



9. St Giles

Significance

Concentration of historic buildings

Presence of features from historical period(s)

Townscape / Landscape quality:

Quality of details:

Concentration of negative features:

Score

HIGH

HIGH (3)

HIGH (3)

VERY HIGH (4)

HIGH (3)

FEW (3)

16

Character Area Overview

Summary

St. Giles is predominantly a residential area, although it contains a number of commercial and leisure uses mainly focussed along St Giles Street. The compact urban grain contains several fine Georgian, Regency and Victorian houses and some earlier timber-framed properties which have been refronted, although a few C17 and earlier properties remain in their original state. There is also a selection of good C19 and early C20 public buildings.

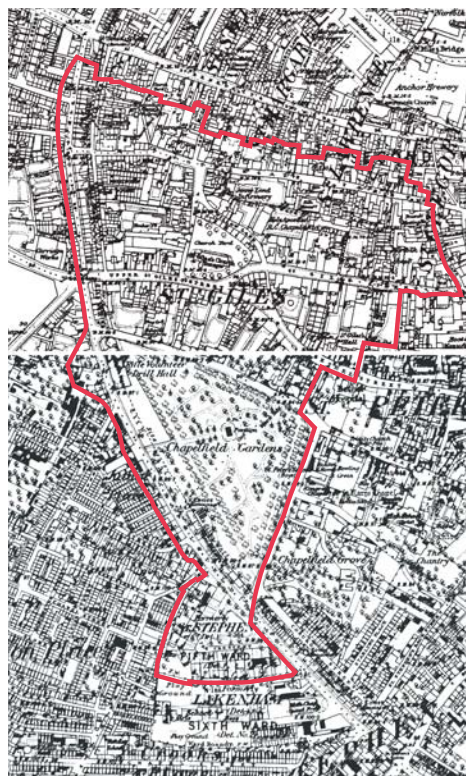
The north-western part of the area in particular has been significantly redeveloped since bomb damage during the Second World War. Throughout much of the

area, however, the townscape is largely coherent with strong building lines and active frontages to the main streets and some of the narrower lanes. In this respect it is similar to the area to the east, though St Giles has a generally more residential character.

Topography & Landscape Framework

The area slopes down towards the river northwards from St Giles allowing some panoramic views to the north (a). Much of the area has a tight urban character where the churchyards provide major opportunity for tree planting to relieve the solid building lines. The exception is Chapelfield Gardens, a significant open space of citywide

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Extract from 1880 - 1886 map

importance, which is the largest public recreation area in the City centre. This also provides a welcome separation between the residential area and the busy traffic on the Inner Ring Road (b). The paths within the gardens are lined with mature trees on either side adding further to its amenity value. The churchyard of St Giles Church is large with several mature trees whilst the open space of Wellington Green stands

- aa. 7 - 11, Bethel Street
- bb. 10 - 14, Ten Bell Lane
- cc. 1 - 21, St Giles Street
- dd. 107, Pottergate
- ee. 6 - 14, St Giles Street



at the centre of a high-density, late C20 housing area.

Town Morphology, History & Archaeology

From Saxon times until at least the C13, the area was a centre of pottery-making, and part of the 'French Borough' after the Norman Conquest. During the C15 and C16 the area was inhabited by wealthy merchants involved in the gold and woollen industries and a large number of undercrofts which stood beneath merchants' houses still survive.

By the C18, the area had become fashionable as a residential area for the middle and wealthier classes with some fine houses built along St Giles Street, Bethel Street and Chapelfield North in particular. The trend continued into the C19 with St Giles being especially popular with doctors showing the wealth of the area.

Pottergate's status appears to have been slightly lower.

Chapelfield Garden, which had been used for recreation since the C17 but was the resort of 'idle boys' and washerwomen by the mid C19, was remodelled from the 1860s-1880s and became a fashionable place for relaxation. The C19 also saw several houses along the main streets converted to shops, the building of several small surgeries and hospitals and erection of schools and Nonconformist chapels as the local population rose.

Second World War bomb damage in April 1942 destroyed much of the western area around Wellington Lane which has now been redeveloped as high-density housing. Cleveland Road was built in the 1970s, linking St Giles to Chapelfield; before this time, both St Giles and Pottergate continued west across the line of the Ring Road.

Landmarks & Views

The 120 ft high tower of St Giles Church is the dominant citywide landmark in the area, its location making it of particular importance in views west along St Giles and Bethel Streets and south up Cow Hill (c). The numerous other churches in the area tend to only be visible from quite close range and are therefore only of importance in localised views.

Two of the City's other major landmarks, the City Hall clock tower and the Roman Catholic Church are very visible within this area dominating views to the east and west respectively. Both are especially important in views along St Giles (d) and Upper St Giles Street (e).

Some other buildings such as the St Giles House Hotel and No. 68 Bethel Street (Churchman's House (f)) can also be considered to be landmarks because of their architectural style, materials and location within the streetscene.

The gradient of the slope means that some views up Cow Hill are of townscape interest, and there is a view of the remains of St Benedict's Church tower across Wellington Green (g).

Vantage House (h) on Pottergate is a negative landmark in the area due to its scale, height, bulk and architectural style.

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Key Building Groups

Built in the C14, St. Giles Church, with its tall tower (i), is the most recognisable building in the Character Area and addresses the space that was damaged by the construction of Cleveland Road. The numerous other churches and chapels in the area are also of significant architectural and historic interest (j *Chapel, Willow Lane*).

Telephone House (now the St. Giles House Hotel), built by George Skipper in 1906 of Portland stone, is the St Giles equivalent of the Norwich Union Headquarters on Surrey Street and is a similarly imposing feature in the street due to the use of stone and its Edwardian Baroque decoration. There are several other fine houses along St Giles Street dating generally from the C18 and C19, though some have earlier cores (k).

The streets around Chapelfield Gardens also have several good C18 houses along them. Churchman's House, opposite St. Giles Church, is a particularly fine example at a prominent position in the street. This was the home of Alderman Thomas Churchman. Close by on Chapelfield North are several more fine examples of Georgian and Regency houses. Ninham's Court is a small complex of houses possibly dating from the C16 with a very good C15 undercroft. Many of the visible buildings are, however, C17 with later alterations and the result of a C19 restoration.

St Giles Terrace is an early C19 row of houses, tucked away off Bethel Street (l), and St Mary's Croft, which dates from 1881, is a particularly good and unusual late C19 property facing Chapelfield Gardens (m). The Crescent off Chapel Field Road is a wedge shaped terrace of 1820 with two rows of red brick properties forming two sides of a triangular space.

Current Uses

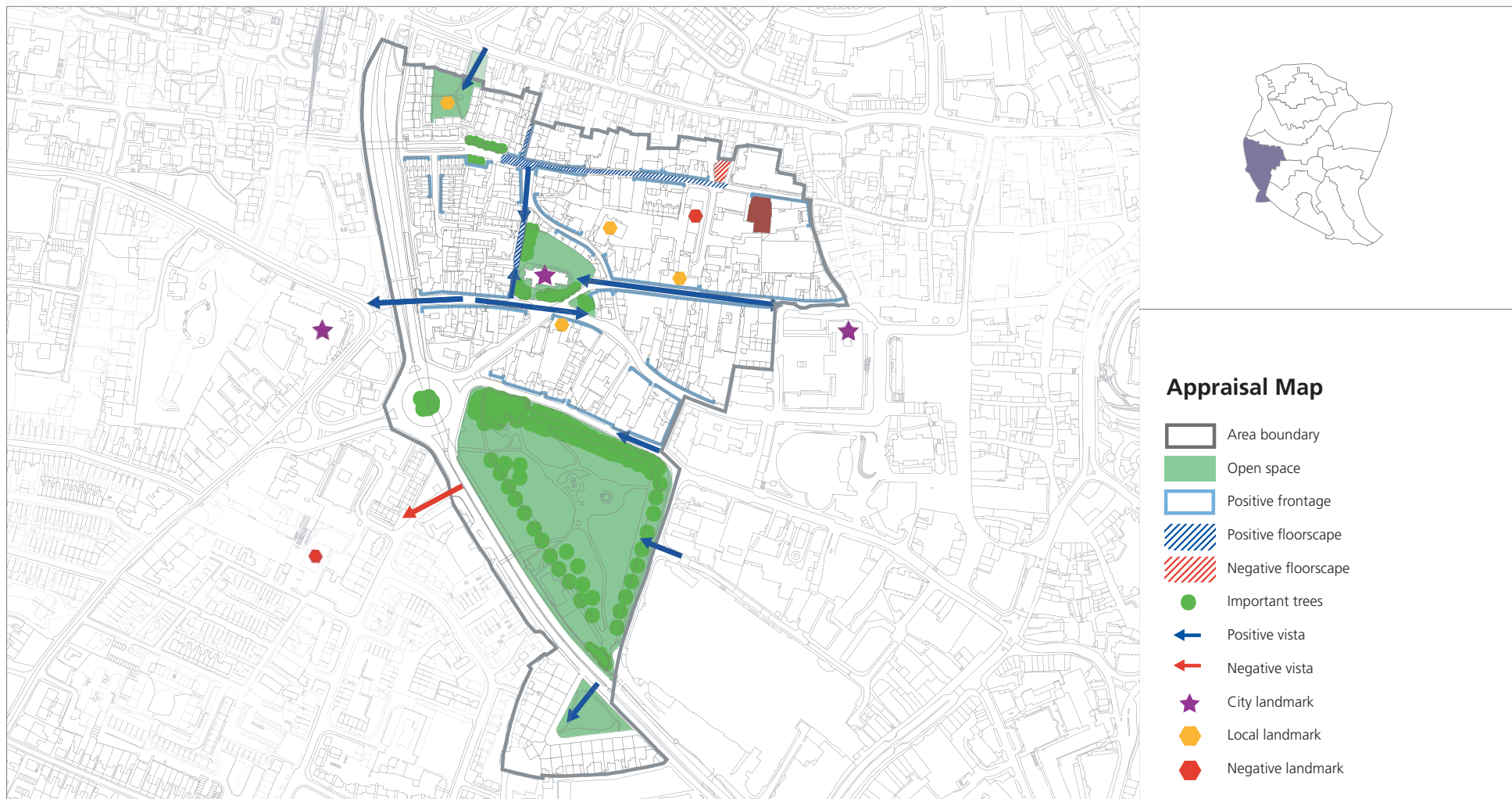
The western part of the area is predominantly residential with houses of various sizes dating mostly from the C18 to C20. The streets running east-west, particularly St. Giles and Upper St. Giles Streets are home to numerous restaurants, cafés and specialist retail outlets.

There are several churches of various denominations in the area, some of which have been converted to other uses since the 1960s. There are also several offices, some in converted houses and some obtrusive late C20 purpose-built blocks.

Chapelfield Gardens is the largest recreation space in the Central Conservation Area and is popular with walkers and joggers, and houses a children's nursery at its southern end.



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Key Characteristics

Townscape Elements

Just like the area to the east, much of the St Giles area is characterised by a grid of streets with the main routes running east-west and narrower lanes and passages running northwards towards the river. Both the narrower lanes and the wider streets are characterised by their strong built frontages with most buildings hard on the footpath edge. Earlier buildings tend to be individual structures, often on narrow plots, though by the C18 and C19 century more consistent blocks of similar or identical style can be found giving more formality to the streetscene.

Although a number of courts have been lost, several still survive to the rear of buildings which front streets such as St Giles Street. This is an important characteristic of this and several other areas of Norwich, with glimpsed views of the rear yards often possible through the cart openings in the blocks along the street frontage.

Early C20 terraces survive towards the western end of the area (n), but most of this area was remodelled after the Second World War (o) with blocks of houses arranged around green spaces and open courts.

C20 interventions such as office buildings and a multi-storey car park are negative features of the area not just because of their height and style but because of their

monolithic nature, footprint and often uncharacteristic building lines.

The streets closest to the river tend to lack significant areas of open space and greenery; those to the south take advantage of the trees and open space in Chapelfield Gardens to add variety and setting to the groups of high quality houses (p). The only exceptions are the churchyards, of which St Giles is by far the most important. The slight widening of the road where Cow Hill / Ten Bell Lane and Pottergate meet is an interesting informal space well enclosed by buildings of various ages (q). The space slightly to the west, outside No. 104 Pottergate also allows for a significant tree to add further interest to the townscape here.

Cow Hill and Ten Bell Lane both retain their granite setts surface which adds texture to the streetscene and complements the buildings along it. The resurfacing along Pottergate, although modern, is equally pleasing and adds significantly to the quality of the street (r).

Building Types

At first sight, the area is characterised by Georgian houses, usually of 2-3 storeys interspersed with timber-framed courtyard houses along the principal streets. Some of the Georgian houses are façades covering earlier structures, however, whilst numerous undercrofts dating to the C15 often betray the presence of merchants' houses which

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have been rebuilt or altered. Bethel Street contains the greatest concentration of C17 and earlier buildings in the area, including No.51, the Coach & Horses PH which dates from the C16 (s).

The area towards Chapelfield Gardens has some exceptional Georgian, Regency and Victorian houses. Whilst some similar properties survive on Pottergate (t) and St Giles Street, the popularity of these streets for commercial uses has seen a more significant amount of rebuilding in the C19 and C20.

Within the area are four medieval churches and two significant C19 Nonconformist places of worship. Along the main streets are several blocks of fine C19 and early C20 commercial properties of which the former Telephone House is the most exuberant and noteworthy example. There is even a former ice rink (1877) behind No.48 Bethel Street which is now used as a warehouse.

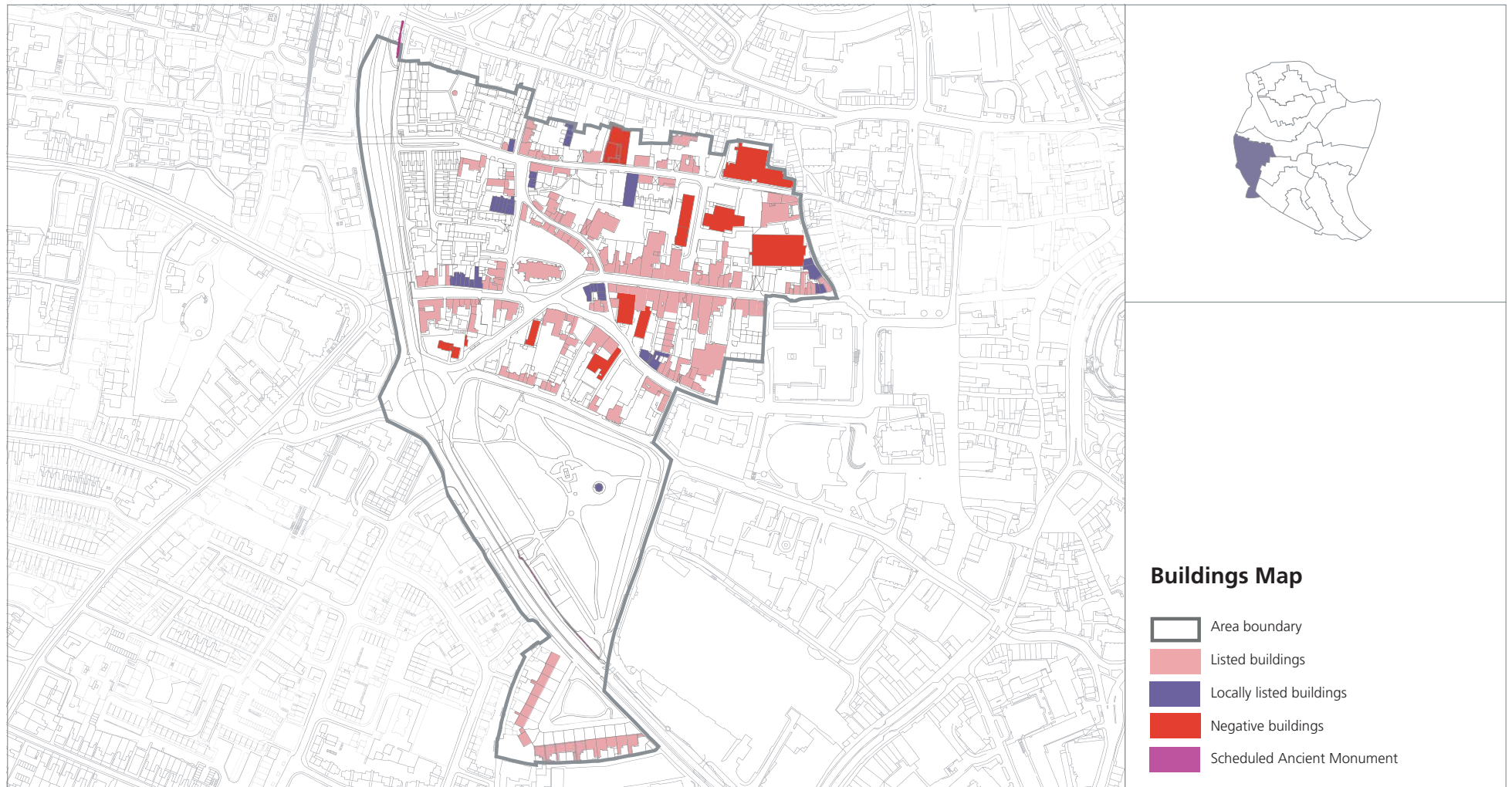
Building Details

The Georgian façades exhibit much period detail including classical Georgian doorways with columns. The Georgian houses in Chapel Field North have ornate cast-iron trellis work, whilst some Victorian properties have interesting chimney details (u), which not only add individuality to the buildings, but reflect the wealth of the original owners.

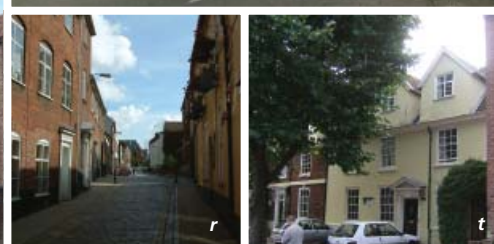
The C17 Ninham's Court has long runs of 7 & 8 pane mullion windows visible from the alleyway which connects Chapel Field North and Bethel Street and the mid C18 Holkham House on Cow Hill has Palladian half-pediments, whilst the C16 Coach & Horses public house on Bethel Street has a rendered timber-frame on a flint rubble ground floor.

Some of the shops along St. Giles and Upper St. Giles Streets have surviving Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts, which enhance the attractiveness of the streetscene and are appropriate to the specialist retail nature of the street (v).

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Management & Enhancement

1. Reinstatement of historic building line along Pottergate and west end of St Benedict's Street (B2.2, C2)
2. New buildings must be designed to take account of changing gradients (A2, C2, D1, D3, D6, D7)
3. New buildings should respect the domestic scale of existing buildings (D2.1)

