

Swindon Town Gardens

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



- Conservation area designated on 7th March 1989
- Appraisal and management plan adopted 29th April 2008

This appraisal of Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area was adopted by Swindon Borough Council as “a proper assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of [the] conservation area and approved as guidance for decision makers dealing with planning matters” on 29th April 2008.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Conservation areas in Old Swindon

This document defines and records the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of the Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area, and identifies elements that contribute to its special character and appearance. It is one of four in the Old Town area of Swindon, the others being Old Town, Devizes Road and Prospect Place¹.

1.2 Purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal defines the special interest, character and appearance of the conservation area, providing a sound basis for development control decisions. It will help planning officers, developers, designers and the public at large assess whether a proposed development affecting a conservation area would, or would not, preserve or enhance the character and appearance of that area.

1.3 Conservation policy

A conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

When considering applications for development which affect a conservation area “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.” (Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

This appraisal should be read in conjunction with policies contained in the current Swindon Borough Local Plan and with national planning policy guidance, especially Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.

The information contained in this appraisal was initially collected during the year 2001 and revised in 2008. To be concise and readable, it does not record all features. The omission of any feature from the text or accompanying maps does not therefore mean that it must not be of interest or value.

¹Appraisals of these conservation areas are also available

2. Background

2.1 Designation of Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area

Thamesdown Borough Council first designated Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area on 7th March 1989.

2.2 Location

The Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area is situated on a pronounced hill in the part of Swindon, known locally as 'Old Town', above the greater part of modern Swindon.

Town Gardens Conservation Area is a mainly residential area whose focus is an urban park called 'Town Gardens', which lies to the immediate west of the historic core of the original hill-top settlement of Swindon. It is surrounded by built-up areas except to the south-west where the ground drops away sharply to the south into a broad vale through which runs the M4 motorway, which is allocated for Swindon's future expansion.

The Geological Survey of Great Britain (OS, 1974) shows Swindon lying mainly on deep Jurassic sands of the Portland Beds, but the presence of localised outcrops of Portland and Purbeck limestone provided a ready source of building material for previous inhabitants. The Town Gardens Conservation Area is centred on a part of the hill where extensive quarrying of this stone was carried out.

2.3 Boundaries

The conservation area is focused on the former Swindon quarries, now laid out as the Town Gardens, a public park and recreation ground in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The boundaries of the conservation area extend to include streets of prestigious suburban housing typical of the late Victorian period and the first decades of the 20th century.

To the east, the boundary follows the extent of former quarrying and includes former quarry faces, which are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest² (SSSI). To the south the area includes the leafy residential streets of Westlecot Road and Belmont Crescent. The southern boundary is formed by the cutting of the former railway line, now a cycle path (also designated as an SSSI), at the edge of the built up area. To the north, a length of the busy Bath Road is within the boundary, along with short lengths of Okus Road and Kingshill³.

To the west the, mainly Edwardian, terraced streets of Goddard Avenue and The Mall are included within the conservation area. Beyond are the open playing fields of Commonweal School, the town's main hospital and an industrial estate. In the southwest corner of the area the boundary includes Westlecot Manor⁴ and its grounds.

² Notified by the Nature Conservancy Council for their geological interest.

³ The remaining length of Bath Road, east of Eastcott Hill is included with the Old Town Conservation Area.

⁴ A 16th century, grade II listed, former manor house

2.4 Archaeological and Geological Interest

Archaeological evidence shows that the Old Town hill was a popular settlement site from earliest times. Although much of the documented archaeological evidence is from the eastern end of the hill (today's shopping and business area), there is also evidence of early activity in the area that today forms the Town Gardens Conservation Area⁵.

It is likely that the quarrying of stone for local building purposes was carried out from the earliest times but the industry did little contribute to the economic growth of the town until the mid-17th century when a seam of fine Purbeck Limestone was discovered. This stone, worked from shallow quarries, was transported to London via the Thames at Lechlade.

These resources of fine stone appear to have been exhausted by the end of the 18th century and export of stone from the area more or less ceased. Quarrying however, continued as an important industry at a local level, with the quarries providing much of the 'Swindon stone' that was used as undressed building stone in the 19th century expansion of the town. Quarrying continued in the area to the west of the conservation area until the 1950s.

Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the conservation area have been designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These are located around Town Gardens 'Quarries' area, the park and the recreation ground in Quarry Road. These sites are of particular geological interest for the exposed rock faces left by past quarrying activities, which allow unique opportunities for the study of the Jurassic beds that outcrop in this area.

Just outside the southern boundary of the conservation area, a stretch of disused railway line now a pedestrian and cycle path, is also designated as an SSSI.

2.5 Historical Development.

From its medieval origins as a planned settlement Swindon remained little more than a small local market town until the 19th century. Although quarrying and the increasing importance of the town's market stimulated limited growth in the 18th century there was little development beyond the original core area until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1841 the Great Western Railway Company began construction work on a major new engineering works beside the new railway on a green-field site some two miles from Swindon's hill-top 'Old Town'. Accommodation for the railway workers was built in the 'Railway Village' and spread beyond and up the hill towards the Old Town.

For some years, Swindon Old Town remained the main centre for shopping and other facilities, leading to much rebuilding and improvement in the Old Town market centre itself. Located on a hill above the railway works, the area was seen as a pleasant and genteel location for the emerging middle classes to settle. A significant

⁵ *The Archaeology of Old Swindon Hill*. Swindon Archaeological Society Report No.1. Roy Canham and Bernard Phillips (1976).

part of the residential expansion of the Old Town took the form of substantial middle-class homes.

The first expansion of Old Town westwards, towards the area now included within the Town Gardens Conservation Area, occurred with the building of a number of large villas of individual design, set in substantial gardens, along Bath Road (then known as The Sands) in the second half of the 19th century. Kingshill House was the most westerly of these. When built, these villas were surrounded by fields but once started, development continued swiftly and by the end of the century many of the empty plots along Bath Road had been in-filled. At the road's western end, the Victoria Hospital was built and a new Junior and Infants School opened in Lethbridge Road.

To the west of the quarries expansion of the town took the form of good quality terraced housing. Goddard Avenue, was already laid out and some plots built upon by the turn of the century. The rest of Goddard Avenue and most of the Mall, to the west, was built by the end of the Edwardian period. By this time also, Westlecot Road, a historic route running east west past the quarries, had been substantially built up. Here short terraces built at the end of the century were followed increasingly by large semi-detached and detached houses, those to the south side of Westlecot Road and on Belmont Crescent set in substantial plots of ground.



Photograph 1
A 1952 aerial view of Belmont Crescent illustrating the large gardens at the front and back.

Meanwhile, quarrying was ending in the central area and in its place the beginnings of a formal park was laid out with paths, tree planting, a bandstand and gate-lodge. By the 1920s, the remainder of the Town Gardens Park had been laid out and planted, with a maze and bowling green adding to the attractions on offer. To the east of Quarry Road, old quarry workings were converted to a recreation ground and allotment gardens.

2.6 Town Gardens Today

Despite the town's rapid growth since the 19th century, the Town Gardens Conservation Area retains much of the character of a handsome Victorian and Edwardian residential area and is a sought after location. At its heart, Town Gardens Park has a peaceful atmosphere that extends to the surrounding streets. Although the area is mainly residential in character, it is close to the retail and business district of the Old Town. Some larger properties in the area have been converted for use as nursing homes or guesthouses. Others, particularly along the busy Bath Road are occupied by business uses. There are schools for all age groups within the conservation area itself and nearby. There is easy access by car, bus or on foot, to all of 'New' Swindon's facilities.

The most significant impact of modern life is traffic. At the end of the 19th century Bath Road was an attractive, tree-lined road overlooked by genteel middle class houses. Today it is a busy through route carrying high levels of traffic. Unauthorised parking on the street in Bath Road has encouraged the removal of front garden walls and gardens in favour of hard-surfaced parking, contributing to the urbanisation of the area.

Elsewhere in the conservation area, the quiet of the residential streets is disturbed by traffic attempting to avoid congestion in the centre of Old Town and by commuters using Mill Lane as a 'back route'. Morning and afternoon school traffic causes congestion around Commonweal School. Although provided with rear service ways, which are today lined by garages, the terraced streets are used almost continuously for parking. To the south of the area, noise from the M4 motorway is nearly always discernible in the background, detracting from the otherwise peaceful ambience.



Photograph 2 The Mall shown heavily parked although houses have access to parking at the rear of properties

3. The Special Interest of Town Gardens Conservation Area

3.1 Street pattern

Bath Road and Westlecot Road are early routes leading westwards from the original market town. Bath Road was the main road to Wootton Bassett and was turnpiked in 1757-8. Early suburban expansion of the Old Town, in the 19th century, followed this route, known as The Sands at that time. Today, Westlecot Road leads only to a narrow lane that joins the B4005 Wootton Bassett to Wroughton Road.

In the early 19th century the land between the routes followed by today's Bath Road and Westlecot Road was open land, dotted with quarries and cottages and accessed via field tracks. The current layout of this area is largely a result of development planned during the late Victorian and Edwardian period, based on three roads (The Mall, Goddard Avenue and Quarry Road), which run north-south between the two east-west 'historic' roads.

At the centre of the conservation area are the Town Gardens, a designated historic park and garden⁶.

3.2 Architectural and Historic Character

The architecture of the Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area is characterised by a mixture of late 19th and early 20th century dwellings, together with some public buildings offering local facilities e.g. school and hospital⁷ and some limited recent infill. Buildings are of a variety of materials as local stone and brick were both readily available and good rail and canal links allowed the easy import of materials such as Welsh Slate.

The conservation area's architectural character, as defined by Bath Road, Goddard Avenue and The Mall, is quite distinct from that of the majority of the rest of Swindon's late Victorian/Edwardian expansion, being larger in scale, less dense and with more ostentatious detailing than the red brick terraces commonly found elsewhere.

With the exception of Westlecot Manor, a listed manor house dating from the 16th century, and a number of small, stone built cottages in the vicinity of the quarry; the earliest properties in the conservation area are the original detached 'villas' that were constructed on Bath Road in the mid 19th century. Seven of these remain (No.54 Yucca Villa, No.58 Longford Villa, No.64 The Willows, No.81 Colville House, No.84 Fairfield House, No.101 Oxford House and Kingshill House (listed). By the 1880's several pairs of semi-detached villas had also been built. These 19th century villas are substantial dwellings, built of brick or stone to individual designs. There appears to be no chronological progression in the choice of materials or architectural detailing, which was presumably a matter of personal preference.

⁶ Included on the Register of Parks and Gardens maintained by English Heritage

⁷ Now closed and a site designated for redevelopment

Perhaps the most characteristic buildings of the area are the terraced dwellings of Goddard Avenue, The Mall and Westlecot Road. In contrast to the individually designed and built residences on Bath Road, these terraces were built in numbers by speculative developers. The dwellings are built to a typical terraced form with bay windows, often at both ground and first floor and entrance and staircase to one side, leading a rear service wing. They are substantial family homes by today's standards.



Photograph 3
A typical house-type retaining original features, including timber sash windows, Welsh slate roof and open porch.

The overall impression given by the terraces is one of architectural uniformity. However, on closer inspection, many small differences in architectural detailing become apparent. The plots were laid out formally at the same time with the narrow, uniform plots ensuring the general form of development, however they were developed by different builders. Some builders perhaps built only a short terrace of four or five houses, whilst the bigger building firms with greater capital, built larger sections of the street.

The terraces were built in the main of brick, with slate roofs. Local stone has occasionally been used but is confined to the rear of properties or gable-end walls, indicating that brick was considered the desirable 'modern' material in this area. Individual features are generally confined to the treatment of the two storey projecting bays. Some of the larger terraces in Westlecot Road have attic rooms. The use of tiles with decorative motifs and tiled paths to recessed front doors are characteristic, as are timbered projecting gables and terracotta ridges and finials.

There are also a number of public buildings in the area. These include the schools in Commonweal and Lethbridge Roads and the (former) Victoria Hospital. These are built in brick and are of styles typical of public buildings of their time and are worthy of retention and preservation.



Photograph 4
Commonweal School 1927 in the Mall has an 'Edwardian classical' front with split pediment and portico porch with balcony.

Modern development within the area has been relatively limited although the generous size of the original plots has allowed infilling in several places and some older properties have been lost and replaced with modern buildings. Noticeable examples of this are on Bath Road for example 56 Bath Road (Walton Grange) and 66/68 Bath Road. There are some modern developments within the area - Penfold Gardens, Oxford Gardens, The Quarries and Quarry Mews. Although these developments do not harmonise with the area's historic architectural character, with the exception of Oxford Gardens, they are in general contained within the old quarry area and, on the whole, do not impinge on general views of the conservation area.

3.3 Trees

At the heart of the conservation area, Town Gardens Park is characterised by abundant vegetation and mature trees, which contribute to its air of shade and seclusion. Trees play a very important part in forming the character of the Town Gardens conservation area.

Many of the streets in the area have wide pavements with trees planted at intervals. With the mature planting of the generous plots that characterise the houses, these trees contribute to a general impression of a pleasant leafy area.

Bath Road is perhaps the most urban section of the conservation area, but here again many of the adequate front gardens feature abundant planting, including some fine specimen trees. However in recent years this character has become eroded as front gardens are sacrificed to paved surfaces allowing car parking.

3.4 Open Spaces

The most important public open spaces within the Conservation Area are the Town Gardens Park and the adjacent recreation ground. These have been described elsewhere.

Elsewhere, private gardens also make an important contribution to the character of the area. Their varying and often generous sizes and styles reflect the ages and status of the dwellings they serve and add to the subtle differences in atmosphere within the conservation area as a whole.

3.5 Local Details and Features

There are a number of local features, which add to the area's distinct identity and form part of the special interest of the area. It is highly desirable that these features are retained.

Original small details of architectural interest such as chimneys, open porches and the varying treatment of bay windows in the Goddard Avenue/Mall area contribute to the area's Edwardian appearance. In this area the use of decorative tiles in entrance porches, on front facades and for front paths is also notable. Surviving original double hung timber sash windows are an important feature, which merit retention. Many gables have terracotta finials and ornate ridge tiles.

Stone and brick boundary walls, together with hedges, enclosing front garden plots are an important feature of the area and should be retained. They include random stone with stone 'toppers' and a variety of brick walls with stone or blue brick copings and gate piers with stone cappings. The stone boundary walls in the Belmont Crescent area are particularly notable.

Early post boxes in Goddard Avenue and Westlecot Road are of interest.



Photograph 5
Westlecot Road houses are of large proportions with attic rooms and double storey bays. Front gardens are used for parking, but in the main, garden walls are retained.

A characteristic and attractive feature of the locality are the glimpses gained between buildings, of their side elevations and rear gardens and, to the south of the Conservation Area, of the sky and the open countryside beyond. The gaps between buildings also allow daylight to permeate to back gardens.

The floor-scape is generally a black tarmac surface to both road and footway but the use of stone kerbs and stone setts as gutters at road edges and to the centre of the rear service roads adds to the character of the area.

3.6 Character Areas

Bath Road

Only that stretch of Bath Road west of Eastcott Road is included in the Swindon Town Gardens Conservation Area⁸. At its western end, Bath Road splits into two routes. The northern fork leads steeply downhill as Kingshill Road. Okus Road, the southern fork, is a busy route leading to the Okus Trading estate, and a residential area. On the south side of the road is the Victoria Hospital, the town's first hospital built in 1887 and at the time of writing (2008) a proposed housing development site.

The majority of the buildings along Bath Road are dwellings dating from the 19th century suburban growth of the old town and they include some good examples of Victorian properties of impressive scale and proportions. In particular, there are several fine stone-built villas dating from the period 1850-1885, when Bath Road was first developed, and some equally valuable buildings from the late-Victorian period e.g. The Vicarage and Quarry Mount.

Most of the dwellings are substantial semi-detached or detached buildings, with the exception of two short terraces to the western end of the road. For the most part these are set in generous plots, facing and quite close to the road. An exception is Kingshill House (listed), the most westerly of the early villas, which is set back from the road in its former grounds which have been redeveloped to include a large residential home for the elderly. For most of its length, properties to the northern side of Bath Road are served by a narrow service road to the rear.

Some properties retain attractive front gardens enclosed by stone or brick walls but many of these have been replaced by paved off-street parking, to the detriment of the area's character and appearance. However, enough mature garden trees remain to give the area a surprisingly leafy character.

Today the majority of these buildings remain in residential use but some are in use as guesthouses, bed & breakfast, or hostel accommodation, whilst others are offices. Modern development along Bath Road is limited to the infilling or redevelopment of a number of plots. Where this has occurred it has not always matched the elegant character set in the past.

The historic character and appearance of Bath Road is unfortunately marred by high levels of traffic and by modern street lighting, signage and road markings. However, despite the erosion to character caused by the modern pressures of traffic and development, the road retains sufficient of its previous elegant residential character to merit protection.

⁸The remainder of Bath Road lies in the adjacent Swindon Old Town Conservation Area

Goddard Avenue and The Mall

The most characteristic feature of these residential streets are the late Victorian / Edwardian terraces that line Goddard Avenue and the northern half of The Mall - a type of development that is scarce in Swindon.

There is a strong cohesive architectural quality to these streets, in the rhythm of the gabled bay windows for example. These substantial houses are in great demand as family houses.

Goddard Avenue, which is lined throughout its length by terraced housing, dates from the end of the 19th century. The northern half of The Mall was laid out soon after but its layout is less regular than that of Goddard Avenue. The southern length was not completed until after the First World War. Commonweal School was built in 1927 and is a fine example of its period and has original timber windows. Larger, semi-detached and detached dwellings completed the road.

Although varying in architectural detail, the overall appearance of the terraced streets is one of uniformity. The houses are set towards the front of long gardens, separated from the road by small, square plots enclosed by combinations of walls, hedges and railings.

Although the streets are of generous width and flanked by paved footpaths lined with trees, there is a sense of enclosure that is due to the long terraces, some of two and a half storeys, built close to the street frontage.



Photograph 6

A good example of part of a terrace, retaining original features.

To the side is an alleyway giving access to rear parking.

An integral feature of the Edwardian terraced area is the narrow service roads, lined by an accumulation of outbuildings and garages, which run to the rear of each terrace. Amongst the modern garages and sheds, a few early 20th century ancillary buildings, generally of brick and slate, survive and are worthy of retention. Although some of these buildings are in need of attention it is important that proposals for new garages are of a bulk, size and scale, with appropriate design and materials to assist in retaining the character of these back gardens and alleyways.

Westlecot Road and Belmont Crescent

This area retains the character of an elegant and genteel Edwardian residential suburb. The wide streets have paved footways set with trees which, combined with more generous front garden areas, and space for off-street parking, give these streets a generally more spacious character than the terraced areas.

The majority of the buildings are substantial semi-detached or detached houses, set in large plots, of Edwardian date. Development of empty plots in the Westlecot Road / Belmont Crescent area has continued sporadically since then. Attractive stone or brick roadside walls are a feature of the area, enclosing generous front gardens, many with mature trees and planting. Plots to the north of Westlecot Road are served by narrow service roads to the rear, which also provide access to the service roads behind Goddard Avenue and The Mall.



Photograph 7
Westlecot Road - the character of the area is enhanced by the many mature street trees and the trees within the Town Gardens.

The houses around the Belmont Crescent area are set well back from the road, having front and back gardens of almost equal length. Falling ground (to the south), an abundance of mature trees (within gardens and on the roadside) and the high stone boundary walls that enclose parts of Belmont Crescent mean that many of the houses are almost completely concealed from the street scene. 53 Westlecot Road was the subject of a planning appeal⁹, which although allowed a large residential redevelopment the Inspector conditioned that the boundary walls and trees be retained. Overall the area has a particularly leafy suburban character.

Many of the dwellings in the area are very large by modern standards and in recent years there has been a tendency for the conversion of some of the largest properties to nursing or residential homes. The quiet and genteel character of the neighbourhood makes this an attractive location for such businesses but where this has led to the coalescence of properties or to the loss of front gardens to parking requirements, to the detriment of the area's character and appearance.

Gaps between the buildings to the south of Westlecot Avenue and Belmont Crescent allow glimpses across the vale towards the distant rising hills beyond. These views reinforce the sense of the area's position as a suburb at the edge of the town and are an important characteristic feature of the area.

⁹ APP/U3935/A/02/1090223 and APP/U3935/E/02/1093306

The Town Gardens and Quarry Road

At the heart of the conservation area is Town Gardens, a park laid out in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for public use on land formerly occupied by old quarry workings. The park is an excellent example of a pleasure gardens of the period and in 2000 was included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England¹⁰. The schedule to this register includes a full description of the park's history and features.



Photograph 8
The aviary and pond at the Westlecot entrance to Town Gardens

The park's main entrance is from Westlecot Road. It is flanked by iron gates and a brick entrance lodge. The park has a secluded and peaceful atmosphere, largely due to the abundant tree cover that screens the area from the surrounding residential streets and splits it into a series of discreet gardens. The park's changing levels are linked by a multitude of paths, in part based on the topographical features and old tracks of the quarry workings. Many of the gardens are formally planted and there are numerous mature specimen trees.

The park is a well-used and loved feature of the area. Other attractions include a bowling green, refreshment kiosk¹¹ (listed), aviary and traditional bandstand¹² (listed) as well as a 1930s 'concert bowl', an important local facility still well-used in the summer for gatherings and performances.



Photograph 9
The theatre bowl in one of the park's quarry hollows is used for summer concerts

¹⁰ A national record maintained by English Heritage containing nearly 1300 sites.

¹¹ The kiosk is currently closed

¹² The bandstand underwent a major restoration in 2007.

To the east of the park Quarry Road runs alongside the park boundary linking Bath Road and Westlecot Road. From Bath Road, the downhill approach towards the park and recreation ground is flanked by stonewalls and particularly in summer greenery in the gardens to either side and in these public areas gives an almost rural appearance to the road.

At its farther end Quarry Road is lined to one side by a number of brick terraces of Victorian date, most likely former quarryman's homes. These have a quite different character from those to the west of the conservation area. They are of a smaller scale and are more urban in appearance with many being built up to the pavement edge. Railings and thick perimeter vegetation of the park provide a strong sense of enclosure.

In contrast to the secluded and formally planted gardens of the Town Gardens Park, the recreation ground is a more open area, fringed by trees. Part of this area is now laid out as a children's playground. The recreation ground is an important resource in the area, which has few other public open spaces available for sport and recreation. At its rear edge the former quarry faces are designated as a SSSI.

Hidden away to the west of the Town Gardens Park is a secluded former quarry, which is maintained by the Council as a wildlife garden. This area is a haven for wildlife, its peaceful nature only marred by the hum of the distant motorway.

Modern development within the area is generally restricted to the infilling or redevelopment of individual plots, however, around the former quarry area there are a number of small housing developments which infill slightly larger areas, such as Penfold Gardens, which occupies an area formerly in use as a nursery, or The Quarries, to the immediate west of the Park. Here a number of modern bungalows and houses of individual design are located in an uneven former quarry area on large plots.

There are also several older, stone, cottages in this area, which may represent some of the earliest buildings within the Conservation Area.



Photo 10
The 'Quarries' cottage' one
of the earlier houses in the
conservation area

Although these modern buildings do not, on the whole, harmonise with the character of the conservation area, the majority of them are tucked away from the main thoroughfares and not prominent within the area. The overall impression within the conservation area is of an area almost untouched by modern development.

Town Gardens Park is the setting for three listed buildings. These are the wrought-iron gates to the northwest entrance, the octagonal late-nineteenth century bandstand with cast-iron columns and square clock tower and the refreshment kiosk, a former Great Western Railway information kiosk of 1915 subsequently relocated to the Park.

3.7 Summary of the Special Interest of the Conservation Area

The Town Gardens Conservation Area retains much of the character of a handsome Victorian/Edwardian residential area and retains a distinctly separate identity from the rest of the town.

In summary, the special interest that justifies designation of Swindon Town Gardens Conservation area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors including:

- The area's archaeological interest and reminders of the area's quarrying past;
- The area's geological interest as identified by three Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the conservation area, designated specifically for their geological interest;
- The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, including five grade II listed buildings;
- The Town Gardens public park, which is designated grade II in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England;
- The distinctive late Victorian and Edwardian architectural character of the residential streets in the area, particularly the unspoiled Edwardian terraces of Goddard Avenue and The Mall;
- The peaceful ambience of the mainly residential streets to the south of Bath Road;
- The area's trees and shrubs in the Town Gardens and local gardens;
- The layout of local housing in long, linear plots;
- Local features, especially historic boundary walls and other details that give the area its distinctive identity.

4. Community Involvement

A public meeting was held at a Community Hall (Moose Hall, Tuesday 4th March 2008) at the centre of the four 'Old Town' conservation areas and was attended by over sixty members of the public. The majority of attendees were from the residential areas, (primarily Town Gardens and Prospect Place Conservation Areas), but who also use the Old Town for shopping and its other facilities.

Residents were given an explanation of the purpose of the conservation area appraisals review and the special meaning and status of conservation areas, after which a number of planning and environmental issues were discussed in open forum as well there being an opportunity to affix specific comments to a large scale map of the area. Those concerns relating to other Council Services were noted and forwarded; where applicable they have been included in the management plan.

There was strong support for the retention and preservation of all open spaces. There was particular concern about the impact of alterations to houses, which have an impact on the visual amenity of the conservation area. There was discussion of the possible option of controlling certain of these developments by the use of an Article 4 direction. General planning concerns relating to residential use included, loss of family houses to flats, threat of demolition to secure access to back-land and the development in back gardens due to visual impact, loss of green space and additional traffic and uncharacteristic layout.

On street posters advertised the meeting, which was also highlighted in the individual consultation letters sent to all properties within the conservation area.

5. Negative features and opportunities for enhancement

- High levels of traffic on Bath Road detract from the area's interest and the removal of front walls and replacement of gardens with car parking has resulted in the loss of historic walls and hedges.
- The appearance and character of terraces like Goddard Avenue and The Mall depends on uniformity of external details. Unfortunately, cumulative small changes that do not necessarily require planning permission (e.g. replacement windows, alteration to porches, removal of boundary walls etc)¹³ have begun to erode the area's architectural character.
- The dumping of rubbish in empty plots. The service road behind Avenue Road is a cause for concern.

¹³ It is always advisable to check if planning permission is required

6. Management Plan

The management plan detail how the conservation area could be enhanced or improved with the support of the local authority, residents and other agencies. It should be seen as workings document that: -

- Encourages future planning applications to respect and promote what is special about the conservation area;
- Seeks to ameliorate or (is possible) remove negative elements;
- Encourage a degree of 'ownership' of the area by residents (and where applicable Parish Councils);
- Promote closer cooperation between all relevant parties including utilities, local authority departments and the local community.

In line with advice¹⁴ it is proposed that this management strategy together with the conservation area appraisal be reviewed and updated regularly (five years is recommended).

In order to achieve effective improvement to the character and appearance of the conservation area, consideration should be given to the formulation of a working group involving internal and external partners to inform and respond to enhancement opportunities identified within the management plan. Feedback from such a group would be invaluable to the progression of such opportunities and be an active means of engaging public participation and community involvement.

¹⁴ Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas - English Heritage and PAS (2006)

Issues / opportunities	Actions	Agency	Time scale
Development issues:			
Development proposals should reflect the local character and appearance of the area.	All applications to be considered according to local and national policies and guidance	SBC Planning Development Control / Conservation	O
Loss of character as a result of demand for parking in gardens; loss of local features and details including traditional sash windows, chimney pots and ridge tiles and painting of brickwork.	Investigate possible implementation of Article 4 (2) Direction to control specific minor developments normally considered to be permitted development.	SBC Planning Development Control / Enforcement / Legal	S/M
Loss of characteristic street pattern resulting from 'back land' development.	Implementation of 'Backland and Infill' SPD.	SBC Planning Development Control / Conservation Sections	O
Over-sized garage proposals.	All applications to be considered according to local and national policies and guidance	SBC Planning Development Control / Conservation	O
Open spaces:			
Concern over the condition of park gates and unused kiosk.	Liaise with Parks Department/investigate possible additions to statutory list/ restoration project.	SBC Planning / Parks & Open Space / Property	S/M
Overgrown land, including allotments in the park and quarries areas and tennis courts.	Discussion with Parks to consider options for bringing back into use.	SBC Community Planner / Parks & Open Space	S/M
Other aspects of general upkeep / removal of graffiti and rubbish	As above	As above	S/M
Support for wildlife garden from local residents.	Possible set up of local voluntary group	Parks & Open Space	M/L

Traffic / highways issues:			
Impact of proposed residents parking scheme and traffic safety issues in Quarry Road.	Currently under consultation	SBC Planning / Conservation / Highways	S/O
General maintenance and use of appropriate materials	Discussion of materials and design.	Parks / Highways / Street Scene	S/O

Key

S = Short-term (0-12 months), M = Medium-term (12-24 months), L = Long-term (24-26 months), O = On-going.

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- Crittall, Rogers and Shrimpton (1983) *'A History of Swindon to 1965'* Reprinted from The Victoria County history of Wiltshire Volume IX Wiltshire Library & Museum Service
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- Wiltshire County Council (February 2000) *'The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns – Swindon'* Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- DoE (1994) Planning Policy Guidance 15 *'Planning and the Historic Environment'*
- DoE (1990) Planning Policy Guidance 16 *'Archaeology and Planning'*
- English Heritage/PAS (2005) *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals.*
- English Heritage/PAS (2005) *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas.*

Swindon Borough Council

(All documents are available on the Council's website <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/>)

- Swindon Borough Local Plan (2011)
- Buildings of Significant Local Interest - Supplementary Planning Guidance (December 2004)
- Good Design – House Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance (December 2004)
- Swindon Design Guide SBC (December 2006)
- Shop Front Guide SBC (December 2006)
- Backland and Infill Development SBC Supplementary Planning Document (June 2007)

Listed Building/Conservation Areas







The Statutory list and current appraisals are available on our Website, in addition they are available to view at Planning Office (Premier House and Central Library)

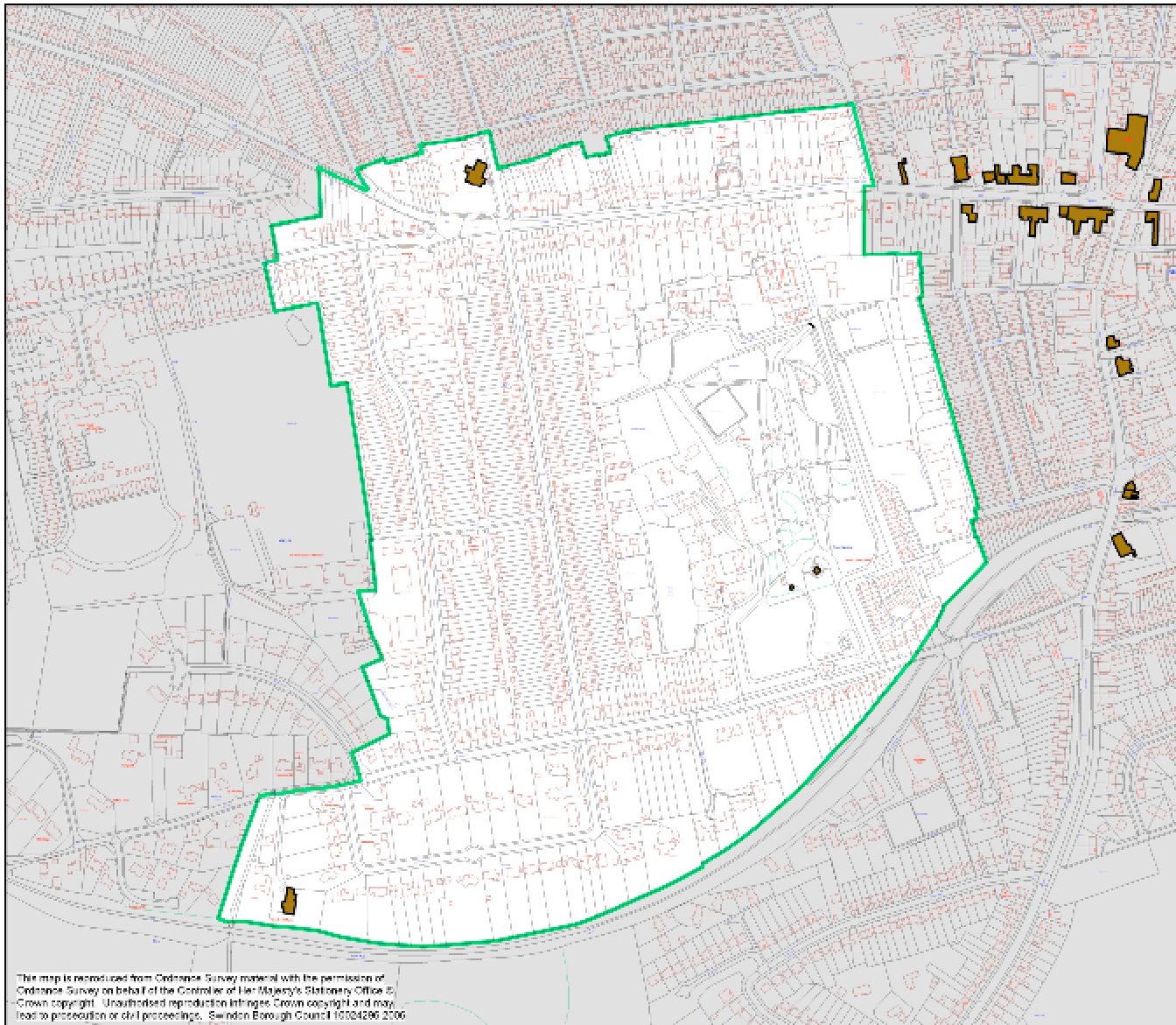
- <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/environment/planning/environment-planning-conservation.htm>

Town Gardens Conservation Area

Key to map

Given the complexity of the area, the omission of any feature from this map should not be interpreted as evidence that it is not of interest or value.

-  Boundary of conservation area
-  Listed building
-  Key building of interest
-  Significant tree or trees
-  Area of water
-  Important green space
-  Wooded area
-  Significant wall or boundary
-  Area with distinct identity
-  Important view



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