

## Policy context, scope and status

### 1.1 Planning Policy Context

The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s.69(1)). Bristol currently has 33 designated Conservation Areas, covering approximately 30% of the city.

There is a requirement to review those areas from time to time so that changes in both the understanding of the area and its physical context can be accommodated. This imperative is emphasised in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012.

The 1993 Conservation Enhancement Statements (PAN 2) were the last wholesale assessment of the city’s Conservation Areas. Since 2008, the City Design Group have been undertaking a programme reviewing the city’s Conservation Areas, following English Heritage best practice guidance ‘Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management’ (2005; revised 2011).

Adopted Character Appraisals are Planning Guidance with status as a material consideration in planning decisions. An appraisal provides an evidence base for determining character and context intended to guide and inform Development Management process and appeal decisions.

Character Appraisals form part of a suite of guidance documents referred to in Policy BCS21 of the Core Strategy and the Local Character and Distinctiveness

Policy (DM26) in the Development Management Policy document. The Core Strategy (June 2011) is the overall approach for planning in Bristol, guiding development and setting out key elements of the planning framework up to 2026 and beyond.

### 1.2 Purpose and scope

A character appraisal provides a basis from which change can be appropriately managed. Elements that make a positive contribution are identified as are features that offer an opportunity for enhancement.

*‘Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area should be treated as substantial harm or less than substantial harm...taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole’.* (NPPF para. 138)

*‘Opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas (and their setting) that enhance or better reveal their significance or preserve elements that make a positive contribution will be treated favourably.’* (NPPF para. 137)

Conservation Area designation with an adopted Character Appraisal will also be a tool to help highlight the value and significance of Westbury-on-Trym, raising its profile, and helping to promote it as a special place worthy of its status as a Designated Heritage Asset.

