

4.0 CIRENCESTER SOUTH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL SUMMARY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following summary should not be read in isolation but in the context of the Cirencester South Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

4.2 Summary of Special Interest of the Conservation Area

This Character Appraisal concludes that the special interest of the area derives from the following key characteristics:

Context:

1. Comprising a large portion of the area within the Cirencester ringroad south of Lewis Lane and Querns Lane, and including a small section northwest of Querns Lane, the Conservation Area contains development of mostly nineteenth and twentieth century origin on mostly flat land;

Uses:

2. Predominantly residential in character, the area nevertheless contains a harmonious mix of uses including several schools, public houses, a few shops and offices and an occasional light industrial activity, alongside several formal and informal recreational spaces;

Form and Spatial Character:

3. Predominantly two- and three-storey development in the form of terraces and semi-detached properties, set parallel with the road and often divided from it by small gardens bordered by walls and /or railings, and in contrast with a handful of significant detached buildings, some set with generous grounds including Holy Trinity Church and Watermoor House;
4. Laid out in an informal grid pattern, with Watermoor Road and Victoria Road forming the principle vehicular routes within a mostly flat landscape, it also contains no less than six Important Green Open Spaces of various forms populated by large numbers of trees and providing a range of formal and informal recreational facilities including pedestrian and cycle routes;
5. There is good permeability throughout the Conservation Area with public and semi-public pathways linking the main vehicular routes with informal recreation areas;
6. The most important view of the church beyond its immediate environs is the view north from the southern end of South Way, originating in CA4 at St Michael's Park;
7. Holy Trinity Church forms the most important focal point within the Conservation Area;
8. Other important focal points include Watermoor House from the southern end of St Michael's Park and the remaining two chimneys of the former Malt House in Cricklade Street;

9. There are numerous other views along streets, across recreation spaces and along pedestrian routes [See Map N] which are important to the character of the Conservation Area;

Architectural Character:

10. An architecturally and historically interesting area, containing a very high proportion of nineteenth and twentieth century Positive Buildings but a relatively small number of Listed Buildings [30 entries in total];
 - a. Includes two buildings listed as being “particularly important”, namely 1 Querns Lane / Watermoor Road, and Holy Trinity Church, both listed Grade II*;
and
 - b. Includes twenty-eight Grade II Listed Buildings;
11. A large measure of consistency in building height, roofline, building proportion and building line as a result of a significant proportion of terraced and semi-detached properties designed as single entities;

Materials:

12. Memorable for the greater variety of building materials than elsewhere in the historic parts of Cirencester, featuring substantial amounts of brick alongside the dominant use of limestone, and often in combination for decorative and colourful impact;
13. Also significantly greater use of Welsh slate for roofs but also clay tile, as well as limestone slate roofs on older properties and /or Revival styles;
14. Timber boarded panels, pebbledash - most notably to Purley Road - and decorative brick and terracotta panels also feature strongly to building elevations;
15. Engineering bricks, Staffordshire blue bricks and red brick pavements with terracotta edging used for domestic pathways;
16. Rock-faced limestone for building frontages, flank walls and garden walls and in combination with ashlar and/or brick;
17. Numerous chimney stacks providing vertical emphasis and visual punctuation;
18. Use of brick for chimney stacks, high garden boundary walls, the flank and rear walls of some stone buildings;
19. Use of decorative cast and wrought iron for ornamental gates, railings, balconies, porches and rainwater goods etc;

Distinctive Features:

20. The distinctive and memorable identity of the Conservation Area is enhanced by the presence of:
 - a. Timber sash windows, often with margined lights, in decorative stone or contrasting brick surrounds, often with keystones and /or sills supported on simple scrolled corbels;
 - b. A wide variety of bay windows, some canted, with parapet or half-hipped slate roofs, often in pairs, and /or spanning two storeys;
 - c. Paired doorways with simple or decorative fanlights over timber panelled doors, set within either square-headed or arched-headed openings, often incorporating decorative chamfered edges;
 - d. Good quality traditional timber shopfronts;

- e. Architectural detail, including inscribed stone date stones, enamel road signs, symbolic ornamentation, and classical elements including pedimented doorcases with fanlights and Georgian-glazed windows;
- f. Boundary walls, of varying heights, mostly of limestone rubble to roadside elevations, often in combination with stone pillars and gated features, and occasional red brick boundary walls between properties;

Public Realm:

- 21. Mostly neutral floorscape and lighting;
- 22. Glimpses into private gardens at the rear of enclosed blocks, surrounded by high, mostly limestone walls;
- 23. Occasional benches of robust modern design, most notably in St Michael's Park;

Trees & Biodiversity:

- 24. The importance of trees:
 - a. The large number and variety of native and some exotic species within the six Important Open Spaces marked on Map R, and most densely planted along the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area, shield nearby housing and recreation areas from the fast-moving traffic along the adjacent ringroad;
 - b. Trees forming a green backdrop to residential development adding to the sense of enclosure and compartmentalising gardens and recreation areas;
 - c. Occasional individual specimen trees providing a focal point within the built form;
 - d. Trees within small private gardens and overhanging limestone boundary walls, and/or visible through gaps in the street scene, and softening the built form whilst denoting areas of informal recreation;
 - e. Trees helping diminish large areas of car parking and/or recycling facilities;
 - f. Banks of large mature trees lining the east end of St Michael's Park, and other mature groups providing the setting for Watermoor House;
 - g. Trees screening the children's play area within St Michael's Park, and/or providing areas of seclusion and shade throughout the area;
- 25. A range of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, most notably within the six Important Open Spaces, some of which form part of the River Churn Wildlife Site.

4.3 Summary of the Issues facing the Conservation Area

The issues affecting the Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

Spaces, Routes & Views:

1. Spaces with inadequate enclosure as a result of demolition or redevelopment, including:
 - a. The extreme southern end of Watermoor Road where the ringroad crudely truncates it;
 - b. The junction marked by Watermoor Way, Watermoor Road, Stepstairs Lane, Southgate Mews and City Bank Road which is characterised by a lack of containment, poor public realm and the open grounds and unattractive elevations of large commercial sheds; this space nevertheless has the potential to be an attractive gateway at the southern half of the town and provide a valuable amenity space for nearby residents;
 - c. The area north of the northern entrance to St Michaels Park, where rows of domestic garages and parking dominate, and where the foundations of the basilica of Roman Corinium are poorly marked out.
2. Loss of boundary features, often to facilitate provision of off-street car parking, particularly to Victoria Road;
3. Views within the town, most notably of the landmarks and focal points, at risk through the development of gap sites;
4. Potential to maximise views by the removal of visual clutter including traffic-related signage and /or the cutting back of vegetation, for example along the raised railway line to allow improved views of the Parish Church tower and northern part of the town;

Negative Buildings:

5. Negative buildings, most notably poorly-proportioned late twentieth-century commercial buildings with horizontal emphasis, asymmetric fenestration, inadequate modelling, and inappropriate positioning within plots which disrupt otherwise regular building lines, and offering significant opportunities for enhancement;
6. Temporary, often flat-roofed or ancillary accommodation;
7. Use of reconstituted stone and other alien artificial materials for building elevations, extensions and boundary walls;

Vitality & Viability:

8. Inadequate and /or poorly maintained interpretation of the area's extensive archaeology, architecture & history, most notably to the north of St Michael's Park ;
9. Lack of general maintenance to individual buildings, both commercial and domestic, with gutters filled with vegetation, and rainwater goods in poor condition;

Public Realm:

10. Some poorly maintained floorscape of non-contextual artificial materials and /or large areas of damaged tarmac;

11. Visual clutter caused by a jumble of uncoordinated street furniture and poorly-designed traffic-related signage and road markings;

Traffic Management:

12. Traffic and car parking dominating the street scene and putting pedestrian and cyclist safety at risk;

Commercial Signage:

13. Poorly-designed shopfronts and commercial signage;

Local Distinctiveness:

14. Opportunities for public art;
15. Opportunities for added local distinctiveness in design of all elements of the built environment including elements of the public realm;
16. Loss of and replacement of architectural detail with inappropriate designs and materials, including artificial stone products that weather unsympathetically;
17. Loss of lime render / limewash to historic buildings;

Heritage Protection:

18. Several unlisted structures which might qualify for listed status;
19. Opportunities for well-designed interpretation of the area's unique archaeological, architectural and historic past;

Trees:

20. Many of the trees within the Cirencester South Conservation Area are old and may be nearing the end of their healthy lives.