



**- CHARACTER SUMMARY -**

*Although the three 'legs' of the Study Area have their own unique character traits, as do several of the individual Conservation Areas included in this Review, they also have a number of strong common elements, which together make up the character of the Industrial Heritage Study Area as a whole.*

Chalford. Layers of transport infrastructure are squeezed into the valley bottom, the slopes having been painstakingly colonised by the creation of dry stone walled terraces. A 'polite' 19<sup>th</sup> century house perches above the 19<sup>th</sup> century road.



## THE CHARACTER OF THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREA: A SUMMARY

- 3.1 Although the three ‘legs’ of the Study Area (**west of Stroud, east of Stroud and south of Stroud**) have their own unique character traits, they also have a number of strong common elements which, together, make up the character of the Study Area as a whole.
- 3.2 Within each of the legs, distinct pockets also have strongly identifiable differences in character, ranging from the sparsely populated rural extremities to the dense rows of redbrick development lining many stretches of the 19<sup>th</sup> century road network. These component sub-areas or “**character parts**” are listed on page 98 in the ‘Introduction to the Character Parts’, which identifies 19 different character types in the Study Area. (The characteristics of each type are set out in VOLUME 2 of this Conservation Area Statement).
- 3.3 Yet it is possible to summarise the broad characteristics that make up the IHCA Study Area as a whole, which give the IHCA and the seven other Conservation Areas their special architectural and historic interest, and which tie together the Study Area’s diverse character parts.
- 3.4 This summary should be sufficient for many users of this Conservation Area Statement and should provide owners and developers with the tools to assess what it is that gives their building or site its particular character, and how it contributes to the wider interest of the Conservation Area. *However*, it is full of generalisations, as a summary must be. It should be borne in mind that anomalies and exceptions can be interesting and valuable in their own right.
- 3.5 This summary is intended to explain what types of buildings appear where in the study area, and why.
- 3.6 This is crucial to understanding what makes this particular area distinctive, understanding why particular buildings or spaces are (or are not) important, and ensuring that new development can preserve or enhance the fundamental character and special interest of the Conservation Area.

For a list of the illustrations used in the Character Summary over the following pages, please see Section IV at the end of this document

## THE CHARACTER OF THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREA: A SUMMARY

### Industrial Heritage

- 3.7 The Industrial Heritage Conservation Area was designated in 1987 and was one of the first instances in Britain where the value of an area’s industrial heritage was recognised as being worthy of conservation.
- 3.8 The Stroud Valleys have an important legacy as one of the country’s earliest cloth-making areas, a legacy which can be traced back to at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A cloth fuller was recorded in Woodchester in 1272, but non-cloth-related milling had long been thriving, drawing power from the Frome river and the area’s numerous streams and brooks, which spring from the limestone Cotswold plateau. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, cloth manufacture was well established in the Stroud valleys and the industry expanded and evolved over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to become the life-blood of the area. The cloth industry generated enormous wealth for several very powerful clothier families, who effectively commanded the local economy and left a legacy of well-built mills and grand houses. A large proportion of villages and hamlets in the Stroud Valleys either grew up specifically to serve the various mills or to accommodate cottage-based weavers, or else (as home to the hundreds of mill workers) they came to be dominated by the industry.
- 3.9 Though most mills in the Study Area, from the largest to the tiniest, have had a chequered history, most have had at least some small brush with the cloth industry at some point. The Stroud Valleys’ mills have also supported other agricultural and manufacturing processes for hundreds of years – from cider pressing and corn grinding, to wire and pin making, ironworks, engineering and walking stick production. Since the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, many mills have diversified to other industries, and textile manufacture has virtually disappeared in the locality. However, a rich built heritage of former mills, associated buildings and the transport infrastructure (canals, roads and railways) remains.
- 3.10 The relationship between built and natural features along the valley bottoms creates a unique and often surprisingly picturesque character, of great variety and contrast. A beautiful architectural gem, or some half forgotten relic, is often to be found hidden in the midst of an industrial estate. While industry and agriculture have co-existed for centuries. The watercourses, which were so crucial to the mills’ operation, have also provided us with some breathtaking landscape and idyllic scenery, while its power is obvious to anyone who has ever stood listening to the roar of a weir, seen a sluice opened or closed on a mill pond, or been lucky enough to witness the waterwheel turning at Dunkirk Mill.
- 3.11 The IHCA was originally designated to acknowledge and protect the influences that industry has had in forming the built environment. However, the IHCA is not exclusively made up of obvious industry. Historically, domestic buildings and small residential enclaves have always been closely intermingled with the industrial environment throughout the Stroud Valleys. It should be remembered that many buildings that lack an obviously ‘industrial’ appearance may actually have links to the industrial heritage of the area: clothiers’ mansions or mill workers’ cottages, for example, or buildings and structures that relate to the evolving transport infrastructure which was so crucial to the Stroud valleys’ industrial progress.



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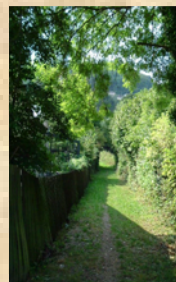
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## THE WEST: THE FROME CORRIDOR ON THE SEVERN VALE

- 3.12 **Patterns of settlement** along the length of the IHCA, including the placing, appearance and density of buildings, have been greatly influenced by the topography and geology of the flat Severn Vale and the steep Stroud Valleys.

### Landscape, setting and settlement patterns in the west



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- 3.13 The fertile, flood-prone land of **the lower Frome corridor**, from Dudbridge westwards to the Severn Vale, is characterised by its **open, rolling landscape**, which broadens out towards the Severn [picture 9].
- 3.14 Perfect for agriculture, this land has seen its scattered rural communities grow from their **medieval cores of church, manor house and home farm, which were often grouped with a domestic mill**. Villages such as Eastington and Wheatenhurst [8] are prominent in a predominantly unoccupied agricultural setting, and church towers (typically steeple-less, castellated and rather squat) are highly visible landmarks in long range views across the flat or gently rolling landscape.



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- 3.15 In the far west, **Framilode sits within a pocket of Severn Vale grazing marshes**. Here the numerous drainage ditches and streams that criss-cross the flat land are notable features and, outside the immediate confines of settlement, there is an overwhelming sense of broad open space and sometimes a hazy 'bleached out' brightness in the wide fields, pale mud flats, breezy rushes, reflective estuary and expansive sky [10]. It is quite a different world to the rest of the Study Area.



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- 3.16 **Framilode's origins relied on the Severn** – once one of Europe's busiest and most important commercial water highways. But **the settlement's evolution at was shaped by the 18<sup>th</sup> century arrival of the Stroudwater Navigation**.



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- 3.17 The Stroudwater Navigation originally passed through basically uninhabited pasture land – virtually all the settlement that has occurred along its banks has grown up subsequently (the ancient manorial and church groups at Wheatenhurst and Stonehouse Court being among the very few exceptions). **The development of both Newtown and Upper Framilode was very clearly linked to the new canal**, with numerous examples of Georgian 'polite' and local 'vernacular' architectural characteristics [11].



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- 3.18 Heading inland, long range views eastwards (and, getting closer to Stonehouse, looking south and north too) frequently feature **the spectacular backdrop of the Cotswold Escarpment**, looming over the broad Frome corridor [12]. The corridor narrows and becomes more constrained around Ryeford and Ebley, and this backdrop of wooded slopes and valleyside settlement (Whiteshill, Selsley) becomes more immediate [13]; while the **pattern of meadows created by the sinuous, tree lined river** is 'distilled' into a series of green oases.
- 3.19 Close to the Escarpment, **pasture and grazing land** predominates, with arable land becoming increasingly common towards the Severn in the west, where field sizes are larger and enclosure is less. The land form and field pattern is well appreciated from the Escarpment, where large buildings, settlement expansions and new development are often also conspicuous in long range views [9, 13].



3.20 Throughout much of the **rural Frome vale**, man-made features, such as the embankment and bridges of the canal, electricity pylons and wartime pillboxes stand out clearly in the undeveloped landscape. Although, for the most part, the canal [14] is soft-edged and tree-lined, its engineered straightness contrasts with the natural environment, and the effect is heightened by the causeway-like embankment it sits on in places.



3.21 **Settlement is often clustered close to the Frome watercourse**, hamlets (including Ryeford, Bridgend and Dudbridge) having grown up at **historic river crossing points** on the old routes between larger villages such as Stonehouse and the Stanleys, which tend to run north-south across the Study Area. **Mills sit at quite regular intervals along the Frome and the river itself snakes across the valley floor, frequently splitting into multiple branches**, some having been engineered as mill leets or to feed **millponds** (Stanley Mill has an outstanding example).



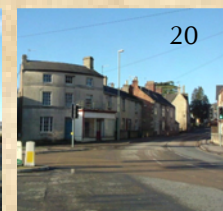
3.22 **Building groups nestle into the landscape**; the junction between rural openness and built-form (which is often densely grouped) tends to be softened by the trees which typically grow along the riverbanks. The importance of **traditional boundary treatments** in helping this transition should be noted. Low native hedgerows, dry-stone or brick walls, and wooden or iron fencing all help to contain and anchor the buildings in their wider setting [15, 16] – whether farm groups, mills complexes, clusters of cottages or buildings on the edge of larger villages and urban areas.



3.23 **Narrow lanes** (sometimes only single track) criss-cross the lower Frome corridor, bordered by **soft verges and hedges, or ditches** lined with willow and alder trees. Unlike the main roads, there is no brash signage, street lighting or markings to intrude into the **timeless quality of the lanes**. Farm tracks and private drives to larger rural houses are often un-metalled and/or kerbless, with grassy verges [15]. The C19<sup>th</sup> new roads and upgrades tend to run east-west. They changed the face of the western Study Area, creating linkages and aiding the introduction of new building styles and materials.



3.26 Within the more urban parts of the western leg, roadside buildings may sit hard on the back of the pavement, as at Cainscross [19], or behind small formal gardens – the boundary treatments are often important in the street scene. Sometimes plots are extensive to the rear, while urban ‘backlands’ [43] tend to be tight-knit, often with small-scale industry and houses side by side.



3.24 **Churchyards and graveyards** are often key open spaces in settlements, with enclosure provided by high quality stone or brick walls (the latter often having locally-distinctive, specially shaped coping-bricks or -stones), or by wrought iron railings. Gateways are usually notable features.



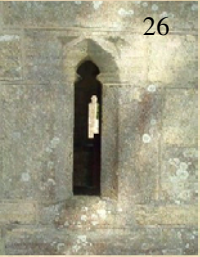
3.25 Similarly, **many cottages have small front gardens**, which are also enclosed from the road, typically by brick walls [21], simple iron railings [11], or wooden picket fences, which are often painted white or a colour. Typical cottage garden plants, spilling onto a garden path, set off the charming simplicity of the vernacular architecture. **The original boundary treatment often contributes much to the character of these buildings**. Many cottages have generous sized gardens to the rear.



3.27 **Mills and their ancillary buildings are often densely grouped, with tight spaces between buildings contrasting with broader, open areas** (as at Stanley Mill [23]). Spaces are generally functional and devoid of fancy landscaping; surfaces tend to be unpretentious (tarmac or gravel and, historically, brick or stone setts) and treated as a wall-to-wall carpet – i.e. without kerbs or borders. Greenery is generally minimal in these yards – perhaps no more than an isolated tree – but the riversides and perimeter of industrial sites are often well vegetated.







3.28 There are no large areas of woodland, but **trees** play an important role in the landscape. Certain parts feel ‘wooded’, even though these may be no more than linear tree-lined patches, only two or three trees deep – this becomes more pronounced further east, where features such as railway embankments are often heavily tree-covered. Small **farm copses**, **churchyards** and little **orchards**, slotted into villages and urban areas, make important contributions. Some **parkland** environments remain, particularly surrounding some of the Study Area’s largest houses. Distinctive features include mature specimen trees in pasture, or formal avenues along drives and boundaries (including the canal), and typical wrought iron parkland ‘estate’ fencing [8, 25]. Oak and Horse Chestnut trees are increasingly common towards the east.

### Building styles and materials in the west

3.29 Although prestigious buildings, such as churches and major houses, are often stone-built, the lack of good building stone west of Stonehouse means that the traditional materials and methods of construction in the Vale have long been based on **timber and locally made bricks**. Cotswold limestone was at a premium as it often had to be transported large distances, and the blue lias stone which is native to the westernmost part of the Study Area always required rendering. Hence **limewash** and the use of roughcast **lime render** (often in conjunction with better quality limestone dressings [25, 27]) are also strong traditions.

3.30 **Timber frame was the Severn Vale’s early building vocabulary [28, 29]** and this form of construction extended from medieval times, right through to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, being superseded by brick from about 1700. In the study area, **surviving buildings from this period tend to lie close to the Frome watercourse**. From cottages, to barns, to mills, buildings were characteristically long and low: simple rectangular plan forms, with a **wide frontage** and **shallow plan depth**. Low storey heights, together with the **steepness of roof pitches** (most would originally have been thatched), mean that the roof is a dominant part of the elevation, sometimes accounting for as much as half the building’s height. Roofs were often habitable space, with small pitched-roofed or ‘cat-slide’ dormers. Small **casement windows** (either with leaded lights or multi-paned with wooden glazing bars) are slotted into the simple square box-framing. **Brick infill panels** (sometimes limewashed or rendered) have generally replaced woven wattle panels or lime rendered laths, while **roofs are now most commonly clay plain tiles or, occasionally stone slate**.

3.31 These characteristics subtly evolved into the **mid 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgian and Victorian vernacular**, which consisted of much more straight-forward brick or stone construction. Hence the distinctive long, low building form with a steep roof is common to both traditions [29, 30]. Lime-coated Walk Farmhouse at Wheatenhurst [31] is a typical wide-fronted farmhouse. **The later vernacular also developed into a slightly more ‘upright’ appearance [35]**. Buildings of the later vernacular are much better survivors today than their timber framed predecessors. Their prevalence in the study area also illustrates the boom in building and the increasing numbers of people living and working here, particularly as improving infrastructure like the Stroudwater Navigation brought prosperity and fuelled the expansion of local mills.

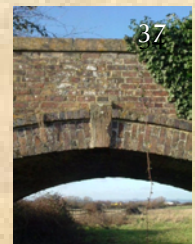
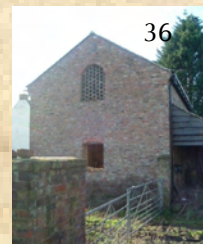
3.32 **Houses and cottages [30, 35] are generally wide-frontage and shallow plan-depth** (commonly only one room deep, so roof spans are often only 4-6m, front to back). Simple single-storey **lean-to ranges** to the rear or the side often house additional ground floor rooms [32, 35].



3.34 Roof coverings are traditionally **clay plain tiles** (double-Roman tiles occur, but are not so typical) or **Welsh slate**. Chimneys perch at one or both gable-ends, sometimes atop an externally projecting chimney breast. Most are only **two storeys**, while attics and roof spaces tend to be lit and ventilated via openings in the gable-end wall, rather than by using dormers. **Casement windows sit beneath segmental arched window-heads**, construction of which varies, often from village to village. **Windows** are usually timber frames with side-hinged opening casements, either of iron or of timber with multiple glazing bars [34], which were always painted. Modest cottages and utilitarian buildings usually had plain **plank doors**, with 4- or 6-**panelled doors** on houses of higher status. **Most were built without porches** and, where subsequently added, these tend to be simple timber canopies, rather than enclosed brick structures.



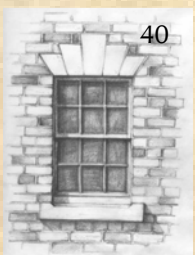
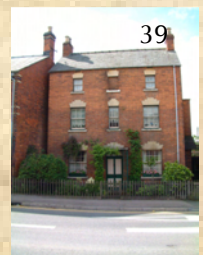
3.35 **The bones of this brick-based vernacular translated to all sorts of buildings, including agricultural [36] and industrial, as well as domestic. Many Stroudwater canal structures display typical characteristics – from workers’ cottages to the original brick bridges [37].** Brick colour and texture varies according to the date and status of the building and the location within the Study Area, as does the precise bricklaying bond. Bricks lend themselves to the creation of cambered arches, decorative courses of projecting ‘headers’ and hit-and-miss ventilation panels [36]. Attention to detail – like the fine lime pointing commonly used [34] – contributes character and texture.



3.36 **By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of ‘polite’ architectural styling was being felt in this part of the Study Area** (this is architecture which is much more consciously ‘designed’, relying on fashion and international influences, rather than ‘vernacular’ building, which is driven by constructional functionality and local traditions). **Many early buildings were given fashionable facelifts** – some houses were extended or re-fronted in the new style, as at Ryeford Lodge [38]. Sometimes this involved completely re-orientating the building, particularly where new roads had been put in, and this can provide a fascinating insight into evolving infrastructure, changing fortunes and social status.



3.37 **Stone and other ‘imported’ materials became much more common in local polite architecture.** But perhaps the most widespread and easily accommodated ‘polite’ feature was the sash window. **Sash windows under contrasting dressed stone window heads, with a distinctive ‘stepped’ vousoir shape [40],** are very locally typical and appear on even modest cottages from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (as at Newtown).



3.38 **A lively juxtaposition of materials (principally red brick and limestone) is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the mill complexes here and also the more urban areas (particularly Ebley, Dudbridge, Ryeford and Bridgend).** Buildings of differing styles sit side by side, and different materials can often indicate phases of expansion or alteration. But the two materials are also often consciously combined – typically a brick building with stone dressings. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century industry made good use of contrasting coloured brick dressings too [41]. **The physical annexation and juxtaposition of different uses (domestic, industrial, agricultural) is also common [43],** adding to the rich mix of styles, scales and materials.



3.39 **The division between the brick tradition of the Vale and the stone of the Valleys becomes blurred towards Stroud and the Cotswold escarpment.** The settlements of Stonehouse, the Stanleys, Ryeford and Ebley contain examples of both types of vernacular building tradition.







## THE SOUTH AND EAST: THE STROUD VALLEYS

### Landscape, setting and settlement patterns in the south and east

- 3.40 In the middle ages, the Stroud valleys were very sparsely populated and the timber frame tradition dominated, as it did throughout much of Britain. The emergence of what we think of as the ‘Cotswold style’, really only began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with a resurgence in the local cloth industry (which had been decimated by the 14<sup>th</sup> century Black Death) and spurred on by land and wealth redistribution following the dissolution of the monasteries. A series of massive building booms swept away much of what had previously existed and the process of settling the steep valley sides began. **The growing cloth industry influenced the appearance, form and siting of buildings to a very great extent.**
- 3.41 From Stonehouse eastwards, the landscape becomes increasingly characterised by the **steep hillsides and constrained valleys to the east and south of Stroud**. Here weavers’ and mill workers’ hamlets cluster along the spring lines on the hillsides [45, 46, 47].
- 3.42 These are often on the routes of historic pack horse tracks that linked the **mills in the valley bottoms** [44] to the main trade roads on the hill tops and the major settlements of Bisley, Minchinhampton and Painswick, which were prosperous centres of local wool-production. Some valleyside hamlets expanded into large villages, such as Amberley, Woodchester and Chalford. Others, such as Bagpath and Theescombe, have remained small and relatively isolated.
- 3.43 Many of the steepest routes have been superseded over the centuries by improved roads, following a winding but less extreme course (Butterow Hill at Bowbridge, and the ‘W’ at Nailsworth being good examples). Clues to the earlier routes can sometimes be seen in the clustering of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, as at Bowbridge where the **cottages step irregularly up the slope**, aligned to the steep hillside track, which is now no more than a footpath [49].
- 3.44 In many cases, these routes were themselves superseded by further phases of road construction in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which, together with the 18<sup>th</sup> century Thames & Severn Canal, began **linking together some of the previously isolated valley-bottom mill sites and settlements into a ‘string’**. Again, the earlier routes, which criss-crossed the valleys, can be discerned at points where the two road phases intersect or combine in the valley bottoms (at Inchbrook, for example, and at Rooksmoor [50], where some roadside buildings pre-date the 1782 turnpike.)
- 3.45 In the past there has been **very little tradition of domestic development in the valley bottoms: the water meadows and valley floors have been chiefly left to agriculture and clusters of industry**, as in the Vale.
- 3.46 In both Vale and Valleys, the exceptions to this rule are surprisingly few. However, **small groups of houses grew up around river crossing points**, such as at Bowbridge, Wallbridge and Brimscombe, with buildings clustered close to the bridge and usually aligned to the road. **Millers’ houses** are often found tucked in amongst industrial groups and **occasional canal-related dwellings occur** – often sited in quite remote locations.



3.47 The 19<sup>th</sup> century valley-bottom roads, which tend to sit just a little way above the actual valley floor, are quite well-populated, though [52, 77]. Early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘polite’ stone and stucco (render) houses, with sash windows, sit alongside **red brick roadside houses (particularly terraces), which are typical of the Study Area’s late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic development** (see 3.100 - 3.103, below). These tend to sit on the slope above the road, with industry on the lower side.



3.48 **Mills sit at quite regular intervals along the River Frome, the Nailsworth Stream and the Toadsmoor Stream – the watercourses snake across the valley floor, frequently splitting into multiple branches**, some having been engineered as mill leets or to feed **millponds** (Brimscombe Mill’s pond is an urban oasis, while the pond at Belvedere Mill makes an impressive visual setting for the buildings.) On smaller tributary brooks, ‘batch’ mills boosted the less powerful water flow by creating a distinctive series of ponds, stepping down the slope - as at Atcombe Mill (Frogmarsh) and Southfield New Mill.



3.49 The sinuous course of the River Frome and the Nailsworth Stream contrasts with the rather straighter Thames and Severn canal – **the looping Frome frequently comes very close to the canal, creating distinctive narrow slivers of land** – sometimes little wider than the towpath. The winding, often tree-lined, watercourses carve up the valley bottoms meadows – **in places, open sunlit ‘glades’ contrast with the shady, enclosed spaces of the towpath, the former Midland railway branch (now a cycle route), narrow lanes and leafy sections of the main roads** – very atmospheric where long shadows are cast by evening or morning sunlight. East of Chalford in particular, the ‘Golden Valley’ lives up to its name on a sunny day, with a backdrop of wooded slopes [57].



3.50 Towards its eastern and southern extremities and at Toadsmoor, the Study Area takes on the character of sparsely populated **secluded valleys**, where small vernacular building groups sit quite isolated in picturesque rural landscape. Certain stretches within more central areas (notably between Bourne Mill and St Marys [56], and at Rooksmoor and Woodchester) produce a similar impression.



3.51 **Long range views up to green valley sides and hilltops are particularly important to the eastern and southern legs of the Study Area** – even within (or adjacent to) quite urban areas, there is a sense of contact with the natural landscape [53, 55]. **Equally, the valleyside settlements have strong visual as well as physical links with the valley bottoms.** Watledge and Chalford Vale sprawl up the valley sides, while Brimscombe has an impressive amphitheatre-like presence above the former port area [54].



3.52 The **valley side settlements** are predominantly constructed from limestone, as are the mills they served. Their position on the steep hillsides has often entailed the construction of terraces of dry stone retaining walls to support houses and gardens – the natural landscape has been painstakingly artificially shaped to allow habitation and transport infrastructure. The **terraces, retaining walls and viaducts** make a striking contribution to the character of the southern and, particularly, the eastern legs of the Study Area [58, 59].



3.53 **Evolving transport infrastructure has always played a major role in shaping the character of this part of the Study Area, but modern highway alterations have been particularly harmful** – though Wallbridge retains certain key features of historic interest, much of its charm and tight-knit vernacular character has been obliterated. Bowbridge, too has suffered from a loss of roadside enclosure due to highway modifications.







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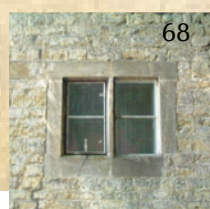
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## Building styles and materials in the south and east

- 3.54 **Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a strong building vocabulary emerged, which gives the area a visual coherence. This was based in the ready supply of good local limestone, which was often quite literally quarried out of the back garden by cottage builders. But the area was busy with larger quarries. The escarpment provided particularly good access to high quality ‘freestone’ – Selsley Common still bears the scars of quarrying [60, 61] and this was almost certainly the source of the large blocks of hammer-dressed stone used at Ebley Mill.**
- 3.55 **Settlements at the foot of the escarpment also benefited from the accessible ‘freestone’: the Valleys’ vernacular sits side by side with the Vale vernacular in and around Stonehouse and The Stanleys.**
- 3.56 A surprisingly high number of buildings throughout the Stroud valleys would originally have been limewashed, and many still betray traces (ranging from a soft cream colour to a vivid yellow ochre), tucked away in sheltered crevices [62]. Roughcast lime render was also used [63].
- 3.57 The early valleys’ vernacular contains many components that are typically ‘Cotswold’, yet the Stroud valleys added their own particular characteristics. The **influence of the growing cloth industry** is seen in the physical appearance, form and siting of buildings of all sorts, while the **steeply sloping topography** also influenced how buildings took shape.
- 3.58 Tall attic gables (“**cross gables**”) are a distinctive feature of the local roofscape. These were functional additions to the valleys’ building vernacular, because the local economy was dependent to such an extent on cloth production that buildings of all sorts (cottages [64], clothiers houses [65], farmhouses, mills) had attics which were designed to accommodate the large broadlooms needed for the weaving process. Cross gables became less and less common during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as cloth-making processes were increasingly centralised into the mills and loom space was no longer essential off-site.
- 3.59 **Key characteristics of the early vernacular include very steep roof pitches** (typically 50-55° to ensure the **stone roofing slates** [67] shed water effectively and were weathertight, as well as helping the roof timbers to bear the weight) and **stone mullion windows**, either with or without **hoodmoulds** (which helped divert rainwater from the openings). Windows are usually aligned beneath the apex of the gable. Glass (originally leaded lights) was set directly into the stone window surrounds, with some **opening iron-framed casements** [68]. Simple but hefty **plank doors** were usual, and **porches** were uncommon – although some higher status houses had classically-influenced canopies on stone corbels, and decorative wrought iron or functional timber porches were sometimes fitted on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – corrugated iron was even commonly used [71].
- 3.60 Plan depths were dictated by the span that could be achieved by the roof timbers – hence buildings are often only one room deep, or ‘double pile’ (two rooms deep with a valley between two roof pitches [65]) on the largest buildings. Mill buildings were typically long and narrow, with windows on the long elevations [66]. On sloping ground, buildings are often partially cut into the bank behind, and therefore only have windows on the outward-facing elevation (another reason to avoid deep floor plans).



3.61 **Buildings respond in a bespoke, irregular way to the challenging topography, which helps them to sit on the slopes in a very natural-looking way [49, 69].**



3.62 In many places, the sloping topography and elevated vantage points make the built form of both valley side settlements and valley-bottom industry conspicuous components of often breathtaking views. In particular, **the roofscape**, with its irregular alignments, subtle variations in shape and pitch, and the range of traditional materials is important [69].



3.63 Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, distinctive features of the early vernacular, such as the steep cross-gables and stone mullioned windows, were increasingly left behind and the influence of polite architecture was absorbed. Wealthy clothiers, in particular, lavished money on their homes – they pioneered the introduction of polite and international architectural styles in the area. Sash windows were increasingly common – sometimes retro-fitted into cottages [??], and often combined with smooth, highly dressed stonewalling, known as ‘ashlar’. 19<sup>th</sup> century bay windows take advantage of the valley views [52, 69].



3.64 **The early Georgian and Victorian building vernacular** exploited the high quality of the local limestone, which could be cut and dressed into quite large blocks, particularly around Stroud. From mills [73] to farmhouses [74], barns, stables and terraces of workers’ cottages [75], the **distinctive arched window- and door-heads, formed from carefully shaped stone blocks, are among the most locally identifiable building details** (though timber lintels also exist, particularly in the Study Area’s extremities, around Nailsworth and Chalford). By far the majority of domestic buildings built between the tail end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first 30 or 40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Stroud valleys – particularly workers’ cottages – adhere to some basic characteristics:



3.65 As in the Vale, **houses and cottages are generally wide-frontage and shallow plan-depth** (commonly only one room deep, so roof spans can be as little as 4-6m, front to back). Simple single storey **lean-to ranges**, to the rear or the side, often house additional ground floor rooms. Such additions may be either stone or brick. Roof coverings are traditionally **stone slates** or **Welsh slate**, both of which are laid in diminishing courses – tiles reducing in size from the eaves to the ridge [67]. Stone or brick chimneys perch on the ridge, at one or both gable-ends. Most are only **two storeys**, and dormers were less common than may be imagined (where they do exist, they are generally quite small, with pitched or sometimes hipped roofs). The **archetypal Stroud valleys window from this period is a casement**, consisting of a timber frame, with side-hinged opening lights of iron, usually with a single horizontal glazing bar. Timber casements are also common – always painted, never stained or oiled. Modest cottages and utilitarian buildings usually had plain plank doors, with 4- or 6-panelled doors on houses of higher status.



3.66 **While stone was used almost exclusively for three hundred years, the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century saw the occasional brick building appear** – The Brickhouse near Capel’s Mill, home of the wealthy Capel family (now demolished), and Lower Gannicox on Cainscross Road would have been eye-catching at first.



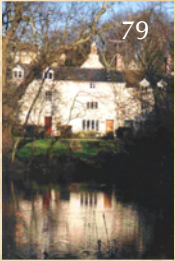
3.67 **Red brick began to be used for major mill buildings during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century** (the main buildings at Lewiston Mill of 1856 and 1864 [76] were a startling architectural departure, locally) and seems to have been **the material of choice for much of the industrial expansion that occurred between the 1870s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century**, particularly around Thrupp, Brimscombe and Dudbridge. Now, many of the valleys’ major landmarks are brick built, and the large stock of red brick terraces and houses of the late Victorian and Edwardian period make for a lively mix alongside older stone buildings. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the railways made great use of blue-black engineering bricks for major structures, such as bridges and viaducts.







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## MILLS, FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

3.68 **Mills, and former mill sites, punctuate the length of the conservation area** and there is often a strong visual dialogue between them – like the church towers of the Vale, **the mills' landmark chimneys and water towers make striking focal points [78]**. Most of these sites were historically very isolated in the landscape; prior to the creation of valley-bottom transport infrastructure (roads, railways and canals), the river-based mills were accessed by private tracks, which were often long, steep and circuitous – particularly in the Stroud valleys.

3.69 By far, the majority of the mills in the study area were originally river-related, and often the earliest buildings in many industrial groups can be found tucked away by the water's edge, or actually spanning the watercourse. **Water management** works, such as **mill ponds [79]** and **sluices**, were created to harness the water's power. Traces of these still exist in many places and provide evocative reminders of the past.

3.70 **The mill buildings have often undergone waves of expansion and rebuilding in response to each improvement in transport infrastructure and advance in manufacture technology.** The loading doors on Kimmins Mill (Dudbridge) are a graphic example – the building took advantage of the adjacent Midland Railway branch station (now disappeared), with a purpose-built loading 'bridge', which spanned from the station to the upper storeys of the mill [81].

3.71 Many mills were originally constructed with an eye to the prestige of the owner, and are therefore quite imposing and well detailed. Ebley [80, 82] and St Mary's mills are good examples of the **archetypal Stroud valleys mills: long, narrow, stone-built with a pitched roof and repetitive fenestration** – typical of mills which underwent development in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

3.72 As a large mill, built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Stanley Mill at Ryeford [84, 91, 92] is quite unusual in being brick-built. **Some early brick mills do exist (Fromebridge Mill, for example [83]), but brick was principally a material of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.** Red brick with dressings of stone or black brick is a particular industrial trait around Stonehouse, Dudbridge and Thrupp. Griffin Mill (Thrupp) [86] and Lewiston Mill (Toadsmoor) [76] are typical of the way that the potentially overbearing, monolithic character of the buildings is lifted somewhat by the large windows and the delicacy of their cast iron glazing bars – the windows are important to the overall impression, part of the original architectural concept.

3.73 **The phases of expansion and the adaptation of mills to other industries often had little regard to aesthetic appeal, which in itself tells part of the working story of these places and can be important to their character.** Quirks and anomalies (such odd patches of contrasting materials [84, 85] used to alter buildings) shouldn't necessarily be 'ironed out' or 'neatened up'.

3.74 **Ancillary buildings** are frequently a haphazard mix of stone, various types of red brick, creosoted or painted timber and corrugated iron [88]. More prosaically, concrete blocks, asbestos and sheet metal are also common, and incremental add-ons, such as loading bays, flues and vents, have sometimes been insensitively slapped on – although these can often add to the texture and character of this industrial environment [80, 86].



- 3.75 It has to be borne in mind that conservation areas are not about ‘prettiness’ or ‘attractiveness’, but about ‘character’. The **gritty and functional appearance of the mill sites** is a key component of the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area.
- 3.76 **However, it is equally true that even minor ancillary buildings were often lavished with attention to detail and quality, and may be consciously embellished [87, 88], or simply just sturdy and well-built.**
- 3.77 Ancillary buildings range from the most basic, functional, make-shift boxes, to little architectural masterpieces in their own right. Several mills, such as Stanley Mill (Ryeford) [91] and Lewiston Mill (Brimscombe) [87], have **minor buildings which complement the main ranges by picking up their architectural motifs and details and by using a similar palette of materials.**
- 3.78 Most **mills** are set in the very bottom of the valleys, often **below road level [89]**. In spite of their **landmark chimneys and water towers**, they can be quite shielded from view. As a general rule, **mill ranges and their ancillary buildings ‘turn their backs’ on the canals and roads** and present blank, hard edges as their public faces [90, 91]. Tall perimeter walls are common, particularly along main-road or canal frontages, often with vehicular or pedestrian access marked by distinctive brick, stone or timber gatepiers and timber or iron gates [93]. Roadside and canalside buildings are frequently quite low, with a strong horizontal emphasis and a general lack of windows or doors: later phases of expansion are often found at the perimeter of these sites, particularly the redbrick northlight buildings of the late C19<sup>th</sup> and early C20<sup>th</sup>, with their distinctive zig-zag roofline [94].
- 3.79 **Often, the special historic and architectural interest of a mill site is strengthened by ‘group value’ – in that the ancillary buildings help to complete the story.** It is not just the set-piece landmark buildings that are important, and these can become isolated and deprived of their historic context if stripped of the buildings which provided them with support. Seemingly ‘common’ buildings – such as northlight factory buildings or makeshift tin sheds – are vulnerable because they are often perceived as architecturally ‘disposable’. This is rarely the case and, if left unchecked, continued losses will eventually mean that these highly typical, characteristic buildings become rarities within the Study Area.
- 3.80 While it is impossible to miss the major landmark mills, and industrial estates are quite evident, **remnants of small-scale industry are often tucked away and may not be obvious.** Ebley Saw Mill [96] and Atcombe Mill are modestly scaled, dwarfed by their mill neighbours; while the industrial origins of buildings at Bakers Mill (Golden Valley) [95], Arundell Mill (Stroud) [66] and Churchend are ‘disguised’ by their rather domestic appearance and idyllic vernacular architecture. **Often, former industrial buildings sit side-by-side with other uses, particularly squeezed into backlands in the most dense, urban areas, as at Ebley [43, 96].**

### Clothiers’ and millers’ homes

- 3.81 If you dig into the history of almost any of the Study Area’s most substantial houses, you will find some connection with the local cloth industry. In particular, grand clothiers’ houses are integral to the local historic environment. Often, they provide little case-studies in how mill owners’ and clothiers’ homes evolved over the centuries, reflecting economic boom and bust and social attitudes to manufacture, money, status and the cloth industry.







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3.82 **Early (16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> century) mills tended to feature mill owners' houses in very close proximity to the mill itself** (e.g. Fromebridge Mill [99], St Mary's Mill). It was not uncommon for these to be annexed to mill buildings. Grade II\* Lodgemore, despite its spectacular 18<sup>th</sup> century re-fronting and extension [98], sits cheek by jowl with functional buildings and, to the rear, the early origins are visible in the more vernacular gabled architecture. **Often these houses were extended or re-fronted by their affluent owners, to reflect more up-to-date fashions** (as at Southfield House [97] and St Mary's). By the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 19<sup>th</sup>, it became more fashionable for clothiers to build their homes **at a little distance from their mills** – in the Valleys, these often perch above the industrial valley bottom (e.g. Dunkirk, where the house overlooks the mill, but is quite distant). Earlier, on-site houses often became homes for mill managers or offices. Early C19<sup>th</sup> The Leaze (now 'Eastington Park') was built for mill owner Henry Hicks – an extremely powerful man [100]. His house was purpose built, on open land, at some little distance from his three Eastington mills (Millend, Churchend and Meadow Mill), but within easy reach. It illustrates the wealth and social aspirations of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century mill owners locally: the house and grounds aspire (in terms of architecture, scale and setting) towards that of the landed gentry.



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**GREEN SPACES AND GAPS**



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3.83 Conventionally, the water meadows have been left undeveloped [103, 104]. This has preserved some of the **visual and historic distinction between mill sites and settlements** along the length of the Study Area [101]. However, in places, these glimpses into the past are being seriously eroded by the uncharacteristic modern trend for valley-bottom housing development (particularly acute on the stretch of canal between Ebley Saw Mill and Dudbridge bridge [102]).



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3.84 The distinctive, rhythmical pattern of mills, dotted at intervals along the linear Study Area, is well-appreciated from the perspective of the canals and (to a lesser extent) the former Nailsworth branch railway line. By contrast, sometimes the main roads have become developed in a linear fashion, which blurs this perception. Gaps between mills, industrial groups and clusters of settlement are particularly crucial to the special interest and appearance of this linear conservation area since, by its nature, much of its character is perceived in transit – passing *through* the area or *along* the transport routes.



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3.85 The **green spaces along the IHCA** are as important to its character as the built environment, acting not only as a visual setting for the buildings, but also providing a valuable insight into the **historic co-existence of agriculture and industry**. Intensely developed urban and industrial areas are juxtaposed with pockets of land that have remained green, or land that was once developed but has subsequently become redundant open space. In some cases, former mill ponds have been infilled, but still maintain a valuable sense of open space. Frequently, green spaces occur in places that have no obvious use, such as narrow, inaccessible or confined sites. These may be unmaintained and overgrown and could be perceived as being 'scruffy', but they play an important part in **punctuating and balancing the built form and pattern of settlement** in the conservation area.



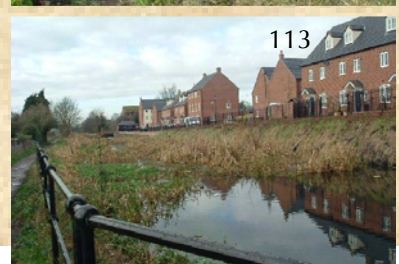
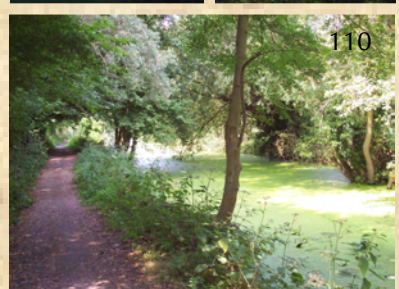
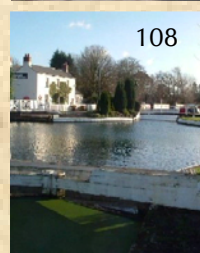
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3.86 **The 'spine' of the Study Area is a green corridor**, ranging in character from wooded railway cuttings/embankments [105], to sports fields [105] and former tip land, to the high quality meadows of the rural Frome vale, and the secluded valleys at the extremities of the southern and eastern legs.



THE CANALS

- 3.87 Two great 18<sup>th</sup> century canals traverse the IHCA Study Area, descending westwards from the Cotswold plateau to the River Severn. The **Stroudwater Navigation** (built between 1776 and 1779, after several abortive attempts to render the River Frome navigable) linked Stroud to the River Severn at Framilode and was one of the country’s earliest canals. The **Thames & Severn Canal** (which meets the Stroudwater at the now infilled Wallbridge Basin [107]) was open as far as Daneway by 1786 and completed as far as the Thames at Lechlade in 1789. It includes some staggering feats of engineering as it climbs the Cotswold scarp, with twenty-eight locks between Wallbridge and Daneway. The Stroudwater was unusually broad, to accommodate Severn trows (the flat-bottomed sailing boats used for goods shipment). An inland port (now infilled) was constructed at Brimscombe [106], where goods were transhipped onto the longer, narrower Thames & Severn barges. East of Bourne lock, the canal narrows noticeably.
- 3.88 A third major canal, the **Gloucester and Sharpness**, passes through the study area, crossing the Stroudwater at Saul Junction. Opened in 1827, this was Britain’s first ship canal. It is **extremely wide** and its **airy, open character** [108] is in marked contrast to the other two canals, which feature many highly vegetated stretches, enclosed by trees – their branches often touching, creating a tunnel-like character. The Gloucester-Sharpness is still busy, with a vibrant house-boat community, while only a tiny stretch of the Stroudwater (at Whitminster) is still fully functional – offering a glimpse of what the ongoing restoration project may produce [109].
- 3.89 Today, the abandoned Stroudwater and Thames & Severn canals (known collectively now as the ‘Cotswold Canals’) are **tranquil green havens, with flourishing flora and fauna**. Parts of both the Stroudwater and the Thames & Severn have been completely infilled, and the Stroudwater was subject to narrowing in the 1960s. Some of the trees now lining the corridor are self seeded, encroaching on the line of the channel and therefore destined to be lost to the restoration [110]. However, the verdant tree-lined character is important and these losses may need to be compensated for by replanting in a more planned manner.
- 3.90 The vast majority of **the canals corridor has a naturalistic informality** – yet this is not just a result of disuse and neglect. **These were always fundamentally rural canals**. The two canals generally bypassed the centres of towns and villages (virtually all settlement along the Stroudwater occurred post-canal) and the **tradition of building on one side of the canal bank only** (predominantly the towpath side) has ensured that the **canals retain a rural or semi-rural feel**, even as they pass adjacent to the sprawl of industrial complexes.
- 3.91 **The canals are predominantly bordered by soft, natural edges**, with a towpath (which originally allowed horses to pull vessels along the canal) of compacted earth or gravel, and broad grassy verges. Even through the most urbanised stretches of the IHCA, historic wharves and sections of hard canal edging are limited. **Hefty limestone coping blocks**, resting on brick or stone walls below water, are used at the handful of historic wharves and at locks and bridges. Wharves (the largest of which were basically big open spaces [111]) sat close to the water level, for ease of loading and unloading goods to the mills – unlike the unfortunate trend for modern canalside development to construct steep embankments and retaining walls, with buildings perched well above water level [102, 113]. Even Brimscombe Port’s distinctive ‘island’, which was used as a coal wharf, had soft grassy edges.





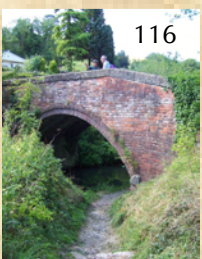


3.92 The **towpath to the Thames & Severn canal** was always enclosed, marking out the extent of the Company’s land ownership. The **dry stone walls [114, 118] are a particularly distinctive feature of the canal** – some parts reaching up to a height of two metres, though in places no more than a couple of courses remain above ground, engulfed by vegetation.



3.93 The **Stroudwater’s towpath** was not formally marked out and enclosed until 1827, and today the boundary is a piecemeal mix of hedgerow, stone or brick walls, iron parkland railings and (less attractively) a random collection of modern fencing. **Field gates span the path in several locations [115]** – another very distinctive and unusual canal feature, probably originating in the need to stop grazing cattle from wandering between fields, along the previously unenclosed towpath.

### Canal structures and canalside buildings



3.94 Many of the original canal structures, particularly along the Stroudwater, are built from **mellow, multi-tonal red brick**. When the canals were being built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these were made locally on a relatively small scale, hence marked variations in the appearance and colour of the bricks from east to west across the Study Area.



3.95 Both Cotswold Canals feature **brick-built hump-backed bridges [116]**, but the Stroudwater and the Thames & Severn companies had their own subtle design variations. The Stroudwater is particularly distinctive in its use of **swing bridges** – a type of bridge which the Thames & Severn did not employ.



3.96 The two canals both have their own highly distinctive characters, with fairly standard designs adopted for many of their early structures and associated buildings (cottages, warehouses etc). Typical stone-built Thames & Severn **warehouses** can be seen at Wallbridge Upper Wharf and Brimscombe [117], while a similarly designed warehouse at Bowbridge Wharf appears to have been subsequently incorporated into a row of cottages. Although design variations do occur (including the distinctive ‘Roundhouse’ [4] at Chalford), archetypal Thames & Severn **cottages – built for lock keepers, lengthsmen and wharfkeepers** – are also easily recognisable: built of stone with segmental arched window- and door-heads. Stroudwater cottages are more often brick-built, with slate or clay tile roofs, but they display an equally dolls-house-like simplicity. Both blueprints are very typical of the Georgian and early Victorian architectural vernacular [118] (see 3.32 and 3.64, above).



3.97 Mill-related and (sometimes very isolated) canal-related dwellings occur sporadically. Given the great length of the canals corridor in the study area, **canalside houses are surprisingly few and far between**. Of these, a high proportion either sit side-on or actually turn their backs on the canal, sitting hard against the towpath, as at Canal Row, Framilode [112]. Larger houses (e.g. Ebley House, Stonehouse Court, Ham House) tend to be set well back, with grounds extending to the water’s edge.



3.98 **Historically, buildings have tended to turn their backs on the canals [119, 112, 90]**. Mill complexes and industrial sites bordering the canals often form very hard edges, with buildings sitting directly on the back of the towpath. Few buildings open directly onto the towpath, and windows are often sparse on canal-facing elevations, particularly at ground floor level. There are of course exceptions, but this is a very distinctive underlying trend. Canalside enclosure is further enhanced by the **tall perimeter walls that often border the historic mills**. Many feature **gateways onto the towpath**, providing wharf access [120].





**LINKAGES: THE IMPACT OF CANALS, ROADS AND RAILWAYS**

3.99 The 18<sup>th</sup> century canals, and late C18<sup>th</sup>/early C19<sup>th</sup> improvements to the road infrastructure, linked some of the previously isolated riverside mill sites into a ‘string’. Notably, the 1782 turnpike Bath Road opened up the bottom of the Nailsworth Valley, while the 1814 London Road from Stroud through Bowbridge, Brimscombe and Chalford to Cirencester, together with the 1825 Cainscross turnpike, opened up the River Frome corridor. But many mill sites still retain a strong sense of their original isolation, separated from their neighbours by unpopulated gaps and green spaces. The very base of the valleys remains dominated by industry and green space of various types.

3.100 These roads tend to sit very slightly above the valley bottom. From being fundamentally river-centric or perched on the valley sides, settlement began to expand into these newly opened-up roadside areas in the C19<sup>th</sup> and C20<sup>th</sup>. **Thus the ‘new’ roads came to be populated by buildings of generally more polite architectural appearance, typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century** – ranging from the simple elegance of classical stone and stucco-fronted terraces (such as Palace Chambers on London Road, Stroud) to picturesque ‘revivalist’ styles (such as neo-gothic and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arts & Crafts), which were often favoured for toll houses [127] and lodge cottages/gatehouses.

3.101 With the canals, the improved road system and, to a greater extent, the arrival of the Railways (1845 & 1867), **new materials became accessible to the area**. Cheap, mass-produced **red brick** could be transported over a greater area (the Stonehouse brick works were particularly prolific), or imported to the region. **Welsh slate** began to make its mark on the Stroud valleys’ roofscape. This created the **mix of building styles and materials that is so characteristic of the study area**. The 19<sup>th</sup> century changed the vernacular face of older settlements such as Ebley and Wallbridge, to the point where it is sometimes difficult to perceive their ancient origins.

3.102 The 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the construction of the **brick terraces** (as well as individual and paired cottages and villas) which have in many ways come to be as typical of the Stroud area as its clusters of stone cottages [121, 122]. Despite mass-production and mass-building, these houses are carefully detailed and thoughtfully proportioned; **their character and visual impact relies to a large extent on group-impact, uniformity and consistency of design and detailing**. Features such as windows, doors, boundary walls, gate-piers and railings are crucial to the character of these buildings; they are often delicately proportioned and well crafted. Hence, these buildings are particularly vulnerable to piecemeal alterations.

3.103 **As well as linking and revitalising, evolving transport infrastructure often demolished, truncated, isolated and split apart the close-knit historic fabric**. Early C19<sup>th</sup> artisan terraces at Bath Place, Cheapside, were severed from the town centre by the Great Western railway line in 1845, preventing further southerly town centre expansion. Viaducts slice through Wallbridge Mill [123] and Bourne Mill and the only surviving building at Capel’s Mill is one built into a viaduct arch by the railway company, to compensate for demolitions.

3.104 **The Study Area is peppered with buildings which relate to the operation or support of the transport infrastructure**. Turnpike toll houses, wharf- and lock-cottages and railway signal boxes ensured the smooth running of the infrastructure; workers were often housed on the spot; coaching inns, canalside pubs and road- and rail-related hotels provided refreshment and accommodation for travellers (man and horse alike). Like the canals, the roads and railways brought their own architectural vocabulary – **railway architecture** is particularly distinctive: the rather whimsical ‘cottagey’ revivalist styles beloved of the Victorians, combined with the latest robust cast iron or black brick...**a mix of the technological and the picturesque – rather like the overall character of the IHCA study area as a whole**.

