

Downing Place is a back street which runs along the side elevation of the Sedgwick Museum. Whilst its primary function is to provide servicing to the properties on Regent Street, it has a small number of frontages of its own.

Downing Place is evident on Loggan's map of 1688 when there were buildings on the east (Regent Street) side of the street, although the west side of the street was open fields called 'The Lease' (later known as Pembroke Leys). However, the street does not appear to have had a name until the founding of Downing College in 1800 and the

acquisition of the Leys for the college site. A notable feature of the street is the covered carriage yard at the rear of the Victorian police station building (Hobson House Yard).



Downing Place

SIGNIFICANCE - SIGNIFICANT

General Overview

Downing Place is predominantly an access/service street for the mixture of commercial and University (administration and laboratories) buildings. There is little reason for pedestrians to walk down this street unless they are on their way to one of the buildings. Nevertheless, the older, east side, of the road has a number of buildings that face the street and provide an active frontage. The newer, west side of the street is mainly composed of the sides of the tall (three storeys plus attics) of the Sedgwick and five storey laboratory buildings, which are oriented to face a central courtyard to the west, largely turning their backs to the street, behind a low brick wall although they do provide overlooking windows. These buildings were constructed in dark red brick that make the north end of the street appear somewhat dark. The taller laboratory building is set back from the street with a triangular garden space defined by iron railings that contains trees and shrubs that add greenery to the streetscene. The lower, single storey, laboratory building at the south end of the street is built of buff brick. Both its scale and materials help to make this part of the street lighter, although it presents an inactive frontage to the street.



The Sedgwick and laboratory buildings to west side



The east side of the street

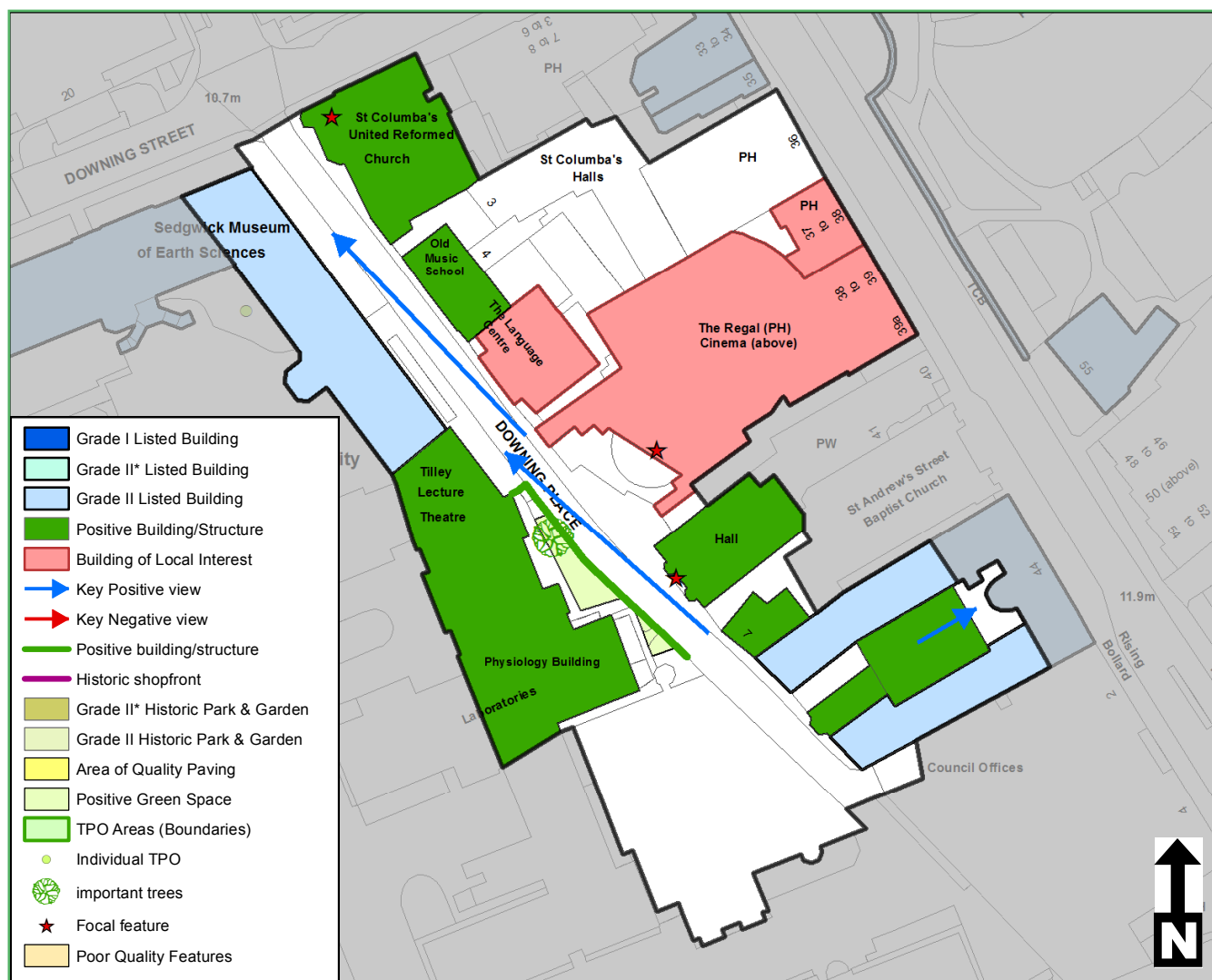
The east side of the street is more varied and contrasts with the long frontages of institutional buildings on the west side. It includes several buildings fronting onto the street, including the Archaeology Department East Building, the Old Music School (built as a Congregational Chapel), the red brick Sunday School or Church Hall at the rear of St Andrew's Road Baptist Church, and the small Constable's House that stands near the rear of the former Police Station. Other buildings are seen as rear or side elevations of buildings on Downing Street and Regent Street,

including the prominent rear elevation and modern terrace at the rear of the Regal Public House, which provides a point of activity in the street.

Hobson House Yard is accessed via the narrow alley at the southern end of the street. It gives access to the glazed yard via a high brick arched entrance, which provides an unusual insight into the functioning of the former Police Station. The height of the arches suggests they were designed to allow access for horse drawn carriages or vans (historically referred to as Black Maria's) used to transport prisoners.



Inside Hobson House Yard



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Townscape Elements

- The majority of buildings are set on the back of the footpath creating a tightly enclosed space with views focused along the street.
- Low brick wall with half-round brick copings (and railings further along the street) forms a well detailed boundary on the west side.
- Set-backs are created by narrow access lanes and the entrance to Hobson House Yard.
- Several mature deciduous trees within the garden at the rear of the laboratories soften the view towards the south end of the street.
- Buildings on the west side of the street are relatively tall, creating a strong sense of enclosure and making the street rather dark.
- Buildings on the east side are more varied in scale, rising to the high rear elevation of the Regal Public House which draws the eye to this building.



Rear of The Regal PH

- The interesting brick and stone detailing of the Church Hall adds interest to the street scene and complements the Gothic Revival (Early English style) detailing of St Columba's United Reformed Church on the corner with Downing Street.
- The mixture of red and Gault brick with stone detailing provides a unified sense of place despite the variation in building ages and styles.

Streetscape Enhancement

On the east side of the street the redundant lamppost standing adjacent to its replacement

should be removed.

The rear of The Regal Public House could be enhanced by improvements to the various ventilation and other service elements, plus the possible removal or recovering of the green-felted roof of the escape stair.

Large wheelie bins stored at the rear of various laboratories and the public house are brightly coloured, unduly prominent and compete with the buildings when viewed from along the street.

The glazed yard is an unusual feature in its own right and could be made more of a feature through an imaginative use.

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
St Columba's United Reformed Church	Positive Building	1891	N/A	stone	tile	J. MacVicar Anderson	early English style
Dept. of Archaeology East Building	Positive Building	C19	3	Gault brick	parapet		
Old University Music School	BLI	1790	2	Gault brick	hipped / slate		built as Emmanuel Congregational Chapel
The Regal Public House	BLI	C20	3	rendered	flat		former cinema
6 St Andrew's Baptist Church Hall	Positive Building	C20	2	red brick, stone dressings	tile		
7 Former Constable's House	Positive Building	C19	2	grey Gault brick	slate		
Rear of former Police Station	Listed Grade II	1901	2	red brick	slate	John Morley	in manner of G.G. Scott the Younger's New Building at Pembroke of 1883
Townhouse	Positive Building	late C19	3	Gault brick	hipped / slate		later, 2-storey extension in red brick
garage	none	C20	N/A	up-and-over metal door			
gates to Downing Site	none	C20	N/A	brick piers, iron gates			
laboratories	none	C20	1	buff brick	metal sheeting		
laboratories	none	C20	5	red brick	flat		
Sedgwick Museum of Geology	Listed Grade II	1904-11	3 + attics	red brick with stone dressings	tiled	Sir T.G. Jackson	