

The market place is the commercial and civic heart of the city, a role it has performed for over eight centuries.

The market has been at the centre of city life for centuries. It was cleared of the buildings that occupied its eastern half after fire in 1849 and is now a broad square fronted by notable buildings, including the Guildhall, the Church of St Mary the Great and has an ornamental fountain at its centre. The name Market Hill comes from the old use of the

word 'hill' to mean a meeting place - not raised ground! Today the market continues to be the thriving heart of the day-time city.



Street view

SIGNIFICANCE - HIGH

General Overview

Lying between the two principal routes through the city centre the market place represents Cambridge's ancient role as a place of commerce at a meeting of roads and an important river crossing.

The Church of St Mary the Great is an Anglo-Saxon foundation reflecting the importance of King's Parade/Senate House Hill to the west. The churchyard forms much of the western edge of Market Hill, as well as defining the courses of routes from King's Parade into the market. In the late C17 (and perhaps earlier) the edges of the churchyard were lined with buildings perhaps generating an income for the church from the busy activity of the market. However, from 1209 this was used by scholars as the University church, representing tension between the town and University interests.



The Church of St Mary the Great



The market place

Braun's map of 1575 records a market cross that stood on the western edge of the market place near the entrance to St Mary's Passage, which may also be shown on the later Loggan map (dated 1688). This would have been a meeting place and was the location for important public announcements. Both maps also show dense blocks of back-to-back buildings occupying the western half of the present market place. Braun's map shows these as relatively tidy rows of two storey buildings and it is likely they were formally planned shop buildings providing permanent premises for marketers. These buildings were destroyed by fire in 1849 and subsequently the market was redeveloped as a formal open piazza.

As the heart of the historic city's commercial activity it has also played a role as the focus of civic life, being the location of the town's Guildhall since the C13. This was founded following the acquisition by the burgesses of Cambridge of the right to collect their own tolls for the king (known as the farm), rather than have these collected by the sheriff of the county. They were also empowered to establish their own court to decide suits between merchants in the town and presided over by an elected mayor. A Guildhall was established on the site of the house of Benjamin the Jew given to the people of the town by Henry II in 1220. This was known as the toll house as it was the place where fees or taxes were paid, which would have included payments for use of the market.

The Guildhall was rebuilt in 1386, probably as a result of the fire that swept through the town in 1385. As shown on Braun's map of 1575 this was set back from the market place with a garden or open space in front. A shire hall was added in front in 1749, which is thought to have been a raised structure with an arcaded covered market beneath. This Guildhall was pulled down and a new one built in 1781. A large assembly hall was added in 1859 (completed in 1865) further contributing to the redevelopment of the market place as the grand civic space of the town. Further additions included a library reading room in 1884 (fronting Wheeler Street) and County and Police Courts in 1894 (fronting Guildhall Street). In 1933 it was decided to build a new larger Guildhall requiring the demolition of the row of shops fronting Peas Hill. The building was designed by Charles Cowes Voysey and includes a large balcony at the front from which, once again, important proclamations (such as the announcement of peace in 1945) could be made.



The Guildhall

A fountain is recorded in the market place in 1429. This was replaced by the conduit head of Hobson's conduit in the early C17 (which now stands at the west of Lensfield Road) and subsequently by a Gothic fountain above ground and lavatories underground as part of the post fire remodelling of the market place in 1855.



Buildings surrounding the market place

The buildings surrounding the market place include examples of construction for every century since the C14 (the oldest being the Church of St Mary the Great). They stand at the rear of the pavement providing immediate access to shopfronts and rise to a mixture of three and four storeys with attics (the larger buildings on St Mary's Street, which forms the northern side of the square rise to five storeys). They are very varied in style and size reflecting the organic process of renewal of much of the building frontage. Nevertheless they tend to have ornate frontages that compete for attention through the use of decorative mouldings, balconies, turrets and window details and present a great variety of contrasting materials and textures. The buildings along the east side form an informal terrace that, with the Guildhall and buildings of St Mary Street, provide a strong enclosure to the market place. The varied roofline of these buildings provides an interest roofover, including a mixture of gables, parapets and dormers, contributing to the interest of the expansive views across the square from its peripheries. Nevertheless, the large loading bay of the Marks and Spencer's department store at Nos. 10 and 11 Market Hill detracts significantly from the quality of this frontage in spite of

the attractive façade above the ground floor.

The monumental frontage of the Guildhall on the south side of the market place dominates the space, although its position means it is normally in shade, making it appear dark. The tower of St Mary's Church to the west acts as a natural and attractive focus of views from the east. The large east end of the church, including the elaborate Gothic tracery of the east windows also provides an attractive and dominating feature on the west side of the square, with the foliage in the churchyard providing greenery that softens the otherwise hard urban environment. The churchyard railings also



Churchyard railings

provide historical interest with decorative cast iron heads.

The corner building at No. 1 Market Hill and Nos. 39-41 Petty Cury provides a focal feature at the south east corner of the square as a result of its height, eye-catching red brick, stone detailing, moulded stone and terracotta ornamental detailing. Just to the north, the frontage of No. 5 Market Hill also stands out because



No. 1 Market Hill and Nos. 39-41 Petty Cury



Detailing to No. 1 Market Hill



No. 5 Market Hill



Baroque hood



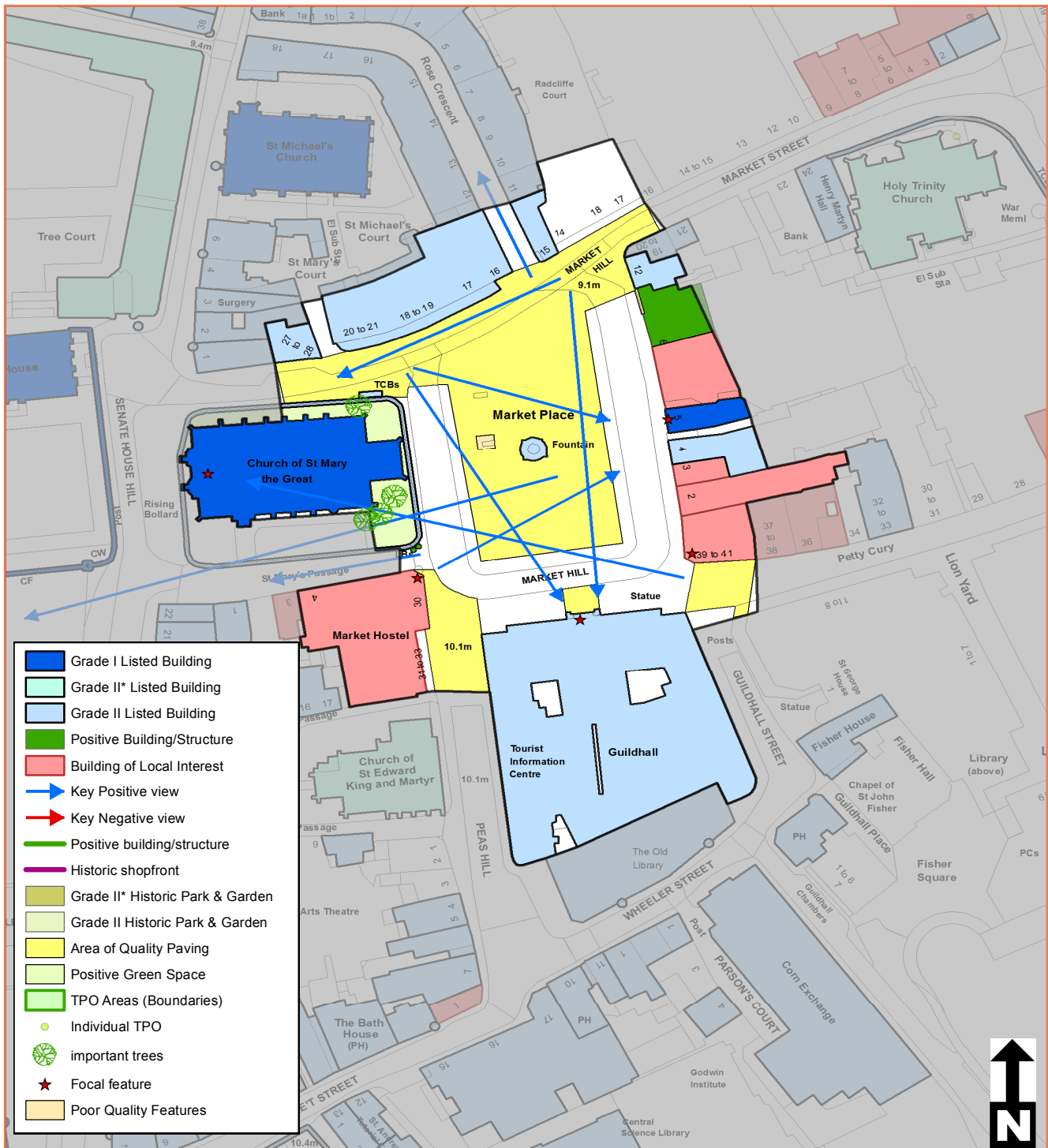
Historic post boxes

of the use of mathematical tiling for its cladding over a timber frame and the large baroque hood that covers the centrally placed access to the wrought iron first floor balcony.

The road surfaces of Market Hill are undistinguished black top, although the kerbs are of good granite and road edges have gutters of stone setts or blocks. The footpaths to the east and west side are simple concrete slab and brick setts but the broader footpath on the south side, outside the Guildhall, has been enhanced with sandstone slabs that continue along Petty Cury to the east, providing a better quality environment and a larger public space including benches and sculpture. The market place is surfaced with attractive setts, which contribute to the historic character of the space. The market stalls are semi-permanent structures that are robust and provide the low cost market space that attract marketers but are rather drab in appearance. The central fountain was largely demolished in 1955. Now just a

granite basin and a single spout remain. Whilst it provides some historical interest, it is no longer the attractive focal feature to the public space that it must have once been and is now used as a plant trough and occasional seat. Historic post boxes provide some further detailing in the public realm.

The square has remained the vibrant heart of the city and is popular with residents and visitors alike. It is effectively pedestrianised between 10am and 4pm as it is within the core traffic zone and is frequently used as the starting point for walking tours. Present uses include retail, cafes, Local Government offices, banks, student accommodation, church and general market.



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Townscape Elements

- A large open public square used as a market place, reflecting at least eight centuries of market activity with the addition of an early Victorian scheme to create an impressive civic space.
- Buildings set the on back of the footpath (except the church in the west) create strong definition to the square as a public space, generally containing views within the space but allowing glimpses to side roads, alleys or over rooftops, including the glimpses of King's



Buildings set on the back of the pavement

College Chapel's corner towers, which provide a visual connection to the collegiate aspect of the city.

- Buildings of different periods, materials and designs but retaining a common three to four storey scale and exuberant use of ornamental detail to provide eye-catching frontages with a varied and interest roofscape above.
- The Guildhall provides a dominating presence that commands views to the south and illustrates the role of the space as the historic focus of civic administration in Cambridge.
- The surfacing of the square with stone setts provides a distinctive space, whilst the area of stone slab paving creates an attractive public realm outside the Guildhall.



Views west

- St Mary's Church provides an attractive focus to views westward, with the many pinnacles of its tower silhouetted against open sky.
- The church provides further architectural interest to the square as well as having special importance to the history of both the town and University, whilst its churchyard adds greenery and the definition to the public realm.
- Roads lead into corners and at other points provide glimpsed views out of the space often to further historic frontages of interest.



Victorian railings

- The Victorian railings hidden behind refuse skips in the market place are a reminder of the presence of the former underground toilets.

Streetscape Enhancement

The Victorian fountain in the centre is a sad shadow of its former glory and any enhancement scheme should attempt to raise its profile.

Generally the surfaces are in good order although the pavements to the east and west side of the square could be brought up to the standard of those to the north and south.

The large loading bay doors for Marks and Spencer's would benefit from enhancement to enliven this frontage.

The market stalls seem relatively flimsy given that they are a near permanent fixture of the space. Although the canopies were recently replaced there is potential to enhance the market place considerably by upgrading the stalls to larger, more robust structures and using better quality materials.



Market stalls

A large black rubbish compactor that stands within the market area is generally considered to be an eyesore (albeit something of this kind is necessary for the functioning of the market).

The present street lighting in the market is not particularly appropriate and has been replaced in a rather piece-meal manner over recent years. An enhanced lighting scheme could support the sense of the square as a single formal civic space.

The atmosphere changes after dark, however, and, to some, the square becomes intimidating. More leisure uses within the market and better street lighting may help.

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Conduit Head (fountain) for Hobson's Brook in the market place	Listed Grade II	1856	N/A	stone fountain in granite basin		erected after original fountain removed to Trumpington Road, partly demolished in 1953	
39-41 Petty Cury and 1 Market Hill (Optical Express)	BLI	1890	3 + attics	red brick & stone dressings	tile		
2 (Gap Kids)	BLI	1890	3 + attics	red brick & stone dressings	tile		
3 (Gap)	BLI	C19 front	3	painted brick	parapet / slate		
4 (Gap)	Listed Grade II	probably C16 in origin	3 + attics	painted tile hung front	tile		front remodelled in mid C18
5 (Oasis)	Listed Grade I	late C17	3 + attics	front tile hung	parapet / modern slate		fine plaster ceiling at first floor, probably by Henry Doogood
6 (Marks and Spencer's)	BLI	late C19?	4	stone	slate		
7 & 8 (Marks and Spencer's)	BLI	1930s?	3	red brick	slate		Neo- Georgian
9-11 (Marks and Spencer's)	Positive building	1930s	3	painted render	parapet		Unattractive loading bays at ground floor level to Nos. 10 and 11 but attractive frontage above
12 (Don Pasquale)	Listed Grade II	late C18	4	painted Gault brick	parapet		
13 & 14	none	late 1960s	4	painted concrete	flat	Stanley R Nevell & Partners	built as Radcliffe Court
15 (West Cornwall Pasty Co.)	BLI	Mid C19	4	Gault brick	parapet		rebuilt when 13 & 14 were redeveloped
16-21 Gonville & Caus: Market Hill Buildings	Listed Grade II	1937	5	portland stone	flat	J Murray Easton	
27-28 (Cambridge University Press)	Listed Grade II	Early C19	3 + attics	Grey gault brick	Parapet/ mansard/ slate		
3 telephone kiosks on Market Hill	Listed Grade II	1935	N/A	cast-iron	domed		K6 type designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott
Church of St Mary the Great	Listed Grade I	C14 - late C15	N/A	Rubble + some ashlar dressings oolitic & barnack limestone	flat-pitched / lead & copper		Restored by James Essex in 1766, Gilbert Scott in 1850 and Antony Salvin in 1857
30	BLI	Late C19	4 + attic	painted brick	slate		5 storey corner turret
31	BLI	Late C19	3 + attic	painted brick	tile		
32 & 33 (Market Hostel)	BLI	1960-62	4	brick	copper sheet	Architects Co- Partnership	
The Guildhall	Listed Grade II	1936 & 1939	5	grey brick	flat	C Cowles-Voysey	job architect : J Brandon-Jones