



3. STAPLETON AND FROME VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA

DESCRIPTION

- (1) The Stapleton and Frome Valley Conservation Area comprises the land immediately abutting the River Frome from Frenchay Village to Stapleton Bridge at Eastville Park and extends eastwards to include Fishponds Village and the estates of Glenside and Manor Park Hospitals; and northwards to include Stoke Park, Purdown and Stapleton Village.
- (2) The geography of the Frome Valley varies considerably along the length of the River Frome contained within the Conservation Area. At Frenchay Village the river is crossed by Frenchay Road via a stone rubble bridge and the valley rises



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directly up from the river banks along Frenchay Hill to form a secluded rock face setting for the cottages of Frenchay Village (at the northern boundary of the Conservation Area). The valley increases in depth towards the Oldbury Court Estate, developing into a wooded gorge, punctuated by sheer rock protrusions which rise to a dramatic height above the river and provide a scenic route to the various footpaths along the valley up to Frome Bridge. The shape of the valley broadens out at Frome Bridge but rises quite steeply through wooded gardens to Stapleton Village where several historic buildings and the spire of the Holy Trinity Church form an impressive and varied linear framing at the ridge in the valley along Park Road.

- (3) The Frome valley and riverside footpaths continue through Eastville Park where the northern side flattens out to provide the playing fields of Colston's School, and the southern side rises steeply through mature trees to public gardens and playing fields accessed from Fishponds Road.
- (4) The plateau providing the historic site of Stapleton Village ends at the M32 motorway where the land rises steeply again to form the estate of Stoke Park, a Grade II* site (in the register of Gardens and Grounds of Special Historic Interest), which provides setting for the Dower House, (a Grade II* Listed Building).
- (5) Stapleton Village dates from 1086 AD when it administered 2,554 acres of adjoining farmland. The earliest buildings were the mills on the River Frome including the now restored Snuff Mills. The present church of the Holy Trinity (Listed Grade B) was built in 1857 but the font dates from 1000 AD – providing evidence for earlier structures from Norman times.
- (6) The church of the Holy Trinity, located at the junction of Bell Hill and Park Road forms an important focus to the present village of Stapleton. As the visitor approaches the village by climbing Bell Hill the wedge shaped piece of land forming the railed churchyard, and the church buildings contained within, are visually framed between the Bell Inn and the entrance to Colston's School. The west tower and steeple of the church rise from the prow of the church precinct in a proliferation of gothic crocketed stonework; from which point the visitor is offered the quiet solace of Colston Hill, a winding country lane between cottages and stone walls, leading to Wickham Glen and a stone bridge over the Frome; or the alternative trafficked environment of Park Road which links to Bell Hill at the north side of the church precinct.
- (7) Park Road is characterised by the 17th and 18th Century houses of wealthy merchants and traders; Stapleton Village being described by Victory Purdy (1746–1822) as *"a village, a pleasant and fashionable place having several gentlemen's seats in it"*. The houses are situated directly at the pavement boundary or with small front yards, giving a good sense of enclosure to the street, down to the junction with Broom Hill.
- (8) The architectural character of the Conservation Area – derived from the linking of the villages of Stapleton, Fishponds and the perimeter of Frenchay – is predominantly rural in the demonstrated range of building materials and the disposition of cottages and streets. Architectural features include pantiled and slate roofs, random stone walling, painted and rendered walls and red brick walling.
- (9) Several Listed Buildings are included in the Conservation Area, which, in addition to exhibiting the above general characteristics, contribute particular architectural and historical qualities to the built fabric of the area. For example the Listed Buildings along Bell Hill and Park Road are distributed at sufficiently frequent intervals to substantially influence and reinforce the quality of the Conservation Area and street elevation in the linear village of Stapleton.



KEY ISSUES

Traffic and Movement

- (1) Traffic flows through Stapleton Village continue to be heavy despite the completed M32 link to the M4 and the A4174; to the detriment of the Conservation Area's pedestrian environment and the fabric of the historical and Listed Buildings located at the pavement boundary along Park Road and Bell Hill.
- (2) The new road from New Station Road to Fishponds Road via Hockeys Lane, as part of the approved Retail Development may lead to increased traffic flow at the perimeter of the Conservation Area opposite Station Avenue but should improve traffic conditions in Fishponds Village proper – the new road providing access to substantial proposed parking facilities and an alternative route for traffic heading south via Filwood Road.

Land Use

- (3) The Regional Health Authority are planning to dispose of land surplus to their requirements in the Stoke Park Hospital Complex. The land at present in Health Authority ownership extends from the Stoke Park Hospital complex along Coldharbour Lane, southwards to Frenchay Park Road and the estate of Purdown Hospital along Bell Road; and westwards to the playing fields of the Lockleaze housing estate.
- (4) Although Avon County Council proposed to alter the Green Belt Policy in the 3rd Alteration to the Structure Plan, to provide for the inclusion of the Stoke Park and Purdown Estates in the Green Belt, there is a possible threat to the established visual and footpath amenity of the Estates if the land is disposed of by the Health Authority for building development. However, the City Council have approved a Restoration Master Plan for Stoke Park/Purdown in 1992, in partnership with the Health Authority and other local authorities to protect and enhance this part of the Conservation Area.

Townscape

- (5) Unsympathetic extensions and alterations to houses will threaten the character of the Conservation Area.
- (6) There is a danger that the large gardens and estates of historical buildings within the Conservation Area will be developed, altering the 17th and 18th Century settlement pattern. In particular the estates of Stoke Park, Purdown, Glenside and Manor Park Hospitals.
- (7) Since designation there have been a number of residential developments which, while respecting the domestic scale of the Conservation Area have not respected the open space, and traditional layout and form including materials of development.

GENERAL ENHANCEMENT OBJECTIVES

- (1) An environmental traffic management scheme, including provision for cyclists needs to be considered for Stapleton Village in conjunction with the Highway Authority. This should address the issues of through traffic, parking and the needs of the residents and shoppers within the area.
- (2) That part of the Conservation Area presently comprising the Stoke Park, and Purdown Hospital Estates and adjoining Bristol City Council owned recreation grounds and playing fields, and Bridge Farm represents an open landscape



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and is essential to the character of the Conservation Area and provides a green gateway into the city. Development altering this character will not normally be permitted.

- (3) The sub division of large garden plots is a particular problem in the area and will not normally be permitted. Conservation Principle P33 will apply.
- (4) '*Stoke Park, Purdown Enhancement and Preservation Policy 1990*', will apply to development and land in the Conservation Area north of Frenchay Park Road, the Stoke Park and Purdown Hospital Estates, and the recreation grounds and playing fields adjacent to Lockleaze; including Bridge Farm.
- (5) The Greater Bristol Nature Conservation Strategy 1991, will apply to the land forming Wildlife Corridors within the Conservation Area, especially in relation to the River Frome.
- (6) Large residential development, where appropriate, should closely regard the traditional layout and character of the local villages.