



northampton

# Northampton Central Area Design, development and movement framework

Final Report

November 2006

# Contents

Northampton Central Area  
Design, development and movement framework  
Final Report



## Executive summary Context for change

1	Introduction	4
2	Northampton past and present	5
3	Need and opportunity	21

## Vision and masterplan

4	A vision for Northampton town centre	29
5	Masterplan and project proposals	33
6	Transportation strategy	46
7	Public realm strategy	54

## Delivery

8	Delivery strategy	65
---	-------------------	----

## Appendices

A	Sustainability appraisal objectives	73
B	List of supporting documents	75

Northampton Central Area  
Design, development and movement framework  
Final Report

# Executive summary

## Context for Change

# northampton

### Northampton and the Development Framework in context

- i. Northampton is a town of 200,000 people, expected to grow to a town of 300,000 people by 2021 as part of the Sustainable Communities Plan. A successful town centre will be fundamental to the growth of Northampton, to provide an increased retail and leisure offer to meet the needs of a growing population, significant additional employment opportunities to reduce out commuting and with a distinctive quality that will attract and retain the people of Northampton.
- ii. Northampton is a traditional County Town, with a built heritage that can be traced back to medieval times and a history of trade and commerce including, famously, the manufacture of shoes. The town today is characterised by attractive historic buildings, including glorious civic buildings bestowed by the Victorians, framing an historic street pattern culminating in a Market Square of impressive proportions.
- iii. Whilst in broad terms the town centre is performing reasonably well and there is healthy demand from investors and businesses for opportunities to grow and develop in the town, there is currently no overview of how the town should develop over the next 10-15 years, to respond both to current shortcomings and the growth agenda. The purpose of the Development Framework for Northampton town centre is to establish the vision for the town centre and to identify the key projects that will be required to realise this vision.
- iv. The Development Framework is not a statutory plan document but will inform the development of an Area Action Plan for the Northampton Central Area. This will form part of the Local Development Framework for Northampton prepared by Northampton Borough Council. The Development Framework has been prepared with the involvement of many key stakeholders and following the production of a number of supporting documents which examine the context for the development proposals and so it is anticipated that the Framework will provide a robust foundation for the development of the AAP.

### The vision for Northampton town centre

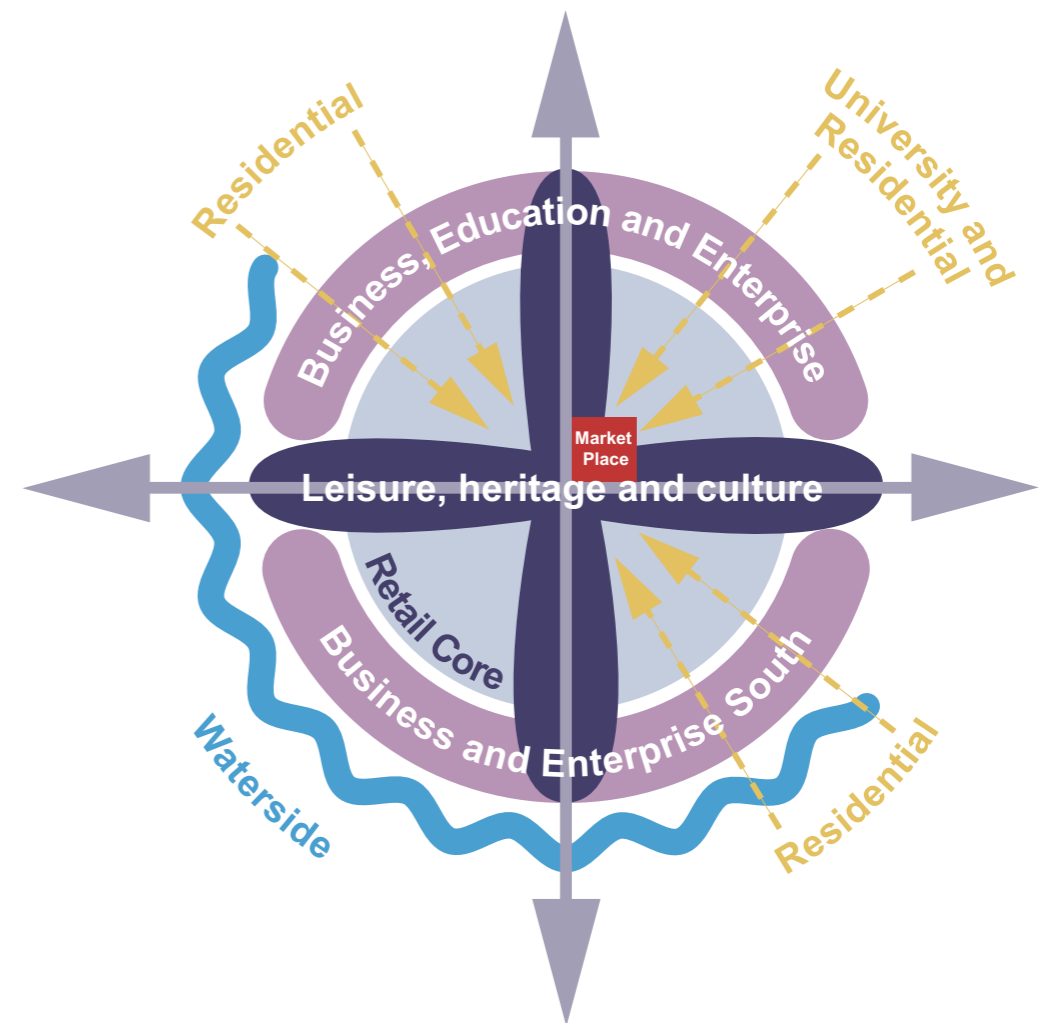
- v. *'Northampton is the prototype for the 21st century County town, its Market Square the centre of life for a fast growing creative and enterprising community in a dynamic city region. As the town becomes a compact city, offering the range and quality of services required by an aspirational, creative and critical population, it develops an identity drawn from the wealth of historic buildings and the intimacy of its streets and squares but also reflecting exciting new creative and entrepreneurial ambitions. The future town centre will provide the conditions for growth and success.'*

### Key development drivers

- vi. To prioritise and structure the approach to development in the town centre in line with the vision we have proposed the following key drivers:
- vii. **Built heritage** - Use the historic structure and organising principles of the town as the basis for understanding the orientation and legibility of the centre, emphasising the main north-south and east-west axes and the Market Square as the hub of the town centre.

Executive summary

- viii. **Exceptional public realm** - Create the best possible image and setting for development and investment and set Northampton apart from towns with less built heritage by delivering an exceptional public realm in the historic core.
- ix. **Rediscover the waterside** - Continue to rediscover the waterside areas to the south and west of the town centre, as the basis of a high quality residential and employment lifestyle offer.
- x. **Create a series of exciting new destinations in the town centre** – to address shortfalls in the town centre offer and meet the demands of a growing population.
- xi. **Foster creativity and enterprise** – by developing links with the University and college, creating a cultural environment that attracts and retains creative talent and facilitating enterprise with suitable housing and business accommodation.
- xii. The Development Framework identifies 14 key projects. These include the following priorities:
  - a. **Retail** led mixed use developments at the **Grosvenor Centre** and at **St Peter’s Square** to meet capacity shortfall and retailer demands for modern floorplates in a high quality environment.
  - b. **A business and communications hub at Castle Station**, reflecting the accessibility of this location by rail and providing the high quality office floorspace missing from the Northampton offer.
  - c. **An arts, crafts and culture quarter around Angel Street and Derngate**, with links to the College and University as a home for new and independent businesses.
  - d. **Public realm and infrastructure** – Exceptional public realm focused on the **Market Square** and remodelling of key routes to create an attractive pedestrian experience.
- xiii. Other projects include a **new civic office and hotel complex on Horsemarket**, an **enterprise hub at Great Russell Street** based around media industries and with links to the College and University, **the linking of the town centre with the waterside along Bridge Street**, a **healthcare campus** at the hospital and the **regeneration of Spring Boroughs** as a successful urban neighbourhood.
- xiv. The delivery partners include Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, English Partnerships and the East Midlands Regional Development Agency. This partnership has commissioned and delivered the Development Framework and will be managing the delivery of the projects.
- xv. By 2021 it is therefore expected that in addition to the substantial housing growth in the county the town centre will offer over half a million square feet each of additional retail and business floorspace, along with over 300,000 square feet of leisure and café/restaurant space and 3,000 new housing units within the central area. Above all the qualities of Northampton as the prototype for the C21<sup>st</sup> county town will have been brought to the fore: A place with history and identity, a place of creativity and enterprise, first choice in the region.



Strategy Summary

# Introduction

## Northampton Central Area Design, development and movement framework Final Report

# northampton

- 1.1 Northampton is a town of 200,000 people, expected to grow to a town of 300,000 people by 2021. This is a phenomenal rate of growth though one that the town has some track record of dealing with; the designation of Northampton as a Growth Area in 1964 preceded the establishment of the Northampton Development Corporation in 1968 and a doubling in population from 100,000 to almost 200,000 by the time the Corporation was wound up in 1985. Full circle it would seem as Northampton is again identified for growth in the ODPM Sustainable Communities Plan for accommodating the economic growth requirements of the South East of England and a new Development Corporation is established for West Northamptonshire (WNDC).
- 1.2 However, the present day challenge is both more urgent and more complex. The timescale is shorter, sustainability is an absolute requirement, the infrastructure needs are multifaceted and an increasingly mobile and aspirational community must have reason to choose Northampton. Moreover the Government guidance on sustainable communities and the sub-regional guidance on the growth area of Northampton rightly set down the need for an holistic approach to social, economic and physical regeneration and puts the spotlight firmly on the town centres of the region as the focus for growth.

- 1.3 Northampton is therefore a town with a big future. The framework for the planning and development of the future of the town will be enshrined in the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Northampton. This report provides the backdrop for the preparation of the Central Area Action Plan which will be the key component of the LDF that guides development in the town centre.

### The client and consultant team

- 1.4 The client partnership, led by Northampton Borough Council (NBC), also includes WNDC, Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and English Partnerships. The consultant team responsible for this project is led by **BDP Urbanism**, the UK's leading interdisciplinary urban design and regeneration practice, with support from commercial surveyors **CBRE** and transportation experts **MVA**.

### Objectives

- 1.5 The objective for the project is:

*To deliver an exemplar design, development and movement framework for Northampton's Central Area – a vision that recognises the heritage and civic value of the town centre, recognises the challenges of growth and enables investment, in order to deliver a town centre that is of regional prominence and nationally recognised”.*

### Purpose of the report

- 1.6 This report sets out the vision and design, development and movement framework for Northampton and is structured as follows:
- Section 2: Northampton past and present
  - Section 3: Need and opportunity
  - Section 4: A vision for the town centre
  - Section 5: Masterplan and project proposals
  - Section 6: Transportation and movement strategy
  - Section 7: Public realm strategy
  - Section 8: Delivery strategy

### Summary

- 1.7 The Design, Development and Movement Framework for Northampton is a collaborative project bringing together key stakeholders from the town, county and region. The objective is to bring forward an exemplar masterplan that will deliver a development, design and movement framework to guide investment in the central area of Northampton until 2021.

# Northampton past and present

# northampton

## Introduction

2.1 The purpose of this section of the report is to set out a description and appraisal of the central area of Northampton. Accordingly this section is structured as follows:

- a. The study area
- b. History
- c. Townscape appraisal

## The study area

2.2 The study area is the Central Area of Northampton, as proposed for the Central Area Action Plan (AAP) in the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Northampton. This is illustrated on the plan opposite. The study area includes the town centre and the adjoining areas to the north, east, south and west. The surrounding areas include some areas of relative deprivation (such as Spring Boroughs) and key infrastructure elements such as the rail station. Thus the Central Area extends to the residential areas and the Racecourse Park to the north of the town centre, to the General Hospital in the east, to the south as far as the River Nene and Northampton Branch of the Grand Union Canal and to the Castle Station site and Spring Boroughs neighbourhood in the west.

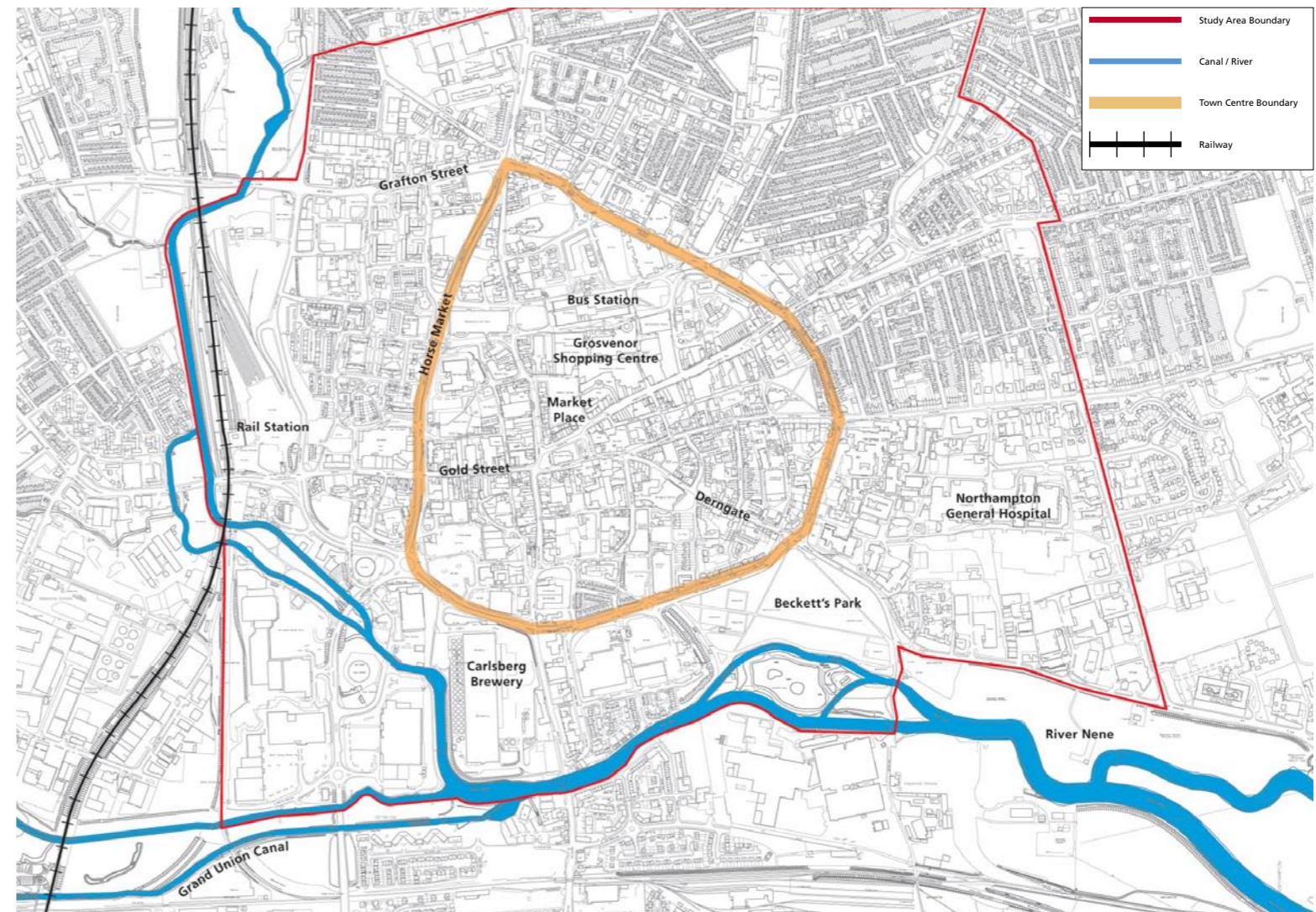


Figure 1: Study Area

## Northampton past and present

### History

2.3 The first time visitor to Northampton cannot fail to notice the history of the town, writ large in the built heritage, medieval street pattern and impressive Market Square. This combined with a distinctive use of local materials, particularly the honey coloured stone and ornate decoration, lends Northampton a sense of permanence and stature. This is especially noticeable in contrast to other centres in the sub region including Milton Keynes and Coventry. Because of the particular value of the heritage of Northampton and the key role that this plays in both defining the town centre today and in shaping a vision for the future, it is worth highlighting some elements of the history of the town in broadly chronological order.

#### Saxon Northampton in Saxon times and the Middle ages

2.4 Osbornes guide of 1840 recorded the early history of Northampton in its guide to accompany the opening of the new London to Birmingham railway.

*"Northampton, four miles to the right [east] of the [Blisworth] station, a borough, market, manufacturing, and county town, containing 15,351 inhabitants, is a place of considerable antiquity and importance, situated on the north side of the river Nine or Nene; the name is Saxon, and having been adopted for the shire in the time of Alfred, shows that at this period this town was the most important in the county. Many interesting events are connected with the history of this town, in the earlier period of which it was frequently burnt by the Danes."*

2.5 Northampton began as a Saxon village, reportedly called Hamm Tun, which means the village by the well-watered meadow. Later it was called North Hamm Tun, possibly to distinguish it from Southampton. The name Northampton first appeared in writing in 914. When the Danes occupied Eastern England in the late 9th century they turned Northampton into a stronghold called a 'burh'. They dug a ditch around the settlement and erected an earth rampart with a wooden palisade on top. By the time of the Domesday Book (1086) it had a population of about 1,500.

2.6 Osbornes guide continues:

*"It was a considerable place in the reign of Edward the Confessor, having at that time sixty burgesses in the King's lordship. It was bestowed by the Norman Conqueror to Simon St. Liz, a noble Norman who founded a castle there; the whole hundred of Falkely or Fawsley was included in the grant, and was valued at 40l a year; the latter was given to the said Simon St. Liz to provide shoes for his horses. In 1106 the Saxon Chronicle states that Robert Duke of Normandy had an interview here with his brother, King Henry I, to accommodate the quarrel then subsisting between them. In his 23rd year that monarch and his court kept the festival of Easter at Northampton, with all the pomp and grandeur peculiar to that age; and in the 31st year of the same reign a parliament was held in this town, when the nobles swore fealty to the Empress Maud. In 1138 King Stephen summoned a council to meet him at Northampton, when all the Bishops, Abbots, and Barons of the realm attended, for the purpose of making promotions in the Church. In 1144 Stephen again held his court here. In the reign of Henry II a council of the states was convened at Northampton before whom Archbishop Beckett was summoned to appear for not assenting to the celebrated statutes of Clarendon. The King of Scotland with the Scotch Bishops and Abbots attended this council; and the formation of this convention has been considered the model by which succeeding parliaments have been*

*constituted. In the 10th year of his reign, John, having been offended by the citizens of London, commanded the exchequer to be removed to Northampton. Henry III frequently made Northampton his residence, and honoured it with particular marks of his favour. Edward I frequently resided at Northampton, and on his death a parliament was once more held at Northampton to settle the ceremonial of his burial, and the marriage and coronation of his successor. In the reign of Edward III several parliaments were held at Northampton. In 1460 Henry VI made this the place of rendezvous for his forces, prior to the fierce and bloody battle which was fought between his forces and the Yorkists under the Earl of March, when Henry was defeated and taken prisoner."*

2.7 Northampton grew in size in the 12th and 13th centuries, reaching a population of 2,500 or 3,000 by 1300. Early in the 12th century the first Earl of Northampton built the Church of the Sepulchre when he returned home from the crusades. This is a copy of a church in Jerusalem. He also fortified Northampton by building stone walls around it as well as a castle to safeguard the town.

2.8 Richard I gave Northampton its first charter in 1189 and in the Middle Ages Northampton had weekly markets. By the early 13th century they were held in the present Market Square. Much later, Osbornes London & Birmingham Railway Guide of 1840 describes the Market Square as follows:

*"The market place is an exceedingly good one and is used on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; the latter being the principal market day. Boots and shoes are the staple commodities of the trade. Fairs are held April 15, May 4, July 20, August 5 and 26, September 19, November 28, and December 19."*

2.9 The main industry in Northampton in the Middle Ages was wool based. It was woven and dyed in Northampton. The importance of the wool industry is evident from surviving street names such Mercers Row (a mercer was a dealer in fine cloth), The Drapery and Woolmonger Street. The first shoemaker was mentioned in the early 13th century though there is no evidence that shoemaking was a major industry in Northampton till much later.

## Northampton past and present

2.10 St Andrews Priory was built about 1100 in Broad Street. Delapre Abbey was built in 1145. In 1264 there was a rebellion against the king. At first the rebels held Northampton but a royalist army captured the town and sacked it. Soon afterwards Northampton suffered a decline. By the 14th century there were reports that many parts of the town were in ruins. This may have been because high taxes were charged on people within the walls triggering a move to suburbs outside the town.

### Northampton from 1500-1800

2.11 Northampton continued to grow in size and prosperity. The Welsh House on Market Square was built in 1595. It got its name from the Welshmen who drove cattle to Northampton fairs. By the 17th century Northampton was noted for shoemaking which was taking over from the traditional industry of wool. In the Civil War of 1642 Northampton staunchly supported the Parliamentarians over the Royalists.

2.12 In 1675 disaster struck on September 20th when a fire began in St Marys Street and spread through the town. About 600 houses, half the total number in Northampton were destroyed as well as many public buildings. Henry Bell (1647-1711) was an architect who belonged to a wealthy merchant family and was well educated and had travelled on the Continent. His early works were carried out in Northampton where, in 1676 he met the architect and scientist Robert Hooke who had collaborated closely with Christopher Wren in the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666. These experiences would have been shared with Bell and influenced his masterplan for Northampton. The town was rebuilt in a far neater and more elegant style than it had been before the fire and so by the 18th century Northampton had a reputation for being an attractive, well-built town with a population of over 5,000. Daniel Defoe described Northampton as 'The handsomest and best built town in all this part of England' in his book 'A tour through the whole island of Great Britain' (1724).

### Northampton in the C19

2.13 At the beginning of the 19th century Northampton only had a population of about 7,000 but it grew rapidly. By the 1870's it was 40,000 and by 1900 about 87,000. Osbournes London & Birmingham Railway Guide of 1840 provides a contemporary impression of the town:

*"Northampton is situated on a slight inclination, rising gently from the bank of the River Nene, and consists principally of two capacious streets, nearly a mile in length, which intersect each other at right angles. There are two stone bridges over the river and the town is a thoroughfare for various roads. Charles II presented 1000 tons of timber and seven years' chimney money towards repairing and beautifying All Saints Church; and a statue of that monarch was erected on the balustrade of the splendid portico of that building. Northampton formerly contained seven churches within its walls and two without, but the town was almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1675, and it now contains only four parishes. The Church of St Sepulchre is of a circular form, having a cupola in the centre supported by eight Norman pillars; it is supposed to have been built by the Knights Templars, from a model of that erected over the holy temple in Jerusalem. The Sessions House is a handsome building of the Corinthian order. The other buildings of note are the Shire Hall, the Infirmary, the County Gaol, built on the principle of Howard, the*

*philanthropist, in 1793, the Town Gaol, a Theatre and many charitable foundations."*

- 2.14 Ironically, given the detailed record of Northampton published in the guide, the section on the town concludes; "The town cannot be seen from the line on account of the cutting." Clearly Northampton must have had considerable importance to have merited such a lavish description when the railway did not at this time even serve the town!
- 2.15 The railway did finally reach Northampton in 1845, terminating at Bridge Street station. Castle station (the present station) did not open until 1859. The first public library in Northampton opened in 1877 and from 1880 horse drawn trams ran in the streets. Also in the 19th century Northampton gained a piped water supply and sewers. The Guildhall was built in 1864. The Royal Theatre followed in 1884. Victoria Park opened in 1898.
- 2.16 The following extract taken from 'Building Jerusalem' (Tristram Hunt, 2004) records the debate surrounding the new Guildhall.

*"By the mid 1850's, the leading burghers of Northampton, the Midlands market town originally built around the footwear trade but now encompassing a growing amount of proto-industrial commerce, had begun to sense that their city's wealth and significance demanded some kind of monumental edifice to reflect it's burgeoning status. The old Guildhall had outlived its purpose and the site of the existing Corn Exchange was too limited for the civic aspirations of the Northampton municipal worthies. In September 1860 the town voted to adopt William Ewart's pioneering 1855 Public Libraries Act, which permitted the levying of a rate to fund municipal libraries and museums. The Council agreed to impose a one-penny rate to fund the construction of a new town hall."*

- 2.17 Much complaint followed, from Councillors and the public, protesting that the town could not afford this, that it would promote political agitation. But the key issue was the question of style. Selection of design was by way of a competition as was the tradition of the time, to be judged by the RIBA president, William Tite. Two clear leading contenders, one Italianate and the other Gothic. The latter won out, designed by Edward Godwin. The iconography included statues of Richard I who gave Northampton its first charter and St Michael, the patron saint of the town. There are tympana on the ground floor windows portraying a civic narrative with events including the trial of Thomas a Beckett and the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.



## Northampton past and present

2.18 Hunt noted that the style of the building had more than a little to do with the image that the Northampton elite held of themselves:

*"The Town Hall also directly appealed to the glorious traditions of the self-governing Italian republics with whom the Northampton civic elite were keen to ally themselves...The building is dotted with iconography celebrating in a consciously Renaissance or 'civic republican' fashion the town's history of commerce and local self-government. In a skilled prequel to Manchester Town Hall, the sculptures around the four lower windows focused on the commercial and industrial history of the city and its heroic workers and merchants."*

2.19 Tristram Hunt concludes that with the completion of the Guildhall in Northampton, Venetian Gothic had been established as the 'national' style of the English municipality.

2.20 By the 19th century industry in Northampton was dominated by shoe making; more than a third of men worked in this industry, rising to nearly half by the end of the century. A townscape of two storey red brick terraced housing punctuated by multi-storey red brick shoe factories and public buildings such as churches and schools emerged with the growth of this industry. The only other significant industry was brewing.

### Northampton in the C20

2.21 In the early 20th century shoemaking was still the dominant industry but it was already declining and many workers were laid off in the 1920s and 1930s. The council tried to attract new industries to Northampton in the 1930s with limited success.

2.22 Bathing areas were created at Midsummer Meadow and Millers meadow and other popular leisure pursuits included roller skating and the cinema, though horseracing at the Racecourse was abandoned after several serious accidents.

2.23 No. 78 Derngate was remodelled in the Scottish Art Nouveau style by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for Basset-Lowke, an eminent model engineer. In the 1930s various new buildings appeared on the Mounts including the Police Station, Magistrates Courts and the swimming baths.

2.24 Council house building continued after 1945, as did private house building although there was only a small increase in Northampton's population in the 1950s and early 1960s. Then in 1965 Northampton was designated a new town which led to a huge expansion of its population. Many Londoners 'emigrated' to Northampton. A Development Corporation was formed in 1968 and building work began in 1970. The first new area to be built was the Eastern District followed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Southern District. The new districts included industrial estates to attract new industries to Northampton. Today the main ones are financial services, soft drinks, cosmetics and brewing. The Grosvenor shopping centre was built in 1975. The Northampton Development Corporation wound up in 1985.

*Northampton past and present*

**Town centre appraisal**

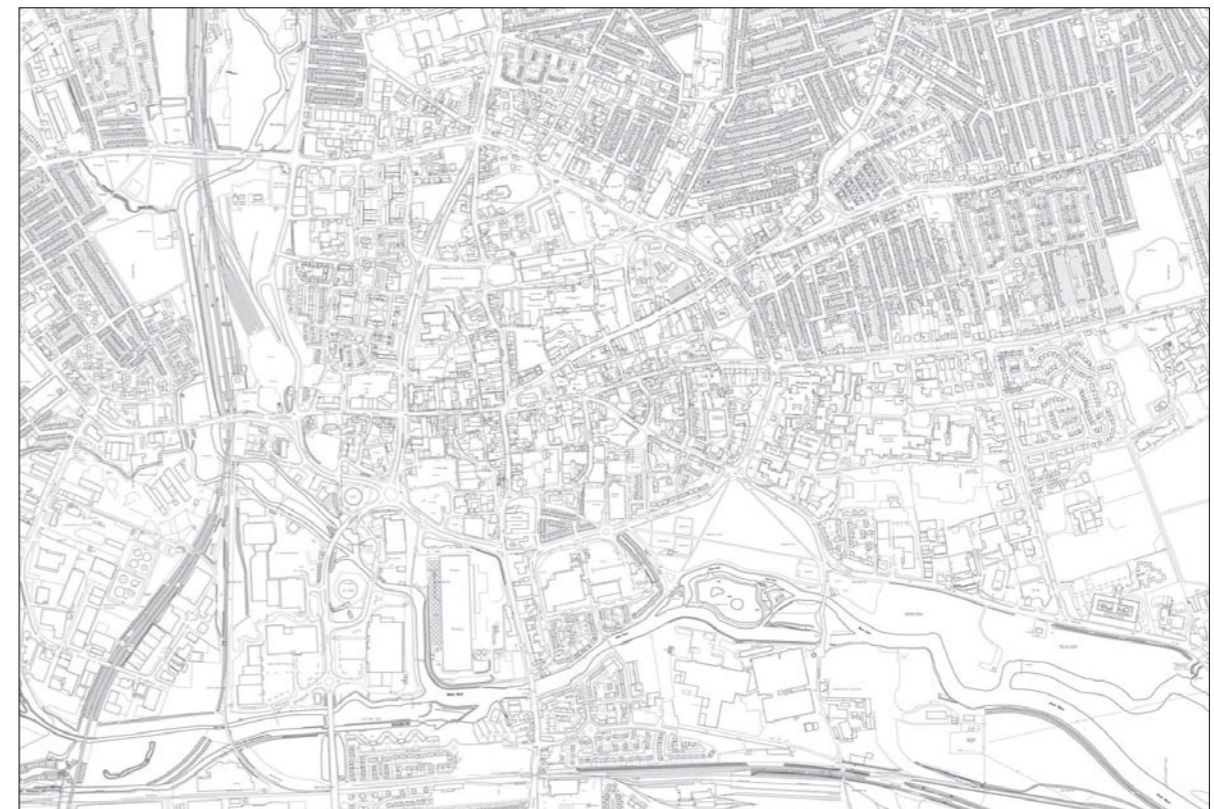
2.25 The appraisal of the town centre is based on an overview of the heritage and townscape qualities of the central area, illustrated with a photographic survey.

**Built heritage**

2.26 The figure opposite illustrates the town centre in 1886 and again in 2006. The fact that the historic town centre is recognisable in the contemporary street map, over 120 years on, is evidence of the heritage value of the built environment and streetscape of the town, much of which is still evident on the ground. This is a key selling point for Northampton in comparison to its modern neighbours. The medieval origins of the market town are evident and the later Georgian and then Victorian developments have largely respected the historic street pattern. The alignment of the present day ring road is evident in 1886 however. This was a Victorian intervention, creating orbital routes for example to the south east of the town centre, creating a boulevard to overlook the parkland and better link the town centre with the morally uplifting countryside beyond! Whilst the alignment of the ring road is over 100 years old (and intriguingly similar to the route of the original town walls destroyed by Charles II as recorded on John Speed's map of 1610), the twentieth century has of course witnessed major widening to accommodate increasing levels of traffic and this has resulted in loss of buildings and replacement with often poor quality urban design.



1886



2006

**Figure 2: Northampton 1886-2006**

Northampton past and present

2.27 There are four Conservation Areas in the town centre, three based on the parishes of All Saints, Holy Sepulchre and St Giles and the fourth based on Deragate.

- a. All Saints – Covering the historic core and market square
- b. Holy Sepulchre – Covering the church and Sheep Street
- c. St Giles – Covering the church, Spencer Parade, York Road and the west side of Cheyne Walk.
- d. Deragate – Covering Deragate, Albion Place, Castilian Place and Victoria Promenade.

2.28 The combined Conservation Areas therefore cover much of the historic core, focusing on the key routes crossing the town centre as follows:

- a. Sheep Street / The Drapery from the north
- b. Gold Street from the west
- c. Bridge Street from the south
- d. Deragate and St Giles from the east.

2.29 In addition the conservation areas cover the core historic areas around the Market Square and the Guildhall and the frontages to Victoria Promenade, Cheyne Walk and York Road which form the south east quadrant of the town centre ring road. There are also numerous listed buildings in the Central Area, not recorded individually in this report but reflected in the approach taken to development where appropriate.

**Townscape appraisal**

2.30 The townscape appraisal is included opposite and illustrates, at a high level, the areas of good, neutral and poor townscape. This is broken down into Landmarks, Routes, Barriers and Frontages; 'landmarks' are key building landmarks or key spaces, 'routes' are the main streets within the town centre, 'barriers' refers to the severance effects of traffic dominated routes in particular but also to blank, non-permeable street level facades and 'frontages' is the quality of the built frontage to the main streets and spaces.

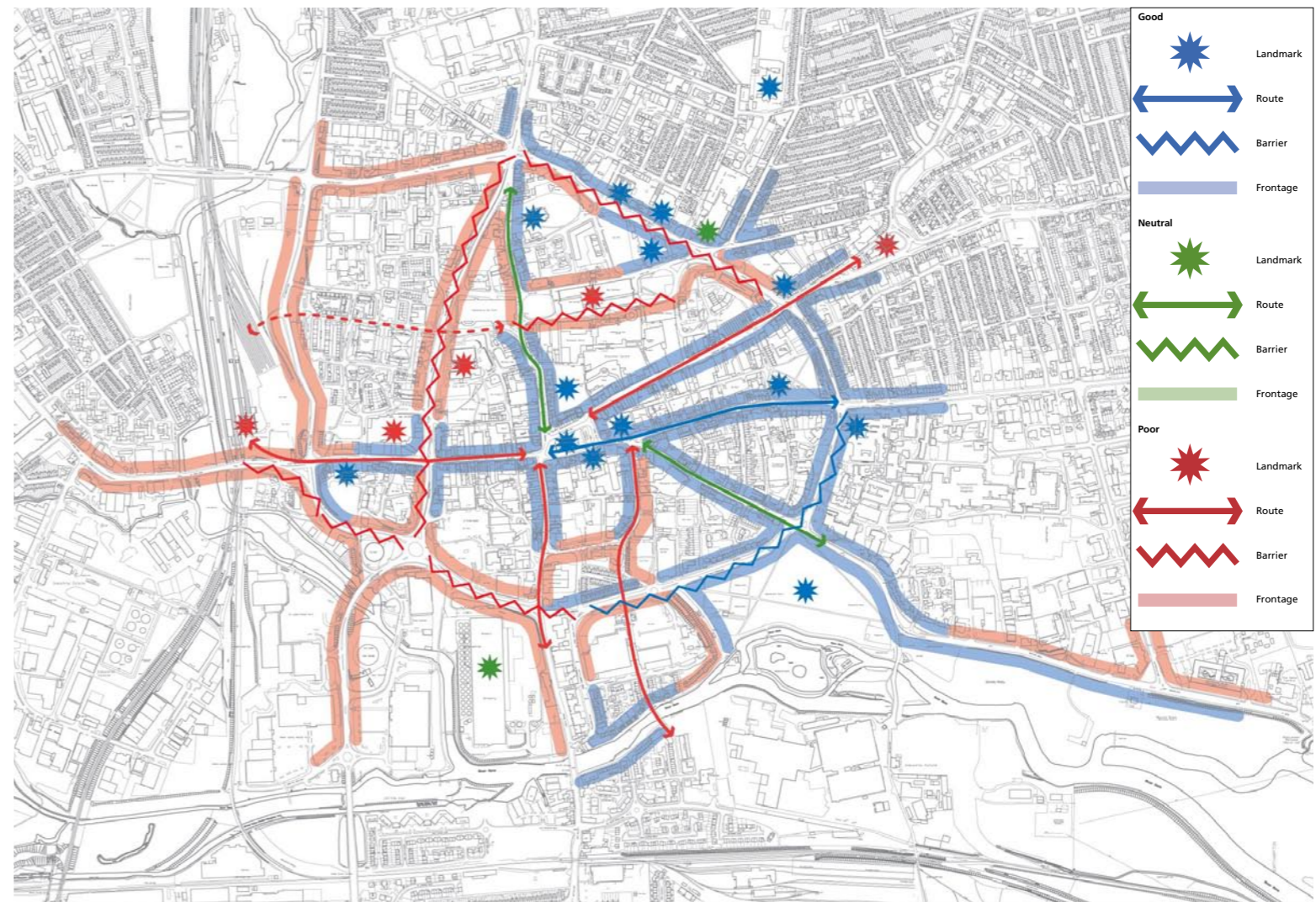


Figure 3: Townscape Analysis

*Northampton past and present*

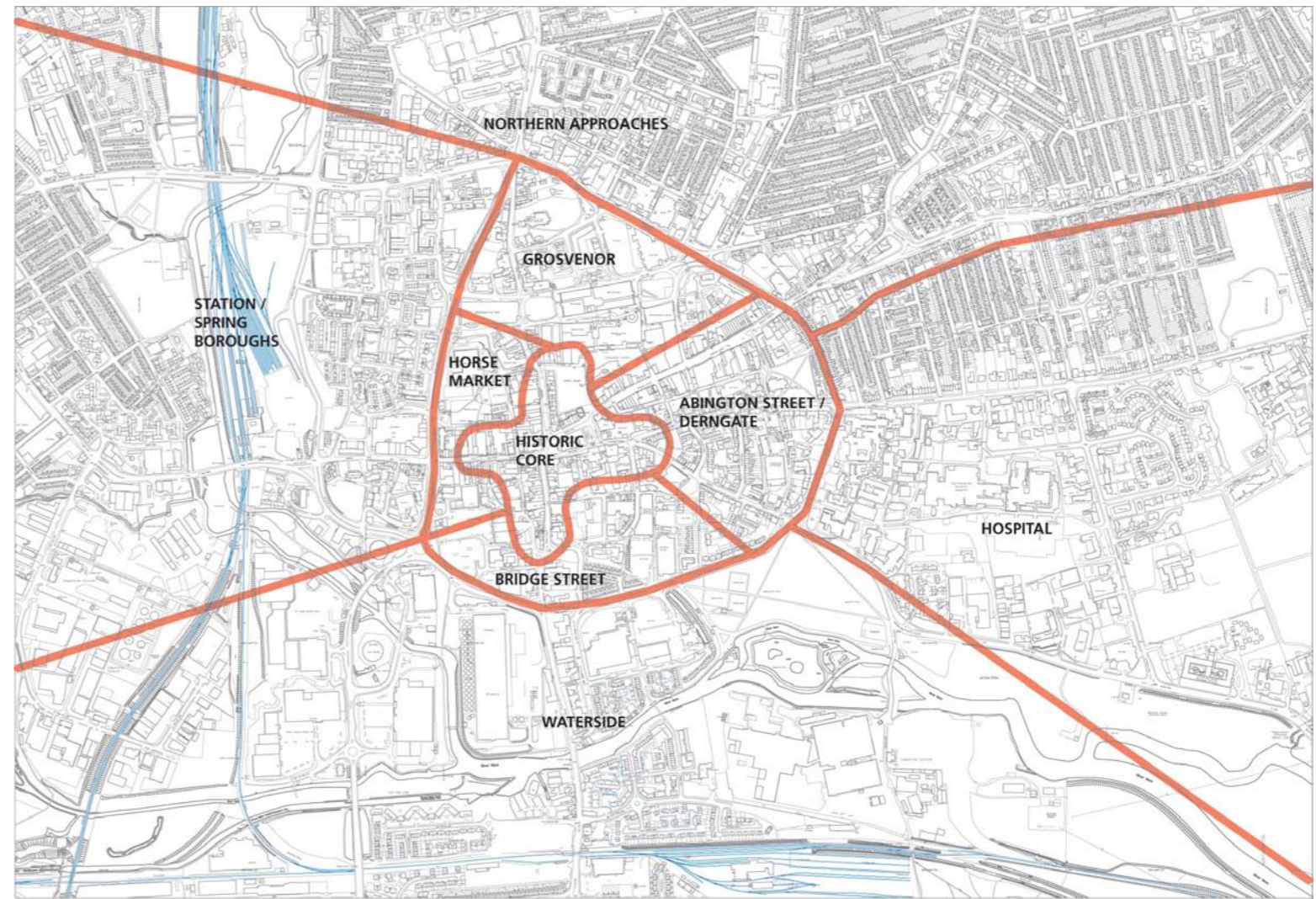
2.31 Not surprisingly, the areas of 'Good' townscape quality correlate closely with the retained historic street pattern and building fabric. The areas where there has been greatest intervention in the building fabric, to deliver road widening schemes such as along Horse Market or comprehensive area redevelopment such as the Grosvenor Centre, correlate with the areas of Poor townscape quality.

2.32 The masterplan strategy for the Central Area needs to address these issues by facilitating new development that enhances the townscape of those areas that are deemed to be 'Poor' or 'Neutral' and respecting and working with the townscape of those areas that are deemed to be 'Good'. More generally, recognition of the positive townscape features of the town centre is the basis for the development of design guidance that can be applied to any development proposals in the Central Area and that helps to promote the distinctiveness of Northampton compared to competing town and city centres. As already emphasised it is the quality and character of Northampton that is likely to set it apart from other areas.

**Character Areas**

2.33 The photographic survey included on the following pages is structured according to an initial assessment of the different character areas in the Central Area. These are defined as follows:

- a. The historic core
- b. The town centre areas
- c. The outer areas



**Figure 4: Photographic Survey Key Plan**

*Northampton past and present*

2.34 The **Historic Core** is defined by the intersection of the main north south and east west streets and includes the Market Square and the area around the Guildhall and County hall. Key features are:

- a. The extensive survival of historic building fabric from the 18th and 19th centuries and the ornate design and detailing.
- b. The scale and quality of the Market Square, potentially one of the greatest Market Squares in England and of European significance.
- c. The attractive 'set piece' of All Saints Church and the oblique and detailed views of Guildhall.
- d. The network of streets and fine grain of buildings around Angel Street.



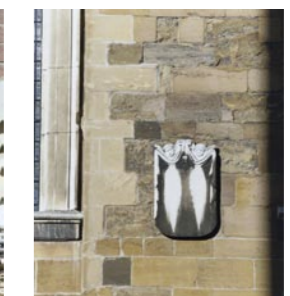
All Saint's Church and Guildhall



The Market Square



Angel Street and surrounds



Typical facades and details

*Northampton past and present*

2.35 The **Town Centre North or Grosvenor** area includes both areas of redevelopment and historic streets. The key features include:

- a. The Grosvenor Centre, constructed in 1975, which is substantially hidden from view, concealed behind older frontages and part buried into the ground which rises to the north.
- b. The Drapery is the historic route into the town from the north and was formerly a prime shopping street. Considerable character remains however, and narrow passageways or 'jetty's' provide linkages to the Market Square and Horse Market.
- c. The bus station to the north which is universally reviled and severs the town centre from the areas to the north.
- d. The Mounts, site of the former gaol which was substantially redeveloped in the 1930's to provide civic facilities including the police and fire stations, magistrates Courts and swimming pool. These form a distinctive and attractive group of buildings. The new Crown Courts were more recently completed on the south side of the Mounts.



**Bus station and surrounds**



**Grosvenor Centre/Market Square**



**Drapery**



**The Mounts**



*Northampton past and present*

2.36 The **Abington Street / Derngate triangle** forms the **Town Centre East** area, comprising a series of routes fanning out from the town centre to towns to the east. The historic street pattern of this area survives reasonably intact and the area consequently has a pleasant feel to it. The key routes are:

- a. Abington Street, which has been much redeveloped albeit, retaining the street and which is now dominated by retailing.
- b. St Giles Street which is a traditional town centre street with some retail and food/drink uses at the town centre end and more business uses towards the east. St Giles Church is a key landmark.
- c. Derngate and surrounding streets including Albion place and Castilian Street which were once dominated by attractive town houses, most of which are now small business premises. The area still retains a residential character nonetheless.



**Abington Street**



**St. Giles and surrounding streets**



**Derngate and surrounding streets**



*Northampton past and present*

2.37 **Bridge Street** forms the spine through the **Town Centre South** area. This area has been substantially redeveloped as a result of road widening and clearance of former industrial uses and so contains a mixture of older historic areas and new developments. Key features are:

- a. St Peter's Way, part of the town centre ring road, with St Peter's Church and adjoining grounds providing open space. St Peter's Way is a dual carriageway with few active building frontages and acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement.
- b. Bridge Street, the historic route south to the crossing point on the River Nene. This is an attractive street at its northern end but has been adversely affected by traffic and road schemes associated with the ring road.
- c. St Johns, dominated by the multi storey car park and surface car parks, but with attractive routes framed by Victorian building frontages rising up to the town centre.
- d. Victoria Gardens, a small enclave of domestic scale terraced properties, around the site of the former rail terminus of St John's Station.



**St. Peter's Way**



**Bridge Street**



**St. John's**



**Victoria Promenade**



*Northampton past and present*

2.38 **Horse Market** completes the town centre area, forming the **Town Centre West** area. Key features of the area include:

- a. The Mayorhold car park and hotel sites, unattractive post war developments that do not relate well to the surrounding streets and character of the town.
- b. Horse Market itself, presently a wide, traffic dominated route which buildings and uses tend to turn away from.
- c. Gold Street on the other hand is a delightful historic street leading in to the town centre from Castle Station to the west. There is a concentration of historic buildings here though the ground floor treatments and floorscape are generally poor.



**Horsemarket**



**Mayor hold and Hotel**



**Gold Street**

*Northampton past and present*

2.39 The **Northern Approaches** is a working name for the **Outer North** area. This is an extensive area sweeping round the north of the Grosvenor Centre and bus station. The area includes:

- a. Gateway sites where Sheep Street meets Horse Market, currently underutilised and presenting a poor quality front door to the town centre.
- b. The Great Russell Street area, leading from the Chronicle offices past the TA Barracks to the Racecourse and the University beyond.
- c. The predominantly residential streets around Clare Street, where attractive small scale manufacturing premises have been converted to apartments.
- d. The Wellingborough Road, a vibrant route out of the town centre, with strong secondary and specialist shopping and leisure uses, but a poor quality environment between Abington Square and St Edward's Hospital.



**Northern Gateway**



**Great Russell Street**



**Clare Street and surrounds**



**Wellingborough Road**



*Northampton past and present*

2.40 The **Outer East or Hospital** area which sits beyond the town centre ring road. The key features here are the hospital, with its attractive C18 frontage buildings and the similarly attractive pavilion style Georgian and Victorian former residences opposite. The scale of the buildings and relative narrowness of the ring road at this point actually help to reduce the impact of the traffic.



Hospital



Cheyne Walk



*Northampton past and present*

2.41 The **Waterside** is the linking feature of the **Outer South** area. There are a number of distinct locations within the area including the following:

- a. Bridge Street which extends south from the town centre to the crossing of the River Nene, a key link dominated by traffic.
- b. The Carlsberg Brewery, which dominates the skyline and offers industrial architecture of a certain style, maintains the brewing traditions of the town.
- c. Linear walkways and meadows associated with the canal and river branches link the west and south sides of the town centre and have been the focus for residential development of varying quality.
- d. Becketts Park (formerly Cow Meadow) and Midsummer Meadow provide the major open spaces accessible to the town centre.



Bridge Street

Brewery

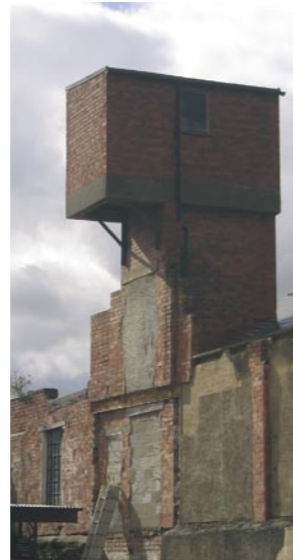
Canals and rivers

Beckett's Park and Midsummer Meadow

## Northampton past and present

2.42 The **Outer West** area is of an entirely different character again, dominated by **Spring Boroughs and Castle Station**.

- a. Spring Boroughs is dominated by social housing of various patterns developed through the C20. However, there are some remnants of manufacturing and industrial premises as well as newer developments such as the hotel and cinema complex on the corner of Horse Market and Mare Fair.
- b. Castle Station forms the westernmost part of the Central Area, sandwiched between the River Nene and Spring Boroughs, defined north and south by arterial routes into the town centre. This is the single largest undeveloped site in the town centre though it is currently in use as rail user car parking and rail freight facilities.



Spring Boroughs



Mare Fair/Spencer Bridge Road



Station

### Summary

2.43 Northampton town centre has a rich history and this is manifest in the built heritage of the town, which gives it great character and a quality of distinctiveness. The townscape qualities of the town arise directly from the history of the town and where interventions have resulted in the loss of historic street patterns in particular, this has impacted adversely on the quality of the townscape. This is particularly pronounced on the western side of the town centre.

2.44 The central area includes the historic core, the reminder of the town centre and the outer, adjoining areas. The character of these areas varies in terms of the townscape and mix of uses, though each pays a contributory part to making up the town centre. The masterplan and strategy for Northampton town centre should build on and exploit the heritage assets of the central area and seek to elevate the quality of the townscape where this is judged to be weak. This will deliver benefits including the ability to attract economic and other investment as well as promoting better safety, security and respect for the public realm as activity and usage of the town centre increases.