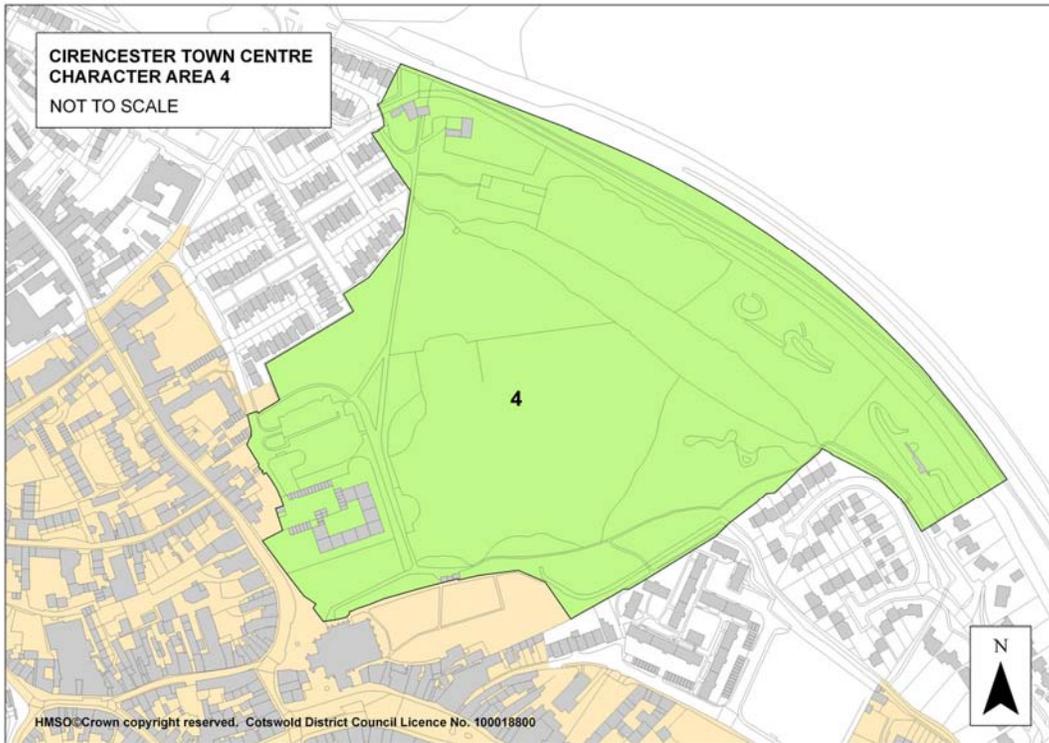


Character Area 4: Abbey Grounds



Map V



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Character Area 4: Abbey Grounds – Key Characteristics



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Character Area 4: Abbey Grounds – Key Characteristics

- Hidden behind the large parish church, the Abbey Grounds form a tranquil and informal, recreational facility incorporating the former Abbey fish pond, a children's play area and equipment [465], a bandstand used for musical performances [460] and large areas of mown grass used for a variety of informal games and leisure activities [464];

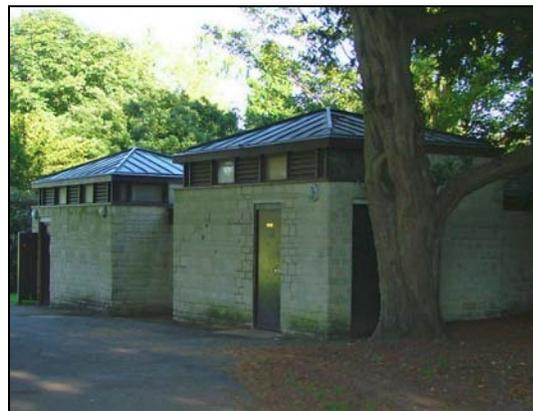


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- The medieval gatehouse, known locally as the Norman Arch, at the extreme northern tip of the Abbey Grounds, provides a visual stimulus and a fitting reminder of the role the grounds played in the history of the town [466];
- The trees in the grounds, and especially along the eastern boundary, are very effective and important in minimising the noise, visibility and pollution associated with the dual carriageway beyond [480];
- Trees are a very important, attractive feature providing a source of shelter and the variety of species offers opportunities for education [462 & 475];



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- Additional visual interest is provided by features such as the fish pond / lake [468], the section of Roman wall [469] and nearby stone bridge [463]; the elegant route of winding pathways, and the extensive views across the grounds and especially from east to west towards the parish church tower;
- High limestone boundary walls surrounding the Abbey Grounds to the south provide texture, and a sense of containment and security [478-79];
- Pedestrian access to the Abbey Grounds is provided from a number of locations around the site, making it especially permeable and user-friendly for those resident and/or working in the town; for those visiting it appears as a surprising oasis within a short distance of the commercial core;
- The public car park at the northwest corner of the character area provides a useful facility for those visiting the Abbey Grounds; its appearance is much enhanced by the surrounding trees which minimise visual impact;
- The public toilets located at the southern edge of the Grounds have been well-designed and fit subtly into their context [477];
- Benches of an attractive yet simple design are provided and the lighting within the Grounds is mostly of the mid-twentieth-century design with concrete columns and simple iron lamps of the Jubilee type [464].



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Character Area 4: Abbey Grounds – Negative Features & Issues

- Poor interpretation of the Abbey Grounds:
 - The outline of the Abbey marked out using paving stones on the grass is perhaps too subtle, especially as the accompanying signage has been vandalised;
 - the interior of the Norman gatehouse and section of Roman wall are daubed with graffiti and interpretation signs are barely visible [484-85];
 - there is no signage at the northern side of the Norman Arch which would indicate to the visitor that the grounds are accessible to the public;
- The demolition of Abbey House and its replacement with flats is unfortunate; the mediocre design, bulk and massing of the replacement building with its flat mansard roof does little to enhance the setting of the grounds. Conversely the grounds play a significant role in minimising the impact of the building [459];
- Parts of the wall bordering the route of the river to the south of the Roman wall are in need of repair;
- Some signage within the Abbey Grounds is of very small typeface making it difficult to read [482];
- The river's course through the Grounds is often littered with debris such as plastic bags and take-away packaging [481];



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