

London Road / Whitley Character Area

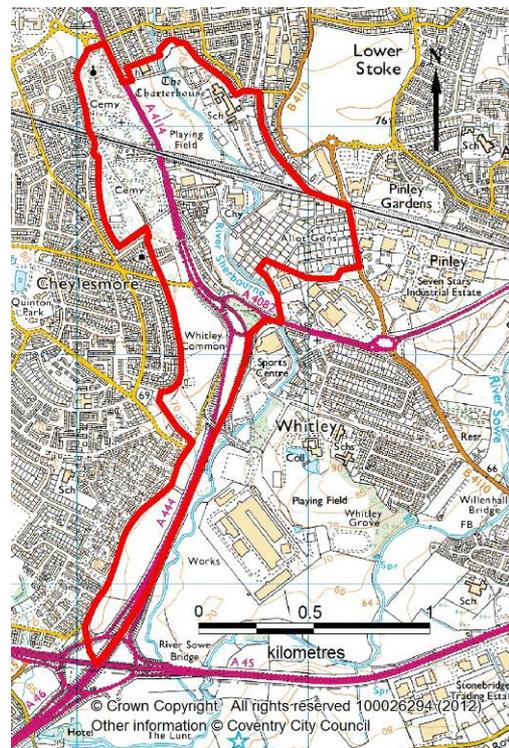
HLC Area 4

Location and Context

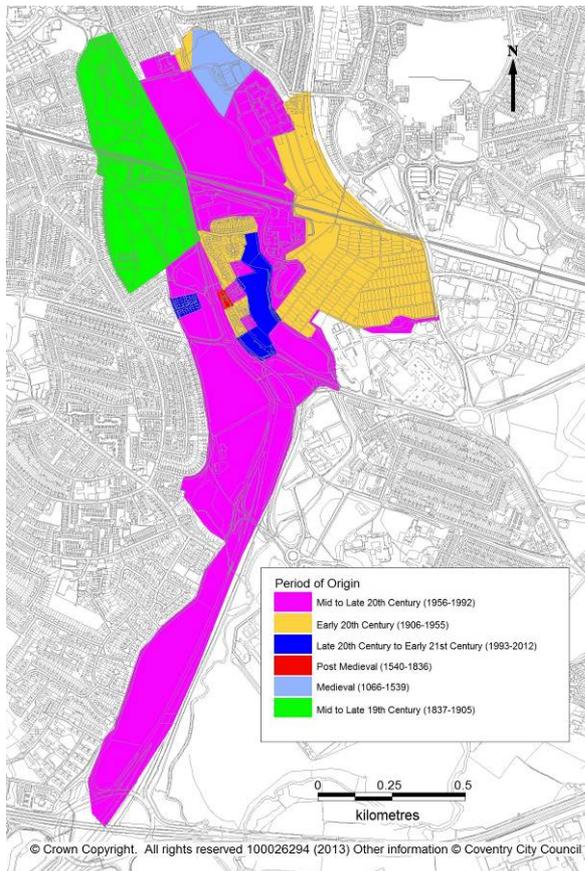
The character area is located just to the southeast of the city centre and runs along the London Road, one of the main arterial routes in to central Coventry. The area includes a section of the River Sherbourne which passes through the northern part of the character area in a north-south alignment and then continues just outside the character area to the east. The Coventry – Rugby railway line also crosses the north of the character area. The area is predominantly bordered by settlement with some industry.

Heritage Designations in the Area

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: 1
Archaeological Constraint Areas: 9
Listed Buildings: 10
Locally Listed Buildings: 0
Conservation Areas: 1
Registered Parks and Gardens: 1



Historic Development



Little is known about the landscape of the Character Area prior to the Medieval period but by this time there were a variety of land use types. In the north there was a quarry which belonged to St. Mary's Priory and which is thought to have provided stone for the city walls. The quarry was later incorporated into the London Road Cemetery designed by Joseph Paxton during the mid-19th Century and the resultant landscape of hillocks and hollows, surrounded by rows of mature elms, was one of the main features of the cemetery's design. Immediately to the south during the medieval period was an enclosed field and beyond this Whitley Common, an area of common or waste which stretched as far as Whitley village.

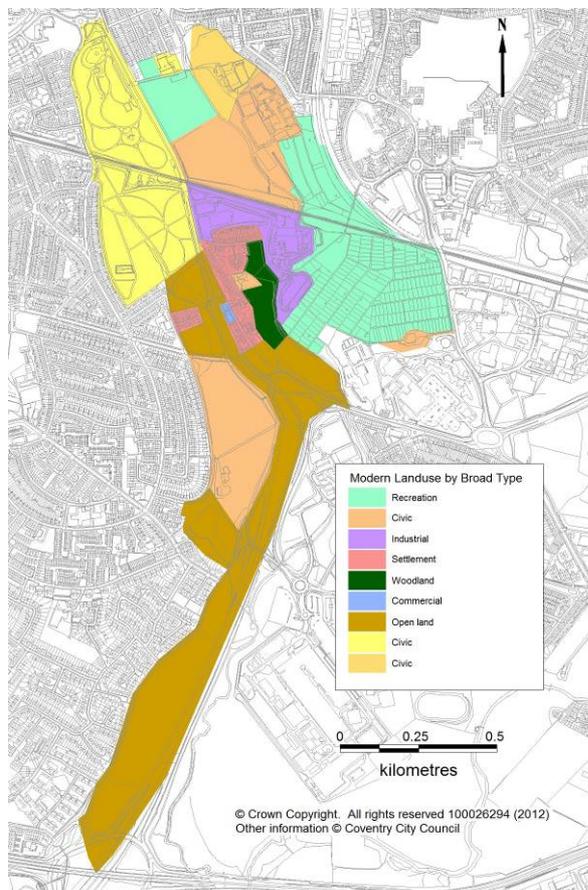
The present London Road is thought to have existed as a major route to and from the

medieval city and to the east of it was situated Charterhouse, the Carthusian Monastery of St. Anne which was founded in 1381. The monastery was surrounded by agricultural land, including Lammas land, apart from Bisseley Mill to the northwest and New Mill / Dilcock's Mill further south on the River Sherbourne. St Anne's Chapel, which was later used as a dye house lay to the west.



At the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 the church and other parts of the monastery were demolished but the Prior's Lodge/east range survived and was converted to a house, which still survives today, although its use has changed several times over the years.

Charterhouse with the River Sherbourne in the foreground



There were relatively few changes to the landscape by the mid-19th Century and it remained largely agricultural. Apart from Whitley Common, which remained open, all agricultural land was enclosed. A small number of houses had been built either side of London Road towards the middle part of the common and the London Road Cemetery was created in the north in the site of the medieval quarry. The London and North Western Railway line was opened in 1838 and runs through the north of the Character Area.

As Coventry's population grew in the early 20th Century new areas of housing were built and there was also pressure on the land for recreational use. An area of allotment gardens was developed between 1905 and 1913 south of the railway line and east of London Road. This had expanded further east by 1936 and the area also saw the building of houses along Swifts Corner, Peggmill Close and Shortley Road. The final

major development within the Character Area was between 1969 and 1977 with the building of the Bluecoat School to the south of Charterhouse.

Modern Character

In general, this area comprises much open space, either in the form of allotment gardens, agricultural land or common which together forms a green corridor from the city centre to the southern edge of the Coventry border. The presence of the railway line and of the dual carriageway, however, makes this quite noisy and busy environment. The predominant feature is the London Road Cemetery which borders the city. Opened in 1847 it makes use of the contours created by medieval quarrying to create a landscaped parkland. The character area contains a large number of listed monuments and buildings many of which are associated with the cemetery. Another key feature within the character area is the grade I listed medieval Carthusian Monastery of Charterhouse with associated grounds. The presence of the railway line and the dual carriageway makes this area quite noisy and busy even though it is a predominantly green and open space. Areas such as the playing fields are also areas of great activity at particular times.

Geology and Topography

This area lies over an area of mudstone and sandstone with a drift geology of sand and gravel. The topography is influenced by the River Sherbourne which passes through the north of the character area and continues its course just outside the character area to the east on a north – south alignment. The lowest point of the river valley is 75m and rises to the east and west to 90m above sea level.