

9 Christchurch Road

9.1 Historical development

This area was largely developed in c.1830-70 in response to a growing demand for middle-class housing in a suburban environment. Throughout the country detached and semi-detached villa-type housing became increasingly popular during this period, especially because it was regarded as being healthier and more appropriate for family life. In Winchester this preference was met by the release of land for development between St Cross Road and the newly-opened railway. Some of the housing, notably in St James' Villas, was purpose-designed for officers from the nearby barracks. Winchester College located its first house beyond the college precincts in this area—Du Boulays in Edgar Road.

The area takes its name from Ewan Christian's Gothic Revival church of 1861 which, with the adjacent villas, forms a characteristic mid-Victorian group. Apart from the advent of the car, and the replacement of some of the houses by blocks of flats, the environment of the area has changed remarkably little since its original development.

9.2 Building uses

This is a predominantly residential area, either of single family houses or of houses divided for multiple occupation. The main exceptions are the purpose-built boarding houses for Winchester College and some low-rise blocks of flats.

9.3 Building character

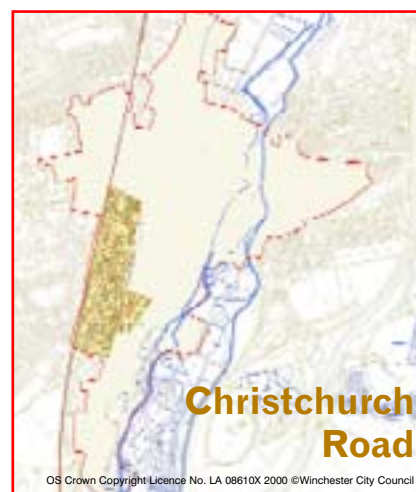
The area is notable for its large houses set in generous gardens with well-defined boundaries and established openings and breaks. Wide roads and paths emphasise and enhance this character and create a sense of open townscape in contrast to the walled town.

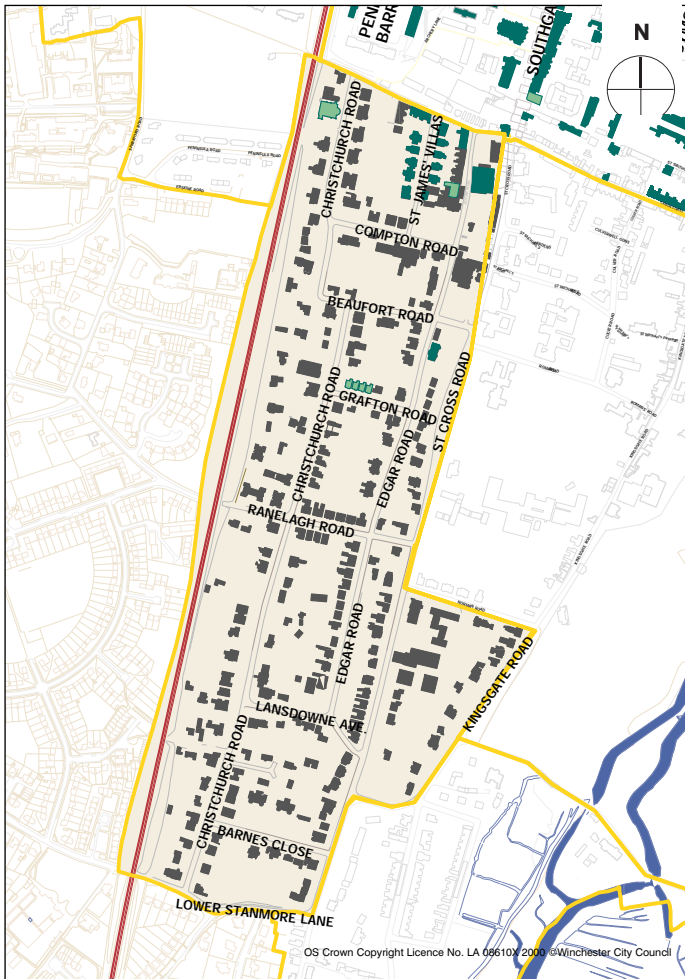
The area takes its character from the comparatively low density housing, set back from the street in plots of various sizes. There are some terraces, for instance at the north end of Edgar Road, with narrow front gardens and railings; but generally the houses are detached or semi-detached with larger front gardens or front drives. A particularly good group is at Nos 39-45, Christchurch Road, (photo 1) where the villas have polygonal bays and Doric porches. The boundary walls on the street frontages—either rendered brick or brick and flint—are an important ingredient in the street scene.

Houses are brick, or stuccoed brick, generally with slate roofs. Many have Italianate details—quoins, cornices and window architraves—a standardised language varied to give each house individuality. Some houses have chalk cob walls, but these too are stuccoed and so are indistinguishable from their brick-built neighbours. Throughout the area houses were built for coal-fired heating, and chimneys form part of their overall picturesque effect.

9.4 Public realm

Apart from the space around Christ Church there are no specific public or semi-public spaces in the area. The main aspect of the public realm is the street layout, consisting essentially of a grid of broad streets, shaded by trees in front gardens. Parts of the grid terminate in T-junctions, which add to the sense of suburban enclosure, but the houses which close the vistas at these junctions are not treated in any special way. Except for the heavily-trafficked St Cross Road on the eastern boundary, the area is largely protected from through traffic and has required no obtrusive traffic calming measures.

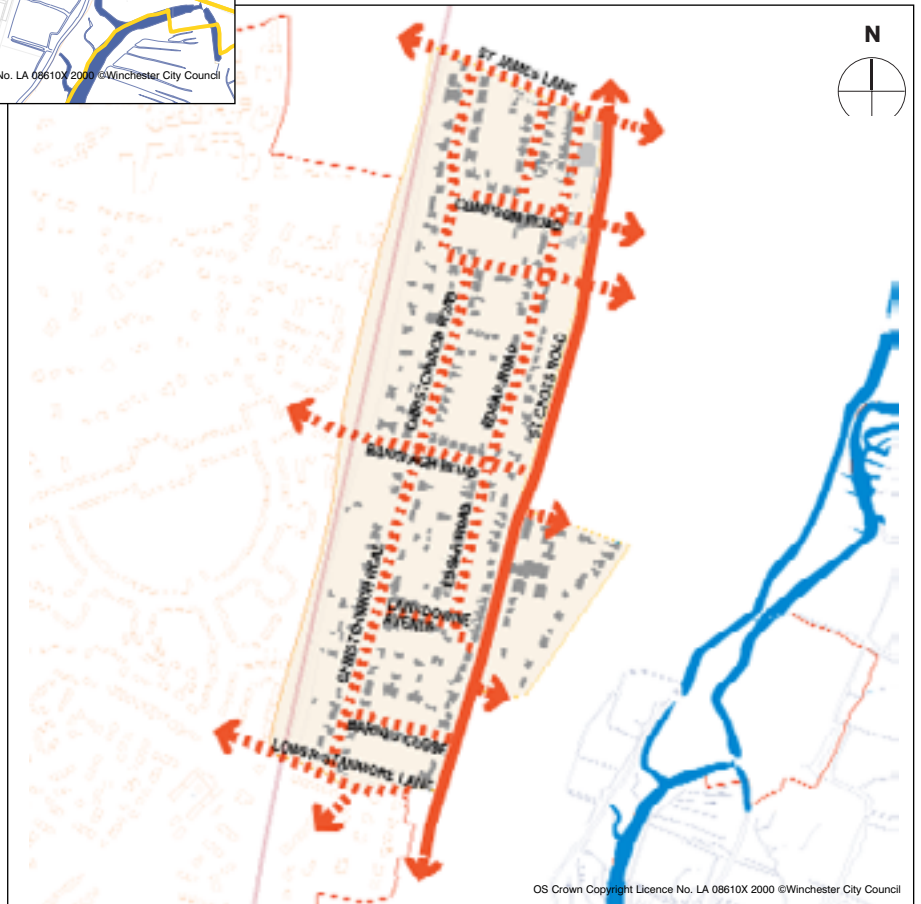




- Listed Buildings
- Important Unlisted Buildings
- Main routes
- - - Other important routes

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Top: Environmental Assets
Bottom: Urban Structure

9.5 Natural features and topography

The major feature of the area is the railway line on its western boundary, partly in a cutting and partly on an embankment, lined by trees. The lineside vegetation and wildlife form a crucial natural corridor through this part of Winchester. The rest of the area has a moderately varied topography: Christchurch Road crosses two slight ridges, whereas Edgar Road follows a gentle slope. Mature trees and garden planting reinforce the sense of suburban lushness, in contrast to the much tighter topography of the Walled city.

9.6 Views

The spire of Christ Church is a landmark in distant views of Winchester, for instance from St Catherine's Hill, but the church is largely hidden in closer views. There are few significant views from the area, except the sight along Edgar Road of the spire of St Thomas's Church. The open quality of the built form and infrastructure lends itself to extended views within this area of the sides and rear of principal buildings and related outbuildings and attractive planted gardens.

9.7 Neutral and negative features

The picturesque streetscape of the Christ Church area depends on a delicate balance of trees, planting and enclosure. This balance is easily threatened or broken if enclosing walls are demolished, or trees replaced by buildings. Although there are no significant negative features in the area, in parts its character has been undermined where the original housing has been replaced by blocks of flats of a larger scale, such as King Harold Court, Christchurch Road; or where insensitive additions have occurred. The insertion of new, proprietary windows of non-traditional design or modern material has detracted from the overall appearance of a number of houses.

9.8 Potential for enhancement

The area will gain from the establishment of a strategy for the maintenance and repair of frontage walls, and the rebuilding of walls and railings which have been lost in recent years. Similarly, a policy to record mature trees in the area, and to provide for their replacement where appropriate, will help preserve this aspect of the suburban landscape. If existing houses are redeveloped the replacement buildings should be sympathetic to the scale, massing and materials of the area, and should avoid prominent parking facilities.

Some of the houses on St Cross Road which present their backs onto Edgar Road could provide an opportunity for a new mews development providing frontage onto Edgar Road.





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Above: Christchurch Road area from 1870 Ordnance Survey, after the completion of the railway but before Christ Church was finished.