



**- DEFINING THE ISSUES AND PRESSURES -**

*In order to formulate effective conservation policies, which will preserve and enhance the prevailing character of the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area and the other Conservation Areas covered by this Review, it is important to assess the sorts of pressures to which they are subject.*

*Policy guidelines will be compiled in direct response to the issues and pressures that are identified as affecting the character or appearance of the IHCA study area. These will form the backbone of the IHCA Management Proposals SPD.*

## DEFINING THE ISSUES AND PRESSURES

- 12.1 In order to formulate effective conservation policies, which will preserve and enhance the prevailing character of the IHCA and the other Conservation Areas in this review, it is important to assess the sorts of pressures to which they are subject. Many of the common trends in development or use in these conservation areas can have negative implications for the retention of important aspects of character and architectural integrity.
- 12.2 Over the following pages, the most pressing issues affecting the historic environment in the Industrial Heritage study area have been summarised. These 32 issues and pressures have been identified through the process of appraising the Character Parts (VOLUME 2).
- 12.4 The Local Planning Authority will therefore be drafting policy guidelines for inclusion in the IHCA Management Proposals SPD (VOLUME 4 – see particularly Chapter 3 and APPENDIX 3). These will be used to guide the interpretation and application of Development Plan policies when considering applications for works requiring Planning Permission or Conservation Area Consent in any of the conservation areas covered by this review.
- 12.5 These policy guidelines will be compiled in direct response to the issues and pressures that are identified as affecting the character or appearance of the IHCA study area.

## Policy and Design Guidance

- 12.3 The designation of a conservation area is not intended to prevent all changes. Change can be a positive force, especially those which would enhance the character of the area. As a general rule, however, it will be expected that works requiring Planning Permission will not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and should, wherever possible, positively preserve or enhance those qualities. Under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, this requirement to pay special attention to preservation and enhancement extends to all powers under the Planning Acts, not only those which relate specifically to historic buildings.

Right, and previous title page illustration: Bourne Mill at Brimscombe. An outstanding group of listed buildings, which has been at risk from disuse and dereliction for some years. In 2006, a new use began providing the buildings with a new lease of life.

**Key issues affecting the character and appearance of the conservation area:**

12.6 Five key issues have been identified as being of particular concern, placing great pressure on the character and appearance of the Industrial Heritage Study Area. The broad themes of each of these issues are manifested in many ways, and are reflected to varying degrees in many of the issues and pressures that have been identified through the Character Parts appraisal and that are set out from paragraph 12.16 (see also the Conservation Area Management Proposals SPD, APPENDIX 3). These key issues must be borne in mind when the impact of development proposals within or affecting the setting of the IHCA is being considered. Consequently, they have been developed into five policy and design ‘priority actions’, which are set out in Chapter 3 of the Management Proposals SPD.



**Key issue 1:**

The loss of legibility of historic settlement patterns, particularly the erosion of visual distinction and physical separation between settlement groups and mill complexes.

12.7 Along the length of the conservation area, the occurrence of undeveloped green space, ranging from strips of woodland to open rural land, is very important to its character. These act as physical and visual buffers between historically isolated mill groups, industrial sites and domestic settlements, allowing an appreciation of the historic distinction and physical separation between these sites. Furthermore, the rural land illustrates the nature of the historic economy of the Stroud valleys, with industry and agriculture existing side by side, forming a distinctive pattern of settlement, usually centred on crossing points over the watercourses and growing up around hubs of industry and transport infrastructure. The ‘gaps’ are often as important to the interpretation of the historic environment as the built form, but are very vulnerable to erosion, particularly in close proximity to existing urban areas, where the spaces are perhaps all the more precious.

12.8 The loss or visual obstruction of important open spaces, key views or landmarks has a profound effect on character and local distinctiveness, eroding the sense of ‘punctuation’ between settlement groups. Linear development (whether along the roads or canals) threatens to homogenise and amalgamate the built environment of the IHCA ‘corridor’. The canal and towpath provides a unique perspective on Stroud’s industrial environment. The creation of access/service roads adjacent to the canal also poses a potential threat to the character or of the historic environment and the area’s legibility and sense of place. Poor design in terms of ground surfacing, landscaping, scale and signage often means that the relationship and hierarchy between new and existing routes/links is unclear and there is a growing sense of suburbanisation and homogenisation.

**Key issue 2:**

The impact of changes in industrial land usage, including the domestication and gentrification of the industrial environment, and the appearance and character of historic industrial buildings.

**Key issue 3:**

The creation of ‘active edges’ and development which has a strong positive frontage to the canals, where historically the canalsides are characterised by the backs of buildings, blank walls or undeveloped space.

- 12.9 The modern viability of historic industrial buildings is a key issue in the IHCA. Many historic mill buildings are not well suited to conventional industrial and manufacturing uses today. In particular, minor and ancillary buildings are vulnerable because they are often undesirable when the use of a site changes, and may prove difficult (though rarely impossible) to adapt. Instead, finding appropriate new uses for the existing building stock, and designing-in adaptability right from the start, is a highly sustainable approach.
- 12.10 The default position of many landowners and developers is to approach ‘redundant’ industrial sites as potential residential development opportunities. Residential re-development presents particular threats to the preservation or enhancement of the industrial character of the IHCA. As well as minor buildings, seemingly insignificant details (such as traditional metal-framed industrial windows or redundant industrial gear) are often viewed as sacrificial. Even where major landmark buildings are preserved, the loss of surrounding minor ancillary buildings can strip the principal building of its context and transform the character of a site – as can the subdivision of spaces and the erection of fences and walls to create private amenity areas or parking places. Meanwhile, small matters of ground surfacing, the introduction of planters and ‘alien’ soft landscaping can have a suburbanising effect; and the industrial character may be further eroded as years go by, simply by the (very natural and understandable) colonisation of a place by residents: hanging baskets might appear outside doors, as well as curtains at the windows and washing hung out to dry.
- 12.11 For good reasons, it would be desirable in commercial and urban-design terms to increase levels of active frontage along the canals. However, large stretches of canal-fronting new-build on the Stroudwater Navigation or the Thames & Severn Canal (known collectively as the Cotswold Canals) would be highly damaging to the character and appearance of the IHCA – and the effects of this are, sadly, already beginning to manifest themselves. This issue is closely linked to issue 4, below.
- 12.12 The vast majority of existing canalside built form consists of industrial sites and historic mill sites. Historically, whilst this type of built form provides canalside enclosure (buildings often sit immediately on the back of the towpath, with no set-back), it has not positively fronted onto the water: it tends to turn its back on the canal, or else is screened behind long tow-path boundary walls, which form a distinctive component of the canal’s character. Historic canal-fronting buildings are limited in number and type, including the few canal-related warehouses and some odd, sporadic dwellings (usually also canal-related). Moreover, historic canalside built form tends to be sited on the tow-path side of the canal and, very often, is balanced by open or undeveloped space on the off-side. There is a delicate balance, ensuring that the fundamentally rural character of the Cotswold Canals is evident, even when passing adjacent to intensely developed and urban areas.

**Key issue 4:**

The uncharacteristic development of the canalsides and valley bottom, particularly the loss of open space and the proliferation of medium-large scale housing developments.

**Key issue 5:**

Loss of local distinctiveness, whether through the alteration of existing details and the loss of characteristic historic buildings/structures, or through the proliferation of new build which fails to observe local characteristics and hence has a ‘watering down’ effect on the distinctiveness of the IHCA’s built environment.

12.13 Closely linked to Key Issue 1 and Key Issue 3 (and to some extent 2), number 4 concerns the impact that medium- and large-scale housing development is already having on the character of the IHCA, and particularly the canals corridor. In places along the corridor, a series of individual adjacent developments has become amalgamated, giving the impression of intensive, dense, linear housing along the canalside, and merging distinct settlements together. In particular, double-sided development (with rows of houses on both sides, looking at each other), risks the creation of a ‘canyon’ effect, increasing levels of enclosure along these canals and losing the sense of openness that characterises views along so much of the channel. In itself, the construction of large numbers of dwellings in the very valley bottoms is uncharacteristic. But this tends to be exacerbated by the types of architectural treatment chosen (which too often pay only lip-service, at best, to traditional local building vernaculars) associated hard landscaping (including ‘wharf-style’ access roads and parking), loss of trees and loss of open space. Development sites on the valley floors very often tend to consist of long, narrow slivers of land, which can present particular problems in layout terms: provision of vehicular access and parking for individual houses can dictate an uncharacteristically road-dominated layout, with properties strung out along it, exacerbating the impression of linear infill development in the valley bottoms (refer to Key Issue 1 and to Issue/Pressure 1). These factors represent a harmful erosion of the IHCA’s character and threaten the subtle degradation of amenity value and environmental quality, particularly (though by no means exclusively) along the canal corridor.

12.14 There is no historic tradition for large swathes of canalside housing in Stroud District at all – historically, as the IHCA Character Appraisal explains (see especially paragraphs 3.45, 3.83-3.86 and 3.97), the canals are places of industry and agriculture. This settlement pattern – or rather, lack of it – is one of the most misunderstood characteristics of the conservation area, and it translates as one of the most serious threats to the character and local distinctiveness of the IHCA. The few historic dwellings that do exist tend to be canal-related and often sited in remote, isolated spots, often alone and rarely grouped with more than five or six other buildings. They are visually typical of the local vernacular and often sit side-on to the canal, looking along it.

12.15 In many ways, Key Issue 5 is an overarching statement of the need to protect those things that make the IHCA distinctive and give it its own sense of place. In various ways, each of the preceding Key Issues highlight aspects of the gradual erosion of this specialness and particular character, which must be guarded against.

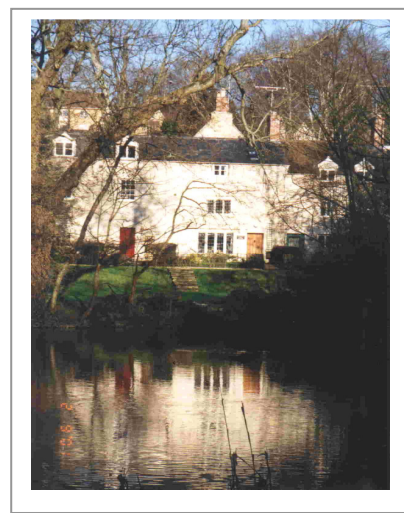
## THE ISSUES AND PRESSURES

- 12.16 It is important to understand the Policy and Design guidance points contained in the IHCA Conservation Area Management Proposals SPD in the light of the Issues and Pressures that have shaped them. Guidelines PDG1 – PDG42 are set out in Chapter 3 of the SPD, and each point is cross-referenced there against relevant Issues and Pressures. When considering or applying any of the 42 Policy and Design Guidance points, reference should be made to the Issues and Pressures, set out as follows, to ensure the emphasis and reasoning behind the guidance is properly understood.

### 1. Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping

- 12.17 Along the length of the IHCA, the occurrence of undeveloped green space, ranging from strips of woodland to open rural land, is very important to the character of the conservation area. It acts as a physical and visual buffer between historically isolated mill groups, industrial sites and domestic settlements, allowing an appreciation of the historic distinction and physical separation between these sites.

- 12.18 Furthermore, the rural land illustrates the nature of the historic economy of the Stroud valleys, with industry and agriculture existing side by side, forming a distinctive pattern of settlement, usually centred on crossing points over the watercourses and growing up around hubs of industry and transport infrastructure. The ‘gaps’ are as important to the interpretation of the historic environment as the built form, but are very vulnerable to erosion, particularly in close proximity to existing urban areas, where the spaces are perhaps all the more precious.



Above: Arundell Mill, one of the dozens of small mill sites which were originally independently accessed by circuitous routes and were subsequently linked together by the C18th canals and the C19th roads. The distinct separation and the legibility of the historic settlement pattern is seriously threatened by encroaching development, infilling the roadside and canalside gaps.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 1 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)	
<p><b>The historic remoteness and characteristic sporadic pattern of mill development along the river corridors is being harmed by adjacent modern development and the intensification of links between sites, particularly along the Frome valley.</b> The mills have an important visual and historic relationship to the rural river corridor landscape in which they sit. The setting of the mills is vulnerable through the erosion of the open space between and around them. Many mill sites were historically accessed via circuitous routes and were quite independent of each other. The canals and C19 improvements to road infrastructure linked some of these sites into a ‘string’, but many still retain a strong sense of their original isolation, which risks being eroded by intensifying linkages between them, whether through ‘ribbon’ built form or the construction/opening up of physical access routes (vehicular, pedestrian, cycles etc).</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 1, 2, 4, 17, 18, 35</p>
ISSUE/PRESSURE 2 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)	
<p><b>Development pressure on highly visible landscape risks harming the character of the conservation area, potentially having an overbearing effect on the countryside, degrading the transition between historic built form and its rural setting and challenging the dominance of landmark buildings.</b> Due to the topography of much of the IHCA and its setting, the landscape is highly visible from many vantage points. (e.g. the steeply sloping land of the valley, or the broad, flat water meadows, overlooked by the high ground of the Cotswold escarpment). The conservation area is particularly susceptible to inappropriate development in the form of tall or bulky buildings, or encroaching built form associated with the expansion of the Stroud and Stonehouse settlements. Both within and adjacent to its boundaries, such development can have a conspicuous and harmful effect on the character of the conservation area.</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 1, 2, 3, 4</p>
ISSUE/PRESSURE 3 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)	
<p><b>Along main roads, undeveloped land is particularly under pressure for development, risking the blurring of the historic distinction between settlements and clusters of built form.</b> Often, even quite small green patches or open spaces provide a valuable break in built form along main roads. These can sometimes allow road travellers a glimpse of long range views and a sense of connection with the landscape. Most importantly, they prevent the impression of ‘ribbon development’, which tends to extend the dominance of urban character into rural land. These breaks often become vulnerable to infill development.</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 1, 2, 4, 6</p>



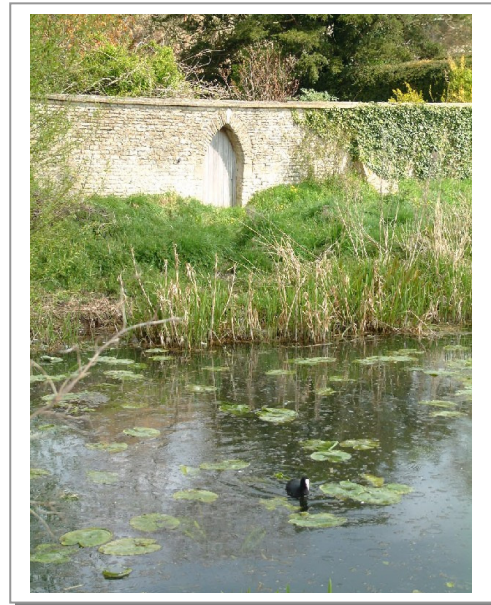
Above: Disused agricultural land (now built on), separating two listed mill sites at Ebley. The view is framed by magnificent mature trees  
 Right: The Severn Vale is overlooked by the Cotswold escarpment. The setting of the IHCA and individual mill sites is sensitive to encroaching development and the infilling of spaces

<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 4 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)</b>	
<p><b>The conservation area value of certain green spaces in the IHCA is vulnerable to being underestimated and hence eroded through lack of protection from inappropriate development.</b> “Green space” does not exclusively comprise expanses of historically undeveloped open meadow: brownfield sites that have reverted to vegetated open space, the narrow artery of land that follows the canal and river corridor, and the tree-covered spine of railway cuttings and embankments all play their part in punctuating and balancing the built form and pattern of settlement in the conservation area.</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18</p>
<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 5 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)</b>	
<p><b>Excessive tidying of redundant or underused green land, which can sometimes be perceived as scruffy, can have a surprisingly strong effect on character, transforming unassuming green patches into manicured places.</b> Frequently green spaces occur in locations that have no obvious use, such as narrow, inaccessible or confined sites. These are often left unmaintained and overgrown, becoming traps for litter, and it is often difficult to strike a balance between prevention of perceived ‘eyesores’ and over gentrification of such spaces.</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 5, 6, 7</p>
<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 6 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)</b>	
<p><b>The character of the conservation area is harmed by non-native planting and the loss of existing natural features. In particular, mature specimen trees and areas of tree cover are at risk from development and from the maintenance of transport infrastructure.</b> Trees and native vegetation, including hedgerows, are important to the character of the Frome Rural corridor. The canal restoration threatens tree cover along the canal edge, particularly where extensive excavation is required or new canalside development is proposed. Similarly, improvements, widening or maintenance of highways and railway land can result in extensive tree loss. New planting and landscaping which introduces alien vegetation, particularly fast-growing screening species, can also be harmful to the locally distinctive character of the conservation area.</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 5, 6, 7, 9, 18, 19</p>
<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 7 (Settlement patterns; open spaces and gaps; landscaping)</b>	
<p><b>Wildlife and agriculture, including grazing livestock, is important to the character of large stretches of the IHCA. However, the implications of seemingly minor development proposals or changes of use on this aspect of the IHCA character are sometimes overlooked.</b> Alterations to the canal or to field patterns and watercourse vegetation, which can erode wildlife habitats, as well as changes of use on agricultural land or to agricultural buildings, can have profound effects on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Not least through altering the sounds and smells, which contribute to the rural ambience of the IHCA; the juxtaposition of this with more industrial character is one of the most distinctive aspects of the IHCA environment.</p>	<p>See SPD policy guidelines 5, 6, 8</p>

## 2. The Canals: restoration; excavation; materials; edging; and hard landscaping/street furniture on the towpath

12.19 The vast majority of the canals corridor, both along the Stroudwater and the Thames & Severn, has a naturalistic informality, even when passing by quite urban areas. The soft, green edges and rural or semi-rural character of the canal and towpath is threatened by an increasing suburbanisation or urbanisation. Inappropriate towpath surfacing, widening and edging, the addition of barriers or railings and the impact of adjacent development can all have a profoundly harmful effect on the character of the canal and conservation area.

The Cotswold Canals in Stroud District are predominantly bordered by soft, natural edges – thriving habitats for flora and fauna. Even through the most urbanised stretches of the IHCA, historic wharves and sections of hard canal edging are limited. The naturalistic character of the towpath and canal corridor is vulnerable to uncharacteristic urbanisation, through inappropriate surfacing, hard landscaping, embankment and widening.



ISSUE/PRESSURE 8 (The Canals: restoration; excavation; materials; edging; and hard landscaping/street furniture on the towpath)	
<p><b>Pressure to widen the towpath, together with safety barriers, bollards, signage and other typical paraphernalia, can have a significant harmful effect on the character of an historic area.</b> At certain points along the canal, the towpath is used for vehicular access to canalside industrial/commercial sites and private dwellings. In these situations, the intersection may potentially be viewed as a conflict between vehicular and pedestrian users, especially if the volume of use intensifies (e.g. with the creation of additional residential units on a particular site or increased canal traffic following restoration). Plans to develop a cycle network along the canals route would also result in intensified use and traffic.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 38, 39, 41, 42</p>

ISSUE/PRESSURE 9 (The Canals: restoration; excavation; materials; edging; and hard landscaping/street furniture on the towpath)	
<p><b>The choice of materials used for canal infrastructure and edging, and the places where they are used, is very distinctive to the Stroudwater and the Thames and Severn respectively.</b> Inappropriate, non-historic 'restoration', together with landscaping schemes associated with new development, runs the risk of eroding this distinctiveness - particularly the proliferation of brick canal edging.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17</p>

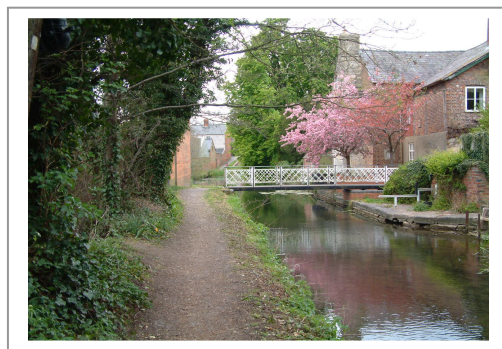
ISSUE/PRESSURE 10 (The Canals: restoration; excavation; materials; edging; and hard landscaping/street furniture on the towpath)	
<p><b>Excavation of the infilled canals is having a profound, transforming effect on the existing character and appearance of the conservation area – with some negative as well as positive results.</b> At certain points, the canals are completely infilled or were subject to narrowing in the 1960s, and restoration will involve excavation, effects of which sometimes include <b>loss of trees and vegetative enclosure.</b> Some parts are simply very over grown, and clogged up with vegetation – which does little for the character of the conservation area or the biodiversity that could be supported by a properly restored canal. Excavation and widening has also tended to happen incrementally in association with new canalside development, at intervals along the canals corridor. Some of the incremental work carried out so far, which has not previously had the benefit of a planned restoration strategy for the entire canals length, has not enhanced the character of the conservation area and has had harmful impacts on surviving archaeology. There have been instances where there has been insufficient control over, or sensitivity to, <b>appropriate forms of hard and soft landscaping on the canal edge.</b> Moreover, there is likely to be developer desire to create moorings in conjunction with new development, risking the distortion of the historic canal channel.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 6, 9, 12</p>



### 3. The Canals: restoration; infrastructure; canal-related buildings

- 12.20 The restoration of the Stroudwater and Thames & Severn canals is a project which will stretch over many years. In addition to the miles of canal channel, the restoration will involve repairs and reinstatement of canal structures, as well as newly built features, particularly bridges.
- 12.21 The two canals both have their own highly distinctive character, with fairly standard designs adopted for many of their early structures and associated buildings (cottages, warehouses, etc) – an early form of ‘corporate identity’. The distinction between the two can easily be eroded through the loss of typical historic features or the creation of new structures which do not acknowledge the respective architectural vocabularies of the Stroudwater and the Thames & Severn.
- 12.22 There is a risk that, however well intentioned, restoration or maintenance work to the canals will be undertaken without full regard to their heritage significance, and thereby diminish their value as a heritage asset. In the past works have sometimes proceeded without a thorough understanding of the historical/archaeological significance of the feature to be restored, and some restoration and repair work has not been carried out to appropriate standards. Where changes have been made to structures, these have not always been adequately recorded. This applies both to work undertaken by volunteers and contractors, and to work carried out as part of planning gain agreements with Local Authorities. The risk of damage applies equally to standing historic structures and to buried archaeology uncovered during restoration work.
- 12.23 Although the main volunteer organisations working on the canal restoration projects have instigated formal training in heritage management and the use of traditional craft skills, some volunteers have limited experience in these areas. Successful restoration of the canals demands informed management and adequate skills training and this must also apply to the subsequent maintenance and management of the waterway.

A beautifully reinstated iron swing bridge on the Stroudwater Navigation at Ryeford. Although swing bridges of this type were not original to the canal construction, there are a handful of bridges with this highly distinctive lattice design parapet at intervals along the course of the two canals – although the Thames & Severn features fixed, raised bridges, rather than the distinctive low-level swing bridges of the Stroudwater. The bridge makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and is a charming feature in this cluster of canalside buildings.



ISSUE/PRESSURE 11 (The Canals: restoration; infrastructure; canal-related buildings)	
<p><b>Restoration works to the canals and associated structures poses a risk to the historic fabric and historic identity of the Cotswold Canals.</b> Several bridges and locks along the course of the Stroudwater and the Thames &amp; Severn are listed for their special architectural or historic interest. Any works of alteration or extensive repair to listed structures will be subject to approval through listed building consent. The vast majority, however, are not listed and hence may be vulnerable to inappropriate forms of restoration, repair or alteration. During the course of canal restoration, it is likely that remains or footings of historic structures, currently buried and possibly not known about, will be exposed. These structures, too, are vulnerable to damage or destruction.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guideline 13</p>
ISSUE/PRESSURE 12 (The Canals: restoration; infrastructure; canal-related buildings)	
<p><b>Inappropriately designed replacement bridges would harm the character of the conservation area, but a large number of existing canal bridges will need to be rebuilt or replaced in order to render the canal navigable</b> – especially since many bridges are now low-level, flat slab structures, having replaced traditional swing bridges. New or replacement bridges are likely to face pressures which translate as design constraints, making it virtually impossible to build new traditionally-styled bridges. (e.g.: desire to allow boats to pass conveniently with minimum obstacles and disruption; demands on gradient, span and towpath access for highways and disabled access reasons).</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guideline 14</p>
ISSUE/PRESSURE 13 (The Canals: restoration; infrastructure; canal-related buildings)	
<p><b>Several key historic sites on the canal also have good development potential, which could act as a real enhancement to the conservation area - in particular, Wallbridge Basin and Brimscombe Port.</b> However, enthusiasm for development and the desire to maximise regeneration potential is sometimes viewed as being at odds with the heritage assets and the statutory requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. This need not be the case, but a clear understanding and respect for the historic character, context and surviving fabric and archaeology of these sites is essential.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 15, 17, 21, 22</p>

4. The Canals: canalside development; re-use and adaptation of historic buildings; canal frontage; open space and ‘gaps’ along the canal corridor

12.24 Just as canalside development can profoundly affect the character of the canal corridor, the way that we perceive the character of each of the existing mills and industrial sites along the route is strongly influenced (for better or worse) by what we can see from the canal and tow path. The canals are a crucial public viewpoint in the conservation area and, as a through route, the face that is presented to the canal is the face of a whole slice of Stroud District.



below:  
Whilst this mill complex is characteristic of the lack of positive canal frontage or canal orientation in the conservation area, the image it presents to the tow path is not a good setting for the historic buildings on the site. Large expanses of tarmac, modern industrial sheds, a lack of enclosure and wire fencing all leave plenty of scope for enhancement

left:  
Industrial buildings in desperate need of a new use.



ISSUE/PRESSURE 14 (The Canals: canalside development; re-use and adaptation of historic buildings; canal frontage; open space and ‘gaps’ along the canal corridor)	
<p><b>The canal frontage was historically one of the most important faces of any industrial or commercial site, and remains so today.</b> Industrial sites along both the Stroudwater and the Thames &amp; Severn are frequently bounded by long, high walls or the blank elevations of buildings. However, these are not just featureless structures: they often feature high quality materials and detailing, while access points to the towpath from the mills are often marked by decorative gateways or piers. Conversely, however, <b>poor quality boundary treatments, overbearing, poorly maintained or uncharacteristic buildings, and large visible expanses of tarmac all have a harmful effect on public impressions of the conservation area.</b></p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 37, 38</p>

ISSUE/PRESSURE 15 (The Canals: canalside development; re-use and adaptation of historic buildings; canal frontage; open space and ‘gaps’ along the canal corridor)	
<p><b>The proliferation of the ‘canyon’ effect, with heavy enclosure on both sides of the canal, would be highly damaging to the character of the conservation area and should be resisted in most circumstances.</b> Almost without exception, mills have historically remained confined to one side only of the canals (usually the tow-path site). Historically, the built-up industrial edges of canalside mill sites were almost always balanced by largely undeveloped open land on the opposite bank. Double-sided development is distinctly uncharacteristic of the conservation area. However, this balance (in places quite a stark contrast between industry and rurality) has begun to be eroded, with the creation of new business parks, superstores or, more often, housing development.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22</p>

ISSUE/PRESSURE 16 (The Canals: canalside development; re-use and adaptation of historic buildings; canal frontage; open space and ‘gaps’ along the canal corridor)	
<p><b>The proliferation of canalside development, together with changes in the use and activity on historic mill sites, is leading to a gradual shift towards domestication and gentrification of the industrial environment, particularly along what is seen as prime canal frontage.</b> It is important that the canals retain the sense of passing through an industrial environment. The sounds and smells of industry bring the conservation area to life. In this respect, the working industry (though not always the built form) on modern industrial parks abutting the canal often contributes to the character of the conservation area. The loss of active employment uses on historic mill sites, meanwhile, would erode something of the spirit and robust character of the IHCA.</p>	<p>See Policy guidelines 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22</p>



The Thames & Severn at Thrupp. Industry on the tow path side and open fields on the offside.

The canal is heavily populated by industry along this stretch. But thick vegetation, plenty of green ‘gaps’ between the industrial sites and the fact that buildings (both traditional and modern) tend to back on to the towpath, mean that the presence of dense built form is rarely overbearing and often very inconspicuous.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 17 (The Canals: canalside development; re-use and adaptation of historic buildings; canal frontage; open space and ‘gaps’ along the canal corridor)	
<p><b>The creation of canal fronting buildings is an uncharacteristic but highly pressing trend in new development in the IHCA.</b> New canalside development and the redevelopment of existing canalside sites tends to make uncharacteristic use of the sites’ canal edge, constructing buildings which are orientated towards the canal. The vast majority of canalside built form in the conservation area consists of industrial and historic mill sites. Historically, whilst this type of built form provides canalside enclosure, it has tended to turn its back on the canals, or else is screened behind long tow-path boundary walls. Historic canal-fronting buildings are limited, and include some odd, sporadic dwellings and canal-related warehouses, etc. Large stretches of canal-fronting new build is highly damaging to the character and appearance of the IHCA.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22</p>

## 5. The Canals: housing development; extensions; householder permitted development rights; boundary treatments; planting and landscaping.

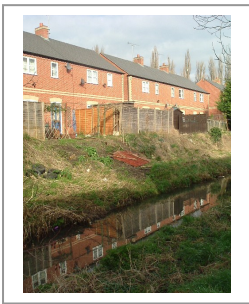
- 12.25 Traditionally, canalside dwellings are extremely rare along both the Stroudwater and the Thames & Severn. Surveying the length of the two Cotswold Canals in Stroud District, the number of historic houses and cottages which address the canal, or even have a genuine proximity to it, is remarkably few.
- 12.26 Almost all of those that do exist have a strong functional and physical relationship to the historic operation of the canal or canal-related/canal-reliant industries and commercial activities (wharfs, coal yards etc). Canalside houses tend to be individual, isolated buildings, or form small, tight groups, clustered on roadsides where historic routes cross the water (i.e. oriented around the road and bridge, rather than the canal). Many houses positively turn their backs on the canal, while others now simply happen to have found themselves adjacent to the canal, having existed before it.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 18 (The Canals: housing development; extensions; householder permitted development rights; boundary treatments; planting and landscaping)	
<p><b>There is no tradition at all for large swathes of canalside housing, even in the most urban areas of this conservation area. This pattern of settlement – or rather, lack of it – is one of the most misunderstood characteristics of the conservation area, and it translates as one of the most serious threats to the character and appearance of the IHCA today.</b> There is an extremely high level of development pressure for housing to be built on canalside sites. Not only is the construction of large numbers of dwellings uncharacteristic, but the associated hard landscaping, loss of trees and open space and increasing enclosure of the canal corridor with built form is a harmful erosion of the character and appearance of the industrial environment. Historically, most canal-related dwellings were built to house those who operated the infrastructure and so are sited not only at the busiest locks and wharves, but also the most remote. By their nature they are often quite isolated, functional and sparse, a characteristic which can be easily eroded by encroaching development. Similarly, by the introduction of new buildings or extensions within a group, which could add to the mass and density of the cluster, or bestow an uncharacteristic sense of grandeur and scale (gentrification).</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 1, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 38</p>

**ISSUE/PRESSURE 19 (The Canals: housing development; extensions; householder permitted development rights; boundary treatments; planting and landscaping)**

**Paraphernalia associated with domestic gardens, including the increasing trend for waterside decking, is harming the appearance of the conservation area and domesticating the character of the canals.** Today, there is a premium placed on waterside frontage, among both new-build and existing houses. However, the very natural desire to make the most of the location, including a reluctance to screen views to or from the dwelling, can have harmful repercussions. Decking, sheds, alien boundary treatments and non-native planting, together with uncharacteristic siting and orientation of new-build homes, are all adding to a general suburbanisation of the canal corridor, sometimes having a very overbearing effect. The right balance between frontage, back gardens, enclosure or openness is difficult to achieve and highly site-specific.

See SPD Policy guidelines 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 34, 38



Above:  
Canal-fronting built form, particularly housing, is historically uncommon in the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area. Canalside housing threatens to increase enclosure and domestic presence in ways which are uncharacteristic of the IHCA. But back gardens can have an equally harmful effect.

Right:  
Two houses in Chalford: an interesting and site-specific way of tackling the dilemma. The sparsity of windows, particularly at ground floor, avoids the effect of uncharacteristic canalside frontage. The building does not have an overly domestic character and the detailing and materials are locally distinctive, vaguely reminiscent of Thames & Severn warehouses. Their siting on the back of the towpath, with good separation from other built form, acknowledges the linear form of the canal, while avoiding the effects of 'ribbon development' along it.

## 6. Housing development in valley bottoms; settlement patterns; water meadows; brownfield re-development

12.27 Historically, the water meadows that border the river Frome and parts of the Nailsworth Stream have remained undeveloped, with only sporadic agricultural or river-related buildings, such as mills. These often relied on the water for power or, in some cases, transport. The lack of built form on the broad, flat water meadows (and further east and south, the more confined valley bottom) makes sense historically. In particular, housing has traditionally tended to be sited on higher ground and on the valley sides, thus avoiding flood risk and leaving the fertile river corridor to agriculture and clusters of industry.



Above:  
Housing in the IHCA typically clings to the sloping ground, set slightly above the valley bottom. This cluster, which has developed over many years, responds directly to the steep, curving lane.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 20 (Housing development in valley bottoms; settlement patterns; water meadows; brownfield redevelopment)	
<p><b>The valley floors of the IHCA are under increasing pressure from medium- and large-scaled housing development.</b> Extensive numbers of domestic buildings in the valley bottoms are historically uncommon and very uncharacteristic of the IHCA. Whether proposed on green field or brown field sites, such schemes go against the historic grain, lack precedent in design terms, and face controversy and obstacles due to pressure on the flood plains.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 1, 18, 22, 26</p>

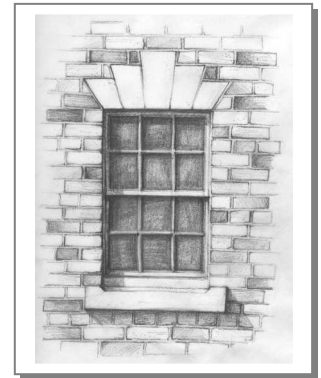
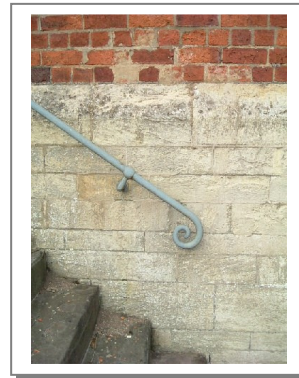
## 7. Materials and detailing; contextual design and local distinctiveness; natural stone; extensions; roofs, chimneys and dormers

- 12.28 One of the main characteristics of the IHCA is the mix of materials and architectural styles. These often appear jumbled up together, creating a distinctive variety of colours, textures and forms. The appearance of buildings can sometimes mark out a particular corner of the conservation area as being very much of one period of historic development, but more commonly areas display ‘layers’ of evolving building traditions and styles, side by side with each other.
- 12.29 The occurrence of particular building types, styles or materials in any given location is very rarely arbitrary, however. New building, whether a large-scale new development, or a minor domestic alteration, must respect the context and historic character of the site. Otherwise the intricacies of historic evolution and features of local distinctiveness risk being obscured or overwhelmed.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 21 (Materials and detailing; contextual design and local distinctiveness; natural stone; extensions; roofs, chimneys and dormers)	
<p><b>Although the conservation area is characterised by its mix of materials, particularly limestone and brick, the delicate balance of this mix is being eroded.</b> This is partly as a result of the quantity of new red brick housing development that has been constructed in recent years. Red brick with contrasting brick or stone detailing has become a sort of shorthand for “Stroud-ish” and, whilst this combination is indeed characteristic of 19<sup>th</sup> century roadside development, it is increasingly used in quantities and locations where that architectural vocabulary is historically uncharacteristic and out of context (for example, along the canals).</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 22, 23, 24, 26</p>

ISSUE/PRESSURE 22 (Materials and detailing; contextual design and local distinctiveness; natural stone; extensions; roofs, chimneys and dormers)	
<p><b>Extensive use of reconstituted stone – or badly-matched natural stone – on extensions, new-buildings and large or conspicuous developments, can have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area, devaluing the high quality built environment.</b> The Stroud valleys have benefited for centuries from an abundance of high quality, easily accessible building stone, which has had a strong formative effect on the character of the conservation area. Stone walling and roofing is particularly characteristic of the most ancient points of settlement (early river-based industry and hubs or crossing points along the Frome). Modern substitutes for natural stone compare very poorly to the variety, texture and patina of the real thing; reconstituted stone does not have the same weathering qualities.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 23, 24, 26</p>

ISSUE/PRESSURE 23 (Materials and detailing; contextual design and local distinctiveness; natural stone; extensions; roofs, chimneys and dormers)	
<p>The detailing of buildings, particularly houses and cottages, varies enormously from one end of the conservation area to the other. Even something as simple as the construction and detailing of a brick arch for a window- or door-head can vary from village to village. <b>The use of standard developer house-types, non-native or non-traditional building materials and a failure to observe basic details on new buildings and extensions can erode the character of the conservation area and make these highly localised building traditions less pronounced.</b></p>	<p>See Policy guidelines 1, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31</p>



Whilst brick and stone are undoubtedly the most characteristic materials in the IHCA, the ways in which they are used and their range of textures and colours is far more subtle and complex than the ubiquitous “Stroudish” Red Brick With Stone Dressings.

**ISSUE/PRESSURE 24 (Materials and detailing; contextual design and local distinctiveness; natural stone; extensions; roofs, chimneys and dormers)**

The roofscape in the conservation area often makes a key contribution to its character and appearance, which may be harmed by insensitive alterations or lack of attention to the form and design of roofs on new buildings. This is partly to do with the local topography – in sloping areas, buildings may be viewed from vantage points which give a greater emphasis to the roofscape. Features such as traditional roof coverings, the pitch and span of the roof, and whether particular details (including dormer windows, roof lights, chimneys and decorative bargeboards) do or do not traditionally appear on a certain building or cluster of buildings, can have a great impact on their character. One particular roofscape issue arises from modern housing development, which places a premium on maximum accommodation on minimum unit footprint, as well as home improvement loft conversions. Increasingly, the roof space is being exploited, leading to a dramatic proliferation of dormer windows, which is not always appropriate or characteristic of the conservation area.

See SPD Policy guidelines 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

**8. Materials and detailing: permitted development/householder alterations/ industrial and commercial buildings; retention of original features; replacement windows; satellite dishes; boundary treatments**

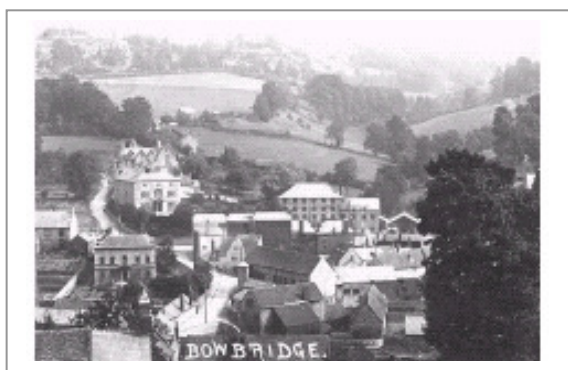
- 12.30 Character depends very much on the small details such as windows, doors and boundary walls or railings. Such features are often delicately proportioned and well crafted, even on relatively humble houses and cottages. They can be major components of a building’s appearance, whether for decorative value or historic interest. Details can be indicators of a building’s age, status or local distinctiveness. Popular architectural details at any particular time often reflected the available materials and technological capabilities of the day.
- 12.31 Buildings of all sorts are elevated from the ordinary by their details. Many traditional industrial buildings and mills are effectively just simple boxes. Their character derives from small details, sometimes of a decorative nature, but mostly from such basic things as original windows and doors (including metal windows, which are very typical of the local industrial environment). The loss or alteration of such features gradually erodes the character of buildings and, unstopped, may mean the loss of some of the most aesthetic aspects of our industrial environment.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 25 (Materials and detailing; permitted development/householder alterations/ industrial and commercial buildings; retention of original features; replacement windows; satellite dishes; boundary treatments)	
<p><b>Householder development, which often does not require planning permission, can erode the character of a building or group of buildings, and is having an increasingly harmful effect on the appearance of the IHCA.</b> In particular, unsympathetic window replacements, the addition of porches, the cladding of external walls, the replacement of roof surfaces and conspicuous or insensitive siting of satellite dishes can harm the local distinctiveness, traditional character and the original architectural proportion and features of a building. In the IHCA this effect is particularly pronounced in terraces of buildings, where an inappropriate alteration on even a single building can disrupt the unity and coherence of the whole group.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34</p>

ISSUE/PRESSURE 26 (Materials and detailing; permitted development/householder alterations/ industrial and commercial buildings; retention of original features; replacement windows; satellite dishes; boundary treatments)	
<p><b>In certain circumstances, the alteration of an industrial building may be carried out without planning permission. Where features such as windows and doors are concerned, this can have a profound material impact on the character of an historic building.</b> Many of the details on traditional industrial buildings are vulnerable to gradual erosion, through replacement, removal or lack of maintenance, especially as they may be viewed as having no real practical use and perhaps do not repay the cost and effort of maintenance. However, they are crucial to character and the incremental loss of detail can strip an individual building or whole site of what makes it distinctive and attractive. Multiple occupancy and multiple ownership of many sites in the conservation area can tend to exacerbate this problem.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 23, 24, 31, 32</p>

**9. Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art**

12.32 The character of an area is not simply reliant on the appearance of the buildings within it. The relationship between buildings and spaces, the level of enclosure or openness, and the small details such as boundary walls or railings, ground surfaces and levels of greenery or hard landscaping all act together to create character. Even the best-preserved building can be made to appear alien in its setting if everything around it is stripped away. Conversely, new development (even on quite a large scale) can be anchored into its environment by paying close attention to the treatment of the land around it, allowing it to relate to the buildings and spaces which are its neighbours.



Bowbridge was once a thriving industrial hub, with buildings clustered densely together and a high level of enclosure along either side of the winding road. Bowbridge and Wallbridge are possibly the two areas of the IHCA worst hit by today's broad, open spaces, dedicated to cars.

ISSUE/PRESSURE 27 (Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art)	
<p><b>Minor elements and structures contribute a great deal to the character and appearance of conservation areas yet they are often most vulnerable to change.</b> 'Inconspicuous' components such as historic kerb edging, traditional ground surfaces, iron railings, gate piers and street furniture are frequently lost through lack of maintenance and during developments and redevelopments. Such losses are often barely considered, but cumulatively erode the history of an area and greatly harm its character. Replacement products, such as modern steel railings, can help to evoke traditional character, but they are never a substitute for the originals: once lost, their craftsmanship and historic interest is gone forever.</p>	<p>See SPD Policy guidelines 15, 35, 40</p>

<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 28</b> (Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art)	
<p><b>Small ancillary buildings, of varying forms, are highly characteristic of the conservation area. Yet many small structures have no statutory protection against demolition or substantial alteration and may be viewed as expendable, due to their perceived insubstantial construction or ‘scruffy’ character.</b> Such structures range from redbrick ancillary buildings to corrugated iron sheds, whether situated in mill complexes or back gardens. Sometimes viewed as unsightly or ‘out of place’ when redundant, many of these buildings are actually highly characteristic of the conservation area. In particular, the distinctive contribution of corrugated iron structures to the industrial environment should not be underestimated.</p>	See SPD Policy guidelines 35, 36

<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 29</b> (Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art)	
<p>Traditionally, much of the IHCA has been characterised by a sense of enclosure, be it by railings, gardens walls, hedging or buildings. <b>The domination of the motor vehicle has seen the gradual erosion of human scale, detail and this characteristic urban grain and sense of enclosure, in several ways.</b> Much character has been lost by homeowners removing or altering their boundaries in order to create parking spaces, or excavating into hillsides and constructing retaining walls in order to provide level hardstandings. On a greater scale, the construction and widening of roads has caused irrevocable damage to the conservation area, sometimes stranding or marginalizing buildings. Recent developments have failed to acknowledge the historic form of their surroundings, partly due to inflexible or unimaginative application of highways standards and layout criteria (visibility splays, broad road and pavement widths, car parking and turning space), and poor hard and soft landscaping. Taken individually these changes may seem relatively minor. However, incrementally, they continue to harm the character of the IHCA.</p> <p>In some places, such as Wallbridge, the historic importance, context and character of the area has been virtually eradicated along with their once distinctive urban grain and sense of enclosure. Remaining historic buildings have been left stranded and marginalized by highway development. This has resulted in the diminishment of physical and psychological accessibility and a removal of human scale.</p>	See SPD Policy guidelines 35, 36, 37, 40

<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 30</b> (Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art)	
<p><b>Inappropriate new boundary treatments can have a harmful effect on the character of the conservation area.</b> A particular threat is the use of alien materials, such as close-boarded fencing, reconstituted stone or concrete blocks. These compare very poorly with locally distinctive, historic materials and detailing. Such materials are sometimes added to existing low-level road-fronting boundaries, to try and create privacy by adding height. In uniform terraces, for example, this can be very disruptive to the coherence of a design.</p>	See SPD Policy guidelines 15, 16, 19, 23, 24, 37, 38

<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 31</b> (Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art)	
<p><b>Ground surfacing is an aspect of the conservation area that can easily be overlooked. Today, the specification and character of new surfaces (or the ‘upgrading’ of existing) is often dictated by factors which can have a very harmful effect on the texture and historic interest of the area.</b> Ease of access, whether for vehicles or pedestrians, ease of maintenance, drainage requirements and – inevitably – cost, all place pressure on the ground surfaces of the conservation area. The IHCA has few areas of historic surfacing (e.g. brick paving or stone hoggin; cast iron kerbs) left. However what does remain, brings a depth to the character and appearance of the surroundings – as well as clues to the appearance of the area in the past. These are often difficult to use or maintain, however, as are unmetalled surfaces (including paths and tracks of compacted earth or limestone with grassy verges) which also feature in the IHCA. The distinction between metalled and unmetalled, urban and rural, is vulnerable to erosion and the gradual suburbanisation of the whole conservation area is threatened with increasing prevalence of tarmac and the ubiquitous concrete block paver.</p>	See SPD Policy guidelines 8, 9, 35, 39



<b>ISSUE/PRESSURE 32</b> (Spaces: ground surfacing; hard- and soft-landscaping; original street furniture; boundary treatments, gates, etc; enclosure and density of buildings; demolition; car parking, road widening, visibility splays and vehicular access; signage and public art)	
<p><b>Signage and public art. Signage, advertisements and public artworks, where appropriately sited and thoughtfully designed, can make a lively contribution to the character of an historic environment.</b> Public art has the potential to increase the vibrancy of a space and provide visual stimulation – but it often provokes strong reactions. It is important to remember that art is subjective: one person’s wine is another’s poison. <b>Some people find public art obtrusive – indeed, some public art really does not ‘add value’ to its surroundings.</b> Many advertisements are poorly conceived and insensitively located. This is a particular problem on multiple occupancy sites (whether modern industrial estates, business parks or historic mill sites), where too often the entrance is marked by a competitive jumble of signage and advertisement. Worse still, on arrival, seeing signs and banners draped over buildings does nothing for the character of the area and can dramatically harm the appearance of even a good historic building. That is not to say that all historic signage has always been discreet and subtle – on the contrary, some of the most distinctive and evocative surviving historic signage is massive and brazen: for example, the tradition of painting directly onto the external brickwork or stonework of a building with large lettering, stating the name of the premises or company, and the nature of its business/wares. Meanwhile, obsolete historic signs and adverts can be vulnerable to loss, particularly when premises change hands or buildings are restored or converted.</p>	See SPD Policy guidelines 10, 41, 42