

# PARKS CHARACTER AREA

IPSWICH URBAN CHARACTERISATION STUDY

# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
History	4
Biodiversity and Archaeology	7
Transport and Access	8
Open Space	9
Landform and Views	10
Urban Analysis	11
Character Sub Area Description – Parklands	12
Character Sub Area Description – Valley Road	16
Summary	18

INTRODUCTION

The Ipswich Parks character area is a connected series of 19th and early 20th century suburbs on the north and east sides of Ipswich. The area occupies tree covered slopes which encircle the historic town on these sides and which channel routes towards the town centre; roads such as Spring Road and Tuddenhams Road cut radially across the area. On its north side it is bounded by the early 20th century Valley Road. Two character sub areas have been identified:

- Parklands
- Valley Road

This is one of the most attractive residential settings in Ipswich. The steeply sloping banks above the town offer sites on major routes and views across the estuary - a good place to see and be seen. Wealthier residents built here from the 16th century onwards and the grounds of the larger houses, such as Christchurch Mansion and Holywells House, are preserved as public parks.

In the 19th century some of the best middle class housing was built in this area and large parts of the inner suburbs are today protected as conservation areas (CA). This study examines the urban areas not covered by CA designation, although for a full picture the Conservation Area Appraisals for the adjoining areas should be consulted.

The area is characterised by its mature residential setting, mostly comprising terraced housing types stepping up and down sloping streets. The development density is lower here than in adjoining areas; the parks, gardens, allotments and wooded slopes provide a picturesque setting for terraces and villas. Many of the streets frame views across the town centre.



Picture: Lacey Street

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Parks area in 1926 (Ordnance Survey map)



Trinity Lodge. Grade II listed. The earliest part of the property is 16th century.

the mid 18th century (a time of limited economic growth in Ipswich), there was development beyond the historic town boundary. Redhouse Park (now demolished) and Trinity Lodge are clearly visible in the engraving, the latter set at the top of a garden.



Redhouse Park. Demolished in 1937, the 18th century home of the Edgar family was located near where Cranfield Court, off Valley Road now stands. The avenue of trees leading to the front of the house has been preserved as a small park

Fine views, fresh air, access to spring waters emerging from the hillsides and space for gardens made these sites attractive to the newly wealthy entrepreneurs of Ipswich. The new residents wanted access to their business in the town and a foothold in the surrounding countryside. They also, perhaps, wanted freedom from some of restrictive practices within the urban parish boundaries.

A good example is Morpeth House on Lacey Street, built 1887 by Charles Whitfield King (1855-1930). He made his fortune out of philately, operating a worldwide mail order business for stamp collectors from premises on the opposite side of Lacey Street (the early 20th century factory still stands).

**History**

Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's 1741 engraving shows the medieval town crowded around the riverside. Beyond, fields and woods climb to a plateau-like upland; it is these slopes which have become the Parks character area. Even in



The South West Prospect of Ipswich (detail), Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, 1741

HISTORY

Morpeth House. Whitfield King used his house to entertain clients and display his product; the library was converted to a Stamp Room and papered with a mosaic pattern of 44,000 stamps. The base of the octagonal Billiard Room can be seen in the foreground



Quirky individualism is visible in a number of the larger houses, a product both of the owners desire to make their mark and a response to the wooded, sloping setting - several houses, for instance, have crenellated and turreted belvederes projecting above the roofline.

A number of architects chose the Parks area for their own residences, no doubt for the quality of the setting and also for access to middle class clients. Examples include Joseph Rotherham Cattermole (1824-1900), the local architect who worked on Woodside the Italianate mansion on Constitution Hill. He lived in The Warren, which

he built for himself around 1853 on Arthurs Terrace. Birkin Haward (1912-2002), built The Spinney off Westerfield Road in striking modern style in 1960.



The Warren, originally Rotherham House 1853, Arthurs Terrace



From top: Property at the junction of Back Hamlet and Grove Lane, second half of 19th Century and early 20th. The view is largely unchanged today. Spring Road viaduct and allotments. The character area has a semi-rural appearance in places, which should be protected from development.

The majority of housing in the Parks area is more modest - semi detached villas and substantial terraced housing. The 19th century house building initiative was taken in 1849 by the Freehold Land Society on their 98 acre Cauldwell Hall Estate (see the California character area study). No doubt the success of the California venture helped encourage private developers to lay out streets of housing on the nearby slopes. Although not as readily developable as the level Cauldwell Hall site, builders found ways of stepping their terraces up the sloping streets, turning corners and taking advantage of sites with views and proximity to open spaces.



Gothic House, St Johns Road. Grade II listed. 1851-7



The Spinney, 1960, Westerfield Road (Grade II listed)



Ringham Road. The picturesque effect created by the combination of slope, garden tree planting and built form can be seen in the group of streets between Spring Road and St Johns Road

Valley Road was developed later than the rest of the character area. The upland site was semi-rural until the 1920s, the area mostly open fields and parkland belonging to estates such as Redhouse Park and Brookes Hall. Surviving parkland and hedgerow trees dating from the 18th century and earlier are landmarks.

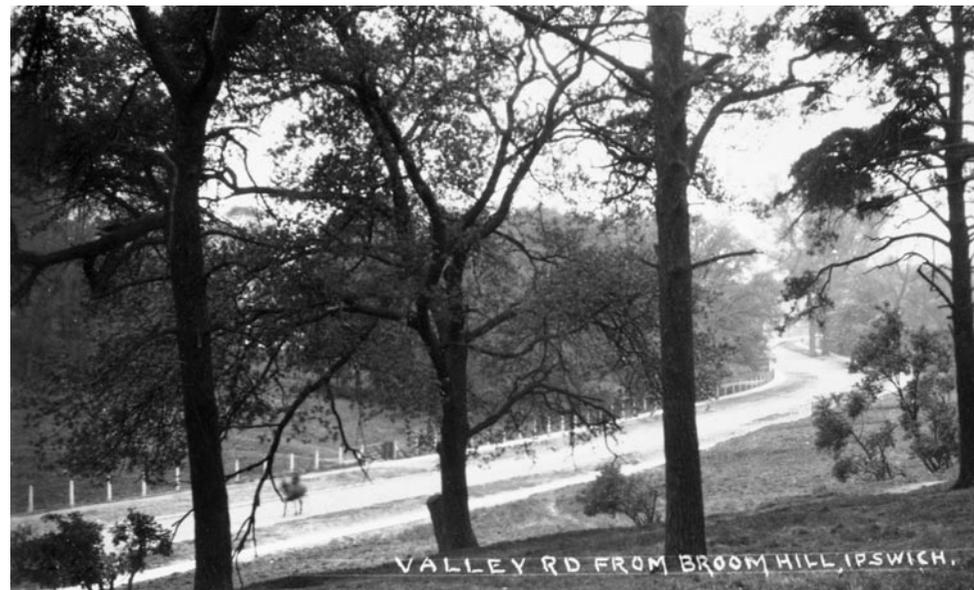
In the later 1920s, Ipswich Borough Council acquired land across the north side of the town and constructed Valley Road, an urban relief road and the first substantial route in the town's history which did not connect directly to the town centre. The broad carriageway runs in several straight sections before descending in a natural valley towards Norwich Road in the west. The land in this area belonged to the Sherrington family; Broomhill Park was created out of woodland sold to the council in 1925.

Housing plots were sold either side of the new road, a popular location for the modern middle classes who had cars and could take advantage of the new road to commute. The area has the spacious, light filled feel of garden city planning; detached houses set behind large front gardens, culs de sac and avenues planted with ornamental trees. The development density is lower than elsewhere in Parks.



Spring Road viaduct. Part of the branch line built to Felixstowe and opened in 1877

Valley Road near Broomhill Park shortly after construction in 1926. The mature woodland either side of the road remains an attractive feature today



Parkland tree, Cranfield Court. The Sweet Chestnut tree is a survival from the grounds of Red House Park which stood nearby



Byles drinking fountain, Alexandra Park, donated 1905 (locally listed). The park was originally the grounds of Hill House, donated by descendants of the Byles family to Ipswich Corporation and named after the wife of Edward VII.

**Biodiversity**

From Broom Hill to the western end of Valley Road, the habitat in the Parks area consists of acid grassland and woodland containing springs, which create wet flushes in the vegetation.

Moving eastwards up Valley Road, the area becomes characterised more by large gardens and features such as Cordale Spinney, which make an important contribution to the town's tree canopy and ecological network (canopy cover in Parks area is relatively high at 20.8%). Dropping down to the area east of Christchurch Park, there are several sites which are significant for wildlife, including: Spring Road allotments and wood and Bishops Hill Wood.

The Felixstowe railway line traverses this eastern part of the Parks area, providing a key corridor for the movement of wildlife.

Reptiles are found throughout the Parks area and the railway line is particularly important for their movement. Stag beetles too are found in the eastern part of the Parks area. The major feature in this area is large gardens forming part of the ecological network, and relatively high canopy cover. These are the features which new development should maintain. In relation to species, habitat enhancements should be sought through new development, e.g. the creation of stag beetle piles.

1 Mansons Close. Some wooded slopes in this area have never been developed and support a wide range of native plant and animal species. Redevelopment of garden and backland areas should be resisted where possible.

2 Spring Road allotments. These are a highly valued local resource, as well as supporting wildlife and contributing to the green setting of the area.

3 Wildflower meadow, Hayhill. The management of the nearby stream as public open space area will help create habitat and increase awareness of the wildlife in the area.

4 Meadows near Constitution Hill. This unique open space supports a range of meadow species and preserves the setting of the Victorian urban edge.

5 Front gardens are mature, well established features in this area and support a range of flora and fauna.



**Archaeology**

This area is characterised by higher ground, and archaeological sites and early occupation relate to former valleys of tributaries to the Orwell. There is:

- A Bronze Age hoard of axes from Bishop's Hill/Nacton Road (IPS 067)\*
- Prehistoric site at Westerfield Road/Valley Road (IPS 246)
- Roman/Late Iron Age site at Dale Road/Valley Road (IPS 022, IPS 123)
- Roman settlement at Berkeley Close/Carlton Way/The Albany (IPS 240)
- Saxon settlement at Vermont Crescent (IPS 122)
- Medieval Brook's Hall at Westwood Avenue, possibly moated (IPS 636).



Bronze Age axe. Bishop's Hill/Nacton Road

\*Historic environment reference (HER) number. For further information about archaeological sites, visit <http://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/>



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**Transport and access**

Topography is the major factor shaping access. It constrains major routes within valleys, reducing their visual impact. The more visible streets tend to be the side roads, laid out in the 19th century to serve the new residential developments. They climb the sides of the valleys and present a distinctive rising streetscape (or a descending vista of terraces framing a view).

Although modern vehicle traffic has imposed itself on the street scene (parked cars are particularly noticeable), the road layout continues to manage traffic demands.



Belle Vue Road

Valley Road is an early modern inner ringroad which has generated its own suburban townscape and mature landscape setting. The low density design contrasts with other parts of the Parks area and suggests the influence of the early 20th century Garden City movement; grass verges planted with ornamental trees, generous landscaped areas,

family homes with front gardens. The layout is simple and spacious - junction improvements and new development should avoid detracting from the setting with intrusive signage and infill.

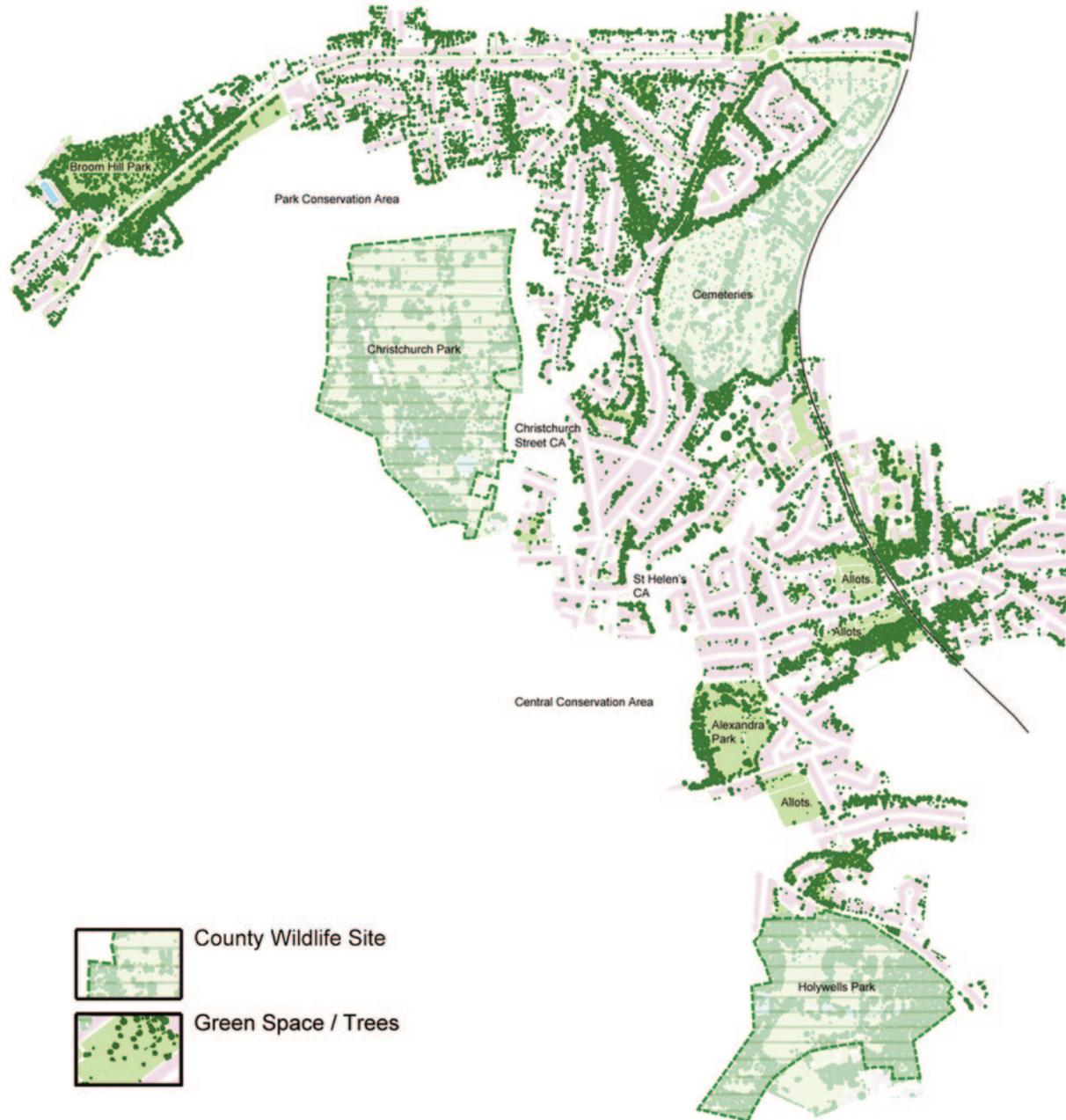
The quiet side roads are a pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, the numerous parks provide traffic free access (cyclists are restricted on some routes).



Colchester Road, near the cemetery



Alexandra Park



Clockwise from top left: Broom Hill Park  
Spring Road Allotments  
Withipoll Street

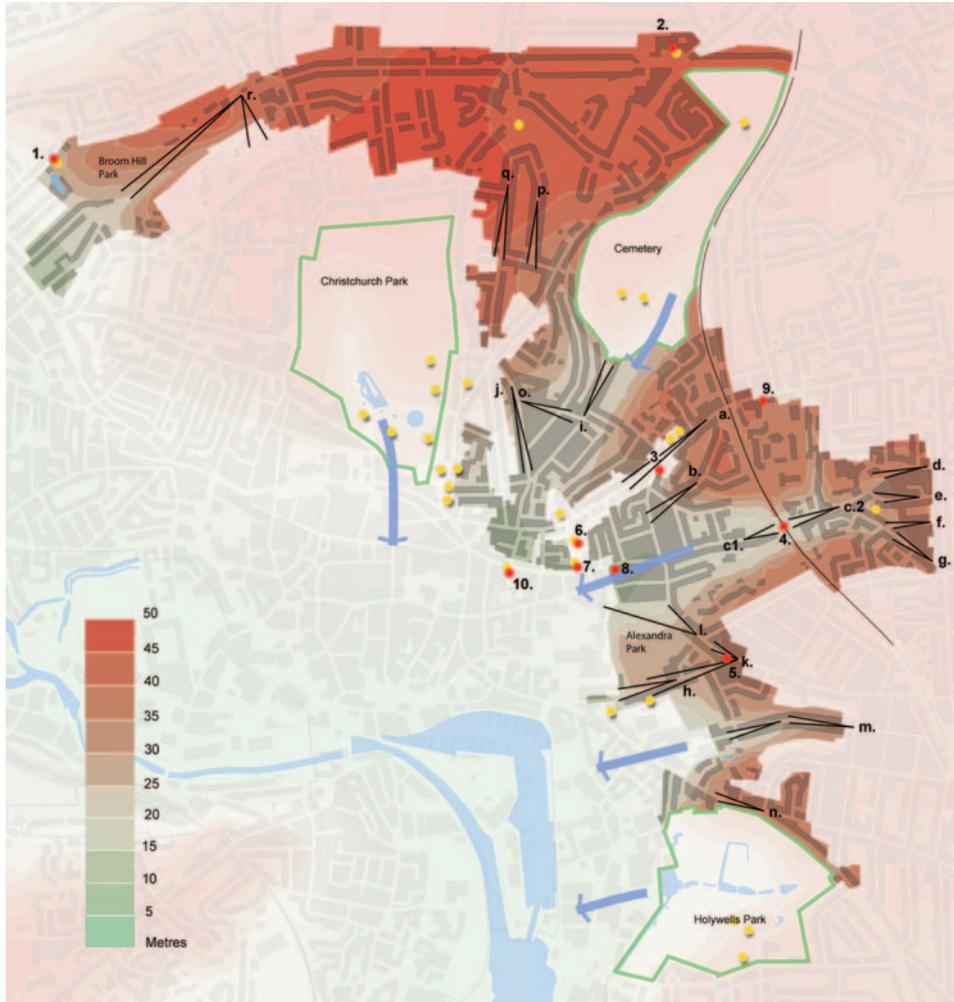
The Parks area is defined by the number and quality of its open spaces and high level of canopy tree cover. Parks such as Christchurch and Holywells provide a resource for the whole of Ipswich and are protected as Conservation Areas and Local Nature Reserves. Smaller parks such as Alexandra and Broom Hill serve more local areas but also contribute to the overall townscape.

The springs which flow down through the narrow valleys are mostly culverted. However, they are visible in places, most memorably in Holywells Park where the stream was formed centuries ago into fish pools. A linear park is being created alongside the Hayhill development either side of the stream which flows down from the Cemetery. Publicly accessible environmental projects which highlight the ecology of natural springs should be encouraged in this area.

Open spaces tend to be on the steeper slopes and are visible from the lower lying roads and streets, with the result that private and semi private spaces such as allotments and gardens make a distinctive visual contribution. Most of these spaces are well cared for and protected, but modern infill development on some sites has had a visually damaging impact.



Linear parkland next to the Belvedere brook at Hayhill



- 15. Landmark buildings
- 15. Listed buildings
- a. Distinctive views
- Conservation Areas
- Principal Streams

**Landform and views**

The maturity of the townscape and woodland partly masks the topography of sand and clay, eroded by the action of the post glacial Orwell. Springs emerge from between the gravels and the underlying clay and flow down towards the estuary. The scale of the landform only becomes clear where unexpected views across the town centre are opened up from the tops of steeply sloping streets. The Spring Road viaduct is a dramatic demonstration of the level changes in this area.

- 1 Broomhill Pool (Listed Grade II)
- 2 Cranfield Court Almshouses (Listed Grade II)
- 3 Duke of York public house
- 4 Spring Road viaduct
- 5 90 Grove Lane
- 6 St Helens Primary School (Listed Grade II)
- 7 St Helens church (Listed Grade II)
- 8 Zoar Baptist Chapel
- 9 St Marys RC Parish Hall
- 10 County Hall (Listed Grade II)

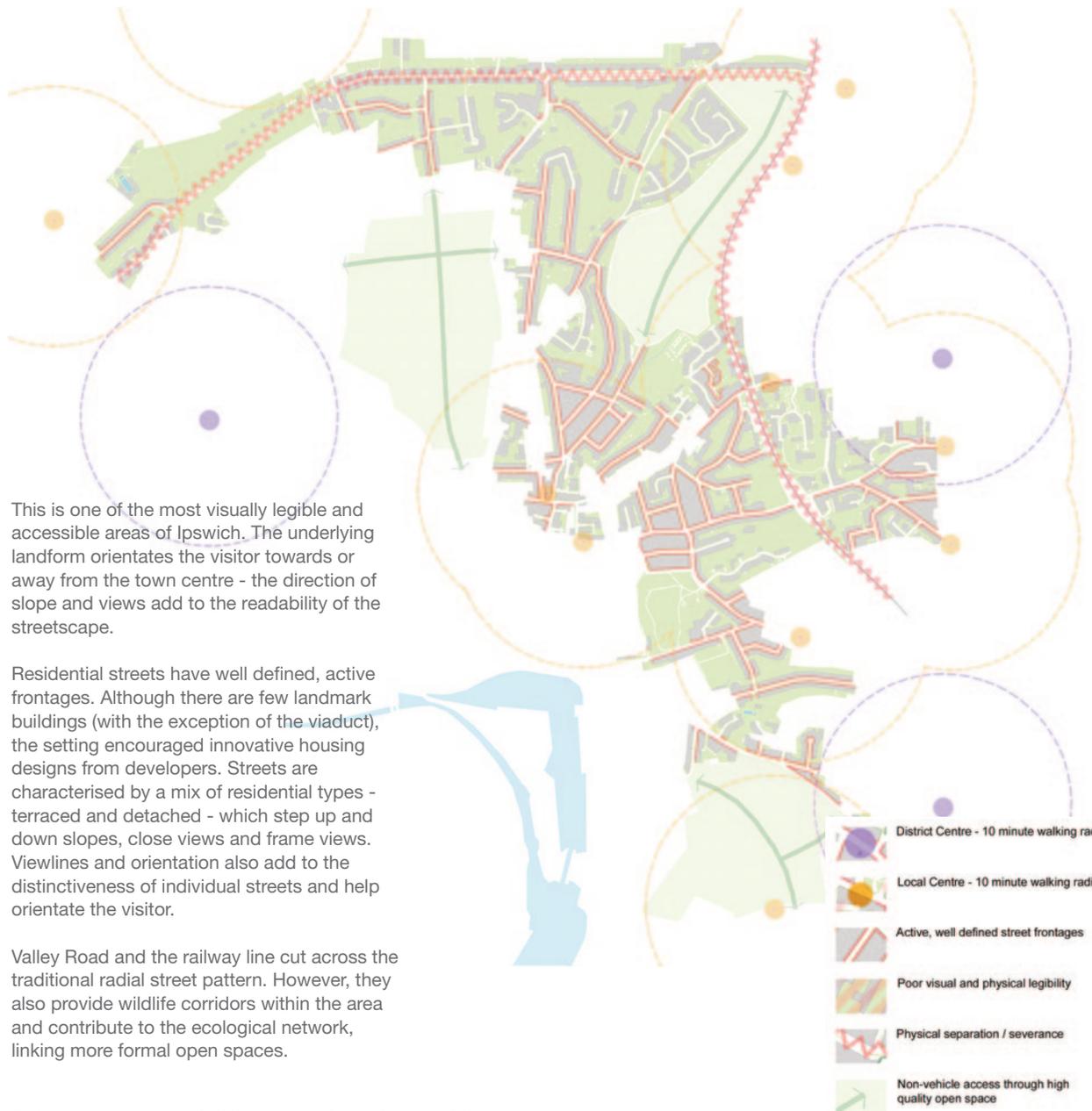
- a Albion Hill – view of Waterfront
- b Belle Vue Road – view of Waterfront
- c. Spring Road – views of Spring Road viaduct
- d Spring Road – streetscape view
- e Upland Road – streetscape view
- f Ringham Road – streetscape view
- g St Johns Road – streetscape view
- h Back Hamlet – streetscape view
- i Cemetery Road – streetscape view
- j Hervey Street – streetscape view
- k Back Hamlet / Grove Lane junction – streetscape view
- l Grove Lane - streetscape view
- m Cavendish Road - streetscape view
- n Bishops Hill - streetscape view
- o Suffolk Road - streetscape view
- p Corder Road - streetscape view
- q Constable Road – streetscape view
- r Valley Road streetscape view and view of Constitution Hill



2



1 Bishops Hill 2 Bishops Hill 3 Cranfield Court Gateway, Valley Road 1939 4 Zoar Baptist Chapel and Church Hall, St Helens Road 1925



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Suffolk Road, looking towards Hervey Street. The slope and viewlines from the upper parts of streets give a strong sense of orientation to the streetscape



Kettlebaston Way. The Valley Road area is more level and more conventionally suburban - the lower number of through routes makes this a less legible and permeable area, although Valley Road itself is a landmark in the townscape of north Ipswich



The streets of 19th and early 20th century housing which form the larger part of the character area are comparable with Victorian residential development elsewhere in Ipswich, for instance in the Norwich Road area. The houses are typically two or three storeys, Suffolk white or red brick (with a mix of more decorative materials such as terracotta and flint). Original slate roofs are rare, but worthy of preservation where they exist. Door and window openings are finely detailed - some original sash windows survive and the heads of doorways are often treated decoratively.



**1 and 2** Attractive 19th century white and red brick terraced housing, Cemetery Road and Ringham Road.

**3 and 4** Larger terraced houses with double height bay windows on Tuddenham Road and Belle Vue Road. On a gradient, the characteristic features of this middle class housing type play a new role - the bay windows and chimneys, for instance, form an attractive stepped composition.

**5 and 6** Constable Road and Ashmere Grove. The 'best' streets were reserved for the upper slopes near Christchurch Park, although fine terraced and detached houses can be found all over the Parks area.



**1** Ringham Road. A mix of frontages works well in this setting - here, a row of semi detached houses stepping down the slope and round a curve include a prominent gable fronted property with a decorative bargeboard and brickwork.

**2** Belle Vue Road. The end terrace in this group faces the side street, allowing the frontage to face down the slope and avoiding a blank side gable.

**3** Spring Road. Y-junctions, where roads meet at an angle, are a characteristic of the area (reflecting the topography). The end terrace has been given an entrance and facade, complete with pediment, facing down the slope and forming a landmark at the junction.

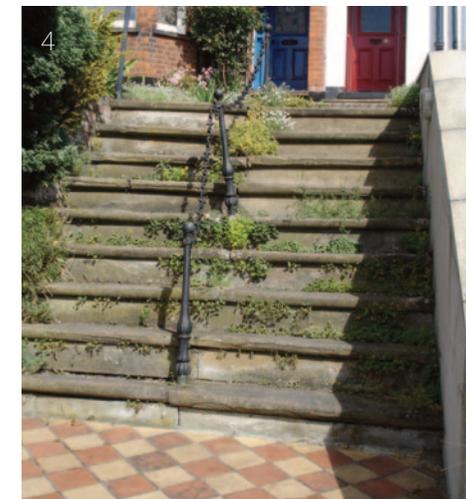
The exceptional feature in the area is the adaptation of conventional building types to the distinctive topography. Speculative builders employed ingenuity in adapting house types to the angle of slope including the use of prominent buildings on corners with frontages that wrap the corner rather than presenting a blank gable end.

Frontages are stepped up the slopes and a variety of elevation styles are used to make the progression look picturesque; decorative brickwork courses for instance, or bays that emphasise the individual frontages. The attention to detail is continued in the design of front garden walls, which are either stepped up the slope or laid in brick courses parallel with it. Roofscapes are more important in a rising townscape; the roof planes themselves are more visible, and the chimneys become a prominent

part of the stepped building mass. Many streets in the Parks area retain their ranks of terracotta pots crowning broad brick chimney stacks.

In some streets the houses are set well above the pavement, either above a basement or as an adaptation to difficult levels along the street. The flights of steps from street level to front door are set between brick balustrades, the composition elegantly expressing the change of level and providing privacy and an outlook for the occupants.

Front boundary treatments are an important aspect of the areas character. Almost all properties have a front garden, varying in depth according to the size of the house but always large enough for garden planting. Mature shrubs and ornamental trees contribute much of the foreground greenery, with native species trees closing the view along the street or rising above rooftops.



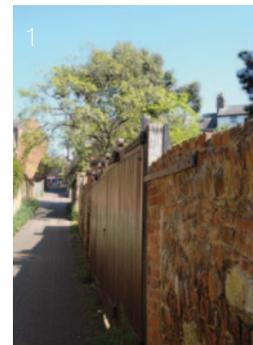
**1** Hervey Street. The curved, rising line of the street is emphasised by the original details - the chimney stacks and pots, bay windows, front garden walls, carved doorway lintels, even the lead flashing on the gables.

**2** Bartholomew Street. A mix of house styles is given visual unity through similarity of scale, the steep gradient and the mature tree canopies which rise above the rooftops on the highest ground.

**3 and 4** Alexandra Street. Original stone steps, flank walls, cast ironwork and clay tiles. These threshold details are prominent in a sloping streetscape, and the attention to detail at entrances should be reflected in modern proposals

Original brick garden walls survive in many places and a few examples of ironwork such as gates and railings. Boundary walls are also a feature, for instance along the boundaries of parkland. These former estate walls, when combined with mature overhanging trees, are a positive feature in the streetscape. Rear garden boundary walls also exist, for instance at street junctions where properties turn a side elevation to the side road.

The removal of garden walls and paving of gardens for off road parking is a significant threat to the distinctive character of the area.

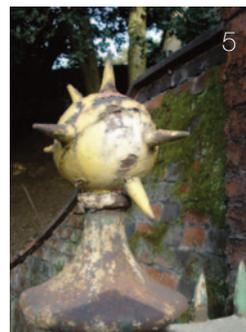


**1 and 2** Gainsborough Road and North Hill Road. Front gardens of various sizes help define the character of the Parks area. Where original gate piers and garden wall details survive, they should be retained

**3** North Hill Road. Rear garden walls can form part of the streetscape at junctions

**4 and 5** Bishops Hill. Brick boundary wall and cast iron gate pier finial to Upland Gate, c. 1863. Grade II listed. The house was built for a director of Ransomes; the red brick boundary wall has a diapered pattern and the words 'Bishops Hill' in blue brick. The brick coursing is laid parallel with the slope rather than horizontally

**6** Original iron railings and gatepier, Alexandra Park (Kings Avenue entrance).



**1** Cobbold Mews. A mix of materials along rear boundary walls, including timber panelling and random brickwork adds to the informal character of the space.

**2** St Marys Convent (former), off Woodbridge Road. An example of a residential development in a sensitive landscape setting. The site has been masterplanned carefully so that the modern townhouse terraces preserve the mature garden setting of the original convent building.

**3** Housing on former driving test centre site off Woodbridge Road. Architect: Barefoot and Gilles, 2011 Distinctive modern housing design that responds to its setting – an approach that should be used more widely.

**4** Cemetery Road. There are at least three different designs of cast iron railings and front gates in this street, produced locally.

**5** North Hill Gardens. A sensitive conversion of existing buildings which retains original fabric alongside appropriately scaled and detailed new build.



Development proposals should seek to retain distinctive streetscape elements and detail. The tendency for modern development to use cut and fill to create a single grade should be resisted where possible in favour of building forms that reflect topography and context. Street frontages and views should always be addressed positively and elevational treatments broken up to express function and the varying context typical of Parks sites.

Detailed design features should express the underlying response to the site. The Parks area already includes a robust mix of styles and materials - part of the area's picturesque character is derived from casual contrasts of scale, materials and elevational treatments. Modern design is welcome, particularly if it respects the overall street form and scale, and proposes innovative solutions.



Red and Suffolk White brickwork and Welsh roofing slate are the historic building materials. There is a colourful mix of materials alongside this basic palette however. The examples shown include clay tiles and kiln fired brick waste incorporated into a garden wall. An individualistic approach to building materials choice can be seen across the Parks area, and this could be reflected in modern development proposals.



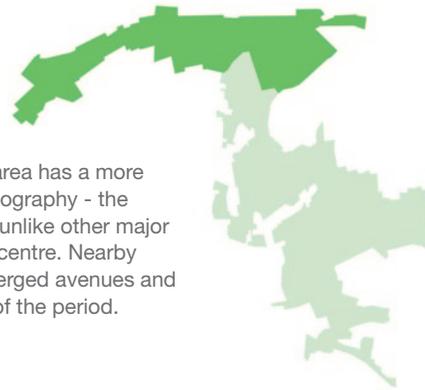
1 Spring Road viaduct. Locally listed. The white brick structure is an example of bold functional design working well in this location.

2 St Johns Road. Tree and shrub planting is a vital part of the areas character. New development should not treat garden or landscape spaces as an afterthought.

Private garden space should continue to form part of the streetscape in new developments. Its boundary walling and paving should be carefully detailed. Redevelopment of existing garden space (including back gardens) should be resisted where possible, unless there is a compelling design justification.



Alexandra Park, and housing along Kings Avenue (1908. Architect, Joseph Wood for the Freehold Land Society). Public open space defines much of the character of the Parks area. The housing on Kings Avenue has been designed with first floor balconies and French windows overlooking the park; modern proposals should also be responsive to their setting



The early 20th century development in the Valley Road area has a more planned, spacious feel. It is also less constrained by topography - the defining feature is the route of Valley Road itself, which (unlike other major roads in Parks) does not connect directly with the town centre. Nearby residential roads have fewer through routes; the grass verged avenues and culs de sac are good examples of the garden city style of the period.

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Although the area lacks some of the picturesque qualities typical of most of the Parks area, it retains a fine landscape setting enhanced further by well planted gardens.

Valley Road itself, although busy, is a pleasantly suburban thoroughfare in the section that runs through Parks, lined with a mix of suburban house types fronting the road and visible over hedgerows. Ornamental street tree planting adds to the setting, and in its western section the road descends through a broad, landscaped parkland to the busy junction with Norwich Road.

Typically, the architectural style of the Valley Road area is the classic interwar suburban villa; broad hipped roofs with deep eaves, double height semi circular bay windows, brindle brickwork, timber and tile-hung cladding.

Although less architecturally mixed than the rest of the character area there are some examples of Arts and Crafts and Art Deco architecture and one excellent example of Modernism (The Spinney, 1960 Grade II listed. Architect, Birkin Haward).



1 400 year old parkland tree between Valley Road and Westwood Avenue. The interwar villas in the background are typical of the suburban housing type in the area.

2 Woodstone Avenue. Well maintained grass verges and mature street trees are an important aspect of the garden suburb setting. Although some front garden space has been paved for off road parking, garden shrubs and trees still contribute to the streetscene. New development should follow this pattern unless there is a compelling design reason.

3 Valley Road near the junction with Westwood Avenue.

4 Broomhill Park section of Valley Road.

5 Colchester Road near the Old Cemetery. The verges are planted with ornamental cherries, the distinctive poplars are in the Old Cemetery conservation area.





1 Interwar housing on Valley Road.



2 Broomhill Pool, 1938. Grade II listed. Architect, E.McLauchlan. The reinforced concrete lido is in the Moderne style (a late form of Art Deco).



3 Detached house, Valley Road. A restrained Art Deco suburban design featuring horizontally proportioned Crittall window frames (curved glazing either side of the entrance), a reinforced concrete entrance canopy and original timber door.



4 Cranfield Court, 1938-9. Grade II listed. Architect, Cautley and Barefoot. The Vernacular Revival style group frames an open, lawned courtyard facing the junction of Valley Road and Tuddenham Road. The expansive, low density style of architecture is appropriate in the setting of Valley Road.

There are opportunities for high quality design in this area, as elsewhere in the Parks character area. At present The Spinney is the only outstanding modern building, but the potential for equally bold architectural commissions exists. It is important that the low development density of the area is maintained in the planning of new schemes and that the extent and character of open spaces is protected.



The building materials palette is more restrained than in the 19th century Parks area; there is more of an emphasis on the functional rather than the decorative characteristics of materials



Although the front parking courts are too stark for this location, the design of these new houses on Valley Road is an interesting variation on the suburban type in the area.



View from Valley Road towards Constitution Hill

# SUMMARY

- Existing undeveloped space, both private and public, should be conserved for its visual and biodiversity value. This includes gardens, allotments, meadows and woodland.
- Where possible, the paving of front gardens for vehicle hardstanding should be avoided.
- Distinctive front garden features such as walls, railings, gatepiers and footpath tiles should be protected where possible. Contrasting design approaches, including the omission of garden planting, will have to be justified in terms of visual impact on the surroundings.
- The removal of existing tree canopy cover and / or other environmental assets should be avoided.
- Distinctive townscape and landscape views should be protected from intrusive development.

## **Parklands Sub Area**

- The design of new development should reflect the underlying topography, particularly in the adaptation of building mass and elevations to sloping street frontages. Avoid creating levelled sites with large cut and fill retaining structures.
- Ensure that active or overlooking frontages are wrapped round corners - avoid blank walls at junctions.
- Modern building materials should complement the existing brick and slate combination, but there is opportunity for considered contrast, particularly in order to make the most of a strategic site.

## **Valley Road Sub Area**

- The low density, garden suburb character of the area should be protected and reflected in the design of modern development.
- The typical frontage treatment in the area is a generous front garden; this should be the case with modern development unless there is a good design reason.
- Within a suburban setting, there are opportunities for a wide range of architectural styles – especially good modern designs.
- The pattern of roadside planting, grass verges and open spaces should be protected and enhanced where possible.