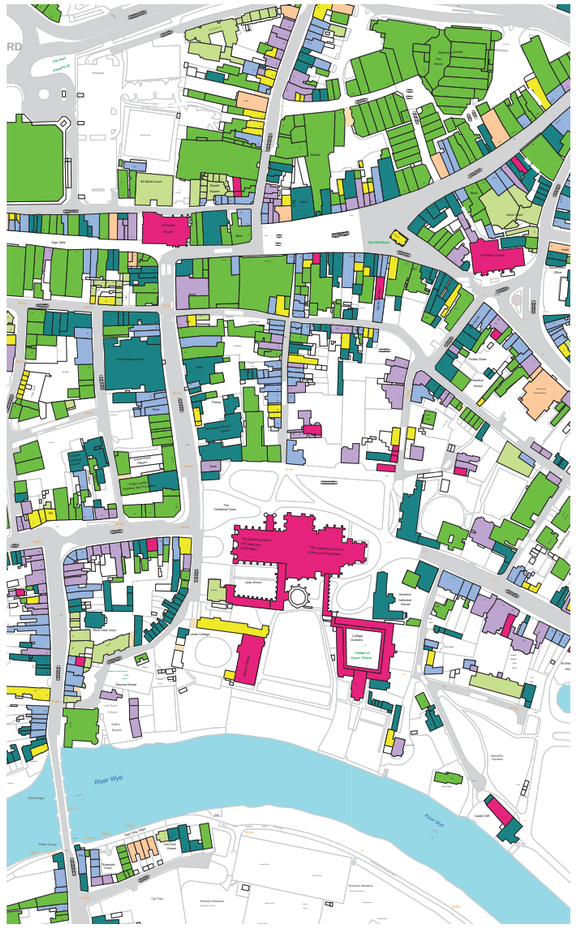
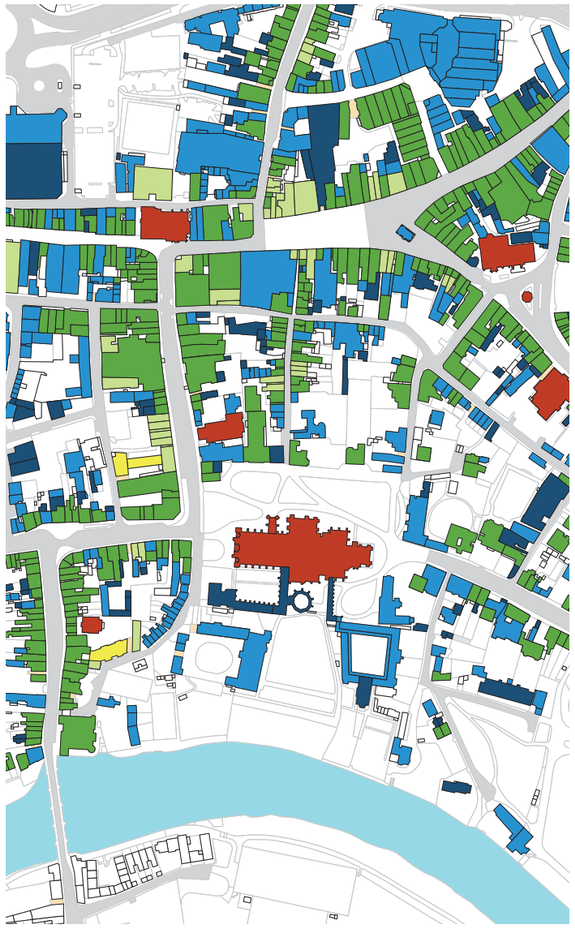
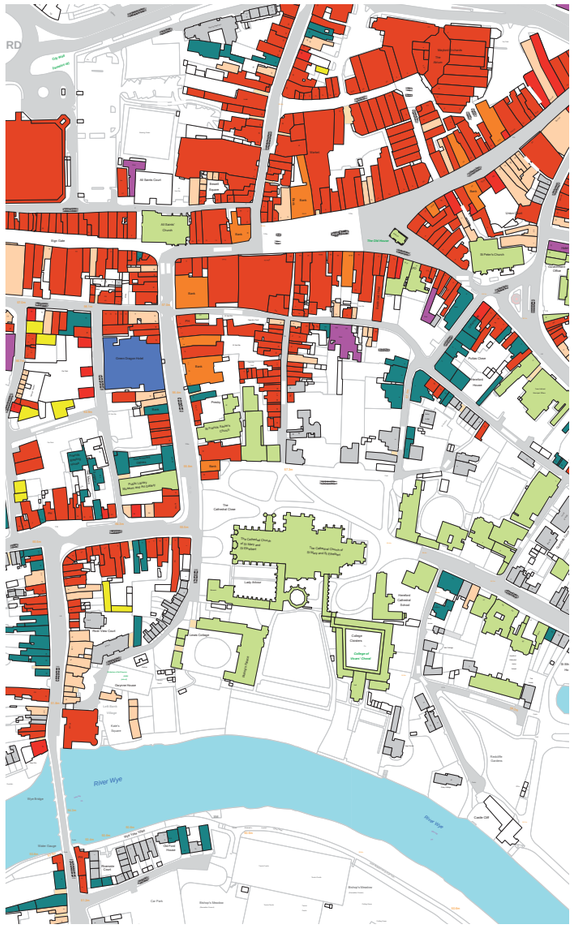






A characterisation of

The Historic Townscape of Central Hereford

February 2010

Herefordshire Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Herefordshire Archaeology Report no. 266

A characterisation of

The historic townscape of central Hereford

Herefordshire Archaeology report no.266
Revised draft March 2010
Prepared by Dr Nigel Baker, Urban Archaeologist

Contents

1. Introduction

The background and purpose of this study

This study was commissioned by English Heritage as part of the second (assessment) stage of the *Hereford Urban Archaeology Strategy* project, which commenced in February 2006 with work on the Hereford Urban Archaeological Database (UAD). Its primary purpose is to examine the townscape of central Hereford from an archaeological perspective, in order to determine what its historical components are, their state of preservation and their significance – both from the point of view of their historical importance and for their contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. It also looks at how the townscape as a whole has evolved over time. In short, it is a form of historic landscape characterisation, undertaken in an urban context. It takes the view that the present-day townscape is a historic landscape in just the same way as any ancient field system or deserted medieval village. It is an artefact, worked over many centuries, and is therefore as much a part of the archaeological resource as the stratified deposits that underlie the city streets.

The study also has immediate relevance for townscape management and conservation. The timetabling of this work (April-August 2009) was designed so that its conclusions and principal components could inform and support the process of Conservation Area Appraisal by Herefordshire Council's Buildings Conservation Team. In the longer term, the study is also designed to form part of the evidence base to support the Local Development Framework (LDF), scheduled for completion and adoption in stages between 2011 and 2013.

Scope

The study is limited to the historic core of Hereford which, for precision and simplicity, has been defined here as those parts of the city and suburbs shown by Isaac Taylor's map of Hereford to have been built up by 1757. Within this area, all periods contributing to the townscape in its present-day form are considered.

Related studies

The study, a relatively intensive examination of the historic city centre, should be read in conjunction with the *Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment* (Lello 2009) a characterisation at a coarser level of resolution of the entire built-up area of Hereford, city and historic suburbs included. The issues examined by the HRTA – townscape character, historical development, townscape issues and opportunities for enhancement – have broadly been followed in the present document. The area immediately north of the city centre, the Edgar Street Grid or ESG, is currently earmarked for an extensive programme of urban regeneration and has been the subject of a separate *Archaeological Characterisation* (Baker 2007) examining both its townscape and its archaeological resource; the more recent ESG *Archaeology Masterplan* (2009) has examined issues around the management of the archaeological resource and the enhancement of its historic assets and townscape.

Hereford has a long and distinguished history of topographical and archaeological research, and some aspects of this are summarised in section 4.2.

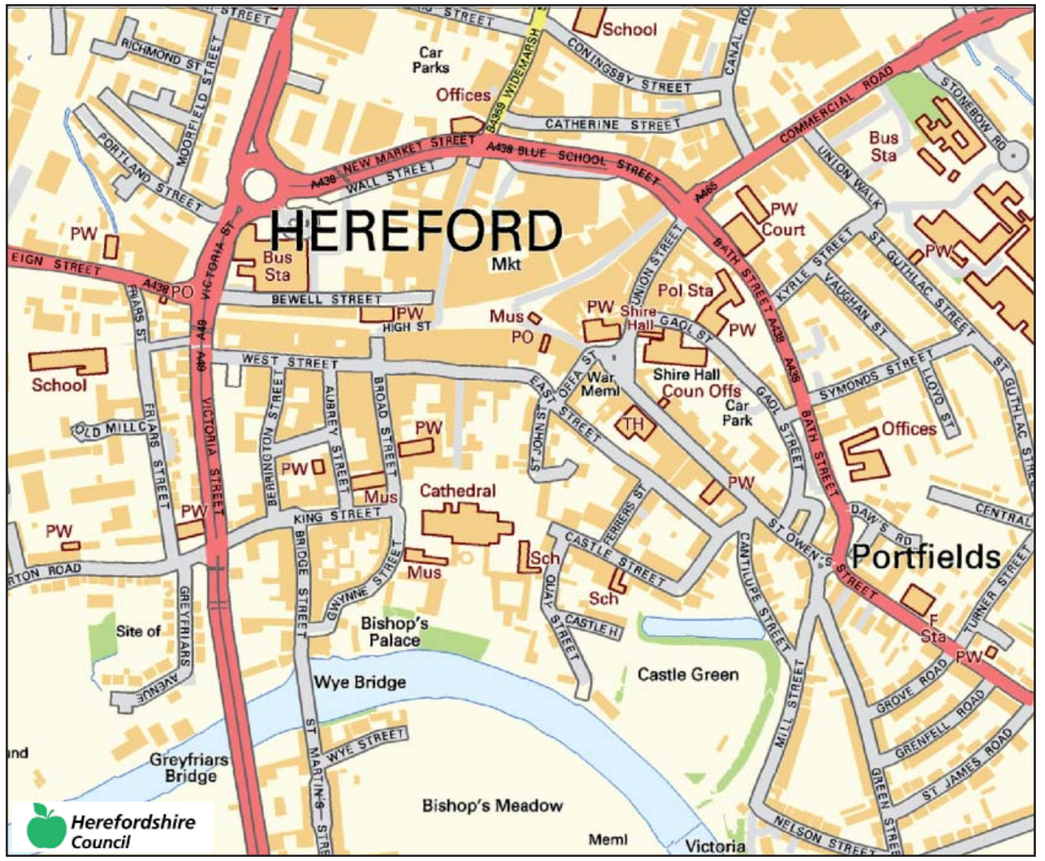
Methodology

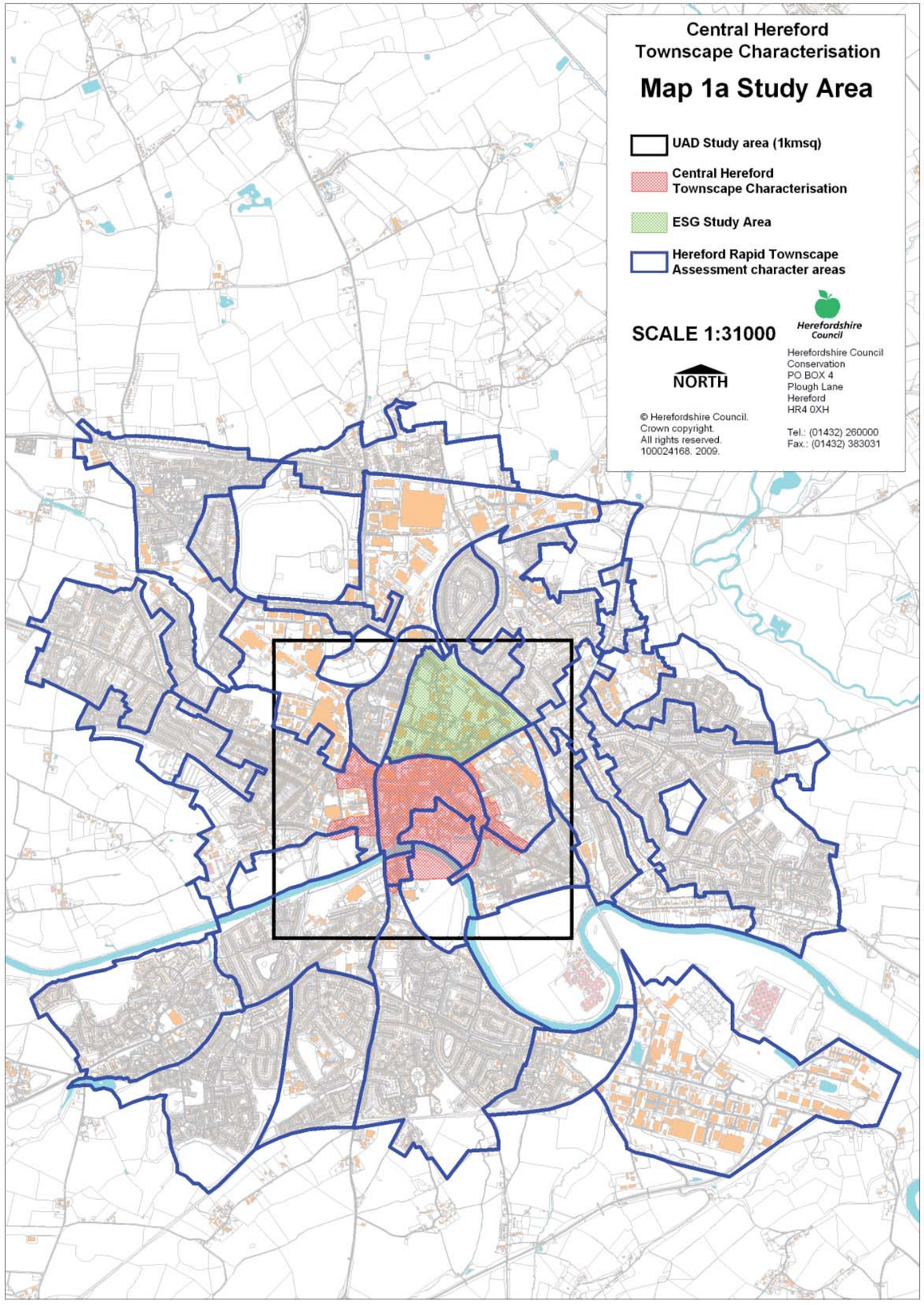
The methodology for the present study was evolved in response to the particular character of Hereford's historic townscape. An earlier historic city centre characterisation study by the present writer, of Worcester (Worcester City Council 2008), took as its starting point localised variations in the date of the present building cover and the way this related to the evolution of the traditional townscape grain – the pattern of plot boundaries, streets and alleyways and the response of the built form to this framework. To illustrate: some parts of some streets were clearly 'ancient', in the sense of having many historic buildings standing within traditional long, narrow, burgage type plots, while others were clearly 'modern', built up, for example, with national chain stores of the 1950s on amalgamated plots, or shopping centres of the 1980s within huge cleared areas. The historic city centre could thus be resolved into distinct 'townscape character areas' (TCAs).

This approach was found to be inadequate for Hereford, where the incidence of different periods of building around the city is far more mixed, structures of a variety of periods being found on many streets and almost no streets exhibiting exclusively the architecture of a single period. Yet Hereford, on the briefest encounter, shows clear differences in character between one street and another. A broader approach to the characterisation was therefore adopted, one which gives equal weight not just to the date of buildings and the survival of townscape grain, but to the form of the site on which the city developed, the form of the buildings (as expressed in the number of storeys), the evolution of the townscape, and present land-use patterns. Although land use is potentially the most transitory of all townscape phenomena, subject to change far more rapidly than building form or plan form (Conzen 1969), the pattern of land use in modern Hereford can be shown to have the deepest historical roots and to be a fundamental factor in character differences within the historic core.

The characterisation therefore examines, in order: site, built form (present-day character and historical composition), plan form (streets and townscape grain), the historical evolution of the town plan, and land use, before using these factors to disaggregate the townscape into a number of distinct townscape character areas.

The word 'townscape' is used here in the general sense of the urban landscape, and specifically as it was defined by the geographer M R G Conzen. The geographical character of a town, he wrote, is expressed physically in its 'physiognomy or *townscape*, which is a combination of town plan, pattern of building forms, and pattern of urban land use' (Conzen 1969, 3). The town plan, superimposed on the town site, consists of streets, plots and buildings, the street blocks providing the containing framework for the plots, and the plots providing the framework for the buildings. In terms of dynamic change, land use is potentially the most rapidly changeable element, while the plan framework is clearly the most conservative of all, representing the largest amount of fixed capital divided (in a built-up area) between a multiplicity of ownerships, and therefore highly resistant to change. This inbuilt resistance to change within the town plan means that it may well encapsulate features of great antiquity – potentially dating back to the initial urbanisation of a built-up area.




Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation
Map 1a Study Area
UAD Study area (1kmsq)
Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation
ESG Study Area
Hereford Rapid Townscape
Assessment character areas
SCALE 1:31000
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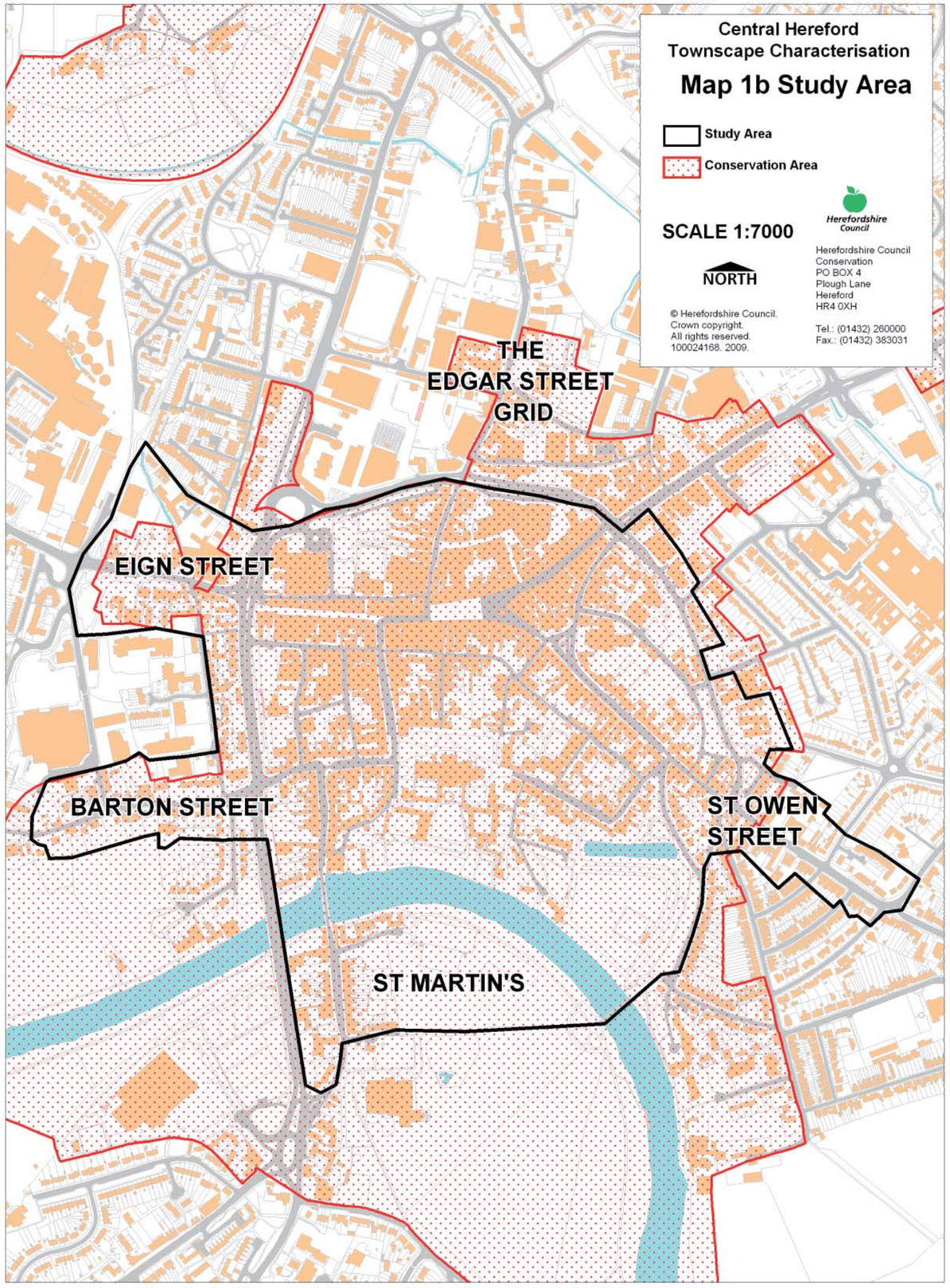
Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation
Map 1b Study Area
Study Area
Conservation Area
SCALE 1:7000
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THE
EDGAR STREET
GRID
EIGN STREET
BARTON STREET
ST OWEN
STREET
ST MARTIN'S

2. Site

Map 2 opposite is a LiDAR (light detection and ranging) survey image of the site of the medieval and later city. Produced by laser pulses emitted from a survey aircraft, the resultant digital terrain model has been colour-coded for variations in altitude and the vertical scale has been exaggerated to show relief more clearly. Critically, the buildings of the city centre have been digitally removed to produce a 'bare earth' model – effectively a computer-generated aerial view of Hereford as an archaeological site or earthwork, showing the natural peninsula site cut by terracing on the edges and hollow-ways on the arterial routes, with accumulated ground retained by the encircling medieval ramparts, and the surrounding floodplain – the Wye to the south, the Eign Brook and the Widemarsh to the north – selectively infilled by reclamation.

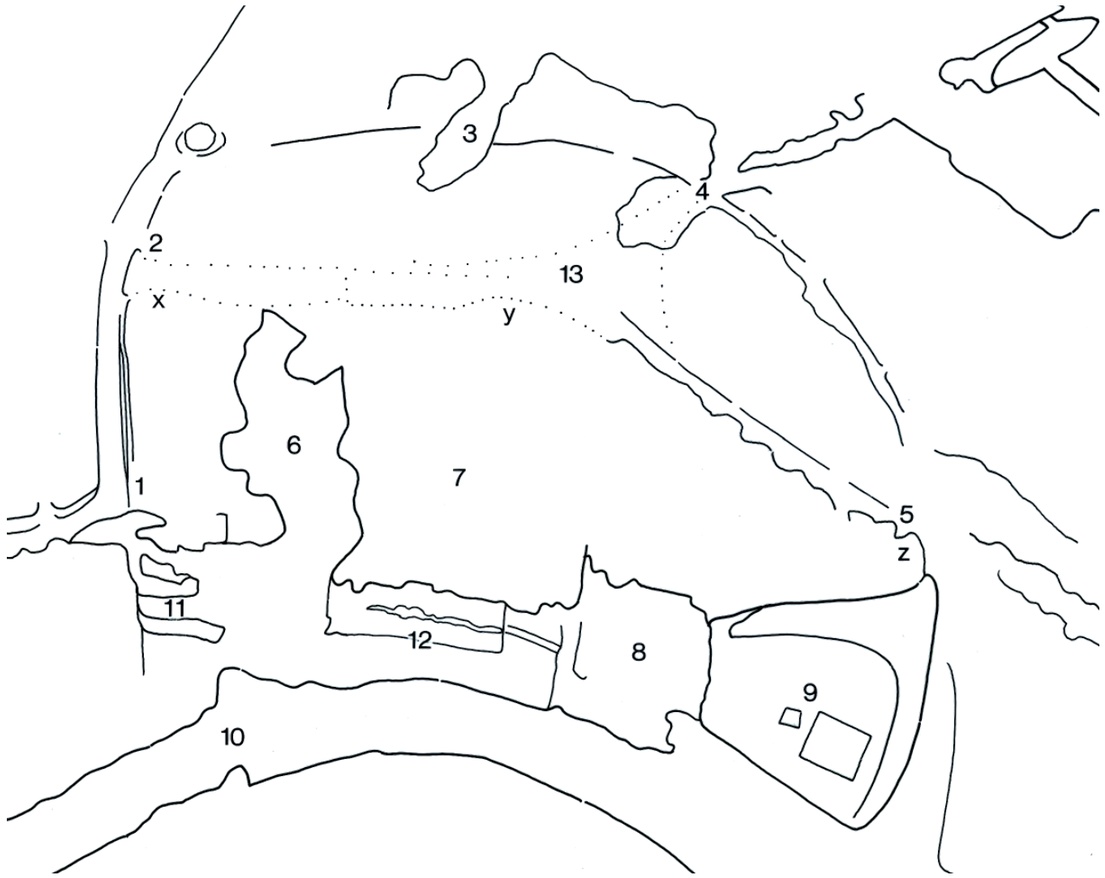
A number of features are particularly prominent. In the south-east corner of the city (right foreground) is Castle Green, the former castle bailey, the height of its surrounding ramparts greatly exaggerated. At its western end is the depression left by the quarrying away of the motte in the 18th century. Further west is the broad, flat terrace on which the cathedral stands with, below it, the terraces of the Bishop's Palace overlooking the river.

Further west still is the valley known as the King's Ditch. Excavation has shown this feature to contain, even at its upper end, nearly five metres of waterlogged archaeological deposit accumulating from the Bronze Age onwards. Now visible at ground level mainly as a depression crossing King Street (which is carried over it on a 10th-12th-century log causeway), this much-infilled valley was a significant feature of the early town and may have formed the boundary between the king's jurisdiction, or fee, to the west and the bishop's, around the cathedral.

Immediately west of the King's Ditch is the series of terraces, running down to the floodplain, by which the medieval burgages of Bridge Street accommodated themselves to the gradient.

Beyond is the line of the modern A49 trunk road (Victoria Street) and the cut for the Greyfriars Bridge (digitally removed). Victoria Street follows the Saxon and medieval defences around the western side of the city. The inverted U-shape of the remainder of the medieval city wall circuit is also visible, marked by the line of the inner relief road of the late 1960s following the extramural ditch, and by the elevated ground level within the wall and its medieval rampart.

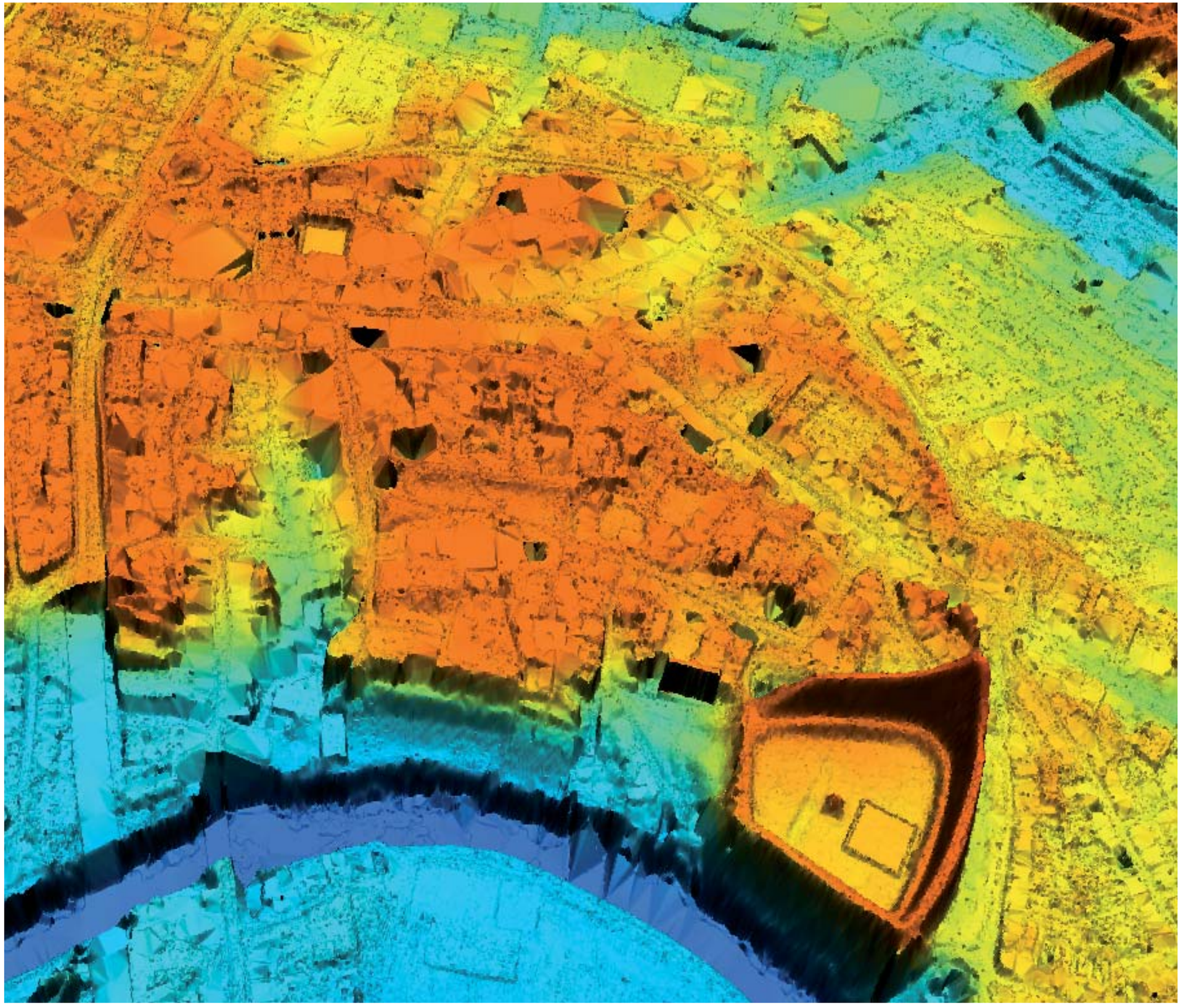
A number of shallow radiating linear scars cross the defences on the lines of the ancient arterial road pattern, clockwise: Widemarsh Street (north), Commercial Street (medieval Bye Street, north-east) and St Owen Street (east). Each produced a hollow-way effect on the gradients of the peninsula, traffic cutting into the underlying gravel subsoil. The impact of St Owen Street on the local relief is also quite marked, with a hollow-way effect particularly evident beyond the city wall but continuing within and only ceasing on reaching High Town. The visibility of St Owen Street is increased by the presence of the former Saxon defences on its south side, continuing westwards parallel to High Town, High Street and Eign Gate and giving a strong edge to the highest ground of the city site at roughly 56-57 metres above Ordnance Datum.



Key to LiDAR image of Historic Core (Map 2)

The medieval defences:
1 Friars' Gate;
2 Eign Gate;
3 Widemarsh Gate;
4 Bye Street (Commercial Road) Gate;
5 St Owen's Gate
6 The King's Ditch;
7 site of Cathedral;
8 castle motte (quarried away);
9 Castle Green;
10 site of Wye Bridge;
11 Bridge Street terraces;
12 Bishop's Palace terraces;
13 site of High Town;
x-y-z Saxon defences

Map 2 LiDAR image of the site of Hereford (building cover digitally removed)



NORTH

Not to Scale

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3. Built form

3.1 The physical composition of the townscape

Hereford can be said to be a three-storey brick-built city. While obviously a sweeping generalisation, the statement is not entirely inaccurate. Map 3 shows the heights of buildings in the city centre based on the number of storeys they contain. The map, or the pattern of differential building heights it represents, can be viewed, broadly speaking, as a representation of differential land values at different points in history, at least insofar as those periods are still represented in the present-day townscape. Modern commerce has however departed from traditional patterns in seeking dedicated retail space on one level without combining it with residential accommodation above. The consequence has been that a large proportion of the two-storey buildings in the retail core area are products of the mid-20th century and later, combining retail ground floor space with offices above. With this component taken out of the equation, the traditional pattern of building is one of predominantly three-storey buildings throughout the retail core with an increasing proportion of two-storey buildings towards the margins. Four-storey buildings are relatively uncommon, the majority being modern residential and office buildings, mostly located towards the periphery (Bath Street, St Nicholas Street), though some are to be found in central locations: these include a recent four-storey residential block immediately behind All Saints Church, and offices and apartments on Broad Street (rising to five storeys at the rear) opposite the Cathedral Close. It would be very difficult to argue that either of these contributes positively to the skyline, views into or out of the city, the setting of its ancient churches, or the townscape in general. A recent five-storey apartment block on Gwynne Street, behind the Bridge Street frontage, is more successful in being built in the defile presented by the line of the ancient King's Ditch and not intruding into the skyline. Clusters of four-storey buildings of 18th- and 19th-century date are present on High Town, principally on the larger north side plots and at the bottom of Widemarsh Street (one 18th-century building having been lowered from five storeys). This area, in the vicinity of the site of the medieval High Cross, may be expected to have been amongst the most sought-after commercial property in the medieval and later city. Occasional four-storey Georgian buildings appear on St Owen Street, Church Street, and on Castle Street and seem to be the random result of building for wealthier households.

Detached single-storey buildings are largely confined to modern commercial structures, mostly garages, workshops, clubs (with a cluster in the Berrington Street – Aubrey Street area), small ancillary buildings and supermarkets. Most single-storey buildings occur as elements of rear ranges extending back down traditional plots behind much higher frontages; the complexities of these rear-range assemblages are not fully represented by map 3, particularly where back-plot areas were not accessible to the survey.

Mapping building storeys is also inadequate in conveying variations in the status of the buildings. This is best illustrated by contrasting examples of what can be argued to be the archetypal Hereford city traditional building form, the three-storey brick-built house of 18th- or early 19th-century date. With or without specifically Georgian detailing (horizontal brick bands earlier, dentilled eaves later, sash windows, neoclassical doorcases), such buildings occur in virtually every street in the city and inner suburbs, some wholly residential, some with ground-floor shops – either original or conversions of domestic space. Most are distinguished by the higher status accorded the first floor in relation to the second, expressed by different storey and window heights. However, this 'standard' building type occurs at what may be interpreted from their context, size and detailing at vastly different social levels.

The Georgian three-storey brick townhouse. Different socio-economic contexts on St Owen Street (left, early 18thC) and Union Street (right, late 18th/early 19thC)

3.2 The historical composition of the townscape (map 4)

Any rapid, cursory, exploration of the city centre would be likely to notice differences in character between city streets based on the predominance of particular periods in the architecture found along them, although, as the introduction outlined, hardly any streets are monopolised by the architecture of a single period. Nevertheless, the distribution of architectural styles across the city or, to express it differently, the pattern of impacts of particular historical periods on the urban fabric, makes a major contribution to the character of the city as a whole and to the identities of its component districts.

The distribution of buildings by their period of origin is expressed by map 4. This is based primarily on a walk-over survey by the writer in April 2009 which sought to identify the date of buildings from external evidence – architectural style, building materials and, very occasionally, inscribed dates. The problems inherent in this method were described in full in the context of the characterisation of central Worcester (Worcester City Council 2008). These may be summarised as: visibility, structural complexity and susceptibility to spot-dating on limited evidence. The map seeks to emphasise the presence of structures, represented by their plan-form, over and above architectural style, which in an urban context is most usually and strongly expressed in the frontage elevation. The problem here is that in Hereford, as in very many English historic towns, frontages have often been added to much earlier structures, a process of particular importance

Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation

Map 3 Height of Buildings

- 1 Storey
- 2 Storey
- 3 Storey
- 4 Storey
- 5 Storey
- Churches, Monuments & Public Buildings

SCALE 1:3500

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in the late 17th and 18th centuries when, for the first time, brick overtook timber-framing as the standard building material. There is therefore a serious underlying flaw in the data presented by the map arising from the identification of structures that, from their frontages, appear to be Georgian brick buildings, while in reality they are encased timber frames of earlier date.

To some extent the problem of detecting encased early fabric is mitigated in Hereford by the visual accessibility of most rear elevations, frequently via small, shared car-parks situated in plot backlands. Nevertheless, some substantial runs of rear elevations – for example the buildings on the east side of Church Street – remained partly unseen . Time did not allow interiors to be inspected or visits to private property organised, so it is inevitable that the map expresses the current state of knowledge, which will, with further research and repairs-related revelations, inevitably be superseded. Some further mitigation of this problem was achieved by incorporating information from the analysis of individual buildings, mostly associated with past repairs, renovations and extensions (much of the data held on the SMR/UAD), together with references to early cores in the Listing information, and further information from the Council's building conservation officers. Only one comprehensive interior survey of a city block has taken place, the 1989 High Town survey (Rock Townsend 1989), which covered the block bounded by High Town, Capuchin Lane, Offa Street and East Street. Information from this survey was incorporated directly onto the date of buildings map presented here. The scale of resolution is also an issue. Survey details were noted onto 1:500 map copies, which permitted phases of multi-period buildings to be recognised at the level of the individual wing, allowing, for example differences in date between frontage blocks, rear wings and extensions onto rear wings to be represented. Nevertheless, the High Town Survey illustrates that even that scale of resolution may over-simplify the complexities of multi-phase buildings. Further uncertainties arise from the problems of reliably spot-dating buildings on the basis of their architectural style: these include the survival of archaic features and the lack of closely-dateable stylistic criteria on the simpler, less extravagant town buildings. For these reasons the date ranges illustrated have been deliberately broadly drawn.

Despite these limitations, the date-of-buildings map arguably offers a range of new insights into the composition of the present built-up area: the respective contributions of individual periods and their variable scale and incidence across the city, and the variable survival of the oldest building forms.

Discussion & commentary

Late 20th and 21st century building

The incidence of development post-c.1990 in the city is widely dispersed, with no marked impact on any one area. A few 'landmark' major buildings are scattered across the city: the Magistrates' Courts on the north side of Bath Street, the Mappa Mundi building south of the Cathedral; a new school classroom block north of Castle Green, and the Left Bank restaurant on Bridge Street occupying a significant 'gateway' location adjoining the Wye Bridge. Recent replacements of earlier frontage buildings have also occurred widely, though in small numbers, on Union Street, Bridge Street, Bewell Street and elsewhere. Infill developments, behind main frontages, have been more common, with examples behind Widemarsh Street, West Street, East Street, Union Street and elsewhere. More extensive residential development in these years has taken place in the western fringe-belt between Eign Street to the north and Barton Road to the south. The most central streets – High Town, Church Street, Broad Street – have seen almost no new building in this period.

The 20th century

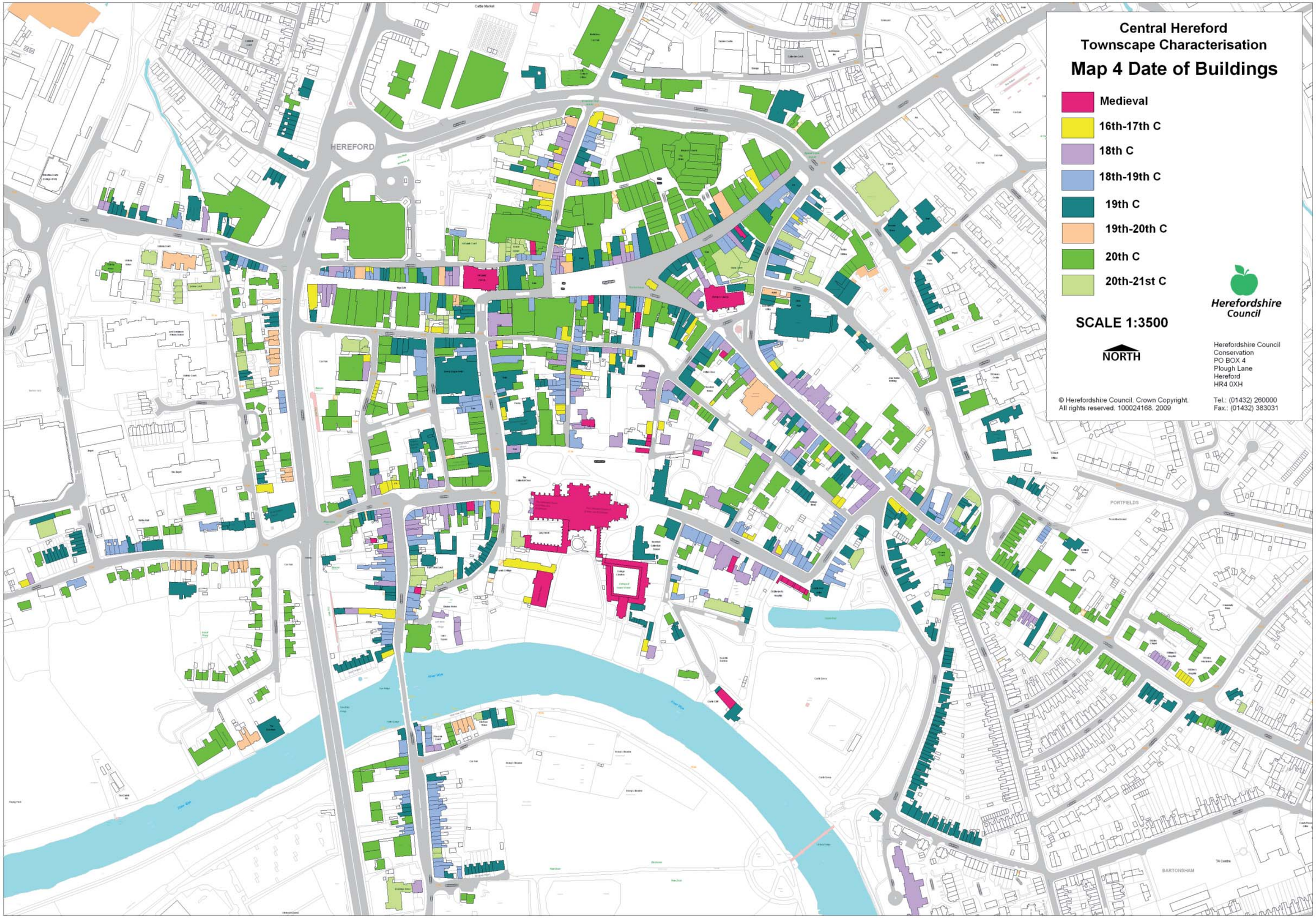
The map shows a clear and striking concentration of 20th-century building in the north/central sector of the city, clearly associated with the retail economy. This concentration can be broken down into identifiable components. The largest single mass of 20th-century development lies north of Commercial Street in the north-east quarter: this is the Maylord Orchards shopping centre development by Norwich Union, built between 1981 and 1987 centred on a new square, Trinity Square, but nevertheless broadly retaining the pre-existing streets in that area. This development was the second originating in a 1978 development brief by the then City Council, together with Hereford & Worcester County Council, that sought to expand retailing capacity (diminished by construction of the ring road in the 1960s) in the city's north-western quarter (designated 'sector A/B') and the north-eastern quarter ('sector C'). The first, Tesco, in the north-west quarter was built, with its car-parking, on former brewery land and opened in 1983 (Roberts 2001, 27-33).

Much of the remainder of 20th-century building in the retailing core can be attributed to the multiple or chain stores, some of which had moved into Hereford earlier in the century. However, it was the 1960s that saw a general and large-scale rebuilding of premises for firms such as Boots the Chemist, Woolworth's, Marks & Spencer's and Littlewoods, all in High Street or High Town. An earlier contribution to 20th-century building in the same area is the Buttermarket, rebuilt after a fire in 1922, with a development of shops and offices built on its west side towards Widemarsh Street in 1930.

There are other smaller though nevertheless distinct concentrations of 20th-century building within the walls, notably at the southern end of Broad Street and behind, in the Berrington Street area, but in general the 20th-century contribution is spread widely but thinly right across the city – few streets were immune from such modern building, but few streets came to be dominated by architecture of this period either. Outside the walls in the historic suburbs the 20th century is most marked in the Edgar Street Grid area, based on the Widemarsh Street axis. Although this retains its historic (medieval) plan form, it is to all intents and purposes a mainly mid-late 20th-century suburb, dominated by commercial uses. The 20th-century has also made a major contribution to extramural St Owen Street, but in two main phases: the first around 1911 when the area of St Owen's Gate was comprehensively remodelled with terrace housing; the second in the 1960s with the Fire Service HQ, new sheltered accommodation at the St Owen's Almshouse site, and new housing in Turner Street (part of the Priory Portfields character area, HCA 6 of the *Rapid Townscape Assessment*). In architectural terms (as opposed to developmental) the impact of the pre-First World War years is muted as well as dispersed, with little of the ornate terracotta-faced commercial development that made such an impact on turn-of-the-century Worcester. The Town Hall on St Owen Street, built c.1904, is a spectacular exception.

The 19th century

Within the walls, the impact of the 19th century is similarly a widely dispersed one with few streets dominated by 19th-century developments and equally few left entirely unaffected. The most notable exception is Broad Street, where the frontage of the Green Dragon Hotel, together with the Church of St Francis Xavier of c.1839, the Post Office of c.1881 and the Library, Art Gallery and Museum of c.1874 together make a striking ensemble and would dominate the character of the street, were it not for their dilution by the modernist buildings of the 1960s and 70s on the west side. 19th-century commercial architecture also makes a substantial contribution to the frontages of High Town.


Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation
Map 4 Date of Buildings
Medieval
16th-17th C
18th C
18th-19th C
19th C
19th-20th C
20th C
20th-21st C
SCALE 1:3500
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HEREFORD
PORTFIELDS
BARTONSHAM
River Wye

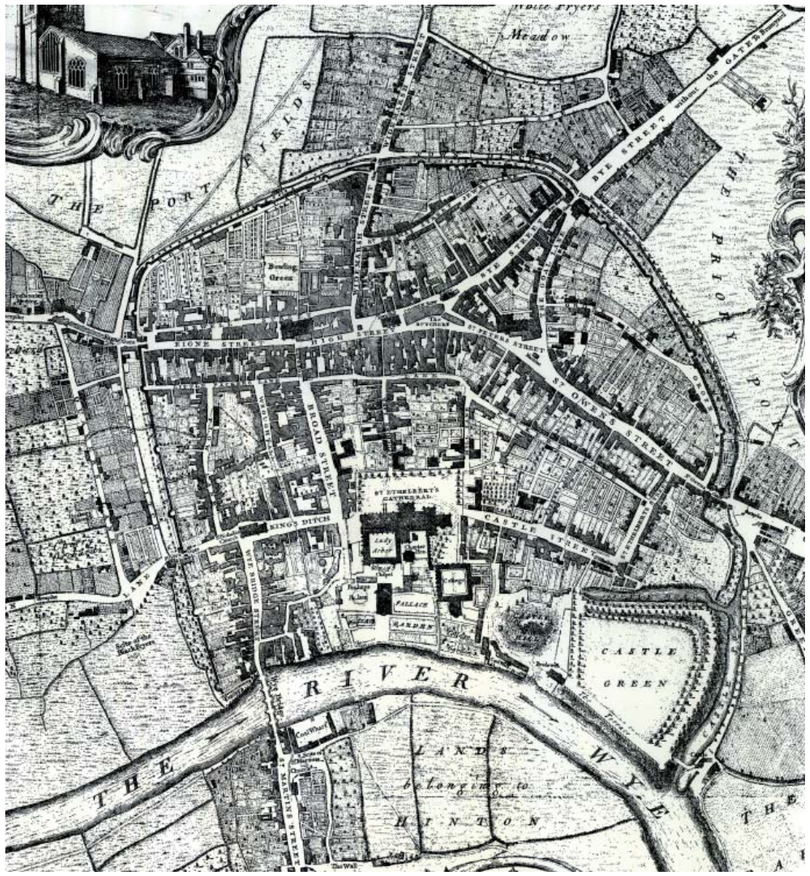
The 18th and early 19th centuries

Again, buildings of this period, in what would generally be recognised as Georgian neoclassical style, occur throughout the city, being present on virtually every street. However, unlike later 19th-century buildings, there are areas where they are a significant enough presence, occurring in sufficient density, to dominate particular streetscapes. This is most notable in the case of the intramural section of St Owen Street, with significant numbers of large, wealthy, mid-18th-century town houses. Castle Street, similarly, is dominated by this architecture, which continues around its eastern end and up St Ethelbert's Street to St Owen Street, these streets together forming a substantial quarter in which Georgian neoclassical is the prevailing style. Bridge Street, too, is an essentially Georgian street and this character is maintained throughout much of King Street crossing its north end, and, south of the Wye, down St Martin's, with nearly the whole of its eastern frontage occupied by buildings from the end of the 18th century. This is the only suburb thus dominated: in all the other historic suburban streets – Commercial Road, St Owen Street, Widemarsh Street and Barton Road, 18th- and early 19th-century buildings occur singly or in small groups or rows amongst buildings of other, later, periods. As described in the introduction to this section, it is also the case that a Georgian brick frontage may be unrepresentative of the building within. Thus on Widemarsh Street and Church Street, as on the west side of Bridge Street, the predominantly 18th-century character is partly illusory, a disguise of the survival of earlier structures.

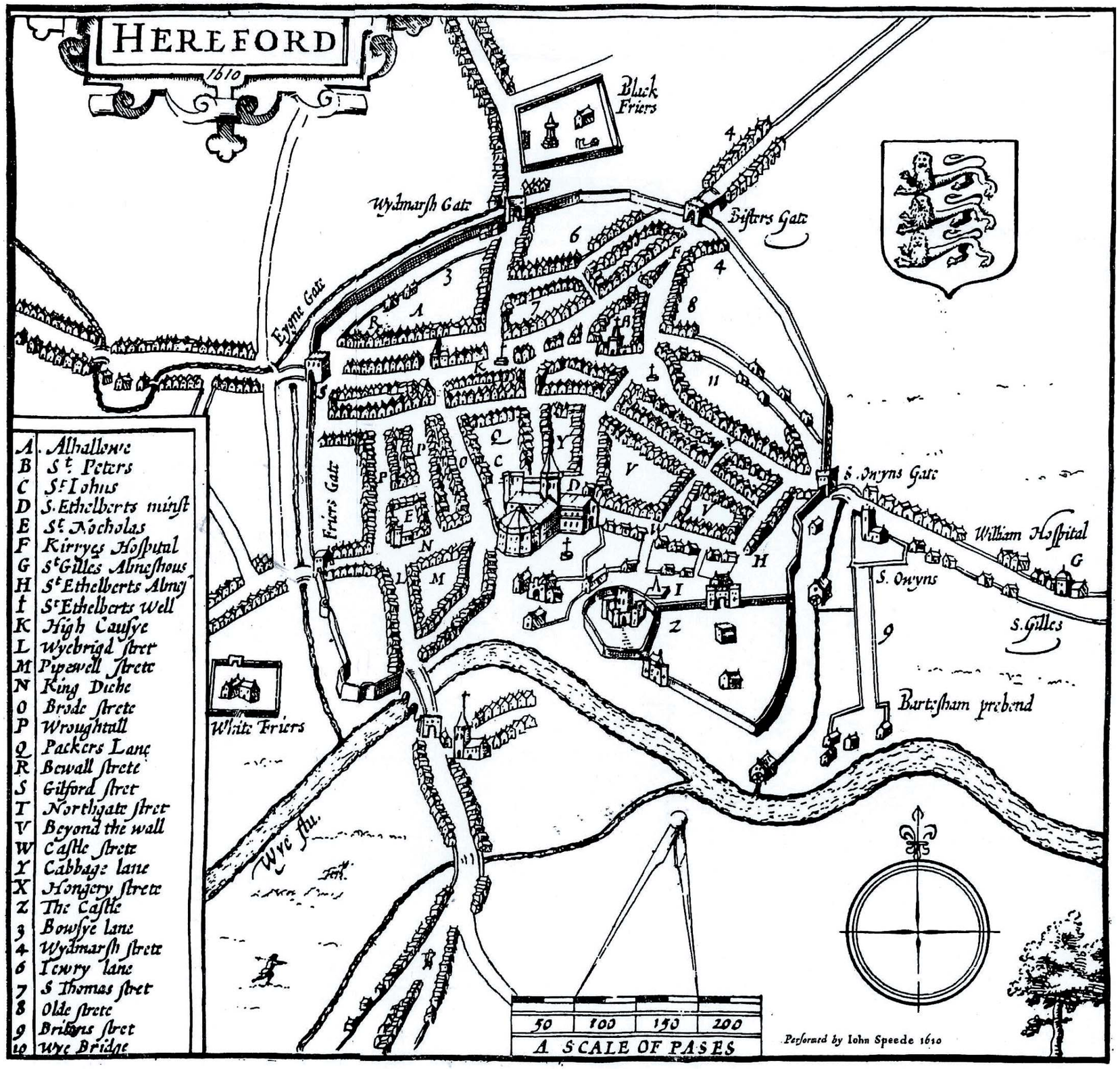
17th century and earlier

Nowhere is the disparity between architectural and archaeological townscape character clearer than in the question of the survival of timber-framed buildings. While a few individual buildings – the Old House in High Town, Aubrey's Almshouses on Berrington Street, the Black Lion on Bridge Street, for example – are highly-visible, architectural landmarks, timber-framed structures of great character that add greatly to the historic character of their immediate surroundings, they are rarities, exceptional by virtue of their visibility. However, where internal surveys have taken place, or where rear elevations are visible, it is immediately evident that the building cover in some quarters of the intramural city is still quite substantially timber-framed. In this regard the High Town study of 1989 is an invaluable control, against which the results of external survey and the Listing descriptions can be measured. Of twenty-four properties surveyed, twelve were listed at the time of the survey and seven (all Listed) contained fabric pre-dating the mid-18th century (Rock Townsend/CHAC 1989). Across the walled city as a whole, the Listing descriptions and the survey results represented by map suggest that at least ninety buildings contain fabric that is older than their present frontages, a figure that does not include the presence of medieval undercrofts at basement level.

Once again, the known distribution pattern of 16th-17th-century and earlier buildings across the city appears to be dispersed and fairly even, with few exceptional concentrations or very marked absences apart from the major, comprehensive retail developments of the 20th century (see above). Pre-18th-century survival appears to be most marked in those areas characterised by fine-grain burgage-type plot survival (see section 4.1) rather than building cover ostensibly of a particular dominant period. So, for example, both St Owen Street and Bridge Street can be described as streets of predominantly 'Georgian' character. However, the survival of medieval and early post-medieval buildings appears more frequent on the latter, rather than the former. This is not particularly surprising. The more open urban grain/plot-pattern of St Owen Street is essentially one of wider plots accommodating larger, wealthier houses, where comprehensive redevelopment was more likely than re-fronting or encasing. Conversely, the narrower plots/ finer urban grain of Bridge Street accommodated less substantial houses where re-fronting may more frequently have been an attractive or necessary option. In contemporary social terms, we may – as a gross generalisation – be looking at the distinction between gentry town houses and the professions on the one hand, and tradesmen on the other. The frequent survival of timber-framed buildings on and behind both sides of High Town, characterised by an exceptionally close, fine-grained plot pattern, has already been discussed.



The central portion of Isaac Taylor's map of Hereford, 1757



John Speed's map of Hereford, 1610

4. Plan-form

4.1 The historic town plan today

Streets

Within the city walls, the present street plan of Hereford is virtually unchanged from the end of the Middle Ages: unlike almost every other cathedral city or county town in England, no major new streets have been inserted to ease through-traffic flows (as in Worcester in the 18th and 20th centuries), to service new infrastructure developments (Shrewsbury in the 1840s), to regenerate cul-de-sac areas (1930s Gloucester), or to break up large areas of slum housing (late 19th-century Birmingham). John Speed's map of 1610 still provides a perfectly serviceable guide to the street plan of modern Hereford.

This is not only relevant to the street plan as a communications network: street-spaces have remained demonstrably static (evidenced by the survival of historic buildings along the frontages) so the present hierarchy of streets (Hamilton-Baille 2009, 33) is a close reflection of medieval patterns, in particular, the breadth of High Town and (of course) Broad Street reflecting their early medieval origins as linear market places and their continuing commercial role within the retail core. St Owen Street, King Street and Bridge Street, Eign Gate and Widemarsh Street all exhibit widths appropriate to their history as ancient arterial routes through the built-up area, while Castle Street may formerly, according to local archaeological orthodoxy prevailing since the 1970s, have had this role too – though this is, in the present writer's opinion, less certain.

Some changes took place in the course of the second half of the 18th century, most importantly the removal of the medieval city gates. However, once again, such changes were nowhere near as drastic as those in, for example, Shrewsbury, where the Street Commissions of the 18th century rounded-off corners and straightened projecting frontage lines throughout the town; or, in late 19th-century Worcester, where municipal street widening by setting back one frontage was endemic. In Hereford a small-scale but significant change took place by the widening of the north end of Broad Street on the site of the pre-Conquest north gate, but this was an exception. Similarly some rounding-off of corners has taken place (King Street/Bridge Street east corner, Broad Street/Eign Gate west corner) but the practice was never widespread.

The few changes that have taken place to the street network have been relatively minor in scale and have affected only peripheral areas just within the walls. The only new street to have been inserted within the walls is Cantilupe Street, built across open ground just within the eastern medieval defences in the 1880s for residential development. On the opposite side of the city, a bastion of the medieval city wall had been taken down a few years earlier so that West Street, which had formerly stopped within it, could be connected to Victoria Street outside.
Further changes to the intramural street plan were confined to the 1980s, when minor lanes were truncated just within the northern walls. With the redevelopment of the north-western quarter (Sector A/B) for Tesco (opened in 1983) the western part of Wall Street, running just inside the city wall, was closed off. And, with the development of the Maylord Orchards shopping centre in the north-eastern quarter in 1983-7, the medieval Maylord Street was retained, but truncated, its eastern return to Commercial Street being removed.

Immediately outside the walls, the single most dramatic change in the townscape has been the introduction of the inner relief road around the northern defences in 1966-9 and the A49 bypass down the western side, leading to the Greyfriars Bridge. This scheme was started in 1964, though first proposed as a solution to Hereford's notorious traffic problems – the A49 still ran through High Town and over Wye Bridge – way back in 1939 (Roberts 2001, 60-72).

The A49 improvements have also brought about the largest scale changes to the plan form of the historic suburbs built up by the mid-18th century. Specifically, this involved the insertion of the new road from Greyfriars Bridge alongside St Martin's Street, and the superimposition of the Belmont roundabout across its outer end. Substantial changes in the plan form of the Eign Gate – Eign Street – White Cross Road suburb also took place in c.1854 when the Hereford, Abergavenny and Newport railway was inserted across it. The replacement of the railway line in the later 20th century with a substantial road junction and attendant residential and retail development (Sainsbury's) has added to the dislocation of the inner and outer parts of the suburb.

Apart from these two instances, the extramural built-up area within its mid-18th century limits has seen comparatively little change in plan form. However, much greater change in building cover has occurred, 19th and 20th-century buildings predominating in all but St Martin's Street, which retains its almost entirely late Georgian character.

Townscape Grain (map 5)

Townscape grain is the term commonly applied to describe the skeletal structure of the townscape – the framework of plots and their boundaries – together with the pattern of buildings and access routes that is contained within and closely conditioned by this framework. The state of the townscape grain today can be assessed from any of the modern maps illustrating this part of the characterisation study, but is further emphasised by the figure-ground map (map 5), which shows the town plan as a negative image, with open spaces in black and building blocks left white, in order to emphasise the relationship between the two.

Examination of the figure-ground map highlights a number of fundamental characteristics of the plan-form of central Hereford:

- The enclosure of the historic core within the broad circular corridor cut through the built-up area by the ring road following the city walls

- The historic core and inner suburbs, characterised by a very tight, fine, narrow grain, the street-spaces well defined by buildings directly abutting the frontages, and the plot pattern well defined by building ranges and frequent alleyways extending back from the frontages

- The surrounding suburbs, characterised by a much coarser grain (except in the 19th-century suburb to the SE), and more widely separated building masses often with a much looser relationship to the street network and frontages – to the extent that the street pattern is unreadable west of the city centre

- The occurrence of very large single-mass structures in a broad arc around the city centre, representing the usual fringe-belt extensive land-uses: supermarkets, the cattle market, schools and hospital buildings

- The virtual unreadability of the River Wye: a product of unoccupied floodplain on the south bank, the historic open spaces on the north bank, and a general disregard of the river by the built form arising from its limited economic potential in recent centuries


Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation
Map 5 Figure-Ground
Buildings
Streets & Open Spaces
Herefordshire Council
SCALE 1:3500
NORTH
Herefordshire Council
Conservation
PO BOX 4
Plough Lane
Hereford
HR4 0XH
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Fax.: (01432) 383031

- The existence of a number of open spaces within the historic core: historic precincts (the cathedral close, the castle); traditional garden/back-plot open spaces (north and east of the close); areas cleared of sub-standard buildings (Berrington Street, west of the cathedral)

The scope of recent changes to the city-centre townscape grain can be assessed by comparing the figure-ground map (or any of the modern maps reproduced here) with map 6, an extraction of streets and property boundaries from the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan of 1888. This reveals a number of changes, the most significant of which may be identified as follows:

- The loss of the historic townscape grain in the NE quadrant, associated with the redevelopment of the area for the Maylord Orchards shopping centre in 1983-7: though its subsidiary buildings are grouped around preserved but truncated ancient streets, the main shopping centre itself is a single-mass structure superimposed diagonally over the cleared traditional townscape grain

- The amalgamation of a number of narrow plots of traditional form in commercial core of the city to accommodate new stores with very large retail spaces. These are the 'High Street multiples', the national chain businesses that are a familiar feature of almost every town of any size that arrived at various points through the mid-20th century: F W Woolworth's, Boot's the Chemist, Littlewoods, Marks & Spencer and W H Smith's. In Hereford, these are concentrated (from west to east) on the south side of Eign Gate, both sides of High Street, and the south side of High Town. To this list may be added the premises on the east side of Commercial Street: Chadd's, the now defunct Hereford-based department store, and MacDonald's, the restaurant built on a site previously the first branch of Tesco (Roberts 2001, 24-27).

- Earlier plot amalgamations leading to localised coarsening of the townscape grain include the Green Dragon Hotel site on the west side of Broad Street, and the Town Hall of c.1903 on the south side of St Owen Street.

- The large-scale loss of townscape grain is a particular feature of the Berrington Street – Aubrey Street area to the west of Broad Street, where dense working-class housing was identified as unhealthy in the 1850s and subsequently cleared. Never fully rebuilt, the traditional plot pattern in this area has been partly (but not entirely) lost.

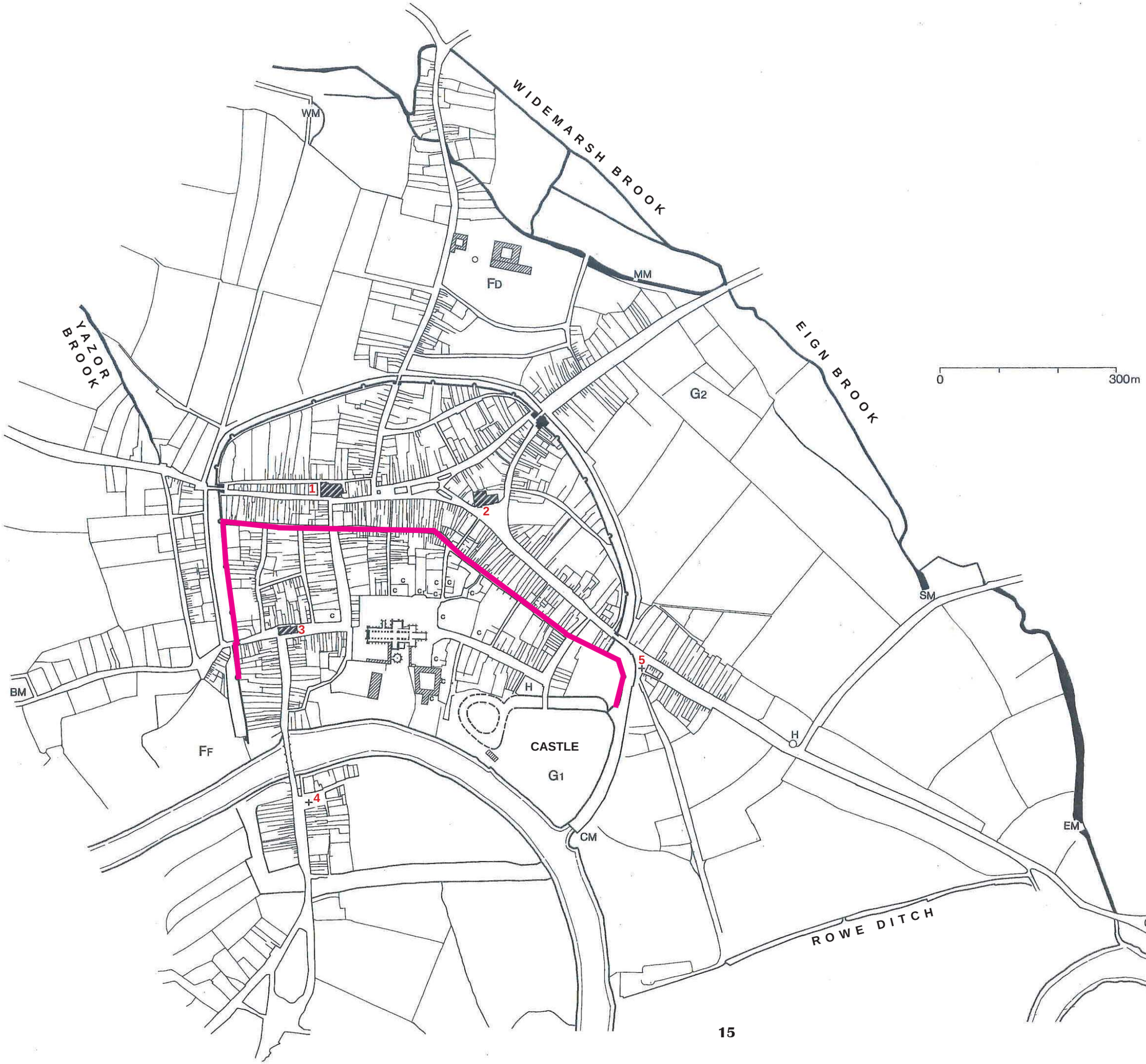
Despite these changes, the bigger picture is that the traditional townscape grain of central Hereford is remarkably well preserved across most areas of the city. This is true particularly on the periphery of the retail core area: in Bridge Street, Church Street and Widemarsh Street. It is also true of those parts of the main commercial streets unaffected by plot amalgamations for the 20th-century multiple stores, or expanded local businesses: particularly on the north side of Eign Gate (where the proximity of Bewell Street at the rear limits plot size), and on the south side of High Town.

Of still greater historical significance, the level of preservation is both good enough, and widespread enough, that localised *variations* in the character and type of townscape grain are still evident. This has two important implications. The first is that it becomes a factor in readily perceived character differences within the townscape and is therefore crucial in imparting clearly distinguishable identities to different parts of the city. In other words, ancient *neighbourhoods* are still discernable within the city walls. The second is that such localised variations in townscape character can be mapped and analysed; this is the subject of the next section.

Townscape grain in central Hereford: the plots and open spaces of High Town and St Peter's Square, looking south.

Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation

Map 6 Hereford city and historic suburbs: settlement framework



KEY

1	All Saints
2	St Peter's
3	St Nicholas
4	St Martin's
5	St Owen's
H	Medieval Hospitals
G1	St Guthlac's, first site
G2	St Guthlac's, second site
FD	Dominican Friary
FF	Franciscan Friary
C	Canomical residences
WM	Widemarsh Mill
MM	Monkmoor Mill
SM	Scut Mill
EM	Eign Mill
CM	Castle Mill
BM	Barton Manor

known pre-Conquest defences

NORTH
Not to Scale

Base map: 1st edition
Ordnance Survey, 1886

Herefordshire Council
Conservation
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Hereford
HR4 0XH

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4.2 The development and origins of the town plan

Previous work

Hereford has a long and distinguished history of research into the form and development of the city. This may be said to have begun with Walter Pilley, confectioner and antiquarian, who in 1899 published an article in the local press 'The first town of Hereford' in which, for the first time, he reconstructed the perimeter of the Saxon town, based on his observations on building sites and topographical evidence. His work was followed-up and given greater academic weight by Alfred Watkins in his 1920 paper 'The King's Ditch of the City of Hereford'. In brief, the Pilley/Watkins model proposed that the pre-Conquest defended town was smaller than that enclosed by the medieval city walls, having a northern perimeter marked by parallel streets: on the outside of the former defences, Eign Gate, High Town, St Owen Street, and on the inside, West Street and East Street (see map 6). Watkins also drew attention to the 'King's Ditch' west of Broad Street (see map 2), a feature running north-south within the pre-Conquest enclosure, suggesting that this marked the western boundary of an even earlier enclosure whose opposite side lay along the eastern side of the Cathedral Close. There matters more or less remained until the advent of large-scale archaeological excavations in 1967-1976, which confirmed some of the main elements of the Pilley/Watkins model while adding very substantially to it. The present model of the city's development, as developed in the 1970s and updated by more recent discoveries, is as follows:

- The origins of Hereford remain enigmatic. There is an increasing body of evidence for Roman activity, including buildings and occupation of some kind in the vicinity of the present cathedral.

- c.676AD. The probable foundation of the cathedral. The current orthodoxy is that it was founded next to a crossroads at the junction of a north-south route (approximating to Broad Street) heading for the Palace Ford across the Wye, and an east-west route represented by King Street and Castle Street. Contemporaneous burials were taking place on the St Guthlac's site (later Castle Green) to the east.

- Late 8th century/early 9th century. Undefended settlement developed in the Victoria Street/ Berrington Street area, possibly within a local planned framework of north-south streets, one excavated west of Berrington Street, the latter implied by excavation to be of the same date.

- 9th century. The first defended town, its gravel and clay rampart and ditch demonstrated by excavation on the west and north sides but the putative eastern side returning down the eastern side of the Cathedral Close remaining unproven.

- c.900AD. The town was refortified with a turf, clay and timber rampart extended well to the east (proved by excavations at Cantilupe Street) to include the St Guthlac's site. The defences were strengthened by stone walls later in the 10th century.

- Late 10th to 11th century. There is evidence from both the west and east sides of the city for the neglect or abandonment of the defences before an episode of refurbishment involving the re-excavation of the ditch to the west and the provision of a timber fence or palisade on the east. These may be associated with the documented refortification of the city in 1055. Recent C14 dates from the Bishop's Meadow Row Ditch south of the river suggest it may date from the same episode.

- The castle is built following the Norman Conquest. From the 1070s a new market place (High Town) was established outside the old defences, and this rapidly became the new commercial core of the city

- Late 12th century. New defences were built to enclose the newly-developed High Town area, re-using the western and eastern sides of the old perimeter but establishing a new line further north. At first of earthwork and timber construction, this line was fortified in stone from the 13th century on

This, crudely summarised, is the model published by Ron Shoesmith as early as 1974 and further developed in 1982, which remains the orthodox archaeological understanding of the way the city has developed, reiterated most recently by Thomas and Boucher (2002, 8-11).

The latter volume also contains a first attempt at town-plan analysis for the city, making use of detail extracted from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey plans to propose a six-fold division of the intramural city (in addition to the historic precincts) based largely on the character of the plots (Thomas and Boucher, 'Some thoughts on urban morphology', 2002, 193-196). Although a very brief exercise, it made a number of sound and perceptive observations (reiterated and explored below) but may also have jumped to a number of premature conclusions regarding plot morphology and date.

Method (map 7)

The town-plan analysis that follows is (like that of 2002) a highly abbreviated summary rather than a detailed and comprehensive study, but it is nevertheless believed that, supported by archaeological and historical evidence, a number of new insights can be gained into the development of Hereford and its townscape. The method is derived from that devised by the geographer M R G Conzen in the late 1950s and utilised by him in his pioneering study of Alnwick, Northumberland (Conzen 1969) and in many other towns. The same approach has subsequently been developed by other scholars and has previously been used by this writer to examine the development of Worcester and of Gloucester, cathedral cities and shire towns in many ways comparable to Hereford (Baker and Holt 2004). The reader is referred to that volume for further bibliographic detail and to the website of the *Urban Morphology Research Group* based in the University of Birmingham.

In summary, town-plan analysis of this kind relies upon the difficulty, once an area has become fully built up, of inflicting changes to the urban plan at a scale larger than that of the individual plot – multiplicity of ownership interests and the fixed capital inherent in the townscape inhibiting processes of change. As a consequence of this phenomenon, now widely recognised and demonstrated, it is likely that a substantial proportion of the property boundaries mapped by the Ordnance Survey in the 1880s will have originated in the medieval period, shared, common boundaries in particular being likely to date from the original urbanisation of a given area. From this it follows that where street-spaces and plots vary in character between adjacent parts of a town, such character differences may well reflect discontinuities and different conditions in the original urbanisation process and it may in many cases be possible to define boundaries, or plan seams, that separate them.

Map 6 represents the town plan of Hereford, as surveyed in 1885, stripped of its more volatile elements (buildings) and reduced to its more static infrastructural core (streets and property boundaries). As a first stage the plan is disaggregated into what appear to be its component parts,

Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation

Map 7 Historic Plan - Units (1888 base-map)

KEY

1	Eign Gate - Bewell Street
2	Widemarsh Street
3	High Town (north) - Maylord Street
4	Commercial Street - Union Street
5	Union Street (east)
6	Eign Gate
7	High Street - High Town (south)
8	St Owen Street (south)
9	St Owen Street (north) - Gaol Street
10	St Owen's extra mural market
11	Berrington Street - Aubrey Street
12	Broad Street
13	Church Street
14	East Street
15	Cathedral Close and environs
16	Castle Street
17	Hereford Castle
18	King Street - Bridge Street
19	St Martin's

NORTH

Not to Scale

Herefordshire Council

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based on character differences between areas. While this stage is inevitably largely descriptive and frequently simply defines the extent of plots attached to a particular street, it also highlights a number of features, drawn out in the discussion that follows, that appear to be significant in the early urbanisation process.

Analysis (map 7)

Plan-unit 1. Eign Gate-Bewell Street
Similar forms in other towns and the archaeology of this area suggest that these two streets need to be considered together as an important planned townscape component. At first sight, this plan-unit contains two very different landscapes: the long, narrow block between the two streets almost completely built up on very small plots nearly all of which face south onto Eign Gate, together with the medieval parish church of All Saints; and the northern side of Bewell Street behind, laid out with very large, wide plots extending back to the city wall, some boundaries of which still survive. While there has been no effective archaeological investigation of the main street (Eign Gate) frontage, the archaeological character of Bewell Street is well established: there is plentiful evidence of pre-Conquest activity particularly towards the west end of the street (e.g the Tesco excavations, SMR 271), but no evidence of building along the street frontage until later in the medieval period. Indeed, the character of the Bewell Street north frontage appears to have been mainly industrial, with intensive iron working up to c.1200 (39-40 Bewell Street, SMR 38459, 41928). Bewell Street was clearly always a subsidiary or service lane to the main frontage block. As such, it invites comparison with the (earlier, grander) arrangement of service lanes either side of Winchester High Street and appears to be an example of later pre-Conquest town planning. The presence of All Saints' Church, a royal foundation, in the frontage block strongly suggests that this too was part of the project, and that the whole may be interpreted as a planned royal development that accommodated some at least of the king's tenants dwelling outside the walls, recorded by Domesday Book. The plots extending north from Bewell Street may, however, be part of an earlier landscape. Like the common boundary to the Widemarsh Street plots that terminates the series on the east, some at least of them may well have continued far to the north before being truncated by the new city defences in the late 12th century, in which case they would fall into place as part of a much larger pre-Conquest field system extending down to the Widemarsh Brook and its floodplain (see discussion, below).

Plan-unit 2. Widemarsh Street
Although it is now separated by the late 12th-century defences into a short intramural section and a much longer extramural section, each with its own distinct townscape character, Widemarsh Street appears in origin to be a single townscape component, extending at least 500 metres from the Eign Gate – High Street road north to the Widemarsh, and possibly 750 metres to the north side of the Widemarsh Brook. Within the walls the plots on the west side are well defined by a continuous back boundary. On the east side, only the northernmost intramural plots had (prior to the Maylord Orchards development) a matching common rear boundary at a similar distance back from the street: south of Maylord Street the plots are much shorter and appear to have been truncated by development running back from the more important High Town frontage. Although Widemarsh Street is not recorded by name until the 13th century, it was until the mid-19th century the major approach road to the city from the north. Archaeological evidence that there was occupation along the street in the 12th century (Stone 1997) is consistent with the topographical evidence that the suburb was bisected by the new defences of c.1190 (Shoesmith 1982), and with the historical evidence for the foundation of the Hospital of St Sepulchre between 1154 and 1189 on the edge of the Widemarsh on the Coningsby's Hospital site.

Plan-unit 3. High Town (north side) – Maylord Street
The plots here extend fairly uniformly along the frontage of High Town and Commercial Street to its east, either side of Gomond Street. Before the insertion of the Maylord Orchard development of the 1980s the plots all ran back to Maylord Street which functioned as a back lane; its curving return to the main frontage (also removed in the 1980s) just within the city wall has been suggested to have been the result of truncation and re-planning when the wall was built (Thomas and Boucher 2002, 176). The archaeological evidence is consistent with these plots having been laid out for Fitz Osbern's new market place (High Town) in the 1070s, with late 11th-century pottery from the Trinity Hospital site on Commercial Street and 12th-century pottery from the backs of the plots at Maylord Orchards. Whether Maylord Street was a planned contemporary back-service lane is uncertain, the present line having been established in the late 14th century though possibly having shifted from the line of a much earlier metalled path along the backs of the plots (Thomas and Boucher 2002, 41-50). This plan-unit also approximately represents the extent of the medieval Jewish quarter prior to the expulsion of 1290.

Plan-unit 4. The Commercial Street – Union Street triangle
This block, defined by Commercial Street, Union Street and St Peter's Street, has usually been discussed as an example of market infill, developed at the junction of the main through streets and built up in the 13th or 14th century (Thomas and Boucher 2002, fig.1.13). However, the form of the plots within this block is entirely conventional – short, wide strip-type plots taking their principal alignment from the principal frontage (Commercial Street), with shorter plots facing south-west onto St Peter's Street and very restricted development on Union Street, which appears (as now) to have been of secondary importance. There is no sign here of the typical market infill or market encroachment, characterised by M R G Conzen (1960) as consisting of plots that were 100% occupied by their buildings – in other words, buildings with no attached yards or gardens. Excavations within the north end of this block (SMR 47244; Stone 1998) close to the Union Street frontage found a small patch (c.2m x 1m) of metalling laid and in use before the mid-12th century and interpreted as a possible market-place surface; it was however rapidly cut by pitting (also before the mid-12th century) and both a post-built building and a stone-lined subterranean feature constructed nearby before c.1200. The sequence may therefore be interpreted equally well as building and other activities taking place within conventional plots. As a piece of 'normal' urban development rather than an encroachment retarded by regulation, this area may be expected to have been built up from the late 11th century onwards as part of the general development of the High Town marketing area. The block also contains the parish church of St Peter, a contemporary part of this process, founded before 1085 by Walter de Lacy and clearly related to St Peter's Square, the space at the southern end of the triangle, and to St Owen Street beyond, leading towards de Lacy's other ecclesiastical foundation, the church of St Audoen, and what appears to have been an additional marketing area around it (Lobel 1969, 4; see below).

Plan-unit 5. Union Street (east side)
The plots on the east side of the street are conventional in their layout with a common rear boundary reflecting the curve of the frontage, small, narrow plots developed on the frontage and a few, much wider, plot tails running back to the rear at what appear to be regular intervals. The latter might possibly reflect an original division of the east side of the street into four plots, though Taylor's map of 1757 shows seven plots in the series, including an exceptionally wide one behind (approximately) 16-21 Union Street. The development of these plots may be assumed, from the results over the road at the rear of 46 Commercial Street (above) to have commenced by the mid-12th century.

Plan-unit 6. Eign Gate
The development of the northern frontage of this important through street has been discussed above; the southern frontage may have been developed as part of the same project but has the important distinction of immediately abutting the pre-Conquest city ditch. From Ron Shoesmith's investigations in 1968-70 the lip of the ditch can be estimated as lying about 13 metres south of the present and medieval frontage (Shoesmith 1971), which would be enough to permit (even before the ditch was reclaimed) the development of normal frontage buildings with either the separate rear-rank structures characteristic of many towns in the late 10th- and 11th-century or the attached rear ranges perpendicular to the frontage normal in later periods. The process of the disuse and reclamation of the ditch cannot be dated accurately here, though it appears still to have been open to its full depth in the 11th and/or 12th century.

Plan-unit 7. High Street – High Town (south)
Occupation of this area, and the foundations of the present plot pattern, is assumed to start with the establishment of High Town as a new market place in the 1070s. Archaeological evidence for the development of the frontage is however limited. A salvage excavation at 16-18 High Town (SMR 15999) found evidence of gravel spreads above and below (earlier and later than) a timber building of 12th-century or earlier date that had burnt down, between the street frontage and the pre-Conquest city ditch, which here lies about 17 to 25 metres back from the High Town frontage. It might be thought that the creation of High Town as a new market place for the city might be the cue for the centrally-organised infilling and reclamation of the ditch; there is however no evidence for this, and, where the ditch has been examined, no sign of the rapid arrival of clean fills: it seems instead to have lingered into the 12th century as a sewer. The plots filling this block have a distinctive form: long, many boundaries passing right through the block to East Street at the rear; very narrow, doubtless a product of the high value of the frontage here; intensively built up for some distance back from the main street; and punctuated at frequent intervals by alleyways communicating between the main and rear frontages. This distinctive 'ladder-pattern' morphology is widely paralleled in other English towns (for example, the Lanes of Carlisle, or the north side of Nottingham's market) where high-value plots fronting a market place were penetrated by closely-spaced alleyways to give access to developments on their backlands and, either from the first or by stages, communicate with parallel secondary streets at the rear.

Plan-unit 8. St Owen Street (south)
The origins of the plan-form of this block may be assumed to be very similar to the two previous areas discussed, in the sense that to a large degree it too is a product of the apparently gradual infilling of the pre-Conquest city ditch. However, the present plot pattern is more open that that of the south side of High Town, the larger plots probably deriving from two factors: less competition for space away from the core of the marketing area; and the probable amalgamation of plots in the post-medieval period, particularly in the 18th century, to allow the building of the evidently high-status (probably professional and gentry) Georgian houses that still stand there. The pre-Conquest defences are perfectly evident through this area in the form of a linear depression through the body of the plots and a rise up towards East Street at the rear, following the rampart. As in the plan-units previously discussed, there is no clear understanding of how the defences were levelled – whether by a corporate campaign affecting many plots, or piecemeal, property by property. In this plan-unit, dominated by high-status residential plots, the role that East Street developed as a rear service lane is particularly clearly expressed architecturally, with, for example, surviving coach houses and workers' dwellings. This stands in contrast to the two previous plan-units where (to a limited extent) West Street and East Street, though remaining secondary, developed independent commercial functions. Here though, most plots run from the St Owen Street frontage through the full depth of the block, there having been very little development of independent plots fronting East Street.

Plan-unit 9. St Owen Street (north) and Gaol Street
The historic plot-pattern here is quite different from that on the south side of the street: though it probably developed at the same time, the processes and constraints were different. Here there were neither defences to be reclaimed nor a pre-existing former 'wall street' like East Street for the plots to run back to. The back lane function was provided by Gaol Street, the medieval Grope Lane. It has been persuasively argued that – like Maylord Street in relation to Commercial Street – Grope Lane was a planned rear lane that serviced a much longer series of St Owen Street plots before being truncated and diverted towards the main frontage by the construction of the city defences in the late 12th century (Thomas and Boucher 2002, 176); its line can in fact be seen to continue far out into the countryside. The intramural plots in this block are rather more heterogeneous than those on the south side, with some quite narrow plots passing all the way from the main frontage to the lane at the rear, some extremely wide plots, and some very short plots. If Isaac Taylor's 1757 map can be relied on for this detail, the character of the plots in the mid-18th century was generally similar, with spacious gardens at the rear of grand houses already a leading characteristic of the area.

Gaol Street (Grope Lane) is included within this plan-unit for the reasons given above, though separate plots were developed on its north side within the medieval period. This has been demonstrated by the excavation of a 13th-century house on its north side, built behind the 12th-century rampart and later wall. Whether the plot-pattern shown here by the mid- and late 19th-century mapping is related to what was there in the medieval period is improbable, Taylor's 1757 map showing only two boundaries running back to the defences but a common back boundary running very close and parallel to the lane. Much of this small area was radically changed by the building of the gaol, and its subsequent partial demolition and replacement by the former De Lacy Street. The street-name, Grope Lane, in conjunction with the spatial relationship of the lane to the High Town markets area, also makes it fairly clear that this was a centre of medieval prostitution (Holt and Baker 2001).

Plan-unit 10. St Owen's extramural market
Taylor's map of 1757 shows that this part of St Owen Street, just outside the medieval St Owen's Gate, was much wider than other parts of the street, both inside and outside the walls, and had a block of encroaching properties towards the south side extending east from the site of St Owen's Church. The church was itself an encroachment, standing in the street. Though the church is long gone, the original southern street or market-place frontage is still visible in the form of a row of cottages now set back from the present frontage behind gardens, while the encroachment block is represented by a mid-19th-century building (a launderette) standing on the present frontage, which has moved north. The plots that Isaac Taylor shows built up in 1757 coincided with this widened section of the street. The localised widening of the street together with the island of encroachments, including the church, point to a small but distinct extramural market-place given official encouragement by the foundation there of St Owen's/ Audoen's. This was a late 11th-century foundation by Walter de Lacy and is precisely paralleled in the Southgate suburb of Gloucester by the St Audoen's Church founded there (also known later as St Owen's) by the early post-Conquest Constables of the Castle (Baker and Holt 2004). The Gloucester St Audoen's appears to have been founded to serve both the new suburb and the garrison of the castle. While the Hereford St Audoen's is directly associated with this small market-place, the latter must itself – as it appears to predate the medieval defences and gate – have been sited in relation to Hereford castle, though it also raises the question of the status of the old Anglo-Saxon defences at this corner after the castle had been built. Excavation at 16-18 Harrison Street in 1999 (SMR 30317), at the back of the westernmost plot on the north side of this plan-unit, found evidence of 12th-century occupation, including a timber building and a metalled lane running SW-NE roughly perpendicular to the St Owen Street frontage. The lane would presumably have communicated with the postulated rear access lane (continuing the line of Grope Lane/Gaol Street) running along the backs of the plots.

Plan-unit 11. Berrington Street – Aubrey Street
Of all the plan components that make up the historic city, this one has the earliest substantial evidence of domestic occupation, excavations in the late 1960s and 1970s having found a lost north-south road with associated post-built buildings under the defences west of Berrington Street and, next to Berrington Street itself, at least one further building, all of probable late 8th-century date. The buildings lay fairly widely spaced, perpendicular to the street surfaces (Shoesmith 1982, summarised in Thomas and Boucher 2002, 8). Though Berrington Street (and possibly Aubrey Street, running roughly parallel) seems to originate at this time, it is not clear from what date the recorded plot pattern developed. The answer is probably that different elements came into existence at different dates anytime from c.800 onwards, the excavated record showing that the area has been continuously occupied from that date on. Apart from the element of homogeneity imparted to the area by its two approximately parallel north-south streets, this plan-unit is distinguished more by its differences to surrounding areas than from any striking or strongly consistent internal character. The plots, mostly east-west, were of a variety of widths and sizes, though if Isaac Taylor's map can be trusted for such detail, the plots extending west from Berrington Street were more uniformly narrow that those to the east.

Plan-unit 12. Broad Street
Broad Street is a very singular element of the town plan: a street of exceptional width flanked by uniformly wide plots running perpendicularly to it. It has long been taken to be the principal street of the pre-Conquest town, running between the North Gate (Norgate) at its north end and, it has been argued, continuing due south past the Bishop's Palace enclosure to give access to the Wye crossing of the Palace Ford. The latter point still arguably lacks authoritative proof, with no sign (for example, a relict hollow-way) of a descent of the roadway down the steep terraced gradient in the Bishop's Palace garden immediately east of the wet, low-lying, King's Ditch (see below); an alternative route might have been provided perhaps by Gwynne Street, descending into and crossing the King's Ditch lower down. Broad Street certainly appears to have continued south as far as the north side of the Bishop's Palace enclosure, as metalling excavated on the Mappa Mundi site up to 11m east of the present Cathedral Close frontage is consistent with a continuation of the eastern side of Broad Street on its alignment north of the close. At up to twenty metres wide it was clearly a street of particular status within the pre-Conquest defences, being equalled in width only by King Street, its continuation to the west. This status is also evident from the Mappa Mundi excavations, which located a pre-Conquest mortar-bonded stone cellar perpendicular to and contemporary with the street metalling, together with a stone wall footing continuing south along the street frontage, either for a further range of buildings or for a boundary wall to the precinct. Domestic stone buildings are extremely rare in pre-Conquest towns, other excavated examples being confined to a probable royal hall in Northampton and – perhaps the closest parallel to the Broad Street basement – a small stone building from middle Saxon Winchester (Lower Brook Street) associated with gold working. But Broad Street may be the location of yet another early stone building, the former North Gate. The location of the gate through the defences has long been evident from the name Norgate, shown on Isaac Taylor's map of 1757 attached to the narrow (later widened) section of the north end of Broad Street. There, in 1905, the amateur archaeologist Walter Pilley investigated two parallel walls of 'well dressed' mortared stone, exposed in roadworks, that he thought had been part of the Saxon North Gate, within the ditch (SMR 44574). It would be easy to dismiss this record as that of a much later structure (such as an undercroft) were it not for Shoesmith's 1968 investigation nearby on the corner of West Street and Broad Street where some of the earliest pre-Conquest strata were found to include stone chippings (SMR 443).

Plan-unit 13. Church Street
This plan-unit is quite distinct, consisting of a series of short, very narrow plots on each side of the street/lane. At the north end the plots are intermingled with the adjoining series facing north onto East Street, and there have clearly been parcels exchanged between the series. Most of the Church Street plots however terminated on long, common, north-south boundaries which, on both sides, are longer than the plot series they contain. Archaeological evidence is lacking, other than from the specific context of 20 Church Street, a canonical house (see below). The impression, however, is that Church Street and its plots are a late arrival in the urban landscape: although the street could be taken to have some processional or liturgical significance by virtue of pointing directly towards the mid-point of the cathedral, its width suggests that it was never a major thoroughfare and there is no evidence that it related to an entrance through the pre-Conquest defences. It can also be suggested that the rear (north-south) boundaries to the plots either side may not have been established for that purpose, but may have been part of an earlier landscape into which Church Street and its plots were inserted.

Plan-unit 14. East Street
East Street, like West Street, appears to have originated as a planned 'wall street' at the time of the refurbishment and extension of the pre-Conquest defences, probably in the late 9th century. As such it has many direct parallels, particularly in the Wessex burhs of King Alfred where wall-streets (or linear cleared zones) were designed to facilitate the movement of troops around a defended perimeter. A number of archaeological excavations on West Street and East Street (formerly known together as Behind-the-walls Street) have shown that these streets either follow the tail of the rampart or encroach upon it. Iron working was, on a number of sites, a feature of late Saxon occupation in the immediate vicinity (Shoesmith 1971; Thomas and Boucher 2002, 15-17). In time, housing developed along West Street and East Street, with plot development most advanced on the western part of East Street, probably because of its proximity to the later medieval High Town marketing core. As already discussed, further east, behind St Owen Street, East Street remained a back-service lane, plot development remaining much more limited.

Plan-unit 15. The Cathedral Close and its environs
This plan-unit – the largest in the walled city – encompasses the cathedral church and its associated buildings together with the open space (the cemetery) around them, and the plots that face into it or immediately adjoin it. Adopting this simple definition immediately raises a number of points concerning the geography of this area. The first and most obvious is that of the regularity of its principal features, first and foremost, the cathedral cemetery itself. This is particularly apparent in terms of the present northern cemetery frontage in relation to what appears to have been its former southern frontage, formed by a straight west-east line following the southern wall of the south walk of the cloisters (which incorporates and was respected by the north wall of the late 12th-century bishop's chapel), and the north elevation of the Vicars Choral which represents its public 'frontage' onto the cemetery. The cemetery, thus defined, lay symmetrically about an east-west axis formed by King Street to the west and Castle Street to the east, with a precision that makes it difficult to believe this was not a carefully planned composition, dominated by a cathedral lying centrally within the open space. The present cathedral church lies just to the south of the east-west axis (and about five degrees off its alignment) though the present crossing occurs almost exactly centrally within the space between Broad Street and the east side of the cemetery.

Of the plots facing into the cemetery, the Bishop's palace occupies by far the largest, occupying two-thirds of the total river frontage. The boundary between the Bishop's Palace enclosure and the Vicars Choral next door is an anomalous curving feature in an otherwise rectilinear landscape, but appears to be ancient, in place by 1472 when the Vicars Choral was established, and defined by a stone wall of medieval character which separates substantial terraces on the gradient to the west from an even slope to the east – the two plots having been clearly subject to very different depositional processes. On the north side of the cemetery the canonical residences sit within plots of various sizes, but mostly large and rectilinear in form. This seems the most likely context for the origin of the straight north-south boundaries into which the Church Street plots have been fitted – a series of very large rectilinear plots extending northwards from the cemetery frontage to contain canonical residences. If this is correct, the environs of Hereford Cathedral may, uniquely, preserve a landscape type that was once widespread in English towns – large, largely empty plots containing a single high-status residence – but which, even before the end of the 10th century, had begun to disappear under pressure from growing urban populations. The date at which this landscape was actually established in Hereford is another question. While the canonical plots and the cemetery boundaries could be a product of the reconstitution of the cathedral in the late 11th or 12th century, this regular landscape takes up such a large proportion of the pre-Conquest fortified area that it is difficult to believe that it is not itself also of pre-Conquest date, though whether of the 11th century or of the 8th, there is, at the moment, no evidence.

Plan-units 16. Castle Street and 17. Hereford Castle
Castle Street itself represents one of the outstanding unsolved problems of the east side of early medieval Hereford: interpreted for many years as a major through-street truncated by the construction of the Norman castle, there is no supporting evidence to indicate that it ever continued beyond the city's perimeter. Yet its width, its association with the planning of the Cathedral Close and associations with the castle and with the site of St Guthlac's church within the castle, all indicate its importance, and there is recent excavated evidence for late pre-Conquest occupation at its eastern end (the Castle Hotel: SMR 31780, 31829). The eastern end of the street was also the site of the medieval corn market, which in 1395 was said to have 'long been held' there (Whitehead 2007, 22-23). The plots lining Castle Street, and St Ethelbert Street, its northward return, fall into two groups. Those towards the west end of the street, in institutional use, are wider, with large areas of garden ground behind the north-side plots and smaller areas behind the south-side plots, which are dog-legged to the west. The plots on both sides of the streets further east are (apart from the St Ethelbert's Hospital plot) narrower, and generally in residential use. These distinctions do not seem to be purely recent, though they do reflect current land use (institutional v. residential): they can be seen on Taylor's map of 1757 and distinction between the main plot types appears to coincide with the parish boundary between St John's (the Cathedral parish) and St Owen. The western end of the street was at least partly occupied by further canonical residences. The extent to which the area was subject to regular planning is uncertain: minor streets (Quay Street, Ferrers Street, St Ethelbert Street) branch off Castle Street at approximate right-angles and could be interpreted as a simple street grid adapted to the constraints of the site.

This is not the context for a detailed consideration of the castle, and readers are referred to Whitehead's The Castle Green at Hereford (2007) for the latest treatment of it. Concerning its origins, in brief summary it may however be said that Whitehead (pp.15, 25-7) doubts the long-cherished belief that Hereford Castle was begun, or had a predecessor, before the Norman Conquest, while emphasising the strong possibility of an Anglo-Saxon royal hall somewhere in the vicinity of St Guthlac's in the area later taken over by the castle bailey.

Plan-unit 18. King Street and Bridge Street
King Street is one of the few streets in Hereford with relevant, dated, sub-surface archaeology from below the actual carriageway. This was obtained from a corduroy (transverse log) surface laid down where the roads crossed the King's Ditch opposite the junction with Aubrey Street; the timbers were C14-dated to c.900-1200AD but may not have been the first such surface to take traffic over this boggy, infilled valley. Bridge Street is, as the name suggests, intimately associated with the river crossing, which, on the present Wye Bridge site, can now be taken back to the 1080s (dendro-dates on piles supporting an abutment) – though an earlier bridge on the same site cannot be ruled out. The late 11th century is also the most likely date for the foundation of St Nicholas' church at the top of the street, and the two together (as in Gloucester) strongly suggest early Norman re-planning in this area associated with the building or re-building of the bridge and, doubtless, its approaches, which here would most probably necessitate a causeway from the floodplain edge, roughly 60 metres inshore in modern terms. This would be entirely consistent with work on river-crossings and their approaches taking place in many other shire towns (Shrewsbury, Worcester, Gloucester, Oxford) at precisely this time. It has also been suggested that the St Martin's suburb across the river was conceived as part of the same campaign (K. Ray, pers comm. and Thomas & Boucher 2002, 192). Excavation on the eastern frontage of Bridge Street at the Crystal Rooms site (SMR 39314) found pits that had survived later cellarage dated from the early 12th century on. Re-planning in this area seems not to have extended to the actual plots, which are long and narrow but irregular in outline, reflecting both the slight curve in the street and the contours of the gradient on the terrace edge. In detail, Bridge Street resolves itself into two sections: that on the terrace being wider and straighter than the section descending the gradient. One factor in the formation of this area which is now quite well understood is the infilling of the King's Ditch to the east of Bridge Street, with substantial reclamation taking place on the tails of the east-side plots (SMR 39314). One factor that is not understood is whether the riverside edge of the town was defended in the pre-Conquest period: there are substantial terraces on the gradient within the plots at 34-38 Bridge Street, but whether these conceal an eastwards return of the Anglo-Saxon rampart, last seen just to the north in the Deen's Court area (SMR 42945), remains uncertain (see Thomas and Boucher 2002, 184-5).

Discussion

This town-plan analysis, a sub-section of the overall characterisation, can in no way be thought to 'solve' Hereford, in the sense of providing an over-arching, comprehensive narrative or framework into which a host of archaeological, historical and topographical evidence can be fitted. That would be a major project in itself, an appropriate subject for a full urban assessment on the lines of those commissioned by English Heritage elsewhere. The analysis above simply seeks to distinguish and briefly comment upon the likely derivation of the major components that appear to underlie the present and recorded plan-form of Hereford. The following discussion seeks to extract a few major themes and draw some tentative conclusions from them. Time and space have not allowed analysis of the suburbs.

The 'morphological frame': the site, through-routes and field patterns

The summary plan-analysis has identified a number of factors that influenced and moulded the development of the built-up area. First and foremost is the natural topography of the site on which the city grew. It is hoped to address this in more detail at a later stage of the urban archaeological

strategy process with the analysis of data relating to the present surface topography and to depths of archaeological deposit found around the city, from which it will be possible to create a more accurate model than has hitherto been possible for the shape of the natural site. At this stage it is however necessary to emphasise the importance of the minor watercourses: the Yazor Brook, feeding water into the town's pre-Conquest and medieval defences from the north west, and its tributary, the Eign Brook (sections of which were also known as the Widemarsh Brook and the Tan Brook) which drove a chain of mills, provided water for industry and doubtless for grazing (see below) and provided an outer boundary to the city from the north and east. One unsolved problem in relation to the Eign Brook as a boundary or barrier is the date and function of the Row Ditch, to the south-east of the city in the Bartonsham area. This linear earthwork links the lower end of the Eign Brook to the Wye, reinforcing the edge of the gravel terrace above the floodplain in the river-loop opposite Rotherwas.

A subject that has long been central to any discussion of the evolution of Hereford is that of the major long-distance roads passing across the site, in particular (1) the north-south long distance route through the Marches, represented within the medieval built-up area by Widemarsh Street, Broad Street and St Martin's Street and (2) the putative east-west route, represented by Castle Street and King Street. In brief, the plan-analysis has been able to shed no further light on the vexed question of the southward continuation of Broad Street over the Palace Ford, other than to question the surface topographical evidence for a well-used route descending the gradient to the west of the Bishop's Palace. The analysis has however rejected the idea of boundary alignments east of Broad Street representing a deflection from a direct course of the latter towards Widemarsh Street (see Stone and Appleton-Fox 1993, 7). While the analysis does support the importance of King Street and Castle Street in the planning of the Cathedral Close it has however been able to find no evidence outside the city of a continuation of these west-east roads outside the built-up area. In fact, the evidence points to the primacy of the Whitecross Road – Eign Gate – High Town – St Owen Street route as the principal east-west route through the site that determined the form of the city. This is evident not only in its long-distance connections but in its close relationship with the coaxial field system that underlies the built up area from Eign Street west of the defences all the way to Eign Road in the east, extending from the road down to the Eign or Widemarsh Brook and its floodplain. This field system formed the framework into which were fitted: the Eign Street/ Bewell Street planned area; Widemarsh Street; the plots of Commercial Road; and the St Owen extramural market. Parallels should be sought in neighbouring shire towns and the provision of extensive organised grazing extending out from their early medieval cores into floodplain areas and their watercourses (as in Gloucester and Shrewsbury).

Planning inside the Anglo-Saxon defences

Prominent in any discussion of pre-Conquest Hereford is the question of town planning and, in particular, the provision of a regular, rectilinear street grid right across the 8th-century town, and its extension to the east in the late 9th century (see introduction to this section). The subject is of much more than local interest, Hereford being embedded in the national archaeological and historical literature as an early example of Anglo-Saxon town planning reflective of the administrative sophistication of Mercia under Offa. The analysis above does not dispute the presence of rectilinear town planning in the pre-Conquest town, but it does question its uniformity, suggesting that the present city plan is a combination of at least two quite separate components. In the western part of the city, Berrington Street may very well, as Shoesmith originally suggested, represent part of a planned street grid, with Aubrey Street as one component and a metalled lane discovered by excavation under the western defences as another. But whether Broad Street and the rectilinear town-plan elements north of the cathedral close are part of the same system now seems doubtful, for two reasons. The first is that the plan characteristics of each area are quite different: The Berrington Street area consists of parallel north-south streets containing small east-west strip-type plots that may or may not be related to the excavated plots of the 8th century and later. The plan characteristics of the cathedral area on the other hand are north-south streets at wider intervals with their associated plots separated by major common boundaries parallel to the streets, a landscape interpreted here as having evolved from a few very large rectilinear plots facing south onto a rectangular open space around the cathedral. The second reason for arguing for different origins for these two areas is that the weight of evidence suggests that they lay in different jurisdictions or lordships, and that different agencies – the king and the bishop respectively – are likely to have been responsible for their planning. Medieval Hereford was divided between two fees, the king's and the bishop's. While it is apparent that by the later Middle Ages these estates were inextricably intermingled (Rosser 1998), the Domesday account implies that they were in the 11th century distinct parts of the town, with the king's fee described as the *civitas*, (the city) the bishop's as the *port*, suggesting that it contained the market place, probably in Broad Street. The boundary between the two, west of the cathedral, was almost certainly the King's Ditch, as both Alfred Watkins (1920) and M D Lobel (1969) thought, its line also being followed by the parish boundary between St John's, the cathedral parish, and St Nicholas'. The name 'the King's Ditch' is itself highly suggestive, usually being found attached to suburban boundaries where royal towns met the surrounding rural manors. Lobel also saw the Castle Street area, within St Owen's parish and in the eastern extension to the burh, as within the king's jurisdiction, a view consistent with Whitehead's (2007) appreciation of the likelihood of a royal palace in the immediate vicinity of St Guthlac's and the later castle; the townscape here may also have been subject to a degree of rectilinear town planning based on the axis of Castle Street though, as discussed, this street – and the area in general – remain some of the least well understood parts of Hereford.

Planning outside the Anglo-Saxon defences

The analysis has drawn attention to the singular character of the pairing of Eign Street and Bewell Street and suggested that this represents another pre-Conquest planning episode in royal jurisdiction, quite distinct from High Town to the east. In contrast, High Town, usually discussed as a major piece of early Norman town planning, bears few of the conventional signs of a 'planned' origin. With further evidence this view might change, for instance, if the plots were measured and found to present recurrent regular dimensions, or if the pre-Conquest ditch behind/under the south-side properties was found to have been infilled and reclaimed in a single brief episode. However, on present evidence it appears more likely to be an instance of constitutional town planning, with tenements built up on an ad hoc basis around an existing road network and its triangular junction, but encouraged to do so by the provision of a newly-imported 'off-the-peg' constitution, the Laws of Breteuil.

5. Land-use and townscape (map 8)

Variations in land-use within central Hereford offer some of the sharpest and most readily discernable distinctions between different parts of the city. This may be illustrated with the briefest consideration of the differences between, say, High Town and Castle Street. Here, although in many instances the architectural forms are more or less the same (three-storey Georgian brick townhouses), the adaptation of ground floors as shops and the consequent pedestrian footfall patterns make the two areas completely and very obviously different. Map 8 (based on a survey undertaken in April 2009) shows current land use in the city centre and its immediate periphery. The colouring seeks to distinguish clearly between commercial functions (including retail, financial, entertainment and industrial uses) and non-commercial functions (including residential, administrative, educational and public).

Retail-sector dominated areas

The retail sector in Hereford is very heavily concentrated on a limited number of streets, mostly in the north-western quarter of the walled city: Eign Gate, Widemarsh Street (within the walls), Church Street, Commercial Street and Maylord Street. Historically, the core of this pattern can be traced back to the 1070s and the creation of High Town as a new marketing area based on the through-routes outside the Saxon defences, though it has been suggested (in the preceding section) that the commercial development of Eign Gate may pre-date this; Church Street is the only street within the former Saxon defences to be wholly dominated by retail functions. From this basic core, the retail area bleeds off in a number of directions: outwards down the Commercial Road suburb; inwards – though in competition with other land uses – into Broad Street and King Street; and sideways into the traditionally lower-status Union Street. The 1980s also saw a significant expansion of the retail sector by means of infill developments within the walls behind the principal through-street frontages (Tesco, Maylord Orchards). It is the core of the retail area (High Town and its immediate surroundings) that saw the highest level of investment in the buildings stock in the course of the 20th century (map 4) and amongst the highest land-values in the 18th and 19th centuries, evident from the height of buildings of that date (map 3). It is perhaps a testament to the stability and sustainability of this pattern of investment and land-use across the centuries that the highest secular pre-modern building in the town was next to the High Town-Widemarsh Street corner, within a few feet of the site of the medieval High Cross.

The mixed-use streets

The retail sector also retains a major presence on the two streets within the Saxon perimeter that are thought to have been commercially the most significant: Broad Street, probably the principal market place of the pre-Conquest town, and King Street, its continuation – another wide street that may have had market functions. Their commercial role, from the pre-Norman period into the early 1960s, was a product of their basic geographical context as elements of the inter-regional north-south through-route, now the A49. But Broad Street, as the principal approach road to the west end of the cathedral church, almost certainly always had significant ceremonial-civic-processional functions and, particularly in the 19th century, these could be accommodated and expressed in its built form. And so Broad Street assumed its present character, dominated by 19th-century monumental and institutional buildings: St Francis Xavier's Church of 1838-9, the Library & Museum of 1874, the Post Office (1881), the Green Dragon Hotel and the Corn Exchange (1857, later demolished). As a central street with the high status accorded by the presence of the cathedral, Broad Street has also attracted financial, professional and administrative functions, most recently represented by the mid-20th-century modernist office blocks used by the Inland Revenue on its west side. It could however be argued that this further dilution of the remaining retail presence has been detrimental, by reducing footfall along the street and isolating the retail offer in King Street and Bridge Street from the main retailing core area.

King Street and Bridge Street have a rather higher professional element in their land-use than is suggested by map 8, as estate agents, a very strong presence in these streets, have been mapped as retail premises. Professional uses are to be expected in this area, by virtue of the distance from the High Town retail core, the proximity of the cathedral (again) conferring a particular status on the area, and the presence of large numbers of Georgian townhouses offering easy conversion to small-scale office spaces and carrying the usual subliminal messages of respectability, enlightenment and permanence that are sought by the professions in cathedral cities everywhere. St Owen Street displays a very similar pattern, with mixed uses – the health professions in the ascendant – inhabiting Georgian architecture that probably originated at a slightly higher social level than Bridge Street. Here, much of the retail component within the intramural part of the street is directly related to health and medicine, but there is a nucleus of pubs and restaurants further out, in the vicinity of the former gate.

The Cathedral Close and the public realm

Of the greatest significance to the identity of Hereford and its sense of place, the Cathedral Close can be argued to represent the true heart of the city. The close itself is remarkably intact and, despite being a focus of numerous pedestrian routes through the city, still offers a strong sense of enclosure – a facet that current initiatives are designed to enhance. But to a much greater degree than is found in most cathedral cities, the influence of the close extends some distance beyond its actual boundaries. This is, firstly, because of the presence of former canonical housing in large plots, in the area to the north, north-east and east of the cathedral, and secondly, because of the character of Castle Street, with its past and present cathedral associations, polite architecture and complete absence of all commercial functions, except for a single hotel at its far end. The Cathedral School represents a substantial eastward extension of cathedral functions into Castle Street. Thus the close, together with its former canons' plots, Castle Street and the adjacent site of the castle (Castle Green) associated together form a distinct enclave or quarter occupying the south-eastern quadrant of the intramural city.

The public, non-commercial, realm is also to be found within the larger part of the city dominated by commercial functions, with a very distinct nucleus on the eastern edge of the commercial core, most prominently represented by the early 19th-century Shire Hall on St Peter's Square. The progenitor was the medieval Bye Street Gate at the junction of Commercial Street (Bye Street) and Union Street. The gate had been used as the City Gaol, which in time expanded into adjoining properties to the south-east. The gate itself was demolished in 1798 though the gaol lasted until 1842. A new City Gaol was completed by 1844 on Gaol Street (then Grope Lane) but after 1877 used as the City Police Station and latterly as a church (Shoesmith and

Central Hereford Townscape Characterisation

Map 8 Modern Land Use

- Retail (including food & drink, pubs)
- Banks & Building Societies
- Commercial & Industrial (including garages)
- Entertainment (including private clubs)
- Professional
- Public (including places of worship, schools, hospitals, council offices)
- Hotels
- Residential Properties
- Empty Premises & Properties

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Crosskey 1994). This building, together with the Shire Hall, the present police station (1976), the new Magistrates Court on Bath Street and the recently-built Probation Service offices on Gaol Street together form a nucleus of public functions that have persisted in the same area since the Middle Ages. The 1903-4 Town Hall too, on St Owen Street, can be seen as a satellite member of the same group of monumental public buildings, framing St Peter's Square.

Residential functions

Residential functions are found scattered throughout central Hereford, though more rarely in the commercial core area (High Town, High Street), even on upper floors. Small clusters of residential properties are however a feature of some of the margins of the commercial city, notably on Gwynne Street, the south side of St Nicholas Street and off Bridge Street at Wye Terrace. Areas wholly dominated by residential functions are however confined to the non-commercial quarter, notably the eastern end of Castle Street and the remainder of the block extending north to East Street, where a certain amount of 19th-century workers' housing was associated with the street's service role in relation to St Owen Street. Cantilupe Street was an extension, in the late 19th century, of villa-type housing into one of the few intramural areas that remained open, in proximity to this 'polite' residential quarter. Of the inner historic suburbs, Barton Street to the west is mainly residential, St Martin Street to the south likewise, though with a larger commercial presence in its west-side plots, while the principal historic through-route suburbs feeding into the commercial core – Eign Street to the west, Widemarsh Street to the north, Commercial Road to the north-east and St Owen Street to the east are all largely commercial, with residential functions competing more successfully for sites further out from the core or behind the main through-street frontages.

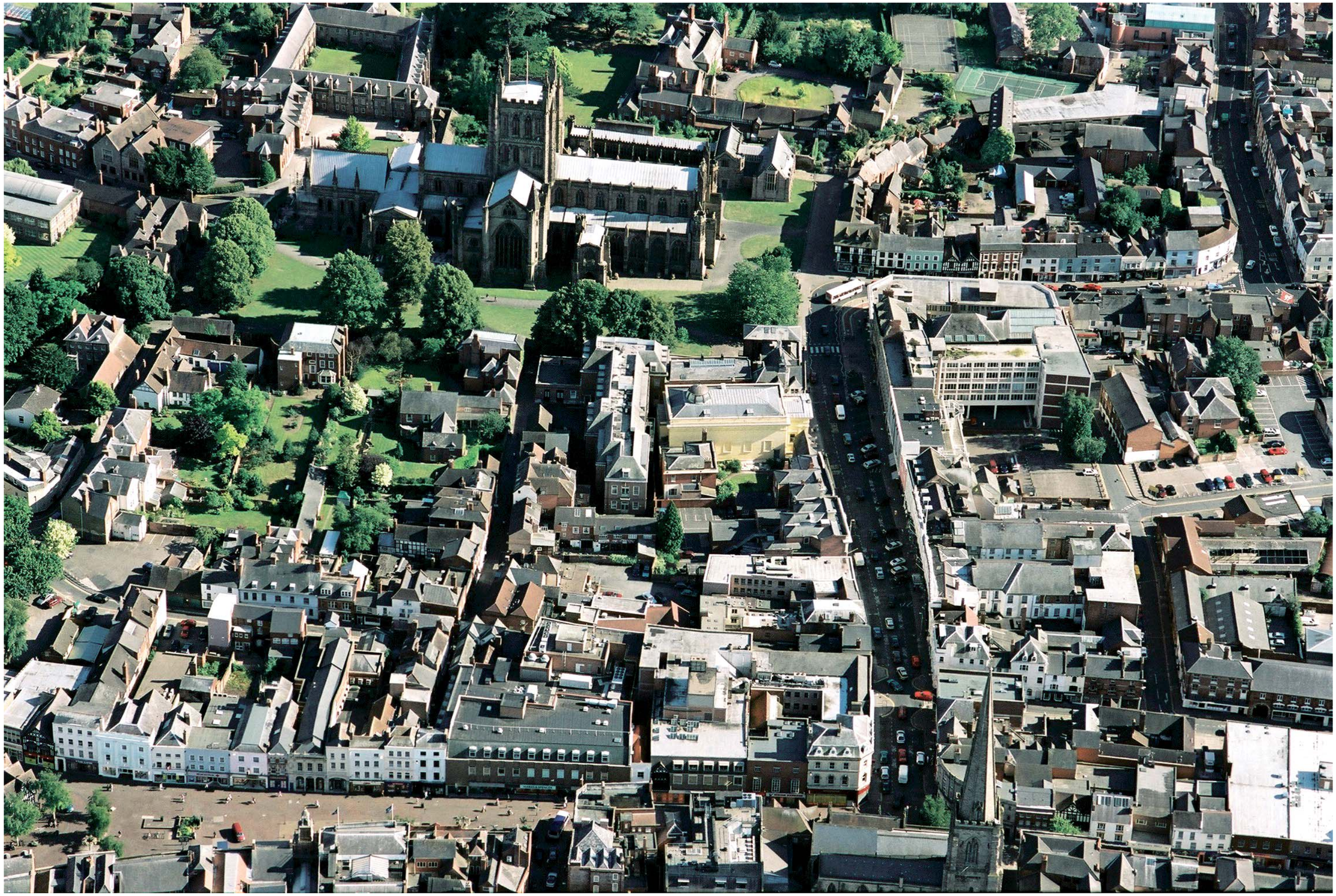
It needs to be emphasised that the intramural pattern is partly a modern one. A glance at the 1st edition Ordnance Survey plans immediately shows how much residential accommodation – albeit nearly all sub-standard even to contemporaries – has been lost, even within the city walls. In part this was housing that had sprung up since the Industrial Revolution – notably the terrace housing that occupied virtually the whole length of the former city ditch, along the south side of New Market Street, Blue School Street, and Bath Street, much of which was cleared in the 1960s for the ring road. Similar housing has also disappeared from the back streets like Maylord Street and Gaol Street. Older generations of buildings with residential and commercial functions and court-housing to their rear have also disappeared from the north side of Bewell Street where notorious slums were an early target for civic improvements. Further inroads have been made by the need for rear vehicular (lorry) access to modern commercial and retail premises.

Empty properties in 2009

At the time that the characterisation survey was undertaken (April/May 2009), an issue of great concern was that of the number of commercial properties in central Hereford main streets that were without a current occupier or use. A glance at map 8 will show that, firstly, these are small in number in comparison to the commercial city as a whole, and secondly, that with two or three exceptions, their location tends towards the periphery. A detailed economic history of the city has yet to be written and is far beyond the scope of this study. However, it is certain that cycles of economic activity will have had similar impacts on the city in the past and that the current pattern is, in the long view, normal. Two of the currently unoccupied sites are susceptible of very specific explanations: the former Woolworth's on Eign Gate, entirely a product of that company's global situation; and the Chadd's department store premises on both sides of Commercial Street, arising from the demise of one company that, even while it operated, could be regarded as an unusual though valued survivor of a business-model fast disappearing from the English provincial High Street. The only empty premises to highlight (arguably) a longer-term planning issue are those at the bottom of Bridge Street which, it is suggested above, may be vulnerable to reduced footfall arising from the mix of functions on Broad Street, specifically the interruption of the retail offer by other land-uses.

Other than these temporarily un-used or under-used buildings, central Hereford also has a number of areas that are not currently built up or used to their full economic potential. The most striking of these is the Berrington Street – Aubrey Street area, which has remained underused since cleared of sub-standard housing. These areas are considered further below.

The Cathedral and surroundings, facing north © Chris Musson, 2003



Aerial view of the core of Anglo-Saxon Hereford, looking south. The northern defences run under the buildings on the High Town frontage (bottom edge of picture). Broad Street, the market-place, is centre/right. The rectilinear planning and open spaces between defences and the Cathedral Close appears to reflect planned canonical residences and plots © Chris Musson, 2003

6. The historic character of modern Hereford

The preceding sections have explored the character of Hereford's historic townscape from a number of perspectives – its historic buildings (built form), its street-spaces and townscape grain (plan form), its archaeological development, and the land-uses it now contains. In central Hereford, virtually every street and open space offers a different combination of these character traits, and the purpose of this section is to map and describe these.

For this purpose it is possible to divide central Hereford into 18 intramural **townscape character areas** and use them to explore these variables, together with the broader significance of each locality and the opportunities they individually offer for the regeneration, enhancement, management or presentation of the townscape.

All of the townscape character areas fall within one of two broader, more fundamental divisions of the city: that between what may be termed the **Cathedral City**, and the **Commercial City**. As the names imply, the distinction between these two zones most obviously relates to present land use. The pattern is, however, long-established – ancient even – so the distinction is reflected in many other aspects of the townscape.

These divisions were recognised in the 2009 *Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment* (Lello 2009) which drew the same basic twofold distinction between the Cathedral – Castle Green Character Area (HCA 1) and the Central Business Core Character Area (HCA 2). The boundary between them differs slightly from that defined here, as the present characterisation study takes more account of historical criteria and therefore includes the area dominated by past and former canonical housing around Church Street and St John's Street with the Cathedral Close, rather than with the commercial core. The same basic difference between the cathedral city and the commercial city is also recognised in the *Conservation Area Appraisal* with boundaries that more closely follow what is proposed here, and further divisions within the commercial core that also reflect a coarser resolution and grouping of components that are recognised below.

Townscape Character Areas (map 9)

The Commercial City

TCA 1. Eign Gate – Bewell Street

Character

Fully within the city's retailing area, this is a relatively narrow street lined with mostly three-storey buildings of traditional type, including some of 18th-century date, a few earlier, but more of the 19th century. There is a clear distinction between the north and south sides, with a greater replacement rate by 20th-century buildings on the larger south-side plots, many of only two storeys with flat, rather than pitched, roofs. The townscape grain is consequently coarser on this side and the former Woolworth's store and its neighbours are, alone on the street, set back from the frontage. All Saints Church at its eastern end adds dignity and weight to the otherwise wholly commercial character of the street.

Distinctiveness

Its smaller scale (expressed by plot widths, building heights and the street itself) makes this street quite distinct from the adjacent High Street – High Town and Widemarsh Street, and the smaller properties encourage a more diverse, even eclectic, retail offer. All Saints marks the transition to the more central city areas.

Significance

A historic gateway street (now minus its gate) to the west, this is identified, with Bewell Street, as the product of late Saxon town planning outside the old defences. All Saints Church may have been founded as part of this episode.

Central Hereford
Townscape Characterisation

Map 9 Townscape Character Areas

The Commercial City

1 Eign Gate - Bewell Street
2 Bewell Street north
3 Widemarsh Street
4 High Street - High Town
5 Berrington Street - Aubrey Street
6 King Street - Bridge Street
7 Broad Street
8 Church Street
9 Maylord Street
10 Commercial Street - Union Street
11 Gaol Street
12 St Owen Street

The Cathedral City

13 The Cathedral Close
14 St John's Street
15 Castle Street west
16 Castle Street east
17 Cantilupe Street
18 Castle Green

Inner Historic Suburbs

19 Barton Road
20 Friar Street
21 Eign Street
22 Widemarsh Street
23 Commercial Road
24 St Owen Street
25 St Martin's

SCALE 1:4000

NORTH

Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council
Conservation
PO BOX 4
Plough Lane
Hereford
HR4 0XH

Tel.: (01432) 260000
Fax.: (01432) 383031

Opportunities

The empty 1960s Woolworth's building and its neighbours would, if rebuilt, offer an opportunity for the restitution of the frontage line and replacement by architectural forms more in keeping with the character and scale of the remainder of the street; the site also offers the opportunity for increased permeability with the Berrington Street – Aubrey Street area at the back (see below) – which was a feature of this street block in the 18th century, though not in the 19th.

TCA 2. Bewell Street north

Character

Bewell Street itself retains the back-lane character that it has had at least since the late Middle Ages and probably since the late Saxon period, except that, with the removal of the continuously built-up north frontage and its replacement by a supermarket and car-parking interspersed with mature trees, the area now has a distinct urban-edge feel. It is, nevertheless, an essential part of the city's retailing.

Distinctiveness

The area is quite distinct from its surroundings: dominated by the 1980s supermarket and the activity it generates, other than the south side of Bewell Street it appears to be a suburban enclave brought within the city walls and surrounded by city streets.

Significance

The area has been identified as part of the proposed late Saxon planned layout of Eign Gate, superimposed over part of an earlier field system extending north towards the Widemarsh Brook; some of these field boundaries may be found to underlie the existing north-south divisions within the car parks.

Opportunities

The north-south boundaries that survive here are likely to be of considerable antiquity. They link-in directly with the townscape grain underlying the ESG to the north, and should be retained and re-used as a framework in any redesign of this area. A long-term opportunity afforded by any eventual relocation of the supermarket could be used for the sympathetic re-urbanisation of this area based on the reconstitution of the northern frontage, bringing the fine 18th-century, listed Bewell House back into the built-up area, from which it currently stands isolated.

TCA 3. Widemarsh Street

Character

A fine, traditional city street of medium width, fully built up with three-storey buildings (and one of five) on both frontages, with retailing predominating throughout the street. The architecture is mostly Georgian brick in style, of 18th and early 19th-century date, though this frequently disguises encapsulated timber frames, particularly on the west side. The listed late 17th-century Mansion House, though hard to pick out from the surrounding shops, is an important landmark building on the west side. A distinction can be drawn between the northern end of the street and the southern, which has seen a greater volume of 20th-century building closer to the retail core area.

Distinctiveness

The obvious historicity of the street offers the clearest contrast with the 20th-century architecture of Maylord Street, with, overall, a much stronger Georgian flavour to the street than the mainly 19th- and 20th-century High Town.

Significance

Widemarsh Street was, historically, the principal approach road to the city from the north, developed at an early enough date for its built-up area to be bisected by the late 12th-century city defences. The most significant single building is the Mansion House, one of the earliest surviving brick houses in the city.

Opportunities

Given the number of historic and listed buildings on the street there are few opportunities for redevelopment and few buildings of poor quality offering obvious targets for townscape improvement. Works on the redesign of the (largely pedestrianised) carriageway are to commence shortly. A significant priority should however be the reunification of Widemarsh Street with its extramural section via the redesign of New Market Street and its junction.

TCA 4. High Town – High Street

Character

A wide, open, pedestrianised space framed by mainly three and four-storey shops of various dates, 19th-century predominating. There are some 18th- and 18th-19th-century Georgian buildings interspersed with later buildings, and some significant runs of mid-20th-century buildings, notably the modernist Marks & Spencer's and the former Littlewood's stores dominating the southern High Street/High Town frontage. The space is framed at either end by the spires of All Saints and St Peter's, but monumental public architecture in High Town itself is restricted to the Buttermarket clock tower of 1859-60 on the northern frontage. The Old House, the last remains of substantial market-place encroachments cleared in the late 18th and 19th centuries, is the only easily visible timber-framed building. However, many more are to be found in the densely built-up and complex back plots, visible from the open space of the Maylord Orchards loading area to the north or from East Street and the Booth Hall passage to the south. Further early buildings and medieval cellars are concealed within or under later superstructures. Much of the townscape grain containing these buildings is composed of traditional long, narrow plots, frequently penetrated by alleyways giving access to the rear ranges.

Distinctiveness

High Town is, with the Cathedral Close, the most singular space in the city, made quite distinct by its width in comparison to the streets feeding into it, and by the church spires which signal its proximity when approaching from the east or from the west. High Town also accommodates some of the highest pre-modern commercial buildings in the city and a variety of substantial examples of 19th-century monumental commercial architecture.

Significance

A highly significant, instantly-recognisable, public open space, firmly part of the identity of Hereford, perhaps even more so than the Cathedral Close, this is also one of the most distinctive urban market places in England. It has a particular historical significance as the principal, documented, Norman contribution to the town plan, one which could be perceived as a substantial break with the past though, if the interpretation of Eign Gate in this study is correct, it should instead be seen as a further stage of a process (extramural development) already begun. High Town is of course much more than a commercial space: it is also fundamental to the civic identity of the city though, since the demolition of the Old Market Hall in 1862, this has not been expressed architecturally, at least not in terms of public buildings.

Opportunities

While there are a large number of listed and historic buildings around High Street and High Town which afford few opportunities for substantial change, the former Littlewoods building of 1965 can be identified as having the single largest negative impact on the townscape, as well as offering an unusual example of long-superceded approaches to conservation by its incorporation, at first-floor level, of the timber-framed no. 3 High Street. Many of the conclusions of the 1989 High Town study (Rock Townsend 1989) remain valid today, and the concerns it expressed have still not been fully addressed. Prominent among these are the decline of East Street as a rear service street with the loss of non-retail commercial functions from it, leading to substantial gaps along its frontages, the decline exacerbated by unacceptable traffic flows making it an unfriendly environment for pedestrians; and the decline in the utilisation of upper floors of High Town buildings, not just a wasted asset but also a disincentive to effective maintenance in many historic buildings.

TCA 5. Berrington Street – Aubrey Street

Character

This area is characterised by its mix of land-uses (it is the last area of central Hereford to retain many non-retail commercial functions); its low-rise skyline, with many single storey buildings and flat roofs; and its many open spaces, mostly in use for surface car parking. It is an area where 20th-century buildings are dominant, replacements for structures lost to slum clearances. But although the townscape is superficially modern, occasional buildings like the timber-framed Aubrey's Almshouses on Berrington Street or the Victorian commercial buildings at the north end of Aubrey Street serve as a reminder that this is fully part of the historic city core. There is however little indication that this is one of the oldest continuously built-up areas in Britain

Distinctiveness

The area is distinctive on account of all of the factors described above – land-use, architecture and plan-form – and the stark contrast they present to the surrounding streets, with densely built-up and high or even very high buildings forming a perimeter around its north and east sides. With the Victoria Street section of the ring-road on its west side and the traditionally built-up backs of the plots on King Street to the south, the area is divorced from its surroundings, but particularly so from the main retailing area.

Significance

While the present townscape of this area, excepting particular buildings, is of little merit or aesthetic appeal, it is nevertheless of great historical-archaeological significance, since excavation in this area has demonstrated that occupation commenced here, and Berrington Street and Aubrey Street probably originated, before 800 AD. It is townscape, in short, with a twelve hundred year history, a history that is encoded in the archaeological deposits that are known to underlie the area.

Opportunities

Apart from the remaining open areas within the northern city wall, the Berrington Street – Aubrey Street area offers more opportunities for imaginative redevelopment than any other in central Hereford, whether for residential or office uses or for the extension of the retail core area. Arguably if the latter option were chosen the problem of the impermeability of the adjacent frontages (Eign Gate and Broad Street) would have to be addressed to maximise footfall through the area. There are also design issues inherent in the 'chasm' effect presented to Aubrey Street by the five-storey backs of the Broad Street buildings (the Green Dragon and the government offices to the south). The Berrington Street area is bounded to the south-west by one of the best preserved sections of the city wall, whose considerable amenity value could without difficulty be enhanced by better presentation, access and interpretation (now subject of a separate forthcoming *Herefordshire Archaeology* study).

TCA 6. King Street – Bridge Street

Character

This is one of the mixed use areas where retail functions compete for space with professional uses in mainly three-storey Georgian buildings. Many of these ostensibly 18th- or 18th-early 19th-century townhouses, particularly on the west side of Bridge Street, encapsulate earlier timber-framed structures, or retain them whole in rear ranges invisible from the frontage. Both streets are wide and, with their largely neoclassical architecture, present a distinguished approach to the city and its cathedral leading up from the Wye Bridge. The two examples of 20th-century Modern architecture on Bridge Street, the Crystal Rooms' Art Deco frontage, and the Left Bank restaurant next to the Wye Bridge, are both distinguished examples of their periods, and arguably add to rather than detract from their surroundings.

Distinctiveness

Bridge Street in particular is made distinct by the integrity of its Georgian frontages (and the success of recent structures blending-in); King Street, with the mid-20th-century buildings on its north side, appears more historically diverse, but its width, and its relationship to the west front of the Cathedral, mark it as a street of historical importance. Both are utterly different in character from surrounding areas – less monumental than Broad Street, more urbane than St Martin's.

Significance

Other than their significance in contemporary historic townscape terms as a largely 18th-century quarter that eloquently sums up many of the expectations of an English cathedral city, these streets have a particular archaeological-historical significance as a fine example of early Norman town planning overlaid on an earlier Saxon background. Specifically, Bridge Street can be seen as part of a planned ensemble of the late 11th century that included the earliest known phase of the Wye Bridge, symmetrically planned streets either side of the bridge and the former St Nicholas' church at the top of Bridge Street. King Street derives significance from its relationship to the Cathedral and the Cathedral Close, and from the archaeological remains, under the carriageway, of its crossing over the infilled King's Ditch.

Opportunities

Single-site opportunities for the enhancement of this area may arise as some of the poorer 20th-century buildings on King Street reach the end of their design life. However, a more significant

opportunity for the enhancement of the area as a whole may probably be found outside it, by action on Broad Street to promote connectivity with the main retailing area, and by the regeneration of the adjacent Berrington Street – Aubrey Street area.

TCA 7. Broad Street

Character

A highly eclectic, mixed-use street of enormous contrasts – the museum in High Victorian gothic, next to mid-20th-century offices, opposite monumental 19th-century public buildings, next to a barely-disguised timber-framed two-storey row. Ultimately, monumentality triumphs over the residual smaller-scale buildings, aided by the width of the street, All Saints' and its spire at the end, the proximity of the Cathedral - and grand Victoriana everywhere, not just the public buildings but the enormous frontage of the Green Dragon Hotel.

Distinctiveness

Utterly unlike any other street in the city on account of all the characteristics described above, Broad Street has something of the character of a civic street-space though local government and judicial functions are elsewhere, as well as a strong flavour of the central business district – though it contains only a proportion of the city's financial institutions.

Significance

Its architectural-historical significance is implicit in the characteristics described above. The more distant historical significance of the street is even higher. It was the most important street of the Saxon town, most probably the principal market place, distinguished by at least one stone building (very rarely paralleled at this date in English towns) and possibly by a stone gatehouse at its northern end where it passed through the ramparts. Fragmentary but nevertheless convincing evidence shows that there was a Roman presence, as yet unidentified, in this area too.

Opportunities

While Broad Street is fully built up and much of its architecture is of the highest quality, the mid-20th-century tax office on the western frontage may be considered problematic on account of its height and location – a four-to five-storey block almost opposite the west front of the cathedral with a full-height elevation rising abruptly from the two-storey townscape of Aubrey Street at the rear – and problematic also in terms of the space given over on the frontage to non-retail functions such that, in combination with the cathedral, there is a total interruption in the retail offer with a consequent reduction in footfall through the streets further south.

TCA 8. Church Street

Character

Church Street more than any other encapsulates Hereford's role as the tourist-historic city, with specialist and up-market shops framing a distant view of the cathedral, while the exceptionally narrow pedestrian street and its tall (mostly three- sometimes four-storey), mostly Georgian, narrow-fronted buildings gives a feeling of antiquity and enclosure. The street contains earlier, timber-framed, buildings either encapsulated or simply re-fronted in brick on both sides. For simplicity, this character area has been drawn to include the adjacent south frontage of East Street, which contains buildings and plots of comparable date and scale.

Distinctiveness

The small scale of the street and its shops stands in complete contrast to the adjacent streets – Broad Street to the west and High Town to the north.
Significance

The present-day significance of the street is that expressed above; it forms a perfect link, physically and metaphorically, between the commercial city and the cathedral. Its historical significance is more uncertain: it falls within the rectilinear planned framework of the area north of the Cathedral Close, though its origins, and its relationship to other elements of this planned landscape, are at present unknown.

Opportunities

There are few opportunities for the enhancement of this street, most of its buildings making a positive contribution to the townscape. The principal exception is the former GPO telephone exchange (now in use by the Cathedral School) on the corner of the Cathedral Close.

TCA 9. Maylord Street

Character

Maylord Street, though based on the line of a medieval street shown by excavation to have assumed its present form in the 14th century, is now a wholly-20th-century townscape with three-storey buildings on the south side of the street, two-storey to the north and the Maylord Orchards shopping centre closing the east end of the street and facing into Trinity Square, also a creation of the 1980s.

Distinctiveness

The Maylord Street area is wholly distinct from its surroundings, a completely 20th-century quarter framed by traditionally built up streets and, to the north, the ring road outside the remains of the medieval city wall.

Significance

Its significance is almost wholly contemporary, as an important modern component of the city's overall retail offer. It also has a shadowy historical significance as the site of the city's pre-1290 Jewish quarter, though this is not yet represented in the archaeological record, or in the surviving townscape.

Opportunities

Wholly built up by buildings still well within their design life, the area nevertheless offers two opportunities for enhancement by capitalising on historic assets. To the north, the setting of a substantial length of the city wall outside the shopping centre – marooned on an island between the dual carriageway and bus-lane – offers substantial scope for redesign. Secondly, the deliveries area on the south side of Maylord Street offers a unique view of the backs of the traditionally built up plots on High Town. Though the backland plot boundaries have gone, the area contains a number of easily visible and well-preserved timber-framed buildings: though easily visible the area is not accessible to the public and views have to be snatched through the lorry entry onto Maylord Street. Redesign of the adjacent Buttermarket may be able to offer a solution to this.

TCA 10. Commercial Street – Union Street

Character

This character area has been drawn to encompass two related streets. Commercial Street and Union Street both represent connections from the principal historic east-west through route to the road heading north-east towards Worcester; Commercial Street has historically always been the higher-status street with Union Street to some extent fulfilling a rear service function in relation to it, though it developed its own plots (as discussed in the town-plan analysis, above).

Commercial Street is a funnel shaped street space, widening at its junction with High Town and narrowing on its approach to the former city gate. Its architecture broadly reflects this transition, with three-storey buildings on both sides at the High Town end but two-storey buildings on its north side at the outer end. Its architecture mostly follows traditional forms though with a variety of periods from the 18th century on, with quite a large 20th-century contribution, particularly on its north side. At least one encapsulated earlier structure lies behind its southern frontage. The street is fully part of the retail core area.

Distinctiveness

Strangely, Commercial Street is the less distinctive of the two streets here, presenting a gradual transition in its width and its architecture from High Town towards its suburban extension, Commercial Road. Union Street is by contrast, quite unmistakable, with much of its western frontage occupied by the backs of properties that face the main street, while its eastern frontage is traditionally built up with largely early 19th-century three-storey buildings. It is firmly part of the commercial city, though a slightly down-at-heel and marginal part of it, bounding the Gaol Street character area (TCA 11), which, of all the commercial city character areas, is by far the least commercial.

Significance

The contemporary and near-future significance of Commercial Street is that of one of the most important pedestrian approaches to High Town and as a major route linking the city centre with the Edgar Street Grid. Its historical significance is that of one of the major approach roads to the Anglo-Saxon and medieval town, probably developed contemporaneously with High Town in the late 11th /early 12th century.

Opportunities

Opportunities for single-site enhancements will occur over time as a number of poor quality 20th-century buildings reach the end of their design lives. Such opportunities will be rare on the south side of Commercial Street, though it would be difficult to argue that the MacDonald's building (mid-20th-century Modern in style) makes anything other than a wholly negative contribution to its surroundings. The present streetscape, at least in terms of materials/condition, is presently one of the poorest aspects of this street. Empty properties and very short-term leases in properties that would otherwise be empty can be viewed as a short-term cyclical phenomenon, though the loss of the traditional Chadd's department store has undoubtedly been a temporary blow to the vibrancy of both streets.

TCA 11. Gaol Street – Bath Street

Character

The character area sits uneasily within the Commercial City, offering islands of administrative and residential functions within a sea of car parking. The origins of the administrative/judicial/policing functions dominant in the western part of this character area were discussed in the town-plan analysis (above). The surface car parking that dominates the bulk of the area is a consequence of the non-replacement of large areas of sub-standard working-class housing, much of it cleared in the 1960s in advance of the construction of the ring road. Though in many senses marginal, the area nevertheless contains some outstanding buildings: the neoclassical Shirehall of c.1815-17, the formidably solid, rusticated, former Magistrates Court of c.1842 on Gaol Lane, and the John Haider building, a block of flats in the Modern style of the 1930s on Bath Street. Fragmentary remains of, or on the line of, the city wall survive in this area, either side of the Police Station and as a low retaining wall separating the carriageway of Gaol Street from the southern part of the Bath Street car park.

Distinctiveness

All of the factors discussed above contribute to the unmistakable character of this area, which is quite distinct from the Commercial City streets that bound it to the west and south (Union Street and St Owen Street) and the mainly residential areas neighbouring streets of the areas beyond Bath Street, outside the former city defences.

Significance

The contemporary townscape significance of this area resides largely in its monumental public buildings. Its historical townscape significance is that of a traditionally marginal area, in more than one sense – encompassing a section of the city defences with much open ground within, through which ran a street (Gaol Street, formerly Grope Lane) with the distinction of being medieval Hereford's red light district.

Opportunities

The large area of surface car parking, the most extensive in the city, offers potential for residential, commercial and/or civic development that would add vitality to the city as a whole while not (if massing and building heights are sensitively handled) compromising the quality of the surrounding townscape. It is also arguable that rebuilding of this area would contribute substantially to the distinctiveness of the city as a whole, in the sense that this character area is the first point of contact with the historic city centre for large numbers of people living in the northern and eastern suburbs. There is also an opportunity to reinforce and enhance the identity of the city centre as a historic place by repairing the substantial gap in the city defences. Whether through good design and planning of new buildings or actual reconstruction of the wall, either option would at least clearly differentiate the historic city from the suburbs beyond.

TCA 12. St Owen Street

Character

A wide and distinguished Georgian street, what Pevsner called 'the most consistent Georgian brick street in Hereford', St Owen Street has been characterised here as one of the mixed use streets where the professions vie with retail functions for space in a largely 18th-century townscape. The buildings are mostly of three storeys but with substantial numbers of two (mostly two storeys with dormer-lit attics). Amongst the Georgian buildings are some of the most substantial in the city, rivalled only on Castle Street. The width of the street and the scale of its buildings gradually diminish from west to east to the point where the approximate site of the medieval gate is easily apparent though the structure itself is long demolished. The character area boundaries have been drawn to include St Peter's Square at its western end, with St Peter's church facing it, looking down the length of the street. Added weight is given to this end of the street by the presence of the Shirehall on its north side and by the Edwardian terracotta town hall on the south side, one of the city's most distinctive and original buildings, rising well above the surrounding houses.

Distinctiveness

The scale of the street in terms of both the street-space and its associated architecture mark St Owen Street as one of the city's major thoroughfares. It is in fact the only main through-route entering the eastern half of the city, completely distinct from the surrounding streets.

Significance

The historical significance of the street is that of the major approach road to the city in general and High Town in particular from the south east, Ledbury and Gloucester and the lower Wye Valley. Its present significance resides in the quality of its Georgian architecture.

Opportunities

The most significant opportunity for townscape enhancement within this character area is offered by the rather overlooked civic space of St Peter's Square. Surrounded by listed historic buildings, including the medieval church and the Shirehall, with the listed war memorial as its centrepiece, it is a townscape feature with vastly greater potential than its present use as a bus station and taxi rank, and improvements should seek to enhance this important civic focus with positive benefits for the adjacent businesses in St Peter's Street and Union Street as well as St Owen Street itself. Further opportunities for the enhancement of St Owen Street will be limited to individual sites, though two at least (55 and 59 St Owen Street) are occupied by structures that are notably detrimental to their surroundings.

The Cathedral City

TCA 13. The Cathedral Close

Character

A typical English cathedral close, in the sense of a green open space with mature trees, surrounded by canons' houses, largely secluded from the city beyond, bounded on one side by the River Wye and dominated by the Cathedral Church, in this case a building fundamentally of the early 12th century. As a former secular cathedral much of the traditional apparatus of monastic life is absent, though a cloister lies to the south-west and the college of the Vicars Choral to the south east. Further south and west lies the late 12th-century aisled Bishop's Palace, standing within private gardens extending down to the Wye.

Distinctiveness

The character area has been drawn to encompass only the cathedral close as commonly recognised today. The area of canonical housing to the north, though closely associated with the close, has been treated as a separate townscape character area (TCA 14).

Significance

By a long way, the most significant single feature, the central place, of Hereford's historic townscape, dominated by the cathedral church and framed by historic houses associated with the cathedral community. In historical-archaeological terms it would once have been considered the 'pre-urban nucleus' around which the city grew, and while this conveys a part of the story of the growth of Hereford, it avoids many of the intricacies and enduring mysteries. At a more detailed morphogenetic (townscape evolution) level the close may be considered as a substantial act of planning, but at what date remains uncertain (see town-plan analysis, above). The Cathedral Close also derives significance from its fine state of intactness, the equal of its neighbours in Chester and Gloucester and far finer than its sadly compromised counterpart in Worcester.

Opportunities

A scheme for the comprehensive enhancement of the Cathedral Close area, aiming to restore select buildings, improve the soft landscaping and enhance the sense of enclosure in the close is in hand at the time of writing. The monolithic and utilitarian 20th-century former Post Office buildings in the north-west corner of the close can however be identified as, at best, not making a positive contribution to their surroundings.

TCA 14. St John's Street – Church Street

Character

St John's Street, which forms the axis of this character area, is a quiet, secluded street with clusters of buildings at either end rather than continuously built up frontages. Though its boundaries have been drawn to include the block of mostly two-storey buildings on East Street that include private houses, small offices and a shop, the area as a whole is distinguished by substantial detached houses mostly with medieval origins situated within extensive gardens. These include 20 Church Street, the Cathedral Barn, Canon's House, Harley House and Harley Court. The dominant land use is residential.

Distinctiveness

The core of this character area is quite distinct from the largely commercial streets to the west and north, though it has features (substantial houses, large off-frontage plots) in common with Castle Street to the east.

Significance

While the character area could be perceived simply as a kind of 'buffer', a quiet street with private houses and gardens intervening between the Cathedral Close and the busy city centre outside, it has a very particular significance in terms of historic townscape nationally. If the origins of this area have been correctly interpreted – as having developed from canonical housing in large plots planned around the perimeter of the close – it can be seen as an extremely rare example of the survival, in a relatively intact state, of a type of settlement pattern that was disappearing from English towns as early as the 10th century. Historical and archaeological research has for some time suggested that early towns acquired large, permanent populations trading on built up street frontages only as a secondary stage in their formation, and that in their primary phases early towns were dominated by a much smaller number of high-status households in large open properties, sometimes planned, often referred to as *hagas* (originally meaning hedged plots). This, in a modified form, appears to be the kind of landscape that survives in the St John Street – Church Street area of Hereford.

Opportunities

The best opportunity for enhancement in this area arises from the open plot (in use for surface car-parking) on the corner of East Street and St John's Street. Appropriate rebuilding here, and on the opposite (north) side of East Street would help restore the traditional building pattern and sense of enclosure along the street and would assist in signposting the differential character of the St John's Street area. Conservation of the off-frontage open spaces in this area will be critical to maintaining its historic character and identity.

TCA 15. Castle Street west

Character

In detail, this area can be further sub-divided into perhaps four distinct components, either side of the street. The frontages themselves are quite different, the southern frontage largely continuous, abutting the pavement and composed of three and four-storey Georgian buildings. The northern frontage is dominated by two large buildings set back from the street line, one a modern school building, the other a very substantial Georgian house with later extensions. The back-plot areas associated with these are again different, with conventional strip-like back gardens, partly developed to the west, infilled by a recent classroom block to the east, behind the southern frontage and much larger gardens, partly developed with larger school buildings, behind the northern frontage. The southern frontage also contains the encapsulated remains of the pre-15th-century hall of the Vicars Choral (29 Castle Street).

Distinctiveness

This area has been distinguished from that to the east (TCA 16) largely on the basis of land-use, in that this area is dominated by the Cathedral School and this has to quite a large extent determined the kind of buildings present, at least behind the historic main-street frontages.

Significance

Castle Street remains, despite 19th- and 20th-century buildings used by the school, a largely Georgian street, contributing to the seclusion and character of the Cathedral Close, to which it forms the eastern approach.

Opportunities

There appear to be few opportunities for enhancement in this area apart, perhaps, from that afforded in the long term by 20th-century school buildings of indifferent design quality on Ferrers Street.

TCA 16. Castle Street east – St Ethelbert Street

Character

This character area encompasses the outer, residential, section of Castle Street together with St Ethelbert Street extending northwards from its eastern end. The northern frontage of Castle Street is occupied by mostly Georgian houses, though these include a very obvious example of re-fronting to an earlier timber-framed building. Georgian architecture, though mostly it seems of early 19th-century date, continues around the corner along St Ethelbert's Street, though Victorian buildings occupy the northern part of the eastern frontage backing onto the public gardens adjoining Cantilupe Street.

Distinctiveness

The area is distinguished from the western part of the street principally by the uses it contains, which are almost exclusively residential (as opposed to institutional), though this includes the almshouses of St Ethelbert's Hospital and the Castle Pool Hotel at its junction with St Ethelbert Street. It is similarly clearly distinguishable from the adjacent section of St Owen Street, and architecturally quite distinct from the much later inserted Cantilupe Street to the east. The late medieval St Ethelbert's Hospital occupies most of the southern frontage of Castle Street.

Significance

This part of Castle Street has fewer modern buildings than the western end of the street, its Georgian character only diluted by even earlier structures: the medieval hospital, and the encased timber frame on its northern frontage. In residential use and busy only at the end of the school day, the street contributes to the seclusion and character of the Cathedral Close. Historically, the street (this part in particular) derives added significance from its role as the main approach to the castle, formerly accessible via a lane leading south from the Castle Street/St Ethelbert's Street corner. Despite uncertainties as to the street's role in the early development of the town, excavations on the Castle Pool Hotel site have demonstrated intensive late Saxon occupation there. This part of the street was, in addition, the late medieval Corn Market, though how much further back in time this function originated is unknown.

Opportunities

Opportunities for the enhancement of this area are confined to the open areas (currently surface car-parking) facing north onto East Street, where residential building of appropriate scale and form would help restore the sense of enclosure along East Street. The blocks of flats set back from the east side of Ferrers Street do not contribute to the townscape value of the area.

TCA 17. Cantilupe Street

Character

This is a leafy suburban residential street with early 20th-century detached houses set back from the frontage, overlooking a small municipal green space and the Castle Pool, the last water-filled remnants of the castle ditches. The street was developed across an open space behind the St Ethelbert Street plots, and has more in common with Mill Street and the suburban villa type housing along it.

Distinctiveness

Distinctive only insofar as it is the only street of wholly 'suburban' character within the medieval city walls.

Significance

The only post-medieval inserted street within the city walls.

Opportunities

Few, other than the provision of interpretation to explain the origin of the Castle Pool. Restoration work on Castle Green would give the opportunity to re-form the gardens on the castle side of the street. A section of the city wall forms the rear boundary to the houses, and is at least in part in poor condition.

TCA 18. Castle Green

Character

This is, at first sight, a municipal park partly framed by high embanked walks on its east and north-east sides, with intensive planting of mature trees, extensive lawns, a bowling green and pavilion and Nelson's monument. Its origins as a Norman motte and bailey earthwork castle built, probably in the 1060s, to subdue the native English population of Hereford and suppress insurrection, are not remotely easily legible. This is a consequence of the post-medieval removal of the earth motte, the 18th-century removal or concealment of the stone curtain walls, gatehouse and towers, and the lack of any on-site interpretation to explain the story to residents or visitors. The earthworks are nevertheless substantial and impressive, though their composition has never been determined. Are they, on the one hand, medieval ramparts from which superincumbent masonry structures have been removed, or 18th-century raised walks that cover the reduced remains of walls and towers? Building within the former castle footprint has been limited to the south-west corner adjacent to the site of the motte; Castle Cliffe, one of the buildings, is the sole surviving (listed) masonry building from the castle. A wall, trees and path separate the main body of Castle Green (the former bailey) from the site of the motte, which retains a sense of enclosure though all trace of the earthwork has gone.

Distinctiveness

Even as a green open space Castle Green is distinctive and the Castle Pool, and the north and east ramparts absolutely separate the space from the suburban development outside, and from the hotel and almshouses on Castle Street. The grassed open space on the site of the motte is also clearly different from the built-up backlands of the Castle Street plots, though geophysical survey suggests that they have in fact encroached over the line of the motte ditch.

Significance

An area of the highest significance: in contemporary terms as green open space at the heart of the built-up area; in historical terms as the site of Hereford Castle, whose active military life extended from the late 11th century to the Civil War of the mid-17th, and as one of the earlier laid-out public walks in England.

Opportunities

The enhancement of this area can best be achieved by a comprehensive and integrated approach to a full park restoration project, including proposals for the improvement of landscaping, planting, lighting, paths, facilities and interpretation, developed within the context of an overall conservation management plan.

The inner historic suburbs: a summary

The built-up area of medieval and early Modern Hereford was not confined by the city walls: suburbs extended to the west (Barton Street, TCA 19 and Friar Street, TCA 20), north-west (Eign Street/Whitecross Road TCA 21), north (Widemarsh Street, TCA 22), north-east (Commercial Road, formerly Bye Street, TCA 23), east (St Owen Street, TCA 24) and south (St Martin's, TCA 25). They are treated in summary form only here: they are also discussed in the *Hereford Rapid Townscape Assessment* (Lello 2009), and the northern suburbs in the *Edgar Street Grid Archaeological Characterisation* (Baker 2007). As this study is principally concerned with the built-up area, the Bishop's Meadow – the ancient open space occupying the floodplain to the east of St Martin's Street – is not discussed further, though it is arguably an absolutely critical part of the character of the historic city as a whole, presenting open views of the built-up and elevated city-site with its cathedral, on the opposite bank, in exactly the same way as the floodplains at Worcester and Salisbury.

The historic extent of the suburbs is not always easy to determine, at least before 1757 when Isaac Taylor's map provides a reasonably accurate benchmark, used here to determine the outward extent of the plots drawn out in map 6. The most extensive appears to have been Widemarsh Street, which certainly extended 300 metres north of the defences by the end of the 12th century, but may (from the form of its plots) have extended almost twice that distance, across the Widemarsh floodplain. Despite largely 20th-century building cover, the plan-form of the suburb survives well, and the ESG regeneration programme will present an opportunity to utilise this structure and capitalise on the surviving watercourses around which it was formed. It will also present a unique opportunity to enhance the presentation and setting of the Blackfriars precinct and Coningsby's Hospital, the key historic assets in this suburb. Commercial Road too was a major medieval suburb, developed from the late 12th century on with another ecclesiastical institution, the Priory of St Guthlac, at its outer end; despite many investigations on its site (now occupied by the Hospital) much of its geography remains unclear. Like suburban Widemarsh Street, the grain pattern of Commercial Road remains relatively intact although its present building cover (excepting one 17th-century listed building) is largely 19th-century and later.

The linear extent of historic settlement eastwards along St Owen Street is not yet clear. The medieval hospital and chapel of St Giles on the corner of Ledbury Road may mark its outer extent, though Taylor's 1757 map shows the built-up area then confined to the area of the widened street market (identified in the plan analysis, above) within c. 200 metres of the gate. The building cover in this suburb too is largely 20th-century, though the row of (possibly 18th-century) cottages nos. 76-86 St Owen Street set back from the south frontage is of greater significance than a cursory glance might suggest, as they appear to be neglected survivors of the medieval market-place frontage. To the west of the city, the buildings stock along the first c.250 metres of Eign Street appears to be of 18th-century and later date, though this includes a structure with late type timber framing on the south side. The historic plot structure on the north side is also relatively intact. Friar Street is something of an enigma – a street outside the pre-Conquest and medieval defences but sharing the orientation of the suspected Saxon grid-plan in the Berrington Street area. Excavation has suggested some form of transitory or intermittent low-level medieval activity in the Friar Street area but as yet no sign of anything earlier. Intermittently built up in the mid-18th century, the street now contains one possible 17th- but mostly 19th-century and later structures. Barton Road contains some 17th-century buildings and several of the early 19th. The north-side properties retain their historic plots, though archaeological investigation has scarcely touched this area and the history of settlement within it is not yet clear.

The most well-defined of the historic suburbs is St Martin's, in which the historic built-up area extended just under 200 metres south from the Wye Bridge and was enclosed within the possibly mid-11th-century Row or King's Ditch. A number of archaeological investigations have taken place, mainly in back-plot areas, revealing extensive evidence of medieval industry and reclamation of the Wye riverbank. The present building cover here is mainly late Georgian, the row of houses on the east side being at least as consistent a group of that period as anything to be found in the city centre.

The medieval Widemarsh Street suburb snaking through the ESG regeneration area north of the city walls
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7. Summary

It is a commonplace of writing on historic towns to claim an exceptional state of preservation and significance for the place in question. However, Hereford *is* exceptionally well preserved, and it *is* a historic town of exceptional significance – and both assertions can be justified and shown to be based on quantifiable evidence, much of which is contained in or implicit in this characterisation.

- The plan-form of the city has been compromised by Victorian and 20th-century development to a smaller degree than any of the neighbouring cathedral cities or shire towns. No city street – bar one – has been inserted into the city; all originate in the medieval period, or earlier.

- The fine detail of the city plan – the townscape grain – remains almost as uncompromised as the street plan, with a clear differentiation between the city and the extramural suburbs, and subtle variations in the character of the townscape grain still evident that can be traced back to the initial urbanisation process, or even to the underlying agricultural landscape. Distinct medieval neighbourhoods can still be traced within the city walls.

- The Cathedral Close retains its integrity as an enclosed sacred space and its immediate surroundings retain an exceptionally rare, early medieval settlement pattern associated with it.

- The present land-use geography of the city and the fundamental distinction between the Cathedral City and the Commercial City can be shown to be rooted in the remote past, much of it derived from the years following the Norman Conquest, aspects of it even earlier.

- Excavations, particularly the pioneering digs of the late 1960s and 70s on the west side of the city, revealed that Hereford possesses one of the earliest, continuously built-up areas in the country.

Much concern is currently expressed about the superficial appearance of the city, its viability as a business centre, its ability to compete with neighbouring cities and its long-term future. The long view of this is that the city centre is in fact structurally very sound and extraordinarily resilient in terms of its urban functions – as a place of business, culture, daily life and administration.

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Abbreviation: TWNFC: Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club

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