



Bath Urban Extension

HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE REVIEW - OCTOBER 2011

The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment seeks to improve the quality of people's lives by helping to build and improve communities that are beautiful, long lasting and healthy for people and the planet.

We believe that if we can understand and apply time-tested principles, building once more in a sustainable way, we will reap improvements in public health, in livelier and safer streets and in a more affordable lifestyle for families and individuals. The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment believes that building in a sustainable way will reap benefits for communities and result in neighbourhoods that accrue higher value over time.



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This report has been prepared in support of the proposed urban extension on land to the west of Twerton. The content has been informed by detailed research commissioned by the Duchy and preparation of this report also responds to the representations made by both English Heritage and Natural England in so far as they relate to the urban extension proposals.

1. The Heritage of Urban Form

1.1 Bath is often described as a self-contained Georgian City in a hollow and much of this informs presumptions about the future location of growth. However, study of available LiDAR data reveals no single identifiable ‘hollow in the hills’, merely development on the opposing banks and tributaries of the River Avon.

1.2 Indeed the Regional Spatial Strategy Panel *‘note that the development of Bath has already extended out of the original hollow and much of the current edge of the city comprises fairly ordinary suburban development’*. The panel concluded that *‘the critical area in terms of the WHS designation is the compact city set in the hollow in the hills’* and that *‘this area cannot be seen from the southern edge of the city and the southern edge cannot be seen from within the hollow in the hills.’*

1.3 In fact Bath is a contemporary City whose World Heritage status and site encompass both Victorian and 20th century extensions outside of the hollow. Victorian Bath, for example, occupies an area larger than the historic Georgian core of the city while 20th century Bath is even more extensive.

1.4 By the mid to late 19th Century, Georgian consensus about style had broken down but continuity was achieved by the consistent and almost ubiquitous use of stone. Architectural style was less important in maintaining a tradition in Bath’s architecture over three or more centuries than this use of a local material.

1.5 Suburban development continued into the 20th Century, and new housing followed the national pattern of being low-density and arranged in an informal, picturesque manner. Although these post-Georgian residential developments have received very little attention from historians and topographers.

1.6 What is clear is that the planning of new residential areas was largely determined by land ownership and by individual developers. In common with most other British towns and cities, development in Bath was essentially an ad-hoc affair driven by market forces and private aspirations, and responding to fluctuating national cycles of economic and political stability.

1.7 The City has grown subsequently along movement corridors and routes to the northeast, southeast and northwest. Growth to the southwest has historically been constrained because of land ownership rather than natural directional growth. No overall plan was imposed by Bath Corporation any more than it was in Georgian Bath.

1.8 Part of the City’s main character remains the interesting dialogue between different levels of elevation across topography from buildings to buildings, buildings to landscape and landscape to buildings.

1.9 The Royal Crescent, in its form and orientation, marked a water-shed in Bath’s architecture and planning. From this point the Georgian architectural and planning pattern is given a new nuance with terraces and crescents laid out after 1770 being often brilliant responses to the visual potential offered by the landscape - either by stepping terraces up hills, or by placing undulating crescents on undulating land to form breathtakingly sinuous - almost sculptural - compositions.

1.10 It is precisely this dialogue between buildings and the countryside from rather exaggerated levels that make the experience of both living in and visiting Bath so theatrical and beautiful.

1.11 The urban character of Bath is also largely defined by building on slopes and so continuing this tradition of building any new buildings along contours and up slopes is an important part of the urban tradition.

1.12 The City fabric is often integrated visually rather than in the most direct transverse route given it crosses a river valley corridor with bridging points playing an important part in the direction of urban network and form.

1.13 Bath is also characterised by strong lines of terraces, pairs of houses, villas and then single houses. Stone walls play an important part in bedding the more suburban houses into the landscape. Other situations see a strong terrace or urban edge addressing the landscape.

1.14 The Western approach to Bath is highly uncharacteristic and underwhelming for entry into a World Heritage City from its nearest neighbour Bristol. Although 20th Century additions to Twerton are included in the World Heritage Site it is not considered typical of the urban, architectural or landscape patterns.

1.15 The Duchy land affords the opportunity to create a new, improved and more representative western edge to Bath in keeping with its character, dignity and theatre at the point of Brunel’s railway tunnel.

1.16 The proposed response to contours, urban form and landscape is derived directly from the essential characteristics of Bath’s urban and landscape typology and morphology.

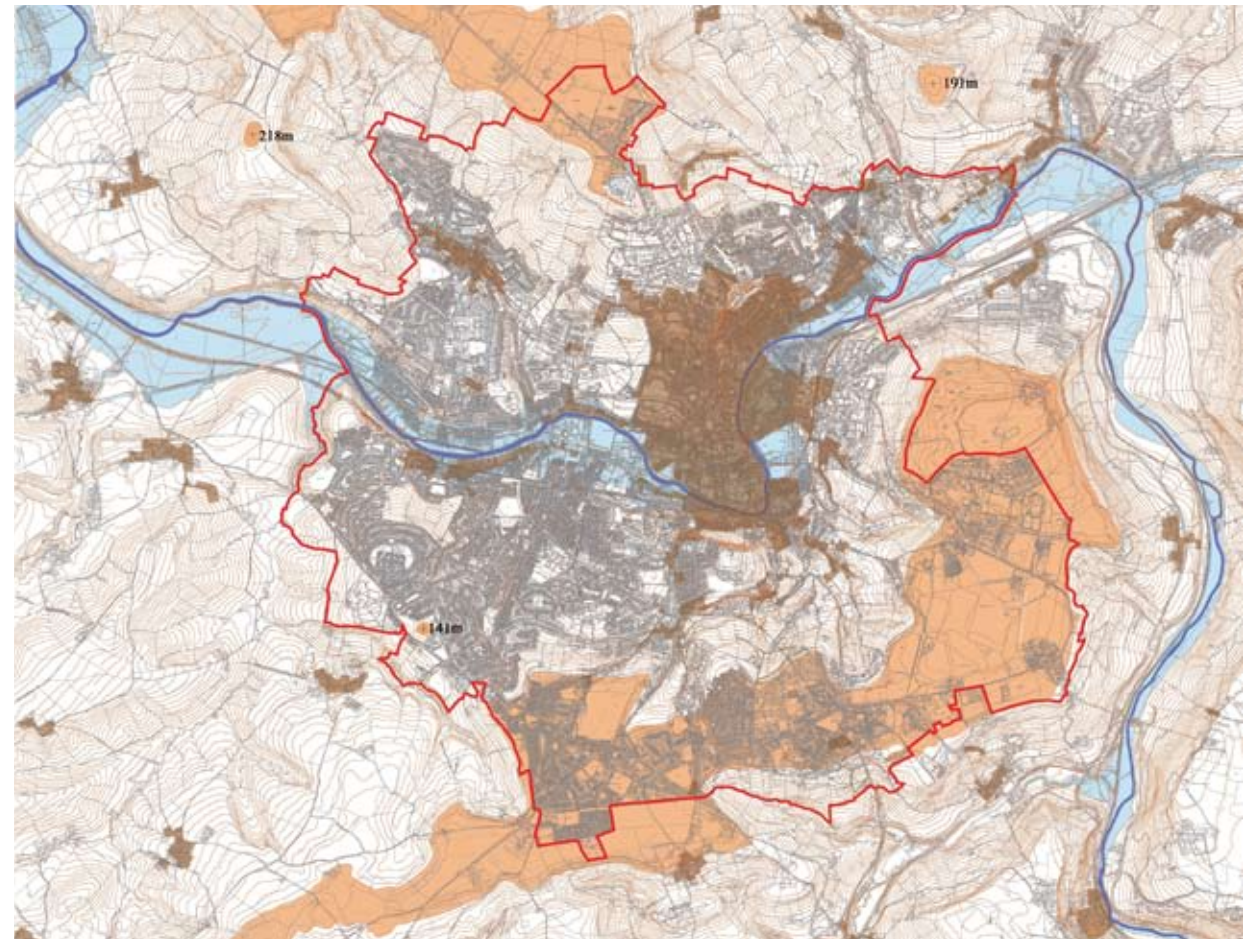


Plan showing extent of Bath City growth in relation to Duchy of Cornwall ownership

Historic Bath has responded to natural topography by layering housing up from the valley floor



Plan showing extent of Bath City growth outside of the original Georgian City in the hollow



2. Kelston Park House

2.1 Buildings (such as Kelston Park House) and depictions of them, reveal high status houses occupying higher ground where the viewer might look up towards the house as much as the owner might also look out and admire the view. The view to and from Kelston Park is clearly important and features in a key etching of Bath.

2.2 Land to the south of the house was not designed by Capability Brown and this view is known to have 'exploited' the borrowed landscape over a different rural estate over which it had no control. It is also possible this southern view from Kelston Park House (towards the BUE site) may not have been one especially valued for its landscape beauty - the estate plan of Newton St Loe 1789 shows the land within the vista from Kelston to be occupied by coal pits some 20 years after the landscaping of Kelston Park by Capability Brown (1767-8) and by 1840 the land contained quarries.

2.3 Over the next 200 years the view has changed significantly with the development of The Bristol & Bath Railway, cycle path and the busy and illuminated at both ends, dual carriageway A4 which can be viewed from the rear of the building. The Whiteway Estate, which became part of the view in the 1950's and 60's does little to enhance the picturesque quality of town and country

2.4 The view of the rural hinterland can be both framed, restored and covenanted from Kelston. Mitigation measures include the careful positioning of development within the BUE site, and the potential for tree planting to restore the Georgian farmed landscape in the valley. These mitigating measures have the benefit of clearly defining Bath's Western edge in perpetuity giving a strong identity to the west of Bath and vastly improving the current transition between 'town and country' as well as protecting the open countryside between Bristol and Bath.



The borrowed Views across the Avon Valley to Twerton. The proposed development would be set back behind Seven Acre Wood, framing and improving the views from Kelston Park



Views across the Avon Valley today include the A4 Bath to Bristol Road and the railway cutting, built during the mid 19th Century

1788 Kelston (Published by J.Collinson. Drawn & Engraved by T.Bonner) showing the importance of views across the borrowed landscape of the Avon Valley towards Kelston



3. Landscape

3.1 The site is outside the AONB and the 'setting' of the AONB is not protected by statute. However, the proposed development takes account of any visual or other impact which is within the 'setting' of the AONB on account of the high level of protection levied by the designation.

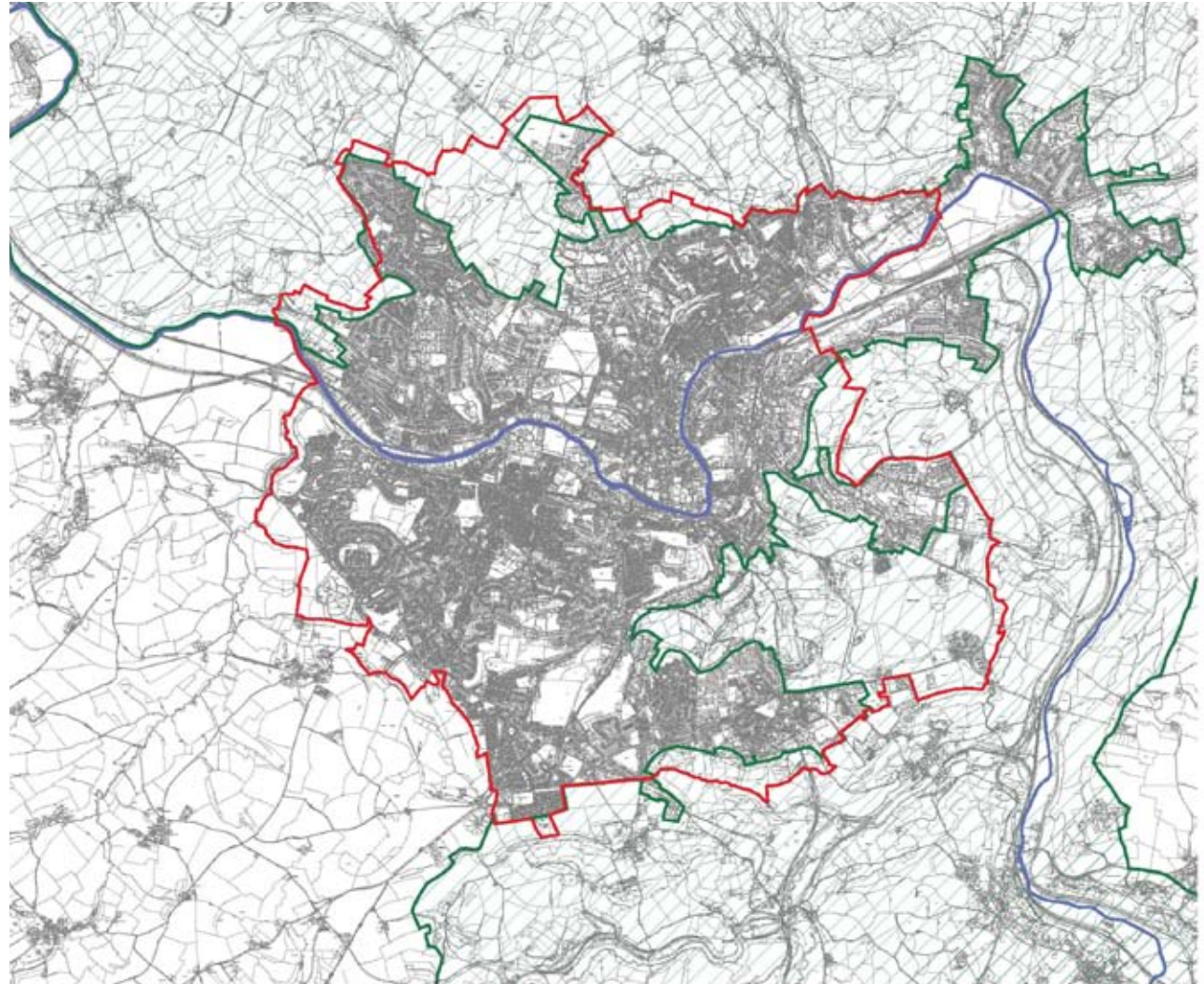
3.2 The current City boundary at Twerton is clearly visible from the AONB and is not of high architectural quality. Development of the BUE site presents an opportunity to enhance the visual edge of the City in this location.

3.2 The landscape of Bath has evolved from a more spartan urban landscape of Georgian Bath where street trees did not play an important role compared to the Victorian period.

3.3 The form of Bath and its surrounding landscape has been defined over the past two centuries by some key view points which have come to help inform the perceived character of Bath.

3.4 The proposal has been informed by key viewpoints from the surrounding urban and rural areas and has fully respected the adjacent wood and brook.

3.5 The form of the proposed development does not break the skyline from any views and allows the tree line to form the dominant silhouette from distant views. Seven Acre Wood will contribute significantly to the perception of undeveloped hillsides as referred to by the Local Plan Policy NE3 (2007). achieving this effect even if reduced in size.



Plan showing extent of AONB designation

The Site - From the Globe Roundabout

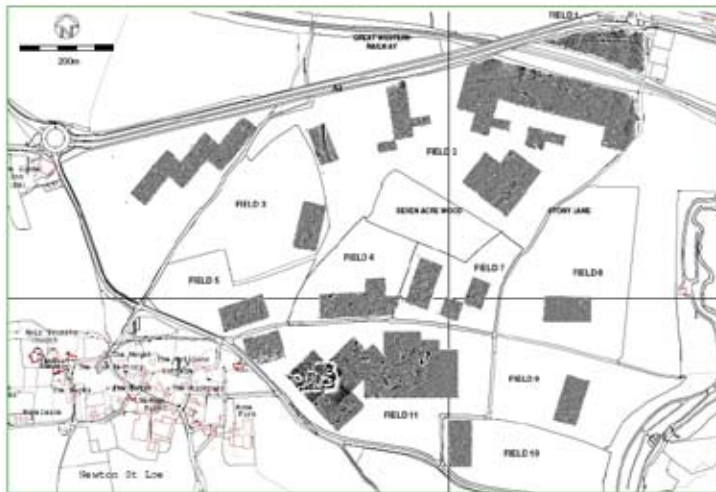
4. Archaeology

4.1 The archaeology of the site is well identified and contained. Detailed studies commissioned by the Duchy identify two separate and distinct areas of important archaeology; Newton St Loe Roman Villa adjacent unearthed during excavations for the railway cutting in 1837 and the Prehistoric/ Romano-British to the South of the site.

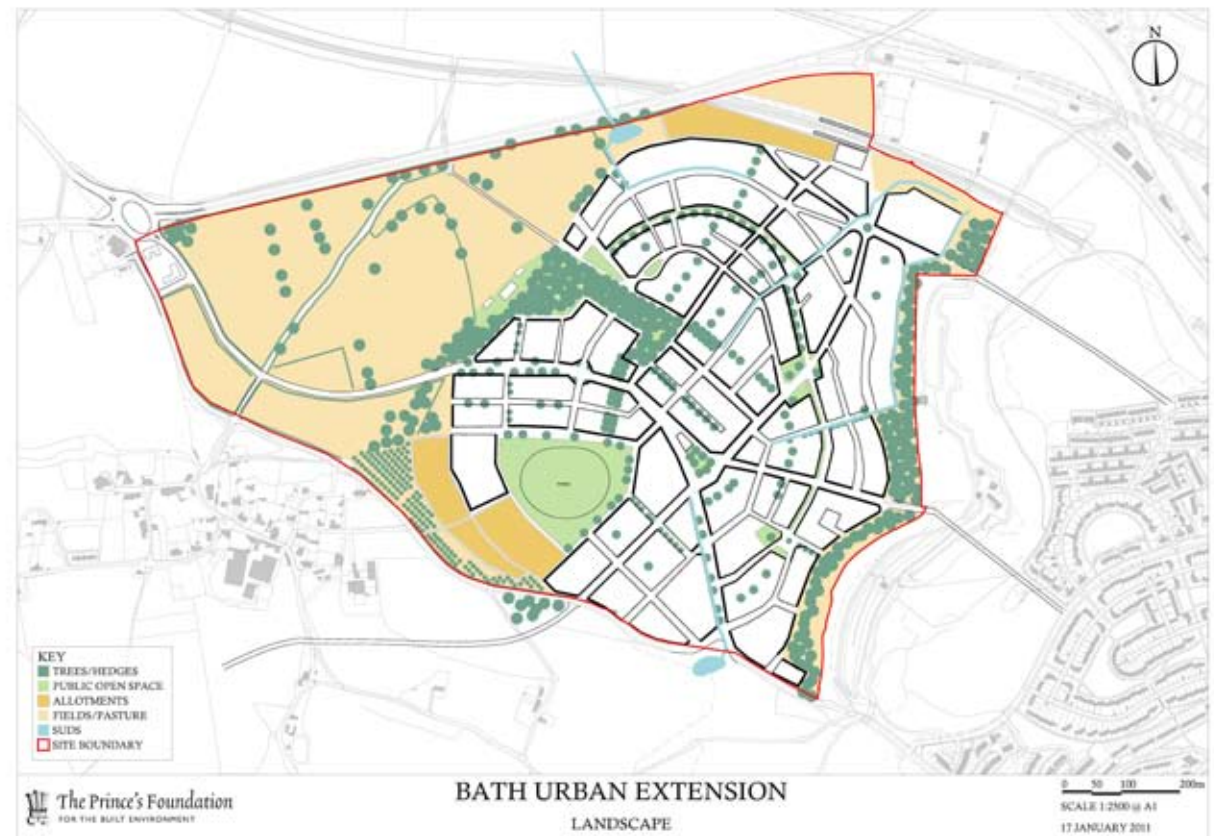
4.2 These sites afford the opportunity to create suitable amenities which would be required in a sustainable urban neighbourhood. Indeed, the presence of historical remains adjacent to the village

of Newton St Loe have proved helpful in creating a sense of separation between the village and the proposed development whilst also ensuring valuable open space that can reflect the historical importance of the site.

4.3 The presence of the Roman Villa has enabled development to be set back from the railway whilst not impeding any potential future rail halt. As such the archaeology does not displace other land uses and is not therefore viewed as a constraint.



Plans showing extent of Archaeological findings and responding landscape structure



5. Connection to Twerton

5.1 The proposed development would be directly connected to Twerton by a cycle and footbridge to encourage walking and cycling as well as the more usual road network for public transport and private vehicle, which is encouraged less.

5.2 The scale and density of the proposed development is enough to support amenities required for daily needs in its own walkable form.

5.3 Sustainable urban forms should be both connected but self sufficient in terms of daily needs to this is both of those things. The connection to Twerton is therefore encouraged for complementarity rather than necessity, providing amenities not just for the new development but for existing communities

5.4 The slopes and brook, combined with a new bridge afford an excellent opportunity for a unifying landscape strategy for wider Bath, Twerton and the proposed development. Both Bath and Keynsham show how landscape features and amenity space threading between urban areas are characteristic typology of the area.

6. Newton St. Loe

6.1 The proposed development would seek to protect the integrity and setting of the village of Newton St. Loe using natural topography and planted woodland to create separation between Pennyquick and the village.

6.2 Traffic would be directed through the urban extension, and away from Newton St. Loe, therefore reducing the impact on the village whilst maintaining local access.

The Site - From the Globe Roundabout

7. Conclusions

7.1 The heritage and landscape constraints present have been considered carefully and through specific studies commissioned by the Duchy of Cornwall. In response to representations made by both English Heritage and Natural England it can be concluded that:

7.2 Bath as a city has grown significantly beyond the Georgian City in the hollow. The WHS encompasses the whole city including its Victorian and 20th Century additions marking the long-term growth of the city. Like many later additions to Bath, the development cannot be seen from within the hollow.

7.3 The Western approach to Bath is uncharacteristic of the WHS and the Duchy land offers an opportunity to address and improve the entrance to the city whilst introducing street and building forms that represent continuity with the character of the WHS.

7.4 The site lies outside the designed landscape of Kelston House but within the 'borrowed' landscape that provided views to the rear of the house. The view of the rural hinterland has been consistently degraded since the 1760's but can be both framed, and restored by the development.

7.5 The site is without the AONB, and the setting of the AONB is not protected. The proposal has been informed by key viewpoints and preserves key landscape features of the site.

7.6 Archaeological remains are not seen as a constraint and provide amenity space and a natural break between the development and Newton St Loe.

7.7 The development would be purposefully connected to Twerton, and the site presents an opportunity for a unifying infrastructure, transport, community facility and landscape strategy with Twerton.

7.8 The setting of Newton St Loe would be protected by the natural topography and woodland with through-traffic diverted away from Pennyquick.



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