

ST. MARY STREET



CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

CARDIFF



2006



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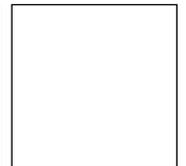
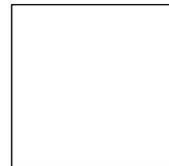
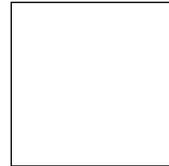
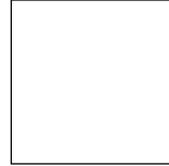
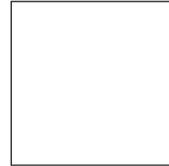
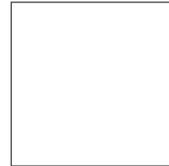
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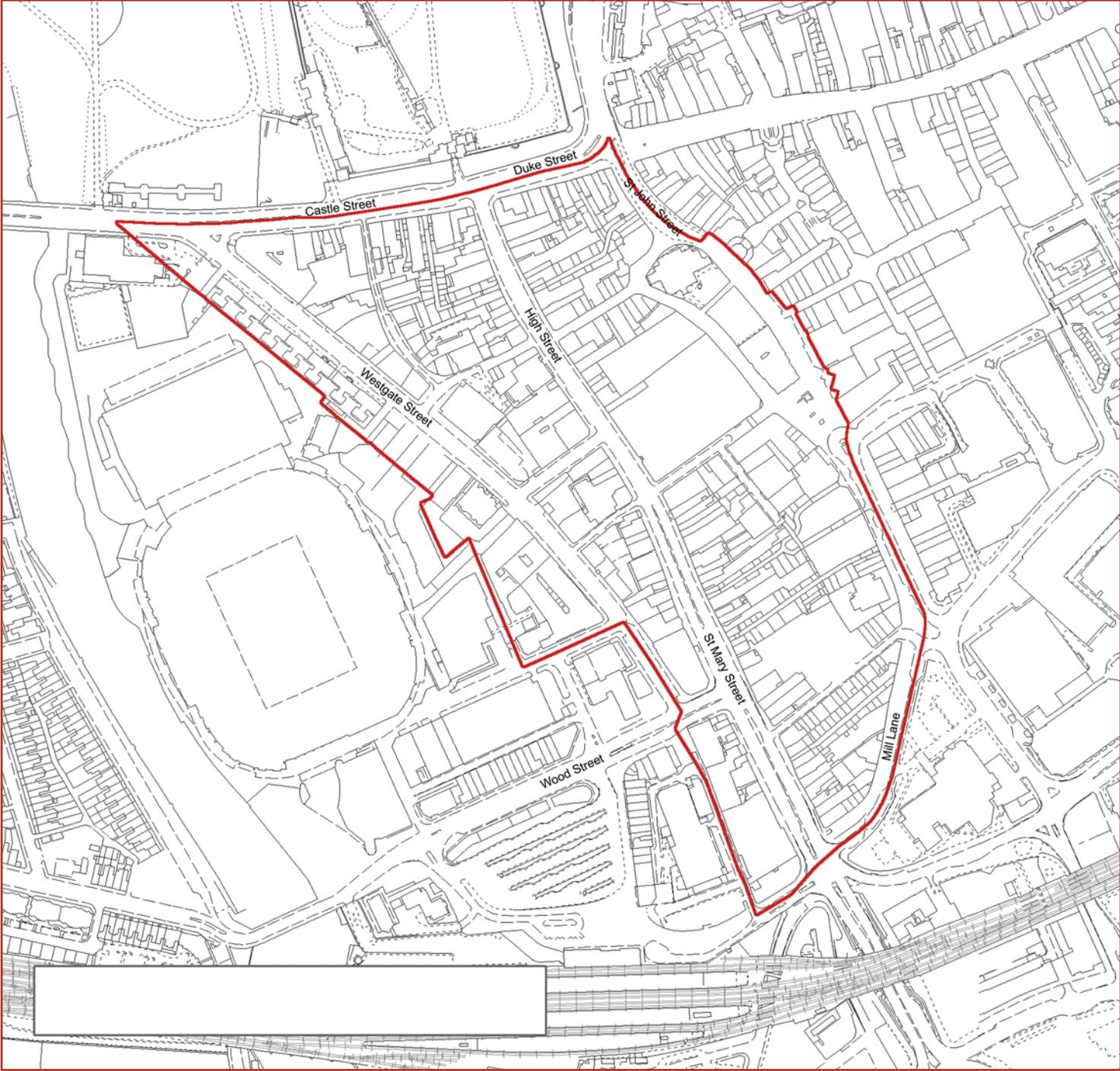
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1.1 Background

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest. A decision to designate a Conservation Area is made after an assessment of the character of the area and often extends beyond the buildings alone. The road layout, street scene, vegetation and historical context all contribute to the quality of an area. Designation gives special protection to this character and to achieve this, the Council has extra controls over demolition, development and in the protection of trees.

1.2 Appraisals

The Council has a duty to review Conservation Areas and to manage this process, a Conservation Area Strategy has been prepared. Additional work has identified priorities for the City, and confirms the criteria to be used in the assessment of existing and new areas. The St. Mary Street Conservation Area is one of the first areas to be assessed and the first part of its review, to look at its boundaries, is now complete.

1.3 The Boundary Review

The boundary review was undertaken following consultation and it has been agreed that no amendments be made. Consultation on the boundary review was undertaken under the guidance of the City Centre Strategy Board. Consultation with Local Ward Members, the Conservation Area Advisory Group, Cardiff Initiative and Cardiff Chamber of Trade was undertaken to ensure interests of the area were fully represented.

1.4 The Next Stage

The second stage of the appraisal process enables the Council to identify the character of the Conservation Area and to prepare strategies for its preservation and enhancement. The requirement for this review is identified in Section 71 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which seeks the formulation of proposals through local consultation. This report sets out a full character appraisal and a framework for action for the St. Mary Street Conservation Area.

1.5 The Policy Context

Now that consultation is complete, the appraisal can set out an agreed statement on the character of the Conservation Area, for which appropriate policies may be prepared. These can be supported by parallel policies within the statutory planning framework. This is provided by the City of Cardiff Local Plan, the South Glamorgan Structure Plan and the policy contained within the Cardiff Unitary Development Plan [UDP], until such time as a Local Development Plan has been adopted. The Conservation Area Appraisal will assist in the formulation of Supplementary Planning Guidance.

This adopted Appraisal will enhance its status and the weight it has as a material consideration in the determination of development proposals.

The Appraisal is divided into three sections:

- An assessment of the character of the Conservation Area.
- A framework for the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area.
- Recommendations and future action.



character assessment

2.1 Background

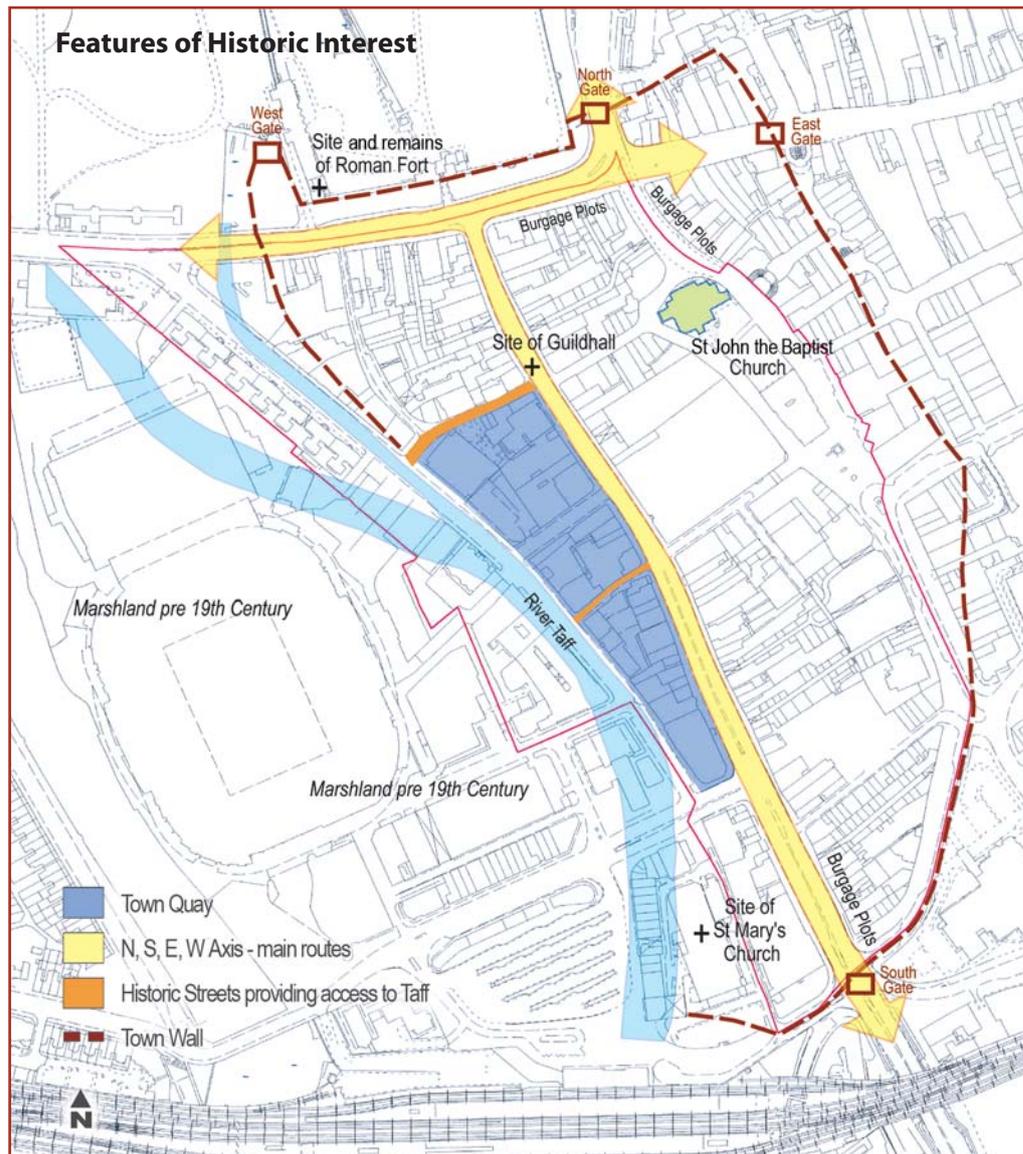
The boundary review used three criteria to establish the area's special character. They are used again here to identify the key characteristics of the area:

- Test 1 - Does the area possess special historic interest?
- Test 2 - Does the area possess special architectural interest?
- Test 3 - Is the character or appearance desirable to preserve or enhance?

2.2 The Area's Special Historic Significance

The area, although mainly Victorian reflects the old medieval street pattern focused around St. John the Baptist Church and Cardiff Castle. The narrow and irregular passages such as Womanby Street and the traces of historic burgage plots and street names such as Quay Street all reflect the early activities of the area.

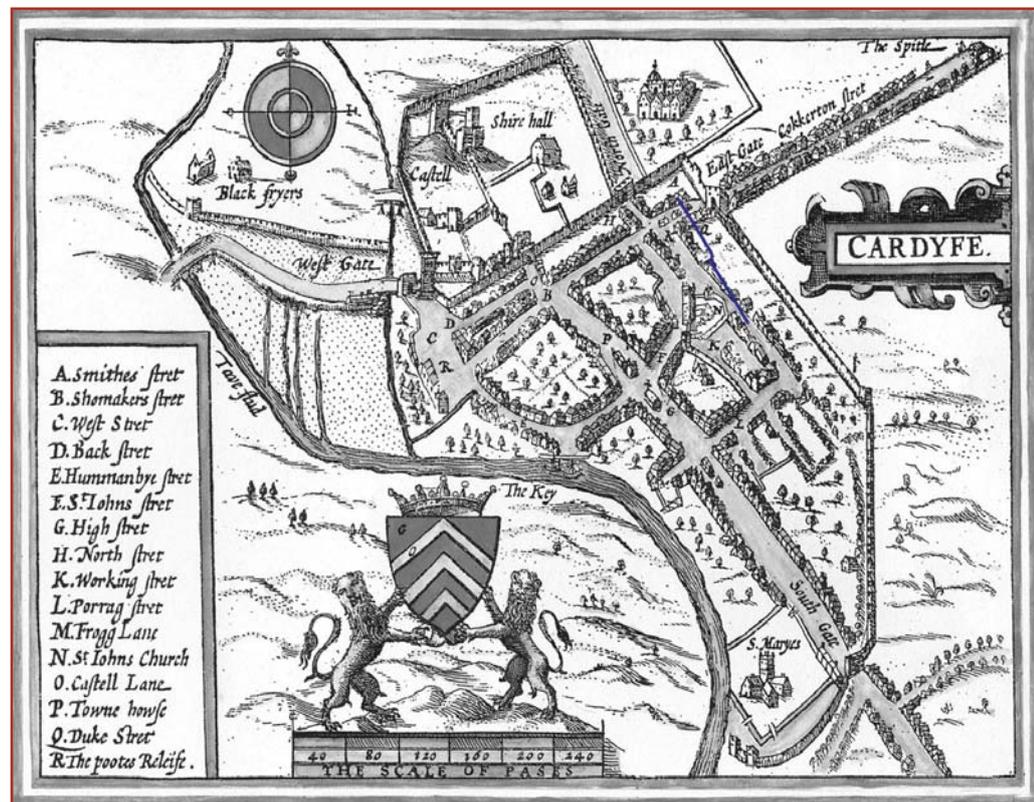
The area's special interest can be demonstrated in the way in which its historic interest and development translates into the physical character of the area today.





Whilst it is impossible to say precisely when the north/south route which is such a strong part of the area's character was built, it is likely to have formed part of the medieval walled Borough. The northern end and the market, were the focus of commercial life, and the quayside, where the river followed its original course along the route of the present day Westgate Street marked the western edge. Little physical representation of the original course of the River Taff exists today, though the historic interest of the area is still reflected in the area's street names. Golate ran to the Taff a few yards downstream and may have been used for the loading and unloading of goods away from the attention of Customs. Quay Street and Womanby Street also provided access to the quay on the River Taff. The warehouse architecture of the quayside is still present in this area.

Historic plans and maps demonstrate that the southern half of St. Mary Street was the only part of Cardiff that saw a substantial change in layout between 1600 and 1800. The Taff was moving progressively eastward, and by the beginning of the 17th Century, any man-made defences on that side of the Borough had disappeared. Worship was transferred from St. Mary's Church to St. John the Baptist Church by 1678. During the 18th Century, St. Mary's Church was washed away by the flooding of the Taff.



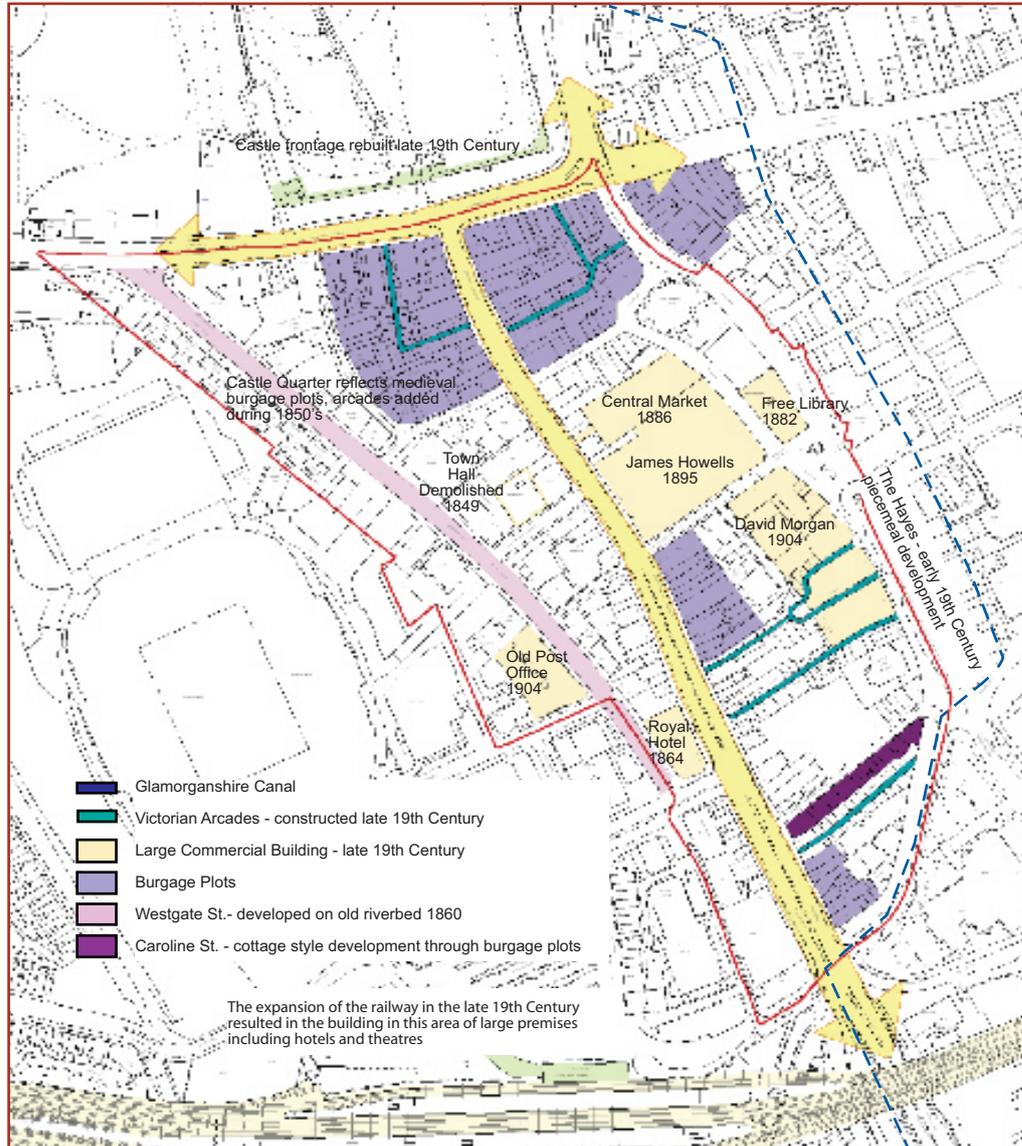
John Speed Plan - 1610

By the middle of the 19th Century, the western edge of the southern end of St. Mary Street was affected by the changing river course. The development of the Glamorganshire Canal and the opening of Cardiff Central Station to the south of the area in 1850 led to a realignment of the River Taff. Opportunities for development began to emerge along the remaining undeveloped frontages to the west of St. Mary Street.

It was the period between 1880 and the early 1900's that saw the most extensive rebuilding of High Street and St. Mary Street, including the erection of large commercial schemes such as Market Buildings, James Howell's Department Store and the Royal Hotel. As a result of this extensive rebuilding, little remains from before 1850.

2.3 Changing Character and Land Use

The role of the St. Mary Street area changed when civic functions were transferred to Cathays Park. Prior to this switch to Cathays Park, St. Mary Street was the centre of civic importance and traditionally the centre of local civic power. The street was also the focal point for many local and national historic events. The photographs opposite show: the Town Hall taken on the occasion of the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902; the 'Javelin Thrower' on the roof of James Howell's store in St. Mary Street - 1958; and the year Cardiff was host to the VIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games.

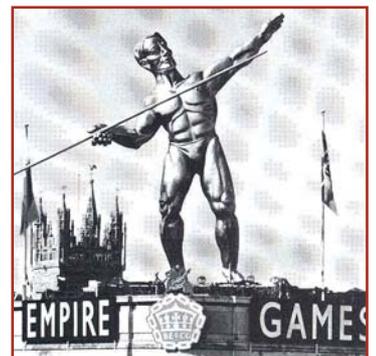


Plan shows development at the turn of the 19th Century

A further change was that the main high street shopping function shifted to Queen Street. Additionally, the Hayes Island area was traditionally used as an open-air market and street hawkers were permitted to sell goods in this open space subject to a toll of 6d per truck. Historic information has also identified that Mill Lane had a similar role during the late 19th Century.

Today, even though St. Mary Street, High Street and the adjoining streets form a group of shopping frontages, retailing in the City Centre has become refocused on Queen Street and the associated covered Shopping Centres. However, St. Mary Street still has a specialist retail function, including the numerous arcades which contain many specialised and unique shops.

However it should be noted that there is a high level of vacant floor space within the St. Mary Street Area, particularly above ground level in relation to offices.



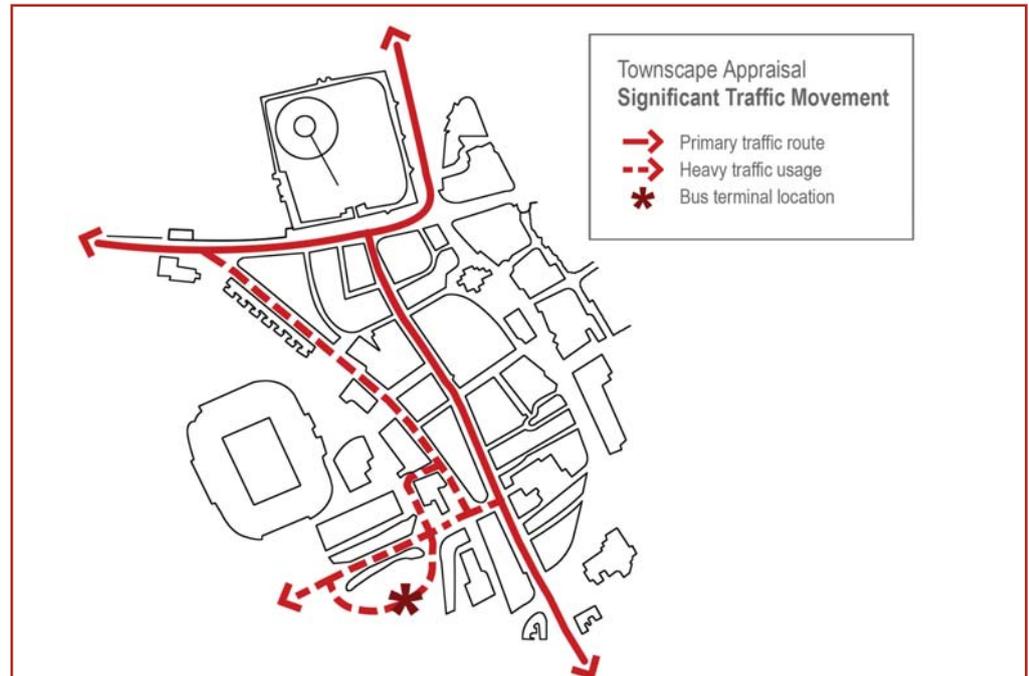


St. Mary Street is a main thoroughfare for traffic and pedestrians alike, with the area functioning as an important link to Central Station, the Millennium Stadium and the Callaghan Square Area. The area also plays an important link to Cardiff Castle and has an important tourism role.

Re-investment in the area has taken place in more recent years and has resulted in the opening of many new establishments and the refurbishment and expansion of existing premises, particularly in the café, bar and club sector. The regeneration of Mill Lane (initiated 1994) at the southern part of the area, supported by the Wyndham Arcade Town Scheme and Commercial Improvement Area projects provided a catalyst for change in the area.

The St. Mary Street area is almost certainly the most diverse within the City Centre and is heavily influenced by events at the Millennium Stadium; the area also encompasses a large concentration of food and drink outlets that affect the area's character day and night. Generally, during the day time the area performs a shopping role, however, financial institutions tend to dominate, but during the night the area becomes more vibrant, transformed by cafes, bars, restaurants and take away establishments.

The increasing number of food and drink and nightclub uses in the St. Mary Street area, is reducing the attractiveness and viability of the area for other uses and sometimes presents a threatening night-time economy. The balance and intensity of established land-uses is an important determinant of an area's essential character.



The area also faces pressures from commercial advertising that has an affect on the special architectural quality of the area. In addition, High Street and St. Mary Street form part of the Central Distributor Box and are part of a major bus route. Traffic congestion can place significant pressure on the built heritage and its environs.

2.4 The Area's Special Architectural Interest

The use of Portland stone, the classical styling of monumental columns and pediments and gothic ornamentation all give the area an opulent style and demonstrate a significant level of craftsmanship particularly in stonework. Examples of this type of treatment include Hodge House, built in Portland stone in a classical style in 1915, James Howell's buildings of 1895 in renaissance style and the Royal Hotel, 1864 & 1890, the earliest building of this scale containing a variety of detailing and materials to each floor. During this period, the buildings were designed to 'showcase' the businesses of the day. This style is not, however,

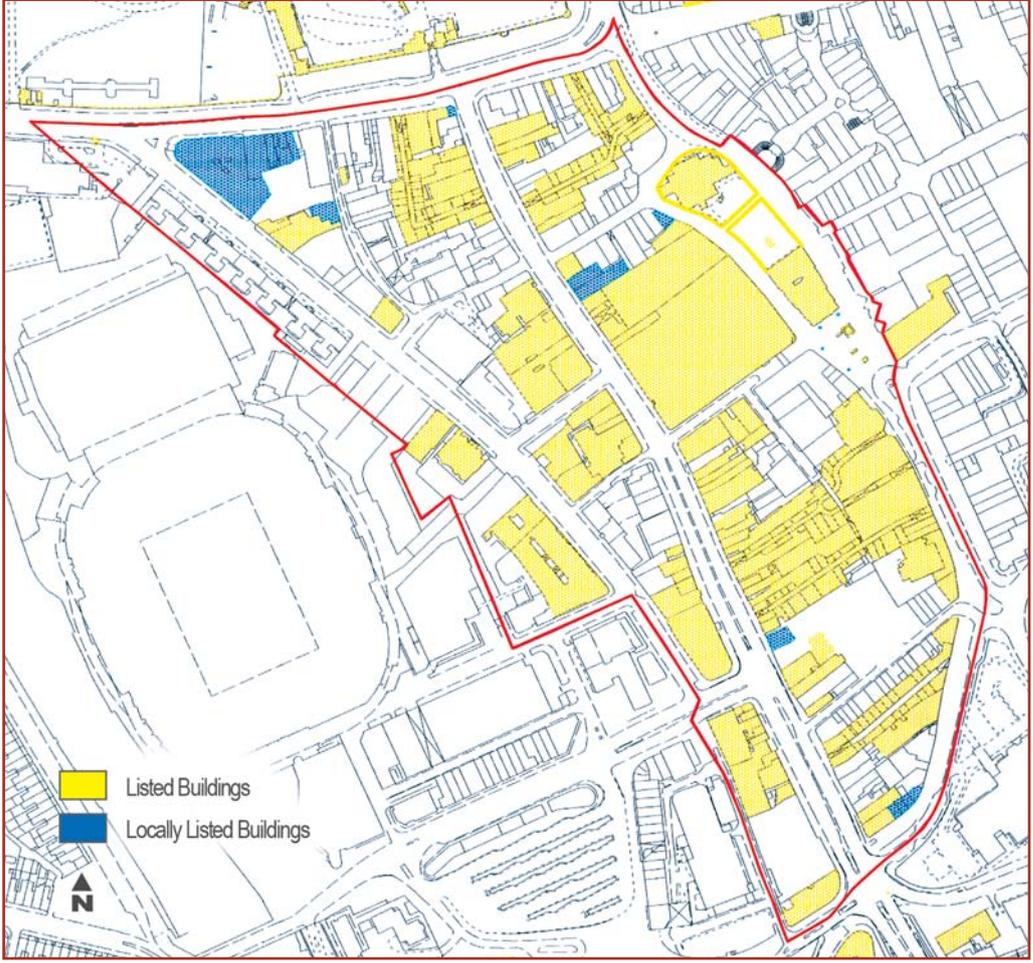
consistent throughout the area and much of the character of the area is derived from the variety and juxtaposition of styles and materials within a reasonably consistent building height, and a continuous built frontage, particularly in St. Mary Street and High Street. Variety is also seen in building materials with terracotta brickwork providing a contrast to Portland, Pennant and Bathstone. The introduction of features in contrasting stone, reflects the range of international materials being brought in as ballast to the City at the turn of the 19th Century.

In addition, the area also contains examples of modern and contemporary architecture dating from the 1960's all of which differ in shape, height and materials. They display a diverse range of architectural styles from gothic to postmodernism. The scale of the St. Mary Street properties, some up to six storeys, emphasizes the street's grandeur and, in relation to the street's width, results in an elegantly proportioned street.

In the streets surrounding St. Mary Street, there is a change in scale to reflect earlier more pedestrian building styles, ranging from three storey frontages to Castle Street, down to small scale terracing and courtyards, such as Jones Court off Womanby Street. The warehouse building styles seen in Womanby, Westgate and Quay Street are a reflection of the significance of the area in relation to its former quayside role. The St. John's area and particularly Hayes Island, whilst containing the elegant architecture of the late 19th Century and the modern St David's Hall development, reflects the less formal street patterns of earlier periods resulting in a greater sense of enclosure to spaces, and a more intimate feel.

2.4.1 Extent of Listed Buildings

Within the current boundary for St. Mary Street, the extent of buildings listed as being of "special architectural or historic interest", demonstrates the degree of national importance which the area possesses. Listed and Locally Listed buildings within the Conservation Area boundary are shown below.



Plan shows Statutory Listed and Locally Listed Buildings



2.4.2 Non-designated Buildings of Interest



There are a significant number of unlisted historic buildings which reflect earlier plot divisions and demonstrate a degree of architectural merit. They are important background buildings within the Conservation Area and re-enforce the area's historic character. There are some more significant, larger undesignated buildings, namely, Castle Court flats in Westgate Street, built in neo-Georgian style, 1937. This block is a significant landmark and encloses the western edge of the Conservation Area. The Imperial Buildings frontage is also important in continuing the classical frontages to the southern end of St. Mary Street. However, only the façade of this historic building remains.

2.4.3 Detailed Architectural Style



The St. Mary Street area demonstrates some of the best examples of Victorian townscape in Cardiff and provides the essential character of the City today. As discussed, the area demonstrates a diverse range of styles, materials and building techniques. The local Pennant stone and stucco render reflect local traditional styles of the pre-20th Century. St. Mary Street is, however, enhanced by the use of more decorative treatments, both in local materials such as the pink Radyr stone 'Crazy Paving' stonework of the Great Western (64 St. Mary Street), and in the use of other materials from further a field, such as marble, granite and terracotta brickwork.



Cardiff Castle whilst outside of the boundary has a bearing on the area's character and reflects the distinctive style of William Burges.

The Free Library by Edwin Swards is an impressive building and the best representative of the quality that local Cardiff architects were achieving at the end of the 19th Century, prior to the involvement of London Architects in the City in areas such as the Civic Centre in Cathays Park.

Substantial development and re-building within the area at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Century, however, transformed the City and reflected the wealth of its commercial traders as coal exports grew, as did the spending power of its citizens.

There has clearly been a significant loss of historic streetscape both in terms of materials and street furniture. The little that remains include the lamp posts of Hayes Island and the boundary treatment to St. John the Baptist Church and gardens.



2.4.4 Main Historic Building Styles

The St. Mary Street Conservation Area contains a diverse range of architectural styles:

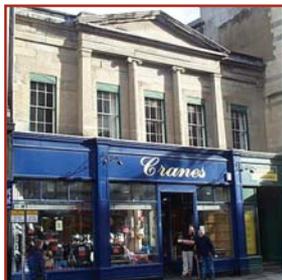
Gothic Revival

Key details of this style include arched windows, dormers, and carved leaf ornamentation. A good example is 75 St. Mary Street, built in 1886 with gothic style windows and leaf ornamentation. The Great Western Hotel (64 St. Mary Street) also has gothic windows with tracery heads. Some elements of this style can also be seen at 20-21 St. Mary Street.



Classical Revival

Key details of this style include, columns and capitals, pediments, and stone block work. Howell's Department Store, St. Mary Street built 1895, is a good example of this style of architecture with its renaissance (another term used to describe the revival of the classical ancient Roman/Greek cultures) upper elevations – Ionic columns, fret style detailing above windows and frieze depicting Drapers scenes. Cranes, 5-5a High Street also shows features of this style with its simple pediment and Ionic columns at its upper elevation. Hodge House, St. Mary Street, built in 1915 in Portland Stone is another good example of the classical revival style.



Georgian Revival

Key details of this style include, 19th Century town house - stucco render, brickwork, sash windows. A good example of this style is Castle Court Flats, Westgate Street with original windows still evident on the front elevation and fine brickwork. 1-2 St. Mary Street is another good example showing render work and sash windows. There are also numerous examples on High Street and around the St. John Street area.



Dutch Style

Key details of this style include tall/narrow building design. An example of the use of a narrow and tall building plot can be seen at 8 St. Mary Street. Also, along Mill Lane where warehouses of a Dutch style can be found.



Victorian Arcades

Key features include glazed walkways, balconies, and traditional Victorian shop fronts. Morgan Arcade built 1896 in Jacobean classical style contains the most original shop fronts of the Cardiff arcades with high quality detailing to pilasters, doors, fanlights and stall-risers. High Street Arcade built 1885 and linked to Duke Street Arcade, built 1902, also has original fanlight detail showing 'sun rays'. Castle Arcade built 1887 is a classic example of a Victorian Arcade that encompasses an

upper elevation walkway/balcony linked by footbridges and continuous jettied top storeys under a curved glazed roof.



Art Deco

Key features include, friezes, lettering and metal shop fronts, typically built in the early 1900's. Shop fronts in Duke Street Arcade are an example of this style of architecture. The use of stylish metal shop fronts with lettering detail cut into the shop front framework can be seen at the entrance to the Arcade at 12 Duke Street and along the return into the Arcade. The Queen's and Royal Garage, 27 Westgate Street is another good example of Art Deco style with its 'Carways Airways' with corresponding car and airplane logo above the entrance and the upper elevation at 3-4 St. Mary Street.



Warehouse architecture

Key features include large windows and doors and banded brickwork and repetition of small openings. Most notably found in Womanby Street, the buildings reflect the area as a quayside location during the 19th Century, many buildings here were used to store goods transported on the River Taff.



Courtyards

Buildings reflecting earlier periods. Key features include small scale, cottage style buildings set within a courtyard setting. A good example is the recently refurbished Jones Court, off Womanby Street and Crown Court, off Duke Street.



2.4.5 Distinctive Architectural Features

Shopfronts

Metal framework/Curved glazing/Leaded fanlights.



Upper Floor Windows

Sliding Sash/Oriel/Dormer/Arches and Keystones.



Doors

Georgian style timber panelled and Art Deco metal doors.



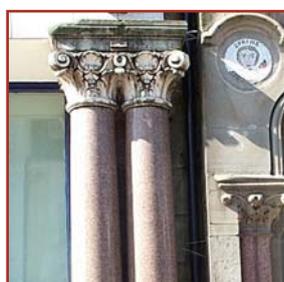
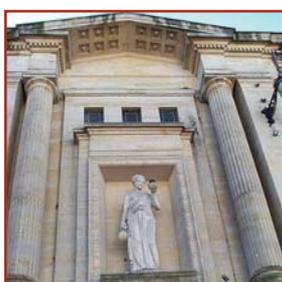
Eaves

Parapets/Balustrades.



Facades

Columns/Pediments/Friezes/Decorative stone carving/Quoins/Balconies.



Chimneys

Detail banding-brickwork



Boundary Treatment

Most properties front directly on to the street, an exception being St. John the Baptist Church with its cast iron railings, enclosing gardens (church/grave yards).



2.4.6 Quality Assessment and Retention of Original Features

A visual assessment of the general condition and maintenance of buildings within the Conservation Area was undertaken in September 2001. This identified that, of those buildings surveyed, 2% of the buildings were in outstanding condition, 28% of the buildings were in generally good condition, 47% of the buildings were in average condition and 23% were in a poor condition.

The buildings on the whole appear to be structurally sound. Many of the buildings have been well maintained but have inappropriate replacements that greatly affect the historic integrity of the buildings, for example, the replacement of traditional wood front doors with modern alternatives or modern roofing materials, instead of natural slate. The poor condition of buildings is mainly due to lack of maintenance to windows and doors and the loss of original features. Damage and lack of maintenance to chimneys and main facades, damage to architectural features and the loss of appropriate rainwater goods were also identified. Therefore, many properties in the area have need of some attention to restore their historic fabric and character.

2.4.7 Enhancement/Change Since Designation

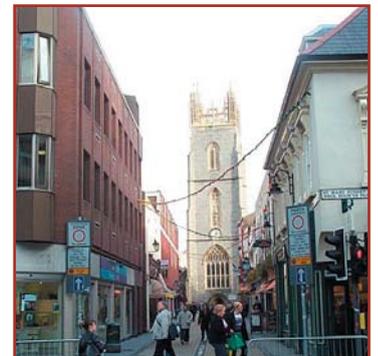
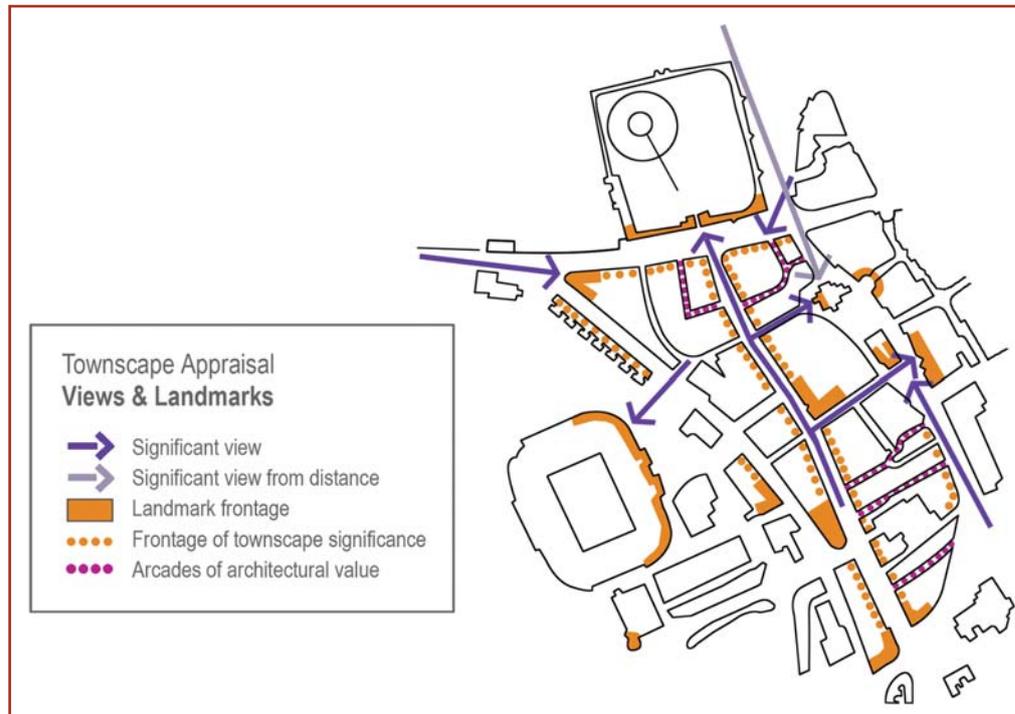
Since the designation of the Conservation Area significant improvements have been made in the area through the restoration of historic facades in the Conservation Area, supported by private investment and the joint County Council and Cadw St. Mary Street Town Scheme Initiative.



townscape assessment

3.1 Vistas and Landmarks

From within the Conservation Area, the linear form of the main street axis results in the formation of strong vistas along its length, with views enclosed at the northern end by Cardiff Castle, but with a weaker sense of enclosure primarily provided by the railway bridge to the south. The street openings along this access provide glimpses and vistas to buildings beyond, notably Church Street with views to the landmark tower of St. John the Baptist Church, Guildhall Place, Golate and Wharton Street. The Millennium Stadium, whilst outside the area, provides a prominent landmark viewed in glimpses from the western sector of the area.



The quality of landmark buildings such as St. John the Baptist Church, The Old Library, Cardiff Castle, and prominent landmarks in the street scene such as Hodge House and Howell's Department Store provide a significant role in defining the character of the area.

3.2 Landscape Assessment

The treatment of the streetscape in terms of materials used, street furniture, the presence of artwork, and tree planting has a significant impact upon the character of the Conservation Area. The remnants of traditional streetscape add to associations with the past and contribute to the value of the area and its sense of place. Whilst much of the historic architecture of interest in this area has been preserved and in some cases restored (particularly at upper floors) the area retains very little historic landscape in the form of street surfaces, street furniture and statuary. One exception being vertical basement lights set in the pavements around Hodge House and Howell's Department Store.

Various enhancement schemes have taken place on a street by street basis over



a period of time. This has led to a lack of consistency through the area, with the public realm playing a limited role in enhancing the character of the area, and in many places, having a negative impact on the quality of the streetscape.

Historic photographs from the Victorian period show that street surfaces included large stone pavements and stone kerbing to footpaths, with cobble or rolled gravel on the road. Remnants of these materials can be found in Barry Lane (beneath David Morgan Department store). Some of the arcades preserve their original surfacing detailing too; large size Pennant Slabs, polished from continuous use over more than 100 years.

The tramlines of the Victorian period provided a significant amount of street furniture with tram cable supports running centrally along the length of St. Mary Street, Working Street and Castle/Duke Street. Again, historic photographs identify that the architectural detail of this large scale cast iron work reflected the detail of the built architecture of the period.

Several examples of railings from the period have an impact upon the character of the street scene and are listed for their value. These are the railings around St. John the Baptist Church and gardens and the railings, gates and lamp standards relating to the public conveniences at Hayes Island. Some original ornamental cast-iron lamp-standard supports are still in use at Hayes Island, but no other traditional furniture remains. The street furniture found throughout the area today, such as light columns, seating, and bins have been provided in either a heritage style or contemporary design. They are generally uncoordinated with little reference to local context and scale.

3.3 Recent Street Enhancement Schemes

Various schemes have been undertaken in the area in recent years, and particularly in the streets surrounding St. John the Baptist Church and Mill Lane. An assessment of these can provide some direction in terms of an appropriate conservation response. There is need for a full assessment of public realm schemes, in particular paving materials to inform a framework for new schemes and to identify suitable materials for the Conservation Area. The City Centre Strategy - Strategy Area Appraisals identify key public realm enhancement projects, and recommend suitable paving materials where appropriate.

3.4 Street Clutter

Lighting columns, sign posts, traffic signs and utility boxes all create street clutter. Some bus shelters are of an inappropriate design, poorly located, often representing a barrier to pedestrians.

Clutter undermines the quality of spaces; and is generally owned and managed by different bodies. This clutter can detract from the visual amenity of the Conservation Area.

3.5 Public Art and Monuments

The area contains a relative lack of public art and monuments. Artwork in the area tends to take the form primarily of architectural detailing on buildings or of traditional statuary. Much of the art incorporated on buildings is in the arts and crafts, deco and art nouveau styles.

The notable examples being the friezes on Howell's Department Store and to the Queen's and Royal Garage, Westgate Street. In addition, the Prince of Wales Theatre features a utilitarian frontage facing St. Mary Street that is surmounted by a Grecian female figurine. Other examples of public art include the chimney pots at Sam's Bar, 63 St. Mary Street and artwork incorporated into railings at Mill Lane. The Hayes Island area encompasses a monument to the liberal politician and industrialist John Batchelor that was erected at the beginning of the last century.

To the west, at Castle Street, the Animal Wall, lies outside the boundary, but makes an important contribution to the Conservation Area. A vulture, a bear and other realistic animals balance on alternate mullions of Bute Park. The wall was originally erected in 1887, further east along Castle Street between the Cardiff Castle Clock Tower and the south gate of the Castle, where it protected the moat garden from passers-by. The wall was moved to its present site in 1930 and supplemented with six more animals.

3.6 Soft Landscaping and Trees

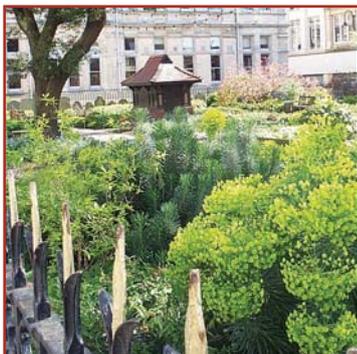
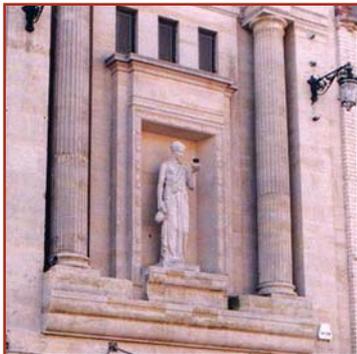
Two examples of formal street planting from the Victorian period remain in the area. Hayes Island is planted with a formal group of Plane Trees planted at the turn of the century and provides a strong sense of enclosure and structural form to this public space. The second example is the line of mature street trees to the west side of Westgate Street, which were at one time mirrored by planting to the east side to create a formal avenue. An avenue of trees has also been planted along Mill Lane as part of the recent public realm improvements.

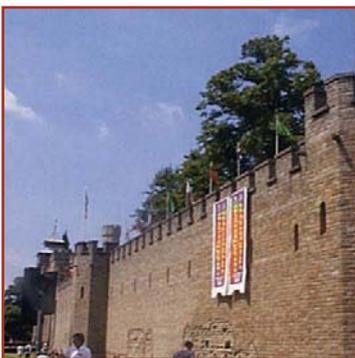


3.7 Gardens

The gardens around St. John the Baptist Church are divided into two distinct parts by a footway and cast iron railings. Both areas are planted with species trees and ground vegetation.

The former graveyard space to the south is a fully enclosed gated garden with a single access. This is a tranquil space at the heart of the City but the nature of its





enclosure can lead to personal safety and security concerns.

The northern garden has a stronger ecclesiastical character as a graveyard space with more limited public access.

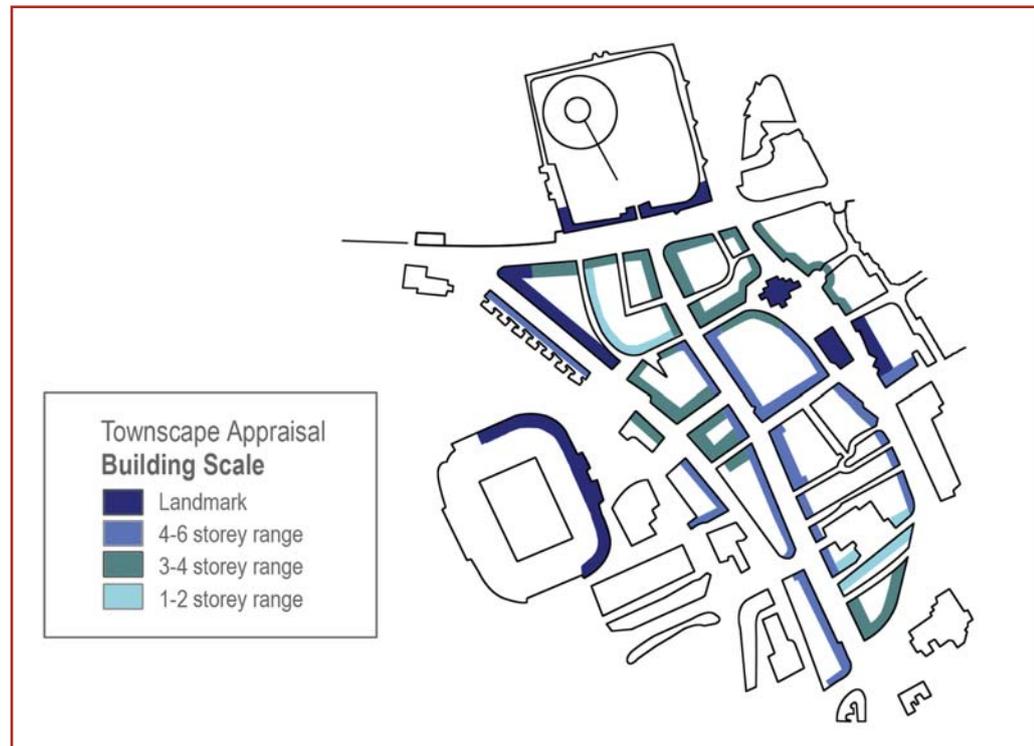
3.8 Castle Frontage

A large grassed area exists to the front of the Castle Walls, set at a slightly lower level than the road and footway giving it a moated appearance. This area contained buildings up until the turn of the last century, but now allows an open view along the full vista of the Castle Walls, and Cathays Park beyond.

3.9 Areas of Special Character

The preceding analysis identifies a concentration of buildings of importance at the core of the Conservation Area, with a more dispersed pattern towards the boundary particularly to the western and eastern edges. These boundary areas are, however, identified as containing significant unlisted buildings of value, which not only provide a backdrop to the area but in some cases act as landmarks. The Conservation Area encompasses three distinct areas that each have a special character and unique identity, they are:

- Castle Quarter
- Mill Lane
- St. John’s



Castle Quarter

The Castle Quarter is a distinct area of central Cardiff with clearly defined boundaries formed by Cardiff Castle to the north, St. John Street to the east, Quay Street and Church Street to the south and Westgate Street to the west. The quarter is the oldest area of Cardiff, with the historic built form and street layout remaining the same since medieval times. It was also an important quayside location due to the previous route of the River Taff, reflected in the warehouse style architecture of Womanby Street.

The Castle Quarter contains some of the oldest buildings in Cardiff, including the majority of the City Centre's Victorian/Edwardian arcades, a main feature of Cardiff's City Centre and home to small speciality shop units. The quarter has a special identity, focusing upon its unique location and close proximity to Cardiff Castle.

Mill Lane Café Quarter

Mill Lane originally stood alongside the Glamorganshire Canal and during the late 19th Century was home to a fruit and vegetable market; stock was transported to the street by the canal. However, the market ceased trading with the closure of the canal in the mid 20th Century and the street became neglected and dilapidated. In 1995 a public realm enhancement scheme to create a café and bar quarter along the street acted as a catalyst to the regeneration of the area.

The character of the area changes significantly throughout the day and is also dependant on the weather. During the day, and sunny weather the area is transformed into a cosmopolitan eating area that has a distinct European feel. However, the proliferation of bars and clubs in the area is having a detrimental impact on the night-time character of the area and has increased the perception and fear of crime and violence.

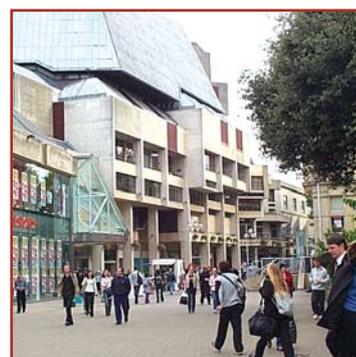
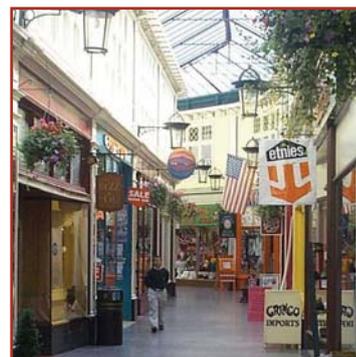
The planting of mature trees has created a sense of enclosure; this is further reinforced by distinctive water themed railings designed by an artist to represent air, land and water - the former Glamorganshire Canal

St. John's

The St. John's area is situated at the centre of the commercial core and at the hub of the City's pedestrian network. It is an area of fine architectural quality containing St. John the Baptist Church. It is an important visitor destination, and provides an important link between the Millennium Stadium, St. Mary Street to the west and the main retail area of Queen Street to the east.

The St. John's area forms part of the City's principal shopping area. However, the area's primary shopping role and character is under growing pressure from food and drink premises, and other non-shop uses.

The role, character and quality of key spaces within the Hayes Island area and the wider St. John's area up to its junction is in need of improvement, this could be achieved through positive environmental enhancements. The St. John's area is also the subject of a strategy area appraisal which the City Centre Strategy identifies as a priority area.



4.1 SWOT Analysis of the Area

This analysis on strengths and weaknesses concentrates on the quality of the Conservation Area, in particular the buildings and environmental quality. It forms the basis of objectives for the framework for action.

Strengths

- High quality architecture.
- The Medieval street layout.
- The unique Victorian/Edwardian arcades.
- St. Mary Street represents the 'backbone' of the arcades and provides links to surrounding areas.
- The attractions for tourists: The Millennium Stadium; Cardiff Castle; the arcades and specialised shops.
- The area serves as an important axis to north-south and east-west links.

Weaknesses

- Narrow cluttered pavements result in poor pedestrian movement.
- There is a lack of vegetation and street furniture, inappropriate street lighting and poor public realm.
- There is a proliferation of A3 uses; night time perception of crime and violence; daytime blank frontages; litter problems.
- There are upper floor vacant units which can have a negative impact on the maintenance of key historic buildings.
- The design integrity of some modern shopfront improvements undermines the street scene. Areas such as Castle Street and Duke Street have variable standards of maintenance.
- There is a high volume of traffic in the area, and as a result poor air quality.

Opportunities

Opportunities could be presented by:

- Marketing and branding of the area – its heritage, history and architecture.
- Maximising investment opportunities afforded by St. David's Shopping Centre Phase II, Central Square as well as the Castle Heritage Lottery Fund project.
- Providing more signage and information for tourists/pedestrians in terms of directions, links, and historical and architectural interpretations. For example, the promotion of historic and Blue Plaque walking trails.
- Encouraging the development of the Millennium Walkway and water use expansion.
- The promotion of the area's architecture - particularly key listed buildings such as Hodge House, Howell's Department Store and the Central Market.

- The improvement of connections and permeability between arcades, Cardiff Castle and surrounding areas.
- The enhancement of buildings, townscape and public realm.

Threats

- The erosion of historic fabric by incremental changes as well as large scale redevelopment.
- Environmental pollution – damage to architectural detailing on key listed buildings.
- A Proliferation of A3 [bar/restaurant] uses could increase perception of crime and fear, damaging the special character and distinctiveness of the Conservation Area.



5.1 The Appraisal

Paragraph 1.5 of the report sets out the policy context for the Conservation Area. Within this context, some specific objectives for St. Mary Street can be provided to support advice within Circular 61/96 “Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas.” These should form the basis for guidelines drawn up for use in the area.

The appraisal is the most important part of the review process as it describes the features which make up the Conservation Area’s special character and identifies potential for enhancement. Now adopted, the appraisal and guidance may be used in the following ways:

- In providing guidance for business, property owners and those who live in St. Mary Street Conservation Area.
- In establishing adopted policies to be used in the assessment of planning applications.
- In setting out priorities for the allocation of budgets and resources in the future.

The following opportunities, derived from the SWOT analysis are presented by the appraisal:

- To maintain the coherence and character of the St. Mary Street Conservation Area.
- To ensure the protection of the status of the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings.
- To ensure that new developments are well integrated within the historic street scene and to secure an appropriate balance between shopping and other uses, in particular to control the increasing pressure for café/bar uses.
- To improve the public realm and quality of pedestrian environment and to ensure this is achieved with regard for the Conservation Area’s special character. The City Centre Strategy - Strategy Area Appraisals will also help to achieve this.
- To enhance the area’s diverse character and tourist role.
- To increase the awareness, understanding and appreciation of the character and quality of the Conservation Area.
- To encourage and explain to business and property owners in the area the importance of accurate repair and restoration of the buildings within the Conservation Area and that they should be carried out to standards and detailing which match original design and construction techniques, where possible.
- To support shops and businesses in their efforts to keep the area as a vibrant and lively place in which to visit, shop, eat and drink.
- To encourage better use of vacant upper floors of buildings within the Conservation Area.

This final section aims to address these findings in proposals to enhance the character of the Conservation Area and the features described in preceding sections.

5.2 The City Centre Strategy

The Cardiff City Centre Strategy plays an important role in the enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area and provides a vision for the continuing regeneration of Cardiff City Centre for the period 2003-2006, and includes proposals for its development and management. The strategy outlines key issues, current initiatives and future aspirations for the City Centre as a whole and for the distinctive individual strategy areas, which it contains. The St. Mary Street Conservation Area incorporates 3 strategy areas; the aims and objectives of each of these strategy areas are listed below:

The St. Mary Street Area

1. To improve the quality of the pedestrian environment, redressing the balance between pedestrians and traffic.
2. To secure an appropriate balance between retail A1 (shops) and other uses.
3. To improve the commercial viability of the area and tackle the problem of high vacancy.

The St. John's Area

1. To enhance the role and quality of the St. John's area as an important focal point for the City Centre.
2. To establish an appropriate balance between retail (shops/food and drink), cultural, religious and other uses.
3. To strengthen business activity and to realise the area's economic potential by increasing pedestrian numbers and expenditure.

The Millennium Stadium Area

1. To improve the quality of the public realm.
2. To balance the needs of commercial interests with those of other interests.
3. To encourage inward investment in new development & building refurbishment.

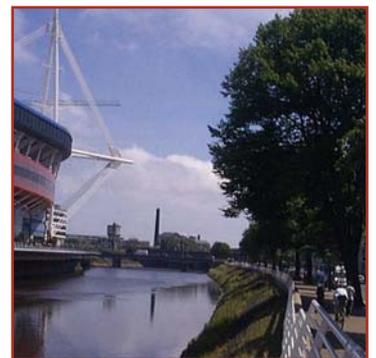
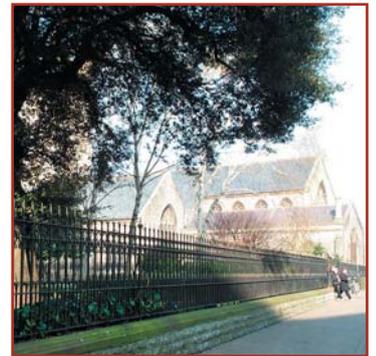
Strategy Area Appraisals are in the process of being produced for these 3 areas, with additional information on Public Realm proposals for St. Mary St & St. John's.

The strategy relates to and draws upon other corporate initiatives, such as the deposited Unitary Development Plan (UDP) until such time as a Local Development Plan has been adopted, the Local Transport Plan and the Local Sustainability Strategy. It reflects national planning guidance, which advocates the preparation of a clear strategy for the future of town and city centres, and supports and builds upon the key aims and objectives of the above corporate initiatives. The strategy is regarded as a material planning consideration by the Council in determining applications for proposed development in the City Centre.

5.3 Guidance

The most effective way to enhance the Conservation Area is to ensure that those planning work or development in the Conservation Area understand its character.

The inclusion of many of the properties in the St. Mary Street area within the Cadw List of Buildings of architectural or historic interest has established other criteria to be met in proposals for alteration. The listing of a building places a duty on the Local Planning Authority to consider the impact of development on the setting of a Listed Building. Listing also means that proposals for alteration need to be fully justified.



5.4 Enhancement

Although the Planning Act 1990 (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) places a duty on the Local Planning Authority to prepare a scheme of enhancement for a Conservation Area, there is no identified budget or mechanism for its achievement. This means that enhancement can only be achieved in cooperation with other Service Areas within the Council or in partnership with the community or other public bodies.

The following opportunities are those where the Council could have a significant role in influencing and bringing forward enhancements.

1. Through the use of the Appraisal to guide the Local Planning Authority in making planning decisions. The character appraisal can be a material planning consideration when considering planning applications. Applicants in demonstrating fulfillment of relevant policies for new development in the Conservation Area will need to show that a context appraisal has taken account of the character identified in this document.
2. The management and maintenance of the Council's estate including property, parks and gardens.
3. The promotion of an understanding of the cultural and historic significance of St. Mary Street through links with schools, libraries and heritage and community groups.
4. Through the adoption of grant aided programmes to restore buildings. With the possible scope for partnership with Cadw.
5. Through the encouragement and support of local initiatives to enhance and strengthen local shops, businesses and services.
6. Through the effective management of existing Council budgets for example in:
 - Building repair
 - Grant aid to improve Energy Efficiency in business
 - Highway improvement and repair
 - Traffic and Transportation – maintenance and enhancement.
7. Through the encouragement and support of initiatives to enhance and strengthen the tourist, shopping and business role of the area through the City Centre Strategy.

The following objectives could also enhance the Conservation Area:

Controlling the Balance of Land Uses

To maintain an appropriate diversity of land-uses to maintain and enhance the City Centre as an attractive place to shop, live, work, relax and invest. In particular, to protect and enhance the special character of Mill Lane as a restaurant and café quarter and to resist the pressure for pubs and nightclubs in other locations within the Conservation Area.

Vacancy Levels

Progress a Vacant Floor-space Initiative to consider the potential for office refurbishment or conversion to other uses and where appropriate the potential for vacant office space above ground floor level to be converted to residential accommodation.

Public Realm Initiatives

To secure a high quality public realm that has contemporary relevance, is historically consistent and has visually appropriate carriageway materials that meet a variety of functional situations. To protect and enhance small scale distinctive historic treatments. New materials should match or compliment existing historic materials and their arrangements, and should have unity with other streets within the area through their use of natural materials.

Street Furniture

To develop a range of street furniture that is simple, elegant, robust and which compliments and is appropriate to the architecture and setting of the Conservation Area.

Trees and Open Space

To introduce trees to enhance the visual amenity of the area. New planting could provide an accent to the area's noted architectural and spatial qualities. More importantly the St. Mary Street Area is designated as an Air Quality Management Area and the introduction of trees would assist in reducing Nitrogen Oxides and improve air quality.

Lighting

To highlight buildings of architectural importance at night and define entrances into the area, particularly at the gateway sites, both initiatives can strengthen the special identity of the St. Mary Street Conservation Area while emphasising the links between areas.

Public Art & Traditional Monuments

To seek appropriate public artworks to be of a suitable scale, imagery and choice of materials, colour and texture that are sensitive to the environmental context of the area. The incorporation of public artworks within the public realm would benefit the area by enhancing existing townscape features and enlivening the environment. It should be noted, that the Council have prepared a Public Art Strategy.

Clutter

Establish a partnership with key stakeholders, such as highways agencies and utility companies for removing the superfluous and obsolete street furniture.

Poor Quality Shopfronts

Undertake enforcement action on inappropriate shopfront designs, roller shutters and shop signs and re-enforce and review design guidance on shopfronts and signage.

Unauthorised Building Restoration

To research funding sources for building improvement initiatives, and to provide guidance for building restoration with design guidance for the area.

Local Identity

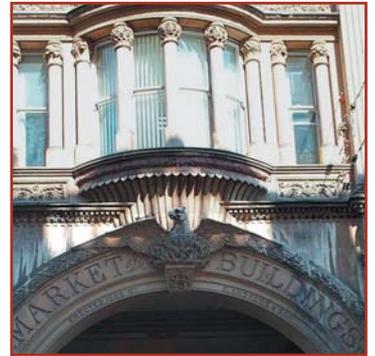
To promote the area's retail function and quality architecture. To offer tourists leisure experiences complementary to the main shopping core. Market the historic role and the medieval role of St. Mary Street as a quayside location.

Signage

To develop an integrated system for pedestrian and traffic signage which is simple, elegant and contemporary and does not visually compete with the built form.

Disability Issues

To investigate the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act and the implications for access into Listed Buildings and the effect on the appearance of the Conservation Area.



5.5 Conclusion

St. Mary Street Conservation Area has a special significance in Cardiff. However, the listing of most buildings establishes a strong set of Government principles and priorities, which must be acknowledged in the formulation and adoption of a scheme of enhancement for the Conservation Area.

This high level of protection raises opportunities for funding to support conservation objectives. One way in which this might be achieved is to ensure that properties within the Conservation Area benefit from relevant grant programmes.

Funding of enhancement activity is central to the success of conservation. However, the availability of grants from Central Government, Welsh Assembly Government or other grant giving bodies is not high in Cardiff at this present time.

Specific external funding sources should be investigated and could include partners such as Wales Tourist Board, Arts Council for Wales, CADW and Heritage Lottery Fund for grant aid opportunities. In order to preserve the special character of the Conservation Area it is considered appropriate to seek public realm improvements in this area from proposals that come forward through the planning application process. Future developments could provide financial contributions that will facilitate and fund a public realm enhancement scheme for the area. Developers could also be requested to enter into a legal agreement to make a contribution towards necessary public realm enhancements along or in the St. Mary Street area.



recommendations

The following recommendations summarise the findings of the Appraisal and the action that may be taken after adoption:

- It is recommended that the Appraisal and its findings be published and made available to businesses, property owners or those who have an interest in the St. Mary Street Conservation Area.
- The Appraisal and its recommendations and priorities for action be confirmed as the basis for corporate initiatives in the Conservation Area and its findings inform the implementation of the City Centre Strategy.
- Scope for the re-establishment of a Town Scheme partnership be investigated with CADW.
- In partnership with the Conservation Advisory Group, improved communications with heritage groups and businesses be established.
- The Appraisal and information on the history of St. Mary Street area be made available for study in the local studies library and at local schools.
- Opportunities for the use of historic records and archive material and photographic records be researched and made available for use within the school curriculum.
- An appropriate scheme of repair and maintenance within the Council's Highways and Parks Service Area be agreed to ensure that work in the public realm is sensitive to the character of the Conservation Area.

6.1 Consultation

This document has been adopted following local consultation. If you would like to contribute and share information on St. Mary Street Conservation Area, please contact the Conservation Team on 20873485, or 20873480.

Details on individual buildings, together with other planning policy documents and references identified in the text may also be obtained from the Regeneration Group, Strategic Planning, City and County of Cardiff, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4UW.



7.1 Bibliography

- Cardiff: The Making of a City Centre - P Riden (1993)
- The Buildings of Wales: Glamorgan - John Newman (1995)
- Cardiff: A History of the City - William Rees (1962)
- City of Cardiff Local Plan - Cardiff County Council (1996)
- City Centre Strategy - Cardiff County Council (2003-2006)
- Cardiff Unitary Development Plan (Deposited) - Cardiff County Council (2003)
- Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Welsh Office Circular 61/96 - Planning and the Historic Environment

7.2 Acknowledgements

- Cadw Welsh Historic Monuments
- Glamorgan Record Office

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