

# Old Market Square Conservation Area

## Draft Character Summary and Analysis





# Old Market Square Conservation Area Analysis

## Introduction



Nottingham Market Place and Exchange c.1900 © Picture Nottingham

The Old Market Square Conservation Area was designated in 1969. The original boundary was extended in October 1995 to its current position. It is the City's longest standing conservation area and is one of the most dynamic in terms of economic activity.

As the central focus of settlement for over 1000 years the history of the development of Nottingham from market town to city and regional centre is reflected in its character. The City Council is committed to ensuring its special architectural and historic interest and its recognised cultural value is preserved and enhanced, whilst achieving successful growth and economic prosperity in what is the historic heart of the City.

This document is a Character Summary and analysis of the conservation area.

## Location

The conservation area takes its name from the Old Market Square, a large open space of medieval origins and considerable historic significance located at the heart of the city centre. The designated area embraces the historic retail and commercial streets that surround the square, excluding the late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments of the Broadmarsh and Victoria Shopping Centres that abut the conservation area boundary to the south and north (respectively). The conservation area is centred on a natural 'bowl', with land rising to the north, east and west. Views of its skyline are limited from most approaches to the city because of the terrain, though evident from the Castle on higher land to the west.

## Historic Context



Nottingham Market Place 1812 © Nottinghamshire Archives

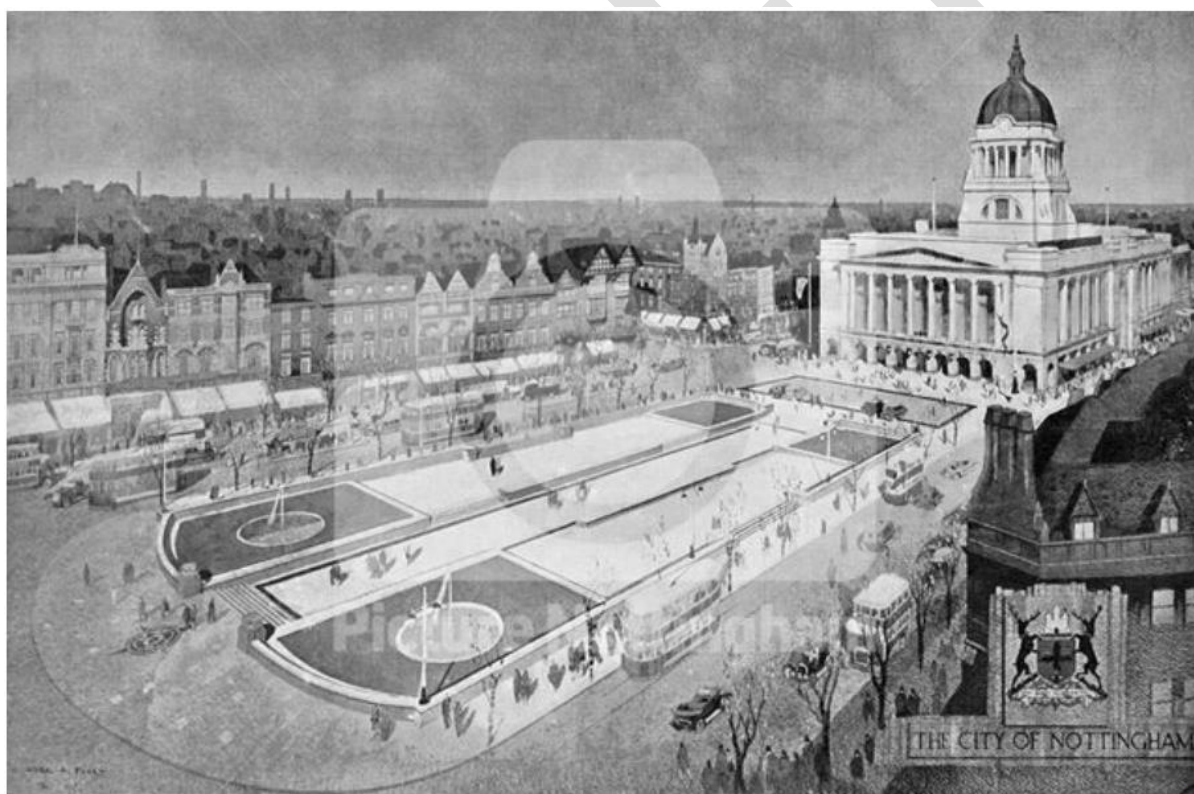
The area defined by the conservation area was first settled in the Norman period. Its development came with a Royal Charter in c. 1155 that conferred on Nottingham the right to hold markets. The market place developed on an area of relatively flat land along with the historic street pattern, in evidence today, forming east west links between the earlier Anglo Saxon Settlement, the market place and the Norman Castle. Increasing wealth during the medieval period was evidenced by the construction of substantial properties, typically the three storey townhouses and mansions of a prosperous medieval market town.

The Georgian period saw the blossoming of the town as a centre for industry and 'society', leading to the development of townhouses for the gentry focussing along the medieval thoroughfares of The Pavements, Castle Gate, Hounds Gate and St James's Street. It was a 'green' town of its day with

orchards and tree-lined roads. Throughout the period its success as a centre for manufacturing particularly lace making, led to its rapid growth. Warehouses, factories and workshops replaced many of its medieval buildings, and the orchards and open land were developed.

The Victorian period brought new buildings of a grand scale and 'improvement' with new wide roads, built for traffic, replacing the narrow medieval yards and lanes as the main thoroughfares. This changed the historic east west axis of the town to north south. Purpose built town centre properties began the early transformation of the character of Nottingham from that of a market town to a city. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the market place was not only the focus of the long standing weekly markets and annual Goose Fair, but was also the hub of a busy transport network.

In 1897 City status was conferred on Nottingham and early 20<sup>th</sup> century development saw the fulfilment of its 'new' role as a retail and commercial centre for an expanding city and regional population. The transformation of the character of the centre reached its zenith with the replacement of the Georgian 'Old Exchange' and the earlier buildings on 'Cheapside' with the neo-classical Council House and Exchange Buildings in 1929. At the same time the former medieval market place was remodelled into a grand 'processional route'; a development that was to bring an end the 800-year tradition of the weekly market and annual Goose Fair which was relocated out of the centre.



T. Cecil Howitt's designs for the Council House, Exchange Buildings and Processional Way, 1928 © Picture

The transformation of the centre continued into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most significant development of the time was the construction of Maid Marian Way, which severed the historic links between the Old Market Square and the Castle. Its construction also resulted in the subsequent redevelopment of the land along its frontages with high-rise commercial properties. High-rise



development was also introduced into the city centre, due west of the Old Market Square along Beast Market Hill and Wheeler Gate.

## Archaeology



Cheapside, Nottingham c. 1900 © Picture Nottingham

The entire conservation area falls within an Archaeological Constraints Area (Local Plan Policy HE1) and contains a number of sites of known archaeological importance including a rock cut cellar under 8 Castle Gate which is the only scheduled monument within the area. A scheduled section of the medieval town wall survives just outside the conservation area at the end of Chapel Bar. The large number of caves that were dug into the sandstone in locations throughout the area are a distinctive feature of its

archaeology. All of the caves are man-made, cut out of the bedrock to perform a large range of different uses including tanning, malting, brewing, wine cellarage and general storage. Many were brought back into use and expanded during the Second World War to provide shelter from air raids. Nottingham has more man-made caves than anywhere else in the country.

## Character Summary



Milton Street and Parliament Street, 1895 © Picture Nottingham

The Old Market Square Conservation Area encompasses the retail core of the historic centre of Nottingham and retains the ambience of Nottingham's origins as a market town; with a network of enclosed and tightly built up streets providing an intimate and informal backdrop to the commercial and social life of the city. The character of the conservation area and the city as a whole is influenced by a large formal square at the heart of the city centre; one of the largest market squares in the country. Unlike certain other large cities, there are no distinct zones for different activities; shopping, commerce and leisure interweave, coming together at the Old Market Square to feed it with a continuous random mix of shoppers, office workers and visitors throughout the day and evening.

From its evolution from medieval market town to modern city, the orientation and linkages between the Old Market Square and the streets of medieval settlement remain legible and are a key component of the historic townscape. Critically, a significant number of the medieval yards survive to the present day. These narrow pedestrian thoroughfares, approached through over-arched entrances between buildings, provide intimate pedestrian linkages away from the bustle of the city streets.

The complex topography of the conservation area is one of its defining elements. The majority of streets cut across the slope of the land thereby emphasising its contribution to the character of the conservation area. A number converge on the relatively flat open space of the Old Market Square creating a dramatic entrance to the central open space. In an area characterised by sloping topography, the contribution of the skyline is also significant, though the legibility of the landform

has been undermined particularly to the south of the Old Market Square by the construction of high-rise buildings since the 1960s.

Spaces, both large and small contribute to both the townscape and the function of the conservation area. The Old Market Square's position at the convergence of a number of thoroughfares makes it the natural focal point. Smaller informal spaces such as St Peters Square, Low Pavement and High Street also provide areas for respite and relaxation. The hidden gems are the narrow medieval alleyways, courtyards and lanes, mostly positioned out of sight behind the main street frontages, which provide the setting for bars and restaurants as well as offices.

The architectural quality of the conservation area is high with buildings representing all periods of development from the medieval period until the present day. Fine examples of each period (included on the Statutory List of Historic Buildings) are located throughout the conservation area and contribute significantly to the overall townscape quality. The majority of the conservation area's buildings date from the 18th and late 19th/early 20th century, reflecting the periods of rapid growth in the town's commercial history. A small but significant number of buildings pre-date that time including the earliest surviving buildings of the Church of Saint Peter with Saint James and the Bell Inn (both 15th century), together with 11 Bridlesmith Gate (early 16th century). Equally there are a small number of outstanding buildings from the early 20th century including the Council House and Exchange Buildings, the centrepiece of the conservation area and the City.

There are three distinct periods of development where buildings survive in sufficient numbers to contribute significantly to the townscape. These include the neoclassical styles of the Georgian period focused along Lower Pavement, Castle Gate and Hounds Gates; the revival buildings of the Victorian period principally found along Market Street, King's Street and Queen's Street, and the range of Art Deco and revival styles from the early 20th century located throughout the conservation area. High-rise development from the late 20th century is also a feature of the conservation area, although it is not of significant architectural quality, and undermines the character of the conservation area particularly to the west of the Market Square. The contribution of buildings to the character of the conservation area is further enhanced by the sloping topography and the curve of the city's earlier medieval thoroughfares, which results in buildings closing views and creating focal points within the townscape.



Wheeler Gate – looking towards St. Peter's Church c. early 20<sup>th</sup> Century © Picture Nottingham

The character of the conservation area has evolved over many years of development and redevelopment, which has created thoroughfares of distinct character defined by the predominant period and type of building along their frontages. The gradual increase in scale of development over the centuries remains legible with the survival of distinct areas that correspond to the transformation from market town to city and regional centre.





Long Row West, c. 1910 © Picture Nottingham

## Medieval Streets

Bridlesmith Gate and St James's Street, in particular, have retained the ambience of medieval Nottingham, their continual evolution over the centuries has resulted in a diversity of architectural styles of materials along the frontages. However, the characteristically narrow plot widths of earlier settlement and building heights of between two and three stories, are a key surviving characteristic. These thoroughfares retain the intimacy of the medieval town, as do the narrow yards and lanes that run perpendicular to the main thoroughfares throughout the conservation area.

**Bridlesmith Gate** is a thoroughfare of significant architectural quality and includes buildings of noted architectural interest from the medieval period to the present day. The earliest surviving buildings from the medieval period and buildings from the Victorian revival combine to retain the essence of its character as a medieval thoroughfare, which is characterised by strong sense of enclosure, narrow plot widths, the vertical emphasis of its buildings and its complex roofscape. A variety of construction dates give rise to a range of building materials, period styles and a slight variation in roof heights, though buildings are predominantly of two to three stories. Bridlesmith Gate also includes buildings from the late 20th century that have been successfully designed to respect the scale of the established frontage, though not all display the architectural quality of the buildings from the earlier periods.



The high quality of the townscape along Bridlesmith Gate is undermined by the divergence from the building line at number 34 to 44, and the widening the entrance to Pepper Street (an important medieval thoroughfare that formerly linked Bridlesmith Gate to Wheeler Gate and Beast Market Hill) resulting in the characteristic loss of enclosure. The adjacent medieval thoroughfare of Pepper Street was truncated in the late 20th century with an extension to the Marks & Spencer store along Albert Street. The loss of buildings along its frontage and the unprepossessing view of the rear of the store and the service entrance further undermine the character Bridlesmith Gate.

The historic character of Bridlesmith Gate contributes significantly towards its success as one of a number of key shopping thoroughfares in the conservation area. The domestic origin of a number of its buildings has resulted in a concentration of small specialist shops selling high-value goods. The pedestrianisation of the street in the late 20th century enhanced its character as an intimate thoroughfare of human scale, which is a key feature of its overall ambience. Retail uses predominate, though a number of cafés and café bars have become established along the street and its environs, which create continuing levels of activity during evening hours



**St James's Street** was one of the historic routes to the castle, severed by the construction of Maid Marian Way. It is of high architectural quality with a cluster of listed 18th and early 19th century buildings surviving at its core. The domestic scale of these buildings, a number of which are former Georgian townhouses, combined with the narrowness of the thoroughfare create an intimacy that reflects its medieval origins. The uncharacteristic high-rise development from the 1960s at Beast Market Hill undermines the street's architectural

character at the entrance from the Old Market Square while development fronting the Ring Road similarly undermined its character at its entrance from Maid Marian Way. The traditional buildings display a range period styles, including a former music hall with a high-quality frontage.

St James's Street is remote from the retail core of the conservation area. Although there are a number of retail outlets, leisure uses predominate and define the ambience of the street which comes to life in the early evening. Though pedestrianisation has had a positive impact on its overall ambience, the view of Maid Marian Way along the street and the high-rise buildings at its entrances have undermined its historic setting.

### **Yards**

A significant number of medieval yards survive to the present day and are located throughout the conservation area. The yards are characteristically narrow pedestrian alleyways of around 2m in width, running perpendicular to the street, over sailed by buildings along the main street frontages. Their strong sense of enclosure and their remoteness from the traffic create intimate pedestrian linkages within the town centre away from the bustle of the city's main streets. In this way they make a significant contribution to the urban environment.

The yards provide an insight into the early industrial past of the city with the survival of a number of former warehouses, small factories and artisan houses that are otherwise hidden behind the main street frontages. The yards are characterised by the close juxtaposition of buildings of different types, periods and scale. The prevalence of Nottingham red brick is a significant unifying element. The character of a number of the yards has been undermined by progressive extensions to the large retail units fronting the main streets which have resulted in the loss of the smaller earlier buildings. The modern day function of a number of the yards as service accesses also undermines their overall character. Of the many yards that survive (see plan), those that are in active use, particularly Greyhound Street, Poultry Arcade and especially Hurts Yard make a significant contribution to the character and vitality of the conservation area and the city as a whole.

**Hurts Yard** is the most complete in terms of surviving frontages and the continued use of the buildings along it. This steeply sloping, narrow route, varies in width between 1 and 1.5 metres. The small traditional shop units on either side date from the 18th century and earlier. The architectural quality of the shopfronts contributes significantly to the character of the thoroughfare. Late 20th century development along the eastern frontage is of a good quality has retained the traditional plot width and height. As with all yards, the predominant material is brick, though a number of the properties are rendered. The natural York stone surfacing along its length contributes significantly to its character.



## Georgian Streets

Georgian streets convey a restrained grandeur and an overall unity of character. Within the conservation area; Castle Gate, Hounds Gates and Low Pavement are the key surviving thoroughfares. All retain their earlier medieval alignment and many of the buildings follow traditional narrow burgage plot widths, continuing the interest and variety of architectural detailing at street level. The redevelopment of Castle Gate and Hounds Gate in the 18th and 19th century with taller warehouse buildings of four and five stories, combined with the narrowness of the roads,



create a canyon like space across their length. Low Pavement, by contrast, is a wider thoroughfare and remains a place of living, leisure and commerce with the assembly rooms at its heart.

**Hounds Gate** retains the character of its industrial past with the survival of a number of former warehouses along its length. Its narrow width, characteristic of its medieval origins, combined with its grand industrial and commercial buildings create a thoroughfare of intimate character. The tower of St Peter's Church closes the view to the north-east, framed by the second floor pedestrian bridge that links former warehouse buildings on either side of the street. To the west the street rises towards the Castle, though the construction of Maid Marian Way severed this historic connection and undermined the potential contribution of topography to its character.

Along Hounds Gate five storey warehouses predominate, with three storey commercial buildings and former domestic properties surviving at its east end. Nottingham red brick is the predominant building material with substantial ashlar detailing at



ground floor level. Neo classical doorways are a feature of the former domestic and smaller commercial properties.

Mid way along the street, Archer House, a six storey modern building of high-rise construction undermines the character of the thoroughfare by virtue of its scale, design and setback building line. Facing Archer House, the demolition of a group of small buildings to provide a car park opened a gap in the frontage, undermining the street's historic character by allowing views of the backs of the buildings fronting Friar Lane. The side elevation of the rear extension to 30-34 Hounds Gate, is also exposed by the gap site and is particularly insensitive in its design.

During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the majority of the former industrial buildings along Hounds Gate were converted to offices. Since the 2010s however, residential uses in the form of apartments and student accommodation, have come to the fore. These trends have resulted in a change of ambience as the relative quiet of commerce and residential use have replaced the background noise and activity of industry and trade. Pedestrian traffic along the street is light during the day, and busiest during the rush hour period although a move towards student occupancy has brought additional vibrancy, particularly during term time.



**Castle Gate** was also severed by the construction of Maid Marian Way though, unlike Hounds Gate, the continuation of the thoroughfare remains legible on the Castle side. Traditional buildings along Castle Gate are of particularly high architectural quality and unity. The thoroughfare retains the character of a Georgian residential street due to the survival of a significant number of former townhouses alongside the later warehouses and offices.

The limited palette of Nottingham red brick and Ashlar contributes to the overall unity of the townscape. Along the frontages, openings provide the focus for decoration. Rubbed brick voussoirs and keystones are a feature, as are raised margins, cills and soffits. Panelled entrance doors are framed by decorated door cases, which take their reference from the classical orders to convey a restrained grandeur at the point of the entrance. Glazed fanlights over doors are typically with decorative tracery adding further detail. Castle Gate also includes buildings from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that have little regard for the classical references and architectural quality of buildings from earlier periods and dilute its character.

Many of the former townhouses and warehouses were converted to office use in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but recent developments have seen several buildings repurposed as student accommodation. Pedestrian traffic along the street is steady during the day and despite being severed by Maid Marian Way, Castle Street remains a preferred pedestrian route to the Castle from the city centre. A predominance of daytime uses gives the street a somewhat 'off the beaten track' feel during the evening, particularly outside of the University term times.

**Low Pavement** has a character that is distinct from the industrial character of Castle Gate and Hounds Gate. Low Pavement was a place of living, leisure and commerce with the assembly rooms at its heart. The domestic character of the thoroughfare retains the ambience of Georgian society. Businesses, shops, café bars and restaurants now occupy its former residential properties. The architectural quality of the street is high with ornate stucco buildings contrasting with the restrained



elegance of the traditional red brick buildings. The former Assembly Rooms contributes significantly to the richness of the townscape. Surviving architectural ironwork including the railings of the former townhouses, further contribute to the character of the street.

Low Pavement slopes down towards Castle Gate. At the entrance from Middle Pavement and Weekday Cross to the east, the height of the street affords views in the direction of the Castle. The quality of these views has been undermined in the modern day by late 20<sup>th</sup> century high-rise development on Hounds Gate and Maid Marian Way. This draws the eye and dominate the skyline, undermining the potential contribution of the underlying topography.

The modern day ambience of Low Pavement is reminiscent of the past. The overall atmosphere of the thoroughfare is of leisure, further enhanced by the introduction of outdoor seating. The management of traffic along its length has contributed towards its relaxed ambience with a high-quality traditional paving scheme that enhance the setting of its buildings.

## **Victorian Streets**

The Victorian streets of Market Street, Queen Street and King Street and Wheeler Gate emanate from the north and south of the old Market Square. They are characteristically wide thoroughfares designed for the needs of transport and commerce. The buildings along the frontage were developed over a relatively short time and as such they are set pieces of Victorian town centre development. The buildings are characteristically individual in their design though their consistency in scale and the architectural treatment of levels is a strong unifying element. The contribution of the highly decorated style of buildings along these frontages extends to the skyline. In many cases the roof adds further architectural expression to the overall design. Turrets, gables and dormers are treated in a variety of ways. Their dramatic impact on the skyline provides further architectural interest to the townscape. The prominence of these thoroughfares at the key entrances to the Market Square are key to their impact on the character of the conservation area.



**Market Street** is the earliest of the Victorian thoroughfares and follows the line of a former medieval alleyway known as Sheep Lane. Although the buildings lack the grandeur of King Street and Queen Street they provide a high quality townscape. The street comprises of purpose-built shops with offices above and retains the vertical emphasis of the city's earlier origins. The street slopes steeply downwards towards the Old Market Square and opens out at its south end. The high-rise building at Beast Market Hill, which draws the eye towards the skyline, significantly undermines the drama of the arrival at the Market Square. In contrast the theatre Royal provides a dramatic vista looking northwards up the street.

Along the west frontage red brick predominates, though a variety of shades are evident. The eastern frontage displays a wide variety of brick, though it is stone that predominates. Architectural detail includes stepped cornices, arched window heads and Oriel bay windows that rise between the first and second floor. Deeply set and modelled windows and doors and highly decorated facades dominate. This creates a unity in character which is reinforced by the strong vertical emphasis across the narrow plot widths of 4 to 6 m, particularly along its west side. The roofline, though relatively level, is articulated with the use of dormer windows and return gables.

Market Street is characterised in the modern day by the number of small specialist retailers and restaurants along its length. The loss of a significant number of traditional shopfronts and the under use of upper floor space significantly undermine its historic character. The street remains a key bus and tram route between the city centre and Upper Parliament Street.

**Queen and King Street** are later thoroughfares with frontages not completely built up until the early 20th century. All buildings along the frontages are characteristically large and imposing, displaying the overt confidence, which was a feature of the age. Exaggerated doorways are a feature of some, with panelled doors hidden in deep lobbies, further decorated with mosaic/tiled entrances.

Along Queen Street, 'The Frontage', a monumental Ashlar building built as the central post office dominates the west side, though its 20th century extension undermined the architectural quality of the street to the north.



The east side comprises the white faience side elevation of the former Elite Cinema and the terracotta, brick and grey granite of the former Prudential Assurance Co. offices. To the south of The Frontage, Watson Fothergill's Queen's Chambers turn the corner onto the Market Square. In perhaps his best known building, Queen's Chambers represents the architect in full flow, a highly accomplished yet eccentric mix of Gothic Revival and Old English styles. The quality of the materials and design extravagance of these buildings all combine to create a street of exceptional architectural quality and character.



All buildings are constructed on deep sites of assembled plots with wide frontages. This is most apparent with the former Elite Cinema and Prudential Assurance building, which occupy frontages to both Queen Street and King Street. On the east side of King Street, the brick built former Jessops drapery store (also by Watson Fothergill) takes forward the timbered gable detail reminiscent of the medieval period to create an imposing building that extends along a significant length of the frontage. Its integral grand shopfront has been altered over the years. The division of the former store into individual shop units has been a significant contributory factor.

Variety in the use material is characteristic along these Victorian thoroughfares. As a general rule, ashlar is employed as the predominant material in the classical revival buildings, with the large unit size of the building blocks conveying a further sense of grandeur. Brick, terracotta and tile predominate in the case of Gothic revival buildings where polychromy provides a further level of detail, architectural interest and individuality.

Retail and leisure uses predominate along both thoroughfares following the redundancies of its commercial uses. The grand interiors of buildings such as The Frontage and the former Prudential Assurance building have accommodated the modern day requirements of specialist retailers and café bars whilst retaining their former character. The architectural quality and completeness of the streets creates a sense of place that is distinct from any other thoroughfares in the conservation area.

**Wheeler Gate** curves downwards away from Old Market Square to the south, cutting across Hounds Gate as it enters Albert Street. The Victorian splendour of Nottingham red brick decorative architecture is shown at its best along the eastern side. Buildings are tall, vertically orientated and with return Gables. Their rich red brickwork, pedimented stone lintels, cills supported by decorative console brackets together with a hierarchy of storey heights and frontages which curve with the street further strengthen the overall architectural form. Their original oversized shopfronts add grandeur to the composition, though this architectural detail has been undermined by the installation of poor quality modern shopfronts within the openings. There are a variety of period styles along the south western frontage and although dominated by the plain podium of the multi-storey Pearl Assurance House at its northern end, it retains a strong townscape character. The broad raised pavements and roads, lined with cherry trees and benches enhance the street and create the feel of a boulevard.



## 20<sup>th</sup> century Streets

20th century streets within the conservation area are characteristically diverse in their character. The majority were medieval thoroughfares widened in the early 20th century to facilitate the easier movement of traffic and so wide pavements to allow the safe movement of large numbers of

pedestrians are also a feature. Their widths often create large open ends, which allow expansive views and also result in the loss of enclosure along their length, in contrast with the defining characteristic of earlier thoroughfares. Diversity in architectural styles, building materials and contrast in scale are also a defining characteristic. The streets of 20th century character comprise the majority of thoroughfares in the conservation area and include; Upper Parliament Street, Kings Walk and Trinity Walk, Trinity Square and Forman Street, Clumber Street, Friar Lane, Albert Street and Lister Gate, Angel Row, Long Row West /Chapel bar, Milton Street, St Peters Gate, Exchange Walk and the environs of the Council House and Exchange Buildings.



Clumber Street, c. 1905 © Picture Nottingham

**Clumber Street** follows the line of its medieval origins and was widened in the 19th century. It remains a relatively narrow thoroughfare with the sense of enclosure reminiscent of its earlier origins. Of those streets that retain their earlier domestic character, Clumber Street has experienced significantly more redevelopment in the modern day.

The majority of new buildings have integrated well into the frontages having retained the narrow plot widths and vertical emphasis characteristic of early properties, though the concrete and glass buildings at its entrance from High Street undermine the character of the street through their larger scale and contrasting materials. Building heights are 3 to 4 storeys with four storey buildings predominating to the south of Lincoln Street. Variations in roof height are a feature and the traditional roofline of a simple pitch predominates, though chimneys have often been removed.

Brick is the predominant building material, though colours vary. Some brick facades have been painted undermining their potential contribution to the character of the streetscene. Shopfronts vary in quality, the 19<sup>th</sup> century faience front of the Red Lion Hotel and the early 20th century shopfront to the Sun Valley Amusements (a former public house) are of significant quality. Oversized

fascias undermine the architectural quality of a number of buildings. The overall mediocre quality of shop frontages undermines the character of the street.

**Friar Lane** is a historic route from the city centre to the Castle though its character was transformed in the 20th century. The road was widened and re-developed in the 1930s and then severed from the Castle by the construction of Maid Marian Way in the 1960s. The majority of buildings that pre-dated the road schemes were subsequently lost and their frontages redeveloped.

The architectural quality of the buildings along its length is mixed. Along its north side a high quality group of Art Deco and Revival buildings built when the road was widened, follows the curve of the street and continues to contribute significantly to its character. However, the setting is undermined by the juxtaposition of the towering high-rise building on Beast Market Hill and the similarly low quality Travelodge building that abuts the group to the south-west (outside the conservation area). Other buildings along Friar Lane from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century and later are of unremarkable architectural quality. Building heights vary between three and four storeys. The majority of buildings have been constructed across assembled plots resulting in broad frontages. Materials are mixed and include faience, stone and brick in various shades.

The depth of view along Friar Lane across Old Market Square is unrivalled from any other entrance to the conservation area. The curve of the thoroughfare and the impact of the rising land in the far distance, presents an open view that has significant townscape interest. The legibility of the areas topography from this viewpoint is particularly significant. The view afforded can be appreciated from the Castle's entrance (the Castle Conservation Area).

The historic character of Friar Lane is diluted by the variation in scale of buildings along its frontages and the predominance of buildings of insignificant architectural quality. The prominence of its junction with Maid Marian Way and its role as a main vehicular access to the city centre further impacts on its townscape quality.

**Upper Parliament Street** reflects the transformation of Nottingham from a market town to a city in the scale of the thoroughfare and the range building types along its length. The street follows the east/ west line of the ridge and it subsequently the highest road in the designated area. Its broad width and linear nature channel long views to the east, towards the high rise buildings on the edge of St Ann's and Sneinton. The character of the thoroughfare is typified by the contrast in building scale and architectural style between the north and south frontages.

The street is an early medieval thoroughfare, formerly known as Backside. Its south frontage was largely reconstructed following the widening of the route of the road in the late 19th/early 20th centuries and is characterised by grand commercial and public buildings including the former Express Offices (Watson Fothergill) and the former Elite Cinema. Though extensive, their frontages are articulated, with bays that correspond to earlier plot widths. Building materials are of a high quality and diverse including; polychromatic ashlar and white faience alongside the traditional red brick. The architectural quality of the buildings is high with the ornate roofscape adding interest to the skyline.

Along the north side the buildings date from the 18th century to the late 20th century and are predominantly three stories in height. They retain the narrow plot width and vertical emphasis characteristic of the domestic origins of the street. Red brick predominates though some are





rendered, roughcast or painted. Late 20th century redevelopment has respected the traditional scale but is of insignificant architectural quality and detracts from the character of the frontage. The roofline is not consistent; late 19th and early 20th century buildings have decorated gables fronting the street and are slightly taller than the simple pitched roofs of plain tiles that are typical of earlier properties. Chimneys are a feature of the earliest surviving buildings, though they are not ornate. Retail uses predominate, although in many cases oversized fascias overpower the simple character of the buildings.

As the main east west vehicular route through the city, Upper Parliament Street is heavily trafficked and does not have the intimacy that is characteristic of other streets in the conservation area. The physical presence of traffic itself and the high number of traffic signs dominate its character. The contrast in scale between the north and south frontages results in an imbalance in townscape terms that undermines the potential contribution of the smaller vernacular buildings along the north frontage. Although the street includes a number of buildings of significant architectural quality, the historic integrity of the street is weak overall.



**Kings Walk and Trinity Walk** were built in the early 20th century as set piece pedestrian retail streets. Trinity Walk was built along the line of the existing 18th-century thoroughfare known as New Yard and retains original buildings at its entrance. Kings Walk was built over surviving garden plots, hidden behind the built-up frontage of Upper Parliament Street and Forman Street (then North Street). Both thoroughfares are around 5m in width with buildings of 2 to 3 stories. Both are of significant townscape quality, though Kings Walk displays greater unity in the design with red brick buildings predominating and ornate lanterns spanning the width along its length. The poor quality surface materials and loss of significant numbers of original shopfronts undermine the historic character of both thoroughfares.

**Albert Street and Lister Gate** comprise the 20th century traffic route from the city centre to the south (via Carrington Street) towards the Midland Railway Station. The route was truncated following the construction of the Broadmarsh Centre in the 1970s and the thoroughfare is pedestrianised. The character of Albert Street and Lister Gate is defined in the modern day by their role as the main pedestrian link between the Broadmarsh Shopping Centre and the city centre.

The architectural quality of the thoroughfare is mixed. The Art Deco former Woolworth's building is of significant quality (grade II) and contrasts with the indeterminate nature of the 20th century redevelopment that dominates and undermines the overall architectural quality of the streetscape. Building scale varies with 20th century infill occupying assembled plots and earlier buildings displaying the vertical emphasis characteristic of the early development of the area. The majority of buildings are 3 to 4 storeys in height.

Though these are two of the city's busiest thoroughfares, their pedestrianisation and the introduction of planting and seating along their length has created a relaxing ambience. The trees are effective in introducing a human scale to the public realm and contribute significantly to its character. At the head of Albert Street, the pedestrian route terminates at St Peter's Square, an informal open space enhanced by the setting of the church of St Peter and St James.

**Angel Row/Long Row West/Chapel Bar** comprises buildings of 3 to 5 storeys that are of a similar height to the main square with the same vertical orientation; although the design, construction date and roofscape are more varied. A variety of materials are used for facing buildings, including stucco and render, natural stone and Nottingham red brick. For the most part the buildings retain the narrow historic plot widths, which give a strong regular rhythm to the street. The diversity along the frontage is this created by the variety of construction materials and finishes and slight variations in floor height. The consistency in the building line, on the back edge of the pavement contributes towards the townscape.



At Chapel Bar the traditional buildings date from the early 20th century. There is a visually striking range of buildings either side of the entrance to West End Arcade, which have been constructed along the narrow plot widths with a variety of designs. They have strong vertical emphases with high Dutch Gables facing the street. Redevelopment in the late 20th century resulted in the construction of two office buildings at the head of the street. Both have been constructed along an assembled plot that does not accord with the traditional character of the street. Chapel Bar was also severed by the construction of Maid Marian Way which has created an unresolved space at the head of the street.

In the majority of cases modern shopfronts do not have an architectural relationship with their host buildings. Oversized fascias predominate on a significant number of retail premises and where glazing terminates at ground level, without stallrisers, it gives a top heavy appearance. The use of bright or garish colours on fascia signs and shopfront frames is a common issue. When an oversized fascia is combined with a garish colour scheme the impact is particularly traumatic, distracting not only from the building but also from other properties to either side and from the street scene as a whole.

## **The Old Market Square**

The Old Market Square occupies relatively level ground at the convergence of several important streets and pedestrian routes and so forms a natural meeting point. As a place of meeting and the bringing together of people over many centuries, the former Market Place has significant cultural importance. The modern day Square also provides a particular focus for activity. The daily movement of people crossing it; coming to and leaving work is supplemented throughout the year by daytime leisure activities and cultural events, including small fairs and specialist markets. As a focal point for a range of activities it has a dynamic quality and its ever-changing ambience contributes significantly to the character and vibrancy of the conservation area and the City.

The Council House dominates views across the square from the west. It was designed in the classical style with an imposing colonnade topped with a tympanum depicting characters from the civic life of the city. It is unquestionably Nottingham's most dominant building both in terms of its monumental scale and its classical proportions. The dome dominates a number of views within and from outside the conservation area.



Although a medieval marketplace in its origins, the buildings surrounding the Old Market Square that provide its setting are predominantly 20th-century in origin. They vary considerably in terms of style, scale, construction and materials and though the various styles coexist for the most part, the fragmentary architectural quality, particularly on the south side of the square undermines the setting of the space.

The building frontages around the square, apart from the podium of the high-rise block at the west end, have a relatively consistent height to their street facades of between four and six storeys and occupy the entire frontage right up to the back edge of the pavement. The majority of buildings have vertical emphasis, deep projecting cornice lines, and vertical structural elements constructed from Nottingham red brick, stone, concrete, metal and glass. Of considerable historic and visual interest are the rows, the name given to the recessed colonnade which runs for almost the entire length of the north side of the square, part way along its south side and along short sections along its west side. This ground floor colonnade, a feature of its medieval past recreated on the reconstruction of the frontages, is a unifying architectural element, which helps to retain some essence of its historic character.

Market Square House at Beast Market Hill comprises the west frontage to the square. It is a 12 storey 1960s building which rises off a 3-storey podium. The podium's broad horizontal emphasis, in excess of 40 m, contrasts with the narrow plot widths and vertical orientation of the majority of buildings that surround the rest of the square. The high-rise element of the building dominates views to the south and west.

Though the Council House provides a strong focal point, the square does not have the complimentary contribution from the surrounding buildings (with respect to their presence and scale) to achieve the strong sense of enclosure characteristic of a formal square. The proportionally large area that surround the Market Square and the roads that cut through the surrounding frontages, particularly at its western end, further reduce enclosure.

The formal processional way that existed from the building of the Council House in 1929 until its redevelopment in 2007 did not properly address the natural slope of the square and introduced additional changes in level that conflicted with the characteristic openness of its medieval origins. The ceremonial design of the processional way, although part of a set piece to complement the Council House, was obsolete in its function moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and inflexible to the modern day requirements of a central urban square. On a day to day basis, the east west orientation of the processional way did not accord with pedestrian movement across the square and the combination of walls and changes in level obstructed the natural diagonal movement across it.



In 2007 the grade II listed processional way was replaced with the current award winning design. The £8m redevelopment by Gustafson Porter + Bowman provides a large space at the centre of the city reminiscent of its medieval origins which is used for large gatherings and events forming a modern foreground to the monumental Council House. After more than a decade the Old Market Square design is contemporary, uncluttered and of high quality unifying the most important public space at the heart of the city.

### Council House and Exchange Buildings environs



The streets that wrap around the Council House and Exchange Buildings are diverse in their character. **Poultry** is dominated by the Exchange Buildings. **Cheapside** shows great variety and visual interest and the varying periods of architecture contribute positively to its character. The Flying Horse, a former public house of medieval origin occupies a significant length of frontage. Towards the east a range of buildings from the 20th century constructed on narrow plot widths frame the

entrance to Poultry Arcade, with a high quality original shopfront. Between Park Lane and Exchange Walk, a late 20th century building of poor architectural design and scale, undermines the quality of the entire frontage. **Long Row East/Smithy Row** is an equally inconsistent thoroughfare in terms of its architectural quality. The pedestrianisation of this once busy street has created a wide space with a static quality. The south side of the street (Smithy Row) is dominated by the Exchange Buildings. Along the north side (Long Row East) there is a great variety in building styles and materials. The roofline is strongly articulated; the former Midland Bank (15 Long Row East) has a highly decorated pediment across its full width and 17-19 Long Row East has a pair of distinctive curved turrets with conical roofs. Number 21 Long Row is a landmark building with towers and tall shaped gables. However, to the east the frontage is undermined by the intrusion of post-1948 buildings, notably the Primark store (7-12 Long Row East), which detracts from the architectural quality of the streetscene. **High Street** is a small thoroughfare that connects Bridlesmith Gate to Clumber Street and it is therefore one of the busiest streets in the conservation area. However, the enclosure provided by the Exchange to the west and 2 to 2B High Street create an intimate static space. Although this space is aligned with both Clumber Street and Bridlesmith Gate, it is offset sufficiently to allow buildings on the corner of Poultry to close its southern end. The grade II\* listed former Boots department store, an Art Nouveau terracotta building of significant style and individuality occupies the eastern frontage, facing the entrance to Exchange Buildings which dominates the western frontage.

## Summary characteristics

### Architectural quality

- The architectural quality of the conservation area is high. The majority of the thoroughfares feature a diversity of architectural styles which is an intrinsic characteristic of the area as a dynamic, evolving urban core.
- There are distinct areas relating to key periods in the city's development that express a unity of architectural character predominantly;
  - the Georgian streets of Castle Gate and Hounds Gate
  - Victorian streets of King Street, Market Street and Queen Street

In these areas the contribution of architecture to the character of the conservation area is most apparent and there is a tangible sense of place. Maintaining unity in these areas is key to preserving this historic character of the current conservation area as a whole.

- The juxtaposition of buildings of different architectural styles is most successful along Bridlesmith Gate and St James's Street where the majority of buildings are of high architectural quality.
- The architectural quality of the city has been marred by the design anonymity of the modern buildings particularly along Best Market Hill, South Parade and Wheeler Gate (south side), where modern (post 1950) infill buildings predominate.

### Setting

- The sloping topography of the conservation area creates drama within the townscape, which is further emphasised by the curve of the streets and their strong sense of enclosure. The consistency of the building line on the back edge of the pavement is a significant contributory factor.
- Landmark buildings including the Council House and Exchange Buildings, the Theatre Royal, and the church of St Peter and St James are of a monumental scale and close the relatively short views to create drama in the townscape.
- The relatively flat space occupied by the Old Market Square provides a strong visual counterpoint between land rising to the north and falling to the south, though the impact of the high-rise 20th century development to the south of Old Market Square undermines the contribution of the topography to its setting.
- The topography of the area increases the sensitivity of the townscape in accommodating tall buildings. The impact of high-rise buildings from the late 20th century undermines the legibility of the landform of the conservation area as a whole. High rise development outside the conservation area boundary also impacts on the skyline in a number of key views towards the west and north east.

## Spaces

- Formal and informal spaces are a key characteristic of the townscape and make an important contribution to the urban experience within the conservation area.
- The Old Market Square, the central historic open space, is the cultural heart of the conservation area and the city. The design is reminiscent of its medieval origins and it is used for large gatherings and events. The Old Market Square's design is contemporary, uncluttered and of high quality, as befitting for the city's most important public space.
- Small informal spaces such as St Peters Square and High Street are an important element of the townscape and contribute significantly to the urban experience within the conservation area.
- Formal spaces of relatively small scale such as the alleyways and yards behind the street frontages are mostly hidden from view. Nevertheless, they contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area by their intimacy and contrast with the open character of the Old Market Square.
- The truncation of routes following the 20th century extension of buildings and Victorian road schemes has resulted in unresolved spaces that undermine the historic character of the area.

## Streets

- The surviving medieval street pattern of the area is a key element of the character of the conservation area.
- A rich and varied historic streetscape is a feature of the conservation area. The contrast in the character of the streets, between areas of distinct phases of development creates townscape of contrast and visual interest. The widening of thoroughfares has resulted in reduced enclosure around the Old Market Square where streets from the late 19th and early 20th century open out into the central open space.
- Many medieval streets and yards have been built over and absorbed into new enclosed developments; this has reduced the positive contribution of the yards as alternative pedestrian routes.
- Pedestrianisation/traffic management is most successful in townscape terms along the streets of medieval width such as Bridlesmith Gate and St James's Street or where planting has been employed to create a sense of enclosure along Lister Gate and Albert Street.
- The impact of Maid Marian Way's construction in the 1960s was severe and physically disconnected the Castle from the Old Market Square. The impact has been reduced by traffic calming schemes in the last 20 years although this could still go further to reconnect the city and restore a human scale to pedestrian travel

## Scale

- The conservation area displays a gradual increase in scale of development over the centuries, which is characterised by distinct areas that correspond to the phases of the city's evolution from market town, to industrial and commercial centre to the retail centre of the present day.
- The scale of the development in the conservation area falls into two broad categories;



- Large-scale development with broad plot widths predominate along the late 19th and 20th century streets (Queen Street, Market Street, King Street, Friar Lane, Lister Gate and Upper Parliament Street)
- Domestic scale development with characteristically narrow plot widths that define pre-Victorian frontages. This is focussed along Bridlesmith Gate, St James's Street and Clumber Street.
- Building scale makes a significant and positive contribution to the historic townscape on Queen Street, King Street and Market Street where there is unity in scale through large-scale redevelopment. Building scale also makes a significant contribution along Bridlesmith Gate and Clumber Street where the traditional plot widths and building heights have informed the scale of new development.
- Where there is diversity in scale such as along Upper Parliament Street, large-scale buildings undermine the potential contribution of the earlier vernacular buildings to the character of the conservation area.
- Where there is contrast in scale, the historic character of the area is undermined. In this respect the 20th century high-rise development works least successfully in a townscape context, with the juxtaposition of taller and massive buildings undermining the setting of surviving buildings from earlier periods particularly along Beast Market Hill and Wheeler Gate (south side).

## Materials

- The conservation area is characterised by an overall diversity in building materials particularly around the Old Market Square following successive phases of redevelopment in the 20th century.
- Brick is the predominant traditional building material with a continuity of use dating from the 17th century. It is employed on a broad range of building types from medieval dwellings through to townhouses and large commercial buildings. Its dominance along the thoroughfares of Castle Gate, Hounds Gate and Angel Row contributes significantly to their overall unity.
- Where stone has been employed it is traditionally in the construction of large public or commercial buildings (predominantly from the early 20th century). Stone buildings do not predominate along any given thoroughfare but are located sporadically throughout the conservation area.
- Concrete contributes least to the character of the conservation area. Its bland, lifeless patina overwhelms the contribution of other materials in close proximity to it. The concentration of concrete buildings in and around the Old Market Square significantly undermines the historic character of this important central space.
- Roofs are largely hidden from view and as a consequence roof materials do not contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area.

## Floorscape

- The floorscape treatment across the conservation area is not unified as a variation of approach across the range of paving schemes has been implemented. However, within that variation are a number of high quality public realm schemes, the best of which is the Old Market Square at the centre of the conservation area.
- Where there is consistency across a large area, such as the Old Market Square and frontage to the Theatre Royal, there is a positive impact on the townscape created by the high quality of the surface.
- Where natural surface materials have been used, as part of the paving scheme there is a positive contribution to the historic character of thoroughfare.
- The paving schemes from the 1990s are potentially the most detrimental to the traditional character of the conservation area due to the large variety of patterns. This concentration of this approach along the main north/south pedestrian thoroughfare of Lister Gate, Albert Street, High Street and Clumber Street emphasises its impact on the character of the conservation area. These are areas that should be targeted for public realm schemes in the future.

## Street furniture

- Street furniture does not contribute positively to the overall character of the conservation area. There are a number of reasons for this:
  - The variety of designs
  - The variety of colours
  - Concentrations of street furniture where there is no functional relationship between items
  - The positioning of street furniture where there is no obvious context
- Street furniture is most successful when it when related to planting schemes
- When unified within a scheme such as that in Old Market Square it can work well; however, this approach needs to be brought together within the conservation area as a whole.
- Decluttering has been effectively achieved within the last 5 years and this approach should be extended to its conclusion including measures to ensure the removal of letting boards and fixings.
- Priority for decluttering and traffic reduction should be aimed at Angel Row which is currently dominated by bus traffic and clutter.

## Shopfronts and advertisements

- Shopfronts as a whole do not contribute to the historic character of the conservation area
- Unsympathetic advertisements, in particular oversized fascias dominate a significant number of shopfronts and undermine the architectural quality of their host buildings particularly along Wheeler Gate and Long Row West.
- Traditional shopfronts are few but those that do survive along Bridlesmith Gate, High Street, St James's Street, Clumber Street and Wheeler Gate are of high architectural quality and contribute significantly to the character of their immediate environs.

- 20 inappropriate shopfronts are being replaced with historic details reinstated as part of the Historic England Funded Heritage Action Zone heritage-led regeneration scheme

### **Trees and planting**

- The lack of consistency in tree planting across the conservation area undermines the potential contribution to its character.
- The contribution of planting is most successful where it is used architecturally, that is to say where avenues of street of trees are used to recreate enclosure as is evident a long Lister Gate and Albert Street, and at the end of truncated streets such as Chapel Bar where they are used to close views. Successful planting schemes have helped to introduce a human scale to the city environment along these thoroughfares.
- Window boxes, planters and hanging baskets contribute to a seasonal dimension to the urban townscape by providing temporary colour throughout the summer months.