

Dame Emily Park The Deaner



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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...

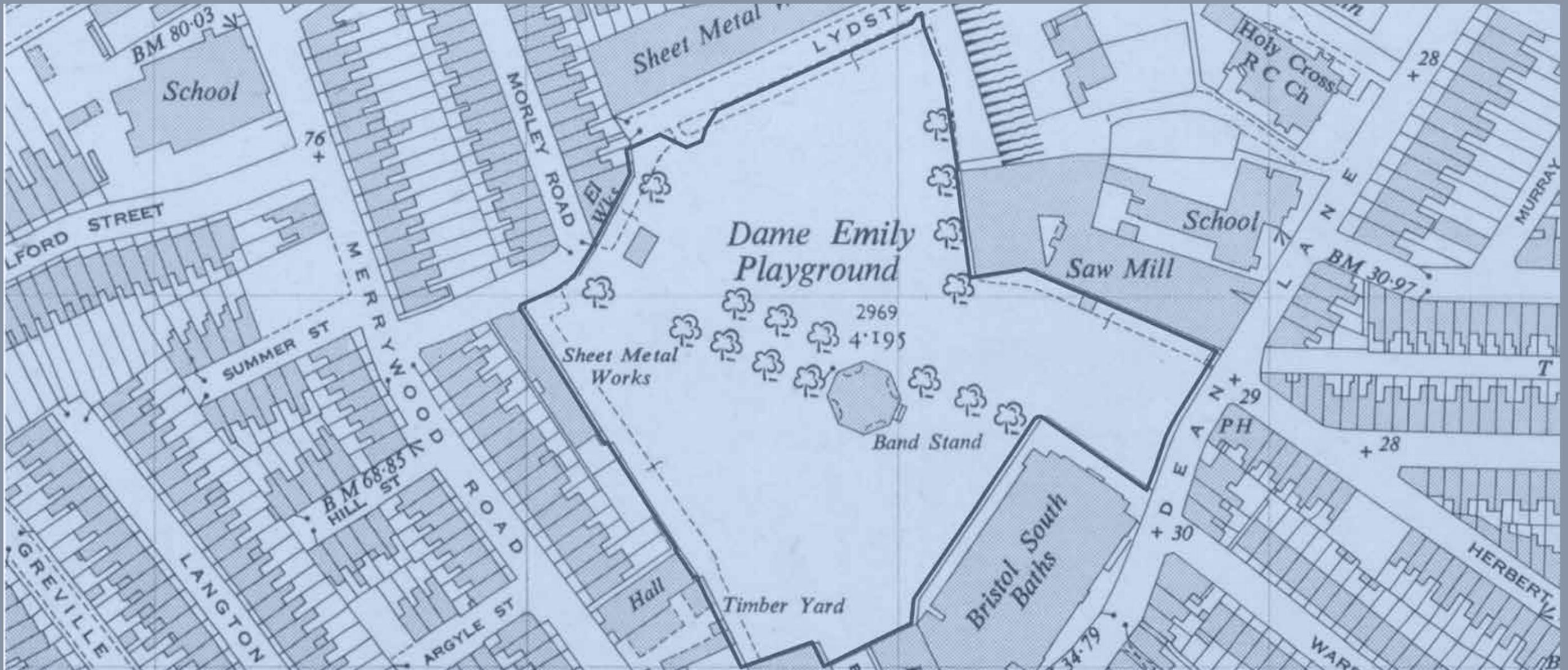
Spirit of Place brings together key stakeholders to unpick and identify what makes a place distinctive and unique. This understanding is built from the emotional reactions people have to the physical elements such as scenery and buildings, cultural aspects, heritage, and a sites aesthetic qualities.

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.

Purpose and scope

This document provides an understanding of why Dame Emily 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 and boundaries

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 Dame Emily Park and ensure that all users of the park can contribute to its positive future.

Our Spirit of Place Dame Emily Park

In July 2021, the community met with officers at the park to undertake an Our Place character mapping exercise and begin the Spirit of Place process.

Participants were 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 Dame Emily 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

Our Place

Community mapping exercise to co-define the character and significance of a place, based on the Our Place toolkit

Spirit of Place

Agreeing together the underlying themes that define a place and set of principles to guide its future management based on National Trust guidance

Our Spirit of Place

Document that unites the Our Place (statement of character and significance) and Spirit of Place (place themes and principles) agreed by all stakeholders

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.

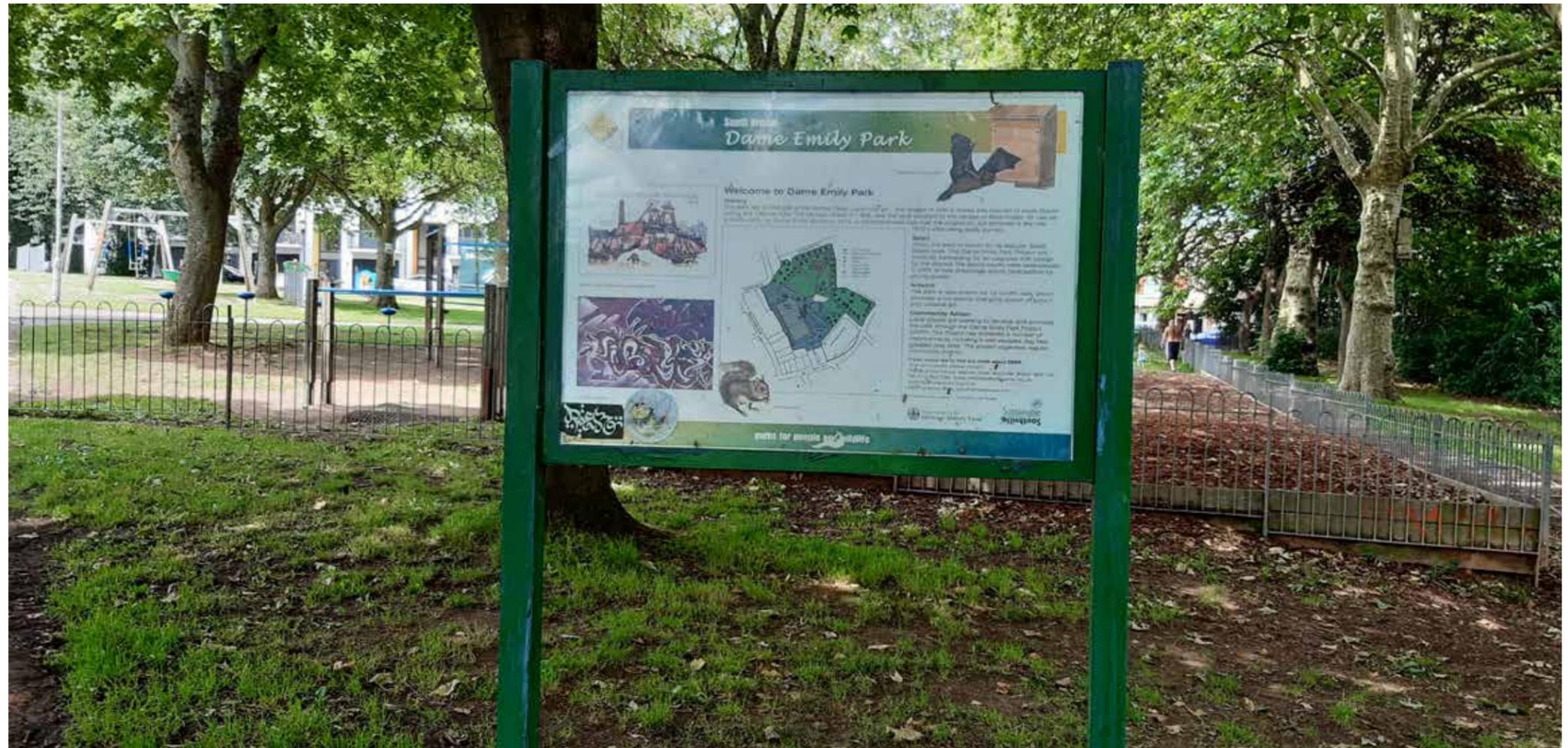




Fig 1
Our Place Dame Emily Park study area



Location

Location

Dame Emily Park lies between the Southville and Bedminster neighbourhoods in south Bristol.

The Park has a mixture of boundaries. The streets of Dean Lane, Morley Road and Lydstep Terrace form part of the northern and southern boundaries. These boundaries consist of railings and provide four of the five park entrances.

The fifth entrance is in the southern corner of the park at the top of the cul-de-sac of Booth Road.

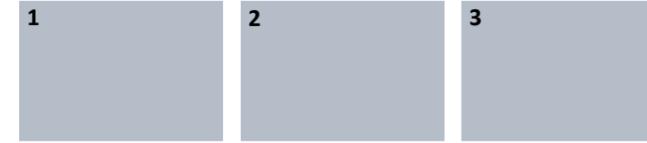
The remainder of the southern boundary is formed by the perimeter of the Bristol South Baths building that is accessed from within the park.

The east boundary is formed by the rear of properties on Merrywood Road, while the west boundary is a fence and hedge edge to the neighbouring school and private garden.

The skatepark within Dame Emily Park is known locally as Dean Lane or 'The Deaner'.



Fig 2
Historic development



- 1 1828 Plumley and Ashmead map
- 2 1854 Ashmead map
- 3 1880s Ordnance Survey (OS) map

Dame Emily Park historic development



1828

- The earliest map evidence for the area shows the site of Dame Emily Park as open fields to the north and west of the historic centre of Bedminster
- At this date, Dean Lane (1) was a track through these fields connecting the emerging settlement of Southville that had begun soon after the creation of the New Cut and Coronation Road to the north in 1809.



1854

- Dean Lane Colliery (2) was established on the site in 1845
- Two shafts were sunk to an initial depth of 193 metres, later increased to 395 metres. The workings extended north-eastwards beneath Bristol
- A rail road (3) carried extracted coal to a coal yard on East Street

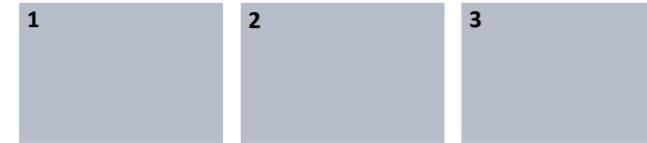


1880

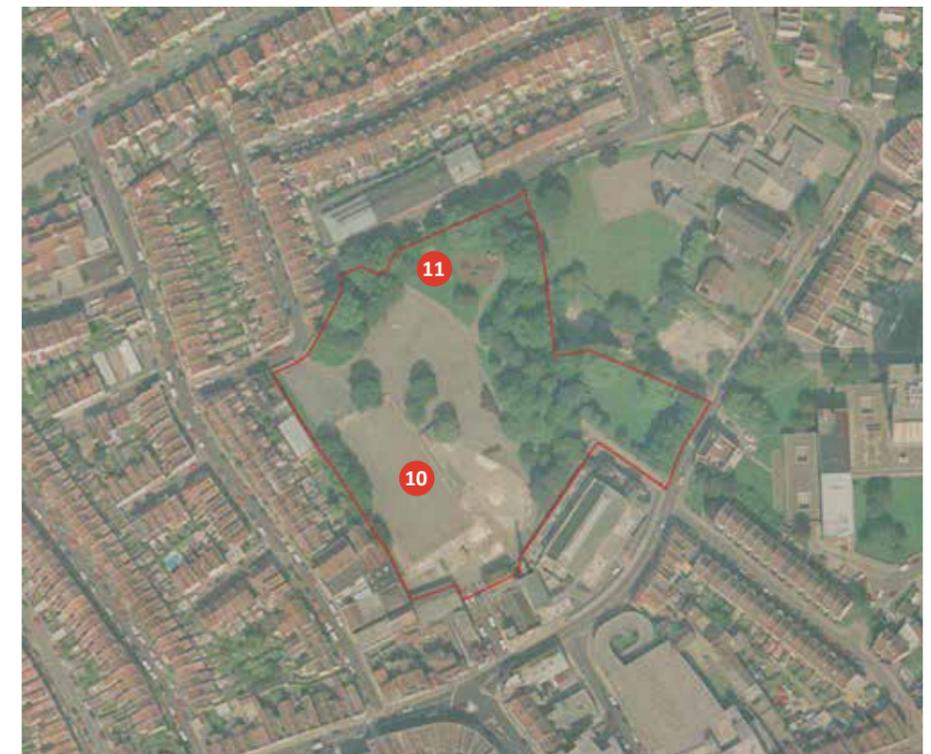
- By the 1880s further industrial uses had been attracted to the area including a limekiln (4) that occupied an area close to the present playground
- This OS map also shows the various shafts on the site including the circular shaft close to the site that later became used for the bandstand (5)

Dame Emily Park historic development

Fig 3
Historic development



- 1 1913 Ordnance Survey (OS) plan
- 2 1946 RAF aerial photograph
- 3 1999 aerial photograph



1913

- The colliery closed in 1906 to be replaced by Dame Emily Park named after Emily Smyth, wife of landowner Greville Smyth of Ashton Court
- A bandstand was erected above one of the air shafts (6) and the area of spoil heaps and mine workings were landscaped primarily creating an avenue of trees (7) connecting Bedminster to Southville. Note that originally this avenue continued through the site of what would become Bristol South Baths, see (9) on the 1946 aerial photograph

1946

- After the war the park remained little changed and appears quite bare in this 1946 aerial image. There is also little sign of the site being used for allotments unlike many other parks in the city
- A small group of nissen hut type structures close to the northern entrance (8) suggests that the park had seen some wartime use
- Bristol South Baths had been built in 1929 on part of the original park layout

1999

- In 1978, the skatepark, 'The Deaner' was opened and by 1999 hardstanding covered the majority of the park area (10)
- At this time the playpark had been created in its current location (11)

Identity of place

2



Dame Emily Park

Summary description

Dame Emily Park can be divided into two distinct areas:

- The skatepark to the west consisting of hardstanding surfaces for skating and BMX uses
- The green area containing the playground, grassed areas and the community garden

There are three entrances on the northern boundary and two in the south and the main pedestrian route runs from the northwest corner between the two areas towards Dean Lane.

The top of the grassed area is fenced by low railings to enclose the play area and separate lawn to the west.

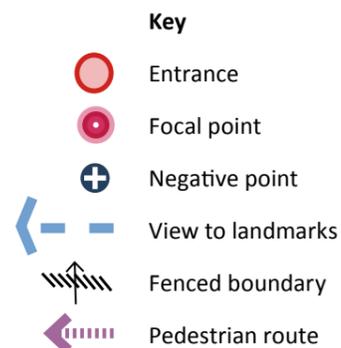
Routes and boundaries are generally lined with trees, although the original avenue has been eroded, first by the creation of the swimming baths buildings and latterly by the creation of the skatepark.

The skatepark/hardstanding area also contains a ball park.

The uses within the park create three focal points:

- Skatepark and multi-sport area
- Play area
- Community garden

The elevated position of the community garden and reduced tree coverage within the skatepark area results in a good view point from the northwest corner of the park looking towards local landmarks within the Bedminster Conservation Area.



Positive Context

- Views to local landmarks
- Positive skatepark use by young people
- Multi-sport court in regular use
- Community garden planting
- Well used play area
- Accessible entrances and paths along main routes
- Good tree coverage
- Green space in constant use by dog walkers and other leisure activities



The Deaner



View from the community garden area



Mosaic sign



The play area



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 and opportunities
Community garden area	Volunteer led area of planting within the top northwest corner of the park including a table tennis point and informal seating	Opportunities to increase the amount of flowering plants within the park, but problems of encroachment by DIY skating community. This could be addressed with greater provision for DIY skating within the skatepark area and clearer designation of community and skating areas
Skatepark and its important heritage	Nearly 50% of the park is retained as hardstanding areas with ramps and concrete aprons to facilitate skating. The slope down through the park makes an attractive and unique site for skaters.	Many of the surfaces used by the skating community are very worn and poorly maintained creating unusable or dangerous areas leading to more DIY encroachment into other areas of the park. Formalising a skating community aspect within the park together with investment in the facilities will increase the positive use on the site and continue to attract skaters from further afield
Well used play area	Good sized, well maintained playground with a good range of equipment together with an adjoining safe grassed area for ball games, picnics, etc	For understandable reasons this area is fenced, but it does create additional barriers within what is a relatively small park. Recent work to rationalise some of the paths and entrances has provided some improvements
Accessibility	Entrances and most paths are accessible and level access is available for all, although some inclines are challenging for some users	Encroachment of DIY skating activity can add barriers to movement and accessibility particularly towards the northwest corner. Some paths through the park have uneven surfaces as a result of tree roots
Coal mining heritage	The colliery was an important local employer during the 1800s and is an important local story that has relevance to the whole city	This heritage has no visible remains, although many people know that the surviving base of the bandstand covers the mine shaft. This heritage presents many opportunities for local heritage and arts projects that can be embedded in the design of features in the park
Graffiti/street art	Long established association with graffiti on the site connected with the skating community and now associated with the internationally significant Upfest festival	One persons street art can be another persons vandalism. However, the continuing growth and success of Bristol's street art scene is an increasing part of Bristol's identity. The association with UpFest in particular presents significant opportunities for The Deaner

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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 as detailed in the following section.

This study takes a broad approach to ranking the assets 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*

Dame Emily Park lies within the Bedminster Conservation Area, but is one of the few municipal green spaces that is not a locally registered park and garden.

Value rating C

Historic Associative Values

The Park has some historic value associated with the site’s former use as a colliery. This is an important aspect to the local story of Bedminster and the city.

The site’s development as an early example of a skatepark is of considerable or greater value having national and international recognition within the skateboarding community.

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

Aesthetic Value

Views out of the open space are important contributors to the significance of the park and wider conservation area.

The green space is a significant contributor to the character and appearance of the Bedminster Conservation Area.

Value rating C

Design Value

The skatepark was opened in 1978 making it one of the earliest in the UK. However, many of the original features of this late 70s design have been lost (as opposed to the grade II listed skatepark in Hornchurch, East London of a similar date). The surviving concrete features have some design value.

The historic development of the park is quite late in date and although the entrances and paths relate to the origins of the park, historic mapping suggests that the original design was quite limited.

The surviving base of the bandstand/shelter over the mine shaft has some design value linked to its associative value.

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

Opening in 1978, The Deaner is one of the country's first phase of skateparks and therefore has considerable evidential value.

The base of the bandstand marking the last remnants of the colliery has some evidential value in terms of the site's industrial heritage and municipal park origins.

Value rating A/B

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

The skatepark aspect of the park has exceptional value that sets it apart from many other city parks.

Since 1998, the Dame Emily Park Project have organised community events and activities that demonstrate the important contribution that this green space makes within this area.

Natural Value

The community garden and hedged boundaries provide some important local natural value.

Our Spirit of Place

The Our Spirit of Place workshops with officers and members of the community defined the following themes:

Inspiring

A place to be creative

Lots of good skaters there who are friendly to younger kids

Spirit of Place survey responses

Freedom of expression

A place to express yourself

DLH (Dean Lane Hardcore)

Ever changing graffiti wall

Spirit of Place survey responses

Connecting

A place where people of all ages, faiths, beliefs, race and backgrounds come together

The playground is a key stopping off point after school for families

Spirit of Place survey responses

Our Spirit of Place

A set of place principles has been established within each of the Our Spirit of Place themes.

These principles set out a broad approach to the future management of Dame Emily Park by all stakeholders; council officers, community groups and users of the space.

Inspiring

Place principles:

- Work in partnership with all stakeholders to support the skatepark and its community
- Work with the skating community to ensure that the facilities meets their needs through co-design processes
- Use this process to encourage positive skating that does not encroach on key pedestrian routes or hinder maintenance access

Freedom of expression

Place principles

- Make the most of opportunities for future collaboration with initiatives such as Up Fest to create a vibrant, welcoming and dynamic entrance from Booth Road
- Noticeboards within the park will be kept up to date with latest information about activities and community gardening opportunities

Connecting

Place principles

- Where possible promote Dame Emily Park as part of the BS3 Space Trail and similar neighbourhood initiatives that promote walking and exploring the local area
- Develop opportunities to explore and celebrate the coal mining story in the area through community cultural projects
- Future developments within the park will be co-designed to ensure that they are accessible and encourage greater integration of park users