

Civic Core



Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Adopted December 2015



Planning for a Better Watford

Civic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

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1.0 Introduction

The Civic Core Conservation Area Character Appraisal aims to set out the area's special character and appearance and how it may be preserved or enhanced.

This appraisal will be used to help inform the design of any future development proposals so that they preserve or enhance the area and acknowledge its features.

It is important to note that no appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and that the omission of a particular feature, building or open space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

2.0 Background, Scope and Structure

The borough of Watford contains ten conservation areas, the oldest of which were designated in 1973 and 1975. The Urban Conservation Strategy produced during 2001 designated a further five conservation areas - including the Civic Core. The High Street / King Street Conservation Area was designated in 2006, while the Watford Heath Conservation Area and Estcourt Conservation Area were extended in 2008 and 2010 respectively. More recently, Macdonnell Gardens was designated as a conservation area in 2012 and Oxhey was designated as a conservation area in 2013.

This appraisal is structured to include:

- A summary of designation;
- Policy background;
- Definition of the special interest of the area via spatial and character analysis, historical development and important features.

3.0 Designation

The Civic Core Conservation Area was originally designated on 22nd January 2001 under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The main aims stated within the designation report for the Conservation Area (Watford Borough Council, 2001) were:

- To maintain the relationship and quality of spaces in the civic precinct and The Parade area;
- To retain the appearance of buildings fronting The Parade and civic precinct;
- To protect the area from further development which would harm its character or appearance;
- To enhance the space around the Pond on The Parade;

- To enhance the space around the Library, the Town Hall and the Bandstand.

4.0 Definition / Summary of Special Interest

This is an area of the town that contains the core of the borough's civic buildings and northern most section of Watford's medieval settlement. A largely linear conservation area, the Civic Core follows the path of a historically important road and contains a number of nationally listed buildings – some of which date back to the 17th century.

The Conservation Area is divided by Rickmansworth Road, with the area to the north containing both the civic buildings element and remnants of the Cassiobury Estate, while to the south the interest is focused on the historical layout of the town's High Street and pond. The set piece architecture on The Parade echoes that of the Town Hall and Colosseum and unifies the space now severed by the widened Rickmansworth Road and underpass.

5.0 Location and Setting

The Civic Core Conservation Area lies within the north-western area of Watford town centre – along The Parade and southern portion of Hempstead Road. The Conservation Area is divided by Rickmansworth Road, with a wide road carriageway and pedestrian underpass replacing the more modest at-grade junction that previously existed. It extends as far north as the northern boundary of West Herts College and as far south as the Exchange Road flyover - with the latter feature, in particular, forming a clear boundary element. The southern end is marked by a visual severance of The Parade caused by the flyover. The northern part of the Conservation Area comprises the Town Hall complex, Central Library, Central Leisure Centre, West Herts College and Little Cassiobury.

Other clear boundaries to the Conservation Area are formed by the Hempstead Road to the north and the two major junctions of Rickmansworth Road as it intersects with Beechen Grove and Cassio Road. However weaker boundaries are formed to the rear of The Parade's main street frontage, where the urban grain loosens out and a less coherent structure of more modern built form prevails. The rear garden boundary line of the houses on the east side of Cassiobury Drive provides the final significant edge to the Conservation Area – marking a clear transition point between different character areas.

6.0 Archaeology and Historic Development

6.1 Archaeology

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments, relating to development in the area, were undertaken in 2003, 2005 and 2008. These evaluated the archaeological significance and potential of areas within the Civic Core Conservation Area. As well as this, a wider archaeological survey covering the whole of Watford, authored in 2000 by Terry Hunns, has helped inform this section.

Although existing elsewhere in Watford, material evidence of activity within the Conservation Area that predates the medieval period has not been recorded to date. It is possible, although unlikely, that Hempstead Road and the High Street follow the alignment of a former Roman road (Margary, 1957), and consequently it is possible that archaeological remains could survive beneath the road surface and pedestrianised area between the Town Hall and the Library. Although the construction of houses, and subsequently a roundabout, in the northern part of the Conservation Area is likely to have resulted in the destruction of archaeological remains, there is the potential for some deposits to have survived beneath the current car park surface (Gifford, 2005).

The 'Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment Report' (Hunns, 2000) concluded that the likely extent of Watford during the medieval period reached as far north as the Rickmansworth Road. However, this is likely to be a mistake and is predicated on the mistaken identification of 12th century occupation close to 58 The Parade, which was in fact around 58 High Street.

While the post-medieval period (post 1500) saw extensive urban development within the Conservation Area, the importance and potential for further archeologically discovery from this period is deemed to be low (Gifford, 2005).

A desk-based assessment of the West Herts College site, produced in 2008, concluded that the likelihood of finding significant archaeological finds was low, although there is some potential for encountering park/garden evidence from the landscaping of Cassiobury and Little Cassiobury House.

There are no scheduled monuments in the Conservation Area.

6.2 Historic Development

Early Development

Evidence suggests that by the 12th century a town had developed a little north and clear of the floodable area of the Wat-ford (a crossing in the river). It is likely that Watford was a planned town - set up by the Normans as a trading settlement during this period (Gifford, 2005). Following the awarding of a market charter during the 12th century the settlement grew as 'Watford Street' - simply a row of buildings leading up from the River Colne along what we now know as High Street, and grouped around the church of St Mary's. Its layout was a linear development with narrow tenement or burgage plots off the main street, but it is unlikely that it reached as far as the present day Conservation Area.

Development in the Conservation Area during the early modern period was relatively modest and can be characterised by three particular development patterns. Firstly, the development/redevelopment of detached houses with generously sized gardens up the High Street to the junction with Rickmansworth Road. Secondly, the development of a group of properties to the north of the aforementioned junction, later named Cashio Hamlet, and thirdly, the development of a grand house with lands at Cassiobury - to the north of the Conservation Area.

A grand house at Cassiobury is thought to have been first built during the 16th century by the family of Sir Richard Morrison, following the granting of land, previously held by the Abbey of St Albans, to Richard Morrison by Henry VIII. In the 17th century the house and lands passed to Arthur Capel, who, as the first Earl of Essex, had a second house built in the 1670s to replace the existing property (Forsyth, 2008). Although the pre-eminent manor house was located well to the north of the present day Conservation Area, the associated parkland would have originally included parts of it. Somewhat later, during the late 17th century, the dower house known as Little Cassiobury was built on a peripheral part of the estate.

Directly to the south of Little Cassiobury, the origins of 'Cashio Hamlet' remain rather vague - although it is suggested that by the 17th century a series of buildings had been constructed in this location (Saunders, 1931). Of the buildings in this location that we know of, The Horns public house is believed to have been first constructed in 1740, whilst the since demolished Dog/Holly Bush/Dog & Partridge public house was built in 1720 and Townsend House in 1717 (Chapman, 1985).

One of the first detailed accounts of this area is provided by a report of the General Board of Health in 1849 following a major cholera outbreak in 1848: "Commencing at the top of the town, the houses below The Dog public-house have privies with open cesspools, pigsties, dung-heaps, and are without drains. The house slops are for the most part thrown into the main road and public footway, which, at the time of my visit, was in a state very offensive to passers by. This is a fever locality." Quoted in Bard, 2005. p.95



Dury and Andrews Map - 1766

The houses can be seen on Dury and Andrews' 1766 map of the area to the south of Cassiobury House and its grounds. For the most part, the settlement here was linear and was situated at the northern end of the High Street at the intersection of two historic roads: St Albans to Rickmansworth and London to Tring (Saunders, 1931). The road to Rickmansworth formed part of the Reading and Hatfield Turnpike Trust (1770 – 1881) (Festival of Britain Committee of the Borough of Watford, 1951), whilst the Hempstead Road was part of the Sparrows Herne to Aylesbury Turnpike during the 18th - 19th centuries (Ball, 1973).

Of the buildings constructed to the south of the Rickmansworth Road junction during this period, the most notable was Monmouth House, which was built in 1610 by Sir Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth, as a dower house. It remains today as 85 – 95 The Parade. At the end of the 18th century, Watford was described

by Daniel Defoe as being 'very long, having but one street; at the entrance of it stands Townsend House, which is large and handsome, and belongs to Arthur Greenwollers, Esq.' (Williams, 1884).

By 1849, the town was still described in a similar vein – being 'composed of a principal street, about 1 ½ miles long, built upon a sort of ridge sloping southwards to the river.' 'There are scarcely any cross streets and the town is nowhere above 440 yards and seldom above 220 yards broad' (Ball, 1973, p. 8).



Tithe Map 1842

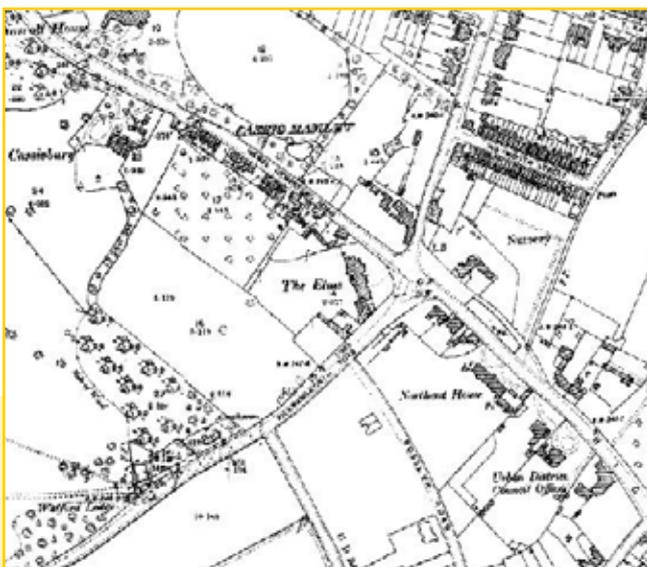
The Watford Tithe Map of 1842 reveals that development still remained relatively modest – particularly on the eastern side of Hempstead Road. The bulk of the map extract is dominated by fields, gardens and orchards – including a notably large orchard in the area marked '1091'. This map is also the first one that clearly shows the existence of the pond on the High Street.

By the end of the 19th century relatively little had changed. The eastern side of what is now known as The Parade housed two large houses, 'The Limes' and 'Elmcote' and a meadow which was used as a plant nursery by a Mr. Darby (Williams, 1884), whilst the western side was occupied by 'Northend House', 'The Laurels', 'Woodlands', 'The Shrubbery' and 'Upton

House' (north to south). 'The Elms', formerly known as 'Townend House' or 'Townsend House' dating from 1717 and rebuilt as 'The Elms' at end of 1800s (Watford FoBC, 1951; Bard, 2005), was a key element of the streetscene on the north-western corner of the crossroads. 'Little Nascot House' lay to the north-east of the crossroads in extensive grounds. The Horns and The Dog public houses were located adjacent to Hempstead Road, with smaller cottages dispersed along the street.



1871 OS Map



1898 OS Map



1914 OS Map

20th Century Development

As indicated on the Ordnance Survey maps, the setting of the Conservation Area was very different prior to 1920 from its current composition. It was structured by a simple crossroads at the junction of Rickmansworth Road and the High Street, where the underpass and Hempstead Road roundabout today stand, while small cottages and larger townhouses occupied the spaces that are now inhabited by civic and commercial buildings.

In celebration of Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1887, an oak tree from Cassiobury had been planted at the crossroads by the Countess of Essex. Surviving for only a few decades, the oak was removed to make way for the realignment of the crossroads and the installation of a new traffic roundabout in 1936 (Edwards, 1999). The 2 ½ storey, steep gabled, 19th century building on the north-eastern corner of the crossroads, Little Nascot House, remained in use as a maternity and infant welfare clinic until its demolition in 1959 (Nunn, 1999; Knight, 1999).



1940 OS Map

The most significant works to the crossroads took place in 1972 when the underpass between The Parade and the Town Hall precinct was built and other major ring road works took place. The semi-detached houses which had been constructed next to the library were also demolished to make way for road realignments at this point.



Underpass under construction

The house 'The Elms' and its grounds were bought in 1919 by the Urban District Council. The Peace Memorial Hospital was subsequently built on the stable lands of the house, while the former house site and the land containing some of Cassio Hamlet's cottages was developed with the Town Hall and Central Baths (Nunn, 2003). Further to the north, Watford Technical College was constructed between 1938 and 1953 on Hempstead Road on a site that had formally been part of the grounds of Cassiobury House and Little Cassiobury.



The Parade in 1929

In the early part of the 20th century, the eastern side of The Parade saw a significant amount of change, with the construction of shop units at 47-63 The Parade in the 1920s. To the north of Monmouth House, the large Georgian house named 'Elmcote' and its extensive grounds, along with Darby's market gardens and plant nurseries, were sold off after World War I for redevelopment. They were replaced by the bank building at 151 – 153 The Parade, the Plaza cinema, the Gas Showrooms at 149, the Watford Electricity Showrooms at 135 and a further 1930s parade of shops at 137-147.



Building work on 137 – 147 The Parade



The Elms prior to demolition



The original Faircross House



Colosseum under construction

The Plaza cinema, opened in 1929 on the site of 'Elmcote', was a prominent building which defined and rounded the corner of The Parade and Albert Road South (Knight, 1999), whilst the 1920s built Portland stone fronted bank at 151-153 The Parade defined the corner of St Albans Road, before the further construction of an adjoining shopping parade during the 1950s. The cinema was subsequently demolished in 1964 and replaced by the building that now houses the Oceana nightclub.

The western side of The Parade has also seen significant alterations in its urban fabric over the course of a century. The town's fire station was completed and opened in 1900 at a site next to 'Upton House' near the junction of the High Street and Upton Road (Nunn, 2003). The houses on Rosslyn Road and Cassio Road were set out behind The Parade by 1914, and in the following decades this side of The Parade changed from that of large two-storey houses to mainly three and four storey parades of shops.

Following the incorporation of Watford as a borough, the existing council offices at the Town Hall were built in the late 1930s, replacing the previous offices at Upton House (Bard, 2005). The former fire station building and Upton House were demolished in the 1960s to allow the building of a block of shops called Gade House. A large house, 'Northend House', was sited adjacent to the western side of The Parade, with

gardens setting it back from the main streetscene. In 1920, the building was acquired by the Conservative Club and renamed Halsey House (Nunn, 1987). The building was demolished in the late 1950s, making way for the construction of Woodlands Parade (70 – 110 The Parade) in 1960 (Nunn, 2003). The mock Tudor development at 112 – 114 The Parade was built in 1930 for the builders' merchant Cakebread Robey, whilst Faircross House at 116 The Parade was built in the mid 1930s on the site of the original 'Faircross House'.



Watford Central Leisure Centre



Extension to Watford Colosseum

More recent development within the Conservation Area has largely taken place in the northern part. Much of the former Peace Memorial Hospital was demolished in the latter half of the 20th century, with a large part of the site redeveloped for new health care facilities. Most visually significant of these developments is the Peace Children's Centre, which was built in 2000. The original Public Baths on Hempstead Road, which had been opened in 1933, were replaced by a new public swimming pool in 2008. West Herts College was extensively redeveloped in 2010-2011, while Watford Colosseum was renovated and extended in 2011.

7.0 Spatial Analysis

This section considers the morphology of the area, key spaces, and important views and vistas into and out of the area.

7.1 Character and Interrelationship of Spaces

Despite the loss of some earlier buildings and the negative impacts of road widening, this is an area which retains significant elements of its linear historical layout around a long-established pond and road structure. The majority of buildings within the current Conservation Area are civic or commercial in nature and largely date from the 1920s - 1930s.

Overall the buildings within the Conservation Area date from the 17th – 21st centuries and represent some of the most dramatic juxtapositions between different architectural styles exhibited in Watford. Unity of street composition is nevertheless evident in the strong townscape quality of the main north-west to south-east axis that runs through the Conservation Area.

The key spaces within the northern portion of the Conservation Area are formed in the arboreal setting between Hempstead Road and the frontage to West Herts College, as well as in the civic space between the Town Hall and the library.

In the southern portion of the Conservation Area the key space is formed by the pedestrianised street along The Parade – with particular emphasis on the area around the pond. Both sides of the Rickmansworth Road contain a number of key buildings which are of

a large-scale formal architecture, give structure to the area and are of architectural or historic interest.

The Town Hall and Colosseum in particular stand out as major landmarks that are central to a legible group of locally important municipal buildings, including the college building and the library, as well as the curved facades of The Parade and Faircross House. The pond, a naturally occurring feature, makes a pleasant contribution to the amenity of the area along the wide streetscene of The Parade.

Key Open Spaces:
Hempstead Road

The treed open space in front of the former West Herts College building forms the part of the gateway to the Conservation Area and to the town centre; it also provides a setting for both the Lanchester building and the Grade II* listed Little Cassiobury. The space is one of the few green spaces within the town centre. The space forms an important edge to one of the key views into the Conservation Area and into the town centre.

Town Hall and Library

The main public space here is the area between the Library and the side wing to the Town Hall, which contains the Peace Memorial. The space contains significant trees and some good quality features but lacks quality in terms of the relationship of the space to the buildings and the location and use of the features. The bandstand was relocated back to Cassiobury Park in early 2015 and options for enhancing the space are currently being looked at by the Council.



Green space by Lanchester building



Public realm by Central Library

The Pond

"A pond was in front of Watford House, and at the end a plantation of fir trees; also, as well as the present pond, one in Rickmansworth-road, nearer 'The Elms,' and one in Cashio Hamlet, now the garden to 'Little Nascot'."

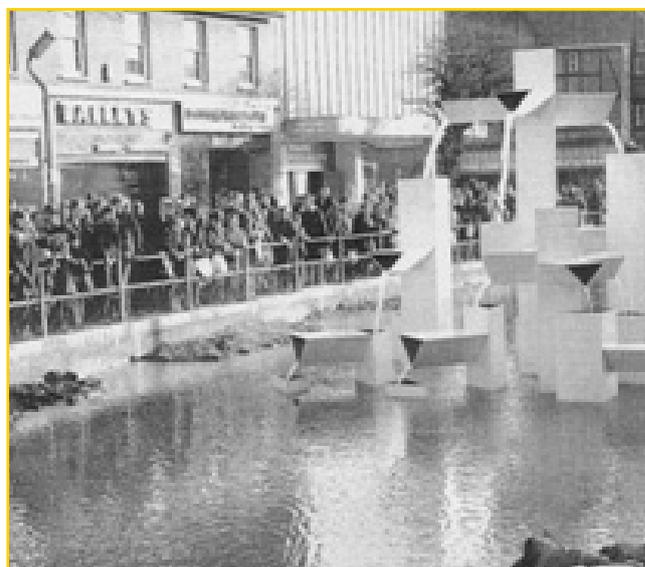
Mr Downer's recollections in 1916 quoted by Saunders, 1931, p.41.

By 1935, the ponds outside Little Nascot, Watford House and The Elms had been filled in (Nunn, 1987), leaving the pond on The Parade as the only surviving

example of a number of natural ponds that were historically located in this area of Watford. Originally the pond on The Parade served the needs of livestock and horses, as well as being used for washing and as a source of water in case of fire. In the 1900s the pond had railings put around its edges except for a horses' splashpoint, before it was entirely enclosed in the 1920s. Numerous improvements have since followed including the addition and removal of fencing, sculptures, landscaping and fountains. The most recent enhancements took place between 2013/14.



The Pond c.1900



The Pond in 1968

7.2 Key Views and Vistas

The views and vistas within, into and from the Conservation Area are important. The key sequential views within the Conservation Area follow the axial route from The Parade to Hempstead Road. This route goes from the commercial area by the flyover, through the town's café quarter and into the civic area and on to the residential Hempstead Road. The pattern of building types and form does change but there is a consistent and generally coherent building edge to the route.

The sequence of vistas is interrupted by the wide barrier of Rickmansworth Road and the pedestrian underpass; this point was noted by Pevsner (1977, p.390) in his Buildings of Hertfordshire book, 'The Parade is no longer the triumphal way to the Town Hall, as this now (ludicrously) has to be reached by a subway beneath Rickmansworth Road.'

The civic core of the town has been isolated to an extent from the historic centre of the town and main shopping centre by the poor road layout. In addition to the physical separation of the buildings for pedestrians, the major road cutting through the area does not support the visual linkage of The Parade with the Town Hall precinct.

There are views from St Albans Road and Rickmansworth Road into the Conservation Area but both are dominated by the road network. Views from Albert Road South towards the Conservation Area focus on the southern end of the pond. The other key view into the Conservation Area is from The Avenue, across the car park towards the leisure centre and The Horns public house.

8.0 Character Analysis

8.1 Character Zones

The Conservation Area is large and does have two quite distinct character areas, which are defined principally by a change in the scale and relationship of the buildings. The Rickmansworth Road is the separating feature, with the buildings to the south having a tighter urban grain than the area to the north where larger detached buildings are located. The

buildings to the south have a strong relationship across the pedestrianised street and the pond. While there is variation in building height, there is a consistency in the materials and rhythm of the buildings which creates a coherence to the streetscape. There are some buildings which are more modern and do make such a positive contribution, but they still maintain that strong building lines.

The northern character area lacks the coherence of the townscape that the southern part exhibits with sides of buildings address the front of other buildings. The buildings themselves are generally of high quality and the relationship the leisure centre development forms with the street and surrounding buildings has helped to repair gaps in the streetscape.

8.2 Activity

Activity in this Conservation Area varies during the course of the day and between the two character areas. During term time, the northern part of the Conservation Area can get relatively crowded with students. This is in addition to the underlying pedestrian movements relating to the other uses, such as the Town Hall and Central Library. Facilities, such as the Colosseum and Leisure Centre help ensure that there is pedestrian activity into the evening.

The southern part of the Conservation Area is less busy during term time, but maintains pedestrian activity throughout the day due to the town centre shops, cafes, restaurants, night clubs and bars. The latter land uses ensure that the area gets notably busy in the evenings.

There are areas which are less well used, such as the open space next to the Library. The northern part of the Conservation Area contains significant amounts of car parking which is well used during the day time, but less so at night.

8.3 The Qualities of the Buildings and their Contributions to the Area.

Key Buildings Built 1600-1900:

Monmouth House (Grade II Listed), at Nos. 85 – 95 The Parade, was built in 1610 by Sir Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth, as a dower house. Carey resided at what is now Moor Park and was a distant cousin of Elizabeth 1, notably riding to Scotland to tell James of her death, and for a while he and his wife looked after James's sickly son Charles (Forsyth, 2008).

In 1771, the red brick building was divided into two



Monmouth House



Monmouth House & The Platts

dwelling and the aforementioned land was sold off. The northern end of the building 'Monmouth House' was significantly altered in 1816, when the roof was lowered, the façade was refaced in stucco and the windows were replaced with large sash windows (Castle, 1977). The southern end of the building remained simple and quite devoid of external ornament (Victoria County History, 1908) and was renamed 'The Platts' in reference to the ancestral home of the Cox family who owned the premises at the time (Ball, 1973).

In 1927 the northern half of the building was rebuilt by Henry Colbeck, possibly using materials from Cassiobury House (Castle, 1977). The Georgian façade was replaced with a new structure so as to match the southern half of the street block. As part of these works, the southern half of the building was also restored and the ground floor of the whole building was converted to shops. The building thus took on its present form of three storeys in height with four coped gables and a symmetrical arrangement of windows.

Little Cassiobury (Grade II* Listed), positioned close to the frontage of the Lanchester building on Hempstead Road, is a former dower house of the Cassiobury Estate dating from the late 17th century. A small red brick mansion house, the building is two storeys with an attic served by three flat topped dormer windows. The house was built to accommodate widowed and unmarried members of the Essex family – under whose ownership it remained until 1922 when, following the death of the 7th Earl of Essex, the Cassiobury Estate was sold off.



Little Cassiobury



Little Cassiobury in c.1900

Under the ownership of Mr Lancelot Hill, the house was extensively renovated, internally, and extended during the 1930s by the acclaimed architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis. Elsewhere Williams-Ellis is most well known for his work in creating the Italianate village of Portmeirion in Wales and for his work in establishing the first National Parks in Britain. The building was subsequently acquired by the County Council in 1939 and was subject to further internal renovations and additions. The building was described by Pevsner in 1977 (p.387) as 'the best classical house in Watford'

but it is currently unoccupied and its future use remains uncertain.

Key 20th Century Buildings

Other than Monmouth House and Little Cassiobury, few substantial buildings remain in the Conservation Area that date from before the 20th century. The houses along Rickmansworth Road, at 7 – 11, were built in 1899 and parts of the complex of buildings forming The Horns public house on Hempstead Road predate 1900.

Designed in 1923 by the architect Wallace Marchmont, the Peace Memorial Hospital was formally opened by Princess Mary on the 24th June 1925. Funded by public subscription totalling £90,000, the hospital was envisioned to be a practical memorial to the horrors of the First World War and was originally complimented to the front by the Peace Memorial that now sits next to the Town Hall.



The Peace Hospital c.1925



The Peace Hospice

Following the closure of the hospital in 1985, the site lay derelict before being reopened in 1996 as The Peace Hospice. While much of the original hospital has been demolished, the central building remains – with the frontage largely restored to its original design during the 1990s. A Locally Listed Building, the Peace Hospice is of a neo-classical design with white columns, portico and pediment. The roofline contains eight hipped dormer windows, whilst the two storey building also features a detailed cornice and splayed window arches.

Designed by Moore-Smith & Colbeck, 101 - 115 The Parade were built in 1928 and may have recycled building materials from Cassiobury House. Built to a 'tudorbethan' style, the building has three-storeys and is Locally Listed. Constructed of brick and timber with pitched roof elements, the building has strong gables that include black bargeboards and overhanging eaves. Elevations include leaded casement windows and vertical brick work that follows a herringbone pattern, while the roof is topped by ornate chimney stacks.

Replacing an earlier library on Queens Road, Watford Central Library was constructed in 1928 and was subsequently extended in 1961 – 1963. Forming part of the civic nucleus of buildings and a Locally Listed Building, the two-storey library was designed by H.A. Gold & W.W. Newman. The building is red bricked, with small painted sash windows and a clay tiled roof. The main entrance point has stone bands and an open pediment, as well as detailing that includes the Borough's coat of arms. The front elevation has a central projection, with five parallel windows on the first-floor, while slightly recessed wings feature rows of three windows on each floor.



Watford Central Library c. 1930



Watford Central Library

The Grade II listed Peace Memorial, which sits next to the Town Hall, was unveiled to the public in 1928. Created by Mary Pownall Bromet, the three cast bronze nude figures on a Portland stone base were originally located in front of the Peace Memorial Hospital on Rickmansworth Road, before being moved in 1987 to their current location.



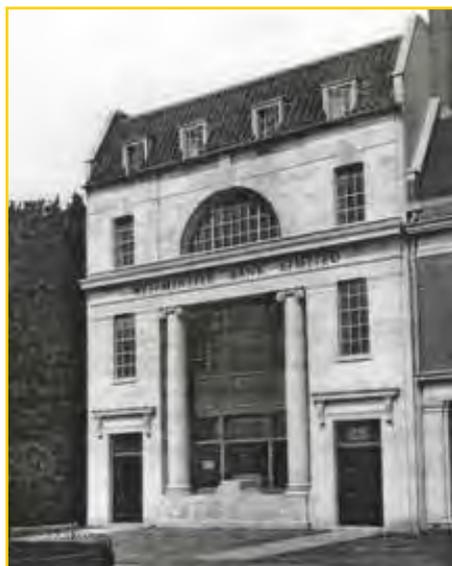
War Memorial in front of the Peace Hospital



War Memorial in current location

The sculpture's three figures represent the fallen, the wounded and those who have won through 'still whole in body and mind' (Knight, 1999). Mary Pownall Bromet first made two of the statues in plaster during the First World War, before money was raised by local subscription to allow all the sculptures to be cast in bronze.

Built between 1929 and 1930, the Grade II listed building at 151 – 153 The Parade was built as the Watford premises for the Westminster Bank. The Portland stone fronted three storey building is a formal classical building with simple yet monumental columns and entrances. The building was designed by the notable architect Septimus Warwick, who is most famous for his work in London, where he designed The Wellcome Building on Euston Road and was involved in the development of Canada House.



Westminster Bank c.1930



151-153 The Parade

Approved in 1933 and built in 1934, Faircross House, at 116 The Parade, was designed by the architects Hubert Lidbetter and Henry Colbeck for 'Watford Ideal Homes Ltd'. A purpose built development of shops and flats, the building was constructed on the site of an existing detached house - that had also been called Faircross House (Leech, 1950). Hubert Lidbetter was an award winning architect at the time, who largely specialised in ecclesiastical architecture – with his most well known building being the Friends Meeting House in central London (Gawne, 1998).



Faircross House, 116 The Parade

A Locally Listed Building of red brick with stone dressing, the architectural style is classical, which is evidenced by the design of the stone entrance, motifs and original windows. The building has a raised parapet at eaves level, which is raised slightly higher over the central part of each bay to give emphasis. The roofline is strong and constructed of clay tiles. The main stone entrance features a heavily recessed door, overhead fan light and tiled floor. A simple canopy sits above the door and the building name is detailed in black lettering.

Built in 1935 for the Prudential Company by their own in-house architect, 58 – 68 The Parade was a purpose built office block, with additional ground-floor shop units for renting out externally. Neo-Georgian in style and five-storeys high, the structure was one of the tallest buildings in Watford at the time of its completion. A red brick building with a flat roof, the building has a 'T' shaped layout – with the central axis denoting the main entrance. Marked by stone dressing, the main entrance is topped by a broken pediment, while the third-storey is topped by classical entablature. The fenestration is formed of casement paned windows of neo-classical proportions, while a central stone feature on the first and second floors has a complete pediment top.



58 – 68 The Parade



Lanchester building



135 The Parade

Designed by the borough engineer W.W. Newman and built by the local contractors Messrs. G. & J. Waterman Ltd., the building officially opened on the 29th October 1938. This Locally Listed Building is of a neo-classical style and has four-storeys constructed within a steel frame and encased in brick walls.



Town Hall under construction

Designed by the architects Henry V. Lanchester and T.A. Lodge, Watford Technical College began being built in 1938 but, due to the outbreak of the second world war, was not officially opened until 1953. Henry Vaughan Lanchester was a notable designer of the period – receiving the Royal Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1934, before later becoming a vice president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Amongst other important commissions, Lanchester and Lodge designed Hackney Town Hall (Grade II) and the Parkinson Building at the University of Leeds (Grade II). The building was occupied by West Herts College until 2011 and is due to reopen as a primary school in 2014.

The Locally Listed Building consists of three-storeys and is constructed from a pink red brick, with reinforced concrete floors. The front elevation is symmetrical with two side bays around a central entrance feature. The roof of the building is flat, creating a streamlined and clean building form. The fenestration pattern on the building is regular and breaks up a linear elevation. The building has an important relationship with the open space and trees in front of it which also provides the setting for the Grade II* listed Little Cassiobury.



Watford Town Hall

A large scale 'set piece' structure, 135 The Parade was built in 1938 as the Watford Electricity Showroom.

The Grade II listed Town Hall and Colosseum stand at the corner of Hempstead Road and Rickmansworth Road. Designed in 1935 by Charles Cowles-Voysey and built between 1937 and 1940, the building originally had a tighter relationship to The Parade as its radial plan and concave central entrance addressed the intersection of streets (Pevsner, 1977). Cowles-Voysey was also responsible elsewhere for a number of civic buildings, including Cambridge's Guildhall (Grade II) and Winchester's Queen Elizabeth II Court, (Grade II).

The building has a reinforced concrete frame clad in hand made bricks, with tiled roofs topped by a large scale lantern clock tower. Consisting of three-storeys, the office building element has extensive fenestration made up of aligned rows of bay windows. With frames made of wood and metal, the Crittall windows dominate the façades of the building, while the principal double door entrance to the building is located up a series of steps that sit below the raised clock tower. The building is a rich and complete example of a 1930s classical style public building. Its dramatic concave front and side wings show that the classical style can still be inventive and relevant to civic architecture of the twentieth century.

Built in two stages in 1955 and 1956, St Albans House, at 155 – 185 The Parade, was designed by the London architects Cotton, Ballard & Blow. Copying a design by John Howard Leech from 1949 that was never built, the architecture of the finished buildings has a strong relationship with Faircross House, which sits on the other side of The Parade.

This Locally Listed Building was constructed as a simplified version of Faircross House – using the same proportions, materials and elevational structure. However, the building lacks the classical detailing which Faircross House possesses. The first floor uses dark red and London stock brick banding to give horizontal emphasis. The main elevation is London yellow stock brick with stone and red brick detailing. There is a parapet wall at eaves level and a clay tile pitched roof. The original windows are metal framed with some replacements evident.



Site in 1935 awaiting development



St Albans House, The Parade

8.4 Public Houses

Historically, there were only three public houses within the Conservation Area. The earliest remaining public house, 'The Horns', is located adjacent to the Town Hall at 1 Hempstead Road. A public house of this name has been present on the site since 1740 (Chapman, 1985). Initially kept by the Lea family, the public house was apparently popular with carters travelling through Watford (Branch Johnson, Undated). The existing building on the site was significantly rebuilt around 1924.



The Horns in 1934



The Horns

Further up Hempstead Road close to Little Cassiobury, another establishment named The Dog, Holly Bush or Dog and Partridge existed from approximately 1720 until 1970 (Chapman, 1985). Following the demolition of the simple two-storey brick building in 1970, the site of the public house is now part of the grounds of West Herts College (Knight, 1999). Another public house 'The Artichoke' was situated adjacent to the pond (Chapman, 1985). This was commemorated by the now vacant public house of the same name situated at 112 - 114 The Parade.

8.5 Listed buildings

The following buildings are included on the "List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest," issued by the Department of the Environment under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

- Little Cassiobury and former stable block to the rear (Hempstead Road) – Grade II*. Listed in 1952.
- Monmouth House (85-95 The Parade) – Grade II. Listed in 1977 & 1983.
- 151-153 The Parade – Grade II. Listed in 1983.
- War Memorial (The Parade) – Grade II. Listed in 1983.
- Watford Town Hall (Rickmansworth Road) – Grade II. Listed in 1994.

8.6 Locally Listed Buildings

As part of the Council's Urban Conservation Strategy, a register of Locally Listed Buildings was compiled within the Watford District Plan (2000). A revised list was adopted in 2010. The following buildings are included in the register:

- Watford Central Library (Hempstead Road). See section 8.3.
- Lanchester building (Hempstead Road). See section 8.3.
- The Peace Hospice (Peace Drive). See section 8.3.
- 58 – 68 The Parade. See section 8.3.
- 97 The Parade. In 1927 Monmouth House was extended to the west with the addition of a largely two storey structure – numbered 97 & 99 The Parade. This Locally Listed Building was designed by London architects Moore- Smith & Colbeck and built by local firm Bracey & Clark, with some evidence suggesting that the bricks may have come from the recently demolished Cassiobury House.
- 101 – 115 The Parade. See section 8.3.
- Faircross House (116 The Parade). See section 8.3.
- 135 The Parade. See section 8.3.
- 137 – 147 The Parade. This three-storey building was constructed in 1935 and designed by the London architecture firm Davies and Knight. Neo-classical in style, the building is both symmetrical and understated. The main building material is red brick, with a clay tile pitched roof and sash windows.
- 149 The Parade. Built in 1930, 149 The Parade was designed by the Rickmansworth architect Sydney

Dawes for use by the Gas Board as an office and showroom. A two storey structure constructed in a neo-classical style, the building is of red brick with a clay tile pitched roof.

- 155 – 183 The Parade. See section 8.3.



137 – 147 The Parade



149 The Parade

8.7 Other Significant Buildings/Structures

A number of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area contribute positively to the local character despite not meeting the criteria for statutory or local listing.

- The Masonic Hall, Rickmansworth Road.
- The Horns, Hempstead Road.
- 63 The Parade.
- 47 – 61 The Parade.
- 75 – 83 The Parade.
- 112 – 114 The Parade.
- 129 – 133 The Parade.

8.8 Prevalent Local and Traditional Building materials

Facing Materials

Red brick is the predominant facing material in the Conservation Area with stone dressing used on many buildings. The shades of red vary from a brownish red through to an orange red. The dominant roof material is clay tile on the pitched roofs. Most windows are wooden and some sliding sash, but some metal exist in more recent buildings; most are painted white.

Floorscape Materials

There is little evidence of original historic fabric in the floorscape. The predominant materials are granite pavements and stone flags.

The area around the Town Hall and Central Library was not part of recent town centre enhancements and is paved in standard concrete flags. Part of the area in front of the Library is laid out with grass raised beds. Once the pedestrian route finishes the floorscape reverts to standard tarmac and concrete kerbing. The car park areas are covered in standard blacktop and concrete kerbs.

8.9 The Contribution made by Green Spaces

There is one key green space in the Conservation Area which is the space in front of the Lanchester building. The only other green area is the land adjoining the Central Library. It is thought that some of the trees in this space may have been part of the gardens of Little Nascot. Significant groupings of trees in the Conservation Area are located in the following areas:

- the frontage of the Lanchester building;
- the area between the Town Hall and Central Library;
- the rear of the health centre and Central Library.

Rows of semi mature trees down The Parade help give structure to the street and add visual interest. These were supplemented in 2014 with additional tree planting close to the pond. The only trees in the Conservation Area subject to a full Tree Preservation Order (TPO) are located on the college site immediately adjacent to what was 63 Hempstead Road (TPO 190). This TPO was made prior to the Conservation Area being designated to afford the trees protection from the adjacent development site.



Trees on The Parade



Trees opposite the Town Hall

8.10 The Extent of Intrusion or Damage (Negative Factors)

Traffic and Pedestrian Management

The dual carriageway of Rickmansworth Road and the associated underpass represent an especially negative feature within the Conservation Area. The wide road serves to visually and physically sever the two parts of the Conservation Area, as well as lower the quality of the environment around it. The buildings along The Parade and the Town Hall were designed to have a strong physical relationship to one another, which the underpass and dual carriageway serve to weaken. The level change required for the underpass has resulted in large expanses of steps on either side of the road, which reduce the quality of the public spaces within which they are contained.

The flyover section of Exchange Road on the south-eastern boundary of the Conservation Area also serves to weaken the townscape quality of The Parade. This road feature reduces the quality of the environment in this location and has a deleterious effect on the Conservation Area as a whole.



Rickmansworth Road

Risk to Little Cassiobury

At present Little Cassiobury is on the English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk Register'. Although the building is structurally sound and repairs to the roof have previously been completed, the uncertainty over the future use of this vacant building is of concern. The 'Friends of Little Cassiobury' group are currently exploring options for restoring the property.

Dominance of car parks

In the part of the Conservation Area located to the north of Rickmansworth Road a considerable portion of the land is allocated to visually uninspiring surface level car parks. An inefficient use of land, the large car parks serve to weaken the grain of the built form and lower the quality of the urban environment.



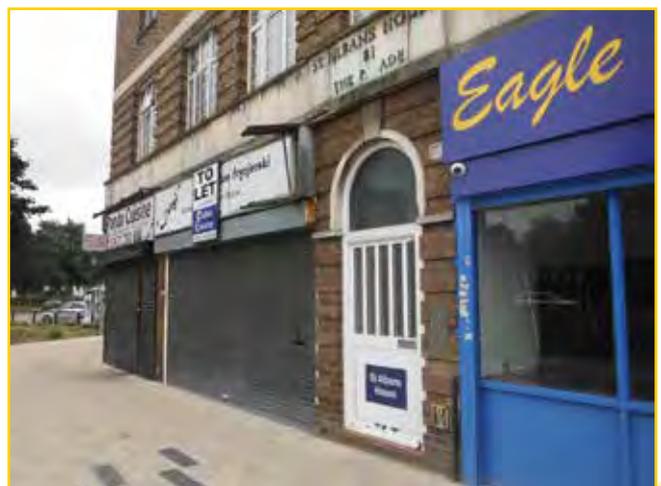
Flyover



Visually dominant car parking

Shopfronts

There are many examples of poor shopfronts and signage on properties located along The Parade. Some fascia boards are placed too high up the building and many are in poor quality materials. In some cases there are inappropriate replacement windows in the floors above. Visually poor shop units have an effect on the whole façade of the building and the perception of the Conservation Area as a whole.



Poor quality shopfronts

8.11 Neutral Areas

Commercial buildings from the later 20th century on The Parade may be considered to be “neutral” buildings in terms of the Conservation Area. Demolition of these buildings may be considered if the design of redevelopment is sufficiently high to provide clear benefits to the Conservation Area.

8.12 Capacity for Change

The northern part of the Conservation Area has seen significant changes in recent years. This has taken place in a piecemeal fashion and has not made sufficient provision for the enhancement of the Conservation Area between the new buildings. The area does have the capacity for further change, but this needs to be undertaken in a more holistic manner.

A plan for the enhancement of the public realm in the northern part of the Conservation Area should be prepared alongside any future redevelopment proposals and funding secured to deliver this. Any new buildings in this part of the Conservation Area should respond to the civic character of the area and should reinforce the north south axis.

There are areas adjoining the south-eastern part of the Conservation Area which could accommodate change, such as land to the south of Albert Road South. Such redevelopment could potentially involve those buildings which are of less significance in the Conservation Area. Any scheme which involved such proposals would have to demonstrate that there was a clear benefit to the character and quality of the Conservation Area.

9.0 Article 4 Direction

An Article 4(1) Direction was served on the following properties on the 4th April 2013: The Horns (1), Watford Central Library, West Herts College Hempstead Road; Halsey Hall (1), 7, 9, 11 Rickmansworth Road; 58, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 97, 99, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 155, 157, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185 The Parade.

This Direction restricts permitted development rights with regards to:

- Development within the curtilage of a property comprised within the following classes of Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the said Order:

Class C – the painting of the exterior of any building or work.

10.0 Suggested Boundary Changes

It is not considered that there are material reasons for making any alterations to the boundary of the Conservation Area.

11.0 Management Proposals

A separate Conservation Areas Management Plan was adopted in July 2013. The document is accessible to view here: www.watford.gov.uk/conservationareas

12.0 Local Consultation

This draft version of the appraisal has been published for public consultation. The Council will seek to identify and consult by letter those with an interest in the Conservation Area. The draft appraisal will be accessible on the Watford Council website. Responses will help shape the final version.

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Glossary of Terms

Band – an un moulded, projecting string course, often delineating a floor/storey.

Bargeboards – projecting boards set against the incline of the gable of a building.

Bay – the vertical division of the exterior, (or interior) of a building marked by a window opening. They may be Round, (or Canted) or Square.

Broken pediment – a low pitched Gable above a Portico where the raking cornice is left open at the apex
Casement window – a window hinged vertically to open like a door.

Classical architecture – originated from Roman and Greek construction methods, which were later used as a model for “neo–” architectural styles.

Cornice – a projecting, decorative moulding found along the top of a building refers to a cornice made up of a series of small square blocks Dentil Cornice.

Crittall windows – type of steel window frames that hot tipped galvanized to prevent corrosion.

Dormer – a projecting window placed vertically in a sloping roof with a roof of its own.

Dressings – a decorative feature made of stones, most commonly set around windows.

Eaves – the underpart of a sloping roof overhanging a wall, (Oversailing), or flush with it.

Fenestration – the arrangement of windows in a building.

Gable – the triangular upper part of a wall found at the end of a ridged roof.

Grain – refers to the arrangement and size of buildings in the urban context.

Herringbone pattern – a pattern of columns of short parallel lines with all the lines in one column sloping one way and lines in adjacent columns sloping the other way.

Hipped roof – a shallowish pitch with sloping at the vertical ends.

Pediment – a low pitched Gable above a Portico.

Pier – a solid vertical masonry support (or mass) found in buildings and walls.

Portico – a roof space open or partly enclosed

Sash window – a window that is double hung with wooden frames (sashes) that slide up and down with pulleys.

Stucco – a form of plaster used internally or externally to decorate or protect.

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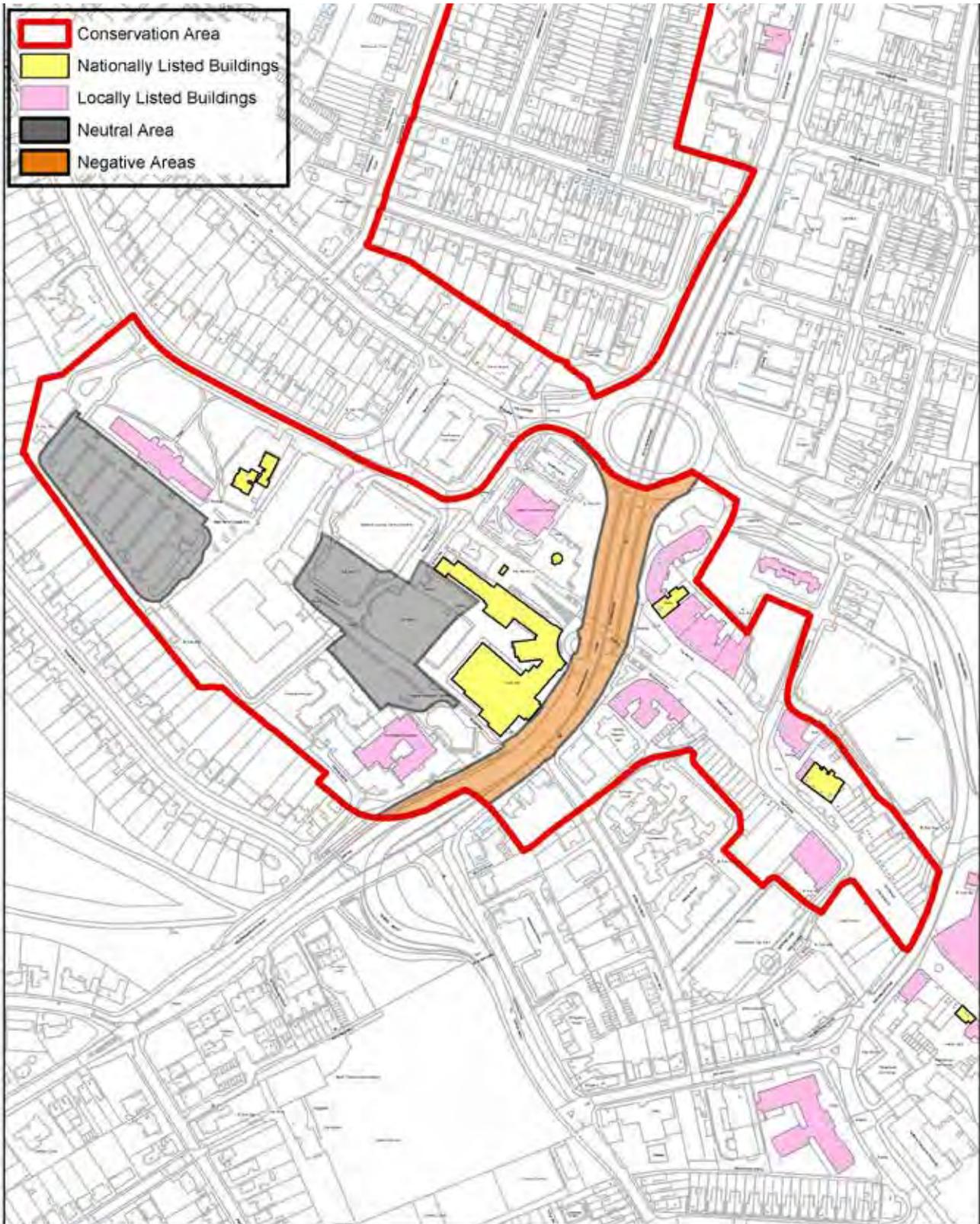
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Civic Core Conservation Area

Produced by: Tessa Minton, Planning Policy Officer, 16th May 2012

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 Scale: 1:3,583
 at A4



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