

3.5 Spatial Analysis of the Park Conservation Area

The Conservation Area can be seen as a sequence of interconnecting spaces which have a major influence on the character of the area.

Plan Form & Layout

The majority of the Park Conservation Area is formed by the easternmost part of the registered park and it is the relationship between the Park and the town that is of fundamental importance.

The Broad Ride forms the central axis of the Park. It is flanked by mature trees which provide a unique space with an uninterrupted and exceptionally long view westwards. The Broad Ride rises gently and its slightly undulating form is such that the horizon gently changes with each step. The memorable view when travelling east is focussed on the tower of the Parish Church in the far distance flanked by a downward slope marked by the mellow limestone roofline and multiple stone and brick chimneys of Cecily Hill in the middle distance [See frontispiece].

Beyond the westernmost extremity of the Broad Ride at the point of the Park Conservation Area boundary, the grassland is managed more as a meadow with fewer cuts and a less intensive approach to management. This marks a distinct change in character and as such, is an appropriate boundary. Within the Park Conservation Area the grass is far more regularly mown to maintain a close-cut sward appropriate to the more genteel and urban character at the town end of the Registered Park.

The relationship between Cirencester Park and the town in particular is most unusual, its Mansion only separated from the network of streets by its high wall and famous yew hedge.

Character & Interrelationship of Spaces

The character of spaces and the contrast between them helps to define the nature of the Park Conservation Area:

- There is a marked contrast between the enclosed linear urban space of Cecily Hill with its funnel-like shape, which is drawn in at the west end, and the broad linear expanse of the Broad Ride and to a lesser extent, Windsor Walk with its avenue of lime trees flanking views to east and west.
- Wooded areas within the Park, and some of the more curvilinear paths through it, provide tranquil and almost secretive locations very close to the centre of the town yet very rural in character.
- There are also various expanses of open land, some within the conservation area boundary, others affording views from within it; these include the historic orchard south of The Barton, the open land to the west of the Mansion and east of Windsor Walk, the swathes of open land beyond the west side of the boundary marked by Windsor Walk, and open areas of grassland near the Kennels.

- Smaller discreet spaces include the courtyard between the yew hedge of the Mansion and the adjoining stables, and the inner courtyard of the Kennels.
- The southern side of Cecily Hill is characterised by small gardens with generous and colourful planting including boundary hedges offering a degree of separation and containment. To the north side, gaps in the street scene lead to glimpses of mature planting in the rear gardens sloping down towards the River Walk.

Key Views, Landmarks and Focal Points

Views into and out of the area are an especially important characteristic feature of the Park and the remainder of the Conservation Area. There are essentially four types of views and these are marked on the Views Analysis Map below.

Long views:

- The principle view within the Park Conservation Area follows the Broad Walk on an east-west axis with the focus at the east end being the tower of the Cirencester's Parish Church of St John the Baptist, the town's principal landmark.
- The clearly designed intention of aligning key architectural features within the Park and specifically the importance of the alignment of several focal points with that of the Parish Church is explicit and significant.
 - Standing at the mid-point along Windsor Walk where Fulham Bridge marks the semi-circular section of the ha-ha, one views the Queen Anne Monument beyond the conservation area boundary to the west, the Hexagon to the northwest, and the Mansion to the east with the tower of the church appearing momentarily to emerge from its rooftop. This intentional trompe-l'oeil effect is heightened by the contrast of the gothic Perpendicular tower of the church with the classically-inspired proportions and simplicity of the Mansion. These very long views are an exceptional feature;
- Views from the raised walk of the Old Tetbury Road looking east are available from as far west as the entrance lodges, and focus once again on the Parish Church, albeit sometimes broken by the branches of overhanging trees from within the Mansion pleasure grounds.

Views gained from the placing of key buildings as focal points within and on the edge of the conservation area:

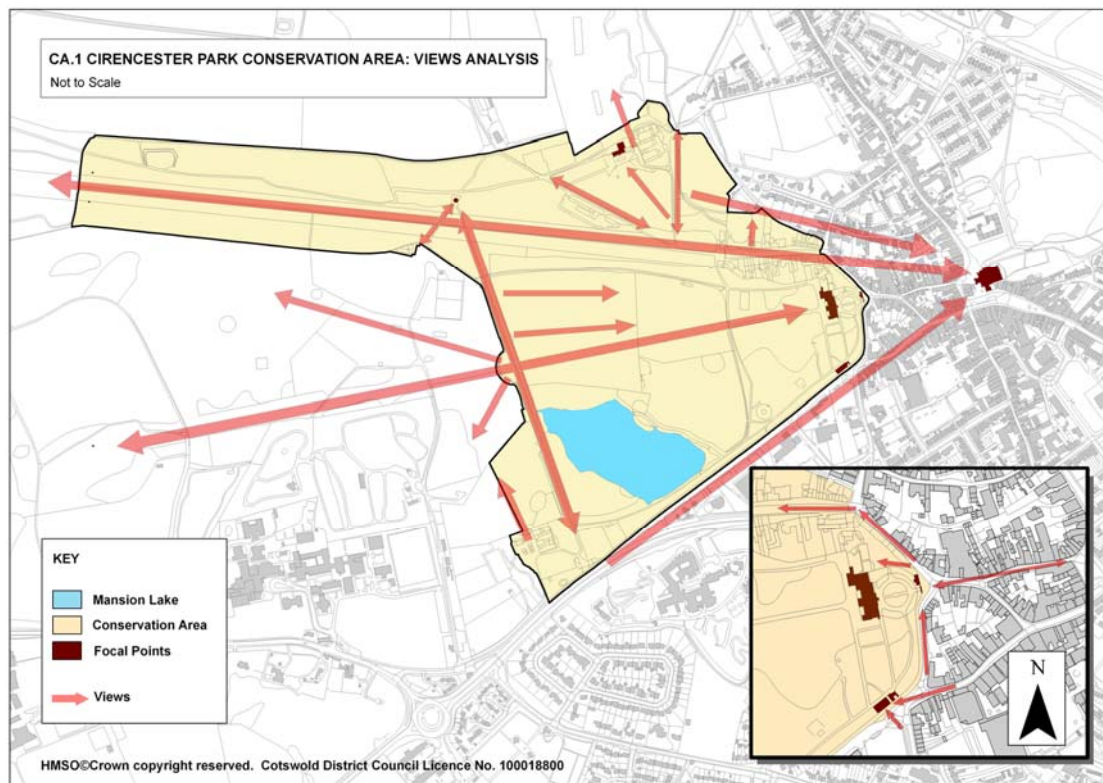
- The former Museum of Antiquities forms a focal point at the north end of Castle Street;
- The tall rusticated gates and adjacent small lodge with the unique semi-circular yew hedge as a backdrop forms an especially memorable focal point both from Silver Street / Black Jack Street and, in profile and hence less dominant, from Park Street.

Views across short-mown parkland and pasture:

- The view towards the Barton from the pathway extending north at the eastern end of the Broad Ride;
- The view from the lodges off the west end of the old Tetbury Road towards the Kennels;
- Further views from the Fulham Bridge at the half-way point along Windsor Walk radiating from here to the NW and SW.

Smaller glimpsed views:

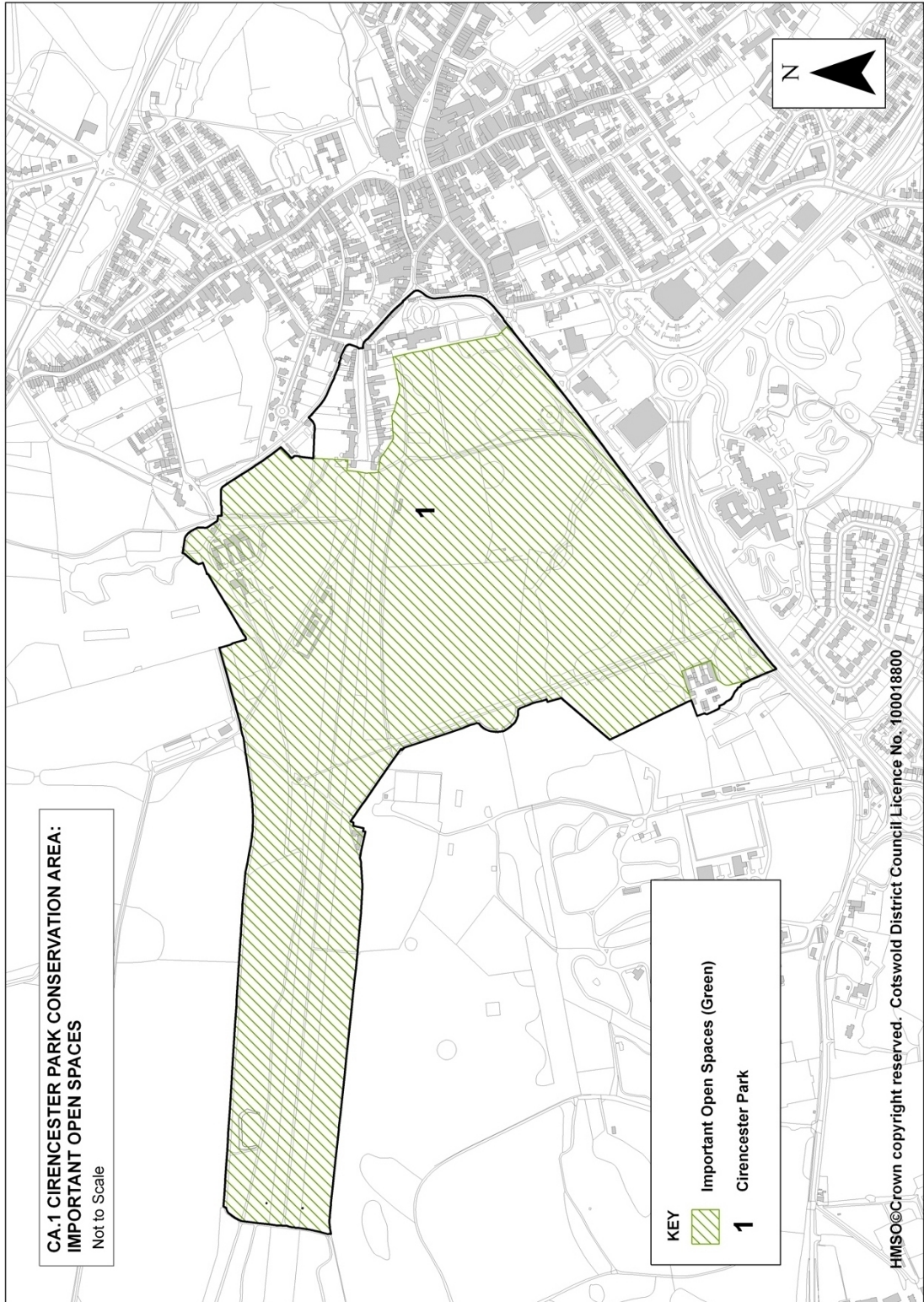
- The narrow gap between the eastern flanking wall of the former barracks in Cecily Hill and the adjacent pedimented building to the east is an example which allows an attractive view to mature trees beyond.
- The gap between the small lodge adjacent the rusticated gated entrance with the yew hedge behind at the junction of Silver Street, Park Street and Park Lane into the yard bordered by the former stable block which backs onto Park Street.



Map L

Important Open Spaces:

There is one Important Open Space within the Cirencester Park Conservation Area which is shown on Map M overleaf:



Map M

3.6 Activity & Prevailing Uses

The Park provides an extensive low-intensity recreational resource for residents of and visitors to historic Cirencester. The Broad Ride forms the principle route followed by Windsor Walk but many lesser paths, some of them more curvilinear in form, provide a deliberately picturesque scene for informal recreation.

The only formal recreation facility within the conservation area boundary is the former Archery House now used as a sports pavilion to the south of the Broad Ride. Beyond the confines of the Conservation Area, the Park is home to numerous sports such as tennis, cricket and polo, and those activities can be viewed from within the Conservation Area in many cases.

The Park is still a working estate and is open to the public between the hours of 8am and 5pm by kind permission and at the discretion of the Bathurst Estate. Dog walking is permitted in certain areas but vehicles of all kinds are restricted; only drivers with permits have access to the grounds and the main gates at the top of Cecily Hill are rarely open. Some buildings in the Park Conservation Area are used for commercial purposes, and for administration.

The estate yard, well-hidden within a bank of mature trees to the northeast of the Broad Ride, serves to provide storage and repair facilities for the estate buildings whilst the various buildings at the Kennels are used for minor office use or are ancillary to the nearby polo grounds. The former Museum of Roman antiquities has been used as private offices for some time and recently underwent alteration to further facilitate this use.

The dominant use of the buildings within the Park Conservation Area is however, residential. Within the Park, the lodge buildings at the southern entrance adjacent the old Tetbury Road and the farmstead at The Barton provide residential accommodation although the associated agricultural buildings at the Barton currently lie empty.

Residential use also dominates Cecily Hill with the only exception, albeit a significant one, being the former barracks at the west end of the road, known as The Castle thanks to its crenellated appearance, and now used for education purposes by Cirencester College.

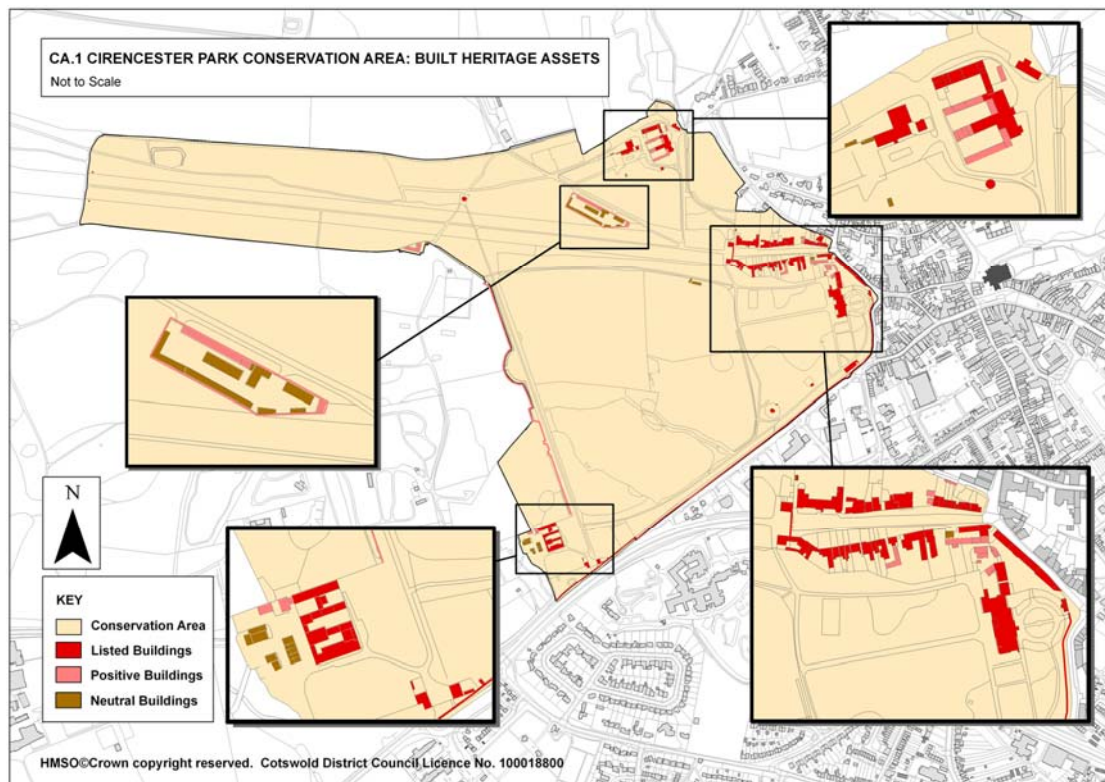
With the generous patronage of generations of the Bathurst family, the Park has been the venue for local concerts and social activities. For almost the last two decades the Cotswold Show, an event that combines town and country pursuits, has taken place at the town end and serves to continue the close relationship both physically and socially between town and park.

3.7 Buildings of the Conservation Area

- **Listed Buildings**

The Park Conservation Area has an unusually high proportion of listed buildings within its boundary, 6 of which are listed Grade II* and the remainder, of some 36 in total, listed Grade II. A table summarising the buildings which are listed can be found at Appendix B.

All the listed buildings make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. They are shown coloured red on the Heritage Asset Map below. Examples of listed buildings are shown in plates 92-100 overleaf.



Map N



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Positive Unlisted Buildings

The Park Conservation Area contains historic unlisted buildings and structures which have been identified as contributing positively to the special architectural and historic importance of the conservation area. Those identified here are shown coloured pink on the Heritage Asset Map above and include:

- The ha-ha on Windsor walk; [101]
- Archery House and the wrought iron park-type gates and stone piers adjacent Archery House; [103-105]
- The wrought-iron Victorian bench on the raised walkway along the southern [Tetbury Road] boundary; [125]
- The eighteenth-century classical building in brick in the Estate Yard off Broad Walk [106].



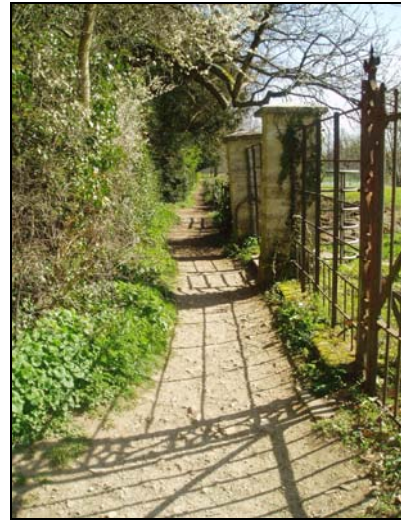
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Neutral buildings

The few buildings within the Park Conservation Area which can be considered neutral are shown in beige on the Heritage Asset Map above and include:

- Additions to the barns at The Barton with corrugated roofs; [107]
- Storage, administrative buildings and lean-to open sided structures abutting the outer stone wall to the estate yard off the Broad Ride; [108 & 109]; and
- Commercial buildings adjacent the Kennels [110].



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Distinctive Local Features

The Park Conservation Area features a number of architectural details, some quite small in nature, which combine to provide the area with added visual appeal and a distinctive and memorable identity. The following are considered to be some of the distinctive Local Features in the Park Conservation Area:

- the yew hedge and gates; [111]
- enamel road signs; [112 & 124]
- the weather vane to 7 Cecily Hill; [113]
- the Gothic glazed bay window with leaded lights to 5 Cecily Hill; [114]
- the dog statue that adorns the Kennels; [115]
- ball finials on the gable copings of the kennel lodges, and
- the carved oriel window to 38 Cecily Hill [116]



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3.8 Public Realm

Floorscape in the conservation area consists predominantly of black tarmac to most public highways including:

- Cecily Hill and adjacent pavements and car park to the barracks,
- the raised pavement to old Tetbury Road,
- the principle Rides in the Park such as Broad Ride and Windsor Walk.

Some hoggin [compacted crushed stone and clay] and gravel are to be found in the more informal footpaths and semi-private areas of the Park and provide informal domestic parking areas within the Park Conservation Area.

In the early part of the twenty-first century, improvements to the public realm were made in the vicinity of the Park Conservation Area; these run from opposite the former railway station at the north end of Castle Street via Park Lane and just into the entrance of Park Street including the curvilinear section in front of the Park gates and the yew hedge. The improvements include:

- new tarmac road of a subtle purple colour
- long Pennant kerb setts
- York stone flags to pavements with uplighters set within the pavement around the Mansion wall;
- A section of paving in front of the Mansion gates consisting of a resin with a rolled-in aggregate;
- Low level metal bollards and new signposts.

The work is generally considered to be of excellent quality combining a simple palette of materials and a subtlety in design and detailing. In contrast, the floorscape to Cecily Hill and to parts of the raised walk along the old Tetbury Road is poor and detracts from the character and appearance of the Park Conservation Area. There is little in the way of historic floorscape other than the limestone block paving which runs along the inner courtyard side of the stables in Park Street together with the adjacent mounting block, and a small section of traditional block paving can be found on the roadside adjacent the stables [117-118].



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Lighting in the Park Conservation Area is mostly provided by modern lighting columns but in Cecily Hill there are four reproduction standard lantern lights and the aforementioned pavement uplighters around the gated entrance to the Mansion.



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The use of ironwork, often in combination with limestone walls and ashlar stone piers, forms an important feature within the conservation area.



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The wrought iron gates and screen at the entrance to the Park at the top of Cecily Hill are a most impressive piece of street furniture and are listed Grade II in their own right [122-23]. There is also an elegant metal bench affixed to the raised path along Tetbury Road which is of architectural and historic interest [125]. Name signs attached to walls are mainly traditional enamelled metal which adds a further historic element to the public realm.

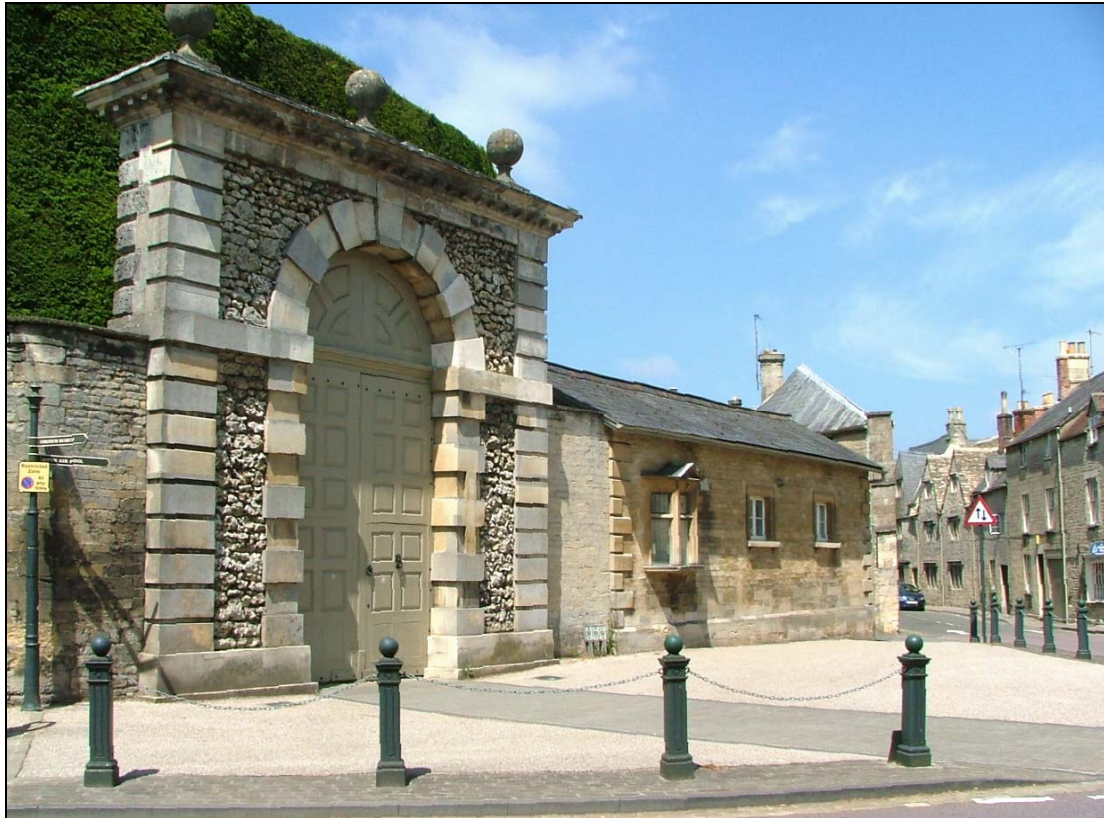


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The junction of Park Lane, Park Street and Silver Street contains a number of elements of street furniture [126]. The gated entrance to the Mansion is built of uncoursed rubblestone with rusticated ashlar quoins and a moulded cornice surmounted by three ball finials. It is flanked by the impressively high yew hedge, said to be over 40ft high [over 12 metres]. Together these features provide a unique focal point and serve to completely screen the Mansion from public view.



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Modern cast iron bollards located to the forecourt of this entrance serve to prevent vehicles from mounting the curb and are relatively inconspicuous.

3.9 Trees and Biodiversity

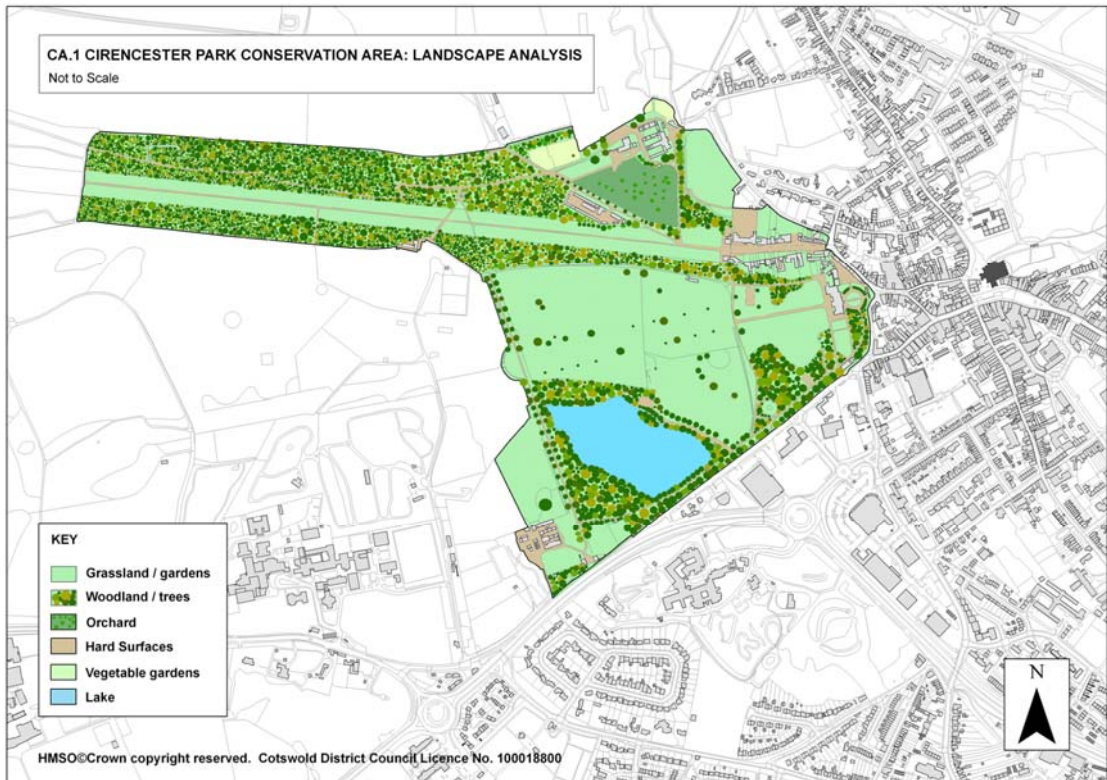
Cirencester Park supports a wide diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats. The woodland, lake and stream habitats that fall within the Park Conservation Area are of particular significance; however they fall outside the currently designated Key Wildlife Site [Cirencester Park Woods]. These habitats are likely to support a number of protected and priority species [i.e. species within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan], for example bats, water voles etc.

Structural tree planting forms the backbone of the designed landscape of the park. The tree belts serve to define spaces and lead the eye to landscape features and other focal points. Cedar trees, used singly as specimens in open grassland or grouped in groves, are a distinguishing feature of the Park. Horse Chestnuts are used to line the Broad Ride and lime is used as avenue planting on Windsor Walk to great effect [127]. Native yew is used extensively in the form of groves and hedging including the famous gateway on Park Lane and behind the park wall on the old Tetbury Road.

Map N overleaf shows the main landscape features of the Park Conservation Area.



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Map O