

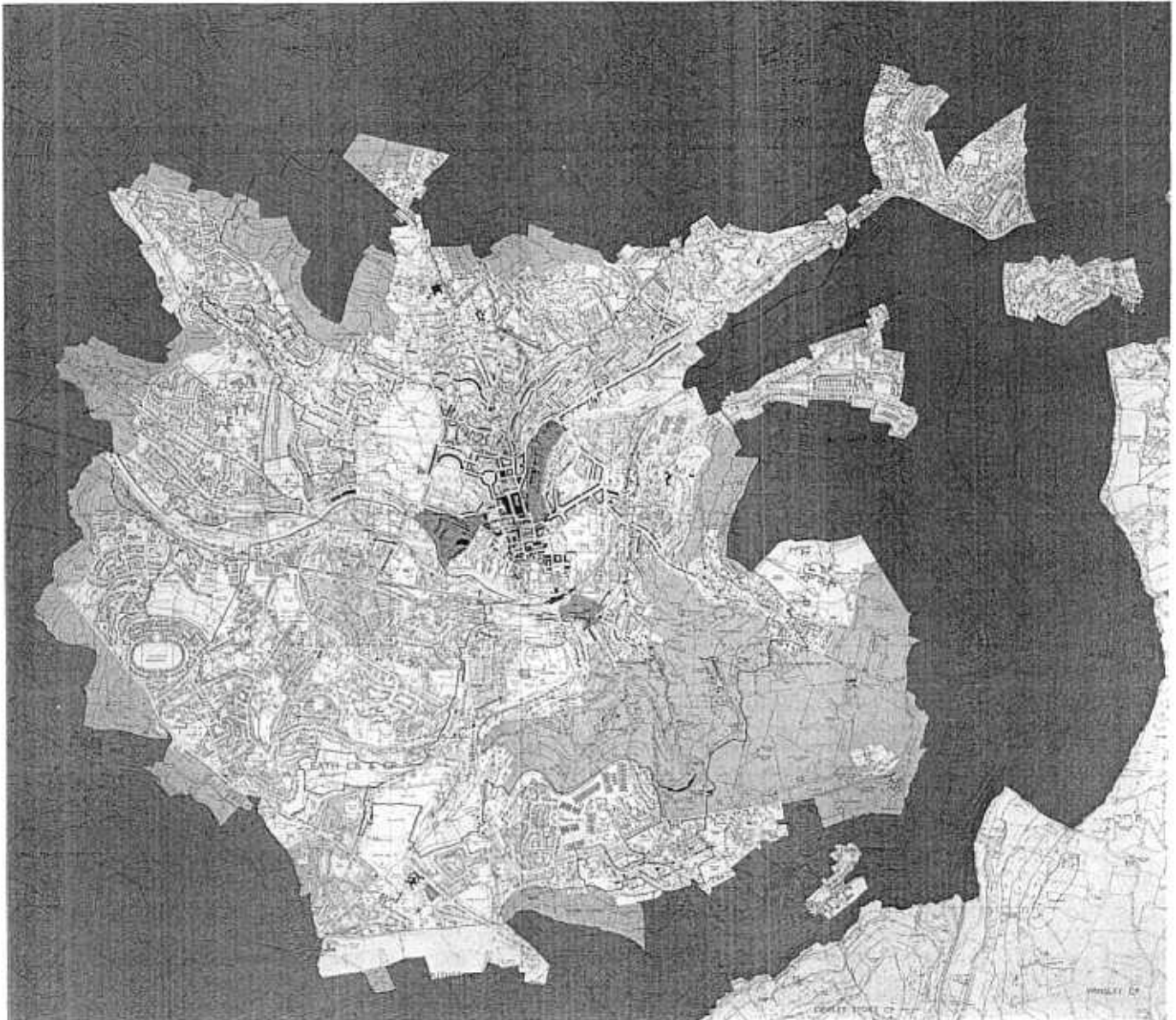
## URBAN SPACE AND CONSERVATION

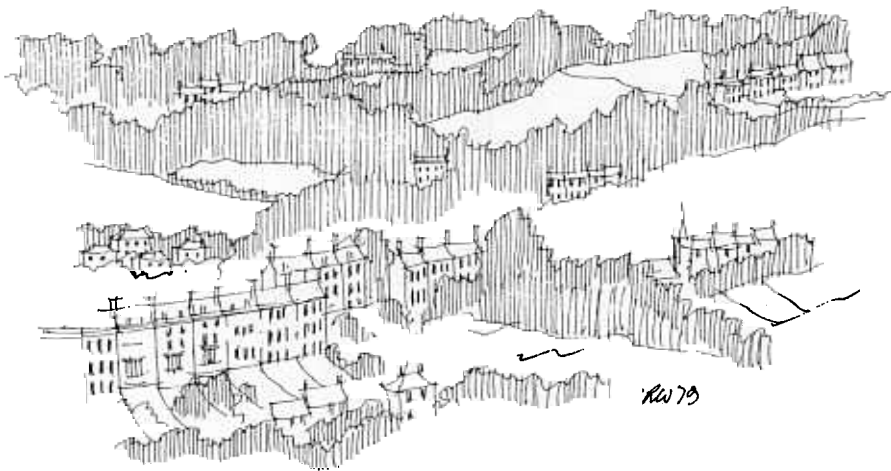
Most countries have a variety of methods and approaches aimed at the protection of buildings and monuments. These vary in effectiveness and many are strong in the control they attempt to exercise but very few countries have developed approaches in philosophical or administrative terms to the use and planning of the space between buildings.

Legislation has been developed to protect areas — Conservation Areas in England, Secteurs Sauvegardés in France — which draw attention to the need to recognise and protect the whole assembly of buildings and associated urban space. In Britain, using a kind of shorthand to cover a wide range of urban quality, we have called this “the Townscape”. Indeed in the

United Kingdom the whole approach to the designation of Conservation Areas has been one of identifying the total townscape rather than of identifying groups of buildings which are in any case protected by listed building legislation.

The space around buildings is as important to the character of an area as is the appearance of the buildings themselves. Space in towns and





1. - The surrounding landscape of Bath, all included in the Conservation Area. The boundary of the area is on the ridge line of trees.

cities is also important in revealing the historical growth of cities. An examination of the spatial arrangements in the townscape will often be more revealing through their archaeology than the buildings themselves. So often the relationship between spaces in the urban environment has remained whilst the buildings enclosing them have changed. Many English towns, for example, have Roman and mediaeval origins but appear on the surface to be Georgian and 19th-century places; only the spaces between the buildings reveal the older origins. Furthermore, the actual appearance of buildings is changed by the nature of the space from which those buildings are seen. A building which is observed from a street or square, which are part of a mediaeval city, where spaces are small and informal, has a totally different impact from a building seen in a city laid out during the Renaissance. The individual building may be a focal point in the street, a surprise around a corner or, simply, itself just an element of enclosure.

The use of buildings is also related to, and influences, the space around — a square or street that is enclosed by buildings in residential use clearly has a quite different characteristic from one with buildings in shopping use. So the link between buildings and space is both aesthetic, in that buildings and space are visually interrelated, and functional, in that the activities in both space and buildings are interrelated.

If therefore conservation is to be successful at more than the level of just the preservation of façades, both aesthetic and administrative approaches and policies must be arranged to secure the planning and control of the whole townscape. In Bath in particular we have tried to develop methods to protect this complete townscape.

To talk in terms of "control" in towns perhaps to use an emotive word in the present political climate. It could be argued that the quality of urban space is best left to the natural activities and functions that are developing and changing in our society and which result in the need for flexible building forms and flexible urban space. But, of course, space is not flexible and neither is the internal layout and appearance of buildings if the historic character of a place is to be preserved. Effective town planning control, including aesthetic control, is essential.

In most New Towns there has been a policy to segregate one use from another; this policy has had general public support in that, for example, the quietness of suburban residential areas has been achieved by the total segregation of, say, industrial or commercial use. By far and away the largest aspect of the work of most planning departments in the United Kingdom revolves around the need to ensure that one use is neighbourly with another, — i.e. that it does not visually detract from or aesthetically pollute another. This segregation of uses has quite definite social benefits. The aesthetic benefits for urban space are, however, less certain. The character of urban space has always been elusive and enigmatic because the use of space varies so greatly and depends upon the variety of uses in buildings. For many people the most attractive spaces are those which have the greatest variety of use and where the conflict of functions provides the main visual attraction.

In Bath a larger percentage of buildings are in residential use than in other English historic cities of similar size. Planning control is exercised in such a way as to maintain as far as possible a peaceful environment for those who live in the centre of the city. It does not require

specific conservation legislation for this purpose — normal development control is used.

Two policies are worth mentioning. First there is strict control over the expansion of shopping use into residential areas; second there is strict control of the expansion of non-retail use such as Building Societies and Banks into existing shopping streets and third, there is an almost total prohibition on the conversion of residential or shopping use into office use. Office permission can only be obtained if it can be demonstrated that an office is the only way of saving a building. All these policies can be supported by very clear conservation and planning arguments. They do, however, illustrate that planning control affects the character of a city by ordering and influencing change of use where normally that change would take place and be expressed on the streets and squares naturally and originally. Furthermore, change and development was certainly a major feature in the making of the historical character and appearance of our towns. So in many ways there is a conflict between the results of essential control and the character of urban space with all that it must mean in historical terms.

The uses which take place within an area are clearly one of the major determinants of the type and volume of traffic in the form of cars, service vehicles and public transport that needs to use the spaces between the buildings. In the United Kingdom a primary aim is now traffic management.

The building of urban distributor roads and motorways has largely been abandoned, leaving only the option of the management of traffic through the existing road systems. This results in less damage to the historic fabric but frequently leads to the destruction of the environment in other parts of the town or city. Traffic management has proved to be simply the removal of vehicles from one street only to force them through another with all that this implies for those living on the new routes. The planning and deployment of different uses in the city and the segregation of one use from another has largely come about through the need to concentrate traffic attraction away from residential and shopping areas. The office restrictions in Bath are operated to reduce commuter traffic. The use of space and the associated buildings cannot be isolated from the wider needs of traffic planning.

Visually the need for traffic management is clear whenever one walks in an old city. Not only is the visual intrusion of vehicles damaging to most historic cities (not all, of course) but the effect of the weight of vehicles on paved surfaces is often disastrous. In England there are now virtually no grants or subsidies available to cover the cost of replacing traditional forms of street paving which are often essential to the historic character of an area. If a local authority wishes to maintain or replace historic road or pavement surfaces, then, that money must be found from its own resources. Those resources are seldom sufficient and the appearance of



ansdowne Crescent where landscape was designed as part of the housing scheme.

tarmac as a repair material for cobbled streets becomes almost inevitable.

The planning and administrative constraints mentioned above are part of the framework within which aesthetic decisions have to be made; to ignore the framework is to lose political support. Very few conservation objectives can be obtained unless they can be seen as part of a political programme that achieves acceptable social and economic ends. The main question for the designer and conservationist in an historic town remains primarily a concern with the ethics of the aesthetic approach. The ethics of the design approach to urban space are never clearcut nor can they follow any set of rules or simplistic charter. Not only must the designer strike a balance between historic evidence as to original intentions and contemporary needs implicit in informal lifestyles and behaviour, but he must cope with residents' participation, the vagaries of lay committees and the mass of regulations that inhibit freedom of design. There is, however, no hope without the creative imagination of the designer.

In Bath, like most historic towns and cities, there is an inherent visual discipline in the appearance and history of urban space which needs to be observed in order that design decisions in new and maintenance work retain the historic quality of the place. The key to success for the designer must lie in the assimilation of this discipline before he can inject his own creative instincts into any proposals. This requires the ability to see and absorb the architectural character of the place; its uses, its shapes and its materials; and the ability to understand historical development. Only through this approach can the contemporary facilities that are required be disciplined to fit comfortably into the existing fabric.

The townscape of Bath, although primarily designed in the 18th century, exhibits enormous variety which largely comes about from changing and developing fashions in attitudes to landscape and the implantation of an 18th-century aesthetic upon the plan of mediaeval and Roman foundations. Where no previous mediaeval city existed the outer Georgian terraces envelop green landscape in a way that no other housing schemes had done previously. The open space between these buildings is used and enveloped in such a way that architecture and green landscaping are fused together to create magnificent and romantic effects.

At the opposite end of the range of townscape in the city are the hard and formal unplanted squares around the Abbey where the aesthetic effect is quite different. The difference between hard landscape and soft is therefore one of the major ingredients of the character of the city. The way in which trees and planting are used provides a tight discipline between the two extremes of space — enveloped landscape and buildings in hard paved areas.

This distinction between hard and soft landscaping applies throughout the city. The squares and circuses are usually accompanied by planting and grass, whereas the streets linking them are devoid of trees. This use of trees accentuates the visual and historical nodal points. Smaller streets and alleyways are paved, mostly without planting, but where trees do appear they are often seen simply glimpsed over garden walls. Private planting therefore has a major, if rather secretive, part to play and assists in making residential use more attractive.

Despite the importance of these internal spaces within the City and the inherent discipline which they exhibit, there is a further and wider dimension to the character of space in the City

of Bath that plays an even greater part in establishing its appearance. Whilst the internal relationship of planted to unplanted spaces is so important, the real impact of space in the City of Bath comes from the relationship of the whole of the built-up area to the landscape of the countryside which surrounds the city. Whether one stands on the high ground in front of the Crescents or whether one is deep in the mediaeval city, the views out of the city are always present.

The city sits in a great bowl of landscape which provides both panoramic views and tiny glimpses out to tree-covered slopes around the city. These landscape slopes are all within the conservation area which extends out to the ridge line of the surrounding hills. The city is also encircled tightly by a Green Belt; thus, through the medium of these two devices, all the external open space is protected from new development. The policy is not only dramatic in its visual success but effective in administration.

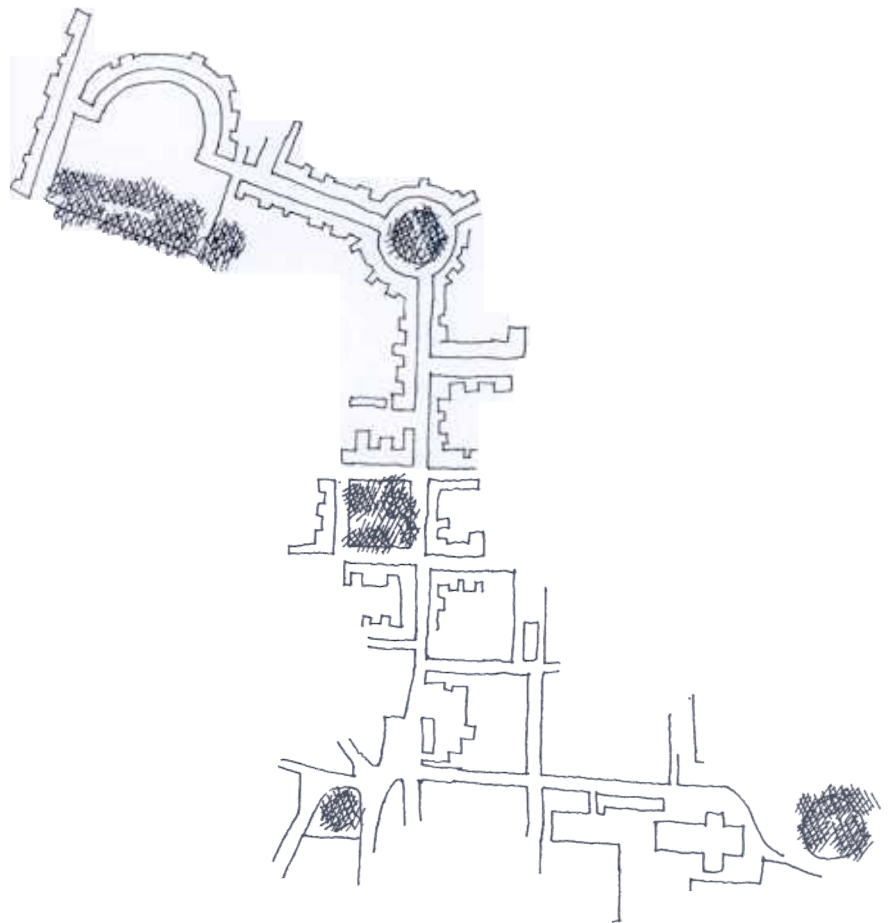
Perhaps, however, the most fascinating aspect of the Green Belt and the extensive Conservation Area is the economic and political effect which these essentially aesthetic designations, derived from the need to preserve open space, have upon the conservation policy. The presence of so much protected space prohibits the peripheral expansion of the city, thus driving both the private market, and local authority investment in housing, back into the centre of the city. As a result both private and Council housing finance is largely devoted towards the restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings.



3. - Even in the mediaeval centre where the townscape is dense and close-knit the landscape still plays an important part in the street scheme.

The easy option of development on peripheral green field sites is denied — the only alternative is rehabilitation at the historic core. This rehabilitation would not, of course, be so likely to happen if the buildings were not listed and protected by Central Government. The effect of such economic pressures on the historic centre of the city caused by the restriction of peripheral development would otherwise encourage redevelopment rather than conservation. This wider aspect of conservation in Bath admirably illustrates the links between the protection of space in towns and cities and the economic and political framework in which decisions are taken. Space in cities is where the conflicts of urban life are fought out. Conflicts of use and protection, conflicts of peace and activity, conflicts between historical and contemporary aesthetic forms and expressions. Space needs as much protective care as do buildings.

Roy Worskett



4. - Nodal points of tree planting in the urban centre.

## ESPACE COLLECTIF URBAIN ET CONSERVATION: L'EXEMPLE DE BATH

L'espace dans les villes et les cités est l'une des plus sûres illustrations de leur croissance historique. Très souvent, la relation entre les espaces s'est maintenue alors même que les édifices qui les cernent se sont modifiés au cours des temps. Le lien entre les bâtiments et l'espace est à la fois esthétique en ce sens que bâtiments et espaces sont visuellement interdépendants, et fonctionnel en ce sens que les activités menées dans l'espace et à l'intérieur des bâtiments sont liées. Dans le Royaume-Uni la séparation des fonctions opérée par la planification a des conséquences certainement bénéfiques du point de vue social, mais il n'est pas aussi sûr que les espaces urbains en tirent un bénéfice esthétique. Pour bien des gens, les espaces les plus attrayants sont ceux qui offrent la plus grande diversité d'usages, mais où le conflit entre les fonctions constitue la principale attraction visuelle. La planification a eu tendance à faire disparaître cette diversité par souci de bon voisinage.

## LA CONSERVACIÓN Y LOS ESPACIOS COLECTIVOS URBANOS: EL EJEMPLO DE BATH

La presencia de los espacios históricos, en las poblaciones y en las ciudades, es una de las más seguras ilustraciones del desarrollo histórico que tuvieron. A menudo, la relación entre los espacios se ha mantenido mismo cuando los edificios que les delimitan se transformaron en el transcurso de los años. El enlace entre los edificios es estético y funcional. Estético porque el volumen de las construcciones y del espacio son virtualmente interdependientes; funcional porque las actividades desarrolladas en el espacio y al interior de los edificios son ligadas y relacionadas. En el Reino Unido de Gran Bretaña la separación de las funciones, que la planificación ha hecho, tiene consecuencias favorables al punto de vista social pero no se puede afirmar que los espacios urbanos hayan

A Bath, comme dans la plupart des villes et cités historiques, il existe une ordonnance visuelle spécifique et inhérente au style et à l'histoire des espaces urbains, que l'on ne doit pas manquer d'analyser si l'on veut que les décisions d'aménagement respectent la qualité historique du lieu. L'aménageur doit assimiler cette discipline avant de pouvoir laisser ses propres instincts créateurs s'exercer sur la scène urbaine.

Le paysage urbain de Bath, bien que principalement dessiné au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, présente une très grande variété, qui tient surtout au rapport entre l'environnement construit d'une part et l'environnement naturel et la topographie de la ville d'autre part. De surcroît une architecture

du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle fut implantée dans le centre sur le plan des fondations médiévales et romaines. Le contraste entre la rigueur et la douceur des différents paysages est un des attraits caractéristiques de la cité.

Dans les quartiers extérieurs de la ville les bâtiments furent conçus pour un environnement de parcs naturels; dans les parties plus denses du centre les bâtiments enveloppent de petits espaces verts qui forment des nœuds d'intérêt.

La ville est également entourée d'une ceinture verte qui non seulement remplit une fonction visuelle importante en traçant une limite entre les zones construites et la campagne, mais limite aussi le développement de la banlieue, valorisant ainsi la réhabilitation du centre.

1. - Le paysage autour de Bath, entièrement compris dans la zone de conservation. La limite de cette zone se situe en bordure des arbres.

2. - Lansdowne Crescent dont l'espace paysagé fut conçu et dessiné en même temps que les bâtiments d'habitation.

3. - Même dans le centre médiéval au paysage urbain dense et serré, le paysage naturel joue encore un rôle important dans la conception d'ensemble de la rue.

4. - Localisations principales des plantations d'arbres dans le centre de la ville.

comprobado un beneficio estético certero. Para mucha gente, los espacios los más atractivos son los que ofrecen la máxima diversidad de uso y en los cuales el choque entre las diversas funciones constituye la principal atracción visual. La planificación tuvo, precisamente, la tendencia de hacer desaparecer esa diversidad por cuidar de una buena convivencia.

En Bath, como en casi todas las ciudades históricas, existe un orden visual específico y inherente al estilo y a la historia de los espacios urbanos que se debe analizar, si se quiere que la organización de estos respete la cualidad histórica del sitio. El ordenamiento debe asimilarse esta disciplina antes de poder dejar libre curso a sus propios instintos creativos en la área urbana.

El paisaje urbano de Bath, aunque fue dibujado en el Siglo 18, nos presenta una gran variedad sobre todo por la relación entre el ámbito

construido, el ámbito natural y la topografía de la ciudad. Por demás, la arquitectura del Siglo 18 fue implantada en el centro sobre las fundaciones medievales y romanas. El contraste entre el rigor y la suavidad de los diferentes paisajes es uno de los encantos característicos de la ciudad.

En los barrios exteriores los edificios fueron concebidos con razón al ámbito que es de parques naturales; en el centro, que es de mas grande densidad, los edificios rodean pequeños espacios verdes que forman así centros de interés.

La población esta igualmente rodeada de una cintura de verdura no solo tiene una función visual importante pero que tambien traza una delimitación entre las zonas construidas y el campo, y que, al mismo tiempo, pone un limite al desarrollo de las afueras, valorizando de esta manera la rehabilitación del centro.

تطور الأحياء السكنية  
EVOLUTION DE L'ESPACE BÂTI  
التطور منذ 1912  
EVOLUTION DEPUIS 1912

