

A busy street mostly lined with University buildings.

Downing Street was originally called Bird-Bolt (i.e. crossbow-arrow) Lane and is recorded as early as the late C16 on Braun's Map of Cambridge when it continued to the west as Pembroke Street. The current name originated with the establishment of Downing College at the beginning of the C19, founded in memory of Sir George Downing, 3rd Baronet of Gamlingay Park. The anticipated grand college entrance was never constructed and instead the University purchased the northern part of the Downing Site to build museums and

laboratories as a southern extension to the New Museums' Site.

The street now runs between tall late C19 and early C20 institutional buildings with courtyards at the rear providing access to further laboratories, museums and teaching facilities of the University. The eastern end of the street is more commercial in character including the late C20 Hilton Hotel and the redeveloped Grand Arcade including the John Lewis department store, a large building which marks the corner with St Andrew's Street.



Downing Street

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General Overview

From the junction with Tennis Court Road, Downing Street is dominated by the long frontages of the late C19 and early C20 institutional buildings including the Free Classical style Zoological Laboratories building, which has a strong horizontal emphasis due to the lines of rusticated masonry. The building's limestone frontage and pediment-topped bays continue the materials and detailing of the laboratories on Pembroke Street to the east, and are continued to the west by the early C20 extension of the Department of Zoology. This space is softened by shrubs



Long frontages



The David Attenborough Building, as seen from Downing Street

and trees that seem to compete for light with the large buildings surrounding them. The David Attenborough Buildings, formerly the Arup Building (designed by Philip Dowson and completed in 1971), is an exemplar of the use of ferro-concrete construction to create a series of overlapping and seemingly hanging forms supported on a light frame of beams and piers.

The Sedgwick Museum building on the south side of the street provides a contrast to the classicism of the northern frontage with a long Jacobean Revival frontage that incorporates the Geological Museum, Haddon Library and the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Each is seen as a separate element of the asymmetric frontage with an elaborate roofline of gables and dormers

above. The central entrance of three arched gateways provides a strong focus to this frontage and also provides glimpsed views through to the courtyard within. This is surrounded by further ranges of the building. The later C20 McDonald Institute creates a strong sense of enclosure, with the dark red brick and stone dressings reflecting some of Waterhouse's buildings of Pembroke College to the west, although the frontage is dark and foreboding. Cleaning the stonework could enhance the building, which is set back from the street with a grass verge behind a low wall – this helps to make the street more visually spacious.

The east end of the street has been largely rebuilt since the early 1980s with only St Columba's United Reformed Church providing historic interest. The church helps to screen the unprepossessing office and restaurant building at the east end of the street from view. The Hilton Hotel, built in the 1980s,



The Sedgwick Museum



Elaborate roofline of gables and dormers



Three arched gateways



C20 McDonald Institute, Downing Site

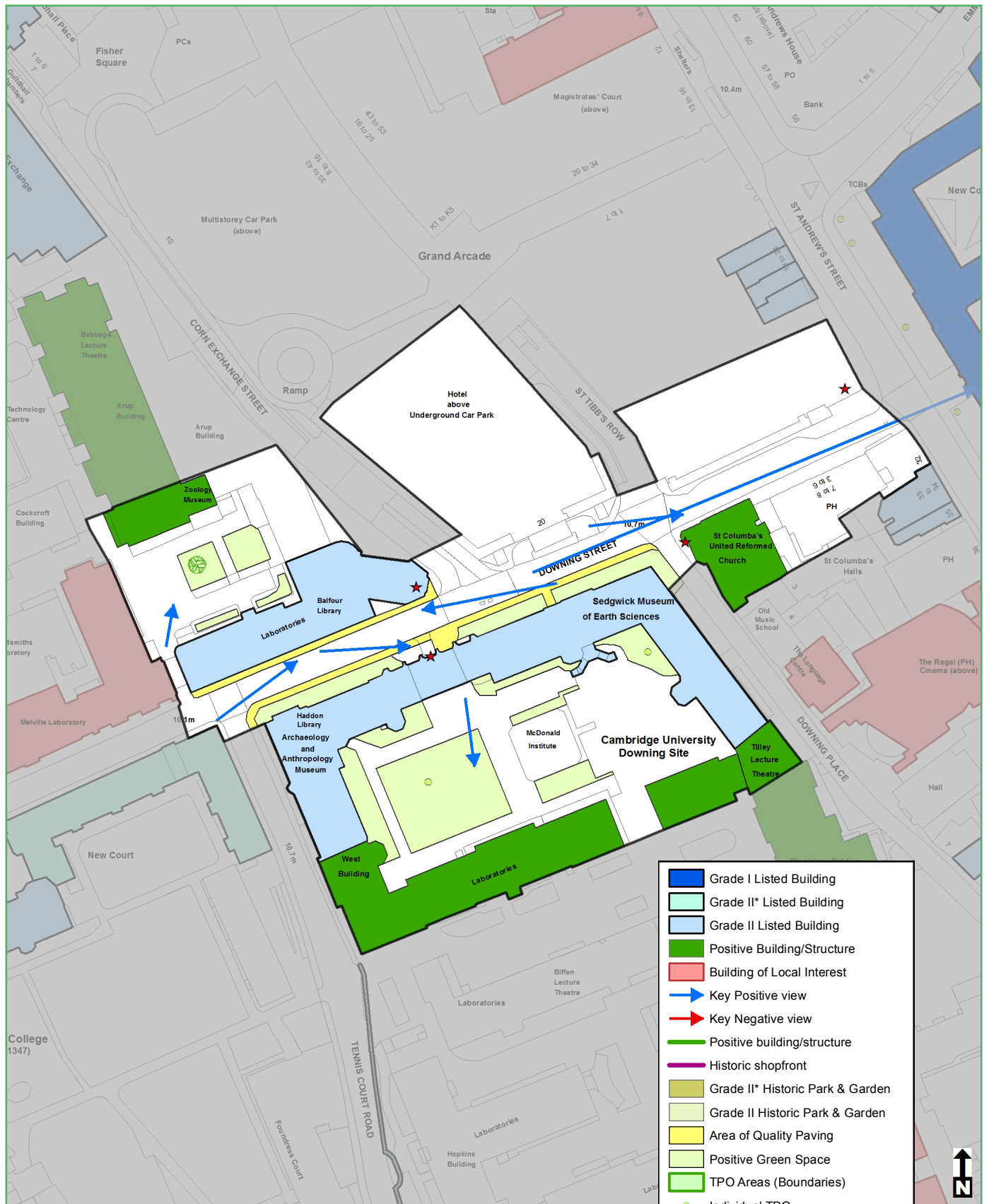


St Columba's United Reformed Church

has an imposing Neo-classical frontage including a large portico that provides some continuity with the laboratory and museum buildings to the west. The new building for the Grand Arcade, including the John Lewis department store, now forms an attractive and prominent corner to St Andrew's Street. The limestone walls of the building complement the materials of other buildings in the street and Emmanuel College to the east, whilst the use of slate colour cladding draws attention down to the shopfronts and commercial nature of the building. The mother and child sculpture at the corner provides an interesting element of public art to the streetscene.

Downing Street is continuously busy with pedestrians, cyclists and cars, including frequent queues to access the Grand Arcade and Lions Yard car parks. This can make it challenging for pedestrians, and the junction with St Andrew's Street is especially problematic, as are crossings over the adjoining roads such as Corn Exchange Street.

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Townscape Elements

- Buildings on the north side about the back of the footpath with the exception of the Hilton Hotel, which is setback behind a pull in / drop off space, creating a strong relationship between the buildings and footway and allowing pedestrians to experience the commercial architecture close up.



Hilton Hotel

- Several buildings on the south side are set back behind low walls with a narrow lawn in front, making the buildings more remote but complementing the grandeur of the Jacobean Revival architecture. This helps to draw attention to the arched entrance to the Sedgwick Museum where the paved surface breaks through the set back to the front of the building.
- The buildings, with their elaborate architectural details, create a strong sense of enclosure to the street, channeling views along it to Pembroke Street to the west and the frontage of Emmanuel College to the east. The south facing elevations to the street are constructed in limestone and buff coloured brick which glow when they are illuminated by direct sunlight, drawing the eye along the attractive frontage to the portico of Emmanuel College at the end of the vista.



Channeling of views to Emmanuel College



Highly varied roofscape

- The street has a highly varied roofscape due to the exceptionally elaborate buildings to either side.
- At the time of last appraisal, the street furniture and signage was considered excessive. This may have been resolved to an extent with the only 'cluttered' area being around the junction of Downing Street and Corn Exchange Street. w

Traffic Markings

The mass of road markings along the length of the street, particularly at road junctions and crossing points, are intrusive.

Streetscape Enhancement

The pink dimpled concrete slabs at the pelican crossing should be replaced with more sympathetic materials such as Yorkstone with brass studs.

The road surface has been improved, including the repair of the pavement outside the Sedgwick Museum. Improvements in front of the museums should include the faithful restoration of the iron railings to restore the Museum's designed setting.

The east end of the street has been rebuilt as part of the Grand Arcade development. The resultant changes to traffic management have been used to improve the quality of surfaces. However, several crossing points remain difficult for pedestrians to negotiate given the wide, bell mouthed junctions and busy traffic.

South side

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
32 St Andrew's Street Cambridge Building Society	none	C20	2	artificial stone & buff brick	mansard / lead		
3-6 & 7-8 Revolution Bar	none	1967	2-4	painted brick / Cement	flat	James & Bywaters	
St Columba's United Reformed Church	Positive building	1891	N/A	ashlar (Kettton?)	machine made clay tile	J. MacVicar Anderson	
Sedgwick Museum of Geology, Haddon Library & Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology	Listed Grade II	1904-11	3 + attics	red brick with stone dressings	tiled	Sir T.G. Jackson	

North side

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Zoological Laboratory	Listed Grade II	1900-4	3 + basement	ashlar	flat	E.S. Prior	Free Classical Style additional 1930s floor
Humphrey Museum (part of above)	Listed Grade II	early C20	3 + basement	ashlar	slate		
HiltonHotel	none	1980s	4 + attics	buff brick & artificial stone	mansard / artificial slate	J T Design & Build	
John Lewis	none	1980s	4-5	stone			Sculpture on corner