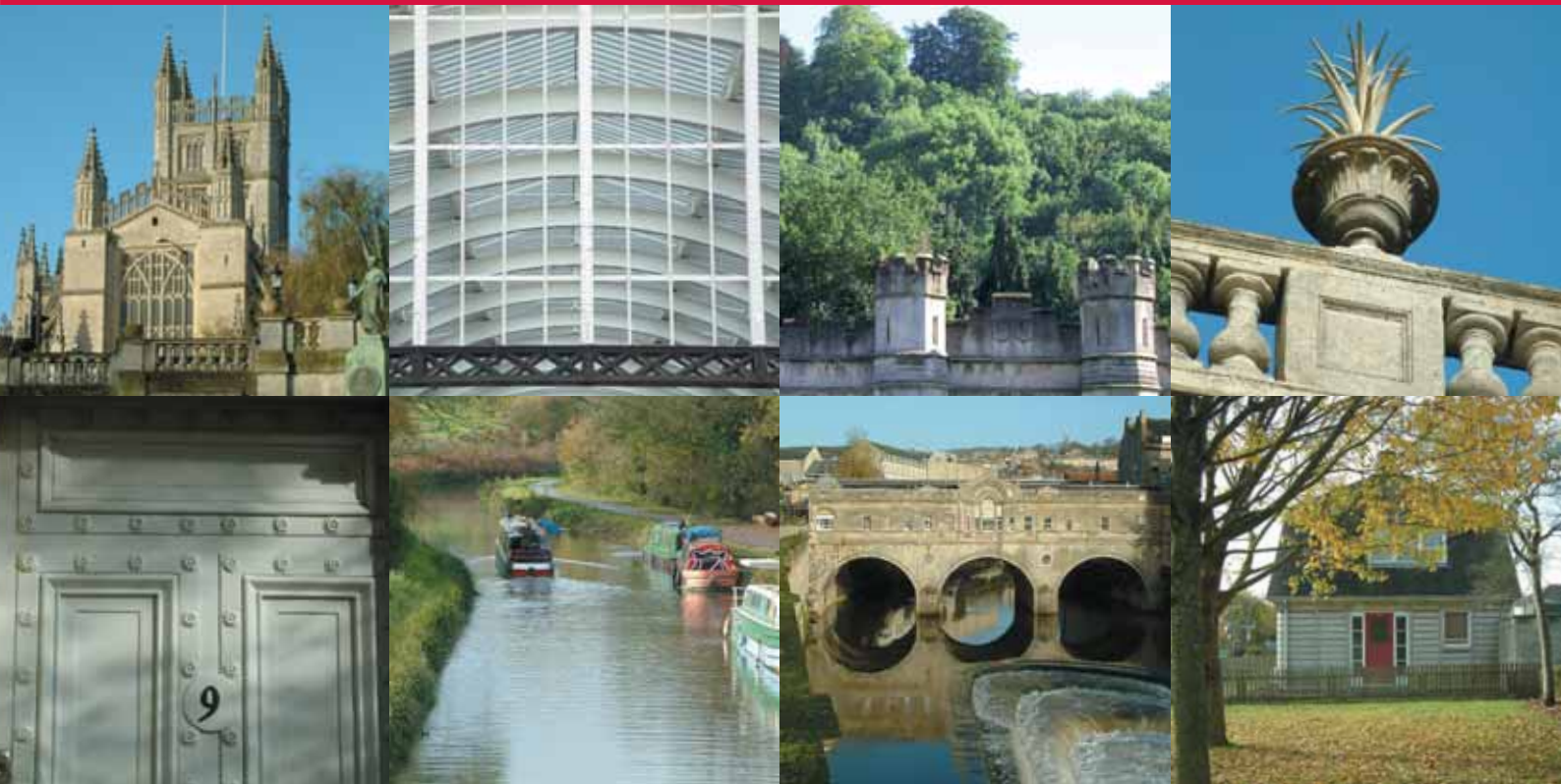


Bath and North East Somerset
Planning Services

Bath City-wide Character Appraisal



Supplementary Planning Document
Adopted 31 August 2005



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Bath has evolved over time in response to political, social and economic conditions and continues to evolve to this day. The cumulative effect of these changes has created the distinctive character of Bath which is so valued by residents and visitors alike. An understanding of this character is fundamental to informing any changes and in achieving good design that continues to maintain and enhance the character of Bath.
- 1.2 This document presents the results of the Bath city-wide character appraisal which was carried out in 2004 and 2005. This has been prepared to assist residents, businesses, developers, agents, amenity societies, planners, decision makers, visitors and the local community in understanding the character of the city, its setting and its component parts. It also provides the context for more detailed assessments which will be needed to inform specific proposals and for studies such as the Bath conservation area character appraisal which is planned to be carried out following this study.
- 1.3 Public consultation on the Bath city-wide character appraisal as a Supplementary Planning Document took place between 20 June and 18 July 2005. A summary of the comments received and council's responses is available on request.
- 1.4 This document was adopted on 31 August 2005 as a Supplementary Planning Document to policies 1, BH.1, BH.6, BH.8, BH.15, D.1, D.2, D.4, HG.7, GB.2, NE.1, NE.2, NE.3, NE.12 and NE.15 of the Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan including Minerals and Waste Policies Revised Deposit Draft 2003; policies C1, C2, C3, C4, GB2, H13, L1, L2, L3, L9 and L20 of the Bath Local Plan adopted June 1997; policies LNC.1, LNC.2, CH.4, GEN.2, WGB.1, CH.5, HO.4, HO6 and HO.12 of the Wansdyke Local Plan Deposit Draft November 1995 (as amended September 2000) and policies 1, 3, 17 and 19 of the Joint Replacement Structure Plan adopted September 2002. It is a material consideration in planning decisions affecting Bath and carries considerable weight in decision making, having been subject to scrutiny and amendment through public consultation.
- 1.5 The Bath city-wide character appraisal covers the area of Bath and its immediate environs. This complements Bath & North East Somerset Council Planning Services' 'Rural Landscapes of Bath and North East Somerset: A Landscape Character Assessment: Supplementary Planning Guidance' (2003). This Bath city-wide character appraisal has also been informed by earlier studies listed in Appendix 1.

2 Designations that Demonstrate the Significance of Bath

- 2.1 The significance of Bath is locally, regionally, nationally and internationally recognised through a series of designations. Principal designations include the:
 - Inscription of the city of Bath as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in December 1987
 - Protection of the Hot Springs in Bath¹
 - Designation of the Bath conservation area covering 1,486 hectares
 - Designation of the Bristol/Bath Green Belt
 - Designation of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty²
 - Listing of c 5,000 buildings as being of special architectural or historic importance
 - Scheduling of five ancient monuments
 - Nine historic landscapes on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens

3 Aims, Objectives and Methodology

- 3.1 The Bath city-wide character appraisal reviews:
- The historical development of Bath
 - Key elements that contribute to Bath's character
 - Variations across the area of the city and its immediate environs
 - and provides a summary of the issues that affect Bath's character.
- 3.2 The aims and objectives of the Bath city-wide character appraisal are to:
- Identify character
 - Inform decisions
- 3.3 By identifying key elements of character and highlighting variations across the city this document will help to retain, conserve, maintain and enhance Bath's character and quality through the development control process and by informing other projects such as public realm enhancements.
- 3.4 Methodology
- 3.4.1 The methodology used was based on guidance prepared by English Heritage, the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland 2002', as well as good practice and recent urban character assessments such as Gosport and Oxford.
- 3.4.2 The Bath city-wide character appraisal process included the following stages:
- Desk top study including an analysis of available information (see Appendix 1) and identification of draft character areas
 - Field survey to gather information and to refine character area boundaries (a Bath city-wide character assessment survey sheet is set out in Appendix 2)
 - Analysis and writing up research and survey information and preparation of draft document
 - Consultation
 - Review and revision of document
 - Publication of finished document

4 Using the Bath City-wide Character Appraisal

- 4.1 This Bath city-wide character appraisal gives an understanding of what makes Bath distinctive by considering its character and significance. This will be used to inform future proposals for change and opportunities for enhancement, preservation and innovation within Bath.
- 4.2 This Bath city-wide character appraisal summarises the character and significance of Bath with end notes which set out full references to further detailed information. The references are an essential part of the character appraisal and should therefore be referred to in any consideration of this document.

5 Cultural and Historical Development of Bath

5.1 The very existence of Bath's Hot Springs gives Bath its *raison d'être*. The hot mineral springs have had a profound influence on the continually evolving development and culture of Bath.

5.2 Pre Roman

5.2.1 The pre-historic landscape around Bath was intensively used. The surrounding downs have provided evidence of human activity in the form of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flint implements suggesting settlements, and Bronze Age tumuli can still be seen at Lansdown, Charmy Down and Bathampton Down. The sixth to second centuries BC saw the construction of Little Solsbury hillfort which still dominates the modern skyline. In addition to hilltop defended sites, there would also have been a large number of farmsteads on the more fertile lowland slopes. Sion Hill and Barrow Mead are the few examples recorded within Bath.

5.2.2 However, nowhere within the walled city area has any trace of pre-Roman occupation been found. This may be explained either by the fact that the area would have been an inhospitable marshland of thick, black mud, or perhaps a sacred location surrounding the springs. Either way, this was to change with the arrival of the Romans.

5.3 Roman

5.3.1 The Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43 brought knowledge and technology. Stone quarrying, the use of lime, pozzolana, brick, tile and mass concrete were all introduced. The Romans provided a completely new infrastructure of roads, settlements, public buildings and temples. The Roman bath houses enclosed Bath's Hot Springs and included a sophisticated water and drainage system. Outside the walled town workshops (at Walcot Street), villas, farmsteads and burial sites abounded. The influence of Roman roads can be seen in the orientation of present day roads, including Brougham Hayes which crossed the River Avon to meet Julian Road.³ By the fourth century the Roman town was generally abandoned although Walcot Street, on higher ground, remained in use through the fifth century. Abandoned, the baths and temple fell into decay. The eighth century Saxon poem 'The Ruin' describes the remains:

5.3.2 *"Wondrous is this masonry, shattered by the Fates.
The fortifications have given way,
the buildings raised by giants are crumbling...
There stood courts of stone.
and a stream gushed forth in rippling floods of hot water.
The wall enfolded within its bright bosom
the whole place which contained the hot flood of the baths."*

5.4 Mediaeval

5.4.1 The Saxon reconstruction of the city took place in the late ninth century. A new street pattern, a narrow grid, was superimposed on the Roman town. The High Street market place was its civic hub with a great Abbey as its religious heart, adjacent to the surviving King's Bath over the principal Hot Spring.

5.4.2 Mediaeval Bath was controlled by church, city and charity. The influence of the church was profound. The Abbey and its estates dominated the city and its surroundings. Edgar was crowned king of all England in the Abbey in 972. The Abbey controlled the baths.

- 5.4.3 The multitude of ecclesiastical parishes led to the secular parish system with their geographic administrative boundaries. The city walls and gates were rebuilt, the majority of the houses were timber framed, thatched roof dwellings with only the Abbey and principal buildings built in stone. Bridewell and Bilberry Lanes are examples of the remaining mediaeval street pattern. The mediaeval villages of Bathwick, Twerton, Weston and Widcombe and the hamlets of Walcot and Lyncombe were later incorporated into Bath.
- 5.4.4 Early development up to and including mediaeval times generally took place on lower land (below 50 metres above sea level), avoided steeper slopes and took advantage of cold water springs and streams as a source of fresh water. Development generally avoided the flood plain; development close to the river was located on gravel terraces rather than less stable silty alluvium.



Bridewell Lane – medieval street now enclosed by more recent development

5.5 Georgian

- 5.5.1 Royal patronage of the spa led to an increase in Bath's popularity as a place of resort, resulting in the development of lodgings, significant spa and public buildings as well as later pleasure gardens, such as Sydney Gardens and the former Vauxhall Gardens.
- 5.5.2 *"In the Progress of these Improvements Thatch'd Coverings were exchang'd to such as were Tiled; low and obscure Lights were turn'd into elegant Sash-Windows; the Houses were rais'd to five and more Stories in Height; and every one was lavish in Ornaments to adorn the Outsides of them, even to Profuseness: So that only Order and Proportion was wanted to make BATH, sixteen years ago, vie with the famous City of Vicenza, in Italy, when in the highest Pitch of Glory, by the excellent Art of the celebrated Andrea Palladio...."*
John Wood (1704-1754) Essay 1742-3
- 5.5.3 Bath's role as a place of fashionable resort was paramount in the Georgian era. Bath was the place to see and to be seen. Parading was the new fashion. The built expression of this was in the broad pavements of the North and South Parades, Terrace Walk, Gravel Walk and Milsom Street.
- 5.5.4 *"The New Terrace Walk (Gravel Walk) behind the Circus is one of the best and most pleasant walks in this kingdom..."*
Bath Chronicle, 6 August 1789
- 5.5.5 The Georgian city was built using Oolitic Limestone (commonly known as Bath stone) from the quarries of Ralph Allen at Combe Down.
- 5.5.6 Early C18 developments ring the core of the mediaeval city; John Wood's North and South Parades and Queen's Square are two notable examples. By mid C18 the development of nearby hillsides began. Wood's 1754-1767 Circus is the pre-eminent example.
- 5.5.7 The construction of Pulteney Bridge between 1796-1774 opened up the Bathwick estate for development. Grand plans were drawn up for this area but the 1793 war with France led to a rise in interest rates which caused the Bath bank crash and much of this area was left unfinished.



The Circus

- 5.5.8 The demand for accommodation led to speculative building. Successful speculative development dominated the development of Bath throughout the C18 and C19 and relied on the creation of a socially desirable built form that had the flexibility to respond to individual requirements. Bath's C18 architects, craftsmen and developers excelled at providing this. By acquiring tracts of land, designing an overall guiding set of plans and then sub-leasing individual plots to others, they minimised their own financial risk and controlled the overall design of principal elevations, roadways and pavements while enabling the final lessee to create their own building interior.
- 5.5.9 This period saw the importance of the architect in designing and setting out buildings particularly where more modern or prestigious buildings were required. Other buildings were the responsibility of master craftsmen who followed the designs of fashionable building styles. These buildings were speculative in nature and followed classical principles of proportion and symmetry. The building style gave rise to a co-ordinated appearance with variation of detailing providing interest. The imposition of order was fundamental to the design and construction of Georgian buildings. Architects and patrons studied the ruins of ancient classical sites in Italy and Greece. The publication of their measured studies led in turn to a rash of builders' pattern books. Together these forged an understanding of classical architecture; the preferred architectural language of C18 Britain. This coincided with the introduction of building legislation stemming from the impact of the 1666 Great Fire of London.
- 5.5.10 This new legislation had a direct and wide-ranging impact on the design of new buildings. Many aspects of buildings were subject to new controls including a series of 'rates' for buildings. These established an ordered relationship between the spacing of party walls, the width of streets, floor to ceiling heights, the height of the principal floor above ground level, the recessing of window frames behind the face of a façade and the protection of roofs behind parapets. These and other controls, coupled with the introduction of classicism through architects' and surveyors' designs as well as builders' pattern books, had a profound effect on emerging new buildings, streets, squares and the spaces between them.
- 5.5.11 The impact of the concept of the Picturesque⁴ in the late C18 led building occupants to seek a closer relationship to the landscape. The form of the terrace and crescent now followed the contours of Bath's undulating topography in a far more fluent way. The ensemble of Lansdown Place East, Lansdown Crescent, Lansdown Place West and Somerset Place is the pre-eminent example of the response of built form to landscape and views.
- 5.5.12 The development of the villa in the late C18 and early C19 continued for the wealthy through the C19 and into the beginning of the C20.

5.6 Victorian

- 5.6.1 The C19 saw the introduction of new transport technologies; the Kennet and Avon Canal at the beginning of the century, the Great Western Railway mid century and the Bath tram system at the latter part of the century. The tram system provided mass transport which enabled new developments on the fringes of the city.
- 5.6.2 Modest scale terraces formed the housing for the great growth in Bath's working population as the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the Enclosure Acts led to a migration of the population to England's cities. Bath was no exception and the development of industry along the River Avon was matched by an explosion of two storey terrace housing engulfing the river valley sides. Oldfield Park and former villages such as Twerton are examples. Larger properties set within large gardens were also built during this period.



Third Avenue, Oldfield Park

- 5.6.3 C19 society's anxieties about public health issues led to new initiatives in sanitation, public parks and cemeteries. In Bath the Royal Victoria Park and the Abbey Cemetery were among the earliest national responses to these concerns.
- 5.6.4 Municipal corporations were created by new legislation. The exuberance and optimism of Victorian society and the recently established City Corporation led to the further discovery and redisplay of the Roman Baths and the building of the Concert Room, Guildhall extensions and the Victoria Art Gallery.
- 5.6.5 Three events; an 1898 plaque scheme, the 1904 campaign to save the north side of Bath Street and the 1909 Historical Pageant, led to a reawakening of an interest in the significance of Bath's history and development and a new concern for its future care.

5.7 Twentieth Century and Present Day

- 5.7.1 The inter war years saw the revival of the spa, the revitalisation of the Mineral Water Hospital and the restoration of the Assembly Rooms. The early C20 growth of the ownership and use of motor vehicles led to new pressures on the city's streets and public spaces. The introduction of traffic signs and markings was not enough to keep traffic flowing. Historic buildings at key road junctions were demolished and rebuilt to take account of new street patterns, examples of such junctions are Westgate Street, Kingsmead Street and Kingsmead Square and Monmouth Street.
- 5.7.2 The 1930s development of Kingsmead flats on a former Corporation stone yard was the first steel framed building in Bath. The 1923-7 Post Office, New Bond Street by the Office of Works shows an informed understanding of classicism.

"A distinguished and competent Neo-Georgian design produced at a time when classicism still formed the basis of an architect's education."

Michael Forsyth

Housing developments at this time included areas of Bailbrook; Rosehill, Larkhall; Villa Fields, Bathwick; Dolemeads, Widcombe; Wellsway; Odd Down; Moorlands; The Oval; Southdown; Stirlingale; Whiteway; Innox Road; Avon Park; Rudmore Park and Yomedea Park.

- 5.7.3 The evacuation of the Admiralty to Bath in 1939 led to it becoming Bath's largest employer.⁵
- 5.7.4 The 1942 bombing of Bath was a watershed in the city's history. The two nights of Baedeker raids led to the death of over 400 people and the damage or destruction of 19,000 buildings of which 1,100 buildings were seriously damaged or destroyed. Repair and reconstruction were swift.
- 5.7.5 *"The beauty [Bath] was not awakened by a kiss from a city father; Hitler blitzed her back into life and vitality, and it may be that the shock of the air raids jolted Bath into a new determination and confidence to succeed."*
Horace Annesley Vachell
- 5.7.6 Patrick Abercrombie's 1945 'A Plan for Bath' gave the city and its environs a new outlook on planning that reviewed air raid damage, urgent housing problems and traffic issues. Providing new housing alone was not enough. The Plan envisaged Bath being divided into a series of neighbourhoods each provided with its community centre, shopping areas, churches, schools, parks and playing fields.
- 5.7.7 Much of Bath's postwar housing and communities are a direct result of this initiative. Populations in existing local communities both within Bath and in its environs were to increase greatly through the provision of new housing. The Plan led to the 1950s incorporation of the villages of Combe Down, Twerton and Weston into an expanded Bath with the consequent development of significant areas of new housing, much of it prefabricated. Building materials were still subject to strict postwar rationing and control, even the number of prefabricated housing was limited and subject to carefully scrutinised allocation nationally. The Moorlands estate was the first new housing scheme to be built after the war. Work began in August 1946. The last house was opened on its completion in February 1949 by Aneurin Bevan.

- 5.7.8 *“As the years go by estates like this will spring up all over the country, and when I come across local authorities that are not paying enough sufficient regard to the design of their houses and the use of materials, I will tell them to visit Bath and see a good example of what they should do.”*
Aneurin Bevan



The Oval

- 5.7.9 The postwar review of the city's C18 and C19 housing against C20 housing standards led to the wholesale clearance and redevelopment of large areas of the city. Snow Hill (1954-1961), Calton Gardens (1969-1970), Margaret's Hill and Ballance Street (1969-1973) are key examples.
- 5.7.10 The creation of the Bath Festival in the 1940s and the University of Bath in the 1960s were further spurts to Bath's cultural and economic revival.
- 5.7.11 The conservation programmes of the 1970s and 1980s marked a turning point in the care and reuse of the city's buildings and open spaces.
- 5.7.12 The intercity rail link to London and new technologies enabling people to work from home have led to a buoyancy in Bath's housing market. These factors, coupled with the growth of Bath's hospitals and universities as well as the influx of new businesses into the city and its environs, have increased housing demand.
- 5.7.13 Changing technologies, business takeovers and consequent financial pressures led to the loss of traditional key industries leaving large tracts of brownfield land as yet undeveloped. The twentieth century development of architecture led to a concern for the care, well-being and future use of historic buildings and areas as well as a plethora of new building technologies influencing the development of both architecture and new building types.
- 5.7.14 Current government planning policy guidance emphasises the redevelopment of brownfield sites, higher housing densities and the need for significant amounts of new housing as well as affordable homes. Housing provision, once primarily the concern of central and local government, has now also become the domain of private finance and social housing providers.
- 5.7.15 In 1987 the city of Bath was inscribed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites, recognising it as a place of international cultural significance. Bath's World Heritage status is based on the city's Roman remains; the C18 city, including architecture and urban design; the surrounding landscape and its relationship with the development and design of the city and the city's social history. At the heart of Bath's significance are the Hot Springs, which have been the driving force behind the creation and growth of the city since the Romans first discovered them in the first century AD. The City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan 2003-9 gives a full explanation of Bath's significance as a World Heritage Site and sets out what the status means for the city.

5.8 Conclusion

5.8.1 This wealth of history reflects Bath's significance as a place of resort and is a key to understanding the character of Bath.

Bath Abbey from Parade Gardens



Queens Square



Newton Road



Walcot Parade



6 The Character of Bath

The following sections describe the key aspects of character that give Bath its distinctiveness and significance.

6.1 Landscape, Setting and Views

- 6.1.1 The key ingredients that have influenced the form of Bath are the presence of Hot mineral water Springs, the River Avon, cold water springs on the seven surrounding hills, the degree of enclosure that the hills give and the gentle sheltered landform at the foot of the Cotswold Hills.
- 6.1.2 One of the valued characteristics of Bath is the way buildings respond to the distinct topography and are designed with consideration of the surrounding landscape and adjoining spaces. Many buildings and terraces follow contours, often overlooking open ground to panoramic views across the city. Other buildings and terraces step up the slopes at right angles to the contours giving a contrasting appearance. The ingenuity and variety of architects' responses to the topography contribute greatly to the unique appearance of Bath. The landform is occasionally manipulated by the building of raised pavements and vaulted gardens. The distinct topography has resulted in some dramatic variations of building scale, for example the relationship between the Paragon and Walcot Street.
- 6.1.3 Fingers of green, whether woodland, open farmland or grassland, extend well into the city softening and contrasting with the built form.
- 6.1.4 Bath's unique topography gives opportunities to exploit a multitude of views. It is clear from these views that the city is characterised by a limited colour palette of muted tones.
- 6.1.5 Many parts of the city have views to wooded skyline or undeveloped slopes. Many terraces and villas were designed to impress visitors and other residents. John Wood Senior in his quote referring to design said *"first as a landscape of vistas, visual surprises and open spaces linked one with another."*
- 6.1.6 Views within the city are usually enriched by private and public spaces, an abundance of trees and landmarks including Bath Abbey, church spires, Beckford's Tower, Prior Park and Sham Castle.
- 6.1.7 The desire for views across the landscape and to the landscape itself led to the development of deeper, lower windows. Earlier terraces and crescents often had the cills of their first floor windows cut down to enable their occupants to enjoy the newly discovered landscape as at the Royal Crescent.



View from North Road to the Paragon and Walcot Street



Royal Crescent

6.1.8 Key points include

- Physical Influences; geology, landform, drainage pattern and orientation
- Development responds creatively to natural topography
- Green space brings the countryside into the city
- Key characteristic views and vistas to trees and open landscape
- Limited colour palette of muted tones
- Development characteristically makes use of views to the city and undeveloped slopes and hills. The visual focus changes according to viewpoint (no one part of Bath can be considered out of sight)
- Open space provides the setting to key buildings and set pieces

6.2 Influence of River Avon

6.2.1 The River Avon is an important feature of Bath. The environs of the course taken by the river are very varied. In places the river is in a tight corridor between developments; elsewhere it flows through a wider fairly flat bottomed valley with residential and business development. Further out it flows through open spaces and meadows with trees and woodlands.



A natural section of riverbank



Southbourne Mansions



Local open space west of Windsor Bridge Road

6.2.2 The River Avon was a natural barrier to the early expansion of the city and a source of transport. River crossing points influenced street patterns and were a catalyst for development. Bridges over the river are key features in their own right; they also aid orientation and provide excellent views of the city and surrounding hills.

6.2.3 In the early C18 the river channel in Bath was partly canalised, the existing river side footpaths were upgraded to a towing path and locks were added to make the river navigable to Bristol. This allowed easier transport for Bath stone quarried at Combe Down to reach Bristol and ports beyond, as well as easing the import of coal from Wales, timber from the Baltic and other imports to the city.

6.2.4 In the early C18 John Wood had a number of grand plans to make use of the river near Terrace Walk as the centre of the new city. North and South Parade were constructed but then the focus of development moved to the upper part of the city. As a result very little of C18 Bath related positively to the river. The exceptions were Norfolk Crescent and Green Park, both built in the later Georgian period and designed to take the views along and across the river in accordance with the picturesque movement. In the C19 and C20 development continued to turn its back on the river; generally the public face of development related to roads running parallel to the



Waterfront house (Camden Malthouse)

river. This resulted in the area between the main buildings and river being occupied by small scale buildings or service yards. This created variety in the relationship of development to the river. The riverside warehouses opposite Bath Quays are four to six storey buildings located directly at the river's edge. This relationship is memorable and distinctive.

6.2.5 The River Avon valley provided the route for alternative means of transport including roads, the Kennet and Avon Canal, and the Great Western Railway. The latter two great linear constructions of the C18 and C19, which link Bath to London and Bristol, follow the contours only deviating where landform dictates by locks or tunnels, aqueducts and viaducts. They can be picked out at a distance from the many surrounding hills by the way they constrict housing lines and by the trees along their course.

6.2.6 Key points include

- River west of Widcombe is canalised with a towpath
- Variety in the way development relates to the river
- Most development turns its back on or ignores the river
- Few sites positively respond to the river. Examples include Norfolk Crescent and Green Park
- Importance of bridges crossing the river – Pulteney Bridge, Cleveland Bridge and Victoria Bridge through to more workaday reminders of the industrial past
- Importance of views from the riverside path and to the river corridor between buildings

6.3 High Quality Architecture and Urban Design

6.3.1 An important characteristic of Bath is the use of buildings to create places and spaces; a high quality public realm framed by buildings of simple and understated design but with elegant and classical proportion.

6.3.2 One of the most important characteristics of Bath is that its buildings and the spaces between them form an ensemble. This partnership, designed and functioning as one, is a key characteristic of the architecture and urban design of Bath.

6.3.3 Bath has a very limited range of building forms which provide distinction and form to the city's character, whether large villas in spacious grounds or terraces marching up hillsides or clinging to contours. When seen from higher ground clear breaks are discernible between groups of buildings. These spaces provide human scale and are the setting for a range of activities as well as providing room for trees which provide softening and visual interest. These spaces are often experienced as part of a sequence and are integral to the enjoyment of the city. Many of Bath's buildings are complemented by carefully detailed boundary walls and railings.

6.3.4 Terraces of buildings and their response to Bath's distinct topography are key defining characteristics of the architecture and urban design of Bath. This is particularly evident in terraced buildings that have been built:

- 1 On comparatively level ground as outward looking blocks – for example North and South Parades and Duke Street
- 2 On comparatively level ground as inward looking squares – for example Queen's Square and Beauford Square
- 3 On comparatively level ground as linear blocks – for example Beauford Place East, Prior Park Buildings and Grosvenor Place



1 South Parade



2 Queen Square



3 Prior Park Buildings

- 4 On hillsides as stepped buildings with stepped band courses, parapets and cornices – for example Gay Street, Oxford Row, Belmont and Lansdown Road
- 5 On hillsides as stepped buildings but with subtly swept band courses, parapets and cornices – for example St Mary's Buildings, Wellsway, Raby Place, Bathwick Hill and Seven Dials
- 6 Following gently curving contours – for example Lansdown Place East, Lansdown Crescent, Lansdown Place West and Somerset Place.



4 Lansdown Road



5 St Mary's Buildings



6 Somerset Place

6.3.5 A further characteristic of terraces is the way in which they turn corners with their side elevations relating to the street, and subtle detailing.

6.3.6 A distinguishing characteristic of many of Bath's C18 and early C19 terraces is the unifying of the façade by treating individual buildings as components of one palatial façade. This architectural device was used extensively in C18 developments of which the Circus and Royal Crescent are well known examples. This approach gives classical proportion, geometry and formality to a variety of building forms including more flowing crescents of the later C18.

6.3.7 One of the key architectural styles used in the development of Bath was classicism. The basic characteristics of classical architecture are order, harmony, proportion, symmetry, unity and a balance of form, line and decoration.⁶ The essence of classicism is striving for harmonious relationships in architecture. Understanding the principles of classicism can lead to interpretations of present day classicism in contemporary building. Some modern Bath buildings have the inherent, understated simplicity of modern classicism.



Royal Crescent

6.3.8 Bath buildings are typically fairly restrained with a clear and overriding emphasis on classical principles and proportion. Elaboration is generally reserved for the smaller elements of buildings such as detailed stone work in window surrounds or above entrance doors. Importantly this elaboration often performs a practical function such as shedding water from buildings.

6.3.9 The roofscape of the majority of Bath's C18 and early C19 terraces are articulated by stone capped party walls and front and back stone chimney stacks with their clay chimney pots and 'M' shaped roofs. The same roofing materials and pitch are used for each of the roof's slopes with front and back lead-lined parapet gutters as well as a central lead-lined valley gutter.

6.3.10 Vertical sliding sash windows are one of the major elements of most Bath buildings and provide a major contribution to the small scale detail on building façades. The basic symmetry and elegance of the sash window and its practicality for controlled ventilation led to its wide scale use.

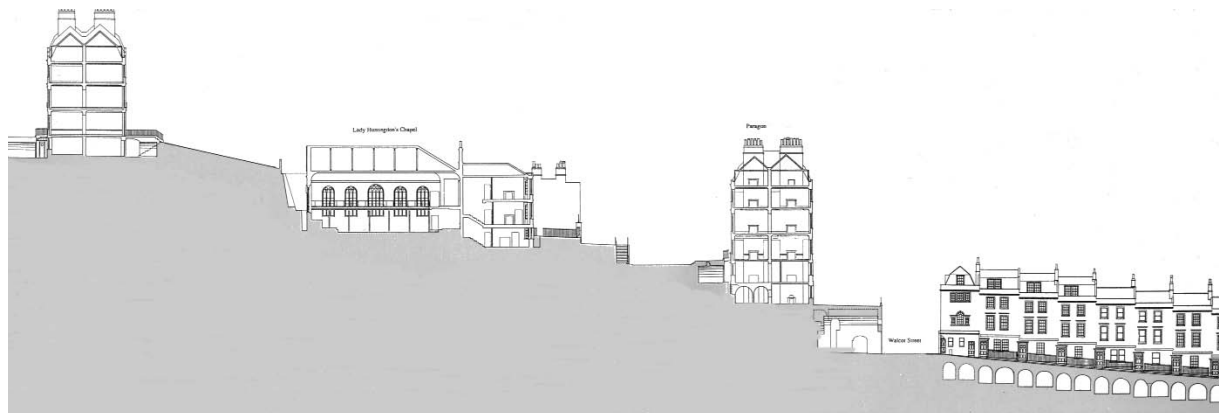
6.3.11 Key points include

- Integration with landform
- Terrace form is characteristic
- Urban design and architectural principles such as set pieces, spaces between buildings, symmetry, architectural detailing and proportion
- Well designed relationship between buildings and spaces
- Restrained building design but plenty of distinctive places and streets
- Quality of spaces; human scale and design for use
- Groups of buildings often separated by green space
- Consideration of sequential views
- Influence of trees and shrubs both locally and as a setting to the city
- Importance of boundary walls and railings.

6.4 Height and Scale

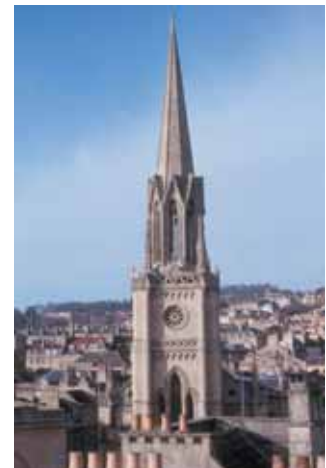
6.4.1 A unifying characteristic of Bath is the generally uniform heights and scale of its buildings.

- Within the core of the city and its immediate surroundings, the majority of buildings are three to four storeys high with attics and basements (and sometimes sub-basements). There can be considerable variation in height between buildings of the same number of storeys. This is due to different floor to ceiling heights which traditionally were defined by the 'rates' described in 5.5.10. In the major C18 developments there was often a hierarchy of scale between the grand frontage blocks and the smaller scale service blocks to the rear.
- Outside the city centre the majority of buildings are two storeys in height with the exception of occasional three or four storey C18 or C19 terraces.



Section: Belmont, Building of Bath Museum, Vineyards, Paragon, Chatham Row

- 6.4.2 Much of Bath’s C18 and early C19 buildings are elevated on a series of C18 vaults approximately four to five metres above the natural ground level thus avoiding the need for otherwise costly and difficult ground excavation.
- 6.4.3 Bath’s skyline and roofscape is punctuated by the tower of Bath Abbey and by church towers and spires.
- 6.4.4 The integrity of Bath’s skyline and roofscape and the balance of views within, to and across the city were harmed by the introduction of a series of C20 buildings. Among them are the former Empire Hotel (1899-1901), Snow Hill tower block (1955-57), the City of Bath College (1957-63), Rosewell Court (1961), Kingsmead House (1964-65), the University of Bath (1966), former Telephone Exchange (1966-67) with a taller slate-hung extension (1971-72) and Pines Way building (early 1980s). These buildings also fail to relate sensitively to their immediate neighbours and the public realm.
- 6.4.5 The Snow Hill terraces fail to climb and follow the contours of the hillside. The resulting clash with neighbouring buildings is accentuated by the green roofs of Snow Hill’s terraces.



St Michael's Church



Snow Hill tower block and terraces



Rosewell Court



Former Telephone Exchange

6.4.6 Key points include

- Bath is characterised by buildings of generally uniform heights and scale; typically three to four storeys in the core of the city and two storeys outside the city centre.
- Bath's skyline and roofscape is punctuated by Bath Abbey and occasionally by church towers and spires
- Later tall buildings generally harm the integrity and balance of city views
- Human scale buildings and surrounding area (private and public spaces and streets)
- Characteristic roofscape articulated by chimneys, 'M' shaped roofs and parapet walls
- Modern buildings are often out of character due to deep plan forms, large unbroken roof expanse, flat roofs and poorly designed roof service facilities

6.5 Materials

6.5.1 Bath's buildings have an inherent quality given by the use of a limited palette of natural materials: well-detailed and well-maintained Bath stone,⁷ Welsh slate (principally soft blues and purples), painted iron and painted timber.



Pulteney Bridge

6.5.2 The scale and consistency of these natural materials, their inherent colours and the subtlety of their natural weathering, gives Bath's buildings a cohesive quality which is a key characteristic of the city.

6.5.3 The predominant use of Bath stone laid as ashlar⁸ with very thin joints gives Bath's natural stone buildings their characteristic unbroken surface.⁹

6.5.4 Bath stone ashlar was traditionally laid in regular course heights of 14 inches (355 mm) or 12 inches (305 mm) with cill courses of 6 inches (152 mm). These regular course heights are fundamental to the characteristic use of Bath stone. Some back and side walls are constructed of coursed Bath stone rubble, much of which was originally rendered with a self-finished lime render.¹⁰



Sydney Place

6.5.5 Painted timber sash windows¹¹ and doors, iron railings,¹² iron overthrows, and glass in painted timber sash windows and traditional fanlights and shopfronts also contribute to Bath's character. Clay roof tiles, principally pan tiles or double Roman tiles are prevalent in certain areas of the city. There are also a small number of buildings with stone tiled roofs which were prevalent in the C18.

6.5.6 Other locally used walling materials sometimes found within outlying areas of the city include red brick, pennant sandstone and White and Grey Lias Limestone.



Pennant Setts, Kerb and Paving

6.5.7 The characteristic paving material for footways is natural Pennant stone with Pennant stone kerbs. Pennant stone kerbs also border many areas of tarmac footways. Other paving materials include natural stone such as York stone, Forest of Dean stone and Blue Lias, Granite kerbs, tarmac and concrete.

6.5.8 Key points include

- Limited palette of materials
- Bath stone and Welsh slate characterise Bath's buildings
- Scale and consistency of natural materials
- Inherent colours of natural materials and their natural weathering

6.6 Perceptual and Cultural Influences on the Character of Bath

6.6.1 The painter and President of the Royal Academy Benjamin West (1738-1820) wrote *"Take Bath and twenty miles round it and there is not anything in the world superior to it."*

6.6.2 Bath has attracted travellers, writers, artists and musicians for centuries. They were drawn to Bath's distinctive character, and in turn, they contributed to the development of that character in a multitude of different ways through their work. The cultural perception of Bath has been dominated by three principal components: Bath Abbey; the spa and its Hot Springs; and the Georgian city and its landscape setting.

6.6.3 Bath has an international reputation for the quality of its architecture, urban design, archaeology and landscape setting, as recognised by the city's status as a World Heritage Site. The warm Bath stone of its classical buildings and their Pennant stone pavements create an image that is the very epitome of an English Georgian city.

Writers

6.6.4 A vast number of writers have contributed to the literature of Bath. Among writers who set their books in Bath are Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Fanny Burney, Tobias Smollett, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. Nineteen of the thirty chapters of Austen's 'Northanger Abbey' and nine of the twenty-four chapters of her 'Persuasion' are set in Bath.

Artists

6.6.5 Bath has always attracted artists to record its buildings and landscapes. Over 160 artists were working in C18 Bath. Of these, 49 were landscape or topographical painters. Printmakers documented over 1,100 views.

6.6.6 J.M.W. Turner, one of the most celebrated painters of the C19 created a painting of Bath Abbey in 1793.¹³

6.6.7 John Nash, (1893-1977) primarily a landscape painter with a great love of nature, visited Bath in the 1920s. He painted few urban scenes and even these show the subject framed by the surrounding landscape, such as 'Canal Bridge,' 'Sydney Gardens' and 'The Suspension Bridge, Bath.'¹⁴

6.6.8 The devastation wrought by the Baedeker blitz of Bath on 25, 26 and 27 April 1942 during the Second World War was recorded in a series of evocative paintings and drawings by war artists including John Piper, Clifford Ellis, Leslie Atkinson and Norma Bull.

6.6.9 Scenes and images of Bath have been used in advertising including railway posters from 1908 to the 1960s. A good example is C H Buckle's 1949 poster for British Rail simply titled 'Pulteney Bridge.'



West front of Bath Abbey by Turner



Norma Bull, "Bath's famous Circus is saved by the work of the Bomb Disposal Squad," 1942¹⁵

Photographers

6.6.10 The Bath Photographic Society's fourth annual meeting in February 1893 attracted attention when it proposed a "...photographic survey of the district."

6.6.11 *It was proposed to obtain photographs of all "... objects of interest which would form a most valuable record for historians, antiquarians and archaeologists."*
Bath Journal 25 February 1893

6.6.12 Forty years before this, the Reverend Francis Lockey (1796-1869) was using the newly invented calotype photographic process to record the city, its river and canal.



Francis Lockey, Pulteney Bridge and Weir, 1853

6.6.13 The architectural photographer Frank Yerbury (1885-1970) made a major photographic record of Bath in the 1930s/1940s.¹⁶

Film Makers

6.6.14 Bath is frequently used as the setting for film. Two recent productions include the BBC's 1995 adaptation of Jane Austen's 'Persuasion' and the 2004 film 'Vanity Fair.'

Musicians

6.6.15 Music has been at the centre of the city's life from the 1700s. Bath's Pump Room is home to the longest established band of musicians in England, now known as the Pump Room Trio.

6.6.16 *"The Pump-Room Band is one of the oldest and best establishments of this place; it draws the visitor and inhabitant from the most distant parts of the city to one general place of morning rendezvous; there long-parted friends indulge in unexpected meetings, whilst the inspiring melody of the Orchestra spreads a general glow of happiness around "*
Bath Herald 2 February 1799

6.6.17 The proposal for a Bath International Music Festival in 1938 was realised in 1948 and established Bath as a premier festival city.

6.6.18 Composer and performer Peter Gabriel drew inspiration from Little Solsbury Hill for his song 'Solsbury Hill.' The song reflects the mystical nature of the landscape, derived in part from the Iron Age hill fort, and mentions the view towards the city of Bath at night,

*"Climbing up on Solsbury Hill
I could see the City light
Wind was blowing, time stood still"*
Peter Gabriel, 1982