

A historic link route between St Andrew's Street and King Street running outside the city's medieval boundaries. Named after the Cambridge carrier Thomas Hobson, who inspired the phrase 'Hobson's Choice'.

Hobson Street contains many individual buildings of historical and architectural interest with a variety of historic materials and styles. Both spatially and in use, it has the character of a back lane, particularly at its southern end where this character is enhanced by the tight sense of enclosure created by its narrow width,

tall buildings and wall. Views are channeled along the course of the street as well as along Hobsons's Passage and Sussex Street. It is often used by lorries unloading to business premises but the northern end has a more open character and a small area of commercial frontages.



View along Hobson Street

SIGNIFICANCE - SIGNIFICANT

General Overview

Hobson Street has the character of a back lane or street, probably reflecting its historical development as a route running around the outer edge of the city centre between St Andrew's Street and King Street, rather than forming part of the city's main commercial spaces. It has a narrow entrance from St Andrew's Street, the site of the historic bridge over the King's Ditch, and continues with a slight curve of the street and tight sense of enclosure created by a cliff-like (on the south-west), near-continuous frontage of tall buildings on the west side, but a more interrupted and lower frontage to the east with gaps between buildings closed by Christ's College's old boundary walls. The greenery of tall trees in the college's grounds make an important contribution to softening the character of the streetscene.



Narrow entrance from St Andrew's Street



Side elevation of Lloyds Bank

The west side of Hobson Street marks part of the course of the King's Ditch and is mainly formed by the rear of commercial premises that front Sidney Street. The former Central Cinema and a parade of shopfronts that form part of the Sussex House are exceptions that provide the potential for a more active frontage. Many of these buildings are early C20 in origin with a range of design styles of that period. These include the Classical Revival Marks and Spencer's, "Egyptienne" Central Cinema, Art Deco No. 27 Sidney Street (originally a dance hall and now Waterstones) and Sussex House. The good condition of the latter includes the preservation of its early C20 shopfronts, in addition to attractively detailed windows and brickwork detailing above. These buildings have a monumental scale that dominates the streetscene, although some other buildings are very plain and make little visual impact. At the southern end of the street, the rear of the Lloyds Bank building provides a contrast with more heavily detailed brick and stone banded elevations with exuberant detailing in Queen Anne Revival style, although part of the building is built in ashlar

stone with Gothic Revival details which reflect the frontage of Christ's College at the street's corner.

The east side of the street has buildings which are generally older, including a mixture of C17, C18 and C19 houses standing at the rear of the pavement or with a small front area defined by railings. The street preserves evidence of its past use as a more residential area on the edge of the city set amidst the leafy grounds of the colleges, which is sustained by the continued use of many of these buildings as student halls. The buildings are of two or three storeys but have frontages of three or more bays, with wide gaps in places between them, allowing for views over the boundary walls towards the greenery of the college grounds. This provides a pleasantly open ambiance, which is reinforced by the low density of development. Nevertheless, the Old County Hall building (built 1913), which has strong classical detailing, provides a taller scale punctuation.



The Old County Hall



Views into Christ's College

Views into Christ's College provide some awareness of collegiate Cambridge, whilst at the southern end of the street the college outbuilding provides a much lower scale of building with historic features, such as boarded dormer windows and a hayloft door that illustrate the historic use associated with keeping horses. The listed, red brick arched gateway to the Masters Lodge and the long boundary wall maintain the sense of enclosure. The C18 cupola of the college chapel is seen over the roof of the outbuilding, and provides a curious focal feature in views across the street that adds to its aesthetic value.

Hobson Street is one of the main routes out of the city for buses and taxis. However it is rather intimidating for pedestrians at the south end where the pavements are narrow. The street generally is not very inviting as it tends to be dominated by vehicles accessing the servicing yards of the shops which face Sidney Street.



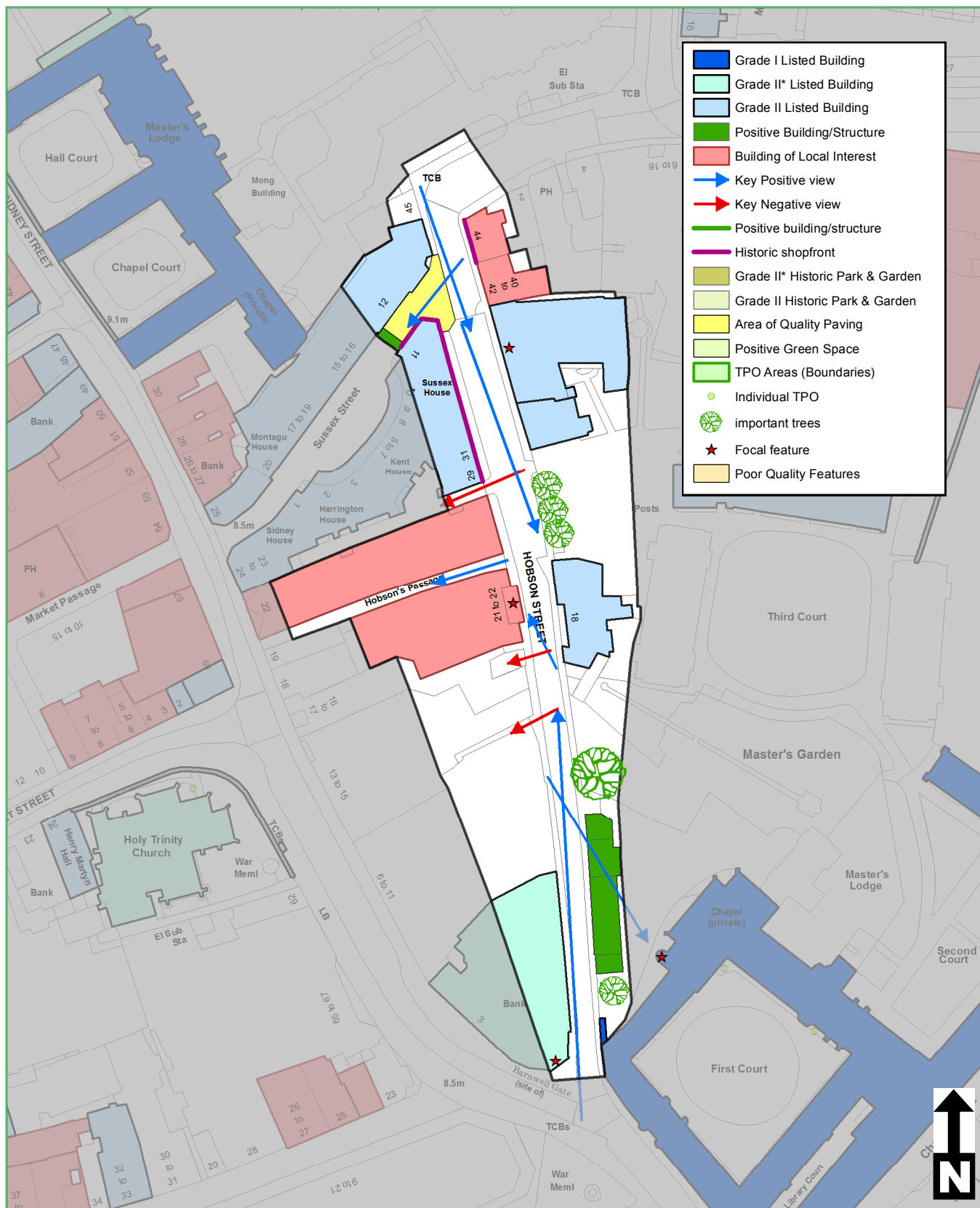
College outbuilding



C18 cupola of the college chapel



Narrow pavements



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Townscape Elements

- The building line is consistently on the back of the footpath apart from the Tutor's House of Christ's College which is set back behind a paved area which has a dwarf wall and railings to the street.
- The street has an enclosed feel because of the cliff-like height of the west side buildings, wall on the east, and relative narrowness of the street.
- Looking north, the old County Hall building dominates; to the south, the eye is drawn to St Andrew's Church via the former cinema.

- Buildings on both sides of the street include a mixture of highly detailed examples of early C20 architectural revival styles, as well as simpler Neo-classical architecture.
- Glimpses into Christ's College's Third Court, Master's Lodge and Chapel provide visual access to collegiate Cambridge – these views take in green landscape and tall trees, as well as buildings of great historic and architectural interest.
- The varied roofscape adds interest, especially on the east side of the street.
- A key landscape element is the mature trees of the college grounds, including those that lean across the street over the boundary wall.

could be improved. Should traffic be reduced, however, better paving would help improve the convenience and appearance of the street.

Building Enhancement

The chance to improve the service areas would make a major contribution to the street, but it is difficult to envisage with the current building plots.

The former Central Cinema is currently not in use. Securing a beneficial reuse could help to restore more vitality to the street as a secondary shopping frontage.

Streetscape Enhancement

While the road continues to be a major bus and taxi route and is frequently used by service vehicles, it is difficult to see how the pedestrian experience

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Gateway to Masters Lodge	Listed Grade I	C16		Red brick			Arch
Christ's College out-building	Listed (curtilage)	C18	1	brick	tile		
18 Tutor's House	Listed Grade II	early C19	2 + basement + attic	Gault brick	mansard / slate		
32 'X' Staircase	Listed Grade II	C17 with C18 front	2 + attics	timber-framed with mathematical tiling	tiled		
Former County Hall	Listed Grade II	1913	3 + basement	ashlar faced	parapet	H.H. Dunn	
40-42	BLI	C19	3	rendered	slate		
44	BLI	C19	3	painted Gault brick	slate		
45	Positive building	early C20	3	red brick	parapet		Complementary to Sussex House
29 & 31 Sussex House (includes 11 & 12 Sussex Street)	Listed Grade II	1928-32	4 + attics	red brick	hipped / pantiled	E.R. Barrow	
27 Waterstones	BLI	late C19	4	grey brick			Art Deco style
21 Former Central Cinema	BLI	1930	3	glazed tile facade	parapet		Egyptienne style
Nos 16 and 17 Sidney Street (rear of)	none	C20	3	red brick	mansard / tile		
Nos 13 – 15 Sidney Street (rear of Next)	none	C19	3	buff brick	parapet		
Nos. 6 – 11 Sidney Street (rear of Marks & Spencer's)	none	C20	3	grey & red brick	parapet		
Lloyds Bank	Listed Grade II*	1891; extended 1935	3 + attics	limestone ashlar & red brick bands	tile	1891: A & P Waterhouse for Foster & Co Bankers (Dutch Renaissance Style); 1935: Munro Cautley & Barefoot of Ipswich (Neo-Tudor Style)	