

Appendix 4: History & conservation planting report

Produced by Adam Dyer, Planning policy Conservation Officer, August 2017

Today the postcard image of Cheltenham is undoubtedly the Regency terraces with large numbers of colourful bedding plants that are replaced regularly throughout the spring and summer. This however, is largely a late Victorian fashion and not the original intentions of the architects and designers for the open green space.

In Regency times it is likely that lightly wooded, sinuous shrubberies, with beds of herbaceous perennials would have been used in areas such as the long gardens, and in the gardens once found on the Promenade. Many of these therefore strongly link into the idea of sustainable planting today.

Case Studies

Long Garden

The Long Garden has gone through a number of changes and but does continue to have great historical value, largely due to the association with the Grade II* listed terrace but also as a formally arranged garden. Under the 1891 improvement of the Promenade by the Corporation that resulted in a landscaping of the Long Garden so it become a 'Beautiful attraction of the town'. At this point the formal garden was laid out with planting beds arranged symmetrically with gravel strips in-between beds, with finely manicured lawns, ornamental railings, and the central area where the war memorial sits today. The current planting scheme, albeit a watered down one, appears to be a semblance of the Victorian scheme with a less complex arrangement.

Prior to this it is likely that there were originally gates in front of each house with the gardens laid out with ornamental shrubs, plants and trees with Regency metal railings surrounding. Whilst it cannot be said for certain, it is likely that it was a fairly naturalistic form of landscaping that was very much in fashion in the Regency period, with fairly simple planting containing herbaceous perennials.

Imperial Gardens

The beds are from the early 1950s and so of less historical value, but again it is the green space that these areas provide are important characteristic for the conservation area. Furthermore, although these gardens and the flower beds are now 'iconic' to Cheltenham's post-war identity, the reality is that with or without bedding plants the public green square is the important element of Regency design in the conservation area.

Successful Examples

Brighton Pavilion Gardens

In the 1980s John Nash's never-executed plans for the garden setting of the Briton Pavilion were carried out in connection with the extensive restoration of the pavilion itself. This saw the implementation of a picturesque garden with irregular shrubberies projecting into the lawns, forming changing patterns and views with a combination of trees, shrubs and plants for year round interest.

Alverstoke Crescent Garden

The garden was formed with the surrounding terraces in 1826 but fell into a state of disrepair in the early 20th century. The restoration of this garden in a Regency style involved the introduction of herbaceous plants, shrubs and small trees. Today it holds a green heritage award.