

# Thornbury

## CONSERVATION AREA

Approved 29th March 2004

### WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?

**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."**

Designation is a recognition of the group value of buildings and their surroundings and the need to protect, not just the individual buildings, but the distinctive character of the area as a whole. The special character usually derives from a combination of many features, such as - trees, hedgerows, walls, open spaces, groups of buildings, the degree of enclosure, the massing and detailing of buildings. Each area is unique.

#### WHAT CONTROLS APPLY?

Within Conservation Areas a number of special controls apply. Planning policies seek to ensure that any development accords with the areas' special architectural or visual qualities. These are set out in the Local Plan and further details are given in the **CONSERVATION AREA ADVICE NOTE** available from the Council. The emphasis is on preserving those buildings, spaces and features which give each Conservation Area its special character. Where changes can be justified, great care must be exercised to ensure that there will be no adverse impact on this character.

#### PURPOSE OF THE LEAFLET

- 1 To provide a detailed appraisal of those buildings, features and spaces which characterise the Thornbury Conservation Area.
- 2 To set out a strategy for its preservation and enhancement.
- 3 To provide guidance for development proposals.

**THIS SHOULD BE READ WITH A3 PLAN INSERT**

**Thornbury still retains its special historical character as a medieval market town despite much new residential and commercial development. Originally designated as a Conservation Area in July 1975 and expanded in March 1984, the boundary was reviewed and expanded again on the 4 July 2000.**

**This leaflet summarises the character assessment undertaken as part of the review - identifying the different character areas within the town - from the high quality of the High Street and Castle Street areas - to the back lane areas, open spaces and closes which also help create the special character. It sets out a suggested enhancement strategy for the town.**



### Location and Setting

Thornbury is a former medieval market town situated at the edge of the Severn Vale some 3 miles east of the River Severn. It lies west of the A38 and M5, just north of the M4/M5 junction. On the main approach from the south there is an important vista overlooking the Severn Estuary to the west, with the church tower to the north.

The historic borough was created in 1252, with evidence of the historic walls, closes and burgage plots remaining. The special historic character is reinforced by the simpler back lane areas of stone walls, twisting lanes, and terrace cottages as well as by the closes remaining to the west and north. New development to the east is situated such that it does not intrude unduly into the setting of the Conservation Area. The eastern edge of the historic town (St Mary Street and Rock Street) detracts from the character, with the large open parking areas and modern brick buildings lacking the enclosure and sense of place found in the rest of the town.

Rosemount House forms an entrance gateway on the western approach. The High Street provides the bustle of the traditional historic market town with an interesting variety of street widths and enclosure - including the "pinch point" created by the listed Bristol & West building. There is a wide range of historic buildings and styles - including a number of special features (the swan and white lion)- unified by pastel painted render finishes and white painted joinery. Castle Street to the north is quieter with the pastel coloured render giving way to more natural stone buildings and walls. It leads via an interesting and twisting route to the hidden jewels of the Castle and Church - set in a tranquil woodland setting.

# The Historic Context

The original settlement of Thornbury was probably on the lower ground by the Church. This was developed southward by Robert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, as a new town between 1243 and 1262. The alignment of the streets reveals the history of the town with the 3 streets of Castle Street, High Street, and The Plain (St John's Street) converging to a large marketplace. Thornbury's market history stretches back to Domesday. The town for a time belonged to Queen Mathilda and the royal patronage stimulated trade and urban growth.

The layout of Thornbury can be traced to the creation of the Borough of Thornbury in the 13th century, confirming the medieval layout which already existed. The Borough Charter of 1252 created an independent administration with a Town Mayor, Borough Court, Burgesses etc with a defined borough boundary and responsibility for the market and fairs. Before 1252 references to Thornbury relate to the much larger Manor of Thornbury covering Oldbury, Falfield and other hamlets.



The Court Rolls and Mayor's returns record payments from 119 to 134 burgage units until the early 19th century. This does not take into account the sub-division of burgage plots, nor the larger holdings of wealthy burgesses. The surprisingly complete town boundary wall and the high stone walls to the narrow burgage plots provides an important unifying framework for the town. Beyond, or outside the town wall enclosing the houses and gardens, are the closes, or land required as paddocks, meadows, orchards and market gardens to enable the borough to operate independently of the manor. These closes are therefore important both historically and for their contribution to the overall setting of the town. Historically the borough boundary has been described as being bounded by the four streams surrounding the town.

In medieval times Thornbury had a flourishing cloth industry but as this died out the town survived mainly as a market centre. The original market was held (until 1911) in the wide open street.

*For further information visit the Thornbury & District Heritage Museum Trust in Chapel Street - [www.thornburymuseum.org.uk](http://www.thornburymuseum.org.uk) - tel (01454) 857774 or try the Tourist Information Centre at the Town Hall, High St - (01454) 281638.*



## The Castle and Church

Thornbury Castle was built on the site of a medieval fortified manor house and in 1507 Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, began rebuilding the castle. That which survives is in fact unfinished, for in 1521 Henry VIII had the Duke executed on grounds of high treason. The Castle is primarily a castellated Tudor Manor House and is of national importance. Indeed Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn stayed at the Castle in 1535. In 1720 the Castle was partly restored and completed in 1854 by Anthony Salvin for Mr Henry Howard. During the time of the Duke of Buckingham, three large deer parks existed close to the Castle, one of which was 1,500 acres in area. Today the Castle is a private hotel.

A fine embattled wall, spaced with mullioned bay windows, separates the Castle and the Churchyard. Churches were often built close to the Manor House and this is the case at Thornbury. Although a Norman Church once stood on the site, the only traces of Norman work are the transitional Norman north and south doorways - no doubt salvaged from the older church. The restored Chancel dates from the mid 14th century whilst the south aisle was added later. The Stafford Chapel displays the Stafford Knot. On the roof corbels the arms of the Lords of the Manor are clearly visible, including William Rufus, Fitzhammon, de Clare, Stafford and Howard. The Church displays a superb western tower with pierced battlements. The size and grandeur of the Church illustrates the past importance of Thornbury.

# Character Assessment

The Conservation Area has been assessed in accordance with the English Heritage Good Practice Guidance. Thornbury has a distinctive and special character as a traditional market town. There are considered to be five different character areas within the town:-

- 1: The High Street
- 2: Castle Street
- 3: Around Thornbury Castle and Church
- 4: The back lane areas
- 5: The open closes around the historic town.

The leaflet will consider each of these in turn.

**Common important features which contribute to the distinctive character include:-**

**Historic buildings** - The many and diverse listed buildings and traditional details.

**The historic layout and plan form of the settlement** - including the variety of street widths and enclosure, the linking lanes, and the open setting to the town walls.

**Views and glimpses of landmarks** - such as the Church Tower and of the Severn Estuary are important.

**Stone boundary walls** - are important features in the town and surrounding landscape, providing enclosure along the roads and delineating field and property boundaries and defining burgage plots within the town. Also low front walls and railings are characteristic of some boundaries.

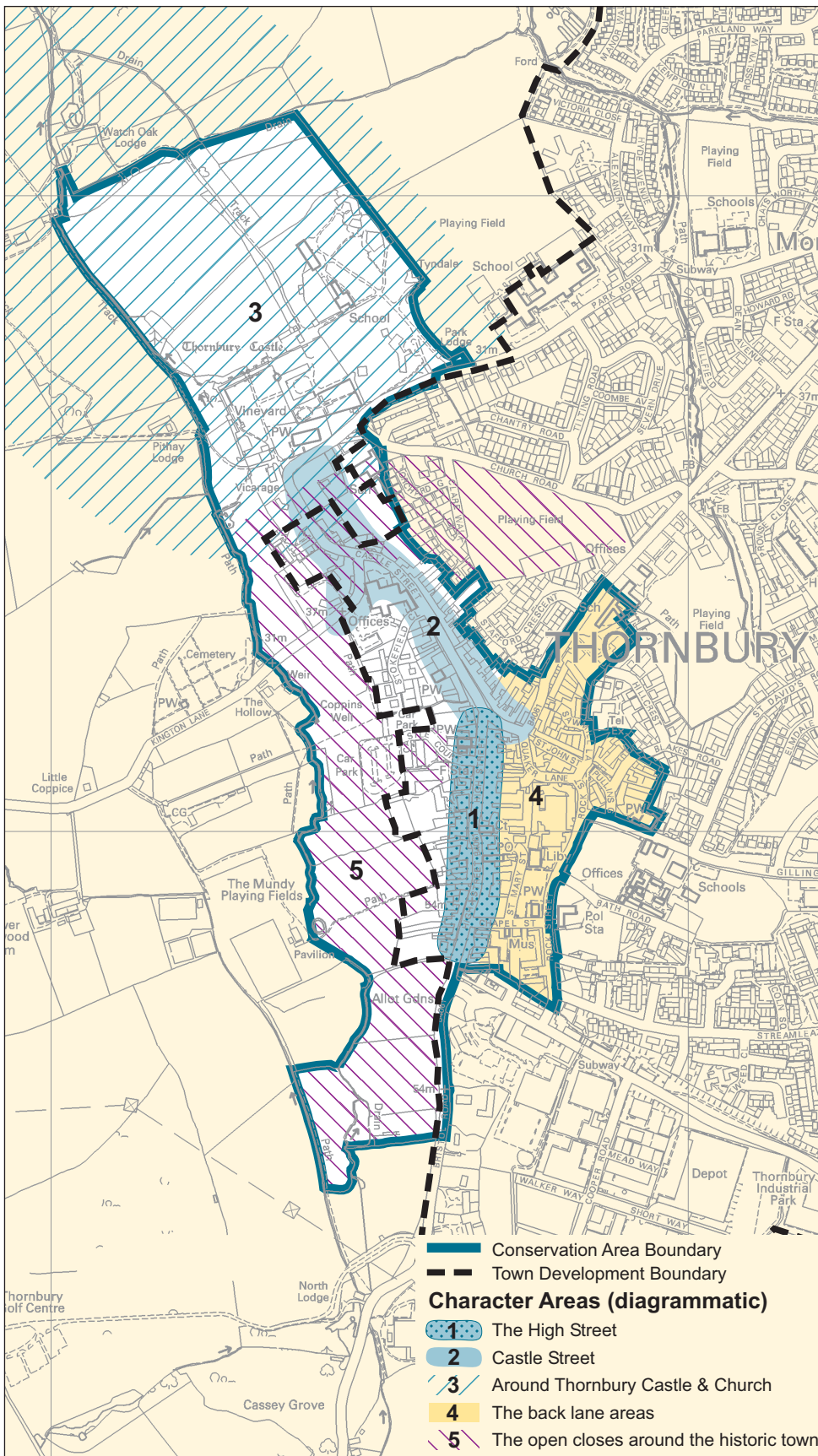
**Building Materials** - either pastel coloured render (High Street and Castle Street) or natural stone (Castle Street) with steep pitched clay tile roofs, and timber windows (not upvc). (The few brick walled and slate roof buildings are the exceptions that prove the rule).

**Archaeology** - the historic borough boundary walls and other sites on the Sites and Monuments Record

**Water features** - the streams.

**Trees** - individual trees on the glebe field, the mature trees and woodland setting to the Castle and west.

**Open spaces & vegetation** - the closes and glebe field, the informal open spaces, verges, gardens, etc contribute to the character. There is a need to maintain clear distinct boundaries.



# 1: The High Street

The town centre is focused around the lively High Street which contains a wide range of historic buildings and features, the earliest being 15th century. The mixture of periods and styles has also produced interesting street frontages such as Victorian revival styles including the neo-Georgian former Fire Station, a neo-Gothic Methodist chapel and a neo-Renaissance bank.

The varying street and pavement widths contribute greatly to the character, including the “pinch point” created by the Bristol & West building. The shopfronts are characterised by pastel coloured render and white joinery - although there is a need for tighter control over details to avoid the very special quality of the High Street being diluted. Sensitive management of refuse, forecourt parking and adverts is also required.

Interest is created by a wide range of architectural details and interesting features - from the simple bay windows, recessed doorways, porches, roof height and pitch and irregular building lines to the obvious landmarks such as the Swan and the White Lion. A sense of place is generated by the projecting Bristol & West building - which juts forward to provide a visual focal point and distinguish the simpler informal terraces to the southern end of the High Street, from the main centre of the High Street to the north. Enclosure is created by the largely unbroken facades and interesting roofscape - in contrast with the narrow walled lanes leading to the adjacent countryside and open views. Development is generally two, two and a half and three storey, usually with white painted joinery, a pastel coloured stucco or roughcast render and a steeply pitched clay tile roof, although there are a small number of buildings in stone and brick or with the roof in slate. The narrow frontages reflect the history as burgage plots.



The High Street - with the Bristol & West pinch point



Shop front details are critical

## Enhancement Strategy

- Ensure that all proposals for works to shopfronts, signs and elevations onto the High Street are strictly in accordance with good practice and well detailed. There is a specific concern at the cumulative affect of minor alterations which are harming the historic character, the affect of “blank/ dead” shop windows, adverts, refuse bins and parking on the forecourt. Applications will need to be conditioned to deter.
- Promote appropriate white painted shopfront and joinery details, through a supplementary design advice note. Note that a stained finish, upvc, or top-hung casement window design or roller shutters are unlikely to be appropriate.
- Encourage the use of traditional lime render to an agreed colour palette (see p.8). Sharp expamet edging or brick finishes are unlikely to be appropriate.
- Encourage a regular review of street furniture and signage (including all poles, A frames, adverts, planters, etc) to minimise clutter and adverse visual impact. Use conditions on approvals to manage.
- Whilst encouraging economic viability, secure appropriate action to minimise the dangers from unauthorised loading/unloading. Ensure that the disabled parking bays are sufficient for estimated need.
- Ensure that the variety of street widths and ‘enclosure’ is retained and that special care is taken so that all highway works are sensitively designed to reflect the special character of the area.
- Encourage the sensitive management of all special features (the swan and white lion, porches, etc) and architectural details.
- Encourage the retention and sensitive repair of the lanes leading off the High Street (including investigating the opening up of Silver Street or Soapers Lane).



The forecourts and street clutter need careful management



The footpath links from the High Street are important

## 2: Castle Street

The simpler and quieter quality of Castle Street sits in contrast with the bustle of the High Street. The historic importance of The Plain is reflected in the quality of the surrounding streetscape. It is thus important for all works to be appropriately detailed. Castle Street needs to let the quality of its soft pastel terraces and groups of individual buildings and enclosure dominate - so care is needed in managing parking, signage, footway and kerbing works, as well as in retaining traditional joinery and other features and details. The relationship of the individual buildings to the street is particularly important - both at street or boundary wall level and in the roofscape profile. The high natural stone boundary walls and trees and shrub planting also contribute to the important sense of enclosure.

The important view of the Church Tower from the Plain (looking down Castle Street) is lost as one moves north through the twisting and enclosed nature of Castle Street and Kington Lane - suddenly to be again revealed across the open green areas in front of the Church. The simple and informal nature of this unfolding sequence of enclosed spaces is important. Castle Street is the link between the High Street(1) and the area around the Castle and Church (3), reflected also in the footpath links by the stream to the west(5). This transition is also reflected in the change from pastel rendered buildings to the use of natural stone.



The Plain at the head of Castle Street



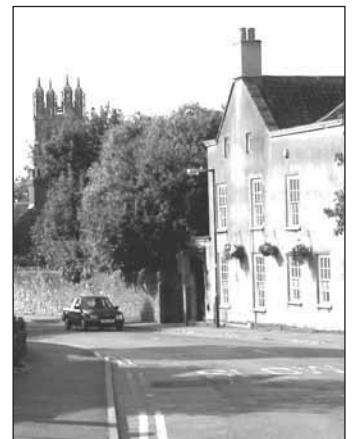
Quality can rise from doing simple things well



Pleasant simple quality and interesting roofscape



Kington Lane demonstrates enclosure



Chantry with Church Tower to the north

### Enhancement Strategy

**Many of the strategies for the High Street are applicable to Castle Street - especially the rendered buildings and shops.**

- Ensure that the informal character of the twisting lanes, walls and verges is maintained.
- Encourage repairs and improvements to stone boundary walls.
- Preserve the strong sense of enclosure created by the stone walls and buildings.
- Encourage the use of traditional lime render to an agreed pastel colour palette. Sharp expamet edging or brick finishes are unlikely to be appropriate.
- Ensure the footpath links are maintained.
- Keep parking to Castle Street under review - including minimising intrusion from signs, etc. and considering enhancements to parking / footpath areas.
- Encourage the retention of the simple painted joinery and unique details which contribute to the character.
- Encourage the retention / reinstatement of traditional metal railings to boundaries.

## 3: Around Thornbury Castle and Church

Whilst the visual importance of the Church Tower as a landmark is important, the historic Castle is the secret jewel to those exploring beyond the High Street. The enclosed twisting lanes and rubble stone walls of Castle Street give way to the pleasant informal open green spaces around the Church and Castle entrance. There are also important views and glimpses over the levels and Severn Estuary from this area. The area is characterised by the large mature specimen trees, the traditional church yard, and the special castle walls, set within the open fields of the former deer park. Care is particularly needed to maintain the informality, enclosure, and setting of properties and boundaries facing onto the road or other open spaces, where the simple character is an important foil to the richness of the listed Church and Castle. Thornbury Castle is also a registered historic garden - with the Castle walls enclosing the forecourt and Tudor garden.



*The high quality of the setting to the listed church is helped by the wall and trees.*

### Enhancement Strategy

- Encourage repairs and improvements to the stone boundary walls, and retention / reinstatement of traditional metal railings to boundaries.
- Retain trees and hedgerows as 'enclosure' to roads, including a replacement planting strategy.
- Seek careful control over road signs, markings, and other street furniture to avoid harming the character.
- Retain informal grass verges and open grass areas.
- Encourage repairs to the tombstones in the Churchyard to prevent further deterioration.
- Encourage improvements to the local footpaths.
- Ensure that the views of the Church Tower are retained and protected, together with the glimpses from this area to the estuary.

## 4: The back lane areas

Whilst the best of the special historical character is found in the first 3 areas, the back lane areas around St Mary Street, Rock Street, Pullins Green, Sawmill Lane and Gloucester Road all make a critical contribution to the historical setting and perception of the Town. It is therefore particularly important to preserve and reinforce the sense of enclosure and specialness of this eastern edge to the Town. This means securing good quality design (without becoming twee). It means looking after the remaining stone walls and recreating a sense of place

through enclosure in any new development around Rock Street - including enhancing the appearance of the Rock Street car park. It means preserving those historical - if often simple details - which exist, whilst recognising that with other sites, such as Safeway, it is not the details of the service yard but the impact in the structural landscape and public streetscape which is important. The simple stone walls, terraced cottages, and enclosure of the narrow lanes and links to the High Street are all important to the character.

### Enhancement Strategy

**The general principles for the High Street should be applied to these areas according to the degree of public visibility. Whilst greater flexibility on details may be appropriate, emphasis needs to be placed on stone walls, the enclosure created, and the hard and soft landscape treatment.**

- Ensure that the scale, details and simple proportions of the terraces of cottages are respected and preserved.
- Maintain enclosure to the High Street and along approaches.
- Ensure alterations & new development is in character & encourage the reinstatement of traditional details such as windows, doors, chimneys etc.
- Ensure good quality new design without becoming 'twee' or pastiche.
- Maintain and seek to enhance the important footpath links to the High Street.
- Encourage the development of landscape and planting enhancements to Rock Street Car Park; and a design brief to ensure that any re-development respects and enhances the local character.
- Seek the undergrounding of the overhead wires and removal of telephone masts which intrude into the skyline.
- Seek to repair / reinstate stone walls.
- Encourage new planting / landscape improvements - particularly to strengthen and reinforce the edges and approaches.

## 5: The open closes around the historic town

The open closes around the historic town are important to the historic character and in providing vistas of the Church Tower and estuary - setting the town in its wider context (refer to Landscape Character Assessment). The recent boundary extension to the west seeks to reflect the importance of the open "closes", with their stone walls, trees and stream, to the landscape setting of the Town and it's walls. Designation is designed to safeguard this contribution to the broader landscape - it is not intended to create detailed control over the allotment sheds or play equipment over and above normal planning controls. The closes to the west and north are important to the historic context (the closes to the east have largely been built on, but remain important in terms of archaeology).



The open setting of the boundary wall is important.



The vista to the west is important in setting the Town in the Severn Vale context

### Enhancement Strategy

- Encourage repairs and improvements to the stone boundary walls.
- Consider further planting and landscape improvements to enhance the setting.
- Seek to protect the important views of the Church Tower and estuary.
- Promote the undergrounding of services, where they intrude into the setting.
- Encourage improvements and planting to the local footpath network.
- Enhance and protect the setting of the stream.

## Other features

### Architectural details, materials and other features

Details are very important - retaining the original materials and architectural details - windows, doors, roof materials and chimney stacks etc. are all essential to keeping the period character.

Materials typically would be white painted wood for windows and doors and clay roof tiles or slate. New brick buildings are unlikely to be appropriate (despite the small number of historic brick buildings). Walling ranges from traditional pastel colour washed render in the High Street to natural stone buildings to the north end of Castle Street. The unsympathetic replacement of windows and doors and the removal of other architectural features can result in the downgrading of the property, town and Conservation Area as a whole. Particular care is required in the detailing of shop fronts and design of advertisements and to ensure the effective management of forecourts.



Stone walls are important to the character



Porches, wall & railings add to the character



The Swan



The White Lion

### Enhancement Strategy

- Encourage repairs and improvements to the stone boundary walls. Produce detailed guidance on front walls and railings. Avoid damage to burgage walls.
- Protect the open views and setting of the boundary walls and closes (see plan insert for wall survey).
- Ensure strict control of joinery details to shopfronts & produce detailed guidance.
- Monitor & review the need for further controls (Article 4 direction or Special Advert Controls).
- Avoid the use of concrete copings or kerbings.
- Review and enhance street furniture & lighting.

# Preservation & Enhancement Strategy

The objective is to preserve and enhance the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area, its historic buildings, features and setting as follows (as shown on plan insert 2):-

## 1) To preserve and reinforce the historic character.

By encouraging repairs and ensuring that any works to the listed and unlisted buildings, features and surroundings are considered in relation to the historic context and use appropriate materials and detailing. Historic walls to be protected are identified on the inserted plans.

## 2) Minimise the impact of modern development.

The area is adjacent to modern development which is starting to impinge on the historic character and setting. Enhancement proposals should seek to reduce this impact by protecting important views or gaps and using planting and natural stone walls to help soften the impact of obtrusive features and create a sense of enclosure and place.

## 3) Ensure that any new development or alterations are sensitive to the historic context.

Any new development needs to be in scale and sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is important that it does not adversely harm the setting of the existing historic features or harm the underground archaeological resource.

Listed Buildings, Locally Listed Buildings, and the principal protected open spaces are shown on the plan insert - these link to the policies in the Local Plan. If as a result of the Local Plan Inquiry the inspector's report supports development on any site in or adjacent to the Conservation Area then it will be necessary to prepare a design brief to ensure the development minimises the harm likely to be caused, and contributes to the wider enhancement objectives identified in this leaflet.



The attractive shop frontages contribute greatly to the character of the High Street - but careful management of advertisements and forecourts is required.

## ADVICE ON PASTEL COLOURS

The diverse pastel colours make an important contribution to the character of Thornbury. It is therefore important that planning applications state the colour to be used - preferably by using the British Standard colour notation - which indicates the hue, light reflectance and chroma (or colour intensity) to be used. The light reflectance value should generally be over 77 and with a low chroma value to fit in with the local character i.e. a light pastel colour. It will help if a colour chart or British Standard paint number is submitted if one is available. It will also help if traditional lime render is used as this will normally be self coloured and achieve the preferred softer edging. Sharp edges from beading are best avoided.

## GRANTS AND FURTHER ADVICE

Financial support (up to 50%) and other forms of assistance may be available towards enhancement or tree planting schemes. For information and advice please contact **The Director, Planning Transportation & Strategic Environment, Planning & Environment Section, Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood, South Gloucestershire BS15 9TR. Tel: 01454 863579** [www.southglos.gov.uk/ConAreas.htm](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/ConAreas.htm) or email: [ConservationAreas@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:ConservationAreas@southglos.gov.uk)

## LANDSCAPE & OPEN SPACES

The Draft Landscape Character Assessment shows Thornbury set within the Severn Ridges (18) area - characterised by the views over the lowland levels and Severn Estuary, diverse vegetation cover - with settlements nestling into the landform. The open aspects to the west and north - with the outlook to the Severn Estuary and with the old town walls set within open space - form important landscape features which contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area.

An assessment of open spaces within the Town Development Boundary identified principal open spaces which are considered to contribute to the quality, character, amenity and distinctiveness of the locality in accordance with Policy L.6. The inserted plan shows these protected areas.

## CONTROL OF DETAILS

The character critically depends on the detailed design of changes. The Council will monitor the position to consider whether there is sufficient harm to justify the local support identified for introducing Article 4 directions and for a Special Advertisement Area. This applies particularly to shopfronts, joinery and render details, and to forecourts - where applications will be expected to set out a statement on how the forecourt is to be managed - for example - to avoid inappropriate parking or refuse storage. Relevant applications will be conditioned to encourage good management.

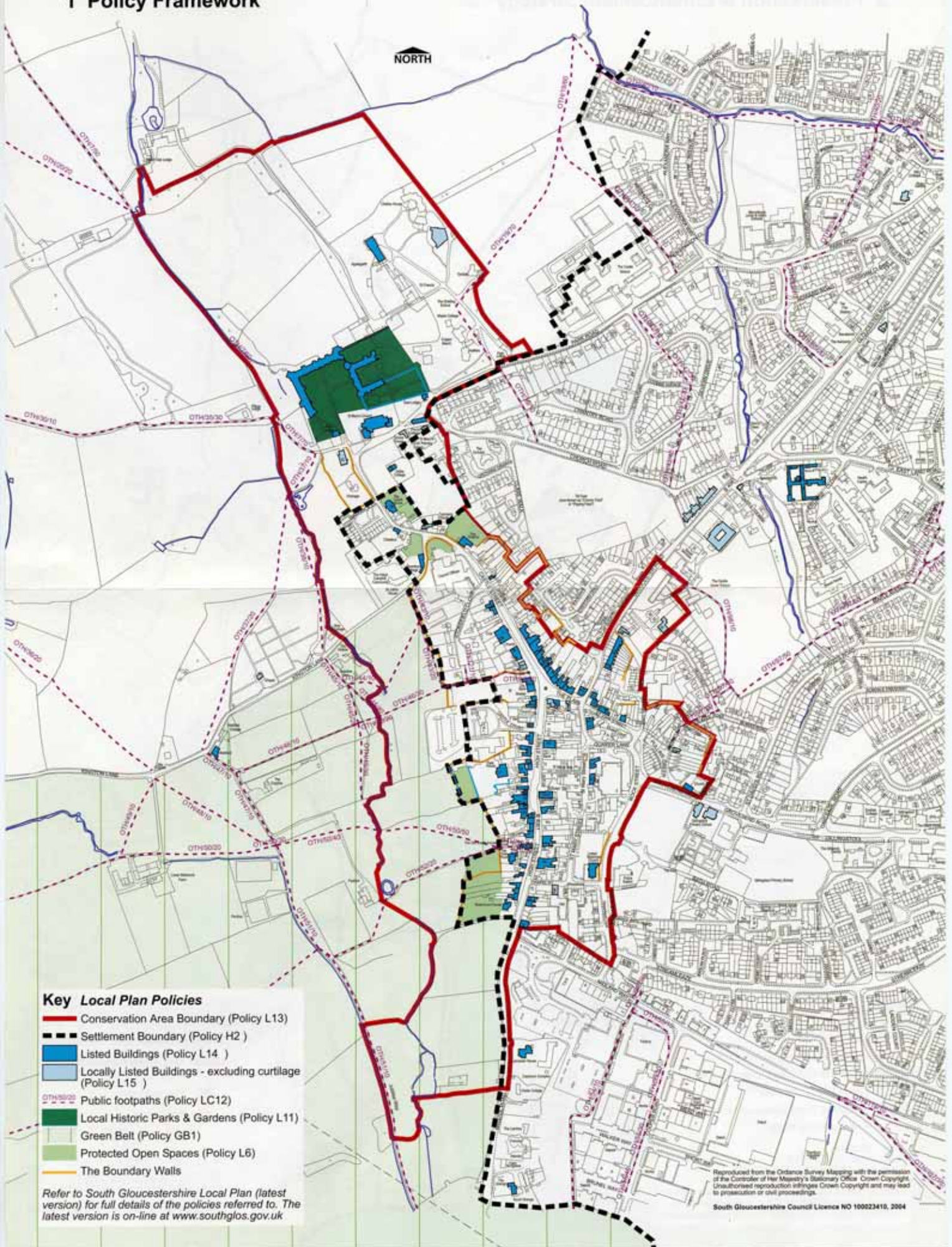
This advice note was consulted on in 2000 and agreed for publishing in 2004. It forms Supplementary Planning Guidance to be read with the policies of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan. The guidelines will be taken into account when assessing the merits of planning applications. **THIS LEAFLET SHOULD BE READ WITH A3 PLAN INSERT**

The leaflet takes into account the Good Practice Guide on Conservation Areas from English Heritage & PPG 15. It should be read in conjunction with the general **Conservation Area Advice Note** which gives general advice & details of special controls and policies which apply in Conservation Areas.



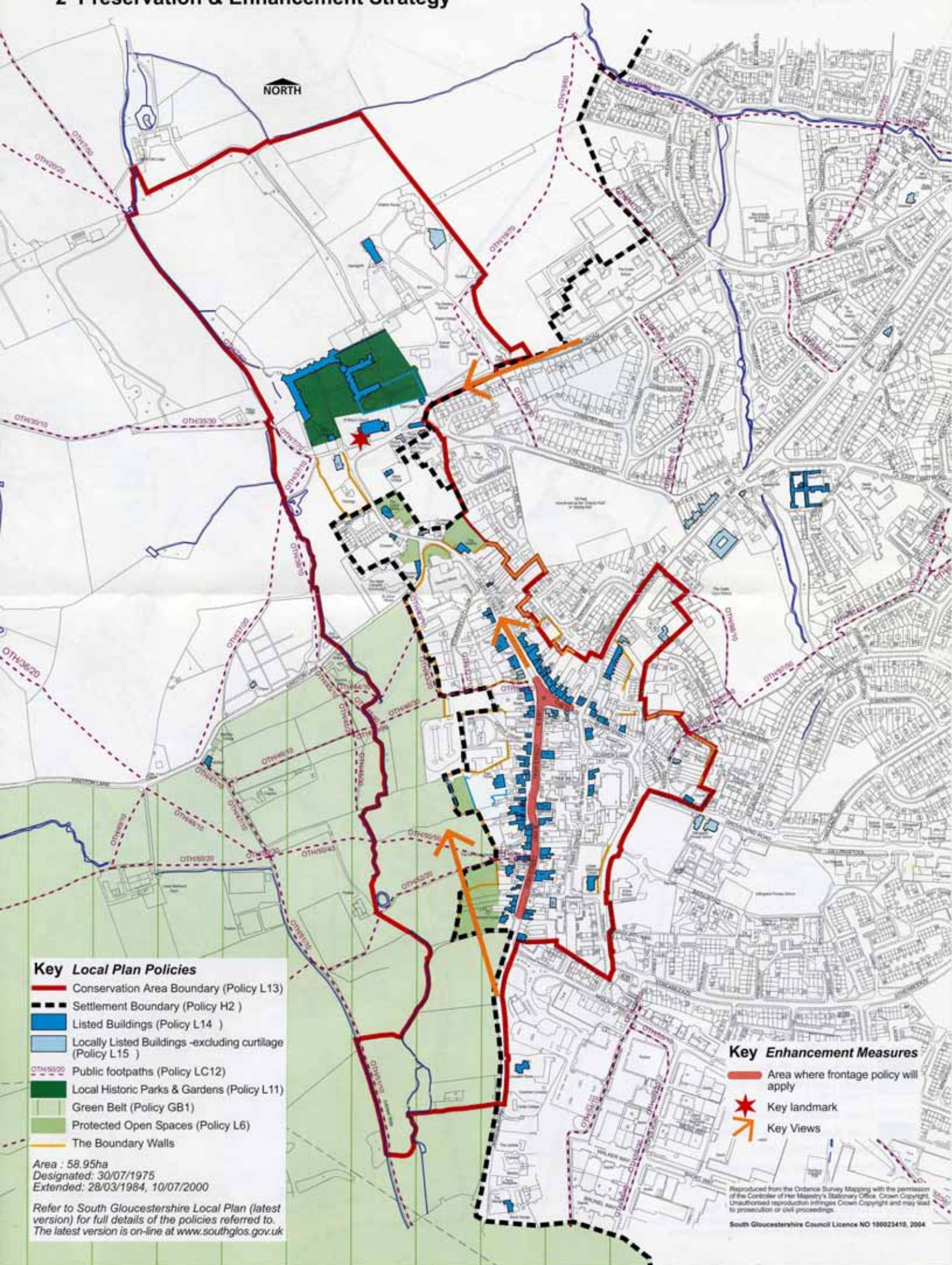
# THORNBURY CONSERVATION AREA

## 1 Policy Framework



# THORNBURY CONSERVATION AREA

## 2 Preservation & Enhancement Strategy



### Key Local Plan Policies

- Conservation Area Boundary (Policy L13)
- Settlement Boundary (Policy H2)
- Listed Buildings (Policy L14)
- Locally Listed Buildings -excluding curtilage (Policy L15)
- Public footpaths (Policy LC12)
- Local Historic Parks & Gardens (Policy L11)
- Green Belt (Policy GB1)
- Protected Open Spaces (Policy L6)
- The Boundary Walls

Area : 58.95ha  
 Designated: 30/07/1975  
 Extended: 28/03/1984, 10/07/2000

Refer to South Gloucestershire Local Plan (latest version) for full details of the policies referred to. The latest version is on-line at [www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk)

### Key Enhancement Measures

- Area where frontage policy will apply
- ★ Key landmark
- Key Views

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