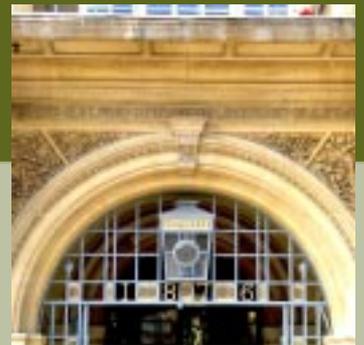


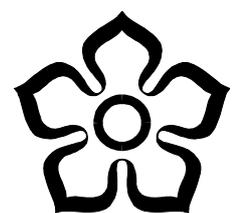
Supplementary Planning Guidance



Town Hall Square Conservation Area Character Statement



Urban Design Group
Adopted April 2005



Leicester
City Council

Cover images, from the top:

Town Hall: central section of main elevation to the square.

HSBC Bank 31 Granby Street.

Carved stone entrance to Town Hall.

Looking across Town Hall Square to Horsefair Street.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

TOWN HALL SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA

Character Statement

Adopted: April 2005



Leicester
City Council

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I.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A conservation area is defined as *an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*¹. The City Council designates conservation areas, after consulting local people, under powers contained in national planning legislation and in accordance with advice from central government. Leicester's conservation areas contain the best of the older parts of the City but each conservation area is distinctive and contains qualities that help to give the City an overall character of its own.
- 1.2 The City Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character of conservation areas and the purpose of this statement is to identify the factors that make the Town Hall Square Conservation Area an area of special architectural and historic interest. At a later date, following the adoption of the Character Statement as Supplementary Planning Guidance and as funding for physical works permits, proposals for enhancement of the conservation area will be drawn up.
- 1.3 It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent change but to manage change in the light of the existing character of the area. The Character Statement will enable the Council to ensure that, when considering planning applications within the conservation area, the development will help to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.
- 1.4 Looking after and improving the qualities of a conservation area can bring real benefits to the people who live and work there. An attractive environment also helps to maintain property values. However, for a conservation area to be successful, both occupiers and property owners must play their part. The City Council will continue to strive to improve the environment of conservation areas whenever the opportunity presents itself and when resources allow and will encourage others to do likewise.
- 1.5 Town Hall Square was the fourth of Leicester's conservation areas to be created under powers first granted to local authorities in the Civic Amenities Act 1967. It was designated in March 1970. Unusually for Leicester virtually all the buildings within the conservation area are included in the statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic interest. The boundary and listed buildings are shown on Map 2. The Council is proposing extensions to the conservation area (see Section 12.0) and this draft Statement includes references to these areas as appropriate throughout the text.

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 section 69

2.0 Location and landform

2.1 The conservation area is located a few hundred metres south of the centre of Leicester as measured from the Clock Tower. It is small, occupying an area of 1.6 hectares, on the north face of a gentle slope that rises from the Horsefair Street/ Every Street corner up to Bishop Street Reference Library.



The last stage to leave Leicester from the Three Crowns Inn (now the site of the NatWest Bank on the corner of Horsefair Street and Granby Street). Leicestershire's black horses were said to be the largest in England and were used to pull coaches and carts.

3.0 Archaeology, history and development

3.1 The site that Town Hall Square Conservation Area occupies today has not always coincided with the seat of its municipal government. In the sixteenth century local government business in Leicester was carried out in the medieval Guildhall which the Corporation had purchased for that purpose in 1563. It was not until the 19th century that local government relocated to the specially built Town Hall. Nor was the Square always at the heart of the town's commercial life. Until the sixteenth century the site was undeveloped and lay outside the borough's boundary that was defined by the Romano-medieval town walls and ditch.



Another historic view of the Three Crowns Inn, Horsefair Street.

3.2 During the 16th and 17th centuries the use of and demand for horses was increasing rapidly throughout England. Leicestershire was famous for its horses ("the largest horses in England"²) and Leicester's horse fairs were nationally renowned. Increasing pressure on the town's congested markets led to the move of the horse sales out of the town to the undeveloped land to the south. The site of the 'Horse Fayer', which provided space for stalls, showing and exercise, is clearly shown on Robert's map of 1741 (Map 3).

3.3 One of the first recorded changes in the area was the sale, by the Borough Corporation, of parts of the 'Horsefair Gardens' and the town's bowling green (on the site of the present Town Hall) in 1807. The land was sold as building plots and the present streets (Bishop Street and Bowling Green Street) laid out.

3.4 Around this time the sheep market was transferred to the horse market, as can be seen on Fowler's map of 1828 (Map 4). In 1846 a local Improvement Act provided for 'the removal of the most inconvenient and offensive markets from the public streets'³ and thus the cattle market came to be moved to the site of the horse and sheep markets. However, the

name, Horsefair Street, remains as a reminder of this part of the town's history.

3.5 By the middle of the nineteenth century Leicester was expanding rapidly (for example, the town's population increased by 40% between 1861 and 1871). The new Corporation's responsibilities were increasing too as people expected better services such as fresh

water and street lighting. The old Guildhall was no longer big enough to accommodate the growing number of administrators and there was much debate between 'the Improvers' who wanted to make Leicester a better and more attractive place and 'the Economists' who thought that proper drains were more important than a new Town Hall⁴. The matter was finally settled by the passing of a further Improvement Act in 1866. This gave the Corporation the power to raise money for a new Town Hall and a new cattle market (the site for the latter being Freemens' Common).

3.6 However, it was not until 1871 that the Corporation finally agreed to build new municipal offices. The chosen site was not Horsefair Street but the site of the present Greyfriars offices in Friar Lane. An architectural competition was held but there was controversy about the way in which it was conducted and the Friar Lane site was dropped. Nevertheless, the Corporation remained convinced that the borough needed a new Town



The Cattle Market site used for the proposed Town Hall and public square. In the background is the Classical facade of the Wesleyan Chapel constructed in 1815.



Francis John Hames design for Leicester Town Hall.



Laying the Foundation Stone, 3rd August, 1874

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Hall and in 1872 it announced a new competition. This time the members could not make up their minds about which scheme they liked best and so they decided to vote for the designs they liked least with the design that got the fewest votes becoming the winner! This unusual elimination system resulted in F.J. Hames, a local man who worked in London with W.E. Nesfield, being declared the winner⁵. By this chance, at the official opening in 1876, Leicester came to possess a Town Hall designed in the very latest 'Queen Anne' style rather than the Gothic style favoured in other cities at that time. The square was laid out three years later (1879), also to Hames' design. A former Lord Mayor and one of Leicester's most prominent citizens, Sir Israel Hart, donated the central fountain, the design of which is reputedly based on one Hames saw in Oporto. Its upper tiers are supported by four Assyrian winged lions and four fluted Ionic half-columns.



The Town Hall nearing completion. Note the Cattle Market buildings in the foreground.

- 3.7 By 1879 therefore Town Hall Square had a new Town Hall as well as some other notable buildings - the Wesleyan Chapel, built in 1815, what is now the HSBC bank of 1870 (31 Granby Street) and the former Wesleyan Schools of 1873 at 10 Bishop Street (Map 5). Over the following twenty-five years the square developed its present-day appearance with the addition of the former Sun Alliance Building and Royal Hotel at 7-17 Horsefair Street and 6 and 8 Bishop Street (1885-8 and 1887 respectively). Nearby, on Bishop Street was the Parcels Post Office with a fine storey Elizabethan Gothic style Central Post Office on the Granby Street frontage.



Leicester's Town Hall was opened on 7 August 1876 and over the years has witnessed many public occasions of celebration and mourning.

² J. Simmons, *Leicester The Ancient Borough to 1860*, Alan Sutton, 1983

³ Ibid;

⁴ Town Hall Centenary 1876-1976 poster, Leicester City Council, 1976

⁵ Ibid.

3.8 Several buildings were added in the twentieth century – the Town Hall extension on Bowling Green Street (1925), 10 Horsefair Street (now Barclays Bank) of 1900-1910, the Reference Library (1904), the former Pickfords Building (1924) and the Picture House (1910) which ran through to Granby Street. The Picture House was rebuilt in 1925 and the site redeveloped again in 1974 but the 1925 façade to Every Street was retained.



The unveiling of the Boer War Memorial, designed by Joseph Crosland McClure on 1 July 1909. Below: part of the completed memorial.

The Town Hall itself was extended in 1910 and 1924. In the 1930s the Post Office site on Granby Street was redeveloped, the Post Office relocating to its present, though smaller, building on Bishop Street. A new block of shops was constructed on the rest of the site.



Town Hall square: the cast iron bronzed painted fountain was the gift of Sir Israel Hart, a former Mayor of Leicester.



3.9 The Boer War Memorial at the north-east corner of the square also dates from 1909. Originally planned for a site at the entrance to Victoria Park, the first commission was awarded in 1903, the year the war ended. However, the sculptor failed to complete his contract. The Council abandoned the Victoria Park site in 1908 and the present memorial was commissioned from sculptor Crosland McClure⁶. In 1917 a temporary memorial to the men killed in the Great War was erected on the Every Street side of Town Hall Square. Although this was replaced in 1925 when Lutyens' War Memorial in Victoria Park was unveiled, the Town Hall Square memorial was not removed until 1954. In the early 1930s the Town Hall underwent major internal alterations; the present Council Chamber dates from this time.

3.10 In the 1970s there was much demand for new office space in Leicester and the conservation area was not immune to this pressure. In 1973/4 a planning application was submitted for the demolition and redevelopment of the then vacant Royal Hotel and Sun Alliance buildings. The potential loss of these buildings caused much public outrage. The Secretary of State subsequently 'called-in' the application and granted permission with a condition that the Horsefair Street façades were retained. Similarly, the Every Street façade of the old Picture House was retained when that site was redeveloped.

⁶ P. Fortun & I Buckley, Living History Unit Newsletter No 13, Summer 1996, *A Mystery Solved*, Leicester City Council

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3.11 In 1989 the Square was refurbished and redesigned. The roadway and car park in front of the Town Hall were closed and the set out as a public open space incorporating an image of the Leicester Coat of Arms in specially commissioned brick pavers. The unsuitable street furniture was replaced and new railings with lion finials installed to echo the original Victorian design and recreate the square's sense of enclosure. The area was also re-landscaped using plants that would have been familiar to the Victorians.



Lion finials and railings to Town Hall Square.

3.12 Traffic priorities on Horsefair Street were also altered at that time. The footpaths were widened and pinch-points, incorporating low brick and stone planters, created opposite the Town Hall. The junction with Bowling Green Street was also redesigned and corner planters constructed at the western end and outside the back of the Town Hall. To commemorate the Year of the Maze, the Leicester Maze was installed in 1992 close to the alleyway leading into the Market Place.



The Leicester Maze, Horsefair Street.

4.0 Prevailing and former uses

4.1 Since the opening of the Town Hall in 1876, Town Hall Square has been at the heart of the Leicester's civic and commercial life. It is still the site of public celebration and mourning and has served as the focus of the city's annual Christmas light display for many years. However, it is also the only significant area of green space in the city centre and is thus subject to considerable pressures and potential for conflict between differing demands.

4.2 The Town Hall's original role as the centre of local administration diminished as the Council's functions and staffing needs grew. However, the Council Chamber and the Lord Mayor's Parlour remain and the building is still fully occupied. The conversion of part of the ground floor to create a new Registry Office following the planned closure of the existing Registry Office on Pocklington's Walk will add a new dimension to the Town Hall's role.



Christmas decorative lighting adorning the Town Hall façade.

4.3 Elsewhere office uses have taken over the former Liberal Club (1888-1936) at 6 Bishop Street (Alliance House) and the Wesleyan School at 10 Bishop Street is now used for shops and offices. Building societies sit behind the facades of the 19th century Royal Hotel and Sun Alliance Insurance Building at 7-11 Horsefair Street and new residential uses have appeared above the NatWest Bank and at 8 Bishop Street.



The preserved façade of the former Picture House cinema, overlooking the Square is designed in the Italianate style and has a distinctive roof of Roman clay tiles.

4.4 Efforts to remove extraneous traffic from around Town Hall Square has led not only to an environment where the qualities of the conservation area can be better appreciated but also to a reduction of noise and pollution. Access and parking for taxis and disabled drivers has also been improved. However, over the last ten years or so, there has been a marked increase in the use of the paved area in front of the Town Hall for parking and an increasing abuse of the pedestrian priority streets by unauthorised vehicles.



The façade of the former Sun Alliance offices dates from 1891.

5.0 Architectural character and key unlisted buildings

*The inclusion of buildings in this section is selective and is intended to illustrate the range of building types, styles and materials in the conservation area. Those unlisted buildings that are considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area are shown in **bold**. If a building is not included this should not be taken to indicate that it does not make a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area.*

5.1 There are several features which, taken together, create the character of Town Hall Square. Firstly, the proportions of the buildings and the space they enclose make it grand without it being overwhelming - it is very much of human scale. Secondly, the materials of which it is built harmonise together to create a visual whole. The square is also well used and highly valued by local people, both for its role in city's public and ceremonial life as well as its function as an open space for relaxation or for a brightly-lit Christmas showpiece.

5.2 The Town Hall Square Conservation Area is unique in Leicester in that the majority of its buildings are included on the list of buildings of architectural and historic importance. These buildings also represent works by some of the town's best-known architects. Together the buildings form a nationally recognised 'group', including the **Pickfords** building, an unlisted building of local interest.

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5.3 Various architectural styles combine to give much architectural interest to the area. The range of styles is large - from the small-scale 'Gothic' of 10 Bishop Street or the much more elaborate 'French Gothic' of 31 Granby Street (HSBC bank) to the free 'Flemish' style of 17 Horsefair Street or the more formal 'Queen Anne Revival' style of the Town Hall.



The former Pickfords Building, Every Street



HSBC Bank, 31 Granby Street, (designed originally for the Midland Bank by Joseph Goddard and dated 1870).

There is also the Italianate façade of the former cinema and the 'mannered Classical' buildings at 10 Horsefair Street (Barclay's Bank) and Bishop Street reference Library. The central **Post Office** is a plain building but its simple classical proportions nevertheless complement its neighbour at 6 Bishop Street. The fine group of shops and offices at **35-45 Granby Street**, despite some inappropriately large or ill-designed shopfronts, is typical of the 1930s in its use of materials and decoration.



Art Nouveau-style glass, 31 Granby Street.



Town Hall: detail of one of the two Ketton stone relief panels depicting "night".

5.4 Ornamentation is also a feature of the square. There are highly carved doorcases, sunflower, scallop shell and Greek key pattern motifs, a carved brick frieze, rusticated pilasters, moulded stringcourses, balconies, stone brackets, a highly decorated and brightly coloured 'Dutch' style dormer and an elaborate clock tower with carved pediments, timber balustrading and octagonal lantern and cupola. Decorating the spandrels on either side of the commemoration stone of the Town Hall two intricately carved panels representing Day and Night are of particular note. The highly decorative French Gothic exterior and Art Nouveau-style glass of the HSBC bank on Granby Street are particularly noteworthy as is the contrast



The Head Post Office, Bishop Street, constructed in 1935.

this building makes with its plainer neighbour on the opposite corner at 35-45 Granby Street. Closer examination reveals, however, that this Portland stone-faced group of shops is also decorated, albeit simply, with a moulded stringcourse, ornamental vertical ‘fins’ on the projecting bays and convex (torus) mouldings on the curved corner parapet. At the other end of the spectrum the simple and modest design of the façade of the Wesleyan Chapel is a stark visual contrast.

- 5.5 Other architectural features are also common. The combination of dormer and round-headed windows, tall chimneys, columns and pilasters, pedimented gables and steeply pitched roofs create visual interest and contrast on all sides. There are stone quoins, segmental and triangular broken pediments, Ionic pilasters, as well as original railings at the Methodist Church and the Reference Library.



The Town Hall Clock Tower is a major landmark within the Conservation Area. It is rich in architectural ornamentation including striking blue diaper brickwork, Ketton stonework, and an octagonal timber lantern with balustrade, all crowned by a lead covered cupola.

6.0 Townscape

- 6.1 *Townscape* refers to the way in which views open and close through an area, to changes in levels, visual contrasts and linkages and the rhythm and pattern in the street scene. These elements give an area individuality and character.

- 6.2 The townscape quality and value of the Town Hall Square Conservation Area is determined by the way in which the heights of the surrounding buildings relate to the dimensions of the space between them. The buildings enclose and dominate the garden area but do not over-power it. Views into the square are restricted, opening up fully only when the space is actually entered. The boundaries of the public square, enclosed by new fencing, provide a positive edge and direct pedestrians into and through the space.

- 6.3 From Horsefair Street the tower of the Town Hall clock is a particularly important landmark and the HSBC bank, NatWest bank and 35 Granby Street form important corners. Trees and greenery soften the space to create a zone of relative peace in the heart



Portland stone and Art Deco styling to 35-45 Granby Street.

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of the busy shopping centre and the seasonal changes complement and enhance the colours of the surrounding buildings. The sound and movement of the water in the fountain add further levels of interest.

6.4 Glimpses are afforded of moulded plaster ceilings (the banking hall at 10 Horsefair Street) and through an alleyway towards the market place. Skyline interest is created by tall chimneys, both plain and elaborately moulded, (including an unexpected circular chimney at the Reference Library), gabled, triangular, half-round and Dutch-style pedimented gables, finials and varied rooflines. The horizontal and vertical planes generate rhythms - stringcourses, friezes, the crisp shadows cast by overhanging eaves, the pattern of windows, chimneys, clock tower and pilasters.

6.5 Mention has already been made of the high level of decoration on the buildings around the square. This feature also introduces a range of contrasting textures into the space. Plain brickwork contrasts with carved stonework, blue diaper brickwork patterning against red brick, smooth-faced stonework on upper floors with rusticated stone at ground floor level, a simple date plaque (the Wesleyan Chapel) with an elaborate one (Sun Alliance building). The use of



The Reference Library, Bishop Street. Designed by Edward Burgess in the Baroque style and completed in 1904.



The simple date plaque to the pediment of the Wesleyan Chapel, Bishop Street.



Carved tympanum above main entrance to Barclays Bank, 10 Horsefair Street.



Moulded and dated lead rainwater hopper and down pipe, Town Hall.



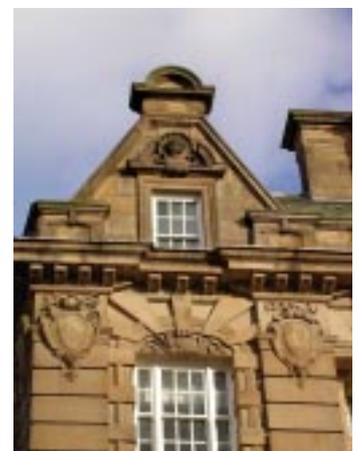
Moulded brick detailing to Town Hall chimney stacks.



Carved stone detailing at 17 Horsefair Street.



Skyline interest is an important element to the character of the square. It includes this unusual tower structure above the Reference Library in Bishop Street.



Part of the Baroque detailing to Barclays Bank, 10 Horsefair Street.

herringbone and radial patterns for the paving add visual interest at floorscape level. Shop and office signage is mainly discreet and low-key.



Swithland slate to roof of 17 Horsefair Street.

7.0 Building materials

7.1 The predominant materials in the conservation area are red brick and stone. Most of the bricks are probably local, although the Town Hall is built of Suffolk brick and Ketton stone. Blue bricks are used to create diaper patterns on the Town Hall clock tower or decorative brick banding, and yellow bricks were used in the construction of the building which now houses the NatWest bank. Terracotta can be seen at 7-11 Horsefair Street and timber is used for balustrading and one example of sham half-timbering. Of particular value are the 'Art Nouveau'-style stained glass windows at the HSBC bank on Granby Street. Roofs are generally of slate but 17 Horsefair Street has stone slates and the former cinema has red Roman-pattern clay tiles. Road surfaces are also varied. Bishop Street retains the standard black tarmac with concrete paving slabs while traffic calming on Horsefair Street and Every Street has been achieved using red and blue clay pavers. The former also incorporates the brick Leicester Maze of 1992 (the Year of the Maze).



Decorative cast iron gates to main entrance of Town Hall.



One of the four cast iron Assyrian winged lions to the central fountain.



At 10 Bishop Street a variety of materials was used to create the 'Gothic' style: Leicester red brick; 'stringcourses' of blue brick; stone corbelling and a fanlight of stone and cast iron.

7.2 When the square was refurbished in 1987 floorscape materials were chosen to reflect their surroundings - clay pavers in various red tones to harmonise with the red bricks, reconstituted stone edgings, kerbs and steps to complement the stonework, brick trims and buff paving slabs. Granite and York stone steps were re-used wherever possible. A specially commissioned reproduction of the city's Coat of Arms was also incorporated into the forecourt area in front of the Town Hall.

7.3 Cast iron railings can be found in several locations. The Wesleyan Chapel has gates and gateposts in a late Georgian style contemporary with the building (the railings are replacements from 1991). At 17 Horsefair Street the railings are enhanced by decorated and chamfered finials and those outside the Reference Library are topped with elaborate openwork stanchions and truncated obelisk-shaped finials. The Town Hall balcony has ornate cast iron balustrading



Carved stone detailing to the preserved façade of the former Royal Hotel, Horsefair Street.

as does the 'Pickfords' building. The original moulded lead rainwater pipes and dated hopper heads remain on the Town Hall. Low railings set between polished dark red Ross of Mull granite posts form the border around the bronze-painted cast-iron fountain. The fountain itself is supported on rusticated Ross of Mull granite and the largest basin is formed of massive pieces of Shap granite.⁷



Town Hall Square was laid out three years after the completion of the Town Hall.

8.0 Open spaces and trees

8.1 The importance of the trees, shrubs and grassed areas to the quality of the conservation area cannot be over-stated. Trees provide colour, shade, enclosure and scale around the edges of the space and are also interesting in themselves. The Town Hall Square is a



Town Hall Square from Bishop Street. Early spring planting and Japanese cherry blossom in full bloom.

dignified open space and benefits from the unity and rhythm of the surrounding buildings. Its layout is formal even though its use is informal. In 1987 a major improvement scheme was carried out and the retention of the existing trees was therefore a priority. However, the current mix of small ornamental trees and young trees capable of reaching forest-size is confusing. There is a need for an overall strategy to rationalise the planting, leaving large trees to reflect the formality and dignity of this important space but in a way that also enhances the surrounding buildings.

⁷ T. Cavanagh & A Yarrington, *Public Sculpture of Leicestershire and Rutland*, Liverpool University Press, 2000

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- 8.2 There are ten flowering Japanese cherries along the north and south boundaries. On the Every Street side there are also four purple cherries, one of which recently died and has been removed. This species is, however, small, dark and short-lived and is unsuitable in a space of the scale and setting of Town Hall Square. Indeed both types of cherries are generally considered to be more appropriate in domestic gardens and for this reason they should perhaps not be replaced when they die. The space they leave should be used to plant large-growing trees of a species more appropriate to an urban setting. This would add greatly to the character of the square and be more in keeping with the scale of the space.
- 8.3 Two impressive lime trees frame the approach to the Town Hall and, although they are already large, they nevertheless have the potential to grow bigger and to live for many more years. A young London Plane of good form and condition occupies the south-east corner. English Oaks have been planted in the north-west and south-west corners, the latter as a Workers' Memorial. These four corner trees will create important focal points in the future.
- 8.4 The shrub borders were replaced as part of the 1987 refurbishment scheme. Species that the Victorians would have recognised (such as Amelanchier, Phormium tenax, Aucuba japonica, lavender, roses, alchemilla, bergenia and geraniums) were incorporated into new borders around the edges of the square. Raised beds were also constructed in front of the Town Hall and these are planted up with a series of scented annuals. Additional colour is provided by summer hanging baskets. The planters at either end of the Town Hall's main façade are planted up with a series of annuals throughout the year.
- 8.5 Another feature of the square is the presence of flocks of pigeons. Whilst familiar these are not necessarily welcome visitors. They carry disease and their droppings can deface buildings, make the footpaths slippery and the grass unsuitable for sitting on. Local byelaws make it an offence to feed the pigeons but feeding still takes place. This makes it difficult to control bird numbers and culling is carried out when numbers reach unacceptable levels.

9.0 Lighting and street furniture

- 9.1 Street lighting in the conservation area is provided from three sources - 'Paris' lamps around the fountain area, tall 'Victorian' style lamp columns incorporating swan-neck lanterns and banner supports along the four sides of the square and high level wall-hung lanterns on the north side of Horsefair Street. The façade of the Town Hall is floodlit by spotlights attached to the lamp column shafts on the forecourt side and floodlights on the roof of the Town Hall illuminate the Sun Alliance building. General lighting levels are therefore relatively high - and are increased significantly during November to



A Christmas tableau on display in Town Hall Square.

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January when the Town Hall and the trees are festooned with Christmas lights and the square is filled with a large Nativity display and two set-piece animated models based on characters in children's books.

9.2 There is also a wide range of other street furniture. Seating is provided around the fountain area, the Town Hall forecourt and on Horsefair Street in a combination of 'Victorian' or modern designs. The original Victorian cast iron railings have been reproduced in mild steel and embellished with lion and ball finials. Double hanging basket poles have been installed on Every Street and Horsefair Street. Elsewhere there are two types of litter bins, information fingerposts and various traffic signs as well as eight brick-built planters in two different designs on Horsefair Street and Bowling Green Street.

9.3 In general a black and gold colour scheme is used for fencing and seats, although the fingerposts are a dark blue and traffic signs are mounted on standard grey posts. The 'lion' fencing is in need of repainting and the various bins, traffic signs, floodlights etc contribute to a sense of clutter.

10.0 Loss of character

10.1 Whilst the conservation area has largely been protected from inappropriate developments some buildings have been altered in ways which do little to enhance its character. Others, as set out in 10.3 below, present a false impression at odds with conservation philosophy.

New buildings

10.2 Two obvious examples are the infill buildings that frame 17 Horsefair Street. These are bland and undistinguished and do little to enhance the conservation area or the setting of their listed neighbour, although minor concessions have been made on the east side in the form of some articulation of the façade and the size, proportion and position of the windows.



For such an important civic space, street furniture in Town Hall Square is of variable quality and often badly maintained.



1970s infill, Horsefair Street.

'Facadism'

- 10.3 The former Sun Alliance, Royal Hotel and cinema buildings are also not what they seem - only the facades are original. Whilst these contribute to the visual character of the conservation area, façade-retention is a questionable technique in the historic context. By giving primacy to the exterior, the qualities of the interior layout and spaces are rendered irrelevant, as in this case.



Shopfront to Alliance House, 6 Bishop Street.

Shopfronts

- 10.4 The ground floor shopfront installed at Alliance House at 6 Bishop Street does particular harm to the building and a sensitive and appropriate replacement needs to be sought. Similarly the small shopfront installed at 12 Bishop Street does not respect the design of the upper floor or the Wesleyan Chapel next door and the very deep fascia at 35 Granby Street is out of scale with the shopfront.



The galvanised finish of this industrial style roller shutter introduces an unnecessarily discordant image in Town Hall Square.

Other building alterations

- 10.5 The steel security grills to the basement windows of the Town Hall, however necessary, are of an inappropriate design.

Function, use and appearance of Town Hall Square

- 10.6 As the only area of green space within the central shopping core, the Town Hall Square is under continual pressure from a variety of uses. Some have been accommodated for many years (such as the Christmas tableaux and lights, lunchtime picnicking and sunbathing etc), others are newer (rock bands, local radio events, summertime special tourism events etc). Some uses have little physical impact on the square, but others can result in problems such as excessive litter and damage to grassed areas. Amplified sound can also be disturbing to office users during the day, particularly as the physical form of the square (relatively small size enclosed on all sides by three and four storey buildings) can lead to an magnification of noise levels and reverberation. The future use of the Town Hall for civil weddings will add further to the demands on the space (for access and photographs). The planters at each end of the Town Hall façade are not historically accurate and consideration should be given to their retention in any future refurbishment of the Square.

Traffic and access

10.7 As noted in paragraph 4.4 the streets forming the boundaries of the conservation area have been re-designated as pedestrian priority zones. However, the number of unauthorised vehicles using these streets has been rising over the last few years and enforcement of the traffic regulation orders by the police is infrequent.

10.8 The use of the paved area in front of the Town Hall for car parking is also increasing and has a detrimental impact on the appearance and setting of this important listed building. It also creates an unsatisfactory pedestrian environment.

Street furniture

10.9 Street clutter is a growing problem in urban areas and the highways in the conservation area are no exception. Groups of road signs, 'A' boards outside shops and commercial premises, parking meters, utility cable boxes and other structures are scattered across the area and have a detrimental effect on the appearance of the conservation area. The planting boxes on Horsefair Street and Bowling Green Street are unco-ordinated and make little contribution to the area's character, particularly as the planting has been poorly maintained.



The removal of the clutter of signs, poles, bollards and the hotchpotch of different paving materials, would help to restore the dignity and character to the streets of the Conservation Area.

II.0 Preserving the character

Why?

11.1 This appraisal has shown how the character of the Town Hall Square Conservation Area derives from the setting, layout and relationship of the buildings and the central open space. Its character comes from both the historical and visual connections between the Town Hall and the open space as well as the varied architectural details of the surrounding buildings. These elements have combined to create a unique place that is worthy of special care and protection. This quality and variety has been recognised both by its declaration as a conservation area and by the listing of most of its buildings.

11.2 By definition, therefore, the Town Hall Square area is an environment that is sensitive to damage and change. Increasing demands on the space have the potential to damage its character and to sever the historic and visual links between it and the surrounding



'A' boards add to the general street clutter of the area, as here in Horsefair Street.

buildings, particularly the Town Hall. The importance that Leicester people attach to Town Hall Square also means that its surfaces and features should be maintained to the highest standards.

How?

11.3 It is also important to ensure that any changes to the use and appearance of the square are considered in the context of its history and status and that the area is sympathetically managed. More intensive use will also necessitate additional maintenance. Management considerations should address not only the effects that additional events would have on the ambience of the square but also the impact these would have on the care and after-care of the square such as more litter removal, greater demand for vehicle access etc. A balance has to be struck between the popularity and accessibility of the square with what is appropriate for this historic space.

11.4 The movement of unauthorised vehicles in the pedestrian priority streets and the paved area in front of the Town Hall needs to be addressed if the character of the conservation area is to be preserved and enhanced. There is also a need to re-design, relocate and/or reduce the amount of street furniture to minimise its impact and enhance to visual environment. Where features no longer make a positive contribution to the street scene, such as planters, they should be removed or redesigned.

11.5 With regard to buildings, local planning authorities are given powers to preserve and enhance conservation areas. This means that alterations to, or demolition of, any building or part of a building in this conservation area will need planning and/or conservation area consent. Where a building is also listed, there is the additional control over development in the form of Listed Building Consent. Further, conservation area designation also affords protection to the area's trees. Whilst those in the Town Hall Square and surrounding streets are owned by the Council, they are nevertheless subject to the same 6 week 'notification' procedures as those in private ownership. Any works to them have to be similarly justifiable and appropriate (but see also paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2).

11.6 The Draft Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan contains policies designed to protect the area's character, for example by ensuring that new development takes account of the scale, form, materials and details of its surroundings.

11.7 The detailing of individual buildings is important in forming the character of the area and any loss could detract from the special quality of the area as a whole. Owners should



The City Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character of conservation areas, to ensure that distinctive architectural qualities (as here at 31 Granby Street) are maintained for future generations.

therefore be encouraged to retain the original appearance through careful restoration and repair.

12.0 Conservation Area boundary

12.1 Periodically the Council is required to review the boundaries of conservation areas and to consider changing them as appropriate. The boundaries of the Town Hall Square have therefore been re-assessed and three extensions are proposed. The alterations, and the reasons for them, are set out below.

Area A

12.2 This Grade II listed building (currently the NatWest Bank) is on the corner of Horsefair Street and Granby Street. It was built on the site of the Three Crowns, one of Leicester's many 18th century coaching inns (from which it is believed the last stage coach journey from Leicester was undertaken in 1866). The site is therefore closely associated with Leicester's great age of horse traffic (see para. 3.2). The Three Crowns was demolished in 1869 and the prestigious new offices for the National Provincial Bank constructed on the site, the first such banking offices in Leicester and a sign of the town's growing prosperity. The inclusion of this building would therefore seem appropriate in view of its historical links.



The NatWest Bank at the corner of Horsefair and Granby Streets, was originally built for the National Provincial Bank in 1870 and is in the Italianate style. It occupies the site of the Three Crowns Public House.

Area B

12.3 The Central Post Office on Bishop Street is included because of its architectural, visual and physical links with the rest of Town Hall Square. It reflects the scale of its surroundings and complements its neighbours in terms of its massing and materials. Although its design is a twentieth century 'pared down' interpretation of the classical form, it is nonetheless an attractive building which makes a valuable contribution to the townscape.

12.4 The adjoining group of shops and offices at 35-45 Granby Street/2 Bishop Street is included for similar reasons to the Post Office – it is an attractive building, well-detailed, of appropriate scale and with direct visual and townscape links with the Post Office and, thus, the rest of the conservation area.

Area C

12.5 A small revision to the boundary behind the Bishop Street Methodist church is also proposed. This will ensure that all the land currently within the boundaries of the church is also within the conservation area.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

List of buildings within the existing and proposed conservation area boundaries

Bishop Street	2, Post Office, 6, 8, 10, 10a, 12 , Methodist Church, Central Reference Library
Every Street	Pickfords Building, 7-9
Granby Street	1-11 (NatWest Bank), 31 (Midland Bank), 35-45
Horsefair Street	2-10 (even), 7, 9, 11, 15, 17-21 (odd), War Memorial
Town Hall Square	Town Hall, Fountain

Appendix 2

List of Listed Buildings in the conservation area

Bishop Street	2, 4 (Central PO), 6, 8, 10, Methodist Church, Central
Reference Library	(all Grade II)
Every Street	7-9 (façade only)(Grade II)
Granby Street	1-3(NatWestBank)(Grade II), 31 (Midland Bank)(Grade II*), 35-45
Horsefair Street	2-4, 6-10, 7-11 (façade only), 17-21 (façade only), War Memorial (all Grade II)
Town Hall Square	Town Hall (Grade II*), Fountain (Grade II)

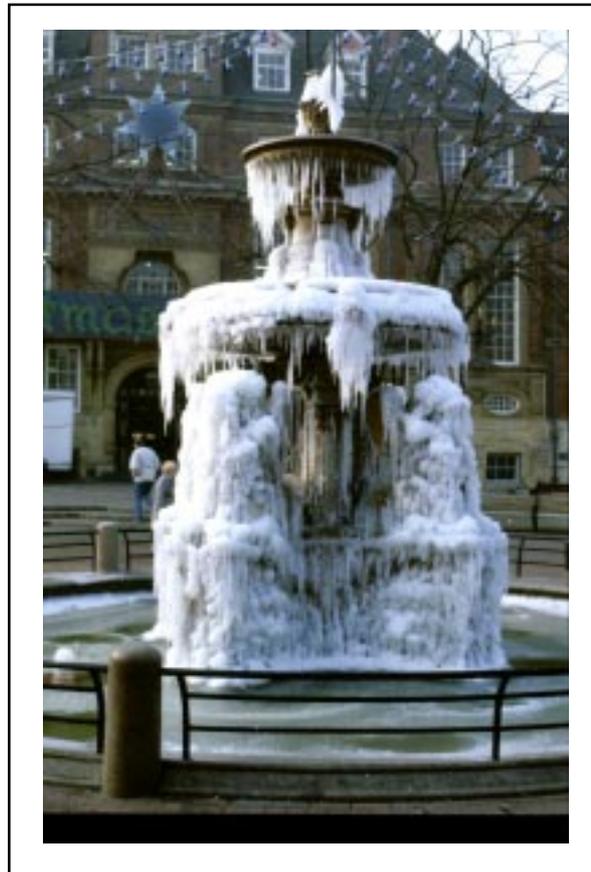
Appendix 3

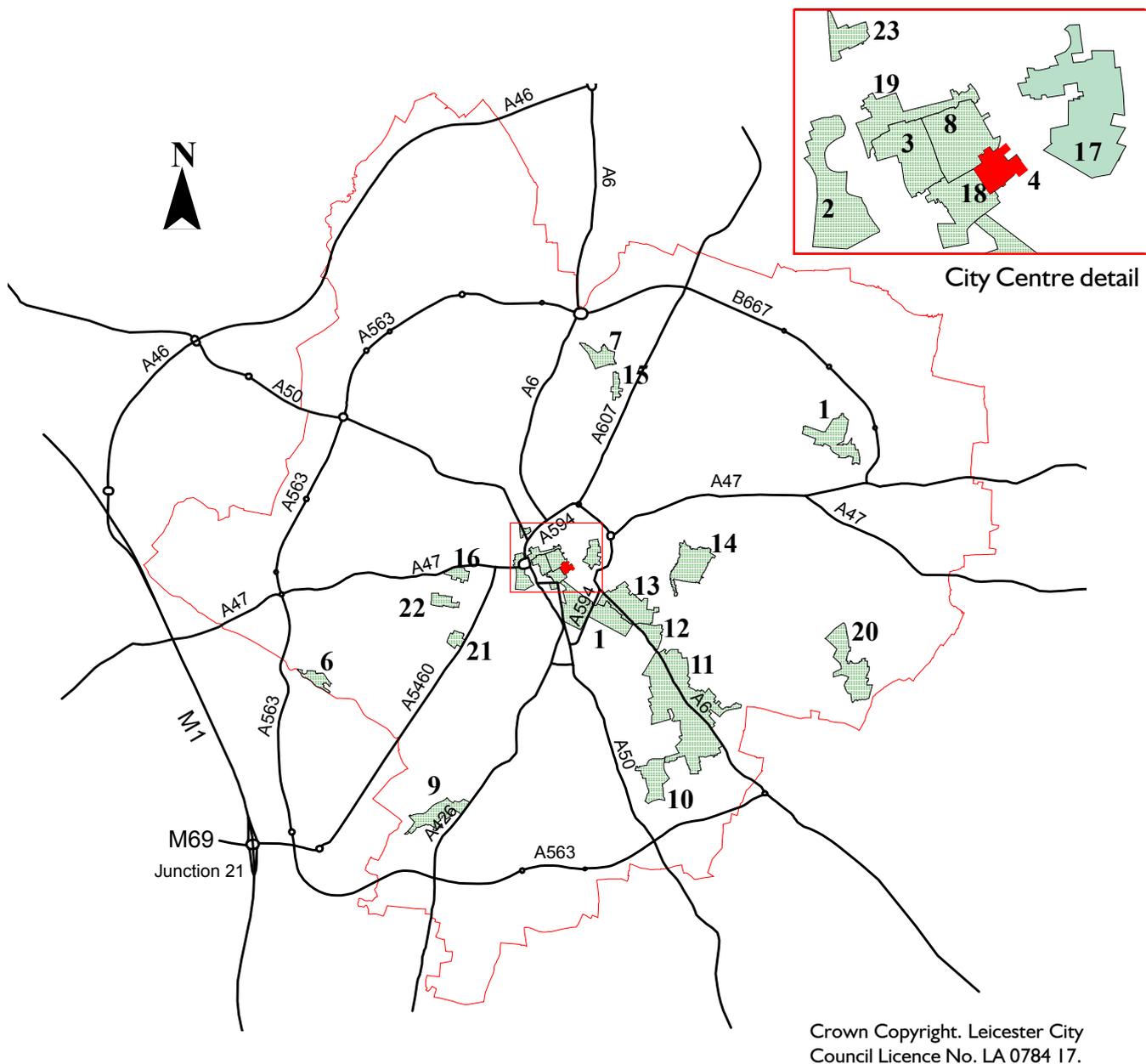
Glossary of architectural terms

articulation	a method of making a building appear more 3-dimensional by constructing a series of slightly projecting bays at regular intervals along the facade
balustrade	a series of short posts or pillars supporting a rail
bracket	a small support carrying a projecting weight
cupola	a dome on a roof or turret
Classical	a style of architecture reflecting that of ancient Greece or Rome
diaper pattern	a pattern composed of lozenge or square shapes
doorcase	decorative stone or timber framing a doorway

TOWN HALL SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA: Character Statement

finial	a formal ornament on the top of a canopy, gable etc
frieze	a decorated band along the upper part of a wall
lantern	a small turret with openings crowning a roof or dome
obelisk	a tapering shaft on a square base
pediment	a low pitched gable over a roof or opening
pilaster	a shallow column attached to but slightly projecting from a wall
rusticated	of columns: square blocks which interrupt the shaft at regular intervals of walls: masonry cut in massive blocks with deep joints
spandrel	the triangular space which is created between a horizontal line from the apex of an arch and a vertical line from the point from which the arch springs
stringcourse	a continuous decorative horizontal band projecting from a wall and usually moulded





Map I. City of Leicester Conservation Areas

- | | | | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1 | New Walk | 9 | Aylestone Village | 17 | St. George's |
| 2 | Castle Gardens | 10 | Knighon Village | 18 | Market Street |
| 3 | Cathedral /Guildhall | 11 | Stoneygate | 19 | High Street |
| 4 | Town Hall Square | 12 | Evington Footpath | 20 | Evington Village |
| 5 | Old Humberstone | 13 | South Highfields | 21 | Ashleigh Road |
| 6 | Braunstone Village | 14 | Spinney Hill Park | 22 | Westcotes Drive |
| 7 | Belgrave Hall | 15 | Loughborough Road | 23 | All Saints' |
| 8 | Market Place | 16 | Daneshill | | |

Listed chronologically

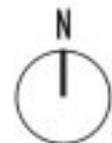
TOWN HALL SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA: Character Statement

Map 2



Town Hall Square Conservation Area

-  Boundary
-  Listed buildings
-  Buildings that contribute positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area



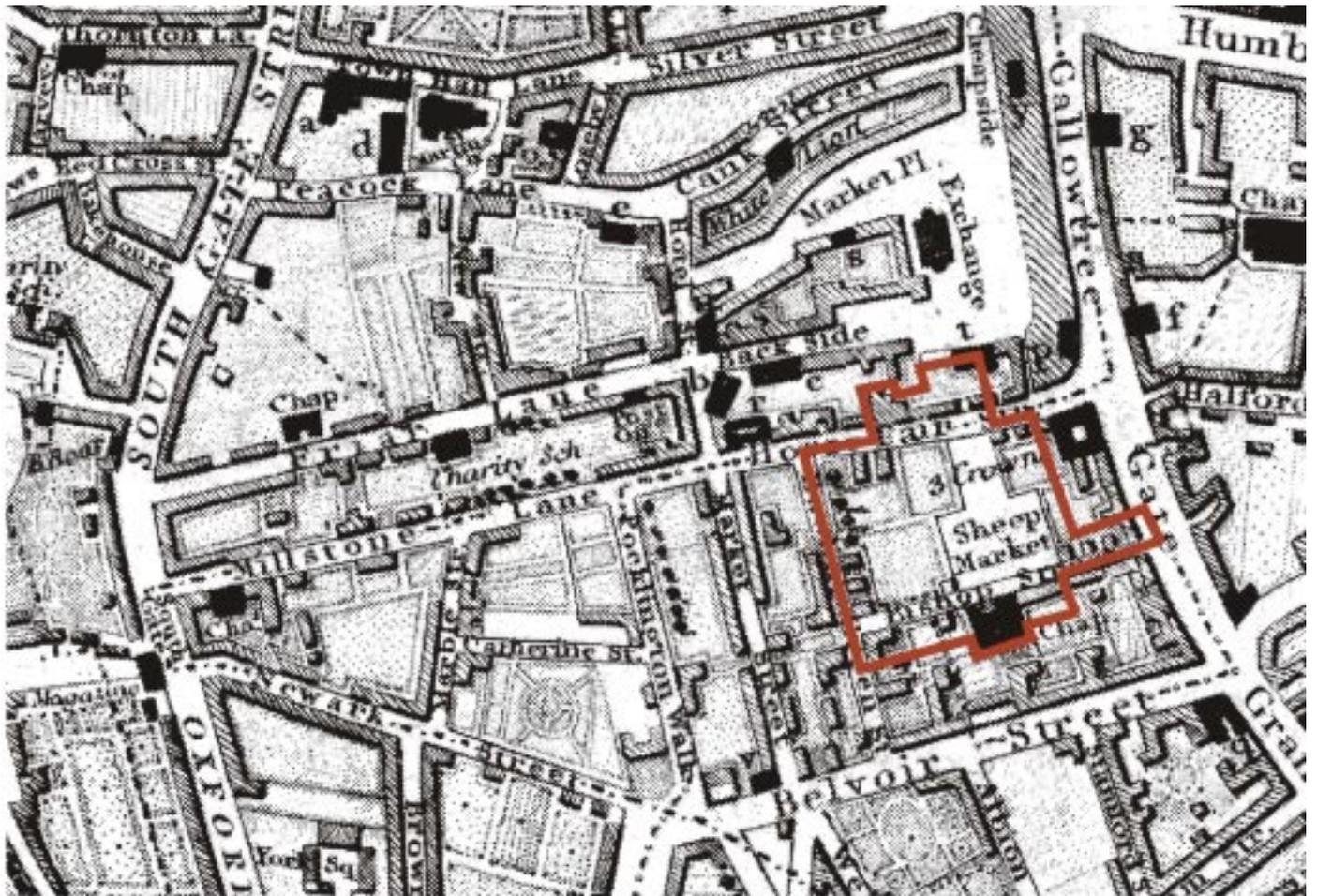
Not to scale

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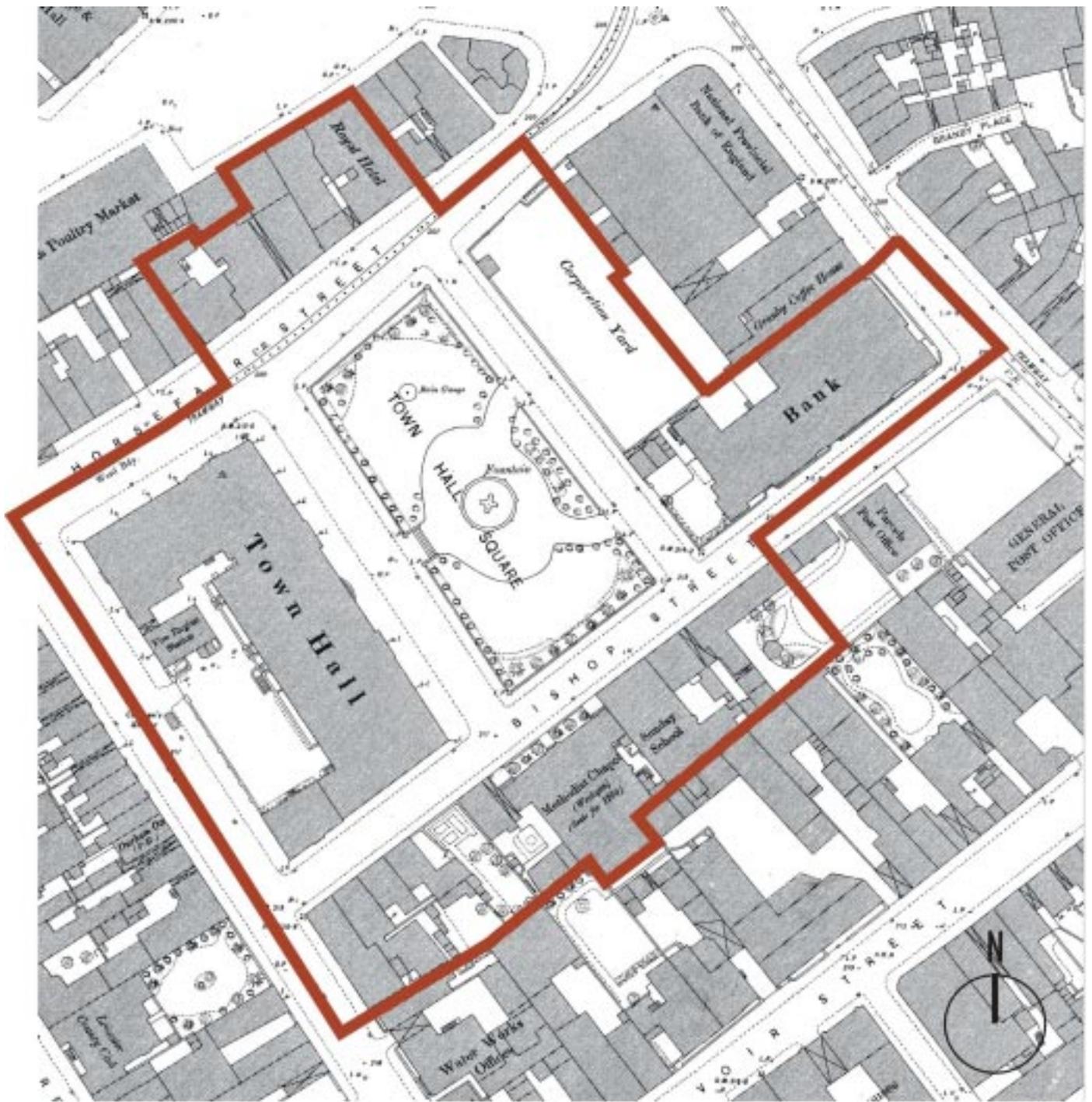


Map 3. Robert's Map of 1741 with the approximate area of the Conservation Area encircled.

TOWN HALL SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA: Character Statement



Map 4: Fowler's Map of 1828: The approximate boundary of Town Hall Square Conservation Area is shown superimposed.



Map 5. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1886 with the boundary of the Conservation Area superimposed.