

17.0 HEREFORD IN CONTEXT – the significance of the city

The briefing for this report asks that 'The study should describe the overall significance of Hereford in its national context as a medieval city.'

To provide this assessment in a concise form an analysis of the significance of the city under a range of headings has been prepared, with an assessment of the level of significance against each. From this an overall summary statement has been prepared.

The concept of Significance of a Heritage asset is discussed in depth in the Historic England publication Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance. This shows how significance can be considered under the following headings: evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal. It also shows how significance varies according to the audience which might range from the local inhabitant to the visitor to the expert. The assessment of a whole city is a considerable exercise and so the factors which might be considered have been reduced to a manageable level and are set out below.

Categories of significance		Measure of significance
Evidential significance		
General archaeological	One of only six cities in England designated as having Areas of Archaeological Importance Significant volume of HER records and excavation reports informing the developmental history of the city.	National
Roman period	Some evidence relating to Roman settlement, although more significant evidence relating to Roman settlement of Magnis to the west.	Local
Saxon	Considerable evidence relating to Saxon development including traceable Saxon defence system	National
Norman	Evidence relating to Norman expansion of the city, the establishment of an extra-mural market and later enclosure of the whole by a city wall and gates	Regional
Later medieval	More limited evidence relating to the monastic communities and trade within the city. Evidence of the part the city played in the Civil War.	Regional
Georgian	Considerable architectural evidence of rebuilding of whole streets and the establishment of grand town houses by significant local families. Early use of the river for trade.	Regional
Victorian	Expansion of river trade, to be replaced by canal and then railway. Limited industrial development relating to local produce – brewing, milling etc. Expansion of the cattle market as a regional function.	Regional
20 th C	Military significance for munitions manufacture and specialist metallic production.	National (but limited)

Historic significance		
Ecclesiastical	The diocese of Hereford was founded in AD686 and is thus one of the oldest in the country. The diocese includes the whole of the county of Hereford and a significant portion of Shropshire. The cathedral is the seat of the Bishop of Hereford. A significant portion of the fabric of the cathedral is Romanesque in period, though with much later alteration and adaptation.	National
Monastic	The city was surrounded by three monastic establishments – the Augustinian Greyfriars monastery was on the western edge of the city, the Dominican Blackfriars to the north and the priory of St Guthlac, a Benedictine foundation just to the east on the site of the former castle, but in the 12thC moving to a site north east of the city centre.	Local
Civic	The city has a total of 19 royal charters dating from the time of Richard 1 up to the grant of a charter by Queen Elizabeth in 2000 re-conferring city status following local government reorganisation.	National
Civic officials	The city has an unbroken line of mayors going back to 1382 and the office of Town Clerk dates back to 1258, pre-dating London.	Local
County	Until 1974, Hereford was the administrative centre of the old County of Herefordshire. At that date it was merged with Worcestershire as part of Local Government reform. Since further re-organisation the county has regained its autonomy, with the city of Hereford once again the seat of administration.	Regional
Military	The city was the site of a substantial castle, part of a chain of castles and associated Lordships established at the time of the Norman conquest as a bulwark against Wales. More recently the city has been the home of an infantry regiment, and in the 20 th Century an RAF base and the home of the SAS.	National
Judicial	Formerly the seat of a County Court, part of the Oxford circuit, the city now retains only a magistrates court. The city formerly had its own gaol.	Regional
Educational	Cathedral and then local authority schools established. A regional teachers training college, later to become a National Blind College. Regional centre for further and higher education.	Local / National

Aesthetic significance		
The River Wye	The River Wye featured prominently in the development of the Picturesque movement, the lower Wye being particularly favoured for visitors taking the Wye Tour. The river and its bridges feature in many artistic works, though not prominently in works by artists of national repute.	National and local
The cathedral	The cathedral is illustrated in many paintings and engravings from the 17thC to the present day.	Local
The cityscape	The cityscape is featured in one of the engravings by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck from 1732. Scenes within and around the city feature prominently in the works of the local artist James Wathen, the more widely known David Cox and in Hereford's 'own' Brian Hatton an accomplished artist from the First World War period.	Regional and local
Communal significance		
Sporting	Base for county football team. Regional rowing centre.	Regional
Cultural	Centre for the local library system. Home of the county archaeological and natural history society (Woolhope Club). Home of county museum and art gallery. Home of county archives and record centre.	Regional
Musical	Home of Three Choirs Festival (in rotation), annual music and drama festival	National and local
Entertainment	Location of regional theatre and cinemas	Regional
Shopping	Local and regional shopping centre (growing)	Local and regional
Agricultural	The centre of a thriving regional market, the home of one of the country's leading cider producers and the 'home' of Hereford cattle.	Regional, national and international

Summary statement:

The city of Hereford has claims to significance at all levels from local to international.

1. Its associations with the eponymous breed of cattle are known particularly in the New World giving the city and area an *international* reputation in that connection.
2. The evidential significance of the establishment of the city as a Saxon burgh and as the seat of an ancient diocese, as well as its connections with the world's oldest running music festival, the Three Choirs and its military links past and present give the city a *national* status.
3. The strategic location of the city on the Welsh borders, its status as the seat of a county administration, its river trade and its cultural offer, past and present all emphasise the *regional* significance of the city.

The city has many *local* significances, some enumerated above, but many others not identified.

18.0 Issues relating to the historic environment which affect the whole of the city

18.1 Traffic

During the survey and assessment process in connection with this report it was noted that there was almost no part of the inner city area studied where traffic was not an issue in one way or another. This is a nationwide issue and is due to society's seeming dependence on unfettered car ownership. It seems appropriate to take a long term view here, looking ahead to an era when other approaches to transportation may become predominant and individual car ownership reduced. However in the meantime it is felt that the problems listed below need to be addressed in order to make improvements to the historic environment of the city.

18.1.1 Reducing traffic on Edgar Street and Victoria Street

There is no doubt that the volume of traffic on the A49 trunk route which runs through the city on these streets has a serious detrimental impact on the environment of the city in a number of readily observable ways. Firstly there are the impacts of the vehicle flow itself – significant noise and significant local air pollution. These are not only unpleasant in themselves, but impact on the properties which front onto the street, reducing the quality of life of those who occupy them and reducing their value.

Secondly, there are the impacts on the way the streets either side the A49 are used. The east-west routes formed by Eign Street and St Nicholas Street / Barton Road are effectively severed by the main road. The traffic flows into and out of the city, which logically should be predominant, are subservient to the north-south flow. Significantly, the outer sections of both streets have much reduced pedestrian footfall due to the barrier effect of the main road and this has a particular impact on the businesses on the outer part of Eign Street.

Reducing the flow of traffic on the A49 would improve the local environment considerably and would allow the east-west pedestrian routes to be strengthened.

18.1.2 Reducing traffic on the inner ring road and other main routes

In the 1960s and 1970s, the creation of this route was a bold move which had the very positive outcome of removing much traffic from the city centre and permitted the creation of significant traffic free areas with a much improved local environment. However it is arguable that the move had the effect of reducing retail land values outside the ring by the very effect of creating 'inner' and 'outer' zones. This effect has remained and is readily observed in Eign Street, Widemarsh Street, St Owen's Street and, to a lesser extent Commercial Road.

The fact is, also that the ring road is quite difficult for pedestrians to cross. Except where there are traffic lights with a pedestrian phase, there is a significant risk in crossing the road due to traffic volume. This has been partly ameliorated in the Old Market area.

Insert Inner ring rd traffic pics

While this problem remains, Victoria Street, Blueschool Street and Bath Street will continue to be 'streets of two halves'. With a more managed traffic flow it would be possible to make improvements to the streets to make them safer and more people-friendly environments. This would, in consequence allow some of the lower value sites on the outside of the ring to be redeveloped with the expectation of better access and footfall.

In Blueschool Street particularly this would allow more satisfactory solutions to the junction with Widemarsh Street, the wide area of surface parking, the setting of the Blueschool itself and, not least would allow a better appreciation of the City Wall.

18.1.3 Reducing surface car parking

As is the case nationally, car parking is a serious problem for Hereford where it has a strong visual impact on the character of the historic city as a whole and also on the setting of some of the city's important historic buildings. Parking is of three main categories – residential parking, commuter parking and shopper / visitor parking. To reduce the impact it is likely that each category will require its own particular approach which will need to be tailored to the characteristics of the location concerned.

Residential parking was observed to be particularly problematic in the Moorfields and Portfields areas of the city. These are areas with small late Victorian houses on narrow plots with narrow streets and no front gardens. Often the house themselves have significant character and go to make visually attractive streets, however in many cases the visual character is marred by the presence of large numbers of parked vehicles. The effect is that in these streets vehicles are seen to dominate rather than people. Where these streets are also used as free commuter car parks the effect is compounded.

Improvements may be effected through residents' parking schemes and where possible the provision of secured residents parking areas. However the long term solution probably relies on the reduction of individual car ownership.

Commuter parking takes place on streets around the city and, very obviously on certain large surface car parks. In parts of the city, noticeably off East Street, former gardens of private houses have been taken over and surfaced to provide lettable parking spaces. The longer term strategy for dealing with this will be to aim to reduce the need for parking, by promoting effective public transport, park and ride schemes, car sharing, pool cars etc. In the medium term it is likely that the need will remain and could be met by the provision of a number of strategically placed multi-storey car parks of suitably sensitive design.

Shopping and visitor parking will need similar solutions, but it is key that multi-storey parks are located within reasonable distance of shopping areas.



Junction of Eign St and Victoria St



Residential parking on Price St



Traffic on Edgar St



Surface parking on Gaol St

18.2 Views

The city contains many memorable views, the majority of which have been identified on the sequence of 'Visual containment' maps. As is the case with historic cities of this type, many of the views are short – even surprise views, with few grand vistas. Such views should be retained and enhanced where possible.

One of the significant detractors from the townscape environment of the city is the way in which, in a number of locations the sense of containment is lost and views 'leak out'. This should be remedied where possible.

The views analysis in Part A of this report shows how important the key landmark buildings are in the wider view of the city. The view of these landmarks from key locations outside the city should be respected and preserved. This means that the height of buildings in the foreground from these viewpoints will need to be controlled and, to a lesser extent any buildings which lie in the background.

However the analysis suggests that there are areas of the city, particularly to the west of the centre and to the north east where buildings heights are less critical and there may be opportunity for taller structures. However Hereford should remain primarily a city of low buildings so that the overall historic character remains dominant.

18.3 Conservation Areas and the protection of unlisted buildings

The extent of Conservation Areas within the study area of this appraisal is shown on maps XX and on the 'Designations' page of each study zone. As a result of the appraisal no reason to change the overall coverage was observed, however certain (generally small) anomalies in the boundaries of individual CAs were noted and these have been marked on maps. In most cases where there were these anomalies it was the case that the boundary does not follow a current property boundary, meaning that an individual property could be 'half in and half out' which is not supportable in legal terms. The situation probably arises from the perpetuation of a historic boundary which has been dissolved through recent changes in ownership.

Changes have been proposed – either to extend the boundary, or to reduce it, so as to align boundaries. In one or two instances a recommendation for extension has been made to include an additional building (or in one case a short street) where the present character area appears to extend beyond the present CA boundary and that an extension of the CA would provide additional protection to the area concerned.

It was not possible within the scope of this study to carry out an individual in-depth appraisal for each CA. However there are one or two general concerns about the effectiveness of the CAs. Primarily the question is about the widespread, indeed almost wholesale, use of uPVC replacement doors and windows and other unsympathetic changes to properties. Whilst the need for improved insulation values is accepted, there are ways to achieve this with a less detrimental effect on the character of individual buildings.

It was noticeable in a small number of instances that owners had cherished their original windows and doors and had even repainted them in Victorian colours rather than the ubiquitous white. Rather than being the norm, these few survivals are now the marked exception, but they do show the greater aesthetic integrity which adherence to original, or similar patterns of joinery and colour provide.

18.4 A local list of distinctive buildings

As with many cities, the list of Listed Buildings is very strong on buildings up to and including the Georgian period but tends to include fewer representatives of the Victorian period and later. It is the case with Hereford that whilst there are a number of very good listed Medieval and Georgian buildings, there are also a number of more recent buildings which contribute strongly to the historic environment of the city. As there was no great industrialisation phase in and around the city, these buildings tend to be rather small in scale and thus, perhaps tend to be rather overlooked. Nevertheless the character of the city would be weaker without them.

Within each study area there is a map headed 'Designations' which gives the current legal protections of Conservation Area, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building and Area of Archaeological importance. To this we have added an extra category of buildings which fall into the group listed above and which it is recommended form a Local List. Inclusion on this list would mean that the buildings are considered worthy of additional protection above CA status and that, should proposals affecting their character come forward, the Local Authority would give these special consideration as if they were on the national list.



NatWest bank, Broad St, unlisted



Warehouse, Gwynne St, unlisted

18.5 Green spaces

As a fairly dense urban settlement based around a medieval plan, Hereford has relatively few green spaces, with the notable exceptions of the castle area and the cathedral close and the open space of the King George V playing fields across the river. There is no real opportunity or indeed reason to create any additional large scale green spaces within the city, but consideration could be given to some 'greening' of the city to soften the hard urban environment and perhaps to provide one or two small spaces where people can sit and enjoy a moment of quiet.

The planting of tree avenues can greatly enhance an otherwise perhaps unprepossessing street. There are a number of opportunities for this to happen, particularly where the width of streets is greater than required by the basic function of conveying people and traffic. This has been tried in Eign Gate but was not successful as the street is too narrow to carry trees of any size. However wider streets, including perhaps those around the city wall could be so planted to beneficial effect.

Elsewhere there may be opportunities to create 'pocket parks' including a few trees and benches, as a break in otherwise consistently hard surfaces. Where Offa Street – St John's Street cross East Street, there is an area currently occupied by cars, but already including some trees, where a small green space could be created. Other locations may be considered.

The Planning Policy Framework document allows for the designation of Local Green Space which would cover this type of proposal.

18.6 The city wall

As mentioned in the assessments in the previous section it is possible to pass through and around the city of Hereford without having any awareness that it is a walled city. It is accepted that the walls are not of the scale or significance of Chester or York, but nevertheless they are historically and archaeologically significant. The presence of the enclosing walls was a main determining factor in the form and growth (or lack of growth) in the city throughout the majority of its existence.

The revealing of the remaining fragments of the wall and their partial display was an enlightened move in the 1960s when elsewhere historic elements such as this were often not highly regarded and were being swept away as impediments to growth.

With a reduction in traffic on the inner ring road and with the redevelopment of sites adjacent to the wall there exists the opportunity to further mark the line of the wall and to highlight its presence and significance. Where no masonry fabric remains it would be possible that the wall's line is marked by a reconstruction (though not in any way attempting to fake the original) or by contrasting paving. A wall walk could be created with suitable actual or virtual interpretation to show the gates, the walls and to explain the effects of the wall. Additional soft landscaping could be provided to give an appropriate setting to the wall so that there is adequate space to appreciate it.

The marking of the line of the wall would be particularly helpful in any redevelopment of the sites between Bath Street and Victoria Street.

18.7 Promoting good contemporary design

Hereford has some very good examples of contemporary design which sit well within the historic city. There is evidence of sensitive use of traditional and modern forms and materials in ways which sit well within their overall context. These examples provide proof that contemporary design can take its proper place in the evolution and development of the city.

Equally, and regrettably there are a few examples of buildings where there had been a resort either to a pastiche of historic styles which has not worked or an ill-considered modern design which does not sit well in its context. Both outcomes tend, consequently to produce a lack of confidence in the ability to design and produce buildings which are worthy of the city.

The requirement for good design should be a part of the briefing and design process and also embedded within development control. NPPF provides a basis on which good design considerations should form part of the whole development process. However there is a need to engage with developers and designers at an early stage in the process so that this requirement is firmly embedded and is carried right through to the execution and completion of any building or place.



City wall and traffic on Victoria Street



City wall, Blueschool Street

19.0 Issues which relate to specific locations or buildings within the city

19.1 Place making

The most significant public open spaces in the city in terms of use are High Town and to a lesser extent the Cathedral Close. These are spaces where there is the opportunity to sit, to meet up with friends, maybe to have coffee or a sandwich and to 'watch the world go by'. Such places are important to a city, providing places to be still amongst the hustle and bustle. However such places mostly do not arrive by accident. There is usually the need to slow, or remove traffic, to provide attractive ground surfaces, to provide some shade (!) and essentially some seating. A visual focus helps – a water body, a historic building, a monument, public art or sculpture, or gardens perhaps. Within the existing fabric of Hereford there are a number of locations where it would be possible, and desirable to create such spaces, all as described below.

19.1.1 St Peter's Square

Although more of a triangle, this open space has great potential to become one of the key open spaces within the city centre. It has many very strong architectural elements which contribute to a strong sense of place – the Shire Hall, St Peter's Church which is the mayoral church and a focus of civic activity, the War Memorial and, slightly distant, the Town Hall. This area is already the focus of the city's parades, for example on Remembrance Day.

The changes needed to strengthen the qualities of the square are not that great. The main 'structural' changes would be the removal of the bus stands and the railings in front of the Shire Hall. Traffic management would be needed to emphasise the square as a 'shared space' and these would involve changes to pavings which could be setts or flags laid out in such a way as to emphasise the form of the square itself rather than the traffic routes through it. Premises adjacent to the square could be encouraged to have pavement seating and tables in order to encourage people to sit and chat and enjoy the space.



St Peter's Square, 1840 described as 'celebrating Hereford's new civic centre.'

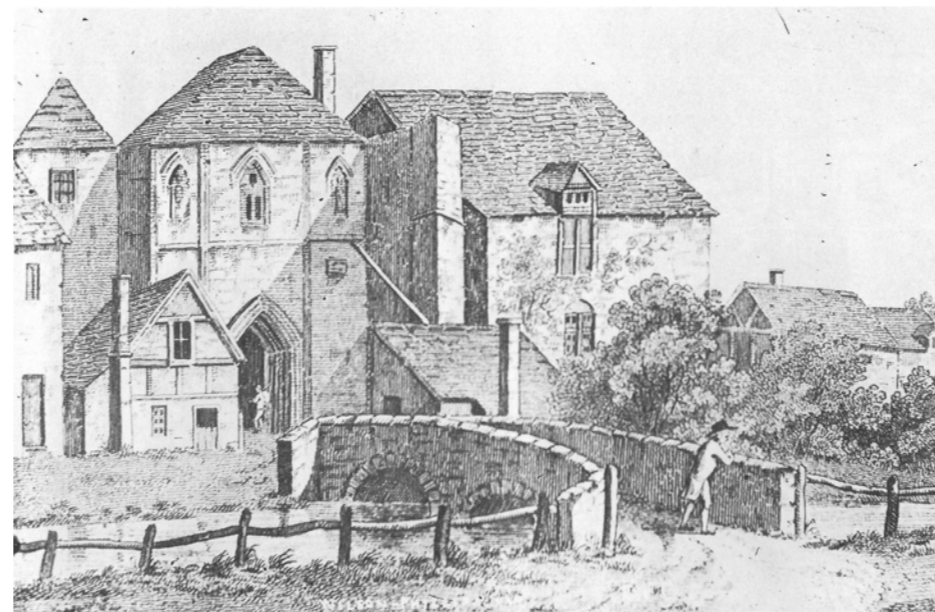
19.1.2 Commercial Square

Currently this is a square in name only. It lies at one of the major traffic intersections in the city and there is no doubt that traffic dominates the environment. However with a reduction in traffic volumes consequent on changing the priorities within the city streets it would be possible to reclaim this space for people. It might never be a space in which to pass the time of day, but yet there is the opportunity to re-create a 'place' which has its own character and provides a contrast to the linear streets and thoroughfares.

The square is fronted by two good buildings and three buildings of perhaps a lesser status. The Kerry appears to be in good condition, but Franklin House at present looks somewhat forlorn and uncared for. A proper facelift for this building, which it certainly merits would help greatly. The other three buildings are in reasonable order, but all would benefit from careful enhancement.

With reduced carriageway widths it would be possible to extend the paving and introduce some public art or sculpture as a visual focus. Commercial Road is one of the main approaches to the city centre, and enhancement of the square in these ways would enhance the sense of arrival into an important historic city.

The square was the location of one of the city's main gates, Bye Street gate, which had its own gaol. Some recognition or representation of this would also form a link between the lengths of city wall either side.



Bye Street gate (now the site of the Kerry)

19.1.3 St Martin's Street

Prior to the construction of the Greyfriar's Bridge, St. Martin's Street was the only approach to the city from the south, leading, as it does up to the medieval river bridge. The street is therefore wide and lined with some good Georgian buildings particularly on the east side, as befitted its earlier status. With the removal of traffic the street is relatively quiet, but still retains its central reservation and kerbs as for a more major road. There is the opportunity to reconsider the hard landscaping of the street, to 'soften' its appearance and maybe to include some tree planting so as to improve the overall environment. If the former garage could be persuaded to remove its canopy and maybe to rebuild on the line of the main frontage this would also add to the appearance of a street which has potentially very attractive visual character.



Commercial Square and Franklin Barnes



The Kerry

19.2 A canal basin

The value and opportunities that a waterside location can bring have been discussed briefly under the Urban Village assessment. The animation provided by boats and water remain a draw for people and there are examples from across the country where water has been used to promote an attractive environment for living and for recreation. Examples range from Salford Quays to Gloucester canal to Chester's canal side to Brecon and the theatre.

Canal-side development could focus on the recreational use of the canal, with moorings for private boats as well as the opportunity for short boat trips as is the case at Pontcysyllte near Llangollen. Alongside the canal there could be cafes and restaurants as well as space for private residential properties – possibly in the form of apartments.

Hereford has the disadvantage of having to reclaim the canal and open it up as well as the actual development of hard landscaping around the water's edge. Indeed the timescale of the canal restoration company is uncertain, however it may well be that a vision for the new canal wharf, as well as possible funding could shorten the timescale to delivery.

19.3 Connectedness and interpretation of historic sites

Hereford as a historic city has much to offer the visitor and historian. Not only are the plan and development of the city of interest, but there are many historic sites which can be explored. Currently and understandably, the emphasis is on the city centre, and perhaps particularly on the cathedral and castle sites. However the city has more to offer through exploration of sites just outside the centre.

An obvious sequence of site to explore would be the walls and the gates which provided the city's entry points. Improvements to the setting of the wall and a physical marking of the locations of the gates would assist in this.

A further series of sites, could be the John Venn legacy sites, the gaol site and governor's house, St Peter's churchyard, the canal basin and Blackfriars /Coningsby Hospital. The creation of a footpath link from the Canal Street / Coningsby Street through to the Blackfriars gardens would enable a more logical progression.



Views to Cathedral from KGV fields

19.4 Access to the river

It is possible to visit Hereford, to see its historic sites, to do shopping and yet be completely unaware of the fact that the city sits alongside one of the country's most attractive rivers. The opportunities to view the river and its setting from the north bank are limited to the area around the Castle Green and around the old Wye Bridge. This seems quite a regrettable situation, given the added pleasure that experiencing the river can bring, and to be mercenary, the value it would add to the tourist experience.

Part of the reason for this is the geography of the site whereby the city is higher than the river and the main activities take place at a distance from the river banks. On the north side there is quite a steep embankment above the river which has limited riverside development. Another significant historic reason for avoiding river-bank sites is the propensity of the river to flood, and the significant rise in water levels sometimes experienced.

Another significant reason for lack of access to the river is the fact that, within the limits of the medieval city, the north bank of the river is 'privatised' in that it remains under the control of the cathedral estate.

However, despite all these constraints, it ought to be possible to create a carefully designed riverside walkway linking the Victoria Bridge, the access of Quay Street and the area of the Left Bank. This could form part of a 'loop' walk encompassing the cathedral and castle sites which would provide an attractive addition to the experience of Hereford.

To achieve this would involve careful negotiations with many parties, not least the cathedral estate. It would also require careful engineering design to withstand the effects of flood waters and to be sufficiently sensitive to the picturesque setting of the city when viewed from the Bishop's Meadow and King George V playing fields. However complex design challenges often bring out imaginative and innovative solutions.



Widemarsh Street

19.5 Re-making the city's streets

This section is about reinforcing the visual character of individual streets, so that they become inviting places and provide a greater sense of being in a city, with its fairly dense urban environment. There are a number of street, most already referred to, where the sense of enclosure is weak and the urban character is lost, or at least very diffuse. What goes to make a good city environment is that feeling of progressing through a series of well-defined spaces – be they enclosed streets, squares or parks. If the streets are winding, or the destination is hidden from view then there is a sense of anticipation, discovery and revealing. By contrast when there is little sense of enclosure or definition of spaces there is little sense of progression or anticipation of what might be to come. There is little sense of expectation of a view or a landmark and so the feeling of the city space is diluted.

A number of Hereford's main streets have lost some of this sense of definition and hence constitute a weak urban environment. Opportunities to recover or recreate this character exist and are described below.

19.5.1 Widemarsh Street

Reference has been made in the Urban Village section of the appraisals to the weak nature of the middle section of Widemarsh Street. At the Newtown Road (north) end there is a good sense of enclosure, but the presence of large billboards facing as you enter the street suggests that things are not as they might be, billboards often being a sign of long-vacant plots.

Opposite the interiors showroom and chip shop there is a series of warehouse type properties set well back from the road behind metal spiked fencing. All this says is 'keep out' and that the property owner or developer has little sense of making any contribution to the street scene apart from advertising. Further south, there are small light industrial premises either side and next to the Link Road crossroads a pair of dwellings looking now somewhat lost.

Further on, next to the Oxford Arms is a short terrace of late Georgian town houses, again looking lost in a largely non-residential environment and nearly opposite an interesting Victorian warehouse building and more former dwellings. Between and around many of these properties are gaps and open spaces, often used for surface car parking.

Using the best of the existing buildings it would be desirable progressively to recreate (or perhaps create for the first time) a sense of continuity in the buildings. They need not be of one use, nor of uniform design, indeed individuality is part of the variety of a cityscape. This process would need to happen through development control and would take many years, but an overall vision for the street would indicate how individual re-developments should be planned.

19.5.2 Eign Street

Eign Street has suffered from being bisected by the A49. Some visual connectivity remains, but the views are often broken by the rush of traffic in the Inner Ring Road. There is almost no connectivity for vehicles as a significant detour is required. Pedestrian connectivity is provided by means of an underpass, well intentioned at the time, but now unpopular for environmental reasons and those of personal safety. The reduction in status of the A49 through the city provides the opportunity to re-make this link.

Pedestrians would no longer need to be forced underground and once again given the priority that they deserve. As a result, some of the struggling commercial premises on 'outer' Eign Street would benefit from greater passing trade. There may be opportunity to build on the north side of the street, west of the a49 which would help to create visual continuity and a more continuous retail frontage.

19.5.3 Inner ring – Victoria Street, Newmarket Street, Blueschool and Bath Streets

Whereas Eign Street is about mending a break what was formerly a continuous street, in the case of the Inner Ring Road the opportunity is to re-unite the two sides of the street. With the almost constant flow of traffic, the emphasis for pedestrians and drivers alike is on negotiating a safe passage whether along or crossing the street. Opportunities to experience what lies alongside the street are limited to occasional glimpses for drivers, or to the few points where it is safe and comfortable to stand for pedestrians.

Much has been said about the desirability of re-emphasising the presence of the city wall where there are remains and of marking its line where it has been demolished. This should be a key factor in re-shaping the environment of these streets. Marking the positions of the former gates into the city could also be useful part of the exercise and would help to explain the function of the wall as a means of defence and control.

Victoria Street, with its dual carriageway is not a street for pedestrians. The local environment is noisy and polluted so is relatively uninviting. There are some good residential properties fronting the street, but the environment is obviously a challenge for inhabitants, therefore to reduce the traffic flows would significantly improve enjoyment of these houses.

The broad area of grass in front of the city wall make it very visible and it would be inappropriate to redevelop this ground, however, tree planting could be incorporated which would help form a visual boundary to the east side of the street without obstructing views of the wall. In due course, if the Berrington Street sites are redeveloped up to the wall line this would form further visual enclosure, but the line of the wall should remain clear.

Newmarket Street has already been greatly improve through the removal of the underpass and the levelling of the road surface so that it is more easily crossed by pedestrians. The frontages on the Old Market side remain somewhat blank, with large service gates in one section. The north side of the street is warm and attractive and opportunities to open up frontages still further could be explored. The line of the wall on the south side is clearly visible.

Blueschool Street is currently the least attractive section of the ring road, though it has the potential for better. Including the service road to the rear of Maylord Orchards, there are currently six traffic lanes between the outer and inner sides of the street. The city wall is marooned between traffic lanes and is not appreciated and not particularly well maintained as there is probably no great incentive to do so. The inner two lanes, providing service access and bus stops is not a particularly attractive environment though reasonably well used. Waiting for buses alongside this north facing frontage is a bleak experience. Further around this road is the wide expanse of the entry to the basement car park and surface level service yards to the rear of Commercial Street – all vehicle dominated and rather bleak and unattractive.

On the north side of Blueschool Street the preponderance of car parking and some rather inappropriate uses has already been commented on. To mend all this requires the undertaking of a detailed study to understand the requirements and to see how the dominance of the road environment can be reduced. The principles of mending and restoring the continuity of frontage, the creation of a sense of place, the softening of hard surfaces and increased use of shared surfaces have been covered elsewhere.

Bath Street has high traffic volumes, but it retains more of its sense of an enclosed street than the others. The wall remains, the police building and the residential blocks on the south side and the courts building, the commercial premises and former housing on the north side all contribute to a definable character. The weak point is the gap on the south side of the street between the John Haider building and Harrison Street.

19.5.5 East Street

East Street is, and probably always has been a service street, providing rear access to properties which face onto the more 'important' streets either side, but particularly to the north. It also provides a way through to Castle Street and the cathedral school from the west side of the city and provides access to significant areas of surface car parking for offices in the neighbourhood. Such buildings as abut the street are fronted by narrow pavements if any at all and are therefore difficult for pedestrians to use safely. At present therefore it is a service street and a street which provides access to better places.

To lift the environment of this historic street it will be necessary to address fundamentally the way the street is used, before opportunities for enhancement can be grasped. This would involve seeking to reduce traffic using the street for short term access to the Castle Street area and seeking to reduce the volume of service vehicles using the road.

Visually, and in terms of pedestrian comfort, the worst section is the short length between Broad Street and Church Street. Buildings here pay no respect to the street and disregard any obligation to provide a harmonious street environment.

19.6 Making new neighbourhoods

There are parts of the city which, although quite close to the city centre have quite a low level of development and economic activity and, to a degree do not live up to their potential. Reasons for this are many and varied and are particular to the locations themselves. However they remain as sites where, when circumstances are right, there is real opportunity to create lively, attractive new quarters for the city. None may be regarded as 'prime' sites – hence their present condition – and so would probably not be appropriate for larger scale retail based development, but mixed uses including residential may find favour.

19.6.1 Berrington Street area

This is a significant area of land within a 'stone's throw' of the main commercial centre of the city and the cathedral. Now largely surface car parking it retains the early street grid and a small number of historic buildings which could form significant elements of a design brief for the area. Given the over-provision of small retail accommodation at present this may not be a significant part of any redevelopment proposal but nevertheless it is a location which may well lend itself to good quality housing – apartments or town houses. The development of these sites would provide the opportunity to 'mend' the urban fabric in this area and would bring it back to life.

19.6.2 Gaol Street area

Gaol Street seems to be one of the city's main car parks – a group of vacant sites all used for parking which together are significantly detrimental to the appearance of the city. As some of the surrounding buildings are of a larger scale it may be possible to accommodate some multi-storey parking which could work well being adjacent to Bath Street, one of the city's main traffic routes. The aim would be to reduce the need for surface parking and to develop these sites in such a way as to create a new 'quarter' for the city. In this part of the city, near to existing offices, and near to the police buildings and to the magistrates court it may well be that additional office space could be provided as part of a mixed development including a significant residential component.

The historic buildings which abut the site, and which may provide design references are the Shire Hall, the old gaol building and the John Haider building. They are of completely different character, but with sensitivity could be used to give identity and individuality to a site which, apart from the street layout is a fairly blank canvas.

A further component and potential determining factor in the design is the presence of the route of the city wall, near the north east perimeter of the area. Recognition of this in the design, perhaps through differentiated paving, or through actual structure or art work is desirable as it would help to make the line of the wall more intelligible and the more appreciated.

19.6.3 Catherine Street area

Catherine Street is a narrow through-way just north of Blueschool Street which, owing to its restricted nature is not heavily used. It mainly provides access to the property either side but is not one of the significant through-routes in the city. It falls within an area of the city designated as 'Urban Village' and at its east end it has something of that character. However in the middle, and to the west it is dominated by warehouse type buildings and, again, by surface parking.

The use of a site so close to the city for warehouseing, light engineering and vehicle servicing seems increasingly out of step with the desire to enhance the character of the city as a whole. Mixed and contrasting uses, sometimes 'cheek by jowl' in the past have been part of the essence of a city and contrast with the distinct zoning which is often favoured. However if the neighbours which this type of develop produces do not sit harmoniously together then the overall outcome is less than satisfactory for all parties. Again the dominance of the car and the need for access by large vehicles is a prime factor in producing disharmony. A view of the historic maps for this and other city centre sites shows them to be a maze of small scale properties, which sit happily in a tight urban setting. A nominal return to this scale of development may well be a better approach for areas such as Catherine Street. The development at the east end of the street set a good precedent, being of apartments and small houses with courts and alleyways which have a strong urban feel.

The scale of the redevelopment of this area may well be increased closer to Blueschool Street where the thoroughfare is wider and where there are some good buildings along the street of increased scale.

19.6.4 Friar Street area

Friar Street is an area in transition. Formerly it was an industrial area with strong links to the adjacent Barton Station, with insertion of some different uses such as the Victoria Eye and Ear hospital and the Lord Scudamore school. More recently the non-residential uses have been declining so that housing is now becoming dominant. There is no reason why this process should not continue, however the properties fronting station road have good access and non-residential might well be retained in this area.

However for environmental reasons Friar Street lends itself to residential accommodation and the forthcoming sites on the street could well be used for this purpose. Variety of scale and type of tenancy would help to maintain vitality. The retention of small scale retail and other appropriate community uses would help to retain life and interest within the area.

19.7 Regeneration based on individual buildings

Heritage-led regeneration is a relatively new approach and recognises that in some instances significant historic buildings can form the basis of the regeneration of an area by providing a strong visual focus and, often a level of economic activity through visitors or other appropriate uses in a historic setting. There can never be any such regeneration on a large scale in Hereford for historic reasons, but there are a number of places or locations where key buildings could be used as the focal point for regeneration and re-building.

19.7.1 The railway station

Penson's railway station of 1854 has a strong architectural character and is currently well maintained and well used. However (and it is recognised that this is a temporary situation) the forecourt of the building is rather bleak and unattractive. There is a pedestrian zone just outside the front wall of the station, but elsewhere there is a relatively undefined space used for short term parking, drop-offs, taxis, buses and deliveries. The entrance to the station ticket hall and the platforms is a very undistinguished and well-worn single door.

Early illustrations of the building show that there was a long glazed canopy across the frontage between the two forward projecting end wings. To reinstate this would have a real functional benefit, providing a sheltered place for people to wait and also a visual benefit in restoring the integrity of the original design.

It is the forward plan to provide an integrated transport hub in association with the station building. Ideally this should contain covered spaces for waiting bus and taxi passengers, cycle parking, possible newsagents and a café and maybe a visitor space which includes information on the locality and something of the history of the site. All this implies a building, probably of single storey height. This would require careful location so as not to obscure the frontage of the station, at least from the approach side. In addition careful hard and soft landscaping could be provided such that by subtle means, such as changes in hard surfacing, pedestrian and vehicular spaces can be clearly designated.

Chester station which has an Italianate design and an extremely long frontage has a 'piazza' of this type as its forecourt and, despite initial concerns about shared spaces works well and looks completely uncluttered.

3.7.2 Old Gaol site

The former gaol governor's house is another of Hereford's minor architectural gems looking forlorn and undervalued. Here we have an early work by one of the country's big name architects which should be appreciated more and could form the focus of local environmental improvement. The building, with its very heavy masonry rustication and its bold round-headed windows is most unusual in character. It could be that the interiors are equally interesting.

Not only is the building itself not well appreciated, but its setting is rather poor. It sits in the sea of concrete paving which is the bus station, whilst on one side is the service entrance for the former cinema and on another side are the rather poor quality buildings of Union Walk. Yet all this sits again with a few metres of the city centre and on a main approach to the city.

The street elevation of the former cinema is not without character and the curved north end with its storey height curved glazing has strong art deco feel reminiscent of airports and seaside pavilions and travel.

Together, these buildings could form the core of a regeneration area offering significant local environmental benefits and increased values to adjacent properties. Union Walk provides a ready pedestrian access to the hospital site, but at present is not attractive, but redevelopment could add value to this street and encourage more pedestrian use.

3.7.3 Blackfriars Monastery site

Conservation and improvement of the setting of the existing ruins is desirable. If possible, the floorplan of some of the other buildings in the monastic complex could be explained by means of hard landscaping or paving set out along the lines of the walls.

Linking the site by means of footpath connections to the former St Peter's church burial ground and through to site in the northern part of the Urban Village area would help to revitalise the site and would help to improve the interconnectedness of the area as a whole.

20.0 Recommendations and Opportunities



Map 28 - Recommendations and Opportunities

21.0 Note on commissioning, authorship and use of report

21.1 Details of commission

The commission has been carried out by staff of the Birmingham office of Donald Insall Associates. The commission was awarded following a competitive fee bidding process which involved also a quality appraisal.

Donald Insall Associates (Insalls) is a firm of Conservation Architects established 60 years ago with a national reputation for excellence in the field of conservation of historic buildings and places. Insall brings to its projects unrivalled experience in the field of conservation and aims to give the highest quality of service and customer care. From its institution, the firm has always adopted a method for conservation projects which puts understanding of the present situation at the beginning and heart of any work. This present report aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the historic core of the city of Hereford as a forerunner and basis for developing policy which will allow growth and development whilst conserving what makes the city special.

21.2 Authorship and use of report

This report has been prepared on behalf of a team from Herefordshire Council led by Matthew Knight, Principal Conservation Officer, supported by members of the planning and archaeology teams.

For Insalls, the team has been led by Matthew Vaughan Associate and leader of the Birmingham office, supported by John Simons, Conservation Architect and Holly Chapman, Architectural Assistant.

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