

Forming the north edge of the city centre, Chesterton Lane runs down the hill to the historic cross roads that lead, via Magdalene Street, to the bridge over the River Cam. It is now a busy section of the ring road, but its historic status is reflected in the dominating presence of St Giles' Church.

Chesterton Lane may have ancient origins as a route on the edge of the Roman fort or medieval castle, joining the north - south route to the river crossing at its west end. It has important frontages for Magdalene College and St Giles' Church, as well as The Colony – land owned by Clare

College since the C14 and extensively developed as halls of residence since the late C19. The architectural character reflects the development of the lane as a fashionable area of middle class housing on the edge of the city in the late C19.



Street view looking west

SIGNIFICANCE - SIGNIFICANT

General Overview

It has been speculated that Chesterton Lane and Northampton Street mark routes that ran in front of the walls of the C4 Roman fort or settlement built on the brow of the hill and overlooking the river crossing. As such it is likely to have been a location for associated settlement and this has been supported by archaeological finds. Its name supports this theory referring to the 'chester' (Anglo-Saxon caestra) meaning fort and '-ton' meaning minor settlement. However, as the focus of settlement moved south of the river during the early middle ages, its role seems to have been greatly



Street view looking east



The Church of St Giles

diminished.

Chesterton Lane is evident on Braun's map of Cambridge, when it appears to have been an accommodation lane leading to the open fields. As shown on Loggan's map of Cambridge of 1690, the curving lines of Northampton Street and Chesterton Lane together suggest the edge of a large bailey lying to the south west of the motte of Cambridge Castle, which may provide a plausible medieval origin for its present route. The castle stood next to the highly strategic route from London to York. The Church of St Giles would also have occupied a prominent position next to this route and

contains elements of C12 construction although the present building was largely reconstructed in 1875.

Clare College bought the land between the castle and Chesterton Lane, east of the church in 1326 and added land during the C15 and early C16. The present lodge to 'The Colony' is recorded as Clare House on the 1880s Ordnance Survey map. Castlebrae was built as the home of the famous palaeographer Agnes Smith (later Lewis) and her husband Rev'd Samuel Lewis. Their home was a centre for intellectual debate and both Agnes and her sister Margaret were influential campaigners for female emancipation. Castlebrae, built in 1889, forms the centerpiece of the college's halls, around which the property was gradually developed to provide additional accommodation during the C20 but retaining the character of densely planted grounds surrounding the large Victorian home. Other large townhouses are recorded standing on the bank above the north side of the road, including Hillside and Sunny-side, both of which



The lodge to the Colony (Clare House)



Castlebrae partially hidden by trees



Nos. 9 and 11 Chesterton Lane

remain today. During the late C19 the large semi-detached villas at Nos. 9 and 11 Chesterton Lane were built in a position commanding views north east along the street.

The lane's southern side provided part of the boundary of Magdalene College by the late C17. During the early C20 the college grounds were expanded up to the corner of Magdalene Street and Chesterton Lane forming the whole southern edge of the road and requiring demolition of the narrow fronted buildings lining Magdalene Street.

The busy crossroads is dominated by traffic signage and waiting vehicles at the traffic lights. However, the road here is broad, providing a sense of openness that includes the greenery of the churchyard and the trees in the ground of Magdalene College. The buildings stand well back from the road with more active frontages on the other streets leading off the crossroads providing a contrasting character. The road narrows visibly looking eastwards towards the crest of the hill, drawing attention to the tall Edwardian townhouses overlooking the route before the bend in the road to the



Broadness of the road



Boundary wall to Magdalene College

east. Views to the west are focused on the long, curving row of houses on Northampton Street. From the crest of the hill there is a long and attractive vista along the boulevard of Chesterton Road to the east.

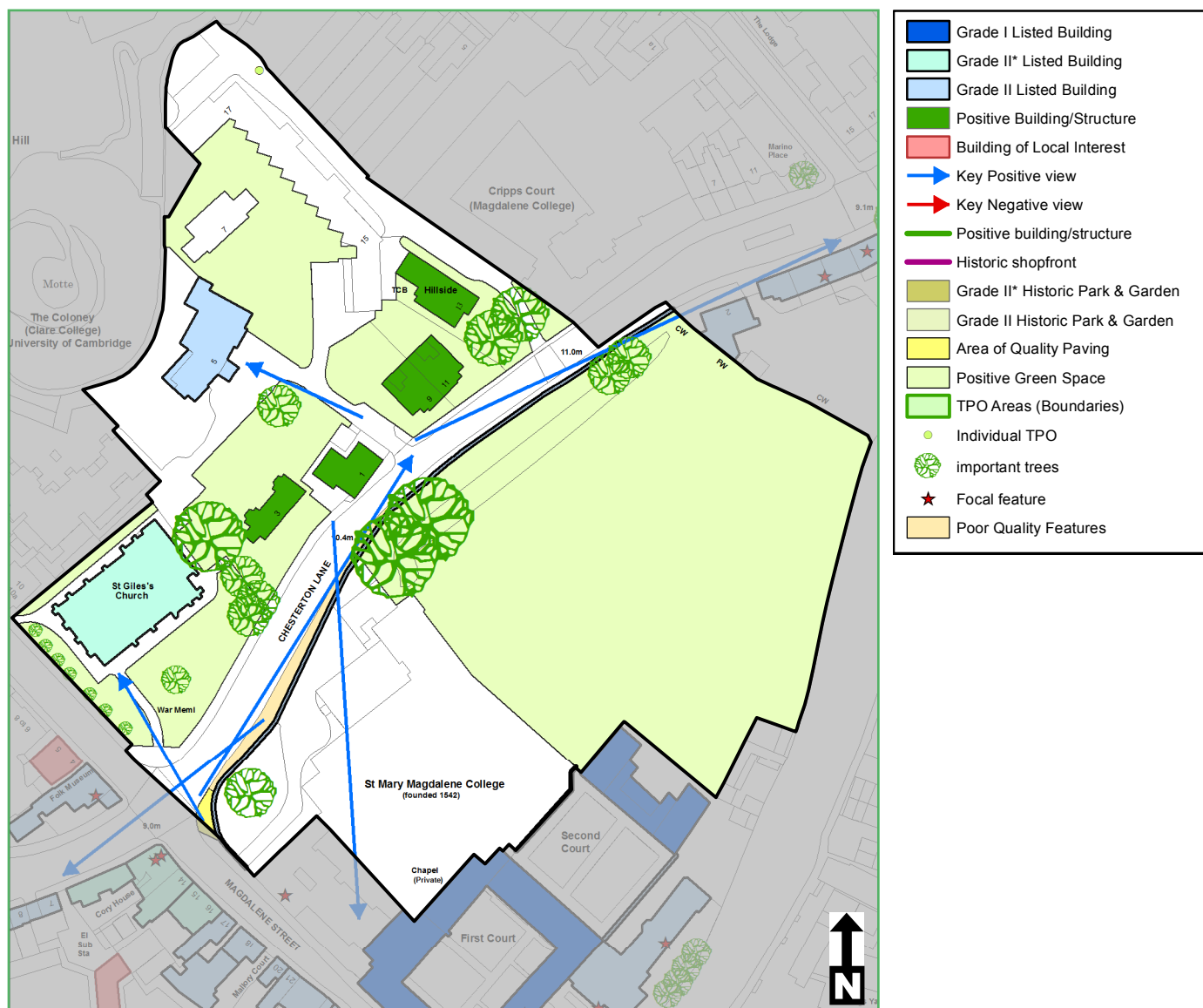
The church is a good example of a late C19 rebuild but is of greater significance for the survival of earlier elements inside and for the fittings by notable C19 church decorators. The town houses on the north side of the hill provide evidence of the suburban growth of Cambridge at the end of the C19, as well as having some aesthetic value of their own (notably

Nos. 9 and 11). The long boundary wall to Magdalene College may retain elements of C18 construction and mirrors the high walls of the churchyard and residential properties on the north side of the street.

The Colony, to the north of the road contains a number of notable buildings include the Victorian Gothic house of Castlebrae, along with a number of C20 college buildings.

The greenery overhanging the various boundary walls and hedges provides a sense of the maturity of the area's landscape, emphasises the size of the college grounds and gardens of houses to either side of the street, and softens the otherwise hard urban landscape of this section of ring road.

Chesterton Lane is very busy with vehicular traffic, the broad pavement helps to mitigate the impact of traffic on the pedestrian although these would benefit from enhanced surfacing. The unusual 'totem pole' public art installation at the street corner provides a gateway feature at the entrance to Magdalene Street which is a main entrance to the city centre.



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Townscape Elements

- The curving line of the road creates a series of unfolding vistas that are channelled by the high boundary walls and mature vegetation on both sides of the road to key buildings.
- All buildings are set back from footpath to varying degrees, though are closer to it at the bend in the road, creating a narrowing that emphasises the rise of the road to the crest of the hill.
- The high walls on both sides contribute to the definition of the street space and reflect the historical development of the areas of college property on either side during the C20.
- St Giles' Church provides a focal building that allows a connection with the medieval development of this area on the edge of the city and around the main north west – south east route.

- The wealth of vegetation in the churchyard grounds and visible in Magdalene College and Clare College Colony grounds provides an attractive green environment despite the hard surfaces of the road and walls.
- Views out to Northampton Street, Magdalene Street and Chesterton Road are important to the overall quality of the environment.
- High quality paving is limited to a small area around the corner of Magdalene Street.

Streetscape Enhancement

There is a plethora of signage along the street, some providing directions and others associated with the traffic lights. The number of signs should be reduced.

The street lighting columns are a basic uninspiring design that reflects the role of this area as part of the city ring road rather than reflecting its status as part of the historic city centre.

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
St Giles' Church	Listed Grade II*	1875	N/A	Gault brick & stone	slate	T.H. & F. Healey	C13 Gothic style, containing remains of C12
3	Positive building	late C19 / early C20	2	painted brick	tile		
1 Chesterton Lane Lodge	Positive building	C19	1	painted brick	slate		
5 Castle Brae	Listed Grade II	mid / late C19	2 + attic	red brick, stone dressings, blue brick decorations	tilled		In tudor style
7	none						
9 & 11	Positive buildings	late C19	3 + attic + basement	red brick	plain tile		
13 Hillside	Positive building	C19	2	grey brick, brown brick banding	slate		
Magdalene College boundary wall	Listed Grade II	C18 / C19, much rebuilt	N/A	buff brick			