

Colchester

Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Study Area 5:

Queen Street, St Botolph's and Vineyard Street Area



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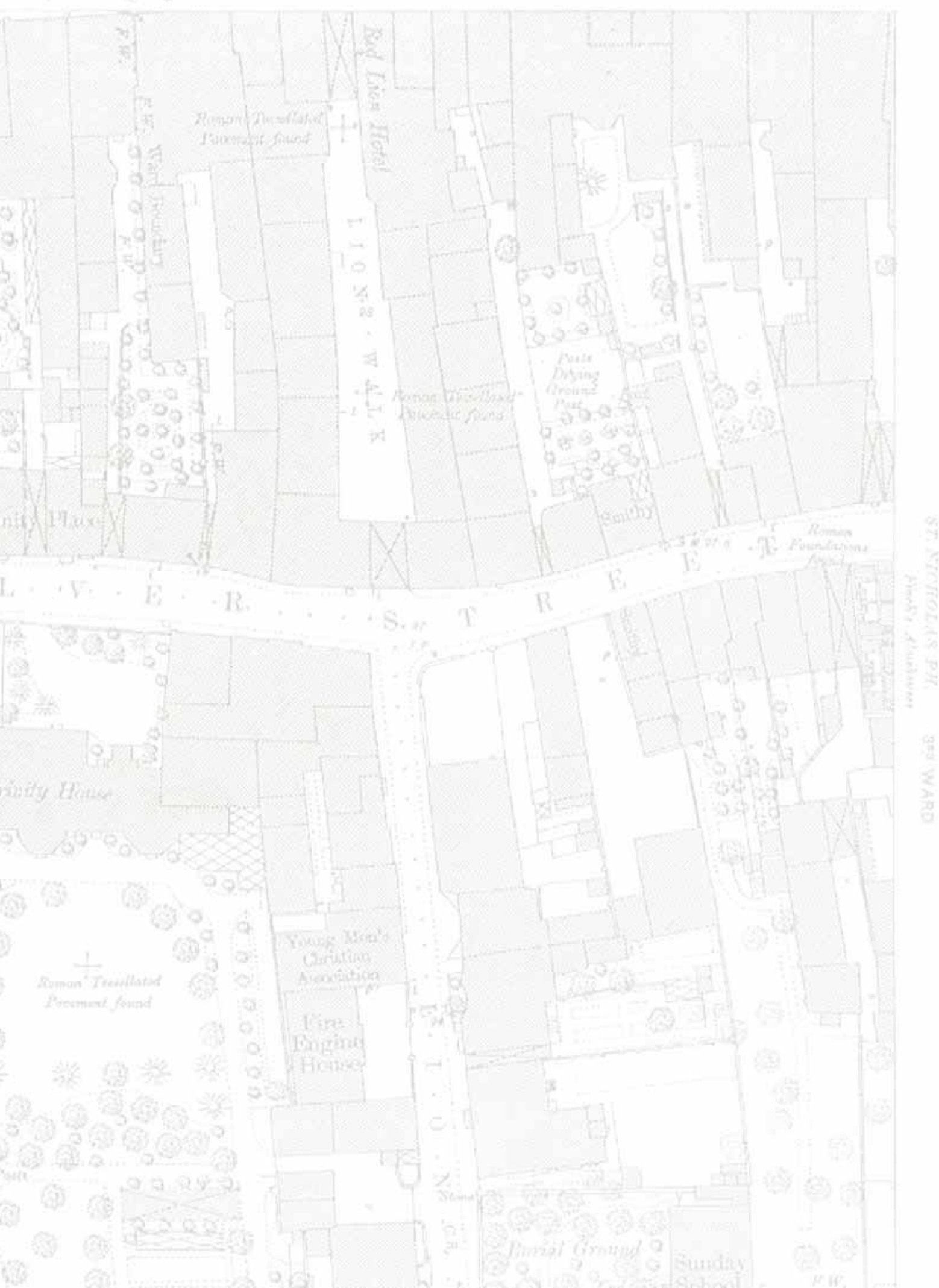
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Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area

1.0 Introduction

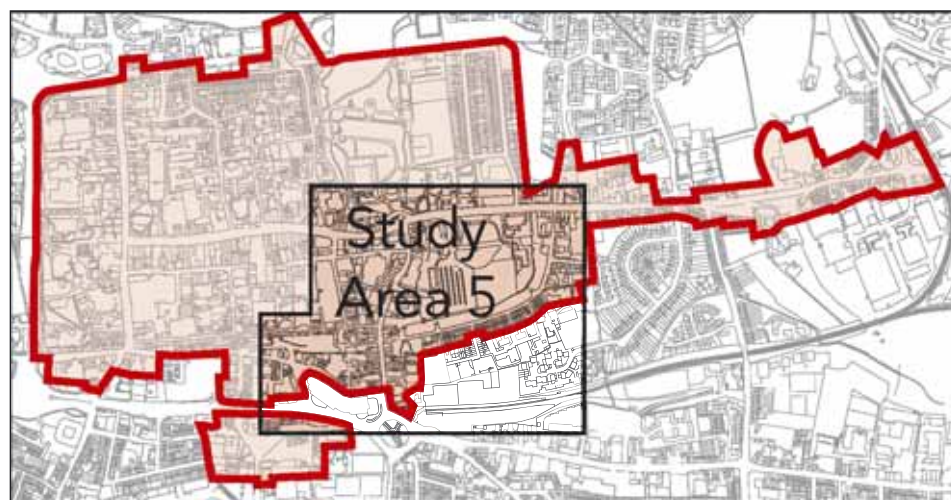


Figure 1: Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area

- 1.1 The Colchester Conservation Area No.1 was first designated in 1968, with amendments in 1978 and 1980. It covers the whole of the ancient walled town and includes parts the historic extra-mural settlements immediately outside the walls, including East Hill, Abbey Gate, St John's Green and St Botolph's.
- 1.2 *'Colchester, though not the county town, is without doubt the foremost town of Essex, and it is, what is more, a town richer than most in the country in traditions and survivals of a distant past.'* (Pevsner)
- 1.3 The Conservation Area includes the whole of the Roman town. Substantial lengths of the 1st century town walls survive, including the very impressive remains of the great west gate, known as the Balcerne Gate. The early date of these walls makes them unique in Roman Britain. However, apart from the town walls, the Roman remains are almost wholly below ground level and the character of the historic town now largely derives from the substantial number of surviving buildings of mediaeval, post-mediaeval, Georgian and Victorian date.
- 1.4 A distinctive feature of Colchester, particularly evident from the north, is its hilltop setting and close relationship with the valley of the River Colne. The High Street runs east west along the spine, with a grid of streets sloping down the hill to north and south. The Conservation Area is bounded on the south and west sides by modern dual carriageway roads, which separate St John's Green from the rest of the Area. St Peter's Street, flanked by modern development, runs along the northwest side, but on the northeast the Lower Park extends the open spaces of Castle Park well beyond the town walls. On the east side, the Conservation Area extends down East Hill and over the River Colne to East Street.
- 1.5 The social and economic development of the town centre can be readily traced through its historic buildings and structures. Roman town walls, Norman Castle, mediaeval churches, abbey and priory, mediaeval inns, the 'Dutch Quarter', Georgian town houses, and Victorian and Edwardian commercial and civic buildings, reflect the main periods of Colchester's prosperity over nearly two millennia from its first establishment as a Roman *colonia*. The Royal Commission lists 264 houses as wholly or partly built before 1714. There are a large number of good quality Georgian houses and a variety of Victorian buildings ranging from artisan terrace houses to the flamboyant Town Hall and massive 'Jumbo' water tower.

- 1.6 Like many towns, Colchester suffered from poor quality town centre redevelopment in the post-war years, but in recent times the town has demonstrated its ability both to protect its heritage and retain its vitality and significance as a retail centre, by the restoration of historic buildings and the sympathetic incorporation of a number of major developments in the historic core.

The Conservation Area Appraisal

- 1.7 There are continuing pressures for change and development, which will need to be addressed. Colchester is a town of national significance and it is vital to ensure that its character and appearance are protected and that any new development accords with the principles of preservation and enhancement inherent in its designation as a Conservation Area.
- 1.8 Following guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15 1994), the Borough Council has decided to prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal. The purpose of the Appraisal is to describe the historical development and townscape of the area and to assess its special character and significance. It should also draw out any issues that might affect the protection and conservation of the Area.
- 1.9 The Conservation Area covers a large area of diverse character. In order to assess its character and significance in greater detail, the Area is divided into six study areas based on the historic quarters and thoroughfares of the town. The study areas are covered in five separate volumes:
- Vol.1** High Street (West) and The Dutch Quarter
 - Vol.2** North Hill, Head Street and Balcerne Gardens
 - Vol.3** Culver Street, Trinity Street, Scheregate and St John's Green
 - Vol.4** High Street (East) and The Castle. East Hill and East Street.
 - Vol.5** Queen Street, St Botolph's and Vineyard Street Area.
- 1.10 Each volume contains a brief history of the town followed by a more detailed description of the historical development of the study area. This is followed by a street-by-street analysis of the townscape character of the area. A key part of the Appraisal is the statement of significance of the area and its surviving features, above and below ground. Buildings and spaces are classified according to their contribution to the character of the area and the Appraisal concludes with a statement of issues and recommendations for the future of the area.
- 1.11 An appendix sets out the current statutory protection and planning policy for the Conservation Area and includes select references.
- 1.12 Maps are included showing those buildings and spaces that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and those that detract from the area. Additionally, maps are included showing the area as it was in the 1870s at the time of the first large-scale edition of the Ordnance Survey.

Note: *Volume 5* was first published in 2003, under the title *St Botolph's Quarter*, as a background study to help inform plans and proposals for a number of major redevelopments proposed in the area. Although reference is made to a number of changes in the area, for example the construction of the new arts centre, the character appraisal has not been significantly revised. Some of the streets that were covered in that study, for example High Street, East Gate, Eld Lane, Scheregate and Abbey Gate Street, are now included in other volumes.

2.0 Colchester: Historical Development

- 2.1 The origins of the town of Colchester lie in the establishment of a legionary fortress by Claudius after his successful invasion of Britain in AD 42. The site occupied a good defensible position on a spur of land with an east-west ridge, sloping steeply to the River Colne on the north with more gentle slopes to the south and east. On the east side was a large annexe, about a third of the size of the fort, though its purpose is not clear. The fortress and annexe were of identical construction with earthen ramparts and a V-shaped ditch.
- 2.2 Late in the fifth decade the legion was moved to the west of Britain and a *colonia* or chartered town was established in the now redundant fortress. Some of the military buildings were reused, but the legionary defences were filled in and a new street grid laid out, dividing the town into rectangular blocks of property or *insulae*. The annexe was given over to public buildings, including the temple of Claudius and probably a theatre.
- 2.3 The town was almost completely destroyed in the Boudiccan Revolt but rebuilt soon afterwards. Between about AD 65-80, a freestanding masonry wall, the first of its kind in Britain, replaced the earthen ramparts. The new walls and ditch enclosed the site of the fortress and annexe in a great rectangle and had six gates and between twelve and twenty-four towers. The street plan remained much the same as before, but at least one new street was constructed, a north-south street east of the temple, leading to a new south gate. The town appears to have had a piped water supply from an early date.
- 2.4 In the 2nd century the growing prosperity of the town was marked by the construction of several large, well-appointed town houses and there was a remodelling on a grand scale of the southern side of the precinct of the Temple of Claudius. In the second half of the century the town defences were strengthened by the construction of an earth bank inside the masonry wall.




Figure 2: Roman Colchester in about AD 250

- 2.5 Towards the end of the 3rd century, the town, like others in Roman Britain, appears to have entered a period of gradual decline, which was never really to be reversed. In increasingly troubled times, the defences were again improved and the town ditch widened. Many houses were demolished without replacement and the size of the cultivated areas within the walls appears to have significantly increased. The suburbs suffered dramatic decline, partly perhaps through clearance of buildings to improve the town's ability to withstand a siege. Burials now took place much closer to the walls.
- 2.6 In the 4th century there was a concentration of occupation along the main street (High Street), with small houses on either side of the street, a pattern that anticipated the later post-Roman town.

- 2.7 The Roman way of life may have continued for some time after the break with the Roman Empire, but the evidence for the first Anglo-Saxon occupation in the mid 5th century, for example 'sunken-featured buildings', suggests that settlement was not concentrated in any one area but scattered amongst the ruins of the former town. It is possible that, by the 8th and 9th centuries, occupation was centred on St Runwald's Church and the lord's hall, close to the centre of today's High Street. The principal Roman streets, such as High Street, North Hill and Head Street, which connected the main gates (East Gate, North Gate and Head Gate), survive to this day. Queen Street connected the High Street with South Gate and to an extent seems to have followed the route of its Roman predecessor.
- 2.8 In 917 Edward the Elder drove out the Danish army that had occupied the town, though there is no trace in the archaeological record of the Danish presence. Edward, like his father Alfred, adopted a policy of creating fortified *burghs* as a way of consolidating his gains and allowing the local people to resist Danish reconquest. The Roman town defences were repaired, new streets laid out and new properties created.
- 2.9 The town continued to develop its commercial role and, sometime in the 10th century, High Street was widened to create a market place. This would have involved the realignment of the street and the demolition of frontage properties. Culver Street was laid out as a back street serving the new building plots on the south side. Other separate developments included the creation of Trinity Street, Lion Walk and Long Wyre Street on the south side of the town and East and West Stockwell Streets and the southern end of Maidenburgh Street on the north side.
- 2.10 By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, Colchester had the status of a borough and was an important administrative and commercial centre. Besides St Runwald's, several other churches had been founded including Holy Trinity, St Peter's, St Nicholas', All Saints' and possibly St James'.
- 2.11 Following the Conquest, the town saw numerous changes under the lordship of the Norman Eudo Dapifer. He used the great podium of the Roman Temple of Claudius as a base for his new Castle and the High Street was diverted southwards to make room for the construction of the bailey bank and ditch, the diversion clearly visible today. He founded St John's Abbey (1095) and the leper hospital at St Mary Magdalen, and restored St Helen's Chapel, which may have stood on the site of a Roman chapel. The parish church of St Giles was founded in the cemetery of the abbey some time in 1171.
- 2.12 St Botolph's Priory was founded between 1100 and 1104 and has the distinction of being the first Augustinian foundation in England. It was formed by a small group of priests who were probably serving an existing minster with its origins in pre-Conquest times. It may even be on the site of a Roman church or *martyrium*. At the Dissolution, the nave of the priory church was preserved and used for parish and civic services for another hundred years.



Figure 3: Colchester in the 17th Century

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- 2.13 The overall pattern of streets and building plots established during the late Anglo-Saxon and early mediaeval periods lasted pretty well intact until after the Second World War. However, although the frontages of the principal streets were built up, a considerable amount of land inside the walls was taken up with gardens and other cultivated areas. One substantial area, now the Bus Station and gardens of East Hill House (formerly known as the 'Berry Field'), seems to have remained open since Roman times and was for many centuries the site of St Denis' Fair. The town walls were repaired and strengthened in the 1380s at the time of the Peasants' Revolt.
- 2.14 The surviving, ruined Roman buildings provided a ready-made source of stone and tile for the construction of the principal buildings such as the churches and castle.
- 2.15 In the Middle Ages the prosperity of the town was based on the cloth trade, its markets and the presence of the religious institutions. However, in the 14th and 15th centuries the Black Death dramatically reduced the population of the town and the economy must also have been severely affected by the closure of the Abbey and Priory at the Dissolution in the 1530s. However, the town received a boost with a reinvigorated cloth trade, particularly in the late 16th century with the arrival of refugees from the Low Countries fleeing religious persecution. Many of them settled in the area north of the High Street, still known as the 'Dutch Quarter'. They introduced the 'bays and says' for which the town became famous and which were the mainstay of the economy throughout the 17th century.
- 2.16 A substantial number of houses dating from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries survive in the main streets, particularly in North Hill, Trinity Street, Scheregate, the east end of High Street and East and West Stockwell Streets. A number of suburbs had grown up outside the town walls, for example East Hill which also retains a number of mediaeval and post-mediaeval buildings.
- 2.17 The characteristic buildings of the 15th to 17th centuries are timber-framed, often jettied, with steep-pitched tiled roofs and plastered, gabled fronts. The mediaeval pattern of narrow-fronted 'burgage' plots at right angles to the street can still clearly be seen in several of the main streets including High Street and Long Wyre Street. Many of the mediaeval High Street properties would have had shop with chambers over on the street frontage, with an open hall behind, and further buildings at the rear. Away from the High Street where the pressure on land was less intense, many of the superior houses had halls built parallel to the street with cross wings at one or both ends, sometimes often with projecting (jettied) first floors.
- 2.18 Later, with the introduction of chimneys, open halls were floored in and new houses built with two full storeys, sometimes with continuous jetties. The fashion for jetties continued into the late 17th century.
- 2.19 The Siege of Colchester in the English Civil War resulted in the destruction and damage of many key buildings, including St Botolph's Priory, where the former priory church was almost destroyed. The mediaeval East Gate was damaged in the Siege and cleared away in 1674. In 1722 Daniel Defoe reported that the town 'still mourns in the ruins of a civil war' and referred to its 'battered walls, breaches in the turrets and ruined churches'.
- 2.20 The local tradition of building timber-framed houses, plastered on the outside, continued into the 18th century. The recovery of the economy in the 18th century is demonstrated by the number of good quality Georgian houses erected in the principal streets and also in the fashionable 'modernising' of older properties. Red brick was the predominant building material, with plain clay tiles for the roofs, but stucco also became fashionable, particular towards the end of the period. There are good groups of Georgian buildings in East Hill, North Hill, the east end of High Street, Queen Street, East and West Stockwell Streets and Abbey Gate Street.

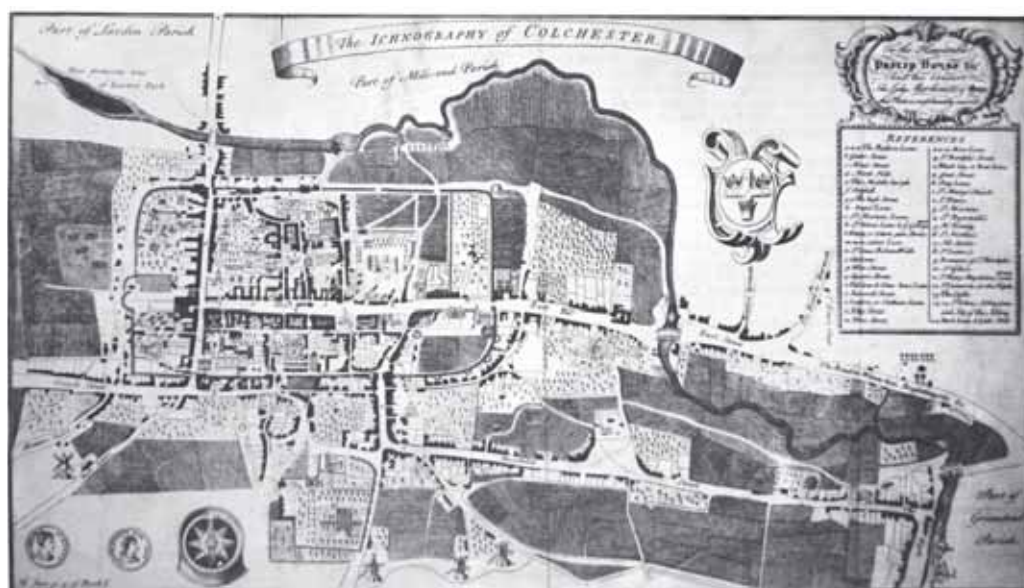




Figure 4: Colchester in the 18th Century

- 2.21 In the early 19th century, a grand new Corn Exchange was built at the North Hill end of the High Street (later the Essex and Suffolk Fire Office). The Theatre Royal was established in Queen Street in 1812.
- 2.22 Under the Improvement Commissioners, established in 1811, the main streets were paved, obstructions removed and street lighting introduced. The town walls, no longer needed for defence, were neglected, built over, or robbed for stone. With the growing demands of traffic in and out of the town, all the remaining gates, except Scheregate, were demolished.
- 2.23 Deane's plan of 1748 (*figure 4*) shows the frontages of the principal streets largely built up. But it also shows just how much of the town was still undeveloped and given over to gardens. A large part of the garden of East Hill House, built in the early 18th century, survives to this day.
- 2.24 The 19th century was a period of significant expansion. Colchester became a garrison town during the Napoleonic Wars, with the first barracks to be erected since the Roman occupation. The military presence was expanded during the Crimean Wars and later in the century, and to this day Colchester remains an important garrison town.
- 2.25 The century saw a boom in retail trade and commerce and the coming of the railways and the development of The Hythe provided the essential transport for the developing industries, such as flourmills, breweries, foundries and engineering works.
- 2.26 In the High Street many older buildings were demolished and replaced with new shops and banks in the confident styles that characterise Victorian and Edwardian architecture. The Corn Exchange moved to new premises in the High Street in 1844 and the local Cooperative Society opened its first shop in 1861. Queen Street, Long Wyre Street and St Botolph's Street also have good groups of substantial shop buildings in a variety of styles and materials.
- 2.27 A number of churches and chapels were built, reflecting the religious revivals throughout the century, including St Botolph's Church, the Baptist Church in Eld Lane, the Roman Catholic Church in Priory Street and a new Congregational Church to replace the old Meeting House in Lion Walk.

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- 2.28 The density of building increased as the back yards and gardens were developed as tenements of cheap housing, for example Smith's Yard and Albion Court off Long Wyre Street and All Saints' Court off Culver Street. By the 1870s the area around Vineyard Street and Osborne Street had become densely built up with houses and cottages backing onto the town walls and packed into courtyards. Later in the century, terraces of houses were built in Priory Street and Northgate Street. As might be expected there were numerous inns and drinking houses.
- 2.29 The predominant building material was still red brick but, with the ability to transport materials over greater distances, grey gault brick became increasingly popular in the first half of the century, together with slate for the roofs. In the second half of the century, stone became fashionable as a decorative material.
- 2.30 By the turn of the century Colchester had acquired two of its best-known landmarks, the 'Jumbo' water tower and the Town Hall, and the main built-up parts of the town centre and inner suburbs had become quite densely developed. However, it is remarkable how much open space still remained, even in the middle of the town. In 1892 Castle Park was opened and augmented by the creation of the Lower Park in the following year.
- 2.31 A number of buildings on the north side of the High Street were demolished to make way for the impressive War Memorial designed by H C Fehr and unveiled in 1923. The Memorial also includes the Castle and Hollytrees, acquired for the town by Viscount Cowdray.
- 2.32 Colchester was subject to a number of bombing raids in the Second World War, with the area around St Botolph's Green, Magdalen Street and Mersea Road suffering particularly heavy damage. In common with many other historic towns, historic buildings that had not been damaged were still the subject of redevelopment schemes and the quality of much of the rebuilding in the 1950s and 1960s was poor. The loss of St Nicholas' Church, demolished in 1955 was perhaps the most dramatic single loss which the town suffered, but many more modest buildings of historic interest were lost, for example in Queen Street, where a Georgian terrace was pulled down to make way for flat roofed 'modern' shops, totally out of character with their surroundings.
- 2.33 In 1966 a new multi-storey car park was opened in Nunn's Road. New office blocks were constructed in St Peter's Street to provide municipal offices and the huge Telephone Exchange 'tower', which dominates views from the High Street, North Hill and the Dutch Quarter, was built despite local opposition. In common with other historic towns, the quality of many of the new buildings constructed in the 1950s and 60s was generally poor and paid little regard to the historic character of the town.
- 2.34 There was, however, one particular scheme of which Colchester can be proud. In the 1950s, the restoration of over forty of the old houses in the Dutch Quarter gained a Civic Trust Award and later, the Borough Council built several infill developments of flats and houses, constructed in vernacular style sympathetic to the character of the historic area.
- 2.35 A report of 1968, prepared by the County and Borough Councils, recognized that steps had to be taken to preserve Colchester's heritage and proposed that parts of the town centre should be designated as a Conservation Area. The report also contained proposals for the redevelopment of the Lion Walk, Culver Street, St Peter's Street, St John's and Vineyard Street areas and for the construction of an inner relief road with peripheral multi-storey car parks. The south and west sections of the Inner relief Road were completed by 1981, cutting through existing road patterns and neighbourhood areas and requiring extensive demolition of houses, shops, businesses and other properties, including a church, cinema and four public houses. Multi-storey car parks were built in Queen Street (closed 1992), St John's Street, Middleborough and Balkerne Hill.

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- 2.36 Between 1968 and 1980, total commercial floor space increased by 45% in the central area. The Lion Walk shopping precinct was opened in 1976 and non-food retail space increased by 35.6% in the same period.
- 2.37 By 1984 parts of the plan had been amended because of financial constraints and a recognition that large-scale comprehensive redevelopment was not the solution in a town with an intricate and small-scale mediaeval plan. The later developments of the Culver Street shopping precinct and St John's Walk have been more successfully integrated with the historic character of Colchester. Since 1980, the importance of conserving Colchester's heritage has been recognized by the designation of the whole of the walled town and the historic suburbs as a Conservation Area.

3.0 Character Appraisal: Queen Street, St Botolph's and Vineyard Street Area

- 3.1 This area can be divided into three sub-areas of markedly different character that are the subject of proposals for major developments that will have a significant impact on the town centre.

Queen Street Area

- 3.2 The whole of this area lies within the walls of the Roman and mediaeval town and is bounded by High Street, East Hill, St Nicholas Street, Long Wyre Street, Short Wyre Street and the Town Wall. It includes Queen Street, Culver Street East, Priory Walk, the Bus Station and the gardens and former playing field at the rear of East Hill House.
- 3.3 Queen Street connected the main street of the Roman town (the modern High Street) with the south gate and to some extent it still follows its original line. Long Wyre Street was probably in existence by the end of the 10th century, whilst Short Wyre Street, along with Eld Lane and Sir Isaac's Walk, represents an early intra-mural street. Culver Street is another ancient street, being created as a rear lane at the back of High Street properties.
- 3.4 Maps from the 18th century show the street frontages lined with buildings, but still with gardens and orchards at the rear. In the 19th century the back areas were increasingly built up, particularly for housing, for example Smith's Yard and Albion Court off Long Wyre Street and All Saints Court off Culver Street. However, one large area, which includes the former car park and bus station site and the gardens of East Hill House (formerly known as the Berry Field), seems to have remained open since Roman times and was for many centuries the site of the St Denis Fair.
- 3.5 In the 19th century many of the older buildings in the main streets, like Queen Street and Long Wyre Street, were demolished to make way for new shops and commercial buildings. The local Co-operative Society was established in 1861 and opened its first shop in Long Wyre Street. Parr Bank opened its office in 1899 and occupied the ornate red brick building on the corner of St Nicholas Street. The old South (St Botolph's) Gate was destroyed in 1823 as part of the 'improvements' to the town at that date.
- 3.6 Colchester's first theatre, the Theatre Royal, was established in Queen Street in 1812 at a cost of £3,000, with seating for 1200 persons. It was destroyed by fire in 1918 and replaced by the National Bus Company's depot, which is still in use. A Soldiers' Home and Institution was opened in 1879 at 37 Queen Street in a fine 18th century building that was later used as a police station.
- 3.7 Queen Street in particular suffered from very poor quality redevelopment in the post-war years. A number of Georgian buildings were lost when the west side was redeveloped with box-like staggered shops and the frontage to Priory Walk. The brutalist former department store and offices opposite (Roman House) will hopefully be removed in the forthcoming redevelopments, which include a new arts centre on the site of the now demolished multi-storey car park.

Queen Street

- 3.8 Queen Street slopes downhill southwards from the High Street. The street starts promisingly with a group of listed 17th and 18th century buildings on the east side, though there is an unfortunate gap between nos.3 and 7, where a modern single-storey building has been inserted back from the building line. Nos.7 – 13 are in need of restoration.



3-15 Queen Street



Alleyway between 13 & 15

- 3.9 No.15 is a gault brick house in late Georgian style, which is of local interest and has a key role in views from the High Street and Culver Street East, enclosing the alleyway between nos.13 and 15, and visually re-establishing the historic line of Queen Street when viewed from the south. The alleyway is an historic continuation of Culver Street. The back of the 18th century summerhouse in The Minories garden can be seen at the end. The alley could be attractive but is spoiled by a clutter of lamps, posts, railings and a waste-paper bin, as well a poor street surface and graffiti.
- 3.10 On the west side at the top of the street is the former All Saints' Church, with its railings enclosing the old churchyard and, beyond, a group of handsome listed Georgian houses (boarded up at the time of writing) on the corner with Culver Street East. The churchyard retains its gravestones and monuments and there is a huge copper beech tree that is a feature in views of Queen Street and Culver Street East.



All Saints' churchyard



Upper Queen St from the south

- 3.11 From here the street curves downhill and the quality of the townscape goes down too. On the left is the ugly mass of Roman House, now largely disused, which pays no respect to the scale of the street or the historic building line. The return elevation into the bus station, with its concrete ramps, is quite dreadful. On the right, a zig-zag of two-storey, flat-roofed shops is followed by the entrance and frontage buildings to Priory Walk, in scale and design only marginally less worse than Roman House. Then there is the entry to the rear service yard of Priory Walk, with views of the backs of properties, which is followed by other nondescript post-war development.



Roman House



Priory Walk entrance

- 3.12 The only salvation here is the group of historic buildings lower down the street on the east side, which includes the impressive former Soldiers' Institution (no.37, mid 18th century in red brick), but which is interrupted by the Bus Depot entrance. The scale of this part of the street is three-storey commercial, and the single-storey building on the corner with the bus station entrance is a mistake. The lower part of Queen Street runs into St Botolph's Street, which in contrast has retained much of its Victorian character.



Lower Queen Street

- 3.13 Queen Street is on the fringe of the town centre retail area and is part of the circulatory system for town centre traffic. Traffic is one-way southbound downhill and, with the lack of calming measures, tends to be too fast. The amount and speed of traffic can act as a real barrier for pedestrians and reduces the attractiveness of the street for shoppers.

Culver Street East

- 3.14 Culver Street East is now mainly a service road for the shops in High Street and Priory Walk. Unattractive rear elevations and service yards dominate the south side. The principal merit lies at either end of the street.

- 3.15 At the west end, the Cooperative Society's buildings make an attractive frontage, particularly the stone clad 1930s block on the corner with Long Wyre Street, with its Art Deco touches. Opposite, part of the former St Nicholas' churchyard has been retained as a small garden. There are two ilex trees that provide some year-round greenery, but the garden is not well maintained.



Coop buildings



1 & 3 Culver Street East

- 3.16 At the east end, the fine early Georgian houses (nos.1 & 3) and All Saints' Church and churchyard make a pleasant entry to the street. Both 1 and 3 Culver Street East are listed grade II* and no.3 is dated 1743. The churchyard, with its boundary wall, railings and trees, is an attractive feature in the street scene.

St Nicholas Street, Long Wyre Street and Priory Walk

- 3.17 Historically this was one street, running south from the High Street to the town walls. St Nicholas Street has an attractive group of buildings on the east side. The red brick gabled former bank of 1896 (no.60) on the corner makes for an imposing entry. Adjacent is the twin gabled, timber-framed Jacks building (nos.5 & 6), which should be listed.



St Nicholas Street



Long Wyre Street

- 3.18 Long Wyre Street has a mix of buildings of different dates and styles. The best are to be found on the west side, where, besides the Coop building already mentioned, a number of handsome early 20th century three-storey facades, in red brick with stone dressings, have been retained. At the foot of the street there is a group of three 16th century timber-framed listed properties.

- 3.19 The upper part of the east side is modern and includes the entrance to Priory Walk, but there are two small groups of 19th century properties lower down the street.



Long Wyre Street from the south



Priory Walk

- 3.20 Priory Walk is a short, pedestrianised shopping street between Long Wyre Street and Queen Street. The buildings are two-storey and, apart from the supermarket frontage, are neo-vernacular in design with traditional shop fronts, which makes for an attractive and popular place. The street is paved and well maintained.

- 3.21 Long Wyre Street is within the main shopping area and pedestrian-only during the day. It is relatively narrow and the frontages follow the historic building line, though the pavements have been widened. The buildings vary between two and three storeys and though most are of no special interest, there is a comfortable scale and pedestrian-friendly character to the street.

Short Wyre Street

- 3.22 Together, Short Wyre Street, Eld lane and Sir Isaac's Walk form an ancient narrow intra-mural street inside the line of the town walls, though Short Wyre Street has been widened at some time. The buildings date mainly from the 19th century and the whole of the south side (nos.1-10) is of local interest.



Short Wyre S from Queen St



Short Wyre St from Eld Lane

Bus Station and East Hill House Gardens

- 3.23 In the 18th century and 19th centuries, almost the whole of the area between the town walls and the rear of Queen Street and High street was within the grounds of East Hill House. Now the bus station occupies the western half. The main impression is of a bleak expanse of concrete and tarmac. The modern bus station buildings are of no interest and the buildings at the rear of the bus depot are unattractive. However, the main problem is the overbearing and ugly rear elevations of Roman House, which dominates the scene. There are outward views to the south over the inner suburbs of Colchester.



Back of Roman House



New arts centre under construction

- 3.24 The whole area is now undergoing a major redevelopment, the principal part being the construction of a new arts centre, which will be known as 'firstsite.' The new building will contain a 200 seat auditorium, education centre, business and conference facilities and a café/restaurant and is designed by Rafael Vinoly Architects. Its setting will be a new public park, incorporating the grounds of East Hill House, and with improved access to the Romans town wall.



East Hill House and gardens



Summerhouse at The Minories

- 3.25 The survival of the so much of the private gardens of East Hill House may be an accident of history but, with its lawns and trees, it makes a unique contribution to the character of the conservation area. They must once have been fine gardens. Part of the formal layout of the 19th century remains, with a terraced walk that originally linked the 18th century summerhouse (now in the rear garden of The Minories) at the west end with a mound and obelisk on the east. The terrace is now used for car parking. At some point the southern part of the gardens was turned into a playing field, bounded by high walls and fences, but not now used.

St Botolph's Area

- 3.26 This area is bounded by St Botolph's Street, the Town Wall, Priory Street, St Julian's Grove and Magdalen Street. It includes St Botolph's Church and the remains of St Botolph's Priory. Just outside the conservation area boundary are St Botolph's Station and associated car parks; any development here will affect the setting of the conservation area.

St Botolph's Street

- 3.27 St Botolph's Street is a continuation of Queen Street, sloping down from the site of the old South Gate to where it joins with Osborne Street and Magdalen Street at the modern St Botolph's Circus. The street still retains much of its 19th century character, though the date and interest of most of the buildings is only apparent above the ground floor.



St Botolph's Street (west side)



St Botolph's Street (east side)

- 3.28 The west side has a mix of two and three-storey buildings, mostly of mid and late 19th century date. The scale tends to diminish towards the foot of the street. There is a mixture of styles and materials, including red and white brick, painted brick and render. Of particular note are no.4 on the corner of Vineyard Street, in gault brick with painted rendered details, and no.5, also in gault brick but plainer. Nos.6-8 are most imposing; the three-bay building has a rendered front with classical details, including a central pedimented and pillared triple window on the first floor and a decorative wrought iron balcony on moulded brackets across the whole front.
- 3.29 The east side also has a few good 19th century buildings, including no.32 on the corner with St Botolph's Church Walk in red brick with rendered details, and nos.28-30, another imposing three-bay building with sub-classical details.



27-32 St Botolph's Street



40-45 St Botolph's Street

- 3.30 The oldest buildings in the street are nos.40-45, on the south side of the entrance to Priory Street. They have been much altered but are probably of 17th century date or earlier. No.40, with its carved 'grotesque' brackets to the gable is certainly early, whilst nos.41-43 appear to have been re-fronted, probably in the 19th century. They are not listed, but at least no.40 ought to be, and the whole group merits further investigation.

- 3.31 Like Queen Street, St Botolph's Street is very much a secondary shopping street, but has a colourful mix of shops, bars and eating houses, with shop fronts to match. It too suffers from the circulating one-way traffic. From a townscape point of view, the main problem is at the foot of the street where there is now no enclosure and the view is of St Botolph's Circus and Southway with its constant stream of traffic, and railings, lights, signs and other highway impedimenta.

St Botolph's Church Walk

- 3.32 St Botolph's Church was built in 1836 to replace the old Priory Church, which had been badly damaged in the Siege of Colchester in 1648. The architect was William Mason of Ipswich and the church is an early example of Norman revival of remarkable quality, with much moulded enrichment, particularly on the west tower.



St Botolph's Church Walk



Rear of Church Walk

- 3.33 The view of St Botolph's Church tower along the narrow Church Walk is one of Colchester's gems. The flanking building on the south side quite adequately frames the view, but the building opposite is perhaps too bland to do it full justice. However, the problems lie at the rear where the main view is of the ugly backs of buildings, parked cars, refuse bins and electrical posts and wires. The tarmac road surface with yellow lines does nothing to improve the situation. The new church extension has been designed with much care and this important church deserves a much better setting than it currently has.

Priory Street and St Julian's Grove

- 3.34 Priory Street runs from East Hill to St Botolph's Street along the outside of the town walls and the line of the town ditch. The south side is largely built up with attractive terraces of mid 19th century cottages and villas in a variety of styles, mostly in red brick with slate roofs. Between the terraces there are views southwards of the modern housing developments of The Dell and Nicholson's Grove and beyond. St Julian's Grove runs downhill from Priory Street and has terraced housing on both sides.



Priory Street



St James the Less

- 3.35 At the west end of Priory Street is a converted 19th century school and the boundary gates and railings of St Botolph's Priory. At the east end there are a number of significant buildings, including the Church of St James the Less and the adjoining Presbytery and Cardinal Vaughan Institute and the 19th century red brick buildings of the Convent of Mercy, now part of St Thomas More's Catholic School. The new housing in St Augustine's Mews, in yellow brick and render with slate finished roofs, fits in well with the character of the area.



Priory Street car park

- 3.36 The north side is now given up almost wholly to car parking, where old properties have been cleared away to open up views of the town walls. This is one of the best-preserved sections of the Roman walls and deserves a much better setting. This could be a very attractive street, but is spoiled by the car parks and by intrusive telephone poles and wires.

St Botolph's Priory

- 3.37 This is one of Colchester's most important monuments. The ruins and surrounding open space add significantly to the quality of this part of the conservation area. Not all the site is included in the conservation area, but it is protected as a scheduled ancient monument. However, the setting of the ruins of the priory church is impaired by the view of the backs of properties in St Botolph's Street, whilst the views of the ruins from St Botolph's Church Walk suffer from the problems described above. The east and south sides are relatively open and the views over the surrounding area are not of great interest. The Britannia car park forms a poor setting for the south side of the Priory and Church.



St Botolph's Priory



View towards station car parks

Magdalen Street and St Botolph's Station

- 3.38 Three buildings in Magdalen Street, fronting the modern St Botolph's Circus, are within the conservation area. One of them (no.4) is a very ornate three-storey building in 'Mannerist' style with moulded brick details and an extraordinary pedimented gable carried on moulded brackets.



Magdalen Street



St Botolph's Station

- 3.39 The station buildings, in red brick with slate roofs and a fretted canopy, are listed. Although outside the conservation area, the car parks north and south of the railway line are large bleak areas of tarmac, which would benefit from development or landscaping. From the train there are good views of the Priory ruins and St Botolph's Church, which is also important in views from the car parks.
- 3.40 The brown brick wall of the station car park forms a featureless boundary to the street, though partially relieved at the east end by some planting. From the street there is a view northwards to the ridge of the High Street and, on the skyline, the tower of St James' Church and the trees in the grounds of East Hill House.

Vineyard Street Area

3.41 This area is bounded on the north by Eld Lane and the Town Wall and on the south, by the modern dual carriageway of Southway. It includes Vineyard Street and Vineyard Gate, Stanwell Street, Osborne Street and Arthur Street.

Vineyard Street and Vineyard Gate

3.42 Only the western and eastern ends of the historic Vineyard Street now remain. The rest has been cleared away and is now used for car parking and access to the underground service area for Lion Walk. The west end has a small group of listed buildings, including the Brewers' Arms and the properties immediately adjoining the Scheregate. More survives at the east end, where a number of 19th century commercial and warehouse buildings have recently been restored.



Vineyard Street (west end)



Vineyard Street (east end)

3.43 A long stretch of the Roman town walls is now open to view, but its setting is marred by the car parking and the entrance to the underground service area creates an ugly gash in the wall. The older projecting concrete staircase from the top of the wall to the car park below is wholly unsympathetic. The more recent stone-clad lift tower is much better. The backs of the properties in Eld Lane sit directly on top of the walls and are of variable quality, both in design and state of repair.



Vineyard Gate car park



Roman town wall: stairs and lift

3.44 The land falls away to Osborne Street and, since the buildings have been removed, the terracing of the site over many years is now quite noticeable.

Osborne Street and Arthur Street

3.45 The western end of Osborne Street was formerly part of Stanwell Street (see Volume 3). At the junction of the two streets all sense of enclosure has been lost and there is a clutter of signs and railings. The south side of Osborne Street is now dominated by the huge multi-storey car park. An attempt has been made to reduce the scale of the building by breaking up the elevations into a series of different facades, though it is difficult to integrate such a large building into the street scene.



Osborne Street multi-storey car park



Osborne Street(north side)

- 3.46 The north side of the street has something of a rundown appearance, with a number of vacant sites and advertisement hoardings. Most of the old properties have been cleared away, but a few of the 19th century buildings survive. The best is a three-storey red brick terrace (nos.3-7), which barely holds its own against the scale of the multi-storey car park.



Arthur Street


- 3.47 In Arthur Street there are two small 19th century warehouses and a pair of cottages, which were originally part of the properties fronting St Botolph's street. Further along Osborne Street, nos.14-19 are also of 19th century origin, but much altered and dwarfed by the car park. The Kwik-Fit garage building is assertive and ugly and detracts from the appearance of the area.

4.0 Significance



4.0 Significance

Above ground features

- 
- 4.1 Despite considerable changes through development in the 20th century, the area still retains a great deal of its historic character.
 - 4.2 The Roman town wall is the oldest surviving feature above ground level and is a scheduled ancient monument. The wall along Priory Street, from St Botolph's Street to East Hill, is one of the best-preserved sections.
 - 4.3 The historic street pattern is largely intact and this is a key element in defining the character of the Conservation Area. High Street, Queen Street and St Botolph's Street are on the lines of original Roman streets and appear to have been re-established as early as the 8th or 9th centuries. Long Wyre Street, Short Wyre Street, Eld Lane, Culver Street and St Nicholas Street probably date from the 10th century. Outside the walled town, streets like Vineyard Street and Priory Street are also likely to be of an early date.
 - 4.4 The ruined 12th century priory church of St Botolph is the most important and impressive ecclesiastical monument in Colchester. It is of special interest as the first Augustinian house in England and is a scheduled ancient monument.
 - 4.5 There are no complete domestic buildings surviving from before the 16th century, though a number may have mediaeval cores, but there are good groups of timber-framed buildings of 16th or 17th century origins in Queen Street and Long Wyre Street. The corner of Queen Street and Culver Street East has retained a number of good quality Georgian houses.
 - 4.6 The area is well endowed with buildings from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Of particular interest are St Botolph's Church and the Roman Catholic Church of St James the Less. St Botolph's Street is largely Victorian in character and Long Wyre Street owes much of its interest to retained frontages of the period. Priory Street and St Julian Grove are characterised by groups of Victorian houses.
 - 4.7 Most of the buildings surviving from before 1840 are listed. However, the significance and quality of many of the later 19th and 20th century buildings is not generally appreciated and, at the moment, lacks any formal recognition.
 - 4.8 There are two green areas that make a particular contribution to the character of the area; these are the historic grounds of St Botolph's Priory, with the ruins of the Priory church, and the gardens of East Hill House, which retain a number of features, including an ice house. The large Gothic summerhouse of c1745 at the rear of The Minories, but originally in the garden of East Hill House, is an unusual and important survival of the period.

Below ground features

- 4.9 The remains of several Roman buildings have been discovered in the area of Queen Street and the bus station and there are likely to be extensive Roman deposits across the whole area within the town walls. At least one Roman street runs east-west across the top of the bus station and East Hill House gardens. The gardens and adjacent playing field are especially interesting as this area appears to have remained undeveloped since Roman times and is now protected as a scheduled ancient monument.
- 4.10 The Roman town ditch runs parallel to the Roman wall and there is evidence for an 11th century defensive ditch and possible early extra-mural street from excavations in the Priory Street car park and in Vineyard Street. Roman and mediaeval suburbs are likely to lie under the Vineyard Street area and foundations for the mediaeval East and South gates are likely to survive below ground.
- 4.11 There may have been an Anglo-Saxon church, possibly a minster, that preceded St Botolph's Priory, but its site is not known. Nor is the exact extent of the Priory known, although the precinct may have reached as far as the town walls.
- 4.12 A detailed evaluation of the extent and significance of surviving archaeology was commissioned in preparation for the new developments in the Queen Street and St Botolph's areas.

Open spaces: Contribution to the area

- 4.13 The open spaces have been assessed for their intrinsic quality and for their contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area. Several of them make a positive contribution and these are shown on Map 1.

Spaces that make a positive contribution:

- Former churchyard of St Nicholas
- Former churchyard of All Saints
- St James' churchyard
- East Hill House gardens and former playing field
- St Botolph's Priory

Spaces that detract from the area:

- Forecourt of 5 Queen Street, side alley and land at rear
- Bus Station and entrance roads from High Street and Queen Street
- Bus Depot
- Service areas on Culver Street East
- Priory Walk service area off Queen Street
- Priory Street car park
- Vineyard Gate car park and entrance road
- Land between Vineyard Street and Arthur Street
- Gaps in frontages to Osborne Street
- Junction of Stanwell Street and Osborne Street
- Junction of Osborne Street, St Botolph's Street and St Botolph's Circus
- Britannia car park

Buildings: Contribution to the area

- 4.14 The individual buildings and other structures have been assessed on their intrinsic architectural and historic interest and on their contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. They include both listed and unlisted buildings.
- 4.15 The buildings in the first schedule are those that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area (red for listed buildings, blue for buildings of local architectural or historic interest). These are shown on Map 1. The listed buildings are Grade II unless otherwise shown.
- 4.16 The buildings in the second schedule (green) are those that detract from the character of the area and are shown on Map 2.
- 4.17 The remainder of the buildings and spaces, uncoloured on the maps, are judged to have a neutral effect on the character of the area.

Buildings that make a positive contribution to the area:

Arthur Street (East Side)

- Two small warehouses
- Nos.1 & 2

Culver Street East (North Side)

- No.60

Culver Street East (South Side)

- Nos.1 & 3 (Grade II*)
- No.75 (Co-op)

East Hill (South Side)

- Church of St James
- Churchyard wall of St James

High Street (South Side)

- Former Church of All Saints
- Wall and railings to All Saints churchyard
- Summerhouse at The Minories (Grade II*)
- Garden walls adjacent to Summerhouse
- No.76 (East Hill House) (Grade 1)
- Garden features to rear of East Hill House (part of SAM)
- Ice House to rear of East Hill House (part of SAM)

Long Wyre Street (West Side)

- No.23 (frontage)
- Nos.25 – 31 (frontage)
- Nos.33 – 37

Long Wyre Street (East Side)

- Nos.32 – 36
- Nos.44 – 48

Magdalen Street (North Side)

- Nos.2 – 4
- St Botolph's Station House
- Nos.182 - 191

Osborne Street (North Side)

- Nos.3 & 3a
- Nos.4 – 7
- Nos.14 – 17
- No.19
- No.31 (Brewers Arms)
- Nos.32 & 33
- No.34

Osborne Street (South Side)

- No.36 (Scheregate Hotel)
- Nos.41 – 44
- No.45 with 12 Stanwell Street

Priory Street (North Side)

- Colchester Town Wall (Grade I, SAM)
- Nos.58 & 59
- Nos.121 – 124

Priory Street (South Side)

- Nos.1, 1a & 1b
- Nos.2, 3 & 3a
- Nos.4 – 9
- Nos.10 – 13
- Nos.14 & 14b
- Nos.15 – 30
- Nos.32 – 41
- Nos.42 – 47
- Priory Street frontage of St Thomas More's School
- No.50 with garden wall
- The Cardinal Bourne Institute with wall and gate at side
- No.51 (Presbytery)
- St James the Less RC Church with railings and gates to front
- No.52
- No.52a

Buildings that detract from the area:

Queen Street (West Side)

- No.2

Queen Street (East Side)

- No.1
- No.3
- Nos.7 & 9
- Nos.11 & 13
- No.15
- Nos.33 & 35
- No.37
- Nos.39 & 41

St Botolph's Church Walk

- St Botolph's Church
- New addition to St Botolph's Church

St Botolph's Street (West Side)

- No.1
- No.1a
- Nos.2 & 3
- Nos.4 – 8
- No.17

St Botolph's Street (East Side)

- Nos.27 – 30
- No.32
- Ruins of the Priory Church of St Botolph (Grade I, SAM)
- No.35
- No.40
- Nos.42 – 45
- Nos.46 – 49

St Julian Grove (West Side)

- Nos.2 – 22

St Julian Grove (East Side)

- Nos.1 – 21

St Nicholas Street (East Side)

- Nos.5 & 6

Short Wyre Street (North Side)

- No.12

Short Wyre Street (South Side)

- Nos.1 – 10

Vineyard Street (North Side)

- Colchester Town Wall (Grade I, SAM)
- Nos.10 – 16

Vineyard Street (South Side)

- Building at rear of 4 St Botolph's Street

Arthur Street

- No.4 and buildings opposite

Bus Station

- Rears of 19 – 29 Queen Street
- Bus Station buildings
- Bus depot and boundary walls

Culver Street East (South Side)

- Whole frontage from No.5 to junction with St Nicholas Street (rears of buildings in Queen Street, Priory Walk and Long Wyre Street)

Long Wyre Street (East Side)

- Nos.24 & 26

Osborne Street

- Nos.1, 2a, 2b, 2c and adjoining warehouses
- Nos.8 – 13
- Nos.18 & 18a
- No.20
- Sheds to east of Brewer's Arms

Queen Street (West Side)

- Nos.2a – 16 with 19 Priory Walk
- Nos.20 – 28
- Rears of buildings in south service area to Priory Walk
- Nos.34 & 36

Queen Street (East Side)

- No.5a
- Nos.19 – 29 (Roman House)
- No.43 (Bus Depot)

St Botolph's Church Walk

- Elevations of properties facing St Botolph's Church

St Botolph's Street (East Side)

- No.28

Vineyard Gate

- Rear elevations of 5a-5c Eld Lane
- Rear elevations of 6a, 7 & 7a Eld Lane
- Rear elevations of 8a – 11 Eld Lane
- Concrete steps from Eld Lane
- Rear of 24 Osborne Street and sheds fronting Osborne Street




5.0 Issues and Recommendations

General


- 5.1 The area contains a number of listed buildings, some of which are empty and boarded up. It is essential that these buildings are preserved and maintained in good condition and every effort must be made to secure their future. There are a number of buildings that might be of sufficient interest to be listed including 5 & 6 St Nicholas Street and 40-45 St Botolph's Street.
- 5.2 However, very few buildings dating from after 1840 are listed and the historic and architectural character of this area depends very much on unlisted Victorian and Edwardian buildings, some of which are of real architectural quality, with good levels of decoration and detailing.
- 5.3 Since these buildings are in the Conservation Area and subject to a number of local plan policies, they have some limited protection, for example against unauthorised demolition, but it would be a good idea to make a 'Local List' of these buildings, with a brief description and photographic record. This would prove useful in considering any future proposals, particularly for alterations that might affect their character.
- 5.4 A common problem, particularly with domestic properties, is the pressure to replace timber windows in aluminium or UPVC, which can so easily spoil their appearance. It can often affect the value of a building and there are alternatives that can provide modern levels of insulation, but still retain the character of a building at reasonable cost. The Council could consider introducing an 'Article 4 Direction', which would bring these alterations under control.
- 5.5 There are a number of buildings, mainly of post-war date, that seriously detract from the character and appearance of the area. Where the opportunity arises, every encouragement should be given to their replacement with buildings that respect the character of the area.
- 5.6 There is also a significant amount of open land that detracts from the character of the area, particularly the bus station, the cleared areas now used for car parking and the rear service areas of the modern shopping developments. These spaces need to be improved, though change of use and redevelopment or landscaping and environmental improvements.
- 5.7 Apart from buildings and open spaces, it is the historic street pattern and property boundaries that give the town its unique and distinctive character. Queen Street and Culver Street East illustrate the damage that can be caused through street widening, setbacks and ignoring historic boundaries. Where redevelopment is contemplated, the opportunity should be taken to restore the historic street lines and reflect historic street patterns and property boundaries. The 1876 First Edition 1:500 scale Ordnance Survey provides a useful starting point.
- 5.8 The protection of below ground history is as important as it is above ground. There is a very strong presumption against development that would affect a scheduled ancient monument. Where development is acceptable, archaeological investigation can provide evidence that can help inform the new development, not only in foundation design, but also in relation to its siting and layout.
- 5.9 Queen Street and St Botolph's Street in particular are on the margin of the main shopping area. Lower turnover and lower rental values have resulted in a lack of investment in repair and maintenance of the properties, and the resulting decline is not easy to reverse without investment in the public realm. Public/private sector partnerships are key to obtaining investment and any major new developments should contribute to the costs of environmental improvement works throughout the area.

Queen Street Area

- 
- 5.10 Now that plans have been finalised for the new arts centre and the bus station, the principal issues here relate to the future of Queen Street and Culver Street East.
 - 5.11 Queen Street was once an attractive and flourishing shopping street but, apart from the north end and a few listed properties at the south end, it is of poor architectural quality. The post-war buildings on both sides of the street are particularly unattractive. Overall, the impression is of a street in decline, with empty property and poor shop fronts.
 - 5.12 The new arts centre will attract more people to this area. However, although Queen Street has good pedestrian connections with the town centre via High Street, Priory Walk and Short Wyre Street, which are attractive, the route via Culver Street East is uninviting. The street carries one-way traffic, which, because of the steepness of the street, tends to be too fast and creates hazards for pedestrians. The wide entry to the bus station produces an unattractive gap in the street frontage and, together with the bus depot, produces additional traffic.
 - 5.13 The forecourt of 5 Queen Street and the side alley and land behind need clearing of eyesore and improved ground surfaces. If the opportunity arises for redevelopment, the new building should be brought forward to the historic frontage line. Several of the properties in this block are in need of restoration and an environmental improvement scheme is required for the alleyway between nos. 13 and 15, including the removal of posts, railings and graffiti, repainting and repaving.
 - 5.14 The new arts centre and the redevelopment of Roman House would give an opportunity to revitalise the street. The redevelopment of nos. 2a – 14 on the west side of the street should also be encouraged. If the bus station is moved, it would be beneficial also to relocate the bus depot. Consideration should also be given to improving the views of the service yards..
 - 5.15 The aim should be to restore some of the character that was lost with the poor redevelopments of the post-war years. New buildings should revert to the historic, curving frontage line, in order to restore the traditional townscape and enclosure of the street.
 - 5.16 Culver Street East is dominated by the back of Sainsbury's and the Priory Walk service yards. Despite the presence of some good buildings and the surviving parts of the churchyards of All Saints and St Nicholas, the street is not attractive to pedestrians. Some thought should be given as to how to make the street more attractive, including improving the frontages and the ground services.
 - 5.17 It would be worthwhile to prepare a comprehensive action plan for the whole area. This would include the beneficial use of upper floors and empty property; building repair and face-lift schemes, including shop fronts; redevelopment or improvement of eyesores; traffic reduction and management, and extension of facilities for pedestrians.

St Botolph's Area

- 5.18 The principal issues here relate to the future of St Botolph's Street and the Priory Street and station car parks, and the management of St Botolph's Priory.
- 5.19 In St Botolph's Street the main challenge will be how to ensure the continued repair and maintenance of the older properties. As in Queen Street, this is likely to involve some public investment, and again it would be useful to take a comprehensive look at the whole street.

- 
- 5.20 St Botolph's Church Walk needs radical improvement if it is to be made attractive to visitors and an entry to the Priory ruins.. The narrow, historic view from St Botolph's Street should be retained. The problem of attracting people to the church lies not in the narrowness of Church Walk, but in the poor environment of the space immediately in front of and to the side the church. An action plan needs to be drawn up in partnership with the Church and adjoining property owners.
 - 5.21 In Priory Street, the removal of the car parking would provide an opportunity to improve dramatically the setting of the Roman town walls. A footpath around the walls and proper signage would do much to enhance public appreciation of the monument. Allowance would no doubt have to be made for residents' parking. The overhead wires that disfigure the street should be removed.
 - 5.22 The Priory does not attract as many visitors as it should. The biggest problem arises from the lack of supervision, which leads to anti-social use of the gardens. The setting of the Priory is also compromised by the Britannia car park and by the rear views of several properties in St Botolph's Street. A comprehensive Management Plan has been prepared by the Borough Council and it is hoped that it will be fully implemented.
 - 5.23 If the station car parks are to remain, they should be properly landscaped. If new development is proposed, special attention will need to be paid to the setting of St Botolph's Church and Priory.
 - 5.24 Measures should be taken to improve the environment around St Botolph's Circus and its attractiveness to pedestrians. It would also be beneficial to redevelop the gaps between buildings to restore the street frontage in this area.

Vineyard Street Area

- 5.25 The main issue here relates to the future redevelopment of the area between Osborne Street and the town walls.
- 5.26 The setting of the walls needs to be respected. Public access should be maintained and proper signage provided. The two ends of Vineyard Street ought to be reconnected, if possible reflecting the historic street line.
- 5.27 Achieving the right scale for any new development will be quite a challenge. The context of the western end of Osborne Street is two-storey domestic, whilst the context of the eastern end is now largely set by the multi-storey car park, and care must be taken not to diminish the impact of the town walls. Consideration should be given to the retention and incorporation of the surviving groups of 19th century properties. A number of buildings, particularly in Osborne Street, have been much altered and some of them are in need of repair, but they are still of interest as examples of the character which the area used to have.
- 5.28 Finally, it would be useful to see whether the streetscape can be improved at the junctions of Osborne Street with Stanwell Street and St Botolph's Street.

APPENDIX A

Statutory Protection and Planning Policy

Conservation Area: the Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1968. It was amended in 1978 and 1980.

Ancient Monuments: the Colchester Town Wall; Colchester Castle and Park; the Benedictine Abbey of St John; St Botolph's Augustinian Priory; Southeast corner of Roman Town in East Hill House gardens.

Listed Buildings: those buildings that are included in the Statutory List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest are shown in red in the schedule of buildings in Section 5.0 and on the accompanying maps.

Parks and Gardens: the Castle Park is included in the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Planning Policy: the most recent local planning policies for the area are set out in the adopted Colchester Borough Local Plan. The following policies are of particular relevance for the Conservation Area:

- **Policy UAE1** protects the buildings, open spaces, trees and views that go to make up the character of the Conservation Area
- **Policy UAE2** sets out criteria against which planning applications will be judged in order to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area
- **Policy UAE3** sets out the (very limited) circumstances in which consent might be given for the demolition of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area
- **Policy UAE4** states the presumption against the demolition of listed buildings
- **Policy UAE5** sets out criteria against which applications for listed building consent will be judged in order to preserve the special interest of the building
- **Policy UAE8** sets out the presumption against development that would adversely affect ancient monuments and their settings and includes requirements for archaeological assessments and mitigation strategies
- **Policy UAE11** protects sites on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens

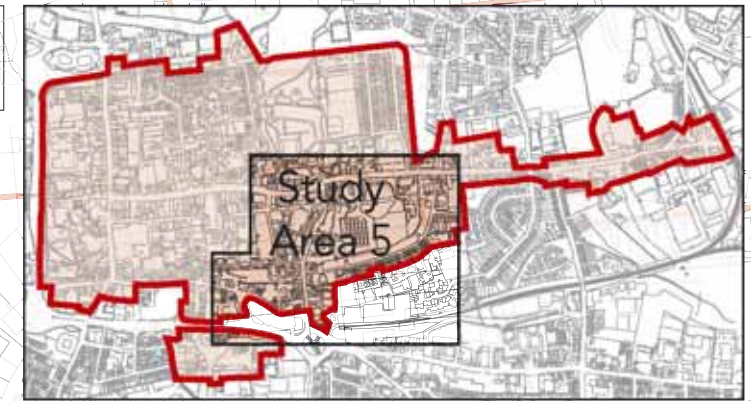
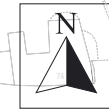
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Colchester

Town Centre Conservation Area



Study
Area 5

Conservation Area boundary

Study Area 5: Queen Street, St Botolph's and Vineyard Street Area

Map 1: Positive Contributions

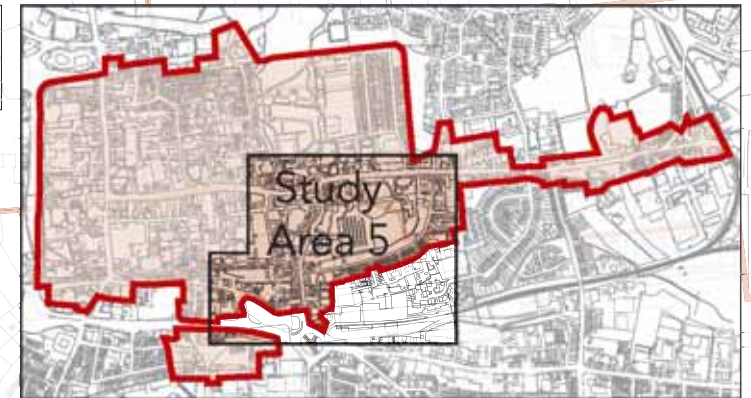
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Listed buildings
- Other buildings of historic or architectural interest
- Spaces making a significant contribution to Conservation Area

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Colchester



Town Centre Conservation Area



Conservation Area boundary

Study Area 5: Queen Street, St Botolph's and Vineyard Street Area

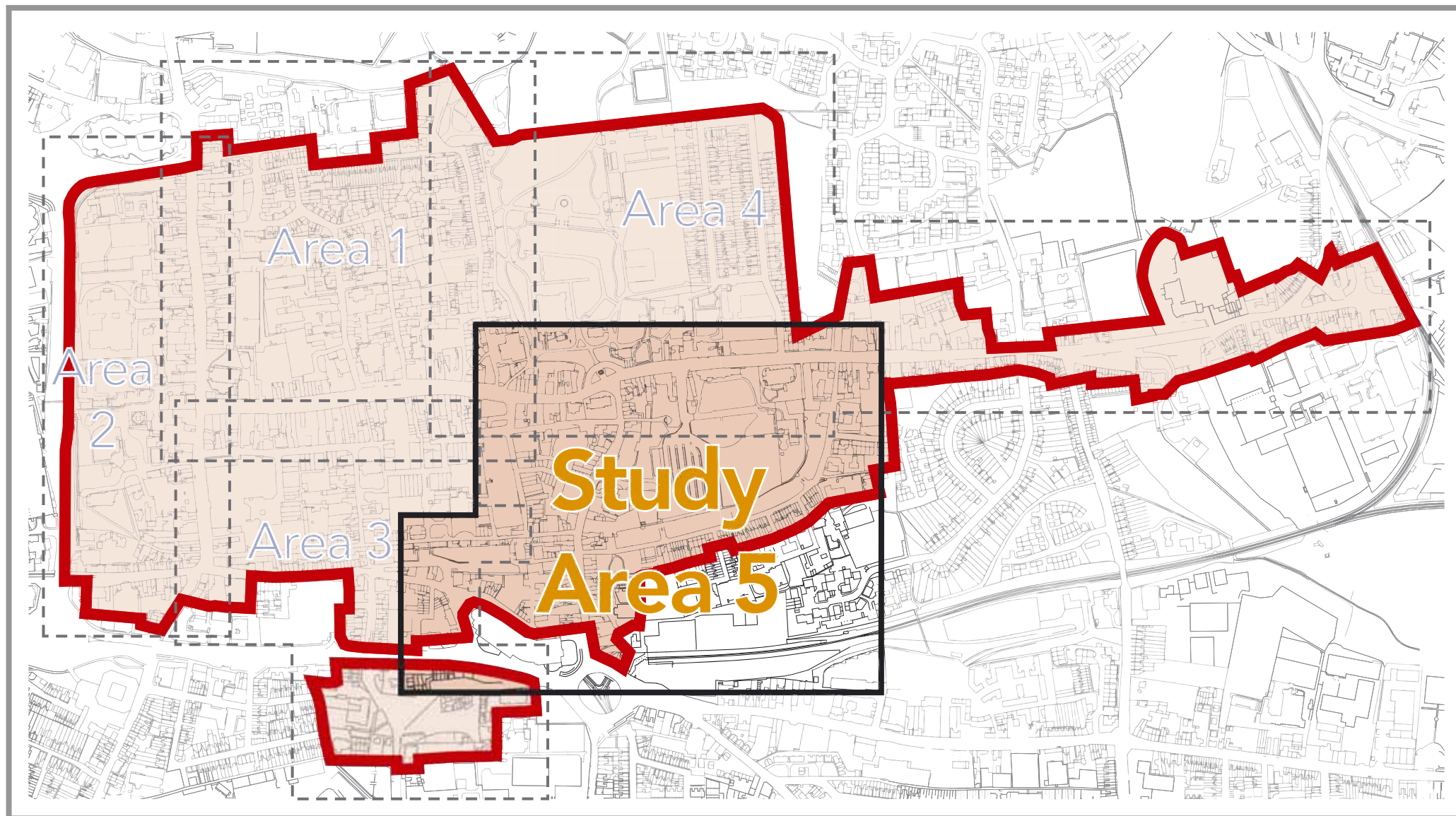
Map 2: Negative contributions

-  Buildings detracting from the Conservation Area
-  Spaces detracting from the Conservation Area

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Queen Street, St Botolph's
and Vineyard Street Area
Map 3: Colchester 1876 Ordnance Survey





Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal Study Area 5