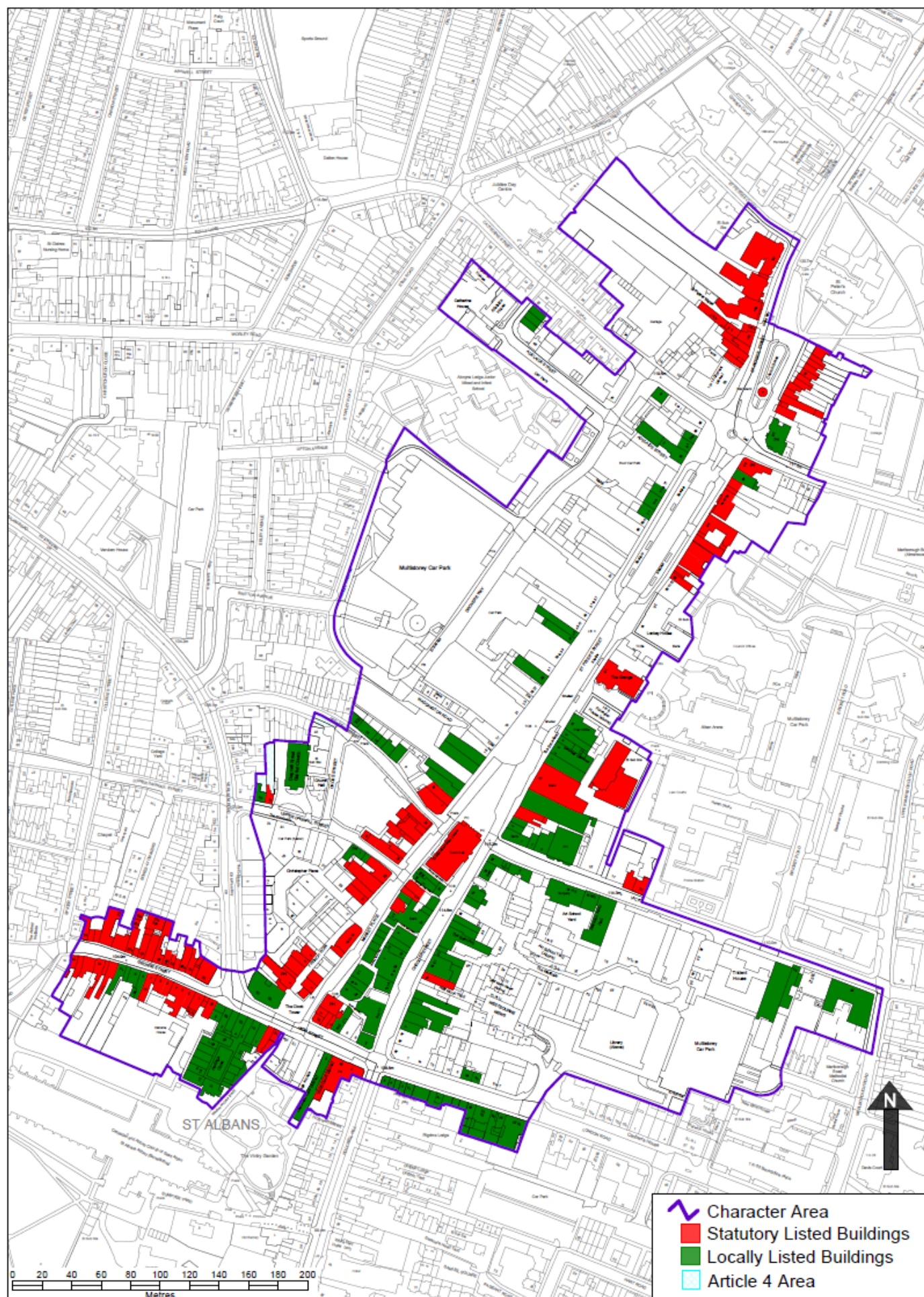


Character Area 4a The Commercial Centre



Note: Parts of this character area have been subject to redevelopment since the CACS was prepared. The CACS will be updated in future reviews



AREA 4A: THE COMMERCIAL CENTRE

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Adelaide Street (part), Boot Alley, Catherine Street (part), Chequer Street (part), Christopher Place (incl. The Colonnades), Cross Street, Drovers Way, French Row, George Street, Heritage Close (part), High Street (incl. Cathedral View, Village Arcade), Lamb Alley, Market Place, Pudding Lane, Queen's Way, St Peter's Street (part) (incl. The Broadway, City Point, St Peters Mews), Sovereign Way, Spencer Street (part), The Maltings (incl. Art School Yard, Half Moon Mews, Westbourne Mews), Upper Dagnall Street, Victoria Street (part), Waddington Road.

Scheduled Monuments

Market Cross
Clock Tower

Listed Buildings

Boot Alley
Type K6 Telephone Kiosk (Grade II)

Chequer Street
14 (formerly Bat & Ball P.H.) (Grade II)

French Row
1 (Fleur de Lys), 3, 5, 7, 9

George Street
1-7 (consecutive incl. 4A), 11-13 (consecutive), 14 & 15, 16 (included in Area 2c), 18-20 (consecutive), 20A & 21, 22-25, 26, 26A & 26B (all Grade II), 27 & 28 (formerly Tudor Tavern) (Grade II*)

High Street
Odds: 3 & 3A, Walls surrounding garden of 3 & 3A (Vintry Garden see Character Area 2a), Waxhouse Gate, 15, 17, 33 (all Grade II)
Evens: 14, 16 & 18 (all Grade II), Clock Tower (in Market Cross) (Grade I)



The grade II listed Town Hall. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*

London Road
Odds: 11 (Grade II)

Market Place
Town Hall (Grade II*),
Odds: 1, 3, 11, 13, 17 & 19, 21 & 21A, 23/23A, 25, 27, 31-37 (all Grade II)
Evens: 2, 4 (Old Boot P.H.), 26, 30 & 32 (all Grade II)

St Peter's Street
Waterend Barn, Little Barn (Grade II)
Odds: 1 & 3, 95-101, 101A, 103, 105 (all Grade II), 107 (known as Ivy House) (Grade II*)
Evens: 6, 10-12 (Bank) (all Grade II), 16 (The Grange) (Grade II*), 28 & 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40 (Donnington House), 42, 48 & 50 (Cock P.H.), 58 & 60, 62-70, 72-76, 78, War Memorial (all Grade II)

Spencer Street
Evens: 26 & 28, 30 (all Grade II)

Upper Dagnall Street
Evens: 2 & 4, 6, 18 (all Grade II)

Victoria Street
Odds: 19 & 21 (Grade II)



The Boot public house (grade II listed).

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Locally Listed Buildings

Adelaide Street

6 "Adelaide's" r/o 79 St Peter's Street, and 52-58

Catherine Street

Odds: 5, 13, 15-25 (incl.) (Flats May Clarke House), 27-39 (incl.)

Chequer Street

Odds: 3-9, 13-29, 31-35

Evens 4-10, 16-26 (includes The Bell), 32 and 34, 36 and 38

French Row

Former Great Red Lion (corner with High Street)

George Street

8-10 (consecutive), r/o 21 (see also Bowes Lyon Mews (Area 5b)).

High Street

Odds: 1 (now joined with 3 which is grade II listed), 5 (Village Arcade - see also Character Area 2a), Heritage Close 1-23 (consecutive), and Heritage Close 19, 21, 25, 27, 29 High Street.

Evens: 2, 10 & 12, Former Great Red Lion.

London Road

Odds: 3A & B.

Evens: 2-38 (incl.) (Peahen P.H. Nos. 8/10, 12/14, 28/30). (See also Areas 4d and 5a).



The former Great Red Lion (locally listed).

Market Place

Evens: 6-12, 14-22 (Corn Exchange), 24 (r/o 31 Chequer Street, Bank), 28, 34-38.

St Peters Street

Odds: 5-7, 11&13, 29, 41&43, 73-75, 79, 81 (inc. 81a),

Evens: 2-4, 8, 1-5 Broadway/Broadway Chambers, 14, 46 (Blacksmiths PH)

Spencer Street

Odds: (see Character Area 5b).

Evens: 8-24

Upper Dagnall Street

Odds: 1 White Swan P.H.

Evens: 20, Dagnall Street Baptist Church

Victoria Street

Odds: 1, 7&9, 11 (Former Library).

Evens: 4, Surgery, 12-14 Building Adjacent, Salvation Army Hall, 50 (Former Baptist Church), 52-54, 58.



Salvation Army Hall (locally listed).

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Character Summary

The special interest of this area is complex because it lies at the heart of the original town and thus contains many historic and cultural layers, including an early medieval market town layout, with many legible burgage plots, a significant number of surviving medieval buildings including those built as inns to serve the pilgrim trade and later as accommodation for post-dissolution travellers.

There are significant numbers of post medieval timber framed and brick buildings and the Georgian period is well represented in St Peter's Street.

There are some excellent Victorian/Edwardian buildings mostly representing the

area's growth as the shopping and banking centre for the wider city that grew up during the railway era. Later C20 development within this area is generally mediocre or poor.

This character area encompasses the commercial city centre and the grain, and to some extent the scale of buildings in the character area, reflects the period in which they were constructed or modified. There are a number of historic buildings, listed and locally listed, which reflect the history of the area. Most of the listed buildings are clustered around the medieval market place but there are also surviving groups on the east side of St Peter's Street and close to St Peter's Church.



Medieval buildings on George Street still demonstrate the original narrow burgage plots of the medieval street plan along with a retained inn carriage arch.



The Victorian/ Edwardian buildings on St Peter's Street demonstrate the area's growth as a commercial centre.



There are numerous large Georgian buildings on St Peter's Street. Image courtesy of John Bethell.



Lockey House on St Peter's Street is typical of the poor or mediocre C20 development in the area.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

History

Reputedly, the medieval market place in this location was originally laid out early in the C11 as a large triangular space, bounded by the present French Row/Market Place, Chequer Street and High Street. By the later Middle Ages this open area had become built up with permanent buildings which replaced market stalls thus setting the organic cross grain pattern of streets and alleys which is still evident today.

At the centre of medieval St Albans was the site of the Eleanor Cross, opposite one of the entrances to the Abbey, Waxhouse Gate. The Eleanor Cross was one of twelve crosses erected by Edward I, in memory of his beloved wife, Queen Eleanor, who died in 1290. Each cross marked the nightly resting-place of her funeral procession on its slow journey from her death-bed in Nottinghamshire to her burial in Westminster Abbey. Neglected, the Eleanor Cross was pulled down in 1703 to be replaced by the town pump.



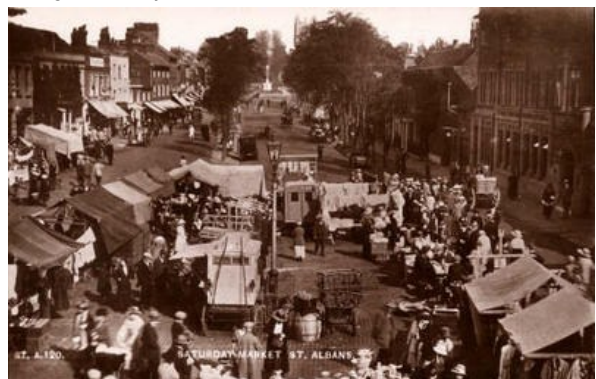
Numerous alleys criss-cross the area, a remnant from the medieval period when the Market Place was full of stalls, before these became permanent buildings.

The Clock Tower was built near to the Eleanor Cross between 1403 and 1412. It is the only medieval example in the country. From the beginning, the Clock Tower seems to have been intended as a visible statement of St Albans' civic ambitions against the power of the Abbot. It was a look out as well as a curfew, ringing out the times when people had to be indoors.

The medieval town functioned very much as an adjunct to the Abbey and always included many inns which served the pilgrim trade. These were in the form of narrow but deep plots which stretched back from the streets which immediately surrounded the market and also beyond, including George Street and to some extent St Peter's Street. The medieval street pattern is well illustrated by the earliest map we have of 1635 and is supported by medieval documentary evidence and by extant buildings in all of the streets on the map.



The Clock Tower and end of Market Place and French Row. Image courtesy of John Bethell.



The Saturday market outside the front of the Town Hall, looking down St Peter's Street. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

History contd.

After the dissolution of the monasteries in the mid-C16, the continued importance of the town as a stop-over for travellers between London and the North West led to gradual further development of inn yards back from their confined narrow frontages, thus retaining the medieval street pattern. This is illustrated progressively through study of the 1766 Andrews and Wren Map and the 1810 Brayley Map. By 1810, massive expansion of coaching inns had been accompanied by a new major turnpike from London (the London Road) creating the current Peahen junction and causing the Peahen Inn to be majorly expanded. Later in 1825, Verulam Road was cut through many of the older inn yards, and, at a stroke, the inns at the lower end of George Street and beyond were effectively bypassed.

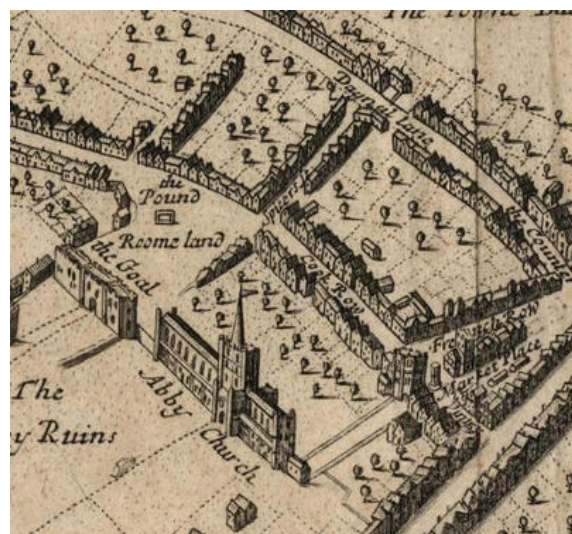
Until this time Georgian development in the town had mostly comprised new brick frontages or front ranges to earlier inns and houses. This was the case especially in St Peter's Street where the substantial houses of the rich still retained deep undeveloped gardens. The Grange (no. 16 St Peter's Street) is a remaining example of a fine, C18 house, which was, originally, set in large grounds extending back towards Bricket Road. New Georgian development, however, was largely along the new turnpikes outside the central area but was represented most prominently in the centre by the Town Hall (designed / built 1826-1830) which would have formalised St Peter's Street into a wide avenue of Georgian character, disguising the medieval layout behind. A small area of Georgian redevelopment also occurred at the northern end of the street opposite St Peter's Church and green (Area 7e).



View north up St Peter's Street, showing the avenue of trees. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.

During the Victorian/Edwardian era, the area became progressively the centre of the wider city which was then expanding into suburban residential suburbs. Shopping and banking flourished and some Victorian shopfronts remain from the era along with three of the large Edwardian banks. An avenue of lime trees was planted in St Peter's Street in 1881 at the expense of a private citizen Mr H. Gotto (the lime trees were replaced with London Plane trees in the 1990s). In 1906 when telephone poles had started to be erected there was public outrage and the Postmaster-General was persuaded to abandon the plan and route the wires underground.

During this time, former inn yards were in decline and were diversifying into other light manufacturing uses including straw hat manufacture which had become an important regional industry. Other inn frontages had declined into public houses or ale houses and, despite the eclipse of the town as a staging post, the breweries to the west of St Peter's Street and Chequers Street continued to expand. Whilst there was little change in plot sizes, site observation shows us that many buildings in the centre were being rebuilt or re-fronted into higher Victorian form. This is most prevalent on Chequer Street, High Street, and the west side and southern end of the east side of St Peter's Street and is indicative of the great commercial activity in this period.



A map from 1700 showing the street layout prior to the cutting of Verulam Road or the new London Road. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

History contd.

Whilst there had been some early C19 development in Catherine Street (then Catherine Lane), nearly all of this predominantly residential, Victorian development was swept away at the turn of the C20 century when extensive, more commercially-focused, redevelopment took place. Renamed Catherine Street, the junction with St Peter's Street was widened and entirely new development of small artisan dwellings and shops sprang up. Similar development occurred on Shropshire Lane (by this time renamed Victoria Street), which served to connect the centre with the main railway station. National social changes brought St Peter's School in the north and the Carnegie library (1911) and the Art School in the south. The largest building, the former brewery in Chequer Street, was incorporated into a Cinema (Chequers).

The late Victorian and Edwardian era finally started to bring the amalgamation of plots including the first department store in the High Street (demolished in the 1970s and replaced by Heritage Close, comprising small shops and restaurants around an internal courtyard with maisonnettes above).

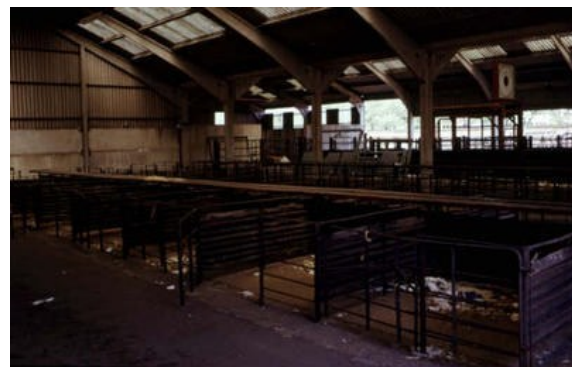
During the inter-war years, the shopping centre developed further north in St Peter's Street with larger shops and department stores transforming the west side. This era also marked the passing of the last of the grander houses on the west side, Aboyne Lodge. In its place, further retail premises were developed on the St Peter's Street frontage, whilst, in the late 1940s, the grounds to the rear became the site of the school with the same name. Small, artisan cottages on the south side of Adelaide Street were also demolished to assemble the site for the school. The cattle market was finally removed from St Peter's Street and set up in the land behind, which was by this time becoming a wasteland of car parks and service areas which unfortunately still survives. Printing had become a major local industry and further plot assembly took place between Upper Dagnall Street and Spencer Street to create a larger printing works (the plot subsequently re-developed as a supermarket

and now occupied by the Argos retail warehouse). On the west side of St Peter's Street, the process of plot amalgamation and building replacement to create larger and more modern stores continued in the 1960s and 1970s, so that by the 1980s very little early fabric survived south of Catherine Street.

On the east side of St Peter's Street, the large houses at the north end survived, although falling into commercial use, and further south, Thame House was demolished to accommodate more shops and the post office. In 1938, the Bocket Estate decided to dismantle a large, early C17 barn on estate lands in Waterend, and re-erect it on brick foundations, on land that they owned in the centre of St Albans. The Waterend Barn, sited to the rear of the post office, was let as a restaurant. In 1964, Little Barn, a smaller but older barn (probably C16), was moved from Little Hornead, near Buntingford, and re-erected adjoining the Waterend Barn, to enlarge the restaurant accommodation.



The C20 saw the amalgamation of plots on the west side of St Peter's Street to create larger, modern shops.



Indoor cattle pens, probably in the Drover's Way area, after the cattle market moved from St Peter's Street. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

History contd.

Although in the last thirty years most of the city centre has only experienced small scale and piecemeal changes to its buildings, two major developments took place in the city centre during the early 1980s.

Firstly, in an area between Chequer Street, Victoria Street, London Road and New Kent Road, a comprehensive development area (CDA) had been assembled by the Council through compulsory purchase in the 1970s (following approval in 1974), including land occupied historically by the brewery. Following much controversy about the form which the “Chequer Street scheme” might take and local reaction against the national trend towards enclosed shopping malls of standard unsympathetic format, disregarding context, a detailed historical study was carried out including recommendations¹ and the Council held an architectural competition. The brief was to re-develop the area, replacing small non-conforming uses and surface parking with mixed retail, office and residential development including a library, theatre, car parking and a department store. The scheme was to retain key historic buildings around the road frontages and to follow the historic grain, incorporating historic east west links. The successful scheme was that designed by Renton Howard Wood Levin. A competition was held to name the development and ‘The Maltings’ was chosen to echo its former use, also evidenced by the restoration of the Brewmaster’s House marking the Chequer Street entrance to the scheme.



The Victoria Street frontage of the Maltings Shopping Centre.

Secondly, an area between Verulam Road, Upper Dagnall Street, Market Place and French Row (then known as Gentle’s Yard after a C19 occupier of one of the properties), much of which had been bought by the Council in 1949 and cleared by 1980 and was being used as surface car parking, was subject to a planning brief for retail and residential development with car parking. This was designed by architects Gordon Benoy and Partners in a neo-medieval style. This shopping centre was called Christopher Place, consciously preserving the name of the Christopher Inn which occupied one of the buildings in French Row, now nos. 3-7.

A smaller scale but significant structural change took place in the 1990s when Drovers Way (the service road to the rear of St Peters Street) was extended northwards to link with Catherine Street to ease access to the car parks and service road.



Brewmaster’s House on Chequer Street. It was restored and incorporated into The Maltings development.



Entrance to Christopher Place, seen from George Street.

¹ Chequer Street St Albans – Historical background of the Central Area Redevelopment site and survey of existing buildings, Hertfordshire County Council, 1979

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Spatial Form

The area occupies the high ground and so there are middle and long distance views of it. From the west, south west, south and south east, the area is seen in conjunction with the tower of the Abbey and to a lesser extent that of St. Peter's Church. In these views, the central area is seen as a mixture of relatively small scale pitched roofs with chimney stacks, at a lower level and deferential to the bulk and height of the Cathedral roof and tower. However, in long views from the west, the multi storey car parks on Drovers Way unfortunately form part of the scene, competing somewhat with the Abbey, St Peter's Church and other prominent skyline buildings such as the Town Hall and the Baptist Church. These later buildings, and in particular, the lift towers and telecommunications equipment installed on the roofs, have a negative effect on the setting of the historic buildings and on the character of the conservation area. In views from the east, the Maltings car park, and in particular, the lights to the top deck, also impact negatively on the character of the conservation area.



St Peter's Street is characterised by its long, wide nature and avenue of trees.



Chequer Street is narrower than St Peter's Street and has many three storey buildings so feels more enclosed.

Spatially the area is centred on the wide, tree-lined St Peter's Street characteristic of many English market towns. The buildings which line it are between two and three storeys and it is therefore distinctly wider than its height and as a result generous in proportion. At the north end beyond the small roundabout with Catherine Street and Hatfield Road it widens further into St Peter's Green, which is flanked by small two storey cottages, fronted by the fine war memorial, and enclosed by St Peter's Church and churchyard, to the north (Area 7e).

At the southern end the street begins to widen further, as witness to the medieval triangular market place, into what is almost a square in front of the imposing focal point of the Town Hall. At this point it bifurcates into two narrower streets Chequer Street and Market Place. Chequer Street feels narrower than St Peter's Street because many of the buildings are three storey which increases the sense of enclosure. Market Place, whilst physically narrower is still predominantly flanked by two storey buildings.



There is a square-like area in front of the Town Hall where the north-south route splits into Chequer Street and Market Place.



Market Place has mainly two storey buildings so doesn't feel as narrow as Chequer Street.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Spatial Form contd.

Market Place widens and an informal square is created in front of a fine landmark building of early post-medieval date with white plastered gables. It then forks again into the extremely narrow, pedestrianised, French Row on the west and continues on the east to High Street as Market Place. French Row is especially narrow, with two to three storey gabled buildings, and thus distinctly medieval in character, whereas Market Place is wider with the low Corn Exchange on the east side, which despite its height, forms another focal point. Looking north to St Peter's Church tower, the extent of St Peter's Street is foreshortened.

Tiny alleys criss-cross and link French Row, Market Place and Chequer Street and the whole triangular area has a distinctly medieval feel with the great bulk of the Norman Tower of the Cathedral looming behind.

At the southern end of the area, French Row and Market Place come together into a little square (called Market Cross) in front of another landmark and focal point, the medieval Clock Tower. The square opens out onto High Street which runs east-west and joins Chequer Street at the Peahen junction, a highly trafficked cross roads, mostly surrounded by three storey buildings. High Street forms a physical boundary between the bustle of the town and the quieter cathedral precincts to the south. George Street continues west down hill from High Street and again has a narrow medieval feel with two storey, high roofed ancient buildings either side.



The triangular market area has a medieval feel with narrow streets and alleys, and the Norman tower of the Cathedral visible over the roof tops.



Market Place forms an informal square before splitting around an early post-medieval landmark building.



George Street continues down the hill from High Street.



Despite its height, the Corn Exchange is a landmark in the Market Place.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Spatial Form contd.

The area to the west of St Peter's Street is a rather formless mix of rear service yards connected by Drovers Way, a north - south service road, partly canyon-like between high buildings and partly dribbling away onto untidy open service areas. It is connected to St Peter's Street by narrow alleys and roads of promising form but these are let down by detail and poor materials.

To the west of French Row, Christopher Place is an open pedestrian mall, constructed in the early 1980s, which curves back to the south but rather ignores the grain of the original inn yards. It is relatively permeable through alleys linking it to French Row, Verulam Road and Upper Dagnall Street.

To the east of Chequer Street, the much larger Maltings Shopping Precinct of the same 1980s era, follows the east-west grain of the former inn yards. A generous passage from Chequer Street opens out into a small square which then dog-legs into the main, narrow, linear pedestrian precinct. There are narrow routes to either side connecting to Victoria Street and London Road giving some permeability. At the eastern end it widens into a small square which is dominated by higher buildings, initially intended to be a "destination" department store. This was never realised and the effect is a somewhat anticlimactic access to a multi-storey car park and a second access to Victoria Street. The access to and from London Road leads past the shopping centre's service area, a utilitarian area sandwiched behind the earlier London Road properties and dominated by the high backs of the shops, but also passes down steps through a more pleasant

oasis of landscaped beds. The residential south-western part of the Maltings development is formed around relatively narrow linear spaces stretching back eastwards from Chequer Street and redolent of former inn yards parallel to and behind London Road. Homes are also grouped around a landscaped courtyard at first floor level. The north-western sector is in the form of an enclosed courtyard around which are the retained two-three storey buildings of the former Art School. In contrast, the north-east sector is occupied by a massive, single floor plate building of ground floor shops and a mix of commercial and shopping at first floor level.



An entrance into Christopher Place from French Row.



Interior of The Maltings Shopping Centre, built in 1980s.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

St Peter's Street

The east side of St Peter's Street is of two to three storey buildings of relatively narrow plot width. It still has a Georgian feel, especially the northern half.

North of Hatfield Road, and forming a focal point, facing down St Peter's Street with the church tower as a backdrop, is the City War Memorial (1920-21), a tall slender tapered cross on a cross-plan plinth, by stonemason Charles Alderton, probably to a design by architect Sir Edgar Wigram (listed Grade II). The war memorial was erected on the open space to the south of St Peter's Church, known as Church Green and this area is now a charming, small, formal public garden (St. Peter's Green memorial garden).

A group of listed historic buildings are set behind the garden; key within this group are nos. 58-60, the former St. Peter's Parish Workhouse. This C18, two storey building was much altered in the C19 and is now in commercial use. Its features include a central archway to a yard, a steeply pitched, tiled roof, and red brick elevations with diaper of blue headers. A terrace of attractive two storey cottages with tiled roofs, leads up to the gate into the church yard. The red brick cottages (nos. 62-64) are early C18, whilst the remaining cottages may have older origins, having been 'remodelled' in the early C18 (nos. 66-76). No. 78 is listed as originally C17, although the exterior has been thoroughly modernised, probably in the 1930s.



Buildings on Church Green, the Cock can be seen in the middle.

Flanking the Hatfield Road junction are two public houses. On the north side, no. 56 The Blacksmith's, a C20 mock-Tudor purpose built public house. It ably addresses the corner, is of sufficiently modest scale and of traditional materials and appearance to sit comfortably with its neighbours. Whilst it replaced small cottages it has become a landmark and part of the local scene. To the south side is The Cock Inn, an historic inn of late C16 or early C17 origins and which gave its name to Cock Lane (now Hatfield Road).

Also south of Hatfield Road is a good group of listed Georgian town houses and Georgian facades to earlier buildings (nos. 28-40), which are set back behind a line of as yet immature plane trees and a service road, presently used as a taxi rank. The York stone pavings are good quality and the bus shelters relatively discreet. These buildings are generally in office use but no. 30, a shop with an old Victorian shopfront, marks a change to a predominance of banks and building societies in the southern end of the street.

The Grange (no. 16), a fine, two storey, Georgian, Grade II* Listed house, now a building society, forms a centre piece of the whole eastern side. Wide pedestrian ways to the Civic Centre (Area 4b) are either side of the building and there are some good major trees on the north side redolent of the former character of the street and the gardens behind the former town houses. This frontage is rather obscured by bus stops because the building is not set back like nos. 28-40.

Two 1960s buildings, either side of these pedes-



The City War Memorial, as seen behind St Peter's Green memorial garden.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

St Peter's Street contd.

trian ways, form an extension of the Fredrick Gibberd Civic Centre into St Peter's Street. Forrester House to the south (named after "Jim Forrester", 5th Earl Verulam who was Mayor of St Albans, 1957) with a flat roof and blind frontage to the upper floors, forms a transition with the 1960s Civic Centre. The parapet height is restrained, and by limiting the height of the building, by setting it back and by designing the facade to have plain upper floors in red brick, Gibberd has designed a building which is reasonably sympathetic to the setting of The Grange. Whilst the building is considered a neutral element in the street scene, the contemporary mosaic mural by William Mitchell, which is integral to the frontage brickwork and depicts the history of the city, does have artistic and historical significance and is a heritage asset. Lockey House to the north, however, is an aggressive building, too high and wide with fenestration out of character with the street. Its flat roof is marred as usual by a plethora of air handling equipment which is particularly prominent and visible from ground level.

The south of the east side has a good quality building group largely in use for financial and professional services. These are generally early to mid C20 brick frontages of two and a half to three storeys with pitched roofs. Notable examples are: the imposing bank at no. 10 (listed Grade II), which is one of the very few stone-faced buildings in the city; no. 6, listed Grade II (now an estate agent); the fine Post Office at no. 14 (locally listed), and the corner building no. 1 Victoria Street (locally listed, now a building society). Here the pavements have been renewed in small scale granite slabs.

To the rear of this group, and with an entrance to the rear of Forrester House, is the Grade II listed Waterend Barn and the adjacent Grade II listed Little Barn. These buildings are sited gable-on to a courtyard at the front, which is accessed from the open space to the fore of the Albans Arena, and are tucked behind the range buildings on St Peter's Street. Thus, although these are buildings of large volume (the Waterend Barn is a

seven bay barn, the Little Barn is smaller, with four bays), much of this volume is not immediately apparent and the scale of these buildings is not truly appreciated from the outside. Although both of these barns are timber-framed, external walls are faced with brick.



Waterend Barn and Little Barn (both grade II listed)

The west side of St Peter's Street is comprised of generally wider plots to accommodate larger shops. Heights of buildings are between two and three storeys. The general feel is of a typical mid-C20 shopping street but set back behind trees and a service road. The service roads on each side of St Peter's Street are a remnant of the original drovers' wastes. On market days, this area is transformed by the presence of the market stalls, all uniformly coloured in St Albans blue and yellow, adding much colour and bustle and noise to the street.



St Albans market takes place every Wednesday and Saturday, continuing a tradition that has been in practice since medieval times.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

St Peter's Street contd.

The predominant façade material is multi-red brick, but there are rendered buildings on this side and even some which are stone-clad. Earlier surviving pitched roofs are nearly all tiled, but there are also a significant number of flat roofs.

On the west side there are a few historic buildings but only one is listed (nos. 1-3). This has a fine late C17 façade. No. 79/81 is the only other pre-C19 building, its high pitched roof is redolent of its medieval or post-medieval origins but it has modern windows and shopfronts. Some C19 survivors give some clue as to the original plot widths but the wide C20 department stores which have obliterated these are the principal buildings of the street. Some of these, including the former Woolworths store at nos. 33-39 (which became Tesco in 2010) are faced with mock Georgian brick facades in deference to the conception in the inter-war years that St Albans was a "Georgian Town".



The mock-Georgian façade of Nos. 33-39 St Peter's Street.

Locally listed buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of St Peter's Street are nos. 5-7 and 11 and 13 in a variety of styles which form a good group with nos. 1-3 (statutorily Listed Grade II) at an important location near the Town Hall. No. 29 (Queen Anne style by local architect Percival Blow for Sainsbury's (1921)), and nos. 41 and 43 (a good Victorian pair with sash windows and slate roof) form a group with the neo-Georgian facades of nos. 31-39. Nos. 71-75, in red brick with fine stone dressings and a high clay roof, were built as a group for several occupiers and included

Mac Fisheries. Whilst all these locally listed buildings contribute positively in respect of their front ranges, the rear buildings stretching back to Drovers Way are invariably poor and utilitarian with expansive flat roofs accommodating uncontrolled air handling plant and/or car parking which are of negative effect. The exceptions are no. 79 (formally The Adelaide Public House), which turns the corner into Adelaide Street, and no. 1, the listed building which returns into Spencer Street. The façade of no. 81/81A dates from 1938, by commercial London architects North, Robin and Wilsdon in an Art Deco style. A rare survivor of its type and time in the area, it has cream faience tiling (including the shopfront fascia cornice, capitals and pilasters) and steel Crittall windows.

The remaining buildings are either of neutral or of negative effect. Most of these date from the mid-late C20 and are in styles evocative of that period. No. 69/69a (1955/56) in Festival of Britain style, by architects Lewis Solomon, Son and Joseph (then headed by Sidney Kaye and Eric Firmin), has a recessed first floor with stone wing walls and a wrought iron balustrade. The most negative buildings are nos. 15 and 17 (which unfortunately flank the entrance to Waddington Road); nos. 51 to 57 (a department store); no. 65; no. 67 (a supermarket); no. 77 (which unfortunately forms the corner with Adelaide Street and dwarfs no. 79 opposite), and nos. 83-85, a plain, flat roofed building in a sombre, machined, brown brick, not a fitting edifice for such an important location on the major corner with Catherine Street. On the north side of that junction and returning along Catherine Street is another large 1970s office building (now converted to flats) with a retail showroom ground floor designed by Louis de Soissons and somewhat better detailed including a lead roof, recessed windows and more characteristic red brick in Flemish bond. Whilst it replaced much more modest buildings, in scale and window proportion the architect has attempted to be respectful of a fine group of surviving listed buildings to its north side.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

St Peter's Street contd.

This group, nos. 95-107, which faces St Peter's Church, is in mixed commercial and residential use and is set behind a slightly raised pavement of concrete block paving with traditional blue brick stepped edging. Nos. 95-97 are late C16, re-fronted in the C18 in a red brick with blue headers; shop fronts were added later (c1900). No. 99 dates from the C17 but has a rebuilt front of modern brick. Nos. 95 through 99 have clay tiled roofs. Nos. 101 and 101A are also red brick and are unusual in having a slate mansard roof. Described by Pevsner as "an uncommonly good triplet of houses" are nos. 103-107. This group is slightly further back behind small paved forecourts with low enclosing walls. No. 103 (The White House) is a grand, three storey, stuccoed, strongly vertical and symmetrical, Classical villa of 1829 attributed to George Smith, architect of the Town Hall and contemporary with that. No. 105, in contrast, is a two storey, quirky, mid-C19, asymmetrical, gothic style building with Tudor arches and a part battlemented parapet, once the vicarage. The landmark building of the group is no. 107 (Grade II*), known as Ivy House. Built in the early C18, probably by Edward Strong (Chief Mason to Wren at St Paul's) for himself, the house turns the corner into St Peter's Close. This grand, three storey, four bay wide building has fine purple brick with rubbed red brick dressings, a well-detailed Tuscan door case and very large sash windows. At the corner it steps down to two storeys with a round bay.

South of Catherine Street, shopfronts on the west side of the road are generally less traditional than those on the east, although the basic language of fascia, stall riser, pilasters and cornice has been followed and they are mostly of painted timber but with some aluminium window framing (usually colour coated) generally confined to the department stores. Signage has been controlled and is almost exclusively at or below traditional shop fascia level, not internally illuminated; Dutch blinds are completely absent and external shutters virtually absent.

The street-scene on this side is still based on the "service road" layout introduced in the first quar-

ter of the C20, i.e. pavement/service road/pavement/main road, but the change of level between pavement and service road has gone to accommodate its greater pedestrian priority. The demarcation is still maintained however by a tarmac strip set in the predominantly granite pavings. The replacement granite pavements vary from small scale flagstones to granite setts. This does appear dark on rainy overcast days.

Street lighting is too tall and out of scale with the buildings (particularly incongruous adjacent to The Cock public house), but as the trees grow they should become less prominent. Other street furniture including signage, traffic signals, guard rails, telephone kiosks, CCTV, and various service boxes are for the most part of poor quality.

Because the original trees were near the end of their safe and useful life expectancy, from 1999 there has been phased replacement of most of the avenue of lime trees with plane trees, due to their more resilient nature in a trafficked environment.



Ivy House, grade II listed, probably built by Edward Strong. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



The group of listed buildings opposite St Peter's church.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Chequer Street and The Maltings

The buildings along Chequer Street are predominantly in use as shops with a small number for financial services. Buildings on the east side of Chequer Street in particular are generally taller than in St Peter's Street or Market Place at two-three and a half storeys and are generally of the C19 or Edwardian era. The exceptions are the Bell Inn (no. 22 Chequers Street) and the former Bat and Ball Inn (no. 14), which have medieval origins. Roofs are a mixture of red/brown tiles and slate, and walls are of red multi brickwork and/or render. Again, the roofscape is generally small scale and varied which is an important characteristic. There are only a few dormer windows but several half storey roof extensions especially on the west side.

The two early C20 bank buildings (the Midland, now HSBC on the west, and Lloyds, now Lloyds TSB on the east) are prominent and have formal stone facades. Nearly all the buildings contribute positively to the character of the conservation area and there are several good groupings. The exceptions would be the flat roofed single storey no. 37 on the west side immediately south of the Town Hall, nos. 2 & 12 on the east and the canopied entrance to the Maltings Shopping area. The shopfronts are almost exclusively of timber and the shop signage is restrained. The street signage function is generally of poor quality and obtrusive and the pavings are of poor quality concrete. The street feels more traffic dominated than St Peter's Street because the buildings are closer to the carriageway.

The Maltings is a shopping and residential area behind and to the east of Chequer Street. It is entered through a couple of old inn yard carriage arches but the main entrance is through a wider access straddled by a conservatory style canopy and is less sympathetic to the grain and character of the area.

To the rear of Chequer Street the refurbished and altered historic back extensions of the Chequer Street frontage have been successfully altered and are still redolent of the former inn yards. The new residential buildings are well

integrated with the old in terms of their small scale roof form arranged in a linear east-west orientation to follow the historic inn yard grain, but the commercial units increase progressively in scale into the site, culminating with relatively massive floor plates with the substantial height of the multi-storey car park at the eastern end.

Shopfronts are generally minimal metal frames and glass, consistently treated and mostly set back into covered arcades. Signage is well restrained. The floorscape comprises "Blanc de Bierge" textured small element concrete blocks and blue/brindle clay brick pavers.

Materials at the western end are a mixture of red/brown tile and slate roofs over mostly red multi brick and some yellow stock brick facades. Towards the eastern end of the mall the materials are less traditional: the wall cladding is mostly metal and there are metal clad false roofs with large expanses of flat roofs above. These eastern buildings have a negative effect on the character of the conservation area.



Left: The Bat and Ball in the 1960s. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.



An early C20 bank building with a formal stone façade.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Market Place/ French Row

The area, including Market Place, French Row and the small alleys connecting, contains a great variety of buildings loosely based on the medieval pattern and including a fair number dating from and evocative of this period.

Narrow frontages predominate with relatively complex and generally steep tiled roof forms but with a significant number of lower pitched slate roofs indicating the Georgian and Victorian rebuilds. The variety and juxtaposition of roof forms and chimney stacks is a major characteristic of the area. Buildings are between two and three storeys high with the exception of the Corn Exchange (single storey) and, of course, the Clock Tower. There are a greater proportion of two and a half and three storey buildings in this area and a fair number of dormer windows, normally pitched roofed and equal or narrower in width than the main windows, which themselves are almost exclusively vertically proportioned.

There are a significant number of plastered or rendered facades but they are now normally plain except for the fine, pargetted no. 17 High Street. There is generally little exposed timber frame, the exception being no. 27 Market Place, albeit this framing is suspect in origin.



The varied roof forms of Market Place and French Row. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.

There are also a significant number of brick buildings generally of the typical St Albans red or red-multi brick, including fine examples from the C17 (nos. 33-37 Market Place) through to grand Victorian examples at nos. 6-12 Market Place. The exceptions are the Corn Exchange, in cream coloured, gault bricks with stone and stucco dressings (a deliberate statement of its civic status); nos. 17-19 Market Place; nos. 16-18 High Street (London Stocks), and Christopher Place Shopping Centre (yellow stocks with red details).

Shopfronts are almost exclusively of timber and signage is restrained. There is a greater proportion of cafés and restaurants than in St Peter's Street; vibrancy is added at night by the two public houses and one restaurant by the Clock Tower square, and the Swan public house in Upper Dagnall Street. Also, at night most frontages remain un-shuttered. However, Pudding Lane, the alley behind the Corn Exchange, does not reach its potential as an attractive space contributing to the character of the conservation area because rear shopfronts to the Chequer Street premises are generally closed up to avoid security problems.

The bland mid-C20 terrace, nos. 11-21 French



A lot of the buildings use typical St Albans red brick but a significant number are plastered, like this pargetted example (right). Image courtesy of John Bethell.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Market Place/ French Row contd.

Row, could be regarded as neutral, although the demolition of the previous historic building on the site was a major loss in a group of otherwise high quality. The generally flat roofed, larger scale buildings which back onto the west frontages of Market Place are negative, although the large retail outlet (currently Argos) in Spencer Street is an important contribution to the vitality of the area (although, given that it is visible from three streets, it would benefit from more active frontage).

The Christopher Place Shopping Centre buildings are over scaled but their layout allows old pedestrian links to be maintained into the area and through to Verulam Road. The 1990s (modified / widened in 2014/15) high arched main entrance to the centre was constructed to allow views through to the shopping centre whilst maintaining continuity in the street. Use of white render and slate roofs ties in with the traditional materials nearby, whilst the fully glazed internal faces and boarded wooden soffit provide the modern edge.



The bland, neutral-impact, mid-C20 buildings in French Row. The main entrance of Christopher Place is seen on the right.

The main focal point buildings in this area are the Clock Tower, the Corn Exchange, no. 13 Market Place and the Town Hall, although there are several other prominent corner buildings.

The hard landscaping includes some good quality materials, such as blue Staffordshire brick pavers, York stone setts and granite kerbs, but some are badly detailed and there is also a large proportion of black top on the carriageway. French Row is paved with poor quality interlocking concrete blocks with two City of London design bollards at its northern end. The Clock Tower square contains good quality hard landscape in granite setts and large format blue Staffordshire bricks and York stone and there is good bespoke street furniture in the form of a circular seating area around a lighting column and a valuable street tree. Elsewhere in the area, street furniture is poor and badly placed, although road signage is restrained.



City of London design bollard at the end of French Row.



Good quality hard landscaping in the Clock Tower square.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Upper Dagnall Street and Spencer Street (part)

To the west of the Town Hall are two narrow historic streets which run downhill to Verulam Road. The most northerly, Spencer Street, was cut in 1834 to link the new Verulam Road to St Peter's Street. Spencer Street has distinctive raised blue brick pavements and its northern side is, for the most part, lined with locally listed buildings from the C19. The western end is included in Area 5b (Verulam Road). To the south side a printing works was re-developed as a supermarket in the late C20, which fills the sizeable site between Spencer Street, Cross Street and Upper Dagnall Street. This is quite sympathetic having been built in a red multi brick, with variation in the plane of the façade and a recessed shopfront which faces Spencer Street.

Upper Dagnall Street is part of an ancient route, previously Dagnall Lane, cut in two by Verulam Road in 1825. On its north side is the Baptist Church (1885), a fine red brick building surrounded by a red brick wall with stone capping. A local landmark, it has a distinctive high pitched roof and spire which contribute significantly to the St Albans skyline. This replaced the early C18 Baptist church on the same site. To its east side the former church house was replaced in the 1990s by the Cross Street Centre, also in red brick by local architects Cannon Morgan and Rheinberg. West of the church are two early houses, no.18 (with much timber framing) is listed and no. 20 locally listed. On the south side of the road is the entrance to the Christopher Place car park, quite restrained in appearance including its minimal signage, and some very small commercial units also within the envelope of the shopping centre.



The supermarket building (now Argos) on Spencer Street. It has a varied plane, red multi brick façade with a recessed shopfront.



Baptist Church on Upper Dagnall Street.



No. 18, listed (right), and no. 20, locally listed (left), on Upper Dagnall Street.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

High Street

This effectively forms the boundary between the former medieval town and the Cathedral environs and is another section of one of the earlier routes through this historic settlement.

Buildings are generally larger in scale, most being three storeys, with more varied roofs on the north side, but less so on the south side where C20 wider block development has been introduced. Roofs are all pitched in tiles or slates (with the exception of the rear wings and extensions behind the south frontages). Facades are predominantly brick, the exceptions being nos. 17, which is of pargetted plaster date marked "1665"; 12-16 (rendered), and 8 (half timbered).

The focal point is the medieval Clock Tower but nos. 2 and 18 (listed) on the north side and no. 3 (listed) on the south and nos. 20/22 (a locally listed Victorian red brick building formerly The Great Red Lion P.H.) all hold prominent corner positions. No. 7, formerly Lyons tea house, was converted into an arcade of small shops leading through to Waxhouse Gate (Area 2a). Nos. 19-31 "Heritage Close" is prominent because of its overall size and, together with no. 33 (a listed building with an C18 highly detailed brick façade), closes the vista along Verulam Road. Windows are exclusively vertically proportioned and of timber. Shopfronts are in the main traditional and a significant proportion are of timber. The main exceptions are nos. 6-8 and 19-31.



High Street has larger scale buildings, typically of three storeys and often with larger plot width, seen here from the Peahen junction.

Many of the buildings are listed or locally listed and are positive contributors to the character of the conservation area, the exceptions are the mock-Tudor nos. 6-8 (although by Percival Blow, local architect of note, and having a well detailed bronze shopfront, considered neutral), and nos. 9-15a (another wide C20 building of pseudo-classical style considered neutral).

On the south side, an historic building with an ancient narrow archway leads through to Waxhouse Gate and the Abbey (see Area 2a). On the face of the arch is one of the street war memorials unique to St Albans.

Street furniture is relatively good and restrained but hard landscape is poor concrete except for the Clock Tower.



Shops on the south side of High Street with the narrow archway leading through to Waxhouse Gate. Image courtesy of John Bethell.



The Village Arcade is a traditional-style arcade of shops on the south side of High Street that goes through to Waxhouse Gate.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

George Street

This is an ancient street of ancient buildings; several early medieval in fabric. Overall, a succession of relatively narrow frontages, with high pitched, mostly tiled roofs, tumble down the hill in a gentle curve. It is close to the Abbey precinct and well used by tourists and locals, popular for its independent shops and restaurants.

On the north side, long, and generally lower, narrow ranges stretch back towards Lower Dagnall Street, redolent of the former inn yards which formerly took up most of this side of the street. On the south the rear gardens reach back towards the Abbey's quiet north churchyard. Several old carriageway openings and gates remain and these are important reminders of the historic importance of the street in providing hospitality for pilgrims and travellers.

The key character of George Street is medieval with a small element of C18 refronting and infill. Most buildings are of two storeys and dormers are few. Generally facades are of stucco and white painted although many have Georgian/Victorian windows or even whole frontages. Medieval roofs are quite evident and many buildings are still jettied, e.g. no. 28 formerly The Tudor Tavern (Grade II*), which occupies the prominent corner site at the corner with Verulam Road; nos. 18-21 on the north side, and on the south no. 6 and no. 7 (formerly The King's Arms). The landmark buildings with Georgian red brick facades are no. 1 with a fine frontage of three storeys, a prominent and attractive building, and no. 16, also three storey, with a façade which curves around the corner with Romeland forming a strong corner feature (included in Romeland, Character Area 2c). The only unlisted building in the street is nos. 8-10 on the south side, a much larger, later (Victorian) building of brown brick and slate although of good quality and locally listed for its contribution to the street scene and the setting of the listed buildings.

Shopfronts are generally timber and traditional, the modern exception being no. 24 which is aluminium set within a recessed ground floor and with the upper façade supported by thin metal poles. Several of the shopfronts are fine C19 examples: no. 11, which has Gothic arches, is particularly noteworthy. Signage is generally restrained, although no. 23 has more due to the fact that it contains a number of small units around an old inn yard. There are no internally illuminated box signs and projecting signs are generally below or around first floor level. The street has the feel of a genteel shopping area of generally individual local shops which are important to its character. The carriageway to no. 23, however, allows access to a mix of small antiques, craft shops and café/restaurants.

The area behind the northern frontages is taken up by narrow inn yard plots which now have a mixture of both ancient and more recent buildings stretching to the back of the plots. Generally of two storeys with some single storey, they have pitched roofs in tiles or slates, and are linear but split into short sections of varying height. Behind the southern frontage the plots at the eastern end are truncated by the extensive and sylvan grounds of Osborne House, an unremarkable but low key property behind nos. 1-8 George Street. To the west, nos. 9-15 have deeper plots with narrow and deep rear extensions and gardens running down to the old flank wall to the Cathedral's north churchyard. Beyond, some of the gardens have mature trees which enhance the setting of George Street buildings and the Cathedral.



George Street has a large number of surviving medieval buildings, some jettied to the front. Image courtesy of John Bethell.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

London Road (part, see also Area 5a).

London Road is one of the main routes into St Albans and runs north westwards right into the main commercial centre. It is of historic significance in the city's development, having been engineered by Telford and cut during the late eighteenth century. Only the western extremity of London Road is included in this character area. This comprises the group of shops around the busy Peahen junction, several of which are integrated into the façade of the Peahen public house which has its main pedestrian entrance on Holywell Hill (Area 4d) but also has a carriage archway with timber gates onto London Road. The first floor of the Peahen is in part set back behind a parapet with a balustrade. Red brick predominates with traditional style shopfronts and timber windows. To the east of that group, and matching well in style and scale with the Peahen, is the former fire station, now all retail/service on the ground floor with some flats and offices above. This group is two storey to eaves with a third storey in half timbered gable dormers, and they have traditional shopfronts.

On the north side are retail units, some with residential over. From the corner with Chequer Street there are predominantly late C20 buildings. The corner building, a bank in the mid C20 with a rather fortress-like façade, was altered later in the century to accommodate a more open and traditional style retail frontage. Nos. 1B, C & D are a late C20 build in a traditional neo-Edwardian style with a traditional style shopfront. Nos. 3A & 3B are earlier and are locally

listed, both smaller scale and traditional in style and materials, 3B has an excellent early C20 curved glass shopfront. To the east, Clockhouse Court (nos. 5-7) (1980s) is three storey of square plan which, in spite of a lighter top floor and variation in brick and some arched detailing, is out of scale with the group. Trees and landscaping incorporated alongside, between this building and the rear and service entrance to the Maltings is a welcome break in the street scene.

The weight of traffic in this area detracts from its character and acts as a barrier between the two sides of the road.



A drawing of the Peahen Hotel. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.



Early C20 curved glass traditional shopfront of 3b London Road.



Peahen Hotel with shops integrated into its London Road façade and a carriage archway.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Victoria Street (see also Area 7c)

Victoria Street is one of the main roads into the city centre from the east, leading uphill from the Midland mainline rail station (see also Area 6b) where it ends at the junction of St Peter's Street and Chequer Street. The western end of Victoria Street beyond Marlborough Road has been included in this character area because its current character relates to the central retail and commercial area, and because of the historic buildings with original social functions chronicling the history and development of the city in the late C19.

It has very early origins still reflected in its narrow span. The fortifications of Tonman Ditch, which surrounded St Albans on the east side, ran along what is now Upper Marlborough Road and Marlborough Road. Where it crossed Victoria Street was a postern thought to have been called the Man-gate. From this gate to St Peter's Street was a narrow lane called "Shropshereslane", first mentioned in 1381. During the First Battle of St Albans, it is recorded that the Duke of Somerset was killed at the Castle Inn which stood at the corner of St Peter's Street and the lane (this is now recognised by a plaque on no. 1).

The street is characterised by two and three storey buildings with some three storey plus attics and a variety of building designs for both modern and historic structures. Overall the buildings along the street are of a relatively uniform height and scale, and consistency in the materials palette gives a coherence to its character and appearance.



Plaque commemorating the death of the Duke of Somerset in the first Battle of St Albans.

Key to this area is the Grade II* listed Town Hall the flank of which closes the vista westwards. On the north side is a listed early C18 pair of small scale, two storey buildings (nos. 19-21). These are red brick with a fairly high pitched, clay tiled roof with attic gabled dormers and first floor sash windows. They indicate that there were buildings on Victoria Street long before its Victorian heyday and perhaps indicate the scale of buildings at that time. To the east, the significant set back of the 1960s Police Station building around the quaker memorial garden is important in protecting their setting within the street-scene. (see Area 4b).



A watercolour by J H Buckingham (between 1837-1901) showing Marlborough Road where it met what is now Victoria Street. Marlborough Road followed the line of the Tonman Ditch, the medieval defence of the town which became the boundary, shown as a slight rise in this picture. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.



Nos. 19 and 21 Victoria Street.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Victoria Street (see also Area 7c) contd.

Landmark Victorian buildings include, on the south side, the former School of Art and Science 1880. Built on an open space beside the brewery, it was funded by public subscription and government grant and was used as a public library until 1911. It is a distinctive and wide fronted building with steeply gabled roofs and three terracotta medallions showing Davy, Bacon and Hogarth representing science, literature and art. Also on the south side, the former Tabernacle Baptist Church (no.50), designed by D. Parkins and opened in 1882, is a tall, symmetrical, tripartite building with steps up to a central doorway. Above the doorway, the arch contains an attractive carved relief of a dove. The fine red brickwork facade is highly decorated with stone dressings and finials, rows of arched windows and a round wheel window in the central gable. Its Victorian neighbour, no. 52/54, is a more modest commercial building with a small shop, good brick details and an arched gateway to a yard behind.

The Salvation Army (no.16), dating from 1911, was previously the site of the Public Baths (shown on the 1878 O.S.). It has an ornate façade built of orange brick with terracotta dressing and glazed tile dado. It is in three bays with taller and projecting end bays and a pedimented central bay with a large arched window. The arches have particularly long keystones. It is a mix of classic and medieval fortress style in character and harmonises with the Art School. Opposite, from the same time, is the Carnegie Public Library (1911) by local architect F G W Dudley of Spencer Street with stained glass window. Nos. 12-14 appear on the 1878 O.S.; the façade is high Victorian with polychromatic patterned brickwork, whereas the rear (visible from Art School Yard) appears Georgian. On the south side, a group of, for the most part, smaller scale and less decorative buildings between the Salvation Army and the Church were removed to accommodate The Maltings Shopping Centre. The centre is accessed by a wide tunnel entrance from Victoria Street. This Victoria Street facade is partly arcaded, built from a purplish red brick

with coated metal windows and a feature triangular projecting oriel window. The shops are now entered only from the internal mall but have display windows to this side which add interest to



The purplish red brick and triangular projecting oriel window of The Maltings Shopping Centre.



The Tabernacle Baptist Church.



The old Public Library.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Victoria Street (see also Area 7c) contd.

the street scene and should be retained.

Also on the north side are nos. 1, 7 and 9 which are locally listed for their positive contribution to the street scene. Their materials (red brick and cream stone and faïence) and intricate detailing and sash windows relate well to the character of the street and they provide a very pleasing setting for the Town Hall and are a good group with the Old Library, having similar Edwardian dentilled eaves' details. The turret on the corner with St Peter's Street is a key feature. Opposite on the south side, no. 2, which turns the corner into Chequer Street (no. 38), marks the position where a building has been identified since 1700 when accurate maps were made. It is of unpretentious classical style with a parapet hiding the complex roof form, white painted render, sliding sash windows and a string course separating the storeys. It relates well in terms of materials and style to the Town Hall yet, given its modest scale, it complements rather than competes. No. 4 (1928) repeats this "Georgian" appearance in brick and has pleasant modest window shop-fronts.

As the street falls down hill from the Town Hall the buildings step down in response to this, particularly noticeable at the eastern edge of this character area where the land slopes away more steeply. The boundary of this character area stops at the Victoria Street-Marlborough Road junction. This was the town boundary until 1835. At the end of the C19, straw hat factories were located on three corners of this junction, including no. 58, the façade of which survives and which is included in the Area.

The modern developments, particularly the Maltings Shopping Centre, have sought to respond to the principal characteristics of the street in terms of height, scale and use of materials, in particular red brick, and Trident House, again in brick, has a variety of gables reflecting the Art School building. This approach has allowed most of the modern additions to sit comfortably within the local context.



No. 58 Victoria Street has retained the façade from when it was a straw hat factory.



The turret on no. 1 is a striking feature in this area.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Catherine Street (see also Area 7k)

With origins as an ancient route to Harpenden, in the early C18 this was a quiet rural lane called Catherine Lane. In the early C19, Folly Lane was cut to join Catherine Lane which, together with Branch Road, effectively joined the top of St Peter's Street to St Michael's and gave a means by which the city centre could be bypassed. This was the establishment of what is now a busy and major route from the city, yet one which still retains its more historic, narrow form.

Most of the early Victorian buildings along Catherine Street, nearly all residential, were replaced by more commercially-focused buildings at the turn of the C20. Catherine Street, now a secondary shopping street, largely comprises predominantly small units in retail and service use, with a residential element, both in individual houses and in flats above businesses. The part of Catherine Street within this character area is the easternmost end where the residential element is confined to upper floors. The developed frontage of Catherine Street was continuous into the 1990s, when a new road link to Drovers Way was cut, assisting access to the car parks and service road. This link opened up an unfortunate view from Catherine Street down Drovers Way and, conversely, views through to Catherine Street from Adelaide Street and Drovers Way close the vista northwards. It also opened up views of the rear of premises on Catherine Street and Adelaide Street that were previously more hidden from public view. A funeral director's premises on Catherine Street was demolished to make way for the new link road and a three storey building, Drover House, no. 16 Adelaide Street, was constructed alongside. This is set

back from the Catherine Street frontage behind a wide pavement with new planting, and with a car park to the side along Adelaide Street. This red brick building has a small red tiled pitched roof behind a corbelled parapet. On the east side of the link, fronting Catherine Street, no. 5 is traditional in form and materials (slate roof) and is locally listed. Nos. 1-3 Catherine Street, also a modest shop, in scale with the street, has a particularly good traditional style shopfront from the 1930s (for many years, as Warwick's Fishmongers, the central part was used as an open wet fish display counter but was infilled in the 1980s, in matching detail when the shop closed). On the north side of Catherine Street, buildings are more 1930s "modern" in character, comprising a flat roofed, parapetted, single storey building encompassing a parade of three shops and a car showroom, with a car park to the east side. Completing the small scale frontage development and in keeping with the street, to its east is a largely 1990s building containing two small shops with red facing brick, a slate roof and traditional style timber shopfronts. The much larger scale building which turns the corner is described as part of St Peter's Street; an unfortunate feature in the Catherine Street street-scene is this building's large scale arched opening to rear car parking, although this does afford interesting views through to the rear of the group of listed buildings further north on St Peter's Street, which are less formal and in part more historic than some of their frontages. To the east the street dips slightly downhill to St Peter's Street and the vista is closed with views across to Hatfield Road and The Blacksmiths P.H. and The Cock P.H.



The view of St Peter's church and rear of St Peter's Street properties from Catherine Street.



Nos. 1-3 have a particularly good traditional-style shopfront.

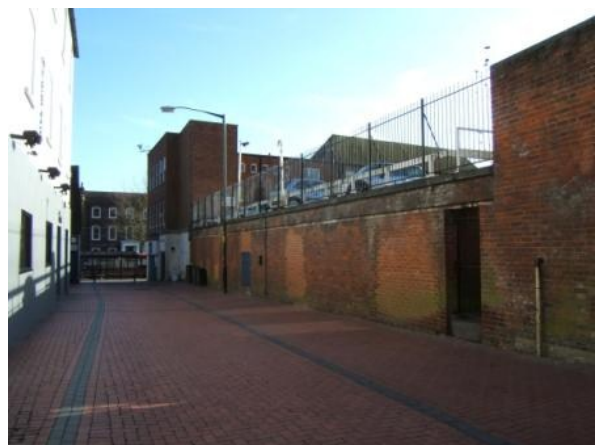
Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Adelaide Street

This L-shaped street was built up along the length of its north and south sides with small units by the late C19 and at that time the northernmost return onto Catherine Street was called Cross Street. By the 1960s, properties on the south side had been cleared and have been replaced by public, surface car parking. On the north side, some small units from the C19 survived into the 1960s, but again these have been replaced by a series of private car parks and some new offices. In the 1980s, the easternmost section of Adelaide Street was pedestrianised (retaining service access) and surfaced in a rather incongruous bright red clay block with blue brick channels. Therefore, although within an historic area of the city, apart from the road layout, the only historic feature in Adelaide Street is the three storey former factory, now a club (no. 6, and formerly known as Adelaide's). This locally listed building is unusual in scale to its surroundings and echoes its former function, its height has somewhat set a bench mark for some of the modern development nearby which has detracted from its own stature and its setting. Its current function as a night club, and boarding over of upper floor windows and reduction of ground floor windows to a minimum has resulted in a dead frontage to the pedestrian route, unwelcoming during the daytime. This is echoed opposite on the south side by the return to no. 77 St Peters Street, and beyond a blank wall at ground floor, above which is an open screen railing to a private first floor car park. This railing prevents the alley way from seeming hemmed in and claustrophobic. To the west of Adelaide's, no. 8 is a small scale, early C20 workshop building converted to a restaurant with an attractive traditional shopfront. To the rear, the building visible from Catherine Street retains its industrial corrugated roof. Beyond, the rear elevation of Adelaide's is blank, painted, with a prominent fire escape. Overall, the new road has opened up views to some servicing equipment but, although improvements could be made, currently these are not too obtrusive. The boundaries have, for the most part, been made good in matching red brick.



Nos. 6+8 Adelaide Street showing the dead frontage and large scale of no. 6.



The east end of the street showing the red clay block surfacing with blue brick channels in the pedestrianised part of the street. The private first floor car park can be seen on the right behind its open screen railings.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Adelaide Street contd.

To the west, beyond no. 8, the road is trafficked and the road appears particularly wide and rather desolate, having surface car parks to both north and south sides. On the south side, an electricity sub station and ugly chain link entrance is fortunately partly screened by a large tree.

From Adelaide Street, the entrance to Couper's Car showroom partly closes the vista north to Catherine Street, but there are also views along the access road to the open car storage. From this area there are also views of the St Peter's Church turrets and the rear of the White House.

Surfaces of roads, footways and car parks to the west end of the street are, for the most part, all tarmac with concrete kerbs, at the east end changing to some concrete blocks, with red clay for the pedestrianised part. On the south side is of a row of right angled public parking abutting the school wall, a line of trees planted in pleasant cobbled surfacing, and some substantial sympathetic timber bollards, and some less sympathetic signs and machines. There are fairly low scale modern street lights; several junction boxes detract from the pedestrianised area.

The north side has private car parks some with particularly poor furniture – crude guard rails, entrance barriers and arched height restrictions painted yellow and black. There are also groups of unattractive concrete sectional garages in the car park. The car park to Drover House (again tarmac), however, has a brick wall and traditional railings.



The car park for Drover House has a brick wall and traditional railings.

On the north side is an office building slightly set back – very plain and typically mid C20 in style, of red brick with timber casement windows. Beyond are two modern, two storey buildings from the 1980s/'90s. Some attempt has been made to introduce interesting detailing. On the corner, the office has an over sailing roof feature, contrasting brick courses and metal windows with wood cills.

Catherine House from the 1980s closes the vista northwestwards, and within its frontage an archway leads down to yet another large, tarmac, private, surface car park behind. The building is two storey plus an attic in a "slate" "developers' mansard" roof, built in a mix of red brick and render, with timber windows to try to match the local materials. Some attempt has been made to introduce variety, including changes in roof line, relief pilasters, and some soft landscaping in raised beds to the front. Opposite, on the south east side of the return to Catherine Street, nos. 52-56 is two storey with three flat dormers in a high red plain tile roof and the ground floor restaurant has a good traditional shop front which ties in with those in Catherine Street, and is locally listed.

Behind Catherine House, Benedict House is modern, similar in style to Catherine House, two storey flats, in red brick, with timber windows and a "slate" roof. Its unusual gambrel roof picks up the detail from the nearby 1930s block on Catherine Street (nos. 41-45).



The west end of Adelaide Street has a large amount of surface car parking.

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Waddington Road

Branching off near the southern end of St Peter's Street, Waddington Road forms a pedestrian link to and from Drovers Way, and a service road to the rear of some of the retail units fronting St Peter's Street, with consequently unattractive views of those properties. Unfortunately, the pedestrian only section at the eastern end is not inviting: the return elevations of the 1960s shops fronting St Peter's Street present a dead frontage. However, it provides an area where street furniture, such as the telephone kiosks, can be centrally located without intrusion into the street scene of St Peter's Street. The flanking buildings are typically mid C20, one with brick above large element concrete panels and the other the converse. Of benefit to the street scene, there is small parade of shops on its north side in a small scale, unremarkable and utilitarian red brick building, with a parapet roof and brick on edge details and casement windows. Its redeeming feature is a complete group of original chrome shopfronts, by Sage and Company, polished black granite stall risers and recessed lobby entrances with terrazzo floors. To the western end, the road opens out and opposite the parade, on the south side, is a forecourt and secondary entrance to nos. 7-9 St Peter's Street. Whilst this is a large and modern building of tall two storey height, effort has been taken to introduce detailing into the design to break down its bulk and add interest.



The buildings on St Peter's Street that flank Waddington Road present dead frontages to this street.



Waddington Road provides a central but out of the way area to locate street furniture like phone boxes.



The shops on Waddington Road have original chrome shopfronts with a number of interesting features.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Public Realm

The quality of the public realm in this city centre area has an important role to play, ensuring that St Albans provides a quality environment both for residents and for visitors to the city.

The road and foot way network comprises a key aspect of the character area. The city centre has two major routes through it, which cross at the Peahen Junction. The area is unified in character by its commercial city centre feel, but streets vary in appearance depending on their historic origins and pattern and degree of redevelopment and change. Historic photographs of the centre show unsurfaced roads criss-crossed by paths of setts. Traditional materials for the centre of St Albans include York stone in slabs and setts and large element blue brick paving also found in cities such as Oxford. York stone is sometimes seen in surviving building forecourts, for example at no. 6 St Peter's Street where it is enclosed with bollards. Ironstone setts from the Midlands survive in channels and for crossovers into some of the old inn yards. Kerbs tend to be York stone (particularly in the earlier streets) and granite (in later streets). Other materials which have been used in the area include large, mid C20, concrete paving slabs (although these have largely been replaced over time by smaller concrete slabs and concrete blocks). Some more recent replacements have taken place to re-introduce traditional materials.

There are a number of alleys and pedestrianised roads in the centre, some of which are retained elements of the medieval street layout. These could benefit from maintenance, lighting and sign posting.



The use of non-traditional surfacing materials on pavements has a negative impact on the area's character.



Subtle and fairly traditional-looking signposts point to the various areas and attractions in the city centre.



St Peter's Street was recently resurfaced using more traditional paving materials.

Area 4a: The Commercial Centre

Positive & Negative Characteristics and Scope for Change

Positive

- ✓ Many historic assets – medieval street plan, listed and locally listed buildings.
- ✓ Landmark historic secular buildings which are key to the identity of St Albans: i.e. the Clock Tower and Town Hall.
- ✓ Other buildings which despite changes of use are still evidence of the social history and development of the city, such as the churches, Carnegie Library, Art School, Corn Exchange, hat factories, parish workhouse and public houses.
- ✓ Variety of commercial uses mixed with residential use with associated vital character.
- ✓ Historic Street Market.
- ✓ Landscaped areas such as the memorial garden at Church Green.
- ✓ Trees which given the densely developed nature of the area are for the most part street trees including the distinctive “avenue” in St Peter’s Street, but which also include a few in gardens.
- ✓ Public Access.
- ✓ Some historic street furniture.
- ✓ Street War Memorials.
- ✓ Some Public Art.



The market on a Wednesday and Saturday has been in existence since the medieval period. One of the trees that makes up the St Peter’s Street ‘avenue’ can be seen on the right.



The area has a large number of historic assets and in some roads, such as George Street, the medieval street plan can still be clearly seen.

Neutral

- Some buildings, including mid-late C20 ones, which relate acceptably in scale and materials to their context and neighbours but cannot be said to make a positive contribution to the area and are therefore not locally listed.

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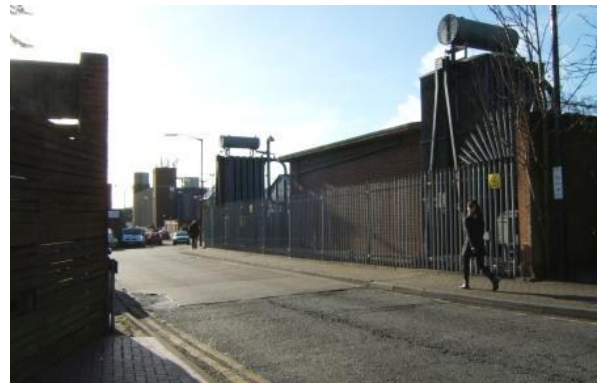
Positive & Negative Characteristics and Scope for Change

Negative

- ✗ St Peter's Street is used as a major through route. Generally, the entire area is rarely free from intrusive traffic, traffic noise and parked cars.
- ✗ Severance of St Peter's Church and the northern part of St Peter's Street from the southern part of St Peter's Street due to traffic routes and street clutter.
- ✗ Highway paraphernalia, signage and junction boxes.
- ✗ Multi storey car parks, which are out of scale with the historic grain.
- ✗ Lift towers & telecomms equipment to roofs.
- ✗ Some of the modern shops and offices, particularly from the 1960s and '70s provide very little positive character and many are out of scale.
- ✗ The service yards and service route of Drover's Way.
- ✗ Some poor street furniture.



The junction of St Peter's Street with Hatfield Road and Catherine Street severs the main section to the south from the northern part and St Peter's Church.



The unattractive service route of Drover's Way.

Scope for Change

- The historic buildings near the Clock Tower are a substantial remnant of medieval and Elizabethan St Albans. Their visual and historic importance is evident, however unsympathetic alterations on adjacent buildings can mar appreciation of these buildings and damage the vital sense of historic continuity which they help to create as a group.
- The City Vision provided an opportunity to look at ways to enhance the character and put forward possible improvements for the city centre given its status.
- Modern buildings in the area would benefit from redevelopment or enhancement. Opportunities should be explored to reduce the visual effect of such buildings, to improve their quality and that of the street scene and floorscape.
- Some private and public car parks would benefit from enhancement through planting and resurfacing.
- Public realm improvements: re-instating historic materials, removal of redundant street furniture, maintenance of street furniture and paving.
- Creation of more attractive, friendly and useable public spaces.
- Addition of good quality public art.
- Better exploitation of the network of alley ways and pedestrian routes in the city and links to the wider area.
- Improvement of pedestrian routes in the vicinity of St Peter's Church

