

Colchester

Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Study Area 2:

North Hill, Head Street and Balcerne Gardens



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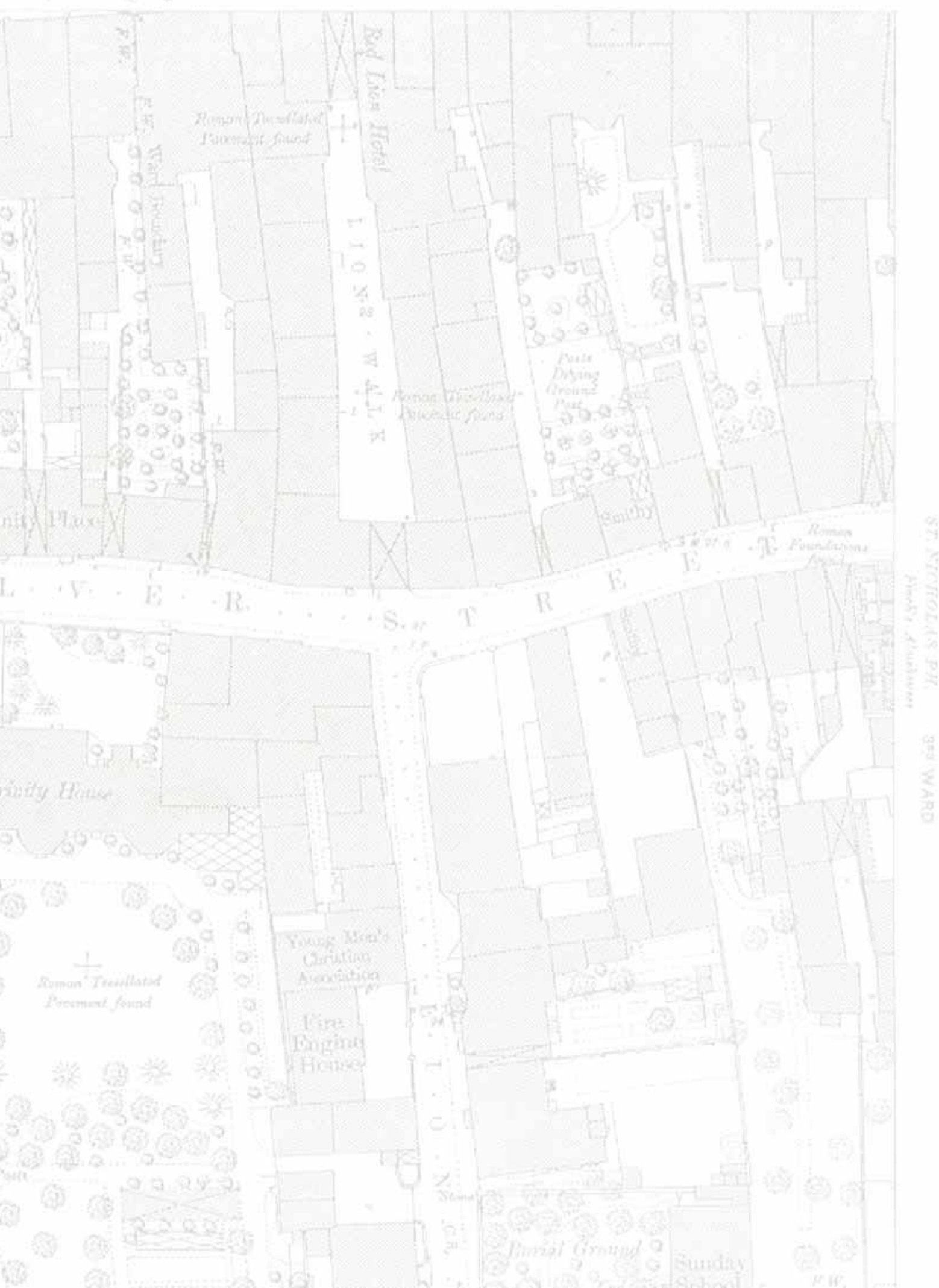
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Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area

1.0 Introduction

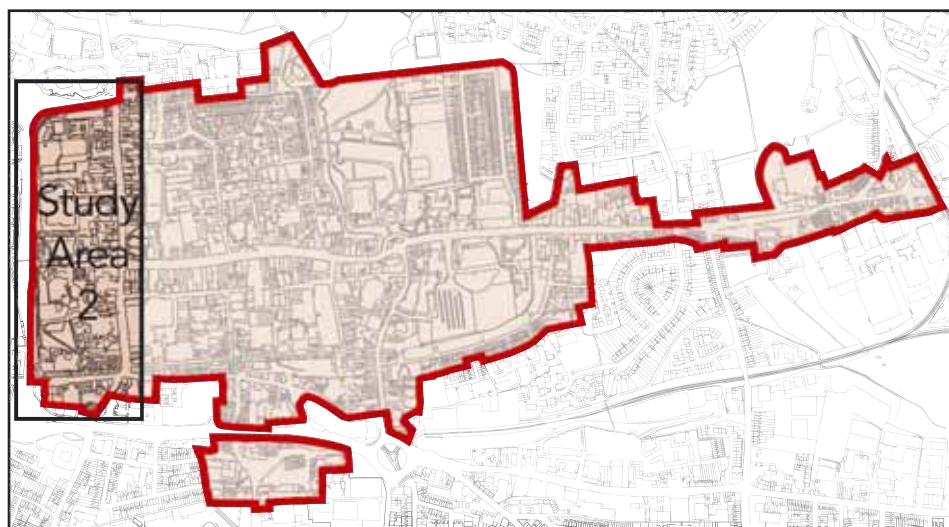


Figure 1: Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area

- 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.

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.

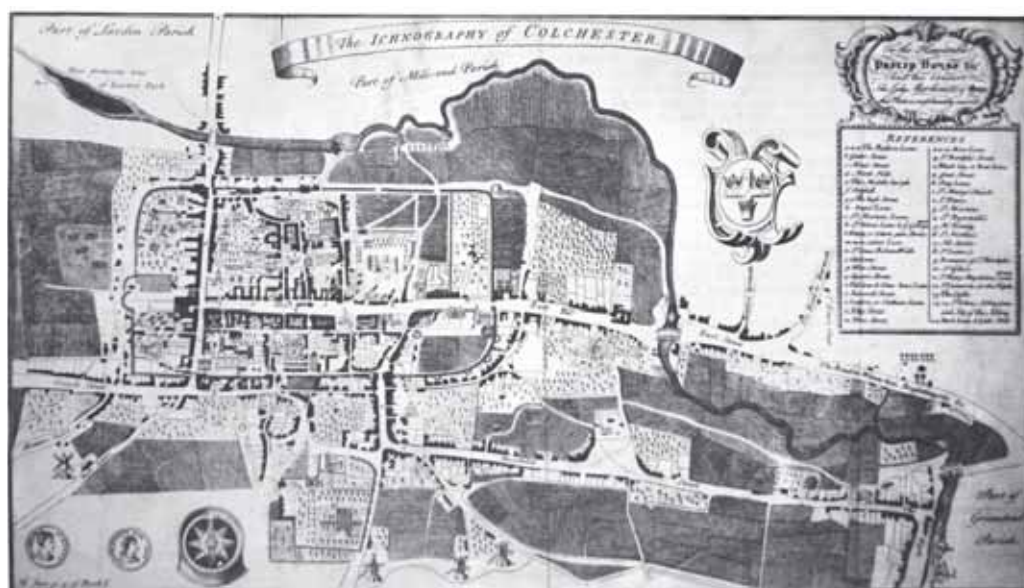





Figure 4: Colchester in the 18th Century

- 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 Balcerne Hill.

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- A detailed historical map of Colchester Town Centre, showing the layout of streets, buildings, and green spaces. The map is oriented with North at the top. Key features include the 'Young Men's Christian Association' and a 'Fire' station in the upper left, a 'Roman Tessellated Pavement found' in the center, and 'Holy Trinity Church (Rudely)' with a 'Site for 400' in the lower left. A 'Roman Foundation' is marked near the bottom left, and a 'T R' label is visible near the bottom center. The map uses various hatching and symbols to represent different types of structures and archaeological findings.
- 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: North Hill, Head Street and Balcerne Gardens

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- 3.1 This area was the western end of the Roman town. The remains of the Roman town wall encloses it on the north and west sides, but the conservation area extends south of the line of the town wall to include Headgate and the eastern end of Crouch Street.
 - 3.2 The Balcerne Gate was the main gate of the Roman town, leading to the *Via principalis*, preserved to this day in the line of the High Street. Head Gate and North Gate were also principal gates and the wide streets of North Hill and Head Street survive from the original layout of the Roman town. When the Balcerne gate was blocked up in pre-Conquest times, Crouch Street and Head Gate became the main entry from the London road.
 - 3.3 The frontages of North Hill and Head Street were built up from an early period, but, as Speed's and Deane's maps (Figs.3 & 4) show, apart from St Mary's Church, the land between these streets and the town wall was largely undeveloped and given over to gardens and orchards, a situation that remained well into the 19th century. Late 17th century views show rows of tenter frames for the drying of cloth on the land behind North Hill.
 - 3.4 The Head Gate was removed in 1756 and no traces of it now remain. The upper floors and central gateway of the North Gate were removed in 1774, following a partial collapse, and most of the remains cleared in 1823.
 - 3.5 By the 19th century there were a number of courts of close-packed housing entered through alleyways from North Hill and Head Street. Only Green's Yard survives, though the modern housing at Byrom's Yard, built on the site of a 19th century brewery, follows in the Colchester tradition.
 - 3.6 Visually speaking, perhaps the greatest change occurred with the construction the 'Jumbo' water tower in 1882. It dominates the west end of the town centre and, along with the Town Hall and the Castle is one of Colchester's most 'iconic' buildings. Other major changes occurred with the construction of the GPO in Head Street in the middle of the 19th century and the building of what is now the Sixth Form College in 1912.
 - 3.7 In the last forty years there have been a number of major developments, including the new Mercury Theatre (1972), the conversion and extension of the old GPO building to form the Odeon cinema, and the construction of the Culver Square shopping precinct in the 1980s, which has resulted in a dramatic change of character to the east side of Head Street. The Sixth Form College has been considerably expanded to form an educational campus.
 - 3.8 Outside the walls, the construction of the dual carriageway along Balcerne Hill resulted in the clearance of many properties on both sides of the street and the partial severance of Crouch Street, though opening up new views of the Roman wall not seen for centuries. At the foot of North Hill, the new road works and construction of the huge Royal London Insurance building brought sweeping changes to the character and appearance of Middleborough, whilst the construction of the Southway has had a similar effect at the foot of Headgate.

North Hill

- 3.9 North Hill is as fine a street as any in Colchester. It is wide and slopes steeply down to the river valley. Houses on both sides of the street step down the hill, in a variety of colours and materials typical of the town. Almost all the buildings on the east side are listed and there are good groups of listed buildings, and some interesting unlisted buildings, on the west side. The overall impression is of a prosperous Georgian country town street.



North Hill – view north



North Hill – view south

- 3.10 Many of the houses date from the 15th and 16th centuries and are timber-framed, though mostly 'modernised' in the 18th and 19th centuries, with plastered fronts, sash windows and panelled doors and surrounds. There are also several 18th century houses, the earlier ones still timber-framed, the later ones in brick.
- 3.11 The majority of buildings are of two-storeys, though many have attics with dormer windows. Because the houses step down the slope, many have cellars with lights above ground level and steps up from the pavement to the front doors, often with good iron railings, which a particular feature of the street. There are also a number of 19th century shop fronts. The architectural detailing of the Georgian fronts is generally of a high quality, with a number of fine panelled doors and carved doorcases and many of the properties retain their original sash windows with glazing bars. The buildings appear generally to be well maintained and in a good state of repair.
- 3.12 From the top of the street at the junction with High Street, the large trees in St Peter's churchyard provide a colourful, natural element in the street scene and, at least in summer, help to screen the unfortunate views of the BT buildings. The church tower is a prominent focal point in views up the street from the north.
- 3.13 Progressing down the street, the bulk of the 1980s Insurance office building comes into view. Beyond the site of the old North Gate, **Middleborough** lacks containment or any coherent townscape and forms a poor approach and ending for a street of the quality of North Hill.

East Side

- 3.14 The trees and boundary walls of St Peter's Church are an important feature in the street scene. The present church dates from the 15th century, though the square red brick west tower of 1758 gives the church an 18th century appearance.



Nos.1 to 6



Nos.4 to 7

- 3.15 No.1 is unlisted but has a grey gault brick front and dates from the 19th century. No.2 has an 18th century rendered front with a gable to the street, though the building behind may be earlier. No.3, with a brick front, is probably 18th century, though altered in the following century. The 18th century plastered front of no.4 has a large two-storey bow window. Nos.5 & 6 have a red brick parapet front of 1808 with a carriage entrance, good doorcase and bowed balcony rails to first floor windows.
- 3.16 No.7 has an 18th century plastered front with a central doorcase and steps with iron handrails. No.8/8a is a tall timber-framed and rendered 18th or 19th century building over a carriage entrance, but the rear wing is 16th century. No.9 has an 18th century brick parapet front, whilst no.10 dates from the 17th or 18th centuries, but was refaced in brick in the 19th century.
- 3.17 In contrast, Nos.11 and 12 (**Crispin Court**) show a well-intentioned but untutored and poorly executed modern attempt at building in 'Neo-Georgian' style that detracts from the otherwise high quality of the street frontage.



Nos.11 to 15



Nos.17 to 23

- 3.18 Nos.13-15 comprises several stages of building. The front part is early 17th century but refaced in the 19th century. At the rear is an early 15th century wing with a long wall jetty, which may be unique in Essex. No.15 is also timber-framed, but was faced in brick in 1931. The adjoining buildings (nos.17, 18, 18a and 18b) date from the late 16th century, but have a late Georgian front of grey gault brick, with an oriel window over a central doorcase to No.18.
- 3.19 Nos.19 to 23 are further examples of early (probably 17th century) timber-framed houses refaced in brick in the Georgian period, 19 & 20 in red brick, 21 in grey gault brick. Nos.22 & 23 have a painted front. Between 20 and 21 is the arched entrance to Nunn's Road.



The old Marquis of Granby

- 3.20 No.24 (Ye Old Marquis PH) dates from c1520 and has exposed framing and exceptionally fine carved detail. It was extensively restored in 1914. The adjoining buildings (nos.26-29) are of late 15th century origin, and also have exposed timbers, though considerably altered over the years.
- 3.21 With its almost window-less façade, no.30, on the north side of the entrance to Northgate Street, has little to commend it. Fragments of the town wall are visible sandwiched between no.30 and no.1 Middledborough, which is a refronted 17th century building.

West Side

- 3.22 Nos.32-34 are three late Victorian two-storey red brick properties with shops on the ground floor. No.34 incorporates the entrance passage to **Cistern Yard**, now cleared of buildings and used for car parking. Nos.35 & 35a are taller, in painted brick, and also date from the 19th century. These buildings are not listed, but are certainly of local interest. At the side of no.35a is the entrance to **Byrom's Yard**, a modern housing development in local style, on the site of one of Colchester's main breweries. No.36 is a modern building of no particular interest.



Nos.38 to 32



Entrance to Green's Yard

- 3.23 No.37 is an early (17th century or earlier) timber-framed and plastered building with a very good 19th century shop front. The adjoining buildings (nos.38-42) date from the 19th century and are in brick, most of them now painted. No.38 has a good early shop front and incorporates the carriage arch entrance to **Green's Yard**, which has a row of early 19th century red brick cottages, all listed.
- 3.24 The newspaper offices (nos.43/44) are in a well-mannered Neo-Georgian style, in buff brick, with a good quality of detailing and complete with oriel bow window above the central panelled doorcase, although the mansard roofed third storey with its raised brick gables might be considered over-prominent in relation to adjoining buildings.



Nos.46 to 38

- 3.25 Nos.45 & 46 date from the 16th century, though remodelled in the early 18th century. Above the central passageway to the rear court is a large 18th century oriel window. No.47 has an 18th century plastered front and a 17th century rear wing with some original mullioned windows. In contrast, no.48 is three-storey red brick townhouse from the mid 19th century, whilst the 19th century front to no.49 has ornamental iron balconies to first floor windows and a double flight of steps enclosing the cellar entrance.



Nos.52 to 48

- 3.26 No.50, though unlisted, is a good example of a 19th century three-storey townhouse, in painted brick, with sash windows and a low-pitched slate roof. No.51 is early 19th century, also three-storey in painted brick with sash windows and a slate roof. Adjoining and flanking the entrance to the Sixth Form College, is no.52, a tall three-storey building in Tudor style. The ground floor is in brick with four-centred moulded brick arched windows and door: the 'black and white' upper floors have exposed timbers, mullion and transom windows with leaded casements and an oriel at first floor. This is a building of some quality and is certainly of local interest.
- 3.27 A gated entrance road leads to the **Sixth Form College**. Set back on the north side are nos.52a and 53, a range of red brick gable buildings which may date from the late 19th century. They too are of local interest. Also approached from this road is no.54, a listed late 18th century house, rendered and painted, with a Doric porch and original sashes with glazing bars. The garden wall in herringbone brickwork is attractive. A number of mature trees help to frame the views of the main college building.
- 3.28 The 1950s flat roofed gym building, which detracts from the street scene, is to be remodelled as a performing arts facility. The winning design in the recent competition was by Colchester architects Inkpen Downie.



Original school building 1912

- 3.29 The main red brick building of the Sixth Form College dates from 1912. It was officially the New Technical Institute and was designed by Westminster architects Cheers and Smith. It is an imposing building, in red brick with yellow brick banding, three tall storeys to cornice level, with attic floors above. The front is symmetrical, with a four-bay central part with tall semi-circular headed windows at second floor level and tall piers that project up beyond cornice level. The projecting central entrance wing is two-storey and has a grand entrance with broken pediment on Ionic columns, approached by double balustraded steps. There is a two-storey wing on the west side and large modern extensions at the rear.



New wing and entrance



New campus buildings

- 3.30 The building is now part of an extensive campus that extends down the slopes to the north as far as the town wall. The east end of the main building has recently been extended in matching style, which contrasts nicely with the glazed section which now forms the main entrance to the college. In front and below is a range of new buildings in contemporary style that make much use of large panels of colour. The new development, which includes over thirty teaching spaces, lecture theatre, refectory, sports hall and all-weather pitch, was designed by Colchester architects the Roff Marsh Partnership and is due to be opened in Summer 2007. During construction, the remains of the tessellated pavement and bathhouse of a Roman villa were discovered on the site and investigated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust.
- 3.31 Returning to North Street, nos.55 & 56 were formerly The Old Cock and Pye Inn. The 18th century front is of red brick with parapet (no.56 now stucco) and a range of seven sash windows. The rear wings date from the 16th and 17th centuries and the carriage entrance leads through to **Cock and Pye Court**. Adjoining is no.57, a 17th century timber-framed and plastered building, the entrance reached by a flight of steps with curving handrail.



Nos.62 to 55

- 3.32 Nos.58, 59 and 60 are all earlier buildings refronted in the 18th century, no.58 in grey gault brick, the others in red brick. No.59 has a wide frontage in two parts stepping down the hill. No.60 is a rather grand house, originally dating from 1680. The symmetrical front block (mid 18th century) has a modillion eaves cornice with central pediment above a Venetian window, two-storey canted brick bay windows and a Tuscan doorcase.
- 3.33 No.61 has a plastered front and tiled roof. It looks 18th century, but is not listed. No.62 is a tall 19th century red brick building in vaguely Mannerist style, with rusticated side pilasters, flat pilasters supporting an apex pediment and a canted brick oriel with pediment at first floor level. This building is also of local interest.



No.63



Entrance to Balcerne Passage

- 3.34 No.63 is set back from the street frontage behind a partly paved garden area. The roof of the 17th century house is clearly visible behind the 18th century painted brick front, with its Ionic doorcase and fanlight. Nos.64/65 have a mock-Tudor gabled front, but the rear parts facing Balcerne Passage appear to date from the 18th or 19th centuries and may be timber-framed. The buildings are not listed, but are clearly of local interest.



Head Post Office



Old Waggon & Horses PH

- 3.35 The old Waggon and Horses PH (now O'Neil's) is in 17th century style. The main feature is a pair of double-height gabled bays, ashlar stone on the ground floor with diamond-pattern timber-framing above. The Head Post Office (nos.67-70) is a fine example of what might be called 'Tudor Revival', the jettied upper storeys in black and white timbering with three gables to the street. The ground floor shop frontage appears to be original, with a range of clerestory lights with both diamond-shaped and square leaded lights. Neither of these buildings is listed, but they are two of the most recognizable buildings in the town centre.

Head Street



Head Street – view north

- 3.36 Head Street slopes down the hill to the site of the Head Gate. At this point, Headgate is not in line with Head Street and, unlike North Hill, buildings at the beginning of St John's Street contain the view. The street was widened by the Improvement Commissioners in the early 19th century and, though there are a few remaining buildings from the 17th century or earlier and a small number of 18th century town houses, the general character of the west side of the street largely derives from the three-storey buildings of the mid and late 19th century, whilst the new frontages constructed as part of the Culver Square development dominate the east side. Although the architectural quality of the buildings is mixed and only a few are listed, there is still much of interest in the street.

West Side

- 3.37 The ground floor of the 1970s Yates's Wine Bar (no.1) runs the whole length of the broad frontage. Above, an attempt has been made to split the building into two, with a different treatment of each part that looks entirely artificial. The brown buff brick and the heavy lead-capped projecting windows at second floor level give the building a drab and heavy appearance. This contrasts unfavourably with the simple painted brick facades of nos.5 & 5a, which date from the mid 19th century. No.5 retains its original shop front. Nos.11/13 (with a poor modern shopfront) and 15-19 are similar. At first glance, nos.7 & 9 appear to be of the same date, but they are in fact recent infilling with traditional style shop fronts. The 19th century buildings are not listed, but should certainly be considered to be of local interest.



No.1



Nos.5 to 19

- 3.38 No.21 is a relic of the older Colchester. Originally an early 16th century house, the decorated bargeboarded gable and the oversailing first floor on the long side to Church Street give the building a picturesque feel. A plaque on the side records that the house was built in 1608 as a baker's and that it suffered extensive damage in 1834 in a fire that destroyed a number of adjacent buildings. The next building (no.23) with a red brick front presumably dates from after the fire. It is not listed but is of local interest.



Nos.27 to 19

- 3.39 No.25 has a late 18th century red brick front and retains its entrance porch with flat head and fluted columns. The adjoining building (No.27) has an early 19th century front in grey gault brick, with remnants inside from when it was The Alexandra PH, but the rear wing is early 15th century with evidence of smoke-blackening to the roof.



Former GPO



Nos.27 to 37

- 3.40 The former GPO building, now the Odeon cinema, is the tallest building on the west side. It has a high ground floor and a fourth storey with gables at roof level. It is in red brick and has contrasting drip-moulds that form a continuous band over windows and doors at ground and first floor. Opened in 1874, it is a striking building in the street scene. The adjoining building is in the 1930s classical style adopted by the Post Office, with a red brick parapet front surmounted by decorative urns at either side. Tall flat pilasters topped by a flat cornice frame the central five bays at ground and first floor. The windows are traditional sashes with glazing bars and there is a circular window in each end bay of the top storey. The façade is largely unaltered and retains its rusticated stone door surrounds. Both these buildings are of local interest.

- 3.41 The late 18th century front of nos.37, 39 & 39a conceal an earlier timber-framed house. This fine town house has a semi-circular Doric porch with two-storeyed bow window above. No.41 has a late 18th century grey gault brick front with a shallow bow window above the shop and a large oriel above a carriage entrance that leads through to Headgate Court, which was formerly the Assembly Room of the King's Head Inn, a fine 16th/17th century building with a good late 17th century front.



Nos.37 to 41



Nos.43 to 51

- 3.42 Returning to the street, nos.43/45 comprises one broad building, with a dark brick parapet front and contrasting red brick details. There are four tall metal-framed windows either side of an Art Deco centre bay with flagpoles and two drop lanterns. There are six fancy metal brackets, three with lights. The modern shop fascias detract from the appearance of the building. The adjoining building (Nos.47-51) is set forward and has a red brick parapet front in Flemish bond, above three shops with original surrounds. Both buildings are of local interest.

East Side

- 3.43 The Britannia Building Society (nos.2-8) on the corner with High Street is a modest but well-proportioned red brick building in 1930s Neo-Georgian style. The three-storey adjoining building (nos.12/14), which is set forward on the old building line, has a painted rendered front, with sash windows to the upper floor, and a low-pitched slate roof. Nos.16-20 and 22-26 are modern shop buildings that sit either side of the entrance to Culver Street West. The latter, with its rectangular and oblong windows has little to commend it.



Nos.2 to 20



Nos.22 to 44

- 3.44 Debenhams and Woolworths take up a considerable part of the street frontage and incorporate nos.44-52, a fine red brick Georgian building of 1763-5. This long frontage is all part of the 1980s Culver Square development. A reasonable attempt has been made to lessen the impact of the new buildings by incorporating gables, tall feature windows, clerestory lights and a glazed entrance, and by a change of building line and setting back the bulk of the third storey. However, the ground floor is bland and the main problem arises from the fact that the subdivisions of the frontage do not relate to the shops behind. From a townscape point of view, it would have been preferable to design it as a number of separate buildings that would have responded more to the historic scale and plot width of the street and kept the integrity of the historic buildings.



Nos.44 to 54



Nos.58 to 62

- 3.45 The street ends with two more historic townhouses. No.54 dates from the early 17th century but has red brick front of 1774, whilst nos.58-62 comprise a large late 17th century house with mediaeval cellar and 18th century plastered front. This house belonged to the Rebow family and Sir Isaac Rebow is said to have entertained William IV here.

Headgate

- 3.46 Headgate starts from where the old Head Gate stood, but the buildings north of the junction with Crouch Street and St John's Street are visually part of Head Street. On the lower part of the street, buildings on the east side contain the views down the street to the Southway and Police Station. However, the west side is mostly open and the view up the hill is largely of the backs of properties in Crouch Street. Headgate is a main access to the town centre and carries a considerable amount of traffic.



Headgate Building



Headgate east side

- 3.47 On the east side, nos.2 & 4 are part of Headgate Building, which extends eastward along Sir Isaac's Walk and St John's Street. This is an impressive building, with an eclectic mix of styles, in red brick with yellow painted banding and window surrounds. The gable end facing the street has oriel windows on the first floor corner splays, each with segmental arched moulded transoms and two little pyramid tops. The central window is in similar style, with painted panels above and below, topped with a range of clerestory lights under a small triangular pediment. The building was constructed in 1910 and makes a considerable contribution to the street scene.
- 3.48 Opposite, on the west side, is a very poor post-war development (nos.1-5 Headgate and 1 & 3 Crouch street – see Crouch Street for picture), occupying a most important position on the corner with Church Walk and Crouch Street. Redevelopment of this site is to be encouraged.
- 3.49 In contrast, the tall three-storey 19th century building in yellow brick (nos.6-10) forms a strong corner with the south side of St John's Street and acts a visual stop in views down Head Street. Two other 19th century buildings step down the hill, one a three-storey house, the other a two-storey commercial building with a row of tall semi-circular headed windows and wagon entrance, now used as a restaurant. A modern office block turns the corner into Southway.



Headgate – view north



Victoria Place

- 3.50 At the foot of the hill on the west side is a row of three restored cottages (Victoria Place 1837) with original pattern sash windows with glazing bars. The remainder of the land between the cottages and the rear of Crouch Street is used for access and car parking for adjacent businesses. The red brick building occupied by Essex & Suffolk Lettings appears to be of 19th century date, though the date of its weatherboarded neighbour is uncertain.

Crouch Street

- 3.51 Until the 1980s, Crouch Street formed the main access to the town centre from the west. The street is now cut through by the Balkerne Hill dual carriageway, though there is a pedestrian underpass connecting the two parts of the street. This end of Crouch Street is now one way for traffic exiting on the west. The construction of the inner relief road destroyed the continuity of the street frontages, removing several historic buildings. The street has become something of a backwater and, judging by the number of vacant premises, it appears that businesses are struggling.



Crouch Street – from Headgate



Crouch Street – view west

- 3.52 Although there are only a couple of listed buildings, there are a number of buildings of some quality dating from the 19th century and a few interesting examples from the 20th century. A number of the more interesting buildings suffer from poor shop fronts that tend to spoil their character.

North Side

- 3.53 Nos.1 & 3 Crouch Street are, with 1-5 Headgate, part of the unattractive post-war development which occupies a very prominent corner position at the junction of Head Street, Headgate, Crouch Street and St John's Street.



Nos.1 to 3

- 3.54 In contrast, the half-timbered building at nos.5/7 appears to be of some age and interest, though much altered. No.15 is a narrow three-storey building with a 19th century stucco front. The adjoining two-storey building (nos.17-21) has a plastered front with three 19th century sash windows with glazing bars. There are indications that this was once a jettied building. Like nos.5/7, it would repay further investigation.
- 3.55 Nos.23 & 25 are a three-storey late 19th century red brick pair with bracketed cornice, stringcourse and contrasting window heads. The adjoining double-fronted pair in Gault brick are earlier and retain original pattern sash windows with glazing bars and ironwork balconies to the first floor windows. No.41 is an interesting little building with a rendered parapet front with projecting cornice and moulded fascia. Two metal casement windows with raised architraves frame a classical sculptural feature with an urn set on a raised base with swags.



Nos.27 to 5



Nos.47 to 41

- 3.56 Lloyds Bank (nos.45 & 47) is a substantial three-storey 19th century building with parapet front and decorative cornice. The sash windows have side-margin glazing bars. Adjoining, and now the last building in the street, is Stacey House (nos.49/51) built in 1883, in red brick with a deep bracketed eaves.
- 3.57 All the above buildings can be considered to be at least of local architectural or historic interest. Apart from Thomas Cooks on the corner with Headgate (nos.1-3), the other buildings on the north side are of no great interest, but have a neutral effect on the street scene.

South Side

- 3.58 Most of the south side frontage is of some interest. The Bull Inn is listed and has an 18th century front with 19th century tiled pub ground floor, concealing an older, timber-framed core. Also listed are nos.20 & 22 (John Cole House), originally a large square red brick house built in 1763 by local merchant John Cole. It has a fine modillion cornice and painted bands and quoins and a pedimented doorcase. The three-storey wing built in 1971 is a poor neighbour for such a fine building.



No.2 and the Bull Inn



Nos.4a to 14

- 3.59 Adjoining the Bull Inn is an interesting little building (no.4a). The ground floor shopfront has thin cast iron columns and side pilasters. The first floor also has the appearance of a shopfront with pilasters and a bracketed fascia, with a partly balustraded parapet above. Nos.10-14 is a terrace of three three-storey, painted brick Victorian houses with shops below. Some of the original sash windows survive.



Former Regal Cinema



John Cole House

- 3.60 One of the more interesting buildings is the former Odeon Cinema. Originally the Regal Cinema, this was designed by Cecil Massey in a Moorish style and opened in 1931. A range of shops flanks the tall gabled front and the first floor metal windows retain their fancy metalwork grills. Sadly, at the time of writing, the whole complex was unused.
- 3.61 The other buildings have a largely neutral impact, though the former bank building (no.8) is of poor quality and appearance and detracts from the street scene.

Church Street

- 3.62 This is an historic street, leading from Head Street to the Church of St Mary-at-the-Wall (now the St Mary's Arts Centre). The trees at the start of Balcerne Gardens form the backdrop for the view along Church Street from Head Street, which is framed by the jettied wall of 21 Head Street and the high flank wall of no.19, which has curved sash windows on the corner at first and second floor. The paving of both footways and carriageway is in poor condition and it would be desirable to get rid of the double yellow lines.



Entrance from Head Street

- 3.63 On the north side, nos.1 & 2 are of no great interest, but no.3, dating from the early 19th century, is listed. It has a grey gault brick first floor front with gable and pediment and a rusticated stucco ground floor. The red brick building at the rear (no.4), also 19th century, is of some interest.
- 3.64 On the south side nos.11 & 12 date from the 19th century, in painted brick with a brick eaves cornice. No.10 is a late 18th-century listed house with rendered, painted front, and a tall slate mansard roof. The building has been extended on the west side and the property split in two, with the result that part of the original house is now painted a different colour. Adjoining (no.8) is the former County Court of c1810, which has a ground floor tetrastyle portico the length of the front.



Nos.10 to 12



Old Court House

- 3.65 No.6 (Quaker Meeting House) is set back on the south side behind a deep front garden. This is a late 18th century house with a grey gault brick front and timber-framed rear wing. The iron railings, gates and walls are good features that need to be preserved.



No.8 Quaker Meeting House



Rear of Odeon Cinema

- 3.66 The view between nos.6 and 8 is dominated by the huge extensions at the rear of the Odeon Cinema. An attempt has been made to break down the mass and bulk of the development, but it still has an overbearing effect and is intrusive in a number of views in the area.
- 3.67 Church Street bends as it approaches the church and the boundary wall of Mercury House and the mature trees in its garden are particularly attractive features on the north side. At the end of the street, St Mary's Steps lead through the town wall to link up with the footpath from the Balcerne Gate and the bridge over Balcerne Hill and provide an attractive pedestrian route to the Arts Centre and the middle of the town.



St Mary-at-the-Wall

- 3.68 The church suffered damage in the siege of Colchester and the upper parts of the perpendicular west tower were rebuilt in brick in 1729, the very top in 1911. The rest of the church was rebuilt in dark red brick by Arthur Blomfield in 1872. The churchyard was landscaped in the early 18th century and an avenue of trees lines a diagonal path through the churchyard leading to Church Walk. The churchyard appears to be well maintained and forms a pleasant secluded green space.

Church Walk

- 3.69 The narrow entrance to Church Walk from Head Street, between the largely blank side walls of Headgate House (1 Headgate) and 51/53 Head Street, is rather forbidding and the patched tarmac road surface with double yellow lines is not attractive to the visitor. Overall, the street has a rather neglected air.



View east towards Head St



Church Walk - view west

- 3.70 The buildings either side are something of a hotchpotch, several dating from the 19th or early 20th centuries, but much altered and of no great interest. Nos.3 & 4 on the south side are a three-storey 19th century pair in painted brick that have managed to retain some of their original features, including wrought-iron balconies.
- 3.71 At the far end of the street on the right hand side are some old industrial buildings, a single-storey garage and forecourt used for car parking, which detract from the appearance of the area, particularly when approaching through the gates from the churchyard.



Unattractive area



St Mary's Cottage

- 3.72 The most interesting building is St Mary's Cottage (now Charles May House), a picturesque cottage of 1822 set back in what was formerly a large garden. It now accommodates modern sheltered housing.

Balcerne Passage

- 3.73 Balcerne Passage leads through from North Hill towards Balcerne Gardens and the Balcerne Gate. On the north side is a three-storey 19th century commercial building, in painted brick, now converted to restaurant and flats, with a range of clerestory lights under the eaves. On the south side are brick warehouse buildings at the rear of the Post Office that are of no particular interest.



Balcerne Passage



Archway to almshouses

- 3.74 Immediately ahead is a large arched gateway, with side pedestrian arches, with views through to a green courtyard and a row of listed almshouses built in 1837. The almshouses, now called Papillon House (but listed as Provident Place), form part of a modern development by the Balcerne Gardens Housing Trust, with buildings extending towards the Balcerne Gate.



'Jumbo' water tower

- 3.75 The dominating feature of the area is the 'Jumbo' water tower, erected in 1882 to the design of Charles Clegg the Borough Engineer. It is approximately 110 feet high in a Roman 'campanile' style, with echoes of a triumphal arch. It was decommissioned in the 1980s, but has become one of the most familiar images of Colchester and is rightly listed Grade II*.

Balcerne Gardens

- 3.76 Opposite 'Jumbo' is one of Colchester's principal modern buildings, the Mercury Theatre. Opened in 1972, the theatre was built on the site of the old St Mary's and designed by local architect Robert Downie. The setting, inside the town wall is attractive, with grass and trees contributing to a pleasant environment.



Mercury Theatre

Balkerne Lane

- 3.77 At the end of Balkerne Gardens are the remains of the Balkerne Gate, the only remaining Roman gateway in the town wall and the best preserved of any Roman gateway in the country. The remains of the north tower and southern pedestrian gateway survive. It may owe its survival to the fact that it was blocked in pre-Conquest times and did not fall foul of the Improvement Commissioners in the 19th century. It now forms a convenient access from the car parks and residential areas on the west side of Balkerne Hill. The Hole-in-the Wall Public House was built over the north carriageway of the Gate and the terrace gives good views over the surrounding area.



Balkerne Gate & The Hole in the Wall from the pedestrian bridge

Balkerne Close

- 3.78 Balkerne Close lies behind North Hill and is approached from Balkerne Passage. There are two interesting buildings, Tudor Cottage, a listed 16th century timber-framed house, and the 19th century Coach House. The St Peter's Vicarage is modern.



Balkerne Close

Balkerne Hill

- 3.79 By the end of the 19th century, Balkerne Hill was built up along the west side and, south of the Balkerne Gate, on the east side as well. The construction of the modern dual carriageway has had the effect of opening up views of the whole length of the town wall in Balkerne Hill and Middleborough, one of the best-preserved sections of the Roman wall. The landscaping has proved effective, providing a green setting at the base of the wall and a footpath along its length. Some of the best views are obtained from the pedestrian bridge leading to the Balkerne Gate.



Balkerne Hill – view north



Balkerne Hill – view south

- 3.80 From the road, some of the larger buildings within the walls are visible, for example St Mary's Church and the buildings of the Sixth Form College. The new college buildings add interest to views from the lower part of Balkerne Hill and the junction with Middleborough.

Middleborough

- 3.81 On the east side two buildings remain adjoining the town wall; no.1 is of 17th century origin and is listed. Over the other side of St Peter's Street, there are mostly modern buildings, though in nos.6-9 there are remnants of the old street frontage.



View north from North Hill

- 3.82 On the west side, the construction of the widened Middleborough has opened up the town wall to view. Now a wide pavement and strip of grass runs along the exposed wall, with trees and seats. The drinking fountain presented by the local MP in 1864 and the municipal horse trough were moved to their present positions when the road works were carried out.



View west along Roman town wall



Former Royal Insurance offices

- 3.83 The views of the town wall may have been improved but, inevitably, the setting is compromised not only by the busy road, but also the overbearing presence of the former Royal Insurance building. The large hoardings above the wall spoil the view and ought to be removed.





4.0 Significance



Above ground features

-
- 0 M 100
- Roman Ruinations
- Rector's Office
- Rector's Parsonage
- Young Men's Christian Association
- Fire
- Holy Trinity Church (Rector's Office)
- Roman Tessellated Pavement found
- Yard
- TR
- 34

Below ground features

4.9 Several finds from the Roman period have been made over the years, the most recent being the tessellated floor and bath house on the site of the new buildings for the Sixth form college. Some parts of the area have remained largely undeveloped since Roman times and There is likely to be a high level of survival of remains in those parts of the area that have remained largely undeveloped since Roman times.

4.10 Many of the properties in North Hill, Head Street and Crouch Street are on the site of earlier buildings and their rear yards and gardens might well retain evidence of earlier occupation from refuse and cess pits.

Open spaces: Contribution to the area

4.11 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. However, there are a number that detract from the area, including some that are used for car parking. These are shown on Map 2.

Spaces that make a positive contribution:

- St Peter's churchyard
- St Mary's churchyard
- Green spaces around Mercury Theatre & Sixth Form College
- Green spaces alongside the Roman town wall

Spaces that detract from the area:

- Car park at Cistern Yard off North Hill
- Open yard in Church Walk

Buildings: Contribution to the area

4.12 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.

4.13 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.

4.14 The buildings in the second schedule (green) are those that detract from the character of the area and are shown on Map 2.

4.15 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:

Balkerne Close

- Tudor Cottage
- Coach House

Balkerne Gardens

- Papillon House, Provident Place

Balkerne Hill

- The Roman town wall (Grade I, Ancient Monument)

Balkerne Lane

- The Balkerne Gate (Grade I, Ancient Monument)
- The Hole in the Wall PH

Balkerne Passage

- 'Jumbo', Municipal Water Tower (Grade II*)
- Nos.1 - 4

Church Street (North Side)

- No.3
- No.4

Church Street (South Side)

- Railings to Mercury House
- Church of St Mary at the Wall (St Mary's Arts Centre)
- Railings and gates to churchyard
- No.6 (Quaker Meeting House)
- Railings and gates to No.6
- No.8
- No.10
- Nos.11 & 12

Church Walk

- Charles May House (formerly St Mary's Cottage)
- Nos.3 & 4

Crouch Street (North Side)

- Nos.5 & 7
- No.15
- Nos.17 - 21
- Nos.23 & 25
- Nos.27 & 29
- No.41
- No.45a
- Nos.45 & 47
- Nos.49 & 51

Crouch Street (South Side)

- The Bull Hotel
- No.4a
- Nos.10 - 14
- Nos.16-20 inc. former Regal Cinema
- Nos.20 & 22 (Grade II*)

Head Street (West Side)

- Nos.5 & 5a
- Nos.11 & 13
- Nos. 15 - 19
- No.21
- No.23
- No.25
- No.27
- Headgate Court (No.3) (Grade II*)
- Odeon Cinema
- Former GPO
- Nos.37, 39 & 39a
- No.41
- Nos.43 & 45
- Nos.47 - 53

Head Street (East Side)

- Nos.2 - 6
- Nos.12 & 14
- Nos.44 - 52
- No.54 (Grade II*)
- Nos.58 - 62 (Grade II*)

Buildings that detract from the area:

Headgate (East Side)

- Nos.2 & 4 Headgate Building
- Nos.6 - 10
- No.12

Headgate (West Side)

- Nos.15 - 19
- Suffolk Lettings building

Middleborough (West Side)

- The Roman town wall (Grade I, Ancient Monument)
- Drinking Fountain

Middleborough (East Side)

- No.1
- No.8

North Hill (East Side)

- Church of St Peter (Grade II*)
- Walls and ironwork to St Peter's churchyard
- No.1
- No.2
- No.3
- No.4
- Nos.5 & 6
- No.7 (North Hill House)
- Nos.8 & 8a
- No.9
- No.10
- Nos.13 - 15 (Grade II*)
- No.16
- Nos.17, 18, 18a & 18b
- Nos.19 & 20
- No.21
- Nos.22 & 23
- No.24 (Marquis of Granby) (Grade II*)
- Nos.25 - 29

North Hill (West Side)

- Nos.32 - 34
- Nos.35 & 35a
- Nos.1 - 5 Green's Yard
- No.37
- Nos.38 - 42
- Nos.45 - 46
- No.47
- No.48
- No.49
- No.50
- No.51
- No.52
- Nos.52a & 53
- No.54
- Nos.55 & 56
- No.57
- No.58
- No.59
- No.60 (Grade II*)
- No.61
- No.62
- No.63
- Nos.64 & 65
- The Waggon & Horses PH (O'Neil's)
- Nos.67 - 70

Crouch Street

- Nos.1 & 3
- No.8
- Modern extensions to Nos.20/22

Church Walk

- Garage adjoining No.15

Headgate

- Nos.1 & 3 (Headgate House)

North Hill

- Entrance buildings to Crispin Court
- Former gym building adjacent to Sixth Form College



5.0 Issues and Recommendations

- 5.1 The area contains a significant number of listed buildings: it is essential that they are preserved and maintained in a good condition. However, very few buildings dating from after 1840 are protected through listing, except really outstanding buildings such as the 'Jumbo' water tower. The contribution of Victorian and Edwardian (and sometimes later) buildings to the character of the Conservation Area needs to be recognised.
- 5.2 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 helpful 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.
- 5.3 A common problem with unlisted buildings 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 alternative solutions that can provide modern levels of insulation, but still retain the character of a building at a reasonable cost. The Local Authority could consider introducing an 'Article 4 Direction', which would enable these alterations to be brought under control.
- 5.4 Generally speaking, the properties in this area appear to be structurally sound and well maintained. However, there are a few buildings that positively detract from the character and appearance of the area, the most prominent being the block of property on the corner of Headgate and Crouch Street. Every encouragement should be given to redevelopment with buildings of a more suitable design.
- 5.5 The area of Middleborough immediately outside the town wall provides a poor entrance and exit for a street of such a high quality as North Hill. Consideration might be given to forming a modern 'gateway' that would restore the sense of enclosure that has been lost over the years.
- 5.6 In contrast to most other streets in the town centre, Crouch Street appears to be in decline economically, with several empty premises. The appearance of the street is marred by a number of buildings and shopfronts of poor design and it would be worthwhile to consider a scheme of environmental improvements to encourage regeneration. Church Walk would also benefit from improvement, particularly to the street surface.

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

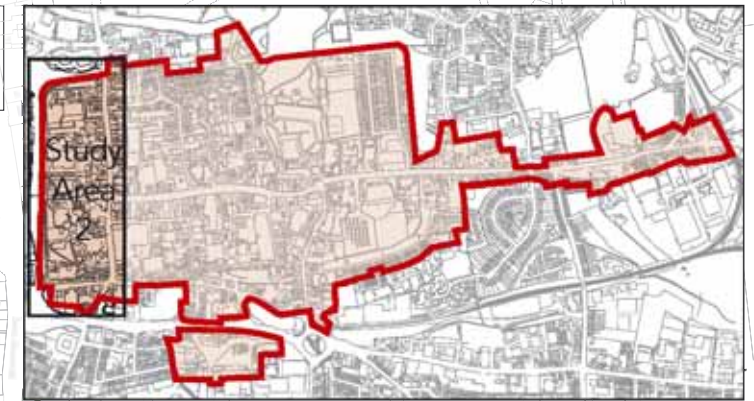
References

Victoria *History of the County of Essex* Vol. 9 (1994)
List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest – Colchester
N Pevsner & E Radcliffe *The Buildings of England: Essex* (1979)
Patrick Denny *Colchester, History and Guide* (2004)



Colchester

Town Centre Conservation Area



Conservation Area boundary

Study Area 2:

North Hill, Head Street and Balkerne Gardens

Map 1: Positive Contributions

--- Scheduled Ancient Monument

■ Listed buildings

■ Other buildings of historic or architectural interest

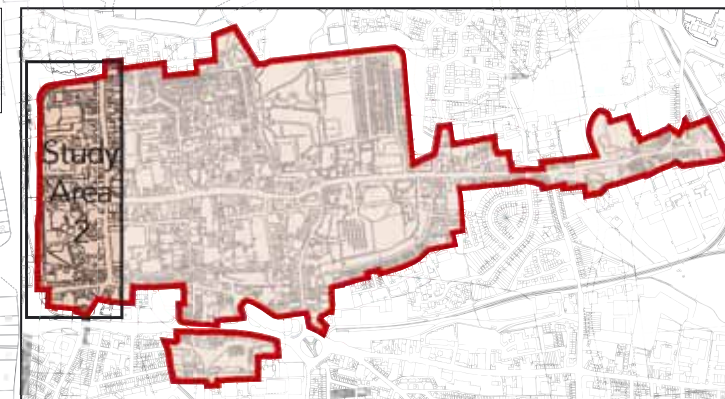
■ Spaces making a significant contribution to Conservation Area

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Colchester

Town Centre Conservation Area





Conservation Area boundary

Study Area 2:

North Hill, Head Street and Balcerne Gardens

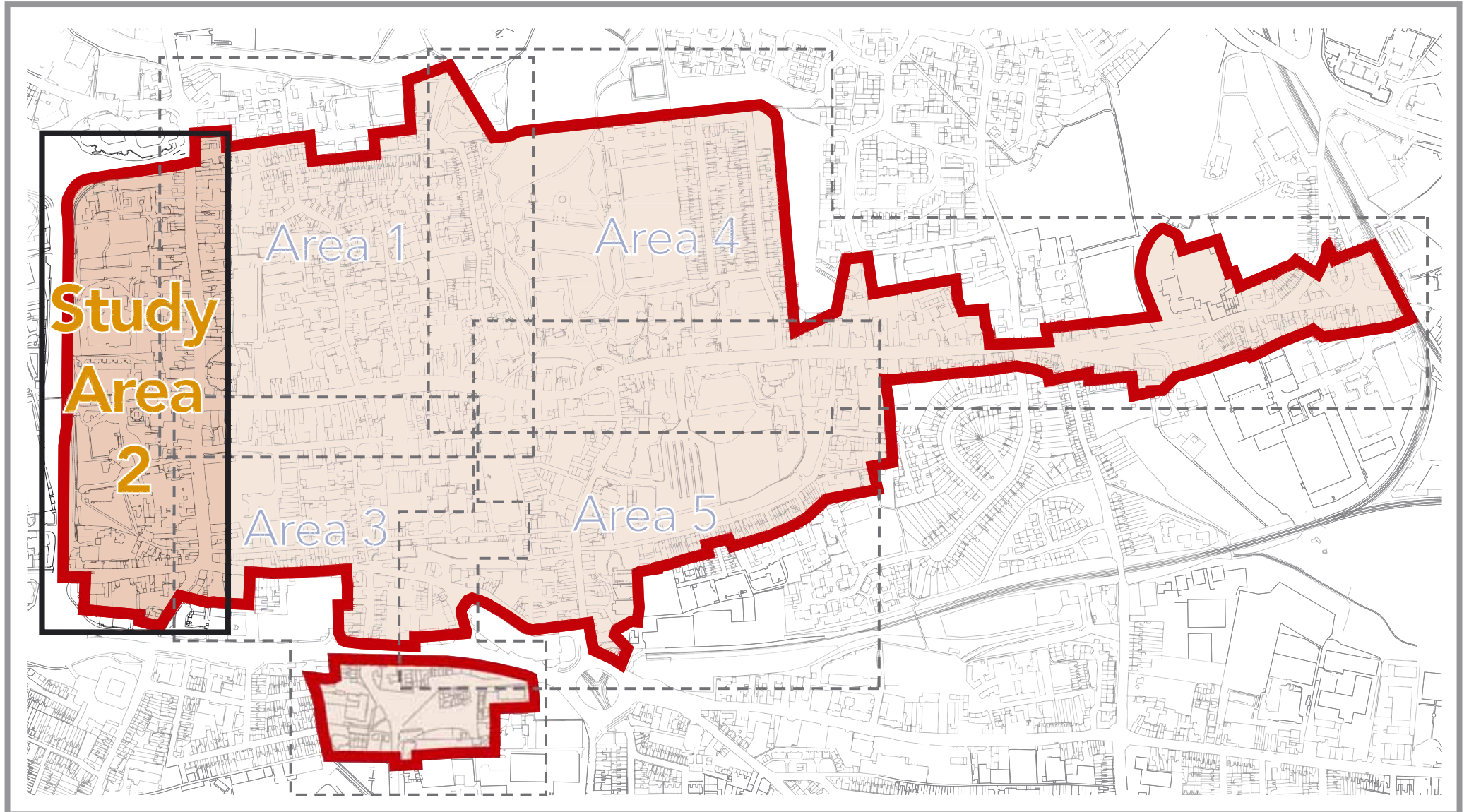
Map 2: Negative contributions

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

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North Hill, Head Street
& Balkeine Gardens
Map 3: Colchester 1876 Ordnance Survey



Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal Study Area 2