

Character assessment: Industrial/commercial areas of Coleford (not shopping)

Location

There are three main locations where industrial usage dominates the landscape. One is the Suntory Factory complex to the south-west of the town centre, accessed off Rock Lane, on the edge of the built up area and the Green West of Coleford. The other two are industrial estates, Crucible Close off Old Station Way and Stepbridge Road off Tufthorn Avenue, which are located next to each other to the south of the town centre.

The Suntory Factory and the Crucible Close Industrial Estate can be easily accessed from the south without traffic having to pass through the town centre. However delivery vehicles approaching from other directions do have to pass through the town centre and/or residential areas. All traffic accessing the Stepbridge Road Industrial Estate has to use a residential road.

In addition to these three main industrial areas, there are also individual and small clusters of industrial/commercial premises scattered around Coleford parish, such as along Station Road, Milkwall, Ellwood Road and the northern end of Tufthorn Avenue.

Landscape

The Suntory Factory is sited on a plateau with the land sloping down to the southeast, south, west and north-west. Consequently it is highly visible from a number of locations, most notably from the B4228 approaching Coleford and from the SE of the Buchanan Recreation Ground across the Whitecliff valley. There is housing on the north-eastern edge of the factory site. In other directions the factory site borders onto open fields of pasture, which contrasts with the factory and increases the visibility of the buildings.

The two modern planned industrial estates are less visible in the landscape, being lower than the adjoining areas of Coleford, although the Crucible/ Cupola Close site does have an obvious frontage onto the B4228 [Old Station Way]. Both it and Stepbridge Road are bounded on their eastern edge by a cycle path which follows the route of the old railway line.

Trees and hedgerows along this linear feature provide a green backcloth to the industrial estates and effective screening from the east. Crucible Close has cycle and pedestrian access onto the cycle path.

There is no direct access between the two industrial estates.

Settlement character



1 Suntory in the background, viewed from the B4228 and the Green West of Coleford by Puzzle Wood



2 Industrial estate planned and constructed in same phase as Old Station Way in the 1980s

The Suntory Factory complex contains the largest buildings in Coleford. It is on a large but compact site which also contains ancillary buildings, storage tanks and large areas of tarmac for parking, loading and unloading. It is bounded by high wire fencing.

There has been a factory making drinks here since WWII but recently it has been extended. It is one of the largest employers in the town.



3The 21C buildings of Suntory, viewed from Angus Buchanan Recreation Ground

Crucible/ Cupola is the more recent of the two industrial estates. The industrial/commercial units are either accessed from the B4228 [mainly commercial services open to the public] or from a series of cul-de-sacs. The units are modern, either one or two storeys and mainly with flat roofs. Most are built of brick and corrugated metal.

Some of the buildings along Old Station Way are commercial, notably garages along this through route. A number of the units have wholesale and retail functions.

Most buildings house an individual business, although there is one building subdivided into 8 small units. Each building has a substantial area of tarmac for parking and the boundaries between them are marked by grass banks or hedges giving the area an overall look of space and open-plan.

The roads are wide with grass verges and pavements and there are frequent turning areas. Some trees have been planted within the estate and along the B4228



4Modern purpose-built industrial unit with parking and easy access, green boundaries and verges



5Small units



6Old Station Way & commercial premises

Stepbridge Road industrial area is older and consists of a single no through road giving access to the units. The buildings are one or two storey and are built of a variety of materials including brick, pre-fabricated concrete and corrugated metal

The premises have large open areas of tarmac for storage and parking and are bounded by high metal fencing and lockable gates. Some of the fences also have hedges, but there is noticeably less greenery than on the Crucible Close estate. Some of the buildings are subdivided into several units. The road has a pavement. There is a substantial amount of on-road parking.



7Wide roads and high street lighting indicate purpose-built access for HGVs, but onstreet parking is notable.

The road ends in a 'hammer head' beyond which there is a large fenced area at present used for salvage, storage and lorry parking. It is not landscaped, nor is there any industrial building.



9 Note the new residential development overlooking this.



8 End of Stepbridge Rd, next to path connecting to Cycle track and footpath used by tourists and local people

This area mixes residential and commercial/ industrial uses.

Adjoining these areas are two earlier industrial plants which were also purpose built for their time. The appearance is in need of decoration, but they have a good location off the traffic lights just into the southern arc. This does mean they are at the junction, and the space opposite has been given permission 2016 for an Aldi supermarket, with entrance located next to the residential area. Issues of noise from traffic and manufacturing processes would need to be addressed.



10 Tufthorn industry left, potential Aldi supermarket right

Most of the industry and commerce in Coleford consists of small and medium enterprises ie they employ fewer than 250 people. These range from the small units/ sole traders which exist in homes and grouped units to the larger enterprises which are often manufacturing. Products vary tremendously from industrial pumps to soft drinks to pavers and wood flooring. In addition, ancilliary services such as bottling plants, building supplies, supplement the commercial services like auto sales and repair, IT/website design, and the tourism-biased catering and accommodation.

Hotel accommodation may use listed buildings eg Forest House (High Nash Gateway)) and Poolway (Gloucester Rd Gateway), and some are converted such as Bells Hotel (Coalway Rd Gateway). They are in easily located, and connected positions relative to the town.



11 Forest House (former home of the Mushet family)

Bed and breakfast accommodation is distributed widely, but is limited in provision.

Outside Coleford town, but in the rural Green west of the Parish is the Forestry Commission site, leased for camping, chalets and caravans. This is accessed via Christchurch in West Dean, but a cycle track is in process of construction through the woods into Coleford using the burial path.

12 Poolway House



13 Bells Hotel (former school)

14 Christchurch Forest Holidays attracts thousands of visitors annually.



Grouped mainly in High St and parts of Market Place are professional services such as solicitors and estate agents, linked into the shopping in the town centre, and using noted buildings.



16 Health services are found at the top of High St and Pyart Court.



18 The Fire Station (retained) is found at the top of High St. The ambulance station is next door, and St John Ambulance opposite.

Key views of industry/commercial areas

- Suntory from Buchanan Rec (3)
- Suntory from B4228(1)

Key features: see photos

- Suntory and industrial estates
- Railway line/ cycle track boundary
- Forest House
- Bells Hotel
- Poolway House
- Services eg Fire, Ambulance, Police
- FODDC and Lawnstone House
- Bristol Terrace
- Christchurch Forest Holidays



15 Bristol Terrace : use of listed buildings in a prominent position



17 Forest of Dean District Council looking toward High St Another major employer, located in a former railway

cutting off High St. Lawnstone House (older unused building adjacent) is to be demolished. No decision as to use of site at present.



19 The Police Station is next to the Magistrates Court by the traffic lights at Market Place. The Court is closed and up for sale.

20 Railway museum on site of original station: limited opening hours



Positive features and special qualities

- Provides local employment
- The two industrial estates provide commercial services for the public as well as manufacturing
- The two main industrial estates are fairly well concealed/screened but accessible
- Much scope for tourism development: attractions nearby, heritage potential
- Use of valued (maybe listed) buildings for appropriate commercial activity actively conserves

Negative features and detracting elements

- Noise and light pollution from some units
- Traffic problems especially along Tufthorn Avenue and High Nash
- Some units not in the main industrial areas are unattractive and could be better screened
- Range of accommodation for tourism is limited
- No Tourist Information Centre in the middle of town
- Threat to emergency services in terms of local permanent headquarters.

Looking ahead

- Maintain range of industry and commerce, and number of jobs in manufacturing
- Develop further employment eg at Tufthorn or end of Stepbridge Rd where currently storage
- Assess any out of town industrial area sites to widen range and increase number of local jobs
- Aim to reduce out of area commuting
- Review training opportunities elsewhere in town if College moves
- Develop tourism employment: tour operator/ manage tourism
- Lawnstone site
- Magistrates Court/Police station to police hub
- Tourist information Centre in the middle of town