

**CHARACTER APPRAISAL**  
**FOR**  
**VICAR STREET AND EXCHANGE STREET**  
**CONSERVATION AREA**  
**KIDDERMINSTER**  
**July 2003**



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Forward Planning Section,  
Planning, Health and Environment Division,  
Land Oak House,  
Chester Road North,  
KIDDERMINSTER DY10 1TA

Tel. 01562 820505

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER	1
2.1 Historical Background	1
2.2 Topography	1
2.3 Setting	2
2.4 Street Pattern	2
2.5 Pattern and Density of Development	5
2.6 Types of Buildings and Uses	6
2.7 Style of Buildings	7
2.8 Size and Plan of Buildings	9
2.9 Roofs	10
2.10 Articulation of Roofs to Supporting Walls	12
2.11 Walls	13
2.12 Doorways and Doors	14
2.13 Windows	16
2.14 Watergoods	17
2.15 Listed Buildings and Structures	18
2.16 Buildings of Local Interest	19
2.17 Street Furniture	20
2.18 Spaces	22
2.19 Trees and Vegetation	23
2.20 Views and Vistas	23
2.21 Landmarks and Focal Points	25
2.22 Other Noteworthy Features	26
2.23 Elements that Detract from the Character or Appearance	27
3.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT	31
<i>Enclosure 1</i> Character Appraisal Map	Rear



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Vicar Street and Exchange Street Conservation Area was designated by Wyre Forest District Council on 16<sup>th</sup>. July 2003. It is 1.46 hectares (3.61 acres) in extent and is located within Kidderminster Town Centre, in the County of Worcestershire.

The Conservation Area encompasses civic, business and other buildings that date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; parts of an older street pattern; and a short length of the embankment to the River Stour.

The purpose of this document is to describe the special architectural and historic interest of the Area, in order to assist all concerned with the use and development of land and buildings within and adjoining it to preserve and enhance its character. The Heritage section of the District Local Plan makes reference to the consideration that will be given to Conservation Area Character Appraisals in considering proposals for development.

*Enclosure 1* (back of document) shows the boundary of the Conservation Area, together with a number of features referred to in this document.

## **2.0 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER**

### **2.1 Historical Background**

Kidderminster grew-up at a crossing point to the River Stour, on an important route-way between the Midlands and the Wales. A minster was founded somewhere in the vicinity during the eighth century and Kidderminster (or "*Chideminstre*", possibly meaning "*Cyddas*" or "*Cydela's minster*") was of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

A textile industry grew-up in the Town during the medieval period, associated with the industrial potential of the River Stour. This industry reached its height between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries, when Kidderminster became a leading centre for the manufacture of textiles.

The Conservation Area encompasses part of the central and south-west extent of the former medieval settlement, and part of the centre of the much enlarged present day Town. The textile industry brought with it considerable prosperity and associated activities, which are reflected in some of the older buildings in the Area.

Parts of the Town centre were redeveloped during the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, so that only buildings dating from the nineteenth century onwards survive in the Area.

### **2.2 Topography**

The principal topographical influence on the Conservation Area is the River Stour, which flows north-south through the Town. The Area adjoins the eastern side of the River and includes a spur at its southern end, known variously as Vicar's Brook and Back Brook.

The Area has an average height of approximately 32 metres A.O.D. The north-east end lies above the flood plain of the River, on the side of a gently sloping terrace and was developed first; whilst the south-west end lies within the flood plain and was developed last.

### **2.3 Setting**

The Conservation Area is almost entirely surrounded by built development dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Important aspects of the current setting, include the Area's proximity to and links with the following:

- a) Elements of the surviving medieval street pattern (refer also Street Pattern, Section 2.4, below) particularly in the Bull Ring, Church Street, Worcester Street, Oxford Street, Lower Mill Street, Blackwell Street and Coventry Street.
- b) Church Street Conservation Area, which is located approximately 60 metres to the north-west of the Area and like Vicar Street lies within the medieval urban form albeit now characterised by later buildings. (Church Street in-turn links to the medieval Church of St Mary, to the north).
- c) Groups of older buildings both within and adjoining the Town Centre; particularly in the Bull Ring, Church Street, Worcester Street, Oxford Street, Lower Mill Street, Blackwell Street, Coventry Street, Prospect Hill, New Road, Green Street, Dixon Street, Castle Road and Park Lane.
- d) The River Stour, which both adjoins or flows close to its western edge, and is visible from a road bridge at the south-west end of Exchange Street and a footbridge at the western end of Weavers Wharf.
- e) The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area, which is located approximately 230 metres to the west. (The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal was constructed in 1772 and runs north south through the Town, following the valley of the River Stour).

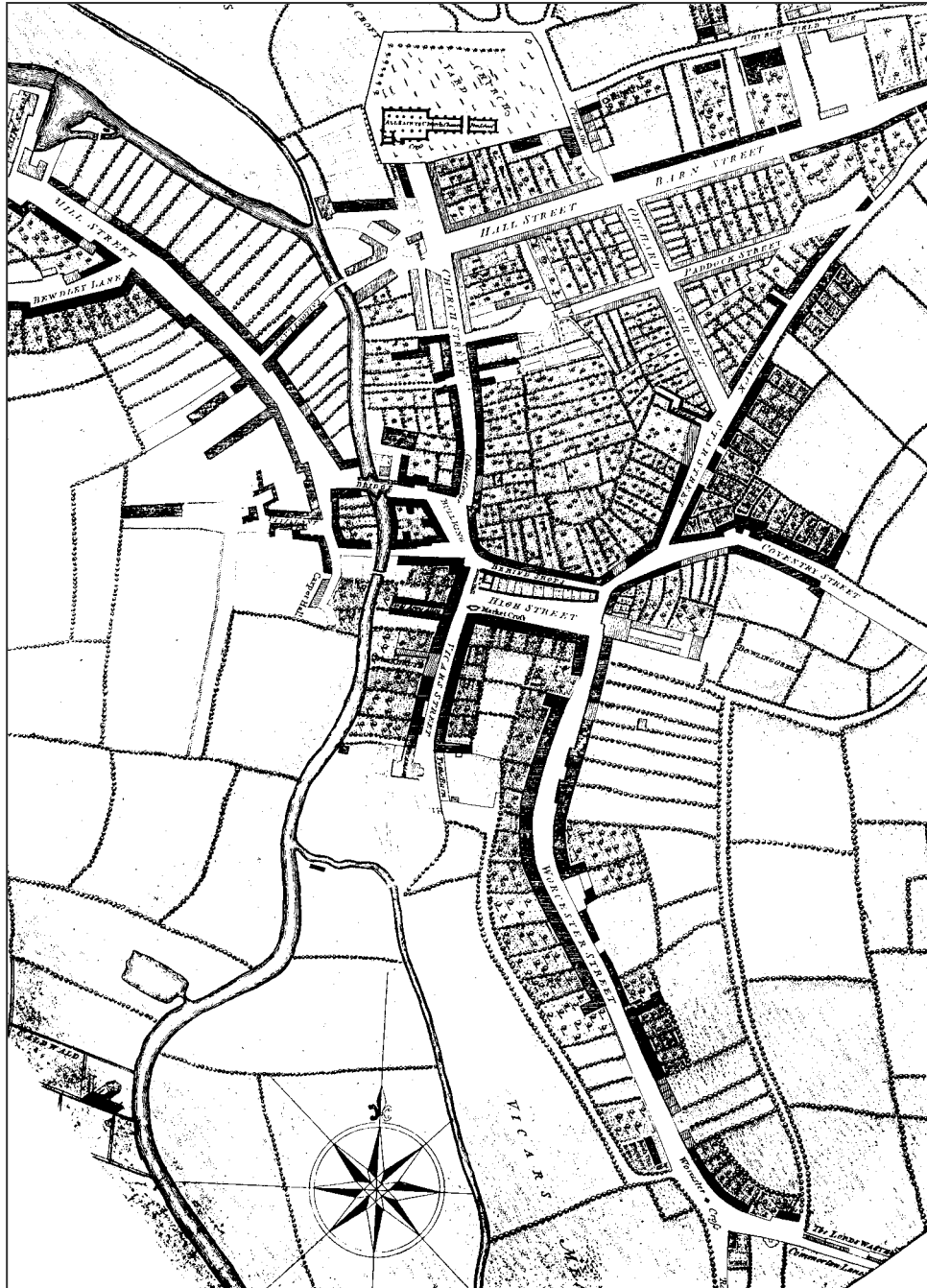
### **2.4 Street Pattern**

The principal thoroughfares in the Area are Vicar Street and Exchange Street; together with parts of High Street, Oxford Street, Market Street and Weavers Wharf. Vicar Street, High Street and the route of Oxford Street (as a path), are shown on one of the oldest surviving maps of Kidderminster dated 1753 but are thought to be medieval in origin. In this respect, the basic layout of the northern part of the existing Town centre, including the streets, was probably established during the medieval period and added to significantly from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries onwards.

The pre-nineteenth century street pattern in the Town centre may be likened to an upright letter "H" standing beside the River Stour. Other roads lead off the top right and left limbs, to form the extremities of an important east-west route. Vicar Street comprised the lower-left limb to the "H" layout and so lay just off the central street of the early settlement.

The name Vicar Street probably derives from the presence of a vicarage shown on a map of 1753 as being located at its south-west end (with a tithe barn opposite) on the site of what is currently the Town Hall buildings. This in-

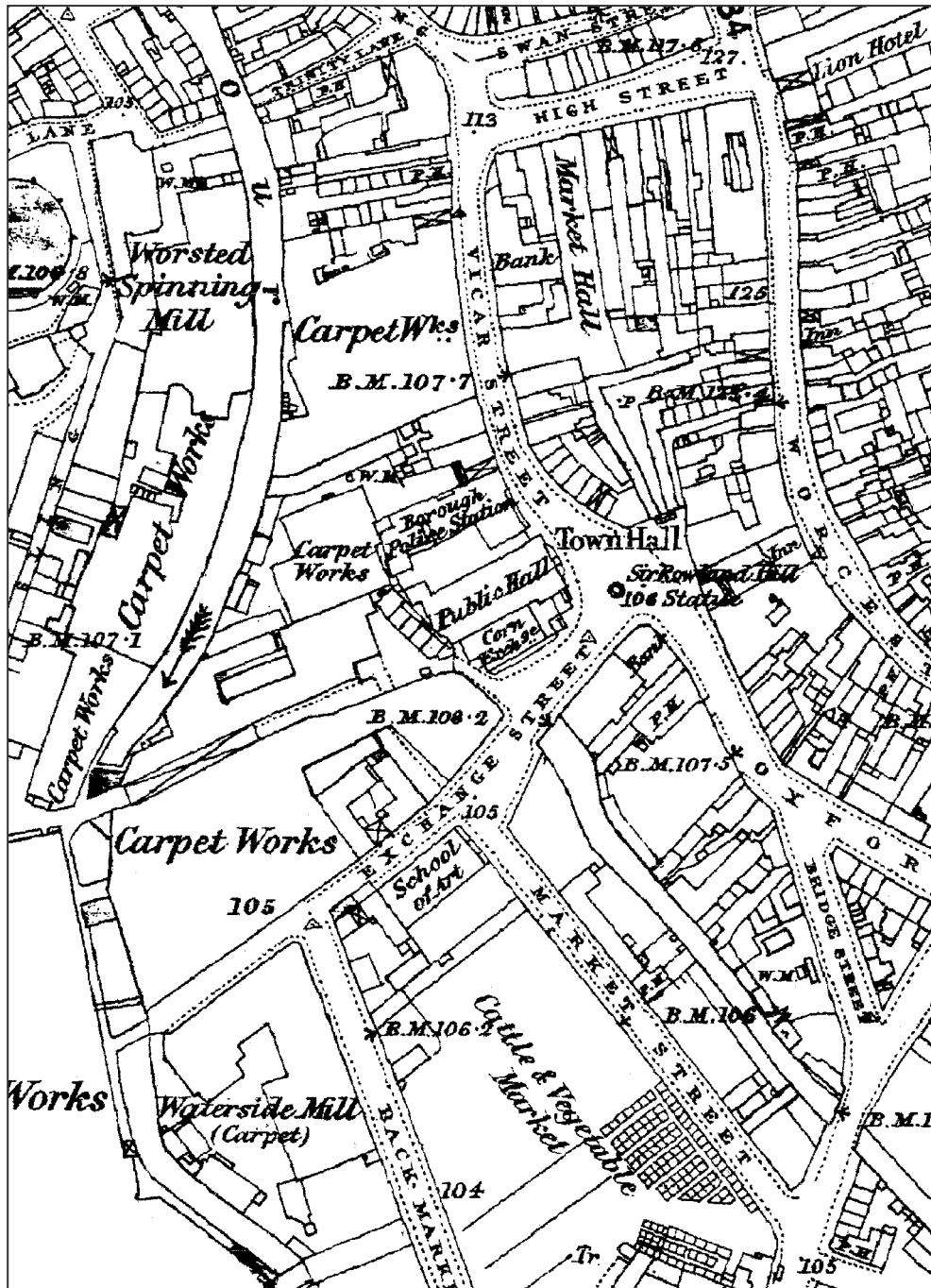
turn may have been the site of a vicarage to the Church of St. Mary thought to have been built in the vicinity during the fifteenth century.



*Map of Kidderminster by John Doharty dated 1753*

High Street forms the central crossbar to the "H" street pattern and would have been an important component on the early east-west route through the Town. It is thought to have been the site of the Town's former medieval open-air market; a market cross formerly standing at its south-west end to the fore of the current Nos. 25 & 26 High Street (Boots Opticians). This street was originally much wider, but was subject to infilling by the mid. eighteenth century, when it became two parallel streets. The western street (Swan Street) was redeveloped and lost during the late 1960's, as part of the Swan Centre Shopping Centre, leaving the narrower High Street as it is today.

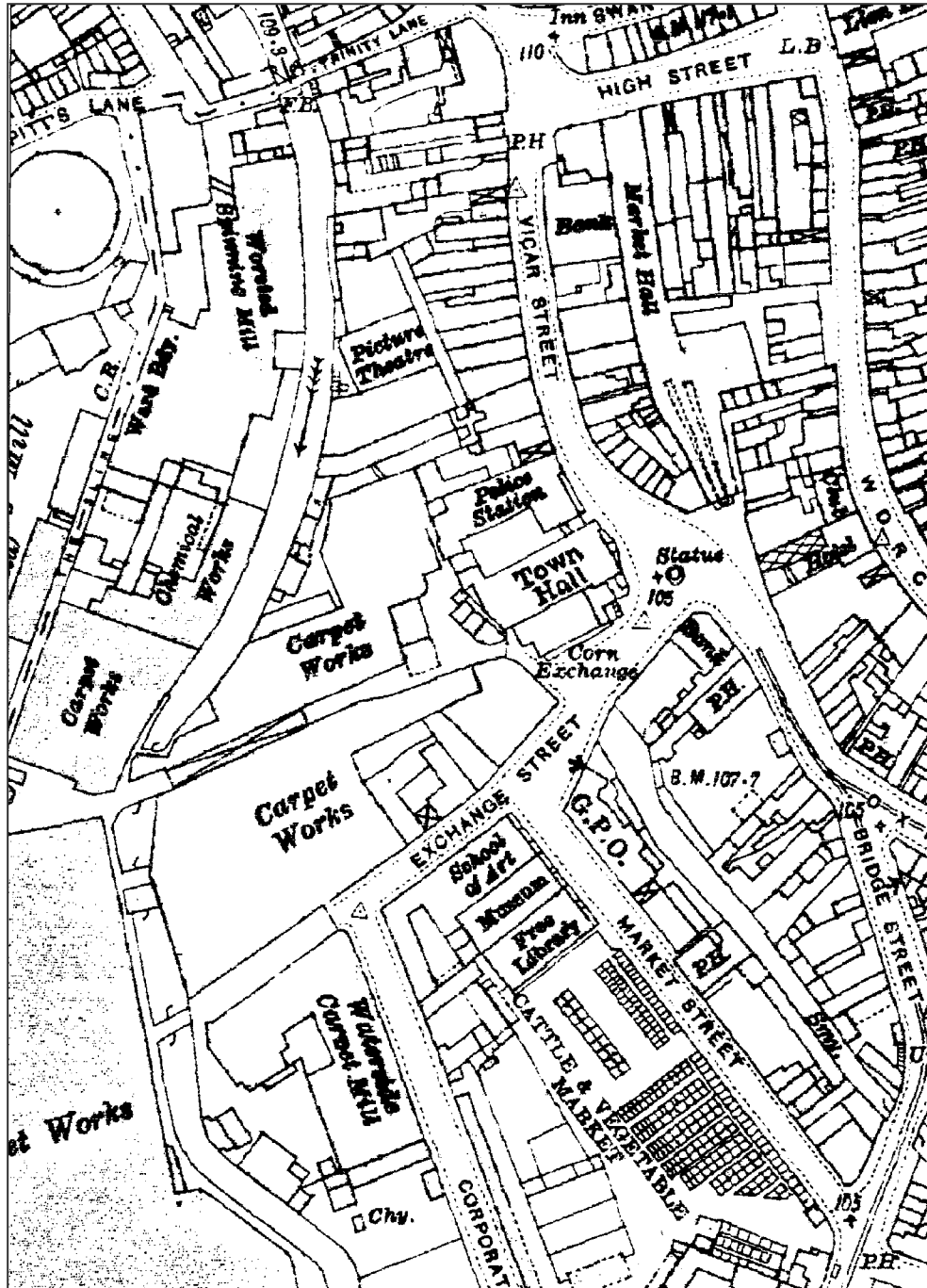
Exchange Street and Market Street extend from the south-west end of Vicar Street, and are probably early nineteenth century in origin; being first shown on a map dating from that period. Exchange Street probably takes its name from the current Corn Exchange (now part of the Town Hall buildings) built adjoining its eastern end in 1853; whilst Market Street probably takes its name from a nineteenth century livestock market that formerly adjoined its western side.



Ordnance Survey Map of Kidderminster dated 1884

Weavers Wharf is a pedestrian route-way created in 2003 in order to link Vicar Street with a new retail development on the western side of the River Stour.





Ordnance Survey Map of Kidderminster dated 1926

## 2.5 Pattern and Density of Development

The pattern of development throughout the Area is back of pavement, forming terraces; and is of high density, almost entirely infilling the plots.

In much of Vicar Street and along the eastern side of Oxford Street, the plots are generally narrow and deep, and aligned perpendicular to the street. Some of these plots may reflect or overlie an earlier pattern of development and occupancy known as burgage tenure, which in Kidderminster dates from at least the thirteenth century. Burgages were freehold tenements of standard width, whose occupiers paid a rent to the Lord of the Manor. Such burgages

were particularly common near market places (such as in Vicar Street) and were typically held by skilled craftsmen and traders. In central locations they usually comprised a house on the frontage, with an integral workshop and a garden to the rear. By 1307, there were 63 burgesses in the Town many of who were granted the right to set up stalls outside their houses on market days.

The south-west end of Vicar Street may historically have been Church land and is shown on the map of 1753 as being the site of a vicarage set in a large garden. This building and plot was replaced and infilled by the current Town Hall buildings, during the nineteenth century. A tithe barn shown on the map of 1753 as lying opposite the former vicarage was probably redeveloped at around the same time as the vicarage; being the site of the current Nos. 8 to 12 Vicar Street, which date from the nineteenth century.

In Exchange Street, particularly at the north-east end, the plots tend to be comparatively wide and shallow; and like those in Vicar Street, almost completely infilled. Barclays Bank; Nos. 1 to 3, Exchange Street; and Brinton's Offices (which date from the nineteenth century) are probably the only buildings to have been erected on those plots.

The plots adjoining the north-east side of Oxford Street are likely to be subdivisions of older burgage plots. They are shown on the map of 1753 as having their principal built frontages onto Worcester Street, which runs parallel to the east; with rear gardens running west to what is now Oxford Street. (At that time, Oxford Street was little more than a path linking the south end of Vicar Street to Worcester Street). These plots were subdivided and the rear gardens infilled to create a new built frontage facing south onto what became Oxford Street, during the nineteenth century.

The layout of plots adjoining Weavers Wharf dates from 2003. They have a modest size and pattern appropriate to the more intimate environment of the walkway.

The tendency for older plots within and adjoining the Area to be infilled, and for later plots to be densely developed, probably dates from the nineteenth century onwards; associated with a progressively more intensive use of centrally located land as the Town grew.

## **2.6 Types of Buildings and Uses**

The types of buildings and uses in the Area reflect those expected in a town centre location, particularly from the nineteenth century onwards; together with the presence of an important carpet manufacturing industry, which conferred considerable prosperity on the Town. These buildings and uses include grand civic buildings (Town Hall, Corn Exchange, Police Station and Law Court), shops, banks, offices and a public house. Notably, two of the buildings relate to the nineteenth century carpet manufacturing industry. These are Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street (formerly premises for J.E. Barton Co.); and Brinton's Offices (offices to the former adjoining Brinton's carpet factory).

Most of the buildings in the Area remain broadly in their original uses. The exceptions are Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street, which is now three shops with offices above; and the Corn Exchange and Police Station, which are now part of the Town Hall buildings.

A school of art, a museum and a library, were originally erected by public donation at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street during the late nineteenth century. This building was replaced with the current public library during the late 1990's; which in part continues a historic use *in situ*.

There is a single open-air flower seller's stall located at the corner of Vicar Street and High Street. It is likely that High Street was the location of the Town's former medieval open-air market (refer Street Pattern, Section 2.4, above) so this type of structure and means of trading continue a historic activity in the Area.

## 2.7 Style of Buildings

The principal style of building in the Area is a high quality nineteenth century interpretation of the Italianate, particularly as exemplified by Listed buildings (refer Listed Buildings and Structures, Section 2.15, below) together with a few other broadly sympathetic but less characteristic variations (refer Other Buildings of Interest, Section 2.15, below).

The interpretation of the Italianate among the Listed buildings, is as follows:

- a) Strict and very high quality incorporation of Italianate classical orders and detailing, as exemplified by the Town Hall buildings and Nos. 1 & 2, Vicar Street (Lloyd's Bank).



Town Hall buildings (left) and Nos. 1 & 2 (Lloyd's Bank) Vicar Street (right)

- b) A more free but high quality classical Italianate, as exemplified by No. 66 Oxford Street (Barclays Bank), Nos. 1 to 3 Exchange Street, Brinton's Offices, and the façade to the former Head Post Office at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street.



No. 66 Oxford Street (Barclays Bank) (left) and Brinton's Offices (right)

- c) A high quality interpretation of the Italianate, reminiscent of late medieval and early Renaissance city palaces, as exhibited by Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street.



*Nos. 17 to 20, Vicar Street*

Importantly, all the Listed Buildings and Structures in the Area exhibit a sense of civic or business dignity and pride appropriate to their location adjoining one of the principal streets of the Town centre; and all compliment one another in the street scene.

The secondary styles of building in the Area may be summed up as incorporating elements of classicism and the polite, with varying degrees of quality.

These styles are as follows:

- a) A high quality variation of Art Deco, incorporating Egyptian inspired classical detailing, as exhibited by Nos. 25 & 26 High Street (Boots Optician).



*Nos. 25 & 26 (Boots Opticians) High Street*

- b) Lower quality interpretations of the nineteenth century polite, as exhibited by Nos. 8 to 12, and the Swan Public House, Vicar Street; and new Units 1 & 2, Weavers Wharf.



*Nos. 8 to 12 and Swan Public House, in Vicar Street*

- c) Incorporation of loosely based Italianate elements and modern elements, as exhibited by the late twentieth century Public Library in Market Street.

Importantly, it is the Listed buildings that provide the principal lead for defining the architectural style of the Area, together with many other aspects of design.

## **2.8 Size and Plan of Buildings**

The size and plan of buildings in the Area are characterised as follows:

### a) Size:

Most of the buildings are two or three generously proportioned storeys in height and reflect a stage of development reached during the late nineteenth century.

The top floors to buildings are often shorter than lower floors, for example No. 66 (Barclays Bank) Oxford Street; Brinton's Offices; and Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street.

The height of buildings relative to one another generally reflects the subtle variation in topography, which slopes from north to south. The only exceptions are Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street, which has four storeys (part of a carpet manufacturing factory); and No. 3/3A Vicar Street (Woolwich Building Society) which has one storey.

High rise buildings were introduced to towns elsewhere from the late nineteenth century onwards, but the buildings in the Area (although of quite grand designs in some instances) retain a human scale.

### b) Plan:

The ground plan of buildings in the Area appears to have been defined by the plot shapes, some of which may precede the existing buildings and which in most cases have been almost entirely infilled, apart from small yards. Notably, the facades of the buildings display order and elements of symmetry, regardless of the plan.

The better buildings incorporate high quality design elements that positively address important corners. These include curved corner plans (incorporating principal entrances) continued to the floors above, for example, No. 66

(Barclays Bank) Oxford Street, and Brinton's Offices; a curved entrance colonnade and porch, exhibited by Nos. 1 & 2 Vicar Street (Lloyds Bank); and right-angled step backs, exhibited by the north-east corner to the Town Hall buildings.

In addition, the Town Hall and Brinton's offices (two of the largest buildings in the Area) have inner court-yards accessed via covered entrances.

## 2.9 Roofs

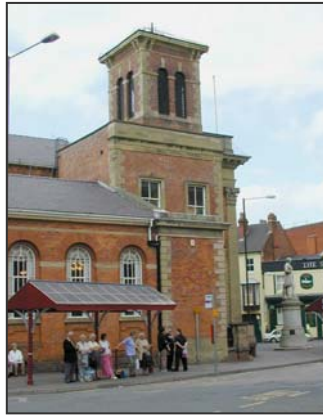
The roofs to buildings in the Area are characterised as follows:

- a) Principal roofs are low to medium angled hips, of Italianate form.



*Principal roofs to Nos. 17 to 20, Vicar Street (top left),  
No. 66 Oxford Street (Barclays Bank) (top right)  
and Brinton's Offices (bottom)*

- b) Clad with grey welsh slates.
- c) Joints at the roof planes are sealed with rolled lead or ridge tiles.
- d) Long axis runs parallel to the long axis of the street.
- e) Absence of skylights or dormers, and front facing gables, because the useable volume of roof is generally reduced by the shallow angle.
- f) Elaborate secondary roof structures, including a campanile and mansard roof on the front facing corners to the Town Hall buildings.



*Corner campanile (left) and mansard roof (right) to the Town Hall buildings*

- g) Chimney stacks of rectangular plan, generally mounted below the roof ridge, having ornate brick dentilling, and two or three vent pots.

Of further note are three lantern-like pointed metal ventilation fixtures (not chimneys) mounted on the roof ridge to the Town Hall buildings



*Chimney stacks to Nos. 1 to 3, Exchange Street (top left) No. 2 (Lloyds Bank) Vicar Street (top right), and No. 12 Vicar Street (bottom left); and ventilation lanterns to the Town Hall buildings (bottom right)*

There are three variations to the above characteristics for principal roofs. These are Nos. 8 to 12 Vicar Street, which incorporates a pitched roof without hips and an exposed side gable; Nos. 25 & 26 High Street (Boots Opticians), which has a flat roof but concealed behind a parapet; and the new Library, which has a grey metal roof. These variations are not representative of the important roof characteristics of the Area.

## 2.10 Articulation of Roofs to Supporting Walls

The articulation of roofs to supporting walls in the Area takes two forms, as follows:

- a) Firstly, the lower edge of the roof is concealed behind a palisade. These palisades have an exterior basal projecting cornice in contrasting material and colour. The better examples are ornately detailed and incorporate pilasters, pediments, and ornate metal work, as exhibited by the Town Hall buildings.



*Roof palisades to the Town Hall buildings (top)  
Barclays Bank (bottom left) and Brinton's Offices (bottom right)*

- b) Secondly, the lower edge to the roof projects, and the eaves are ornately decorated with several courses of dentilled and moulded brickwork or stone work, or with modillions and decorative banding/frieze.



*Roof eaves to Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street (left),  
and Nos. 1 & 2, Vicar Street (Lloyd's Bank) (right)*



## 2.11 Walls

The exterior walls to buildings in the Area are characterised as follows:

- a) Construction of nine-inch machine made bricks, with Flemish bond, and narrow courses of lime mortar.



*Brickwork with a Flemish bond*

- b) Red brick predominates but buff brick is also used, and occasionally a combination of red and buff, and red, buff and blue brick for polychrome detailing (but blue brick never predominates)
- c) Buff stone and brick dressing, in a classical and free-classical Italianate manner. Important details include giant pilasters of two storeys, and superimposed pilasters of two and three storeys, capitals, entablature, quoins, architraves around window openings, pediments, projecting window sills, moulded projecting cornices below parapets and marking floor divisions, rustication, and basal pedestals and courses.



*Giant and superimposed pilasters to the Town Hall (top left) and corner of Barclays Bank (top right) and banding between floors to Lloyds Bank (bottom left) and Nos. 17 to 20, Vicar Street*

- d) Ornate cast metal ventilation grilles, of width equivalent to one brick and height equivalent to one or two bricks.

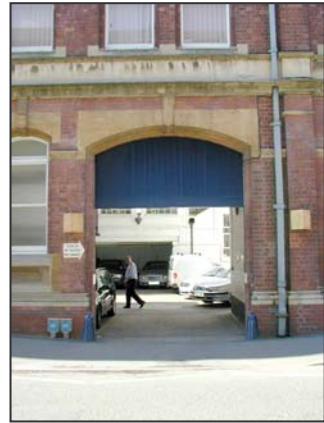


*Ornate metal ventilation grilles  
on Nos. 1 to 3, Exchange Street*

## 2.12 Doorways and doors

The doorways and doors to buildings in the Area are characterised as follows:

- a) Classically inspired entrances detailing, with the decorative scheme often continued to the floors above.
- b) Often positioned at the corner of a building, where this is particularly prominent, and having a ground and upper floor plan curved to address the corner aspect (for example, Barclays Bank, Brinton's Offices and on the ground floor, Lloyds Bank).
- c) Hard wood panelled doors (often double); one or more buff stone steps; decorative floor tiles; internal porch; and semi-circular or segmental head to external doorway.
- d) Occasionally, outer doors are of ornate wrought iron, for example, the porch door to the former Law Court (Town Hall buildings).
- e) The largest buildings (Town Hall and Brinton's offices) have covered service entrances of sufficient width for the passage of horse-drawn wagons and motorised vehicles, leading to inner courtyards.



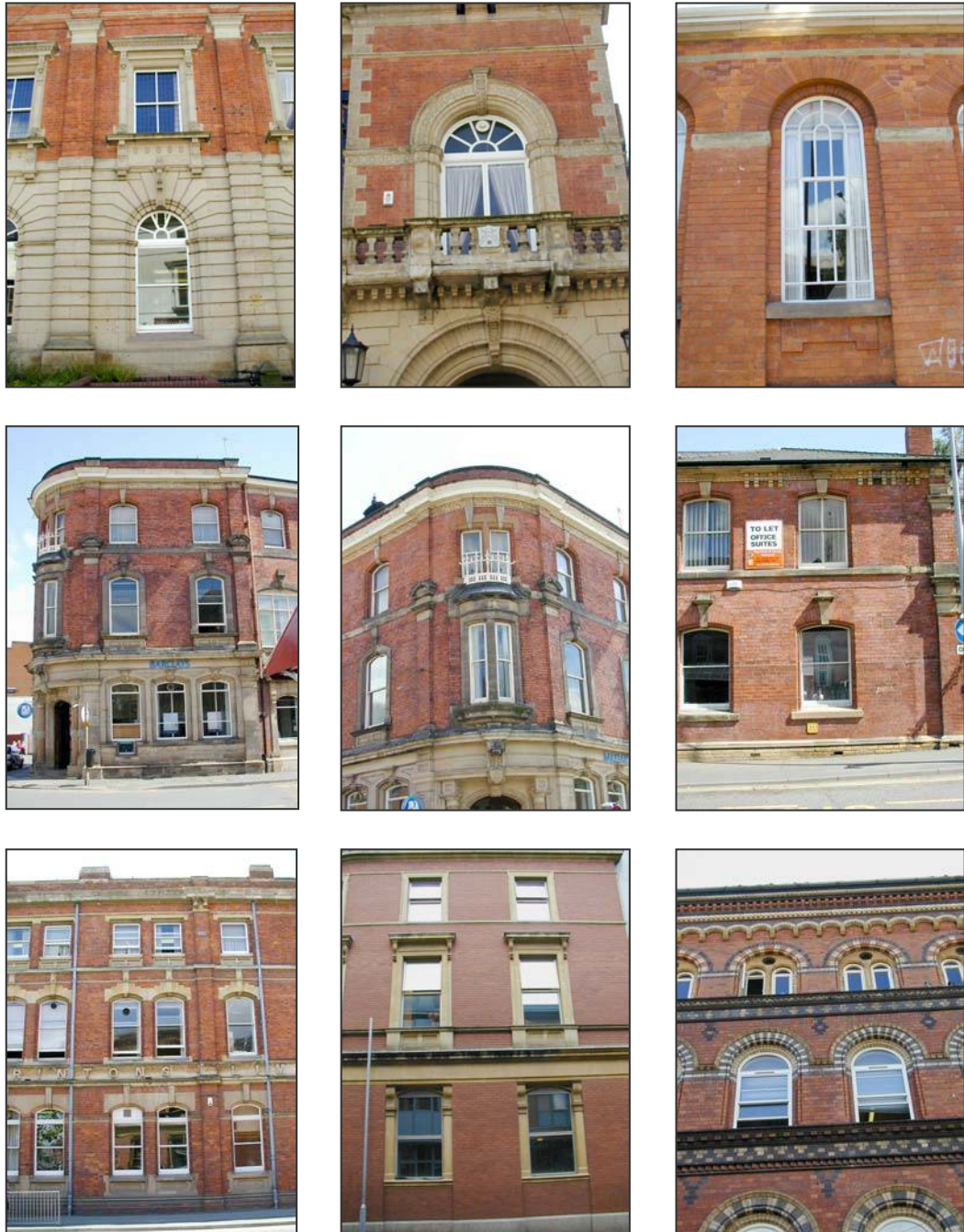
*Pedestrian doors and doorways to the Town Hall buildings (top)  
Barclays Bank, Brinton's Offices and Lloyds Bank (middle)  
And Lloyds Bank (northern end) (bottom left)  
and vehicular entrances  
to the Town Hall buildings and Brinton's Offices (bottom middle and right)*

## 2.13 Windows

The windows to buildings in the Area are characterised as follows:

- a) The window openings are broadly rectangular in shape, with headers generally being segmental, semi-circular or flat. The overall opening is vertically attenuated.
- b) The window mechanism is generally a sash (1/1, possibly being altered from 2/2 sashes) with the lower half offset back from the upper half. (Variations include smaller rectangular multi-pane glazing).
- c) The material for the window frame and glazing bars is wood, painted white.
- d) The window is set back from the face of the wall, rather than being flush.
- e) In the case of segmental headed openings, the top light of the sash is segmental. For semi-circular headed windows, the top light of the sash is flat, with a further fixed semicircular window above (often a multi-pane fanlight).
- f) The outer edge of the window opening generally incorporates a buff stone header with keystone; buff stone architrave, or moulded brickwork; and projecting buff stone sills. The better window openings have stone balustrades above the sills, and stone brackets and carved stone panels below the sills.
- g) The height of top floor windows is often less than for lower floors.
- h) The decorative scheme associated with the windows varies with each floor.
- i) The lower edges to ground floor windows are quite high off the ground, i.e. above the height of any basal plinth or pedestal (or its equivalent proportion as part of the façade) reflecting careful placement in a classically balanced or polite composition.
- j) Occasionally first floor windows project, the structure of which is either wood or stone.
- k) One high quality building (Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street) incorporates paired windows to the upper storey; and polychrome brickwork of up to three colours (red, buff and blue) around the windows.

The window detailing to Nos. 8 to 12, Vicar Street and the Swan Public House, Vicar Street is a simple flat-headed design with near square upper floor openings. These designs read well with each another but do not rise to the quality of the better buildings in the Area. Nos. 25 & 26, High Street (an Art Deco influenced building) has 6/6 pivoting windows, which are of good quality but not characteristic of the Area. A late twentieth century Public Library in Market Street introduces a variety of window forms that do not exist elsewhere in the Area.



*Windows to the Town Hall Buildings (top)  
 No. 66 (Barclays Bank) (middle left and centre)  
 and Nos. 1 & 2, Exchange Street (middle right)  
 Brinton's Offices (bottom left), the former Post Office (bottom middle)  
 and Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street (bottom right)*

## 2.14 Watergoods

Watergoods (gutters, hoppers and down pipes) are of metal construction. Exposed gutters are semi-circular in cross section with a stepped upper lip, or square in cross section; whilst original down pipes are rectangular in cross-section on the better buildings.

## 2.15 Listed Buildings and Structures

The Area includes seven Listed Buildings and Structures (Grade II) all of which date from the nineteenth century, as follows:

- a) Town Hall, and former police station and law courts, Vicar Street:

The principal buildings in the Area, designed by J.T. Meredith and dated 1876-7.

- b) Corn Exchange:

Former Corn Exchange adjoining the Town Hall, by Bidlake and Lovell, dated 1853 (now part of the Town Hall buildings).

- c) Nos. 1, 2 & 3 (Barclays Bank) Exchange Street:

A bank and offices, *circa* 1860-70.

- d) Brinton's Offices, Exchange Street:

Offices constructed for Brinton's carpet manufacturers during 1876 and extended during 1926.

- e) Nos. 1 & 2 (Lloyd's Bank), Vicar Street:

A bank dating from the late nineteenth century.

- f) Nos. 17 to 20 (incl. W.H. Smiths), Vicar Street:

Offices by J.G. Bland, for J.E. Barton & Sons carpet manufacturers, dated 1872. The style perhaps reflects the Argent Works (1863) in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter also by Bland.

- g) Statue of Sir Rowland Hill, to the fore of the Town Hall:

A statue by Sir Thomas Brock, dated 1881. The subject is Kidderminster-born Rowland Hill, who introduced the World's first Penny Postage in 1840.

As previously stated (refer Style of Buildings, Section 2.7, above) it is the Listed buildings that provide the principal lead for defining the architectural style of the Area, together with many other aspects of design.

## 2.16 Buildings of Local Interest

The Area includes five old buildings and one reconstruction that are not statutorily listed but which are considered to be of local interest and/or townscape value (and some of which may in future be included on a Local List) as follows:

a) Nos. 25 & 26 (Boots Optician) High Street:

A shop constructed during the early twentieth century, occupying a prominent corner gateway position at the northern end of the Area, and adjoining the Listed Lloyd's Bank.

b) Nos. 3 & 3A (Woolwich Building Society) Vicar Street:

A shop with a full width white stone pediment surmounting the façade, adjoining the Listed Lloyd's Bank.



*Nos. 3 & 3A (Woolwich Building Society),  
Vicar Street*

c) Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 (Britannia Building Society & Klick Photos.) Vicar Street:

A terrace of shops (probably once with residences above) dating from the late nineteenth century and lying opposite the Town Hall buildings.

d) Swan Public House, Vicar Street:

A public house dating from the nineteenth century located in a prominent corner position opposite the Listed Town Hall.

e) Façade to the former Head Post Office, corner of Market Street and Exchange Street:

A reconstruction of a late nineteenth century facade, occupying a prominent corner position.

## 2.17 Street Furniture

Traditional and traditional style street furniture within the Area, includes the following:

- a) A red cylindrical public post box outside the Swan Public House.



*Traditional Post box  
outside the Swan Public House*

- b) A cast metal road name plate fixed to Nos. 1 & 2 (Lloyd's Bank) Vicar Street; and a semi-traditional metal road name plate fixed to Barclay's Bank (corner of Oxford Street and Exchange Street).



*Traditional and traditional style street name plates  
In Vicar Street and Exchange Street*

- c) Two ornate traditional style cast metal finger posts, finished in muted red and silver, outside the Town Hall buildings and at the corner of Vicar Street and High Street.



*Traditional style finger posts  
outside the Town Hall buildings (left) and at the corner of Vicar Street and High Street (right)*



- d) Numerous traditional style cast metal bollards, finished in muted red and silver (similar to the finger posts) throughout the pedestrianised parts of High Street, Vicar Street and the eastern end of Market Street.



*Traditional style bollards  
in Market Street*

- e) An ornate traditional style cast metal railing, finished in black and gold, adjoining the pavement on the south side of Exchange Street over a spur to the River Stour.



*Traditional style railing  
adjoining a spur to the River Stour  
In Exchange Street*

- f) Two ornate cast and wrought metal former early twentieth century tram shelters, in Exchange Street, finished in muted red and silver; and currently used as bus shelters.



*Former tram shelters in Exchange Street*

- g) A traditional style single-light lamp-post, finished in black, outside Nos. 25 & 26 High Street (Boots Opticians).



*Traditional style lamp post  
outside Nos. 25 & 26 High Street*

- h) Two traditional style single-light bracket street lights, finished in black, mounted on the facades to Nos. 1 & 2 (Lloyd's Bank) (southern end) Vicar Street, and No.17 Vicar Street. (These are similar to a pair of bracket lights mounted on the entrance to the former Law Court [Town Hall buildings]).



*Traditional style bracket street lights  
on Nos. 17 (left) and 1 & 2 (Lloyds Bank) (right) Vicar Street*

## 2.18 Spaces

The Area contains several important spaces, principally comprised by the streets. In this respect, much of the northern end of Vicar Street and its junction with High Street, and the north-west end of Market Street, were pedestrianised during the 1980's. Weaver's Wharf was created specifically as a pedestrian route way in 2003. The exclusion of vehicles from these areas greatly enhances their character, as it both increases the importance of the thoroughfares as public spaces and provides a more dignified setting for the adjoining buildings.

The junction of Vicar Street, Exchange Street and Oxford Street has the feel of a modest civic square. Here the roadways splay outwards, but are

enclosed by back of pavement development including the Town Hall buildings and statue of Rowland Hill; which add a sense of civic grandeur.

## 2.19 Trees and Vegetation

Trees are not a general characteristic of the Area, due mainly to the relative narrowness of the streets and pavements, and the almost complete infilling of plots with built development.

There is, however, one important ornamental deciduous tree (a Plane) located in a pedestrianised part of the area at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street; and other important deciduous trees located immediately beyond the Area in High Street, the Bull Ring and adjoining the River Stour. These trees add interest and seasonal colour to the vicinity.



*Plane tree at the corner  
Of Market Street and Exchange Street*

There is limited ornamental planting of small shrubs and flowers in raised beds at the north and south ends of the pedestrianised part of Vicar Street, undertaken and maintained by Wyre Forest District Council.

There are no hanging baskets on buildings (except for the Swan Public House) or attached to street furniture, although the latter has potential to provide seasonal colour and interest if undertaken sensitively.

The embankment to the River Stour adjoining the south-west edge of the Area is landscaped; giving a soft green edge to that particular aspect.

## 2.20 Views and Vistas

There are several important views and vistas associated with the Area, including as follows:

a) Within the Area, as follows:

- Looking north and south along Vicar Street.
- East and west along Exchange Street.
- North west along Oxford Street (particularly from its northern end).
- North west along Market Street (particularly from its northern end).
- East along Weavers Wharf.

Within these thoroughfares, the back of pavement pattern of development creates a corridor-like line of sight and enclosure.

In the first four cases referred to above, the group value of the Listed Buildings and other buildings of interest is particularly apparent and important.

b) Looking outwards from within the Area, towards a variety of features, as follows:

- The southern edge of Church Street Conservation Area, viewed from the corner of Vicar Street and High Street.



*View towards Church Street Conservation Area  
from the corner of Vicar Street and High Street*

- Listed Nos. 17 and 18 High Street, and the unlisted but noteworthy façade to Nos. 20 & 21 High Street (Marks and Spencer), viewed from the corner of Vicar Street and High Street.
  - Nineteenth century buildings in a corner wedge between Oxford Street and Bridge Street, viewed from the northern end of Oxford Street.
  - Towards canal-side dwellings and trees in Park Lane and on rising ground beyond in Park Street, from the western end of Exchange Street.
  - The long sweep of the River Stour, which adjoins and flows close to the western edge of the Area, viewed from the western end of Exchange Street.
- c) Looking towards the Area, as follows:
- The northern part of Vicar Street and southern part of High Street, viewed from both Church Street Conservation Area and the eastern end of High Street.
  - The roofs and upper storeys to some of the buildings in Vicar Street and Exchange Street viewed from a public car park in Bromsgrove Street to the east, which occupies higher ground. (These buildings include the corner mansard roof and campanile to the Town Hall; Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street; No. 66 Oxford Street (Barclays Bank); and Brinton's Offices in Exchange Street.
  - The rear of the Brinton's Offices and the public library, at the south-west corner of the Area, viewed from the retail park and bus station to the west of the River Stour.
  - The front of Brintons Offices, looking north along Market Street.

## 2.21 Landmarks and Focal Points

There are several landmarks and focal points in the Area.

Landmarks are buildings, structures or other features, that are important because their size, design or position makes them particularly noticeable, but in a positive way. Special care is needed in the treatment of landmarks because they are particularly noticeable.

Important landmarks in the Area are as follows:

- a) All of the Listed Buildings. In this respect, the Town Hall buildings are particularly notable for their grand classical façade, projecting clock, corner campanile and corner mansard roof. These buildings exude a sense of civic grandeur and style, and are deliberately designed to be eye-catching and to visually govern their immediate setting.
- b) Important corner and gateway buildings (some of which are Listed) including the Town Hall; No. 66 Oxford Street (Barclays Bank), Brinton's Offices, Nos. 25 & 25 (Boots Opticians) High Street; the entrance to Lloyds Bank; the Swan Public House; and the façade to the former Post Office in Exchange Street. The first four of these buildings incorporate design elements that specifically seek to positively address and impact upon the corner aspect.
- c) Public Library at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street. This building is important punctuating the view looking south-west along Exchange Street; and as a busy public building that attracts many users.
- d) The south facing side elevation to the fourth storey of Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street. The decorative brickwork to this elevation catches the eye above the three storey adjoining building, when viewed from the south-east.

Focal points are buildings, structures or areas, that are important because of their position in view lines; or because they are the centre of well-frequented public activity. Special care is needed in the treatment of focal points because they are particularly noticeable.

Almost the entire Area could be described as a focal point because it is part of a busy town centre. Individual focal points are as follows:

- a) Town Hall buildings, which are prominent in the view lines looking south along Vicar Street, north west from Oxford Street, and which command the open space to the fore and corner aspect with Exchange Street.
- b) Space to the fore of the Town Hall buildings. This area has the feel of a modest civic square and is a place to where public gatherings, such as marches and rallies, often converge. It contains a further focal point, the statue of Roland Hill, made all the more prominent by being mounted on a plinth.
- c) Flower sellers stall at the corner of Vicar Street and High Street. This stall is particularly important in the view lines looking north along Vicar Street and to a lesser extent looking south-west along High Street.

- d) Brintons Offices, which close the view looking north-west along Market Street.
- e) Nos. 7 & 8, Vicar Street; which close the view looking east along Weaver's Wharf. Albeit the design of No. 7 is not in keeping with the character of the Area, and the ground floor façade to No. 8 has been altered.

## 2.22 Other Noteworthy Features

The Area includes several other noteworthy features, of importance to the townscape, as follows:

- a) Public Library, corner of Market Street and Exchange Street:

A public library for Kidderminster is located at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street. This building was constructed by Worcestershire County Council, *circa* 2000; and lies on the site of the Town's former College of Art and Public Library, built during the late nineteenth century. The new library, in part, continues a historic use *in situ*; and occupies a prominent corner position, particularly important in the view and looking south-west along Exchange Street.



*Public Library  
at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street*

- b) Units 1 & 2, Weavers Wharf and eastern end of walkway:

Weaver's Wharf is a pedestrianised walk-way with adjoining shops, constructed during 2003, to link Vicar Street with a new retail development on the western side of the River Stour. This development occupies the site of two unsympathetically designed shops, constructed during the early nineteen seventies and demolished in 2002. Units 1 & 2, and the immediately adjoining length of walkway, have an important frontage onto Vicar Street and enhance the vicinity.

- c) Vacant plot adjoining Barclays Bank, corner of Exchange Street and Oxford Street:

A small vacant plot adjoins the south-east side of Barclays Bank. This is the site of a nineteenth century public house that was demolished during the 1980's. The plot is located at a gateway point to the southern end of the Area, and adjoins the Statutorily Listed Barclays Bank; where it is

important to ensure that any future development is designed with appropriate respect for its context.

d) Embankment to the River Stour:

The River Stour runs along the western edge of the Area. It is likely to have formed a historic boundary to the south-west edge of the former medieval urban component of the town, and may have persisted as an important boundary to development until the late eighteenth century. Two components of the River Stour are included in the Area, as follows:

- Part of the east riverbank, to the rear of Brinton's Offices. This boundary reflects both the aforementioned historic margin to development and forms a soft green edge to the current built form in the vicinity.
- A short length of a spur to the River Stour, to the south side of Exchange Street, which emerges briefly from a culvert constructed during the nineteenth century. This channel gives a historically reminiscent and enlivening glimpse of flowing water within the Area.

### 2.23 Elements that Detract from the Character or Appearance

The Area contains or is adjoined by a number of features that detract from its character or appearance, as follows:

a) Alterations to the facades of older buildings:

Alterations to facades, have occurred as follows:

- Insertion of late twentieth century ground floor shop fronts to older buildings, namely Nos. 3 & 3A, 8 to 12, and 17 to 20, Vicar Street; and Nos. 25 & 6 High Street.



*Shop front to Nos. 17 to 20, Vicar Street*

- Replacement of windows and gutter down pipes.
- Addition of small unsympathetic fixtures and fittings, variously including alarms, opening time signs, plastic bracket signs, display cases and automated teller machines.
- Painting of brickwork on Nos. 8 to 12 Vicar Street.

b) Unsympathetic extensions to the rear of properties:

The rears two Listed buildings have been unsympathetically extended. This has occurred in relation to Nos. 17 to 20, Vicar Street, to which a two storey extension has been added; and Brinton's Offices, Exchange Street, to which a four storey extension has been added. These elevations do not, however, impact visually on the Vicar Street or Exchange Street frontages; although they do impact on the view towards the Area from the west.



*Extensions to the rear of Nos. 17 to 20 Vicar Street (left) and Brinton's Offices (right)*

c) Unsympathetic adjoining buildings and structures:

Unsympathetic adjoining buildings and structures are as follows:

- Several late twentieth century buildings adjoin the Area and detract from its character; particularly in relation to their styles, materials, and detailing. These buildings include Nos. 21 to 31 Vicar Street; 1 Bull Ring; Swan Centre; 23 & 24 High Street; Rowland Hill Centre; Nos. 1 to 7, Oxford Street; Wilkinsons DIY; and the new College in Market Street (particularly the roof seen from the south-east). In many cases, the frontages to these buildings follow a historic back of pavement pattern of development and the boundary of the Area has been drawn along the facades, to include the full extent of the streets to the fore but to omit the facades themselves.
- A modern style circular logo advertisement sign and canopy is located immediately beyond the northern edge of the Area, projecting from the south-west corner of the Swan Centre, and is prominent in the view looking north along Vicar Street and from the southern end of High Street.



*Logo sign and canopy to the Swan Centre, located immediately beyond the corner of Vicar Street and High Street*



- A series of eight modern style pendant advertisement signs are mounted above the ground floor to the Rowland Hill Centre in Vicar Street, together with one large fixed sign immediately over the entrance, and are prominent in the view along Vicar Street.



*Signage on the Rowland Hill Centre in Vicar Street*

d) Ground materials:

Ground materials of varying appropriateness have been used throughout the Area, including as follows:

- Square buff coloured pavements and small rectangular brown setts have been used in the pedestrianised areas at the northern end of Vicar Street and in High Street. These materials are of good quality, but have a character more allied to the late twentieth century than to the nineteenth century character of the Area.
- Red tarmac has been used on the pavement to the fore of Town Hall and in Market Street. This material is not unattractive, but has a character more allied to the late twentieth century than to the nineteenth century character of the Area.
- Modern black pavement tarmac, modern sealed black road tarmac and modern concrete kerbs have been used in Oxford Street and Exchange Street, and are very unsympathetic to the Area. In addition, highway markings on the surface of these roads are similarly unsympathetic.

e) Street Furniture:

Street furniture which detracts from the character or appearance of the Area, is as follows:

- Two pairs of late twentieth century British Telecom telephone boxes adjoining the south side of the Corn Exchange, Exchange Street; and to the fore of No. 18 (Thrifty), Vicar Street.



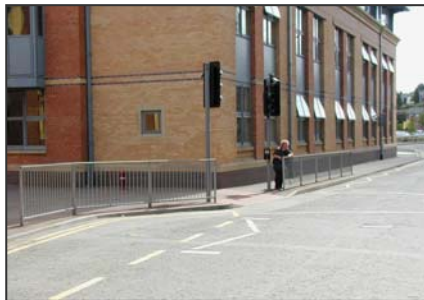
*Telephone boxes to the south side of the former Corn Exchange, Exchange Street (left) and the fore of No. 18 Vicar Street (right)*

- Various modern traffic signs of an unsympathetic size, mounting and grey finish; particularly in the non-pedestrianised southern parts of the Area, and at the gateways to pedestrianised parts. A pair of signs on either side of the highway at the entrance to southern end of the pedestrianised part of Vicar Street, have the greatest impact. (This impact could be reduced by removing the signage on the western side, closest to the Town Hall).



*Highway signs at the southern end to the pedestrianised part of Vicar Street*

- Modern traffic lights, and modern railings of an unsympathetic style and galvanised finish, at the western end of Exchange Street.



*Traffic lights and railings at the southern end of Exchange Street*

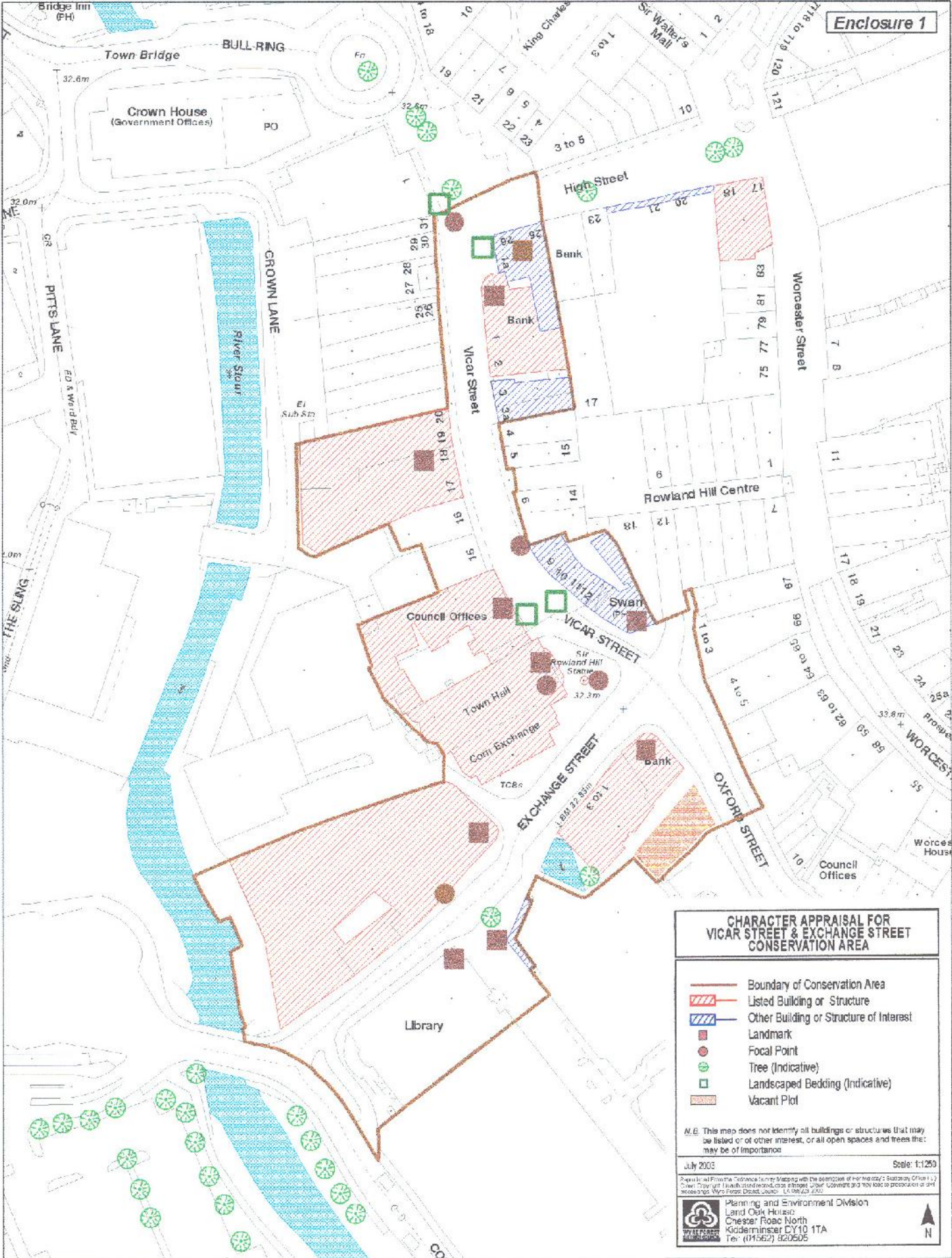
- Four tubular metal cycle stands of a simplistic design, to the fore of the Town Hall buildings in Vicar Street. (The impact of these structures has been mitigated in part by their black colouring, and relatively small size and number).



*Cycle stands in Vicar Street*

### **3.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The medieval layout of much of the Area, and its redevelopment and expansion during the nineteenth century (as exemplified by the Italianate inspired designs of the Listed Buildings) has given it a distinctive character and appearance; which provides a clear guide for the design and layout of any further development.



**CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR VICAR STREET & EXCHANGE STREET CONSERVATION AREA**

- Boundary of Conservation Area
- Listed Building or Structure
- Other Building or Structure of Interest
- Landmark
- Focal Point
- Tree (Indicative)
- Landscaped Bedding (Indicative)
- Vacant Plot

*N.B.* This map does not identify all buildings or structures that may be listed or of other interest, or all open spaces and trees that may be of importance

July 2003 Scale: 1:1250

Prepared in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Worcester and the Worcestershire County Council, signed in 1997, and the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Worcester and the Worcestershire County Council, signed in 1997.

Planning and Environment Division  
 Land Oak House  
 Chester Road North  
 Kidderminster DY10 1TA  
 Tel: (01562) 520505

