

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Development

Draft Pulteney Road Character Appraisal Bath Conservation Area

November 2015



**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



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1. Introduction and description of the Character Area

General description and form

This document is a character appraisal for the Pulteney Road Character Area of Bath Conservation Area.

The Pulteney Road Character Area is of roughly rectangular shape with its west boundary formed by the River Avon, its south and east boundaries defined by the Kennet & Avon Canal and the northern extent broadly following the north side of the Recreation Ground.

The centre of the area bounding the River Avon consist of open sports pitches, bounded to the east by late Georgian and Victorian housing along Pulteney Road. The main Great Western Railway track crosses the area on a viaduct diagonally from south-west to north-east. Dolemeads in the southern part of the area consists mainly of social housing of c. 1900-40. The spacious open feel and green boundaries of the area contribute significantly to Bath's green setting and thus to its status as a World Heritage Site.

Pulteney Road 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; its preservation and enhancement are key criteria for all 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

been 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 - None

2. Contribution to hot springs - None

3. Contribution to 18th century architecture

While this Character Area contains no major examples of Georgian architecture, it provides some of the most iconic views of Pulteney Bridge, among the most recognisable buildings in Bath. The relationship of the river with the Abbey, North Parade and the site of Harrison's Walk are also best viewed from the riverside here. This Character Area also includes the rear mews buildings to Great Pulteney Street, an important reminder of the social and class relationships on which the Georgian City depended. The surviving listed limekiln off Johnstone Street is evidence of the production of materials and artisan crafts that built Bath.

4. Contribution to 18th century town planning

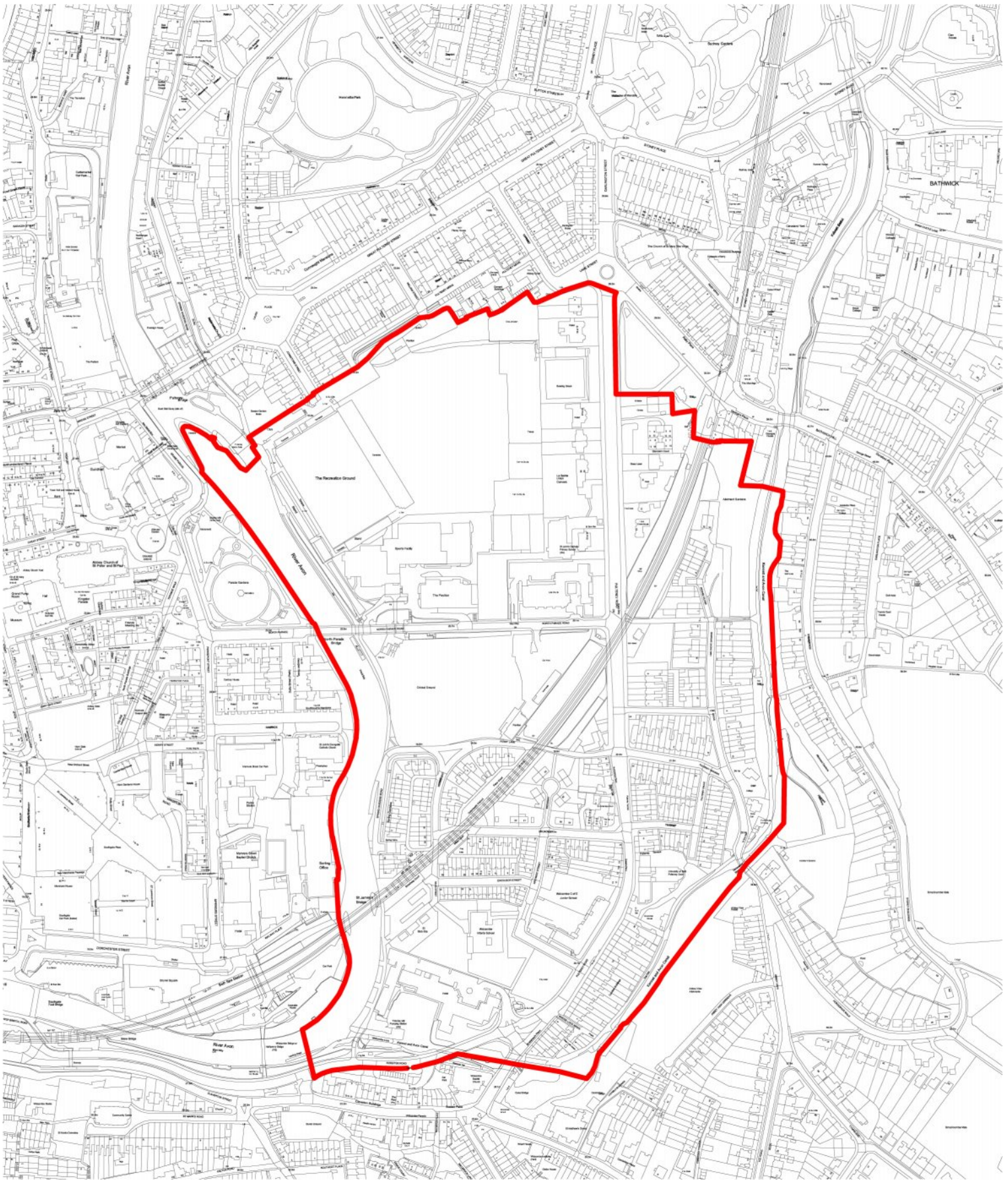
The history of the open space south of Great Pulteney Street embodies the plans for even grander town planning layouts which failed as the city's spa heyday faded after 1800. The creation of North Parade Road in 1835-6 demonstrates the desire to extend the work started by John Wood the Elder with North and South Parades, creating new vistas linking the Georgian city with the early 19th century villa townscape of the Bathwick slopes.

5. Contribution to green setting

The green heart of Character Area 14 contributes significantly to Bath's setting, forming the foreground to some of the best views of Bath Abbey and the city centre from the eastern slopes. The sports grounds are crucial to views within the Character Area and to views into the city from the surrounding hills. The survival of this open space alludes to Bath before the 1820s when one could walk from the eastern slopes across ancient water-meadows to the riverbank only yards from the Abbey without passing through built-up streets.

6. Contribution to social setting

The history of leisure on the fields east of the river, from the 16th century or earlier to the present, encompasses Spring Gardens pleasure ground. Here fashionable Bath ate, played cards, danced and enjoyed the riverside gardens from the 1730s. On the same spot genteel middle-class Victorians played cricket or tennis and today's rugby fans watch international class matches while amateur clubs play a wide range of sports at the Rec.



Pulteney Road Character Area Map

2. Summary of key characteristics

- A largely flat area on the flood plain east of the River Avon.
- It features prominently in views of the river, bridges and Abbey from the east.
- It forms the middle ground of views out from around Grand Parade and the Abbey.
- Sports pitches are a major contributor to its character and to the green setting of the World Heritage Site
- Bounded to the north by the rear of Great Pulteney Street.
- In the early 19th century the Kennet & Avon Canal was cut through rising ground at the east boundary of the Character Area, with wharfs near Widcombe
- The area was opened up to development by the construction of North Parade Bridge in 1835-6, and shortly after the Great Western Railway viaduct was driven through.
- Large semi-detached villas of the 1850s along Pulteney Road, with a fringe of late Victorian suburban housing alongside the canal.
- The Dolemeads estate is a testament to early 20th century ideals of social housing
- The 20th century has seen some infill building, larger public sports facilities and the development of Pulteney Road as part of a busy outer road circuit.

Pulteney Road Character Area is a very mixed area with substantial amounts of residential and open space, sports pitches in particular. There are also educational and transport uses, the latter being quite varied with road, rail and canal. It is not large and divides neatly into three areas with differing characteristics and historical development.



First is the northern part of the Character Area bounded to the west by the River Avon, to the east by the rear gardens of Pulteney Road, and to the south by the Dolemeads estate. This area is largely open land which has never been built upon, and its use is now predominantly sports pitches. The Recreation Ground (known as 'the Rec') houses Bath's main rugby club ground, and there are tennis courts and a cricket pitch to the east. South of the Rec is Bath Sports and Leisure Centre, built in the early 1970s, with the Pavilion alongside, Bath's major live music venue in an Edwardian stone-fronted hall originally designed as a roller-skating rink. South of Pulteney Road is Bath Cricket Club's home ground, bounded by Ferry Lane on its south side and Pulteney Road to the east. The Dolemeads viaduct carrying the main London to Bristol train lines cuts across the south-east corner of this sub-area. The green open space in this part of the Character Area is of key significance to Bath's green setting as a World Heritage Site.

The second sub-division of the Pulteney Road Character Area is the Dolemeads estate, to the south of the sport pitches and west of Pulteney Road. It is bisected by the Dolemeads viaduct as it approaches Bath Spa railway station. Along Pulteney Road are the few survivors of the early 19th century beginnings of Dolemeads as a working-class residential area, though the houses fronting Pulteney are somewhat higher in status than the poorer terraces that originally comprised the Dolemeads estate. The latter have all now been demolished. The core of the estate is now composed of buildings of three distinct types and ages: red-brick terraces of c. 1900 around Excelsior Street and Archway Street, some of the first social housing built by Bath Corporation and a significant survival because of its early date; then inter-war council housing around Broadway and Spring Gardens Road; and finally late 20th century schools buildings with surrounding green space at the south side of Dolemeads.

Finally the third sub-division of this Character Area. It comprises all the housing east of Pulteney Road and up to the Kennet & Avon Canal, with the housing on both sides of Pulteney Road north of its junction with North Parade Road. Housing in this part begins with Caroline Buildings, a late Georgian three-storey terrace east of Pulteney Road; then the large semi-detached pairs of Italianate, Gothic or Jacobean houses of the 1850s and '60s around the north end of Pulteney Road, and finally middling bay-fronted terraces of 1870-1900 around Pulteney Gardens. At the junction of Pulteney Road and North Parade Road are the Magistrates' Courts, housed in an adapted mid-19th century convent building with 1980s additions.

3. Historic development

Physical influences: geology, land form and drainage pattern

The area is part of the flat river valley floor. The surface geology is therefore alluvial deposits and river gravels. The flatness means that there is no specific orientation. There are no natural watercourses across the area but the River Avon itself lies along the western boundary.

West of the railway embankment, the land form is entirely flat as the valley floor, and this has been well suited to the sports use of the Recreation Ground and Bath Cricket Club.

East of the railway embankment the ground begins to rise quickly to the east of Pulteney Road, where the canal is cut into the hillside high above the valley floor at the foot of Bathwick Hill. The canal level drops via six locks as it turns west to pass under Rossiter Road to join the Avon.

Some surface water drains into the canal from above, but the river dominates the valley bottom, absorbing the run-off from adjacent areas. Despite the flood defences installed in 1964-5 and the new weir of c. 1971-2, the Recreation Ground has flooded as recently as 2000.

Historical influences

No prehistoric remains are known to have been found in this area, but the river was probably used for transport and fishing so activity on the adjacent flood plain is possible. The proximity of Roman *Aquae Sulis* west of the river, and a Roman settlement equating to Bathwick to the north-east means that a crossing point (ferry, ford or bridge) is also likely to have been in the vicinity. Two mills on the Avon here are recorded in Domesday – west of the river was Monks' Mill, and Bathwick Mill east of the river sited next to the present weir south of Pulteney Bridge. A mediaeval weir ran diagonally from Monks' Mill to Bathwick Mill. Fragments of the fabric of Bathwick Mill survived into the 20th century. A mediaeval ferry operated just north of the site of Pulteney Bridge, and is marked on Savile's map of 1608. On the east bank, three paths fanned out from the ferry landing to Bathwick, Claverton Down and Widcombe. Opposite the site of Parade Gardens were withy beds on the river bank. Football and other sports have been played in this area since at least the 18th century and probably long before. The playing of cricket and quoits on the fields of Bathwick parish here was banned in 1792.

In the early 1730s Spring Gardens was opened as a pleasure ground on a site directly south of Argyle Street and next to Bathwick Mill. It was hugely popular at first though it declined in fashionability and closed in 1796.

In the 1730s John Wood proposed his ambitious scheme for a Grand Forum straddling the River Avon. Only a small section of the scheme was completed west of the river (Pierrepont Street, North and South Parades and Duke Street) but memories of Wood's ambition may have inhibited further development east of the river in this Character Area until the 1790s when the owners of the Pulteney Estate imposed their own plans on the present Recreation Ground/ Cricket Ground area. The tendency to severe flooding must have

been a more immediate factor in the land remaining unbuilt.

The next significant development was the Pulteney Estate. It was instigated after 1764 when 600 acres of fields in the parish of Bathwick east of the Avon came to Sir William Johnstone Pulteney by inheritance through his wife. The first phase, and prerequisite for the rest, was the building of Pulteney Bridge in 1769-74 to the design of Robert Adam. Nothing more was done until 1787 when building leases were granted by Pulteney's daughter. Great Pulteney Street was laid out on the axis of Pulteney Bridge as the spine of the new estate. The architect of the first housing was Thomas Baldwin.

The Pulteney Estate represents the largest single planned Georgian development in Bath, with highly fashionable Georgian terraces erected from about 1788 until development petered out around 1825 (the completion date of Raby Place at the foot of Bathwick Hill). The Bathwick estates (including the unbuilt land that became the Recreation Ground) passed in 1808 from the Pulteney family to the Earl of Darlington, later the Duke of Cleveland, whose heirs retained the land until 1891.

Johnstone Street runs south from Laura Place, and covered about half the north-south extent of the site formerly occupied by Spring Gardens. Part of the site including its entrance gates remained after 1800 and became a brass and iron works. This in turn was truncated for the recreation ground in 1894. The small portion that survived was used as a builder's yard until it too was demolished c. 1970-1 for the new weir and associated landscaping of the riverbank.

Much development was projected for the Pulteney estate on the current Recreation Ground and Cricket Ground sites, including a grand crescent facing west towards what is now Parade Gardens. The axis would have been Great Annandale Street, south of and parallel with Great Pulteney Street; the western end would have directed the view to the Abbey's east end, while St Mary's Church Bathwick (1810-20) would have formed the focal point eastwards. Further streets extended south in a grid to a line roughly opposite the end of South Parade. This southern part of the Pulteney Estate was never built though it continued to appear on maps until at least 1818. The present Recreation Ground and Cricket Ground were in the early 19th century occupied by market gardens.

The Kennet & Avon Canal was built 1794-1810 to link the River Kennet at Newbury Berkshire with the River Avon at Bath. The Kennet flowed east into the Thames; thus the canal provided a commercial transport route between London and Bath and, via the River Avon, west to Bristol. It reduced the need for the perilous road or sea journey from London to Bristol, offering a safer, cheaper and quicker route for goods transport. Bath stone could be delivered easily to London and other cities, while coal, food and other goods essential for Bath's profitable spa could be brought into the city. The eastern portion crossed the Pulteney Road district via the rising ground at the foot of Bathwick Hill, terminating at the lock and canal basin at Widcombe where the canal joins the River Avon. The canal flourished at first, reaching its trading peak in 1840 transporting building materials for the Great Western Railway. In that year, toll receipts exceeded £50,000. It declined quickly as the expansion of the railway network offered a much faster and cheaper service. Commercial traffic ceased in 1920. Restoration began in 1962 and the whole canal was reopened in 1990. It now forms a significant part of the local tourist industry and is a major element in Bath's 19th century industrial heritage.

Dolemeads is wedged between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the river at the south end of the character area. In 1818 this area was almost wholly market gardens. Terraces of small artisan housing

were reportedly built here by c. 1809, possibly in connection with work on the Kennet & Avon canal, but it is not until 1825 that they are shown on maps. The area frequently flooded and was known as Mud Island. Its northern boundary is Ferry Lane, which pre-existed the 19th century developments as a track to a ferry across the Avon to South Parade.

Pulteney Road did not exist in 1810, although a narrow and gently winding lane ran roughly on its course from Bathwick to Widcombe, both mediaeval villages. Sackville Street was intended as a wide boulevard roughly following the course of the old lane, forming the eastern boundary of the Pulteney Estate. This appears on Barratt's map of 1817, labelled the 'New Road to Widcombe'. This road was linked more directly to the city centre by the construction of North Parade Bridge in 1835-6, and North Parade Road which ran east from the bridge on a causeway across the open meadows to meet Pulteney Road. Housing development on the section north of the railway bridge crossing began c. 1850, with big middle-class villa pairs being built southwards from St Mary Bathwick.

The Great Western Railway viaduct was driven through the area c. 1837-40, bringing the railway into Bath Spa station on its route from London. The north end of the viaduct terminated with a rail bridge crossing over Pulteney Road, which was unfortunately dismantled and replaced by the present bridge in 1974-5, destroying the hitherto relatively intact status of the viaduct. In 1855 Dolemeads Infants' School was built as a philanthropic mission by St Matthew's church, Widcombe, and reportedly designed by the architects H.E. Goodridge & Son. It was built against the east face of the viaduct adjacent to Broadway. Demolished in the 20th century, the marks of the roofline are still visible on the viaduct masonry at Ferry Court, Broadway. The mid-19th century saw residential development along Pulteney Road. After c. 1870 smaller terraces filled the slice of land east of Pulteney Road and bounded by the canal (i.e. Lime Grove, Pulteney Grove, Pulteney Gardens and Pulteney Avenue). At the same time housing spread northwards from the crowded streets of Widcombe, essentially completing the current grain of development in this Character Area by c. 1900.

Amidst this development the current Recreation and Cricket Grounds remained as open land. South of North Parade Road, the Bath Association Cricket Club bought a parcel of land from the 4th Duke of Cleveland in about 1860-64. This became the "North Parade" cricket ground. The current Recreation Ground site belonged to the heirs of the Duke of Cleveland until it was inherited by Capt. F.W. Forester in 1891. The land was in use for cricket, football archery, tennis and cycling by the 1880s. In 1894 the Bath and County Recreation Ground Company leased the land from Captain Forester, beginning its 20th century history as the home of Bath Rugby club as well as other participatory sports. An entrance from William Street was formed, with two ornamental kiosks and a cricket pavilion, both of 1895. Also in 1894-5 an open-air roller-skating rink was sited at North Parade Road (now the site of The Pavilion). About a dozen spectator stands of increasing size were built during the 20th century. The west stand (1933) was destroyed by a bomb in 1942. Today's north stand was erected in 1948, the adjacent clubhouse c. 1953-4, the south stand in 1993-4, the west stand in 1997 and the east stand (a temporary structure removed at the end of each season) in 2004. In 1956 the Rec became the property of Bath Corporation. Many other sports are played on the Rec as they were in the 19th century. In 2002 a High Court hearing ruled that the land was held in trust and should be governed as a charity. Since then the Bath Recreation Ground Trust has managed the Rec and its various tenants independent of Council control.

The Pavilion was built in 1910 as an indoor roller skating rink, on the site of the 1890s outdoor rink. It was converted and reopened in November 1930 as a concert and dance-hall. It was used in

the Second World War to build aircraft wings. It remains Bath's only purpose-built concert venue and has hosted acts such as Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, The Who, the Rolling Stones, Oasis and Blur. Bath Sports and Leisure Centre was begun adjacent to the Pavilion in 1971 and opened in November 1975. It is a big Brutalist concrete building that dwarfs the Pavilion and dominates views south across the Rec.

The building of red-brick municipal housing was instigated in 1898 by William Symons, Bath's Medical Officer of Health. The Council raised the site above flood level and laid out streets and drainage. 36 red-brick houses were designed by the City Surveyor Charles Fortune and completed in July 1901. Another eighteen east of Archway Street and Middle Lane were erected before 1914. Rents were 5 shillings (25p) for the smaller homes and 6s 6d (32.5p) for the larger, making them affordable to the artisan class but beyond the reach of the very poor.

Further council housing was built c. 1919-21 on Broadway and a cul-de-sac to its north, in Bath stone and semi-detached. These follow the ideas of the Tudor Walters report (1918) that shaped social housing design after the Great War. Similar but plainer housing in short terraces was built on Ferry Lane, Spring Crescent and Spring Gardens Road c. 1937-9. Excelsior Street was hit by a stray bomb in 1941 with the loss of 10 lives. Some of the last 1820s housing, such as the long Regent Terrace, was cleared in the 1970s.

The repeated flooding in this area was finally resolved by river management in the 1960s and 1970s. Downstream, the 18th century Old Bridge was replaced in 1964-5 by Churchill Bridge, a single-span concrete structure. Further flood prevention work was carried out around the Skew Bridge west of the railway station in 1971. Pulteney Weir was reconstructed beginning in 1970, and the new weir and sluice gate were opened June 2 1972. The city centre has not suffered major flooding since.

4. Cultural influences

Leisure

From the Georgian Spring Gardens to today's boaters, match spectators and tourists enjoy the riverside. From mediaeval public holidays to Victorian Circus and today's fireworks displays, this land has long been associated with festivity and enjoyment.

Sporting achievement

The success particularly of Bath Rugby Club (founded in 1865) continues the long tradition of sports, fitness and competition at the Rec. Amateur clubs in many sports have also used these sports fields since the 15th century and continue to do so. Courts for croquet, bowls and tennis sit alongside the rugby and cricket pitches.

Music and performing arts

Live performance especially at the Pavilion, associated with the Beatles and many other acts.

Industry and transport

With the arrival of the Kennet & Avon canal c. 1810 and the Great Western Railway in 1840 this Character Area has been a key part of Bath's transport infrastructure. Industry has risen up alongside these features.

5. Archaeology

The areas of alluvial floodplain surrounding the Recreation Ground and the Cricket Ground have been subject to some investigation in relation to new buildings, however no evidence of settlement or activity was noted. Nevertheless the area has potential for prehistoric and Roman activity as it lies on the projected route of the Roman Road from Bathwick to Poole.

6. Landmarks and views

See map, Appendix 1.

Landmarks

The most important landmarks in this area are

- North Parade Bridge
- Dolemeads viaduct
- Kennet & Avon Canal

Bath Abbey, St. John's Church, Pulteney Bridge and Pulteney Weir in the City Centre Character Area, have a strong influence on this area.

The church of St Mary, in the Bathwick Character Area, has a dominant presence at the junction of Pulteney Road and Bathwick Hill.

Views

The river is the single most important feature of the area. Together with Pulteney Weir and Pulteney Bridge it is a dramatic scene viewed against a backdrop of historic buildings rising up the slopes.

The riverside path from Pulteney Bridge to North Parade Bridge is the busiest stretch of the River Avon for views of the Abbey and the Georgian city in its fine landscape setting. Some of the best views of Robert Adam's Pulteney Bridge are obtained from this walk, and more distant views from North Parade Bridge.

The raised railway and associated archways slicing through Dolemeads and across Pulteney Road have a strong influence on the area; the railway viaduct may be glimpsed from multiple points, e.g. from Pulteney Road via Archway Street, Broadway and Ferry Lane. The viaduct also affords extensive views of the city to train travellers arriving at Bath on the London line.

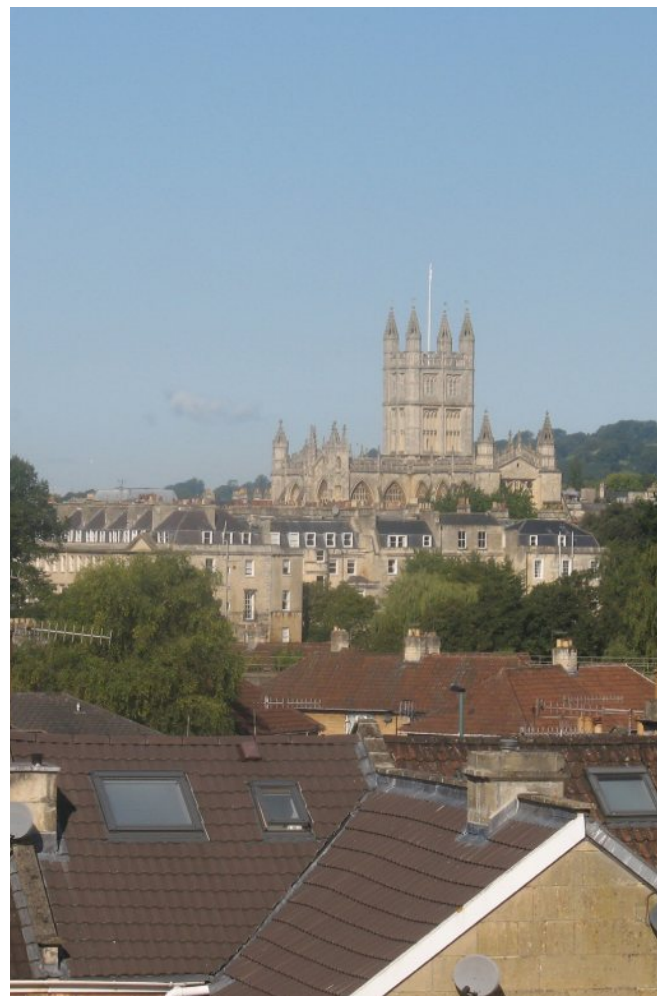
There are good views to St John's Church spire e.g. from the Recreation Ground, Cricket Ground, riverside, Pulteney Gardens, Archway Street, Broadway and Ferry Lane.

The openness of the area allows for many short and long views. The distant views from North Parade Bridge to wooded slopes to the north and south east are a particular feature.

Glimpses of the wooded eastern skyline are obtained from Pulteney Avenue, Pulteney Grove and Pulteney Gardens. There are also views south to the skyline around Prior Park/Combe Down from Pulteney Road approaching Widcombe.

The following views from the sensitive Bath skyline are noted without excluding other viewpoints:

- From Beechen Cliff and Alexandra Park and to some extent from the Holloway area below, this Character Area frames the right-hand side of the crucial and much-loved view of Bath
- From the hilltops east of Bath (i.e. National Trust Skyline Walk, Claverton Down, Bathwick Hill, Bathampton Down, North Road, etc) the open tree-fringed space and sports grounds form a significant foreground element to views of the city centre and Bath Abbey.
- From the National Trust walk on the east side of Prior Park landscape garden, this Character Area forms a foreground to views of the Abbey, Pulteney Bridge and St John's church.



7. Land uses and their influence

Land use has always been dominated by the River Avon. This fertile ground on a river flood plain was in agricultural use until the early 19th century.

The level topography and close access to the south end of the city centre made it an obvious corridor for roads, canal and railway lines. Some industrial uses grew up around the Kennet & Avon locks and wharfs near Widcombe in the 19th century.

The Dolemeads area was used for working class housing because it was prone to flooding. Further from the river, middle-class housing was built along Pulteney Road and on the slopes between the road and the Kennet & Avon Canal.

Sports fields dominate the flat ground north and south of North Parade Road, and Victorian middle class housing around Pulteney Road.

The riverside walk with its fine views of the Abbey, Parade Gardens and Pulteney Bridge is popular with tourists and photographers. The riverside at Pulteney Weir is a docking point for river craft and tours. Likewise, tourism now dominates the use of the canal, with narrow boats navigating to and from Widcombe locks, and walkers using the towpath.



8. Buildings, architectural quality and townscape

Building age

Perhaps the earliest intact building is the late 18th century limekiln at the south end of William Street. Residential construction began with the mews buildings behind Great Pulteney Street, presumably c. 1790, and the isolated terrace of Caroline Buildings of c. 1800; the latter was fundamentally a part of Widcombe. Of the same date are locks, bridges and a fine pump house chimney on the canalside near Pulteney Gardens bridge. Almost opposite Caroline Buildings is Queen's Place, c. 1820. North Parade Bridge and its Jacobean-style lodges are of 1835-6, and the opening of North Parade Road probably encouraged the mid-19th century housing fringing the Recreation Ground at the north end of Pulteney Road. Of 1870-1914 are the red-brick housing in Dolemeads and the stone-fronted speculative terraces east of Pulteney Road. Victorian or slightly later timber sports pavilions exist both north and south of North Parade Road, with the delightful entrance kiosks to the Rec, built in 1895. 20th century housing in Dolemeads replaced the worst of the slum terraces there, and some infill along Pulteney Road includes 1960s/70s flats on the site of Victorian villas. Post-1950 building includes the Sports and Leisure Centre, stands for the rugby ground, schools buildings in Dolemeads and the additions to the former convent on North Parade Road for Magistrates' Courts.



Building form

There is a variety of height and form across the area but the landform unifies the component parts. The separate parts are quite distinctive within themselves, for example the red brick housing around Ferry Lane, Bath stone 19th century terraces south of the railway and east of Pulteney Road and the large detached 19th century villas alongside the northern section of Pulteney Road.



As with the building form the height of buildings varies across the area but remains constant within each distinctive part. Much is two storey, the sports centre is the same height but in a single storey. There are some taller dwellings, up to four storeys high.

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

- North Parade Bridge
[Bath Abbey, Pulteney Bridge, Pulteney Weir, St John's RC Church and the former Empire Hotel are all anchor buildings in terms of significance for views, although not in this Character Area.]

Other listed buildings of historical/townscape significance

- Former limekiln, Johnstone Street/ Recreation Ground. Predates the completion of the Pulteney Estate. Now converted to the President's Lounge for Bath Rugby Club.

- St James Railway Bridge : by I.K. Brunel c. 1840, at the southern end of the Dolemeads viaduct. A bold conception in dark brick, skewed to the river. Good heavy classical detailing.
- Caroline Buildings, Pulteney Road : c. 1800. A late-Georgian three-storey terrace of middling status, the only example in this Character Area.
- Queen's Place, Pulteney Road – a row of humbler Late Georgian houses not planned as unified terrace. They may represent the only housing to survive from the initial 1820s development of Dolemeads.
- Cricket Pavilion and entrance gate kiosks, Recreation Ground: Fine Victorian timber buildings of 1895, with nicely detailed veranda and bell turret to the pavilion. Leaded ogee domed roofs and little ornate columns to the kiosks.
- 24-29 Pulteney Road – Victorian middle-class villas of c. 1850-70.
- Pumping Station chimney, Kennet & Avon canal, c. 1840 – columnar chimney with urn finial



Unlisted buildings of merit

- Pulteney Mews, off William Street/ Edward Street : Mews buildings were small low buildings giving onto a rear lane behind Georgian houses, used for stabling horses, storing coaches/traps, and often to accommodate grooms or other servants. An essential adjunct to understanding Georgian terraces such as Great Pulteney Street. Few in this Character Area but significant reminders of both transport arrangements and of class/social hierarchy in Georgian Britain.
- Dolemeads Railway viaduct : 31-arched viaduct by I.K. Brunel, 1840, in dark brick and Bath stone. Refused for listing in 2011 mainly because the Skew Bridge across Pulteney Road / North Parade Road junction was replaced in 1974-5. Nevertheless its historic and townscape merits were acknowledged by Historic England.
- The Pavilion, North Parade Road : Edwardian Classical style, of Bath stone with imposing double pediments flanking the columned main entrance. The sides and back of the building are plainer.
- Former La Sainte Union Convent, North Parade Road, by J. Elkington Gill, 1866-7. An unusual example of Victorian Gothic in Bath.
- Magistrates Court, North Parade Road, 1987-9. Bath stone and steep slate roofs, responding to the adjoining La Sainte Union convent.
- Archway Street and Excelsior Street, Dolemeads, by C.R. Fortune, City Surveyor, c.1899-1901: on the east side, a ten-house terrace in solid and pleasing red brick with well detailed conjoined door hoods on curved timber brackets. Tapered columnar gateposts with ball finials. Nine have the original front doors, one or two appear to have original sash windows with small panes in the upper leaves only. Excelsior Street is similar but plainer.
- Broadway and a cul-de-sac to its north : semi-detached Bath-stone built Council housing, c. 1919-21. Particularly early and well-detailed for post-First World War council housing in Bath. One or two houses seemingly retain original front door and small-paned timber casement windows, e.g. No. 21 Broadway. Similar housing in semi-detached pairs and short terraces was built in Ferry Lane, Spring Crescent and Spring Gardens Road, probably c. 1937-9.
- Pulteney Avenue, Pulteney Gardens, Pulteney Grove and Lime Grove : an enclave of conventional late-19th century bay fronted Bath-stone terraces, well kept and all of a piece. Dwarf garden walls and hedges add much to its feel.

- St Matthew's Place, Pulteney Road : a handsome terrace, probably c. 1850-60, well detailed and simple with many original doors and windows. A three-storey house with gable end to the street acts as a full stop at the north end.
- Widcombe Junior School, Pulteney Road. By Nealon Tanner Partnership, 1995-6. A low and unobtrusive building which holds its own in the streetscape while respecting its historic surroundings.

Townscape features of merit

- Pulteney Road: a broad tree-lined boulevard consciously designed as the setting for large detached and semi-detached villas of c. 1840 – 70. Linking the pre-Georgian village of Widcombe with the grand Neoclassical terraces of the Pulteney Estate, it is evidence of the mid-Victorian expansion and remaking of districts outside the core of the Georgian city.
- Features associated with the canal are a significant reminder of the importance of trade and industry to Bath as it emerged from its Spa heyday and began to assume a more diverse and prosaic 19th century character. They include:
 - Kennet & Avon canal
 - Canal Basin, locks and bridge adjoining the Lower Lock, c. 1810.
 - Cast-iron footbridge by Stothert of Bath, c. 1815 (adjoining Wash House Lock).
 - Pumping House chimney near Pulteney Gardens bridge.
 - Raised pavement in front of Caroline Buildings, Widcombe : a typical feature of the Bath streetscape
 - The Beazer Garden Maze, next to Pulteney Weir, was laid out in 1984 by the maze artists Randoll Coate and Adrian Fisher.



- **Buildings at risk-** None identified

Negative buildings and townscape features

- Bath Sports and Leisure Centre. c. 1971-5. Brutalist concrete, steel-framed construction. Big and overbearing in its relationship to the sports grounds, river and city beyond.
- Pulteney Road Skew Railway Bridge, c. 1975 : a steel-girder bridge carrying the main London-Bath railway line over Pulteney Road at the junction with North Parade Road. An unattractive and characterless replacement for Brunel's bridge which formed part of the Dolemeads viaduct.
- Recreation ground, 20th century spectator stands : their scale and materials make a negative contribution to the highly sensitive environs of Great Pulteney Street, Pulteney Bridge and the riverside setting of Bath Abbey. At the same time their social significance and contribution to the sporting life of Bath is recognised. Sports buildings of this type are rarely of more than utilitarian design and materials.
- Glencairn Court: Late 20th century block of flats, on the east side of Pulteney Road, disrupts the otherwise largely consistent streetscape of big Victorian villas along this stretch of road.
- Travelodge Hotel north of Widcombe lock is a neutral contribution to the townscape, but its position degrades the setting of the industrial heritage of the Kennet & Avon canal.
- Excelsior Street, Dolemeads : Second World War bomb damage resulted in several houses being rebuilt in red brick but without the original detailing, somewhat marring the integrity of the Edwardian streetscape.

- Electricity substation, Miles Street, Dolemeads (south end) : an unattractive feature and a bar to river bank access.



9. Materials and detailing

Bath stone dominates in some parts of this area but in others, notably Dolemeads, red brick is dominant and is very distinctive. A range of material is used for the buildings associated with the sports area.

Bounding the northern edge of the Character Area is the rear of Great Pulteney Street: in a mix of rubble stone and ashlar, a reminder of the informal and unplanned aspect typical of the backs of Georgian housing. Mews buildings may have a mix of ashlar and rubble stone.

Housing before 1830 is usually fronted with Bath-stone ashlar, intended to have near-invisible mortar joints so as to appear like solid stone.

In the mid-19th century, Bath stone of irregular block sizes with black mortar joints became more common, to emphasise the idea of truth to materials by showing and making a virtue of the individual blocks of stone. Example, St Matthew's Place, Pulteney Road.

18th and 19th century roofs tend to be of blue slate, except for utilitarian and mews buildings which may have clay tiles. Late 19th and 20th century buildings are more likely to have clay tiles. Concrete tiles are sometimes used on buildings after 1950 or where roofs have been replaced recently.

Dolemeads (Archway Street, Excelsior Street); terraces c. 1900; red brick with a slight colour contrast used for relieving arches over openings. Unusual material for Bath.

Most buildings are fairly typical for their period. In particular there are some notable Arts and Crafts details in the Dolemeads area and the modern public buildings of Widcombe Junior School and the Magistrates Court contain thoughtful architectural detail.

Bridges are the focus of excellent detail denoting their importance to a Character Area dominated by the river.

- Pulteney Bridge : Robert Adam's Neoclassicism, relying on proportion and sparing use of details such as domes, pediments and Venetian windows. (Pulteney Bridge is just outside this Character Area, but important as a focal point of many views.)
- North Parade Bridge and pavilions : the bridge is essentially Classical with heavy rusticated voussoirs to the arches, scrolled brackets and cornices, Georgian-style stone balustrades. The pavilions are Jacobean Revival style with strapwork crestings.
- St James's railway bridge : also Classical, with bold scrolling brackets.

Pulteney Road villas: a mix of mid-19th century styles and motifs: some Gothic with steep gables, Tudor style bay windows, occasional pointed Gothic arches. Others Italianate; round-arches, arched lights grouped in twos or threes, plate-glass sash windows, moulded cornices, string courses etc. All are faced in Bath stone. Bay windows may be canted or bowed.

Late Georgian terraces: e.g. Queen's Place, Caroline Buildings, both Pulteney Road. Generally unadorned, flat-fronted, moulded cornices below parapets. Sash windows, either small-paned or replaced with plate glass (after the glass tax was repealed c. 1845). Caroline Buildings has all windows paired at each storey. Door openings sometimes have a simple moulded canopy. Openings either flat or round-arched, the latter with a plain keystone. Unmoulded stringcourses, often with the window-openings rising direct from the stringcourse.

Mews buildings are generally low in form to maximise light in rear rooms of the main house. Rarely given formal architectural treatments because of their building type (see above). Large sliding or folding doors at ground level for carriage access, small sash windows above.

Doors are generally in moulded panels of six panels for Georgian houses (eg Caroline Buildings). Later 19th century housing often has four panels, either in the conventional 'two over two' form or varied, for example, two long panels in the centre sandwiched by single horizontal panels above and below (e.g. Pulteney Grove). St Matthew's Place has five panels; a horizontal central panel with two verticals above and two below.

Historic boundary treatments are characterised by high-quality materials and workmanship. There are a variety of boundaries but stone walls and planted boundaries are most frequent.

- Pulteney Road and Vane Street junction, south side: pierced Bath stone walls c. 1850. Jacobethan decorative detailing, a fashionable style at that date. Pulteney Grove, Pulteney Gardens, Pulteney Avenue and Lime Grove are Victorian terraced housing of around 1870 typically with dwarf walls to the front gardens.
- Nos. 24-29 Pulteney Road: dwarf walls with stone piers infilled with hedging. Possibly originally with iron railings removed 1939-45.
- North Parade Road: iron palings backed by large trees and vegetation to the Cricket Ground and Recreation Ground.



10. Streets and movement

Density and degree of enclosure

As with other aspects of the area the density and enclosure is very varied. The sports pitches are very low indeed and with wide open views on all sides except to the north where they are enclosed by the tall backs of the Great Pulteney Street terraces. The housing areas, in contrast, are much denser and here the enclosure is inevitably tighter.

Street pattern

A deformed grid pattern is most common but there are a few long, straight streets. North Parade Road and Pulteney Road are busy arterial routes forming a T-shape on the edge of the city centre.

Public realm

Tarmac or concrete slab footways are found throughout the area and have a mixture of pennant and concrete kerbs. There are no squares or public open spaces in this Character Area.

Vitality and tranquility

The noise of trains on the raised railway has a marked influence on the tranquility of the area. Pulteney Road is a very busy route taking traffic from the A36 Warminster Road and A4 London Road through the city. It has fairly constant heavy traffic as does North Parade Road. The Rossiter Road/Pulteney Road junction at the south of the Character Area is also dominated by constant heavy traffic forming a less pleasant environment than is typical elsewhere. Pedestrian traffic is less noticeable on these busy traffic routes, however they are rarely empty of walkers for any length of time except late at night. Away from these routes the area is much quieter. Vitality and tranquillity is greatly influenced by the playing pitches, especially the cricket ground which exudes an air of relaxed activity. The riverside path is a well-used recreational route. On match days, the rugby creates significant vibrancy in this area.

The Kennet & Avon Canal towpath is also a well-used route for walkers, cyclists and tourists enjoying the traffic-free environment of the canal route to Bathampton and beyond.



11. Trees, open space, parks and gardens

Trees and vegetation

The mature street trees along Pulteney Road are a dominant feature, and planting within plots or on boundaries provides interest and diversity to the character of the area. The sports fields have some vegetation and shrubs at the margins, and large trees border North Parade Road on both sides. The river bank is fringed with trees both north and south of North Parade Bridge.

There are generally fewer trees in the south of this Character Area owing to its historic development dominated by industry, the canal and railway lines.

Open space and parks

There is much open space within this area. Sports pitches and riverside walks predominate. The space by Pulteney Weir is one of the most important riverside areas in the city. The wide tree-lined carriageway of North Parade Road contributes to the open feel of the area. There are no public parks in the Character Area. Significant open spaces include:

- Riverside Walk from Pulteney Bridge to North Parade Bridge.
- Recreation Ground and Cricket Ground
- Canalside towpaths from Widcombe Lock northwards.
- Widcombe Play Area, Archway Street – fringed by mature trees such as horse chestnut.

Private gardens

Front gardens and boundary hedges/vegetation make a significant contribution to the streetscape along Pulteney Road, softening the impact of heavy traffic. In the side streets (e.g. Dolemeads and around Pulteney Gardens) they also make a significant (and more expected) contribution.



12. Night-time character

The night-time character is dominated by the continued presence of road traffic but far less pedestrian movement. The residential neighbourhoods are generally quiet with occasional localised traffic and movement.

Apart from the pubs and restaurants on Argyle Street (the backs of which are accessed from Spring Gardens Road and Pulteney Weir), there are no significant venues for eating or drinking and, other than the Pavilion on North Parade Road, no public music/performance venues. Late night foot traffic consists mainly of occasional walkers passing through from city-centre venues.

Occasionally the Rec is floodlit for night-time sports events, lending a different dimension to the normally dark sports fields at the centre of this Character Area.

13. Issues affecting the Character Area

What are the assets of the Character Area?

- The outstanding quality of the Character Area is the extent of its open green spaces, providing a green lung for the city of Bath and facilities for exercise and numerous competitive sports at amateur and professional levels.
- The River Avon bounds the Character Area to the west, providing opportunities for boating and other water-based recreation from the moorings at Pulteney Weir. North Parade Bridge and Pulteney Bridge link the area closely with the city centre, making it easily accessible from the tourist hotspots of Orange Grove, Grand Parade and Terrace Walk where many tour buses stop.
- Fine views are a significant feature of the area. This includes views into the city from the hilltops of Bathwick and Widcombe, in which the Pulteney Road Character Area forms an open middle ground, and views out from Grand Parade, Parade Gardens and Orange Grove which overlook the Rec.
- In addition the riverside walk from Pulteney Bridge to North Parade Bridge and beyond offers views of a succession of city-centre landmarks across the river: Pulteney Bridge itself, the colonnade beneath Grand Parade, the Empire Hotel, the Abbey, Parade Gardens, North Parade and St John's RC church.
- A further ribbon of tranquil green space and historic buildings is afforded by the Kennet & Avon Canal as it winds along the lower slope of Bathwick Hill at the eastern edge of the Character Area. The towpath connects with the landscape north-east of the city towards Bathampton, and via Widcombe with the River Avon and the south side of the city centre.
- The building stock includes many solid and attractive large Victorian houses which are highly adaptable to modern needs, providing big single family homes or dividing well into flats or business uses. Average-sized two and three bedroom homes around Pulteney Gardens and in Dolemeads form a pocket of desirable housing close to the city centre.
- Beazer Garden with its maze (1984, by Randoll Coate and Adrian Fisher) is an unusual and attractive feature in an under-used pocket of green space adjacent to the popular and busy Pulteney Weir area.
- Dolemeads and the Pulteney Gardens area are both hemmed in by watercourses with limited or non-existent bridge access. The streets in both areas are therefore unusually quiet and not subject to large volumes of through traffic.
- Interwar semi-detached social housing around Broadway of c. 1921 is particularly attractive and includes some unusually

intact examples with original windows and doors.

What are the weaknesses of the Character Area?

- The area is effectively cut in half by the busy thoroughfare of Pulteney Road, causing pollution, noise and safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The ugly 1970s Skew Bridge over Pulteney Road detracts from the noble and consistently well-designed structures of the railway around Bath Spa Station.
- Access to the city via bridges creates traffic bottlenecks, with queues of vehicles a regular feature of the Pulteney Road area.
- Dolemeads suffers still because of its historic reputation as a poor area subject to flooding, and therefore not a desirable place to live. Light industrial and commercial sites in the shadow of the Dolemeads viaduct tend to underscore that reputation, which is now undeserved.
- The sheet piling of the River Avon flood alleviation measures gives rise to an unattractive riverscape.

What opportunities exist to improve the area?

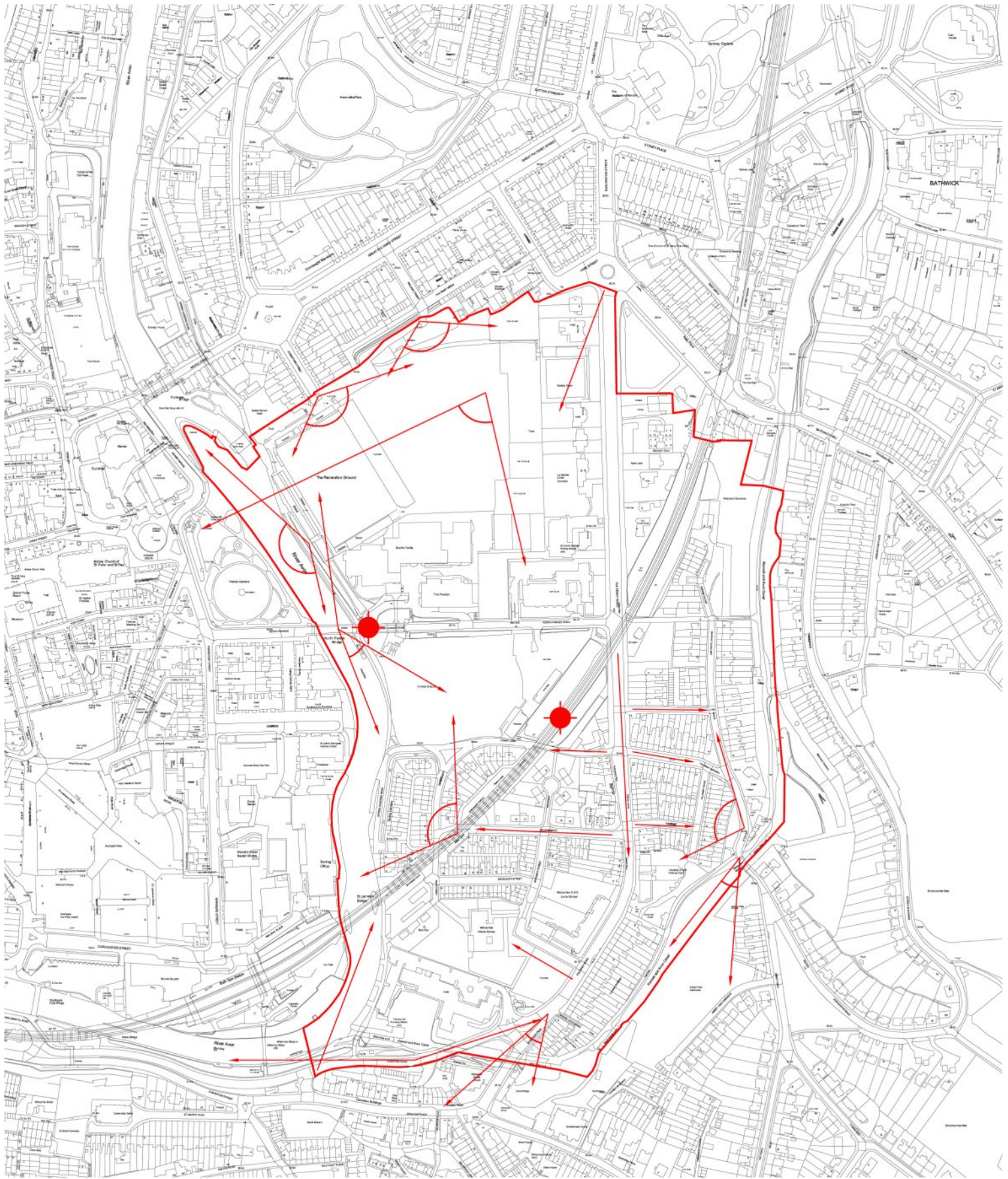
- Impact assessment of proposed developments in this Character Area should include consideration of views from the sensitive Bath skyline and in general from points within and outside the city, in order to preserve the visual integrity of the area as part of Bath's green setting.
- Proposed development work to Bath Rugby Club's facilities at the Recreation Ground offers the opportunity for new architecture which may enhance the special qualities of the surroundings rather than working against them.
- Some opportunities for development remain in the Dolemeads area and to the east of Pulteney Road, and with sensitive design, may allow the essential atmosphere to remain unimpaired.
- A sensitive and carefully managed programme of improvements to the unlisted Dolemeads viaduct would enhance its historic fabric and its visual presence in the Dolemeads area.
- Identification and recognition of undesignated heritage assets of architectural and historic interest.

What factors might be seen as threats?

- Traffic levels in this area are likely to lead to erosion of the historic fabric with pollutants likely to cause surface damage particularly to Bath stone.
- 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.
- Building height of new development exceeding the traditional limits of Baths historic core and disrupting the hierarchy of public and private buildings.
- 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, Penant rubble and brick walls.
- Proposals for the future of the Recreation Ground are likely to involve increased seating capacity and potentially more flood lit evening matches. The architectural design of new facilities, if not carefully managed, has the potential to erode the special qualities of the Recreation Ground and the surrounding Character Area.
- Proposals for the future of the Recreation Ground may affect the setting of the Character Area with higher volumes of spectators arriving on match days overloading the surrounding streets.
- The impact of the Great Western Railway line electrification on the appearance of the line and its historic structures.

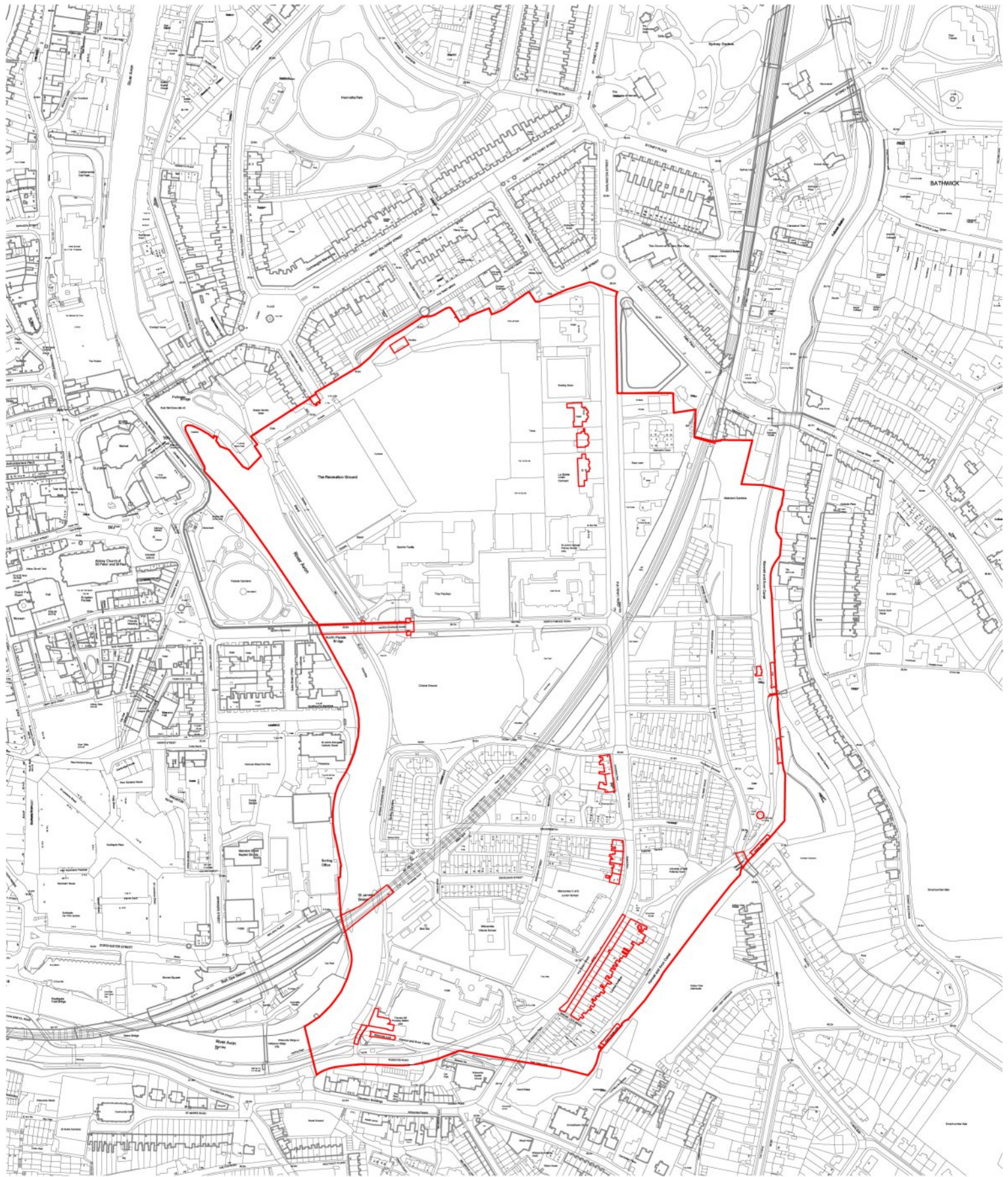


Key:  : Landmarks

 : View

 : Panoramic view

Landmarks and views



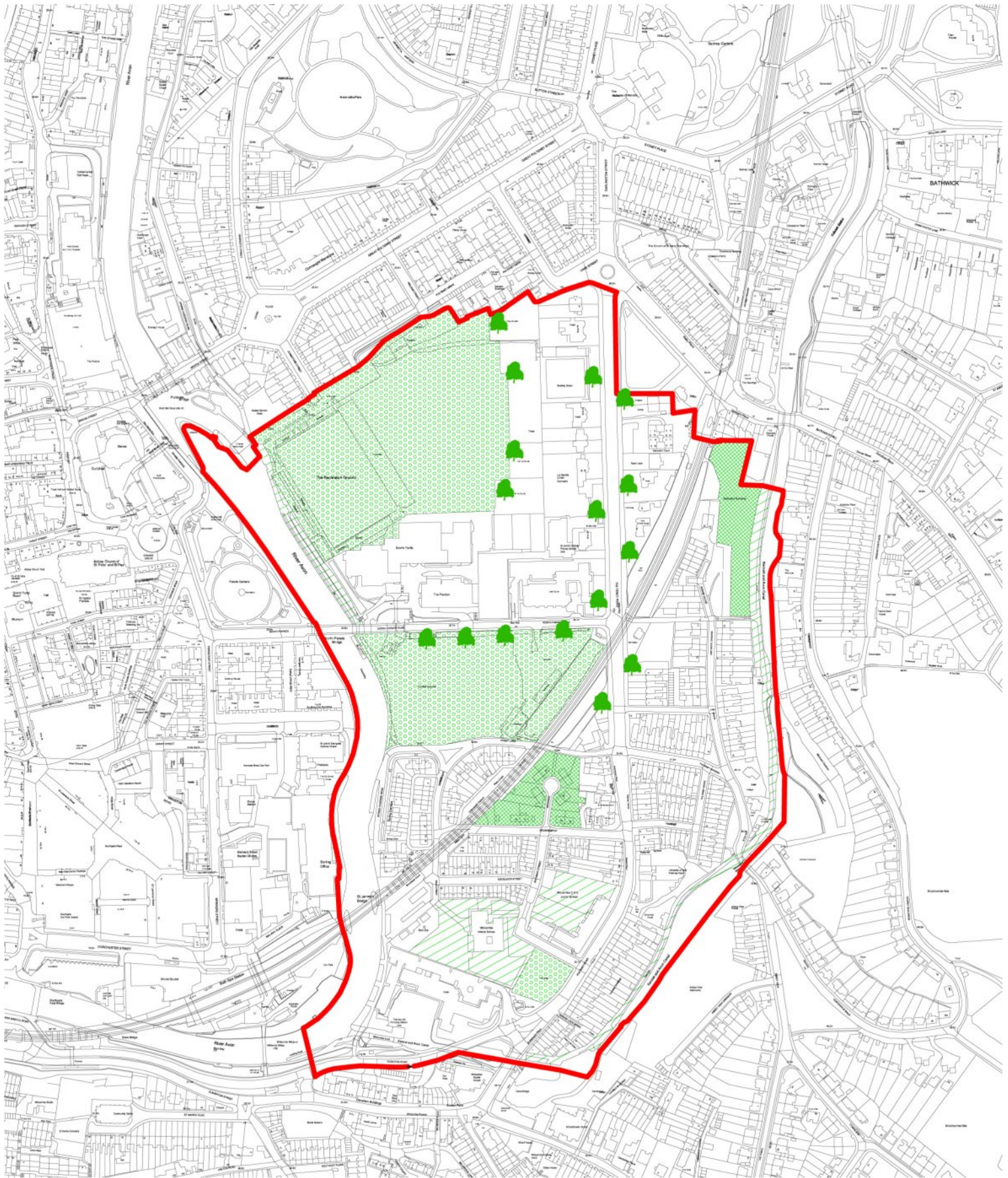
Listed buildings






Key:

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

Townscapes features



Key:

-  : 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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Distant view during construction, see www.britainfromabove.org.uk, image EPW001958, July 1920.

See www.britainfromabove.org.uk, image EPW053138, 19 May 1937; showing demolition of early 19th century houses near the viaduct. Houses clearly complete in image ref EAW000757, May 9, 1946.

