

# CHURCH GATE CONSERVATION AREA Management Plan

September 2017





# CHURCH GATE CONSERVATION AREA

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## Management Plan





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# I.0 Introduction



*Church Gate looking south towards the City Centre.*

The aim of this document is to provide guidance for changes within the Church Gate Conservation Area to allow the area to thrive while preserving and enhancing its special character.

Development can bring welcome investment into a conservation area and change can keep an area vibrant and viable. However, inappropriate development can harm the character of individual buildings and erode the very features that give the conservation area its special character.

It is the intention that this management plan will be a guide for property owners, developers, council officers, elected members and interested members of the public in how to care for the properties and public realm and to highlight works that will be likely to be granted planning and listed building consent where needed.

The character of the conservation area has been defined in the 'Church Gate Conservation Area Character Appraisal', which is available to download at [www.leicester.gov.uk](http://www.leicester.gov.uk). This management plan should be read in conjunction with the appraisal.



## 2.0 Policy Context

This document supplements and expands on national and local planning policy. Its purpose is to help building owners, their agents and architects along with planning professionals interpret and apply statutory requirements, national and local planning policy in the Church Gate Conservation Area.

### 2.1 Statutory Designation

A conservation area is designated by the local planning authority, but has national protection. It is designated because it is an area where the character or appearance is considered worthy of preservation or enhancement.

All planning applications in a conservation area are considered on the basis of whether the proposal preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area. Alongside the greater weight given to character and appearance in planning applications, local authorities should publish proposals for management of the area, outlining plans which preserve or enhance the area.

### 2.2 National policy

The overall aims and objectives of national policy are to promote sustainable development. National policy recognises that the historic environment, including conservation areas, has a key part to play in creating sustainable places. National policy places greater weight on enhancement, and asks local authorities to look for opportunities for development to enhance conservation areas. It also requires appropriate justification to be provided where works would affect the character or appearance of the area.

### 2.3 Local policy

Local policy makes a commitment to seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment including the character and setting of designated and other heritage assets. It supports the sensitive reuse of high quality historic buildings and spaces, promotes the integration of heritage assets and new development to create attractive spaces and places, encourages contemporary design rather than pastiche replicas, and the protection and where appropriate, enhancement of historic public realm. Particular importance is given to the integration of the historic environment with new development through encouraging heritage-led regeneration. For a full break down of relevant statutory protection, national and local planning policies please refer to appendix A.



## 3.0 Vision

Our vision is for the Church Gate Conservation Area to retain its special and unique character and to provide an interesting commercial and residential environment, which is both commercially successful and a beautiful place to live, work and visit.

Opportunities will be sought to restore lost building features and allow buildings to fulfil their potential as viable businesses and residential accommodation.

New development should be designed to respect the historic character of the street with reference to the scale, design and materials of the area.

Opportunities will be sought to reduce the impact of vehicular traffic on the area and to ensure a pleasant and safe pedestrian environment at all times of the day.

There are five key areas of influence that this Management Plan will cover and provide guidance for; these are as follows:

<b>Planning Applications</b>	Guidance on how to process planning applications, which are submitted and impact on the character of the area
<b>Compliance and Monitoring</b>	Guidance on taking action where work has taken place that harms the character of the area, without the necessary planning consent
<b>Enhancement Opportunities</b>	General guidance on what can be done to enhance existing buildings and structures to improve the character of the area
<b>Public Realm</b>	Guidance on how the public realm and highway land can be enhanced to improve the character of the area
<b>Specific Site Development Guidance</b>	Development guidance for specific sites within the area to ensure their development is consistent with the character of the area.

## 4.0 General Principles

The Church Gate Conservation Area Character Appraisal contains a character map which sets out whether buildings are listed, have a positive, neutral or negative impact on the character and appearance of the area. It also identifies the open and undeveloped land and the impact it has on the area.

### 4.1 Buildings

As the Conservation Area is a part of the city centre it is developed at high density and most of the land is built up. The majority of buildings contribute towards its special character. Many of the buildings have stood for over 100 years and have had many uses and alterations in this time. These alterations may have harmed or improved their character; regard should be given to the impact of any future alterations and efforts made to ensure there is no further loss of character and opportunities are taken to restore lost character.

### 4.2 Listed Buildings

Listed Buildings are designated nationally for their special importance and have the highest level of protection within the area. Listed building consent will be required from the City Council for any works which affect their special character; this applies to both internal and external works. As each listed building is unique it is not possible to give generic guidance, however consent is only likely to be granted for works which respect the special character of the buildings in terms of materials, design, scale, historic features and room layout.



*The Great Meeting House is a grade II listed building.*

Planning permission will be required for works to the exterior of a listed building where they would materially affect the external appearance of the building.

The impact on the setting of a listed building is also a key consideration for works that need planning permission close to, but not adjoining a listed building – this can include impact on long views where the view is part of the building's special character.

### 4.3 Buildings with a Positive impact on the Character of the Conservation Area

Along with the listed buildings, these buildings, and their relationship to others form part of the special character of the conservation area and are worthy of preservation.

This assessment is based both on the overall appearance of the building as well as its potential to be enhanced. Positive buildings may have negative elements such as insensitive windows or excessive signage, but these elements do not override the importance of the building or its overall positive impact on the character of the area.



*29 Church Gate makes a positive contribution to the character of the area and could be further enhanced through sensitive decorations*

There is a presumption in favour of retaining these buildings; demolition should only be permitted in exceptional circumstance or where the wider public benefits of the proposal can clearly be demonstrated to outweigh their loss.

The value of these buildings should be considered both on their individual merits and on how they relate to the wider street scene they form; no building should be considered in isolation of its impact on the wider Conservation Area.

Any alterations, which would affect the character or appearance of these buildings and the wider area will only be acceptable where the character and appearance of both the building and conservation area is either preserved or enhanced.

#### **4.4 Buildings with a Neutral impact on the character of the Conservation Area**

These are buildings which do not form part of the special character or appearance of the area, but also do not detract from its character. The buildings may be interesting in their own right, just not in keeping with the predominant character and appearance of the Conservation Area or may have lower design and construction standards than the positive buildings within the area. Critically, they do not harm the character of the area and may be 'lost' within a street scene.

There is no presumption in favour of retaining these buildings but any replacement development must respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and new developments should be designed in a way that respects and enhance the character of the area.

The fact that a building has a neutral impact is not a valid justification to allow inappropriate development that would harm the character and appearance of the wider conservation area.



*10 Church Gate (centre) is not historic but blends in the Streetscene. The entrance to the shopping centre (left) does not fit in with the surrounding street scene.*

#### **4.5 Buildings with a Negative impact on the character of the conservation area**

A small number of buildings within the area have been identified as having a negative impact on its character and appearance. These are buildings which are out of scale or character with the surrounding buildings to the point that they harm the street scene and the setting of the surrounding buildings.

Redevelopment of these sites in a way which would enhance the character of the area is welcomed; however the fact that the existing building harms the character and appearance of the area is not justification to allow development that does not respond to its context. Opportunities should be sought to ensure any new development enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area.

#### 4.6 Open Spaces

Open and green spaces have a significant impact on the character of the area. Where they are well designed and managed well they can provide a welcome spaces for greenery, biodiversity and views. Poor quality open spaces can detract from the appearance of the area through lack of maintenance or be paved in unsympathetic materials.

Open spaces may be specifically designed or may have been created by the demolition of buildings or highway works. Some open spaces may have a defined use such as car parks, parks and gardens, while others may be temporary gap sites.

Further guidance on specific sites, which could be suitable for redevelopment, is contained later in the document.

#### 4.7 Open Spaces with a Positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area

Open spaces identified as positive in the character appraisal have been designated for their valued openness as much as the quality of the landscaping. Such positive spaces include well-managed areas as well as areas which have the potential to be enhanced; the existing surface treatment may not be sympathetic, but the openness of the space should be retained.

These areas should be maintained for the qualities that give them their unique characteristics and are generally not suitable for infill development. Works should be resisted that would harm this character or replace it with a lower quality environment.

#### 4.8 Open Spaces with a Neutral impact on the character of the Conservation Area

Open spaces identified as having a neutral impact have the potential to be managed in a way that can improve their overall appearance as an open space, but may also be suitable for sensitive redevelopment where it can be demonstrated that overall character of the conservation area will be enhanced.

#### 4.9 Open Spaces with a Negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area

Negative spaces are those which are open, but this openness harms the character of the area and as such, these sites would be suitable for sensitive redevelopment. It is not likely these spaces could be improved to become high quality open spaces that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area by landscaping. However improved landscaping could enhance their appearance in the short term.



*The space outside 66 Church Gate allows views of the building and the timber warehouse beyond. It's openness is important and could be enhanced further.*



*The openness of the car park on the corner of East Bond Street and Butt Close Lane harms the character of the area.*



## 5.0 Planning Applications

### Planning applications for works within the area

Planning permission is needed for a number of works within the area including:

- Alterations to existing buildings including replacing windows and doors
- Change of use of buildings to some other uses
- New buildings and hard landscaping
- Control of advertisements

#### 5.1 Alterations to buildings

The majority of planning applications submitted within the Conservation Area relate to alterations. These applications should be assessed both on the impact of the proposed works on the character of the building and on the impact on the wider conservation area.

The character of buildings within the area is composed of a number of elements which may be present in all or some of the buildings. Below is a list of common treatments of these elements and guidance on how they should be addressed to help preserve or enhance the character of the properties. As all properties are unique, guidance will not always apply.

In cases where special character has been lost, this can also guide sensitive replacement of lost character.

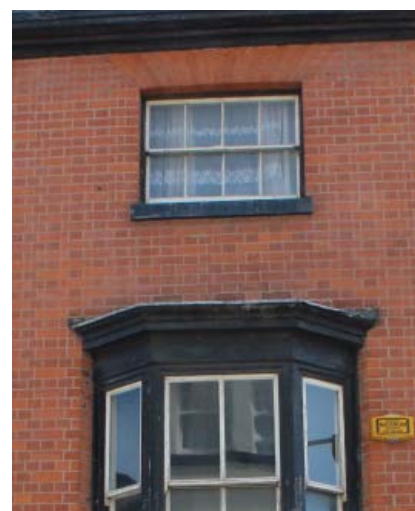
#### 5.2 Walls

Brick walls are a key characteristic of the area and it is desirable for these to remain as exposed brick. Even where buildings may have a neutral impact on the character of the area, exposed brickwork is generally preferable to cladding or painting.

Where works involve the insertion of new brickwork every effort should be made to match new bricks to the appropriate historic brick to the property in terms of size, shape, finish and bonding as well as the appropriate mortar.

Cleaning should be done sensitively and to protect the surface of the bricks from damage abrasive or chemical methods should be resisted. Particular care should be taken with older properties that may have hand-made bricks. These are typically softer and more porous than machine-made ones.

Repointing of historic brickwork should be done with an appropriate lime-based mortar which allows moisture penetration and is not harder than the surface of the bricks. Cementitious mortars should be avoided with historic brickwork.



*Exposed brickwork at 33 Church Gate forms part of the character of the area. Decorative bonding and a rubbed brick voussoirs are visible.*

### 5.3 Roofs

Where slate roofs survive and have a positive impact on the character of the building, they should be retained and repaired. If the slates are beyond repair, they should be replaced on a like-for-like basis in respect of material, size, depth of profile and colour.

The use of 'mock' or synthetic slates should be resisted as it is currently not possible to replicate the variation in colour, finish and weathering provided by natural materials. In addition, it is not a historically appropriate material to the area.

In buildings where the roof is hidden from view it is not as important to secure a traditional roofing material.



*The prominent roof of 73 Church Gate, including slates and chimneys adds greatly to the character of the conservation area.*

### 5.4 Roof extensions

Roof extensions should only be allowed where they would not harm the character of the host property. Where a property has a prominent slate roof, integral to the character of the building, this should be retained and it may not be possible to extend upwards.

### 5.5 Chimneys and Pots

Chimney stacks and pots which make a positive contribution to the character of the building and conservation area should be retained and repaired.

Removal of chimneys which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be resisted.

### 5.6 Windows

Existing windows should be retained where they are historic or have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the building and area. Sensitive repair will be supported.

In all cases uPVC is an inappropriate material for windows in buildings which form part of the character of the conservation area and will be resisted.

Where windows, which make a positive contribution are beyond a reasonable state of repair replacement windows will only be acceptable where the following criteria are followed:



*Unusual 'Gothick' style windows in the former Great Meeting School*

### Material

Timber will be the only acceptable material to replace existing timber-framed windows.

### Double glazing

Where windows are single-glazed – double glazing will only be permitted where the existing window proportions and decorative details can be replicated.

In listed buildings, or where windows contained stained or leaded glass, double glazing is unlikely to be acceptable.

### Opening method

The opening method of a window should remain appropriate to the building. Sliding sashes will need to be replicated in kind.

Top-hung mock-sashes are not an appropriate replacement for functioning sash windows and should be resisted.



*Historic windows that have depth of profile, a traditional opening method and material.*

### Glazing bar pattern and decorative details

Glazing bars and frames must be replicated exactly including decorative moulding details. Surface applied, internal or other mock glazing bars will not be acceptable replacements.

### Location within window opening

Sash window boxes are typically set one brick back from the front elevation. This is an important historic and decorative feature and must be replicated.

Replacement windows must be set in the same location within the window reveal as the historic window has been.

### Passive ventilation

Where passive ventilation is required to meet other legislation it should not be applied to the frame of the window. Where required it should be located in a way that does not interrupt the façade through using existing vents or air bricks. If no other options are available, they should only be allowed in the window frames where they do not harm their overall appearance.



*Inappropriate replacement windows which have 'flattened' out the façade.*





#### **Poor quality replacement windows:**

- Plastic frames – brilliant white
- Chunky frames, flat profile
- Mock glazing bars
- Non-traditional opening method
- Set flush with brickwork
- Prominent trickle vents



#### **Good quality replacement windows:**

- Timber frames – painted off-white
- Deep frames strong profile
- Structural glazing bars
- Traditional opening method
- Set within reveals
- No trickle vent visible

### **5.7 Sills, Voussoirs, Tiles and Decoration**

Many buildings in the area have often modest decorative details on the façade to provide interest. These are often surrounding windows or below the eaves. Such decorative details should be retained where they still exist and re-instated where lost. Such decorative features should be incorporated into new buildings where appropriate

### **5.8 Access Doors and Gates**

The majority of properties in the area have shopfronts, but there are a number of doors that do not relate to shops, such as street access points to rear yards and workshops or entrances to upper floor flats. There are very few original doors left and many have little historic precedent.

The most important factor is to ensure these doors fit in with the buildings and the wider area. Simple timber doors would be appropriate in most cases; in some instances metal-framed doors may be suitable; uPVC is not an acceptable material.

Where there is need for visibility through to the area behind; simple metal gates are likely to be appropriate. Where visibility through to the rear is not important, simple timber gates would generally be preferable.

## **5.9 Flues and extracts**

Modern building uses often have need for a flue to serve a commercial kitchen or extract flues for mechanical ventilation. Wherever possible, these should be located on elevations where they are not visible from the public highway,

Where this is not possible, they should be screened or located to minimise impact on the building. It is generally preferable to locate vents in sensitive and considered locations within brickwork rather than going through windows.

## **5.10 Rainwater goods**

Cast metal is the most historically appropriate and visually pleasing material for rainwater goods. Replacement goods should be constructed of cast metal painted black; uPVC alternatives are not likely to be acceptable.

Decorative brackets and hoppers should be retained wherever possible and replicated if appropriate.

## **5.11 Shopfronts**

Despite the historic character of the street, very few properties retain historic shopfronts. Many properties have unsympathetic shopfronts dating from the mid twentieth century.

Where a historic shopfront does remain, it should not be removed unless it cannot be repaired. If beyond repair, a shopfront would need to be replaced in replica.

Some of the larger industrial buildings may retain historic elements such as cast-iron pilasters which should be retained and be incorporated into a new shopfront.

In buildings which do not contain historic shopfronts, the main consideration will be ensuring that the shopfront sits well within the wider building and area in respect of design and use of materials. Timber-framed shopfronts are preferable; metal framed shopfronts can be acceptable subject to design. UPVC-framed shopfronts are unlikely to be acceptable.

New shopfronts should be considered in context of the building in which they are located. Where shop units have been combined the shopfronts should still respect the historic buildings above.

Further advice on appropriate shopfronts can be found in the City Council's Shopfront Design Guide.

## **5.12 Shopfront Security**

There are of a number of late night venues in the wider area, which can lead to an increase in public order offences in the area, particularly associated with the evening and night time economies. This has led to a number of business owners installing extensive shopfront security, measures, in particular, roller shutters.

For historic buildings of traditional construction, it is not possible to accommodate an external roller shutter without harming the appearance of the building and wider area.

External shutters can also lead to a greater perception that the area is at risk of crime, which reduces its attractiveness as a retail destination. Particular issues related to shutters are the projecting boxes at fascia level and the lack of visibility through closed shutters which screen the shop windows and give an impression of an industrial estate rather than a historic street.

As such, the Council would advocate other security measures such as toughened glass and fully removable shutters. Options to locate roller shutters internally should also be investigated.

Where shutters exist, measures should be taken to reduce their impact such as by locating the box internally and ensuring an element of perforation to allow visibility through when the shutters are closed.

### 5.13 Changes of Use

Being part of the city centre, the area is suitable for a wide range of uses consistent with the areas changing character. The changing use of a property is not likely to impact on the character of the area, but physical alterations necessary to allow a use to function remain material considerations.

Where a change of use requires alterations to the physical appearance of the exterior of the building, these should be considered in context of the character of the area.

A new use may require or desire alterations such as new windows or doors, venting, extraction and security measures – these issues should be considered at an early stage to ensure any subsequent alterations can be designed to take full account of the character of the area.

### 5.14 Advertisements

As the majority of the area is commercial in character, there is an ongoing demand for a wide range of signage.

This is a key characteristic of the area and well designed and articulated adverts can add greatly to the streetscene and ensure its commercial viability. Inappropriate adverts can overdominate buildings and harm the appreciation of the wider streetscene.

Good adverts are unique and eye-catching but don't screen out other elements of the building. Careful use of lighting can pick out key elements of a sign or architectural features of a building on which they are attached.

Poor quality adverts tend to be flat and appear as an alien feature on the building to which they are attached. Over-illumination can wash-out eye-catching details and be counterproductive.



*Upper floor adverts that don't make a positive contribution to the streetscene by reason of their size and height above fascia level.*

In most cases, signage should be located at fascia level and should be in proportion to the shopfront with which it is associated. Illumination is only likely to be acceptable where it is done sensitively and does not dominate the shopfront or building.

Signage above fascia level can lead to a cluttered appearance of the street and detracts from the character and appearance of the buildings and will be resisted.

Allowances may be considered where a business has no ground floor frontage on which to display an advert. In these cases, sensitive adverts may be permitted if they can be accommodated without harming the character of the building to which they are attached.

### **5.15 New Development within the Conservation Area**

Given the built-up character of the area, there are unlikely to be many sites coming forward for development; guidance for the main areas of undeveloped land is included later within the management plan.

New development should take account of the historic character of the site and should respect the character of the area with respect of scale, design, form and materials. All buildings within the Conservation Area will have an impact on its character and as such it is as critical to secure sensitive new design.

New development does not need to be a pastiche of a historic building type and can embrace modern design providing sufficient reference is made to the character of the area.

Modern extension to existing buildings will only be acceptable where they retain the historic character of the main property.

### **5.16 Setting of the Conservation Area**

As well as the buildings and sites within the conservation area boundary, there are a number of sites in the surrounding area which have an impact on its character through the role they play in its setting and framing.

### **5.17 Sites which border the conservation area**

These sites typically contain buildings and sites which have been redeveloped in the twentieth century and have lost their historic context. They still have an impact on the character of the conservation area and insensitive development has the potential to harm the setting of the conservation area.

As such, should development on these sites come forward the impact on the conservation area will be a material consideration.

While buildings and spaces don't need to be of traditional or pastiche design they should not be of a height, scale or materials that would jar with or overwhelm buildings within the conservation area or lead to the loss of their historic interpretation.

Opportunities should be sought to enhance the setting of the conservation area through appropriate design.



### 5.18 Sites which affect long views

As well as protecting buildings within the area the character appraisal identifies key views within, looking into and looking out of the Conservation Area.

The impact on these identified views is a material consideration of any planning application. Development should not be allowed that would interrupt or harm any of the key views. This could be through:



*The Highcross Shopping Centre (right) has a significant impact on the setting of the conservation area.*

<b>Obstruction</b>	Where a building or structure would be set in the foreground which would obstruct or impede a key view
<b>Encroachment</b>	Where a building or structure would be on an adjacent site which could harm the way a view is framed or set against the sky.

Once views are lost or damaged, this loss is likely to be permanent. Care must be taken at an early stage to prevent harm to these key views through new development.

### 5.19 Archaeology

The Conservation Area and surrounding streets fall within the Archaeological Alert Area. The impact on any proposal which involves new groundworks on local archaeology will be a material consideration of any application for planning permission.

### 5.20 Trees

There are a number of mature trees within the area which make a significant positive impact on the character of the area. Every effort should be made to retain these trees in a healthy condition.

Where trees are lost through death and disease, they should be replaced with suitable replacements wherever possible.

Opportunities to introduce new trees to the area must be carefully considered in context of the existing character of the area and long view into, within and out of the area.

## 6.0 Compliance and Monitoring

Enforcement is important to the success of any management plan. Ensuring that permitted works have been executed properly and that any unauthorised works are investigated and dealt with appropriately is important in maintaining and been seen to maintain the character of an area. Part of this work is pro-active monitoring of the area to identify any breaches and also to gather baseline evidence which can be used as evidence in any action.

Where works have been done without the relevant planning, listed building or advertisement consent, the City Council will investigate to see if these breaches harm the local environment. If harm is found to be caused, appropriate action will be taken.



*Bond Street benefits from sensitive property signage appropriate to the area*

The following are among the options the city council will consider using to address unlawful planning works:

- Urgent Works Notices
- Repairs Notices
- Prosecution
- Stop Notices
- Listed Building Enforcement Notices
- Planning Enforcement Notices
- S215 Notices
- Discontinuance Notices

These will be used in line with Leicester City Council's enforcement policy.

The publication of this guidance will be a material consideration in the action that the council takes and how retrospective planning applications are considered.

## 7.0 Additional Local Powers

As part of the overall enhancement and management of the Conservation Area the use of additional local powers will be considered, including:

### 7.1 Article 4 directions

An article 4 direction can bring works, which are normally permitted development within planning controls. Planning permission can then be assessed against the relevant policies for the area. Such directions are most effective in areas where properties benefit from extension permitted development rights for external alterations. This is not the case in the Church Gate Conservation Area as the majority of properties are in commercial uses or have been subdivided into residential flats.

An issue has been identified in the character appraisal regarding a loss of character caused by painting of traditional brick buildings; this work does not need planning permission as it is permitted development.

The loss of character caused by painting is evident and there is scope for further harm through painting of buildings where there is attractive exposed brickwork. Should steps be taken to remove paint from existing buildings, it would be regrettable if there was no control on such buildings being re-painted.

An article 4 direction to remove the permitted development right for painting is therefore recommended for all properties within the area.

There is a specific and identified threat caused from painting, but there are no other present threats being caused by works which can be done under permitted development rights. As such the direction can be specific to painting alone and not include the removal of any other rights.

It is the intention to implement this direction within a year of the publication of this management plan.

### 7.2 Special Area of Advertisement Control

An area of special advertisement control restricts the criteria within which advertisements are allowed without requiring express consent.

Given the commercial nature of the street and proliferation of adverts at present, it is not considered to be the right time to implement such a direction. At a future date, once the current guidance has been in place and action taken on existing unlawful and defunct signage the situation may be reviewed.



## 8.0 Enhancement Opportunities

The guidance and advice in sections 4 and 5 relate to reactive considerations for submitted applications and unlawful works, but there are a number of works which can be carried out proactively and outside the planning process, which would enhance the general appearance and historic character of the area.

### 8.1 Improvements to existing buildings

Opportunities should be taken to improve and restore prominent elevations of buildings to help retain and enhance the historic character of the area. Funding opportunities should be sourced to help fund these improvements. Key improvements include:

- Encouraging and facilitating repair and restoration of historic frontages, in particular the removal of inappropriate paintwork wherever appropriate;
- Re-introduction of historically appropriate windows, doors and shopfronts to buildings where they have been insensitively replaced;
- Removal and relocation of general clutter such as satellite dishes, CCTV, wires and cabling to elevations not prominently visible from the public highway;
- Removal of inappropriate advertisements, especially defunct ones on upper floors of buildings.

### 8.2 General Opportunities

#### 8.2.1 Façade improvements

On outward appearance, many buildings in the Conservation Area suffer from a general lack of care; this in turn is creating an unwelcoming appearance which detracts from the area and can deter investment.

##### 8.2.2 Removal of paint

Wherever possible, steps will be taken to secure the removal of paint and inappropriate render from the façade of buildings within the area. Where the brickwork is damaged or the bricks cannot be cleaned, re-painting will be supported only with 'breathable' paint that doesn't trap moisture within the brickwork.

##### 8.2.3 Cleaning of buildings

As they age, buildings take on the dirt of the urban environment. Cleaning can often refresh the appearance of a building, but it is unlikely that they can ever be returned to an 'as new' finish as materials absorb impurities.

When cleaning buildings of traditional construction, care must be taken not to damage the fabric of the building with aggressive or abrasive treatments. Historic building materials are often much softer than modern ones and less able to withstand modern cleaning techniques.

They are also liable to break-down with aggressive treatment which can cause long-term irreversible damage. As such, lighter steam cleaning or poultice treatments are likely to be the only acceptable treatments.

### 8.2.4 Windows and Doors

Windows make up a significant proportion of the elevations of most buildings within the area and form a significant element of the decorative detail. In most cases there is a high level of retention of original windows or later windows that are sympathetic to the original building.

In some cases, unsympathetic replacement windows have been installed, some before the designation of the Conservation Area in 2006, while others may have been installed without the benefit of planning permission. As window technology has developed, it is now possible to make more sympathetic replacement windows and, as such, where planning permission was granted for replacement windows historically, it may have been based on available technology.

Reinstatement of more historically sympathetic windows to a building can have a significantly beneficial impact on the appearance of a building and the wider area.

Wherever possible efforts will be taken to ensure inappropriate and harmful windows are removed and replaced with more historically sensitive replacements.

Access doors have a lesser impact on the area but still form an important part of the street scene. Doors which are of inappropriate material and design can mask the historic character of a building and detract from the character of the conservation area.

### 8.2.5 Shopfronts

A high proportion of properties within the area have shopfronts, which have either a neutral or negative impact on the character of the property within which they sit. It is important to ensure that any new shopfronts fits in with the character and proportions of the area and allows it to serve its function.

In properties where historic fabric survives, restoration of this fabric will be supported and removal and replacement will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated the fabric is beyond physical repair.

Where there is evidence of a historic shopfront design, restoration or installation of a facsimile replica will be supported. Where it is not possible to determine the design of a historic shopfront, it may be appropriate to draw references from similar buildings within the conservation area.

It is not desirable to install a faux historic shopfront into a building which either historically didn't have a shopfront or to install a shopfront with no local historic reference.



*50 Church Gate could be enhanced though sensitive replacement of windows and shopfront.*

### 8.2.6 General clutter

As part of a general maintenance programme, defunct clutter such as cables and wires, hanging baskets and brackets, satellite dishes, alarm boxes and CCTV boxes should be removed.

Church Gate forms part of the citywide festive lighting scheme and, as such, permanent brackets are fixed to the facades of a number of buildings. As this represents part of a citywide decoration scheme they are an acceptable if unfortunate building accretion. Opportunities to develop a less harmful system should be investigated,

A number of buildings on the street also have street lights attached to the façade. While this has an unfortunate impact on the buildings, they do reduce clutter within the public highway.



*9 – 15 East Bond Street – this row of properties could be enhanced through the removal of excess clutter, restoration of historic shopfronts and sensitive removal of paint from the first floor.*

### 8.3 Advertisements

The general street scene is let down by poor quality advertisements, particularly at high level, which are no longer relevant as the businesses detailed have stopped trading.

They can often show significant signs of weathering and neglect and, as such, can disproportionately affect the appearance of a building and the wider street.

Poor quality advertisements harm the character and appearance of the conservation area and as such:

- Where advertisements are no longer needed and have no consent, the council will take steps to ensure these are removed where they harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- Where advertisements have been in place for more than 5 years and or their consent has lapsed, an assessment will be made as to whether a discontinuance notice should be served to ensure the advert is removed.

### 8.4 Vacant Buildings

The best way of retaining historic buildings and the character of the area is for the buildings to be well used and occupied. Buildings within the area are generally well-used. Where properties are long-term vacant the city council will take the steps to try to encourage re-use.

Long-term vacancy will not be a justifiable reason to allow for demolition unless it can be demonstrated that all available options for re-use have been investigated.

## 9.0 Public Realm and Open Space Strategy

### 9.0 Public Realm and Open Space Strategy

The quality of the public realm has a significant impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area. It should be designed to reflect the intrinsic character of the area while providing a pleasant and uncluttered environment which allows space to rest, and reflect but also encourages movement and interaction through the area.

The strategy implemented should work with the character of the area and be used to highlight key building entrances and features, as well as helping to frame key views such as St Margaret's Church.

The majority of public realm improvements will be common throughout the whole area, but certain elements, particularly the types of surfacing used will be specific to the identified character area in which they are located.

There is a wider City Council aspiration to pedestrianise the section of Church Gate between East Gates and Mansfield Street. This would have a significantly positive impact on the quality of the public realm within the Conservation Area and would fundamentally alter traffic flow and reduce the need for associated signage. Should the pedestrianisation scheme not take place, the public realm enhancements will be limited.

The principles set out below will be applicable in either case but will be significantly improved with the implementation of the pedestrianisation scheme.

#### General Principles

The following principles will apply to the whole conservation area and will help provide an uncluttered environment that enhances its historic character.

#### Historic features

Historic features can include paving materials such as setts or kerbstones or cast iron street furniture and nameplates. Historic features worthy of preservation are set out in the character appraisal; where such historic features remain, they should be retained in situ wherever possible.



Far right: 19th Century Cast-iron lamp standard on Church Gate.



Granite setts laid at a former vehicle entry on Butt Close Lane



## Pavements

The amount of highway space dedicated to pedestrian footways should be maximised with due consideration being taken for users with alternative mobility requirements. Where vehicular movement is necessary there should be clear delineation between vehicular and pedestrian pavements.

## Surfacing

The surface used for the pavements and carriageway can contribute significantly to the character of the area. High-quality natural materials would be desirable but there may not be sufficient depth between existing levels and cellars/services to accommodate the depth of foundation for stone paving.

A suggested finish is to have natural aggregate topped block pavements; with a contrasting tarmac roadway. There needs to be a clear contrasting delineation between pathway and roadway. Block paving can accommodate a range of colours but should avoid high contrasts which could be garish. Areas of interest can be marked out in a different finish.

The palette of colours used should be minimised and generally muted to avoid competing with the character of the buildings.



*Contrasting materials can be used to denote the entrance to key buildings as shown here on Silver Street*



*Artist's Impression of Church Gate  
Reducing clutter in the highway can enhance the historic character and improve the environment.*

## Street Lighting

Street lighting which does not contribute towards the historic character of the area should be replaced with either historic replicas or with co-ordinated modern lights with intrinsic aesthetic interest.

## Street Furniture

Street furniture including bollards, bins, benches bike stands and other freestanding structures within the highway should co-ordinate with each other and tie-in with similar features elsewhere within the city centre. An appropriate and sensitive colour palette should be chosen to achieve this. It should be kept to a minimum and carefully positioned to avoid clutter or hindrance to pedestrian foot flow.

Seats and benches should be angled in such a way to take advantage of the important views and buildings within the area whilst taking in consideration limitations of the highway layout.

### **Bus Stops**

There are a number of bus stops on St Peters Lane. These help add activity to the area and do not interfere with important buildings; they are also in a generally good state of repair. Should these be moved, care should be taken they are not moved to insensitive locations.



*Individual chairs can be located to provide space for conversations as demonstrated in Cathedral Gardens.*

### **Freestanding Poster Adverts and Maps**

These should be minimised and located away from the more sensitive parts of the area. They should be maintained in a good state of decorative repair.

### **Traffic Direction & Regulation Signs**

These should be kept to the minimum needed in line with current highway regulations and kept to the minimum possible size. The need for such signs as well as number and size should be reviewed as the regulations are amended.

### **Street Markings**

Use of street markings should be kept to the minimum needed in line with current highway regulations and kept to the minimum possible width. The need for such markings as well as number and size should be reviewed as the regulations are amended.

### **Hanging Baskets**

While these can be pleasant in the short term – they are intrinsically seasonal in interest. As such movable structures are preferred which can be taken away when no longer needed. Permanent structures, with the sole purpose of providing support for hanging baskets should be resisted; any such existing structures should be removed and options to combine them with other columns should be investigated.



*large traffic sign on Butt Close Lane*

### **Raised Planters**

These can often take up significant highway space and provide limited options for planting.

Other ways of providing greenery, which require less structural elements and provide a better use of limited space, will be preferred. A mixture of hard wearing grasses, perennials and herbs should be planted in the alternatives to create attractive and interesting pockets of foliage.

### Cellar Lights

There are no cellar lights visible on the highway; should any be un-covered, they should be retained where possible as interesting historic features. Their removal will only be accepted if they are beyond reasonable repair.

### Phone Boxes

These should be removed where they are no longer needed. If they are needed, they should be cleaned and refurbished.



*Raised planter appears chunky and has increased maintenance requirements.*



*Street level planting on Peacock Lane sits better within the highway.*

### Architectural Feature Lighting

It may be appropriate to illuminate certain buildings within the area at night to highlight key building features and enhance the night-time economy.

Where used, a minimal approach should be used that avoids flooding a façade with light; instead certain characteristics can be highlighted. The colour, brightness and impact on biodiversity in the area should be taken into careful consideration when specifying feature lighting.

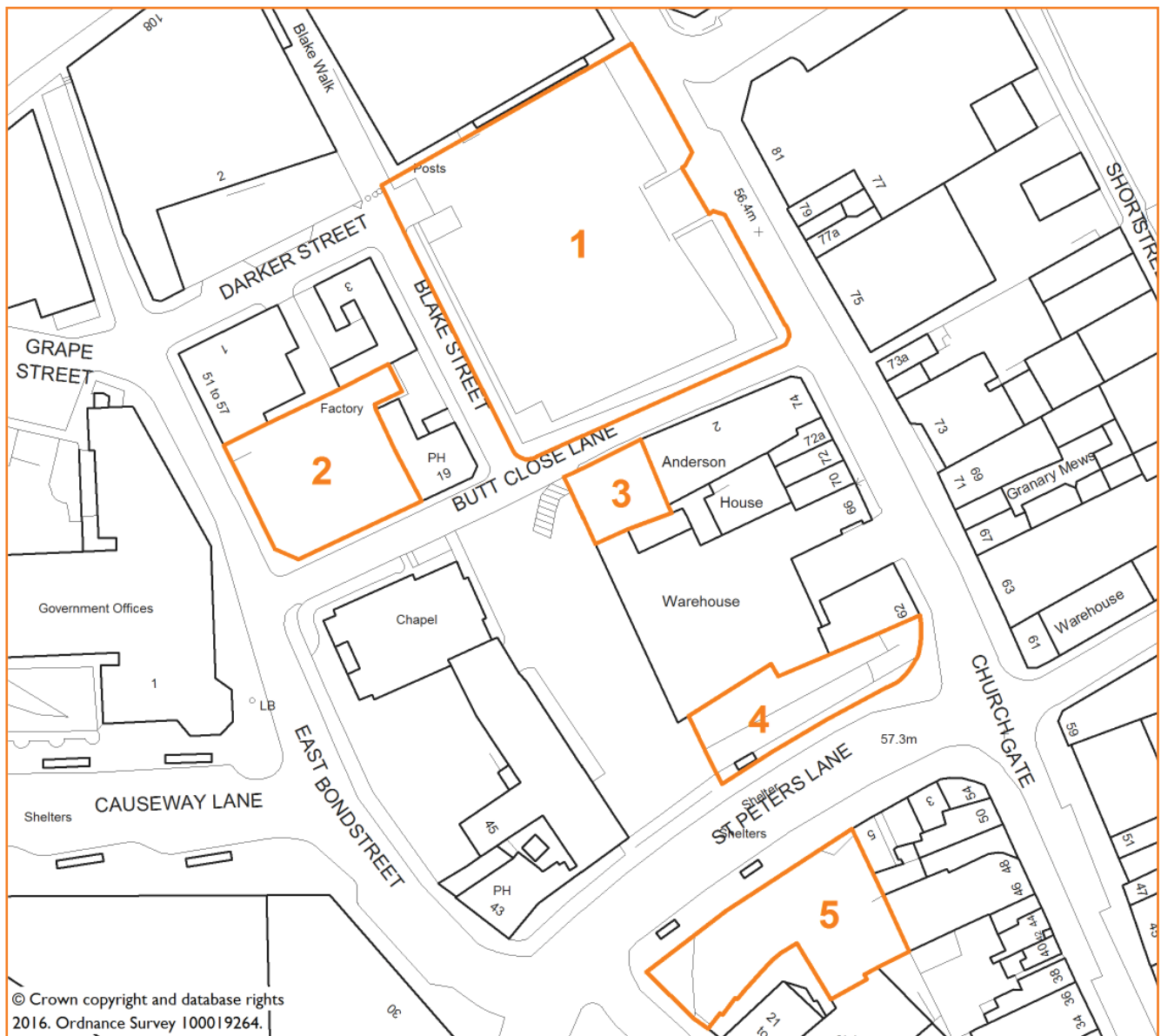


## 10.0 Guidance for Undeveloped Land

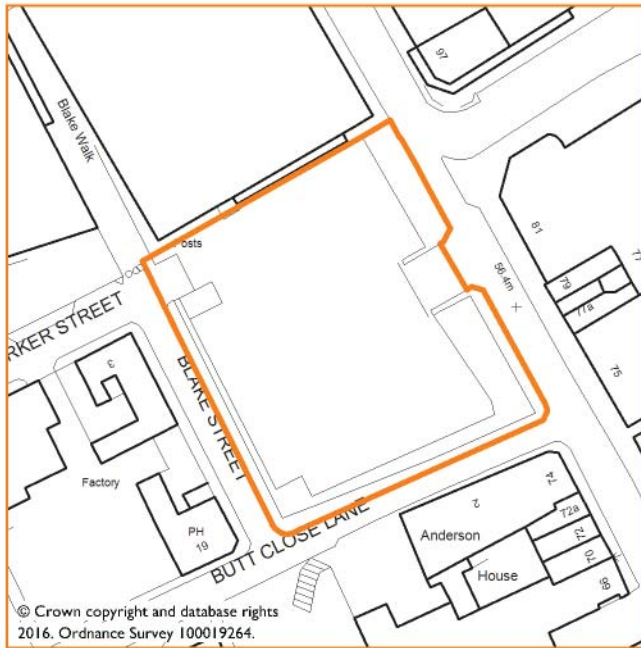
There are a number of key plots of land within the area, identified as being of neutral or negative character that would either benefit from redevelopment with new buildings or better surface treatment. These are:

1. Matalan Car Park;
2. Car Park at Butt Close Lane and East Bond Street;
3. Car Park to 66 Church Gate (on Butt Close Lane);
4. Corner of Church Gate and St Peters Lane; and
5. Corner of East Bond Street and St Peters Lane.

This is intended to be a summary of spaces within the Conservation Area that may come forward for redevelopment at some point. If they do, this guidance should be used as a guide to the key considerations.



## 10.1 Matalan Car Park



- This plot of land is historically interesting as it is broadly the area that it is believed to have been used as practice ground for archery in Medieval times.
- Since then it has been subject to a series of developments, firstly with a school and small housing in the 19th century. The school made way for a large vehicle garage which lasted from the 1930s until the 1970s. The housing was cleared in the 1960s.
- The current retail unit of Matalan dates from the 1980s and the land has been used as associated car parking ever since; it is also open as a privately owned general car park.
- As such there is historic precedent for the land being developed or left open.

The site works well as a car park and is surrounded by semi-mature trees which are an asset to the area. However, the interaction of the car park with the public highway is poor.

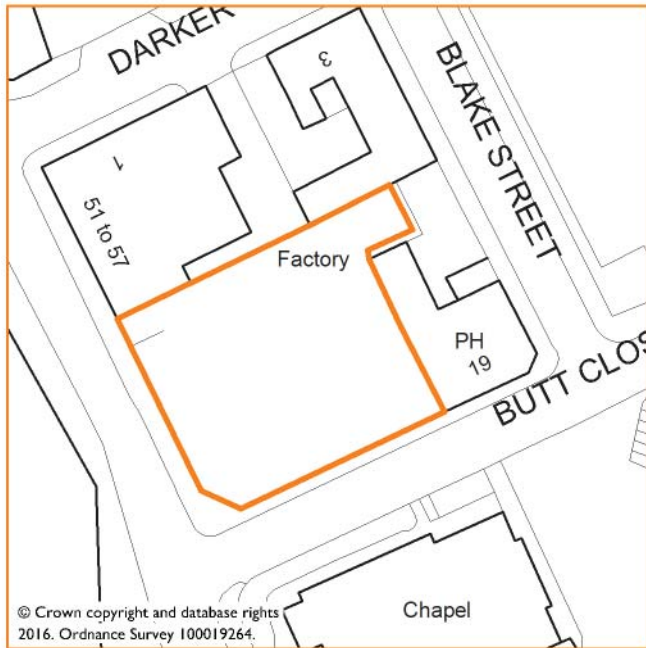
The site is surrounded by a dwarf wall made from red engineering bricks, which does not add positively to the appearance of the area. Public access is also limited and, as such, there are unofficial paths through the low level planting. There is also an issue with the service entrance and bins being stored at the end of Blake Street.

It would be desirable to see this car park re-landscaped to improve its visual amenity within the area.

Should the site come forward for development:

- There is likely to be important archaeology on the site as it is within the old Roman and Medieval walls. This must be investigated as part of any scheme;
- Any development on the site should respect the prevailing pattern of development within the area and the scale should be no higher than 3 storeys;
- The view of the timber warehouse at the rear of 66 Church Gate from Blake Street must be preserved;
- Active frontages should be provided to Church Gate, Butt Close Lane and Blake Street;
- Trees, shrubs and soft-landscaping should be retained as a key feature.

## 10.2 Car Park at Butt Close Lane and East Bond Street



This area of land appears to have been developed as housing in the mid-19th century.

The houses survived until the mid-20th century when the row adjacent to the Salmon public house was cleared. The houses on the corner of East Bond Street and Darker Street appear to have survived as they were knocked though into a single commercial building, having their roofs removed in the process.

The car park use appears to date from the mid-1980s.

It would be preferable for this site to be developed as the openness of the site does not bring the same benefits as the Matalan Car Park site and detracts from the overall character and appearance of the conservation area and nearby listed buildings.

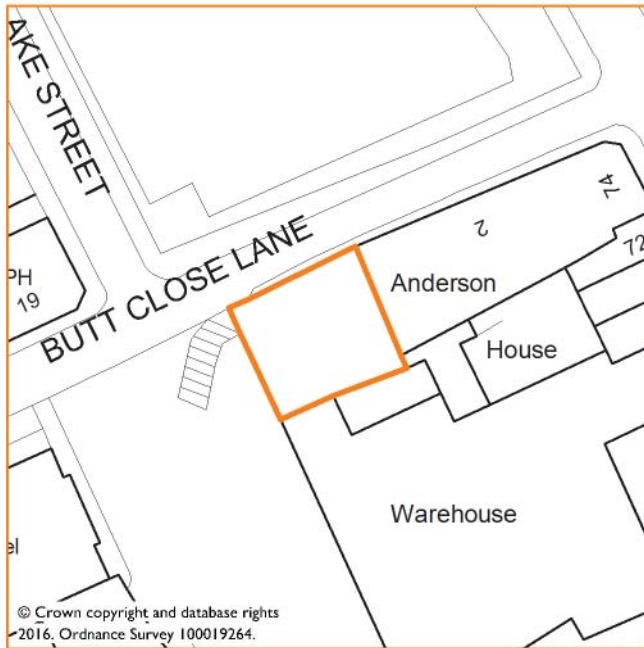
The open space is dominated by the gable walls of 51-57 East Bond Street and The Salmon Public House and, as such, it gives the feeling of a gap site. The site is not well overlooked.

The site would lend itself to a small row of dwellings or a small block of flats. Any redevelopment would need to take into account the impact on the adjacent Great Meeting Chapel and Butt Close Lane wall.

Should the space remain open as a car park, efforts should be made to improve the landscaping, both in respect of the boundary walls and the layout and treatment of the site.



### 10.3 Service Yard and Car Park r/o 66 Church Gate (access from Butt Close Lane)



This small area of land used to contain a small row of houses, which were demolished in the early 1970s to improve vehicular access to the main use of 66 Church Gate.

The land is now covered with black-top tarmac with no boundary treatment to the front or landscaping within the site. As such the space itself has a negative impact on the appearance of the area with a long dropped-kerb with cars and vans parked in haphazard fashion.

There is a strong benefit to this site being undeveloped however as it affords views of the side elevation of the listed timber warehouse at the rear of 66 Church Gate.

Given the built-up character of the surrounding area, this is the clearest view of the building from the public realm and has become key to its character.

As such, this site should be kept undeveloped to allow for continued views of this important building.

As such should the site come forward for development, no building or structure should be allowed that would impede on views of the timber warehouse from Butt Close Lane or Blake Street.

Sensitive landscaping and boundary treatment would be supported.



#### 10.4 Corner of Church Gate and St Peter's Lane



Similar to the plot of land on the corner of East Bond Street, this plot of land has no historic precedence having been created when St Peter's Lane was extended in the 1970s.

The site has no lawful use; planning permission had been granted for a building in the 1980s but it was never implemented. Instead, it housed five 48-sheet advertisement hoardings from the late 1970s until 2015 when a discontinuance notice was served.

The lack of building on this site increases the impact of the width of St Peter's Lane and heightens the contrast between it and the more historic parts of the area; it also allows the flank wall of 62-64 Church Gate to be highly prominent, which detracts from the character of the area.

While the site has no historical significance as a site, there were previously buildings running along Church Gate. A building on this site that addressed Church Gate and St Peter's Lane would add to the character of the area and provide an attractive corner feature.

Should the site come forward for development:

- A new building should be no higher than 4 storeys;
- Should address Church Gate, St Peter's Lane and the corner in-between;
- Design should take influence from others in the area in respect of materials, scale, rhythm; and
- Use would lend itself to residential in the upper floors with an active frontage, possibly retail, at ground floor level.

## 10.5 Corner of East Bond Street and St Peter's Lane



This plot of land was created following the construction of the St Peters Lane extension in the 1970s. The plot of land follows the curve of the fencing between St Peters Lane and East Bond Street. The corner forms part of the public highway.

The site has a long-standing lawful use for a surface car park. From the 1980s until 2015, five 48-panel advertisement hoardings were in place on the fencing, but these have now been removed following the serving of a discontinuance notice. Remedial works to the fence have since taken place.

The openness of this piece of land on a key corner within the City Centre and the Conservation Area is to its detriment as it opens up unattractive views of the side and rear elevations of adjacent buildings.

The site could be developed with a building to address St Peters Lane and East Bond Street, which would form a visual bridge between the buildings on Bond Street and Church Gate as well as providing a frontage to St Peters Lane.

A better development plot could be formed by integrating the corner of highway land. The decorative tower, which forms part of the Highcross Centre, could act as a visual feature to take reference from and create a gateway to Bond Street.

Should the site come forward for development:

- The prominence of the corner could allow for the building to be slightly higher than the adjacent building on Bond Street, but not more than 2 storeys higher;
- The building should address both Bond Street and St Peters Lane as well as addressing the corner;
- Design should take reference from other buildings in the Conservation Area; and
- Use would lend itself to residential/offices in the upper floors, while active frontages should be included on the ground floor to tie in with the adjacent shopping streets.

## 11.0 Contacts



**Write to:**

Conservation Team  
Leicester City Council  
City Hall,  
115 Charles Street,  
Leicester,  
LE1 1FZ

**Or Email:**

[planning@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@leicester.gov.uk)

**Or telephone:**

0116 454 1000

## Appendix A. Relevant Statutory and Policy Information

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 allows local authorities to designate conservation areas. These are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to “preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas they have designated.

The statutory protection requires planning authorities to ensure that any new development which requires planning permission preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 requires any demolition in a conservation area (over 115m<sup>3</sup> or where demolishing boundary walls) to require planning permission.

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 can be found at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/59>

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, schedule 17, which specifically refers to heritage, can be found at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/24/schedule/17>



## National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph number	Summary
I27	Conservation areas should justify their status
I28	Provision of information on significance by applicants
I29	Assessment of significance by local planning authorities
I30	Evidence of neglect not material to decision making process
I31	Local planning authority to consider the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the contribution of heritage asset, their positive contribution and the contribution of the new development
I32	Impact of development on significance material; significance is proportionate importance of assets.
I33	Substantial harm or total loss of heritage asset only to be allowed in exceptional and defined circumstance.
I34	Less than substantial harm to be weighed against public benefits
I35	Impact on non-designated assets carefully considered
I36	Loss only to be allowed where steps taken to ensure redevelopment
I37	Promote developments which enhance significance within conservation areas
I38	Loss of buildings in conservation areas can be substantial or less than substantial harm accordingly.
I39	Non-designated archaeology can have same protection as scheduled sites.
I40	Enabling development to be carefully considered.

For more details the complete national planning policy framework can be found at <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/>

Further explanation and interpretation can be found in the accompanying practice guide at:

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/>

Historic England Planning Practice guide can be found at;

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/pps-practice-guide/>

## Local Planning Policy

Leicester City Council Local Development Framework: Core Strategy key policies for the Church Gate Conservation Area are:

Core Strategy	
Spatial Objectives	Description
7	High Standard of design in new development.
9	Development of a strong city centre.
10	Preservation and enhancement of Leicester's heritage.
Policy Number	Description
2	Climate change and flood risk.
3	Designing quality places.
4	Strategic Regeneration Area.
6	Housing Strategy.
8	Existing Neighbourhoods.
10	Employment opportunities.
12	City Centre.
Policy Number	Description
16	Cultural Strategy
17	Biodiversity
18	Historic Environment

Saved Local Plan Policies	Description
UD06	Landscape Design
BE10	Shopfront Design
BE11	Shopfront Security