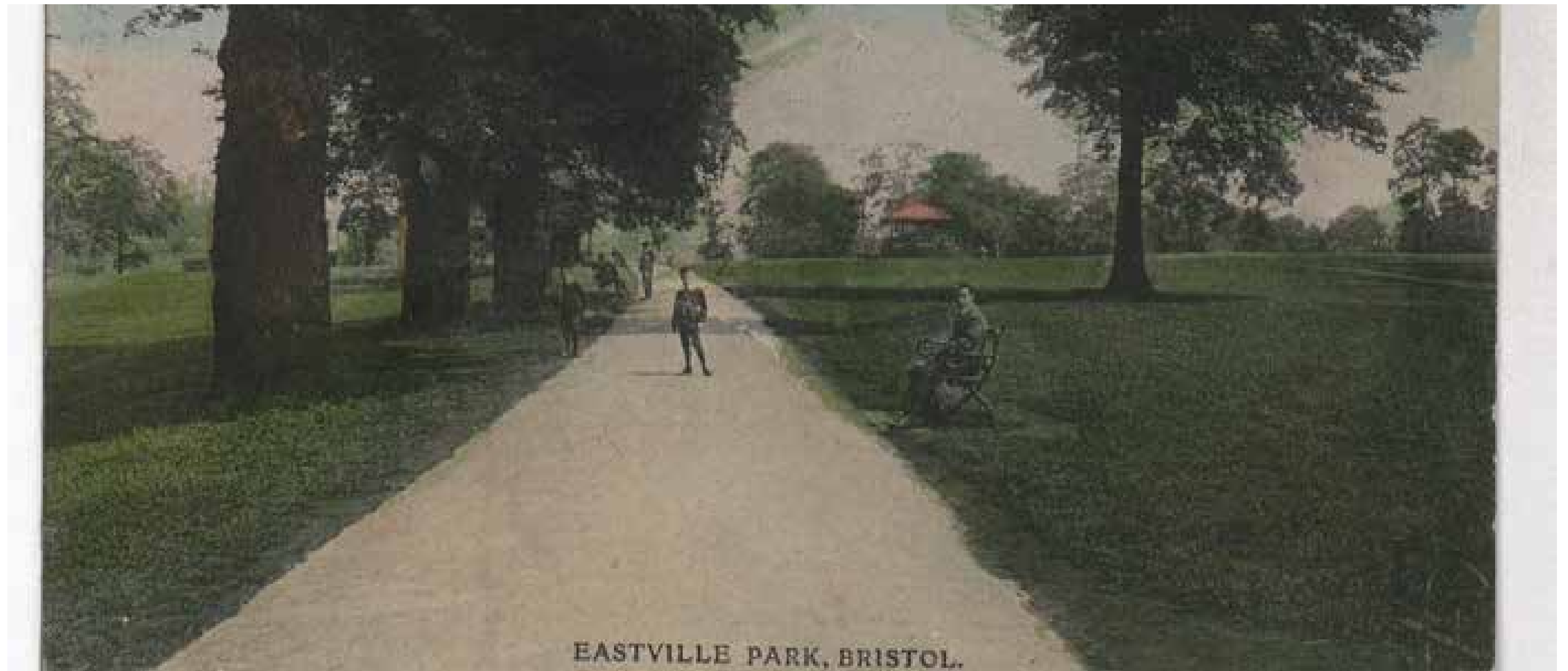


Eastville Park A People's Park



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Ordnance Survey 100023406

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Cover image An old postcard of Eastville Park showing the old bandstand in
the distance. The postcard was posted in 1907 and is used here
courtesy of Bristol Archives, ref 43207/9/42/24

Preface

Understanding the context of our place...

The City of Bristol is one of the most historic cities in England. Founded in about 1000AD the city has always been a place of change, economic growth and innovation.

Until the First World War the fabric of the city was essentially a medieval structure centred on the cross roads of High Street, Corn Street, Broad Street and Wine Street. Even the outer structure of the city, now the inner suburbs such as St Pauls and Kingsdown, was based on medieval routes or field patterns.

Despite centuries of urban growth and densification this structure remained unchanged while building forms adapted to new uses and new architectural styles.

During the twentieth century Bristol has seen its most dramatic changes with the depopulation of the central core, bombing during the Second World War and the dominance of private motor car use. Although this period has continued the process of urban renewal and the replacement of built form, it is the Post War highway infrastructure projects that have eroded the physical fabric of the city on a scale unlike any other period.

Within this broad context, Bristol's character is defined by a variety of individual neighbourhoods with a distinctive character informed by their topography, landscape, views, layout, land use, social development, architectural style and materials.

An Our Place document is intended to help explain how a specific area has arrived at its current state from its origins, and highlight the key features that define the area as it exists today.

This understanding provides the basis from which appropriate changes to the area can be achieved, which will enable it to grow and succeed whilst still respecting its historic legacy and unique sense of place. Ultimately it will help to deliver local plan policies particularly around issues concerning local character and distinctiveness.

The Our Place process encourages greater participation by communities in defining the character of their neighbourhood and planning for the future of their place.

Our Place character mapping is an important stage in defining the identity of a place that informs the Spirit of Place process that follows a co-creative place evaluation approach as defined by the National Trust (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/our-conservation-principles>).

Understanding Our Spirit of Place...

Spirit of Place brings together key stakeholders to unpick and identify what makes a place distinctive and unique. This understanding is built from the emotional reactions people have to the physical elements such as scenery and buildings, cultural aspects, heritage, and a sites aesthetic qualities.

Bristol City Council have adopted this approach as a way of understanding what their parks and green spaces mean to the people that use them. Through a series of workshops run at each site BCC will work with park users and managers to create a set of guiding principals that will act as a touchstone for future management of that place.

The finished Spirit of Place documents will be publicly accessible and will be published alongside the Bristol Future Parks Expression of Interest pilot. This aims to identify new sustainable income opportunities and community activities whilst also respecting the natural and cultural heritage within our parks and green spaces. The themes and principals identified in the Spirit of Place document will form part of the decision-making process.

Introduction

1



Purpose, scope and status

Policy Context

A local area is largely defined by its physical character and distinctiveness. Understanding and defining this local character significantly contributes to conserving an area’s identity. For this reason local character and distinctiveness is a material consideration of any planning proposal.

The over-arching planning policy is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied at a local level. Of specific relevance is Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

The Core Strategy (June 2011) is the overall approach for planning in Bristol, guiding development and setting out key elements of the planning framework up to 2026 and beyond. Our Place documents form part of a suite of guidance documents referred to in Policy BCS21 of the Core Strategy and the Local Character and Distinctiveness policy in the Development Management Policy document.

In addition to the physical character the identity of a place is dependent on and defined by its occupiers and users that bring vibrancy and activity to an area.

Purpose and scope

This document provides an understanding of why Eastville Park is special and articulates which elements contribute to or detract from its identity.

To achieve this understanding, the document identifies the physical characteristics of the park defined by the local:

- Topography
- Views and vantage points (into, out of and within each area)
- Landmarks (positive landmarks and other notable features)
- Significant green infrastructure
- Routes
- Spaces

Combining an Our Place process that considers physical character and significance to a Spirit of Place process that draws in wider communal aspects, enables a rich understanding of the identity of an area.

This understanding is intended to form the basis of care for places like Eastville Park and ensure that all users of the park can contribute to its positive future.

Our Spirit of Place Eastville Park

In June 2021, council officers and members of the community primarily from the Friends of Eastville Park group undertook an Our Place/Spirit of Place process that began with an Our Place character mapping exercise (see section 2).

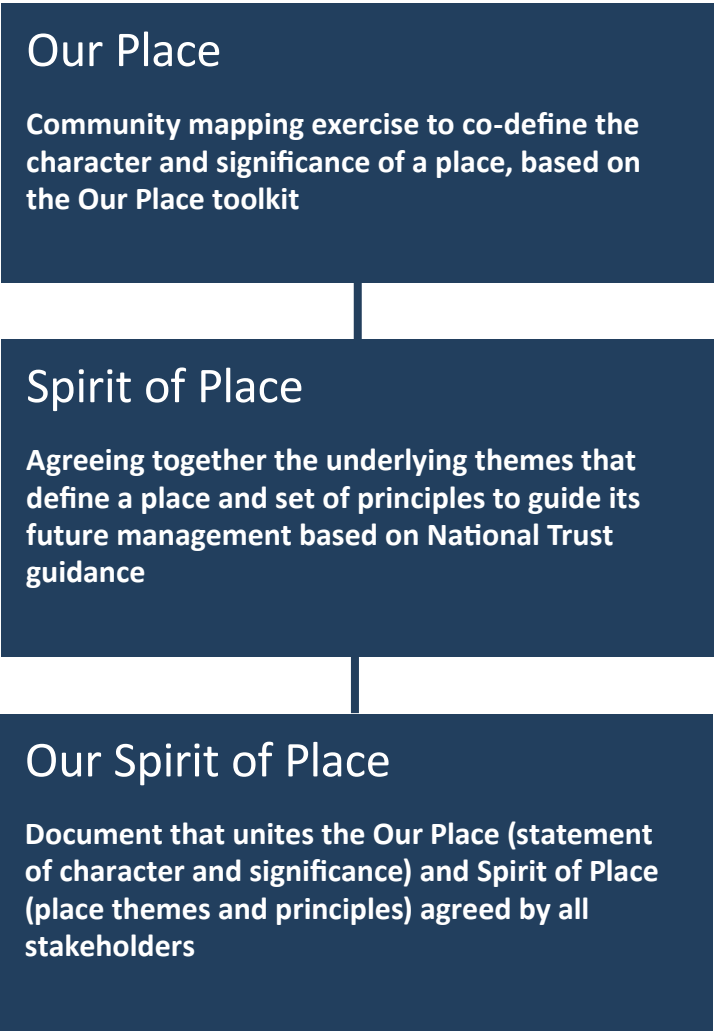
Participants were then invited to complete an online survey to help define what was special and distinctive about the place and whether there were any negative aspects to the site.

Two online Spirit of Place workshops followed the Our Place mapping event. These community and officer collaborative sessions used a Flinga online white board tool to draw out themes about the place, based on the survey responses and discussions.

The Our Place character mapping and identified place themes have been combined in this document to form a co-created vision for Eastville Park that should inform the future use and management of the site.

For further information about the Our Place project visit <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/239165/Our+Place+report-revised.pdf/bcbfffe3-58a4-2297-26be-98a8ba32d8a3>

The Our Spirit of Place Process



Language of the document

Character/context

The main visual characteristics of an area resulting from the influence of geology, topography, urban layout, plot form, land use, and predominant building ages, types, form and materials.

Topography

The physical form of an area defined by natural features of relief and geographic elements such as rivers.

Views

Within the scope of this document views are discussed in terms of locations from which a view to a specific landmark, or series of features (natural or built) is possible.

Landmarks

Are defined as features that make a positive contribution to a view (long distant or local). The description of each character area refers to positive landmarks as well as 'other features within the area'. This latter type are not necessarily visible in a specific view but are of historic interest or make a positive contribution to the local character.



Location

Location

Eastville Park lies northeast of central Bristol immediately east of and close to junction 2 of the M32 motorway.

The park is bordered by Fishponds Road and Muller Road to the south and the River Frome to the north.

To the east the area of the park has a mixed, discontinuous boundary formed by residential streets, Ridgeway Park cemetery, the rear of properties on Redhill Drive and woodland areas along the river valley.

For the purpose of this document the boundary has been taken from the local history park and garden designation boundary, but has considered the eastern edges including the cemetery in the text.



Fig 1
Our Place Eastville Park study area


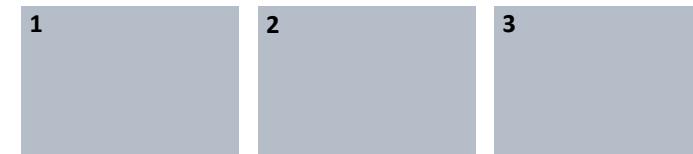
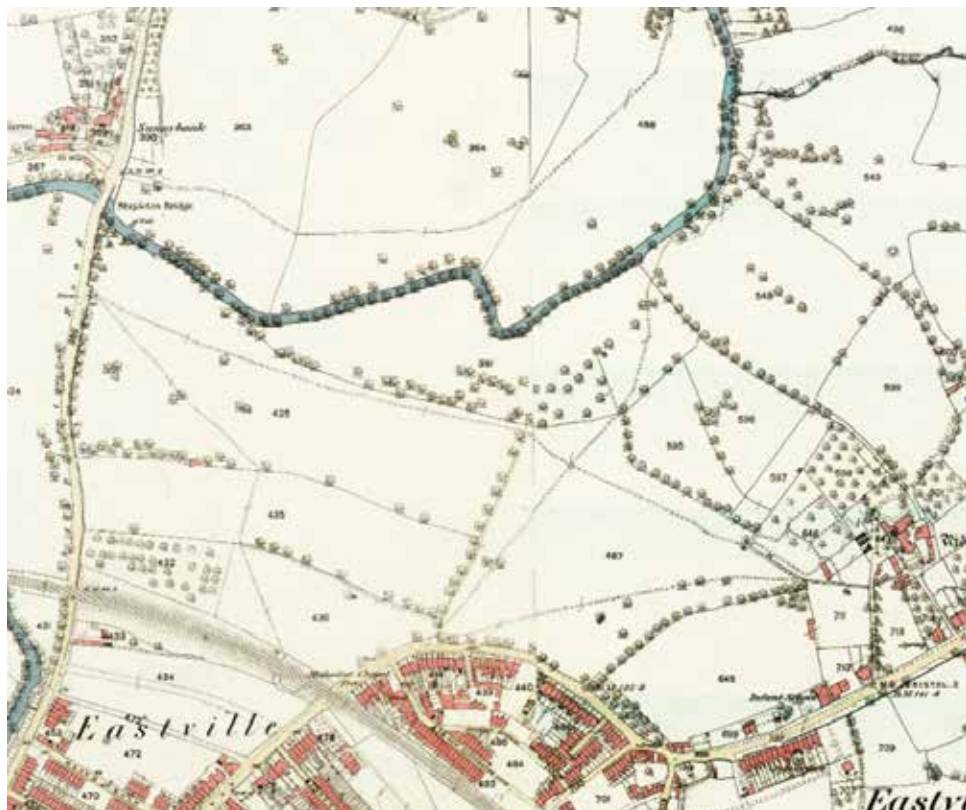
 Park area boundary

Fig 2
Historic development



- 1 1880s Ordnance Survey (OS) plan
- 2 1903 OS
- 3 1913 OS

Eastville Park historic development



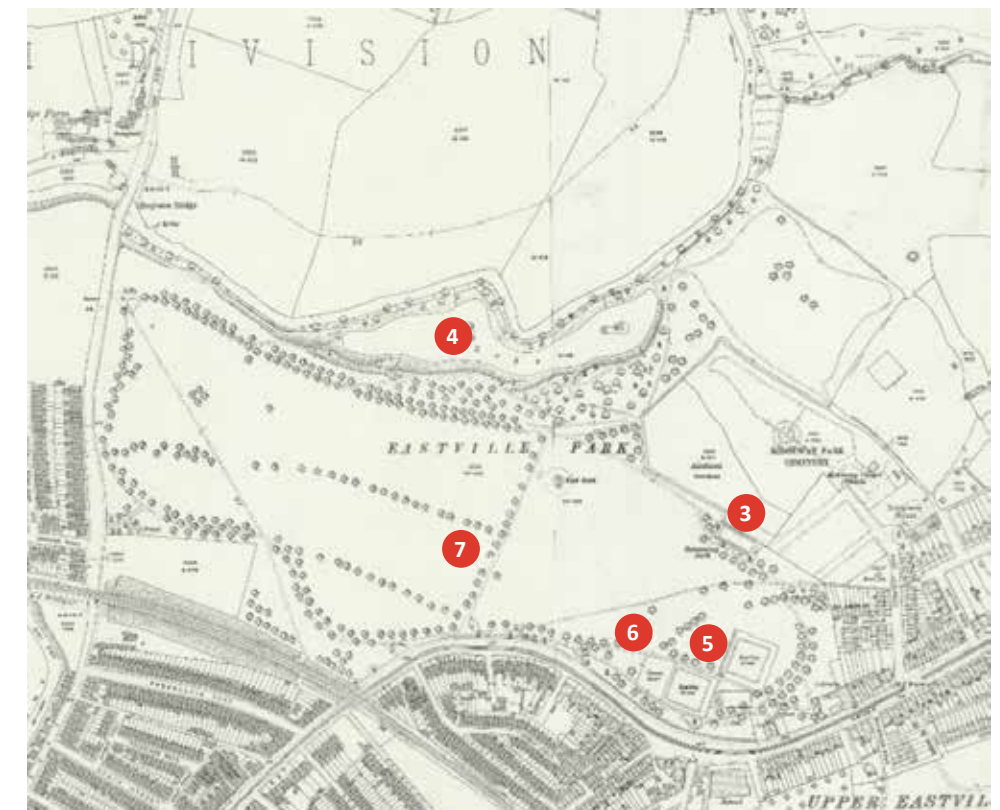
1880s

- Before the park was created the area was agricultural land on the fringe of the ever expanding urban area.
- At this time the land was owned by the Smyth family of Ashton Court.



1903

- The land was sold to the Bristol Corporation (now Bristol City Council) by Greville Smyth in 1884.
- In 1893 the park was opened.
- Many of the former field boundaries were incorporated into the design of the park landscape and an avenue of trees planted along the northern ridge (1).
- A longer avenue was created to create a serpentine walk along the southern edge (2).



1913

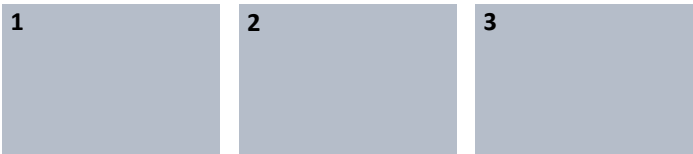
- A swimming pool in the park was created in 1907 (3).
- The boating lake (4) and bowling greens (5) were added in 1908.
- Tennis courts (6) were probably added at the same time.
- Additional tree planting (7) had taken place within the parkland area along the line of the former field boundaries before the First World War.

Fig 3
Historic development

1 RAF aerial photograph, 1946

2 1950s OS

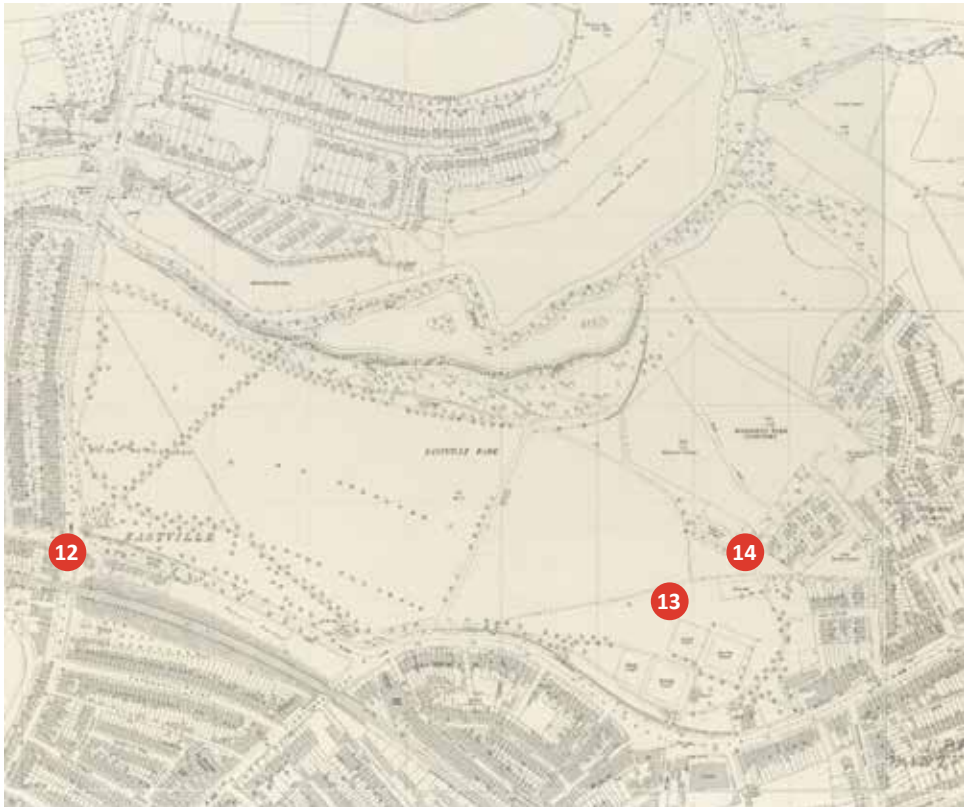
3 2012 aerial photograph



Eastville Park historic development



- 1946**
- Before the Second World War a new path had been created (8) across the western parkland area to directly connect the south western entrance to the boating lake.
 - During the war, the majority of the park was given over to allotment use as part of the city’s *Dig for Victory* campaign.
 - Other areas were used for Home Guard activities; a searchlight battery (9) and barrage balloon (10) were both stationed within the park and can be seen as concrete scars in the photograph above.
 - A public air raid shelter (11) was also positioned near the bowling greens and can also be seen in this 1946 aerial image.



- 1950s**
- The creation of Muller Road in the 1930s had cut across part of the park, changing the boundary in this area and creating a new southwestern entrance (12)
 - The 1950s plan shows an additional tennis court area (13) that had probably been added before the war.
 - It also shows the play area (14) that was probably added to the park in the late 1940s/early 1950s.



- 2012**
- In the mid 1960s, the creation of the M32 (formerly The Parkway)(15) across the western edge of the park caused both a significant erosion to the landscape, but also increased noise and air pollution to the area.
 - A new western play area was added in the later 20th century (16).
 - By 2012 some areas of trees had been lost particularly within the central area probably to allow for the football pitches (17).

Old postcards of Eastville Park

(Images courtesy of Bristol Archives and sourced from Know Your Place)



Postcard sent 1st July, 1909, reference 43207/9/42/20



The old swimming pool, photographed after 1920, 43207/9/42/78



The lake, postcard sent 26th April, 1921, 43207/9/42/71



Boathouse burnt by Suffragettes, November 1913, 43207/22/19/22



The canon in the park, postcard sent 25th July, 1905, 43207/9/42/13



The bowling green, postcard sent 27th August, 1909, 43207/37/2/5



Postcard sent 7th May, 192?, 43207/9/42/82



Postcard sent 28th June, 1921, 43207/9/42/63

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Identity of place

2



Fig 3
Mapping areas

Local character

Summary of local character

The character of Eastville Park is predominantly defined by its historic origins as a large Victorian municipal park with Edwardian recreation additions; tennis courts, bowling greens, boating lake.

As such Eastville has a parkland character with tree-lined boundaries and tree-lined routes through the spaces. Significant parkland trees within the spaces are also prominent and contribute to the visual interest.

Beyond the parkland environment, the park merges with the wooded Frome Valley creating a distinctive woodland experience that continues beyond the park into Snuff Mills to the east.

For the purposes of the Our Place mapping process the area was divided into four elements:

- The main parkland area
- The area of recreational uses; tennis courts, bowling greens, play area etc
- The boating lake
- Redhill

These four areas help to further define the distinctiveness of Eastville Park that contribute to the theme identified as part of the Spirit of Place process (see page 28-9).





Mapped areas

Character areas

The Our Place mapped areas enable the park to be divided into distinct character areas:

- Parkland (green)
- Active recreation area (purple)
- The boating lake (blue)
- Redhill (orange)



Parkland



Boating lake



Active recreation



Redhill



Parkland

- Positive Context**
- Landmark trees within the parkland context
 - Views to landmarks beyond park
 - Important avenues of trees/tree lined routes
 - Locally important heritage assets including the remains of the old fountain (1) and Edwardian toilet block (2). The area also has strong associations with uses during WWII including site of former allotments (3), barrage balloon (4), searchlight battery (5) and public air raid shelter (6)
 - Gateways to the park are generally accessible and well defined with noticeboards close to main access point (7)
 - Football and cricket pitches within central area are not intrusive and do not detract from the parkland setting

Key

- Gateway (decision point)
- Historic point of interest
- Landmark trees
- Welcome signs
- Area of concern
- View point
- Vista
- Events/service access
- Boulders boundary
- Area of rough grass
- Park boundary





Parkland area viewed from vista point near the Fishponds Road entrance looking towards Purdown



Avenue along southwestern boundary alongside former Edwardian toilet block



North-south avenue separating the two football pitch areas






The stone base of the former fountain near the Fishponds Road entrance

Active recreation area

- Positive Context**
- Active uses during daylight hours
 - Play area
 - Well used ball court on former tennis court area
 - Tennis courts
 - Bowling green
 - Former swimming pool
 - Informal fitness/training area
 - Views to landmarks beyond park
 - Small accessible car park
 - Friends group use of nissen hut creating positive active hub including pop up cafe at weekends

Key

-  Gateway (decision point)
-  Historic point of interest
-  View point
-  Park boundary





Play area




Boundary to ball court

Boating lake

- Positive Context**
- Birdlife rich area
 - Connection to Snuff Mills
 - Views across the river towards Stapleton church
 - Quiet tranquil areas and sense of enclosure provided by surrounding woodland and tree lined watercourse

Key

-  Gateway (decision point)
-  Historic point of interest
-  Area of concern
-  View point
-  Boundary to view/edge of slope
-  Park boundary





Autumnal view of the boating lake



View across the lake towards one of the stepped routes beyond

Redhill

- Positive Context**
- Views, particularly from top of field
 - Good sense of enclosure and seclusion from the rest of Eastville Park and public route along river
 - Landmark oak tree in centre of field
 - Ridgeway cemetery immediately adjoining the area provides natural and historic interest

Key

Gateway (decision point)

Historic point of interest

Landmark/significant tree

Tree stump/patch of scrub

View point

Vista

Boundary defined by woodland

Fenced boundary

Informal path/desire line

Area of oak saplings

Park boundary





Tree stump/scrub area in centre of Redhill with Stapleton Church spire beyond



Patch of oak saplings looking towards the rear of residential properties at the top of the hill



View across Redhill looking west into the river valley



Bench at the wooded edge of Redhill on one of the informal paths

Strengths and challenges

Following the Our Place mapping activity the participants were asked to identify the various character strengths in the local area.

In addition to these positive elements a number of particular challenges to the maintenance of the area’s character were also identified.

These strengths and challenges have been correlated in the adjoining table.

Strength	Description	Challenges
Historic greenspace used by everyone	People described the history of the place being important particularly in relation to this being a ‘People’s Park’ where everyone is welcome	Although many people described the park as accessible, lack of parking was identified as an issue particularly where this put pressure on surrounding streets. Lack of cycle parking and lack of maintenance was also identified as issues affecting the ‘People’s Park’ concept
Wildlife and nature	Woodland paths, trees, plants, birdlife, sense of openness and a sense of countryside were identified as positive aspects of Eastville Park	As above, maintenance was seen as an issue. Also the openness could sometimes make the space feel windswept in the parkland area
Water environment along northern edge with the River Frome and boating lake	The link to the river and the associated connections to Snuff Mills and weirs were seen as an important part of Eastville Park’s identity. The lake was also an important feature of the park alongside the tree-lined river environment	Maintenance of the lake was seen as an issue along with uneven surfaces and steps. Irresponsible fishing was also mentioned as a problem
Sports and recreation opportunities for all	Clearly defined games area with pitches, ball courts and bowling green. Play areas for young children and informal use for fitness activities	Some areas feel neglected and disused such as the old club house building and the play area requires updating. Conflict between users such as cyclists and walkers was also reported
A positive place for mental health and wellbeing	Parts of the park were described as peaceful and tranquil. A place for walking and relaxation	Some uses/users occasionally conflict with this tranquillity

Significance

3



Understanding Significance

Heritage Values and Significance

The conservation principle of ‘Significance’, the sum of the cultural and natural heritage values of a historic place, underpins modern conservation policy and practice. It provides a framework for understanding and comparing different values that have established in a given place through time.

Recent publications by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund set out the current thinking on what is significant and how it is to be described. These documents promote four key categories of heritage value:

- The site as a source of evidence or knowledge (*evidential*)
- The site as a link to the past, the people who shaped it and a means of learning about it (*historic*)
- The site as a source of sensory or intellectual stimulation, designed or incidental (*aesthetic*)
- The site as an embodiment of social or spiritual values (*communal*)

To these heritage values a fifth has been added to cover the contribution that the site makes to the natural environment.

Within the five value categories the different levels of importance inevitably require judgements about their relative significance.

This study takes a broad approach to ranking the asset’s significance based on the heritage values, any formal designation status and survey information available at the time of assessment. The following significance ratings are used:

A+	Exceptional	(international)
A	Exceptional	(national - UK)
B	Considerable	(regional - West of England)
C	Some	(local - Bristol)
D	Little or no importance	
INT	Intrusive or damaging	

This approach supports future decision-making about the prioritisation and approach to management of historic assets. However, it is recognised that direct comparison across different heritage values can be problematic. For example part of the site may only be of limited historic interest but exceptional communal value to the local community.

Historic Values

English Heritage’s ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance’ (2008) states that:

- *historic* value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present
- *historic* value tends to be *illustrative* or *associative*

Recognised as an early example of a municipal park in Bristol that retains much of its original design, Eastville Park is a locally designated historic park and garden making it an important local heritage asset. It consequently falls within the remit of the Local Plan Policy DM31 that aims to protect and enhance heritage assets.

Value rating C

Historic Associative Values

There is some associative value in relation to the original land owning family the Smyths of Ashton Court who sold the land to the Corporation as part of the Victorian public park initiatives.

There is also some associative value with the park’s connection to the Suffragette movement in the early 20th century.

Value rating C

Aesthetic Values

English Heritage's 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (2008) states that:

- *design* value relates to the aesthetic qualities generated by the conscious design of a building, structure or landscape as a whole
- *aesthetic* value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
- some aesthetic values are not substantially the product of formal design, but develop more or less *fortuitously* over time, as the result of a succession of responses within a cultural framework

Views to landmarks beyond the park provide local aesthetic value that contributes to the identity and sense of place.

The boating lake also has local aesthetic value, as a result of its sense of enclosure, bird life environment and neighbouring River Frome.

Value rating C

Design Value

The park retains much of its original Victorian municipal park design. The avenues of trees in particular contribute to the local design value of the park.

Value rating C

Evidential Values

English Heritage's 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (2008) states that:

- evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity
- physical remains of past human activity are the primary source of evidence and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them
- age can be a strong indicator of relative evidential value
- evidential value derives from the physical remains or genetic lines that have been inherited from the past
- the ability to understand and interpret the evidence tends to be diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal and replacement

Community participation in a cultural heritage programme for the park would reveal further evidential value for the park, particularly in relation to the wartime uses, former swimming pool and other leisure activities.

Value rating C

Communal and Natural Values

English Heritage's 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (2008) states that:

- *communal* value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory
- *commemorative* and *symbolic* values reflect the meanings of a place for those who draw part of their identity from it, or have emotional links to it
- *social* value is associated with places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence

Communal Value

Eastville Park is a designated important open space.

As a public park, Eastville has significant communal value in terms of its historic and present leisure uses.

Sri Chinmoy Peace Mile within park.

Natural Value

Parts of the park particularly the Redhill area are a site of local conservation interest and the whole park is an important wildlife corridor.

Many of the fringe areas including the river and boating lake are important natural habitats.

Summary of significance

Heritage significance

Eastville Park is one of Bristol’s earliest municipal parks.

It retains a lot of its original layout and has historic associations with the Smyth family and wartime uses on the site.

Routes and access

The routes through the park relate to the original layout or early design development of the park.

The most significant routes across the parkland are tree-lined avenues that provide shaded walks as well as helping to provide a sense of enclosure to the grassland spaces.

The route along the river through the area of the boating lake is an important strategic walking and cycling route connecting Eastville to Snuff Mills, Oldbury Court and neighbourhoods to the east.

Access into the park is generally good with clear entrances from surrounding main roads or from the car park at the west end of the park. Some of the routes to the boating lake are stepped, although level access is also available.

The entrance and route past the Jewish Burial Ground is a historic route, but narrow and not fully accessible.

Communal value

As a popular city park, Eastville Park has significant value for the communities of Bristol.

The play areas are well used by families.

The tennis courts and ball park are also in near constant daytime use. There are also popular formal and informal fitness activities that take place within the active leisure area.

The Friends group have an active presence within the park and run a community cafe and bowling club.

The parkland character area is a popular family picnic area in summer months and features a regular park run.

The football pitches are used by local teams such as Ashley Down juniors.

This parkland area is also used on certain summer weekends for larger public events.

The riverside walk and boating lake are popular with people enjoying peaceful walks and the natural environment.

Wildlife and nature

The river and boating lake area are important for wildlife particularly birdlife.

The adjoining escarpment to the north of the boating lake is also an important semi natural area for badgers and other wildlife.

The Redhill area and adjoining woodlands including the graveyard beyond the park boundary offer an important mix of natural habitats.

The parkland area is regularly mown to enable sporting use, but offers areas of enhancement in accordance with the Nature Recovery proposals to encourage a mixed grassland environment.

Our Spirit of Place

4



Our Spirit of Place

The Our Spirit of Place workshops with officers and members of the community defined the identity of Eastville Park as the People's Park, a place where the whole community should and does feel welcome. This identity stems from the original aspiration for the municipal park when it was established late in the Victorian era.

Within this overarching identity for the park, a series of additional themes that are important within the area were identified. These four place themes help to form a set of principles for the future use and management of the park:

- A place to experience a natural water environment
- An accessible place for people to enjoy wildlife and nature
- A place for sport and recreation
- A peaceful place to support positive mental health and wellbeing

Eastville Park

A People's Park, a place where the whole community should and does feel welcome



People’s Park

Place principles

- Ensure that existing signs and information boards are well maintained and up to date including all relevant contact details for services, support and events timetables
- Work in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure the park meets the needs of all
- Continue support for community activities and events
- Use the identity of Eastville Park as defined by the history and wildlife of the area on all signage and promotion

Any improvements to signage in the park should be developed as part of a wayfinding strategy infomed by an access audit.

The access audit should be undertaken in partnership with stakeholders and should consider physical and digital content.

Water

Place principles

- Work in partnership with all stakeholders to promote the water aspects of Eastville Park
- Wayfinding in the park will ensure signs and maps direct people towards the lake and river
- Any business operations on or around the boating lake will respect the important wildlife

Wildlife and Nature

Place principles

- Work in partnership with Nature Recovery proposals
- The rich wildlife within and around Eastville will be promoted and celebrated with all park users
- The Ridgeway Park Cemetery will be included within these considerations as a place of rich wildlife habitats

Sports and Recreation

Place principles

- Work in partnership with existing and potential users of the facilities to ensure that the park meets their needs
- Notice boards and web pages will provide clear information about permissions for organised sport and fitness activities in the park and sporting events
- Ensure that any new facilities including lighting respects the wildlife in the park

Mental health and wellbeing

This was identified as a key overarching theme for Eastville Park and one that has always been important from its origins and recognised as a site of a Sri Chinmoy Peace Mile.

The current uses of spaces within the park for quiet contemplation, relaxing walks and collective mindfulness activities was seen as a significant aspect of the park that needed to be retained and enhanced.

These tranquil spaces were particularly identified as being important within the boating lake and Redhill character areas.

It was also agreed that the old swimming pool made an ideal environment for tranquil activities and relaxation combined with community gardening. This was agreed to be beneficial for the important wildlife within this area of the park.

Place principles

- Continue the positive community use and relaxing activities within the old swimming pool to retain the space as a place of tranquillity
- Ensure that new uses and users within the park respect the spaces for relaxation

