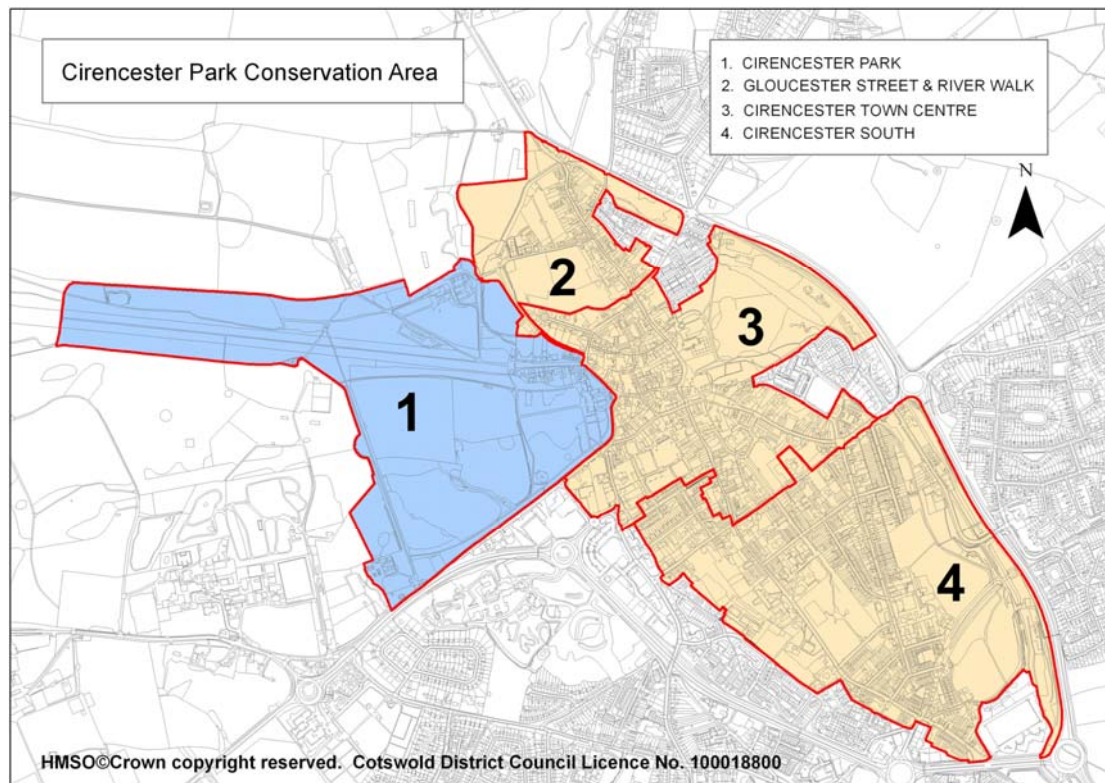


3.0 THE PARK CONSERVATION AREA

3.1 Location & Setting

The Park Conservation Area stands at the north-west edge of Cirencester town centre and to the west of the remaining three conservation areas in the town. Its eastern edge borders Park Street and Park Lane which separate it from the medieval core of the town. The Park sits in gently undulating ground with a subtle rise from east to west, most noticeable at Cecily Hill, whose fairly gentle gradient contrasts with the almost universally flat thoroughfares in the rest of Cirencester.



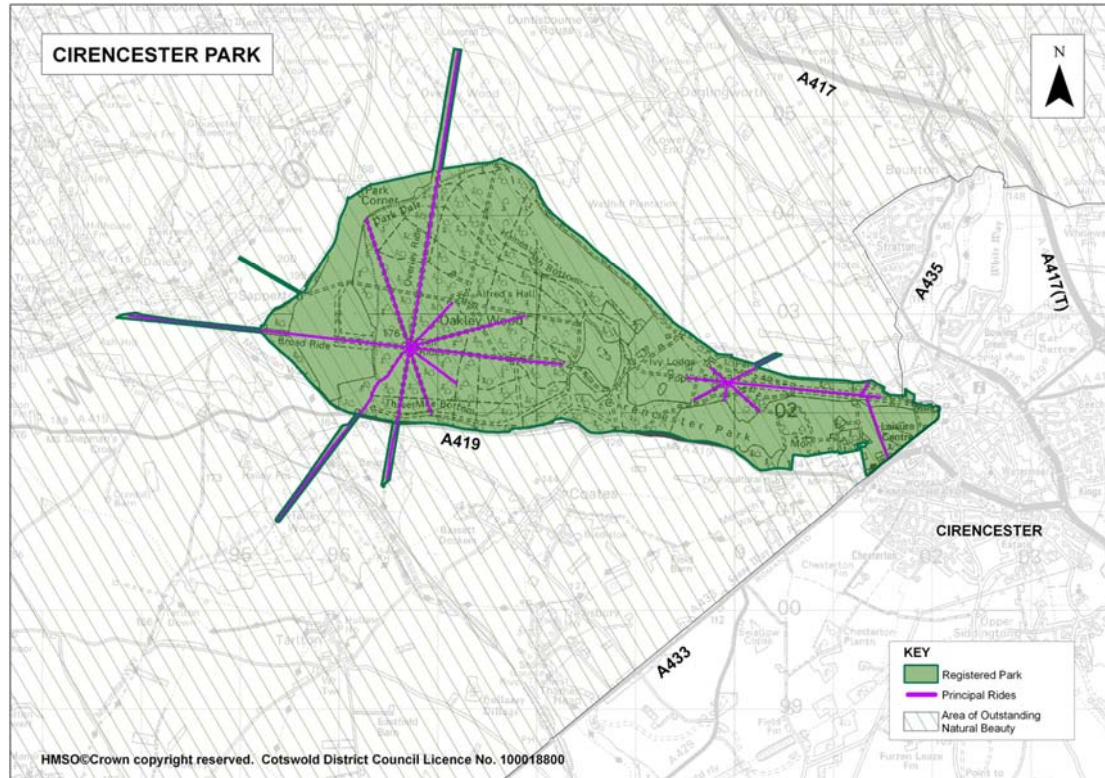
Map I

3.2 Additional Policy Considerations:

The Park Conservation Area includes part of Cirencester Park which is also recognised as a historic landscape of national importance by its inclusion in *The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest* compiled by English Heritage.

Whilst inclusion on the *Register* in itself brings no additional statutory controls, registration is a material consideration in planning terms [*Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Para 2.24, 1994*]. This means that following the submission of an application for development which would affect a registered park or garden, local planning authorities must, when determining whether or not to grant permission, take into account the historic interest of the site.

Registered in 2000, Cirencester Park is a Grade I site, recognising it as one of the most important 10% of all registered parks and gardens. As a Grade I Registered Park, Cotswold District Council is also required to consult English Heritage and the Garden History Society when considering applications affecting the Park.



Map J

That part of the Conservation Area that lies within Cirencester Park also lies with the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty [AONB], a national designation which seeks to protect the most sensitive landscapes in the country. *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* introduced a statutory duty for local and other relevant authorities. When exercising any functions in relation to land in, or affecting an AONB, Cotswold District Council is required to have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the designated area. *Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* – acknowledges that, along with National Parks, AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

3.3 Boundaries of the Park Conservation Area

The Park Conservation Area includes a relatively small part of the Park at its east end where it forms an essential part of the historic setting of the town.

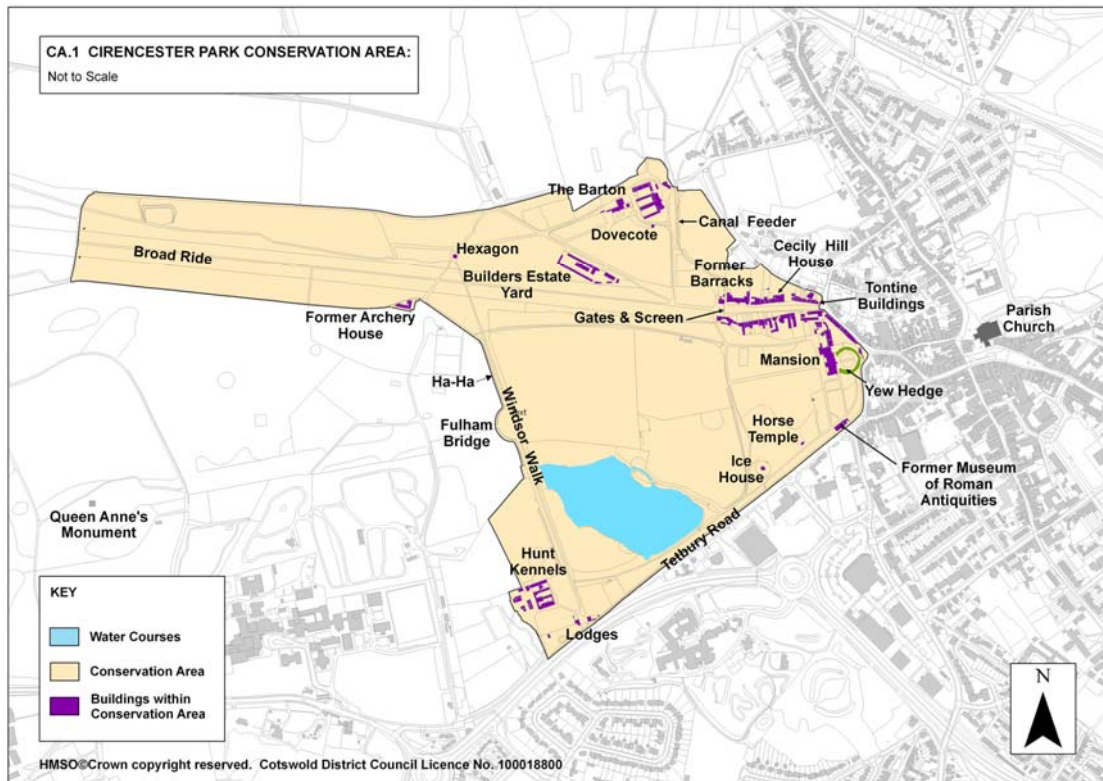
The Conservation Area takes in the whole of Cecily Hill where the boundary on its north side follows that of rear gardens which back onto the River Walk as far west as the public outdoor pool from where it follows the line of a former canal feeder, now a minor stream to take in the farmstead known as the Barton and its ancillary agricultural buildings.

From here the boundary is marked by the northern edge of a pathway in the Park which lines the edge of the mature bank of trees running north of the Broad Ride which runs east-west. The westernmost section of the Conservation Area takes in the Broad Ride with its bank of trees on both north and south sides as far west as the north-south path marked by two rusticated pillars and a change in the management regime beyond.

The boundary then follows the southern side of the pathway on an east-west axis taking in the former Archery House now used as a sports pavilion. The boundary continues westwards to include the parkland railings and follows the south side of the path until it reaches the ditch marking the stone-walled ha-ha. The west side of the ditch and ha-ha mark the boundary along Windsor Walk which leads to the former hunt kennels facing the old Tetbury Road and the lodges and gates forming the access.

The southern boundary of the Park Conservation Area is marked by the lower edge of the raised walkway [including the grass verge and steps and ramps where they occur] which continues past the former Museum of Roman Antiquities [now used as an office] and in front of the Mansion at the east end marked by the yew hedge and tall rusticated gates and small lodge.

The boundary finishes where it meets Cecily Hill following the outer edge of the slim and incomplete path alongside the stable block in Park Lane.



Map K

3.4 Historic Development of the Park Conservation Area

The major part of the Park Conservation Area lies within Cirencester Park which was created by Allen, first Earl of Bathurst [1684-1775] and Tory MP for Cirencester, from c.1714. The estate has been in the Bathurst family since its purchase in 1695 by Allen's father, Sir Benjamin Bathurst. The core of the estate has remained fundamentally unchanged over the years although ownership is now in two parts. Approximately 3,000 acres is in the ownership of Lord Bathurst, the eighth Earl, and the remainder held in Trust and managed on behalf of succeeding generations.

Cirencester Park is immense in scale covering over 1,000 acres extending westwards from the Mansion for some 8km [5 miles] towards the village of Sapperton. It is bounded to the south by the A419, to the west by a minor road from the A419 to Winstone, and on the other sides by agricultural land. A 1.5 to 3 metre high, mostly drystone wall extends around much of the park and there are two main approaches to it from the east end; one public and one private:

- East of the Mansion, a semi-circular eighteenth century courtyard is enclosed by an early- to mid-eighteenth-century curved wall [listed Grade II*] to the east around a vast, three-quarter circle yew hedge. A gateway [also listed Grade II*] from Park Lane passes through the centre of the wall and hedge;
- The main entrance from the town leads west through high wrought-iron gates and railings [77], understood to have been brought from Carshalton in Surrey and erected in 1856 [listed Grade II]; they were altered in the nineteenth century and stand between two large mid-nineteenth-century stone lodges [78].



77



78

From the gates, the principle axis within the Park, the Broad Ride, extends westwards in a straight line to the village of Sapperton.

The Park consists of extensive woodland with park and private pleasure grounds, also built by the first Earl c.1714-c.1718 [listed Grade II], located west and south of the Mansion comprising the Italian Garden and the Temple Garden, each with eighteenth-century garden buildings.



79



80

The first Earl Bathurst, later Lord Bathurst, inherited Oakley Grove with its Elizabethan house and estate grounds in 1704. In 1716, he bought a large area to the west and contiguous with his own property, from Sir Robert Atkyns, Gloucestershire's first and eminent historian. It comprised Oakley Wood and the manor of Sapperton, where on the east slope of the valley and close to the parish church, stood a picturesque Tudor manor house, the home of the Atkyns family, which Bathurst demolished.

Allen Bathurst then set about landscaping the conjoined areas to form Cirencester Park. He did so in collaboration with his friend the great English poet, Alexander Pope [1688-1744], who was a frequent visitor. The Park is known as an early and fine example of "rural and extensive gardening" advocated by the influential writer and garden designer Stephen Switzer [c1682-1745]. Pope was also a key figure associated with the eighteenth century Enlightenment; Bathurst and Pope were both Tories and members of the Kit-Cat Club, a secret political association whose most prominent member was the English architect Sir John Vanbrugh [1664? – 1726] and who is perhaps best known as the designer of Blenheim Palace in Woodstock, Oxfordshire [1705-1722].

The Park was designed with deer hunting in mind and is mainly wooded to the north and west with mature beech and other deciduous and coniferous species; it is more open to the south-west. It was conceived at a time when geometric avenues, influenced by Continental examples such as that at Versailles, were starting to be considered old-fashioned and when the concept of naturalism, a more informal approach, was being developed. Cirencester Park combines both the formal geometric designs of previous designed parks characterised by radiating avenues extending in straight lines between principal viewpoints, and the naturalistic elements of later designs incorporating irregularly shaped woods and glades and occasional serpentine paths.

Southwest of the pleasure grounds, within the private grounds of the Mansion, is a tree-lined lake [c.5 hectares] dug by Lord Bathurst in c1736. It is one of the earliest irregular pieces of water in the history of English gardening and

fits perfectly with the notion of the “amiable simplicity of unadorned nature” so admired by Pope.

The first Earl had a long life; he died in 1775 aged 91 years, and his designs were little influenced by changes in fashion over his lifetime. The Park was as yet unfinished and it was his successor who was responsible for the creation and planting out of the easternmost mile or so of the Broad Walk, now contained within the Park Conservation Area. Later Lord Bathursts too, particularly Henry, the third Earl, continued planting to the original grand design well into the nineteenth century and succeeding generations have renewed the scheme to the present day.

There are several intersections along the Broad Ride [or Broad Avenue], the first being a seating enclosure known as the Hexagon, and occasionally and erroneously as the Octagon. Some 700 metres northwest of the Mansion, the Hexagon faces Windsor Walk which runs southwards, with a stone-faced ha-ha to its west, bounding the grounds of the Mansion.

Approximately 2km further west along the Broad Ride, near the Polo Ground, is the Seven Rides marked by Pope’s Seat [listed Grade II* and named in honour of Alexander Pope] and a further 3.5km west is Ten Rides set deep in the west part of Oakley Wood.

Pope’s Seat [82] and the Hexagon [81] are just two of several garden buildings designed by the first Lord Bathurst. The latter lies within the Park Conservation Area and dates from c.1736; it is listed Grade II*. On Rudder’s plan of 1779 the Hexagon appears at the meeting place of three rides and three smaller walks and then enjoyed views of the Horse Temple [now moved] and Hartley’s Temple [now removed]. The two arches to the left and right were possibly blocked when the Broad Ride was extended eastwards past the Hexagon after 1779.

Other garden buildings to be found beyond the confines of the Conservation Area include the Horseguards, a pair of pavilions of late eighteenth-century date. Bathurst also designed several Gothic-inspired folly buildings in the Park, some of the earliest in the country, including the Square Tower, the Round Tower, Ivy Lodge and Alfred’s Hall of 1732.



81



82

Originally, the former Elm Avenue [now Windsor Walk] was the principal vista on a line extending west from the church tower through the centre of The Mansion and terminating at Queen Anne's Monument [83], erected in 1714. The monument was erected to the Tory heroine and comprises a Roman Doric column some 50 feet [15 metres] high, crowned with a larger than life-size statue of the queen.

The lake was another first; whilst most Georgian country gentleman's estates would contain a formal water feature, in c1736 Bathurst created a lake that was irregular in shape and made to look as natural as possible. This was a complete departure and even pre-dated the large serpentine lake at Stourhead in Wiltshire certainly not begun before 1741.



83

Cirencester House, at the east end of the Park, was also built and designed by the first Earl Bathurst from c1714 to c1718, in a restrained classical style. Over the years it has been variously known as Apsley House – a family name originating from the marriage of the first Earl with his cousin Catherine Apsley – and also Cirencester House; today it is usually referred to as the Mansion, Cirencester. The original house on the site – Oakley Grove - was built for Sir John Danvers in the late sixteenth century. The first Earl substantially rebuilt the Elizabethan house to totally new designs of his own making.



84



85

Henry, the third Earl later employed the architect Robert Smirke in 1810-11 to add the present north wing and demolish the west porch; Smirke was probably also responsible for the rebuilding of the east front in 1830 and for the stable block to the north of the Mansion. It has been suggested¹ that a Castle stood where the Mansion now stands, at the west end of Castle Street which would have joined the castle to Market Place in medieval times. The site lies between the two principal Roman entrances to the town from the west and at the junction of the Roman rampart. If the Castle was sited here, the motte would have stood at the southern side beside the Fosse Way where the present Tetbury Road is now found.

¹ Slater [1976]



86



87

Until 1818 Cecily Hill was the principal turnpike road leaving the town for Stroud via Park Corner. The Bathursts diverted the route and the line from what is today the old Tetbury Road to Sapperton was adopted, skirting the southern edge of the Park [89].



88

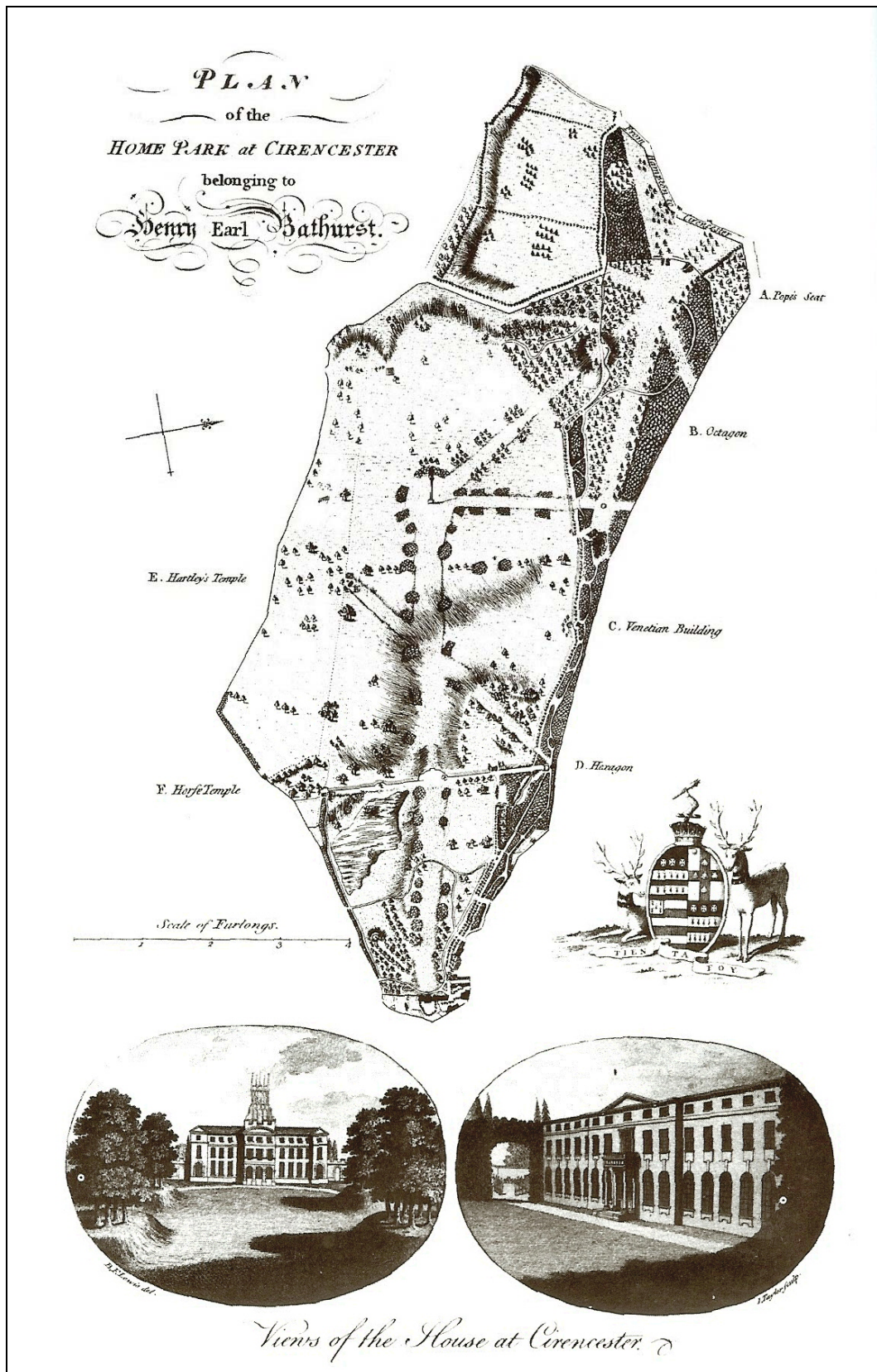


89

A chapel dedicated to St Cecilia may be the origin of the name Cecily Hill. The chapel is thought to have been sited where No.7 now stands [90]; it had its own burial ground and was in use in the fifteenth century but is known to have been demolished by c1540.



90



Cirencester Park and Mansion from Atkyns' "A History of Gloucestershire", of 1799 shows the present Mansion and the estate prior to extension northwards to include the present Broad Walk.