SITE HERITAGE EGE 3

Staple Hill high street reflects the layered heritage of a settlement that evolved from a woodland hamlet to a suburban centre. Its origins lie in the boundary of the ancient Kingswood Forest, where the original centuries-old Staple Oak served as a rural landmark for travellers moving between scattered hamlets. This ancient tree gave the area its name and anchored early routes that would later form the high street we see today.

The 19th century brought accelerated growth through coal mining, textile production and the arrival of the Midland Railway in 1888. The emerging commercial corridor of Broad Street and High Street is still preserved in the street scale and typology today- Victorian frontages with active ground-floor retail and workshops or dwellings above.

Many of the Victorian-era pubs remain open today, with hints to the industrial past of Staple Hill seen in the old tram depot and ghost signs on shop frontages.

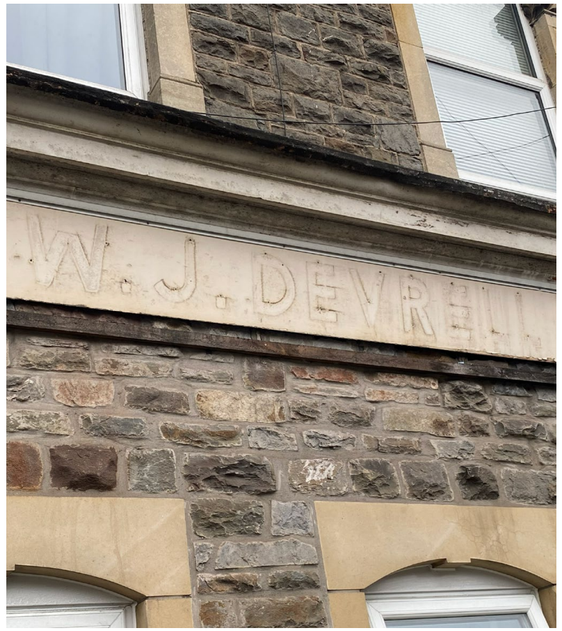
The locally listed tram depot at the eastern end of Broad Street was constructed in 1897, and completed the development of Staple Hill as a major suburb of Bristol.

Post-war development reshaped parts of the urban fabric with the development of Fountain Square as a commercial centre and an increasingly car-dominated public realm.

Today the high street is a resilient local centre, however lacks an informed sense of place and identity. Illustrating and retelling local history can enhance the identity of the area today.



Staple Hill high street c.1904, Kingswood Heritage Museum and Ian Bishop



Former Victorian shopfront, ghost sign on a now residential building



High Street, Staple Hill c.1908, the Regal Cinema (now God's House International Centre), Bristol Archives

1610

The earliest map of the area shows only the ancient Staple Hill Oak, which stood in what is now Page Park, and was a meeting place for the local shepherds.



Page Park from above, Bristol Archives

1888



Mangostfield Station, opened earlier in 1940s, Kingswood Heritage Museum

Midland Railway opened Staple Hill railway station, giving direct access to Bristol, Gloucester and Bath. Staple Hill grew beyond a small hamlet and gained tram and bus links with Bristol that allowed it to become a residence for commuters to Bristol or Bath.

1905

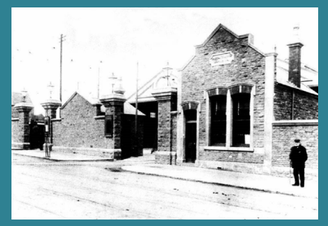
Electric trams came to Staple Hill in 1905, expanding Staple Hill rapidly as a working-class community, commuting to Bristol and beyond.



Trams along Staple Hill high street

1938

The tram service was terminated, with the original depot building, constructed in 1897, being used for bus services until the early 1980s. Today, the tram depot still stands and became locally listed in 2010.



The original ticket office, demolished mid-late 20th Century



WDM Building Today



Signage to Cycle route, Page Park

1966

Staple Hill Train Station closed, later being converted to the Bristol & Bath Railway cycle route, one of the Sustrans National Cycle routes.

1996



Following an intentional arson attack on a supermarket on the high street, Fleur Lombard became the first female firefighter to die in peacetime service in Britain.
A memorial plaque stands today outside the Library.

Memorial to Fleur Lombard

2010

Page Park celebrated its 100th anniversary, which was donated to the people of Staple Hill by Arthur William Page in 1910.



Page Park Clock Tower

Architectural character

The architectural character of the high street is defined mostly by late-Victorian, two-storey, mixed-use shopfronts, when industrial expansion and improved transport links created a new local commercial centre.

Buildings are typically a mixture of Pennant stone and brick frontages, with some original recessed entrances, stall risers and cornice elements of the shopfronts preserved. Upper floors tend to be residential, with a mixture of original sash or retrofitted windows.

Fountain Square and Broad Street shops are notable post-war developments of the high street. The square is a typical pedestrian plaza of the 1960s-80s, modestly decorated with a ground floor commercial use, and a single storey flats at first floor, accessed by external walkways.

Larger developments to the eastern end of the high street such as Tesco supermarket, gym and office buildings interrupt the original scale of the Victorian high street.

The depot at the eastern boundary of the high street was built to house and service electric tram cars, consisting of two long pennant rubble parallel sheds of approximately 16 bays. Modern alterations have taken place to accommodate the later use as a bus depot and now WDM- the company that now occupies the buildings. Surrounding the whole site, with the exception of the entrance, is a well-preserved 2m-high boundary wall of Pennant stone.













Top left: Old Mail House Pub
Below left: Victorian Cornice detail to shopfront
Centre top: Ghostsign on side of No. 62 High St
Centre Below: Covered Portico of the old Chemists
Top right: Victorian Shops with Dutch gable roof feature
Below right: Existing condition of Fountain Square













Above left: Staple Oak Pub
Below left: Fountain Square
Above middle: Victorian Terraces
Below middle: Post-War shop units
Above right: Typical Alleyway
Below Right: Car domination

Staple Hill character

Staple Hill high street reflects a strong early 20th century commercial identity, layered with Victorian influences. Many buildings feature stone façades, ornate window surrounds, and decorative gables such as Dutch or Flemish styles, which were popular in late Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

These features give the street some distinctive heritage character and visual richness, but these are broken up by poor quality 20th century buildings as you move further east along the high street.

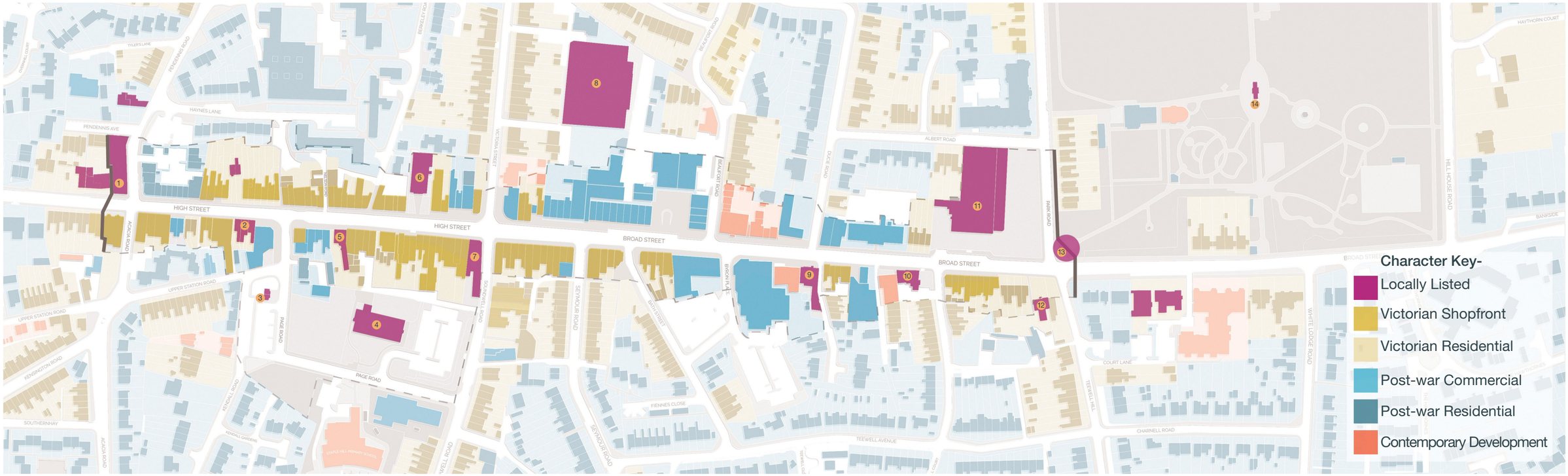
The high street follows a strong linear form, creating a continuous frontage and a sense of enclosure. However the urban grain is much tighter at the west of the high street with small Victorian terraces and narrower pavements.

The character of the high street becomes distinctly more civic moving east towards Fountain Square with the library, square, wider pavements and larger retail units.

The high street is generally car dominated with wide carriageways, busy junctions, and heavy on-street parking particularly around Fountain Square.

The existing green infrastructure also plays a key part in the high street's visual identity, with the cluster of trees around the Staple Hill Oak Pub at the west, as well as Page Park to the east. The Staple Oak tree which gives Staple Hill it's name, is a strong part of the area's history.

It will be important to ensure that these existing character features of the high street are positively celebrated in order to strengthen the high street's local identity.



Locally listed buildings



1 *The former Regal cinema, now a Christian Fellowship hall.*



2 *No. 78-82 High Street.*



3 *Public toilets, requires work to reach accessibility requirements.*



4 *The old school- now Staple Hill Children's centre and 'Youf Club'.*



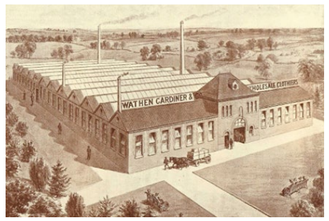
5 *No. 96 High Street.*



6 *Staple Hill Methodist Church.*



7 *The Portcullis Pub.*



8 *Victorian Gardiner & Sons clothing factory, 1899, current redevelopment in planning.*



9 *King William IV Pub.*



10 *The Forge & Fern.*



11 *The former Tram Depot.*



12 *Staple Lodge, Broad Street.*



13 *South West Entrance to Page Park.*



14 *Shelter Clock Tower, Page Park.*