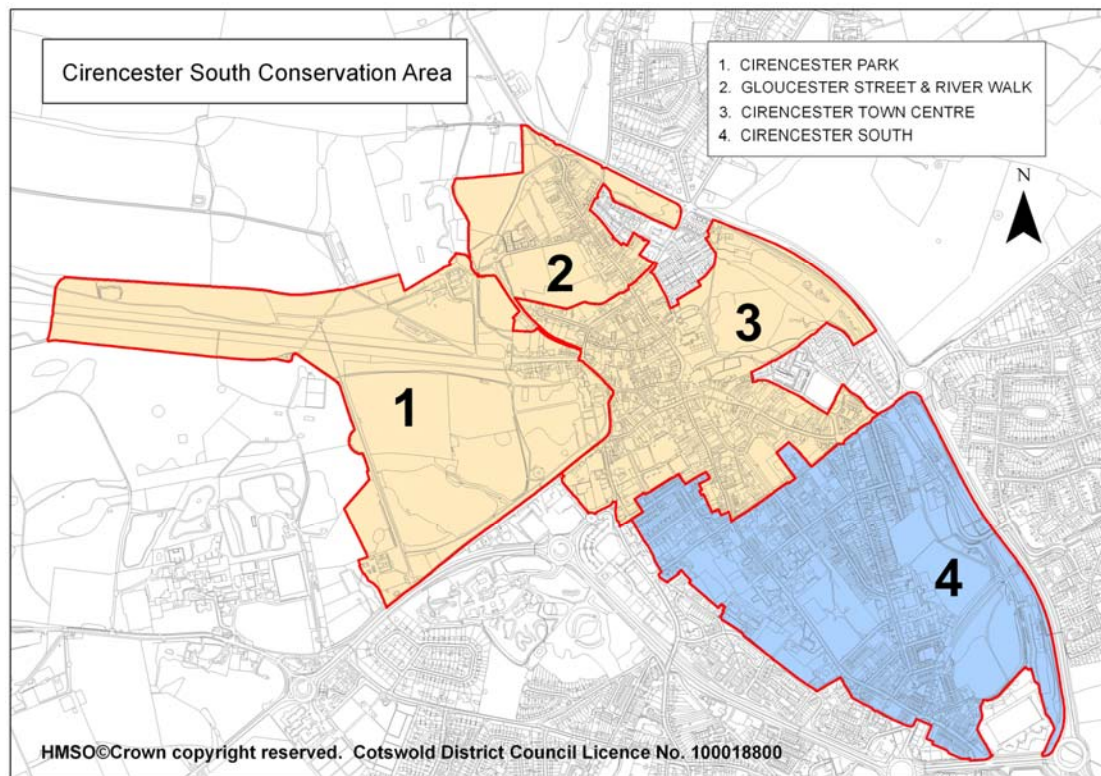


3.0 CIRENCESTER SOUTH CONSERVATION AREA

3.1 Location & Setting

The Cirencester South Conservation Area is the most southerly of the four Conservation Areas in the town. Its northern boundary abuts the Cirencester Town Centre Conservation Area [CA3].

The Conservation Area lies on fairly flat land which lowers slightly at its most southerly point. It also contains two raised and curved banks, one forming the City Bank, the remains of the Roman wall along the south eastern side, and the other being the former railway line cutting across open land from the A419 Swindon Road terminating at the east end of Prospect Place. The location of these two tree-covered banks results in the creation of a sheltered shallow bowl for the allotments and recreation ground in the south eastern portion of the conservation area.



Map I

3.2 Boundaries of the Cirencester South Conservation Area

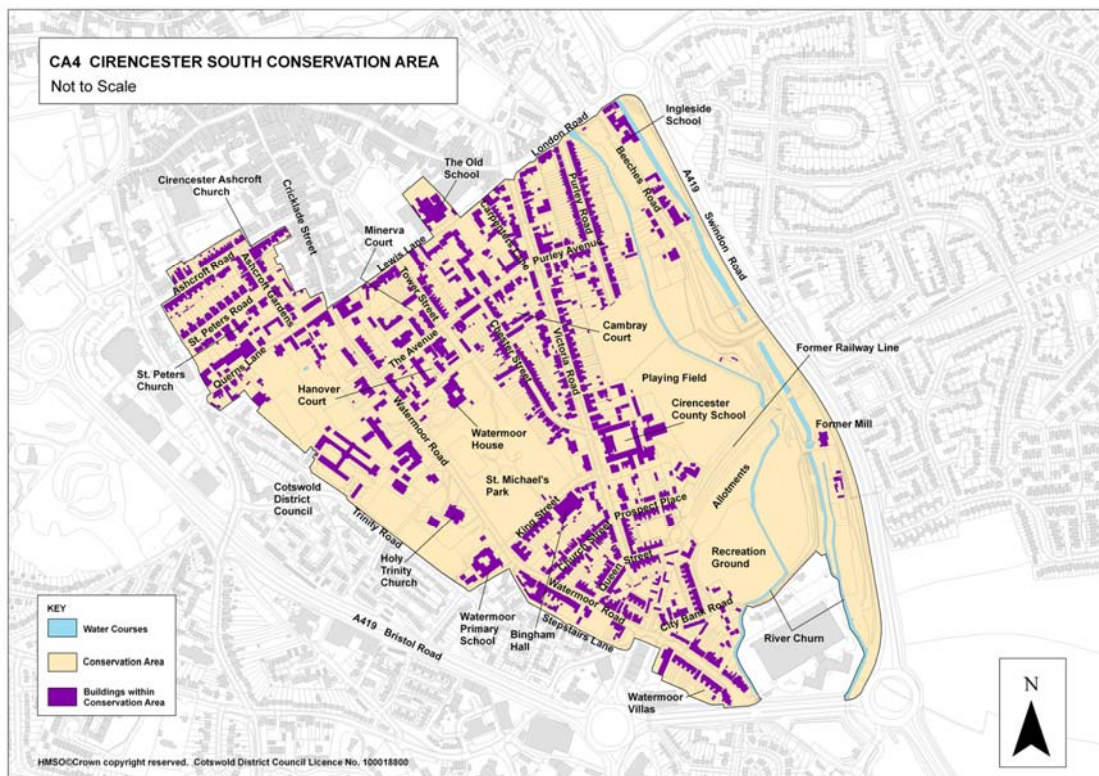
The Cirencester South Conservation Area includes the majority of the town within the inner ring road below a line marked by Lewis Lane and Querns Lane, as well as nineteenth-century development northwest of Querns Lane.

The boundary of the Cirencester South Conservation Area starts at the southwest corner of the London Road roundabout where it follows the verge of the A429 Swindon Road south with its protective bank of trees, taking in the route of the River Churn, until it reaches the A419 Bristol Road. It then follows

the eastern boundary of Riverside House before meeting up with the City Bank walk for a short section before returning back to the western boundary of Riverside House, where it meets the truncated end of Watermoor Road.

The boundary follows the rear of the brick terraced housing to the west of Watermoor Road, from where it crosses the entrance of the small Mercian Close industrial estate before taking in Stepstairs Lane where it moves west along the southern edge of the lane, south of Watermoor Primary School.

Trinity Road forms the boundary where the Conservation Area takes in the Watermoor Primary School, and the offices of Cotswold District Council and the lock-up within its grounds, before following the line of rear boundaries of houses on Querns Road. Taking in properties at the west end of Querns Lane, the Conservation Area boundary then follows the pedestrian route towards St Peter's Road and beyond to Ashcroft Road where it meets the southwest corner of CA3: Cirencester Town Centre Conservation Area. From here the boundary follows the CA3 southern boundary and takes in the rear gardens of terraced housing on the north side of Ashcroft Road, before diverting to take in brick properties on the south side as far as the junction with Cricklade Street. Cutting around the back of Homeberry House and shops to the south if it, the line takes an easterly route along Lewis Lane, taking in the Old School before finishing at its starting point at London Road.



Map J

3.3 Historical Development of the Cirencester South Conservation Area

The Cirencester South Conservation Area represents the expansion of the town southwards, from the eighteenth century onwards, to fill almost the entire area defined by the walls and ramparts of Roman Corinium. From then until the early-nineteenth century, the area south of a line marked by Lewis Lane and Querns Lane, [the main east-west route of the Roman town] consisted of low-lying and boggy common land and waste ground. This lack of development shows clearly on the section of Hall's 1795 Map below [Map K].

Hall's Map [Map K below] shows the former Wharf of the Thames & Severn Canal [shaded green and lying just outside the Conservation Area boundary]; its wharf house, just to the north-east, was demolished in the 1970s to make way for the ring road. Watermoor Manor and Ashcroft House, together with Bathurst almshouses, can be seen at the junction where Cricklade Street meets Watermoor Road, Lewis Lane and Querns Lane. Apart from these, and an unidentified house located roughly where the Union Workhouse was to be built, the area appears devoid of development.



Map K [1795]

There were a handful of buildings in existence nevertheless; the late-seventeenth century Rose Cottages at City Bank are the remains of Langley Mill [77]. Old Mill House, off Beeches Road on the edge of the River Churn, formed part of another mill, sometimes referred to as New Mills, which was originally built for the last Abbot of Cirencester in the sixteenth century. It continued to be used as a cloth mill until the early-nineteenth century and then as flock mills. Demolished in 1912, the house, which was substantially altered in the twentieth century, is now all that remains of the mills [78].

The sale of the common land at Watermoor in 1824, to provide the money for the clearance of medieval streets and houses in Market Place in 1830, combined with the town's growing population, provided the catalyst for major development of the area. It was further fuelled by concerns about the crowded and unsanitary conditions in the courts and alleys of the old town.



First to be built was Watermoor House in c.1825-27 for Joseph Randolph Mullings, an eminent solicitor who became a Member of Parliament for Cirencester from 1848 to 1859. Up until the end of the nineteenth century, the Watermoor House estate formed a large part of the current Conservation Area, roughly the area defined by St Michael's Park today. Under the requirements of the Poor Law Act, the Union Workhouse, to the southwest of Watermoor House, was constructed in 1837, with the imposing Holy Trinity Church following in 1851; together these three buildings formed the most prominent built structures in the area.

Watermoor House can be seen on John Wood's Plan of Cirencester [Map L] of 1835. Ashcroft House, with its semi-circular driveway, can also be clearly made out, together with No 2 Watermoor Road - on the corner of Querns Lane and Lewis Lane - reputedly the site of the former manor house of Chesterton, substantial parts of which survive.



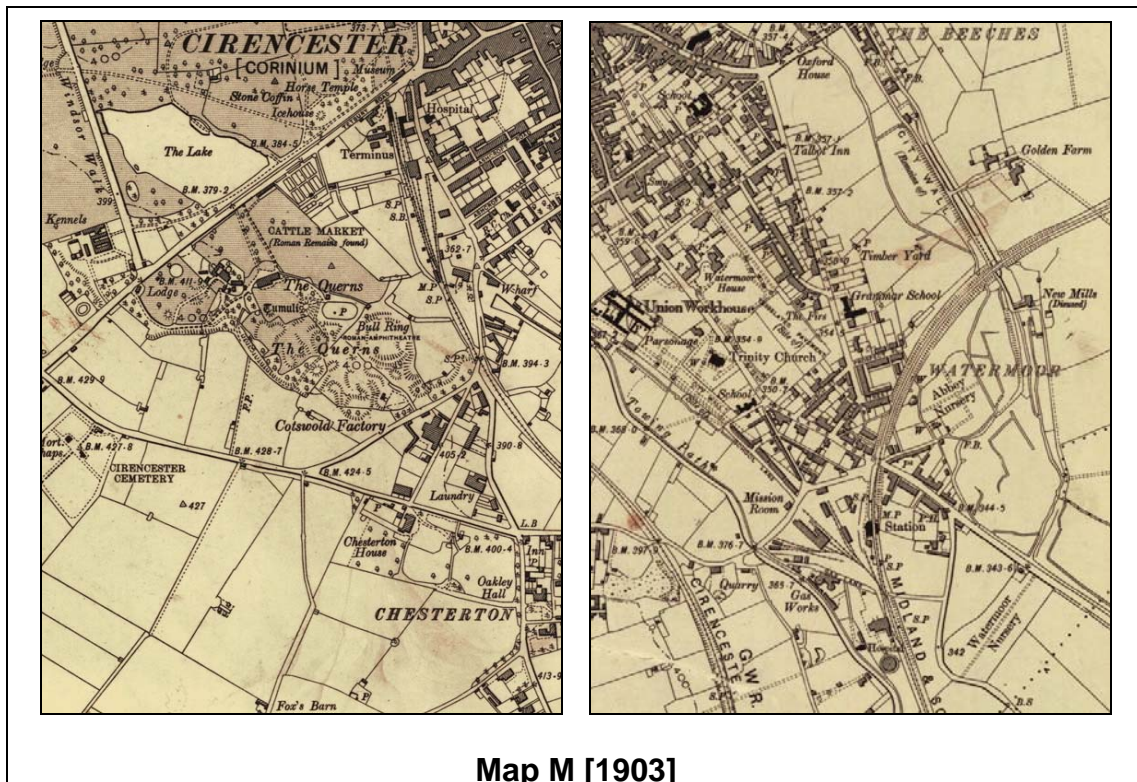
Map L [1835]

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, several new roads were laid out in the Watermoor Area; Tower Street in 1853, and Victoria Road, built as New Road, was laid out in 1859; it was renamed in 1887 to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The Avenue, originally named Corin Street was also constructed in 1859, followed by Chester Street in 1861.

Although largely residential, Watermoor also came to house a large foundry and a wide variety of small businesses - cabinet makers, agricultural engineers, tin and copper smiths, flour millers, stone masons, plasterers and electrical engineers – which served the local population, and increasingly, the town, as the “dirtier” trades moved to the outskirts.

In 1883, the Midland and South Western Junction Railway opened; it stood on the main line between Andover Junction and Andoversford and was used by the Company as its Head Office between 1883 and 1923. The railway encouraged additional housing, partly for employees of the railway, as well as facilitating the transportation of new building materials to the area. Map M shows clearly the route of the line which today survives in part as an attractive high-level pedestrian route, linking Queen Street with Beeches Road, its western end having provided infill plots occupied now by the somewhat uncompromising Southgate Mews [81].

Much of the land being developed at this time was donated by the Bathurst and Chester-Master families, enabling a range of new development such as schools to open, including the Grammar School in Victoria Road, which opened in 1881. Cirencester's population of about 5,500 at the Queen Victoria's accession, grew to just over 8,000 by the end of the century, by which time, a variety of housing had been erected in this area. Ranging from substantial town villas to semi-detached houses it was nevertheless dominated, in large part, by numerous terraces, particularly at the southern end and towards City Bank.



The Cirencester Improvement Dwelling Company was founded in 1880 and developed numerous properties, the first of which was Victoria Terrace,

comprising ten cottages and a shop. This was followed by similar housing in Queen Street. In 1882 the Cirencester Water Works Company was founded on the site of Bowly's Brewery in Lewis Lane with a service reservoir in Bathurst Park. This and other public services ensured that the Watermoor suburb was to become an affordable yet attractive place to live.

But the area did not just serve the working classes. In the Avenue and St Peter's Road, substantial villas and semi-detached properties were constructed, enabling local professionals to demonstrate their wealth and status within the community.

1908 saw the opening of the Bingham Hall and the adjacent residential terrace [79] in the newly laid out King Street, south of Watermoor House. Playing fields at City Bank and Cirencester Bowls Club were also completed in the early part of the century; soon after Earl Bathurst built Apsley Terrace around the corner in Watermoor Road in similar style [80].



79



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81



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The north-eastern section of Victoria Road was the last section to be developed; the 1903 map above shows it still largely undeveloped; similarly, the Purley Road area [84], comprising a series of modest terraces and semi-detached dwellings set in a regular grid pattern, was a relatively major undertaking in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Of similar date, but in contrasting architectural style, are Bowly's Cottages at the north end of Watermoor Road [83], dated 1924.

The area has seen many changes in the twentieth century, some of which have done little to enhance the area. Ashcroft House disappeared in the 1960s and was replaced by modern flats and houses. Cambray Court, between Victoria Road and Chester Street, and perhaps to a lesser extent Hanover Court off The Avenue fail to take account of their context, and as a consequence, have a negative impact on it. Cirencester County School in Victoria Road is just one of several schools set up in the area in the nineteenth century; they have since developed into some of the largest building complexes within Cirencester's urban form.



83



84

Other changes have made a neutral, or in some cases, a positive impact. The Beeches, once the home of the Sewell family, was converted into the Phoenix Community Centre and now provides a range of community facilities. More recently, St Michael's Park, adjoining Watermoor House, has provided an additional public open space and valued recreational facilities. The once-redundant Union Workhouse now houses the offices of the District Council, made possible by modern extensions.

But perhaps the greatest impact on the character of the area in recent years has been the construction of the ringroad [Map F]. First mooted in 1963, following a report commissioned by the Urban District Council to examine the town's growing traffic problems, the idea gained momentum and in 1966 a partial by-pass on the eastern side of the town was built. Completed some ten years later, it effectively truncated the southern half of Watermoor Road from its context, and today the southern tip of that road offers significant opportunities for enhancement.

The area covered by the Conservation Area is now neatly contained on the east side by the ringroad and by modern housing, light industry and offices along its western side.