

A tree-lined road with sweeping views constructed in the 1890s through the ancient meadows on the north east edge of the city centre.

Victoria Avenue was laid out in 1890 and Victoria Bridge was built across the River Cam, bisecting the riverside pasture of Midsummer Common and bypassing Magdalene Street as a route to the city centre from the north east. This was probably the most significant change to the character of Midsummer Common since the establishment of Barnwell Priory and St Radegund's Priory (now Jesus College) 800 years earlier. The bridge and road provides extensive vistas across the open green

spaces to either side. To the north east Midsummer Common retains much of its informal pastoral character, illustrating the city's historic rural edge. Jesus Green, to the south west, is a more formally arranged municipal public park which is crossed by tree-lined avenues and shares much of the character of Victoria Avenue. The bridge replaced the many ferry crossings points that connected Chesterton to Cambridge, and the street is now one of the main vehicular routes into the city.



Street view

SIGNIFICANCE - HIGH

General Overview

North of the River Cam, Victoria Avenue is a narrow street enclosed by two storey buildings of varied date but including some late C19 or early C20 houses, some of which retain good quality historic shopfronts. At the bridge there are views down onto the river and to the boathouses to either side, including the Christ's College boathouse. The bridge provides attractive views across the green setting to either side and along the river, which is otherwise hidden from view from the road below steep banks.



Historic shopfront



Views shortened by the boundary of Jesus College

The main part of Victoria Avenue to the east of the bridge has a long, curving route, with views along the road foreshortened by the tree line and, ultimately, by the densely wooded boundaries of Jesus College to the south west. Iron railings with decorative cast-iron posts including ball finials provide definition to the road and the wide pavements. The surfaces are unexceptional tarmac and in places are in need of repair but do incorporate good quality granite kerbs and large stone-block paving to the gutters.

The horse chestnut trees that line the road are all of the same age and have a uniform size, crown form and foliage colour (as well as 'candles' in spring) that makes an important contribution to the aesthetic value of the street.

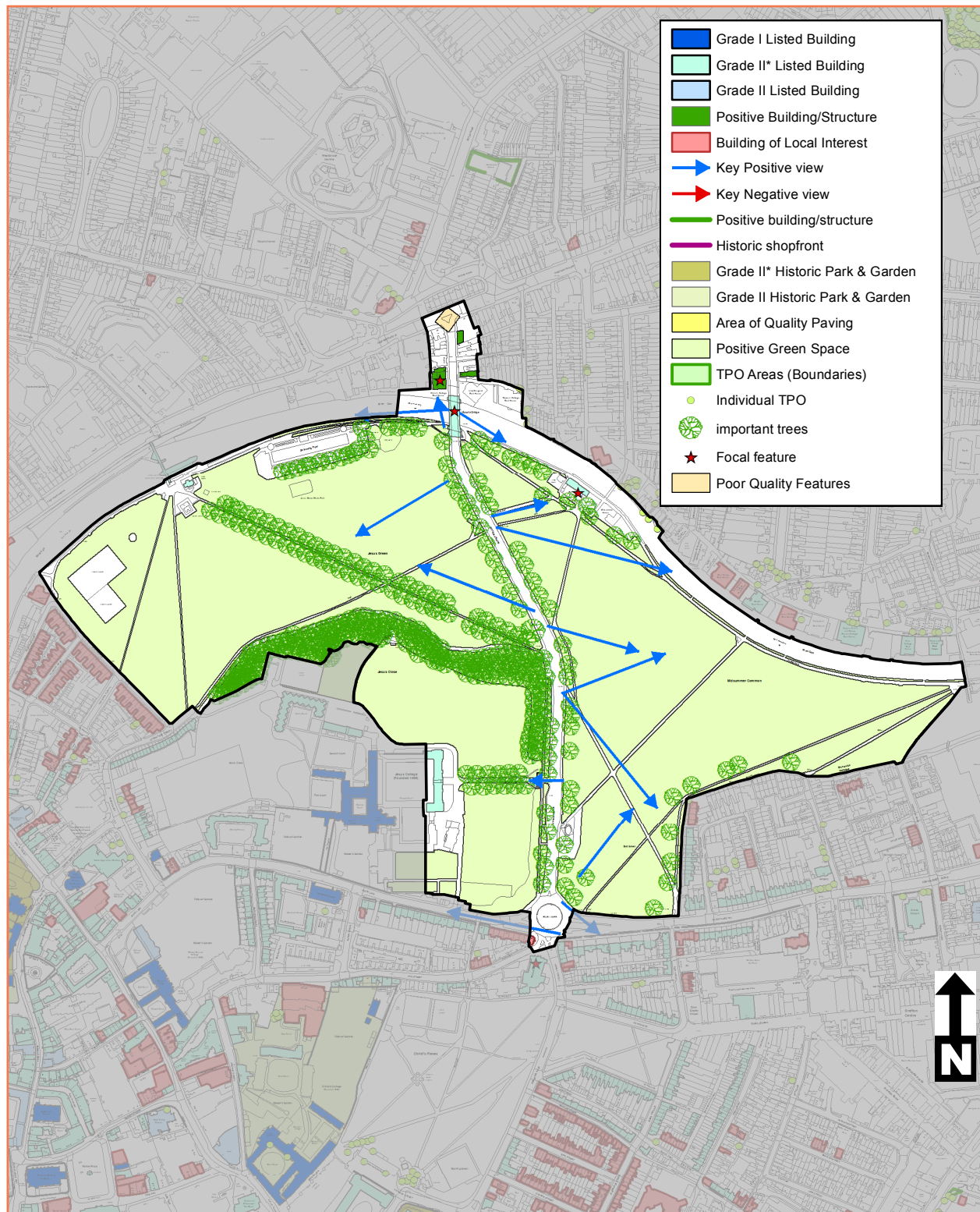
Other features that punctuate the route are a series of Victorian wood and cast iron benches and the distinctive iron gates that give access to Midsummer Common and Jesus Green.



Trees lining the road

In the south, the footpath alongside Jesus College on the west side of the road splits to run either side of a long green grass verge that helps to maintain some of the sense of openness despite the college's thickly treed frontage. The railings that form the college boundary provide glimpsed views into the grounds and allow the trees to contribute to the road's green setting. The college gates form an important focal feature in the street.

The southern end of the street also provides views eastward that take in the park frontages of houses at Brunswick Walk as a focus.



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Townscape Elements

- South of the bridge the road is an impressive, wide boulevard.
- The road and bridge offer very attractive views across open spaces with a rural character reflecting the historic rural limits of the city.



View from the bridge

- The avenue of horse chestnut trees provides some enclosure, as well as vertical interest, foliage, and flowers, and also channels views along the road, creating a formal route between the open spaces.
- South of the river the road is not overlooked by built frontages, providing an open character away from the buildings of the city.
- Views of the east range of Jesus College are glimpsed between trees and through the main college gates, providing a connection with collegiate Cambridge. The gates provide a focal feature in views along the road.



Jesus College gates

- North of the river crossing the road is a tightly enclosed, narrow, building-lined street.
- Iron railings line the route from the bridge to Maids Causeway in the south, with distinctive iron gates providing access to the green spaces to either side.
- Victorian benches located to either side of the road suggest the formal parkland character of this route. At the southern end of the road, views across Butt Green to the houses at

Brunswick Walk are notable for the attractive contrast between the historic houses and semi-rural open space.

- The Methodist Church at the corner of King Street is a focal feature of historic interest that is framed in views along the street.

Streetscape Enhancements

Repairs need to be made to the footpath on the west side of the road.

The railings near the southern pedestrian crossing and the pavement from the northern pedestrian crossing up to the bridge could also be improved slightly.

Given the current threat to horse chestnut trees from phytophthora, the health of the trees in the avenue needs to be closely monitored. If disease is noted as threatening the integrity of the avenue, a systematic programme of replanting with a disease resistant species may be necessary to sustain the character of the road in the medium to long term.

The southern end of the road is visually dominated by the large number of waiting buses that are often congregated here, detracting from the aesthetic quality of views over Midsummer Meadow and towards Jesus College.

Redevelopment Opportunities

The public conveniences in Midsummer Meadow just to the east have been improved with a new building that is an eye-catching feature on the edge of the public open space.

There is some scope for redevelopment of the houses either side of the road north of the river. However, this should maintain the scale and form of the largely close-knit C19 development.

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
No. 32 Chesterton Road The Waterman PH	none	C19	2	brick / render	tile		
8-10	none	C20	1	red / brown brick	flat		
12	none	late C19	2 + attics	Gault brick	modern tile		
14-18 (even)	none	C21	3	Gault brick	slate		
20	Positive building	C19	2 + attics	red brick facade & stone bay	slate		
Christ's College Boathouse	Positive building	1887	1 + boat storage floor	brick & timber & plaster	tile		
Victoria Bridge	Listed Grade II	1889-90	N/A	cast iron with stone abutments	N/A		Decorated with arms of the City and University. Abutments topped with gas lanterns. Refurbished in 1990
Fort St George Public House	Listed Grade II	C16, additions in C19 and later	2	timber framed / rendered / painted	tile		
Midsummer House	none		2	Gault brick	slate		
Jesus Green	none	1890s	Large recreational park with various leisure facilities such as tennis courts & open-air swimming pool. Expanse of grass with criss-crossing paths lined with avenues of trees.				
Jesus College: gateway to Victoria Avenue	Listed Grade II	late C19	N/A	red brick piers, stone quoins & ball finials, wrought-iron gates		entrance to Jesus Close	
Jesus College: East range of Chapel Court	Listed Grade II	1884-5	4	red brick with stone dressings and bands	slate	Carpenter and Ingelow	
Butt Green	southern part of Midsummer Common						
WCs	none	2005	1	render	copper sheet	Freeland Rees Roberts	
Midsummer Common	area of water meadow						
Queens' College Boathouse	none	1980s	2	brick	tile		
Lady Margaret Boathouse	none	C20	1 + boat storage floor	brick & timber boarding	tile		
23 Overstream House	Positive building	C19	3 + attic storey	grey brick	slate		
11-15 (odd)	none	C19	2	Colour-washed brick	slate		
9 (University Cycles)	Positive building	C19	3	Gault brick	slate		
No. 34 Chesterton Road	none	C19	1		flat		