



DEVIZES CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

September 2005

Planning Services

 Development Control & Conservation

 Forward Planning & Transportation

 Building Control & Property Management

Devizes is a town with a remarkable architectural and historic legacy. The pattern of streets and spaces still reflects the organisation of the Norman castle and this, together with the 500 or so listed buildings, provides a town centre of individuality and distinction.

The range of historic buildings, particularly from the 15th century, includes many of high architectural quality. Variations in the use of materials and details create interesting and attractive streets and there are many occasions where the quality of craftsmanship sets a standard that regrettably is no longer achieved.

The character of Devizes depends on its buildings and spaces, landscape setting and trees, and uses. Commercial activity in the town centre is an integral part of the town's character and its attraction needs to be maintained.

Creative conservation is all about managing change. This Statement is not intended as an exercise in preservation - its main purpose is to ensure that the significance of the architectural and historic heritage of Devizes is fully recognised and is taken onto account in making decisions about the future of the town.

DEVIZES CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

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DEVIZES CONSERVATION AREA



The quality of the Devizes Conservation Area is in the layout of streets, spaces and historic buildings. Also the variety of styles of architecture and scale and juxtaposition of buildings.

The purpose of this Statement of the Devizes Conservation Area is to identify and record those special qualities of the town that make up its architectural and historic character. This is important for providing a sound basis for local plan policies and development control decisions as well as for the formulation of proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the area.

The Statement contains an assessment of the Devizes Conservation Area and is intended for all those with an interest in the town, or undertaking work on its buildings, landscape, streets or public spaces. It is also essential reading for anyone contemplating development within the town. By drawing attention to the distinctive features of Devizes it is intended that its character will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of this and future generations.

The Conservation Area was first designated on 26 November 1970 and extended on 27 October 1977 so that it now covers the whole of the town centre. The northern boundary follows a section of the Kennet and Avon Canal and then runs southwards around the outer wall of the Castle and following the line of the former railway, cutting back along Southbroom Road and the eastern side of The Green. The boundary then turns to the north-east of St. James's Church, and back just north of Estcourt Street and north-westwards along Commercial Road, to The Wharf.

The main characteristics of the Devizes Conservation Area are:

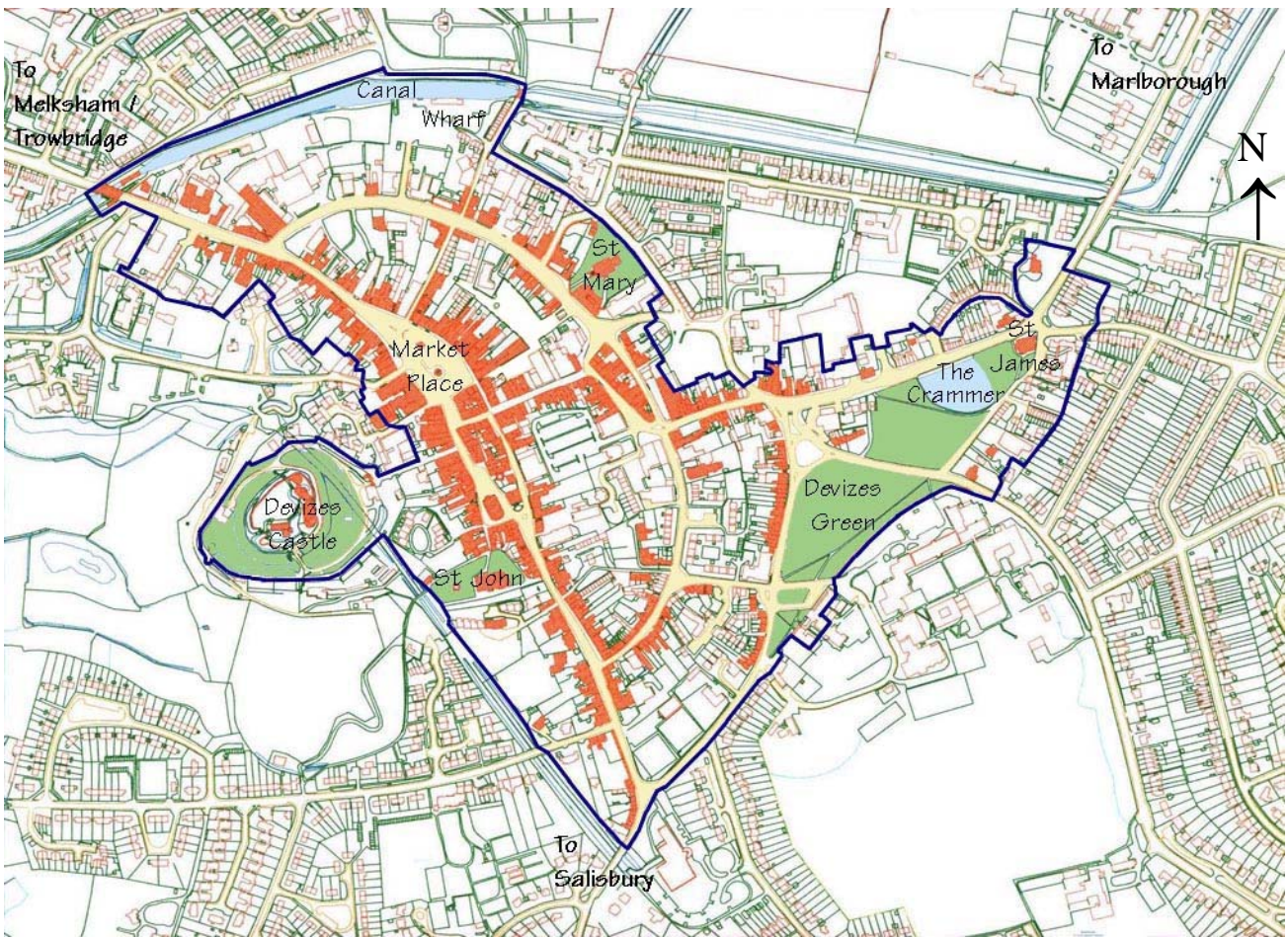
- A unique town plan based on the layout of the Castle and the Norman origins of Devizes
- A remarkable collection of historic buildings dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries with a number of especially high quality 18th century buildings
- A town market place almost entirely surrounded by listed buildings and including historic monuments
- Attractive vistas along historic streets frequently terminated by buildings of high quality
- Two especially fine churches of Romanesque origin, St. John originally located within the confines of the Castle to serve the garrison and St. Mary outside to serve the townsfolk
- Public open space in the form of Devizes Green together with The Crammer
- A small section of the Kennet and Avon Canal including the Wharf



At a closer look many of the buildings in the Conservation Area are intricately detailed with a high quality of design, materials and craftsmanship.

The history of Devizes relates directly to the Norman Castle, the siting of which is fundamental to the layout and setting of the town. This has defined the street pattern, most of which has survived. The visual impact of the present Castle on the town centre and the Conservation Area is limited by its comparative seclusion.

DEVIZES CONSERVATION AREA



Devizes Conservation Area with the listed buildings marked in red. This map shows the overall form of the town and the relationship between the castle and the subsequent layout of streets.

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Geology and topography

Devizes is geographically at the centre of Wiltshire and has a population of around 15,000 in the urban area. It is approximately 20 miles east of Bath and 20 miles south of Swindon. Chippenham is 10 miles to the north-west and Salisbury 26 miles south. The A361 running east-west from Swindon to Trowbridge passes through the town.

The town is located at the western lip of Pewsey Vale which separates the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain. The town is built on more or less level ground to the north and east of the Castle at around the 130 metre contour and sits on a plateau of Upper Greensand at a point where several platforms of greensand line the western edge of the Wiltshire chalkland. The land falls away sharply to the south towards Salisbury Plain and to the west, as can be seen at Caen Hill. Gault clay extends from the west in two dry valleys almost up to the Castle walls.

Devizes is also at the division of the Bristol and Salisbury Avon river systems of Wiltshire and, being at the watershed, had a limited water supply with virtually all drinking water obtained from wells within the town. This situation was slightly eased in 1810 by the arrival of the canal but it was not until 1877 that a water supply was piped in from the east.

Origins and development



One of the earliest surviving buildings - the impressive view of St. John's Church seen from Long Street.

The historical content of this Conservation Area Statement is intended to show the links between the town's history and present day streets and buildings. The original plan and layout of the town and the subsequent pattern of growth are major influences on the character of Devizes and these links need to be recognised as the starting point for considering the form and scale of future change.

The Statement is not a definitive history of the town: the history of Devizes is well documented and a selected list of books on the subject is included in the Bibliography.

Origins

The development of Devizes starts with the Castle. It is possible that the Castle's history began with an Iron Age hillfort but our starting point is the wooden construction in 1080 by Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury. His castle, built on the boundaries of his manors of Potterne and Cannings and the King's manor of Rowde, was known as 'castrum ad divisas' - the castle at the boundaries. The site was easily defended with the Castle built on a spur of land with three sloping sides and a link to the plateau to the east.



In the street scenes St Mary's Church mostly appears behind other buildings and is only seen in its entirety from the churchyard.

The timber castle burned down in 1113 and was replaced in stone by Osmund's successor, Bishop Roger of Caen. The Castle played an important part in the Civil War of 1139-1141 and the reward to the townspeople of Devizes for their support in winning back the Castle for The Empress Maud was a Royal Charter of 1141 guaranteeing traders freedom from market tolls throughout the land. A further Charter of 1218 gave the burgesses of Devizes a large measure of local jurisdiction and underlined the increasing significance of the town.

The town grew to support the Castle although the expansion was restricted by the topography to the level area of land east of the Castle. The plan form of Devizes, which has more or less remained intact to the present day, is based on the concentric lines of castle defence.

Economic activity in the town was encouraged by the Charter and in the early 14th century the tradesmen seemed to be mainly leather workers although later there are references to metal workers. It was not until the 15th century that weavers and clothiers became prominent.



Although Great Porch House dates from the 15th century many of the external features such as the Georgian sash windows are later.

Early buildings in Devizes are the Churches of St. John and St. Mary. St. John's is an important Norman church with an impressive rectangular crossing tower and an attached round stair turret, built to serve the Castle. St. Mary's also has a Norman chancel and dates from around the same time as that of St. John.

The Church of St. James, Southbroom, is first mentioned in a document of 1461 and was, until the 19th century, a Chapel of Ease for the parish of Bishops Cannings. The building of St. James's Church marks a stage in the growth of the town when the population was no longer forced to shelter within the Castle ramparts.

The market recorded in 1228 was in a wide space south of St. Mary's Church and market trading increased in importance as the town developed.



In medieval times the buildings of Devizes were timber frame, probably with wattle and daub infill, as still can be seen in St John's Alley. Limestone paving setts complement the buildings.

As the military importance of the Castle declined there was less need for strong defence and by the 14th century there was evidence that the outer bailey walls had been breached and redevelopment had taken place within. It was therefore possible for the tradesmen to make use of the open space of the outer bailey. This area became known as the New Port with the former market place known as the Old Port. The new street then laid out between the north and south gates of the town included what are now Northgate Street, Market Place and Long Street. Infilling at the south-east end of the Market Place by the 15th century produced St John's Street and Wine Street. Just beyond is St. John's Alley, once linked to Wine Street, where medieval buildings still survive. Great Porch House in Monday Market Street is another early building with origins dating from the 15th century.

16th Century

The 16th century saw the considerable growth and influence of the administration of the Borough by the Mayor and Burgesses. This was evident in the supervision of trade, including the maintenance of standards and the registration of apprentices and in the various aspects of public interest such as health, housing, highways and poor relief. The Borough was also responsible for a considerable amount of property. The other major role for the Borough Council was as a Court of Law.

Evidence of 16th century buildings survives at the southern wing of the Bear Hotel and behind the later frontage of the Four Seasons in High Street. The Three Crowns PH in Maryport Street also dates from the 16th century. Buildings in St. John's Alley date from the early 16th to mid 17th century and still illustrate the architecture of the time.



Steep pitch gables facing the street are characteristic of 16th and 17th century building represented here at the Three Crowns PH. Form and scale is in marked contrast to the 20th century building alongside.

17th Century

Limited development continued in the 17th century and buildings, or remains of such buildings, from this time can still be found in a number of streets. These early houses were constructed of timber frame with wattle and daub infill and probably had thatched roofs. Characteristics of the 17th century are gables facing the street and steep pitched roofs such as can be seen at the restored Elm Tree Inn. This and other gable fronted buildings give an impression of how the town would have looked at the time. 17th century remains survive at 39 New Park Street, and at 6-10 The Island. Much of Long Street has 17th century, or earlier, origins and 4 St. John's Court has a medieval core behind a late 18th / early 19th century stone front.

Detailed investigations are needed to determine the exact dates of buildings and further studies may reveal a more accurate picture of the town at this time, particularly as knowledge is accumulated and investigative techniques become more sophisticated.

18th Century

The 18th century was a time of economic prosperity for Devizes, evidence of which can be seen in many of the town's fine buildings. A rebuilding programme began around 1700 and was to continue for the next 150 years or so changing the character of Devizes from medieval to the various phases of Georgian. Building lines and streets were largely unchanged but many houses were rebuilt and others refronted.



There are a number of 18th century buildings in the Market Place. Number 17 in brick on the south side and Parnella House in stone on the north are examples of particular quality. The Brewery dates from 1885.



Brownston House is one of the high status buildings of Devizes and is typical of the style and materials used in the 18th century. Gates and gatepiers complement the setting.

Much of this prosperity was based on cloth and other industries but was also due to the location of the town on one of the major routes to Bath which saw Devizes develop as a coaching town. During this time market activities continued to expand and Devizes was seen as having one of the best markets in the west of England. This economic activity encouraged various professions to the town bringing with them the need for good quality buildings, although the lack of a supply of running water for industry, power and transport undoubtedly constrained the development of the town.

Georgian architecture in Devizes occurred as new-build or re-fronting of existing buildings giving the town a strong Georgian character. Brownston House in New Park Street and 17 Market Place are high quality 18th century brick buildings, now listed grade I, and Parnella House is another fine 18th century building, this time in stone. Many of the houses in Long Street were refronted in both brick and render and this gives the street a most attractive Georgian character, although in a number of cases hiding much earlier buildings.



The attractive 19th century stone entrance to the Museum between 18th century brick buildings introduces variety and interest to the street scene.

Also towards the end of the 18th century the Devizes Improvement Commission began to clean the streets and erect lamps and pave certain routes. Trading encouraged travel and brought with it the need for accommodation. In 1776 the town had 41 inns and alehouses, 26 in the New Port, 11 in the Old Port and 4 on The Green. Some of these, including The Bear, could be traced back to the 16th century and former sites are commemorated in street names such as Old Swan Yard.

Although in 1637 there was a regular journey made by carriers from Devizes to London, the improvement of roads created the opportunity for longer and more frequent journeys. A Devizes Turnpike Trust was established in the early 18th century and the works undertaken encouraged increased passenger and goods transport. Devizes had its first turnpike road in 1706 and by 1753 a complete route had been opened up from London to Bath by way of Marlborough and Devizes, although the main route was the Great West Road that ran from Marlborough to Chippenham.

Longs Stores in New Park Street, the former Anstie's Mill, built in 1785 is one of the earliest factory buildings in the south-west of England. This prominent industrial building used as a silk mill, and later for snuff and tobacco, is a now converted to residential use.

19th Century



The Market Hall of 1835 is one of a number of buildings that demonstrate the prosperity of Devizes in the 19th century.

The position of Devizes led naturally to its establishment as an administrative and service centre with new buildings constructed to serve this role. Public buildings erected included the Town Hall of 1808, the former Assize Courts in Northgate Street and the Market Hall, both of 1835. The Market Cross, a distinguished monument in the Market Place, is 1814.

The completion of the canal in 1810 was another major influence on Devizes, not only because of its effect on the layout and economic activity of the town but also by providing the ability to move building materials such as Bath stone and Welsh slate thereby influencing the architecture of the period. The stone bridges over the canal together with the buildings at the wharf are integral parts of this legacy.

The Corn Exchange, 1857, is notable for its imposing front and contribution to the townscape of the Market Place. The fashion for buildings of style can also be seen at Lloyds Bank in the Market Place. The building dated 1892 and designed with early Georgian and 17th century motifs represents a high point in the quality of building. Handel House in Sidmouth Street and the Northgate Brewery of 1885 are other landmark 19th century buildings.

Nonconformist churches and chapels date mostly from this period although the former Congregational Church in Northgate Street was enlarged from a building of 1776. The Baptist Chapel in Sheep Street is 1851-2 and the Maryport Old Baptist Chapel 1780 but enlarged 1818. The Salem Chapel in New Park Street is 1838. The Methodist Chapel in Long Street was opened in 1899.



Devizes in 1900 showing the remarkable survival of the compact town plan. The Conservation Area covers the whole of the historic town centre including most of the buildings shown on this map.



These late 18th and early 19th century brick and stone houses at Southbroom Terrace enjoy an open aspect over The Green.

In the mid-19th century the arrival of the railway brought about increased industrial and commercial activity and led to a steady expansion in the population of the town. This was reflected in new housing in Bridewell Street, Sheep Street and Southbroom and in rebuilding and infilling within the town centre. Burgage plots were subdivided, the medieval Brittox widened, and many timber-framed buildings replaced. Much of the rebuilding was a direct consequence of the establishment of another Improvement Commission this time in 1825.

20th century

As with many towns across the country there was relatively little development and change in the early part of the 20th century. The effects of the First World War and the general economic circumstances of the time reduced the amount of activity and investment and many areas and buildings fell gradually into decline.

By the end of the Second World War a view was taken that action was required to improve the town and particularly to provide better living conditions for its inhabitants. In the 1960s a number of buildings in the town were demolished and replaced.

The largest scheme was demolition and redevelopment in Sheep Street where houses were replaced by three and four storey flats. Frontage cottages and rear courtyard groups were swept away to accommodate the new housing and places such as Jeffries Court, Royal Oak Court and Alexandra Court are names long forgotten.

Close by there was later redevelopment in Hare and Hounds Street, including Sutton Place and Tylees Court. Other 20th century building can be seen in Maryport Street (Tesco), the County Library, Job Centre and former Post Office and the row of shops and flats at the Maryport Street junction with New Park Street.

The growing use of private cars in the post-war period was one of the factors leading to the closure of the railway in 1966. The station buildings were subsequently demolished providing space for the Station Road car park, located just outside the Conservation Area.

Prominent mid/late 20th century developments occur along New Park Street where the former filling station east of Wadworths Brewery and other facilities to serve the motorist, such as the tyre depots and car sales areas, are in marked contrast to the architecture of their surroundings. Similar large-scale redevelopments are the warehouses for the brewing industry, one adjoining Wadworths Brewery and another in Northgate Street.

After many years of neglect the canal and wharf were brought back into use largely due to the initial efforts of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust and the canal was formally reopened in 1990. Similarly from 1975 there was significant financial input from the local authorities to encourage the conservation of historic buildings in the town centre. Around this time a number of derelict buildings were rescued including the important medieval structures in St. John's Alley. Further details on the contribution made to the character of Devizes by the Devizes Historic Buildings Joint Committee are included as Appendix 2.



Buildings in Sheep Street on either side and across the road from the New Baptist Chapel of 1851-2 are mid to late 20th century and relate to the architecture of the period.



A number of shops in the town are post-war buildings designed with varying degrees of success. Some of the 20th century buildings in The Brittox fit more comfortably into the pattern of the town than such buildings elsewhere as here in Maryport Street.



Accommodating large vehicles remains a problem. In Estcourt Street there are a number of places where the frontage has been interrupted to provide new access.

Later in the 20th century infill residential developments were undertaken such as the construction of dwellings in the grounds of The Ark behind the Museum in Long Street and at Castle Court south of St. John's Street.

It is impossible to ignore the effects of the motor vehicle on the town centre as major changes were made to accommodate both moving and parked cars. The most obvious alteration was the removal of buildings and construction of a new section of road at the south end of New Park Street to divert through traffic through Gains Lane and away from Monday Market Street and Sidmouth Street.

Demolition was also undertaken in other parts of the town to provide car parking for shoppers and visitors and more recently traffic management schemes have been introduced including work in the Market Place.

Many of the 20th century changes in Devizes occurred outside the town centre with major expansion of both residential and commercial areas.

Archaeological significance



A number of individual buildings and courtyards in the town have been demolished for redevelopment or cleared away to make space for car parking and have provided the opportunity for archaeological investigations.

The evidence for prehistoric settlement in the area of the modern town of Devizes is slender at best and a few Neolithic flints have turned up south of the town. In the Roman period there was a villa at the base of Roundway Down and Roman pottery and coins have been found across the area south and east of the medieval town. Other evidence of Romano-British activity has been found at Southbroom and at Pan's lane. Although there were several Saxon settlements around Devizes only two Saxon finds are recorded from Devizes itself, both from outside the study area.

The Castle would initially have been a wooden construction but this burnt down in 1113 and was rebuilt in stone between then and 1121. Nothing remains of the first Castle although the early ditch found in excavations at the Corn Exchange in 1994 was probably part of the defences. The outer bailey defences have been examined in several places and are better known. The ditch was roughly 8 metres wide and 4-5 metres deep and has been observed in three separate locations, Estcourt Hill, the rear of 33 Market Place, at Vales Lane and most recently at Snuff Street to the rear of 27/28 Market Place.

Archaeological evidence for the following centuries up to 1750 is fragmentary. The levelling of the Castle rampart probably took place after the Civil War or even after 1723, at which time Stukeley's drawing of the town shows a substantial rampart standing in the area of Castle Lane. Other excavations within the town provide evidence of post-medieval work.

Industrial archaeology in Devizes is focused on the Kennet and Avon Canal and the former railway. The most significant industrial buildings to survive in the town are the former Anstie's Mill (Longs Stores) and Wadworths Brewery. Numerous archaeological features have been recorded from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Sites for new buildings within the centre will provide an opportunity for additional knowledge of the town's history to be obtained and archaeological investigations are likely to be required before construction is undertaken.

Architectural and historic character

The townscape quality of Devizes is exceptionally high with long street frontages of historic buildings and well-defined urban spaces. The character of the town is not uniform and variations can be identified based on the relationships between buildings, roads and spaces and on the dates of development and consistency or variation in the architecture. The divisions between the boundaries merge and are not hard lines.

The areas identified in this study are:

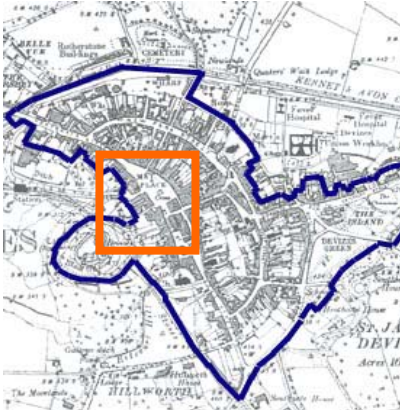
1. The Market Place
2. Northgate Street and New Park Street
3. St John's Street, High Street and Wine Street
4. Long Street
5. The Brittox, Monday Market Street and Maryport Street
6. Bridewell, Sheep Street and Hare & Hounds Street
7. Southbroom Road and the Green
8. Estcourt Street, St James Church and The Crammer
9. Southgate Street
10. The Canal and Wharf
11. The Castle

The key elements identified in each of the sectors defined above are intended to highlight the main items of interest. The layout of streets and spaces throughout the Conservation Area is of considerable historic significance because of the way the plan of the town is based on the layout of the original Castle. In addition some 500 listed buildings make a major contribution to the quality and character of Devizes, as do many of non-listed traditionally built structures.



For obvious reasons the photographs used to illustrate this report were taken on bright days but it should be remembered that the character of an area changes from day to night and across the seasons.

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The Market Place

The Market Place is the focus of the town and is an especially attractive space almost completely surrounded by historic buildings, a number of which are also of considerable architectural interest. The buildings are mostly three storeys in height giving a pleasing uniformity to this part of the town, although dates of construction and building materials vary creating interest within the overall picture. Rooflines, chimneys and monuments produce a varied skyline.



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Key elements are:

- The size and shape of the Market Place, its historic use as a town market and the relationship between the space and the buildings around it.
- The importance of the Market Place as an integral part of the economic and commercial life of Devizes.
- The alignment of roads into and out of the Market Place which brings certain buildings into prominence, in particular Wadworths Brewery looking north-west and the former Cheese Hall (now Cheltenham and Gloucester) to the south.
- A remarkable collection of historic buildings of varying dates.
- Features in the Market Place - the Market Cross and the Fountain
- Trees as a counterpoint to the fine and varied architectural facades.

There are a number of key buildings in the Market Place, in particular the Corn Exchange, the Bear Hotel and The Shambles. Other buildings recognised as of special architectural interest are the grade I listed 17 Market Place and Parnella House.

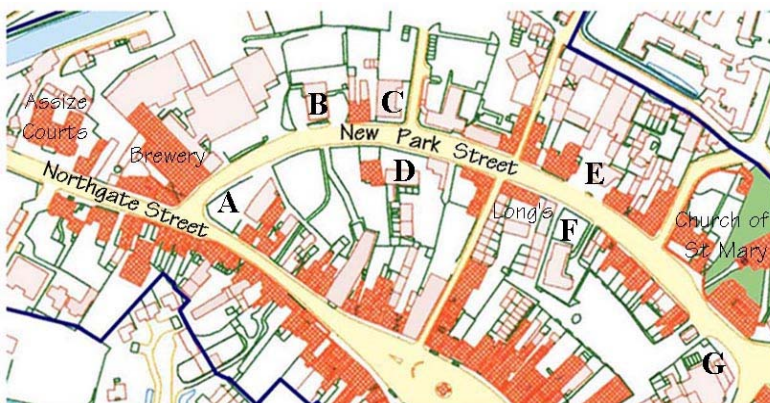
For much of the daytime the open character of the Market Place is obscured by parked and moving vehicles including service vehicles and buses. The two important historic features here are the Fountain, erected in 1879 in memory of T. Sotheron Estcourt, the town's MP in the mid 19th century, and The Monument that carries the legend of Ruth Pearce. The trees around the Fountain and the street lights rise above the building outlines and become part of the skyline. The Market Place, including the cinema, is the main centre of evening activity in the town.

Northgate Street and New Park Street

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There is considerable traffic movement through Devizes on the east-west axis, most of which travels through these streets and has an influence on their character. The domestic buildings along the north side of Northgate Street are relatively small in scale which gives greater emphasis to the former Assize Courts and Wadworths Brewery. Buildings on the south side of Northgate Street have a higher status, especially Northgate House and Sandcliffe.



Within New Park Street are a number of sites that detract from the quality of the Conservation Area, these being:

- A The car park gap site
- B the former filling station east of the Brewery
- C the tyre depot at Wharf Street
- D the former auction rooms
- E the vehicle sales opposite Longs Stores
- F the Health Clinic and associated parking area
- G the *Iceland* block at the junction with Maryport Street

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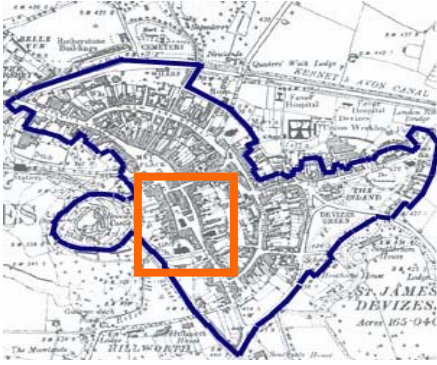
Key elements are:

- The historic alignment of New Park Street in relation to the outer bailey of the Castle
- Individual buildings of architectural and historic interest, in particular the former Assize Courts, Northgate House, Wadworths Brewery, Longs Stores, Brownstone House, St. Mary's Church (behind the frontage) and the Castle Hotel
- Northgate Street being the main route into the town from the west

New Park Street is now used as a through route for passing traffic. The architecture here is varied with a number of historic buildings of quality. Interspersed between the frontage buildings are mid to late 20th century developments, many of which are set back from the road and thereby create a visual break in the street scene. The curve of the street presents a constantly changing picture.

St John's Street, High Street and Wine Street

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The important historic focus in this area is St. John's Alley where medieval structures can still be seen, although the Alley is secluded and often missed by the casual visitor. St. John's Street, running north from Long Street to the Market Place, provides an attractive route into the town centre with historic buildings on both sides. To the west is the access to the Castle although the Castle itself is hidden from this view. Looking south the key buildings are the former New Hall, the Town Hall of 1806-08 (prominent where the road swings past the building and into Long Street), and St John's Church, which is seen in the vista along St John's Court.



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Key elements are:

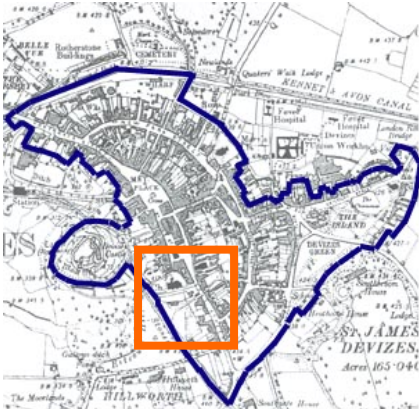
- The medieval origins of the area as seen in St John's Alley and St John's Court
- The close-knit character as defined by narrow streets and some relatively tall buildings
- The glimpses of Devizes Castle from St John's Street
- Devizes Town Hall and its setting
- Views to the Church of St John the Baptist along St John's Court
- The tranquil atmosphere of the churchyard and the quality of surrounding buildings

There are interesting building relationships in High Street. Looking from the south there is a remarkable difference in scale between the Elm Tree, the Four Seasons and Greystone House. Efforts were made in 1971 to integrate the supermarket into the street scene by breaking up the front elevation and this is rather more successful than some of the 1960s development in the town. Also in the High Street is the attractive 1991 development of Old Swan Yard which is successful because of the scale and arrangement of buildings, including the incorporation of a number of historic structures. The traditional stone paving adds to the quality of the scheme.

At the junction of Wine Street with St. John's Street is the decorative *Boots Corner* building which presents an attractive view to both streets.

Long Street

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Long Street is the important historic route running south from the Market Place to Salisbury. On both sides of the street are almost continuous rows of listed buildings, a number dating from medieval times. The character of the street is however determined by work undertaken in the Georgian period. Evidence shows that many buildings from the 17th century (or earlier) have been refronted, and in some cases enlarged, and this is most evident south of Bridewell Street where there is an especially fine group of Georgian brick elevations.



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Key elements of Long Street are:

- The alignment of the street and the relationship between the height of buildings, the width of the street and the simple line of the pavement
- A range of buildings of obvious architectural and historic interest including the grade II* listed buildings of Lansdowne House, the Museum and Number 27
- The variation in architectural treatment of buildings either side of the junction with Bridewell Street, those to the north being predominantly 17th and 18th century with rendered fronts and to the south 18th and 19th century and predominantly brick
- St. John's Church and the churchyard which make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area but have only a limited impact on the character of Long Street
- A pleasing lack of street clutter

The buildings of Long Street are mainly brick or render with painted timber sash and casement windows. The Georgian fronts usually have parapets thus obscuring roof coverings. Roofs are more prominent on the rendered buildings and are clay tile or Welsh slate. The quality of 18th century joinery is generally high with panelled doors and fanlights. The rendered buildings show an attractive use of colour with an obvious recognition of the effect on the street scene. Colour is often dismissed as simply a matter of taste but in Long Street care has clearly been taken to ensure variety and compatibility.

The Brittox, Monday Market Street, Maryport Street and Sidmouth Street

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The layout of The Brittox is directly related to the former Castle and the Victoria County History notes that the road through the outer bailey crossed two bridges "between which in 1380 was a barbican." The name of the street derives from this historic association. The alignments of Monday Market Street and Maryport Street are similarly of considerable historic significance. Sidmouth Street was until comparatively recently the main route to the town centre from the east.



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Key elements are:

- The historic alignments of the streets, as indicated above
- Buildings of considerable historic interest, in particular Great Porch House which dates from the 15th century
- Continuous frontages of listed buildings especially in Maryport Street and on the southern side of The Brittox

The Brittox was pedestrianised in the late 1970s, the kerb lines taken up and the area paved. The character of the street is therefore derived from its width and the height of buildings on either side together with the buildings at each end that provide a visual stop looking north or south. Buildings along the street vary in date and style ranging from early 18th to mid 20th century.

Buildings that detract from the quality of the Conservation Area are:

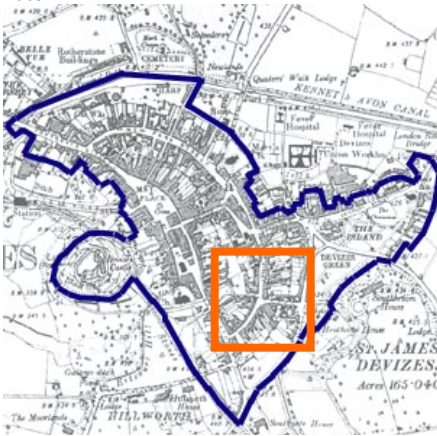
- A The 1960's development in Maryport Street opposite The White Bear
- B The Tesco Store
- C The former Job Centre and Post Office on the corner of Sheep Street
- D Indicates the Devizes link road constructed in the 1980s

Monday Market Street is notable for Number 8, Great Porch House, one of the earliest surviving buildings of Devizes, although the street itself is now of relatively little architectural interest. Sidmouth Street and Maryport Street, with almost continuous lines of small shops, have retained much of their historic character. Handel House and the stone buildings of Albion Place are distinguished.

The incongruous part of this area is the 1980's road that was cut through to link New Park Street with Sidmouth Street. The objective was to remove through traffic from Monday Market Street and Sidmouth Street but unfortunately the link was conceived as a road rather than a town street. The open view of the car park and rear of the supermarket are not visually attractive additions to the town.

Bridewell Street, Sheep Street and Hare & Hounds Street

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Buildings in Bridewell Street are predominantly 18th and 19th century two storey brick with the curved alignment of the street creating an interesting townscape view, the T-junction with Long Street being a good example of this.

Sheep Street and Hare & Hounds Street is an area that has seen considerable change. Much of Sheep Street is 1960s redevelopment where three/four storey flats replaced earlier housing. Redevelopment also took place in the vicinity of Hare & Hounds Street in the 1970s. The scale and form of Sheep Street does not relate to historic Devises; the buildings have been set back from the street frontages and are geometrically arranged. In contrast the later development at Hare & Hounds Street in part was kept to the original building line and the character of the south side of the street thereby maintained with new housing at Sutton Place and Tylees Court built behind. The historic scale of two and three storey houses can be seen in Bridewell Street.



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Key elements are:

The historic and architectural character of Bridewell Street and in particular the range of building on the north side from the junction with Long Street

The townscape importance of the Baptist Church in Sheep Street

The intimate and dignified Regency character of Lansdowne Walk, Lansdowne Terrace and Lansdowne Grove

Small scale development behind frontages such as Albert Terrace

An interesting feature in Bridewell Street is the 19th century Gothic style rched doorway to The Grange. Morris Lane, which provides a pedestrian link between Sheep Street and Long Street, contains the attractive early 19th century Lansdowne Terrace and, to the north, the secluded Regency villas of Lansdowne Grove.

In Sheep Street the County Library of 1968 and the Post Office and Job centre of 1966 are buildings typical of the period. These were built before the Conservation Area was designated and are indicative that unsympathetic modern buildings are detrimental to townscape character.

Southbroom Road and The Green

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The south-eastern approach to Devizes town centre from Upavon arrives at The Green which is a feature of the town that dates back to medieval times. Today it provides a visual and physical attraction maintaining the historical link with town fairs and at the same time offering an attractive prospect for those buildings that surround it. The Green is an important space much cherished by the town's inhabitants and used for a range of activities from quiet contemplation to events and shows.

With the exception of the buildings on the corner of Hare & Hounds Street most of the houses along Southbroom Road are 18th and 19th century. The buildings form an almost continuous line of development with only slight variations in height and style. To the south they are two storey increasing to three towards the junction with Estcourt Street



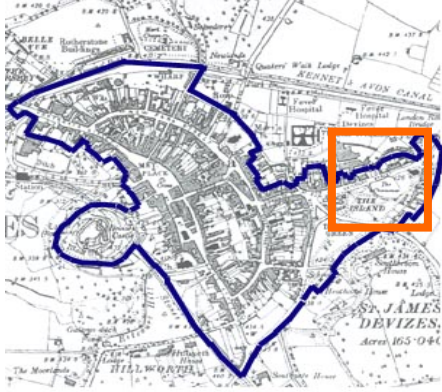
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Key elements are:

- The size and configuration of The Green and the many mature trees
- Extensive and long views across The Green including views to the hills beyond
- The historic origins of The Island - Nos. 6-10 are refaced timber frame buildings dating from the 17th century
- 18th and 19th century brick and stone terrace houses along the west side of Southbroom Road
- Heathcote House on the east side (listed grade II*)
- School activity on the edge of the Conservation Area

The character of The Green varies according to the seasons. In winter the surrounding buildings define the space, whereas in the summer trees become much more dominant. Trees in this area are predominantly lime with a small percentage of London plane, maple and silver birch. Maintenance of The Green is the responsibility of the Town Council.

Small scale features often define local identity and provide a different view of history and the town's inhabitants. Near the Fire Station is the horse trough dedicated to Richard Hickley Gundry *who was kind to every living thing* - OB 1896.



Estcourt Street, St. James Church and The Crammer

As previously indicated, the Church of St James was originally in the Parish of Bishops Cannings and became part of Devizes as a result of boundary changes. Estcourt Street is the road route eastwards out of the town and is therefore a busy traffic route. This area includes the eastern part of The Green.

Buildings to the western end of Estcourt Street are on the edge of the town centre although the construction of the Safeway (now Morrisons) supermarket has tended to alter the centre of gravity of the trading area. Buildings on the north side of Estcourt Street have the attraction of facing onto The Green and The Crammer (in evidence before 1654) and have the benefit of a southerly aspect.

Many of the buildings are painted render and unlike much of the rest of Devizes the majority are unlisted. This should not be taken to indicate that they are of little or no interest. It is more that these are relatively later buildings and therefore ineligible for listing under present criteria.



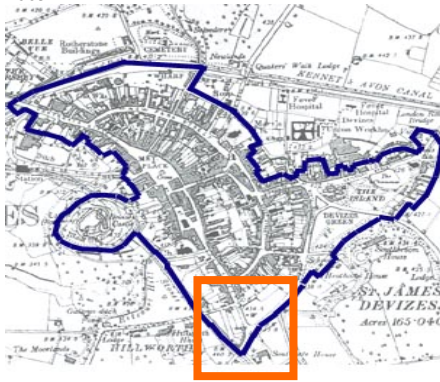
Key elements are:

- The historic and townscape importance of the Church of St James
- The eastern portion of The Green and the mature trees, especially those shown in the above photograph
- The Crammer - site of the famous "Moonrakers" story
- Views - along streets and across The Green
- The relative calm of Church Walk with some attractive unlisted buildings

In recent times a number of gaps have appeared along Estcourt Street. As can be seen from the 1900 map the Kwik-Fit development replaced earlier buildings where there would have been a greater sense of enclosure. Similarly the service bay and main access to the supermarket have created sizeable breaks in the street frontage. Further east along the street the open character is of a different kind with the combination of the water of The Crammer and the eastern end of The Green provide an attractive setting for the Church and other buildings. The route of the A361 brings considerable traffic to this part of the town.

Southgate Street

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As the name implies Southgate (like Northgate) goes back to the origins of the Castle and surrounding layout. The Potterne Road south to Salisbury is an important route and Southgate also defines the extent of historic Devizes. Much of what is built beyond is 20th century. The earlier route south was further west via Hartmoor and then on to Potterne.

The small terrace of cottages at Southgate is brick built with clay roofs as is the pub beyond. Tree cover on the east side of the road encloses the view and approaching from the south the open space and tree cover to the Bowling Club is a significant green feature.



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Key elements are:

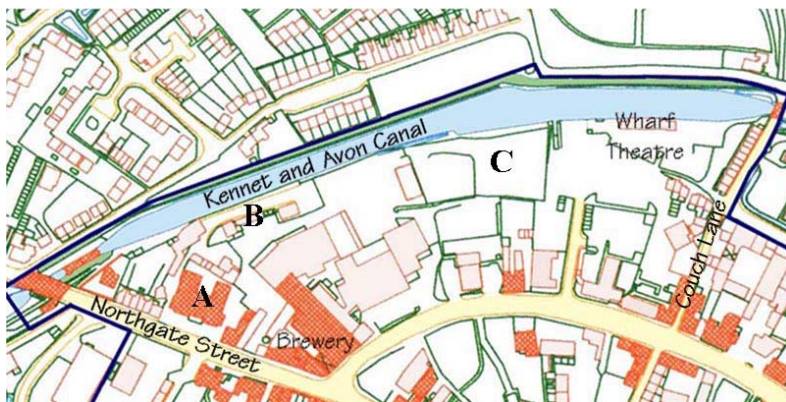
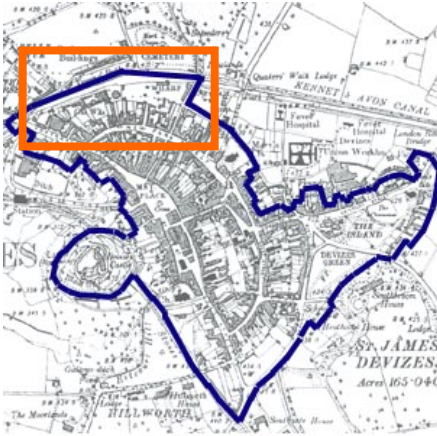
- The climb from the south along Potterne Road (just outside the Conservation Area) emphasising the elevated location of the town
- Historic importance as the site of the "South Gate"
- Mature trees and tree groups in the grounds of Southgate House and around the Bowling greens
- The open space of the Bowls Club giving a more rural feel to the locality

Approaching Southgate from the south the road crosses the line of the former railway with brick parapets of the bridge on either side. Arriving at the junction of Potterne Road with Southbroom Road there is an enticing view north as the buildings of Long Street come into view and descend towards the town. In the reverse view from Long Street leaving the town centre the trees provide an important backdrop.

Looking east along Southbroom Road trees and hedges provide enclosure. Further east is the brick and slate Scout Hut of 1919, the semi-detached houses to the south-east side being outside the Conservation Area. Beyond is The Green emphasising the edge of town centre character of this part of Devizes. The mature trees on The Green are prominent in this view.

The Canal and Wharf

The canal and wharf are now the focus of recreational activity both on the water and alongside. Former wharf buildings are in use as the Information Centre for the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust and the Wharf Theatre. A substantial part of the land is used for car parking. There are new houses to the south where a pedestrian link is provided into the town centre.



- Building at risk:
 A Former Assize Courts
- Opportunity areas:
 B Lower wharf
 C Gas works site

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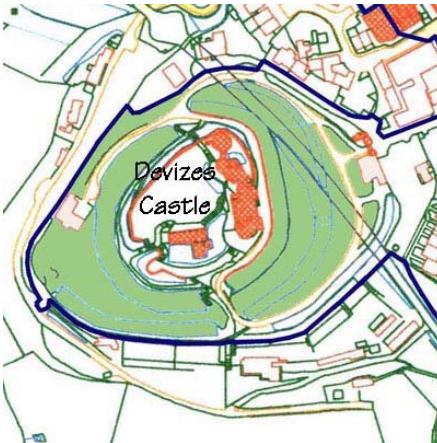
Key elements are:

- The canal including the bridges and the lock
- The vegetation providing a green "lung" through the built-up area
- The tranquil atmosphere created by the canal and its setting together with the slow and quiet movement of boats
- The Wharf Theatre and Canal Trust building

From the towpath the views are contained and the curvature of the canal is apparent. The stone bridges enclose the space. Trees on the canal bank and within the cemetery (outside the Conservation Area) are prominent. On the north side is a World War 2 brick and concrete pill box, a remnant of a defensive line constructed in 1940/41. On the south side of the canal to the rear of the former Assize Courts the area has an air of neglect.

The Castle

The impact of Devizes Castle is best viewed from the south where there is a footpath from Hillworth Road. Here it is possible to appreciate the importance of the original Castle as a defensive structure. The present Castle derives from a Victorian conversion to a dwelling (now flats) with the building and grounds in private use.



Key elements are:

- The present castle building and associated structures
- The topography and in particular the spur on which the castle stands
- The surviving ramparts that now form the setting to the castle
- Groups of trees planted in and around the castle grounds
- The line of the former railway that ran under the castle and now forms the western boundary to the Conservation Area

By the early 18th century the castle had all but disappeared. Stukeley's drawing of the town in 1723 shows that whilst the motte and ramparts appear to survive, the only buildings to be seen were a pair of windmills, which remained in place until 1840 when they were demolished to make way for the present house. It is believed that the tower of the house stands on the foundations of one of the windmills which itself was built on the base of a medieval tower. West of the Conservation Area and on the lower land below was a medieval Deer Park.

In addition to the castle building and the former ramparts, the site contains a gatehouse of around 1860, various walls which encircle the castle mound, and remains of the original castle including part of the foundations of the original keep.

Viewed from Station Road the castle buildings are completely hidden by the trees and even from Castle Lane there are only glimpses of the building. There is a gateway part way along Castle Walk preventing public access. At this point is the 1960s telephone exchange which is an ugly, flat roofed, concrete frame building that runs through to Castle Lane.

Traditional streetscapes



Streets and spaces in historic towns almost always have an obvious function which makes them look attractive and feel comfortable to walk in.

Historic town centres are places of streets and lanes as opposed to the lower density roads found away from the centres and in 20th century suburban developments. Reference has previously been made to the historic importance of the development of the town centre streets of Devizes and it is significant that changes in direction and alignment bring certain buildings and groups of buildings into prominence. This is evident throughout the town and particularly in the Market Place, New Park Street and St John's Street.

The historic character of the streets is most distinctive where the frontage buildings rise directly from the back of the footpath and form a continuous and often sinuous line. These characteristic back-of-footpath facades frequently frame a view as can be seen at the northern end of Long Street and the junction of Bridewell Street with Long Street, although there are many others. The views of the former Cheese Hall and the present Town Hall looking south from the Market Place are especially distinctive and present real quality to the town.

In Devizes more than in other towns the historic street lines are an essential part of the character of the town and the relationship between the buildings and the pavements is particularly important.



This view of New Park Street demonstrates the importance of the road alignment - buildings on the outside of the curve are part of a continually changing scene.

The relationship between the height of buildings and width of the street determines the character of the spaces between. Narrow streets with relatively tall buildings such as The Brittox and Wine Street have a distinct sense of enclosure, especially where the end views are contained by buildings. Wider streets or spaces with lower buildings create the opportunity for longer views and have a more open character.

Paving materials are an integral part of the town's character with kerbs, slabs, and steps of special note. Natural stone kerbs are extensively used in the town centre streets and are usually Pennant stone. In some places this is matched by natural stone paving, with occasional use of limestone setts such as remain at St John's Court and the entrance to the Churches of St Mary and St John. Paving around the Market Cross and the Fountain is especially noteworthy.



Devizes contains many unlisted buildings of architectural and historic interest - they need to be treated with care with original features (especially doors and windows) retained.

Within the street scenes there are individual elements that enhance the town and add interest. Examples of this are the porches of the Georgian frontages of Long Street and other doorways of note such as the corner entrance to the HSBC Bank. Alongside pavements architectural features such as the stone entrance to the Museum and the gates and railings to Numbers 16 and 17 Market Place are important in the townscape.

The character of the Market Place has been altered by the recently completed traffic management scheme including the welcome renewal of paving. The removal of kerbside parking to the north-east kerbs is a definite improvement and the care taken in the overall design of the scheme is evident, particularly when compared to what was there before. There is some additional visual intrusion with more signs and street furniture and care now needs to be taken to avoid adding to this.

The need for clear signage is an obvious aspect of street design but signs, however well-designed, can cause great harm to the character of an historic street if they are badly sited or of an inappropriate scale.



The attractive combination of Bath stone with a stone tile roof - here in 19th century Tudor style.

Street lighting also makes a major contribution to character because of the visual impact of lighting columns and fittings and the way in which these create the night-time atmosphere. In all cases the siting of street and security lighting and its relationship to building facades is important.

The amount of carved stonework evident on buildings and walls, especially in the Market Place, is a demonstration of the care taken by those who commissioned and crafted the town's buildings and these elements add greatly to the interest and quality of their surroundings.

Building materials and details

Buildings in Devizes reveal the use of a wide range of materials from timber frame in the 15th century to brick and stone in the 18th and 19th centuries and the introduction of modern materials in the 20th century.



High quality brickwork, often with stone dressings, is a particular feature of many Georgian and later buildings in Devizes. The window surrounds here in Long Street are cast imitation stone.

The selection of materials used in building construction comes directly from those easily obtainable at the time. This explains the use of timber framing for 15th, 16th and 17th century building and the later use of brick, stone and slate. In the 19th century bricks were manufactured just outside the town at Caen Hill, and the use of local materials provided a consistency in colour and texture. The opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810 created an easy route for the importation of Bath stone and Welsh slate.

Much of the timber framing used in the town is now hidden but interesting examples can still be seen at Great Porch House and St. John's Alley. In addition, work recently undertaken at 35 Market Place (*the little house of coffee*) has uncovered a medieval roof structure. Traditional infill to timber framing is wattle and daub, an example of which is evident to the rear of Great Porch House. Infill panels in St. John's Alley are replacements inserted when the buildings were comprehensively repaired in 1988.



The colour and texture of the bricks and the pattern used in construction influence the visual quality of the building. The mortar and jointing techniques used are also significant. This brickwork in Sheep Street is in Flemish bond with overburnt blue headers to provide contrast.

Brickwork forms a significant element throughout the Devizes Conservation Area and there are many good brick or brick faced buildings especially from the 18th and 19th centuries. 17 The Market Place and Brownstone House, New Park Street, are excellent examples of high quality brickwork. There are also examples in the town of "penny joint" brickwork which is a technique of minimising the visual effect of the mortar. The quality of historic brickwork derives from the colour, texture and size of the brick and the bond used, together with the colour and texture of the mortar. The standard of workmanship is an important consideration and it is obvious that standards in Devizes were high.

Stone buildings in Devizes are generally of high status, thus we see, in addition to the churches, stone used in the 18th century at New Hall in Wine Street, Parnella House in the Market Place and the Town Hall. 19th century examples are the former Assize Courts in Northgate Street and the Corn Exchange and The Shambles in the Market Place. Especially distinctive is the considerable use of carved stonework which adds appreciably to the townscape qualities of the buildings. It is significant that when the Museum was opened in Long Street in the late 19th century the decision was made to build a new entrance in stone.



The thick glazing bars of the early 18th century. This building on the corner of St John's Court is timber frame with a rendered exterior and is dated 1740 on the rain water head but there is an earlier structure beneath.

The medieval origins of buildings in Long Street are now largely hidden and the buildings which are not faced in brick are generally rendered and painted. For the most part the buildings now seem to be cement rendered with modern paints. Decorative plasterwork is nowadays a relatively unusual external finish but there is an interesting example at Boots Corner (now Abbey Bank) dated 1912.

Early roof coverings in the town would have been thatch and stone tile and although there are no longer any thatch roofs a number of stone tile roofs survive. Roof coverings on 18th century buildings are mostly clay tile, both plain and profiled. Later buildings are clay tile or Welsh slate and there are only a small number of buildings in the Conservation Area with concrete tiles.

There are few examples of early windows in the Conservation Area as these are frequently replaced with the passage of time. One of the earliest examples is at St. John's Churchyard where the contrast between the stone mullion window of the 16th century and the 18th century replacement sash window can be clearly seen.



The refinement of the late 18th century with slim glazing bars to the sash windows and contemporary wrought iron railings. Ionic columns support the elaborately detailed pediment to the front portico. The finish is painted stucco.

Windows of the 18th century were generally double-hung small-pane sashes, the earlier examples having thick glazing bars and the windows being set further forward, whereas later refinement was to set the windows back and use slender glazing bars. The tradition for sash windows continued into the 19th century and the number of glazing bars reduced as glass sizes increased. Interesting comparisons of this can be seen in the town including New Park Street where No. 76 adjoins the former Long's Stores. The survival of historic windows depends on regular maintenance and where this is not undertaken or where fashion suggests a move to larger glazing original windows have been lost.

Windows will often reveal the date of a building and on occasion the social status and aspirations of the original occupants. Casement windows, often seen as inferior to sashes, are more evident on small cottages and 19th century buildings. Casements have also been used in early buildings as replacements.

Very few early doors survive and for the most part the doors on residential buildings are four or six panel or occasionally eight, the design and complexity of the door reflecting the importance of the building. In many cases front doors are set within a decorative doorcase, as at Greystone House High Street and Heathcote House just off The Green, or within a porch such as at Lansdowne House and No. 27 Long Street. Doors are generally painted and original handles, knockers and other door furniture add interest.



This attractive use of colour in Long Street emphasises the form of the buildings and the plot boundaries, details that are lost once the buildings are all the same colour.

High status buildings were often constructed with matching boundary walls, gates and fences, good examples of which are 17 Market Place and Brownstone House. Railings were once in evidence at the Town Hall where only sections now remain. Other notable gates and railings can be found at the entrances to the churchyards.

Rendered buildings provide an opportunity for the use of colour and there are a number of interesting examples in Devizes. In recent years the lower part of Long Street has been enlivened by some imaginative colour schemes and it is pleasing that the schemes are complementary suggesting care taken by the owners to respect the street scene.

Shopfronts and Signs



Traditional shopfronts and painted fascias add considerably to the quality of the town centre. Colour schemes are important.

Commercial activity in Devizes has long been an important part of its function and many town centre historic buildings have, over the years, been altered to accommodate trade and industry. In the later part of the 20th century the introduction of new building materials and the growth of corporate identity brought a standardised approach to retailing which has adversely affected the appearance of towns and cities, including Devizes.

Period shopfronts within historic buildings are nowadays seen as adding to their character, whereas modern shopfronts are often viewed as obtrusive. The reason for this is the tendency to disregard elevational design and stretch shopfronts, and particularly fascias, over the whole frontage of a building leaving the upper floors visually unsupported.

It is perfectly reasonable that national companies seek to use a house style that clearly identifies them wherever they seek to trade but some of these styles are incongruous in historic settings. The retention of the character of the town centre requires recognition of its individuality and this will demand adjustments to the standard approach. Local distinctiveness is a positive asset in attracting shoppers and visitors and should be seen as such.



The restrained lettering on The Lamb PH is particularly distinctive and an attractive way of advertising.

Devizes contains a number of historic shopfronts. Of particular note are those at 25 The Brittox, 1 Maryport Street, 37/38 St. John's Street and Handel House in Sidmouth Street. An exceptional example is 20 The Brittox where the early 20th century shopfront has a glass frame. This list is not exhaustive and other good examples can be found. In recent years there has been a tendency to replace mid or late 20th century shopfronts with period styles, some of which are not convincing.

There are some glaring examples of incongruous shopfronts visually unrelated to the buildings on which they are placed, similarly, there are out of scale and excessively large modern fascias. Both can dominate a street scene degrading its character and the pursuit of size becomes counterproductive as each trader seeks to compete with his neighbour.

The introduction of new shops away from the main frontages adds interest to the town and good examples of this can be seen at The Ginnell and Old Swan Yard. To be commercially successful there needs to be signs to direct customers and the occasional display board is acceptable. Excessive use of display boards outside properties can however become a problem, particularly where that causes obstructions, as is evident in The Brittox.



Fortunately there are not too many examples similar to the above where large fascia boards disfigure the building and obscure first floor windows but where they do occur they are very damaging to the character of the town.

Hanging signs are a traditional method of drawing attention to a particular trade and a number of good examples can be found in the centre of Devizes. The most attractive of these are the signs which demonstrate a degree of care and craftsmanship such as painted pub signs or others in painted timber on traditional brackets. Illuminated box signs are a late 20th century invention, the detailing tends to be crude and they generally look out of keeping. Their use is restricted and the signs that are in place pre-date current regulations.

The retention and enhancement of the character of the commercial part of Devizes requires particular attention to the size, scale and detailed design of shopfronts, fascias and hanging signs.

Landscape setting and the contribution made by green spaces and trees



St John's churchyard provides an attractive setting for surrounding buildings and space for tree planting. This is also one of the long distance public views to the castle

Locations within the Conservation Area where the contribution made by trees and green spaces is especially conspicuous are:

- the line of the Canal, including The Wharf
- the churchyards (St John and St Mary)
- The Green, which visually includes The Crammer and the churchyard of St. James's
- Lansdowne Grove and locality
- the bowling club in Long Street
- the Castle grounds

In addition there are a number of street trees and trees in private gardens within the Conservation Area.

The Kennet and Avon Canal forms an attractive green route through the northern part of the town and, although only a small part of the canal is within the Conservation Area, it nevertheless has a significant bearing on the character of the town. Many trees have been planted along the banks and these, together with trees in the cemetery grounds, are especially notable seen from the Wharf.



There are two areas in the town where the open space is created or enhanced by water - the canal and The Crammer. The trees at St James's Church are both an integral part of the street scene and form a backdrop to The Crammer.

Trees within the churchyards of St. John and St. Mary are important features. St. John's Churchyard, which lies west of Long Street, also provides an attractive setting to the church and the surrounding buildings and here yew, lime and holm oak dominate. The churchyard of St. Mary has a more secluded character than that of St. John. The church is set behind street frontage buildings and the churchyard only fully appreciated by those who walk through. Tree species vary but yew and beech are of particular note. Publicly accessible green space in the historic core of the town is limited and both churchyards are notable exceptions.

Approaching the centre of Devizes from the east and south-east, The Green provides a large open area both as a setting for surrounding buildings and as a space for recreational activity. The mature trees surrounding The Green are important in defining the character of the area. These are mostly middle age and mature lime, some of which have had to have extensive surgery in recent years. The Crammer between Estcourt Street and Church walk is visually part of this impressive open space.



In a number of cases trees frame the view and the south end of Long Street is a good example of this.

The construction of the Castle on a spur on the edge of the Upper Greensand provides a clearly defined boundary to the southern side of the town. This edge has considerable tree cover running down the hillside, particularly north-west of the Castle. Whether the Castle grounds were historically wooded is a debatable point but the area has been the subject of a large scale Victorian planting scheme of mixed coniferous and broadleaf species and these trees are now a major and dominant feature of Devizes. This is especially so seen from Hillworth Road, Castle Lane and Station Road.

Between Long Street and Sheep Street the gardens of Lansdowne Grove and the surrounding area contain many large mature trees which form important skyline features visible from many parts of the town. A large redwood, holm oak and copper beech are of particular importance.



Street trees at the corner of Sheep street and Sidmouth Street. The position of street trees and species used need to be selected with care and once planted carefully looked after.

Trees have been a feature of the Market Place since 1875, the existing trees being recent replacements. At Albion Court in Sidmouth Street are hornbeams that add considerable quality to the space and enhance the setting of Handel House. The pollarded limes at Northgate Street and pollarded sycamores at Estcourt Street are in decline. At the eastern end of Estcourt Street two limes and a sycamore form an important termination to the vista.

Problems and eyesores

It is important to recognise that the town centre is by day a centre for commerce and employment and by night and weekends a location for leisure and enjoyment. In Conservation Area terms problems are seen generally as those sites or buildings where uses have disappeared or where **replacement buildings or alterations or extensions to buildings are out of keeping** with their surroundings. Lack of care or attention to public streets and spaces will also be seen as problems.

As with almost every other town, **moving and parked vehicles** are intrusive. The dilemma of commercial activity and car parking is always contentious and there is a balance to be struck between the demands of transport and the protection and enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area. In visual terms car parks present certain problems, either because they have been created from previously developed areas and reveal the rear areas of properties fronting the main streets, or because they open up a gap in otherwise developed frontages.



Repairing the former Assize Courts and bringing the building back into use is a priority. For far too long this has been a blight on the town.

The main east-west route through the town includes New Park Street and here the townscape has been damaged by 20th century development often related to the use of the motor car. The former petrol filling station on the north side together with tyre depots, break up the street frontage but do not provide attractive spaces. This problem is also evident on the south side where there are additional **breaks in the street frontages** at the clinic and the former auction building.

The early and mid 20th century was not kind to Devizes bringing with it **architecture of little merit**. The fashionable style of building was rectangular in both plan and elevation with flat roofs frequently used. Redevelopment carried out at the time did not therefore follow original street lines or building footprints but imposed the 1960s style. Thus we now see the development on the corner of Monday Market Street and New Park Street as incongruous and unattractive, especially when seen from the service areas to the rear. The former Post Office at the junction of Monday Market Street and Maryport Street and the Tesco store to the side are similar. Efforts were made in the High Street to break down the scale of what is now the Somerfield supermarket but the design considerations disregard the rear service areas onto the car park which appear as an afterthought and are unattractive.



The contrast between styles of architecture could not be more apparent. The *Iceland* building looks worse from New Park Street. One day there needs to be an opportunity for rebuilding (or remodelling).

With few exceptions the architecture in Devizes town centre is of exceptionally high quality and needs to be recognised as such. This means that **modern fascias and lettering** will look incongruous, especially where these are large in relation to the building and run close to or above first floor window cills.

Display boards are prominent in various places, especially The Brittox. If used to excess they can be visually unattractive as well as hazardous to pedestrians.



Replacement doors and windows can spoil and devalue traditional buildings. If repair is not possible then accurate copies of the original should be used.



Signs and especially fascias should be designed to relate to the building on which they are located. Traditional painted signs are part of the character of the town - excessively large fascias if removed will often reveal an attractive period detail underneath, as is hinted in this picture.



Direction and warning signs on main roads need to be kept to a minimum and other alterations for traffic reasons need to respect the historic streets. Signs that are redundant or non-essential for safety reasons such as these above should be removed.

The standard of building maintenance within Conservation Areas is in some cases high and in others less so. The Devizes Town Scheme, that ran from 1975 to 2003, (see appendix 2), was an initiative to encourage the careful repair and retention of historic buildings and to improve maintenance standards. Over the years the Scheme made a major impact on the improvement of the **condition of buildings** in the town centre but a few problems remain or new problems have appeared. The most prominent of these is the sad condition of the former Assize Courts where a viable new use is desperately needed. 42 Market Place is another prominent building where action is required. Plans have been agreed for the reuse and repair of the former Beales shop in St John's Street but work has not yet started and the boarded-up building has a depressing effect on its surroundings.

One of the problems arising from the provision of car parks and the construction of the Devizes Link Road between New Park Street and Gains Lane is the **space left over at the edges of sites**. Efforts have been made to enhance with, for example, the planting of an occasional tree but urban design considerations and integration with existing street scenes remain unresolved. Public spaces work well where there is a clearly defined purpose or function. The space left over from a development will nearly always look like an afterthought if not properly designed.

Alterations to listed buildings are subject to control which means that doors and windows are for the most part in keeping. **Replacement doors and windows** are evident in unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area and many of these are poorly related to the original designs for the buildings.

Observations concerning fascia boards and signs on commercial properties have already been mentioned. Equally important in the overall picture are the effects of **public signs and street furniture**. In recent years there has been a tendency to introduce more and more signs, usually to give direction or impose control. The results of this are to clutter the streets and although new signs are added old signs hardly ever seem to be taken away.

Service cables on street elevations can be unsightly. In some locations overhead cables are also conspicuous.

Preservation and enhancement

Preservation and enhancement can be achieved by control or by positive action and both are equally important. Protection of the character of the Conservation Area depends on all who undertake work in the town either as owners, occupiers, the Town and District Councils and other service providers. Owners and occupiers of land and buildings have the ability to enhance the area through their direct activities, some of which may require planning permission or listed building or conservation area consent.

The District Council is responsible for planning control, and preservation of the character of the Conservation Area is a statutory duty. Work carried out within the highway, undertaken by those providing electricity and telephone supplies, can affect the quality of the environment.

Preservation of existing character



The access to St Mary's Church dictated the position of the new buildings on the right with the result that the church is attractively framed in this view from Monday Market Street.



Refronting of buildings in the 18th century did not always relate to the structural form as the fashion was for a designed elevation. These top floor windows at Long Street are blind hiding the roofs behind.



There are a number of locations where trees frame the view but there are others where trees are the view. Mature trees will need to be replaced in due course and replanting programmes need to anticipate this.

It is the aim of the District and Town Councils that the character and appearance of the Devizes Conservation Area should be preserved and there are various ways in which this can be achieved. The following list is not exhaustive but is intended as a guide to the type of work that would contribute to maintaining the quality of the town.

Action by the District Council:

- Applications for planning permission and conservation area consent to be assessed with reference to this character appraisal.
- Advice to be made available to owners of historic buildings, listed and unlisted, to encourage good standards of maintenance and repair and the retention of original materials and details.
- Establish formal liaison with the County Highway Authority, and involving the Community Plan Transport sub-group, concerning the need for careful design of any works within the Conservation Area and a reduction in the number and sizes of highway signs.
- Proposals for selective tree planting to be encouraged, especially in locations where mature trees will in due course need replacement.
- Recognition needs to be given of the importance of surviving historic detail. Historic street lines are an essential part of the character of the town and the relationship between the buildings and pavements is particularly important. Paving materials are an integral part of the town's character with natural stone kerbs, slabs and setts of special note. The Council will seek to ensure that such elements are retained.

Action by owners:

- All potential changes to buildings and surroundings need to be seen in context. Those seeking planning permission or listed building consent should ensure that their schemes take into account their setting and are shown together with their immediate surroundings. Where new construction is involved take particular care in the choice of materials and quality of work.
- Repair rather than replace original features: where undertaking alterations to doors and windows on traditional buildings copy original styles and details.
- When considering maintenance or re-decoration do not necessarily follow what has been done before but look to see if the appearance of the property can be improved.

Devizes Town Council has responsibility for a number of historic buildings. Repairing the Corn Exchange and giving it a new lease of life is just one of its many conservation projects undertaken in recent years.

Enhancement

Where areas or features in the Devizes Conservation Area are out of keeping with the character of the town it will be desirable to seek improvements or undertake replacements. The way to achieve enhancement is to recognise and respect the intrinsic character of Devizes, design accordingly and undertake all work using appropriate materials and details. There is considerable potential to enhance the area in particular the following:



The canalside area behind the Assize Courts is an enhancement opportunity.

- Major redevelopment opportunities for mixed and civic uses exist at The Wharf (former Gas Works site) and the North Gate, for which a Development Brief has been approved. In addition, there are a number of smaller sites where redevelopment would be beneficial. For the most part these are the areas that were developed in the 1960s when concern for architecture and the quality of building was at an all time low. Examples of such development are the "Iceland" block on the corner of Maryport Street and New Park Street and the Health Centre and tyre and car sales depots also in New Park Street.
- Traffic in Devizes is a key issue and the impact of both moving and parked vehicles has a detrimental effect on town streets. Traffic calming has been implemented in the Sidmouth Street/Maryport Street area but is not visually successful. There is an excessive use of bollards and the block paved ramps and raised areas are showing signs of premature failure. Signs and other items of street furniture related to traffic movement are frequently too large, too many and obtrusive. An audit of signs with the intention of removing all those that are non-essential would be of considerable benefit.



Swan Yard is an award winning example of sensitive remodelling and infill development completed in 1991. The timber framing is based on an earlier framed building in this position but is not a copy.

- The condition of many of the buildings in the centre of Devizes has been improved in recent years, in some cases very significantly. Much of this results from the Devizes Town Scheme initiative which was set up in 1975. The cumulative effect of a small number of projects year by year is of benefit to town centre character but further work is needed and continuing maintenance will be required. Repair and reuse of the former Assize Courts needs to be a priority. Reuse and enhancement of 41 Market Place is also required.
- Commercial activity in Devizes is a vital part of its character. Efforts to promote individual business activity appear in the form of fascias and other signs, together with display boards. A balance needs to be achieved between the desire to maintain and enhance visual character and the promotion of economic activity. It is not necessary for fascia boards to dominate buildings and streets and there is a danger that signs simply get larger and the advertising more obtrusive. Similarly, display boards on the footway can have a useful function provided that they are used with discretion and do not present a danger to the public, especially the disabled.



Parking signs are a present day necessity, using the post box does at least avoid yet another signpost.

- Car parking within the Market Place is seen as an essential component of shopping activity and a major scheme to reorganise parking, vehicular and pedestrian movement has recently been implemented, including the provision of bus stops and shelters. For the most part the scheme has recognised the quality of the space although the prominence given to the identification of routes for vehicles has led to areas of paving being built arbitrarily into the carriageway. These together with an increasing number of traffic islands, bollards and line painting are visually obtrusive.
- Paving is important in defining the quality of a street and the improvements carried out in the Market Place are an example to be followed. The priority for future repaving schemes should be Northgate Street, St John's Street, Wine Street and The Brittox.
- Swan Yard and The Ginnell illustrate the kind of changes that enliven the town. Other opportunities, such as the court behind 4-5 Northgate Street, do exist and should be encouraged.

Areas of potential change or future enhancement opportunities

Potential change

Assize Courts
Full repair / new use urgently needed

Lower Wharf

Northgate site

Gas works site

41 Market Place

There are selected locations in the town, notably Sheep Street, where new tree planting would enhance.

More care is needed regarding changes to unlisted building in Estcourt Street and elsewhere



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Longer term opportunities

Redevelopment of Kwik-Fit site

Create a sense of enclosure on the south side of the link road

Redevelopment of 1960's buildings
Tesco / Job Centre / Post Office

Redevelopment / remodelling of the *Iceland* block

Redevelopment of the Health Centre site

Redevelopment of Hi-Q and Checkpoint in New Park Street

This plan shows only the larger sites - smaller areas of opportunity do exist but cannot be included on a map of this scale

Design considerations



It is highly unlikely that permission would be given today to alter an 18th or 19th century building in this way but equally damaging proposals are sometimes presented to the Council.



Gap sights present a challenge. There needs to be respect for the adjoining buildings and an aim to add to the quality of architecture in the town.



The 1930's infill in the Market Place is usually dismissed as an eyesore but is this the right place for a pseudo period building? Design considerations need to be more than just debates about style.

There is no doubt that Devizes will continue to see large and small scale changes within the town centre reflecting the economic and social circumstances prevailing at the time. Apart from the redevelopment sites already identified there are likely to be new ideas and opportunities, all of which will need to be assessed within the conservation context. Large sites or gap sites provide the opportunity for enhancement provided that a high quality of design and construction is achieved.

How to achieve the required quality will be a matter of debate but it should be an informed debate, not simply a requirement to "be in keeping". The way in which buildings are made to "look right" is in proportion and scale and in the design of doors, windows and other features. The layout and arrangement of floor plans is also significant. The construction of buildings in earlier centuries was dictated by the use of materials such as the length of timber beams but this is no longer a controlling factor.

Recent publications from English Heritage and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, in particular *Building in Context*, emphasise the need for high quality design in conservation areas and provide useful guidelines.

To quote "In final analysis it is true that there is a subjective element in judgements about design quality and people often disagree about what they like. Such differences of opinion and matters of taste should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it is possible to arrive at opinions about design based on objective criteria." These include:

- The relationship of the building to its site
- The relationship of the building to its wider setting
- How is the density of the proposal related to that of existing and neighbouring uses?
- The impact of the building in close view
- What materials are used? How do they relate to those of surrounding buildings?
- Is the architecture of the building suitable for the uses it contains? Is it trying to be too grand or pretending to be more modest than it really is?
- How does the architecture present itself to the viewer?
- What contribution, if any, does the proposal make to the public realm? If new open space is created, is it clear that it will provide a positive benefit and have a genuine use?
- In the wider setting, has the impact of the building in views and distance been considered? Does it make a positive or negative impact? Does it detract the eye from the focus of the view and, if so, does it provide something better to look at?

Specific and complex sites will require particular consideration but where there is any redevelopment potential within the Conservation Area the opportunity should be taken to reintroduce missing street frontages. In such cases the relationship to adjoining buildings and factors such as height, scale and use of materials are major considerations.

The planning context



An interesting example of the scale of development over the centuries. To the right of the Market Cross (1814) the coffee shop gable end is 17th century and is in marked contrast to the 18th century building next door. Lloyds Bank is 1892.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are "Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

The Act, and Government advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Planning and the Historic Environment, states that the local planning authority should formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of all Conservation Areas and this assessment, published as the Devizes Conservation Area Statement, is part of the process.

This Conservation Area Statement was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 8 September 2005. SPG provides additional information on the interpretation and implementation of policies and proposals contained in a Local Plan.

Consultation procedures, consistent with the advice contained at paragraph 4.7 of PPG15 – *Planning and the Historic Environment*, have been undertaken during the preparation of this Statement. Paragraph 3.16 of PPG12 – *Development Plans*, also states that adequate consultation is a requirement for adoption of SPG. The Council considers that the consultation undertaken meets the obligations for consultations set out in PPG12.

The Kennet Local Plan 2001-2011 has been adopted by the Council and became operative on 30th April 2004. This Statement provides detailed background information for the interpretation of the Local Plan, particularly Policies HH5 and HH6.

In addition, the guidance will be relevant to the application of Policies PD1, HC2, HC3, HC5, HC10, HC21, ED8, ED17, ED18, ED19, ED20, ED21, ED22, AT4, AT20 and AT21.



Details are important in the streets and spaces of the town. The quality of these areas and their visual attractiveness depends on the form and alignment of the streets, the position, heights and scale of the buildings and the materials and details used in construction. At first glimpse the details may not be apparent especially above the ground floor. Looking up can often be rewarding.

The Conservation Area of Devizes is complex and, although priority has been given to highlighting the main features, omission of items from the text or from the illustrations should not be regarded as an indication that they are unimportant in conservation or planning terms.

Summary and Conclusions



This group of buildings at the north end of Long Street includes examples from the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Any alterations will change the character: the challenge is to ensure that any such works are an enhancement.

Summary

Devizes is a town with a remarkable architectural and historic legacy but with a few blemishes. The pattern of streets and spaces has survived almost intact for over 800 years and this, together with the 500 or so listed buildings, provides a town centre of individuality and distinction. The range of historic buildings from the 15th century includes many buildings of high architectural quality. Variations in the use of materials and details create interesting and attractive streets and there are many occasions where the quality of craftsmanship sets a standard that regrettably is no longer achieved.

The character of the town depends on more than just buildings and spaces and uses are an important component. The importance of commercial activity in the town centre needs to be recognised and its attraction maintained.

Up until the middle of the 20th century development was concentrated in the town but in recent years, in common with other settlements, the built up area of Devizes has expanded considerably. Within the Conservation Area there are a number of 20th century buildings that are now seen as incongruous and which make little or no contribution to the character of the town. There are also a number of gap sites that present the opportunity for new development.



There will be occasions where preservation is a priority. Craftsmanship at the level seen at Lansdowne Grove is not likely to be achieved in future building.

Conclusions

Creative conservation is all about managing change and the purpose of Conservation Area designation is to draw attention to the quality and character of an area in order to influence future decisions. The Statement is not intended as an exercise in preservation - it is intended to prevent the loss of important parts of our built heritage.

Devizes is a thriving market town and a place of employment and enjoyment. Businesses come and go and this is a natural occurrence in town centres. An important consideration is that new uses should be compatible with the buildings in which they are located and, where alterations are needed, that these respect the character of the building and its wider setting.



Adaptation and reuse of historic buildings is an ongoing process of which The Wharf Theatre is just one example. Providing buildings with a new use in an attractive setting is good conservation practice.

There are vacant sites and opportunities for new development within the Conservation Area and these have the potential to add to the interest of Devizes. In this context new schemes should be designed to reflect the form and grain of the town taking into account historic boundaries and overall density.

The important message of this Conservation Area Statement is the need for all those intending to carry out work in the town which affects its buildings, their settings, open spaces and street scenes, to examine the implications of change and see all perspective alterations within the larger picture. If change and development in the town are to be based on historic forms then it is important to have a clear understanding of period style and detail. Alternatively, it may be more appropriate to seek a 21st century solution that recognises and respects historic precedent but does not try to imitate it.

Retention and enhancement of the special character of the town is for the benefit of existing and future residents, businesses and visitors. The information in this character assessment is intended to assist this process and provide guidance for the future.

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This leaflet is one in a series of Conservation Area Statements and Guidance Notes produced by Kennet District Council. For an up to date list, or if you require further information or advice, please contact:

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Appendix 1 - The Time Line

DATE		BUILDINGS - SURVIVING EXAMPLES	NOTABLE EVENTS
			Evidence of Roman settlement in the Southbroom and Wick areas
11 th and 12 centuries	Norman	Church of St John Chancel of Church of St Mary	1080 Construction of the first (wooden) Castle 1106 Robert Duke of Normandy (son of William the Conqueror) imprisoned in Devizes Castle for 20 years 1113 Castle burns down and is rebuilt in stone 1141 Borough Charter granted by Empress Maud
13 th to 15 th century	Medieval	Great Porch House Monday Market Street 4 St John's Court The Bridewell (remains now known as The Grange)	1228 First recorded Market 1306 First Mayor of Devizes The Brittox then called La Bretasche (derivation from brattice or stockade)
16 th century	Tudor Elizabethan 1558-1603	Buildings believed to date from the 16 th century include: The Bear Hotel (north section) 9 Long Street 2 & 3 St John's Alley and No. 12 (Patch Cottage) 1-3 St. John's Court The Three Crowns PH	
17 th century	Jacobean 1603-1625 Stuart 1625-1702	39 New Park Street Sexton's Cottage St. John's Churchyard St. John's Alley 33 & 34 St. John's Street The Elm Tree 6-10 The Island The Lamb Inn	1643 Battle of Roundway 1645 Cromwell besieges the castle
18 th century	Georgian 1702-1830	The Bear Hotel (south section) 1720 Brownston House rebuilt 1731 Greystone House 1737 The Black Swan and 8 Long Street 1740 Parnella House 1752 the New Hall (former Cheese Hall now C&G offices) 1776 Congregational Chapel Northgate Street (later extended) 1780 Old Baptist Chapel Maryport (enlarged 1818) 1785 Long's Stores New Park Street Other prominent 18 th century buildings include: 1-4 Estcourt Street Heathcote House (Southbroom Road) 35 St. John's Street 39 St. John's Street (Crown Centre) 41 St. John's Street (Nat West Bank) Lansdowne House (Long Street) 40/41 Long Street (The Museum)	1706-7 The first turnpike 1753 The story of Ruth Pearce 1759 Map of Devizes published by Edward Dore 1775 First bank opened in Devizes 1781 First body of Improvement Commissioners - Act of 1780

DATE		BUILDINGS - SURVIVING EXAMPLES	NOTABLE EVENTS
19 th century	Victorian (includes Gothic Revival and Classical Revival)	<p>1808 The Town Hall (rebuilt on the site of the Wool Hall)</p> <p>1814 The Market Cross (Gothic Revival)</p> <p>1817 Devizes Prison</p> <p>1827 Opening of the Gas Works next to the canal Wharf</p> <p>1835 Assize Courts (Classical Revival)</p> <p>1835 Market Hall Market Place (Classical Revival)</p> <p>1838 Salem Chapel New Park Street</p> <p>1852 New Baptist Chapel Sheep Street (Gothic Revival)</p> <p>1857 The Corn Exchange (Classical Revival)</p> <p>1866 40 Market Place</p> <p>1872 Cottage Hospital at New Park Road</p> <p>Museum entrance Long Street</p> <p>1879 Estcourt Fountain</p> <p>1885 New Northgate Brewery</p> <p>1892 Lloyds Bank</p> <p>1899 Methodist Church Long Street</p> <p>Other notable 19th century buildings include:</p> <p>Albion Place</p> <p>Handel House</p> <p>15 High Street</p> <p>1-4 Lansdowne Grove</p> <p>1-4 Lansdowne Terrace</p> <p>5 Maryport Street (Halifax)</p>	<p>1801 population 3460</p> <p>1810 Kennet and Avon Canal completed</p> <p>1825 Establishment of new Improvement Commissioners with increased powers</p> <p>1827 Gas works built (closed 1955)</p> <p>1833 Literary and Scientific Institute formed</p> <p>1835 Municipal Corporations Act - Borough reincorporated as 'Mayor and Burgesses of the Borough of Devizes'</p> <p>1838 Castle used as private house</p> <p>1854 Establishment of Brown & May Engineers</p> <p>1857 Arrival of the railway from the west</p> <p>1862 Extension of the railway to the east</p> <p>1871 population 6840</p> <p>1874 Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society acquires premises in Long Street</p> <p>1875 HA Wadworth enters the brewing industry</p> <p>1884 W.E. Chivers & Sons Building Contractors</p>
Early 20 th century	Edwardian	<p>1903 11 St. John's Street</p> <p>1907 Literary and Scientific Institute Northgate Street (formerly a British School of 1822)</p> <p>HSBC (Market Place)</p> <p>The Electric Palace Cinema</p> <p>1912 Boots Corner (now Abbey Bank)</p>	<p>1926 Southbroom House purchased by County Education Committee</p> <p>1927 First County Library</p>
Mid/late 20 th century		<p>1968 Public Library Sheep Street</p> <p>1976 Police Station New Park Street</p> <p>1976 Wharf building converted to Wharf Theatre</p> <p>1977 Regeneration of the Hare & Hounds Street area</p> <p>1980 Restoration of St. John's Alley</p> <p>1991 Swan Yard based on the location of the original yard</p>	<p>1957 – 1973 demolition in Sheep Street and construction of blocks of flats</p> <p>1966 closure of the railway</p> <p>1967 WCC proposal to take down / move Great Porch House for construction of link road</p> <p>1967 Trust for Devizes formed</p> <p>1970 Conservation Area designated</p> <p>1974 Creation of Kennet District Council</p> <p>1975 Establishment of the Devizes Town Scheme</p> <p>1976 The Brittox closed to vehicular traffic</p> <p>1977 Conservation Area extended</p> <p>1990 Queen Elizabeth II visits Devizes to officially mark the completion of the restoration of the canal</p>

Appendix 2 - Devizes Town Scheme



St John's Alley in 1975



Neglect of historic buildings was much in evidence in the 1970's. In addition there were many abandoned upper floors in buildings across the



St John's Alley today

The Devizes Town Scheme was established in 1975 and ran until 2003. Its purpose was to encourage the proper care and conservation of historic buildings by the allocation of grant aid. The scheme, introduced following an appraisal of historic buildings, identified poor standards of maintenance and in some cases dereliction which threatened the town's character and historic interest. 180 buildings were initially included, mainly in the Market Place, but over the next two decades the Scheme was extended to cover some 400 listed buildings in the town centre.

Financial support was provided by the Department for the Environment (later English Heritage) and the County, Town and District Councils and the scheme was a recognition of the contribution made by historic buildings to the economic life and vitality of the town.

A condition of buildings survey undertaken in 1975 revealed a large number of problems including particular difficulties with some of the 16th and 17th century buildings. There was major concern about a group of 16 buildings in High Street, St. John's Alley and St. John's Street that had been acquired for redevelopment and were threatened with demolition. The redevelopment then proposed failed because of an economic recession and all of the buildings were subsequently retained, repaired and brought back into use.

Over the years of the scheme some 100 buildings were repaired and many hundreds of thousands of pounds invested by both public and private sectors. One of the concerns at the time was a need to bring disused upper floors back into use and there are a number of examples where this has been successfully achieved.

Considerable progress has been made since 1975 in improving the standard of care of the town centre historic buildings, much of which can be attributed to the assistance provided under the Town Scheme. Credit must also be given to the many building owners who have themselves made a substantial investment. The conservation of Devizes is however an ongoing exercise and more work remains to be done. Protection of the town's historic buildings is fundamental to retaining Conservation Area character.

Studies undertaken as part of this Conservation Area Appraisal reveal that changes to unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area are often incongruous even though many of these buildings are of architectural and historic interest. They may not meet the current criteria for listing but their contribution to the character of the town should not be ignored, especially where they are in prominent locations. Similarly maintenance is sometimes seen to be incorrectly specified and poorly executed with a damaging effect on the buildings concerned.

The provision of specialist technical advice on the protection of historic buildings is an important function of the Council's activity. An analysis of the work undertaken in the last 20 years indicates that many of the problems of preserving historic buildings in the town result from badly executed alterations and inadequate standards of repair. These together with poor or non-existent maintenance remain a concern. Consideration needs to be given to how these concerns can be addressed.