



10. St Stephens

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)

MANY (1)

10

Character Area Overview

Summary

This area contains the majority of the large department stores, shopping malls and national chains and also includes the City's main bus interchange. It is as a result busy with both pedestrians and traffic and is characterised by large buildings or blocks of buildings. It is modern in feel, although many of the buildings are historic and the area is also important archaeologically. The main routes are wide with spaces often at the junction of streets, indicating the former market uses of the area.

Topography & Landscape Framework

The area lies on the lower slopes of the Ber Street escarpment and this hilliness is evident in the key spaces such as Hay Hill which rises westwards. The churchyards of the three churches in the area are the key green spaces in the area.

Area Morphology, History & Archaeology

The area to the west and south of the castle formed the focus of the planned Norman development and the market spilled out from the market place into the

ST STEPHENS



Extract from 1880 OS map

surrounding streets where specialist markets evolved. Timberhill for example was the timber market in the middle ages, but since the 1970s, the area has been extensively restored and infilled and it became partly subsumed into the Castle Mall development in 1993. The cattle market, which was formed in 1738 from the levelling of the Castle earthworks south of the mound, was also redeveloped as part of the Castle Mall.

St Stephens Street has always been a major route into the city from the west and has been regularly widened since the Thetford Turnpike was opened in 1767. As a result, its C14 gate was one of the first to be demolished after 1791. The street was to be widened for motor cars in the 1930s, but the City Council could not decide whether to demolish the west or east side – heavy

- aa.** 18 - 20, Westlegate
- bb.** Haymarket, rear of 21 - 24
- cc.** 2 - 6, Rampant Horse Street
- dd.** 65 - 75, St Stephen's Street
- ee.** 7 - 10, Orford Hill

bombing of the east side in the Baedeker air raids made the decision for them, and the road was rebuilt (and widened) by 1963. Red Lion Street, the continuation of St Stephen's Street, was also widened in 1899 to allow for trams and the whole of the south east side was rebuilt after 1900.

The most recent development is also the largest; the Chapelfield development sits on the site of a former chocolate factory, adjacent to the ring road which follows the line of the city walls.

Landmarks & Views

The castle, although adjoining the character area, is sited on a hill and as a result of the built form and street pattern that surrounds it, is surprisingly invisible from most parts of the St Stephens area. Clear views of the

castle are only really gained from Red Lion Street and Farmers Avenue (a).

St Peter Mancroft Church, although outside the character area, dominates the Haymarket shopping area (b). St Stephen's Church is important to the Chapelfield shopping area (c), whilst The Forum looms large at the top of Hay Hill (d).

Key Building Groups

The Timberhill area has an attractive range of buildings, in particular the group of timber-framed properties that terminate views south along Timberhill from Orford Hill (e). The two flint churches with their tree-filled churchyards, also at the southern end of Timberhill, form an attractive end-point in views north along All Saints Green and Ber Street (f).



Red Lion Street was rebuilt in 1900 by the two leading architects of the day, George Skipper and Edward Boardman. As a result the street is lined by tall Dutch-inspired shops and houses with Baroque elements (g). A few early C19 buildings survive in the west side of St Stephens Street. Gentleman's Walk is the city's Georgian street and contains a fine range of commercial buildings despite a refurbishment in the 1960s.

Current Uses

The area is almost exclusively in retail use, although service industries (banks, estate agents, etc.) and restaurants, cafés and bars are also dotted throughout. Some buildings are in office use above the ground floor (h).

The main exceptions to these uses are the bus station (i) and multi-storey car parks found at the southern side of the area where it adjoins the Ring Road. The recent Chapelfield development also contains residential apartments which help to break up the bulk of the large block (j).

ST STEPHENS



ST STEPHENS



Key Characteristics

Townscape Elements

The scale and form of the character area varies greatly, but it is unified by the continuous shop frontages which integrate the buildings from different periods. These streets in conjunction with the more intimate lanes and alleys further north, are the busiest in the City.

The east side of St Stephens Street dates entirely from the mid-late C20 and has a shabbier appearance than the streets further north (**k**), although this slight decline may be reversed with the newly opened Chapelfield development and the recent streetscape improvements. The large scale of this street contrasts sharply with Timberhill (**l**) and the streets off Castle Street which are more like the Elm Hill and Maddermarket character area in scale, but with later buildings and infill redevelopment.

Two of the three churches in the area are located at the southern end of Timberhill. St John the Baptist Church is slightly overshadowed by the bulk of the Castle Mall behind, but the churchyard and its trees, combined with the slight widening of Timberhill, create a small informal open space. All Saints' Centre is enclosed by surrounding development, particularly Norwich's first tower block, Westgate Tower (**m**). In contrast, St Stephen's Church has a more open aspect, almost forming part of the Chapelfield development. Public

ST STEPHENS



footpaths pass through its churchyard which has striking modern 'public art' railings enclosing it (n).

The smaller streets such as Orford Place (o) run between Gentleman's Walk and Red Lion Street which are lined predominantly by highly decorated Victorian buildings. The area's largest urban space, Hay Hill opens up at the southern end of Gentleman's Walk where the street becomes Haymarket. Hay Hill (p) is a small space that serves as an informal meeting place, dominated by St Peter Mancroft to the north.

The main wide streets terminate in Castle Meadow which has become an informal bus station with an almost continuous line of bus shelters, although the city's bus station actually lies at the southern end of the

character area. This main route into the City centre has been subject to a public realm enhancement scheme and all street furniture (railings, planting trellises, benches, bins, bus shelters, etc.) is in matching stainless steel.

The majority of the streets are paved in a variety of stone and/or concrete slabs. Although these are not untidy or ill-maintained, a more uniform (and high quality) approach to surface treatments could perhaps unite and/or highlight the hierarchy of these well-used streets. This would differentiate between the character of the 'lane'-like mostly pedestrian streets such as Timberhill and White Lion Street (q), the more formal and wider pedestrian routes of Gentleman's Walk and Haymarket, and the wide vehicular routes of St Stephens / Red Lion Street and Rampant Horse Street (r).



ST STEPHENS



Building Types

Because the area has been subject to so much redevelopment over the years, the area contains a wide variety of building types; the main types are summarised below.

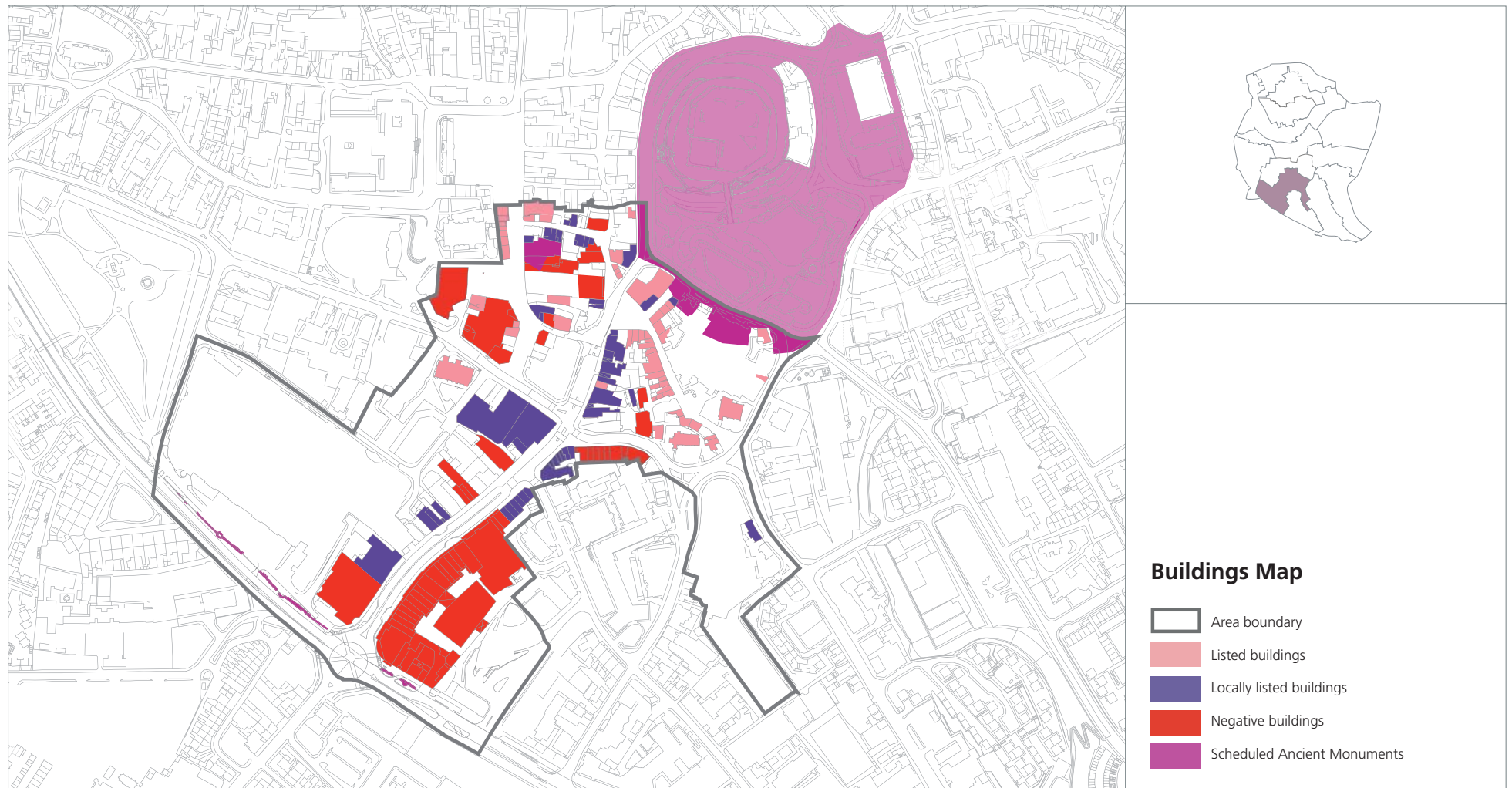
The earliest buildings date from the C16 and C17 and are found along Timberhill. They were probably built as houses, but because of their location, would have been converted to shops or public houses early in their development.

Georgian and Victorian buildings are also found in the Timberhill area (**s**). These tend to have been built as 3 storey houses originally, although some were purpose built as shops. They sit hard on the back of the footpath, usually in short rows.

Purpose built commercial buildings are found throughout the character area, although the earliest examples are interspersed with the Georgian and Victorian Buildings, but the best group is found along Red Lion Street (**t**) which was rebuilt at the turn of the C19/ C20. These early commercial buildings are of 4 storeys and form continuous frontages with a strong vertical emphasis.

Later C20 commercial development varies between the small 2 storey infill shop units found along Castle Street and the surrounding narrow streets, and the huge blocks of post-War redevelopment such as Brigg Street (**u**) and modern shopping malls such as Chapelfield which are located around the Ring Road.

ST STEPHENS



ST STEPHENS

Building Details

Timber-framed properties with jettied upper floors are relatively rare in this character area, though two thatched properties survive, which is a relatively high proportion for one area. Timber framing is usually restricted to the first floor with red brick and occasionally flint used at ground floor. Casement windows usually survive in dormers, but most windows are early sashes.

Most C18 and C19 buildings are of red brick with pantile roofs, although slate becomes increasingly common in the second half of the C19 and the brick is sometimes painted. Sash windows, usually with rubbed brick flat arched heads are widespread, as are bracket cornices and semi-circular fanlights above doors.

Portland stone and faience are used extensively in the early C20 buildings along with Dutch-inspired and Baroque architectural features. Building façades from this period are heavily decorated with swags and wreaths, consoles and balconies. Most shopfronts are C20 replacements.

Management & Enhancement

1. Promote good new shopfronts to replace poor ones along Gentleman's Walk and Haymarket (E2.2)
2. Control advertising on shopfronts (E3.3)
3. Create high quality streetscape which respects and enhances the character of the individual streets (B1.3, B3, C3, D5)
4. Re-organisation of All Saints Green / All Saints Street / Westlegate junction to create a high quality key urban space (A1.2, B1.3, B2.3)
5. Enhance the St Stephen's gateway area through high quality development (B4, D1, D2.2, D3, D6, D7, E1.2)
6. Redevelopment of St Stephen's Street Towers and Westlegate Tower (C1.2, D1)

