they do not have a significant positive impact. Such planting is itself suburban in character and is more suited to less urban areas of the town.

Character Area 7: The Bridge and Lower New Road

Legend

-  Negative Landmark or Focal Point
-  Positive Landmark or Focal Point
-  Negative Views and Vistas
-  Positive Views and Vistas
-  Character Area Boundary
-  Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit



 **Chippenham Town Council**
The Town Hall, High Street,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 7
The Bridge and Lower New Road

22/12/2021

1:1700 @ CUSTOM

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Fig 7.1: The listed railway viaduct terminates this key positive view up Lower New Road

History, Archaeology & Morphology

The buildings in this part of the town date from the early 19th Century onwards. However, current archaeological assessment is revealing enough evidence to suggest that this area formed part of a northern suburb to the original Saxon town. The area has seen major physical change at three times in the past. Firstly, in 1792 the Chippenham Turnpike trustees undertook the construction of what is now New Road and part of Marshfield Road as alternatives to entering the town from Old Road / Monkton Hill and Foghamshire respectively. The original route into the town from Bristol was along Ivy Lane and Foghamshire, forming a T-junction with The Bridge and Monkton Hill, the original route into the town from Malmesbury, with the land currently occupied by Lower New Road being open pasture and a timber yard. Secondly, the coming of the railway in the 1840s saw the construction of Station Hill. Thirdly, the 1950s and 1960s saw the replacement of the old Town Bridge, mill and weir with the current utilitarian structure and parade of plain, low rise shops at Nos. 2-22.

Topography & Views

The Bridge itself and the street of the same name, extending to the junction with Foghamshire, Monkton Hill and Lower New Road, are relatively flat. Lower New Road then rises gently to pass under the railway viaduct at the top of the street. The topography is important in allowing a number of views of the street and beyond, giving a particular impression of the town.

Positive Views

From the Bridge there is an important view to the end of the street where the imposing structure of the Grade II* Listed viaduct terminates the view. The higher ground serves to emphasise its presence (Fig 7.1). Unfortunately, the view through the viaduct reveals St. Paul's House - a bland, monolithic office block, diluting the definition and visual impact of the arches.

Also from the Bridge are pleasant views of the bay windows of No. 1 Lower New Road, and closer by, No. 5 The Bridge. Unfortunately the unsightly gap between the latter two buildings at No. 5 detracts from the quality of the view (Fig 7.2).



Fig 7.2: The junction of Bath Road and The Bridge. The lack of a strong frontage gives a poor definition and focus on the space. Gaps between the buildings weaken the structure of the urban form.

Looking towards the town centre from the junction with Station Hill shows an impressive vista of good quality buildings over a distance of some 120 metres on the west side of the street from the Black Horse public house to the end of the street. It is only on closer inspection that the gaps created by single storey buildings and a number of poor quality shopfronts become apparent and the positive image becomes diluted (Fig 7.3). In the centre of this vista is the distinctive domed roof of No. 19 The Bridge, a local landmark of high townscape quality. This building is best appreciated when viewed from Monkton Hill. The Black Horse public house is also best viewed when emerging from St. Mary's Place.



Fig 7.3: This part of The Bridge contains these three fine buildings. Unfortunately the character and quality of the street frontage is diluted by the diminutively scaled buildings between them, allowing views of blank side walls, and the poor quality of some of the shopfronts.

Negative Views

At the junction with Station Hill, the higher vantage point allows an important view down the street, across the bridge and into the town centre. This is important as a first impression of the town (Fig 7.4).



Fig 7.4: The view down New Road to the town centre lacks a positive focal point.

Unfortunately, dominating the view is the low, bland frontage and flank wall of No. 1 High Street (Superdrug). The low-rise nature of Nos. 2-22 The Bridge also contribute to this effect. None of the buildings positively address the bridge as a space in its own right and consequently many rear and side elevations are visible, particularly Nos. 2-4 The Bridge, Nos. 31-33 High Street (Wilkinson) (Fig 7.5) and No. 1 High Street (Superdrug). Looking from on the bridge towards Bath Road reveals No. 1 Bath Road (Grounded), a single storey building constructed at the time of conversion of the Nestle building, which has had a variety of hospitality uses in the last 30 years. It has been extended and improved in recent times, with outside seating, and is now making more of a positive contribution to the street scene.



Fig 7.5: Whilst the front elevation of the old Co-op building (Wilkinson) is extremely attractive, the side elevation and service area poorly define the space and allows views to the plain roof forms and plant of the shopping centre.

General Character

This character area is primarily retail in character. Its location in relation to the town centre and the type of the shops it contains, identify it as a secondary shopping area. There are over 40 premises containing a range of uses. Most premises are relatively small and are all contained in a section of street about 200 metres in length. Generally, the area is one of variety and diversity. There is a relatively high pedestrian flow and a degree of trade would appear to come from vehicular traffic parking in the street. The street is a vibrant mixed-use area with little restrictions on movement imposed by traffic management measures.

Whilst the passing traffic and availability of on-street parking adds to the vibrancy of the street it has also come to dominate it. This is particularly so in peak hours where the intensity, noise and fumes of vehicles make the street an unpleasant place to be in, and a place to be passed through as quickly as possible, paying little attention to the quality of the buildings and interest of the shops. The street and pavement surfaces themselves are in a poor state of repair or are a patchwork of past repairs, although the top area of the street has recently been resurfaced.

A closer inspection shows an area of repressed and hidden character containing many buildings of good quality (Fig 7.6). In some cases buildings have gradually accumulated unsympathetic alterations and additions over time. This is particularly evident in the poor quality of some of the shopfronts that often obliterate the buildings that they are attached to, although in recent years replacement shopfronts and associated signage have been more sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



Fig 7.6: There are many fine buildings in the area, and recent years have seen an improvement in the quality of shop fronts.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The Bridge

The aspect from the bridge itself is very open. It is a wide structure and almost all the buildings surrounding it are only two storeys in height and set well back from it. This gives the bridge a rather stark and exposed feel - a no-mans-land between two parts of the town - where the buildings have been 'pushed away' from the vicinity of the bridge to make way for the high volumes of traffic which now no longer use it. This impression is reinforced by the fact that none of the nearby buildings positively address the bridge as a space in its own right. The wideness of the bridge helps define it as a space and recent installation of purpose designed railings and piers, in addition to high quality paving materials, have helped to raise its appearance. It is also a popular informal meeting place.

Due to the temporary provision of access to the Emery Gate car park still being in place, the bridge still has more daytime traffic movements than necessary. However the relocation of the taxi rank away from the bridge and the provision of more seating have enabled the area to be an attractive place for pedestrians than hitherto. However it has the potential to be more of a positive focal point in the town - providing an active and attractive space which is an integral part of the town and makes the shops and businesses on the north side of the river feel more strongly part of the town centre.

Turning the corner into Bath Road is The Citadel, with its red brick facade and castellated roofline making for a quirky local landmark. The front part of the building dates from 1903 and was purpose built for the Salvation Army (the original stone inscribed fascia lettering has recently been revealed again). The building is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5.

Before the construction of the new bridge, the structure of the old bridge extended as far as the junction with Foghamshire, Monkton Hill and Lower New Road. Although now simply a street, it is still known as The Bridge. On the eastern side of the street is the site of the town mill, the sole building on this side of the street before its demolition in the 1950s. This was an imposing four-storey structure and was replaced by today's parade of shops - half as many storeys and twice the length. The building shows a degree of architectural restraint, almost elegance, which goes some way to neutralising its presence as a negative element in the townscape. The creation of 'Rivo Lounge' at Nos. 2-4 The Bridge, across two ground and three first floor units, has improved the building in terms of both its diversity of use and architectural treatment. The remodelling of the façade in a Retro '1950s' style fits with the building, and the external seating has improved the sociability of the area. However, re-statement of the part demolished attractive stone boundary wall to the side would benefit the Conservation Area (Fig 7.7).



Fig 7.7: Whilst this building has a strong uniform horizontal emphasis at odds with prevailing urban form, the retro styled Rivo Lounge has added an appropriate, and highly popular use.

The position of the mill building was set well back from the street. This layout widened the aspect to the river when approaching the town centre and brought the river right up the centre of the street between the mill and the road, giving a wide range of views of the riverscape and making it an obvious feature in the town centre. In the opposite direction it allowed clear views from the bridge to most of the attractive side elevation of No.1 Lower New Road (Gough's).

The buildings on the west side of The Bridge remained relatively untouched by the construction of the new bridge and demolition of the town mill. Three imposing buildings (Nos. 5, 11 & 19) dominate the street frontage. Although attractive buildings, their dominance is heightened by the small scale one and two-storey buildings sitting between them and exposing their flank walls. As with Station Hill, this part of the street gives the impression of an area that has had a brief spell of prosperity, but not one of sufficient time to see all of the original smaller buildings redeveloped to a grander scale.

No. 5 (Oxfam) occupies an important corner site at the junction with Bath Road and close to the bridge. Although not as grand and imposing as the listed No. 19 (Shoestrings), it marks the corner in a positive and restrained manner. The only negative aspects to the building are the poor quality bland shopfront bearing no relation to the building either in design or materials, and the loss of the distinctive oriel window which once adorned the south elevation. No. 11 has an imposing and solid pedimented frontage, but at street level is again compromised by a mundane shopfront. No. 19 is a fine example of Edwardian architecture and has an imposing corner entrance and domed roof. Unfortunately the corner entrance appears little used. Two shop units occupy the Foghamshire side of the building. The restaurant has a poor quality shopfront, but the barbers has an attractive curved glass window. The building would benefit from stone cleaning.

Lower New Road

The junction of The Bridge, Lower New Road, Foghamshire and Monkton Hill is a focal point within the context of the character area, offering views up Monkton Hill and along the curve of Foghamshire. The pedestrian crossing and junction concentrates the pedestrian flow and slows down traffic and, in addition to the relative openness of the space, gives the opportunity to notice the fine buildings on three of the four corners of the junction. Looking up the street and away from the town centre building heights generally reduce gradually, giving way to the presence of the viaduct at the end of the street.

Nos. 63 (Kingsley Pike) to 66 (Athena) form a fine group of buildings, the only ones in the Town Centre in the Arts and Crafts style, probably built just after World War 1 (Fig 7.8). They are largely original, with attractive stone gables, projecting eaves and brackets, gutters and downpipes and original windows. The only unsatisfactory shopfronts are Nos. 63 and 64, where clumsy brick arches were added in the 1980's, presumably in an attempt to mirror the railway viaduct. These buildings are currently unprotected, and therefore at risk of unsympathetic alterations such as replacement UPVC windows. They are designated as Buildings of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5.



Fig 7.8: This fine group of buildings share a common design theme and are a well-executed group dating from the early 20th Century. The most impressive building occupies the important corner site and the other buildings step up with the gradient.

No. 62 is the Black Horse pub. The large impressive ground floor bay windows define the character of this building, though old maps and the upper storey fenestration would suggest that these are later additions to an original building. The appearance of the building is generally positive, the traditional hanging sign contributing to this, though it would benefit from exterior decoration and the removal of the large signs and lighting between the first floor windows.

Adjacent to the pub is a short terrace of three shops within a more humble but pleasant building. It's restrained character and lack of architectural detailing make it particularly susceptible to the excesses of modern advertising, shopfronts and building alterations. However, it is at No. 61 that one of the most impressive shopfronts in the character area is to be found, spoilt only by the current fascia sign which is overly scaled and hides some of the shopfront. The shopfront is of a traditional design and projects from the building line, but not excessively, so as to dominate the building. It has a rendered stall riser of appropriate height to deal both with the change in levels and provide suitable proportion to the whole shopfront, although this could be improved by removing the lower horizontal paint division. The fascia has an elegant, curved glass central recessed entrance with slender, decorative glazing bars and attractive ventilation grilles at the top of the windows (now hidden by the fascia sign). The grilles and cill reflect the proportions of the fascia and stall riser. Bar the fascia sign, the overall effect is of a shopfront that fulfils its primary objective of maximising display space, yet is also an attractive and well-proportioned design.

The whole terrace would benefit greatly from restoration of original fenestration where this is missing, removal of paint finish on the first floor elevation and replacement of the shopfronts at Nos. 59 and 60 with better proportioned examples, taking the one at No. 61 as an example.

Adjacent to the humble terrace at Nos. 59-61 is the imposing three storey Georgian frontage of Nos. 57/58 (Prezzo restaurant). This is an attractive building and provides a positive focal point to the view down Station Hill.

Unfortunately the subtle and restrained details which give Georgian buildings their attractiveness have been severely eroded over time. The façade has been uniformly painted over, dulling the definition of the cills, window surrounds, parapet and string courses, and windows have lost their glazing bars. Old photographs show the building to have been of bare stonework and having no shopfront at all. However the current shopfront is an improvement on the previous one.

The mini roundabout at the junction with Station Hill has been removed and redesigned to incorporate traffic lights enabling cycling priority and pedestrian crossings.

Nos. 54, 55 and 56 have been converted into four shop units and shopfronts have improved in recent years, although fascia signage is still overscaled at No. 54 in particular. These units consist of two distinctive detached buildings, set slightly back from the street. These were both originally houses and Brunel is reputed to have lodged in No. 54 whilst supervising construction of the railway. Both buildings have had their ground floor frontages built out to accommodate shopfronts, hiding much of the original building frontage (Fig 7.9).



Fig 7.9: The improvement in the design of shopfronts, plus the restoration of the viaduct, have been welcome. It is still a shame that the quality of the Grade 2 listed 'Brotherhood' ex railway works office is only really able to be appreciated from inside the Brunel pub.

The east side of the street begins with the solid and stately Grade II listed building at Nos. 1-2 (Gough's & Atwell Martin), which remain largely unaltered (Fig 7.10). The adjacent Nos. 3-4 (Pearl Assurance House) is a more plain modern building of similar scale and materials. However, its form is somewhat bulky and slightly awkward in appearance. It fails to fully acknowledge the slight increase in the steepness of the gradient of the street and, whereas at ground level the shopfronts acknowledge this in their differing fascias and floor levels, this is not reflected in the upper storeys, leading to a poorly resolved composition. The bulkiness is particularly apparent when the side elevation is also viewed.



Fig 7.10: Nos. 1-2 is one of the most notable and elegant buildings lining the street. Note how the adjacent Nos. 3-4, although similarly scaled, appears bland and monolithic in appearance. Greater attention to siting, proportion and detail could have produced a far more satisfactory and appealing building.

Nos. 54, 55 and 56 are an interesting group of buildings. As with Nos. 58 and 59 there would originally not have been projecting shopfronts, and the original set back two storey frontage would have been detached properties. The fine house at No. 54 housed the Brotherhood family, who worked with Brunel on the construction of this part of the Great Western Railway. The projecting shop fronts have recently been improved, and now house a Studio, Gym, furniture warehouse and the Brunel pub. The first three have modern but acceptable shopfronts, and the Brunel is altogether a very fine conversion with good relationship to the street.

Across from St. Mary's Place, the three-storey part of No. 5 (Digiprint Nettle) is a well-proportioned, simple and attractive Georgian façade. Unfortunately the upper storeys have seen unauthorised replacement of the original sash windows with inappropriate UPVC double-glazed units.

Adjacent is a single storey section of No. 5 and the single storey Nos. 5a and 2 Station Hill (Café India). This site, much like others on The Bridge and Station Hill has never been fully developed. The site is in desperate need of a larger building of suitable presence and quality of design for this important corner site on one of the main routes into the town centre. The lack of building presence merely serves to accentuate the presence and negative effects of the heavy traffic. Recent refurbishment works to the side elevation of No. 5 have uncovered a ghost sign from at least 1910 for Colmans, only just visible today. Conversely the shopfront at this corner site is one of high quality, both in its design, materials and the way it steps gradually round the corner and down the gradient of the street. It retains historic retractable awnings which add to its character.

On the opposite side of the junction is Nos. 6-8, a building once a single shop unit but now accommodating three shop units (Fig 7.11). The two storey building with pitched roof has more presence in the street than the single storey building opposite, and also turns the corner in a positive manner. The first floor façade has been covered fully in a single paint colour where once it was bare stone. As a result the effect of the details, particularly the window surrounds has been considerably diminished. The existing building is of good quality and makes a positive contribution to the townscape.



Fig 7.11: This parade of shops has recently seen some improvements although shopfronts could be further improved. Stricter advertisement controls could help secure improvements to the appearance of these shops. Replacement windows and painting of stonework at upper floors have diluted the character of these otherwise simple but attractive buildings.

The adjacent stone clad building, Nos. 9 and 10, is part gabled two-storey stepping down again to a small single storey shop unit before a vacant plot adjacent to the viaduct. This reduction in height, giving visual deference to the viaduct is reflected on the opposite side of the street and is a positive characteristic of its setting, allowing one to gain a sense of its size and imposing nature. The now vacant space between No. 10a and the viaduct remains an ill-defined patch of un-built on land which allows views to the backs of buildings on Station Hill and would benefit from better enclosure at the rear and a permanent landscaping of the space.

Vegetation

There is no significant vegetation in the character area of particular amenity value. Much of the vegetation around the bridge consists of unattractive scrub that hides views of the river and collects litter. From the bridge there are fine views of mature trees in either direction into Monkton Park and towards The Ivy and Rowden Hill. Similarly the view up Monkton Hill is notable for the garden of the Methodist Church and the mature trees at the entrance to the Wiltshire Council offices. The railway embankment on the east side of the viaduct contains some quite dense vegetation. Though it has little amenity value in its own right, it undoubtedly aids the stability of the embankment and affords a degree of screening to the rear of properties in Station Hill.

The character area is a distinctly urban space and gains its positive characteristics from its buildings and the ability to see them and their relationship with each other and the topography from a number of perspectives. Thus it would be inappropriate for the introduction of major tree planting other than in the immediate vicinity of the bridge. Longer distance views down to the river in which vegetation was more prominent could advertise the presence of the river and enhance the attractiveness of views towards the town centre.

Materials

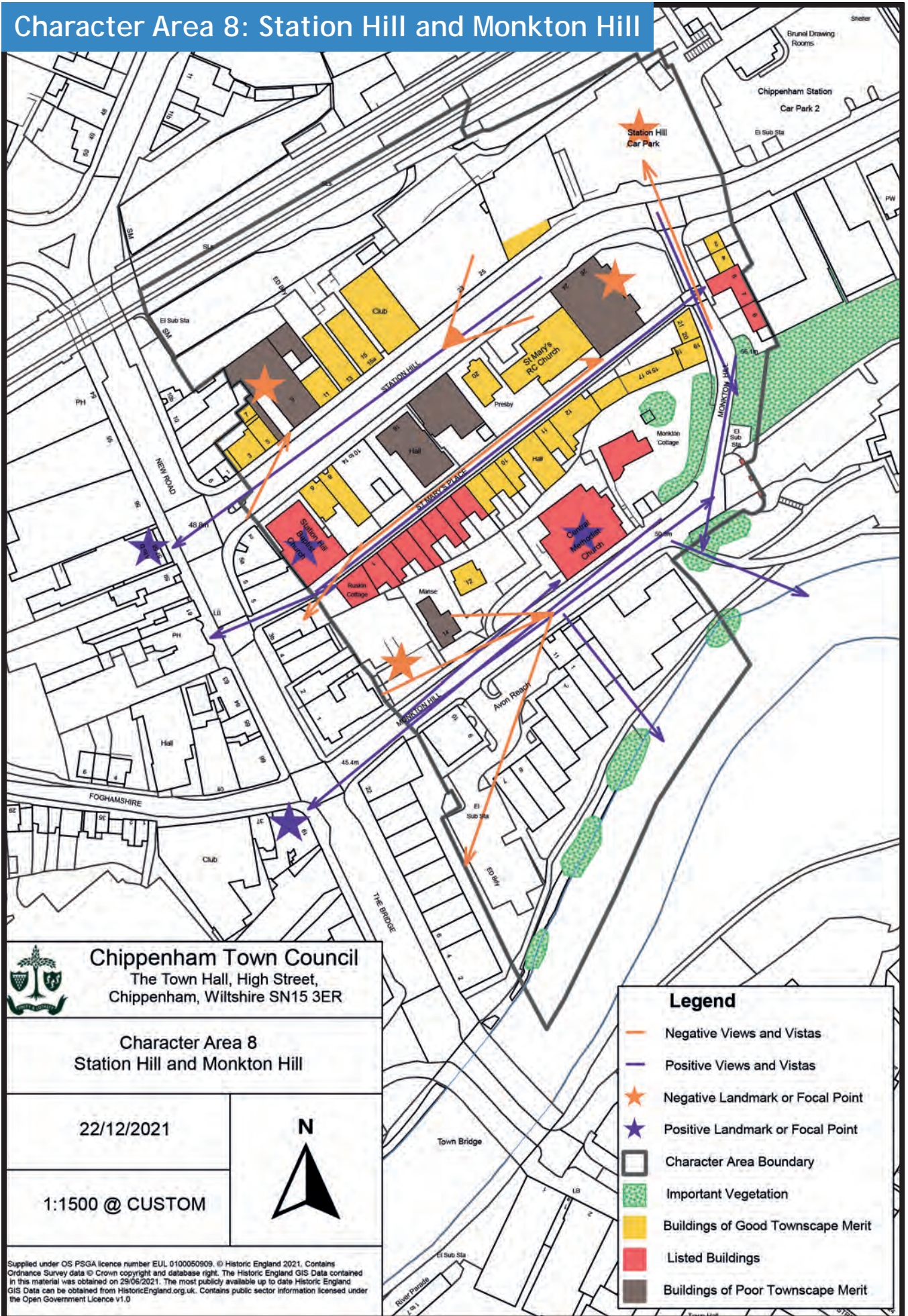
The great majority of buildings are constructed from (or faced with) Bath stone, with other materials extremely rare. Render and painted finishes are also evident, but in many cases these simply hide a Bath stone frontage. The effects of time mean that many buildings would benefit from stone cleaning and others would benefit from removal of inappropriate applied finishes. Roof finishes are primarily slate, although more modern materials exist and many low-pitched roofs are hidden behind parapets. Windows are predominantly painted timber sashes, though there are a few inappropriate unauthorised modern UPVC replacements evident.

Highway Infrastructure

There are a relatively few highway signs and paraphernalia in the character area. However, that which there is, is occasionally an intrusive or negative element in the townscape due either to its location, design or poor state of repair. The streets are currently lit by tall standard highway lighting columns.

These are an inappropriate and inefficient design for such an urban area. There have recently been improvements to the road and pavement surfaces of the upper part of the street, as well as new traffic lights. However, as with Marshfield Road and Park Lane the overall quality of the environment is very poor due to being dominated by traffic. Opportunities could be taken to introduce shared use or other pedestrian and cycle friendly initiatives.

Character Area 8: Station Hill and Monkton Hill



 **Chippenham Town Council**
The Town Hall, High Street,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER



Character Area 8
Station Hill and Monkton Hill

22/12/2021

1:1500 @ CUSTOM



Legend

-  Negative Views and Vistas
-  Positive Views and Vistas
-  Negative Landmark or Focal Point
-  Positive Landmark or Focal Point
-  Character Area Boundary
-  Important Vegetation
-  Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit

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History, Archaeology & Morphology

Monkton Hill is probably the oldest street in the area. Formerly known as Black Horse Hill, it is the remains of the original route of Malmesbury Road into Chippenham. The street took its name from the Black Horse Inn, which stood on the site of the Methodist chapel and was replaced by a new Black Horse on New Road in 1842. It also gave access to the entrance to the long approach drive to Monkton Park House, the site of a Medieval Manor. The 18th Century house is now converted to flats and the gate piers remain as the entrance to Wiltshire Council offices. A substation now occupies the site of the lodge. St. Mary's Place is a narrow, single aspect street, with a terrace of houses fronting the majority of the south side, and the rear of buildings facing Station Hill along the north side. The date of the houses suggest they were built very soon after the coming of the railway and would therefore have had clear views across to Station Hill for a number of years before it became lined with buildings of its own.

Station Hill was laid out as the formal approach to the railway station and thus probably dates from the middle of the 19th Century. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 shows only the Baptist church, a sorting office and a collection of buildings on the site of the current tyre depot on Station Hill, with the site marked for the Roman Catholic Church. The land on the south side of Monkton Hill is land reclaimed from the River Avon with the building of the new bridge in 1966 and relocation of the weir. The site is the location of the original weir and is now occupied by modern offices.

Topography & Views

The land rises steeply in a north easterly direction away from the Avon and Hardenhuish Brook further to the west. The topography is a key component of the character of the area, contributing differently to the character of each street.

The straight course of Station Hill clearly emphasises the steepness of the hill and, in addition to its uniformity of incline, gives a distinctive planned and formal feel to the street.

St. Mary's Place has a more organic feel, with it following a more undulating level. Although it is generally straight, a slight narrowing at the top and kink at the bottom in conjunction with its relative narrowness, help emphasise the informal impression.

Monkton Hill starts with a gentle, gradually steepening incline up to the gate piers, then sweeps sharply left and at a greatly increased incline, gradually levelling out at the junction with St. Mary's Place. High walls on either side of the steepest part, its narrowness and sharp curve combine to give a strong sense of enclosure and transition from one area to another. This is in contrast to the more formal and open feel of the straighter section.

Buildings, Space & Townscape

Monkton Hill

The most prominent and distinctive building on Monkton Hill is the Methodist Church (**Fig 8.1**). It is the only building built directly onto the pavement on the north side of the street and is an imposing, solidly built 3-storey structure. Its main entrance is actually on one side and a path curves up to this on its western side. The space in front of the path is laid out as garden and the space to the rear is the garden of No. 12, a restrained but pleasantly proportioned detached house, whose original windows are an important element in raising it above the mundane. Adjacent to No. 12 is No. 14, The Manse, a bland modern house occupying an unduly prominent elevated position. Similar in many respects to No. 12, it clearly shows how apparently small differences can have a significant impact on overall character.



Fig 8.1: The view up Monkton Hill reveals the Methodist Church as a fine landmark. The lack of a street frontage beyond this building and No. 1-2 New Road (a fine corner building) is evident and the plain house between the two buildings poorly relates to the street and brings an inappropriate suburban feel to the street.

On the south side of the road are the Avon Reach office developments. These are constructed of modern block work and at close inspection contain little of visual interest, being devoid of human scale detail. Their contribution to the character of the area comes from their form and scale. The smaller individual units are clearly apparent and the layout helps to visually break up the size of the development.

At its junction with Station Hill and Cocklebury Road, Monkton Hill has an open aspect. This soon changes at the junction with St. Mary's Place, as the former warehouse on the right and the listed terrace on the left enclose the street. The narrow, steeply dropping and curving nature of the street adds to this feeling, as does the dense vegetation that prevents any long views. All these elements are key characteristics of the street at this point, which is akin to that of a narrow lane. The terrace of cottages at Nos. 2-8 are of rubble stone and render and their slightly elevated position gives them a prominent feel. Although there is only one entrance onto the street, the high walls are of good quality and a small, well-tended garden area in front softens their impact and adds visual interest. This garden area would benefit from reinstatement of railings.



Fig 8.2: This attractive part of Monkton Hill is a busy pedestrian route to the town centre.

Monkton Hill is a major pedestrian route to the town centre from the railway station and residential areas to the north of the town (Fig 8.2). As the street turns away from the Council offices and rises to meet Cocklebury Road it is prohibited to motor vehicles travelling uphill. A pedestrian footway on one side, inappropriately marked with coloured surfacing, has a negative impact on the townscape. Monkton Hill is a street punctuated by space and enclosure, with both positive and negative results.

The elevated position of Monkton Cottage and the side entrance to the Methodist church have precluded the development of buildings close to the street edge for much of the north side, however the result has a positive effect on the character of the area, introducing the softening effect of vegetation and stone boundary walls. Moving southwards, the narrowness of the steep section gives way to the more open space in front of the listed gate piers. Mature vegetation from Monkton Park and Monkton Cottage garden help enclose the space and glimpses are possible over the wall to the park and river valley beyond. The gate piers, walls, Methodist Church and nearest Avon Reach office building also help define this space.

Beyond the Church the street again gives way to a more open area, this time with a negative effect on the character of the conservation area. The setback nature of Nos. 12 and 14 and Avon Reach gives this part of the street an open feel but the buildings have given way to parking areas to the detriment of the appearance of the street (Fig 8.3).



Fig 8.3: *The main office development at Avon Reach is of bland blockwork and its form relates poorly to the street, making the car park a prominent feature. The office block furthest to the left relates better to the street and resolves the parking arrangement far more satisfactorily.*

Avon Reach parking is generally well ordered and enclosed in a small courtyard with low wall and railings. However, the space in front of and adjacent to No. 14 is given over to informal parking straight onto the street and to unenclosed rear courtyards to buildings fronting New Road. The open aspect of the street allows unattractive views to the backs of buildings fronting The Bridge and New Road. Utilitarian street lighting and road and pavement surfaces with a number of repairs evident are also a negative intrusion into the street scene.

Despite the negative elements mentioned above, Monkton Hill has a generally pleasant aspect. This is due in large part to the views in either direction along the street to the Methodist Church and to No. 19 The Bridge, an impressive Bath stone building which turns the corner into Foghamshire with an impressive curved entrance, pillars and domed roof (Fig 8.4). The elevations of Nos. 1 and 66 New Road also contribute to this view, giving a suggestion of grandeur, which is only partly realised on arrival at the junction. Vegetation is an important and prevalent element in the character of the top end of the straight part of the street, providing a link with the adjacent River Park.



Fig 8.4: *The view down Monkton Hill reveals the listed former cigarette factory as a fine landmark building.*

Building materials are predominantly Bath stone on the older buildings, with the buildings at the top of Monkton Hill being of rubble rather than sawn stone with brick and limewash evident to a lesser degree. The office units use modern blockwork which, although rather crude, reflect the similar pale shades of the Bath stone, the upper most office building being more successful than the drabber main part of Avon Reach.

St Mary's Place

There are no particularly dominant buildings in St Mary's Place, the dominant form being the long terrace of houses on the south side (Fig 8.5).



Fig 8.5: The narrow St. Mary's Place contains these humble but pleasant former railway workers cottages stepping down the street. The laundry chimney is a notable landmark in the view.

This is, however, punctuated at a few points by slightly more distinctive buildings. On entering the street from New Road one encounters the four-storey west frontage of Ruskin House (Fig 8.6), its larger scale and balcony giving a pleasant aspect and contrast to the less formal character of the rest of the street. About half way up the street is a small hall nestling within the terrace and not readily apparent until one is quite close to it. At the top of the street the residential character gives way to a small group of brick and rubble stone warehouses. The open area in front of the building is untidy and would benefit from improvement, as would the painted brick façade. The stone built part of these buildings fronts Monkton Hill and is an element which contributes to the enclosure which is characteristic of this part of the street. The gable end facing St. Mary's Place right at the top of the street contains a first storey loft door, a prominent historical remnant of the building's original use, though in need of repair.



Fig 8.6: The view up the narrow entrance to St. Mary's Place reveals the fine frontage of the listed Ruskin House, though its effect is dulled by the monolithic presence of the office building to the right.

The north side is dominated by the rear elevations and randomly parked cars of buildings fronting Station Hill (Fig 8.7). Boundary treatments are minimal or non-existent to enable parking in most available space. It is these elements, rather than the buildings themselves, which give this side of the street a rather tawdry feel.



Fig 8.7: No buildings face the north side of St. Mary's Place and this side of the street is a generally unattractive collection of poorly defined rear entrances to buildings on the south side of the hill. Note also the painted and pebble dashed facades on the south side are prominent and out of character alterations disrupting the unity and coherence of the terrace.

The stepped rooflines of the terrace help emphasise the slope and give the buildings a more organic form and human scale. This is in clear contrast to the Pearl Assurance office at the bottom of the street, which works against the topography, resulting in a bulky and monolithic building unable to accommodate ground floor windows and thus lacking visual interest. The spaces behind the buildings fronting Station Hill gives the street a wider aspect and, in conjunction with the enclosure at either end gives a degree of emphasis to the terrace as the central element to the street. A key feature of the view down the street is the brick chimney of the Ivy Lane Industrial Estate with the mature vegetation on Rowden Hill in the background. Turning the slight corner at the bottom of the hill brings into view the large bay-fronted façade of the Black Horse public house.

Moving up the hill gradually brings into view the well-maintained and attractive terrace of rubble stone cottages at the top of Monkton Hill. This however, is marred by the intrusiveness of the overhead wirescape against the skyline. The narrowness of the street emphasises the intrusiveness of the double yellow lines on either side of the street.

The cottages are constructed of coursed sawn-faced rangework with slate roofs, although some have succumbed to inappropriate modern render and pebbledash. Much original fenestration has been lost, though the overall effect of this is minimised by the oblique-viewing angle. Brick and random rubble are also evident to a lesser degree.

Station Hill

Station Hill is a street of mixed character (Fig 8.8) and contains a number of impressive buildings. Whilst being straight and formal in its layout, this is not reflected strongly in the buildings lining the street. The buildings on the south side present a different image to those on the north side.



Fig 8.8: The view down Station Hill. A number of attractive buildings line this street but unsympathetic alterations and a lack of continuous street frontage of buildings ensure the street lacks coherence and sense of stature suitable for the approach to the station.

The buildings on the south side are mainly free standing buildings of differing styles and forms, not conforming to any one building line. Many are non-retail uses and these buildings generally make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. The Baptist Church (Fig 8.9) and the Roman Catholic Church are buildings of particular note, as is the presbytery at No. 20. The buildings at No. 6-8 and 10-14, although smaller in scale, also make a positive contribution to the area's character. No. 6-8 has an attractive brick façade, with a fine original shopfront restored at No. 8 (Prince of Wales Public House). A contemporary 'mansard style' rooftop extension has been sensitively added to the building.



Fig 8.9: *The Baptist Church was the first building built on the street and is probably it's finest. It has recently benefited from a fine entrance improvement scheme, including suitable railings.*

Unfortunately, the shopfronts and replacement windows at Nos. 10-14 severely compromise both the character of the building and its contribution to the street scene. The small Rotary Hall and adjacent shop units at No. 18 are single storey and smaller scale in the street scene. Whilst the Rotary Hall has a neutral impact, the shopfronts are of poor quality and occupy a building with a temporary feel which has a negative impact on the character of the street.

At the top of the street is a large modern building housing a tyre and exhaust depot (Fig 8.10). This is a prominent corner site at the junction of Monkton Hill and Station Hill, and forming part of the setting for the railway station. The use is not unsuitable for the area and the building is purpose designed. Unfortunately, from the station the building stands out as a prominent and functional form, responding poorly to the prominent site.



Fig 8.10: *This building relates particularly poorly to this prominent corner site, though architecturally it is more than one would expect from a modern garage building. The use is an indication of the semi-industrial nature of much of the area around the station.*

The buildings on the north side of the street conform to a regular building line but are of a varying degree of heights, form and detailing, (Fig 8.11). Some of the single storey ones have now been replaced by taller buildings, and their individual built dates have given this side of the street great variety.



Fig 8.11: A range of buildings of various ages and styles gives variety to this side of the street.

Nos. 1-5 are two-storey with pitched roof and their heights step upwards with the road, helping draw the eye forward and emphasising the gradient. No. 9 (Carpet Barn) is a single storey intervention that should be replaced with something more suitable should the occasion arise. No. 11 is a tall, imposing Edwardian building which sadly has recently had the fine two storey bays removed. It has an interesting roof terrace enclosed by attractive balustrading to the front. Next door a modern, well designed, four storey residential building has been built which matches the adjacent properties which are of similar height.

No. 15 is a solid, brick, infill building of appropriate scale. Nos. 17-25 is the former Palace Cinema and skating rink. The Palace façade remains largely intact, though to its detriment the brickwork has been painted over, reducing its visual interest and positive presence in the street scene. Blocked up upper windows and modern canopies and signage serve to further obscure the original façade. Notwithstanding, it is a local landmark of historic social and cultural interest and designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5. There is potential to restore the façade and windows with any future conversions.

The skating rink (now a charity furniture warehouse) has fared less well. Whilst it retains much of its brick façade, it again is painted and some of it has been lost in conversion to retail uses - old photographs showing it as having two large pedimented gables above the shallow arches on the façade with a different roof form from that existing today. The changes over time have diluted the building's positive impact on, and presence in the street such that it appears to sink into the rising hill, exposing the blank flank wall of the post office building against the skyline.

Adjacent to the former skating rink is the post office sorting office building (Fig 8.12). The warm red brick frontage is only a small part of the building. This brick frontage is a solid a well-proportioned example of Victorian architecture and shows a degree of architectural integrity. The large side extension has been stylishly adapted for its new use as a local Sainsbury's store, externally expressing the structural columns of the previous building. The first floor is for office. This development, incorporating improved access arrangements and parking now makes a positive contribution to the area.



Fig 8.12: The pleasant former post office building was one of the first to be built along the street. The 1960's rear extension has been elegantly converted into a Sainsbury's store.

The street's comparatively wide aspect, particularly in relation to the height of buildings lining it, gives a feeling of spaciousness. This however, is somewhat to the detriment of its formal character, as its definition as a linear space, is weakened by small scale and temporary looking buildings in places. On the south side this is evident with the single storey buildings on the Rotary Hall and the adjacent shops at No. 18. It is evident on the north side also, with No. 9 sitting in uncomfortable juxtaposition to the adjacent two and three storey buildings.

The view down the hill reveals a more pleasing aspect. The three-storey Georgian frontage of Nos. 57-58 New Road terminates the view. Above this are the rooftops of houses on Ivy Road and Bath Road and mature trees on the skyline of Rowden Hill. This reinforces the market town feel of Chippenham and distinction between urban town and leafy suburb. Nos. 57-58 and the adjacent terrace at Nos. 59-61, whilst both buildings of positive character, have suffered as a result of unsympathetic alterations. Unsympathetic shopfront extensions bearing no relation to the buildings they sit within, rendered facades and loss of an impressive chimney have diluted the impact of these buildings.

Old photographs from c.1905 show Station Hill was once lined with Horse Chestnut trees, emphasising the formal nature, and importance of the street as an approach to the station and bringing a softening element of greenery into an otherwise severely urban scene. Removal of functional lighting columns and replanting of street trees would undoubtedly enhance the character of the street.

Heavy traffic volume is a distinctly noticeable and unpleasant feature of the character of Station Hill. The road is the only vehicular access for the railway station, Wiltshire College, Olympiad, Wiltshire Council offices, a number of industrial and commercial premises, and the whole of the Monkton Park housing estate. The visual intrusion of the often continuous traffic, noise, vibration, pollution and safety implications (traffic speed is often excessive outside peak times), combine to make the traffic a real and significant intrusion on the character of the conservation area.



Chippenham Town Council
The Town Hall, High Street,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 9
Ivy Road and Lowden Hill

22/12/2021

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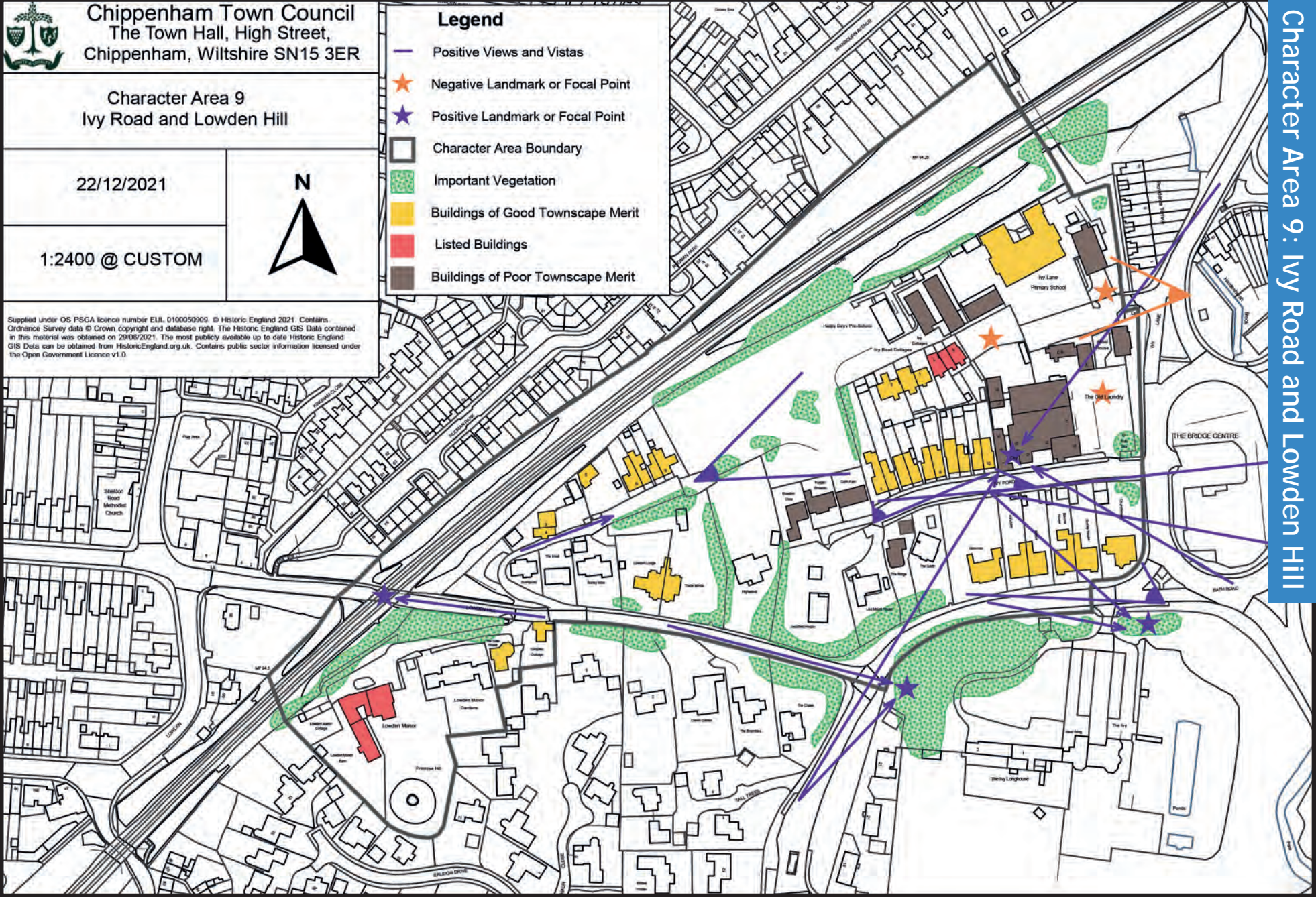


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Legend

- Positive Views and Vistas
- Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
- Listed Buildings
- Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit

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Character Area 9: Ivy Road and Lowden Hill

History, Archaeology & Morphology

The oldest building in the character area is Lowden Manor (Grade II), dating from the 16th or 17th Century with later additions and associated barns. The manor itself is recorded as early as 1258, when Henry III gave the property to William de Valere, Earl of Pembroke.

Other than the Manor, the earliest buildings in the character area date from the 18 Century. These are three cottages (Grade II) remaining from a short lane leading off Ivy Lane, once known as Barley Close Lane. The land around the lane, covering most of the character area, consisted of two fields known as Upper Barley Close and Lower Barley Close. Other field names included Bushel Leaze, New Orchard and Home Ground.

During the 19th Century, and since the construction of Ivy Lane Primary School, a path on the south side has replaced the original lane running to the north side of the cottages. The land formerly occupied by the lane now forms part of the school grounds.

Ivy Lane is shown as Winnick's Lane on John Powell's map of 1784 and as Frank's Lane on the Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1886. Lowden Hill is shown as Lowden Lane on Powell's map. Powell's map also shows the short lane rising off Lowden Hill and turning sharply back on itself, with a few cottages. Nos. 3 & 4 probably date from this time, though much altered and extended, and No. 5, shown on the 1886 map still remains, though again, much extended. Lowden Hill was the original road westwards from Chippenham until the construction of the Bath Road turnpike. Land to the south of the character area forms the grounds to The Ivy, a large listed country house. Its grounds once extended across Bath Road by means of a footbridge, occupying the land to the south of Lowden Hill between Bath Road and Lowden Manor. A number of the many impressive mature trees in this area probably date back to this period.

The railway line forms the northern boundary of the character area and dates from the 1840s, though its construction seems to have done little to prompt immediate development in the area. Turnpike cottage is shown on the 1886 map and still exists as part of later and much larger additions. The villas Trade Winds and Lowden Lodge probably date from the mid-19th Century. The great majority of the development of the area took place around the turn of the 20th Century. Development around this time included the primary school and laundry fronting Ivy Lane, the villas fronting Bath Road and the construction of Ivy Road and the houses along it, houses on the lane off Lowden Hill and houses adjacent to the former Barley Close Lane cottages. The remaining land along the north side of Lowden Hill and Bath Road has gradually been developed with large detached houses during the 20th Century. Most of the land on the south side of Lowden Hill has been developed for housing more recently, in the grounds of Green Gables, an attractive early 20th Century building which still remains. A large area of land in the centre of the character area has remained undeveloped. Used as allotments until the 1960s, the area is partly unused and partly forms the playing field for the school.

Topography & Views

The land rises away from Ivy Lane in a westerly direction and is the northern extremity of Rowden Hill, a ridge running approximately on a north-south alignment as far south as Pudding Brook on the edge of Chippenham. A shallow cutting exists where Lowden Hill passes over the ridge. The fall in the land to the north west is enclosed by the presence of the railway embankment.

Positive Views

The laundry chimney is one of the most important landmarks in the area and is particularly prominent and impressive when descending Rowden Hill, when arriving at the Bridge Centre gyratory from Avenue La Fleche and on approaching the gyratory from Ivy Lane. From Ivy Road, in the vicinity of the chimney there are also clear and attractive views out to Bank House, the St. Andrew's Church steeple and the Cedar tree by the entrance to The Ivy. The gently curving and rising terrace of houses on the north side of Ivy Road provides attractive views in either direction. From the entrance to the school there is an attractive view of the rooftops of houses in Foghamshire and properties on New Road interspersed with vegetation, the most notable feature being the roof and pediment on the front of the Methodist Church on Monkton Hill.

The view east down Lowden Hill is dominated by mature vegetation, though gradually an impressive Cedar in the grounds of The Ivy becomes particularly prominent, its twisting 'twin trunks' being a distinctive feature (Fig 9.1). This tree is also a distinctive element of the view from Rowden Hill. Continuing into Bath Road the other large Cedar by the entrance also comes into view and, when the gates are open, the view to the front of The Ivy is particularly imposing.



Fig 9.1: The approach from Bath Road is distinctive due to the landmarks of the fine Cedar tree and the laundry chimney.

The lane leading off the north side of Lowden Hill turns back on itself and its informal nature and arrangement of buildings makes for pleasant views that draw the eye forward along its length. On reaching the end of the lane the view opens out to give an attractive wide vista of the town, of buildings and rooftops interspersed with vegetation, mature trees in the foreground and on the skyline. Attractive views also exist from the end of the drive to Lowden Manor across the western part of the town.

Negative views

The entrance into the primary school and access to Ivy Cottages is one of an ill-defined space dominated by cars, telephone poles, a variety of boundary treatments and the blank side elevation of No. 5 Ivy Cottages.

On approaching the town from Bath Road, the view towards the town centre (before being taken round the gyratory) is of a plethora of highway infrastructure in the foreground and the blank, bland rear elevations of the Borough Parade Shopping Centre in the distance. The trees do little to soften this unattractive view and the steeple of St. Andrew's Church is lost in the clutter.

General Character

The character area is primarily a quiet residential backwater bounded by the railway line and the busy roads of Bath Road, Ivy Lane and Lowden Hill. Lowden Hill is the only route through the area, though the narrow Railway Bridge limits this to eastbound traffic only. Otherwise the area consists of mainly informal cul-de-sac accesses to the primarily residential properties. A turning off Ivy Lane gives access to Ivy Lane Primary School and Ivy Cottages. On Lowden Hill two unnamed accesses lead off in the vicinity of Turnpike Cottage - one to Nos. 3-9 Lowden Hill and the other to Lowden Manor. Ivy Road is the only formally made road in the area and only has houses fronting the road on the north side, the south side giving rear access to properties fronting Bath Road and Lowden Hill. The only non-residential uses are the primary school and the former laundry, now an industrial estate, both fronting Ivy Lane. The busy roads on the periphery and lack of through routes are important elements in ensuring the relative peace and tranquility of the area. The topography helps minimise the impact of the traffic from much of the area, the lack of vehicular through routes being a key element in maintaining its character. However, redevelopment and new development opportunities exist that would not necessarily undermine this character.



Fig 9.2: The fine villas on Bath Road are a distinctive feature when travelling west.

The curve in the road is a transition from the distinctly enclosed and urban space described above and the more open and suburban character it takes on as it rises to become Rowden Hill. At the eastern end of the street the character becomes amorphous and unfocussed as one is presented with a sea of highway infrastructure and the end elevation of Avonbridge House. This unattractive end to what is a generally attractive route into the town does nothing to give it a positive image.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

Bath Road

The enduring character of the short length of Bath Road in the character area is that of a road enclosed by mature vegetation on one side and attractive Victorian villas on the other (Fig 9.2). The high stone wall and lack of pavement heighten the sense of enclosure created by the trees on the south side. On the north side the villas are set back from the pavement behind brick boundary walls and in front gardens with mature, domestic scale vegetation. The gardens are of a depth which is both appropriate to the character and scale of the houses and which offers a degree of separation from the busy traffic. The sense of enclosure is heightened by the curve in the road, as views to the end of it present a dense array of trees and shrubs.

Lowden Hill

This is a long established lane that cuts through the ridge of high ground to the west of the town. The rising ground either side is lined with attractive dry-stone walls that are a distinctive characteristic of the lane, particularly on the north side where there is only one vehicular access. The lane is also characterised by a large amount of mature vegetation, including many impressive trees (Fig 9.3). The height of the trees and sunken nature of the lane, in addition to its narrow width and single pavement, combine to create an intimate scale and sense of enclosure which is particularly attractive. This is undermined to a degree by the lower walls and wider vehicular accesses to properties on the south side of the lane.



Fig 9.3: The character of Lowden Hill is defined by impressive stone walls and mature trees.

Most properties are set well back from the lane and only glimpses are to be had of them. The most visible properties are generally the most attractive. Sitting nearest to the road and on the highest ground is the impressive front of the Victorian villas Lowden Lodge and Trade Winds. Almost opposite, and on a more open site is Green Gables. Dating from the inter-war period this is a generally attractive large stone built detached house. However, prominent modern replacement windows, door and inappropriate timber fencing undermine the simple elegance of the building. A large grass bank in front gives it a somewhat bland setting that is only relieved by an impressive tree. Opposite is a more recently built large detached house in a mildly 'mock Tudor' style. Although of no particular architectural merit it is of appropriate scale to its setting. The lane reaches its highest point at Turnpike Cottage. Private access roads lead off either side on continually rising ground whilst the lane drops back down to pass under the diminutive railway bridge. Untidy scrub and concrete retaining walls line much of the approach to the bridge, which itself is caked in white salt stains from poor drainage.

Overhead wires and cables and the remnants of traffic signs attached to the bridge add to the unattractiveness of the bridge and its environs, particularly for pedestrians.

The access road leading off on the south side is the original driveway to Lowden Manor and the listed gate-piers remain. The most prominent building here is Turnpike Cottage. The original building has been significantly extended to several times its original size. The small section on the left-hand side with the attractive canopied front is the original building and is shown on the 1886 map. The larger part on the right-hand side is also attractive and generally complementary to the original. Dating from around 1900, it uses engineering brick and large Bath stone quoins and window surrounds. To the rear is a late 20th Century extension though also generally in character with the rest of the building.

Adjacent to the gate-piers is The Gate House, a modern and distinctive property (Fig 9.4). The principal element is a two storey octagonal building of coursed rubble stone with stone quoins and slate roof. The octagonal shape and arched windows give it a gothic appearance. Unfortunately the windows would appear to consist of more frame than glass, adding a mass-produced suburban element to an otherwise distinctive and attractive building.



Fig 9.4: Modern development of good quality and interest adjacent to Turnpike Cottage by the listed gate piers to Lowden Manor.

Lowden Manor Gardens, a large modern detached house sits between the Manor and Turnpike Cottage on the site of the kitchen garden, but is almost totally hidden by vegetation. At the end of the road is Lowden Manor (Fig 9.5). This is a secluded and distinctive listed building, with later additions to the right-hand side, which appear to include inappropriate modern replacement windows.



Fig 9.5: The fine frontage of the listed Lowden Manor in its secluded cul-de-sac. Modern top-hung replacement windows (right) are an intrusive and inappropriate feature.

An access road also leads off the north side of Lowden Hill at Turnpike Cottage and turns sharply back on itself before reaching the railway. At this point the land has risen to a height such that the railway is in a shallow cutting, which is briefly interrupted to allow Lowden Hill to pass beneath it, returning to its cutting until just past Lowden Manor. The embankments between the access road and Lowden Hill are untidy and covered in scrub and the access road consists of patchwork tarmac and unmade gravel. The variety in levels is a distinctive and interesting characteristic of this area.



Fig 9.6: A spur off Lowden Hill turns back on itself to reveal a pleasant lane with an eclectic mix of cottages.

On turning the corner one is presented with two properties of contrasting styles on either side of the road (Fig 9.6). On the left is Nos. 3 & 4, a pair of cottages dating from the mid-19th Century. It is a two-storey building with large slate mansard roof. The side elevation facing the road is of coursed rubble stone with flush brick chimney stack running through the centre. Welcome improvements have been made to the west elevation including the removal of render or paint to one half of the building and replacement of a flat roofed extension with a lean to extension, but chunky UPVC modern replacement windows and pebbledash finish of the extension are rather inappropriate for the building.

The turning area to the west side of the house was, until the mid-20th Century, occupied by the now demolished Nos. 1 & 2. On the opposite side of the road is Sunnyside, a modern two storey replacement building with a largely inoffensive but somewhat incoherent design and material palette.

Lean-to porches to both of these buildings facing the road create a pinch-point and entry into the next part of the road, which has a more open aspect. Clear views are possible into the gardens of Nos. 3-4 & 5 and on the opposite side of the road accesses into the properties facing Lowden Hill give the road a wider feel. No. 5 also probably dates from the mid-19th Century, is an attractive rubble free stone building with triple roman clay tiles, and has been subsequently extended, though in a far more sympathetic manner than at Nos. 3-4. The east elevation has a first floor timber projection, which would appear to be an oriel window, though only its side is visible due to the garden hedge.

On the opposite side of the road The Knoll is a plain rendered white painted house with modern casement windows. The wide driveway and weakly defined frontage give it undue prominence in the street, which is only relieved by the two small trees in front.

The adjacent Barley Mow is a generally attractive modern house in subtle grey imitation stone. Unfortunately the frontage is partly obscured by a large double garage surrounded by a high stone wall. This and the wide, weakly defined entrance give a somewhat stark overall impression. In contrast the accesses to Lowden Lodge and Trade Winds are from the side and combine a more successful sense of enclosure with pleasant boundary treatments in the form of an attractive brick wall and a hedgerow.

Although generally straight, the positioning of houses, outbuildings and property boundaries gives the road a slightly winding feel and, with the slope of the land giving longer distance views, draws the eye forward. At the end of the road are two pairs of houses dating from around 1900. Nos. 6-7 are faced with Bath stone and have ground floor bays and Nos. 8-9 are faced with engineering brick with Bath stone quoins and window surrounds. The small front gardens retain most of their railings. Although the buildings make up a generally pleasant composition, unsympathetic alterations such as replacement UPVC windows, painted stone and brick, and blocked up porch recesses combine to significantly compromise their character. The distinctly urban terrace contrasts strongly with the large open space of the school playing fields and the dominance of vegetation in the view, particularly on the skyline, railway embankment and to the south of the playing field.



Fig 9.7: The distinctive terrace of houses behind the fine laundry building and prominent chimney on Ivy Road, the gables, bays and chimneys, and stepping down with the gradient give a sense of continuity and rhythm.

Ivy Road

Ivy Road is the only formerly laid out street in the area. It is of uniform width and generally straight with a slight turn at the top of the rising slope up from Ivy Lane. The south side of the road has no built frontage and serves only to give rear access to the villas and detached houses fronting Bath Road. Much of the boundary consists of generally attractive high brick walls along the back edge of the pavement, with breaks to give access to garages. This works best at the eastern end and where garages are not built into the wall, the uniformity breaking down somewhat at the western end. The walls are important in maintaining a strong frontage and sense of enclosure on this 'unbuilt' side of the road.

The north side of the street consists of The Old Laundry and a row of five pairs of houses dating from around 1900. The Old Laundry industrial estate is the former laundry, consisting of a collection of modest and undistinguished brick buildings of various sizes and scales, the only notable feature being the impressive brick chimney, which is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5. The brick buildings have all been painted white which gives them an unduly prominent and slightly shoddy appearance, particularly where the paint is beginning to wear away.

The frontage onto Ivy Road is particularly unattractive, consisting of an ill-defined boundary, a mix of bare and painted brick, concrete service area and plastic mesh fencing. The estate buildings also poorly address the busy Ivy Lane, and the impression is of an underused site in a prominent location that would benefit from redevelopment to provide attractive and appropriately scaled frontages to Ivy Road and Ivy Lane and the primary school.

The adjacent row of houses are of coursed rubble stone with ground floor bays and gables with decorative bargeboards (Fig 9.7).

The houses curve gently and step up the hill gradually forming an attractive composition from either direction that is in harmony with the gradient. Unfortunately all railings have been lost from the small front gardens, most original windows and doors have been replaced with unsympathetic modern designs and some bargeboards have been removed. Despite this the essential elements of form, scale and stone detailing remain relatively unaltered, the terrace retaining much of its attractive character. Between Nos. 6 & 7 a narrow path leads through to Ivy Road Cottages. This is a short terrace of three houses accessed from Ivy Road only by this path, but located adjacent to Ivy Cottages. Mature trees beyond in the grounds of houses fronting Bath Road and Lowden Hill provide a green backdrop at the top end of the road. More recent residential development in this area is at odds with the low-density character of the properties beyond the end of the street, and their attendant mature vegetation. The three properties Bowden View, Punjabi Bhawan and Cefn Parc are crammed close together, are of a distinctly suburban character, plain in appearance and the view is dominated by the garage block to Bowden View. More recently The Ridge has been developed between The Garth and Lea Mount House. This development is out of scale and character with its surroundings, uses inappropriate materials, has a porch that is alien and a double garage that is not in keeping with the area. The general attractiveness of the street is undermined by the unattractive wirescape, variety of street lighting designs and the poor state of some of the pavements and kerbs.



Fig 9.8: The simple but pleasant frontage of Ivy Lane School. The space in front of the school is poorly defined and unattractive and would benefit from tidying up.

Former Barley Close Lane

There is now no trace of the former lane, other than the access off Ivy Lane. The access remains only for the primary school (Fig 9.8) and the terrace at Nos. 5-7 Ivy Cottages. Turning off Ivy Lane one enters a poorly surfaced and ill-defined car park, beyond which is a stark suburban timber board fence. An unmade driveway leads past this to an amorphous and ill-defined space, the site of the long since demolished Nos. 1-4 Ivy Cottages, now unmade ground serving as parking space for the remaining Ivy Cottages. The painted side elevation of No. 5 presents a stark and unattractive appearance.

Adjacent to this space, in the grounds of the school is a prefabricated two storey flat roofed building of utilitarian design, its drabness relieved by some bright artwork. Behind is a more recent single storey flat roofed modular building of higher quality design. School Boundaries are marked by a variety of means and often attended by grass, weeds and scrub. The whole area is unattractive and amorphous and is sorely in need of enhancement and rejuvenation.

The buildings of The Old Laundry are also prominent, however, a more recent small scale office development constructed on the corner of the site has failed to improve the aspect from Ivy Lane and the School in this prominent position. The original school building is a modest but attractive building dating from around 1900 and is best viewed from the car park. The most recent addition to the collection of buildings on the site is a plain brick building to the east of the original building. This is sited well forward of it and disrupts views of, and generally has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the original building.

Vegetation

The area contains a significant number of mature trees and vegetation and this is a defining element of the character of the area. The majority of this is to be found along Lowden Hill and Bath Road, much of which is probably attributable to the remains of the gardens and park of The Ivy. The vegetation also extends into the centre of the area and along the railway embankment. Mature vegetation is evident in most views within and beyond the area and it is this characteristic which reinforces the identity of the area as suburban.

Materials

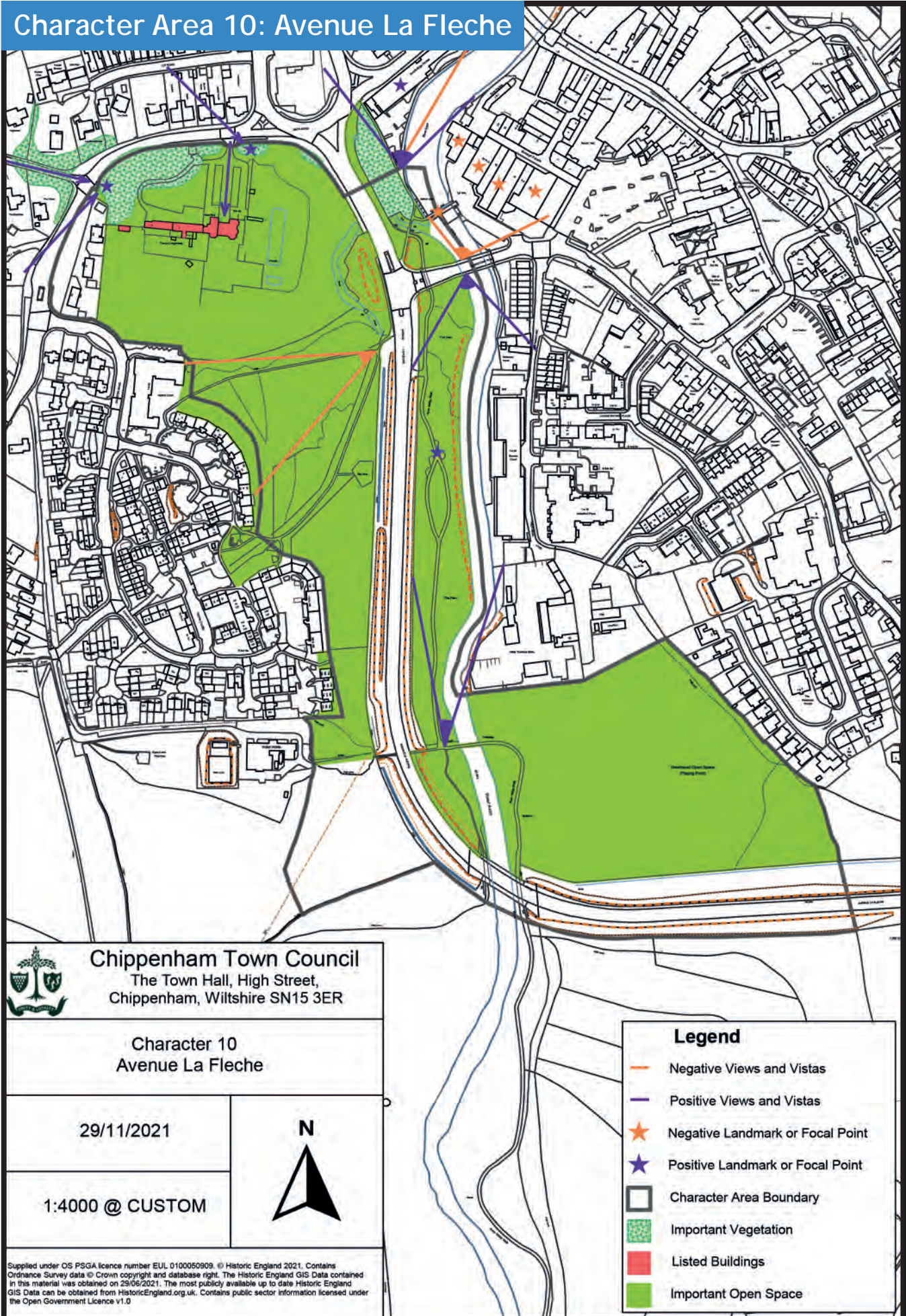
There is a mix of materials to be found in the area, generally relating to the range of ages and styles of buildings. The older buildings tend to be coursed or free rubble stone with stone, slate or clay tile roofs. Later buildings tend to be of engineering brick with Bath stone dressings or faced in Bath stone. Newer properties such as Highwood and The Gate House use appropriate shades of brick or natural stone. Imitation stone is seen in a generally subtle tone at Barley Mow and in an out of character shade and style at Bowden View, Punjabi Bhawan and Cefn Parc.

Inappropriate standard bright suburban brick is evident in The Ridge in the former grounds of Lea Mount House.

Highway Infrastructure

Highway infrastructure is particularly evident and intrusive in the vicinity of Bath Road and the gyratory, where large road signs and a plethora of lighting columns, sign poles and traffic lights are particularly intrusive in the townscape. The large direction sign at the junction of Lowden Hill and Bath Road is particularly visually intrusive and has the potential to be reduced in size. A variety of styles, sizes and finishes of lighting columns exist throughout the area, those a stark galvanised finish being the most unattractive. In addition to the variety of lighting columns, overhead wires and poles, often with attached streetlights, add to the generally cluttered view which persists in many views of the streets in the area.

Character Area 10: Avenue La Fleche



Chippenham Town Council
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character 10
Avenue La Fleche

29/11/2021

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Legend

- Negative Views and Vistas
- Positive Views and Vistas
- ★ Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- ★ Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Listed Buildings
- Important Open Space

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History, Archaeology & Morphology

The area forms part of the Avon river valley to the south-west of the town. The area remained relatively unaltered until the 1960s. This saw the major flood mitigation measures to the river and the installation of the current weir. In 1985 Avenue La Fleche, the town centre bypass, was constructed through the river valley with a significant impact on the character of the area. During the 1980s the Charter Road housing estate was built in the flood plain on land to the south of The Ivy. These late 20th Century changes have had a profoundly detrimental impact on the character of this part of the river valley but, despite this, opportunity exists for much enhancement of the character of the area.

Prior to these interventions the river environment was informal and more rural in character and, with no weir, the water was freer flowing. Downstream from the Town Bridge the river diverged to form the Isle of Rea, land most recently used as allotments. These channels converged with Hardenhuish Brook into a pool crossed by Back Avon Bridge, a flimsy footbridge that gave access from River Street via Cradle Bridge to an area known as The Ham. This was a long island created by a second tributary of Hardenhuish Brook. The whole area was a picturesque backwater to the town in a landscape of mature trees that had remained unchanged for centuries.

The Ivy is Chippenham's only Grade I listed house. The adjacent Longhouse and Stables are listed Grade II*. The house was built for John Norris, lawyer and MP for the borough in 1713. The current house dates from 1728 though is a remodelling of an early 17th Century house, fragments of which survive. The house retains its immediate landscape setting, though the visual connection to the river valley has been lost with the development of the Charter Road housing estate. Unlike Monkton House the river valley was not transformed into formal parkland setting and the land to the south remained as pasture. The house did have an associated park on the west side of Rowden Hill (A4). This was accessed by a bridge across the road which is shown on the Powell map of 1784. The bridge is no longer shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 and some of the land likely to have been occupied by the park has been developed.

Topography & Views

Topography

The river valley slopes within the area are relatively gentle, the steeper gradients being beyond the area at Rowden Hill, Lowden Hill and towards the town centre along Gladstone Road and Wood Lane. The intervention of the by-pass has driven a high embankment throughout the area in close proximity to the river that severely limits the perception of the area as a river valley. The riverbanks are quite steep in places as a result of the flood mitigation measures.

Views

Generally views are confined by vegetation, apart from in the south where Westmead Playing Field and Open Space afford longer and wider views towards the south east. In the northern, more urban part of the river, the west side footpath affords an attractive view across the town bridge into Monkton Park, the bridge railings standing out particularly well and the Wiltshire Council offices are pleasantly softened by trees. The high water level in relation to the bridge, and its simple design, gives it the appearance of a jetty rather than a bridge. The footpath itself is generally attractive with suitably scaled vegetation and attractive railings and this provides a pleasant foreground to the renovated Avonbridge House building. The car park is not too obtrusive an element, but the rear elevation and refuse bins of No. 1 Bath Road (Grounded) detract further serve to make this out of scale building an anomaly in the townscape.

Moving along the footpath by the River the rear elevations, parking and servicing areas of the Borough Parade Shopping Centre become apparent, creating an obtrusive and unattractive riverfront environment. This view becomes even more apparent from Gladstone Road Bridge. The view south from the bridge, on the other hand, is more attractive (Fig 10.1). The rear elevations of Bowles Court, a new housing development are a big improvement on the Hygrade factories which it has replaced.



Fig 10.1: South of Gladstone Road Bridge the river takes on a more informal, less urban feel.

To the south crossing the footbridge over the river to Westmead Playing Field one is afforded a wide vista of the slopes of the river valley ridge to the east. Continuing along the footpath to the Avenue La Fleche bridge and looking back towards the town centre, the view immediately beyond the playing fields is of an untidy and unattractive hotchpotch of buildings, the development at Flowers Yard, fencing, scrub and the contents of the water works yard. A number of mature trees soften the view in the distance. The break in the screening scrub as Avenue La Fleche crosses the river means that this is one of the first views many visitors will have of the town. This view will considerably change with the construction of Westmead Activity Centre. There are positive views of the River and Westmead Open Space looking south beyond Avenue La Fleche bridge.

On the west side of Avenue La Fleche is the Charter Road housing estate. From the town centre this is accessed by footpaths across an area of open ground between the road and estate. This tapers to the south and affords clear views of the stark and monolithic blocks of flats enclosing the estate (Fig 10.2).



Fig 10.2: The flats and space in front are bland, featureless and sterile, a particularly uninspiring part of the river valley.

Remnants of former hedgerows and some mature trees help break up the space. Other than this the space is a bland grassed area, of little attractiveness and no definition between it and the flats. The screening vegetation along the road ensures that the flats are not particularly noticeable from passing traffic.

General Character

The character of the area is dominated by the road, as a main gateway to, and route through the town. Views from the road are important in conveying the image of the town to visitors and through traffic. The road has no footpaths and those that exist beyond the screening vegetation of the road are isolated from it and primarily support local pedestrian traffic. The path along the river is part of the North Wiltshire Rivers cycle route. This has been extended towards Lacock and is likely to see greater tourist and leisure use. The area suffers from the intrusion of the road but has failed to attempt to integrate it into the environment. The river is a recreational and landscape resource with great potential. Unfortunately it is suffering from unattractive interventions such as the weir and unsympathetic development alongside parts of it, such as the shopping centre that turns its back on it and established industrial uses that prevent public access and give the river environment and the gateway to the town an unattractive image.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The area can be divided into three further sub areas for the purposes of analysis:

- The Ivy
- The Urban River
- The River Valley

The Ivy

The Ivy and its gardens are isolated from the surrounding area by the dense vegetation and mature trees in the grounds, by the boundary wall and the inappropriate timber gates. Views of the house can be had in winter from Bath Road if the gates are open (Fig 10.3).



Fig 10.3: The fine frontage of the Grade I listed Ivy, only visible when the gates are open and the trees in the foreground are not in leaf. It is quite isolated from its surroundings.

Although the land rises gently across the site towards Rowden Hill, the stature of the vegetation gives an impression of higher ground and this, and the mature trees near the weir, has the effect of narrowing the space that the road passes through.

The narrowing also acts as a transition point between the urban and active space of the gyratory and the more open aspect of the river valley. Travelling south from the gyratory, the aspect opens, though the scrub vegetation prevents views to the open countryside.

The Urban River

The Urban River is the sub area located between the Town Bridge and Gladstone Road Bridge. It overruns into Character Areas 6, 7, 12 and 13, but for consistency in appraising remains best described as a single entity under Character Area 10 as per the original 2007 Appraisal. The river environment between the Town Bridge and Gladstone Road Bridge is very urban in character. The west and east banks are quite different in character. The west side is generally attractive with little to detract from this (Fig 10.4).



Fig 10.4: The footpath along the river to the rear of the refurbished Avonbridge House is generally a pleasant space with human scale vegetation enclosing the pedestrian from the small car park. This breaks down close to the town bridge where the unattractive rear elevation of No. 1 Bath Road is revealed and pedestrians are diverted away from the River.

Avonbridge House and the mature trees give enclosure to the triangle of land used as the car park. This is generally unobtrusive and the vegetation and planting along the footpath help screen the vehicles whilst not hiding the presence of the building. The walls and railings are solid and of good quality, adding to the character of the path. The path provides a vertical solid embankment to the river that is a key element in defining the urban character. Some vegetation is growing out from the bottom of the wall where the water is shallowest. This is unattractive and collects litter and is most prevalent towards the busy Town Bridge and weir. Similarly, the short riverbank adjacent to the town bridge is unattractive.

In contrast, the east side bank is generally sloping land from the town bridge to the weir. The character of the river environment is dominated and defined by the Borough Parade Shopping Centre, which it partly encircles. The shopping centre ignores the river. Service yards and unlandscaped parking face the river. However, one of the shopping centre's service yards has been successfully screened from the river by a terrace of housing association dwellings. This addresses the river in a positive manner and has a simple but pleasant frontage (Fig 10.5).



Fig 10.5: In the town centre, these housing association flats positively address the river and make the most of their setting. Their scale, form and layout is also appropriate to the location.

The Bridge House public house occupies a prime riverside site of some considerable length, yet it makes minimal use of the river bank environment (other than a small river front seating area for patrons) and does not allow public access to it. The river path itself is diverted through the service yard route. This route contains cycle unfriendly rumble strips yet it is a cycle route as well as a footpath, car park, service vehicle route and service yard. It is a singularly unattractive, uninspiring and poorly planned environment that contains a potentially dangerous mix of users. Re-routing the footpath and cycle route along the river front would dramatically improve the environment for all users and allow the river environment to be experienced and appreciated by all, better integrating it into the townscape.

Adjacent to the Town Bridge is No. 1 High Street (Superdrug), which replaced a fine three storey former hotel building constructed in Bath stone and which had active frontages on to both the High Street and River Avon. The current building is bland and unattractive, and of insufficient stature for its important setting. Its side elevation facing the river is particularly unattractive and its setting of a 'left over' triangle of ill- defined space is equally unattractive (Fig 10.6). Any redevelopment of No. 1 High Street should include an active frontage on to the River.



Fig 10.6: No. 1 High Street (Superdrug) is completely at odds with its neighbour and surrounding buildings being flat roofed, having horizontal fenestration and concrete facing, and has a poor relationship with the River.

To the north of Gladstone Road Bridge is the sluice and weir installed as part of the 1960s flood mitigation works. This can only be described as one of the ugliest and intrusive features of the river in the town, its extending concrete counter balance being its most dominant feature (Fig 10.7).



Fig 10.7: The monolithic and functional structure of the weir and sluice is an ugly intrusion into the river environment. The proximity of the busy road bridge and unattractive rear of the shopping centre make this a particularly unpleasant space, yet it is one of the main routes into the town centre.

The built infrastructure is unsightly and utilitarian and combines with the bland scrub of the shallows downstream and the utilitarian structure of the road bridge, offers a singularly unattractive environment to this major through route and gateway to the town and one of its busiest car parks.

The space under the bridge is used by pedestrians and cyclists but unfortunately it floods on occasions, when users have to divert elsewhere. The structure of the bridge has been put to good use as an informal gallery for community street art (Fig 10.8).



Fig 10.8: *The underneath of the bridge has been put to good use as an informal gallery for community street art.*

Whilst the bridge is utilitarian in character it offers a vantage point for the river environment and town centre skyline and is wide enough to support a more informal and natural riparian environment than currently exists. The unattractive rear elevations of the shopping centre are particularly evident from the bridge and footpath across the weir and this built form and the proximity of Avenue La Fleche give this part of the river environment a rather cramped feel. The open green space between the river and Avenue La Fleche is generally attractive but inaccessible and hides the unnecessarily culverted Hardenhuish Brook. Opening up the Brook and making the area accessible could reduce this cramped feel.

The River Valley

Looking south from Gladstone Road Bridge, the aspect is more rural and open, and not unattractive. On the east bank is the rear elevation of the well-designed terrace of three storey houses which forms Avonside, and Bowles Court, whose principal elevations and gardens face the river. The river is freer flowing along this stretch and more attractive for it. Unfortunately the riverbanks are poorly accessible and steep in places and the transition between water and land is characterised by unattractive scrub that collects litter and flotsam.

The open space between the river and road contains the Avon Valley Walk. There is also an impressive feature of public art - a curved concrete structure incorporating 4000 tiles designed and made by Chippenham school children to mark the new Millennium in the year 2000 (Fig 10.9).



Fig 10.9: *The Chippenham Millennium Wall, incorporating 4000 tiles designed and made by children in the year 2000.*

At the end of this narrow strip of land the Avon Valley Walk crosses the river, and opens out on to Westmead Playing Field. Westmead Activity Centre is currently being constructed in the north west corner of the playing field. This will be a new recreational and community facility, which will include a skate park and climbing wall. It will be a tall, contemporary styled, landmark building and will be make a noticeable impact on views into and out of this part of the Conservation Area.

The Avon Valley Walk continues under Avenue La Fleche Bridge into Westmead Open Space. Although outside the Conservation Area, this is an important part of the river valley. It is a popular community open space, which during the last decade has benefitted from extensive tree planting. Following the Avon Valley Walk south, there are numerous long distance views in several directions.

Vegetation

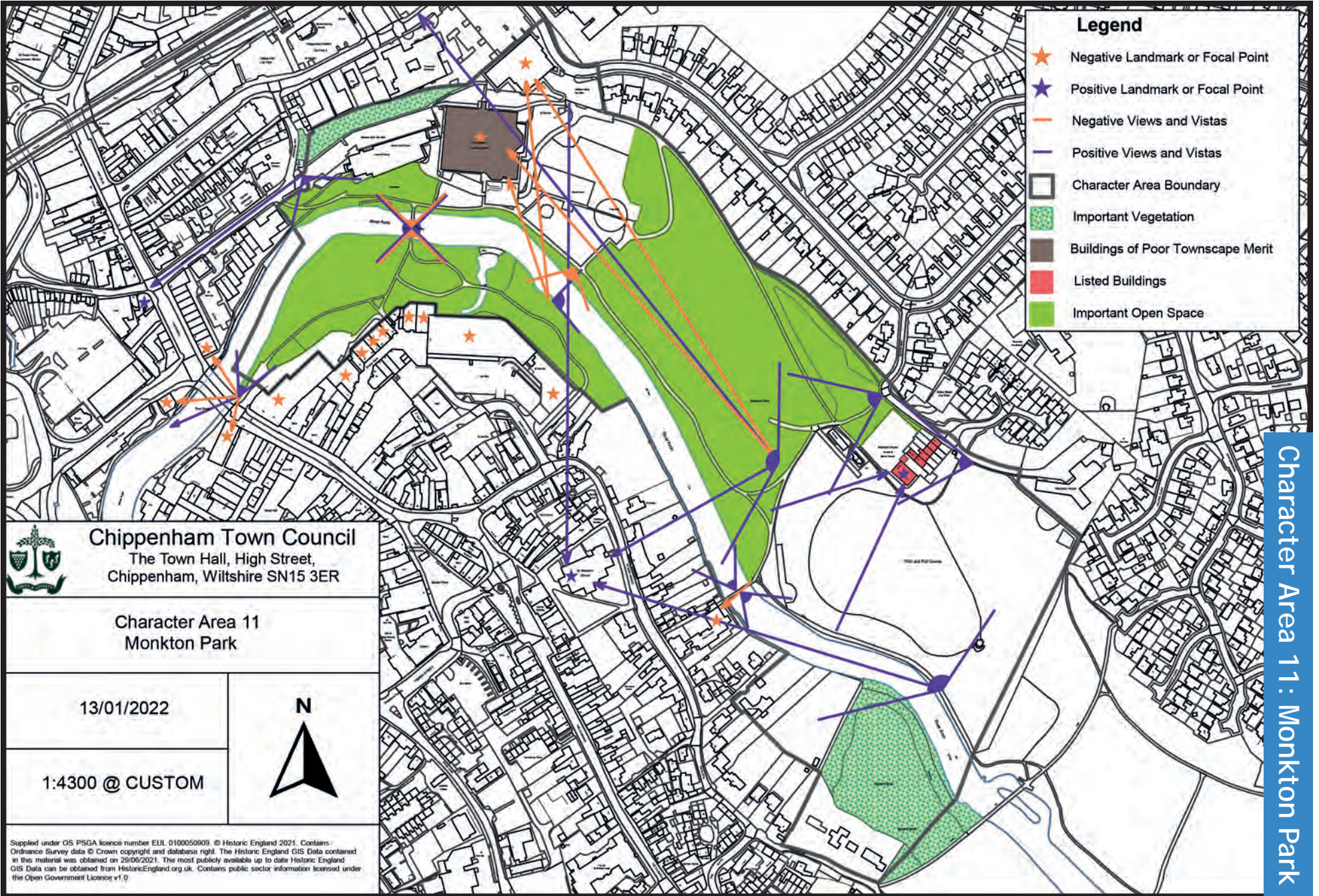
Vegetation plays an important role in defining the character of the area. A number of mature trees exist in the vicinity of the weir, remnants of the former riparian landscape. These are a significant element in defining the character of the space and complement the otherwise urban character of the river upstream of the weir. These trees are a pleasant termination of the view from the Town Bridge and help screen the traffic on Avenue La Fleche. The majority of mature trees are to be found within and bordering the grounds of The Ivy. These include many fine specimens including a number of ornamental species and provide an attractive setting for the open space to the south, from where they are best appreciated. Screening scrub and bunding across Avenue La Fleche from Gladstone Road obscures much of this landscape.

Whilst there are a number of other individual trees in the area which add to its character, most of the remainder of the vegetation has a less attractive impact. Self-seeded trees along the riverbanks appear to suffer from a lack of management and accumulate litter and flotsam. The remainder is generally characterless scrub, much of it planted along the road to screen traffic from view. This blocks views across the valley and out to the open countryside, especially for pedestrians, reduces the level of surveillance of the footpaths from the road, divorces the road from its environment and generally provides an uninspiring and soulless landscape.

Highway Infrastructure


Avenue La Fleche itself is a major intrusion into the river valley. Conversely, its embankment and screening vegetation isolate it from its immediate environment. This has little effect on the noise of the traffic, which is visible in the wider setting and from vehicles using the road. Vegetation of a greater stature, such as trees, could help counter the scale of the infrastructure and traffic, reduce the visual dominance of vehicles from beyond the character area. Removal of the screening vegetation could strengthen the relationship between the road and its immediate environment, allowing better views across the road and better perception of the river valley as a whole.

Apart from the road itself, the most intrusive feature is the large number of lighting columns along its length. The road itself is a barrier to movement, with only one surface crossing point along its whole length.



Legend

- ★ Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- ★ Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Negative Views and Vistas
- Positive Views and Vistas
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
- Listed Buildings
- Important Open Space

 **Chippenham Town Council**
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 11
Monkton Park

13/01/2022

1:4300 @ CUSTOM



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Character Area 11: Monkton Park

History, Archaeology & Morphology

The character area consists primarily of the remains of the parkland associated with Monkton House. This forms a section of the River Avon valley that creates a green corridor through the centre of the town. This extends from the Town Bridge in the town centre to the open countryside in the south east.

Monkton was one of a number of manors in the area now part of the urban area of Chippenham. It was originally given by Empress Maud (mother of Henry II) to the Priory of Monkton Farleigh and although there is no evidence of a religious house on the land, it explains the origin of the name (i.e. 'Monk's Town'). Following the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 the Manor passed to the Seymour family who held it until 1686. In 1686 the Manor was sold, the lands being split from the Manor in 1690. From then until 1919 various members of the Esmeade family held the Manor. In 1919 it was sold to a Mr H R B Coventry, being purchased by the Borough Council in 1957.

The current house sits on the approximate site of the original Manor House. During the 20 years prior to the sale in 1686, the then tenant, William Bayliffe, converted the old timber house into an elegant stone mansion with a small formal garden down to the river. In 1757 Esmead Edridge converted the mansion into the Georgian house that remains today.

Originally this also retained the small garden. The creation of the park came later and transformed the setting of the house and the surrounding landscape.

The building is listed Grade II and is now subdivided into flats. The stable buildings have been converted for housing and Sadlers Mead now separates the main house from the site of the kitchen garden, now also redeveloped for housing. The single access to the house and park was from Monkton Hill. The gate-piers remain (although altered) as part of the entrance to the Wiltshire Council offices, though a sub-station now occupies the site of the lodge. The drive passed through a belt of woodland before reaching the open parkland where it curved gently along the contours to the front of the house, facing south west towards the town. About half way into the open park a second drive left the main drive to pass behind the house to the stables and kitchen garden.

The 1st edition 1886 Ordnance Survey Map shows the house surrounded by parkland, bounded by the river to the south and west and Cocklebury Farm to the north and east. In the 1950s all the land to the north-east of the drive was developed for housing and now forms the Monkton Park housing estate of over 1000 houses. The main drive through the park remains as a pedestrian path and the route of the rear drive remains as an informal path along the boundary of the housing estate.

In 1960 the open-air swimming pool was opened and in 1967 the original District Council offices were opened on part of the wooded entrance to the park. Although the integrity of the approach drive was compromised, both these developments were of a suitable form and scale and architectural style to fit in with the parkland character and did not dominate it. In 1988 the large Olympiad leisure centre in a more functional architectural style replaced the pool, and more recently the council offices were replaced by a larger building in 2001. Both these buildings now dominate this part of the park and only a few individual trees remain of the wooded entrance. The old town mill was demolished in 1958 and during the 1960s the old town bridge was replaced by a utilitarian structure and major flood attenuation works were undertaken to the river environment, solving the perpetual flooding problems, though in a very brutal and sterilising manner for the river environment. Despite all these changes, the park remains a generally pleasant space in the town, though with great potential for enhancement.

Ordnance Survey maps up until 1936 show part of a moat, connecting with the River Avon, south west of Monkton House. The moat is thought to have been introduced as part of the 18th Century parkland and is now filled in. Within the pitch & putt golf course is a Second World War pill box, in reasonable exterior condition. There is evidence of medieval ridge and furrow in the open parkland to the west of Monkton House. The Extensive Urban Survey report for Chippenham produced by the County Archaeological Service describes finds in the area that date from the Mesolithic, Romano British through early and the late middle ages.



Fig 11.1: The view into Island Park from the town bridge is generally an attractive vista. However, the sterile nature of the river environment is evident

Topography and Views

Topography

The River Avon runs through the park, entering the character area from the south east with the parkland on the north west side. The open parkland here is predominantly level adjacent to the river, only rising up to a ridge along the line of the former approach drive. On the opposite bank the land rises up more immediately within the gardens of properties on St. Mary Street. The open level land narrows as the river bends round towards the town bridge, with the banks becoming steeper and the level areas of land now on the opposite (south) side of the river. This land then rises gently over the extent of the Emery Gate Shopping Centre.

The topography, combined with the framework of mature trees, creates a large degree of visual containment. As a result significant views beyond the park are generally limited to those along the course of the river to the Olympiad and to the open countryside. A key exception to this is the Parish Church of St. Andrew on St. Mary Street. This enjoys exceptional views of great quality from a number of locations in the park. Other views beyond the park are limited to skyline views, though these also have a significant effect on the character of its setting.

Views

The principal public view into the park from the town centre is to be had from the Town Bridge (Fig 11.1). This view into the park is generally positive, being of a landscape of mature trees, with some impressive specimens. However the view is heavily compromised by its setting on either side of the bridge. The ad-hoc form of access to the Emery Gate car park and associated parked cars, the exposed rear wall of Wilkinson's, and the general poor condition of the south river bank, is to be found on one side. On the other is to be found the part-blank side wall of Nos. 2-4 The Bridge, and overgrown scrub on a steep and sterile river bank.

The entrance from Monkton Hill is from a higher vantage point under a magnificent plane tree and the path affords some attractive views along the sweep of the river in each direction when trees are not in leaf.

The footbridge linking the Olympiad and Wiltshire Council offices with the town centre affords pleasant views along the river to the open parkland in one direction and the varied roofscape of Avon Reach in the other. Unfortunately the views north and south from the bridge are less pleasant. To the north the bulk of the Council offices and Olympiad dominate the park. To the south is the dead frontage of Emery Gate Shopping Centre, a much used but unattractive, uninviting and unsigned hole in the wall to one of the town's prime shopping areas.

As one passes across the remains of the former weir bypass stream, a gap in the trees allows a generally pleasant view of the open parkland on the north side of the River. However a number of features ensure this view is less than appealing. The timber-clad bulk of the new Sadlers Mead multi-storey car park is insensitively sited at the ridge of the slope, further canyonising and urbanising the River Valley. Further to the east on the ridge of the slope, and where there is no tree screening, the houses on Sadlers Mead and variety of boundary treatments are intrusive in the view. In the foreground are the multi-use games compound and fenced off play areas that together give a discordant feel to the view. The feel is of incremental additions and removal of individual features over time with no sense of a co-ordinated or planned use of the space or common or comprehensive approach to design and materials. The view from the opposite side of the river towards the town centre is particularly unattractive, the gap in the trees allowing the car park, blank wall and service area of the shopping centre to intrude into the parkland vista.

St. Andrew's Church steeple is an attractive and dominant landmark in views from a number of locations, notably from Sadlers Mead car park, the former approach drive, from Sadlers Mead near Monkton House and from the cycle/pedestrian route near Baydons Lane.

From the former approach drive views also exist towards Monkton House. Unfortunately a row of tall, out of character, conifers completely blocks this view and divorces the house from its parkland setting, ensuring the house is almost completely invisible from the north west. The view of the house from the entrance off Sadlers Mead is equally as poor.

Moving from this entrance near the house and into the park, the impressive view of St. Andrew's Church steeple gradually opens out into a wide picturesque vista of exceptional quality, consisting of the rear gardens, elevations and roofscape of the many listed buildings on St. Mary Street. This is probably the most attractive view to be had of the town and is visible from much of the open central area of the park. Unfortunately the location of seating in the park does not take full advantage of the potential to exploit the magnificent views offered from the park.

The park can also be accessed from St. Mary Street via a footpath through River House, a small courtyard of flats that is out of character with the setting it is in. Part of the development is built over the path and passing through the narrow space one emerges onto the footbridge across the river.

General Character

The bridge affords fine, tranquil views along the tree-lined river, the vegetation enclosing the views. The view directly ahead is less appealing, being of ivy-clad trees and scrub, obscuring what would otherwise be a fine view of the front of Monkton House. Following the path to the left the house becomes visible and presents a fine view. The view into the parkland to the south, occupied by the pitch & putt course is also attractive. However, the dense ornamental conifer planting of the crazy golf course compromises the attractiveness of both these views. Recent native hedge planting along the southern boundary will in time help to visually screen the post and wire fencing enclosing this part of the otherwise open golf course from the River path and provide a softer boundary.

From Baydons Lane the 'Blue Bridge' cycle/footpath crosses the river valley. Although this is located outside of the Conservation Area, the Bridge affords a number of attractive views into and out of the parkland and Conservation Area to the west, and open countryside to the east.

Before reaching Sunningdale Close a path leads off to the left to pass Seymour House and passes back into the Conservation Area. From this path there are pleasant views into the park and Monkton House, though the high chain-link fence marking the edge of the golf course dilutes the openness of its character.

The area is a formal and informal recreational resource for the town of a generally attractive character and is a pleasant contrast to the dense urban form of the nearby town centre. It consists primarily of the openness of the river valley and the significant mature vegetation. The space consists of the remnants of the parkland of Monkton House and the remains of the landscape associated with the former mill and its by-pass stream.

Herein lies the problem, as the area simply lacks an image and definition as anything in particular, it is a remnant of things past and has yet to make the transition into a formally acknowledged resource for the town, whatever that should be. This is evidenced by the fact that, of the dozen or so means of entering the area, there is no signage either naming the space one is entering, what it is, what facilities there are, who is responsible for managing it or any general or historical information about the area.

The Town Council has recently acquired Monkton Park and has prepared a 5 year Management Plan for enhancing the biodiversity of the area. It will continue to develop the Park as a high quality, town centre recreational asset.

In general, great benefit would result in improving the relationship of the park to the river. When flood prevention measures were carried out in the 1950s the river was dug out, and much of the spoil deposited on the river banks. This can be seen in Monkton Park and the parkland to the east of it, where often the level of the river bank is higher than that of the land behind it. This could be rectified in select locations by the digging of berms to create a shallower slope down to the river, benefitting public access and wildlife.



Fig 11.2: A pleasant view of mature trees along the main thoroughfare through Island Park

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The character of the area is varied, and can be broadly subdivided into five separate parts:

- The 'Island Park' and adjoining areas to the north incorporating the Olympiad Leisure Centre and Wiltshire Council offices
- Historic parkland between the Olympiad and Monkton House
- Monkton House, and the crazy golf and pitch & putt golf course to the south
- Baydons Wood area
- The open river valley of grassland beyond the Conservation Area boundary

Island Park

This area is so named as the former mill by-pass stream once formed a large island at this point in the river valley. As a result of the remodelling of the river in the 1960s the appearance of this area has changed almost beyond recognition. The riparian infrastructure of the mill included an impressive stone weir, associated pond and with silt islands and the long meandering by-pass stream forming a large island. The whole scene was exceptionally picturesque and is in stark contrast to the comparatively sterile character of the area today, which consists of a single deep channel forming the river and a short and neglected remnant of the by-pass stream. The former weir to the stream has been replaced with an unattractive concrete wall.

This is probably the busiest part of the park, and accommodates a wide range of uses within a complex landscape pattern. There is a steady throughput of pedestrian movement between the central shopping area to the south and offices, college, and homes to the north, as well as some east to west movement. The north-south movement consists mainly of people passing through the space between other destinations whereas the east-west movement is more recreational based with people coming specifically to enjoy the open space and access the countryside beyond

The Wiltshire Council and Olympiad buildings within the park, together with occasional outward views of adjacent shops and the rear of Emery Gate Shopping Centre, give rise to a semi-urban, though generally attractive character, derived from the presence of the river and numerous mature trees (Fig 11.2).



Fig 11.3: Fencing and scrub is unattractive and unnecessary and divorces the footpath from the river and its banks.

The feel is of a mature green space in an urban setting. The scale of the buildings generally reflects that of the mature landscape though the bulk and massing of the Olympiad is particularly unsympathetic to the space, particularly when viewed from the open parkland.

There is access to both sides of the riverbank from the Town Bridge. Both of these suffer from unattractive side elevations of adjacent buildings. The steep bank, untended scrub vegetation, part demolished balustrade, and signage and tree in the middle of the footpath combine to make this a narrow, awkward and unattractive entrance to Monkton Park on the north bank. A modest enhancement scheme could vastly improve the appearance of this area. The dense vegetation and steep banks continue as far as the Monkton Hill entrance, being augmented by utilitarian railings in places (Fig 11.3)

These features isolate the river from the adjacent footpath, prevent pedestrians from enjoying the riverside environment and are an example of the sterilising effect of the river environment as a result of the flood mitigation measures in the 1960s. Whilst the adjacent Avon Reach office buildings appear suitably scaled from a distance, from the footpath they are uninspiring and lack visual interest or detail. Their car park appears as an intrusion into the riverside walk and allows unattractive views of the rear of shops on The Bridge. Whilst the scrub does little to screen the office buildings, the semi-mature trees in front of the buildings and the self-seeded trees on the river bank achieve this in a relatively successful manner.

The entrance on the south side gives access to the main open space and former 'island' part of the park. This is the nearest public open space to the town centre and is a heavily used space, particularly in good weather.

There are numerous water birds inhabiting the river that add to its attractiveness. The former silt islands and shallow riverbanks once provided ideal and secluded nesting places for these birds. Now they often congregate in large numbers near the south side entrance to the park, wearing away grass, leaving their own mess and forcing people to detour widely around them onto other grassed areas. This can often present an unattractive and unwelcoming entrance to the park. The river itself is a particularly benign, almost inert feature in the landscape, its movement barely perceptible and its interest to the senses limited due to this. Faster flowing water would be audible as well as cooling the air and creating a breeze. This could be achieved by the re-introduction of a weir, which would also provide a visual focus and provide the opportunity for the reintroduction of small islands for waterfowl.

The side elevation to Wilkinson's is also its service access and this is a particularly unattractive and prominent intrusion into the park. The poor quality boundary treatment and the line of parked cars adjacent to it compound this. The single storey rear section allows views of the unattractive roofscape of the shopping centre and its lack of height means that it provides a poorly defined edge to the park. This area is in particular need of improvement. The use of this area as an access to the shopping centre car park creates pedestrian/vehicular conflict at the entrance to the High Street.

An additional storey to the Wilkinsons building could better define the park as well as provide a more attractive frontage and additional lettable floorspace. This could also help provide additional activity in the area, particularly in the evening if it was for residential or leisure use.

The open space in Island Park is a generally attractive and self-contained space, enclosed by the mature vegetation along the riverbank and alignment of the former bypass stream. At the eastern end of the space there are some particularly impressive Pine trees. The trees along the former by-pass stream give some degree of screening to the unattractive rear edifice of the Emery Gate shopping centre (Fig 11.4). However, it is still an intrusive feature in the landscape of the park, particularly so in the location of the pedestrian 'hole in the wall' entrance/exit into the park. This is a well-used route, though there is no signage to welcome either entrance into the shopping centre or the park. Consideration needs to be given to either improving the appearance of the elevations by improving their interaction with the park, by giving the shop units entrances into the park or facing them with new development; or by intensifying the screening, particularly at eye level.



Fig 11.4: *The unattractive blank elevation of the shopping centre is an intrusive feature along much of the south side of the island park.*

Crossing the north-south path in an easterly direction, one reaches the remnants of the bypass stream. This area is more heavily wooded, informal and secluded in character, the grass being left to grow in many places. The space is generally peaceful and pleasant, a footbridge takes the footpath across the stream. The path continues round the rear of the shopping centre car park and service yard to connect with Emery Lane.

Unfortunately, the remnants of the stream are neglected, it is dank, unattractive, collects rubbish and its banks are overgrown with nettles. In addition, the lack of natural surveillance from adjoining areas, no apparent 'way out', the overgrown character, and an absence of lighting make the area appear less safe to walk through than other parts of the park. One can see the open parkland on the other bank of the river but there is no place to cross and the route up to Emery Lane is almost completely devoid of surveillance. A bridge here would open up more walking opportunities and increase the use of the area. Selective thinning of vegetation, cleaning up of the stream and installation of lighting would help to release the potential of this area as a pleasant and well-used part of the park.

From Island Park, the bulk of the Wiltshire Council office building is softened and broken up to some extent by existing mature trees, which give a degree of screening to the large south elevation. However, from some angles and positions the building can appear unduly dominant and would benefit from some further tree planting.

On crossing the footbridge to the north side, the proximity of Council offices and Olympiad is particularly evident. The space between the two buildings is particularly unattractive. This is a well-used pedestrian route and is dominated by the high, blank walls of the large buildings on either side and the servicing area of the office. The area would benefit from some tree planting to soften the space, reduce the impact of the scale of the buildings and provide a green relief to break up the bulk of the buildings as seen from the open park to the south.

The majority of the car parking for the Council offices is to the north of the building where it cannot be seen from the main body of the park. There is a steep, vegetated embankment and retaining structure adjacent to the car park which provides a degree of relief to the mass of large buildings in the vicinity and the unattractive rear views of the small scale buildings fronting Cocklebury Road. The embankment would benefit from improved management of vegetation.

The well-used steps up the west side of the Olympiad end in an unattractive concrete wall and scruffy and inconvenient dog-leg to the steps up to the car park. The steps are of a poor design, the treads being of varying and awkward lengths for comfortable use. The variety of boundary treatments and surfacing adds to the general unattractiveness of this entrance into the park. A redesign of the layout of this space, in conjunction with that of the descent into the park, could dramatically enhance the quality of the space and entrance to the park.

The public footpath passing the Wiltshire Council offices then passes under the main, Sadlers Mead car park level entrance to the Olympiad, with a densely shrub planted embankment up to the car park. This, and the side walls of the Olympiad give this section of the footpath, once the approach drive to Monkton House, a dingy, unattractive and poorly surveyed feel. The north side of the steps to the car park consists of dense scrub and whilst providing some screening, is not particularly attractive. Replacement of the shrub planting with trees would improve surveillance and light levels at eye level and would provide a significant belt of vegetation to break up the bulk of the Olympiad, Sadlers Mead multi-storey car park and telephone exchange, dramatically improving northward views from the open Park.

Historic Parkland

The central section of the Park, bounded to the north by mainly single storey post-war housing and to the south by the river, still retains an attractive historic parkland character. The landscape is generally open in character and specimen tree groups punctuate views across the broad sweeps of open grassland sloping towards the river (Fig 11.5) These frame views of the river and historic parts of Chippenham to the south. The vegetation along the river and the slopes beyond are particularly important in defining the character of this part of the park.

The historic parkland is arguably the most visually coherent and attractive part of the park, retaining much of the original parkland character. The openness and views give a sense of space and scale commensurate with the river, topography and the character of Monkton House.



Fig 11.5: The full expanse of the open parkland as seen from the Sadlers Mead multi storey car park.

The southern corner of the Olympiad, containing the café and hall below, and pleasant clock tower, echo riverside pavilion architecture, and do not look out of place within this part of the park. However, the large swimming pool hall roof, bulk of the sports hall with its high blank wall facing the river and the generally bland architecture and form of the building are a few of a number of features that ensure the building is a significantly detracting element to the character of the area, particularly from the riverside and the parkland as seen in views from the east.

This view from the east in particular of the large buildings of the Sadlers Mead multi-storey car park, Wiltshire Council offices, Olympiad, telephone exchange and college combine to form a mass of ugly and discordant building forms that are a significant intrusion into the park and drown the impact of the impressive steeple of St. Paul's Church (Fig 11.6). Whilst the Council offices and the college extension are not unattractive, they are significant buildings towards the periphery of the view, the Olympiad, telephone exchange and Sadlers Mead multi-storey car park being most dominant. This unattractive view could be dramatically improved by additional tree planting of appropriate species in key locations between and in front of these buildings.



Fig 11.6: The view north from the open parkland. A mass of bulky building forms provides an unattractive and poorly defined focus to the view. Further tree planting between and in front of the buildings would do much to soften their impact.

The entrance to the Park from Sadlers Mead is dominated by the new multi-storey car park, with retained surface car parking area adjacent. The appearance of the multi-storey is softer and better in long distance views, but when viewed up close the projecting timber fins disappear and the grey, utilitarian concrete frame behind becomes much more evident. There are missed opportunities to provide attractive and legible pedestrian routes from Sadlers Mead into Monkton Park/the Olympiad through both the multi-storey car park and surface car park.

The main access into the Park from this location is via a steep, winding road, enclosed on one side by the Olympiad and on the other by an attractive belt of maturing trees (Fig 11.7). These are the remnants of an avenue once forming the approach to the former open-air swimming pool. The access road is a particular intrusion into the space, and lacks any pedestrian path, as is the random accumulation of other facilities and clutter. This includes the multi-use games area and play areas that feel temporary and isolated in the grassed space.



Fig 11.7: The environs of the Olympiad.

Moving round to the south side of the Olympiad the car park is a particularly intrusive element in the open space between the building and the river, as is the access road to the Council offices, cutting across the middle of the space with its attendant plethora of bollards and lighting poles. The building itself has terraces outside the café and pool yet there is no access to these from outside and they appear underutilised spaces with excellent views into the Park.

Some external plant and service entrances are unattractive elements of the elevation. The south elevation has a bland entrance at odds with the roof form and the large blank wall of the sports hall is a particularly bland and unattractive feature. This is a dead area of wall and unattractive parking very close to the river and the potential to provide some active uses in the ground floor of the Olympiad should be explored.

Monkton House, Crazy Golf and Pitch & Putt

Originally the 1757 house was the central focus of the parkland landscape that surrounded it and was constructed to provide its setting. The integrity of the parkland has been considerably eroded by subsequent development and inappropriate tree planting (Fig 11.8), though a large area surrounding the house still remains largely intact and identifiable as parkland to the house.



Fig 11.8 Monkton House is hidden from its parkland by inappropriate domestic conifer planting.

Some of the older trees in this part of Monkton Park may well date back to the laying out of the park. Most importantly, the house still remains its exterior hardly altered, although the stables have been converted and the kitchen gardens lost.

The poorly sited crazy golf course and conifers mean that the house can only be appreciated in its setting from the south across the pitch & putt course from the adjacent footpath and from the 'Blue Bridge'. The infrastructure and planting significantly compromises the setting of the important listed House (Fig 11.9).

Relocation of the crazy golf course and its landscape planting, and removal of fencing and other inappropriate planting is all that is needed to reunite the two sections of parkland and the house into a much larger and more attractive and meaningful space and open up longer views to the open countryside beyond.

Fencing/hedge screening around the north and south boundaries of the pitch & putt course and self-seeded trees covered in ivy blocking views from St. Mary Street Bridge further isolate the house from its setting. The boundary fence and large expanse of scrub between the southern boundary of the pitch & putt and the path linking Baydons Lane and Sunningdale Close also impede clear views to the house and give an impression that the area is out of bounds.



Fig 11.9: The Grandeur and setting of the house is undermined by inappropriate species of planting

The pitch & putt course has generally not compromised the character of the parkland, which retains a number of freestanding mature trees. Whilst a few bunkers exist and some of the trees are of an inappropriate species, the course allows for a number of areas of longer grass, that are not inappropriate, encourage wildlife and help to effect a more gradual transition to open countryside. The Second World War concrete pillbox located within the grounds is of interest as one of a number of pillboxes remaining along the River Avon and forming the last line of defence to protect the port of Bristol from attack from the east or prevent the advance of enemy troops inland should there be a successful landing in Bristol. Accordingly it is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5.



Fig 11.10: Baydons Wood is to the left, and the 'Blue Bridge' in the distance.

Open Countryside

Although outside the Conservation Area, this land forms part of the setting of the parkland, with views into and out of the Conservation Area. It is also an integral part of the river valley and forms part of the transition from urban parkland to open countryside. The flat unmanaged scrub forming part of the flood plain is a key element of the character of this area, as are the skyline views of the sides of the river valley. In the distance is the higher ground towards Bremhill

The housing estates on both sides of the river valley are unattractive intrusions into the space and would benefit from screening. The flood plain open space has recently been transferred to Town Council ownership and management, and there is potential for this space to be enhanced through the Monkton Park Management Plan.

Baydons Wood Area

Baydons Wood is a small area of woodland planted as part of the Woodland Trust's Millennium Project (Fig 11.10) The area is accessible by an informal path looping through the site and there is an information panel at the entrance to the woodland. The maturing woodland will help screen the housing to the south and enclose the valley with attractive woodland.

To the south west of the Baydons Lane path, as far as the sailing club, the land is open. A wild flower meadow, Baydons Meadow, has been successfully restored and is managed by a voluntary organisation. The sailing club is the main visual point of interest though the backdrop of suburban housing on the upper valley slopes compromises its setting. These slopes to the east and west side of the sailing club would benefit from tree planting to screen the houses.

Vegetation

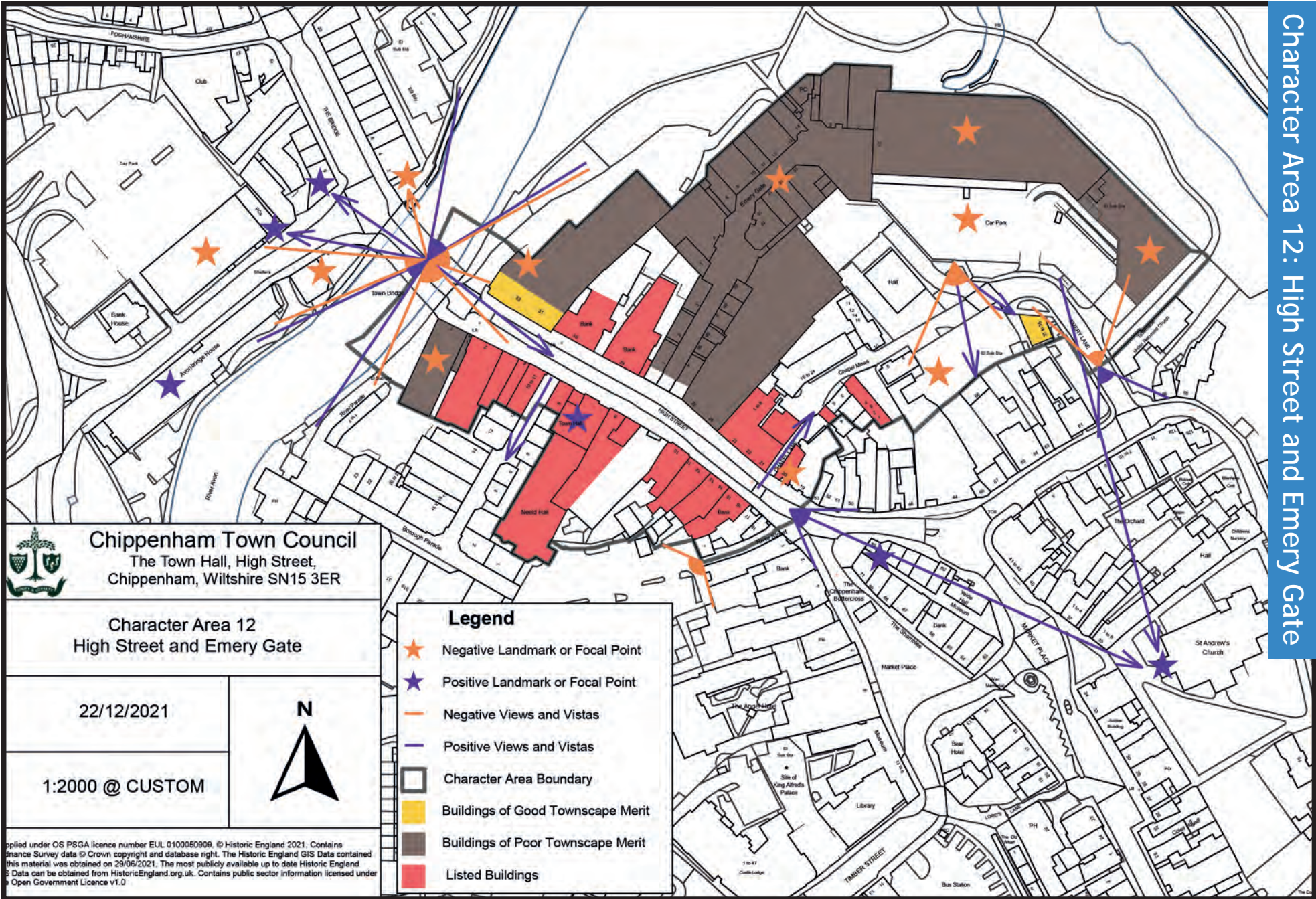
The park contains a large number of mature trees of a wide range of different species, including some very fine specimens. Some of the trees may date back to the construction of Monkton Park, and the laying out of its associated parkland. In addition to the intrinsic qualities of the specimen trees, tree groups and avenues, existing trees play a valuable role in enclosing the park, screening less attractive views of adjacent built development, framing attractive views, and unifying the disparate elements with the park in conjunction with the river, which also provides a key common element. The vegetation in the form of the trees is the single most defining element of the character of the park and it is essential that this is maintained, managed and developed with a clear purpose if the character of the landscape is not to be further eroded or undermined.


A potential threat to the quality and integrity of the park exists, as existing trees mature and eventually reach over maturity. Marginal aquatic vegetation along the riverbanks is generally limited by overhanging trees, or by what appear to be the generally steeply sloping sides. Some bank-side vegetation exists, but there is an opportunity to improve the diversity and interest of riverside planting.

Highway Infrastructure

Existing street furniture and lighting is of a variety of designs, the majority of a basic and unattractive type. There is no common or coherent design style and the great majority of what exists is out of keeping with the character of the park. Signage is sporadic and not at all comprehensive. The park would benefit from a review of existing furniture and lighting and the formulation of a plan to provide comprehensive, attractive facilities in keeping with the character of the park

Character Area 12: High Street and Emery Gate




 **Chippenham Town Council**
The Town Hall, High Street,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 12
High Street and Emery Gate









22/12/2021

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Legend

-  Negative Landmark or Focal Point
-  Positive Landmark or Focal Point
-  Negative Views and Vistas
-  Positive Views and Vistas
-  Character Area Boundary
-  Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
-  Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
-  Listed Buildings

History, Archaeology & Morphology

Despite some Roman archaeological finds being recorded, Chippenham became established as a town in the Saxon period, although the plan form of the town is generally medieval. As the Saxon town was centred on the current Market Place, the High Street would have been an important link to the bridge across the Avon from this period onwards, and a natural route along which the town would have expanded. Emery Lane is also a medieval route, and formerly known as Chapel Row.

Archaeological finds in the town are concentrated in the town centre, all of which has high archaeological potential for future finds and recording.

The street is relatively short and lined continuously with buildings fronting directly onto the pavement and the form and layout of the High Street has remained relatively unchanged throughout its history. The only significant changes have come through the replacement, alteration and renewal of the buildings fronting the street. The area to the north east of the High Street was largely undeveloped until the construction of the Emery Gate Shopping Centre in the 1980s. Prior to this it contained a number of uses. Behind the buildings fronting the street, there existed a number of small industrial uses as well as a chapel, two schools and a number of small cottages. Gardens and orchards occupied the land abutting the mill bypass stream. Immediately prior to the development of the shopping centre the majority of the land had been given over to a surface car park and market area.

The High Street has been pedestrianised (daytime only) and its appearance enhanced with the use of high quality surface materials and street furniture, though opportunities exist for further enhancements. Whilst the majority of buildings are of good quality and high townscape value, many of them being listed, a few are less successful. Although there are some discordant shopfronts, the last 20 years has seen an overall improvement in their quality.

Topography & Views

The High Street is on a gentle winding curve and rises noticeably, though gently, from its low point just south of the bridge, up to the Market Place. The land rises similarly across the site of the shopping centre though is less perceptible as there is no street of any significant length. It is most noticeable from Emery Lane and the level change allows the shopping centre to accommodate an enclosed low level car park.

Views on the High Street are mainly limited to those up and down its length, due to its enclosed nature. Looking up the street the view is terminated by the simple but elegant frontage of Nos. 54 & 71 Market Place, part of The Shambles buildings. Above this, roof forms, chimney stacks and the steeple of St. Andrew's Church combine to form an attractive urban roofscape. Moving further up the street, the restored and re-sited Buttercross comes into view and the wide space of the Lower Market Place and the fine buildings that surround it.

Looking down the street there is no distinct focus. Above the buildings rise the impressive mature trees on the distant railway embankment. In the absence of any distinct building or frontage to terminate the view, the trees do this in an impressive and large-scale manner. This end of the street has a more open feel due to the lack of definition of the space around the bridge by suitably scaled buildings.

General Character

A number of side views exist off the High Street alignment. Views into the Borough Parade Shopping Centre and down Chapel Lane are of generally attractive pedestrian friendly spaces. The view into the covered Emery Gate Shopping Centre is subdued and somewhat cavernous and gives the impression of a semi-private space and is generally not as inviting as the uncovered precinct of Borough Parade. The view down the remains of River Street is rather bland and it soon opens out onto and is subsumed within the sea of cars of the Borough Parade car park.

The main view into the Emery Gate area is to be had from the top of Emery Lane. Moving down the street, one is presented with a wide panorama of parked cars, servicing areas and backs of buildings and the shopping centre. The whole area is a discordant, uncoordinated and unattractive space. Emery Lane is reduced to an access road, with no building frontage. This is the entrance to one of the main town centre car parks and presents a particularly poor image of the town.

The High Street is the primary shopping street of the town centre and retail uses dominate the street, with a number of national chain stores evident. The town's two shopping centres have their main pedestrian access from the High Street and their relative attractiveness is in stark contrast to the poor quality of the townscape experienced by those arriving by car. The Emery Lane area has a particularly poor townscape quality and is in urgent need of enhancement. The short length of the High Street, combined with its relatively generous width, gives it the feel of a space as much as a linear street. Both of these elements are important to the character of the street and a balance between the two needs to be maintained.

The feeling of space encourages people to linger, use the full width of the street and is conducive to activities such as outdoor café seating. The linear feel of the space is an important part of its historic character and the buildings that line the street define it in a clear and positive manner. The pedestrianisation scheme has maintained the definition between pavement and carriageway. This maintains the feel of a 'street', whilst the absence of raised pavements encourages pedestrians to use the full width of the street and warns drivers that they are not necessarily the dominant mode of transport.

Since pedestrianisation the street has become a far more pleasant environment for pedestrians and shoppers and there is generally a good deal of pedestrian activity during the day. However, there is a lack of other activities and uses that would continue this activity into the evening hours. Thus the street is a less attractive and active place during evening hours. Through vehicular traffic is permitted during the evening and is an important factor in maintaining a degree of activity and surveillance during these hours. Any future plans for full 24-hour pedestrianisation should bear this in mind and preferably be progressed in conjunction with plans to increase residential, community and leisure uses in the High Street. There are now a number of shops which have had their upper floors converted to residential use. This is a very welcome development, and is encouraged for the future.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

High Street North Side

Nos. 31-33 is the former Co-op building that retains its fine first storey with pediment windows and arched cornice with carved title. The building is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5, principally for its high quality façade to the High Street. The current user has generally respected the vertical rhythm of the façade though the shopfront is rather plain. The frontage of this building used to have a recessed colonnade, and re-introduction of such a feature would add interest and stature to the building, provide a shelter from the elements. The main body of the building is constructed as an industrial shed, so this could be developed for other uses, which would enable a better relationship between it and Island Park.

Nos. 29 and 30 are two fine bank buildings (Lloyds and NatWest respectively), both listed. No. 30, though smaller, is given stature by being separated from adjacent buildings by short flanking walls (Fig 12.1). Though larger, No. 29 is in a more restrained classical style. Both buildings make particularly fine contributions to the character of the street, though alterations to No. 29, such as some modern windows, door and gate detract slightly from its appearance. The cash machine in the window space is a particularly unfortunate feature.



Fig 12.1: This fine bank building is the only freestanding building in the High Street.

Adjacent is the entrance façade to the Emery Gate Shopping Centre of 1986. Its form is a clear attempt to draw on that of the town hall opposite and it does this with a degree of success and without competing for prominence.

Nos. 24-25 is the former Woolworths building (Costa Coffee and Poundland). This is probably the most banal frontage to any building in the town centre, and is particularly notable for the fact that it replaced one of the finest buildings that once fronted the High Street. This building with its fine Corinthian column faced front was considered of such value that the facade was transported stone by stone to Bath and reconstructed there. In Chippenham it was such a significant feature of the High Street, that it led the town to be labelled 'Little Bath'.

Both the shopping centre frontage and Nos. 24-25 fail to respect the topography and their parapets and fenestration do not step up with the rising land. Thus the Lloyds Bank, shopping centre and Nos. 24-25 all share the same parapet height and consequently give this part of the street a somewhat monolithic appearance, undermining the vertical emphasis of the buildings. This also serves to expose the less than attractive flank wall of No. 23 and its lack of depth. An additional storey and redesigned frontage to the Nos. 24-25 building could bring about a considerable improvement to the townscape character of this part of the street. Nos. 21-23 are two fine listed commercial buildings and are a dominant feature in this part of the street (Fig 12.2).



Fig 12.2: These fine commercial buildings at Nos. 21-23 dominate this side of the High Street and are a stark contrast with No. 20 adjacent (left).



Fig 12.3: The poor architectural and townscape quality of No. 1 High Street is an eyesore in its prominent location and surely warrants its replacement with more suitable high quality replacement.

The narrow Chapel Lane provides a small gap in the frontage to the remaining two High Street buildings at Nos. 19 and 20. The lane leads to the attractive Grade II* listed Old Baptist Chapel and through more recent residential development to Emery Lane and the shopping centre car park. The residential development, including restoration of listed buildings has seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of the townscape of this side street and helps bring some evening activity and surveillance back to this part of the town centre. Surfacing of the lane has been improved as part of the development.

No. 20 is a diminutive listed house sitting behind an unattractive timber boarded single storey shopfront. The steep pitched roof juts awkwardly above the shopfront and the whole presents a jarring and unattractive composition. This is a poor frontage, detrimental to the character of the listed building. A new 2-3 storey frontage of high quality is required to provide a suitably scaled frontage to the High Street, screen the side elevation of No. 21 and provide a frontage of suitable quality for the listed building behind. No. 19 is a pleasant, though modest two storey building. It has three bays with pedimented parapet above sash windows with margin lights at first floor. A remnant of a pediment exists projecting above the shopfront entrance.

High Street South Side

No. 1 (Superdrug) sits on the corner of the High Street and the riverfront (Fig 12.3). Formerly occupied by an attractive three-storey hotel, the site is now occupied by a bland, uninspiring and poorly weathered modern building. This competes with the former Woolworths building for the distinction of least attractive building in the High Street. It responds abysmally to its prominent location, lacking stature, presence and quality and totally ignoring the river. The river front elevation is predominantly blank wall or screened plate glass with a purposeless block paved space in front. The High Street frontage is plain and utilitarian in appearance. A mean blank narrow brown-brick wall connects the building to No. 2 and houses a small shop unit.

Nos. 2-3 are a listed former coaching inn, now two shops (WH Smiths and G Hatto Barbershops). The former carriage arch has been sensitively utilised as the entrance to the shop at No. 2 and much of the ground floor ashlar has been retained, thus ensuring the shopfront integrates well with the building.

Nos. 4 and 5 are listed as a former carriage entrance and lodge, now shops. No. 4 is the lodge and remains in-situ. As part of the development of the Borough Parade Shopping Centre, the adjacent carriage entrance was moved to sit adjacent to the town hall and now forms the entrance to the shopping centre. The pilaster abutting No. 4 was retained and a new one constructed to sit between the re-sited carriage entrance and new shop unit. The carriage entrance is an impressive edifice with free standing coat of arms sitting on a simple plinth. It now forms an attractive entrance to the shopping centre.

No. 4 has a small two-storey frontage with shallow pitched roof behind a parapet. The range of three windows is modern and partially blocked and would benefit from reinstatement with a more appropriate design. The parapet is painted and stained and would benefit from removal of the paint.

No. 5, now units 10 & 11 of the shopping centre, is also two storey, but of greater height. The arched upper storey windows reflect those of the town hall. On the other side of the shopping centre entrance is the impressive façade of the listed town hall (Fig 12.4).



Fig 12.4: The solid Town Hall is one of a number of fine buildings remaining in the lower part of the High Street. The external steps and ramps are an unfortunate but necessary addition for disabled access that disrupts the symmetry of the building and the solidity of form provided by the arched loggias.

The corner bay is of a slightly differing design to the remaining symmetrical three bays and, on passing, reads as a separate building. This, with the repositioned arch, provides an attractive entrance into the shopping centre. The central bay of the symmetrical section is surmounted by an elaborate carved coat of arms. The imposing ground floor arches once formed an open loggia, giving the building a sense of depth and solidity appropriate to its use. The centre arch gives access to the Town Council offices, Town Hall and to the Neeld Hall to the rear. The Neeld Hall was once a cheese market hall and has since the 1920s functioned as a performance space. Now called 'The Neeld Community & Arts Centre', it has more recently been the subject of a major restoration to become a popular regional attraction.

No. 6 is a listed former coaching inn with fine upper storey sash windows and first floor railings. The solid chamfered stone ground floor elevation cleanly defines the extent of the shopfront. Unfortunately this is an unattractive modern frontage of plain design, with plate glass windows.

No. 7 is also a listed former house, though far more humble in appearance, with two small dormers almost hidden by a substantial first floor parapet. The shopfront is modern in a traditional design and is a good example of how large display windows and side entrances to upper floors can be incorporated into attractive shopfronts. The window surrounds and other stonework would benefit from the removal of paint and the appearance of the building would benefit from removal of cluttered wiring and junction boxes and a more discreet flashing.

No. 8/9 (Boots) is a simple 20th Century building of two storeys faced in ashlar. Whilst plain in comparison to other buildings, it is not unattractive and exerts a generally positive contribution to the townscape at first floor level. This cannot be said of the ground floor. The shopfront is of a bland aluminium frame and plate glass and the arrangement of doors and windows lacks coherence. The fascia is excessively deep for the scale of the building and a chunky corporate signage and logo exists where simplicity would more appropriately prevail.

No. 10 is another listed former house, now two shops. The building is an attractive whole as the shopfronts sit well in the frontage and are of an appropriate scale and design. The stone stallrisers add a degree of solidity to the building's appearance. The frontage would benefit from general cleaning and decorating and the removal of the clutter of wiring, junction boxes, pipes etc. The removal of paint from stone cills, plinths and eaves and replacement of applied fascias with directly fixed or painted designs would also improve the appearance of the building.

No. 11/12 is a listed former house, though of more imposing stature than No. 10. The parapet, cornice and full height rusticated pilasters give the building a solid appearance that is given unity and coherence by the range of five attractive sash windows. Unfortunately the stature of the building is significantly compromised by the modern shopfront. The recessed entrance, full height plate glass windows and over-sized fascia all serve to undermine the character of this otherwise attractive listed building. The remainder of the frontage is painted and would benefit from the removal of paint from the pilasters, window surrounds, cornice and parapet copings, as well as the replacement of the shopfront with one of a more suitable design.

No. 13/14 is similar in style to No. 11/12, though smaller and without a parapet. As with No. 12 a modern plate glass shopfront with oversized fascia and recessed entrance dominates the building façade, though the more humble character of the building emphasises the dominance of the unattractive shopfront (Fig 12.5).



Fig 12.5: This is one example of a number of shopfronts that fail to respect the character of the building of which it forms a part. This is completely out of scale with the building.



Fig 12.6: A rare example of a modern shopfront that is sympathetic to the character, form and proportions of the building façade.

Nos. 15 and 16 (Santander) are two listed former houses, No. 16 being of three storeys and grander in appearance, with heavy cornice (Fig 12.6). The recent shopfront is traditional, though restrained in appearance and admirably complements the character of the building. Extensive window display space exists and the occupier has used this judiciously and not filled all the windows with advertising. This is one of the most successful modern shopfronts in the street.

Nos. 17 and 18 return to a more humble two storey form. The simple and not unpleasant first floor has applied lettering on the elevation naming the building 'Bristol and West House', reflecting its former use. Both shopfronts are modern, though the column on the corner of No. 18, and possibly parts of the shopfront may be original. No. 17 is in a corporate style with recessed doorway. The adjacent River Street has bland side elevations although its footway surfacing relates well to the High Street.

Emery Lane and Emery Gate Shopping Centre Emery Lane has never been a major street, but primarily a means of accessing properties to the rear of those facing the High Street. It retains this function today, though it has lost most of the buildings that formerly lined it and car parks are the main destination for traffic. The residential development on Chapel Lane has vehicular access via Emery Lane, though parking provision is limited. In addition to providing access to the parking and servicing for Iceland and the shopping centre, and access to the new housing, Emery Lane gives access to the Masonic Hall and Emery House.

The entrance to the street is from St. Mary Street, arguably the finest street in the town, and the contrast between this and the bleak and open prospect of service yards, car parking and the undefined and uncoordinated townscape of Emery Lane could not be more startling (Fig 12.7).



Fig 12.7: At the rear of the shopping centre Emery Lane becomes an unattractive, amorphous collection of service yards and car parking. This is one of the main car parks in the town centre and presents a particularly poor impression for visitors.

The junction with St. Mary Street is particularly poorly defined. The space in front of the listed Tabernacle United Reform Church is an open parking area where there were once buildings fronting the street. On the other side of the street, undeveloped land on the site of former buildings is used as the car park for the occupier of the adjacent Grade II* listed building. To the rear of this building is a plain single storey extension. Beyond the car park is the attractive Emery House, though the lack of adjacent buildings gives it an isolated feel, uncertain of which way it should now be facing. To the rear of the Iceland car park is the attractive listed former school building, though never intended to be viewed from this direction.

Sited at the end of the lane, as it divides into accesses to service areas and car parks, is the Masonic Hall. This plain box like building has recently benefitted from exterior decoration. However its isolated position contributes to the random and disjointed character of the area.

Vegetation

The High Street has no vegetation in it save for some planters with trees outside the town hall and a few other locations, and hanging baskets along parts of the street. Thus the street retains a strong urban feel. The most evident vegetation from the High Street is that on the distant railway embankment and the landscape of the river valley as viewed from the Town Bridge. From Emery Lane, the mature trees of Monkton Park are a significant and positive element of the landscape and help to soften the presence of the shopping centre and Wiltshire Council offices beyond.

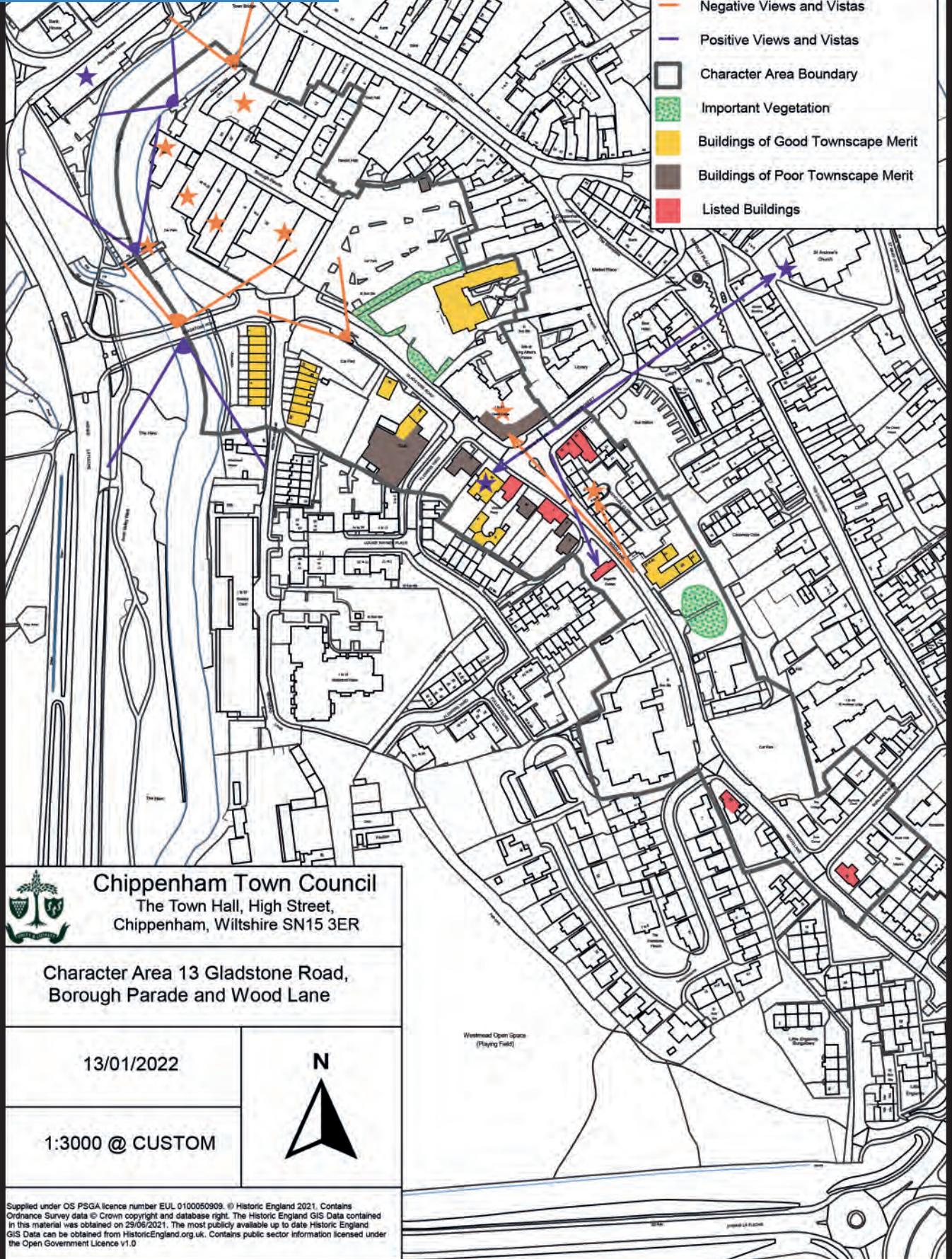
Highway Infrastructure


The pedestrianisation has hugely improved the public domain of the High Street. The area where further improvement could be carried out is the Town Bridge. This very busy part of the town centre has more traffic movement than desirable. Removal of the rear access into the Emery Gate car park, which was created in 1995 as a temporary measure, would enable improvement of the public domain, and ease the possibility of development of the former Co-op building to better relate to the river.

Character Area 13: Gladstone Road, Borough Parade and Wood Lane

Legend

- ★ Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- ★ Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Negative Views and Vistas
- Positive Views and Vistas
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
- Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
- Listed Buildings



 **Chippenham Town Council**
The Town Hall, High Street,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

**Character Area 13 Gladstone Road,
Borough Parade and Wood Lane**

13/01/2022

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History, Archaeology & Morphology

This part of the town dates from its medieval expansion. It is identified as an archaeologically important area in the Chippenham Archaeological Urban Survey and this, in conjunction with the generally high opportunities for future redevelopment in the area, ensures it is a prime candidate for future archaeological investigation. Ordnance Survey maps describe the area to the rear of the former cinema and former magistrates court as being the site of 'King Arthur's Palace'.

The character area occupies land to the rear of the High Street, Market Place and Causeway and during the medieval period was the focus for many local industries such as silk mills, saw mills, orchards, market gardening and other cottage industries. River Street, now just an access from High Street to Borough Parade car park once extended down to the river at the point of the current weir. River Street, Gladstone Road and Westmead Lane all met in the vicinity and the only means of crossing the river was by a long and rickety footbridge called Back Avon Bridge.

Thus the area was never a thoroughfare until the construction of the bridge link to Avenue La Fleche as recently as August 1996. Gladstone Road was formerly known as Blind Lane and Westmead Lane formerly known as Factory Lane - both giving some indication of the former character of the area. Wood Lane existed as a semi-rural lane extending parallel with London Road as far as Crickett's Lane. During the 20th Century the land to the South West of Gladstone Road was dominated by two industries - the huge Flower & Son scrap metal yard, and food production (latterly Hygrade) adjacent to the river.

The area remained largely unaltered until after the Second World War. During the past 50 years the area has changed beyond recognition. Key physical changes have taken place, such as the construction of the weir, the clearing of back land for car parking, the destruction of River Street, the development of Borough Parade Shopping Centre, the construction of the Gladstone Road bridge link and Avenue la Fleche, the demolition of the tannery and its chimney and the clearance of the scrap metal yard for the Flower's Yard development. The riverside Hygrade factories have also gone, to be replaced by retirement housing. These have transformed an industrious backwater into a busy part of the town centre.

The character of the area is very mixed - it is a transition zone between the town centre and the rest of the town. Its physical appearance has suffered somewhat as a result of incremental and uncoordinated development. The pedestrianisation of the High Street has led the area to become a through route for local traffic and vehicular access to the town centre.

Topography & Views

The land rises gradually from the river towards the Market Place and along Gladstone Road, and continues rising into Wood Lane where it remains relatively level. After rising to cross the river, Gladstone Road drops to its lowest point at the junction with Westmead Lane and the entrance to Borough Parade car park. This physical characteristic combined with a gradual curve in the road make this a visual focal point.

Timber Street is generally level, its short length and wide carriageway give it a relatively open feel - somewhat akin to that of a linear square. The focal buildings at either end add to this, and a stronger definition of the space between the Library and former cinema would strengthen this feeling and the overall character of the street.

Positive views

On entering the character area across Gladstone Road Bridge the views down Westmead Lane has been much improved by the recently built riverside housing scheme. On Timber Street there are fine views in both directions to the landmark buildings of the Gladstone Arms pub (Fig 13.1) and St. Andrew's Church tower and steeple (Fig 13.2).



Fig 13.1: *The view focuses on the Gladstone pub, a generally attractive building. The building on the right is a modern, incongruous, grey colour addition with a roof line that steps up from the pub in contrast to the slope of the road.*



Fig 13.2: *The view along Timber Street to the impressive church steeple. Whilst the foreground buildings offer a varied roofscape, more positive street frontage would benefit the view and potentially bring more activity to the street.*

At the corner of Wood Lane and Timber Street the view up the former includes the picturesque listed Bagatelle Cottage. Its small scale and orientation make its gothic revival style a distinctive feature of the view along Wood Lane. The rising and gently curving nature of the lane and its narrowness afford pleasant views along it in both directions. From the south end on the higher ground there are glimpses of St. Andrew's Church steeple across the car park and gardens.

Negative views

As the area is poorly defined, it offers some unattractive views and vistas. Entering the area from the bridge, the visitor is presented on one side with the rear elevations of the Borough Parade shopping centre and its service yards, although this is mitigated to some extent by the view of the fine riverside houses opposite (Figs. 13.3 and 13.4). Moving on from the bridge, the rising ground and the sweep of the bend in Gladstone Road is a positive element of the townscape character, but is something that the built form does not entirely respond to or capitalise on.



Fig 13.3: The view up Gladstone Road shows clearly the lack of street frontage, with surface car parks on either side of the street. A recent extension of the Angel Hotel has failed to provide a building facing the street, instead setting it behind its car park - again facing the road.



Fig 13.4: The terrace of houses adjacent to Gladstone Road bridge, which pay homage to the historic industrial use of the area. They positively address the river, and make a fine corner building on the junction with Westmead Lane.

At the corner of Gladstone Road and Timber Street there is the imposing presence of Castle Lodge, a retirement complex with ground floor retail units (Fig 13.5). This replaces the former Gaumont Cinema/Golddiggers nightclub and is designed as a pastiche of the previous building. Despite the inclusion of some elements of the fabric of the previous Cinema building, it is very poorly executed.



Fig 13.5: The former Gaumont cinema has been poorly redeveloped into a mixed use building.

General Character

The area is somewhat ill defined. Gladstone Road serves mainly as an access to the town centre and car parks and few buildings actually address it. As a consequence its identity and perception as a street or a particular place is somewhat weak.

Timber Street fares better. Close proximity to the Market Place, the library and bus station ensure a degree of activity - pedestrian and vehicular, that one would expect of a town centre. The street is better defined by buildings, although the carriageway is unnecessarily wide, with strong focal points at either end in St. Andrew's Church steeple and the Gladstone Arms pub. The pub and nearby listed properties ensure that this is the most visually interesting and distinctive part of the character area.

The streets in the area contain a diverse range of uses, but these alone are unable to create the activity and vitality that make this place a pleasurable experience. Uses include car parking, residential, hotel, cafe, public house, shops and nearby library and bus station.

Much of the north western part of the area is occupied by the Borough Parade shopping centre. This provides a large part of the retail floorspace in the town and is a modern, attractive and publicly accessible pedestrianised area. Most of the buildings are suitably scaled for the character of the town. Incorporated within the shopping centre is the Neeld Community & Arts Centre, a performance and community facility accessed to the rear of the Town Hall. It can also be accessed from Borough Parade for retail orientated events, giving variety to the shopping experience.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

Gladstone Road

From the bridge, the former alignment of River Street is no longer discernible across the shopping centre car park. To the right, the orientation of the new riverside housing and the terrace opposite, on Westmead Lane, draw the eye along the narrowing lane. Vegetation on one side and the pleasant listed No. 26 on the other, create a pinch point in the street which allows limited glimpses of the recently built retirement complex.

The junction with Westmead Lane, the car park entrance and small car park on Westmead Lane are a focal point of activity both for vehicles, pedestrians and bus users. Unfortunately the quality of the environment here, where many visitors arrive and leave the town from, is poor. Heavy traffic, street clutter and the lack of any defining urban form give the area an inhuman and unwelcoming feel.

Beyond the car parks the road rises. On the right, buildings fronting the road begin to appear and it begins to take on the character of an urban street. No. 19 (Sweet Briar Cottage) is an attractive detached red brick house with sash windows, stone dressings and small attractive front garden. Its urban character and scale is entirely appropriate for the area. Beyond this is a walled concrete courtyard and then No. 20. Formerly a house which was the Gladstone Liberal Club, it is now empty and awaiting redevelopment.

Adjacent to No. 20 is the junction with Flowers Yard, a street which leads to the residential development which has replaced the previously existing scrap metal yard. On the opposite corner of the junction is a bland, modern two storey building which appears residential but is actually offices. Its materials do not reflect the local vernacular.

On the opposite side of the street to No. 19 is the rear entrance and car park to the Angel Hotel - the main entrance being on Market Place. A substantial building here has created a pleasant internal courtyard for the hotel. The frontage facing Gladstone Road is of an appropriate scale and height for the area.

Unfortunately it is set well back from the road, with the car park in front. Whilst this provides the opportunity for clear views to the building, the car park and trees flanking it give the whole frontage a distinctly low density, edge of town, motel appearance, wholly at odds with its town centre location. Adjacent to the hotel entrance is the side elevation of Castle House, which whilst built of stone is poorly detailed.

Beyond this building is the Gladstone Arms pub, the façade of which has recently been the subject of a fine restoration. It is set back from the street frontage, but still makes a positive contribution to the character area.

Adjacent to the pub is the listed No. 35 Gladstone Road, which consists of a Georgian façade fronting earlier medieval buildings. This was once part of the 150 year old Philips Removal Company - the house being its offices with storage buildings to the rear. In 2006/7 the site was developed to create Victoria Place, with No. 35 being sensitively refurbished, and two striking modern houses constructed to the rear. The whole development has helped enhance this part of the character area.

Adjacent to Victoria Place is No. 36, a small bungalow which is set back and appears at odds with the taller buildings that surround it. It would be beneficial if this were redeveloped with a larger building. However it could equally be argued that it is a quirky insertion which adds to the variety of built form in this part of Chippenham.

The junction with Timber Street is a visual focal point, and the wide space occupied by the road junction is a result of since demolished buildings that once stood in place of the current flowerbeds (Fig 13.6). These walled flowerbeds are isolated, small scale, and rather ineffective, with no seating or pavement around them from which they can be appreciated.



Fig 13.6: Aerial view of junction of Gladstone Road and Timber Street showing some of the buildings described above. Also shown is the junction with Wood Lane, and the Flowers Yard development on the former scrap metal yard.



Fig 13.7: These newer houses and flats do little to enhance the Conservation Area. The high gable is an overbearing and inappropriate feature and details such as the diminutive railing design and window units with cills that duplicate the stone cills below are examples of poor attention to detail. The roof tiles are out of place too.

Wood Lane

From the wide junction with Timber Street, Wood Lane rapidly narrows until it becomes almost single lane width. The narrowing width, curving and rising street and raised pavement close off views into the distance. Beyond this point the street becomes primarily residential and suburban in character and the narrowness separates it from the more urban character at its northern end in this character area.

No. 1 is an attractive listed two-storey house, previously a silk mill with large gambrel roof, giving it the presence of a three-storey building. The varnished appearance of the carriage entrance doors is the only discordant element, contrasting with the painted joinery on the rest of the house. Adjacent to this are two modern houses in concrete and reconstituted stone blockwork. No. 2 is particularly stark in appearance and No. 3 is set back behind a poorly defined patch of grass and tarmac driveway to integral garage. Whilst their scale is not particularly inappropriate to the location, their positioning and style is wholly suburban and out of character with their setting in the town centre.

On the opposite side of the street is a modern development of terraced houses and flats (Fig 13.7). The scale and massing of the development is appropriate to the urban, town centre location and in marked contrast to the suburban houses opposite. The mix of stone and render generally works, the units step down, respecting the topography whilst giving the terrace a human scale and the hoods and simple doors are in character with surrounding older buildings. However, the central gabled section containing the flats is somewhat overbearing in scale, particularly in relation to the lower houses to the left. The roof materials and some of the detailing are out of character and overall the scheme misses an opportunity to enhance the character of the conservation area.

The south end of the street is in stark contrast with the north end. The enclosed, narrow street gives way to a distinctly open character. This is primarily due to the lower building density and the open space created by the car park. Moving south up the narrow part of the lane, on the left is the attractive stone built former Westmead County Primary School, now sensitively converted into special needs housing. Essential to this development is the need to replace the derelict railings which top the edge of the elevated path—these are in a terrible state and not very safe.

On the opposite side of the street is the attractive high stone wall enclosing part of the former scrapyard and the listed Bagatelle Cottage. This was in the process of restoration, but work has now ceased leaving it with a derelict appearance. Adjacent was the site of the now demolished Westmead Infant's School, which in combination with the former police station site is currently being redeveloped for a care home.

On the opposite side of the street is the former nonconformist burial ground, now a small public garden, though the former mortuary chapel has long since been demolished. The garden is generally an attractive space with four large Yew trees. To the South of that is Unity House, a hostel development incorporating special needs housing, was built in between the burial ground and the Wood Lane Car Park. This two and three storey building benefits from a natural stone elevation, but the massing lacks interest and the positioning is unfortunately set back from the street.



Fig 13.8: This cottage is the only listed building in the area and was once the lodge to The Paddocks, now hidden behind the bungalows to the rear.

At the junction with The Paddocks is the listed No. 23, which once was the lodge to The Paddocks House (Fig 13.8). Beyond this the street becomes suburban in nature, with piecemeal development dominated by detached houses and bungalows built from the 1950s onwards.

Timber Street

Timber Street is a short, wide space. This, and the focal points of St. Andrew's Church tower and steeple and the Gladstone pub, together with the key activities of the library and bus station, give it the characteristics of an urban square, or 'place', as much as a street. There are opportunities to reinforce this positive character by improving the enclosure of the space and softening the large expanse of tarmac. The rear outbuildings to the Bear Hotel, the gap between the library and Castle House all present opportunities for better enclosing the space and providing high quality buildings fronting the street.

Originally part of 'The old Bakehouse', Nos. 11-21 comprise three buildings, plus one to the rear. Nos. 19-21 are listed, the former a shop and the latter offices. Nos. 11-13 (Buckles) is a 20th Century blockwork building. Unfortunately the whole façade has been painted white, except for the return of No. 21 facing Gladstone Road, which is in its original stone finish.

On the opposite side of the street is the imposing Castle Lodge, which replaced the former Gaumont Cinema. As previously described, this building is a very poor pastiche seeking to emulate the form of the old cinema. It is only relieved by the reuse of three high level sculptural panels from the previous building (Fig 13.5).

The adjacent Library, built in 1973, is a good example of the modernist architecture of that time (Fig 13.9). The façade consists of alternative panels of part glazing and concrete piers, benefitting from fine fluting cast into the concrete. It is respectful in its scale to surrounding architecture. A popular and well used facility with a fine interior, the only criticism of the design is the entrance and the junction with No. 11 Market Place. This could be improved as part of any future project. The Library is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5.



Fig 13.9 The Library, as a fine modern building, adds variety to the Conservation area. Its scale is respectful of the adjacent No. 11 Market Place.

Vegetation

There is little vegetation of note in the character area. The majority is of an inappropriate suburban nature in the vicinity of the car parks. Trees either side of the Angel Hotel extension, and yew trees located with Wood Lane burial ground, have a degree of amenity value and views from Gladstone Road to the mature landscape of Rowden Hill are important in maintaining the market town character of the Conservation Area.

Materials

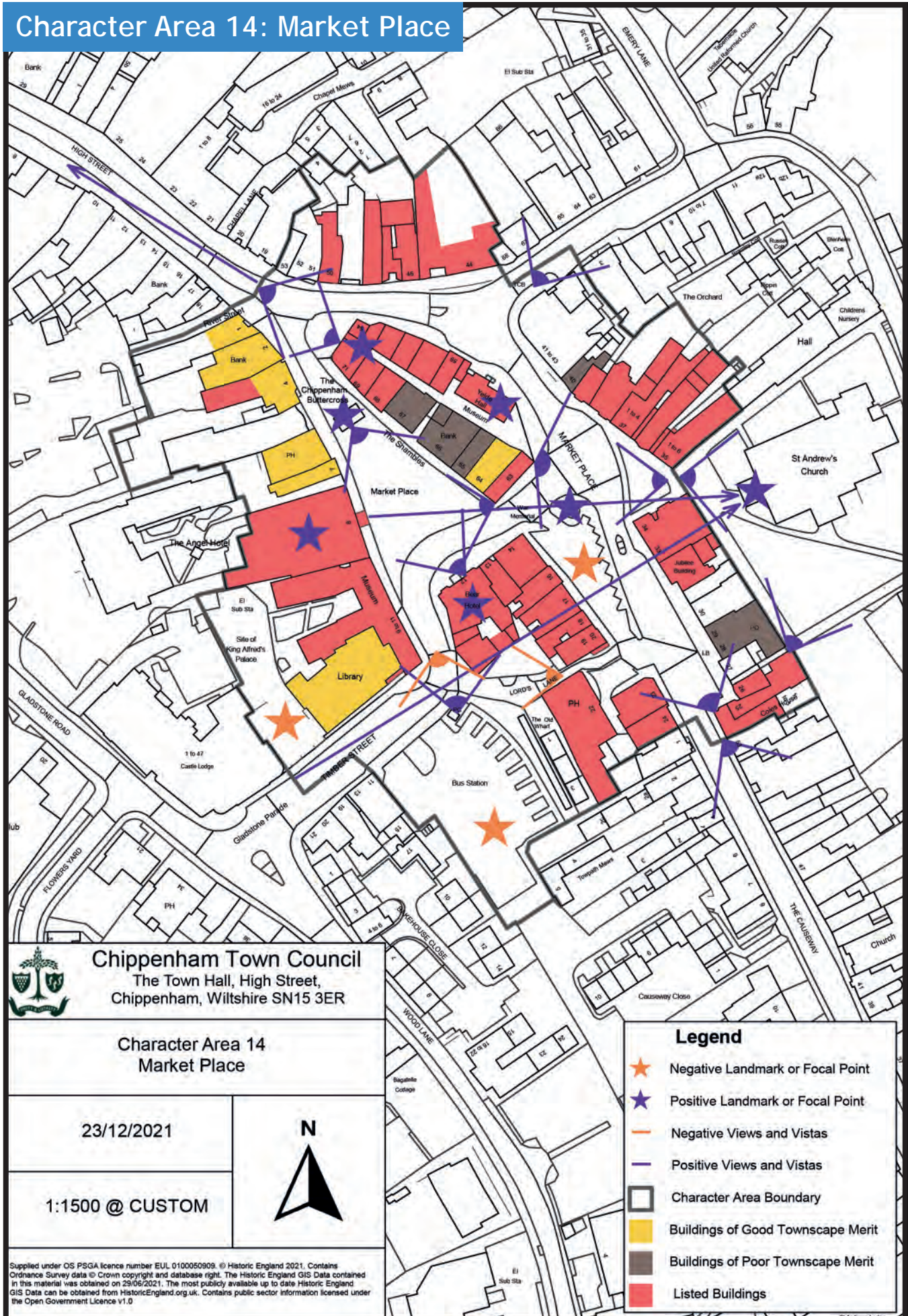
Historically the area is a transition between town centre and local industry. Traditional town centre materials are generally Bath stone or limestone, either sawn or rubble with either graded stone, clay Roman or slate roof tiles. Stone mullions and window surrounds are common. Windows are generally metal or timber casement or sliding sash. Brick is also evident as a building material; mainly accurately shaped or engineering brick in soft warm hues. Render is generally roughcast and either bare or limewashed, as is general stonework. Modern concrete blockwork is particularly out of character, as is smooth render and painted facades.


Highway Infrastructure

Highway infrastructure is generally not particularly obtrusive, though this may be due to the low-key nature of much of the area. Where there is most activity is where the infrastructure becomes an intrusive element. This is particularly evident in the vicinity of the entrance to the Borough Parade car park and around the entrance and exit to the bus station. Lighting columns are frequently of the tall, galvanised highway style and not sympathetic to the character of the Conservation Area.

The highway infrastructure is typical of an area which accommodates several accesses to town centre car parks. It is difficult to see how these could be made less highway dominated, without substantial investment. However as previously stated, the highway in Timber Street is unnecessarily wide, and its reduction and widening of pavements would enhance the area and benefit adjacent businesses.

Character Area 14: Market Place



 **Chippenham Town Council**
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 14
Market Place

23/12/2021

1:1500 @ CUSTOM



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History, Archaeology & Morphology

The Market Place is the historic core of Chippenham, adjacent to the parish church of St. Andrew and the site of the Saxon town. Thus the whole area is of high archaeological value. The Extensive Urban Survey of Chippenham produced by the County Archaeological Service identifies the area to the rear of Nos. 35-43 as of particularly high potential and to the rear of Chippenham Museum is the reputed site of King Alfred's Palace.



Fig 14.1: Aerial view showing the Lower Market Place (left) and the Upper Market Place (right). St Andrew's Church also shown with Monkton Park in the background.

The area once formed one single large open space and there has been a market here since 1320 when Edward II granted rights for four fairs and two markets. The construction of the Yelde Hall, the original town hall, in the mid-15th Century, began the process of the encroachment of buildings into the Market Place. There are now two groups of buildings sitting within the original open market area. Firstly is The Shambles, a group of buildings at Nos. 54-71 that grew up around the Yelde Hall, secondly a smaller group of buildings at Nos. 12-20 grouped around the Bear Hotel.

This encroachment has effectively divided the area into two distinct spaces: Lower and Upper Market Places (Fig 14.1) - the former around the relocated Buttercross, and the latter around the War Memorial. There are also three secondary spaces defined by the buildings: the top of the High Street, the junction with St. Mary Street and, less well defined, the entrance to the bus station.

For several centuries the Market Place was the commercial heart of Chippenham, providing space for trade in cattle and associated produce such as milk, butter and cheese. Once this activity moved to the purpose built cattle market and cheese hall around the Town Hall, the area gradually changed and eventually became a traffic junction with car parking. Until pedestrianisation in 1995 the area contained a busy traffic roundabout around the Shambles - linking the Causeway, St Mary Street, the High Street and Timber Street.

The Buttercross was originally sited in The Shambles, but was dismantled in 1889 and re-erected in the grounds of Castle Combe manor. It remained there until 1996 when it was re-sited to its current position by Chippenham Civic Society as part of the creation of the new Market Square.

The war memorial stands on the site of the old town pump. This was removed in 1867 and replaced by a fountain. Part of the fountain remains incorporated into the current war memorial.

The Lower Market Place has benefited from more recent town centre enhancements and the contrast between this and the Upper Market Place, which has not been enhanced, is most notable. Parts of the Upper Market Place remain distinctly shabby in appearance and the quality of the buildings are also compromised by some unsympathetic and out of character modern shopfronts which bear little relation to the scale or appearance of the buildings of which they form a part.

Topography & Views

Topography

The rising ground continues from the High Street, south easterly through the Market Place to its highest point where it meets The Causeway, the gradient becoming gentler towards this south eastern edge of the area. Thus the gradient is more noticeable in the Lower Market Place than the Upper Market Place, which is almost level. The Causeway continues at a slight gradient out of the town centre.

Views

The majority of the views within and out of the area are positive, due to the generally high quality of the buildings within and defining the edge of the Market Place, and the openness of the space allowing a number of attractive wide vistas.

There are attractive views from the High Street to the right of The Shambles into the Lower Market Place, with glimpses either side and through the Buttercross itself. Once beyond the Buttercross the widening space becomes apparent and, at the end, the fine landmark building of the Bear Hotel terminates the space. From the bus station there is an attractive view through to the Buttercross and to St. Paul's Church in the distance.

The view from the High Street to the left side of the Shambles is dominated by the former Post Office building (No. 41-43, now occupied by Mander Duffill). This 1950s building has benefitted from an extensive restoration, which befits its landmark status. Also visible is the fine frontage of Nos. 44- 45.

The views from and into St. Mary Street are equally attractive, though the wide break in the frontage at Emery Lane is unfortunate. From St. Mary Street the view is of the three fine listed buildings at Nos. 56-59 Market Place.

The Upper Market Place is the largest space in the Market Place and this can be appreciated from a number of positions where the space and the generally fine buildings that define it can be appreciated. The entrance to St. Andrew's Church, the entrance to No. 41-43, and at the corners of Nos. 23 and 63, are probably the most notable viewpoints though the space can be appreciated continuously as one moves through it. Nos. 44-45 is still a notable building from this space.

Views along the Causeway are generally attractive, showing an eclectic and varied collection of mostly attractive buildings. Generally buildings are on narrow plots and respect the slightly rising topography. The gables of the former Methodist chapel stand out as notable features on the east side and ahead the listed No. 1 London Road rises above the unattractive Kwik Fit garage.

The Church tower and steeple are a prominent landmark from many locations in the Market Place. The most dramatic views are from Timber Street over the top of a number of Market Place buildings; from the Angel Hotel through the two pinch points created by Nos. 14 & 63 and Nos. 34 & 35 and with the war memorial in between; and as one moves up High Street and to the left of The Shambles the church combines with the rooftops and facades of Market Place buildings to create a continually changing and attractive roofscape.

General Character

The area reads as a series of connected spaces with the ground floor uses primarily retail in character. The majority of the buildings in the area are of high architectural and historic interest with two thirds of the retail uses occupying listed buildings. Whilst many of the listed buildings are formal in character, a number are also more vernacular and the spaces themselves are irregular in shape. The prevailing character of the urban form is that of a space that has an organic feel and has developed over time, rather than having been planned and developed as a whole. This is also shown in the variety of roof forms, building heights, floor heights, number of storeys, use of dormers as well as the variety of architectural detailing. There is, however, a prevailing use of stone and stone slates and the majority of buildings are of two or three storeys.

The retail character of the Market Place is different to that of the High Street. The great majority of the retail uses in the High Street are shops, including some national chain stores. In the Market Place only a small proportion of commercial uses are shops. The Market Place sees the largest concentration of estate agents and building societies in the town centre, generally concentrated in the northern part of the area. Pubs, restaurants and cafes are also found in the Market Place area.

Up until approximately 15 years ago the Market Place was an important part of Chippenham's evening economy. However the opening of the Brunel in New Road along with several other restaurants and takeaways led to this part of town becoming the main attractor in the evenings. The Market Place has therefore lost some of its evening vitality.

The last decade has seen a downturn in retail activity, due to factors such as internet shopping, and an increase in out of town shopping centres. These have adversely affected Chippenham Town Centre, just like every other town in the UK. The result has been several empty shop units, and a move away from conventional retail to facilities such as nail bars, hairdressers, coffee shops and vaping shops.

There has been a recent increase in conversion of upper floors, and sometimes whole buildings, into residential in the Market Place. Whilst this can be a good thing which can add to the vibrancy of the area and natural surveillance, there are aspects which need careful consideration, such as loss of ground floor commercial units which could harm the vitality and viability of the high street provision for refuse storage, and parking provision, particularly for cycles.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

Top of High Street Area

At the top of the High Street the street widens out to accommodate The Shambles and the routes either side. Nos. 54 & 71 enclose, and help define this small space at the top of the High Street. The Shambles buildings at Nos. 54 & 71 and No. 2 (HSBC Bank) are the most prominent and attractive buildings. An information sign is located in the space.

No. 1 (formerly Burton) is a purpose built store for the former occupier, dating from 1937 in Art Deco style with classical motifs and retaining a number of original features (Fig 14.2). These include foundation stones either side of the side entrance, granite stallrisers with ventilation grilles cast in the store name and original logo, original metal frame shopfront with capitals, stone frieze of the store name at parapet level entitled 'Montague Burton - The Tailor of Taste', and first floor range of three windows with frieze above, separated by plain extended mullions. Despite the retention of these features the shopfront entrance has been replaced with modern doors, the first floor windows are modern UPVC replacements and the fascia is a modern, chunky and overbearing feature that is out of character with the building and dominates the whole frontage to its detriment. The shopfront would benefit immeasurably by the replacement of the current fascia with one that better reflected the original design. The building is designated as a Building of Local Merit under Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC5.



Fig 14.2: The poor shopfront of the former Burton store disguises much of the fine Art Deco building - one of only two in this style in the town centre.

No. 2 (HSBC), although a narrow building, has an imposing ionic classical ground floor frontage befitting a bank and is a key positive feature of the space. The upper floors are faced in a different stone and share design details with No. 56/57 and thus it would appear that the bank frontage is a later addition to an earlier building.

Nos. 54 (Chappell & Matthews) & 71 (Floral Culture, The Sweet Shop) read as a single building and the shopfronts are separated by an archway through to the alleys to the rear of The Shambles. This prominent building at the top of the High Street makes a fine contribution to the townscape, with the two shopfronts facing the high street being of good quality and sympathetic to the architecture of the building (Fig 14.3). There is residential accommodation above.



Fig 14.3: Nos. 54 & 71 form a fine group of buildings that face the top of the high street.

Nos. 49 & 50 (Halifax and Nationwide) are similar in appearance though No. 49 is a 20th Century building and No. 50 is listed. Both shopfronts, though modern, are recessed and thereby do not detract from the host buildings. Nos. 51-2 & 53 are of a more diminutive vernacular character. No. 51-52 (Julian House) has only one upper storey. This is painted, diluting the interest brought to the elevation by the band course, pilasters and window surrounds. Like Nos. 49 and 50, the shopfront is a substantial stone structure, reflecting its previous use as a building society. Its modern projecting form with offset stone column and recessed entrance is a discordant feature of the façade. The shopfront bears no relation to the form or character of the upper storey and is a negative intrusion into the townscape. Its projection forward of the upper storey, its deep fascia with poorly positioned applied sign, partly recessed form and large expanse of brightly varnished timber heightens this. No. 53 is three storey and narrower, with rendered upper floors and modern, though not unattractive green painted windows. The partly curved historic shopfront is particularly fine (Fig 14.4).



Fig 14.4: These three buildings in the centre (originally all building societies) now have modern stone shopfronts, all partly recessed. Apart from No. 51-52 fascia lettering is subtle, and overall does not jar with the historic character.

Junction with St. Mary Street

A mini roundabout occupies this triangular space and the gated entrance to the High Street pedestrianised area. No. 41-43, Yelde Hall, shambles buildings and Nos. 44-47 define the space. The latter three buildings are listed and all buildings are positive elements in the townscape. A mini roundabout was built at this junction as part of the original pedestrianisation in 1995. Construction of this roundabout also saw an alteration in carriageway levels that now present a barrier to pedestrian movement and only basic materials were used for surfacing. As there is now minimal traffic entering the High Street, there is considerable scope here for re-assessing the junction design, improving the quality of surfacing and the provision of wider pavements outside the shops, which would improve the immediate environment and emphasise the area as an urban space rather than simply a vehicular route.

Nos. 44-48 (all listed) is formerly the White Hart Hotel, at which Cromwell is reputed to have lodged. No. 48 is an attractive building with modern traditional shopfront in keeping with the building. A rainwater pipe disappearing into the top of the shop front and modern top floor windows are the only incongruous elements. Nos. 46-47 have bay windows at upper floors and chamfered rusticated pilasters that give the building a more imposing character in the street than No. 48. The complete painting of the façade has a detrimental effect on the appearance of the detailing, diluting its visual effect and interest of the frontage. A cornice to the shop fronts provides an architectural feature for the bays to rise from, although it is likely they originally also existed at ground floor level.

Nos. 44-45 (Iceland) is an imposing stone façade with central pediment (Fig 14.5). Whilst remaining an imposing and attractive building, its character has been severely compromised by its conversion into a supermarket. The central section includes a former carriage entrance, yet neither the supermarket nor the offices above utilise this as an entrance. The windows to the supermarket are floor to ceiling plate glass and two of these are solid with advertising. The entrances to the supermarket and offices are recessed, dingy, utilitarian and unattractive.

The four imposing bays of the upper floors truncated brutally and unceremoniously, give the appearance of floating in space and are a particularly incongruous architectural disfigurement to the building. The roof has lost its chimneys and original tiles and appears somewhat bland.



Fig 14.5: The imposing frontage of this former coaching inn is a local landmark. Converted into a supermarket in the 1970s, the character of the frontage has been severely compromised by the brutal truncation of the bays, insertion of plate glass and recessed entrances, and shows a complete lack of respect or understanding for the form and layout of the façade.

No. 41-43 (former Post Office) dates from 1959 when it was constructed as the new post office, replacing three smaller buildings on the site (Fig 14.6). Although constructed with ashlar limestone walls under a stone tile roof, it is an undeniable modern building. Its curved form emphasises the sweep of the transition from the Market Place into St. Mary Street. Recent decades saw the building deteriorate and attain a rather shabby appearance. The conversion from Post Office into premises for Mander Duffield has been done with great sensitivity - restoring the stonework, inserting more suitable grey framed windows, and improving the service entrance. It has been reinstated as a modern landmark building which adds to the variety within the conservation area.



Fig 14.6: *The sensitively restored façade of No. 41-43 on a prominent corner site is a welcome landmark building adding variety to the Conservation Area.*

Opposite No. 41-43 is the Yelde Hall, one of the oldest buildings in the town and one of only two Grade I listed buildings in the town. A major restoration was carried out some years ago, which has seen repairs and restoration to the panelling, timber and roof, and a new set of oak doors to the entrance. Further enhancements have recently been carried out. The building has seen many uses since its original purpose as the first town hall including an armoury, fire station and town museum. It is now used as a space for community and historic events, linked to the museum. The restoration has transformed the appearance of the building and it now resembles, as close as is possible, its original appearance. Its setting is compromised to a degree by the untidy rear elevations of some of The Shambles buildings, the bland expanse of concrete paving in front of the building, roundabout junction and service lay-by.



Fig 14.7: *Nos. 55-59 represent a fine range of buildings in the Shambles that are adjacent to the Yelde Hall.*

Nos. 55-59 of The Shambles face onto the space, and are a group of fine listed buildings of similar appearance and detailing (Fig 14.7). No. 59 (Connells) has chamfered rusticated pilasters to the ground floor and a simple though not out of character shopfront, retaining a cornice above the fascia. The shopfront however has a detrimental effect on the character of the building due simply to the oversized and bright-applied fascia and painted pilasters. No. 58 (The Total Letting Service) has had an ashlar frontage to the ground floor either side of the shopfront and upper floor entrance inappropriately painted over. However, the relief console details below a traditional and attractive fascia remain. The shopfront is of plain plate glass and has an oversized fascia. Nos. 57 and 56 are essentially the same building, though the shopfronts step down to accommodate the slope of the street. This is a more imposing building with a distinctive row of dormers to the roof and window surround detailing matching the upper floors of No. 2 (HSBC). From St. Mary Street all these buildings together present an impressive and fine frontage to this secondary space in the Market Place.

Upper Market Place

This is the largest open space in the Market Place and is of a rather irregular shape. The war memorial sits in the centre of the widest part of the space though fails to provide a focus for the space as it is lost amongst the nearby parked cars and the passing traffic. It has little 'breathing space', its setting is cramped and no attempt has been made to provide it with a setting that would both give it a degree of dignity and focus in the Market Place. It is almost as if it were regarded as an obstacle to traffic rather than a focus of civic pride. There is the opportunity to rearrange the parking area and improve the setting of the War Memorial. Please refer to Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC3.

The triangular space facing the entrance to the Grade II* Listed St Andrews Church is a bland expanse of tarmac, which would similarly benefit from improvement. All the surrounding buildings except two are listed (Fig 14.8).



Fig 14.8: St. Andrew's Church is a dominant landmark flanked by fine buildings. Unfortunately the approach is an unattractive and ill-defined expanse of tarmac used for random parking and service vehicles.

Nos. 14-24, the car park in front, and square in front of the Rose & Crown define the western edge of the Upper Market Place. The buildings fronting on to the space present a less formal and more varied range of styles, forms and heights. The car parking is inefficiently laid out and the parked cars and large expanse of tarmac bays and manoeuvring space provides a stark and unattractive setting for the buildings facing it, all of which are listed. There is the opportunity to rearrange this parking and the general environment as referred to above (Fig 14.9).



Fig 14.9: The parked cars and additional highway signs in the middle of the open space are a dominant and unattractive feature, necessitating a separate access road that takes land away from pedestrians. A redesign of the parking layout in this area could bring significant improvements to the townscape and shopping environment.

The eastern edge of the Upper Market Place is defined by Nos. 25-33 and a row of parking spaces at a 90 degree angle to the street. The buildings in the centre of this row are not listed, though only the plain No. 28-29 has significant negative impact on the townscape.

No. 40 (Boston Burger) is one of only two buildings in its frontage not listed and has been much altered in the last 50 years. The painted exterior, lack of glazing bars and modern shopfront with unattractive fascia make what is essentially a simple but well-proportioned building a negative feature in the frontage.

Nos. 38-39 (Awdry Bailey Douglas) is a fine building with distinctive balustraded parapet, bay windows and classical entrance. Originally a house and formerly an inn, the left-hand ground floor bay has an early 20th Century shopfront. The inserted door adjacent to the main entrance disrupts the symmetry of the building and it would benefit from its removal. The ground floor frontage would also benefit from attention to the stonework and paint removal and the right hand bay windows would benefit from reinstatement of glazing bars.

No. 37 (Allen & Harris) dates from as recently as the 1960s, replacing the former Duke of Cumberland Inn. For a building of this time it fits well into the façade, though it is clearly a modern building. No. 36 is a generally pleasant building with an altered 19th Century shopfront.

No. 35, once a coaching inn, is similar in appearance but greater in stature than No. 36. An attractive shopfront recessed doorway and appropriately designed and subtle signage contributes to the attractiveness of this building.

Nos. 33-34 (Strakers and Hand of Glory) is known as London Buildings. The north facing elevation is two storeys with heavy cornice. The entrance to No. 34 has an attractive door hood. The shopfronts are generally in keeping with the character of the building though the corner shopfront poorly reflects the solidity of the rusticated pilaster above. The façade would benefit from a more robust design for the corner of the building and the removal of paint from stonework. The west facing elevation is three storey and has a particularly fine classical 19th Century shopfront that reads well as part of the building and with the adjacent Jubilee Buildings. The upper floor facade would benefit from the removal of paint.

No. 32 is the offices and meeting room of the Chippenham Borough Lands Charity, and was built to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. This is a particularly fine and unaltered building and is the most prominent and attractive building to this frontage of the Market Place.



Fig 14.10: These once fine buildings have acquired a number of unsympathetic alterations over time, notably painting, advertising, modern shopfronts and replacement windows that have severely compromised their character and contribute to the generally unattractive appearance of this part of the Market Place. However No. 25 on the right has been sensitively refurbished.

Nos. 30-31 (FW Jones & Son & Elkins Architects) is essentially a single building, though the first floor windows are not evenly spaced. This is a far more humble building than the Jubilee buildings but nonetheless a generally attractive one. This is due primarily to the quality of the shopfronts and garage doors and the unpainted stone first floor elevation. The first floor windows to No. 30 are modern replacements.

No. 28-29 (One Stop) is a bland modern building with poor quality modern plate glass shopfront and large bright fascia, and is one of the most unattractive buildings in the Market Place. The adjacent No. 27 (Keskins) is an older building that has seen a number of alterations that have almost removed all of its positive characteristics (Fig 14.10). It once boasted a fine shopfront and balustraded parapet. Now the parapet has been replaced with blockwork and the shopfront is modern, brightly coloured and out of character with the building. In addition the frontage has been painted white and kept in poor repair and the original windows have been lost. The building presents a rather depressing sight.

No. 26 (New World) is listed and retains both its arched doorway and alley and original first floor windows. The bow fronted shop window is not original but neither out of character with the building. The façade is of brick, which has been painted white for a number of years. The original windows on the second floor have been replaced, as have the moulded surrounds to all the windows.

No. 25 is the former premises of the chemist John Coles, three times Mayor, who gave a legacy to the town that was used to create John Coles Park. This building has recently benefitted from a sensitive restoration. On the ground floor are two shop units, the only negative elements of these shopfronts being the boxy fascias.

No. 25 and Nos. 23-24 opposite are important in defining the entrance into Market Place from the Causeway, being corner buildings that open out the street into a wider space. No. 23-24 is a simple elegant building with chamfered corner. It gains its attractiveness from its proportion and simplicity. It was once a drapers with traditional Victorian shopfront. The modern shopfront generally reflects the style of the former Victorian shopfront. The side of the building is painted and its removal would be an improvement to its appearance and enable it to be better read as a single building.

No. 22 is the Rose & Crown, listed Grade II*, it is one of the remaining inns of the Market formerly rendered though looks far better in bare stone and brick. However, the main negative impact of the building is its setting, and the untidy, ill-defined and unattractive space in front of it bounded by raised kerbs attempting to delineate the space (Fig 14.11).



Fig 14.11: This area fails to do justice to the setting of the fine architecture and history of the Rose and Crown.

Nos. 18-20 (The Puffin Hut & Jolly's Café) is a single building. Although three storeys to the side, it has a long sloping roof to the front with dormers, partly concealed by the parapet of a later frontage. The building has an attractive colonnade to one side and the shopfronts are plain and modern with a generally neutral effect on the character of the building. The former central doorway to the upper floors has an attractive door hood though this has now been incorporated into a shopfront. The upper floors of the front and part of the side elevation are painted, including the stonework and the building would benefit from its removal.

No. 17 is an older timber framed building with an attractive fascia incorporating curved bays. No. 16 has a plain shopfront with solid stallriser but the large expanse of glazing would benefit from being broken up by mullions. The upper storeys, though attractive, would benefit from the removal of paint. No. 14-15 is an attractive and solid building turning the corner into the Lower Market Place. It has fine upper floor windows, though the inserted bay windows in the ground floor with deeply recessed upper sections look somewhat incongruous.

Lower Market Place

The facades of the Bear Hotel, Angel Hotel and Museum, together with the restored Buttercross and public space, make this the finest part of the Market Place.

The southern frontage to the space is particularly fine, though the shopfront to No. 13 is distinctly out of character with the building and the fascia is a particularly oversized, bold and vulgar intrusion into the façade. Probably the most prominent building in the Lower Market Place, the Bear Hotel is a fine Neo Gothic building. However the façade is not in the best condition, and would benefit from a restoration scheme (Fig 4.12).



Fig 14.12: The Bear Hotel is a fine neo gothic building, and part of an elegant group of buildings turning the corner into the Upper Market Place.

The western frontage consists of buildings that are generally attractive and provide a positive setting for the space and the restored Buttercross. The Angel Hotel is the largest and most important building in the Market Place (Fig 14.13). Over the years it has seen several refurbishments, including the recent restoration of the stone entrance canopy. Whilst it has in living memory always had a rendered and painted façade, it is a shame that this painting has also been applied to the window dressings, string courses and the fine parapet balustrading. It would enormously enhance the building if the paint were removed from these features, and the stone restored to view.



Fig 14.13: The Angel Hotel is one of the most important and imposing buildings in the Market Place. It is unfortunate that the stone dressings on the building have been repeatedly painted over during each recent redecoration.

Originally Nos. 9-11 consisted of a dwelling house designed by John Wood of Bath, and a later extension to create the original Bear Hotel. Once the location of the Magistrates Courts, the buildings were sensitively converted by Chippenham Town Council into the Museum in the late 1990s, with further improvement to the arched entrance in 2018. It is now a fine civic building providing a valuable service to the community.



Fig 14.14: The Shambles and Buttercross in the Lower Market Place.

The frontages to Nos. 7 and 6 (Flying Monk pub) are generally attractive. No. 5 (Savers) has a modern shopfront and large applied fascia that are not particularly sympathetic to the building. Notwithstanding, the recent removal of a former recessed shopfront is an improvement. Nos. 3-4 is an attractive building with half dormers in the elevation with projecting eaves and bargeboard, and projecting roof eaves above a modillion cornice. Below is a moulded band course above windows with moulded stone surrounds. Unfortunately, the full effect of this detailing is diluted by the white paint covering the whole façade. The ground floor has an interesting stone tiled canopy along the width of the frontage. Unfortunately the application of fascias and extension of the unsympathetic shopfronts into the space below all but hides this attractive feature.

On the east side of the Lower Market Place, No. 69-70 (British Red Cross) has an imposing stone gable with large semi-circular window at second floor. Unfortunately the shopfront is a plain modern design with oversized applied fascia. No. 68 has a simple but attractive shopfront in keeping with the building façade.

The quality and character of the Lower Market Place is diluted noticeably on the east (Shambles) side, where the two buildings constituting Nos. 65 (Coral), 66 (Barclays Bank) and 67 (Betfred) present a long frontage of plain and unattractive modern buildings and shopfronts (Fig 14.14). The bright fenestration and signage of No. 67, the discordant forms of the frontage at No. 66 and the bland plate glass and bright fascia of No. 65 combine with the plain buildings to provide a particularly uninspiring frontage to this important space. Both buildings fail to reflect the slope of the land, further drawing attention to themselves.

No. 64 (Goodman Warren Beck) stands on the original site of the Buttercross. The façade includes ornate pilasters and cornice with pediment at second floor and arched moulded window surrounds with projecting string course at first floor. Unfortunately the shopfront below does not reflect the quality of the façade above.

No. 63 is a fine listed building on a prominent site between the Upper and Lower Market Place areas. Works to the ground floor as part of its conversion to a restaurant have made a significant improvement to its appearance.

To the rear of The Shambles buildings is a small network of pedestrian alleys providing short cuts across the Market Place although the quality of surfacing is poor. These are generally rear elevations, but also provide the backdrop to the restored Yelde Hall. They are generally unappealing elevations with pipes, drain gulleys and other clutter. These features bear testimony to the unmodernised combined drainage systems below.

Bus Station Area

The bus station represents a large gap in the streetscene devoid of buildings and is a generally unattractive, ambiguous and ill-defined space. Lords Lane is also poorly defined and barely recognisable as a street. Whilst the rear of The Bear Hotel presents a variety of roof forms, the back elevations face into the space and the bus station, giving poor definition to the space and adding to the amorphous feel of the area. The Bear Hotel and Museum are a fine frame for a poor view into the bus station. The Library (Fig 13.9) generally addresses the street and is described in more detail under the 'Timber Street' section of Character Area 13.

Vegetation

Market Place is very much an urban townscape and apart from the fine Plane tree opposite the Bear Hotel, vegetation plays little part in its character. However, this is as much due to the use of much of the space for traffic and parking, as it is part of its historical character and past use. The war memorial space is split into a number of smaller spaces by the necessity of the road passing through it. There is scope to reduce the negative impact of vehicles by better ordering the space and tree planting here may be an appropriate means of helping achieve this and improving the quality of the space for pedestrians.

Materials

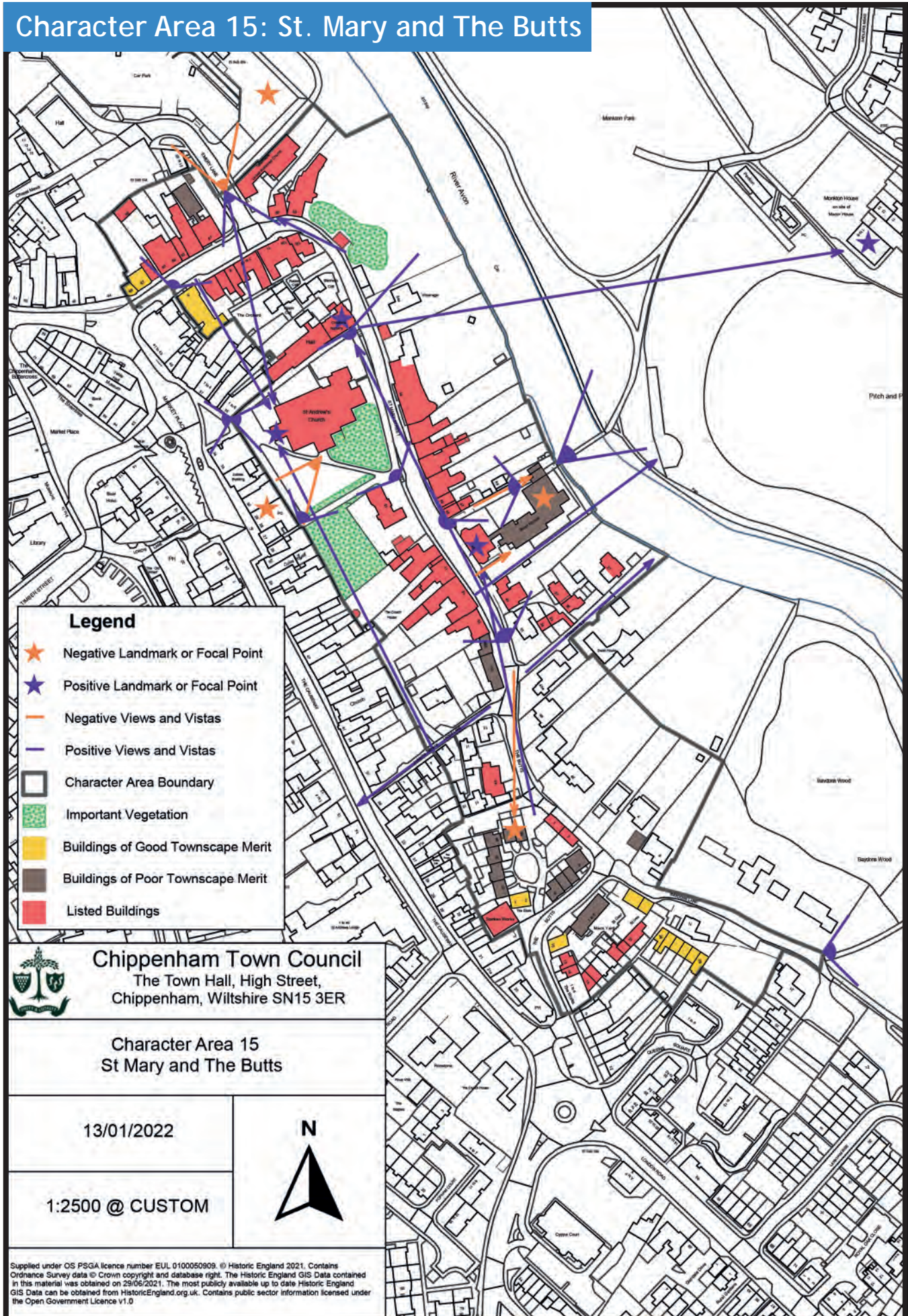
Traditional town centre materials are predominantly Bath stone or limestone, either sawn or rubble with quoins to principal elevations with the occasional occurrence of warm orange / brown brick in either Flemish, English or common bonds to side and rear elevations. Walls are generally natural stone and often constructed of similar brick and faced in natural stone with plain 'flat tops' using through stones as coping. Particular attention to detail should be given where walls change level. Roofs are historically graded stone or slate and more recently clay Roman or pan tiles. Stone mullions and window surrounds are common. Windows are generally timber or metal casement or sliding sash. Render is generally roughcast and either bare or limewashed, as is general stonework. Modern concrete blockwork is particularly out of character, as is smooth render.

Highway Infrastructure

When enhancement of the Lower Market Place took place in 1996, the Friday and Saturday markets were returned to the area. However due to their distance from the main shopping areas, the markets viability suffered, and they were successfully relocated to the High Street. This has meant that although the Lower Market Place is still used for events such as the annual Folk Festival, the function of the space has somewhat diminished. Combined with a lack of parking enforcement this has meant that the area has become an illegal parking area, which in turn has resulted in damage to the stone pavements. It is recommended that enforcement is reintroduced to return the space to formal and informal community use.

As a result of enhancements, the Lower Market Place is generally free from extraneous highway infrastructure and this is in contrast with the Upper Market Place where standardised signage is an intrusive feature. The war memorial sits in a rather isolated position in the centre of the space, surrounded by the road and car parking. It has a somewhat detached and forlorn feel and undignified setting. The Upper Market Place is an area which, through subtle re-arrangement of the carriageway and parking, the public realm could be much improved (please refer to proposals for this area in Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC3).

Character Area 15: St. Mary and The Butts



Legend

- Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Negative Views and Vistas
- Positive Views and Vistas
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
- Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit
- Listed Buildings



Chippenham Town Council
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 15
St Mary and The Butts

13/01/2022

1:2500 @ CUSTOM



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History, Archaeology & Morphology

St. Mary Street is one of the oldest streets in the town, probably dating back to the Saxon period, the northern section being formerly known as Cook Street. Other streets such as The Butts, Ladd's Lane and Common Slip are all medieval streets. Baydons Lane is a continuance of St. Mary Street and gradually becomes a footpath as it runs parallel with London Road, similar to Wood Lane to the south, though leading eventually to the sailing club and former bathing place in the River Avon. The lane now forms the northern edge of the built up area.

At one time St. Mary Street was the main thoroughfare into the town, and from medieval times also its commercial heart. A centre of the wool industry, it contains substantial 'Burgage' houses - the residents of which had certain beneficial rights. However, The Causeway eventually became established as the main road into the town and St. Mary Street gradually became a quiet backwater, and its relative seclusion has ensured that it has experienced less pressure for modern development than other parts of the town centre. As a result, St. Mary Street is the finest unspoilt street in the town and boasts its highest concentration of Grade II* listed buildings. More recently the street has been closed as a through route and this has minimised traffic and helped retain its character and ambience. The street has been described by Nikolaus Pevsner as 'the best at Chippenham' and by Sir John Betjeman as 'one of the prettiest streets in England'.

The whole of St. Mary Street is within the area considered as part of the original planned Saxon settlement and the area to the north of St Andrew's Church is considered the possible site of the royal seat. This area bounded by the Church, Market Place and St. Mary Street is considered the most archeologically significant in the town. Chippenham was also briefly a spa town between 1694 and 1801 and the remains of the spa are located in the grounds of No. 55 (The Grove).

Later Victorian expansion has seen the development of terraced cottages around The Butts and to the west of Baydons Lane. 20th Century development has seen detached suburban houses developed to the east of The Butts and Baydons Lane.

Topography & Views

Topography

The main thoroughfare lies on the north east slope of the escarpment on which the town is built, and generally runs with the contours. From the north, the street gradually slopes down to a low point at the junction with Ladd's Lane and Common Slip. And rises gradually before levelling out along the alignment of Baydons Lane. The historic route of The Butts is still discernible through the modern housing development and is at a steeper gradient as it rises up to London Road. Ladd's Lane and Common Slip represent the steepest slope as they take the shortest route from The Causeway down to the river. Generally, the escarpment allows more open views across the river valley into Monkton Park and in the opposite direction restricts views to the rooftops of buildings lining The Causeway. Thus the aspect of the street is notably towards the north east.

Views

Along the northern section of St. Mary Street there is a pleasant view towards the attractive Shambles buildings that help to enclose the space. In the opposite direction the sense of enclosure is weaker due to the lack of corner buildings at the junction with Emery Lane and the view down this short street into the car park and servicing area is particularly unattractive. An impressive glimpse of the church steeple is to be had between Nos. 3 and 4, the buildings framing the view.



Fig 15.1: *This view from the church steps is one of the finest to be had in the street.*

Moving south into the main section of the street, the steps up to the churchyard opposite the vicarage provide one of the finest viewpoints in the whole street (Fig 15.1). To the south is the exceptional vista of the gently curving street lined by fine buildings. To the east is the mature landscape of Monkton Park and a view of the front of Monkton House in its parkland setting.

Ivy on the trees is a detracting element and the suburban ornamental conifers of the crazy golf course are notable even from here. Whilst the churchyard is generally defined by attractive buildings, the high, bland rear elevation of No. 28-9 Market Place (One Stop) is a particularly jarring and unattractive feature and the appearance of the flats to the rear of No. 30 Market Place could be improved.

River House, with the pedestrian route through the building, is inappropriate and detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area. However a number of attractive views are to be had from the lane that runs down to the footbridge into Monkton Park especially if one looks north over the wall and along the roofs to the rear of St. Mary Street. However, this is spoiled by the utilitarian railings, unsightly overhead wires, and suburban wooden boundary fence.

From the entrance to No. 18 there is an attractive view across the river into the landscape of Monkton Park, with a number of impressive conifers prominent. Unfortunately, the bland form and bulk of River House, a large tarmac yard and bin store close to the road are detracting features in the foreground. Along the street to the north the roof forms and elevations of a number of buildings and the churchyard

vegetation combine to provide an impressive vista, terminated by the former Girl's School, above which rises the steeple of St. Paul's Church on the other side of the town. From the opposite side of the street, outside No. 45, a similarly fine view is to be had in the direction of the church, with its steeple a prominent feature.

As the street becomes The Butts there are attractive views down Common Slip (Fig 15.2) into Monkton Park and up Ladd's Lane to the frontage of No. 13 The Causeway. On the left are a number of detached suburban styled houses.

Entering The Butts from the south one is presented with a distinctly unattractive vista of the rear of a number of buildings fronting The Causeway. As the road turns away from its historical alignment the trees of Monkton Park are again visible on the horizon. The focal point at the end of the street itself is however, a diminutive, though not unpleasant suburban bungalow, though even the character of this is compromised by the large bland double garage prominent in the front garden.

Staying on the historic alignment of The Butts, the impressive classical side bay of No. 45 St Mary Street comes into view, and stays in view, gradually becoming more prominent as one passes through the 1960s housing development. This is one of the most impressive views in the whole area and is considerably compromised by the unsympathetic form of this development, particularly the prominent elevation of No. 36 in the view. On exiting this area, the attractive side elevation of No. 19 St. Mary Street also comes into view, though only due to the poorly defined corner with Ladd's Lane, itself revealing the blank side elevation of No. 20.

The 1960s housing development actually splits The Butts into two separate streets. From the northern section the tall bland rear elevations of Nos. 35 and 36 of the new development are a prominent and unattractive intrusion into the street scene. However, the view from Baydons Lane is generally attractive, with the narrowness of the lane, and brick and stone elevations of Nos. 1 and 2, being notable components of the view (Fig 15.3).



Fig 15.2: Common Slip has the appearance of a pleasant country lane and is lined with a number of attractive cottages. To the right is the recently built Swan House, which is respectful of its surroundings.



Fig 15.3: Attractive view on entering The Butts from Baydons Lane

General Character

The majority of the area is residential, with only the northern section of St. Mary Street containing commercial and retail premises as well. The 90 degree bend in the street separates this section from the rest of the street and gives no indication of the continuing street beyond with its fine buildings. The commercial part of the street is busy with traffic as it gives access to the main Emery Gate Shopping Centre car park and this has a significant impact on the character of the space. The southern part of St. Mary Street curves gracefully and allows excellent views of the fine buildings that line this part of the street. This part of the street has an almost timeless quality.

The southern part of the character area is less well defined, taking on a more suburban character. This is due in part to it having been developed incrementally over time.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

North St. Mary Street

The Shambles buildings and the corner at the opposite end enclose this short part of the street and help make it seem like a place rather than a thoroughfare. However, the continuous traffic and wide entrance to Emery Lane undermine this. Nearly all the buildings in the street are listed and all generally make a positive contribution to the quality of the townscape. This is the most densely developed and vibrant part of the St. Mary Street and it is continuously lined with buildings with a variety of uses.

The most notable buildings are No. 3 and No. 61. No. 3 is unlisted but its rubble stone frontage is well executed with tall slender stone stacks, central stone pediment and fine arched window above. No. 61 is older and listed Grade II* and is a fine town house now used as offices (Fig 15.4). The setting of this building is poor due to the blank side elevation and vacant plot on the corner with Emery Lane, currently used as a car park. A utilitarian single storey rear extension visible across the car park also has a detrimental effect on the setting of the building. The opposite side of the junction is also poorly defined. Although all the buildings in the vicinity of this corner are listed, the past demolition of the corner building has exposed two plain blank walls and a parking area.



Fig 15.4: The north end of St. Mary Street is commercial in character and contains a number of fine buildings, notably the Grade II* listed No. 61.

Opposite is an attractive group of stone fronted buildings at Nos. 11-12. Adjacent at Nos. 5-10 is a pleasant terrace of houses, some now offices. These have seen a number of unsympathetic alterations over time, including a white rendered gable to Nos. 7-10, and only No. 6 retains any original windows. Much of the stone tile roof has been replaced with concrete tiles. This group would benefit from restoration of original features, especially windows and doors and the painting of the gable in a more muted colour. A further detracting element is the telephone pole and array of unsightly cables directly in front of the building.

South St. Mary Street

Turning south round the sharp bend reveals a long vista along the street and group of fine buildings in the distance. The aspect is relatively open to the east and this reveals the rather stark wall and tarmac frontage to the otherwise well secluded though plain vicarage. Passing the impressive gable end of the former girls' school the imposing form of St. Andrews Church comes into view, sitting high above street level. The side face of the steps up to the churchyard have been poorly re-pointed and the small space in front of the Old School Rooms entrance is an unsightly array of numerous patches of concrete.

The character of the space is different on either side of the church. The east side is open and offers fine views of Monkton Park. The north side is lined by a continuous row of listed buildings, the most notable being the former school buildings with their seven gable ends. The south side is the largest part of the graveyard and contains a number of fine mature trees. A secondary, more secluded space to the south contains a short avenue of pollarded Lime trees. Though attractive, this space appears isolated and would benefit from measures to encourage greater use. To the west, the bland, blank blockwork rear elevation of No. 28-9 Market Place is a particular eyesore, especially where it rises to three storeys (Fig 15.5). Adjacent is an uninviting alley leading to the Market Place. The facade of the building to the rear of No. 30 Market Place is also not particularly attractive. This corner of the churchyard is in particular need of enhancement.



Fig 15.5: The parish church of St. Andrew is generally surrounded by fine buildings and views. The exception is the west side where bland frontages undermine the quality of the setting.

Onwards from the church, for about 150m is the finest part of the street, where seven of the houses are listed Grade II* and the townscape is of exceptional quality (Fig 15.6). Medieval in origin, many of these were wool merchants houses, with wide doorways to passages through which animals would have been taken through to the rear. Originally their facades would have been timber framed, as No. 52 (The Wood House) still is. In the early 1800s ashlar stone facades were added in the classical style, the somewhat irregular window positions attesting to the original construction.



Fig 15.6: The south side of St. Mary Street. Nos. 51 and 50 (to the right) had their timber framed facades replaced with classically styled stone in the early 1800s.

The majority of the buildings are contained in two terraces, one opposite the church and the other following on from this on the same side as the church. Within this part of the street the detached No. 45 is a notable landmark with its side bays being a distinctive feature, especially from the south. Almost opposite, the 'L' shape of No. 16 and the prominent side elevation of No. 15 create a punctuation space in the street. The space between No. 45 and 46 with the path leading up from the river emphasises this area as a local focal point.

At the southern end of the street the urban form begins to dissipate. Adjacent to the imposing No. 45 are the diminutive cottages at Nos. 41-43 bringing a distinct contrast in style and scale. This allows the fine views of the end bay from the south. Adjacent and on the corner of Common Slip is a modern detached suburban house, its form and character being alien to the street and unsure whether it should be facing St. Mary Street or Common Slip. This replaced a terrace of attractive cottages, demolished in 1965. Opposite is a row of outbuildings converted into houses with oddly proportioned fenestration.

Common Slip and Ladd's Lane

Common Slip is an attractive narrow lane, enclosed at the top by stone walls and vegetation. It has no pavements and is informal in character. Vegetation is an important element in the tranquil nature of the lane. On the north side are four listed cottages set slightly back from the lane, and on the right the modern, though respectful, Swan House. The street is very picturesque and secluded.

Ladd's Lane is a dead end for vehicles and acts primarily as a pedestrian link to the Causeway. Near the top of Ladd's Lane there are is a historically styled modern terrace, which addresses the lane well. Further down the lane are detached houses of individual designs, with rendered facades.

The Butts

This street has been substantially altered by the 1960s housing development that has been inserted on top of the historic alignment of the street. The development retains views along the original route, and the ability to walk through the small garden area. The buildings are of no particular merit but their arrangement creates an attractive central open space. The development has created a new section of street to join Baydons Lane opposite No. 4 (Fig 15.7). Fronts and backs face each other as if the street need not exist. Nos. 3-6 face the street yet Macs Yard turns the stark form of its back to the street. At the corner of the street is an older property at No. 10. Modern replacement windows of varying designs and the infilling of a former shopfront have undermined the character of the building. Opposite the Three Crowns pub is a former industrial building now converted to offices and known as The Works. Although not an unattractive building, the recessed brick bays appear incongruous next to the original painted brickwork and the bright green window frames are an unduly dominant feature.



Fig 15.7: The realignment of The Butts has created a section of street devoid of character.

Behind No. 45 The Butts is No. 10-11 Ladds Lane, a semi-detached building with mansard roof that has been sensitively extended. At the north end of the street, No. 12 Ladds Lane is a large suburban house in a prominent position. Adjacent is No. 45, a listed rubble stone cottage. The suburban house, garages adjacent to the cottage, entrance to rear accesses to properties on The Causeway and the dominant rear elevation of Nos. 35-6 provide a poor setting for this pleasant cottage. The rear elevation of No. 35-6 is a particularly dominant and intrusive feature. The suburban housing on the east side of the road is of no particular note and generally has a neutral effect on the character of the area, though more substantial vegetation would better soften the roofscape.

Baydons Lane

The lane begins as an urban lane, Nos. 1 and 2 and St. Clear and St Ives being the key elements in defining this urban form. These are older, more humble buildings, using brick as well as stone. The narrowness of the lane and enclosure of the wall to the east adds to the urban feel (Fig 15.8). Beyond St. Ives the lane opens out, the wall giving way to a hedge. On the west side the urban form breaks down and consists of two suburban houses and two unattractive makeshift parking areas on the sites of demolished houses. Between the two suburban houses is a patch of waste ground covered in scrub and some trees. The increase in vegetation is an indication of the proximity of the river valley and softens the view of the houses from within the valley.



Fig 15.8: The narrow entrance to Baydons Lane is defined by these humble but pleasant buildings. The concrete bollards are an uninspired addition.

The houses are set partially into the slope and above them to the rear are three terraces of older cottages. No. 11 is an older property much altered and resembles a modern suburban house. To the rear the terrace (Nos. 24-29) is an attractive stone fronted group, given some prominence by their elevated position. However this also brings to attention their array of modern replacement windows that disrupt the cohesiveness of the terrace and are detrimental to its overall appearance. A path leads up the side of this terrace to reveal a second terrace at a 90 degree angle to it. These cottages are listed and retain much of their original features and charm. The path is a pleasant and intimate pedestrian space in contrast to the busy main road nearby. However, some modern replacement windows and porches are jarring elements. This is generally an attractive and secluded residential area though unsympathetic alterations to buildings and the poorly defined edges to the lane undermine this to an extent.

On the east side of Baydons Lane are three recently built, large, elegant, high quality, detached, contemporary houses, which through clever use of levels and materials do not detract from long range views. Largely faced in timber, it is expected that in combination with planting they will subtly enhance the Conservation Area.

Vegetation

The area is primarily urban in character, though it is the urban, rather than the suburban parts that benefit most from the most prominent areas of vegetation - in the churchyard and in Monkton Park. Vegetation in the suburban areas to the south is generally more diminutive in scale, sporadic and has less of a positive impact in the townscape. Monkton Park provides a fine parkland landscape of mature trees that are visible from a number of points. The churchyard, notably on the south side, contains a number of fine mature ornamental conifers giving this side of the space a more enclosed and intimate setting. Also to the south is a pleasant avenue of Lime trees.

The attractive front to No. 15 is partially obscured by vegetation, notably by two large Yews that would benefit from extensive pruning. At the corner of St. Mary Street are a fine group of mature Lime trees that add a degree of seclusion and enclosure to the entry into the main part of the street.

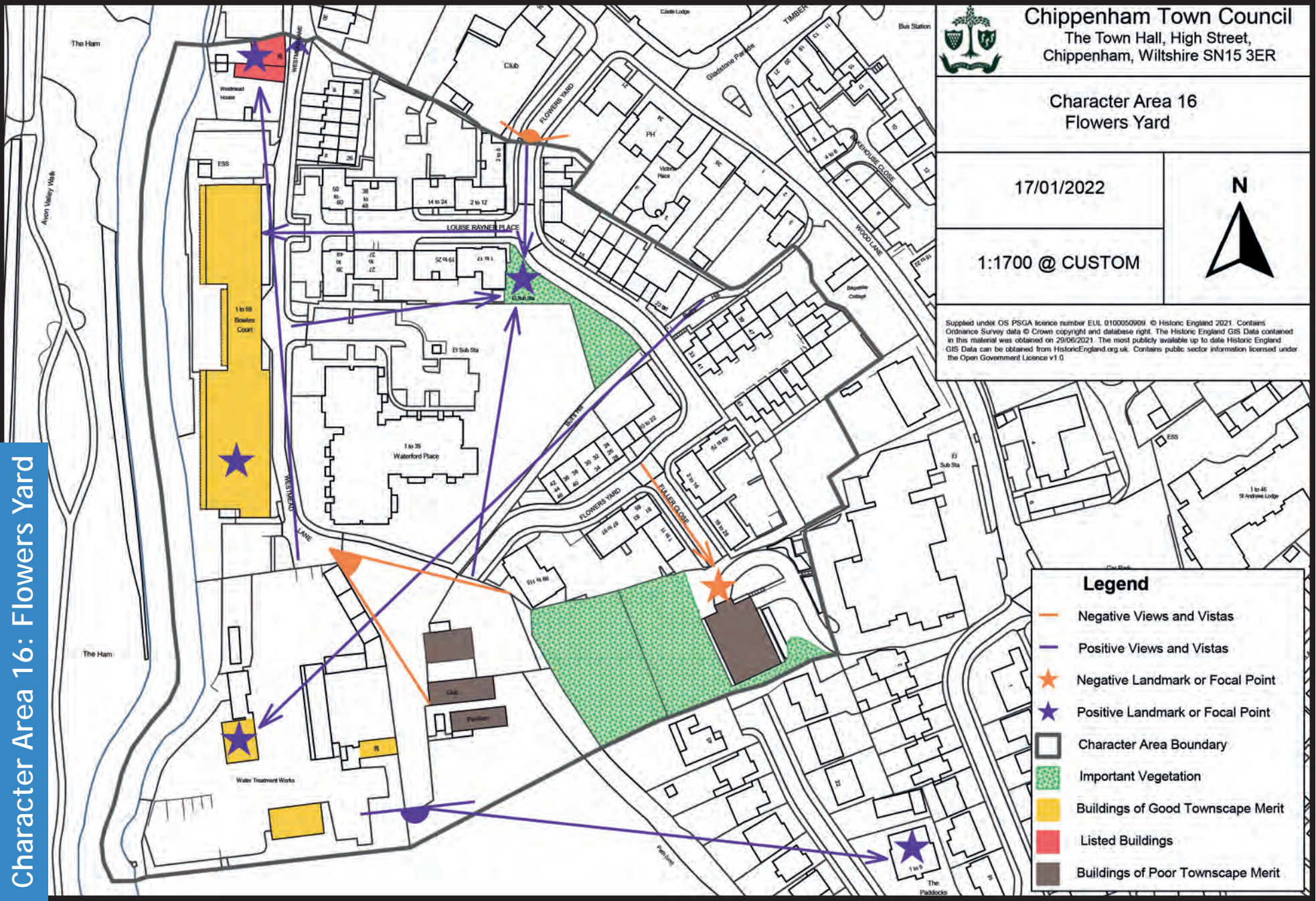
Materials

The materials used are predominantly Bath stone or limestone with stone tiles. Slate roof tiles are also to be found and more recently clay Roman tiles have started to dilute the character of the area. These should be discouraged, especially brightly coloured ones. Coursed and free rubble stone, both bare and limewashed is also evident so too is limited occurrences of rough cast render. Brick is generally evident in outbuildings, or more humble dwellings or side and rear elevations and where found is historically constructed in Flemish bond using warm colours. Exceptions are the inappropriate River House development - this is to be compared with the attractive listed Nos. 46 and 52 both good examples of appropriate brickwork. Modern buildings are often rendered, with varying degrees of attractiveness.

Highway Infrastructure

As the area is not heavily trafficked, highway infrastructure is generally not a prominent feature. However, the quality of surfacing on the pavements does not match the quality of the buildings and is generally of a poor quality. A patchwork of concrete slabs of varying finished, inappropriate block paving crossovers and poor quality tarmac repairs are an all too evident and unattractive feature of the street. Standard gauge and colour double yellow lines are also a prominent feature.

Character Area 16: Flowers Yard



Chippenham Town Council
 The Town Hall, High Street,
 Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3ER

Character Area 16
Flowers Yard

17/01/2022



1:1700 @ CUSTOM

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Legend

- Negative Views and Vistas
- Positive Views and Vistas
- Negative Landmark or Focal Point
- Positive Landmark or Focal Point
- Character Area Boundary
- Important Vegetation
- Buildings of Good Townscape Merit
- Listed Buildings
- Buildings of Poor Townscape Merit



Fig 16.1: Aerial view of the Flowers Yard development, and the new retirement housing on Westmead Lane.

History, Archaeology & Morphology

This part of the town, being both on the edge of the town centre and the built up area, and adjacent to the river, has always been primarily in industrial use. Initial development took place on the south side of Gladstone Road (itself the rear access to High Street and Market Place properties) and between the river and Westmead Lane. The 1784 Powell map shows the land between these two areas as two enclosures - The Rack Close and Bulls Hill, although the footpath of the same name is only marked as an informal track. The former police station site was part of an extensive garden to The Paddocks. The 1886 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows Bull's Hill footpath and expansion of industry onto the east side of Westmead Lane. Houses are intermixed with industrial uses, including a sawmill, silk factory, tannery, cloth factory, and gas works (now water works).

The area was extensively redeveloped between 2006 and 2017. The Flowers scrapyard has been developed with flats and housing, The Hygrade food factory site is now a retirement housing complex, and Housing Association dwellings replaced the Avonside building on the corner of Westmead Lane and Gladstone Road. There is a new care home in the offing at the former police station site. The only industrial use now is the Wessex Water Board depot (Fig 16.1).

The area is now essentially two cul de sacs - Flowers Yard off Gladstone Road, and the remainder off Westmead Lane - ending at Westmead Playing Fields.

Topography & Views

The site slopes gently down to the river from Gladstone Road, being steeper towards the south. This is most apparent along Bull's Hill. Views within the area are limited due to the lack of publicly accessible vantage points. Limited views into the site and to the open countryside beyond exist from the top of Bull's Hill.

Views along Westmead Lane are generally very enclosed, particularly at No. 26, where the house and vegetation opposite narrows the view along the straight section of the lane. Beyond No. 26 the retirement housing at Bowles Court comes into view.

The most significant and important views are from Gladstone Road bridge and Avenue La Fleche. The riverside housing that has replaced Avonside is of particularly high quality. The three storey form is very sculptural, and the roofline invokes the previous industrial use of the area. The riverside elevation of Bowles Court is likewise very attractive. Uncompromisingly modern, it looks attractive from both Avenue La Fleche and the cyclepath adjacent to the river (Fig 16.2).

General Character

The design brief for the area drawn up in 2003 envisaged a mixed use development of the sites. However, apart from the single office building on the corner of Gladstone Road and Flowers Yard, the developments are essentially residential. There are two types: conventional houses and flats on Flowers Yard; and a range from fully sheltered to retirement housing on the former Hygrade sites. Flowers Yard contains a proportion of affordable housing, which also makes up the three storey terraced Avonside development.

The layout of the area is very urban, with a high density. The design of Flowers Yard is essentially conventional 'Neo-Georgian/Victorian', whilst the other sites have a much more contemporary appearance.

Whilst there are just two vehicular access points into the character area, there is a useful pedestrian way into the area via Bull's Hill. This path, once a forbidding alley flanked by the Flowers scrapyard, has now been incorporated effectively into the new development.



Fig 16.2: Attractive rear elevation of Bowles Court

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The entry into the area from Westmead Lane is quite pleasant, being marked by the attractive listed house at No. 26 and the mature vegetation opposite (Fig 16.3). It is at this point that the lane is at its narrowest and this marks the beginning of the long straight linear space defined by Bowles Court on the right, and part of Flowers Yard and further apartment blocks on the left. There is a centrally located open space, with several mature trees, in the centre of the Flowers Yard development.



Fig: 16.3: View down Westmead Lane, with listed No. 26 in the foreground and Bowles Court in the distance.

At the end of Westmead Lane is the gated Wessex Water depot. The lane then kinks around the water works site and opens out into a car parking area and large triangular space that tapers towards Westmead Playing Field. The space is enclosed to the north by the new retirement housing, to the west by the water works boundary and outbuildings, and to the east by run down pavilion buildings. Adjoining the waterworks site, in the north west corner of the Playing Field, Westmead Activity Centre is currently being constructed as a new recreational facility, which will include a skate park and climbing wall.

Vegetation

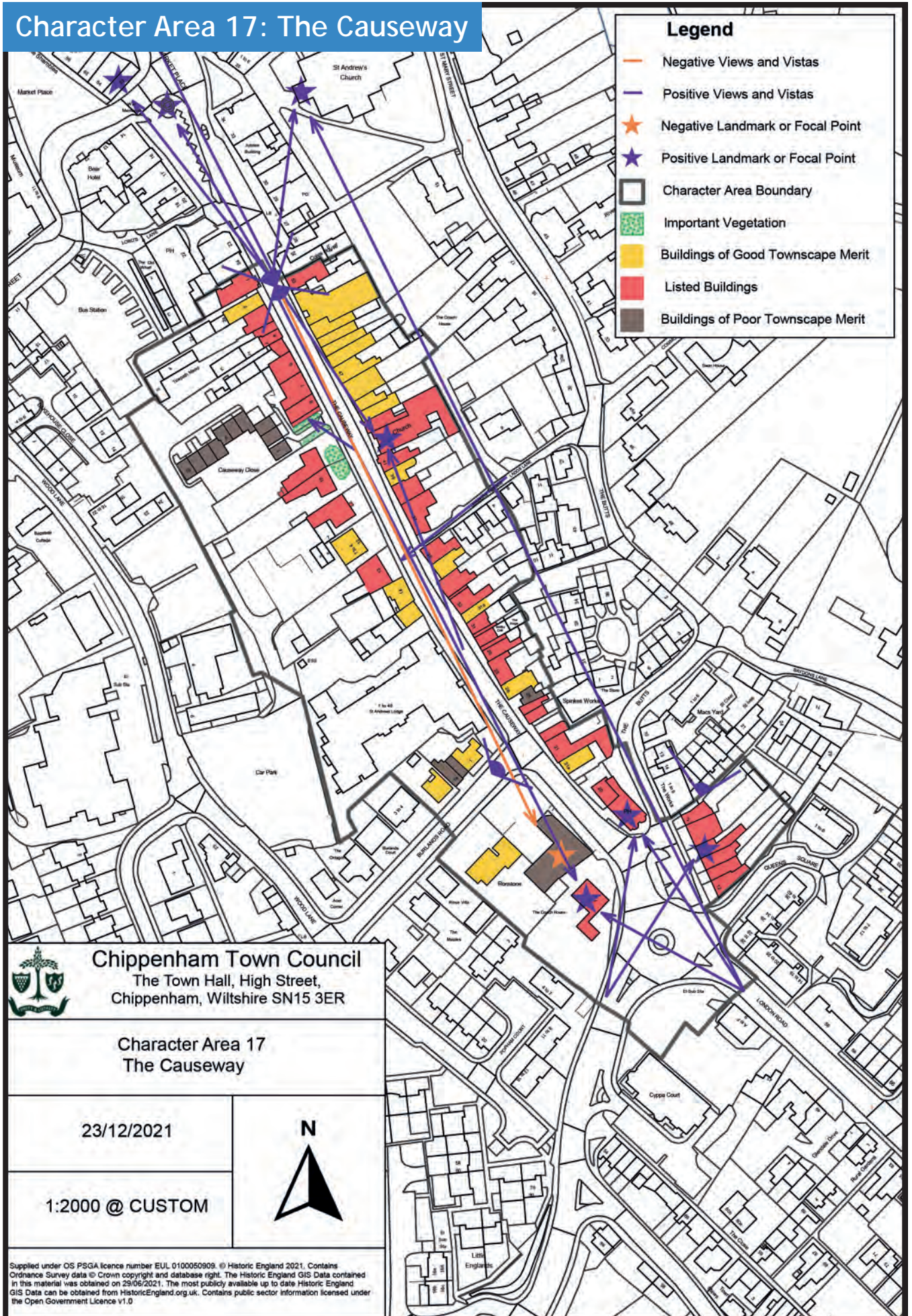
There is a variety of vegetation across the whole area of varying quality and amenity value. It is concentrated along the riverbanks, to the rear of the former police station site, at the adjacent Westmead Playing Fields, and at the central open space within Flowers Yard. The latter area contains some fine mature trees.

Materials

Facades in the Flowers Yard development predominately comprise reconstituted stone, under grey or brown concrete tiled roofs. Bowles Court is a mixture of stone and render, under corrugated metal roofs. The remaining retirement housing along Westmead Lane comprises stone and/or red brick, under concrete roofs.

Highway Infrastructure

Westmead Lane is the only historic road in the area and has little attendant infrastructure. It is narrow and unassuming in character, devoid of footways for much of its length. Flowers Yard is a standard street with pavements on both sides. Bulls Hill is a narrow enclosed path for some of its length, then incorporated into the development.



History, Archaeology & Morphology

The Causeway is part of an ancient causeway from Chippenham to Derry Hill and raised sections of footway further along London Road are remnants of this. It is also a medieval road and forms part of the medieval town. The road was on the turnpike route from the south and, although within the turnpike gate it was outside the borough and came to be known as Rotten Row due to the poor condition of the road and buildings. Stagecoaches passed along St. Mary Street to avoid The Causeway.

The Causeway in the past has traditionally been lined with burgage plots, including a number of inns due to the importance of the route and in the 20th Century it became part of the main A4 trunk route between London and Bristol. Many old buildings still line the street and most of these are listed. Pedestrianisation of the High Street and construction of Avenue La Fleche has reduced much of the through traffic, though the street is still a through route and gives access to the main Emery Gate car park.

Topography & Views

The Causeway is generally flat, though rising gently towards the south. Views are limited due to the straight and enclosed nature of the street (Fig 17.1). These open out at either end of the street into Market Place to the north and the roundabout junction with Avenue La Fleche to the south. The entrance into Market Place provides an attractive vista in contrast to the enclosed street. The southern end is less well defined, with the entrance to Burlands Road and the roundabout junction being particularly poorly defined.



Fig 17.1: View south along The Causeway showing the linear nature of the road, the eclectic mix of buildings, the dominant form of the former Methodist church and the unattractive edifice of the Kwik Fit garage obscuring the listed No. 1 London Road in the distance.

Views are limited primarily to those along the street. The most prominent feature of the street is the former Methodist Church, with its impressive gabled towers rising above the roofline. A number of attractive buildings in the Market Place are visible at various points though Nos. 44-45 (Iceland) is the most prominent. To the south, the large and imposing frontage of No. 1 London Road is dominant, though its setting is compromised by the Kwik Fit garage to one side and the roundabout to the other.

Glimpse views are to be had down Ladd's Lane and Burlands Road, though neither are of any particular note. Burlands Road is lined with undistinctive buildings and rises and dips to offer no focal point.

From the south, and particularly approaching from Avenue La Fleche, the terrace of weaver's cottages at Nos. 2-12 London Road and the Three Crowns pub are notable landmark buildings. Continuing northwards, the setback nature of Nos. 9-13 allows a view of the fine frontage of No. 8 that faces south.

General Character

Overall the Causeway is a street with a significant proportion of listed buildings forming large terraces that give a sense of enclosure. Generally most of the remaining non-listed buildings add to the character of the area.

The Causeway is very urban in character and contains a mix of residential and retail uses. It is clearly an edge of centre area and evidence of the contraction of the retail area is visible with a number of old shop windows. The retail uses are concentrated near the northern end of the street closest to the town centre. A number of retail units have residential accommodation above, though from the street it would appear that some is either under used, vacant or in poor condition.

Most frontages remain narrow and reflect the former medieval burgage plots. This is particularly notable on the east side of the street. This is less pronounced on the west side and may in part be due to the construction of the canal in 1798. The majority of this side of the street is occupied by attractive villas.

The buildings are generally 2-3 storeys and, on the east side, share a common building line and front directly onto the pavement. The street is a mix of grand and more humble buildings and this is evident by the varying roofline that is a characteristic of the street. However, the street has a slightly run down feel and a number of the buildings are in need of enhancement and removal of inappropriate alterations.



Fig 17.2: *The shopfront of No. 52 (centre) could be further improved by removal of the timber parapet to enhance the setting of the adjacent timber framed listed building at No. 53 (left).*

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

The road is relatively narrow and this, combined with the closeness of the buildings to the street edge, gives it a human scale, enclosure and a sense of place. This is particularly so of the northern end of the street and is only really eroded towards the south, in the vicinity of the Kwik Fit garage and roundabout. The linear nature of the space as a historic route into the town is a key element of its character. The strong building line and absence of invasive traffic management features in the carriageway maintain this perception. The closure of the Vauxhall Garage and its recent replacement with St. Andrew's Lodge - a respectful retirement housing scheme - has enabled this building form and line to be extended.

East Side

The most distinctive building at the north end of the street is No. 53, Tudor House, a listed black and white timber framed building. Although not the only timber framed building in the street, it is the only one not to have been re-fronted in a different style. To the left is No. 25 Market Place (Coates Florist), another listed building. To the right is No. 52 (Edward & Alan), a diminutive single storey shop building with an unattractive timber parapet but more recently improved façade and more muted shopfront colour palette (Fig 17.2). The building is also out of scale with other buildings in the street, which tend to be 2-3 storeys in height.

Nos. 51 (Taj Mahal) and 50 are also of humble scale though they are of two storeys. No. 51 retains an attractive bracketed door hood and shopfront fascia. Unfortunately the buildings suffer from a number of unsympathetic features, including truncated chimney stack, concrete tiled roof, replacement windows, modern shopfronts and inappropriate pointing to the rubble stone.

Nos. 49-43 are either rendered or ashlar faced and generally increase in stature towards the former Methodist Church. Nos. 49 & 48 are rendered and, from the upper storeys appear to have possibly once been a single house. The former shopfront is not unattractive. A variety of window designs fail to bring unity to the façade and imitation slates and lack of chimney add to this effect. No. 47 is an attractive ashlar faced building in good condition with an impressive chimney stack in the middle of the roof slope. Chamfered window reveals house modern replacement double glazed sash windows that do not appear too incongruous in relation to the proportion of the remainder of the façade.

Nos. 46-44 are a terrace of three storey houses with slate roof. The terrace once had four chimney stacks on the rear roof slope although only one remains. This and the position of the doors and windows would suggest that Nos. 45 & 44 might have originally been a single dwelling. No. 46 has a fine shopfront which has been sympathetically retained despite it no longer being in retail use and Nos. 44 & 45 retain attractive door hoods. Unfortunately, ten of the twelve windows in these buildings have been replaced with a variety of inappropriate modern designs (Fig 17.3). These features are discordant elements in this otherwise simple but pleasant façade.



Fig 17.3: The effect of the loss of traditional fenestration can transform simple elegance into plain ugliness.

No. 43 is a three storey listed house now forming part of the adjacent former Methodist Church and together with the listed house at No. 41 frames the setting of the impressive frontage of the church. The church is set back from the road behind a low stone wall and gate piers. This lovely building which is now The Cause music and arts centre, is a very valuable community facility. The building has benefitted from an extensive sensitive refurbishment. Re-instatement of railings and gate would further enhance the building.

In comparison to the formal frontages of Nos. 47-43, the terrace consisting of four houses at Nos. 41-37 is vernacular in appearance, No. 39 being the only non-listed building. The facades are either rubble stone or render, with door hoods a distinctive feature. No. 41 would benefit from removal of paint from the stone quoins and door and window surrounds. No. 39 is a modern building and is successful in fitting in with the character of the terrace, though the suburban door, roof vents and party wall copings are out of character features. No. 38 is an attractive house with distinctive 8/8 pane sashes and former shop window at ground floor that does not detract from the appearance of the house.



Fig 17.4: No. 37, a fine listed building, marks the corner with Ladd's Lane.

No. 37, restored in 1990, is probably the finest building in the terrace and marks the corner with Ladd's Lane (Fig 17.4). This is a more imposing building in roughcast render with large stone tiled roof containing two small-hipped dormers. The painted frontage keeps the paint to the render only and retains the stonework bare and is a good example of the appropriate means of exterior decoration for such a building.

On the opposite corner of Ladd's Lane is No. 36, a listed building with rendered stone frontage and stone tiled roof. The frontage is a later addition when the building was converted to a shop, the largely unaltered side elevation (No. 1 Ladd's Lane) giving an indication of the original appearance. The former shopfront is simple though generally a positive element in the frontage and has been sympathetically retained despite the building no longer being in retail use.

Nos. 34 & 35 are former shops now converted to houses, retaining their shop windows and fascias. The fascia extends across the whole frontage though the door openings, shop windows and first floor windows step up slightly with the rising street. The eaves to No. 34 are distinctly higher than those of No. 35 and the roof contains a large hipped dormer. Nos. 34-36 are set at an angle to the street and this creates an alcove in front of Nos. 34-35 as No. 33 returns closer to the street edge.

The general appearance of the building is not unattractive but the poor quality fenestration, plain shop windows and painted flank wall to No. 33 are all discordant elements to its appearance.

Nos. 33-26 are an eclectic mix of houses and shops, varying between 2, 2.5 and 3 storeys in height, varying heights of each storeys lending to a distinctive variety in roof heights and forms within a limited range. This, together with the three distinctive mansard roofs and the presence of door hoods are a distinctive feature of this part of the street. All buildings in this terrace are listed except Nos. 31a and 26. The brick side elevation to No. 33 suffers from being partially painted and is a rather drab and prominent elevation visible along the street. The lower window is notable as a former doorway. The upper storey windows suffer from the loss of their mullions, although the most discordant element to this otherwise attractive building is the painted stonework. The house would benefit from removal of paint to the window surrounds and side elevation, and a more appropriate design of ground floor windows.

No. 32 has a drab untreated render over a limestone rubble front but is generally an attractive building retaining many original features. A shopfront window is retained and the former shop entrance has a fine panelled door. The building would benefit from removal of the shopfront awning and sign.

No. 31 is an attractive stone fronted house with large hipped dormer in a gambrel roof. The ground floor sash window is a later replacement, the original being the same as the first floor window, its outline being visible in the stonework. The house was originally two bays wide, the left hand bay being demolished to allow access to the rear and later being filled by the current No. 31a. This is a humble building, its appearance benefitting from recent conversion to residential and associated removal of poorly proportioned upper floor window and modern shopfront. The only jarring element is the use of grey slate. No. 30 is an older conversion consisting of an office with 3 residential units, which makes a positive contribution to the street (Fig 17.5).



Fig 17.5: No. 30 (centre) makes a positive contribution to the character of the area. To the right is a former shop converted to residential. Like a number of such buildings in the street it retains its shop window.

No. 29 is a fine three storey listed building, retaining the plate glass shop window at ground floor. As with No. 33, No. 28 projects slightly forward from No. 29, and the pleasant side elevation contains two small windows and is in contrast to that of No. 33. Nos. 27 & 28 is one of the finer buildings on this side of the street. It is a symmetrical pair of cottages with large mansard roof. The houses were restored in 1975, with a further restoration in around 2005, although the subsequent application of paint to the façade is unfortunate (Fig 17.6).



Fig 17.6: Nos. 27-28 is one of the most attractive buildings in the street.

Nos. 26-23 is a terrace of more formally proportioned houses with plain frontages. Nos. 23 and 24 are both listed and has seen improvements in recent years, though No. 23 has an inappropriate suburban front door. No. 24 has suffered from its flank wall being painted white up to the middle of the 2nd floor. No. 25 is set back from the pavement and doesn't sit well with its surroundings. The space in front is poorly defined because there is no boundary treatment. The windows and doors are all replacement UPVC and this combined with the white painted frontage gives the whole building a distinctly suburban appearance out of character with the street. The plain frontages rely heavily on traditional fenestration for their visual interest and this has unfortunately been lost with replacement UPVC windows and door at No. 26.

Between Nos. 23 and 22 (both listed) is a former wide pathway to the listed former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. When no longer required as a chapel it was converted to Spinkes printing works and still bears this name over the arched doorway, though it is no longer used as a printing works. The building has been converted to 3 dwellings and is a pleasant surprise in the gap in the frontage and is the focus of the view from Burlands Road, although the recent raising of the garden fence of No. 22 has somewhat undermined the view. The former pathway now forms part of the yard to No. 22 and original attractive gate piers have been retained and relocated to accommodate a wider timber gate. No. 22 is an attractive narrow building, the remains of a larger house partly demolished when the former Wesleyan Chapel was built.

No. 21 was originally an inn in the 18th Century but has long since been a house. The most interesting feature being the stone tiled roof and dormers. The whole frontage has been covered in roughcast render, including the stone window surrounds and cills. Although the first floor retains plate glass sash windows the dormers and ground floor windows have been replaced with out of character UPVC replacements. There is also no front door onto the street and this, along with the render, gives a sense of remoteness. The building would greatly benefit from enhancement to re-instate original windows, remove the render and re-introduce a front entrance to the street. The adjacent No. 21a, although not listed, suffers in a similar manner to No. 21, its side elevation being painted rubble stone with two truncated brick stacks.

The space between No. 21a and No. 20 is defined by an ancillary building. No. 20, which is set back behind a hedge, is an attractive 17th Century cottage. Formerly two houses, it retains the stone door hood of a former entrance. The appearance of the cottage suffers considerably from unauthorised UPVC replacement double glazed windows in some openings.

Attached to, and wrapping round this house, is the Three Crowns pub (No. 18). This is a fine landmark building at the tapering junction with The Butts. As late as the 1970s this building retained its stone tiled roof. The building has benefitted from recent restoration.

The angled junction of The Butts creates a triangular open space that is fronted by an impressive 3-storey terrace of former weaver's cottages (Fig 17.7).



Fig 17.7: This impressive 3 storey terrace creates a landmark building when approaching the town from Avenue La Fleche.

These are another fine landmark building in the vicinity of the roundabout junction with Avenue La Fleche and are in marked contrast to the clumsy imitation of their form opposite at Queens Square. Unfortunately the dominance of the road and traffic has a detrimental effect on the setting of the building. A number of roads converge in this area, including The Butts, The Causeway, London Road, Queens Square and Avenue La Fleche and the large expanse of open space is almost completely covered with tarmac and crazy paving.

The space directly in front of the terrace is a parking area and parked vehicles disrupt the view of the building, providing it with a cluttered and bleak setting. The unity of the façade is severely compromised by a number of features. Most houses do not retain their original fenestration, there being a variety of styles, both of sashes and unauthorised inappropriate modern replacements, though No. 12 appears to have been restored to a high standard. No. 6 has single plate glass windows and a variety of different slate types disrupt the unity of the roofline.



Fig 17.8: New retirement housing scheme on the old Vauxhall Garage site contributes to the quality of the Causeway.

West Side

Entering the town centre from the south, the Kwik Fit garage presents an unattractive gateway to the town. The road junction and garage marginalises the large listed house at No. 1 London Road giving it a particularly poor setting. However the demolition of the former Vauxhall garage and recent development of St. Andrew's Lodge - a sensitively designed retirement housing scheme - is a welcome improvement to the street. This development is in the form of two storey houses and flats, turning the corner into Burlands Road (Fig 17.8).

Adjacent are two houses at Nos. 15 and 14. Both are stone faced though No. 15 has been painted and has replacement UPVC windows. No. 14 is an attractive and interesting building, retaining three 6/6 pane sash windows, the ground floor one having margin lights.

To the right is an unattractive plate glass shopfront in poor condition with suburban UPVC door. To the left the door and window are surmounted by an arch in the stonework and between the two is a recessed boot scrape.

Nos. 9-13 mark a change in the prevailing form of the street, though are positive contributions to its overall character. These are three detached villas and a pair of semi-detached villas, all dating from the mid-19th Century. They are set back from the pavement, above street level with raised front gardens behind boundary walls (except No. 12). This gives the street a wider feel in comparison to the narrow section immediately after the Market Place, and emphasises the presence and stature of the buildings.



Fig 17.9: *These former Town Council offices have been converted into housing, and have benefitted from a fine restoration of the façade. The similar restoration of frontage and boundary treatment would be very beneficial.*



Fig 17.10: *Towards the north of the street is a concentration of more vernacular building forms that are an important part of the character of the street.*

No. 13 is a three bay detached villa with impressive Tuscan portico. No. 12 was formerly the Town Council offices, now housing, and has benefitted from a fine restoration of the façade. However it has lost its raised front garden area, and the setting and frontage to this building is a significantly discordant element in the group. The garden area has been hard landscaped at street level in a distinctly suburban style with brick pavers, tarmac and birch trees. Steps with suburban style railings lead up to a paved area behind a concrete block retaining wall (Fig 17.9).

No. 11, similar to No. 13, has an impressive, heavily decorated porch and bay to one side. Nos. 9 & 10 have a more restrained frontage, the 6/6 pane sash windows being a distinctive feature as are the ornamental trees in the front garden.

The vegetation continues with the attractive pathway with arbour leading to the modern Causeway Close development. The gap in the frontage allows a clear view of the fine side (front) elevation of No. 8 and its cast iron trellised veranda and entwined creeper. The elevation of Nos. 1-3 Causeway Close successfully encloses this attractive space. Nos. 6 & 7 are also attractive listed buildings in similar style to No. 8, though finished in stucco. The window surrounds would benefit from removal of paint.

Nos. 1-5 marks a return to a more eclectic mix of building forms and varied roofscape (Fig 17.10). No. 5 has been enhanced through removal of its former shopfront and ground floor rendering via residential conversion. No. 4 is an impressive roughcast rendered timber framed building with two gables facing the street.

The former shopfront has been sympathetically retained and to the left are two doorways leading to Towpath Mews - recently built houses to the rear.

No. 3 is a pleasant, humble building similar in form to No. 4 but only two storeys. It has two shop windows and doors though is now a single shop. The plate glass windows and suburban doors are detracting elements, as is the poorly positioned drainpipe which cuts across the building. No. 2 has a rendered two storey frontage with arched side door to alley behind. Again, bland and indistinctive shop windows and fenestration are notable detracting elements in a simple but not unattractive frontage. No. 1 is a distinctive timber framed building, with one side of the elevation jettied out over a small bay window. It is in marked contrast to the more formal buildings either side, and a notable local landmark building at the transition from Market Place to The Causeway.

Vegetation

Although vegetation is not a significant feature of the street, the gardens of the villas at Nos. 9-13 bring a notable and pleasant element of greenery to the street. The side elevation to No. 8 has an attractive veranda with climbing vegetation and the arbour along the pedestrian entrance to Causeway Close is a pleasant reflection of this and addition to the street.

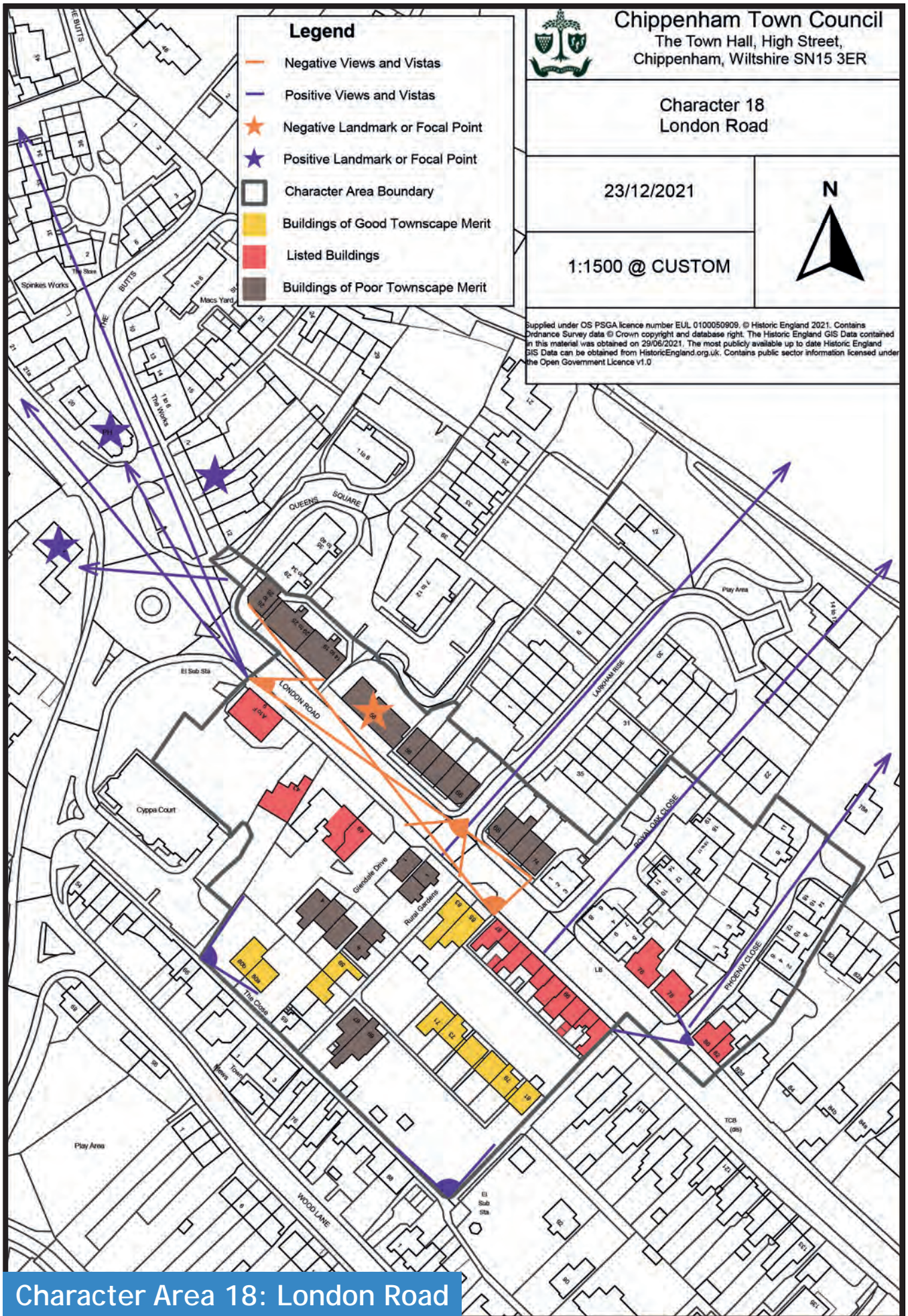
Materials

Larger and grander buildings tend to be of ashlar faced limestone or coursed rubble stone, others more usually free rubble stone, limewashed or, more recently painted. Ashlar is generally not painted. Flank walls are often in brick or random rubble stone. Roofs are generally graded limestone or slate. More recently clay Roman tiles have started to dilute the character of the area, these should be discouraged especially brightly coloured ones. Windows are generally sashes or casements in mullions

Highway Infrastructure

Generally, highway infrastructure is not an intrusive element in the street. Tall highway-style galvanised lighting columns are, however, a notable feature and are out of character and scale with the street at its southern end. Towards the roundabout with Avenue La Fleche lighting columns become a cluttered and intrusive feature.

Pavements are narrow in many places and the surfacing drab and unattractive for a town centre location. There are also no formal pedestrian crossing places along the whole length of the street. The reduced volume of traffic since pedestrianisation of the High Street provides the opportunity for widening the pavements and providing pedestrian crossing points. Two remaining telephone poles outside No. 1 London Road and No. 12 the Causeway and associated wiring are unsightly and particularly out of character with such an urban street scene.



History, Archaeology & Morphology

The character area consists of part of the historic A4 trunk road from Bristol to London, becoming London Road at the point where The Causeway and The Butts meet. The route was a turnpike road and became part of the A4 trunk road in the 1920s. The road has been incrementally developed with buildings along its length. As the town has expanded the buildings and plots have been through a process of renewal, enlargement and expansion. This short length of street is lined with a combination of attractive listed buildings and more modern development of varying quality.

Topography & Views

The land is generally flat, though the road rises gently away from the town centre in a south easterly direction, along the ridge around which the River Avon sweeps through the town. Views are generally limited to those along the linear space of the street. The land is generally slightly higher on the south west side of the road, as it does not sit quite on the crest of the ridge. This prevents views across the river valley towards Rowden, though allows some views across the river valley towards Monkton Park. The pattern of development fronting the road has changed over time, particularly on the north east side, and views across the river valley towards Monkton Park have changed with this. Today the views are defined by the streets that lead off London Road to serve subsequent backland development.

Along London Road

There are no distinctive views or focal points south east along the road and the general impression is of the road leading off into the distance lined by buildings. Looking towards the town centre, there is more to catch the eye. Unfortunately, there is little to provide an attractive entry into the town. The most attractive arrival is from Avenue La Fleche, where, on reaching the top of the ridge, one is presented with the fine listed terrace of Nos. 1-12 London Road and the interesting turret on the corner of Nos. 26-28 Queens Square. Unfortunately, the more diminutive block at Nos. 1-6 blocks all views across the river valley beyond.

On turning into The Causeway, and sharing similar views with those from London Road, one is presented with an amorphous and ill-defined townscape. The slight curve in the road accentuates the unsightly Kwik Fit garage and tall galvanised lighting columns. The scene is one of clutter, lacking any visual interest or quality of built form that shapes the space, in complete contrast to the townscape on the opposite side of The Causeway. The isolated listed building at No. 1 London Road, and the development site and building at No. 9 London Road, together with the large tarmac area occupied by the roundabout, serve to add a degree of neglect and bleakness to this southern gateway to the town centre.

Diverging from the Causeway at the roundabout is The Butts. Between the two roads is the attractive Three Crowns pub, a local landmark. The view along The Butts is notable for the view of the steeples of St. Andrews Church and St. Paul's Church on Malmesbury Road in close juxtaposition. The variety of roof forms and heights provides an attractive foreground to this view. Untidy rear elevations of buildings, overhead wires and tall standard galvanised lighting columns are all negative elements in this view.

Off London Road

In addition to the truncated view along Queen's Square there are views across the river valley to Monkton Park at Larkham Rise and Phoenix Close. The view along Larkham Rise offers a soulless vista of a wide road, tarmac and parked cars in the foreground. In the middle distance is Monkton Park housing estate and vegetation of the river valley. Tree planting along Larkham Rise and in front of Monkton Park houses across the river could improve this view dramatically. The longer distance views are the most attractive consisting of the mature trees along the alignment of the former Calne branch railway and the hills above Tytherton beyond.

Views of the river valley down Royal Oak Close and Phoenix Close are not dissimilar to that of Larkham Rise but more restricted. In the view down Royal Oak Close houses beyond the site boundary in Larkham Rise help enclose the space and mature trees within the Close soften these. The view down Phoenix Close is more enticing, because of the Close's narrowness, its bend, and staggered houses on the right stepping down the gradient. Also in the foreground are some tall poplar trees.

General Character

The area is almost entirely residential, though the width of the road and scale of most of the buildings ensures it retains the character of a main road. The nursery at Nos. 47-49 is the only non-residential use.

London Road remains a shorter and often quicker route into the town centre than the busy and circuitous Pewsham Way - the sign posted route into the town centre. Extensive traffic calming measures have been installed along the length of London Road to discourage through traffic, though it is envisaged that, despite this, and as Pewsham Way becomes busier, a certain amount of traffic will continue to use the road as a route to the town centre. The route is also the historic turnpike route and A4 trunk road to London and the dimensions of the road and scale and character of the buildings lining it reflect this, as does its strong sense of being a linear space and a road that leads the traveller onward. This is an important element of its character, and development and traffic management measures that dilute this character would be detrimental to the historic character of the street.

Buildings, Spaces & Townscape

North east side

Leading off the roundabout is Queen's Square, a modern development of 40 flats. The corner block is marked by a distinctive terrace and is suitably scaled for the street and space, being similar to the adjacent listed terrace at Nos. 2-12 London Road. Whilst the simplicity and proportions of the terrace at Nos. 2-12 gives it an elegant appearance. The bold and chunky architectural elements, lack of chimneys, uniformity of scale and lack of entrances onto the street gives it a bland and soulless character in stark contrast to its neighbour.

Adjacent is No. 56, a single storey building containing two dwellings (Fig 18.1). The scale of the building is out of character with the rest of the street. Its combination of white render, bright brickwork, plain UPVC windows and doors, and galvanised gates draw undue attention to a building that is unattractive, out of character and detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area.



Fig 18.1: This diminutive building is out of scale with surrounding housing and has a poor quality bland frontage. Redevelopment of this site could bring significant townscape enhancements.

Nos. 58-74, flanking the entrance to Larkham Rise are of little architectural note and are somewhat suburban in scale and character for the location. Being only two storeys, lacking chimneys and pitched roofed door hoods are some of the features that contribute to this. However, the development works considerably better than Queen's Square. The appearance is simpler, scale more human, doors open onto the street with small garden and paved spaces, and the end houses with entrances on the corners add an element of interest. The buildings relate better to the street rather than turning their back on it.

The modern housing development at Royal Oak Close is sited on the former car park and garden of the former Royal Oak public house (Fig 18.2). The buildings are similar in scale to the pub and have distinctive mansard roofs. These are more successful than the Queen's Square buildings and from a distance, are generally positive elements in the townscape. However, like Queen's Square they relate poorly to the street frontage, having no entrances onto the street. The gravel space behind the plain railings is bland and dominated by meter boxes. Flat roofed dormers, large stained bargeboards and crude detailing around the windows are all elements that give the buildings a sterile appearance and lack of interest at closer inspection.



Fig 18.2: Nos. 1-9 Royal Oak Close located adjacent to the listed former Royal Oak pub, though is somewhat chunky in appearance. Unfortunately lack of attention to detail make these rather bland buildings.



Fig 18.3: This listed building has a well-executed extension but the character of the building is severely compromised by UPVC replacement windows and doors.

Beyond this, up to the edge of the Conservation Area is a group of three listed buildings. The former Royal Oak (No. 76) is an attractive building, which has been converted to residential. Adjacent is No. 78, an elegant town house. Beyond is Phoenix Close, a modern housing development on the site of the former Phoenix works, which includes three imposing three-storey blocks of flats stepping down the gradient of the slope.

Nos. 80-82 is a short terrace of two dwellings with extension to one side (Fig 18.3). The extension replaces an earlier property and is generally in keeping with the character of the adjacent building. However, from the pavement the reconstituted window surrounds and modern pointing finish are evident. The generally attractive rubble stone terrace suffers greatly from inappropriate replacement doors and windows, and in the case of No. 82, dark wood stained timber effect plastic that is particularly detrimental to its character and appearance.



Fig 18.4: The listed No. 9 London Road, with recent side extension (left).

South west side

A development site, which will accommodate a terrace of three storey dwellings fronting on to the roundabout is currently under construction. Adjacent is the listed No. 9, restored and converted to residential, and still retaining a simple and elegant façade with first floor balcony windows (Fig 18.4). A later bay has been added at ground floor. A recently built side extension is generally sympathetic, although the return façade is in render rather than stone and the front door is not recessed.



Fig 18.5: Nos. 87-105, a fine terrace of listed cottages, is a local landmark in this part of the street.

Set well back from the street is the listed No. 45, its gated stone and railing frontage and varied roof form both positive and attractive elements in the street scene, although the removal of vegetation and creation of a new retaining wall, vehicular access and car parking area adjacent, will change the setting of the building dramatically. Adjacent is another listed building at Nos. 47-49, an attractive and well-proportioned town house. It accommodates a nursery and has a single storey side extension in character with and suitably scaled to the main house.

Beyond this the wide parking area and entrance to Glendale Drive fragment the built frontage. This creates a large area of poorly defined bland tarmac and draws undue attention to the frontage of Nos. 2-4. On the opposite side of the entrance No.1 Glendale Drive and No. 1 Rural Gardens, sit in awkward and close juxtaposition to one another, and being of brick, with gaps either side, they are particularly noticeable in the street frontage. Both are plain modern buildings of no architectural note, though No. 1 Glendale Drive manages to create some visual interest with sash windows and door hood.

On the opposite side of the path giving access to the remainder of the Rural Gardens courtyard is an attractive semi-detached pair of houses dating from the late 19th Century. The pair are faced with coursed rubble stone with sawn dressings and remain a positive element in the townscape despite the loss of original windows and railings.

Nos. 87-105 is an impressive three-storey listed terrace of townhouses (Fig 18.5). Their shallow depth, tall height and painted brick frontage in varied colours make them a distinctive and important element in the street. Some inappropriate and unauthorised replacement windows undermine the overall uniformity of the character of the terrace.

Vegetation

The street is a particularly urban space and generally devoid of any significant vegetation. The impact of vegetation is generally limited to longer distance views across the river valley.

Materials

The predominant building materials are Bath stone or limestone. Sawn stone is generally bare, rubble stone is either rendered or limewashed. Roof materials are either plain clay tiles, Roman clay tiles or slate. Modern buildings tend to be in imitations of these natural materials. Their regularity, larger mortar joints and uniformity of colour gives them a sense of starkness. This is particularly noticeable on the north east side of the street.

Highway Infrastructure



Street lighting is primarily by means of tall, two-tone green columns which are more attractive than the bare galvanised finish. Their scale is also appropriate to that of the street in general and they help to emphasise the linear character of the space. However, the columns begin to become visually intrusive around the roundabout. Whilst there is not a large amount of highway signs in the area, those that exist are often an untidy agglomeration of more than one sign that could be better sited on existing lighting columns. Overhead wires are also a dominant element on parts of the street.



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