

Godmanchester (Post Street)

Conservation Area Character Statement



Godmanchester (Post Street) Conservation Area Character Statement



Portholme Meadow

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 **H**untingdonshire has sixty-three designated Conservation Areas. They are designated on the basis that they are areas of special architectural interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' Designation is not an end in itself, but the start of a process to preserve or enhance the character of each Conservation Area, in accordance with the statutory duty of the local authority.

1.2 In addition to normal planning and listed building controls, Conservation Area designation restricts the permitted development rights of property owners.

1.3 The character of a Conservation Area is defined not only by its buildings, but by the pattern of streets and the open spaces and trees that separate them.

1.4 This series of character statements is adopted as supplementary planning guidance and provides a sound basis for development plan policies and development control decisions within the Conservation Area.



The Old Manor House, Cambridge Street

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2.0 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 **G**odmanchester lies immediately to the south of Huntingdon, on the opposite bank of the River Great Ouse. The two are linked by a medieval causeway and stone bridge.

2.2 There are two Conservation Areas in Godmanchester. Godmanchester (Post Street) includes an area centred on Post Street, West Street and The Causeway. The boundary also includes its approaches and the immediate landscape setting. Godmanchester (Earning Street) covers a smaller area to the east. Both were designated on the 9th May 1972. A Character Statement for Earning Street will be produced in due course.

Listed Buildings

2.3 There are 124 buildings in the Conservation Area which have been listed by the Secretary of State as being worthy of protection because of their special architectural or historic interest. The locations of these buildings and structures are illustrated within each Character Zone Map.

Protected Trees

2.4 Conservation Area legislation protects all trees within the designated boundary of the Conservation Area. There are also six Tree Preservation Orders within the boundary.

Green spaces, trees and setting

2.5 As Godmanchester is so closely allied with its rural setting, green-spaces and trees are vital to its character.

2.6 The principal areas of valuable green-space are identified on the Character Zone maps. The contribution that these green spaces make to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is very important and should not be prejudiced.

2.7 The wider setting of Godmanchester Conservation Area also makes an important contribution to its character, particularly the many full or glimpsed views gained into open countryside from within the Area.



The Post House, Post Street



Aerial Photograph showing Conservation Area Boundary

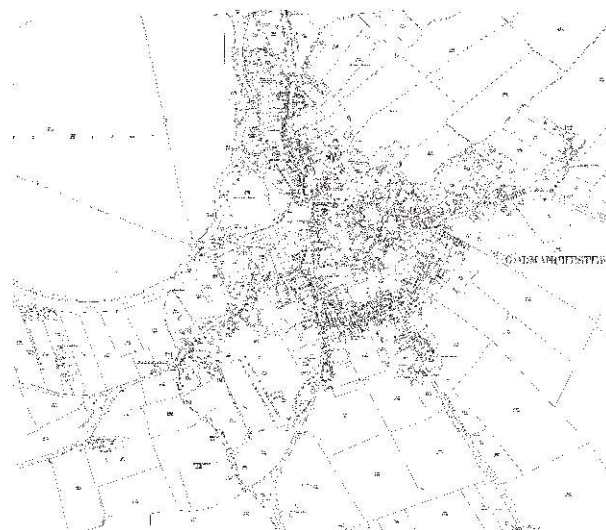
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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 **G**odmanchester, situated within the fertile Ouse valley, has its settled origins in Roman times. The moderately-sized Roman settlement became an outpost on the northerly route of Ermine Street from London to York, at its crossing with the Via Devena from Colchester to Chester. This association with early transport infrastructure, derived from the crossing point of the river, sustained Godmanchester's continued prosperity and growth through the medieval period. The early phases of St. Mary's Church are indicative of the historic importance of the settlement and, in the seventeenth century, Godmanchester was referred to as 'a very great county Toune'.

3.2 The Roman town, which covered an area of 24 acres, was laid out in a formal pentagonal street pattern, which can still be traced today. From time to time, relics of the period have come to light, such as the south and west gates of the camp and a bath house. These indicate that the Roman occupation was lengthy, lasting from the 1st to the 4th century AD.

3.3 The topography of Godmanchester has moulded the development of the settlement. To the east and west, the water meadows of the River Great Ouse form a natural barrier. Post Street is the principal thoroughfare towards the river crossing and the route of Ermine Street. A dense form of development has clustered here on the higher ground. Being so physically constrained and also so prosperous, the architecture of Godmanchester has a status and character which belies its limited size.



1926 Ordnance Survey Map



Post Street c. 1926

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Direction signs at No. 2 The Causeway

4.0 CHARACTER ZONES

4.1 **G**odmanchester radiates from the convergence of Post Street, The Causeway and Cambridge Street. Post Street follows the course of Ermine Street, Cambridge Street the route of the Via Devena.

4.2 The description of Godmanchester below identifies separate areas of character within the settlement as a whole. These are identified on the Character Zones maps and comprise groupings around the following: Zone A - The Avenue and Post Street

Zone B - The Causeway

Zone C - West Street.

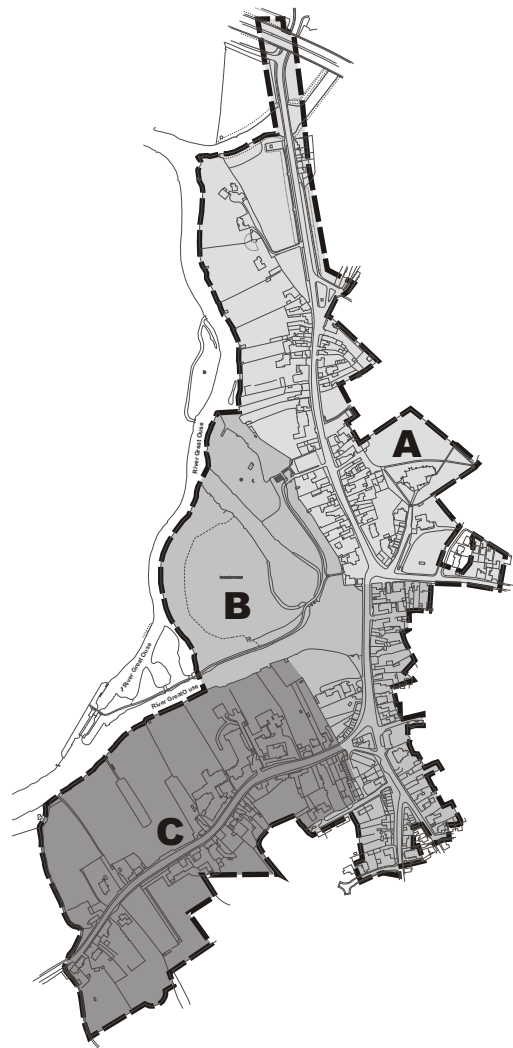
3.4 Godmanchester continued to prosper through the centuries and in 1212 King John gave it a charter which converted the town into a self-governing manor, which was an extremely rare form of local government. Godmanchester obtained the coveted status of Borough in 1604 under a Charter of James I.

3.5 Godmanchester was still a prosperous place between the 16th and 19th centuries, and a great deal of re-building took place in the early 17th century, reflecting the newly-acquired Borough status. Many of the timber-framed structures from this period survive.

3.6 Unlike Huntingdon, Godmanchester's fortunes were not particularly affected by the coming of the stage coaches and railways although it remained a prosperous town.

3.7 The 1970's and 1980's saw significant residential development around its fringes. Nevertheless, Godmanchester remains a small, pleasant town with a population of circa 6100. It has no 'high street', market place or concentrated shopping centre.

3.8 Over the centuries, there has been great rivalry between Godmanchester and Huntingdon, with both towns having periods of prosperity and decline – often at the other town's expense. The two boroughs were united in 1961, but by 1982 Godmanchester acquired its own independent Town Council.



Character Zones within the Conservation Area Boundary

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Character Zone A: The Avenue and Post Street

- 4.3 When approached from Huntingdon, Cooks Bridge and The Avenue mark the formal entrance to Godmanchester. The Avenue was created as a causeway for traffic across the low-lying meadow to the foot of the Town Bridge across the River Great Ouse. The short terrace adjacent to Cooks Bridge forms an attractive small-scale group at the north end of the avenue of lime trees, although the informal parking of cars on the verge could be improved. On each side of the Avenue are cast iron railings and seats which provide an attractive boundary between the pavements and the meadows. To the west, there are open views across towards Nos. 4a,b & c The Avenue on a spur of higher ground on the banks of the Great Ouse. Beyond these properties and the mature trees, there are glimpses of Portholme meadow, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation. To the east, former views of the meadow land are curtailed by the embankment of the A14 but the spaciousness of the setting remains. Southwards, the avenue of trees and the properties at the north end of Post Street funnel views into the narrow, built-up townscape beyond.



Post Street c.1949

- 4.4 At the south end of The Avenue, the green outside the Black Bull Inn forms an attractive focus and marks a transition between the spacious, green character of the Avenue and the urban activity of

Post Street. The green is formed at the junction of Park Lane and the Avenue. Although properties within Park Lane are not included within the Conservation Area boundary and are not of architectural merit, the enclosure of built form around the green creates an attractive space. It tends to be dominated by traffic and parking, but the hedged boundaries and softer setting to the foreground of Nos. 1-3 The Avenue opposite help to draw the landscape into Post Street.



The Green and Nos 1-3 The Avenue

- 4.5 Within Post Street, the streetscene is urban in character, comprising a varied mix of building scales and ages – although they are predominantly residential rather than commercial in use. Polite two and three-storey Georgian properties reflect the formality and prosperity of their age and the aspirations of the community. They tend to dominate the scene. Smaller scale, timber-framed mansions of the seventeenth century provide a contrast with their Georgian counterparts. Nineteenth-century neo-classical town-houses unify the scene.



The Green leads into Post Street.

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- 4.6 Almost without exception, the buildings abut the pavement edge. Coupled with the tendency for taller storey heights, this creates a narrow, urban streetscene with a vertical emphasis along the entire gentle sweep of Post Street until its junction with Cambridge Street.



Post Street has a narrow urban character.

- 4.7 To the rear of properties on the west side of Post Street, gardens run down to the mill race and river. These areas provide a very definite contrast with the activity of Post Street and are an integral part of the Conservation Area's character. The many mature trees are very important to the character of this area.



The quiet mill race behind Post Street.

- 4.8 With one exception, there is no significant backland development to the rear of properties on the west side of Post Street. As such, the original linear settlement pattern of garden plots remains intact and

is very important to the area's environmental quality. There are a number of properties within Post Street which warrant particular mention for their contribution to the streetscene. The first of these is Post House. It is the focal building in views from the Avenue. Slightly further to the south, on the opposite side of the road is The Holme, a very large eighteenth century residence, extended in the nineteenth century and now converted into flats. In common with its immediate neighbours, The Holme's hard urban street frontage finds contrast in the quiet riverside gardens behind. From these gardens, there are extremely fine views over Portholme and vice versa.

- 4.9 On the same side as The Holme, Island Hall is Godmanchester's principal residence. It dates from 1748/9 built for John Jackson, the Receiver-General for Huntingdonshire. Its particular status is marked by its position set back from the road and the fine railings along the front boundary which defend the private space. Due to the hall's position at the centre of the gentle sweep of Post Street, the railings become all the more prominent in the streetscene.



The garden elevation of Island Hall

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4.10 Island Cottage is perhaps the most prominent of the earlier, small-scale, timber-framed dwellings. It is one of the few buildings in the street which now appears to stand detached due to the formation of the car-park alongside.



Island Cottage

4.11 Opposite Island Hall and Cottage lies one of two gaps in the otherwise continuous built-up frontage; namely, the boundary to the school playing fields. This area was formerly an open vista to the east of Island Hall. The railing and hedge are a reasonable edge to the street. Presently, the school buildings are clustered outside the Conservation Area to the east. As such, the playing fields and boundary trees offer a positive contribution to Post Street and should be retained.

4.12 As on the west side, the land to the rear of properties on the east side of Post Street has not been greatly affected by backland development.

4.13 The mid-point of Post Street is marked by the pedestrian crossing, the local shop and the car park the latter marking the site of the former mill. These provide much-needed facilities but there is scope for environmental improvement here. The treatment of the parking area is bleak and pedestrian links

between Post Street and the riverside walks beyond could be enhanced. The forecourt associated with the local shop creates a busy environment throughout the day. Fortunately, due to the narrowness of the access, the negative impact of the parking area on the Conservation Area is limited.



Enhancement opportunity : the shop and parking area

4.14 Church Place is the only secondary roadway leading from Post Street and connects the main thoroughfare with the parish church of St. Mary. The position of the church, behind Post Street, relates to the original alignment of Ermine Street.



Looking from Church Place into Post Street.

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4.15 The church is a Grade II* listed building principally dating to the 16th century but with a west tower of 1623 and chancel of 13th century, restored in 1853 by Sir George Gilbert Scott. The churchyard is bounded by brick walls on all sides and provides an attractive, quiet space in contrast to Post Street. In Church Place, the walls and piers have recently been restored and the railings reinstated.



The quiet atmosphere of the churchyard.

4.16 The remaining section of Post Street up to the junction with Cambridge Street is lined with more modest dwellings of various date. There is some more recent infill development in these parts although the narrowness of the street and the tendency to reflect the pavement edge style of development has reduced detrimental impact. In this part of Post Street, the presence of the church spire behind the dwellings on the east side becomes more evident, and is particularly noticeable between Nos. 53 and 55.



The spire of St Mary's rises above Post Street.

4.17 The urban streetscene dissipates along Cambridge Street. The trees within the grounds of Chadleigh House provide a very attractive cover to the street and the boundary wall creates strong enclosure on this sharp corner. The wall leads the vista eastwards along Cambridge Street towards No. 4, the Old Manor House, marking the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area. The wall is a very strong boundary feature. The properties on the south side of Cambridge Street form a backdrop to the southerly views along Post Street and a continuous frontage which turns the corner into The Causeway.

4.18 Due to the convergence of roads and the focus of public and commercial buildings, the junction of Post Street, Cambridge Street and The Causeway forms the heart of the settlement. The grouping of the old Grammar School and Town Hall form an intimate, small scale and intentionally picturesque piece of streetscene, well suited to its prominent position in views from the town and the meadows to the west. From here the Chinese Bridge, a Grade II* listed structure, leads the way to the recreation ground and the meadows.

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4.19 Opposite the Grammar School is the entrance to Chadley Lane. This narrow, over-shadowed lane leads to St. Mary's Church through the listed cast iron gates. The lane is enclosed on its east side by the listed boundary wall to Chadleigh House which sits behind in its spacious, tree screened gardens. On the west side is an interesting accumulation of buildings dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, all of a small scale. The church spire is visible beyond the lane and provides a dramatic contrast of scale.

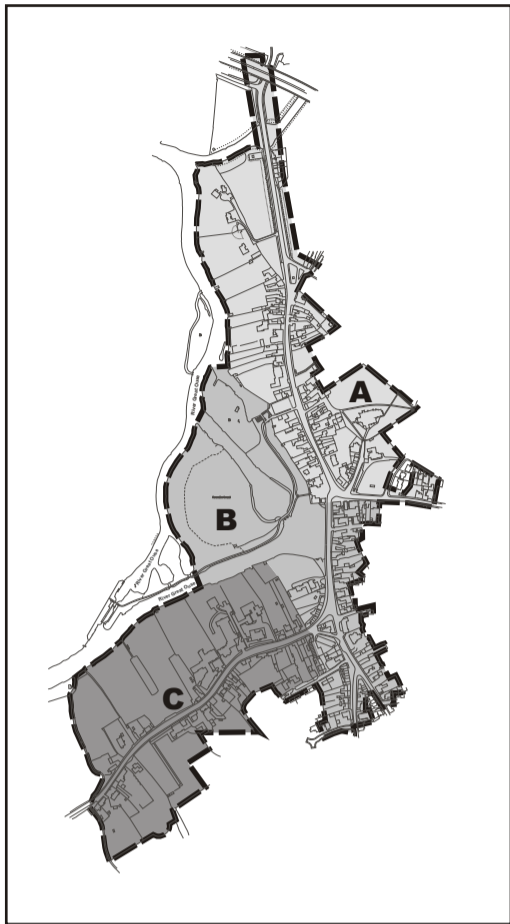


Chadley Lane and the spire of St Mary's Church

Examples of formal architectural detailing in Character Zone A :



Map 1 - Character Zone A
The Avenue & Post Street



Character Zones

Legend

- Conservation Area
- Views
- Space leaks/townscape poor
- Glimpsed views
- Landmark
- Protected Open Space
- Wide angle/distant views
- Frontage requiring enhancement
- Grade II Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Tree Preservation Orders (individual trees or groups)
- Important Open Space



Private gardens to the rear of Post Street adjoin the open countryside

Glimpsed views towards the meadows

The Green : the entrance to Post Street

The Holme

Enhancement Area

Island Hall

Island Hall

The spire of St. Mary's Church and the rear gardens of Post Street

Chinese Bridge and Town Hall are an important landmark group.

Poor views beyond



The varied streetscene of Post Street

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Character Zone B: The Causeway

4.20 The Causeway contrasts with the narrow, urban form of Post Street. As the name suggests, the roadway runs along the edge of the mill lagoon, with the properties on the east side looking out over the waterways. Once past the junction with Post Street, the views open up to the south and east, the eye being taken along the course of the river upstream and past the recreation ground to the glimpses of open meadow-land beyond. The atmosphere is spacious and calming – a contrast with the through traffic and bustle of Post Street. Although the lagoon was created for functional reasons associated with the former mills, the nineteenth century recognised its picturesque qualities, maximising a very intentional piece of street and riverscape.



The Mill Lagoon and Chinese Bridge.

4.21 The architectural character along The Causeway is gentle. In place of the imposing and uniform neo-classical frontages of Post Street, The Causeway has a mix of building ages and styles. With one exception, storey heights are limited to two or two-and-a-half. In place of regular brickwork, there is a greater variety of materials.

4.22 At the north end, a two storey red-brick building of late 18th century date, formerly the 'Three Horseshoes', leads us from Cambridge Street into

The Causeway. The variety of uses at ground floor have given rise to shopfronts and signage. These contribute to the interest and vibrancy of the streetscene.

4.23 St Ann's Lane leads to the backland of The Causeway and hints at the smaller scale character of the outbuildings which sit behind the frontages. On the south side of St. Ann's Lane is the Royal Oak public house, the most imposing building in The Causeway frontage. Its three storey height, large scale and neo-classical style dominate the streetscene, particularly when viewed alongside the timber-framed buildings at Nos 10 and 12.

4.24 Nos 13 and 14 are two-and-a-half storey late Georgian dwellings which reinforce the prosperous, domestic character of the street and retain their open gardens to the rear.

4.25 The local shop is a valuable resource at No 17 & 18 but the treatment of the shopfront and signage gives an untidy appearance and could be improved. Adjacent to the shop is an incongruous, two-and-a-half storey red-brick retail building. The choice of materials and the design are both poor and detract from the otherwise coherent and high quality streetscene.



The Causeway c.1949.

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- 4.26 At the south end of The Causeway is the junction with Old Court Hall and West Street. In this area, the character of the buildings is much more modest, and the dominant buildings are the buff brick Victorian terraces lining the pavement edges.



The Causeway from the recreation ground.

- 4.27 Old Court Hall continues the gradual quietening of architectural character as the grandeur and scale of Post Street is left behind. The street is wide, with a consistent two-storey height to the buildings. The street is predominantly lined with dwellings in local materials and simple architectural detailing. Although falling outside the Conservation Area boundary, the nineteenth century terrace at Nos. 48-50 London Road provides an important end-stop to vistas along Old Court Hall.

- 4.28 Buildings of particular note include No. 1 Old Court Hall, an Italianate villa now converted to flats. Its spacious setting is in marked contrast to the tighter plots of Post Street. Westbury Barn, opposite, is of overtly agricultural origins, now converted to residential use. It makes a valuable contribution to the variety of building types in the streetscene.

- 4.29 The gable of Tudor Cottage has a jetty which projects over the pavement and is another example of Godmanchester's very fine 17th century buildings, and is well maintained.



Tudor Cottage.

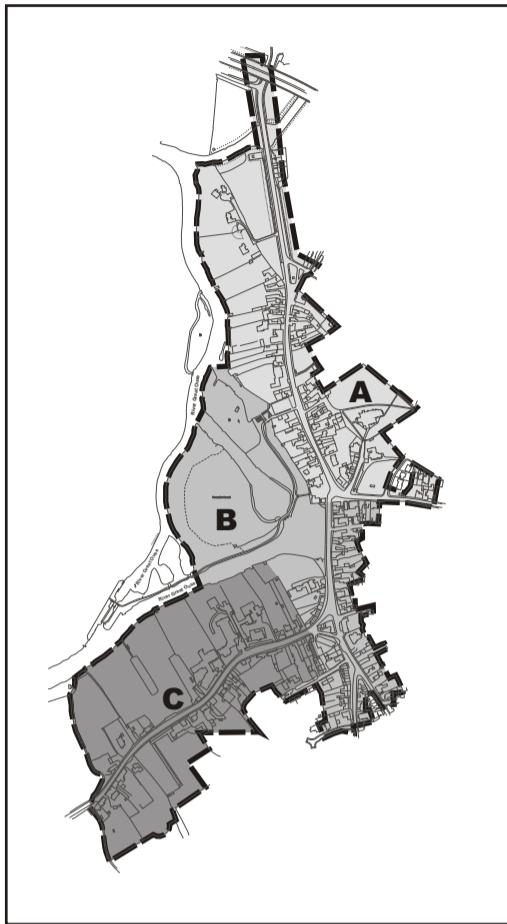
- 4.30 Silver Street leads from the village centre into the open countryside. This is reflected in the character of the street, particularly the survival of thatched, timber-framed dwellings at Nos 5, 10 and 19. 19th century terraces complete the scene. Looking back to the town from Silver Street, views are focussed on Tudor Cottage, with the spire of St. Mary's Church in the background.



No.5 Silver Street

- 4.31 Corpus Christi Lane leads from Old Court Hall towards the countryside at the rear of properties on the south side of West Street. There are no particular buildings of merit in this lane other than Nos. 6-8 Corpus Christi Lane but the views of the backland outbuildings and roofscapes in West Street and Silver Street provide an interesting dimension to the Conservation Area. The end of the lane terminates at a field gate into open pasture.

Map 2 - Character Zone B
The Causeway



Streetscene along The Causeway

Portholme Meadow
Site of Special
Scientific Interest

Character Zones

Legend

- Conservation Area
- Views
- Space leaks/townscape poor
- Protected Open Space
- Views stopped
- Important corner
- Landmark
- Wide angle/distant views
- Frontage requiring enhancement
- Grade II Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Important Open Space



The riverside footpath

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Character Zone C : West Street

4.32 West Street provides another contrast within the Godmanchester Conservation Area and is a very fine grouping of buildings and spaces.

4.33 The sweeping course of the street is matched by a less dense, less formal arrangement of plots, some of which are set back from the pavement edge behind high boundary walls. The result is an informal, private character, with only a few buildings built onto the pavement edge. With the exception of the terraces at the junction with The Causeway, the plots associated with the dwellings are much more generous than in the constrained locations of Post Street. On the west side, the plots run down to the River Great Ouse. Trees and boundary planting contribute very positively as West Street gradually winds into the open countryside.

4.34 The transition from dense pavement-edge development to the less formal arrangement occurs very soon after the junction with The Causeway. Here, there is a narrow pinch-point with small-scale buildings on either side of the road. Nos. 44-48 West Street are a particularly fine group of buildings, enclosing the street at its narrowest point and spanning several centuries in construction. Thereafter, the streetscene breaks into its informal, green and spacious character.



Nos. 44-48 West Street

4.35 The remainder of West Street, south-westwards, is marked by a small number of major buildings, interspersed with smaller-scale vernacular dwellings. No. 9 and 42 West Street are large dwellings of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries respectively. Both are now converted to office use but this has had limited impact on their character other than the predominance of car-parking within the grounds.

4.36 The Chestnuts residential home sits behind the wall fronting West Street. Although a very large building, particularly as a result of the very large extensions, the wall mitigates its otherwise negative impact on the street.



No 11 West Street

4.37 No 11 West Street is a very unusual, intentionally 'picturesque' piece of architecture at the mid-point of the street. Its thin, coursed rubble construction is not a local characteristic but is typical of the ironstone buildings of East Anglia and Suffolk. The attractive character and small scale of this building reinforces the gentle atmosphere of West Street.

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West Street looking south along West Street

4.39 Beyond Farm Hall, informality is restored and the character of the so-called 'Belle Isle' reinforces the close relationship between vernacular architecture and its natural setting. The built form becomes less prominent in the streetscene as larger plots disperse the settlement. As the Conservation Area boundary closes beyond No. 31, West Street bursts into open countryside.

4.38 Farm Hall stamps its authority on both the landscape and streetscene. It was constructed in 1746 for Charles Clarke, Recorder of Huntingdon. The massive three-storey Georgian elevation, close to the roadside, is matched by the formality of the parapet wall on the opposite side of the road and the avenue leading northwards to the river, all of which form the designed landscape setting to the hall. The views across this open space are extremely attractive and the landscape design builds upon the natural landscape idyll. The avenue of trees to the north is matched by another to the south of the Hall, within the extensive open garden area.



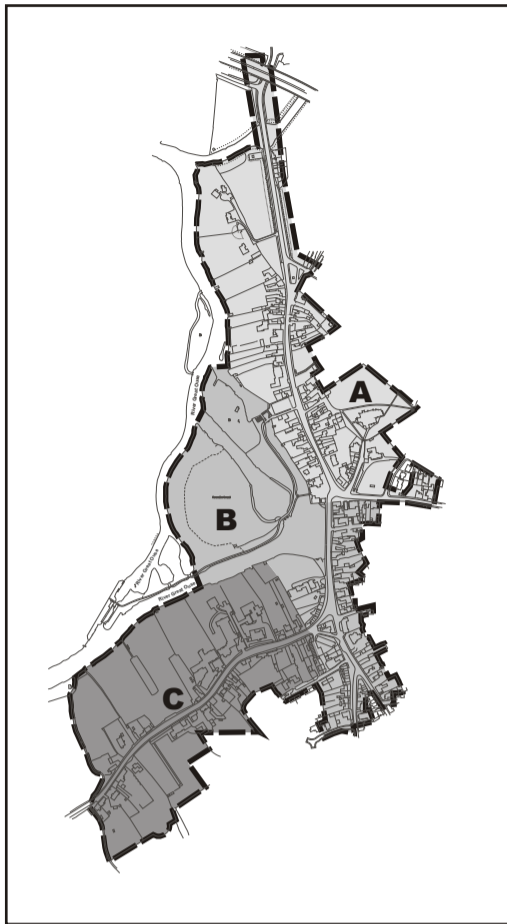
31 West Street

4.40 There are very few elements or buildings which detract from the character of West Street. Only the modern infill at No. 17, 43 and 43a are evidently unfortunate additions to the streetscene. In each case, more appropriately-designed replacement buildings would offer enhancement.



The Avenue west of Farm Hall

Map 3 - Character Zone C
West Street



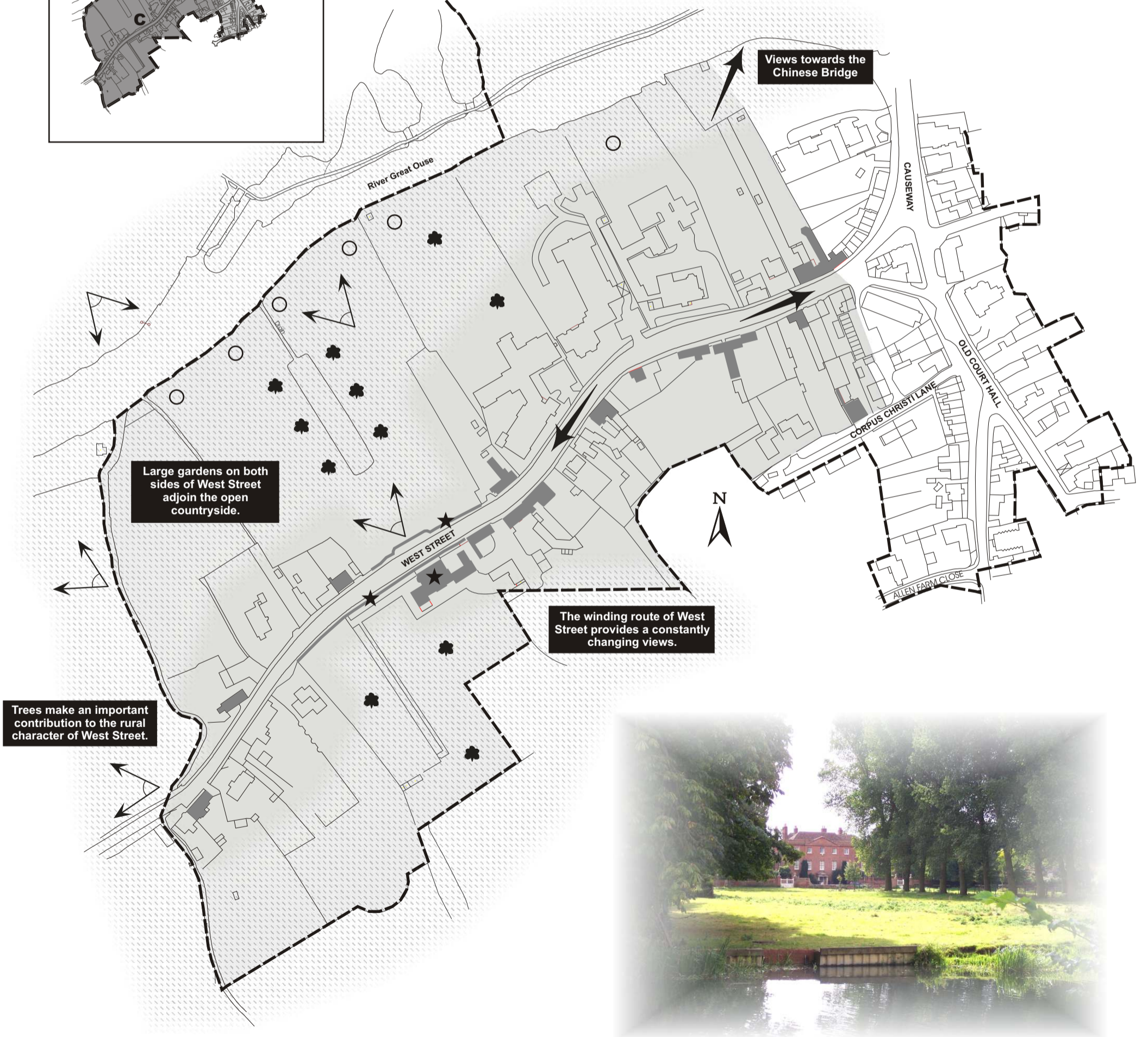
West Street narrows as it approaches The Causeway

Character Zones

Legend

- Conservation Area
- Views
- ⚡ Space leaks/townscape poor
- ↔ Wide angle/distant views
- Grade II Listed Building
- ★ Grade II* Listed Building
- ⊞ Important Open Space
- ♣ Tree Preservation Orders (Individual trees or groups)
- Protected Open Space

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Farm Hall and the avenue from the river bank

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5.0 MATERIALS AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

5.1 MATERIALS

5.2 **G**odmanchester (Post Street) has a character derived from its most intense periods of building activity: the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Subsequent development has not greatly affected the character of the settlement contained within the Conservation Area boundary.

i) Timber frame

5.3 The timber-framed buildings are characteristic of the local timber-frame tradition: generally of a lightweight nature with little or no decorative stud or bracework. This reflects a vernacular tradition of moderate skill in timber frame incorporating a high proportion of re-used material. There are exceptions, such as Tudor Cottage, where the timber framing is of a high standard. The timber-framed elements within the streetscene are extremely important, reflecting the wealthy patronage of the yeomanry who built dwellings here in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These buildings are roofed in the local Cambridge mix plain tile or thatch. Both are extremely important to the richness of the roovescape.



No.11 Chadley Lane.



A timber mullion window in Old Court Hall



Timber frame & thatch Nos. 45 and 46 West Street.



A thatched dormer detail in Silver Street

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ii) Georgian brick

- 5.4 The 18th century had the most profound impact on the architectural character of Godmanchester, not least in scale. Farm Hall and Island Hall are the most imposing examples. Their neo-classical detailing is as refined as you would expect in a prestigious residence of the mid 18th century. In addition, the forward-projecting pedimented gables denote very significant patronage and architectural statement, far above the conventional townhouse.
- 5.5 The humbler dwellings of this period adopt the more common arrangement of symmetrical two storey, three bay form, with central door.



Georgian red brick & pegtile - Old Courthall.

- 5.6 The eighteenth century relied on locally-available materials. Soft red brick is the dominant walling material at this period although hand-made buff clays do exist later in the century. For the roof, most buildings of this date made use of local 'peg' tiles with their distinctive speckled appearance. Mansard roofs, with dormers, begin to be used for townhouses at the end of the 18th century.



Georgian red brick & pegtile - No. 44 West Street.

iii) Victorian brick

- 5.7 The nineteenth century and the continued prosperity of Post Street gave rise to a number of neat neo-classical townhouses throughout the Conservation Area. Where the builders of the eighteenth century used handmade red brick, the nineteenth century offered local gault brick, buff in colour.



Victorian buff brick and slate - No.1 The Causeway

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- 5.8 The detailing of these dwellings remains 'politely' neo-classical, appropriate to a town of this status and civic pride. The sash windows of the Georgian period remain, usually retaining the small paned glazing. Gault brick is coupled with natural slate imported to the county or handmade (latterly machine-made) clay tiles, often more uniform in colour.



Victorian buff brick and slate - No. 31a Old Court Hall



Victorian porch - 19 Post Street

6.0 ARCHAEOLOGY

- 6.1 The County Sites & Monuments Record contains 195 entries for Godmanchester, of which 104 relate to the Roman period.

Pre-Roman

- 6.2 During prehistoric periods, the alluvial islands and gravel terraces along the Ouse Valley were attractive for settlement and activity. Flint scatters dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Age are known from the area.

- 6.3 There was probably an Iron Age settlement predating the Roman town at Godmanchester, but little trace has been seen. The town lies on a logical and strategic fording point of the river, and during the Iron Age the Ouse may well have been the boundary between the Iceni and the Catuvellauni tribes.

Roman

- 6.4 During the Roman period a small yet significant town grew on the south bank of the Ouse at the crossing point of Ermine Street and the river. A fort was built here, and formed the focus for a road junction with the road to Cambridge. However, as the Roman army advanced further north the fort fell out of use and a civilian settlement replaced it.

- 6.5 The town was organised along a linear plan, with buildings mainly built out of timber. At least one catastrophic fire is known from 150AD. During the 2nd century AD a *mansio* was built, and a temple to an unknown deity Abandinus. With the growth of the *cursus publicus* (Imperial message and post service) the location of the town on Ermine Street was of significance. The *mansio* served as an inn or way station, and that at Godmanchester is one of the largest known in Britain.

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- 6.6 The Antonine Itinerary list two settlements in this area, being *Durolipons* and *Durovigutum*. Conventional scholarship identifies the second as Godmanchester, although some have challenged this assumption.
- 6.7 Other buildings known in town include a bath house and a basilica. The town was walled in the later 3rd century in response to political uncertainty. Industrial remains around the town include pottery kilns and iron smelting, and numerous cemeteries are known. It is likely that Godmanchester formed the service centre at the core of a local landscape of villas, farms and hamlets.
- 6.8 The *mansio* and baths were demolished in the 360s AD as part of the general move away from the civic function of towns seen in the 4th century in Britain. However occupation in the town continued into the 5th century.
- 6.9 The town grew and stagnated at various points in the Roman period, and it is difficult to draw limits on the extent of Roman activity here. There have been numerous archaeological interventions in the town and its hinterland, and certainly the entirety of the current town can be deemed of high archaeological potential and significance. The walled area of the later 3rd century encompassed approximately the area bounded by Cambridge Street, Earning Street and The Causeway, i.e. between the two Conservation Areas. However it should be noted that later Roman fortifications often only defended a core of the urban area and not its full extent.

Anglo-Saxon

- 6.10 The town eventually fell out of use in the Saxon period, and was succeeded by a substantial Early

Saxon settlement in the area of Cardinal Distribution Park. There is a cemetery at Cow Lane from the same period. This settlement fell out of use in the Middle Saxon period. During the Viking period, there is a tradition that there was a dock and settlement along the Causeway, but this has no archaeological support. The main settlement at this time appears to have been at Huntingdon, although the name 'Godmanchester' does derive from name 'Gudmund' and the word for fortification 'ceaster'.

Mediaeval

- 6.11 At the time of the Domesday Survey, Godmanchester was a fairly large estate although still eclipsed by Huntingdon, and in 1212 it became a liberty, and the basis for a wealthy and large mediaeval and post-mediaeval town was established. It is likely that the medieval town core to the north of the Roman area was preceded by the Late Saxon village and manor, and was probably focussed on the church of St Mary and also the moated site to the east. This is believed to be a holding of Merton Priory, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 6.12 In summary, there are three distinct urban cores to Godmanchester, being the area of the Roman town, the Saxon settlement to the east and the Mediaeval core to the north and west. Each has different characteristics and have contributed in a different way to the evolution of Godmanchester.

For more information contact the Sites & Monuments Record at Cambridgeshire County Council. Tel: 01223 717312

Godmanchester (Post Street) Conservation Area Character Statement

7.0 SUMMARY

7.1 **T**he preceding sections describe the essential characteristics of the Godmanchester (Post Street) Conservation Area. Certain key elements are fundamental to the character and appearance of the Area and can be summarised as follows:

- the rural setting of the Conservation Area.
- the narrow, urban built form of Post Street
- the relaxed, riverside setting of The Causeway.
- the informal and dispersed 'country lane' character of West Street.
- the importance of rear gardens, particularly in Post Street, in providing a contrast to the busy through road and an attractive setting for the many listed buildings.
- The absence of backland and tandem development.
- the presence of mature trees and green open spaces.
- the use of consistent construction materials: timber-frame, brick, render, plain tile and slate.
- the coherence of traditional architectural detailing
- long-range vistas into open countryside.

Protecting the special character and appearance of the Godmanchester Conservation Area will be of benefit to residents, businesses and visitors alike – now and in the future.

For more detailed information and advice, please contact Planning Services, Huntingdonshire District Council. Tel. 01480 388424



The river to the rear of Island Hall