



The Grand Quarter is a place of special character and historic interest.

This appraisal and management plan sets out the features that contribute to its distinctiveness and identifies opportunities for its protection and enhancement



# The Grand Quarter

## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN



Approved as a material consideration in the determination of planning decisions - 20 November 2017

# Summary

## Summary of special interest

The Grand Quarter Conservation Area is located to the north of the city centre and was the earliest expansion of Leeds beyond its medieval boundaries. Centred on the Church of St John the Evangelist, the area was first developed in the 17th century initially through the philanthropic works of John Harrison, a wealthy merchant of the town and a key figure in the history of the development of Leeds. The area has evolved since then with industrial, commercial and cultural uses that continue to shape the character of the area today. Evidence of the origins and evolution of the area is preserved in its plan form and historic architecture, and its important green space close to the heart of the city.

Key characteristics:

- St John's is the oldest surviving church in the city centre and its exceptional interest is recognised in its Grade I listing. It represents a rare example of a virtually intact 17th century church.
- The Grand Theatre and Opera House is a significant cultural destination in the city centre and the Grand Arcade is one of the city's distinctive shopping arcades.
- The area includes a mix of small-scale, tight-grained units that suit the city's independent businesses and large-grained plots like the landmark buildings of the church, theatre and arcade.

- The built environment of the area is rich in colour and lavish in architectural detail. The palette of materials is varied but red brick with stone dressings dominates. Historic details survive and there is scope for enhancement through restoration of details that have been lost. Buildings form end-stops to key views and corners are emphasised architecturally, for example with roof turrets and angled corner doorways.
- St John's churchyard and Merrion Street Gardens provide significant green space in the city centre.

## Summary of issues and opportunities

The protection and enhancement of the special character of the conservation area depends on the positive conservation management of the area. In addition to the existing national statutory legislation and local planning policy controls the following opportunities for protection and enhancement have been identified:

- Explore the possibility of securing a heritage-led regeneration funding scheme for the Grand Quarter.
- Retain and maintain surviving historic shopfronts and shopfront elements
- Ensure that any new shopfronts, signage and security measures preserve or enhance the special character of the area.
- Respect the character of historic buildings by:

- addressing maintenance issues in a timely manner to reduce damage and expense,
- maintaining and sympathetically repairing surviving historic features,
- replacing inappropriate fixtures, fittings and adaptations, and
- addressing vacancy and underuse.

- New development should respond sensitively and creatively to the historic environment.

- Ensure that future public realm and traffic management measures respect and enhance the special character of the conservation area.

- Promote the enhanced use of the area's greenspace.
- Protect the important contribution trees make to the special character of the conservation area.

- Ensure the historic environment plays a positive role in addressing climate change and that the introduction of microregeneration equipment does not harm the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

- Development should have regard to the archaeological record and where necessary include an element of archaeological investigation and mitigation.

- Promote and celebrate the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.

- Ensure that the setting of the conservation area is considered as a material consideration within the planning process.



St John's church, 1632-34. The oldest surviving church in the city centre



The Grand Theatre and Opera House and Grand Arcade, spectacular architectural gems and important cultural destinations in the area



'The Grand Parade' contributes to the architectural richness of the area and offers scope for enhancement

# Extent of the conservation area

The Grand Quarter Conservation Area was designated in November 2017 to recognise its special architectural and historic interest.

The boundary includes:

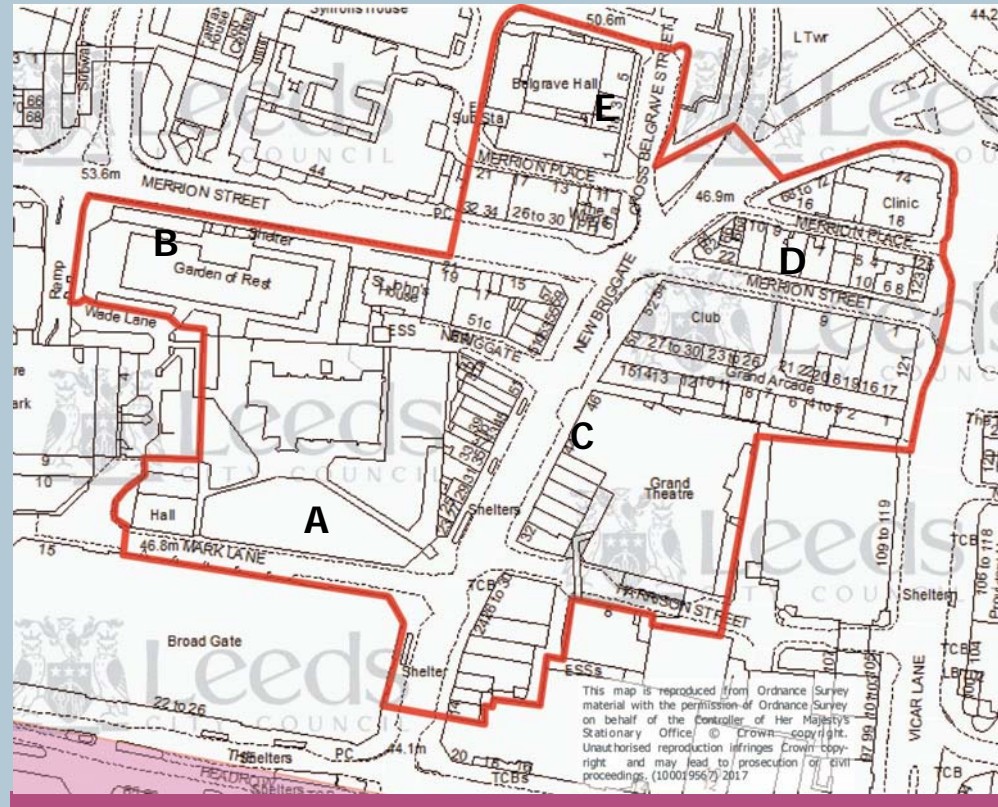
A - St John's Church and churchyard - the oldest surviving church in the city centre

B - Merrion Street Gardens - an important green space in the city centre

C - New Briggate - a busy commercial street with strong leisure and cultural uses that is an important public transport route. The street features the Grand Theatre and Opera House and the Grand Arcade, significant listed buildings.


D - Merrion Street - an important route through the city centre with the recently pedestrianised eastern extent now a focus for bars and restaurants offering outside seating areas

E - Cross Belgrave Street - a group of historic buildings relating to the former Belgrave Chapel and Sunday School, now Belgrave Hall



Conservation area boundary

 The Grand Quarter Conservation Area

 City Centre Conservation Area



Cross Belgrave Street former Belgrave Chapel and Sunday School



St John's and Merrion Street Gardens, important historic green space in the city centre



New Briggate, a busy street and important transport route with strong leisure and cultural uses



Merrion Street an important route with a group of early 20th century vernacular revival buildings

## Location and context

The Grand Quarter Conservation Area is located to the north of Leeds city centre at the northern end of Briggate, its main pedestrianised high-street.

The area includes some of the city's important landmarks with St John's Church being the oldest surviving church in the city centre, and the Grand Theatre and Opera House being one of its most popular cultural destinations.

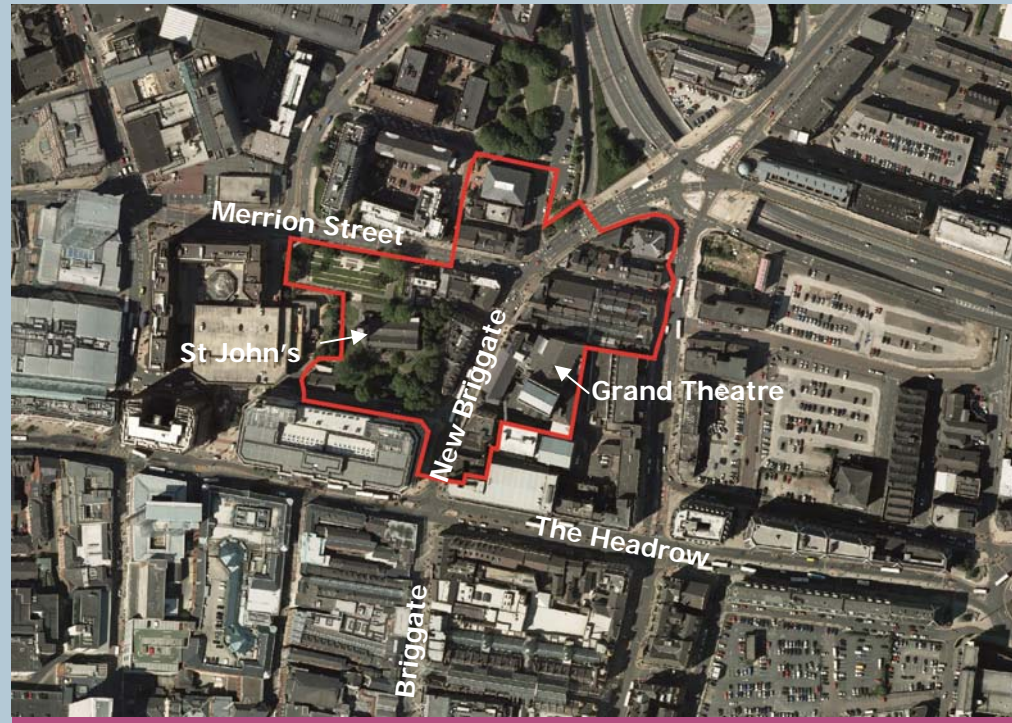
The area is vibrant and busy with a growing leisure use of bars, cafes, restaurants and take-aways, alongside retail and service-provider commercial units.

The area contains a number of important road links, with New Briggate forming a busy public transport route for access to areas to the north of the city centre, and Merrion Street providing an important traffic through-route linking to the north and the Inner Ring Road.

### Geology, topography and setting

Leeds sits in the basin of the River Aire with its flood plain to the south and the original settlement located on the south facing slope of the rising ground to the north.

The underlying geology of the Pennine lower coal measures has shaped the town providing building materials of sandstone and clay for brick-making



The Grand Quarter is located to the north of the city centre in an area surrounded by regeneration both delivered, such as the First Direct Arena, Trinity Arcade and Victoria Gate phase I, and forthcoming, such as Victoria Gate phase II

together with coal that powered the town's industrialisation.

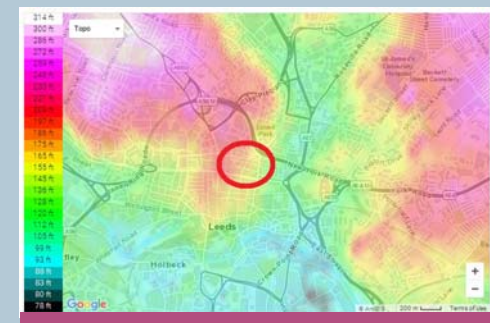
The conservation area is located on the higher ground to the north, with land falling from west to east, most noticeable on the side-roads running off New Briggate.

The immediate setting of the conservation area is densely urban with the dominant east-west axis of the Headrow to the south, separating New Briggate from Briggate. To the north, the Inner Ring Road is bridged by New Briggate linking to North Street. This

area is currently seeing regeneration development delivered by market forces with the recent establishment of a number of new bars and apartment developments. To the east lies Vicar Lane and the site of the proposed Victoria Gate Phase II redevelopment and to the west lie the St John's Centre and The Light retail and leisure developments leading to the Civic Quarter.



New Briggate in its wider setting



The conservation area is located on higher ground with New Briggate running along the contour and land falling to the east



New Briggate is located on a geology of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures (grey) to the north of the river deposits of the Aire (yellow)

# Historic development

## Early origins

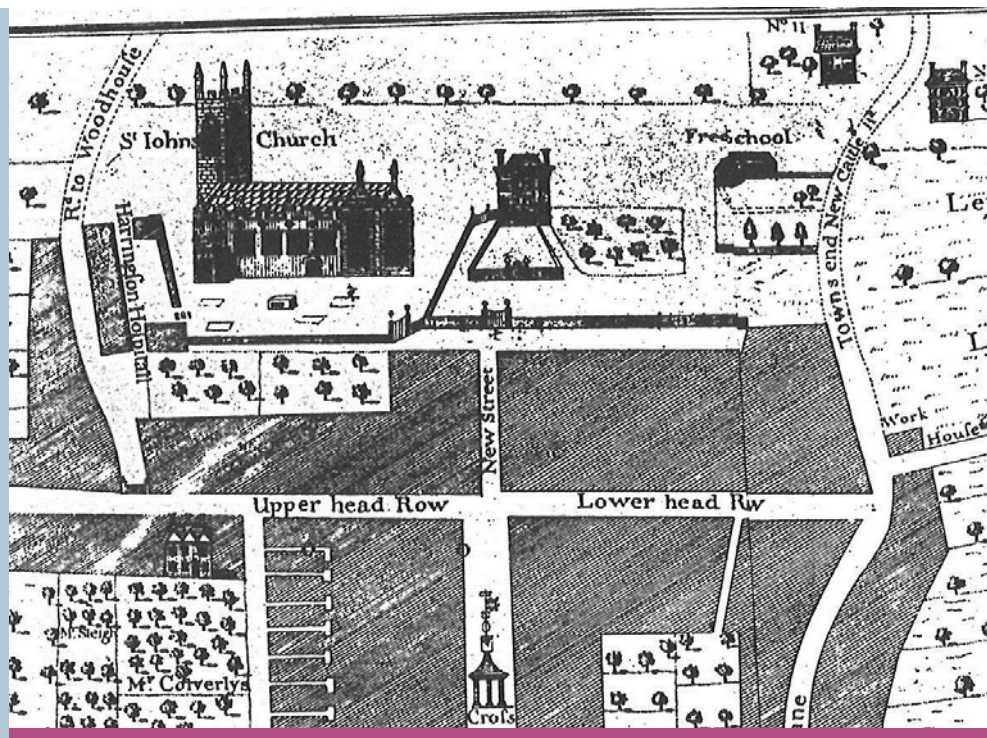
The area was the earliest expansion of Leeds beyond its medieval boundaries and was initially developed in the 17th century. Prior to this, the area formed part of the open field system, with The Headrow, a medieval ploughing headland, marking the boundary between the burgage plots of the planned medieval town on Briggate and the strips of the open field system to the north.

## John Harrison and the initial 17th century development of the area

The area was transformed from the early 17th century by the philanthropic developments of John Harrison (1579-1656), one of the city's wealthy cloth merchants and among the most influential figures of the time.

Harrison acquired land in the northern part of the town and in 1624 built a grammar school (now lost) in what was then a field, later becoming Vicar Lane. It was notable for being one of the first secular buildings in the town to be built in stone rather than being timber-framed.

St John's Church, however, is his most notable legacy. Built from 1632 and consecrated in 1634, it survives today as the oldest place of worship in the city centre and its exceptional significance is recognised in its Grade I listing. It is a rare survival of a virtually intact 17th century church with its distinctive double nave showing the population



Extract from John Cossins' Plan of Leeds of 1726 showing Harrison's 17th century development of the area; 'New Street', St John's, the Grammar School (Free School) and his Almshouses (Hospital). Also shown is the 1720 gentry house of merchant Matthew Wilson, the only private house on the map to survive and now Nash's Fish and Chip Restaurant

pressures of the booming town of this date that had long outgrown the medieval parish church of St Peter on Lower Kirkgate.

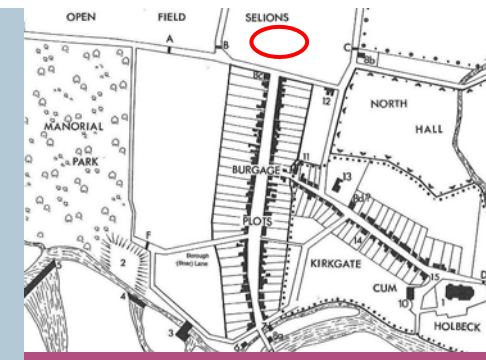
Harrison linked this new development to Briggate and the town centre by upgrading an ancient pathway running through the fields into 'New Street' - a narrow, cul-de-sac on the alignment of today's New Briggate.

To the west of the church Harrison founded a complex of Almshouses,

with a large yard and dedicated chapel standing on the site of what is now Age UK. Sometimes known as 'Harrison's Hospital', the establishment consisted of two sets of almshouses each containing twenty separate apartments and was endowed to provide for forty poor women.

## 18th century development of the area

John Cossin's map of 1726 is the first accurate plan of Leeds and shows the



Extract from Burt and Grady's reconstruction of Leeds c1500 showing that New Briggate was open fields at this time



John Harrison, initial developer of the area, commemorated in a St John's church window



Harrison's Grammar School of 1624, previously on Vicar Lane, demolished c1900 ©Thoresby Society

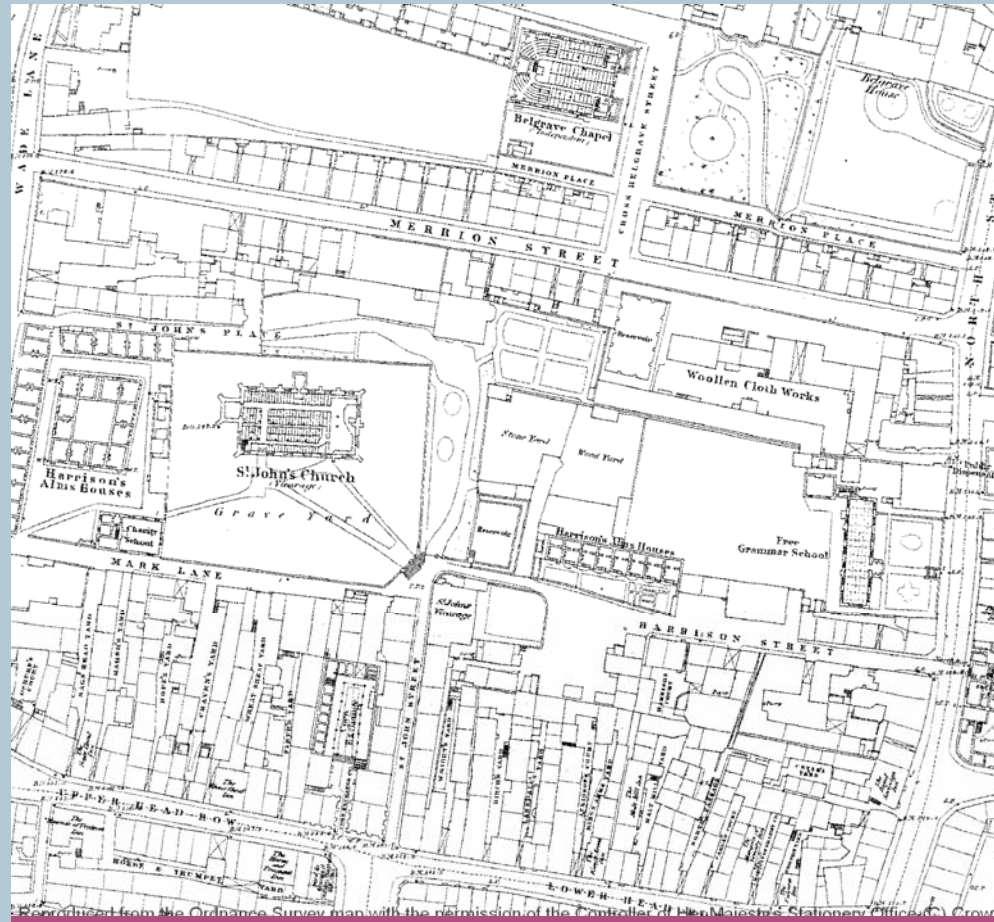
17th century development of the New Street area. It also depicts a fine gentry house built in 1720 that survives today. This is the only surviving private house shown on the map and was built for the merchant Matthew Wilson. It stood in a setting originally known as St John's Place and was originally brick fronted with today's stucco, resembling rock-faced ashlar, added after 1860. By 1817 the house had become Richard Kemplay's Academy for Young Gentlemen, a move likely to be symptomatic of the flight of the wealthy classes from the city centre to the suburbs following the intensification of industrialisation.

### Early 19th century development – intensification and industrialisation

The 1850 Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map shows the area in great detail, even down to the pews of the St John's church and Belgrave Chapel. New Street is renamed 'St John Street', but continues to lead only as far as the church. Harrison's Free Grammar School remains but the area has changed considerably with 19th century intensification of development.

Merrion Street was laid out in 1830 by the Lupton estate and developed for housing, with a site reserved for the Belgrave Independent Chapel built in 1836, followed later by its attached Sunday School.

From 1726 the Leeds Charity School, founded in 1705, had been located in the former chapel of Harrison's Almshouses. In 1815 a purpose-built school was constructed on the site in a



Extract from the 1850 Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map showing the intensification of development of the area with the residential development of Merrion Street (1830) and the industrialisation of the area with the Woollen Cloth Works, Stone and Wood Yards and reservoirs joining the original 17th century development. New Street, now named St John Street, still terminates at the gate to the church

gothic revival style. This building survives and is currently used by Age UK.

Harrison's Almshouses are shown with an additional block built in the original courtyard and a further row provided to the east of the church on Harrison

Street, now the site of the Grand Theatre and Opera House.

The vicarage of St John's is marked on the corner plot opposite the surviving stepped gateway to the church.



Gentry house of 1720 built for merchant Matthew Wilson and later used as Richard Kemplay's Academy for Young Gentlemen. Subsequently the Victoria Club and now in restaurant use



The former Leeds Charity School built 1815 on the site of the chapel of Harrison's Almshouses. Now Age UK offices and cafe

The area has been industrialised with a Woollen Cloth Works and its reservoir on the site of today's Grand Arcade, and stone and wood yards and another reservoir on the site of the Grand Theatre and Opera House.

**Mid and late 19th century development — 'New Briggate', cultural and commercial development**

In c1868 New Street / St John's Street was widened and extended north by the Leeds Corporation. 'New Briggate' was created linking Briggate to North Street and forming a primary through-route in the city centre. The extract from the 1890-1 1:500 Ordnance Survey map shows this major civic intervention that created today's street.

In 1878 the Grand Theatre and Assembly Rooms, designed by George Corson, was built. It added a significant cultural destination to the town and included a number of commercial units to its ground floor. At the time of opening the splendour of the building was hailed as one of the finest and handsomest theatres outside London.

Many of the surviving buildings of the street date to the late 19th century including the Wren's theatrical hotel and restaurant of 1880, and Parker's Commercial Hotel at Nos 49/50 New Briggate dating to 1889.

In 1897 Merrion Street Mill was replaced by the Grand Arcade, designed by Smith and Tweedale, developed by the Lupton family under the auspices of the New Briggate Arcade Company.



Extract from the 1890-1 Ordnance Survey 1:500 map showing the Corporation's creation of 'New Briggate' with its tramlines, and the Grand Theatre of 1878. The woollen mill still stands on the site of the Grand Arcade.

These surviving buildings show the Victorian flamboyance and ornate architectural detail typical of the period and demonstrate that the area formed part of the vibrant commercial and cultural heart of Victorian Leeds.

By the mid 19th century St John's church was in a poor state of repair and seen as old fashioned and inconvenient. In 1861 plans were made for its demolition and replacement with a new church. However, Richard Norman Shaw



Former public dispensary, later chest clinic, 74 New Briggate, 1865



The Grand Theatre and Assembly Rooms of 1878 by George Corson



'The Grand Parade' including the former Parker's Commercial Hotel of 1889 on the corner plot



The Grand Arcade, 1897, Vicar Lane elevation. The two archways were originally open and led to twin arcades of shops in a 'H' plan

led a successful campaign to save the church and was appointed architect for the restoration. Subsequent phases of work were carried out by George Gilbert Scott Junior and Temple Moore.

New Briggate Synagogue founded in 1876 is shown on the map adjoining the 1720 gentry house, now Nash's but then in use as the Victoria Club. Its capacity was 500 and shows the Jewish influence in the development of the area. The synagogue closed in 1927 and was demolished a number of years later.

### 20th and 21st century development

The early 1930s redevelopment of The Headrow designed by Reginald Blomfield dramatically changed the setting of the New Briggate area with the linear parallel yards replaced with the large scale development reminiscent of London's Regent Street. As part of this development, Wades Charity was relocated from the Upper Headrow to St John's House, Merrion Street. Designed by GW Atkinson, the building is one of a group of this date using an early 17th century vernacular revival style of mock timber framed construction.

The Wades Charity continue to be important landholders in the area . They created Merrion Street Gardens as a garden of rest in 1932 to commemorate their 16th century benefactor Thomas Wade. The gardens also contain memorials to commemorate those lost in the World Wars.

The inner ring road, built in the 1960s and 70s, was a response to severe



The area is experiencing a resurgence and continues to adapt to the needs of the city. The recent pedestrianisation has accommodated much needed open-air leisure space and street living, including regular Bank Holiday Merrion Street Festivals (photo ©Mojo)

traffic congestion in the city and was another significant infrastructure intervention in the setting of the conservation area. The road construction involved substantial demolition in what had been a continuous streetscape linking New Briggate to North Street.

Individual plots have continued to be redeveloped through the 20th and 21st centuries adding to the architectural diversity of the street. To the lower east side of New Briggate there is a group of faience clad buildings of the 1930s-50s with a recent redevelopment

showing a return to residential use of the street.

The area is currently experiencing a resurgence with the Grand Arcade, at one stage almost empty, now a popular leisure destination with vibrant bars, restaurants and independent retailers.

The recent pedestrianisation of lower Merrion Street has seen the area once more responding to the changing face of the city, providing well used open-air leisure space and street living with regular street festivals throughout the year.



Early 1930s vernacular revival mock timber framed buildings. St John's House to the right built for the Wades Charity



Early 20th century building at the southern end of New Briggate on the site of the earlier vicarage



Merrion Street Gardens created as a garden of rest by the Wades Charity in 1932

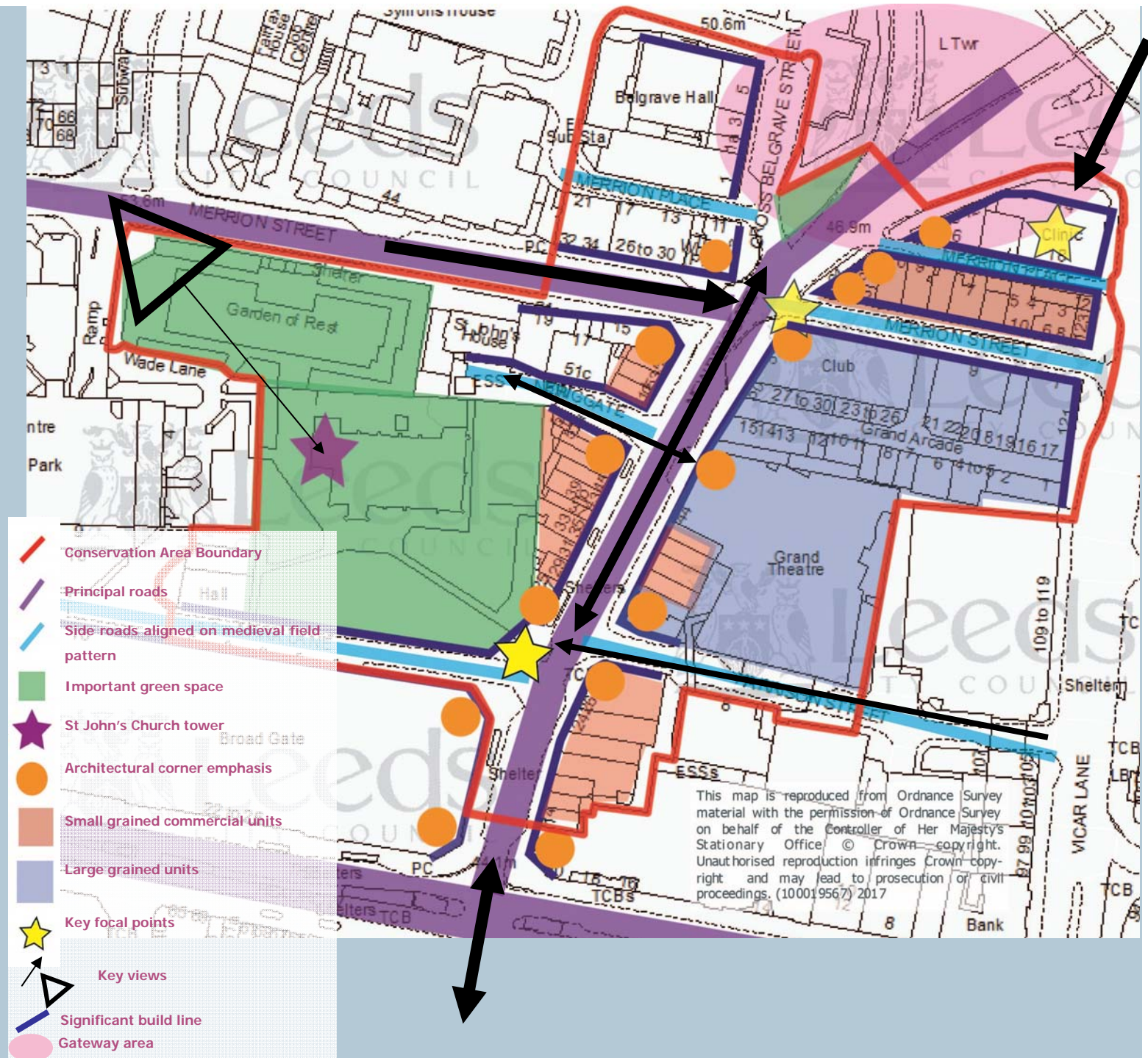


# Character Analysis: Spatial Analysis

## Urban form

The area's urban form is shaped by its origins and evolution, from its initial 17th century development and 19th century intensification, through to the on-going changes of the present day.

- The underlying topography of the area falls from higher ground to the west to lower ground to the east, with New Briggate laid flat along the contour. This falling gradient is particularly marked to the east of New Briggate and is visible in streets such as Merrion Street and Harrison Street that fall relatively steeply to Vicar Lane.
- The area has a loose grid-form layout shaped by its historic development. The Headrow, the medieval divide between town and fields, remains a strong presence in the urban form. With the curving, broadly north-south alignment of New Briggate, the dominant street in the area and important route linking the city centre to the north, fixed to the south by Harrison's 'New Street' of the early 17th century and the later extension through to North Street by the Corporation in c1868. The smaller east-west side streets feeding into it follow the underlying alignment of the medieval strip field system still visible on mid 19th century maps.



- There is a strong sense of arrival / departure at the northern end of the street and this forms a gateway area to the city centre.
- Urban character is emphasised in the near continuous built frontages flanking and strongly enclosing the streets. However, the density of development is less intense than in the city centre core, with plot sizes, building height and form varying more widely. The large 'one offs' of St Johns Church, the Grand Theatre and Grand Arcade contrast with the finer grained, regular divisions of the parades of small shop units which are dwarfed by the Blomfield Headrow buildings at the southern end of the street.
- Although the area has a group of significant landmark buildings and destinations, spatially it does not have a dominant focal point or 'centre' and the overriding character is dominated by movement through the area and the connectivity its routes provide to navigate through the city. The exception to this is St John's churchyard linking to Merrion Gardens. The high boundary wall and gateway with stone steps leading to the raised graveyard forms a break in the near continuous build line of tall frontages along New Briggate and together with the small public space in front creates a focal point in the streetscape.
- Buildings are a mixture of three storeys with dormered attics, with the equivalent height matched by the large commercial and cultural

buildings like the theatre and Grand Arcade, and smaller two storey buildings to side streets. Building siting is generally hard to the pavement edge emphasising the urban character of intensive development, with a vertical emphasis created from the regular rhythm of tall, narrow buildings and the large, architectural ornate Victorian set-pieces of theatre and arcade.

- St John's Churchyard and Merrion Street Gardens are large plots providing important greenspace in a city centre short of such a resource. The open space and soft landscaping contrasts spatially with the surrounding densely developed urban form.

#### Key views and landmarks

- St John's Church tower is an important landmark but is relatively little seen in New Briggate where it is screened by trees and buildings. Here, the gateway and steps up into the churchyard form a focal point emphasised by the hard surfaced public realm space in front of them.
- The entrances to the Grand Theatre are landmarks due to their elaborate architectural detail with the decorative stucco of the former Assembly Room entrance forming the southern bookend to the main entrance to the north.
- A series of smaller landmark features help define the sense of place in the urban form including the architectural emphasis of corners with roof turrets,

angled corner doorways and flat-iron forms. Buildings are designed to form 'end stops' to streetscape views, for example The Wrens to the north end of New Briggate and the Skylord flat-iron at the entrance to the east end of Merrion Street.

Views are relatively contained within the immediate network of streets:

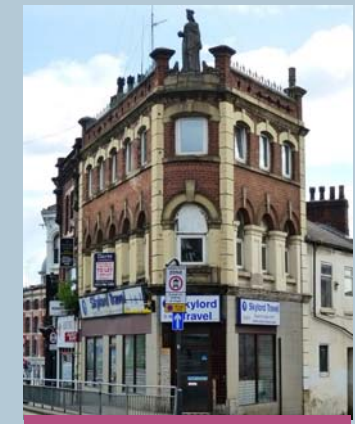
- Important views into the area are seen along North Street with the former public dispensary (74 New Briggate) forming a strong focal point and 'end-stop'.
- Views along New Briggate into the Headrow are important in linking the area back into the central core of the city centre with the Portland stone detailed Blomfield and Atkinson Headrow development towering over the smaller scale, brick buildings here.
- As well as the enclosing urban development shown off to best effect by the curving line of the street, views north along New Briggate feature important groups of trees which make a significant contribution to the quality of the townscape; at St John's churchyard and at Cross Belgrave Street.
- The views along St John's Place provide rich and intact views of historic Leeds. Views west include a good surviving Victorian shopfront and the 18th century Nash's Restaurant and views east frame the main entrance of the Grand Theatre.



The continuous build line of the three+ storey development strongly encloses the street



The gateway to St John's provides a place to pause along the busy street



The flatiron form emphasises this corner plot which forms an important end-stop to views along Merrion Street

# Character Analysis: Built environment

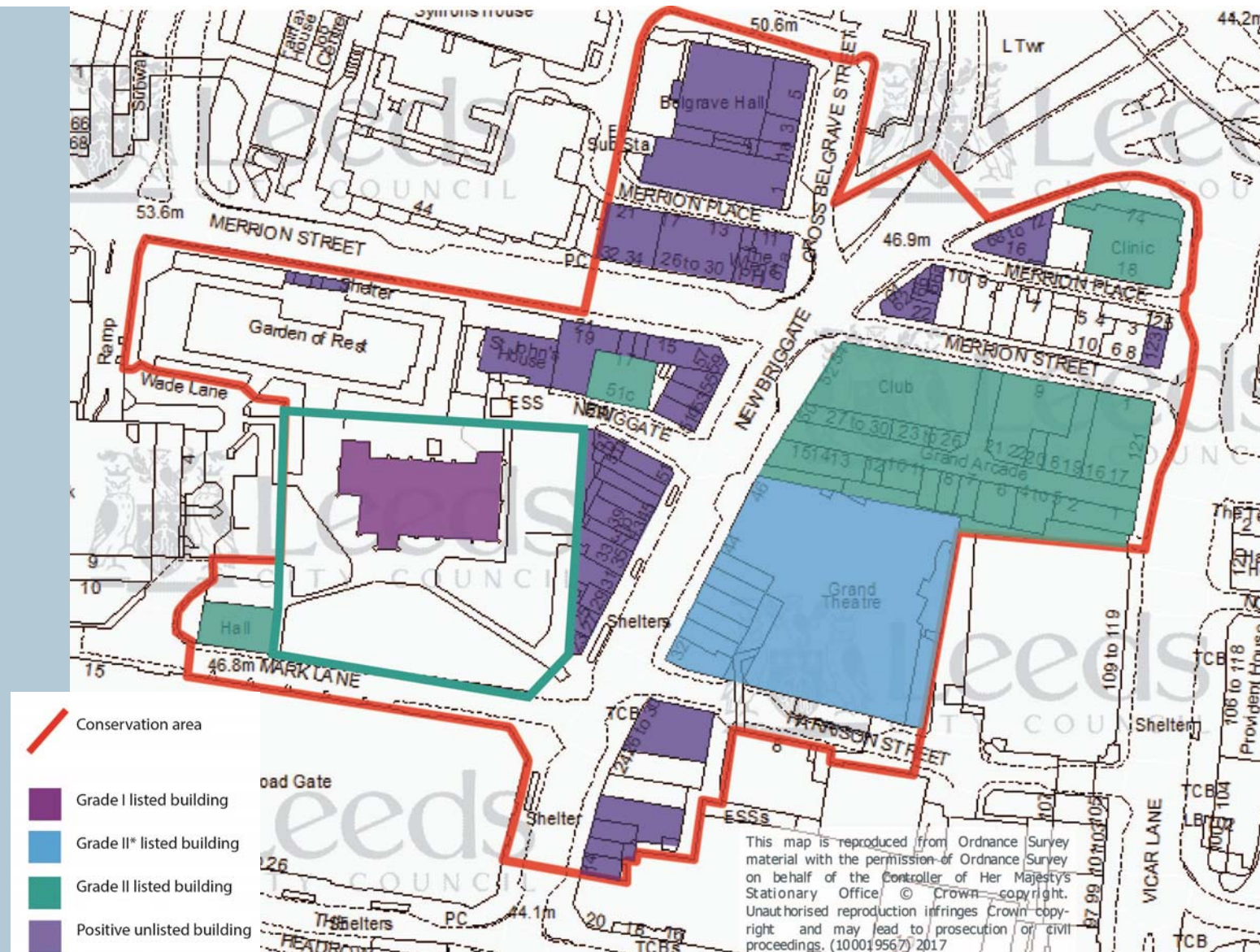
## Architectural characteristics

The Grand Quarter's built environment reflects its historic development and includes a mixture of buildings surviving from its earliest 17th and 18th century development, through the Victorian redevelopment and into the 20th century. Uses, form, scale and materials vary but a common theme is a high level of architectural detail and quality.

There are seven listed buildings of 'special architectural and historic interest' within the conservation area. St John's Church is a Grade I listed building denoting its 'exceptional interest'. The Grand Theatre is Grade II\* listed denoting its 'particular importance' and 'more than special interest'. The remainder are Grade II listed structures; Nash's Restaurant, Age UK, the Grand Arcade, the boundary gateway and walls of St John's churchyard and the former public dispensary.

In addition, there are many unlisted properties that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. The positive contribution may be in one or more of the following ways:

- Landmark buildings
- Buildings that provide evidence of the area's history and development
- Buildings of architectural merit
- Buildings with local historical associations



- Buildings which exemplify local vernacular styles
- Groups of buildings which together make a positive contribution to the streetscape.

Any application to demolish a positive building will require justification taking into account the guidance provided in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework particularly paragraphs 131-134.

## Positive buildings



'The Grand Parade'. The polychrome red brick with stone dressings and high level of architectural detail of the 19th century buildings dominates the built environment

## Materials

The area has a wide range of materials but dominant in the palette is the red brick with stone dressings of the 19th century buildings.

St John's Church and the former Leeds Charity School, now Age UK, are of local finely grained sandstone used as ashlar. The stone for the church was quarried at Woodhouse Moor.

The Grand Arcade features lavish architectural enrichment including colourful panels of locally made Burmantofts faience and intricately

detailed terracotta. White faience is seen on a number of early 20th century buildings at the south end of New Briggate.

The mock timber framed group of 1930s vernacular revival buildings on Merrion Street adds diversity to the area. As does the 19th century heavy stucco made to resemble rock-faced rusticated ashlar added to the 1720 gentry house at St John's Place, now Nash's Fish and Chip Restaurant. More render is seen on the buildings along Merrion Street.



Locally quarried sandstone from Woodhouse Moor, St John's Church



Colourful, locally made Burmantofts faience and *art nouveau* detailed terracotta (below left) at The Grand Arcade



Mock timber framing, Merrion Street



Nash's stucco intended to resemble rock-faced rusticated ashlar

Pitched roofs are of grey slate with a group of flat roofs hidden behind parapets.

Decorative leaded and stained glass is seen in a number of buildings including the Grand Theatre and the vernacular revival timber framed group.

## Local details

The built environment of the area is dominated by the high level of architectural detail enriching the buildings:

- Windows, doors, cornices, storey bands are all the focus of high levels of ornate architectural enrichment. Faces, foliage, swags and colour add to the excitement.
- Colour plays an important part in the architecture of the area with the polychrome pairing of red brick and stone dressings, Burmston's faience, magpie black and white of the mock timber framing and the painted stucco and render.
- Corner treatments are architecturally important with chamfered corners decorated with angled doorways and windows, corner turrets and flagpoles and flatiron building forms.
- Roofscapes are very active with decorative gabled dormers giving a Parisian feel to the 'Grand Arcade'. Chimneys and chimney pots, rooftop turrets and flagpoles add to the animation.
- The buildings have a strong vertical emphasis with a regular rhythm of the narrow, tall buildings with large vertical sash windows.
- A traditional shopfront in St John's Place makes a strong positive contribution to the area and it's likely that other historic shopfront detail survives under the largely inappropriate modern shopfronts and



'The Grand Parade', polychrome brick and stone, active roofscape despite loss of original roof turret

signage which currently blights the special character of the area.

### Important architectural groups

This small area includes a number of architectural gems and rarities. None of the former industrial buildings of the area survive.

- *Earliest surviving buildings* - 17th century St John's juxtaposes its external late use of Perpendicular gothic with its Renaissance influenced, double nave interior.

Nash's, the 1720 gentry house, is the only private house on the Coussins map of Leeds to survive.

The Leeds Charity School, now Age UK, is possibly by John Clarke, and it's gothic revival style and recent glazed café extension shows how successful *contrast* can be as an approach to additions to historic buildings.

- *Victorian landmark buildings* - The Grand Theatre, George Corson's extravaganza of a cultural



Traditional shopfront surviving at St John's Place

destination, is still without equal outside London (Wrathnall, 2008, 162), an eclectic mixture of Romanesque and Gothic detail.

The Grand Arcade is one of the important group of arcades of Leeds. Featuring an animated Potts of Leeds clock.

The former public dispensary and former Belgrave Chapel Sunday School are local landmarks.

- *19th century commercial buildings* - the mid to late 19th century red brick and stone dressings, ornately detailed retail units, pubs and hotels are a key group in the character of the area.
- *20th century buildings* - the group of '30s mock timber-framed, vernacular revival buildings on Merrion Street, but also a group of flat-roofed Neo Regency buildings in a mixture of red brick and stone dressings, on the corner of New Briggate and Merrion Street, and white faience at the south end of New Briggate.



Age UK, successful glazed extension to early 19th century listed building



Surviving historic architectural details



Early 20th century white faience building south end of New Briggate

Lavish architectural detail is a positive characteristic of the Grand Quarter



## Streetscape

Historic streetscape features contribute to the area's special character.

- The area in front of the gateway to St John's church is an important public space and focal point in an area with few such on-street opportunities.
- Quality surfacing treatments including the setts and Yorkstone pavings of St John's Place and the cobbles of the area around St John's gateway add interest, texture and high quality materials to the streetscape.
- Some examples of street furniture add interest and quality to the area including the cast iron bollards of St John's Place and the St John's gateway area.
- Attractive cast iron street signs are a positive surviving historic feature and the Civic Trust's Blue Plaques help make the heritage of the area more accessible.



An important public space in a busy street with quality surfacing and street furniture



Attractive historic street signs contribute to the area's special character

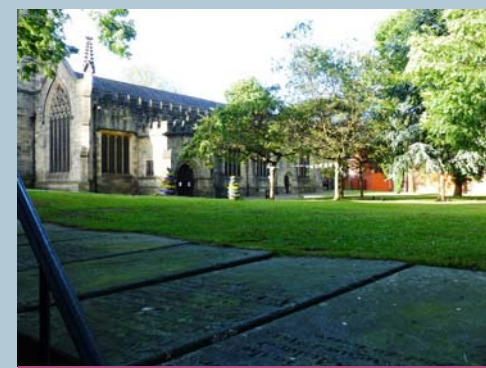


The Civic Trust's blue plaques make the heritage of the area more accessible

## Greenscape

Greenscape and soft landscaping are an important part of the area's special character.

- St John's churchyard and Merrion Street Gardens provide important greenspaces in the city centre where such resources are relatively limited.
- The churchyard provides a well enclosed space laid to grass with trees, enclosed by the listed sandstone boundary wall and featuring relaid gravestones. It provides an important pedestrian link to Merrion Street, although the gates are closed at night.
- The trees of St John's Churchyard are visible and make a positive contribution to the streetscape of New Briggate. They combine in impact with the trees at the northern end of the street adding a richness and quality to the streetscene.
- The 2006 relandscaping of Merrion Street Gardens maximises the use of the gently sloping site with a series of terraced long narrow lawns defined by stone edging. Planting and trees add interest and colour and memorials are important to the communal heritage value of the area.
- Long distance views south across the Headrow are funnelled along Briggate and out to green field beyond which provides a sense of the edges of the city centre and its surroundings.



Merrion Street Gardens and St John's Churchyard provide valuable city centre green space and mature trees



Views to trees, planters and hanging baskets all contribute to the greenscape of the area

## Management Plan — Opportunities for management and enhancement

There are a number of features and issues that currently detract from the special character of the Grand Quarter. Addressing these issues offers the opportunity to enhance the conservation area, while positive conservation management measures will ensure the on-going protection of the area's special character.

### Heritage-led regeneration

The Grand Quarter is currently the focus of a Council-wide regeneration project which recognises that the area has scope for significant enhancement. Disrepair, inappropriate change, loss of historic architectural details, vacancy and underuse of historic buildings and public realm issues are all putting the special character of the area at risk.

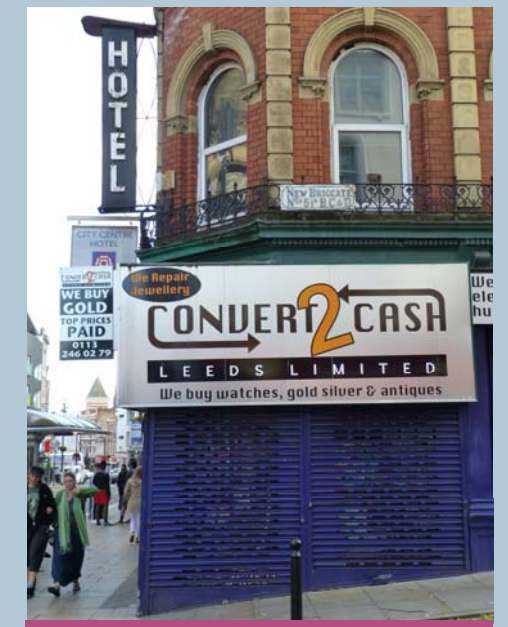
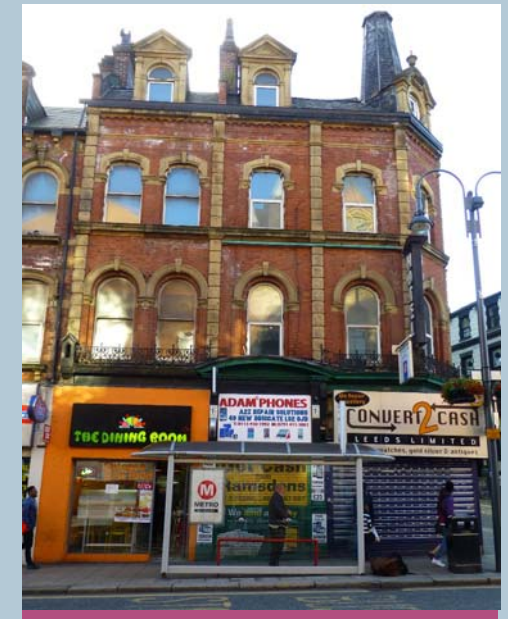
Due to the extent of the issues it is recognised that a heritage-led grant funding approach will be needed to guide positive change in the area.

The Grand Quarter would benefit from a heritage-led regeneration scheme such as those run in partnership between local authorities and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). For example a HLF partnership Townscape Heritage scheme would seek to invest in people and place by:



Due to the extent of disrepair, inappropriate change, vacancy and loss of historic architectural detail, a heritage-led grant funding approach is needed to guide the positive change the area needs

The artists impression above shows the potential of the 'Grand Parade' and how it could look following a heritage-led regeneration shopfront scheme



To be successful shopfronts, signage and security measures should be sensitive to the building in which they are set





Community crowd-sourced funding secured the first phase of restoration for the Grand Arcade's Potts clock—but further work is required

- bringing historic buildings in the area back into good repair to promote full use,
- restoring lost historic detail such as appropriate shopfronts, signage and windows,
- improving the public realm
- and providing local people with the opportunity to learn new skills and get involved in the heritage of the area.

Such projects leave a lasting legacy both in terms of the built environment improvements and in the capacity building in the community. A successful scheme would mean that the heritage capital of the area was maximised for the economic and social wellbeing of the city.

**Action:** Explore the possibility of securing a heritage-led regeneration funding scheme for the Grand Quarter.

### Shopfronts

The loss of historic and traditionally detailed shopfronts has been harmful to the special character of the area. The majority of shopfronts are inappropriate to the positive historic buildings in which they are set causing the ground floor of the buildings to be architecturally dislocated from their upper floors. Poorly designed shopfronts, signage and security measures detract significantly from individual buildings and the wider streetscape and as opportunities arise should be replaced with sensitive, well designed and detailed alternatives.

The design of new shopfronts should respect the period and proportions of the building in which they are set. Care is required to ensure that signage is not detrimental. Appropriate design and placing of signs and adverts is essential to preserve and enhance the area's special character.

External security shutters have a negative impact on the character of streets and should be resisted. Internally fitted systems offer more suitable alternatives.

Some historic shopfronts survive and should be retained and maintained. Elsewhere elements of historic shopfronts survive, sometimes behind new signage. Opening up work may reveal more historic survivals that can be restored or used to inform new shopfronts. Historic photographs and original elevation drawings provide a valuable source to guide future restoration of appropriate shopfronts to the area.

**Action:** Retain and maintain surviving historic shopfronts and shopfront elements.

**Ensure that any new shopfronts, signage and security measures preserve or enhance the special character of the area.**

### Protecting and enhancing the character of historic buildings

**Disrepair:** The general condition and maintenance of a number of positive historic buildings is an issue. The failure of roof coverings and rainwater goods is leading to saturated and stained



Historic shopfront elements survive and more may be rediscovered



Historic photographs provide a good evidence base for future restoration of historic details and shopfronts ©Leodis



Unaddressed maintenance issues get progressive more harmful and expensive to resolve

masonry, tell-tale vegetation growth and internal damage leading to underuse and vacancy and damage to occupied units.

Maintenance issues need be addressed as soon as possible to ensure the buildings are capable of full use which will work as a virtuous circle promoting good maintenance and repair regimes.

**Inappropriate change:** The incremental loss of traditional architectural detailing is an issue and ongoing threat to the character of the conservation area. The inappropriate replacement of shopfronts, windows, doors, traditional wall surfaces and roof coverings with inappropriate materials and designs negatively affects both individual buildings and the wider streetscape and can affect property prices.

Surviving historic features should be maintained and sympathetically repaired and the replacement of inappropriate, poorly detailed fixtures and fittings is encouraged.

**Vacancy:** Vacancy or underuse of some historic buildings is an issue in the area. As well as the area not functioning to its economic and social capacity, it also puts historic buildings at risk as empty units are less likely to be well maintained.

Vacancy doesn't just affect the host building, it can also blight the wider street by reducing activity levels and changing the perception of the safety and economic vibrancy of an area.

*Successful new development in historic areas will:*

- *Relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land*
- *Sit happily in the pattern of existing development*
- *Respect important views*
- *Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings*
- *Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings*
- *Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.*

*Cabe and English Heritage, 2001, 'Building in Context: New development in historic areas'*

The vacancy and underuse of the historic buildings in the conservation area should be addressed to get the buildings back into full use.

**Action: Respect the character of historic buildings by:**

- **addressing maintenance issues in a timely manner to reduce damage and expense,**
- **maintaining and sympathetically repairing surviving historic features,**
- **replacing inappropriate fixtures, fittings and adaptations, and**
- **addressing vacancy and underuse.**

**Sensitive new development in the conservation area**

To be successful, any future development within the conservation area needs to be mindful of the

character of the area, while being distinctly of its time and addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability. Poorly designed and detailed pastiche development can be as eroding to special character as development that shows no regard for its setting. New buildings need to respond to their setting in terms of urban design - eg layout, density and spatial separation, and architectural design - eg scale, form, quality of materials and building methods.

**Action: New development must respond sensitively and creatively to the historic environment.**

**Public realm and greenscape**

Public realm issues are currently having a negative impact on the special character of the area.

The dominance of traffic, particularly buses, taxis and their associated infrastructure, is recognised as an issue to be addressed while also ensuring the full accessibility of the city centre. As part of the Council-wide regeneration focus on the area opportunities for Highways enhancements are being explored, including the potential for a shared space approach to New Briggate involving the careful redistribution of street functions to make best use of the space available in the street.

A streetscape audit and rationalisation of existing signage, road markings and street furniture would provide the opportunity to clear the streetscape of any unnecessary clutter. Redundant and duplicate items could be removed and consideration given to the reduction and

sensitive design, siting, scale and grouping of fixtures, fittings and markings. Regard should be had to the current 'Streets for All' guidance jointly published by the Department for Transport and Historic England.

Historic street signs are a positive feature and should be retained and maintained.

Environmental enhancements with sensitive public realm treatments and soft landscaping could enhance a number of the important focal points and potential focal points in the area including the main entrance to the Grand Theatre to emphasis a sense of arrival and the important public space at the gateway to St John's church.

There are opportunities for further enhanced use of some key streetscape and greenscape spaces. For example the successful Merrion Street East model of timed vehicle deliveries and pedestrianised spill-out space has got potential for other parts of this area, in particular St John's Place.

Promoting the enhanced use of the important greenspaces in the area is another opportunity. The potential to achieve level access into St John's Churchyard and Merrion Street Gardens from New Briggate is being explored along with measures to facilitate and encourage use. For example improvements to the rear of the 'Grand Parade' and addressing its current underuse would ensure improved surveillance and a programme of summer events and provision of seasonal deck chairs would all enhance

this important city centre asset, bringing more people to the area and discouraging anti-social behaviour possible due to its current underuse.

**Action: Ensure that future public realm and traffic management measures respect and enhance the special character of the conservation area.**

**Promote the enhanced use of the area's greenspace.**

### Tree management

Trees form an important part of the character of the area. Conservation area designation affords some degree of protection. However, to ensure that this element of special character is protected and enhanced a tree strategy should be considered to assess the need for the designation of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), replanting strategies and other general tree management issues.

Trees provide an important source of urban cooling and help fight the impact of global warming. Their protection and planting is going to be an increasingly important element in the Council's approach to climate change adaptation.

**Action: Protect the important contribution trees make to the special character of the conservation area.**

### Responding to the challenge of climate change

The historic environment has an important role to play in addressing climate change. The retention and

reuse of heritage assets avoids the material and energy costs of new development. The City Council encourages property owners to find sensitive solutions to improve energy efficiency. This can be achieved through simple maintenance and repair of properties, ensuring that they are draft free and in good condition, as well as the use of microregeneration and energy renewables such as solar panels and wind turbines. Care is required to ensure that such measures do not harm the character of the conservation area.

**Action: Ensure the historic environment plays a positive role in addressing climate change.**

**Ensure that the introduction of microregeneration equipment does not harm the special character and appearance of the conservation area.**

### Protect archaeological remains

Archaeological deposits and building archaeology have the potential to provide further evidence of the origins, development and evolution of the area.

The building archaeology of the 17th and 18th century buildings is likely to be of particular interest.

Development that may disturb archaeological deposits and building archaeology may require an element of archaeological investigation in order to ensure preservation of archaeological evidence in situ or by record.

**Action: Development should have regard to the archaeological record and where necessary include an element of archaeological investigation and mitigation.**

### Celebrate and promote the heritage of the Grand Quarter

The heritage of the area can be used as a positive asset for the Grand Quarter and as a way to attract visitors to the area. There are opportunities to celebrate, promote and make this special character and historic interest more accessible. The Grand Quarter's heritage can be used to positively promote the area for residents and visitors alike.

The Civic Trust's blue plaques already help to make the heritage of the area more accessible and there is scope to build on that.

The Churches Conservation Trust is keen to increase visitor numbers and the use of St John's church and it is likely that a partnership approach to the regeneration of the area will assist in this. For example, the temporary children's play area in the churchyard is already bringing families into the area that may never have previously been. There are other opportunities to raise the profile of the building and the resource it offers to Leeds; for example the scope to light the church tower is being explored.

A number of buildings in the area already participate in events in the city's cultural calendar including Light Night in October and Heritage Open Days in



**Celebrating and promoting the area's heritage offers scope for positive change, for example at St John's Church**

September. A programme of seasonal events including the heritage of the area could be explored.

**Action: Promote and celebrate the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.**

### Setting of the conservation area

It is important that development around the conservation area does not spoil its setting. Views towards and away from a conservation area can be spoiled by inappropriately placed buildings or groups of buildings, at key locations. Appropriate design and materials should still be used when considering development adjacent to the conservation area, as well as consideration given to the impact it may have on views towards and away from the conservation area.

**Action: Ensure that the setting of the conservation area is considered as a material consideration within the planning process.**

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Secret Leeds - [www.secretleeds.com](http://www.secretleeds.com)

## Sources of further information

Central Library (Local & Family History Section), The Headrow, Leeds LS1. Tel 0113 247 8290 email: [localstudies@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:localstudies@leeds.gov.uk) website: [www.leeds.gov.uk/library](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/library)

Leeds Civic Trust, Leeds Heritage & Design Centre, 17-19 Wharf Street, Leeds LS2 7EQ Tel: 0113 243 9594 Email: [office@leedscivictrust.org.uk](mailto:office@leedscivictrust.org.uk) website: [www.leedscivictrust.org.uk](http://www.leedscivictrust.org.uk)

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West Yorkshire Archaeological Advisory Service, Nepshaw Lane South, Morley, LS27 7JQ. Tel 0113 393 9959 email: [wyher@wyjs.org.uk](mailto:wyher@wyjs.org.uk) website: [www.wyjs.org.uk/archaeology-advisory-service/](http://www.wyjs.org.uk/archaeology-advisory-service/)

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## What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is '*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

## What does conservation area status mean?

Conservation area status provides the opportunity to promote the protection and enhancement of the special character of the defined area. Designation confers a general control over development that could damage the area's character. The details are complex but can be summarised as:

- Most demolition requires permission and will be resisted if the building makes a positive contribution to the area and the loss is not justified by public benefit.
- Some minor works to houses is no longer "permitted development" and will require planning permission. Examples are rear dormer windows, external cladding and most satellite dishes on front elevations.
- Advertisement controls are tighter
- Most work to trees has to be notified to the Council who has six weeks in which to decide to impose restrictions.
- Generally, higher standards of design apply for new buildings and alterations to existing ones.

Change is inevitable, not necessarily harmful and often beneficial. It is not the intention of the conservation area designation to prevent the continued evolution of places. The challenge within conservation areas is to manage change in a way that maintains, reinforces and enhances the special qualities of the area.

## What is the purpose of this appraisal?

This appraisal provides the basis for making informed, sustainable decisions in the positive management, protection and enhancement of the conservation area.

It demonstrates the special interest of the area and how to maintain and enhance this special character by:

- assessing how the area has developed
- analysing its present day character and
- identifying opportunities for positive management and enhancement

This appraisal follows the current guidance set out by Historic England in the 2016 publication 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management'.

The appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

The survey work for this appraisal was carried out in July 2016.

## Planning policy context

This appraisal should be read in conjunction with the wider national, regional and local planning policy and guidance. Relevant documents include:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- The National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012, particularly Chapter 12
- Leeds City Council, Local Development Framework

## Community involvement and adoption

A draft version of this appraisal went through a public consultation period. A four week consultation period ran from 10 July to 7 August 2017 and included:

- An exhibition at Leeds Central Library
- A public meeting with a presentation and question and answer session at St John's Church on New Briggate on Tuesday 25 July 2017
- Property owners, businesses and occupiers within the proposed conservation area were directly notified.
- The draft appraisal and relevant response forms were available on the Council's website.

- The consultation was advertised with a press release and social media coverage.

All consultation responses were evaluated and the appraisal was amended where appropriate. The Open Panel report to the Planning Board sets out the comments received and the actions taken as a result. This appraisal was formally adopted following approval at the Planning Board meeting of 19 October 2017 and became operational as non-statutory planning guidance from 20 November 2017. It is a material consideration in the planning process.

**This document is available to view and download on the Council's website - [www.leeds.gov.uk/council/Pages/conservation-area-appraisals-docs.aspx](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/council/Pages/conservation-area-appraisals-docs.aspx)**