

Magdalene Street / Northampton Street

Busy streets containing the best group of timber-framed buildings in the city.

Magdalene and Northampton Streets retain evidence of the houses of wealthy merchants who lived here in the C16 and who transported their goods from the nearby wharves. These streets provide the most complete group of timber-framed buildings in the city, with a strong group value among the buildings on both streets. The red brick buildings and walls of Magdalene College dominate the east side of Magdalene Street. The

historic role as an entry to the city has resulted in a legacy of numerous historic inns, although several have closed in the recent past. Today, these streets form a peripheral mixed-use area that acts as a gateway to the city centre and has also become an enclave of specialist shops, small cafes and housing for students attached to Magdalene College. Northampton Street also forms part of the edge-of-town ring road.



View along Magdalene Street

SIGNIFICANCE - VERY HIGH

General Overview

Magdalene and Northampton Streets are both primary roads through and into the city. Northampton Street's course reflects the historic importance of the convergence of roads on the river crossing at Magdalene Bridge. The south side of the street is dominated by the informal terrace of timber-framed and brick houses that are now mainly occupied as student residences. Notable features of these buildings include a high number of surviving horizontal sliding (or Yorkshire) sash windows, which are well suited for timber framed buildings with low floor to ceiling heights.



View of Northampton Street



Horizontal sliding sash windows

It includes the St John's Chop House (formerly Storey's Almshouses) and several other buildings that provide evidence of former use as inns or public houses (the former Merton Arms public house and the Rope and Twine public house). Gaps in the southern frontage provide glimpses of the grounds of St John's College which include the Dutch gable of Merton Hall and the School of Pythagoras (Cambridge's oldest secular building), which, along with a small music room, form a group set around a yard that resemble an historic Fenland farm. The rooftops and north facing elevations of the Cripps Building are also seen representing the most recently constructed building in Cambridge to have been



Dutch gable of Merton Hall



Cripps Building, St John's College

recognised through listed status.

The north side includes the institutional edifice and lantern topped tower of Westminster College in its well wooded grounds, as well as a C19 public house (The Punter) and the open space of Honey Hill Green. This is surrounded by houses and a bungalow (which were built after clearance of old inns and densely built-up yards that occupied this area until the 1970s) and the cluster of buildings of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum and Kettles Yard Gallery. This frontage is notable for two buildings that have a modern architectural design that uses elements of the local vernacular tradition; No. 20, which was constructed as a rebuild of a former public convenience, and the extension to the Folk Museum. Both are



The tower of Westminster College



The Punter PH



The Folk Museum and Kettles Yard

prominent in the streetscene. Northampton Street is part of the inner ring road and as a result heavy traffic and dominant Highways signage are both negative features.

Magdalene Street is a key route into the city that preserves the historic approach to the bridge - literally the 'bridge' in Cam-bridge (the current structure dates from 1823) and may continue the alignment of a road that originated during the Roman period. The west side of the street is lined with timber-framed buildings, several with conspicuous wagon arches suggesting use as either merchants' houses or coaching inns. The buildings are of a mix of two and three storeys with several jettied frontages that lean out over the pavement, contributing to the sense of enclosure and confirming the timber-framed construction. This is also suggested by the exposed frames of sash windows on the surface of the walls, indicating a phase of later 'improvement'. Some of the frontages include examples of raised fields of plaster as a form of decoration. The use of hand painted shop signs has been carefully maintained to preserve the character of the street. There are occasional glimpses to college gardens behind or along narrow cobbled alleys that have aesthetic and historical value. The east side of the road is enclosed by the buildings, walls and railings of Magdalene College which are clad in red brick and are generally only two storeys high but



Hand painted shop signs



'Pavement jewellery'

with massive chimney stacks rising at the roadside. Mullioned casement windows represent Victorian and Edwardian efforts to maintain the character of the medieval college. Greenery from the College gardens spills over the walls and into the street scene.

Use of the road for private vehicles is restricted, although it is still busy with cyclists, buses, pedestrians and service vehicles. An enhancement scheme to improve the street and pavement surfaces and reduce traffic has been successful in raising the quality of the environment. The addition of paving

which features 'pavement jewellery' can be seen in the floral path that links Magdalene College and St John's College. The decoration references flowers which can be seen in the stonework of both colleges. The restriction of traffic along Magdalene Street was partially a response to damage caused by buses hitting the projecting jettied frontages of buildings.

Townscape Elements

- Consistent building lines tight on the back of the footpath edge except on north side of Northampton Street which is pleasantly overlooked by the open green space in front of Honey Hill.
- Magdalene Street reads as a narrow gateway from the north into the core area, with framed views down to the river crossing and city core.



Channelled views up Castle Hill

- Magdalene Street frames long vistas north with the ground rising away from the city centre (rare in Cambridge).
- The curve of Northampton Street and the strong sense of enclosure creates a series of unfolding views.
- Channelled views up Castle Street, Honey Hill and Pound Hill lead the eye up the hill.
- Shopfronts along the south west side of Magdalene Street maintain a busy, active frontage and have numerous well-preserved historic shopfronts. Use of simple Tuscan and Doric pilasters is a notable feature of the shops that provides a subtle unifying feature. Some also preserve large vertical sliding shop windows and tiled stallrisers.
- Painted frontages are a characteristic feature of both streets.
- Narrow alleys running from Magdalene Street are evidence of the medieval street pattern.
- Good variety of roofscapes and roof-top features - picturesque townscape.

- Historic buildings form focal points of views including the spire of St Peter's Church, the Folk Museum and St John's Chop House.



Views along the River Cam

- Greenery in the grounds of Westminster College, St Johns College and the churchyards either side of Castle Street contribute to the enclosure of Northampton Street.
- Views along the River Cam to and from Magdalene Bridge are of a notably high quality, taking in the busy activity provided on and along the riverside by many visitors, shoppers, and residents.
- The particular contribution made by the use of punts, which can be hired from here.
- These views also focus on the riverside tree planting and green spaces, as well as the historic buildings of Magdalene College and the street.



Views south from Northampton Street

- Views from the bridge also include the former industrial buildings of the old brewery buildings (now converted into apartments and a restaurant/bar) providing a glimpse of the industrial past of Cambridge.
- Views south from Northampton Street include buildings and spaces of St John's College including the historic buildings of Merton Hall, the Music Room and School of Pythagoras, as well as the Cripps Building.

Streetscape Enhancement

- Improvements to the pavements and more sensitive road signs would improve Northampton Street.



Honey Hill

Townscape Enhancement

- The white and blue of the houses lining Northampton Street provide a cold or washed-out appearance, exacerbated by the north-facing aspect. A colour scheme, drawing in warmer earth tones could improve the appearance and character of the street.
- The open green space of Honey Hill Green lacks particular definition or purpose. This could be enhanced through planting or landscaping, either to provide some privacy for the properties along its northern edge and to provide better

definition to the road, or the space might be landscaped to make it a more usable public space.

- Use of the entrance to Honey Hill for car parking was also noted as detracting from its character as a route leading off Northampton Street.

Building Use

- The use of the buildings as specialist shops and small cafes should help encourage pedestrians to venture further north than the Great (Magdalene) Bridge. This provides a vibrant atmosphere.
- Two historic public houses on Northampton Street have now been converted to use as residential property resulting in loss of the vitality of the area.

Redevelopment Opportunities

Few opportunities for new buildings exist and the 1950s element of the Folk Museum has now been extended and refurbished.

Magdalene Street

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
13 & 14	Listed Grade II*	late C16	2 + attics	timber-framed & plastered	mansard		
15, 15A, 15B & 16	Listed Grade II*	early C16, C17 & C18	2 + attics	timber-framed & plastered	tile		
17	Listed Grade II	early C19	3	grey Gault brick	parapet		
18	Listed Grade II	early C19	3	grey Gault brick	hipped /slate		
20	Listed Grade II	C18 or earlier	2 + attics	brick / plastered timber-framing	tile		
21 & 22	Listed Grade II	C16; remodelled C18	2	timber-framed & plastered	tile		
23	Listed Grade II	C16	2	timber-framed & plastered	tile		
24	Listed Grade II	early C19 front of earlier buildings	3	painted Gault brick	parapet		
25 (former Post Office)	Listed Grade II	early C17	3	timber-framed & plastered	tile		
26-28	Listed Grade II	C16; remodelled C18	2 + attics	timber-framed & plastered, Gault brick	mansard / tile		

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
29	Listed Grade II	C16; remodelled C18	2	timber-framed & plastered	slate		
30, The Pickerell Inn Public House	Listed Grade II	early C19	3	Gault brick - painted blue	slate		Coach arch including massive side hung plank door to right and Winsor lantern on wrought iron bracket over
31	Listed Grade II	C16 remodelled c1800	2	timber-framed & plastered	parapet		Asymmetric frontage with timber shopfront
The Great Bridge	Listed Grade II	1823	n/a			A Browne	Single span, cast iron bridge with ashlar piers
Magdalene College: buildings to First Court	Listed Grade I	1573, street front refaced in 1875	2 + attics	red brick, stone dressings	tile		
Bright's Building	Listed Grade II	1908-09	2	brick	gables & dormers	Aston Webb & Ingress Bell	
boundary wall	Listed Grade II	C18 / C19	N/A	buff brick with dentil course	N/A		
railings, gate piers and gates	Listed Grade II	1973	N/A	wrought iron / stone piers	N/A	F C Penrose	

Northampton Street

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
1	Listed Grade II*	late C16	2 + attics	timber-framed & plastered	mansard		
2-6 Corey House	Listed Grade II*	C16 & early C18	2 + attics	timber-framed & plastered	tile		
7-18 (consec.) (south side)	Listed Grade II	C18	2	lower: brick; upper: timber-framed & plastered	tile		
19	Listed Grade II	early C19	2	grey Gault brick	slate		
20-24 (former Storey's Almshouses)	Listed Grade II	1729	2 + attics	red brick	hipped dormers / tile		founded at the bequest of Edward Storey 1693 to house widows of clergymen
25	Listed Grade II	C18	2	timber-framed & plastered	hipped / tile		Formerly The Merton Arms public house. Retains tiled ground floor frontage and doorcase with coat of arms over
26-30	Listed Grade II	early C19	2 + attics	gault brick	mansard / tile		No 26 (Pythagoras House) built c1800
32-38	Listed Grade II	late C18 / early C19	2 (+ attics Nos 32 - 36)	timber-framed & plastered	mansard / tile (Nos. 37&38: slate)		
Westminster College	Listed Grade II	1899	3	red brick, stone dressings	slate	H T Hare	
The Rope & Twine Public House	BLI	C19	2	painted brick	slate		
Honey Hill House	none	C20	3	brick	slate		
Honey Hill flats and houses	none	C20	flats: 2 & bungalows	brown brick	tile		
8-11 Kettles Yard (north side)	Listed Grade II	late C18 / early C19	2 + attics	yellow brick	mansard / tile		
Kettles Yard extensions	none	C20	2	brick, timber cladding	lead		redevelopment of Kettle's Yard has been approved and is underway
County Folk Museum	Listed Grade II	C16, C17 & c1700	2 + attics	timber-framed & plastered	tile		formerly the White Horse Inn