

Reading

Historic Area Assessment

READING HAA | FEBRUARY 2023
On behalf of Reading Borough Council



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Authors

This report was researched and written by Sam Jackson and Charles Wagner of Built Heritage Consultancy and Mary Neale of Archway Heritage. The figures and all graphics are the work of Ian and Toby Drury of Ultranyx and the design and layout of the report are the work of Shelly Wraight.

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Figure 1. Coloured Aquatint of the East View of the Ruins of the Abbey of Reading Berks. by Matthew Blackmore dated, 1759



Part A

General Character of the Study Area

1. Introduction Summary of Findings & Key Recommendations

Purpose and Structure of Report

- 1.1 This is a rapid historic area assessment (HAA), purposed to identify the significance of Reading's historic environment, its character and heritage assets, and to signpost issues and opportunities that have the potential to change its character. The project is co-funded by Historic England grant and Reading Borough Council match funding. The HAA forms part of the Reading High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme.
- 1.2 The assessment of character within the report is evidenced through a fieldwork survey of historic buildings and streets, recording the significance and approximate condition of Reading's historic townscape. The Study Area incorporates the centre of Reading within the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), including two of the conservation areas that form the focus of the HSHAZ programme: St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street; and Market Place/London Street Conservation Areas. It was decided relevant to extend the survey area beyond the IDR along key historic routes. The survey records were integrated into a Geographical Information System (GIS) system to aid spatial analysis.
- 1.3 Alongside this report the GIS records of the HAA survey will be made available to integrate into Reading Borough Council's GIS and The Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record (HER) to inform when the design of new development or decisions need to be guided by the character and location of the site.
- 1.4 The structure of the report is divided into three parts. The first part, Part A, assesses the physical form, historic development, current built environment, communications and the historic environment of the Study Area. The second part, Part B, describes the historic development of each character area together with an assessment of overall importance, a boundary review, significance and detracting elements. A table at the end of each character area assessment provides a bulleted summary of each sub-area for ease of reference. The third part, Part C, provides key recommendations including recommendations for buildings to be considered for statutory listing, recommendations for buildings of townscape merit/locally listed buildings, proposed conservation areas revisions and recommendations for new conservation areas, as well as recommendations for potential regeneration and refurbishment sites.

Summary and Key Findings

Conservation Areas and Identification of Other Additional Heritage Assets

- 1.5 Having undertaken a review of existing conservation area boundaries within the Study Area, we considered whether existing conservation areas should be extended or reduced and whether there were other parts of the study area which should be considered for additional conservation area designation, the following is recommended:
 - St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area extended eastwards to take in the Heelas extension to John Lewis and Minster Street including the former Telephone Exchange, and to be extended in the north-west to include Hosier Street and some more buildings on St. Mary's Butts.
 - A new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area designated to take in Reading Abbey, Reading Gaol, Market Place, Blagrove Street and Forbury Road.
 - A new Reading Central Conservation Area be designated taking in much of Friar Street, Broad Street, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Station Road, West Street, as well as Duke Street and King Street and the east end of King's Road.
 - The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area should be revised with:
 - the London Street part, south of north bank of the Kennet including High Bridge, expanded to the west of London Street to include more of the area to and around Southampton Street.
 - the Market Place put into the proposed Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area.
 - the area north of High Bridge and the Kennet including King Street, Jackson's Corner on King's Road, Duke Street, Highbridge Wharf and Yield Hall Place/Thorn Lane to be added to the new Reading Central Conservation Area.
- 1.6 These proposals are set out in Figures 100 and 101 and should be read with Section 18.
- 1.7 Within the study area a number of buildings and structures were identified that the project team, with information from the Reading CAAC and Reading Civic Society, believe should be considered for at least local listing. The council already have a list of locally listed buildings (LLBs) that lie outside conservation areas and identifies buildings of townscape merit (BTMs) within conservation areas. Additionally, this HAA study (see Part C) sets out in three tables additional buildings and structures to potentially be added as BTMs and LLBs entries. See Section 21 of Part C of this HAA and Figure 102. The HAA study concludes that there are some buildings that meet the criteria for national statutory listing but no additional sites that meet the criteria for scheduling.

Managing Change in Conservation Areas

External Joinery: Shopfronts, Windows, Doors

- 1.8 The HAA report survey identified that there was a growing replacement of original timber windows and doors with uPVC windows and doors. The loss of original joinery and the different appearance of uPVC is cumulatively eroding the character and appearance of conservation areas, and there have even been cases where uPVC windows have been inappropriately installed into listed buildings. The aim, through the HSHAZ should be educating owners and contractors to be in favour of retaining and repairing and/or redecorating surviving examples of historic joinery, and where new windows are required, that timber is more sustainable when sourced from sustainable forests than uPVC. Repaired or retained timber-framed windows can often be upgraded to help with thermal/acoustic considerations or measures installed (e.g. secondary glazing). In conservation areas Article 4 Directions can assist with the management of this issue “, Article 4 can be linked to Local Development Orders (LDOs) as set out in the Reading Local Plan. Where occupiers/owners are assessed as not having sufficient resources to install suitable sympathetic replacement doors and windows, the HSHAZ grant scheme might be used to fund a deficit if it is a significant historic building.
- 1.9 Likewise, it is recommended that all historic shopfronts are protected so that they are retained, repaired and/or redecorated. Even where only partial elements of a historic shopfront survive, care should be taken to avoid its total loss in favour of generic, modern replacements. Where historic examples have been lost these could be replaced with timber replacements when there is evidence of the original design or where the subject building is listed. On non-listed buildings where there is no evidence of the original, consider a more honest and cost effective powder-coated aluminium replacements based on a traditional pattern.
- 1.10 In historic streets, to maintain the character and appearance non-traditional internally lit fascias should be resisted in favour of traditional shop signage subtly spot lit with the shop owner encouraged to display branding so it fits with existing historic frontages. In areas where historic shopfronts survive, it may be better to display the shop name on hanging signs affixed to the wall by brackets. Such an approach might be appropriate where there is no space for a fascia signage or where there is historic evidence for hanging signs in the subject street. These recommendations have already been taken on board by the Council with the adoption in January 2022 of a Shopfronts SPD¹.

Walls and Roofs

- 1.11 Reading has an amazing variety of brick colours and patterns on its buildings and its vernacular of polychrome bricks is a distinctive characteristic of the town. The survey found that historic brickwork is being damaged by repointing in cementitious mortar. Owners and contractors need to be encouraged to use historic brickwork lime mortar repointing instead, and, where possible, to replace cementitious mortar, to foster good practice standards at every opportunity.
- 1.12 The survey noted a tendency to overpaint historic brickwork, in particular using modern non-breathable paints. Overpainting removes the ability to see the different patterns and characterful surface patina of the bricks and also gives rise to a need for regular repainting to maintain appearance, and a corresponding loss of attractiveness if this is not done. Owners and contractors need to be helped to understand the disbenefits of overpainting brickwork. Where occupiers and/or owners are assessed not to have sufficient resources to carry out brickwork repair, it may be that the HSHAZ grant could fill the deficit if it is a significant historic building.
- 1.13 The HAA study found that there has been a loss of natural slate roofs with concrete tile replacements. The study also found that traditional lead on roofs has often been replaced with asphalt and roofing felt. These changes have resulted in the erosion of some of the character and appearance of conservation areas. Educating owners and contractors in the first instance to retain and reuse existing historic or modern traditional roof coverings. Where inappropriate modern roof coverings exist these should ideally be replaced using a material to more closely match the traditional roof covering historically present on the building. With felt replacement roofs the case should be made to replace it with a better material. In both this case and with lead roofs that need replacing, there are acceptable alternatives that could be used.

Other Changes under Permitted Development (PD) Rights that Erode Character and Affect Appearance

- 1.14 The HAA survey identified numerous examples of satellite dishes and air conditioning condenser units affixed to highly visible elevations. These should instead be on flat roofs, less visible elevations and if in a prominent position then shielded from view (in the case of condenser units).
- 1.15 To avoid uncontrolled conversion of retail to residential, consider using an Article 4 direction (linked to an LDO) to protect the key historic shopping streets including (but not exclusive to) Broad Street, Friar Street, Queen Victoria Street, Oxford Road and so on.²

Conservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas

- 1.16 With the grant funds available and using them together with S106 and CIL funds, the Reading HSHAZ offers the opportunity to make noticeable improvements to the conservation areas.
- 1.17 Consider promoting targeted investment in groups of buildings, particularly those where there are opportunities to conserve historic shopfronts and improve partially surviving shopfronts that would form part of wider public realm improvements. Visual representations of how each shopfront could look are helpful.
- 1.18 Targeting can be achieved by compiling a list of buildings (both designated and non-designated locally important) in poor condition or with missing features or poor alterations.
- 1.19 Encourage the sympathetic conversion of under-utilised upper floors, to be re-occupied as separate residential units. Consider the production of a Design Guide to encourage approaches conserving and adapting underused buildings that identifies character and features to be maintained.

¹ Reading Borough Council - Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD adopted January 2022

² Reading Borough Council confirmed Article 4 as of 15 November 2022 https://my.reading.gov.uk/custom/article_4_direction.html.

Public Realm

- 1.20 Research undertaken by Urban Place Lab demonstrates that the town centre is a highly walkable area. However, to encourage more people to walk around the town the public realm is likely to require improvements. One could consider the public realm in a holistic way as a room, with the buildings forming walls, horizontal surfaces forming the floors, and various items of furniture placed appropriately throughout. Each ‘room’ (street, or group of streets) could be designed in a way appropriate to its particular distinctiveness, using a palette of modern materials as well as historic ones that originate from within the Thames Valley area, to reinforce the identity of different historic areas within the centre. If any one of these elements is deteriorating it can be off-putting to pedestrians, whereas a visually coherent streetscape is instinctively viewed as much more attractive. Historic England’s Streets for All and the CIHT’s Manual for Streets 2 offer useful advice.
- 1.21 Consider concentrating targeted investment in particular areas where improvements would enhance the historic environment to greatest effect. For example, St. Mary’s Butts and its southern junction, Oxford Road and Duke Street and Jackson’s Corner.
- 1.22 Consider preserving surviving parts of historic public realm with old surfaces surviving in places like Thorn Lane and Castle Street, to be repaired and reinstated where possible if some elements have been lost.
- 1.23 Consider creating more areas of green space, where possible, across the town and/or avenues of trees in existing streets, to contribute to Reading’s target of Net Zero by 2030. Consider green corridors along the IDR on both its north-south branch and its east-west branch, delivered through a coherent vision for improving Reading’s green spaces.
- 1.24 Additional areas of hard and soft landscaped public open space would be beneficial. These are often used by residents, tourists and office workers for moments of repose during the day. Consider choosing high quality street and pavement surfaces, benches and lighting, utilising high grade materials that will last indefinitely with appropriate upkeep.

- 1.25 The surfaces to pavements and pedestrianised streets are also an important consideration, to maintain the distinction between vehicle carriageways and pedestrian footways through the use of different coloured kerbs and changes in level, perhaps also identifying pedestrian priority crossings. Red brick has been successfully used in some parts of Reading. Other local vernacular colours to consider might be the use of grey, buff or gault bricks. To some of the central areas of the town another option to consider are granite setts whilst in other areas (including suburban) reconstituted stone is an option.
- 1.26 Consider undertaking a street audit to inform the decluttering of the public realm and to identify for retention historic street furniture (e.g. lampposts, manhole covers, benches, bollards etc.) followed by a programme of improvements in selected areas. Redundant elements of street furniture could be removed as appropriate.

Utilising the Town’s Existing Strengths More Effectively

- 1.27 Consider boosting promotion of Reading’s existing watercourses (rivers, canals, former leats and so on) to encourage repose, walks and exercise through improved wayfinding, by installation of kiosks and use of canal boats to cater for the passing public.
- 1.28 Reading Abbey’s history as an important surviving abbey complex given its association with Henry I may benefit by the expansion of the successful wayfinding boards for the Abbey Quarter project into the St. Mary’s Butts area. St. Mary’s Butts has great potential as a visitor attraction once recommended improvements have been implemented.
- 1.29 Promoting Reading’s industrial heritage, for instance Huntley & Palmer site’s history. While many of their buildings were demolished in the mid-late 20th century some remain at the back of London Street, on Gas Works Road and the Biscuit Tunnel. 2022 marked the 200 years since Joseph Huntley started his biscuit enterprise on London Street and given the impact of the company nationally further promotion of the company’s history and that of its associated company Huntley, Boone & Stevens would make this historical association better known.
- 1.30 The town could make better use of existing alleys, yards and courts, to create artisan/independent retailer quarters, e.g. Union Street, Wiston Terrace, Fife Court, Merchant’s Place etc.

Making all New Development Sustainable and Contextual

- 1.31 Encourage developers to consider conversion of existing buildings instead of demolition to act more responsibly towards conserving embedded carbon and bearing in mind Reading’s Net Zero target by 2030 and the national 2050 carbon neutral target.
- 1.32 Consider partially reflecting the historic street pattern when regeneration schemes are proposed. This could help bring permeability to an area but also consider reusing historic street names themselves.
- 1.33 Consider a pallet of materials that includes better quality brickwork in future developments given Reading’s vernacular is brickwork, often polychromatic. Continue the tradition of brick as the predominant material. Resist lifeless, bland bricks, as well as inappropriate alternatives such as powder coated metal and ceramic cladding systems.

Reducing the Impact of Roads and Traffic

- 1.34 Traffic levels also affect the quality of the historic environment, directly and indirectly and reductions in traffic supports Reading’s 2030 Net Zero target and the national 2050 carbon neutral target.
- 1.35 Though the review of roads and traffic is outside the scope of this report and will be covered by the Reading Town Centre Strategy, there are some projects that have been undertaken in other historic town centres that might be considered in Reading.
- 1.36 Consider improving pedestrian crossings under the IDR at Southampton Street to link to Bridge Street and the town centre. Likewise improve pedestrian at grade crossings across the IDR at London Street
- 1.37 Look at ways to improve the pedestrian experience crossing the IDR at Castle Street and Oxford Road.
- 1.38 Consider how to reduce the impact of traffic on the gyratory system around Crown Street, London Street and Southampton Street which negatively impacts on this historic suburb.

Regeneration Schemes

1.39 The reuse of under-utilised or vacant historic buildings adheres to national and local planning policy and, if done sensitively, preserves embedded carbon, bearing in mind Reading's Net Zero 2030 target and the national 2050 carbon neutral target.

1.40 Refurbishment is often a better choice than demolition because it requires less resources in terms of utilising embedded carbon within the built environment and supports Reading's target of Net Zero by 2030. In cases where refurbishment of office blocks is proposed, encourage design options that reflect the local historic context, suitable cladding as recommended under 'Promoting good design and sustainability - New Development'.

1.41 There are a number of locations that could be targeted for delivering new homes and supporting other forms of sustainable development, including those identified under Policies CR11, CR12, CR13 and CR14 of the Local Plan. A proactive approach would be to provide planning briefs recommending heights, massing and scale for those sites.

1.42 The Local Plan identifies several sites in the Study Area that it would like to see brought forward for redevelopment. This HAA also identifies a number of other sites in the Study Area that will be redeveloped and a number of other sites potentially capable of being redeveloped to enhance the conservation areas in Reading:

- Reading Gaol represents a key cultural site in Reading and has the potential for sensitive conversion to a new use. The south-western corner of the boundary walls has been rebuilt, which might provide a useful place to locate a new entrance if needed in fabric of less significance. Such a new entrance could be designed to be legible as a modern insertion to maintain legibility of historic and later fabric, as well as designed not to compete in prominence with the prison's original entrance. The site is located within a scheduled monument and preservation in-situ by design of buried archaeology is the recommended approach.

- Minster Quarter redevelopment with the Broad Street Mall including the car parks offers the largest site, which includes the Hexagon (recommended as a locally listed building), Police station Headquarters, Magistrates' Courts and Lavender Place Community Gardens along with Queens Walk, Dusseldorf Way, Hosier Street and surrounding paths and pavements. There is an opportunity to introduce here a new quarter with permeability through the site from Castle Street north and the creation of green space within the masterplanned design for this new quarter.³
- Connected with the above potentially, although it could be undertaken independently, is improving the informal market off St. Mary's Butts, and the streetscene and public realm around Hosier Street. This HAA has also identified potential regeneration/opportunity sites on and close to Hosier Street.
- Revitalisation of St. Mary's Butts needs to be sensitively done without damaging the historic character of the area and heritage assets. This area could become an enhanced retail/café/restaurant offering as proposed in the Minster Quarter.
- Refurbishing the exterior of the McIlroy Building is an important regenerative step. If this can be accomplished and the Broad Street Mall revitalised it would give renewed pull to Broad Street's western end.
- In the centre of the block between Friar and Broad Streets there used to be historic passages and spaces that could be recreated in redevelopment of the large floorplate buildings for which there may be less demand in the future. As regeneration opportunities come forward, consideration could be given to redevelopment of the modern built form in this location and reinstatement of lost historic streets and spaces.
- As part of the survey the existence of the former cinema auditorium to the rear of 47-48 Broad Street (Boots) was revealed. With agreement, more could be made of the former auditorium by perhaps converting back to an entertainment venue.
- Merchant's Place also represents a little known street of some antiquity that could be regenerated. It also is a rare example of the survival of historic street surfaces. Any surviving historic buildings (e.g. No. 8 Merchant's Place) and historic elements of the street scene should be retained and/or repaired as needed.
- Smelly Alley/Union Street - many of these buildings date to the 18th century but almost universally have been altered beyond recognition. A scheme to improve the frontages perhaps by encouraging more in keeping wall finishes, new timber sash windows and sympathetic shopfronts, along with a re-laid street surface, could much improve this location. The use of brick slips should be discouraged. The former public house at Nos. 12, 12a and 12b Union Street could help 'anchor' the scheme.
- Surviving historic buildings and historic features give these town centre streets their unique character and should be retained and/or repaired as needed.
- Bringing the Jackson's Corner buildings back into use and the regeneration of Nos. 14-23 King Street including the Kings Walk Shopping Centre (excluding the positive contributors to the streetscene at Nos. 17-19 King Street) is another opportunity to lift the profile of this area.
- The dilapidated former Lower Ship Hotel, Duke Street, an existing BTM, could be brought back into use. Such a scheme could be used to regenerate Thorn Lane and the buildings that surround it and improving the appeal of Yield Hall Lane. Any surviving historic buildings and historic elements of the streetscene should be retained and/or repaired as needed.
- An area in need of improvement is the mid-late 20th century residential housing on St. Giles Close and Letcombe Street (Policy CR14g in the New Local Plan noted) as well as 6-18 Crown Street.
- Several potential sites lie adjacent to the IDR e.g. the Salvation Army site off Castle Street, Mundesley Street, John Lewis Customer Collections Depot (Crossland Road), and the Oracle Car Park and Vue cinema fronting the IDR. A triangular land parcel close to the junction of Yield Hall Place/London Street and Queen's Road could be developed and the development used to reconfigure the junction of the IDR and London Street to improve the pedestrian crossing to get from the centre to London Street.

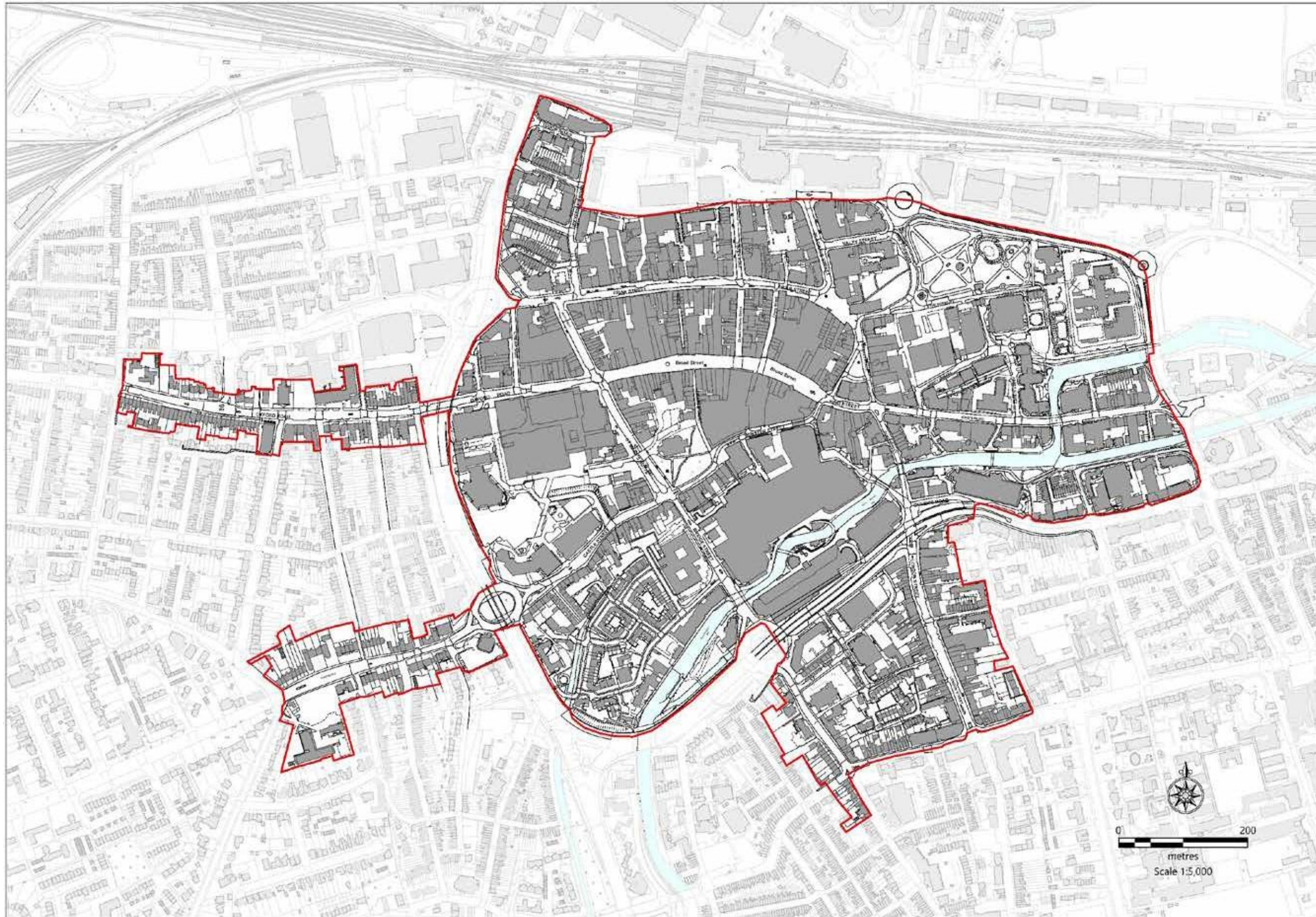
³ Minster Quarter Area Development Framework December 2018
https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Minster_Quarter_Area_Development_Framework_Part_1.pdf

Use of Existing Reports and Documentation

- 1.43 Secondary research of the substantial body of reports and documents, including area assessments. Key documents referred to are as follows:

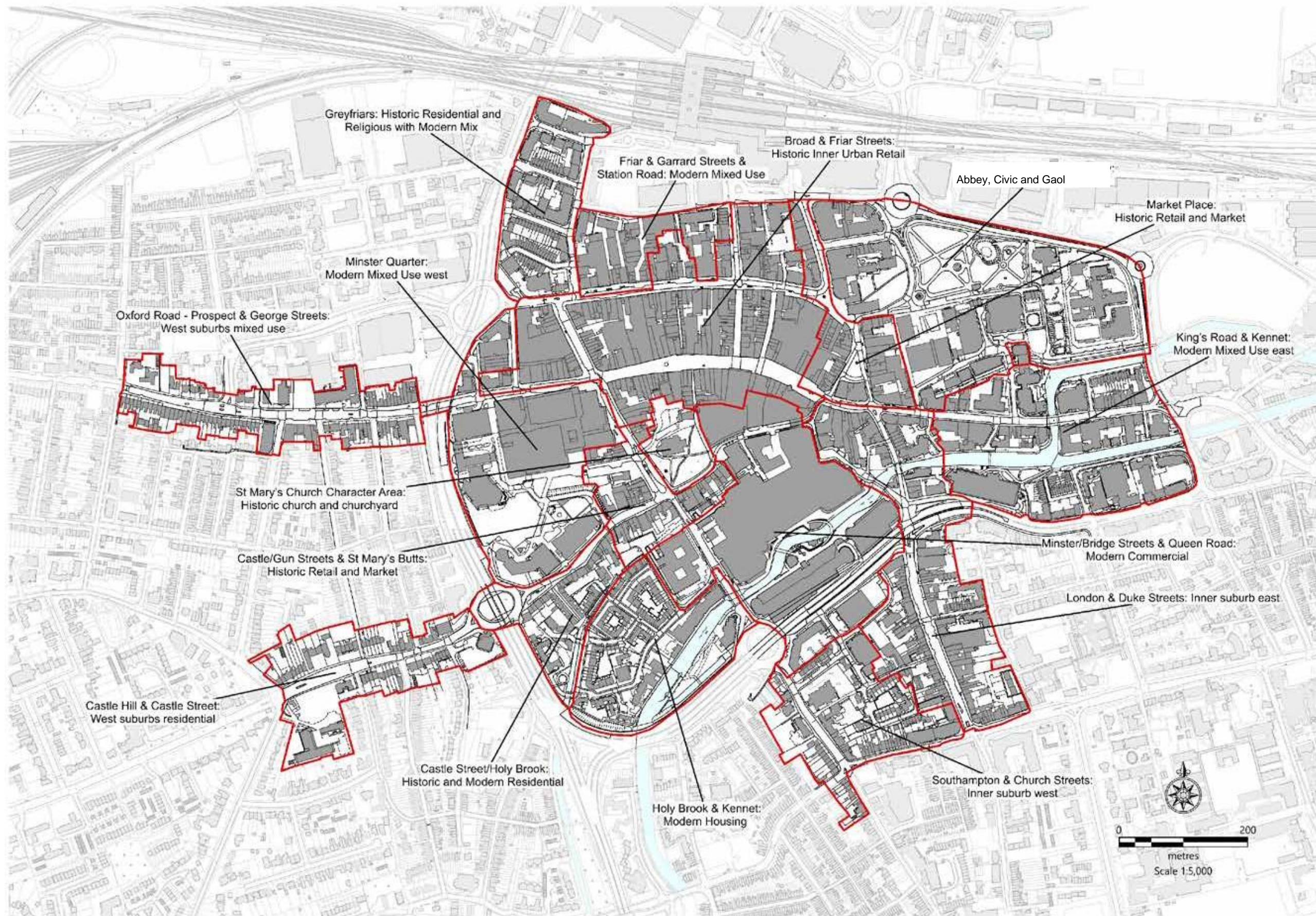
| | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|
| Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area: Conservation Area Appraisal | March 2020 | RBC |
| 3128 Reading Town Centre Walkability Report Draft03 Summary 21001 TCS Officer Meeting Presentation 21.07.21 | September 2020 | Urban Place Lab |
| Reading: A History | 2019 | Joan Dils |
| Reading Borough Local Plan: Adopted November 2019 | November 2019 | RBC |
| Reading Tall Buildings Strategy SPD Reading Tall Buildings Strategy Update Note | 2008 2018 | RBC |
| Assessment of significant Views with Heritage interest | January 2018 | CAAC for RBC |
| Design Guide for Shopfronts | January 2022 | RBC |
| Minster Quarter area outline development framework: Reconnecting with Reading's historic town centre | December 2018 | RBC |
| Outline Development Framework: The Site of Reading Prison | March 2015 | RBC |
| HMP Reading: Historic building assessment | September 2015 | PURCELL |
| Reading prison Reading County of Berkshire: Report on an archaeological evaluation | September 2018 | MOLA |
| HM Prison Reading: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment | September 2015 | MOLA |
| Reading Abbey Revealed Conservation Plan | August 2016 | RBC |
| St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal | March 2008 | RBC |
| Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal | April 2007 | RBC |
| Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal Draft | May 2021 | CAAC for RBC |
| Historic towns in Berkshire: an archaeological appraisal | 1978 | Astill |
| The Buildings of England: Berkshire | 2010 | Pevsner et. al. |
| Town Trails 1: The Abbey, Market Place, London Street | Undated | Reading Civic Society |
| Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading | 1999 | Gold |
| Visitor Insights Report, Footfall Analysis for Reading HSHAZ | August 2021 | Ellandi |

Figure 2. Showing Extent of Study Area



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Figure 3. Illustrating Character Areas



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2. Historical Note

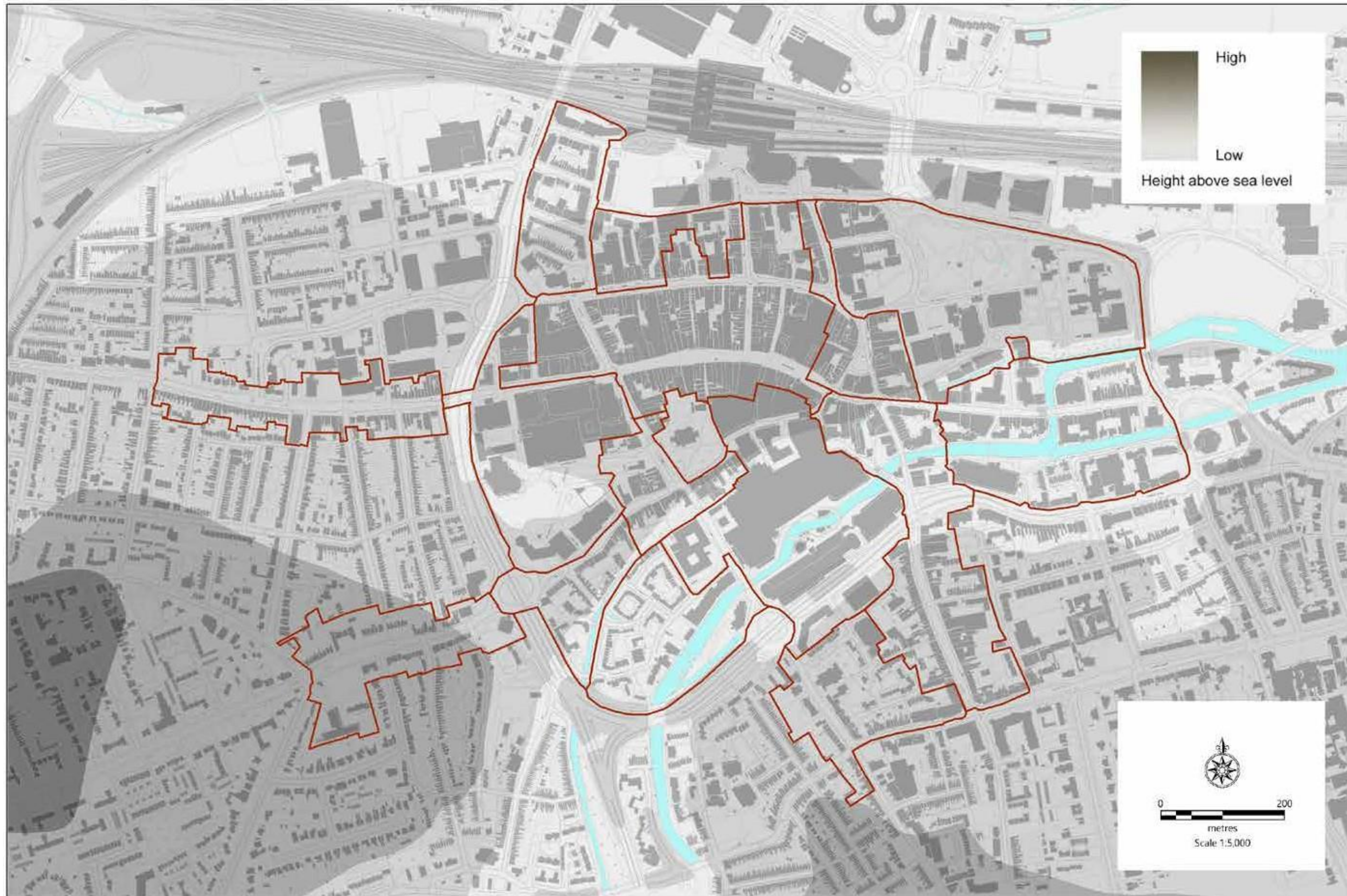
Landform

- 2.1 The centre of Reading is located upon a dry gravel terrace, one of a number in the area (Figure 4.). Another distinct dry gravel terrace underlies the eastern side of the River Kennet. The historic settlement occupied the high ground at a crossing point for the River Kennet, to the west of its marshy confluence with the Thames.
- 2.2 High ground surrounds the gravel terrace. To the south and west, Bath Road and Tilehurst Road reach high points at Tilehurst and Little Heath. To the north of the gravel terrace, an area of high ground dominates and reaches high points at Caversham Heights and Caversham Park.
- 2.3 Reading's unique topography shaped the development of its historic core due to the importance of crossing points, which became the focus of markets that in turn led to the development of habitable zones along the gravel terrace. A number of bridges ford the Kennet, giving access to and from the core of Reading. The most significant and historic of these bridges were the former Seven Bridges, now Bridge Street Bridge; High Bridge, later replaced by an 18th century stone bridge; and a bridge over the Holy Brook just to the north, which is now part of the roadway of Duke Street. The latter two bridges lay between London Street and Duke Street. Two further major bridges, important to the expansion of Reading from the Post-medieval period onwards, cross the Thames: Reading Bridge is located to the north and Caversham Bridge is located to the north north west of Reading.
- 2.4 Reading's position on the intersection between the London to Bath and Oxford to Southampton roads reflects Reading's important role as a communications centre during the Medieval period. The staggered junction of these two major trading routes and the ease of crossing the Kennet and its tributaries help explain the elongated shape of Reading's plan to the south.

Watercourses and Drainage

- 2.5 The heart of modern Reading is located a short distance south of the River Thames, sufficiently close to provide easy riverine access to London, Oxford and Wallingford. The surrounding flood plain is wide and marshy. In contrast the River Kennet, a tributary of the Thames, is a narrower river that runs through the heart of Reading. It flows from the south west, up through Katesgrove, eastwards and to the south of the Abbey Precinct. The Kennet then sub-divides at Crane Wharf, with one channel continuing eastwards and another turning north at a right angle and flowing under King's Road. John Rennie, Chief Engineer of the Kennet & Avon Canal, constructed a by-pass of the loop (known as Rennie's Cut) in the river south of Reading Abbey. Wharfs were formed along the banks of the river to aid trade; as Reading expanded, the shape of the river influenced the shape of Post-medieval industry and later settlement. Both channels meet again further east to join as one river where it meets the Thames at Kennet Mouth, which lies east of the Abbey Precinct. This confluence was a focus for Danish landings during Reading's early history.
- 2.6 A number of tributaries and streams of the Kennet were important sources of power and food in the past, including the Mill Stream and the Holy Brook. The most identifiable today is the Holy Brook, a channel of the Kennet which is partly culverted and is still visible running along the historic southern edge of Saxon Reading. In addition to its status as a boundary feature of the early settlement, the Holy Brook is also historically important during this time, as parts of the channel were created to supply water mills and fish ponds. The channel runs for 6 miles, part of which now flows culverted underneath the centre of Reading, before re-joining the Kennet to the south east of Reading Abbey ruins.

Figure 4. Topography



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3. Historical Development of Reading

Earliest Archaeological Evidence (500,000 BC-410 AD)

- 3.1 There is a large amount of archaeological evidence relating to human activity within the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) of Reading. These come in the form of, for example, worked flint assemblages, dating to between the Paleolithic and Late Iron Age (*circa* 500,000 to 43 AD). There is also evidence of Romano-British settlement within Reading’s suburban areas, such as Coley and Katesgrove.
- 3.2 Beyond this evidence, the extent and permanence of early activity within Reading Centre is difficult to define because many archaeological recordings of soft landscaping, pits, finds and burials are found without supportive contextual evidence.

Foundation of the Urban Centre (410-1066)

- 3.3 References in primary sources indicate Saxon settlement when Reading is first mentioned in 870-71 AD in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle. Sources also indicate that the settlement was sacked, and it is unknown whether the reference to a Danish camp between the River Thames and River Kennet represents continuous occupation. A burial of a man and a horse dating to between 801 and 820 AD was discovered in 1831 “100 yards east of the end of the engine sheds at Reading Station”. However, no further definitive evidence has been discovered thusfar. Further raids are recorded in 1006, and these continued sporadically across the region. Whether the raids were related to the failure of the nunnery recorded at Reading *circa* 979, thought to have been located within the Saxon settlement but no longer existing by 1086, is unknown.
- 3.4 Thus, the beginnings of Reading’s urban core are largely unclear. Reading is documented as a Vill in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 870-71 AD. A Vill was the smallest administrative unit under the feudal system, consisting of a number of houses and their adjacent lands. Limited archaeological evidence of a small number of burials across at Forbury Gardens and a single structure at Forbury House hint at the possibility of future discoveries. In addition, a late 9th century inhumation, within a coffin, was found in the graveyard of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin in 1839. The inhumation was accompanied by a hoard of Saxon pennies, dating to *circa* 875 AD. A minor mint was established between 1042 and 1066.

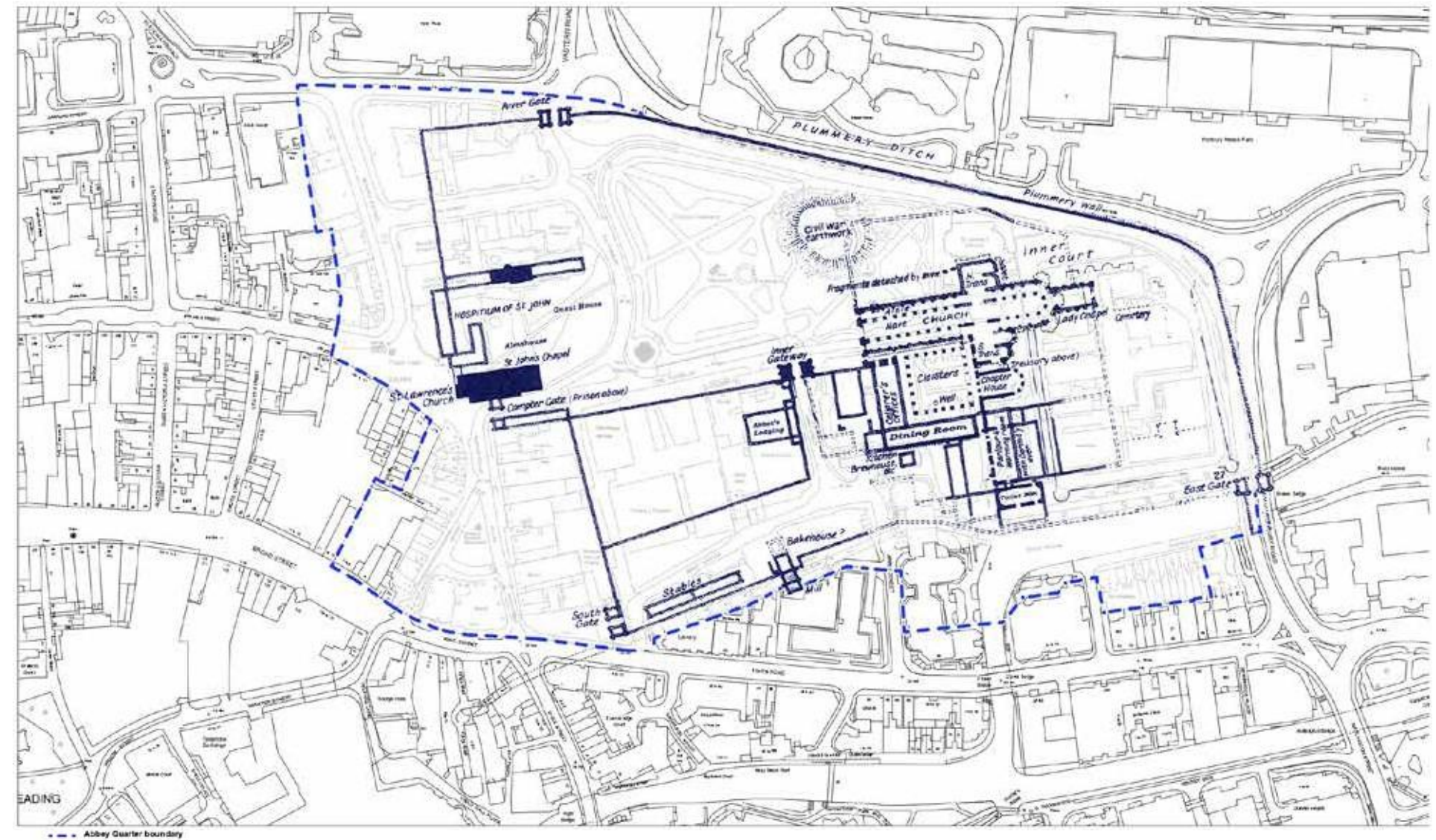
Figure 5. Representative Extent of the Saxon Market and Settlement, as Recorded on the Historic Environment Record



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Figure 6. Plan of Abbey Over Modern Street Layout (© copyright Hampshire County Council 2009, reproduced with permission from RBC)

- 35 However, more definitive evidence for permanent occupation within Reading's Saxon core is tantalisingly absent. Structures of late Saxon or early Medieval times were located to the north north west of Reading Minster. Chalk and flint foundations and floor surfaces of the late 11th-12th century and chalk and flint masonry remains indicate the existence of a once substantial building, possibly an early part of the site of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin.
- 36 The settlement at Reading had attained elements of 'borough' status, i.e. a degree of self-government, granted by Edward the Confessor in the 11th century. This status was appropriate for important trading centres, and agricultural produce was as important as other goods since it was for the populace's subsistence. Based on available evidence, the late Saxon Borough was probably focused around St Mary's Butts, where the two main trading routes crossed (Oxford to Winchester/Southampton and London to Bath). The interpretation of its extent was first mapped by Professor Grenville Astill, recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER), and based on 13th century deeds (Figure 5). In addition, the deeds also record a town court in Reading. Reading had a mint and a church, and had attained a degree of self-government by 1066 AD, when the Norman Conquest led to a change in governance and the adoption of the manorial system.

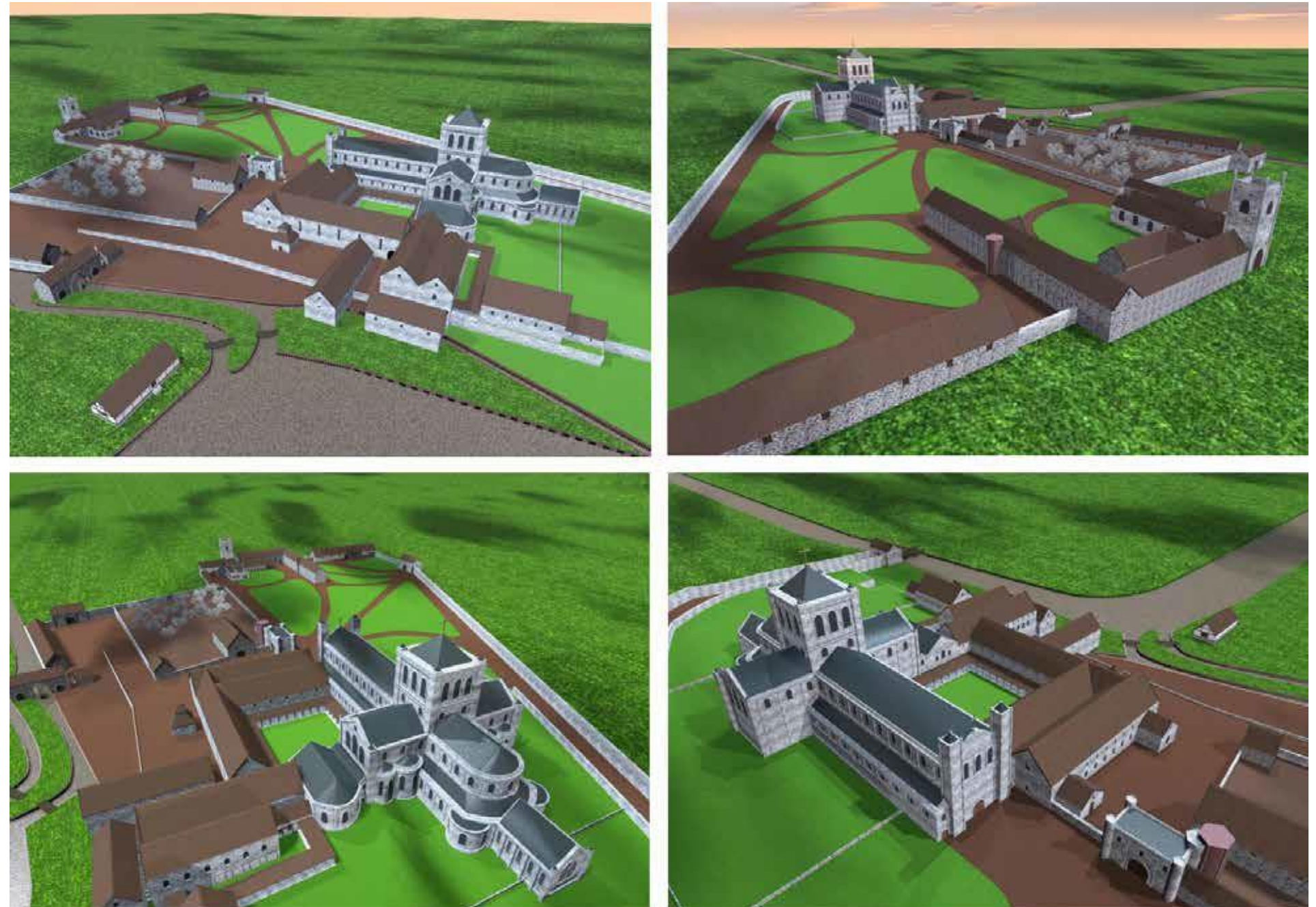


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Figure 7. Digital Image of Reading Abbey (image produced with permission from Reading Museum)

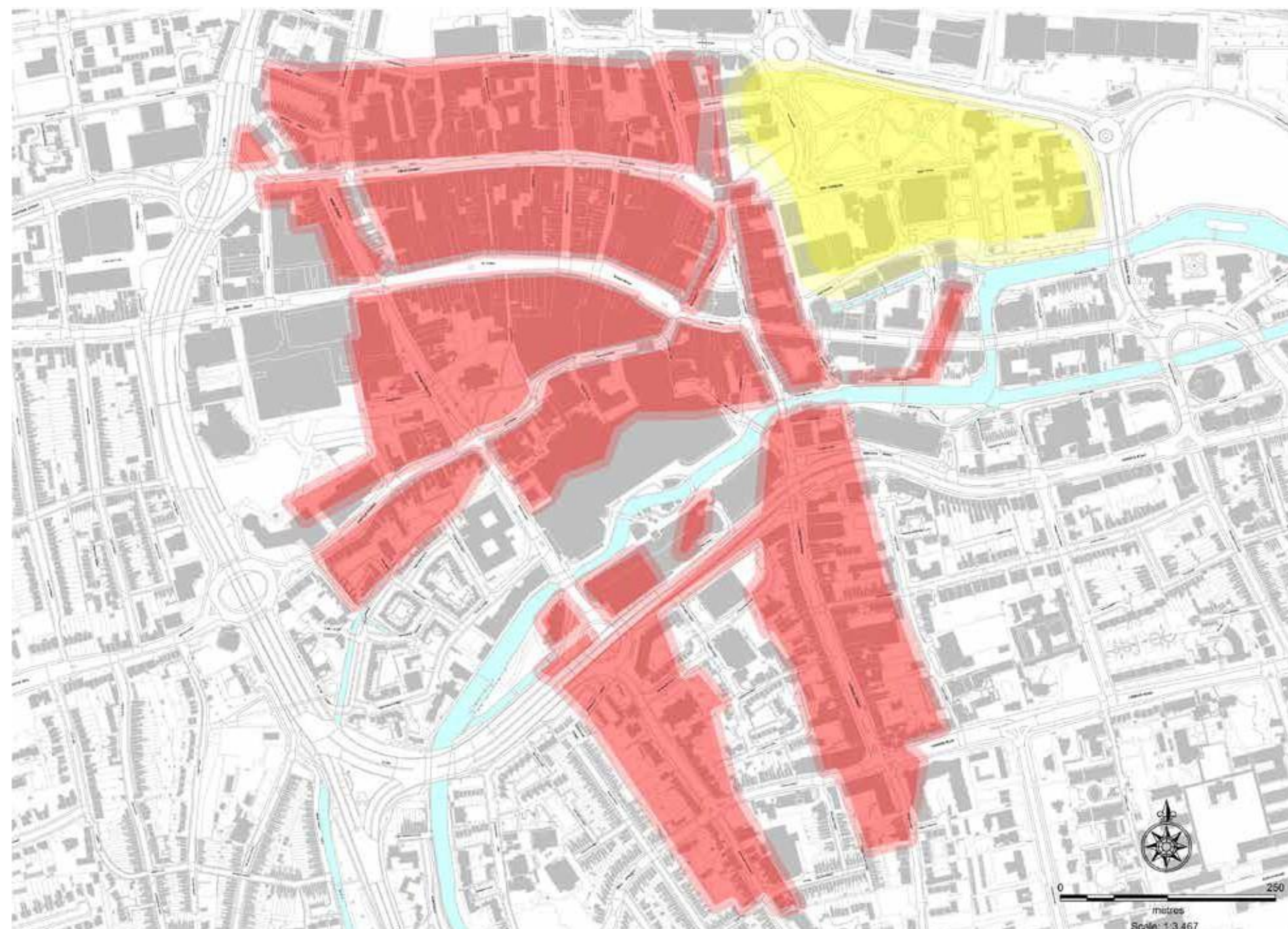
Post Conquest (1066-1600)

- 3.7 The unrecorded though implicit contribution of the Berkshire levies in the Battle of Hastings is commemorated through and illustrated by the Bayeux Tapestry, a facsimile of which hangs in Reading Museum. Once established, William I commissioned a survey of all landholdings, which was recorded in the Domesday Book. This historic reference provides information on settlements of a particular size and importance, indicating a commercial settlement of some wealth. The manor and borough amounted to a sizeable settlement at Reading with fisheries, meadows and woodlands. The land of Henry de Ferrers was recorded as lodgings, associated with entertaining royalty during their journeys to and from their residences.
- 3.8 Royal interest in Reading continued, and Reading Abbey was founded by Henry I in 1121 (Figures 7 and 8). It was based at the river edge approximately 350m to the north east of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, and was influential in the growth of Reading. While the rural outskirts of Reading continued to be a key resource for food and trade to support the Medieval settlement, the abbot immediately assumed control of the market (determining opening and closing times, quality of goods and measurements), tolls and fines, as recorded in the town court.
- 3.9 The arrival of the Abbey resulted in a divergence in market influences and associated economic nuclei from the area around Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin to the west gates of Reading Abbey. This changed the fortunes of the established market at the Minster and led to disputes between the Abbey and the Guildhall, a group of the town's leading merchants and craftsmen. The first references to a Guildhall are made between 1205 and 1216, but it is not until the '10-year quarrel' (1244-54) between the Guildhall and the Abbey that the Guildhall is evidenced as a corporate body. This led to a legal agreement (1254), after which the burgesses were allowed to maintain the guild and its hall, as long as they allowed the abbot to elect bailiffs and the warden. Burgesses were a small, self-selecting elite with wealth and influence beyond that of townspeople. Burgage tenure allowed property to be willed. There is little further evidence about the guilds before 1357, at which time records of the guild accounts are recorded.



- 3.10 The conjectural extent of Medieval Reading was mapped by Professor Grenville Astill and more recently by Joan Dils, based on entries within deeds recorded by Reading Abbey; due to the uncertainty of its full extent and some alterations within the built environment, its extent has been illustrated with ‘fuzzy’ boundaries (Figure 8). The Abbey’s Deeds mention a succession of streets that indicates a process of formal urban planning over two centuries. It has been possible to reconstruct the creation of streets chronologically during this time when the framework of Reading’s streets was formed. This plan was put into action during the 12th century, indicating that a ‘master plan’ was in place to create new streets to link into the existing settlement and beyond. The route from London Street and Duke Street was an autonomous route through to the Abbey’s Market. A link to the Saxon core was formed through Market Street and Broad Street. Friar Street, referred to as ‘New Street’, mentioned in 1165, was the last street to be built, which ties in with archaeological evidence of a Medieval building comprising walls, foundations, chalk floors and a drain recorded to the rear of 1 Friar Street (1200 AD to 1499 AD). The 13th century Friary and chapel at the west end of Friar Street, Greyfriars, marked its western limit.
- 3.11 Two churches, St Giles and St Laurence, were founded during this planned phase. St Laurence’s was located at the Abbey’s main gateway (northern end of Market Place) before it became a parish church. The laying out of plots nearby was recorded in 1270 as having a consistent size, approximately 42m by 5m, again indicating formal planning. Towards the south west of the Saxon core, St Giles was built as a parish church in the late 12th century, indicating that there was sufficient population beyond Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin to tend to the spiritual needs of those in the Medieval inner suburbs of Reading (Figure 9). The link between Southampton and London Streets, which became Church Street, would have made a convenient access through to both markets. A further indication of the growth of Reading’s Medieval inner suburbs relates to a record made of the laying out of plots along London Street by the 1350s.

Figure 8. Representative Extent of the Medieval Market and Settlement, as Recorded by Professor Grenville Astill 1978



3.12 Unrestricted trade, frequent markets and three annual fairs led to more rapid urban development. Reading, therefore, developed rapidly, benefiting from the manufacture of woollen cloth, leather goods and of silk weaving found in the archaeological record and in charters that mention street names. Metal working and possibly manufacture and the making of brass cooking vessels are also noted beyond the centre. By the early 13th century trades such as tailors, barbers, vintners, goldsmiths, bakers, cooks, breweries, carpenters, coopers, masons, tilers, tinkers, tanners, and millers are mentioned. The range of crafts documented indicates the size and importance of Reading, considered to be of regional importance. The 13th century guilds were concerned with the major industry of Reading - cloth working. They included drapers (the first to have their own guild in 1242), weavers, fullers and shoemakers. Leather was also an important industry in Reading though cloth working was the main industry.

3.13 However, as the 13th century came to an end the Abbey neared financial disaster. It subsequently lost its firm grip on Reading after the Abbey's administration was taken under royal control in 1286. After this pivotal point, Reading gained greater privileges and was able to elect two members of parliament from 1295. The interests of the guilds were represented by an MP at the Kings Council. By circa 1300 it had a mayor.

3.14 Reading gained a Royal Charter (1487), which enabled it to prosper. Cloth production grew in importance becoming the focus of Reading's economy. Between 1250 and 1545 two groups of mills are recorded, consisting of six in all, one group on a channel of the Kennet and the other group along its main branch. The two groups of mills had the same set of purposes, including corn mills and a fulling mill. The waterfronts were also important as wharfs, with evidence of revetments dating from this period onwards. This evidence is also associated with waterlogged deposits, with potential for excellent preservation of remains providing proof of related activities. By 1334 Reading was assessed as the 40th wealthiest town in England by taxation level. Certainly, by the 14th century Reading was noted for its cloth industry, while the importance of agriculture continued. Reading's location allowed it to prosper within the region, gaining a status equivalent to the 'county town', hosting the county gaol and long-established county courts.

3.15 Trade in cloth was disrupted by war in the Low Countries and the Black Death also had an impact on Reading. By the 1500s Reading functioned as a seigneurial borough; the abbot had judicial powers for breaches of the peace and market regulations and for crimes. The abbot also collected rents and tolls. However, the townspeople benefited from the Abbey's need for craftsmen, labourers and servants and the custom of courtiers and their servants, traders and pilgrims. An additional advantage to the association with an Abbey with Royal favour was freedom from tolls throughout England. However, the borough status was not officially recognised by charter and operated in the absence of a Borough customal, i.e. a written account of customs. Nevertheless, the administration of the burgesses became more formally recognised during the 15th century in the charter of 1487 granted to the guild by Henry VII. The charter added responsibility for aspects of law and order in addition to economic affairs.

3.16 Tudor times were associated with religious and political turbulence and Reading Abbey was dissolved during the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-41). This met with local resistance and the Abbey's last abbot was executed outside the Abbey Gates in 1539. Systematic robbing of materials from the Abbey site occurred from 1549. Professor Grenville Astill suspects that the dissolution led to a slackening of economic growth in the town, alleviated somewhat by the conversion of some of the buildings into a royal palace. The dissolution provided the burgess with an opportunity to gain power, and self-government was achieved by 1542, formally recognised by charter, though the Crown retained the lordship.

Figure 9. St Mary's. Extract from *The History and Antiquities of Reading* by Rev. Charles Coates (Reading, 1802) (image produced with permission from the Berkshire Record Office D/EX2329/3/6)



Figure 10. Part of Castle Street from the turnpike in Reading. From *Select Views of the Borough of Reading and Adjacent Scenery* by W.H. Timms 1823 (image produced with permission from the Berkshire Record Office D/EX2329/3/6)

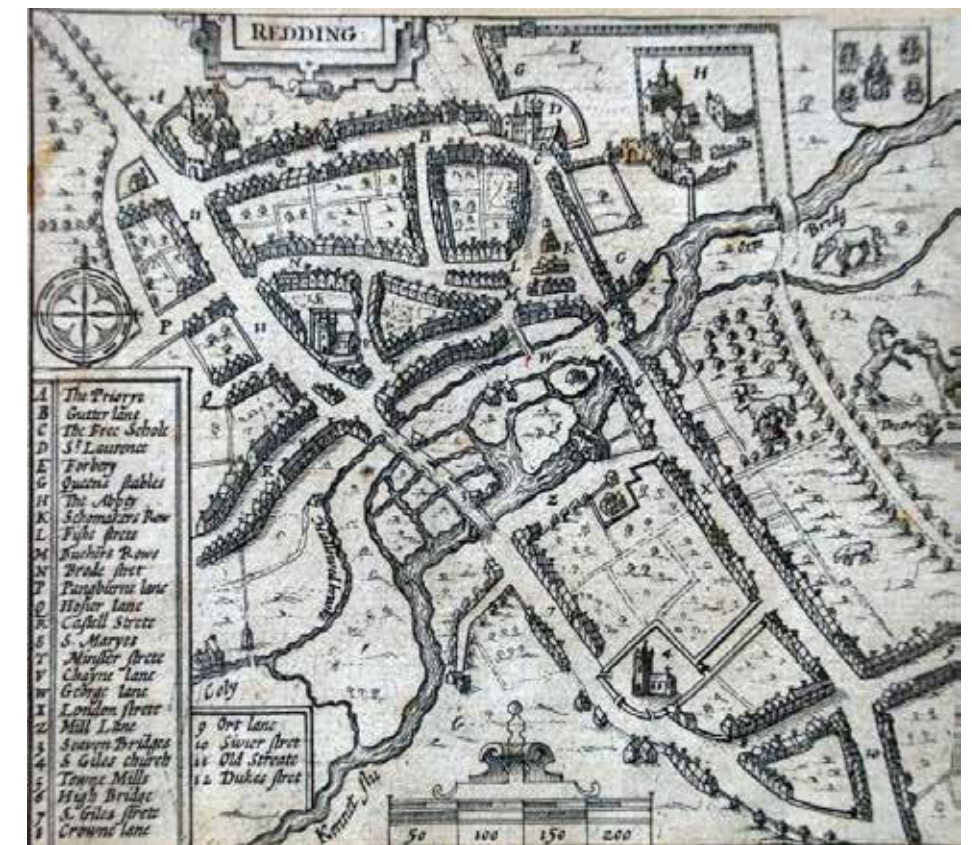


17th Century Expansion (1600 - 1700)

- 3.17 The form of Reading had changed little as seen in John Speed's map (1610) (Figure 11). The map indicates that open countryside reached to the edge of the town and was denoted in Roger Amyce's survey as pasture and meadow. The rural economy remained important, including leather and wool. However, the predominance of the cloth industry began to wane from the 1640s. Other farm produce was brought to sell in the town, and trade continued to be of importance to Reading, supporting the tradition of maintaining and rebuilding bridges and roads. The market place was also carefully maintained and its regulation continued through a biannual court leet. Trade supported inns and alehouses, also regulated by licence. A number of timber-framed public houses date from this period: the Sun Inn on Castle Street; the Allied Arms Inn on St Mary's Butts; and the Coopers Public House on Market Place, among others.
- 3.18 However, trade brought the risk of plague. Indeed, the bubonic plague reached Reading by 1625, re-emerging in 1637 and 1640. Among the trades affected was the cloth industry, leaving many destitute. Their plight attracted private charity, and a workhouse producing cloth was requested by John Kendrick, which was cited as unfair competition by other clothiers. These social and economic difficulties coincided with the growing political and religious divisions that led to the Civil War.
- 3.19 Alternating military occupation of Reading by both Parliamentary and Royal forces between October 1642 and July 1644 led to destruction of many buildings. Most of the Abbey church had been razed when the Civil War defences were dug across the nave. After the end of the Civil War, hostilities continued until 1651 as a result of risings against Parliament. Add to this the context of the 'Little Ice Age', associated food shortages and increased prices, and these times were difficult for the populace. Despite the struggles, the corporation revived Reading's trade. Between 1665 and 1668, Reading's councillors purchased fire engines and employed the first permanent fire crew in the town. Prior to this, householders paid for private insurance which paid for a small group of men to be on call to put out fires.

- 3.20 This historic period is noted for continuous political divisions during the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, which continued until the 1690s, together with disrupted trade, the social and economic difficulties of the early 1600s, and the Civil War. In the context of these events, continuing hostilities hastened the decline of the old industries of cloth and leather over the next century and led to a gradual reorientation of Reading's economy while agriculture continued in importance.
- 3.21 With the efforts of the corporation, Reading continued as a trading centre for agricultural produce, and locally sourced produce was the raw material for most of the trades and crafts in the town. Corn processing and trading became one of the leading industries in Reading. Malting grew in importance; with demand from London supplied by river, Reading's trading role once again flourished. Daniel Defoe writing in 1725 found the town 'very large and wealthy' and 'handsomely built'. This growth was facilitated by the improvement to the London to Bath road and straightening of the Kennet in the early 1700s. While canalisation was begun through private investment, likewise road improvements, undertaken by private local trusts, were maintained through the charge of a fee at a toll gate, known as a turnpike (Figure 10). The junction of Coley Avenue and Tilehurst Road on Castle Hill was the start of a well-known turnpike. The Kings Arms on Castle Hill was a coaching stop on this route. The form, extent and layout of several public houses in the town centre suggest they were once coaching inns, such as The George Hotel.
- 3.22 The return of the monarchy brought with it the desire to restore the Anglican church although there was increasing nonconformity. There are a notable number of nonconformist churches in Reading including the Former Congregational Chapel on Castle Street, the Quaker Meeting House on Church Street, and Providence Chapel on Oxford Road, among others.

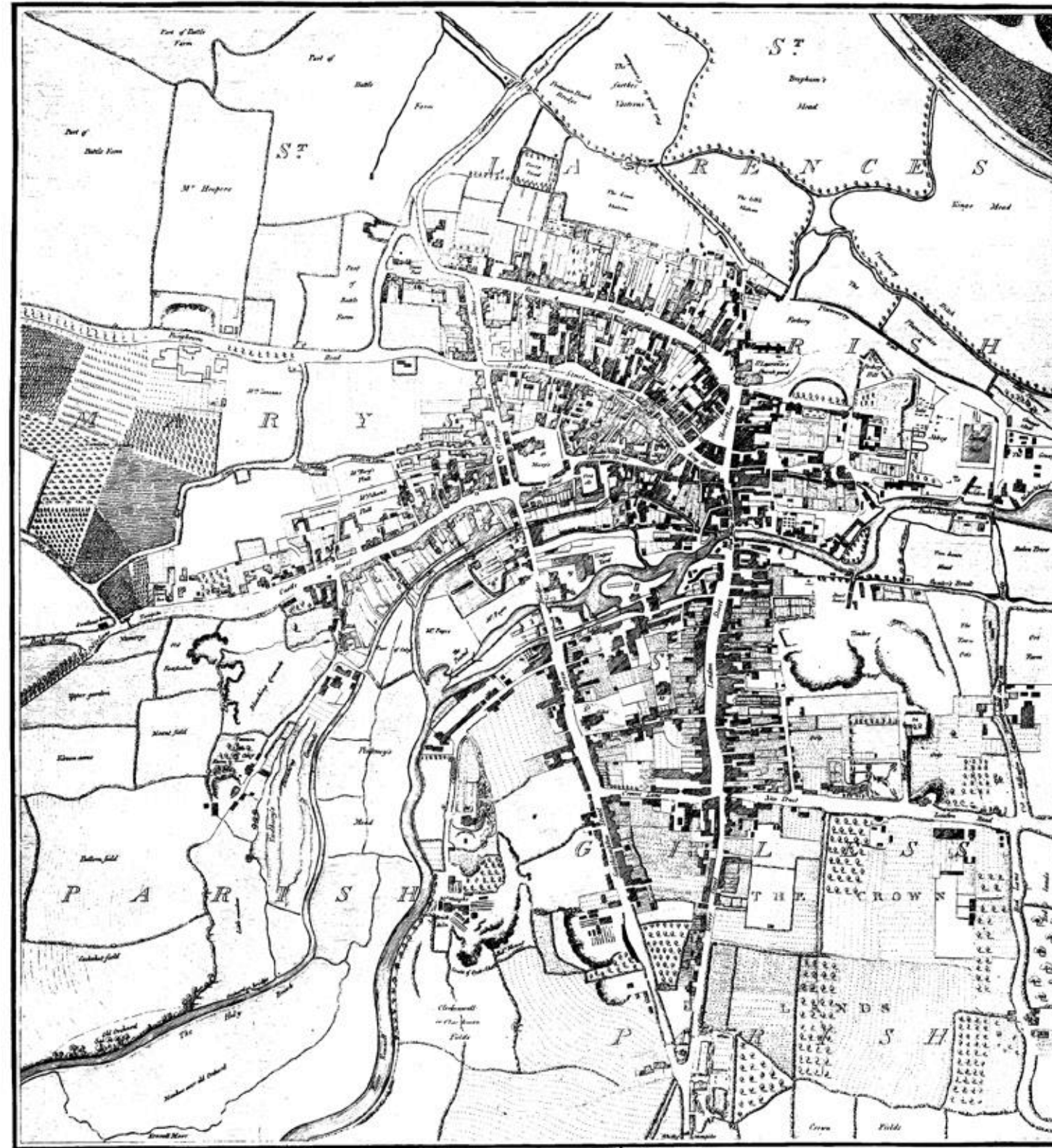
Figure 11. Map of Reading by John Speed, 1610 (image produced with permission from the Berkshire Record Office D/EX2385/1)



Expansion (1740s-early 1900s)

- 3.23 While a comparison of Speed's maps from 1610 (Figure 11) and plans from circa 1800 (Figure 12) shows little outward growth, the subdivision of properties accommodated significant population growth. The extent of Reading as established in the 13th century was not exceeded until the 18th century. There was notable population growth within a 60-year period from 1740, from 7,500 to 9,742. The latter part of the 19th-century is marked by greater population growth, expanding from 16,048 in 1831 to 42,000 in 1881 and 72,217 in 1901. New residential housing was constructed across Reading's central streets and main roads out of town, gathering pace from the 1780s and through the 1800s with expansion east and west. By 1840 (Figure 13) Reading's expansion was in evidence as infill along existing streets and new roads¹. New roads were developed to the east along King's Road and Watlington Street. In addition, new roads were developed to the west: along Chatham Street; along Oxford Road at Prospect and Russell Streets; and south from Castle Hill. Streets of terraces were mixed with semi-detached houses with large gardens. Residential expansion increased further between the 1850s and 1890s, as captured on the First Edition Ordnance Survey maps.
- 3.24 Growth was supported by continued improvement in communication links. The works included the straightening of the Kennet from High Bridge to the Thames, a new cut to bypass the loop in the Kennet south of Reading Abbey and Reading Gaol, and made Reading an important port for London and the Midlands. The continued extension of the canal westwards allowed for ease of long-distance transport from Bristol to Reading and on to London. Improved road surfaces allowed fast and more frequent coach services. The town's early economic and industrial growth, supported by these initiatives, was boosted by the arrival of the railway in 1840 while other towns declined. As a result, coaching inns reverted to public houses and turnpike trusts ceased to function and the established industries of tanning, brick and tile-making underwent significant expansion. The canal facilitated new trade links that supported these industries for which Reading became famous:

Figure 12. Map of Reading by Charles Tomkins, 1802 from *The History and Antiquities of Reading* by Rev. Charles Coates (Reading, 1802)
(image produced with permission from the Berkshire Record Office D/EX2329/3/6)

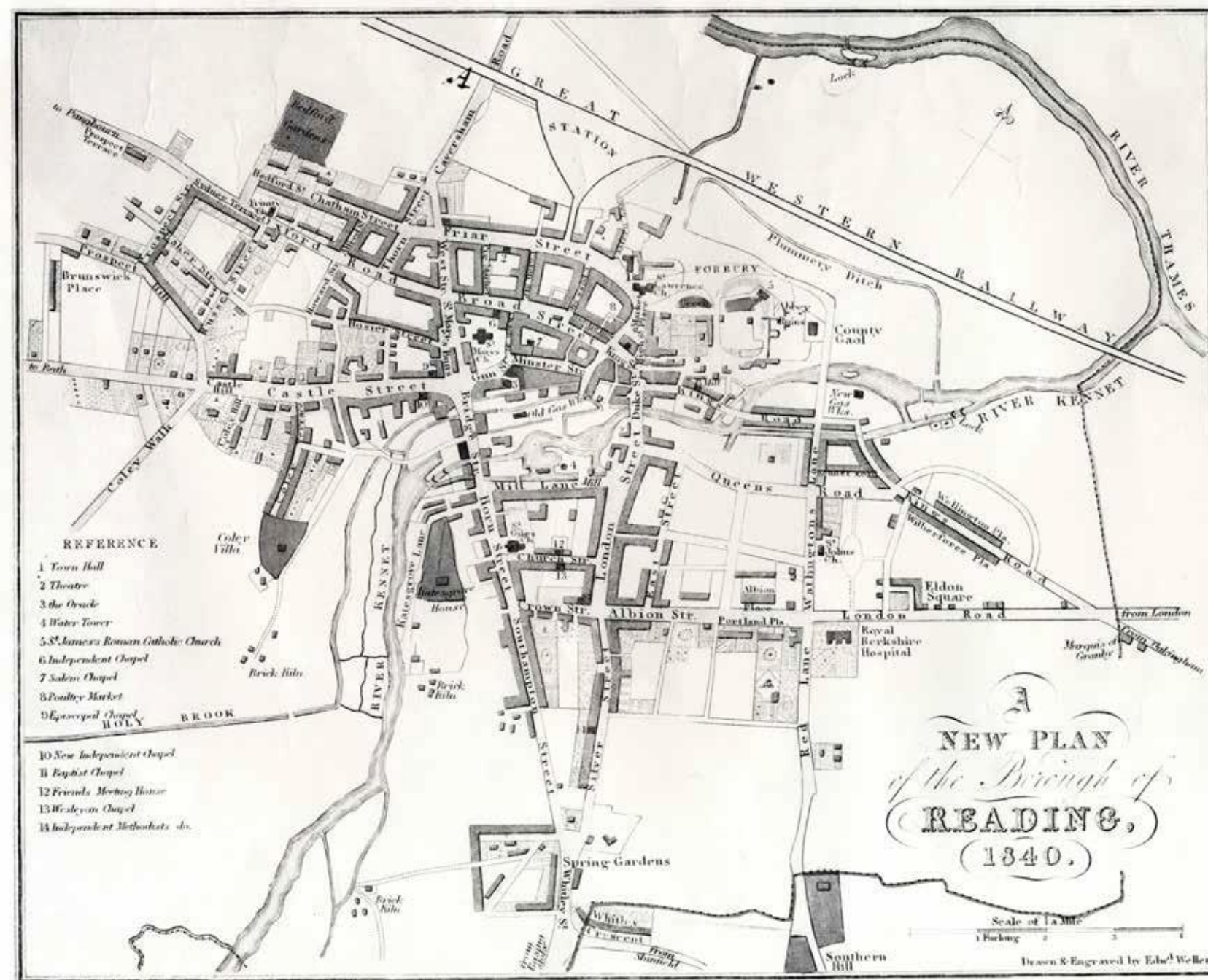


¹ Detailed maps dating to 1853 are available at The Berkshire Record Office, referred to as the Sanitation Maps.

Figure 13. Weller's 1840 Map Reading
(Image produced with permission from the Reading Library)

- Brick and tile making, an early Medieval craft², had expanded to 52 brick makers in 1851. The processes became industrialised, associated with three firms, Colliers, Poulton and Wheeler Brothers, with Colliers dominating the market and noteworthy for Reading redbrick, diaper patterned brickwork and terracotta mouldings.
- Brewing is associated with Simonds. Simonds was established in 1789 and expanded in the 1860s aided by modern technology and contracts with the railway and army.
- Biscuit making, was associated with Huntley & Palmers. J. Huntley & Son biscuit bakery opened in London Street in 1822 after a short period at Church Street run by Joseph Huntley junior, becoming Huntley & Palmers in 1841. It responded to market needs by developing an associated tin works for biscuit tinsto keep biscuits fresh and undamaged.
- Bulbs and agricultural seed associated with Sutton's Seeds' Royal Seed Establishment. Their produce responded to a UK-wide need, selling pure viable seeds quickly by rail and the penny post.

3.25 Further industries established to support the main industries, as diverse as printing works, banks, hospitality, foundries and milling. Ironworking complexes prevailed along the Thames and on the Kennet, while other large industrial complexes flourished. Purpose-built department stores, such as McIlroys and Jacksons, and independent traders and craftworkers living above town centre shops are characteristic of this period of growth across the more affluent areas in the UK (Figure 11). Together these economic shifts indicate a successful reorientation of Reading's economy and the shape of Reading today (Figures 14 and 15). This led to civic pride, as expressed in the Victorian civic precinct, statues and monuments and rebuilding projects such as Queen Victoria Street. The Victorian civic precinct incorporated the Town Hall complex comprises several phases of development on the site that now houses Reading Museum and Art Gallery, the Concert Hall, the Victoria Hall, the coroner's court and ceremonies room. However, many townspeople were affected by the trade depression of the late 1800s, and many workers were living in poor quality back to back housing, especially in Coley and Hosier Street. However, the large workforce was employed by an increasingly small number of large-scale employers in a broad range of trades ensuring overall economic stability for the majority.



² Several Medieval tile kilns were discovered on Silver Street on route south out of Reading.

- 3.26 The provision of transport for workers from the suburbs to the town centre factories was provided by horse-drawn tram constructed by Tramways Company Ltd in 1878. The first tramline was constructed between Oxford Road and Cemetery Junction, which was followed by tramlines to Whitley, Caversham Bridge, Bath Road and Addington Road. Those tramlines were further extended in the early 1900s following the construction of a generator providing electricity to the newly electrified system in 1903. This was made possible by the supply of electricity to Reading in 1893 by the Reading Electric Supply Company. A plaque marking the location of the tram depot is located today on the rear of the Vue Cinema building.
- 3.27 Expansion continued, resulting in the spread of the built environment along Oxford and London Roads, over the meadows by the Thames and to the south of Reading. In the late 1800s Reading became a County Borough within Berkshire responsible for local administration independent of the county of Berkshire, with responsibilities including highways, education and poor law. Board schools and lending libraries were established though Victorian philanthropy and expressions of civic pride continued to be important.

Figure 14. King Street, Reading from “Select Views of the Borough of Reading and Adjacent Scenery” by W.H. Timms 1823

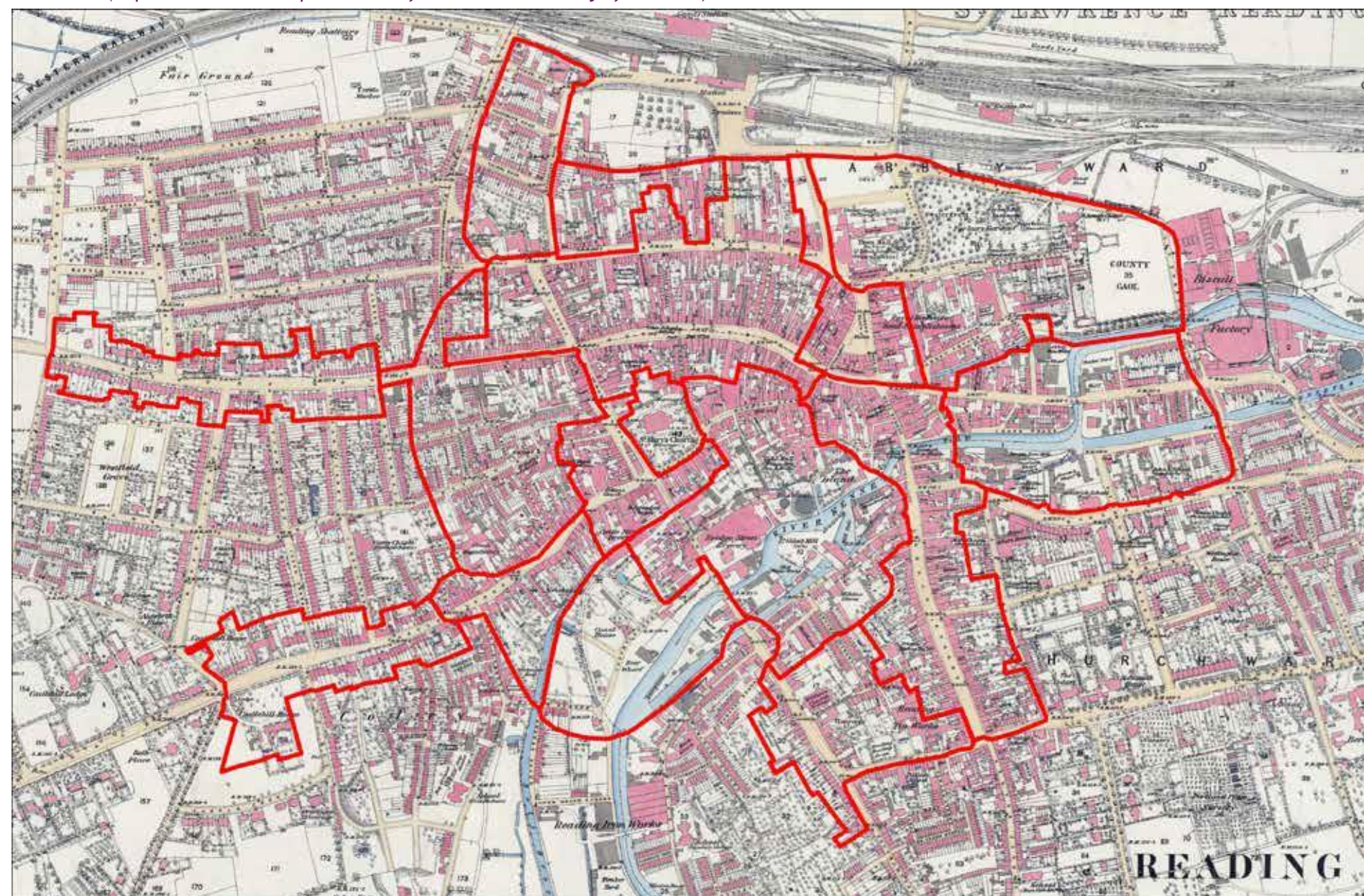
(Image produced with permission from the Berkshire Record Office D/EX2329/3/6)



Early 1900s to the Present Day

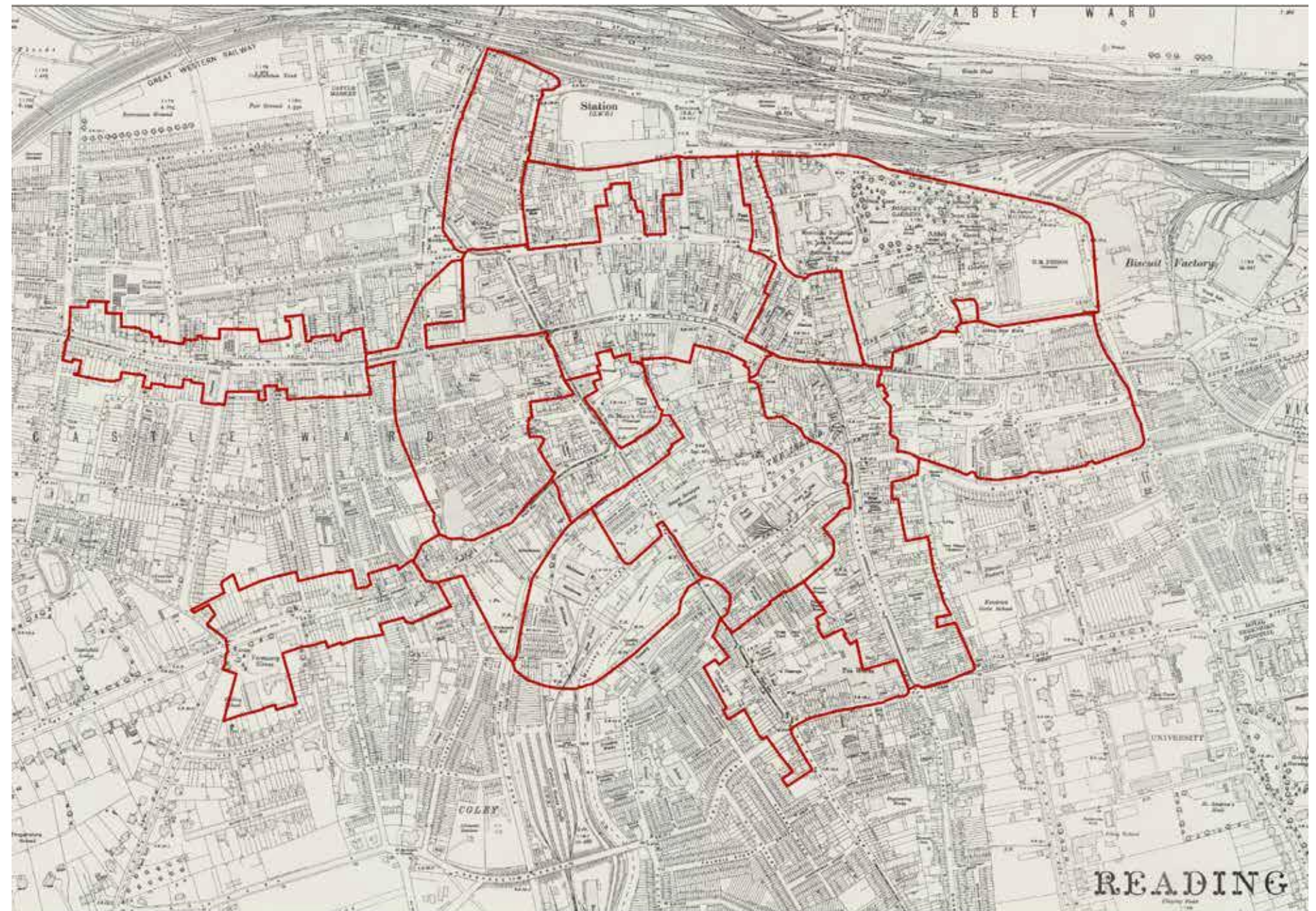
- 3.28 During World War I, many industries focused on the war effort, and Reading was a major recruiting centre. Slum clearance in the 1930s included some back-to-back neighbourhoods such as at Coley, and new estates were built in Shinfield Road, Oxford Road and Silver Street. Residential growth required the extension of transport into new suburbs and estates (Figures 15 and 16), which was achieved by the replacement of trams with trolley buses, and in 1919 by motor buses. Reading also received a large number of evacuees during WWII (by October 1941 the town was accommodating 25,000 evacuees). In 1941 Reading's population was estimated at 124,000, and this had reduced to 114,196 in 1951.
- 3.29 Despite the pressures of wartime and post-war rationing, the well-established Victorian department stores and independent shops and industries continued to operate following World War II. However, in the post-war period emphasis on industry and manufacturing slowly changed across the UK. In 1969 Reading-based Huntley & Palmers merged with the other major English biscuit makers, Peek Frean and Jacobs, to form Associated Biscuits. The associated massive biscuit tin making factory of Huntley, Boorne & Stevens moved to Woodley between 1967-69 and biscuit production in Reading ceased in 1976. Simonds merged with Courage and moved their brewery to Worton Grange in 1973. Suttons Seeds transferred to Torquay in 1974. Colliers brickmakers also continued to produce bricks until 1966. Gradually, Victorian factories were replaced by offices as a new economy evolved and UK-wide and international brands became established, while hospitality became ever more important to the town's economy.
- 3.30 Council house provision continued between 1945 and 1955, contributing to housing in Tilehurst, Calcot, Southcote and Emmer Green. Again, public transport was extended to serve these new areas through the provision of trolley buses and motor buses.

Figure 15. First Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map of the Town Centre XXXVII.3 Surveyed: 1875, Published: 1879 (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland). Character areas outlined in red.



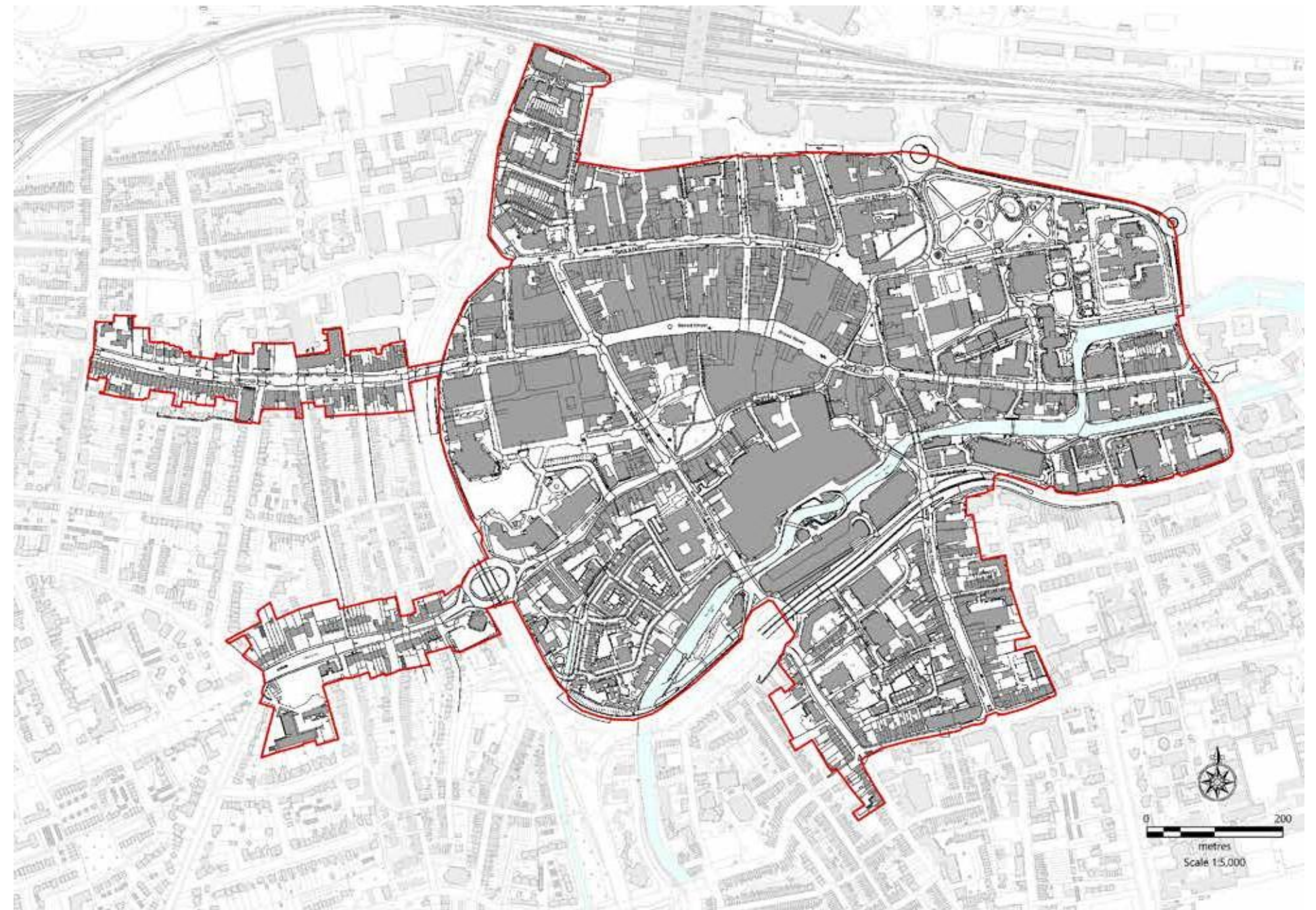
- 3.31 As Reading's industrial heyday passed in the 1970s, there was an economic shift towards attracting high tech, commercial and insurance companies based on Reading's status as a major transport hub. Retail also grew at this time and pressure for housing grew. Some council estates were built to the south and west, including Dee Park. Residential tower blocks formed part of the response to continued pressure for housing. The 1961 census records 119,937 inhabitants, with a further increase in 1971 to 132,939. Gradual redevelopment of Newtown included flats and houses some with an attractive riverside location. Subsequent records of a reduction in population levels within Reading may relate to the extension beyond the borough boundaries to include the Reading Travel to WorkArea. Population growth is noted again from 2001, by which time it had reached 143,096, increasing further to 155,698 in 2011. Migration played a role, increasing the ethnic diversity within local communities. This is particularly marked within the study area along Oxford Road which is noted as a place to buy a wide range of foodstuffs from around the world.
- 3.32 The 'slum clearance' and subsequent redevelopment of the north western end of St. Mary's Butts and southern side of the eastern extreme of Oxford Road to form the Butts Centre in 1972 was a response to the continuing growth of the retail sector and ambitions for Reading to become a retail centre, and this became part of a wider redevelopment within this part of Reading. The Heelas rear retail extension (1979-1985) also responded to the need for a large retail offering.
- 3.33 As industry dwindled in the mid-late 20th century in the centre of Reading (as elsewhere), the Yield Hall car park was created. At the turn of 21st century, the nature and quantum of retail square footage in the town was further extended by a major shopping mall and leisure centre known as the Oracle (completed in 1999 and opened in 2000), which has proved a strong attraction to visitors and residents alike. The layout for the Oracle incorporated the Kennet, which reflects the change in use of the canal and river to leisure and pleasure. The trend towards leisure experience is now evolving into a wider experiential retail appeal within Broad Street Mall and the appeal of Reading as a cultural centre is also becoming recognised through work in promoting Reading Abbey, Museum and Art Gallery, among other attractions.

Figure 16. Second Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map of the Town Centre Berkshire XXXVII.3 Revised: 1931, Published: 1934
(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland) Character areas outlined in red.



- 3.34 Traffic congestion and pollution were identified in many urban areas in the UK, likewise in Reading. To address this, the Traffic in Towns Report 1960-3 provided some recommendations and proved influential during the master planning of the redevelopment of Reading (Figure 17). The Inner Distribution Road (IDR) was based on this report, and was designed by Sir Robert Matthew and Sir Stirrat Johnson-Marshall of RMJM Architects. Many historic streets were demolished to make way for the construction of the IDR, which was opened in 1969 and completed in 1989. Funds were raised in the intervening period and a less destructive route was agreed upon. The north-south section of the IDR now forms part of the A329. The M4 reached the outskirts of Reading in 1971, and today connects with the A329/IDR via the A33 (the latter was extended to meet the A329 in post-2000). RMJM Architects were also selected by the local authority to rebuild large swathes of the town centre; their concepts were presented in The New Heart of Reading Brochure in 1976. Many of their concepts were not implemented but the Civic Precinct was realised by RMJM Architects and connected into the IDR. The Civic Precinct consisted of the Civic Centre (1971-6), Hexagon (1974-7), Magistrates Court (1968) and Police Headquarters (1976). Historic streets were also demolished to make way for the Civic Precinct, again resulting in loss of street plot patterns, historic street names and finer grain to create space to agglomerate plots into larger parcels and build developments with large floorplates.
- 3.35 The construction of office blocks on large floorplates continued with demand for places of work for white collar employment and companies migrating here from London. Early examples include the extensions to Simonds Bank on King Street and the run of office frontages in Market Place. This trend had continued into the 21st century. However, the change in working practices post-Covid 19 pandemic may alter this trend.

Figure 17. Map of town centre of Reading (2021) with study area outlined in red.



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4. Pattern of Existing Built Form

Site Coverage, Grain and Scale

- 4.1 The map below (Figure 18) illustrates the approximate site coverage and finer or coarser grain of the built environment within the study area. Site Coverage refers to the proportion of land that is developed within each land parcel or ownership.
- 4.2 The highest site coverage within the study area corresponds with buildings that have large-scale floor plates. The sites are:
- Broad Street Mall complex, Police Headquarters and Magistrates' Courts (the adjacent open space is due for redevelopment);
 - Mclroys Department Store and former Primark shop, which were extended and amalgamated; and
 - the Oracle Shopping Centre on Broad Street that extends across Minster Street down to the river front and the associated car park and cinema on the other side of the river.
- 4.3 The Broad Street Mall complex, Police Headquarters and Magistrates' Courts are examples of the amalgamation of sites into large plots for large floorplate developments located within raised circulation decks, which were constructed after the demolition of streets that once had plot patterns and finer grain similar to the surrounding historic streets of St Mary's Butts, Castle Street and Gun Street. The original rear plots have been infilled over the centuries though historic plot boundaries are decipherable here. In contrast, the site coverage and grain of the modern riverside residential and modern residential courtyards to the south of Castle Street are associated with larger footprints and higher densities (habitable rooms per hectare) within cul-de-sac layouts. The offices, hotels and the riverside apartments south of Fobney Street are of higher densities though they benefit from the space provided by the riverside location.
- 4.4 A mix is also noted along Broad Street and Friar Street. Fine grain plots are in evidence on the frontages, though many plots have been amalgamated when extended to the rear. The infill of former rear courtyards with buildings of medium-scale floor plates has resulted in the loss of historic plot boundaries, which has occurred within the majority of plots to the north of Broad and Friar Streets. However, open space within rear plots is utilised, some of which are historic yards. Surviving lanes continue to provide ease of access between streets. The typical site coverage of the built environment drops slightly around Garrard Street and Blagrove Street, which is an area that also has buildings of medium-scale floor plates.
- 4.5 Beyond these areas of high site coverage the pattern becomes more mixed. Typical site coverage decreases slightly in the commercial and civic areas surrounding Abbey Square and to the east of Market Place. Here buildings with large and extended footprints were designed with more surrounding space. Spaciousness increases at Forbury Gardens, Reading Abbey Ruins and areas adjacent to the River Kennet, providing low-density open spaces.
- 4.6 The easternmost portion of the study area is represented by areas of both low and high site coverage. These buildings also become taller progressing eastwards along King's Road. The mixed-use commercial and residential area surrounding King's Road consists of blocks typically of high site coverage. The areas directly north of Queen's Road also follow this pattern e.g. the Queen's Road Car Park and the residential blocks. The areas surrounding the river and finer grain Victorian and early 20th century residential terraces are typically lower in site coverage.
- 4.7 Equally mixed though comparatively lower typical site coverage is in evidence to the west of Greyfriars Road. Finer grain Victorian and early 20th century residential terraces, with more open space to the rear, are located on the side streets while modern blocks are being developed along the main axis road. This pattern continues opposite, west of the IDR, where large scale buildings are mixed with smaller buildings. The open space within these plots varies and no longer reflects the historic layout of buildings on the street frontage and rear garden or courtyards to the rear. Typical site coverage drops considerably to the west and south of the study area, along Oxford Road, Castle Hill, London Street and Southampton Street, where Victorian terraces occupy many smaller, residential plots. Fine grain, mixed-use commercial and residential buildings predominate along Southampton and London Streets, though redevelopment has led to residential blocks occupying land that had once been terraces or open space.
- 4.8 Within areas of typically lower site coverage, gardens provide openness and some have surviving elements of the long, narrow layout typical of historic plots. Long, narrow plots are most clearly in evidence along the southern side of the western end of Castle Street. Terraces with gardens are noted along Castle Hill, Blake's Cottages and Queen's Cottages.

Figure 18. Site Coverage, Grain and Scale



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Building Heights

- 4.9 The plotting of building heights within the study area is based on the number of storeys and basements, rather than height in metres (Figure 19). While the latter would provide accurate height above sea level, this data was unavailable for buildings of traditional height. Therefore, the number of storeys is used as it provides a relative indication of difference in height between lower and taller structures and is based on careful estimation rather than exact measurement; this adds to the understanding of the built environment. The colour-coding defaults to the highest number of storeys for each property, which is of particular note for buildings that consist of elements that were constructed at differing height levels and numbers of storeys.
- 4.10 Building height often corresponds to land value and commercial pressure, in the past and at present. Generally, taller historic buildings are located in areas associated with greater levels of commercial, industrial or financial enterprise or to express civic distinction, particularly in Victorian times. More recently, the provision of tall buildings has reflected Reading Borough Council's (RBC) policy approach as initially set out in the Tall Buildings Strategy and Local Plan.
- 4.11 The historic buildings and the majority of modern buildings within the town centre are predominantly two-storey to five-storey structures. This indicates protection of the historic environment from overly prominent structures, which is noteworthy. However, many factors, such as scale, massing and proximity are also important and a contextual study of the way modern buildings alter the setting of Reading's historic environment would prove enlightening.
- 4.12 The result of modern buildings of similar or slightly taller height in the proximity of historic landmark buildings is that those historic landmark buildings no longer punctuate the skyline from wide vistas. Instead, these landmarks are only appreciable at specific vantage points or within glimpsed views, and instead a number of modern buildings provide wayfinding across the built environment. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to consider securing views of Reading's historic landmarks by the use of finer grain in macro schemes allowing views through gaps and by creating schemes of mixed heights. The protection of such views is particularly important from identified key viewpoints (see Section 6).

Green Spaces

- 4.13 There are few formal green spaces within the centre of Reading, though it benefits from its proximity to the Kennet and Thames (Figure 20). The classifications used in this Figure were based upon those provided by the Ordnance Survey, which were correct at the time that data was downloaded. Forbury Gardens is a designed park, a venue for events and the site of well-known public monuments. There is a relatively hidden formal garden to the south of this, adjacent to Abbots House, which is now gated and locked and is privately owned. Further south adjacent to Reading Abbey an informal grassed area is open to the public and associated with sculptures, known locally as Balls Head. Seats within Reading Abbey allow members of the public the opportunity to rest, on a route around the various paths where a number of information signs and decorative stones from the Abbey enliven the walk.
- 4.14 To the south of Reading Abbey and Reading Gaol is Chestnut Walk, along which chestnut trees form an avenue on the north side of the Kennet. This has sculptures associated with Oscar Wilde in reference to his internment within Reading Gaol and an information sign to aid understanding and wayfinding. Beyond these more formal green spaces there are a number of passive and active green spaces. Active spaces are of sufficient scale to enable people to play games, walk and cycle etc., whereas members of the public can enjoy sitting and viewing scenery or architecture or art within passive spaces.
- 4.15 St Laurence's and Reading Minster churchyards may be described as passive green spaces, containing a number of notable monuments and views of the church and surrounding architecture. The active spaces are riverside walks along the Kennet. Trees are planted along some stretches of riverside paths. Local initiatives are underway to create further ecological and greening enhancements and promotion of these recreational networks.

- 4.16 The Lavender Place Community Gardens near the former Civic Offices¹, to the west of Hosier Street, is a temporary though much appreciated facility. Valuable though often overlooked green spaces consisting of areas of grass, trees and other planting arrangements are located at roundabouts and junctions such as at Castle Hill and adjacent to Greyfriars Church. However, some environments are currently too inhospitable to enjoy due to traffic, as experienced on Forbury Road by Forbury Gardens and King's Road, Queen's Road, adjacent to Bridge Street and south of IDR, on London Road, and on Southampton Street. A limited amount of green space is afforded along the paved river side of the Oracle, along Hosier Street and Queens Walk, and at Chatham Place. Other informal green spaces are difficult to access and may be private land such as that between Yield Hall Place and Duke Street. Many of these informal and often passive spaces could be enhanced to improve the setting of the historic environment.

¹ known locally as Lavender Gardens

Figure 19. Building Heights



Figure 20. Green Space



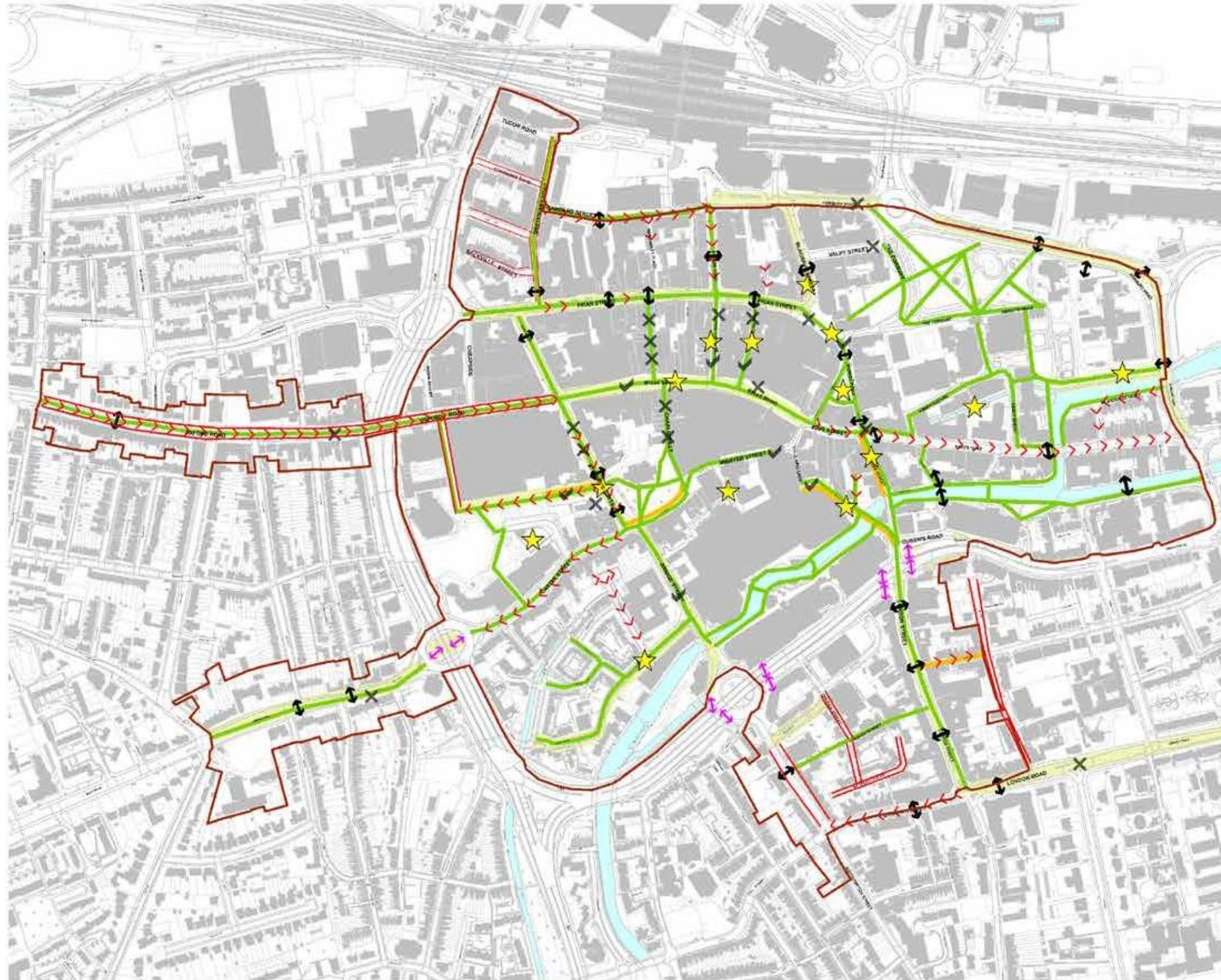
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5. Circulation and Communications

Public Realm

- 5.1 Public realm has an impact on the way historic places are perceived, and therefore the condition of the public realm affects the historic environment (Figure 21). If the public realm is attractive and appropriate it highlights the unique heritage of that area. However, if it is unattractive or inappropriate then it detracts and distracts from the heritage offering in that area. An analogy is to see the public realm as an outdoor ‘living room’ with the buildings around it as the walls, the surfaces as the floor and the street furniture as the furniture. All elements work together to create an attractive environment that encourages users to spend time there. Some streets are associated with positive attributes, such as Broad Street where good public spaces, attractive features and trees and varied surfaces have been recorded within the survey undertaken for this report. This is also true of Queen Victoria Street and Cross Street. However, obstacles and restrictions caused by street furniture and temporary signage on these two streets are problematic, particularly for those with more limited mobility.
- 5.2 The difficulties caused by obstacles or restrictions are increased along narrow streets or alleys such as Union Street and Chain Street. Other streets present a completely different challenge. Many streets have both positive and negative attributes. Along Hosier Street, San-Francisco Libre Walk, Cusden Walk and Dusseldorf Way, for example, tree planting and sculptures make a positive contribution but the pavement surface is in a poor condition as shown by the chevron symbols on Figure 21. Minster Street has been given a recent public realm treatment and the good condition of the surfaces are acknowledged with a tick symbol. However, it is currently infrequently used. There is a distinct lack of active frontages and engaging signage resulting in a street that lacks atmosphere and attraction and no reason to go there: currently it is just a route through. It also has the potential to utilise areas as good public spaces with useful bus links. Some streets were identified as having mainly negative attributes, such as Oxford Road where the pavement surfaces are in poor condition, there are obstacles and restrictions in the way of pedestrians and the survey identified a need for more crossings. King’s Road is another example of a key access route into the town, to the river and walking routes, which is in poor condition and has few crossing points. One area with exceptionally good pedestrian links is recorded around Reading Abbey, which also benefits from public spaces and attractive features. However, access is limited by a need for crossings along key routes to this location.
- 5.3 On other streets a mixture of positive and negative attributes has been identified. Along St Mary’s Butts, attractive features such as the Victorian fountain and the mix of historic shops are not as easily appreciated when contrasted with the poor condition of the surfaces and the many bus stops and other obstacles in pedestrians’ way. A need for crossings has also been identified here, particularly where good pedestrian links connect with the street.
- 5.4 The character of St Mary’s Butts and Gun Street continues along Castle Street, where historic buildings become more regular in architectural style progressing westwards. However, the narrowness of the pavement at the junction with St Mary’s Butts, and condition of the road surfaces, detract from the historic environment. Due to these distracting features within the public realm it is difficult to appreciate the story of the historic growth of Reading at this location, which would otherwise be readily appreciable through good signage and ease of access.
- 5.5 The existing pedestrian links north-south from Castle Street are not obvious and requires local knowledge. From here it is possible for pedestrians to access the river to the south and the western side of the shopping area to the north.
- 5.6 One issue shared by many historic streets is that of extremely narrow pavements. A number have been identified, particularly Gun Street, South Street and Duke Street; the path around Jackson’s Corner is also relatively narrow, with bus shelters forming obstacles along the path. Though Yield Hall Lane has been modernised parts of it are associated with narrow pavements resulting in reduced accessibility.
- 5.7 A major barrier to appreciating London Street and Southampton Street is the gyratory system on those streets that links to the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), which cuts off the north part of London Street and Southampton Street from Bridge Street. The major junctions at the northern end of each of these streets creates a physical and visual barrier that discourages exploration. Yet exploring these streets is key to understanding Reading’s development. London Street and Southampton Street represent inner Pre-Victorian suburban growth, which began in Medieval times and directly linked to the twin markets by Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin and the Abbey. A number of Medieval timber-framed buildings on London Street are intermixed with 18th century and early 19th century buildings, Victorian infill and modern development. There is a historic route from London Street through to Southampton Street, in the form of Church Street, which is relatively hidden. Ease of access is also improved with a north-south route from St Giles Close to Mill Lane via Letcombe Street.
- 5.8 This study also highlights issues with a number of other streets and solutions for meeting modern needs whilst integrating with the traditional appearance and character of the historic environment will be addressed within Part C of this report. This work needs to be carried out sensitively to protect the distinctiveness of each historic area in Reading.

Figure 21. Public Realm



Public Realm Along Streets and Paths

- ✓ Good Public Spaces
- ★ Positive Elements (e.g. furniture or sculptures) along streets or footways
- ↔ Potential New Crossings
- ↔ Need for Improved Crossings
- × Obstacles or Restrictions such as Street Furniture
- Good Pedestrian Links and paths along Kennet
- Narrow Footway
- Trees or Varied Surfaces
- >>> Carriageway in Poor Condition
- Footway in Poor Condition

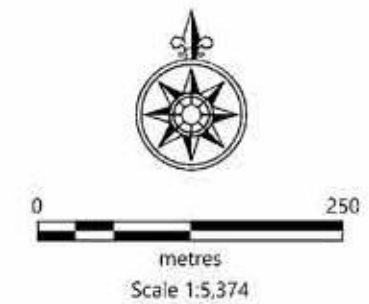
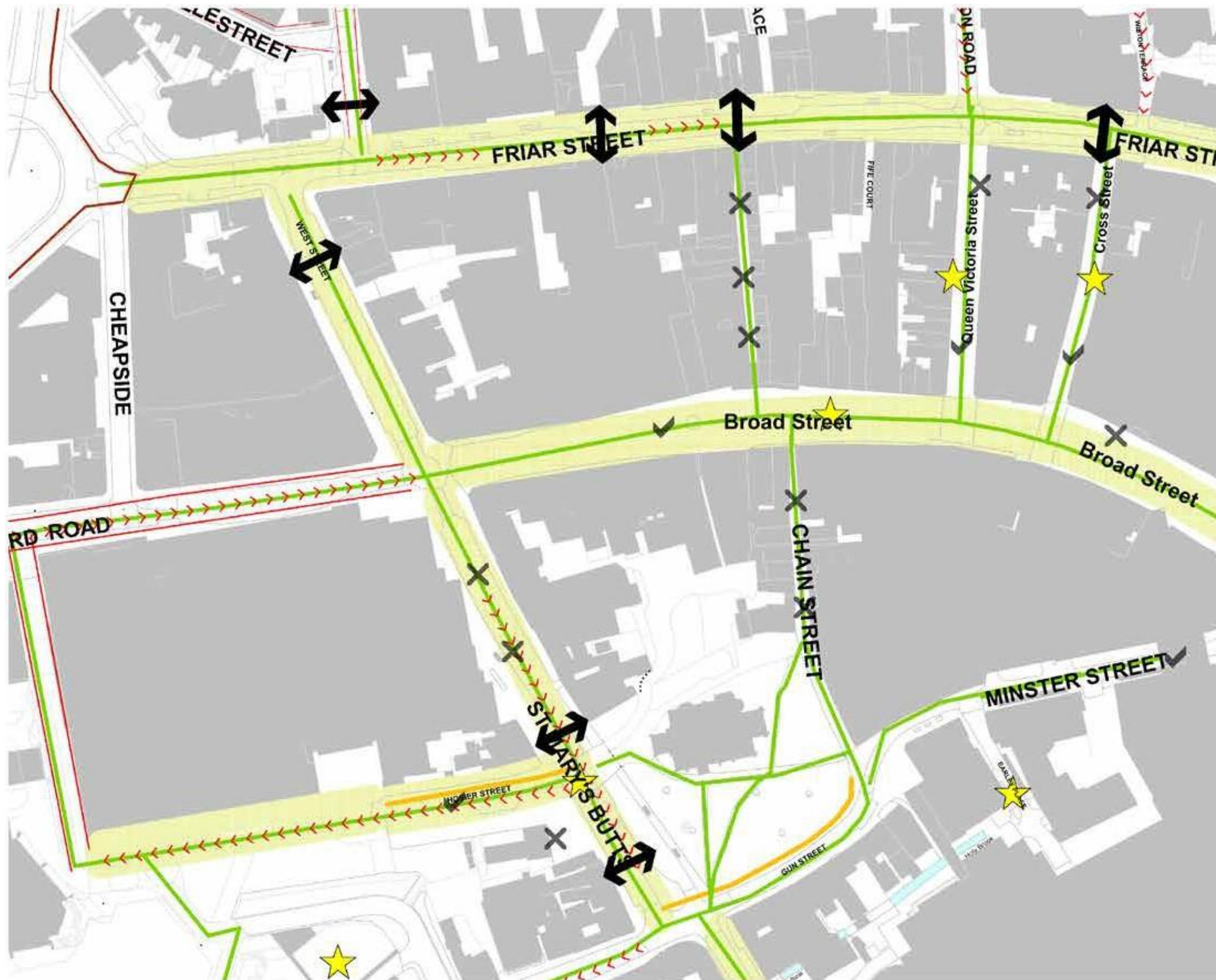


Figure 21a. Public Realm (Zoomed View)



Public Realm Along Streets and Paths

- ✓ Good Public Spaces
- ★ Positive Elements (e.g. furniture or sculptures) along streets or footways
- ↔ Potential New Crossings
- ↔ Need for Improved Crossings
- ✗ Obstacles or Restrictions such as Street Furniture
- Good Pedestrian Links and paths along Kennet
- Narrow Footway
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- >>> Carriageway in Poor Condition
- Footway in Poor Condition

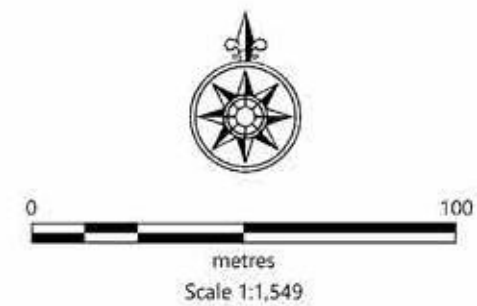
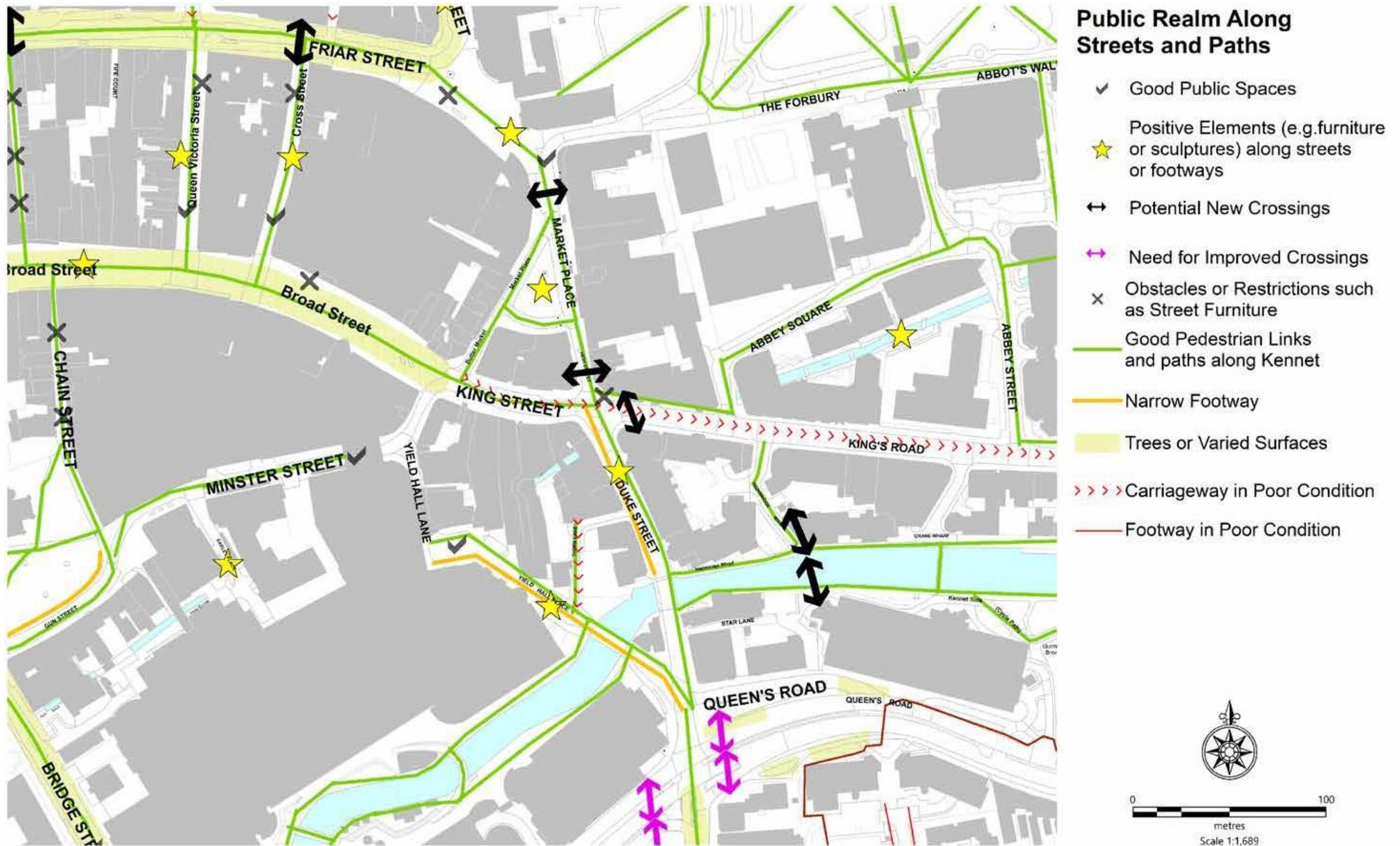


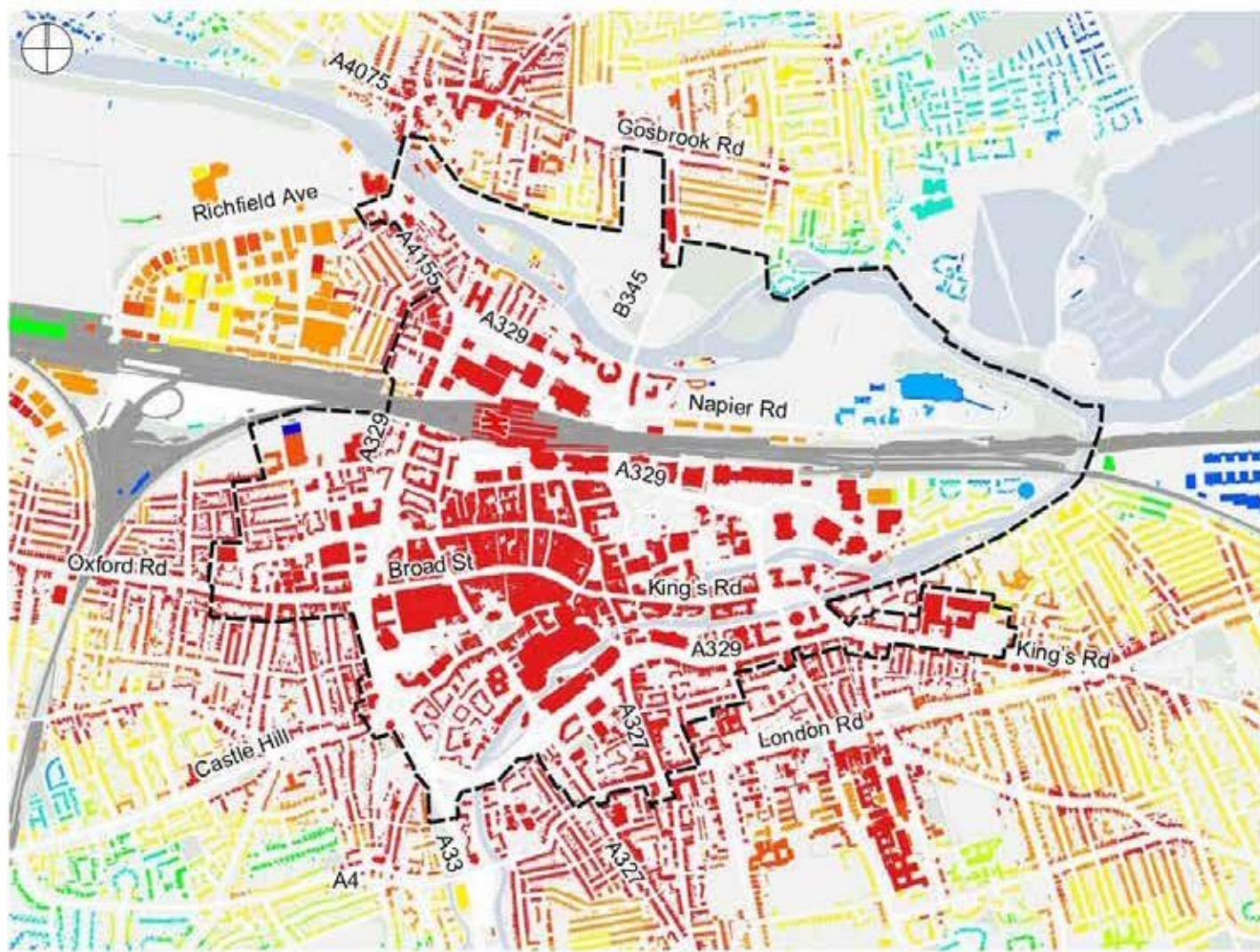
Figure 21b. Public Realm (Zoomed View)



Walkability and Footfall

- 5.9 Urban Place Lab have been commissioned to undertake the Town Centre Strategy and their draft includes an assessment of movement in and around Reading, key to people's ability to appreciate the historic environment. One aspect of this analysis is assessing how easy it currently is to walk around central Reading, referred to as 'walkability' (see Figure 22). Characteristics that enable walkability are an identifiable centre, good public spaces, facilities close enough for residents to walk to and from and streets that are pedestrian-friendly. A high walkability standard (i.e. good accessibility on foot) is beneficial to health and the environment and improves the popularity of places with visitors, whilst walking is less expensive than driving. Studies indicate that Reading has a high walkability standard that is consistent with national competitors. However, convoluted routes and physical barriers such as major dual carriageway junctions, waterways and railway lines can inhibit walkability.
- 5.10 The areas coloured in red on Figure 22 indicate areas that are easy to walk around, and to and from. This includes the majority of central Reading and beyond the IDR. More convoluted routes are experienced beyond the central area shown on the figure in yellow.
- 5.11 Complimentary to that study, Reading UK Business Improvement District (Reading UK BID) kindly shared the footfall counting data they have gathered as part of their monitoring of indicators to assess economic trends (Figure 23). Footfall counting enables analysis of how people use spaces and shops. Data has been recorded at two points either end of Broad Street: at the eastern end at 61-64 Broad Street shown in orange; and at the western end at 12 Broad Street shown in blue.
- 5.12 The daily footfall data from 1st December 2015 through to 28th July 2021 is shown on Figure 23, from which two clear trends are identifiable. There was a notable drop in footfall during the lockdown period. Interestingly it also shows there was greater footfall at the western end up until the middle of April 2021 when lockdown eased off (shown in blue), since when there has been greater footfall at the eastern end of Broad Street (shown on orange).
- 5.13 High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) is also utilising this form of data collection through Ellandi. Long term trends recorded between June 2017 and June 2021 indicate a fall in total annual visits to Reading of over 50%. The average dwell time, which is time spent in the same area for a period of time, also decreased by 32%. In June 2017 the dwell time was approximately 4 hours, but by June 2021 it had reduced to approximately 2 hours. There is a corresponding reduction in the number of places visited.
- 5.14 Footfall has also been recorded for the HSHAZ Project and will be published in a report entitled *HSHAZ Zones, Footfall Monitoring Captured Data Within Four Areas Between June 2020 and June 2021: Abbey Quarter; St Mary's Butts; Oxford Road; and Market Place/London Street*. The data referred to here was produced in the Visitors Insights Report footfall analysis for the Reading HSHAZ project and is currently unpublished. The greatest number of visits recorded are along Market Place and London Street. A relatively high number are recorded around the Abbey Quarter and Oxford Road. The number of visits around St Mary's Butts is comparatively low, approximately half that recorded within the Abbey Quarter and Oxford Road areas.

Figure 22. Analysis of Current Walkability by Space Syntax Limited © 2021



- Generally high walkability standard in the centre; consistent with national comparators
- Some drop offs in walkability where routes are convoluted or severed around railway tracks and major roads
- Improved connections and crossings have the potential to bring high levels of walkability further out into areas surrounding the city centre
- Increased route strength from improved connections, combined with increases in density, will improve the potential for diverse land uses, which can in turn further strengthen walkability

Walkability
 The sum of the ratios between the number of land uses of a specified category within 15min walking divided by the distance to the closest one of these land uses.

high
 low

Reading railway station
 Central Reading inset boundary

Space Syntax Limited © 2021
 Reading Town Centre Walkability Reading Borough Council

Baseline report Draft 01

Figure 23. Footfall Data Along Broad Street

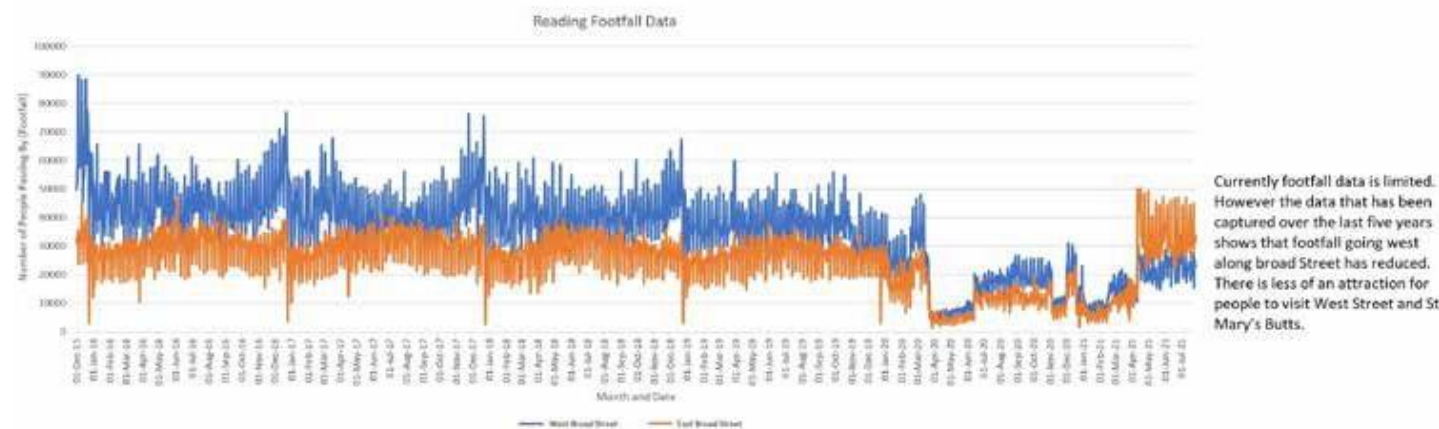
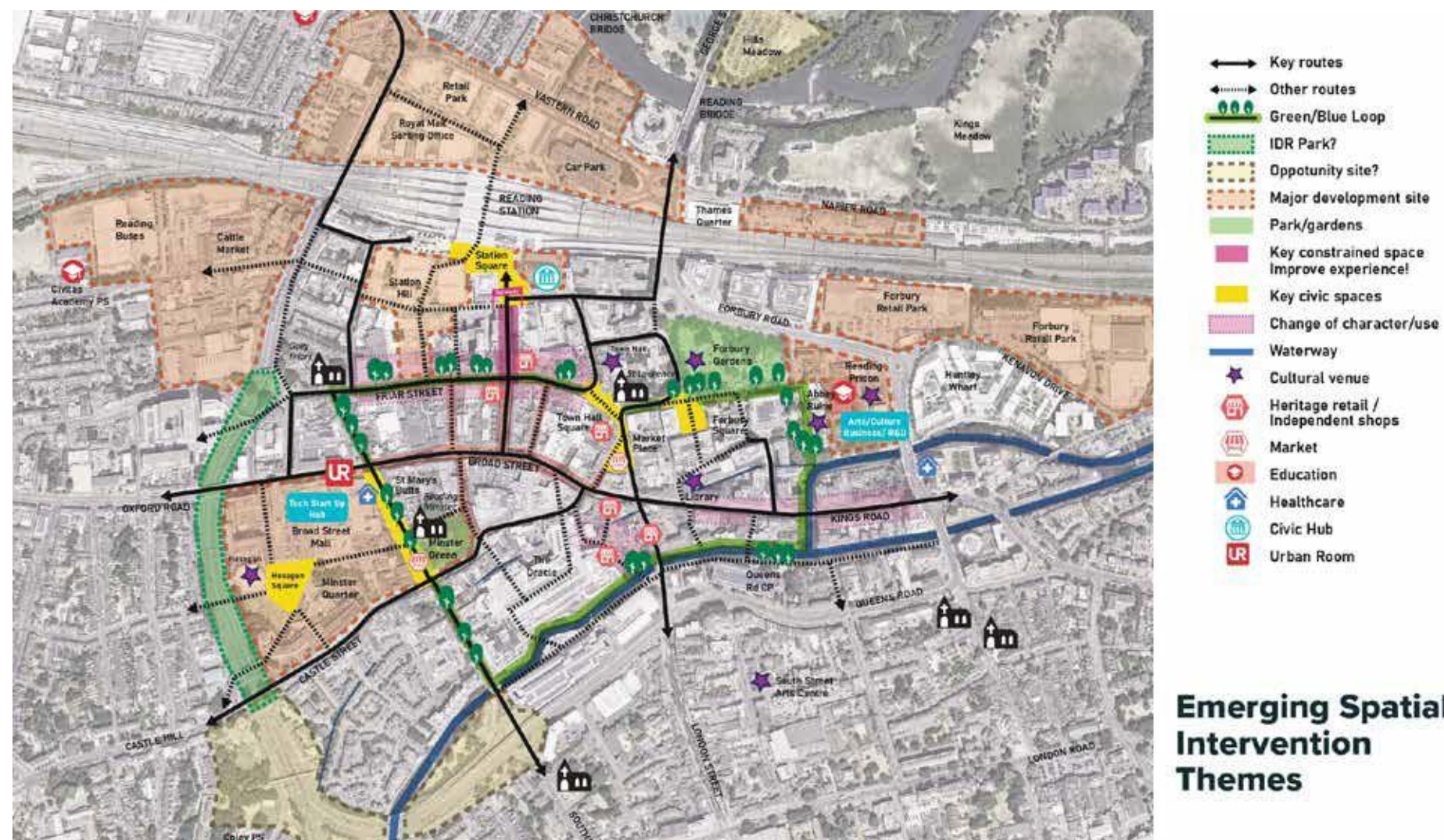


Figure 24. Draft Emerging Spatial Intervention Themes © Urban Place Lab 2021

Key Routes and Cultural and Heritage Attractions

5.15 Urban Place Lab are also assessing vehicle movement and the road system, assessing ways of improving connectivity through and around Reading. Figure 24 is an image that superimposes their draft emerging key routes linking cultural venues, heritage retail/independent shops and churches. Many of Reading's churches are located on key routes and are landmarks with noteworthy towers and spires. However, the majority of cultural heritage venues are located nearby but are less obvious, and these require some wayfinding effort. The wayfinding around the new Abbey Quarter has proved effective. The cultural heritage venues identified within the Urban Place Lab research are also located in the Historic Area Assessment study area; these are Reading Museum and Town Hall, Forbury Gardens, Reading Gaol and Reading Abbey ruins. Other sites include The Riverside Museum and Kennet & Avon Canal, and The Hexagon venue, and outside the Historic Area Assessment study area to South Street Arts Centre and The Museum of English Rural Life.

5.16 'Heritage retail' and independent shops are also identified within the Town Centre Strategy. On the figure supplied by Urban Place Lab, these are predominantly located at Queen Victoria Street, the Harris Arcade, Market Place, Duke Street and the northern end of London Street, King Street and Yield Hall Lane. There are a number of other streets associated with a high number of historic retail shops yet to be identified in this study, which signifies that more work needs to be done in making our heritage retail offer more apparent. Some examples of other streets that include a high number of historic shopfronts include London Street, Oxford Road and Castle Street.



Emerging Spatial Intervention Themes

6. Views

Previously Recorded Views

- 6.1 A large number of views are recorded within the street level record. Those street level records often matched those views recorded in the adopted Conservation Area Appraisals and Market Place & London Street Conservation Area Appraisal Consultation Draft. During the process of selecting the most important views, a series of other sources were referenced and views selected as they pertain to the study area. Views recorded in Figure 25 also include those protected under the Local Plan (2019) Policy EN5, and the Reading Tall Building Strategy updated in 2018. Views within the Reading Station Area Framework were also reviewed and included in Figure 25 where relevant
- 6.2 An overlap between views within the updated Tall Building Strategy and a number of views within the Conservation Area Appraisals have been identified: namely Viewpoints B, C, I, J and M in the Tall Building Strategy. These views along with the other views in the Conservation Area Appraisals have been captured in the Visual Containment Figures in Part B of this report.
- 6.3 Viewpoints within the updated Tall Building Strategy that have been included in Figure 25 are -
- Viewpoint F: From Forbury Gardens towards Abbey Gate
 - Viewpoint G: View along Queen Victoria Street towards John Lewis building
 - Viewpoint H: View along Kennet and Avon Canal towards Blake Cottages
 - Viewpoint K: View along West Street to Greyfriars Church
 - Viewpoint L: View along Watlington Street to the twin spires of St. John's and the Methodist Church
 - Viewpoint O: View from Kenavon Drive towards Reading Gaol
- 6.4 View 2, protected under Policy EN5 also pertains to the wider Study Area and is included in Figure 25. It is a view north along Southampton St from Whitley St towards St Giles Church, Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin and Greyfriars Church.
- 6.5 An overlap between views within the updated Tall Building Strategy and a number of views within the Conservation Area Appraisals have been identified: namely Viewpoints B, C, I, J and M in the Tall Building Strategy. These views along with the other

views in the Conservation Area Appraisals have been captured in the Visual Containment Figures in Part B of this report and are not shown on Figure 25. The key views within the existing affected conservation areas are set out in the following locations: Page 29 of the St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal, Page 27 of the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area Appraisal, and Page 25 of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal.

- 6.6 Views 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 51, 53, 54, 55, and 60 from the Reading Station Area Framework have also been added to the figure.

Long Views

- 6.7 Long views are recorded in orange on Figure 25:
- Long views towards Greyfriars Church along Bridge Street, St Mary's Butts and West Street
 - Long views towards St Giles Church along St Mary's Butts and Bridge Street
 - Long views from the western part of Castle Street over the IDR to the eastern part of Castle Street and turning back to look in the opposite direction [View 37]
 - Long views along the southern portion of the IDR, travelling east and west
 - Long views along Oxford Road
 - London Street

Key Viewing Locations

- 6.8 Views to promote are captured in purple on Figure 25:
- Reading Abbey and Reading Gaol from Blakes Cottages, Abbots Walk and Forbury Gardens
 - Town Hall and other Victorian Civic Precinct from Market Place, Blagrove Street and Forbury Gardens
 - Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin from Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way
- 6.9 Additional views of historic landmarks and architecture are captured in Market Place and London Street Conservation Area Appraisal update and St Mary's Butts/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal.

Evolving and Kinetic Views

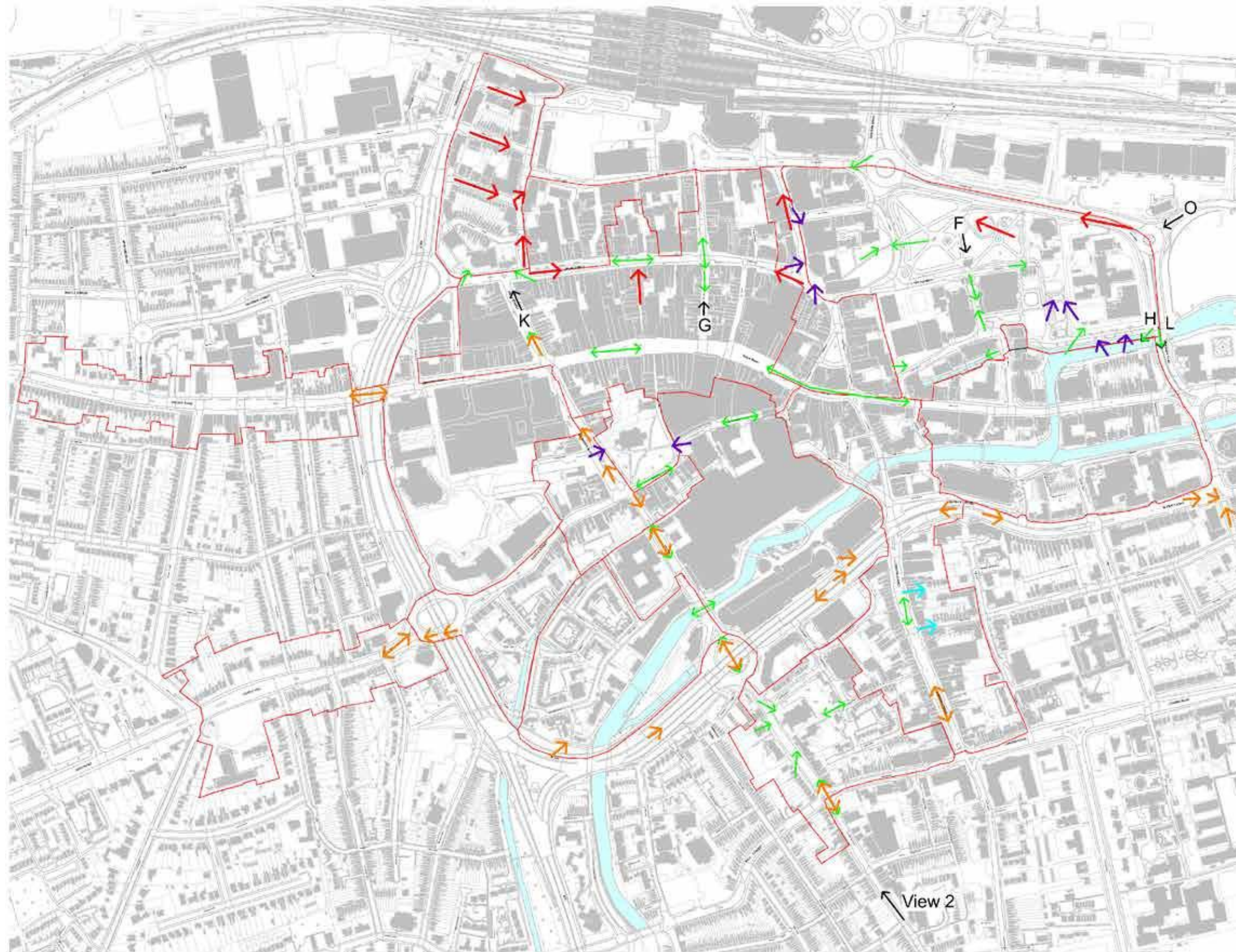
- 6.10 Views, associated strong visual links, which have not been previously recorded in the Conservation Area Appraisals and Market Place and London Street Conservation Area Appraisal update are recorded in magenta on Figure 25:

- Broad Street
- Friar Street
- Station Road
- Around Reading Abbey
- King Street
- Queen Victoria Street
- Southampton Street [North End]
- London Street
- Gun Street

Additional Glimpsed Views

- 6.11 These are views are captured in blue on Figure 25:
- along South Street from London Street A327
 - along London Court from London Street A327
 - Merchant's Place
 - Union Street
 - Fife Court
 - Wiston Terrace
 - Chain Street
 - the eastern end of Church Street

Figure 25. Key Views Not Identified Elsewhere in HAA



Key Views Not Identified Elsewhere In HAA

F G H Selected views from the
K L O Tall Buildings Strategy

View 2 Relates to Local Plan
Policy EN5

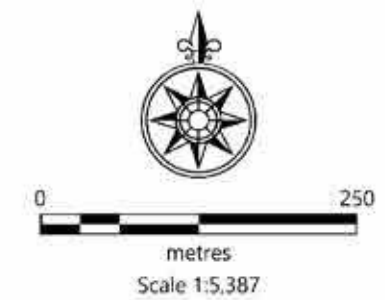
→ Key viewing locations

→ Long view

→ Evolving and kinetic views

→ Additional glimpsed views

→ Relates to Reading Station
Area Framework



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7. Historic Environment

Conservation Area

- 7.1 There are currently fifteen Conservation Areas within the Reading BC boundary and three overlap with the study area (Figure 26). Each conservation area has its own unique character and appearance, and within each any areas of different character are identified as part of the designation. Each character area contributes to the understanding of the historic and architectural development within each conservation area.
- 7.2 The designation of conservation areas was first legislated under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and integrated into the planning system by the 1968 and 1971 Town & Country Planning Acts. Designation, review of boundaries, proposed enhancements and the requirement for any development within the area to conserve or enhance their special architectural or historical interest, is now in legislation in Sections 69 to 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990.
- 7.3 Proposals for the demolition of most buildings and structures within conservation areas require planning permission, while work to trees requires prior notification to the council (and potentially permission as relevant)¹. Even minor works under permitted development rights can affect a whole area. To ensure this does not happen, Article 4 directions may be introduced within Conservation Areas to restrict 'permitted development rights' for specified alterations. Article 4 Directions can protect key features such as shop frontages, doors and windows. Restrictions may also apply to wall cladding, dormer windows, satellite dishes, equipment on exterior walls and solar panels.
- 7.4 Design guides, such as the forthcoming shopfront guide, and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are helpful in demonstrating the types of architectural features that can be installed. Important views, landmarks, open spaces and landscapes can be protected in the same way.
- 7.5 Ideally every Conservation Area should have an up-to-date appraisal outlining the special interest of the conservation area, its historical development, character and appearance including landmarks/focal buildings, relative contributors within the conservation area etc. In addition, an up-to-date appraisal should include a management plan to ensure change is actively managed and enhancements are delivered wherever possible. Absence of such documents can lead to unsympathetic development being more difficult to resist.

Listed Buildings and Registered Parks and Gardens

- 7.6 Listed buildings are protected in accordance with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990 (Figure 26). There are three levels of designation: Grade I is reserved for the most important buildings in the UK; Grade II* buildings are the next most important; and the Grade II category represents the majority of listed buildings in the UK. Some buildings are Scheduled. Legal protection for these statutorily listed buildings includes the frontage, usually described in list entry summaries, as well as the whole property including the interior, later alterations and extensions. Protection is also potentially afforded to buildings constructed before 1948 within the curtilage of listed buildings, depending on the facts of each case.
- 7.7 Any works of demolition or works of alteration or extension that affect the character of the building as a building of special architectural or historic interest require listed building consent². Demolition and alterations that materially affect the external appearance of the building may require planning permission depending on permitted development rights.
- 7.8 Registered Parks and Gardens are protected under The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 and are graded in the same way as listed buildings are - I, II* and II. There is one Registered Park and Garden within the study area (Figure 26), Forbury Gardens, which is designated at Grade II. Planning permission is required for work to designated areas of the RPG³.

Scheduled Monuments

- 7.9 Scheduled Monuments (SMs) are protected under the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act through requirements for investigation, preservation and recording of such remains (Figure 26). Section 61(12) defines sites that warrant protection due to their national importance. There are two Scheduled Monuments in Reading (Figure 26), High Bridge and Reading Abbey. The designation for Reading Abbey includes the former mills on the Holy Brook, hospitium and stables.
- 7.10 With investment and promotion, Reading Abbey has become a heritage attraction that captures the imagination. The Abbey itself, its association with King Henry I and the history of its dissolution imbues the site with a strong sense of place. The heritage of Reading Gaol, built within the former Abbey grounds, adds to the fascination. The Gaol's associations with famous detainees, implementation of a new 'correction system' and Banksy's recent art are becoming ever more appreciated. Together these sites illustrate the time-depth of history within Reading, and unsurprisingly are carefully protected.
- 7.11 There is a presumption against development within or near a SM, where preservation *in situ* by design may be considered an alternative option. Works to a SM requires Scheduled Monument Consent from The Secretary of State (administered by Historic England). Undertaking works without first obtaining Scheduled Monument Consent is illegal, unless informally authorised by Historic England as *de minimis* or like-for-like works. Some Scheduled Monuments are also listed, in which case Listed Building Consent may also be needed. Undertaking works that affect the character of a listed building without first obtaining Listed Building Consent is also illegal, unless informally authorised by the local planning authority as *de minimis* or like-for-like works. Planning permission may also be needed depending on the nature of the works. This study has concluded that no alteration to Scheduled Monuments boundaries is needed, and that no additional buildings/structures, ruins, etc. should be considered for designation as new scheduled monuments.

¹ To undertake work in a conservation area, without planning permission where that permission is required is a criminal offence.

² Making changes to a listed property without listed building consent (where applicable) is a criminal offence.

³ Advice should be sought as to the requirements for a specific schedule of work.

Archaeology

- 7.12 The Post-medieval development of Reading is well-represented by documentary sources and structures from that period (Figure 27). However, earlier periods of Reading's beginnings and growth are less clearly defined. Evidence may relate to documentary sources and the built environment, with greater reliance on buried archaeological remains to enable interpretation of the Saxon and Medieval development of Reading and activities from earlier periods. The extent of Saxon and Medieval Reading, as they are currently evidenced (Figure 27), needs to be reassessed as new discoveries are made. Such remains are therefore worthy of protection.
- 7.13 Archaeological remains are protected under the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act where such monuments are in the opinion of the Secretary of State of public interest by reason of historic, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest. Unless scheduled or of schedulable quality, buried archaeological remains are non-designated heritage assets. Records of archaeological remains and new discoveries are maintained within the Historic Environment Record (HER). The location of archaeological remains is represented as areas, points and lines (Figure 27).
- 7.14 The curation of the HER and administering and being the investigating authority for archaeological remains in Reading, is the responsibility for Berkshire Archaeology, under contract with Reading Borough Council. Upon receipt of planning applications Berkshire Archaeology will determine what archaeological response is appropriate under the 1979 Act, through a recommendation to the Reading Borough Council's Planning Authority. Protection of archaeology is a material consideration in planning decisions. Areas of potential archaeological importance are shown on RBC's Proposals Maps in the Local Plan. These maps show that the majority of the study area has archaeological potential.

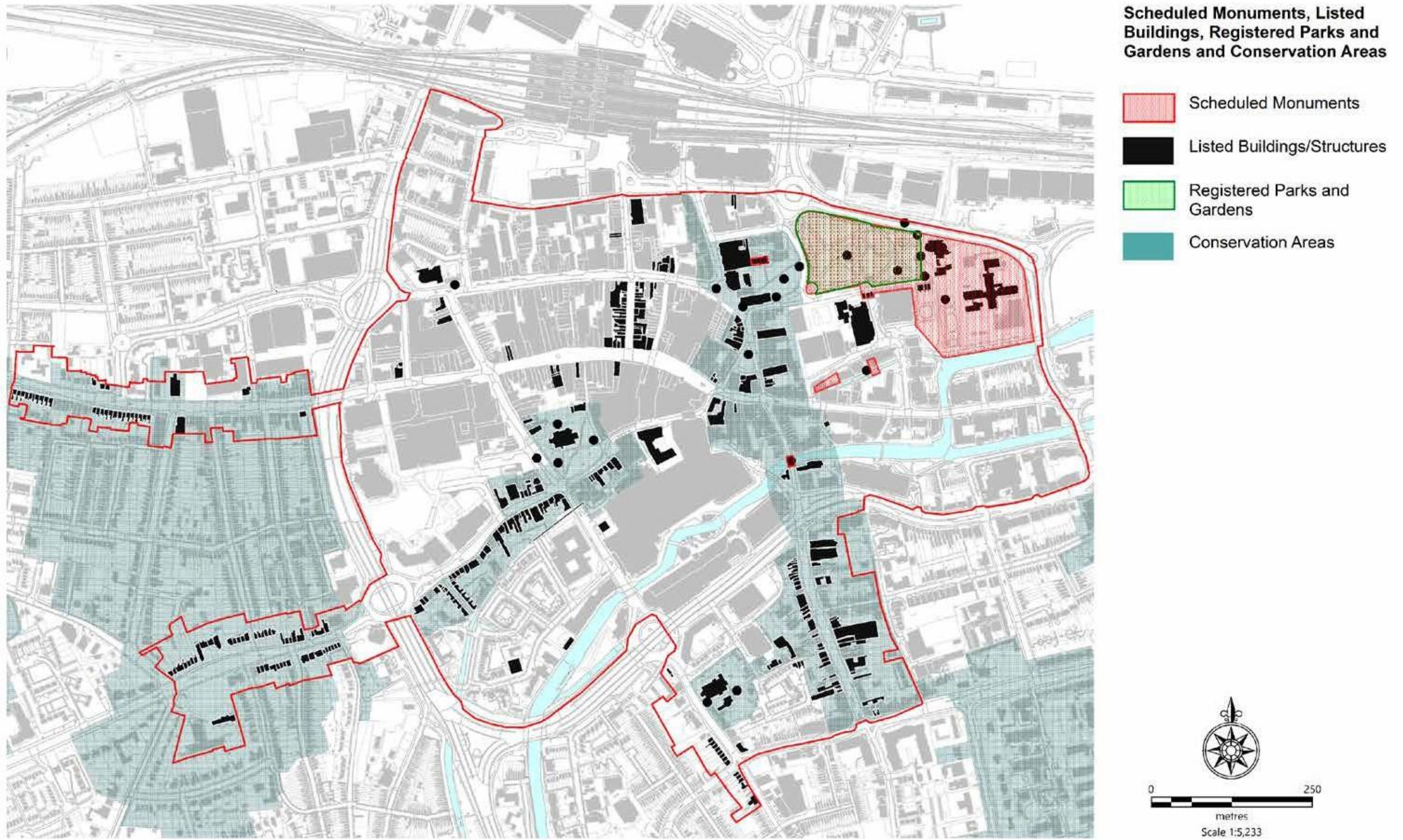
Locally Identified Buildings Making a Positive Contribution

- 7.15 The system RBC utilise in Reading to differentiate between 'locally listed buildings' (LLBs) and 'buildings of townscape merit' (BTMs) relates to their location within or outside a conservation area. Buildings that contribute positively to the historic environment within a conservation area are recorded as BTMs. Whilst buildings that contribute positively to the historic environment outside conservation area boundaries are identified as LLBs. Alterations to LLBs and BTMs are a material consideration in planning decisions. Where existing LLBs and BTMs are present in a character area, a figure ('Map Showing Heritage Designations in Character Area') is included in the relevant character area within part B of this HAA Report.

New Protection for Unlisted Statues, Plaques and Monuments

- 7.16 New safeguards have been put in place to protect statues, plaques and monuments through changes to the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) and with supporting policy at Paragraph 198 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). The stipulation is that they will be 'retained' *in situ* and 'explained'. Removal may be allowed only in exceptional circumstances, which now requires planning permission and/or listed building consent/scheduled monument consent as relevant.

Figure 26. Legal Designations



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Figure 27. Archaeological Data



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Part B

Appraisal of Study Area

8. Methodology for Defining Character Areas and their Boundaries for the Reading Historic Area Assessment

Background

- 8.1 The main source of advice used to determine the character areas, their boundaries and their sub areas is the Historic England *Understanding Place - Historic Area Assessment, HEAG 146* (v1.2 of April 2017). This sets out the following in Section 2 Key Issues:
- 8.2 That the boundaries need to be appropriate for the scope and contextual understanding of the study;
- The relevance of proposed boundaries should be critically examined as underlying landforms or patterns of land ownership may have exerted a more decisive influence on an area's development than any administrative boundaries;
 - The boundaries defining character areas may be clear-cut in some places but soft edged in other cases;
 - Areas do not develop in isolation, and thought should always be given to significant relationships with places and events outside the study area.
- 8.3 The other detailed guidance is found in the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, and for the purposes of this initial division of the town centre into character areas the 'short' version can be applied.

Boundaries of the Study Area

- 8.4 Regardless of the existing conservation areas in the central part of Reading the Study area boundaries were selected on the basis of what can be considered historically and at present to be Reading Town Centre and its immediate Pre-Victorian suburbs¹. More specifically, those suburbs where initial expansion along major trading routes was directly connected to the historic centre.
- 8.5 The key maps for defining what is the centre of Reading and its historic Pre-Victorian inner suburbs, are the Speed Map of 1610 and the early/mid-19th century maps of Coates 1802, Adam 1816, Ordnance Survey 1" to a mile 1830, Weller 1840, the 1842 Post office map and in the Board of Health Survey 1853. Finally, there is an excellent, very detailed Ordnance Survey 25" to a mile map of 1879 (surveyed 1875).

- 8.6 Obvious boundaries are the railway station to the north, and to the west Caversham Bridge Road and the IDR (north-south branch) running south from it. To the east the physical boundary of the dual carriageway Forbury Road, running as it does on the line of the Abbey's Plummery Wall formed a boundary. To the south the IDR (east-west branch) forms another physical boundary. Meeting up as it does with the projection south of Forbury Road along the top of Watlington Street. The separation by modern development of the surviving parts of the early 19th century eastern suburbs led to their exclusion from consideration as part of the town centre study. In the south, however, it was felt that there was a strong case for adding the inner suburb south of the IDR of London Street and Southampton Street because historically they had been part of Reading's Saxon/Medieval development (as relevant), using the west end of London Road and Crown Street as the south boundary. Furthermore, it was felt that Oxford Road and Castle Street/Castle Hill beyond the IDR to the west were early suburbs and should be included to a limited extent, as they were a part of the town from the prior to the early 19th century. In the north the decision was taken to limit the boundary to west to the east edge of Caversham Road, take in the streets between it and Greyfriars Road but exclude the areas of complete redevelopment east of Greyfriars Road and north of Garrard Street on Station Hill/Approach. This meant running to the top of Station Road and then using Blagrove Road and Forbury Road as the north boundary.

Identifying Character Areas

- 8.7 Within the Study Area more detailed assessment was needed to identify individual character areas, and the process above was used to decide on the character areas. Firstly, there were the existing conservation areas, which by their very definition should have included all properties of a defined historic character within their boundaries (accepting that conservation area boundaries are to be reviewed from time to time). These conservation areas are:
- Market Place/London Street Conservation Area;
 - St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area; and
 - Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.

- 8.8 From the historic map analysis, looking at the building plot patterns the rough character area boundaries were considered. These boundaries were then refined after a field walking exercise of the town centre in late May 2021.
- 8.9 The street level and building survey data carried out in June 2021 provided data on each of the streets identified within the study area. This was then used to supplement the initial thoughts on the character areas by using data sorting to identify streets with similar characteristics.
- 8.10 The patterns of rebuilding and uses were important in the central commercial/retail area where the pattern of plots varied from the survival of plots with frontage buildings and side alleys to rear yards as opposed to the modernised sites with blanket development over one or even two or more plots. This meant that in some cases in the central shopping streets character areas spread across streets.
- 8.11 The general rule was that the boundaries of the character areas and the sub-character areas should follow the presently existing boundaries, unless there are overriding reasons for not doing so. A case in point is the complete redevelopment on the south side of Broad Street to Minster Street, where two large floorplate stores and the north entrance of the Oracle Centre go from one side of the block to the other. Here a notional line of the back line of the original Broad Street buildings was used.
- 8.12 Outside the main town centre the Pre-Victorian inner suburb streets were identified as London Street and Southampton Street and Castle Street and Oxford Road. To capture the boundaries as they are now, and in the absence of defining topographical features, the character area took in the present plot boundaries and not the full lengths of the original long plots. It is recognised that the underlying historic character extends beyond the study area. That character evolves and changes, whilst our assessment focused on the growth of the town centre and the initial expansions along major trading routes most directly connected to the historic centre.
- 8.13 Detailed discussion took place during workshops to answer queries about the inclusion and exclusion of specific areas into specific character areas and sub areas.

¹ Please note this differs from the meaning of 'town centre' in policy terms.

Initial Suggested Character Areas Based on the WalkOver of the Town Centre

- 8.14 The town centre walk provided the project team with initial thoughts for the main character areas and how these areas may be studied in more depth as Sub Areas. These are illustrated in Figures for each character area in this part (Part B) of the HAA Report.
- 8.15 Based on the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area, two linear character areas were conceived based on the earliest stages of development along Oxford Road (Character Area 6.1) and Castle Street/Castle Hill (Character Area 6.2).
- 8.16 In the south part of the study area, the linear Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area, the boundary included Southampton Street and London Street to enable assessment of these early inner suburbs. Historically these were linked with Crown Street and, over time, the link road (today known as Church Street) between Southampton Street and London Street slowly developed over time (Character Areas 5.1 and 5.2).
- 8.17 The St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area was another obvious character area, but with the proviso that the boundaries needing review and the Minster Quarter Area should be considered (Character Areas 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3).
- 8.18 To the north east the work already done for Reading Abbey Revealed Conservation Plan (2016) provided justified much of this area as an appropriate character area (Character Areas 2.1 and 2.2).
- 8.19 The area north of the River Kennet (Character Area 4.1) and the area west of and south of the Abbey and Gaol (Character Area 4.2) were identified as having industrial heritage that had been subject to extensive redevelopment and warranted separate assessment.
- 8.20 This left a large part of central Reading with the two main shopping streets of Friar Street and Broad Street and it was decided to make this one large character area, but review its boundaries as information was gathered (Character Areas 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).
- 8.21 These initially proposed character area boundaries were later refined to reflect those used in this HAA, once further analysis of the historical development of the town had been undertaken by the team.

Tabular Form of Assessment Using Data from Street Survey

- 8.22 Based on the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit Short a table was used to take data from the survey of streets and buildings to assign a value between 0 and 5 with 5 being very good.
- 8.23 The key data from the street and building survey sheets were assessed within each character area and sub area to help define the characteristics of that character area and to determine where the boundaries needed to be refined.
- 8.24 The survey data was also vital for providing the textual analysis of each character area and sub area. In the writing of that textural analysis, i.e. historic note, the research questions listed under 2.4.2 of the guidance were used. Those research questions were refined to apply to the specific context of each character area. The outcome of this process is recorded in the historical note written for each character area.
- 8.25 Overall table of each of the main character areas:

| Area/Feature | 1 Topography, Landscape, Views | 2 Layout | 3 Buildings | 4 Enclosure and Defined Spaces | 5 Designed Streets/ Landscape |
|---|--------------------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| St Mary's Area Character Area 1 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 |
| Reading Abbey, Civic and Gaol Area Character Area 2 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 |
| Reading Central: Character Areas Character Area 3 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |
| King's Road, Gaol to Queen's Road: Modern Character Areas Character Area 4 | 2/5 | 2/5 | 1/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |
| Historic Inner South Suburb Study Area Character Area 5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |
| West Suburbs Character Area 6 Oxford Road | 3/5 | 3/5 | 4/5 | 2/5 | 3/5 |
| West Suburbs Character Area 6 Castle Street West and Castle Hill | 4/5 | 3/5 | 4/5 | 3/5 | 4/5 |

St Mary's Area (Saxon Origins) - Character Area 1

- 8.26 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** level in centre though roads rise towards the N and fall S towards the Kennet, many mature trees feature in the churchyard; views along the main streets. Score 4/5
- 8.27 **2 Layout:** Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin is the central feature around which the streets run. Gun Street - Castle Street have the most important of buildings with pronounced plots running back to the Holy Brook on the S side, and buildings are back of the footway. St Mary Butts opens out opposite church as former market place. We recognised the importance of the historic cross roads at St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street/Gun Street and the proximity of the River Kennet could be indicative that Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin was established as a Minster church in the Saxon period. This cross roads is also of importance as Minster/Gun/Castle Streets were originally the east-west axis between Bath and London. Score 4/5
- 8.28 **3 Buildings:** Some timber-frame buildings and many 18th century and 19th century good brick houses and shops, more modern buildings on St Mary's Butts. Score 4/5
- 8.29 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** Churchyard enclosed by low wall with streets around and main historic routes lined with buildings at back of pavement. Score 4/5
- 8.30 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** historic street forms date back to Saxon settlement with churchyard as central landscape feature. Score 4/5
- 8.31 **Weighting:** uniformly high and showing that this area is the most identifiably historic part of Reading, as the site of its Saxon origins.

Reading Abbey, Civic and Gaol Area (Medieval Origins) - Character Area 2

- 8.32 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** level plateau in N and falls to S towards the King St. King's Road and Kennet S boundary; landscape features confined principally in Forbury Gardens; views into Market Place, along Friar Street into town centre and from abbey ruins over Kennet. Score 4/5
- 8.33 **2 Layout:** the defined inner abbey precinct marked by street layout and in places surviving medieval ruins. The Town Hall and the courts on Forbury Square are the civic parts, with the Gaol on the east part of the Abbey site. Score 4/5
- 8.34 **3 Buildings:** Varies from the surviving medieval elements, important civic building and some recent buildings of quality. Score 4/5
- 8.35 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** The former abbey precinct wall lines are still apparent and Forbury Gardens are planned Victorian Gardens. Score 4/5
- 8.36 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** The street pattern follows the Abbey precinct walls with St Laurence's church forming the top of Market Place. Score 4/5
- 8.37 **Weighting:** uniformly high demonstrating this area's importance historically as the second centre based around the abbey and still having the feel of a civic centre of the town

Reading Central: Character Areas - Character Area 3

- 8.38 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** mostly level area perhaps falling S towards Kennet and rising to W; built up retail area with few landscape features, but townscape views along Broad Street and Friar Street and the streets that connect. Score 3/5
- 8.39 **2 Layout:** with the abbey to the NW and Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin to the S this area defines the post medieval commercial centre of Reading, along the lines of streets with medieval origins of the roads leading W. The deep block between the two streets had many yards with industries in, particularly brewing. Score 3/5
- 8.40 **3 Buildings:** Listed buildings grouped at the E end of Friar Street and south side of Broad Street with some historic groups of and individual buildings elsewhere. Modern interventions spread throughout area, many not sympathetic to context. Score 3/5
- 8.41 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** Linear Routes with cross streets, all buildings built from back of pavement. Broad Street is wide enough at its E end to be an open space and has a wide junction at its W end. Score 3/5
- 8.42 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** Whereas the earlier streets are part of the organic growth of Reading from medieval times, some of the cross streets were pushed through in the 19th century as planned streets e.g. Station Road and Queen Victoria Street. Score 3/5
- 8.43 **Weighting:** Uniformly middle ratings and this identifies the area as having a relatively strong character, accepting that sites, often agglomerated have been redeveloped with out of context development which detracts from the overall character.

King's Road, Gaol to Queen's Road: Modern Character Areas - Character Area 4

- 8.44 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** the land falls towards S and the Kennet; landscape features confined to the hard landscaping along the Kennet within the Oracle. There are views along the Kennet and from the W end of Minster Street to Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin. Score 2/5
- 8.45 **2 Layout:** overlain by modern shopping centres this area down to the IDR Queen's Road is almost totally a modern overlay of what was there historically with only Minster Street surviving. Score 2/5
- 8.46 **3 Buildings:** Some individual listed buildings like the telephone exchange survive but this area is dominated by the Oracle shopping centre. Score 1/5
- 8.47 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** The Oracle is a covered shopping centre which has taken in the Kennet and its banks as private public realm and as such these are well maintained spaces. Score 3/5
- 8.48 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** Inside the Oracle and its public spaces are all designed spaces of the late 20th century. Score 3/5
- 8.49 **Weighting:** In historic and architectural terms lower than the other areas, but still forms part of historic Reading town.

Historic Inner South Suburb Study Area - Character Area 5

- 8.50 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** From its lowest level either side of High Bridge, the ground rises and both London and Southampton Streets rise to their S ends. The area between them is fairly level. St Giles' Churchyard is an important green space boundary; views past St Giles back to Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin and along London Street both ways. Score 3/5
- 8.51 **2 Layout:** The two historic routes into Reading from the south head towards the Kennet to go to the town's two historic centres. Cutting across both now is the IDR. The land between the streets (once factory buildings) has been redeveloped in the recent past, while the streets are part of a large gyratory system. Score 3/5
- 8.52 **3 Buildings:** London Street contains many buildings from the 17th century to 19th century and Southampton Street the rebuilt medieval church of St Giles, a timber frame building and some early 19th century terraces, while Crown Street has 19th century terraced housing. Score 3/5
- 8.53 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** London Street has an almost continuous back of pavement building line, whilst on Southampton Street there are setback buildings, like the church and the flat blocks and only buildings on the frontage around the Crown Street junction. On Crown Street the terrace is setback behind front areas. The churchyard is the only open space. Score 3/5
- 8.54 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** The main streets have medieval origins and the street patterns between them mostly follow the factory boundary when the area was redeveloped from the 1980s. Score 3/5
- 8.55 **Weighting:** Slightly cut off by the IDR this area possesses some important historic interest and historic buildings, some of which need maintenance.

West Suburbs in Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area - Character Area 6

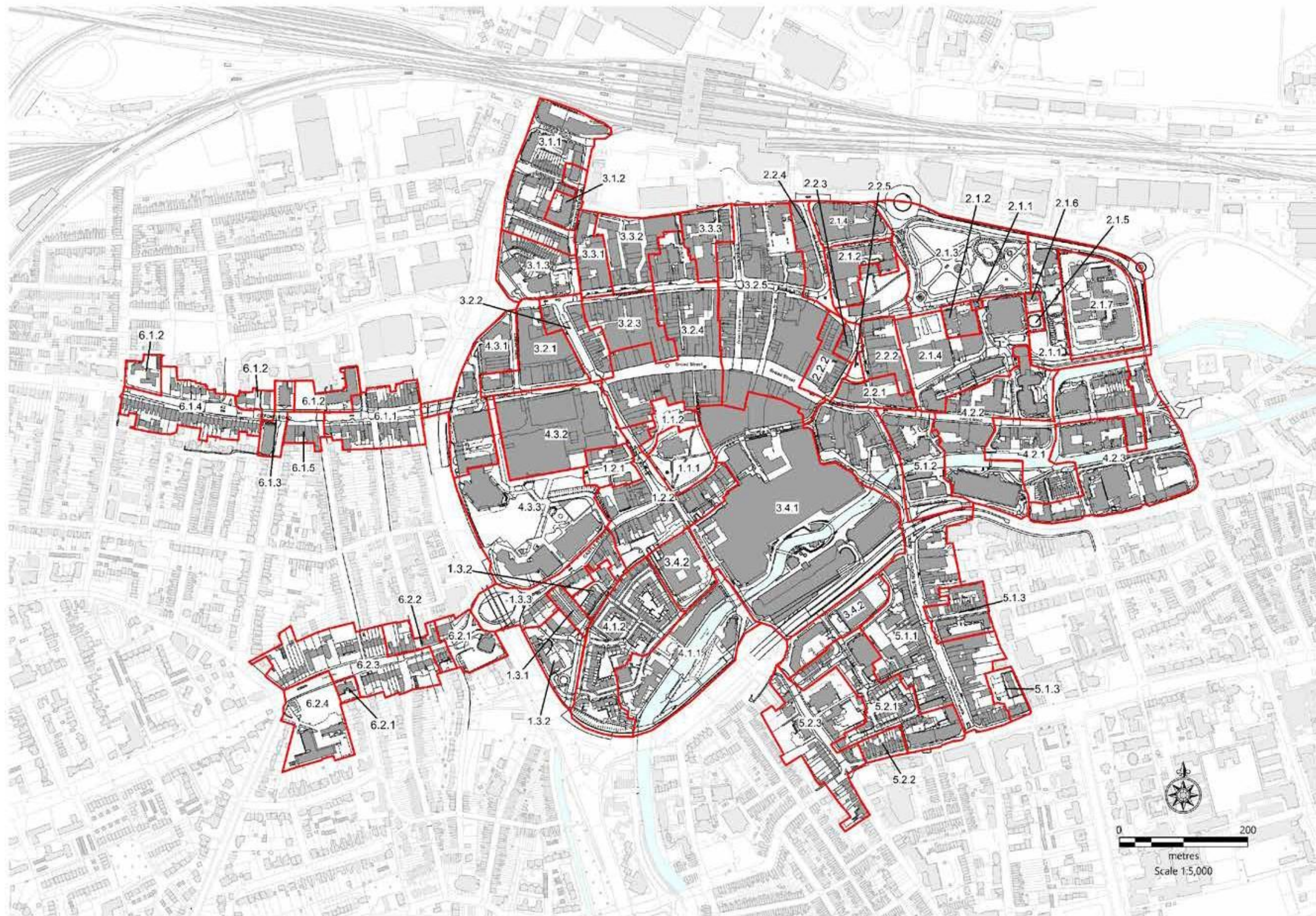
6.1 Oxford Road

- 8.56 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** level, few landscape features, long views into town centre. Score 3/5
- 8.57 **2 Layout:** Terraces of buildings close to the back of the footway, and side streets some containing buildings of similar age. Score 3/5
- 8.58 **3 Buildings:** Quality 18th and early 19th century terraces now mostly commercial on the ground floor and a few individual buildings such as a church and cinema. Score 4/5
- 8.59 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** Linear Route lined with side roads. Wider areas in front of shops where front gardens removed, no created public spaces. Score 2/5
- 8.60 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** Historic route with ribbon development then enclosed by suburban spread west in the 19th century. Score 3/5
- 8.61 **Weighting:** Scores as historic ribbon development of terraced houses with shops or businesses on the ground floor

6.2 Castle Street West and Castle Hill

- 8.62 **1 Topography, landscape, views:** steep hill from IDR to junction at top, front gardens to most buildings and Yeomanry House in its own grounds, views back to town centre and up the hill. Score 4/5
- 8.63 **2 Layout:** buildings set back and the road widens in centre part. Score 3/5
- 8.64 **3 Buildings:** Nos 154-160 were the 17th century Kings Arms Inn Late 18th and early 19th century terraces in stucco and brick and Yeomanry House as a detached house in grounds, nearly all are listed Grade II. Berkshire Records Office in an attractive modern building to rear of Yeomanry House. Score 4/5
- 8.65 **4 Enclosure and defined open spaces:** mature trees prominent in front gardens, hedges along frontage. Though carriageway is wide it does not form a public space and junction at the top is a large unfriendly space. Score 3/5
- 8.66 **5 Designed streets/landscape:** Much of Castle Hill was laid out by Jesse family who lived at the former Kings Arms and owned and rented out Yeomanry House. Historic route with ribbon development of large terraced houses and semi-detached villas and house in its own grounds, then enclosed by suburban spread west in the late 19th century. Score 4/5
- 8.67 **Weighting:** Higher scoring area as well surviving inner suburb of upmarket houses.

Figure 28. Illustrating Sub Areas



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1. St Mary's Area (Saxon Origins)

1.1 St Mary's Church Character Area: Historic Church and Churchyard

- 1.1.1 St Mary's Butts: Church and Churchyard
- 1.1.2 St Mary's Butts/Chain Street: Historic Mixed-use with Historic Yards

1.2 Castle/Gun Streets & St Mary's Butts: Historic Retail and Market Character Area

- 1.2.1 Hosier Street: Informal Market
- 1.2.2 St Mary's Butts/Gun Street: Historic Shops and Public Houses

1.3 Castle Street/Holy Brook: Historic and Modern Residential Character Area

- 1.3.1 Castle Street: Almshouses
- 1.3.2 Rose Walk & Talbot Court: Modern Residential Areas
- 1.3.3 Castle Street (opposite civic buildings): Historic Residential Areas

2. Reading Abbey, Civic and Gaol Area (Medieval Origins)

2.1 Blagrove Street & The Forbury: Abbey and Civic Character Area

- 2.1.1 a) The Forbury & b) Oscar Wilde Walk: Abbey Ruins and Churches
- 2.1.2 a) Blagrove Street/Valpy Street & b) County Court: Historic Civic Areas
- 2.1.3 Forbury Gardens: Formal Public Gardens
- 2.1.4 a) Valpy Street & b) Abbey Square: Modern Commercial
- 2.1.5 Abbot's House Gardens & Balls Head: Formal Public Gardens
- 2.1.6 a) Abbot's Walk: b) Historic Residential
- 2.1.7 The Forbury & Oscar Wilde Walk: Gaol Site
 - 1. Reading Prison (Main Building)
 - 2. Perimeter Wall
 - 3. Gatehouse and Administration Building
 - 4. Gymnasium and Workshop
 - 5. Games Court and Amenities Buildings

2.2 Market Place: Historic Retail and Market Character Area

- 2.2.1 High Street: Historic Banking and Retail
- 2.2.2 Market Place/Butter Market: Modern Commercial
- 2.2.3 Market Place/Town Hall Square: Historic Retail
- 2.2.4 Blagrove Street: Mixed Historic Retail and Commercial
- 2.2.5 Market Place Square: Formal Market

3. Reading Central: Character Areas

3.1 Greyfriars: Historic Residential and Religious with Modern Mix Character Area

- 3.1.1 Greyfriars Road /Tudor-Vachel Roads: Historic and Modern Mixed-use
- 3.1.2 Greyfriars Road/Stanshaw Road: Modern Offices
- 3.1.3 Greyfriars Road/Sackville Street: Religious and Historic Residential

3.2 Broad & Friar Streets: Historic Inner Urban Retail Character Area

- 3.2.1 Oxford Road East (McIlroys Site): Historic and Modern Retail - West
- 3.2.2 West Street: Historic and Modern Retail Mixed-use
- 3.2.3 Friar Street West: Modern Retail on Historic Plots
- 3.2.4 Broad/Union/Chain Streets: Historic Retail Frontages with Historic Yards
- 3.2.5 Broad Street/Queen Victoria Street/Station Road: Historic and Modern Retail

3.3 Friar & Garrard Streets & Station Road: Modern Mixed-use Character Area

- 3.3.1 Friar Street/Greyfriars Road: Modern Retail, Office and Residential
- 3.3.2 Friar/Garrard Streets: Under Development
- 3.3.3 Friar Street/Station Road: Modern Mixed-use

3.4 Minster/Bridge Streets & Queen's Road: Modern Commercial Character Area

- 3.4.1 Queen's Road/Minster Street: Modern Retail
- 3.4.2 Bridge Street/Letcombe Street: Modern Commercial and Warehouse

4. King's Road, Gaol to Queen's Road: Modern Character Areas

4.1 Holy Brook & Kennet: Modern Housing Character Area

- 4.1.1 Fobney Street/Kennet: Modern Riverside Residential and Industrial Heritage
- 4.1.2 Holy Brook/Fobney Street: Modern Residential Courtyards

4.2 King's Road & Kennet: Modern Mixed-use Character Area East

- 4.2.1 King's Road/Blakes and Queen's Cottages: Historic and Modern Residential Mixed-use
- 4.2.2 King's Road/Abbey Street: Modern Mixed-use including Historic Elements
- 4.2.3 King's Road/Kennet Side: Modern Mixed-use

4.3 Minster Quarter: Modern Mixed-use Character Area West

- 4.3.1 Oxford Road/Thorn Street: Modern Hotel and Residential
- 4.3.2 Oxford Road/St Mary's Butts: Modern Retail
- 4.3.3 Castle Street/Dusseldorf Way: Modern Civic

5. Historic Inner South Suburb Study Area

5.1 London & Duke Streets: Inner Suburb Character Area East

- 5.1.1 London Road to King Street Historic Route: Historic Area
- 5.1.2 Duke Street/Kennet: Modern Area
- 5.1.3 London Street/East Street: Modern and Historic Area

5.2 Southampton & Church Streets: Inner Suburb Character Area West

- 5.2.1 Church Street/St Giles Close: Modern Residential Area
- 5.2.2 Crown Street: Victorian Residential
- 5.2.3 Southampton Street Historic Route: Historic Mixed-use

6. West Suburbs in Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

6.1 Oxford Road - Prospect & George Streets: West Suburbs Mixed-use

- 6.1.1 Oxford Road from Howard to Waylen Streets: Georgian Villas and Early Victorian Retail
- 6.1.2 Oxford Road Northside: Modern Mixed-use Redevelopments
- 6.1.3 Oxford Road/Russell Street: Civic and Religious
- 6.1.4 Oxford Road from Bedford Road to Prospect Street: Georgian and Victorian Terraced Shops (Brick)
- 6.1.5 Oxford Road from Russell to Waylen Streets: Georgian and Victorian Terraced Shops (Rendered)

6.2 Castle Hill & Castle Street: West suburbs residential

- 6.2.1 Castle Street to Coley Place & Coley Hill: Modern Residential and Office
- 6.2.2 Castle Hill (Part of Carey Street): Historic Terraces
- 6.2.3 Castle Hill from Russell Street to Field Road: Historic Villas
- 6.2.4 Castle Hill to Coley Avenue: Detached House and Grounds

9. St Mary's Area (Saxon Origins)

Character Area 1.1 Level 2 [II]

Introduction

- 9.1 St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area forms the most historic area in Reading, with a history of settlement stretching back to the Saxon period. The Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin is the parish church, together with listed structures surrounding it and the churchyard provide the focal point for this character area (Figure 32).

St Mary's Church Character Area: Historic Church and Churchyard

Historical Note

- 9.2 The church is central to this character area. Grenville Astill states that only one church was recorded in Reading in the Domesday Book which is assumed to be an earlier structure earlier than the current church. In support of the interpretation of an earlier phase of activity, a coffin containing human remains and a late 9th century coin hoard of silver pennies that date the burial (853 to 874) were located within the north east of the churchyard. As such, it is the site of the Church of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, known locally as St Mary's Minster, that is most likely the location mentioned in the Domesday Book.
- 9.3 This conclusion is also supported by the fact that Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin was a Minster church. Churches of this date became important religious, social and economic centres, and St Mary's Minster later became a parish church; the parochial arrangement was a 12th century form of organisation. Churches were carefully chosen "often in a royal vill above a waterway with an important road crossing". The need for a parish church indicates that sufficient population lived here to support a priest or priests.
- 9.4 Archaeological remains were found beneath the present-day Nos 53-54 St Mary's Butts. Chalk and flint foundations and floor surfaces of the late 11-12th century were recorded within the site. Further chalk and flint masonry remains were found to extend southwards and eastwards beyond the limits of the excavation area indicating the existence of a once substantial building, possibly an early part of the site of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin. A number of disarticulated human remains were found, interpreted as being beyond the formal churchyard or subsequent reburials.
- 9.5 During the 13th century the same site was in use for fourteen inhumations of adults and children, which were supine, east-west burials that appear to be part of a wider churchyard. The site was subsequently subject to a series of changes in site use, interpreted as resulting from the historical developments in the immediate vicinity of the site relating to the construction of the Norman church, and influenced by the growth of Reading Abbey. Further evidence of possible medieval burials, predominantly of 13th and 14th century origin, was located opposite the current churchyard boundary just south of Hosier Street. However, the extent of the churchyard at this time is unknown. The first mapping evidence showing the extent of the churchyard dates to the publication of John Speed's map in 1610. The boundary of the churchyard to Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin to Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin was extended south after that publication.
- 9.6 The current church, Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin (1066 AD to 1900 AD) stands on or near that site. Little early historic fabric survives due to later alterations, with the exception of a door from the Norman phase of construction that now stands in the north wall. Early remains may survive at foundation level as indicated by footings of a compacted flint raft of early date within construction trenches. Victorian underpinning work was also identified.
- 9.7 As detailed in *The Buildings of England: Berkshire*, these later phases of the church are reflected in surviving architectural features. The crenellated west tower was built in the early 1550s of flint and ashlar stone. This work and other 1550s construction reuses stone, columns and roofs from Reading Abbey. The chequer design is rare in Reading and the polygonal buttresses that support the tower were capped with crocketed pinnacles in 1624.
- 9.8 Further work in the 19th century included alterations to the northern side. The nave's north aisle, 3 bays with decorated tracery, was designed by Joseph Morris in 1871-72. In 1863-4 J.B. & W. Clacy designed a series of alterations. The south aisle was designed with dividing buttresses and Decorated-style tracery. The chancel was rebuilt with knapped and squared flint in Early English style and the east chapel was added at this time. The vestry was designed to project towards the older polygonal turret. A perpendicular North Chapel, a war memorial, was added by Sir Charles Nicholson in 1918.
- 9.9 The interior detailing is also noteworthy. The decorated chamfered soffits of the south arcade of the nave date from *circa* 1200, having been reused from Reading Abbey. A screen was installed into the north arcade to separate this part of the nave from the transept. The screen under the west tower gallery is decorated with cusped panelling, with a projecting jetty that dates from 1631.
- 9.10 Associated with the church are two groups of Grade II listed tombs, St Mary's Church House, adjacent to St Mary's Gate, and Nos 53-54, the aforementioned flats, with café at ground floor. An access road curves round the south of the flats and into an area of hardstanding for car parking immediately to the north. To the east lies an area of ground which consisted of the formal gardens to the original vicarage (demolished). St Mary's Gate is a Vernacular building that may once have been associated with the former vicarage, whereas St Mary's Church House is Georgian in style.

Overall Importance

- 9.11 Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin is the central feature around which the streets run and the churchyard is enclosed by low wall, which is the key defined open space within the character area.
- 9.12 Between 1551 and 1555, St Mary’s Minster church was reconstructed using building stone from Reading Abbey; the roof of the nave, which is an arched braced truss, may also have originated from the Abbey. Two phases of later repairs and additions were designed by noted architects, altering both the exterior and the interior character, adding to its significance. Interior detailing is also exceptional (described above), and many details were by noted designers including the font, alms box, reredos, paintings, sculptures and a traceried door. A series of monuments and memorial tablets add to the interest of the interior.
- 9.13 All associated buildings, except the flats, are Grade II listed.

Boundary Review

- 9.14 To ensure that the area is more representative of the historic extent of the church, churchyard and associated buildings, the character area has been extended beyond that indicated within the St Mary’s Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area at:
 - the northern edge, where it meets the edge of the rear plots on St Mary’s Butts, Broad and Chain Streets. It is anticipated that any further burials relating to the Christian practices within rear plots would be more likely to survive here than within the more fully developed plots beyond the boundary of the character area; and
 - the eastern edge. The eastern edge extends only to the boundary of the churchyard and extends across part of Chain Street, providing important access points into the site.
- 9.15 This review signifies some boundary changes are recommendable when updating the conservation area appraisal.

Summary of Key Issues

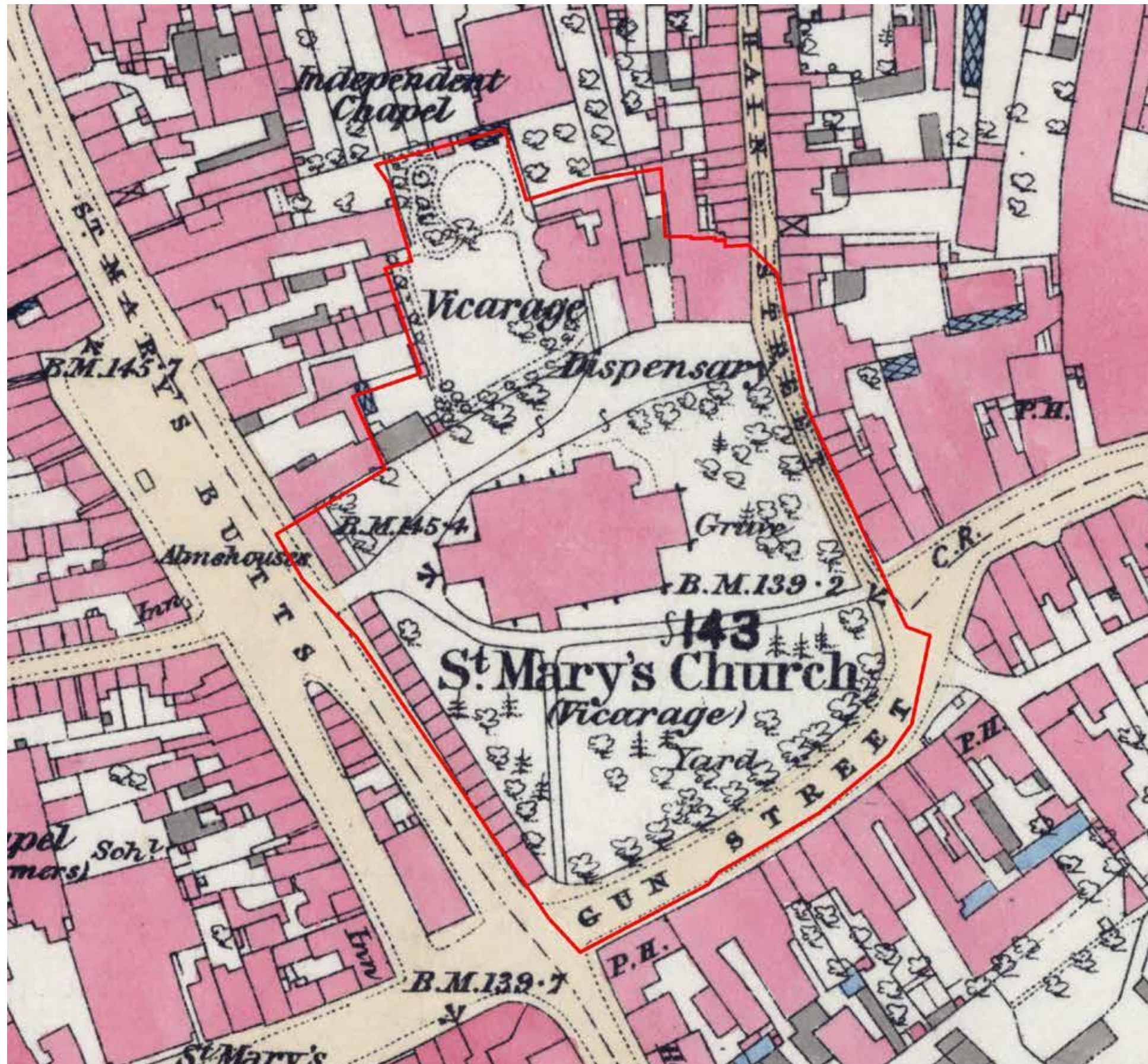
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 9.16 St Mary’s Minster (1066 AD to 1900 AD) is Grade I listed [1113573], having been built in phases, successive phases have added to its significance. In addition, this church stands on or near the site of the church recorded in the Domesday Survey. Being strategically located along an important trade route, it became the centre for religious, social and economic growth.

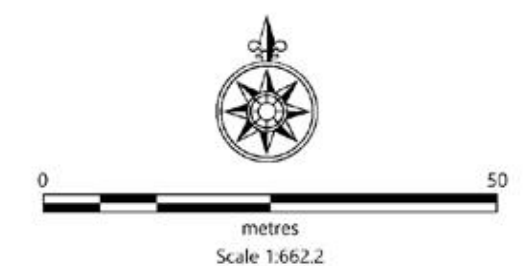
Principal Detracting Elements

- The amount of street furniture on St Mary’s Butts obscures views of St Mary’s Minster and the churchyard.
- Uneven crossings for the many pedestrians who cross the road here. It is unclear who has priority crossing the street
- View to the north into service yard from churchyard is affected by the residential and commercial waste in this area of hardstanding.

Figure 29. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 1.1
(Source: National Library of Scotland)

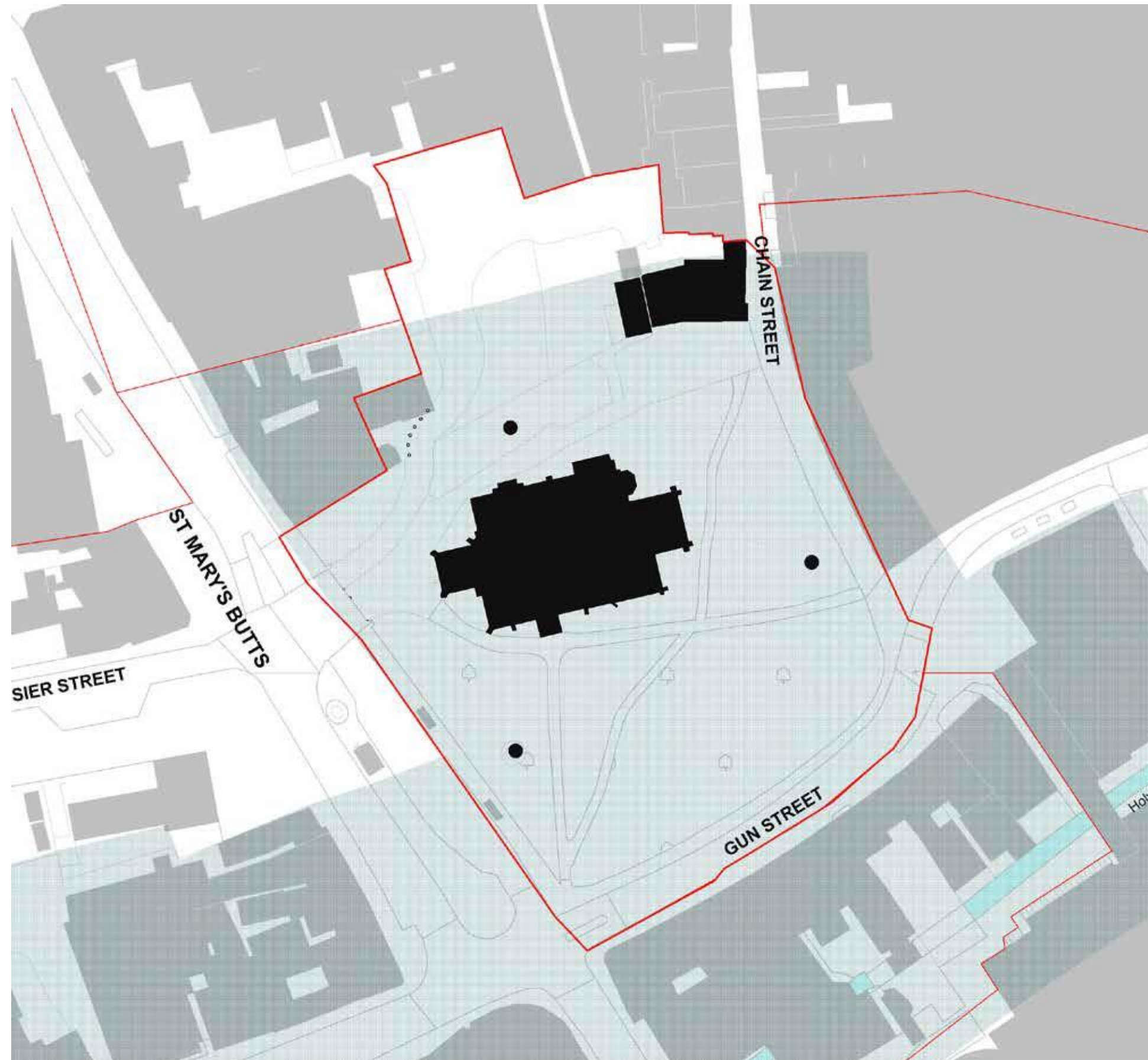


1.1 St Mary's Church Character Area



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Figure 30. Map Showing Existing Heritage Designations within Character Area 1.1



1.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- Church of St Mary, Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin (Grade I listed)
- Group of 4 churchyard tombs north of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin (Grade II listed)
- Group of 4 churchyard tombs, east of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin (Grade II listed)
- Building to west of Church House (Grade II listed)
- Church House (Grade II listed)
- Jubilee Cross (Grade II listed)

Conservation Areas

- St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area

Figure 31. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character within Character Area 1.1



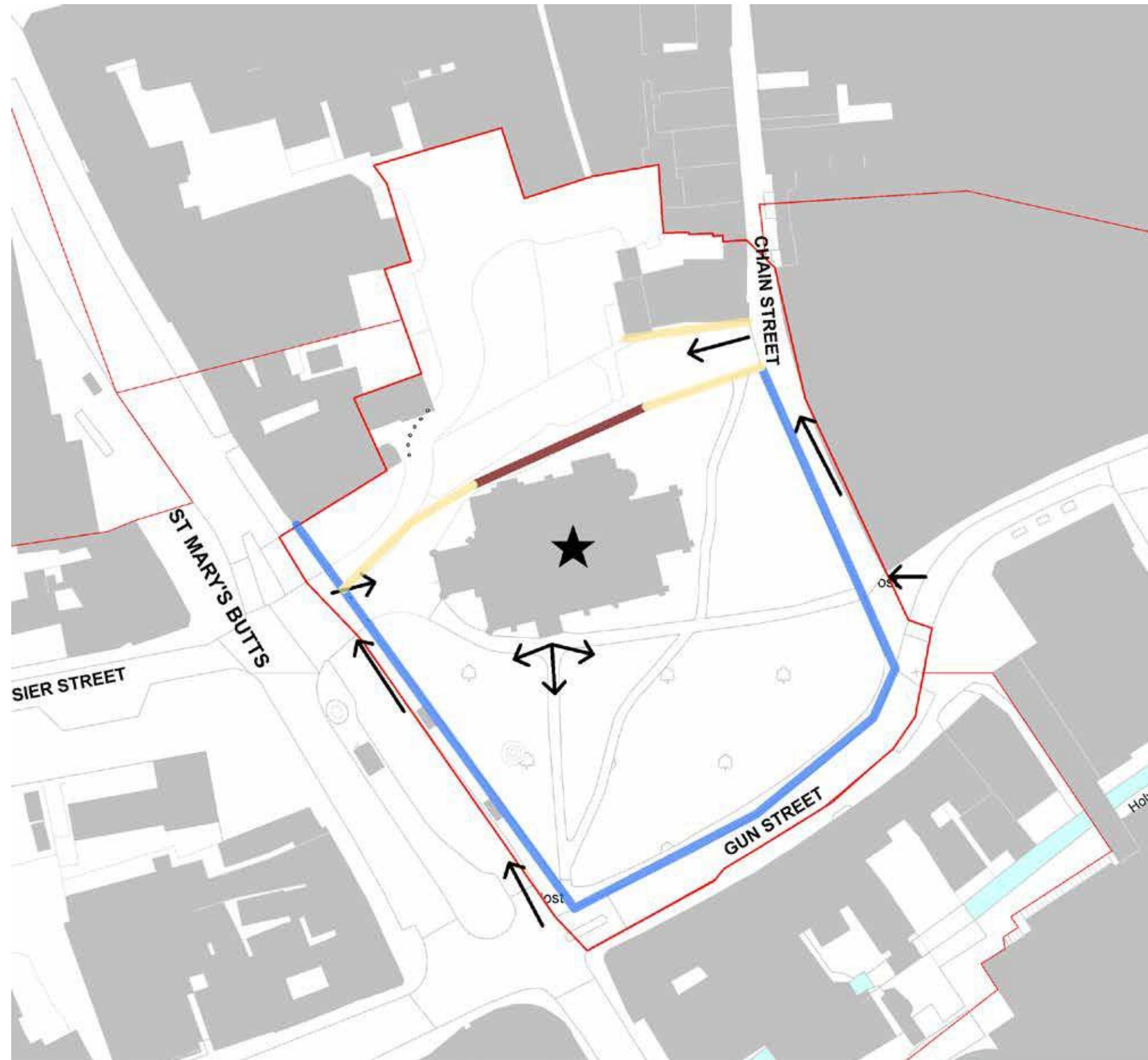
1.1 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



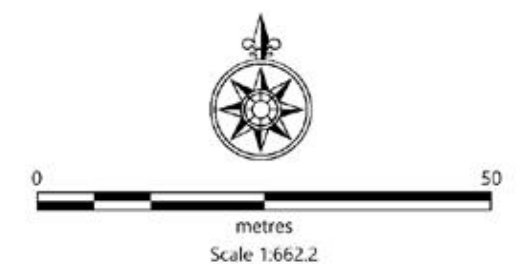
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Figure 32. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 1.1



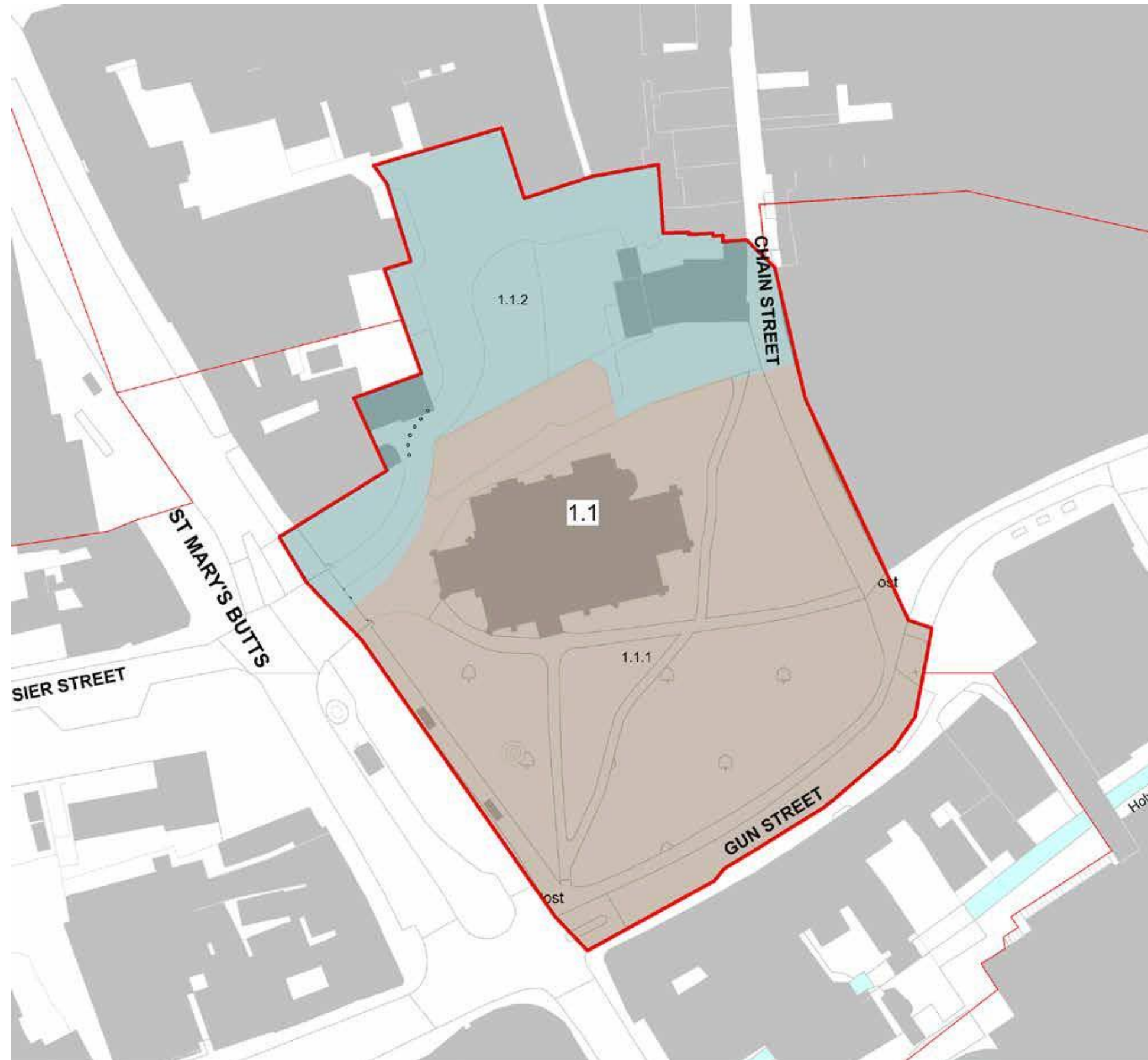
1.1 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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Figure 33. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 1.1





1.1 St Mary's Church Character Area

Sub areas

- 1.1.1 St Mary's Butts: Church & churchyard
- 1.1.2 St Mary's Butts/Chain Street: Historic mixed-use with historic yards



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| Sub area Character | 1.1.1 | 1.1.2 |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Name | St Mary's Butts: Church and Churchyard | St Mary's Butts/Chain Street: Historic Mixed-use With Historic Yards |
| |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade I listed church of Saxon origin with Pre 1500 AD structural elements retained • Open space populated by graves • Managed and sculpted greenery • Churchyard populated with gravestones and tombs including Grade II listed tombs early C18 early C19 • Enclosed by a non-continuous low-medium height brick wall to its south, east and west • Grade II listed Jubilee Cross (Harrinson Memorial Cross) • Trees providing shaded areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-3 storey buildings • Early-Mid C18 to early C21 • Mix of residential, religious and commercial functions • Mix of brick, stone and metal and modern render • Discontinuous frontages • Open spaces • Wide pathway, accessible to cars • Chained bollards to keep vehicles off grass |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous access points • Many mature trees so shaded areas • St Mary's Minster provides a strong historic focus to the town centre with a strong historic and religious character • Sits well in churchyard and its tower can be seen from many viewpoints • Centre for cultural and pastoral activities in town centre • Low walls provide public seating • Multiple entrances aid accessibility • Open green space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong historic character and features • Sizable on-street dining areas fronting on the street |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively narrow paths may make it difficult for wheelchair users or people with pushchairs to pass easily • North part of churchyard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many wheelie bins in the service yard are visible from the pedestrian pathway • Cars parked in front of the listed buildings break the continuous frontage • Footway A-signs could present a tripping hazard to visually impaired pedestrians • Service yard in the northern portion of the sub area and in front of listed building |

Character Area 1.2 Level 2 [II]

Castle/Gun Streets & St Mary's Butts: Historic Retail and Market Character Area

Introduction

9.17 Castle Street, Gun Street and St Mary's Butts Streets, together with Bridge Street, form a crossing north of the Kennet giving access to and from important historic trade routes (Figure 34). The possible extent of the Saxon core of Reading was mapped by Professor Grenville Astill in 1978, and extended from this character area out towards Broad Street and Minster Street. This area is recorded within the Historic Environment Record (Figure 5). 'Old Street', today's St Mary's Butts, was mentioned in documentary sources in 1160 and Castle Street in 1250. The Medieval town expanded (Figure 28). Formal planning of plot layouts is indicated by the consistency of plot sizes shown on S. Peyton's map based on Roger Amyce's survey of 1552.

Historical Note

9.18 Documentary evidence indicates that urban growth began as an Anglo-Saxon market focused around the site of St Mary's Minster (Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin). This was a strategic location between the crossings of two major routes, to Bath via Castle Street and to Southampton, Winchester and London via Bridge Street and Southampton Street.

9.19 Evidence of Saxon activity was discovered through archaeological investigation of two sunken floor structures at Nos 53-54 St Mary's Butts, associated with the final stages of livestock consumption, crop processing, crafts and small-scale industrial activity. These goods may have been cultivated and reared on site or bought at the local market.

9.20 The precise location of the market near the junction of two roads, one leading from Oxford to Winchester and the other from London to Bath, has yet to be discovered. However, market places spontaneously developed at the location where people left church services; that location was always the door of the nave. It was by this exit that the whole congregation left services and the market was located outside to meet their needs after each service had ended. Reading's trading status was recognised in the establishment of a mint by Edward the Confessor between 1042 and 1066. The existence of an established market in this area is confirmed by references to 'Old Market' in deeds dating from 1160. St Mary's Butts was referred to as 'Old Street' in the same set of records. St Mary's Butts was sufficiently wide to accommodate a market, the space for which has been altered as indicated by map regression.

9.21 Buildings, now demolished, ran along the western edge of the graveyard. Further buildings, now demolished, formed frontages on the three sides of a triangular-shaped space approximately in the location of the modern island.

9.22 Further evidence of the importance of the trading route adjacent to the market is provided by archaeological remains of active channel management of silts that date to the 11th century at Bridge Street demonstrating active maintenance. In addition, proximity to the river provided a key strategic location for trade. Evidence of revetments was discovered at the edge of the Kennet, which began in Saxon times (980 AD to 1120 AD) and continued into Medieval times (1200 AD to 1300 AD). Evidence of revetments was also found near the Holy Brook.

9.23 Ongoing maintenance indicates the continued importance of these routes, even after the Abbey founded its market approximately 330m to the north west. Evidence of management along the southern edge of the settlement and just beyond and along the Holy Brook, during Medieval times, substantiates this documentary evidence. Therefore, irrespective of the establishment of a second market, the 'Old Market' continued to trade; likely due to its strategic location.

9.24 The ongoing importance of the 'Old Market', irrespective of competition from the Abbey markets, is also in evidence within the built environment as a microcosm of buildings representing all periods of Reading's built environment from the 1500s to the present day. This area has the largest concentration of timber-framed buildings dating from the 16th to 17th centuries in Reading, which are located near the church. Residential, office and retail uses varied over the years, however, based on current evidence three of these nine buildings are interpreted as houses, three as shops and three are public houses.

9.25 All but two are Grade II listed; two being Grade II* listed, Nos 15 and 17 Castle Street. No 17 has fine decorative features externally and internally and has a double width, cobbled carriage way. No 15 also has some rare features including timber shutters with original L and H hinges. It is marked with a 'D' on the 1895 Goad map, which the Goad key confirms is an abbreviation of dwelling. The uses of each of these buildings has changed over the centuries, indicating change in use to meet local needs as those needs changed.

9.26 No 15 Gun Street differs in scale to the adjacent terrace with a range of timber framed buildings to the rear. One timber-framed building is hidden behind buildings on the frontage, which is

a former Cottage at the rear of No 8 Castle Street; currently inaccessible, it once formed part of a courtyard and rear plot development indicating an intensification of use at this time. While early maps show little detailing, growing intensification of infill in the form of buildings to the rear is in evidence through comparison between John Rocque's map of 1761 and John Man's map of 1798. More detail of the intensification of the built environment, indicating growth, is provided in Coates' Map of 1802.

9.27 Indeed, there are a large number of buildings built between 1700 and 1840, most in the Georgian style. However, hidden behind the construction of some Georgian facades some earlier buildings can be discovered. For example, No. 13 has a possible 17th century core. Again uses have varied over the years; currently half are houses and half are retail. One public house, also a night club, is a former Congregation Chapel. All are Grade II listed and one, No 19, is Grade II* listed. No 19 was built with the brick 'headers', the short end of each brick, facing outwards, and is associated with good-quality external and internal features.

9.28 The Church of Saint Mary in Castle Street is also Grade II* listed and dates from this period. It is noted as having an interior of exceptional quality in the List Entry Summary. The site is associated with a crypt at the north west corner of the nave (personal information from Mr John Missenden) and stands on the site of the former Reading Gaol.

9.29 A variety of Victorian architectural styles are recorded within a relatively small number of buildings. There are examples of Victorian Baroque, Classical and Vernacular Revival. In addition, there is an example of the Queen Anne Revival style. The Jubilee Fountain by G. W. Webb (1887) is one of a number of monuments that enliven interest along the street. To the south of this the Tea Kiosk is a feature that has been on the traffic island for 100 years and has some local interest.

9.30 The range and quality of these historic buildings indicate the importance of this area in Reading's formative years. As a fortuitous emphasis of the way this area reflects Reading's architecture, there are also examples of modern styles; there is one example each of mid and late-20th century and early 21st century built forms, all currently relating to the hospitality sector.

Overall Importance

- 9.31 This character area associated with the Church of Saint Mary, together with 2.1 associated with Reading Abbey, formed part of a dual role; the two markets acting as catalysts for growth and is a defining aspect of Reading's character as explained by Grenville Astill in *Historic towns in Berkshire: an archaeological appraisal* when he stated that Reading was one of a few settlements identified at the time (1978) as having formed and developed in this way.
- 9.32 Based on current evidence, this is the most historic area in Reading, there is evidence of a market here stretching back to Saxon times. The importance of this trading route is evidenced by the upkeep of the waterways and wharfs. Economically, this area was the focal point of trade for at least a century before any other area in Reading, recognised in the granting of a mint.
- 9.33 That long history becomes more visually appreciable from the 1500s onwards, through varied architectural types and styles. All those types and styles typical in Reading are located in this character area. Moreover, a large number are listed indicating the quality of the built environment.

Boundary Review

- 9.34 To ensure that the area is more representative of the influence of the market, the character area extends beyond that indicated within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area at the north western boundary to incorporate the historic properties up to the edge of the modern shopping mall, incorporating Hosier Street.
- 9.35 The eastern boundary of the character area does not extend as far east as that indicated within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal. For the purposes of characterisation, Minster Street was incorporated into Character Area 3.4. In the assessment of that character area it was found that Minster Street was transitional in terms of the surviving historic layout of the streets and lanes with close physical and visual links with St Mary's Minster and Gun Street. It is recommended that it is incorporated into St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area as a fourth Character Area.

Summary of Key Issues

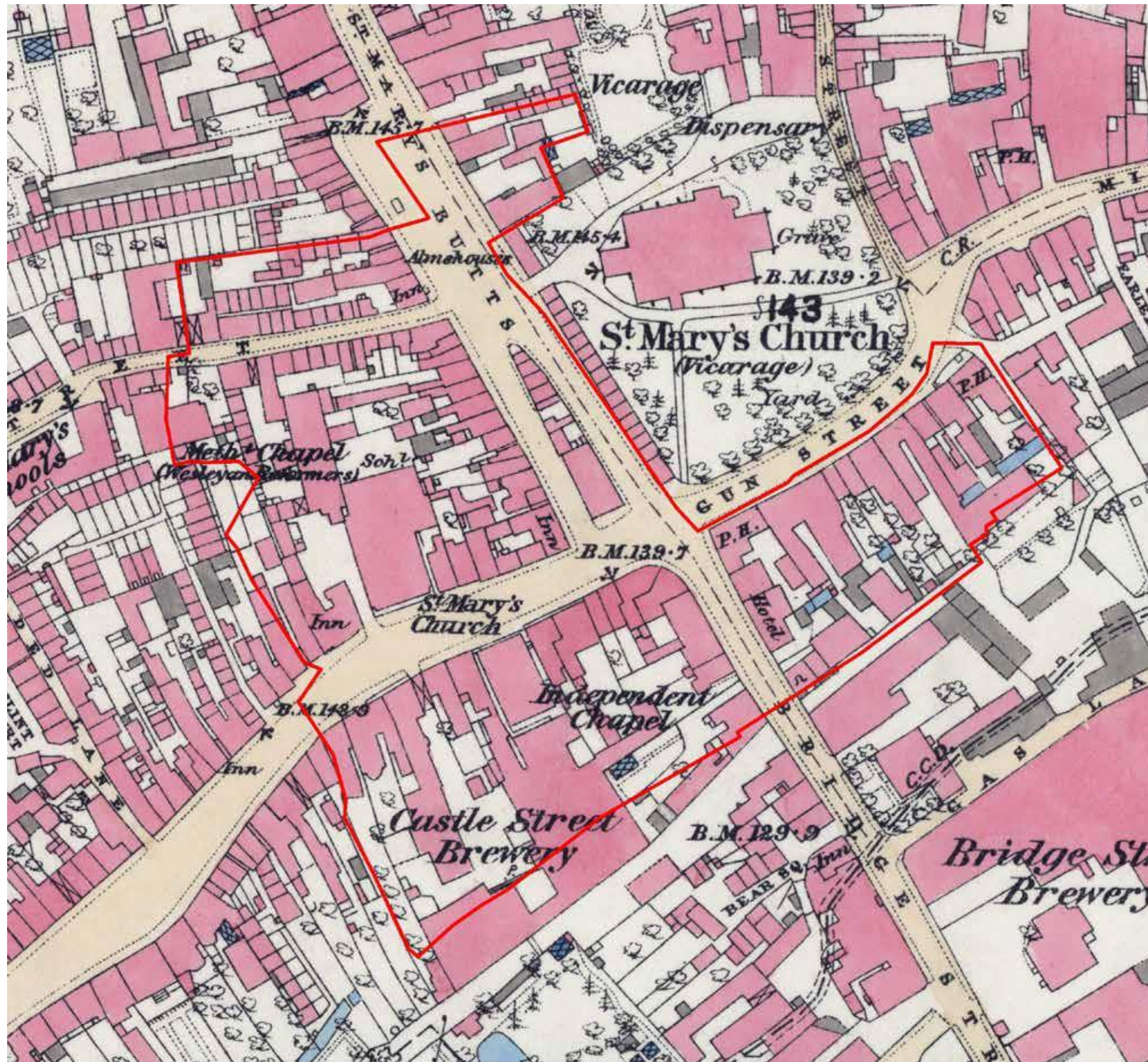
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 9.36 Over the centuries, the area was associated with a wide range of economic activities and building uses that led to growth and intensification represented by a microcosm of Reading's characteristic building materials and styles.
- 9.37 It is also reflected in the street pattern. St Mary's Butts was the former market place. However, the locations of cross roads have varied due to the extension of the churchyard of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin post-1610.
- 9.38 The streets are sinuous and the long, narrow plots along Gun and Castle Streets, extended southwards to meet the edge of the Holy Brook, which formed the limits of the Saxon core.

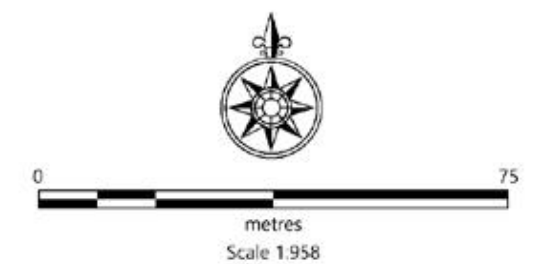
Principal Detracting Elements

- Shop frontage branding has little reference to the architecture of the building occupied, making it difficult to perceive the historic buildings.
- Many examples of inappropriate replacement features.
- The poor maintenance of one or two buildings detracts from the entire row of surrounding buildings.
- Traffic island containing listed fountain and tea kiosk with motorcycle parking is an unrealised asset.
- As important junctions into Reading, the streets and traffic island attract traffic management paraphernalia and traffic noise and pollution.
- Shopfronts, fenestration and wall treatments on infill buildings vary too greatly from historic forms.
- Scale and grain of surrounding modern developments.

Figure 34. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 1.2 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

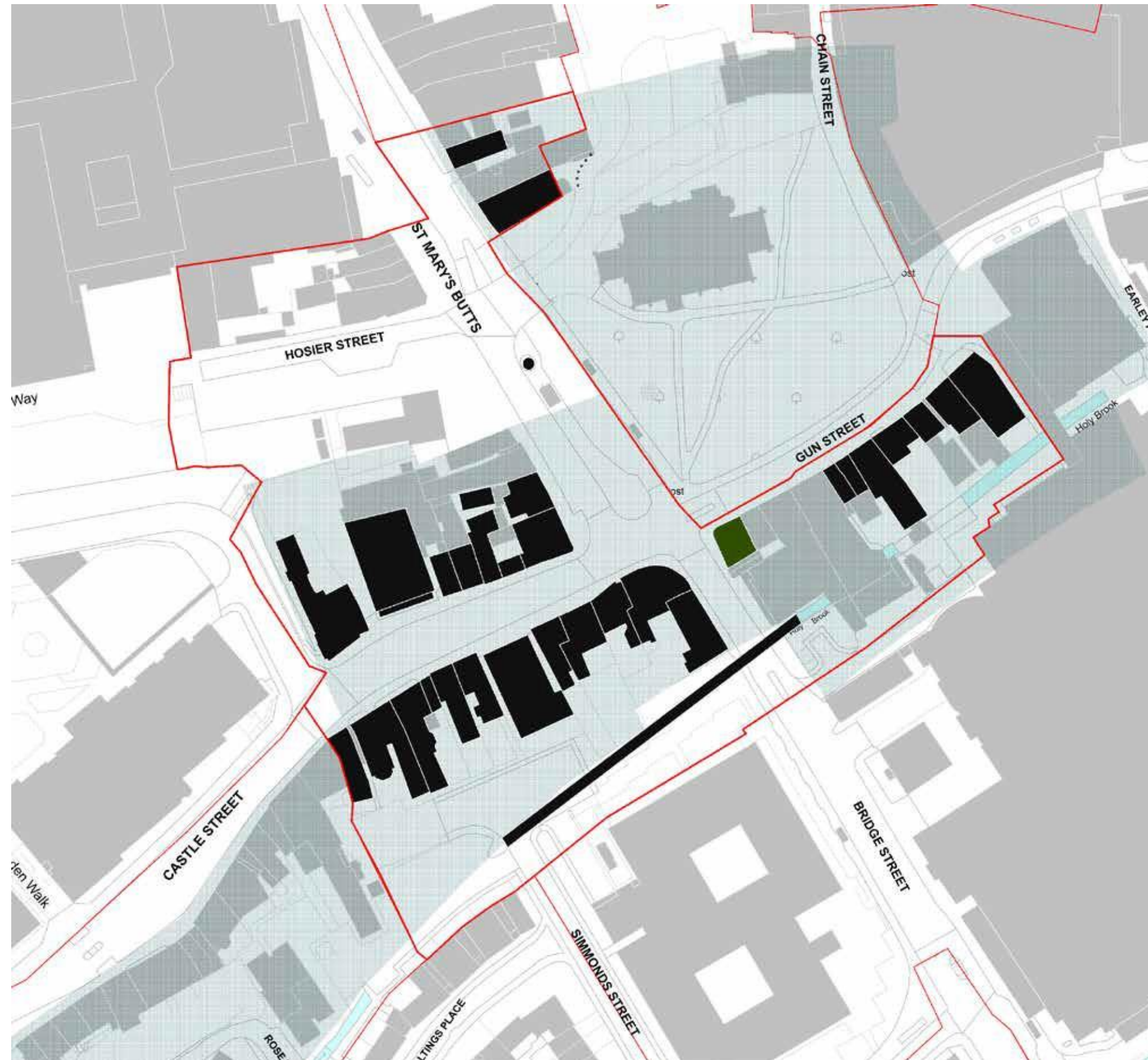


1.2 Castle/Gun Streets & St Mary's Butts



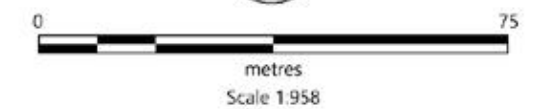
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Figure 35. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 1.2



1.2 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- 19, Castle Street (Grade II* listed)
- Church of Saint Mary (Grade II* listed)
- 15, Castle Street (Grade II* listed)
- 17, Castle Street (Grade II* listed)
- 8, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 10, Gun Street (Grade II listed)
- Former Cottage at rear of No 8 (Grade II listed)
- 10 And 12, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- The Horn Inn (Grade II listed)
- La Corbiere Restaurant (Grade II listed)
- 11, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 6-10, Bridge Street (Grade II listed)
- 9, Gun Street (Grade II listed)
- 13 And 14, Gun Street (Grade II listed)
- Sun Inn (Grade II listed).
- 11 and 12, Gun Street (Grade II listed)
- 8, Gun Street (Grade II listed)
- 9, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 13, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 35 and 37, St Mary's Butts (Grade II listed)
- 7, Gun Street (Grade II listed)
- 2 and 4, Bridge Street (Grade II listed)
- 7, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain (Grade II listed)
- 3 and 5, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 21, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Culvert on Holy Brook running south westwards from SU71441/73234 to 71327/73133 (Grade II* listed)
- The Allied Arms Inn (Grade II listed)
- 55 and 55A St Mary's Butts (Grade II listed)

Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- 1 Gun Street (BTM)

Conservation Areas

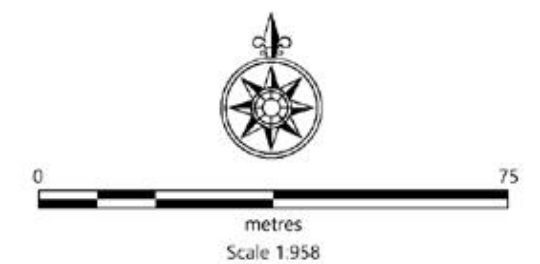
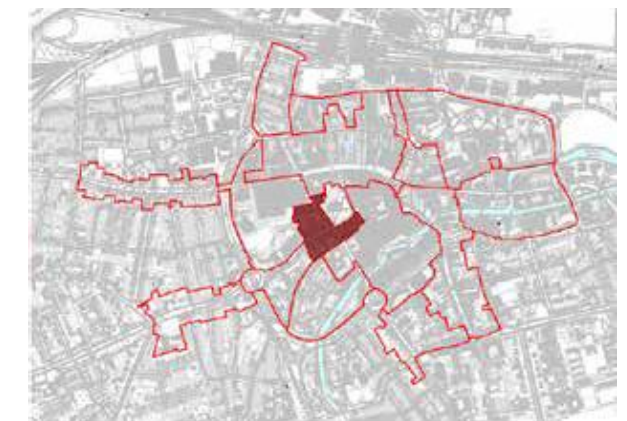
- St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area

Figure 36. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 1.2



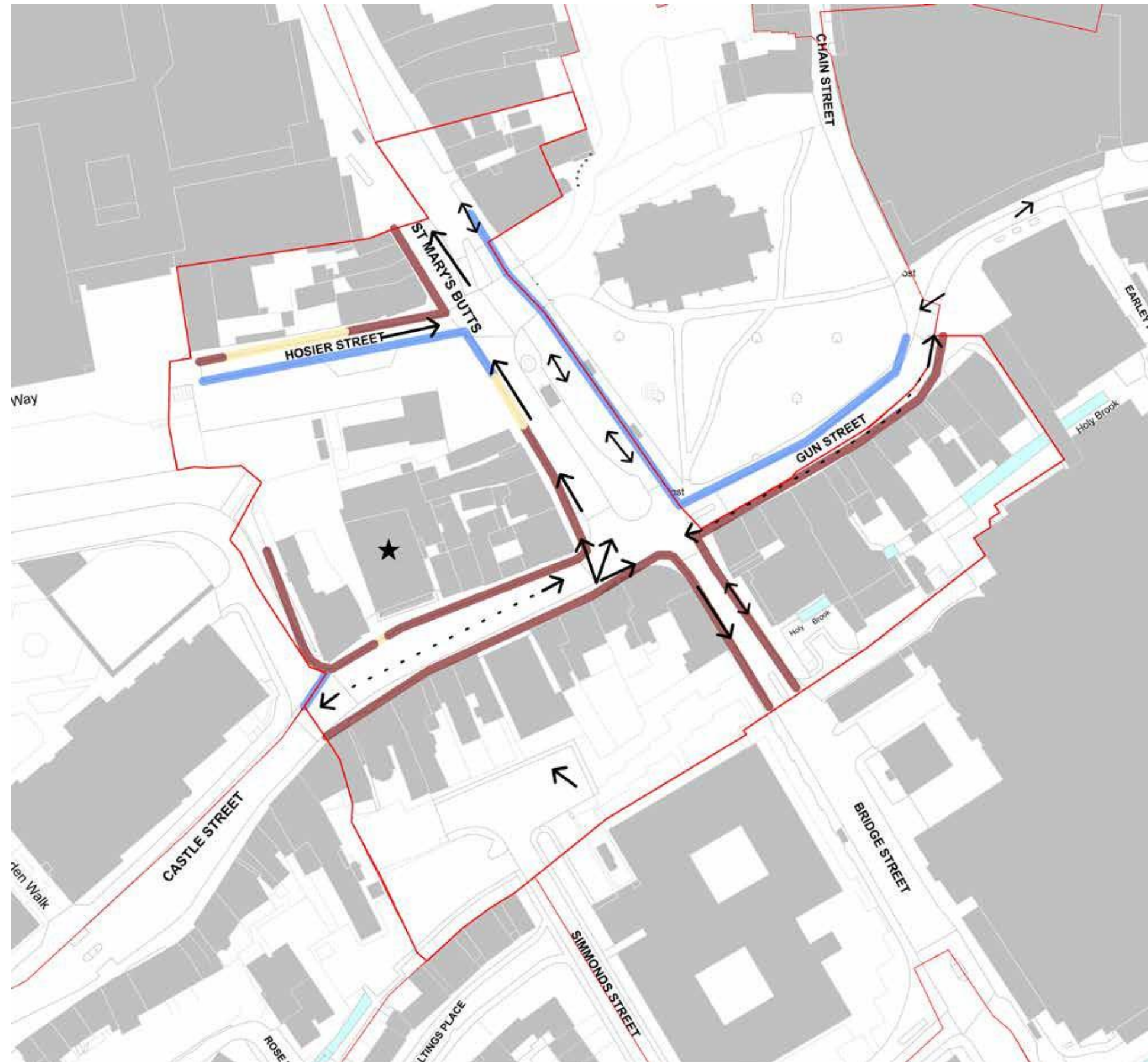
1.2 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



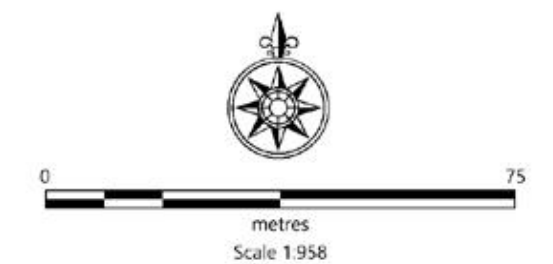
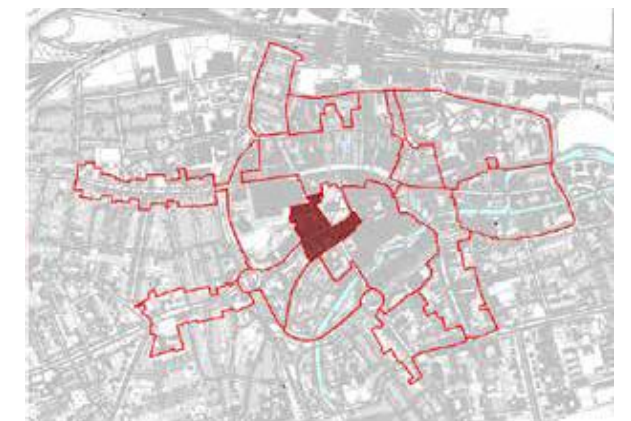
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Figure 37. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 1.2



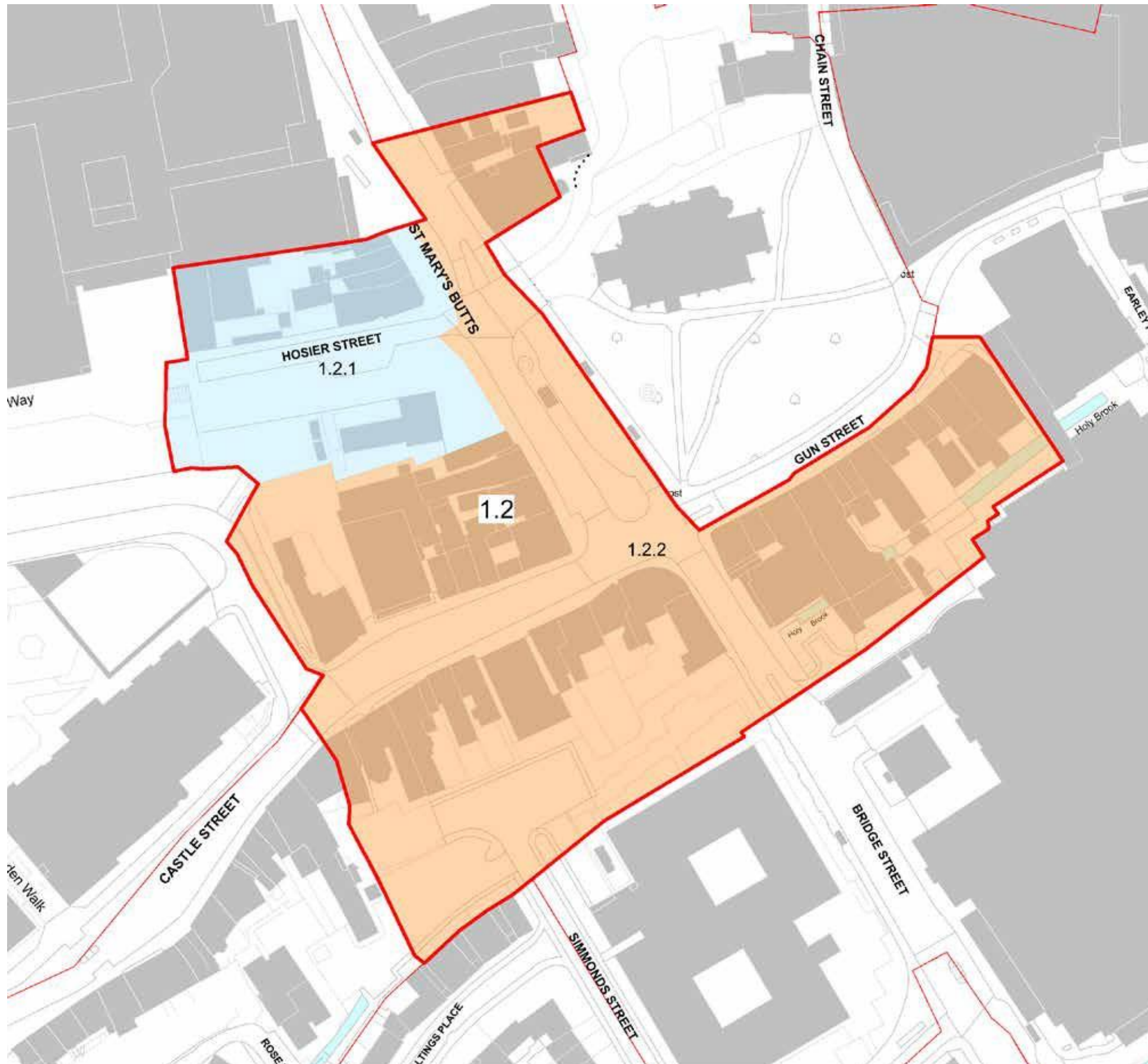
1.2 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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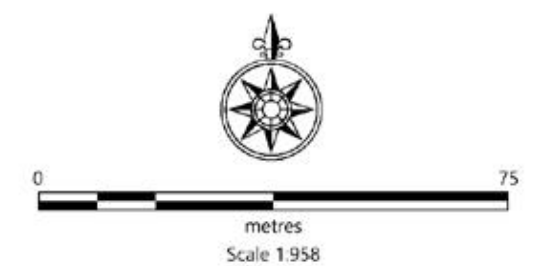
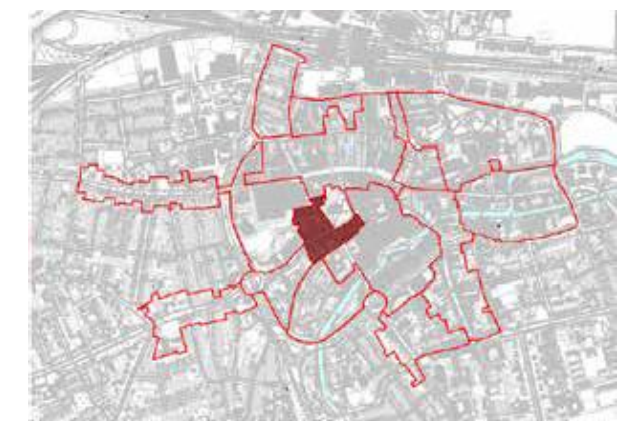
Figure 38. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 1.2



1.2 Castle/Gun Streets & St Mary's Butts

Sub areas

- 1.2.1 Hosier Street: Informal Market
- 1.2.2 St Mary's Butts/Gun Street: Historic Shops and Public Houses



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Sub area Character 1.2.1

Names

Hosier Street: Informal Market



Characteristics

- Range of 3-4 storeys
- Early C19 to mid/late C19
- Rear elevations vary between single and three storeys
- Mixed-use with terraced shops and industrial areas
- Predominantly brick constructed, with some use of timber frames, modern render and metal
- Victorian and Neo-Tudor architectural styles
- On-street car parking available

Strengths

- Market creates a dynamic and busy atmosphere
- View of St Mary's Minster as a vista stop
- Partially pedestrianised
- Row of mature trees

Weaknesses

- Looks better with more market stalls
- Temporary market stalls can appear unattractive
- Uncoordinated design of market stalls

1.2.2

St Mary's Butts/Gun Street: Historic Shops and Public Houses



- Range of 2 to 4 storeys (predominantly 3)
- Broad range from C16 to early C21
- Mix of timber-frame, brick, historic render and stone used as part of construction
- Public seating
- Gun Street is curved, creating an evolving street scene
- Small-scale shop units
- Overlooks the churchyard opposite

- A range of period buildings providing a varied street scene
- Retail providing a mixed offering
- Continuous or grouped shopfronts
- Attractive features, particularly sculptures
- Low traffic volumes and well used by pedestrians
- Good period buildings
- Multiple visual links
- Key views with strong visual links

- Narrow pavements
- Low footfall
- Hidden from the main shopping areas
- Some vacant units
- Obstacles on pavements present a tripping hazard
- Uneven pavements and road surfaces in poor condition
- Frequent flow of buses and associated signage create noise and clutter
- Some inappropriate alterations to historic buildings

Character Area 1.3 Level 2 [II]

Castle Street/Holy Brook: Historic and Modern Residential Character Area

Introduction

9.39 Castle Street formed part of the westward trade route to Bath (Figure 39). It once extended up the hill towards the junction with Russell Street and Coley Avenue, now named Castle Hill. The western part of the street was renamed Castle Hill after the construction of the roundabout for access to the Inner Distribution Road (IDR). Knowledge of this historic background explains the similarities in built form either side of the roundabout and the gradual change in the built environment progressing westwards along Castle Street.

Historical Note

- 9.40 Archaeological evidence supports there being early Medieval settlement on the edge of the probable Saxon core. There was unlikely to have been a definitive boundary between the two, with growth expanding and contracting over time. Early Medieval activity at No 41 Castle Street comprised the remains of floor layers and structures. Whilst not necessarily representing continuity of settlement, this together with evidence of river revetments to the south indicate similar activity during the Early Medieval to that identified within the Saxon core.
- 9.41 Potential for Medieval settlement at a later date, between 1500 and 1700, takes the form of evidence of timber framing at No 31, which has been identified by its Vernacular proportions, particularly the steeply pitched roof. The building has re-faced front and rear elevations, therefore only internal investigation would confirm an early date. The presence of Vernacular in parts of timber-framed buildings to the rear of No 27 is also likely to indicate this date.
- 9.42 This early-mid Medieval settlement represents the growth out from the Saxon core, rebuilding and infilling around existing buildings. Like the adjacent character area, the same process of growing intensification of buildings to the rear of plots is in evidence within the same series of historic maps. However, unlike the microcosm of buildings within the Saxon Core, the majority of the buildings to the west of Castle Street date from the 1700s onwards.

9.43 The majority of the Georgian-style terraced houses are now residential, together with a small number of offices and shops. Uses were more intermixed in the past as indicated by historic signage and photographs, which illustrate that at various periods the buildings were associated with a mix of uses including a small number of shops. No 27 Castle Street is distinguished today by a sign for The Old Reading Brewery.

9.44 Nevertheless, the gradual transition from more retail-oriented terraces to the east to increasingly residential and office use to the west is tangible. This trend forms part of a continuing progression from urban to suburban along Castle Hill, with further residential terraces to the east becoming progressively more suburban as more villas were constructed beyond more intensively occupied zones.

9.45 No 63 is the Grade II* listed Holybrook House; in the style of Sir Robert Taylor, it is a fine example of Georgian proportions with additional detailing. Internally, the detailing within the music room and staircase are of notable quality. However, the setting is affected by the Inner Distribution Road (IDR); it is for this reason that the roundabout and green space have been incorporated into the character area to assess the setting.

9.46 Prior to the construction of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), Castle Street and Castle Hill once formed a single uninterrupted street, a continuation of the main trading route west to Bath. The IDR is described in the current Conservation Area Appraisal for St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street as forming a physical and visual barrier. Indeed, the visual links across the roundabout can only be seen from specific vantage points (Figure 25 and 42). The carriageways and traffic affect the setting of the historic buildings, which once had similar buildings opposite. Holybrook House is the most severely affected, having lost a series of fine grain buildings along Coley Street to the south west and the westward continuation of Castle Street.

9.47 Nevertheless, the formal frontages facing onto the street can be appreciated, though the long gardens that once sloped down to the Holy Brook with views across the fields beyond Reading centre have been redeveloped. A number of historically notable people and events are associated with this part of Castle Street. Ms Phoebe Cusden, a peace campaigner, socialist and the founder of the Reading-Dusseldorf connection, lived at No 55, Talbot House. The adjacent almshouses are Victorian Vernacular Revival in style and present a more informal relationship with the street frontage, being set at a right angle to it. These almshouses were founded by Sir Thomas Vachel in 1634 and subsequently moved and rebuilt at this site in 1864 to replace older, dilapidated almshouses. This occurred after all borough almshouse endowments were consolidated as the General Almshouse Charities of Reading in 1861.

9.48 No 41 is an entrance into the modern 1990s residential development of the western portion of the old Simonds brewery complex. The residential development is built in brick and provides a good example of a sympathetic Neo-Georgian style carriage entrance fronting a modern development within the context of a historic street frontage. This development, which was partially built within this character area, is of a design that focused on interconnected streets and terraced housing, in a modern style. The other modern developments, most of which are built in brick, are comparatively less sympathetic and could potentially be designated as areas for enhancement.

Overall Importance

- 9.49 This street was essential as part of the main trading route from the market west towards Bath. It is unsurprising that the gradual transition from urban to suburban is still discernible along that historic route. The gradual growth of the Saxon core, together with Medieval expansion, is evidenced within this character area. This historic evidence, together with the recognition of the historic connection with Castle Hill, is key to understanding the significance of this character area.
- 9.50 Many of the historic buildings here are of sufficient quality to be protected as Grade II listed, having a consistent Georgian style that provides a high-quality urban context. One Grade II* building is of exceptional quality.

Boundary Review

- 9.51 To ensure that the area is more representative of the southern extent of Reading, the character area extends beyond that indicated within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area at the south western boundary. The full length of the historic plots that once extended down to the edge of the Holy Brook has been incorporated into the boundary. This boundary also represents the end of the plots here from the Medieval through to the early 20th century.

Summary of Key Issues

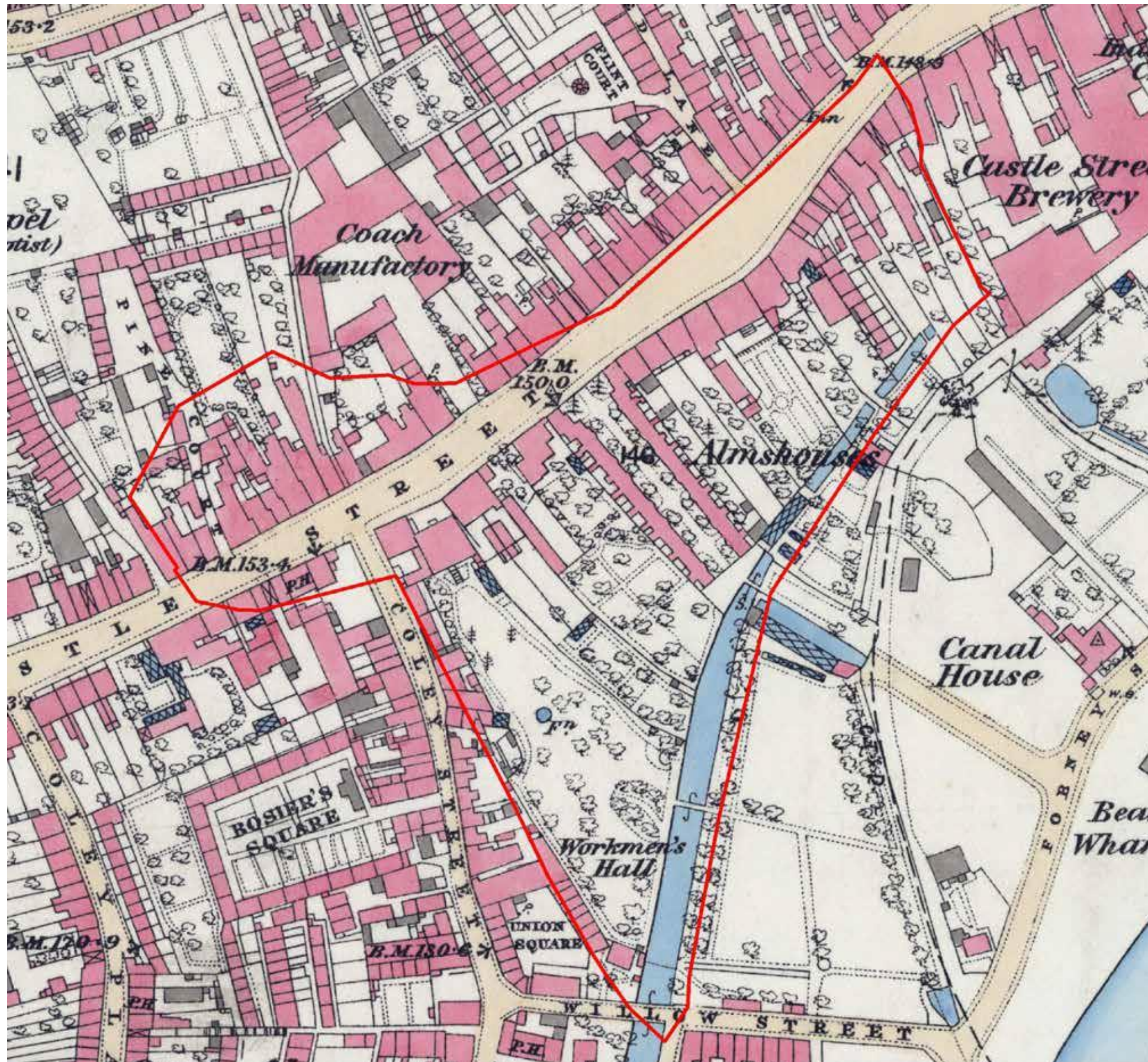
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 9.52 This part of the street is characterised by a consistent period of construction and a high quality of construction, with a consistent architectural form and style.
- 9.53 The narrow plots along Castle Street accentuate the fine grain of the built environment with the notably long length of plots extending southwards to meet the edge of the Holy Brook, which formed the limits of settlement for a number of centuries.
- 9.54 The beginnings of a transition from urban to sub-urban dwellings, more clearly expressed along Castle Hill, is discernible.

Principal Detracting Elements

- Infill of rear plots, once demarcating the edge of settlement.
- Proximity of the scale and grain of modern developments to the north of Castle Street detracts from the historic scale and grain.
- Traffic noise and pollution from the IDR detracts from the setting of the only Grade II* building and surrounding Grade II listed buildings and thereby detracts from its significance.
- A few examples of inappropriate replacement features.

Figure 39. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 1.3 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

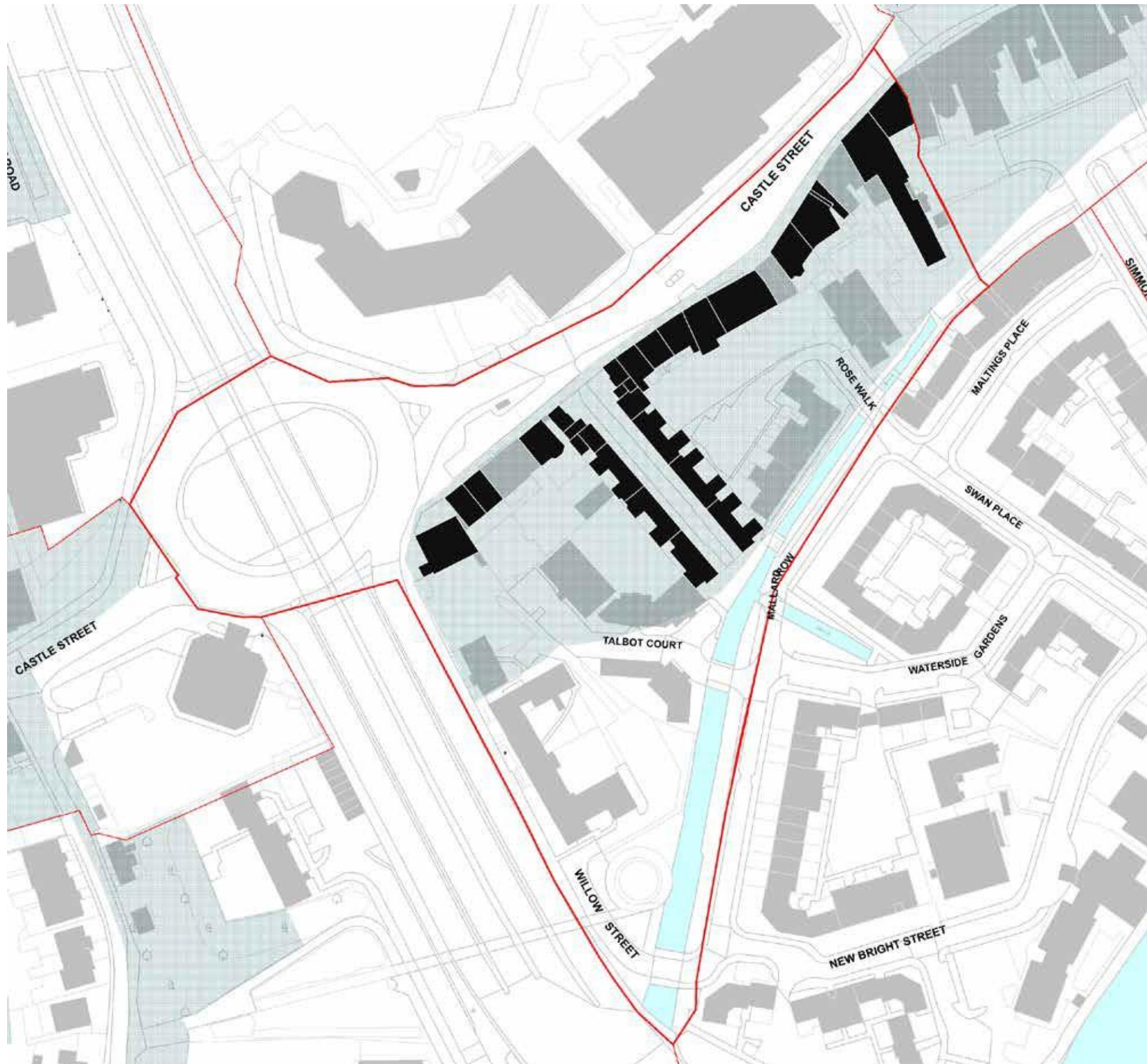


1.3 Castle Street/Holy Brook



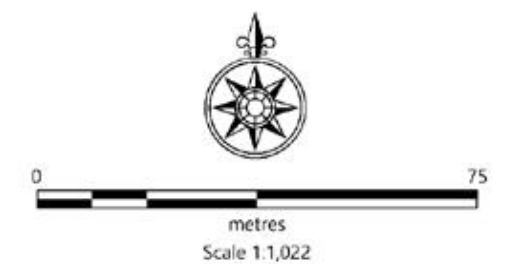
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Figure 40. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 1.3



1.3 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- Vachel Almhouses (Grade II listed)
- 47 and 49, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 39, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 59 And 61, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 51, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 33-37, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Talbot House (Grade II listed)
- 23 And 25, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 27, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Holybrook House (Grade II* listed)
- 43, Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 45, Castle Street (Grade II listed)

Conservation Areas

- St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area

Figure 41. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 1.3



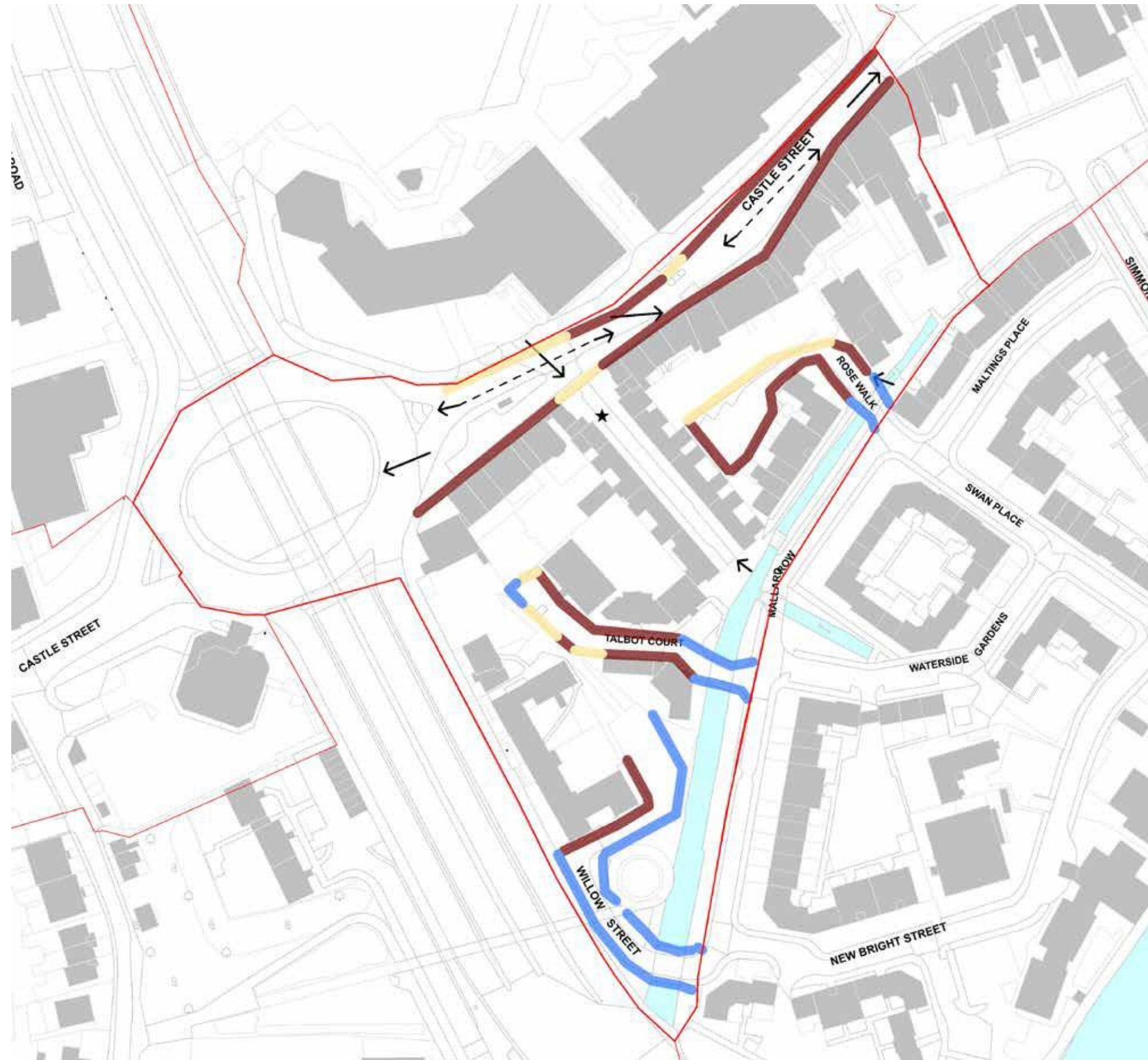
1.3 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



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Figure 42. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 1.3



1.3 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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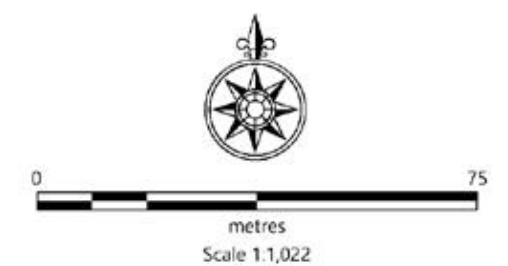
Figure 43. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 1.3






1.3 Castle Street/Holy Brook

Sub areas

- 1.3.1 Castle Street: Almshouses
- 1.3.2 Rose Walk & Talbot Court: Modern Residential Areas
- 1.3.3 Castle Street (opposite civic buildings): Historic Residential Areas



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| Sub area Character | 1.3.1 | 1.3.2 | 1.3.3 |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Names | Castle Street: Almshouses | Rose Walk & Talbot Court: Modern Residential Areas | Castle Street (opposite civic buildings): Historic Residential Areas |
| |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 storeys • Medium density terraced residential cottages in small plots • Early C17 foundation ‘rebuilt’ at current site in 1864-1867 • Victorian vernacular revival style • Constructed from brick and stone • Continuous but varied built-line • Site slopes down from road to Holy Brook • Gated access to central garden • Fenced front gardens • Maintained grass and hedges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly 3-4 storeys • Late C20 to early C21 • Predominantly high-density residential blocks of flats • Predominantly brick constructed, with some timber cladding, stone and rubbed brick • Mixed frontages, some on-street and some set back • On-street and off-street rear parking • Sculpted grass and hedgerows | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-3 storeys (predominantly 3 storeys) • Georgian to late C20 • Medium-density terraced houses in small plots • Predominantly residential, with office and retail use • Wide, sinuous street, creating good vistas • Predominantly brick construction, with some stone and historic or modern render • Continuous but varied built-line • Discontinuous shops • Strong visual links with St Mary’s Butts, Gun Street and the wider townscape • On-street parking |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent architectural style and detailing • Plaque detailing the provenance of the buildings • Historic features throughout • Reasonably quiet location (especially away from the main road) • Long unbroken view from the road • Attractive historic lampposts • Multiple views of the former malthouse on the northern side of Fobney Street (Grade II listed). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet location • Little traffic pollution • Easy pedestrian access towards Reading centre • Multiple access routes to southern portion of the sub area • Diverse architecture • Attractive historic lampposts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed architectural styles, functional types and periods creating a varied street scene • Street of mainly listed houses • Frequently unfolding views |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one access point by foot and vehicle • The steep decline may make access difficult for those with disabilities • Does not utilise the Holy Brook at the south end of site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one vehicular access route to the north eastern portion of the sub area • Large wheelie bins were visible on the street | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent traffic and busy junction • Low level of commercial activity • Some premises showing signs of neglect • Poor surface condition of tarmac • Obstacles on pavement of bins, street signage and phone booths • Unightly wheelie bins kept on the pavement |

10. Reading Abbey, Civic and Gaol Area (Medieval Origins)

Character Area 2.1 Level 2 [II]

Blagrove Street & The Forbury: Abbey and Civic Character Area

Introduction

- 10.1 Some Saxon activity is noted in the archaeological record in this area, however, convincing evidence of settlement at this early date is elusive. It is thought that the area upon which Reading Abbey was developed, forming the largest parcel of land within this character area, was unoccupied by the Saxons. Subsequently, the remaining part of the character area developed initially as part of the Reading Abbey complex and post-dissolution the area continued to play an important civic role in Reading, as seen in the development of the town hall complex illustrated on Speed's map. However, Civil War defences and destruction caused by the Civil War have left visible and invisible traces within this character area. It developed rapidly as a commercial core during the 17th century, thrived during the 18th century (Figures 11-13 and 15) and continues to be identified as one of two market cores from which Reading grew.

Historical Note

- 10.2 The monastery was founded by King Henry I (1121). The monastic complex was planned and constructed over the next 100 years, which extended to the west and south of the present-day ruins (Figure 44). Subsequently, new buildings were added to the complex and the water's edge along this southern boundary was retained by a timber framing revetment. The Abbey Gate was once the Inner Gate within the complex dividing the outer public forecourt of the Abbey and the service area given over to a mill, stables, stores, workshops and wharf. The Abbey Hospitium and St Laurence's Church were located inside the west gate.
- 10.3 Royal connections were highly influential and Reading Abbey formed part of the European pilgrimage honouring St James, marking Reading as a significant location with international contacts. Beyond established routes, proximity to the river provided a key strategic location for trade. Evidence of revetment dates from the mid-13th to the 15th centuries and more substantial construction of buildings and wharfage from the 14th century. Evidence of the management of the flow of water at the Abbey mill race and modifications to the riverside layout also date to these centuries.
- 10.4 Elsewhere within the complex, 40 burials, all orientated east-west, were recorded near the Forbury Gardens boundary wall. An additional 10 burials were discovered below the wall that separates St James Church from the present-day Forbury Gardens. The current interpretation is that this was a formal burial area later replaced by the graveyard adjacent to St Laurence's Church (1557).
- 10.5 Subsequent religious and political turbulence marked years of crisis (1529 to 1600), during which time the Reformation Parliament recognised King Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church in England (1534). Valuation by Royal Commissioners in 1535 confirmed Reading Abbey as one of the wealthiest in England. Subsequently, Reading Abbey was dissolved, following resistance against which Abbot Hugh was executed in 1539. As property of a convicted traitor, the Abbot's possessions were forfeited to the Crown. Post Dissolution (1539-1661), structures were repurposed or used as a source of building stone. There appears to have been a short period of abandonment of the river frontage, it was later reinvigorated as indicated by evidence of land reclamation and further revetment in the 17th century.
- 10.6 Religious practice continued at St Laurence's Church, which was modified and extended over the centuries. Surviving 12th century features consist of: the south east quoins of the nave; a small south window also in the nave; and fragments of a doorway set inside the wall of the north aisle. The church was enlarged as indicated by the restored lancets on the eastern wall of the chancel and the south doorway of the nave. The west tower (1438 to 1450) was built in a perpendicular style. The north aisle is dated to 15th century. Further alterations are recorded from that date up to the late 19th century. Interior features are also noted in *The Buildings of Berkshire, Including the Chancel Screen, Bench Ends, Font and Pulpit*.
- 10.7 Within St Laurence's churchyard are the partially surviving elements of the Abbey Hospitium (1196), which were incorporated into a hospice of St John the Baptist (1486). It has been modified since and underwent a series of different uses over the centuries. Also within St Laurence's churchyard are twelve listed tombs among other graves. The high brick wall that surrounds the churchyard was 'rebuilt in 1791', and marks the enlargement of the 1550s churchyard. At that time, 'The Forbury' was an informal open space, used for markets, fairs and other events.
- 10.8 At the western end of the former Abbey grounds stood an 18th century prison that is now occupied by the present-day Reading Gaol. The original prison on this site was the House of Correction and County Gaol (1785 - 1793), which replaced the earlier prisons on Castle Street, at Greyfriars and adjacent to St Laurence's Church.
- 10.9 The current Reading Gaol (1842-1844) was designed to impose a new system of 'correction' on the men and women imprisoned there. It was considered a pioneering English adaptation, designed to enable enforcement of the 'separate system' that was a part of the history of prison reform at that time. The radial-plan shape facilitates observation at the central point; this observation atrium has an 'octagon' shape, looking down on all parts of the prison. Therefore, the layout forms part of its significance in addition to the Victorian Gothic Revival style (or neo-Tudor style), designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott.

- 10.10 The perimeter wall is of importance because it was integral to the function of the prison, though it is excluded from statutory listing. Adding to its significance is the Banksy graffiti of a prisoner's escape, recently sprayed on the north eastern elevation of the perimeter wall. All buildings within the perimeter wall, except the main prison building are excluded from statutory listing. However, those that are linked to the prison are curtilage listed, having been built at the time of listing. Nevertheless, they are of less significance due to their limited or negative contribution to the site.
- 10.11 In addition to County Gaol, a town hall (1785 and 1879-1882) was built nearby; it is now situated behind the more recent town hall. A drawing of this earlier building is recorded as the building to the left of St Laurence's Church in The History and Antiquities of Reading.
- 10.12 In contrast with the building programme on the Reading Abbey site up to this point, the need to protect the remaining Abbey ruins became recognised. Between 1833 and 1915 Reading Abbey structures were placed under the guardianship of trustees instigated by public subscription. The South Transept and Chapter House were saved in this way. The inner court of Reading Abbey became Forbury Gardens (1830s - 1850s). Approximately 2 ha in size and enclosed by brick and flint walls and railings, it was designed as gated public gardens by J.B. Clacy and restored in 2003-2005. There are a number of listed and high-quality structures and sculptures that contribute to the significance of Forbury Gardens, including commemorative monuments. The Maiwand Lion (1886) by Blackall Simonds is often used as a symbol of Reading and commemorates those lost in Afghanistan in 1880.
- 10.13 Within the grounds of the Abbey, nestled within surviving fragments of the Abbey, lies the Church of St James (1837 and 1840) by A.W.N. Pugin. Built in neo-Norman style, it is said to reflect the Abbey, having an apse-ended nave, a Bellcote and oculus. Around the same time, St James's Presbytery was constructed, both of which were built after the punitive sanctions experienced by Catholics up until the late 1700s. Therefore, their location within the Abbey grounds is of symbolic importance. Located adjacent are the former school buildings of St James's (1876). Among other changes of use within Reading Abbey, the Inner Gate was sold and redesigned by Sir Gilbert Scott (1861).
- 10.14 The wealth generated by Victorian industry was expressed architecturally as a way to celebrate Reading's economic success. Notable sculpture and architecture includes the: Queen Victoria Jubilee statue (1857) carved by George Blackall Simonds; Shire Hall (1909 - 1911) and the Assize Court. The Assize Court sits to the south of Forbury Gardens (1861) in French Baroque revival style; the rear extension was designed by Broadway and Malyan. Shire Hall in Queen Anne Revival (now The Forbury Hotel) was the county administrative headquarters.
- 10.15 In addition to the civic buildings associated with the Assize Court and Shire Hall, a new civic complex (Municipal buildings) was constructed adjacent to the town hall built a century earlier. This complex consists of the town council chamber and offices (1872-5) by Alfred Waterhouse; Former School of Art (*circa* 1879); Concert Hall (1879 and 1882); Reading Museum (1882) and the art gallery (1894) by W. R. Howell. All built in Victorian Gothic Revival style with red and silver-grey brick (made locally by Colliers), sandstone dressings, decorative terracotta freezes and detailing and slate roof tiles. The buildings, designed in successive phases, were with each additional building continuing the built line, reflecting the architectural detailing and interconnected with those adjacent. The clock tower of the town hall was positioned to be visible from both Friar Street and Market Place.
- 10.16 A number of historic buildings still stand among the modern buildings on Valpy Street, Blagrove Street and Forbury Road, including No.s 17-19 Valpy Street (1770) and Walter Parson's Corn Stores (1890) on Forbury Road. Nos. 17-19 Valpy Street was once part of Queens Hall. The Corn Stores fronted a corn merchant's warehouse associated with carriageway to the rear for loading and unloading. In contrast, the Rising Sun Public House, 18 Forbury Road, reflects the Victorian Vernacular style and scale. Among these retained historic buildings are modern office blocks, some of brick and glass and others of glass and cladding. Irrespective of the variation of materials, none respond to the historic setting. The chosen scale obstructs views or limits the prominence of the Victorian civic precinct. The Guardian Royal Exchange Building or Minerva House by Ellsworth Sykes Partnership (1979 to 1983) is designed slightly more sympathetically with a varied roofline designed to echo that of the aforementioned town hall and civic precinct buildings. However, in this instance too, the scale competes with that of the Victorian civic precinct.
- 10.17 Likewise, the modern buildings to the south of Forbury Square vary in style and are large in scale and massing. At Forbury Square stands office buildings (2000-2003) including Davidson Court, an office designed by Lifschutz Davidson and 1 Forbury Square. Both are Modernist International in style and create impact through large glazed façades overlooking the paved court with raised grass beds. The surrounding space lessens the impact on the two adjacent historic buildings, the Assize Court and Shire Hall (previously described). To the east is a modern block more in-keeping with the surroundings. It is the office of Abbot's House (1982 to 1990) by T. P. Bennett and Partners, which was built in brick with arcaded stone ground floor. This building is Neo-Georgian in style reflecting the Regency houses just to the east through the use of balconettes and Regency style architectural references.
- 10.18 The informal gated gardens adjacent are well maintained and lie to the rear of the Georgian and Regency style houses on Abbot's Walk. There are key views here of Reading Abbey and from the informal gardens to the rear. This area gives access to Abbey Square. To the south is The Blade (2009) by Shepherd Robson (engineers Whitbybird), which provides a skyline-based way-finding reference across many areas in central Reading. Opposite is the modern extension to the Crown Court, previously described.
- 10.19 The surrounding buildings are a mix of residential and office and the Abbey Baptist Church associated with a mix of architectural styles, scale massing and materials. The tall buildings along the narrow streets create an enclosed, canyon-effect obscuring views of the historic environment just beyond. More space is provided around Reading Central library (1980s). Designed by Ian Whittaker and built by Berkshire County properties, it is a three storey brick building with segmental arcading. It spans the Holy Brook and part of the preserved scheduled Reading Abbey buried remains. Just to the east, are the remains of the Abbey Mill, with the Historic England list entry dating to the remnants to the late 12th or early 13th century. The original Abbey Mill is believed to have first been constructed in the 12th century, perhaps shortly after Reading Abbey was established in 1121. The three surviving arches are partially rebuilt with decorative stones from Reading Abbey ruins.

Overall Importance

- 10.20 Having originated as a Saxon trading point, the establishment of Reading Abbey reflected Reading's strategic importance in Medieval England, ruled by royalty. Reading became subject to over 400 years of monastic rule, Royal visits, national parliaments and international trade and pilgrimage. Reading Abbey had a formative influence not only in governance but also the physical layout of the streets as part of formal urban planning. The links between royal and monastic rule were never so evident than during the dissolution of the Abbey and ruination of the monastic complex.
- 10.21 At that point in time, Reading had become an important town within the region, which influenced the way this character area developed during the following 480 years of, comparatively, greater secular rule and religious freedom. The town hall and complex, county gaol and the county's administrative headquarters were established at the western and southern extent of the former Abbey. The architectural splendour of and associations with these buildings now form part of Reading's identity.
- 10.22 The designs of the majority of modern buildings contribute far less to that character though public realm design and improved access have contributed to the historic setting. Permeability between various standing elements of Reading Abbey allows for greater appreciation. Views from and within more hidden spaces, such as St Laurence's Churchyard, create an intimacy and appreciation for smaller spaces that contribute to the wider sense of place; strong visual links form an important part of that experience.

Boundary Review

- 10.23 The boundary for the character area reflects that of the extent of the former Abbey complex, which has become the focus for Victorian civic redevelopment projects resulting in a character that differs from the immediate surroundings.
- 10.24 The character area boundary is similar to that considered within the Reading Abbey Revealed Conservation Plan. However, the Market Place has been studied as a separate character area. In addition, the area of Blakes Cottages was included in the Reading Abbey Revealed Conservation Plan in recognition of their contribution to the setting. Having had the opportunity to study the wider area, Blakes Cottages has been assessed as having a character more in-keeping with the area to the south. It has, therefore, been incorporated within a separate character area to the south of the river, which does not diminish from its contribution to the setting of Reading Abbey and the importance of views of Reading Abbey from across the water.

Summary of Key Issues

Overall Heritage Value/Significance

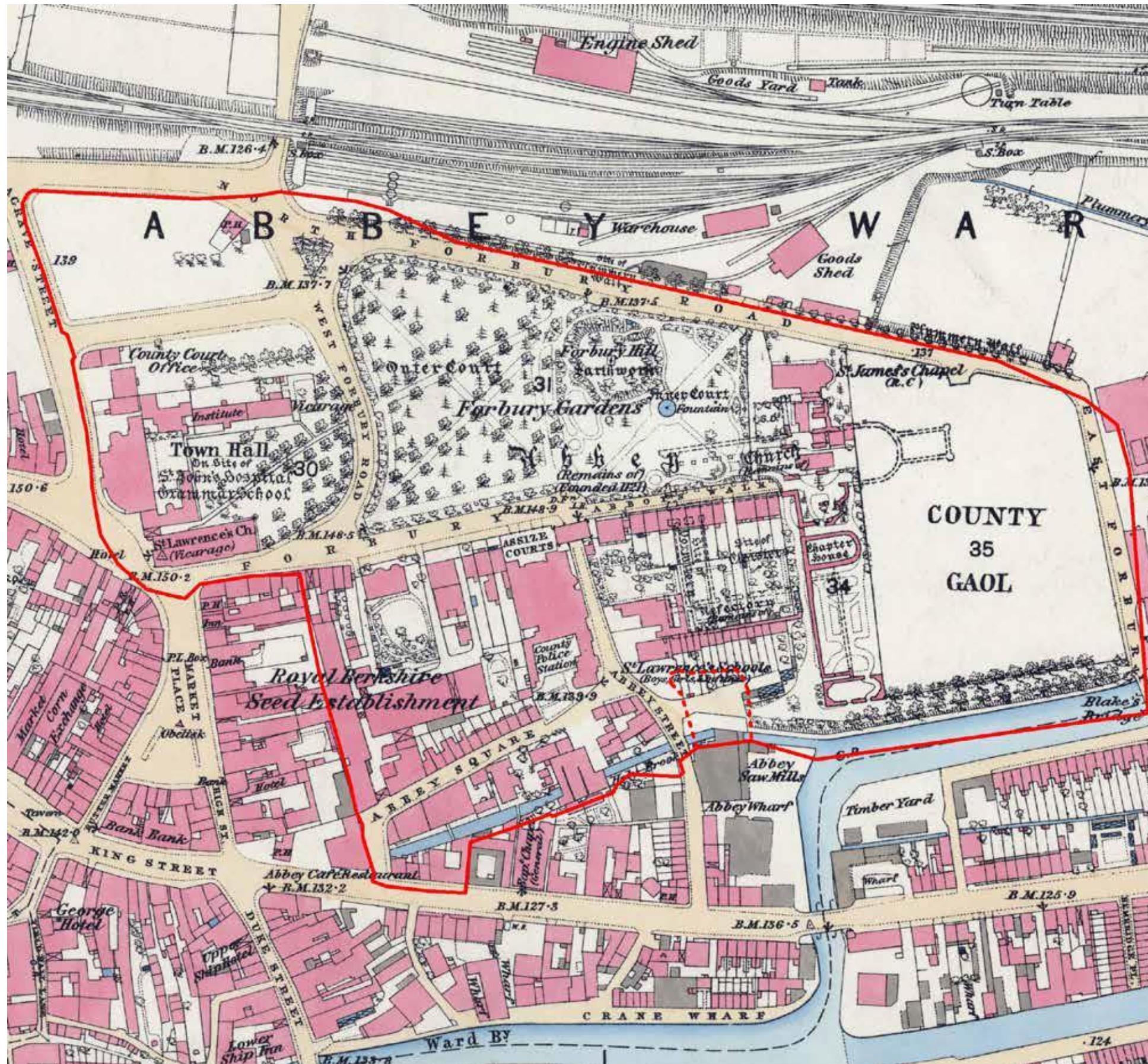
- 10.25 Building complexes in this character area capture key moments in Reading's history, expressed in a form of exceptional built quality; each now survives in varying states of repair or disrepair¹, depending on the history of their continuance or demise. Consequently, there are a mix of Grade I and Grade II* listed ruins and structures and areas of scheduled remains.
- 10.26 All contribute to a sense of place. Nevertheless, the Abbey arguably most successfully captures the imagination as one of the ten wealthiest monastic houses in England and in its influence in changing the shape of Reading. The area continues to be a focus for memorials and celebrations within areas of high quality public realm.

Principal Detracting Elements

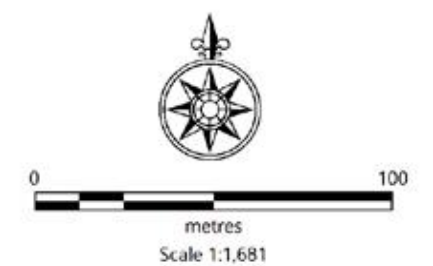
- The designs of many of the modern buildings do not reflect the historic character of the surroundings and their height obscures views of those iconic structures.
 - One important structure remains on the at risk register, Abbey Mill (Grade II listed), which is located on land in private ownership.
- 10.27 The present-day Reading Abbey requires careful management. In addition to being a scheduled monument (List Entry Number 1007932) the fragments of Reading Abbey are protected through statutory listing. Having been allowed to remain in a dilapidated state post-dissolution, the western parts of the Abbey Complex and chancel, Lady Chapel and cemetery were subject to redevelopment, which has resulted in a number of designated zones geographically isolated from the main scheduled area. These are located at: St Laurence's graveyard; the rear of Reading library located along the Holy Brook; and east of the abbey stables, where the mill arch stands by the Holy Brook.
- 10.28 Heritage Lottery Funding was granted for consolidation of those ruins in a dangerous state, which included soft capping and coatings to the rubble flint walls. These form the remains of the Chapter House, parts of the refectory, dormitory and necessarium and part of the Church and are accessible during the day time.

¹ All but the Abbey Mill, which is on private land, have been conserved.

Figure 44. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 2.1 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

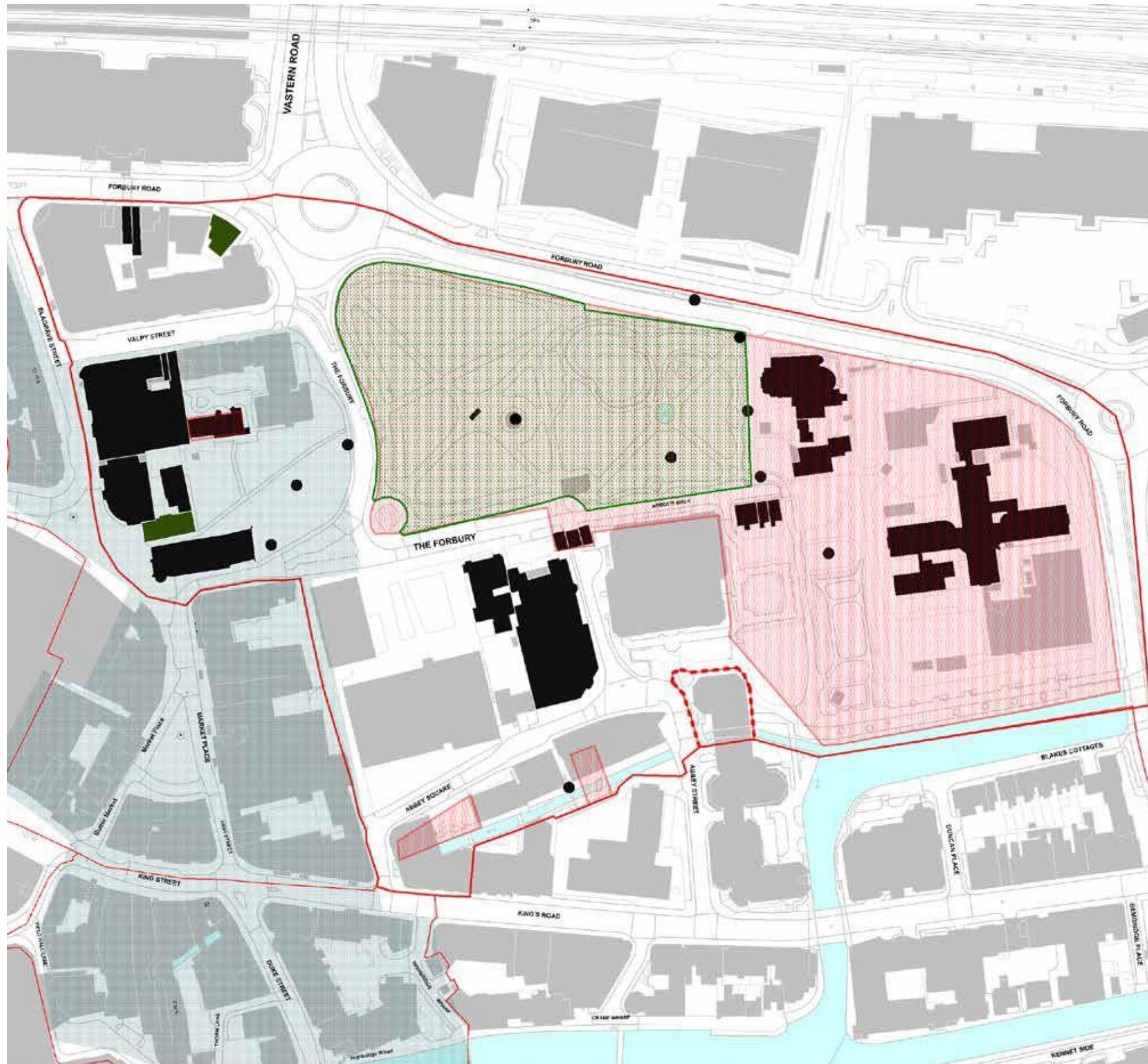


2.1 Blagrove Street & The Forbury



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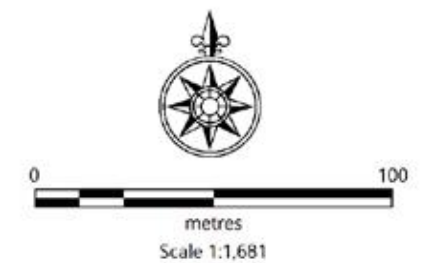
Figure 45. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 2.1



2.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area

Note: The stream, Holy Brook, belongs to 2.1 which flows beneath the building in 4.2. So the building is in 4.2 but the stream beneath is 2.1.



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- Walter Parsons Corn Stores (Grade II listed)
- Assize Courts (Grade II listed)
- St James's Presbytery (Grade II listed)
- Town Council Chamber and Offices with Clock Tower (Grade II* listed)
- Wall and Gatepiers of St Laurence's Graveyard (Grade II listed)
- Maiwand Memorial (Grade II listed)
- Anglian Cross (Grade II listed)
- Drinking Fountain On South Side of St Laurence's Tower (Grade II listed)
- Tracery Fragments to south of No 10 (Grade II listed)
- Church of St Laurence (Grade I listed)
- The Plummery Wall (Grade II listed)
- 11 And 12, Abbot's Walk (Grade II listed)
- Small Town Hall (Grade II listed)
- The Concert Hall (Grade II listed)
- Wall between Forbury Road and Abbott's Walk to west of St James's Church (Grade II listed)
- Shelter at north east corner of Forbury Gardens (Grade II listed)
- Church of St James's (Grade II listed)
- Former School of Art (Grade II listed)
- 10, Abbot's Walk (Grade II listed)
- Municipal Buildings (Grade II listed)
- Reading Abbey Ruins (Grade I listed)
- St Laurence's Church and Churchyard twelve tombs in St Laurence's Churchyard (Grade II listed)
- Archway connecting Forbury Gardens to Abbey Ruins. Including retaining walls flanking path to Abbey Ruins (Grade II* listed)
- Reading Gaol (Main Building) Former Her Majesty's Prison (Grade II listed)
- Reading Museum (Grade II listed)
- Shire Hall (Grade II listed)
- St James Former School Buildings (Grade II listed)
- Abbey Mill Ruins (Grade II listed)
- Abbey Gate (Grade I listed)

Park and Gardens

- The Forbury Garden (Grade II listed)

Scheduled Monuments

- Reading Abbey: A Cluniac and Benedictine Monastery and Civil War Earthwork

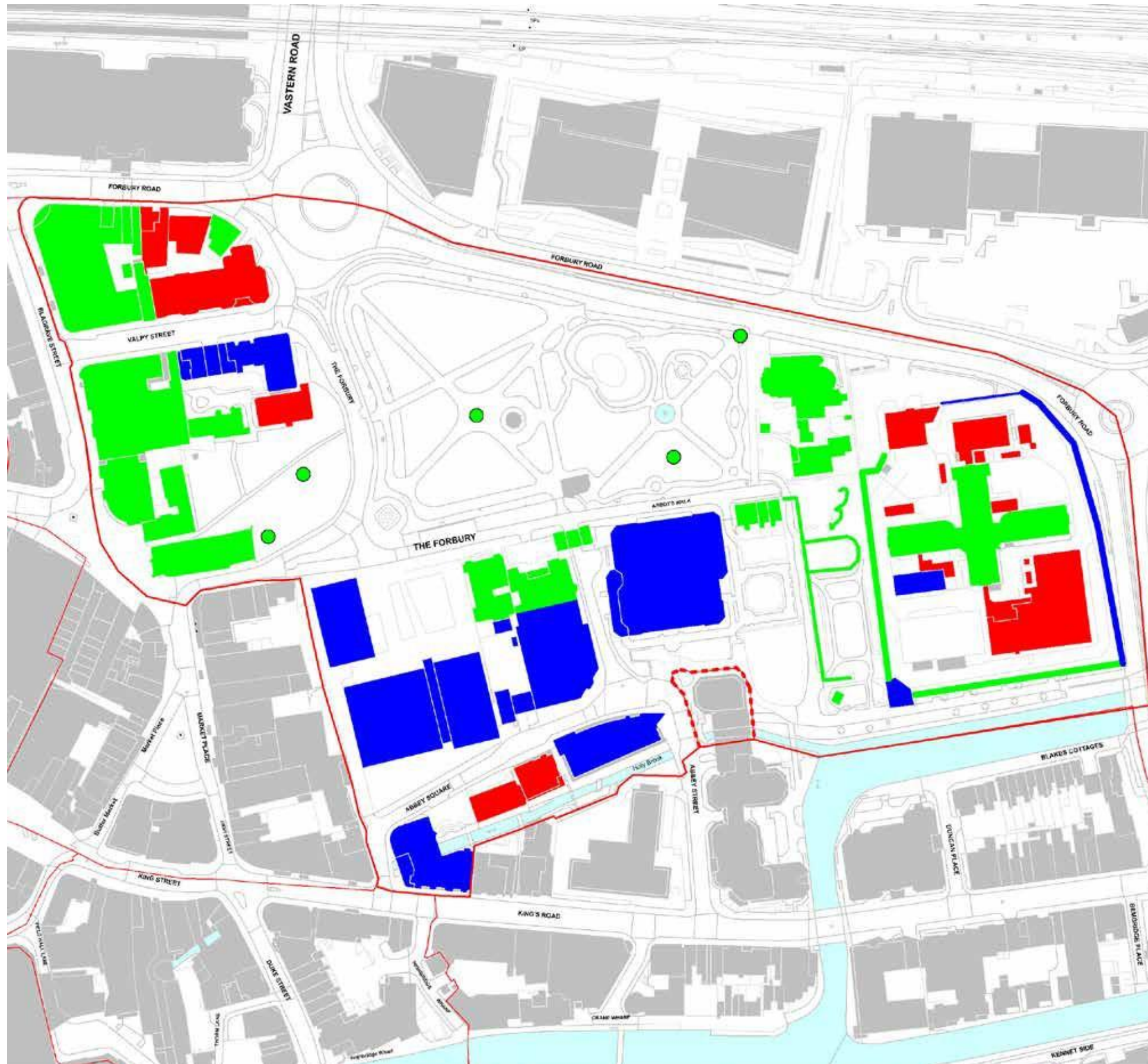
Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- 18, Forbury Road (LLB)
- 1, Friar Street (BTM)

Conservation Areas

- Market Place and London Street Conservation Area

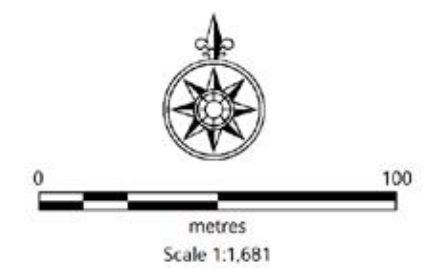
Figure 46. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 2.1



2.1 Relative Contributions to Character

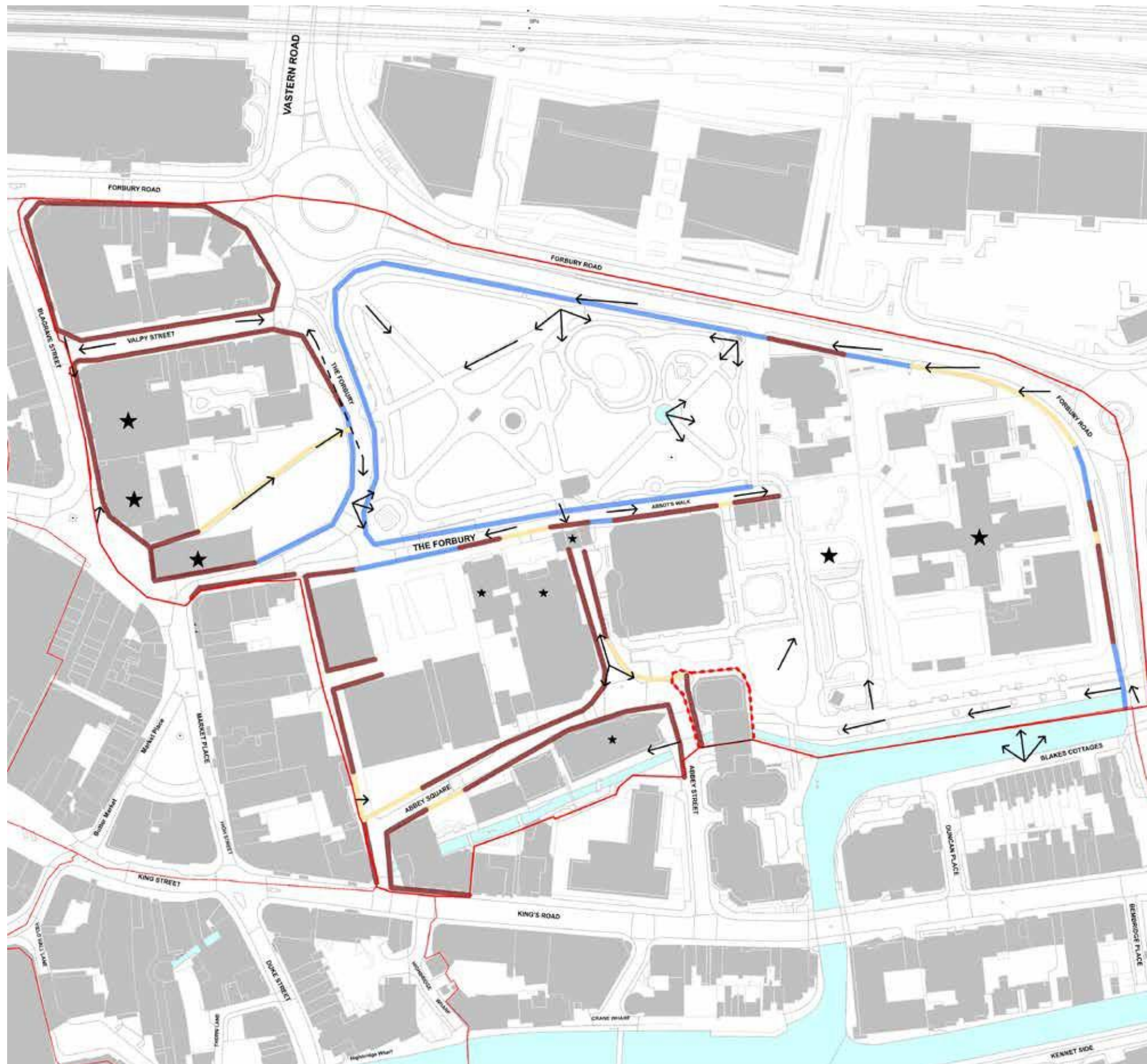
- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor

Note: The stream, Holy Brook, belongs to 2.1 which flows beneath the building in 4.2. So the building is in 4.2 but the stream beneath is 2.1.



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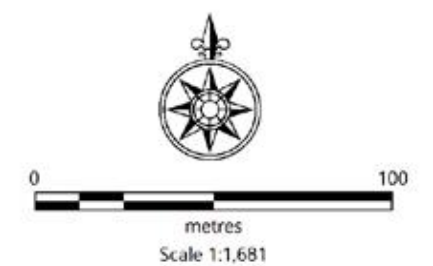
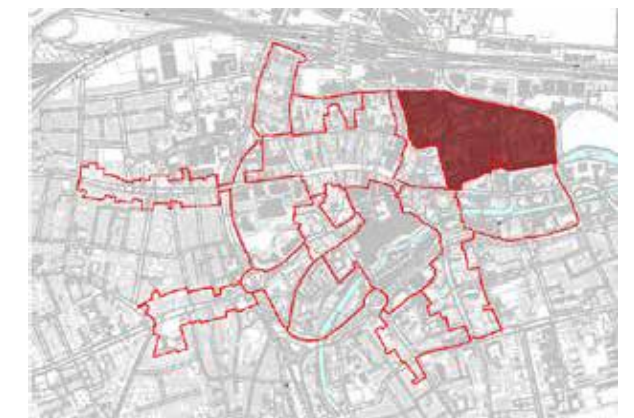
Figure 47. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 2.1



2.1 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

- Strong Visual Containment
- Neutral Visual Containment
- Weak Visual Containment
- ★ Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
- ★ Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
- - - Kinetic view
- ↔ Key Viewing Points
- Static View

Note: The stream, Holy Brook, belongs to 2.1 which flows beneath the building in 4.2. So the building is in 4.2 but the stream beneath is 2.1.



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Figure 48. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 2.1

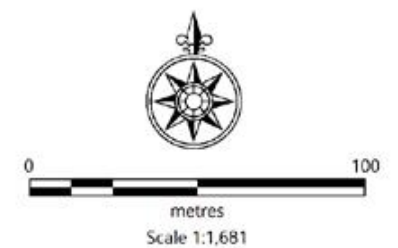


2.1 Blagrove Street & The Forbury





Sub areas



- 2.1.1 a) St Laurence's Church and Churchyard & b) St James Church & Abbey ruins : Abbey ruins and Churches
- 2.1.2 a) Blagrove Street east & Valpy Street south & b) County Court: Historic Civic Areas
- 2.1.3 Forbury Gardens: Formal Public Gardens
- 2.1.4 a) Valpy Street north & b) Forbury Square /Abbey Square: Modern Commercial
- 2.1.5 Abbot's House Gardens & Balls Head: Formal Public Gardens
- 2.1.6 Abbot's Walk: Historic Residential
- 2.1.7 Gaol Site

Note: The stream, Holy Brook, belongs to 2.1 which flows beneath the building in 4.2. So the building is in 4.2 but the stream beneath is 2.1.



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| Sub area Character | 2.1.1 | 2.1.2 (areas a & b) | 2.1.3 | 2.1.4 (areas a & b) |
|------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Names | a) St Laurence's Church and Churchyard & b) St James Church & Abbey ruins | a) Blagrove Street east & Valpy Street south & b) County Court | Forbury Gardens: Formal Public Gardens | a) Valpy Street north & b) Forbury Square /Abbey Square: Modern Commercial |
| |  |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 1-3 storeys (predominantly 1) • C12 to C19 • Combination of ruins, intact structures and churches designed by noted architects • Predominantly stone construction, with some brick • Mix of Victorian Gothic Revival, Medieval Gothic and Gothic architectural styles • Varied siting and location of buildings • Surrounded by open and green space • Strong religious focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 3 - 8 storeys (predominantly 3-3.5) • C18 to early C21 • Predominantly medium to high density structures • Range of different civic buildings and commemorative sculpture • Buildings principally constructed from brick, metal and terracotta • Sculpture constructed from stone and bronze • Provides focal points • Court buildings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid C17 to mid C20 • Contains memorials, monuments, a low-density building, boundary walls and a Civil War earthwork reworked in the C19 • Predominantly stone, metal and brick structures within a formally planted setting • Gated public space • Formal landscaping and paths within the former Reading Abbey complex • Fragments of the Abbey are incorporated into the built fabric • A serpentine path creates permeability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of building heights (2-14 storeys) • C12 to early C21 • Predominantly large-scale structures • Varied density • Mixed architectural styles • Wide range of building materials • Varied building line to street frontage |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Abbey ruins is a noteworthy site contributing to identity of Reading with strong cultural links • The sites (a & b) are attractive town centre open spaces and the Abbey in particular a popular and free attraction • Historic signage to aid wayfinding • Key viewing points • Frequently used as pedestrian routes and entertainment space • Peaceful due to low traffic levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains important civic buildings • Attractive consistent built design • Distinctive architecture in decorative brick designed by noted architects • Peaceful due to low traffic levels • Public spaces contribute to the setting • Open to public • Accessible by public transport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of public monuments • Band stand provides venue for music events • Location for public events • Attractive planting schemes • Numerous links that improve inter-connections • Multiple historical information panels • IDR reinforces the boundary of the plummery wall helping to appreciate the relative seclusion of the outer area of the Abbey. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains of the Abbey Mill arch over the Holy Brook • Good pedestrian links • Low traffic levels • Historic signage to aid wayfinding • Open space of Forbury Square |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited accessibility consisting of only two access points to both areas • The Abbey site is less well-known than other abbeys of its status, (though the site is becoming a better known visitor attraction) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacent to busy bus routes so can be busy • Some inappropriate alterations to Town Council Chamber and Offices building, such as unsympathetic window replacements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively busy Inner Distribution Road to the north invades the peace by contributing some noise and pollution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Littering in and around the Holy Brook • Poor public realm around hidden and underused space • Tall building heights loom over the historic Holy Brook • Buildings appear designed without reference to local context |

| Sub area Character | 2.1.5 | 2.1.6 | 2.1.7 |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| Names | Abbot's House Gardens & Balls Head: Formal Public Gardens | Abbot's Walk: Historic Residential | Gaol Site |
| |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central grassed area surrounded by paved paths and managed trees and bushes within a gated space and a grassed area to the south accessed via steps to the river-side • Railings • Sculptures • Bollards and historic lamp posts • Open spaces, that includes private managed Gardens associated with Abbot's House and public green space to the south | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 storeys plus lower ground floors • Early C19 to circa 1840 • Medium-density residential terraces • Regency architectural style • Constructed from stone, brick, with some modern render • Located in a cul-de-sac • Consistent building line • Numerous links | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-5 storeys • Comprises a number of interconnected large individual buildings and a perimeter wall • 1842-44 to late C20 • Grade II listed prison building • Main building constructed of brick, asbestos tiles, stone and concrete and C20 buildings constructed of cladding, metal and glass • Limited open spaces within perimeter wall • Designed landscape |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet area • Lower levels of traffic pollution • Views of Reading Abbey Ruins • Historic character • Mature trees and shaded areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to be consistent (group value) • Railings and frontages enhance appearance • Links create good connections • Low traffic levels • Quiet location | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong historical links to Sir Gilbert Scott (Gothic Revival architect), both world wars, the Easter Rising and a number of famous prisoners, including Oscar Wilde and Anthony Joshua • High archaeological significance as built over east end of Abbey • Strong place-making links • Popular and significant Banksy graffiti on the north eastern wall • Visually arresting scale of the perimeter wall |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden and underused area, that receives low footfall from town centre • Southern access point to raised northern portion provides limited accessibility to those with reduced mobility • Few access points to raised northern portion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow pathway • Low footfall contributes to an underused area • Some inappropriate replacement features to houses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perimeter wall blocks views to the centre of the prison complex • Vacant and disused at present • The prison has numerous sizeable unsympathetic mid-late 20th century extensions |

Character Area 2.2 Level 2 [II]

Market Place: Historic Retail and Market Character Area

Introduction

10.29 This area consists of the market associated with Reading Abbey and, based on redevelopment of the market and the town hall complex in the 18th century, is interrelated with the development of Blagrove Street (Figure 49). However, Medieval settlement evidence has been identified through archaeological evidence of settlement. Therefore, most of our information derives from documentary sources relating to the founding and development of Reading Abbey. Documentary sources indicate that Reading's street pattern had emerged two centuries after 1121 and has remained largely unchanged over the subsequent centuries.

Historical Note

10.30 While a Saxon market has been identified around St Mary's Minster, which continued to be a focus for Medieval growth, the influence of Reading Abbey was also pivotal to the development of Reading's trading influence in Medieval times. It proved to be a catalyst for settlement expansion and town-planning, until its dissolution.

10.31 A market had been established by *circa* 1186-1213, based on deeds documenting activities relating to the Abbey, outside the west gate of the Abbey's boundary walls. The market benefited from unrestricted trade and a series of annual fairs becoming a catalyst of growth. St Laurence's Church overlooked the triangular market place, which took the form still in evidence today. Duke Street and High Bridge provided ease of access to Market Place for traders from the south and east via London Street.

10.32 Routes west were also planned to support the markets. Abbey deeds indicate formal planning of Broad Street and later, Friar Street, to link with the Abbey's market. Formal urban planning is indicated by the consistency of plot size; a typical plot layout of 127 by 17' or 42 by 6 m is documented in sources *circa* 1270. Settlement developed along these routes, however, archaeological evidence is rare due to a limited amount of archaeological investigation. Excavation at 172 Friar Street, on the boundary with Market Place, recovered three phases of occupation from the 13th century onwards.

10.33 By the 14th century, a series of different types of markets are recorded including fish (as Fish Shambles) and meat (as Butcher's Shambles), Cordwainers' Street, Shoemakers' Row, Cheese or Fish Row, Butcher Row and The Drapery. Other commodities were also traded including corn and iron, documented in 1347.

10.34 The aforementioned Abbey deeds also referred to a dwelling house with outbuildings and land assigned to its use along London Street, indicating an established route. Archaeological evidence of a bridge over the Holy Brook at Duke Street, near the present-day High Bridge, provides a date for an earlier bridge sometime between the 13th and 15th centuries and a cobbled surface on Duke Street in use sometime between the mid-11th and mid-16th centuries. This, together with documentary sources dated to 1186, refer to a new bridge over the Holy Brook and a 'Great Bridge' over the Kennet, indicating an established route by that date.

10.35 The riverside here too, was also key to the town's access to trading opportunities. There are records of quays on the riverbank *circa* 1213. A town wharf, mentioned in a deed (1428), was located near High Bridge. The importance of the Riverside extended beyond trade, being essential to milling and several mills existed in Reading throughout Medieval times.

10.36 Evidence of established plot boundaries in 1552, is indicated by a survey by Roger Amyce, later illustrated by S. Peyton. The regularity of the plots is interpreted as evidence of urban planning. However, it is John Speed's map (1610) that illustrates the rows of Medieval buildings along the street frontages here, and around Market Place. The earliest known buildings on Market Place are two surviving timber framed structures, both listed, which are also associated with rubble walls at basement level from an earlier Medieval phase.

10.37 The Coopers is dated to the 17th century and Kik Sports adjacent to it is dated to the late 16th century or early 17th century. This jettied building has a late 18th century shopfront. Adjacent and opposite St Laurence's Church is No 25, built in the early 19th century of Georgian proportion that contrasts with the earlier timber framed shops. It is attributed to H. & N. Briant. This and surrounding buildings of later date are represented on maps of the time as infill of earlier plots, which occurred from the 17th century as evidenced by maps produced for Roque (1761) and John Man (1798). The contrast in built form and materials adds to the interest of the streetscape.

10.38 During the 19th century, Butter Market and the western side of Market Place was largely retail. Victorian shopfronts on Butter Market and 2, 3 and 3a Broad Street are in evidence today. Associated with the historic corn market is the Corn Exchange Entrance (1854) by J.B. Clacy and F. Hawkes marking its entrance with a landmark structure, topped with the eye catching pepperpot turret with bell and weathervane, which is unique. Adjacent is the former Trustee Savings Bank Nos. 33 and 34 Market Place. The Market Arcade (1954) by Alec French & Partners in Neo-Georgian brick (the former Bristol & West Arcade) was the frontage to an arcade that spanned through to Market Place, the plot abutting the established Corn Exchange Arcade. The Market Arcade was lined with shops either side as seen on Goad's Map but was damaged during a World War II when, in 1943, a single Dornier bomber targeted this part of Reading also resulting in the loss of life.

10.39 The Market Place retains a triangular shape, now a paved area, which is demarcated by granite stone kerbs. A regular food market enlivens this space. An obelisk (1804), the Simeon Monument, by Sir John Soane is located near the centre. To the south side of the Market Place triangle, are a number of high-quality historic buildings. Nos. 52 and 46 Market Place, with distinctive scallop shell decoration, was a former Huntley & Palmers Shop, Nos. 46-47. Equally distinctive are Barclays Bank on King Street and the Brutalist addition to the corner of Butter Market.

10.40 The eastern side of Market Place was largely offices during the late 19th century, many of which were replaced by modern offices. The former Post Office building is a repetitive design of brick and concrete that curves around the corner and juxtaposes with the adjacent Nos. 10-12 The Forbury, the latter being a late Victorian Neo-Georgian Gothick style building. The post office building is equally juxtaposed with the adjacent bank on Market Place, London and County Bank (1875) by Brown and Albury. In contrast, the latter together with Lloyds bank (1870s) create architectural interest on this side of the street. There is a greater concentration of listed buildings along High Street. Two shops of note are the art nouveau shop (1904) by W.R. Howell and the stucco faced No 7. Nos. 10 High Street and 52 Market Place, opposite, are also faced with stucco. Today only the façade of Jackson's Department Store originally by Brown & Albury (1880), has been retained (currently under redevelopment). The old Simonds Bank (1838 to 1839) by H. & N. Briant is located on King Street; Italianate in style. It was extended (1893) by W. G. Millar and G. W. Webb and non-matching fronts (1978) by Sir R. Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners.

10.41 A large portion of the eastern side of Market Place belonged to Sutton Seeds, who opened here in 1837. However, the Sutton Seeds complex extended beyond the street frontage into the Abbey Square area where more functional buildings were established between Shire Hall on The Forbury (to the north east), the eastern side of Market Place (to the west) and north of the Holy Brook (to the south). Much of this area has been subject to redevelopment. The modern offices to the west and east of market place form the scheme by Sir R. Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners (1965) consisting of near-unbroken office frontages on pilotis, faced with upright fins.

10.42 The modern redevelopment within Market Place is also in evidence towards the northern end of Blagrove Street. Based on Speeds map, Blagrove Street had not been laid out by 1610; it was formed at a later date as indicated by Roque's map of 1761. The historic buildings are all Victorian or Edwardian in date and a range of styles are in evidence. No 7 is an example of Victorian Baroque, whereas No 17 Blagrove Street, is Victorian Dutch or Flemish in style, which also provides a good example of Reading brickwork. Forbury View in between is Victorian Italianate. The Blagrove Arms, 35 Blagrove Street has significant elements of a historic shopfront. Nos. 37-43 Blagrove Street is an example of Vernacular Revival. Forbury Works is Neo-Baroque in style. Comparatively, O'Neill's is Victorian in style, its grandeur presented in scale rather than architectural detailing.

Overall Importance

10.43 This character area contains Reading Abbey's market. The markets became a focus for settlement, under the Abbey's influence, until the Dissolution. The market was intended to be a catalyst for both trade and settlement. This character area associated with Reading Abbey, together with 1.1 associated with the Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, formed part of a dual role; the two markets acting as catalysts for growth and is a defining aspect of Reading's character as explained by Grenville Astill in *Historic towns in Berkshire: an archaeological appraisal* when he stated that Reading was one of a few settlements identified at the time, 1978, as having formed and developed in this way.

10.44 The range of associated buildings illustrate the changing character of the area and evidence its dramatic history from Medieval through to Victorian and contemporary times. Structures representative of these periods, may not in themselves be unique. However, the majority of the retained historic buildings are of a high quality style, designed by well-known architectural firms. Within the context of the Abbey and subsequent civic pride, they collectively create a unique character that echo the structures and institutions of the past.

Boundary Review

10.45 Comparing the boundaries in the consultation draft of Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal and this character area, two boundaries within this character area differ. Firstly, the character area boundary incorporates the former Bristol & West Arcade to ensure both entrances to this complex, on Friar Street and Broad Street, remain within one character area.

10.46 A more significant boundary change occurs at the southern extent, where the boundary is to be drawn. For the character area assessment, the line was drawn along the northern edge of King Street, to distinguish between the character of Market Place and the character of King Street. The origins of the market were as a separate entity from the surrounding streets and trade routes, though the boundary became less defined over time as the market activities spread to surrounding streets. Some waxing and waning resulting from fluctuations in economic forces, such as the Black Death, would also have formed part of that change over time.

10.47 Unsurprisingly, therefore there are distinctively different characteristics in the built environment at these locations, particularly as time progressed. The built environment in and around the market evidences a focus on banking, some of the earliest examples of dedicated shopping arcades and consistent use of a trading space that incorporates areas dedicated to both permanent and temporary markets. As time progressed, office-use became more prevalent, though it remains a place with a dedicated focus for trade. A further review of these boundary lines will be made once all the character assessments are completed.

Summary of Key Issues

Overall Heritage Value/Significance

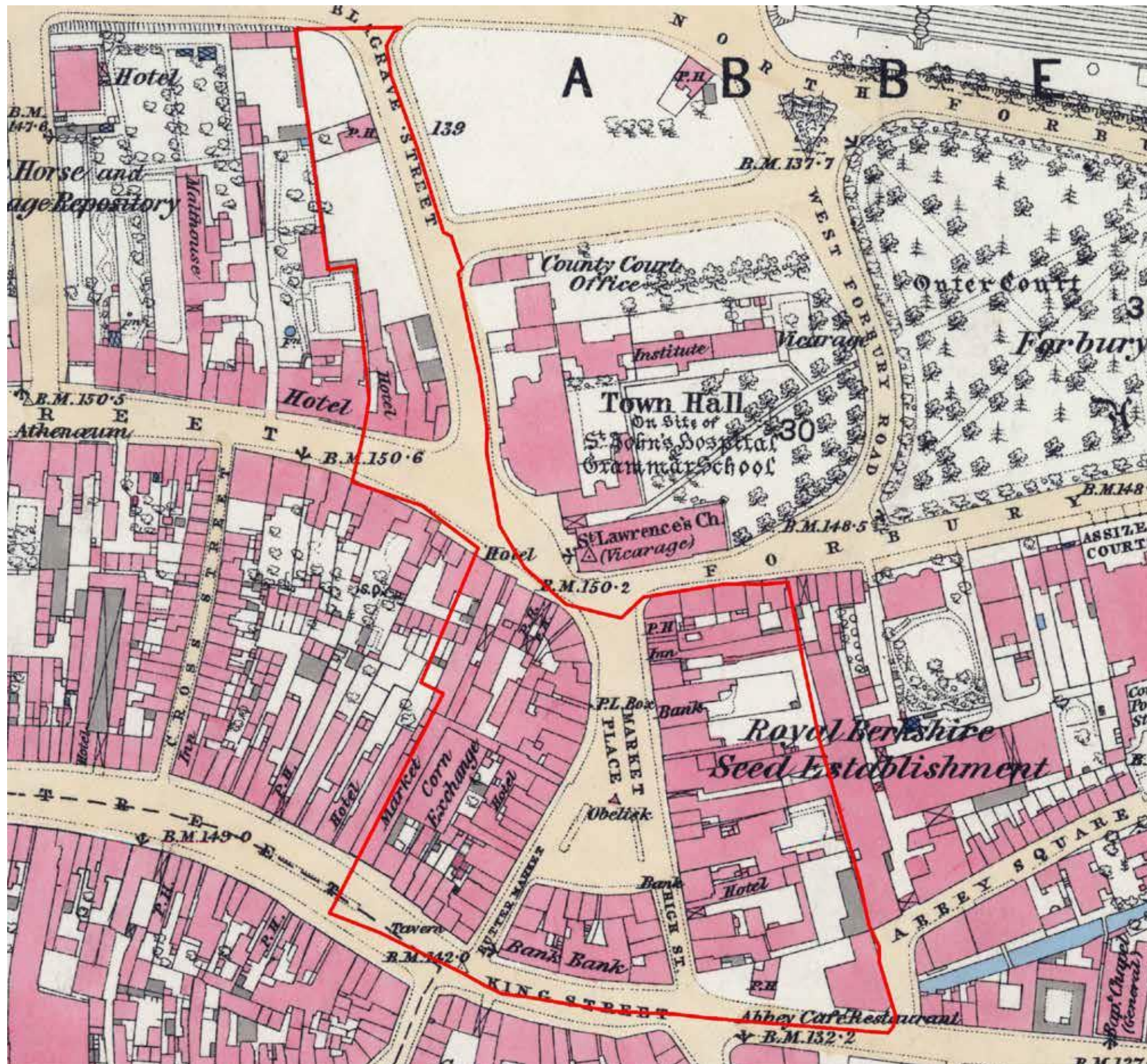
10.48 Reading Centre has a rich, yet hidden, heritage that contributes to a strong sense of place. That sense of place is interlinked with a market established by Reading Abbey. This long history is in evidence within the built environment with some traces of earlier settlement in the archaeological record. Above ground, there are high quality historic buildings and a well-maintained Market Place suitably distinguished with its own monument. Historic signs and attractive features and benches, facilitates this as a key viewing place, adding to the historic interest of the area. Trees and varied surfaces soften the effect of extensive areas of hard landscaping.

10.49 There are strong visual links with St Laurence's Church, which always featured at the apex of the market. Additional visual links are appreciable of and from the town hall. Further visual links south from Butter Market and High Street also provide a brief experience of the intimacy of Medieval layouts.

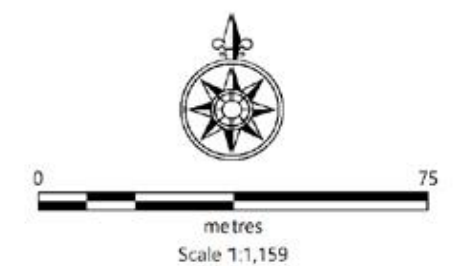
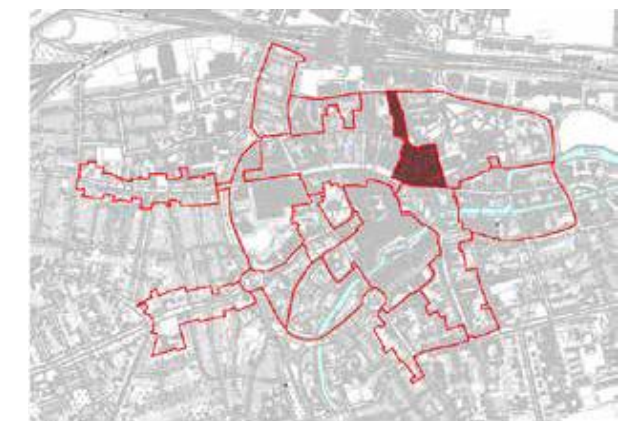
Principal Detracting Elements

- Pedestrian desire lines across these spaces and traffic levels vary to such an extent that formal crossings are not used.
- Private vehicles can increase speed if not obvious obstacles, such as buses, are present.
- Instances between vehicles and buses can occur and between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Limited visibility at the corner with The Forbury.
- Uneven path outside the shops adjacent to the former post office.
- A number of poor replacement buildings.

Figure 49. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 2.2 (Source: National Library of Scotland)



2.2 Market Place



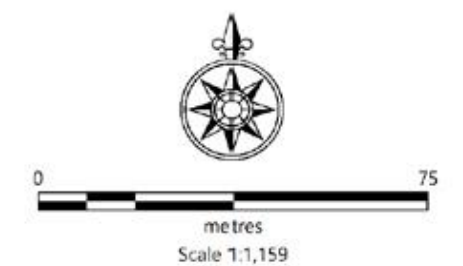
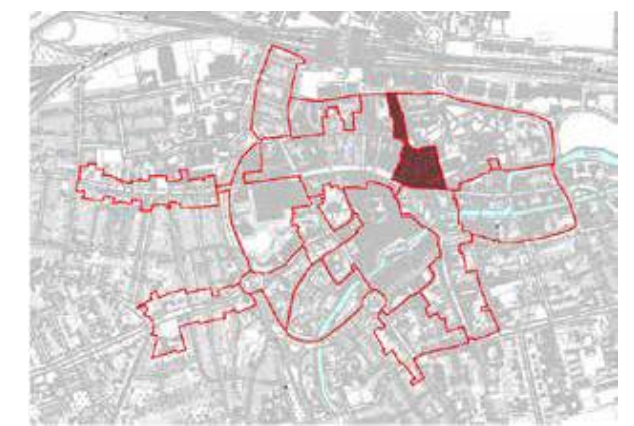
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Figure 50. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 2.2



2.2 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- Queen Victoria Jubilee Statue (Grade II listed)
- 23-26, Market Place (Grade II listed)
- Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance (Grade II listed)
- The High (Grade II listed)
- The Simeon Monument (Grade II* listed)
- 1 and 2, Market Place (Grade II listed)
- 50 and 51, Market Place (Grade II listed)
- 27 and 28, Market Place (Grade II listed)
- 10, High Street (Grade II listed)
- The Coopers Public House (Grade II listed)
- 32, Market Place (Grade II listed)
- Barclays Bank (Grade II listed)
- Trustee Savings Bank (Grade II listed)
- National Westminster Bank (Grade II listed)
- 7, High Street (Grade II listed)
- 2 and 3 and 3A, Broad Street (Grade II listed)
- 48 and 49, Market Place (Grade II listed)

Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- 1-9 King Street (BTM)
- 11 King Street (BTM)
- 12 King Street (BTM)
- 5 Broad Street (BTM)
- 6 Broad Street (BTM)
- 5 Butter Market (BTM)
- 46 Market Place (BTM)
- 47 Market Place (BTM)
- 175 Friar Street (BTM)
- 4 Friar Street and 1A-5A Blagrove Street (BTM)
- 5-6 Friar Street (BTM)
- 7 Blagrove Street (BTM)
- 9-15 Blagrove Street (BTM)
- 17 Blagrove Street (BTM)
- 35 Blagrove Street (BTM)
- 37-43 Blagrove Street (BTM)

Conservation Areas

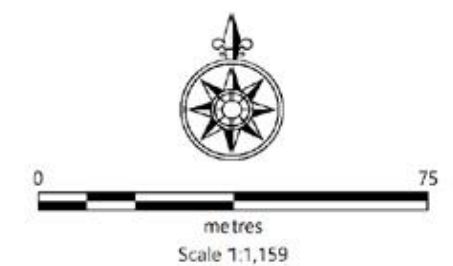
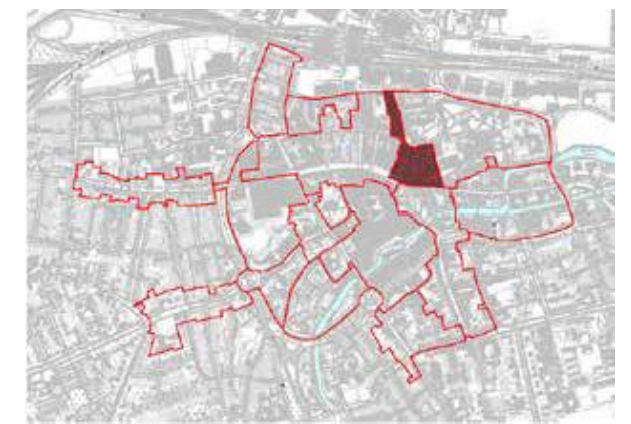
- Market Place and London Street Conservation Area

Figure 51. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 2.2



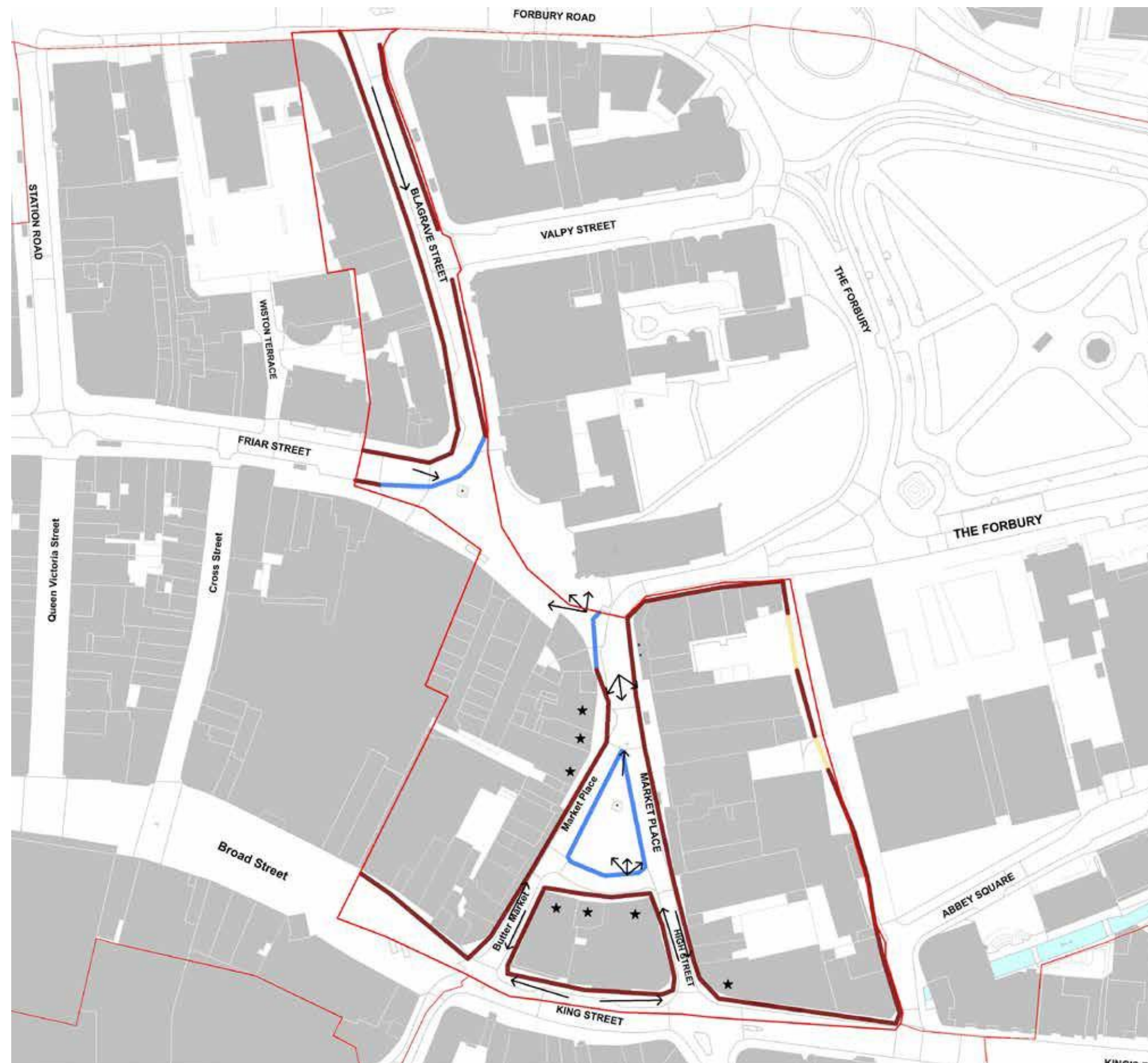
2.2 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



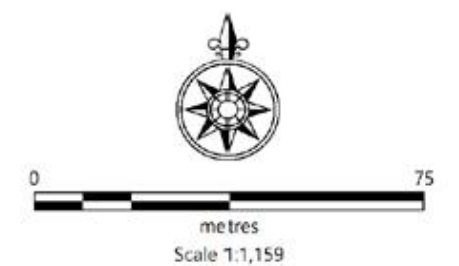
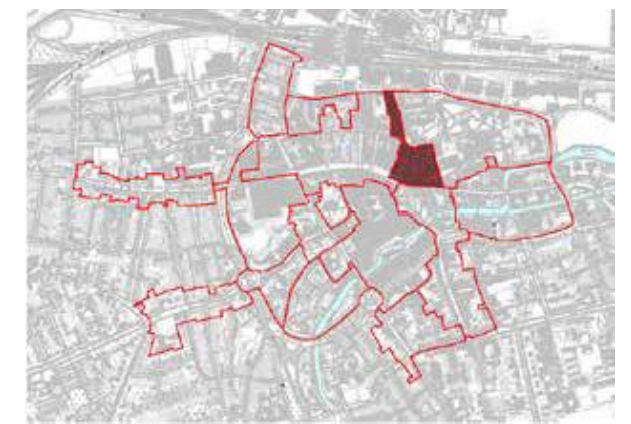
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Figure 52. Figure Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 2.2



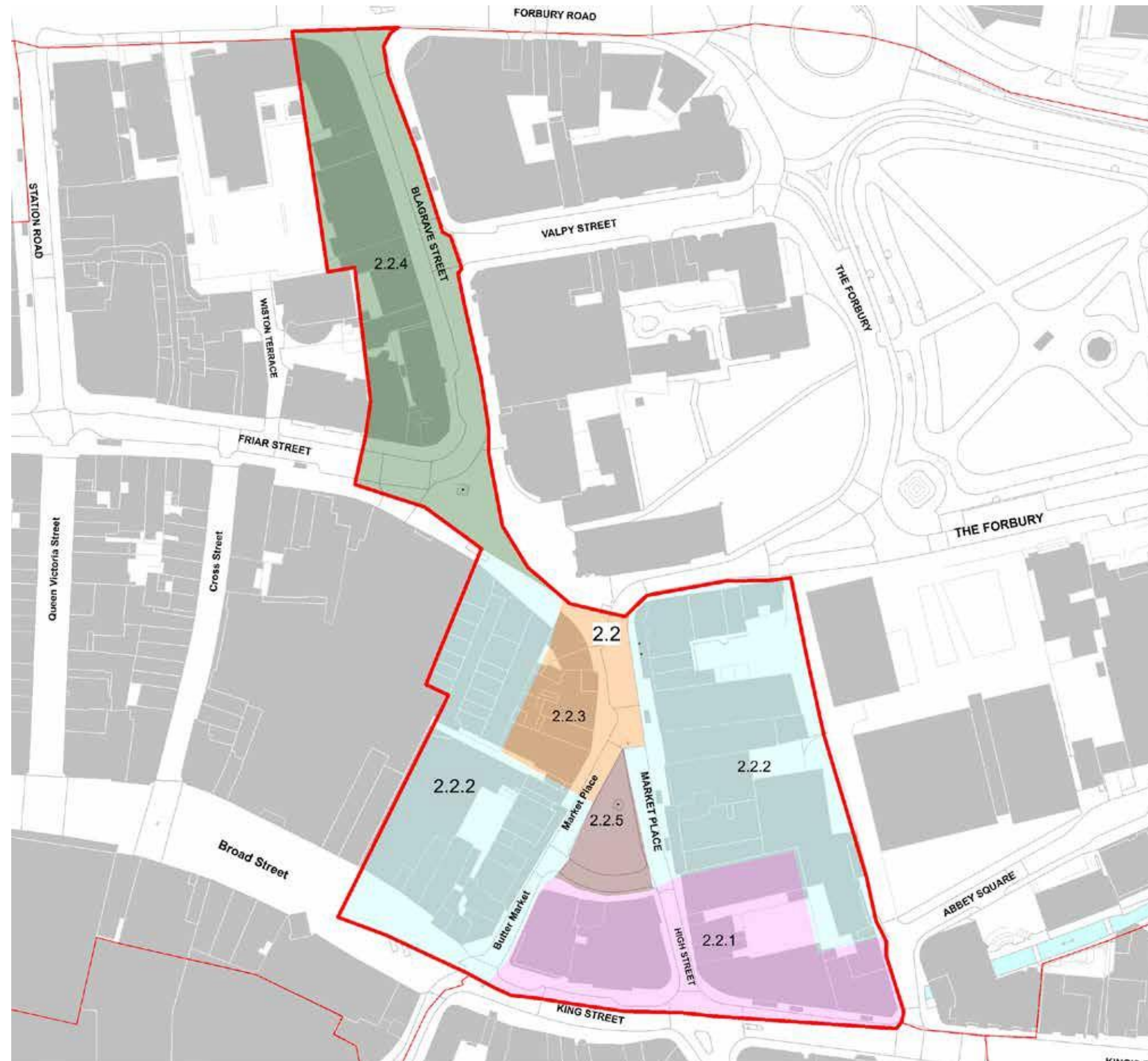
2.2 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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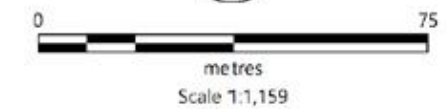
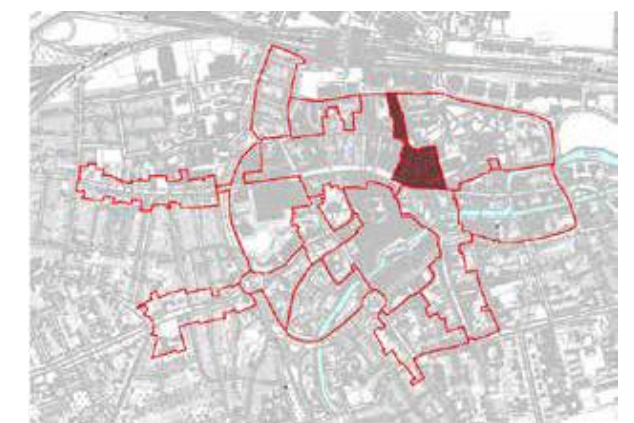
Figure 53. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 2.2



2.2 Market Place

Sub areas

- 2.2.1 High Street: Historic Banking and Retail
- 2.2.2 Market Place/Butter Market (east and west): Modern Commercial
- 2.2.3 Market Place/Town Hall Square: Historic Retail
- 2.2.4 Blagrove Street west: Mixed Historic Retail and Commercial
- 2.2.5 Market Place Square: Formal Market



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| Sub area Character | 2.2.1 | 2.2.2 | 2.2.3 | 2.2.4 | 2.2.5 |
|------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| Name | High Street: Historic Banking and Retail | Market Place/Butter Market: Modern Commercial | Market Place/Town Hall Square: Historic Retail | Blagrove Street west: Mixed Historic Retail and Commercial | Market Place Square: Formal Market |
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 3 to 4storeys • Mid C18 to mid C20 • Mix of banking, retail, office and civic buildings • Predominantly brick built with some historic rendering, painted brickwork, timber and concrete • Continuous on-street frontages • On-street public dining areas • Pedestrianised streets in western and northern portion • Designated off-street parking spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 1 to 4 storeys (predominantly 3-4) • Early C18 to late C20 • Wide range of architectural styles • Predominantly brick construction, with some stone • Mix of food retail, banking and a public house | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 3-4 storeys (predominantly 4) • Early C17 to mid C19 • Medium-density commercial terraces with upper parts • Range of architectural styles, including Tudor Jacobean, Georgian and Victorian Italianate • Timber-framed and historic rendered brick constructions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-5 storeys (predominantly 4-5) • C19 to Late C20 • Mix of retail, office, civic and public houses • Predominantly brick-built, with occasional rendering and stones • Consistent built-line to street frontage • Some on-street parking • Mixed architectural styles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form of the sub area dates back to the C12, after the formation of Reading Abbey • 1804 Grade II listed obelisk Simeon monument designed by noted architect Sir John Soan • Wrought iron and stone are prevalent materials • Chained bollards • Numerous public benches • Open space |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic features throughout • High footfall • Excellent transport links • Multiple Grade II listed buildings • Bike racks within the southern portion of the sub area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readable historic character with frequently listed and older buildings • Multiple pedestrian access points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade II listed buildings with rich historic character and features • Good bus links • Multiple pedestrians access points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple on-street bicycle racks • Good pedestrian links • Medium-high footfall • Occasional mature tree • Good interconnectivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic character and listed monument • Historic information to aid wayfinding • Weekly food market reminds of previous use • Public meeting place • Many pedestrian access points • Row of mature trees • View of St Laurence's to the north |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacles in the form of street signage present a tripping hazard to visually impaired pedestrians • Narrow pavements in sub area also problematic for pedestrians, particularly around bus stops • Noise from bus traffic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newer buildings not in keeping with historic surroundings • Eastern portion can be noisy adjacent to busy bus routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disused and abandoned ground floors • Lower commercial activity than could be expected • Poorly maintained lower and upper storeys • Some inappropriate replacement features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-street obstacles in the form of signage, bins, dining areas and broadband boxes present a tripping hazard to the visually impaired • Some inappropriate replacement features for the majority of buildings • Noise from busy bus routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise from Busy bus routes • An increase in public realm seating provision would improve the quality of the public realm here |

11. Reading Central: Character Areas

Character Area 3.1 Level 2 [II]

Greyfriars: Historic Residential and Religious with Modern Mix Character Area

Introduction

11.1 Historically this was an area of Victorian terraced housing, a medieval church, a Victorian brewery and several public houses. Much macro development has taken place merging plots, with some unsympathetic scaled and styled late 20th century onwards buildings. The front building lines have been eroded, some back gardens lost to car parking, historic front brick boundary walls and railings lost. There are many other unsympathetic alterations.

Historical Note

11.2 In 1233 the Abbot of Reading Abbey granted land to the Franciscan Friars, who were sometimes called Greyfriars because they wore grey habits. This had been ordered by Henry III following the friars' patronage, although the land they were given was often liable to flooding. This initial land was in the Vastern area, either side of the River Thames and lives on in Vastern Road. The Archbishop of Canterbury, a Franciscan himself, argued their case with the Abbey, and in 1285, the Friars were granted a new site on New Street, later to be called Friar Street. The present church was originally built between 1285 and 1311. The western end of the road, past the West Street junction, was known as Town's End, indicating the Norman extant of Reading in that area.

11.3 Greyfriars Church lies at the junction of Friars Street, St. Mary's Butts/West Street. Friars Street from medieval times forms one of the three sides of the ancient core of Reading formed by Friar Street to the north, St. Mary's Butts (or Olde Street) and Southampton Street to the west and London Street/High Street to the east. The St. Mary's Butts road ran from Seven Bridges towards Caversham Bridge, with the name 'Olde Street' being used as early as the reign of Henry IV. Caversham Bridge is first mentioned in 1231 and an ancient ford is likely to have existed prior to that.

11.4 Greyfriars Church was dissolved in 1538 by Henry VIII's commissioner, John London. In that year the friary buildings comprised the church and cloister, three lodging buildings, and 20 acres of grounds with trees, a pond, and an orchard. The John Lovells Ltd Civil War Defence Maps show fields in the approximate location of today's Station Hill as Friary Mead and given the 20 acre land parcel the priory lands possibly stretched down to the northern side of the River Thames. The Civil War town defences ran through the former Friary lands, to the west of the church, and then to its north as the defences headed east-west.

11.5 Henry VIII visited Reading in 1540, and was petitioned by the mayor and burgesses to produce a town charter of incorporation. Penyson and Vachell were sent to inquire into the liberties of the town, and in 1542 the new charter was given. At the special request of the mayor and other prominent burgesses the church of 'Lez Greyffreres' was granted to serve as a new town hall. The building soon became too cramped for this use and by 1578 it had become a workhouse. The Speed Map of 1610 shows the former church as a collection of buildings at that time, isolated to the north western edge of the town. By 1613, the former church had changed use again, this time to the town prison. It continued in this use until 1862 when it was restored to use as a church in approximately 1863 by the Borough Surveyor (W. H. Woodman). The Historic England list entry comments that it is said to be the most complete surviving example of Franciscan architecture in England.

11.6 The Vachell family have a very long connection with Reading. The family held the Manor of Coley for centuries, certainly from the mid-13th century. In 1634 Sr. Thomas Vachell Kt. erected almshouses on St. Mary's Butts. In 1645 one of the members for the borough, Sir Francis Knollys, jun., died. The election candidates were Tanfield Vachell (Sir Thomas's nephew) and William Ball, with Vachell being elected (twice as the first election was disputed). Tanfield Vachell lived in Reading at a house at the ancient Grey Friars. He sat as a member for Reading in the Long Parliament, and the king made him Sheriff of Berkshire. During the English Civil War he refused Charles I's command "to raise the power of that county to conduct the King through it." He died in 1658 and was buried in Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin. His possessions passed to his cousin Thomas Vachell, whose son Tanfield, was M.P. for Reading in 1701 and 1705. It is not clear which Vachell today's Vachel Road is named after.

11.7 In 1800 the character area principally only comprised the former church and prison buildings. There was no development north of the prison (former church), and only a handful of buildings west on what is today Caversham Road. By 1840 the area had still not become developed. Between 1840-75 Vachel Road, Stanshawe Road and Tudor Road were laid out. Sackville Street was laid out between 1875 and 1898. When the IDR (north-south branch) was built in the late 1960s the eastern edge of the road was moved eastwards, leading to the loss of historic buildings in this area (see western part of character area boundary at Figure 54).

11.8 Greyfriars Church contains the tomb of the great Reading entrepreneur and founder of Sutton Seeds, Martin Hope Sutton (d.1901). Sutton is commemorated also by the memorial hall (1901-1909) on Sackville Street and named in his honour.

Overall Importance

- 11.9 The historic streetscene survives well within the church grounds and on Sackville Street (sub area 3.1.3). Within sub areas 3.1.1 and 3.1.2. the streetscene is more fragmented, though terraces of 3-storey houses survive on Vachel Road and 2-storey terraces on Stanshawe Road, they have been altered along with front boundaries, and many rear gardens have been lost to car parking and smaller plots agglomerated. The street layout is broadly historic with the mid-19th century terraces still apparent.

Boundary Review

- 11.10 Given the above comments only sub area 3.1.3. is worthy of being considered for inclusion within a conservation area. See Part C of report.

Summary of Key Issues

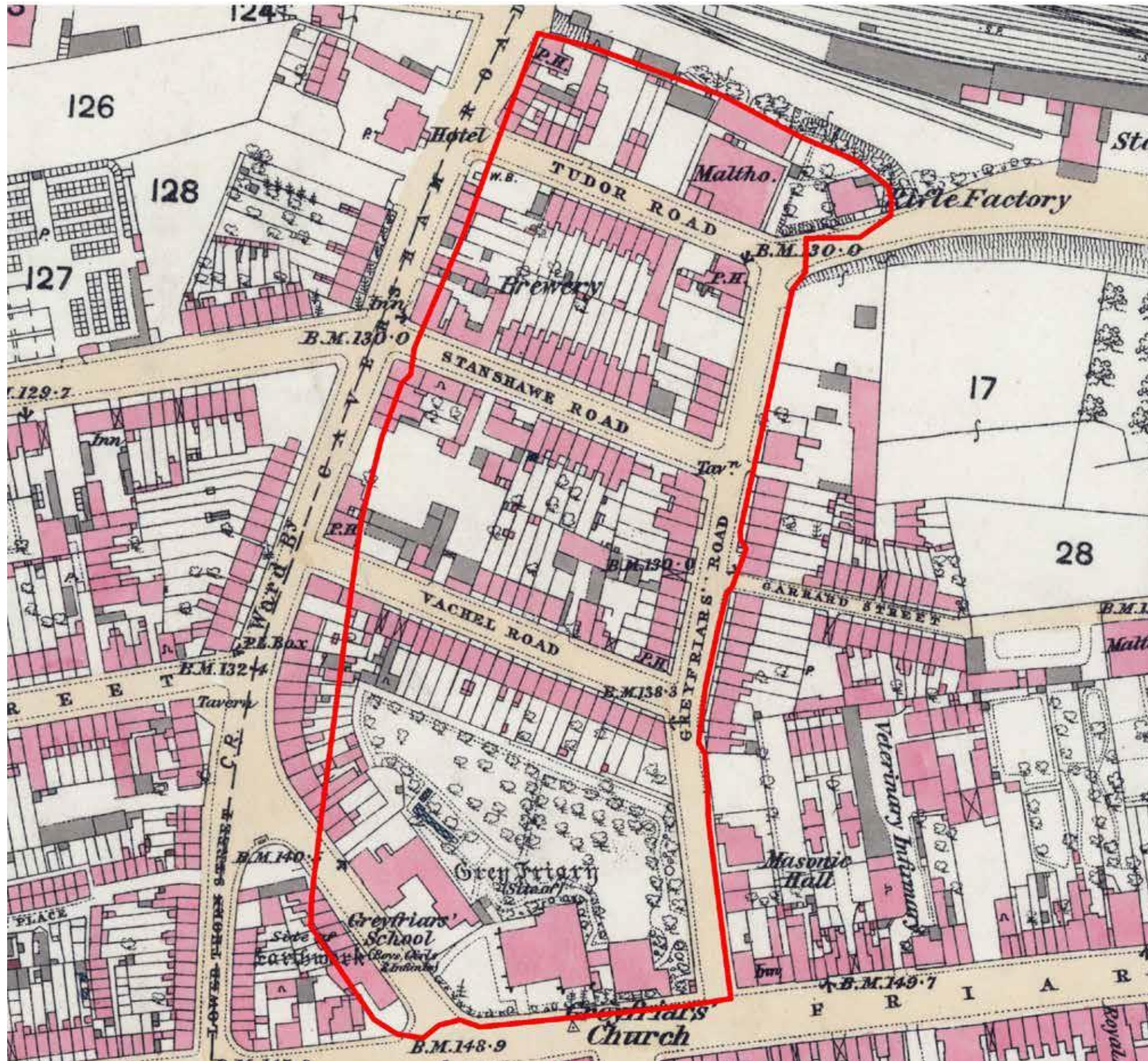
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 11.11 The church is by far the most significant element of built form in the character area owing to its age and its listing at Grade I. The remainder of the character area contains several phases of Victorian housing as well as some non-descript modern infill schemes. The surviving Victorian housing on Sackville Street are the most distinguished architecturally of the surviving Victorian terraced housing.

Principal Detracting Elements

- Sub area 3.1.1, whilst the original buildings were of good architectural merit and retain some heritage value, they are much altered. The townscape in this sub area is much degraded. For example, some front building lines have been eroded, some back gardens lost to car parking, and many original brick front boundary walls and railings lost and many other unsympathetic alterations.
- Replacement uPVC windows, doors, guttering and downpipes seen in many locations. Many unsightly satellite dishes affixed to front elevations.
- Utilitarian steel railings along IDR/church boundary. In addition, the noise, pollution and physical proximity to IDR detracts as part of the church's setting.
- Church grounds dominated by car parking.
- Low-grade patched tarmacked pavements.
- Much loss of the small scale and small plots of the Victorian terraced housing by the merging of plots.
- Many indifferently designed modern replacement flat blocks.

Figure 54. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 3.1 (Source: National Library of Scotland)



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3.1 Greyfriars

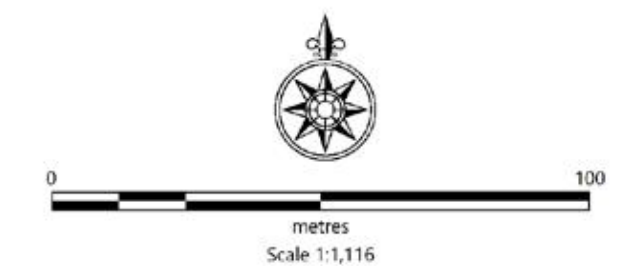
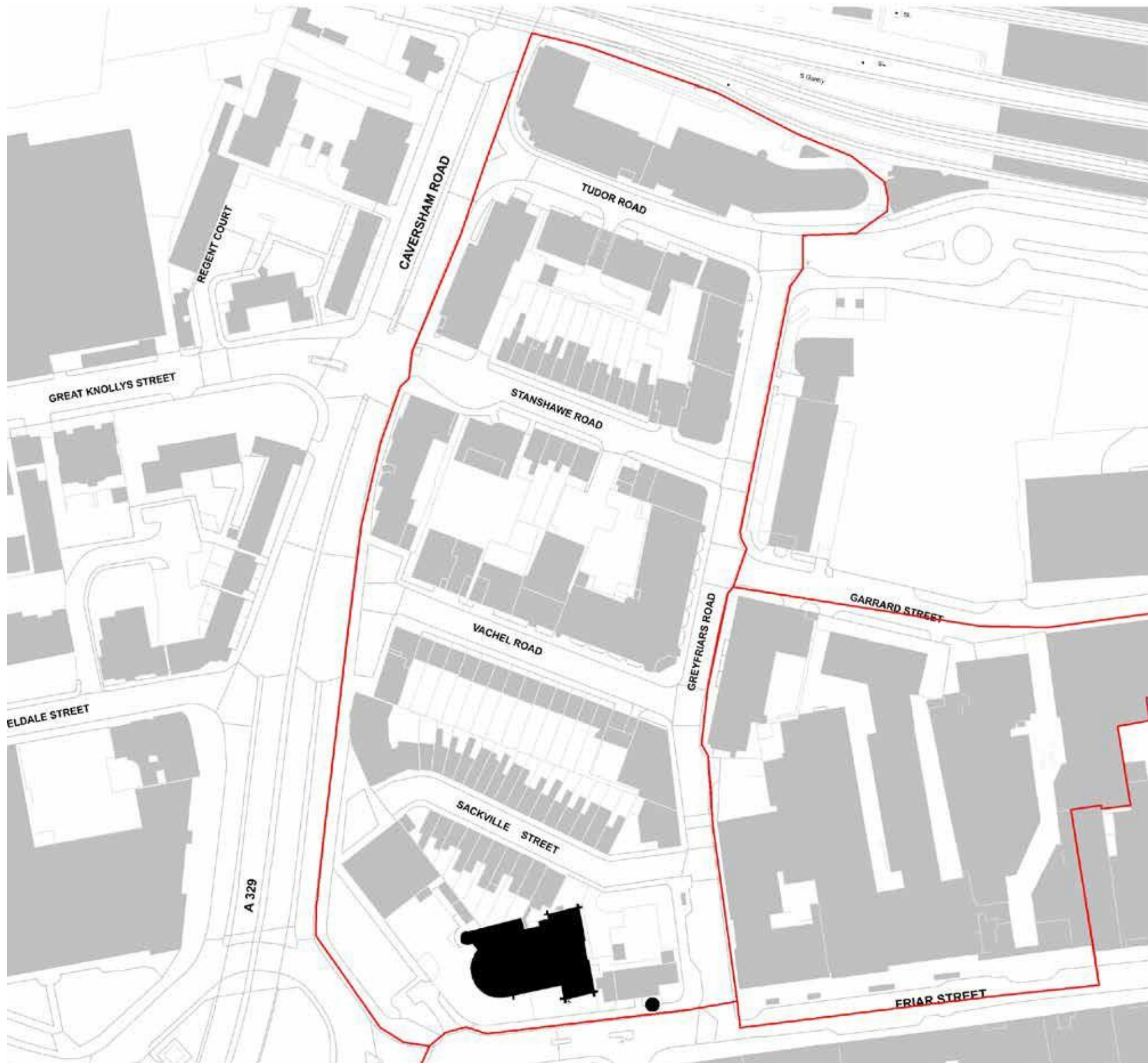
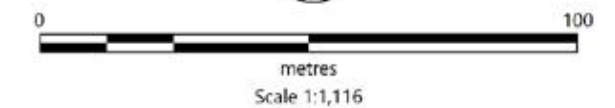


Figure 55. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 3.1



3.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area

Listed Buildings

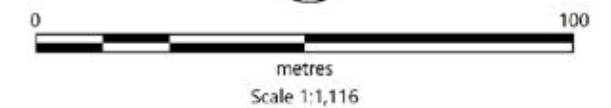
- Greyfriars Church (Grade I listed)
- Quadrant walls and railings to former No. 64 Friar Street (Greyfriars Vicarage) (Grade II listed)

Figure 56. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 3.1



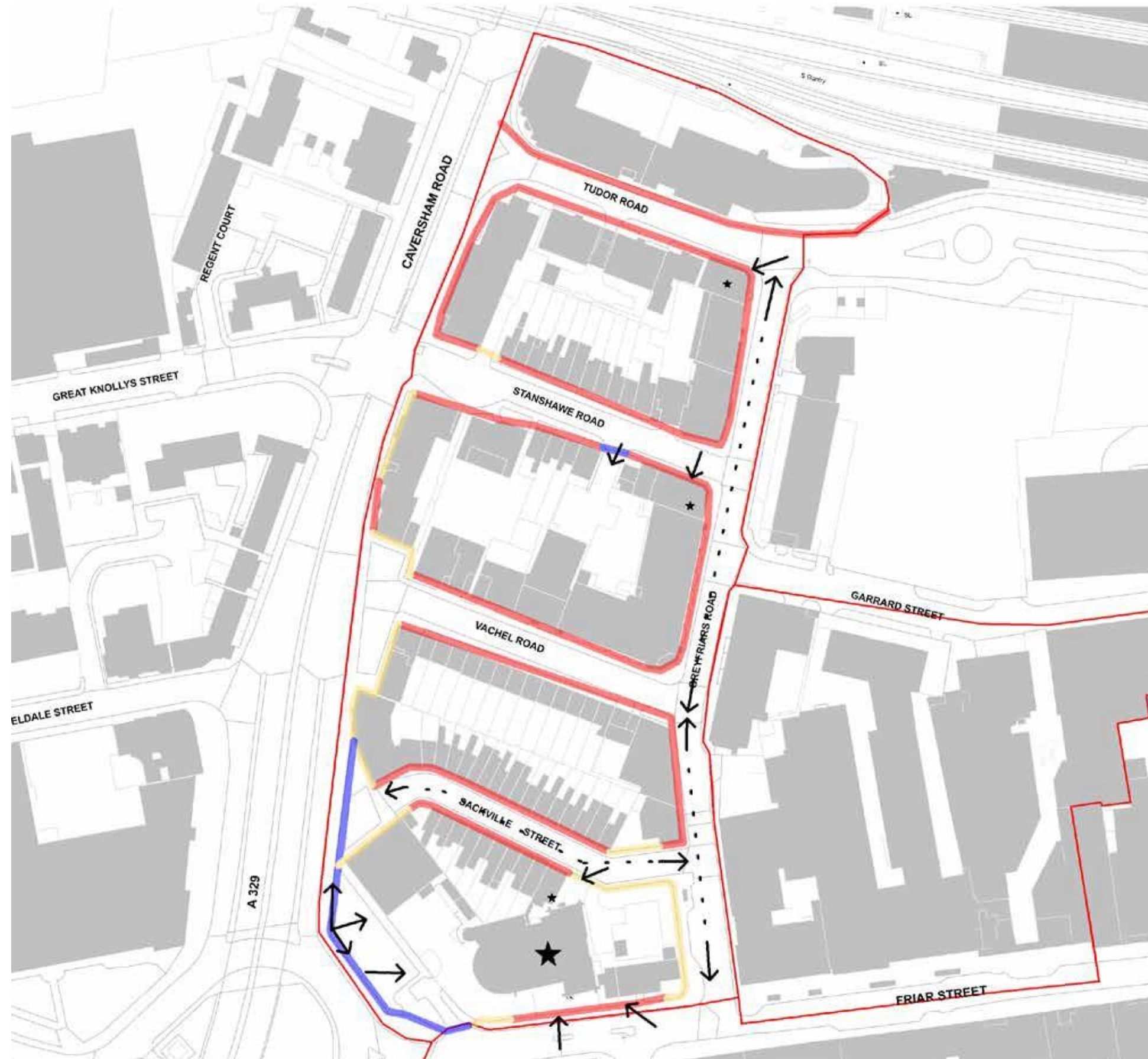
3.1 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



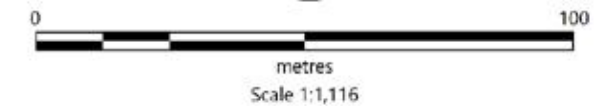
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Figure 57. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 3.1



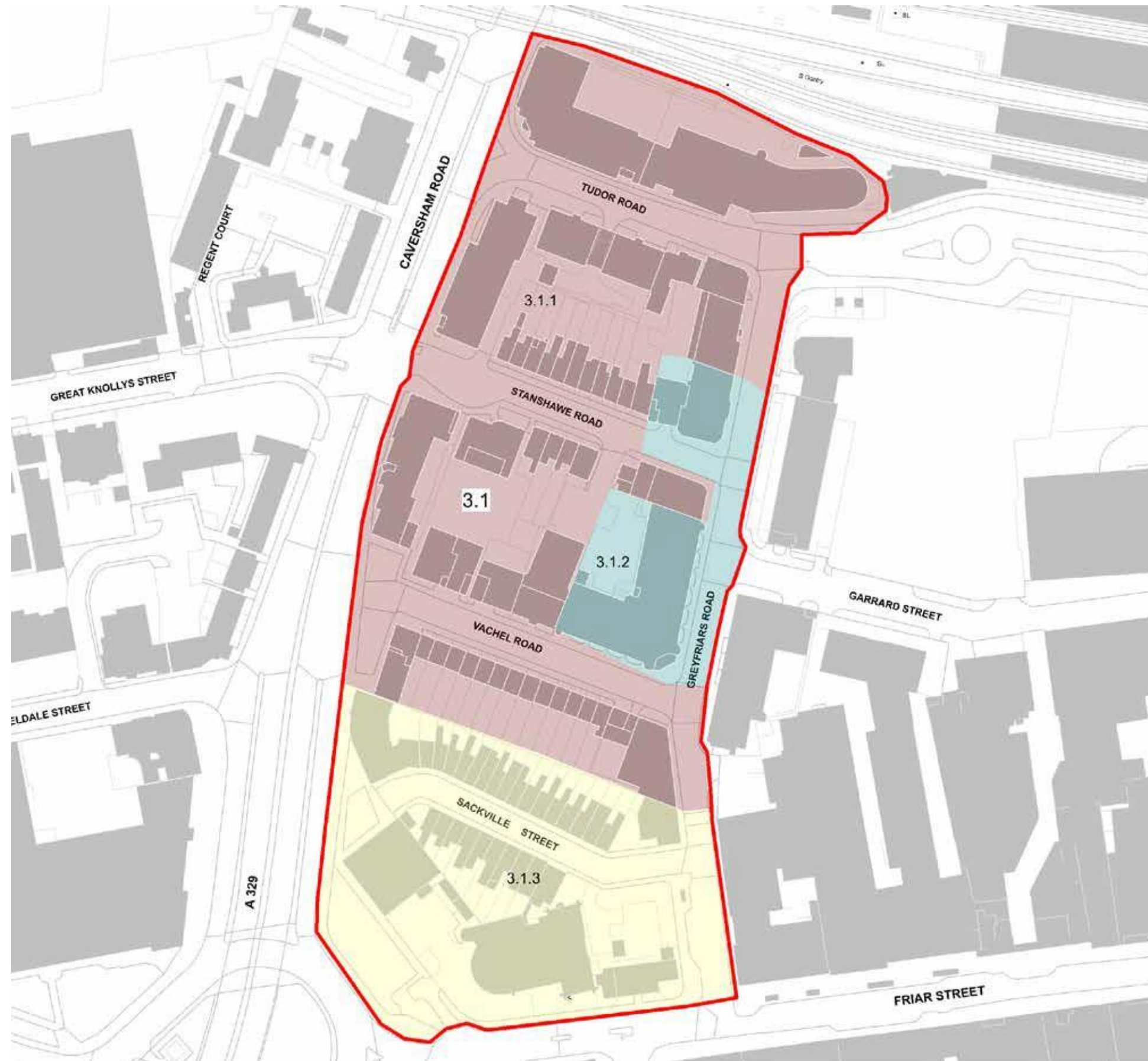
3.1 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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Figure 58. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 3.1

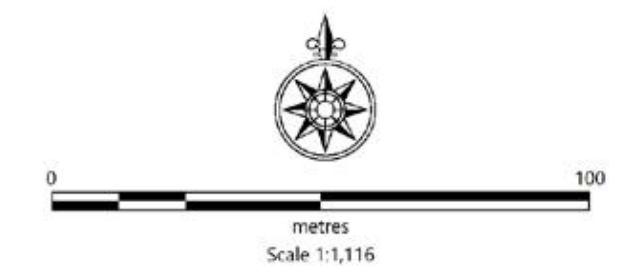




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3.1 Greyfriars

Sub areas

- 3.1.1 Greyfriars Road /Tudor-Vachel Roads: Historic and Modern Mixed-use
- 3.1.2 Greyfriars Road/Stanshawe Road: Modern Offices
- 3.1.3 Greyfriars Road/Sackville Street: Religious and Historic Residential



| Sub area Character | 3.1.1 | 3.1.2 | 3.1.3 |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Name | <p>Greyfriars Road /Tudor-Vachel Roads: Historic and Modern Mixed-use</p> | <p>Greyfriars Road/Stanshawe Road: Modern Offices</p> | <p>Greyfriars Road/Sackville Street: Religious and Historic Residential</p> |
| |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decidedly mixed sub area. This area historically comprised terraced housing, a brewery, a malthouse, a rifle factory and several public houses all from the mid-late C19. Many houses have been merged into larger plots and some plots unsympathetically redeveloped. • Building types today include several office blocks, Victorian terraced housing, modern flatted blocks and Victorian public houses. • Victorian housing of 2-4 storeys, several late C20 office buildings of 3-4 storeys, two turn of C21 6-7 storey office buildings, several flatted blocks of 3-5 storeys from the late C20 to early C21, and two 2 storey Victorian public houses. • Red brick is predominantly used with some buff brick and stone cladding. Some buildings are rendered and painted, some overpainted. Gault bricks are seen occasionally e.g. Montrose House. Sloped roofs are typically covered with traditional grey slates. There are several flat roofs. • No consistency in front boundary walls and railings. Many have been replaced, removed or the former terraced houses themselves replaced. • Some front gardens to Victorian houses on northern side of Stanshawe Rd. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sub area contains two mid-late C20 office buildings, namely Nos. 9 and 35-43 Greyfriars Road. The modern office building character of a larger scale appears to migrate across from the larger scale on the eastern side of Greyfriars Road (outside character area). • Both have re-modelled front elevations in the last decade. • Heights vary between 3.5-4.5 storeys. • Building materials are eclectic including buff brick, curtain glazing, and concrete. • These buildings almost front directly onto the pavement. No. 9 has a small area of hard landscaping between the building and the pavement. Nos. 35-43 fronts directly on to the pavement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church's gabled roof rises to 4-5 storeys, the Sackville St late Victorian housing is 2.5-3 storeys, the flatted block Tanfields is 4 storeys and the former vicarage is 2 storeys. • The original church elements are 1285-1310, with later phases. The Sackville St housing dates to 1875-98. The former vicarage is mid C20 and the bookshop mid-late C20. • Building types include a Grade I listed church, a late C20 Christian bookshop, late Victorian terraced housing, turn of C21 flats and the mid C20 former vicarage. • The church is built of knapped flint, stone dressings and red clay tiles. Brick is used on the housing (polychrome), flats (red), bookshop (brown), former vicarage (red) and 1-3 Greyfriars Road (the latter is rendered). All but the church have grey slates. • The church lies within its own grounds including the bookshop (and its car park), former Vicarage and Sutton memorial surrounding. The housing and flats front directly onto street. • Low and high brick boundary walls surrounding parts of church grounds, railings to front of former vicarage. |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remaining Victorian terraced houses. Although much altered, the original Victorian buildings were of good architectural merit. • The remaining street grid illustrating the former terraced housing that lined both sides of Vachel, Stanshawe and Tudor Roads. • Consistency of height and style for the historic terraced houses. • Easy access to the town centre. • Widespread potential redevelopment opportunities on neutral/detracting elements of streetscene. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both schemes of remodelling have elevated indifferent to buildings of average-good architectural merit as modern office buildings. • Good quality contemporary design and good quality materials. • Easy access to the town centre. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of scale for housing, good quality in its design, good period detailing (e.g. Reading vernacular polychrome brickwork). • Sympathetically designed Neo-Georgian vicarage built in mid C20. • No through traffic to Sackville Street. • Church is focal building to sub area and character area. • Easy access from town centre. • Some mature trees adjoining IDR. |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degraded townscape. Proximity to IDR also highly detracting. • Front boundary walls and railings delineating 'areas' to historic terraced housing as well as gate posts, entrance steps' railings have typically been unsympathetically altered (see above comments). • Former rear gardens to houses on the north side of Vachel Road and southern side of Stanshawe Road have predominantly been lost to parking. • Building line to southern side of Stanshawe Road eroded by setback modern development and creation of access roads to rear car parks. • Universal window replacement with low-grade uPVC units. Several instances of uPVC doors, guttering and downpipes. Satellite dishes affixed to front elevations. • Low-grade patched tarmacked pavements. • Much loss of the small scale and small plots of the Victorian terraced housing by plots merging. Northern side of Tudor Road scale detracts. • Many indifferently designed modern replacement flatted blocks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of buildings and size of plots out of character with the character area generally. • No landscaping / greenery to sub area. • No consistent style to the buildings within sub area. Building designs also not related to the locality. • Low-grade patched tarmacked pavements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilitarian steel railings along IDR/church boundary. • The noise, pollution and proximity to IDR undermines setting of the church. • Church grounds dominated by car parking. • Numerous unsightly satellite dishes to front elevations (housing), replacement uPVC windows and some doors. • Low-grade patched tarmacked pavements. |

Character Area 3.2 Level 2 [II]

Broad & Friar Streets: Historic Inner Urban Retail Character Area

Introduction

- 11.12 The character area includes the prime retail streets of Broad Street, Queen Victoria Street, Cross Street, parts of Friar Street and parts of Station Road, many of which retain historic frontages (mostly Victorian). The character area has pedestrianised streets with high footfall and low traffic volumes, although Friar Street carries frequent bus and taxi traffic. The character area is under significant pressure from development, particularly towards the northern end near the station, and currently lacks protection by virtue of being a designated conservation area.

Historical Note

General

- 11.13 The town's original settlement was probably alongside the River Kennet between Seven Bridges (bottom of today's Bridge Street) and slightly to the east of the High Bridge (Figure 59). St. Mary's Butts, often historically called Olde Street, was likely the location of the town's first ancient market. A second market was established close to Reading Abbey when the latter was founded in the early 12th century. In medieval times the three sides of Reading's ancient core were formed by Friar Street to the north, St. Mary's Butts and Southampton Street to the west and London Street/Duke Street/High Street to the east. The market established by Reading Abbey had become the more important of the two markets by the 14th century.

Broad Street

- 11.14 The road was laid out by Reading Abbey soon after its founding in 1120. The road was originally called Shop Row and some believe was also known as Great Street. The name Broad Street, a reference to its width, was first recorded in 1611. At first the road likely included today's King Street. Sometime in the medieval period, the eastern end was divided into two narrower streets. The northern part was first recorded in the 13th century as Cheese Row but was renamed Fisher Row in the late 16th century. The southern street, first recorded in the 14th century, was called Butcher Row, or occasionally Ox Street with the Shambles close by.

- 11.15 William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury and advisor to King Charles I, was born in Broad Street on 7th October 1573. He is believed to have lived at No. 47 Broad Street. The Speed map of 1610 shows that the western end of Broad Street, today called Oxford Road, was then known as Pangbourne Lane. No 134 Broad Street was a fine Tudor structure with the official name of Walsingham House. It is believed to have been built by Sir Francis Walsingham as his Reading town house, where he could be near to Queen Elizabeth I when she resided at the old Abbot's House. It was demolished in 1905. Reading became the scene of the only fighting of the 1688 Glorious Revolution where there were a few dozen casualties.

- 11.16 Broad Street contained a variety of uses historically including industry (e.g. brewing), retail, public houses, banks, gentlemen's clubs (e.g. New Liberal Club), churches/chapels etc. During the Victorian period there was the Dowsett Brothers' Brewery Tap Public House at No. 47 Broad Street, the Dowsett Brothers brewery, the Ferguson & Sons' Angel Brewery stood on the south side at No. 116, and at the south western end of Broad Street at No. 83 was the Broad Street Brewery and Brewery Tap (see below). Taverns and coaching inns included the Vine at No 74 on the corner of West Street, the Peacock at No. 51, the Duke's Head at No. 41, the Bull at No. 23, the Caledonian at No 29, the Royal Oak at No. 14, the Beehive at No. 11, the London Tavern at No. 2 and the Boar's Head on the south side at No. 124.

- 11.17 William Blackall Simonds established a brewery at 83 Broad Street in 1785. The site proved restrictive to expansion and four years later, the business moved to 24 Bridge Street (then called Seven Bridges). William commissioned Sir John Soane, the foremost architect of the day, to design both a new brewery and a grand Georgian house on the site. In 1791, Simonds was appointed Receiver-General of Taxes for West Berkshire and entered into a partnership which formed Messrs Micklem, Stephens, Simonds and Harris's Bank in Reading's Market Place. The brewery survived until 1960 when it merged with Courage & Barclay. Courage moved the brewery to the edge of Pingewood in 1985 and the Seven Bridges Brewery was demolished soon afterwards and is now occupied by the western half of the Oracle Shopping Centre.

- 11.18 W H Ferguson & Son's Angel Brewery operated from No. 116 Broad Street. A Tudor public house called the Talbot is believed to have once stood on the site. By 1770, the Angel had become a thriving coaching inn and several coach services called there. Secondary sources indicate that in 1863 it was demolished¹ and a new brewery was built, and the Angel Brewery Tap was quickly opened at No. 117 next door. Brewing seems to have declined by 1905, when Heelas purchased most of the brewery yard and by 1914 brewing had ceased at the premises. The brewery tap continued as the Angel Public House and the rest of the buildings were retained as company's offices. The brewery building was demolished in 1964.

- 11.19 Minster Street was the major commercial thoroughfare in medieval Reading, which largely continued until the railway's arrival in 1840, when the focus of the town began to shift northwards towards the new railway station. In 1879 Broad Street became the first street in the town to have a horse-drawn tramway system installed, later replaced by electric trams in 1903 and then trolley-buses from 1939 to 1968.

- 11.20 The shop Heelas was established in Minster Street in 1854 by John Heelas, and his sons, John and Daniel, and later extended through to Broad Street. The store gained the Royal Warrant in 1857. It left family ownership in 1947 and was purchased by John Lewis in 1953. John Lewis' had previously purchased A H Bull's Department Store across the road at Nos. 54-56, which was closed in Heelas' favour. Between 1790 and 1884, Bull's was the site of the Reading Green Girls' School. From 1891, a statue of the biscuit manufacturer and philanthropist, George Palmer, stood at the eastern end of the street, facing down King Street. It was sculpted by George Blackall Simonds, a grandson of the founder of the Simonds' Brewery. In 1930, it was moved to Palmer Park.

- 11.21 At No. 89 Broad Street was the Broad Street Independent Non-Conformist Chapel (or Congregational Church), now Waterstone's Bookshop. Its interior (Historic England list entry believes c. 1800) predates the Broad Street Victorian frontage and is the principal reason for its listing. The chapel was frequented by many great town worthies, including the young William Blackall Simonds. The Primitive Methodist Chapel also lay on Broad Street, later purchased and converted as part of the Heelas expansion. To the north was the Augustine (Independent) Church on Friar Street.

¹ http://www.berkshirehistory.com/businesses/fergusons_history.html

1122 No. 96 Broad Street on the corner of Chain Street, is the oldest building in the street and is believed to be a 17th century shop. During the Victorian period, it was known as the Post Office Tavern, as the main town Post Office stood on the opposing side of Chain Street until it moved to Friar Street in 1923. Nos. 100-101 Broad Street were originally constructed as a butcher's shop (with upper parts), and then converted to the Broad Street Picture House (opening in 1911). By 1912 the cinema had been re-named the Grand Cinema, which was later closed in 1922. The former cinema was converted into a car showroom, then in 1929 it became the Cadena Cafe and later a newsagent's shop. A branch of Santander Bank operates from the ground floor today.

1123 The Butts Centre was built between 1969-72 requiring the demolition of numerous historic buildings including on the southern side of Oxford Road. It was renamed Broad Street Mall shopping centre in 1987.

Friar Street

1124 The Franciscan Friars, or 'Grey Friars' built the original elements of the current Greyfriars Church between 1285 and 1311. A new street was laid out between the church and abbey, called New Street and later renamed Friar Street. At Nos. 16-17 were a fine pair of Georgian townhouses, until pulled down in 1955. These had been typical in eastern Friar Street built by the rising classes, that later became offices of insurers, solicitors, surgeons, auctioneers, architects etc. There were also a few gentlemen's clubs such as the Wellington Conservative Club and the Athenaeum. The first Reading Theatre was opened by Henry Thornton at No. 121 Friar Street in May 1788, which lasted until 1868. At the other end of Friar Street, Pig Market street ran between Friar and Broad Streets, situated slightly east of West Street. Pig Market is visible as late as the 1840 town map, but had vanished by the 1875 Ordnance Survey map. Historically between Friar Street and Broad Street were several courts many comprising ramshackle housing for some of inner Reading's poor. The 1895 Goad insurance plan shows some examples as Gas Court, Ball Court, Lewis Court, Dyson Court, Fife Court etc. with only the latter surviving today.

1125 Friar Street was a secondary retail area until the arrival of the trains in 1840. Indeed, the northern side of the road was not as densely developed as the southern side, with little backland development at that time. There was light backland development by 1879 but development intensified on the northern side between 1898 and 1909.

1126 Uses on Friar Street were again varied. In 1870 the Theatre Royal and Albert Hall was built. The old Augustine Chapel at No. 113 was converted into the Princes' Theatre in 1893 and renamed the New Royal County Theatre (eventually burning down in 1937). Blgrave Buildings were built in 1867 as model tenement blocks but were pulled down in the 1960s. This area was also well known, from the Georgian through to the Edwardian period, for its music shops e.g. Hickie's (1864) which still occupies No. 153 today. Pubs were numerous historically as today, although only the Bugle remains as a site of any antiquity. Prominent pubs now gone include the Star & Garter, the Marquis of Lorne, the Boar's Head, and the Wheatsheaf. The Reading Gas Works Offices and Showroom was on Friar Street at the junction with Cross Street (now Haslams estate agents). Notable former occupiers on the street include Arthur Newbery's Furniture Store at Nos. 146-147, AH Bull's Drapery at Nos. 118-119 and Langston & Sons' Outfitters at No. 93, Tomkins' Royal Horse & Carriage Repository and C & G Ayres coal & coke merchants (1825) at Nos. 44-47.

1127 The Harris Arcade was built through an existing Georgian house at No. 15 Friar Street in 1929. The Central Cinema was opened at No. 25 Friar Street in 1921, designed in the Art Deco style by George Gardiner, and sadly demolished in 2002. Since the opening of the Oracle Shopping Centre in 1999, the retail prime pitch and focus of the town has moved back towards the Kennet, to the detriment of Friar Street.

Cross Street

1128 This street historically was known as Gutter Lane as shown on the Speed map of 1610.

Queen Victoria Street and Station Road

1129 These streets were laid out as a response to the railway arriving in the town and providing a more civilised route from the station to the main shopping street of Broad Street. On Station Road is the Former Great Western Hotel, which is one of the first railway hotels in Britain dating from 1844 (Grade II listed).

Union Street

1130 This street does not appear to be shown on the Rocque map of 1761 but may well have been too secondary to depict given the low level of detail on the map. A street plaque confirms the street dates to at least 1793 and the street is shown on the 1802 town map. The street is colloquially known as 'Smelly Alley'. Some believe this derives from the sale of fish and meat shops there in the mid-20th century. Others believe from the 16th century at least a narrow pathway ran alongside an open sewer where Union Street is now, and hence was known as 'Smelly Alley'.

West Street and Cheapside

1131 West Street historically was known as Rotten Row. Between 1879 and 1898 McIlroy's Drapers began to expand on the western side of West Street and to the rear. In the first decade of 20th century they built a new department store on the corner of Oxford Road and the newly laid out Cheapside.

Chain Street

1132 According to secondary sources, Chain Street historically contained Hall's Almshouses², which appear no longer to have been extant by the Goad map of 1895. The derivation of the name Chain Street is due to Minster Street being so narrow, and so often blocked with wagons historically, that, in 1648, the Reading Corporation closed it with chains. The lane would have been a busy cut through from Broad Street to Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin and Minster Street.

² reading_text.pdf (historictownsatlas.org.uk)

Overall Importance

- 11.33 The character area is partially mixed with a large proportion of historic buildings on Broad Street, Queen Victoria Street, Cross Street, parts of Friar Street and parts of Station Road, as well as some modern infill buildings. The historic buildings tend to the 19th century and early 20th century, with a smattering of 17th century and 18th century buildings.

Boundary Review

- 11.34 The relevant parts of the character area with extant historic buildings, historic plot widths etc. are worthy of consideration for inclusion within a conservation area. See Part C of report.

Summary of Key Issues

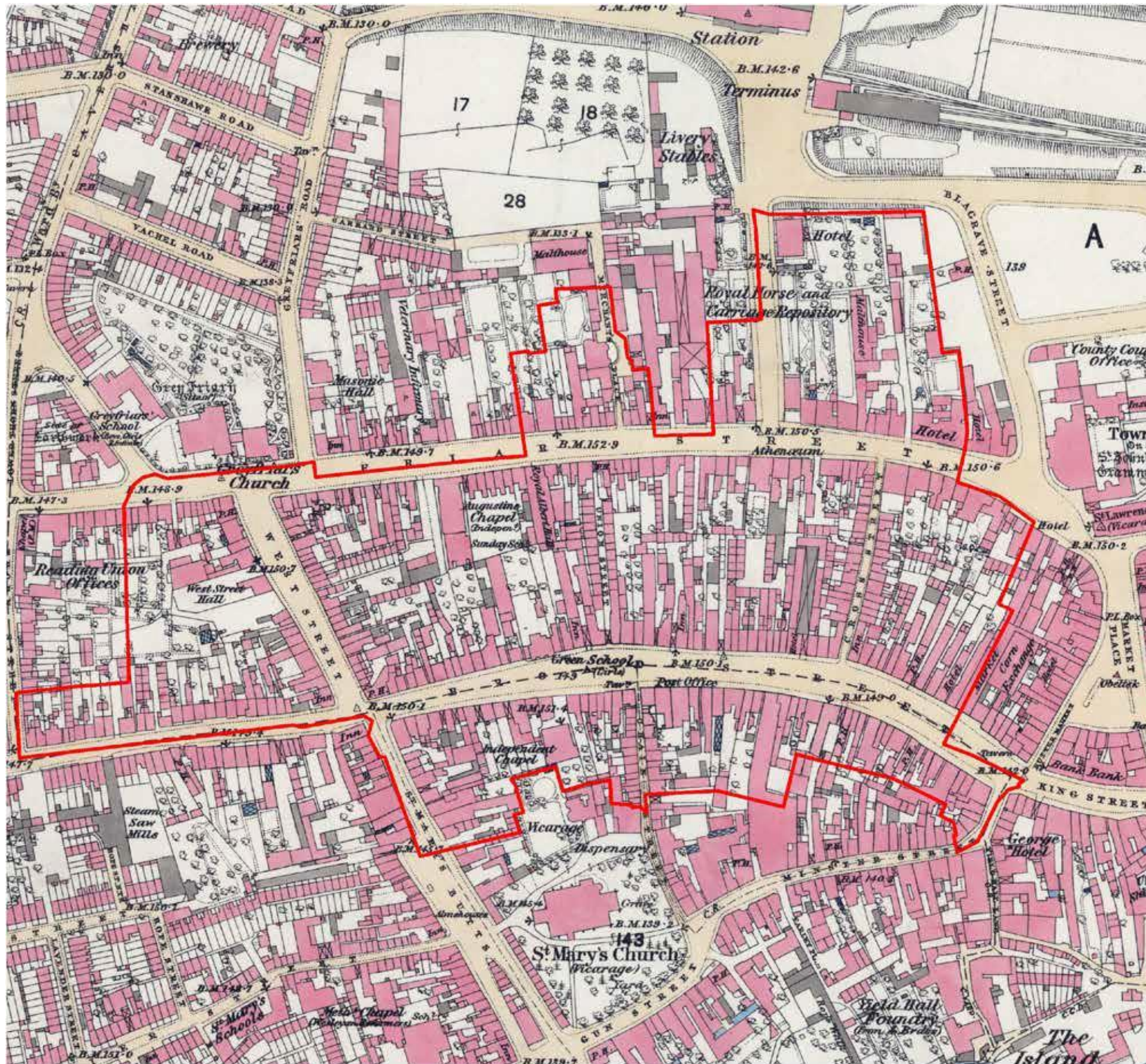
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 11.35 The character area forms a key part of medieval Reading following the abbey's foundation. Traditionally the area has been much varied in its uses, with a strong leaning towards commercial use, and then becoming the main retail pitch for the town following the arrival of the railways in 1840. Other historic uses often included industry, theatres, churches and chapels, clubs, housing, public houses, banks etc. The main significance of the area today are the surviving elements of Broad Street, Friar Street, Cross Street, Station Road and Queen Victoria Street from the Victorian and Edwardian heyday for this part of the town.

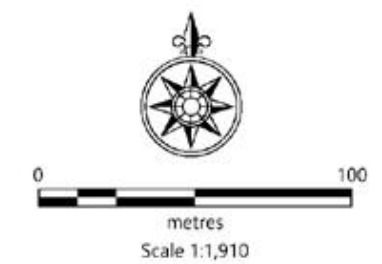
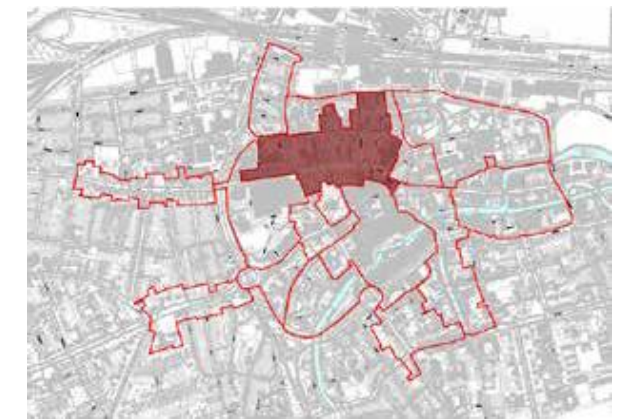
Principal Detracting Elements

- Unsympathetic replacement shop frontages, particularly to some sub areas. Some replacement uPVC windows fitted e.g. 42 Oxford Road.
- Surprisingly low footfall to West Street part of sub area. Cheapside has little footfall as no retail offering except corner retailers on Oxford Road.
- Low-grade tarmacked pavements in some places with areas of patch.
- Some bland infill replacement buildings and non contextual designs.
- Some loss of historic streets such as the former Pig Market Street and Gas Court.
- Despite the age of the character area, in places few historic buildings survive. Tragic losses include the former Central Cinema (replaced by the most incongruous building in central Reading (Novotel)).
- The existence of the former Vaudeville Electric Theatre auditorium (to the rear of Boots, Nos 47-48 Broad Street) is largely unknown or unappreciable.
- Little trace of the sub area's partial industrial past.
- The Oracle Development has rivalled Broad Street as the prime shopping area.

Figure 59. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 3.2 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

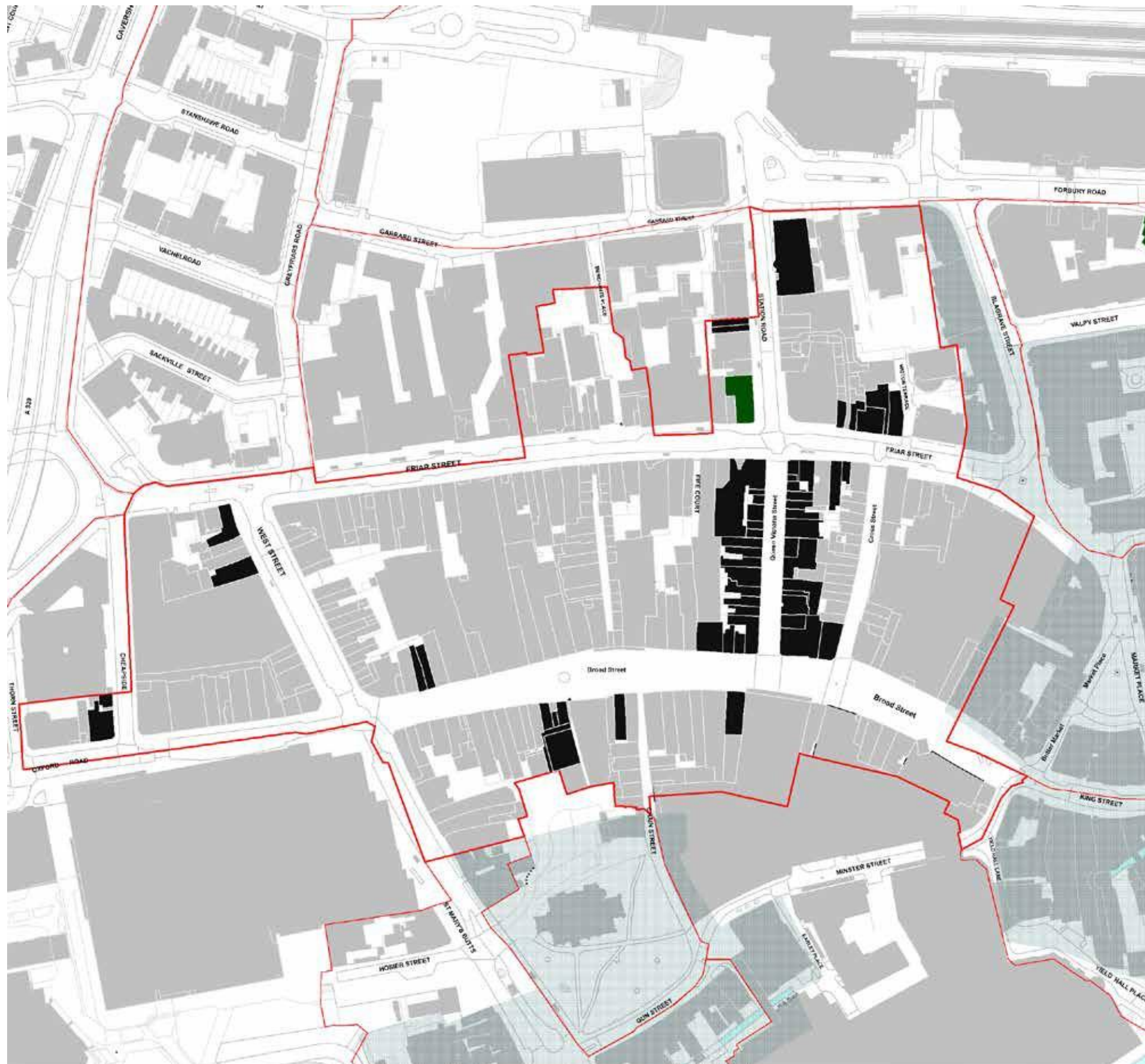


3.2 Broad & Friar Streets



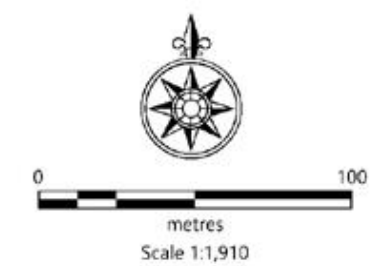
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Figure 60. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 3.2



3.2 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- 3 & 5 Cheapside and 38 Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- The Mitre Inn, West Street (Grade II listed)
- W I Palmer Memorial Hall (Grade II listed)
- 67 & 68 Broad Street (Grade II listed)
- Congregational Church and Nos. 89 and 89A Broad Street (Grade II listed)
- 95 Broad Street (Grade II listed)
- 107 Broad Street (Grade II listed)
- 35-38 Broad Street, 24-28 Broad Street, 2-32 Queen Victoria Street, 148-150 Friar Street and Nos. 1-31 Queen Victoria Street
- 147 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 154 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 155 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 11 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 12 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 13 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 14 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- 15 Friar Street (Grade II listed)
- Great Western House, Station Road (Grade II listed)
- 13 & 15 Station Road (Grade II listed)

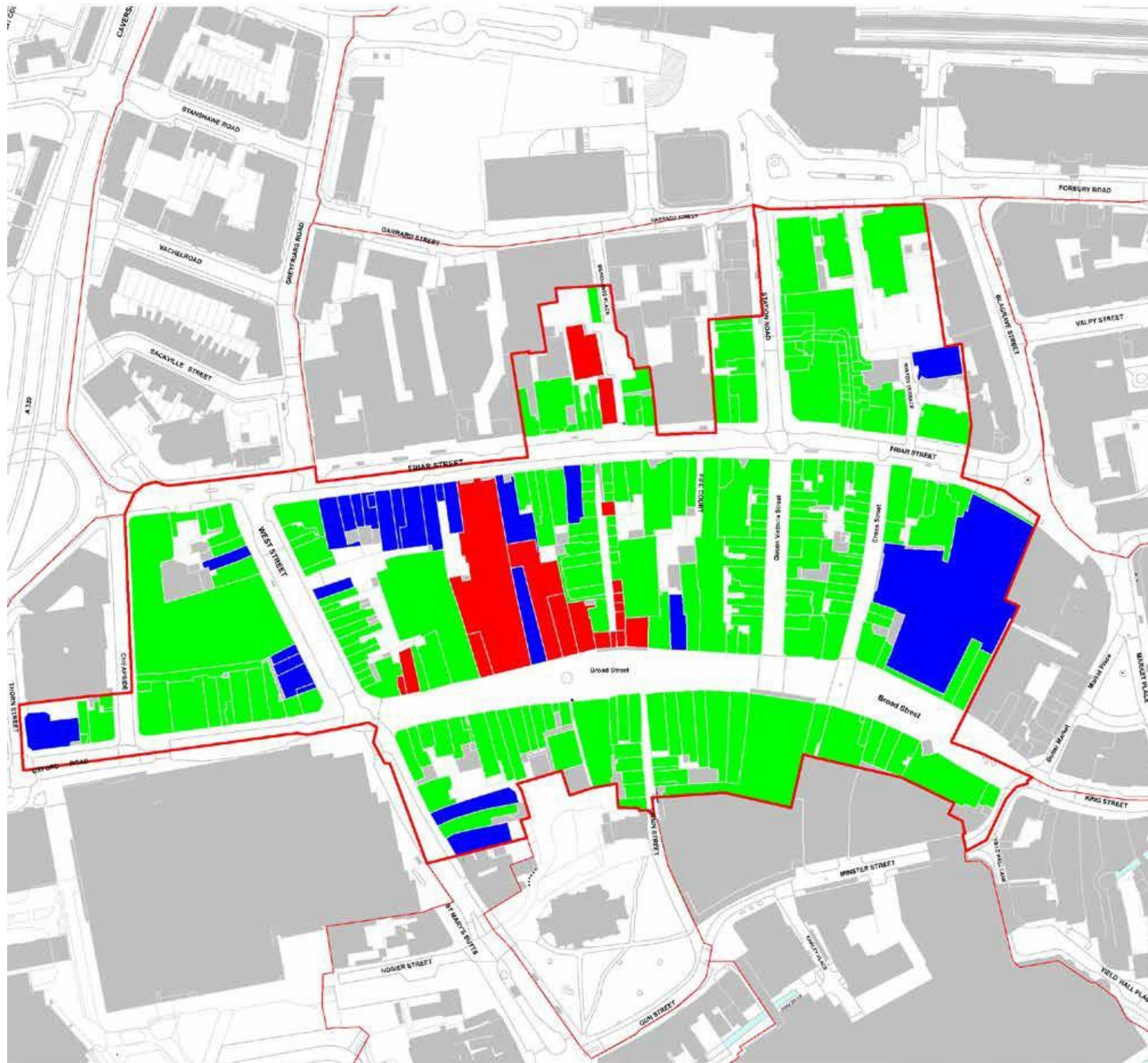
Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- King Edwards Buildings 1 Station Road/22 Friar Street (LLB)

Conservation Areas

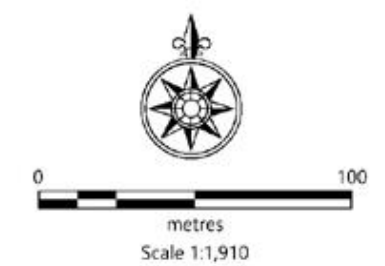
- Market Place and London Street Conservation Area
- St. Mary's Butts Conservation Area

Figure 61. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 3.2



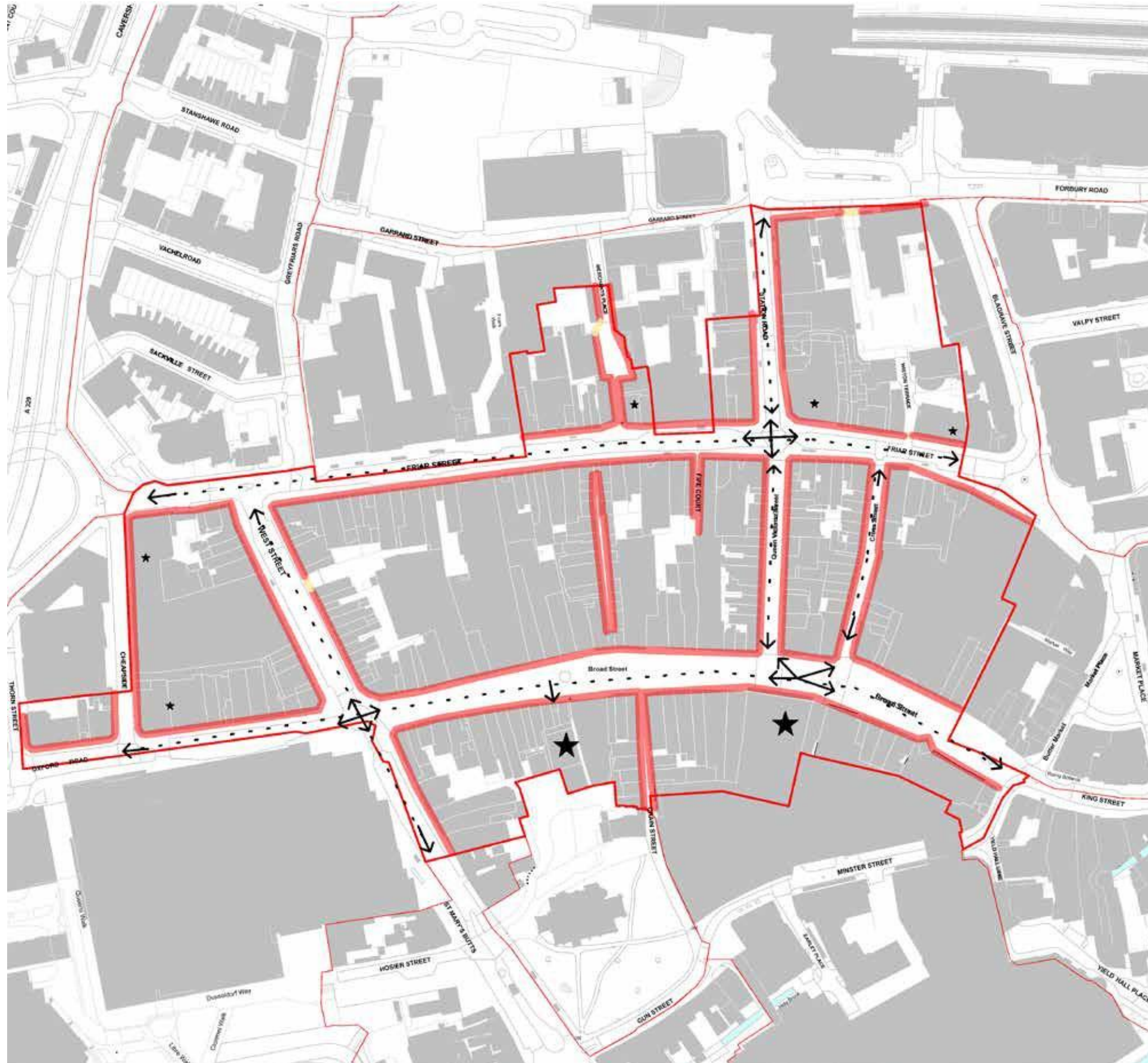
3.2 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



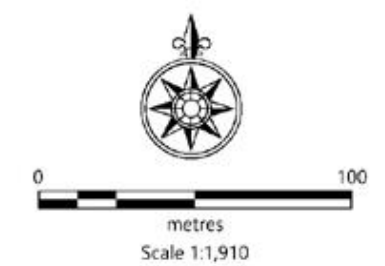
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Figure 62. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 3.2



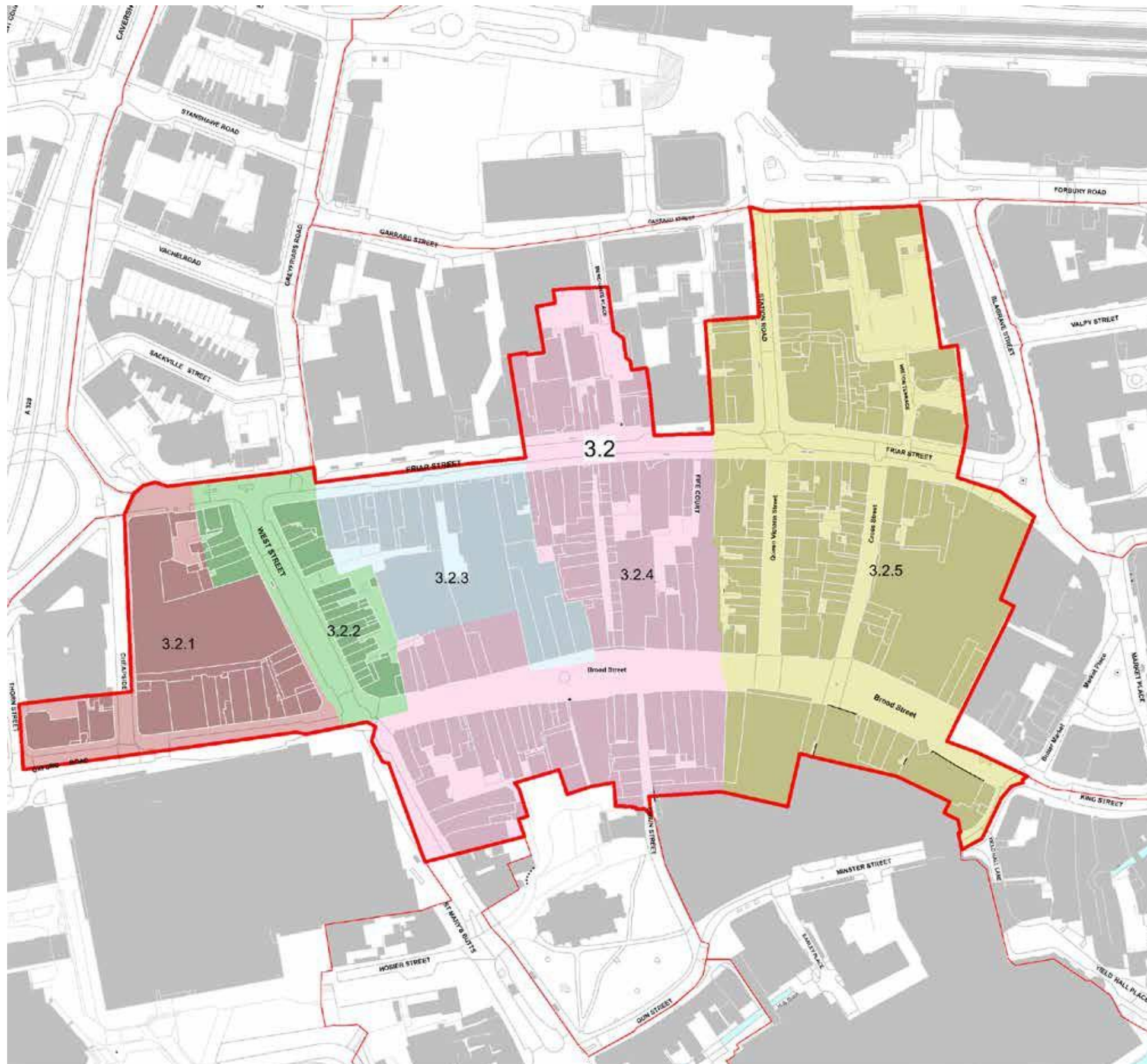
3.2 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



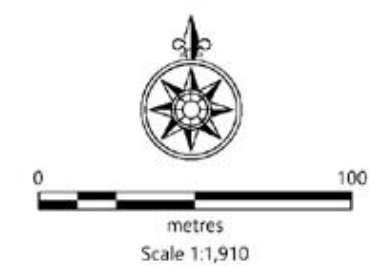
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Figure 63. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 3.2



3.2 Broad & Friar Streets Sub areas

- 3.2.1 Oxford Road north (McIlroys site): Historic and Modern Retail
- 3.2.2 West Street: Historic and Modern Retail Mixed-use
- 3.2.3 Friar Street west: Modern Retail on Historic Plots
- 3.2.4 Broad/Union/Chain Streets: Historic Retail Frontages with Historic Yards
- 3.2.5 Broad Street/Queen Victoria Street/Station Road: Historic and Modern Retail



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Sub area Character 3.2.4

Name Broad/Union/Chain Streets: Historic Retail Frontages with Historic Yards



Characteristics

- Storey heights predominantly range between 3-3.5 storeys.
- Predominantly Victorian but some surviving buildings from the early C19. 95 Broad Street (Grade II) is probably C17 or early C18. Some interwar infills and mid-late C20 and early C21 infills.
- Building materials are predominantly brick (red in the main with some buff, gault and grey), terracotta, some stone dressings and occasional Portland stone.
- Busy prime retail pitch on Broad Street (pedestrianised) and more secondary but busy locations on St. Mary's Butts and Friar Street.
- Buildings typically comprise retail with upper parts as well as restaurants and public houses. Notable historic buildings include former Congregational Chapel and former cinema (Nos. 47-48).
- Densely developed sub area. Most rear areas entirely developed, most historic yards (courts) developed, save for Fife Court and Merchant's Place. Area permeated by narrow alleys in Chain Street and Union Street.
- All buildings front pavements with no set back.
- Focal building to sub area is the former Congregational Chapel.
- Building designs are individual producing an eclectic streetscene.

Strengths

- High proportion of historic buildings survive, some are listed.
- Highly ornate detailing to many frontages especially upper floors.
- Consistency of height throughout sub area.
- Mostly prime retail locations in centre of Reading. High value national retailers typically on Broad Street and generally thriving.
- Good quality public realm and good pedestrian environment.
- Some good contemporary design (St. Mary's Butts).
- Some redevelopment opportunities.
- The Dowsett Brothers' Brewery chimney survives in Fife Court.

Weaknesses

- Historic yards (courts) mostly lost such as Balls Court.
- Unsympathetic shop fronts introduced and some uPVC windows.
- Little trace of the sub area's partial industrial past.
- Some poor quality mid-late C20 infill.
- Tragic loss of the Art Deco former Central Cinema (adjoining sub area), especially as replaced by the most incongruous building in central Reading (Novotel).
- Sub area under pressure from medium-rise developments and roof extensions.

3.2.5

Broad Street/Queen Victoria Street/Station Road: Historic and Modern Retail



- Storey heights are mainly 3.5 storeys.
- Buildings mainly mid-late Victorian or Edwardian. Some early C19 and occasional C17 buildings (often both refronted). Some C18 and occasional modern infills.
- Eclectic building stock of different plot sizes and individual designs.
- Mix of building types including department stores, hotels, public houses, offices, retail and upper parts. Queen Victoria Street and returns built to unified design.
- The focal building to sub area is John Lewis on Broad St.
- All buildings front directly on to pavements, with the exception of the Malmaison, which is set behind balustraded boundary walls.
- Densely developed with most rear gardens built over. Between Acquis House (Blagrove Street) and Wiston Terrace is a surface car park.
- Sub Area forms the grandest and most embellished buildings in the town centre. Prime retail locations along Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street and Broad Street.
- Medium range views from the station to Broad Street along Station Road and Queen Victoria Street, which was created with much demolition of older stock to create this view.
- Building materials are mainly red brick (some gault, grey) (some rendered), Portland stone, and terracotta.

- High proportion of historic buildings with numerous listed buildings.
- Consistency of height.
- Good period details surviving to upper parts.
- Mostly pedestrianised with little traffic, buses or taxis. Pedestrian friendly environment.
- Mainly good quality modern infill buildings.
- Reasonable proportion of sympathetic shop frontages.
- Prime retail locations in centre of Reading. High value national retailers typically on Broad Street and generally thriving.

- Some satellite dishes fitted to front elevations (e.g. Cross Street).
- Loss of many historic shopfronts, replaced by unsympathetic replacements.
- Sub area under huge pressure from inappropriate medium-high rise developments and roof extensions.
- Loss of historic yards/courts such as Lamb Court, Dyson Court.
- No evidence of the sub area's element of industrial past.
- Area has lost many of the public houses shown on the 1879 Ordnance Survey map.
- The Oracle Development has become the true prime retail location, with this sub area being prime a rung lower than the Oracle.

Character Area 3.3 Level 1 [I]

Friar & Garrard Streets & Station Road: Modern Mixed-use Character Area

Introduction

11.36 The character area is undergoing substantial change at present. Some elements have recently been comprehensively redeveloped, some are cleared for redevelopment (Friars Walk site), and some are vacant buildings awaiting development. The character area lies in a central location, with the emerging trend being medium to high rise buildings. Where a tall building (Novotel) has been built on Friar Street (predominantly 3.5 storeys) this is visually highly incongruous and eye-catching and affects the setting of extant historic buildings on Friar Street and surrounding streets.

Historical Note

11.37 In 1233 the Abbot of Reading Abbey granted land to the Franciscan Friars who were sometimes called Greyfriars because they wore grey habits. This had been ordered by Henry III following the friars' patronage, although the land they were granted was often liable to flooding (Figure 64). This initial land was in the Vastern area, either side of the River Thames and lives on in Vastern Road. The Archbishop of Canterbury, a Franciscan himself, argued their case with the abbey, and in 1285, the friars were granted a new site on New Street, later to be called Friar Street. The present church was originally built between 1285 and 1311.

11.38 Friars Street from medieval times forms one of the three sides of the ancient core of Reading formed by Friar Street to the north, St. Mary's Butts (or Olde Street) and Southampton Street to the west and London Street/High Street to the east. The St. Mary's Butts road ran from Seven Bridges towards Caversham Bridge, with the name 'Olde Street' being used by as early as the reign of Henry IV. Caversham Bridge is first mentioned in 1231 and an ancient ford is likely to have existed prior to that.

11.39 In Tudor times Reading extended to the northern side of Friar Street but little development lay north of this point, other than the ancillary church buildings to Greyfriars Church. The latter was dissolved in 1538 by Henry VIII's commissioner, John London. In that year the friary buildings comprised the church and cloister, three lodging buildings, and 20 acres of grounds with trees, a pond, and an orchard. The John Lovells Ltd Civil War Defence Maps show fields in the approximate location of today's Station Hill as Friary Mead, and given the 20-acre land parcel

the priory land lands possibly stretched down to the northern side of the River Thames. The Civil War town defences ran through the former Friary lands, to the west of the church, then to its north and then east as the defences headed east-west. The defences ran approximately just to the south of today's Garrard Street. This suggests that the town boundary at that time was the northern edge of the burgage plots on the northern side of Garrard Street. Indeed, no development is shown north of the northern side of Friar Street on the Speed Map of 1610.

11.40 The Rocque map of 1761 shows an intensification of development along the northern side of Friar Street but with little development north of the northern side of Friar Street. The land appears to be cultivated at this time down to the southern side of the River Thames. The 1802 map shows that little had changed by this time other than more development north of St. Laurence's Church (outside character area) on Vastern Lane. The 1840 town map shows a street orientated north-south marginally east of Union Street, which lies in the location of today's Merchant's Place. At the northern end and on the eastern side new built form is shown for the first time. So too is Station Road. The station was built by July 1839 and opened in March 1840. The Great Western Railway lines are shown to the north, south of the River Thames approximately in their present position.

11.41 In the mid-18th century Thomas Flory, Mayor of Reading in 1749, owned a malthouse off Merchant's Place. He died in 1780 and in 1785 his family sold the brewery to William Garrard after whom the street is named. In 1856 Benjamin Tompkins opened his Royal Horse & Carriage Repository which lay behind much of the western side of Station Road and northern side of Friar Street. The 1875 Ordnance Survey map shows more detail of the extant buildings at that time along the northern side of Friar Street, which included an inn on the corner of Greyfriars Road, a Masonic Hall to its east, a Veterinary Infirmary further east and a malthouse at the northern end of Merchant's Place. The Boar's public house was situated on Station Road. Carriers' stables were built beside the pub and it became a busy terminus for local carriers. The Boar's Head's former stables survive on Merchant's Place. The 1879 Ordnance Survey map shows Garrard Street for the first time and new workers' terraced housing along its western end on both sides of the road. Workers' terraced housing is also shown on the eastern side of Greyfriars Road opposite Vachel Road and Stanshawe Road. The remainder of the northern side of Garrard Street remained undeveloped at that time.

11.42 The area remained largely unchanged on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map (published 1900) since the 1875 Ordnance Survey map. The 1909 Ordnance Survey map (published 1912) shows infilling on the southern side of Garrard Street with additional industrial buildings. By the 1934 Ordnance Survey map the Royal Horse & Carriage Repository had been redeveloped, part of which allowed for the construction of the Art Deco Central Picture Playhouse on Friar Street which opened in 1921. By the 1972-89 Ordnance Survey map the character area had already undergone sizeable change. The buildings on the eastern corner of Greyfriars Road and Friar Street had been lost, as had the Masonic Hall, as had much of the northern central part of Friar Street between Greyfriars Road and Merchant's Place in the construction of the Friars Walk shopping centre. In 2003 the Central Picture Playhouse was regrettably demolished to make way for the Novotel Hotel (constructed between 2004-06) on Friar Street.

Overall Importance

- 11.43 The character area contains no historic buildings and its historic plot widths have largely been lost. Its importance from a heritage perspective is low.

Boundary Review

- 11.44 The character area is not considered worthy of inclusion within a conservation area.

Summary of Key Issues

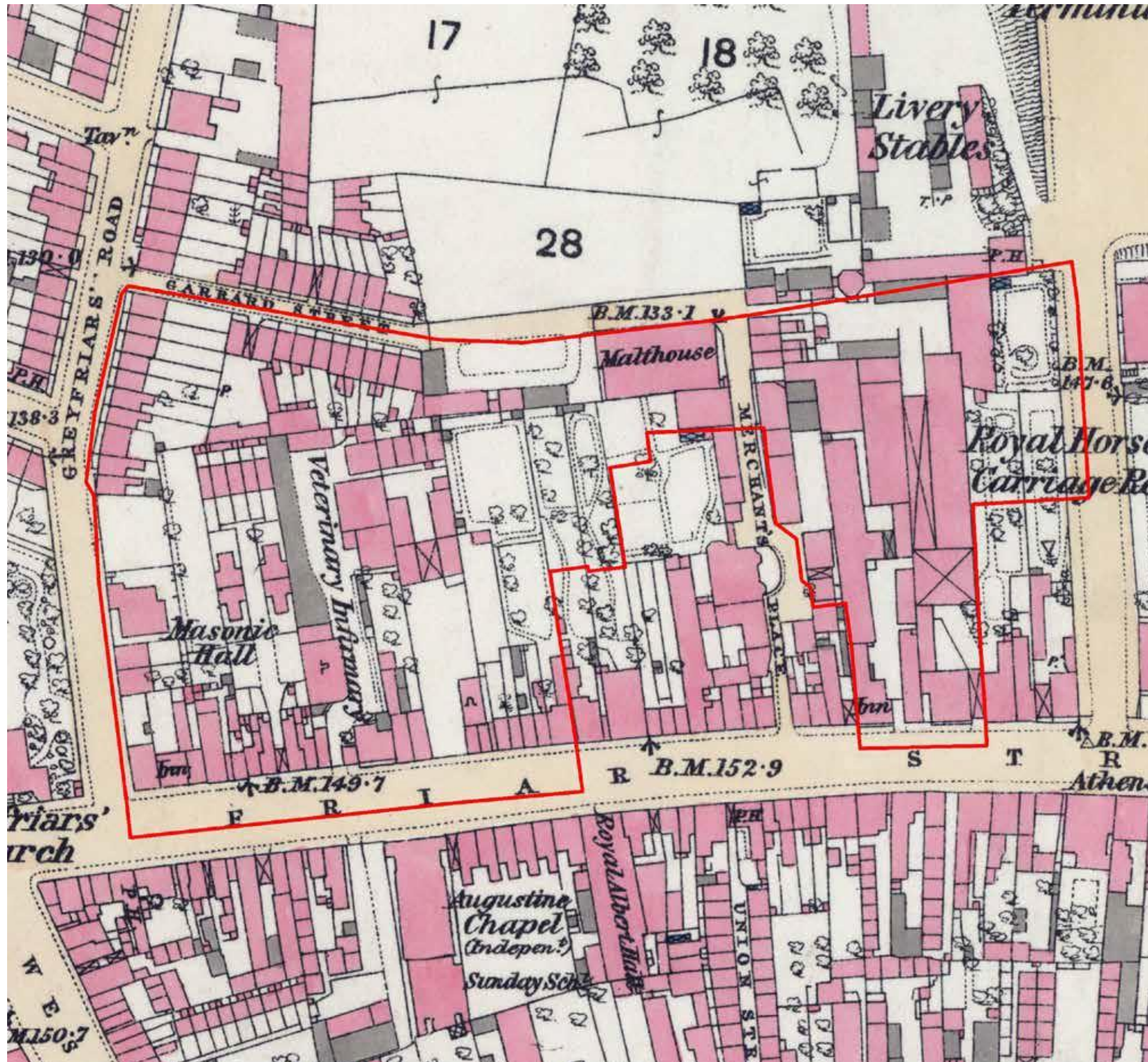
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 11.45 The northern side of Friar Street has been developed since the early 14th century and regrettably most historic built form along the northern side of Friar Street between Greyfriars Road and Station Road has been lost. Within the character area itself, no historic buildings survive. Garrard Street itself is a much later street only being developed between the 1840s and 1909. Any buildings from this period have since been lost. The significance of the character area is therefore low with minor residual significance lying in the street names and street positions indicating to some extent the history of the area.

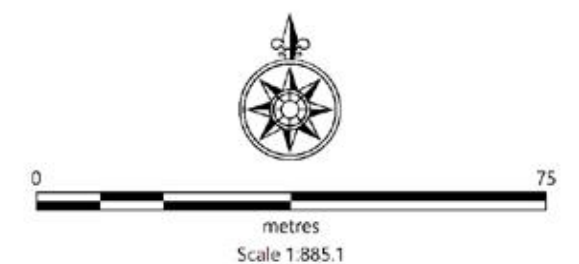
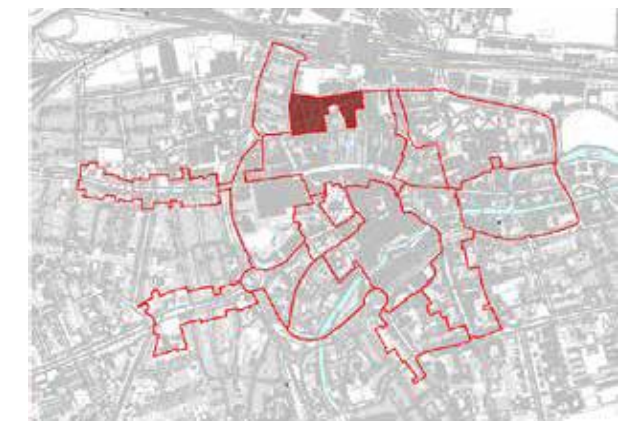
Principal Detracting Elements

- Height excessive on the northern side of Friar Street - non contextual and unsympathetic.
- Complete loss of any historic buildings and loss of narrow burgage plots along Friar Street.
- Some replacement buildings are mediocre, not responding to the historic environment, and materials not-contextual.

Figure 64. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 3.3 (Source: National Library of Scotland)



3.3 Friar & Garrard Streets & Station Road



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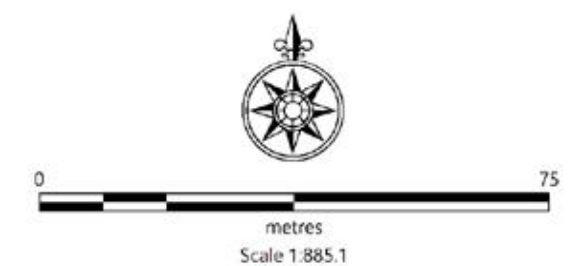
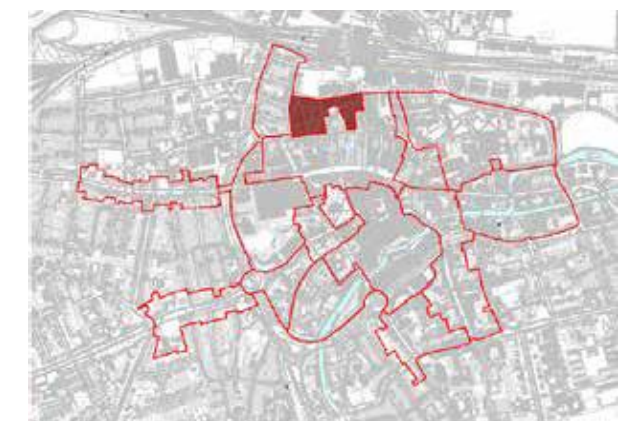
Figure 65. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 3.3



3.3 Friar & Garrard Streets & Station Road

Sub areas

- 3.3.1 Friar Street/Greyfriars Road: Modern Retail, Office and Residential
- 3.3.2 Friar/Garrard Streets: Under Development
- 3.3.3 Friar Street/Station Road: Modern Mixed-use



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Sub area Character 3.3.1

Name Friar Street/Greyfriars Road: Modern Retail, Office and Residential



Characteristics

- Building materials vary between red brick, coated aluminium cladding, and other non-specific cladding.
- Storeys range between 3-7 storeys, but predominantly 6 storeys.
- Building types include a student flatted scheme, offices and a supermarket.
- The building stock comprises modern buildings dating to between the mid-late C20 to early C21.
- The sub area is densely developed. The only area that is not developed is a service area to the Sainsbury's supermarket which has tarmacked hardstanding.
- All buildings front directly on to the pavement with no set back or front gardens.
- All buildings in sub area have individual designs leading to an eclectic streetscape.
- All buildings are mainly on large plots that have agglomerated smaller plots over the last 50 years as this part of Friar Street has been largely redeveloped.

Strengths

- Central location in Reading town centre.
- Prime regeneration opportunities.
- Low traffic volumes to Friar Street.
- Average-good levels of footfall along this part of Friar Street.

Weaknesses

- Height out of scale with northern side of Friar Street, non-contextual and unsympathetic.
- Complete loss of any historic buildings and loss of narrow burgage plots along Friar Street.
- Replacement buildings generally mediocre, not responding to the historic environment, and materials not contextual.
- Footfall drops to the western end of Friar Street.
- Some low-grade concrete paving slabs, infilled with tarmac where broken.

3.3.2

Name Friar/Garrard Streets: Under Development



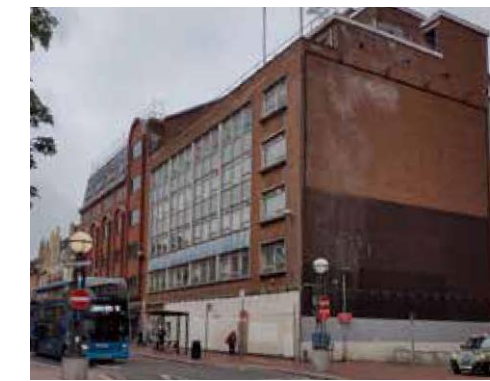
- Whole sub area is a cleared site at present for redevelopment, having demolished Friars Walk shopping centre and related adjoining buildings. This area is being redeveloped in line with Planning App 201536. The massing to be built out is likely to be medium-tall rise in line with the emerging character along Garrard Street.
- No extant buildings.
- The scheme between Friar Street and Garrard Street will comprise a flatted residential scheme (Build to Rent).

- Central town centre location.
- Prime regeneration site currently being built out.
- Potential for scheme to be built out with high grade materials.
- Easy access to station.
- Strong sense of enclosure along Garrard Street (once built out).

- The consented heights are a step change from the remainder of the northern side of Friar Street, save the Novotel scheme which has a similar scale.
- Complete loss of any historic buildings and loss of narrow burgage plots along Friar Street.

3.3.3

Name Friar Street/Station Road: Modern Mixed-use



- Storey heights vary dramatically across the sub area. On Friar Street is the Novotel hotel, which at 13 storeys in a predominantly 3.5 storey Friar Street is most incongruous. Some elements are far lower at 5-6 storeys.
- All buildings front directly on to the pavement with no set back or front gardens.
- All buildings in sub area have individual designs leading to an eclectic streetscape.
- All buildings are largely on large plots that have agglomerated smaller plots. Sub area inclines eastwards towards Station Road.
- The building stock comprises modern buildings dating to between the mid-late C20 to early C21.
- The sub area is densely developed. There is a service road off Garrard Street to the rear of Nos. 29-35 Station Road. There are also several inner courtyard gardens.
- The existing buildings are in a variety of uses comprising offices, hotel and residential. The newly built Garrard House is serviced apartments. Nos. 29-35 Station Road appears to be vacant and is ready for redevelopment.
- Building materials are predominantly red brick with some mid-late C20 mediocre cladding.

- One potential regeneration opportunity.
- Good quality public realm to Station Road.
- Good quality modern developments at Garrard House and 17-27 Station Road. Good quality brickwork to Garrard House.
- Station Road is a wide pedestrian friendly road towards Broad Street.
- Central Reading location near station.

- Lack of greenery to area.
- Novotel is out of scale, non-contextual and unsympathetic.
- Loss of many historic buildings and loss of narrow burgage plots along Friar Street.
- Nos. 29-35 Station Road at present is a detracting element.

Character Area 3.4 Level 1 [I]

Minster/Bridge Streets & Queen's Road: Modern Commercial Character Area

Introduction

- 11.46 The River Kennet to the south and Minster Street to the north form focal points within this character area, which comprises mostly retail and office use.
- 11.47 The Oracle shopping centre (1997-2000 concept Fitch Benoy, was built by Haskoll & Co) is a central focal point. The public space by Whitby & Bird incorporates footbridges and canopies using a range of materials to create an informal atmosphere. Other uses include a hotel and restaurants. The Oracle was a significant change to the character of the town centre because it drew retailers and shoppers away from the traditional streets while encouraging more to visit Reading Centre the town centre from further afield. It also revealed the Kennet and made that an asset. Buildings of note include the Heelas retail extension (1979-1985) on the north side of Minster Street by RD Cook Partnership (consultant Sir High Casson), and the Telephone Exchange c.1903 by Leonard Stokes, Grade II, both described in the Buildings of England. The listed building on Bridge Street, Seven Bridges House (early 19th century), became part of H & G Simonds Ltd as did the Seven Bridges Brewery.
- #### Historical Note
- 11.48 Historically, the area in between the town and the river was largely industrial with some residential on the fringes and retail along Minster Street (Figure 66). Today Minster Street incorporates an area once known as St Mary's Parade and forms part of the coarser grain of large-scale shops. Beyond the obvious difference in use, it also once had a much finer grain than the industrial complexes to the south.
- 11.49 In contrast, the riverside and canal side were characterised by industrial sites and public works, with additional industry located along multiple brooks or streams off the Kennet. That industry was surrounded by residential terraces to the north east, west and south. The redevelopment of this area began piecemeal in the early 20th century until total redevelopment in the late 20th century.

- 11.50 St Giles's Mill, the gas works, waterworks and an iron and brass foundry were present in 1879 and all were subsequently demolished between 1895 and 1934. The gas and Waterworks were replaced by other industrial uses and the foundry was replaced by Heelas, now John Lewis. The Seven Bridges Brewery (in partnership with H & G Simonds Ltd), tram and bus depots were demolished in the late 20th century and replaced by the Oracle shopping centre.
- 11.51 Similar historic development occurred within the adjacent areas, to the west. The land that is now occupied by offices was once partially residential terraces and associated with the Bear Inn within the north of the sub area, and its southern portion was incorporated into Simonds complex during the late-19th century expansion.
- 11.52 In comparison, the area to the south of the river was more residential, forming a street frontage along the south side of Mill Lane, prior to its removal to make space for the Inner Distribution Road (IDR).
- 11.53 The IDR represents a separation from the past. In contrast, historic infrastructure is in evidence, not only in Bridge and Minster Streets, but also in the lanes and places not now serve different uses, such as Earley Place and Gas Lane.
- 11.54 In the past, Minster Street formed part of the retail core and backed onto an industrial zone with a residential fringe. A single Dornier bomber, that hit Market Place, also destroyed a number of buildings on Minster Street. Redevelopment shifted from industrial and residential towards greater retail and office use. A juxtaposing trend of industrial to retail dominates the majority of the area.

Overall Importance

- 11.55 Only three historic buildings have been retained within this area of 20th and 21st century redevelopment. The form, function and grain of buildings along historic routes have changed irreversibly. Approximately half the historic street and lane/alley network survives. For these reasons, the area no longer reflects the character and appearance of the past. Therefore, it does not fulfil the requirements for designation as a conservation area as having particular historic or architectural interest.
- 11.56 There are also strong visual links recorded along Bridge Street, particularly looking south towards St Giles and to a lesser extent looking north towards St Mary's Butts.
- 11.57 The views along the section of the Kennet within this character area are confined to the modern, designed commercial space of the Oracle whose footbridges and canopies were designed by Whitby Bird engineers.

Boundary Review

- 11.58 A small portion of the western edge, around the Telephone Exchange, is located within the current St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. This portion was included in this character area because its scale and grain is more in keeping with the transitional scale and later date of many of the buildings on Minster Street, which currently lies outside that Conservation Area.
- 11.59 However, further study has established that Minster Street, though in need of enhancements, possesses clear visual links either end of Minster Street with Broad Street to the east and Gun Street and St Mary's Minster to the west. Historically, Minster Street connected with Gun Street and the Holy Brook continues to flow to its south, which continues to flow east towards the Abbey Mill.
- 11.60 These current and historic interconnections and the quality of the Heelas building enable consideration of including Minster Street as far south as the Holy Brook as a fourth character area within St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.

Summary of Key Issues

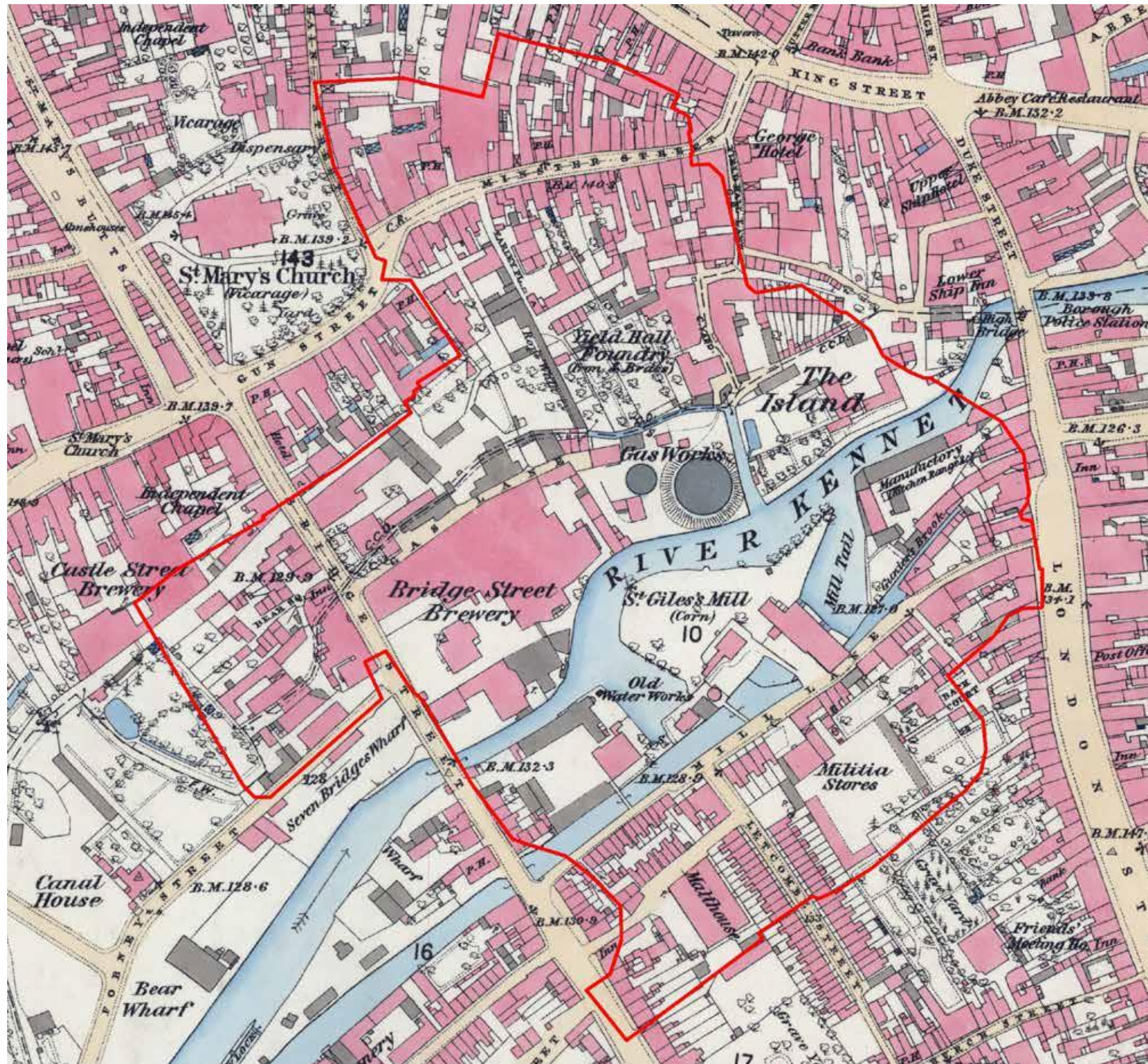
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 11.61 With the exception of the few historic buildings, the scale and grain of the majority of modern buildings in this character area do not reflect the historic grain.
- 11.62 However, Minster Street is transitional in terms of having architecture of a scale and quality to contribute to the adjacent historic areas, and the surviving historic layout of the streets and lanes are physically linked.
- 11.63 There are strong visual links with Gun Street, Chain Street and St Mary's Minster at the western end of Minster Street and equally strong visual links with Broad Street and Market Place.

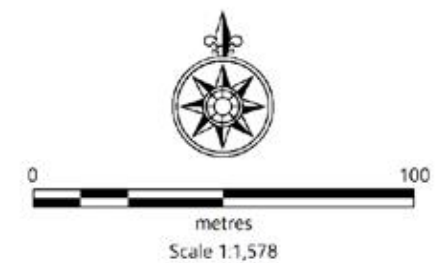
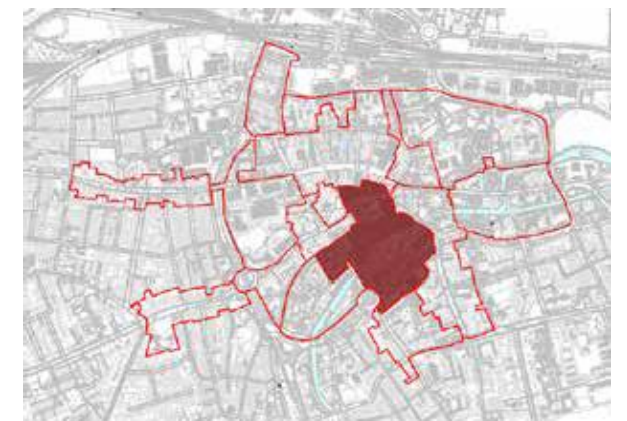
Principal Detracting Elements

- Bridge Street and Minster Street lack character and active frontages.
- Designed to meet singular functions, the current design of the buildings lack flexible re-use.
- Large areas of hard landscaping.

Figure 66. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 3.4 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

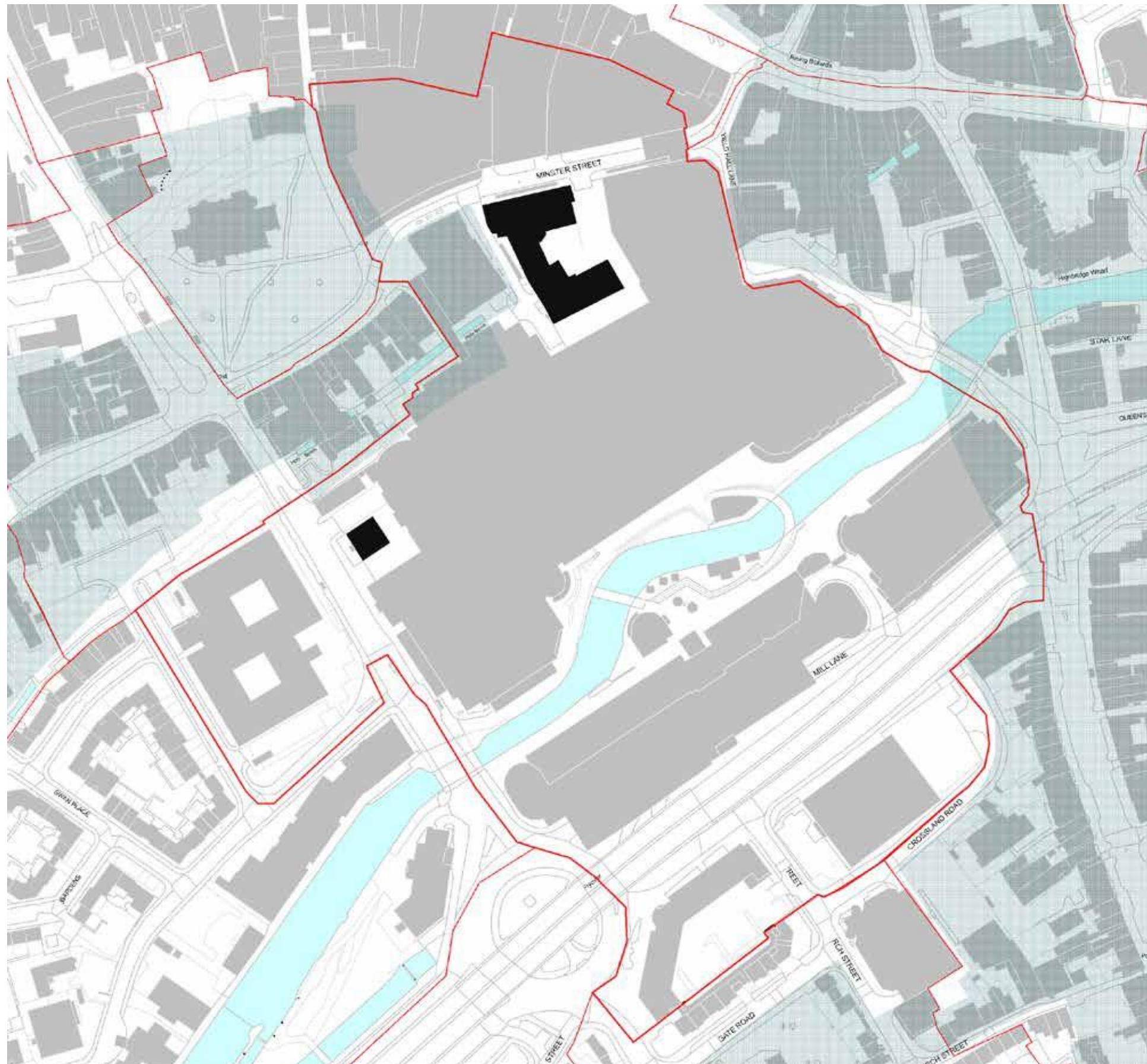


3.4 Minster/Bridge Streets & Queen's Road



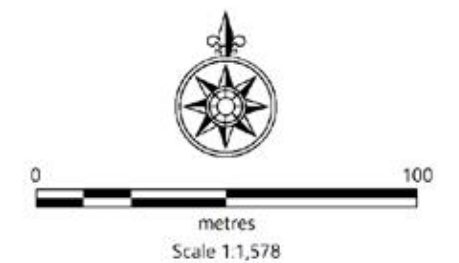
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Figure 67. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 3.4



3.4 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

-  Scheduled Monuments
-  Listed Buildings/Structures
-  Registered Parks and Gardens
-  Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
-  Conservation Area



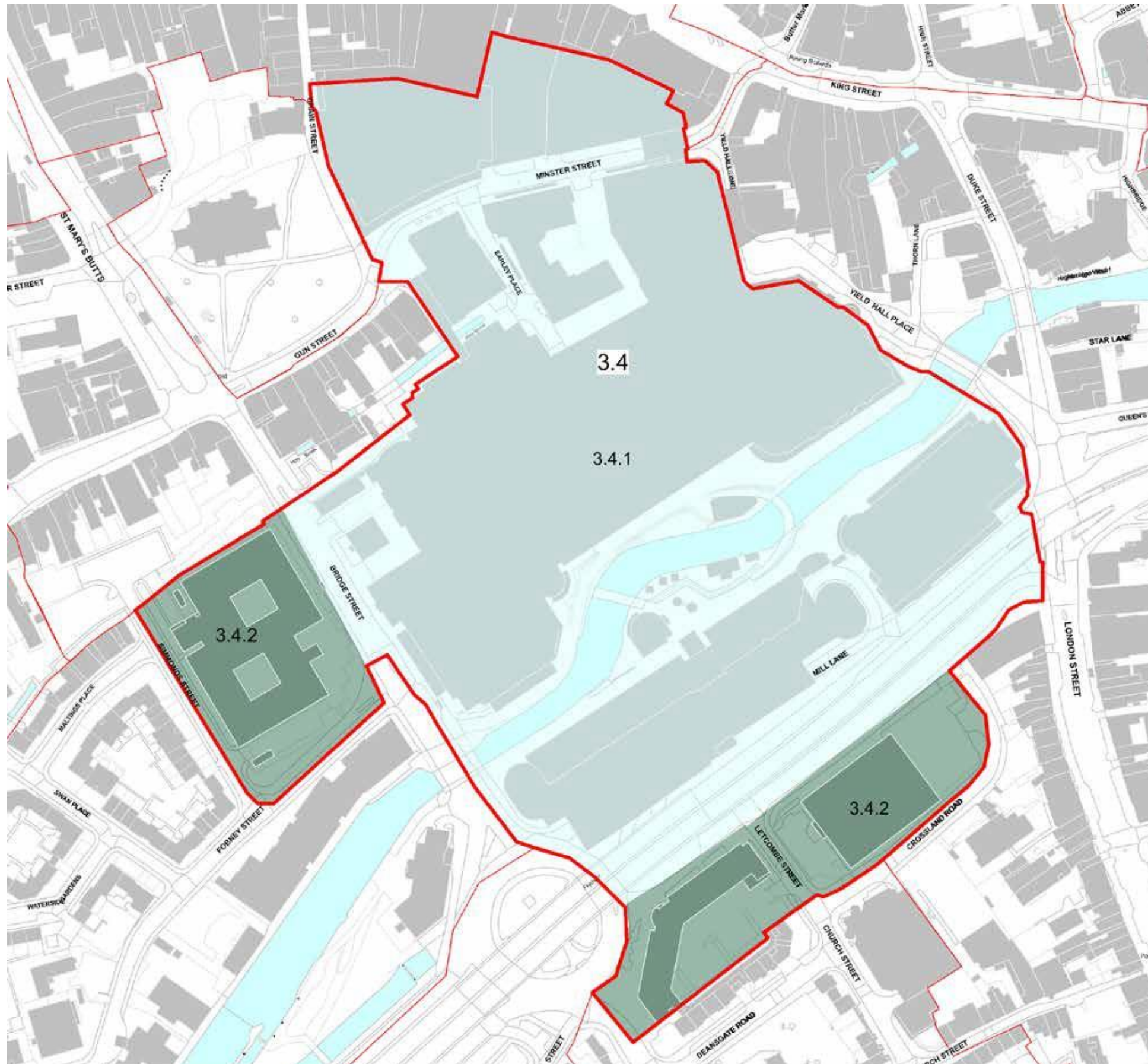
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List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area

Listed Buildings

- Seven Bridges House (Grade II listed)
- Telephone Exchange (Grade II listed)

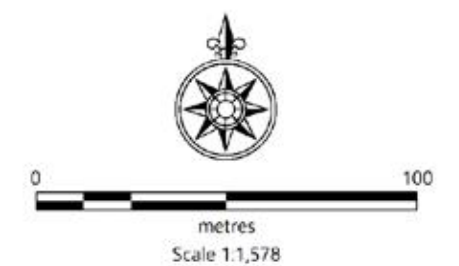
Figure 68. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 3.4





3.4 Minster/Bridge Streets & Queen's Road

Sub areas

- 3.4.1 Queen's Road/Minster Street: Modern Retail
- 3.4.2 Bridge Street/Letcombe Street: Modern Commercial and Warehouse



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| Sub area Character | 3.4.1 | 3.4.2 |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Name | Queen's Road/Minster Street: Modern Retail | Bridge Street/Letcombe Street: Modern Commercial and Warehouse |
| |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-7 storeys • Late C18 to Late C20 • Large-scale, coarse grain buildings containing evolving rows of restaurants • Modern hotel, car park and rear service area to the north of the Oracle • Interconnectivity between buildings • Mix of red brick, glass, metal and cladding • On-street/ pavement frontage • Railings along the Kennet • Wide, pedestrian-only streets along the Kennet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 1-6 storeys • Late C20 • Hotel with commercial eastern ground floor and depot • 3 large individual buildings • Predominantly red brick, with some glass, metal and cladding • Hotel has an on-street frontage, depot fronts onto a car park • Metal railings encircle the depot, including the car park • Car parking to the rear of the hotel |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of the Kennet • Riverside paths • Short distance to Reading centre • Numerous access routes • Rows of mature trees • Glimpses of the Holy Brook and a late 18 house Grade II evidencing links to the past • Lack of noise and air pollution from cars • Continuous shop frontages both sides of the Kennet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature trees and bushes • Easy access from Reading centre • Good provision of off-street car parking • Rear service areas for buildings • Pedestrian and vehicular entrances |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowding during peak times • Bridges act as choke points during peak times • Overhanging wires • Large-scale signage • Inactive street frontage along Minster street and eastern side of Chain Street • South strip of the area south of the Kennet essentially a line of car parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to high levels of traffic pollution from A329 • Low to medium traffic along Mill Lane • Loss of historic character • Damaged paving around the hotel • Unsightly security fence around depot |

12. King's Road, Gaol to Queen's Road: Modern Character Areas

Character Area 4.1 Level 1 [I]

Holy Brook & Kennet: Modern Housing Character Area

Introduction

- 12.1 The course of the River Kennet to the south and the Holy Brook to the north have influenced the development of this area. The character of this area is residential with vestiges of an industrial past. The area also benefits from a series of evolving views, which offer glimpses of historic sites here and across Reading due to the height of the buildings interrupting the long vistas available at key locations.
- 12.2 The majority of this area consists of modern residential development built in the late 1990s of 3 and 4 storey houses and flats in a variety of styles and brick colours with a clear common design theme. It shows a renewed design interest in terraces and street patterns of interconnected streets of the past. In recognition of this, the design won in a competition. The estate has a spacious feel with on-street car parking and in separate areas it is delineated with green boundaries that is described in *The Buildings of England* as 'relaxed and attractive'. The exceptions to the built environment described therein are Centenary House offices and Salvation Army Housing adjacent, overlooking the IDR.

Historical Note

- 12.3 Ordnance Survey maps show the development of this area from 1879 onwards. Initially sparsely occupied and in use as wharfs along the Kennet, there was open land populated with rows of trees to the north (Figure 69). Two Wharfs (Bear and Seven Bridges) fronted on to the northern bank of the Kennet, and to the south a wharf occupied the peninsula between two branches of the Kennet. County Lock aided the canalisation of this part of the river.
- 12.4 The peninsula was largely undeveloped in 1879, except for a bridge connecting Bridge Street with Southampton Street, a key historic route. Other surviving elements of historic infrastructure include Fobney Street and Mallard Row.

12.5 *Circa* 1898 saw the redevelopment of a brewing complex. Brewing and malting were important to Reading's economy in the 18th and 19th centuries. William Simonds began a business in the 1760s, relocated here, to become Reading's biggest brewery H & G Simonds. The Simonds Brewery site extended from the peninsula across the river to the south side of Fobney Street and towards the rear of the properties on Castle Street. Buildings consisted of stores, brewing areas, bottling areas and 3 malting kilns. The remains of the westernmost kiln are now a Grade II listed building, converted to flats, adjacent to former tram rails now laid within stone setts. The second listed building was once hay and corn lofts set between stables that also formed part of the Simonds complex.

12.6 These sites are now converted and surrounded by coarse-grained residential blocks, reflecting a change in land use from industrial to residential.

Overall Importance

- 12.7 The historic wharfs along and partial canalisation of the Kennet aid the understanding of the area's historic development. Apart from the two listed buildings, little remains of other elements of the historic context to aid their appreciation. Not enough of the character and appearance has been retained to fulfil the requirements for conservation area designation because:
- modern residential buildings have altered the character of the industrial grain and the appearance of the area.
- 12.8 Views north from Swan Place of the rear of Castle Street properties, including the Almshouses, provide historic references, with additional glimpses south of the spire of St Giles. Views west from Simonds Street of the Holy Brook add to the understanding of the long history of the area though this is hampered by the Holy Brook's currently overgrown state. There are glimpses of St Giles's spire from the streets off Mallard Row and a strong visual link to the Almshouses. Additional visual links were identified from:
- Fobney Street looking west towards the Malthouse; and
 - towards the Kennet and the former hay and corn outbuilding.

Boundary Review

- 12.9 The assessment identified no need for a boundary review in this character area.

Summary of Key Issues

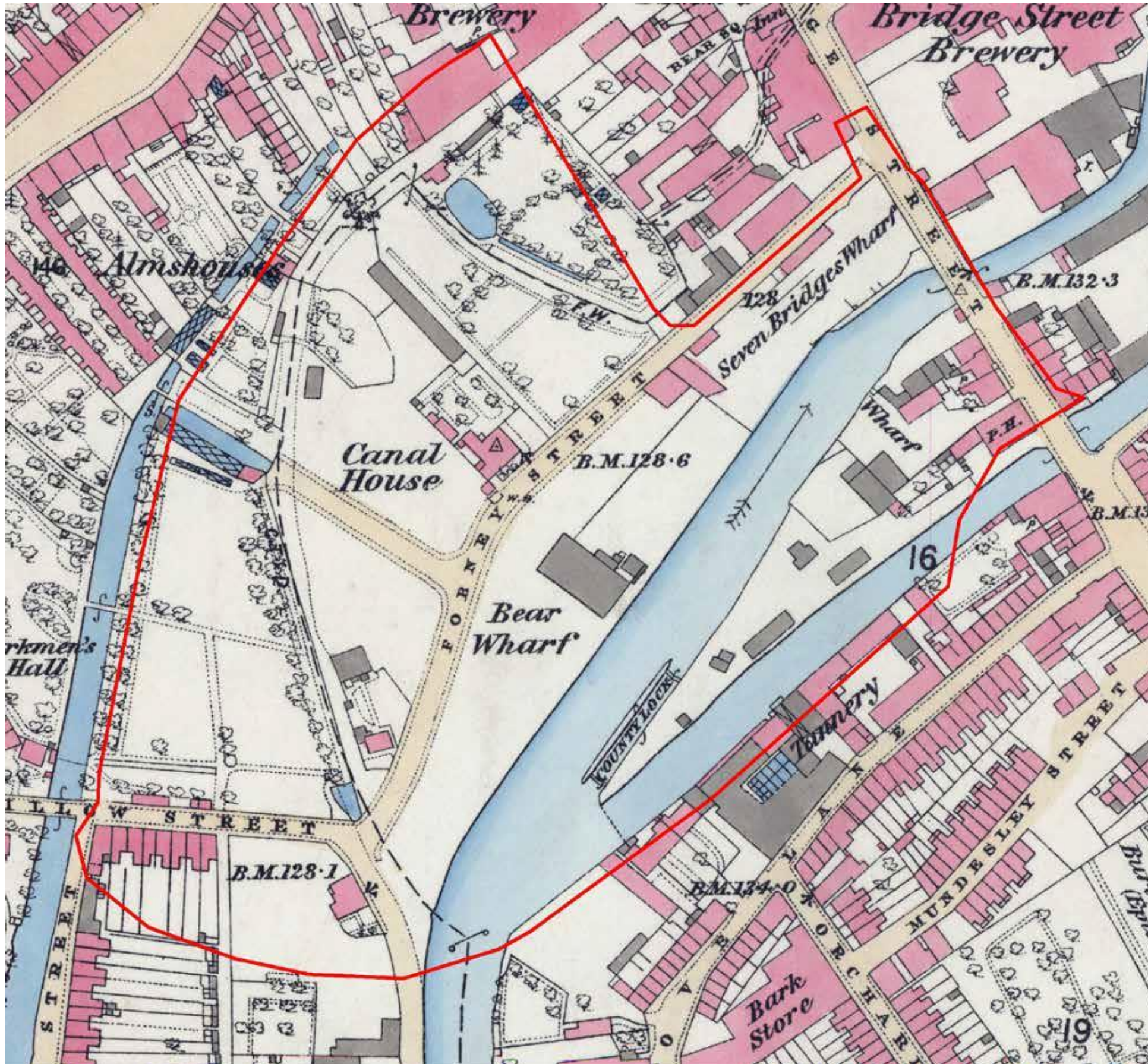
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 12.10 The assessment found that the limited number of historic buildings retained has led to a loss of identifiable historic character. Whilst glimpsed views of the historic environment beyond are of interest and contribute to the setting and the creation of streets within a modern development, in themselves, do not hold sufficient value to retain a character and appearance worthy of designation.

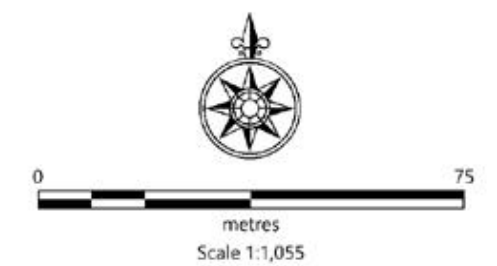
Principal Detracting Elements

- Dissociation from historic character and identity.
- The current appearance does not reflect historic uses.

Figure 69. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 4.1 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

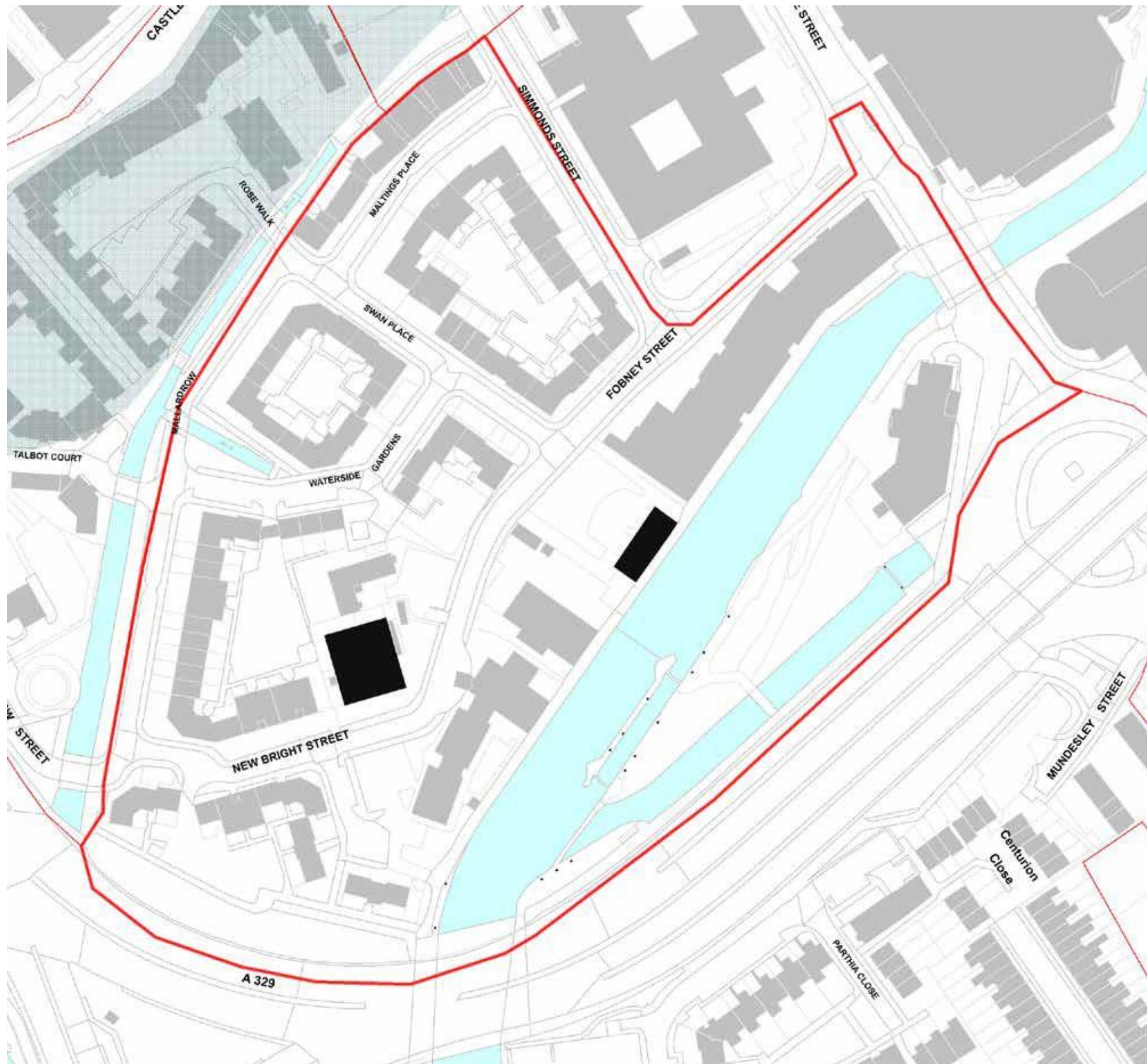


4.1 Holy Brook & Kennet



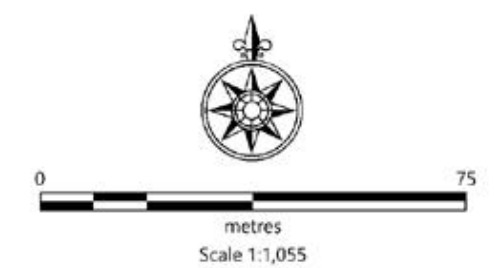
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Figure 70. Map Showing Heritage Designations Within Character Area 4.1



4.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



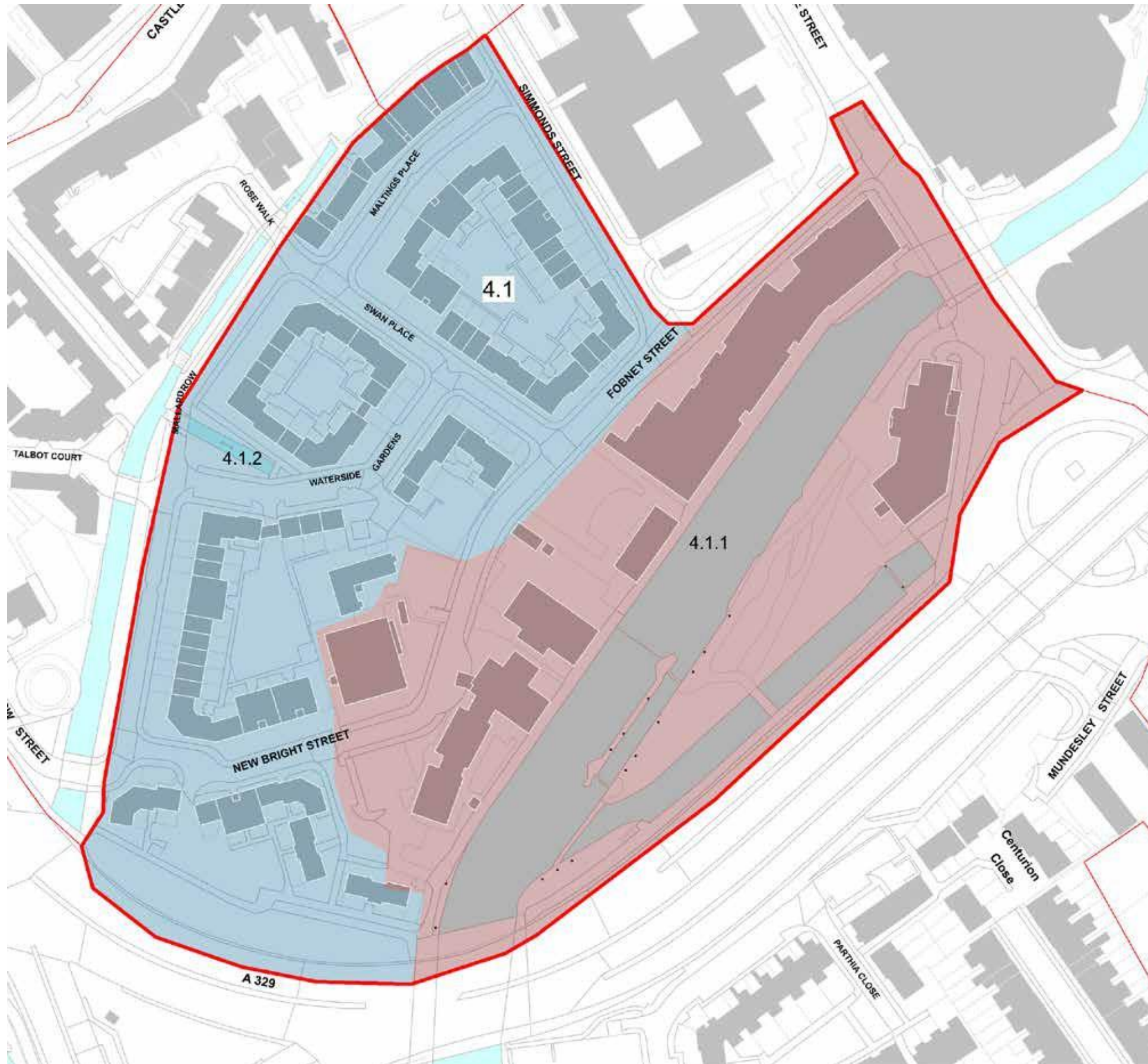
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List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area

Listed Buildings

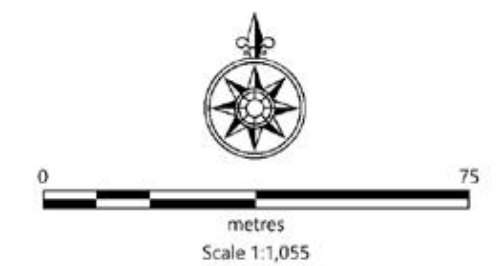
- Simonds Malthouse (Grade II listed)
- Building now part of Courage's Brewery (Grade II listed)

Figure 71. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 4.1



4.1 Holy Brook & Kennet Sub areas



- 4.1.1 Fobney Street/Kennet:
Modern Riverside Residential and
Industrial Heritage
- 4.1.2 Holy Brook/Fobney Street:
Modern Residential Courtyards



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Sub area Character 4.1.1

4.1.2

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Name | Fobney Street/Kennet: Modern Riverside Residential and Industrial Heritage | Holy Brook/Fobney Street: Modern Residential Courtyards |
| |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 1-8 storeys (predominantly 3-8) • Early C19 to late C20 • High density, coarse grain residential flats • Generally lower density office blocks • Brick construction, with some stone and modern render • Riverside paths • River views | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range 2-4 storey (predominantly 4 storeys) • Terraced residential blocks • Late C20 • Eclectic brick construction • Coarse grain • High density with shared amenity space • Continuous frontages with varied built-line |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to and from Reading centre • High connectivity to rest of Reading • Good scenic views along the Kennet • Proximity to scenic walks along the Kennet • Some historic character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to and from Reading centre • Proximity to Inner Distribution Road provides good connectivity • Mature trees and hedge boundaries • Consistent building style |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic noise and pollution from Inner Distribution Road • Lack of continuity of street frontage • Lack of continuous river frontage walk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic noise and pollution from Inner Distribution Road • Historic character has not been retained • Design lacks reference to historic character |

Character Area 4.2 Level 1 [I]

King's Road & Kennet: Modern Mixed-use Character Area East

Introduction

- 12.11 Much of the area developed in conjunction with the course of the River Kennet, around which this character area was built. This focus is evident in the built line of frontages along the Kennet.
- 12.12 This area is characterised by mixed modern development with some historic character centred on King's Road and the Kennet. Today, the area contains many coarse-grained residential and office blocks, in addition to a large car park, and historic streets containing Victorian terraces. This character represents a series of redevelopments, as shown on the Ordnance Survey maps series.
- #### Historical Note
- 12.13 Ordnance Survey maps published between 1879 and 1934 show that this area once contained a number of industrial and commercial sites, including a timber yard, sawmills and a lead and zinc works, all based at the wharfs (Figure 72). Industry in the area benefited from the presence of the Kennet and the opportunity for the transport of goods and raw materials it offered.
- 12.14 Many of these industrial sites have since developed into coarse-grained mixed or single use blocks from the mid-20th century. The first to be block constructed as part of this rebuilding programme was Kennet House (1962 - 1964), No 80 King's Road, by C. H. Elsom & Partners'. This and surrounding buildings contrast with the more historic, adjacent Abbey Wharf office block, (1980s), which now occupies the site of the timber yard, Queen's Cottages occupies the former Queen's Wharf and Queen's Road Car Park replaced the lead and zinc works. Abbey Wharf office block, once called Abbey Gate, with a steel frame, brick-cladding and a pitched roof with dormers, was refurbished and represented in 2019-20 by Spratley & Partners as Abbey Wharf, a serviced office building with many facilities. It is now more in-keeping with the historic setting.
- 12.15 Some wharf infrastructure has been lost, particularly the water streams referred to as brooks and tram lines. Ordnance Survey mapping also indicates that between 1879 and 1900 a bridge was constructed over the Kennet, connecting Abbey Wharf, along with Abbey Saw Mills, to the timber yard. The bridge was demolished after 1934 and the site redeveloped.

- 12.16 This character area also contained a number of schools and chapels, including Kendrick School, St. John's School, the Plymouth Brethren Chapel and Baptist Chapel. These sites, too, were redeveloped throughout the 20th century into coarse-grained, mixed-use commercial and residential blocks, or 2-storey terraced houses, as is the case at Queen's Cottages.
- 12.17 Overall, residential use of the character area has increased since 1879. Many of the historic buildings have replaced earlier industrial sites. Some of the historic residential areas overlooking the riverfront, i.e. Blake's Cottages and terraces along King's Road, have retained their earlier residential use, and some continue to have a retail or commercial use. Residential terraces were extended prior to 1900, adding to numbers 77-93 and 58-62 King's Road, replacing earlier spaces and yards. All of these buildings and numbers 15-23 Crane Wharf have been retained and the adjacent probable historic industrial buildings were redeveloped. There is one possible exception: the public house now referred to as the Outlook has the same footprint as a former outbuilding on the wharf and therefore may be an example of redevelopment of historic fabric rather than demolition and rebuild.
- 12.18 Many of the terraces along the northern portion of Bembridge Place, however, were redeveloped in the early 20th century on the same footprint, in that case into a public house at the street front and later demolition of the terrace to the rear that became a car park. Further residential terraces were added to the area when Queen's Cottages and 2-8 Sidmouth Street replaced industrial buildings on Queen's Wharf and the former Kendrick School. In contrast, many residential houses to the south east were demolished after 1934 and the site they were on has since been re-developed into higher density multi-storey housing.
- 12.19 Fewer historic buildings have survived redevelopment in this character area. Numbers 32-36 King's Road are shown on the 1900 Ordnance Survey map and provide an example of how this row of terraces would once have appeared.

Overall Importance

- 12.20 Those historic buildings present today aid our understanding of how this area grew and developed.
- 12.21 The road network largely reflects that of the 19th century, although Bembridge Place has become more of a service route than a public road. Whilst a small number of buildings and areas retain the character and appearance of historic wharfs and Victorian housing, residential terraces and terraced shops, it does not fulfil the requirements for designation to become part of a conservation area because:
- modern buildings have diluted the historic grain and areas of historic buildings have become fragmentary and;
 - it has become detached from historic character to the west by modern character that surrounds it.
- 12.22 Views along King's Road slowly evolve in both directions and therefore vary between historic and modern depending on the viewing location. Though visually contained due to the built environment within these areas, there are views along the wharfs of the River Kennet and pedestrian bridges.

Boundary Review

- 12.23 The assessment identified no need for a boundary review in this character area.

Summary of Key Issues

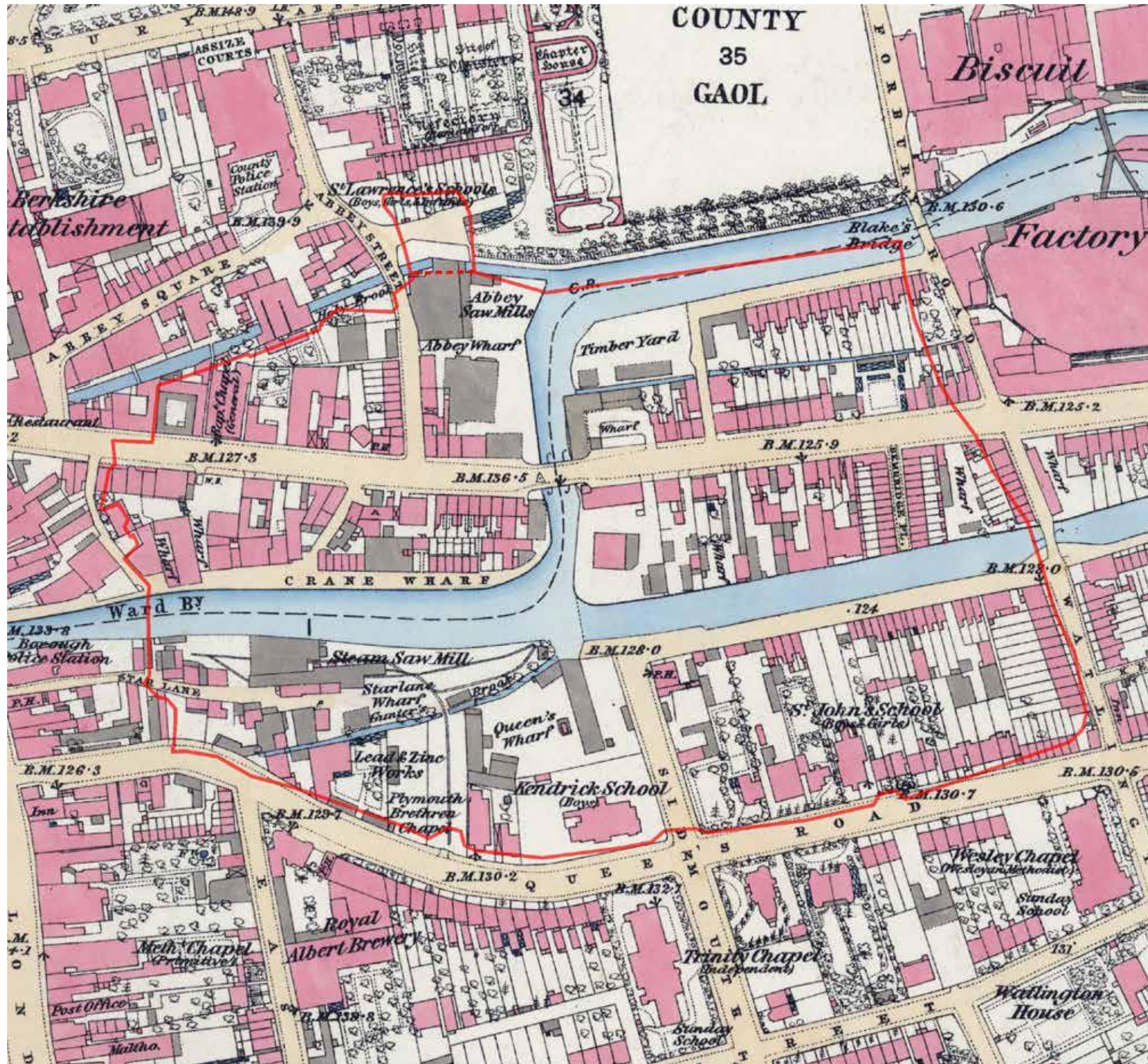
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 12.24 Abbey Wharf, 57-75 King's Road, is an example of a development that was altered and re-clad to become more fitting within the historic context of a wharf. In contrast, the modern buildings on King's Road located within the areas of modern mixed-use are of a design and scale that does not reflect the historic wharf or Victorian terraces of Blake's Cottages and Queen's Cottages.
- 12.25 There are strong visual links with Reading Abbey from Blake's Cottages and also across the river. Further links with the river can be enjoyed from paths and bridges around the river edge and wharfs. Despite their significance, these views alone are insufficient to attract designation based on the overall character and appearance of a conservation area.

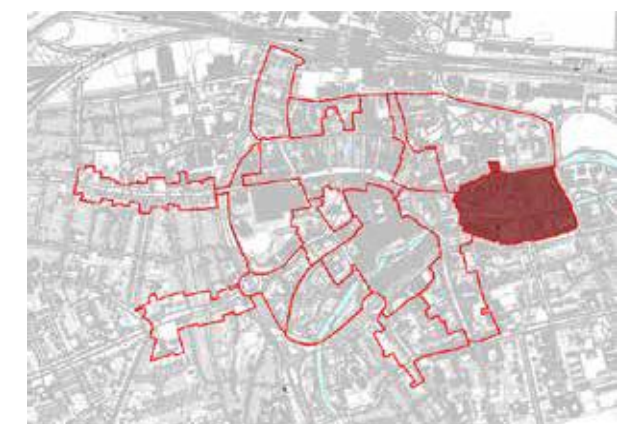
Principal Detracting Elements

- Modern developments have separated the historic portion of this character area from the centre, leading to a disassociation that cannot be bridged.
- Dissociation from historic character and identity.
- The current appearance does not reflect historic uses.

Figure 72. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 4.2 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

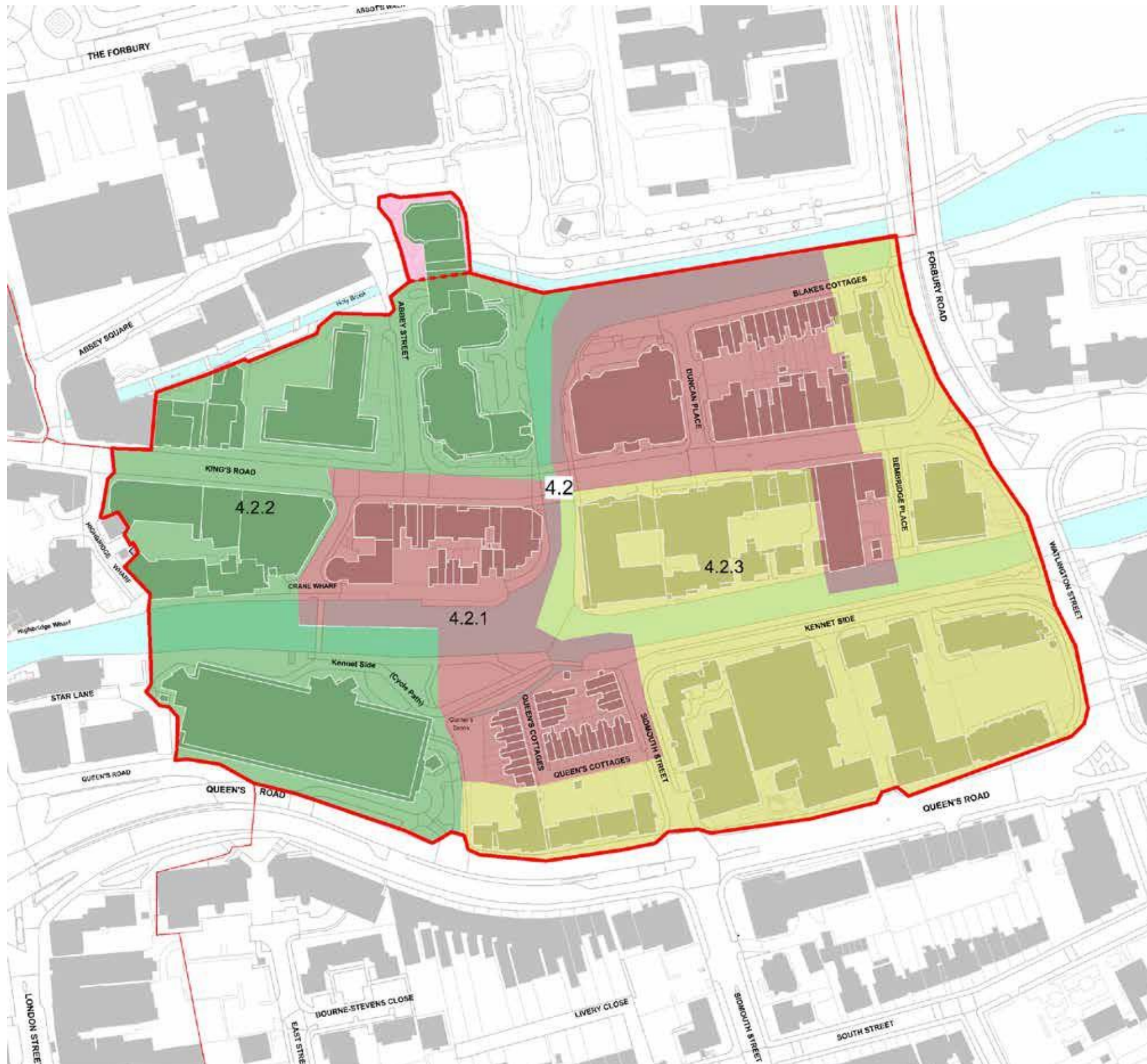


4.2 King's Road & Kennet



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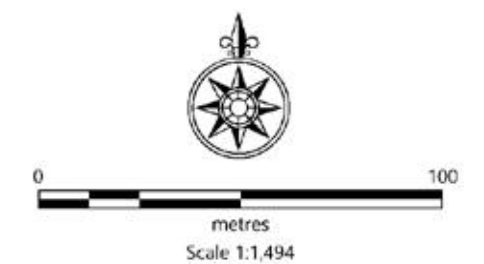
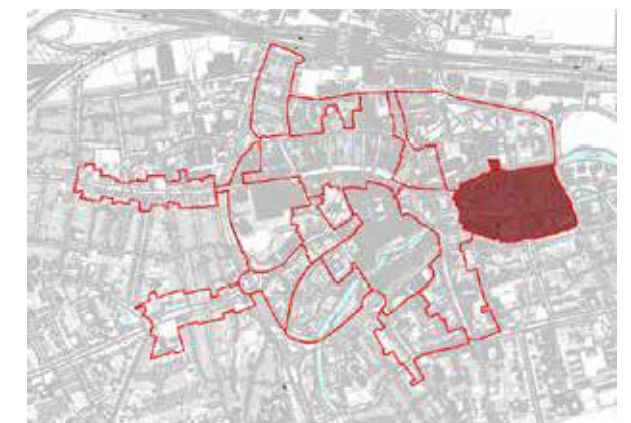
Figure 73. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 4.2





4.2 King's Road & Kenet Sub areas

- 4.2.1 King's Road/Blakes and Queen's Cottages: Historic and Modern Residential Mixed-use
- 4.2.2 King's Road/Abbey Street: Modern Mixed-use including Historic elements
- 4.2.3 King's Road/Kenet Side: Modern Mixed-use

Note: The stream, Holy Brook, belongs to 2.1 which flows beneath the building in 4.2. So the building is in 4.2 but the stream beneath is 2.1.



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| Sub area Character | 4.2.1 | 4.2.2 | 4.2.3 |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Name | King's Road/Blakes and Queen's Cottages: Historic and Modern Residential Mixed-use | King's Road/Abbey Street: Modern Mixed-use Including Historic Elements | King's Road/Kennet Side: Modern Mixed-use |
| |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-6 storeys • Mix of early-mid C19 and later C20 - early C21 • Coarse-grain residential terraces, residential and office blocks and public houses • Mix of terraces and larger individual buildings • Majority red brick, along with some stucco • On street frontages throughout • On street and off street car parking • Most residential terraces have rear gardens • Riverside paths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 4-8 storeys • Mix of late C19 and later C20 • Large scale buildings of coarse grain • Mix of office/residential blocks, residential terraces and commercial terraces with residential upper floors • Predominantly brick construction with some glass and metal • On-street frontages • On-street and off-street car parking • Service yards to rear of buildings throughout | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-18 storeys • Mix of latter half of C20 to early C21 • High density, coarse grain blocks • Mix of brick, metal and glass • Some boundary fencing in southern area • Off-street car parks and on-street parking |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access from and to Reading centre • Many bus links to surrounding area • Wide views of the Kennet • Privacy from main Queen's Road at Queen's Cottages • Pedestrian bridge links across the Kennet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some historic character with varied frontages • Relatively quiet road • Good links to the rest of the city • Views of the Kennet • Riverside paths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Reading's Inner Distribution Road • Views of the Kennet • River Paths • Easy access from and to Reading Centre • Abundant off-street parking for residents |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some traffic pollution from King's and Queen's Roads • Poorly maintained shopfronts • Some unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking by the river frontage impedes enjoyment of riverside setting • Poorly maintained shopfronts/ unsympathetic alterations • Graffiti on buildings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High traffic pollution from the Inner Distribution Road • Unfriendly pedestrian environment • Loss of historic character |

Character Area 4.3 Level 2 [II]

Minster Quarter: Modern Mixed-use Character Area West

Introduction

12.26 As seen today the character area includes a small number of sizeable relatively modern individual buildings in a mixture of civic and retail use. The size of each land parcel is uncharacteristic of Reading town centre.

Historical Note

12.27 The original settlement at Reading was probably alongside the River Kennet between Seven Bridges and slightly to the east of the High Bridge. The original market to the town was located in St. Mary's Butts as was the commercial and municipal centre of the town in the surrounding area (Figure 74). This changed when both were moved eastwards after the arrival of Reading Abbey. St. Mary's Butts was also from medieval times one of the three sides of the ancient core of Reading formed by Friar Street to the north, St. Mary's Butts (or Olde Street) and Southampton Street (historically also called Horn Street) to the west and London Street/High Street to the east. The route of St. Mary's Butts ran from Seven Bridges towards Caversham Bridge, with the name 'Olde Street' being used by as early as the reign of Henry IV.

12.28 Regarding Castle Street, the town is known to have once possessed a castle. Although its precise former location is not known, some believe the castle was situated on the high ground on Castle Hill. Castle Street forms part of the main road west from Reading towards Bath and Bristol. Even today it connects with Bath Road. Castle Street is mentioned as early as the reign of Henry III. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the north and south of Castle Street were lined with a mix of residential and commercial properties.

12.29 The Speed map of 1610 shows that Castle Street stretched westwards to at least the position of today's IDR. This map also shows Hosier Lane. A hosier was a manufacturer of hosiery or stockings. We know that this road was previously known as Lormery Lane or Lortmer Lane. Lorimers made bits, spurs, and other small metal objects, indicating that the predominant use in the lane had changed over time. On the south side of Hosier Street, were the remains of Lady Vachell's house, which was erected in the late 16th century. This had been the Vachell's town house when away from Coley Park and had also been used as the Dower House. It later became known as Finch Buildings and was divided up into tenements.

12.30 The Civil War Defences maps show that the western defences stretched in this area from the area of today's Police Station north east to Cheapside. The majority of the character area was not developed at that time with only the northern sides of Castle Street, most of Boarded Lane, approximately 50% of Hosier Lane on both sides, approximately 50% of Flint Court and the western side of St. Mary's Butts. These areas formed the western fringe of Reading at approximately this time. Back Lane ran off today's Tilehurst Road and connected with Hosier Lane. The 1802 map shows that the western fringe of Reading within the character area had changed little since the mid-17th century.

12.31 The 1840 Map shows that the character area was beginning to become more developed with the setting out of the eastern side of Howard Street. By the 1879 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1875) we can see that the area has been developed with typically Victorian terraced housing. A coach manufactory was located to the northern side of Castle Street opposite the Vachel Almshouses. A steam sawmill is shown on the southern side of Oxford Road approximately on the plot of today's Broad Street Mall. Other residential streets extant at this time are Soho Street, Lavender Street, Hope Street, and Alfred Street. By the 1912 Ordnance Survey map the eastern side of Thorn Street was in the process of being developed and the Cheapside thoroughfare had been created. Largely the character area remained little change from the 1879 Ordnance Survey map.

12.32 The character area remained largely unchanged until the second half of the 20th century when many 18th and 19th century buildings were cleared and redeveloped in the 1960s. These historic buildings were a mixture of shops, dwellings, businesses, breweries and pubs with a tight grain of lanes that connected them to Hosier Street, Castle Street and Oxford Road. The Victorian terraced housing and associated schools in Flint Street, Hope Street, Howard Street, Boarded Lane Soho Street and Lavender Street were cleared to make way for new civic buildings. The tight grain of streets and lanes was lost and the land parcels combined. In addition, the historic street names were lost to renaming such as Dusseldorf Way. The new civic buildings designed by RMJM & Partners included a Magistrates' Court (1968) and Police Station (1976), a civic precinct (civic offices from 1975-8, now gone) and the Hexagon (1977). The demolition of the Civic Centre building has left a space that has become a community garden. The Butts Centre was built between 1969-72 on the southern side of Oxford

Road requiring the demolition of a large quantity of historic building stock including on the western side of St. Mary's Butts. It was renamed Broad Street Mall shopping centre in 1987. Much demolition was also undertaken in the late 1960s and 1970s to allow for the construction of the Inner Distributary Road which cut a long wide swathe through the townscape and changed the character of many parts of the town.

12.33 In the latter decades of the 20th century an informal market returned to the St. Mary's Butts areas, located off Hosier Street.

Overall Importance

- 12.34 The character area contains no historic buildings and its historic plot widths have largely been lost. Its importance from a heritage perspective is low.

Boundary Review

- 12.35 The character area is not considered worthy of inclusion within a conservation area.

Summary of Key Issues

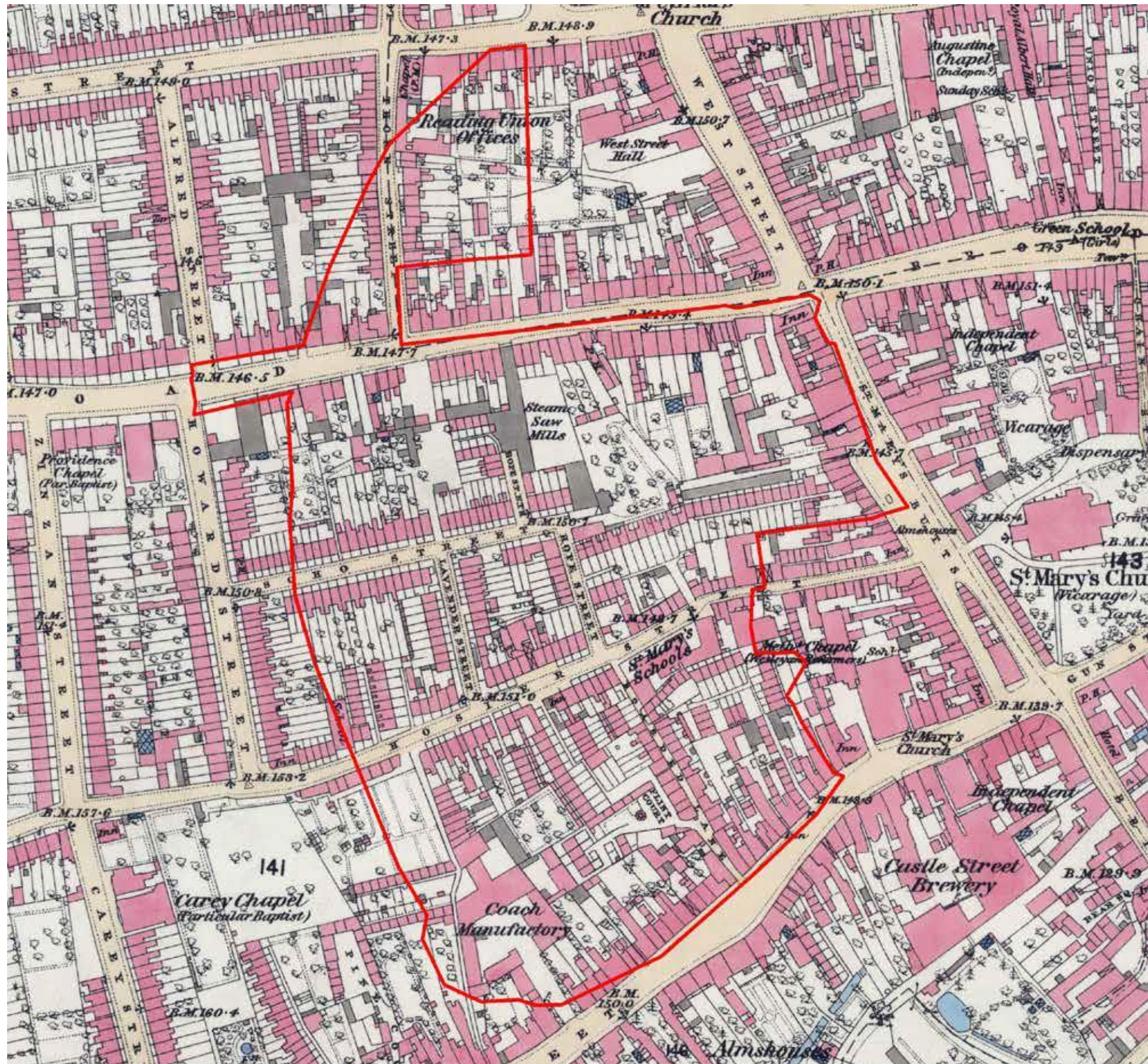
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 12.36 This character area's heritage value has been almost entirely eroded by macro development in the mid-late 20th century, which merged historic plots, erasing the fine street grain and historic street names. However, parts of the historic street pattern remain in the form of Dusseldorf Way (previously part of Hosier Street) and curved building line on the northern side of Castle Street, plus the street layout of the part of Oxford Road within the character area and on Cheapside. This historic street layout could be retained to knit the townscape back together. The pop-up community garden in the centre has become an informal green space with some visual appeal.

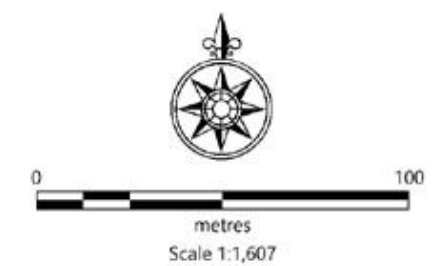
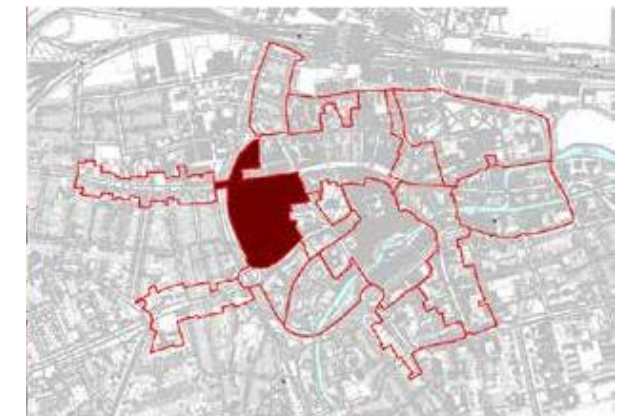
Principal Detracting Elements

- The Broad Street Mall is one of the most incongruous buildings in Reading town centre, given its non-contextual height and design.
- In the construction of the mall, the Civic Centre, the Hexagon, Police Station and Magistrate's Court, there was a loss of the historic street pattern and the merging of smaller land parcels.
- Retail appears not to perform as well as could be expected given its central location and proximity to the prime retail pitch.
- There is no consistency of height or style across the sub area.
- Buildings predominantly not of a contextual design, and sometimes materials. Architecture generally poor or bland.
- Palpable proximity to IDR, associated pollution and traffic noise.
- Low quality public realm, pavements, boulevards, public parks. Also parks under-utilised.

Figure 74. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 4.3 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

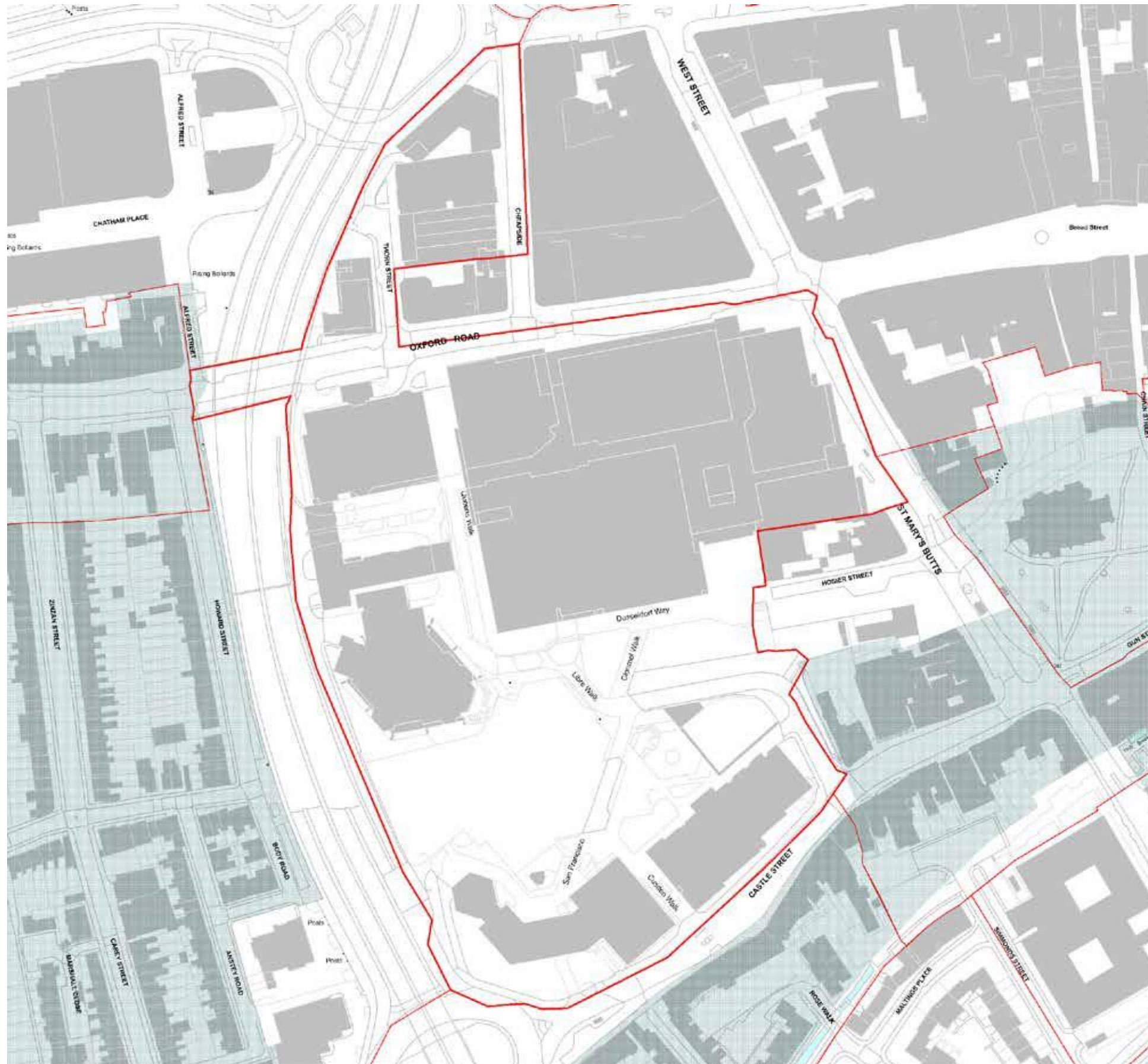


4.3 Minster Quarter



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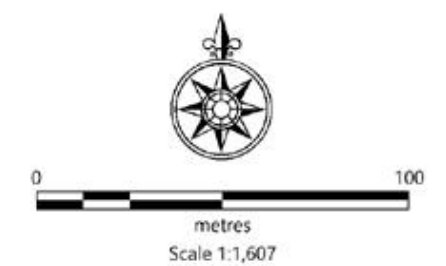
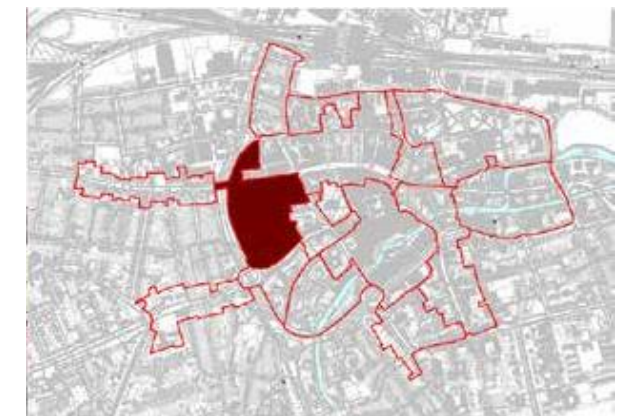
Figure 75. Map Showing Existing Heritage Assets within Character Area 4.3



4.3 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area

Note: For clarity there are no existing heritage assets in this character area.



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List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area

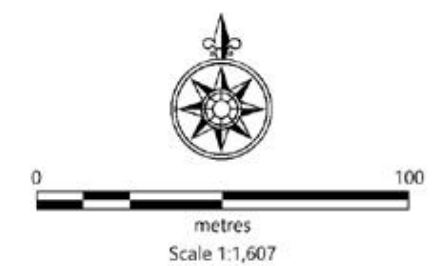
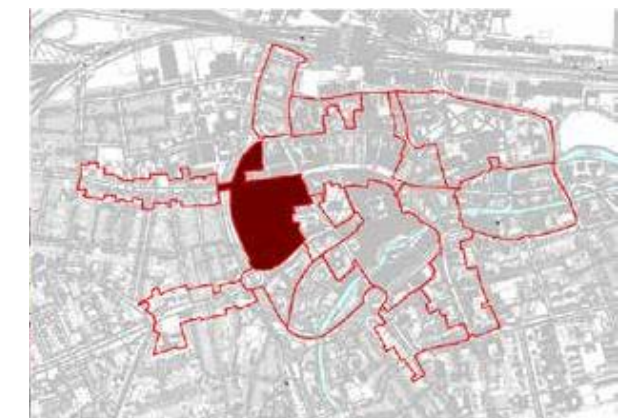
None

Figure 76. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 4.3



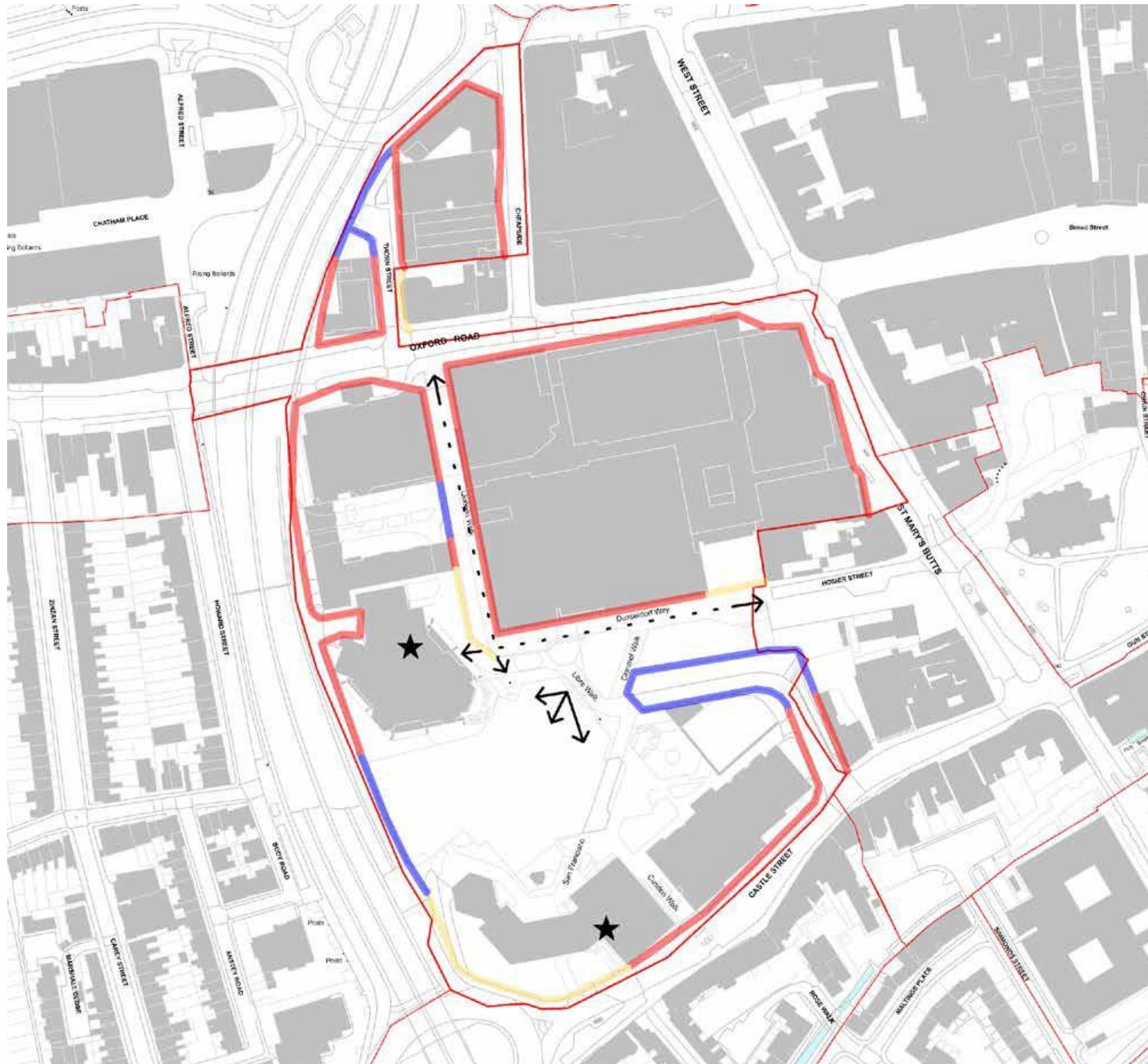
4.3 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



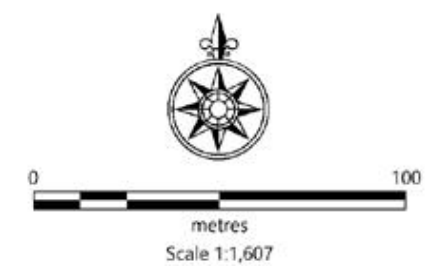
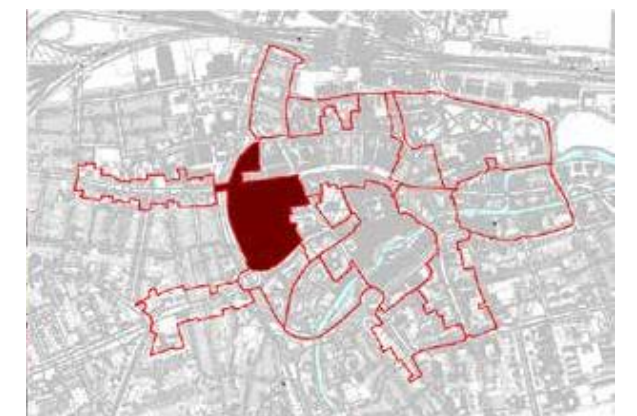
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Figure 77. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 4.3



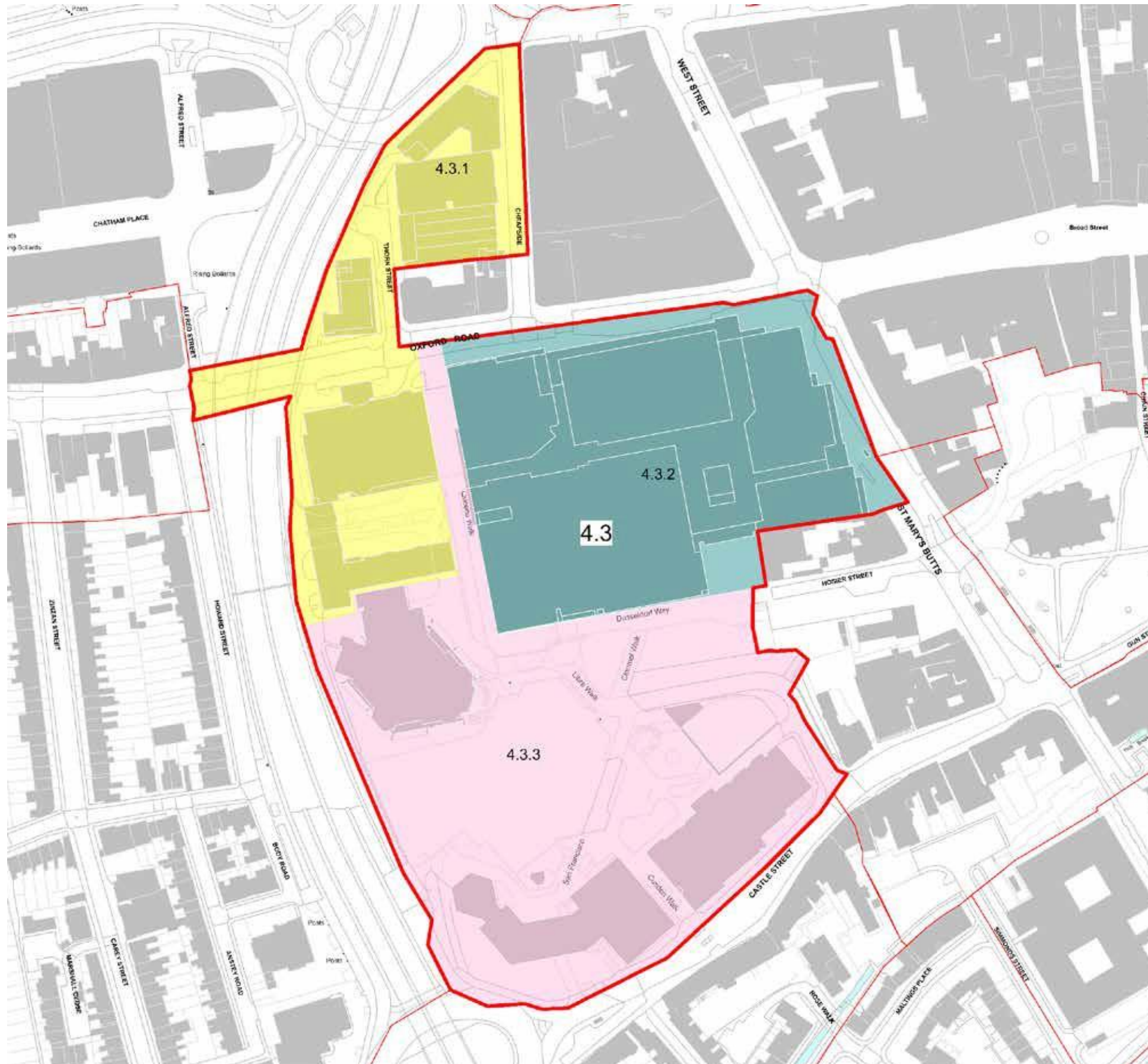
4.3 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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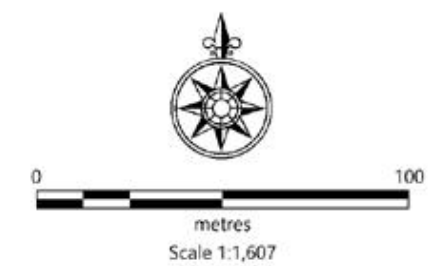
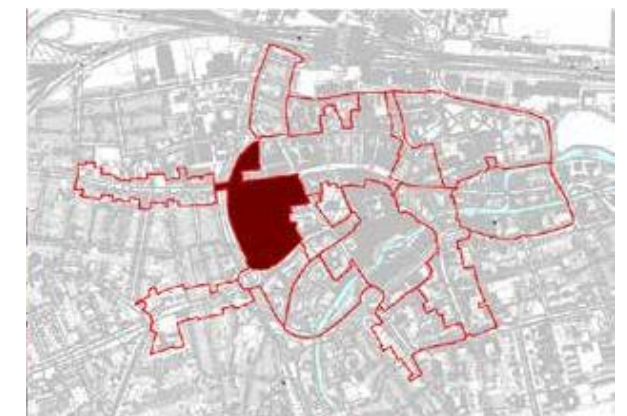
Figure 78. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 4.3






4.3 Minster Quarter

Sub areas

- 4.3.1 Oxford Road/Thorn Street: Modern Hotel and Residential
- 4.3.2 Oxford Road/St Mary's Butts: Modern Retail
- 4.3.3 Castle Street/Dusseldorf Way: Modern Civic



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| Sub area Character | 4.3.1 | 4.3.2 | 4.3.3 |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Names | Oxford Road/Thorn Street: Modern Hotel and Residential | Oxford Road/St Mary's Butts: Modern Retail | Castle Street/Dusseldorf Way: Modern Civic |
| |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-6 storeys around Thorn Street. 7 storeys to the Penta Hotel on the southern side of Oxford Road. The Aparto scheme is 8 storeys, whilst the Job Centre building is 4 storeys. • Buildings all late C20 of no heritage value and indifferent design. • Sub area predominantly in hotel use with the Aparto scheme off Queens Walk being student accommodation. • The Penta Hotel is largely red brick as is the Aparto scheme (some buff and grey). Both have metal panel clad top floors. Travelodge is concrete framed with aluminium cladding. The Thorn Street buildings are largely red brick, with some rendered areas. • The Travelodge is marginally set back from Oxford Road, with low quality hard landscaping, boundary walls and railings. The Penta Hotel is set back, includes in own tarmac driveway and mid-level hedging to the front. Its hard landscaping is mediocre. The Aparto scheme has a good quality contemporary area of public open space off Queens Walk. The Job Centre fronts its pavements. • To the immediate west of the character area sub area is the IDR and the Oxford Road bridge over the IDR. • The Penta Hotel is the focal building in that it is the most visible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sub area comprises the Broad Street Mall between 1969-72. • Heights vary across the scheme dramatically from 2-10 storeys. • The building is concrete framed. Its elevations have been remodelled in recent years. Stone cladding exists to some parts of low level. Aluminium panels to the taller elements. Retail frontages are largely glazed and the upper floors contain a high void to solid ratio. • The mall buildings front elevations all front directly on to Oxford Road and St. Mary's Butts with no set back. • There is a high quantity of uncovered surface car parking at roof level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Magistrates' Court is 2 storeys, the Central Police Station is 2-4.5 storeys and the Hexagon is 3-4 storeys but is set into the hill declines towards the IDR. • The sub area contains civic buildings comprising a magistrates' court, the town's central police station and a theatre and arts venue (Hexagon). All were built in the 1960s or 1970s. • The police station and magistrates court have good quality red brickwork, with lead clad upper floors to the police station. The Hexagon is formed of concrete with lead to its roof, built in a strong Brutalist style. The western side of the Hexagon also has unsightly service and access roads off the IDR. • The character area also contains a large amount of public open space in the form of Lavender Place Community Gardens. There are also several wide pedestrian routes into/out of the park namely San Francisco Libre Walk, Dusseldorf Way and Cusden Walk. A small car park lies to the north of the magistrates' court. • Central location, on edge of town centre. |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality public open space to north of Aparto scheme. • Aparto scheme, whilst not of good architectural merit, is of a reasonable quality in its design and materials. • Central location, on western edge of town centre. • No through traffic on Queens Walk, which is pedestrianised. • Whole sub area represents a redevelopment opportunity (Aparto area less so). • Potential linkage to main shopping area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime redevelopment site. • No through traffic. • Good central location within town centre. • On fringe of prime retail area of town centre. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No through traffic on Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way. • Wide short-medium range views around Lavender Place Community Gardens on the site of the Civic Centre. • The Hexagon is a good quality Brutalist building of its period, albeit now lacking the context of the now demolished hexagonal civic offices. • The Magistrates' Court and Police station was also reasonable modern buildings of their period of good architectural merit. However, we don't consider them worthy of being identified as BTMs or for listing. • There is some consistency of scale. • High proportion of public open space • Minster Quarter Area Development Framework adopted for the area. |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no hierarchy of height or style across the sub area. • Buildings predominantly are not of a contextual design, and sometimes materials. Designs generally poor or bland. • Palpable proximity to IDR, associated pollution and traffic noise. • Loss of historic street pattern and no buildings of heritage value. • Area has a down-at-heel character, surprising given its centrality. Few trees to sub area except adjacent to Aparto scheme. • The height of the Aparto scheme is out of character with the heights of the sub area historically. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Broad Street Mall is one of the most incongruous buildings in Reading town centre, given its non-contextual height design. It has permission to extend upwards. • No trees or landscaping. • In the construction of the current mall there was a loss of the historic street pattern, and the merging of smaller land parcels. • No buildings of any heritage value. • Retail pitch appears not to perform as well as could be expected given its central location and proximity to the prime retail pitch. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public open space run down and under-used. • Poor quality public realm of broken paving stones, concrete pavements, patched tarmac. • In the construction of the current buildings there was a loss of the historic street pattern, and the merging of smaller land parcels. • buildings of any heritage value. • Buildings' designs not overly contextual. • Low quality pavements and surface to Queens Walk. • Tall buildings either side of Queen's Walk create a wind tunnel effect. |

13. Historic Inner South Suburb Study Area

Character Area 5.1 Level 2 [II]

London & Duke Streets: Inner Suburb Character Area East

Introduction

- 13.1 Much 18th and 19th century building stock survives along London Street with the street much of its former grandeur. However, the road is now a secondary shopping street with many professional businesses occupying the buildings. The western side of Duke Street retains some mid 19th century and early 20th century buildings although the street looks rather rundown at present and the former Lower Ship Hotel is vacant. The IDR severs the main part of London Street from its northern section and from Duke Street.

Historical Note

General

- 13.2 The town's original settlement was probably alongside the River Kennet between Seven Bridges (bottom of today's Bridge Street) and slightly to the east of the High Bridge (Figure 79). St. Mary's Butts, often historically called Olde Street, was likely the location of the town's first ancient market. The market function was relocated close to Reading Abbey when the latter was founded in the early 12th century. In medieval times three sides of Reading's ancient core were formed by Friar Street to the north, St. Mary's Butts (or Olde Street) and Southampton Street to the west and London Street/Duke Street/High Street to the east. The Kennet Canal was completed in 1723 and the Kennet & Avon Canal in 1810, bringing London and Bristol, two major sea ports, into direct communication by water.

Duke Street/High Street

- 13.3 High Street historically led from Market Place to High Bridge over the River Kennet and so historically included parts of today's Duke Street and London Street. The bridge is first mentioned in approximately 1230.
- 13.4 Historically to the north east of High Bridge on the Kennet's northern bank was the common wharf. It was mentioned in this position during the reign of Henry VI, and adjoining it was a wharf-house. In 1548 the manor and borough together with the fairs of Reading were granted by Edward VI to his uncle the Duke of Somerset. It is believed this is the origins of the name Duke Street. In 1788, High Bridge was built over the Kennet, designed by architect Robert Brettingham.

King Street

- 13.5 The eastern part of the present King Street was occupied historically by two narrow streets or rows. The northern street was called Back Lane, whilst the southern street was called Sun Lane. In 1760 both were reconfigured to form King Street.

Yeld Hall

- 13.6 The guildhall, or 'Yield Hall' or Yeld Hall, first appeared in the reign of Henry III. It stood slightly west of the High Bridge on a small island between the Holy Brook and another still smaller branch of the River Kennet. To access the hall the Kennet was crossed by 'Le Gildhall Brygge'.
- 13.7 From approximately 1542 the old Yeld Hall was no longer used, with the function passing at the special request of the mayor and other prominent burgesses to Greyfriars Church (recently dissolved at that time). The Greyfriars town hall soon became too cramped for this use and by 1578 it had become a workhouse. In later years the Yeld Hall was enclosed within the engineering works of Messrs. John Wilder and used as a residence. The last incarnation of the Yeld Hall was a small L-shaped brick building of the early 17th century, much modernized and altered until demolished in 1935.
- 13.8 In 1999 the Oracle shopping mall was opened and comprehensively redeveloped the area, merging plots, erasing street names and re-routing many roads. The development fundamentally changed the appearance of those areas directly affected and those that overlook it.
- 13.9 In medieval times there were several wooden bridges in the centre of the town. The abbot, as lord of the town, was responsible for their upkeep. The gild merchant was responsible for the Guildhall Bridge.

Mill Lane

- 13.10 Six mills are identified in the Domesday Survey of 1086, with one being the Minster Mill between Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin and the Guild Hall. By 1545 it is known there were two cornmills and a fullingmill at St. Giles Mill. The first waterworks in Reading were set up between 1694 and 1696 in Mill Lane, the water being pumped from the mill stream.

- 13.11 Mill Lane, which historically led westwards from the bottom of London Street to a mill beside the Kennet, was largely obliterated by the IDR east-west branch (completed 1989) and modern development. Mill Lane itself still exists in name, but has been partially relocated southwards to accommodate the IDR east-west branch. In 1820 the Reading Waterworks was built and in time comprised a water tower and pumping station that used to stand next to St. Giles' Mill alongside the Kennet where the Oracle Shopping Complex is now. In the mid-19th century, the water tower was decommissioned although the steam engine at St. Giles did continue operating until 1877. The Reading Water Tower was finally demolished in 1901.

London Street

- 13.12 This thoroughfare is more than 800 years old with a new bridge over the River Kennet completed by 1186. The transition of market activities from the old market place on St. Mary's Butts to Market Place was complete by the 14th century. The streets of mediaeval Reading were adorned by a number of crosses e.g. Fair Cross was situated in London Street, and is mentioned in the reign of Edward II. A Medieval foundry was located at 67 to 73 London Street, which used to cast domestic wares.
- 13.13 John Speed's map in 1610 shows that the town plan in the early 17th century resembled a triangle with a church roughly at each corner: Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, St Giles' and St Laurence's. By this time London Street is shown as lined with tall, grand buildings in the main. The north-south route from Market Place to London Road is clear. The space between London Street and Southampton Street was little developed at that time. We know from the John Lovells Ltd Civil War Defences maps that the character area was unaffected by the construction of the Civil War defences. The latter did run approximately north-south along East Street for a distance connecting with the River Kennet to the north, and running to the eastern side of Silver Street. On the eastern side of London Street the burgage plots had started to be used intensively by this time with a number of rear courts being visible such as Vine Court, Sim's Court, etc. The burgage plots are also clearly visible on the western side of London Street.

- 13.14 From the 16th and 17th centuries, a few isolated examples survive of timber-framing with typical jetties at first floor level e.g. 26 & 27 Market Place, 88 London Street and 3 & 5 London Road. London Street today is characterised by buildings largely dating from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-19th century. During this period it became a prosperous area with fine houses, busy commercial premises, good quality shops and production premises. Local businesses included a bonnet maker, a shoemaker, an umbrella maker, a cabinet maker and a tailor, bakers and confectioners, booksellers, drapers, grocers, wine merchants, solicitors, estate agents and educational institutions such as the Literary, Scientific and Mechanic's Institute. By 1800 Mill Lane had become reasonably built up with industry and many houses laid out along Church Street.
- 13.15 During the coaching era, London Street was on the main route from the town centre to London via London Road. The Crown Inn, previously on the north eastern corner of the London Street/Crown Street/London Road junction, was one of Reading's most important coaching inns. It was first mentioned in 1518 but sadly was demolished in the 1960s. Another important coaching inn in the town was the George Hotel on Duke Street, which survives today. The 1879 Ordnance Survey map shows three hotels in the Duke Street area at that time Upper Ship Hotel, Lower Ship Hotel and The George Hotel.
- 13.16 In 1830 Queen's Road was built east from London Street. In the mid-19th century, Royal Passage was demolished so that South Street could be extended to join London Street. In 1822, Joseph Huntley started a small bakery shop in London Street capitalising on the passing coaching traffic. His son Thomas assisted with the baking. Joseph Huntley, son of Joseph Snr, began making tin boxes in his ironmonger's shop across the road from the bakery and soon after in 1832 Huntley, Boorne & Stevens was founded on London Street. In 1841 George Palmer came to Reading and joined his cousin Thomas in the business (Joseph had since retired), with the company name changing in time to Huntley & Palmers. The Great Western Railway reached the town in 1840. The arrival of the railway resulted in the rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley & Palmers, biscuit makers, and Suttons Seeds. The 1879 Ordnance Survey map shows the extensive 'Reading Tin Works' stretching between Church Street and Crown Street. Reading biscuits were sent in vast quantities to every part of the world at that time.

- 13.17 The east-west section of the IDR was completed in the late 1980s, which damaged trade on London Street by breaking the link with the town centre. The road widening necessitated the demolition of properties on both sides of London Street and exposed the north wall of the Central Club (Reading Central Youth Provision), formerly the Police Garage. This exposed flank wall became the canvas for the 1990 Black History Mural project led by artist Alan Howard. The associated one-way system along London Street and other traffic management measures have blocked the former north-south vehicular movement from London Street to Market Place and the town centre.
- 13.18 In 1918 Huntley & Palmer bought Huntley Boorne & Stevens. In 1921 Huntley & Palmer formed Associated Biscuit Manufacturers Ltd with Peek Frean of London. In 1960 W. R. Jacob of Liverpool joined Associated Biscuit Manufacturers Ltd. The massive factory of Huntley & Palmer between London Street and Southampton Street closed between 1967-69 and moved to Woodley. After over a century of growth on the site and surrounding area, this represented a significant change in the character of the street.

Church Street

- 13.19 John Speed's map in 1610 shows a lane branched westward from London Street to St Giles' Church, the precursor of today's Church Street. In 1878 there was a proposal by members of the council to widen Church Street by knocking down No. 88. Fortunately, this did not come to fruition as it was opposed for financial reasons. The Quaker Meeting House was built off Church Lane in the early 19th century.

Overall Importance

- 13.20 The character area retains a high proportion of historic buildings, including some early buildings in a Reading context from the 16th century and 17th century. Generally, modest infill buildings have been unobtrusive and of adequate quality.

Boundary Review

- 13.21 Most of the character area already lies within the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area. However, the 18th century and 19th century listed buildings (7-11 Church Street) currently lie outside the conservation area and are worthy of inclusion within a conservation area.

Summary of Key Issues

Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 13.22 High Street/Duke Street/London Street forms one of the two main north-south routes into the town historically. It was specifically established to allow easy access from the London Road to the new Market Place adjoining Reading Abbey. It, therefore, has notable historic importance to the early growth of Reading. There are a large number of 18th and 19th century buildings that survive on London Street from its heyday, although its significance is more difficult to appreciate today since the Queen's Road IDR severed the main part of London Street from the town centre. Duke Street has been subject to a much higher level of change, but still retains some historic buildings to its western side. The George coaching inn on King Street is an important survivor of its type. The short High Street leading into the Market Place retains some historic buildings. King Street, High Street and Market Place retain a number of 19th century bank buildings, and King Street and Duke had inns and hotels.

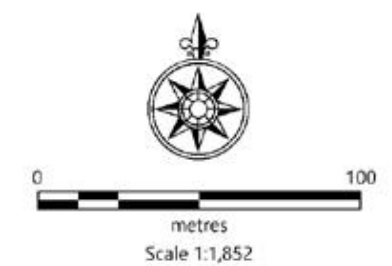
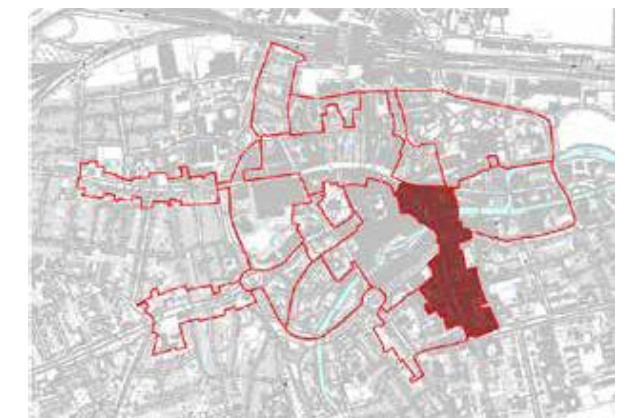
Principal Detracting Elements

- Less prestigious retail and low footfall to Duke Street.
- Backland plots to western side of Duke Street under-utilised and unsightly.
- The IDR severs the main part of London Street south of the IDR from Duke Street and the town centre. Noise and pollution associated with IDR.
- South of the Kennet the rear gardens on eastern and western sides of London Street typically have been turned into tarmacked car parks, plus loss of boundary walls.
- Replacement uPVC windows and doors in a few locations, several unsympathetic shop frontages and some graffiti.
- Some bland modern developments such as Nos. 3-7 London Street (casino) and No. 3 Queen's Road.
- Several satellite dishes fitted in prominent positions including on front elevations.
- Narrow pavements in South Street and its use as a cut-through by traffic means there is conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.
- The existing one-way system and bus lanes along London Street are busy roads with relatively high levels of associated noise and pollution.

Figure 79. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 5.1 (Source: National Library of Scotland)



5.1 London & Duke Streets



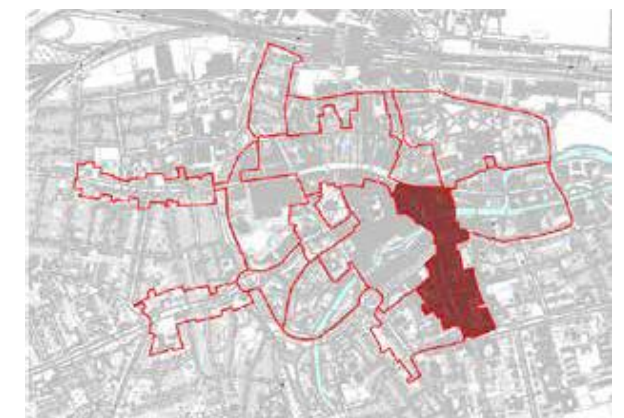
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Figure 80. Map Showing Existing Heritage Assets within Character Area 5.1



5.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Scheduled Monuments**

- High Bridge

Listed Buildings

- The George Hotel, King Street (Grade II listed)
- Building to South East Corner (of George Hotel) (Grade II listed)
- 17 & 18 King Street (Grade II listed)
- High Bridge (Grade II listed)
- Coroner's Court, London Street (Grade II listed)
- 2&4 London Street (Grade II listed)
- House at Rear of Nos. 18 and 20 King's Road (Grade II listed)
- No. 33 London Street (Grade II listed)
- Nos. 37 & 39 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 41 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 49-53 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 69 London Street (Grade II listed) - although it appears the historic building is no longer extant so this entry might be erroneous
- 73 and 75 London Street (Grade II* listed)
- 77 and 79 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 81 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 89-93 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 95-97 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 99 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 101 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 103 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 119-121 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 3 and 5 London Road (Grade II listed)

- 110 and 114 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 108 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 104 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 94 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 92 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 90 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 88 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 86 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 80 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 74 and 76 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 72 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 70 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 68 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 62-66 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 54-58 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 48-52 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 44 and 46 London Street (Grade II listed)
- 7 and 9 Church Street (Grade II listed)
- 11 Church Street (Grade II listed);
- Reading Quaker Meeting House (Grade II listed)
- 6a Church Street (Grade II listed)
- 6b Church Street (Grade II listed)
- 6c Church Street (Grade II listed)

Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- 107 London Street (BTM)
- 1-5 London Court (BTM)
- 106 London Street (BTM)
- 82-84 London Street (BTM)
- 78 London Street (BTM)
- 55-57 London Street (BTM)
- 43-47 London Street (BTM)
- 60 London Street (BTM)
- Unnumbered building on Thorn Street (BTM)
- 4-8 Duke Street (BTM)
- 22 Duke Street (BTM)
- Folk House, Church Street (BTM)
- 2 Duke Street (BTM)
- & 6 Church Street (BTM)
- 83, 85 and 87 London Street (BTMs)
- 7, 9 and 11 London Road (BTMs)
- 19 King Street (BTM)
- 106 London Street (BTM)

Conservation Areas

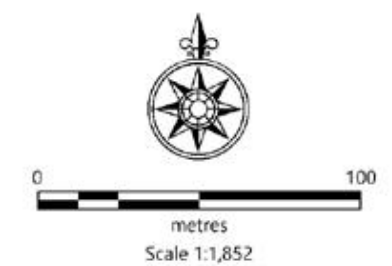
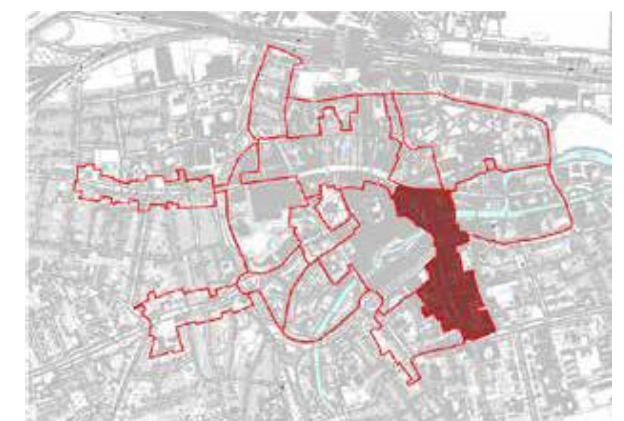
- Market Place and London Street Conservation Area

Figure 81. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 5.1
 (N.B. Historic England's list entry map has the blue location triangle for List Entry Number: 1302482 in an incorrect location. Shown as south of George Hotel, rather than the southern part of the hotel).



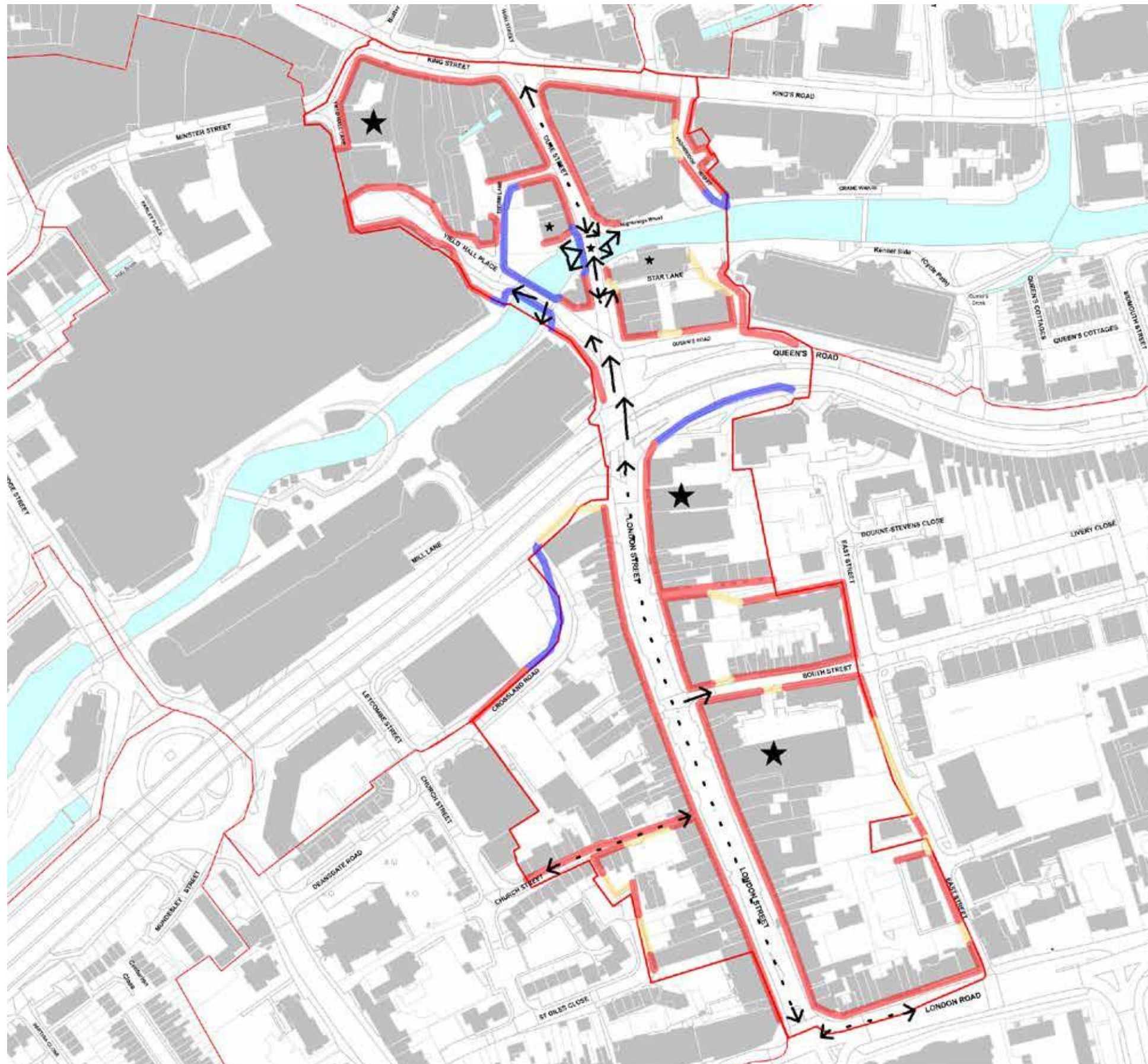
5.1 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



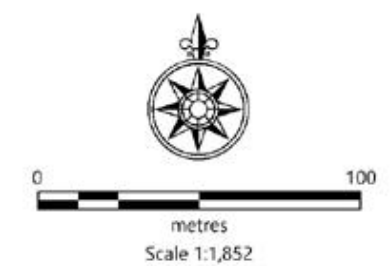
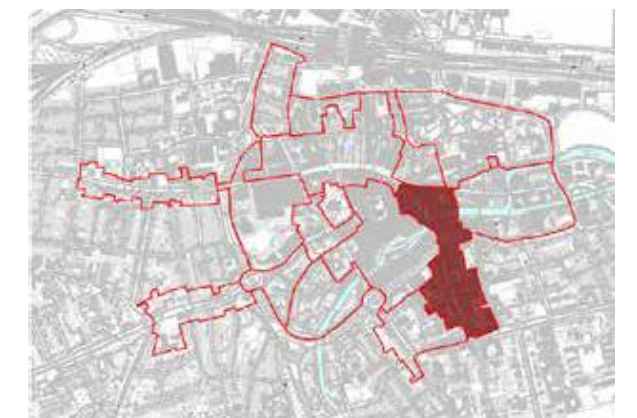
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Figure 82. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 5.1



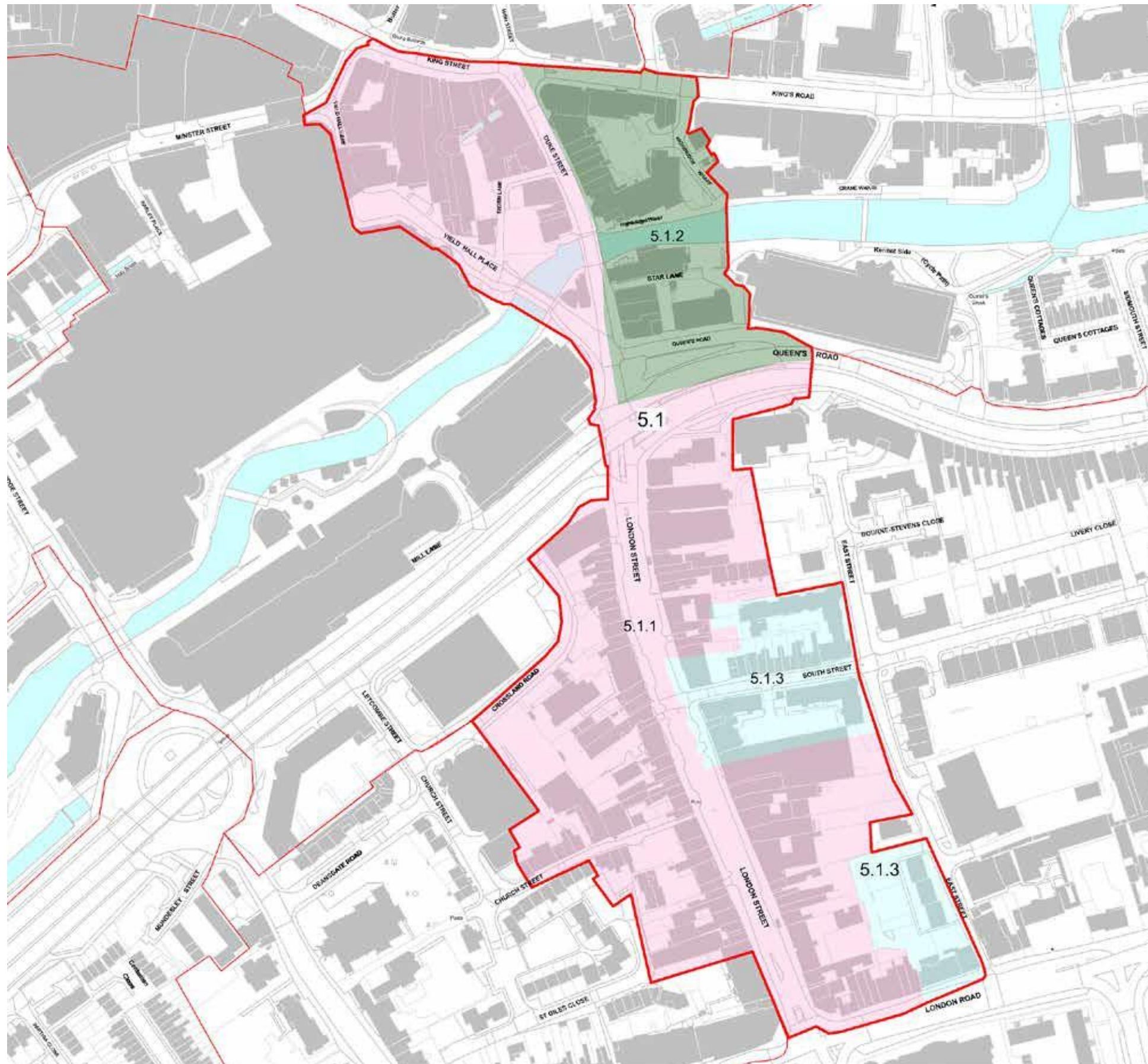
5.1 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



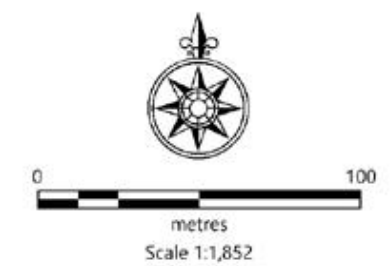
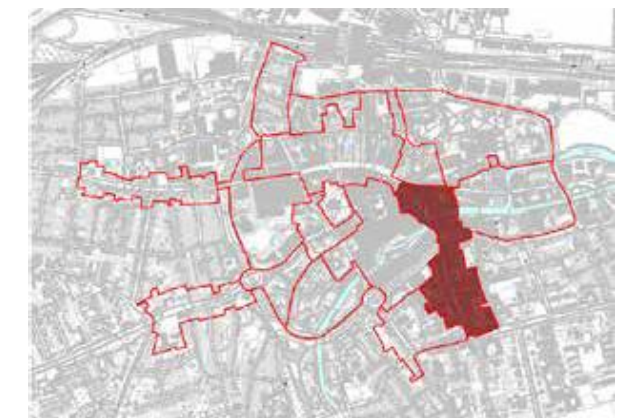
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Figure 83. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 5.1



5.1 London & Duke Streets Sub areas

- 5.1.1 London Road to King Street historic route: Historic Area
- 5.1.2 Duke Street/Kennet: Modern Area
- 5.1.3 London Street/East Street: Modern and Historic Area



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Sub area Character 5.1.1

Name London Road to King Street Historic Route: Historic Area



Characteristics

- North of the Kennet the sub area comprises retail, former coaching inns and some residential. Building heights are 3.5-4 storeys. The buildings fronting Duke Street and King Street do so as a heterogeneous terrace of individual designs. No buildings have front gardens, boundary walls, etc. and all front the pavements. The predominant building material is red brick (some rendered and painted). The buildings are predominantly late C19 or early C20, save for the George Inn (likely C16 or before with later alterations) and some modern infills. Under-utilised areas on Thorn Street/Yield Hall Place.
- Between the Kennet and IDR the sub area has been highly degraded by the Oracle Development and IDR.
- South of the IDR building heights are mainly 3-4 storeys but vary between 2-5 storeys. Most buildings date to C18 or C19, with some late C20 and early C21 buildings and occasional C16 and C17. The building materials are eclectic comprising mainly red brick (some grey and buff bricks), some Bath stone frontages, and occasional timber framed earlier buildings survive e.g. 49-53 London Street. The long rear burgage plots can still be deciphered. All buildings front directly on to pavements with rare exceptions (e.g. 73-75 London Street). Large car parks in the former rear gardens to both sides.
- Church Street is a narrow lane, generally 2-3 storeys C18 and C19 terraced housing, brick (mostly red, but some grey), some with stone dressings. Quaker Meeting house set back behind modern frontage.

Strengths

- North of the Kennet the sub area has a moderate proportion of historic building stock surviving on the western side of Duke Street and southern side of King Street. The George Inn is the focal building. There are a small number of listed buildings (all Grade II) and High Bridge, a scheduled monument. The Kennet is a notable visual and historical element. There are attractive riverside walks, low traffic levels and adequate modern infills where present. Central location lying on a principal approach to the town centre. There are clear regeneration opportunities (e.g. Lower Ship Hotel).
- South of the Kennet the sub area has a high proportion of historic buildings (most are listed). Some street facing buildings/elevations conceal earlier rear buildings. General consistency of height at 3-4 storeys, architectural style (Georgian) and good level of period detailing surviving. Good pedestrian environment. Easy access to the town centre. Clear regeneration potential to the rear gardens, to the former Central Club and some mediocre modern buildings. One of the main approaches to the town centre. Unusually wide, grand road indicating its previous status with a strong linear character.

Weaknesses

- North of the Kennet the sub area is relatively quiet and has a low footfall considering its town centre location. No green space. Contains a disparate, under-utilised array of backland plots following the demolition of other historic ranges and erosion of historic alleys following the Oracle Development. Some inappropriate uPVC windows e.g. Ibis Hotel. Low-grade pavements often with patched tarmac. Yield Hall Place today has the appearance of a service road.
- The IDR severs the main part of London Street south of the IDR from Duke Street and the town centre.
- The public realm around the IDR, pavements, railings, traffic lights, signage etc. convey the impression of an inner city motorway. This makes the area uncomfortable to navigate for pedestrians.
- Palpable proximity of IDR with associated noise and pollution.
- South of the Kennet are the rear yards/gardens on eastern and western sides of London Street typically have been turned into tarmacked car parks with lost boundary walls and privacy to these rear parts.
- Replacement uPVC windows and doors in a few locations, unsympathetic shop frontages and some graffiti.
- London Road to south also has high traffic levels with associated noise and pollution.
- Some buildings on the eastern of London Street (section between Queen's and London Roads) have sizeable rear extensions. We have not inspected these extensions, but many appear unsympathetic and unsightly when seen from East Street.

5.1.2

Duke Street/Kennet: Modern Area



- This sub area has been almost entirely redeveloped in the late C20. Four mid-late 19th centuries buildings survive at Nos. 10-16 King's Road as well as No. 1 London Street (latter Grade II listed).
- Building types include retail with upper parts, offices and flatted schemes.
- Storey heights vary across the sub area between 3.5-5 storeys.
- The building materials utilised are entirely brick, mostly red with some buff and some brown/red bricks used.
- All buildings on Duke Street and King's Road (southern side) front directly on to the street frontage, with no set back, gardens or railings.
- To the rear of the King's Road and Duke Street elevations is a large surface car park, largely concealed from surrounding views.

- Reasonably unobtrusive modern infill to the eastern side of Duke Street, but only of adequate quality. Whole sub area apart from Nos. 10-16 King Road and 1 London Street form a regeneration opportunity.
- Good views over the river along the southern end of the sub area with riverside footpath.
- Good central location within town centre.

- Surprisingly low footfall to shops at time of survey given the central location.
- Loss of any historic character to the eastern side of Duke Street. Deep plots typically lost which historically sometimes extended as far to the rear (east) as Highbridge Wharf.
- No visual unity to the designs on the eastern side of Duke Street and upper part of London Street (north of IDR).
- Some use of uPVC windows and several unsympathetic shopfronts.
- At southern end of sub area the proximity to the IDR is palpable and detracting. The road signage in this location increases the extent to which the IDR feels like an inner-town motorway.
- Nos. 3-7 London Street - the casino and No. 3 Queen's Road are particularly bland although noted that the corner of the casino onto Star Lane replicates the doorway to the demolished Star pub.

Sub area Character 5.1.3

Name London Street/East Street: Modern and Historic Area



- Characteristics**
- This sub area has almost entirely been redeveloped at the turn of the 21st century save for some historic Victorian terraced housing at Nos. 1-13 South Street.
 - The buildings are typically in residential use with Nos. 59-65 London Street being in educational use.
 - Views along London Street are medium range in both directions, with London Street being unusually wide. South Street is a narrow secondary street with constrained views.
 - Nos. 59-65 London Street, Bedivere Court and Compass House have rear car parks which merge historic burgage plots.
 - Storey heights range from 2-3.5 storeys.
 - The building materials used are universally brick, typically red and some buff as well as occasional stone dressings and occasional areas of rendered brickwork.
 - All buildings front directly on to the pavement with no set back, except for Compass House. The latter has a small set back, modern red brick dwarf boundary walls with railings above and some planting.
 - National Heritage List for England identifies No. 69 London Street as Grade II listed. The building they refer to appears to have been redeveloped.

- Strengths**
- Reasonably consistent scale throughout sub area.
 - Some reasonably sympathetic modern infill.
 - Reasonable proximity to the town centre.
 - Use of South Street as a cut through by traffic prohibited by bollards on Watlington Street.
 -

- Weaknesses**
- The area has a proportion of uPVC windows, albeit these are on modern buildings, they are still unsightly.
 - uPVC windows also fitted to the Victorian terraces.
 - Low-grade pavements, often with patched tarmac.
 - Several satellite dishes fitted to front elevations.
 - Particularly noticeable air conditioning condenser units visible from South Street including No. 67 London Street where the unit is located on the pavement.
 - Loss of the original burgage plot boundaries on London Street and East Street due to rear car parks.
 - No green spaces and few street trees.
 - Some lacklustre modern infill.
 - Rear car park to Nos. 59-65 London Street breaks the frontage along South Street.

Character Area 5.2 Level 2 [II]

Southampton & Church Streets: Inner Suburb Character Area West

Introduction

- 13.23 The character area has been badly affected by the gyratory system and IDR; the latter separated the area from the town centre. The previous industry in the area relocated in the 1970s and the later infill is largely of mixed quality. Victorian housing on Letcombe Street and Church Street has been lost. The historic streetscape is scarred and the historic interest of the area is sometimes hard to understand.

Historical Note

- 13.24 The town's original settlement was probably alongside the River Kennet between Seven Bridges and slightly to the east of the High Bridge. St. Mary's Butts, often historically called Olde Street, was likely the location of the town's first ancient market (Figure 84). The market function was relocated close to Reading Abbey when the latter was founded in the early 12th century. In medieval times three sides of Reading's ancient core were formed by Friar Street to the north, St. Mary's Butts (or Olde Street) and Southampton Street to the west and London Street/Duke Street/High Street to the east.

Southampton Street

- 13.25 The road formed part of the original Saxon layout of Reading. Southampton Street, St. Mary's Butts/Bridge Street formed part of a north-south route from Caversham Bridge to London Road and the road to Southampton and Winchester. The name 'Seven Bridges' was used as early as the C14 to refer to today's Bridge Street and at times parts of Southampton Street. Historically, River Kennet flooding prevented many parishioners of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin' from attending mass, prompting the construction of St. Giles Chapel (approximately 1189-93), becoming a parish church by 1200. By 1291 it was the richest church in the town.
- 13.26 The Speed Map of 1610 refers to the thoroughfare as St. Giles Street and it shows that by this time both sides of Crown Street, the eastern side of St. Giles Street from Mill Lane to St. Giles Church, and sparsely developed on the western side of St. Giles Street. The space between London Street and St. Giles Street was undeveloped at that time. During the Civil War, the Royalists were besieged by the Parliamentarians and during the Siege of Reading they mounted a cannon on St. Giles Church's

tower, which the Parliamentarians destroyed with cannon fire. The tower was repaired in 1654, but the spire was only replaced a century later. In the late 17th century, many of the dead from the Battle of Broad Street were buried in St. Giles' churchyard. Reading also saw the only fighting of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The John Rocque map of 1761 shows that the area between London Street/Southampton/Crown and Church Streets had started to become partially developed by this time.

- 13.27 In 1822, Joseph Huntley started a small bakery shop in London Street capitalising on the passing coaching traffic. Joseph Huntley junior began making tin boxes in his ironmonger's shop and soon after in 1832 Huntley, Boorne & Stevens was founded on London Street and in 1841 George Palmer came to Reading and joined his cousin in the business, with the company name changing in time to Huntley & Palmers. The 1879 Ordnance Survey map shows the extensive 'Reading Tin Works' stretching between Church Street and Crown Street. By the 1934 Ordnance Survey map, the premises had expanded to reach Southampton Street. Other notable production premises in the area included Messrs. M. Venner & Sons' Bacon Curers & Sausage Manufacturers of Southampton Street. St. Giles church was radically restored in 1872-3, when, with the exception of the late 13th-century south wall of the south aisle, the whole of the church east of the 15th-century tower appears to have been rebuilt.

- 13.28 The original parts of the IDR were constructed in the late 1960s which broke the link between Southampton Street and the town centre. The road widening necessitated the demolition of properties on both sides of Southampton Street. The IDR's construction was completed in the late 1980s. The IDR's construction resulted in many historic buildings being lost along the banks of the River Kennet and along Mill Lane and the street name Caxton Street being erased. The massive factory of Huntley, Boorne & Stevens closed in the 1960s and moved to Woodley radically changing the area.

Letcombe Street and Church Street

- 13.29 The 1875 Ordnance Survey map shows Victorian workers' terraced housing had been laid out on Letcombe Street stretching from Mill Lane to the north, most of the way to Church Street. To the western side of Letcombe Street, a malthouse can also be deciphered, which was associated with Stephens Mill Lane Brewery (brewing ceased before 1865). Church Street originally extended from London Street to Letcombe Street, with its western half being known as St. Giles Close. The 1761 Rocque Map shows that the southern side of Church Street and the eastern section on Church Street's northern side had been developed by that time. By 1802 the central section of Church Street's northern side had been developed.

Crown Street

- 13.30 In 1879 most of the western half of Crown Street's northern side was predominantly undeveloped and shows a large bowling green. The 'Reading Tin Works' covers the eastern half of the northern side of the road. The Victorian housing on the northern side of Crown Street, east of Southampton Street, dates from between 1879 and 1898.

Overall Importance

- 13.31 Historically part of the Saxon part of the town. A mixed street scene with a reasonable proportion of historic buildings, the latter dating from 18th century, 19th century and early 20th century.

Boundary Review

- 13.32 Much of the character area is worthy of consideration for inclusion in a conservation area. See Part C of this report.

Summary of Key Issues

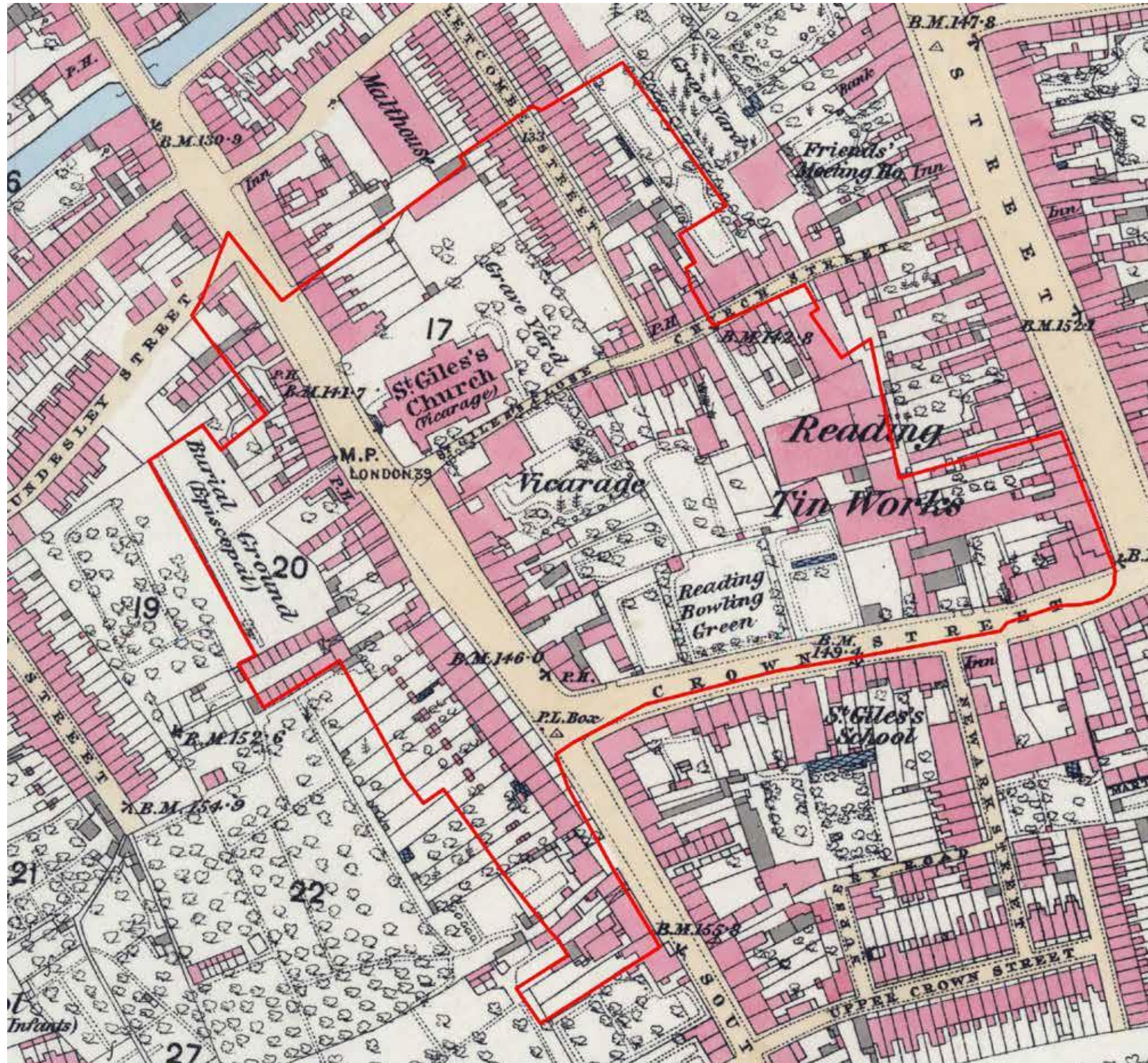
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 13.33 The character area forms part of the original Saxon layout of Reading on the southern fringe of the settlement on the coaching routes to London and Southampton/Winchester. It also contains one of the town's medieval churches (albeit heavily altered) and was subject to much development in the 19th century and 20th century through industry, including the famous Reading biscuit industry. Where the industrial sites were has now been redeveloped for housing and flats, but some Victorian and older buildings on the main street frontages remain.

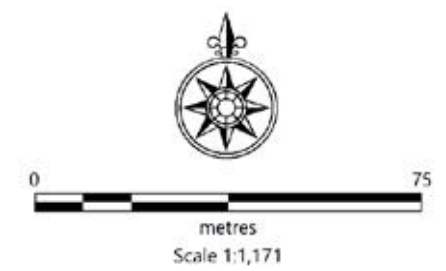
Principal Detracting Elements

- The IDR severs Southampton Street from Seven Bridges, Bridge Street and the town centre. Noise and pollution associated with the gyratory and IDR detracts.
- UPVC windows and doors in a few locations, several unsympathetic shop frontages in some locations and several satellite dishes fitted to front elevations.
- Most of the modern development is disappointing and does not respond to the context of the historic environment. A more contextual low-rise housing scheme can be seen at Centurion Close, just outside the character area and study area.
- No consistency in recent development building heights with some non-contextual excessively high modern flatted schemes. Some non-contextual materials used such as powder-coated aluminium cladding.
- Public realm is poor. Pavements are mostly of tarmac with many areas patched.
- Front boundary walls are poorly maintained and often removed to create front parking areas, and generally, the front areas are poorly maintained. Some rear gardens also lost to form parking spaces.

Figure 84. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 5.2 (Source: National Library of Scotland)



5.2 Southampton & Church Streets



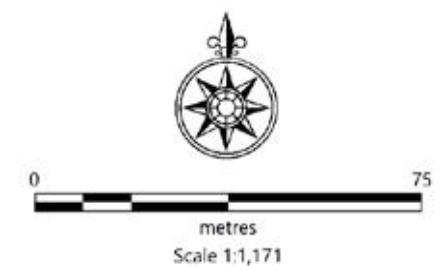
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Figure 85. Map Showing Identified Heritage within Character Area 5.2



5.2 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- 26 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- 28 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- Church of St. Giles and churchyard tombs (Grade II listed)
- Walls enclosing St. Giles's Vicarage Garden (Grade II listed)
- St. Giles Vicarage (Grade II listed)
- St. Giles' War Shrine (Grade II listed)
- 63 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- 72-76 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- 78-84 Southampton Street (Grade II* listed)
- 86 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- 92-96 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- Rose Cottage, 98-100 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)
- 106 Southampton Street (Grade II listed)

Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- St. Giles Hall (BTM)

Conservation Area

- Market Place and London Street Conservation Area

Figure 86. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 5.2

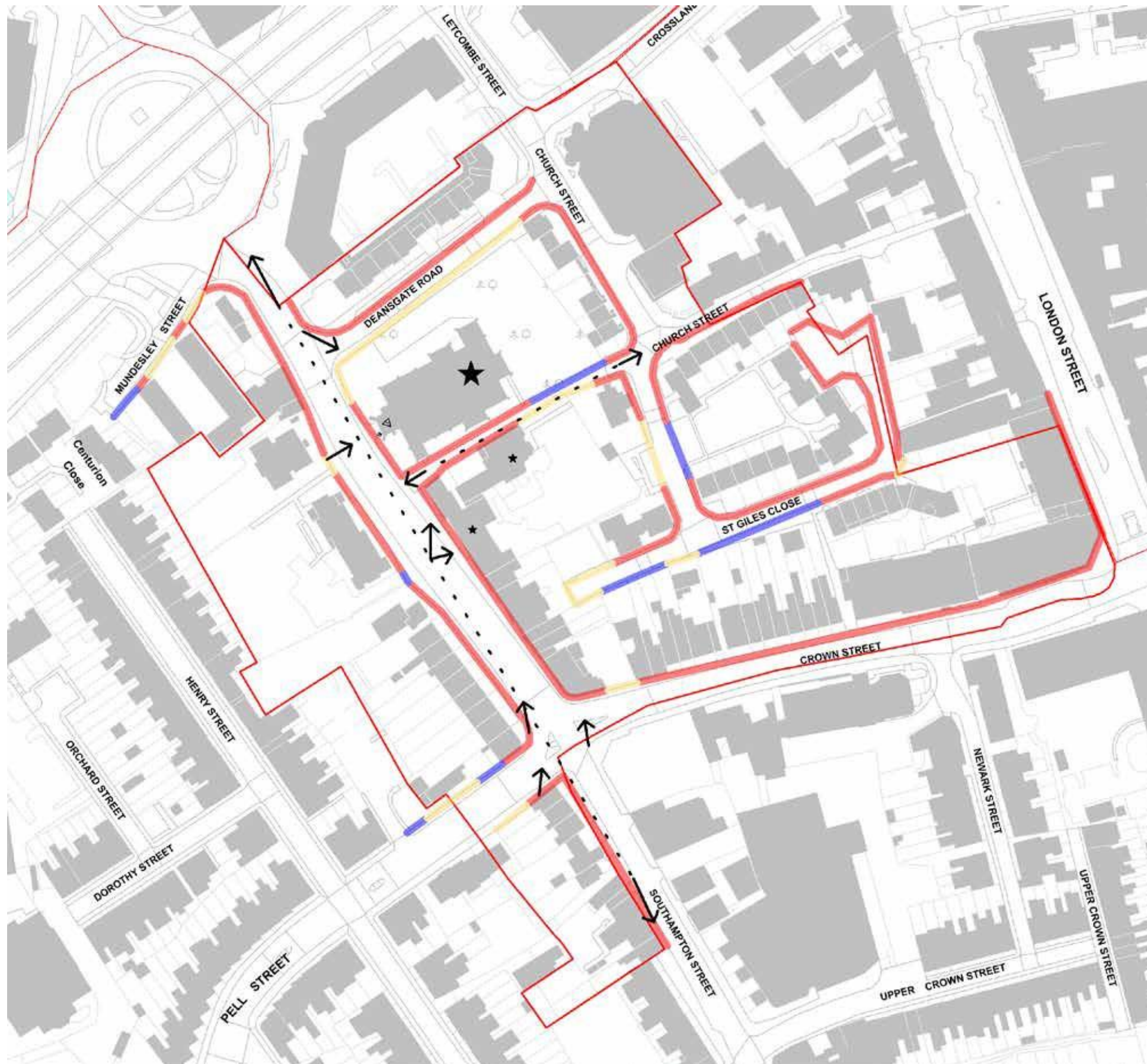


5.2 Relative Contributions to Character

- Red Detracting Contributor
- Green Positive Contributor
- Blue Neutral Contributor

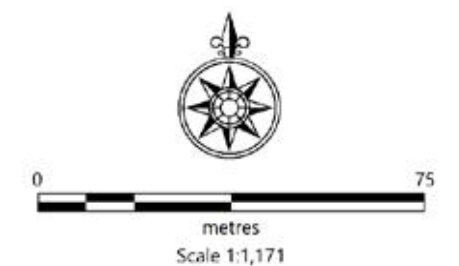
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Figure 87. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 5.2



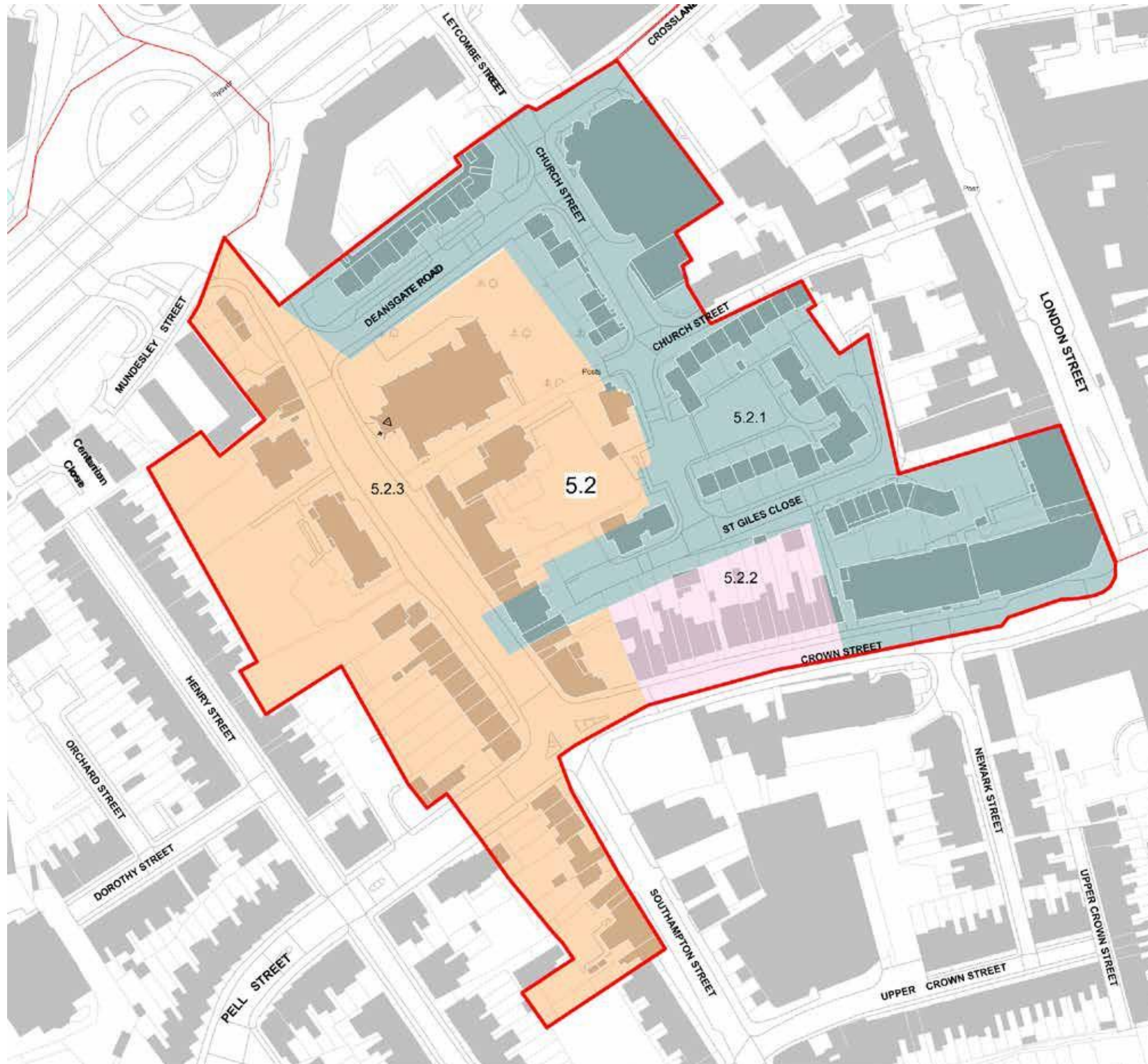
5.2 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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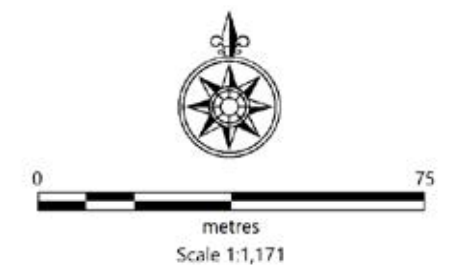
Figure 88. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 5.2




5.2 Southampton & Church Streets

Sub areas

- 5.2.1 Church Street/St Giles Close: Modern Residential Area
- 5.2.2 Crown Street: Victorian residential
- 5.2.3 Southampton Street historic route: Historic mixed-use



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| Sub area Character | 5.2.1 | 5.2.2 | 5.2.3 |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Name | Church Street/St Giles Close: Modern Residential Area | Crown Street: Victorian Residential | Southampton Street Historic Route: Historic Mixed-use |
| |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sub area comprises residential buildings including low rise terraced housing, student flatted schemes and serviced apartments. Buildings vary in date between the 1980s - C21. Building heights vary between 2-6 storeys. Highly eclectic mix of 1980s building styles with no consistency of building line from 'Good gentle infill housing' (BoE) to fairly generic flat blocks. The predominant building material is brick, brown and red bricks in the main. Some use of detracting and non-contextual powder-coated aluminium cladding. Crown House on Crown Street and the housing on the southern side of Church Street front directly on to the street. The remainder have different degrees of setback, some with soft landscaped areas, some with front gardens. Only the serviced apartments have front railings. Most of sub area comprises quiet residential roads of a coherent housing estate that occupies the site of the tin works. Some areas of green space e.g. St. Giles Close Park. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential terraced housing from the mid-late C19. The prevailing building materials are brick. Red, grey and buff all used to great effect in a typical polychrome Reading vernacular manner. Some front elevations rendered. Storey heights range from 2-2.5 storeys. All with small front gardens, save for the pair to the western end of sub area previously in retail use at ground floor. Red brick front boundary walls to most houses, most largely rebuilt. Deep rear extensions and large rear gardens. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building types include a church, the church hall, vicarage, C19 terraced housing, some modern flats a car repairs garage. Most buildings are C18/C19. The remnants of the church are medieval, the church hall is early C20 and some late C20 infills. Storey heights range between 2.5 - 3 storeys. Varied front building line to both sides of Southampton Street. Illustrative of heterogeneous building stock. Wide vehicular one-way system road with heavy traffic. St. Giles Church is the focal building to the sub area. The prevailing building material is red brick, with some buff and grey bricks. Some elevations are rendered. Roof coverings are approximately 50/50 red clay plain tiles and grey slates. The church is built from knapped flint and stone dressings. Nos. 51-63 and 92-108 Southampton Street front pavements directly. Others are set back with small front gardens. The church hall and many of the C19 and C18 houses have brick boundary walls and railings. The modern flats have brick boundary walls. The church and vicarage are set back within their own grounds (the former open with low boundary walls, the latter behind high brick walls). |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some areas of green space. Quiet residential area, largely unused by traffic. Reasonable proximity to town centre. Opportunity to reconsider the dated developments as regeneration sites. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good consistency in building style and scale. Good period detailing. Reasonable proximity to town centre. All buildings in sub area are historic buildings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regeneration on sites reasonably close to town centre. Some key historic buildings survive to define sub area e.g. church. Several are listed. Good group value to terraced houses. Some fine buildings with period details (incl. windows and doors). Some reasonable infill schemes. General consistency in scale. Some mature trees. |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of consistency in building height recently with some non-contextual excessively high modern flatted schemes. Some non-contextual materials in using powder-coated aluminium. No consistency in building designs, those selected often lacklustre. A disappointing under-whelming sub area given the present building stock and the history of the area. Pavements particularly unsightly with many areas patched. Many poorly maintained front gardens. Front boundary walls poorly maintained and often removed to create front parking areas with associated loss of many front gardens. Crown Street suffers as part of the gyratory system leading into Southampton Street, with associated noise and pollution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some unsympathetic ground floor elevations replacing shopfronts. Particularly unsightly rear extensions to houses. Most rear gardens lost to car parking. Some large unsightly rear gardens buildings. No. 43 St. Giles Close has been built incongruously in the rear garden of Nos. 38-40 Crown Street. No. 43 replaces former backland industrial buildings accessed via a carriageway off Crown Street. Crown Street is part of the gyratory system leading into Southampton Street. High levels of traffic noise and pollution. Car dominated poor pedestrian environment. Widespread use of uPVC windows and doors. Many satellites affixed to front elevations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broken street frontages in places, some unsightly gap sites. Low-grade tarmac pavements, often patch repaired. Most historic front boundary walls have either been replaced sympathetically or removed. Some satellite dishes to front elevations (incl. listed buildings). Front gardens (where present) poorly maintained. Signage to one-way system is particularly unsightly and gives the road the appearance of an inner urban expressway. Some mediocre modern infill schemes. Some seemingly disused retail premises. Given the age of this part of Reading the relatively low level of survival of historic buildings is disappointing. Southampton Street suffers as part of the gyratory system, with associated noise and pollution. |

14. West Suburbs in Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

Character Area 6.1 Level 2 [II]

Oxford Road - Prospect & George Streets: West Suburbs Mixed-use

Introduction

14.1 Oxford Road is a part of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area, recently assessed, and now forms part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ¹) project to address its 'At Risk' status.

Historical Note

14.2 In Georgian times, the area served as a verdant suburb with villas dotting Oxford Road such as Nos 101 and 104, which became more urban as a result of Victorian infill. Victorian shops, with residential accommodation above, extended westwards from Reading centre. This extension (prior to 1833) was limited between:

- Alfred Street and Eaton Place along the north side of the road; and
- Russell Street and Prospect Street along the south side.

14.3 Other early buildings beyond Eaton Place include Trinity Church (1826) located as a vista-stop opposite the junction of Oxford Road and Russell Street. Westwards from Waylen Street, the development of Russell Street, Prospect Street and the terraces (notably Sydney Terrace) lying along on the south side of the Oxford Road between those two streets, was carried out in the 1820s, largely by William Pratt Swallow on his open land of the Swallows' nurseries (shown on Coates' map). The end-of-terrace property at the north west corner of Russell Street was replaced in 1929 by The Pavilion cinema, by Harold Scott, which today hosts events and the Lifespring Church.

14.4 Further east, the early 19th century listed terraces along the south side of Oxford Road, Nos 149-177, 187-193, 195-197 and 197-203, possess the same general form (Figure 89). These houses once had discernible front gardens with trees for all of the terraces as shown on the 1879 Ordnance Survey map. Today, most of these still possess clearly defined front gardens with walls or walls with railings. However, those in the middle of the terrace no longer contain trees or greenery. Importantly, buildings of a similar period extended from Oxford Road south along Prospect and Russell Streets to link with Castle Hill, forming part of the Swallow family redevelopments.

14.5 The remaining buildings largely formed part of Jesse family redevelopments, extending from Oxford Road towards Baker Street to connect with Castle Hill and a number of properties on that main route to the west. In contrast, much of the western portion of Oxford Road within this character area was agricultural lands and a farm, Battle Farm, until the railway line was built.

14.6 However, a number of terraces and open spaces have since been demolished to make way for large detached residential or commercial buildings. For example, in the eastern portion of this area, the large building occupied by the Crown Prosecution Service was constructed upon plots containing landscaped open land and terraced buildings. Further to this, a new large high-density block of flats is under construction adjacent and to the east of the Holy Trinity Church, on what was once occupied by two large semi-detached buildings with large open gardens.

14.7 This theme continues further west, where terraces at Trinity Place and a school (Trinity Schools) were demolished sometime after 1934 to make way for medium-sized detached commercial buildings. The plot in the north western portion of the character area, which contained a single building and open space in 1879, is now the site of two medium-density blocks of flats.

14.8 The retail link along Oxford Road was severed by the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), through the demolition of surrounding historic streets. However, the link across the bridge ensures the historic connection can be appreciated today.

Overall Importance

14.9 Oxford Road (originally known as Pangbourne Lane), being one of the earliest roads leading out of Reading, has seen many phases of development as Reading expanded over the centuries. Secondary streets were added along the length of this linear route with further development. The area's historic significance is reflected in the large number of Grade II listed buildings, including Georgian and Victorian terraced houses intermixed with churches and a cinema. The terraced shops nearest to Reading Central were built to extend the shopping offer as part of the historic retail expansion from the urban core. A small number of historic shop fronts still survive. It has become multi-cultural with a range of retail and services that reflect the immigrant populations that have settled here.

14.10 The variety in architectural form is partially intentional, with approximately half the terraces designed to be architecturally varied and half designed to present a consistent, formal frontage to the street. Strong visual links into and out from Reading Central were identified and a key view looking north west towards the striking Grade II listed Oxford Road Community School is noted in the conservation area appraisal.

Boundary Review

14.11 It is recommended that the current boundaries be retained, the character and appearance of which extends beyond the study area (i.e. character area), the boundary of which was not intended to reflect the full extent of that character, which has been recently assessed as a part of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. However, inclusion of this character area allowed for the assessment of it in relation to Oxford Road to the east of the IDR to clarify whether it would be possible to 'stitch' Oxford Road back together.

¹ This project's benefits from some of the research undertaken as part of the wider HSHAZ project.

Summary of Key Issues

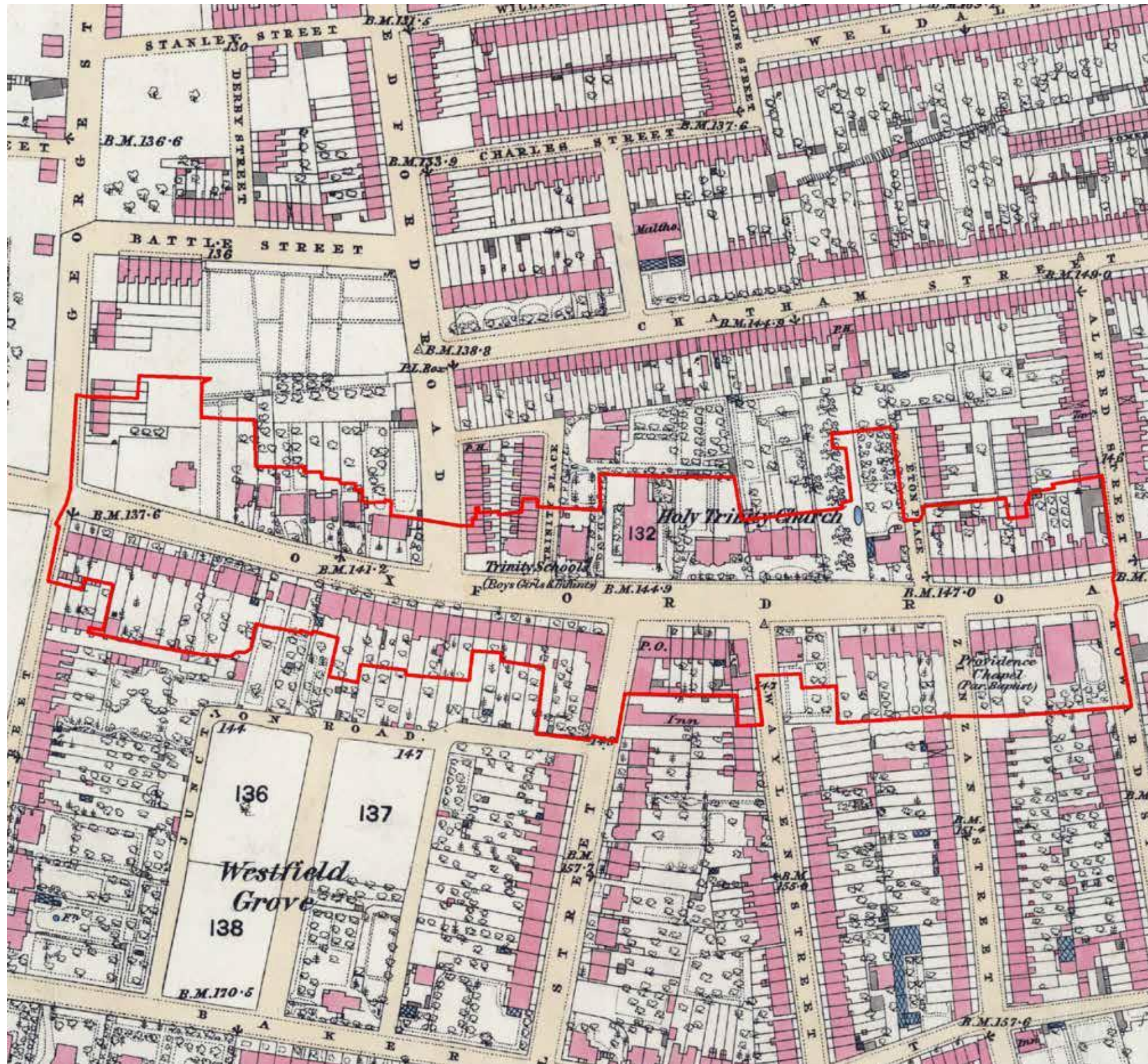
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

- 14.12 A key trading route, villas dotted the road until the growth of the urban core expanded onto Oxford Road. It remains closely linked with the urban core, irrespective of the influence of the IDR. A number of historic shopfront features are noted, though many are in poor condition: No 109; No 127; Nos 139 and 141; Nos 179a; and Nos 181 and 181a. Residences are also represented in the mix, though these are located further west and some distance from the urban core.
- 14.13 The variety in architectural form, relates not only to design intent but also a mix of Georgian and Victorian Classical styles. This together with varied frontages gives the impression of a heterogeneous mix despite the formal nature of the frontages. Strong visual links add to the significance of the character and the appearance of the character area.

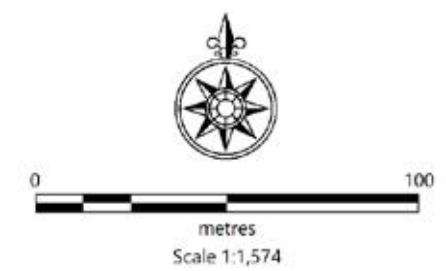
Principal Detracting Elements

- 14.14 This part of the conservation area is registered as At Risk:
- Alterations to approximately 70% of the buildings has led to difficulty in appreciating the original design intention and true quality of this built environment.
 - Proximity of the scale and grain of modern developments to the north of Oxford Road detracts from the historic scale and grain.
 - Traffic noise and pollution from the IDR detracts from its setting.
 - Some poorly maintained buildings detract from surrounding properties.
 - Graffiti, over-painting and inappropriate features further detract from significance.
 - Metal roller security doors and retail signage.
 - Retail spaces extending onto the pavements, through the use of canopies added to the frontage (frequently constructed without planning permission).
 - Excessive signage.
 - Poorly managed waste.
 - Poorly maintained pavements, which are narrow in places.

Figure 89. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 6.1 (Source: National Library of Scotland)



6.1 Oxford Road - Prospect & George Streets



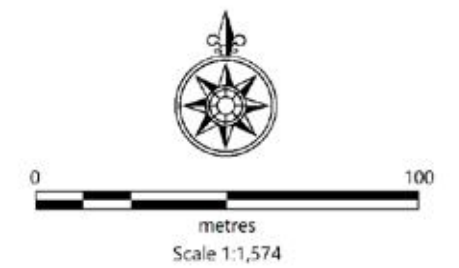
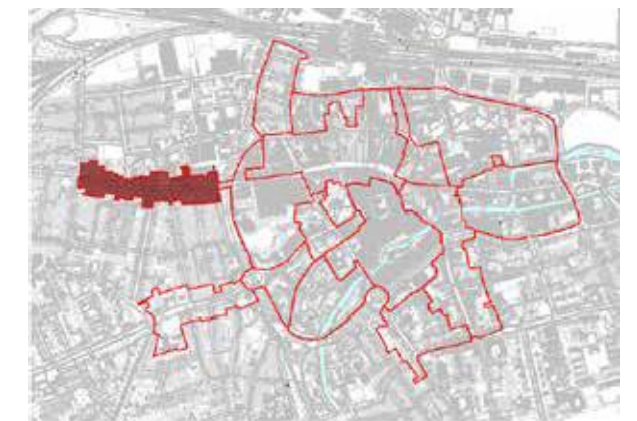
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Figure 90. Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area 6.1



6.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- Mannson House (Grade II Listed)
- 139 And 141, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- 199-203, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- Rox Borough House (Grade II listed)
- 171-177, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- 195 And 197, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- 149-169, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- 120 And 122, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- Church Of The Holy Trinity (Grade II listed)
- 124, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)
- 187-193, Oxford Road (Grade II listed)

Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- Providence Evangelical Church (BTM)
- The Pavilion 134-147, Oxford Road (BTM)

Conservation Areas

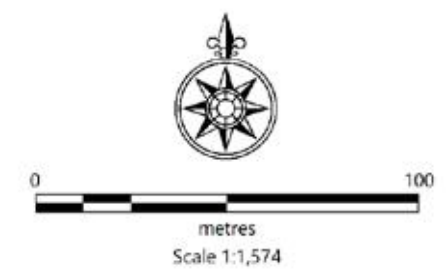
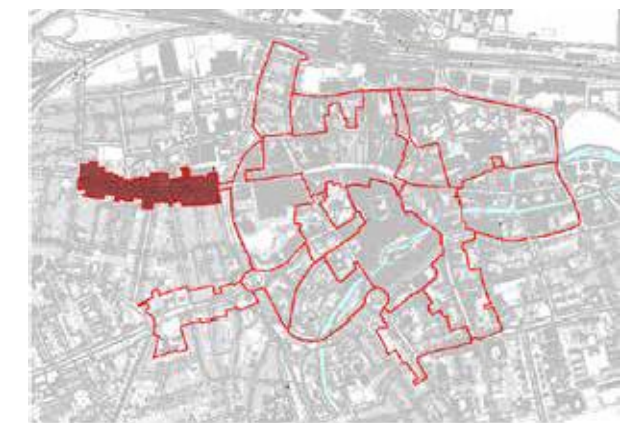
- Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

Figure 91. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 6.1



6.1 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



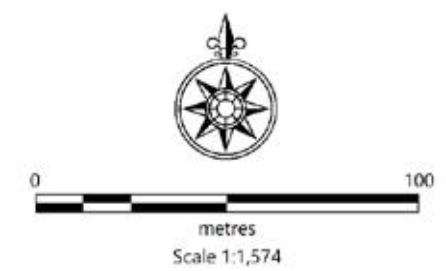
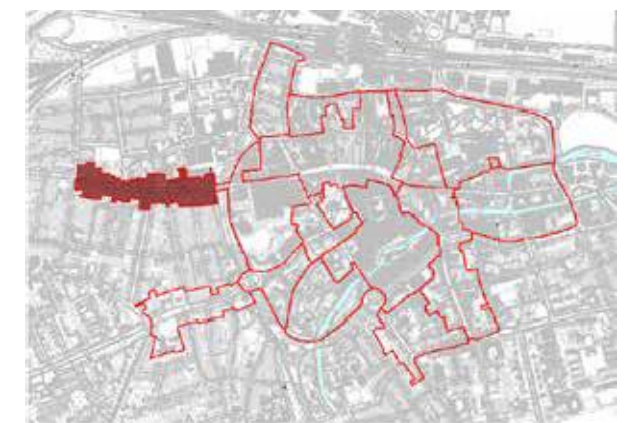
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Figure 92. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 6.1



6.1 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

-  Strong Visual Containment
-  Neutral Visual Containment
-  Weak Visual Containment
-  Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
-  Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
-  Kinetic view
-  Key Viewing Points
-  Static View



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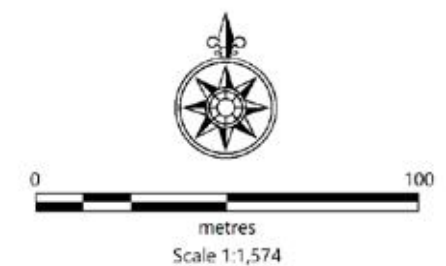
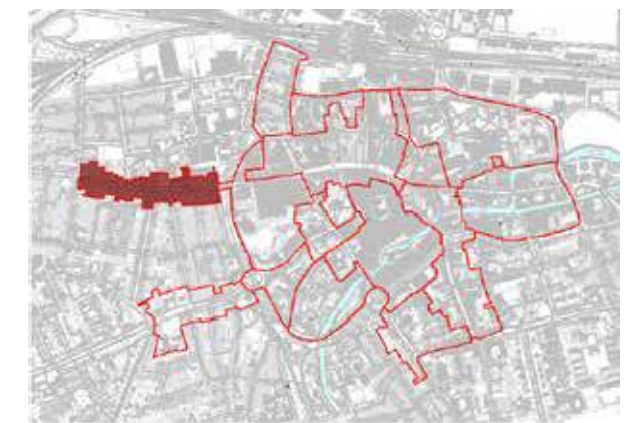
Figure 93. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 6.1



6.1 Oxford Road - Prospect & George Streets

Sub areas

- 6.1.1 Oxford Road from Howard to Waylen Streets: Georgian Villas and early Victorian Retail
- 6.1.2 Oxford Road Northside: Modern Mixed-use redevelopments
- 6.1.3 Oxford Road/Russell Street: Civic and Religious
- 6.1.4 Oxford Road from Bedford Road to Prospect Street: Georgian and Victorian terraced shops (brick or render)
- 6.1.5 Oxford Road from Russell to Waylen Streets: Georgian and Victorian terraced shops (rendered)



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| Sub area Character | 6.1.1 | 6.1.2 | 6.1.3 | 6.1.4 | 6.1.5 |
|------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Name | Oxford Road from Howard to Waylen Streets: Georgian Villas and Early Victorian Retail | Oxford Road Northside: Modern Mixed-use Redevelopments | Oxford Road/Russell Street: Civic and Religious | Oxford Road from Bedford Road to Prospect Street: Georgian and Victorian Terraced Shops (Brick) | Oxford Road from Russell to Waylen Streets: Georgian and Victorian Terraced Shops (Rendered) |
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 1-3 storeys (predominantly 2-3) • Early C19 to Late C20 • Predominantly residential terraces and terraced shops with residential upper floors • Some detached buildings • Predominantly red brick construction, with some stone, slate and render • Varied built-line, with the majority at pavement edge or slightly set back • Walls or railings to some front gardens • Historic features • On-street parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-4 Storeys • C19 to early C21 • Predominantly medium to high density detached residential flats and office blocks • Discontinuous frontages, slightly set back in plots • Discontinuous frontages • Off-street parking creating a gap along the street frontage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 1-2 storeys • Large detached buildings • Varied architectural styles • Predominantly brick constructed, with some stone and glass • Some of gates, walled railings or steps across either building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of 2-3 storeys + basements • Predominantly early to mid C19 (one early C21) • Predominantly a mix of terraced shops with upper parts and residential terraces • A couple detached buildings • Predominantly red brick constructions (occasional historic or modern render) • Walls or railings to in front of small front gardens • Varied built-line, with the majority at pavement edge or slightly set back • Bollards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 storeys • Mid to late C19 • Terraced shops with upper parts • Predominantly brick construction (some rendered) • On-street and continuous frontages |
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic character is evident • Good transport links • Close proximity to Reading Centre • High footfall • Varied building types including a chapel • Varied shops and restaurants/takeaways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some mature rows of trees • Most modern buildings in scale with the street | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong historic character • Rows of mature trees • The Pavilion (Queen Anne Revival cinema) and Grade II Church of Holy Trinity (Georgian early Gothic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes multiple listed buildings and other buildings of historic character • Good access to Reading centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street parking • Some historic character (Grade II listed building) with surviving shopfronts • Identifiable group of historic buildings • Varied shops and restaurants/takeaways |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti upon many buildings • Poorly maintained shopfronts • Inappropriate replacement features throughout • Area crowded during peak times | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti on buildings • Long-term disused buildings • Some frontages heavily dilapidated • historic character • Car parking areas for commercial buildings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti on buildings • Refuse on the street • Some inappropriate replacement features to the Pavilion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly maintained pavement/ frontages • Many inappropriate replacement features • Minimal landscaping in the form of trees, hedges or flowerbeds • Graffiti on buildings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bins and refuse along the street • Poorly maintained pavements • Inappropriate replacement features throughout • Inappropriate use of canopies added to the frontage (often added without planning permission). |

Character Area 6.2 Level 2 [II]

Castle Hill & Castle Street: West Suburbs Residential

Introduction

14.15 Vehicular road orientated south west to north east with a gradual incline from its eastern edge near the IDR to the junction with Russell Street. The road has a high proportion of early-mid 19th century terraced houses, some with large or small front gardens. Many have brick front boundary walls, some with railings. Mature trees are also a defining element of the character area. There are four modern buildings comprising 129 Castle Hill, Castle Gate, 87 Castle Hill on the corner with the IDR and the modern Berkshire Record Office building in the grounds of Yeomanry House.

Historical Note

14.16 Castle Hill today forms part of the western extension to Castle Street. Castle Street runs west off St. Mary's Butts, the latter often called Olde Street, which was likely the location of the first ancient town market. The market function was relocated close to Reading Abbey when the latter was founded in the early 12th century.

14.17 The town is known to have once possessed a castle. Although its precise former location is not known, some believe the castle was situated on the high ground on Castle Hill. King Stephen held the castle on the outbreak of hostilities between him and Empress Matilda. The castle was destroyed in 1151. 'Vicus Castelli' is referred to in a document of the reign of Henry III, which literally means 'Castle village' or 'the small settlement of Castle', potentially giving some credence to the location of the castle. Castle Hill also forms part of the main road west from Reading towards Bath and Bristol. Even today it connects with Bath Road.

14.18 In April 1643 Parliamentary forces under the Earl of Essex established a position facing the Forlorn'd Hope (at the top of Castle Hill) and Fort Royal (between Castle Hill and Castle Crescent). These formed the principal Royalist defensive positions west of Reading. They are shown on the Coates map of 1802 as 'Old Fortifications' suggesting they remained visible at that time.

14.19 In 1715 an Act of Parliament approved the construction of a turnpike between The Bath Road between Reading and Puntfield (just west of Theale). A toll gate was erected at the top of Castle Hill close to the junction with today's Coley Avenue. The toll gate was moved westward c.1830.

14.20 Castle Hill developed largely in the 18th century as an area of residential housing to the west of the town centre signifying the early move by the more affluent to the west of the town to take advantage of the 'salubrious air' away from local industry. The north side of Castle Hill was developed first as shown by John Rocque's map of 1761.

14.21 Nos. 154-160 Castle Hill (Grade II* listed) was constructed in 1734 (later extended) and is a local landmark within Castle Hill. The building was once the Kings Arms coaching inn, as well as serving as a refuge for French priests during the French Revolution and was home to the local Jesse family of developers throughout the 19th century. Another former coaching inn was the Horse and Jockey at 120 Castle Street, which was rebuilt in 1823 on the site of the 17th century inn. Yeomanry House, its large garden plot with its intact gatehouse, is an example of the large well-to-do house from the early 19th century society that once populated the apex of Castle Hill.

14.22 By the end of the 19th century Reading's elite had moved away from the Castle Hill area and plots began to be subdivided or large houses demolished to make way for new developments of smaller properties.

14.23 Castle Hill is a rare survivor in the town of an area that is mostly unaffected by macro development in the 20th and 21st centuries. There is one modern purpose-built block of flats at 129 Castle Hill, and offices at Castle Gate and to the south east corner of the character area at 87 Castle Hill. In the mid-late 20th century the IDR was carved through on a north-south axis east of today's 87 Castle Hill separating it from Castle Street.

Overall Importance

14.24 The character area retains a high proportion of historic buildings and the vast majority of the character area lies within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.

Boundary Review

14.25 Those parts of the character area not currently in the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area are not worthy of inclusion in the conservation area.

Summary of Key Issues

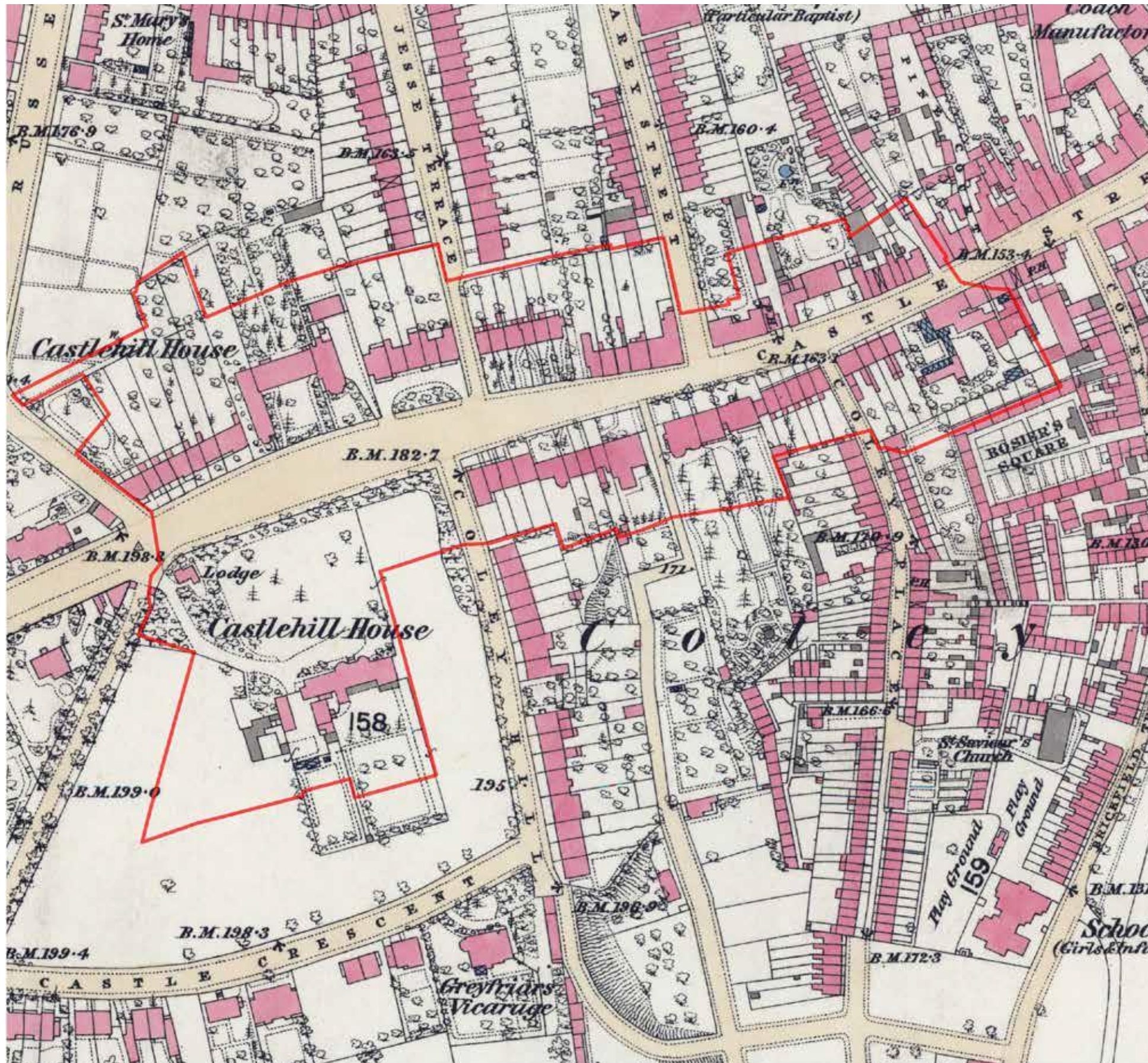
Overall Heritage Value/Significance

14.26 The principal interest of the character area lies in the surviving 18th and 19th century terraced houses, the early 19th century detached Yeomanry House and the 18th century former coaching inn. They illustrate the character of the area as a particularly well-to-do area west of the town centre in the 18th and early-mid 19th century as well as lying on a key coaching route to Bath and Bristol to the west.

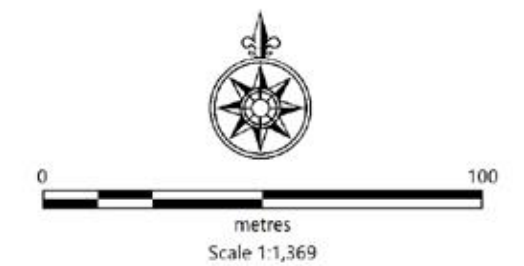
Principal Detracting Elements

- Low-grade tarmac pavements with many patch repairs.
- Inhospitable pedestrian environment around Russell Street/ Castle Hill/Coley Avenue junction.
- Inhospitable pedestrian environment in particular around Castle Hill/IDR/Castle Street junction.
- Front boundaries degraded with removal (car parking), low-grade replacement brick walls, or poorly maintained front gardens.
- Width of Castle Hill carriageway too heavily dominated by cars, with pedestrian pavements overly narrow.
- Signage to roads overly large and numerous, especially given the majority of the character area lies in a conservation area.
- Some limited use of replacement uPVC windows.

Figure 94. Map Extract from 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (Surveyed 1875) of Character Area 6.2 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

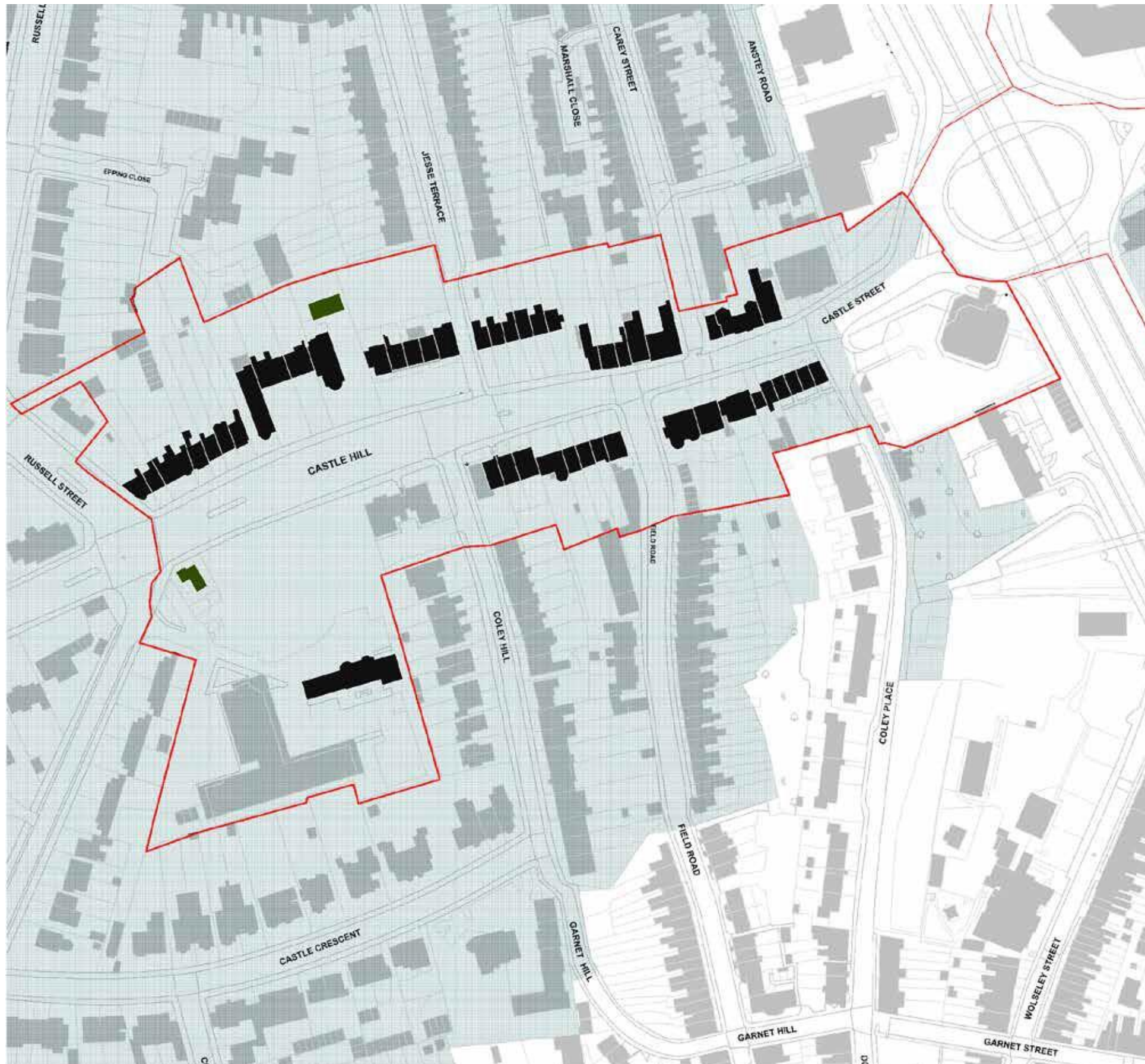


6.2 Castle Hill & Castle Street



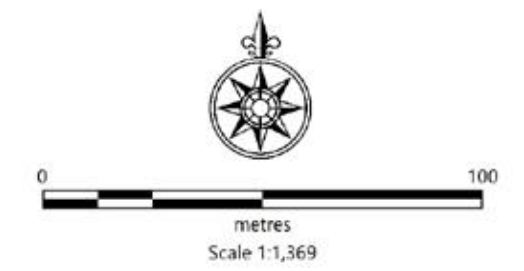
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Figure 95. Map Showing Identified Heritage Assets within Character Area 6.2



6.2 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings/Structures
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/ Buildings of Townscape Merit)
- Conservation Area



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*List of Recognised Heritage Assets in Character Area***Listed Buildings**

- 168, 172, 174 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 162a and 162-166 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 154 to 160 Castle Street and railings (Grade II* listed)
- 144A-152 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 134-144 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 128-132 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 126 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 124 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Culham House, 122 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Horse and Jockey Public House, 120 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 97-105 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 107 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 109 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 111 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 113 Castle Hill (Grade II listed)
- 115 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 117-121 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 123 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- 125 & 127 Castle Street (Grade II listed)
- Yeomanry House, Castle Street (Grade II listed)

Existing Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings and BTMs)

- 133 Castle Street (BTM)
- 154a Castle Street (BTM)

Conservation Areas

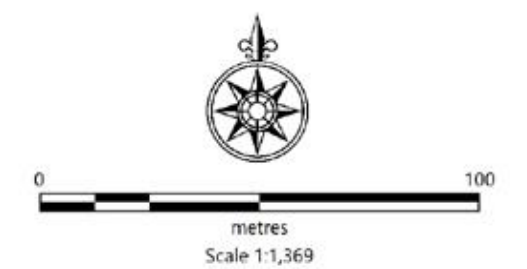
- Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

Figure 96. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 6.2



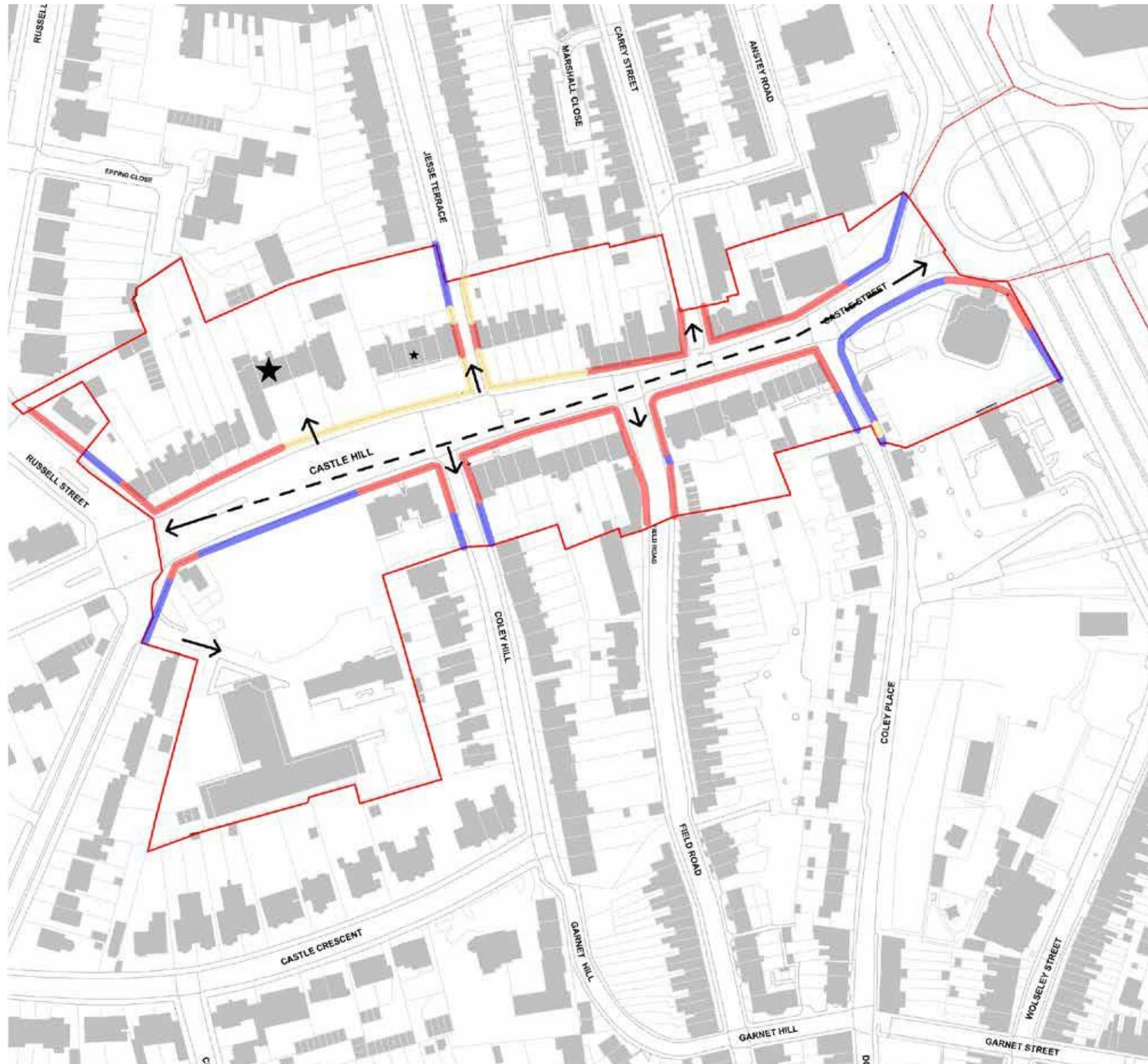
6.2 Relative Contributions to Character

- Detracting Contributor
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral Contributor



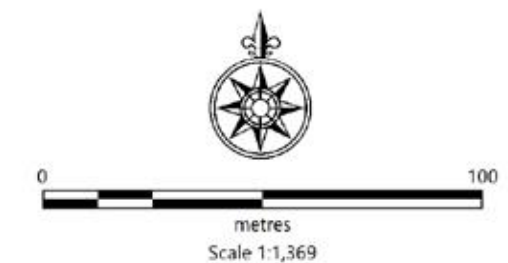
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Figure 97. Map Showing Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views Within Character Area 6.2



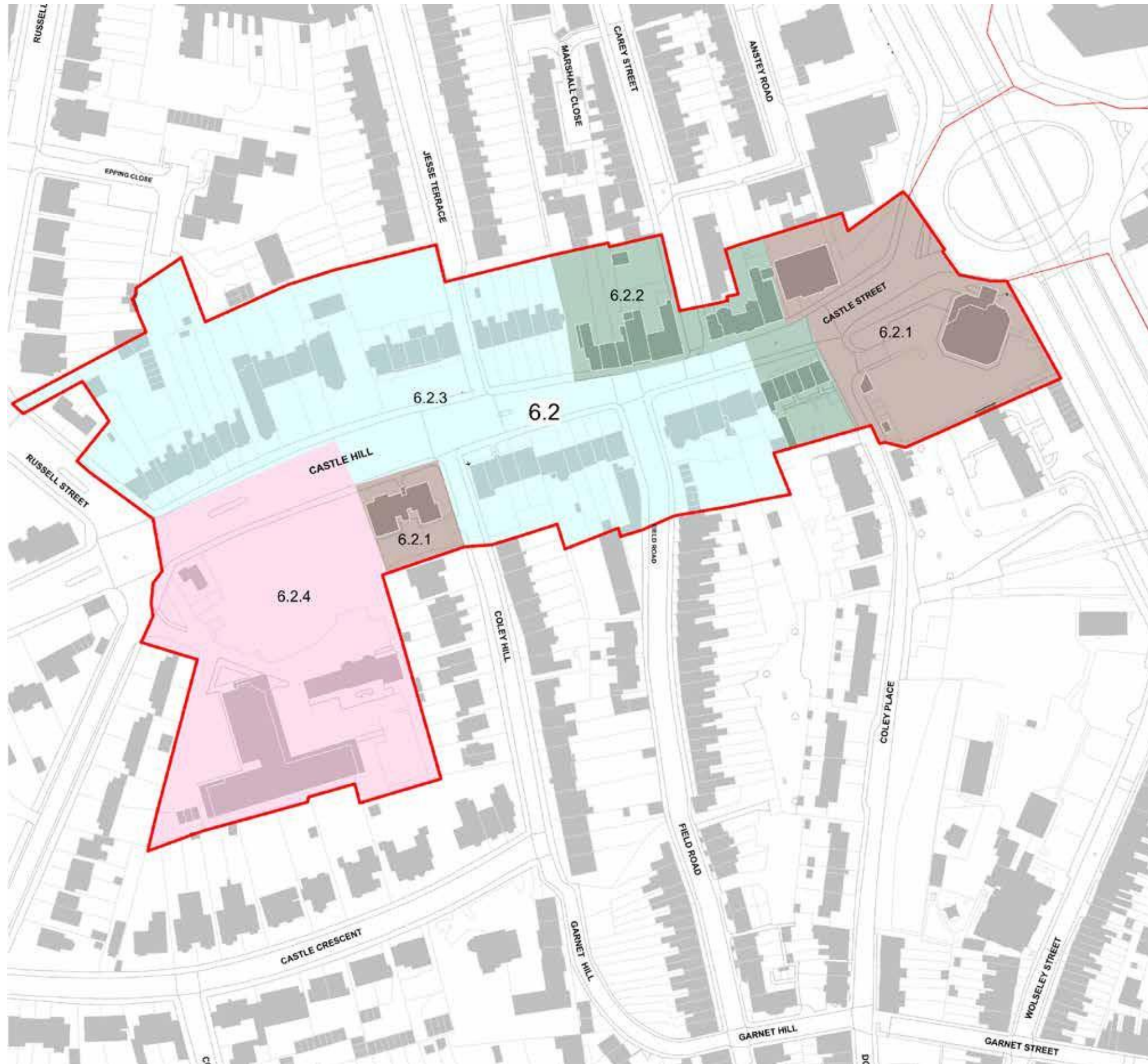
6.2 Visual Containment, Focus Points and Important Views within Character Area

- Strong Visual Containment
- Neutral Visual Containment
- Weak Visual Containment
- ★ Major Focal Buildings/ Structure
- ★ Secondary Focal Building/ Structure
- - - Kinetic view
- ↔ Key Viewing Points
- Static View



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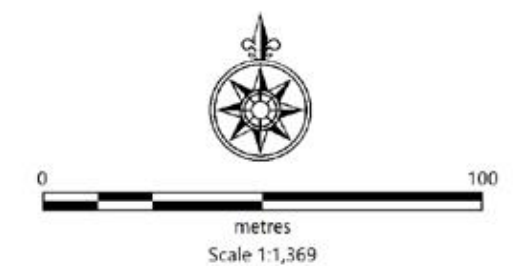
Figure 98. Map Showing Different Sub Areas Within Character Area 6.2



6.2 Castle Hill & Castle Street

Sub areas

- 6.2.1 Castle Street to Coley Place & Coley Hill: Modern residential and office
- 6.2.2 Castle Hill (part of Carey Street): Historic terraces
- 6.2.3 Castle Hill from Russell Street to Field Road: Historic villas
- 6.2.4 Castle Hill to Coley Avenue: Detached House and grounds



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Sub area Character 6.2.1 **6.2.2** **6.2.3**

Name **Castle Street to Coley Place & Coley Hill: Modern Residential and Office** **Castle Hill (part of Carey Street): Historic Terraces** **Castle Hill from Russell Street to Field Road: Historic Villas**



- Characteristics**
- The character area contains three modern buildings, all dating to the late C20. These are included in the same character sub area but the land parcels are not contiguous.
 - Modern buildings are a rarity to the character area.
 - Heights vary between 3-5 storeys.
 - No. 129 Castle Hill is slightly raised from street level.
 - No. 129 Castle Hill and Castle Gate are residential blocks of flats, and No. 87 Castle Hill is an office building.
 - Materials are mainly red brick with painted render or buff stonework. No. 87 has a large proportion of curtain glazing.
 - No.129 Castle Hill has a small front garden. Castle Gate and No. 87 Castle Hill are also slightly set back with some front planting.
 - Castle Gate has a modern brick wall and railings. No 129 Castle Hill retains some historic brickwork to its front boundary wall. No. 87 Castle Hill has no front boundary wall.
 - Wide, straight street, slightly rising towards junction with Russell Street. Medium traffic flow.
 - Varied front building line.
 - Long distance views along Castle Hill in both directions, with views contained by building stock.

- Strengths**
- Good/reasonable quality modern infill.
 - Well maintained grounds to front.
 - No. 129 Castle Hill and Castle Gate are sympathetic in their materials and style to the surrounding historic buildings.
 - One of the many approaches to town centre.
 - No. 87 Castle Hill a landmark building along the IDR and the Castle Hill/ Castle Street/IDR roundabout.
 - All buildings in sub area lie within conservation area except No. 87 Castle Hill..

- Weaknesses**
- Castle Gate and No. 87 Castle Hill are situated close to the IDR. These have far higher levels of traffic noise and pollution.
 - Proximity of IDR very marked next to No. 87 Castle Hill and Castle Gate. Severance from town centre notable close to IDR, although roads and pavements alleviate problem to some extent. Unsaoury road underpass.
 - Poor quality pavements typically patched tarmac.

Sub area Character 6.2.4

Name Castle Hill to Coley Avenue: Detached House and Grounds



Characteristics

- Sizeable detached former house set within large plot with historic gatehouse surviving.
- Early C19 main building with later additions.
- 2 storeys.
- Listed building is brick built, stucco rendered and painted.
- Modern Berkshire Record Office building adjoining. Latter of high quality in Modernist style with concrete piers and high proportion of curtain glazing.
- Stepped brick boundary wall to Castle Hill boundary.
- Wide, straight street, slightly rising towards junction with Russell Street. Medium traffic flow.
- Large car park to front of listed building and to rear.

Strengths

- Grade II listed and lies within Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.
- Sizeable gardens surrounding listed building.
- Tall, mature trees to front gardens.
- Good period details.
- Easy access from the town centre.
- Strong sense of enclosure to plot.
- Accessed by private drive off Coley Avenue.
- Castle Hill is one of the main approaches to the town.

Weaknesses

- High proportion of car parking to lawns/gardens. Car parking dominates setting of listed building.
- Grandeur of large house in its extensive grounds diluted by car parking and siting of Berkshire Record Office and parts of original grounds sold off over years for housing surrounding to the south and east.
- Expanses of tarmac to drive and car parks make site a little institutional.

Part C

Analysis and Recommendations

Precis of Brief

The brief for this report was for a rapid (Level 2) Historic Area Assessment including secondary/desktop research, fieldwork, GIS mapping, review of boundaries and recommendations for designation including:

A review of Reading's town centre heritage in the town centre and two conservation areas (St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street and Market Place/London Street Conservation Areas);

- (ii) An analysis of the historic urban character areas within the defined boundaries of town centre as indicated in the brief;*
- (iii) An evidence-based study of the character, significance and condition of the historic townscape;*
- (iv) A GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping project that can be integrated with the Authority's own GIS and The Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record (HER);*
- (v) A SWOT Analysis highlighted on mapping to see the relations on an urban scale;*
- (vi) Recommendations for designation through listing, scheduling or through addition to the local list together with a review the extent of the existing conservation areas and;*
- (vii) A readily accessible report for use by planners and developers to inform decisions about the character and location of new developments.*

However, for sub areas 3.3, 3.4 (of Reading Central Area) and 4.1, 4.2 (of Kings Road, Gaol to Queens Road) it was agreed that an outline assessment (Level 1) would be sufficient given the limited historical significance remaining in these areas.

15. Significance of the Town Centre

- 15.1 A valuable starting point is to understand the overall significance of Reading town centre, considering it in effect as a heritage asset. To provide this assessment in a concise form an analysis of the significance of the town under a range of headings has been prepared, with an assessment of the level of significance against each. From this an overall summary statement has been prepared.
- 15.2 The concept of ‘Significance’ of a ‘Heritage Asset’ is discussed in depth in the Historic England publication *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008 - being edited and reissued) and first featured in Planning Policy in PPS5 2010. This was further fleshed out in the NPPF 2012 and its revised editions.
- 15.3 This shows how significance can be considered under the following headings: evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal. It also shows how significance varies according to the audience which might range from the local inhabitant to the visitor to the expert.
- 15.4 Guidance from Historic England⁴ explains that there are three levels of assessment: outline (Level 1), rapid (Level 2) and detailed (Level 3). “Each examines an area more intensively than the last and yields a more detailed understanding in exchange for a greater input of time and resources. A level can be applied to an entire area or different levels of assessment can be undertaken. Those commissioning HAAs can adapt the levels of assessment to the needs of the area and other prevailing circumstances.”
- 15.5 The assessment of the whole town centre would have been a considerable exercise and so in two character areas (Reading Central 3 and Kings Road 4) the assessment of some sub areas was carried out as Level 1 to reduce the scope of work required of the team.

| Categories of Significance | Evidential Significance | Measure of Significance |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| General archaeological interest | Importance in Berkshire Significant volume of HER records and excavation reports informing the developmental history of the town | County level |
| Roman period | Some evidence relating to Roman activity along the River Thames settlement, and evidence relating to a Roman crossing of the Thames of the Roman road from Calleva - Silchester to Dorchester-on-Thames. | County level |
| Saxon | Considerable evidence relating to Saxon development including a traceable Saxon centre at St Mary Butts. Evidence that new routes from London to Bath and Winchester to Oxford crossed in Reading | Regional |
| Norman / early medieval | Evidence relating to Norman new settlement around the Reading Abbey site and establishment of a new market place and later enclosure of the whole abbey site by wall and gates and River Kennet | Regional |
| Late medieval/early modern era | Evidence relating to the monastic communities and trade within the town due to its position on the crossroads of the London to Bristol and Southampton to Oxford roads. Decline after the Reformation. Cloth manufacturing stayed an important industry. Evidence of the part the town played in the Civil War survives in the vestiges of the Civil War defences that are still discernible. | Regional |
| 18th century/Georgian | Considerable architectural evidence of the rebuilding of whole streets and the establishment of grand town houses by significant local families. Cloth manufacturing fades as brewing and milling expand. Turnpike Roads radiate from the Town. Early use of the Rivers Thames & Kennet for trade and the Kennet & Avon Canal (opened 1804) for trade. | Regional |
| 19th century/Victorian | Expansion of river trade, arrival of the canal from Bath, both largely superseded by the railway (opened 1840). In a southern England context moderate to significant industrial development relating to local produce - brewing, milling etc. Huntley & Palmers biscuit making dominates north east and south east corners. Multiple breweries. Metal foundries also established. Expansion of the cattle market as a county function. New principal shopping streets are laid out for the first time such as Station Road and Queen Victoria Street, new department stores are established (e.g. Heelas) and Broad and Friar Streets become the principal shopping streets of the town. Development of local public transport - trams, trolley buses and motor buses also vital to town's character. | Regional |
| 20th century early & mid | Manufacturing and retail as above still significant, with Military significance for munitions and barracks and specialist metallic production. | Regional |
| Late 20th and 21st centuries | Decline of manufacturing. Reinvention of Reading as a location for offices and distribution centres. The general impact of motor vehicles of the streetscene via parking, road widening and new relief roads (e.g. the construction of the IDR between the 1960s and 1989), and arrival of the M4 in 1971. New civic buildings with larger footplates built on the northern side of Castle Street, replacing small traditional streets. The Oracle development, providing vastly increased shopping and leisure facilities was opened in 1999. | Regional |

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area-assessments/heag146-understanding-place-haa/>

| Categories of Significance | | Measure of Significance |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| | Historical Significance | |
| Ecclesiastical | Reading Abbey was the most important monastery in Berkshire, established by Henry I as a reformed Benedictine Cluniac house. Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin is the oldest church, of Saxon origin with Norman elements but was substantially rebuilt 1551-5 with stone from the abbey. There are three other churches of medieval origin Greyfriars, St Laurence (abbey's chapel for the town) and St Giles in the southern inner suburbs. Great Victorian expansion of churches as Reading grew. | International and National |
| Monastic | As well as Reading Abbey, Greyfriars at the west end of Friar Street held lands running down to the Thames. | Regional |
| Non-conformist and Catholic | Church of Saint Marys on Castle Street (Episcopalian) was built in 1798 as a Grecian temple. For the Catholics St James in part of the abbey of 1840 was AW Pugin's first church. | Regional |
| Civic | Town Hall, Museum and Art Gallery complex built on the west side of the Abbey precinct from 1872 by A Waterhouse, T Lainson and JJ Cooper & WR Howell. | Regional |
| County | Berkshire County Council was based in Reading from the 19th century until abolished in 1998. | Regional |
| Military | Mention of a Norman Castle but site not located. Civil War defences were extensive and visible until the 19th century. Reading had a role in the 1688 'Glorious Revolution'. Brock Barracks, Oxford Road is an army barracks, built in 1881 and listed. It is the base of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. | Regional |
| Judicial Penal | Crown Court of 1860 with other court buildings rebuilt in the 1990s. Undistinguished Magistrates Court and Police Station of 1970s on Castle Street. Gaol rebuilt 1840s and modernised 1970s and now closed, future uncertain. It is famous for the incarceration of Oscar Wilde there. | International and National |
| Educational | Most educational establishments are outside the central area, to the south and east and west. Established charity schools now in the private sector. Board schools were built from 1870. Reading School was founded as part of Reading Abbey, with the foundation date believed to be 1125. Reading University was founded in 1892 as University College, Reading, an extension college of Oxford, and received the power to grant its own degrees in 1926 by royal charter. It has several sites outside the town centre. | Local/ Regional/ National |
| Technological | In 1843, William Henry Fox Talbot set up the first commercial studios to mass-produce photographs from negatives in Russell Terrace, The Reading Establishment as it became known. Huntley & Palmers Biscuits was the world's largest manufacturer of biscuits in 1900 and Huntley, Boorne & Stevens was instrumental in the development of the biscuit tin. | International |

| Categories of Significance | | Measure of Significance |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| | Aesthetic Interest | |
| River Thames, River Kennet, and the Kennet and Avon Canal | Water features large in Reading and in its history though much of the town has turned its back on the water. The settlement was established above the Kennet as a defensible location. Until the railway came the rivers and the canal were important transport routes from the town. The rescue and reopening of the Kennet & Avon Canal for heritage tourism in 1990 was a great boost to the town. | National |
| Abbey and Gaol Quarter | Reading Abbey was the most important monastic foundation in Berkshire and was a Royal Abbey. The Abbey helped the town grow until Dissolution in 1536. Though the abbey was robbed for its stones, the site has survived mostly unbuilt on and still has important ruins. On the west of its site the town hall was built from 1872 designed by Alfred Waterhouse. In the centre of the site is Forbury Gardens, laid out from 1855 by J B Clacy. On the east half the Gaol was built in the 19th century as a dominant brick building complex. It is likely that much of the Abbey's east end archaeology lies under the Gaol complex. To the south is Forbury Square with its group of civic buildings, and the Market Place with its 19th century commercial buildings and Sir John Soane's Simeon Monument. | Regional |
| Saxon St Mary's Butts | The settlement of Reading originated in Saxon times where Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin is, and it is the other historic node of the town. Its churchyard is a large green space with mature trees with the wide St Mary's Butts to its west that was once the market place. Across the bottom of this run the two best surviving streets of historic buildings: Gun Street and Castle Street. | Regional |
| Townscape | The character of central Reading is that of a market town that did well in the 18th and 19th centuries and was largely rebuilt by its Victorian architects. However post 1960, Reading has been partially rebuilt with modern mainly commercial blocks of a different scale, form and materials. The central streets have retained much of their character. | Local/Regional |

| Categories of Significance | | Measure of Significance |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| | Communal Interest | |
| Cultural | Reading has a museum and art gallery, main and branch libraries and the Berkshire Record Office off Castle Hill. It is home to the Berkshire Archaeological Society, Reading Civic Society, and the Reading & District Natural History Society. There are two Arts Centres off London Street. Outside the town centre Reading University has several cultural venues including the Museum of English Rural Life, the University archive and special collections, the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology and the Cole Museum of Zoology. | Regional |
| Musical | Reading Festival every August is one of the biggest music festivals in England. | National |
| Entertainment | The town has regional theatre and cinemas. The former Victorian town hall today is used as a concert hall amongst other uses. The Hexagon provides a programme of events including theatre, comedy, pop and classical music. The Vue complex and the Biscuit Factory show films. | Regional/Local |
| Shopping | With the opening of The Oracle in 1999, Reading established itself as a regional shopping centre for this part of the Thames valley, Berkshire and north Hampshire. | Regional |
| Sporting | Reading FC is a Championship football club. Reading is also a centre for rowing on the Thames at Caversham. | Regional |
| Agricultural & horticulture | West of Caversham Road is Reading Cattle Market which now operates as a farmers' market and auction sales site. Suttons Seeds were based in Reading from the 19 th century. | Local/Regional |
| Food manufacture | Reading will forever be associated with biscuit and cake production with Huntley & Palmer Ltd, and the successor companies. | National/International |
| Office location | A favoured location for company headquarters has led to Reading town centre accommodating many large office blocks which have brought large numbers of white-collar workers into the town centre. Reading continues to be a key transport hub. This applies particularly to Reading station, which is one of the largest and busiest railway stations outside London and with nationwide connections. The proximity to the M4, proximity to Heathrow airport (and good direct bus service); excellent local bus service (one of very few in UK still owned by the local authority) are also all important factors to the town's appeal. | Regional |

Summary statement:

Reading town centre has claims to significance at all levels from local to international.

- 1 The evidential significance of the town as a Saxon settlement and as the site of a royal Abbey has national importance.
2. Its associations with the eponymous Huntley & Palmers baked products around the World gives Reading an international reputation in that connection.
- 3 Other well know businesses such as Sutton Seeds and the brewing industry from Simonds Brewery to Courage.
4. Its internationally known music festival and its cultural offer is regionally important.
5. Its major University gives the town a national status.
6. The strategic location of the town in the Thames Valley and on east to west and south to north routes, mean that it is attractive as a location for business.
7. It has regional status as the seat of a county administration.
8. Its river, canal and railway (and now road) trade, past and present all emphasise the regional significance of the town.

The town has many local significances, some enumerated above, but many others not identified here but illustrated by the types of buildings in the centre.

16. Findings from Character Area Studies

Character Areas Analysis

16.1 A major element of this report has been to consider the Study Area bearing in mind the existing conservation area coverage. The detailed analysis in Part B was used in the consideration of whether the existing conservation areas within the study area needed boundary review, and whether there were other parts of the study area that might merit designation, bearing mind each area *justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest* (NPPF paragraph 186). The analysis of the character areas in Part B was vital in showing whether the character areas had been correctly drawn up to cover an area of a dominating character or when there were parts of the character area more closely related to adjoining character areas. This analysis was then used to look at conservation area boundaries and proposed conservation areas and their boundaries. See Figure 99 for location of (and the following tables for descriptions of) all the character areas

Area 1 - St Mary's Area - Section 9 in Part B

- 16.2 This area forms the heart of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. Figures 5 & 8 show the extent of the Saxon settlement around Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin and the expansion of the area in medieval times, which influenced the boundaries of the character area. For the character assessment it was divided into 3 sub areas.
- 16.3 Character Area 1.1, comprises the church in its churchyard and the area to the north of it. It is a very distinct area around the minster of ecclesiastical origins which forms the core of the conservation area. However, as the conservation area is at present drawn, crosses Chain Street and takes in part of the Heelas building of John Lewis, on the site of the old dispensary which was demolished in 1978 for the new department store extension. An adjustment to the boundary is recommended, on balance given the quality of the Heelas extension building to John Lewis, designed by the R D Cook partnership with Sir Hugh Casson as consultant, and given how much it gives a setting to the churchyard of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, to include all the Heelas extension building in the conservation area, along with more of Minster Street including the listed telephone exchange. Minster St has an important role as it has kinetic views both ways, towards the George Hotel and towards the churchyard of St Marys, framed by the Heelas Building and the telephone exchange, linking the two areas together.
- 16.4 Character Area 1.2, takes in Gun Street and the east part of Castle Street and the south end of St Mary Butts. The character area study demonstrated that the existing conservation area boundary to the south of Castle Street was too constrained as the extent that the Holy Brook historically formed the southern boundary of the plots on the south side of Castle Street became apparent. It is recommended that the conservation area is extended to include the south boundary of the Holy Brook from the west corner to the car park beside the telephone exchange building. Also reviewed was the western boundary where it interfaces with the Minster Quarter regeneration area. It is recommended that Nos 19-23 St Mary's Butts, the outbuildings behind and all Hosier Street to the steps to Dusseldorf Way linking across to the back of the Sun Inn plot are included in the conservation area, as the buildings are of some architectural merit and the street of some historic interest, as well as being important in the setting of St Mary's Minster.

16.5 Character Area, 1.3, is the western part of Castle Street up to the edge of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area at the far side of the roundabout over the IDR. Like the previous sub-area it was apparent that this conservation area boundary should be extended down to include all of the Holy Brook until it disappears under the IDR. A difficult decision was whether the existing conservation area could be extended to include the roundabout and thus ensure that this conservation area was linked to the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. Looking at the roundabout and concrete and steel bridges that takes it over the IDR, there are no features on it that relate to Castle Street, so bearing in mind the national policy on conservation area designation the case for its inclusion in the conservation area cannot be justified, but it could be referred to in any revised conservation area appraisal and management plan as important to the setting of the conservation area. A similar issue arises with the former Police HQ and Magistrates Court buildings as they make a marginally positive contribution (though in scale and massing they are much larger than the houses opposite) to Castle Street, forming its north side but are due to be replaced in the Minster Quarter regeneration. Here the expedient approach would be to maintain the conservation area boundary at the back edge of the footway at the boundary with this regeneration site so that the site clearly has a major impact on the setting of the conservation area.

Area 2 - Reading Abbey, Civic and Gaol - Section 10 Part B

- 16.6 This area is mostly covered by the Abbey Quarter Study area and would form the core of an already proposed Abbey Quarter conservation area. This was reviewed through the survey and the character area analysis. This proposed conservation area raised the question about whether the Market Place should be included in this new area taking it out of the existing Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.
- 16.7 Character Area 2.1, takes in what is essentially the Abbey precinct, following the line of the precinct wall along the central reservation of Forbury Road and running along the Kennet as far as the mouth of the Holy Brook, then taking the southern boundary of the footpath on the Holy Brook to King's Road. The western boundary followed the boundary of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. In reviewing the character area assessment and considering the setting implications of the development outside the area, it was proposed that the conservation area boundary be moved further out than the line of the Plummary Wall in the centre of Forbury Road and taken to the back of the far, north footway of Forbury Road, and that the boundary take in the south river wall of the Kennet in front of Blakes Cottages.
- 16.8 Character Area 2.2, is Blagrove Road and the Market Place and was mostly included in the Abbey Quarter Study area. Having reviewed the boundary of the study area and character area, it is recommended that the west boundary takes in all of the arcade in the former Bristol & West building to be together with the Corn Exchange arcade. South of this the survey concluded that all the buildings of Broad Street belonged with the Reading central area, along with those forming the north side of King Street and former Jackson's buildings on King's Road. The pertinent question was whether to detach the Market Place from the existing Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and include it with this new proposed conservation area, a logical move as the market place was created by the abbey. In this case a boundary between the Market Place and King Street and King's Road would need to be created. It is recommended that the boundary should go through blocks south of the Market Place with the property plots on the north side of King Street and the west end of King's Road, and both sides of King Street and this west part of King's Road could be included in the proposed Reading Central area, based on Character Area 3.2.

Area 3 - Reading Central Area - Section 11 Part B

- 16.9 This area encapsulates the majority of the traditional town centre, taking in Friar Street and Broad Street, interfacing with Area 1 to the south and Area 2 to the east. The assessment of the character areas within this area shows that there is definite architectural character and the quality of the buildings is such, especially the late 19th century buildings, that the area merits consideration as a conservation area.
- 16.10 Character Area 3.1, takes in the area from Greyfriars Church up to the railway and the survey shows that the quality of the built environment varies from the Greyfriars church and Sackville Street to streets of altered terraced housing and non-descript offices to the north. The Greyfriars area on Friar Street is part of the town centre area and should be included in any central conservation area.
- 16.11 Character Area 3.2 is the main part of Reading's commercial core, taking in the block between Broad and Friar Streets as well as the south side of Broad Street and the surviving historic buildings on the north side of Friar Street and West Street and the start of Oxford Road. The analysis from the survey showed the quality the historic and architectural interest of the area, in spite of new development of a neutral contribution interrupting some of the building frontages. The boundaries of the study area were considered a good starting point for those of a proposed central conservation area, also including the southern block of Character Area 3.1, the Greyfriars Church site and Sackville Street, and at the east end extending into parts of Character Areas 2.2 and 3.4 to take in both sides of King Street, the area south of it down to the Kennet, Duke Street and King's Road both sides from Jackson's Corner to Highbridge Wharf and the area down to the Kennet.
- 16.12 Character Area 3.3 was the majority of the area between Friar Street and Garrard Street, and this area consists mainly of sites that have recently been redeveloped, are being redeveloped or will be redeveloped, so it was not considered that this character area could be considered for inclusion in a conservation area. It would however form an important part of the setting of the proposed Reading Central Conservation Area.

- 16.13 Character Area 3.4 takes in the Oracle and includes the Mill Lane and Queen's Road section of the IDR and the buildings on the south side of it. Since the 1990s this area has seen complete redevelopment and therefore it was not considered for designation as a conservation area. It does however include parts of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area (where the Heelas rear extension and Minster Court and an area south of is now) and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (where the Vue Cinema building is now). For the former, already covered in Area 1 it is recommended that all the Heelas extension building should be included in the St. Mary's Butts/Castle Conservation Area, for the latter, as all the previous development on the site has been removed, it is recommended that the Vue building should be excluded but the public realm in front of it on London Street retained in the area.

Area 4 - King's Road, Gaol to Queen's Road: Modern Character Areas - Section 12 Part B

- 16.14 These character areas are not contiguous but form a number of town centre and periphery areas within the study area that were a part of the 19th century town centre. These areas for the most part have seen much redevelopment over the last 50 years and though pockets of interesting buildings survive the overall impression is of late 20th century development of varied quality. In some cases these areas are proposed to have mass or large-scale developments.
- 16.15 Character area 4.1 includes the area west of Bridge Street between the Kennet and the Holy Brook down to where they both pass under the IDR. It was an important industrial area, with canal wharf buildings and brewery buildings but has largely been redeveloped in the 1980s and 1990s as housing and flats, though retaining two listed industrial buildings converted to flats. On balance it is not considered that there is sufficient special interest to merit including the area in a conservation area.
- 16.16 Character area 4.2 takes in the area on the east side of the town centre on either side of King's Road to its junction with Forbury Road from the Kennet to the north side of Queen's Road. Though the character analysis showed there were survivals of 19th century terraced housing and commercial buildings, it is considered that there is not a sufficient relationship or related character or history to merit either adding these blocks to a conservation area or proposed conservation area. The case in point being Blakes Cottages which the Abbey Quarter study had suggested might be included in the proposed conservation area, crossing the Kennet. It is recommended that the proposed conservation area includes the Kennet and the river wall in front of Blakes cottages in recognition of the importance of the Kennet to the setting of the abbey site and gaol.
- 16.17 Character area 4.3 is an area on the west side of the town centre that takes in the Minster Quarter regeneration area (formerly known as the Civic Precinct), the Broad Street Mall site and the area north of Oxford Road enclosed by the IDR and Cheapside. Some discussion took place about whether this area would not be better placed in Area 3 of the study areas, given its location. The Broad Street Mall development and the surviving civic buildings dominate this area and are of limited architectural interest. Given the extensive redevelopment, it was not considered that the area merited inclusion in a conservation area.

Area 5 - Historic Inner South Suburb Area - Section 13 Part B

- 16.18 This area south of the Kennet and the IDR was defined in the character area survey as the historic southern suburbs of Reading that grew up around the two roads into Reading from the south, London Street and Southampton Street. They have had a chequered history and have been physically and visually cut off from the town centre by the IDR. This is a classic edge of town historic area with a concentration of historic buildings, many listed that has suffered from the impact of traffic, not just the IDR, but also the gyratory that runs around London Street, Crown Street and Southampton Street. It has the potential to be an attractive suburb within walking distance of the towncentre.
- 16.19 Character area 5.1 runs from King Street down Duke Street and over High Bridge to include all of London Street, taking in most of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. It is recommended that the existing east and west boundaries of the conservation area should be maintained. However, the part north of the High Bridge, though a key part of the route into the medieval core of the Market Place, is now in character and activities more related to the central area being proposed for a new Reading Central Conservation Area. It was concluded that the boundary of East Street, though partially excluded from the study area, should be maintained as the Conservation Area boundary.
- 16.20 Character area 5.2 takes in the areas around Church Street between London and Southampton Streets, Crown Street and part of Southampton Street going south. The area between the two Streets, although crossed by the historic Church Street, had largely been redeveloped by 1990s housing which has tried to create a neighbourhood of small houses in an interesting pattern of streets. On its west side Southampton Street overlaps into the Katesgrove area of good late 19th century housing and schools but of a different character. There was discussion about the extent of inclusion of Southampton Street and the housing between it and London Street in an extended conservation area, and much debate about the inclusion of the west side of Southampton Street within the extended conservation area. To successfully promote regeneration and protect character and appearance on balance it was agreed to include it. It should be noted that there is a strong case for the designation of the Katesgrove area as a conservation area in the future, although this is outside the scope of this study.

Area 6 - West Suburbs in Russell Street/Castle Hill Area - Section 14 Part B

- 16.21 Character area 6.1 takes in a stretch of Oxford Road in the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area, starting immediately west of the IDR and including the majority of the Georgian terraces and villas on this late 18th/early 19th ribbon development coming out from the town centre as far as Prospect Street. Had it not been for the IDR, this road would read as a continuation of the town centre coming on from the end of Broad Street. The conservation area appraisal was issued in 2020 in which the boundaries were reviewed, and buildings of townscape merit identified.
- 16.22 Character area 6.2 consists of Castle Hill from west of the roundabout over the IDR to the junction at the top with Russell Street, and it is in the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. It takes in the houses, villas and terraces of this extension to Castle Street laid out from the late 18th century. Had it not been for the IDR, this road would read as a continuation of the town centre coming on from the end of Castle Street. As above, the conservation area appraisal was issued in 2020 in which the boundaries were reviewed, and locally listed buildings identified.

Recommendations from the Survey of Individual Character Areas

Managing Change to Buildings

- 16.23 The points below came out of the character area surveys. Many are common issues found in many historic areas in England but some are particular to these areas of Reading.
- 16.24 Repointing with cementitious mortar is damaging to historic buildings, numerous examples are recorded in the survey. Educating owners and builders is the best way to prevent this (see Historic England advice¹) but it may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions (possibly with an LDO) in conservation areas, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification. As part of the advice on maintaining historic brickwork, the use of brick slips on historic buildings should be discouraged.
- 16.25 The painting of historic brickwork is still occurring and can change the character and appearance of buildings. Educating owners and builders is the best way to prevent this but it may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions (possibly with an LDO) in conservation areas, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification. This particular issue was found to be most noticeable, but is not limited to, the following:
- On London Street within Sub Area 5.1.1
 - On Oxford Road within Character Area 6.1
 - On Forbury Road within Sub Area 2.1.4
 - On Blagrove Street within Sub Area 2.2.4
 - On Station Road within Sub Area 3.2.5
 - On Friar Street within Sub Area 3.2.5
 - On Friar Street within Sub Area 3.2.4
 - On Castle Street within Sub Area 1.2.2
 - On West Street within Sub Area 3.2.2
- 16.26 The installation of unsympathetic uPVC windows and doors takes away much of the character and appearance of buildings. Encouraging owners to try and repair and thermally upgrade the original windows and doors and even to replace existing poor uPVC examples with traditional timber vertical sliding sashes/casements (as applicable) and timber panelled doors is the best way to halt further loss. It may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions (possibly with an LDO) in conservation areas, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification. This particular issue was found to be most apparent, but is not limited to, in the following:

- Character Areas 1.2 and 1.3
- On Sackville Street in Sub Area 3.1.3 and the entirety of Sub Area 3.1.1
- Sub Area 3.1.3
- Sub Area 3.2.1
- Sub Area 3.2.2
- Sub Area 3.2.4
- On King's Road and Blake Cottages buildings within Character Area 4.2
- Character Area 5.1
- Character Area 5.2
- Character Area 6.1
- Character Area 6.2

- 16.27 The installation of satellite dishes and television aerials on the prominent elevations detracts from the character and appearance of streets. Encouraging owners to choose less prominent locations when installing or replacing equipment is the best solution. It may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions (possibly with an LDO) in conservation areas, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification (see key recommendations for alternatives). This issue was seen to be most apparent in the following:

- Sackville Street and within the entire Sub Area 3.1.1
- Sub Area 3.1.3
- Sub Area 3.2.5
- On King's Road and Blake Cottages buildings within Character Area 4.2
- Character Area 5.1
- Character Area 5.2
- Character Area 6.1

- 16.28 It was noticeable that in some commercial parts the character and appearance of the street had been adversely affected by the visual appearance of security features, particularly metal shutters. Encouraging owners to avoid a detrimental visual impact upon the appearance of their building and surrounding streetscene, by paying attention to the siting, appearance and colour of security measures is an approach that has worked elsewhere. Examples of alternative measures in Bradford include the use of laminated security glass and where necessary frame strengthening, anti-shatter film, internal lattice and Brink Bond grilles (with a 1 metre set back from the window). It may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions (possibly with an LDO) in conservation areas, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification. This issue applies to:

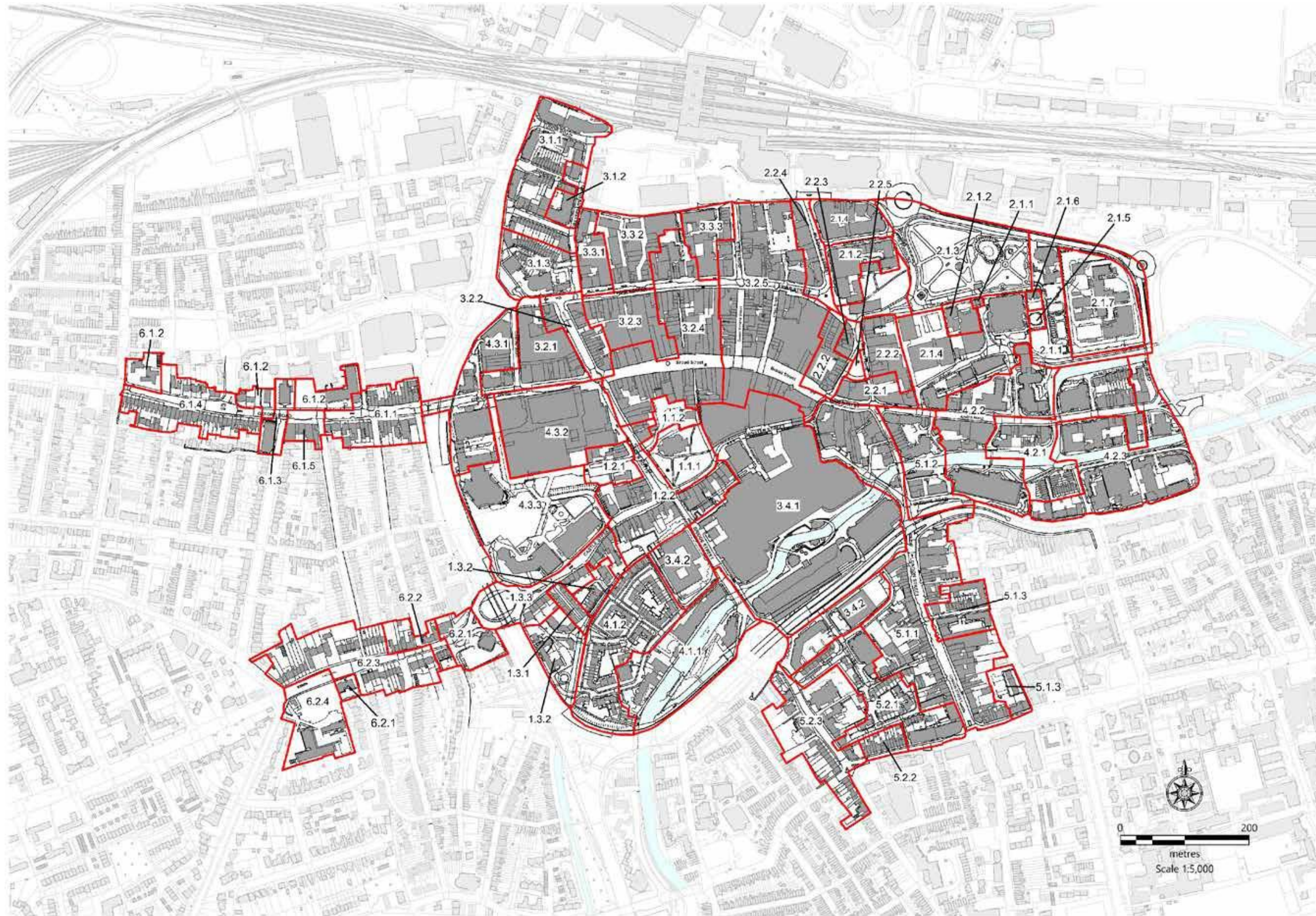
- On Oxford Road within Character Area 6.1
- On Friar Street within Sub Areas 3.2.4 and 3.3.3
- On Bridge Street within Sub Area 3.4.1
- On Union Street within Sub Area 3.2.4

- 16.29 Shopfronts on historic buildings were found to be mostly modern replacements of varied quality and appropriateness. For instance, the fascias to some shopfronts extend excessively high and cover features on the front of the building and unbalancing the façade. It is not clear if historic fabric survives behind in some cases. When applications for replacements are made this provides an opportunity to seek to reinstate a more sympathetic shop front design, using the Shopfront SPD.

- 16.30 Some streets of terraces have lost their visual harmony because of the detracting shop front designs and again use of the Shopfront SPD is recommended so shopfronts are more cohesive as a group. This issue was noticeable in the following:
- Sub Area 3.2.1
 - Sub Area 3.2.2
 - Sub Area 3.2.4 particularly Union Street
 - Sub Area 3.2.5
 - On King's Road within Character Area 2.2 4.2 and 5.1
 - On Oxford Road within Character Area 6.1
 - On London Street within Character Area 5.1
 - On Southampton Street or look to convert within Character Area 5.2

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/repointing-brick-and-stone-walls/heag144-repointing-brick-and-stone-walls/>

Figure 99. Illustrating Character Sub Areas



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| 1. St Mary's Area (Saxon Origins) | |
|--|--|
| 1.1 St Mary's Church Character Area: Historic Church and Churchyard | |
| 1.1.1 | St Mary's Butts: Church and Churchyard |
| 1.1.2 | St Mary's Butts/Chain Street: Historic Mixed-use with Historic Yards |
| 1.2 Castle/Gun Streets & St Mary's Butts: Historic Retail and Market Character Area | |
| 1.2.1 | Hosier Street: Informal Market |
| 1.2.2 | St Mary's Butts/Gun Street: Historic Shops and Public Houses |
| 1.3 Castle Street/Holy Brook: Historic and Modern Residential Character Area | |
| 1.3.1 | Castle Street: Almshouses |
| 1.3.2 | Rose Walk & Talbot Court: Modern Residential Areas |
| 1.3.3 | Castle Street (opposite civic buildings): Historic Residential Areas |

| 2. Reading Abbey, Civic and Gaol Area (Medieval Origins) | |
|--|--|
| 2.1 Blagrove Street & The Forbury: Abbey and Civic Character Area | |
| 2.1.1 | a) St Laurence Church & church yard b) St James Church & Abbey: Ruins and Churches |
| 2.1.2 | a) Blagrove Street east & Valpy Street south b) County Court: Historic Civic Areas |
| 2.1.3 | Forbury Gardens: Formal Public Gardens |
| 2.1.4 | a) Valpy Street north b) Forbury Square & Abbey Square: Modern Commercial |
| 2.1.5 | Abbot's House Gardens & Balls Head: Formal Public Gardens |
| 2.1.6 | Abbot's Walk: Historic Residential |
| 2.1.7 | Gaol Site 1. Reading Prison (Main Building) 2. Perimeter Wall 3. Gatehouse and Administration Building 4. Gymnasium and Workshop 5. Games Court and Amenities Buildings |
| 2.2 Market Place: Historic Retail and Market Character Area | |
| 2.2.1 | High Street: Historic Banking and Retail |
| 2.2.2 | Market Place/Butter Market: Modern Commercial |
| 2.2.3 | Market Place/Town Hall Square: Historic Retail |
| 2.2.4 | Blagrove Street: Mixed Historic Retail and Commercial |
| 2.2.5 | Market Place Square: Formal Market |

| 3. Reading Central: Character Areas | |
|--|---|
| 3.1 Greyfriars: Historic Residential and Religious with Modern Mix Character Area | |
| 3.1.1 | Greyfriars Road /Tudor-Vachel Roads: Historic and Modern Mixed-use |
| 3.1.2 | Greyfriars Road/Stanshaw Road: Modern Offices |
| 3.1.3 | Greyfriars Road/Sackville Street: Religious and Historic Residential |
| 3.2 Broad & Friar Streets: Historic Inner Urban Retail Character Area | |
| 3.2.1 | Oxford Road East (McIlroys Site): Historic and Modern Retail - West |
| 3.2.2 | West Street: Historic and Modern Retail Mixed-use |
| 3.2.3 | Friar Street West: Modern Retail on Historic Plots |
| 3.2.4 | Broad/Union/Chain Streets: Historic Retail Frontages with Historic Yards |
| 3.2.5 | Broad Street/Queen Victoria Street/Station Road: Historic and Modern Retail |
| 3.3 Friar & Garrard Streets & Station Road: Modern Mixed-use Character Area | |
| 3.3.1 | Friar Street/Greyfriars Road: Modern Retail, Office and Residential |
| 3.3.2 | Friar/Garrard Streets: Under Development |
| 3.3.3 | Friar Street/Station Road: Modern Mixed-use |
| 3.4 Minster/Bridge Streets & Queen's Road: Modern Commercial Character Area | |
| 3.4.1 | Queen's Road/Minster Street: Modern Retail |
| 3.4.2 | Bridge Street/Letcombe Street: Modern Commercial and Warehouse |

| 4. King's Road, Gaol to Queen's Road: Modern Character Areas | |
|---|--|
| 4.1 Holy Brook & Kennet: Modern Housing Character Area | |
| 4.1.1 | Fobney Street/Kennet: Modern Riverside Residential and Industrial Heritage |
| 4.1.2 | Holy Brook/Fobney Street: Modern Residential Courtyards |
| 4.2 King's Road & Kennet: Modern Mixed-use Character Area East | |
| 4.2.1 | King's Road/Blakes and Queen's Cottages: Historic and Modern Residential Mixed-use |
| 4.2.2 | King's Road/Abbey Street: Modern Mixed-use including Historic Elements |
| 4.2.3 | King's Road/Kennet Side: Modern Mixed-use |
| 4.3 Minster Quarter: Modern Mixed-use Character Area West | |
| 4.3.1 | Oxford Road/Thorn Street: Modern Hotel and Residential |
| 4.3.2 | Oxford Road/St Mary's Butts: Modern Retail |
| 4.3.3 | Castle Street/Dusseldorf Way: Modern Civic |

| 5. Historic Inner South Suburb Study Area | |
|---|--|
| 5.1 London & Duke Streets: Inner Suburb Character Area East | |
| 5.1.1 | London Road to King Street Historic Route: Historic Area |
| 5.1.2 | Duke Street/Kennet: Modern Area |
| 5.1.3 | London Street/East Street: Modern and Historic Area |
| 5.2 Southampton & Church Streets: Inner Suburb Character Area West | |
| 5.2.1 | Church Street/St Giles Close: Modern Residential Area |
| 5.2.2 | Crown Street: Victorian Residential |
| 5.2.3 | Southampton Street Historic Route: Historic Mixed-use |

| 6. West Suburbs in Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area | |
|--|---|
| 6.1 Oxford Road - Prospect & George Streets: West Suburbs Mixed-use | |
| 6.1.1 | Oxford Road from Howard to Waylen Streets: Georgian Villas and Early Victorian Retail |
| 6.1.2 | Oxford Road Northside: Modern Mixed-use Redevelopments |
| 6.1.3 | Oxford Road/Russell Street: Civic and Religious |
| 6.1.4 | Oxford Road from Bedford Road to Prospect Street: Georgian and Victorian Terraced Shops (Brick) |
| 6.1.5 | Oxford Road from Russell to Waylen Streets: Georgian and Victorian Terraced Shops (Rendered) |
| 6.2 Castle Hill & Castle Street: West suburbs residential | |
| 6.2.1 | Castle Street to Coley Place & Coley Hill: Modern Residential and Office |
| 6.2.2 | Castle Street (to Carey Street): Historic Terraces |
| 6.2.3 | Castle Hill from Russell Street to Field Road: Historic Villas |
| 6.2.4 | Castle Hill to Coley Avenue: Detached House and Grounds |

16.31 Some commercial streets suffered from an excess of signs on buildings and A-frame boards on the footway. Working with the shop owners on a rationalisation of the existing shopfront signage so it is less obtrusive and ideally to remove internally lit signage in favour of signage lit by subtly sited spotlights would be a way to address this issue. It may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions in conservation areas, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification. There is also the issue of semi-permanent shop extensions beyond the hardstanding in front of the shops onto the public footway, and again working with shop owners these need to be controlled so they remain on the private hardstanding and are put away when the shop is closed. This was a particular problem in the following:

- Oxford Road within Character Area 6.1
- Friar Street within Character Area 2.2 and 3.2

16.32 The loss of front and rear gardens to car parking was noticeable in some areas and does adversely impact the character and appearance of the streetscene. It may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions in conservation areas to protect boundary walls, accepting that NPPF policy requires strong justification. This issue particularly applies to:

- Castle Street within Character Area 1.2, 1.3 and 6.2
- Vachel Road and Stanshawe Road within Sub Area 3.1.1
- London Street within Character Area 5.1
- Character Area 5.2

Public Realm Improvements

16.33 The character area survey identified several locations where the footways/pavements were in a poor condition and in need of improvement. Tarmac blacktop is widely used but streets in conservation areas perhaps deserve better quality surface materials to enhance their character and appearance. Expensive natural materials are not always appropriate and reconstituted stone pavements or using brick products of variegated hue could be used. The noticeable locations of poor surfacing that detracted were identified at:

- Outside the former post office at Market Place within Character Area 2.2
- Throughout Sub Area 3.1.1
- Along Greyfriars Road within Character Area 3.1
- Throughout Sub Area 3.1.3
- Throughout Sub Area 3.2.1
- Throughout Sub Area 3.2.4, particularly Friar Street
- Throughout Character Area 4.2
- Along London Street within Character Area 5.1
- Throughout Character Area 5.2
- Throughout Character Area 6.1
- Throughout Character Area 6.2

16.34 The impact of road/traffic/parking signage was identified in the character area survey. An audit to remove redundant signage and poles and make the signage less prominent would enhance the character and appearance of such areas. This issue applied particularly to:

- Along London Street within Character Area 5.1
- Along Crowne and Southampton Streets in Character Area 5.2
- Along Oxford Road in Character Area 6.1
- Along Castle Hill in Character Area 6.2

16.35 There was loss of the sense of the interface between public and private realms in some places due to the loss of front boundary walls. Though this is a matter for the private owners it should be considered under the HSHAZ as a way to enhance some important street scenes in conservation areas. Examples are such as:

- Dwarf boundary walls and railings to front of listed historic terraced houses along Southampton Street (if and when the conservation area is extended)
- Boundary walls and railings along Oxford Road (this might be dealt with as a terrace long issue where applicable)
- The west end of Friar Street around Greyfriars Church and in Sackville Street (if and when this area is designated as a conservation area).

16.36 The survey of the character areas found that some historic streets could benefit from the installation of more sympathetic streetlights (such as those seen on Cross Street). Though it is recognised that because streetlighting is a contracted-out service this might be a longer term aspiration in the following locations:

- Character Areas 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3
- Character Areas 2.1 and 2.2
- Sub Area 3.2.2
- Sub Area 3.2.4
- Sub Area 3.2.5
- Character Area 6.1

Inner Distribution Road (IDR)

- 16.37 The survey of character areas identified the IDR as having a large negative influence on many areas. The impact was seen as the huge visual gap in the streetscene for some historic roads/streets and severing of more residential historic streets. The survey identified the need to improve the sense of connection between Character Areas 5.1 & 5.2 and Character Areas 6.1 & 6.2 with the town centre. For instance, the IDR south section of Queen's Road is a barrier that means for pedestrians the majority of the London Street, Church Street and Southampton Street including St. Giles church is cut off from the town centre. The survey concluded that consideration should be given to realistic measures for reconnecting these areas with town centre via IDR improvements such as the following:
- Along the Oxford Road bridge to increase the sense of continuation of the road between the proposed central conservation area and the existing Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.
 - At the roundabout at Castle Street to increase linkage between the two conservation areas and to improve the setting of Holybrook House (Grade II* listed).
 - Look at possible remodelling of the Queen's Road/London Street junction to improve the pedestrian experience walking in the London Street Conservation Area.
- 16.38 Consider introducing planting to reduce the environmental impacts of the IDR (through noise and fumes) by creating green corridors along the IDR to enhance the enjoyment of Character Areas 1.3, 3.1, 6.1 and 6.2, and the conservation areas they are or may be located within.

17. Conservation Areas and Identification of Additional Heritage Assets

- 17.1 As set out in Parts A & B of this HAA report the existing conservation areas within the Study Area are the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and parts of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area (Figure 101). The latter incorporates historic thoroughfares leading from the town centre westwards, which are the eastern parts of Oxford Road and Castle Hill that were historically projecting developments extending from the centre of Reading. Fairly recently proposals have been drawn up to expand the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area to cover more of the historic town centre. This historic town centre area, based around Broad Street and Friar Street has a different character from those two existing conservation areas.
- 17.2 The following proposals and options were considered:
- Designation of a new Reading Central Conservation Area;
 - Designation of a new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area to the north-east of the Study Area;
 - Review of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area to consider:
 - separate the Market Place off to the above new Conservation Area for the Abbey area,
 - the future of the part of the area from south of the Market Place to the Kennet. Should it be in the new Reading Central Conservation Area or should it stay with the Market Place or be in both Conservation Areas having them overlapping,
 - extending the boundaries west of London Street to including much of Southampton Street (to take in the historic southern inner suburb), rename it London and Southampton Street Conservation Area;
 - Amendments to the St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area to take in all of the Holy Brook along its south boundary, and to take in all the Heelas building and the telephone exchange on Minster Street.
- 17.3 Detailed recommendations are presented in Section 18 and on Figures 100 and 101.
- 17.4 Regarding listed buildings, as with many towns and cities in England that English Heritage (now Historic England) resurveyed in the 1970s, the Statutory List is very strong on buildings up to and including the Georgian period but tends to include fewer representatives of the Victorian period and later. It is the case with Reading that whilst there are a number of very good listed Late-Medieval, 16th/17th century and Georgian buildings, there are also a number of more recent buildings which contribute strongly to the historic environment of the town. Reading has a Victorian heritage of buildings by local architects (see Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading, Sidney M Gold 1999). The industrial buildings in and around the town in the mid-late 20th century were not appreciated in recent times, and many have been swept away whilst those that survive are only now being considered of interest. Nevertheless, the character of the town would be weaker without the surviving examples being identified and protected, as well as the various Victorian buildings by local architects being given some protection.
- 17.5 To assess both the boundaries of existing conservation areas and potential new ones, and to identify buildings worthy of 'non-designated heritage asset' status, the survey work was used to produce analysis of the various character areas that make up the study area. Within each character area there is a map headed 'Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area' which shows the existing Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings/Structures and Locally Identified Buildings (including locally listed buildings and buildings of townscape merit).
- 17.6 The HAA study concludes that there are no buildings or structures that merit being put forward for scheduling. Recommendations for buildings and structures to be considered for statutory listing, or as buildings of townscape merit (BTMs) or locally listing (LLB) are presented in the Section 21 of this part of the HAA report.

18. A Strategic Review of the Extent of the Existing Conservation Areas

- 18.1 Reading town centre has at present two conservation areas that cover parts of the centre: St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area which covers the Saxon settlement around the Minster Church and surviving historic streets radiating from it; and Market Place/London Street Conservation Area that covers the Medieval market place associated with the Abbey and the route of High Street, Duke Street and London Street, connecting the market to settlements to the south of Reading as it was then. To the west there is also the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area taking in two historic routes west from the town which have been included in the Study Area.
- 18.2 The extent of Conservation Areas within the study area of this appraisal is shown at Figure 101 (Recommended Conservation Area (CA) Boundaries) and on the graphic within each character area assessment showing existing heritage assets. A major part of this appraisal was to review the conservation area coverage of the town centre. The main issue was the potential conservation area coverage of the principal shopping streets of the town centre which despite the many and varied historic buildings (that have been perhaps undervalued in the past - especially the Victorian architecture) it has not been previously considered. The question is whether this central area had the distinct architectural interest and character to be considered as worthy of a new conservation area. The assessment has shown that there is sufficient merit for conservation area designation.
- 18.3 In reviewing the conservation area boundaries through the character area assessments some cases were found where there were anomalies. It was sometimes the case that the boundary does not follow a current property boundary, meaning that an individual property could be 'half in and half out' which is not supportable in legal terms. The situation had probably arisen from the perpetuation of a historic boundary which has been dissolved through recent changes in ownership. Some small changes have been proposed within this HAA - either to extend the boundary, or to reduce it, so as to align boundaries. In one or two instances recommendations for extensions of a conservation area boundary include an additional building where the present character area appears to extend beyond the present Conservation Area boundary and that an extension of the Conservation Area would provide additional protection to the area concerned.
- 18.4 On the basis of the character area assessments, the existing conservation area boundaries within the Study Area have been reviewed, and there has also been consideration of whether additional conservation areas should be designated within the study area. The result is that the following new conservation areas designations and conservation area boundary changes are proposed:
- **Proposal 1** a new Reading Central Conservation Area - recommended by HAA study
 - **Proposal 2** a new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area - recommended by HAA study
 - **Proposal 3** Review of Market Place/London Street Conservation Area - HAA study recommended three main amendments:
 - 3a To transfer the Market Place from its present conservation area to the new Reading Abbey / Gaol conservation area.
 - 3b To transfer the area south of the Market Place, as far as the northern edge of the Kennet and the northern abutment of the High Bridge, into the new Reading Central conservation area; (Please look at the MAP on Fig 101 - the Bridge and the Kennet remain in the London St CA).
 - 3c For London Street to be a freestanding conservation area, and for this to be expanded to the west of London Street to include more of Southampton Street.
 - **Proposal 4:** Review of the boundaries of the St Mary's Butts/ Castle Street Conservation Area
- 1.85 This would involve considerable changes to the existing boundaries. There is scope for further consideration of exactly where the boundaries between these conservation areas should be through conservation areas appraisals; however what is of primary importance is ensuring that each area identified in this Assessment is at least included within one conservation area or another. For instance, there has been some discussion about the area around King Street and Duke Street (bounded by Market Place to the north, High Bridge and the Kennet to the south and the eastern end of Minster Street to the west), in terms of whether it should be grouped with the Reading Central, Reading Abbey/Gaol or London Street conservation area. Its history is strongly linked to all three and there are arguments for it to be included within any of those areas, but on balance we recommend that it sits best as part of the Reading Central conservation area as the evidence of its extant historical built environment indicates a continuation of the strong east-west retail route from Broad Street."

185 A SWOT analysis of Proposals for revising conservation areas in study area in central Reading is set out below:

186 **Proposal 1:** new Reading Central Conservation Area

Strengths:

- Recognises the architectural and historic interest of the commercial core of Reading
- Brings some protection against incremental changes that erode this character
- Can bring forward proposals to improve the appearance of the areas
- Extra tool to justify for development management seeking better quality development

Weaknesses:

- Conservation Area legislation not as able to resist development that may have an adverse effect as is perceived to be harmful to the character and appearance
- Conservation Area designation might be seen as Reading not wanting to embrace change in its commercial core

Opportunities:

- To use targeted investment from S106 and CIL to improve the public realm in the central area to make Reading town centre a more attractive environment to walk around

Threats:

- See weaknesses above
- Landowners oppose the designation during consultation and create opposition

187 **Proposal 2** new Abbey/Gaol Conservation area

Strengths:

- Comes out of the Reading Abbey Quarter study that showed the area is already recognised as having historic interest of national importance
- Would be a useful tool to have when considering proposals for Reading Gaol to drive up quality of design

Weaknesses:

- Designation should be timely to best inform the future of the Gaol and development around the listed buildings on the site
- Area may have already had its setting impacted by development taking place around it

Opportunities:

- Using the designation to promote Reading as a tourist destination

Threats:

- See weaknesses above
- Continuing demand for development of adjacent sites with a scale, height and massing already in evidence along Forbury Road

188 **Proposal 3** revision of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area

189 **3a** transferring the Market Place to the new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area when that is designated

Strengths:

- Historic link: the Market Place was created by Reading Abbey to trade outside its gates

Weaknesses:

- Loss of the historic link to routes to the market from the south as planned by the Abbot.

Opportunities:

- To use targeted investment from S106 and CIL to improve the public realm in Market Place and to promote nearby Reading Abbey as a tourist destination
- Could bring more life to the Market Place by improving the value as investments could bring empty listed buildings back into use

Threats:

- Could be seen as an adjunct to the Abbey site, Forbury Gardens and the Gaol and would not receive attention

18.10 **3b** transfer area south of the Market Place, between the west and east boundaries of the existing conservation area down to High Bridge and the Kennet into the new Reading Central conservation area

Strengths:

- Putting this area of King Street and King’s Road into the new Reading Central Conservation Area would confirm its part in the town centre as a link to routes out of the centre to the east and south suburbs. It could be treated as an inviting gateway into the centre

Weaknesses:

- Unless the new conservation area has management plans that emphasise the importance of having ‘draws’ at the east and west ends of the town centre, it could be neglected if the retail centre shrinks

Opportunities:

- To promote the area south of Market Place as a gateway to central Reading and to the Abbey area to its north

Threats:

- If the area is identified in this gateway role there may be pressure to redevelop at a larger scale and losing surviving historic corners like Thorn Lane and Duke Street and the character they give to the area

18.11 **3c** expand the boundaries of the south part of the existing Market Place/London Street Conservation Area west of London Street to include more of Southampton Street Please look at the MAP on Fig 101 - the Bridge and the Kennet remain in the London St CA)

Strengths:

- Recognition of the twin markets of St Mary’s Butts and Reading Abbey, rare in the UK and worth celebrating and promoting, and the importance of Southampton Street and London Street as two key historic trading routes into these markets attracting trade from the south and east, which as a result attracted development along their length beginning at the northern or town end and extending southwards
- Protection of the whole the north end of Southampton Street and north side of Crown Street and area behind them and London Street so that the conservation area management plan can propose holistic public realm improvements
- Opportunity to use funds from new development (future S106/CIL) or heritage grant funding to improve the listed buildings on Southampton Street and their frontages thus stimulating property owners to invest

Weaknesses:

- This separates Southampton Street from the later industrial Victorian suburb of Katesgrove, the boundaries of which could later abut as a possible new designation of this area recognising it as having its own distinct townscape (Pell Street) and public buildings

Opportunities:

- Using funds available (Section 106, CIL or heritage grant funds) to tackle the condition of terraces of listed buildings on Southampton Street to kick start a revival of the area
- Strengthening the case to improve the links from this historic suburb to the town centre by improving the links under and across the IDR
- Reviewing the gyratory around these streets to see if its impact on the historic environment can be reduced

Threats:

- That no funds (Section 106, CIL or heritage grant funds) are available to help improve the extended area
- That the road system remains unchanged and the continuing impact of traffic put off owners from investing in their properties

18.12 **Proposal 4:** Review of the boundaries of the St Mary’s Butts/ Castle Street Conservation Area

Strengths:

- To include all the Holy Brook as the south boundary of the Medieval town, which would raise its historic importance
- To include Hosier Street and the buildings to the north of it on St Mary’s Butts means that the historic butts area is fully included
- Including the Heelas rear extension and listed telephone exchange would mean the eastern setting of the church of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin was included in the conservation area, and this conservation area link both to the north and the east to the new Reading Central Conservation Area

Weaknesses:

- The inclusion of the Heelas rear extension brings in a different character sub area into the conservation area
- The inclusion of Hosier Street means that the conservation area overlaps with the Minster Quarter regeneration area

Opportunities:

- To open up views of the Holy Brook
- To encourage a market on Hosier Street and St Mary’s Butt’s becoming a public space
- To protect the setting of the church of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin by extending the management of the historic environment into the Minster Quarter Framework site

Threats:

- That there is tension between the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area and the need to redevelop the sites on the east and west edges that are now partially included

Explanatory Text

18.13 In presenting these options, the views of the stakeholder and client groups of this HAA project have been taken on board and the options are all justified in terms of adding further conservation area coverage over the centre of Reading to protect areas of historic character and appearance, and of both architectural and historic interest. Proposals 1 and 2 would designate a large extra area of the town centre, but conservation areas designation is all about managing change to conserve or enhance what is special about the area.

18.14 Proposal 3 is the review of the boundaries of the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area, and assessed whether the Market Place should be moved to the new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area, and the part of the conservation area south of this down to the Kennet is moved into the new Reading Central Conservation Area. The basis for retaining it was that it was originally designated as a linear conservation area to follow a medieval trading route to the Market Place from the south point where the road from Southampton met the London Road. The case for reform is that the different parts of this conservation area have different characters and now different issues of uses. It is recommended that the Market Place, as a creation of the Abbey, belongs with the proposed new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area.

18.15 Drawing a boundary within the blocks south of the Market Place allows the whole of King Street and both sides of the east end of King’s Road to be included with all of Duke Street to become an obvious character area within a conservation area. This character area fits most obviously with the proposed new Reading Central Conservation Area that would cover the commercial core.

18.16 However, the argument was put that this area still remains a part of the historic route into Reading and therefore should also be part of the reconfigured London Street (and Southampton Street) Conservation Area. This would require the area to be in both conservation areas, creating overlapping conservation areas. A lesser case could be made for overlapping areas to include the area in both the proposed new Reading Central and Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Areas.

18.17 It was recognised that creating an overlap would create additional complexities for development management of this character area, requiring it to be considered in future conservation area appraisals and management plans for both, and making it important that the area is given a consistent evaluation in the appraisals of both conservation areas and any specific management policies are included in both.

18.18 The alternative was considered of transferring the Market Place and all the area included in the existing conservation area down to High Bridge and the Kennet into the proposed Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area was another option considered. However, it was felt that the character of the area south of the Market Place was different in building use and activities from the area around the Abbey and Gaol, and historically it belonged to the town and not the abbey.

18.19 The agreed solution was the simplest: to demonstrate that the continuation of Broad Street as King Street and King’s Road around Jackson’s Corner is a sub-area part of the commercial town centre, and is an entrance into the town centre for people coming into the centre from the extensive suburbs to the east, as well as those coming up Duke Street from the south and the car parks off Queen’s Road. It is important for the future vitality of the whole town centre, that both the extremes of the town centre, this eastern entrance and West Street to the west are included in the new Reading Central Conservation Area, and that they are fully considered when the full appraisal and management plan is undertaken. Emphasis should be placed on making sure these ends have a draw to bring shoppers and visitors to them. A case was made for the area north of High Bridge to remain in the same conservation area as London Street, however on balance it was felt that having High Bridge itself remaining with London Street was sufficient.

18.20 The expansion of the conservation area covering London Street west is also recommended even though it caused some debate amongst the stakeholder and client group. This is a justifiable extension to take most of the historic southern suburb, to include the most historic parts of Southampton Street with a number of listed buildings that could then perhaps benefit from investment in an improvement scheme such as the HSHAZ. This reconfigured conservation area formed out of the existing Market Place/London Street Conservation Area could be called London Street Conservation Area.

Details of Areas and of Streets Involved in the Proposals

Proposal 1 Recommended New Conservation Area - Reading Central Conservation Area

- 18.21 A new Central Conservation Area be designated taking in much of Friar Street, Broad Street, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Station Road, West Street, as well as Duke Street and King Street and the east part of King's Road around Jackson's Corner then going down Highbridge Wharf to the Kennet, and to the west of High Bridge and Duke Street taking in all the backland area to Minster Street. On Friar Street the buildings on the north side would be only selectively included given the number of development site, and at the west end Greyfriars church and Sackville Street would be included as well as the start of Oxford Road extending from Broad Street to Cheapside.

Proposal 2 Recommended New Conservation Area - Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area

- 18.22 A new conservation area be designated, much in line with the Reading Abbey Quarter Study, to take in Reading Abbey, Blagrave Street and the civic buildings, Market Place, Forbury Gardens and Reading Gaol plus the area east of the Market Place down to and including the library of King's Road and then following the south boundary of the Holy Brook to where it joins the Kennet, and then the south river wall of the Kennet along Blakes Cottages to Forbury Road bridge.

Proposal 3 Recommended review of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area:

- 18.23 Option 3a: the transfer of the Market Place to the new Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area: the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area be broken up and renamed, to allow the Market Place to be added to the above proposed Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area;
- 18.24 Option 3b Recommended: the area south of the Market Place and north of High Bridge forms part of the new Reading Central Conservation Area and is not included in the other conservation areas;
- 18.25 Option 3c Recommended: the London Street part of the present conservation area including High Bridge that at present extends west to include just Church Street and St Giles Churchyard should be extended to the south west to include more of Southampton Street.

- 18.26 **Proposal 4 Recommended:** that St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area is extended eastwards to include the Hellas rear extension and the Telephone Exchange on Minster Street, south to include all the Holy Brook from the Telephone Exchange to the IDR, and to the north-west to include Hosier Street and buildings north of it on St Mary's Butts.

- 18.27 There is a good case for Proposal 4 as the Heelas rear extension forms the east setting of the church of Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin, the Holy Brook is an important linear historic feature and having included the Heelas rear extension building, it is logical to include the listed telephone exchange building whose spine wing bridges the Holy Brook. This proposal is fairly uncontentious.

Managing Change in Conservation Areas

- 18.28 It was not possible within the scope of this study to carry out an individual in-depth appraisal for each conservation area. However, there are some general concerns about the effectiveness of the control of detrimental change within the existing conservation areas. The Reading HSHAZ offers the opportunity to use grant aid to deal with rundown or poorly altered buildings, conserve features on historic buildings and improve the public realm on streets within conservation areas.

External Joinery: Shopfronts, Windows, Doors

- 18.29 An issue of concern is the growing use of uPVC replacement doors and windows and other unsympathetic external changes to properties such as satellite dishes affixed to front elevations and/or air conditioning condenser units to highly visible elevations. Whilst the need for improved insulation values is accepted, there are ways to achieve this with a less detrimental effect on the character of individual buildings. In this regard, please see the following publications (amongst others) which suggest sympathetic ways of upgrading the thermal and acoustic performance of historic buildings: *Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings - Application of Part L of the Building Regulations to historic and traditionally constructed buildings (2017)* by Historic England, *PAS 2035: Retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency*, the SPAB's *Windows & Doors Guidance* and so on. All are in line with The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25.
- 18.30 Informing owners of properties in conservation areas of the more cost effective alternatives to replacement of joinery with uPVC windows and doors is an approach that has had some success elsewhere. Encouragement should be given to retain and repair and redecorate surviving original joinery. Old windows can often be upgraded to improve thermal/acoustic performance and/or other measures can be installed alongside (such as secondary glazing). In conservation areas Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) can assist with the management of this issue.

- 18.31 Likewise, where historic shopfronts survive, even partially, these should be retained, repaired and/or redecorated. These should not be lost to generic, branded replacements. Where historic examples have been lost to modern shopfronts, and there is no record of what the original shop front looked like, the option used in some other historic area regeneration projects of using of powder-coated aluminium replacements based on historic traditional designs is recommended. This allows more of the grant monies to be uses to repair the surviving historic fabric of the rest of the historic building. Non-traditional internally lit fascias should be resisted and/or in favour of traditional shop signage subtly spot lit and to moderate branding so it fits with existing historic frontages.
- 18.32 In areas where historic shopfronts do exist it might be preferable to require retailers to display their signs on hanging signs affixed to the wall above the shopfront by brackets. Such an approach might be appropriate where there is no space for a fascia signage or if there is historic evidence for hanging signs in the subject street. Where bracketed signage is proposed the brackets should be affixed to mortar courses on the front elevation's brickwork (these should ideally not be affixed to historic brickwork itself, corbels or historic shopfronts). Such considerations could be included in the final Guide for Shopfronts SPD (adopted 17 Jan 2022). Where occupiers and/or owners do not have sufficient resources to install a suitable sympathetic replacement shopfront RBC could consider a grant scheme to fill the deficit.
- 18.33 Some parts of the Study Area were notable in their loss of historic shopfronts. These included West Street, parts of Friar Street, parts of Broad Street, Oxford Road, Union Street, and St. Mary's Butts. Therefore, it is particularly important to identify the surviving, or partially surviving, shopfronts and seek to give them protection, which unless statutorily listed is difficult to ensure, though identification in a conservation area appraisal can give some additional weight in favour of retention if a planning application is required.
- 18.34 A review of the effectiveness and need for Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) undertaken may help understand the effectiveness of existing and consideration of introducing further Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) for all conservation areas (including any new ones proposed within this HAA) for shop frontages and/or shop signage, doors and windows. The aim of Article 4 control (possibly with LDOs) would be that where historic shopfronts, doors and windows survive planning consent would be required for replacement and

owners would be encouraged to adopt sympathetic repair and upgrading of performance. If replacements are needed one can use Local Development Orders to pre-approve forms/materials that are acceptable, including for shop frontages. The NPPF now requires more justification for new Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs), though if the nature of the threat to the historic environment and heritage assets can be shown, a strong case can be made.

Walls and Roofs

- 18.35 Reading has an amazing variety of brick colour and patterns on its buildings and they give the town much of its character. The use of brick became fairly universal from the 19th century, if not slightly before, and its vernacular of polychrome bricks is a distinctive characteristic of the town. Historic brickwork is being damaged by repointing in cementitious mortar. With historic brickwork it is recommended lime mortar repointing is used, and where possible it replaces cementitious mortar, using good practice standards, at every opportunity. Consider introducing Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) to all conservation areas on the topic. As well as educating owners to appreciate their brick walls and care for them, it may be necessary to consider Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) for the protection of identified areas of patterned brickwork in Reading.
- 18.36 Historic brickwork is also being overpainted. Consider ways to discourage the overpainting historic brickwork, in particular where non-breathable paints are used. Overpainting loses the ability to see these different colours, as well as losing the bond and patina of the bricks. In addition, if non-breathable paints are used on historic brick this can trap moisture leading to degradation of the brick faces. Consider introducing Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) to all conservation areas on the topic.
- 18.37 Like many other towns with Victorian housing and commercial streets the HAA study found that there has been a loss of natural slate roofs with concrete tile replacements. There are in some locations with surviving plain clay tiles and even clay pantiles.
- 18.38 The HAA study found that traditional lead on roofs has often been replaced with asphalt and roofing felt. When roofs are renewed consider advising replacement asphalt/roofing felt with lead. Terne coated steel, zinc roofs could be considered as long as the material, coating and patina appears similar to lead roofs, if cost or theft considerations are paramount.

- 18.39 When the conservation area management plans are revised or produced for the proposed new conservation areas, it is recommended that they include a policy on materials that give the character/appearance to the area and the new materials that are acceptable in that conservation area.

Other Small Changes Under Permitted Development (PD) Rights that Erode Character and Affect Appearance

- 18.40 The HAA study found numerous examples of satellite dishes affixed to prominent elevations and air conditioning condenser units affixed to highly visible elevations. These should ideally be affixed on flat roofs, or less visible elevations and if in a prominent position shielded from view in the case of condenser units.
- 18.41 Care should be taken to resist vertical extensions to historic buildings where these extensions disrupt the consistency of height to the historic building stock. This can lead to a gradual increase in overall height across an area of the historic environment. It is recommended that consideration is given to drawing up in an SPD a series of maps to indicate those buildings where vertical extensions would be acceptable and those where they would not. The introduction of an Article 4 Direction (possibly with LDOs) to control vertical extensions in conservation areas may also be needed.
- 18.42 In some conservation areas the insertion of mezzanine floors in the tall ground floors is having an adverse visual impact. Consider ways to control further instances of, and the reversal of existing, mezzanine floors inserted in historic buildings along Oxford Road.
- 18.43 It is recommended that consideration be given to Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs), to deter the conversion of retail to residential via the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) to protect the key historic shopping streets including Broad Street, Friar Street, Queen Victoria Street, Oxford Road and others, understood to be currently underway for sites where changes of use or development from commercial sites to residential use is proposed.
- 18.44 It is also considered that there may be the need for further Article 4 Directions (possibly with LDOs) to remove PD rights to convert a house (C3 use) into a small house in multiple occupation (C4 use), meaning planning permission would be needed for such a change of use. For some parts of Reading instead of shop frontage signs being continuously replaced by successive occupiers, wall hung signs on brackets might be preferable (see above comments).

Conservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas

- 18.45 The Reading HSHAZ offers the opportunities over the next years to offer grant aid to secure improvement to both the buildings that make a positive contribution to the public realm.
- 18.46 Targeted investment in groups of buildings particularly those where there are opportunities to conserve historic shopfronts and improve partially surviving shopfronts that would form part of wider public realm improvements for example in parts of St. Mary's Butts; Gun, Friar, Broad and West Streets; parts of Oxford Road; and the whole of Union Street. Other HSHAZ project and earlier Historic England funded historic area projects have demonstrated it is beneficial to show owners and tenants a visual of how improved their building would look with a traditional shopfront.
- 18.47 To assist targetting funds for the HSHAZ suggest that a list of buildings (both designated and locally important) in poor condition is compiled/commissioned by RBC.
- 18.48 Seeking funding and implement repairs for important structures on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register is recommended.
- 18.49 It is recommended that empty upper floors are identified to encourage the owners to undertake sympathetic conversion of under-utilised upper floors to be re-occupied as separate residential units accessed via a single common parts ground floor entrance on the front elevation (often already extant). The production of a Design Guide to encourage approaches to conversion and adapting this type and other conversions that identifies character and features to be maintained.

Proposals for Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Individual Conservation Areas

Site-specific Issues Within Existing and Proposed Conservation Areas

18.50 Consideration of the following is recommended:

Within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area:

- Look at ways to make the wide space of St Mary's Butts more of a public place.
- Use Hosier Street and the area south of it as a market place.
- The environment of the south end of St Mary's Butt will only be improved if there is some rationalising on the existing bus stops.
- Traffic island containing listed fountain and tea kiosk with motorcycle parking should also be looked at to see how it can be improved.
- Rationalising and/or relocating the features and parking on the road island that obstructs the view of the churchyard from St. Mary's Butts.
- Protection of the central gutter along Chain Street, which may be indicative of a historic drain. If the opportunity arises consider making more of this feature.

Within the Proposed Reading Abbey/Gaol Conservation Area:

- Reducing the impact of vehicle traffic in the Market Place to reduce prominence of buses and reduce the speed of other vehicles.
- Seeking good quality design to replace or re-front the mid-late 20th century around buildings in Market Place.
- Improving the riverside walks along River Kennet in front of the Gaol and Blake Cottages.

Within the Proposed Extended London Street and Southampton Street Conservation Area

- Preserving and enhancing the historic alleys and courts that ran off London Street such as London Court.
- Improve East Street's public realm, especially the boundaries on the west side.
- Preserving the interior wall of Huntley, Boorne & Stevens factory at the rear of London Street on St Giles.
- Consider working with residents to improve the public realm on Church Street and St Giles Close.

Within the Parts of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

- On Oxford Road Reviewing permanent structures in front of the shops which occupy the forecourt areas and block the view of "historic" shopfronts, particularly on Oxford Road. Shop owners have the right to use their forecourt but cannot build any permanent or temporary structure (guidance has been provided for Lytham-Road, Blackpool).
- Consider public realm improvements on Oxford Road to make the footways attractive spaces.
- Consider public realm improvements on Castle Hill especially the junction of Castle Hill and Coley Avenue and narrowing the carriageway width where it is widest to improve the setting of the listed buildings.

Within the Proposed Central Reading Conservation Area

- Creating a public walkway from Fife Court through to Broad Street if compatible with future use for the former theatre auditorium (adjoining Boots) and does not lead to loss of historic fabric. New pedestrian route would pass by the former Dowsett Brothers Brewery chimney in Fife Court (or former Duke's Head Yard).
- Identifying Merchant's Place as an artisan/independent retailers' street, with the vestiges of historic building stock remaining retained and any infill development in future of a similar low scale.
- Identifying the former Dowsett Brothers Brewery chimney as a BTM, which is a rare survivor from the industrial past for the sub area.

- Earmarking No. 133 Friar Street and 12, 12a & 12b Union Street for conversion back to a hospitality use (such as a public house) so it could become an ‘anchor’ the Union Street as a retail location. The 1909 (published 1912) OS map appears to show these buildings were once a public house.
- Regeneration proposals for the central and southern parts of Thorn Street thoroughfare
 - Potential for refurbishment / remodelling of much of Sub Area 3.1.1 with the replacement of many of the neutral and detracting buildings. Potential to reinstate the building line and the small plot widths that previously existed and maintain/reinstate low-rise 2-4 storeys to the sub area and maintain/reinstate residential character of Sub Area 3.1.1.
 - Resisting medium-high rise developments and roof extensions in Sub Area 3.2.4.
 - When redevelopment opportunity arises, seek a single good quality retailer to occupy 73-74 Broad Street, which is the focal building to Sub Area 3.2.2.
 - Reinstating lost chimneystacks to terraced buildings on West Street and the multi-faceted gabled parapet to 45 West Street.
 - Reinstating smaller plot widths along Friar Street. Too many plots have been merged into macro schemes over the years.
 - Building heights to Friar Street should ideally be maintained at approximately 3.5 storeys as per the rest of the road. Additional height should be set well back and tested by views so that additional massing is inconspicuous.

Major Regeneration Sites Within the Existing and Proposed Conservation Areas

Reading Abbey and Gaol Area

- 18.51 Reading Gaol represents a key cultural site in Reading and has the potential for sensitive conversion to new uses. Reading prison was closed in 2013 and the Ministry of Justice is in the process of selling the site, which is likely to lead to a mixed-use redevelopment partially converting and partially redeveloping. A brief discussion of those parts of the site where preservation in situ is recommended is provided below to help guide recommendations. Preservation of the most important aspects of the prison building, though later alterations have impacted on its original significance², and areas of greatest archaeological potential for abbey ruins, are recommended.
- 18.52 The south-western corner of the boundary walls has been rebuilt, having less significance than other parts of the wall it might provide a useful place to locate a new entrance. The site is located within a scheduled monument and preservation in-situ by design of buried archaeology is the recommended approach, and the archaeological potential of the site is set out in Figure 104 (An area of legally protected and nationally important archaeological potential due for redevelopment). In addition, the retention of the listed building, the main Reading Gaol building, supports Reading’s target of Net Zero by 2030 and would also avoid the substantial harm associated with demolition or partial demolition of the listed building.
- 18.53 It is recommended that preservation in situ by design is essential within the west and south parts of the site. In addition, Medieval remains have been identified in the open spaces surrounding the current prison, such as the sports pitch, and within the footprint of current buildings. The top of the deposits can be found between 0.1 and 3.6m below ground level. There are considerable depths of made ground, ranging between 1-5m to the south and east of the site.
- 18.54 Evaluation is needed of the contribution of curtilage-listed buildings that have been added to the Gaol make, as they are part of the history of the Gaol but have varied significance, and an initial view is:

- Former Workshop - low
- Games court - neutral
- Workshop/Chapel/Gym - intrusive
- Admin area (visits area) - intrusive
- Link between A and D wings - intrusive

- 18.55 The sensitivity of the setting is high and the prison building has group value with the perimeter wall- though it is excluded from statutory listing, it is integral to the function of the prison. However, not all the wall is original as stretches have been rebuilt and this might allow opportunities to create a second entrance to the site.
- 18.56 Of the Gaol itself - Reading Gaol: (1842-1844) - Reading Prison (main building) is Grade II listed and within a Scheduled Monument covering the Abbey site; its significance is assessed as being legible, distinctive and unique.
- 18.57 Perimeter wall: (late 19th century and 1969-1970) - The wall is higher along its southern extent and has been buttressed which is likely to relate to the slope of the site. In addition, metal buttresses have been inserted at intervals along internal stretches of the wall, conjectured to be essential to maintain stability. The eastern and northern sections of the perimeter wall are built in stretcher bond with cement render on the internal elevation, while the western and southern sections of wall are in English bond and constructed in a different type of brick to that of the eastern and northern sections (Purcell 2015, 8). The brick is spalling in places due to concrete repointing and render on the internal elevations.
- 18.58 It may not be economical to reinstate the lost original design. Certainly part of the wall would require significant repair and the stability of the wall would need to be assessed. It is recognised that retaining part of the wall may be desirable. Of note, is the recent Banksy graffiti art sprayed onto a north-eastern section of the wall.
- 18.59 Gatehouse and administration building: (1969-1970) - Single and two storeys high, built of brick. The sensitivity of the setting is high, though it is acknowledged that retention is unlikely to be economic.
- 18.60 Gymnasium and workshop: (circa 1910) - this single storey building was constructed in modern brick and has a part slate part glazed roof. Games court and amenities buildings: (late 20th century) - the latter is 2-storeys in height, built of brick and metal cladding with some glazing. Due to its height, it interrupts views of the main building, Reading Gaol itself.

² Of note are the asbestos roof tiles.

Around the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Area

- 18.61 Broad Street Mall including the car park, is part of the Minster Quarter redevelopment. Another key regeneration site in this location is the Hexagon, Police Station Headquarters, Magistrates' Courts buildings and the Lavender Place Community Gardens along with Queens Walk, Dusseldorf Way, Hosier Street and surrounding paths and pavements that lead out to the historic streets. There is an opportunity to introduce green space within the design and recreate some of the street patterns lost.
- 18.62 The Minster Quarter site has its SPD and taking it forward needs ideas that identify areas of flexibility in design to ensure the development knits back into the existing mostly historic urban fabric which surrounds the site, so for instance:
- Locating of tall buildings so as to have least impact on the historic environment.
 - Care should be taken to respect the setting, scale, design, quality and massing of the listed buildings on the southern side of Castle Street.
 - Improved public space and open spaces, boulevard surfaces, pavements, paths, lawns, planting etc. along Queens Walk, Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way if these are retained in the development plans.
 - Encourage permeability by reflecting elements of the lost historic street pattern, such as on the north side of Castle Street where the police station and magistrates court are.

18.63 Broad Street Mall redevelopment offers an opportunity to review the Oxford Road frontage to get it broken up into a series of bays reminiscent of the building rhythm of the rest of Broad Street. Connected with the above potentially, although it could be undertaken independently, are improvements to the informal market off St. Mary's Butts, and the streetscene and public realm around Hosier Street.

18.64 Potential to revitalise St. Mary's Butts as an historic core was raised at the Stakeholder Workshops and the need for promoting place-making here was highlighted during the Reading UK Business Improvement District (BID) Workshop. This could become a centre of an enhanced retail/café/restaurant offering to the town centre's western side. Two public spaces were proposed as part of the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework Part 1: Minster Place and Gun Street Square. Reconsideration of these spaces in line with spaces designed specifically to reflect the historic environment here could prove useful.

In the Proposed Reading Central Area: Around and Between Friar and Broad Streets

- 18.65 Restoration of the elevations of the Mcllroy Building is an important regenerative step, which is currently occupied by tenants, both residential and independent retail. If this can be accomplished and the Broad Street Mall revitalised, it would give renewed attraction to the western ends of Broad Street and Friar Street and also would encourage more people to walk along St Mary's Butts and West Street to discover this area.
- 18.66 An aspirational regeneration scheme is revivifying Union Street - known as 'Smelly Alley'. Many of these building's cores date to 18th century but have been almost universally altered beyond recognition. A scheme to improve the frontages perhaps by way of brick slips, new timber sash windows and sympathetic shopfronts, along with a re-laid street surface could much improve this location. The former public house at Nos. 12, 12a and 12b Union Street and 133 Friar Street, shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map and on the 1895 Goad plan, could be considered to anchor the scheme.

18.67 Research into Character Area 3.2 identified that a former street, Pig Market, has been lost that previously lay between West Street and Union Street. Consideration could be given to redevelopment of the modern built form in this location and reinstatement of this lost street. To achieve this mid-rise development might be needed towards the mid-point between Broad Street and Friar Street but should ideally step down towards Friar Street and Broad Street so that it fits in with this historic building stock.

18.68 Research for the HAA study also noted the existence of the former cinema auditorium to the rear of 47-48 Broad Street (Boots). An opportunity for public access to the former auditorium could be sought, should the tenants and landowner/s be receptive to this opportunity.

18.69 Merchant's Place, Ajilon House and The Shed would be key to any regeneration proposals as would relaying the street surfaces and pavements and relocating unsightly air conditioning condenser units. Ajilon House and The Shed could be considered for local listing.

18.70 In the long term redevelopment of Acquis House and the Walkabout could be considered to better utilise the historic yard that exists off Wiston Terrace.

18.71 The regeneration of Nos. 14-23 King Street including the Kings Walk Shopping Centre (but excluding Nos. 17-19 King Street) is another key regeneration site: many of the rear additions that stretch back to Yield Hall Place could be linked to repairing the historic surfaces on Thorn Lane.

18.72 Dealing with the run down appearance of the former Lower Ship Hotel which is notable on Duke Street: bringing this building back into use, regenerating Thorn Lane and the buildings that surround it and improving the appeal of Yield Hall Lane are all potentially worth considering.

18.73 At the east end of the central area bringing the Jackson's Corner buildings back into use would revitalise this east end, as would bringing activity to the Thorn Lane and Yield Hall Place part of the central area.

The South Inner Suburb

- 18.74 Were it ever considered possible to remove the one way gyratory system through London, Crown and Southampton Streets, there would be benefits for the historic environment, as Transport for London have found in a number of locations where they have returned streets to tow-way working.
- 18.75 Southampton Street has the potential to be a more attractive street with the refurbishment of St Giles Court, Solent Court, Hamble Court, and Nos. 70 & 72a Southampton Street and their deep rear garden.
- 18.76 Southampton Street would benefit from a public realm improvement which would be limited with the gyratory. As would any changes to the public realm in Crown Street and London Street.
- 18.77 Another large potential public realm improvement is around the mid-late 20th century residential housing on Church Street Street, Giles Close and Letcombe Street.
- 18.78 The public realm improvements along East Street and reinstatement of traditional boundary treatments for those buildings that extend from London Street (eastern side) to East Street could be considered.

19. Issues Relating to the Historic Environment Which Affect the Whole of the Town

Development Control Measures for Study Area

- 19.1 The following comments apply to all areas of the Study Area, including those areas not in conservation areas or not proposed to be included in potential conservation areas. It is recommended that:
- Local Plan Policies: CC7 Design and the Public Realm; CC9 Securing infrastructure; EN1 Protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment; EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas; EN6 New Development in a historic context, could be used as hooks to secure development that makes a positive contribution to streets in the existing and proposed conservation areas. An example could be made of the very recent development along East Street, permitted through appeal, which is out of character in massing and scale.
 - Recent changes to the GPDO on Permitted Development mean that it would be advisable for the council to outline which parts of the town are appropriate for resisting vertical extensions. See recently confirmed Article 4⁵
 - To keep momentum going with regenerating the town centre the council might consider the use of, and where needed utilise, Compulsory Purchaser Order powers to bring a site forward for regeneration.

Applying Sustainability to the Existing Building Stock to Encourage Reuse and Adaptation

- 19.2 The present Climate Emergency requires all industries and businesses to become better as saving the Earth's resources and the approach to existing buildings, whether they are regarded as historic or not should be to retain and reuse the existing building. Using Local Plans, SPD.s and guidance:
- Promote options for adaptation and conversion of existing buildings rather than immediately considering demolition, as part of the need to act responsibly towards conserving embedded carbon and bearing in mind Reading's Net Zero target by 2030 and the national 2050 carbon neutral target.
 - Produce a Design Guide to encourage approaches to conversion and adaptation that identifies character and features to be maintained in any conversions. Outline advice could also be provided by RBC within the Managing Change section of each conservation area appraisal.
 - Encourage businesses and land owners by providing guidance on how to maintain their historic properties and to upgrade their thermal performance, subject to Listed Building Consents, to respond positively to the climate emergency.

New Development - Promoting Good Design and Sustainability

- 19.3 Reading has some examples of recent contemporary design which sits well within the historic market town centre. There is in recent years evidence of sensitive use of traditional and modern forms and materials in ways which sit well within their overall context. These examples provide proof that contemporary design can take its proper place in the evolution and development of the town. Equally, and regrettably there are many examples of buildings, built from 1960 to 2000 where there had been ill-considered modern development which does not sit well in its context. Reaction against the impact of alien large scale development may have produced a lack of confidence in the ability to design and produce buildings which are worthy of the town. The requirement for good design should be a part of the briefing and design process and also embedded within development control. NPPF provides a basis on which good design considerations should form part of the whole development process. However, there is a need to engage with developers and designers at an early stage in the process so that this requirement is firmly embedded and is carried right through to the execution and completion of any building or place.
- 19.4 For future schemes if greater height is desired consider setting back additional floors dramatically and sufficiently so the main elevations are in-scale with the rest of the street and upper most floors are not overtly visible from surroundings. Good example being the Heelas extension on Minster Street.
- 19.5 Some specific design considerations are given below:
- Given that the Government's encouragement for local design codes to sit under the national design codes, consider producing design codes with a palate of materials that reflect the character of Reading. This might include avoiding plastic coated aluminium or ceramic panels for new builds, to seek to draw more on the local vernacular of brick. Within this it might include a more diverse range of brick in modern builds as most are red: encouraging variegated red brick rather than monotone; using grey and beige/gault more often for large scale proposals with variegated coloured bricks.
 - Encourage better quality brickwork given that Reading's vernacular is brickwork, often polychromatic. Push for brickwork as the predominant material as it is the vernacular but seek to resist lifeless, bland bricks.

⁵ Reading Borough Council confirmed Article 4 as of 15 November 2022 https://my.reading.gov.uk/custom/article_4_direction.html.

- c. Resist extensive use of powder coated aluminium or ceramic panel cladding.
 - d. In the drive to improve sustainability continue to advocate conversion, adaptation and reuse strongly before demolition and new build, deploying the embedded carbon case. This is one of the council's pre-existing targets. It is worth bearing in mind the 2050 carbon neutral target here.
 - e. Consider reflecting historic street pattern when regeneration schemes are proposed. This helps in reinstating permeability to an area, the street positions but also to the street names themselves. For example, where the Police Station and Magistrates Court agglomerated many historic streets north of Castle Street, if this area is indeed redeveloped in years to come as currently mooted a finer grain could be reinstated and street names with relevance to Reading.
- 19.6 We would recommend that all conservation area appraisals, include in the Managing Change section includes the relevant bullet points above and broad details on suitable materials for new developments is included in each conservation area.

Roads and Traffic

- 19.7 The historic environment is negatively impacted by traffic made worse by 20th century road schemes cutting off the centre from its historic hinterlands. This sort of negative impact is not confined to Reading and is a nationwide issue. At the same time as this Historic Area Assessment is being produced a Town Centre Strategy is also being produced and it is appropriate that report covers approaches to roads and traffic in Reading, and that the HAA report identifies the negative impact that roads and traffic have on the historic environment of Reading. The reports should have synergy between the findings and research that the HAA and that study is producing. However, in the shorter term it is important that the issues set out below are given consideration to make improvements to the state of the historic environment of the town centre and how it is experienced by those who live, work, shop or visit Reading for leisure.

General Points

- 19.8 Realistically to make changes to the road layouts it would be necessary to reduce the amount of traffic in the town centre, particularly traffic trying to get from one side of Reading to the other.
- 19.9 In the medium to long term, measures to reduce the impact of the IDR on the historic environment may be included with those put forward in the Town Centre Strategy. In the shorter term some other ideas could reduce its impact.
- 19.10 The introduction of sustainable transport such as the proposals along Castle Hill is an excellent strategy that needs to be supported by a practical provision in the town centre cycle racks perhaps considering the possibility of repurposing the redundant Readybike stands.
- 19.11 The Town Centre Strategy may suggest a review of bus circulation and bus stops/stands to examine whether the impact of buses and their street furniture of the settings of historic buildings and streetscene in conservation areas can be ameliorated. Limited further pedestrianisation is possible and may be included in the public realm part of the Town Centre Strategy.

Reducing the Impact of the IDR

- 19.12 The walking survey of Reading town centre and the individual character area assessments, based on the street and building assessments, all highlighted the negative impact of roads and traffic on the historic environment of the town centre. There was no part of the town centre area where traffic was not an issue, and the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) is a huge physical barrier to the historic edge of the centre, with the west and south in particular experiencing dislocation. The Reading Town Centre Strategy by Urban Place Lab (working with a project team of consultants for several disciplines) is looking at the wider issues that concern the environment and vitality of the town centre and will be making recommendations on traffic in Reading; the HAA has used the findings of the summary recommendations, because the draft report is currently being considered by their clients.
- 19.13 This report can only suggest some small changes to reduce the impact of the IDR, hopefully coincide with those in the Town Centre Strategy study:
- a. One major improvement to the historic environment where it is crossed by major roads would be to replan pedestrian crossings to improve walkability, the quality of the streetscene and pedestrian safety. For example, to improve the enjoyment of historic properties at the north end of Southampton Street and either end of London Street, where the pedestrian routes are currently severed by a wide dual carriageway. This creates a barrier and opportunities to improve these junctions, which may form part of the Town Centre Strategy.
 - b. Not all parts of the IDR operate to capacity, such as Forbury Road which runs around Reading Abbey and Reading Gaol and affects the enjoyment of them. Transport consultants Vectos, working with Urban Place Lab, have recommended sections for the IDR that could be reduced in width, providing additional space for planting or pedestrians, which have been identified as actions in the emerging Town Centre Strategy. The opportunity exists to turn this road which runs along the route of historic Abbey Precinct Plummery Wall and ditch (therefore the historic town boundary) into a greener edge to this historic quarter. This might be linked to the regeneration of Reading Gaol and the offices and retail park on the outer side of Forbury Road.

c. The gyratory system around Crown Street, London Street and Southampton Street highly degrades this area’s historic environment and streetscene by dividing the historic streets into two separate areas, creating a physical and visual break between a once continuous streetscape. The Townscape Strategy is an opportunity to consider ways the historic streets may be reconnected.

19.14 Urban Place Lab support greening in some locations of the IDR and suggest a treed boulevard and wider measures to reduce through traffic. The findings of the HAA, independent of emerging The Town Strategy measures, have also considered short-term options such as a green corridor on both sides of the IDR as a visual shield, to reduce the environmental impact of the IDR on the conservation areas and historic buildings that are on either side of it and that it passes through (which potentially could be more if new conservation areas are designated as this report recommends. Such a measure would also help offset the pollution from the road. Further, and again independent of emerging measures as part of The Town Strategy, consideration could be given to bridging the gap on the historic routes that cross the IDR by the creating more of a sense of enclosure using acoustic barriers, planters and of locating of kiosks on bridges and around crossing points, to improve the immediate environment, create a more active atmosphere and draw together segregated elements of the historic environment.

Public Realm

19.15 The Public Realm is important to the user experience of a town centre. It is the platform on which the buildings sit and the environment within which they are seen. Reading has many attractive buildings in its town centre, some interesting street forms and interesting views. Some parts of the public realm have received investment that has given them good surfaces and well designed and position street furniture, while other, lesser considered streets suffer from blacktop on both carriageway and footway, and standard street furniture whose location has not been well considered. Historic England has its Streets for All guidance³ on improving public realm in historic places and the Chartered Institute for Highways and Transportation Manual for Streets 2 offer useful practical guidance on improving streets in towns.

Walkability, the Pedestrian Experience and Cycling

19.16 As the Space Syntax diagram in Part A of this HAA report (Figure 22) shows, Reading Town Centre is extremely walkable, and provides notable opportunities for getting people who live, work and visit Reading to leave their cars behind, use the park and ride and bus network or use the multi-storey car parks on the edge of the town centre. Wayfinding from the railway station, bus stops and the car parks is vital to encourage walking from these arrival points. A review of existing wayfinding signage is recommended, which is insufficient in some parts of the town centre at present. The recent wayfinding board at Reading Station is a good example of the approach suggested.

19.17 Cycling into and around Reading town centre is related to the issue of street furniture, as the provision of cycle hoops and racks can help encourage cycling as an alternative to the use of cars for short journeys. This could perhaps use some of the street furniture of the defunct Readybike scheme.

19.18 Also needing to be considered with walking and cycling is the use of electric scooters, their safe use on pedestrianised streets and places for them to be parked. RBC will no doubt monitor if the legal status of such scooters changes in the future.

Potential Public Realm Improvements

19.19 Within the Study Area the review of the public realm from the street surveys undertaken as part of this project (Figure 21) revealed the following findings:

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/> and <https://tsrgd.co.uk/pdf/mfs/mfs2.pdf>

Public Realm Regarded as ‘Good Spaces’⁴

19.20 Town Hall Square; Market Place; Minster Street; Gun Street; Queen Victoria Street; Yield Hall Place; Bridge Street; The Forbury; Forbury Gardens and Forbury Square.

Public Realm with Some Attractive Features

19.21 Duke Street; Cross Street; Chestnut Walk; Kennet Side.

Public Realm with Trees to Soften Hard Surfaces or Varied Surfaces

19.22 Chestnut Walk; Kennet Side; Swan Place, Maltings Place, Simonds Street, Fobney Street and Willow Street [in addition to the smaller closes in that area]; Blagrove Street; Southampton Street; Crown Street; West Street; Friar Street; Forbury Road; Deansgate Road; Sidmouth Street; Broad Street; Castle Hill.

Public Realm That Suffers from Cluttered Signage and Markings and Large Advertisements

19.23 Duke Street; Gun Street; Greyfriars Road; Union Street; Market Place; Friar Street; Forbury Road; Southampton Street; Station Road/Station Approach; St Mary’s Butts; Oxford Road.

Public Realm in Poor Condition with Potential for Enhancement

19.24 Station Road; St Mary’s Butts; Hosier Street; King Street including Jackson’s corner on King’s Road; Thorn Lane; Wiston Terrace; Garrard Street; Crown Street; Castle Street; Oxford Road; Blakes Cottages; Merchant’s Place; Queens Walk; Dusseldorf Way; Southampton Street; Vachel Road; Stanshawe Road; Sackville Street; East Street; Letcombe Street; St. Giles Close.

19.25 Public realm in Reading varies from the high quality of the area around the Blagrove Street/Friar Street junction conjoining with The Forbury and Market Place, to the over-use of tarmac blacktop on carriageways and footways that is prevalent both on major roads like Oxford Road and on other town centre streets. Likewise street furniture varies from those carefully chosen and positioned in the higher quality schemes to standard items positioned without due consideration of the townscape around them.

⁴ Allocation with a surface in a good state of repair and sufficient space/s where attractive features could be added or where active frontages may be created.

Recommendations

- 19.26 Surviving areas of older street surfacing should be conserved, repaired and where necessary re-laid using the surviving materials with quantities made up with matching materials.
- 19.27 A palette of surface materials for pavements and pedestrianised streets is an important consideration. Red brick pavements have been successfully used in some parts of Reading. Red brick is perhaps best used in the most central, focal parts of the town. Other vernacular colours of Reading to consider might be the use of grey, buff or gault bricks. To some of the central areas of the town another option to consider are granite setts. Those historic setts that survive (e.g. Thorn Lane) should ideally be retained and the roadways refurbished. It is acknowledged that the brick pavers on many of the key areas within the centre provide a useful relaying solution for quick, easy and effective 'making good'. In less central parts of Reading, such as to some of the suburban streets outside the town centre, other surface materials could be considered such as reconstituted stone. Often such streets are tarmacked over or often poorly patch-repaired.
- 19.28 Targeted investment should concentrate in particular areas where improvements would enhance the historic environment to greatest effect. For example, Gun Street, St. Mary's Butts and its southern junction, and Oxford Road. Another example is at the key node of Jackson's Corner and Duke Street, which forms the start/end of the route in from the eastern suburbs and starts the prime retail area on the edge of the Oracle. Historically Yield Hall Place was an important thoroughfare leading to the Yield Hall/Guild Hall, while Thorn Lane retains its setted surface. More should be made of the history of this area and its historic surfaces.
- 19.29 Opportunities should be taken to improve provision of distinct small areas of public open space where people would want to stop and take stock, including some hard landscape and some grassed areas. These are often used by residents, visitors to an area and office workers seeking moments of repose during the day. See also green spaces comments overleaf.
- 19.30 Wayfinding signs are needed outside the Abbey Quarter area (where they have been successfully introduced), and should ideally be unobtrusive - perhaps inserted into modern parts of the street surface.

- 19.31 Proposed planting of avenues of trees along the edges of the IDR to reduce its visual and acoustic impacts.
- 19.32 Making more of historic yards and courts such as Wiston Terrace, Fife Court and so on, should be considered.
- 19.33 Pedestrianizing more areas such as St. Mary's Butts and West Street, should be considered.
- 19.34 Public realm improvements around key viewing places with views in a number of directions, should be considered, please see Figure 21.
- 19.35 Where footways on bridges over the IDR linking conservation areas are uninviting consider improving the immediate environment to the introduction of retail kiosks⁵ and green shielding. This would create a more pedestrian friendly environment along routes such as to the Oxford Road bridge.
- 19.36 A street furniture audit to document historic lampposts, benches, bollards, manhole covers and then recording modern street furniture items like posts and signs would be beneficial. This could be followed by a programme of improvements in selected places that could better link conservation areas where stretches of the historic road have been lost.
- 19.37 An audit of the street furniture in the public realm should be considered to declutter the footways and allow the historic buildings to be better appreciated.
- 19.38 Review of all highways signage should be considered to improve legibility for drivers and remove outdated signs like the gantry road sign on Southampton Street.
- 19.39 Creation of dedicated repositories for recycling waste should be considered, to hold the expanding recycling initiatives in locations that cause no obstacles or obstructions.

⁵ In the form of a licenced temporary stand or cubicle or hut, probably a trailer on wheels, from which items can be sold.

Views

- 19.40 Reading contains some memorable views, some of which are identified in the Local Plan and in the Tall Buildings Strategy. Others are shown in the existing Conservation Area Appraisals. Additional views of importance were identified in character area assessments and the additional views of importance on the 'Views' map in Part A of this HAA report (Figure 25). As is the case with historic cities of this type, many of the views are short - even surprise views, with few grand vistas. Such views should be retained and enhanced where possible. One of the significant detractors from Reading's townscape environment is the way in which, in a number of locations the sense of containment is lost and views 'leak out'. This should be remedied where possible. The views analysis in Part A of this report shows how important the key landmark buildings are in the wider view of the town centre. The view of these landmarks from key locations on the edge of and outside the town should be respected and preserved. This means that the height of buildings in the foreground from these viewpoints needs to be controlled with the Tall Buildings Strategy, and to a lesser extent any buildings on sites which lie in the background may need to be considered in the light of the impact they may have on the setting of conservation areas.

Green Spaces in the Town Centre

- 19.41 Such a strategy supports Reading's target of Net Zero by 2030. As a fairly dense urban settlement based around a medieval plan, Reading has relatively few green spaces, with the notable exceptions of the Abbey area and the minster churchyard. There is an opportunity to create an additional green space in the Minster Quarter regeneration of the former Civic Precinct, but consideration could also be given to some 'greening' of the town to soften the harsh urban environment created along the route of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) and perhaps to provide one or two small spaces where people can sit and enjoy a moment of quiet on the long but wide shopping streets. The planting of tree avenues could be used to greatly enhance otherwise unwelcoming stretches of the IDR where traffic volumes have shown the route to be under capacity. There are a number of opportunities for this to happen, particularly where the width of carriageway is greater than required by the basic function of conveying people and traffic. The regeneration of the Gaol site allows an opportunity for this to be tried on Forbury Road from the Kennet Bridge to the Forbury Roundabout. However, the wider carriageway of the urban clearway that is the IDR, including perhaps the south section of Queen's Road could be planted to beneficial effect, but also reduced in width.
- 19.42 Elsewhere there may be opportunities to create 'pocket parks' including trees and benches, as a break in otherwise consistently hard surfaces. Generally for future potential/existing development areas such as Minster Quarter, Hosier Street and Station Hill, green spaces should be given priority since the town centre has a low provision of green public open space for recreation. The Planning Policy Framework document allows for the designation of Local Green Space which would cover this type of proposal. Consider green corridors along the IDR on both its north-south branch and its east-west branch delivered through a coherent vision for improving Reading's green spaces.

Regeneration, Refurbishment and Public Realm Improvement Opportunities

- 19.43 Refurbishment is often a better choice than demolition because it requires less resources in terms of utilising embedded carbon within the built environment and supports Reading's target of Net Zero by 2030. In cases where refurbishment of office blocks is proposed, encouraging design options that reflect the local historic context, suitable cladding is recommended. 'Promoting good design and sustainability - New Development' is the recommended point of reference. A local example of a positive contextual refurbishment scheme is that of 57-75 King's Road, an office block named Abbey Wharf and once called Abbey Gate, with a steel frame, brick-cladding and a pitched roof with dormers, was refurbished and re-presented in 2019-20 by Spratley & Partners as Abbey Wharf, a serviced office building with many facilities. It is now more in-keeping with the historic setting. Refurbishment of existing buildings could be considered a priority, with demolition for redevelopment considered an option only where alternatives are proved not to be viable in order to reduce energy and carbon use, which relates to the issue of maximising embedded carbon within existing buildings. This approach respects Reading's vision for Net Zero by 2030. Figure 103 shows the recommended proposals regarding revision to existing conservation area boundaries, possible boundaries for new conservation areas suggested in this study and also shows regeneration opportunity sites within them.
- 19.44 There are a number of locations that could be targeted for delivering new homes and supporting other forms of sustainable development, including those identified under Policies CR11, CR12, CR13 and CR14 of the Local Plan as shown in Figure 103 (Areas designated for redevelopment and refurbishment in Reading). A proactive approach would be to provide in the form of planning briefs some recommendations on heights, massing and scale for those sites where such details are yet to come forward or agreed with the Council as part of the pre-application process. Beyond those sites currently identified in Local Plan documents, the HAA has identified sites around the study area (see Figure 99).

20. Making More of Reading's Historic Environment to Encourage People to the Town

Utilising the Town's Existing Strengths More Effectively

20.1 Reading is perhaps under appreciated at a local, regional and national level as possessing a town centre of some considerable character and historic interest. Reading has an important history as a market town, historically with a large abbey, with the town prospering in the last three centuries from its good transport links and its position on trading routes along the Thames Valley and south to north and has attractive surroundings in the Thames and Kennet valleys. The town centre streets demonstrate the wealth of the town in the Victorian period with undervalued buildings designed by local architects. Although the period from 1960 saw great change in the centre as the town sought to become a modern centre for commerce, much of the older character survives.

General Comments

- 20.2 Greater promotion of the following is recommended:
- The Abbey's history as an important surviving abbey complex and its association with Henry I. The Abbey Quarter Wayfinding is excellent. Consider extending it to a route, laid out through paving markers rather than finger posts and boards, to take visitors from the Abbey to the Minster through Market Place, along Friar Street, Queen Victoria or Cross Street and Broad Street, through Chain Street and round the back of the Oracle.
 - The town's existing alleys, yards and courts to create artisan/independent retailer quarters e.g. to areas such as Union Street, Wiston Terrace, Fife Court and Merchant's Place.
 - Reading's waterways which are the reason for its location and were main transport arteries until 180 years ago, and now provide leisure opportunities.
 - The town's industries such as Huntley & Palmers and Suttons Seeds and Simonds Brewery.
 - The town's transport history with the Kennet & Avon Canal completed in 1804 and Great Western Railway coming to the town in 1840.

Further Promoting Reading Abbey as a Heritage Destination

- 20.3 More promotion of Reading Abbey's history as an important surviving abbey complex, its association with Henry I and further distribution of the successful wayfinding boards for the Abbey Quarter project. This area has great potential as a visitor attraction once recommended improvements have been implemented.
- 20.4 The Abbey Quarter Business Improvement District Business Plan 2019-24 has also proposed waterside coffee concessions and berthing for barges to attract visitors.

Fulfilling the Potential of the Town's Waterways

- 20.5 Reading emerged as a settlement because of its location between two rivers and its position on the Bath/Bristol Road running east west and Winchester/Oxford route running north south. The monastic influence increased the number of watercourses to power mills. The Kennet was canalised around 1800 which led to further water courses and weirs being created. Though some of the watercourses have been culverted, centuries ago in the case of the Holy Brook, most of the water courses are open and have towpaths or walkways on at least one side. However, they appear an under used asset when observed in this study, little advertised and little understood by the wider public. The Great West Way, a new self-guided travel route along the A4 Great West Road, the Great Western Railway, the River Thames, the Kennet & Avon Canal, and multiple foot and cycle paths, is becoming better known and used and the town should continue to market itself as lying on the route and more extensive promotion could be considered.
- 20.6 It would be possible to mix and match modes of transport too, depending on the length and breadth of the trip. A combination of boat, bike, car or train transport options enables visitors to explore the attractions that most excite, from the famous to the unexpected.

- 20.7 The HAA report believes that the town could:
- Make better use of Holy Brook and other watercourse areas - The town at present does not perhaps make enough use of the waterside for good quality amenity space that would encourage business, recreation, health and exercise and add to the character of the town centre. This is recognised in the Abbey Quarter Business Improvement District Business Plan 2019-24. The BID has proposed punting on the Kennet between the Oracle and Reading Gaol as a leisure facility. Additional 'ports' may be established where historic buildings exist. In addition, boat trips could be possible along the Kennet and Thames towards Sonning as an example, which might appeal to tourists visiting the town. Improved advertising of the waterway's history should encourage greater movement around the waterways.
 - Make better use of its existing watercourses (rivers, canals, former leats and so on) to encourage repose, walks and exercise through improved wayfinding, installation of kiosks and more frequent use of canal boats to cater for the passing public.
 - As part of Development Management negotiations on developments beside the waterways should endeavour to secure agreement that towpaths should have minimum widths, and that these are maintained when adjoining sites are developed/redeveloped.
 - Promote the cultivation of plant islands. Business Improvement District (RUKBID) initiatives are promoting this as an environmental scheme, some potentially placed at wharf locations. Consider opportunities to weave some historic interpretation into the scheme.
 - Reopen Holy Brook where recently it is concealed from view: for instance, there is a section east of Bridge Street, and another north of Thorn Lane.
 - Consider how to protect the waterways and watercourses through Reading as these are often under-appreciated and often overlooked during planning of large developments. River Kennet could be a green urban axis to the south of the town.

Making More of Reading's Industrial and Transport Heritage

- 20.8 Regrettably most of the Huntley & Palmer buildings were demolished in the late 20th century but some remain on Gas Works Road and the Biscuit Tunnel. Greater promoting their history is recommended, which has been researched and forms part of the display at Reading Museum. Simonds Brewery and Sutton Seeds also enjoyed international acclaim and further promotion of this history would benefit Reading's appeal forming part of its heritage attraction.
- 20.9 Promote the Biscuit Crumb walking route to the Huntley & Palmers sites, from Reading Museum's display to Market Place, east to the only surviving factory building on King's Road, south to the river and onto London Street, and possibly back round Church Street and St Giles Close prior to return to the town through Thorn Lane.
- 20.10 Consider emphasising Reading station's Great Western Railway history more strongly. Fullers have named the original station building The Three Guineas. The Great Western might be a more fitting name and more immediately identifiable by the public. Three Guineas comes from a competition in 1904 to name a record breaking locomotive that was first to run from London to Plymouth non-stop and Three Guineas was the prize. Consider developing this story for use in the promotion of heritage in Reading.
- 20.11 Consider relocating the large screen outside the station as part of planned future improvements to the public realm associated with the regeneration of the station area, to maximise opportunities to improve the setting of the Grade II station building and conservation area.

Promotion of Signposted Walks

- 20.12 Promote the existing urban pedestrian routes east-west along the canals/ivers (e.g. via the RUKBID). For example, promote a circular walk to take in nature along the river around to the Bel & Dragon and back towards town to see the Banksy Artwork on the former Reading Gaol via Oscar Wilde Walk and take in the greening through small floating plant island initiatives that will be underway. Promotion of this east-west route could include promoting the Riverside Museum at Blake's Lock as part of a signposted walking route.
- 20.13 Consider a walking route to the Huntley & Palmers sites, from Reading Museum's display to Market Place, east to the only surviving factory building on King's Road, south to the river and onto London Street, and possibly back round Church Street and St Giles Close prior to return to the town through Thorn Lane.

21. Buildings and Structures to be Considered for Statutory Listing, and/or as Buildings of Townscape Merit or Locally Listing

- 21.1 The following lists present the buildings and structures to be considered for statutory listing, and/or as buildings of townscape merit (BTMs) or local listing (LLB). They are presented in the relevant sections of this part of the HAA report, which are also illustrated on Figure 102 (Recommended locally identified buildings).
- 21.2 Buildings identified in survey and from work of the CAAC and the Reading Civic Society.

Proposed Local Listing/BTMS Identified in this HAA in Alphabetical Street Order

Broad Street

N side

46 Broad Street 47-48 Broad Street
 65 Broad Street
 66 Broad Street
 73-74 Broad Street

S side

81-82 Broad Street
 84 Broad Street
 85-88 Broad Street
 94 Broad Street
 96 Broad Street
 97-98 Broad Street
 99 Broad Street
 100-101 Broad Street
 102 Broad Street
 103-6 Broad Street
 108-113 Broad Street
 114-115 Broad Street
 120 Broad Street
 121-122 Broad Street
 123 Broad Street
 124-133 Broad Street - Oracle Shopping Centre frontage on Broad Street
 134 Broad Street

Caversham Road/A329

E side

The Hexagon

Cheapside

E side

2-18 Cheapside - part of former McIlroys Department Store, 6-34 Oxford Road and 2-18 Cheapside and 83-85 Friar Street

Fife Court

Dowsett Brewery chimney

Friar Street

N side

23 Friar Street
 24 Friar Street
 27-29 Friar Street, Ajilon House
 32-34 Friar Street
 39-40 Friar Street

S side

83-85 Friar Street - part of former McIlroys Department Store, 6-34 Oxford Road and 2-18 Cheapside and 83-85 Friar Street
 89-91 Friar Street
 97-98 Friar Street (attached to 1 and 1a-7 West Street)
 126 Friar Street
 127 Friar Street
 128-129 Friar Street
 133 Friar Street (and 12, 12a and 12b Union Street)
 134-135 Friar Street
 136-137 Friar Street
 144 Friar Street
 145 Friar Street

Gun Street

S side

2 Gun Street
 3-4 Gun Street

Merchant's Place

W side

8 Merchants Place, The Shed

Oxford Road

N side

6-34 Oxford Road - part of former McIlroys Department Store,
6-34 Oxford Road and 2-18 Cheapside and 83-85 Friar Street
40-42 Oxford Road

Sackville Street

N side

1-3 Sackville Street
5 Sackville Street
7-11 Sackville Street
13 Sackville Street
15-29 Sackville Street

S side

Hope Sutton Hall, Sackville Street
2-4 Sackville Street
6-8 Sackville. Abbey Cottages
10-16 Sackville Street
18 Sackville Street
Unnumbered barn on Sackville Street

Union Street

E Side

12, 12a and 12b Union Street and (133 Friar Street)

St Mary's Butts

E side

56 St. Mary's Butts
58 St. Mary's Butts
61 St. Mary's Butts
64-65 St. Mary's Butts

W side

19-23 St. Mary's Butts

Southampton Street

W Side

108 Southampton Street

The Forbury

S side

10-12 The Forbury (incorrectly shown on existing MPLSCA
Appraisal as listed).

West Street

E side

1 and 1a-7 West Street - and 97-98 Friar Street
11 West Street
13-21 West Street

W side

McIlroys see under Oxford Road

**Previously Recommended BTMs under CAAC Draft
Reappraisal of Market Place/London Street Conservation
Area (MPLSCA):**

Blagrove Street

E side

2 Blagrove Street (R+, formerly Aldwych House)

W Side

53 Blagrove Street, Oakford Social Club

Broad Street

S side

9-10
11
12-19 Broad Street - Marks & Spencer
20
21
22-23

Buttermarket

E side

5

Cross Street

E side

5 Cross street and 159 Friar Street
7-11 Cross Street
27-29 Cross Street - Franklyn House
(This HAA does not support Nos. 13-25 Cross Street being
nominated as a BTM, but such assessments are subjective).

W side

4-16 (even)
18-20 (even)
22-24 (even)
26 - 28 (even)

Friar Street

N side

7-10 Friar Street - Yates Wine Bar
15 Friar Street and Harris Arcade
16-18 Friar Street and 2-4 Station Road

S side
 156-8 Friar Street
 159 (Friar Street) and 5 Cross Street - Haslams

King Street

N side
 1 King Street

London Street

E side
 105 London Street
W side
 36-42 London Street - Former Central Club

Station Road

E side
 2-4 Station Road with 16-18 Friar Street
 6 Station Road
 8-10 Station Road and Harris Arcade
 12
 14-16 Station Road - Revolution

W side

3-5 Station Road
 7-11 Station Road

Valpy Street

N side
 17-19 Valpy Street - Valpy Street Bar

Buildings with potential for National (Statutory) Listing:

Blagrove Street

E side
 7 Blagrove Street - CUP
 17 Blagrove Street - Winkworth
 35 Blagrove Street

Broad Street

S side
 85-88 Broad Street
 99 Broad Street - Everything £5
 100-101 Broad Street -Santander
 102 Broad Street - was Clintons
 109-113 Broad Street - John Lewis main façade
 114-115 Broad Street
 120-123 Broad Street
 130-134 Broad Street

Buttermarket

E side
 5

Castle Street

N side
 Amend 122 Castle Street list entry to specifically include 122a in the title

Friar Street

N side
 Amend existing 15 Friar Street list entry to include Harris Arcade frontage on Friar Street and Nos. 8-10 Station Road⁶
 27-29 Friar Street - Totally Wicked & Treatz (Victorian commercial buildings)

S side

125 Friar Street (Victorian commercial building)
 126-127 Friar Street Reading Lola Lo (Victorian commercial building)
 128-129 Friar Street Mcdonalds (Victorian commercial building)

Gun Street

Cross Keys public house at Nos. 1-2 Gun Street (and return on Bridge Street)

Market Place

S side
 46 and 47 Market Place Chancellors (Victorian shop and office building)

Oxford Road

N side
 McIlroys Building at 6-34 Oxford Road and 2-18 Cheapside and 83-85 Friar Street

Sackville Street

S side
 Martin Hope Sutton Memorial Hall, Sackville Street

Southampton Street

E Side
 St Giles Parish Hall (F G Sainsbury 1924)

W side

108 Southampton Street (Regency shop and house)

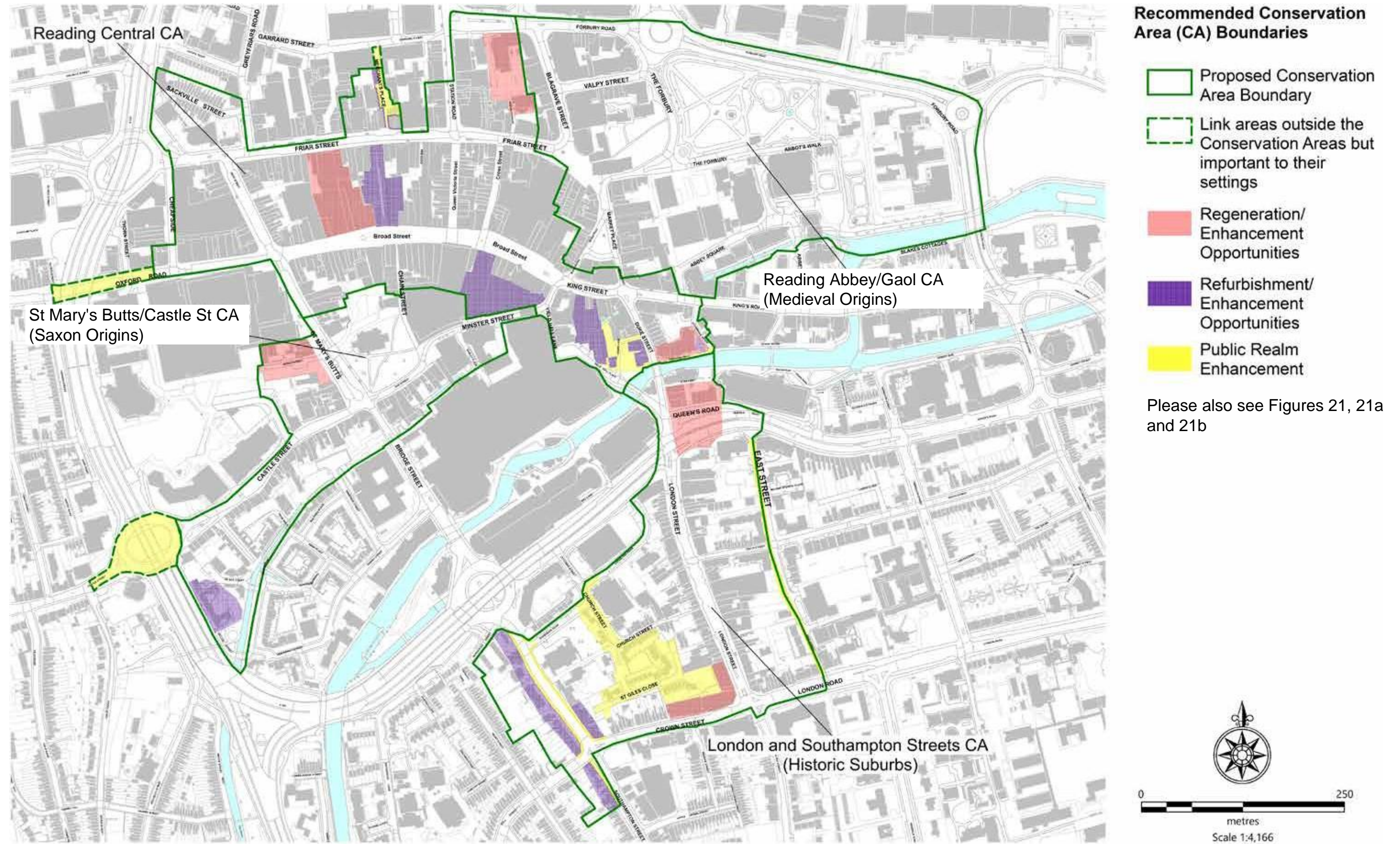
21.3 We recommend that buildings proposed for putting forward for national, statutory listing, first be included on RBC's list of BTMs or locally listed buildings (as relevant).

⁶ Harris Arcade Listed in December 2021.

22. Graphical Illustrations of Key Recommendations

22.1 The following five figures illustrate the recommendations arising from the HAA Project:

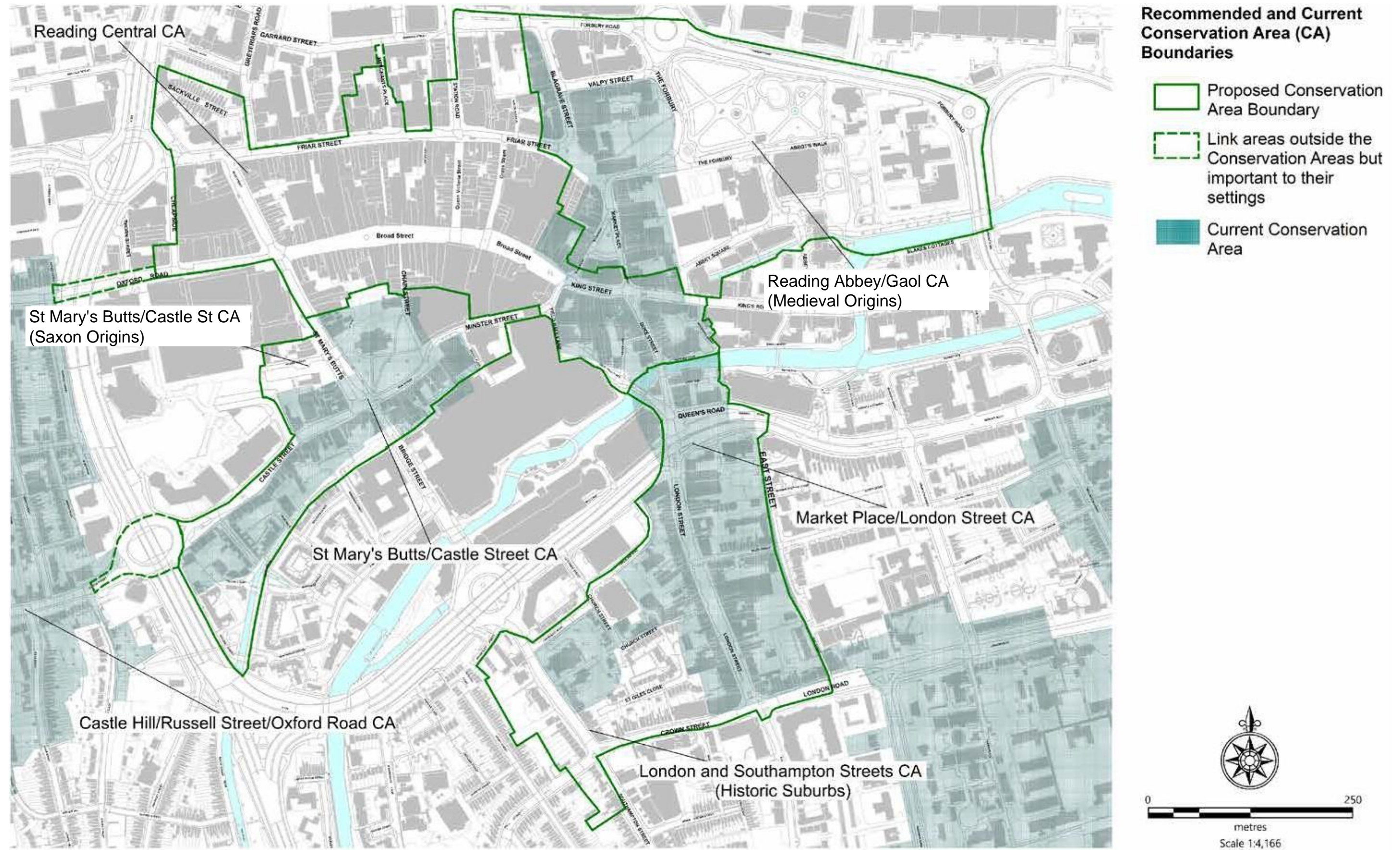
Figure 100. HAA Recommended Conservation Area Boundaries, and Identification of Potential Regeneration/Refurbishment/Enhancement/Public Realm Enhancement Opportunities



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St Mary's Butts/Castle St CA

Figure 101. Recommended and Current Conservation Area (CA) Boundaries



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Figure 102. Recommended Buildings and Structures to be Considered for Statutory Listing, and/or as Buildings of Townscape Merit or Locally Listing

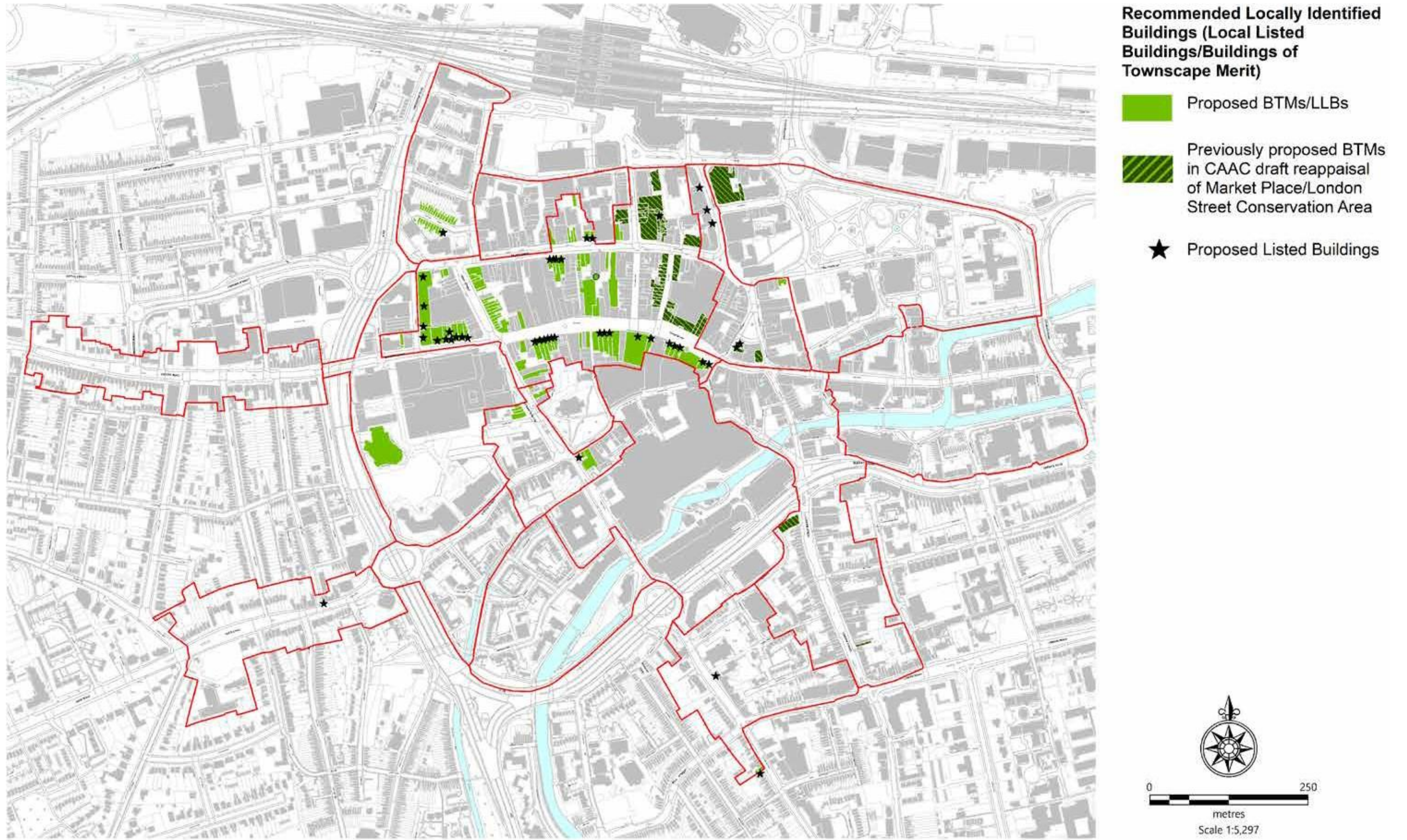
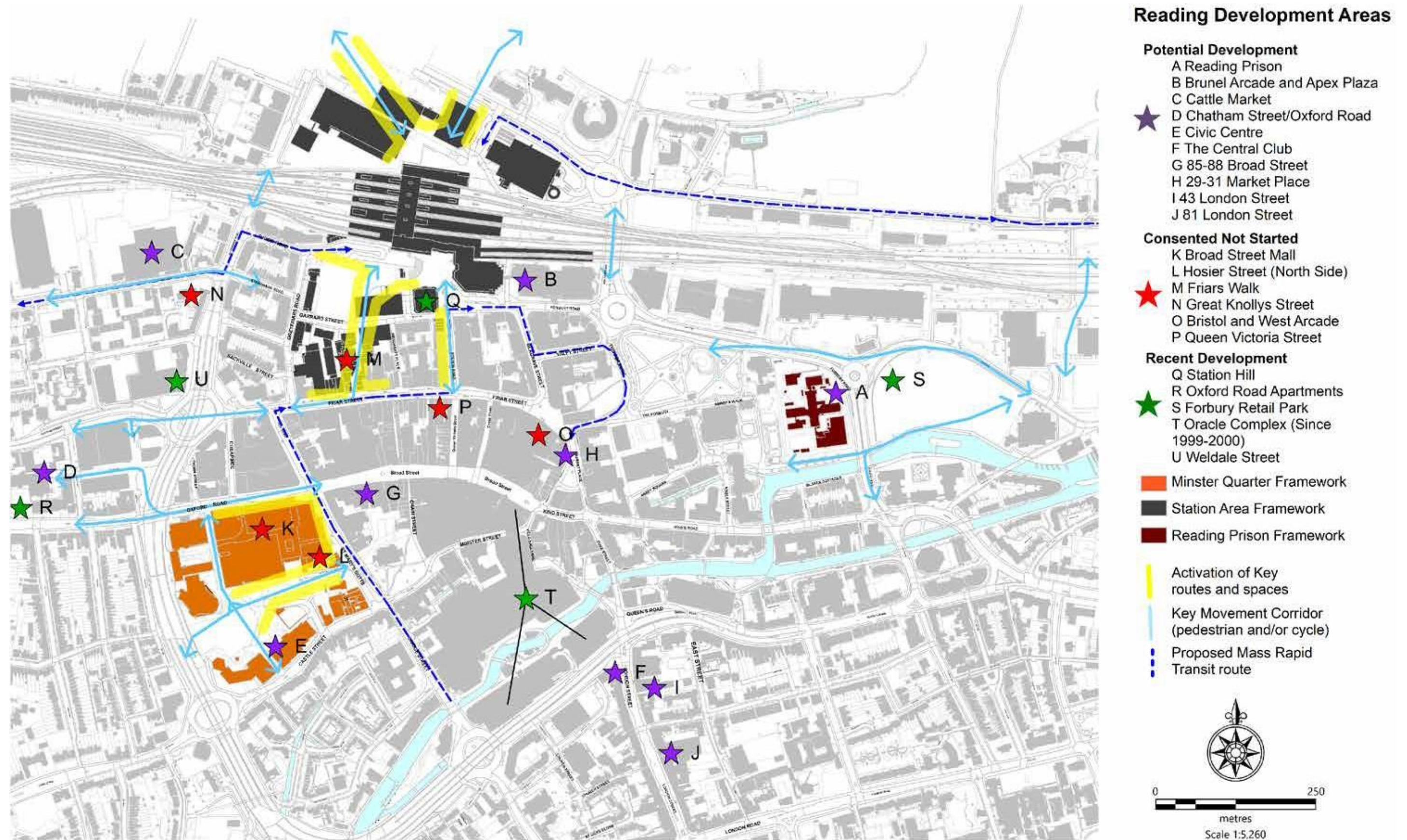


Figure 103. Areas Earmarked for Redevelopment and Refurbishment in Reading



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Figure 104. An Area of Legally Protected and Nationally Important Archaeological Potential Due for Redevelopment



23. Archive

23.1 All research material to be deposited with the RBC’s own GIS and The Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record (HER).

23.2 The following paper-based material, kindly donated by Reading Civic Society and Reading Prison, will be deposited as part of the archival material:

| | | |
|---|---------|--|
| Town Trails 1: The Abbey, Market Place, London Street | Undated | Reading Civic Society |
| Town Trails 3: The Station, Broad Street, The Hexagon | Undated | Reading Civic Society |
| Industrial Reading | Undated | The Berkshire industrial archaeology group |

23.3 The following CD, kindly donated by Reading Gaol, will be deposited as part of the archival material:

| | | |
|---|------|--------------------------------|
| Reading Foundation for Art: a Short Film about Reading and the Foundation | 2015 | ReadingfoundationforArt.org.uk |
|---|------|--------------------------------|

23.4 Figures will be provided in .JPG format and appended as editable .PDF format.

23.5 Photographs that form part of the survey record will be supplied as part of the GIS package.

23.6 HAA project research is provided as part of set of .PDF reports.

24. Glossary

| A | |
|--|---|
| Accessibility | The ability of people to move around an area and reach places and facilities, including elderly and disabled people, those with young children and those encumbered with luggage or shopping. |
| Arcade | 1 (on a building) a series of arches carried by columns, pilasters or similar. May be free-standing; if attached to a wall as a decoration, known as a blind arcade. 2 Covered avenue with shops on one or both sides: this use dating from 1730 was most commonly applied to Victorian shopping arcades. |
| Architectural style | A term used to define the predominant, usually exterior, appearance of a building. Architectural styles or designs usually follow fashions in art and literature and are, at any time, limited by the constructional methods and materials available to society. They usually derive their names from periods in history (for example Classical, Gothic, Regency, Victorian). Buildings may combine more than one style because they transcend design periods, different phases of construction or alteration are evident, or because the current fashion was for revivalist styles, such as neo-Georgian or neo-Tudor. |
| B | |
| Backland Backland development | 'Landlocked' sites behind existing buildings, such as rear gardens and private open space, usually within predominantly residential areas. Such sites often have no street frontages. With right of way and sorting out overlooking issues is possible to develop these sites |
| Building heights | Heights can vary and may be measured by the number of floors or in metres. The term may be used in reference to low, mid-rise or tall buildings. |
| Built form | This consists of the collective height, volume and shape of buildings and their appearance. |
| Brownfield Land and Sites | Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. Also see 'Previously-Developed Land'. |
| C | |
| Character | Sense of place and history A place that responds to and reinforces locally distinctive patterns of development and landscape • Distinctive landscapes • Natural features • Locally distinctive buildings • Streets and street patterns • Special spaces • Skylines and roofscapes • Building materials • Local culture and traditions • Avoiding standard solutions. |
| Connectivity | Ease of movement and access between a network of places and spaces. Creating good connectivity means understanding pedestrians' and other users' desire lines. |
| Containment and enclosure | Term to describe spaces where public and private space are clearly distinguished • Streets, footpaths and open spaces overlooked by buildings • Clear distinction between public and private space • Avoiding gaps in the line of buildings • Enclosing streets and other spaces by buildings and trees of a scale that feels comfortable and appropriate to the character of the space • No leftover spaces unused and uncared for. |
| Contributors to character or appearance | Character or appearance are ways of assessing townscape and in particular conservation areas. To help evaluate the contributors are elements such as buildings or open spaces that can be assessed as: • positive - adding to the character or appearance • neutral -neither adding or taking away but forming a background element • negative or detracting - taking away for the overall character/appearance. |
| Curtilage | The area normally within the boundaries of a property surrounding the main building and used in connection with it. Important when considering the area around a listed building. |
| D | |
| Design & Access Statement | A design & access statement should evolve from a pre-application stage by a developer, explaining the design principles upon which a proposed development is to be based. It has to be submitted in support of larger planning applications and for work to listed buildings. |
| Density and mix | The amount of development and the range of uses within a site/area which influences: • The intensity of activity relative to a place's accessibility • The place's vitality relative to the proximity and range of uses • The development's viability. |
| Distinctive Locally Distinctive | A built form, building detail, building material or indeed street form or street surfacing or piece of street furniture that is local to a place or area giving it a distinct character. |

| E | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Elevation | The actual facade (or face) of a building, or a plan showing the drawing of a facade. |
| F | |
| Façade | The external skin of a building, quite often of superior materials and with architectural details forming an attractive composition. |
| Figure ground | The visual relationship between built on and unbuilt on space. Often identified by shading all the built elements in a dark colour to reveal all the spaces in between. |
| G | |
| Grain | The pattern within the built form, that may be described as fine-grained or coarse-grained. Fine-grained refers to a large number of a variety of built forms and narrow spaces within any given area. Coarse-grained refers to large architectural blocks or buildings with fewer in any given area often located amongst greater areas of highways or open spaces. |
| H | |
| Height and massing | The size of parts of a building and its details, often in connection with the scale, arrangement and shape of a building in relation to other buildings and spaces. Also in relation to a building's effect on views, vistas and skylines. |
| I | |
| Industrial housing | 19th century terraced housing, often built as housing for workers of a factory, railway, mostly brick built on a grid pattern and to a relatively high density. |
| J | |
| Juxtaposition | Location of buildings or streets relative to each other |
| K | |
| Keystone | Stone in the centre of an arch often larger and more decorated than other stones or bricks that make up the arch. |
| Kneeler | Stone or group of stones or bricks projecting horizontally projecting from a wall to from the stone at bottom base of a gable, usually allowing the roof behind to extend beyond the face of the wall to drain into a gutter. |
| Kinetic view | See Views. |
| L | |
| Landform | Naturally formed features of the Earth's surface, that together comprise terrain and the arrangement of such features is known as topography. |
| Layout | The way buildings, routes and open spaces are placed or laid out on the ground in relation to each other. |
| Legibility | Ease of understanding of the layout of a place of individual buildings: • Relating to a place that has a clear layout and is easy to navigate • Landmarks and focal points • Views • Clear and easily navigable routes • Gateways to particular areas • Lighting • Works of art and craft • Signage and waymarkers. |
| M | |
| Mansard roof | Roof with each side formed of 2 slopes, the lower pitch being steeper than the upper pitch. Allows more headroom within the outer parts of the roof than a standard single roof slope. |
| Mass, massing | Mass is the bulk of a building. Massing is the effect of varying or modifying the height and bulk of the form across the extent of a building - see also Height and massing. |
| N | |
| Node or node point | A place where activity and circulation are concentrated |
| Neo-classical | A style of architecture popular in from 1750-1830 and revived again in the first half of the 20th century in reaction against 19th century gothic. It adapted the recorded archaeology of the classical buildings of the ancient Greeks and Romans to be applied to modern types of buildings such as civic buildings and places of entertainment. |

| O | |
|--|---|
| Open Space | All space of public value, including public landscaped areas, playing fields, parks and play areas, and also including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs, which can offer opportunities for sport and recreation or can also act as a visual amenity and a haven for wildlife. |
| P | |
| Public Art | Permanent or temporary physical works of art visible to the general public, whether part of a building or free-standing. For example, sculpture, lighting effects, street furniture, paving, railings and signs. |
| Public Realm | Public owned spaces between buildings and private sites where pedestrian activities occur. Owned by the local authority and maintained by them. |
| Public (Open) Space | Usually urban space, designated by a council, where public access may or may not be formally established, but which fulfils or can fulfil a recreational or non-recreational role (for example, amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural usages). |
| Q | |
| Quoins | Dressed stones or shaped bricks/terracotta used to define the corners of buildings. |
| R | |
| Radial routes/roads | Roads or paths that go out from a node point in all directions. |
| Render | Surfacing of walling made of lime and sand (or usually now sand and cement) to give an outer coating on a building's facade. Often used to give a coherent appearance where the construction behind is of varied or unattractive masonry. Can be a uniform smooth surface, sometimes then given details or inscribed with lines to imitate stone walling. Can be combined with stone chippings or other materials for pebbledash. |
| Reuse of a building Adaptive reuse Creative reuse | Converting an existing building to a new use, accepting that maintaining the existing building is sustainable, maintains the character of a place and often creates unusual and unique and therefore appealing spaces with atmosphere and character. |
| S | |
| Statutory Undertakers / Statutory Utilities | Bodies carrying out functions of a public character under a statutory power. They may either be in public or private ownership such as Post Office, Civil Aviation Authority, the Environment Agency or any water undertaker, any public gas transporters, supply of electricity etc. |
| Street furniture | Equipment placed on streets or public spaces and open spaces (parks etc) such as seating, bins, streetlighting, highways signs, telephone/broadband cabinets, wayfinding posts and signs. In all spaces their position should be considered as if arranging furniture in a room to allow the free passage of users on desire lines. |
| Streetscape and landscape | The design of route and spaces, as well as their fortuitous arrangement, together with microclimate, ecology and biodiversity to include: • Paving, planting and street furniture • The integration of public art, lighting, signing and waymarkers • The treatment of parks, play areas, natural features and recreation areas • Consideration of long term management and maintenance issues. |
| Surfaces | In this context used to describe the surface materials of streets, spaces and indeed parks and gardens. For instance • hard surfaces would mean paving or tarmac • soft surfaces are flowerbeds, grass and even gravel or hoggin • mixed surfaces are both often with trees and hedges. |
| T | |
| Topography | The three-dimensional nature of the surface geography of a place. A description (or visual representation on a map) of the shape of the land, for example, contours or changes in the height of land above sea level. |
| Townscape | Townscape can be • the arrangement of the buildings, spaces and other elements in a place, including both designed and fortuitous elements • the planning and building of structures in a town or city, with special concern for aesthetically pleasing results • a scene or view, either pictorial or natural, of a town or city. |

| U | |
|--|--|
| Urban Design | The art of consciously making or changing places. It involves the holistic consideration of all elements that make up a place, including design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, to create successful development. |
| V | |
| Views | Historic views: those recorded in pictures and prints or in historic texts Recorded Views: ditto but also more contemporary records Key views: those identified in Reading Local Plan Long Views: longer distance views: across the whole town centre and from outside it Glimpsed views: Chanced view that occurs when the viewer is at a particular point Kinetic views: Relating to, because by, or producing motion. The kinetic, or save it on do that dynamic, nature overview refers to the way in which it changes as the viewer moves through a Viewing Place. |
| Visual containment | Refers to streets and public spaces and whether the views experienced within them are confined to that space by the buildings or trees and planting around the edges. It can be defined as: strong, neutral or weak. |
| W | |
| Wayfinding | Design elements that help people navigate through an area or find a place. |
| X | |
| X or cross tieplates, circular, I or S also | Plates on the outside of buildings to hold iron tie rods in place that are tying in the façade of the building |
| Y | |
| Yard | Outdoor space on a building plot with a hard surface. Service yard on a commercial property where goods are loaded or unloaded. |
| Z | |
| Ziggurat | A rectangular pyramidal stepped tower, often applied to modern buildings that step in several times so as to diminish the impact of their height. |

This glossary is an edited version based on the Architectural, Planning and Urban Design glossaries such as

On the Planning Portal's website www.planningportal.gov.uk/services/help/glossary

On the Design Council website: The Councillor's Guide to Urban Design, CABE 2013 <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/councillors-guide-to-urban-design.pdf>

On the ISUF (International Seminar on Urban Form) website <http://www.urbanform.org/glossary.html>

The Glossary that appears in the back of every Buildings of England volume, now published by Yale University Press

