

City Centre

Conservation Area Appraisal

March 2010



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2. The Study Area

The town of Hanley is one of the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent. Over the years it has been developed into the business and cultural centre for the city and is now known as the city centre. It is situated centrally within the conurbation of Stoke-on-Trent in an elevated position making the skyline of the city centre visible from most of the city.

The conservation area has been extended as part of this appraisal process to include larger areas of the city centre rather than concentrating on the listed buildings in the cultural quarter as previously. A map showing the revised conservation area can be seen in Figure 1.

The city centre lost much of the original streetscape to the north of the centre from the 1960s, accelerated with the construction of the Potteries Way ring road in 1986, however the southern part of the town retains the original streetscape and has been included in the conservation area.

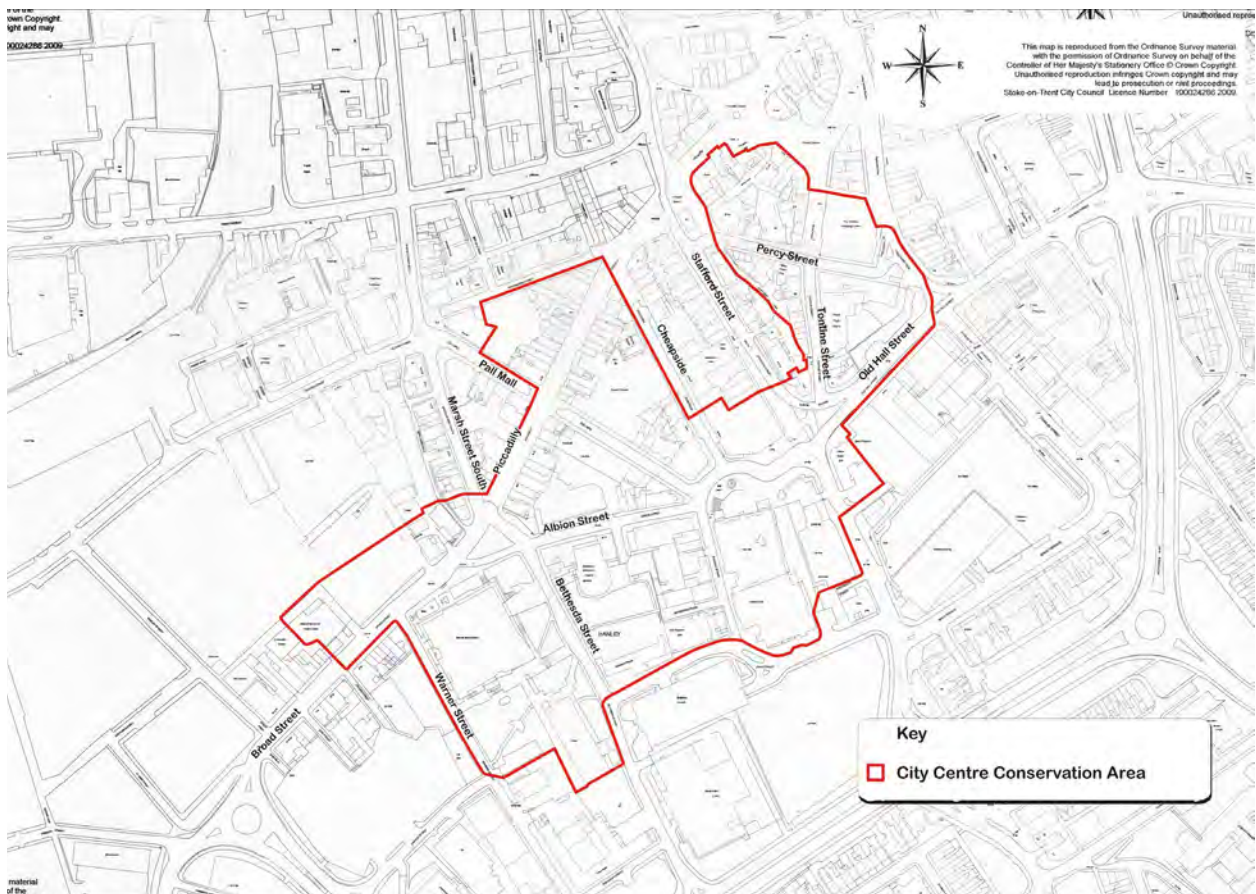


Figure 1: City Centre Conservation Area

3. History and Archaeology

The earliest written record of Hanley dates from 1212, when the Book of Fees records William of Hanley holding land in the vill of Hanley.

Urban development did not take place in Hanley until the later 18th century. Originally the township consisted of two hamlets; Hanley Upper Green (in what we would call the north of the city centre) and Hanley Lower Green (the south of the city centre). These later merged and by 1775 Town Road, Old Hall Street, Albion Street and Marsh Street had been built. In fact by 1783 the town was large enough to warrant a mayor. During the first third of the nineteenth century Pall Mall, Piccadilly and Bethesda Street were laid out.

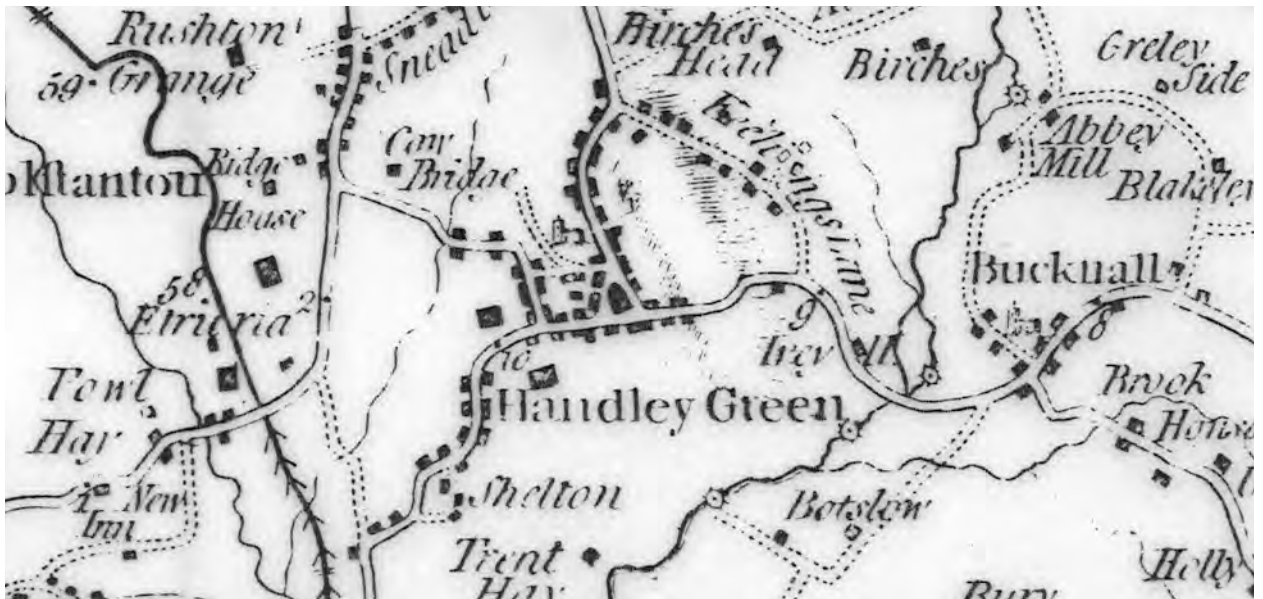


Figure 2: Extract from Yates' map 1775 showing Hanley.

Hanley also had a close association with Shelton and in 1813 they were declared a market town by an act of parliament. In fact until their merger Shelton was the bigger of the two parishes and the majority of the conservation area was actually in Shelton.

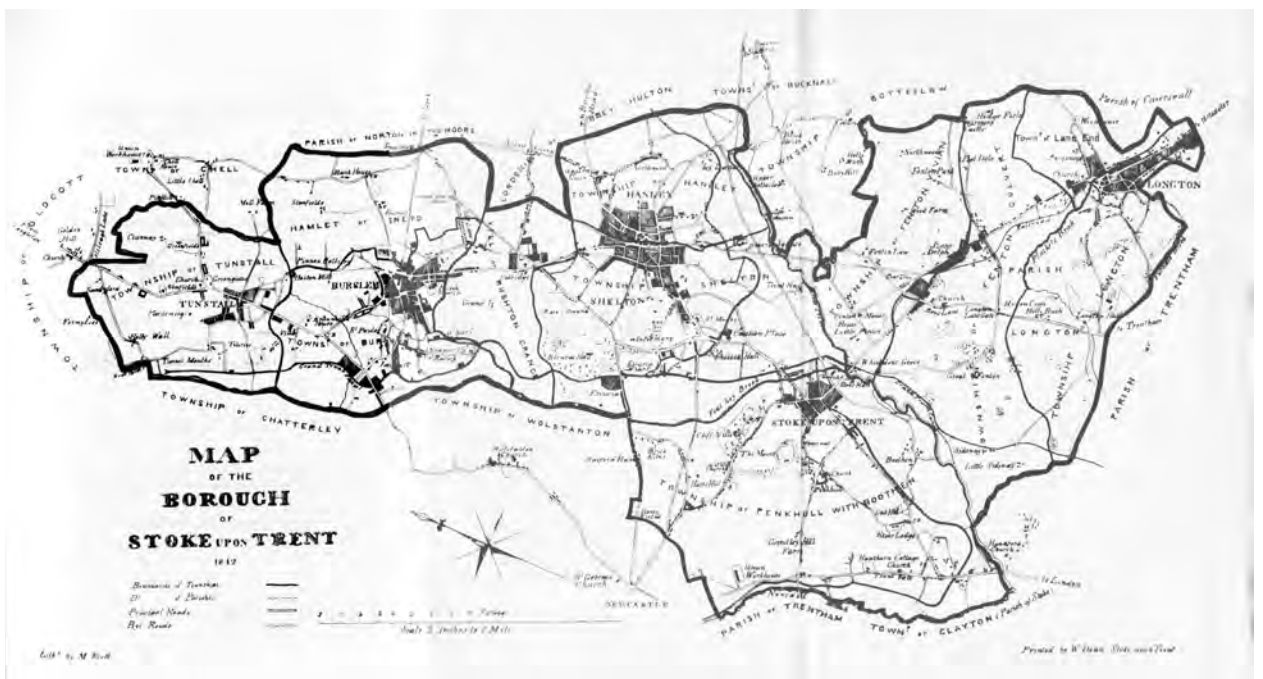


Figure 3: Hanley and Shelton from 1842 map of the Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent by Michael Scott. North is to the left (Ward 1843)

Figure 4: Figure ground diagrams showing historical development

HANLEY 1832

Hanley 1832



HANLEY 1900

Hanley 1900



HANLEY 1951

Hanley 1951



HANLEY 1998

Hanley 1998



In the 1790's, Hanley was still smaller than Burslem, and was seen as a moderately-sized village with an irregular lay out. However by the 1830's, Hanley was classed as a "large modern town", the largest within the Potteries area and equal in size to the county town of Stafford. By the 1850's, it was noted that, 'the principal streets have some good shops; and there has been lately finished a range of shops far above the standard of everything else in the Pottery district.'. The area then began to develop as a shopping centre, with large scale commercial buildings. The city centre historically had a wide range of uses with residential dwellings mixed amongst the factories and shops. This meant that by the 1850's Hanley was becoming overcrowded and new residential areas were developed on the edges of the town.

In 1857 the city centre became the 'county borough of Hanley' which covered nearly 2000 acres. The city centre has, for the most part, retained its layout of streets from the nineteenth century and a majority of the buildings have also been retained. Many of those streets and areas still retain their original names, such as Adventure Place which takes its name from local gentleman Mr Bagnall, who had a ship called 'The Adventurer'.

In 1864 the North Staffordshire Railway Company opened the Potteries 'loop line', with a train station on the bottom end of Trinity Street. Hanley was also serviced by trams. The Trent and Mersey Canal, opened 1777, ran to the west of the town centre and the Caldon canal, also opened 1777, ran just to the south, joining the Trent and Mersey at Etruria.

By 1880 the city centre we know today had been developed and the first slum clearances were being carried out in the areas around the city centre.

The population of Hanley increased rapidly in the later 1800's. In 1811 the population of Hanley and Shelton townships was around 9,900 but by 1901 this had increased to over 61,500. Today the population stands at around 33,200.

Archaeology

Medieval occupation was centred on Shelton along Broad Street and Marsh Street to the west of the proposed Conservation Area and around the Old Hall manor house to the east, joined by Old Hall Street and Albion Street which runs through the conservation area. There is, however, no excavated evidence of these medieval origins within the Conservation Area.

Most of the archaeology within the conservation area is related to the pottery industry which developed in Hanley from the end of the 17th century.

The remains of two kilns dated to c.1680-1720 have been excavated on Old Hall Street and Albion Square by the Stoke-on-Trent Museum Archaeological Society, in the 1970s, one of these was left in situ beneath the pavement.

Several 19th century potteries operated in the Conservation Area, notably along Albion Street and Old Hall Street. None of these have been investigated archaeologically but it is quite likely that substantial evidence survives below ground.

Pottery, mainly in the form of production waster, dating from the 17th to 20th centuries has been recovered from several findspots within the area, mainly from utility trenches, indicating the intensity of production in Hanley throughout this period.

The Sites and Monuments Record also notes several 19th-century public buildings recorded by the Stoke-on-Trent Historic Building Survey in the 1980s. Most have changed use from their original function, including the Bethesda Chapel burial ground, and Sunday school, and the Butchers' market in Tontine Street, and one, the Public Baths, has been demolished but may survive as archaeological remains.

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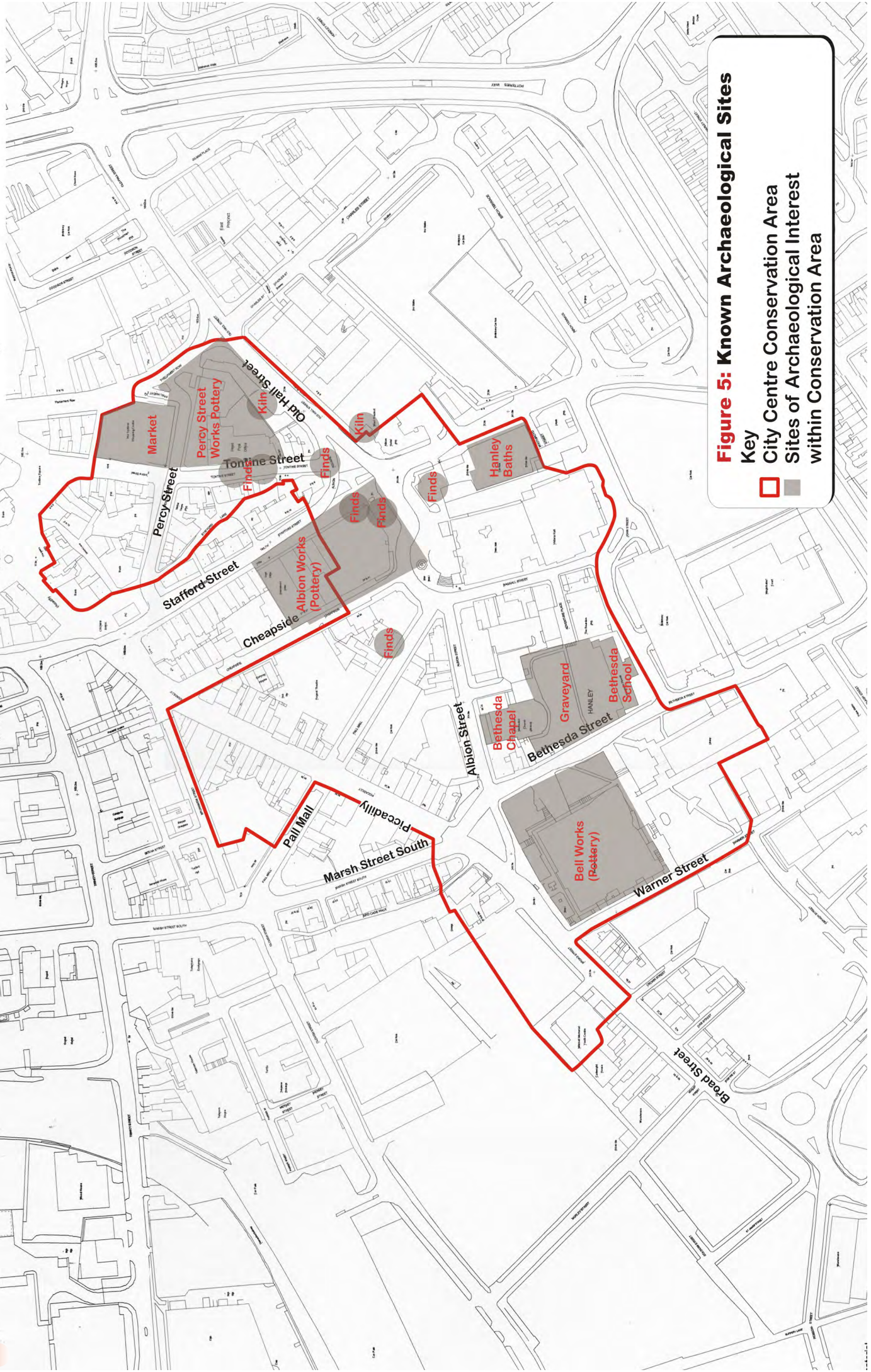


Figure 5: Known Archaeological Sites
Key
 City Centre Conservation Area
 Sites of Archaeological Interest within Conservation Area

4. Spatial Analysis and Appraisal of Views

4.1 Topography

The City centre is one of the hill top settlements within the Stoke-on-Trent conurbation. The core retail, commercial and civic area (which includes part of the Conservation Area), is situated above 160m AOD. This makes it one of the highest city centres in the UK with a visually prominent core, especially from the west on approach from the A500 and less so from the north (taller buildings in the city centre are visible from Burslem).

The Conservation Area is located slightly down slope of the ridge, to the south and is concealed in long views except from the west. It is especially visible in views from Clough Street, where the back of the Conservation Area creates an abrupt edge to the city core. This is exacerbated by the cleared sites in the Clough Street area.

High and low points in topography have an impact on the legibility of the townscape, with features located in high areas being more prominent as landmarks. Landmark buildings in proximity to the Conservation Area include Blackburn House and the BT building, although these are not positive in their relationship with the area. There are no landmarks of that scale within the Conservation Area, although the Regent Theatre, the Town Hall, the Museum and the Library are all significant buildings within the area, all of which are visible on the city centre skyline from the west. A recent lighting scheme at the Regent and the Town Hall have made them prominent night time landmarks, visible from across the valley to the west.

Steeper gradients (greater than 1 in 20) can present mobility issues and affect usability of an area. The gradient is particularly steep on the southern and western fringes of the Conservation Area (Lichfield Street, Broad Street and Clough Street). Within the area, the gradient reduces slightly, although there is a more gentle fall from north to south and east to west. Piccadilly which cuts across the slope is the steepest of the Conservation Area's streets, lending further to its character. The view down this Street toward the Museum is also influenced by the street's sloping character. Old Hall Street which runs east west is partly affected by the sloping topography but this lessens to the east of Albion Square. In views from the west it makes the Town hall more imposing and prominent.



Topography analysis plan



Figure 6: Topographical character of the city centre (Plan courtesy of Glenn Howell Architects).

4.2 Form

- 4.2.1 The Conservation Area includes the former Conservation Area encompassing Bethesda Churchyard, The Town Hall and the Regent Theatre. The extension to the conservation area includes the Reginald Mitchell Memorial Youth Theatre, Museum and associated gardens, Bethesda Triangle, Piccadilly, The Albion Hotel and Percy and Tontine streets. A substantial amount of the City Centre's existing retail, cultural and leisure facilities are included within the boundary of the Conservation Area.
- 4.2.2 The Conservation Area is urban in character. Historically, the conservation area formed a focal point for earthenware production, market and trading uses, interspersed with residential and religious activities.
- 4.2.3 With regard to the road layout, the Conservation Area includes Percy Street and Tontine Street that intersect to form a distinctive cross, or transect, within the historic core of the City Centre. Tontine Street is pedestrianised in part. In a similar fashion, Piccadilly is a pedestrian thoroughfare lined with historic architecture, crossed by Pall Mall. An east west axis route is evident within the site, from Old Hall Street, through Albion Street to Broad Street, one of the earlier streets that carries both pedestrian and vehicular access. Stafford Street is also included within the conservation area in part, forming a significant north-south transport route accommodating a diverse range of traffic modes. Other north south road alignments include Warner Street, Bethesda Street, Pall Mall and Cheapside, although these routes are more minor in character compared to Stafford Street.
- 4.2.4 Vehicular access within the conservation area is partially restricted. The main vehicular approaches to the Conservation Area are from the Potteries Way, specifically Broad Street, Lichfield Street and Old Hall Street. Pedestrian approaches are numerous and associated with the existing street pattern.

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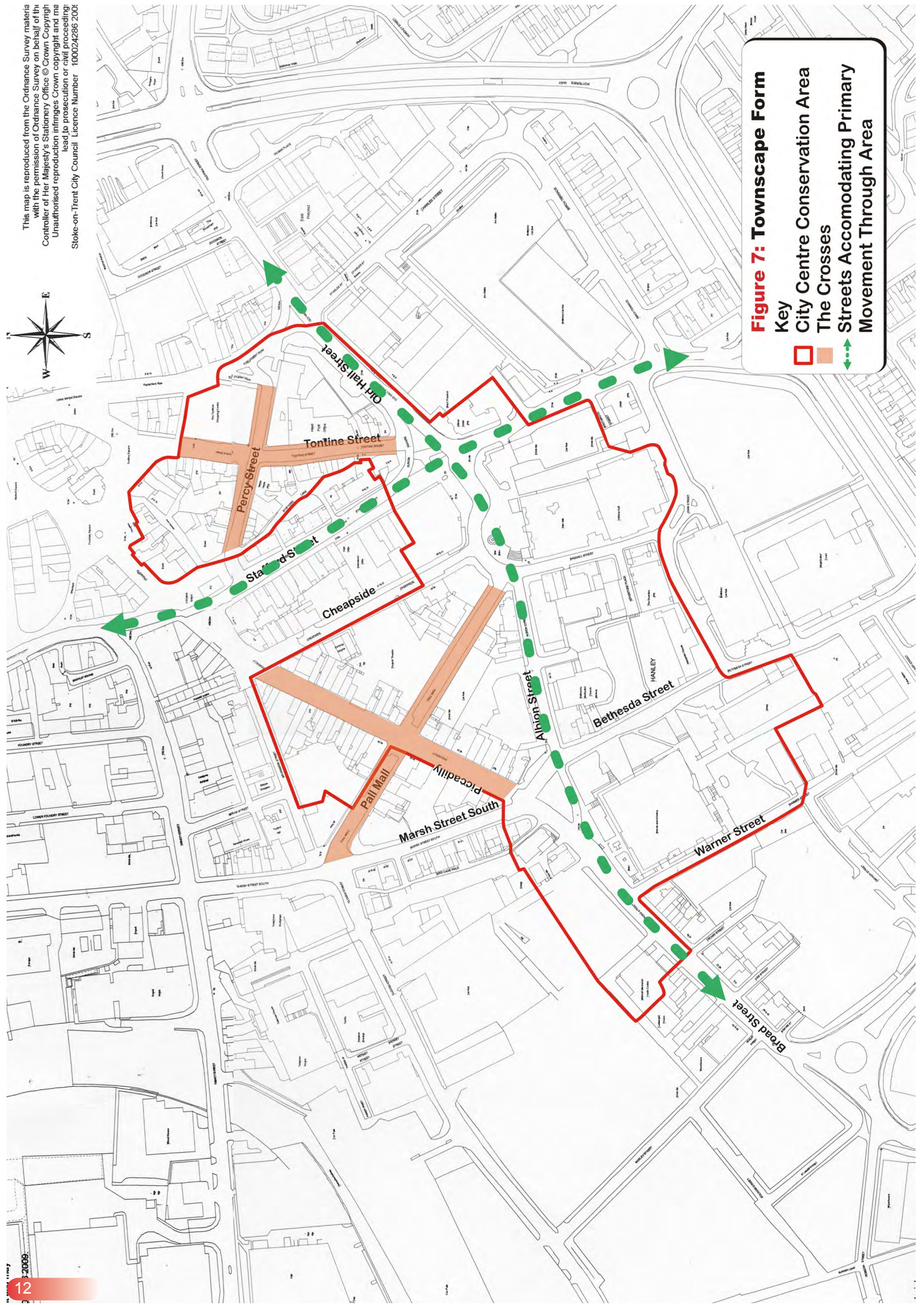


Figure 7: Townscape Form
Key
City Centre Conserving Area
The Crosses
Streets Accommodating Primary Movement Through Area

4.3 Views

4.3.1 A number of significant positive views, alignments and relationships can be identified within and around the boundary of the Conservation Area:

- The Town Hall, Victoria Hall, Tontine Building, former Post Office and Webberleys provide distinctive historic focal points within the conservation area that enhance views. Good views of the Town Hall are available from Albion Street, Pall Mall, Cheapside and Stafford Street, although inactive frontages and fragmented building lines within these streets detract from the overall quality of these views. Views of the former Post Office and Tontine Building from Percy Street, Tontine Street, Parliament Row and Old Hall Street strongly promote the historic character of the conservation area. This is further reinforced by the active shop frontages and characteristic scale and massing of buildings within the streets themselves. Adventure Place affords channelled views of the Victoria Hall. The historic corner buildings on Piccadilly, joining with Cheapside and Brunswick Street form a strong axial alignment when viewed from Crown Bank.
- The fine grain of the Percy/Tontine transect and Piccadilly, wrapping into Marsh Street South has been retained and these historic streets remain architecturally intact for the most part. This promotes characterful views into these streets from Crown Bank, Tontine Square, Parliament Square, Albion Square and Bethesda Triangle.
- Characterful views are also afforded due to the enclosed alleyways of Market Lane and, to some extent, Stafford Lane. The enclosed nature of Market Lane frames views of Lloyds Bank within Fountain Square (outside of the conservation area). These offer the potential for further fine grain secondary trading frontage
- Groups of historic buildings form historic townscapes in three locations within the conservation area, namely Bethesda Triangle, Bethesda Churchyard and Parliament Square. Pleasant views are afforded to Bethesda Triangle from Bethesda Street and Broad Street. Good views of Bethesda Churchyard can be gained from Bethesda Street. Historic views are afforded of Parliament Square from Parliament Row and Old Hall Street. A fourth historic townscape exists on Miles Bank and Crown Bank. These buildings are situated outside of the conservation area boundary. The visual impact of the Crown Bank historic townscape is reduced by the toilet block situated within Crown Bank and insensitive modern architecture. However, good views can be obtained from Stafford Lane and Stafford Street.
- Good long distance views are afforded from the conservation area to the Sacred Heart RC Church from the Victoria Hall, and St. Mark's Church from Bethesda Street.
- Long distance views to the surrounding rural topography from Parliament Row, Stafford Street and John Street are pleasant and contrast with the characteristic hard lines of the urban environment.
- Tree planting within the Bethesda Churchyard and Lower Gardens promotes the green character in this area and enhances views along Bethesda Street. Views along this street are distinctive because of a change of character from the predominant urban character of the conservation area.

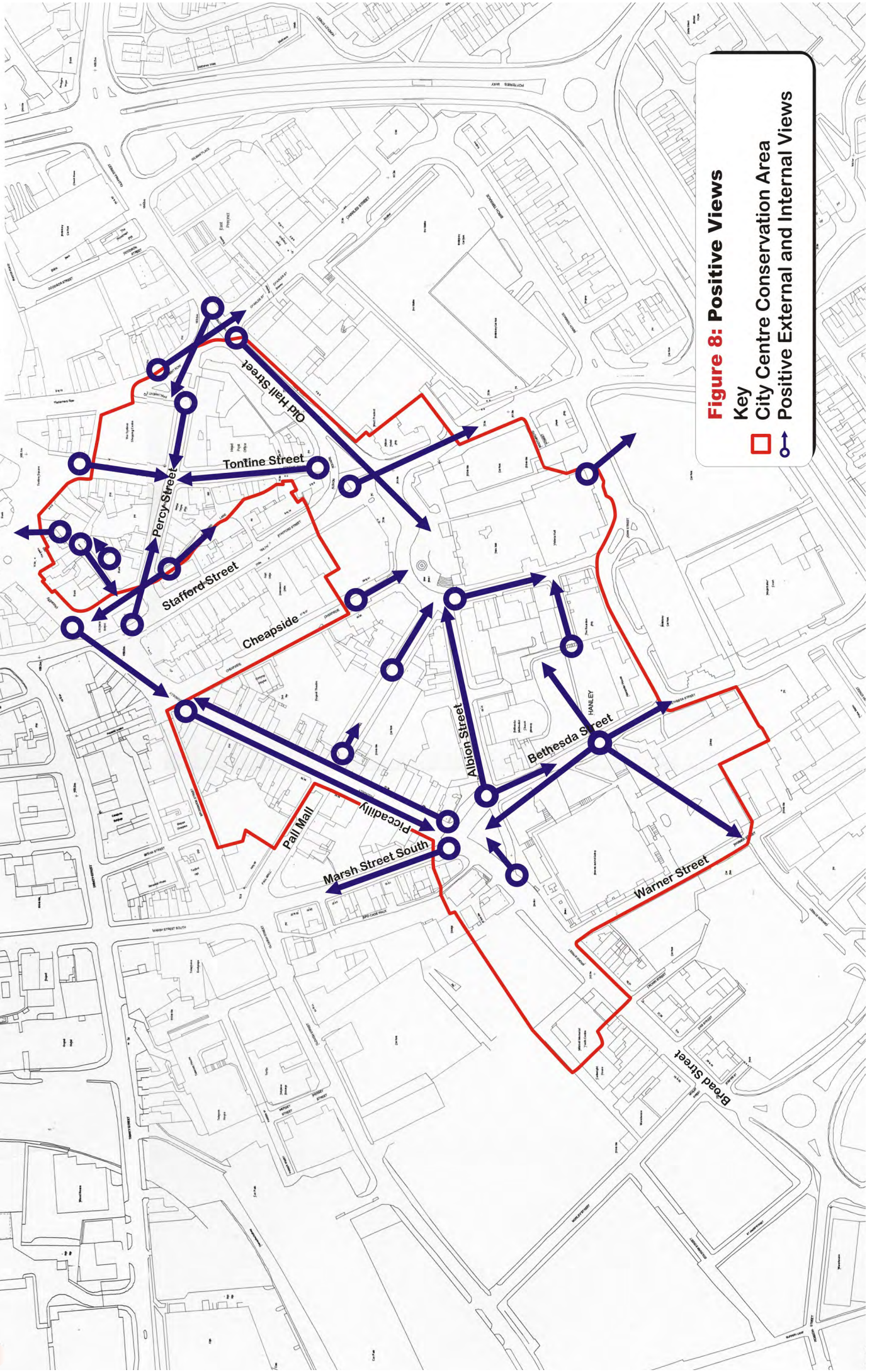


Figure 8: Positive Views

Key

City Centre Conservation Area

Positive External and Internal Views

4.3.2 There are also a number of significant negative views and views of mixed quality.

- Negative views result from insensitive scaling of buildings, highly visible detracting buildings, poor quality frontages, gap sites resulting in rear facades becoming visible that were never intended to become visible, the poor quality of the public realm, inactive frontages, and car parking.
- There are three specific areas within the Conservation Area where a series of significant negative views occur.
- Views from the eastern entrance to the Victoria Hall are blighted with detracting buildings (Wilkinson's, East West Precinct, Chaplin's, bus station and multi-storey car park), the poor quality of the public realm, inactive frontages and car parking.
- Views from the main approaches into Albion Square are significantly compromised due to the gap sites exposing the rear façades of the Town Hall and Webberleys, and the poor quality of more modern architecture within this area. The poor quality of the public realm, combined with burger vans, signage and public toilets further detract from views in this area. Wilkinson's, the amusement arcade and the closed public house on the corner of Tontine Street present inactive frontages that further detract from views into this Square. Insensitive scaling of buildings detracts from the quality of views from Stafford Street.
- Generally, views from the Town Hall are significantly reduced in quality due to detractor buildings, fragmented building lines and inactive frontages. Views towards Bethesda Triangle on Albion Street are mixed, due to the combination of historic and modern developments, combined with on-street parking. Views along Pall Mall are reduced in quality due to the façades of the Radio-Stoke building and BT building, combined with car parking on a gap site and the bland frontage of the Regent Theatre. Views on Cheapside are reduced in quality due to the facades of the Radio Stoke building and Wilkinson's, combined with the poor quality of the arcade façade located on Brunswick Street. However, the continuous building line on this street helps to provide consistency and promote the urban character. Views towards Albion Square are reduced in quality due to the insensitive scaling of modern developments in relation to the historic scaling, e.g Blackburn House tower block adjacent to the Albion Inn. The inactive and bland frontage of Wilkinson's further detracts from the quality of views: the use of red chip paving to demark bus lanes also detracts from the quality of the public realm. Views from Albion Square towards the East West Precinct and Old Hall Street are poor, due to low quality building facades and an insensitive use of signage.
- Views from Parliament Square are poor due to the lack of architectural merit and poor condition of the East West Building façade.
- Views from Stafford Lane towards Stafford Street are poor due to the poor quality of shop frontages; the character of views within Stafford Lane are compromised due to the rear buildings of coarser grained modern developments that do not reflect the fine grain of surrounding historic developments.
- Views from Market Lane towards Crown Bank have the potential to be characterful, but the Crown Bank toilet block prevents views of historic architectural facades and clutters the foreground space.
- Views from the junction of Bagnall Street and Adventure Place are compromised due to open car parking and the poor quality of public realm. Views from Bagnall Street towards John Street and Bethesda Churchyard are compromised in quality due to the poor quality and inactive frontages of the Museum and Library.
- Views towards the rear of the library from Bethesda Lower Gardens are also poor, due to the unattractive nature of the rear buildings.
- Views out of the conservation area along Broad Street towards the Potteries Way are reduced because of the poor quality public realm associated with the Potteries Way roundabout.
- The fractured edges of the city centre to the south and west create open views of the edge of the Conservation Area (Views that were never intended). These need to be repaired and positive channeled views created.

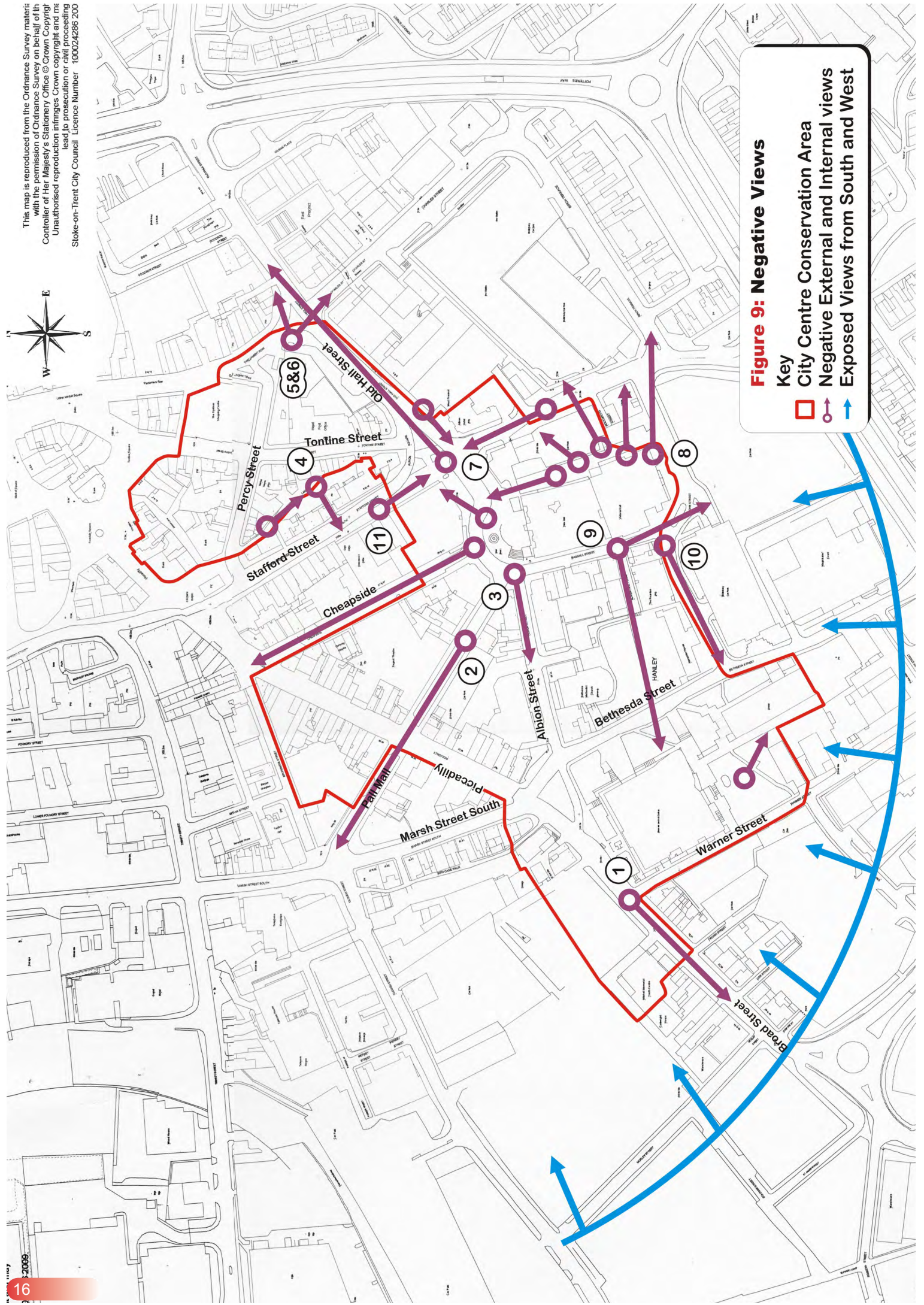


Figure 9: Negative Views

Key

- City Centre Conservation Area
- Negative External and Internal views
- Exposed Views from South and West

4.4 Open Spaces

4.4.1 Open spaces within the Conservation Area consist of public squares, lanes, semi-enclosed yards, car parks, vacant brownfield sites and green spaces.

4.4.2 There are four public squares within the conservation area.

1. Albion Square is evident within the 1880 map of Hanley. Historically, commercial and industrial premises fronted the square, together with a parsonage and associated gardens. Leisure uses have also been evident within this area. Today, the square still forms a strong commercial focus, but the industrial land use has been replaced with retail land use. The historic character of the Albion Hotel contrasts starkly with the coarser grained infill developments that surround this space. Vehicular routes take priority over pedestrian access within Albion Square, and the connection with the Albion Hotel has become broken. The addition of public toilets, combined with on-street trading kiosks, further reduces the impact that this square has on the character of the conservation area.
2. Parliament Square has resulted due to demolition within the area. Historically, Parliament Row was lined with buildings that formed a strong building line adjacent to the pavement. The demolition of some of these buildings has resulted in public open space fronted by attractive historic buildings. These buildings lend strong character to the space. However, the social aspect has not been fully promoted. Vehicular routes fragment the square and marginalise pedestrian users. The full potential of this square is yet to be realised.
3. Historically, Albion Street extended in linear fashion past the frontage of the Queen's hotel, to join with Old Hall Street. No public space existed in this location. Subsequently, the Town Hall has replaced The Queen's hotel, building lines have been pulled back and the street reconfigured to provide a setting appropriate for the Town Hall. The space enjoys an elevation position, with clear views to the surrounding streets. The Town Hall provides a strong historic character, but surrounding developments are insensitive to the Town Hall and associated space, offering inactive frontage, combined with poor quality architecture on some facades. The re-configuration of the street makes best use of levels that allow this space to associate strongly with the Town Hall, but dissociates the space from the street.
4. Attractive and historic corner buildings face on to Bethesda Triangle and provide visual interest and historic character. The demolition of buildings on Piccadilly Street and Albion Street has enlarged Bethesda Triangle and a key historic townscape view has resulted. The Museum has been built on the site of a former pottery works. The two resulting inactive frontages facing on to this space detract from the otherwise historic character of this area. The function of the Museum relates well to the historic townscape view. The space itself forms a key vehicular gateway to the City Centre and enjoys a sunny aspect. However, vehicular routes bisect the area, and pedestrian permeability is difficult. The potential for social uses within this space has not been realised as of yet.

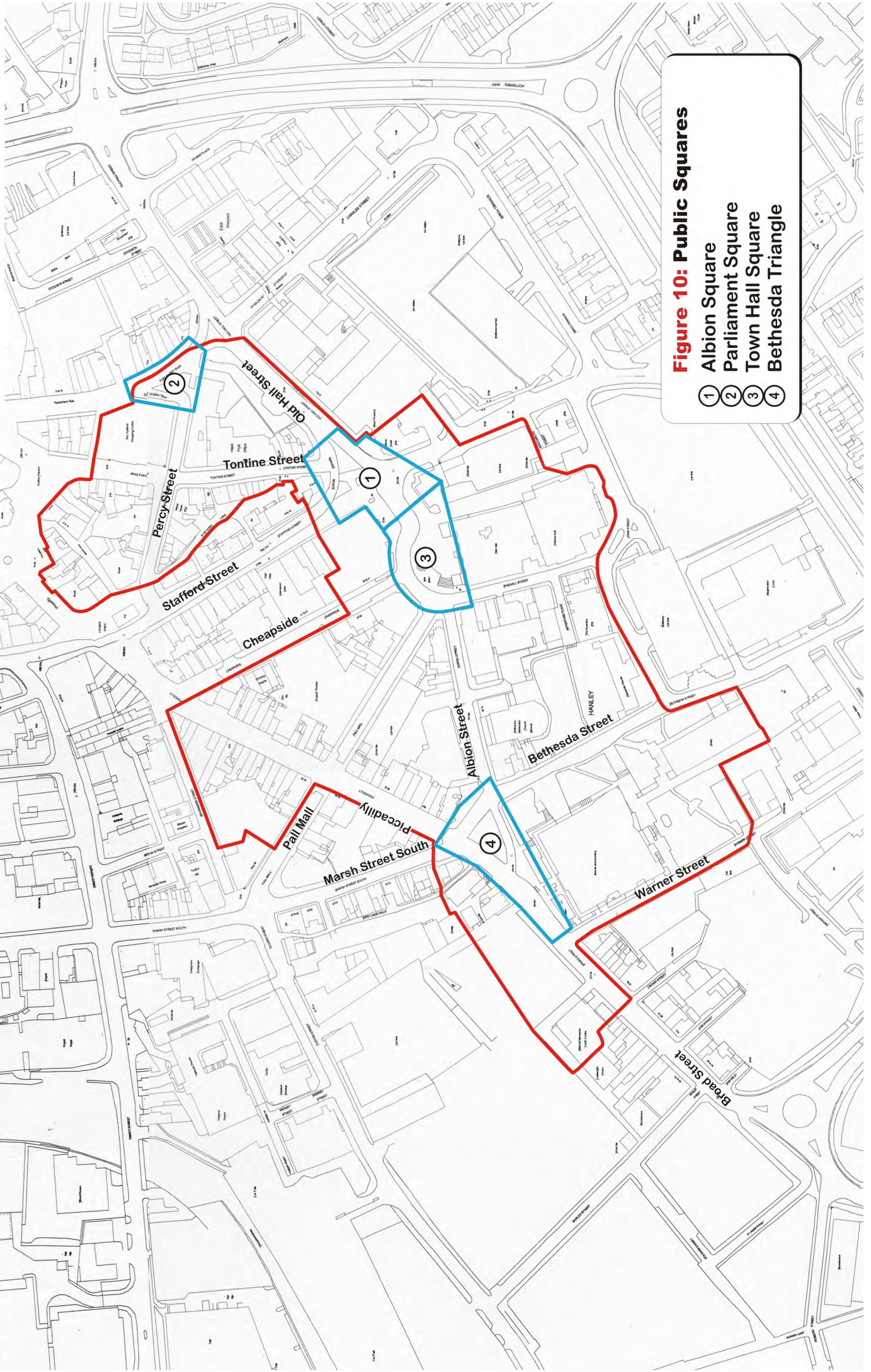


Figure 10: Public Squares

- ① Albion Square
- ② Parliament Square
- ③ Town Hall Square
- ④ Bethesda Triangle

- 4.4.3 Within the Conservation Area two lanes, Stafford Lane and Market Lane create two distinct areas of space and secondary frontage that are presently under used but which offer opportunity for social and quality retail space.
- 4.4.4 Semi-enclosed yards are typical of the historic built form within the historic areas of Pall Mall/Piccadilly and Percy/Tontine transects. They complement the use of the surrounding buildings. Examples of enclosed yards can be found to the rear and side of public houses on Percy Street and other commercial buildings on Pall Mall. Glimpsed views from external pavements add to the historic charm of the area.
- 4.4.5 As a latter day intervention, large expansive open areas of car parking resulting from demolition are incongruous with the fine grain that is still evident within the conservation area. This detracts from the historic integrity of the Conservation Area and exposes rear facades of buildings that were not intended to be viewed. Examples include the car park located on Pall Mall, opposite the Regent Theatre and the three car parks situated outside of the Victoria Hall and Town Hall.
- 4.4.6 The demolition of a property on Piccadilly is currently screened from view by hoardings. Whilst the hoarding serve the purpose of screening the demolished area from view, the resulting graffiti is out of character with the surrounding built environment and detracts from the character of the conservation area. It detracts from the strong building and roof line that is a key characteristic of Piccadilly and exposes blank building facades that were never intended to be on view.
- 4.4.7 There are numerous green spaces within the Conservation Area. These areas of open space are discussed in further detail in section 5.4.

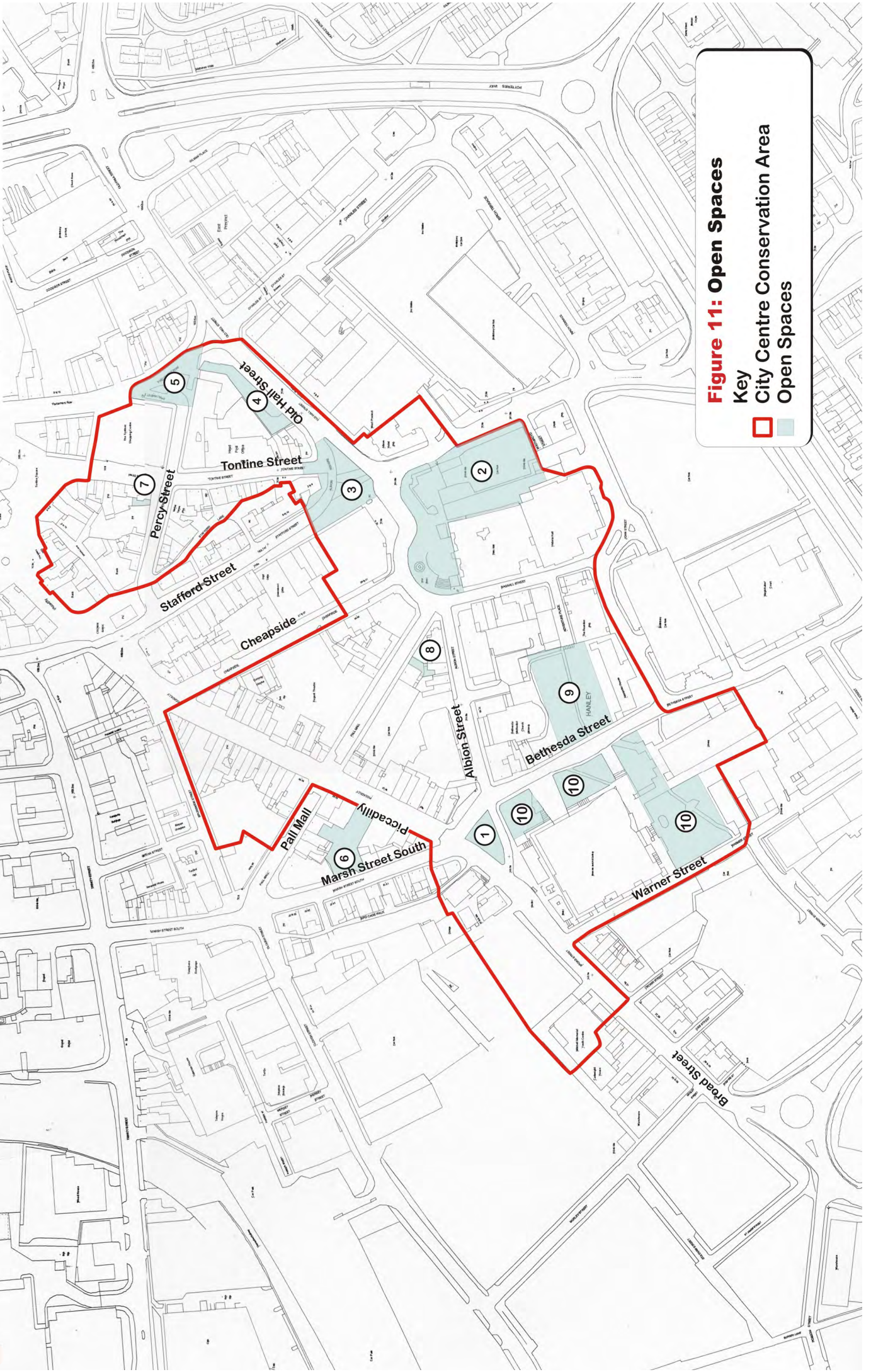


Figure 11: Open Spaces
Key
City Centre Conservation Area
Open Spaces

4.5 Trees, Green Spaces, Edges and Ecology

- 4.5.1 The area has a significant amount of green space around the Museum and Library that lends a strong character to this area. Bethesda Churchyard combines with the Lower Bethesda green space to further reinforce this character. Green space within other areas of the conservation area is limited, being restricted to street trees. The gap site on Piccadilly has naturally regenerated, and infill planting on Bethesda Triangle is also evident.
- 4.5.2 The green space around the Museum is comprised predominantly of grass, low maintenance shrub planting and ornamental tree planting. Tree species include native species such as Birch and Rowan, which enhance the bio-diversity of this area. The linked nature of these green spaces further enhances the bio-diversity of the Bethesda area. However, use of exotic species is also evident, using conifer plantings and ornamental cherries that are less useful for promoting bio-diversity. The open nature of the green spaces promotes a sunny aspect which supports the use of these areas as green spaces. The rationale for the plant selection within these spaces relates primarily to long term maintenance considerations. There has been no provision of a particular habitat, suitable to attracting a particular species. Likewise, there is a lack of consistency in the use of planting species across the Bethesda area. Social use of these green spaces is restricted to visual amenity, with some seating provided in Bethesda gardens and Lower Bethesda Gardens for resting. Water infiltration is promoted through increase soil permeability provided by the green spaces. This provides an opportunity for integrated sustainable water management practices within this area.
- 4.5.3 The gap site on Piccadilly provides a bio-diversity benefit, due to the natural regeneration of the site. Species such as buddleja are evident that attract wildlife, in particular, butterflies. However, the space is not intended to be a green space, and hoardings screen this space from view, negating any amenity uses that could be attached to this site. Self-seeded buddleja also occurs in the Victoria Hall car park.
- 4.5.4 Street trees within the City Centre are minimal, and tend to be located where the finer urban grain has been fragmented and more space is afforded. Ornamental cherries are located in Tontine Street, and whilst they provide a pleasant green aspect to this key historic landmark, they partially screen the building from view. A mature London Plane occurs on the gap site on Old Hall Street, together with a self-seeded Rowan. The avenue trees located outside of the Victoria Hall, and on Albion Street are intended as street trees. The street trees outside of the Victoria Hall enhance an otherwise poor setting for this key civic building. The street trees located on Albion Street screen poor views of buildings, but also partially screen views of the Town Hall.
- 4.5.5 An area of shrub planting occurs adjacent to the Town Hall. The shrub planting fronting the Town Hall is intended to provide a setting for wedding photographs. The space lacks consistency in design and plant selection is inconsistent. The end result is something that looks 'tatty' and is not used for the intended social use.

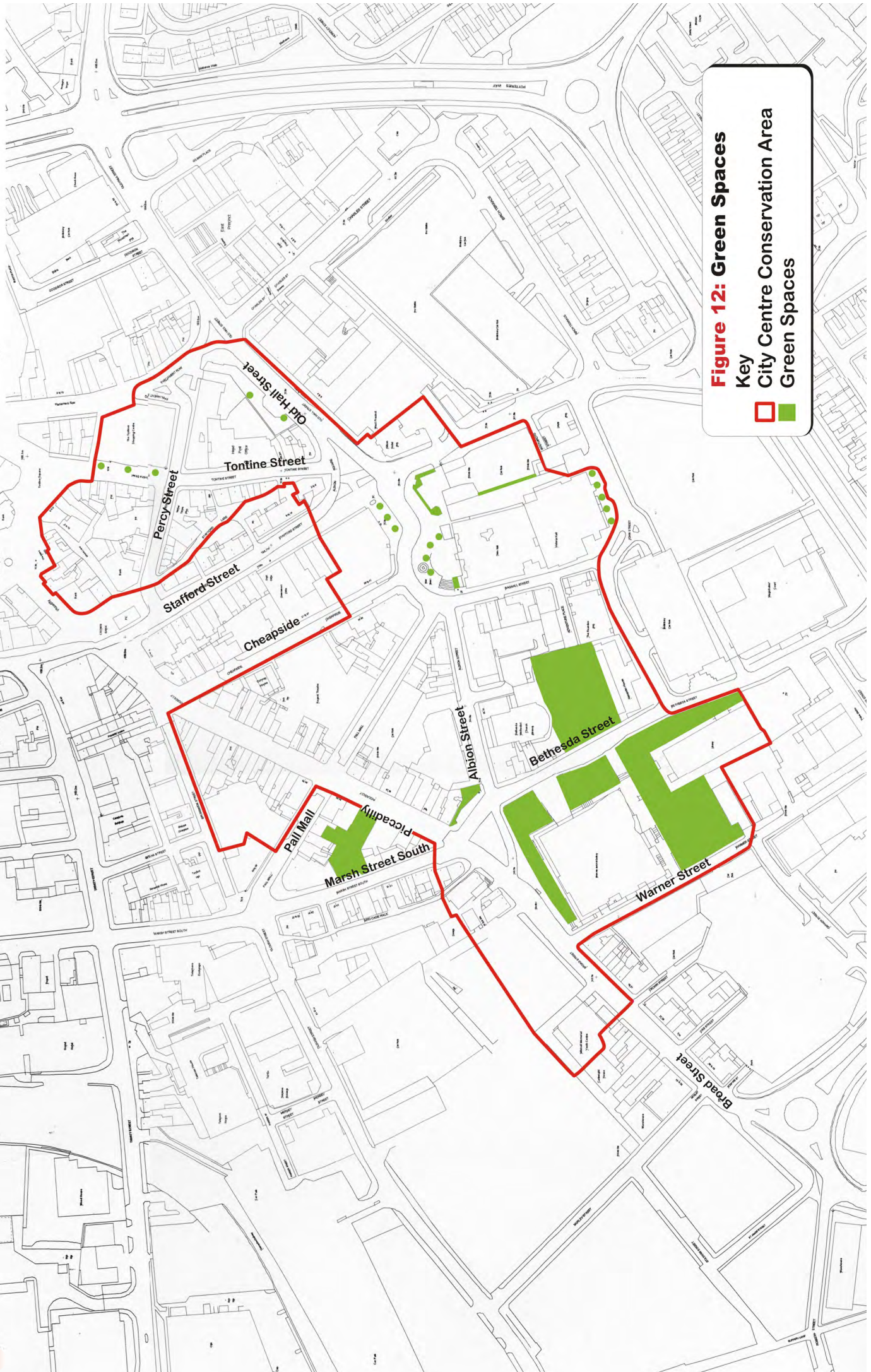


Figure 12: Green Spaces
Key
City Centre Conservation Area
Green Spaces

5. Built Form

5.1 The influence of use patterns and patronage

Hanley was a moorland village until the later 18th century. Manorially it was held from the duchy of Lancaster by undistinguished local families who imposed no overall vision or plan, "By 1615 the principal form of tenure in Hanley and Shelton was copyhold, but in the 18th century with the development of the pottery industry many long leases of waste were made by the lords of Hanley manor, particularly around Lower Green (the present Market Square) and the freehold of most of these plots was eventually bought by the lessees," (VCH, 1963, p162). This meant that at this time there was no overall patronage of the area but rather it was built up by individuals, developing their own parcels of land.

The centre, "was described in 1960 as 'an archipelago of island sites'. The buildings occupying these variously shaped islands have been replaced piecemeal from the early 19th century onwards and are now of widely different heights, styles, and materials. Because of Hanley's development as an important shopping centre and the large scale of its later commercial buildings this lack of uniformity is even more pronounced than in the other Pottery towns," (VCH 1963, 148).

Marsh Street and Stafford Street were in Shelton, directly held by the duchy of Lancaster, which allowed piecemeal development, including industry, on its wastes and commons.

Several of the wealthier pottery manufacturers developed housing estates around the town, beginning with Josiah Wedgwood at Etruria in the 1760s, and including John Ridgway in Shelton and William Ridgway in Northwood in the 19th century, as did Earl Grenville at Cobridge for the workers at his Shelton iron and steel works. These are all peripheral to the town centre, however, where small scale developments continued to dominate.

5.2 Architectural Character, Materials, Colours and Textures

5.2.1 Style and Character

The architectural character and style of the conservation area is best described as free and informal. Whilst there are several very formal buildings and a few architectural set pieces, generally the form of building scale and character of the city centre is very mixed. This is unusual and is a distinctive pattern for the potteries; the development of the pottery industry caused large plots of land right in the civic centre of the city to be used for industry. It is not unusual to see photographs showing pot banks hard up against shops, houses and Town Halls. This left a profound legacy with regard to building plots and scale of development. When a pottery ceased manufacture, its footprint was so large it made a significant hole in the tightly packed fabric of the townscape. The later development often had to redefine streets and street frontages or often the site was vulnerable to being redeveloped by insensitive large size, large scale buildings which had little in common with the original domestic scale. The conservation area defines what survives of the historic core but this is a remnant of a greater whole and contains areas of contrast. Many of the best architectural compositions have no setting. The town hall lacks a formal garden or square because it is not the original building for that purpose, it is a hotel; Lloyds Bank in Fountain Square now occupies the position of the former town hall with its commanding views towards the west of the city. Another example is the Post Office which is faced by very modest workers housing that belonged to a pottery that the Post Office replaced. Webberley's book shop, together with the Percy Street shops and the Market Tavern give a hint of what Hanley's commercial centre felt like at the turn of the last century.

This is not a medieval settlement that evolved gently to a formal Georgian town. There is very little architecture built prior to the late Victorian/Edwardian period which survives. The style of the conservation area is in the main part, "decorated". There are many brick built buildings with distinctive silhouettes and elaborate parapets, gables and chimneys. These buildings are much embellished and characteristically define edges of public spaces or turn corners in flamboyant fashion.

5.2.2 Plan, Form and Massing

As discussed above the area is very mixed in character, for example Pall Mall crosses Piccadilly and the size and scale of building alters dramatically. Approaches to the commercial centre generally contain smaller scale and sized buildings than those in the centre but the plan form and massing of the area lacks any formal planning and consistency. Landmark buildings are often placed next to very modest ones

creating a lively mix of buildings. Historic buildings either have narrow deep plots or are divided into a number of uses at ground floor with narrow repetitive bays suitable for commercial and retail uses.

Piccadilly is particularly unusual in retaining very small and modest two storey buildings; these survive in contrast to the later grander Edwardian architecture. These buildings are not enhanced by the existing pedestrianisation scheme and the treatment of the ground which enhances the width of the street, in turn, emphasising the smallness of the shops. The proportions need to be returned to closer to the original layout and traffic could be re-introduced to the lower section without detriment to the setting of the buildings.



Image 1: Showing the different scales of buildings adjacent to each other within the conservation area.

5.2.3 External Walls and Façade Finishes

There are few areas of render, stucco or natural stone facades in the conservation area, this reflects the dominance of Edwardian and late Victorian architecture and the scarcity of Georgian Buildings.

The stone Butchers Market (the Tontine), the former Post Office, Bethesda Chapel façade and a rendered bank building are the exceptions.

The majority of buildings are red brick with stone dressings, decorative bands and window surrounds. There is some terracotta and Minton tiles, of which the best example is the former Water Board Offices in Albion Street. The predominance of brick is entirely consistent with its status as the most common local building material and this is celebrated in the carved brick frieze above the entrance to the museum.



Image 2: Former Water Board Offices, with Minton tiles.

5.2.4 Roofs

● Materials

A majority of the roofs carry local dark blue-purple tiles and this is a distinctive feature of the conservation area. A few such as the Bethesda Buildings have slate roofs. Unusually none of the buildings within the area have been replaced with red concrete pantiles. Green pantiles are only in evidence on the corner of Tontine Street and Albion Square. A few are covered in copper roofs in conjunction with a mansard roof.



Image 3: Different roof details within the Conservation Area

● Pitch and Type

A majority of the smaller and plainer buildings carry plain blue clay tiles on a pitched roof. Parts of the Conservation Area such as Piccadilly and Percy Street are characterised by buildings with plain pitched roofs carrying Flemish gables. Some buildings carry flat roofs. In some cases this is part of the original design such as the Radio Stoke building or No 31-33 Albion Street adjacent to Bethesda Chapel. In other cases this seems to have been a later alteration. Shallow pitched hipped roofs can be seen at the corner of Albion Street and Pall Mall and on Tontine Street. Mansard roofs are also in evidence throughout the Conservation Area and most carry mid sloped dormers. Examples are the town hall, no 17 Piccadilly and nos 24-28 (even) Piccadilly. Curved roofs can also be seen on Fountain Square where it meets Tontine Street. Dutch gables and parapet walls are also a common feature through-out the Conservation Area, nos 13-21 (odd) Percy Street have a parapet with globe lamps bringing a distinguished appearance to the building.

Few buildings carry finials however they are in evidence on the Market Tavern in Percy Street and on the Albion pub in Albion Square. On the more ornate building deep eaves are common and often carry stone or brick detailing.

The central section of the Town hall roof retains its railings and flag poles but these have been sadly lost from the two flanking Mansard roofs. Flagpoles on roofs were once a common feature of the conservation area, but all apart from the one on the town hall have been lost.



Image 4: Some historic images showing finials, railings and flagpoles on roofs.

Several of the buildings carry turrets or towers including a clock tower at the corner of Brunswick Street and Piccadilly, clock tower on the Former Butchers Market (Tontines) and the centrally positioned square tower on the Webberley's Building. A review of historic photographs finds that this was a common feature of the town and many of them have been lost over the years.

● Chimneys

The roofscape of the conservation area is characterised by tall chimneys where they have been retained. Most are of brick with simple brick detailing. Some have been grouped together such as those on Fountain Square where it meets Tontine Street and on Percy Street where two chimneys are connected by an arch.



Image 5: Different chimney types

5.2.5 Windows

A high proportion of the buildings have retained their timber windows (over 70%) and of those nearly 60% are sash. Unusually very few PVC replacements have been made as the majority of the remainder of the windows are metal. Therefore the retention of timber and sash windows is essential to retain the character of the conservation area.

There are few examples of bay windows in the conservation area. The Albion Hotel has a two storey splayed bay finished with a decorated parapet and bays are also in evidence in Adventure Place and Piccadilly. The Albion also has an oriel bow window at first floor level. This type of window is also in evidence in a few other locations within the conservation area such as on the corner of the Market Tavern in Percy Street. Unfortunately the upper storey of the Post Office has been replaced in unsympathetic unauthorised PVC windows which are unsuitable for the listed building.

Some of the roofs carry dormer windows and a majority of these are mid sloped dormers on mansard roofs, however the metro in Fountain Square also carried mid sloped dormers on a plain pitched roof.

Metal windows are a prominent feature on some of the later buildings such as the entrance to the Regent Theatre and the Former peppers garage on Albion Street. There is a particularly fine example on the entrance to the Regent Theatre.

Unfortunately some of the first floor windows have been blocked off on Tontine Street opposite the post office.

5.2.6 Shopfronts

Not all the buildings within the area carry shopfronts as some are used for office use. The main shopping frontages within the Conservation Area fall in Fountain Square, Piccadilly, Tontine Street, Percy Street and Tontine Square. Whilst the other streets do have a small number of shops a majority of the buildings are in commercial or office use.

Generally within the Conservation Area some buildings retain their traditional shopfronts but this is a relatively low number. Therefore any traditional shopfronts should be retained and enhanced. Examples include 3 Piccadilly and numbers 13 - 21 (odd) Percy Street which still retains pilasters, recessed shop doorways and fascias. Some such as those in Albion Street (numbers 6-10) retain original pilasters and fascias but have new windows in a traditional style.

However many of the shopfronts have been considerably altered in the conservation area. Many of the shopfronts bear no relationship in design, proportions or materials to the buildings above. A high number of the shops carry high fascias which cover parts of the upper storeys and have unsympathetic signage such as signs above fascia level and internally illuminated signs. Also many of the shops have rollershutters which are unsuitable and create a closed off abandoned air to the area when shut.



Image 6: Examples of poor shop fronts

5.2.7 Porches

There are few porches within the conservation area as a majority of the buildings are shopfronts. Recessed doorways were a traditional shopfront feature and are still in evidence in some locations.

Porches are in evidence on some of the later buildings such as the 1930's building next to Bethesda Chapel on Albion Street and pedimented and decorated door surrounds are also in evidence within the Conservation Area. Examples of these include 3 Pall Mall which has a plain flat roofed classical porch with dentiled detail held up on pilasters with corbels.

5.2.8 Doors

A majority of the doors in the area are shop doors. These range from plain modern glass shop doors to traditional recessed shop doors. These have a lower timber panel and a higher glass panel and good examples can be seen on Percy Street. These traditional features should be retained and reinstated wherever possible.

There are some distinctive doors such as the 6 panelled doors on Bethesda Buildings, the 4 panelled doors an Albion Street and the impressive doors to the Tontine Buildings.



Image 7: Some of the traditional doors within the area which have been retained.

5.2.9 Enclosure

There are few areas of enclosure within the conservation area as a majority of the space is public space such as pavements. A sense of enclosure is created by the buildings which sit tightly together. However some low red brick walls do feature within the area and can be seen particularly in Albion Street in front of Bethesda Chapel and on the corner of Pall Mall. In front of the chapel the wall is set on a stone plinth with a stone coping.

There are also blue low brick walls in evidence on Fountain Square and Albion Square which do not have a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. There are few examples of railings and gates within the area but they are in evidence around Alexander Buildings, Bethesda Chapel and along Pall Mall. Unsightly wire fencing can be seen round the east side of the Town Hall and Victoria Hall and modern unsympathetic railings and low blue brick walls have been installed to the front of the town hall.

5.2.10 Details and Features

A particular feature of the Conservation Area are the Urns and lanterns on roof parapets. These are shown on historic photographs and are still in evidence on Percy Street and Pall Mall. Many of the buildings in the area carry Frieze details over the windows and these are often date stamped.



Image 8: Distinctive brick arch to the doorway of Gorden Chambers on Cheapside.

There is a distinctive brick arch to the doorway of Gorden Chambers on Cheapside.

There is a large timber and glass hexagonal lantern in the central section of the roof to Alexander house. The Museum and library are distinctive features of the area. Both are large distinctive buildings which sit to the west side of the city centre, the library, by its height particularly dominates the area.

5.2.11 Groundscape and Public Realm

- Paving materials within the conservation area are mixed and varied, ranging from the following:-
 - natural stone cobbles (to the front of the Metro Bar in Fountain Square),
 - yorkstone cobbles and flag paving (to Bethesda Churchyard and the Town Hall)
 - red brick paving (to internal yard of Bethesda Church)
 - blue clay paviours (to Museum and Library curtilages)
 - red clay paviours (to Tontine Street and Piccadilly)
 - red chip paving (to delineate major bus routes around Albion Square)
 - concrete flag paving (to Reginald Mitchell Memoria Youth Theatre and other areas)
 - yellow blister paving (to pedestrian crossing points)
 - tarmac (to roads)

The use of natural stone flags and setts, blue clay pavements and red brick paving are very traditional paving materials that add to the character of the conservation area. However, they are used sparsely, tending to represent the fragmented remains of a bygone era. Other materials detailed above are modern interventions that are used much more extensively. They tend to detract from the historic character. In particular, the red chip paving to Albion Street outside of the Town Hall particularly detracts from the historic character of this area. The use of paving materials appears to be quite random in places, with numerous changes in materials within a short distance. Insensitive repairs to paving by statutory undertakers further fragment the use of paving materials.

- Feature paving is restricted to the entrance to the Regent Theatre on Piccadilly, using contrasting coloured concrete flags in a chequered pattern. There is no other use of feature paving within the conservation area.
- Levels across the site are challenging and the design of level changes are frequently poor, with resulting dead spaces (the Museum), inappropriately positioned railings (lower Bethesda Gardens) and steps that have been deemed unfit for purpose (Lower Bethesda Gardens).
- Using the B&M shop signage on Old Hall Street as an example, the insensitive design of shop frontages and advertising further detracts from the quality of the public realm and is predominantly out of character with the conservation area.
- Temporary installations, such as toilet blocks, burger vans and JCDecaux signs act as barriers to pedestrian access and screen views to the wider public realm. Albion Square is a typical example of this kind of treatment to the public realm. The result is a public square that looks cluttered and uninviting.
- Street furniture is for the most part poor in quality, inconsistent in design and inappropriately positioned, resulting in street clutter. For example, there are 3 railings types to the public realm adjacent to the substation and parking outside of the Town Hall. The quality of finishing to pavements is poor, particularly on Piccadilly and the gap space outside of the Town Hall and Victoria Hall and public realm elements are not integrated to reduce street clutter.
- Excessive use of street lights, road signs and barrier rails all contribute to a loss of quality within the public realm. The junction at Percy Street and Tontine Street is a good example of how traffic signs and CCTV equipment contribute to a loss of historic character at a key nodal point.
- There is an absence of feature lighting in the area. Lighting is for functional purposes only and is predominantly provided through the use of column lighting. Additionally, there is no public art within the boundary of the Conservation Area.

5.3 Listed and Unlisted Buildings of Importance

Buildings on the Statutory List

- Municipal Offices & Courts (Albion Square): Grade II
- Bethesda Methodist Church Albion Street: Grade II
- War Memorial outside Municipal Offices Albion Street: Grade II
- Alexander House (Former Bethesda Methodist School) Bethesda St: Grade II*
- Heaths Wine Bar, (1 Bethesda St /39 Albion St): Grade II
- Former Odeon Cinema (Piccadilly): Grade II*
- Post Office, (25-31 Tontine Street): Grade II
- The Tontines Shopping Centre (Tontine Street): Grade II

Full list descriptions are included on The National Heritage List for England, which is maintained by English Heritage, and also feature in the City's Historic Environment Record (HER).



Image 9: The Tontines former butchers market dating from 1962.

Buildings of Special Local Interest

- City Centre Library
- The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery
- 2 Broad Street
- 4 Broad Street
- The French Horn/The Metro
- The Albion Hotel
- Webberleys/Former Free Trade Building
- The Unicorn
- Mitchell Memorial Theatre

CH Yf Structures of Note

The following buildings do not currently feature on the local list, but should be considered for inclusion:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ● 3 Adventure Place | ● 12 to 14 (even) Percy Street? |
| ● No 34 to 36 Cheapside | ● Market Tavern Percy Street |
| ● No 32 Cheapside | ● No 24 to 28 (even) Piccadilly |
| ● No 8 to 14 Tontine Square | ● No 17 Piccadilly |
| ● No 6 & 8 Pall Mall? | ● No 32 to 34 (even) Piccadilly |
| ● 58 to 60 Piccadilly | ● Bank on Crown Bank/ Piccadilly? |
| ● 31 to 33 Piccadilly | ● 1 Piccadilly |
| ● No 3 Pall Mall | |
| ● 13 to 21 (odd) Percy Street | |

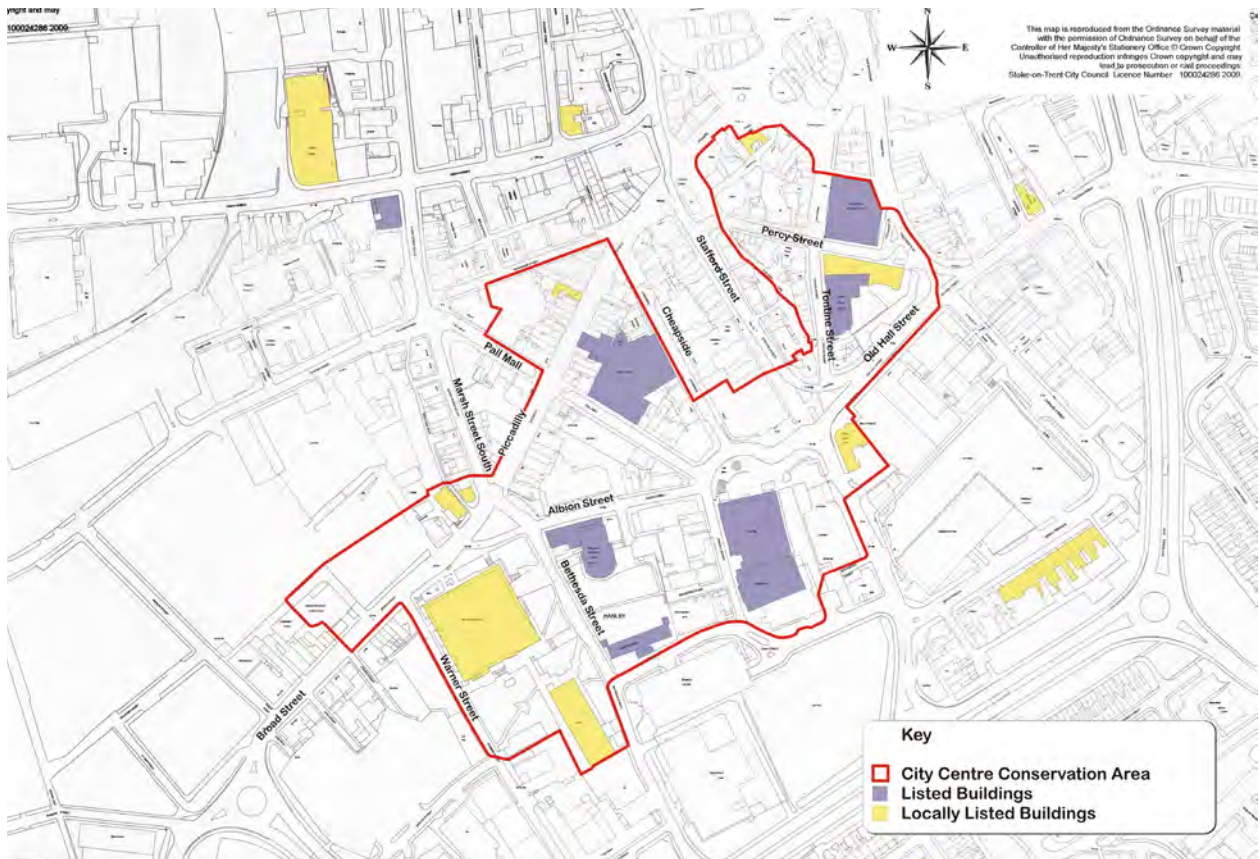


Figure 13: Listed, locally listed and locally important buildings.

5.4 Detractors, Neutral Areas and Gap Sites – Enhancement and Development Opportunities

5.4.1 Within the conservation area there are a number of detractors, as outlined below:-

1. With reference to building form generally, a significant fracture of the conservation area occurs in the area fronting Old Hall Street, Albion Square and Lichfield Street. The loss of the traditional building line has resulted in open space that is at odds with the enclosed, urban character of Percy Street, Tontine Street and Piccadilly. The resulting open space has not been addressed in design terms to mitigate for the loss of this urban character. Likewise, a fracture of the established urban grain has occurred within the Bethesda area, incorporating the Museum and Library. However, the resulting open space has been addressed to provide a strong green character that mitigates for the loss of fine urban grain.

- Radio Stoke, Wilkinson's and the amusement arcade form a group of detractor buildings that front Albion Square. The more modern design of these buildings, combined with the inactive frontage and scaling of the Wilkinson Building don't reflect the character of the more historic areas, and reinforce the fracture within the conservation area that exists around Albion Square.
- The inactive frontages of the Regent Theatre facing onto Cheapside and Pall Mall further detract from the street scene.
- The Museum and Library further detract from the character of the conservation area due to the absence of active frontages and use of materials that do not reflect local vernacular materials and which have dated poorly.
- The building currently occupied by Wolliscroft Solicitors, on Broad Marsh Street, opposite the Museum detracts from the historic character of buildings adjacent to it.

5.4.2 There are several detractors identified outside of the Conservation Area, as follows:-

- The East West Precinct with associated bus station and multi-storey car park act as significant detractors to the conservation area, although they are not located within the conservation area, due to the poor condition of these premises.

- The Textiles Direct building (adjacent to the Tontine Building) is clad in modern materials that are at odds with the surrounding natural stone and brick buildings. Likewise, the cladding of the Moxon Island building does not blend with the predominant use of materials within the conservation area. These buildings are located outside of the conservation area boundary.
- The scale and selection of materials for the Telephone Exchange Building are at odds with the smaller scale of the surrounding buildings that help to form the character of the conservation area.
- The scale and design of the toilet block on Crown Bank compromises the historic character of Crown Bank and its effectiveness as a civic space.
- Due to the poor condition of the building, Chaplins public house, on Lichfield Street, significantly detracts from the entrance to the Victoria Theatre.
- Public realm treatments to Parliament Square, Albion Square, Lower Bethesda Gardens and Bethesda Triangle are poor in quality; the public realm generally is cluttered and inconsistent in the use of materials and design quality.
- The predominance of vehicular traffic and associated traffic signs within these areas also detracts from the historic setting.

5.4.3 There are four gap sites that occur within the conservation area, namely :-

- Old Hall Street
- The car parks associated with the Victoria Hall and Lichfield Street
- The car park located on Pall Mall
- The green space that occurs within Bethesda Triangle, at the southern end of Albion Street

5.4.4 There are two gap sites that occur outside of the conservation area, namely:-

- The vacant plot on Piccadilly Street
- The vacant plot on Broad Marsh Street between the Reginald Mitchell Memorial Theatre and Wolliscroft solicitors.

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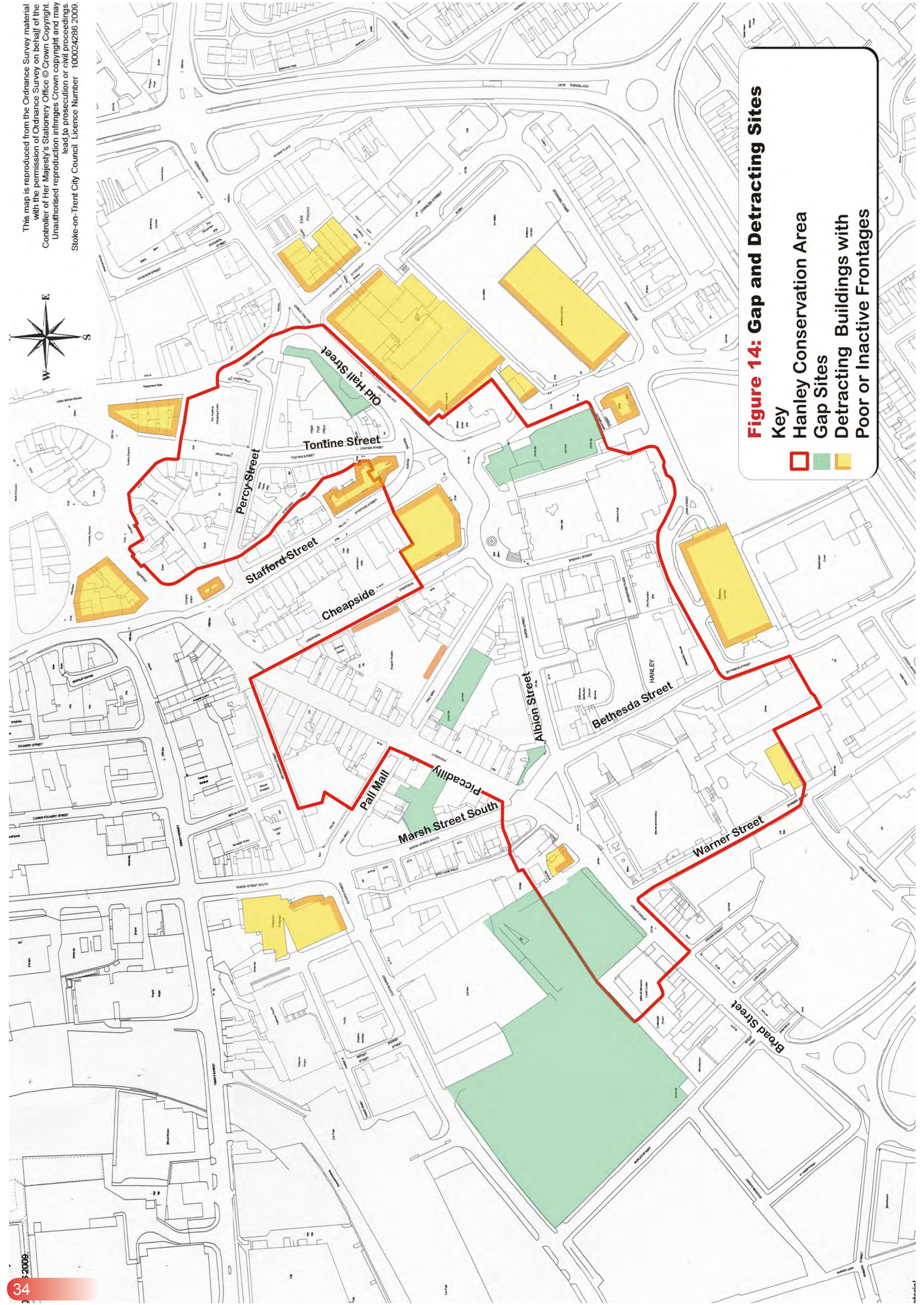


Figure 14: Gap and Detracting Sites

- Key**
- Hanley Conservation Area
 - Detracting Buildings with Poor or Inactive Frontages
 - Gap Sites

5.4.5 Key Development Opportunities exist within the Conservation Area that could enhance and promote the Conservation Area if dealt with in a sensitive manner appropriate to the Conservation Area setting. These opportunities are outlined as follows:-

- Development opportunities exist in the following locations:-
 - The East West Precinct – high quality development proposals in this area will significantly improve the appearance of Old Hall Street and promote the retail offer within the conservation area
 - The gap site adjacent to Old Hall Street – development proposals will screen rear views of buildings and improve the appearance of Old Hall Street, whilst promoting the urban, enclosed character of the conservation area as a whole. The corner of the building adjacent to Old Hall Street and Parliament Row should promote the retail offer of the Conservation Area. The building needs to protect incidental views of the tower feature as the Webberleys building.
 - The bus station and multi-storey car park – again, high quality development proposals will significantly improve views into and out of the conservation area at this point, and enhance the quality of the shopping experience through provision of additional facilities. However there is the potential for impact upon the setting of the Listed Victoria Hall and its modern annexe.
 - The car park outside of the Town Hall and Victoria Hall (adjacent to Lichfield Street) – development proposals for this area should enhance the public realm fronting the arrival point to the Victoria Hall for cultural visitors and define stronger links between the Victoria Hall and the East West Precinct development, whilst creating a stronger building line and enhancing the sense of enclosure on Lichfield Street. Consideration should be given to public open space that enhances the functions of the existing and proposed buildings surrounding it. Development in this area should also aim to restore the historic building line on Albion Street?
 - The car park on Pall Mall – this area is surrounded by fine grain historic buildings and development proposals should reflect this characteristic, whilst restoring the historic building line to this street.
 - The gap site on Piccadilly Street – as stated above, the historic building line should be restored on this site.
 - The gap site on Bethesda Triangle, at the southern end of Albion Street – fine grain development on this site will address the blank elevation currently facing onto Bethesda Square that detracts from the architectural quality surrounding this space. However, the scale of the development should retain the integrity of the historic townscape within this area, by not extending excessively into this space.
 - Lower Bethesda Gardens, to the rear of the Library building and associated car park – views to the rear of the Library are unpleasant, and development would help to screen views into this area, whilst providing natural surveillance over the green space.
 - The buildings fronting Albion Square at the junction of Stafford Street and Tontine Street should be re-developed, in order to promote the retail offer of the conservation area and enhance the quality of Stafford Street. Stafford Lane should be reopened to allow pedestrian access onto Albion Square, Tontine Street.
 - The site next to Mitchell Memorial Theatre should be developed to respond to the context of that area, creating a strong frontage onto Broad Street. and potentially a modest public space to improve the quality of the connection to the Tesco Store.

5.4.6 Improvements to building frontages should be encouraged, as follows:-

- Buildings adjacent to the former Post Office, and fronting Albion Square from Tontine Street would benefit from renovation
- Consideration should be given to extending the Wilkinson building and providing a high quality frontage to this building that promotes the retail offer of the conservation area, whilst providing an active frontage; improvements should be made to the existing façade so that the level of quality is similar in both existing elevations and proposed elevations
- Improvements to the Radio Stoke building should contribute to an enhanced setting for the Town Hall and promote natural surveillance into this public space

- Elevational improvements to the Museum and Library should articulate clearly the function of these buildings from key viewpoints, and provide active frontages, where possible. The function of internal spaces should be clearly understood by users from the street. Opportunities for advertising civic events should be explored within the proposals for improvements.

5.4.7 Public Realm Improvements could significantly contribute to the promotion and setting of the Conservation Area. Specific improvements are outlined below:-

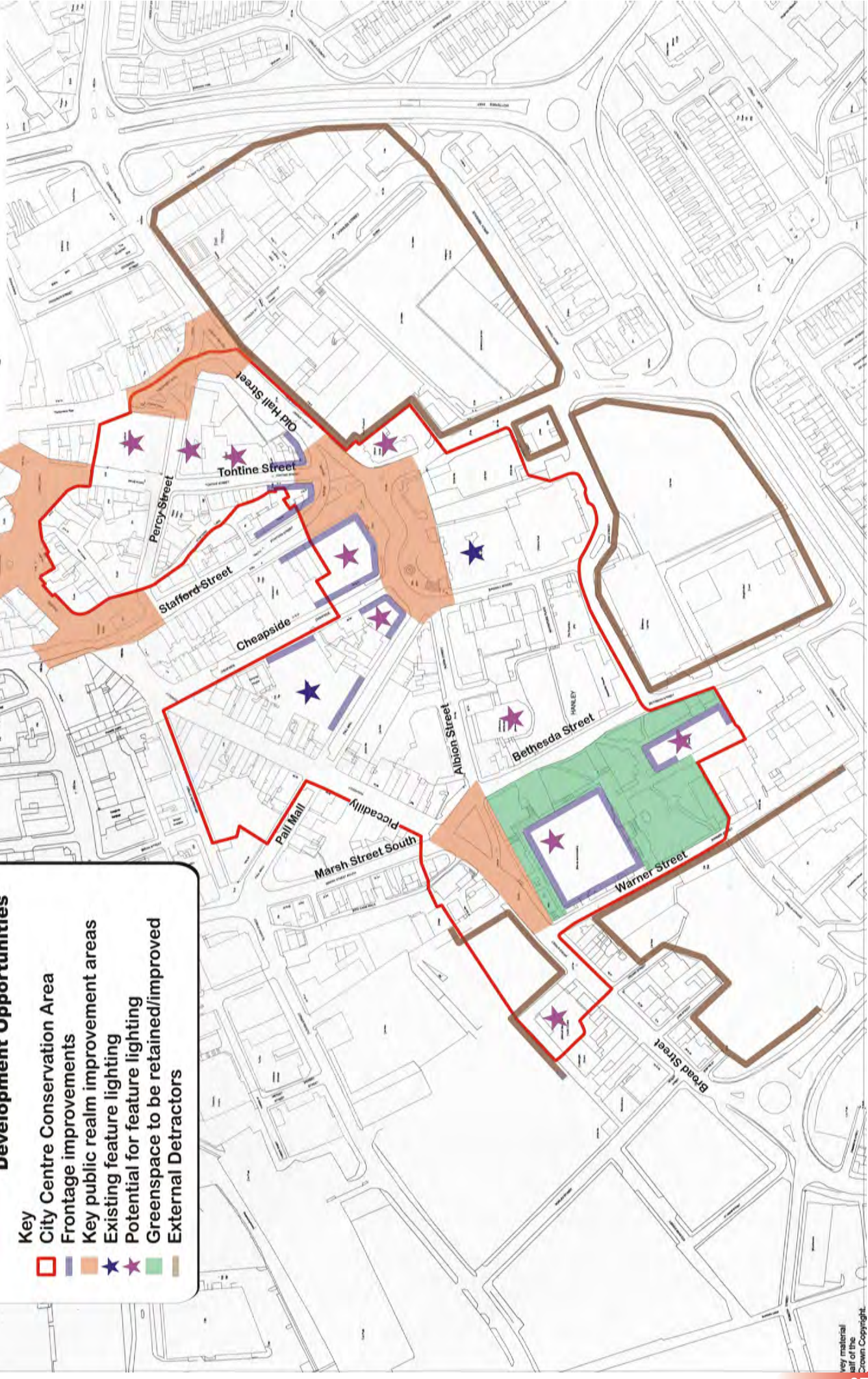
- Public realm enhancements to Parliament Row, Albion Square, the setting to the Town Hall and Bethesda Triangle should help to promote a higher level of pedestrian priority within these spaces, increase the profile of the conservation area and promote external amenity uses in these areas, whilst supporting the buildings surrounding them. Careful selection and siting of design and materials would allow the public realm to enhance the historic setting, rather than detract from it. A reduction in vehicular traffic would allow for a more formal setting to the historic buildings in these areas. Levels should be successfully resolved outside of the Town Hall and Bethesda Triangle
- Public realm improvements should also be promoted on the edge of the conservation area at Tontine Square, Fountain Square and Crown Bank to help improve the setting and character.
- Consideration should be given to public realm treatments that emphasise the curtilages of historic feature buildings, such as feature paving, lighting or carefully selected materials.
- The rationalisation of public realm elements within the conservation area as a whole would be welcomed, in order to reduce street clutter; consideration should be given to a more integrated approach to public realm elements, so that one item serves several functions. The use of natural stone paving would help to considerably raise the quality of the public realm in a manner that is sympathetic to the conservation area. A consistent design approach should be adopted throughout.
- Generally, there is a need to reduce street clutter throughout the historic core.
- Feature lighting to the Town Hall already emphasises the civic nature of this key space. Other historic buildings within public spaces would also contribute further to the historic setting if the frontages were sensitively restored and illuminated, particularly in Bethesda Triangle, Parliament Row and Tontine Street.
- Likewise, large expanses of open car parks should be screened from view through the use of semi mature tree planting crownlifted to 2.5m.
- Future car parking proposals should be screened from view where possible, using multi-storey car parks, basement parking and undercroft parking where possible. On-street parking, such as blue badge parking should be positioned at less strategic viewpoints, with the use of tree planting to screen, where possible, and as fully integrated elements of the street/space.
- The green spaces around the Museum and Library should be retained as they lend strong character to this area. However, the design of these spaces should be reviewed and revised, to provide a more coherent approach that addresses sustainability issues such as surface water management practices, habitat enhancement and provision of shading. Planting should be consistent across these green spaces so that a strong link is formed between them. Key views outside of these green spaces should be preserved and not be screened by tree planting, whilst tree planting should screen unsightly views in these areas. The social amenity of these spaces should be enhanced, and stronger links formed with the uses associated with surrounding buildings. Levels should be successfully resolved and incorporated into design proposals at an early stage.
- Street trees would help to enhance the character of the conservation area, but should be planted selectively. Development proposals for the East West Precinct and Old Hall Street should include provision for street trees along Old Hall Street and Lichfield Street. Street trees would also provide a stronger character to the approach to Bethesda Triangle, from Broad Street and Bethesda Street.

A programme of shop frontage enhancement would contribute significantly to the development of an attractive historic conservation core within the City Centre. In particular, the adaptation of shop frontages to reflect more closely the building elevations of historic facades would help to enhance the quality of views within the Conservation Area. Shop frontages associated with modern infill developments should be adapted to complement the historic core rather than compete with it, adopting quality, contemporary principles.



Figure 15: Enhancement & Development Opportunities

- Key**
- City Centre Conservation Area
 - Frontage improvements
 - Key public realm improvement areas
 - ★ Existing feature lighting
 - ★ Potential for feature lighting
 - Greenspace to be retained/improved
 - External Detractors



6. Pressures and threats

As noted previously, the City Centre (Hanley) is in a state of transition. The coming years will see it change in scale from a town into a city centre. This process will need to be carefully guided and managed to successfully integrate the historic core area and areas of proposed change, whilst ensuring that its generally human scale is not dwarfed and overwhelmed. It will be important that the remaining historic fabric of Hanley is both cherished and valued for how it can positively contribute to the quality of the City's environment.

Whilst this scale of re-development is not unprecedented (the centre has been the subject of major development and re-development since the 1960's), in most instances this has not contributed positively to the area's character or successfully integrated with it. Consequently, it is important that lessons are learnt from past mistakes, and where practicable that these are also remedied.

There are several proposed strategic, large scale schemes that have a direct relationship with the proposed Conservation Area which are indicated on the plan below. There are also several infill or opportunity sites that are within or directly relate to the Conservation Area (also identified on the plan).

If an ill informed approach is adopted in relation to the urban design of these various developments then it could have significant consequences for the integrity of the conservation Area. It is vitally important that the sensitivity of this relationship is fully understood by developers and their design teams and factored into development proposals.

Within this regeneration context lies an important opportunity to reuse and retain the historic buildings in the City Centre. Replacement of the good examples of the existing historic building stock with new build should be avoided. Any new modern buildings should be designed to be sympathetic in terms of scale, material, colour and proportion. Sympathetic in this context means based upon a sound analysis of the surrounding buildings; it does not mean a debased interpretation of historic styles that does not produce buildings of the original quality.

Currently the area has some blank spaces left from the demolition of buildings without replacement buildings being built. This leaves unsightly gaps. In future, conditions will be added to any Conservation Area Consents to ensure that demolition is more effectively tied to redevelopment.

In association with the city's wider regeneration, the public realm will also be an area of significant change. Again it will be important not to repeat past mistakes and to adopt an informed approach to the enhancement of streets and spaces. This offers significant potential for improvement to the character of the area by uplifting the quality of the streetscape. The Public Realm Strategy and associated subsequent work is an important vehicle in managing public realm change and ensuring sensitivity in relation to the Conservation Area.

Pressures and threats also exist at a lesser scale, not least from incremental erosion of character arising from lack of investment and ill informed alterations to individual properties.

The character of shop frontages is a particular issue, where, below eye level, in the zone that most people visually interact with, the character of the Conservation Area has been significantly affected. As with all historic retail areas there is frequent refurbishment of the shops and shop-fronts. Where historic frontages remain, in whole or in part they should be robustly protected, whilst frontage restoration should be promoted in conjunction with high quality contemporary shop fronts as appropriate. Care should be taken that this is done in a manner which enhances the host building. The City is fortunate in possessing a strong photographic archive which may be used to reinstate lost architectural features.

Shop front security shutters and other measures need to be carefully managed to prevent further character erosion and to bring about enhancement. This will help to improve the appearance of shop fronts and create a more inviting and safe night time environment within the area.

Unsympathetic or unsuitably located signage is also a current issue and any future proposals should take the historic nature of the area into consideration. Signs should not be positioned above original fascias and internally illuminated signs or decorated banners should be avoided on commercial buildings without a public function.

A lack of activity in the evening in parts of the Conservation Area further compounds these issues, where antisocial activity such as vandalism exacerbates problems of building maintenance/upkeep and a desire for securing the vulnerable parts of properties, often undertaken insensitively and without regard to the character of the building or area

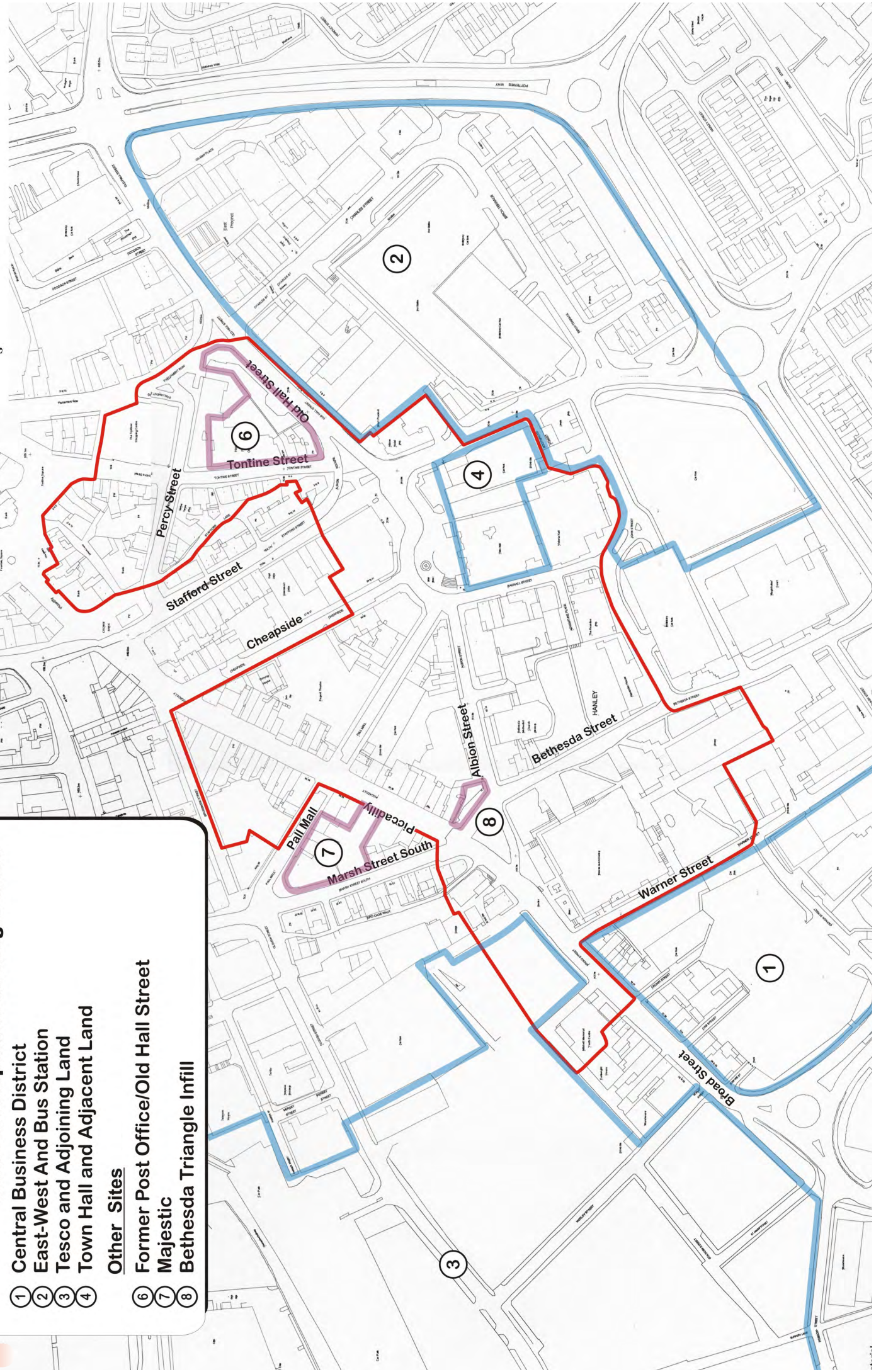
Many buildings in the Conservation Area also suffer from a lack of general maintenance which if left unchecked could place buildings and townscape features under threat from inappropriate alteration removal. Often this is in areas that are not so visible or obvious, such as roofs, upper floor windows and side and rear elevations.

Over 70% of the buildings retain their timber or sash timber windows and therefore their retention is essential to retain the character of the conservation area. Planning consent is needed to change windows for buildings which are not single family houses. The Council will use its planning powers to retain and protect original features where they contribute positively to the character of the Conservation Area. Conversely, some minor development within the boundary has not conserved the special interest, this is especially true of works to modest buildings. A real threat is to consider these as viable precedents that may be repeated. This must not happen and a positive approach to management is essential to promote the value of conserving historic character.



Figure 16: Potential Pressures From New Development Strategic Sites

- ① Central Business District
- ② East-West And Bus Station
- ③ Tesco and Adjoining Land
- ④ Town Hall and Adjacent Land
- Other Sites**
- ⑥ Former Post Office/Old Hall Street
- ⑦ Majestic
- ⑧ Bethesda Triangle Infill



7. Summary of Special Interest

Architecture

The architectural style of the Conservation Area is dominated by the richly decorated brick buildings of the Late Victorian and early Edwardian periods. The lack of formality and planning within the City Centre gives a strong visual identity and a lively mix of scale and size.

History

The City Centre is a creature of the late nineteenth century; it grew rapidly in a period of less than fifty years. There is very little evidence of the original medieval settlement along Broad street and Marsh Street which is confined to archaeology.

Character and Appearance

The Character and appearance of the conservation area is very free and informal. Despite the relative consistency of building age, the size and scale of the development appears organic rather than controlled. This is due to the unique settlement patterns which developed in Stoke on Trent with large Potteries each developing their own housing intermingled with Civic Buildings, and due to the complex ownership.

Views and Corners

Some parts of the Conservation Areas are characterised by strong corner buildings and detailing to capture and focus views within the area. This characteristic should be protected and enhanced and new development should continue this approach (where appropriate).

8. Recommendations and proposals

Boundaries in each case are suggested by natural breaks in townscape character or historical developmental patterns and relationships. The current boundary was revised as part of this appraisal process and is appropriate and therefore no further boundary revisions are proposed.

The area retains much of the historic character but has suffered from unsympathetic alteration, especially to shopfronts and signage. More effective use of planning controls would greatly improve and preserve the character of the area, potentially supplemented by a programme of improvements.

The Conservation Area adjoins several areas of major regeneration and several sites within the area have also been identified for a regeneration. These have the potential to significantly benefit the Conservation Area provided that the relationship between existing and new is fully considered and respected.

Enhancement and rationalisation of the public realm will help to unify and re-connect the area. It will be important to ensure the removal of street clutter and to overcome the dominance of vehicular movement particularly in the Old Hall Street, Albion Square, Bethesda Triangle and Stafford Street areas.

The strategy for the public realm should be implemented to ensure that the colours and textures of local materials are enhanced by improvements to the streetscape.

There is an opportunity to further define and reinforce key historic buildings through the treatment of streets and spaces

The character of the Conservation Area would be enhanced by the promotion of social uses within streets and spaces to help further enliven and animate the townscape.

The existing accent lighting of key buildings could be extended to other key buildings in the conservation area to help define and reinforce its character at night time and to encourage more social and night time usage.

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