

Larkhall

Character Statement and Development Principles

March 1998



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

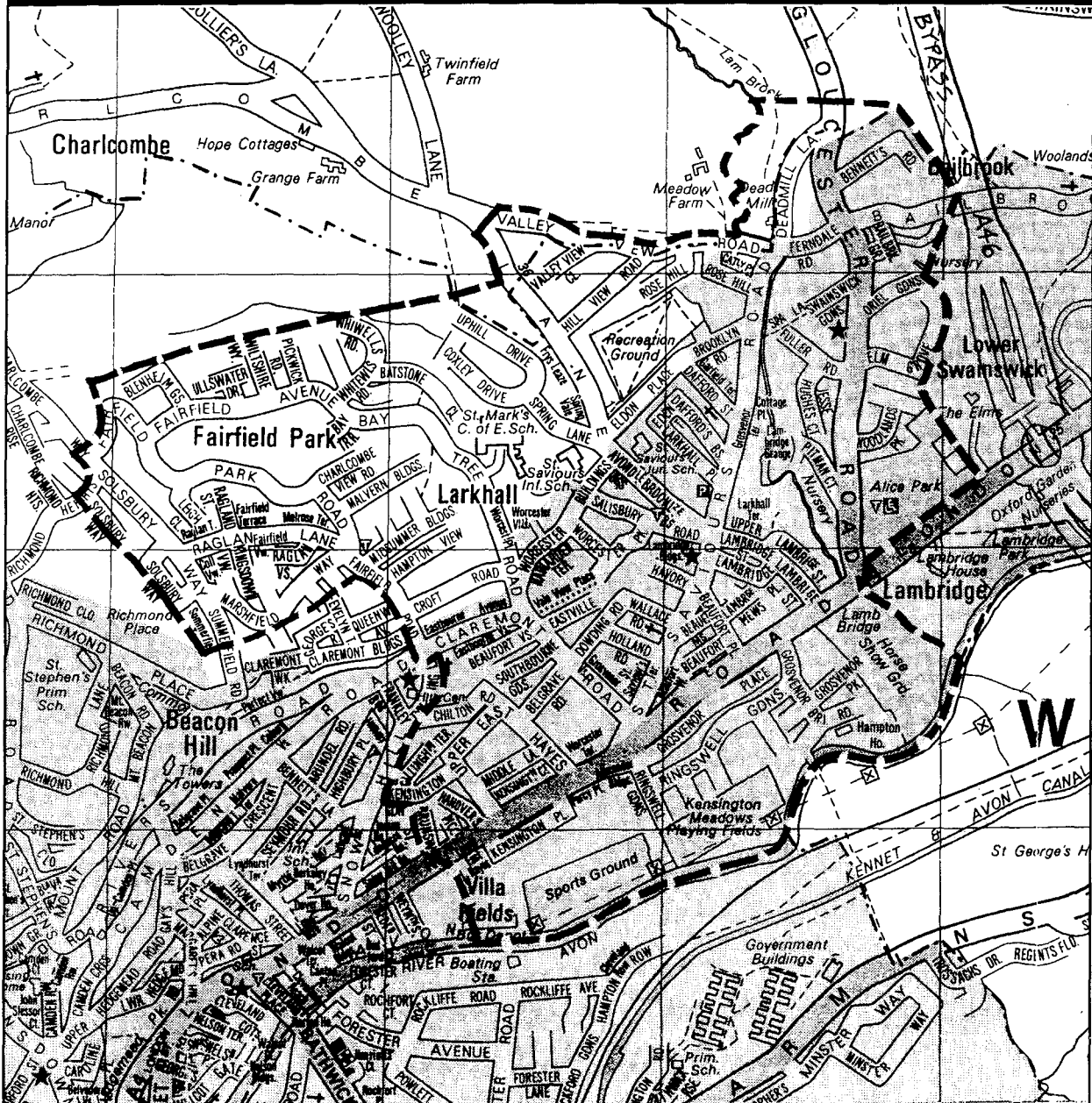
Illustration by Elgin Diaz

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MAP SHOWING THE STUDY AREA



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Note:

The boundary of the study area should not be read as a fixed boundary as such. It is merely intended to be indicative. A 'fuzzy' boundary originated as a result of a combination of the historical and geographical development of the area, the activities and use of the area with the focus being on Larkhall centre itself, along with the community's perception of the area and where the boundaries should be drawn. The area known as Larkhall also encompasses parts of Lambridge and Fairfield Park. The Conservation Area is shown on the map for illustrative purposes (shaded grey) as certain Local Plan policies referred to in the 'Development Principles' refer to it. However, the Area Boundary as shown is not accurate enough to be used to determine whether the designation applies to any individual property.

INTRODUCTION

One of the statutory duties of the local planning authority is 'to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.' By undertaking a character assessment of the Larkhall area of the Bath Conservation Area, the local planning authority will be better placed in making decisions in relation to development proposals.

In recent years there has also been increasing recognition that our experience of an historic area depends on much more than the quality of individual buildings - it also includes the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular mix of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of spaces between buildings.

This Character Statement is intended to give the reader an impression of the character of Larkhall by describing the aspects or elements of the built and natural environment, as well as its commercial, social and leisure functions, which are thought to be important to its character. In this way the Statement will inform decisions on planning applications and other fields of work of the Council. It will also highlight some of the concerns of the local community and provide the impetus for future action and involvement of local people in managing their environment.

DEFINING CHARACTER

Character is a central concept in the planning and management of places. It has particular relevance to conservation planning, but it is also important in understanding and managing landscape.

The character of a place is not only a matter of

fact, in that it can be described and quantified, but it is also a matter of perception. It is important that character is not perceived only in terms of a professional point of view. The built environment is a shared resource, which people should have the opportunity to influence democratically.

Issues that contribute to the character of an area are -

- **Physical setting** - the surrounding topography and underlying geology.
- **Landscape** - The natural features and open spaces of the area.
- **Settlement Development** - the layout and form of the area, building materials, style and density.
- **Townscape** - Civic design features and building groups, urban spaces, building heights, incidental features, views, streetscape.
- **Historic interest, the local economy and activity** all contribute as well.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This document contains a character statement and set of development principles aimed at promoting and reinforcing the existing qualities of character of the Larkhall area. It also draws attention to issues and problems within the area which may be threatening its unique character.

The assessment and development principles contained within this document will constitute "supplementary planning guidance". It would be a material consideration when determining planning applications. Through these means, the policies of central and local government, can be given a local interpretation, to protect the character and sense of place of the neighbourhood of Larkhall.

THE STUDY AREA

The study area is situated in the north eastern part of the World Heritage City of Bath. Historically, it was a local centre on the outskirts of the city, formed above the flood plain of the

River Avon at the Southern end of the Cotswold Hills. The study area sits on the south facing slopes north of the River Avon.

These slopes are developed with mainly residential properties, and look down on the centre of Larkhall which provides the visual and social focus for the area.

Land to the north of the study area above Fairfield Park, forms part of the tightly drawn Green Belt around Bath. This land also falls within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) boundary and part has been designated as a site of Wildlife Importance within the City.

A number of open spaces also fall within the study area. These areas are identified as important features within the character area studies. The whole of the study area has also been designated as Priority area two for tree planting within the City. Key individual trees or areas of tree planting have also been identified. (Cherishing Outdoor Places - A Landscape Strategy For Bath 1993)

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE AREA

Up until 1742 there was virtually no building in the area. Lambridge House and Dead Mill are identified on a plan of that date. However, a road pattern was clearly established following what is now St. Saviour's Road, and Lambridge Street to Charlcombe and London Road. By 1795 Grosvenor and Kensington had been built creating the edge of the London Road.



From 1795 Harcourt Masters Map

A Map of 1852 (not shown) indicates a more familiar form. Claremont Road, St. Saviour's Church and the Lower Swainswick area were established, also Salisbury Road (shown without buildings). By 1889 the pattern is well established although it was not until 1936 that Dowding, Holland and Wallace Roads are mapped. In 1960's the schools were enlarged and St. Mark's Secondary School built.

Through historical evidence and morphology (or pattern of development) five different character areas can be identified.

- 'Cross Roads' focusing on the Square in the centre.
- The planned terraces and villas of the London Road.
- The group of artisans' houses at Raglan Lane, Fairfield.
- 'Outer' pre and post war estates.
- The rural area of Bailbrook Lane beyond the Gloucester road.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The majority of settlement in the Larkhall area is relatively recent, the landscape having been largely agricultural until the 18th Century. The earliest archaeologically significant site is that of Deadmans Hill on Deadmill Lane and although of basic 18th and 19th Century construction may well lie on or adjacent to the site of an earlier medieval mill.

The southern part of the area however, is bisected by London Road, the Roman Road known as the Fosse Way which runs from Exeter to Lincoln via such places as Cirencester and Leicester, some of the most important towns of Roman Britain. Bath itself was an extremely important Roman Spa centre of international renown and clearly attached a substantial population although the form of Roman settlement is not particularly well understood. The Roman practice of siting burials and cemeteries along the major routeways into towns is reflected in two archaeological discoveries in the area: a tombstone of a cavalry soldier found off Gros-

venor Place in 1714 and a stone coffin found under the pavement of London Road in 1844. More recent trial investigations in 1992 on the sports ground to the south of London Road revealed evidence of very early medieval settlement indicating that the archaeological picture is far from complete. Roman and medieval remains may well still survive beneath the present settlement, particularly along the London Road corridor and on land between the road and the river.

PROJECT APPROACH

Because it is important that character is perceived not only in terms of the professional view, the project was designed to include the participation of the local people.

It became clear from the Initial Issues Report March 1996, that for many in the community, the social fabric and the 'community spirit' were as much part of the character as the physical fabric. This therefore involved consideration not only of the physical and aesthetic aspects, but also the way the place was used, and the processes which generate and modify the character. Issues of traffic, and a perceived threat to the shopping area by a new superstore, were thus seen as important to the project's assessment of character as the width of streets and height of buildings.

Key Issues

The study has shown that residents are concerned with a number of issues which are considered to be threatening the character of Larkhall.

These include:

- the growth in volume of through traffic and therefore the need to re-establish the essentially residential character of the area by reducing the impact of vehicular traffic on the environmental quality of the area;
- the tendency of properties affected by this to have a quicker than usual turnover of occu-

pants or to change their use to flats resulting in poorer maintenance of the fabric, and increases in on-street car parking;

- the effect on the vitality and viability of the active shopping core, regarded by many as excellent, of the establishment of a supermarket in the vicinity.

The remit of this report can only be based on planning issues. As funding becomes available, schemes which address these issues can be brought forward to the Council's Planning, Transportation and Environment Committee's attention.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out a character assessment it was necessary to divide the area into smaller, more manageable sections or zones, roughly defined by building ages, styles or by natural boundaries such as roads, rivers or open spaces.

The surveys were carried out by officers from the Strategic Policy Section of the Council, with contributions from local residents.

Initially, a character assessment form was devised to record the elements of character of individual areas. At least two people surveyed each area so that the results were not biased by the views or tastes of one individual.

Results were then pooled. At this stage it became apparent that some areas could be joined to form four character zones. These are:

1. Central Larkhall: The central area of shops and terraces built around St. Saviour's Road also including the 1930-40's detached dwellings of Dowding, Wallace and Holland Road.

2. Fairfield Park-Rose Hill and Environs: The Pre and Post-War housing estates of semi's built around the occasional older terrace such as those at Raglan Lane, Raglan Street, Malvern Buildings and Worcester Villas.

3. Gloucester Road: The area to the east of the Lam Brook across to the Gloucester Road and

up to Bailbrook in the north and down to the edge of Alice Park.

4.Grosvenor: The area to South of London Road to the River Avon and from the rugby ground in the east to the west of Kensington Place.

From the information gained from the character assessment forms, a character description broken down into individual elements of character was prepared identifying areas of special note or visual richness.

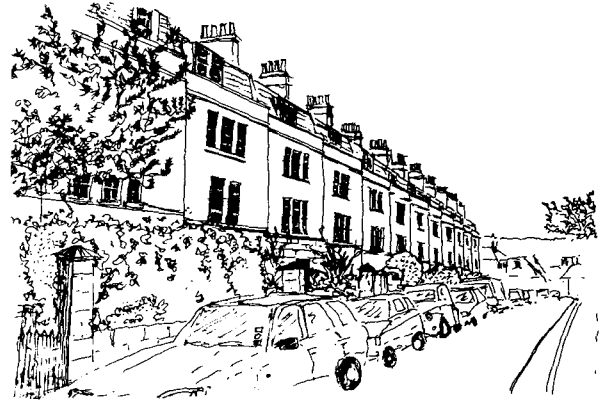
CHARACTER ELEMENTS

The character elements identified have been broken down into the Built Form - Materials, Details and Streetscape, Landmarks and Focal Points, Natural Features and Open Space, Views, Activities and Uses and Traffic and Accessibility and are described in the following text.

THE BUILT FORM

The built form of an area is a major determinant in defining the character of that particular place. Without buildings there would be no spaces formed between those buildings creating a sense of place.

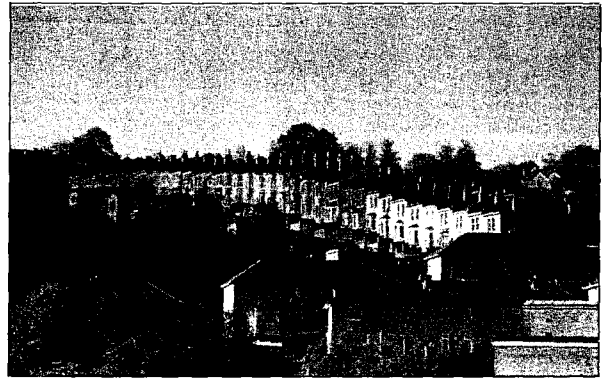
In Larkhall the built form varies considerably from the generally older central Georgian - two to four storey, terraced area and the planned grand terraces of the London Road; to the looser knit, two storey, 'outer' pre and post war estates of Fairfield Park and Rose Hill; and the piecemeal development of the Gloucester Road area. This morphology, or pattern of development, is an important aspect of the area's character.



A traditional terrace in Larkhall

Within the study area as a whole the buildings respond to the hillside terrain, running up and down slopes as well as across slopes, revealing and framing views and vistas.

Situated on the edge of the city, close to the Cotswolds AONB and Green Belt, a particularly good feature of the built form is the way it relates to the landscape. Terraces of buildings intertwine with swathes of trees, creating a unique character which is very pleasing to the eye.



Contrasts between strong built form and vegetation

There are examples of many different building styles from the C18th to the present day.



An example of an individual building style

The outskirts are more suburban in character compared to where development was originally concentrated around the central crossroads of Larkhall village.

This is reflected in the style and form of building according to age. After the turn of the century, there was a desire for more detached housing and gradually the form of development changed from the terraces to semi-detached and detached dwellings.



Examples of three periods of building style

In the central area of Larkhall village, the Georgian artisan terraces and grander terraces running down to the London Road form a major contribution to the character of the area in terms of built form. With their sliding sash windows, parapets, mansard roofs and dormers, some are rendered and painted a range of colours, others remain in ashlar stone at the front, often with rubble stone to the rear.



A unique villa style building on London Road

The built form of the more northern area of Upper East Hayes is non typical, and therefore stands out introducing variety within the visual appearance of the street. Other areas of the built form that are also different from that surround-

ing them are the terraces of Raglan Lane and the grand terraces of Grosvenor Place and Kensington Place.



The grand terrace of Grosvenor Place

MATERIALS

The fabric of the buildings within an area is very important visually in terms of character. For it is the use of certain materials that makes the greatest contribution to the local distinctiveness of that area and that which makes one place distinct from the next.

In the older areas of Larkhall, there is a predominance of natural materials, however, in the more modern areas these have largely been replaced by man made materials, having a much less attractive effect.

Despite the huge variety of building styles and periods within the Larkhall area, the common factor between most buildings is that they are constructed of Bath stone, or in the modern houses, reconstituted Bath stone. This contributes significantly to a strong character definition not only within Larkhall but Bath as a whole.

Bath stone is a locally occurring material which has shaped the character of Bath since it was first used in great quantity in the C18th. It has a characteristic rich, honey coloured tone with a patina that mellows and matures over time.

Other materials which complement Bath stone and have been traditionally used as roofing materials are grey Welsh slate and red clay plain or

pantiles. More recently however, brown concrete, double roman style, tiles have been used.



Varied roofscape of smooth slate tiles and clay pantiles

Other materials present throughout the survey area are ironwork, largely for decoration such as balconies, window boxes, overthrows, gates and railings.

Woodwork also features in the form of decorative bargeboards, gables, finials and importantly sash windows.



Decorative bargeboards in St Saviour's Road

Within the study area there are also a few anomalies or 'exceptions to the rules'. For example, the Brains Surgery pub, built mainly of brick with stone detailing and a former church in Bailbrook constructed of corrugated iron.

BUILDING DETAILS/FEATURES

Introduction

The decorative treatment of the external elevations of buildings and means of enclosure of these buildings can enhance the visual richness of a place, which in turn influences character.

Richness depends on visual contrasts. Whilst the section on Built Form highlights terraces as the predominant building form, there is a wealth of ornamental detail throughout Larkhall which gives a uniqueness to each terrace, or enhances the interest of contrasting individual buildings.

The best examples of fine detailing are concentrated in 18th and 19th century housing. Whilst there are a variety of building styles since this date, there is a marked absence of interesting detail in these areas, resulting in a bland environment which contributes much less to the character of Larkhall.

Terraces: Rhythm and Uniformity

The Georgian and Victorian terraces were built to a simple design with regular proportions. The detailing ensured that the facades were interesting and never monotonous. Features can include string courses, or parapets. Along with these, window cills, cornices and other projecting architectural features, and the rhythm of doors and windows, all contribute to the pleasing uniformity. The structure of most houses within the terraces is unaltered, so each house continues to make an important contribution to the whole piece of architecture.

Brunswick Street is a fine example of strong rhythm created through repeating a uniform treatment to each house in a terrace. The rhythm is strengthened by chimney pots and the regular stepping of houses up the hillside.

In St. Saviour's Road, a short terrace stands out because untypically, gables featuring very ornamental timber barge boards face the road, contrasting with adjacent terraces.

Openings: Proportions and Unity

The Georgian technique of recessing doors and windows creates shadows which add texture to facades. The arrangement of windows may initially appear uniform. However, on closer inspection, there is a wide range of patterns of fenestration.

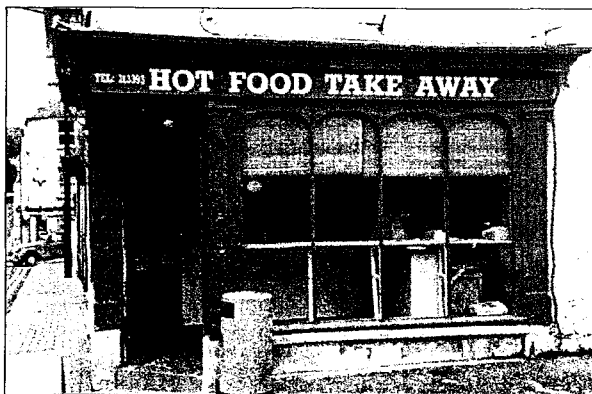
In the main, the original openings have been maintained and many traditional sashes are intact. Original glazing bars are evident in Georgian houses. Timber sliding sashes are the predominant type of opening. Very occasionally, an altered opening or replacement window spoils the integrity and detracts from the character of a terrace.



Unaltered traditional pattern of fenestration

Shopfronts

In the centre of Larkhall, the shopfronts which contribute most to character are the traditional ones, which still respect the proportions and style of the buildings and contribute to the unity of the street scene. Shopfronts and signs styles which are used regionally contribute much less to character. One shopfront of note is at 7 St. Saviour's Road; it is attractive and simple, befitting local shops, unlike the elaborate shops one would expect in the City centre.



Shop front at 7 St. Saviour's Road and Carved roundel of a bee, fixed to undercill of front elevation.



Ornamentation/Decoration

Some terraces feature single storey bays; the flat roof concealed by parapets with varying patterns carved from them. Occasionally blank windows create an illusion in stone, sometimes the panes are painted in. These are generally used to achieve harmonious elevations. Whilst rare in Larkhall, a few properties retain their original timber blind boxes which would have housed heavy duty canvas blinds.

Decorative iron balconettes and balconies are more common, and some individual properties feature intricate timber or iron balconies, the ornamental treatment continuing beneath the sides of cantilevered canopies to create attractive entrances. A few shutters remain and these tend to be on individually designed properties.

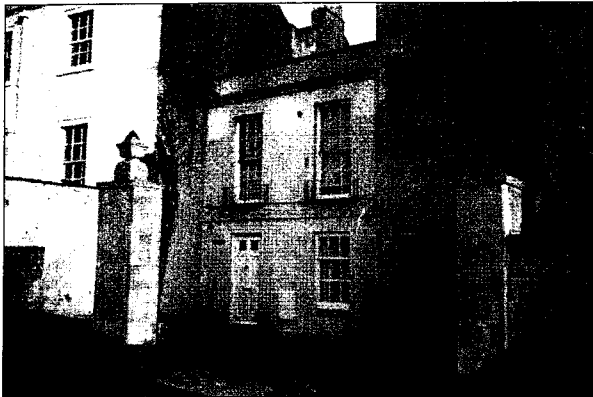


Decorative ironwork

Where dormers are a feature of a terrace they are, in the main, in proportion with the elevational treatment. Occasionally, poorly designed and overlarge dormers become the focus of attention and detract from the pleasing unity of a terrace.

Many properties retain their original panelled wooden doors and where they have been replaced, the style and materials of the replacement frequently does not respect traditional proportions. In the case of plastic replacements, the standard factory made components are often too small for the opening which requires adjustment to the door frame, so it no longer conforms to the other properties, spoiling the uniform treatment of the terraces. Generally, the use of nationally available standard features re-

sults in the loss of local distinctiveness. Wherever possible features should be made locally using local materials in traditional styles.



Variety of built form at Upper East Hayes

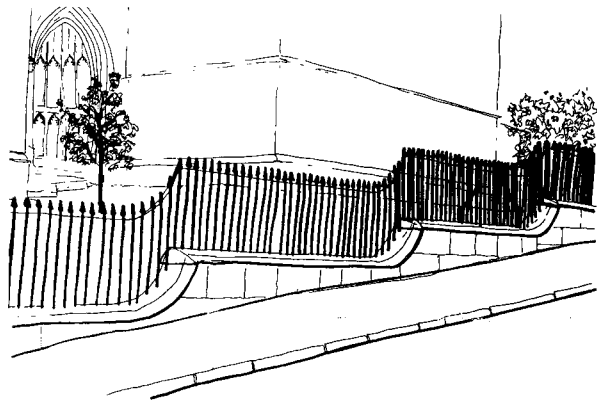
There are many examples of fine original fanlights in Larkhall, particularly at Beaufort East, Grosvenor Place and Kensington Place and Lambridge. Occasionally, replacement doors feature fanlights within the door which misrepresent the traditional relationship between door and fanlight and is therefore, out of character. One owner has adopted a sensitive means of increasing light levels in a hallway by replacing the upper door panels with stained glass panels. This works because it maintains the original proportions of the door.

Personalisation can have a detrimental effect on the character of buildings where materials, windows or doors are changed. An example of personalisation which has enhanced the character of the area is at a house conversion in Upper East Hayes, where gates and railings have been specially fabricated to suit. The use of fossils for decoration in the random rubble wall increases the interest and uniqueness of this property.

Many original railings remain intact. Where they have been removed from a number of houses within a terrace, the appearance of the terrace suffers through the use of an uncoordinated collection of non traditional materials and styles, which are often less robust than the original material, and deteriorate quickly, becoming unattractive.

The presence of a wrought iron overthrow on London Road, is a lone reminder of the degree of ornamentation applied to the entrances of some properties. Stone walls and gate piers are still the predominant boundary material, and there is great variety in the way the material has been used.

Landmark buildings contribute to character by their individuality. The church is the key landmark building, featuring a wealth of ornamentation and standing in a modest space surrounded by a particularly fine dressed stone wall. The wall responds to the slope by the use of a scalloped coping, which the level of the golden topped spearhead railings reflect. The style of the gate piers, with decorated tops can be seen occasionally at road junctions throughout Larkhall.



Wall and iron railings surrounding St.Saviour's Church

Historical features

Historical details enrich the interest of Larkhall. Examples include a faded advertisement on a wall in Brookleaze Buildings, the sun plaque at Upper East Hayes, which entitled the owner to the fire service, inscriptions such as at Deadmill, a Turnpike Trust milestone, a parish boundary marker and a clockface on Beaufort House - unfortunately not in working order.

Summary

The built form, materials and details of Larkhall contribute to the character of the area by providing strong rhythm and unity especially in the terrace form, respecting traditional proportions;

variety within unity; cohesion and richness; attention to details and quality materials. Boundary treatments of these properties provide an affinity with the street, again providing unity as well as a link to and contribution to the streetscape of the area.

STREETSCAPE

The spaces between buildings are equally as important as the buildings that create those spaces.

These spaces or streets are collectively known as the 'streetscape'.

Street furniture and paving surfaces usually form the setting of a street scene. Together with the buildings they often have an overwhelming influence on the impression that people have of the quality of an area.

There is no overall legislation to co-ordinate all the activities that affect the appearance of a street. Much has to be done purely through co-operation between the various different agencies.

Historically, much more attention was given to the streetscape of an area by way of special, locally available paving materials, decorative lamp-posts and railings as well as benches and hand painted or carved street name signs.

Unfortunately, today the streetscape can often be ignored and can become a piecemeal and uncoordinated, conglomeration of boundary treatments, street furniture, signage, lighting, utilities equipment and paving. This can also be attributed to the conflict of modern activity, such as increased traffic, advertising and satellite dishes.

The appearance of Larkhall is affected by the uncoordinated use and styles of seats, street lamps, signs, litter bins and also by the clutter of overhead cables and road markings. Modern telephone boxes do not sit comfortably in their historic environment. Telephone boxes and post

boxes were traditionally the focus of attention in the foreground of a scene; their status justified by their important function.

The grand terraces on the London Road display some historically good quality streetscape and the Upper East Hayes area is rich in visual detailing reflected in boundary treatments, gateposts, gates, railings and balconies, all of which contribute to the overall street scene and should be preserved.



The historical streetscape of London Road featuring steps to elevated pavements traditionally used for mounting carriages.

Paving Material

Pennant stone (a sandstone quarried near Hanham, traditionally used in Bath) paving and kerbs in the Larkhall area largely survives only in streets where there are original Georgian terraces, mostly along the London Road - along with elevated stepped pavements (traditionally used for mounting horse and carriages).

Surfacing materials can create a strong unifying link between buildings. In Larkhall, however, a predominance of patched and worn tarmacadam on roads and footpaths detracts from the character of the area. In the centre of Larkhall, new paving comprises concrete blocks of a uniform size and pattern, which do not reflect traditional materials or laying techniques. Square concrete slabs have been used outside the public toilets but traditional laying patterns have not been adopted. Concrete blocks have been used in the small gaps at the edges, as they are more resistant to abuse by traffic.

Similar concrete blocks have been used for private drives and parking areas.



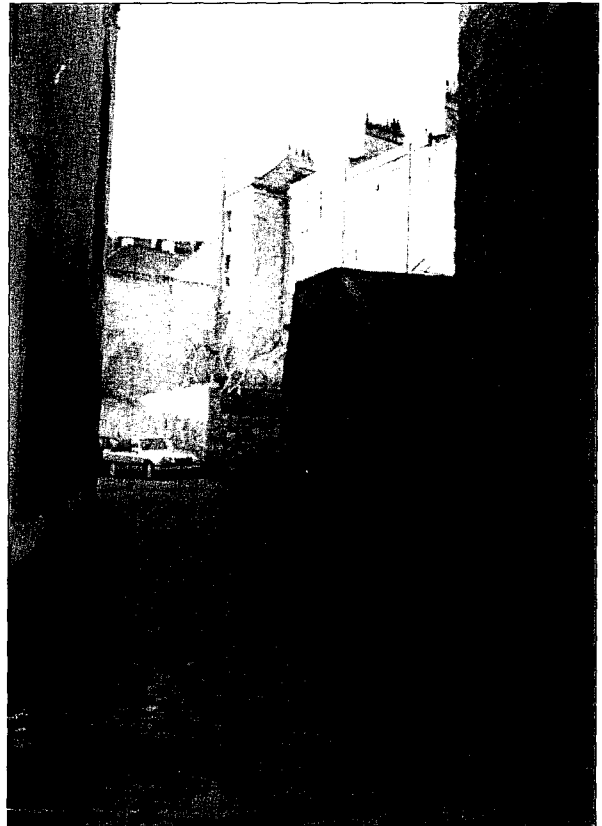
Larkhall Square could benefit from enhancement

At Upper East Hayes, pennant slabs and stone kerbs are used. Whilst not traditionally radiused around the corner, the irregular size of the slabs and the natural material adds richness through texture to the street scene. At Piccadilly Place, stone setts remain in place despite constant use, linking the stone walls of adjacent buildings. Where the use of natural stone cannot be justified, modern concrete paving should continue this tradition but the same care should be taken to shape and fit the slabs.



Traditional pennant stone paving

Good paving is noticed as much as good buildings. In some places in Bath, slabs of pennant stone paving are cut precisely to the corner. Although not properly radiused in the picture below opposite, a good effect is still achieved with traditional paving.



Original stone setts at Piccadilly Place, London Road

Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments also contribute aesthetically to and help tidy up and unite the streetscape. Throughout the older periods of building in Larkhall, there are some strong boundary treatments of stone walls and railings. Some buildings abut the pavement edge, others have small walled front gardens. The newer areas of development do not have such strong boundary treatments, being of a lower density and more open in their layout.

It is important, in terms of streetscape, that this is noted if new development takes place.



Neat boundary treatments create a strong edge to the street

Street Furniture

Fortunately, the centre of Larkhall itself is not too cluttered with street furniture and signposts. The shops use hanging signs and flags as well as their fascia boards and some have 'A' boards on the street. However, there is no real focal point to the centre other than the Larkhall Inn and the 'physical' crossroads at the Larkhall Inn - an area that has become known as the 'Square' which has some shabby paving, a few concrete planters, public toilets, telephone kiosks, a bus stop and some trees. It is also traffic dominated and there are minimal active street frontages onto the 'Square'.

Lampposts throughout the area are largely standard 'highway issue' concrete or metal lampposts with no decoration. It is unfortunate that there are very few decorative iron lampposts still surviving.

Summary

Within Larkhall, the streetscape that provides the greatest contribution to character is the surviving historical streetscape. Generally, little attention has been paid to achieving a good quality modern streetscape, by giving attention to aesthetics and tradition, as well as function.

LANDMARKS AND FOCAL POINTS

Introduction

One of the key elements of character in the Larkhall area is the presence of landmarks and focal points. These comprise buildings and other features which, because of their characteristics or setting, stand out from their surroundings, provide a context for the wider area, or contribute to the character in some other way. Often comprising historical features they provide links to the past and add to the uniqueness of Larkhall as a place. They also help to guide us through the built environment as well as making it a more interesting place to live, work and play.

The most obvious focal point is the neighbourhood centre itself, both physically and socially.

Area-wide landmarks

The most notable landmark building in the area is St Saviour's Church. The building is prominent because of its scale both in the street scene and in the wider area. It is easily identified and forms a focal point from the higher ground to the north, west and east where it forms a visual reference point indicating the location of the central area. Other landmarks tend to be more localised.

Localised landmarks

Public houses provide a social focus for the community and are often notable buildings within the street-scene because of their size or their historical or architectural significance. Within Larkhall there are several public houses of note.

The Larkhall Inn occupies a prominent corner position in Larkhall centre at the intersection of St Saviour's Road and Brookleaze Buildings. The building has a distinctive frontage which is painted white and black over stone, render and rubble. However its appearance suffers through poor maintenance of the fabric.



Larkhall Inn

Within the Fairfield Park area there are two public houses which could be described as landmark buildings. The Fairfield Arms is located on the corner of Fairfield Road and Raglan Lane. It occupies a key position forming a notional gateway to the Fairfield Park area when approached from the south. The Brains Surgery public house is situated on the corner of Eldon Place and Dafford Street and is notable for its large size compared with surrounding buildings and its materials comprising red brick walls with stone edgings and lintels which accentuate its prominence.

From the western approach into the area the methodist church on the corner of Tynning Lane and Claremont Road is also a landmark building.

On Deadmill Lane in the east lies Dead Mill itself. Located on the edge of the built up area, the imposing old mill building is an important landmark. Its dominance in the street scene is accentuated by the space surrounding it as the urban area ceases to the south. This marked transition to a more rural character, as one leaves the urban area, is key to the setting of the mill itself.



Dead Mill

The Lam Brook could also be considered a focal point but is described later within Natural Features.

Within the built environment landmarks are not restricted to single buildings. Pockets of contrasting patterns of development are often landmark features because of this contrast. For example the tightly knit artisan terraces of Raglan Lane and Malvern Buildings contrast markedly with the predominantly suburban semi-detached area of Fairfield Park. On a different scale the grand imposing nature of Grosvenor Place in its gateway to the City location is a landmark.

There are other features throughout the area which could be described as landmarks or focal points. These include several green features such as street trees and open areas. For example the group of trees on the heights of Charlcombe Lane forms a focal point for surrounding areas and similarly the large horse chestnut tree adjacent to Dead Mill is a landmark in its own right.

Summary

Landmarks are identified by their prominence on an area-wide basis as for St Saviour's Church or at a more localised level within the street-scene. Buildings and natural features may be prominent due to their size and dominance of a view, building materials and architecture, location as a focal point and their context within the surrounding space.

NATURAL FEATURES AND OPEN SPACE

Topography

Larkhall has developed above the floodplain of the river Avon valley on south east facing slopes, and on the valley sides of the Lam Brook, which flows southwards through the area. The centre of Larkhall occupies the lower gently undulating land, and development rises up the hillsides, framed by steep hillsides to the north and north east.

The Lam Brook

The character of the Lam Brook changes as it takes its south-flowing route through Larkhall. As it leaves its natural winding course through the hills by Swainswick, it is then canalised adjacent to St Saviour's Road in a stone sided channel protected by railings at the road edge. Even though it is artificially channelled, the mere presence of water with naturally occurring vegetation clinging to and cascading over the random rubble wall, introduces an element of rural character into the street scene. From the other side of the road the water cannot be seen or heard.



The Lam Brook

As it leaves St Saviour's Road, the brook becomes concealed for a third of its length through Larkhall, behind back gardens. There is a crossing point for accessing the open space by an unattractive concrete bridge.

Where it emerges to define the eastern edge of Lambridge Street open space, its presence is obscured by brambles and other vegetation

growing over an unattractive chain link fence, preventing access to the brook. The brook is then concealed between private spaces and takes a route through an artificial channel under London Road to discharge into the River Avon.

The full potential of the brook as a water feature could be realised to create a real asset to the community. Opportunities exist to improve the physical and visual access to the brook where it runs parallel with St Saviour's Road and edges the Lambridge Street open space. Safety should be a key factor of any improvements. Furthermore, the wildlife value of the brook could be enhanced through appropriate management.

Vegetation

As well as contrasting with and softening the buildings, trees, shrubs and hedges enhance the character of Larkhall by:-

- being the focus of views
- containing space
- framing views or buildings
- their connection with historic buildings
- creating variety in street scenes
- concealing unsightly structures or private garden activities
- creating interest through seasonal change

Residents have expressed their individuality in their garden designs, which are generally informal in layout and individual to each house. However, in some places, the uniformity of a terrace is strengthened by hedges, such as at Beaufort East or Daffords Buildings.



Hedgerow boundaries of private gardens

Attractive scenes with plants often occur by chance and not design which contributes to a small scale softening of, and contrast with, expanses of hard materials. An example of this is where plants colonise cracks in pavements or joints in stone walls.

Trees and Tree Cover

The predominant building form being terraces, many with small back gardens and frequently no front gardens, means that trees of stature are not in abundance. However, where they do exist, they have a considerable impact, because of the marked contrast to the built environment.

Few of Larkhall's trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. However trees located within the Conservation Area are afforded some protection as anyone intending to do work or fell trees with a diameter greater than 75mm (3 inches) are legally required to give the Council notice of their intention. This gives the Council the opportunity to protect worthy trees by making a Tree Preservation Order.

There are a variety of ways in which trees contribute to the character of Larkhall. These include formal tree planting at Kensington Gardens which accentuate the formality of the grand Georgian terrace and the straightness of London Road; and trees planted informally in private or public space. The latter represents the bulk of Larkhall's tree cover and so makes the greatest contribution to character.

Examples of important trees include beeches at Upper East Hayes and adjacent to Beaufort House, one of the main entrances into Larkhall; a yew on the east to west section of Upper East Hayes, which contrasts with the unique built character of the street; a horse chestnut at the northern end of St Saviour's Road; and maples opposite and nearby the Somerfield store, which frame views along the road. In most cases where trees are present in gardens, they contribute positively to the character of Larkhall by contrasting with and softening the buildings.



The yew tree at Upper East Hayes

Tree cover which appears to occur naturally is limited to field boundaries and the streamside immediately north of the study area adjacent to the Lam Brook, where it edges the open space in Lambridge Street and a significant wooded area at Fairfield Park Road.

There is a lack of information relating to urban trees in private property, and an audit of trees, to assess their condition, programme their replacement, identify new sites and make provision for their management would be desirable. Given that the majority of trees are in private ownership, the feasibility of an audit would depend on the cooperation of residents

The study area contains open spaces of differing character. They mainly comprise public space for recreation, private and communal garden space, and allotments. The spaces contribute to the character of the area by giving relief to the built form and providing opportunities for informal and formal recreation, gardening and cultivation and an appreciation of nature.

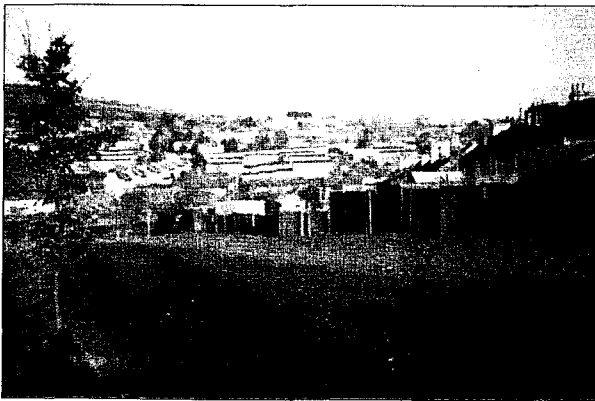
Spaces for informal recreation

Alice Park is at the eastern edge of the study area, features a well equipped play area, toilets and small café, and is popular with residents. The opening of the Swainswick bypass, has relieved the previously heavily trafficked Gloucester Road, across which access is made from Larkhall.



Alice Park

The Larkhall recreation ground between Eldon Place/Brooklyn Buildings and Rose Hill, has footpaths linking the residential area to the north of Larkhall, with the shopping area. This space features a formal play area at the western edge, contains a few scattered mature trees and more recently planted trees around the edges. However, there is insufficient planting to create protected and enclosed areas and the area is generally bland and exposed. There are numerous gardens and boundary treatments backing onto the space, the appearance of which would be enhanced by continuous hedge planting.



The Larkhall recreation ground

A small space which provides a contrast to the built up area is located at the junction of Upper East Hayes and Kensington Gardens. This also features a useful pedestrian short cut.

At Lambridge Street, the backs of houses face the open space separating them from the concealed Lam Brook. Surveillance of parts of the space is poor, particularly at the northern and southern ends.

To the north of Larkhall, at Batstone Close, a large open space featuring a stream and streamside trees, brings the surrounding countryside into the built up area. On the east side, it links to communal open space extending further into the built up area, providing visual and physical links with the countryside. Unlike the space at Lambridge Street where houses back onto the space, the houses on the west side have been designed to overlook the space, providing good surveillance and security. Any improvements to open spaces would be based on the outcome of consultation with residents.

Gardens and communal space

Private garden space contributes to character by contrasting with the predominantly dense built environment of Larkhall. Unusually, the gardens of Malvern Buildings are separated from the houses by the road. There are no boundaries identifying individual plots, which contain an unattractive assortment of garages, so it appears as one large neglected space.

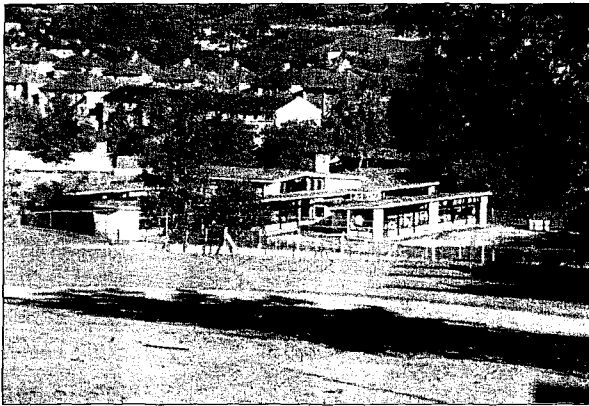
Communal spaces associated with housing are largely confined to modern housing areas in the north of Larkhall. The density of these dwellings with small gardens is relieved by the communal open space which provides pedestrian and recreational through-routes and physical and visual connections with other open spaces and the countryside. These communal spaces, featuring established trees, create attractive, enclosed, car free outlooks for residents, contrasting with those at Solsbury Way, which are not contained by the buildings and consequently are more exposed.

Allotments

Allotment gardens provide valuable open space within Larkhall, and because of the nature of the planting, allow views across them, to landmarks or beyond Larkhall. It is unfortunate that some are not well used, and at Hampton View it appears that only one allotment is in use.

School grounds

The built form of St Saviour's and St Mark's schools, set in large open spaces, contrasts dramatically with the rest of Larkhall. Whilst there are some significant trees at the boundary, the space is monotonous and exposed and does not provide an attractive setting for the school buildings. There is the potential to carry out planting to improve enclosure of the grounds and enhance the appearance of local and distant views.



The grounds of St Mark's Secondary School

Other spaces

Larkhall contains a remnant of countryside at Fairfield Park Road, surrounded by residential development. This small paddock, on a steep slope, is grazed, and bounded at the highest part by a substantial area of unmanaged woodland. This area contrasts dramatically with its surroundings; it provides relief to dense housing development and an attractive outlook for residents. There are no public rights of access over this land.



The paddock in Fairfield Park surrounded by residential development

Kensington Meadows

Kensington Meadows, located between housing and the river Avon, is an open space greatly valued by residents. A low lying area immediately adjacent to the river is to be designated as a Local Nature Reserve. Present management is restricted to essential tree work. Following designation, a management plan will be drawn up in consultation with English Nature. This will ensure the protection and enhancement of the diverse range of flora, in the interests of wildlife. The adjacent open space is not botanically rich, and diversity could be enhanced by adopting different management practices and with new planting. The future management and level of public access will depend on the outcome of discussions between the Council and residents.



Riverside woodland at Kensington Meadows



Kensington meadows

Other designed spaces linked to historic buildings include the small grassed churchyard setting to St Saviour's Church, the partly hedged grassed space to Beaufort East, and the thin linear spaces at the front of Grosvenor Place and Kensington Place.

VIEWS

Views in and out of an area not only help in establishing a sense of place but also make a vital contribution to its overall character. Views can affect our perception of an area as well as allowing us to quickly assess the relationship between the built and natural form.

Bath is particularly fortunate in possessing resplendent views across and into the City and its landscape setting is acknowledged to be one of its most important assets. Thus, it follows that Larkhall's landscape setting is fundamental in defining its overall character.

Those who live, work or pass through the Larkhall area cannot fail to notice the magnificent long range views afforded by the topography of the surrounding area. Here, the main body of Larkhall nestles in the lower slopes of the surrounding hills towards the bottom of the Lam Brook valley and River Avon floodplain. The presence of the Green Belt has helped restrain the spread of development up the hillsides by protecting the openness of this countryside, which has in turn, helped protect the longer range views.

Extensive Views

The higher slopes of the study area afford extensive views over the centre of Larkhall to Little Solsbury Hill that forms part of the escarpment of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Bathampton Down and the Avon valley to the south.

The view to the west over Larkhall from Bailbrook Lane



Extensive views to the surrounding hills are afforded from many points in Larkhall.

From elevated positions such as Bailbrook Lane, panoramic views can be properly appreciated together with how Larkhall fits into the context of the city as a whole. St Saviour's Church is always a strong focal point from these positions.

The extensiveness and ready accessibility of these long range views accentuate the importance of the landscape setting which provides a natural backdrop to the built form.

Within the lower developed area of central Larkhall, long range views out of the immediate area are more limited although nonetheless important, and tend to be mainly skyline views.

Localised Views

Since the majority of the roads are narrow, directly fronted by terraced buildings and more often than not, located on the slopes of a hillside, many views are naturally channelled, whether travelling through the area on foot or by car as in the case of Raglan Lane and Claremont Road. Many of these views are either contained or blocked where roads interchange as at Dafford Place and Chilton Road.



Views framed by boundary walls and vegetation

Open spaces within the area permit wider views which contrast with the more contained views prevalent within the built up area. Trees and shrubs also frame and enhance views and help to create a sense of enclosure.



A View of St. Saviour's Church From London Road

The entry into Larkhall from the London Road looking east along St Saviour's Road affords a spectacular view of Little Solsbury Hill. The view is framed by St Saviour's Church on the left and the series of terraced buildings on the right. This view dominates this street scene by almost overwhelming the built form.

The sequential views afforded along St. Saviour's Road typify the range and type of localised views that can be appreciated from the lower

part of Larkhall. Here, whilst buildings channel the views, these views become deflected when travelling along the typically windy narrower roads and present a continually shifting scene.



A view along St Saviour's Road to Larkhall Centre and the hills beyond.

Summary

Views in and out of the study area are therefore integral to the appreciation of its overall character. The importance of maintaining principal views and glimpses can be assessed on two levels:

- by providing a backdrop to the built form, they can help enhance the aesthetic quality of Larkhall; and
- views, either individually or collectively, help in creating a sense of place and aid orientation within the urban area.

Therefore, any physical changes that may have a detrimental effect on these views should be resisted.



The Batheaston Bypass is visible from many different vantage points in Larkhall.

ACTIVITIES AND USES

Activities and uses are aspects of character that tend to be overlooked in traditional character statements, where more emphasis is normally placed on describing the significance of the historical and architectural merits of the physical environment. Activity gives a place its vitality.

Yet, it is how a place is used and the activities generated that provides an important link between the past, present and future. Although this is inevitably an evolving process, the general distribution and interaction of uses remain slow to change and can provide an important insight into the historical origins of an area.

The Larkhall area is predominately residential and represents part of the north eastern suburban expansion of Bath. However, it is supported by a well established local shopping centre located around the village core which provides the main focus of retail and other commercial activity of Larkhall.

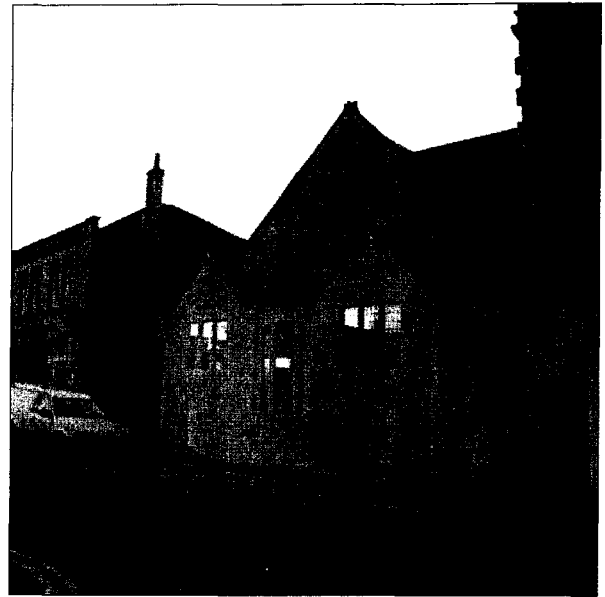


Larkhall Centre

Here there are a variety of shops catering for everyday needs ranging from the Somerfield supermarket and Post Office to a number of independently run shops including a delicatessen, hardware store and tea shop.

This central area plays an important role and focus for social interaction. The Rondo provides a small theatre and concert venue for cul-

tural and non-cultural events. The Larkhall Inn is also well located for potential community use and has a traditional community focus role.



The Rondo Theatre

Elsewhere in the study area, social and commercial/retail facilities are more dispersed, but still in easily accessible locations. These include a newsagent, public houses, a sub-post office, scout hut, religious meeting places. These places represent other opportunities for social interaction.

There are also small unobtrusive pockets of industrial use tucked away. Although these largely co-exist alongside housing, they do not appear generally to detract from the residential amenity in terms of noise and pollution. In fact, it could be argued that the activity generated by these employment uses provides a certain level of interest and vitality and represents a positive contrast to the more passive activity associated with residential use.

There are a number of car repair garages such as those at Ringswell Gardens, Beaufort Mews, and another off St Saviour's Road. Other industrial or workshop uses include a storage depot (Kilnwood Storage Yard), light industrial use in former mill complex (Deadmill Joinery) and builders' yards.

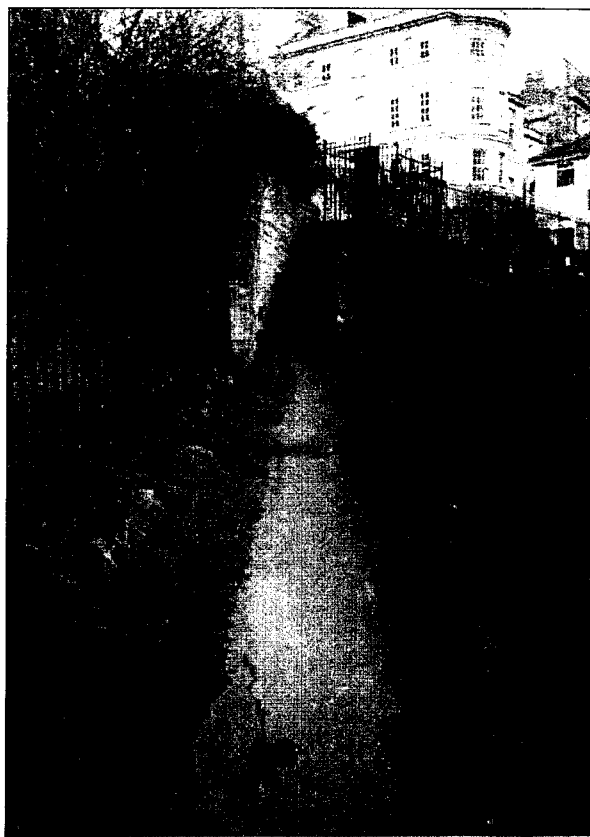


Alternative use of mews buildings for car repair garages

Whilst market forces are to a certain degree instrumental in the presence of a particular use, especially in the case of retail outlets and small industrial enterprises, the Council recognises the importance of protecting the ground floor of premises for retail use in the centre of Larkhall and resisting the loss of small shops elsewhere through policies in the Local Plan.

The liveliness of the area is generally heightened by the presence of a number of schools including primary and secondary schools as well as a small private establishment, the Small School.

The overall density of the built form is alleviated by areas of open space. As well as providing a visual break from this intensity of development, most are well used for some sort of recreational activity, whether formal or informal. The majority of these open spaces are overlooked by the surrounding houses thus providing an unofficial method of surveillance, and therefore making these relatively safe areas for play.



A footpath linking Kensington Road to London Road

The juxtaposition of the urban area and the surrounding hillsides and the presence of a number of public footpaths makes access into the countryside relatively easy and encourages its use for recreation.

Summary

The area provides a range of uses that meet some of the social, educational, shopping and leisure needs of the local community. In essence, it is the particular combination of uses that contributes to an area's unique character as well as enhancing its vitality and viability. The juxtaposition of small-scale retail and business outlets with pubs and meeting places gives the centre a village like character.

As an adjunct to this, Larkhall has a number of publicly accessible open spaces for amenity and recreational use. Its network of routeways also provide good permeability and allow easy access from one area to another, as well as to the countryside beyond.

TRAFFIC AND ACCESSIBILITY

Traffic and the problems associated with it are seen as an important, usually negative, element of character in Larkhall. It was also one of the major concerns arising from the Issues Report. The survey revealed a number of areas and a variety of ways it impacts upon the character of the area.

Congestion

Congestion occurs most notably in Larkhall centre along London Road and around the schools. Congestion in the centre is caused by delivery vehicles servicing the shops particularly the Somerfield supermarket which has large articulated lorries delivering goods.

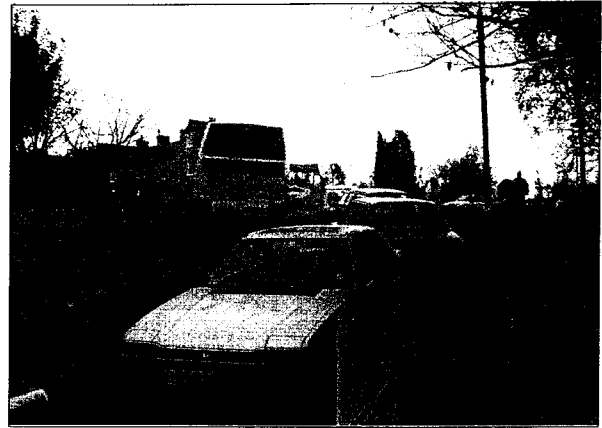


Deliveries to the supermarket can cause congestion

London Road is a National Primary Route catering for long distance vehicle movements. It carries a significant volume of heavy goods vehicles, which account for 10% of vehicles, through the City as well as catering for City-bound traffic. Traffic conditions created by longer-distance vehicle movements are intensified during the morning and afternoon peak periods. The development of the Lambridge Park and Ride has the potential to take some City-bound traffic off this route, but it is likely to remain very busy.

During term-time the school run adds to peak period traffic and the juxtaposition of three schools in the area serves to concentrate the problem in surrounding streets. The Council is supporting (through the Bath Environment Centre) the School Traffic Accident Reduction

(STAR) project which aims to encourage walking and cycling to school. The pilot project included St. Mark's School and is due to be extended to cover St. Saviour's School.



The school run

Rat-running

Congestion on London Road leads to some drivers switching to adjacent roads in the study area. This brings particular problems to residential streets especially when combined with speeding. Streets used as rat-runs include St. Saviour's Road, Claremont Road, Beaufort Place, Deadmill Lane, Ferndale Road, Brooklyn Road, Worcester Buildings and Lambridge Street. Other routes affected by rat-running include Dowding, Holland, Wallace and Salisbury Roads and Avondale and Brookleaze Buildings. Apart from London Road, Eastbourne Avenue on Claremont Road experiences the highest traffic flows in Larkhall. The opening of the Swainswick/Batheaston Bypass may bring opportunities for traffic calming and restrictions in some areas.

Parking

Throughout Larkhall on-street parking is prevalent causing access problems in residential streets and in the centre where illegal parking can be a problem. Parking can also be a positive aspect however as it effectively narrows the available road width which has the effect of slowing traffic. On-street parking and the visual impact of cars are especially prevalent in the tightly-knit terraced areas and where there are larger houses sub-divided with multiple occupation such as

Grosvenor Place. This is less the case in the looser-knit suburban areas where parking is often within private curtilages and road widths tend to be more generous.

The Pedestrian Environment

Larkhall has a comprehensive network of roads and footpaths allowing easy access for pedestrians through the area, to the local centre and to the surrounding countryside. There are few instances where routes are blocked by cul-de-sac development.

Narrow pavements in the vicinity of the centre are a particular problem for parents with push-chairs or small children. Pedestrians can feel vulnerable to traffic and problems of accessibility arise where the volume and speed of traffic creates a barrier to pedestrians trying to cross roads. This can create particular problems for the very young, the elderly and people with impaired mobility. Opportunities for improving access and the environment for pedestrians should be pursued.

Summary

Traffic has a profound effect on the quality of life in Larkhall as it does in other towns and cities. The negative effects of road traffic was one of the major concerns to arise from the Issues Report and it is strongly perceived by the community as a threat to the character of Larkhall. In particular it is believed that the character is changing from that of a residential area with a shopping core to that of an area dominated by roads.

There may be opportunities to improve the situation through the development of park and ride facilities and the use of traffic management measures. There are also opportunities to reduce locally generated traffic through greater use by local residents of walking, cycling and public transport modes of travel. Nearly all of the residents in the study area are within 5 minutes walk of a frequent bus service to the City Centre and Larkhall centre itself provides good access to a range of local goods and services.

OVERALL CHARACTER SUMMARY

Overall, there are some strong character themes evident in Larkhall. It is important that these are recognised and that every attempt is made to preserve and enhance the character of Larkhall through controlled development and sensitive enhancement. The strong character themes in Larkhall can be identified as:

- A predominantly residential area
- The village character of the centre as a social, cultural and geographical focal point
- Terraced forms of a variety of ages
- Prevalence of traditional and decorative detailing
- Visual richness and variety
- Spectacular views to the surrounding hillsides
- The prevalence of open space and vegetation intertwining with the built form
- Impact of traffic

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PPG1, paragraph 4 states that 'The Government is committed to the principles of sustainable development as set out in *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy* (1994) ... The *Strategy* recognises the important role of the planning system in regulating the development and use of land in the public interest.' The principles embodied in PPGs are to be taken into account by local planning authorities, when taking decisions on planning applications, in order secure the objectives of sustainable development.

Bath & North East Somerset District Council is

committed to Local Agenda 21. This focuses on communities and individuals to bring about sustainable patterns of development at a local level. The process aims to build a local community vision of long term social, cultural, economic and environmental health and vitality.

Developers are therefore encouraged to embody the principles of sustainable development in the formulation, design and implementation of their proposals, and in their future use.

Background Information/Further Reading:

Pilot Study for the Assessment of the Character of the Larkhall/Lambridge Area 1996

The Bath Local Plan 1997

*The Wansdyke Local Plan - Deposit Draft 1995
Joint Replacement Structure Plan - A Green Paper for Consultation March 1997*

PPG1 - General Policy and Principles 1997

PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment 1994

The Bath Conservation Area - Policy Note 4

Cherishing Outdoor Places - A Landscape Strategy for Bath



DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The following tables provide a summary of the main points made in each of the elements of character descriptions. It also lists some areas where opportunities may arise for improvements to these elements which may include ideas for environmental enhancement or alleviating the perceived threats to character. Finally, it sets out a number of development principles relevant to each element of character. These give a local interpretation to planning policies set out in national planning guidance, structure and local plans. Also included are references to key Local Plan policies and other relevant guidance. References to Local Plan policies are not exhaustive and other policies may apply.

In accordance with Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) applications for development in Larkhall shall be determined in accordance with the Bath Local Plan (1997) and the Avon County Structure Plan (1994) - unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Larkhall Character Statement will form Supplementary Planning Guidance and will be a material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission.

* Although the Development Principles relate to the Study Area as a whole, Local Plan Policies C3-C10 relate only to the designated Conservation Area.

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES		
<i>Character Elements: The Built Form</i>		
Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
Historical development influences the morphology of Larkhall / Variety and cohesion of early development / Bath stone, fenestration and decoration, paving, boundary treatment and frontage walls.	Ensure that new development respects the characteristics of the built form in terms of position in the street scene, scale, materials and fenestration patterns. Seek to ensure consistency in the use of paving materials and street furnishing and ensuring that the streetscape is maintained in an attractive and sympathetic manner.	Development should respect the character of Larkhall in terms of design and the use of appropriate quality building materials such as Bath stone. Local Plan policies: C1, C2, C3, C4, C8, C11, C21, C24 & C25. Other: PPG1
<i>Character Element: Details and Features</i>		
Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
Rhythm and unity of terraces / Variety between terraces and individual houses / Attention to proportion and detail and richness of detail / Use of quality traditional materials.	Promote the use of quality materials and rich detailing in proposals for development and schemes for enhancement. Ensure that development respects the character of Larkhall.	Development should respect the character of Larkhall by reinforcing local distinctiveness and include the use of good quality materials and traditional detailing. Local Plan policies: C1, C2, C3, C4, C21, C22, C24 & C25. Other: PPG1
<i>Character Element: Landmarks and Focal Points</i>		
Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
Prominence of St Saviour's Church throughout the area / Prominence of localised landmarks in the street scene, gateway buildings and contrasting pockets / The Lam Brook and green elements.	Maintain St Saviour's Church as the dominant landmark in the area. Seek to ensure that views are maintained and not obstructed by new development.	Seek to ensure that key landmarks and focal points are preserved and enhanced and that proposals for development do not harm their character or diminish their contribution to the character of the area. Local Plan policies: C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C11 & C13.

<i>Character Element: Natural Features and Open Space</i>		
Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
<p>Lam Brook - key feature which is under-exploited.</p> <p>Vegetation - provides focal points, entrances, contrast / compliments open space, buildings and streets / historical, wildlife and aesthetic interest. Need for information on trees.</p> <p>Open Space - formal and informal open space / private gardens / designed spaces associated with buildings / allotments. Provides links to countryside / contrasts with dense built form / Kensington Meadows Local Nature Reserve.</p>	<p>Pursue opportunities to improve the physical and visual access to, and ecological value of Lam Brook.</p> <p>Investigate undertaking an audit of trees in Larkhall with the involvement of residents.</p> <p>Seek to improve the amenity and wildlife value of existing open spaces.</p> <p>Maintain the contribution of open space and vegetation towards the setting of the built form and towards providing opportunities for views and links to areas within and around the built area. Pursue opportunities to improve access to and amenity value of public open space.</p>	<p>Retain and enhance areas of amenity open space and seek to enhance their ecological value.</p> <p>Retain and seek to improve important natural features such as the Lam Brook and trees of amenity value, maintain the essential open character of open spaces and encourage the retention of hedges and garden vegetation.</p> <p>Maintain and enhance the physical and visual accessibility and the ecological value of the Lam Brook.</p> <p>Local Plan policies: LR3, LR4, L4, L5, L6, L8, L13 & L15.</p> <p>Other: Landscape Strategy - Cherishing Outdoor Places.</p>
<i>Character Element: Views</i>		
Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
<p>Excellent long-range views over Larkhall and to landscape beyond from higher vantage points / St Saviour's Church as a key focal point in extensive and localised views / Channelling of localised views particularly through terraces.</p>	<p>Maintain principal long-range and localised views.</p> <p>Maintain views of St Saviour's Church as a key focal point.</p>	<p>Principal views out of the area to Little Solsbury Hill, Bathampton Down and the Avon Valley to the east and south, views of St Saviour's Church and over the City of Bath should be maintained. Opportunities for enhancing extensive and localised views should be sought.</p> <p>Local Plan policies: GB1, GB2, L1, L4, L5, C1 & C3.</p> <p>Other: Landscape Strategy - Cherishing Outdoor Places.</p>

Character Element: Activities and Uses		
Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
<p>Retail and commercial focus at the centre / Other dispersed retail, social and educational uses / Occasional pockets of economic activity / Leisure activities associated with open spaces and play space / Good level of pedestrian links and movement throughout the area.</p>	<p>Pursue opportunities to enhance the vitality of Larkhall centre as a neighbourhood shopping centre.</p> <p>Maintain and enhance the amenity value of open spaces.</p> <p>Ensure that access for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired throughout Larkhall is maintained and improved.</p>	<p>Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre of Larkhall as a neighbourhood shopping centre. Safeguard against the loss of ground floor retail premises within the defined suburban centre, other small shops, and venues for community use.</p> <p>Development should ensure that priority is given to providing ease of access and a safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility and visually impaired.</p> <p>Footpath links throughout the area and to the countryside should be maintained.</p> <p>Local Plan policies: LR5, R9, R10, R12, E6, E8, T20, T21, T22, T23 & C17.</p>

Character Element: Traffic and Accessibility

Summary	Opportunities	Development Principles
<p>Congestion and school traffic / rat-runs / on-street and illegal parking / threat to character.</p>	<p>Support measures to reduce traffic congestion eg. development of Lambridge park and ride.</p> <p>Support projects to reduce school traffic and improve road safety such as the STAR project.</p> <p>Seek to reduce non-residential and through traffic using residential streets.</p> <p>Seek to reduce illegal parking through enforcement of restrictions.</p> <p>Seek to improve the access and environment for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility and visually impaired.</p>	<p>The Council will look to developers to enter into planning obligations to assist in the provision of new park and ride facilities at Lambridge.</p> <p>Development should ensure that priority is given to providing ease of access and a safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility and visually impaired.</p> <p>Local Plan policies: T4, T9, T12, T16, T20, T22, T23 & T24</p>

We would like to express our thanks to the Larkhall Forum and the many residents of Larkhall who contributed to the Larkhall Character Project.

*Report Contributors: Annie Boulton, Gill Clarke, Joanna Hart, James Ives, Sarah Johnston and Jane McDermott - Strategic Policy **Design and Layout:** Joanna Hart and Claire Johnstone **Illustrations:** Joanna Hart **Photographs:** Residents of Larkhall and Council Officers **Text printed on Envirocote Recycled Paper.***

LOCAL AGENDA 21

Working towards a sustainable future

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