

PETERBOROUGH  
CITY CENTRE  
  
CONSERVATION  
AREA APPRAISAL &  
MANAGEMENT PLAN

July 2017



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'Peterborough Cathedral Conservation Plan' (2011)  
prepared by Keevill Heritage Consultancy

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.01 The Peterborough City Centre Conservation Area was designated in June 1969 to cover the whole of the city centre including the Cathedral Precincts, Cowgate and Priestgate to the west, Westgate to the north and extending southwards along Bridge Street. It is one of the first of the 29 Conservation Areas located within the Peterborough City Council administrative area and was designated at the outset of the City's expansion under the New Towns Act.

1.02 Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. When a Conservation Area is designated, the local planning authority has a duty to 'draw up and publish proposals' for its preservation and enhancement, and to review the designation and boundaries of the areas to ensure that the area is still considered to be of special interest. This document aims to fulfill that duty.

1.03 The appraisal area covers the existing Conservation Area and its setting where this impacts upon the character of the Conservation Area. Due to the size and complexity of the city centre, individual character areas have been assessed in turn, along with the general characteristics common across the whole of the Conservation Area. It includes:

- An examination of Local Development Framework and National Planning Policy;
- Archival research including historic photograph and historic map analysis, as well as on site survey work;
- An assessment of special interest to include context and setting; topography and landscape; history and archaeology; key characteristics; views and vistas; contribution of trees and green spaces; public realm
- Character area analysis;
- Issues affecting the area;
- Enhancement opportunities; and
- Management Plan.

1.04 The appraisal follows best practice guidance issued by Historic England in 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' Advice Note 1 (2016). It should be noted that no appraisal can be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

## 2.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST

2.01 Peterborough City Centre Conservation Area has a number of key landmark buildings that are iconic across the city centre and make a key contribution to its identity: the Cathedral, the Guildhall and the Church of St John the Baptist. In addition, it has a number of important civic spaces and squares, including Cathedral Square, St John's Square, the Cathedral Precincts, and spaces along Bridge Street and Long Causeway. Aside from the Cathedral and its associated buildings, despite having retained the essentially medieval layout the city centre is dominated by C19 and C20 buildings, with a small number of notable examples surviving from earlier periods dotted throughout. The palette of materials reflects this accordingly, with a typically C19 use of brick and slate in the more peripheral areas, and use of stone on older buildings and C19 buildings of greater status. Stone is a predominant feature of the east-west axis, with the greenery of Long Causeway and Bridge Street running north-south offering a striking contrast and signaling the path to the River Nene and its green river frontage beyond the Conservation Area boundary. Commercial activities are most prominent throughout reflecting its city centre location, and share a close relationship with ecclesiastical buildings occupying key landmark sites.



## 3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT: CONSERVATION AREAS

3.01 Conservation Areas are defined as ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ (Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990). They are areas that are judged to be exceptional in terms of their architectural and/or historic interest and therefore justify a higher degree of planning control. It is the legal duty of the local planning authority to determine what parts of their administrative areas are of sufficient special architectural and/or historic interest to merit such protection and to designate these as Conservation Areas accordingly.

3.02 Historic England’s guidance note ‘Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management’ Advice Note 1 (2016) updates earlier conservation area guidance documents. Regarding conservation areas, this document states:

*The contribution that historic areas make to our quality of life is widely recognised. They are a link to the past that can give us a sense of continuity and stability and they have the reassurance of the familiar which can provide a point of reference in a rapidly changing world. They way building traditions and settlement patterns are superimposed and survive over time will be unique to each area. This local distinctiveness can provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well designed new development which brings economic and social benefits which are valued by both local planning authorities and local communities in the almost 10,000 conservation areas which have been designated.*

3.03 Once a Conservation Area has been designated, it increases the local planning authority’s controls with planning applications judged in part by their impact on the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and their settings. Greater controls over the demolition of buildings and structures are imposed whilst the rights that owners have to undertake works to their properties without planning permission (known as ‘permitted development rights’) are slightly reduced, and can be further restricted through the use of an Article 4 Direction. Stricter controls are also exercised over the design of new buildings, and 6 weeks notice must be given to the local planning authority in advance of any works to trees. Planning



applications affecting a Conservation Area must be advertised on site and in the local press to give people the opportunity to comment.

3.04 In addition, Historic England is invited to comment on development proposals that are considered to affect the character or appearance of a conservation area, or where a material change of use is proposed – in both instances where the application site is over 1,000 square metres. Historic England also welcomes the opportunity to comment on proposals to demolish buildings of local interest and buildings within conservation areas that have been identified to make a positive contribution to its special character and appearance.

3.05 Once designated, local planning authorities are required to review regularly the reasons for designation and designation boundaries to ensure that the area is still considered to be of value and to consider whether any areas have been overlooked or changes have occurred which require the boundaries to be redrawn.

3.06 During this appraisal process any pressures for change can be identified and enhancement opportunities highlighted. These will form the basis of the Conservation Area Management Plan which sets out a strategy to manage change in the conservation area and its setting (section 8).

3.07 The Peterborough Local Development Framework (LDF) provides local planning policies. The three key documents relevant to the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal are the Peterborough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (2011), the Peterborough Planning Policies DPD (2012) and the Peterborough City Centre DPD (2014).

3.08 The Peterborough Core Strategy DPD identifies the importance of the historic environment with a commitment to protect, conserve and enhance through special protection afforded to heritage assets including conservation areas. To achieve this, all new development will be required to respect and enhance the local character and distinctiveness, and Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are to be employed to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the character of each of Peterborough's conservation areas.

3.09 The Peterborough Planning Policies DPD contains detailed policies. Specifically, Policy PP17 covers designated and non-designated heritage assets including conservation areas, statutory listed buildings, locally listed buildings, archaeology and historic landscapes.



3.10 The Peterborough City Centre DPD sets out policies and proposals for new development and regeneration to achieve the Council's long-term vision and objectives for the city centre. The documents are consistent with the provisions of the NPPF.

3.11 The Council are preparing a new local plan. The 'Further Draft Local Plan 2017' documents propose no fundamental change to the current adopted local plan and policies relevant to the city centre. Further consultation on the plan will take place in autumn 2017 followed by independent Examination in Public then adoption as the next Local Plan expected in early 2018.

3.12 When the Peterborough City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal is adopted it will be a material consideration when making planning decision and considering other changes affecting the area, to ensure that its special character and appearance is not harmed.

3.13 National planning policy guidance on conservation areas is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). Key policies for decision-making regarding proposals within conservation areas are included in Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

## 4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

### Context & setting

4.01 The Conservation Area comprises the historic core of the city centre, including the medieval Cathedral and Precincts, but excluding those areas where major C20 redevelopment has eroded the special historic and architectural interest (e.g. Queensgate, Midgate).

4.02 The City Centre Conservation Area is located within the area administered by Peterborough City Council. Its southern boundary follows the line of Bourges Boulevard (A15) which cuts through the southern edge of the city centre, with a spine extending southwards over the road to include Lower Bridge Street. The eastern boundary follows the line of Vineyard Road which follows the historic boundary wall to the Cathedral Precincts, and continues westward on its northern boundary on this same precinct boundary line towards Long Causeway. The surviving historic areas of Westgate are included in a northern extension, with the Conservation Area boundary turning back towards Cathedral Square, encompassing historic frontages along Westgate and Long Causeway but excluding the Queensgate development behind. Cowgate and Priestgate are incorporated into the western half, with the boundary remaining north of the A15 and stepping in from the line of Bourges Boulevard to exclude modern development on its edge (Former Peterborough Telegraph, Park Inn Hotel and the Telephone Exchange building).

4.03 Abutting the Conservation Area on its northern boundary is The Park Conservation Area, designated in September 1988. This Conservation Area extends northwards and is focused around the Victorian Central Park and associated Victorian and Edwardian housing. An appraisal and management plan (March 2007) identifies its special architectural and historic interest.

4.04 The city centre is primarily a commercial area and acts as the commercial centre for the local region. It therefore has a high concentration of retail units and low levels of residential occupancy. In addition to commercial activities, the city centre currently and historically hosts a range of professional services and administrative functions for the district as demonstrated by the Town Hall and Guildhall. The Cathedral and its Precincts, along with the parish Church of St John the Baptist,



give the area a distinctive mix of secular and ecclesiastical buildings.

### Topography & landscape

4.05 Peterborough was founded on an area of relatively dry land at the fen edge at a point where the Nene was navigable and could be crossed. Being close to the higher ground, it was well placed in relation to the networks of paths that ran the entire length of the east side of the country and along the ridges above the river valleys to the southwest, west and northwest. Its position at the intersection of the limestone and claylands where the River Nene reaches the fens has always been of great strategic significance. Settlements were established on gravel islands and fen-edge embayments, surrounded by the meres, wet peat, reed fen and rivers that formed the fenland landscape. Its fen edge location renders it relatively flat, with the land falling gradually from northwest to southeast towards the River Nene. This has made the area vulnerable to flooding, which has historically risen high enough to reach Midgate. The Cathedral is located on slightly elevated ground but not on any feature of great prominence.

4.06 The fenland landscape is a dynamic one that has changed significantly over time, with major periods of flooding as well as marine regressions. The late Mesolithic, late Neolithic and Bronze Age were periods of flooding, and from the later Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, the fens east of Peterborough grew wetter. The water level continued to increase despite attempts at drainage during the Roman period (e.g. Car Dyke) and piecemeal monastic drainage schemes (e.g. Mortons Leam). It was not until the major drainage campaigns that initiated the digging of drains and canals in the C17 and C18 that the water levels reduced significantly.

4.07 The geology of the Peterborough area is made up of Jurassic limestone, clays and alluvial deposits as a result of the continual flooding, and these have played an important role in its historic and economic development. The font in the Cathedral is carved from Alwalton Marble which is also evident in some of the tombs. The local building stone – Barnack Rag – was used for many high status buildings including the Cathedral and local churches, and the roofs were characteristically tiled in locally quarried Collyweston slates. Oxford clay continues to be quarried for the brick-making industry.



## History & Archaeology

### Pre-historic Peterborough

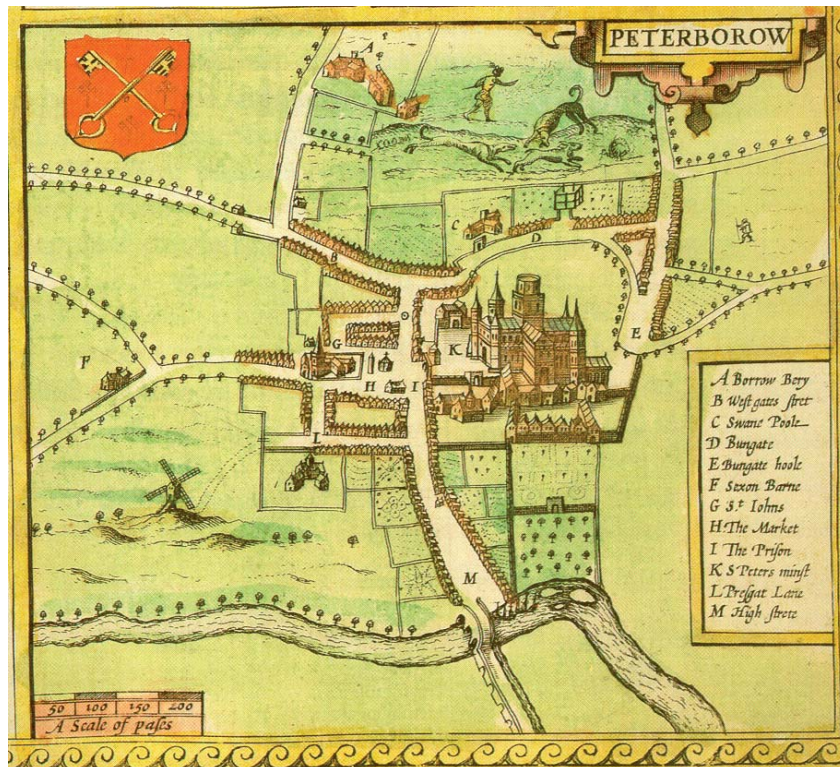
4.08 The combination of wetlands, woodlands and floodplain meadows presented a rich variety of habitats for the flora and fauna on which hunter-gatherer peoples depended. The same mosaic of woodlands, fen, flood-meadows and drier ground presented the resources for early settlers to construct houses, graze stock, plant crops and gather fish and fowl and other resources. The local clays gave rise to pottery making and the Peterborough area lends its name to a particular type of Neolithic pottery known as 'Peterborough Ware'. It is known that these early settlements existed at the fen edge and all along the River Nene and Welland valleys. During the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, huge monuments were formed in the landscape, for example in Maxey to the north and Whittlesey to the south. These were on a scale similar to Stonehenge, but being of earth and wood they have not continued to have the same dramatic impact over the centuries. The Bronze Age landscape at Flag Fen to the east of the city centre is a visible testament to the prehistoric populations that inhabited the area.

### Roman Peterborough

4.09 The Peterborough area continued to be settled during the Roman period some 2,000-1,600 years ago. Following the military conquest illustrated by the forts at Longthorpe, Ferry Meadows and south of Castor, the Nene Valley saw the proliferation of towns like Durobrivae near Waternewton. Villas and industrial sites specialised in pottery making and iron working. Many of these sites were originally attached to the forts but soon prospered independently. The River Nene, Ermine Street – which ran from London to York partly on the line of the former Great North Road – and Kings Street formed the main communication and trade routes, together with the Fen Causeway. There is further evidence of Roman settlements to the west of the city and south of the river.

4.10 During the Roman period the fens continued to grow wetter but were still exploited for salt production, livestock rearing, and meat processing for the Roman troops garrisoned in Britain and on the Continent. In this period the fens were probably an important imperial estate controlled directly by the Roman emperors through their administrators. The centre of this imperial estate may have been located at Stonea near March, and later at Castor, west of Peterborough. At Castor, remains of an impressive and important building are still visible in the village to the north of the

Norman parish church of St Kyneburgha. The impressive Roman Car Dyke, a linear watercourse c.120km long, starting at Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire and joining the River Witham a few kilometers below Lincoln, was once thought to represent a navigable canal. However, the topography of the area suggests that its use as a canal was unlikely and that it may have acted as a drain.



John Speed's map, 1610, based on a copy at Peterborough Museum.



Market Place by Nathan Fielding, 1795. Courtesy of Peterborough Museum.

4.11 By the C5 however the Roman town had been abandoned. The present city is located some four to five miles east of Roman Durobrivae, with little historical evidence of significant Roman activity in modern day Peterborough City Centre.

### **Saxon Peterborough**

4.12 Anglo-Saxon communities flourished around Peterborough leaving a legacy of stone craftsmanship. This can be seen in Barnack church tower, and stone crosses and artefacts in cemeteries in Fletton, Stan-ground, Gunthorpe, Woodston, Alwalton and other villages. In the Middle Saxon period (AD 650-850) a monastery was established at Medeshamstede, the Anglo-Saxon name for the town of Peterborough, on the site of the present Cathedral Church of St Peter. The foundation date of the original monastery is uncertain, although The Venerable Bede (AD 673-735) in his *History of the English Church* suggests a date around the mid-C7.

4.13 The monastery continued as a successful house into the Late Saxon period (AD 850-1066). The Late Saxon meaning of the word 'burgh' is primarily a defended enclosure. The word forms the root of 'borough', a town. Although historians have discounted the existence of a burgh as such at Peterborough, the fact that the names changed from Medeshamstede to Burgh between 992-1005 is indicative that there should be some physical expression of this. Indeed, the remains of the late C10 burgh wall were found in the early 1980s next to the precinct wall in the area behind Peterscourt, Midgate. The nearby Tout Hill was erected as a defensive structure during the rule of Turolf, a Norman appointed by William the Conqueror as Abbot, sometime between 1069 and 1098.

### **Central-late Medieval Peterborough**

4.14 After the Conquest of 1066, the town's fenland location and proximity to the east coast made it a target for English resistance to Norman rule and Danish raids. This insurrection culminated in the ransacking of the city in 1069 by the Danish fleet, aided and abetted by Hereward the Wake. A period of decline and partial abandonment followed until the mid-C12 century when Abbott Martin de Bec extended the Abbey Precincts westwards and also planned a new town (the settlement previously lay on the east site of the Abbey). This marked the founding of the current city centre. Work began on building the abbey church, the future cathedral. Cathedral Square (formerly known as Market Place and Marketstede), Bridge Street (the current Bridge Street and Lower Bridge Street, then known as Hythegate) and Long Causeway were all established at this time.



4.15 The strategic position of the new city and abundant local resources soon brought prosperity. As a result, the wharves, known as hithes, were extended and a new town bridge erected in 1307 (subsequently rebuilt). Two canals were cut running north from the Nene north bank towards the cathedral and it is speculated that the original purpose of these was to import stone as close as possible to build and extend the Abbey. By the C15, a new church (St John the Baptist) was built in Market Place replacing the post-conquest church. By this time, the city constituted Cumbergate (Comberisgate), Priestgate, Westgate (Westegate), Midgate and City Road and settlement was extending along Cowgate (Cougate) and Lincoln Road. The natural water-courses were re-engineered to form fishponds and the town sewers, the largest of which was the Tom Lock stream.

### **Post-medieval Peterborough**

4.16 Throughout the Tudor period, Peterborough continued to flourish, but the road pattern and extent of the urban area appears to have remained fairly static. After the dissolution of the Abbey at the Reformation probably most of the buildings remained standing although many were altered. Medieval buildings, or parts of them that remain, include the Great Gateway, Table Hall, St Thomas Becket's chapel, the Bishops Palace, the Deanery, Almoner's Hall and Norman Hall. The abbey church was designated as a cathedral. It was during this period that the settlement was granted city status. The first half of the C17 century was a period of uncertainty and, according to John Speed's map of 1610, the city had not expanded far beyond its medieval origins. The stability that followed the restoration brought a new wave of building, and in 1669 the Guildhall was erected by public subscription as the first seat of local government in the city. Peterborough lay on the periphery of the Eastern Association of Counties, with Parliamentarians arriving in the city in 1643 – an event that led to the desecration of the Cathedral. Local forts were constructed, with the earthworks at Horsey Hill Fort comprising some of the most elaborate of the fen defenses. The multiple shocks of the Reformation, Civil War and plague of 1666 however took their toll on the townsfolk of Peterborough and the city took into the next century to recover.

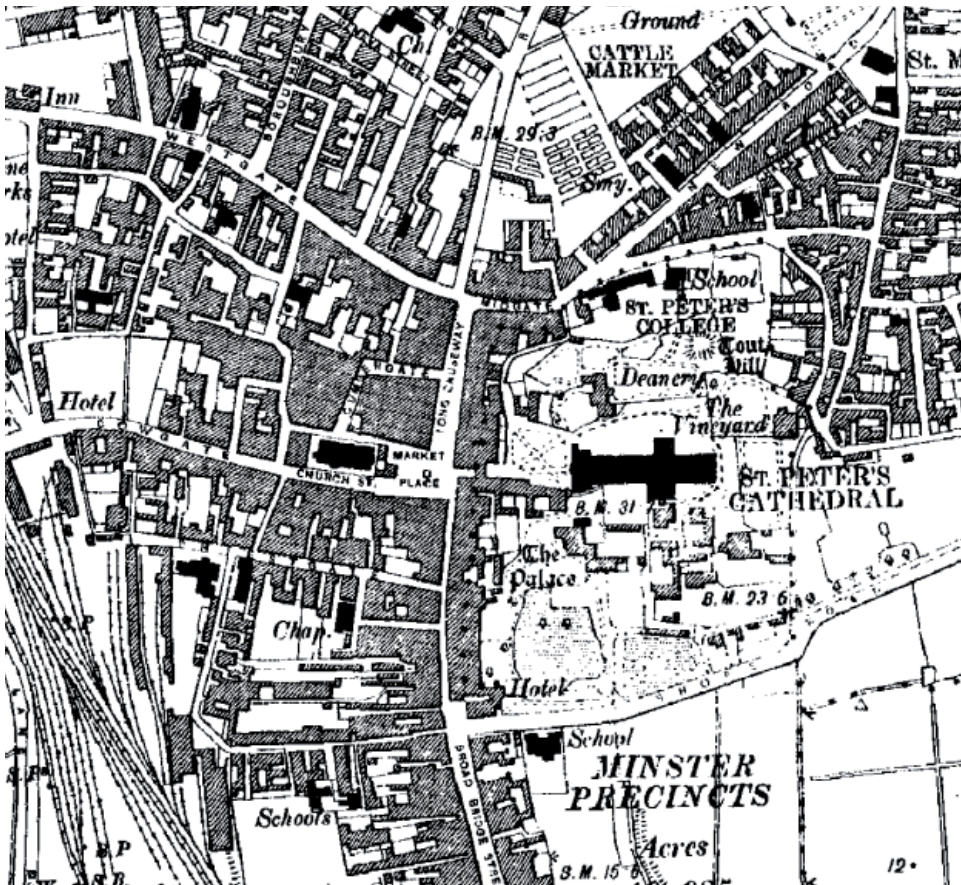
### **Georgian Peterborough**

4.17 Until 1700, Peterborough's street pattern set out in the C12 Norman re-planning remained intact and the city had not expanded beyond these original streets. The medieval city continued to form the core of the city





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Guildhall, C17



Town Hall, C20

centre as demonstrated by Thomas Eyre’s map of 1721 and the Earl of Fitzwilliam’s map of 1815, both of which indicate that at the time of production, the city had not extended significantly since Norman times. The 1721 map clearly indicates the medieval forms of courtyards behind the street frontages. Market Place was enclosed by frontages of smart Georgian townhouses and shops as illustrated in Nathan Fielding’s painting of 1795. An exception to this was the expansion of the city along Westgate at this time where a number of Georgian buildings survive, including The Bull Hotel and The Banyan Tree Restaurant. The C16 grand mansion of the Orme family on Priestgate was redeveloped in the early C19 as a grand Georgian house for Thomas Cooke (now the Museum) and would have been prominent within the streetscene as it is today. Peterborough at this time was a stone city, with important buildings using dressed Barnack ragstone, and rubble or timber frame and lime render used for buildings of lesser status. Roofs were typically of Collyweston, thatch or pantile.

### **C19 and C20 Peterborough**

4.18 By 1800, the Georgian buildings had replaced much of the vernacular architecture, especially in Cathedral Square and Priestgate, whilst other older structures were re-fronted with Georgian facades. Important buildings continued to be constructed in the local stone, however the fashionable town houses were lime rendered and washed in pastel colours or built of locally produced red stock bricks. Pantiles began to be used – particularly for outbuildings and workshops – and the first Welsh slates may have been imported along the River Nene during this period. The boundary of the city was largely limited to the current streets of Bridge Street, Priestgate, Cathedral Square, Church Street, Cowgate, Cross Street, Queen Street, Cumbergate, Long Causeway, Westgate and Midgate. The city had an agricultural hinterland, with farms, fields and orchards occupying the land beyond the city core.

4.19 The Map of the City and Borough of Peterborough drawn in 1840 by Dewhurst and Nicholls shows that by this date, the city was beginning to grow outwards along principal streets such as Cowgate. With the coming of the railways the city began a period of rapid change and expansion. In 1845 the Peterborough East railway station was opened by the Eastern Counties Railways with a line that linked to Northampton and Rugby to the west and to Wisbech and Norwich to the east. In 1848 the Great Northern Railway Company arrived, initially with a line to Lincoln from the East station. In 1850, the Northern Railway Line (East Coast mainline) to London opened, and a new station was built known as Peterborough North in the location of the current station building. There was also briefly a third station off Thorpe Road, Peterborough Crescent, which only operated from 1858 to 1866 for the Midland Railway before operations moved to Peterborough North. A cast iron railway bridge was built in 1850 to cross the River Nene, and is still in use today, making it the oldest iron railway bridge in use in the country on a main line. The railways and ancillary buildings, yards and sidings occupied land on the fringes of the city, on the south bank and later to the north and west of the city centre. Beside these, large areas of terraced housing sprang up with finance from the (Peterborough) Land Society, (this subsequently became the Peterborough Building Society). These new suburbs can clearly be seen on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map.

4.20 By 1900, the original street pattern and ancient drains and waterways still survived but the coming of the railways had brought unparalleled expansion with new development in mass produced brick and Welsh slate buildings encircling the historic city core. The investment brought by the railways stimulated new development and photographs of the city in 1900 clearly show substantial numbers of buildings constructed from about 1860 onwards. The city streets were paved with granite setts and more than half the old frontage buildings were replaced or re-fronted by Victorian redevelopments. The present character of the south side of Cowgate largely derives from this period, and on the north side the earlier buildings were cleared to make way for the Queen Street Iron Works. Individual buildings such as Market Chambers on Cathedral Square, constructed as the city's first department store, replaced structures from the C18, whilst remaining open spaces were rapidly filled with new buildings such as the former courthouse on Laxton Square. This process of renewal continued with the new banks replacing earlier buildings in the most prominent locations on Cathedral Square. Buildings such as the new Carnegie Library and Broadway Court continued to fill and extend the city centre beyond its historic boundaries.





No. 1 Westgate



Great Gateway and Cathedral

4.21 The first half of the C20 saw further redevelopments such as the Town Hall and Westgate Arcade. These redevelopments were often built using local stone incorporating classical design and detailing. The streets began to be adapted to accommodate the motorcar, with the construction of a new town bridge and covering of the Victorian setts with tarmac.

4.22 The second half of the C20 heralded a modernist approach and developments such as Hereward Cross cut across established patterns of movement and incorporated integral car parks. Other areas on the fringe of the city centre were cleared for open car-parks. Traditional forms of construction and materials were often replaced by modular frame construction with exposed concrete, modern bricks and asphalt flat roofs.

4.23 The late 1970s and early 1980s brought a major re-planning of the city centre transport infrastructure undertaken by the Development Corporation as part of the New Town expansion. For the first time, the link between the city and the river was severed by the construction of the inner city ring road (Bourges Boulevard). This road similarly also made a divide between the city centre and the railway that had precipitated the C19 expansion. The Queensgate shopping centre was superimposed into the historic fabric of the city, obliterating historic buildings and streets such as Cumbergate within its footprint. Many developments from this period have taken on architectural forms and used materials that have no special relationship with the city's built form.

4.24 The end of the 1980s and 1990s brought further redevelopments in the historic core of the city such as No. 6 Cathedral Square (Nandos), the Argos building on King Street that replaced the C19 Salvation Army building and Nos. 35-39 Long Causeway. The west side of Lower



Hereward Cross, Midgate



St Mary's Court, St John's Street

Bridge Street and the former power station site made way for the Asda supermarket (Rivergate) and in the process all the narrow burgage plots fronting the street were truncated.

### Archaeological resource

4.25 A variety of archaeological remains have been recorded within Peterborough City Centre dating from the Palaeolithic period onwards, however current evidence suggests that the City Centre was not intensively occupied during the prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon periods. The documentary and excavated archaeological evidence confirms that the pre-1070 Burg was sited around the area of Touthill, northeast of the Cathedral. In the C12 the principal streets were established, and historic maps show that until 1840, the extent of the city and its essential structure of streets and alleys, streams, dykes, canals, wharves etc had not changed substantially since medieval times. Immediately beyond this compact city, were farms, fields, fen, orchards and woodlands.

4.26 Excavations throughout the city centre have yielded deep stratified medieval urban sequences. The variable survival of archaeological deposits will require a flexible approach to development proposals to protect archaeological deposits particularly where they are known to exist and in areas of high archaeological potential such as the waterlogged areas near the river frontage.





C-19 and C20 stone buildings, Cathedral Square



Brick and slate C19 buildings, Park Road with some modern replacement materials

## City landmarks

4.27 Peterborough's flat topography and the relatively low scale of its built environment create opportunities for long range views, especially towards the city centre. Within the city centre there are a limited number of city wide focal points. A key landmark building is the Cathedral. Although from many vantage points it is well screened behind the precinct walls and intervening development, there are some very significant views and glimpses, both short and long distance, to the Cathedral and West Front, which have a strong influence on local character and make a very important contribution to the character and identity of the city centre.

4.28 Main landmarks within the city centre are:

- Cathedral: integral to the character of Cathedral Square, to views within the precinct walls and elsewhere including from the south across the Memorial Gardens and local glimpses
- Guildhall: as seen from Cathedral Square, Exchange Street and Church Street
- Parish Church of St John the Baptist: as seen from Cathedral Square
- Town Hall: in views north and south along Bridge Street and from Wentworth Street and Priestgate
- Former Presbyterian Church, Priestgate: in views east and west along Priestgate and south along Cross Street
- Museum: as seen in views east and west along Priestgate

4.29 Throughout the Conservation Area there are other important buildings that form local focal points, such as Westgate House with its turret, the Church of St Peter and All Souls (the Catholic Church) on Park



Historic railings and new street furniture

Road, The Co-operative Bank on Westgate (No. 33), and HSBC Bank on Cathedral Square (No. 3). Corner turrets and rounded corners to buildings are a feature of the Conservation Area and create local focal points on the junctions of roads (e.g. No. 21 Long Causeway/No. 1 Westgate) and where streets open out into squares (e.g. Market Chambers, Nos. 1-4 Long Causeway).

4.30 Late C20 development has added a number of taller, modern buildings to the skyline that are out of scale and have a bulky silhouette compared to their historic counterparts. These are considered to be negative landmarks. They are mostly located outside of the Conservation Area, however their size and impact affects the setting of the Conservation Area and views into and out of the city centre.

- Hereward Cross, Midgate
- St Mary's Court, St John's Street
- The Park Inn Hotel and Telephone Exchange building, Wentworth Street
- The former Peterborough Telegraph office, Priestgate

### Building materials and types

#### Medieval Peterborough

4.31 From the evidence of buildings and structures surviving in the Cathedral Precincts and recent excavations in Cathedral Square, it can be seen that stone was the almost universal building material for buildings of status. Dressed ashlar was used on higher quality and earlier buildings. Door surrounds, windows and chimneys were also in ashlar (Lincolnshire) limestone, with Barnack Ragstone and limestone







rubble coursing to the walls and roofs slated in Collyweston slates. In later and less important buildings and boundary walls, ashlar was used for reveals, corners, mullioned windows and decoration with rubble infill in between.

4.32 Archaeological evidence suggests that up to the C17, buildings of low status were most often constructed as oak framed structures, using timber from the nearby Forest of Rockingham. Roofs were covered in thatch, probably long straw, oak shingles or Collyweston slates.

### **C17 Peterborough**

4.33 Archival evidence and the few extant C17 buildings that have retained their original appearance indicate that until the end of the C17, Peterborough was a stone and timber city. The city generally comprised the following building types:

- ➔ Formally designed buildings such as the medieval Church of St John and the Guildhall in dressed stone and Collyweston slate and/or lead roofs.
- ➔ Vernacular buildings in stone rubble with steep pitched Collyweston slate attic roofs.
- ➔ Timber framed buildings probably lime rendered with stone slate roofs and possibly some surviving thatch and shingle roofs.
- ➔ Inside the Cathedral Precincts: Dressed stone and stone rubble buildings with stone detailing and Collyweston slate stone roofs.





Street furniture, Bridge Street

## C18 Peterborough

4.34 The C18 was a period of great change in the city's built fabric as the medieval town was upgraded to the fashions of a Georgian city. It is possible to conclude that C18 buildings were characteristically:

- 2 and 3 storey with attics in stone or local red/pink stock bricks with sash windows with fine glazing bars. Decorative details and ornamentation include rusticated quoins, eaves and verge parapets, dentil and band courses, and moulded door cases with decorative glazed fanlights.
- Formally designed buildings include the Customs House (in dressed stone and rubble with a Collyweston slate roof) and No. 11 Lower Bridge Street (dressed stone with dentilled eaves and mansard Welsh salted roof with gabled dormers).

## C19 Peterborough

4.35 In the C19 Peterborough changed from a mainly agrarian market town to an industrial city. These changes are reflected in the buildings, their design and the materials they were constructed from, and can be summarised as:

- Majority of C19 buildings built in yellow/red stock bricks with local stone dressings and detailing, wooden sash or metal casement windows and Welsh slate roofs.
- At the end of the C19 the Cathedral continued to dominate the city centre, however local red and yellow bricks and Welsh slates were beginning to overwhelm some historic streets and encircle the historic core, eroding the sense of a stone city.





Public realm improvements, Cathedral Square

## C20 Peterborough

4.36 As technological, transport and building construction innovations took effect, the C20 brought changes at a faster pace than any previous period, summarised as:

- ➔ The early 1900s brought a number of prominent new stone buildings. These include the Midland Bank, National Westminster Bank, Starbucks (former Lloyds Bank), Miss Pears Alms Houses, Yorkshire Bank and the Co-operative Bank.
- ➔ Process of replacement continued, with Victorian derived architectural styles and materials and also classically based stucco buildings with heavily rusticated quoins and window surrounds.
- ➔ Also highly individualistic structures such as the curiously designed timber framed building on No. 8 Cathedral Square (Pizza Express) and the Lido designed by an honorary architect committee and based on art deco influences.
- ➔ 1930s brought the first comprehensive redevelopment scheme with the east frontage of Narrow Bridge Street swept away to be replaced by the Town Hall with an imposing classically styled portico. Other buildings of the period continued the classically based design theme and the use of local stone and bricks. The former Marks and Spencer building on Bridge Street and the White Lion building on Church Street are typical examples.
- ➔ The Hereward Centre, TK Max building, the Barclays Bank building on Church Street, the former Telephone House (now converted Park Inn Hotel) and St Mary's Court all date from between 1950 and 1975. These buildings adopted an unreservedly modernist architectural approach, being square





View east to Cathedral along Church Street

with large footprints and 4 storeys or higher, utilising concrete and steel with exposed aggregate and modern cladding combined with machine made bricks under asphalted flat roofs.

#### 4.37 1975 – onwards

- ‘Individualistic’ approach to architecture is continued with other late C20 century buildings. The Crown and Magistrates’ Courts and Bayard Place, whilst carefully designed buildings in their own right, do not draw from the Peterborough palette of building styles and materials.
- The recent redevelopment on the site of Nos. 44-46 Bridge Street (Mountain Warehouse) has produced a restrained architectural design incorporating extensive use of local limestone and red stock bricks. This is clearly an architectural response to the Town Hall opposite and the former Marks and Spencer building close by and in the context of these, the new building is architecturally consistent with the street scene.
- The recent demolition of the 1960s Norwich Union House office building that stood to the west of the Church of St John the Baptist has opened up dramatic views and vistas along Church Street and created a new open space within the city centre.

### Public realm

4.38 From photographs taken at the turn of the C20, some of the earlier stone pavements and cobbled carriageways appear to have survived, for example in Lower Bridge Street. However, by this time, Cathedral Square, Long Causeway, Westgate and other city centre streets were paved with machine cut granite setts with pavements of large smooth flagstones and granite kerbs. Well into the C20, the street furniture





View west along Exchange Street to 'The Grapevine'

comprised ornamental cast iron gas lights, the trolley bus power poles, cast iron drinking water fountains (at cross roads) and the occasional ornate sewer vent pipe.

4.39 In the first quarter of the C20, electricity and telegraph poles were installed along the city streets, and street trees and electric lights appeared. An example of a historic lighting column is found immediately to the west of the Great Gateway. Other surviving examples of the historic public realm are the railings to the Church of St John the Baptist which was historically totally enclosed with steps at the northwest corner, and continues to be enclosed on its eastern and northern boundaries.

4.40 Over the past few years the public realm in the city centre has been transformed with the implementation of the recommendations of the Peterborough Public Realm Strategy (2008). Most of the city centre streets and public spaces have undergone significant enhancement with new paving, seating, signage and lighting improving their appearance and attractiveness.

4.41 The prominent guardrails along Bourges Boulevard and the junction with Westgate, Long Causeway and Midgate reinforce the busy nature of the road and dominance of the highways in these areas. Bollards and other prominent street furniture along Broadway are intrusive. The remaining public realm works at Westgate, Midgate and Broadway programmed over the next couple of years are expected to address these matters and will coordinate with the existing public realm work across the city centre to ensure coherency.

### Key views and vistas

4.42 The flat topography allows long views west from Frank Perkins Parkway and south from Stanley Recreation Ground towards the





Open space, Cathedral Precincts

Conservation Area, where the Cathedral is a prominent feature. Views within the Conservation Area are shaped by the built environment and tend to create shorter local viewpoints and glimpses rather than city-wide vistas.

4.43 The Cathedral is a major landmark building with its taller height giving it increased visibility across the Conservation Area. Key views of the Cathedral and its Precincts are seen looking east to the Great Gateway from Cathedral Square and Cowgate and from the south from Bishop's Road across the Memorial Gardens and the south east across the Embankment. Significant long range views are gained from the Frank Perkins Parkway to the east. Attractive views are also gained when crossing Town Bridge from the south, and from the eastern end of St Johns Arcade. Closer views from within the Cathedral Precincts offer direct views to the Cathedral which are very significant to the character of the immediate area. From other locations within the Conservation Area glimpses of parts of the Cathedral are gained and provide useful orientation points.

4.44 One of the most dramatic views within the townscape has been restored through the demolition of Norwich Union House and former Post Office (Nos. 22-24 Church Street) and public realm works to Cathedral Square. This has created an impressive vista looking east along Cowgate to the Church of St John the Baptist and Guildhall in succession and terminating with the Cathedral, emphasising the close relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical buildings in Peterborough City Centre. Views to the Guildhall and Church from the Great Gateway are also very attractive.

4.45 The view westwards to the north of the Guildhall along Exchange Street is similarly attractive, terminating in the Grade II\* listed Georgian building currently in use as 'The Grapevine' Public House. The view





south from the Cumbergate entrance to Queensgate is framed by listed buildings to either side and looks directly to the north elevation of the Church of St John the Baptist which forms a particularly dramatic backdrop to this enclosed space.

4.46 The central portico to the Town Hall building creates a natural focal point. It is neatly framed in the view east along Priestgate, with the Portico set off-centre which enlivens the view and gives it an accidental rather than formal character. Another important view towards the portico is seen from the eastern end of Wentworth Street.

4.47 Views out of the Conservation Area are mixed in quality. There are some attractive views south along Trinity Street to the former railway goods sheds that line the east side of the railway line. Other positive views include those from the southern boundary across Bourges Boulevard to the Lido gardens and green open space. From the northern boundary, the view northwards along Park Road (to Park Conservation Area) is very attractive and forms a positive setting to this northern aspect of the city centre, and views northwestwards from Westgate terminate with the attractive west front of the Victorian Westgate Church.

4.48 Other vistas are not so attractive and detract from the setting of the Conservation Area. These include the view from the junction of Midgate and Westgate to the bulky tower of Hereward Cross and the arcade of shops beneath which does not relate to the scale or character of adjacent buildings. Other negative views include views west from the western end of Priestgate to the busy and traffic dominated Bourges Boulevard, and similarly the view southwards along Wentworth Street which terminates with the ring road as it continues eastwards. The view west from the southern end of Wentworth Street looks across car parking to the re-clad Park Inn Hotel building. The Telephone Exchange building to the north is unattractive. The view from the northern end of



the eastern boundary is similarly compromised through inappropriate C20 development that is unsympathetic to its context, looking north to Leeson House, Dove House, St Mary's Court and other buildings in the complex which fail to make a positive contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area through their use of materials, architectural style and scale.

### Contribution of trees and green spaces

4.49 The use of street trees and green spaces across the city creates distinct differences between the different areas and is a defining characteristic of the character areas. There are clear pockets of green that contrast to other areas which are urban in character.

4.50 The London Plane trees along Long Causeway and Bridge Street create a green axis that links the northern end of Long Causeway to the river at the southern end of Bridge Street. The scale of these trees makes them particularly dominant in the view and screens the upper floors of the buildings along both streets as well as shade seating areas at street level.

4.51 Before c.1880, the city centre appears to have been largely devoid of street trees and its streetscapes were clearly urban in character. Street trees appear to have become more popular throughout the Victorian period, with tree planting along the newly laid streets on the periphery of the city centre. The current stands of London Plane trees in Long Causeway and Bridge Street were planted in the early 1980s following pedestrianisation and make a positive contribution to the visual environment with their verdant appearance as well as provide shade and shelter to pedestrians below.







Commercial shops on Broadway

4.52 The Cathedral Precinct is particularly green with lawned open spaces and a high concentration of mature trees. This extends beyond the precinct boundary, with a well-treed verge to the east of the east precinct boundary wall (Vineyard Road), and the contribution of Memorial Gardens and Gravel Walk. This creates a strong visual connection extending over Bourges Boulevard to the landscaped gardens to the front of the Lido and informal open green space beyond.

4.53 Other areas have a particularly urban character with an almost total absence of green spaces and street trees. This creates a 'stone' east-west axis that is distinct from the 'green' north-south axis as first identified by urban designer Gordon Cullen in work for Peterborough Development Corporation. The most notable exception is the newly created green open space of St John's Square. The few trees across the western and northern sections of the Conservation Area include a group of four to the front of the Museum on Priestgate and street trees on Geneva Street. The predominant commercial land use across these areas limits further any greening effect that the existence of private front and rear gardens may have generated.

### Key uses

4.54 Reflecting its city centre position, the large majority of buildings throughout the Conservation Area have a commercial use, most particularly at ground floor level. Bridge Street, Long Causeway, Westgate, Broadway and Cowgate are characterised by retail units, with the larger footprint stores located along the principal shopping streets of Bridge Street and Long Causeway and enclosing Cathedral Square, and smaller units occupying the more peripheral areas of Cowgate and Westgate. Priestgate is an exception within the city centre with a notable absence of retail units and proliferation instead of office use.





Offices on Priestgate



Ecclesiastical buildings, Cathedral Precincts

4.55 The western end of Westgate is currently peripheral to the city centre and therefore has less retail offer. Land use is less intensive in these peripheral areas and consequently there are more areas of low-key open space such as the surface car-park to the south of Geneva Street (Westgate car-park).

4.56 There are some civic and public functions carried out within the city centre, with sections of the City Council located in the Town Hall and Peterborough Museum located on Priestgate.

4.57 There are also key public spaces such as Cathedral Square and including the new square created to the west of the Church of St John the Baptist. As well as being a place of public assembly, the green of Galilee Court in front of the Cathedral has a spiritual dimension, as does other public open space around the Cathedral.

4.58 There are also notable ecclesiastical uses, including the parish Church of St John the Baptist in Cathedral Square, Church of St Peter and All Souls on the northern boundary and of course the Cathedral and Cathedral Precincts that occupy a considerable portion of the city centre.



## 5.0 CHARACTER AREAS

5.01 While there are features and characteristics common to the whole, there are a number of discrete character areas within the Conservation Area that display their own distinctiveness. These have been identified through an assessment of their characteristics as well as their historic associations and morphology. They are considered to be as follows:

### ➤ Character Area 1: Bridge Street, Long Causeway and Cathedral Square

This character area comprises the primary north-south axis through the city centre, along with key civic buildings and spaces, and is the only part of the Conservation Area to extend beyond the ring road. It includes the commercial core and principal public spaces found within the Conservation Area. Although a historic routeway leading to and from the river, its character is now largely C19 and later, though with some notable exceptions such as the medieval Church of St John the Baptist and the C17 Guildhall.

### ➤ Character Area 2: Cowgate

Cowgate has a mixed character of mostly Victorian and later commercial buildings, extending westwards towards the railway. It forms an important part of the stone east-west axis.

### ➤ Character Area 3: Priestgate

Although running parallel to Cowgate, Priestgate has a very different character as a quiet, enclosed space with greater architectural cohesion that is predominantly C18 and C19 in date and character. The former Presbyterian Church and Museum are important landmarks within this character area.

### ➤ Character Area 4: Westgate

Located to the north of the core of the city centre, historically Westgate has served as one of the key access routes into and out of the city from the west. This is reflected in the building character which generally has a more varied form, a smaller scale and uses

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