



This document forms part of a larger conservation appraisal for High Wycombe, and should be read in conjunction with the master document, which gives development control guidelines.

1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

The Easton Street sub area is a small linking area to the east of the town centre. Medieval in origin, it has been affected by the road building schemes of the 1960s and the development of the Council Offices and Law Courts to the south of the road. Nonetheless it retains a number of historic buildings. The name is derived from, literally, east town or Estynton. The boundaries of the sub area run from Queen Victoria Road/Crendon Street to the west, and Trinity Congregational Chapel to the east.

Location and population

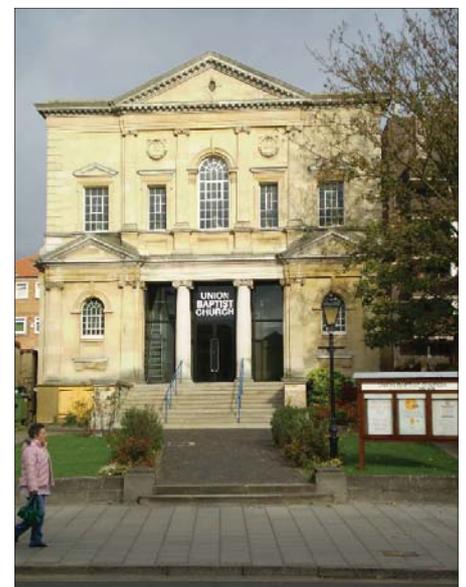
This sub area of High Wycombe lies just within the eastern boundaries of the medieval borough and thus close to the centre. It links the historic core and High Street with The Rye, and London Road.

General character, plan form and landscape context

The former Borough boundary runs along Bibby's Lane immediately east of Trinity Congregational Chapel. This landmark building relates more to the London Road and Saffron Platt Conservation Area due to the loss of frontage buildings between the remnants of St. Johns Hospital and the Chapel, and is thus included in the latter sub area.

Originally Easton Street exhibited a similar form to the High Street, with a strong medieval burgage plot layout that ran parallel to the road. Much of this has now been lost due to modern development. It is an indication of the early origins of the area, which is probably contiguous with the rest of the High Street.

Although the plot form has been lost in modern times, the original layout of principal buildings on the street frontage, with carriageways through



still remains. The remnant medieval buildings run continuously, making maximum use of the plot widths. In places this pattern is disrupted by later 19th and 20th century buildings, particularly at the eastern end of the street. Burgage plots to the south side were particularly long and ran down as far as the banks of the River Wye. Some were utilised as gardens and orchards, but there was also a rope walk and a brewery on this side of the road until as late as the 19th century.

To the east much of the original pattern is lost, and a number of historic buildings were demolished as a result of road improvement schemes and slum clearance. Pann Mill, one of the most important mills in the town, was demolished in 1971, as were the alms houses adjacent. Part of the mill machinery was saved and restored by the High Wycombe Society, and has been rehoused nearby. The north side of the street was cleared in the late 1960s and 1970s as part of the slum clearances at Railway Place. Old photographs show the important groupings of buildings that have been lost. The land slopes from north to south, which has the result that to the north of the road the rear of the plots are elevated, whilst to the south they lie at a lower level. This effect can particularly be seen through the various archways on the south side of Easton Street, with their lowered courtyards. It also means that buildings set back from the road, such as the former Grammar School, have more dominance in the street scene than they would if the relief was flat.

2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Origins and historic development

The Hospital of St. John is the oldest remnant building within High Wycombe and dates from the 1180s, a clear indication that Chepping Wycombe was a significant town at this time. The remnant walls and arches, part of the infirmary hall and a chantry chapel established in 1239, were incorporated into the Grammar School when it was founded in 1549. The hospital was founded with a Master, brethren and sisters, and by the 1270s the Borough had formally become the Patron of the hospital, and appointed the warden. As well as ministering to the sick, the hospital distributed alms to the poor of the town.

The Knights Hospitallers were major landholders in the town, having taken over the manor of Temple Wycombe from the Templars when the latter were suppressed in the 1300s. The Knights Hospitallers disappeared in mid 16th century as a result of Reformation Act of 1547, which led to the abolition of chantry chapels, and the subsequent closure of St. Johns Hospital. The endowments were passed to two prominent Wycombe citizens in order to protect them from the King and his Reformers. The land and income passed to the Mayor and Burgesses with the provision that a school was founded. It was not until Elizabeth I's rule that the Corporation was permitted to found the Royal Grammar School and some alms houses.

The Grammar School utilised the former hospital buildings, and the 12th century arches were saved from total destruction in 1883 when



St Johns Hospital, remains of the Infirmary hall.



Georgian frontages along the north and south sides of Easton Street.



the Royal Grammar School was rebuilt to the rear of the site by local architect Arthur Vernon.

All historic photographs courtesy of SWOP, Bucks County Council and the Bucks Free Press

Rye Mead, formerly held by St. Johns, had by the 1280s become the town's common meadow.



The Oxford to London Road was turnpiked in 1718-24, which led to High Wycombe becoming the "best and wealthiest town in Bucks", partly due to the coaching trade which stopped off here on the routes between London and Oxford, and Windsor and Hatfield. Medieval town houses in both High Street and along Easton Street were refronted in the 18th century as the market town prospered. By the 19th century many of the town's furniture factory owners had houses on Easton Street. At the eastern end of the street lay Pann Mill, close to The Rye, with its picturesque buildings and mill pond. Research into the history of the Mill and the restoration of the waterwheel and machinery has been carried out by The High Wycombe Society. The Wye has long been used for milling and Pann Mill was one of the six Wycombe mills mentioned in the Domesday Survey in 1086. The first Pann Mill was probably associated with the Hospital of St. John the Baptist opposite. An 1185 record shows that the mill was then owned by the Pinel family, and it is probably from this family that name Pann Mill is derived.



The most recent mill was built in 1759, with a new waterwheel and milling machinery fitted in 1860. Commercial milling ended in 1967, and in 1971 the mill buildings and the associated miller's house were demolished as a part of a road widening scheme, together with the Alms Houses. Half of the south side of Easton Street was lost as a result. Railway Place, which linked St. Johns with the Trinity Congregational Church, was also demolished during slum clearance work in 1972/3, destroying the continuity of the street scene on the north side of the road and leading to the loss of the Goat Public House and Wrights Dairy.



Archaeology

The Hospital of St. John is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. This part of the town is of obvious archaeological interest.



Historic maps

1876 OS, 1899 OS

3 Spatial Analysis

The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area

The through road dominates the conservation area. It is essentially a two lane highway with car parking to the south side, and provides access to one of the towns multi storeyed carparks. Easton Street has suffered as a result of the heavy volume of traffic that passes along it.



Norman arches on the remains of the Hospital, now overgrown with vegetation. This is believed to be the remains of the Infirmary hall.

There are no public open spaces excepting the gyratory system opposite St. Johns Hospital. The frontage of the Union Baptist Church is open, the building set well back, which creates a gap in the street frontage. This open space is laid to lawn, and is far more attractive than the next gap on the north side of the road, where the entrance to the multistorey car park is situated. This is visually unpleasant with the modern dark brick block of the car park dominating the street scene, its horizontal lines at odds with the vertical emphasis of the historic buildings. The forecourt is cluttered with parked cars and excessive road signage.

The vacant plot between 23 and 25 was formerly the site of a college building, but is now a carpark.

No 26 is set back in a slightly elevated position above the road, with a small front garden enclosed by brick wall and railings.

The remnants of the hospital lie within a raised and verdant area of green space and the later former Grammar School buildings behind it are set well back and screened in part by the ruins themselves. This creates a green oasis marred only by the busy road, and creates a physical break between Easton Street and London Road.

The remaining lancet window of the Chantry Chapel.



The south side of the street is built up, with glimpses through carriageways of the courtyards behind. However the continuity is lost at the eastern end of the street with the access to the Council Offices and the hard paving to the front of the Law Courts, again a visually unattractive environment.

Important views and vistas

Views are enclosed along Easton Street by the built frontages. The view west is towards the town centre, and is terminated in the far distance by the buildings of the High Street and The Guildhall. Eastwards the view is to London Road, with the twin spires of Trinity Congregational Chapel just terminating the view past St Johns ruins. This view is enclosed by

tree cover to the north of the road.

There is an impressive view of the former Grammar School buildings, their bright decorative facades enlivening the locality.

Also of importance are glimpses through into courtyards and remnants of former burgage yards on the south side of the road prior to the Council Offices entrance, although these make less contribution to the wider street scene.

4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Activity and landuse

Originally Easton Street was primarily residential with domestic buildings refronted in line with architectural fashions. By the 19th century it was the street where many of the eminent furniture factory owners resided, before they moved their homes up to the leafy environs of Amersham Hill. Now all the buildings that line Easton Street are in business use, either as shops, restaurants or commercial premises although some flats remain at upper floor level. This has had a major impact on the ground floors of the buildings with modern shop fronts inserted into the historic buildings. Infill and building at the rear of the frontages have cut across historic narrow burgage plots.

Architectural and historical quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area

There are a number of listed buildings and groups of buildings within the Easton Street Conservation Area.

North Side:

The north side of the street retains more listed buildings than the south. Crendon Street and the corner of Queen Victoria Road were rebuilt in the 1930s in a grand Neo-Classical style, street widening on Crendon Street led to the loss of historic Dial House which previously dominated the corner. No's 3,4 and 5 are a Grade II listed group. No 3, originally domestic, was later a printing works, and is of red brick with slate roof. No 4 has a 17th-century timber frame and a white washed plaster front, with decorative eaves detail. No 5 is of 18th-century red brick, with a modern timber shopfront of better quality than its neighbours. It sits slightly lower in the street scene. No 7 is a locally listed building (formerly a fish shop) dating from the 19th century with an Art Deco faience frontage with decorative detailing, although the windows at upper floor level appear to be earlier. Beyond this, set well back from the road side and in an elevated position, lies the impressive Union Baptist Church with its fine ashlar front. This was designed in 1908 by Thomas Thurlow. It a late example of the Baptist tradition of Italianate fronts with Cinquecento (16th century) details and a grand pediment. Although set back, this



Easton Street multistorey car park, a utilitarian building that is very much of its time.



Rubbed brick archway leading to a hidden inner courtyard south of the road. The original Denner paving setts remain.

Trees surrounding the ruins of St. John's, with Trinity Chapel in the background.



plays a key role in the street scene, and also provides a small area of formalised open space to the front.

No's 8, 9, 10 and 11, beyond the Union Baptist Church, are an 18th-century formal terrace block of yellow stock brick, three storeys high. Each house has two pairs of sash windows and doorways are arranged in pairs with coupled doorcases under cornice hoods. Stone steps lead up to each entrance and the listed iron railings to these remain. There is a gap to the east of this group which is now the unattractive access road to the multistorey car park, which allows the modern rear extensions to the frontage buildings to be seen.

No's 14 and 15 Easton Street is a fine example of a grand 18th-century house of flint rubble with red brick. Symmetrical, with arched projecting bays and end pediments. It has many similarities with park buildings at West Wycombe and may be by the same architect. It has a strong central bay with rubbed brick oriel over a grand door hood. It was for many years the Post Office, before falling into disrepair. It has now been restored, and the shop fronts unified.

Modern bulky infill buildings lie between this and the next grouping of listed buildings. Although these buildings have a vertical emphasis they are not particularly in keeping with the historic frontages to either side. Beyond, No's 19 to 23 form an important listed group. 19 has a bright yellow stuccoed early 19th-century front with red brick window surrounds and string course and is of 3 storeys. The rear is timber framed. No 20 is an early 18th-century plum brick building with a restored ashlar effect ground floor in a similar colour to No 19. It is also of 3 storeys and narrow in comparison to its neighbours. 21 and 22 are a pair of early 19th-century buildings, of plum and vitreous brick to the upper floors, with a stuccoed ground floor with modern office windows, and two first floor oriel bay windows, over a central doorway with hood. No 23 is a grand 18th-century pale rendered house, now in commercial use. Its key feature is the Dutch style pedimented gable and pilasters. The upper floor sash windows remain, the lower floor has modern inserts. The doorway has a rather grand Doric inspired pedimental hood. To the right hand side is a further bay, to the left a rusticated carriage arch. A run of late 19th-century buildings to the east indicate the end of the roadside building line. Nos 25 - 27 are of brown brick with red dressings, with modern white painted shopfronts inserted under a pediment to the ground floor. These buildings have steep street-side gables, roofed in slate, which add interest to the roofscape in the locality - most other buildings lie eaves to road. The first floor has three oriel windows.



Stucco work on No 4 Easton Street, providing a contrast to the surrounding brickwork.



No 5 Easton Street, dwarfed by its neighbours, of red brick.

Yellow stock bricks on the late 18th century No's 8-10, which also have listed railings to the front. The side elevation is of local brick and was never intended to be seen from the street.



Beyond lies an imposing early 19th-century locally listed building, No 28, of white painted stucco to the front, brick to rear.

The former Royal Grammar School, by Arthur Vernon, a prolific local architect, is now private offices. The building dates from 1883 and looks like a grand house rather than a school. Of pale yellow brick, with gables and bows, patterned red brick and terracotta, it stands out in the locality despite being set back from the road. To the front lie the



rather forlorn remnants of St. Johns Hospital. This is the oldest surviving building in the Borough. The remnants consist of arcades of two bays with semi-circular arches and a third detached pier (Early English), thought to be part of the infirmary hall, and dating from approximately 1180-90, and a detached bit of wall with lancet windows, possibly part of the chantry chapel founded in 1239. These only remain because they were incorporated into the Grammar School in the 16th century, and when this was rebuilt in 1883 a campaign by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) ensured that the structure was saved.

14-15 Easton Street, its fine flint work elevations echoing many of the buildings at West Wycombe park. The building, previously "at risk", has been sensitively restored and adds vibrancy to the street scene.

South Side:

The modern buildings of the Law Courts and the rear sections of the Council Offices are at odds with the traditional form and layout of buildings along the southern side of Easton Street. The Law Courts in particular dominate the corner of Easton Street and Abbey Way.



No 83, The Curry House, is locally listed as it retains a 17th-century timber frame and carriage arch. However the building has been much altered.

23 Easton Street, with Dutch gable detailing, formerly a grand house. Its formal design ensures that it stands out from the neighbouring terrace of buildings.

No's 84-5 are late Victorian, with a large half timbered gable bay projection (painted white). Modern shopfronts of poor quality have been inserted at the ground floor, and the facades could do with some maintenance. There is a variety of windows in the original pair. The right hand building has a cream painted addition (85a) which retains many more original features but is contemporaneous with the gabled pair judging by the follow-through of string courses and eaves detailing. This building has a good original door hood and retains a domestic appearance.

25-7 Easton Street, with steeply slated roofs and decorative gables. The front elevation uses more expensive bricks, the sides are of common red brick.

No 86 is Grade II listed, with fantastic Gothic windows to the ground floor. This building dates from the late 18th century and is of colourwashed bricks, with flat topped 18th-century dormers. The building has excellent architectural detailing, particularly the door and fanlight. Attached is No 87, a stuccoed 18th-century building with 19th-century alterations, particularly visible at the western end which was rebuilt with a projecting gabled bay. The back wing of this building is much earlier, but not publicly visible.



No's 88 and 90 form a listed group, and are separated from the previous buildings by a wrought iron entrance arch leading to St. Johns Court. No 88 is an early 19-century whitewashed brick building under a slate roof, shallow pitched. It has a 19th century bay window and entrance porch and the railings to the front of this and the adjacent No 90 are listed in their own right, being 18th century. The building contrasts well with the adjoining No 90 which is on a grand scale. This is 18th-century with 19th-century alterations, of mauve brick with red brick dressings. To the left hand side is a rubbed brick carriage arch leading through into a courtyard. The main elevation is imposing with a grand central doorway. The right hand bay of the building has a first floor decorated oriel bay which projects over the pavement, and a distinctive entrance lobby. This may at one time have been a similar archway through to the rear. Further details on the buildings include a modillion wooden cornice, which contrasts with the brick detailing, and a brick moulded first floor band. Again the building retains a domestic appearance.

Beyond lies the imposing three storey bulk of the Crendon Street crescent continuation which sweeps around the corner into Easton Street, the lower floors of the Neo-Georgian buildings disrupted by shopfronts.



Locally Listed No 28, with railed front gardens. The building is elevated above the roadside which adds to its visual impact.

Key unlisted buildings

There are 4 locally listed buildings along Easton Street, which play an important role in the street scene, in particular the former Royal Grammar School. The Union Baptist Church, although late in date, is a fine example of Baptist architecture and is a key building.

Local details

There is a variety of architectural detailing within this part of the conservation area, although a common uniting theme is the remnants of the burgage plot widths which leads to the built form. The locality's history as a prime residential area is evident in the quality of the remaining building features, particularly grand entrances and windows. Many excellent and diverse doorways remain with varying degrees of decoration. There are good examples of oriel and bay windows found on upper floors. Decorative string courses of brick enliven a number of the 18th century buildings and red and rubbed brick is used for quoining.



Former Royal Grammar School and Ruins of St. John's.

A further feature is the use of grand designs for public buildings - the Union Baptist Church and former Grammar School are both examples of this.

Prevalent and traditional building materials

St. Johns Hospital is the oldest remnant building structure in the town, and is constructed of stone, probably from the same source as All Saints Parish Church in the Town Centre. A much later building to utilise ashlar, or cut stone, was the Union Baptist Church.



Timber framing had mostly died out as a building tradition by the late 17th century for town houses. Nonetheless the remnants of timber frames can be found, as many of the older buildings were merely refronted in fashionable architectural styles as the buildings were updated. In some cases timber frames remain as the rear outshots of buildings, subsidiary to the grander domestic frontages.

As brick became commonplace it was used to refront and rebuild older buildings. More expensive vitrified brick was used, in header bond, on the front elevations of No's 22 and 80, with decorative detailing picked out in a contrasting colour. Header bond was also used on No 20. Header bond is an expensive way to lay brick which is why it tends to be found on the public faces of buildings. Side elevations which were not intended to be seen tended to use cheaper local brick. "Foreign" brick such as yellow London stocks were also expensive and thus used on facades. As the 19th century progressed the availability of other brick from outside the local area led to the wider use of London Stocks, either as detailing, or for whole elevations. This can be seen on No's 8-12, and on the Grammar School buildings. Even the later buildings, such as the Neo-Georgian parades built on Crendon Street and turning the corner into Easton Street, pick out dressings and window surrounds in a contrasting coloured brick. Rubbed brick was used for dressings and archways, and was finely laid so that the mortar was almost invisible. Examples can be seen at No's 14-5, and 80. The former also stands out as it is the only building to use knapped and coursed flint for the main elevation, with flint dressings and rubbed brick detailing.

Stucco was used to disguise brick and to give buildings the appearance of stone, and this, together with colourwashing, is common on Easton Street. Buildings tend to be painted cream or white. Stucco is also sometimes scored to give the appearance of ashlar work. No 7 is a rare (for Wycombe) example of faience, done in an Art Deco style, which is overlaid over an earlier building.

Roofs are either of slate or red clay tile and tend to be steeply pitched. They are adorned in many cases with dormer windows, which add interest to the roofscape.

Contribution made by the natural environment

The main built up area of Easton Street has little open space or vegetation, although there is a tree in the forecourt of the Church, and some tree planting at The Law Courts. Much of the green space and tree cover is located around the ruins of St. Johns Hospital and the former Grammar School, and this greenery is "borrowed" in views to the east. The front garden of No 28 has some trees which



Locally Listed No 83, with an internal timber frame, still visible in the carriageway.



Victorian rebuilding to the south side of Easton Street.



A fine run of listed buildings on the southern side of the street.

The high quality frontage of No 90, with decorative brick detailing.





add to the greenery, and this is echoed by tree planting on the gyratory system between Easton Street and Abbey Way. This provides a green link between Easton Street and the distant open space of The Rye.

Vitrified brick headers, red brick dressings and stucco work, creating a harmonious appearance on this group of listed buildings.

The extent of loss, problems and pressures

Loss of historic fabric is one of the issues affecting this sub area. On unlisted buildings there are no controls over the removal or replacement of windows. Surprisingly many historic windows have been retained on the upper floors, although there are some inappropriate modern ones. Far more of an issue is the insertion of modern shopfronts into the older buildings. This is particularly the case on the southern side of the street on unlisted buildings. Not only have non traditional forms of shopfronts been installed, but the fascia signs tend to be inappropriate, with garish colours and lettering. Temporary fascia signs are an issue on the Neo-Georgian buildings to the west.



Door details.

Traffic has a major impact on the area, with large numbers of vehicles being funneled along the road, causing noise and pollution, and making it unattractive to pedestrians. Car parking along the south side obscures views of the buildings. As Easton Street is a major through road there is little that can be done to ameliorate the impact. Excessive road signage is another problem. While highway signs, car parking signs and the like are necessary, they do little to visually enhance the architecture.



Easton Street

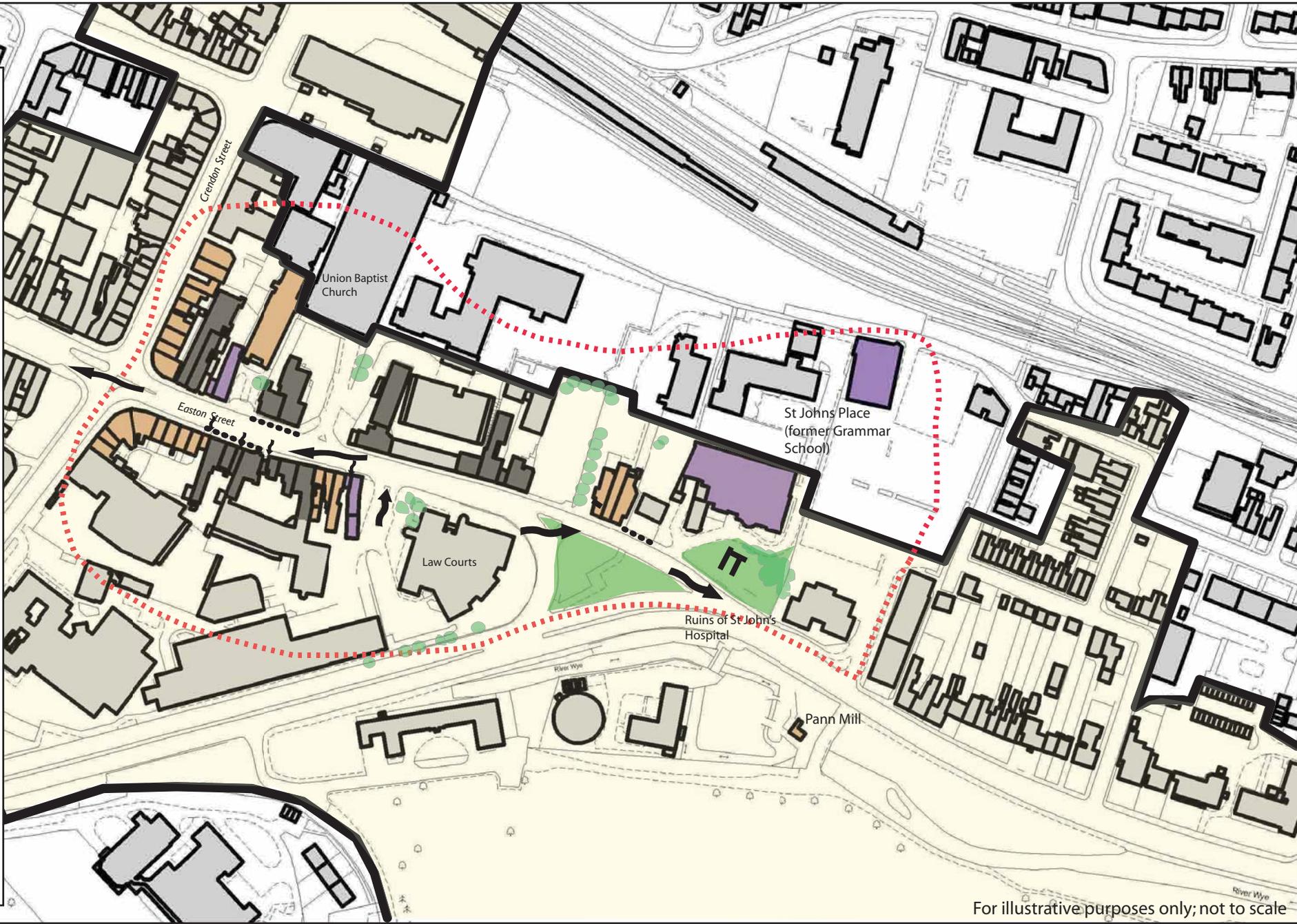
Area 3 Study Appraisal



KEY



- Listed Buildings
- Buildings of interest/designed or civic buildings
- Local List
- Green Space
- River
- Railings
- Views
- Sub area Boundary
- Trees and tree groups
- Conservation Area boundary



For illustrative purposes only; not to scale