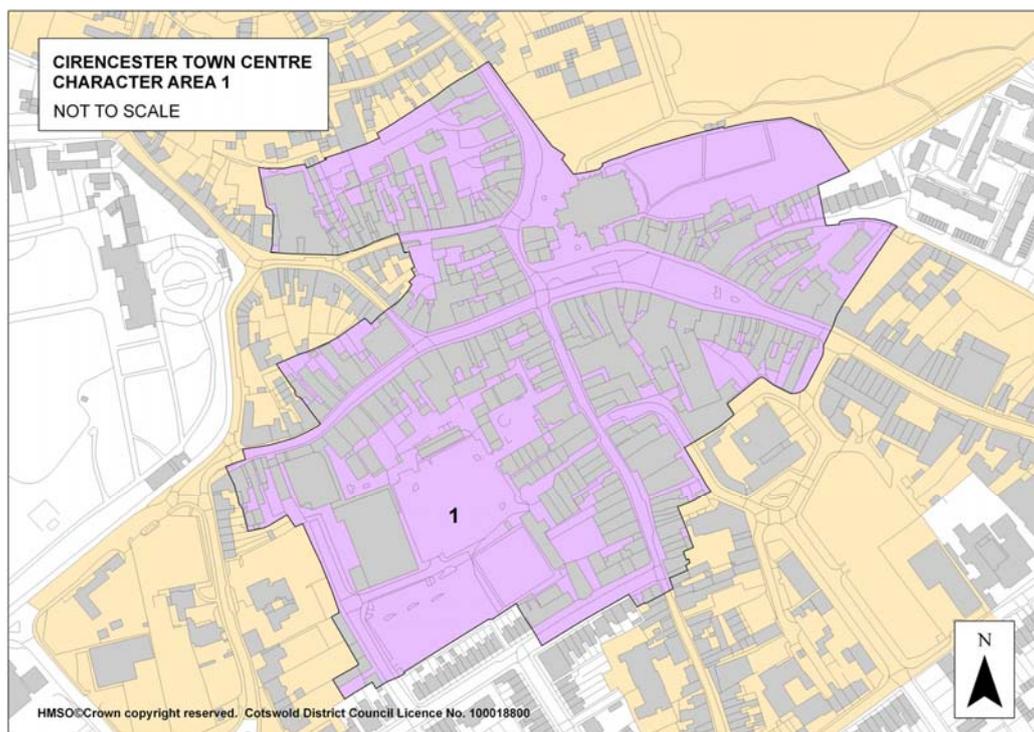


Character Area 1: Town Core



Map S



Character Area 1: Town Core – Key Characteristics



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Character Area 1: Town Core – Key Characteristics

- The Character Area lies at the commercial core of the town and contains a vibrant mix of retail, commercial, residential, community and religious uses;
- A vibrant, historically and architecturally rich area consisting of a varied mixture of intimately-scaled spaces, of mostly enclosed character, and centred on Market Place, with its spectacular parish church whose tall tower provides an iconic landmark for the whole of Cirencester;
- Streets are tightly defined by mostly two- and three-storey buildings built off the back edge of the pavement in long, narrow, medieval plots, set at right angles to the road, mingling with buildings of later periods whose wider dimensions indicate plot amalgamation;
- Market Place, an Important Urban Open Space, has adapted over the years to accommodate different uses and still acts as a visual focal point whilst providing a location for major social and commercial events for the local and visiting community; its sustainable future lies in its continuing adaptability [358-9];
- A wide range of spaces from Market Place, Brewery Court, shopping streets, narrow medieval routes, the tranquil churchyard, corridor mews and courtyards, all serving a variety of purposes ensuring active and sustainable use of the area;
- Very good permeability allowing a wide range of pedestrian movement as a result of a network of corridors and pathways between buildings and streets, under buildings towards courtyards and mews, and through public / commercial buildings;
- Views dominated by the tower of St John The Baptist [359] with shorter views toward local focal points, most often found on corner plots with frontages on two or more elevations, and glimpsed views into corridor and courtyard mews;
- Consistent use of rubble and ashlar limestone for building elevations, and more usually rubble stone for flank walls, chimney stacks, boundary walls and in the form of slates for roofs, creating a very cohesive character;
- Use of other natural materials including timber for windows, doors and shopfronts, Welsh slate and clay tile in combination with cast and wrought iron, some render and limewash;
- Use of brick for later buildings [364], and occasionally, the rear and side elevations of stone buildings, and most often for high side boundary walls;
- A varied, eclectic yet highly attractive jumble of architectural styles dating predominantly from the seventeenth to twenty-first centuries;
- Significant survival of timber-framed buildings especially in Market Place dating from the later seventeenth century and evidenced by shallow window reveals but often concealed by rendered facades [4];
- Use of revivalist and Arts and Crafts derived detailing [373] in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries including hoodmoulds, mullioned windows, oriel windows and ovolo-shaped openings;
- A roofscape enlivened by the use of large numbers of gabled frontages interspersed with pitched roofs behind parapets and occasional pediments, together with tall chimney stacks and high level ornamentation including

- o cornices encouraging views upwards and reinforcing the vertical emphasis of individual buildings and the townscape of the character area [358];
- o A rich array of architectural detail providing added visual interest combined with vibrant use of colour for many elevations and for highlighting architectural detail albeit that pattern and ornamentation is mostly restricted to principal or public elevations;
- o Enrichments including doorcases [372], cornices and window architraves;



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- o A number of surviving, mostly nineteenth-century shop fronts, especially in Market Place, Castle Street and Black Jack Street, many retaining features such as ornate console brackets, fluted pilasters, turned glazing bars, iron ventilation grilles and subtle signage painted onto slim fascias, also imaginative and ornate hanging signs [223 & 224];
- o Some good traditional paving most notably to corridor mews, together with modern paving schemes such as that encircling the parish church, and a handful of eye-catching elements of street furniture including memorials and animal sculptures [293, 240-41];
- o Whilst the built form dominates this urban centre, a few strategically located trees, including the mature cedar to the north-west of the church, and a few hidden gardens, help to reduce pollution and provide shade and sufficient greenery to soften the built form; other trees in the town core also play a vital role in helping to minimise the impact of vehicles, for example within the Brewery Car Park [343];
- o Mature trees in the churchyard help to create a tranquil retreat from the activity of the town, whilst overhanging trees from within the Abbey Grounds reflect the nature of that adjoining space and soften the built form [340];

Character Area 1: Town Core - Negative Features & Issues:

- Dominance of vehicles - both parking and traffic movements - to the detriment of visual character and pedestrian safety, most notably in Market Place [374-5] and Black Jack Street [376];
- Visual clutter created by a jumble of street furniture and poorly-designed traffic-related features, including signage and road markings [375];
- Poor floorscape mostly utilising non-contextual artificial materials [374];
- Backland sites with unattractive rear service wings / extensions [378-81], no active frontage and unsafe or visually-disappointing pathways, for example to the rear of Castle Street backing onto Brewery Car Park;
- Loss of boundary features for provision of off-street car parking [381-83];



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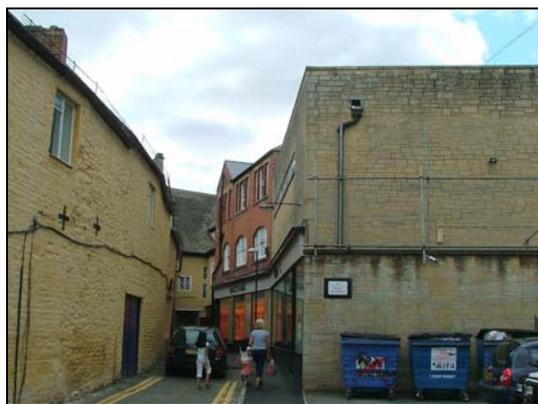
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- Poorly proportioned, later twentieth-century buildings with horizontal emphasis, asymmetric fenestration and inadequate modelling, including large slab-like development from the 1960s and 1970s, particularly the Tesco superstore and adjacent premises fronting Castle Street;



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- Poorly-designed shopfronts and signage, use of plastic moulded deep fascias, projecting box signs, fascias which extend over more than one building and undermine the vertical emphasis of the townscape and individual buildings [384-87], illumination including “heritage” swan neck down-lighters [295], and excessive numbers of free-standing A-frame signs [332];



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- Loss of and/or replacement of architectural details with inappropriate designs and materials including use of artificial stone products that weather unsympathetically;
- Loss of lime render to a number of buildings, most notably in Castle Street;
- Lack of maintenance of buildings and the public realm [388-90];
- Extract vents from hot food outlets which are visually intrusive, particularly on the sky line;
- No Buildings of Townscape Merit despite recent development opportunities.



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