



## 26. BOWER ASHTON CONSERVATION AREA

### DESCRIPTION

- (1) This is a pleasant rural area of open pastureland on the south facing slopes leading to Leigh Woods and forming the setting to Ashton Court, part of the Smythe Estate associated with the house. Rownham Hill, flanking the approach to the Avon Gorge, is an important rural boundary to the city and is visible in a wide arc from within the city. The Conservation Area comprises seven areas each with their distinct characteristics.



- (2) Bower Ashton village itself is loosely organised about three country lanes enclosing a triangle of land, whose western point is defined by the Estate buildings servicing the Court. The buildings are generally ample estate dwellings behind walls and hedges provided with generous gardens. Rubble, render and ashlar walls are prevalent, roofs are traditional slate or clay pantiles.
- (3) A typical estate of inter-war semi-detached houses is located to south accessed of Blackmore Lane.
- (4) Two large educational institutions, a secondary school to the south and the Bower Ashton College of Art to the north, form substantial building groups, unsympathetic to the rural character. The building groups described are encircled by a varied landscape.
- (5) To the south are former meadows now used as playing fields. To the west and north, traditional pastureland forming the natural setting of Ashton Court (Listed Grade 1) , rises to Rownham Hill. Clanage Road bounded by dramatic pennant boundary walls, encloses flat open ground to the east laid out as sport grounds or allotments.
- (6) Kennel Lodge Road, a village lane, enclosed by rubble walls and trees gives public access to Ashton Court and now to the College of Art.
- (7) North of this road lies an area, traditionally nurseries and enclosed gardens for the Estate, with a group of cottages and barns, an essential boundary to Ashton Park.

## KEY ISSUES

### *Traffic and Movement*

- (1) Ashton Road, a major route to the south, is heavily trafficked and the volume of vehicles is visually intrusive and the noise, pollution and danger this creates degrades the quality of the southern part of the Conservation Area. Clanage Road which bisects the eastern part of the village is also heavily trafficked at peak periods when it is used as a 'rat-run' by commuters to the city. A large unsightly roundabout forms the intersection of these two main roads in the south eastern corner in the Conservation Area.
- (2) Major events at Ashton Court attract large volumes of traffic which fill the country lanes leading to it. This reduces the amenity of residents and creates problems for cyclists and pedestrians who also use the roads.

### *Land Use*

- (3) The potential loss of the existing occupier of the estate buildings will create problems of finding a suitable alternative user, sympathetic to the proper refurbishment of the buildings and approaches.

### *Townscape*

- (4) There is a danger that the large gardens of houses which form the village core will be infilled altering the traditional settlement pattern.
- (5) Unsympathetic extensions and alterations to houses, cottages and barns will threaten the character of the Conservation area.
- (6) The pasturelands surrounding Ashton are an essential part of the character of the Estate. Any potential change needs to be very carefully addressed so as not to downgrade this important historic mansion.
- (7) Insufficient and inadequate landscaping exposes the southern part of Conservation Area to Ashton Road. In addition the impact of the two modern educational establishments is very great because of inadequate screening. The



roundabout at the south eastern corner is poorly landscaped and is an eyesore at the entrance to the village.

### GENERAL ENHANCEMENT OBJECTIVES

- (1) An environmental traffic management scheme, including provision for cyclists, needs to be prepared in conjunction with the highway authority. This should address the issue of 'rat-running' in Clanage Road and restricting traffic through the village when there are major events at Ashton Court.
- (2) New uses for the estate buildings should not lead to over-development and seek to resolve problems of re-using derelict or under-maintained historic buildings. New buildings should also complement the scale and character of the rural and residential environment, and should conform to the City Council's Conservation Principles P2-P10.
- (3) The City Council will apply Principles P11-P19 in the Conservation Handbook to extensions and alterations to traditional buildings within the Conservation Area.
- (4) To retain the character of the area of large houses in large plots, subdivision or infill of garden plots will normally not be permitted. Conservation Principle P33 will apply
- (5) A landscape management plan needs to be prepared in conjunction with the Leisure Services Directorate which includes the following:-
  - (i) *screening and tree planting to Ashton Road;*
  - (ii) *a special landscaping scheme to the roundabout at the junction of Ashton Road and Clanage Road;*
  - (iii) *screening and planting around the two educational establishments; and (iv) planting to break-up the sportsfield areas.*
- (6) Any development of the open pastureland forming the traditional setting and lying within the historic curtilage of Ashton Court will be resisted.