

Wheeler Street / Parson's Court

A short, narrow street running behind the Guildhall with a mixture C19 public buildings and historic public houses and inns, which originally formed part of the city's meat market.

Originally known as 'Short Butcher Row', Wheeler Street, together with Guildhall Street, was the site of the city's meat market. By the C19 however, the street had become the home of the city's main public buildings with the Library, Assembly Hall, Reading Room and Corn Exchange all fronting the narrow street. Despite the presence of restaurants,

the street can be quiet during the daytime lacking the more active commercial frontages of the streets to the north. The street can be dominated by traffic leaving the multi-storey car parks on Corn Exchange Street. However, the mixture of bars, restaurants and entertainment venues can make this a much busier area in the evening.

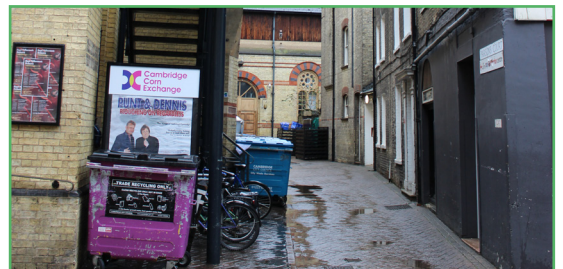


Wheeler Street

SIGNIFICANCE - SIGNIFICANT

General Overview

The current name of Wheeler Street comes from Richard Wheeler who was a basket-maker in the early C19. Parson's Court (known at one time as Ann's Yard) and the surviving earlier buildings are a reminder of the street's original form and historic status as part of the commercial core of medieval and early modern Cambridge. Parson's Court provides a rare partial survival of one of the courts of residential buildings that once crowded the city centre.



Parson's Court



The Corn Exchange and the former Red Cow PH

Buildings on either side stand at the rear of the pavement and provide a strong sense of enclosure with views focused along the informally terraced building frontages. Architecturally the street is dominated by the detailed frontage of the Corn Exchange with its prominent yellow brick with polychrome detailing being very eye-catching. The corner turret and other roofscape features of the former Red Cow Public House are a focus to views further along the street. The height of buildings does not rise above three storeys providing a comfortable, human scale, despite the position at the heart of the city centre.

Nos. 1 and 2 Wheeler Street have some group value with the C16 No. 11 Peas Hill, which stands adjacent. Its lower scale allows the older building to take prominence in the streetscene, whilst its rhythm of openings and whitewashed frontage is sympathetic to those of its older neighbour. Other buildings that seem to have a sympathetic relationship include the former Barclay's Bank, now split between, Cau and Zizzi and the former Public Library (now Jamie's Italian). The former is built in a Regency style with a rusticated ashlar ground floor and yellow brick upper floor with giant order engaged pilasters. The latter was built in an Italianate style in yellow brick with engaged brick pilasters to the first floor above a ground floor with arcaded semi-circular arch headed windows. The use of yellow brick ties these buildings together with the Corn Exchange as a well-defined late C19 group.



Former Public Library (Jamie's Italian)

The street is closed off at either end by substantial buildings, including No. 1 Bene't Street to the west and Fisher House to the east, foreshortening views and adding to the sense of an enclosed back-street area.

Wheeler Street is an important route out of the Grand Arcade car park, but can also be busy with pedestrians and cyclists cutting between Lion Yard and King's Parade. The road can become heavily congested when lorries and coaches are loading and unloading at the Corn Exchange and Arts Theatre, or when people are queuing to get into these venues.

Less attractive features of the road are the uninspiring view down Corn Exchange Street. Recent works to No. 11 Peas Hill and Nos. 1 and 2 Wheeler Street have resulted in improvements to the character of the area.



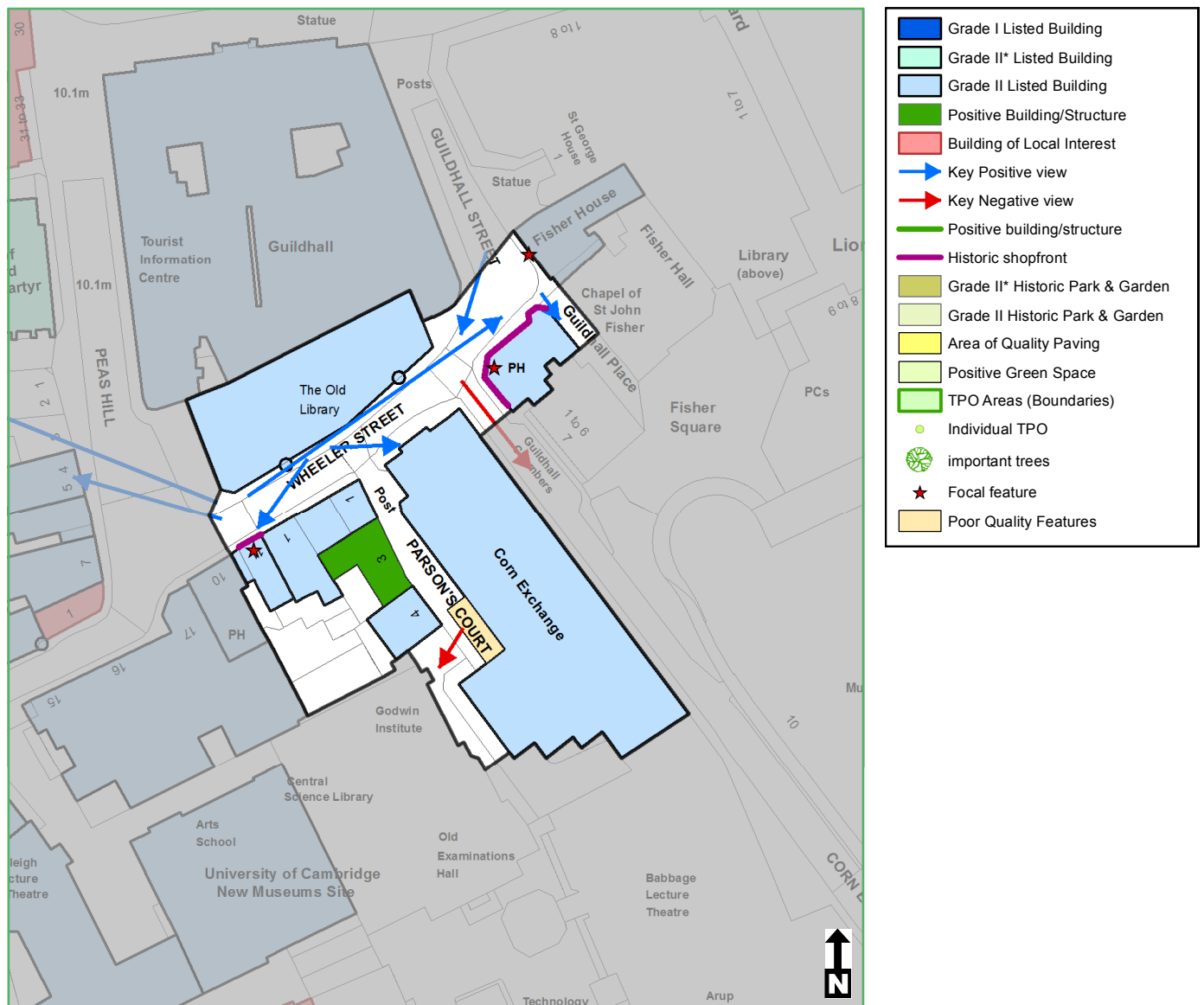
No. 1 Bene't Street



The turret of the former Red Cow PH



No. 11 Peas Hill and Nos. 1 & 2 Wheeler St.



Townscape Elements

- Wheeler Street is defined by buildings which stand at the rear of the pavement creating a strong sense of enclosure. The small C19 buildings surrounding Parson's Court provide an intimate, tightly enclosed space, although this is currently marred by the dominance of the fire escape of the Corn Exchange and use for storage of wheelie bins.
- The railings of the Corn Exchange's ramp add an artistic element that complements the detailed pictorial friezes of the building's frontage. The building provides reference to the city's historic role as a market centre at the heart of a rural landscape.



Railings to Corn Exchange ramp

- Parson's Court looks like, and is, a delivery yard / escape route, but preserves some of the character of one of the city's densely packed C19 courts.



No. 4 Peas Hill

- The corner turret on the former Red Cow and strong frontage of the Corn Exchange dominate views east along Wheeler Street.
- The use of yellow brick unites the buildings.
- Views to Nos. 4 and 11 Peas Hill, and Fisher House help to identify this area as part of the medieval and early modern core of the city.

Streetscape Enhancement

Restriction of the vehicles using Wheeler Street to delivery vehicles would create a more pleasant pedestrian environment and make access to the public buildings and venues more agreeable. Improvements to the path and carriageway surfacing might be possible if vehicle usage could be restricted.

Parson's Court could be made more attractive by providing more discrete housing for refuse bins.

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Old Library, Jamie's Italian	Listed Grade II	1862	2	yellow Gault brick, ashlar dressings	hipped / slate	Peck & Stephens	formerly the Central Library: Italianate additions by G. MacDonell in 1884
No. 11 Peas Hill	Listed Grade II	late C16 / early C17	3 + attic	timber-framed & plastered	old tile		
1 & 2 Wheeler Street & 1 Parson's Court	Listed Grade II	C18	2 + attic	painted Gault brick	mansard / tiled		
3 Parson's Court	Positive building	C19	3	Gault brick	slate		
3a Parson's Court	Positive building	early C19?	3	Gault brick	slate		single storey wing linking to No. 4 Parson's Court
4 Parson's Court	Listed Grade II	late C18 / early C19	3	grey Gault brick	hipped / slate		
The Corn Exchange	Listed Grade II	1875-6	3	brick, tiles & faience	welsh slate	Richard Reynolds Rowe	
The former Red Cow Public House	Listed Grade II	1898	2 + attic	red brick & timber-frame & plaster	plain tile	Richard Reynolds Rowe in a Jacobethan style	
2 Richardson Candle wall mounted lamps	Listed Grade II	1957	Lantern has simple cast-iron capping and base, wall mounted via a pair of plain metal brackets at either end			Sir Albert Richardson	attached to the Old Library