

- DESIGN GUIDANCE: PUBLIC REALM -



The character of an area is not simply reliant on the appearance of the buildings within it. The relationship between buildings and spaces, the level of enclosure or openness, and the small details such as boundary walls or railings, ground surfaces and levels of greenery or hard landscaping all act together to create character. Even the best-preserved building can be made to appear alien in its setting if everything around it is stripped away. Conversely, new development (even on quite a large scale) can be anchored into its environment by paying close attention to the treatment of the land around it, allowing it to relate to the buildings and spaces which are its neighbours.

DESIGN GUIDANCE: PUBLIC REALM

Principles of good practice

1. All designs should be rooted in a clear understanding of local traditions. Observe the sorts of materials that historically were used locally, how they were set/laid/shaped and the contexts and settings where they were (or were not) used. Use this knowledge as a basis for working up a design.
2. Identify surviving features and consider these as assets. The first principle should be to preserve and integrate existing traditional boundary features, ground surfaces and trees wherever possible. These often have inherent value (the craftsmanship, quality and patina of the materials used, for example) and can provide a sense of instant maturity and timelessness, as well as being locally distinctive.
3. Select designs and materials which are appropriate to function and context. What sits happily in an urban or industrial space, may look obtrusive and out of place in a rural, naturalistic setting. Not paying enough attention to this principle results in a gradual suburbanisation and homogenisation of the conservation area, which is at odds with its variety of Character Parts.
4. Quality: Invest in quality solutions which will endure and offer best value for money. If resources are inadequate, do less to a better and higher standard.
5. Avoid the use of standard catalogue products, unless very carefully selected to reflect local traditions: these can dramatically diminish local distinctiveness, even if high quality... our distinctive spaces will end up looking like anywhere else in Britain.

PUBLIC REALM

- 8.1 Public realm (also known as public domain) consists essentially of the parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) that are available, without charge, for everyone to use or see. This may include, for example: streets, footpaths, the canal, churchyards, highways, car parks - even, in some situations, front gardens and driveways.

Façade and interface

The relationship of the building to the street:

- The rhythm, pattern and harmony of its openings relative to its enclosure
- The nature of the setback, boundary treatment and its frontage condition at street level
- The architectural expression of its entrances, corners, roofscape and projections

Details and materials

The appearance of the building in relation to:

- The art, craftsmanship, building techniques and detail of the various building components true to local context
- The texture, colour, pattern, durability and treatment of its materials
- Materials sourced from local and/or sustainable sources, including recycled materials where possible
- The lighting, signage and treatment of shopfronts, entrances and building security

Streetscape and landscape

The design of routes and spaces, their microclimate, ecology and biodiversity to include:

- Paving, planting and street furniture
- The integration of public art, lighting, signing and waymarkers
- The treatment of parks, play areas, natural features and recreation areas
- Consideration of long term management and maintenance issues

- 8.2 Too often, the design of public realm features – whether ground surfacing, planting and landscaping, boundary treatments or street furniture – is treated as an afterthought: the icing on the cake.
- 8.3 Guidance on good practice and minimum standards in the design of the public realm is available in several publications (including the *Manual for Streets*, which was launched in March 2007 and which supersedes *Design Bulletin 32* and *Places Streets and Movement*; and *Streets for all South West*).
- *Manual for Streets* www.manualforstreets.org.uk [DCLG/Dept for Transport, 2007]
 - *Streets for All* www.english-heritage.org.uk [DETR /English Heritage 2005]
- 8.4 This design guide is concerned with highlighting particular issues that relate directly to the creation of a ‘sense of place’, and sensitivity to local distinctiveness. A clear priority must be to ensure that the solutions chosen are appropriate to the character and appearance of the conservation area and, ideally enhance and reinforce local distinctiveness.
- 8.5 It is all too easy for generic solutions to be applied – in many respects “canalside” public realm has become a vocabulary of its own in recent years, for example. This is partly because certain solutions have worked extremely well in certain situations, and this has bred a copy-cat approach. But just because a formula works well in other situations in Britain or elsewhere, it does not become automatically appropriate to every context. Generic solutions, no matter how high quality and ‘proven’, perpetuate homogenisation and the watering down of local distinctiveness.
- 8.6 All designs should be rooted in a clear understanding of local traditions. Observing the sorts of materials that historically were used locally, how they were set/laid/shaped, the contexts and settings where they were (or were not) used (e.g. industrial, agricultural, urban, village, domestic, canalside etc)



Avoid appropriating standard solutions, or making assumptions about what is fitting, without fully understanding the character of this conservation area and what makes it locally distinctive.

In many respects “canalside” public realm has become a national vocabulary of its own in recent years – and much of it is of very high spec. But what do “wharf-style” paved areas [bottom left], mock Victoriana or Docklands-esque bollards and lamp posts, and towering flats or quaintly generic “marine” architecture have to with the reality of our canals [right and bottom far right] and their wharfs, even in their industrial heyday?



[Below] Design guidance in the IHCA Management Proposals SPD. Other policy and design guidelines (PDGs) may also be relevant: see Chapter 3 of the SPD.

IHCA PGG37	Demolition or alteration of boundary features The demolition or alteration of historic walls, railings or fences will not normally be permitted. The creation of hardstandings for domestic car parking or other purposes will not normally be allowed where this involves loss of enclosure or historic fabric on boundaries which front public roads, open spaces or rights of way.
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IHCA PDG38	Boundary treatments and hard landscaping Proposals to erect fences, railings or walls will only be allowed where they are incorporated in a similar way to those already existing and where they are sympathetic to the site and surroundings. Conspicuous use of alien materials such as concrete blocks, reconstituted stone and close-boarded fence panels will not usually be permitted, where such works fall within planning controls. New developments will be expected to make use of locally distinctive, high quality boundary treatments and hard landscaping, especially where an historic precedent exists nearby; this can help to integrate new buildings into their surroundings and create a sense of place.
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IHCA PDG19	Canals and canalside development: boundary treatments Where the erection or alteration or boundary treatments adjacent to the canals falls under planning controls, it will be expected that they will reflect the precedent of traditional forms of canalside enclosure in the conservation area. In particular, the preservation or reinstatement of stone walls (or, where appropriate, the construction of new walls), which are typical of the character of the Thames & Severn, will be encouraged. Where feasible and appropriate to the character and appearance of the conservation area, soft landscaping and tree screening will be encouraged as a form of boundary treatment on the canal edge of new development sites; this should be designed to reflect the natural vegetated breaks in built form along the canals.
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IHCA PDG35	Car parking, vehicular and pedestrian access When considering development proposals, the impact of any associated new vehicular/pedestrian access points, alterations to existing means of access, or provision of car parking, will be a significant consideration. New development will not normally be permitted where parking or access arrangements would be achieved at the expense of historic fabric, characteristic enclosure and urban grain or the appearance of the conservation area.
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IHCA PDG36	Enclosure and urban grain In parts of the IHCA which are recognised as having suffered from erosion of enclosure and loss of historic character, new development should aim to enhance the degraded built environment and reinstate historically typical urban grain. Proposals which improve enclosure, where historically appropriate to the conservation area, and which enhance the context of any surviving historic buildings (within or adjacent to the site) will be favoured.
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IHCA PDG39	Public realm and ground surfacing Where historic ground surfaces survive, they should be retained wherever possible, or reintroduced where there is historic evidence for them. Attention must be paid to edging treatments, ensuring the chosen treatment is appropriate to the context and character of the site; the loss of soft grassy verges on roads and paths should be resisted. Where new development schemes are proposed, new surfaces and hard landscaping should reflect the historic character of the site. The use of concrete paving will only be acceptable if of an appropriate shape and colour and if a traditional laying pattern is proposed. The use of concrete block paving over large expanses can have a suburbanising effect, which would be incongruous to many contexts in this conservation area. Care should be taken to allow sustainable ground surface water drainage, but alternatives to visually inappropriate 'permeable' concrete block paving should be sought.
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IHCA PDG40	Public realm and street furniture: protection of historic features Minor traditional features within the IHCA (such as kerb stones, lamp posts, historic signage and street furniture) should be recognised and preserved for their contribution to the streetscape, character and appearance of the area. Development proposals or works requiring planning permission will be expected to recognise this contribution and ensure the preservation of such features wherever feasible.
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IHCA PDG41	Public realm and signage Signage and advertising which fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area will not be permitted. Signage should be of a scale and design which is appropriate to its location, and should not cause harm to the character or architectural balance of a building on which it is sited. Signage and advertising for multiple-occupancy buildings or sites should be co-ordinated and uncluttered. Illuminated advertisements will generally be unacceptable, although there may be some flexibility to accept internally illuminated signs, where they would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. A very high design standard will be required. New signs should observe historic signage traditions and convention in the conservation area wherever possible, to reinforce local distinctiveness and character.
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IHCA PDG10	<p>Canals and canalside development: signage, street furniture and lighting</p> <p>The District Council will support a coherent, co-ordinated approach to signage and ‘street furniture’ along the canal and at access points to it, with the aim of minimising discordant paraphernalia, and the suburbanising effect of excessive clutter, and uncharacteristically high levels of street lighting. Where such works fall within Planning controls, the erection of railings (and other means of canalside enclosure), bollards, signs or lamp posts should be kept to a minimum and will be permitted only where</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> there is a demonstrable need for the function they would perform, which could not be met by existing facilities; and the design and materials would preserve or enhance the predominant character and local distinctiveness of that stretch of the canal, or the conservation area Character Part through which it passes.
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IHCA PDG9	<p>Canals and canalside development: layout, landscaping and edge treatment</p> <p>Canal restoration (and development adjacent to the canals, which impacts on the immediate canalside) will be expected to make use of materials and forms for landscaping and layout which</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> reflect the historic and locally distinctive character of the two Cotswold Canals and preserve or enhance the predominantly rural and naturalistic character of the Cotswold Canals, as distinct from the sporadic historic wharf locations. <p>In particular, the construction of hard ‘wharf style’ edges to the canal should be avoided, including expanses of paving or hard ground surfacing along the immediate canalside.</p> <p>Proposals for departures will be acceptable only in exceptional circumstances, where either</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> there is historical or archaeological justification; or there is an important strategic reason for deviation. Such proposals will be expected to perform well against all other relevant policy and design guidelines contained in this SPD. <p>The Cotswold Canals Conservation Management Plan (CMP), prepared by British Waterways, will be referred to for development control purposes when assessing proposals for physical works to the canal channel, or for existing or new canal structures, where these fall within normal planning controls.</p>
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IHCA PDG20	<p>Canals and canalside decking</p> <p>Where such works are subject to planning control, the erection of canalside decking will not normally be permitted</p>
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IHCA PDG6	<p>Trees and significant green areas</p> <p>Development will usually be permitted only where proposals do not entail the loss of existing trees and/or areas of vegetation that make a significant positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Proposals for departures will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances, where the impact of losing the existing trees or areas of vegetation can be genuinely mitigated or compensated by planned re-planting in a manner which would enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.</p>
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IHCA PDG5	<p>Landscape character</p> <p>Development proposals should seek to conserve the special features and diversity of the different landscape types found throughout the IHCA, particularly as set out in the Character Parts analysis in the IHCA Character Appraisal.</p>
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IHCA PDG 7	<p>Planting and landscaping schemes</p> <p>Where landscaping forms part of a development, the use of native species for planting schemes will normally be most appropriate. Where significant specimen trees, hedgerows or general tree cover cannot be retained, well planned and high quality re-planting will be expected, particularly where such natural features are important in creating enclosure.</p>
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IHCA PDG42	<p>Public realm and public art</p> <p>Public art should contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area; it should be sensitively scaled and sited and it should be appropriate to its context in terms of content and appearance. Public art will be expected to be executed to a high standard and well manufactured, thus providing an impression of quality and care, as well as ensuring that the item is durable and easy to maintain. Not all public art ‘adds value’ to an historic environment and, where subject to planning controls, inappropriate or sub-standard public art will be refused planning permission.</p>
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BOUNDARIES AND ENCLOSURE

- 8.7 Walls, fences, hedgerows and gates are critical links between buildings and between people, inviting or preventing access.
- 8.8 The loss or alteration of an existing traditional boundary feature can significantly erode the character of an area, while a poor choice of new boundary treatment can reduce the positive impact of an historic building – perhaps exposing or obscuring it in an inappropriate way, or failing to complement the quality, craftsmanship, and historic status of the building.
- 8.9 In new development, broad levels of enclosure need to be established as early as the layout design stage (bearing in mind the distinctive urban grain that should be reflected or preserved, to suit the particular development situation) and when considering density and massing: a sense of enclosure is provided by buildings (the closeness or distance between them) as well as by boundary features. But the detailed design of boundary treatments comes later.
- 8.10 This section looks at how the treatment of boundaries in particular can help to reinforce local distinctiveness, create a strong sense of place and character, provide privacy and security, and anchor new development into its setting.

- **Preserve and integrate existing boundary features wherever possible**

The first principle when it comes to altering existing boundary features, or designing a development scheme, is to identify and understand your existing assets: consider how existing boundary features contribute to the street scene and surroundings and how they relate to existing structures.

Boundary walls are often well-crafted and have a patina which anchors them into their setting; they are often made with materials which can be expensive to source today, with a quality that is difficult to replicate. Wrought iron railings, similarly, have a patina and quality of craftsmanship which modern steel imitations do not. Established hedgerows and trees provide instant maturity and scale. These are all assets which should be worked with and positively exploited, to help settle new development or a new building into its surroundings. Look carefully at existing boundary features, and consider them seriously as constraints and assets; think imaginatively about how they can be worked with, rather than disposed of.

- **Relate new boundary treatments to their context and surroundings**

An understanding and appreciation of context is essential. No matter how beautifully crafted, an ornate iron gateway and railings may be entirely inappropriate in an agricultural or industrial environment – it may also look pretentious and uncomfortable surrounding a modest cottage; a tall brick wall is likely to look out of place in an area that is dominated by dry stone walls; and a rustic willow or hazel wattle fence panel will be alien in front of a redbrick 19th century roadside terraced house.

The best approach is to look at neighbouring examples, or at similar contexts elsewhere in the Study Area. Consider the historic use and historic status of the building or the area, and perhaps research other similar examples elsewhere, if no good prototype exists in the immediate surroundings. Settling for the lowest common denominator is not likely to be acceptable: you may be able to point to an example where a concrete block wall or a chicken wire or ship-lap timber panel fence has been used, but that does not make such treatments appropriate to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Attempts to aggrandize or “gentrify” a building which has historically been of modest status or utilitarian character should also be avoided.

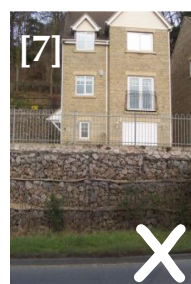
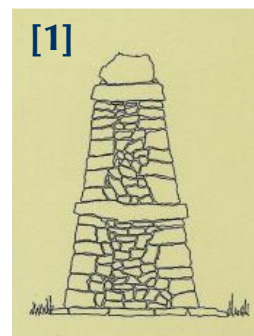
- **Finally, it is essential to pay attention to quality and local distinctiveness:** Observe local traditions and pay close attention to detail.

Walls

Both brick and stone walls appear throughout the conservation although, broadly, brick walls tend to dominate in the west of the area (the Vale), and stone walls in the east and south (the valleys). Stone walls come in all shapes and sizes, with a huge diversity of construction traditions. But because they are so characteristic of the conservation area, and because our area is so rich in examples of good quality stonemasonry, it is important that new work observes local traditions and pays close attention to detail.

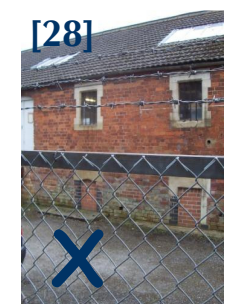
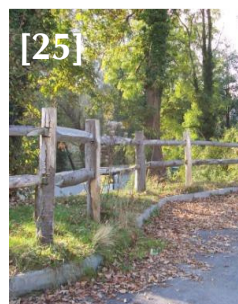
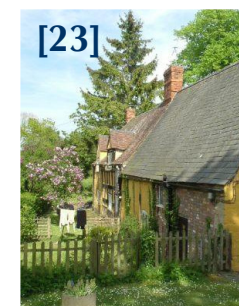
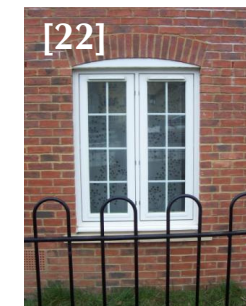
- [1] **Dry stone walls are mortar-less walls, which are highly locally distinctive and traditional to large parts of the conservation area** (though they are less common in the western leg, particularly west of Stonehouse). They are traditionally built with a ‘batter’ – two faces of carefully-placed wide, flat stones, inclining towards each other. The centre is usually packed with smaller stones. The design ensures water does not accumulate inside and the deep crevices are a haven for wildlife and flora. The top is traditionally finished with a row of large stones set upright, known as a “cock and hen” finish. A smooth, curved band of mortar is an alternative.

- [2] Traditionally, the stone courses are narrow, but larger blocks are sometimes used – even dressed stone on high status boundary walls. This wall at Lodgemore Mill proves dry stone walls are at home in industrial settings as well as rural and residential areas.
- [3] Attention to detail is important. A raised bed for planting is potentially a really nice public realm enhancement, and reflects the characteristic use of stone walls for the layering, terracing and retaining of land. But this example confuses several distinct stonewalling traditions, with mortared squared-and-coursed walling, large dressed stone quoins on the corners and cock-and-hen coping. Additionally, the different masonry traditions make use of different types of stone – meaning there is a colour and texture clash as well.
- [4] Although traditional construction methods should be followed wherever feasible, it is also possible to clad a substructure to achieve a dry stone walling effect – as here at Chalford, where the impact of some heavy engineering involving reinforced concrete has been softened.
- [5] Stone retaining walls are an important characteristic of many parts of the conservation area, particularly the valleyside settlements and some of the valley bottom transport infrastructure. They are often very important to the sense of enclosure and should be maintained and protected. Inferior quality alterations or replacements can be very damaging.
- [6] A massive retaining wall, where a chunk has been carved out of the valley slope for car parking; as well as the loss of enclosure and continuity resulting from the demolition of the original roadside wall, the use of alien materials (here, timber boarding) often tends to exacerbate the visual impact.
- [7] Another retaining wall, built with wire gabions, filled with non-native rubble stone.
- [8] Dry stone walling repairs in progress at Puck Mill Lock Cottage. Stone walls (both dry stone and mortared styles) are characteristic of the Thames & Severn canal – historically, they marked the back edge of the towpath along most of the canal's length. These survive in many places, and should be used wherever possible as an appropriate canalside boundary on the Thames & Severn.
- [9] Brick walls are highly typical of rural settlements on the Vale (in the western leg of the conservation area). Brick walls with semi-circular coping bricks (either self-coloured or in a contrasting blue-black brick) are commonly used for cottage gardens, churchyards etc.
- [10, 11 & 12] Brick walls with triangular section blue-black coping blocks or hefty coping stones are very typical of late Victorian and Edwardian development, including red brick terraces and villas throughout the conservation area, as well as industrial areas (particularly their high canal-side and road-side walls) [10].
- [12] Low front garden walls were often combined with iron railings for added height. Where lost, these have often been replaced with attractive clipped hedges. Avoid using wooden close-board fences and trellis as a means of adding height to an existing traditional wall.
- [13] The craftsmanship of brick walls is just as important as that of stone walls.



Fences and railings

- [14]** Historic wrought- and cast-iron railings are often beautifully crafted and integral to the architectural style and period of the building(s) to which they relate (such as this typically Georgian urn finial). They should be maintained and preserved. If they really must be removed or altered, it can often be possible to reuse them on site. They have a character and quality of craftsmanship which modern steel cannot replicate. That being said, many modern steel or iron products will sit quite happily in a historic environment, provided their style and design is carefully selected to be appropriate to the context:
- [15 & 16]** Wrought iron ‘parkland’ or ‘estate’ fences are traditionally used in many situations throughout the conservation area – cottage gardens, field boundaries, churchyards, orchards, even in industrial and urban areas and early 20th century council housing estates. Modern iron or steel products are available **[17, 18]**, and provide a simple, unpretentious and visually permeable barrier, for situations where high security and physical impact (from vehicles etc) are not high priorities.
- [19]** Parkland fencing is ideal as a canalside boundary (particularly along the Stroudwater, which, unlike the Thames & Severn, does not have a tradition of consistent enclosure by stone walls), allowing views to open green space or woodland and preserving a sense of expansiveness... A post and wire fence (like this one) will achieve a similar, more economical, effect – but an investment in quality and character is a good way of enhancing the conservation area.
- [20]** Arrow- or spear-headed railings are typical of Victorian and Edwardian architecture, and suit situations like front gardens, ‘civic’ buildings (e.g. churchyards, schools) and some industrial contexts, including railway-related spaces.
- [21 & 22]** Hoop-top railings tend to have a strong residential character. Popular particularly during Edwardian times, often used for front gardens or schoolyards. Modern steel versions can look really effective **[22]**.
- [23 & 24]** Wooden picket fences are a great, economical choice. Typical of cottage gardens (particularly in the Vale), and they were often used in railway-related spaces (stations, station houses, railway workers’ cottages). Can be appropriate in some industrial settings. Generally avoid wood stains – allowed to weather naturally a wooden picket fence will appear rustic, or smartly painted (white or a colour) it will suit more urban areas or spaces relating to Victorian or Edwardian buildings.
- [25 & 26]** A rustic timber fence, which could suit very rural situations, particularly woodland and the conservation area’s secluded valleys. Hazel and willow wattle hurdles are another rustic solution; as they mellow they become tonally very similar to the local limestone.
- [27]** Avoid using close-boarded or feather-edge wooden fence panels in conspicuous locations – particularly in front of a building’s principal elevation.
- [28]** Security fences and wire mesh or chain-link generally have a very unattractive impact; unfortunately they are often used for canalside boundaries at mills and industrial estates, which presents a very poor face. Walls or hedgerows could be more appropriate alternatives.



[29 & 31] Adding extra height to a traditional boundary can be very harmful to its character and the character of the spaces around it; avoid using trellis and timber fence panels.

[30 & 32] A hedge is a good way of adding extra height in a traditional manner. A quicker fix has been achieved (top) with a wooden fence, but the chunkiness and simplicity of the extra-large pickets, coupled with the fact that they have been allowed to weather grey naturally, means that it sits quite unobtrusively atop the dry stone wall.

Hedges

[32, 33, 34] Hedges occur in all sorts of shapes, sizes and differing styles – from low cottage garden hedges, to controlled topiary, to urban or suburban shrubby hedges, to naturalistic thick planted buffers and wildlife-filled field hedgerows. Hedges and ditches are the predominant field boundaries in the west, on the flat land of the Vale; they often line the meandering rural lanes and merge into private residential boundaries. Industrial sites often have green boundaries too (a mixture of hedgerow plants and taller trees), particularly where the site abuts green open space. This often a thick and substantial buffer. Native hedgerows are an ideal canalside boundary, contributing visually to the conservation area's 'green corridor' as well as forming part of an important linear wildlife corridor.

[35] A dense hedgerow of thorny species like hawthorn and blackthorn, even dog rose, can provide an excellent natural security barrier. If security is a serious issue, a tall wire mesh fence could be erected at the core of the hedgerow, around which plants will grow. (A traditional parkland style fence positioned along the outer perimeter would protect the hedge and provide an additional security buffer). This two-year-old hedgerow (pictured) is already quite well established. In the mean time, a wooden fence provided a barrier. If left alone, a lightweight fence or wattle panel will gradually biodegrade, while the hedge itself becomes stronger.

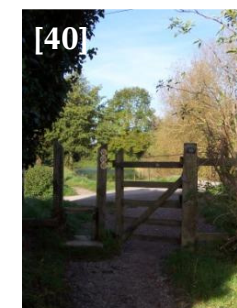
[36] Avoid non-native species, such as leyland cypress, which tends to be popular because it is fast-growing. The visual effect can be overbearing and has a very different character from the thick swathes of deciduous trees that tend to form field boundaries and line watercourses in the conservation area. A mixture of hedgerow plants, selected from native species (including blossoming and fruiting plants), provides colour and variety and makes an ideal habitat for small birds, mammals and insects.

Gates

[37] Avoid overly pretentious gateways and gatepiers. Most traditional gates and gateways in the conservation area have a simple and modest character – even when associated with quite grand properties **[39]**.

[39] A modern driveway gate with an attractive traditional character. The painted finish picks up the colour of the cottage's front door and complements the mellow limestone walling and gravel drive.

[40] The Stroudwater canal is characterised by the gates that span the towpath at intervals – signifiers of the historic lack of towpath enclosure (unlike the Thames & Severn), which meant that field gates were needed to stop livestock straying along it. No original gates survive today, but the simple rustic wooden field gates are appropriate and unpretentious.



GROUND SURFACING

- 8.11 Good ground surfacing tends to act as an unobtrusive ‘foil’ to the buildings, because it works without us really noticing it. Yet it can have a transformative effect – bringing an area to life and making an extremely valuable contribution to our sense of place.
- 8.12 Ground surfacing is full of subtle messages, which we pick up almost subconsciously: it can tell us whether an area is public, private, vehicle-dominated or pedestrian-friendly, urban, rural or suburban, domestic, utilitarian or high-status. It can indicate where vehicles should slow down, where we should cross the road, where we should park our cars or ride our bicycles... and whether this is a formal arrangement to be encouraged, or an informal, occasional arrangement to be tolerated. We are more attuned to these subtleties than we perhaps imagine – and it has a lot to do with how the ground surfacing relates to other aspects of the built environment around us: the way that spaces between buildings narrow or open out, for example, and how boundary features invite or discourage access. Ground surfacing in this respect is part of a holistic ‘sense of place’.
- 8.13 Too often, though, the use of ground surfacing as a very obvious form of ‘signposting’ results in visual clutter, grabbing more attention than is necessary and stripping away the character and soul of the place. This is particularly harmful when the materials and design have no regard to distinctive local traditions and the context of the particular site within the locality. Historic environments require subtlety and restraint, and respect for tradition.
- **Identify and understand your assets**
Maintain and restore historic paving and ground surface features (kerbs, steps, gutters etc) where they survive. Expose and restore historic paving in appropriate locations and consider reinstating lost surfaces of high quality, if they would make a valuable contribution to the character of the area, or help to fill out its story. You may find it useful to seek expert conservation advice before carrying out repairs to historic surfaces.
 - **Relate new ground surfaces and paving schemes to their context and surroundings**
Investigate local traditions. Observe the sorts of materials that historically were used locally, how they were set/laid/shaped and the contexts and settings where they were (or were not) used. Use this knowledge as a basis for working up a design. Respect local designs and details to reinforce local distinctiveness and, where necessary, adapt local designs to address new problems – clever reinvention can even be entertaining and eye-opening for those that notice it.
 - **Invest in quality and simplicity**
Ground surfacing should be simple. It should not become an obvious focal point or, worse still, try to distract attention from a poor quality environment. Good ground surfacing tends to act as an unobtrusive ‘foil’ to the buildings, because it works without us really noticing it. Avoid small paving modules laid in arbitrary colours and patterns; avoid obtrusive colours and markings for cycle lanes – footpaths and cycle routes should be designed as an integral part of the public realm. If resources are inadequate, do less to a better and higher standard.
 - **It may not always be appropriate or feasible to use traditional, native materials and methods for new ground surfacing schemes**
However, it is still possible to use more commonly available materials and modern alternatives in ways that reflect the essential character of the conservation area, and are appropriate to their context.

Paving slabs and flagstones

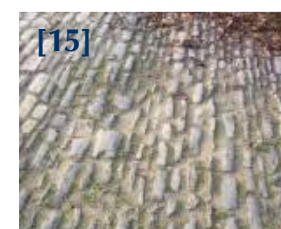
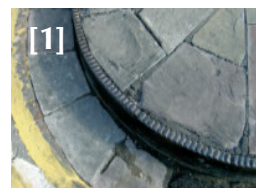
- [1] Paving slabs are surprisingly uncommon in the conservation area, with very few historic examples surviving (although they were probably commonplace in many town centres). May be appropriate on formal pavements and footways in the more urban parts – e.g. around Wallbridge, Cheapside and the station; or on Victorian and Edwardian residential streets.

Brick and block paving

- [2] Modern block paving can be a good alternative to traditional brick paving, which was used in many different situations throughout the conservation area. Available in a vast array of colours and designs. Here, five different paving materials are used, with two different laying patterns and two different kerb treatments. The effect is confusing and attention-grabbing, whereas the ground should be a subtle and sympathetic foil to the buildings and landscape.
- [3] Changes in surface texture can provide important signals for the visually impaired. Tactile surfaces should be well integrated, avoiding awkward relationships with the surrounding streetscape and other surfaces. Colours should co-ordinate with adjacent materials, whilst providing sufficient contrast for visually impaired people.
- [4] Some modern block paving is too harshly coloured for a historic environment [and 13]. This bright red block paving exaggerates the expansiveness of the residential car parking court, it clashes with the stone walling and looks alien in the tranquil rural setting. [5] Red bricks are traditionally used for paving though – here at Beards Mill, Leonard Stanley. Also commonly used for cottage garden paths in both the Vale and the Valleys.
- [6 & 7] Black brick and lattice-imprinted pavers (a hardwearing and slip-resistant surface). Used for garden paths, pavements, alleys and functional spaces like farm yards, mill yards, around stables and cart sheds. A very versatile material, at home in rural, urban, agricultural and residential settings. [8] These glazed blue-black engineering bricks are also traditional, but can look a bit stark over large expanses. [9] Black bricks used for roadside gutters, separated from the carriageway by a single row of stone setts.
- [10] Yards, alleys and utilitarian spaces are often paved wall-to-wall. Although modern, these concrete block pavers are suggestive of traditional brick or stone sett paving; their scale, shape and laying pattern can be more visually soothing than large expanses of herringbone block paving. Black or soft grey colours [3, 12] tend to work well in most situations, although these subtle reddy-brown blocks [11] echo traditional red brick or sandstone paving.

Stone setts and cobbles

- [14] A limestone cobbled surface at Lodgemore Mill, with red brick gutters similar to [9]. This is probably typical of the historic street surfaces that once existed throughout the Stroud valleys, but most areas have been covered with tarmac or were resurfaced during the 19th century with brick or smoother granite setts [17]. Cobbles [15] can be a tricky surface on steep slopes and uncomfortable or impractical for wheelchair users, bicycles and pushchairs. [16] shows a freshly repaired and reinstated limestone surface in Tetbury.
- [17] Larger, smoother granite setts were used extensively in the 19th century as a street surface in urban and residential areas and for yards and utilitarian spaces. [18] Modern granite setts, which are often used today for traffic calming and highway enhancements.



Crushed stone, gravel and compacted earth

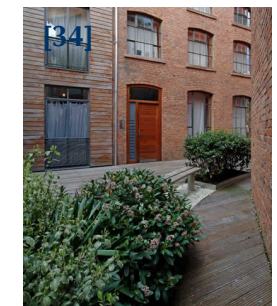
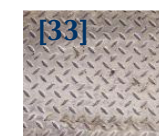
- [19] Whilst many streets, paths and utilitarian spaces in urban areas would traditionally have been paved with cobbles, setts or bricks, most of the conservation area's minor paths and tracks (and even quite major rural roads) were historically just compacted earth or crushed stone, perhaps laid on a foundation of rubble.
- [20] Even some fairly heavily-used industrial spaces around mills and at wharfs were unpaved; certainly most of the canal towpath was (and still is) little more than compacted earth, sometimes surface dressed with fine gravel [24]. This can be a troublesome surface, prone to puddles and potholes, and is unsuitable for spaces with heavy traffic. But at Dunkirk Mill [20] the residents' car park has been surface-dressed with limestone chips and gravel, while asphalt and simple block paving has been used for vehicle circulation space.
- [21, 23] Limestone gravel is an attractive, economical and unpretentious option for private or semi-private spaces, such as driveways, garden paths and parking areas – equally at home in the grounds of a cottage or a manor house, and appropriate in the Vale as well as the Valleys. Unless laid on top of an impermeable hardstanding, gravel is also very good for surface water drainage. [22] A modern housing development, where limestone chips have been used for parking bays; a nice complement to the limestone walling.

Asphalt, concrete and bound aggregate surfaces

- [25, 26 & 27] Where a more durable surface is needed, there are several modern products that can create the impression of a traditional compacted earth or stone surface. An appropriately coloured aggregate can be resin-bound or rolled into the surface of standard asphalt. Some of these surfaces perform poorly in terms of surface water drainage though. A good option for footways and cycle paths, including the canal towpath; in the few instances where hard wharf-style edging is likely to be acceptable, this would be a more locally distinctive alternative to today's rather generic canalside convention of concrete block paving.
- [30] Straight-forward black-top asphalt is perhaps the most universal ground surfacing material in the conservation area. Although it has often been applied in place of (or on top of) historic surfaces, it has been a familiar part of British streetscapes since the late 19th century and remains a very low-key, durable and appropriate surface treatment for many situations. [32] Similarly, concrete is an honest workaday surface, often used in agricultural locations. But most concrete and asphalt surfaces do not allow water to soak through into the ground.
- [31] The carpet-like wall-to-wall simplicity of an asphalt surface is very typical of mill yards and industrial estates, where it is usually uninterrupted by kerbs and separate footways.

Other

- [29] Of course, grass is a characteristic ground surface material. Some products, such as interlocking blocks or meshes, reinforce grassy surfaces, allowing non-intensive vehicular traffic or parking. [33 & 34] Just a couple of examples of how rather more unconventional materials can also have a place in the conservation area. Metal sheeting is a good option for industrial contexts, where it can be used for raised walkways etc. Timber decking is used wall-to-wall here in an intimate pedestrian-only space. An interesting water-permeable surface



HIGHWAYS, FOOTWAYS, KERBS AND VERGES

- 8.14 The Industrial Heritage Conservation Area is an area of contrasts. The distinction between urban and rural character is often obvious, but where the two meet and mix, the subtle differences are vulnerable to loss or alteration, which will lead to a gradual erosion of the overall quality and character of the conservation area. These differences can be as simple as the manner in which the roads and paths are edged, and the breadth of pavements.
- 8.15 There should be a clear distinction between urban, suburban and rural roads. Within those categories, further distinctions should be observed between high speed roads (dual carriageways, A-roads), minor roads and lanes, residential streets, private or semi-private access-roads/ drives/ tracks, and footpaths.
- **Roads must be functional and robust, but they are also important public spaces in their own right.** The treatment of roads, verges and footways should reflect their purpose and location. The treatment of junctions and vehicular access points (driveways, side roads etc) should reflect the historic pattern, urban grain and traditional levels of enclosure in so far as it is possible.
 - **Road markings should be used as sparingly as possible**, whilst being consistent with safety standards.
 - **Respect local characteristics, and aim to emulate them in new development, so far as it is possible.** Preserve grassy verges and avoid the unnecessary introduction of kerbs and/or broad pavements in rural areas; similarly, avoid the introduction of separately delineated pavements/footways in industrial areas, where most spaces are traditionally 'shared surfaces'.
 - **Bollards, barriers and instructional signage should only be used if they are essential**, rather than liberally or decoratively. Wherever possible, the need for bollards (like signage with road-instructions) should be minimised through good layout and surface treatment design. They should be designed to be compatible with the style and materials of the surrounding area, and should be individually positioned to fulfil a precise task.



[above] A sample of the huge variety of highway, footway, kerb and verge treatments across the conservation area, each of which contributes to the distinctive character of its particular context.

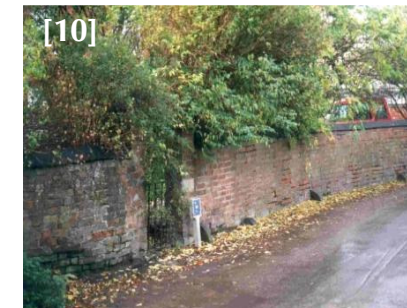
Grassy verges

- [1] Traditionally, many small clusters of buildings in rural parts of the conservation area, and indeed many of the larger villages, have kerbless roads and lanes. The grassy verges simply meet the hard surface.
- [2] The public realm in new development *can* be designed to emulate at least some degree of this rural character (as here at Bishop Stortford in Essex), but all too often buildings and layouts that are superficially drawing on rural built form as an inspiration become suburbanised by these little details [3].
- [4] This informal parking pull-in, which forms part of a refurbishment and residential new-build in Sheepscombe, succeeds in keeping a sense of the informality and softness, by using limestone gravel, separated from the carriageway by stone setts, and retaining the un-mown grassy verges. Stone setts, rather than a raised kerb, can help to preserve a grassy edge if it is likely to be particularly vulnerable to wear and tear [5].

Kerbs and pavements (or not)

Manual for Streets acknowledges that the need for separately delineated footways, with raised and kerbed pavements can sometimes be overstated; as much as the kerbed separation of footway and carriageway can offer benefits such as protection to pedestrians, raised kerbs also tend to confer an implicit priority to vehicles on the carriageway and discourage interaction and courtesy between vehicles and pedestrians.

- [6, 7] Where there is no tradition of kerbs and pavements (as in many rural, agricultural and industrial contexts) they should not be introduced and new development should respect and reflect these traditions. Yards, alleys and utilitarian spaces are often paved wall-to-wall, producing a very distinctive effect.
- [8] However, pavements and kerbs are indeed strong components of traditional streetscapes in many parts of the conservation area – particularly in urban areas, along major roads and in residential neighbourhoods (particularly Victorian and Edwardian suburbs, such as Lightpill).
- [9] A cast iron kerb at Wallbridge. Old photographs show that several of Stroud's main streets once had cast iron kerbs, and these are particularly characteristic of areas where kerbs would have been especially vulnerable to heavy cart traffic. A stretch survives at Wallbridge – possibly Stroud's busiest transport intersection at one time, where the canals, the railways and roads all converge. Similar kerbs were traditional features in many towns and
- [10] Stone knocking blocks on Chestnut Lane near Fromehall Mill. These act like bollards, protecting vulnerable walls/buildings where there is no verge or pavement.



CAR PARKING

8.16 *Manual for Streets* recommends that the following general points of good practice should be followed when considering the design and location of car parking:

- **the design quality of the street is paramount;**
- **there is no single best solution to providing car parking** – a combination of on-plot, off-plot and on-street will often be appropriate;
- **the street can provide a very good car park** – on-street parking is efficient, understandable and can increase vitality and safety;
- **parking within a block is recommended only after parking at the front and on-street has been fully considered** – rear courtyards should support on-street parking, not replace it;
- **car parking needs to be designed with security in mind** – advice on this issue is contained in the publication *Safer Places*.
- **consideration needs to be given to parking for visitors and disabled people.**

8.17 Several of these points relate most directly to residential areas. However, the conservation area has to accommodate considerable numbers of vehicles at business and leisure locations too. The advice contained in this guide aims to address problems and opportunities associated with these contexts as well.

8.18 In residential areas, cars are less prone to damage or theft if parked in-curtilage, but if they cannot be parked in-curtilage, they should ideally be parked on the street in view of the home. Where communal parking courts are used, they should be small and have natural surveillance. Access to the rear of dwellings from public spaces should be avoided. Layouts should provide natural surveillance by ensuring streets are overlooked and well-used.

Private driveways and hardstandings

Front gardens are important buffers between public and private space; they also contribute to the urban grain, character and sense of enclosure of a place, and can provide welcome greenery and colour. But for occupiers of houses, the amenity value of front gardens tends to be lower when compared to their back gardens, and increased parking pressures on streets has meant that many householders have converted their front gardens to hard standing for parking.

[1] However, this can profoundly affect the character of the conservation area, particularly where it involves the loss of traditional boundaries (as here at Avenue Terrace near Bonds Mill, Stonehouse), and it is not necessarily the most desirable outcome for street users in terms of amenity and quality of place. Depending on ground surfacing and construction, hardstandings can also lead to problems with drainage.

Where new developments are aiming to reflect or perpetuate a traditional urban grain that relies on front gardens for part of its character, layouts should aim to accommodate car parking in ways that will not interfere with this. If parking is to be accommodated in-curtilage at the front of the house, then sufficient space should be available to allow continuity of boundary features and enclosure along the street (i.e. there should not be continual interruptions or gaps in the roadside boundaries). Otherwise, alternative such as on-street parking may be preferable.

[2] Here is a commonly seen ‘hybrid’ solution, where parking bays are provided in front of the house, outside its private curtilage, but not “on-street” as such. The road becomes very dominant and there is a lack of enclosure and continuity. It’s the kind of layout that is very typical of standard modern housing developments – and very *untypical* of traditional historic areas, be they rural, urban, industrial or agricultural. This can be a particular problem on valley-bottom sites in the conservation area, which tend to be long and narrow and therefore susceptible to road-dominated layouts (see **Chapter 4**, Priority 4).

On-street parking

[3] On-street parking is typical of many parts of the conservation area – seen here at Watledge. It is an efficient solution, as parking spaces are shared and the street provides the means of access so there is minimal wasted space. A well-designed arrangement of on-street parking can add to the vitality of a street, as here at Ebley Wharf [4], where the road allows informal parking. Conversely, poorly designed parking can create safety problems and reduce the visual quality of a street.

[5] Provision of dedicated parking bays can help resolve this, as here at Poundbury in Dorset. Avoid unnecessary clutter and convoluted ground surfacing design though.

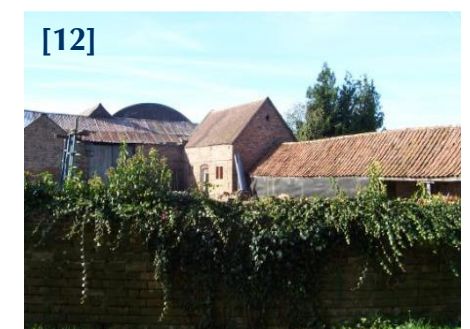
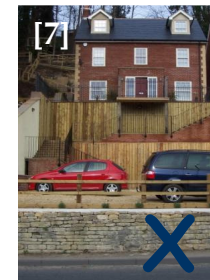
Topographical constraints

- [6] Many parts of the conservation area are characterised by steeply sloping ground and stone retaining walls, which provide a strong sense of enclosure and local distinctiveness. Attempts to accommodate car parking and vehicular access to new or historic properties often results in over-engineered solutions, which erode enclosure and sometimes leave conspicuous scars on the historic landscape – particularly if non-native or visually jarring materials are used [7 and 8].

Every effort should be made to avoid such harm to the character of the conservation area, and this may involve compromising convenience and using imagination and lateral thinking to come up with alternatives where ever possible.

Garages and mews

- [9] The ubiquitous ‘flat over garage’ or ‘coachhouse’ has become a staple of modern housing developments. But there are plenty more imaginative and locally distinctive ways of providing accommodation and garage space as part of a new development.
- [10] Integrated garages can tend to appear too visually dominant, and they rarely sit happily alongside semi-traditional architecture.
- [11] But this London mews development shows how garages can be accommodated in a more consciously architectural way. Here the garage doors actually contribute to the rhythmic repetition of openings across this large, simple building form. It produces a very strong character – which is not unlike the bold, repetitive shapes and gutsy scale of the conservation area’s industrial environment.
- Equally, the simple wall-to-wall paving of the shared surface (which is very typical of true mews-style spaces) is reminiscent of an industrial yard. The building and the space complement each other well: they are both unembellished, plain and simple.
- [12] In rural areas, the precedent of farmyard buildings offers good precedent for locally distinctive buildings and spaces which could accommodate garaging and parking: particularly the long, low form of many farm buildings, their materials (often timber or sheet materials) and their arrangement around a central court or open space



PLANTING AND LANDSCAPING

- 8.19 Planting and landscaping should never be used as a means of ‘hiding’ new development. The buildings, spaces and layout of any new development should first and foremost be designed to sit well in its particular context. If planting is proposed as a means of screening an unattractive building or part of a building, or disguising its disproportionate scale, then something is very wrong with the basic bones of the development.
- 8.20 It must be borne in mind that most trees, particularly native deciduous trees which are most likely to be appropriate to the context of this conservation area, will not have leaves in the winter. For a substantial part of the year, therefore, any obscuring or screening effect will be compromised or non-existent.
- 8.21 Planting and landscaping does, however, have a valid role in integrating and anchoring new development into its setting. Strategic planting can also create a sense of enclosure and intimacy, can demarcate public and private space and can provide semi-permeable barriers – a bit like a lace curtain relies more on the psychological rules of respect for privacy, rather than actually blocking sight lines.



[left] a blank canvas...

Planting and landscaping can sometimes make or break a scheme.

This development in Suffolk is seen here at a crucial point... So far, no obvious planting and landscaping scheme has been started on site. At this point, the plain open spaces and lack of subdivision and clutter actually suits the character of the development: reminiscent of a farmyard group, the development area blends naturally with the big expanses and straight lines of the surrounding countryside. Obvious boundaries, subdivision and domestic-style planting could instantly suburbanise it.

- **Planting and landscaping can make or break a scheme** - good quality, carefully designed planting and landscaping can take a good development up to a great development ...But if the development itself is poorly planned and detailed, planting and landscaping can never hide the fact.
- **Don't leave the design of planting and landscaping until the last minute.** This should be an integral part of the design concept, helping to reinforce the fundamental character of the development. While it may be impossible or counter-productive to work up a detailed scheme before the shape, layout and uses of the development have been determined, it can be useful to have a broad concept and some idea of a basic palette of materials and species to table at pre-application discussions. Involving the Council's tree and landscape officer early on in the design process may avoid unexpected requirements or frustrating delays later at Planning application stage.
- **Avoid suburbanisation and standardisation: relate planting and landscaping schemes to their context and surroundings.** As with other public realm features, an understanding and appreciation of context is essential. It may sound obvious, but whilst dramatic or exotic plants can look amazing and may have a place on occasions, a large swathe of bamboo or a potted palm is likely to look alien in a rural farmyard setting; classic English roses or typical municipal park-style bedding plants may look feeble and incongruous in an industrial setting.
- **Be aware of the wildlife and biodiversity value that the existing site may have and make efforts wherever possible to improve the contribution that it makes.** Even the most unpromising looking site offers potential to enhance natural habitats or even introduce new features. An appreciation of plant species that are native to the area is a valuable starting point for your design, especially those that tend to grow in similar contexts.

industrial character



The historic industrial environment is predominantly characterised by hard surfacing and plain expanses. New planting and landscaping schemes should draw inspiration from key characteristics like this – but they certainly need not be entirely without plants!

The key is to keep to extremely simple and structured forms. Often formal planters will help, and specimen trees can form focal points.



rural agricultural



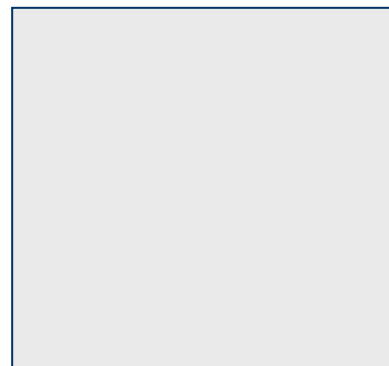
[1 and 2: image credit Riches Hawley Mikhail for Orwell Housing Association]



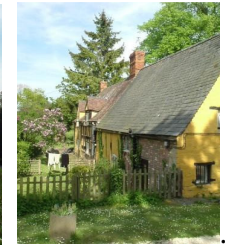
[above] THREE GARDENS, Suffolk

Taking inspiration from rural agricultural contexts, this design for a small development of affordable houses within a village setting in Suffolk stresses both the rural and the communal. This begins with the landscaping treatment, which mimics field patterns formed by ploughing, with a low-maintenance wildflower meadow and Suffolk apples orchard as amenity, both open to non-residents. Detailing is contemporary with a focus on local materials and the impressive environmental specification has a distinct agricultural flavour. Private gardens are well concealed. This 'structured rural' approach to landscaping could be applied in a wide range of scenarios, including potentially business parks adjacent to open countryside, barn conversions in farm contexts, infill in rural settlements, marinas/leisure/tourist facilities in rural locations, even some historic mill environs. A very good interface between the public realm and surrounding natural landscape... straight lines, big expanses, simplicity of design and native species

greening the green corridor



traditional residential and domestic



Traditionally, the contribution made by most houses and cottages to “public realm” is first and foremost the front garden and boundary treatment. Different parts of the conservation area (and different styles and dates of buildings) have different prevailing traditions: getting this vital interface between the public and the private right, is essential to the overall character of a development.

[below] development off THE PARK, Cheltenham.

If carefully selected to be complementary to the setting and context, the use of a fairly limited palette of materials and products for ground surfacing and boundary treatments can give a development coherence and a strong sense of place. The use of flowering fruit trees and other robust garden shrubs within front gardens contributes to the amenity and character of the public realm, even though the planting is within private curtilage.



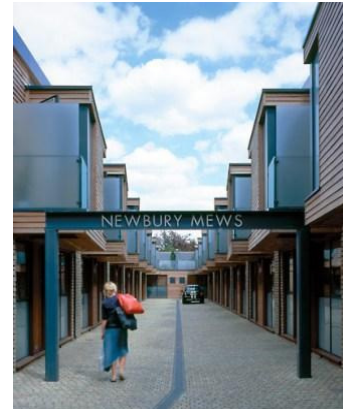
SIGNAGE AND ADVERTS



Traditional signage in the industrial environment tends to have a no-nonsense, robust and gutsy character.

Text painted directly onto brickwork is a distinctive long-standing tradition; while simple, graphic cut-out lettering, applied individually to a wall surface or fascia can produce a similar updated effect.

Using bold, simple shapes and typically industrial materials and colours, such as steel or iron, references the industrial (or former industrial) context.



Adverts

- 8.19 Advertisements, discreetly sited and thoughtfully designed, can make a lively contribution to the street scene. However, many advertisements are poorly conceived and insensitively located. The number and design of advertisements on a shop or commercial premises should assist with the identification of the premises, but should not be detrimental to the visual amenities of the building or area.
- 8.20 This is a particular problem on multiple-occupancy sites, where too often the entrance to the site is marked by a competitive jumble of signage and advertisement – which often includes information such as directions and the site address in unnecessary duplicate, triplicate or more. This can be counter-productive: the jumble is baffling and it presents individual companies' image poorly. Worse still, on arrival, seeing signs and banners draped over buildings does nothing for the character of the area and can dramatically harm the appearance of even a good historic building.
- **Try to co-ordinate signage across a whole site** (business park or industrial estate). A certain degree of uniformity tends to present a clear, well managed and professional image – and dramatically improve legibility and visitors' ability to navigate around the site. Don't have three signs if one will do. A main sign, plus something small to identify your entrance may be all that is needed.
 - **Illumination isn't always justifiable – but if you must have it, keep it subtle and minimal.** Avoid rows of swan-neck lamps or similar 'statement' lights. Try to keep lighting sources directional, low-key and, if possible, concealed. As a general rule, Stroud District Council does not permit internally illuminated signs within conservation areas. However, if well-designed and of very good quality, an internally illuminated sign *may* be less visually obtrusive than an externally illuminated one. There may be some flexibility to accept internally illuminated signs, where they would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. A very high design standard will be required.



- Consider having one single joint sign at the entrance of the site, on which all individual occupants and businesses can be clearly identified and located. This example [top right] at Upper Mills in Stonehouse does this quite effectively.
- [right] A sign board with a 'slot in' system of panels allows names and details to be updated as occupants of the site change. Within the limits of a pre-defined panel size, businesses could also be free to exercise their freedom of expression and identify themselves clearly – but this would be much less confusing than the often-seen jumble of individual signs, as the sign board system creates structure and order, which enhances legibility.
- [bottom right] This approach even offers the opportunity to enhance the collective identity and heritage interest of the site as a whole: why not incorporate some historical information – or even some site-related public art?

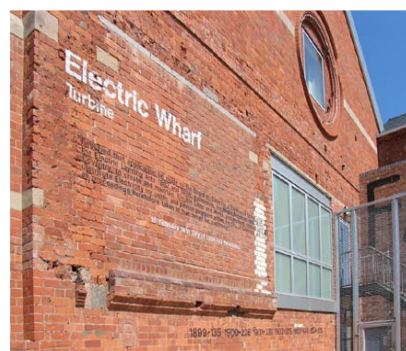
PUBLIC ART

- 8.21 Some people love it, some people hate it. Public art often provokes strong reactions. Well considered, well executed public art, which has had regard to its context in terms of appearance as well as theme/subject matter, can add a great deal to our experience of our environment.
- 8.22 Public art covers a wide range of work, both permanent and temporary - including freestanding sculptures, monuments, murals, even signage and street furniture. The Stroud Valleys have a vibrant arts scene, and that is part of what our area is known for. Public art has the potential to increase the vitality of a space and provide visual stimulation – but it is important to remember that art is subjective: one person's wine is another's poison. Some people find public art obtrusive – indeed, some public art really does not 'add value' to its surroundings.
- 8.23 In terms of planning powers, it is really only the size, location and illumination that can be controlled in most instances, and sometimes not even that. But it is important that new public art is sensitive to the historic environment, so give careful consideration to content and execution.
- **Avoid cramming public art into every corner, just because it is possible.** Make sure the art actually adds value and makes sense.
 - **Public art can enhance our understanding and experience of a place:** it should be used to enhance orientation and identity, reinforcing a sense of place and character. Public art can help us to see our historic environment through fresh eyes if the subject matter is carefully chosen.
 - **Be sensitive to scale.** Bigger isn't always better: even a small piece of public art can become a local landmark; while there is joy in discovering a tiny work of art in an unexpected place. However, some sites will require gutsy scale, so that the art is not visually lost.
 - **Ensure that the art is well executed and well manufactured,** thus providing an impression of quality and care, as well as ensuring that the item is durable and easy to maintain.

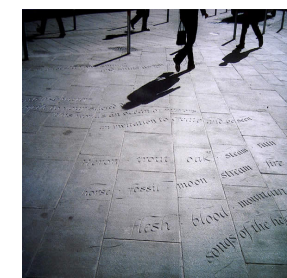


Above: "Heritage interpretation" need not be all about signage and information panels – why not a piece of art, as in the case of this witty giant sheep at a redeveloped woollen mill in Leeds? A fabulous example of scale and subject matter being well-matched to context.

Below: a poem and some historical information have been painted on a wall at a Coventry wharf.



Whether huge or tiny, a quality piece of public art can enhance our experience of a place. Ensuring that the subject matter is appropriate to the context can help to 'add value'.



Building in context: appraising the public realm

1 The site

- Is there a positive and imaginative response to any problems and constraints?
- Have the physical aspects of the site been considered, such as any changes in level within or beyond it?
- Are access arrangements convenient and existing routes respected?

2 Wider setting

- How does the proposal relate to its wider setting?
- Are the street pattern and grain of the surroundings respected?
- Will the result enhance or damage the quality of the townscape?

5 Materials

- What materials are used?
- Does the detailing of the materials show signs of careful thought or originality in the way the scheme is put together?
- How do they relate to those of the surrounding buildings?
- Is the quality as high?
- Are there interesting comparisons or contrasts in the use of materials?
- How will the colours work together?

6 Architecture suitable to its use

- Is the design of the public realm scheme (or a particular public realm feature, such as public art, signage, street furniture, ground surfacing etc) too grand or pretending to be more modest than is really appropriate for the context?

8 Public realm

- What contribution, if any, does the proposal make to the public realm?
- If new open space is created, is it clear that it will provide a positive benefit and have a genuine use?

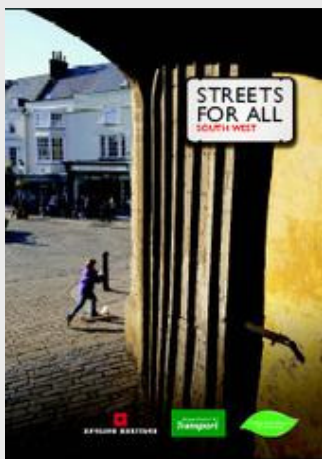
9 Vistas and views

- Do public realm features (public art, signage, street furniture, ground surfacing etc) form an harmonious group or composition with existing buildings or features in the landscape?

Questions taken from the *Building in Context Checklist* – see Chapter 3.

Further information:*Streets for all – South West:*

[DETR /English Heritage 2005]

www.english-heritage.org.uk

A guide produced by English Heritage and the Department for Transport, offers guidance on the management and design of the 'public realm'. This manual encourages a coordinated approach, with different agencies working together to achieve their various priorities in a way that results in a safe, attractive and place-specific public spaces. The guide encourages the recognition and perpetuation of locally distinctive characteristics, highlights the importance of quality and sensitive design in historic environments, and points to the harm that can be done to a place by blindly following the most 'risk averse' and standard highway solutions.

Stroud Public Realm Strategy

[Stroud District Council, draft 2009]

www.stroud.gov.uk*Stroud District Landscape Assessment SPG*

[Stroud District Council, November 2000]

www.stroud.gov.uk*Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment*
http://www.cotswolds-aonb.com/landscape_character_assessment/index.htm
Stroud District Residential Design Guide SPG

[Stroud District Council, November 2000]

www.stroud.gov.uk**Quick check: how does the scheme match up to national policy guidance on design and the public realm?****PPS1 Delivering sustainable development**

Key principle (iv), paragraph 13

"Planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings, in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted"

PPS3 Housing

Paragraph 1

"Developments should be attractive, safe and designed and built to a high quality"

Paragraph 34a

"[local plans and policies should be aimed at] creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people; which are attractive, have their own distinctive identity, and positively improve local character."

Paragraph 37

"New [housing] development should be of high quality inclusive design and layout... and be informed by its wider context, having regard not just to neighbouring buildings but to the townscape and landscape of the wider locality... The key test should be whether a development positively improves the character of an area and the way it functions."

PPG17 Planning for open space

Page 2:

"local networks of high quality and well-managed open space help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe and can play a major part in improving people's sense of wellbeing"

Page 20:

"New open spaces should improve the quality of the public realm through good design"

PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

Paragraph 2.14

"In general, it is better that old buildings are not set apart, but are woven into the fabric of the living and working community."