THE WELLINGTON CIRCUS CONSERVATION AREA APPRASIAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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THE WELLINGTON CIRCUS CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Wellington Circus Conservation Area is located to the south-west of Nottingham city centre. The Area is located between the centre itself and the Nottingham Park Estate.

1.2 The Wellington Circus Conservation Area is bounded by Derby Road, Maid Marian Way, Park Row, The Ropewalk and Upper College Street. The boundary corresponds to the original designated area (July 1969).

1.3 The appraisal has been prepared in accordance with guidance produced by English Heritage and is supported by the policies in the adopted Nottingham Local Plan. The appraisal examines the historical development of the conservation area and describes its present appearance in order to assess its special architectural and historical interest. Its purpose is to assist in the consideration of planning applications to ensure that new development helps to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Area.

2 Summary of Special Interest

2.1 The Area comprises a formally planned Victorian layout. The conservation area is centred on a circular garden, known as Wellington Circus. The area was developed for high quality housing the majority of which were designed by notable local architect T.C. Hine and are listed.

2.2 The Area includes other important ecclesiastical and institutional buildings such as the Cathedral, Albert Hall, Playhouse, convent and Arts College which are located to the north of the Area.

Location and Setting

3 Location and Topography

3.1 Wellington Circus conservation area lies on an escarpment which encloses the Park Conservation Area on its northern and eastern boundaries. It occupies a site which slopes gradually from west to east and from south to north. This prospect affords interesting views over the City Centre to the east and The Park to the west.



4 General Character and Plan Form

4.1 At the heart of the Conservation Area is the Circus itself; a large well maintained grass area enclosed by a brick wall and iron railings. Its most attractive feature is its fine mature London Planes, Limes and other trees located around its perimeter. The buildings adjoining the Circus include the Roman Catholic Cathedral, The Playhouse and the nearby Albert Hall. Together these buildings form the nucleus of a cultural centre of regional importance.

4.2 The open space of the Circus itself with its fine mature trees is the focal point on to which the principal streets converge. South of this point the area is characterised by mid and late 19th century domestic architecture, whilst to the north and closer to the city centre, the scale of the building is greater and architectural style more diverse; Early English, Edwardian and mid 20th century. This characteristic diversity of the conservation area's architectural identity is strengthened by the broad range of uses in a relatively small area; commercial to the south and religious, social and cultural to the north.

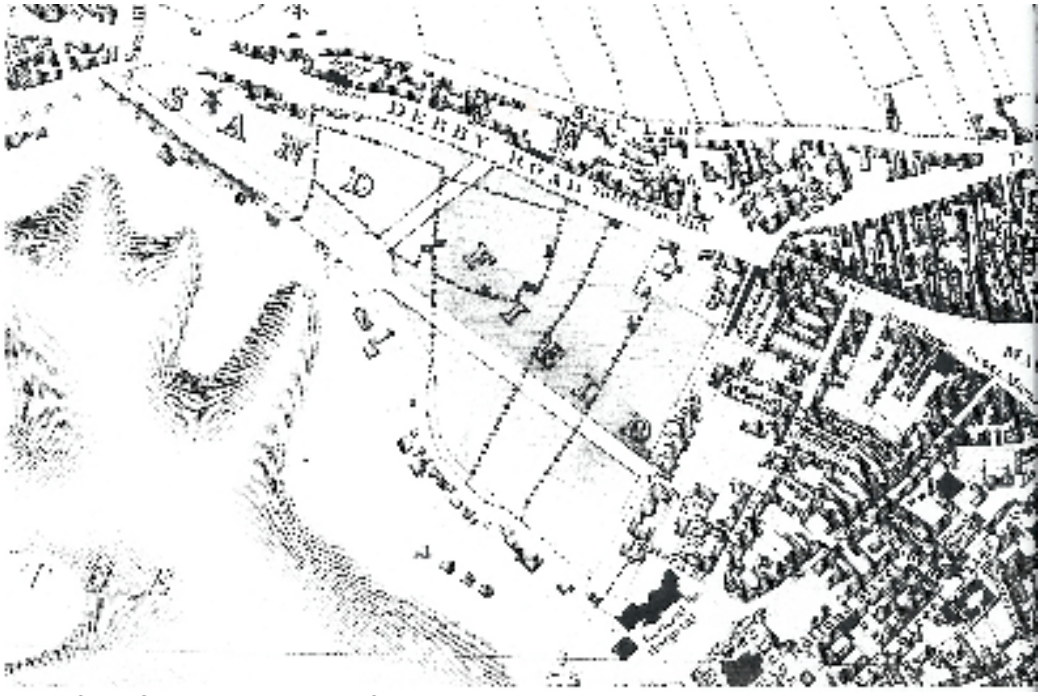
4.3 The eastern edge of the conservation area as defined by Park Row is within an archaeological constraint area as it is close to the medieval town defences.

4.4 The unifying elements of the area are the relative quiet, its maturity and serenity of character, consistently good neighbourliness between buildings, the trees of the Circus which arrest the principal vistas and the Circus area and its radial streets across and from which the buildings are largely seen.

5 The Origins and Historic Development of the Area.

Early origins until 1831

5.1 The development of Wellington Circus followed on from the Enclosure Award of 1839 when the West Croft (Station Street area), and Lammas Fields (Wellington Circus area) Enclosure Act was obtained[1], and the Corporation absorbed 52 acres of common land within its town boundary



Plan of the County and Town of Nottingham 1831

5.2 The early development of the area is shown in the above map of 1831. The line of Regent Street/Ropewalk and Upper College Street is evident with a 'circus' shown where they cross, though this was not to be its eventual location. The earliest buildings in the conservation area

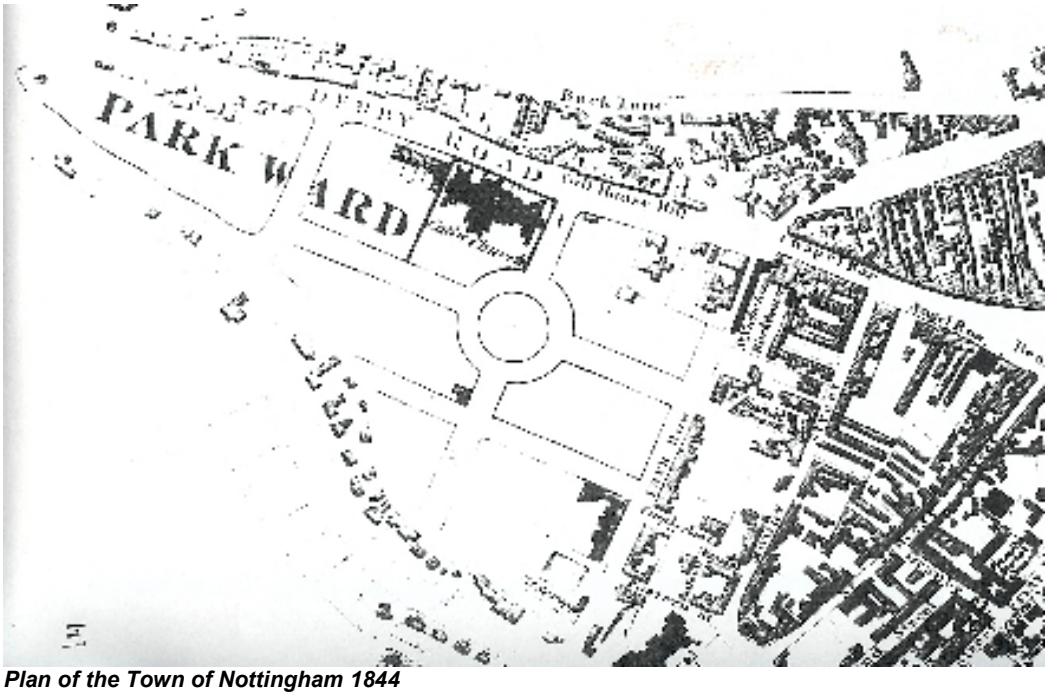
[1] The Enclosure Act covered not only West Croft, and Lammas fields but also Burton Leys (the Trinity Square area).

were along Park Row at its junction with Derby Road and along Derby Road at what was known as Toll House Hill[2].

5.3 All of the buildings from the earliest development of the conservation area have since been demolished. A number were redeveloped in the early 20th century to be replaced later by Number 2 Park Row and Maid Marian Way roundabout.

1832 – 1843

5.4 The Wellington Circus area was originally conceived by Henry Moses Wood the Borough Surveyor of Nottingham (1837-1858)[3]. By 1843 the streets had been formally laid out and the residential development of the area started.



Plan of the Town of Nottingham 1844

5.5 Unlike many other areas of Nottingham that were developed following enclosure, the layout did not correspond to the Award boundaries, but was instead a planned geometric layout. It was reputedly Nash and his layout for Regent's Park London that influenced Hine and Evans in their layout for the nearby Park estate; where they adopted a scheme with a pattern of roads intersected by others, which radiated from two central circuses (Pevsner 1979). However, given that Wellington Circus

[2] The street now named Toll House Hill was then known as Toll Street. Toll House Hill related to a stretch of road between Chapel Bar and Derby Road.

[3] Henry Moses Wood was later to be responsible for the setting out of The Arboretum (1852-1854) following another Enclosure award. He was the first Sheriff of Nottingham to be appointed after the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 led to the first elected Council for the town.

with its one central Circus is a smaller version using the same concept it could also be seen as influencing The Park.

5.6 A major development in the Wellington Circus area at this time, in its social significance as much as the scale of the building itself, was the Roman Catholic Church design by A.W. Pugin, and financed largely by the Earl Of Shrewsbury (Pevsner 1979). The foundation stone was laid on the 29th September 1841.

5.7 At the time of its construction in the 1840's, St Barnabas was Pugin's 'big English church' (Cummins 1977). At about this time he had changed his style to that of the cruciform, which had given him greater reign to express massiveness and unity using a tower, without it dominating the balance of the building as a whole. Internally the cross-wise vistas and complexity gave him the opportunity to explore the richness in decoration that was his trademark.

5.8 Early residential development in Wellington Circus included a terrace of five houses adjacent to the Cathedral on Derby Road, a large detached property, 25 Regent Street (T.C. Hines own house), 1-5 Regent Street; a terrace which wrapped around to incorporate 30-36 Park Row as a continuous frontage. Adjacent to these properties and at the junction of Park Row and the Ropewalk a reservoir was constructed.

5.9 At this time the area now known as Wellington Circus became known as Park Ward and the area directly to the south as The Park. The Duke of Newcastle was the major landowner of the adjacent Park estate. He was advised by one of his agents on hearing that the Lammas Fields was to be developed for housing, that a tunnel under the hill linking The Park to lower Derby Road would be to the Duke's advantage[4]. Although by May 1844 work on the tunnel had started and more than half the route had been excavated, tunnelling suddenly stopped[5] and the project was temporarily abandoned. Work resumed in 1854 when T.C Hine (a prominent local architect) was to be appointed as Surveyor of the Newcastle Estates and the tunnel was completed in 1855 - 1856.

5.10 From this period in the area's development the Cathedral survives (its precincts were developed later) together with the first property on Oxford Street (number 8a) and T.C Hines house at number 25 Regent Street. 1-5 Regent Street, 32 Park Row also survives. 34 and 36 Park Row were demolished when Ropewalk House was built.

1845-1861

5.11 Wellington Circus was a high quality residential area and reputedly the prelude to the 'rest of' The Park (Pevsner 1979). The majority of the

[4] See The Park Conservation Area Appraisal
[5] Nottingham Review 31st May 1844 as quoted in Ken Brand, The Park Estate Nottingham

residential properties that characterise the area were built during this time (Appendix 1: Historical Development).



Salmon 1861

5.12 The Circus was laid out in a geometric pattern with paths and borders and a tree planted perimeter. In and around the Circus, the architect T. C. Hine designed the majority of the buildings. As well as having high architectural quality, a number of the larger houses also had large formally planted grounds to the rear.

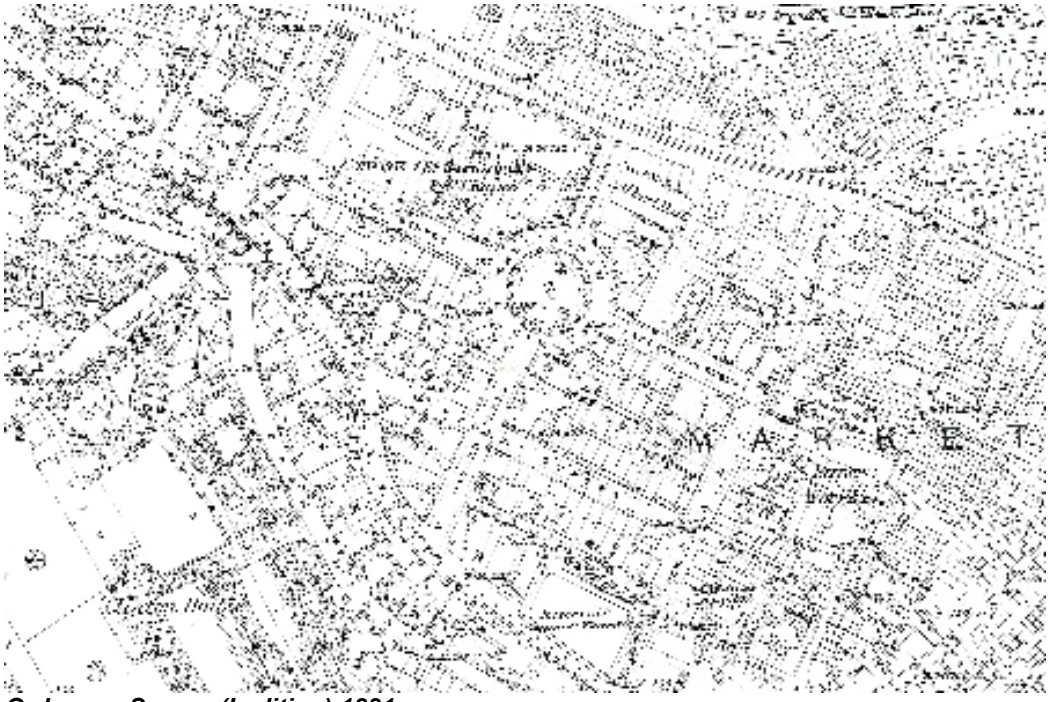
5.13 Although primarily a residential area a number of other significant buildings were also constructed at this time. The presbytery was built in the Cathedral precincts along with a Rest Garden on an adjacent plot of land. The Convent of Mercy was built on nearby College Street. Derby Road Chapel was built along with a school on Upper College Street (then Victoria Street). Other religious buildings included a Baptist Chapel on East Circus Street, and St Thomas's Church a Weslyan Free Church on Park Row; both substantial buildings.

5.14 The Peoples College was established in 1846 on College Street in a large building with substantial grounds to the rear. The College was built with funds raised by public subscription, to provide "education for the working classes of Nottingham and the neighbourhood, for ever".

5.15 The residential properties that define the character of the Wellington Circus Conservation Area are of this period. This early architectural quality of the area has been retained for the most part although no longer primarily a residential area. The first building of the People's College remains in educational use. None of the non-conformist chapels survive.

1862 - 1888

5.16 These 19 years saw the extension of the Convent and the construction of 26 Regent Street.



Ordnance Survey (I edition) 1881

5.17 The major development of the period was the Albert Hall, designed by Fothergill Watson. It was officially opened in September 1876. The initial intent was to build a temperance hall exclusively, but circumstances led to it being built with a more general purpose. The original hall was French Gothic (Iliffe and Baguley 1974). The front to North Circus Street had a large tower, which was the main feature of the building.

5.18 At the same time the earliest properties in the area, predating 1831, that fronted Derby Road between North Circus Street and Park Row were demolished and replaced with larger premises, which included a furniture warehouse. In 1879 The Peoples College was transferred to the Nottingham School Board and the buildings on College Street were expanded to meet the needs of the developing Victorian education legislation, with the Ropewalk building being added in 1888.

5.19 From this period of the area's development 26 Regent Street survives, as does the convent extension, which forms part of the more recent residential conversion scheme. Watson Fothergill's Albert Hall burnt down in a fire in 1906.

1889 - 1901

5.20 This was a period of consolidation. By the turn of the century, the reservoir, owned by Nottingham Corporation, was covered. At nearby 3 Oxford Street a vicarage was built. In the cathedral precincts a small building was constructed fronting College Street, possibly the early beginnings of the later and much larger Cathedral Hall and in the grounds and former playground of the Peoples College, another school was built, fronting the Ropewalk.



Ordnance Survey (II edit) 1901

5.21 The vicarage at 3 Oxford Street survives, though no longer in residential use. The school fronting the Ropewalk survives and remains in educational use. The original 'hall' to the Cathedral has long since been replaced with the modern hall occupying the site.

Twentieth Century Development
1902 -1915

5.22 A Mission Room was built on the side of the Vicarage now known as 3a Oxford Street. The new Albert Hall was built together with an Institute to the rear.

5.23 The Albert Hall survives to the present day, though the Institute no longer remains.

1916 –1953

5.24 Very little happened during this period. The reservoir was built over with Ropewalk House and the Cathedral Hall was enlarged.

5.25 The buildings of the People's College were used variously for infant, junior and secondary education until 1924. From 1924 until 1945 the College became a junior technical school for the building trades. In 1925 the premises on College Street became a boys "central school", specialising in the sciences and equipped with chemistry and physics laboratories; this school closed in 1941. In 1945 the junior technical school for the building trades became a secondary school for the same purpose until it too closed in 1965. The People's College of Further Education was set up in 1950, using rooms at College Street and other city locations.

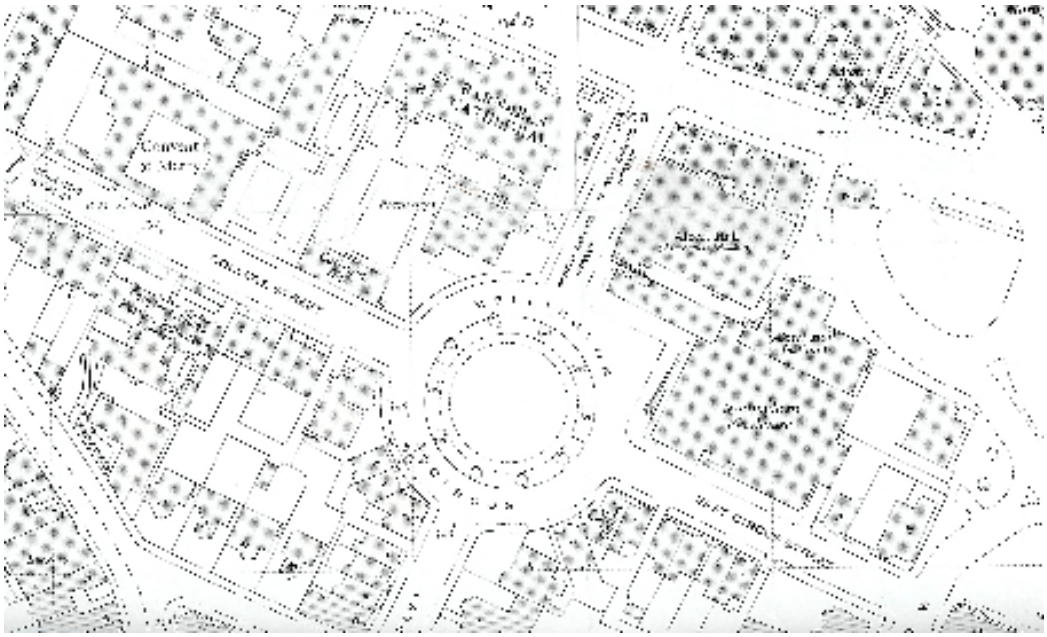
5.26 Within the conservation area there is no legacy of this period in terms of its buildings as the enlarged Cathedral Hall was to be redeveloped again later.

1950 –1967

5.27 The major development of the 20th century was the Nottingham Playhouse, which was built between 1959 and 1963. Val May was the Artistic Director (1957-1961) at the time when a new building for the theatre had been proposed[6] and Peter Moro was named as the chosen architect. The new theatre had a nationally pioneering role.

5.28 During this time Main Marian Way was constructed which resulted in the demolition of buildings on Derby Road and Park Row. Further demolition included the terrace of 25-35 Derby Road, to make way for Wilson House and St Josephs Preparatory School. The only residential development of the time was a large extension to the rear of 14 Oxford Street with a triangular building beyond.

[6] The earlier theatre was on Goldsmiths Street



Ordnance Survey 1965

5.29 People's College of Further Education continued to use the College Street and Ropewalk buildings after moving to new premises on Castle Road in 1959. In 1965 the junior technical school for the building trades closed.

5.30 The construction of the theatre resulted in the loss of the residential properties fronting the north east frontage; formerly a group of 3 villas with two villas either side. To facilitate an open frontage to the theatre the frontage of the Circus was opened out at its entrance. The construction of Maid Marian Way including the enlargement of the roundabout at Chapel Bar resulted in the demolition 1-11 Derby Road and 2-10 Park Row, which included St Thomas's Church.

1968 – 2006

5.31 The remaining traditional buildings along the northern frontage of East Circus Street including a pair of semis next to the Baptist Chapel and a large villa on the corner of Park Row were demolished at this time, replaced with a bank.

5.32 During the 1970's the Trent Polytechnic, now Nottingham Trent University, started its acclaimed theatre design course at the Peoples College. Nottingham Playhouse also used part of the buildings as a store for many years. The College Street Centre for the Performing Arts first occupied the building on the Ropewalk in 1988. In 1989 the People's College of Further Education vacated the College Street premises to allow extensive refurbishment and alteration of the building to be carried out. In 1990 the building came into use as part of the College Street Centre for the Performing Arts; officially opened by actor

Kenneth Branagh on 12th July 1991. In 1998, the College Street site was transferred to the new City of Nottingham Local Education Authority.

5.33 The Cathedral Hall was extended significantly and a new link built between the Cathedral and the presbytery.

5.34 With the proximity of the area to the city centre the 1970's brought the conversion of a number of houses to office use, a trend, which was to continue throughout the latter half of the 20th century. With the continued demand for commercial space in a 'prime location', the Albert Hall Institute was demolished and the site redeveloped for 2 Park Row, a large commercial building fronting Maid Marion Way. 18 Park Row was also demolished and the site redeveloped for the building that is currently occupied by Copper Parry.

5.35 In 1995 Nottingham Playhouse initiated an artistic and architectural collaboration and commissioned a major new piece of public art by acclaimed artist, Anish Kapoor,[7] which culminated with the installation of Sky Mirror. Sky Mirror is nearly 6 metres in diameter, weighs nearly 10 tonnes, and is made from around 150 cubic metres of concrete and 10 tonnes of steel to reinforce the installation area. The artwork is attached to a water feature and is positioned at a 16-degree angle to reflect the sky and surrounding buildings. The sculpture was installed outside the theatre, providing a centrepiece for the re-development of the forecourt area.

5.36 Kapoor won the Turner Prize in 1991 and was described as 'one of the most influential sculptors of his generation'. His work investigates metaphysical polarities, which has been described as concerned with 'material and immaterial, weight and weightlessness, place and non-place'. He explores the relationship between the tangible and non-tangible to create both a physical and spiritual response in the viewer.

5.37 The Sky Mirror was important as a unique development in England, with a major public art commission for a leading international artist by a leading English theatre.

5.38 The reintroduction of residential uses has been achieved through the redevelopment and conversion of the former non-residential properties. The planted gardens to the larger properties have gone, replaced with

[7] Born in Bombay, Kapoor has lived and worked in Britain since the early 70's, rising to prominence in the 1980's. One of the most influential sculptors of his generation his work has been exhibited worldwide including the Tate Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Reina Sofia in Madrid. He won the coveted Turner Prize in 1991 and in 1999 the South Bank Show presented a full-length television profile. May 2000 saw the exhibition of new work by Kapoor at the Lisson Gallery, London.

tarmac. The site of the former chapel and school on Upper College Street is now occupied by a large apartment complex. The Convent of Mercy was closed and converted to apartments in 2002. The Sky Mirror has created a new external environment to the Playhouse and is an attraction in its own right.

6 MODERN DAY

Land Use

6.1 A key change in the last 20 years has been the reintroduction of residential uses back into the area. This change has principally occurred at the north western end of the conservation area with the conversion of The Convent of Mercy for residential use and the redevelopment of the Upper College Street frontages to provide large apartment buildings. The trend is extending to include the former houses converted to office use in the 1970's, which are once more being marketed as potential residences.

6.2 The Roman Catholic Church of St Barnabas remains in active use. However, the Convent has been converted to apartments. The Albert Hall and The Playhouse Theatre continue to be regional attractions with performances throughout the year.

6.3 The People's College continues to provide Arts activities for all ages. As part of the Lifelong Learning Division, College Street is also the base for Curriculum Enrichment Services, which in addition to the Arts, includes Health, Physical Education & Sports and Environmental Education, Study Support and a range of other functions.

Spatial Analysis

6.4 The main roads and streets are a significant contributory element to the character of the conservation area in their layout. Unlike most areas that developed 'post enclosure the street pattern was formally planned, not influenced by the allotment boundaries.

6.5 The grain of the street pattern is geometric for the most part with roads at right angles, centred on a circular open area. Roads are wide which creates a feeling of spaciousness throughout the area, notwithstanding the fact that houses are closely developed for the most part.



6.6 The development of The Ropewalk preceded that of Wellington Circus and it was not included in the planned layout. It is organic in form; winding along the crest of the escarpment. Buildings along the Wellington Circus frontage do not directly address the line of the road, which reduces the impact of its sweeping character and opportunity for enclosure. Views of the rear or side views of buildings are common and the townscape along most of the frontage is weaker for this. That buildings do not generally respond to its sweeping curves is in contrast to the strong streetscape of the facing Park Conservation Area frontage of The Ropewalk with its closely packed villas set on the back edge of the pavement.

6.7 The Circus is the most significant open space in the area and has considerable local amenity value. It provides a green oasis within the built-up area, a place for rest and contemplation. The mature trees around its perimeter contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area; partially arresting the view whilst allowing glimpses beyond along the main thoroughfares.

7 Key Views and Vistas

7.1 The hill and the slight curve to Wellington Circus provide for an attractive townscape. Land rises from the east and from north, with The Ropewalk the highest thoroughfare at the top of an escarpment, which falls steeply into The Park. Within the conservation area the

impact of the topography on the appreciation of the townscape varies between streets.

7.2 With its geometric layout, views within the conservation area are primarily linear, channelled along the length the roads. The majority terminate with a closing view, usually of a building. It follows that not all such buildings will necessarily fall within the boundary of the designated area. In the case of Wellington Circus none of the buildings that close the views are within the area itself. These buildings not only have a potentially significant contribution in maintaining the sense of enclosure; but also act as focal points. This increases their potential to contribute to the character of the conservation area in architectural terms. A key view identified in the City Centre Design Guide is from the junction of Oxford Street and the Ropewalk towards the Circus and Albert Hall



7.3 Within the streets, views focus on glimpses between buildings though these are relatively few due, in part, to the significant number of terrace properties. Where there are gaps some glimpsed views are breathtaking such as the glimpse of St Barnabas tower in between properties at the top of Regent Street, others less inspiring such as the view along the rear of Regent Street from a large gap in the frontage of Oxford Street.

7.4 Views out of the conservation area focus on middle distance views towards the city centre particularly from the higher land at the top of College Street and along The Ropewalk. Views along the main

north/south roads towards the north are of Derby Road / Maid Marian Way and larger commercial buildings. This further reinforces the 'haven like' quality of the conservation area.

7.5 There are key views into the conservation area. In particular, the Cathedral can be viewed from the Old Market Square and the Albert Hall can be viewed from along Upper Parliament Street.

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

The following sub-areas can be identified, each with its own character:

- **Wellington Circus (North)**
- **Wellington Circus (South)**

8 Architecture and Townscape

Wellington Circus (North)

8.1 The sub area located to the north of the conservation area is demarcated on Map 1. The sub area comprises a mix of ecclesiastical, cultural and modern purpose built offices. The buildings vary in scale, appearance and age. However, the buildings are generally larger than their original residential counterparts located to the south.

North Circus Street

8.2 On entering North Circus Street the eye is drawn towards the trees in the cathedral precincts along its perimeter and towards the open circus and Oxford Street beyond. The rendered building of 52 The Ropewalk with the brightness of its white painted walls emphasises the termination of the view. Looking along North Circus Street the impact of the topography is apparent from the slope of the circus (which slopes down from College Street to East Circus Street) and the rise of the land along Oxford Street towards The Ropewalk.

8.3 The scale of the Cathedral and Albert Hall and their materials of sandstone and buff terracotta (respectively) complement each other and create an entrance of high quality. The contrast in style of the two buildings with the paired back detailing of the cathedral set against the exuberant Edwardian temperance hall adds visual interest and vitality to the streetscene. The openness of the view beyond, the width of the road and the grounds of the cathedral, gives both buildings space.

Derby Road

8.4 More recently an increase in scale has encroached into the area at its margins, with the redevelopment of traditional buildings in the north west of the conservation area to create new apartment blocks. Part of the Derby Road frontage is included within the designated area and modern residential developments have extended from the main thoroughfare to wrap around and along Upper College Street. The density of development along Upper College Street is subsequently higher than anywhere in the conservation area.

College Street (North)

8.5 College Street rises away from the Circus. The modern boundary wall of the precinct and church hall is a significant feature but does not have the quality of the traditional walling and undermines the quality of the townscape.



8.6 The former convent presents a mostly blank façade. Tracery windows to the later upper part with small metal windows to the original part of the building further down the street. The building has an lively roofscape with a decorated ridge, tall chimneys and a turret mid-ridge. The church tower of St Barnabas is visible above.

8.7 Beyond the convent is a newer larger apartment block, Parkgate which steps down the street to acknowledge the lie of the land and traditional scale of the area but its overall design does not enhance the character of the frontage.

8.8 The view to the top of College Road is closed by a substantial Victorian villa located outside of the conservation area. The villa is set back from the Upper College Street frontage on higher land with a high rusticated stone wall surrounding it. Its aspect and location at the top of the street gives it significant presence making it a focal point. From the top of the street there is a view towards the Circus and city beyond and the spire of St Nicholas Church. A lone tree at the top of the street and near to the entrance to the tunnel brings the trees around the Circus to the fore.

Wellington Circus (South)

8.9 The roads within the southern sub area are demarcated on Map 1. The southern sub area mainly comprises the original residential development.

8.10 As a former residential area there is relative consistency in scale. The traditional residential properties comprise the terrace row, individual detached residences and a number of semi detached houses. Across all house types most are around 3 storeys; with full height basements and attics a feature. Substantial grounds are not common with most properties having a small forecourt garden to the front and a longer yard to the rear. Notwithstanding this and the predominance of the terrace as a building type, the wide roads and the open space of the Circus at its core contribute to an overall spacious feel.

Wellington Circus

8.11 The architecture of the buildings located around the circus varies although there is a similarity in residential building scale and density. The original residential buildings take full advantage of the Circus and face onto it and where the buildings are located on the corners i.e. ECS and Oxford Street they turn the corner successfully. This circular centrepiece and the circular frontage to buildings creates a dynamic sense of enclosure. Unity is created by the completeness of the circus; its wall, railings and trees around its perimeter.

