

## **4.0 THE GLOUCESTER STREET & RIVER WALK CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following summary should not be read in isolation but in the context of the Gloucester Street & River Walk Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

### **4.2 Summary of Special Interest of the Conservation Area**

This Character Appraisal of the Gloucester Street & River Walk Conservation Area concludes that the special interest of the area derives from the following key characteristics:

#### **Context:**

1. A planned suburb at the north end of the town which has evolved since the medieval period;

#### **Uses:**

2. Predominantly residential, Gloucester Street retains several public houses and incorporates a few minor office uses and Powell's School which together provide activity and interest;
3. The River Walk, which surrounds Gloucester Street on three sides, provides a significant informal recreation facility;

#### **Form and Spatial Character:**

4. A long, narrow, gently winding and intimately-scaled urban space defined by predominantly two- and three-storey almost continuous historic building frontages, built off the back edge of the pavement on both sides, and with the occasional narrow front or side garden;
5. The contrast formed by the combination of the various spaces within the proposed Conservation Area, and in particular the three contrasting elements of the River Walk;
6. The importance of views in and out of the proposed Conservation Area and in particular the role of the Parish Church in providing a principal focal point and a major landmark viewed from Gloucester Street and to a lesser extent, Barton Lane;
7. Focal points provided by key historic listed buildings such as the nave of St John's Hospital, Powell's School and the Open Air Swimming Pool with its unexpected "Castle" backdrop;

#### **Architectural Character:**

8. Retains many good examples of the Cotswold vernacular style, mostly from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;
9. The very large proportion of buildings and structures within the Conservation Area which are listed as being of special architectural and historic interest and which contribute significantly to its character;
10. Several good examples of the Cotswold Arts and Crafts style and a number Buildings of Townscape Merit which enhance the special architectural and historic character of the proposed Conservation Area;

**Materials:**

11. Unity created by the dominant use of limestone for frontages, flank walls and garden walls and for the numerous chimney stacks, providing interest and punctuation to the gently varying heights and pitches of the roofline;
12. The use of brick, especially for tall rear chimney stacks, garden walls and occasionally, for rear and side elevations;
13. The use of traditional timber for doors and windows and the limited use of alien modern materials such as uPVC;

**Distinctive Details:**

14. Distinctive, small-scale features including several date stones, traditional door furniture, enamel street signs, hanging signs and elements of iron, including railings and gates, which combine to create added visual appeal and local distinctiveness;

**Public Realm:**

15. The use of black tarmac for most public highways and pathways provides a neutral context for the historic built form;
16. Limestone boundary walls, of varying heights, often in combination with iron railings, especially important in providing a sense of enclosure to public footpaths and private gardens;

**Trees & Biodiversity Value:**

17. Planting in the form of substantial belts of mature trees of varied species in the four Important Open Spaces within the River Walk character area contrasting with a small number of individual specimen trees in Gloucester Street.

### **4.3 Summary of the Issues facing the Conservation Area**

Such is the very high quality of the built form and landscape of the Gloucester Street & River Walk Conservation Area that most of the issues affecting it are small scale and/or relate to the public realm. The issues affecting the Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

**Public Realm:**

1. The poor quality floorscape in the proposed Gloucester Street & River Walk Conservation Area, and in Gloucester Street in particular, characterised by patchy tarmacadam and utilitarian “dog biscuit” paving;
2. The proliferation of traffic signs particularly at the southern end of Gloucester Street, creating unnecessary visual clutter;
3. Telegraph poles with overhead wires add an intrusive and distracting element to the street scene and are especially noticeable in Gooseacre Lane;

**Traffic Management:**

4. The dominance of parked vehicles in Gloucester Street which detracts from the visual appeal of the street as well as creating pedestrian safety issues, particularly at the Gloucester Street Bridge;

**Loss of Visual Amenity / Inappropriate Development:**

5. A few unattractive buildings such as the fuel garage and canopy at the north end of Gloucester Street and the 1970s housing and associated garages off Trafalgar Road, together with the uninviting corridor link to Gloucester Street, and features such as the electricity substation off Barton Lane, which detract from the otherwise high architectural quality and appealing series of spaces within the proposed Conservation Area;
6. The unfortunate loss of architectural detailing resulting especially from replacement windows and doors of inappropriate design;
7. The creation of private car parking spaces in place of gardens and involving the loss of boundary walls;

**Loss of Rendered and Limewashed Surfaces:**

8. Loss of rendered finishes particularly to a number of buildings in Gloucester Street;
9. Painting of timber lintels and the occasional elevation with shiny oil-based or plasticized paints causing visual harm and damage to historic fabric;

**Lack of Maintenance:**

10. A few buildings are showing signs of a lack of maintenance with gutters filled with vegetation and rainwater goods in poor condition;
11. Several areas of boundary wall, particularly along River Walk are showing serious signs of damage and or general deterioration;

**Landscape and Trees:**

12. Many of the trees within the Gloucester Street & River Walk Conservation Area are old and may be nearing the end of their healthy lives;

**Unlisted Buildings:**

13. Some unlisted structures which might qualify for listed status including several stone and iron bridges along the River Walk.