

New Walk Conservation Area Character Appraisal

September 2020



Leicester
City Council

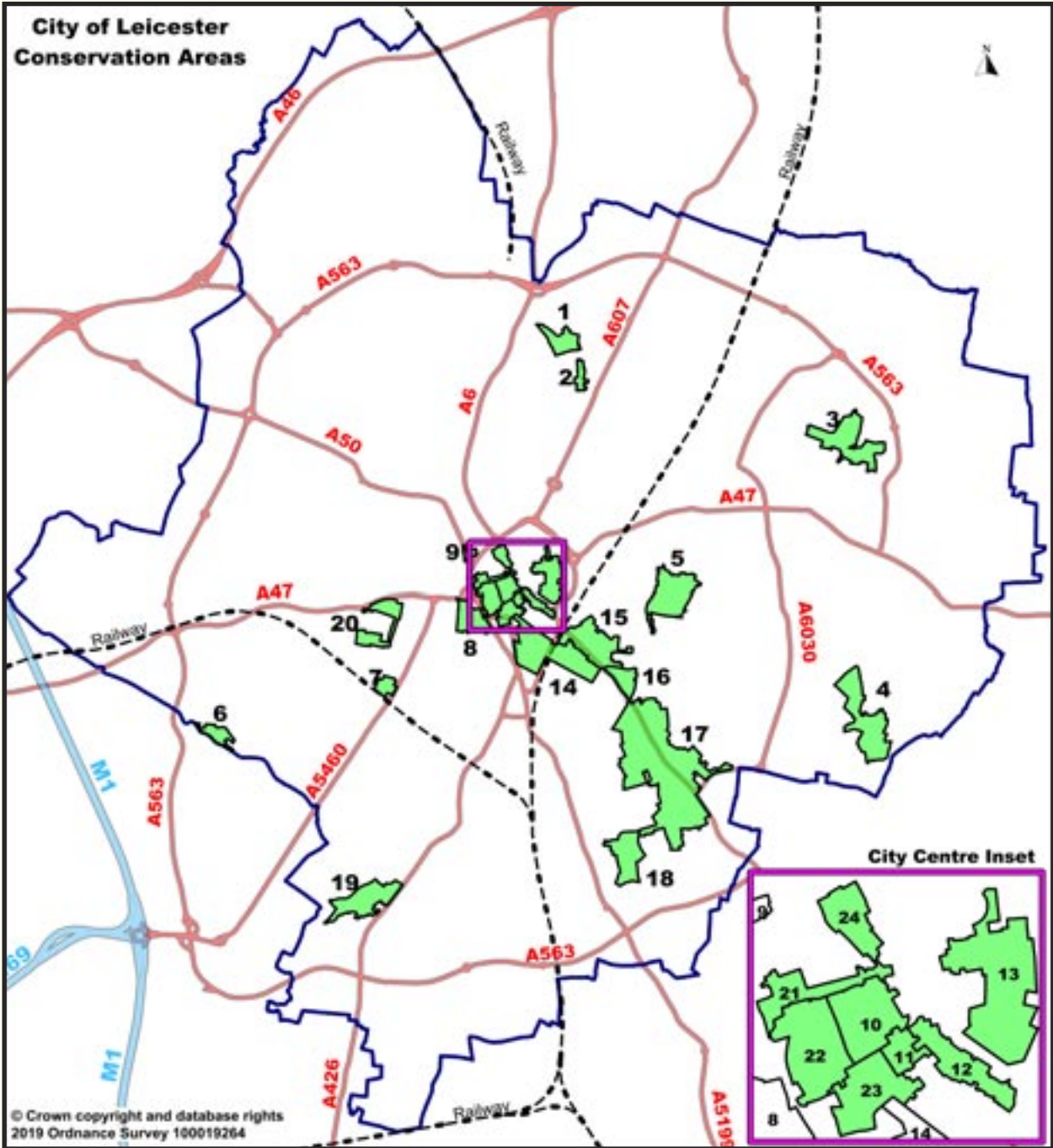


The New Walk, Lorcestor.

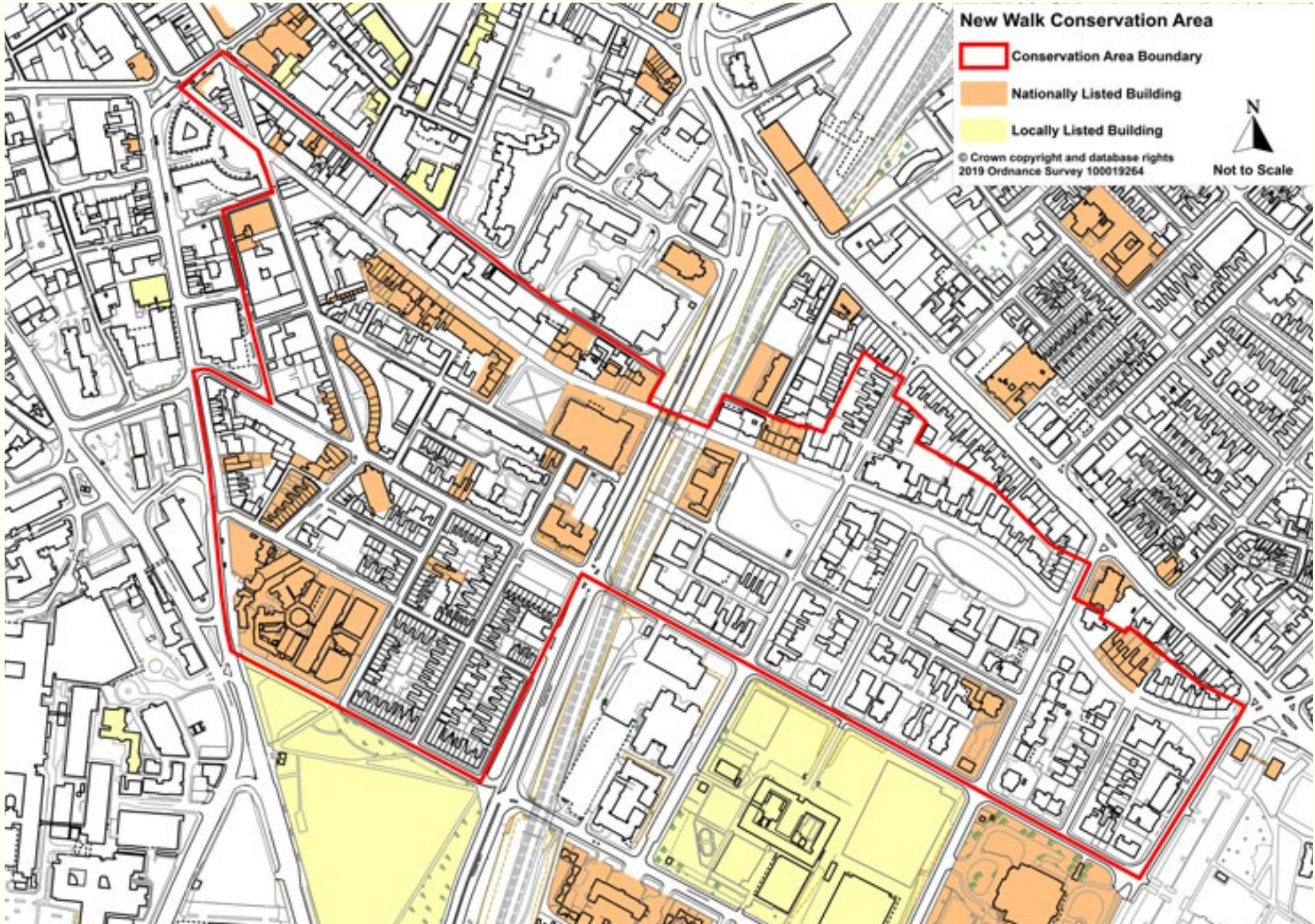
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City of Leicester Conservation Areas



1. Belgrave Hall
2. Loughborough Road
3. Old Humberstone
4. Evington Village
5. Spinney Hill Park
6. Braunstone
7. Asheigh Road
8. Castle
9. All Saints
10. Market Place
11. Town Hall Square
12. Granby Street
13. St Georges
14. New Walk
15. South Highfields
16. Evington Footpath
17. Stoneygate
18. Knighton
19. Aylestone
20. West End
21. High Street
22. Greyfriars
23. Market Street
24. Church Gate



1. Introduction

The New Walk Conservation Area Character Appraisal aims to set out the area's special character and appearance and how it can 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. Background, Scope and Structure

The City of Leicester contains twenty four conservation areas, the oldest of which were designated in 1969. This appraisal is structured to include:

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

3. Designation

New Walk Conservation Area was designated on 18 April 1969 under Part 1 of the Civic Amenities Act (1967). It was subsequently extended westwards to include the Regent Road and Marlborough Street area in 1974 and again in 1980 to include the area between Regent Street and Leicester Prison on Welford Road.

4. Planning Policy Framework

The concept of 'conservation areas' was first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act (1967) which defined a conservation area as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent change but to manage change in ways that maintain and strengthen an area's special qualities.

The definition remains unchanged in current legislation, set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act places duties on local planning authorities:

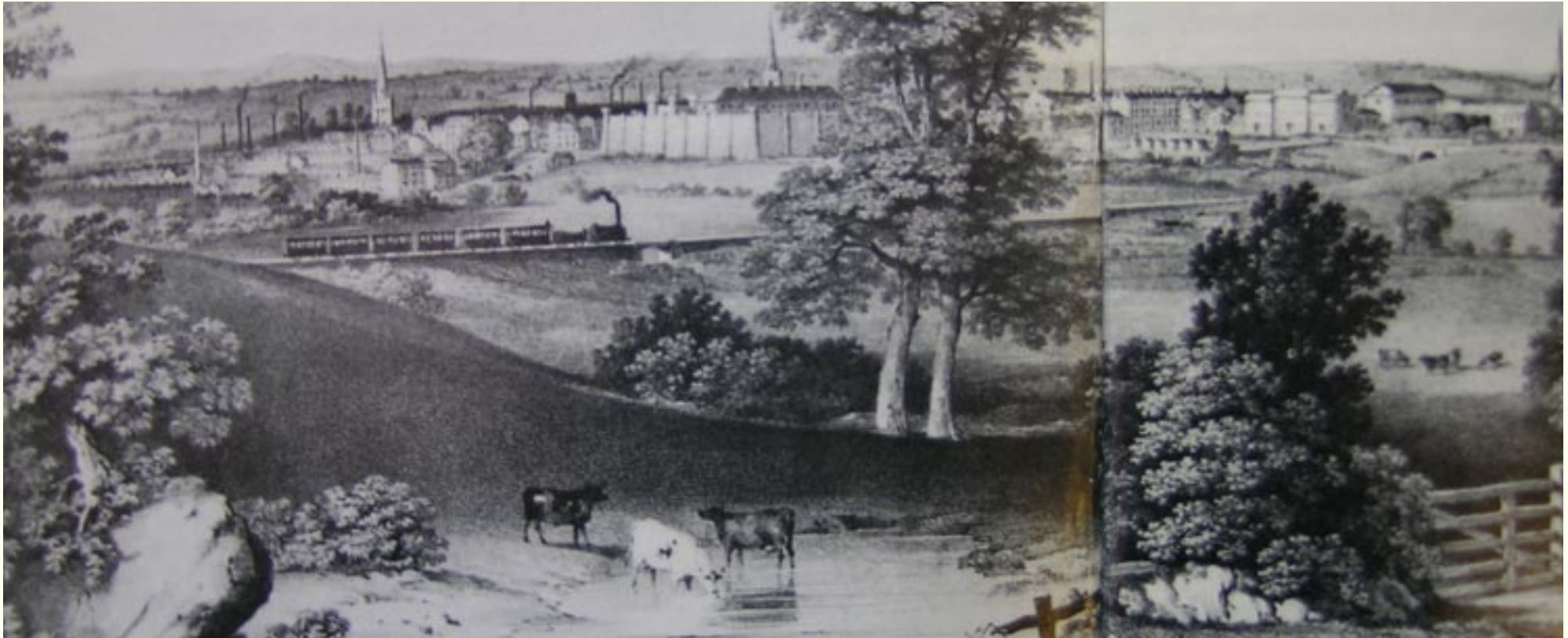
- To identify those parts of their area that are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas;
- To review past designations from time to time;
- To prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas;
- To pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas when determining planning applications for sites within such areas.

The effect of designation means that planning permission is required for the demolition of buildings, with some minor exceptions. There are also stricter controls on changes that can be made to buildings and land, and there is some protection for trees.

Government policy is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It requires the significance of heritage assets – both its historic buildings and historic areas – to be understood by local authorities and by those who propose change. Changes that cause harm to significance will only be permitted where the harm is outweighed by public benefits. Further guidance on the use of the NPPF is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance and in guidance published by Historic England.

The protection and positive use of the historic environment within new development is a theme which runs through the City of Leicester Core Strategy. It is identified as a key component in spatial objectives 7 and 9. This is further strengthened in a number of policies. The Core Strategy also makes an explicit commitment to the preservation and enhancement of Leicester's heritage in Spatial Objective 10. This is amplified in a wide-ranging policy (CS18) for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. There is a general presumption against the demolition of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area, and the policy expects new developments and conservation-led regeneration to reflect the character and value of the historic environment. Both local and national policy puts the emphasis on the enhancement of heritage assets and positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness that should be made through new development.

5. Definition / Summary of Special Interest



A view of Leicester from the south, soon after the completion of the Midland Counties Railway in 1841. The prison can be seen in the centre and the developing Holy Trinity area and New Walk to the right.

The New Walk Conservation Area is one of Leicester's most distinctive and recognisable places. It contains one of the most significant historic landscape features in the region and many of the city's finest buildings. It was designated as one of the first Conservation Areas in the city in 1969 and was the only one located outside the historic core of the old town.

The New Walk contains a number of historically and aesthetically interesting environments, which are

unique within the city and even the nation. The Walk itself is a nationally rare example of a Georgian Promenade and marks the ambition and growing wealth of the Corporation in the late 18th Century. The core building stock, from late 18th to late 19th centuries, was aspirational and contains a high proportion of architecturally distinguished properties. It is a specifically planned part of the city, with the walk developed to prescribed plans and the Holy Trinity area formally laid out on a grid.

New Walk, although a composition of a number of character areas, holds together with a strong identity. It sets out a form of development, which although historic in character remains relevant and desirable to the present day and is an exemplary area of town planning. Its character derives from the commonality of treatment of private properties and the public realm to achieve an area of distinct character which encompasses a variety of uses and building styles.

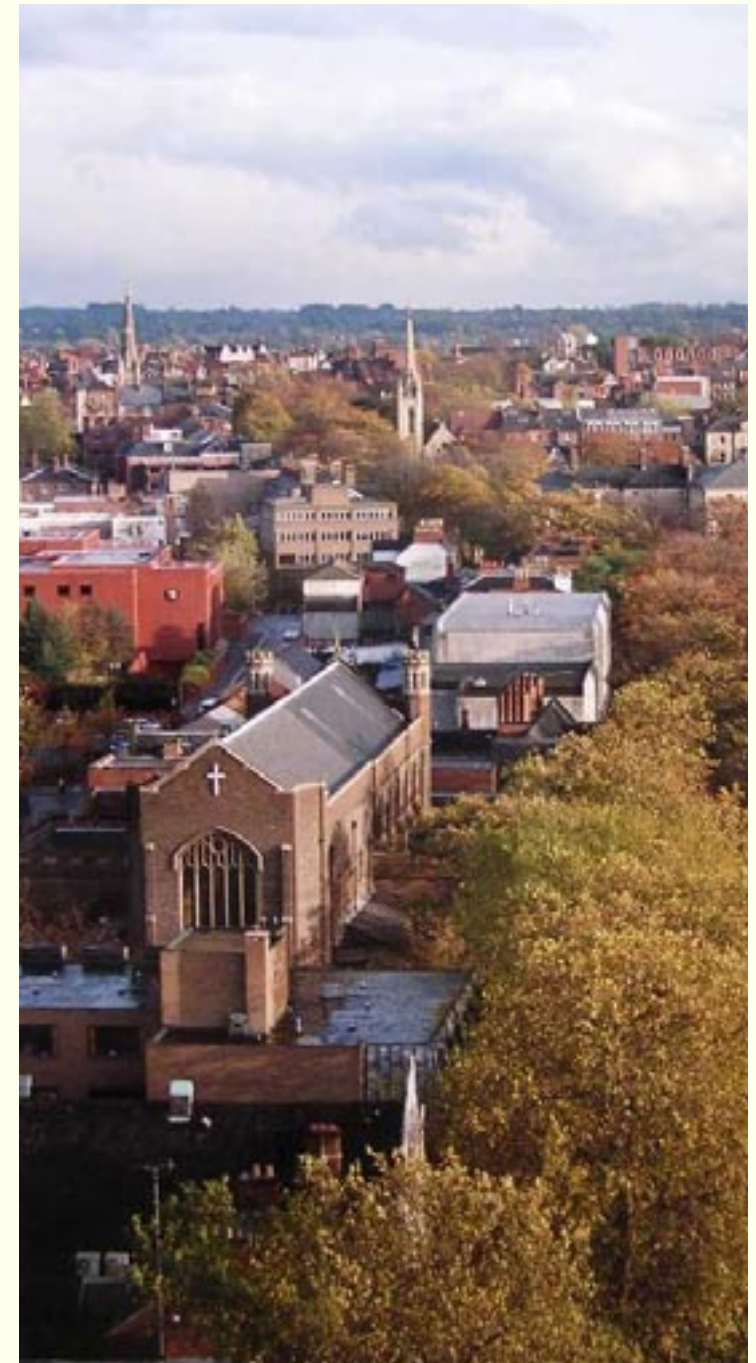
6. Location and Setting

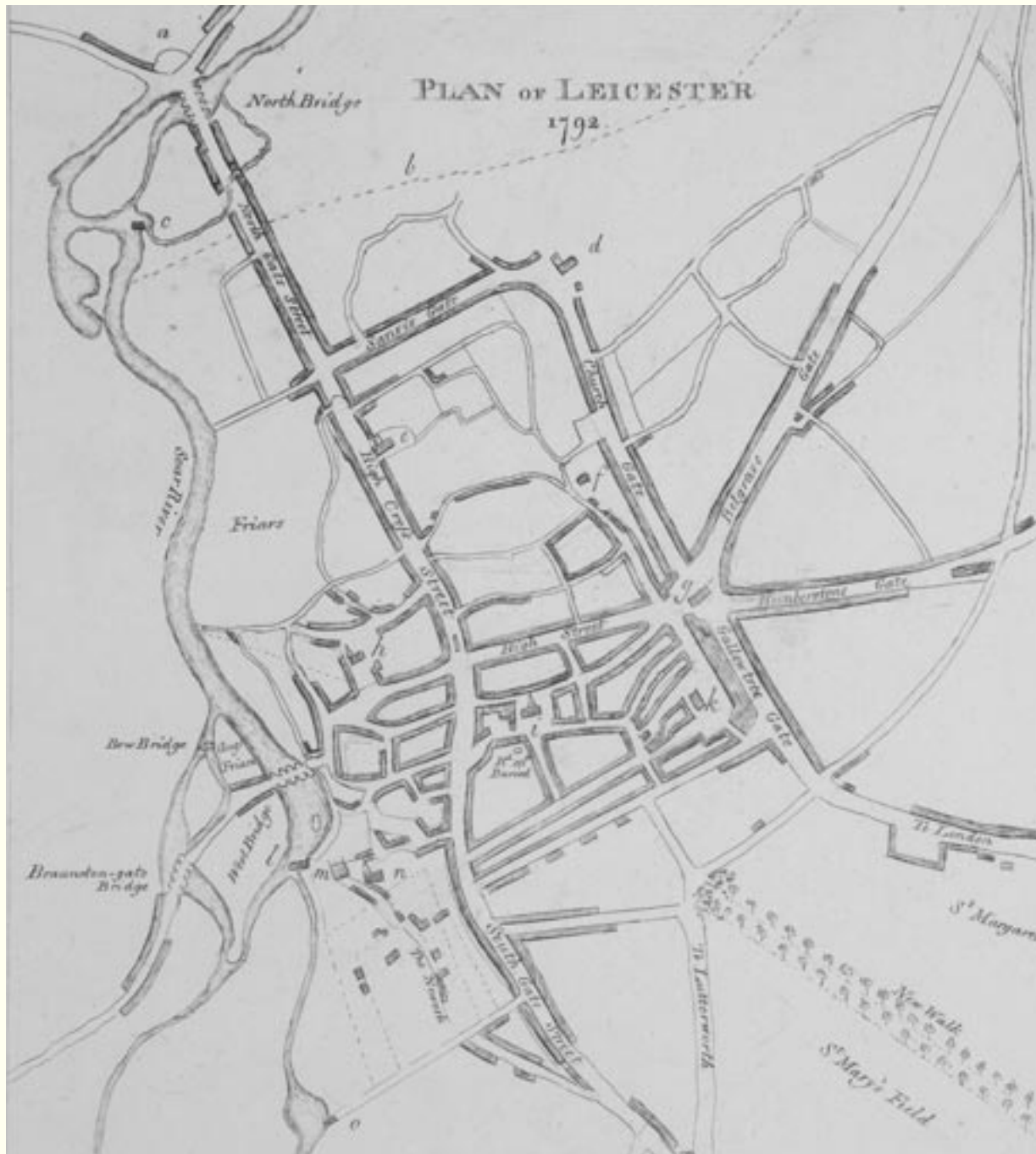
The Conservation Area, which covers an area of 29.5 hectares (73 acres), extends from King Street in the north-west, Granville Road in the east and Lancaster Road in the south. It lies on the hill created by the boundary between the Triassic and Jurassic geological systems. Between King Street and Granville Road, the ground rises about 20m (65ft), from Mercia mudstones at the north-western end to deep layers of boulder clay at the south-eastern end. The land also slopes down from New Walk to Regent Road.

The Conservation Area sits at the south-eastern end of the City Centre. Close to the railway station, the area is bisected by the culverted mainline that leads southwards to London. The periphery of the Conservation Area is marked by a diverse mixture of different land uses and character area. Much of the land to the south is dominated by parkland, and educational land uses with a looser urban grain from the 20th century.

To the west is a mixed use area that was developed in the 19th century but largely subject to comprehensive redevelopment in the later 20th century, resulting in a character that is strongly divergent from New Walk. A similar pattern of development and character divergence is found to the north-east, around South Albion Street, but stronger historic connections are found to the historic core of the city at the north-western boundary.

To the east of the railway line, the northern boundary of the Conservation Area is a more contiguous junction with the tightly grained later 19th century development that forms part of the South Highfields Conservation Area.





Throsby Map 1792

7. Historic Development

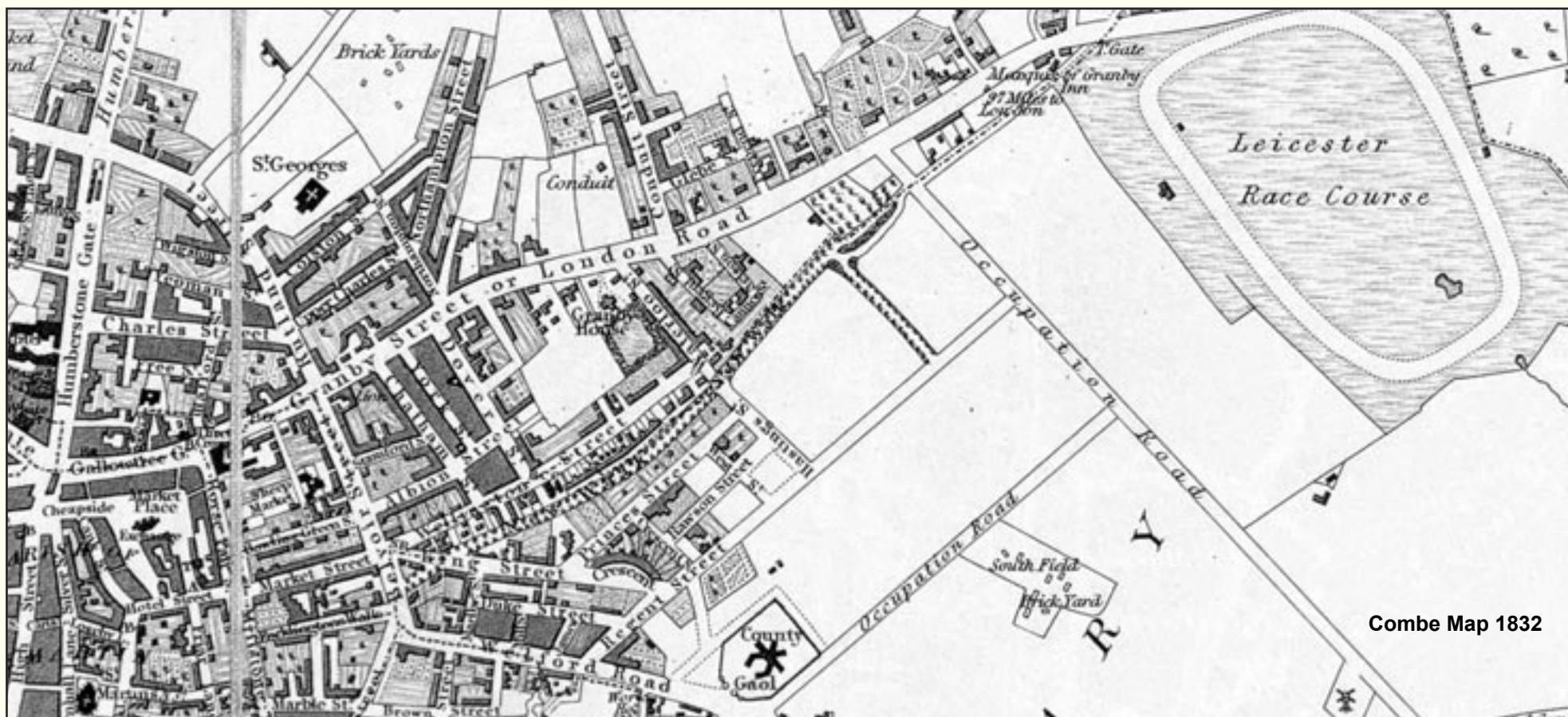
In the late 18th century the area now forming the New Walk Conservation Area was part of the town's South Fields, a large area of open fields owned by the Borough Freemen and used for grazing. A footpath leading to Gartree ran through the Fields, possibly on the line of the Roman road from Leicester to Colchester, 'Via Devana'. The land was above the River Soar flood plain and outside the increasingly cramped confines of the town's medieval walls and, to the Borough Corporation; this made the South Fields highly desirable for building.

It is possible that they decided to lay out New Walk (originally Queen's Walk, sometimes Ladies' Walk) in 1785 as a means of putting pressure on the Freemen to sell the South Fields so that they could be enclosed and sold for building. The convenient location of an existing footpath was to the Corporation's advantage as was the proximity of the town's newly fashionable residential area based around Friar Lane, Millstone Lane and New Street. The provision of a pleasant rural pathway linking the town's well-to-do residents with the open countryside and the racecourse (now Victoria Park) would have been another desirable outcome. However, despite this first move, it was not until nineteen years later, in 1804, that the Enclosure Award was drawn up. In that year, Susannah Watts describes New Walk as a path through open fields affording views of nearby villages as well as the church spires of the town¹. When laid out, the Walk was gravel surfaced and lined with hedges.

After the Award was ratified in 1811 King Street was laid out, followed by Wellington Street in 1812, Princess Road in 1815 and the Holy Trinity streets (Regent Road and the streets to the south) by the late 1820s².

¹Miss S Watts, *A Walk Through Leicester*, 1840 facsimile, Leicester

²Gill, R, *The Book of Leicester*, Barracuda Books, 1985



The south end of Newtown Street was complete by 1840 (when it was known as Lower King Street); it was linked through to Regent Road (Regent Street) by 1844.

The Corporation did not allow any building to take place along New Walk until 1824. However, Holy Cross Priory overcame this restriction in 1818 by being built fronting Wellington Street. From 1824 onwards, albeit in a piecemeal fashion, development commenced south of Holy Cross Priory. However, building had to adhere to the Corporation's strict

conditions, two of which were that (i) "the privilege of opening communications with the New Walk be for the purpose only of a footway" and (ii) building should not be closer than 10 yards (9m) from the Walk. Only at the King Street end was this second condition breached late in the 19th century. It is also clear that the Corporation wanted New Walk to be different from neighbouring streets by requiring that new owners 'make an iron palisade fence along their whole front'. On this proviso, the Corporation would remove the existing hedge and ditch³.

These conditions determined the openness and spaciousness that is characteristic of New Walk and set in place the rules for its traffic-free status. However, development remained uncoordinated, taking place as and when building plots were sold. The rules governing plot layout did not though apply in the Holy Trinity area and development proceeded here in the manner typical of Leicester in the 19th century - small plots with buildings close to, or opening directly off, the footpath.

³Hall Book, 17 March 1824, in Potts, *New Walk in the Nineteenth Century*, Leicester 1968



19th century image of New Walk, by The Oval

The Crescent in King Street is one of the earliest buildings in the Conservation Area; by 1828, it was part of an area of large villas and Regency terraces. In contrast to the wealth and elegance displayed in The Crescent, and also dating from the 1820s, some tiny two room dwellings (Cramant Cottages) were crammed into the back garden of 54 King Street.

Some of the Conservation Area's other notable buildings from this period can still be seen opposite the Museum at 58-60, 62-64 and 72 New Walk. During the 1830s and 1840s some of New Walk's

grandest buildings were constructed, most notably the Museum in 1836, which was built by Joseph Hansom as a Nonconformist Proprietary school and sold to the Corporation in 1848. Lighting along the Walk was provided by elegant throwover arches, some of which survive.

As the town's newest suburb, the properties along New Walk were very fashionable places to live and the quality of the residents' surroundings was further enhanced by open spaces that were created as development progressed. Two grand east-facing

terraces were constructed in the 1840s and 1850s to take full advantage of these, at Museum Square and De Montfort Square. Despite local opposition, the Midland Counties railway line to London was built in 1840. Although in a deep cutting, the Corporation decided it needed to be hidden further and the bridge over the railway was hidden behind a barrier of planting. Even so, the coming of the railway may have accelerated the movement of the wealthier residents on New Walk to the emerging suburb of Stoneygate.



New Walk, looking north from The Oval, in late 19th century

Development elsewhere in the Conservation Area proceeded apace. The large warehouse at 35 King Street (since converted into apartments) was constructed in 1845 for Harris & Sons and between 1850 and 1860 more warehouses had been built on Wellington Street. Indeed many hosiery merchants who had lived in this part of New Walk were building their factories and warehouses on land which not long before had been regarded as the best residential area of the town.⁴

South of New Walk, the development of the Holy Trinity area was also taking place but in a quite different form. The first building to be erected, between 1825 and 1828, was the Prison – a monumental structure, the defensive design of which was perhaps a response to the frequent civil disturbances of the time.⁵ However, its presence did not prevent development nearby as all the surrounding streets were laid out in a standard grid pattern by 1828. Burton's map of 1844 shows that Upper King Street (1835) had been built, with Crescent Cottages and Holy Trinity Church following in 1838. The small terrace of houses at 77-95 Regent Road date from 1841 while those at 44-72 Tower Street, 14-22 Newtown Street and 18-22 West Street were built sometime in the later 1840s.

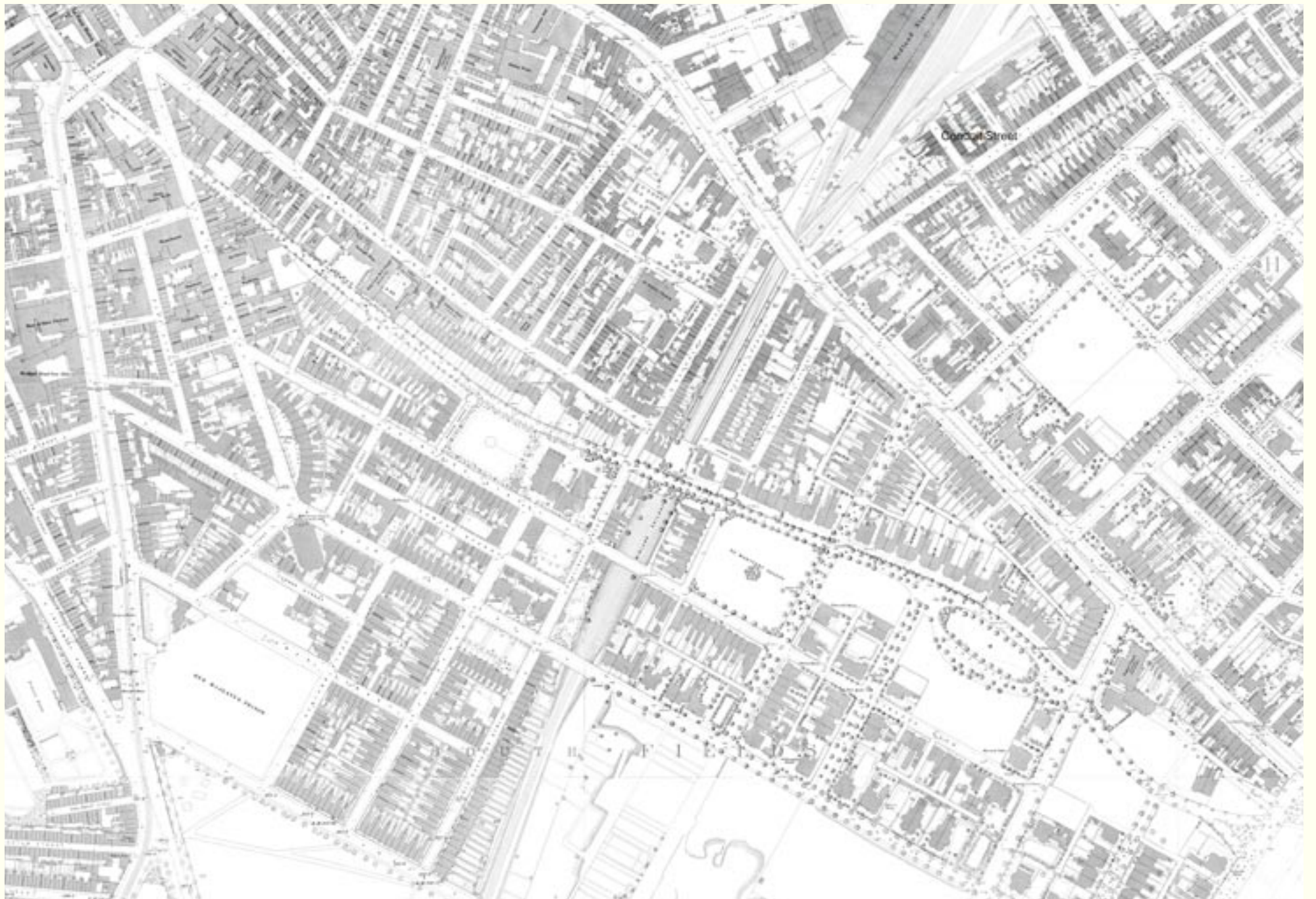
The period between 1860 and 1899 saw the development of most of the rest of the Conservation Area. The remaining plots in the Holy Trinity area were built on, as was most of the land east of De Montfort Street. Here,

large detached houses and substantial semi-detached villas made their appearance; for example, those at 44 Princess Road East, 3 Granville Road and 112-130 New Walk. St Stephen's Church, which was originally located on London Road, was demolished stone by stone when its site was sold to make way for the rebuilding of the railway station and the Wyvern Hotel; it was re-erected in 1893 on its present site on De Montfort Street. The traffic-free status of New Walk also remained because carriage access was only permitted off London Road via a series of 'backways' or between building frontages and the Walk itself on a separate 'carriage way'.⁶ This resulted in a dense pattern of development in the form of roads and coach-houses.

⁴*Victoria History of the Counties of England, Vol 4, and map page 261*, University of London, 1985

⁵Mitchell, T, *A Newtown Trail*, Leicester Urban Studies Centre, Leicester, 1982

⁶Boynton, Helen E, Map from the Deeds of 162 – 164 New Walk, page 54, *The History of New Walk*, Leicester, Leicester 2002



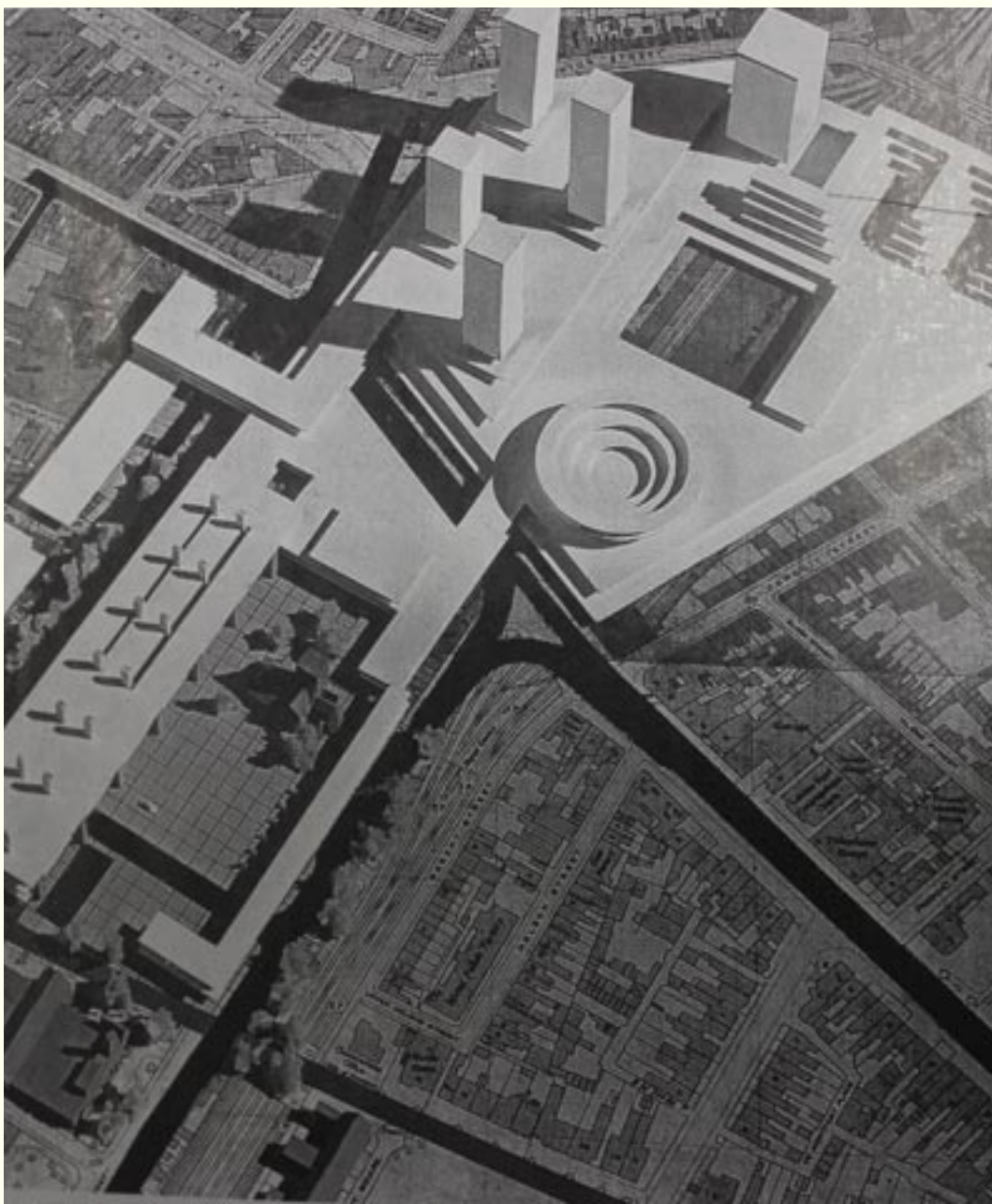
1886 OS Map



The 20th century saw substantial changes in the Conservation Area. However, building lines were generally respected, preserving the original layout. The Holy Trinity area suffered least, where the impact was primarily in the development of lock-up garages, parking courts and motor repair workshops. East of De Montfort Street the Conservation Area is also substantially intact as the 20th century buildings have been constructed primarily on previously undeveloped land.

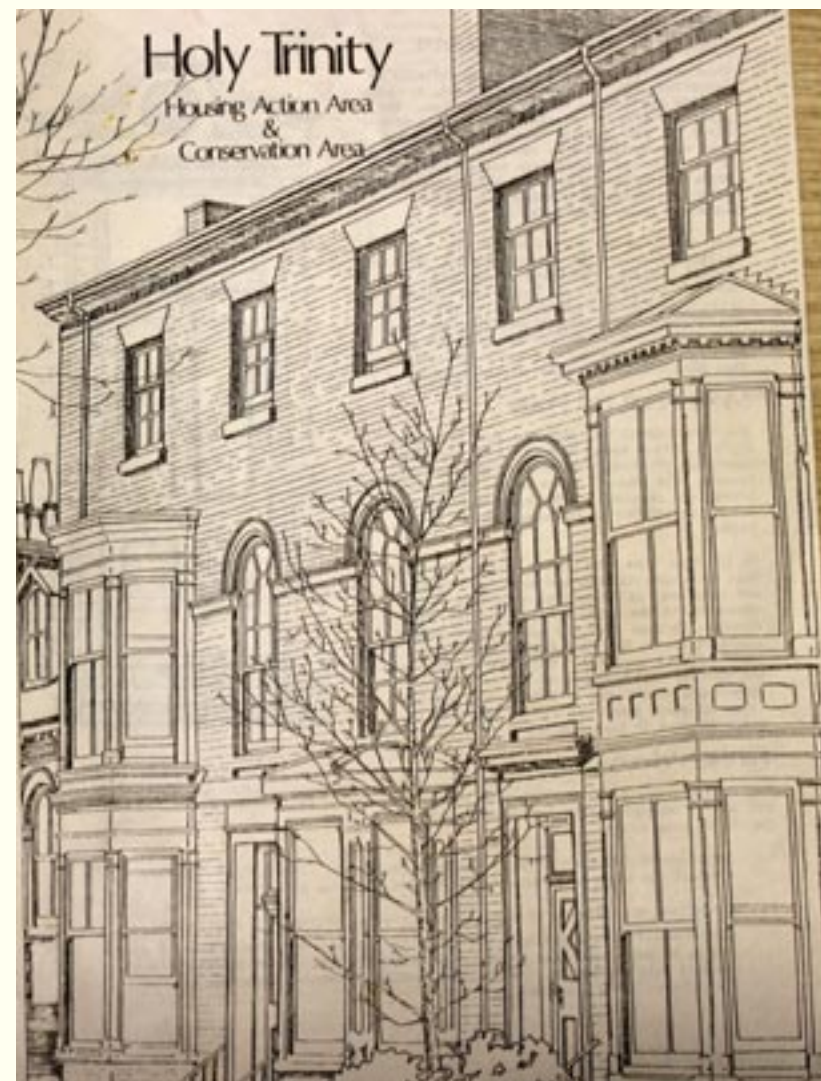
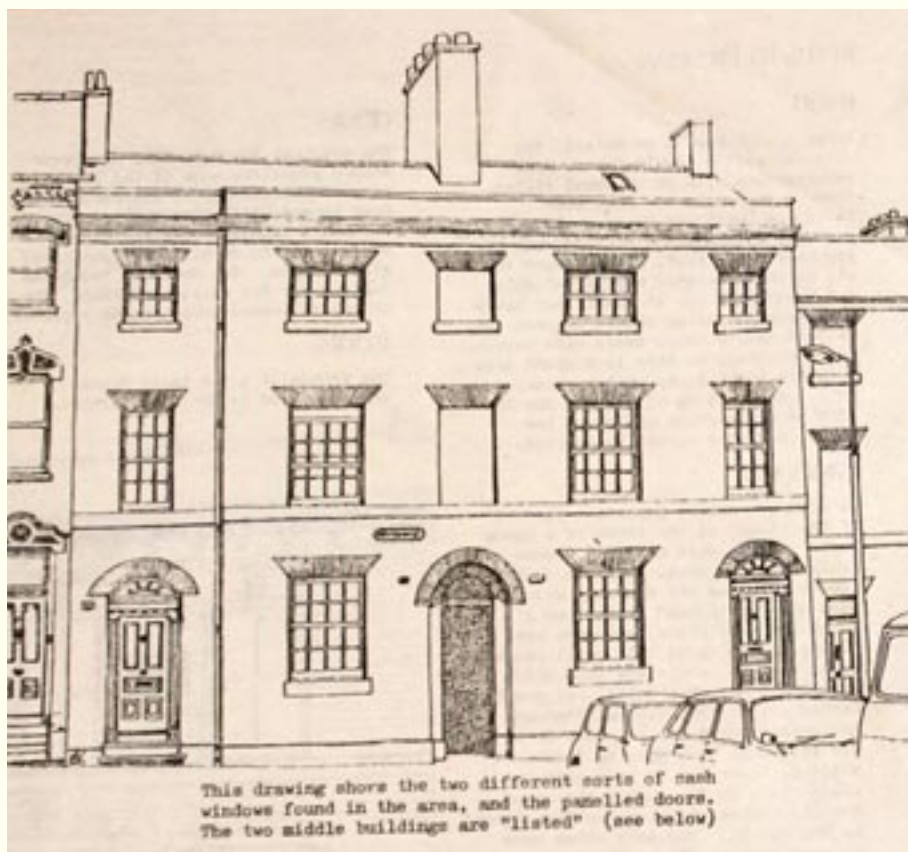
In the 1950s proposals were made for a central ring road and a major Civic Centre, both of which would have required the demolition of, amongst other buildings, The Crescent on King Street. Although the original proposals were abandoned, a number of buildings in the area deteriorated substantially because of planning blight and were subsequently demolished. Many were replaced by offices, such as 20-40 New Walk, Provincial House (37 New Walk) and the buildings at 20-34 and 9-43 Princess Road West.

New walk: 1905/ Museum site (above); 1950s /King Street junction (left)



Model of proposed comprehensive development across New Walk (left); demolition of the Provincial House site in 1969 (right)

However, the blighting of the area was the catalyst that led to the designation of New Walk as Leicester's first conservation area in 1969. The first improvements to New Walk were also undertaken at that time when it was relaid in red tarmac, with granite and concrete setts forming drainage channels and edging. Consequently, when a central ring road (Waterloo Way) was again proposed in the 1970s, the Council succeeded in having it built in a cutting to minimise further damage to the continuity and character of New Walk. Unfortunately Waterloo House, described by Pevsner as one of the finest buildings on New Walk, was demolished to make way for the cutting.



Extracts from Housing Action Area leaflet from 1980

In 1980, the Holy Trinity area was declared a Housing Action Area (HAA). This could have resulted in considerable alterations to the appearance of properties and the Council therefore also agreed to extend the boundaries of the New Walk Conservation Area and to declare an Article 4 Direction in order to preserve the special character and appearance of houses.

In 1994 the Council carried out further improvements to New Walk, including installing Parisian-style lamp columns and additional arches to increase lighting levels and some new front boundary walls and railings. During that year, English Heritage also included New Walk in the national Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest as a Grade II listed park.

Between 2002-2006, the City Council worked with a significant grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on the 'New Walk Restoration Scheme'. A programme to restore much of New Walk to its earlier appearance took place. Works included resurfacing to re-create a gravelled appearance, new lamp arches to replace missing ones, re-instatement of boundary walls and railings schemes, new specially designed seating, landscaping, public artworks and tree planting.



Redeveloped New Walk Centre site in July 2018

More recently, the most notable change within the Conservation Area has been the conversion of vacant office space within a number of buildings to residential use, alongside some other new uses – such as Soft Touch Arts moving into 50 New Walk in 2014. The largest undeveloped plot of land, at the junction of De Montfort Square and Princess Road East, saw the construction of a four storey block of student flats in 2017. The north-western end of New Walk has been dramatically altered by the demolition of New Walk Centre in 2015 and the construction of a pair of smaller buildings, with associated landscaping work, in 2017-18.

8. Prevailing and former uses

New Walk was a fashionable residential suburb in the 19th century. However, a mixed land use had already developed around King Street and Welford Road by the 1830s and during the 1840s, large warehouses, small factories, workshops, pubs and small houses replaced many of the original villas.

By the 20th century, the area around King Street had become primarily commercial and industrial, a function which it retained until the collapse of the hosiery and footwear trades in the 1970s and 1980s. The Crescent and Crescent Cottages have been converted to offices and several former warehouses and factories have been converted into flats or demolished to make way for new office and residential developments.

Most of the buildings along New Walk have been converted for office use, but residential properties are an increasingly common use. Within the last 20 years housing uses have begun to return to New Walk. Some are conversions from offices, such as at 77-89 Princess Road East and 140 New Walk, and others are new build, such as 4 University Road, 19-61 Princess Road West and 2 Salisbury Road. The proximity of the area to the city's universities has attracted student halls of residence, such as Kenneth Holmes Hall on Regent Road and 73 Princess Road East. The conversion of existing offices to student flats and the construction of new student residential blocks has become an increasingly dominant pattern of change and risks harming the mixed use character of the area. There is a modest quantity of social housing in the immediate area.

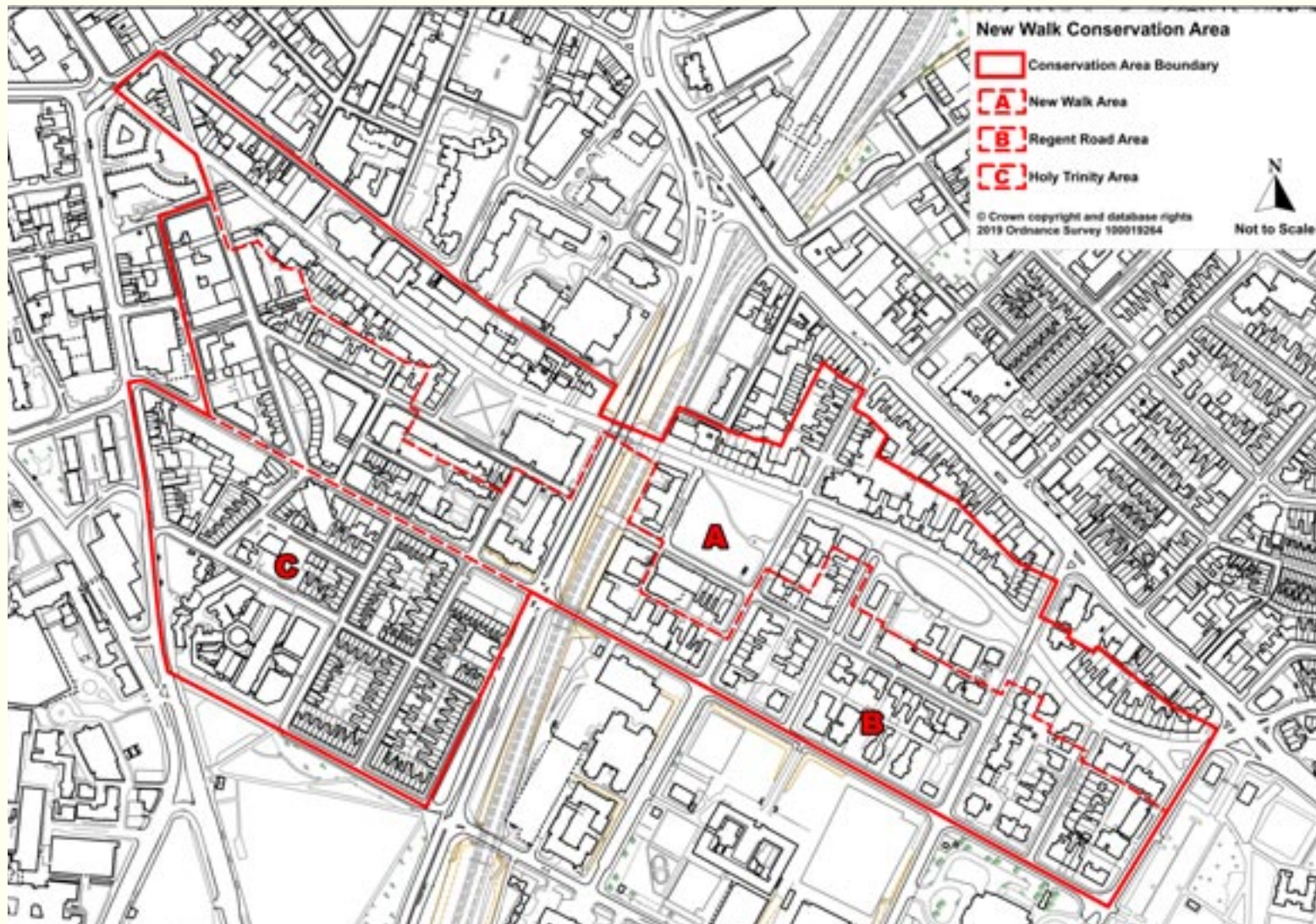
Towards the east end of the Conservation Area, office and professional uses predominate and the University of Leicester uses many of the large properties, although increasing numbers are being disposed of. There are also some hotels and guesthouses and an increasing number of residential conversions. Closer to the city centre, there are more leisure uses, including public houses and restaurants, such as the bar in the former 'Leicestershire Sunday School Union Centenary Memorial Hall' at 6b New Walk.

In the Holy Trinity area, most buildings remain in residential use, although many have been subdivided from larger units into flats. There are some other uses, such as two car repair garages and the shopping parade onto Welford Road, but the two dominant structures in alternative use are the prison and church.



'Images of former hospital on Regent Road from June 1977

9. Architectural character



Despite much modern redevelopment the original architectural character of the Conservation Area is still apparent. It derives primarily from the early 19th century Regency style and can be seen in most parts of the area. The massing and scale of buildings is generally similar, with only important public buildings, such as the Museum or churches, departing from that uniformity.

It is also significant that the Regency style was maintained in the area for over 40 years when elsewhere fashions were changing. However, east of De Montfort Street, there is greater stylistic variety as builders and owners adopted the new styles, such as the English Vernacular, which were making their appearance from the 1870s onwards.

Three broad character areas have been identified and are used to structure the architectural/townscape assessment that follows.

Area A: New Walk



This pair of delightful stuccoed Regency cottages at 23 and 25 New Walk were built in the 1820s and designed by William Flint (1801-1862).

Among the earliest surviving buildings are 58-60 and 62-64 New Walk, which are good examples of the Regency style. These date from around 1825 and have stucco-rendered fronts. The left-hand pair has a heavy Doric porch and the right-hand pair has twinned pilasters, a Greek key frieze on the parapet and Egyptian-style chimney pots. A pair of Regency cottages at 19-25 New Walk are less ornate but the appearance of the plain stuccoed façade is relieved by the use of small segmental bow windows, stone quoins and a bracketed eaves cornice.



62-64 New Walk, Greek Key decoration and Egyptian style chimney pots.



The unusual Chinese 'treslis' type fanlight above the central doorway at 72 New Walk imparts a touch of elegance to an otherwise plain facade designed in the Classical style.

Another early building is 72 New Walk, a detached house built in plain red brick but with classical rectangular fanlight in the Chinese style. Numbers 74-78 New Walk return to the stuccoed Regency style with simple doorcases and elegant balconies. The Museum below dates from 1836; it was one of the first non-residential buildings on the Walk but its massive portico with a big pediment and heavy Tuscan columns continues the classical theme.



The four giant Tuscan columns to the portico of the museum and art gallery. This central section was designed by Joseph Hansom, well-known for inventing the famous horse-drawn cab.



Museum Square, houses designed by William Flint circa 1850.

In 1840 the railway line was built and effectively formed a boundary between the developed north and the undeveloped south of the Conservation Area. However, the railway also gave access to cheaper building materials from other parts of the country and this allowed for the large scale building in brick which is characteristic of 19th century Leicester. The terrace at 98-104 New Walk is one of the earliest examples of brick building in the area, dating from before 1844. Built in a reddish-grey brick it nevertheless continues New Walk's stylistic conservatism in its use of pilasters, columns and delicate fanlights. The rather clumsy bay windows date from the 1870s following the fashion of the day.

By the 1850s and 1860s the Regency style had become less fashionable. However, large parts of New Walk continued to be built with neo-classical references. The use of stucco was generally abandoned and brick became the material of choice. This can be clearly seen in the unusual light grey bricks used at the terrace on the north-west side of Museum Square. Designed by Flint and Wickes to look like a single grand house with a 'palace front', it dates from 1852 and has a symmetrical composition with contrasting segmental and triangular pediments in stone, with a strong stone stringcourse to the first floor and bold stone quoins to the corners. Also from that date, a rather less refined group by William Flint can be seen at 7-17 New Walk. Another brick and stone 'palace front' overlooks De Montfort Square on the north-west side.



Part of the terrace at 98 - 103 New Walk, the enlarged second floor window to number 104 (just visible to the extreme to the extreme right of the picture) was the studio of John Flower the Victorian artist.



Originally designed as two warehouses sharing a central gateway, 11-13 Wellington Street was built around 1865.



The tall slender spire of St. Stephen's Church, one of two landmark spires that punctuate the skyline along New Walk.

Although the 1860s saw the beginning of what is now called the 'Battle of the Styles' there is little to show that the Conservation Area was much affected by it. The classical style remains evident in the warehouse building at 1-3 Wellington Street. However, an interesting building of that period can be found at 11-13 Wellington Street. Built as a warehouse, it is mix of Gothic and 'Venetian' styles with polychrome brickwork, ornamentation at stringcourse and eaves level, Venetian style windows and floral capitals. The last are worthy of close examination as each capital represents different flowers or seeds – snowdrops, ferns, lily of the valley, hops, acorns etc. The 'Flemish' façade of 19 Wellington Street is more subdued but, nevertheless, makes a valuable contribution to the architectural quality of the street.

Development south of De Montfort Street did not begin until after 1862 in the same plain, symmetrical, Italianate style as before. The fourteen semi-detached houses, at 112-130 New Walk, built in red brick by William Rushin in 1865 show this clearly. Deep overhanging eaves supported on brackets, stone quoins and stone window surrounds are used; the bay windows are the first examples of this architectural feature in New Walk. The Oval, which was originally Albert Grove, was created the following year. Nearby is St Stephen's Church, which is quite different. It is a Gothic building but the choice of this style was not deliberately intended as a move away from the Classical theme of New Walk. Rather it can be seen as an 'architectural accident', having been 'imported' in 1891 from its original site on London Road.

Beyond University Road a distinct style change takes place. Where the buildings nearer to the city centre are calmly and regularly Classical, here they are dramatic and bold in the newly fashionable English Vernacular style. Built in the 1880s by such architects as Stockdale Harrison (146-154 Upper New Walk), the eaves lines 'leap up and down, with gables and turrets topped by finials, spikes of lead or terracotta'. These three storey buildings are a free mix of timber framing, wooden balconies, bay windows, tile-hanging and decorated doorways, and, with 156-170 Upper New Walk (1888-91) form a convex curve around to 1 Granville Road. Nearby, an example of the style at the turn of the 20th century can be seen in the form of 57 New Walk, which was the former County Records Office.

Area B: Regent Road

Most of the houses to the south of New Walk, on Princess Road, West Walk, De Montfort Street and Regent Road were built between 1862 and 1875. They depart from the style of the Walk and begin to introduce more decoration. Some remain strictly Classical, such as 104, 108 and 128 Regent Road (1869), while others proclaim their owner's wealth and status, such as 44 Princess Road East which was built in 1870 for F J Morley, the owner of Morley's department store on Cheapside, by his brother. In a cream brick and "amidst the unassuming elegance of De Montfort Square, its riotous decoration stands out boldly and in somewhat doubtful taste. Rows of moulded bricks in panels either side of each window suggest wooden roller blinds, and the decoration round the door and windows and on the corner stones is very ornate". Each façade is crowned by a broken pediment.

One of the most distinctive groups of buildings in this area is The Crescent, built by William Firmadge as an elegant terrace similar to the curved terraces in Bath. It is set behind an area that was originally fenced off, and has a gently curved and well-proportioned façade of plain red brick with a slightly projecting central section featuring a pediment. Semi-circular fanlights above the doors and finely detailed wrought iron balconies and pedimented porch combine to create a building of considerable architectural distinction.



Number 44 Princess Road East was built in 1870. The extravagant embellishment of the stonework and use of special moulded cream brick was designed to impress.

Many of the surviving properties fronting Regent Road, such as here at number 108, have far more elaborate architectural detailing than buildings fronting onto New Walk.

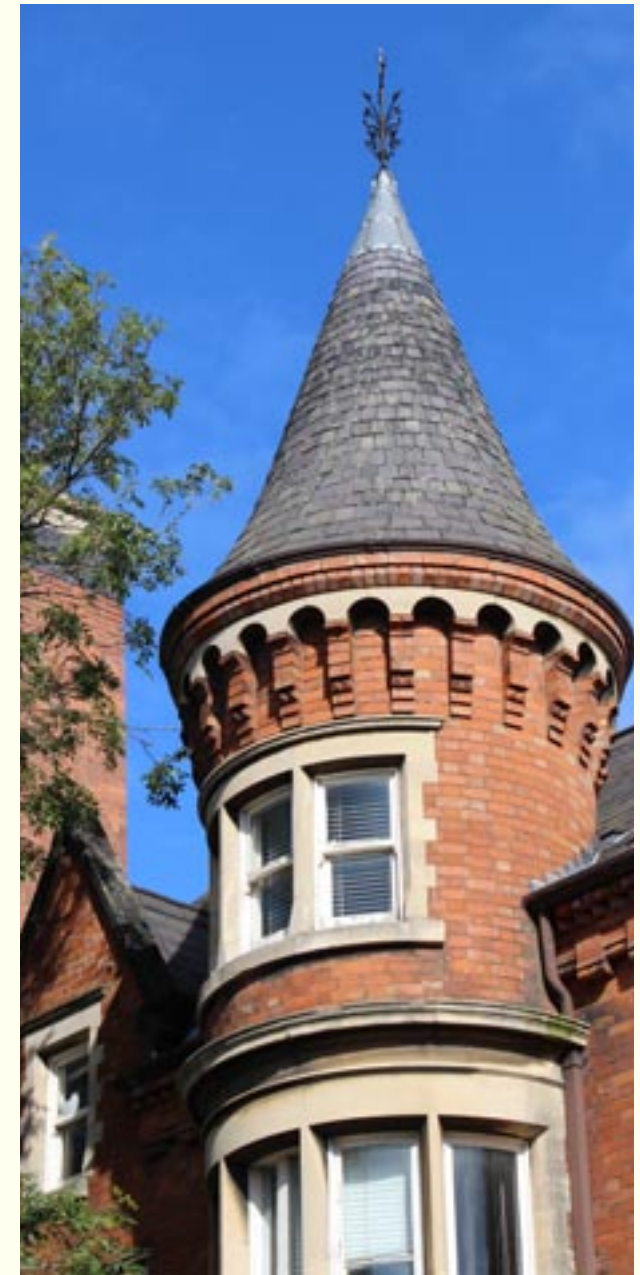
At 2-10 Salisbury Road (1870s) the Queen Anne style makes a modest appearance, complimenting the group opposite at 3-9. Elsewhere the late Victorian English Vernacular style is used with boldness and aplomb, reflecting the confidence of their new wealthy middle class owners. The large house at 113 Princess Road East is a particularly fine example by Goddard and Sons using brick, stone and timber, fish-scale tiles, decorative bargeboards, dormers and polygonal chimney stacks to great decorative effect. Its neighbour opposite at 21 University Road (1873) is perhaps not as grand but it too has interesting stonework and a circular tower with a conical slate roof.

The large warehouse at 35 King Street dates from 1845 and would have presented a great contrast with its surroundings, which, at that time, would have been a mixture of small workshops, houses and public houses. Not only would it have been larger and more impressive but its classical architectural style would also have been distinctive and fashionable.

There are several other good examples of English Vernacular architecture in the Conservation Area. Dating from the early twentieth century, the style can be found at 25 De Montfort Street, 57 New Walk and 1a and 1b Salisbury Road. This latter pair of buildings are typical of the style in their use of render, brick and mock half-timbering with leaded casement or sash windows, big bracketed gables and Swithland slate roofs - an unusual building material for New Walk. They contrast yet complement the late Victorian vernacular style on the opposite side of Upper New Walk (nos.146-154).



Late Victorian vernacular style at 1a Salisbury Road.



At 21 University Road this tower has a machiolated brick and stone cornice, resembling features found on medieval castles.

Area C: Holy Trinity

In Upper King Street, as in New Walk, the Greek theme of the early classical revival style is taken up in the cottages and houses at 71-81 King Street (1838) and 1-29 Upper King Street (1835), where more key patterns and anthemion (honeysuckle) motifs are used for decorative effect. Holy Trinity Church (1838) was built by Sidney Smirke in an early classical style that is in harmony with Upper King Street. However, it was totally remodelled in purple brick and stone, complete with spire and pavilion-roofed turrets in the High Gothic style, by S S Teulon in 1872.

In the 1840s several small brick-built terraces were built in the Newtown area. At 14-24 Newtown Street the houses are of three storeys with a simple stringcourse, flat window arches and moulded timber panels in the door jambs. Those at 44-54 Tower Street are much simpler but their two storeys are well-proportioned with flat window arches and a deep plinth. The group of houses at 2 Newtown Street - 73 Regent Road, possibly by William Flint, are built in an attractive white brick with round-headed windows and a bold pedimented gable facing Newtown Street. In contrast, Southfields Cottages at 77-95 Regent Road (built in 1841) are faced in stucco, copying the Greek Classical style of the larger houses on Upper King Street. Thought to have been built by the Midland Railway for middle management, the choice of the Regency classical style may have been a status symbol. Despite the classical style falling out of fashion in the 1850s and 1860s it prevailed in the Holy Trinity area.

In stark contrast are the massive brick walls around William Parson's prison building of 1825-28. These were built with a sham castle gatehouse in Derbyshire sandstone, which is reminiscent of the Welsh castles of Edward I. Its presence dominates this corner of the Conservation Area. The buttressed walls are one of the area's earliest brick structures as well as the largest.



H.M. Leicester Prison dates from 1825-8 and cost £59,574 to build. It was designed by William Parsons, a leading Leicester architect.



Fine stucco and cast iron: Southfield Cottages, 77-95 Regent Road still retain something of their former elegance and are enhanced by the colourful planting and foliage of their gardens.



More ornately detailed terraced houses on Lancaster Road.

There are two fine groups of two storey houses from this period at 1-15 Tower Street (1855) and 2-14 Lancaster Road (1857). Here there are stringcourses, highly decorated eaves cornices, coupled doorways and stone cornices supported on elaborate console brackets. The first floor window lintels are also decorated with a central console bracket. The former also has a pedimented gable and blank windows to the Newtown Street façade, features that pay an architectural compliment to the treatment of the 1840s houses at the corner 27 West Street and 56 Tower Street.

The late Regency references continue in the grandly designed three storey houses at 16-42 Lancaster Road (circa 1860) but here they are enhanced by stone window mouldings, stone quoins and paired doors with square pilasters and moulded entablatures. Two finely detailed canted bay windows with acanthus leaf capitals and rope-mouldings to the mullions can be seen at numbers 22-24 Lancaster Road. A pair of semi-detached houses at 24-26 West Street are also elegantly decorated with classical motifs in timber and stone against cream brickwork.

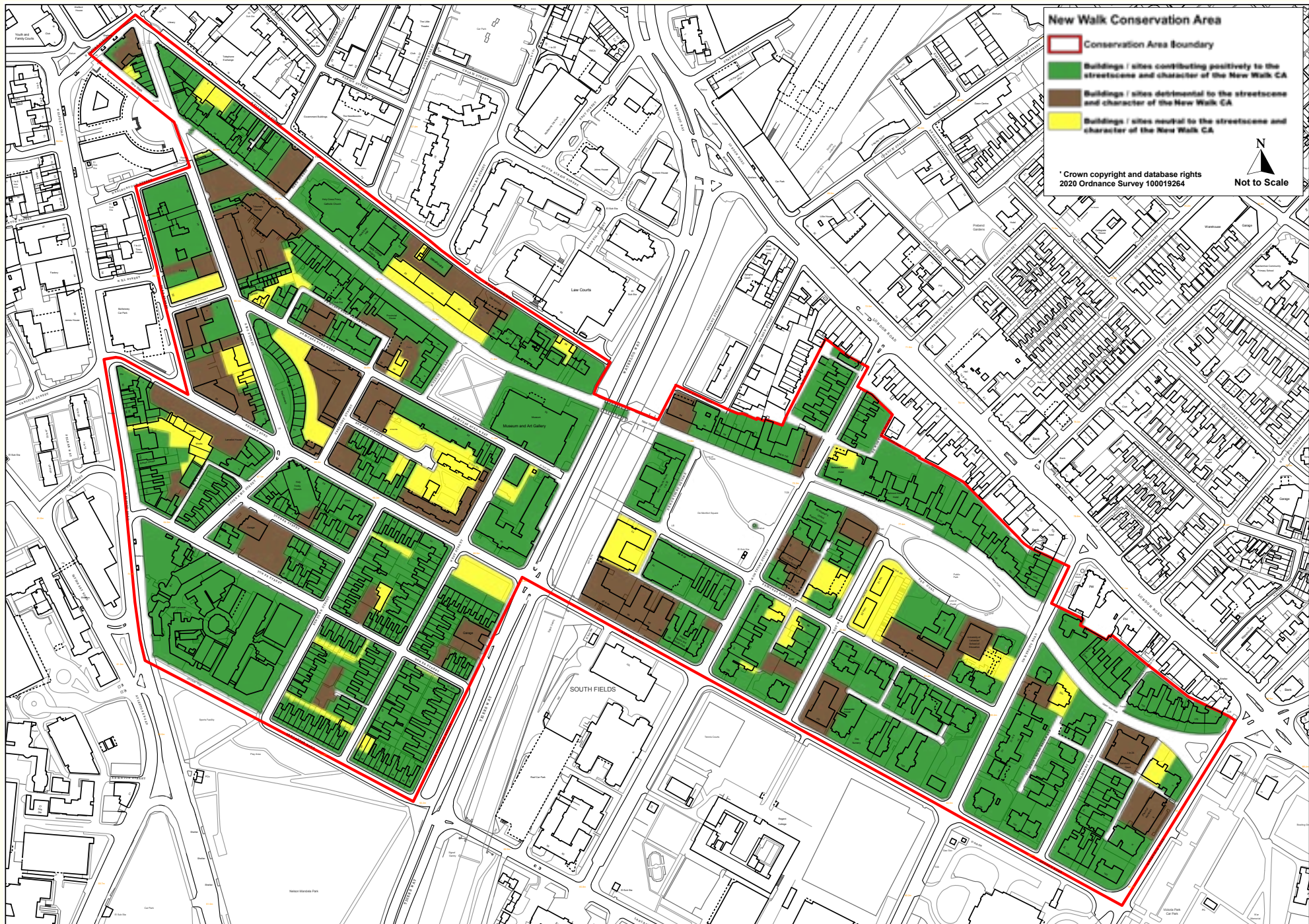
During the last quarter of the 19th century, more 'fashionable' styles began to appear, introducing new forms of decoration into the area. The northern end of West Street provides many examples of this in close proximity to one another. At 17-25 West Street decoration is quite lavishly applied to the Leicester red brick houses in the form of ornate lintels, scrolled brackets to the bay window roofs and a tiled eaves stringcourse with paired brackets and pierced banding. Close to the junction with Regent Road a double height bay with a roofed balcony complete with turned balusters and pierced spandrels at 5 West Street adds interest to the corner. The square and canted bays at 13-15 West Street would have been added to these otherwise Classical buildings, the former having much stained glass. From the 1890s 2-12 Turner Street have been designed with very steeply pitched slate roof and paired front doors beneath tiled canopies supported on big timber brackets. To the north, Lorne House at 61 Regent Road has Gothic Revival details such as hoodmoulds with ballflower end-stops and a triple light Gothic window between the end bays. It is also decorated with crossed rope patterned clay tiles to the stringcourse and bay, rope-moulding to the mullions, and a moulded brick date plaque (1883) on the Newtown Street elevation.



17-25 West Street



This fine wooden double-height balcony can be found at 5 West Street.



10. Townscape

The visual quality of the New Walk Conservation Area stems from diverse factors. New Walk itself rises up a hill and does not have a straight alignment. The observer's eye is therefore diverted at various points along the route. Its buildings are set back from the pathway creating an open feeling to the area which is emphasised by the three open spaces along its route. The form, massing and scale of the original buildings also tend to be similar, thus adding to the prevailing feeling of calm and orderliness. The trees are the most prominent feature of the New Walk landscape, while the open spaces give variety to the experience of travelling along the Walk.

Between Regent Road and New Walk the townscape is different with large modern offices and Victorian houses laid out on large plots in a wide grid pattern. Mature landscaping is still in evidence but traffic has more of an impact. In Holy Trinity the townscape is different again. The buildings are still laid out in a grid but here they are terraced and tight to the roadways. They are also on a hill that slopes down towards a park edged with trees. However, the whole area is dominated by the imposing presence of the Prison.

Views and vistas

From the northern end of the Walk the rising ground to the south can be clearly seen but there is a subtle change of direction at the Museum which 'closes' the onward view. At the Oval the slope gets slightly steeper and the pathway bends away to the right while, further on, the gradient at Upper New Walk increases significantly as the path curves back again. Each direction change reveals or conceals new views or vistas, while the buildings create a sense of enclosure without being oppressive.

Adding to the interest, each of the linked open spaces contribute their own character and quality to the townscape and it is the combination of openness and enclosure that prevents New Walk from being 'just a corridor'.⁷ At various points along the Walk there are views or glimpses of objects beyond the Conservation Area to add to the visual interest.

In the Regent Road area there are interesting views to the clock towers of the Fire Station and Freeman's Common. The Holy Trinity area is more contained. Some views are 'stopped' by other buildings - for example the view north east from West Street to the Classical façade of the Museum. The War Memorial at the top of Lancaster Road terminates the view to the south.



The Leicester Fire Station Clock Tower provides a fine vista from De Montfort Street.



The view north along West Street is 'closed' by the Classical facade of the museum and art gallery.

⁷Taylor, M, The Quality of Leicester, Leicester, 2016

Landmarks and corners

Certain buildings, by reason of elements such as their design or scale, appear as landmarks. The scale and mass of Holy Cross Church make it stand out, while the Museum's big Classical Tuscan portico creates a strong visual impact. The spires of the area's two churches are obvious features that can be seen for some distance and Crescent Cottages form a 'hinge' around which four roads turn. However, the single largest landmark is the Prison, the massive walls of which dominate the south side of the Conservation Area.

Activity

The Conservation Area has varying levels of activity across it due to its differential access arrangements and land uses. The traffic free route of New Walk itself has a high volume of pedestrian movements down its whole length across the day, with the University of Leicester, railway station, New Walk Museum and city centre being key drivers of footfall. The busiest section is the western part, where a cluster of commercial land uses generate additional activity onto the street. New Walk is a destination in its own right and is a popular space for walking and running. Elsewhere, Regent Road is more dominated by traffic movements, while the Holy Trinity area is quieter, with modest levels of pedestrian or vehicular movements.



A running group on New Walk



Larger volumes of pedestrians at the western end of New Walk

11. Building Materials

Facing materials

Stucco, a type of painted external plasterwork was very popular in the regency era and was originally styled to give the impression of stonework. It is not commonly found within Leicester, but this part of the city contains most of the buildings finished in this style. Notable examples can be found on King Street, Upper King Street and the former hospital building on Regent Road. Of particular note are the elegant details which can be found in the pilasters and door cases.

Nearly all the buildings in the area are either built from brick or employ it in some form of decoration. Brick was the most commonly available building material in the City until the development of modern materials from the 1960s. The majority of properties in the New Town are made from local red brick. The bricks are used to great effect for their decorative abilities which include decorative bonding, arching, fluting and corbelling. With the exception of the walls to the prison, very few expanses of plain brick can be found.

In addition to its use on buildings, bricks laid in decorative courses are commonly used on front garden walls throughout the area. As well as local red brick, some buildings in the area are built from a cream gault brick, which would have been used to denote status. The row of buildings on West Street are a good example of this.

Stone is not a common material found in Leicester, but is used within the area predominantly as a material for windows and surrounds as well as gate pier capping. Decorative stonework can be found on a large number of buildings, with the former factories on King Street being notable examples.

Other wall finishes are also used, such as rendering, slate tile-hanging and plain or fish-scale pattern red clay tiles, while modern infill or redevelopment sites have introduced red engineering bricks, harsher yellow bricks and red tiles.

Roofs

The majority of buildings in the area are roofed with Welsh Slate, reflecting the national prevalence of this material in the late 19th century and its qualities as a hard-wearing long-lasting roofing material. While often not prominent, this slate is an attractive natural material and provides a uniformity which adds to the character of the area. More rarely, such as at 1a and 1b Salisbury Road, locally quarried Swithland slate is used.

Tiles are not a common roofing material within the area, but are used on some buildings to decorative effect as a facing material and for porches, particularly effective on a number of shops on King Street. The Vernacular Revival buildings at Upper New Walk are enhanced further by the use of large gables with terracotta dragons and lead or terracotta finials. Original chimney stacks and yellow or red terracotta chimney pots of various designs can also be found and remain important to the townscape and character of the area. Of particular note are the polygonal chimney stacks at 113 Princess Road East and the Egyptian style chimney pots at 62-64 New Walk.



These impressive brick chimney stacks with moulded brick cornices can be found in Salisbury Road.



Red brick, fine terracotta moulded panels, clay roof tiles, stone and leadwork - all used to great effect on this simple hipped gable.

Other materials

Timber is the predominant material used for windows and doors throughout the area. Almost always painted and with varying elements of decorative carving and detail they form a strong element of the character of the buildings and wider area. Of particular note are the various designs of historic doors in the area, many bespoke to their host properties and in detailed panels. Timber windows and doors remain the standard, although some aluminium and plastic products have appeared, particularly in the Holy Trinity area. Most bay windows are made of timber and range from the very plain at Lancaster Road to the highly decorative at 69 Regent Road.

Timber is used on a small scale for decoration – such as the mock half-timbering at Upper New Walk, the ornate balcony at 5 West Street or the ornate porches at 103-105 Princess Road East. Glazed tiles have been used for additional decorative effect at eaves level, such as at 17-25 West Street and other motifs in moulded clay tiles, such as the ‘crossed ropework designs’ at 61 Regent Road, add to the visual diversity.

There are a number of decorative fanlights in the area, which are bespoke to their host properties. Of particular note is the fanlight at 28 Tower Street and at 81 King Street. Leaded and stained glass is not commonly found in the area; where it is found it mostly dates from the later decades of the 19th century when older buildings were modernised. Good examples can be found at 7 and 15 West Street.

Ironwork is used sparingly throughout the area and very few examples of historic iron railings can be found, the panels on 7-9 Wellington Street and the fine railings outside 81 King Street are notable examples of railings. Where properties had front boundary treatments, it is likely that many would have been in iron, but have since been lost and replaced at a later date with mild steel, which does not have the same depth of profile.

'There are few examples of ironwork decoration on buildings - the finial details on the Holy Trinity Church being a notable exception as well as the porch to the Crescent.'

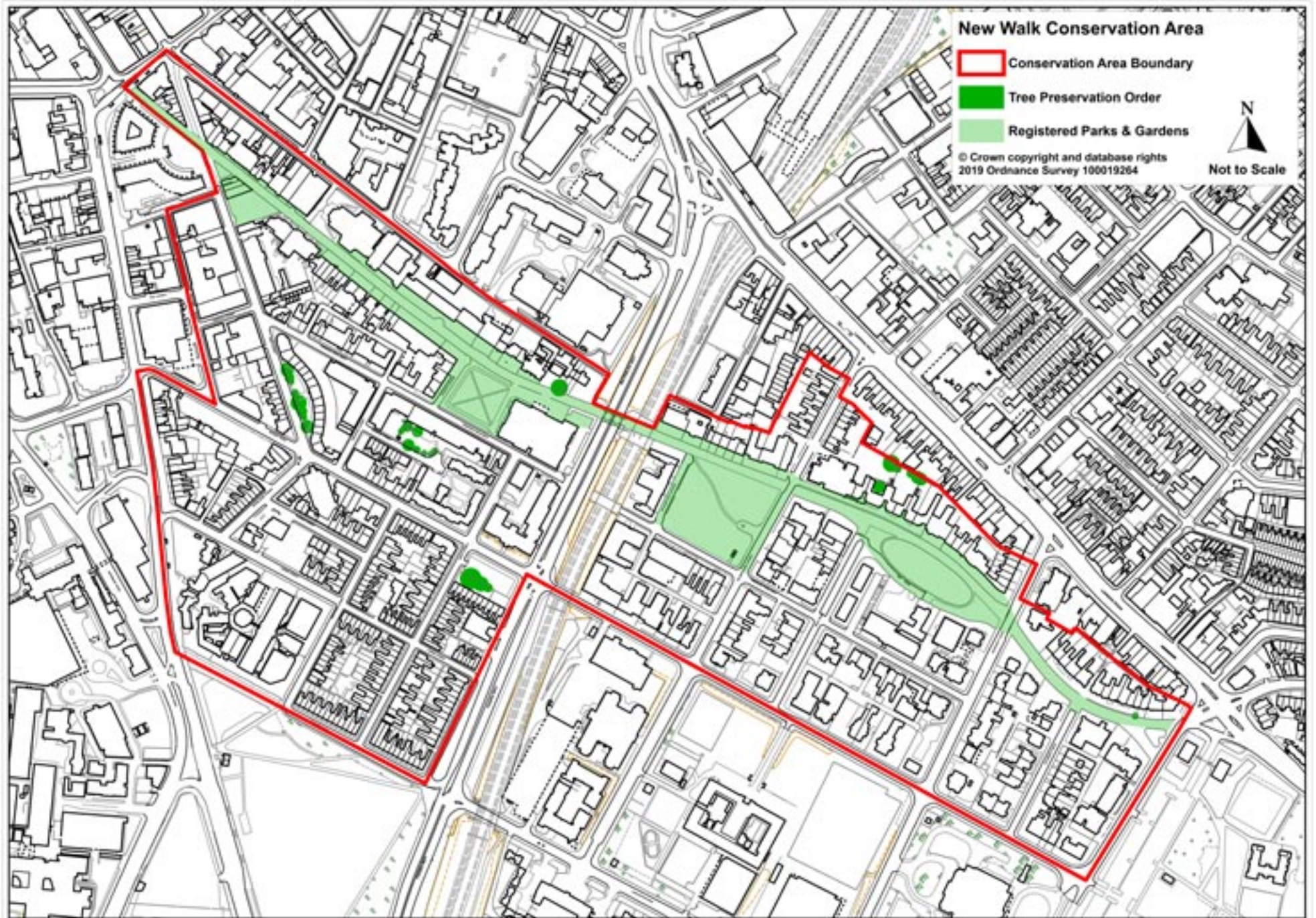
Metal is used as a glazing material in some of the properties from the early twentieth century. Particularly fine metal windows can be found on the industrial buildings on King Street, with both decorative casement on the first floor, and unusual metal sliding sash windows on the ground floor, the corner building has windows in a more Art Deco or Moderne Style.



Cream clay chimney pots, decorative eaves detail, and elaborately carved stonework above the windows on West Street.



Exquisite cast iron filigree-work to entrance porch of The Crescent.



12. Open spaces and trees

New Walk is a 1km long linear park close to the city centre. It is set in an avenue of trees and links a series of open spaces. The trees are spaced at fairly regular intervals and comprise various species – horse chestnut, plane, lime, maple, sycamore, birch, oak, cherry and hornbeam. Some have been heavily reduced, while others have been left to develop naturally. Over the years, replacement planting has been done on an ad hoc basis, rather than to an overall long-term planting plan. As a result a wide variety of tree species have been used. Some of these, such as white birch and purple plum, are inappropriate in terms of scale, growth pattern or lifespan.

The three open spaces along New Walk each have a different character. The Oval is small and intimate with a mix of pine, yew, beech, lime, birch, false acacia and a dawn redwood. Museum Square is quiet with densely planted shady borders dominated by a mature horse chestnut tree in the middle of the square. The largest space is De Montfort Square. Here, plane, beech and oak trees line the north and east boundaries.

Many trees are located on privately-owned land and make valuable contributions to the townscape. The row of horse chestnuts in front of The Crescent on King Street is a particularly fine example. Elsewhere the yew at 101 Princess Road East and the mature limes and horse chestnuts in the garden of number 113 are of townscape significance, as are the limes on the corner of Regent Road/Granville Road.

The many street trees are also important in the Conservation Area and can be of high amenity value. The planes in the central parking area of West Walk are good examples. Elsewhere, the limes along University Road and Regent Road help to soften the environment. The Holy Trinity area is generally too intensively developed to permit much tree planting; the exception being in the car park in front of 77-95 Regent Road where a mature beech tree stands out amongst a variety of other trees and shrubs. Where there are narrow front yards some garden planting remains, such as on West Street and the top of Upper King Street, but generally front gardens have been paved over. However, the views west down the hill to Nelson Mandela Park help to compensate for the lack of planting, with the park containing a large number of mature trees.

The tree cover and quality of the open spaces along New Walk was assessed as part of the New Walk Restoration Scheme. New or replacement tree planting was carried out during the 2003/04 planting season using two species - Silver Pendant Limes (*Tilia petiolaris*) east of Waterloo Way and London Planes (*Platanus acerifolia*) to the west. De Montfort Square was improved and works included the creation of a formal path across it, new trees were planted on the south side of the square with low planting along the western boundary. The view to the statue of Robert Hall was opened up and the area around the statue improved with new paving, planting and 'public art' seats. Other, smaller open spaces, such as at Granville Road and the approaches to The Oval, were replanted at this time.



The open space at The Oval (above), rows of trees on New Walk (below)

13. Lighting and street furniture

Gas lamps were first introduced onto New Walk in 1832 but were replaced in 1895 and 1900 with the distinctive 'Paris' design that is still a feature of the Walk. The lamps are complemented by lamp posts with overthrows at various points, some of which are replicas to replace those removed in the past. In the wider Conservation Area, lamp columns are generally more utilitarian, although those on Lower Hastings Street are an intermediate mix – with lamps supported on swan-neck arms but with more standard steel concrete lampposts.

Public seating and litterbins in bespoke designs were installed along New Walk, together with new railings at the University Road crossing as part of the New Walk Restoration Scheme. The juxtaposition of these with the Council's standard galvanised steel pedestrian barriers is unfortunate. Traffic signals and signs tend to be confined to Regent Road and the points where New Walk crosses other highways. Statutory 'No Cycling' signs of the minimum size permitted are installed along New Walk, in addition to specially designed information plaques and the conservation area roundels.

14. The Extent of Intrusion or Damage (Negative Factors)

Buildings and materials

The greatest erosion of character in the Conservation Area has been the replacement of original features such as windows and doors. An Article 4 Direction covering all residential properties in the Holy Trinity area was made in 1980 when the area was declared a Housing Action Area (HAA). Its specific purpose was to protect important architectural details such as sash windows and panelled doors.

Despite the removal of permitted development rights, many top-hung mock sash windows were installed. A small number of plastic (uPVC) windows and doors have also been installed. The fine detail of the originals, such as the curved transom of the top sashes at 16 West Street, has thus been lost.

The painting of brickwork, such as at 69-73 Regent Road, while not common, is also detrimental to the visual character because it hides the texture and colour of facades. However, the removal of paint, where it is done aggressively or badly - as at 54 Regent Road - can render buildings susceptible to longer term physical deterioration.

The unauthorised installation of satellite dishes is a notable problem in the Holy Trinity area, particularly where they have been located in visually intrusive positions on the front elevations of properties.



One of a series of decorative plaques installed along the length of New Walk to help enforce the No Cycling policy.



One of the distinctive 'throw-over' style lamps along New Walk.

Surface level car parks

There are few open sites in the Conservation Area dominated by parking, but those that do exist cause considerable damage to the area's character and appearance. Loss of buildings in such sensitive urban environments can be particularly damaging to the integrity and quality of the townscape.

The former Fenwick's car park has frontages to both New Walk and King Street. The site has been undeveloped since the Second World War when a bomb destroyed the original building. The gap thus created in both streets has a very negative effect on the townscape quality of this part of the Conservation Area. The redevelopment of nearby sites has improved the appearance of the immediate area, leaving the car park as the only remaining weak point in the building lines.

The prison car park on Tower Street is also an unsightly intrusion. The uniformly terraced streets of the Holy Trinity area are the foundations of its character. The gap in the townscape that is created by the car park detracts considerably from this. Smaller, but still disruptive to the pattern of street frontage are the un-landscaped car parks on Duke Street and Salisbury Road. The car park at the the west end of Regent Road is less visually harmful due to the strong line of trees along its street perimeter.

More generally, the loss of front boundary walls to provide forecourt parking is harmful. Similarly, the removal of rear boundary walls along 'backways' to provide access and car parking has also harmed the historic character of spaces.

Waterloo Way

The dual carriageway of Waterloo Way represents 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 quality of the pedestrian environment at the junctions with Regent Road and Lancaster Road is relatively poor and dominated by traffic, while the bridge that carries New Walk over the road is in need of additional work on the landscaping. Although there is a considerable amount of planting along the road to help screen it, the areas at the eastern end of Wellington Street are lacking in this regard.



Car park on Tower Street (above); Waterloo Way south of New Walk (below)

Boundaries

The majority of original garden walls have been demolished, although many were rebuilt during the HAA improvement programme. However, the modern railings are generally too thin and do not reflect the 'robustness' or fine detailing of the originals. A comparison of the replacement and original gateposts at 14-16 West Street demonstrates this point. Elsewhere some front boundary walls have been lost altogether or replaced with inappropriate designs.

Uses

The area is relatively densely populated, as many of the properties are in use as flats. One of the implications of additional residential units is more expansive provision of bins. As there are few buildings with alleyways leading to rear yards the bins are often stored on the street. Not only is this unsightly it also narrows the footpaths. The loss of planting in front gardens at multi-occupied properties is also unfortunate as these tend to be poorly maintained and subject to occasional dumping. A residents' parking scheme operates in the area and this has eliminated the intrusive effects of commuter on-street parking.

Infill development

Much of the redevelopment that took place during the later 20th century was not contextually responsive and has left buildings and spaces that detract from the character of the area. The large office buildings along Regent Road are a notable example of this. Some of the later development, such as Salisbury Court, represents a poor mixture of badly proportioned building features and unconvincing pastiche design.



Satellite dishes (above); Loss of front boundary walls (below)



15. Neutral Areas

There are some areas of more modern development that have a broadly neutral impact on the historic form of the Conservation Area, such as the recent development of student flats at the junction of Princess Road East and De Montfort Square.

16. Capacity for Change

As an area of the town that was 'built out' well over 100 years ago, with few obvious sites with potential for substantial new development, the capacity for change within New Walk is relatively modest. The designation of a conservation area does not however provide a block on any development within its boundaries. The area has changed considerably since it was first built and the renovation and reuse of properties by new owners and businesses is to be welcomed as a means for ensuring the continued vitality of New Walk as a mixed use area. Change must not however come at the expense of degrading the character and scale that makes the area special, and alterations to properties need to be sympathetic to their context. The car park sites in section 13 may come forward for development and guidance is provided in the New Walk Conservation Area Management Plan.

17. Additional planning controls

Further details on the following can be found in the New Walk Conservation Area Management Plan.

- The Council adopted an Article 4 Direction for the Holy Trinity part of the Conservation Area in 1980. This removed permitted development rights so that planning permission is required for certain works to the external aspects of properties. A revised Article 4 Direction covering the whole Conservation Area was made in June 2020.
- The Council adopted an Area of Special Advertisement Control for New Walk in 1979. This provides additional restrictions on the size of permitted advertisements.

18. Conservation area boundary

The Council is required to review the boundaries of conservation areas and to consider changing them as appropriate. The boundaries of the New Walk Conservation Area have been considered and the Council concluded that it was not expedient to alter them at this time.

19. Local Consultation

An earlier draft of this Character Appraisal document was published for public consultation from 25 July 2019 to 6 September 2019. This final version has been produced with the benefit of the comments received during that consultation.

20. Management Proposals

A separate Management Plan for the New Walk Conservation Area is available to view at: www.leicester.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation/

21. Contacts

For further information on this, or other, conservation areas you can contact the Council's Building Conservation Officers by phone, letter or e-mail at the following addresses:

Conservation Team
Planning Department
City Hall
115 Charles Street
Leicester LE1 1FZ

T: 0116 454 1000

E: planning@leicester.gov.uk

Information on all conservation areas is available on the Council's website: www.leicester.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation/

Gossary of Architectural Terms

bargeboard	projecting board placed against the outside incline of the roof of a building, often used decoratively	moulding	a continuous groove or projection used decoratively to throw shadow on, or water away from, a wall
bracket	a small piece of stone or other material supporting a weight e.g. eaves bracket [console or scroll bracket – in the form of a scroll]	mullion	the vertical post between the panes of a window
canted	having splayed sides	pediment	a low pitched gable shape over a door or window
capital	the head or crowning feature of a column	plinth	plain projecting surface at the base of a wall
cornice	horizontal projecting section at the top of a building or wall	palace front	main elevation of a terrace of houses where the central part projects forward slightly, usually with a decorated pediment above
doorcase	decorative timber or stone framing a doorway	pilaster	a shallow rectangular column which is attached to and projects slightly from a wall
Doric	one of the 'orders' of ancient Greek architecture	polychrome	decoration created by the use of coloured bricks or stone quoin dressed stones laid on the external corners of buildings, usually in alternating large and small blocks
entablature	the entire horizontal mass that is carried immediately above columns and pilasters	spandrel	the triangular space that is created between a horizontal line drawn from the apex of an arch and a vertical line drawn from the point from which the arch springs
fanlight	a window over a door	stringcourse	a continuous decorative horizontal band projecting from a wall and usually moulded
finial	a formal ornament at the apex of a gable or spire	stucco	a cement-type render used for facing external walls
fishscale	a pattern created by overlapping the semi-circular edges of decorative tiles or slates	tile-hanging	a covering of overlapping rows of tiles on a vertical surface
Flemish	a style which incorporates Dutch or north German architectural details such as stepped or shaped gables etc	Tuscan	used to describe a column with a plain base and shaft and a simple cushion-like capital
Greek key	geometrical pattern of horizontal and vertical lines joining at right angles	Venetian window	a window comprised of three parts – a central window with a semi-circular arch with pilasters on each side and two side windows with flat arches
mock half-timbering	timber applied externally to suggest a timber framed building		
hoodmould	a projecting moulding over a door or window designed to throw rain off the face of the building		