



### 3. Northern Riverside

#### Significance

Concentration of historic buildings

Presence of features from historical period(s)

Townscape / Landscape quality:

Quality of details:

Concentration of negative features:

#### Score

#### SIGNIFICANT

SIGNIFICANT (2)

SIGNIFICANT (2)

HIGH (3)

SIGNIFICANT (2)

SOME (2)

11

#### Character Area Overview

##### Summary

The riverside area has been the focus of activity for most of Norwich's history and contains remnants of its former importance. Today, the focus of this activity has shifted from industrial concerns to leisure pursuits and the area is rapidly becoming a popular residential location with many new developments currently underway or in the pipeline.

##### Topography & Landscape Framework

The area follows the route of the River Wensum and therefore lies entirely within the flat river floodplain with the surrounding areas rising gradually to the valley ridges.

##### Town Morphology, History & Archaeology

The riverside area was the focus of activity from the Saxon period until the early C20. It was busy with boat building and the export and import of goods in the Saxon period and remained the centre for most commercial and industrial activity until the mid C14 with the outbreak of the Black Death. Fishermen were based in the Quayside area, whilst tanners, fullers, bleachers and dyers dominated the river frontage around Westwick Street; leather- and horn-workers also competed for space around the river.

The northern riverside, in common with the King Street river frontage, became busy with

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Extract from 1886 OS map

breweries and malthouses in the C19 and early C20. One of the most important sites on the river was the New Mills which marked the end of the navigable stretch of the River Wensum. The original city watermills were funded by the City's corporate body in 1410; the site is now occupied by the rebuilt 1897 Pump House (a) which straddles the river.

The numerous bridges that cross the river were important to the functioning of the riverside and provided direct links between the north and south part of the City. The earliest bridge is thought to be Fye Bridge (b), built by at least 1153. The original Duke Street Bridge (Duke's Palace Bridge, 1822) was removed when Duke Street was widened in 1972, and now spans the entrance to the Castle Mall car park. Much of the riverside has been redeveloped for housing as industrial sites have become vacant.

## Landmarks & Views

Attractive views along and from the river (and of the buildings and trees that line it) are gained from the many bridges that cross the River Wensum. The low-lying river valley surrounded by relatively high development means that the City's key landmarks are not readily visible from this character area, but the City Hall clock tower is visible from Oak Street (c) and Fishergate (d). Views of the Anglican Cathedral are gained from Hansard Lane (e), and Whitefriars (f), whilst St Peter Mancroft and St Giles are also visible from Oak Street.

St James' Mill (g) is the focus of views from the river and whitefriars bridge at the eastern end of the area and is a prominent building in the City. Less attractively, the western end of the character area is dominated by large commercial 'sheds'

which form the focus of views out of the Conservation Area.

## Key Building Groups

In recent years the northern riverside has undergone significant redevelopment including the regeneration of existing industrial sites with new uses such as housing at Anchor Quay (h) and offices at St James' Mill. Large areas of housing now line the riverside, most having been built in the last 30 years. Friars Quay is a 1975 Feilden and Mawson designed award-winning housing development and St Edmund's Wharf (i) is an interesting recent development with an industrial aesthetic.

The Quayside (j) and the buildings along Palace Street (k) and St Martin's at Palace Plain (l) are an attractive group of buildings displaying diverse building styles and materials from different periods. Remnants of the City Walls are found on River Lane and Barn Road with the stump of a tower behind Oak Street along which the Great Hall and C17 houses are also located.

The many river bridges, both pedestrian and vehicular, perform an important function in the City's street framework, but most are also of architectural note. Blackfriars Bridge, now known as St George's Bridge, was designed by Sir John Soane, and Coslany Bridge (or St Miles' Bridge (m) is the earliest iron bridge in Norwich, dating from 1804 and designed by James Frost.

## Current Uses

Housing dominates the northern riverside,

particularly in the eastern and central sections. Some light industrial / commercial uses still remain in the north-western sections of the riverside. The area around Duke Street (n) and St George's Street (o) contains exceptions to the predominant housing, with a new hotel and multi-storey car park, and the Norwich School of Art. St Edmund's Church and St Martin at Palace are the only ecclesiastical buildings in the area, and there are only a handful of public houses, predominantly on Fye Bridge Street and Wensum Street. The eastern end of the area is the location of the Law Courts, with the ruins of a C12 building preserved in the basement.

New Mills



103 - 119, Oak Street

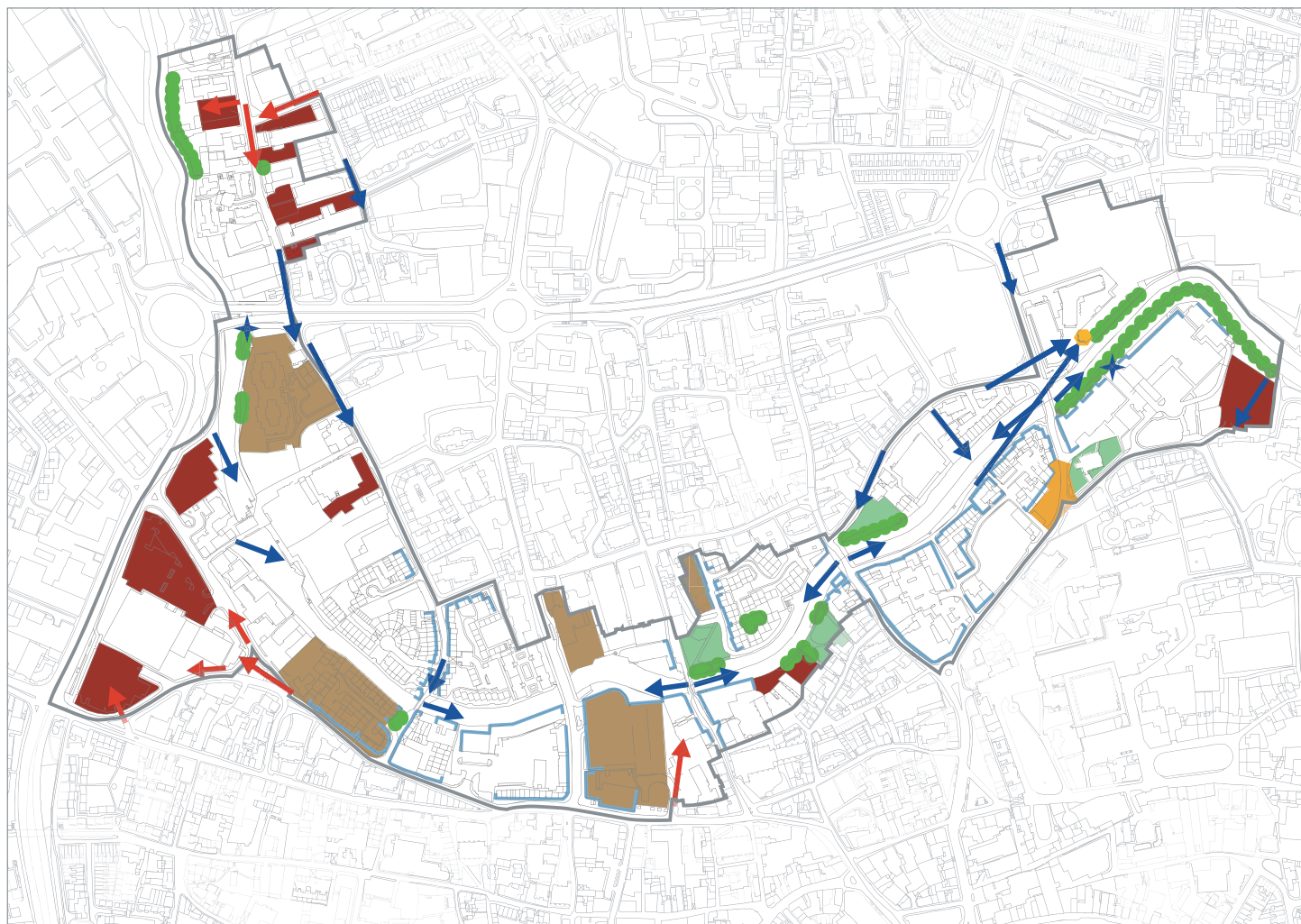


St James Mill





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**Appraisal Map**

- Area boundary
- Urban space
- Neutral areas
- Surface car parking
- Positive frontage
- Open space
- Important trees
- Positive vista
- Negative Vista
- Local Landmark
- Positive feature

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## Key Characteristics

### Townscape Elements

The riverside walks, particularly the tree-lined path adjacent to the courts (q), and the other green spaces which border the river are a key element of this character area. The river setting creates a tranquil character which is particularly evident from the three footbridges which cross it. The bridges are key points within the townscape from which views of the city can be enjoyed (r).

Small squares such as Coslany Square (s) and green pockets of space provide welcome open space in the often quite high density housing developments. St Martin at Palace Plain (t) opens up in front of St Martin's Church and is now partly used as a seating area for the Wig and Pen public house (u). Behind this area, the recent public realm enhancements along the Quayside have created a pleasant pedestrian environment, whilst the eye-catching public art (v) reflects the history of the area and generates points of interest in the street scene.

The character changes significantly further west and north, as the proportion of riverside accessible by the public reduces and the river is lined by building yards/sites and unattractive commercial premises north of the Ring-Road. Large areas of this stretch of the riverside are taken up by surface car parking and large bulky 'shed' premises. The character of the northern riverside area is changing rapidly as more sites are

developed for housing. New Mills Yard (w) with the old Pumping Station and the former factory site on Fishergate are both currently under development; Oak Street (north of the ring road (x)) remains the last big development opportunity.

### Building Types

Wensum Street (y) and the western end of Palace Street contain a number of vernacular buildings in commercial use, but which were presumably originally built as houses. With the exception of the badly War-damaged C15 Great Hall on Oak Street (z), these 2 and 3 storey buildings are the earliest in the area and have their origins in the C16 and C17.

Palace Street, Quayside and St Martin's at Palace Plain contain a good group of C18 and C19 buildings of varying heights, although all of 2 to 3 storeys. They are now in various uses, including a public house and residential, but were all originally probably houses.

The modern housing developments vary in their scale and form depending upon their date of construction. Those dating from before the late 1990s tend to be more standard in their detailing and of 2-3 storeys, whilst the later developments respond better to their context and exhibit traditional detailing, although they are higher, usually 3-4 storeys (1).



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A few traditional industrial/technical buildings such as the Anchor brewery site on Coslany Street and the School of Art (2) remain. Their floor to ceiling heights tend to be taller than domestic structures and St James' Mill rises to 6 storeys. Another historic survival is the small group of 2-3 storey C18 houses on the Quayside.

Low quality large bulky commercial 'shed' structures dominate St Swithin's Road, whilst Oak Street (north of the ring road) is generally lined by single storey mid-late C20 commercial premises such as garages and builders' yards.

A key exception to the buildings described above is the Duke Street apartment block (3) which partially shields a multi-storey car park. It is much higher at 6 storeys than most other buildings in the area, and its form is markedly different and modern.

### Building Details

Most traditional buildings and the modern housing developments in the area are of red brick with pantiled roofs. There are, however, some examples of render on the earlier buildings along the Quayside and St Martin's At Palace Plain, and some timber-framed properties line the western end of Palace Street and Wensum Street. The earlier Great Hall on Oak Street is a flint and brick hall-house.

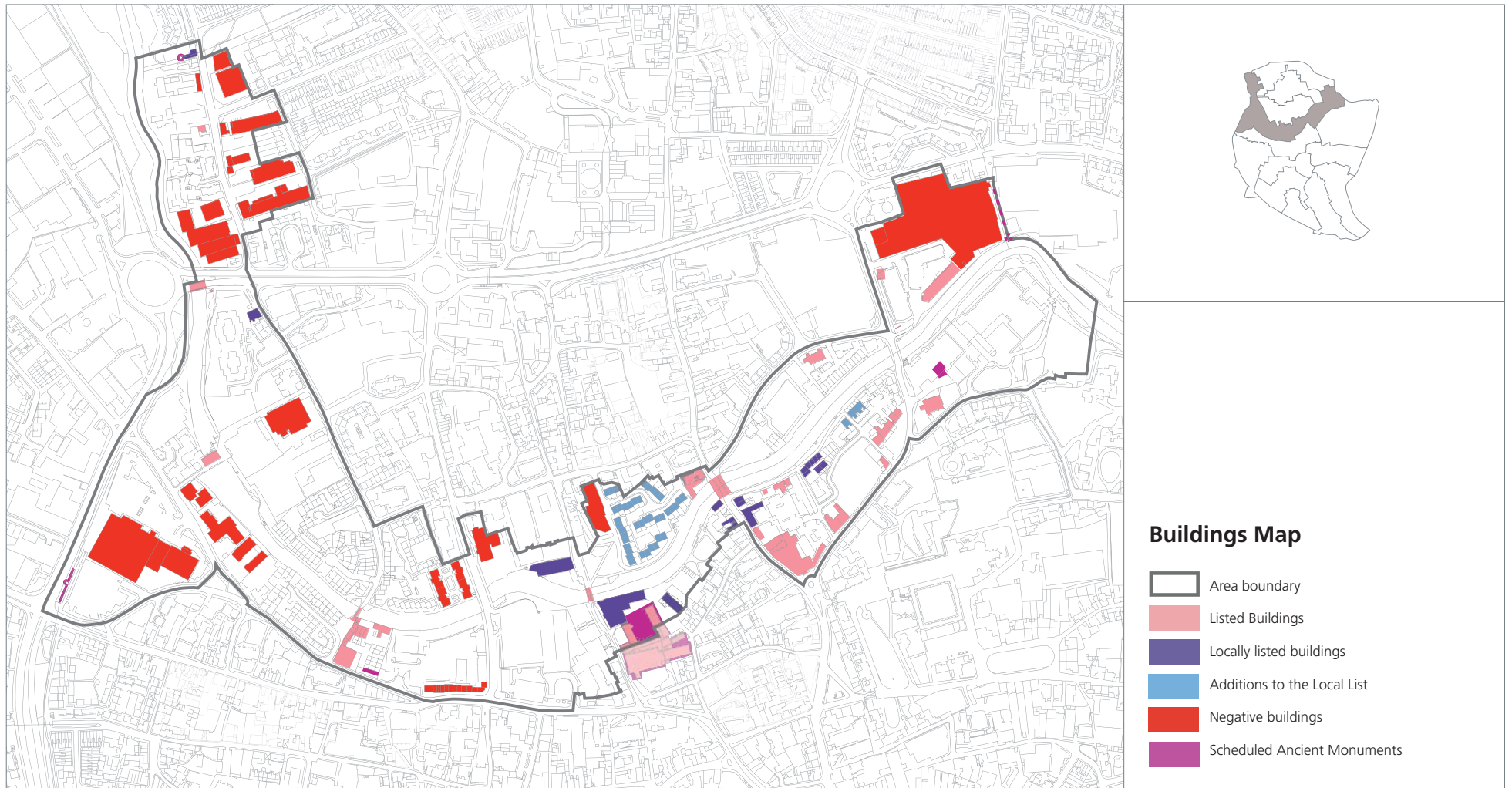
The C18 and C19 domestic buildings have cornice details, sash windows, often with flat or segmental arched heads, and classical door cases and other details typical of the Georgian and Victorian periods; these details vary in grandeur depending on the status of the building. The latest residential developments have tended to mimic such traditional detailing, although some use modern detailing such as timber cladding (St Edmund's Wharf) or have used white brick instead of red (New Mills Yard).

The larger industrial scaled buildings are also of red brick, but with stone (or latterly concrete) detailing and often with large metal casement windows (School of Art), although sashes are common in the earliest examples (Anchor Brewery). C20 commercial premises are often of low-quality materials such as metal-cladding and asbestos sheet roofs (Oak Street and Westwick Street)

The main exceptions to this range of materials and detailing are Mary Chapman Court (4), a concrete 1960s/70s residential development; Silkfields on Oak Street, a Post-modern (1990-92) residential block with varied roof angles; and the Premier Travel Inn and St Andrew's multi-storey car park which are constructed using modern cladding.



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## Management & Enhancement

1. Variation in scale of new buildings appropriate – potential for some larger scale buildings between St George's Street and City Bridge; modest scale should be maintained between Fye Bridge Street and Whitefriars (D2.2 & D6)
2. Maintain, enhance and create river footpaths (LP: SR 11)
3. Reinstall historic building line along Oak Street (B2.3)
4. Views across, from and of the river should be maximised (C1.2 & C2)
5. Retention of existing embankment line and historic features and enhancement of river access (LP: TVA 3 & SR 11)
6. Encouraging increased use of the river and riverside (LP: TVA 3)
7. Enhancing the setting of the City Gates / Walls (LP: HBE 10)
9. Retention of redundant industrial buildings of townscape value (E4)

*Works to the river bank will require the approval of the Broads Authority.*