

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Development

Draft Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook and Western Riverside Character Appraisal Bath Conservation Area

November 2015



**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



Contents

1. Introduction and description of the Character Area	1
2. Summary of key characteristics	7
3. Historic development	9
4. Cultural influences	12
5. Archaeology	13
6. Landmarks and views	14
7. Land uses and their influences	15
8. Buildings, architectural quality and townscape	16
9. Materials and detailing	19
10. Streets and movement	21
11. Trees, open space, parks and gardens	23
12. Night-time character	24
13. Issues affecting the Character Area	25
Annexe 1. Maps	26
Map of landmarks and views	
Map of listed buildings	
Map of architectural and townscape features	
Map of trees, open space, parks and gardens.	
Annexe 2. Context	37
Annexe 3. References	37

1. Introduction and description of the Character Area

This document is a character appraisal for the Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook and Western Riverside Character Area of Bath Conservation Area.

The Character Area takes a narrow linear form dictated by the course of the River Avon and is roughly 2.25 miles long. It runs approximately west-north-west from Churchill Bridge in an S-curve to a point just short of the junction of the Lower Bristol Road with Newbridge Road. At some points the Character Area is no more than the width of the river and its banks.

It contains much of historical and townscape interest because of its transport and industrial associations, and scattered late Georgian buildings along the major roads as the city expanded. There is also a lot of good late Victorian housing. The major contribution to the World Heritage Site is its importance to the integrity of Bath's green setting, being visible from many points around the city, and the presence of scattered but significant archaeology, of which much more doubtless awaits discovery.

Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook and Western Riverside Character Area and the World Heritage Site

Core values and significances of Bath:

- Bath is a World Heritage Site, the only entire city in Britain to be so designated
- It is not a museum but a living city
- It has a remarkable degree of visual homogeneity
- Authenticity of the Site is of the essence, and its preservation and enhancement should be key criteria for all new development
- Its complex and delicate hierarchy of interrelated urban spaces, landscape and architecture could be easily disrupted by overbearing or misinformed development and by the accumulation of harm.

Bath was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1987. The designation describes the city as “a masterpiece of human creative genius whose protection must be the concern of all”.

The World Heritage Site designation was awarded for its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) with six cultural attributes:

1. Roman archaeology

Many of the City's Roman remains are centred around the Roman Baths. These include the archaeological remains of the Roman Temple of the Goddess Sulis Minerva and the extensive bathing complex. The Roman town of Aquae Sulis was a walled settlement. Beyond the city wall are Roman and Iron Age remains including hill forts, field systems and villas, demonstrating the extent of the settlement. The road system and Roman street plan influenced the Mediaeval and Georgian layout.

2. Hot springs

Bath's hot springs are the only ones in Britain, producing 250,000 gallons of water every day. There are three main springs - the

King's Spring, the Hetling Spring and the Cross Bath Spring. They have played a central role to every stage of the city's development, creating a unique social history and culture where the waters are central to healing and recreation.

3. 18th century architecture

Neo-classical architectural style dominates in Bath. Architects including John Wood the Elder, John Wood the Younger, Robert Adam, Thomas Baldwin, John Palmer, John Eveleigh and John Pinch followed Palladian principles to build houses, public buildings, bridges and churches. The Georgian arrangements of crescents, squares, The Circus and terraces form iconic, internationally recognisable structures. The widespread use of local limestone and the uniform scale and height of buildings contribute to Bath's beauty today.

4. 18th century town planning

In the 18th century Bath was re-invented as a fashionable health resort, expanding dramatically beyond its city walls. Mediaeval streets were transformed into a spacious and beautiful classical city, where architecture and the natural landscape complemented each other. Uniformity of design was enhanced with the universal use of honey-coloured Bath limestone. Innovative forms of town planning including squares, crescents and The Circus were introduced. Attractive views and vistas were deliberately created. Bath's Georgian town planning influenced subsequent developments in the UK and beyond.

5. Green setting

The City of Bath lies within a hollow of the hills. There are green views in every direction from the city centre. The countryside stretches right to Bath's doorstep. The hilly, green landscape was exploited by Bath's 18th century architects and developers, who created elegant terraces and villas on the slopes. The hills to the south of the city provided the oolitic limestone from which the city was built. Trees and woodlands populate the skyline, and lend natural beauty to the river, canal, parks and gardens. Open agricultural land on the edge of Bath is still used for grazing animals, just as it was by the Georgians.

6. Social setting

Bath's Georgian architecture reflected 18th century social ambitions. The city was a destination for pilgrimage, and for playing out the social aspirations of fashionable spa culture. The social, economic and physical re-birth of the city as an internationally famous spa resort was largely due to three key characters: the architect John Wood the Elder, wealthy postmaster and stone entrepreneur Ralph Allen and Bath's famous Master of Ceremonies Richard 'Beau' Nash. Visitors flocked to Bath. The list of famous and influential people who visited, lived in or wrote about the city is extensive. Customs and practices associated with 'taking the waters' were practiced and developed here. The fashion for promenading influenced the design of Bath streets and gardens. The rules and etiquette governing polite society were embodied in buildings such as the Assembly Rooms and Pump Rooms.

How does this Character Area contribute to the World Heritage Site?

1. Contribution to Roman archaeology

Scattered Roman archaeological finds along the Avon floodplain, and the line of the Roman Fosse Way which crosses the Character Area just east of Victoria Suspension Bridge, are evidence of the broad context in which the Roman Baths and town existed. It was a small non-defensive town intended for relaxation and pleasure and supported by a number of artisan or service settlements nearby on the road network through the Avon valley.

2. Contribution to the hot springs - none

3. Contribution to 18th century architecture

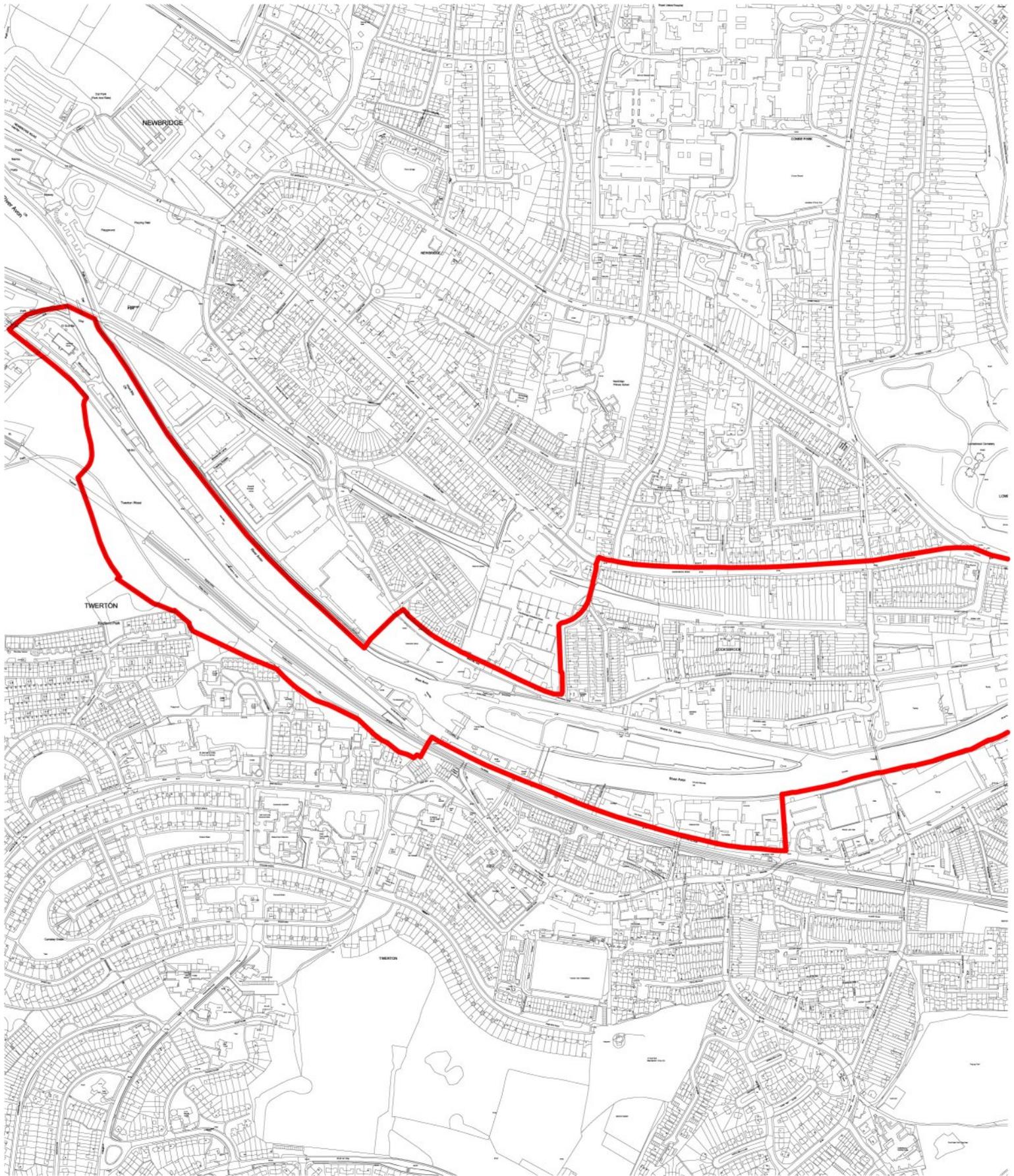
Minor contribution. There are no major Georgian buildings in this Character Area. Norfolk Crescent (listed II*) is in the City Centre Character Area but sits at the boundary of this Character Area. It is the westernmost major townscape element of the Georgian city, built c. 1810-20. Other Georgian buildings in this Character Area consist of small houses on the roads out of Bath or are vernacular or industrial in character. This is evidence of the broad network of economic activity such as cloth weaving which sustained the needs of Bath's population.

4. Contribution to 18th century town planning - none

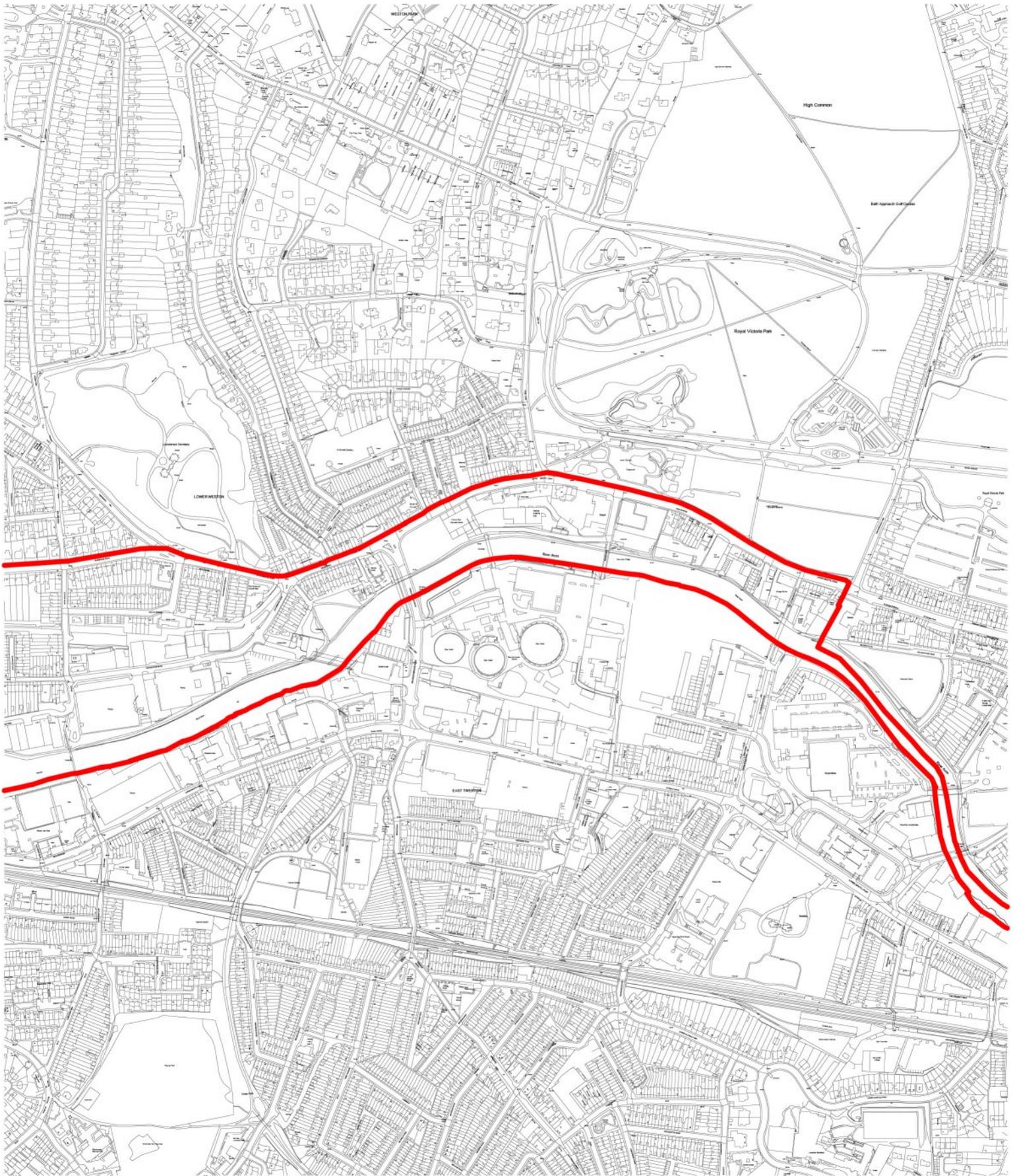
5. Contribution to the green setting

This Character Area is a major contributor to the green setting of Bath, forming a highly visible corridor along the course of the Avon for c. 2½ miles from Churchill Bridge. It provides views out to the surrounding hills and can be seen from them, most notably from Lansdown and Beckford's Tower. Its importance was demonstrated by the sensitivities surrounding the Western Riverside development which prompted a UNESCO review in 2008.

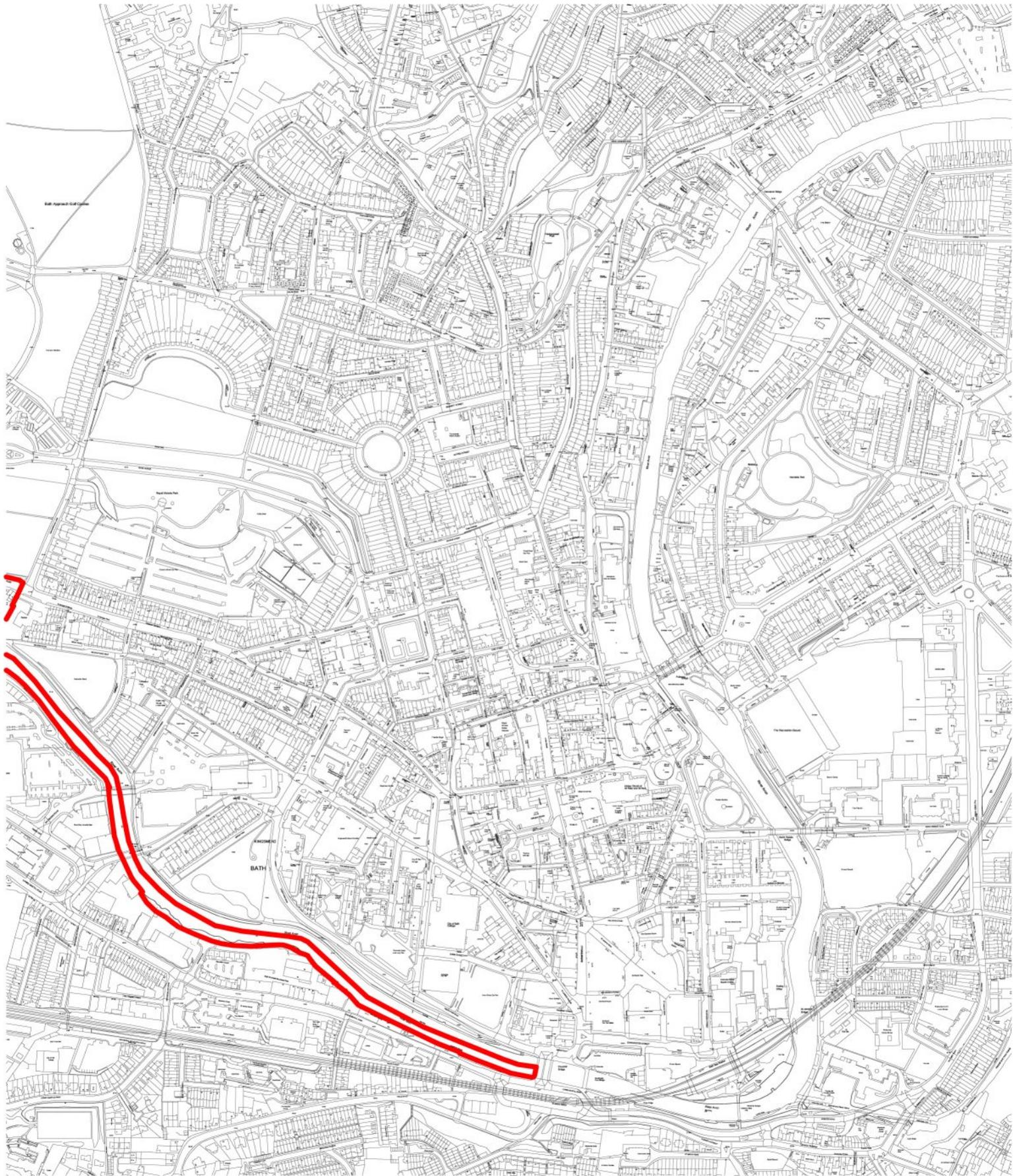
6. Contribution to the social setting - none



Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook and Western Riverside Character Area Map 1



Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook and Western Riverside Character Area Map 2



Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook and Western Riverside Character Area Map 3



2. Summary of key characteristics

- A linear area dominated by the River Avon flowing west towards Bristol
- Character area bounded by busy arterial routes north and south of the river
- Flat or gently sloping flood plains bordering the river
- Scattered but significant Bronze Age, Roman and Saxon archaeology
- Areas of Mediaeval and Early Modern industrial archaeological remains
- A long history of industrial and commercial use associated with the river
- Important survivals of the 1720s Avon Navigation scheme e.g. Weston Island
- The main Bristol-London rail lines pass through parts of the Area
- Mixed commercial and light industry with urban / suburban residential buildings
- Small and scattered open spaces interspersed with densely built areas
- Wooded semi-rural character to the west of Twerton and around Newbridge
- A green corridor along the river's course, with towpaths/footpaths in parts
- Scattered Late Georgian survivals along the Upper and Lower Bristol Roads
- A pleasing series of road and foot bridges crossing the River Avon
- Several minor Victorian churches, cemetery and gas works buildings
- Post-industrial redevelopment transforming parts of the character area
- Bounded (south) for part of its length by the Western Riverside development



The dominant feature of the Character Area is the River Avon which defines the shape of the area as it flows west from Bath towards Bristol and the sea, with several north-south bridge crossings. The almost flat flood plain has made it the focus for transport routes – from the Roman Fosse Way which forded the river south of Marlborough Lane to 18th century turnpike roads and 19th century railway lines. Quays, industry and warehousing grew up from mediaeval times north of the river and west of the Old Bridge. The 1720s Avon Navigation Scheme created Weston Island, harnessing mediaeval mills there to make brass using skilled brassworkers from Holland and Flanders.

Later in the 18th century improved turnpike roads created today's axis of the Upper and Lower Bristol Roads which frame the river north and south. As a result heavy road traffic is a dominant feature in the centre of the Character Area where roads begin to converge on the city centre. 19th century industry occupied open land west of the city – notably the Stothert & Pitt site (now Western Riverside) and the gas works east of Windsor Bridge. Both the Great Western and Midland railways ran west following the easy gradients of the flood plain.

The present character is dictated by the redevelopment which has occurred since the closure of many industries in the late 20th century, principally at Western Riverside on the former gasworks and Stothert & Pitt sites. The light industrial and commercial character is mixed – sometimes uncomfortably - with residential pockets including Georgian terraces, comfortable Victorian villas and glossy modern apartment blocks. The Avon continues to offer a tranquil route enjoyed by occasional boaters while cyclists and walkers take the vehicle-free towpath in and out of the centre.



3. Historic development

Physical influences – geology, landform and drainage pattern

This area is linear in character and most of it lies upon river alluvium. The one small exception is the rising ground of The Maltings Trading Estate (Brassmills Lane) which is White and Blue Lias.

The area is the flat flood plain on either side of the River Avon. The River Avon flows east to west through the area in a gentle “S” shape, curving up around the area’s northern boundary between Midland Bridge and Windsor Bridge and then flowing in a shallower curve close to the southern boundary of the area towards Newbridge Bridge.

Historical influences

Land around the Avon west of Bath has been largely in utilitarian and industrial uses, a history dictated by the presence of the River Avon. This was emphasised further by the presence of Twerton to the south. A village of Saxon origin outside Bath, Twerton was a centre for milling and clothworking from mediaeval times. It had two mills on the Avon at Domesday. Bath Abbey owned a corn mill on the north side of the river. This may have been on the site of either the Weston Lower Mill or the Weston Upper Mill, the latter of which was a fulling mill by the late 15th century.

In the 16th-18th centuries the riverside meadows were developed for industrial purposes, the river (and from the 1720s the canal at Weston Island) being essential for transporting raw materials and finished products. The route via Upper Bristol Road led finally across the Avon at Newton’s Ford, now the site of Newbridge.

The river was made fully navigable from Bath to Bristol in 1724-7 by a consortium led by Ralph Allen, mainly as a means of transporting Bath stone from his quarries at Combe Down to the lucrative Bristol market. A quay next to Churchill Bridge was completed in 1729 to service river freight and passenger traffic to and from Bristol, and the New Bridge replaced Newton’s Ford in 1735-6. Both Upper and Lower Bristol Roads were maintained by Bath Turnpike Trust from its inception in 1707.

The Avon Navigation Scheme also led to the construction in 1727 of the Weston Lock and the short canal through the curve north of the river, creating a small island in the River Avon (south of Osborne Road). The bypass canal was built to avoid the weirs of the Twerton and Weston mills. Weston Island was known in the 18th century as ‘Dutch Island’ after the Dutch immigrant brass-millers working at the brass mills there. In 1728 a stone canal bridge was built, later called Dolphin Bridge, providing access to Dutch Island. The bridge was hit by a bomb in WWII but repaired. The Dolphin Inn was built next to the bridge on the Locksbrook bank by 1738, probably to serve the increased river traffic.

Thomas Thorpe’s map of 1742 shows that the land west of Norfolk Crescent was largely open farmland except for a few buildings scattered along the present Upper Bristol Road. Linear development along the main roads began in the early 19th century, much of it now lost or visible only as fragmentary remains. One such development was Westhall Buildings, Upper Bristol Road, reportedly on the site of a house called West Hall. A small lodge or gatehouse (probably

c. 1820) survives as the New Westhall pub, renamed in 2012 the Victoria Pub and Kitchen.

The first industrial site in the Locksbrook area was the British Gas Light and Coke Works of The Parish of Weston, established in 1819 and closed in 1971. The site was north of the river, east of Windsor Bridge Road. Its office building and manager's house (both 1858-9) survive on Upper Bristol Road.

By the 1880s there was a small strip settlement on the Newbridge Road at Locksbrook and a number of industrial sites along the river, including woollen and carpet mills, cement works and lime kilns. The Locksbrook area was developed with artisan housing to accommodate workers in the many riverside industries. Larger middle-class housing was built around Newbridge Road c. 1880-1914.

The early 20th century saw additional industrial development, including the Bath Brewery and extensive residential growth in the area, notably infill south of Newbridge Road and around Brassmill Lane. During the Second World War the presence of industry, gas works and railways lines attracted heavy bombing, mainly a single weekend of concentrated 'Baedeker' raids in April 1942. They mostly missed their target but much damage was done nearby e.g. the complete destruction of Rosebery Road south-west of New Windsor Bridge. These vacant bomb sites scattered near major roads, river and rail links encouraged the post-war trend for commercial and light-industrial redevelopment in Locksbrook and along the southern riverbank. There has been significant continuity of industrial sites and most development since the 1950s has been the addition or transformation of industrial buildings.

Post-industrial decline and the consequent closure of many industrial premises since the late 20th century (e.g. Bath Gas Works, 1971; Stothert & Pitt's works, closed 1989) has resulted in substantial areas close to the Avon being available for mixed use development, as is now (2015) taking place at Western Riverside.

Four major river bridges cross the Avon from east to west

- Churchill Bridge: the first historic river bridge from Bath to the south, originating in the 13th century or earlier (but post-Conquest). The mediaeval Old Bridge of 1304 was enlarged in 1754 and 1847, and replaced with the current concrete structure in 1964-5. It was named for Sir Winston Churchill who died in 1965.
- Midland Bridge: built 1870 to link the Midland Railway's new Green Park Station with the Lower Bristol Road. Replaced by the current steel girder structure in 1905, when the original bridge was re-erected further west as the Destructor Bridge.
- New Windsor Bridge: the first narrow road bridge in this location was Twerton Suspension Bridge, an unusually early anticipation of a cable-stay design, by Thomas Motley of Bristol and built in 1837. This was replaced by a more conventional bridge in 1894, though the abutments of the 1837 bridge survive beneath a later concrete and steel structure, now closed. A single-span steel and concrete road bridge immediately east of the earlier bridge was opened in November 1980.
- Newbridge: Built 1735-6. The central arch collapsed during floods in 1774 and was rebuilt. Newbridge was widened in 1831-4 for the Bath Turnpike Trust.

Minor bridges provide for foot crossings and in some places light vehicular traffic.

- Victoria Bridge was constructed in five months in 1836 to the design of James Dredge, a Bath brewer. An elegant adaption of suspension bridge design, it uses suspension chains which

taper towards the centre where the load decreases, and inclined hangers to stabilise the structure. Dredge patented his taper principle and later built about 50 bridges on this system. The Bath stone pylons have a pared down Graeco-Egyptian appearance. It was closed in 2010, repaired and reopened 2014-15.

- Destructor Bridge. The dismantled Midland Bridge of 1870 (see above) was re-erected here in 1905. This iron truss bridge gave access from the north to Midland Road and to the waste incinerator or 'Destructor' by the river. Dismantled 2013-14. A new road bridge with pedestrian and cycle paths replaced it in 2015.

The Great Western Railway from Bath to Bristol was opened in 1840. The link to London was completed in 1841. Its route runs just south of this Character Area following the Lower Bristol Road through Oldfield Park, just touching this area at its western end for the length of the Twerton Viaduct.

The Midland Railway opened its line to Bath from Mangotsfield (north-east of Bristol) in 1869. The line ran west from Green Park Station across a river bridge (now the Stanier Road bridge) through the present Homebase site and across the Western Riverside site. In 1874 a junction was created with the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway which curved away to the south-east. Its line is now the Linear Park through South Twerton. The Midland line continued west, crossing back to the north side of the river via Locksbrook Road Railway Bridge (disused) just west of Windsor Bridge Road and thence to Weston Station, Ashley Avenue, in use 1869-1965. From here much of the old line to Mangotsfield is extant as the Bristol-Bath cycle and pedestrian path.

4. Cultural influences

Cultural influences in this Character Area are mainly concerned with industry, transport and trade, with leisure and tourism making a minor impact from the late 20th century. All these derive ultimately from the presence of the River Avon.

Industry

There were corn mills on the River Avon at Lower Weston in Mediaeval times; they were converted to brass mills in the early 18th century, resulting in the building of the Dolphin Inn and Dolphin Bridge at Weston Island. In the early 19th century the first Bath gas works opened at Locksbrook, and gas production and storage continued there until the late 20th century. Stothert & Pitt's iron and engineering concern altered the landscape south of the river and only finally vacated the Western Riverside site in the 1980s: they exported cranes and other engineering products across the world. In the 20th century, furniture producers such as Bath Cabinet Makers and Herman Miller built factories around Lower Weston and Locksbrook, and other light industrial concerns shaped the landscape with industrial estates in the area since the Second World War.

Transport and trade

The river itself has been utilised as a transport route since the earliest times, and the Roman Fosse Way crossed the river (probably via a ford) just east of Victoria Suspension Bridge. In the 1720s the Avon Navigation Scheme formed Weston Island with its short stretch of canal and locks to avoid the weirs that drove mills along the river there, thus making the Avon navigable from Bristol to Bath. At about the same time the Bath Turnpike Trust improved the Upper and Lower Bristol Roads and built the first New Bridge at the west end of the Character Area, replacing a ford. In the 19th century Victoria and Twerton Suspension Bridges were built (1836 and 1837 respectively), and in 1980 New Windsor Bridge created a major new road crossing next to the Twerton Suspension Bridge site. The arrival of the Great Western and Midland railway lines in the mid-19th century stimulated further industrial developments. The Weston Hotel (1890) on Newbridge Road was probably built at a site conveniently close to Weston Railway Station to cater in part for commercial travellers and tradesmen. More recently the siting of the city bus depot at Weston Island emphasises the area's transport links further.

Tourism/Leisure

Tourism and leisure have made a minor contribution to the area's character. Sightseeing day trips down the river to stop at rural destinations for walks or picnics seem to have been a feature of the area as Bath's 18th century growth accelerated. In more recent times, the closure of the Midland railway line provided an ideal route for a walking and cycle path which links Bath with Bristol, and the river towpath is also used by walkers and cyclists. A small but regular traffic in holiday and leisure boats continues the area's link with tourism.

5. Archaeology

There is a possible Roman road along Upper Bristol Road as there have been reports of a number of Roman burials and stone coffins found in the area including some from within the cemetery itself. However most of the evidence for settlement is concentrated further North away from the flood plain. The Upper Bristol Road lies on gravel deposit which was terraced during the 19th century along with the remains of the Midland Railway line into Green Park. There is possible prehistoric potential in the gravel.

6. Landmarks and views

See map, Appendix 1.

Landmarks

Adjacent to Churchill Bridge, a good series of late 19th and early 20th century factories and wharfs line the river to the south along Lower Bristol Road. Their character is essentially that of a 'row of teeth' i.e. tall buildings separated by lower buildings or by gaps in the building line. Other than Bayer's Corset Factory, they were mainly granaries or flour mills.

On the north bank, the fine Georgian terrace of Green Park West (c. 1790s) adjoins the river. Its small park is one of the few public open spaces adjoining or in the Character Area.

Norfolk Crescent and Nelson Place West (in the city centre Character Area) form a notable landmark adjacent to the north bank of the Avon, marking the westernmost expansion of the late Georgian Bath.

Victoria Bridge (1836) is an attractive landmark and a good example of a 19th century suspension bridge. It is a much-loved feature in the area.

Brunel's railway viaduct crossing the Churchill Bridge roundabout is an impressive feature which acts as a gateway to the city centre. The railway viaduct also forms the southern boundary to this area and is an important feature adjacent to the Lower Bristol Road which is a major approach into the city.

The three gasholders east of Windsor Bridge Road were for many decades a prominent landmark bordering the Character Area. The last of them was decommissioned and dismantled in winter 2013-14.

Views



Throughout most of this low lying Character Area there are views to developed slopes and well treed skyline both of Lansdown to the north and Southdown and Odd Down to the south. In the far west of the area views are partially screened by abundant trees.

New Windsor Bridge offers views north towards Lansdown ridge.

The riverbank towpath near Churchill Bridge offers views east to the Bathwick and Claverton slopes. West of New Windsor Bridge, the riverbank gives glimpses of the southern slopes towards Southdown and Whiteway.

As in much of Bath, the surrounding tree-clad hills may be glimpsed from many locations, e.g. Lansdown seen from New Windsor Bridge; Twerton/Southdown from Avondale Road and from building gaps on Newbridge Road.

Around the north end of Victoria Bridge Road and the south end of Marlborough Lane, a fine view of the tower of Bath Abbey is framed by the buildings of Upper Bristol Road, giving a sense of approaching the city.

There are many viewpoints on the hills west of the city from which views into this Character Area are obtained. Examples include Lansdown and Beckford's Tower, and the Bath skyline walk. These were significant considerations for the 2009 review of Western Riverside proposals. Western Riverside and Locksbrook are also visible from Rush Hill, Englishcombe Lane, Widcombe Hill and North Road among other sites.

7. Land uses and their influence

Land use within this Character Area is segregated in some parts and in others very mixed. Land use is influenced predominantly by the presence of the River Avon running west towards Bristol and the industrial uses that grew up around it (see Historical Development). Here commercial and light industrial concerns dominate. Elsewhere residential use takes over. There is still significant derelict land close to the river.

Limited leisure use is associated with the river – walkers and cyclists on the northern towpath, and some holiday longboats moored on the river, mainly in the east of the Character Area. Occasional motor boats using the river.

The area east of Windsor Bridge Road is dominated by the Western Riverside development. It was formerly occupied by Bath's gas works, the derelict former Stothert and Pitt site and the former Midlands Railway Line railway sidings and sheds. These sites are now occupied by mixed commercial and housing, and by the retail sheds of Homebase and Sainsbury's at the east.

Upper Bristol Road was subject to late Georgian housing development in the form of isolated terraces and small groups of villas, some of which survive amid light commercial land use. Further isolated terraces of Late Georgian and Victorian houses also survive on Lower Bristol Road.

To the west of Windsor Bridge Road, land uses become more intimately mixed, with various small trading estates set amongst the housing of Locksbrook and Newbridge (south).

South of the river to the Lower Bristol Road uses are primarily commercial. A notable feature is the bus depot on Weston Island in the river at Locksbrook.

In the far west of the area the dense mixed development quite suddenly gives way to more extensive land uses – a caravan park, playing field, marina and Newbridge Park and Ride. All these are spacious and well-treed areas well suited to the edge of the city.



8. Buildings, architectural quality and townscape

Building age

Most buildings are middle and late 19th century or late 20th and 21st century. There is some mid 20th century housing to the west of Locksbrook. Most of the commercial and light industrial development is modern but that which is associated with the utilities is late 19th century. Locksbrook housing is mainly late 19th and early 20th century with small areas of modern infill. Further west in Newbridge (south) mid 20th century housing predominates.



Building form

There is considerable coherence of building heights despite the diversity of uses. By far the most common is one or two storeys, commercial and residential respectively. There are occasional three-storey or four-storey Georgian terraces at the boundaries of this Character Area (e.g. Norfolk Crescent, in the city centre Character Area).

The redeveloped Western Riverside area now has large footprint blocks of four to seven storeys bordering this Character Area to the south of the River.

The six storey warehouses by the River Avon at the eastern end of Lower Bristol Road are significantly taller than their neighbours and are a feature of the local area.



The building form is not surprisingly quite variable with 19th century terraces, mid 20th century semis and commercial shed “terraces” to the west of Windsor Bridge Road. To the east there are many larger scale sheds individually set on big plots.

Buildings of merit

All buildings and features cited here are examples only, not a definitive list of all buildings of merit. They are cited to give guidance as to the sort of features significant to the Character Area. Almost every street may have isolated buildings of merit, whether listed or not, and many streets are listed in their entirety.

Anchor buildings

- Camden Mill (grade II), Camden Malthouse and Silo (grade II) and Bayer’s Corset Factory, Lower Bristol Road; late 19th century
- Green Park (terrace end facing towpath); c. 1790s
- Norfolk Crescent (terrace end facing towpath); c. 1810-20
- Victoria Suspension Bridge; 1836
- Herman Miller factory, Locksbrook Road; 1976-7 (grade II)
- Former Bath Cabinet Makers’ factory, Lower Bristol Road (1966-7)



Other listed buildings of historical/townscape significance

- Portals of Twerton railway tunnel (grade II*)
- Albion Buildings, Upper Bristol Road; c. 1820s



- 1-2 Down House, Upper Bristol Road
- Sterling House, Upper Bristol Road
- Gas Works office and manager's house, Upper Bristol Road; 1858-9
- Lark Place, Upper Bristol Road; c. 1820s
- St John (Church of England), Upper Bristol Road
- Locksbrook Place, Upper Bristol Road; c. 1820s
- Lodge and gates, Locksbrook Cemetery; c. 1862
- Weston Inn, Upper Bristol Road; 1890
- Dolphin Inn, Locksbrook Road; c. 1730s
- Dolphin Bridge, Weston Cut; 1728
- Maltings Depository, Lower Bristol Road; early 19th century and c. 1900
- 1-6 Rackfield Place, Lower Bristol Road; early 19th century
- Lock gates, Weston Cut



Unlisted buildings of merit

- Bayer's Corset Factory, Lower Bristol Road
- Comfortable Place, Upper Bristol Road
- Pylon bases of Twerton Suspension Bridge (beside New Windsor Bridge); 1837
- Red House, corner of Station Road; (1890s?)
- Former Weston Railway Station, Ashley Avenue; 1890
- Victoria Pub & Kitchen, Upper Bristol Road (a small Neoclassical lodge c. 1820 embedded in later accretions).
- Lock House, Brassmill Lane
- Late Victorian housing on Ashley Avenue, Station Road etc.
- Rotork Building, Brassmill Lane



Townscape features of merit

- River Avon towpath (north side from Churchill Bridge to New Windsor Bridge)
- River Avon towpath (partially complete, west of New Windsor Bridge)
- Weston Island and Weston Cut
- Streetscape, Ashley Avenue – Victorian artisan middle class housing
- Streetscape, Avondale Road – brick and terracotta terraces c. 1890
- Streetscape, Avon Park/Brassmill Lane – on early 20th century Garden Suburb principles



Buildings at risk

- Footbridge west of New Windsor Bridge (pylon bases of Twerton Suspension Bridge, 1837)

Negative buildings and townscape features

- Halford's AutoCentre, Upper Bristol Road.
- 1950s commercial building flanking Recycling Depot west of Midland Road/Upper Bristol Road junction.
- Derelict former gasworks site east of New Windsor Bridge
- Unattractive commercial buildings bordering the towpath (north side) east of New Windsor Bridge

- Commercial sheds, east end of Locksbrook Road (including Horstman building, Speedy Services, B&NES Environmental Services depot, Plumb Centre)
- Locksbrook Road Trading Estate
- Commercial sheds east and north of Dolphin Inn, Locksbrook Road
- Brassmill Lane Trading Estate
- Bus depot, Weston Island
- Commercial buildings south of the Avon and opposite Weston Island

9. Materials and detailing

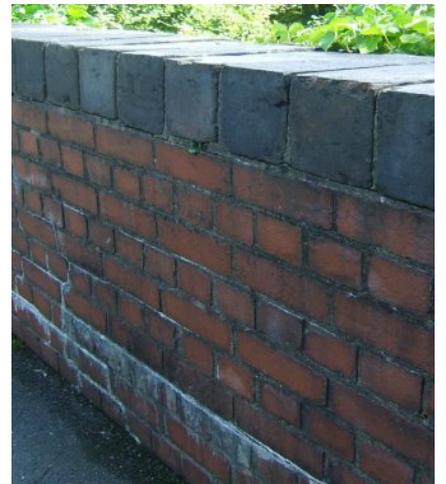
Late Georgian buildings are in Bath's classical tradition, generally of Bath stone ashlar with sash windows, flat parapets hiding the roofs. Some are of three storeys though most in this Character Area are two storeys.

This Character Area has a significant concentration of late Victorian and Edwardian housing on Upper Bristol Road and at Locksbrook. The conventional Bath palette of materials is used: mainly Bath stone ashlar, or pennant rubble walls and slate or clay tile roofs. At Avondale Road is an unusual example for Bath of Victorian terraced housing in patterned red and cream brick.

Mid-20th century housing is largely Bath stone. Roofs are always pitched, and are generally slated or tiled in clay or concrete.

The modern commercial, industrial and utilities buildings have a range of cladding materials with corrugated metal roofs. The Herman Miller building on Locksbrook Road (c. 1975) has cream fibreglass cladding and bronzed windows; a rare example of a good modern building in this area.

Boundaries throughout the area are varied reflecting the very mixed uses. Walls range from high Bath stone walls on some of the industrial frontages to low stone or brick walls around residential properties. 19th century cast-iron railings are found with housing and more modern security railings are often found on commercial and industrial sites. There are occasionally hedges and fences around house boundaries.



10. Streets and movement

Density and degree of enclosure

To the west of Windsor Bridge the density of development is currently much higher than east of the bridge reflecting the difference in current uses. In the far west of the area around the city boundary close to Newbridge, the density of building decreases and leisure uses such as the caravan park become evident.

In the densely developed areas enclosure is generally high, for example the terraces of 19th century houses where streets are narrow. On the trading estates in the Locksbrook and Brassmill Lane area the building masses are large and visually contain the roads and car parks. South of the river and east of Windsor Bridge the former Stothert and Pitt engineering factory was closed in 1989 and demolished in the 1990s. It has been redeveloped since 2009 as Western Riverside with mixed residential and commercial uses, forming a deep barrier of relatively high buildings.



Street pattern

The street pattern and the character Area boundary is dictated by the line of the River Avon. To its north and south the long snaking lines of Upper and Lower Bristol Roads follow an economical line along the valley floor. Together they establish a strong east-west linear emphasis.

Four major river bridges link these two roads, from east to west: Churchill, Midland, Windsor and Newbridge. These dictate the course of north-south roads linking the Upper and Lower Bristol Roads. Victoria Suspension Bridge (repaired and reopened in 2015) is used by pedestrians and cyclists only.



The housing areas and trading estates to the west of Windsor Bridge Road follow a mix of grid and curvilinear patterns taking their lead from the two main roads. To the east of Windsor Bridge and south of the river the commercial and industrial areas have a more amorphous layout.

Public realm

Paving is principally concrete slabs and unit paving or tarmac throughout the whole area.

The towpath on the north side of the River Avon forms an almost continuous riverside linear open space that is well used during daytime by walkers and cyclists. Although narrow it has significant vegetation in places, particularly west of Norfolk Crescent to Brassmill Lane. The eastern end of this walk is more open and offers views of the river with glimpses of the slopes to the south and north. Surfaces on the towpath are tarmac in parts and un-made elsewhere.

Vitality and tranquility

There is much movement and activity close to the main roads. Noise and traffic flows create a bustling feeling. Windsor Bridge is especially busy as it is a major river crossing point.

Homebase and similar retail sites along the major roads partly account for high volumes of traffic as well as pedestrian movement. Elsewhere some of the trading estates have significant vehicular traffic as well as machinery noise.

The river forms a ribbon of tranquility through the centre of this Character Area, with nearby roads and industrial sites often screened from view and noise by strips of dense vegetation. The towpath is well used during the day by cyclists and walkers, giving this feature a slower and quieter pace matched by the occasional boats on the river.

11. Trees, open space, parks and gardens



Trees and vegetation

Trees are abundant in the western parts of the area especially in the Park and Ride site, the caravan park, around the playing field, along the river and the disused railway line. The largest area of trees in this Character Area is Twerton Wood, mixed deciduous woodland south of the Lower Bristol Road and bordering Twerton. Elsewhere trees are much more sparse and there are very few street trees. Locksbrook Cemetery provides a long boundary of mature trees and shrubs on the Upper Bristol Road. Trees and shrubs are generally confined to gardens and landscaped areas on commercial sites. The few parkland areas have a reasonable complement of trees. Trees line the river along much of its length, especially on the south bank, and in places they have developed into scrub patches. There are fewer trees alongside the river in the eastern part of this area. Trees are important along the river, often its presence can only be detected in views by the trees marking its course.



Open space and parks

Open spaces in the area include the playing field adjacent to the caravan site at Newbridge, a small recreation ground south of Brassmill Lane near Avon Park and another alongside the river east of New Windsor Bridge and behind Windsor Villas. Open green spaces border the Character Area at Green Park and at Norfolk Crescent. The Bristol-Bath cycle path forms a 'linear park' through Locksbrook

There is a large unused and derelict industrial site north of the river and east of New Windsor Bridge, formerly part of the gas works. Remaining derelict sites associated with the former Stothert & Pitt works are being redeveloped as part of the Western Riverside scheme. Further infill on the former Upper Mills site at Lower Bristol Road, Twerton, have also recently been redeveloped as student housing. There are isolated pockets of underused or open space along the industrial stretches of the Lower Bristol Road.

Private gardens

Front gardens and boundary hedges/vegetation make a significant contribution to the streetscape along Upper Bristol Road and Newbridge Road, softening the impact of heavy traffic and continuous building lines close to or on the streets. In the side streets (e.g. Locksbrook Road, Brassmill Lane, Station Road, Ashley Avenue etc) they also make a significant (and more expected) contribution.

12. Night-time character

The night-time character of this Area is quite varied.

Given its mix of residential, commercial/ retail and industrial uses, in general there is significantly less pedestrian and vehicular traffic at night. The major roads remain busy until mid-evening with traffic consisting of workers and people arriving at or leaving the city centre. Buses to and from the Keynsham/Bristol direction continue until after 11pm, as does a certain amount of commercial traffic.

Upper and Lower Bristol Roads have a certain amount of late-night pedestrian movement, mainly people leaving city centre entertainment venues, perhaps exacerbated by the increase of student housing in this area. There are few such venues in this Character Area itself other than occasional pubs (The Hop Pole, Weston Inn etc.) but these generate relatively little night time traffic.

The Avon towpaths are unlit and heavily screened by vegetation. In addition long stretches of the river bank are not protected by railings. These factors make them unattractive to many for night-time use.



13. Issues affecting the Character Area

What are the assets of the Character Area?

- The River Avon forms a binding theme for the Character Area, providing a distinctive character and associated land uses.
- The area has historic associations with the 1720s Avon Navigation Scheme and the Great Western Railway
- Remnants of industrial and transport history survive throughout the area, such as Weston Locks, Dolphin Bridge, Victoria Suspension Bridge and parts of Twerton Suspension Bridge.
- Diversity of character is achieved through the mix of commercial, leisure and residential uses
- Innovative commercial architecture in the Character Area includes buildings for Herman Miller, Rotork and the former Bath Cabinet Makers' factory, Lower Bristol Road.
- There are some good examples of 21st century regeneration on brownfield sites, such as the former Twerton Mill site on Lower Bristol Road.

What are the weaknesses of the Character Area?

- Long stretches of townscape dominated by road systems and unattractive retail sheds, light industrial sites etc
- Many good older buildings bounding main roads are under-used and deemed unattractive places to live because of heavy traffic.
- The railway is a dominant dividing line between the river and the residential areas to its south.

What opportunities exist to improve the area?

- Impact assessment of proposed developments should include consideration of views into this Character Area from the sensitive Bath skyline and in general from points within and outside the city.
- Re-use and repair of under-used historic buildings would benefit this Character Area.
- Redevelopment sites across the Character Area would benefit from new high quality architectural designs.
- Better signage, access and safety features (e.g. lighting, safety rails, etc) to encourage greater awareness and use of the Avon towpath.
- Improved access between the towpath and the bordering open spaces (eg Green Park, Norfolk Crescent lawn)
- Sensitive and appropriate redevelopment of unused and under-used commercial/ industrial sites close to the city.
- Weston Island offers an attractive riverside environment, presently under-used because of the dominant bus depot. Better use could be made of the island.
- Identification and recognition of undesignated heritage assets of architectural and historic interest.

What factors might be seen as threats?

- Developers attempting to take their cue from the four- to seven-storey blocks of Western Riverside as justification for further tall blocks within this Character Area.
- New developments and new street patterns have begun to destroy or erode the legibility of the historic grain.
- Gentrification may encourage a tendency to add formal Georgian architectural treatments and features to conversions of mews buildings or other relatively low-status buildings; such features are historically inappropriate to such building types and erode their specific meanings and visual qualities.
- Unsympathetic alterations to unlisted buildings are a threat to the character of the Conservation Area as a whole and specifically to this Character Area.
- Significant creeping increase of building heights may threaten the integrity of the World Heritage Site's green setting.
- Traffic levels in this area may lead to erosion of the historic fabric with pollutants likely to cause surface damage particularly to Bath stone.
- The increasing prevalence of uPVC glazing and doors erodes the character of pre-1950 unlisted buildings. The visually heavy white plastic frames are inappropriate against Bath stone, Pennant rubble and brick walls.
- Widespread use of reconstituted Bath stone, especially for commercial buildings. It provides a generally appropriate colour match but this advantage is eroded by wider mortar joints and a dull, lifeless character which (unlike Bath stone) does not improve with weathering.



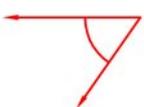
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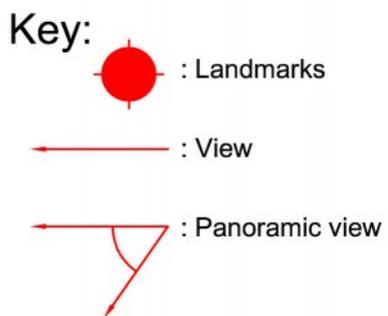
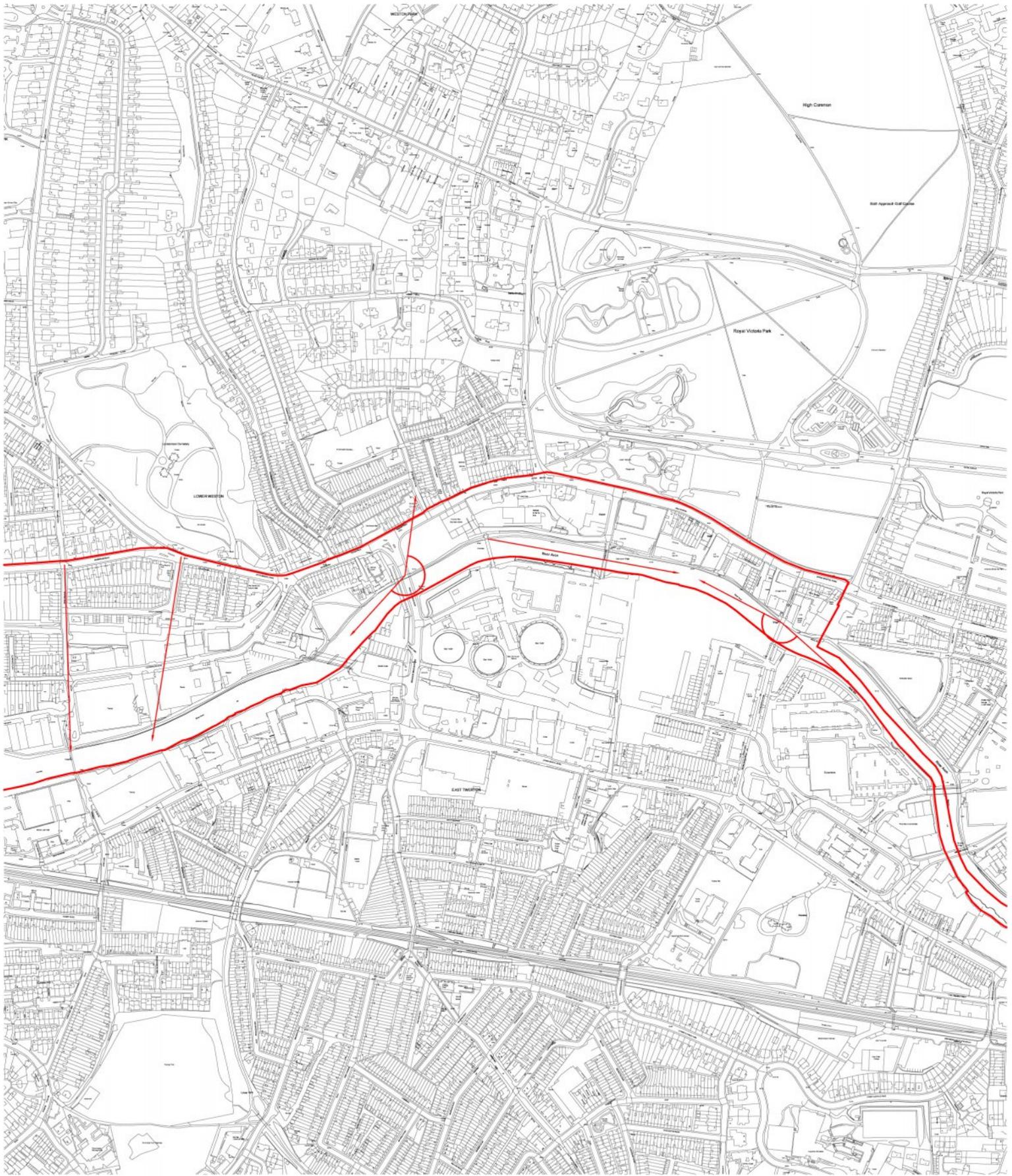


: View



: Panoramic view

Landmarks and views



Landmarks and views



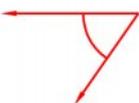
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: View

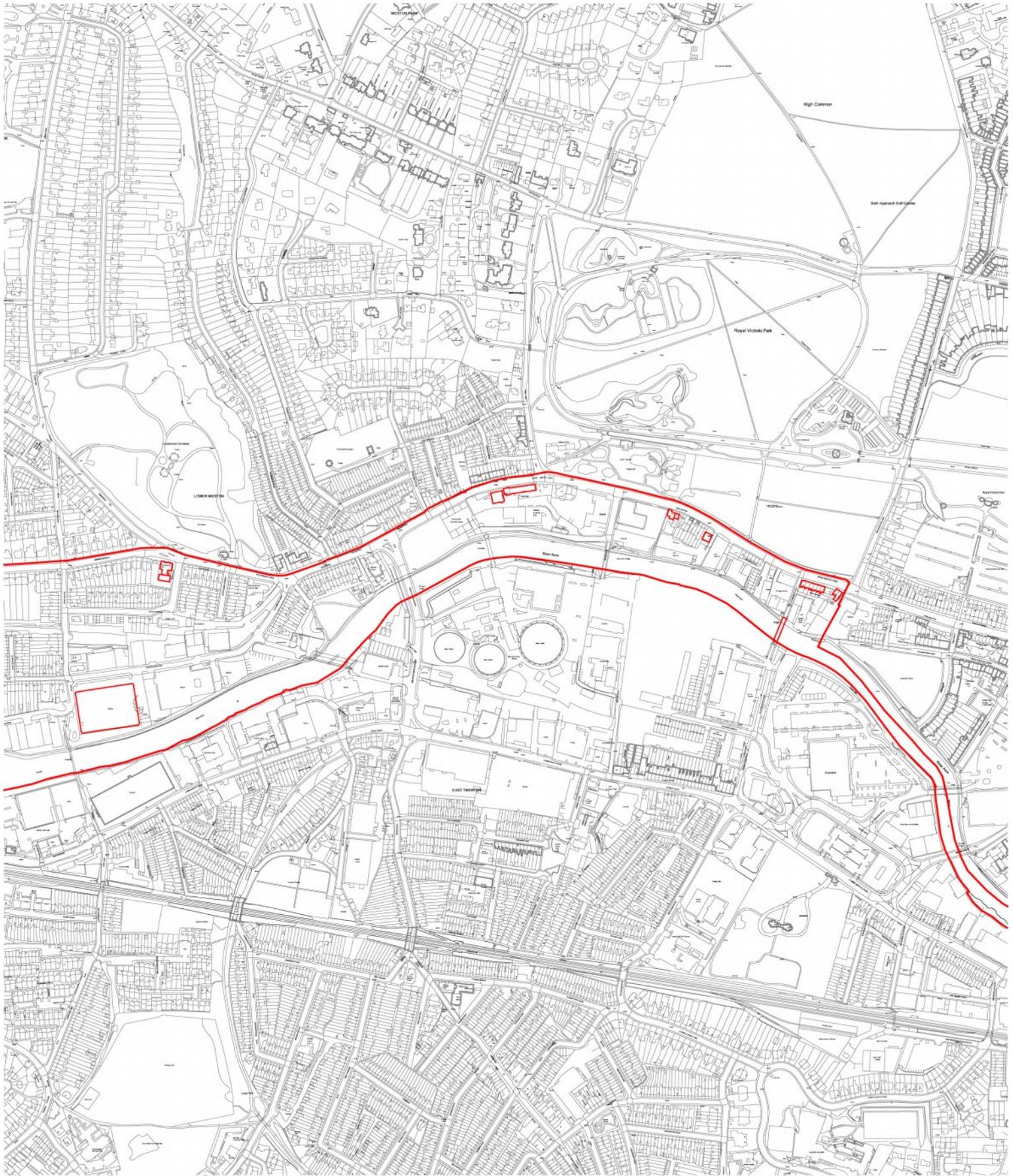


: Panoramic view

Landmarks and views



Listed buildings



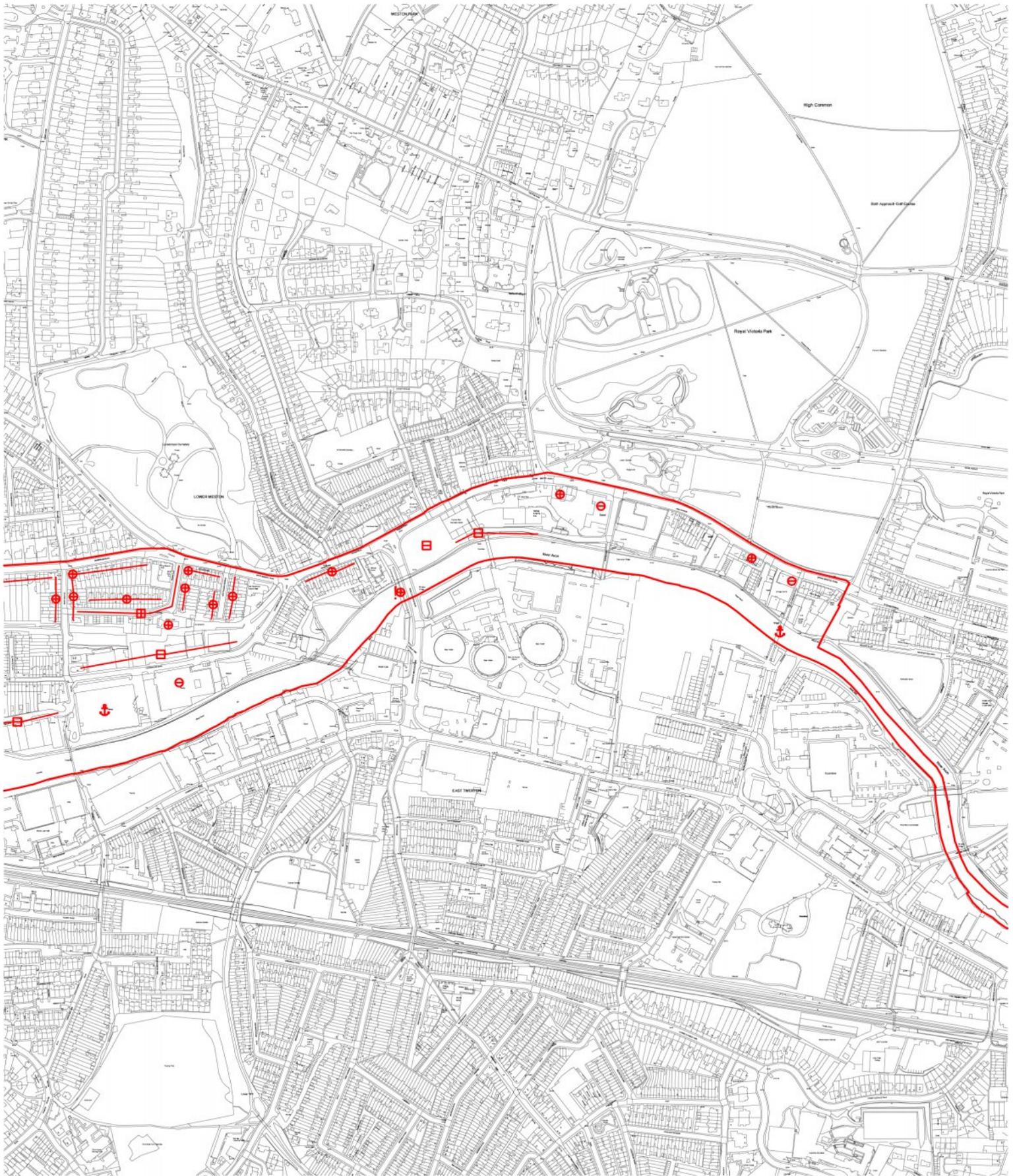
Listed buildings



Key:

- ⊕ : Unlisted building of merit
- ⊖ : Negative building
- ⊞ : Positive townscape feature
- ⊠ : Negative townscape feature
- ! : Building at risk
- ⚓ : Anchor building
- : group/included

Townscape features



Key:

- ⊕ : Unlisted building of merit
- ⊖ : Negative building
- ⊕ (square) : Positive townscape feature
- ⊖ (square) : Negative townscape feature
- ⚠ : Building at risk
- ⚓ : Anchor building
- : group/included

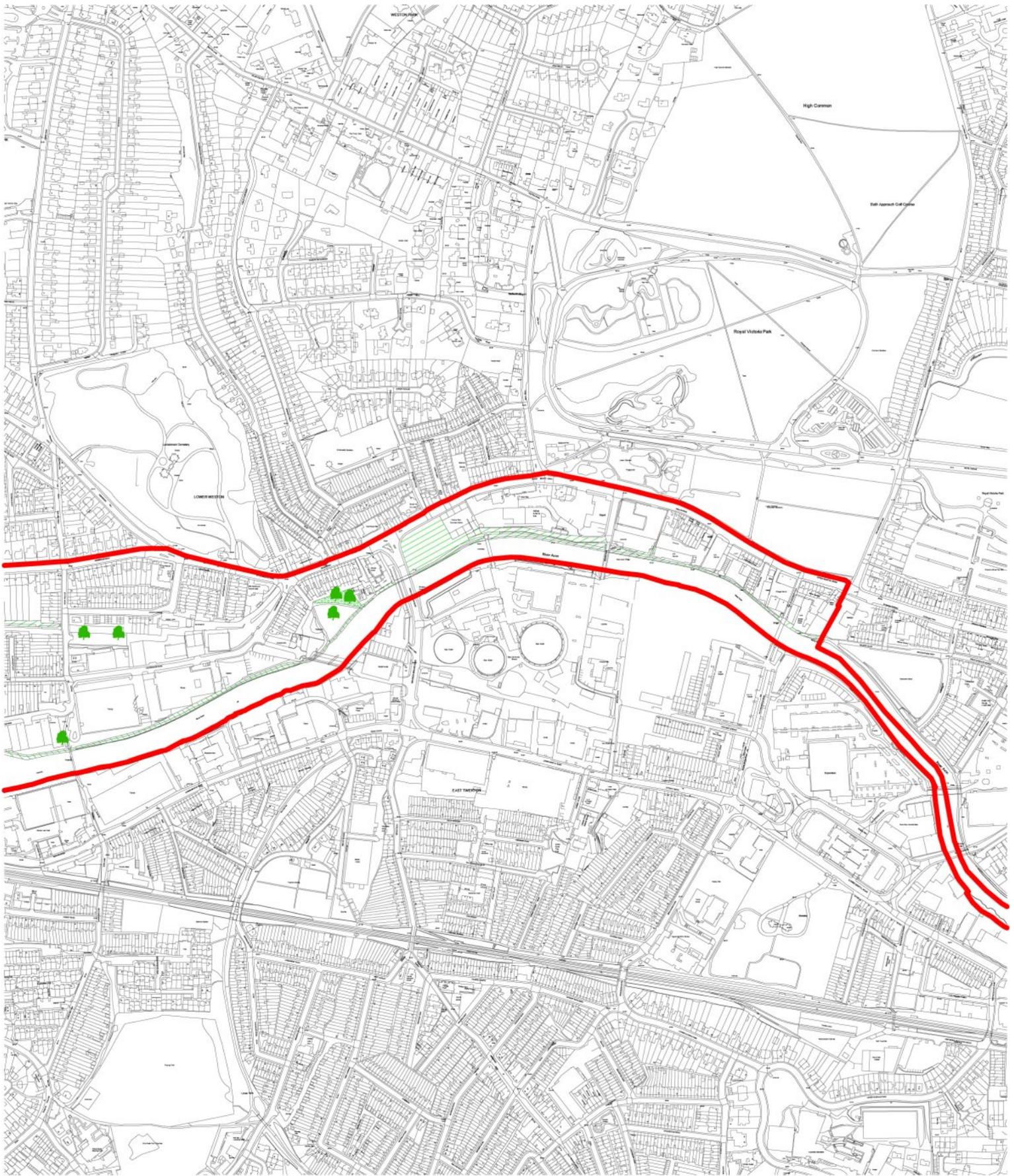
Townscape features



Key:

-  : Open space
-  : Parks
-  : Private/Semi-private gardens (where significant)

Trees, open space,
parks and gardens



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-  : Open space
-  : Parks
-  : Private/Semi-private gardens (where significant)

Trees, open space,
parks and gardens

Annexe 2 - Context

A conservation area is designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990 and is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The quality and interest of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to periodically formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas within the district. Section 72 requires that in considering applications for development in a conservation area, attention shall be paid to the desirability of conserving or enhancing the character of that area.

Conservation area appraisals are considered by Historic England to be vital to the conservation of these special areas.

More detailed policies are to be found in the Bath and North East Somerset Core Strategy and draft Placemaking Plan.

Annexe 3 - References

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<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Environment/Landscape/WHS/WHS%20Map%2008d.pdf>

