

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Development

Draft Entry Hill, Perrymead and Prior Park Character Appraisal Bath Conservation Area

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Somerset Council



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1. Introduction and description of the Character Area

General description and form

This document is a character appraisal for the Entry Hill, Perrymead and Prior Park Character Area of Bath Conservation Area.

The Character Area is large and irregular. It forms a roughly crescent-shaped area around the south side of the city of Bath, stretching from Bathwick Hill in the east to Sladebrook in the west. In terms of distance, it is between half and one mile across, north to south. From east to west it is approximately two miles in length as the crow flies, depending where it is measured. A crescent shaped route from the eastern extremity (the fields below Bathwick Hill) via Rainbow Woods, North Road, Perrymead, the top of Wellsway, Bloomfield Crescent to the western extremity near Stirlingale Farm covers roughly three and a half to four miles.

The Character Area includes the slopes south of Bathwick Hill, Widcombe and Prior Park, Perrymead and Lyncombe Vale, Entry Hill and Wellsway, the slopes around Bloomfield Road to the north of Englishcombe Lane, as far west as Sladebrook. The playing fields between Englishcombe Lane and Moorlands Junior and Infants Schools are also included. The following general characterisation will deal with each of these areas in turn.

a. Bathwick Slopes and Smallcombe

From the back gardens of the early 19th century development on Bathwick Hill open fields drop steeply to the narrow valley of Smallcombe, with its hidden cemetery established in 1855-6 to serve the tightly confined church of St Mary Bathwick. Above to the east the hilltop is crowned by Smallcombe Wood which curtains the valley from the University of Bath campus on the open plateau of Claverton Down. The western boundary of this sub-area is formed by the housing of Sydney Buildings (c.1825 and later), the interwar semi-detached pairs of Horseshoe Walk and large early 20th century villas around The Tynning.

b. Widcombe and Prior Park

Widcombe is an ancient village sitting roughly south-east of the city centre. Widcombe Hill to the north and Ralph Allen Drive to the south frame the steep and largely wooded valley dominated by Prior Park, the magnificent Palladian mansion designed by John Wood the Elder for his patron Ralph Allen and built c. 1733-50. To the south and east of the house the high ground is shaded by belts of deciduous woodland including fine beech trees, and affords some of the most magnificent views of the city and the Lansdown plateau beyond. Other significant houses surviving in the vicinity include Widcombe Manor and Crowe Hall, both sited near the village church of Widcombe.

c. Perrymead and Lyncombe Vale

Lyncombe Vale and Perrymead are part of the ancient and much larger manor of Lyncombe and Widcombe, and are sited directly south of the City centre, screened from the city by Lyncombe Hill topped by Beechen Cliff school and Alexandra Park, both outside this Character Area. The boundary runs from Prior Park

Road west along Rosemount Lane and Greenway Lane, with the steep valley of Lyncombe Vale to their south, formed by the action of the stream called the Lyn brook which flows along the valley bottom. Amidst later development some large Georgian houses survive from the time when a small spa and pleasure gardens briefly flourished here. At the south side, the lane called Perrymead climbs the steep valley side with open fields and deciduous woodland screening the area from the high plateau of Combe Down beyond. The housing stock is well spread out and interspersed by trees and gardens, giving the area a secluded and semi-rural character.

d. Entry Hill and Wellsway to Bloomfield Road

The eastern boundary of this sub-area is Entry Hill, the ancient route from Bath to South Stoke which climbs south from Bear Flat to reach the plateau between Odd Down and Combe Down. Wellsway and Bloomfield Road fan out to the west from the same start point, taking similar routes up the hillside. Housing here forms ribbons along the major roads and is mainly of the late 19th or 20th century. Between Entry Hill and Wellsway a fold in the hillside (formed by the Lyn brook running north from its spring) forms a green open space which is now a nine-hole golf course. The triangle of open ground west of Wellsway towards Bloomfield Road is known as The Tumps. Woodland occupies the steeply sloping northward end. The flatter green space to the south adjacent to Odd Down playing fields is now occupied by a BMX cycle track. At the crest of Bloomfield Road is Bloomfield Crescent, a modest ensemble of the 1790s, indicating how pressure on housing in the city spawned attempted developments in adjacent rural areas. The southern boundary of this sub-area runs south of Bloomfield Park and St Luke's church; the housing here is largely c. 1870 to 1910, an example of the characteristic expansion of Bath with mid-sized detached and semi-detached villas to form desirable leafy suburbs.

e. Englishcombe Lane and Sladebrook

The final sub-area forming the Entry Hill, Perrymead and Prior Park Character Area is that to the west of Bloomfield Road, incorporating the open space westward to Stirlingale Farm and Corston View playing fields. From here the western boundary of the Character Area is formed by the outskirts of South Down, mainly housing of the 1950s to 1970s. From the junction with Stirlingale Road, the Character Area boundary largely follows Englishcombe Lane with its fringe of early 20th century housing, briefly stepping north to include the recreation ground and playing fields between Moorlands Schools and Englishcombe Lane. Then it follows Bloomfield Park and St. Luke's Road back to the junction with Wellsway.

Entry Hill, Perrymead and Prior Park Character Area and the World Heritage Site

Core values and significances of Bath:

- Bath is a World Heritage Site, the only entire city in Britain to be so designated
- It is not a museum but a living city
- It has a remarkable degree of visual homogeneity
- Authenticity of the Site is of the essence; its preservation and enhancement are key criteria for all development
- Its complex and delicate hierarchy of interrelated urban

spaces, landscape and architecture could be easily disrupted by overbearing or misinformed development and by the accumulation of harm.

Bath was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1987. The designation describes the city as “a masterpiece of human creative genius whose protection must be the concern of all”.

The World Heritage Site designation was awarded for its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) with six attributes:

1. Roman archaeology

Many of the City's Roman remains are centred around the Roman Baths. These include the archaeological remains of the Roman temple of the Goddess Sulis Minerva and the extensive bathing complex. The Roman town of Aquae Sulis was a walled settlement. Beyond the city wall are Roman and Iron Age remains including hill forts, field systems and villas, demonstrating the extent of the settlement. The road system and Roman street plan influenced the Medieval and Georgian layout.

2. Hot springs

Bath's hot springs are the only ones in Britain, producing 250,000 gallons of water every day. There are three main springs - the King's Spring, the Hetling Spring and the Cross Bath Spring. They have been central to every stage of the city's development, creating a unique social history and culture where the waters are central to healing and recreation.

3. 18th century architecture

Neo-classical architectural style dominates in Bath. Architects including John Wood the Elder, John Wood the Younger, Robert Adam, Thomas Baldwin, John Palmer, John Eveleigh and John Pinch followed Palladian principles to build houses, public buildings, bridges and churches. The Georgian arrangements of crescents, squares, The Circus and terraces form iconic, internationally recognisable structures. The widespread use of local limestone and the uniform scale and height of buildings contribute to Bath's beauty today.

4. 18th century town planning

In the 18th century Bath was re-invented as a fashionable health resort, expanding dramatically beyond its city walls. Medieval streets were transformed into a spacious and beautiful classical city, where architecture and the natural landscape complemented each other. Uniformity of design was enhanced with the universal use of honey-coloured Bath limestone. Innovative forms of town planning including squares, crescents and the circus were introduced. Attractive views and vistas were deliberately created. Bath's Georgian town planning influenced subsequent developments in the UK and beyond.

5. Green setting

The City of Bath lies within a hollow of the hills. There are green views in every direction from the city centre. The countryside stretches right to Bath's doorstep. The hilly, green landscape was exploited by Bath's 18th century architects and developers, who created elegant terraces and villas on the slopes. The hills to the south of the city provided the oolitic limestone from which the city was built. Trees

and woodlands populate the skyline, and lend natural beauty to the river, canal, parks and gardens. Open agricultural land on the edge of Bath is still used for grazing animals, just as it was by the Georgians.

6. Social setting

Bath's Georgian architecture reflected 18th century social ambitions. The city was a destination for pilgrimage, and for playing out the social aspirations of fashionable spa culture. The social, economic and physical re-birth of the city as an internationally famous spa resort was largely due to three key characters: the architect John Wood the Elder, wealthy postmaster and stone entrepreneur Ralph Allen and Bath's famous Master of Ceremonies Richard 'Beau' Nash. Visitors flocked to Bath. The list of famous and influential people who visited, lived in or wrote about the city is extensive. Customs and practices associated with 'taking the waters' were practiced and developed here. The fashion for promenading influenced the design of Bath streets and gardens. The rules and etiquette governing polite society were embodied in buildings such as the Assembly Rooms and Pump Rooms.

How does this Character Area contribute to the World Heritage Site?

1. Contribution to Roman archaeology

The Character Area has yielded up several Roman burials, particularly around Widcombe and north of Englishcombe Lane, probably indicating roadside cemeteries. Minor occupation sites existed near the upper reaches of Wellsway, to the west of the former Ministry of Defence site at Foxhill and at Smallcombe. Given the existence of the Fosseway which cut around the western boundary of the Character Area en-route from the South West to Aquae Sulis, it is likely that much more remains to be discovered.

2. Contribution to hot springs - None

3. Contribution to 18th century architecture

The most prominent building in this Character Area is Prior Park, the Palladian mansion designed by John Wood the Elder for Ralph Allen partly as an advertisement for the merits of Bath's golden limestone as a building material. The house and its landscape including the famous Palladian bridge form one of Bath's most accomplished set pieces of Georgian architecture, drawing on Wood's own ideas of the iconography of Bath, and alluding to various Antique Classical and Renaissance sources such as theatre design.

A scattering of large gentry houses was established on these slopes in the 18th century; for example, Widcombe Manor, Crowe Hall, Lyncombe House, Bloomfield House and Westfield House. These illustrate the ambition of wealthy Bathonians to live in discreet yet ostentatious fashionability just beyond the city, within reach of Bath's high society yet able to withdraw from it when desired. Occasional minor ensembles such as Bloomfield Crescent demonstrate the desire and ability of Bath's growing middle class to emulate those fashions from the late 18th century. The fashion for revived Gothic residences is exemplified by survivals such as The Cloisters, Perrymead.

4. Contribution to 18th century town planning

While this area makes no direct contribution to the town planning of 18th century Bath, its early 19th century history demonstrates the continuing influence of the city on its immediate surrounds and the transition from tightly packed urban terraces to a more relaxed ideal of 'rus in urbe'. The early 19th century taste for the Picturesque landscape exploited the virtues of informal and asymmetrical architecture half hidden among verdant treed slopes and vales. Whether the chosen architectural language was Tuscan-Italianate, Grecian or Gothic, the obscure and semi-rural landscapes of Smallcombe, Widcombe and Lyncombe were particularly well suited to this suburban ideal.

5. Contribution to green setting

The transformation of this Character Area from a mainly agricultural landscape to one of discreet residential seclusion was motivated initially by Bath's extraordinary growth as a spa attracting the cream of polite British society during the 18th century. Areas such as Widcombe and Lyncombe witnessed the development of a scattering of large houses, many probably rented by the season to upper-class spa visitors. Ralph Allen's Prior Park is the finest 18th century landscape associated with Bath, created under the influence of Alexander Pope's ideas and later extended by Capability Brown.

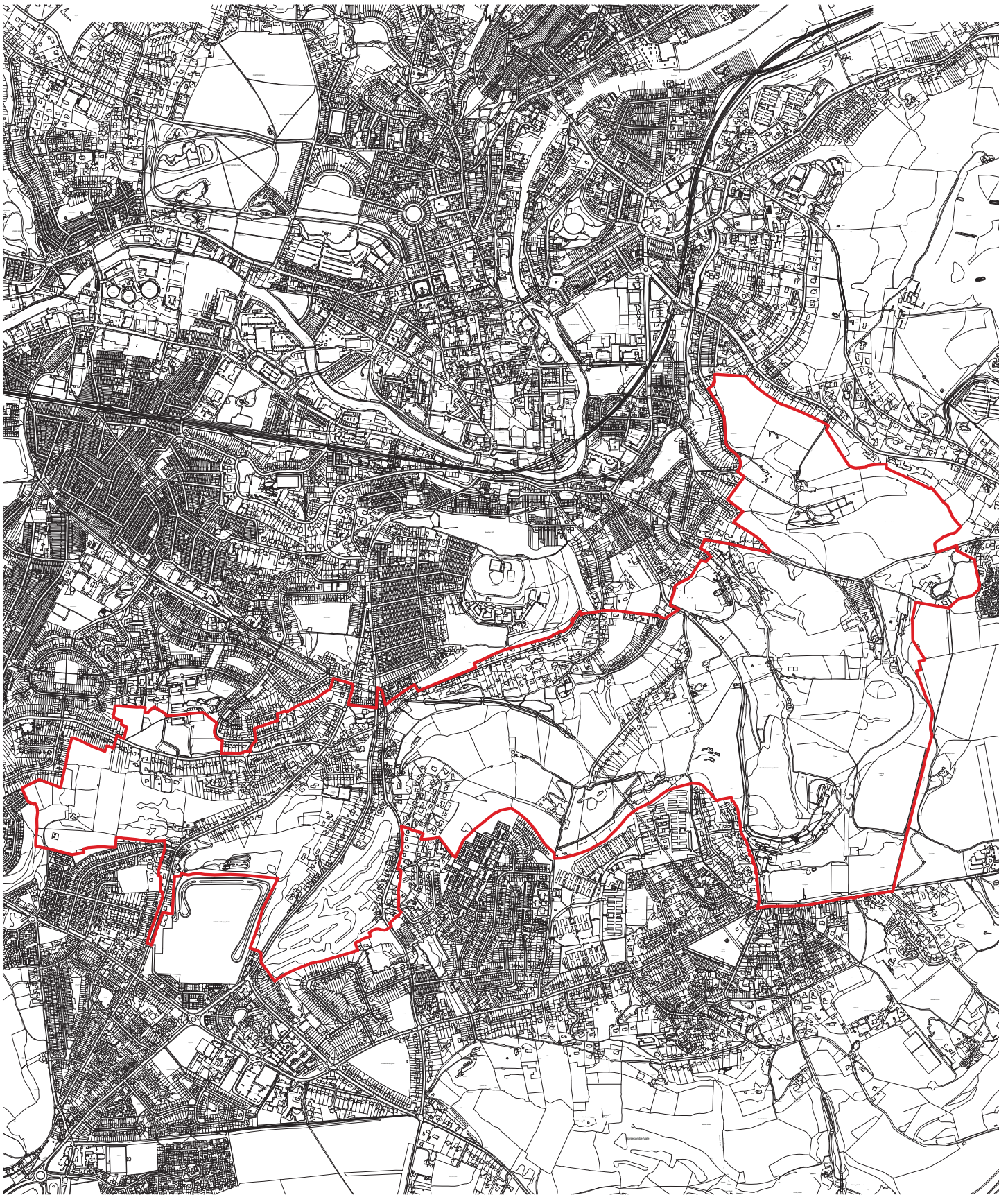
Bath's spa heyday passed after c. 1800 and the city achieved a more stable demographic character, without the seasonal migrations it had experienced in the 18th century. Lyncombe and Widcombe consolidated its popularity as the site of permanent residence by a well-to-do upper middle class. Its green character, defined by wooded glades with more open terrain above, was well suited to the early 19th century Picturesque taste (see 4 above), and that character has been partly maintained despite 20th century infill.

Views between the city centre and the Entry Hill, Perrymead and Prior Park Character Area make a vital contribution to the city's green setting, with glimpses and broader panoramas available from many parts of Bath. In particular Ralph Allen intended Prior Park to be seen from key points around the city, for instance the broad frontal view of the mansion in its steep valley as seen from Camden Crescent.

The preservation of open spaces here contributes significantly to Bath's green setting. Smallcombe Woods (which with the cemetery below is maintained by the National Trust) is Bath's only surviving ancient oak woodland, at least 400 years old.

6. Contribution to social setting

The area's hilly topography, its seclusion and yet its closeness to Bath, all ensured that Widcombe and Lyncombe in particular became desirable residential areas. The airy slopes well above the low-lying smoky city were thought to be health-giving. Among many important residents Ralph Allen must be first, and he attracted visitors of national significance such as Alexander Pope. In the 1730s Lyncombe Vale briefly became the home to a small cold water spa (now Lyncombe House), and pleasure gardens existed nearby, such as that known as Bagatelle at the foot of Ralph Allen Drive. Thus in the mid-18th century Lyncombe was the destination for afternoon and evening excursions for fashionable visitors to Bath. In the late 1820s Prior Park was bought by Bishop Peter Baines as a centre for Roman Catholicism in the west of England, associating the College with the development of English Catholicism in the years after the Emancipation Act of 1829.



Entry Hill, Perrymead and Prior Park
Character Area Map

2. Summary of key characteristics



- The Character Area has a common topographical character, being set upon the south-eastern quadrant of the ring of hilltops that surrounds the city of Bath. The ground broadly rises from north to south culminating in a series of open hilltops fringed with trees, adjacent to Claverton Down and Combe Down.
- The Character Area is crossed north to south by a series of roads radiating south and south-east from the city: Widcombe Hill, Ralph Allen Drive, Entry Hill, Wellsway and Bloomfield Road. Some are of Roman, Saxon or later Medieval origin (e.g. Widcombe Hill, Entry Hill); others such as Wellsway (completed by 1810) were improvements by the Turnpike trusts.
- Within this setting a series of folds and steep-sided combs create secluded enclaves such as Smallcombe, Widcombe, Prior Park, Lyncombe Vale, Perrymead and Entry Hill. These became favoured sites for large residences, for example Crowe Hall, Widcombe Manor, Lyncombe Hall, Lyncombe House, The Cloisters and Fersfield, the latter both in Perrymead.
- Prior Park remained undeveloped meadow and woodland, shaped by its history as a medieval deer park for Bath Priory, later the Abbey. The dispersed lands were purchased incrementally by Ralph Allen c. 1728-60, and an impressive Palladian mansion with a frontage of nearly 1000 feet was built high on the hillside c. 1733-50. Now a school, it faces north down a steep combe with views to and from the City of Bath. The fine 18th century landscaped grounds are open to the public under the National Trust.
- On a core of pre-Georgian scattered gentry houses and farms, Georgian villas and lodging houses were developed, mainly at the select and secluded eastern end of the Character Area around Widcombe village and Lyncombe Vale, the latter briefly a minor spa attraction c. 1740-80. The high open ground at the west end of the Character Area remained more agricultural, with occasional small-scale quarrying activity.
- On this framework came increasingly intensive residential development after 1800, although the housing is never densely packed and always tempered by open spaces. There are few public facilities other than the churches and three mid-19th century cemeteries, and few shops; it occupied a semi-open space between other more urban or suburban districts.



3. Historic development

Physical influences: geology, landform and drainage pattern

The Character Area is arrayed across the south-eastern quadrant of the hills encircling Bath. In general it slopes upwards from north to south. The ground rises to a height of 159.5 metres (523 feet) at the top of Ralph Allen Drive. The total level change is approximately 112 m. The slopes are in places very steep, e.g. south of Greenway Lane.

The drainage pattern is generally from the south draining into the River Avon to the north. Springs arising along Bath's southern slopes have formed combs in the hillside and run northward around Lyncombe Hill. A spring in the grounds of Oakwood House (in Bathwick Character Area) contributes with others to become the Smallcombe Brook, eventually discharging into the Kennet and Avon Canal near Abbey View Lock. The Lyn brook rises near the top of Entry Hill golf course, draining down that valley and then running east along Lyncombe Vale. Small springs in Prior Park gardens feed the ponds at the foot of the valley before joining the Lyn brook to run alongside Prior Park Road and behind Claverton Street into a culvert from which they join the Avon.

Historical influences

Prehistoric remains are scant; they include a proposed Iron Age enclosure or camp at The Tumps between Wellsway and Bloomfield Road, flint finds (a flint chipping floor is known just east of the Character Area on Claverton Down) and possible stock enclosures near Rainbow Wood.

Roman history:

The Character Area is crossed from north to south by several roads of ancient origin, including some known or suggested to be Roman. The principal one was the Fosse Way from Exeter passing through Bath to Lincoln. Its exact route to the south of Bath has been much debated, with various crossing points of the River Avon proposed. A favoured suggestion is that the river crossing lay roughly south of Marlborough Buildings and continued southward along the line of Brougham Hayes, and thence via the parish boundary of Lyncombe and Widcombe, touching the western boundary of this Character Area west of Stirlingale Farm.

A subsidiary road may have skirted the west side of Beechen Cliff to follow the line of Bloomfield Road, joining the Fosse Way at Odd Down, although this is supported by fairly scant archaeological evidence. The presence of burials on Englishcombe Lane implies a road somewhere nearby. Wellsway south of its junction with Entry Hill, marked on OS maps as a Roman road, is in fact a turnpike road completed by 1810 to bypass the steep ascent of Bloomfield Road. Large sections of Roman masonry were unearthed around the junction of Wellsway and Midford Road, implying a building there of some size.

The Roman road from Bathwick to Poole Harbour followed quite closely the line of Ralph Allen Drive up to the Combe Down plateau where stone was being quarried, pushing south past a villa site (near Belmont Road, Combe Down) towards Midford.

Burial sites include a cinerary urn at Widcombe Hill House, a coffinless burial in Smallcombe Vale, and a series of burials suggesting a significant cemetery ranged along the south side of Englishcombe Lane near the junction with Bloomfield Park.

Saxon history:

The Character Area lies mostly within the 19th century parish of Lyncombe and Widcombe, the boundaries of which coincide very closely with the Saxon manor of Cliftune (in modern English, Clifton). Cliftune was named from Beechen Cliff which lay at its northern boundary, with the manorial site below the cliff on or near Holloway. In 970 AD, King Edgar, who was crowned at Bath Abbey in 973, granted to the Abbey 10 hides at Cliftune in exchange for 100 gold coins and 10 hides at Cumtona (probably Compton Dando). A 12th-century copy survives at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. A charter includes a description of the bounds of the manor: the River Avon to the north, Widcombe Hill to the east, Monkton Combe and Combe Down to the south, and to the west a line from Odd Down north to Brougham Hayes, possibly following the Roman Fosse Way for part or all of that distance.

Widcombe Hill (at least up as far as the junction with Macaulay Buildings) is probably synonymous with Aethelburgh's Way named as a boundary in the charter of 970. It was probably named after Queen Aethelburgh, wife of King Ine who ruled the west Saxons 689-726.

It has been proposed (but also questioned) that the Saxon West Wansdyke earthwork followed the line of North Road east of the junction with Ralph Allen Drive. It is considered to be an early post-Roman feature, possibly being used after the battle of Dyrham (577) to mark the boundary between Romano-British Celts and West Saxons. The earthwork ran from the outskirts of Bath to the hill fort of Maes Knoll south of Bristol. A Saxon cross known as 'Tunne's Treow' (town's cross) stood at the top of Ralph Allen Drive, marking one of the manorial boundary points. Later also known as St. Gregory's Cross, it had disappeared by the 18th century.

Later Medieval history:

By the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086 the name of the manor had changed from Cliftune to Lincuma (Lyncombe), presumably because the manorial centre had moved from Holloway to Lyncombe Vale. In the later medieval period the estate became known as the Manor of Lyncombe and Widcombe. There were three medieval centres of occupation: Holloway, outside the Character Area; Widcombe village; and Berewick (or Berewyke or Berwick), an outer settlement with its own church or chapel, lying near the site of St Martin's Hospital and the upper reaches of Wellsway.

In the thirteenth century the de Berewyke family held a "free tenement" here with grazing rights in parts of Lyncombe; this probably refers to Berewyke farm (later corrupted to Barrack Farm).¹ The last survival of the lost settlement, the farm was cut in two by the construction of Wellsway completed by 1810, and the farmhouse (a probably 17th century rebuilding) was finally demolished only in the early 1970s. Berewick's long settlement history is borne out by discoveries made in 1955 during gas main laying on Wellsway. Between the farmhouse and the junction of Wellsway with Midford Road were found evidence of long occupation and much Roman and Medieval masonry.

¹ Alan Keevil, *Wellsway and the former Barrack Farm*, Survey of Bath and District, vol.3, June 1995.

John of Tours, Bishop of Bath from 1090 to 1122, created a deer park on the hilltop south-east of the city at Claverton Down.² It stretched in an elongated oval of about 1.4 miles, from a point just west of Ralph Allen Drive to the eastern curve of Claverton Down Road near the junction with Brassknocker Hill. Parts of the Norman boundary banks and walls survive, notably alongside Hanginglands Lane (colloquially called Pope's Walk) at the boundary of the former Foxhill MOD site. In 1223 the park was divided in two, the eastern part staying with the Bishopric while the western part went to the Prior of Bath, the origin of the name Prior Park. Leland mentions the two parks in 1540. The rest of the Character Area was almost entirely agricultural land with isolated quarries and farms, some of which continued in post-Medieval times: Stirlingale Farm existed by the 16th century and may have earlier roots.

A Norman chapel was founded at Widcombe and dedicated to Thomas Becket, sometime after his murder in 1170. At this time the Priory (later Bath Abbey) would have provided a chaplain. It became a chapel appendant to the lost church of St. Mary de Stalls at some point before 1263, in which year the Bishop granted both churches to the Priory with the Prior as Rector. After a dispute the Bishop confirmed in 1322 that the Vicar of St. Mary de Stalls 'shall find a chaplain to celebrate divine service in the chapel of Widcombe and there to dwell'. It is speculated that the Georgian garden building south of the church had been the site of a priest's house. In 1490-8 the church was rebuilt by Prior Cantlow. In 1539 the Priory was dissolved. The core of modern-day Widcombe was by then established around the church.

Throughout the medieval period the manorial centre of Lyncombe and Widcombe was Lyncombe Farm, now the site of Lyncombe Hall on Lyncombe Vale Road. As the manor was owned by Bath Abbey, the farm was never a manor house in the sense of being the lord of the manor's family house.

16th and 17th century history:

After the Dissolution of Bath Abbey in 1539 Henry VII granted the manor of Lyncombe and Widcombe to John, Lord Russell, who alienated it to the Bisse family. By the early 17th century it was owned by Hugh Sexey. After his death in 1619 the estate was overseen by his executors who in 1638 founded Sexey's Hospital school in Bruton, Somerset under the terms of his will. By the end of the 17th century the former Sexey lands had been sold off but fee farm rents were payable annually to Bruton Hospital, some of which were in force up until the Second World War. The parsonage of Lyncombe and Widcombe was by the 17th century at the house now called Rosemount at the west end of Rosemount Lane.

Lyncombe Hall on Lyncombe Vale Road has been identified as the site of Lyncombe Farm, the manorial centre and probably successor to a medieval grange of Bath Priory. The house was probably built in Tudor times, but the present building appears to originate from the late 17th century, with an extra storey added in the early 18th century, and later modifications. It was occupied from the early 17th century by the Chapman family who later owned Widcombe Manor (see below). Barrack Farm (near Wellsway) was rebuilt in the later 17th century and it is likely that significant numbers of now lost buildings were likewise enlarged or rebuilt as gentry houses, reflecting Bath's significant prosperity from the wool trade before the Georgian spa expansion. Widcombe Manor was built c. 1670-90 for Scarborough Chapman, and remodelled c. 1726-7 for his grandson (see below).

2 Payne, Naomi, *The Residences of the Medieval Bishops of Bath and Wells*, MA dissertation, University of Bristol, 1999.



18th century history:

Lyncombe Vale was briefly a minor spa following Charles Milsom's discovery in 1737 of springs containing iron. An attempt was made to establish the small spa but the building erected over it reportedly collapsed. In 1742 Lyncombe House (now the Paragon School, Lyncombe Vale Road) was built as lodgings for spa visitors, with gardens surrounding the spring. William Hillary (1697-1763), a doctor from Ripon, published *An Enquiry into the Contents and Medicinal Virtues of Lincomb Spa Water near Bath* (1742).

An anonymous diarist described a walk to Lyncombe Spa on September 7th, 1743:

"In the afternoon went to Lincomb about a mile out. It has a very steep hill to Assend to it, there is one Large House to Lodge in & a few near it, it is famous for a well of Water in high Repute hear Say'd to be as good as the German Spaw water but will not keep. I think it tastes as the water of Islington wells, the House is Incloses [inclosed] by other High Hills which makes it very Rural and there is abundance of Springs of water Esewing [issuing] out of these & allmost all the Hills round about Bath."³



After 1767 it continued as a spa under David Kinneir but was also used as an isolation house for patients inoculated against smallpox. It was sold as a private house in 1785. Opposite Lyncombe House on the south-facing slope of Lyncombe Vale was built another house (now called The Court). In the late 1770s a tailor called Charles Waters opened the gardens to the public as a pleasure ground with refreshments and entertainment, known as King James's Palace. The title seems to derive from a tradition that King James II and his consort Mary of Modena stayed at Lyncombe Vale during her treatment at Bath in 1687. Robert Chapman the elder, apothecary, of Lyncombe Hall (then Lyncombe Farm) is said to have attended the royal family which may explain the visit. As late as Whit Monday 1793 the proprietor of King James's Palace, Richard Tanner, was advertising illuminations and music at King James's Palace with refreshments including ham, fowl and good wines, for the ticket price of 1 shilling.⁴ The Pleasure Grounds closed later the same year as a result of the bank crash, although the gardens were well maintained through much of the 19th century and some of the original layout seems to survive.



The medieval centre of Widcombe village around the church is included in this Character Area but most of Widcombe Hill towards the river is not. 18th century development in Lyncombe and Widcombe was intertwined closely with the development of Prior Park (see below) and accelerated by the widening of the Old Bridge over the Avon in 1754.



The most significant house seems to have been Widcombe Manor. It was never a manorial centre, being called Widcombe House in the late 19th century but Widcombe Manor on 1920s maps. The present house is believed to have been built c.1670-90 for Scarborough Chapman and refronted in its present form for his grandson Philip Bennett II, c. 1726-7. The Baroque style façade may be by Nathaniel Ireson of Wincanton. It must have been regarded as up to date; John Wood's promotion of the Palladian style began to impact upon Bath after 1728 when Queen Square was begun. Widcombe Manor had elaborate gardens in the early 18th century, including a steep mount with spiral path leading up to a Chinese pavilion.

3 Diary of an Unknown Traveller, 1743. Bristol Ref. Library [quoted by Fawcett, 1995].

4 Bath Chronicle, May 16, 1793.

Crowe Hall sits above and north-east of Widcombe church. A house was depicted here on Thorpe's map A Survey of Bath and Five Miles Round of 1742, but the present large Neoclassical house was probably built c. 1780 for Brigadier Crowe, owner from the 1770s. It was bought c.1805 by the Tugwell family who altered it significantly and sold it only in 1919. A major rebuilding after a fire in 1926 (by architects Axford & Smith) muddies the evidence for the original build. Its fine gardens command glimpsed views across the combe towards Bath.

Prior Park

At the Dissolution in 1539 Bath Priory surrendered its lands, including Prior's Park, to the Crown. By 1542 it was 'witheout dere' (Leland's Itinerary). In 1543 Prior's Park was sold to Humphrey Colles and by him almost immediately to Matthew Colthurst who died in 1559. Colthurst's son Edmund granted the park to Robert Webb and Edward Langeford in 1582. At this time its sub-division began. The pre-18th century history has been published in some detail.⁵ In 1592 no house seems to have existed though it is possible that the Lodge (demolished 1953) near Rainbow Wood originated as a late medieval or Tudor hunting lodge. After many complex subdivisions the park was owned in the 1720s by three families; Collet, Marchant and Poole. By 1676 the Collett family had acquired the north end of the park including Park House, sited at the south end of Church Lane near the later site of the fishponds. Thomas Poole built a new house c. 1711-20 on or near the (later) west wing of Ralph Allen's mansion.

Ralph Allen first acquired parts of the park from the Pooles in 1728, and possibly moved into Poole's new house shortly after. This area, roughly the south-western third of the final park, included the land on which he was quickly to construct the drive to his projected mansion and the tramway from his Combe Down stone quarries (later Ralph Allen Drive). Further acquisitions in 1743, 1751 and c. 1760 finally reunited almost all the lands which had comprised Prior's Park in the 16th century.

Allen engaged the architect John Wood the Elder (1704-54) to design him a palatial house in the newly fashionable Palladian style sited high on the valley slope above Widcombe; Pevsner called it 'a composition in the Grand Manner, the most ambitious and the most complete recreation of Palladio's villas on English soil'.⁶ The site was chosen because it commanded views to and from the city, and Allen intended that his house should be proof of the suitability of his Bath stone for the highest quality work, visible from many points across Bath. Construction began c. 1733 and was complete by 1750, although Wood had fallen out with Allen and later work was supervised by Richard Jones, Allen's quarry master and clerk of works. Ralph Allen moved into the house in 1741.

The grounds were landscaped in three phases: c. 1733-44, with advice from the poet Alexander Pope who visited several times; in 1744 the garden was extended downhill to include the area of the ponds; and in 1764 shortly before Allen's death, by Capability Brown who remodelled some Rococo features and smoothed out the lawns. The most notable garden structure to survive is the fine Palladian Bridge (1755) over the lakes, by Richard Jones after a design of Palladio. A grotto and small serpentine pond with a Classical bridge partly survive at the west of the mansion. Allen planted extensive belts of conifer and deciduous woodland forming drives and walks on the hilltops around the mansion and to the west between Combe Down and Perrymead. The Priory (on the high ground north-east of

5 John Hawkes, Prior's Park from the Dissolution to Ralph Allen, The Survey of Bath and District, 10, October 1998, pp. 17-19

6 N. Pevsner, Buildings of England; North Somerset and Bristol, 1958, p. 114.



the mansion) is perhaps the most significant of the other 18th century structures; a Gothic revival cottage of c. 1740 said to have been built for Ralph Allen's gardener. This is now disputed since Ralph Allen did not purchase this parcel of land until 1751. In the sale catalogue of July 1828 it was the estate steward's house.

At that time there was already a substantial gothic building called The Lodge on the high fields near Rainbow Wood. Possibly based on a medieval hunting lodge, it was triangular with an attached circular tower which was a prominent landmark. Richard Jones noted in his Memoirs that Allen's heir Mrs. Warburton 'caused to be pulled down one of the neatest gothic piles of buildings which stood in the Lodge field which Mr. Allen took a great deal of notice of to all gentlemen that came, – to shew it – from it was an exceedingly fine prospect into Wales and Wiltshire and Somersetshire'. It was not in fact entirely demolished; the tower was retained but by the late 19th century it was in a dangerous state and was finally demolished in 1953. Lodge Field, known locally as 'Monny' [Monument] Field, is now a school sports ground and the views from it obscured by trees.



After Allen's death in 1764 and that of his wife in 1766, Prior Park went to Allen's niece Gertrude Tucker, married to William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester. She auctioned the contents in 1769 and let the house, returning to live there after her first husband's death in 1779. At Gertrude's death in 1796 the estate passed to her son-in-law, the Hon. Cornwallis Maude, by then Baron de Montalt and 1st Viscount Hawarden, who never lived there and let it to tenants. For the later history of Prior Park, see the 19th century, below.

With one or two exceptions the remainder of the Character Area was open agricultural land in the late 18th century. Isolated and small-scale quarrying was carried on, for example, at the top of Entry Hill (now a Council depot), on the Tumps above Wellsway and perhaps alongside the upper reaches of Bloomfield Road, where 19th century cottages have been built against the quarry faces. Bloomfield Crescent (originally called Cottage Crescent) was built c. 1793-5 at the crest of Bloomfield Road.⁷ The backs are towards the road and the fronts face north onto private gardens with no road, commanding magnificent views of Bath. The developer was John Hensley, who may have provided his own design or used an architect, perhaps John Eveleigh or John Pinch. It expressed the new fashion for dramatically sited buildings exploiting the topography of Bath's outskirts.



On the lower reaches of Bloomfield Road (still the main route to Wells before Wellsway was constructed c. 1810) two large houses were built around the same time. Westfield House was built after 1787 and before 1799 when it appears on J. Charlton's map of Lyncombe and Widcombe. It is a large Neoclassical gentry originally five bays wide, extended at the south west end in similar style. It was occupied by a wealthy brewer, Opie Smith (c. 1752-1837) who probably had it built. Westfield Cottage is reported to have begun as a garden building attached to Westfield House, built around 1800 converted to a dwelling c. 1809 for James Smith, probably Opie Smith's son. This pattern of residence by a well-to-do mercantile and professional middle-class was reinforced by 19th century developments, and mirrors the general Bath trend after c. 1800 towards permanent residence and genteel retirement.



⁷ Unpublished research (2015) by Kirsten Elliott. The usual given date (c. 1801-3) is incorrect. Two houses were complete by 1793, the centre house (No. 5) occupied by 1795. There is no evidence for Harcourt Masters as architect. <https://tinyurl.com/y829zk59>

19th century history:

At the very start of the 19th century the housing development around the junction of Bloomfield Road and Englishcombe Lane intensified somewhat, spurred perhaps by the construction c. 1787-99 of Devonshire Buildings off Bear Flat (outside this Character Area). Nine occupants there paid a poor rate in 1796. Devonshire Cottage at the junction of Wellsway and Hatfield Road was built on a field called Lower Ashes in 1799 for Thomas Jones, a prominent Baptist (datestone and initials on the house), a large cottage ornée in a fashionable mildly Gothic style. It was seemingly let soon after, perhaps because of the construction by 1810 of Wellsway, the new turnpike route to Odd Down and on to Wells. Jones returned by 1820. Bloomfield House (junction of Bloomfield Road and Englishcombe Lane) was built in 1800-1 for John Grose, a Captain retired from the Bengal civil service; he remained there until his death in 1831. The architect may have been Thomas Baldwin. Hatfield Place, Bloomfield Road, an attached pair of three-storey houses of unequal width, was built c. 1803-6, with Bloomfield Place a little below it around the same date. Also depending from the construction of Wellsway is Devonshire Terrace, perhaps c. 1810, a short late-Georgian terrace of four with ramped cornices in the style of John Pinch.

Lyncombe Hill and its surrounds were in the same period being developed as an outer suburb of the city; being in sight of the city they had a more urban character than the old village of Widcombe, which was nevertheless also much redeveloped with polite late-Georgian housing. The upper reaches of Widcombe Hill remained open unlike neighbouring Bathwick Hill, however c. 1825-30 Macaulay Buildings, an isolated terrace with a short row of villas, were built high on the hillside to take advantage of the breathtaking views. Thomas Macaulay Cruttwell (1776-1848) had bought the site in 1819. Cruttwell was an attorney and the son of Richard Cruttwell, printer and owner of the Bath Chronicle from 1769. He built for himself The Cloisters, Perrymead after c. 1806 and before 1823 when it was known as Perrymead Cottage.⁸ Another cottage ornée in the Gothic style, it had an arcaded veranda wrapped around two sides and its own small lodge house. By 1840 it was named Perrymead Lodge and was advertised for sale as Perrymead Lodge after Cruttwell's death. It was renamed The Cloisters by Edward Harwood who purchased it in 1850; Harwood's arms are over the arched gateway, the whole of which may be an addition of that date.

The Cloisters began the development of Perrymead, the secluded hillside facing Lyncombe Vale, as a select retreat of private villas amidst large gardens and woodland. Nearby Perrymead Court and Perrymead House arrived shortly after. Higher on the hillside and hidden by trees lies Fersfield. There was a house known as Woodlands on the site by 1852 (Cotterell's map of Bath), later rebuilt or enlarged and ornamented with half-timbering and a prominent turret.

Three cemeteries were established in Lyncombe and Widcombe in the mid-19th century. First was Abbey Cemetery near the foot of Ralph Allen Drive, providing a new burial ground for Bath Abbey. The landscape design was by John Claudius Loudon and the Romanesque chapel was by the City architect G.P. Mannors. The land was purchased by the rector for more than £3000, and the cemetery opened in 1844. The cemetery layout by the important landscape theorist and designer John Claudius Loudon is one of only three he designed outside London and the only one to remain close to his original conception. Adjoining but higher up to the south Perrymead Roman Catholic cemetery was opened in 1856, the first burial

⁸ Bath Archive, lease and release 0032/4/4, dated 4/5 April 1823.



taking place on September 2nd.⁹ One objection to its construction was received from Edward Harwood of The Cloisters but this was disallowed as he lived more than 120 yards from the site.¹⁰ The Gothic chapel was designed by William Hill in 1859, and the more elaborate Eyre Chantry by Charles Hansom is c. 1860. Smallcombe Cemetery, hidden in its narrow valley off Horseshoe Walk, was required for the church of St Mary the Virgin, Bathwick which had no churchyard space around it. Smallcombe has a mortuary chapel of 1855-6 (by Thomas Fuller) and a more inventive octagonal chapel for Nonconformists of c. 1860-1, by Alfred Goodridge.

Entry Hill viaduct was built by the Bath Turnpike Trust to ease the route over the Lyn brook, perhaps as early as 1707 or c. 1721, though the first certain evidence seems to be a print depicting the viaduct of 1839.¹¹ The land around was part of Lower Barracks Farm (following the farm's bisection by Wellsway c. 1810. In 1827-9 six acres of Lower Barracks Farm near Entry Hill were sold to Charles Davis (1769-1849), a Bath painter.¹² His son was the architect Edward Davis (1802-52), who designed the nearby group of Tudor Revival villas on Entry Hill Drive between 1829 and 1836, a speculation by the solicitor Richard Else. At the part of Barrack Farm west of Wellsway, Welborne Cottages were built c. 1820-35 (on stylistic evidence). The footprint of these and surrounding outbuildings form three sides of a rectangle, a survival of the farm's Upper Barton or farmyard.

Prior Park in the 19th century and after

By 1808 the Prior Park estate had descended to the 3rd Viscount Hawarden. He sold it in 1809 to John Thomas (c.1752-1827), a Bristol grocer and a Quaker, seemingly for £28,000. Thomas sold off much timber from the estate to recoup his outlay. After Thomas's death the mansion and grounds were bought for £22,000 in 1829 by Bishop Baines who planned to use it as a theological seminary and a centre of Roman Catholic activity in the south west of England. He heightened and enlarged the East wing as a lay college and converted the West wing into a seminary (architect H.E. Goodridge, 1834). J.J. Scoles added the large church of St. Paul, 1844. In 1834 Goodridge added a flight of steps to the North portico. The house was gutted by fire in 1836, causing damage of c. £12-15,000. The interior was refitted with salvaged materials from Hunstrete House near Marksbury. Baines's project was over-ambitious and after his death in 1843 the college had few students and was deeply in debt. It finally closed in 1856. It became a private Roman Catholic boys' boarding school in 1895, run by Christian Brothers. It continues as school despite a closure (1904-21) and changes of administration. The Brothers left in 1981. It is now co-educational. The school handed most of the 18th century landscape park to the National Trust in 1993 and it is now open to the public.

Later 19th century:

The Somerset and Dorset Railway extension to Evercreech was constructed in 1871-4 at a cost of c. £400,000, linking Bath with Poole and Bournemouth. From Green Park Station the line ran west and then curved tightly back on itself to run through Oldfield Park. Near the bottom of Bloomfield Road the line entered the Devonshire tunnel, 447 yards (c. 409 metres) long. It emerged briefly into Lyncombe Vale for about 650 yards (600 metres) before entering the 1829 yard

9 Burial registers for Perrymead are at the Presbytery, St John's the Evangelist, South Parade.

10 Bath Chronicle, Thursday July 3 1856, p.8.

11 Bath in Time, Central Library Collection, V4 / 5 IOB 165.

12 A.J Keevil, *Barrack(s) Farm Wellsway, Bath*; The Estate and its Holders, Bath History, vol.8, (200), p.43.

(1672 metre) Combe Down Tunnel to emerge in the Midford valley. The route was reopened in 2013 as the Two Tunnels Greenway, a walking and cycle path costing £1.8m. No. 131 Wellsway was built c. 1871 as the Engineer's office for the project. It was sold in December 1874 at completion of the line for £307.10.0 and converted to a bungalow dwelling by Charles Keel, a local gardener.¹³

Evidence of Victorian working-class housing or industrial buildings is rare in the Character Area. On the plateau at the top of Bloomfield Road are a range of mid- and late 19th century cottages and small houses with their gardens in some cases set into quarry workings. They accommodated the quarrymen who worked the series of small quarries here and on the Tumps to the east, where the old field names Pitts and Upper Pitts are evidence of a long history of stone quarrying.

The later Victorian and Edwardian era saw suburban infill typified by housing around St Luke's Road and the lower reaches of Wellsway. In 1904 an electric tram route was opened between the city centre and Combe Down, via Wellsway, Midford Road and Bradford Road. This made the upper reaches of the hilly terrain more accessible and encouraged house building along and near its route in the early 20th century. At Bloomfield Park six houses were complete by 1894 and the rest after a second land sale in 1902, the arrival of the tramline being advertised as an incentive to buyers. St Luke's church, consecrated in 1867, was enlarged significantly in 1912-13 to accommodate this new influx of residents. The upper reaches of Widcombe Hill saw the arrival around 1880-1900 of a few large houses, often in a vaguely Old English Revival style, such as Rainbow Wood House (1897) and Fairstowe (off Macaulay Buildings and Prospect Place respectively). They are well set back amid treed grounds. Less grand but desirable housing was added, for example, in Lyncombe Vale where a stream alongside the road lent a rural air to the row of substantial villas opposite. Early 20th century infill along Greenway Lane and Rosemount Lane retained their semi-rural feel with villas and bungalows of Bath stone. The most striking Edwardian additions are on Englishcombe Lane, where Nos. 33 – 71 (all seemingly c. 1912-14) present a comfortable array of Old English timbered gables, corner windows, lacy Art Nouveau iron balconies, broad mullions and battered gate piers. The architect may have been Mowbray A. Green.

In 1921 the former carriage drive to Prior Park was still gated at the Lower Lodge near the entrance to Abbey Cemetery. In that year the City bought the drive which was widened using unemployed labour and the gates removed. The new public road to Combe Down was opened in 1922 as Ralph Allen Drive.¹⁴ The interwar years saw the building of semi-detached housing and bungalows along main roads such as Wellsway, Bloomfield Road and even on odd pockets of land in Lyncombe Vale. There were few public facilities other than the churches and cemeteries, and few shops; it occupied a semi-open space between other more urban or suburban districts.

The Character Area suffered relatively minor bomb damage during the Second World War, and activity since has been mainly about further infill of housing, e.g. on the slopes above and east of Entry Hill, where generous detached houses sprang up in the 1960s. In 1969 the City Council began tipping pulverised waste on the steeply sloping land of the former Lower Barrack Farm between Entry Hill and Wellsway, eventually raising the valley surface by between 20 and 40 feet to allow for a nine-hole golf course. After top soil was overlaid, the Entry Hill Golf Course was opened in April 1984.

¹³ Research by the owner, 2014. <http://bearflathistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/A-History-of-131-Wellsway.pdf>

¹⁴ Bath City Guide, 1923.

4. Cultural influences

Leisure

The development of this Character Area was partly about the quest for a secluded idyll close to the city. Excursions to the gardens associated with Lyncombe Spa involved taking tea, playing cards and socialising while listening to music. Similar activities must have taken place privately in the gardens of Prior Park, mirrored on smaller scale at Widcombe Manor, The Cloisters and other smaller villas in the area. The open hilly terrain here has always encouraged the use of the area for brisk walks in the fresh air.

Sporting achievement

Recent local sporting activities are exemplified by the golf course established at Entry Hill in the 1980s and a number of playing fields, e.g. off Bloomfield Drive, Moorlands Schools, The Tumps at Odd Down, and at Prior Park school. The former Somerset & Dorset Railway line has been transformed into the Two Tunnels Greenway, a shared cycling and walking route opened in 2013. These typify the ways in which the emphasis on sport, exercise, health and wellbeing have shaped the landscape in the suburban surrounds of city centres where space is still available for such ventures.

Industry and transport

The Character Area has been significantly shaped by the presence of high quality Bath stone at Combe Down and nearby. Ralph Allen's purchase of much of this land from the late 1720s and his decision to promote and market the stone for Bath's great Georgian expansion led to the creation of his highly visible mansion and estate at Prior Park. Much wealth was also generated for local people through ongoing stone quarrying activity throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Ralph Allen Drive was both the access route to Prior Park mansion and the route of the tramway to bring stone from Combe Down to the river wharf at Widcombe. Otherwise there has been no heavy industrial activity in what was always a predominantly agricultural landscape. Turnpike roads were important here, with Bath Turnpike Trust active from 1707, among the earliest in the country. Entry Hill, Widcombe Hill and Bloomfield Road were turnpiked, and Wells Way, a completely new turnpike road, was completed by 1810 to ease the steeper routes to Odd Down. Victorian Bloomfield and Lyncombe were shaped too by the cutting of the Evercreech extension to the Somerset and Dorset railway in 1871-4.

5. Archaeology

This Character Area includes the following main areas of archaeological significance highlighted below. They tend to be marked by chance discoveries of Roman burials and coins made over the past 200 years or by the existence of known medieval settlements such as Widcombe, Lyncombe and Berwick but with limited archaeological evidence. However, this list is not exhaustive, and archaeological remains may be encountered almost anywhere.

Englishcombe Lane:

Roman burials found over a number of years, notably in the gardens. Indicative of a roadside cemetery, possibly indicating that a major route south from Roman Bath ran nearby.

Prior Park Road:

Roman burials found indicating possible line of a Roman road that may be one of the main Roman southern routes out of Bath. Prior Park Road was also the line of a Ralph Allen tramway giving access from Combe Down stone mines to the wharves of the River Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal. There are a number of original Allen buildings in this area.

Widcombe:

Medieval settlement of Widcombe mentioned in various documents. The church of St. Thomas-a-Becket dates back to c.1422AD and may have replaced an earlier chapel. The origins of the settlement are obscure but it may have formed part of a large land holding originating in a grant made by King Edgar in 970AD. The majority of buildings here now date to the 18th century. Widcombe Manor and Crowe Hall are two of the finest.

Lyncombe:

Medieval settlement of Lyncombe mentioned in various documents and probably forms part of the same land holding mentioned above originating in a grant made by King Edgar in 970AD. Archaeology associated with Lyncombe Spa and King James's Palace is also likely to survive.

Parts of the Character Area not covered specifically by the locations above may contain archaeological sites including isolated prehistoric and Roman finds, the sites of quarries, medieval farms and numerous Georgian buildings. Without doubt significant archaeology remains to be discovered.

6. Landmarks and views

See map, Annex 1

Landmarks

- Prior Park House and its landscape, especially the famous Palladian Bridge
- Giant gate piers and urns at the top of Ralph Allen Drive
- Widcombe Church
- Widcombe Manor house
- Bloomfield Crescent (visible from many areas of Bath)
- Macaulay Buildings, off Widcombe Hill. A prominent row of houses perched alone on a very steep hillside.

Views

From Bathwick Fields (National Trust meadow land south of Bathwick Hill) there are extensive views from the north-west round to the south-west. These views take in most of the city centre, prominently featuring Bath Abbey, the Empire Hotel, St John's Roman Catholic church with its tall spire, the Railway Station, the spire of St Michael's Broad Street, The Paragon and Camden. Also visible are Beechen Cliff with the slopes around Lyncombe Hill, and beyond the Western Riverside, Twerton and Whiteway, Weston and the treed horizon towards Lansdown.

Widcombe Hill:

In the 18th century Widcombe Hill provided, and still does today, some of the best panoramic views to the west and north of the city seen from the east. Georgian buildings are seen in the context of the surrounding hills and the green River Avon valley. It provides many views of the Georgian city within the hollow of the surrounding hills; in



particular there are views of The Circus, Royal Crescent, Lansdown Crescent, Camden Crescent and the Abbey. Lansdown ridge, is also visible from here. Distant views include those west along the River Avon valley towards Kelston Park, Kelston Roundhill, the hills above Corston and very distant views of ridges west of Bristol. Also there are views north to Lansdown and Beckford's Tower, the woodland below Lansdown Crescent, Royal Victoria Park, the Approach Golf Course and Locksbrook Cemetery, Fairfield Park, Swainswick and Solsbury Hill.

From the upper slopes of Widcombe Hill and Prospect Road there are near views west towards Perrymead, the lower slopes of Widcombe and the Lyncombe Vale terraces, Abbey Cemetery, Alexandra Park and allotments and Beechen Cliff woodland; near view of St Matthew's Church (Widcombe), Churchill Bridge with the riverside warehouses, Kingsmead housing, Western Riverside and gas holders and post 19th century housing to the west of city; Snow Hill housing and terraces below Beacon Hill in the middle distance. The garden of Crowe Hall affords views across to the southern slope of Lyncombe Hill and the trees of Alexandra Park, as well as glimpses to the treed skyline around Prior Park and Perrymead.

Prior Park:

From the front steps of Prior Park mansion there is a spectacular view down the open grassland valley enclosed by trees on the side slopes framing views to Bath. The landscape garden itself, partly created by Capability Brown, acts as a foreground to the ponds at the foot of the valley, crossed by the Palladian Bridge. Beyond in the near to middle distance is Crowe Hall. Views may be had across the city centre towards the Lansdown ridge. In the middle distance there are views to Upper Common (Approach Golf Course), Kelston Roundhill, Lansdown Hill and Beacon Hill. In the distance the hills above Charlcombe and Charmy Down can be seen. Built features visible include St. Stephen's Church, Crowe Hall, St. Thomas a Becket at Widcombe, Beckford's Tower, Royal Crescent, Lansdown Crescent, Camden Crescent, Lower and Upper Camden Place, Prospect Place, Snow Hill housing, and the terraces of Camden and Larkhall. Parts of the above views may be seen at even greater height from the upper walks along the east side of the valley above the house. These are signed as part of the National Trust landscape.

Perrymead :

Perrymead as an area offers limited but important views within the Character Area. Perrymead (the lane) and the fields around Honeysuckle Farm afford views north towards Lyncombe Vale, Lyncombe Hill, and glimpses east to Widcombe Hill and the Claverton Down skyline.

Entry Hill :

The upper slope affords views north towards Lyncombe Hill, and glimpses of the city beyond. From Wellsway, the hillside east of Entry Hill and parts of the Entry Hill golf course are visible. At the lower end of Wellsway there are glimpsed views north-east to the University on the skyline, and lower down, views beyond Bear Flat to the city skyline, Lansdown Crescent and St Stephen's church.

The Tumps, Bloomfield Road and Englishcombe Lane :

Variations of the same set of views may be had at different heights, glimpsed between houses (e.g. on Bloomfield Road), between trees (on the Tumps), or in full (e.g. the open prospects from Englishcombe

Lane).

Near Bloomfield Crescent the road offers views to Claverton Down and the University buildings, with Widcombe Hill, Macaulay Buildings and parts of Lyncombe Hill below. Between the houses may be seen the Poets Corner avenues with Bathampton Down radio mast and the wooded eastern hilltops beyond. Glimpsed between the houses here are panoramic views to the east and north, including Solsbury Hill, Fairfield Park, Camden, Lansdown and Royal Crescent, Western Riverside, Lansdown Ridge and Beckford's Tower with Oldfield Park in the foreground. The Moorlands school playing fields on Englishcombe Lane affords similar directional views but from a lower viewpoint with the post-war Moorlands estate in the foreground. Unusually the west end of Bloomfield Park affords glimpses of Bloomfield Crescent perched high above.

Sladebrook Playing Fields, off Corston View:

From this westernmost point in the Character Area, the ridge above Stirlingale Farm offers fine views from Charmy Down, Bailbrook and Solsbury Hill in the east, parts of Camden, Lansdown (Kingswood School, St Stephen's church, Lansdown Crescent, Somerset Place, Cavendish Crescent), through Royal Crescent, High Common, Western riverside, Lower Weston and Locksbrook Cemetery, Weston, Beckford's Tower, Royal United Hospital, Oldfield Park and St Alphege, Newbridge, to Kelston and parts of Southdown in the west.

Views into the Character Area

In general the appearance of the Character Area consists of green slopes rising from combs and small folds in the valley side; the slopes are dotted throughout with housing, its roofs and chimneys only partly revealed amidst areas of trees, hedging and greenery. Some areas of denser housing exist but even here gardens and open spaces between the streets form an important visual element in distant views.

Views towards Prior Park mansion and its valley setting are available from many points on the northern slopes of the city – including from the high ground at Camden and Beacon Hill, the Approach Golf Course and Cavendish Road, from various viewpoints around the Recreation Ground, river banks and from the gaps between the terraces of Great Pulteney Street, and from Royal Victoria Park.

Because of the topography few distant views are available into the Widcombe and Lyncombe areas from the city centre. Alexandra Park on Lyncombe Hill affords views of much of the Character Area from closer quarters, including Bathwick Hill and its meadows, Widcombe Hill as far as Macaulay Buildings, Crowe Hall and parts of Widcombe, Greenway Lane, Perrymead, Foxhill and parts of Wellsway.

The western end of the Character Area (Sladebrook, Bloomfield, The Tumps and Englishcombe Lane) are visible from numerous points in the city centre and the northern slopes, especially from Kelston, Lansdown Ridge and Beckford's Tower, Weston, Newbridge, Royal Crescent, and Camden etc.



7. Land uses and their influence

Much of the Character Area's boundaries are defined by Roman roads or Saxon land boundaries defined by royal charter in 970 AD. Its history as an agriculturally based manor remains visible in the open pasture and woodland threaded through later housing at many points, with a few working farms surviving as late as the mid-20th century. The Medieval creation of a large deer park and its later partial acquisition by the Priors of Bath predicated the later creation of Ralph Allen's large country house estate still called Prior Park. The discovery of medicinal springs at Lyncombe Vale led to a brief period of fashionable spa activity c. 1740-80 which cemented the area's reputation as a fashionable and exclusive place of residence with a well-to-do middle-class population. However the presence of beds of Bath oolite limestone also ensured that stone quarrying continued in a small way at pits near Entry Hill, Wellsway and around the upper reaches of Bloomfield Road into the late 19th century.





8. Buildings, architectural quality and townscape

Building age

Because the Character Area developed gradually over time, many areas have housing of greatly differing ages and forms closely intermingled. Building age can be categorised as follows.

Pre-Georgian :

The church of St Thomas a Becket, Widcombe is one of the few clearly identifiable medieval buildings. A few other buildings have hints of pre-18th century fabric, e.g. (reportedly) parts of the masonry of Lyncombe Hall.



Georgian :

A scattering of substantial gentry houses was built during the 18th century, reflecting the desirability of this secluded and exclusive area. The major and pre-eminent building of this era is Prior Park with its numerous subsidiary buildings and landscape features. Crowe Hall, Widcombe Manor, Lyncombe House, Westfield House and Bloomfield House were built as large and mid-sized gentry houses. The early 19th century saw the addition of Picturesque (sometimes Gothic style) villas such as The Cloisters, Perrymead. There was a light infilling of more modest houses, e.g The Court and Tivoli around Lyncombe Vale and Greenway Lane.



Victorian, 20th century and later:

The third component of the building stock consists of later development from Victorian times through to the present day. In most cases it respects the Georgian context and character, for example in the use of Bath stone, the hierarchy and scale of buildings and in the provision of trees and open space. The period from c. 1870 to 1940 saw substantial expansion throughout the Character Area. Greenway Lane, Lyncombe Vale, along the north side of Perrymead, around Entry Hill and Wellsway, St Luke's Road, Bloomfield Road and the east end of Englishcombe Lane are all of this era. Interwar ribbon development follows major routes, e.g. upper Wellsway and Bloomfield Road.



Building form

There are few public buildings and the character area is predominately residential. Formal terraced housing in Bath's urban tradition is rare here: most houses are detached or semi-detached. Occasional short rows of houses are found, and in general these are Victorian artisan or working-class cottages, such as the mid-19th century examples at the foot of Entry Hill. The building height is generally one to three storeys.

Larger 18th century houses have the familiar devices of Bath's urban Baroque and Palladian styles: Giant order columns (either detached in a portico as at Prior Park and Crowe Hall, or implied by attached pilasters as at Widcombe Manor; solid or balustraded parapets; fine ashlar masonry walls, windows and corners perhaps marked by Gibbsian blocks, and sometimes rustication too; use of tripartite



windows or Venetian motifs (as seen in profusion at Lyncombe Hall). The sides and backs of these houses are usually in rubble stone and may still have mullioned windows rather than sashes, being subsidiary to the main facades. These characteristics typify the informal and unplanned aspect of the backs of Georgian housing.

The Picturesque Regency villa, e.g. The Cloisters and Devonshire Cottage, has its own distinct characteristics. It is generally of two storeys, asymmetrical in plan with gabled projections to add variety, shallow roof pitch, square hoodmoulds over windows, and occasional projecting square or canted bays. Porches are deep and often decorated with coats of arms or heraldic devices to suggest the seat of an ancient family. Tudoresque or Gothic details were favoured, often seen in prominent fanciful chimneys, decorative chimney pots, pierced and carved bargeboards, shallow Tudor-arched openings to windows, verandas etc. If the grounds and the budget were large enough there might be a small lodge house to emphasise cosy domesticity and generous welcome. Both examples cited above have lodges.



The church of St Luke and the cemetery chapels are in the High Gothic Revival style, with the exception of the Abbey Cemetery chapel (1844) which is Romanesque Revival (or Neo-Norman). The spire of St Luke, being low and sheltered by trees, is not a landmark in distant views. There are few Gothic Revival domestic buildings, an exception being a short 1870s terrace at the junction of Entry Hill and Wellsway.

The first half of the 20th century saw unprecedented expansion of most British towns, Bath being no exception. The scale reduces to the two-storey domestic character of Bath stone, render or pebbledash usually with pantiled roofs. Details are often in the Old English Revival style, with mullioned windows and timbered gables. Post-war housing tends towards routine styles with pitched roofs and large picture windows. Occasionally, houses on hillsides are planned 'upside down' with living spaces on the first floor to maximise views. Where large areas of glass appear on main elevations, this can be disruptive to the harmony of the surroundings.



The semi-rural nature of the area means few houses abut the pavement directly, exceptions being (for example) Perrymead Court, Perrymead; 1930s houses on the south side of Greenway Lane; and Devonshire Terrace, Wellsway, where the Late Georgian urban convention of railed basement areas is maintained. Otherwise, the housing stock is characterised by front gardens, low ashlar walls with stone gate piers, full-height stone walls or low walls with hedges planted behind. Boundaries to 20th century developments frequently use walls of reconstituted stone.



There are few if any back lanes for mews buildings in the manner of the urban city centre; in houses large enough to warrant a stable block it was sited in the grounds near the main house but sheltered from view or near the servants' wing. There are occasional coach houses, e.g. on Lyncombe Vale Road and occasionally in Widcombe village. Lodge houses feature more strongly, e.g. Lyncombe House (Lyncombe Vale Road), The Cloisters (Perrymead) and at Devonshire Cottage of 1799, where the lodge house on Bloomfield Road indicates the building date slightly before the laying out of Wellsway. These were an important part of indicating a welcome for visitors to large gentry houses.

Buildings of merit

All buildings and features cited here are examples only, not a definitive list of all buildings of merit. They are cited to give guidance



as to the sort of features significant to the Character Area. Almost every street may have isolated buildings of merit, whether listed or not, and many streets are listed in their entirety.

See maps, Annex 1

Anchor buildings

- St Thomas a Becket church, Widcombe. A small Perpendicular village church c. 1490-8. Particularly good for its compositional value with Widcombe Manor opposite.
- Prior Park mansion (now school). By John Wood the Elder, c. 1733-50. An internationally important example of Palladian villa design on the grandest possible scale. Historically significant for its association with Ralph Allen, a key figure in Bath's development as a Spa and its world renowned Georgian architecture. The mansion is visible from many points around Bath.
- St Luke's Church, Wellsway. A modest church of 1866-7, enlarged c. 1912-13, much screened in its secluded churchyard. The only Victorian parish church in the Character Area, and important for its social historical significance in the area's development.



Other listed buildings of historical/townscape significance

Prior Park: Ancillary and garden structures

- Palladian Bridge, Prior Park gardens, 1755; one of only four known examples based on a Palladio drawing in the Burlington-Devonshire collection at the RIBA.
- Gate piers with urns, top of Ralph Allen Drive
- Mrs Allen's grotto, bridge over the Serpentine pond; important structures influenced by Alexander Pope's theories of garden design.
- Prior Park, Old Gymnasium. Before 1839, a severe Greek Revival arena for ball games.
- 18th century tufa footbridge over Hanginglands Lane (wrongly called Pope's Walk); built to carry one of the many drives and paths which Allen laid out around his estate.
- The Priory – a mid 18th century Gothic style house in the grounds of Prior Park, said incorrectly to have been built for Ralph Allen's gardener. The estate steward's house in 1828.



Churches and religious buildings

- Bath Abbey Cemetery, Ralph Allen Drive; 1844 and later. A group of listed structures including the gates and piers, boundary walls, many monuments within the cemetery. The Cemetery Chapel, (1844) is by G.P Manners and unusual for its Romanesque Revival style.
- Crimean War Memorial, a granite obelisk, 1856, Bath Abbey Cemetery
- Perrymead R.C. Cemetery and chapel, c. 1858.
- Eyre Chantry, Perrymead Cemetery, c. 1860 by Charles Hansom. Decorated Gothic style.
- Smallcombe Cemetery chapels, gates and lodge house; Gothic Revival, c. 1858-61





Vernacular and agricultural

Several houses and farm buildings survive from pre-Georgian farming sites.

- Lyncombe Hall; mainly of 18th century and later appearance, but parts of the core are supposed to be 17th century and represent the pre-Georgian manorial centre for Lyncombe.
- No. 204 Bloomfield Road; an 18th century vernacular farmhouse in coursed rubble with pantile roofs, showing little of the polite building style of Georgian Bath.
- Foxhill Grove Farm, Fox Hill; mainly c. 1827 with additions after 1856 and c. 1894. A Tudor Gothic villa but the core probably represents an 18th century house marked on Thorpe's map of 1742. Among the most isolated houses in the Character Area.
- Barrack Farm Cottages, Wellsway; unusual survival of early 19th century farm labourers' cottages in the Gothic style.



18th century housing

- Widcombe Manor, Church Lane, Widcombe; Baroque façade c. 1726-7 probably on a core c. 1670-90. Among the best pre-Palladian gentry houses around Bath. Unusual west front towards the garden, added c. 1840 in matching style.
- Garden house to Widcombe Manor (against the churchyard wall of St Thomas a Becket)
- Crowe Hall, Widcombe Hill; a good gentry house, the core c. 1780, in Late Georgian style. It has an impressive Giant Order portico, amid fine hillside grounds. Much that appears to be Georgian is from a reinstatement after fire in 1926.
- Lyncombe House, Lyncombe Vale Road; c. 1742 – a large Palladian style house built as lodgings for Lyncombe Spa. Five bays wide, of three storeys raised over a projecting terraced basement with broad arched windows.
- Westfield House, Bloomfield Road, a gentry house of c. 1787-99.
- Devonshire Cottage, Wellsway, 1799. An early example of the use of a Picturesque cottage ornée with Tudor Gothic Revival details. Built for Thomas Jones, a well-to-do Baptist.



Housing post-1800

- Bloomfield House, Bloomfield Road, a gentry house of 1800-1, possibly by the architect Thomas Baldwin.
- Hatfield Place, Bloomfield Road; reportedly c. 1803-6. A Late Georgian pair.
- Nos. 199-205 Wellsway; Devonshire Terrace, probably c. 1810-20. A terrace of four Georgian townhouses; an outpost of urban Bath in the style of John Pinch.
- On Greenway Lane, Tivoli and Tudor Lodge, both modest villas probably just after 1800.
- Nos. 135-141 Wellsway (including the Devonshire Arms at the south end); a modest but finely detailed Greek Revival terrace.
- The Cloisters, Perrymead; a Gothic Revival villa built before 1823 for a solicitor. Later additions may include the arched gateway (c. 1850) attached to the lodge.
- Macaulay Buildings and Prospect Road; c. 1825-30. Outposts of





urban Bath. Polite Late Georgian with extraordinary views.

- Entry Hill Drive (The Lodge, Newfield, Granville House and Entry Hill House); a series of 1830s Tudor Revival villas by Edward Davis, in a Picturesque hillside setting.
- Lynbrook Cottage, Lynbrook Lane; a pair of cottages which stand out for being in red brick. Tudor Revival style, c. 1860. Not shown on Cotterell's map of 1852.
- Tower House, No. 297 Bloomfield Road – said to have been built in the mid-19th century by a quarrymaster for his own use; a standard villa with a high square tower attached to command views.
- Rainbow Wood House, Widcombe Hill, by Silcock & Reay, 1897-9, for W.E. Mallet, a renowned antique dealer. The lodge house next to Macaulay Buildings is in a more overtly Arts & Crafts idiom.



Unlisted buildings of merit

- Stirtingale Farm; much modernised and unlisted but parts are probably pre-1700.
- Smallcombe Farm; a handsome mid-19th century symmetrical house in a remote valley setting.
- No. 131 Wellsway opposite the junction with St Luke's Road; a distinctive Victorian bungalow. Built c. 1871 as the Engineer's office for the Somerset and Dorset Railway extension from Bath to Poole, sold in December 1874 at completion of the line for £307.10.0 and converted to a dwelling house by Charles Keel, a local gardener. The Devonshire tunnel runs almost directly under the house.
- Nos. 145-155 Wellsway; built c. 1879-80 by William C. Cloutman, a Bristol surveyor-architect. They have their backs to the road and broad bay-windowed fronts facing across Entry Hill.
- Bloomfield Park: substantial detached and semi-detached villas c. 1890-1910, handsomely detailed and with individual touches.
- Nos. 33 – 71 Englishcombe Lane; a row of detached and semi-detached houses c. 1912-14, seemingly by the same architect, possibly Mowbray A. Green. They command extensive views north across the city, and have particularly fine and unusual Art Nouveau ironwork.
- Housing on Greenway Lane, south side: a long row of 1920s/30s pairs and detached houses in similar style with well-crafted details. Architect unknown.
- Wester Lea, Greenway Lane; a carefully designed Regency Revival villa dated 1936. Architect unknown but in the style of A.J. Taylor or Mowbray Green and Hollier.
- Good Edwardian housing (e.g.) on Bloomfield Park, with generous bays, porches and gables.
- Occasionally, post-war housing is of good quality and well-crafted. An example is Lyncombe Coach House, Lyncombe Vale Road. Opposite the gates of Lyncombe House, built 1956-7 and designed by Mervyn Seal of Brixham, Devon. An overtly modernist flat-roofed house but with eclectic touches such as a jettied and canted first floor projection hung with slate.





Townscape features of merit

- Church Street, Widcombe. Set amidst trees, Widcombe Manor and the small Perpendicular church opposite make a fine composition, like a remote and drowsy Cotswold village.
- The whole Character Area has large areas of open pasture or woodland (as well as the more usual playing fields etc) interspersed among the housing, giving the feeling that there is room to breathe.
- Lyncombe Vale; a long row of good Victorian villas face south onto steeply sloping woodland, under which runs a raised pavement bounding the Lyn brook. Unusually rural in feel for this location within half a mile of Bath Railway Station. On May 25th 1801 Jane Austen walked to Lyncombe with a companion and mentions leading the way along a raised narrow footpath – perhaps this one.
- Turnpike parish boundary markers and milestones survive, e.g. a triangular cast-iron one at Widcombe Hill opposite the entrance to Macaulay Buildings (Bath Turnpike Trust, 1827). Lower down the hill a post marking 1 mile from the Guildhall.
- Tunnel portals and bridges on the Two Tunnels Greenway, formerly the Somerset & Dorset Railway line of 1871-4. Portals have rock-faced rubble masonry with blue engineering brick for the parapets etc. Horseshoe-shaped entrance arches.
- Steeply sloping and winding lanes in the heart of Lyncombe, e.g. Rosemount Lane, Lyncombe Vale and Lyncombe Vale Road, in places enclosed by high unbroken stone walls.
- The north end of Entry Hill is narrow with terraced 19th century artisan cottages composed nicely against the backs and gardens of the houses on Wellsway which tower up behind them.



Buildings at risk

The area is generally well cared for and, partly on account of the high property values, there are few buildings in a poor state of repair.

Negative buildings and townscape features

Generally the Character Area suffers few such negative features.

- In the 1930s road improvements resulted in very long stretches of new walling on both sides of Wellsway. Of brownish compressed aggregate- concrete blocks, it is sharply at variance with the local tradition of honey coloured limestone.
- North of Entry Hill viaduct where the steep valley bottom runs east into Lyncombe Vale, the formerly rural character of steep slopes overhung by towering beech trees has been largely spoiled by a dense fill of indifferent 20th century housing off Lynbrook Lane and Entry Hill Gardens.
- Garden boundaries are being eroded, mainly by the desire to create off-street parking. This is especially noticeable on busy roads and where the houses are raised above high walls, as on Wellsway where some new parking areas have been carved out of the slopes adjacent to the road.





9. Materials and detailing

Bath stone dominates throughout the Character Area, although other materials occur. Buildings predating about 1830 are usually fronted with Bath-stone ashlar, intended to have near-invisible mortar joints so as to appear like solid stone. Elsewhere one often finds a mix of rubble stone and ashlar, a reminder of the informal and unplanned aspect typical of subsidiary and lower status Georgian buildings. In the mid-19th century, Bath stone of irregular block sizes with black mortar joints became more common, to emphasise the idea of truth to materials by showing and making a virtue of the individual blocks of stone.



Other materials are sometimes seen, and they stand out simply by virtue of the contrast. Red brick is used here and there, for example at Lynbrook Cottages (Lynbrook Lane off Entry Hill), a Neo Tudor pair shortly after 1852, of bright red brick, and a large mid-Victorian villa in Perrymead, visible from some points in Lyncombe Vale. In the early 20th century the national fashion for roughcast render or pebbledash was sometimes followed, e.g. in houses on Wellsway, Englishcombe Lane and Bloomfield Road. Reconstituted Bath stone is widespread in middling 20th century houses, cheaper than Bath stone but less satisfactory for its lifeless appearance. There are some recent examples of rendered blockwork, such as Millennium Court, 376 Wellsway, a three-storey block of flats with glazed balcony fronts.



In higher status houses the roof is often hidden by a parapet, as is the norm for central Bath. But in most houses the slated or tiled roofs come down to exposed eaves and guttering. Deep-plan houses often have a double or 'M' shaped roof of twin slate pitches parallel with the street and with a central lead valley, as in the centre of Bath. Pantiles appear, e.g. at Smallcombe Farm, and in many early and mid-20th century houses.

The sash window remained the more-or-less universal window form through the Character Area. Georgian examples, e.g. Bloomfield House and Westfield House, have the usual small panes arranged perhaps six-over-six or nine-over-nine. After 1850 the four-paned arrangement using the cheaper plate glass becomes common, e.g. in rows of quarrymen's cottages on the upper part of Bloomfield Road. After c. 1920 casements were widely used, sometimes with a transom to form upper square lights. In these cases, the window is often broader than it is tall. Since the mid-20th century, replacement double glazing in uPVC or aluminium has begun to overtake traditional forms, to the detriment of the Character Area.



Doors are in many places marked by a flat stone door canopy on shaped brackets. Plenty of timber doors with traditional moulded and recessed panels survive, and their retention should be regarded as a vital element of the Character Area. Replacement UPVC or metal doors are becoming more common, to the detriment of the character area. Later Victorian or Edwardian front doors often have a full width glazed panel at the top of the door, or a pair of vertical glazed panels in the upper half. This may be in addition to a glazed fanlight over the door. Porches with open timber sides and pitched tiled roofs were popular for Victorian housing. That at the Gothic lodge to Lyncombe House (i.e. The Paragon school) has rustic branches instead of the more usual turned or carved timberwork.

External features form a vital constituent of the Character Area, as elsewhere in Bath. Wrought-iron railings can still be found, e.g.

Macaulay Buildings and Lyncombe Hall. Wrought-iron balconettes are also seen, e.g. at Greenway Lodge, Greenway Lane, early 19th century. The same house has blind boxes, as does No. 131 Wellsway, c. 1870s. These were commonplace until c. 1900 and were used to protect interiors from sunlight, but the boxes which contained the blinds when not in use are now uncommon. Occasional louvred shutters survive, for example at The Court, Lyncombe Vale Road.

Pierced parapets over canted bay windows, e.g Victorian houses on Lyncombe Vale.

Boundary treatments in the Character Area generally follow the era of construction. The earlier and narrower lanes around Lyncombe and Widcombe have characteristic high rubble-stone walls rising directly at the roadside, some without any pavement. Here the passer-by feels actively excluded from the houses and gardens beyond.

As the 19th century drew to a close, low walls with dense evergreen shrubbery or hedges became more usual. 20th century boundary treatments are usually either low walls mainly in rubble stone, with hedges planted to make up the remaining height, or more recently with less appropriate vertical close-boarded fences.





10. Streets and movement

Density and degree of enclosure

The density of occupation of the Character Area varies greatly although it reduces generally with altitude. Medium to low density in most places. The older districts such as the village centres of Widcombe and Lyncombe are fairly low density housing amid narrow lanes enclosed by high walls and often overhung with trees, leading to a sense of enclosure. The western end of the Character Area becomes increasingly open in feel, on high ground with fewer combs and folds in the landscape. Large open spaces around the upper reaches of Entry Hill and Wellsway decrease the overall density of housing here. On the steep slopes e.g. between Bloomfield Road and Englishcombe Lane, there is limited opportunity for access to allow for more housing. Therefore, the rear gardens here are generally very large and the density low. Around the north end of Entry Hill, Hatfield Road, Wellsway and Bloomfield Road the density increases and the feeling of enclosure is accentuated by the lower lying ground, high walls and many trees. But even here the housing is mostly well spaced out and with generous gardens.



Street pattern

Informal and dictated by rising ground everywhere. Generally the pattern is of radiating arterial links between the city and outlying suburbs (Odd Down, Combe Down etc). The major roads are Bathwick Hill, Widcombe Hill, Ralph Allen Drive, Entry Hill, Wellsway and Bloomfield Road, all of which follow the pattern described. Between them a series of linking roads follow the contours of the slopes and circumvent the steepest hills, e.g. Greenway Way and Rosemount Lane.



Public realm

The piecemeal approach to development and the semi-rural character is such that there is not a consistent approach to paving and street furniture, as happened in the formally planned 18th century parts of the centre. The Character Area has retained some 19th century paving materials and in the narrow lanes of Widcombe and Lyncombe there are often no pavements. Perrymead and similar routes have soft verges with hedges and vegetation forming boundaries. West of Entry Hill most development is of c.1860 and later, and here most streets and pavements are paved in tarmac and mostly reasonably well maintained. Some older kerbs of natural stone survive, but most are of precast concrete.



Vitality and tranquility

There is constant motor traffic along the busy routes into the city, especially during morning and evening rush hours. Side streets and lanes are narrow and therefore traffic is to an extent self-limiting. The village-like centres of Widcombe and Lyncombe have a tranquil, cut-off feel. There are few local shops, public buildings or daytime destinations. The Character Area is large and yet has only one pub (the Devonshire Arms) and no cafes. It has two private schools, Prior Park and the Paragon. These factors combined with many

steep slopes results in noticeably little pedestrian traffic, other than the twice daily rush of pupils from Beechen Cliff School (outside the Character Area) along Greenway Lane. The only notable visitor attraction is Prior Park landscape gardens, which generates some foot traffic and also parking problems at peak times.





11. Trees, open space, parks and gardens

See map, Annex 1

Trees and vegetation

The area has a semi-rural character in many places (see Open Spaces below). This results from its evolution as a place of retreat from the growing urban centre of Bath; these open spaces represent the seclusion being sought and so have been preserved. Some roads are directly bordered by open fields or woodland, e.g. Perrymead, Lyncombe Vale, Entry Hill, parts of Wellsway. Significant bands of woodland enclose the Character Area, most notably around Rainbow Wood and the upper slopes of Perrymead where it backs onto the Foxhill site.



Private gardens

Private gardens form an integral part of the landscape of the Character Area. The Georgian and Regency houses here were provided from the first with large well-planted gardens creating privacy and an impression of exclusivity. This character has been carried through to some extent in more recent building and private gardens form screens of vegetation between houses and streets in many places.

Open space and parks



Open green spaces, parks and gardens form a major contribution to this Character Area.

Designed open space:

- Prior Park landscape gardens.
- Bath Abbey Cemetery
- Perrymead Cemetery
- Smallcombe Cemetery

Open fields and woodland

- Bathwick Fields (National Trust), Smallcombe Cemetery, Smallcombe Wood, below Prospect Road off Widcombe Hill, north of Perrymead
- A large expanse of woodland with public walks from North Road at Combe Down around the eastern side of Prior Park to Rainbow Woods.
- Fine beech woods around Entry Hill Drive.
- Rough fields formerly part of Barrack Farm on the west side of Wellsway
- Mixed deciduous woodland at the Tumps, above and east of Bloomfield Road.

Playing fields /sports facilities

- Prior Park – private school sports ground south/east on the plateau adjacent to Rainbow Woods.



- Odd Down (and woodland known as The Tump)
- Entry Hill Golf Course.
- Off Corston View, south of Stirtingale Farm.
- Moorlands School playing fields south of Englishcombe Lane.
- Off Corston View, south of Stirtingale Farm.
- Moorlands School playing fields south of Englishcombe Lane.
- Cycle path at the Two Tunnels Greenway.

12. Night-time character

As a predominantly residential area, the night-time character is subdued. With no secondary schools or significant public buildings in the Character Area, evening events are very limited and tend to be held at centres just outside the area, such as Bear Flat or Combe Down. The only exceptions are occasional events associated with St Luke's church, which are modest in scale, or somewhat larger ones at Prior Park School. With few shops or businesses required to open after dark, traffic is generally light and local, once the evening commuter traffic has died down.



13. Issues affecting the Character Area

What are the assets of the Character Area?

- The numerous listed and other historic buildings which survive intact in respect of their form, fabric and setting.
- The extent and character of the green space throughout the Character Area are remarkable, especially given its closeness to the City centre. The woodland around the rim of the escarpment forms a green belt which shelters and separates the area from neighbouring districts.
- Much of the open space is accessible to the public, notably the open playing fields in the western part of the Character Area, The Tumps and Entry Hill Golf Course, the wooded valley of the Two Tunnels Greenway, Prior Park landscape gardens, three Victorian cemeteries at Perrymead and Smallcombe, and the fine spacious walks at Rainbow Woods.
- In many places the interaction of buildings and landscape form a significant example of 19th century Picturesque ideals.
- The strong sense of place inherent in ancient surviving enclaves such as Widcombe Church and Manor House.
- Vitality created through the successful regeneration of Prior Park's landscape garden and its opening by the National Trust since 1993.
- Victorian and later development respects the Georgian context and character, for example the use of Bath stone, the hierarchy and scale of buildings and in the provision of trees and open space.
- Three Victorian cemeteries in close proximity to each other. Two are closed to new burials. They contribute significantly to the ecological diversity, leisure amenity and historical richness of the area.
- Protected landscape maintained by the National Trust ensures a green buffer will retain continuity of the setting in the east of the area around Bathwick Hill, Smallcombe Woods and Prior Park.
- Lyncombe Vale and Perrymead form a tranquil and little-known area yet close to the city.
- The hilly terrain offers a wide variety of views in many places, with spectacular panoramas from many points on the western hillsides around Bloomfield Road.

What are the weaknesses of the Character Area?

- Heavy traffic e.g. on Wellsway.
- Inappropriate boundary treatments e.g. concrete aggregate walling on Wellsway; close-boarded fencing - erected for privacy.
- Erosion of garden boundaries by creation of parking bays, noticeable on busy roads such as Wellsway, where some high walls have been hollowed back to create parking bays below the houses. Large expanses of render or concrete may be used for cheapness.
- In a few places the historic piecemeal land use and development leaves a disjointed and untidy feel e.g. the upper end of Wellsway.



- Over-development in the 20th century has an impact on a few areas, perhaps most notably the valley below and north of Entry Hill viaduct.

What opportunities exist to improve the area?

- Management to limit the damage currently caused by heavy traffic and parking on busy roads.
- Identification and recognition of undesigned heritage assets of architectural and historic interest.
- Improvements to the design and materials of some boundary treatments and off-street parking spaces to maintain or improve the separation of public realm and private gardens/ property boundaries.
- Use of planning policies to limit over-intensive or inappropriate development, and to encourage high-quality, carefully considered design that is appropriate to the specific qualities of the Character Area.
- Future initiatives to develop further the access, care and managed use of semi-public green spaces, such as Prior Park landscape garden and the three cemeteries in the Widcombe area. Such initiatives should build on the work already done that recognise and develop their potential as resources for the benefit of local communities and visitors.



What factors may be seen as threats?

- Much of the special appeal of the Character Area derives from the imagination and attention to detail of the original builders and architects. Loss of even small architectural details or landscape features can steadily erode this special character.
- Traffic levels may lead to erosion of the historic fabric with pollutants likely to cause surface damage particularly to Bath stone.
- The three Victorian cemeteries, two of which are closed to new burials, will need long-term planning and management to ensure they remain a viable historic and community resources.
- Gentrification may encourage a tendency to add formal Georgian architectural treatments and features to conversions of relatively low-status buildings; such features are historically inappropriate to such building types and erode their specific meanings and visual qualities.
- Unsympathetic alterations to unlisted buildings are a threat to the character of the conservation area as a whole and specifically to this Character Area.
- Building height of new development exceeding the traditional limits of this area and disrupting the hierarchy of public and private buildings.
- The relative narrowness of roads in the Character Area reflects its semi-rural history. Increasing residential pressure may render these inadequate unless constructively managed.
- Attempts to build in the larger gardens.
- Erosion of garden boundaries by creating parking bays, and inappropriate boundary treatments, such concrete block and close-boarded fencing.
- The presence of steep hillside sites with spectacular views may



encourage a tendency to seek to over-develop and to seek permission for statement modern houses which are likely to be visible from the most significant Georgian set-piece crescents on the north side of Bath.

- The increasing prevalence of uPVC glazing and doors erodes the character of pre-1950 unlisted buildings. The visually heavy white plastic frames are inappropriate against Bath stone, Pennant rubble and brick walls.
- The use of reconstituted Bath stone for new building and extensions. It provides a generally appropriate colour match but this advantage is eroded by wider mortar joints and a dull, lifeless character which (unlike Bath stone) does not improve with weathering.

