



3. Northern Riverside

Significance

- Concentration of historic buildings
- Presence of features from historical period(s)
- Townscape / Landscape quality:
- Quality of details:
- Concentration of negative features:

Score

SIGNIFICANT

- SIGNIFICANT (2)
 - SIGNIFICANT (2)
 - HIGH (3)
 - SIGNIFICANT (2)
 - SOME (2)
- 11**

Character Area Overview

Summary

The riverside area has been the focus of activity for most of Norwich's history and contains remnants of its former importance. Today, the focus of this activity has shifted from industrial concerns to leisure pursuits and the area is rapidly becoming a popular residential area with many new developments currently underway or in the pipeline.

Topography & Landscape Framework

The area follows the route of the River Wensum and therefore lies entirely within the flat river floodplain with the surrounding areas rising gradually to the valley ridges.

Town Morphology, History & Archaeology

The riverside area was the focus of activity from the Saxon period until the early C20. It was busy with boat building and the export and import of goods in the Saxon period and remained the centre for most commercial and industrial activity until the mid C14 with the outbreak of the Black Death. Fishermen were based in the Quayside area, whilst tanners, fullers, bleachers and dyers dominated the river frontage around Westwick Street; leather- and horn-workers also competed for space around the river.

The northern riverside, in common with the King Street river frontage, became busy with

NORTHERN RIVERSIDE



Extract from 1886 OS map

breweries and maltings in the C19 and early C20. One of the most important sites on the river was the New Mills which marked the end of the navigable stretch of the River Wensum. The original city watermills were funded by the City's corporate body in 1410; the site is now occupied by the rebuilt 1897 Pump House (a) which straddles the river.

The numerous bridges that cross the river were important to the functioning of the riverside and provided direct links between the north and south part of the City. The earliest bridge is thought to be Fye Bridge (b), built by at least 1153. The original Duke Street Bridge (Duke's Palace Bridge, 1822) was removed when Duke Street was widened in 1972, and now spans the entrance to the Castle Mall car park. Much of the riverside has now been redeveloped for housing as industrial sites have become vacant.

Landmarks & Views

Attractive views along the river (and of the buildings and trees that line it) are gained from the many bridges that cross the River Wensum. The low-lying river valley surrounded by relatively high development means that the city's key landmarks are not readily visible from this character area, but the City Hall clock tower is visible from the northern end of Oak Street (c) and Fishergate (d). Views of the Anglican Cathedral are gained from Hansard Lane (e), and Whitefriars Bridge (f), whilst St Peter Mancroft and St Giles are also visible from the northern end of Oak Street.

St James' Mill (g) is the focus of views at the eastern end of the area and is a prominent building in the city. Less attractively, the western end of the character area is dominated by large commercial 'sheds' which form the focus of views out of the Conservation Area.

Key Building Groups

The northern riverside is undergoing significant redevelopment. Many of the former industrial sites have been redeveloped into residential areas. Some remnants of the previous uses remain, such as the Anchor Brewery site (h) and St James' Mill. However, most of the recent industrial buildings are of poor visual quality.

Large areas of housing now line the riverside, most having been built in the last 30 years. Friars Quay is a 1975 Feilden and Mawson designed award-winning housing development and St Edmund's Wharf (i) is an interesting industrial-inspired recent development.

The Quayside (j) and the buildings along Palace Street (k) and St Martin's at Palace Plain (l) are an attractive group of buildings displaying diverse building styles and materials from different periods.

The many bridges, both pedestrian and vehicular, that cross the river, perform an important function in the City's street framework, but most are also of architectural note. Blackfriars Bridge, now known as St George's Bridge, was designed by Sir John Soane, and Coslany Bridge (or St Miles' Bridge (m) is the earliest iron bridge in Norwich, dating from 1804 and designed by James Frost.

Current Uses

Housing dominates the northern riverside, particularly in the eastern and central sections. Some light industrial / commercial

uses still cling on in the north-western sections of the riverside. The area around Duke Street (n) and St George's Street (o) contains the main exception to the predominant housing, with a new hotel and multi-storey car park, and the Norwich School of Art. St Edmund's Church and St Martin at Palace are the only ecclesiastical buildings in the area, and there are only a handful of public houses, predominantly on Fye Bridge Street and Wensum Street. The eastern end of the area contains the court enclave, in the basement of which the ruins of a C12 building are preserved.

The Norwich Yarn Factory

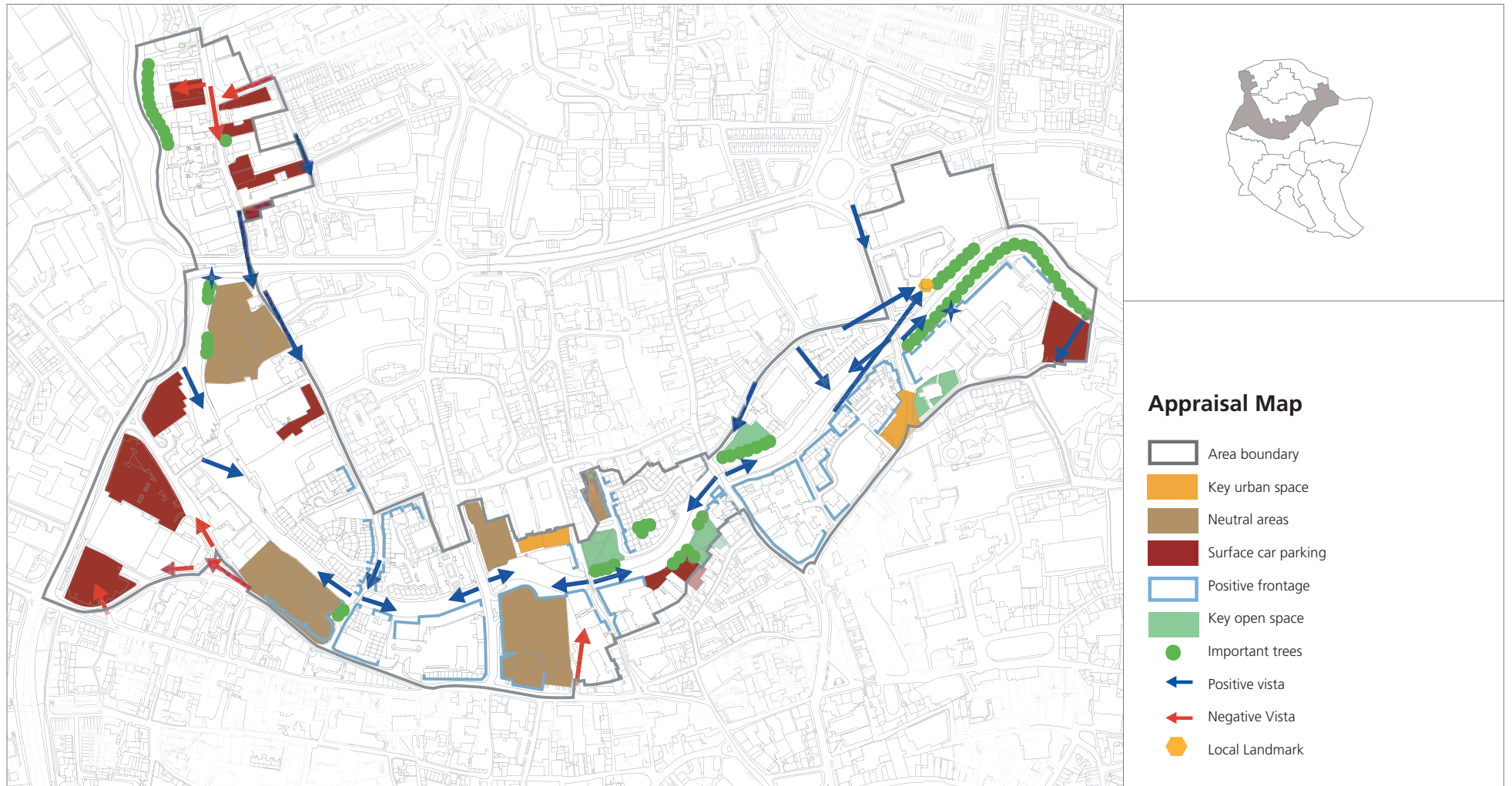


103 - 119, Oak Street

The New Mills



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