



12. Civic

Significance

Concentration of historic buildings

Presence of features from historical period(s)

Townscape / Landscape quality:

Quality of details:

Concentration of negative features:

Score

HIGH

HIGH (3)

HIGH (3)

HIGH (3)

HIGH (3)

SOME (2)

14

Character Area Overview

Summary

The area contains the main public buildings in Norwich, including the refurbished market place, the civic heart of Norwich. The market place and the surrounding area have been at the centre of Norwich's development since Norman times and today form the civic quarter of the city.

Topography & Landscape Framework

The area lies on the southern side of the River Wensum. The market place is the largest urban open space in the city and the land falls eastwards.

Town Morphology, History & Archaeology

The current market place was established by the Normans who moved the focus of the

city from north of the river to around the castle (which they also built). Their French Borough was laid out around the large rectangular market place with two main streets leading westwards (Bethel Street and St Giles Street). St Peter Mancroft (begun in 1430) sits on the site of an earlier church which was probably founded shortly after the Conquest.

The Castle (a) is William I's only castle in East Anglia and was built on the site of an earlier timber structure; its current form is a Victorian reinvention, albeit relatively faithful to the original. The Castle mound was eroded in 1926-7 with the widening of Castle Meadow and was subject to much criticism at the time. The earthworks to the south of the mound had already been

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Extract from 1880 - 1886 OS map

levelled in 1738 to form the cattle market which in turn was redeveloped with the construction of Castle Mall in 1993.

The market place remained important throughout the medieval period and in the fifteenth century the Guildhall (b) was constructed providing an assembly chamber for meetings of the full medieval council. The Chapel of the College of St Mary in the Fields was demolished after The Reformation, but the surviving collegiate buildings were remodelled in the eighteenth century and became the Assembly House (c).

As shopping became a leisure pastime in the C17 and C18 for the gentry, the importance of Norwich's shops and services increased and Gentleman's Walk was formed, allowing visitors to promenade in front of the shops. The Royal Arcade, an early form of the shopping mall was built in 1899 off Gentleman's Walk (d).

Landmarks & Views

The Castle, St Peter Mancroft and the City Hall clock tower are three of the city's main landmark buildings. Long views of St Peter Mancroft are gained from Theatre Street and Bethel Street whilst views west along Chantry Road are terminated by the green backdrop of Chapelfield Gardens. The Forum looms large in views north up Hay Hill and glimpses of the Assembly Rooms are gained from Theatre Street. The Guildhall is a key building in the market place.

The City Hall is readily visible from Gentleman's Walk at the eastern side of the market place, and its clock tower is visible in narrow views from parts of Castle Meadow (e). Davey Place was formed in 1813 by Alderman Jonathan Davey and today visually connects the Castle (f) and the City Hall (g), allowing a long view of the Castle from the Memorial Gardens at the west end of the market place.

One long distance view of the Anglican Cathedral is gained at the junction of Cattlemarket Street and Rose Lane.

Key Building Groups

Collectively, the key individual buildings form the civic and cultural core of the city; three buildings – the City Hall clock tower, the Castle and St Peter Mancroft – are city-wide landmarks and The Forum and Guildhall are local landmarks.

These landmark buildings all date from different periods, often centuries apart, but are mostly very fine examples of their type. The Guildhall for example is one of the most splendid of provincial guildhalls and exhibits fine East Anglian flint diaper work whilst St Peter Mancroft is very richly decorated with a magnificent tower that dominates the market place (h). The most recent addition to this group of landmark buildings is The Forum (or Millennium Building), designed by Michael Hopkins Partnership and built on the site of the destroyed central library.

Behind the City Hall is the Fire Station (1932-4) designed by Stanley Livock in a complementary style. Opposite this is the Bethel Hospital which was the first purpose-built asylum in the country, built in 1712-13, although its Bethel Street frontage dates from its remodelling by Boardman in 1899 (i).

Two very different examples of purpose-built shopping developments are found within the area. The Royal Arcade runs off Gentleman's Walk behind the façade of the former Royal Hotel and is a striking display of faience in

the English Arts and Crafts style (j). Castle Mall is from the late C20 and is constructed within the south bailey of the Castle.

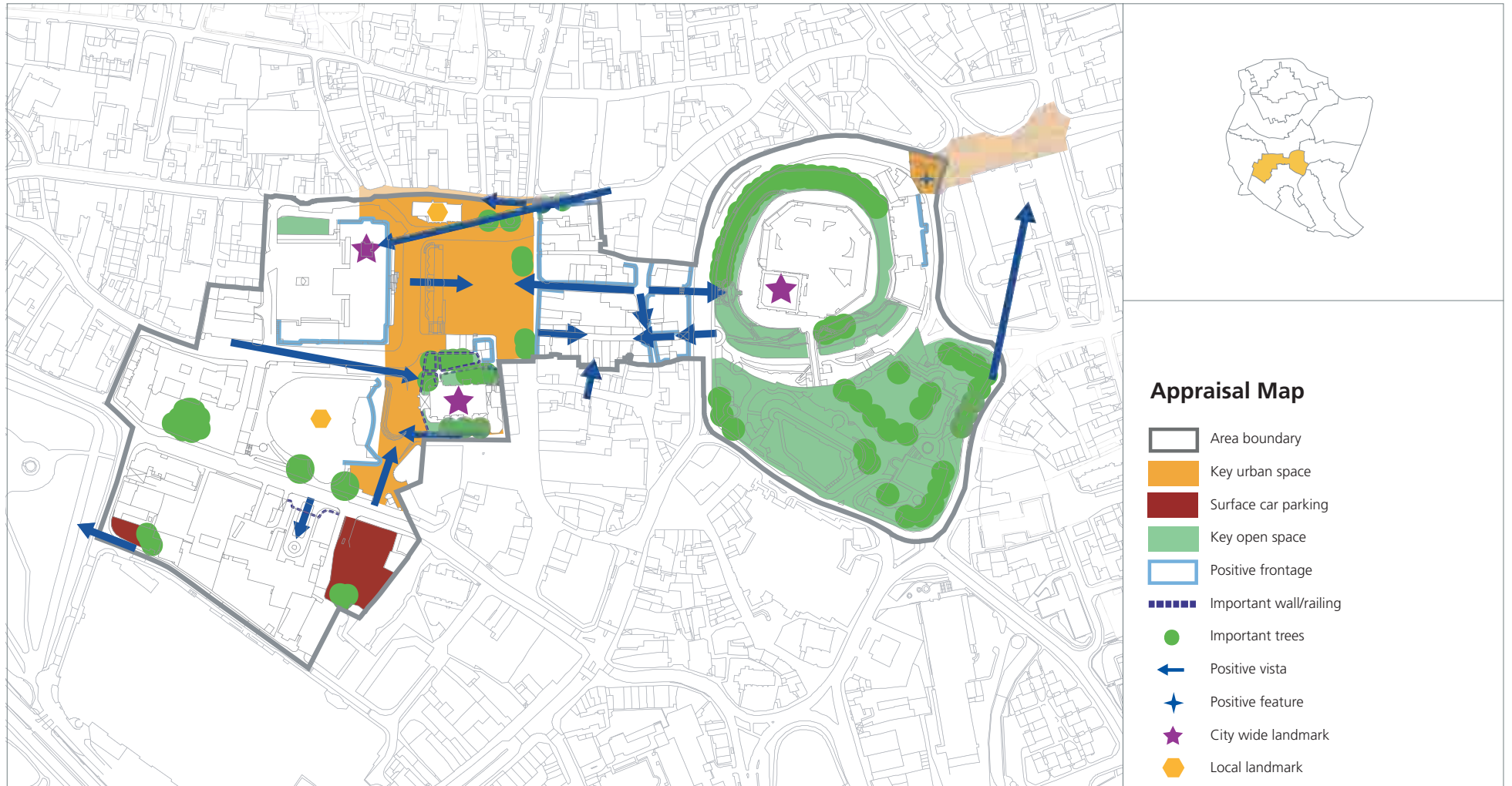
Current Uses

Aside from the civic functions the City Hall, Guildhall, The Forum and Assembly House provide, the area also includes a fire station (k), police station, theatre and a mosque. St Peter Mancroft is Norwich's market church and Chantry Hall (l) contains the church offices. The Castle is a major tourist draw and its gardens, which disguise the bulk of Castle Mall, provide a large green open space in the heart of the city. Shire Hall on the eastern side of the mound is now the Military Museum.

The recently refurbished market place is central to Norwich's shopping offer and some small shops (embracing the Royal Arcade), cafés and a couple of public houses are included within the character area. A small number of office buildings, in addition to City Hall, are also found within the area.

1. 6 - 9 Market Place
2. 18 Davey Place





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Key Characteristics

Townscape Elements

The streets and spaces in the area are wide, reflecting the importance and formality of this civic quarter and giving ample space around each set-piece building. The change in ground level adds interest to the open spaces and ensures that key buildings such as the City Hall, Castle and St Peter Mancroft are often viewed from below, enhancing their importance.

The area is not heavily trafficked and the space in front of The Forum is the recently created and pedestrianised Millennium Plain. This space is occasionally used as a performance venue, but generally provides an informal area of public open space. Unfortunately, this space is marred by the view to the south which is over a sea of parked cars adjacent to the listed Assembly House (m).

The market place is permanently full of market stalls and is therefore not used as an open space; the listed Memorial Gardens at the western end of the market place are the only open part. The well treed churchyard of St Peter Mancroft (n) is a small public green space in the area and key tree groups soften the hard landscaping to the east of the Guildhall and along Gentleman's Walk. The main area of green space is, however, the castle gardens, the mature trees of which form a verdant backdrop to this part of the city, and are particularly welcome on

Castle Meadow which suffers from being an informal bus station (o).

Theatre Street becomes slightly 'dead' towards the western end as the northern side is entirely lined by the side elevation of The Forum and the rear boundary wall of the Bethel Hospital buildings (p). Chantry Road is almost entirely lined by the rear of buildings (including the unattractive Theatre Royal (q) and is predominantly a service road for the Chapelfield development, although this has introduced some active frontage to the street (r); the main shopping entrance to Chapelfield is located at the eastern end of Chantry Road, just outside the character area.

Building Types

Each building, usually because of its civic or cultural role, is unique within this area and reflects the function it was designed for and the period in which it was built. The exceptions are of course the commercial premises which link the castle and market place and the handful of office blocks in Theatre Street (s) and Castle Meadow.

Much of the visible fabric of the shops and public houses is C18 or C19, but No.37 Gentleman's Walk actually dates from c.1500 and No.31 has two, possibly C14, undercrofts which pre-date the C19 building and the known C14 layout of the market. These buildings are all 3 or 4 storeys.



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The Edwardian Royal Arcade is built behind the 4-storey frontage of the mid C19 Royal Hotel and No.16 Gentleman's Walk, on the prominent corner position with Davey Place, was built as a bank in 1924. Castle Mall is mostly hidden beneath the castle and behind existing development, with only its numerous large entrances revealing its location.

The sole surviving remnant of Chapelfield Grove is the 3 storey early C19 house at No.15 Chapelfield East which is now in office use (t). The two Theatre Street office blocks are late C20 large block structures varying between 3 and 5 storeys.

Building Details

The distinctiveness of virtually every building within the character area means that a wide variety of building materials are evident. The Castle was refaced in Bath stone by Anthony Salvin in 1835-8; it was originally of Caen stone and carstone over a flint core. Other early buildings are St Peter Mancroft and the Guildhall which are constructed of ashlar and flint, whilst C20 buildings such as The Forum and the City Hall are of brick, as is the C18 Assembly House.

Details become simpler throughout the centuries and the materials more varied. For example, The Forum uses a large amount of frameless glass (u) whilst the City Hall uses copper which is particularly noticeable on the clock tower, a citywide landmark.

The C18 and C19 century buildings display relatively ornate details such as bracket cornices, sash windows and rubbed brick flat or segmental arches. Walls tend to be of red brick (at least in part) and roofs of pantiles (although some are partly in slate or tile). The earlier buildings are timber-framed in parts.

The 'Art Nouveau' Royal Arcade is a striking and early shopping arcade and is full of flower and tree motifs in coloured tiles, hidden from its Gentleman's Walk side, but in full display as it emerges into Back of the Inns (v). Unusually, no.16 Gentleman's Walk is of stone and is heavily decorated with keystones and scrolls, and cartouches with putti.

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Management & Enhancement

1. Management of key urban and open spaces to preserve or enhance their importance (A1.1, C2, D5)
2. Enhancement of Chantry car park to create a high quality public space or redevelopment of the site to reinstate the building line along Theatre Street (B1.2, B2.2, D1, D2.1, D3)
3. Resurfacing of Pudding Lane (B1.2)
4. Public realm enhancement to unify Bethel Street (B1.2, D3)
5. Enhancement of Davey Place (in particular, shopfronts) as a key visual link between the Castle and City Hall (B1.2, B2.2, C2, C3, D6, E2.1, E3.2, E4)



