

Conservation area character appraisal

# St James Parade Conservation Area Boundary Review



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Adopted by Service Director (Planning Division)  
under delegated powers

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Planning Policy Context

The Civic Amenities Act 1967 introduced the concept of conservation areas and the right for local authorities to designate such areas of architectural or historic interest, although the current legislation is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s.69(1)). Bristol currently has 33 designated Conservation Areas, covering approximately 30% of the city.

There is a requirement to review those areas from time to time so that changes in both the understanding of the area and its physical context can be accommodated. This imperative is emphasised in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012.

The 1993 Conservation Enhancement Statements (PAN 2) were the last wholesale assessment of the city’s Conservation Areas. Since 2008, the City Design Group have been undertaking a programme reviewing the city’s Conservation Areas, following Historic England best practice guidance ‘Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management’ (2005; revised 2011).

Adopted Character Appraisals are Planning Guidance with status as a material consideration in planning decisions. An appraisal provides an evidence base for determining character and context intended to guide and inform Development Management process and appeal decisions.

Character Appraisals form part of a suite of guidance documents referred to in Policy BCS21 of the Core Strategy and the Local Character and Distinctiveness Policy (DM26) in the Development Management Policy document. The Core Strategy (June 2011) is the overall approach for planning in Bristol, guiding development and setting out key elements of the planning framework up to 2026 and beyond.

## 1.2 Purpose and scope

A character appraisal provides a basis upon which change can be appropriately managed. Elements that make a positive contribution are identified, as are features that offer an opportunity for enhancement.

‘Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area should be treated as substantial harm or less than substantial harm...Taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole’. (NPPF para. 138).

‘Opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas (and their setting) that enhance or better reveal their significance or preserve elements that make a positive contribution will be treated favourably.’ (NPPF para. 137).

Conservation Area designation with an adopted Character Appraisal will also be a tool to help highlight the value and significance of the St James Parade Conservation Area, raising its profile, and helping to promote it as a special place worthy of its status as a Designated Heritage Asset.

### 1.3 Background

In accordance with Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the Local Authority has determined that there has been a material change in the significance of the area of the Old BRI building to warrant the consideration of its inclusion within the St James Parade Conservation Area.

The St James Parade Conservation Area was originally designated in October 1982.

In 2011, City Design Group undertook a character appraisal of the St James Parade Conservation Area. At the time it was proposed to extend the conservation area to include the Old BRI building.

This proposal was consulted on and received support from the Kingsdown Conservation Group and the St James Priory Project, though there was resistance from White Young Green (WYG), University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust's planning agent. Their opposition cited the decision by English Heritage not to list the BRI building owing to the level of detrimental alterations that have occurred on site in the 20th century. The significance of the buildings on the proposed extension was called into question and WYG felt that the appraisal focused unduly on the building's past qualities and not the existing structures.

On balance, the decision was taken not to pursue the extension of the St James's Conservation Area.

Since 2011, the Old BRI and its associated chapel building have been assessed by Historic England for national listing on two separate occasions and both times this was rejected because the buildings did not meet the national selection criteria based on the information used in their assessment.

In 2015, both buildings were nominated for inclusion on the local list and were judged by an independent panel to meet the local selection criteria and were added to the list.

In September 2017, following the assessment of new information submitted to the Historic England designations team the Hospital Chapel was added to the national list as a grade II listed building. The listing by Historic England included a group value designation that cites; the grade II listed Eye Hospital on Lower Maudlin Street, the grade I listed Church of St James Priory and the grade II listed White Hart on the corner of Lower Maudlin Street and Whitson Street.

In June 2018, a Certificate of Immunity from Listing was granted by Historic England at the request of the current land owners. Within the report that accompanies this certificate Historic England state that,

*"It should be noted, however, that this assessment is by necessity made from a national point of view, and should not be seen to undermine the interest of the building from a local perspective. Its place in the history of Bristol is clear, and is recognised by its inclusion on Bristol City Council's Local List. Although the building cannot be placed on the national list, its strong local interest and importance remains intact."*

In light of; the new designation for the chapel, particularly the group value element and the recognition of the significance of the Old BRI building as an undesignated building of merit a character appraisal of the area of the former hospital is warranted.

This document forms an addendum to the existing appraisal adopted in 2011.

#### 1.4 Summary of character

The St James's Parade Conservation Area is located on the lower slopes of the escarpment which rises above the city centre below Kingsdown. It contains the precinct and setting of the Priory of St James the Less. The Conservation Area is focused on the Norman Church, together with its ancillary buildings and tower abutting St James's Parade.

As well as being a functioning Catholic church; St James's provides support for people recovering from alcohol and drug addictions.

For a detailed description of the character and setting of the conservation area please see the adopted St James Parade Conservation Area Character Appraisal (<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33832/st-james-parade-character-appraisal.pdf>).

The area that is proposed for inclusion in the St James's Parade Conservation Area is today dominated by the Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI) or Old BRI building, although the area also contains the attached recently listed former hospital chapel building.

The site was vacated by the hospital trust in 2015 and purchased by Unite, student housing providers who subsequently demolished many of the later buildings on the southern perimeter of the site and together with the high pennant sandstone walls that formerly enclosed the site.

Currently (June 2018) the buildings on the site are vacant and the area enclosed by hoarding.



#### 1.5 Landscape and views

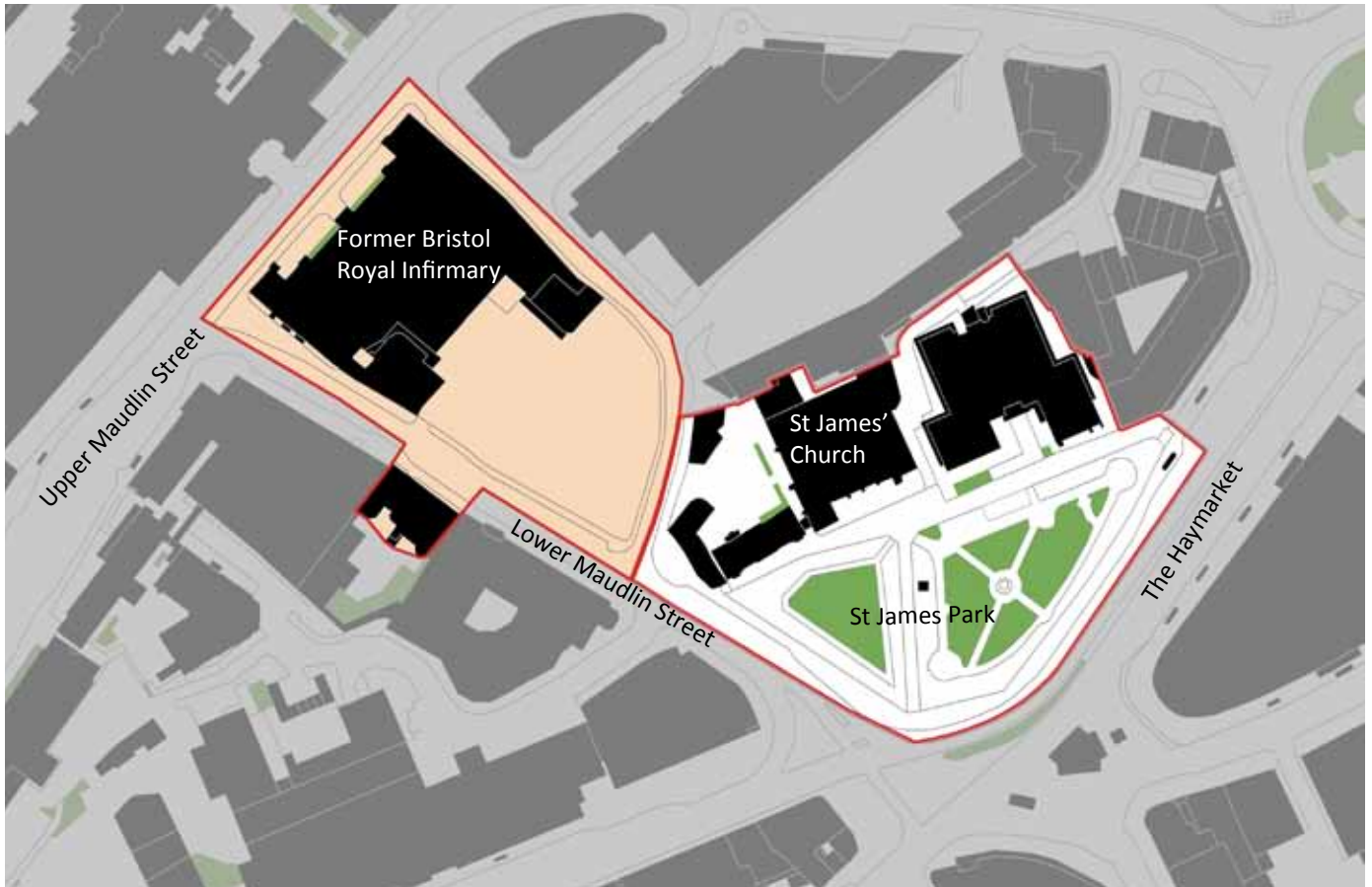
The area proposed for inclusion in the conservation area is a site that slopes down from Upper Maudlin Street towards St James Parade.

The former BRI hospital building stands on the high point of the site fronting Upper Maudlin Street. The scale, massing, materials and aspect makes the building a local landmark visible in views down Upper Maudlin Street and in views of the rear of the building from the south.

The former chapel building also occupies a prominent point in the area visible in the view down Whitson Street past the chapel towards the West elevation of St James Priory and the trees of St James Park beyond. The view along Earl Street towards the chapel is also important and the current views across the site from Lower Maudlin Street of the chapel St James Priory, the White Hart and up to the listed Eye Hospital building are also of recognisable importance as emphasised by the group value designation in the listing of the chapel.

**Fig.1 St James Parade Conservation Area**

-  Existing St James Parade conservation area
-  Proposed conservation area extension



Not to scale

## 2 Historic development

**Fig.2 Historic map extracts**

1 Millerd's map, 1673, approximate area of extension shaded red

2 Rocque's map, 1750

3 Plumley and Ashmead, 1828

### Early history

From the 12th century the area formed part of the lands of St James Priory that lies at the centre of the conservation area.

The boundary to the Priory precinct ran east west through the area of the proposed extension of the conservation area. To the north of this boundary lay agricultural lands of the parish of St James until development in the 18th century.

### 18th century

The Infirmary was first established in 1737 as the surrounding former priory lands were being developed for streets and housing including the pair of houses built in 1753 now part of the Eye Hospital on the west side of Lower Maudlin Street.

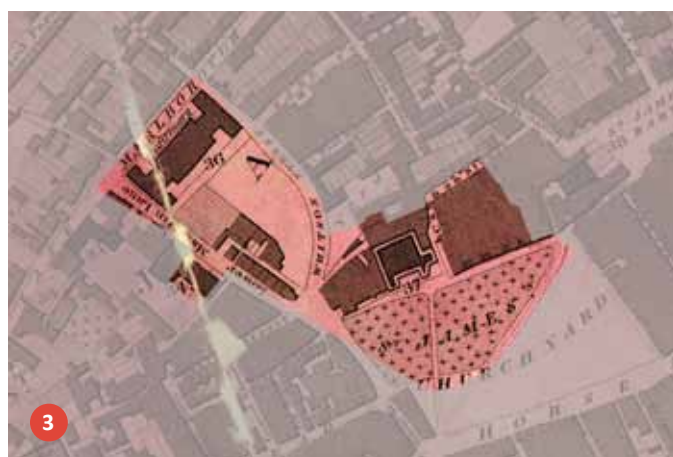
This first Infirmary building fronted the newly created Earl Street that ran along the boundary of the former priory precinct.

By the middle of the 18th century, part of the precinct had become Whitson Court accessed from St James Churchyard.

### Early 19th century

During the 1780s the Infirmary was completely rebuilt as an H-shaped plan building fronting Upper Maudlin Street.

Around this time Whitson Street was extended south of Earl Street to provide a direct access to the Broadmead area for residents of the Kingsdown slopes.





**Fig.3 Historic map extracts**

1 Ashmead, 1854

2 Ashmead, 1874

3 Ordnance Survey, 1880s

### Mid 19th century

Earl Street to the rear of the infirmary had been closed in 1825 allowing the Infirmary to be extended southwards with the addition of an entrance/out-patients block in 1832 accessed from Lower Maudlin Street.



### Later 19th century

During the second half of the 19th century the Infirmary saw a series of changes beginning with the construction of the chapel and mortuary designed by S.C. Fripp and built in 1858.

Rebuilding work to the Infirmary building began in 1866 to add an additional wing to the Lower Maudlin Street side of the site (completed in 1868) and additional floor space to the main building (completed in 1867).

The site as it appears today is largely the product of these Victorian changes to the 18th century fabric that still forms the core of the main building.



## 2 Historic development

# The Bristol Royal Infirmary

The infirmary was first opened in 1736 in a former brewery building on Earl Street. This date places the infirmary as one of the earliest provincial hospitals.

Extensions were added to this brewery building to create the U-shaped plan depicted on Jean Rocque's plans of 1742 and 1750 (Fig.2.2).

Between 1784 and 1814 the building was completely rebuilt largely to the plans of Thomas Paty and Daniel Hague. Construction began with the east wing in 1784 and completed with the addition of the west wing in 1814 (Fig.4).

The core of this late 18th century-early 19th century structure survives on site today and despite the later interventions remains legible in the Upper Maudlin Street elevation and side wings.

After the addition of the chapel in the late 1850s there followed a series of further changes to the main building as the demands for health care increased as the population of the city grew.

In 1867, an extra storey was added to essentially create the building that we see today on Upper Maudlin Street. This addition including the clock face and porch were designed by Pope and Bindon, architects of local interest (Fig.5.2).

Also in 1867, an extension was added to the west wing designed by Godwin and Crisp. At this time the Whitson Court and its dwellings were demolished and the entire block from Upper Maudlin Street to Whitson Street enclosed by the rubble walls that until recently stood on the site.

**Fig.4 Historic images**

1 Etching of the original Upper Maudlin Street elevation (courtesy of Bristol Reference Library, Braik.XI.i.282)

2 Watercolour by T.L. Rowbotham looking north up Lower Maudlin Street (courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, BRSMG M2841)



### Fig.5 Historic images

- 1 Rear of the infirmary, c.1909 (courtesy of Bristol Archives, 43207/9/43/77)
- 2 Upper Maudlin Street, early 20th century (courtesy of Bristol Archives, 43207/23/2/22)
- 3 Rear of the Infirmary, c.1937 courtesy of Bristol Archives, 43207/9/43/74)

The enclosure of this whole block allowed for the creation of hospital gardens to the rear of the main block and the addition of further buildings around the perimeter including a mortuary.

By the early 20th century the entrance block fronting these gardens had been extended. This addition survives on site, although now with an additional storey added before 1937 (Fig.5.3).

During the second half of the 20th century the area of the gardens was gradually built over with single storey structures and car parking areas.

Since the sale of the old Bristol Royal Infirmary to developers in 2015 the structures covering the southern area of the site including the majority of high perimeter boundary walls and the single storey 20th century buildings have been demolished. As of August 2018, this has left a rubble covered area awaiting development behind modern hoardings.



### 3 The buildings today

# The Bristol Royal Infirmary

#### Unlisted building of merit and local landmark

The layout of the Old Building is an H-shaped plan. The east and west wings are joined by a four-storey symmetrical central range fronting Upper Maudlin Street, with bays laid out in a 3:5:3 plan. At the each end are projecting bays with round arched doorways. In the centre is a two-storey pedimented portico with a rusticated doorway behind Tuscan Columns. The Old Building was constructed using pennant stone rubble with limestone dressings. Today however the front façade, the east wing and most of the west wing, are rendered.

Since the initial stages of construction in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the Old Building has undergone a number of alterations and extensions as detailed above. These have been undertaken with the aim of either improving hospital conditions or extending its provision, though overall they have done little to improve the building's architectural integrity.

Despite the alterations during the 20th century the building retains its historic character particularly on the front/Upper Maudlin Street elevation with the pennant stone pediment and railing enclosed forecourt, although the existing railings are 20th century replacements the railings on the Lower Maudlin Street side of the building are likely to be 19th century in date (Fig.7.2).

Other features include the visible remains of the original/1830s out-patients entrance on Lower Maudlin Street incorporated within the 1860s west wing (Fig.6) and original chimney on the Lower Maudlin Street elevation (Fig.7.3).

**Fig.6 The former BRI**

- 1 Former arched hauling way within the west wing extension
- 2 Scars in boundary wall marking the now blocked hauling way on Lower Maudlin Street. The door surround is early 20th century in date



**Fig.7 The former BRI**

- 1 The Upper Maudlin Street elevation today
- 2 19th century railings on Lower Maudlin Street
- 3 The west elevation and original chimney viewed from Upper Maudlin Street



### 3 The buildings today

**Fig.8 The former hospital chapel**

1 The chapel viewed from Whitson Street

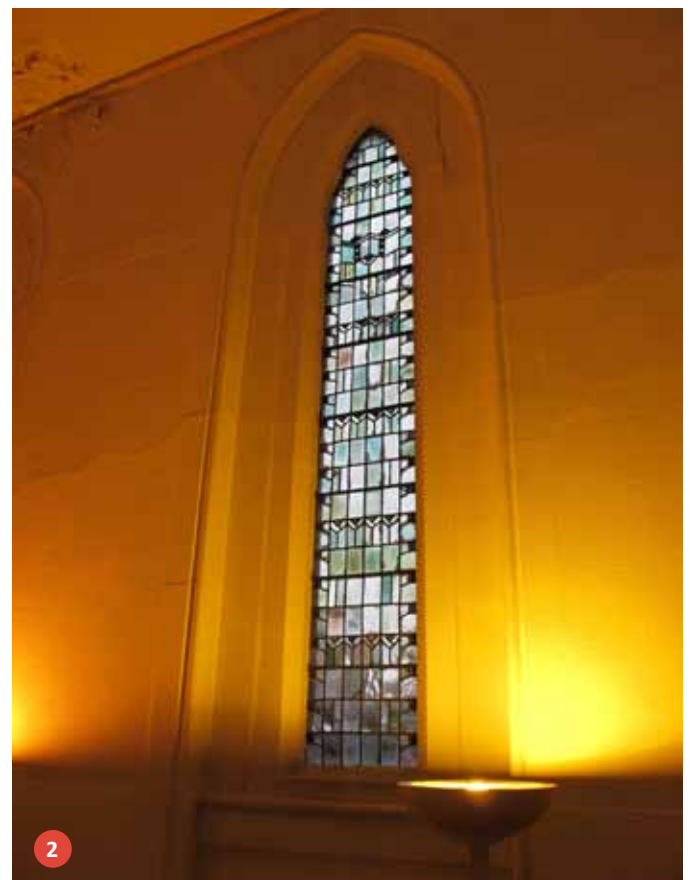
2 One of the lancet windows

## The former hospital chapel

### Listed grade II

The most significant addition to the Old Building was the Chapel added to the east wing in 1858 - 60. Designed by the Bristol architect S.C Fripp, the architecture is more Gothic in style, contrasting with the Classical main building. Its construction, from pennant rubble stone with freestone and terracotta dressings, creates a colourful element, in marked contrast with the rest of the hospital buildings, which are predominantly grey in colour. On both the east and west elevations of the chapel are five lancet windows some of which contain stained glass; whilst on the south elevation is a large window with decorated tracery.

When originally built the west elevation would have been the principal element viewed when visitors entered from Lower Maudlin Street. The hauling way originally forming part of the west wing extension aimed to preserve this visual relationship.



# Eye Hospital

**Fig.9 The Eye Hospital**

- 1 Nos.16-17 Lower Maudlin Street
- 2 No.16
- 3 No.17
- 4 Former front door of no.16, now window

## Listed grade II

Formerly a pair of attached 3 storey houses built in about 1726 (no.17) and 1753 (no.16) as part of the 18th century development of the area north and west of the St James Priory precinct. As such these houses represent the last remains of this early development.

By 1828 these houses had become part of the Eye Infirmary forming part of the developing complex of health institutions in this area.

Alterations in the later 19th century added an additional floor to both houses and later alterations have been made to the frontage including the removal of the original entrance to no.16.



## 4 Heritage significance

# Heritage assets

The proposed extension to the St James Conservation Area contains three Grade II listed buildings; the Eye Hospital (nos.16-17 Lower Maudlin Street) and the former chapel of the Bristol Royal Infirmary. As referenced above these assets have a group value association with designated assets within the existing conservation area; St James Priory Church and the White Hart Public House.

The proposed extended area also contains the locally listed former Bristol Royal Infirmary building.

In addition to these recognised heritage assets two thirds of the proposed extension covers land that was once part of the formal precinct of St James Priory. The historic association with the priory forms part of the special interest of the conservation area as defined in the adopted appraisal of 2011.

The archaeological evidence relating to the priory precinct and associated land use including the early post-dissolution would be of at least local significance.

Part of the hospital boundary along Whitson Street retains the wall erected to block Earl Street in 1825 as the hospital expanded to the south (Fig.10).

**The St James's Parade Conservation Area contains the precinct and setting of the Priory of St James, a Benedictine Priory constructed in the 12th century**

*St James Parade Conservation Area Character Appraisal, May 2011, Summary of character and special interest*



Fig.10 Former line of Earl Street blocked by Pennant sandstone wall (paler stonework) erected in 1825



**Fig.11 Heritage assets**

- Listed Grade I
- Listed Grade II\*
- Listed Grade II
- Locally Listed/Unlisted buildings of merit



Not to scale

## 5 Character analysis

# Material palette

The character of an urban conservation area is largely defined by the buildings and their material palette. The predominant building materials within the St James Parade Conservation Area as defined in the 2011 character appraisal consist of Pennant rubble sandstone and limestone dressings. The area of the proposed extension is consistent with this character and is set apart from the materials of the neighbouring sites.

The former BRI building is largely rendered although at street level the elevations are grey Pennant coursed rubble with a dressed limestone course above.

The chapel building consists of similar materials, although it incorporates red Pennant sandstone courses and details as well as the limestone window dressings.

Although the Eye Hospital buildings on Lower Maudlin Street are brick structures they incorporate limestone for architectural details.

Elsewhere the use of Pennant curbs is consistent throughout the area, although the original paving has been replaced by tarmac around along the surrounding streets with the exception of former thresholds where Pennant slabs and or iron curbs can survive..

**The strong material palette seen in St James's Parade unites the area and gives an indication of building ages and patterns of development.**

*St James Parade Conservation Area Character Appraisal, May 2011, 7.4 Materials*



Fig.12 Pennant and iron curb at former site threshold on Lower Maudlin Street

# SWOT analysis

This has been taken from the St James Parade Conservation Area Character Appraisal, adopted May 2011, and is felt to be applicable to the proposed extension area with supplements shown in **bold**.

| Strengths   | Opportunities   |
|---|---|
| Surviving traditional buildings reflecting the historic character   | Sympathetic replacement or reinstatement of traditional architectural details or boundary treatments  |
| Intimate character and charm of streets and green spaces away from the main thoroughfares   | Scheme to improve street signage and lighting along main thoroughfares  |
| Provision of public amenity and tranquil space in the heart of the city centre  | Continued maintenance of traditional materials and features   |
| Surviving townscape details, including street lanterns, railings, Pennant paving and setts  | Improve appearance of St James's Park to improve setting of listed structures and encourage greater public use and ownership of the conservation area |
| Quality and range of built fabric <b>including good survival of 18th-early 19th century townscape</b>   | Improve safety and security of the conservation area through increased surveillance and signage to promote greater use of the pedestrian routes       |
| Weaknesses  | Threats   |
| Volume of vehicular traffic, especially along Haymarket <b>and Upper Maudlin Street</b> , impedes access to St James's and causes air pollution | Continued or increased vehicular traffic along Haymarket <b>and Upper Maudlin Street</b>  |
| Poor maintenance of individual buildings and boundary features, or use of inappropriate materials   | Loss or unsympathetic alteration to character of buildings and traditional architectural details  |
| Poor maintenance of St James's Park, especially seating and water fountain and signage  | Continued deterioration and eventual loss of townscape details, park features and street surfaces   |
| Temporary banners and signage detracting from frontage of White Hart Public House   | Continued use or increase in banners and insensitive signage to buildings   |
| The cleared/vacant area at the southern end of the Bristol Royal Infirmary site makes a negative contribution to the local character            |   |

## 6 Summary of special interest

# Architectural or historic interest

The extension to the St James Parade Conservation Area contains evidence of an 18th-early 19th century landscape that remains legible today. Either side of the extension area the landscape is entirely 20th century in form and predominantly of post war character.

The area has strong historic associations with the Priory of St James, although the physical evidence of this has been almost entirely lost with the exception of the section of wall built in 1825 to block Earl Street that formerly ran along the northern boundary of the priory precinct.

The route structure around the extension area dates to 1825 or earlier. Lower Maudlin Street is shown as Magdalin Lane on Millerd's map of 1673 (Fig.2.1). Within about 50 years of the date of this map the first of the two houses that now form part of the Eye Hospital on Lower Maudlin Street was constructed.

The Bristol Royal Infirmary was created in the 18th century and the existing hospital building retains elements of the late 18th-early 19th century infirmary. This institution is one of the oldest provincial infirmary buildings in the country and is consequently of significant historic interest.

Despite the later nineteenth century and 20th century alterations, the infirmary building remains a significant local historic landmark in terms of its scale, form and materials.

Of the four principal structures within the extended boundary, three are on the national list and one is on the local list indicating the architectural and historic interest of the built fabric in the area.

Consequently notwithstanding the harmful

### **69 Designation of conservation areas.**

#### **(1) Every local planning authority—**

**(a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and**

**(b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.**

*Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*

developments in the 20th and early 21st centuries, the area defined by this appraisal has sufficient special historic and architectural interest to warrant its addition to the St James Parade Conservation Area in accordance with section 69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

# Statement of community involvement

Public consultation on the draft boundary review character appraisal and proposed boundary amendment was undertaken between 12th July and 9th August 2018.

The consultation received 81 responses. Of these 76 were supportive of the boundary change to the conservation area. Three responses opposed the extension, 1 was neutral and 1 requested more time to review.

Historic England provided a supportive response.

The positive response from the Bristol Civic Society requested that a wider area should be considered for inclusion within the conservation area. They proposed that any new boundary should also include the locally listed Edward VII Memorial Hospital and further 20th century elements of the Eye Hospital on Lower Maudlin Street. However, the Council recommended that these areas not be included as it would likely undermine the special interest of the area that the appraisal has defined as being an 18th – early 19th century urban landscape survivor distinct from the 20th century landscape that surrounds the proposed extended conservation area.

Two of the objections focused on the old BRI rather than the character and special interest of the area describing the building as gloomy and not in keeping with the modern buildings around it.

The other concern raised by one objection and a neutral response was about the long term future of the Old BRI building if it was included in the conservation area. One quoted the danger of creating another Westmoreland House scenario.

The key objection was submitted by Montague Evans LLP acting on behalf of Unite Students, the current site owner of the Old BRI. This lengthy response objected to; the timing of the review, that extending the boundary was for an improper purpose and that the appraisal document was 'defective'. The Council have amended the SWOT analysis section and added references to the cleared area of the Old BRI site within the text of the appraisal in response to comments by Unite. The Council have also issued a specific response covering all other issues raised by Unite Students.

The Health Trust requested more time to respond as they were not directly consulted, but as the changed boundary would have little or no significant impact on their assets, being already two grade II listed buildings, the Council felt that extending the consultation period was not necessary.

The appraisal and results of the consultation were presented to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and City Design on 13th August 2018 where it was decided that the St James Parade Conservation Area boundary should be amended as defined in the character appraisal document.

