



## 4. Colegate

### Significance

Concentration of historic buildings

Presence of features from historical period(s)

Townscape / Landscape quality:

Quality of details:

Concentration of negative features:

### Score

### HIGH

VERY HIGH (4)

HIGH (3)

HIGH (3)

VERY HIGH (4)

FEW (3)

17

## Character Area Overview

### Summary

The Colegate area contains Magdalen Street which is the main street north out of Norwich and the shopping centre for the old town on this side of the river. The area comprises small lanes criss-crossing the larger streets which run North and South, essentially continuing the medieval street pattern of the older City centre streets, but with large factories dominating the western streets.

### Topography & Landscape Framework

Colegate lies within the River Wensum valley and there is little change in ground level, except for a very slight rise from the river northwards to the Ring Road. It is likely, however, that the area was 'hillier' before the C18 when minor levelling occurred with many cockeys infilled. The former

topography of the area is still evident in some street lines.

### Town Morphology, History & Archaeology

The Colegate area was settled early, with evidence of late Saxon activity, and occupation expanded westwards during Norman times. The Dominican friars arrived in 1226 and settled off Colegate, although they moved south of the river after 1307.

Norwich was an affluent city in medieval times and several fine merchants' houses were built in the C15. In the C16, there was an influx of 'Strangers' who established communities in the area, revolutionising the cloth trade in the process. By the C18, the textile trade had created a number of affluent merchants who built fine houses

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Extract from 1886 OS map

for themselves. A number of civic buildings were also built in the later C17 and C18 as Norwich society developed.

The textile industry continued to be important in the C19, but leatherworking became more successful and resulted in the building of large factories. The Coslany area was a typical industrial scene in the C19 with factories built from the 1830s onwards. The Norvic company constructed one of the most important in 1876; a purpose-built shoe factory on Colegate by Edward Boardman (a).

In the late C19, the area was a maze of alleys and courtyards, contrasting sharply with the vast factory buildings, often immediately adjacent. The area was badly hit in World War II and its character was further changed with slum clearances in the C20.

Duke Street was widened in 1972 to become a main feeder for the Inner Link Road and much redevelopment of the wider area has occurred since the 1970s.

## Landmarks & Views

Long distance views of the Castle are gained from the northern end of Calvert Street (b), as are views of St Andrew's Hall which is also south of the river. St Clement's Church is an important local landmark as it is the focus of many views from within the area, particularly from Colegate (c) and Golden Dog Lane. St George's Colegate Church (d) and St Mary's Church (e) form the focus of views in the western half of the character area, whilst buildings such as the Octagon Chapel (f), the Old Meeting House (g) and Doughty's Hospital (h) are the subject of glimpsed views.

## Key Building Groups

Colegate contains many houses showing

the wealth of the C18 master-weavers who settled in this area and two of the best early C18 houses (Nos. 18 & 20 Colegate) in Norwich are found here. An example of the courtyard house, so distinctive of Norwich, is Bacon's House (i) which is one of the best houses in the street, dating from the C15. Another fine C15 house, The King of Hearts (j), is found on Fye Bridge Street and was the subject of a significant restoration project in the 1990's.

Magdalen Street (k) has a variety of street frontages dating from the C17 to C19, with some later facades fronting earlier historic cores. Nos. 44-48 have a fine Georgian shopfront and one of the best door-surrounds in the City and Gurney Court, the birthplace of Elizabeth Fry, is an excellent example of a Norwich back court.

Duke Street (l) is predominantly lined by C19 buildings which are far more humble than those found along Colegate, although the school (m) constructed by the Norwich School Board in 1888, is one of the best Victorian buildings in the City centre. There is also an interesting range of buildings on the corner of Duke Street and Muspole Street (n) with an inner courtyard dating from c1480 and mathematical tiles on the Muspole Street frontage.

Individually, the large number of ecclesiastical buildings (including many Non-conformist chapels) in the area is of great interest, and some of them are important local landmarks. The Octagon Chapel, together with the adjacent Martineau

Memorial Hall (o) and its projecting corner bay is an attractive incident along Colegate, whilst the medieval churches exhibit fine flushwork.

Doughty's hospital off Golden Dog Lane is a well known institution in the city and was designed by a local architect of some note, E.E. Benest, in 1869-70. E.E. Benest was also responsible for the City's C19 cemetery buildings.

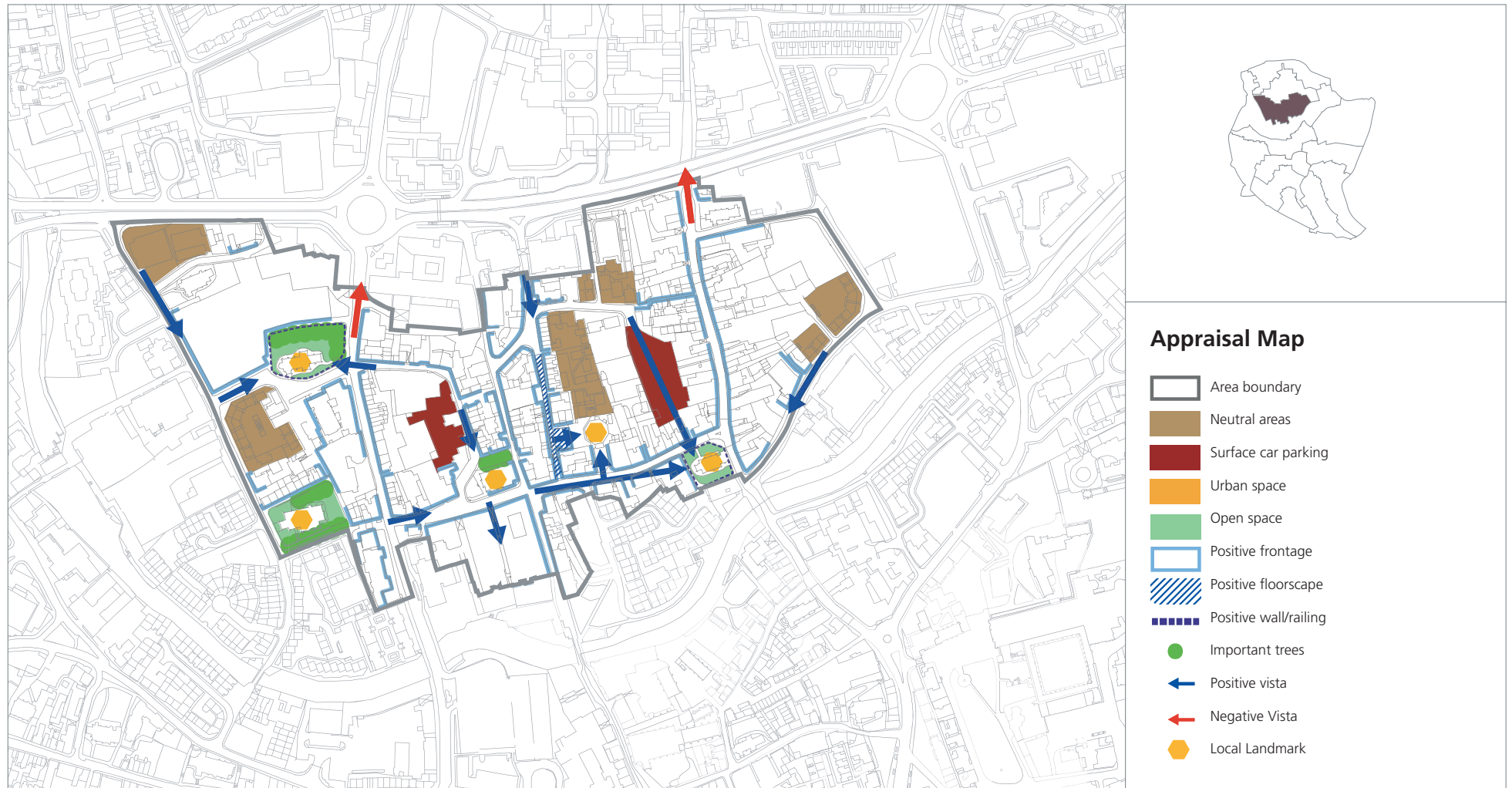
## Current Uses

The main streets remain commercial in nature, though the use has changed from industry to predominantly office and retail. Although many of the numerous places of worship are redundant, many remain in use, but have more secular roles; St Michael Coslany (p) for example has been converted to a Science Centre. The Non-Conformist tradition remains, however, with the Meeting House, the Zoar Chapel (q) and the Octagon Chapel still in their original use. Behind, and often above the ground floors of the main streets are residential units with the minor streets in the area predominantly in residential use.

aa. 7 - 13, Peacock Street  
bb. 44 - 48, Magdalen Street







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## Key Characteristics

### Townscape Elements

The contrast between the small intimate streets, narrow alleys and courtyards, and the large factory buildings provides a dramatic juxtaposition in the townscape of the area, and differentiates it from the medieval areas south of the river.

The tight grain of the buildings, particularly in the central and eastern part of the character area, encloses the streets well, and creates an intimate feel. This character breaks down once Duke Street is reached, however, because the road is wide and is lined by fewer and often larger and more modern buildings with larger spaces between them.

The churchyards provide welcome greenery throughout the area, helping to soften the more industrial western end of Colegate and breaking up the continuous built frontages along streets such as Magdalen Street. Colegate opens up at St George's Plain which could potentially be a key urban space, but its quality is currently eroded by parked cars.

Magdalen Street and Duke Street are unfortunately dominated by heavy traffic as a result of their importance in north-south movements across the city. Colegate, which connects the two is much quieter, as are the many secondary streets and lanes which run off it towards the river or the Ring Road.

Calvert Street is differentiated from the other streets by the granite setts which run the length of the highway, including Octagon Court (r), until it meets Cross Lane (s).

Small features such as the listed bollard on St Clement's Alley (t) and the sundial on the Old Meeting House (u) form attractive details in the streetscene or are glimpsed in views along small alleys.

### Building Types

Four main building types characterise the Colegate area; ecclesiastical, industrial, Merchants Houses and formal Georgian town houses.

The ecclesiastical buildings are split between the medieval churches and the later Non-conformist chapels. The early medieval churches all have different plans and tower details, the most unusual being St Mary Coslany which has possibly the oldest Anglo-Saxon round tower of the three surviving within the city centre. They stand within small churchyards.

The Non-conformist chapels include two Baptist Chapels of different scales, the Unitarian Octagon Chapel and the Old Meeting House which is the oldest remaining Non-conformist chapel in Norwich dating from 1693. The Old Meeting House is tucked away at the end of a narrow alley because Non-Conformists were still



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emerging at the time of its construction, and its architecture is not overly grand. The Octagon Chapel (1756) replaced an earlier Presbyterian chapel built in 1687, and is therefore also set back from the street.

The C19 saw the advent of the purpose built industrial building type which dominates the western side of the Colegate character area. The larger factories tend to be of 4 tall storeys with north light roofs, but smaller scaled units of 2-3 storeys are found along Muspole Street. Other large-scale purpose built buildings, such as the Victorian School on Duke Street, were also constructed in the C19.

Prior to the C19 merchants' houses were built with the wealth created through home-based industry. This type of house is predominantly found along Magdalen Street and Colegate and the earliest ones were 2 & ½ storeys and built around courtyards, with later lucam extensions (v). By the C17, the houses were larger and had increased in height to 3 full storeys. By the C18, speculative building became increasingly common.

Restrained speculative house-building resulted in the fourth building type found throughout the Colegate character area; the formal Georgian town house. The largest examples are of 3 storeys and 5 bays wide with central doorways (w).

Smaller houses of only 2 storeys or of only 2 bays, sometimes forming small rows or terraces, are also common. Examples of these are the Victorian terraces in Calvert Street (x).

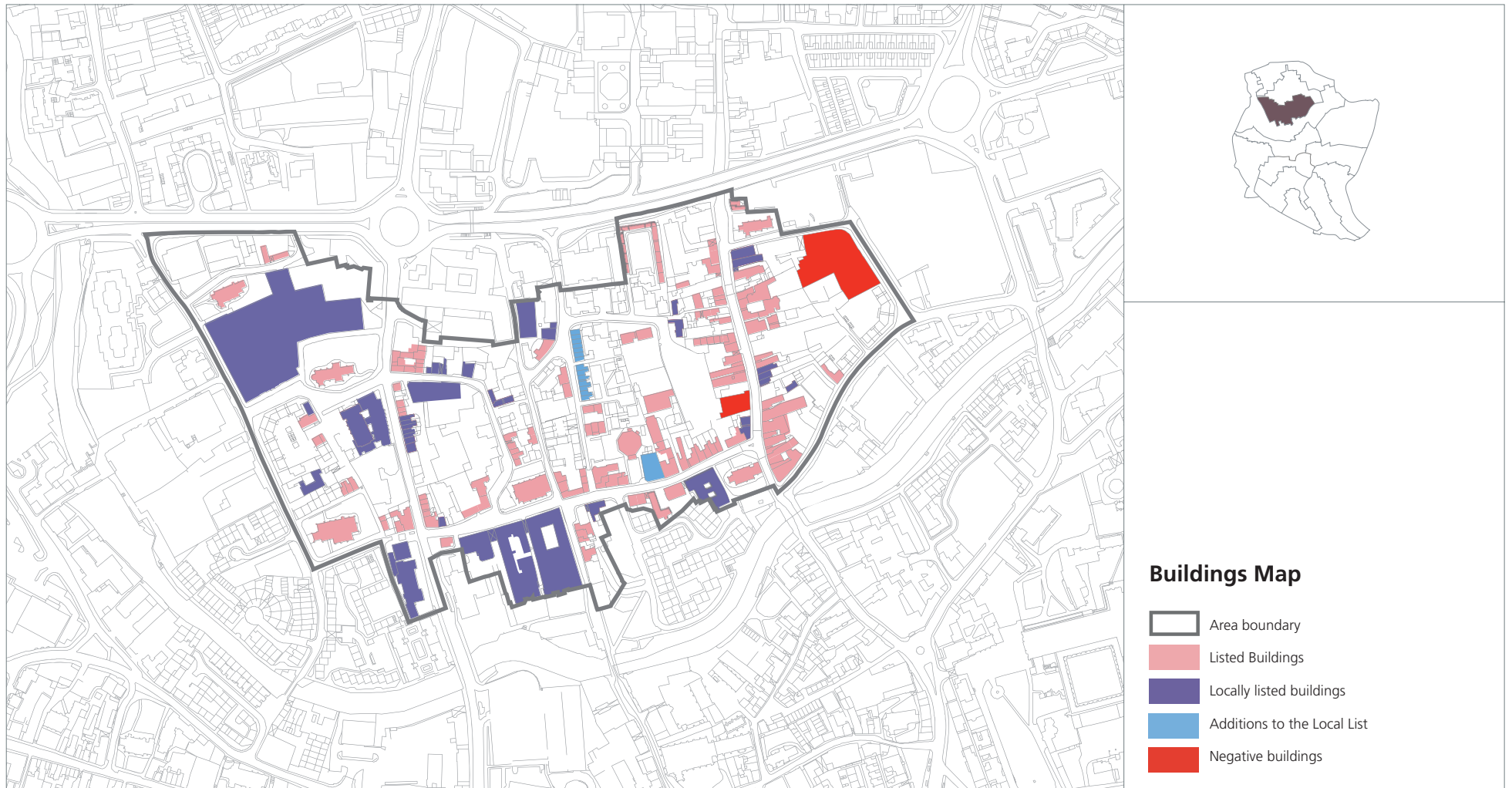
## Building Details

The merchants' houses which by and large date from the C17 or earlier are of timber frame and plaster construction with pantiled roofs (some Roman pantiles) and casement windows, although in the majority of cases, these have been replaced with sashes in Georgian times. Lucams dominate the roof storeys of these houses.

By the C18 houses tended to be built of red brick, still with pantiled roofs, but with sash windows throughout. Entrances tend to be decorative with details such as fanlights, pilasters, carved consoles, Doric friezes and pediments adorning the panelled door. Moulded eaves cornices and rubbed brick flat window arches are also common in properties of this period (y).

Simpler details are exhibited on C19 properties. Pantiles, sometimes black, are still used for roofs, but slate becomes more common. Eaves are still adorned with decorative cornices, but entrances are simpler with restrained details such as flat hoods, fanlights and pilasters. Windows are still sashes, but with fewer panes, and have arched openings. Red brick is generally used,





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sometimes painted, and less commonly, rendered. The main exception to this is the Zoar Baptist Chapel on St Mary's Plain which is of white (grey) brick.

Earlier factories tend to have metal windows, but otherwise follow local tradition by using red brick, although often with stone, or later concrete, detailing. Later C20 buildings tend to employ yellow/buff wire cut bricks.

The medieval churches exhibit fine flintwork with stone dressings. Flint is commonly used on many C16 buildings including Weaver House on St George's Street, Pykerrell's House on St Mary's Plain and Bacon House on Colegate, St George's Street (z). A C20 example is the Employment Exchange building on Colegate.

## Management & Enhancement

1. Reinstate building lines (B2.2)
2. Connect area with other side of ring road (B1.2, B2.2, C2)
3. Traffic-calming in Duke Street (LP: HBE 15 & 18, TRA 6, 14, 26 & 27; Streetscape Design Manual)
4. Redevelopment of St Crispin's House on St George's Street (D1, D2.1, D3, E1.1)
5. Unification of entire lengths of Magdalen Street & Colegate through public realm enhancement works (B1.2)
6. Enhancement of St George's Plain (A1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B5)
7. Retention and refurbishment of large scale industrial buildings, e.g. factories where possible (E4)
8. New large scale development should take its design cue from traditional factory forms (D1, D2.2, E1.2)
9. Potential use of article 4(2)  
Direction to preserve Nos. 13 - 39 (odd) Calvert Street

