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PLAITERS' LEA CONSERVATION AREA, LUTON HISTORIC AREA ASSESSMENT

Katie Carmichael and David McOmish with David Grech

ARCHITECTURAL INVESTIGATION

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HISTORIC AREA ASSESSMENT

Katie Carmichael and David McOmish
with David Grech

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SUMMARY

The Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area lies on the northern fringes of the commercial district in central Luton, Bedfordshire. It is sandwiched between the railway station to the north and the Arndale on the south and was, historically, predominantly associated with straw and felt hat making. Although the integrity of the Conservation Area has been compromised by more recent development, the majority of the surviving buildings are (or were) related to the production, storage, sale and distribution of hats as well as related trades such as dyeing and bleaching, ribbon making, box making or transport. Many are now being used as business premises unrelated to hat making, others have been converted for domestic use, but the area retains the character of an artisanal quarter in much the same way as the Birmingham Jewellery quarter or the Northampton Boot and Shoe quarter. Geographically, the Conservation Area covers a small area, just under 4.5 hectares, with a hub at the crossroad intersection between Guildford Street and Bute Street - each route hosting former hat factories and showrooms, many embellished with impressive façades. This historic area assessment seeks to define the architectural and historic value and significance of the Conservation Area and its immediate hinterland in order to place it at the heart of current regeneration proposals for the town centre. The project has been logged as RaSMIS number 6085 and fits SHAPE criteria as sub-programme number 11111.150 Understanding Place: Assessing Historic Areas.

CONTRIBUTORS

Fieldwork, research and report writing were undertaken by Katie Carmichael and David McOmish. Kathryn Morrison provided guidance on the scope and content of the report and edited the text. John Ette, Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge, David Grech, and Clare Campbell provided additional guidance as part of the Project Board. Thanks are also due to Jacqueline Veater and Gemma Pike, Luton Borough Council, for their support and advice. Graphics were produced by Allan Adams and David McOmish. Photography was undertaken by Steve Cole.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Katie Carmichael (nee Carmichael), Architectural Investigation, English Heritage, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, CB2 8BU.
Telephone: 01223 582782. email Katie.Carmichael@english-heritage.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a detailed Historic Area Assessment of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area in Luton. This was established in 1991 – one of five Conservation Areas in the town – and is flanked by the train station on the north and the Arndale to the south (Figures 1-3). It contains the town's most densely concentrated, and some of the best preserved, surviving elements of the hatting industry and related trades, as well as other industrial, commercial and residential components. The Conservation Area lies to the north of the historic core of Luton and it is clear that development and growth here was entirely contingent upon the health of the hatting industry – as the industry flourished so did the numbers and variety of buildings connected to it. The streets here – Barber's Lane, Guildford Street, Bute Street and Cheapside, for example – mostly follow earlier routes but they were reconfigured to accommodate purpose-built factories, workshops and showrooms all related to the production, display and sale of hats. Indeed, 'Plaiters' Lea' as a name, is a modern invention and part of a successful attempt to brand the heartland of hat production in the town and give it a focus in future urban and commercial regeneration.

In this sense, the area now known as Plaiters' Lea can be regarded as an artisanal quarter in the manner of the Birmingham Jewellery quarter or the Northampton Boot and Shoe quarter and despite degradation in the second half of the 20th century, and more recently, the surviving fabric within the Conservation Area retains a level of integrity and coherence that is both significant and visually impressive. By any measure, Luton's industrial legacy is remarkable, dominated by the development of the Vauxhall car plant to the east of the town centre from 1905, but this was built on the strength of engineering success that had already been created by the industry for which Luton became famous – hat making.

It is apparent that within the Conservation Area development and growth took place over a very short period of time – the period between 1860 and 1880 witnessing the most intensive and widespread development. This may well be associated with the establishment of Luton's first railway station at the relatively late date of 1858 which greatly improved upon the poor existing transport links. An earlier proposal by George Stephenson for the Leighton Buzzard line to loop south-east through Luton and on to London wasn't realised due to local objections about destruction of the 'Great Moor'. Indeed, at a potential shareholders meeting at the George Hotel on 11th May 1844, Stephenson left 'in a very bad mood, vowing that Luton would not have the railway as long as he lived'.[1] Stephenson's line was built in 1848 but terminated at Dunstable and consequently, Luton's residents seeking train travel were obliged to go by coach to Watford and then by train to London. A decade later £20,000 was raised in order to build a rail connection to Dunstable but the site of the station was much disputed: eventually, a suitable site at the northern end of Bute Street was selected. The maiden journey to Dunstable on 3rd May 1858 was notable in that the train, with 22 carriages, broke down and many passengers had to walk home. The extension to Welwyn, which created a link to London via Hatfield, was completed in 1860 and the Dunstable, Luton and Welwyn Railway later became part of the Great Northern Company. In 1862 the Midland Railway started to develop its own line through Luton to London with

construction moving apace and a full passenger service to the capital was in operation by 13th July 1868. This meant that there were excellent transport links in place for both finished goods and raw materials and that buyers' and wholesalers' agents could visit the town regularly and easily. Railway goods yards developed on the south side of the station and development along the Bute Street/Guildford Street axes reflected the desirability of a location within easy reach of the trains. For the next century or so, hatting and related industries flourished in Luton with the majority of firms and workers concentrated in specific production centres close to the town centre and train stations.

At present, there is huge economic pressure in favour of regeneration in Luton and the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area plays a central role in these plans. The Town Centre Development Framework, published in 2004,[2] highlighted the potential of the area and sought to establish a clear role and identity for it within the implementation of the 'Northern Gateway' initiative – that is, development of the area between the Arndale and the railway station whilst attempting to retain some of the historic fabric. More recently, the Pre-Submission version of the Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy (November 2010) identified Luton town centre as performing a pivotal role in delivering sustainable development within the Borough and southern Central Bedfordshire too.[3] Redevelopment, it is hoped, will create a centre that provides scope for employment, retail and leisure opportunities for town residents and others further afield. The Core Strategy explicitly draws upon the historical and geographical character of the area in order to shape new growth and the intention is to integrate high quality existing structures with new buildings in a complementary way that enhances the experience of visiting, shopping, working or living in the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area.

This historic area assessment has followed an established methodology that began with a basic familiarisation of the Conservation Area followed by more detailed analysis of the buildings within it. The analysis, however, was confined exclusively to the visible external fabric, style and function of individual structures, i.e. no internal observation was undertaken at this stage. In addition, documentary and cartographic research in support of the fieldwork was carried out and this was supplemented by discussion with local agencies and individuals. The resultant report contains sections that outline the historical development of Luton and its wider context, the value of early cartographic sources for the area later called Plaiters' Lea, and the current character of the area. This incorporates a commentary on the form and types of buildings surviving within the Conservation Area, as well as their significance and value. In addition to this, the setting of the Conservation Area is assessed in light of the proposed re-development of the town centre: this is augmented by a discussion of the Arndale (variously called the Arndale Centre or The Mall, for ease of reference it shall be referred to throughout as 'the Arndale') and the adjacent civic complex including the library and the Strathmore Hotel. The report concludes with a gazetteer of buildings within the Conservation Area as well as significant structures on its periphery.

The strategic drive for this Historic Area Assessment then is to ensure that a proper assessment and analysis of the historic buildings and street pattern within Plaiters' Lea underscores the area's role and value within the town centre redevelopment proposals. Consequently, this report has a number of strategic aims:

- To assess the individual buildings within the Conservation Area in order to provide a fuller understanding of their developmental history and significance in relation to the hatting industry and allied trades.

- In doing so, help to assign value to the fabric of the Conservation Area, particularly in light of current threat and future risk of alteration and demolition.

- Provide proper strategic understanding of the buildings and street pattern within the Conservation Area and the potential for these to be integrated into emerging regeneration plans associated with the redevelopment of the Arndale and land to the north (the Northern Gateway).

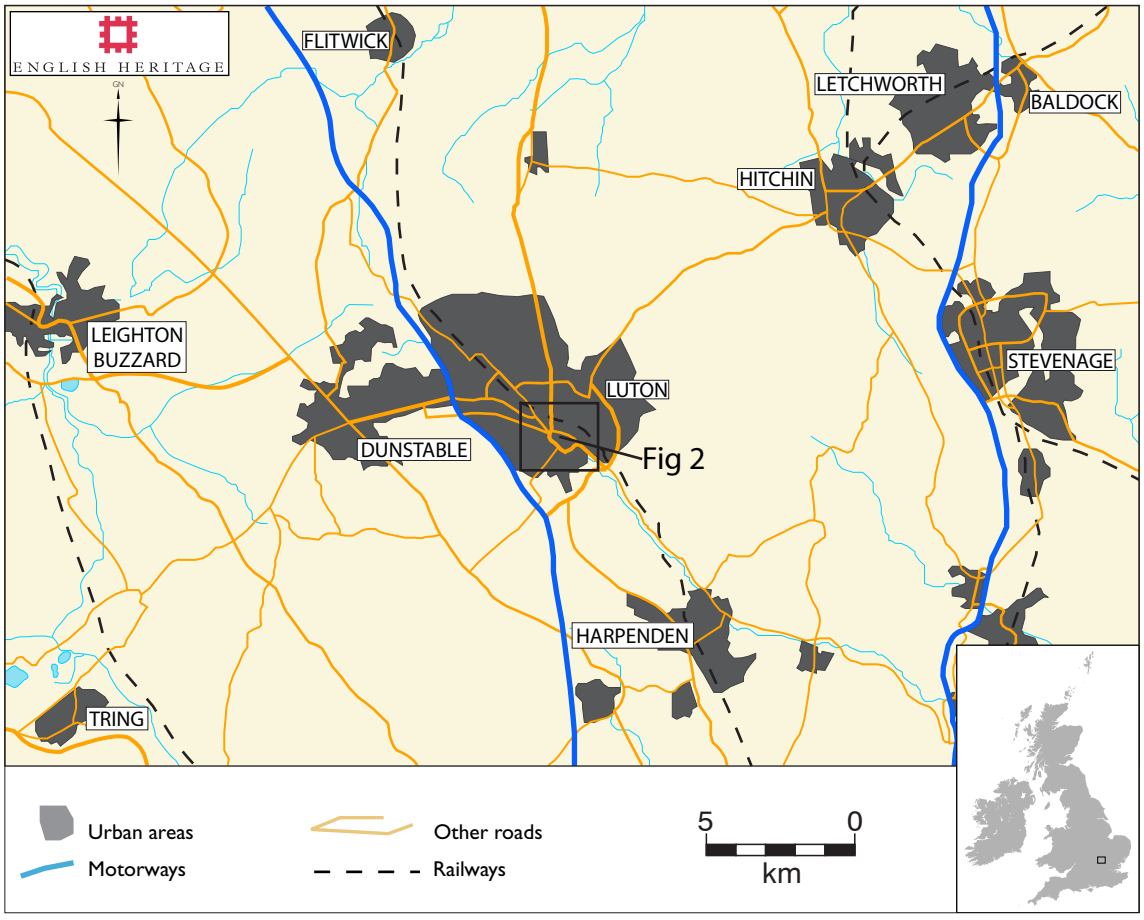

Figure 1. General location plan of the project area. *© English Heritage*

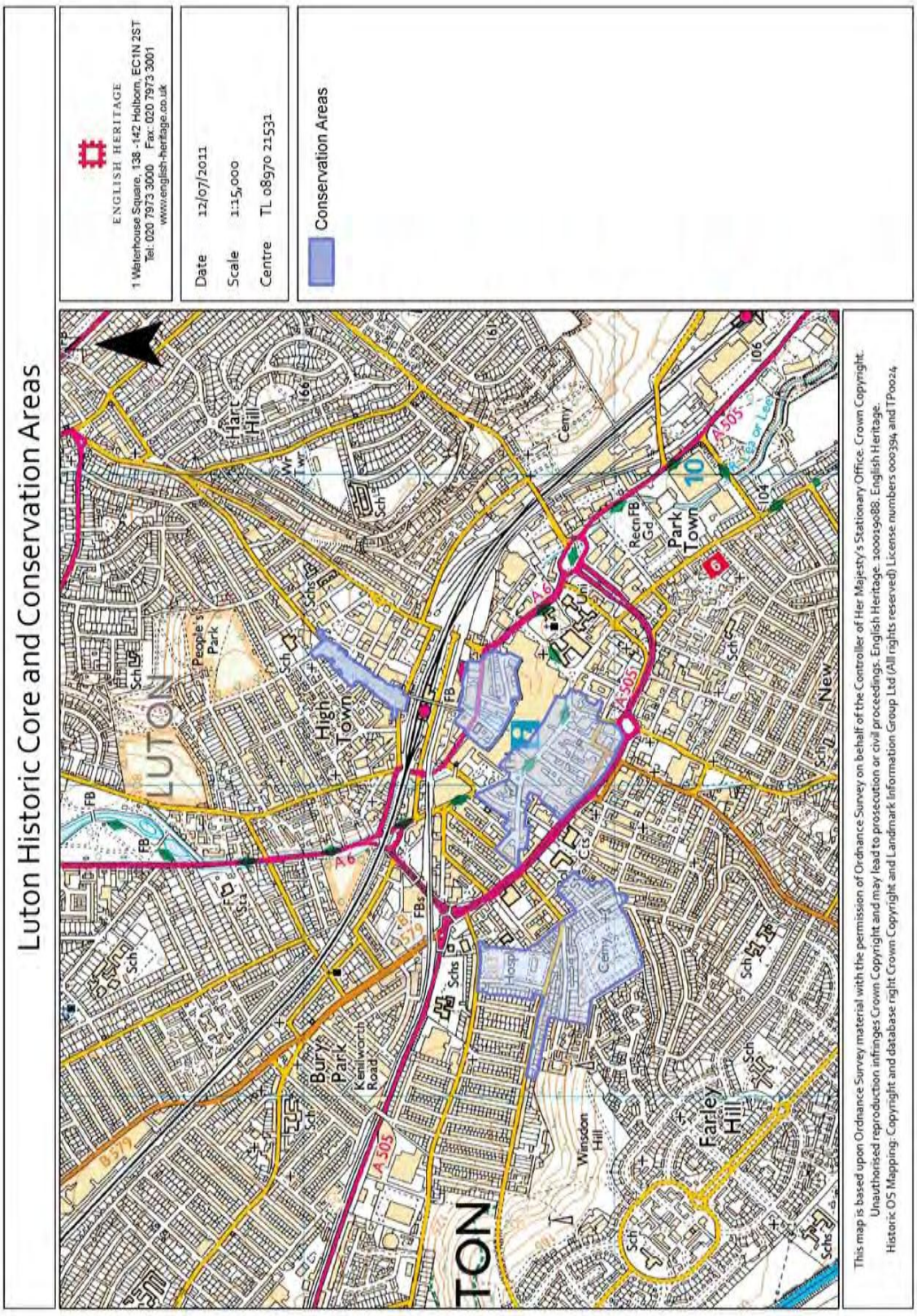

Figure 2. Locations of the four main Conservation Areas in Luton

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Figure 3. Plaiter's Lea Conservation Area, Luton. The boundary of the Conservation Area is marked in green whilst listed buildings are shown using blue triangles.

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PART ONE: OVERVIEW

LOCATION AND SETTING

The town of Luton has developed in a clearly defined gap in the Chilterns ridge. The Chiltern Hills, dominated by an elevated chalk ridge, form part of the Southern England Chalk Formation, and extend north-east from Oxfordshire through Bedfordshire before dissipating some distance to the east of Cambridge. Much of this is protected as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Figure 4).

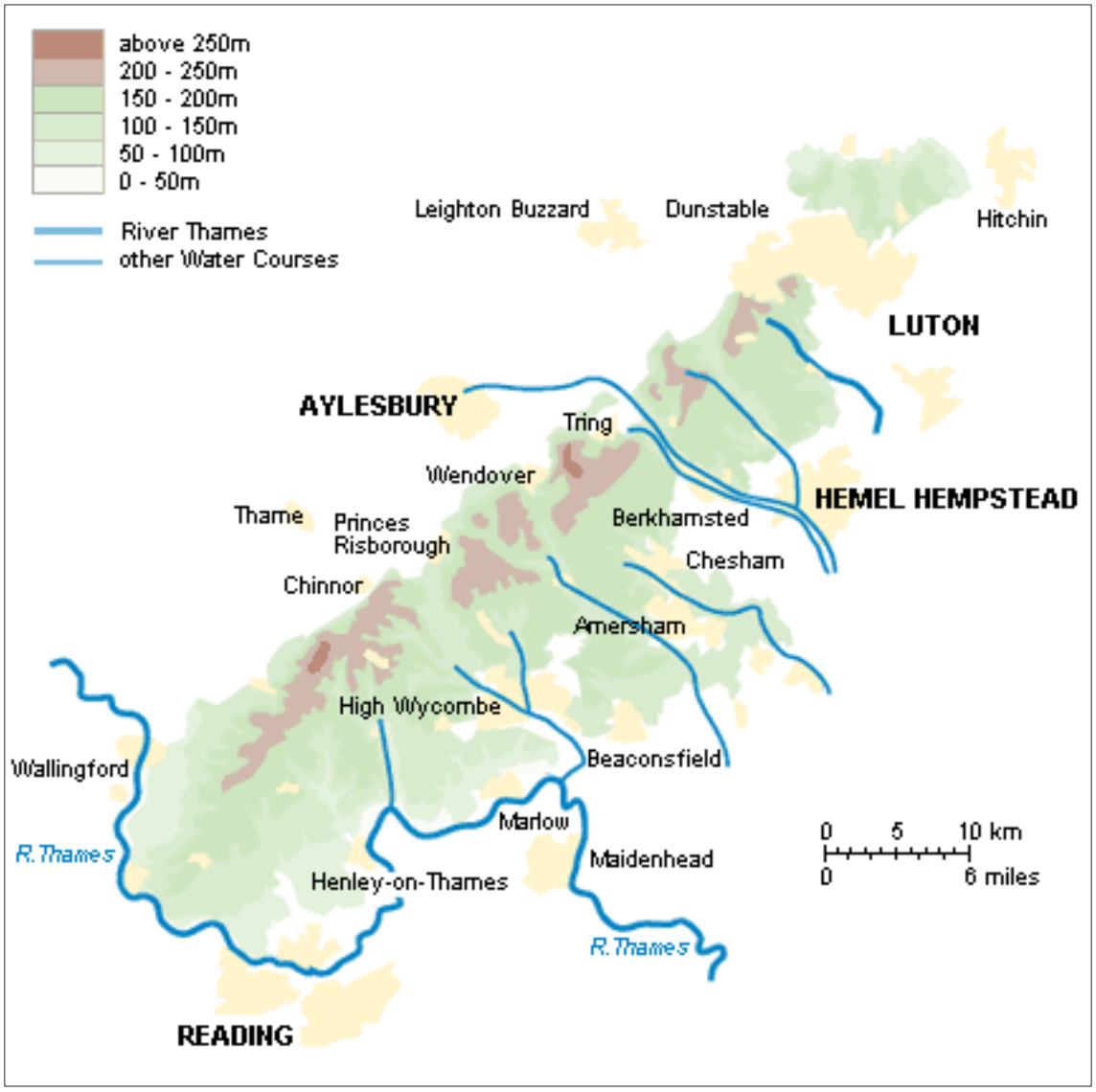

Figure 4. The Chilterns ridge. *Source: http://www.chilternsaonb.org/map3.html*

Chalk is an Upper Cretaceous deposit formed at least 65 million years ago and the variant form encountered in Bedfordshire incorporates a basal deposit of a particularly pure form of limestone known as Totternhoe Stone; once much valued as a building material, and heavily quarried in the landscape to the west of Luton. The associated soils are those expected of chalkland environments, largely dominated by chalk rendzinas which are capped in places on the ridge by tertiary deposits of Clay-with-flints. The river valley gap comprises a broad alluvial plain which widens out to the north-west, but there

are substantial deposits of flinty river gravels in the area of Luton with heavier clay soils to the north-west in the low-lying Aylesbury Vale.

The Chilterns ridge is a typical cuesta landform in that it exhibits an asymmetrical profile consisting of a prominent and sharply-defined north-facing escarpment edge and shallower dipslope to the rear. This dipslope incorporates a number of springlines and these have sapped back into the chalk creating substantial re-entrant valleys. Many of these have played host to historic settlement such as High Wycombe or Chesham but weathering and erosion has, on occasion, been severe enough for a major gap, slicing through the chalk, to develop. These gaps became critical components in the communications network of the area and afforded a prime location for settlement.

Luton is a classic gap town and has grown in the valley created by the River Lea as it flowed south to join the Thames at Leamouth (Bow Creek). The Lea rises in Luton, a few kilometres to the north-west of the town centre, but there is a significant tributary flowing from Houghton Regis as well as an extensive series of natural springs and ponds nearby, particularly on the northern fringes of the town. The most notable of these issue in the vicinity of Waulud's Bank on the Marsh Farm estate (Leagrave Park area). The river itself is modest in size where it flows through Luton, and is culverted for much of its length.

The town has spread out over the lower-lying slopes and terraces of Lower Chalk perched above the river and has expanded to the north-west into the Greensands and Gault Clays of the Aylesbury Vale. Development to the south-east, through the neck of the gap, has been restricted by a lack of suitable terrain and later, the presence of the Luton Hoo estate. When seen in its geographical context the sitting of the historic core of Luton is striking; located as it is at the point where the steep flanking slopes of the valley dramatically fan out to the north and west into the Aylesbury Vale.

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THE HATTING INDUSTRY

i) Development of the industry

The English hatting industry was concentrated in London, Luton and environs, the Denton and Stockport areas of Manchester as well as Atherstone in Warwickshire. Historically it consisted of two distinct crafts – the straw hat trade, which focused on the production of women's hats and bonnets, and the felt trade which concentrated on the manufacture of caps and men's hats. Denton, Stockport and Atherstone formed the centre of the felt trade whilst Luton was the centre of the straw hat trade, with London producing small numbers of caps and felt hats but largely focusing on the finishing and millinery aspects of the industry.[4]

Although basic straw hats have been used for centuries, if not millennia,[5] the process of working straw into plaits and sewing them together into a hat is a sophisticated process the precise origins of which remain unknown. Several European locations lay claim to the process – the Geer valley near Liege in central Belgium is said to have an industry dating from the middle ages, whilst close-by in the German republic of Saxony it is said to date from the 16th century.[6] According to the 19th century Italian novelist Cesare Cantú, who wrote about the straw hat industry in *Margherita Pusterla,* the industry was established in Tuscany in the 14th century – what is certain is that by 1575 Florence was home to a corporation of straw-hat merchants.[7] In the 18th century Domenico Michelacci discovered a way to grow unusually tall and fine straw which allowed for the creation of very delicate plait (known as Leghorn in England) which helped to establish straw hats as the latest fashion accessory, and saw a surge in the number of imports from Italy.[8]

It has been suggested that the introduction of straw plaiting into Britain may be attributed to Mary Queen of Scots, who is said to have brought craftsmen over from the Lorraine and established them in the south of England; the somewhat dubious provenance of this tale can be traced to a Mrs Agnes Strickland, who, in her *Lives of the Queens of Scotland* (1852), refers to a pamphlet – since lost – on the subject.[9] Straw plaiting was without doubt well established in Britain by 1689 when the inhabitants of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire petitioned parliament to reject a proposed bill forcing people to wear wool felt hats – it was claimed that such a bill would ruin nearly one thousand families in the area, affecting more than 14,000 individuals who relied on straw plaiting.[10] No doubt helped by the availability of large areas of cheap land, it is possible that the trade became centred in the chalklands of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire due to the concentration of silica in the soil, which helped to produce very strong and flexible straws ideal for plaiting.[11]

The industry received a boost during the Napoleonic wars when supplies of straw plait from Italy were cut off and, even when the war ended in 1815 and imports resumed, were subject to sizeable duties. As a result manufacturers turned to the local straw plait industry, but the quality of the English plait was deemed far inferior to the fine Tuscan plait until the introduction of the straw-splitter in c.1800 – a simple device which allowed a single straw to be cut into many narrow splints, which in turn allowed far finer plaits than were possible with the use of whole straws. The result was a boom in the straw plaiting industry, which underwent rapid expansion across the south-east Midlands and,

to a lesser extent, as far afield as Orkney and Cornwall.[12] Competition with Italian plait remained sharp, however, and the introduction of Swiss and Saxony goods saw the English plaiting industry contract to a nucleus in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. By 1851 80% of all straw plaiters, around 22,000 people, were based in the south-east Midlands and 50% of those were to be found in southern Bedfordshire.[13]

According to the census returns for Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, at the peak of the industry in 1871 there were 20,701 plaiters in Bedfordshire and 12,089 in Hertfordshire. By 1881 these numbers had reduced to 15,058 and 7,543 respectively, continuing to decline with the 1891 census showing 10,191 plaiters in Bedfordshire and 3,133 in Hertfordshire. By the time of the 1901 census there were only 485 plaiters in Bedfordshire – 98% fewer than 30 years previously – and 681 in Hertfordshire, a reduction of some 94%. The sharp decline in straw plaiting was linked to the rising number of imported plaits from China and Japan – these cheap imports had reduced the price manufacturers were willing to pay for plait and made the work increasingly unprofitable. As such, increasing numbers of plaiters, mainly women, moved to Luton from the surrounding villages and took up work in the more lucrative business of straw hat and bonnet sewing.[14] Although the hatting industry in Luton is said to date from the late 18th century,[15] when it was established on a domestic scale as a direct result of the older and more established straw-plaiting industry, the industry underwent rapid expansion and development in the 19th and 20th centuries. Luton itself expanded faster than almost any town or city in southern England, in 1821 it was a small town with a population of 2,986 but by 1861 the population stood at more than 15,000.[16]

The Luton hatting industry was greatly advanced by the work of two local brothers, Edmund and Thomas Waller, sons of established straw-hat manufacturer James Waller. Edmund Waller manufactured straw hats but also established a warehouse in the centre of Luton which allowed him to buy large numbers of hats from domestic workers in the area, thereby helping to establish the later counter trade whereby individual makers-up would sell their work on to the larger factories.[17] Thomas Waller concentrated on the buying and selling of the plaits, at first buying plait from the prisoners of war at Yaxley Barracks, near Peterborough, before he successfully patented the use of Italian straws to create Tuscan Straw Bonnets in 1826.[18] Along with other individuals, such as Corston and Lancaster who experimented working with different types of grass and rye, their efforts helped to encourage new firms to Luton – including Munt & Brown, Welch, Willis, and Elliott.[19] By 1900 straw-hat making dominated Luton and there were over 400 firms directly employing more than 11,000 individuals within the town.[20]

One of the main reasons for the success and rapid expansion of the industry was the relatively low set-up costs for new businesses and the high returns that might reasonably be expected. For instance, in 1860 an acre of wheat would yield between 15cwt and a ton of cut straws.[21] In the course of just two months a single cwt of straw worth 3s. would create around 40lbs of plaiting straws worth 8s. to 18s. depending on quality, which once plaited and sewn into hats had a wholesale value of £23 to £45.[22] Therefore, one shilling's worth of straw could be transformed into between £7 13s and £15 of finished goods – a return of between 15,000% and 30,000% less labour and production costs.

The felt hat industry was a later arrival to Luton, despite it being the older and more important trade in most other areas of England.[23] It was introduced in the 1870s in an attempt to provide a steady source of work less reliant on the harvest, at first using imported felt hoods from Cheshire and Lancashire where the industry was already well established.[24] In 1877 the Curruthers brothers, originally from Scotland, opened their factory in Luton and began to supply the town with hoods – supply couldn't meet demand, however, and increasing numbers of firms began to manufacture their own.[25] The manufacture of felt hats greatly expanded after First World War, with the firms of Hubbard and Lye commencing the manufacture of completed felt hats in 1920, undertaking all the processes required to turn raw wool into a finished hood ready for sale.[26] Felt rapidly replaced straw as the material of choice and by 1939 it accounted for more than 75% of the Luton hat trade,[27] with Luton producing around 50% of all the hoods used locally.[28] The scrap felt produced as a by-product of the industry was used in the manufacture of cardboard boxes – and many firms set up their own box-making plants as a result.[29]

ii) The straw hatting process

The process of turning straw into a finished hat involves a number of steps but is a reasonably fast procedure – a field of straw can be converted into a stack of finished hats within two months. The first step was the preparation of the raw material – all leaves and knots were removed from the straws before they were trimmed to around 25cm in length (Figure 5). The straws would then be bleached – at first using the fumes from molten sulphur, (Figure 6) and later, in the factories, with the use of hydrogen peroxide which had the advantage of removing minor discolorations as well as bleaching the straw.[30] Once cleaned, the straws would be graded according to size through the use of a straw-sorter (Figure 7), a wooden casing fitted with a graduated series of meshes allowing the straws to fall into separate containers, after which they would be tied into bundles about 15cm in diameter ready for sale by the straw dealers.[31] From around 1800 it became increasingly common to split whole straws into a number of narrow splints by the use of a straw splitter (Figure 8), it is said that the first straw splitters were used by the prisoners at Yaxley Barracks, near Peterborough, between 1803 and 1806 and were made of bone before the process caught on and a

Figure 5. Trimming straws by hand.
© English Heritage, Allan Adams.

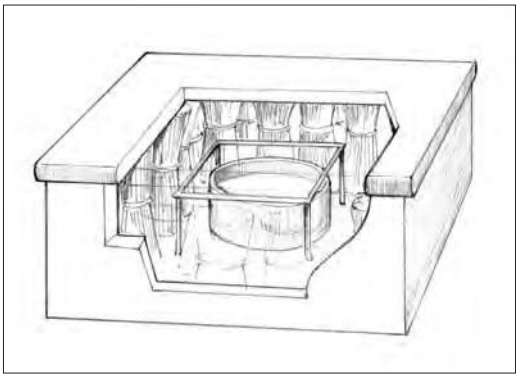

Figure 6. Bleaching the straws.
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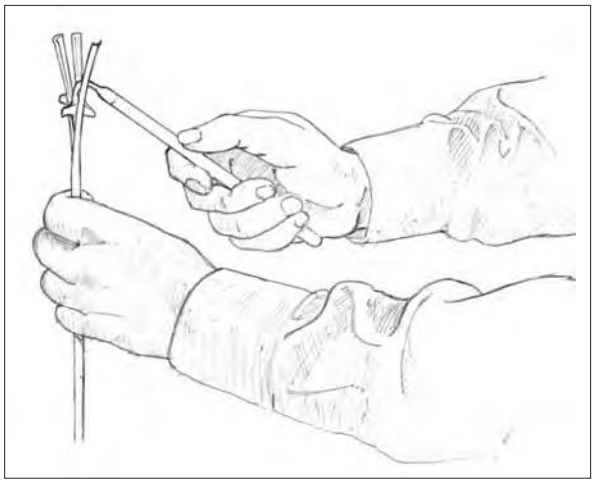

Figure 7 (left). Sorting the straws by size.
© English Heritage, Allan Adams.

Figure 8 (above). Splitting the straws to form splints.
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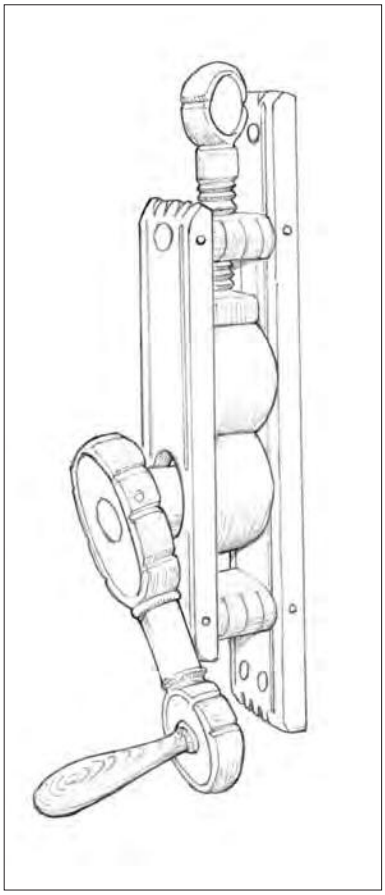

Figure 9. A splint mill,
© English Heritage, Allan Adams.

more commercially viable metal version was created. These simple implements generally had between two and ten spokes and would be inserted at the end of the straw and run down the length, cutting the straw into equally sized splints.[32] Before they could be plaited the straws, whole or splints, would be softened in a splint-mill (Figure 9) – a wooden mangle which could be attached to a door frame. Thus prepared and ready for use, the straws could then be plaited.

Straw plaiters (Figure 10) worked with a bundle of straws or splints under the left arm, each straw being moistened between the lips before being worked into the plait. Plaits varied greatly in design, quality, width and the number of straws/splints, or 'ends', used to create them. One of the advantages of using straw splints was that the outer and inner side of a straw differ in colour and texture – the inner part being whiter and more matt in appearance, thus allowing for a greater variety of patterns when used in contrast to the outer side. Plaits could be anything from a three-end to a sixteen-end plait or more, although plaits made using seven straws were the most commonly used. A fine Leghorn plait would normally use thirteen straws – generally speaking the more straws used and the more complex the design, the greater the price that could be obtained.[33] As new straws were continually fed into the developing plait the ends of these would be clipped off before the plait was completed. After the plait had

Figure 10. Hand plaiting. © English Heritage, Allan Adams.

reached the required length – commonly 20 yards (18m) – it was passed through a plait mill (Figure 11), similar in construction to a splint mill but with grooved rollers to prevent the decorative head of the plait from being crushed – the milling being carried out in the factories or sewing rooms.[34] The process of hat manufacture, as opposed to straw plaiting, starts at this point – manufacturers tending to buy coils of plait from the plait merchants dealing in the markets and plait halls.

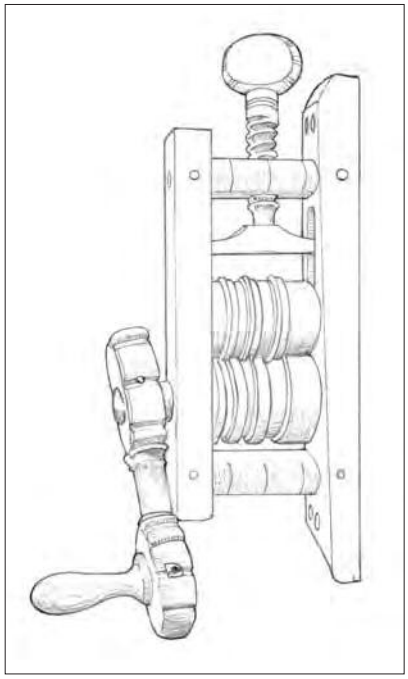

Figure 11. A plait mill. © English Heritage, Allan Adams.

Figure 12. Machine stitching. © English Heritage, Allan Adams.

In order to make a hat, the plait must be sewn in a continuous coil, starting at the crown and ending at the brim (Figure 12). At first done by hand, sewers spent several years as apprentices perfecting tiny stitches that would be almost invisible in the finished item, and learning how to make a hat of the required size and shape. Most of this sewing was done in the home or in small establishments before being sold on to the larger firms.[35] The Vyse firm introduced an American sewing machine in 1868, but in order for the stitch to be concealed the plait had to be sewn from the brim and finishing at the crown – an awkward method which made shaping very difficult.[36]

Machine sewing was improved by the introduction of the *Visible Stitch Machine,* commonly known as the '10-guinea' machine due to its price, by Willcox & Gibbs in 1875, but the visibility of the stitches meant it was only suitable for coarser plaits. It did, however, become very popular, with over 1,500 in use by 1877 and each one capable of sewing a hat in a fifth of the time of hand sewing.[37] Further improvements followed, with Edmund Wiseman inventing a concealed stitch machine in 1878, acquired by Willcox & Gibbs in 1886 and soon known as the 'box machine'.[38]

After sewing, the roughly shaped hats were blocked into their final shape (Figure 13). At first this was done by hand using smooth stones, known as slicken stones, or box irons heated in a fire, using wooden blocks made from alder or lime which were able to withstand the heat and moisture required to shape the hats around them.[39] In the hand blocking process a hat is wetted or steamed and then quickly pulled over the crown of a block and pulled evenly on all sides before it dries. In a hat of complicated shape, the brim may be made separately and attached during the finishing process. Machine blocking was introduced to the industry in c.1860 – although by 1864 only two Luton firms had been converted to machine blocking rather than hand.[40] Machine blocking was done using screw presses until the invention of hydraulic pressure around 1868 whereby each hat was placed in a metal pan of the required shape within a steam heated chamber, a water-filled rubber bag was then lowered and by exerting equal pressure was capable of quickly shaping the hat against the pan. A popular alternative was to heat 'male' and 'female' blocks using a gas flame and, having first steamed the hat, simply press the two together.[41] Blocking and blockmaking tended to be done by male workers, due in part to the relatively late adoption of mechanisation, long after women had come to dominate as plaiters and sewers.

Figure 13. Machine blocking.
© English Heritage, Allan Adams.

Hats could be dyed at various points in the hatting process – sometimes as straws or plait, and sometimes as sewn hats, or even both. Until the 1850s hat manufacturers

tended to dye their own products but the range of colours available to them was limited until the discovery of aniline dyes in 1856. With the introduction of synthetic dyes the bleaching and dyeing industry expanded rapidly and in 1857 Thomas Lye set up as Luton's first independent dyer, leading the way for an increasingly important supporting industry.[42] After the hats had been sewn, dyed and blocked, they would often be immersed in a stiffening agent such as shellac or gelatine before being left to dry (Figure 14). As with dying, the production of gelatine became increasingly important and the British Gelatine works opened in Luton in 1903 – directly supplying the hatting industry.[43]

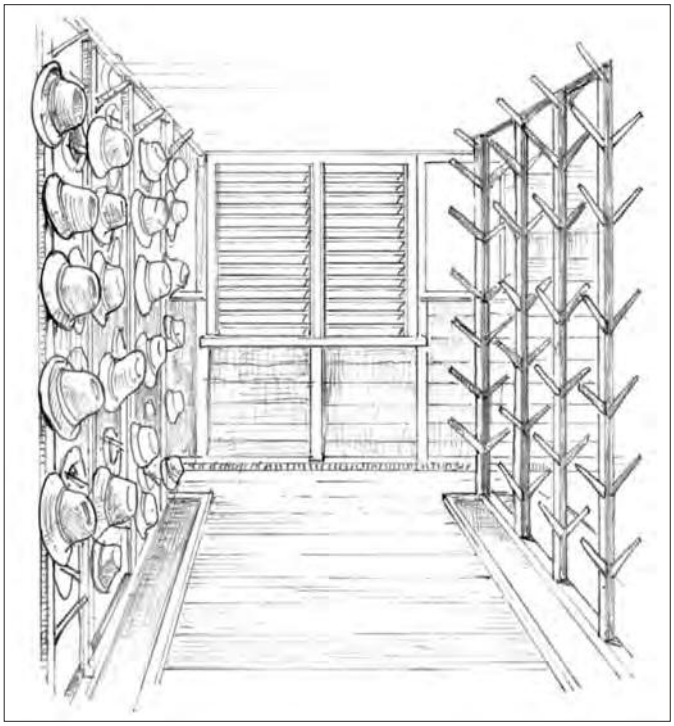

Figure 14. Stiffened hats being left to dry.
© English Heritage, Allan Adams.

The final stage in the hatting process was to finish and trim the hats (Figure 15), the simplest level of finishing being the insertion of a lining and band as most trimming of women's hats was done by the in-house milliners of retailers. Over the course of the early 20th century, however, the 'half-millinery' trade was increasingly adopted where basic ribbons and bows were added, and this continued to develop until hat manufacturers were undertaking the complete finishing and trimming of the hats prior to them being sent to the retailers.[44]

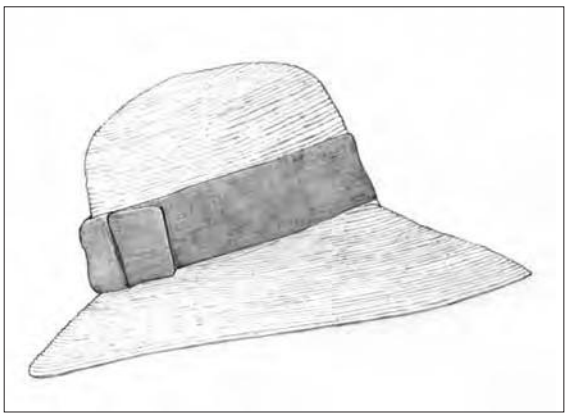

Figure 15. A trimmed hat.
© English Heritage, Allan Adams.

iii) Felt Hat Manufacture

The initial stages of wool felt hat production vary from those of straw-hat manufacture. The raw wool is first cleaned before going through several carding processes to form a web which is then wound around a cone to form a hollow roll of 'cotton wool' – this process was almost always done by women as the fine web would catch on any hairs on the arms or hands and rip. The wool is then cut and into individual pieces and steamed to create loosely felted 'forms'. Continued steaming, rolling and pressing continue the felting process and involved considerable manual labour – as such these 'wet processes' were almost invariably carried out by men.[45] At this point the form has been much reduced in size and is conical in shape, becoming known as a 'body'. Dyeing takes place at this stage before the body is steamed and stretched on a block to open out the crown and create a less conical, more recognisably hat shaped 'hood'.[46] The blocking of the hoods was very painful to do and the women doing this work quickly developed large calluses from the heat and roughness of the felt. At this stage of production some of the crudely shaped hoods would be sold to the millinery industry as 'capelines'.[47] The method of production from there onwards is very much the same as in straw-hat manufacture – after being steamed the hoods would be blocked into shape, stiffened if required and left to dry before being lined and trimmed.

iv) Workers

Plaiting

Plaiting was almost always seen as women's work, although large numbers of children in the region were also employed in the trade. As plaiting was generally a home based activity, and was not affected by the weather or the hours of natural light available, it was seen to be affecting home life in an adverse manner. Often seized upon by those with political or social agendas, plaiting was often (if unfairly) held responsible for women neglecting their domestic duties, 'thus producing the miserable hovels characteristic of the South Midlands'[48] and the commonly held view was that:

> In the busy periods meals were scanty, clothes went unmended and the house was left to take care of itself; 'busy homes; but vacant minds, dirty cottages, neglected children and illegitimate births are the ordinary result'.[49]

The extra earnings made by the women and children were also said to have made the men lazy – preferring to rely on their families than to find regular employment. Unmarried women made the most money from plaiting, but a family could potentially earn as much as the husband working as an agricultural labourer, if not more.[50]

The plaiting industry was subject to marked changes in fortune, with the plaiters' earnings reflecting this. Estimates for earnings vary greatly depending on the season but the average earnings for a plaiter of the course of a year was somewhere in the region of 5s. a week, compared to 10s. a week for an agricultural labourer.[51] The prices paid for plait, particularly in spring and summer, meant that employers of agricultural labourers and domestic servants necessarily had to pay more than in other areas of the country in order to convince their workers to stay – not always successfully, as the agricultural writer Arthur Young claimed: 'it [plaiting] makes the poor saucy, and no servants can be

procured, or any field work done'.[52]

What is certain is that a high proportion of women, and children, in the area around Luton were employed as straw plaiters. The census returns reveal that in 1851 and 1861 about 15% of the women in Bedfordshire had declared themselves as straw plaiters, and of those 25-30% were aged between 5 and 14 years of age. By 1871, 26% of all the women in Bedfordshire were straw plaiters, but only 16.5% of those were under the age of 14.[53] However, these numbers probably under represent the true extent of the plaiting industry as many women and children worked only on a part time basis and would not necessarily have declared their work.

The extent to which the plaiting industry relied upon children is revealed by the establishment of plaiting schools around Luton at the start of the 19th century. Children were generally taught the basics of plaiting at home before being sent to a plait school between the ages of three and four when their work was considered to be financially viable.[54] Even younger children could be found in the schools and although unable to plait, children as young as two might be tasked with clipping the loose ends of straws 'with their scissors tied to their bodies'.[55] At least 10,000 children are believed to have attended such schools in Bedfordshire at any given point during the first half of the 19th century, with as many as 13,000 during the peak of the industry.[56]

The schools charged weekly fees of 2 or 3d., and the children would be expected to earn between 9d. a week aged eight to as much as 3s. a week by the age of fourteen.[57] Although straw plaiting could be done outside, and the children were therefore able to get some fresh air, it also meant that the children were expected to work on their plait almost constantly, indeed:

> Whilst travelling through the country villages, whether at mealtimes or in the evenings, contemporaries remarked that it was rare to see a girl out of doors without her plait in her hand, and working away busily as she walked along.[58]

Accordingly, older children were expected to produce around 30yds of plait a day, and an interview by the Assistant Commissioner for the Children's Employment Commission in 1863-4 with a four year old girl called Mary Scrivener in Houghton Regis reveals that she was expected to produce 10yds of plait in a six hour working day.[59]

Conditions in the schools were often deplorable, with reports of up to 60 children in a room a little over 10ft square, and another of 30 children in a room measuring just 14ft by 7ft – fires weren't an option in such crowded rooms, so the only heat during winter came from small charcoal 'dick-pots'.[60] Although child plaiters were generally safer and healthier than many children employed in other industries, especially in the textile mills of the north, the practise of drawing straws through the mouth before they could be set into the plait was said to lead to sores on the lips as well as associated stomach problems and catarrhal diseases.[61]

Although called 'schools' these institutions were in fact little more than workshops where the master's or mistress's sole duty was to oversee the work of the children. Many of

the mistresses could not even read or write, some could not even plait, and rather than teaching the children to read many of them simply taught the children to memorise passages from the Bible. It was quickly realised that most plaiting schools were 'simply a plait manufactory but with no machinery'.[62] The response by the government to such neglect was to pass the 1867 Workshop Regulation Act which banned the employment of children under the age of eight, and required children aged eight to thirteen to attend school for a minimum of ten hours a week.[63] Initially there was some confusion as to whether the plait schools fell within the provisions of the Act, and it quickly became evident that the number of children employed in this manner made it very difficult for the factory inspectors to enforce the law. The Act was met with great resistance in the region, where it was argued that children needed to learn the skill whilst young if they were to obtain any degree of proficiency in their work. One sub-inspector even admitted that:

> Certain manipulations requiring nimbleness of fingers, if not learnt and mastered at a young age, cannot be learnt at all. If the Workshops Act of 1867 could and would be enforced according to the letter, it would probably have the effect of exterminating the plait and pillow-lace trades altogether.[64]

Accordingly, no strict attempt was made to enforce the law in the Luton area until the Luton School Board brought its first case for non-attendance at school to court on 4th June 1875, spelling the beginning of the end for plaiting schools.[65]

Hatting

Following the decline of the plait schools, and of the industry as a whole, many girls near Luton learnt how to sew – 'a sewer being considered a step above a plaiter, and one who may exhibit a certain amount of personal adornment, to which a simple plaiter would not dare aspire in her village home'.[66] Plaiters had long been used to their independence – not being bound to buy or sell to any one firm or individual, and this sense of pride and self worth seems to have transferred with the sewers into the hatting industry.

The 1866 Factory Act attempted to regulate working hours within the Luton hat factories, but as with plait workshops, proved difficult to enforce due to the seasonal nature of the work and the unusual level of independence that the workers enjoyed. When factory inspectors visited Luton in 1867 they found that:

> The girls, accustomed to going to work when they pleased dressed in nice clothes, resented being classed as factory workers who, they imagined, answered the dictates of a factory bell and went to work in clogs and a shawl. One girl complained to the Dunstable bench that a factory inspector had been rude to her: it seems that he had called her a 'straw-plait girl' and not 'young lady' in the manner to which she was accustomed.[67]

It took about four years to train a girl to become sufficiently skilled to work with all types of plait. Much in demand, the girls quickly found that the large factories in Luton offered higher wages for shorter hours than they were used to in the smaller businesses around the town, and it was therefore unusual for a girl to stay with a small firm once

her training was complete aged eighteen. The production of straw, and therefore of straw hats, necessarily depended upon the seasons and there was always more work to be had in the spring season that the rest of the year. Sewers or 'hands' were paid by piece-work – how many hats or bonnet she had sewn that week – and factory discipline was unknown, with the sewers working the hours that best suited them; often working through the night as they wanted to make as much money as they could whilst work was plentiful.[68]

Many of the women came from the outlying town and villages and therefore took lodgings during the week if they lived close by, or for the entire season if they were from further afield. It has been estimated that as many as 1,000 women would depart Luton in a single week at the end of the season.[69] Many took rooms with families whilst some shared apartments – accordingly the number of inhabited houses in the area in 1871 was 5,960, but the number of families was 8,069.[70] As has been mentioned previously, hatting was a predominantly female occupation – the relatively late development of the industry based on the declining female dominated plaiting industry meant that women were employed in more areas of production than seen in the north.[71] The lack of male labour meant that unionisation in Luton was almost unheard of – this lack of organization resulted in relatively low wages, which only encouraged firms to employ more women.[72] In the largest factories there was an average of about ten women to every one man, and out of the 24 factories in Bedfordshire employing more than 50 workers there were only 183 men compared to 1,928 women.[73] Luton gained a reputation as a place where the men were kept by the women, the Luton Chamber of Commerce going so far as to produce a booklet in 1900, aimed at attracting new industry to the town by advertising the advantage of being able to pay men at low rates as the female members of the family were already employed.[74]

The hatting industry did, however, provide more employment for men than plaiting had – men were required to work as blockers, stiffeners and packers in the hat factories, whilst the secondary trades of blockmaking and dying also employed men. Similarly, the individual 'makers up' in Luton – who split their time between blocking hats and then selling them to the larger firms – were generally men.[75] Despite the fact that women undertook some of the most skilled work in the industry, rates of pay between the sexes varied greatly. The Hat, Cap and Millinery Trade Board was set up in 1919 to oversee the regulation of wages, both for fixed rate workers and for those employed on a piece-work basis. The suggested wages for workers in 1939 were 1s 5d. an hour for skilled male labourers, 1s 1d. for unskilled males and 7½d. for female labourers.[76] These figures, whilst well below what workers could actually expect to achieve, suggest that the industry worked on the basis of paying women approximately half of what men received – this only increased in 1944 when women's earnings were set at 68% of men's.[77]

v) Organisation and trade

By the mid-1860s Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire had a combined total of 48 firms preparing straw plait, many of them bleachers and dyers, and 102 straw plait merchants.[78] Several references have already been made to the way in which the hatting industry was divided up into firms which could be classed as 'manufacturers', 'makers-up', 'wholesalers',

or 'direct traders' according to their methods of production and sale. Manufacturers occupied the large warehouses and factories in the centre of Luton – in 1935 there were seven such factories employing 1,000 women and 900 men between them, the largest firms of Munt & Brown, Vyse, and Elliot employing as many as 500 workers each, whilst the smallest had only around 100 workers.[79] The makers-up, or makers, carried out the same work as the manufacturers but sold their goods 'over the counter' to a middleman, who in turn sold them on to wholesalers – a hangover from the days of plaiting. In 1939 there were at least 125 makers in Luton, the largest of whom employed around 100 workers, whilst the smallest made do with just five or six.[80] Many manufacturers also employed home workers – who worked in a similar manner and it has been estimated that the domestic scale industry accounted for more than three quarters of all the straw hats made in Luton and, as we shall see, had a significant impact on design of houses in the area.

The increased mechanisation witnessed within the hatting industry, particularly in the last quarter of the 19th century, was at first expected to put an end to home working and small firms. However, the machines were available to hire or buy relatively cheaply and could be operated as well at home as in a factory and thus actually enabled the smaller manufacturers to compete better with the larger firms.[81] Before the introduction of wool-felt hatting to Luton it was possible to start up a new business with as little as £5[82] – sewing machines could be hired, whilst blocking benches and irons could all be accommodated within a domestic scullery. The introduction of wool hatting saw start-up costs increase to around £200 to cover the purchase of a boiler, blocking machine and several sewing machines[83] – which, although still very reasonable compared to many industries, was a more considerable investment. If a firm wanted actually to create their own hoods they needed to buy at least ten forming machines at a cost of around £1,700 to £2,500, and employ between 40 and 60 workers to make a viable business.[84] The adoption of increasingly mechanised techniques heralded the period of greatest expansion within the industry and, as previously mentioned, the importation of plait from the Far East at around the same time was directly linked to the decline of the plaiting industry and so freed up the labour required for such an expansion.

The manufacturing branches of wholesalers tended to use their Luton factories for mass production work, retaining their London factories for finer work. The largest of these employed 400 workers in Luton, the smallest employed fewer than 50.[85] The final branch of the industry, direct traders, manufactured their own goods and dealt directly with retailers. This approach started in around 1920 and in 1939 there were around 20 such traders, the largest employing about 350 people, and few employing under 100 workers.[86] The subsidiary industries of block making and dying tended to work on a relatively small scale, the largest block makers employing fewer than 40 men.[87]

vi) Decline

At its height at the turn of the 20th century, Luton was the centre of the British trade in mass manufactured women's hats – so great was the demand for new styles that a fashionable new design seen in Paris might be flown into Luton and a cheaper copy appear in British stores within the week.[88] In 1935 alone it has been estimated that

70 million hats were made and sold in Britain, accounting for around 70% of all the headwear produced for British consumption.[89] By 1871 the total number of men, women and children working in the hatting trade and its subsidiary industries in and around Luton was 8,146 – not including many part time and domestic workers who would not have declared their work.[90] Although the importation of Chinese plait in the 1870s and Japanese in the 1890s had finally put and end to the English plaiting industry, straw hats still accounted for the majority of trade within the hatting industry until 1914 and most of the manufacturers still worked on a small scale.[91]

By the early 20th century the trend for straw had already entered a rapid decline in favour of felt hats and exotic goods from which it would never recover. The Luton hatting industry survived the difficult inter-war years but trade was starting to diminish, resulting in a reduction in employees of around 10% between 1933 and 1938, whilst the London trade continued to improve.[92] By 1939 the hatting industry still provided work for around 16,000 individuals, but underwent rapid contraction during the Second World War when only 4,000 workers remained – and most of those on a part time basis.[93] Changing fashions and competition with foreign trade have been widely blamed, and hat manufacturers tried their best to encourage the wearing of hats suggesting that a man without a hat was improperly dressed and unlikely to find employment whilst maintaining that:

> If a woman does not wish to wear a hat there is not of necessity something wrong with her, but more probably a fault with the industry that it is not producing a hat she wants to wear at a price she can afford.[94]

Various ploys were attempted, including an endeavour to promote straw top hats and policemen's helmets, and even going do far as to encourage sun-bonnets for horses,[95] but to no avail. The local industry proved unable to compete with foreign competition and changing consumer fashions, entering a period of gradual decline. Although a number of millinery businesses survive in Luton they are on a greatly reduced scale, and tend to focus on the finishing aspects of the trade rather than the manufacture for which Luton was so famed.

PART TWO: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LUTON AND THE PLAITERS' LEA CONSERVATION AREA

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LUTON

i) Early History and Archaeology

The River Lea evidently played a pivotal role in the development of Luton and its precursors. The source springs lie immediately adjacent to the Waulud's Bank enclosure, an enigmatic monument consisting of a massive curvilinear bank and external ditch built in the Neolithic, re-used in the Bronze Age and, perhaps, re-deployed as a cult sanctuary in the Late Iron Age and Roman periods.

Waulud's Bank apart, there are few scheduled monuments in Luton and its immediate hinterland. Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age round barrows cluster on Galley Hill, which lies on the northern fringes of the town to the north of Stopsley Common. Two round barrows survive but at least two others are known from aerial photography. Excavation in 1961 suggests that they were re-used in the 4th and 5th centuries AD and again, in the medieval period, when a gallows was established (hence the placename, 'Galley' = gallow).[96] Nearby, at Dray's Ditches, there is a complex of long, linear, ditches probably first established in the Bronze Age but re-configured as part of a more widespread pattern of settlement nucleation within large-scale ditched boundaries at the end of the Iron Age and into the early years of the Roman period.[97] Additionally, there are Iron Age enclosures nearby at Ravensburgh Castle and on Sharpenhoe Clappers too. Here, the main enclosure was established as a medieval rabbit warren but it overlies, and partly re-uses, an earlier Iron Age and Romano-British enclosure.[98]

Within Luton, it is likely that the earliest recognisable settlement would have clustered on the river terraces above the Lea. Antiquarian investigation, alongside rescue work as part of urban expansion in the post-war years, confirms this and has revealed a remarkably complex and detailed history of land use and settlement in the prehistoric, Roman and immediate post-Roman periods.[99] The context and extent of the Late Iron Age and Roman period material that has emerged is, in particular, of national significance. This included a 'log causeway', in all likelihood a timber causeway, associated with Late Iron Age pottery, across the Lea Marshes at Leagrave pointing to the possibility of an early ford here. Iron Age coins were also found in the vicinity of this and further examples including gold staters of the Morini and the Catuvellauni come from a number of locations close to the town centre.[100]

A focus for much of the earlier activity centres on the chalk ridge overlooking the Lea (now occupied by the Leagrave estate), 1km or so to the north of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area. Various remains, predominantly Roman in date, have been uncovered here including a probable villa site (at least one, partly intact, mosaic floor was found) at Bramingham Road near the junction with Ailsworth Road but remains of further potential settlements as well as routeways possibly linked to Watling Street have also been identified.[101]

This pattern is repeated in the vicinity of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area where the presence of a substantial Roman building in the vicinity of Waller Street (now underneath the Arndale) is significant. Indeed, the density of Late Iron Age and Romano-British material and associated features is enough to suggest that there were a number of foci –

settlement, agricultural and industrial – in the area, with a particular concentration along the Park Street – Church Street axis.[102]

The earliest formal named reference to Luton is pre-Conquest and it is probable that the town is mid-Saxon in origin:[103] an Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 571 records that four royal vills, including *Lygeanberg* (possibly Luton or, potentially, nearby Limbury) were attacked by a Saxon army led by Cuthwulf.[104] The placename *Lygeanberg* suggesting a defended enclosure on the River Lea. Davis mentions that the Late Saxon name for Luton is *Lygetune* which has the same cognate as earlier placename references but with a *'tun'* suffix – meaning enclosed or defended farm/homestead.[105] Judging by subsequent references, Luton and its hinterland provided a regular arena for frequent territorial disputes between competing fiefdoms. Another Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry dated 871 places Luton on the boundary in a settlement dispute between Alfred and the Danish leader, Guthrum – although it is the source of the River Lea that is specifically mentioned in the entry. Additional entries in the Chronicles record a successful defence of the town in response to an attack by the Danes in 913.[106]

A pre-Conquest church existed at Luton, reputedly built by Athelstan to commemorate the victory over the Danes, and it was held by the Saxon priest, Morcar, at Domesday.[107] The location of this building is unknown and the present church of St Mary, the earliest phases of which date to 1121, is said to have been constructed on a new site. It has been suggested that on the strength of the Domesday entry (and the named priest) Luton would also have hosted a pre-Conquest monastery and may well have been a minster site.[108] Further pre-Conquest (Early-Late Saxon) activity is concentrated on the high ground to the north-west of the Conservation Area, particularly on the western fringes of what is now Wardown Park. An extensive early Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found in 1925 in the area of Argyll Road/Alexandra Road and has been dated to the 5th and early 6th centuries,[109] but the extent and urban form of Luton at this time – and, indeed, for much of the subsequent medieval period – is unknown.

Luton is referred to in Domesday as *Loitoine* with the manor listed as being among the king's lands – it had been in Crown hands since the reign of Edward the Confessor.[110] Within the hundred of Flitt, the manor had six mills and there is mention of a market grant too – it is clear that this existed at Luton long before the Conquest and was held every Sunday in a location near to St Mary's Church (or possibly the site of the earlier church): the church and its land possibly belonging to the manor at this time.[111] Although it is recorded as the largest manor in Bedfordshire, a note of caution must be exercised as there is no direct equivalence with the town of Luton itself, i.e. it is likely that the manorial returns included several nearby villages and hamlets too.

ii) Luton in the post-Conquest period

After the Norman Conquest, the manor of Luton remained in the hands of the Crown until it was granted to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, by Henry I early in the 12th century.[112] It was subsequently removed from his family and given to a foreign mercenary, Robert de Waudari, by Stephen in 1139 in retaliation for Gloucester's support of Mathilda during The Anarchy.[113] Waudari built a wooden castle on high ground overlooking the town on

the south (at the junction of Castle Street and Holly Street), but it was short-lived and was dismantled 15 years later under the terms of a truce.[114]

In 1182, the manor reverted to the Crown and was granted to Baldwin de Bethune by King Richard in 1194.[115] A second castle, though in a different location – this time to the south of the church of St Mary – was built by Fulk de Breauté in 1221 but, again, this was short-lived and destroyed in 1224 or 1225.[116] Earthworks of this castle mound and the associated bailey enclosure survived into the 20th century but have now been removed. Nonetheless, the present road pattern to the east of the church, especially at the corner of Park Street and Lea Road near the University, reflects the influence of the earlier bailey enclosure boundary.[117] The descent of the manor thereafter became complex and towards the end of the 13th century it was sub-divided into three separate portions with each of these sub-manors developing their own identities.

The urban form of Luton throughout this period is entirely unknown but there is a presumption that it was a linear settlement which developed along the High Street, now known as George Street, and stretched from the area now occupied by the Town Hall south-east to Castle Hill and the Law Courts. It occupied the first terrace above the river – the area later to become Plaiters' Lea lying to the north of this, directly on the floodplain and the slight undulations above it: this stretch was known as 'Town Common' or 'Little Moor' and presumably reflected its communal (possibly 'waste') character before draining, flood control and enclosure later in the 19th century.

Undoubtedly, much of the medieval building stock in Luton was destroyed in the 'Great Fire' which swept through the town in 1336. It must have had a devastating effect on the town, as well as its people and their livelihoods as four years after the fire it was recorded that at least 200 houses were still in ruinous condition and uninhabited, and that 720 acres of land remained uncultivated too.[118]

iii) Town morphology and the development of Plaiters' Lea Hatting Quarter

The earliest depictions of urban Luton that survive date to the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There are a number of earlier etchings that show general views or particular streets and buildings such as the Corn Exchange on Castle Street but nothing that relates directly to the zone later occupied by the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area.[119]

A general view of the area dating to c.1850 was included within 'The Princess Album of Luton' by Rock & Co. (1862) and shows a very rural setting indeed.[120] The view was taken from the north-west in the area now occupied by the Hart Hill estate, with the church of St Mary prominent, as is the Vicarage House and its garden. The northern end of Church Street is also visible but the area of Plaiters' Lea is still depicted as what looks like parkland and fields with hedged boundaries.

Martha Higgins' map of Luton in 1815 (published in 1855).

This is, perhaps, the earliest known depiction of Luton town centre and clearly shows that by the start of the 19th century, the main focus of urban development flanked George Street. As seen in Figure 16, the 'H'-shaped layout of streets was already well

established at this time with continuous development of domestic and commercial premises along George Street, Park Road and Church Street. This map shows little (or no) encroachment onto the area that became the hatting district; instead, the Little Moor is traversed by a single north-south route, in all likelihood Barber's Lane. It may well be that this is an early route to the town centre, probably of medieval date and interwoven with the pattern of open field systems on the higher land to the north.

Figure 16. Martha Higgins' plan of 1815. *(H. White, 1977, Luton Past and Present. White Crescent Press)*

Brown's Map of c.1839.

The earliest (accurately) mapped depiction of the town was produced by Brown of around 1839 and depicts the centre of Luton on the eve of substantial change. The street pattern shown here (Figure 17) appears essentially medieval in character and consists of one long street, George Street, which formed part of the main east-west route of communication along the south side of the river. This is, undoubtedly, an ancient route extending south-east to St. Albans and then on to London, crossing the river to the north-west and terminating at Bedford. This map shows that George Street, which is generally narrow, widens at either end where subsidiary routes bifurcate and would appear to have been the hub of medieval Luton. On the west, this space is now occupied by the Town Hall and flanked by roads on the north and south. A more complex arrangement is visible on the east, particularly in the area at the intersection of George Street with Park Street and Church Street, i.e. Park Square. There appears to

have been a wide open space at the road intersections and it is worth speculating that this was, originally, laid out in the form of a village green. If Luton did develop initially as a 'green' village it fits well into a local pattern of early, in some cases pre-Conquest, settlement centres – part of a wider array of dispersed settlement in the region.[121] There were certainly at least two ponds in central Luton – 'Cross Pond' at the corner of Park Square and Church Street which was backfilled in 1836 and 'Long Pond' in Park Street was infilled at a slightly later date. Castle Street, and the first castle site, lay to the south of George Street, with the market as well as law courts sited here.

Figure 17. Extract from Brown's map of 1839. At this time the area later to host Plaiters' Lea is shown as a well defined enclosure flanked by George Street, Church Street and Bridge Road. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service.

Brown's map suggests that Luton developed into a double-row settlement with buildings on either side of George and Park Street, with subsidiary routes feeding into these from the north and south. These smaller tracks and paths are clearly part of a wider network that was inter-woven with the open field system in the surrounding area, especially the chalk downs to the south, and were used to provide access to the market town as well as the river meadows flanking the Lea.

The map is dominated by a large central enclosure, lying on the northern side of George Street. This area was known as the 'Town Common' (previously, at Enclosure in 1808,

it was referred to as 'Little Moor') and it is where Plaiters' Lea was subsequently to develop. It is a clearly defined area flanked by George Street on the south, Church Street on the east, what later became Bridge Street on the west and Midland Road on the north. Barber's Lane, an earlier route leading to the town from the north, bisects the Common. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the area was enclosed, at least partly, within a substantial earthen bank. Indeed, mid-18th century reports mention that remnants of the enclosure still survived at that time, whilst a small section of bank is shown on the 1842 Tithe map (see below), to the north of, and running parallel to, George Street. The enclosed Moor is a notably bold and well-defined feature on all the early maps of the town centre – certainly those pre-dating urban development here – and it is worth speculating that, as in similar locations elsewhere, the enclosure of the river valley here has a pre-Conquest origin.[122]

The Town Moor (Little Moor) was only one component in a much larger extent of valley meadows along the Lea. Flanked on the west by The Great Moor and Stockingstone Bridge, it had evidently been the subject of a long-running tenurial dispute between the Earl of Bute, who presumed ownership, and a number of individuals and families who had rights of commoning on the land. This was settled in a Parliamentary Enclosure session in 1808, the result being that the Lammas meadows were divided up, the commoners losing their rights along the valley but being given the Town Common in return.[123]

One of the commoners, James Gutteridge, built a large house and associated garden covering nine acres over much of the central area of the Moor and this later became the core of the hatting district.[124] Gutteridge died on 1st October 1833 and the court ordered the sale of his property by auction and it is this action, and that by the subsequent landowner, which set in motion a chain of events which led to the development of an industrial quarter flanking the river Lea. Gutteridge's estate on Little Moor was purchased by one of his executors, John Waller, in 1844. The Wallers were already established at this time as the leading family in the production of straw plaits and bonnets, and owned a number of other domestic premises as well as workshops in and around the area of Plaiters' Lea. Thomas Waller, for example, had built a substantial house to the rear of his business property at the intersection of George Street with Barber's Lane.[125]

Tithe Map of 1842 (and update of 1844).

There are two known Tithe maps for central Luton: the first dating to 1842 (Figure 18), with an updated version produced in 1844 (Figure 19), and both very clearly show the encroachment onto formerly common ground along the river valley. The apportionment accompanying the map illustrates that there were a number of business premises fronting both sides of George Street and that many of these either replaced or incorporated parts of earlier houses, public houses and workshops/offices – a number of which had medieval origins.

The current street pattern, with George Street and Church Street dominant, is clearly recognisable. Bute Street, laid out in 1840, is also shown for the first time, with a number of houses, offices, shops and yards clustering close to the junction with George

Figure 18 (above). Tithe Map of 1842.
© Luton Culture.

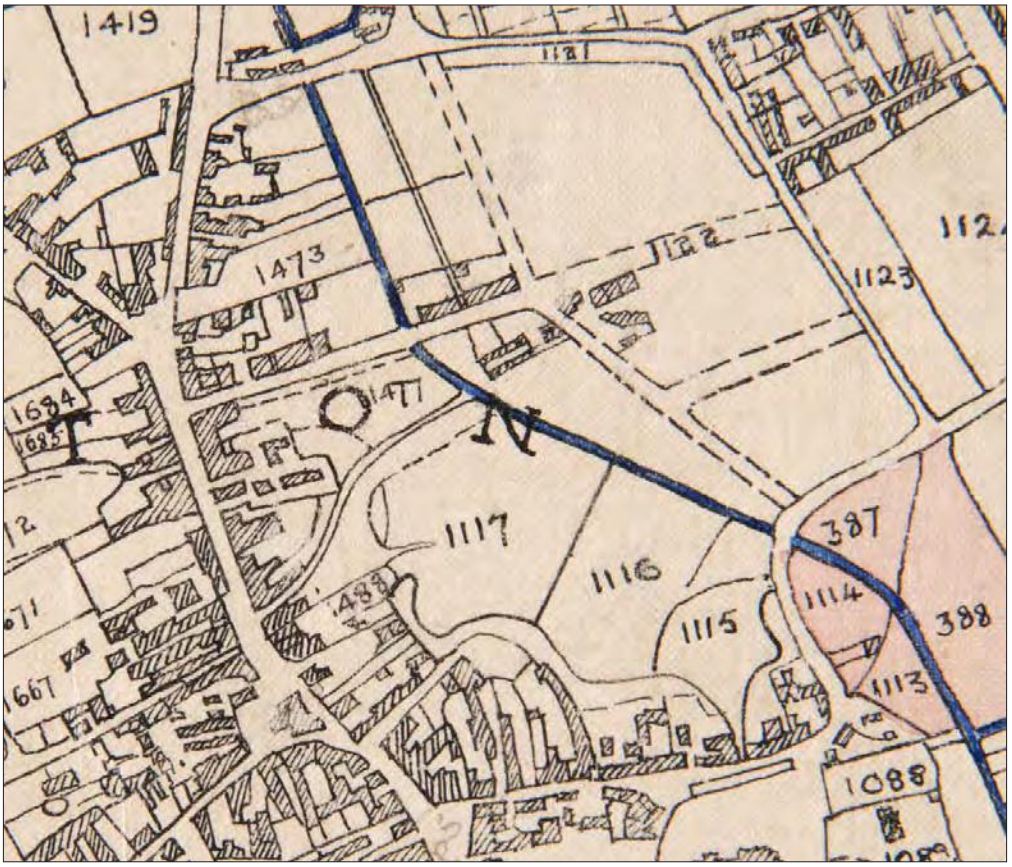

Figure 19 (below). Excerpt from Tithe update of 1844.

Street and now lost to the Arndale. Guildford Street is also depicted for the first time, but not named and shown only in broken lines suggesting that had been set out but not completed at that time. Cheapside is entirely absent. Notably, however, the sinuous track of Barber's Lane remains prominent.

The pleasure grounds laid out by James Gutteridge, later owned by John Waller, can be clearly discerned at the heart of the Moor. They are fringed by strips of woodland and enclose other deliberately planted stands of trees: in addition, a formal approach leading through the small park from Church Street on the east to the residence on George Street, is evident. This enclosed park later formed the core of the hatting district in Luton. The course of the River Lea through the park is markedly straight and it may well have been canalised as part of the formal garden layout and, perhaps, as an attempt to reduce the threat from flooding. The 1842 Tithe map illustrates a large earthen bank flanking the south side of the river immediately to the west of Bute Street – this is still visible by Barber's Lane as a change in ground level and, again, this may well have been an attempt at flood control.

Development within Luton and, specifically, in the area of Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area, gathered pace dramatically in the years succeeding the 1842 survey. The Tithe map update of 1844, whilst less detailed than the earlier version, demonstrates the scale of change in the area of Little Moor. Development had extended further north along Bute Street and included two substantial buildings or terraces – one where the Vyse factory was later built and another since replaced by the DSS offices. Indeed, Bute Street is shown as extending beyond the intersection with Guildford Street, towards High Town, and there is a cluster of buildings on the north-eastern corner of the intersection. A triple range is shown and this incorporates the George II public house as well as an isolated building, closer to the road junction, which was replaced in 1889 by the Walter Gurney & Son hat factory at 64 Bute Street.

The precise course of Barber's Lane to the north of the river is unclear but a small stretch flanked on either side by buildings is depicted: these may well include the small engineering works, shops and a restaurant (23-29 Barber's Lane) that still survive on the western side of the lane in this area. The sinuous course of Barber's Lane to the south of the river has been truncated by more recent construction and the development of the Arndale.

Todd's map of Luton, 1855.

This map, in particular, documents the spread of development along the south side of Guildford Street to the west of the intersection with Bute Street (Figure 20). A discontinuous range of buildings is shown extending west to the junction with Bridge Street – those closest to Bute Street are likely to have been hat and straw plaiting premises (they are on the site of Elliot's felt and straw hat factory and the Nott straw hat factory on Goad's map of 1838); the remainder were domestic. The majority of these, apart from the Nott factory, have been replaced by modern buildings and the (now closed) multi-storey car park.

Figure 20. Todd's map of 1855 shows significant development in the area of Plaiters' Lea. (Frederick Davis,1855, A History of Luton, with its Hamlets etc. Luton.)

Much of the area subsequently comprising Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area is still shown as parkland on this map. The full course of Barber's Lane, extending parallel to, and east of, Bute Street, is clear and there is a concentration of buildings at its northern end close to the intersection with Guildford Street. The listed hat factory at 47 Guildford Street is shown as well as the short range of buildings to the south, on the west side of the Lane.

Todd's Pictorial map of 1853-62 and Corney's Pictorial map of 1855-70.

These maps are remarkably useful as they show rapid development in the town in the 1860s. Individual buildings are illustrated in detail, with front elevations particularly well defined. Large factories, smaller workshops, public houses, domestic residences, and places of worship can be discerned and are articulated by a series of newly constructed streets. Waller Street, John Street and Melson Street were laid out in c.1859 following the death of John Waller. These all crossed Cheapside which ran north from George Street but which was, originally, a formal approach to the park here. Both sides of Bute Street are shown as being heavily developed with hat factories, and further development, including the Balfour hat factory and its contiguous domestic workshops, had taken place on the north side of Guildford Street, to the west of the Bute Street intersection, by 1868. The remainder of Guildford Street – to the east of the junction – is noticeably under-developed. Only two large buildings are shown: that closest to the road junction is the premises that pre-dated the Gurney hat factory; the three-storey building further east may well be 'The Wheelwright Arms' public house at 34 Guildford Street.

Barber's Lane crosses the river Lea by bridge and a short range of buildings flank its eastern side to the north of the river. The listed hat factory (47 Guildford Street) at the junction of Barber's Lane and Guildford Street is also shown on both maps, as is the range of buildings to the south. Both railway stations to the north of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation area are shown on Corney's map which was updated in 1870. The earliest (that closest to the town), the Luton-Dunstable-Welwyn railway, was opened in 1858; the Midland Railway followed in 1868 and is necessarily absent from the Todd map. The

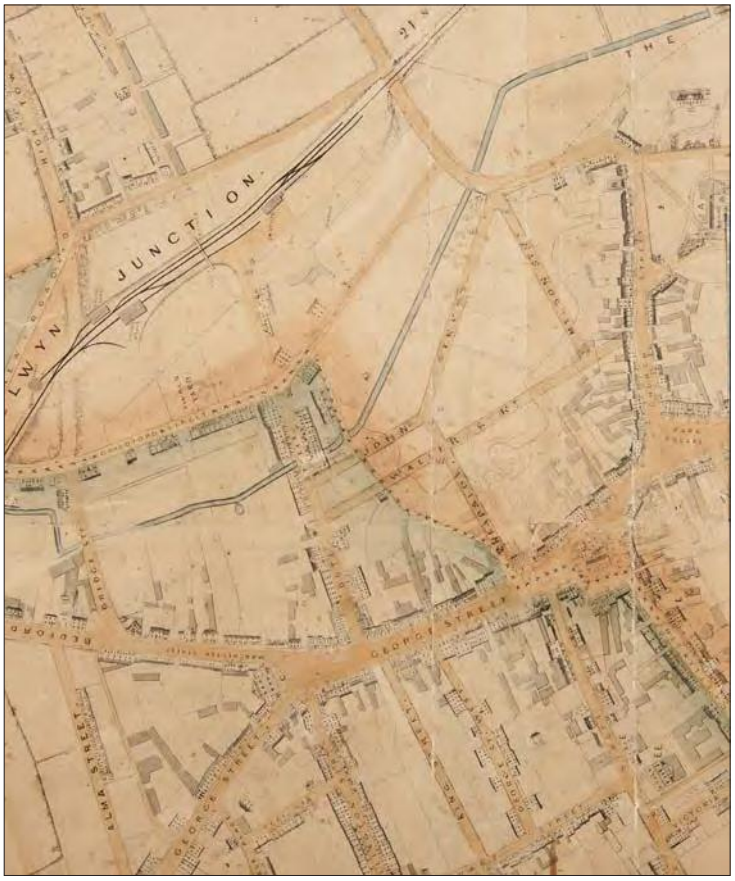

Figure 21. Todd's pictorial map, last updated in 1862. © Beds RO X1-37-1.

line of Waller Street has now been incorporated within the Arndale where it survives as the central thoroughfare. That section of John Street parallel to Waller Street was subsequently re-named Silver Street and extends alongside the northern boundary of the Arndale.

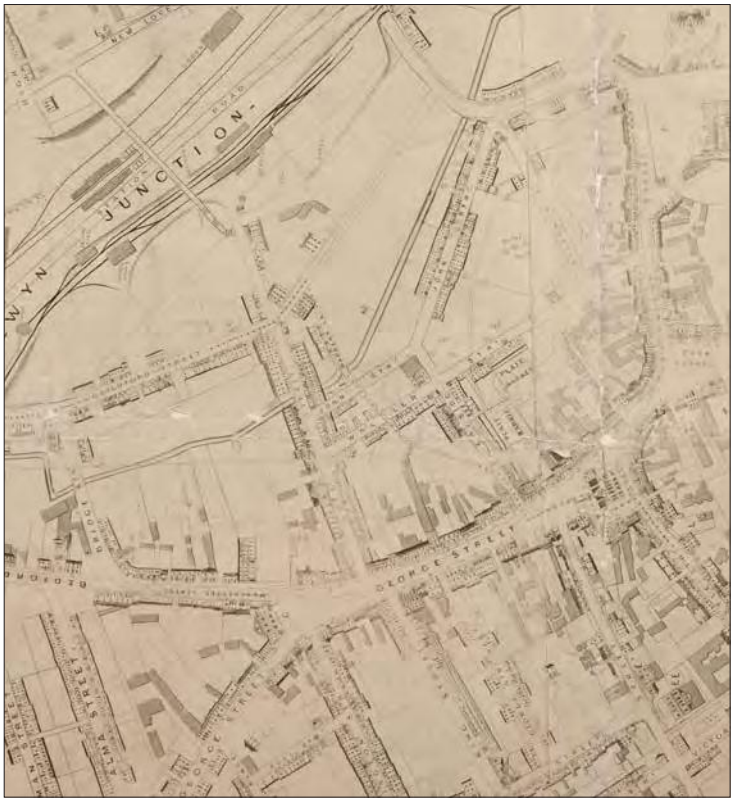

Figure 22. Corney's pictorial map, last updated in 1870. The difference between the two maps clearly illustrates the scale and pace of change within the area. © Beds RO X1-38-1.

Ordnance Survey maps

The 1:2500 Town Plan of 1880 depicts the area of Plaiters' Lea very much as it is seen today (Figure 23). The Arndale has, of course, removed Waller Street but to the north of this the street pattern remains recognisable. The major development is that Cheapside has been extended further to the north and is linked with Guildford Street. Subsequent revisions of the 1:2500 maps in 1901 and 1924 record further development and infill within the area, resulting in the hatting quarter becoming the most heavily built-up area within the town.

Goad's Insurance Map of 1895.

Goad's Fire Insurance plan of the hatting district in Luton was first produced in 1895 (Figure 24) with regular updates until a final plan in 1958. These sequential plans are remarkably useful in that they provide detail, not only on the form, extent and condition of all buildings at the particular time of survey, but also the changing use and ownership of buildings through time. The use of colour to indicate constructional materials – brick, stone or concrete in pink, wood in yellow, metal in grey, and glass skylights in light blue – was augmented by additional information about locations of doors and windows, number of storeys for each building as well as the nature of party walls.

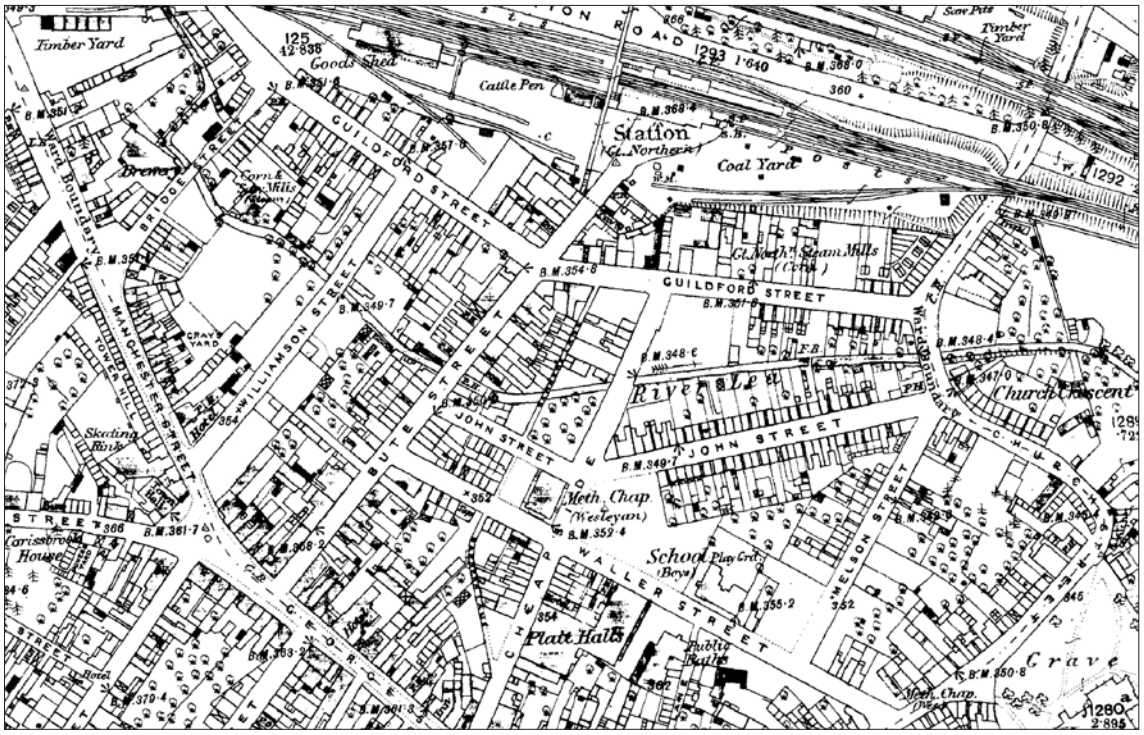

Figure 23 This extract of the OS 1:2500 scale plan of Luton shows that over the course of two decades, development in the hatting and related industries had been rapid.

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Figure 24. A detail from Goad's 1895 series of insurance maps for central Luton. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service.

PART THREE: THE CHARACTER OF THE PLAITER'S LEA CONSERVATION AREA

THE CHARACTER OF THE PLAITERS' LEA CONSERVATION AREA

Movement within the Conservation Area is heavily dominated by the flow of pedestrian traffic in a linear fashion along Bute Street, connecting the rail station with the town centre via the Arndale (Figure 25). Smaller concentrations of pedestrian movement are channelled along Guildford Street and Cheapside, with less on Barber's Lane, but increasing amounts of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on John Street are largely due to the nearby presence of the University of Bedfordshire and associated halls of residence. Vehicular traffic through the Conservation Area is choreographed by means of a partial inner ring road, the main road route running east-west along Guildford Street with substantial flow south into Cheapside leading to the car park for the Arndale or looping to the west to rejoin Guildford Street by way of a section of Bute Street near the Arndale. There is no vehicular access to Bute Street leading north from the junction with Guildford Street – this is now used as an exit from a public car park. The levels of public perception of the historic significance and value of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area are almost certainly conditioned by the transitory nature of experience here, i.e. people are usually walking through it to get to another destination, be it the train station or shopping mall.

Figure 25. View of the Bute Street/Guildford Street intersection. This is the hub of the Conservation Area and frames most people's view of Plaiters' Lea. © English Heritage NMR DP146080.

Development of the hatting industry within the Conservation Area began in the late 1840s and continued to gather momentum in the succeeding decades, so that by the late 1880s a densely occupied, quasi-industrial, sector was firmly established. Such a constrained chronology did not, however, lead to any great homogeneity in terms of building form, and current views within the Conservation Area show a wide range of

structures, in terms of scale, form, fabric and date, as well as function. Views looking south from the train station approach at the northern end of Bute Street are dominated by the traffic arrangements and road disposition at the junction of Bute Street and Guildford Street. This junction acts as an 'eye-catcher', too, when looking north, along Bute Street, from the Arndale entrance – this is most people's experience of the Conservation Area (Figure 26). The views east and west from the Bute Street/Guildford Street intersection are, however, spectacular. Guildford Street, particularly to the east of the junction, has a metropolitan feel to it and consists of a wide street flanked by former hat factories and showrooms, some of which are ornate multi-storeyed edifices such as the Austin & Co. building at 37-39 Guildford Street, or Stirling House, 30 Guildford Street.

Figure 26. View from Bute Street, looking west along the north side of Guildford Street. © English Heritage NMR DP146071.

Similarly, the vista west along Guildford Street incorporates a number of substantial factories and related buildings including the Sunman & Hewson hat factory, 57-61 Guildford Street; the Alexon International clothing manufacturer and shop and the Balfour Hat Factory, 50 Guildford Street. Ultimately, however, components of the earlier streetscape have been compromised by unsympathetic development including the Library Theatre multi-storey car park, built in the early 1970s, refurbished in the early 1980s, but now closed and earmarked for demolition.

This process of constant re-working and redefinition of existing buildings is a recurring theme in the Conservation Area with many substantial premises witnessing structural alterations and change of function soon after construction. R.J. Blow & Co. at 24 Guildford Street typifies this having been constructed in the 1870s as offices with a second-floor warehouse forming part of the goods yard

Figure 27. 24 Guildford Street and the entrance to the former Great Northern Steam millyard. © English Heritage NMR DP146065.

adjacent to Luton Railway Station. By the late 1930s, it had been converted to a hat factory and it is, currently, occupied by a firm of accountants (Figure 27). Similarly, the Vyse Factory on Bute Street was built in 1930 following a fatal fire at the original factory which had been an amalgamation of a number of separate workshops, store rooms and showrooms. Shortly after noon on 25th February 1930 a fire broke out – the result of wax being overheated – and within ten minutes the whole building was ablaze. Of the 136 workers on site at the time, eight people perished – nearly all of them had been working as sewers or steamers on the upper floor.[126] The present building saw production cease in 1956 and became home to the Luton town branch of the TSB, it currently hosts a 'continental' supermarket and a fast food outlet on the ground floor. On the Bute Street approach to the Arndale, many of the earlier shop fronts and ground floors of hat factories and showrooms have been removed or embellished by the addition of new windows, doors and associated fascias. 'The Engine' public house, which is empty and increasingly neglected, is the surviving element of a pair of public houses built here c.1865. The other, 'The Empress', was built over the River Lea conduit and fragments of it – including doorways and window reveals – can be seen in the north wall of the conduit just above water level: this area now hosts a large car park.

The street frontage within the Conservation Area is diverse, particularly at ground level, but is frequently interrupted by vacant plots and large open areas, now generally used as temporary car parks (Figure 28). Indeed, many buildings at the heart of Conservation Area have been demolished and replaced by car parks – building plots on the northern side of Silver Street (opposite the Arndale) are now used as temporary public car parks,

Figure 28. Vacant plots now used as temporary carparks at the heart of the Conservation Area.
© David McOmish.

one of which is the subject of a local ownership dispute. Further substantial vacant plots have been created adjacent to the Austin & Co. factory at 37-39 Guildford Street by the intersection of Cheapside and John Street and at the eastern end of Guildford Street, on the northern side. The cycle of alteration and demolition continues apace within the Conservation Area.

The vast majority of the surviving buildings are industrial or commercial in origin and use. The most distinctive buildings within the Conservation Area, and the most significant, are the large hat factories with incorporated showrooms, workshops, and storage facilities. A number of these are substantial buildings, some with highly decorative façades, but others are more domestic in appearance and scale. Considering how many domestic residences were once present, many of which would have had an extension for outworking at the rear, it is noticeable that very few such buildings remain within the Conservation Area. Those that do remain are confined to the fringes of the Conservation Area at the eastern end of Guildford Street, with another terrace of houses on the northern side of Guildford Street immediately to the west of the Balfour factory (50 Guildford Street) – and therefore outside of the Conservation Area as it presently stands. Goad's insurance map of 1895 provides an indication as to how many domestic residences once existed: both sides of John Street, for example, were given over to a mixture of commercial and residential buildings but most have either been demolished, rebuilt or substantially modified. Nonetheless, the structures which survive within the Conservation Area represent almost the whole range of building types as well as the entire date range of development.

Character

i) Early factories and related premises; other industrial buildings c.1840 - 1880

Buildings erected during the first phase of development were the result of the main period of progress and growth within the hatting industry in Luton, which saw the decline of the local plait trade, the development of blocking machines and the arrival of the railway. Many of the earliest buildings cluster around the junction of Guildford Street and Bute Street – two of the oldest streets in the Conservation Area.

Figure 29. 47 Guildford Street. © English Heritage NMR DP146079.

47 Guildford Street epitomizes many of the characteristics seen in the buildings of this date (Figure 29). A distinctive hat factory supposedly built in the 1860s but very possibly dating to the 1840s, it is largely domestic in appearance, with a low façade embellished with striking white stuccoed quoins and quite unlike any other hat factory in the Conservation Area. The earliest of the smaller domestic scale properties in the area are 23-29 Barber's Lane, a terrace built to house commercial businesses on the ground floor with private living quarters on the two floors above (Figure 30 & 31).

Originally part of a row of eight properties, only 29 retains its original timber shop front with a moulded central mullion in colonette form with a striking foliate capital, whilst the fascia is flanked by fluted consoles with segmental pediments and lead-flashing. More prominent examples of the domestic form are 66-68 Bute Street, three-storey red brick buildings with brick parapets. A number of sash windows remain – although these appear to be c.1880 replacements of the original glazing – and both have impressive ground-floor shop fronts which incorporate simple pilasters (Figure 32).

Figure 30. View looking north along Barber's Lane to Guildford Street. © Katie Carmichael.

Figure 31. Detail of the fascia and entablature above the shop at 29 Barber's Lane. © Katie Carmichael.

Figure 32. 66-70 Guildford Street. 'The George II' is a later addition to an earlier terrace. © Katie Carmichael.

55-59 Cheapside is a three-storey terrace of three individual properties. Built prior to 1880, they feature sawtooth detailing immediately below the eaves and to the tops of the chimney stacks, whilst 55 and 57 have a Maltese cross style motif within the stone window heads. The ground floors of the properties have been substantially altered but it is likely that they originally contained shop windows (Figure 33).

Figure 33. 55-59 Cheapside. © Katie Carmichael.

The terrace of four properties at 50-54 Bute Street appears to have been erected in the late 1870s and is an example of speculative commercial development (Figure 34). The bold treatment of the first-floor windows is unique in the area, the triple lights with bracketed sills being divided by heavy pilasters which support a broken pediment. The dark brick of the building contrasts strongly with the white painted rendering of the window surrounds, bands and pediment, creating a noteworthy façade.

'The Wheelwright Arms' is likely to date to c.1840 and repeats elements of design seen at 66-68 Bute Street, being three storeys tall with a plain brick parapet and sash windows (Figure 35). It differs, being a public house, in that it has a wide central doorway to either

Figure 34. 50-54 Bute Street. *© English Heritage NMR DP146081.*

Figure 35. The 'Wheelwright Arms', built c.1840, is one of the most distinctive buildings in the Conservation Area. © English Heritage NMR DP141931.

side of which is a window with a central stone mullion. The most striking features are the heavily moulded stone hoods supported on brackets running above the windows and doorway – this incorporation of medieval revival elements is unique within the Conservation Area. 55 Bute Street opened as 'The Cooper's Arms' in 1864 but appears to make use of an older domestic, or semi-domestic, pair of buildings dating to around 1840-50. The arrangement of the sash windows, the central doorway and the brick pediment is markedly similar to features seen at 'The Wheelwright Arms' and 66-68 Bute Street, suggesting that they were built at a similar date. 'The Melson Arms', another public house, is a little later in date – opening in 1856[127] – and is markedly different in style. Located on the corner of John Street and Church Street, two storeys high with a cut off corner and large paned sash windows, it was purpose designed as a public house and is unmistakably Victorian in character.

A number of businesses combined domestic and commercial elements to form an eclectic local vernacular style. One such example is 61 Bute Street, now the 'easyHotel', which was built in the 1860s (Figure 36). Here, rusticated stucco has been used to great effect on the ground floor of the building, whilst yellow brick quoins to the first and second floors further enliven the façade. The sash windows are all surrounded by architraves, the first-floor windows surmounted by moulded brick cornices on consoles – lending a somewhat domestic air to the property. In contrast, 36 Guildford Street sits in a prominent location close the intersection of Bute Street and Guildford Street and its most notable feature is the use of white, banded, rustication in conjunction with a half basement and raised ground-floor wholesale showroom – possibly the earliest occurrence of this in the Conservation Area (Figure 37). The provision of two doors mirrors the arrangement at many other similar properties in the Conservation Area: one providing access to the showroom, the other leading to workshops. The particular style and arrangement of the fenestration, containing large paned sash windows without horns, suggests a date of around 1860-70 and is similar to that seen on other buildings within the area, such as 15 Guildford Street. Indeed, the use and treatment of the rustication is another feature which appears repeatedly within the Conservation Area and on buildings of almost every period.

Figure 36. The easyHotel. © English Heritage NMR DP141936.

Figure 37. 36 Guildford Street. © English Heritage NMR DP141930..

Outside of the central hub of hatting around Bute Street and Guildford Street, but also on the periphery of the current Conservation Area, lay a number of domestic premises, as well as supporting industries. Relatively few of these buildings survive but extant examples can be seen along Guildford Street. 52-60 Guildford Street is a small terrace of houses erected in the 1860s, each one equipped with a basement for storage and windows allowing for deliveries of hat materials. The houses may well have housed outworkers servicing the adjacent hat factory.

Figure 38. 9-15 Guildford Street. © David McOmish.

Figure 39. 15 Guildford Street. © English Heritage NMR DP146094.

5-15 Guildford Street represents what remains of a previously more extensive range of semi-domestic buildings erected in the 1870s (Figure 38). The two-storey properties retain a number of original shop fronts, and 7 Guildford Street – the largest of the terrace – may have been designed as a bakery, and remained in use as a baker's until at least the outbreak of the First World War.[128] The most impressive building in the terrace is 15 Guildford Street, now the 'China Cottage' takeaway restaurant but listed as the premises of a watchmaker in Kelly's Directory for 1903.[129] The upper floor has three relatively large sash windows without horns (as expected in buildings built prior to the 1870s) set within prominent architraves unlike any of the other properties in this area and the ground floor is dominated by rusticated rendering (Figure 39). There are strong similarities between the shop frontages

at the eastern end of Guildford Street and that surviving at 29 Barber's Lane, most noticeably the narrow fluted pilasters capped by consoles and miniature segmented pediments: again, rusticated rendering in conjunction with sash windows can be seen at 15 Guildford Street.

During the last quarter of the 19th century the area close to the railway station emerged as a commercial and industrial hub. Coal and goods yards were established to the south of the Great Northern station and the section of Bute Street closest to them witnessed intense industrial development. Notably, in the late 1870s, this included the W. Dixon Engineering Works (rebuilt as the Bute Mills) and the Great Northern Steam Mills, so-called because of the proximity to the Great Northern railway station. Despite recent demolition and refurbishment in the area, the core of the Great Northern Steam Mills does survive, but in a much altered form. The presence of R.J. Blow & Co's offices at 24 Guildford Street has already been remarked upon, and is one of the very few three-storey properties in the area at this date.

Figure 40. 24a-c Bute Street, a remnant of the Great Northern Steam Mills.
© English Heritage NMR DP146062.

24a-c Bute Street is clearly a surviving component of the former mill dating to around 1870: truncated rafters on the surviving west-facing gable indicate that the building extended to the west, a fact supported by the Goad Insurance plan of 1895. The northern elevation, visible from Bute Street, comprises a mill building and adjacent office or residential block (Figure 40). The residential block to the east of the mill has been greatly altered: the road here has been substantially raised so that the original floor level is now buried and only fragments of the ground floor window heads can be seen. Indeed, the present door is a modified, formerly first floor, window. Modern windows have been inserted, but fragments of the original, narrower, segmental heads can still be seen. The larger mill building to the west is dominated by a loading bay on the first floor – this has clearly been enlarged in the past, with the addition of an RSJ and concrete sill.

The two blocked and truncated doors close to ground level indicate that the former ground floor of these buildings was significantly lower than the current road level. Other, less substantial, remains hint at the former extent of the earlier industrial area – such as the small building, possibly a smithing workshop, with a freestanding chimney located behind 'The Wheelwright Arms'.

Figure 41. A view of 'The Engine' taken in the early 1930s. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service.

Figure 42. 'The Engine' public house.
© English Heritage NMR DP141916.

A number of new public houses opened near the station around 1870, including 'The Engine', at 43 Bute Street, which was originally built in 1865 but burned down and rebuilt in its current form in 1900 according to an inscription on the gable (Figures 41 and 42). The building is notable for its use of polychromatic brickwork – the Bute Street elevation built using Luton Stock grey bricks with decorative banding, whilst the southern elevation is built in yellow brick with red brick banding. However, many of the features, such as the polychromatic brickwork, segmental window heads and the low relief stencilling in the tympanum above the central window, would suggest a date of c.1865 – therefore the precise extent of the turn-of-the-century rebuilding remains uncertain. Opposite, on the eastern side of Bute Street, was another pub called 'The Empress' built over the river Lea – as previously mentioned this was demolished and only fragments remain visible within the north wall of the conduit.

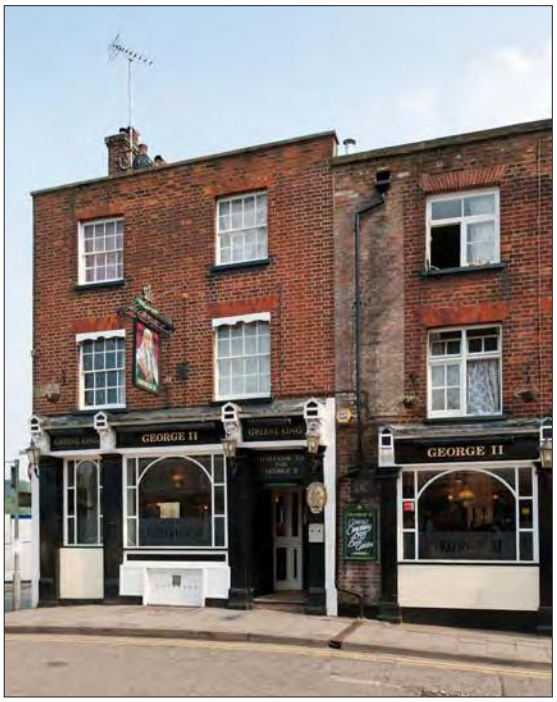

Figure 43, 'The George II', 70 Bute Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP141922.

'The George II' public house, 70 Bute Street, is clearly a later addition to an existing row – it was built in the 1870s and has a number of fine details such as the valances above the upper windows (Figure 43). The ground-floor pub frontage was added around 1880-90, presumably when the pub expanded to incorporate part of 68 Bute St, and appears to be an attempt to unify the façade. 'The Great Northern', 63 Bute Street, retains a remarkably similar window in its frontage.

ii) Continued expansion of the industry c.1880 - c.1905

The second phase of factories and related premises in the Conservation Area date from c.1880-1905 and was therefore contemporary with the collapse of the local plaiting industry and the introduction of inexpensive electricity to the town, allowing for greater mechanisation of manufacture. The biggest single change within the Conservation Area at this time was the construction of new properties along Cheapside and on the formerly open plots at the junction of Guildford Street and Cheapside, whilst a number of properties along Bute Street and Guildford Street, in particular, were rebuilt or substantially altered. It is clear that this period was one of great expansion and, with the exception of some of the domestic properties on John Street, the plots were often utilised to their full capacity with rear extensions into what had previously been open yards.

Figure 44. 'The Cowper Arms', 53 Cheapside
© English Heritage NMR DP141923.

Figure 45. 1882 drawing of 'The Cowper Arms'.
The Builder1882ii: 498.

This rapid expansion of business within the Conservation Area, and the increased investment evident in the choice of architectural styles, reflects not only the adoption of buildings of a suitably industrial scale to allow for mass production, but also increased confidence within the industry and a desire to impress visitors or passers-by through a display of prosperity. As such, the newly constructed buildings display increasingly accomplished designs incorporating decorative motifs in immediate contrast with the simpler, and relatively unadorned, earlier buildings. Many of the most visually impressive buildings of this date cluster at the junction of Guildford Street and Bute Street, but all front onto the main thoroughfares through the town centre including the full length of Guildford Street and John Street. These are 'eye-catching' buildings, intentionally so, with great emphasis on the design of façades.

'The Cowper Arms' temperance hotel and coffee house on Cheapside was built in 1882 to provide workers and residents with an alternative to the public houses of the area. It was constructed in the Queen Anne revival style with a jettied upper floor, triple gable and oriel windows with fine shaped aprons beneath (Figure 44 & 45). Similarly, evidence of another ancillary trade supporting the industry is evident at 31 Guildford Street which has a fine shop front, the glazed bricks within the entrance lobby suggesting that it was constructed as a food shop.

Figure 46. 56 Cheapside was a relatively late addition to the street scene here, being built in a vacant plot at the junction on Cheapside and Guildford Street late in the 19th century.
© English Heritage NMR DP141927.

Domestic, or semi-domestic, properties continued to be built within the area but generally display more architectural detail than previously seen. 54-56 Cheapside is an interesting example of a somewhat eclectic design in the local vernacular tradition, with stone and polychromatic brick used to great effect across all three storeys (Figure 46). The use of small windows with decorated lintels within a continuous string course which arches above each window, as well as the tympana filled with red brick in a herringbone design, suggest it was designed for office or domestic use. The stepped brickwork beneath the eaves is unique within the Conservation Area and forms a hooded feature above each of the upper-floor windows. Built as part of the development of the same plot of land in the 1880s, 52 Cheapside is two storeys high with a small dormer window to the attic. A semi-domestic property, the ground floor consists of a display window

Figure 47. 52 Cheapside
© English Heritage NMR DP146070.

with recessed lobby, whilst above the display window is a very domestic looking three-cant oriel with plate glass sash windows – suggesting that the room here was used as a parlour (Figure 47). The sawtooth detailing beneath the eaves mimics that seen at 55-59 Cheapside, directly opposite.

49 Cheapside, which was built in 1899-1900, is, again, semi-domestic in form, using Luton stock brick with red brick detailing but in the Queen Anne revival style, complete with moulded lead canopy above the first-floor oriel window (Figure 48). This three-storey property, built directly above the river Lea and, therefore, necessarily lacking a basement, is notable for its fine shopfront – in particular, a display window with multi-coloured glass transom lights above, with an etched floral design to alternate quarrels creating a checkerboard pattern (Figure 49). The recessed lobby contains the original door and panelling complete with original letter plate. The style of the aprons beneath the windows, and the shape of the oriel window suggest that the form of the building took inspiration from 'The Cowper Arms', or that both were designed by the same builder.

Figure 48 (left). 49 Cheapside was once part of a terrace that extended to the south. © Katie Carmichael

Figure 49 (above). Detail of the transom lights
© English Heritage NMR DP141924&926.

42-48 Cheapside may well be another speculative commercial development, designed as a terrace of four individual shops (Figure 50). Unusually for a single development, 46 and 48 Cheapside are two storeys tall whereas 42 and 44 are three storeys tall – perhaps allowing for use by firms of varying sizes and therefore ensuring an income for the builder. The properties appear to have been designed this way deliberately, with an unusual brick scroll motif repeated beneath the eaves of each set of properties. Another example of the quirky vernacular tradition, each property had a matching ground-floor display window with recessed lobby accessed by a set of narrow double doors.

Figure 50. 42-48 Cheapside.
© Katie Carmichael.

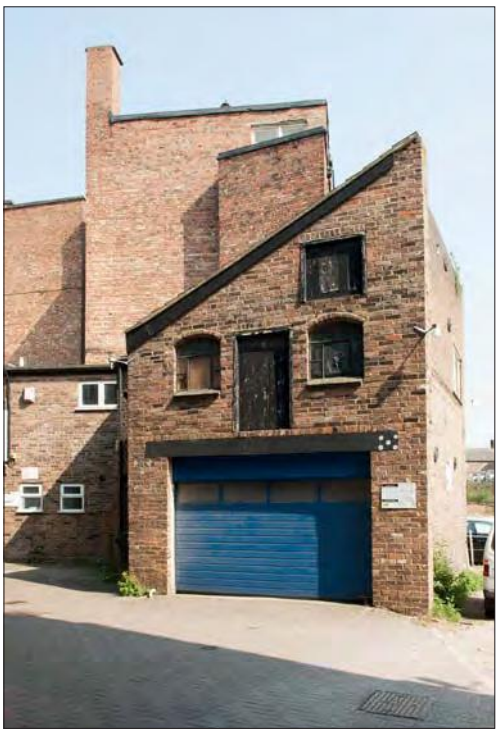

Figure 51. The stables to the rear of 41-43 Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP141928.

41-43 Guildford Street, built as part of the development of the land on the eastern corner of Guildford Street and Cheapside in the 1880s, consists of a range of two-storey buildings – an amalgamation of three formerly separate properties. The entire street façade is coated in painted render but the original outline of 41 Guildford Street is clearly identifiable, with a noticeably less steeply pitched roof. 43 was first used as a domestic hat factory, and the rear workshop with associated stables survives (Figure 51). The stable itself has bull-nosed brick window surrounds and fixed metal glazing. It is remarkable given the number of horses employed in the transportation of hats and materials, and how many stables are shown on the earlier maps (e.g. Goad's Insurance map of 1895), that this is the only surviving example within the Conservation Area.

The predominant character of Cheapside, in contrast with Bute Street and Guildford Street

especially, is of commerce on a largely domestic scale. A number of properties within the Conservation Area, namely nos. 29, 32 and 49 Guildford Street as well as 16 John Street, all built in the late 1880s, incorporate simple brick aprons beneath the upper windows – these motifs, therefore, may well be chronologically diagnostic features when seen elsewhere in the neighbourhood. The more elaborate aprons seen at 49 and 53 Cheapside, with a shaped lower edge, are due to the increasing influence of the Queen Anne revival style visible in these, and other, buildings.

However, it is the development of a truly commercial design during this period that is key to understanding the character of the area. As seen previously at 36 Guildford Street, the use of a raised ground-floor showroom with half basement below marks the emergence of commercial design reminiscent (albeit on a lesser scale) of the large metropolitan warehouses seen in cities such as Manchester.[130] The adoption of pier and panel construction, making use of modern structural technology, is fundamental in establishing truly commercial/industrial properties which are clearly distinguishable from domestic brick-built properties.

Figure 52. 16 John Street. © Katie Carmichael.

10 Melson Street is probably the earliest surviving example of pier and panel construction within the Conservation Area. This three-storey building has relatively little in the way or architectural adornment, with the second-floor windows rising to meet the eaves of the roof, the most noticeable feature being the rusticated raised ground-floor wholesale showroom above a half basement. The lack of ornamentation, and the fact that the only other properties with similar window heads are 42-48 Cheapside, suggests a construction date of around 1880. 16 John Street, which appears to be a c.1890 rebuild of an earlier 1860s commercial property, marks a significant point in the development of the hat factories and warehouses in the area (Figure 52). It is a more developed example of pier and panel construction, and incorporates not only a raised ground-floor showroom with half basement below, but also a prominent gable containing a central oculus.

The basic form for hat factories and warehouses in Luton was well established by the last decade of the 19th century, with increasingly elaborate facades on an ever growing scale. 32 Guildford Street, built in the late 1880s, is a striking building of four storeys plus attic and a half basement with raised ground-floor showroom above (Figure 53). Constructed from red brick with a pier and panel façade, the decorative parapet incorporates a shaped dormer with segmental headed window lighting the attic, whilst giant order arches enclose the upper three storeys – lending an almost Neo-Jacobean style to the

Figure 53. 32 Guildford Street
© English Heritage NMR DP146069

Figure 54. 64 Bute Street: Gurney & Sons.
© Katie Carmichael.

upper floors. The rusticated rendering on the ground-floor provides an immediate contrast to the upper storeys, being more classical in style.

The Gurney & Sons hat factory at 64 Bute Street is another exemplar of its type and one of the most readily identifiable buildings in the Conservation Area (Figure 54). It was built in 1889 on the site of a number of earlier buildings and is a more accomplished design than any of the buildings previously discussed. Constructed from red brick with stone dressings, the raised ground floor contains a recessed central lobby flanked by a display window on either side, with basement windows below. All of these elements are finely crafted, with Corinthian red granite pilasters resting on stone blocks supporting a continuous stone fascia with a segmental pediment over the entrance, terminating in fluted consoles with pediments. The first-floor windows have stone ovolo moulded mullions and transoms set beneath cartouches and moulded stone swags whilst the second-floor windows in the outer bays are surrounded by stone architraves and the central bay contains two arch headed windows. The façade is completed by dentilled eaves and a shaped gable containing a date stone of 1889, a roundel window lighting the attic, and a stone plaque with moulded swag – the overall impression being one of a classic example of late 1880s commercial architecture enlivened by Neo-Jacobean touches.

Sitting somewhere between 32 Guildford Street and 64 Bute Street in terms of style, the former Balfour & Sons hat factory at 50 Guildford Street lies just outside the Conservation Area on its west side (Figure 55). Constructed in c.1900 the symmetrical façade displays a remarkable use of red brick and stone, featuring a

Figure 55. The former Balfour & Sons hat factory lies just outside the Conservation Area on the west but it is of a quality that merits inclusion.
© English Heritage NMR DP141938.

number of Queen Anne revival touches such as terracotta swags whereas the elaborate Neo-Jacobean pedimented gable contains a decorated roundel similar to that at 64 Bute Street. The raised ground-floor showroom windows are situated either side of a central lobby, whilst a trade entrance is provided to the west.

40a Guildford Street, now part of the 'easyHotel', was built in the same style as its earlier neighbour at 61 Bute Street (Figure 47). It was erected in two phases between 1901 and 1905 on a site previously occupied by a number of houses and gardens. Like its neighbour, it is a striking building in red brick with yellow brick quoins and dressings. The ground floor is covered by rusticated render, divided by a horizontal band, with three segmental-headed windows like those at 61 Bute Street, and a matching recessed entrance. As can be seen in the designs for the property, it was designed to blend in with the existing architecture of the town, indicating a respect for the styles and forms already present and a desire to maintain the scale and character of the street (Figure 57). The first phase saw an extension to the west of 61 Bute Street with windows flanking a pair of narrow doorways set slightly off-centre in the façade. The rusticated banding was carefully matched to the existing building, and the yellow brick quoins carried across the new block.[131] The second extension saw another two bays added to the west of the previously added block, with a cart or vehicle entrance and a window of the ground floor, again set within rusticated banding, and with the windows designed to match the existing ones.[132]

Figure 56. 40a Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP146075.

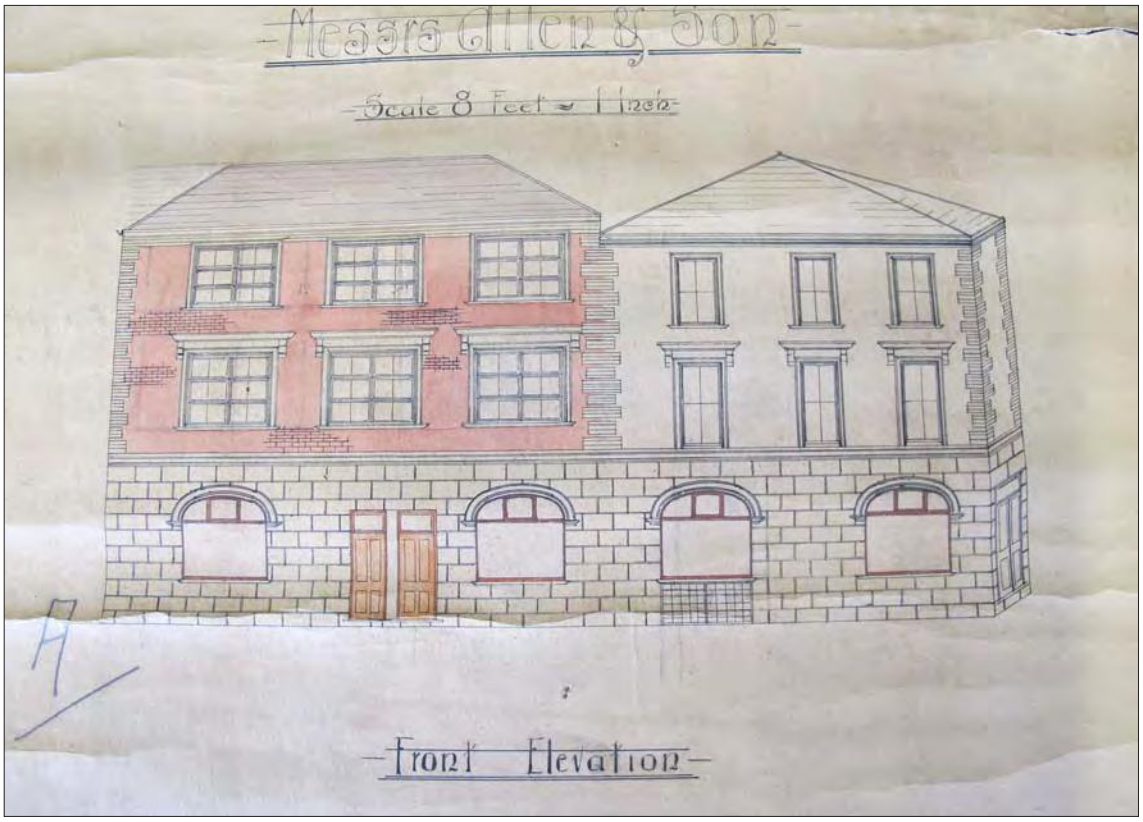

Figure 57. Design plans for the extension to 61 Bute Street. *© Luton Culture. Plan Ref. AD/115.*

Figure 58. 40 Guildford Street, built in 1905.
© English Heritage NMR DP146078.

A more bold design is evident at 40 Guildford Street, an imposing hat factory built in 1905 using a cast iron frame with pier and panel façade (Figure 58). The building extends over five storeys plus attic and basement – making it one of the tallest structures in the Conservation Area. The white painted façade is crowned by a complex gabled parapet behind which is a truncated pyramid turret that may once have supported a flagpole. The building is especially notable for its use of a two storey showroom front, with a giant arcade encompassing the half basement as well as the raised first and second floors, serving to distinguish the showroom and offices from the functional factory element on the floors above. As with 50 Guildford Street, the building features many Neo-Jacobean elements, such as the obelisks to either side of the gable, whilst there are also a number of Queen Anne revival touches including the swag above the attic window.

iii) The Edwardian era and the First World War c.1905-1918

The hat factories and other premises built between c.1905 and 1918 emerged during the rise in the use of different raw materials in the hat making process and increased mechanisation in manufacture which led to the dominance of felt hats as the main product.

Figure 59. 37-39 Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP146095.

Figure 60. 23-25 Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP146098.

One of the most striking buildings within the Conservation Area is the warehouse and factory built for Austin and Co. at 37-39 Guildford Street in 1912 (Figure 59). The style of the street façade – a modified Edwardian Baroque – does not recur on any other building in the Conservation Area. Comprising three and a half storeys, the building is tall and narrow, of brown brick, with white or buff painted dressings and a slate roof. The centre of the façade is recessed between salient lateral bays. At ground-floor level, beneath a plain frieze or fascia articulated by triglyphs, a central show window is framed by engaged Ionic columns and flanked by doorways with rusticated jambs. The doorway to the left have access to a lobby with stairs and a lift, and formed the entrance to the showroom, while that on the right ran through the front block to the factory at the rear. The upper-floor windows, all sashes, have pulvinated friezes; those in the central bay are treated as triplets, with that at first-floor level flanked by Ionic columns. The roof carries four dormers: the pair in the centre have flat tops, while the outer dormers are framed by volutes, crowned by pediments, and contain windows with prominent stepped keystones. The blind gable ends were originally abutted by other structures which followed the street line. The factory wing to the rear is plain and industrial in character, largely faced in Fletton brickwork, with metal-framed windows. It would not originally have been visible from the street, but is exposed due to the loss of neighbouring buildings. This 'backlands' character recurs throughout the Conservation Area as a result of demolitions.

23-25 Guildford Street is another impressive building of this period, probably built c.1910-20, comprising two symmetrically-arranged four-storey premises separated by a party wall but

covered by a single roof (Figure 60). Of brick and stone with rendered dressings, it has been converted into flats and given a new roof with a high eaves band – this sits rather unhappily above the carefully proportioned and detailed façade. The extensive use of banded rustication on all floors marks continuity with earlier commercial buildings in the vicinity, although this is now executed in exposed brick and stone rather than white-painted stucco or render. Each property comprises a wide central bay, recessed between salient bays, as at 37-39 Guildford Street. In each case, the centre of the ground floor (now remodelled) may have contained a shopfront or showroom window. On the inner side of this is a doorway – reached by a flight of steps, presumably spanning a raised basement – which would have served the street block. On the outer side, an entry with a transom bar probably provided access to the long four-storey factory wings to the rear.

Other trades and small-scale industrial developments emerged in the area to the north of Guildford Street, particularly in close association with the railway goods yards on the south side of the main station. These clustered around two foci – the W. Dixon Engineering Works and the Great Northern Steam Mills – both shown on the Goad Insurance map of 1895. Much of this area was reconfigured with older structures demolished or refurbished as well as new buildings erected, during the first two decades of the 20th century. Principal amongst these are the Bute Mills which were built on the site of the Dixon works. It is one of the most recognisable buildings in the Conservation Area, constructed to a high standard using red brick and four storeys high (Figure 61). The most distinctive element of the building is, however, the iron water tank built on a corbelled brick support. This is a landmark feature, visible from a number of locations across the town centre and is emblazoned with 'Brown Bros', an important milling family

Figure 61. The Bute Mills building is one of the most distinctive structures in Luton.
© English Heritage NMR DP141913.

long-established in Luton. The former corn warehouse at 55 John Street is an intriguingly late example of gothic revival design, built for Tomson & Sons corn merchants in c.1913.[133] Built using pier and panel construction, the four storey building is dominated by giant order pointed arches springing from the piers to encompass the windows. It has been constructed using a mixture of Luton stock and red brick with concrete details, the panels incorporate decorative tiles which hint at the influence of the arts and crafts movement. Plans for the proprty drawn up in 1912 by the architect Max Zimmermann (Figure 62) show how well the John Street elevation has survived.

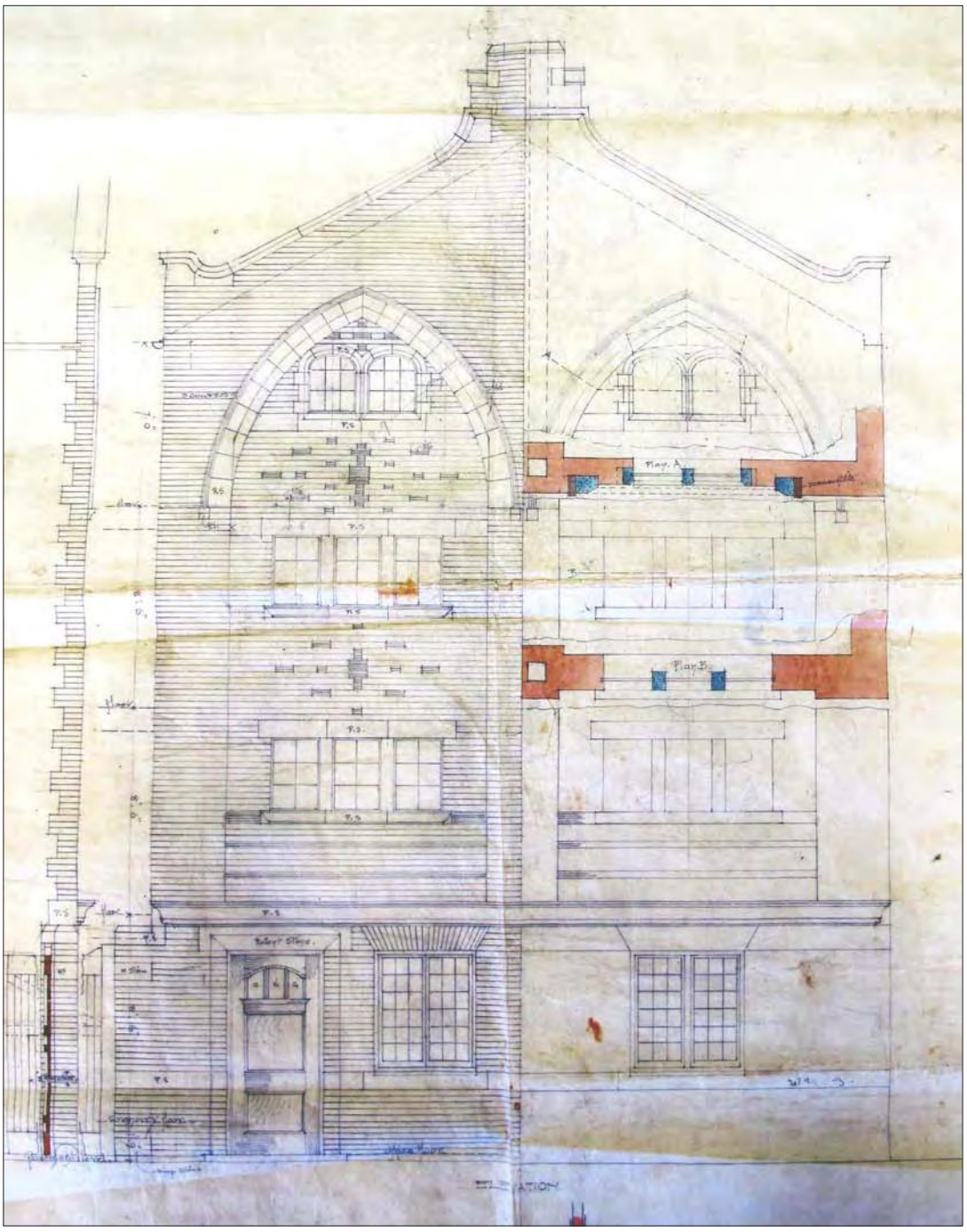

Figure 62. Plans for a new granary on John Street by the architect Max Zimmermann, dated 1912. BRO X843/1/68(1)

iv) Buildings of the inter-war years

Modern factories and other premises built between 1918 and 1939 included Stirling House; the Vyse Factory; 22 and 22a Guildford Street; and 57-61 Guildford Street.

Stirling House, 30 Guildford Street, with its use of concrete render on a rigidly geometric façade, is markedly different in style to all of the earlier properties in the Conservation Area. Erected in 1919 to a design by Basil Deacon, again commissioned by W.G Dunham & Sons building contractors, it is a fine example of Neo-Classical commercial design, where the marginally recessed metal framed glazing panels create a light impression within a bold framework (Figure 63). The ground floor is remarkable in its monumentality with a central bow window framed by Doric columns. To the left, the main entrance is approached via a small flight of stone steps, the side passageway lying to the right of the window. The third floor forms an 'attic' storey, above which is a pierced parapet and, below, a strongly projecting cornice clearly delineating the 'attic' level from the rest of the building. The use of paterae within the entablature and fascia, and the use of pilasters with plain capitals, complete with drops, are all Neo-Classical features much in vogue at the time. However, the incorporation of rusticated render on the outer pilasters once more continues the leitmotif seen on buildings of almost every style and date within the Conservation Area. Designs for the building show that the façade was largely built as shown, the most obvious alteration being the rendering of the inner pilasters which were designed as exposed brick – it is not clear when the change was made (Figure 64).[134] The plans are annotated with the proposed room functions and are typical in their layout – the basement was to be used for storage; the ground floor had a show room at the front with offices, stairs and the lift in the centre (repeated on each floor) as well as access from the side for delivery of goods and for visiting agents, with a room for the packing and receiving of goods to the rear; the first floor had a work

Figure 63. Stirling House, 30 Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP146068.

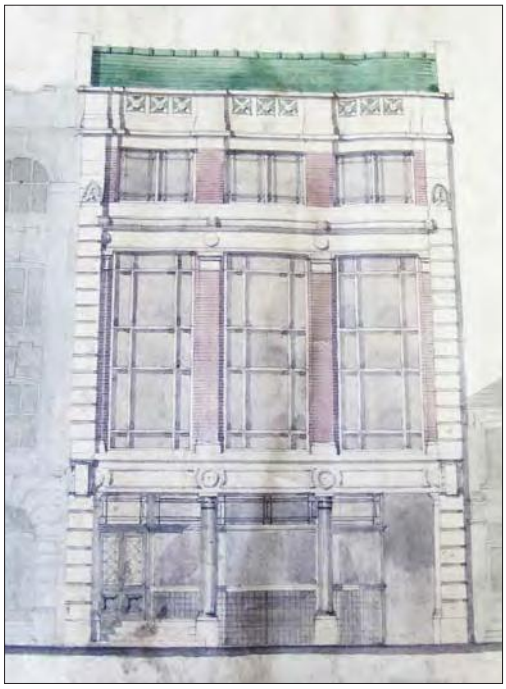

Figure 64. Designs by Basil Deacon.
© Luton Culture.

room to the front with stock room to the rear; the second floor was to have a machine or hand blocking room to the front with a finishers workroom to the rear; whilst the upper floor was designed to house the functions of blocking and stiffening. Such an arrangement made the best use of the space and light available within the building and enabled a logical flow of materials during production.

There are strong similarities between Stirling House and the paired arrangement of hat factories at 57-61 Guildford Street, in terms of form, including the use of projecting cornices at different floor levels, large metal-framed windows occupying the full width of the bays, and use of concrete render (Figure 65). Indeed, W.G. Dunham & Sons were once again responsible for commissioning the design. Although the architect of 57-61 Guildford Street is unknown, the close links between the firm and Basil Deacon, as well as the stylistic similarities, suggest that he may have been responsible for the design (Figure 66). Built to house the business of F.E. Shoosmith, previously of 18 Upper George Street,[135] the building comprises two distinct properties, each a mirror of its neighbour, and whilst there has been much recent renovation the earlier form and fabric remains identifiable. This may well be the earliest surviving example of a 'daylight' factory within the Conservation Area: it was constructed in the 1930s with a concrete frame and finished in a pared down Neo-Classical style with a number of Art Deco inspired details. The upper windows are separated by Doric pilasters, each with a chamfered border. The pilasters feature a 'drop' from the capitals and also at second-floor level where they are incorporated within a string course. The façade is completed by a markedly projecting cornice with modillions. Unusually for a building of this style, the ground floor is dominated by bold, bow, shop windows of the moderne style complete with curved glass and the piers flanking the windows are covered with rusticated render – one of the defining characteristics of building with the Conservation Area of all ages. Undated designs for the property suggest that the fabric of the building has survived relatively intact, save for the re-glazing of the bow windows on the ground floor.[136]

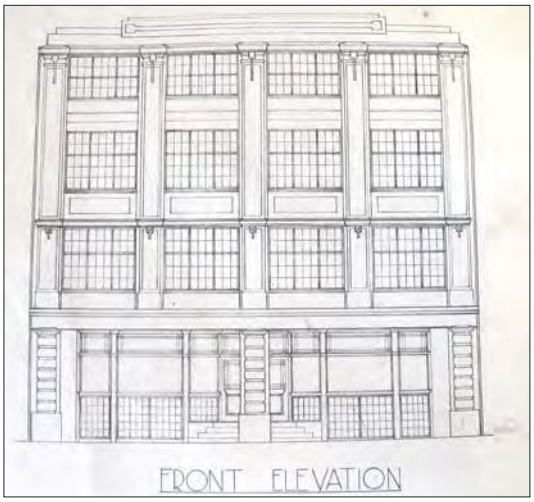

Figure 65 (left). 57-61 Guildford Street. © David McOmish.

Figure 66 (above). Architects' plan for 57-61 Guildford Street. © Luton Culture: AD/139.

35-37 John Street is another example of a concrete framed building and is similar in form to 57-61 Guildford Street but is more modern in style, lacking the Neo-Classical detailing seen previously, with a clean and simple façade dominated by glazing (Figure 67). A certificate of completion for the property is dated 31 May 1933 and names Mr H. C. Janes as the builder.[137] No architect's name is provided, suggesting that the builder may also have been the designer (Figure 68). A symmetrically designed three and a half storey building, with raised ground floor showroom above a half basement, the interior floor levels are clearly articulated by the framing. The glazing occupies the entirety of the space between the piers and consists of large metal-frames divided into multiple small panes. The piers are clad in red brick and the parapet has been rendered. Somewhat unusually the main doorway (to the west) and the passageway (to the east) have been treated equally – the only difference being an extra step up to the main door, with an internal lobby beyond. This helps to create a well balanced design which, despite extensive renovation work in recent years, retains its structural integrity.

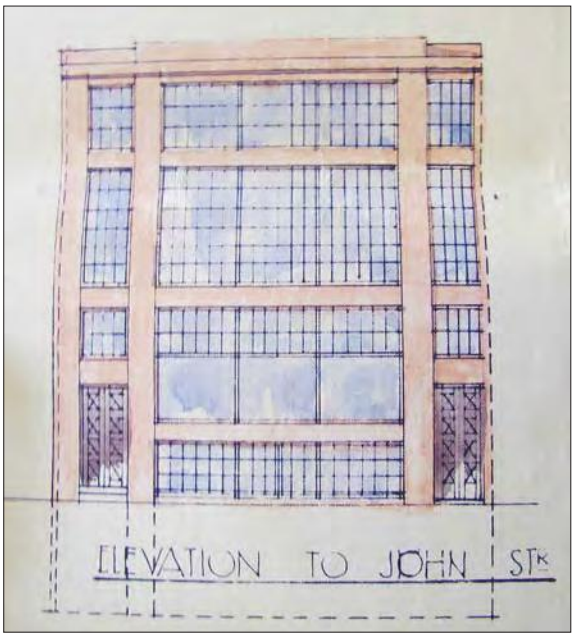

Figure 67 (left). 35-37 John Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP141942.
Figure 68 (above). Design drawn up in 1932.
© Luton Culture.

'The Hat factory' at 65-67 Bute Street is probably the largest building within the Conservation Area, and, certainly one of the best known for its links to the hatting industry (Figure 69). It is a good example of a daylight factory built in the 1930s on a previously unseen scale in the vicinity. Another example of a 1930s 'daylight' factory is the four-storey Vyse factory at 47-53 Bute Street, built on a larger scale than earlier hat factories in the area, as it occupied a particularly wide (or double) plot. Here, the Neo-Classical style of the 1920s was eschewed, although decorative fasces appear in the concrete render of the parapet. Instead, the building adopted a Neo-Georgian idiom, which is somewhat at odds with the industrial form of the building. The windows,

Figure 69. 'The Hat Factory', 65-67 Bute Street. © English Heritage NMR DP141915.

Figure 70. Detail of the Vyse factory, 47-53 Bute Street. © English Heritage NMR DP141914.

instead of being metal-framed, are small-paned wooden sashes, separated by horizontal metal panels masking the floor levels and displaying, in the narrow central bay, the letter 'V' (Figure 70). The piers are faced in red brick, laid in Flemish bond. The ground floor is divided into three bays containing modern shopfronts and a vehicle entry: the original arrangement here is not known.

A more conventional example of the Neo-Georgian style that was current in the early 1930s can be seen at 22a&b Guildford Street (Figure 71). This is a small symmetrical pair of premises, two and a half storeys high, of red brick, with a flat roof hidden behind a soldier-course parapet. The commercial function is betrayed by the treatment of the ground floors: each property has a central doorway, reached via steps spanning the basement and flanked by two display windows. These have smooth rendered surrounds, not the banded rustication favoured elsewhere throughout this district. The panelled double doors and fine transom lights survive. Above this, the first-floor windows contain casements, and in each case the central one is emphasised by a broad, rendered frame with a prominent keystone. Building control plans for the building shows that it was designed by B.B. Franklin in November 1931 and approved in January 1932

Figure 71. 22a-b Guildford Street. © English Heritage NMR DP146064.

(Figure 72). Although the building appears to be a set of identical premises set up for use by two independent businesses, the plans indicate something quite different. The earliest part of the building is the basement and ground-floor on the left (west) – this forming an earlier warehouse. The 1931 plans form an extension to this whereby a matching building was built to the right (east) with basement storage and a ground-floor plait shop with offices, with a first-floor showroom running the width of both properties.[138] Given the homogeneity of the brickwork it seems likely that the extension was part of a longer term plan carried out shortly after the construction of the warehouse and by the same builder, it also seems likely that the façade of the warehouse was refaced as part of the rebuilding work. The apparent lack of access between the first-floor display room and the warehouse below may indicate that the warehouse was used by a separate firm, or that it was a storage area for a wholesaler making use of the newly built retail premises.

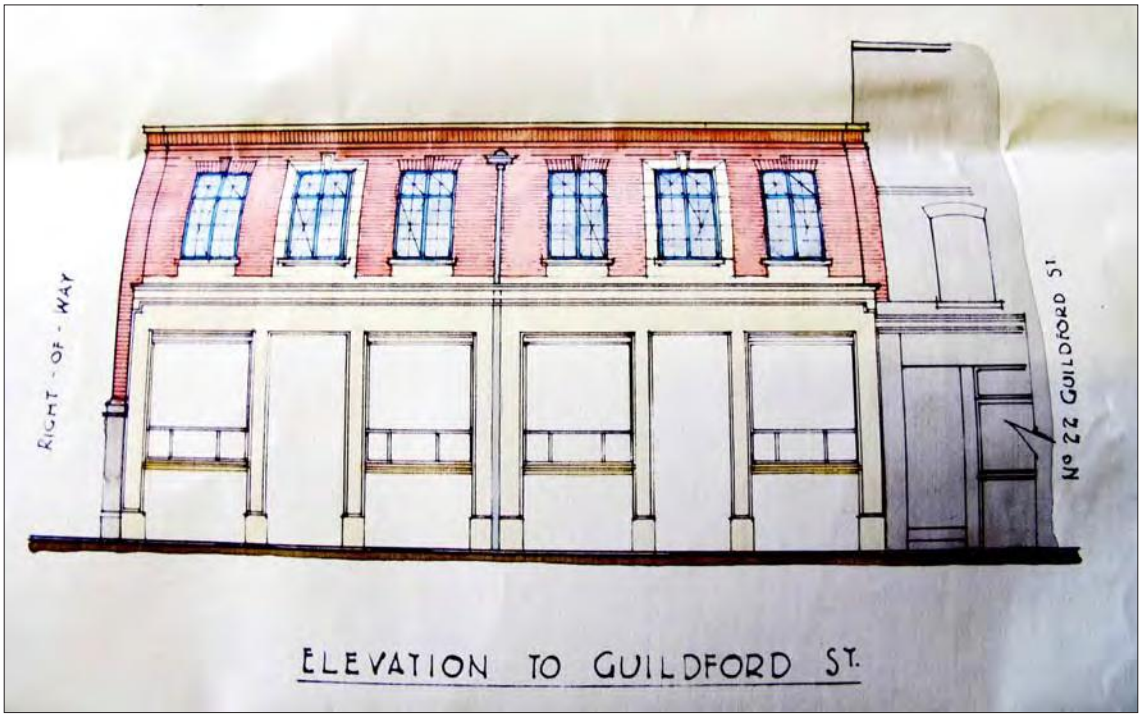

Figure 72. Design for 22a-b Guildford Street, 1932. *© Luton Culture.*

v) Post Second World War developments

Many buildings within the Conservation Area have been altered or demolished in the last 50 years or so, and a number of new buildings erected. The most notable of these are based on Guildford Street or connected to the construction of the Arndale.

The Alexon factory at 42-48 Guildford Street is a relatively sympathetic 1960s addition to the streetscape, with horizontal brick bands aligned to the existing floor levels at 40 Guildford Street, reminiscent of 1930s streamline moderne architecture (Figure 73). Another large structure of the same period is the Job Centre at 55 Guildford Street, known as Cheviot House, which is a six-storey office block with a steel or concrete frame clad in dark brick (Figure 74). One of the most noticeable design features is the

continuous bands of glazing carried around a minimally splayed corner providing a strong horizontal emphasis. The sheer bulk and massing of the building, and the choice of very dark brick, serves to break up the rhythm of the street in a way that 42-48 Guildford Street does not.

Figure 73 (left). The Alexon Factory, 42-48 Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP141937.

Figure 74 (above). Cheviot House, 55 Guildford Street.
© David McOmish.

The Library Theatre car park is a six storey car park built in early 1970s and now closed and earmarked for demolition (Figure 75). The heavily modelled v-shaped GRP balustrades to each of the floors impart a powerful horizontality, punctuated by projecting stair towers, which are glazed on the returns and display deeply incised vertical lines on the elevations facing the street. Overall it is a powerful composition compromised by a dwarf brick wall surmounted by equally incongruous, municipal style and rather fussy railings in front of it at pavement level.

Figure 75. View of the rear of the Library Theatre car park. © Katie Carmichael.

Significant modern development has taken place along John Street particularly on the north side, close to the intersection with Cheapside. Here, new shops have been built with flats and apartments above and these replace (apart from one survival) earlier terraced houses with rear workshops. Further recent development in John Street is dominated by the student halls of residence and apartment blocks (which replace earlier warehouses) – some of which have attempted to replicates styles seen on earlier buildings within the Conservation Area, or to reinstate earlier street rhythms through the use of false building breaks. Additionally, there are a number of empty plots awaiting development (with planning permission for further flats) which detracts from the original character of the area.

vi) Summary

The sharing of certain key characteristics within a diverse mixture of architectrual styles built over a period of 150 years or so is fundamental to the character of the area. The variety in design present within the Conservation Area provides character as well as life and interest to the street frontages, whilst the increasing prevalence of commercial elements of design, based around the requirements of manufacture and wholesale, make the area wholly distinctive from others such as George Street which focused, largely, on retail. The buildings in Plaiters' Lea, established in an area previously given over to common land and private gardens – no buildings existed prior to c.1840 – whilst varied in detail, have a particular cohesion of design resulting from the rapid development of this small area. They represent the establishment, development and subsequent decline of the hatting industry in Luton. The key characteristics of the area are:

- Commercial/industrial frontages
  - Combined doorway, passageway and display window at ground-floor level found on buildings of every period and style.
  - Raised ground-floor over basement, with lights to basement.
  - Use of banded rustication on buildings of all periods.
  - Gables resulting from development at right angles to the street, with long rear ranges occupying the whole of the plot.

- Variety in scale, materials and architectural styles
  - Prevalence, from the 1880s onwards, of four storey factory/showroom blocks, often forming a contrast with smaller buildings to either side.
  - Adoption, from the 1880s onwards, of pier and panel design reflecting the use of modern cast-iron construction, creating a more industrial aesthetic which contrasts with buildings of conventional construction such as the public houses.

- Increasing and often eclectic use of fashionable styles and materials
  - Use of Victorian polychromy, Queen Anne Revival, Neo-Jacobean, Edwardian Baroque, Neo-Georgian and Neo-Classicism.

PART FOUR: DISTINCTIVENESS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLAITER'S LEA CONSERVATION AREA.

DISTINCTIVENESS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The surviving heritage of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area, that remaining above ground as well as below, is under great pressure from a number of threats but most pressingly from planned redevelopments of the Arndale and land (within the Conservation Area) immediately to the north. This is often referred to as the 'Northern Gateway'[139] and planners have identified it as a key constituent in their plans to re-invigorate the commercial potential of the town centre. New retail and shopping outlets are envisaged and good road and rail networks close at hand suggest that the commercial sector here would attract shoppers and visitors from further afield and increase average 'spend per head' too. The fiscal imperatives for change and redevelopment in the area of the former hatting district are unchallengeable but it is evident that the character and, therefore, distinctiveness and significance of the area could and should play a guiding role in any re-envisioning that takes place. It is true that much of the current building stock and road infrastructure in Plaiters' Lea is in a state of disrepair or in the process of dilapidation but the buildings surviving are unlike any others in Luton and their scale, extent and condition immediately mark them (and this area) out as being notably different from other elements of the town. Apart from a cluster of modern flats on John Street there are no concentrations of domestic residences in the Conservation Area and it remains largely distinct from the urban heart of Luton, which is dominated by town centre shops surrounded, to the south, west and east, by late 19th and early 20th century terraced housing. The fact that most of the buildings constructed within the area now defined as Plaiters' Lea were directly or indirectly connected to the industry that was emblematic of Luton – hat-making – is a source for civic pride.

Although the Conservation Area itself is clearly defined, in reality there was never a 'hard-edged' boundary to the hatting industry. However, the concentration of such large, multi-storey, hatting premises within a small geographical area has served as a focus for interest. The Conservation Area covers just over 4ha and is articulated by a number of roads and streets, two of which, Guildford Street and Bute Street, form part of an inner ring road for vehicular traffic. The main routeway for pedestrians is to and from the train station and the Arndale via Bute Street, with the Bute Street/Guildford Street intersection being an important nexus in the communication pattern. The drama of the vista from here cannot be replicated in any other part of the town, dominated as it is by wide and open streets flanked by impressive and ornate factory façades as well as glimpses of the industrial ranges to their rears.

i) Speculation and Expansion

The emergence of the hatting quarter as a distinctive entity is due to a number of convergent events, economic decisions and technological breakthroughs throughout the course of the 19th century and the enabling role played by local landowners at the time. The imposition of punitive tariffs on imported hats and plait from continental Europe during the Napoleonic Wars ensured a firm economic basis for the domestic production of both hats and straw plait. As a result, local markets were encouraged to expand in the hands of skilled entrepreneurs such as Thomas Waller who, famously, purchased plait from prisoners of war held at Yaxley. The newly established businesses flourished at this time and with an improvement in manufacturing techniques, they were able to withstand

the resumption of foreign competition when tariffs were relaxed in the years immediately after the cessation of the war in 1815.

At this time, a number of London-based producers established factories and workshops in and around Luton such as Munt and Brown, and Welch, Willis and Elliot. The largest and most influential of these, however, was the Vyse family who came to Luton in 1826 and built a factory to the south of Park Street, not far from St Mary's Church. The other firms were located in the same general area with a concentration along George Street.

Tariffs were finally removed in 1842 and this, rather than dampen the growth of the industry, appears to have given it a fresh impetus, and expansion took place. It is clear though, that the hatting quarter on the northern bank of the River Lea did not grow organically from more extensive and long-standing urban development – i.e. it did not emerge from a transformation of existing streets, houses and factories. Indeed, the remarkable aspect about the growth of the industrial sector at Plaiters' Lea is that it was *de novo* development, taking place on former river meadows on the northern bank of the river. Much of this, including Little Moor, which subsequently hosted the hatting quarter, fell into private ownership on Enclosure in 1807 and it was the later break-up of these estates that released land for speculative development. The principal estate here belonged to James Gutteridge and his house and enclosed park were dispersed to a number of people on his death in 1833. Key amongst the new landowners were various members of the Waller family who encouraged development with the promise of low rent and little interference from existing premises. As a result, development was astonishingly rapid. A comparison of, say, the Tithe map of 1842 with Todd's survey of 1862 underscores the pace and scale of change over a very short period of time indeed.

Three routes were hugely influential in facilitating this rapid development – Barber's Lane, Guildford Street, and Bute Street – in that they provided a skeletal infrastructure for both construction and access. Barber's Lane, evidently the earliest of these and shown on all early maps of the town, is probably medieval in origin and was one of a number of tracks that linked the market town of Luton to its agricultural hinterland. It presumably crossed the Lea by a ford, which has now gone, but it is worth speculating that the track provided some sort of axial cue for a number of other routes that developed subsequently, including Bridge Street, Williamson Street, Bute Street, Cheapside and Melson Street.

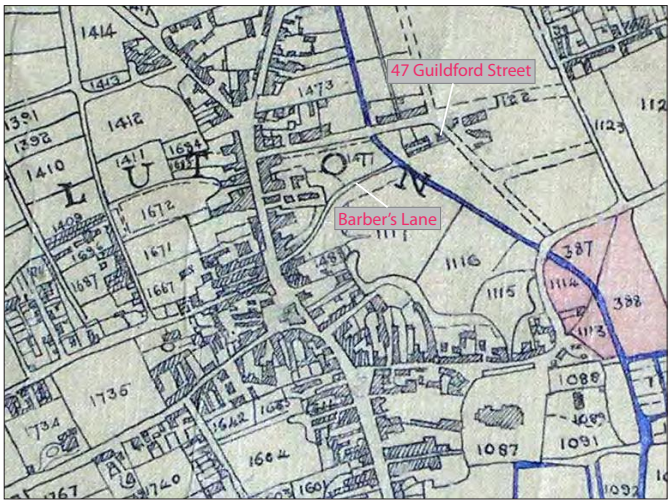

Figure 76. Extract from the Tithe map of 1844 showing Barber's Lane and the hat factory at 47 Guildford Street.

Bute Street and Guildford Street, which runs at right angles to it, were established in the early 1840s and must have been laid down in a deliberate attempt to foster development and encourage urban expansion into these areas. These roads are long and wide, contrasting sharply with earlier, narrower and more sinuous roads such as Barber's Lane or Church Street (Figure 76). The full extent of the present road pattern was fully established by 1860 with many of the streets, such as Williamson Street, or Waller Street, named after important contemporary families and individuals. Only Williamson Street has been entirely removed and the line of Waller Street is preserved to a certain extent as the central thoroughfare in the Arndale.

A sequence of maps from the late 1830s through to c.1870 shows the spread of development and its character too, over a few short decades, buildings seeping north along Bute Street but with a marked concentration of new builds close to the intersection with Guildford Street and, initially, along the south side of Guildford Street to the west of the crossroads. These included straw plait manufacturers and hat factories, as well as a surprisingly large number of public houses, many of which survive.

The earliest of these, and certainly one of the most distinctive in the Conservation Area, is the listed hat factory at 47 Guildford Street. Although described in the listing description as dating to the 1860s, it is shown in its current form on earlier maps of the area and there is a strong likelihood that it dates to the 1840s. If correct, it is one of the earliest (if not the earliest) surviving buildings in Plaiters' Lea. In terms of scale and structure it has a 'domestic' quality to it, and this building certainly catches the eye on the approach to the town centre from the train station with its striking use of white quoins and windows surrounds in contrast to the sombre, dark, brick. Extant buildings of a similar early date within the Conservation Area are, largely, absent. The Tithe update map of 1844 does show a double row of buildings at the top end of Barber's Lane, close to the junction with Guildford Street which matches the scale and extent of current properties there. Only the terrace of buildings to the west survives, however, and this has clearly been modernized on several occasions. Similarly, a terrace of three properties is shown on the 1844 map on the east side of Bute Street, north of the Guildford Street intersection. The buildings on the site today, 66-68 Bute Street, are listed and described as dating to c.1870 but, again, the likelihood is that they are in fact earlier in date, probably constructed in the 1840s, subsequently upgraded, but certainly pre-dating the construction of 'The George II' public house at the end of the row.

One of the most striking trends in the early years of expansion and development was towards increasing monumentality, ostentation and height expressed in the architecture of the industry, particularly on those façades fronting Bute Street and Guildford Street. These were increasingly substantial buildings and with architectural complexity came increased construction costs, indicating a confidence in the industry which allowed owners to invest large sums in construction or refurbishment in order to obtain premises which adequately reflected their aspirations. Former hat factories and straw plait warehouses such as 16 John Street and 61 Bute Street typify this in their use of decorative techniques such as polychromatic brick and stonework, rustication and elaborate window surrounds. Smaller premises such as 29 and 31 Guildford Street (straw hat manufacturer and shop, respectively) were also built at this time

and very often registered in trades' directories as being in domestic ownership, or occasionally commercial shops, but almost invariably connected to outworkers in the hat trade (Figure 77). Although less elaborate than their grander cousins, they are often noteworthy buildings in their own right – the ground floor arrangement of double entrances and large shop windows being of particular interest as a diagnostic feature of the hat trade.

Figure 77 (left). 29 and 31 Guildford Street
© David McOmish.

Figure 78 (above). 52-60 Guildford Street.
© English Heritage NMR DP141939.

The largest density of early, domestic, properties within the Conservation Area, as evidenced on the maps, was concentrated along John Street – close to a number of contemporary hat factories and straw plait manufacturers and warehouses. These are shown very clearly on Corney's map of c.1870 but most have now been demolished and replaced by modern shops and apartments. Another early terrace of houses, built in the 1860s, does survive just outside the Conservation Area at 52-60 Guildford Street, and undoubtedly initially housed outworkers servicing an earlier factory on the site of the Balfour & Sons hat factory, 50 Guildford Street (Figure 78).

The development of an artisanal and domestic quarter here was embellished by the provision of at least six public houses, all built in the late 1850s and early 1860s. All but one of these, 'The Empress' which stood opposite 'The Engine' public house on Bute Street, survives. The largest and most substantial, 'The Engine', was partly rebuilt in 1900 following a fire, so the earlier form of the building is unknown but there is a marked similarity in form of both 'The Wheelwright Arms' and the 'Desert Rose' (formerly 'The Cooper's Arms') (Figure 79). 'The Wheelwright Arms' boasts a deceptively discrete but decorative façade unique, not only in the Conservation Area, but within the town too with its stone mullions and heavily moulded stone hoods above both windows and the door. 'The Melson Arms', on the corner of John Street and Church Street was reputedly built in 1856, but this may relate to an earlier building. John Street wasn't laid out until 1860 at the earliest[140] and so the current heavily modified building probably dates to this decade rather than the previous one. It is a plain building, updated and rendered in the

1960s at which time the main original entrance on the corner of the public house was blocked in favour of the current one on John Street. 'The George II' on Bute Street has similarly undergone much change since it was first opened in the 1870s but is notable for the later inclusion of pilasters with small pedimented consoles. The notable alternative to the public houses in the area was 'The Cowper Arms' temperance hotel and coffee house on Cheapside which was built rather later in 1882, perhaps in direct response to the number of public houses. Constructed in the Queen Anne revival style it is grade II listed and was, somewhat ironically, last used as a nightclub although it currently stands empty. The Bedfordshire Football Association was founded during a meeting in 'The Cowper Arms' in 1894 with Mr G. H. Barford elected as the first president.[141]

Figure 79. The 'Desert Rose' restaurant, formerly 'The Cooper's Arms', was built in the mid-19th century. The rebuilt Vyse factory lies on its left-hand side in the photograph with 'The Engine' public house beyond this. ©English Heritage NMR DP141920.

ii) The Arrival of the Railway in Luton

A railway service arrived relatively late in Luton, in 1858. Before this Luton could claim the dubious honour of being the largest town in England to be without a major transport link. Despite the existence of adequate funds to enable the construction, conflict about its intended route and a feared impact on other town services meant that a decision was delayed. Local, political, difficulties were eventually overcome and a rail connection to Dunstable was opened in 1858. The great goal, of course, was a direct link to London and this was finally established in 1860 with a service that travelled to the capital via Hatfield. A second, direct, line was opened in 1868.

The arrival of the railway is often cited as being the catalyst that transformed the hatting and related industries in Luton and which allowed a rapid growth in the numbers and scales of businesses involved. The reality is less distinct but it certainly allowed an already growing industrial base to accelerate at greater pace: the movement of raw materials and goods was upscaled but the direct rail link also allowed a widening of access to markets and, particularly, buyers from other towns and cities. Synchronous technological development also greatly enhanced the scale of the trade as well as production capabilities and chief amongst these were the use of aniline dyes and the introduction of the blocking machine in c.1860. Subsequent events such as the introduction of the

sewing machine in 1874 and the concealed-stitch machine in 1878 led to higher levels and better standards of production but it was the collapse of the domestic plaiting industry in the face of cheap imports from the Far East (initially China, then Japan at the end of the 19th century) that radically altered the hatting industry in Luton. As the profit margins grew for business owners so, too, did the scale of the related hat factories workshops and showrooms, alongside a burgeoning industrial base. Goad's Insurance map of 1895 illustrates this clearly, showing a densely developed and occupied quarter packed with straw plait warehouses, hat factories, chemical works, blacksmiths, and light engineering works alongside garages and stables.

A crude zoning had emerged in the area later to be called Plaiters' Lea by the end of the 19th century, and fragments of this survive today. John Street, for example, was dominated by domestic outworkers but had a concentration of hat factories and related businesses close to the intersection with Cheapside, a street which, much as it is today, is dominated by small-scale businesses involved in the hatting industry (Figure 80). Their large ground-floor showroom windows still survive, often flanked by decorative pilasters, alongside formal entrances and narrower trade entrances. One block on the north side of Guildford Street, east of the Bute Street intersection, developed initially as an industrial sector unrelated, largely, to the hat trade (Figure 81). A wheelwright could be found here in the 1870s (and presumably earlier – 'The Wheelwright Arms' public

Figure 80. Extract from the Goad Insurance map of 1895. *Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service.*

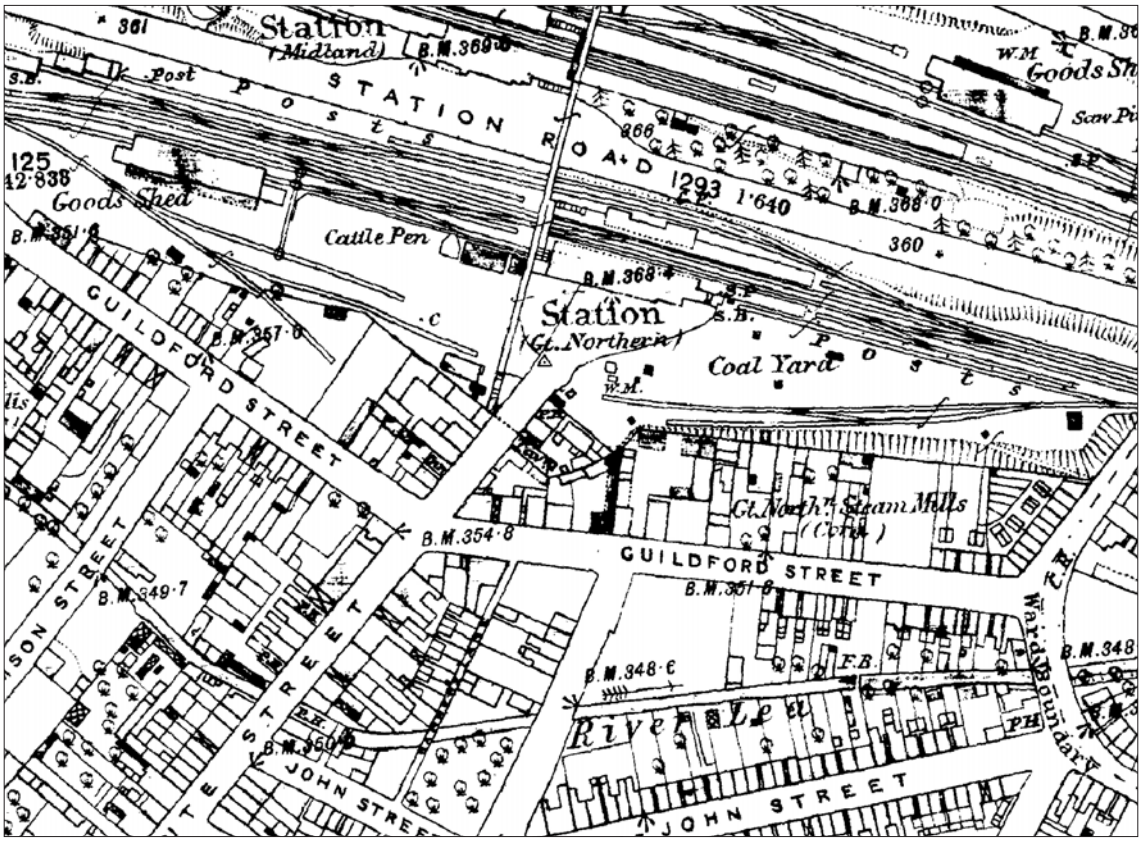

Figure 81. Extract from the OS 1:2500 plan of 1880.

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house was built in the late 1850s) and the W. Dixon Engineering Works, now the Bute Mills, lay a little to the north. By far the largest complex, however, was that built for the Great Northern Steam Mills and although this has been heavily altered by subsequent development, the main office block survives as does the core of the mill building too (Figure 71). Both are constructed in dull Luton stock brick with relatively plain façades dominated by small windows with segmented heads. The massive loading bay from the mill survives much altered and a ground-floor level that comprised two large doorways is largely masked by recent blocking as well as a raised road surface. These buildings are best viewed from the modern car park to the north which overlies the former rail yards: the close proximity of the railway station and its goods and coal yards was evidently an influential factor in the rise of these trades in this location.

Figure 82. Great Northern Steam Mills to the rear of Guildford Street.

© English Heritage NMR DP146062.

iii) The Bute Street – Guildford Street Intersection

The majority of substantial hat factories and related workshops and warehouses clustered around the junction of Bute Street with Guildford Street with substantial buildings extending away from this over time. Corney's map of c.1870 underscores the gathering significance of these routes and the desirability of being positioned along them. The easyHotel at 61 Bute Street is one of the most distinctive buildings in the Conservation Area due to the use of bright red brick alongside rusticated stucco and yellow brick quoins. It sits in a prime location at the crossroads and its prominence was certainly recognised and appreciated at an early date and may well underlie the decision to build an extension to the west, in much the same style, early in the 20th century.

The initial stages of development favoured Bute Street and the south side of Guildford Street to the west of the junction. With the notable exception of 47 Guildford Street (to the east of the junction) few of the earliest buildings survive on Guildford Street – those that do are largely more recent re-builds of pre-existing structures – and much of the south side of the street was demolished in the 1970s to accommodate the Library Theatre multi-storey car park.

iv) The Development of Large Factories

Generally speaking the scale and complexity of the industrial premises increased dramatically towards the end of the 19th century and into the early decades of the 20th. Many of these were re-builds of pre-existing, smaller, concerns but a lesser proportion were entirely new constructions and all are contemporary with the collapse of the home-grown straw plaiting industry (and the concomitant increase in the profitability of the industry) as well as the introduction of a reliable and cheap electricity source to the town centre. Within the Conservation Area these are very distinctive buildings notable for their sheer scale and the complexity of architectural motifs and styles that were incorporated (Figure 72). The earliest of these were built at the end of the 1880s and designed to catch the eye of traffic moving through the town or arriving by train. A close proximity to the train station was desirable as it enabled an easier transport of materials to and from the factories – this was clearly a prime consideration and there are many contemporary commentaries on the congestion caused by traffic attempting to deliver goods to the train station at the end of the day: indeed even in the late 1890s it was remarked that 'at the top of Bute Street all vehicles bound for the Great Northern Station form themselves into an imposing procession, which would be a fit subject for the cinematograph'.[142]

The Walter Gurney & Son factory at 68 Guildford Street, the Balfour Hat Factory at 50 Guildford Street, and 40 Guildford Street epitomised this phase of confident expansion in the industry. All three buildings are situated close to the station and its goods yards, and each occupies the location of an earlier factory or building. Their form is fairly typical of factories built at this time, consisting of a basement and ground floor provisioned with large windows, a formal centrally-placed entrance and a smaller passageway to the side. Above this there are three/four storeys plus attic creating a lively street façade in comparison with what had been built in the area previously. Huge effort has been expended in their design and construction with the use of brick and stone with pilasters

Figure 83. The Balfour factory, 50 Guildford Street.
© Katie Carmichael

and elaborate windows incorporating cartouches and moulded stone swags. Each is further embellished by a shaped gable with a roundel window or similar and additional decorative features.

This same focus on the provision of an architecturally striking street frontage is evident at all of the major factories built at the turn of the century and into the first decades of the 20th century but the most outstanding of these is that constructed for Austin & Co. in 1912 at 37-39 Guildford Street. The street façade is remarkable and complex, incorporating a diverse mix of features, and it has no direct comparisons within the Conservation Area. The façade of 23-25 Guildford Street is equally impressive, if less detailed and affected by recent renovation work. As with many of the buildings here, the current property is an amalgamation and re-building of earlier structures, on this occasion domestic outworkers, and the building dates to c.1910-20.

Smaller-scale hat factories and workshops mirrored many of the characteristics of the larger buildings and followed the same layout of large ground-floor windows with double entrance arrangements. A number of these are notable for their use of banded rustication such as the straw plait merchants at 37 Guildford Street. Indeed, the use of rustication is one of the key unifying features of buildings of all dates throughout the Conservation Area, including the extension to 61 Bute Street and the hat factory at 32 Guildford Street.

Alongside the hat factories, other commercial and industrial premises flourished at the same time and whilst lacking the same heights of architectural elaboration, many show striking and distinctive design traits. The most visually dominant feature at 26-28 Guildford Street is the decorative band of bright red brick used alongside the typical Luton stock grey brick. On occasion, as at 56 Cheapside, this is augmented by the inclusion of flat panels above the window lintels and combined brick and stone heads.

v) Inter-war Developments

The First World War necessarily had an impact on Luton's hatting industry – the export market was greatly reduced and engineering works supplying the war effort drew skilled staff and raw materials away from the trade. These other industries, including light engineering works and chemical plants, prospered and changed the industrial face

of the town. Nonetheless, the hatting industry did survive and transformed itself by the introduction and use of new products and materials. By far the most significant developments, however, were, firstly, the growth in the use of felt as a hat-making material and, secondly, the decline in merchant manufacturers. In their stead, factories emerged that amalgamated previously separate activities in one place – making, trimming, and finishing – and what has been called the 'millinery trade' commenced. In turn, and to accommodate the requirements of the industry, the new factories included substantial showroom facilities.

A small number of factories within the Conservation Area were built at this time in a new and different style. The elaborate Victorian and Queen Anne revival elements were replaced by Neo-Classical and Neo-Georgian styles, often incorporating more geometric forms dominated by flat, Doric, pilasters and large casement windows. Stirling House at 30 Guildford Street and the conjoined hat factories at 57-61 Guildford Street are distinctive in their use of white concrete rendering which immediately raises the visibility of the buildings above that of neighbouring properties. Both buildings have remarkable ground floors with large bow windows unlike any other buildings in the town. The form of the ground floor to the Vyse factory on Bute Street is difficult to discern due to modern refurbishment but it certainly conformed to type with entrance, two large windows and side passageway.

Smaller-scale factories, such as 22 and 22a Guildford Street and 35 John Street, are noteworthy buildings in their own right, marked by their symmetrical plan form and geometrical street front elevations.

vi) The Second World War and after

The rates of new construction in the Conservation Area dropped dramatically in the middle decades of the 20th century and after, whilst a number of other, earlier, buildings, witnessed a substantial overhaul. This was due to the emphasis on the construction of post-war housing as well as the steady decline of the hatting industry in the years after the Second World War. Larger firms and their premises closed first, their buildings sub-divided by new and smaller ventures, but some smaller factories and shops did survive.

The Alexon Factory at 40-48 Guildford Street was built at the end of the 1960s. The firm manufactures women's clothing and so maintains many of the manufacturing skills that emerged in the town as a result of hat-making. It lies immediately outside the Conservation Area, abutting the hat factory at 40 Guildford Street, but it is larger than any comparable factory and showroom in Plaiters' Lea. There is a sharp contrast between the street façade of the Alexon building and those of earlier factories: the constructional design emphasising the horizontal 'layering' of floors and window lights to the building as opposed to the vertical emphasis seen in earlier structures. Although this could easily have had a negative impact on the street rhythm, the use of pale brick bands aligned with the existing floor levels of 40 Guildford Street ensures that the overall impression remains sympathetic to the character of the area.

As already discussed, modern development has had a substantial impact across the

Conservation Area, but particularly along John Street/Silver Street which lies in the shadow of the Arndale. The existence of the Arndale on the edge of the Conservation Area cannot be ignored, nor the impact of its construction underestimated. Luton's industrial sector greatly expanded throughout the early 20th century but housing stocks had failed to increase at the same rate, and the situation looked set to worsen in the 1950s with extensive expansions proposed by both Vauxhall Motor Ltd. and Commer Cars.[143] In an attempt to regain control, Bedfordshire County Council submitted a Development Plan to the Minister for Housing and Local Planning who held a public enquiry in 1955 to examine the major development proposals. The Minister's decision was published in June 1956, sanctioning the development of a further 130 acres for industrial usage as well as 850 acres for housing near the centre of Luton – thereby preventing the town from expanding into the surrounding rural areas and necessarily increasing development pressure on existing facilities and land within the town centre.[144]

The first step in the redevelopment of Luton town centre was the construction of the new Central Library on Bridge Street (Figure 84). Planning began in 1958, with visits to Swedish libraries in 1959 helping to form the final design. The library opened to the public on 24th September 1962 and featured many striking design features, both internally and externally, including the charming *'Story Hour Room'* designed to look like the chamber of a castle set above the River Lea.[145] Visited by the Queen and Prince Philip on the 2nd November 1962, the design was generally well received with the notable exception of Sir Albert Richardson (the past president of the Royal Academy) who felt it looked too like a factory and stated that 'I feel repelled by it… it has a chilling effect which is very detrimental… People have lost the art nowadays of planning to a pattern'.[146]

Figure 84. Central Library, Luton. *© English Heritage NMR DP141944.*

A major shift in retail trends was starting to take hold around the same time with chain stores increasingly demanding larger, standardised premises – purpose built (or significantly modernised) if possible. The overhaul and extension of the Co-operative Society store on New Bedford Road in 1958, and the construction of new premises for Boots Ltd. and International Stores demonstrate how the central area was already changing – the old plot boundaries and streetscapes being swept away in favour of modern development and shifting consumer tastes. A major factor in the demolition of existing buildings, rather than redevelopment, was that the centre of Luton historically comprised a large number of very small units, not easily adapted or amalgamated and often with very poor rear access for delivery vehicles, which in turn led to congestion on the main streets.[147]

Following a public inquiry in March 1963 the Comprehensive Development Area for Luton was approved by the Minister for Housing and Local Government:[148]

> On the grounds of bad layout and desolate development and by reason of its being unsuited in its present state to be a reasonably efficient part of the central area of a large town and having regard to the prevailing traffic conditions.[149]

The Council had therefore initiated the redevelopment scheme in order to revitalise what was viewed as an outdated and inadequate town centre, and by designating the area as part of a Development Plan the Council would gain powers of compulsory purchase within it.

The first Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) was confirmed in February 1965, and covered the area between Bridge Street and Bute Street. In March 1965 the Council produced a brochure with basic information and a briefing, inviting developers to submit schemes for the redevelopment.[150] By October of that year, 24 schemes had been chosen from a submission of 50, and from this a short-list of three schemes was chosen for further consideration.[151] In December 1966 Arndale Development Ltd. were confirmed as the successful candidates, and initial details of the scheme agreed upon prior to the second CPO being served in November 1967.[152] Shortly after the scheme was accepted, the developers convinced the Council to change a number of key features – namely to switch from a standard open precinct with flats above to a covered mall without any flats, but with a larger hotel. The main justification for this was that a closed environment would protect shoppers from the cold, wind and rain and therefore be more popular year round.[153]

Work clearing the site commenced in December 1969, with the third CPO taking effect in February 1970. A partnership agreement was established between the Council and the developers. The council invested £10.75 million to cover the cost of acquiring the land and building the market and car parks in return for an annual ground rent plus 40% of the equity.[154] A total of around 600 businesses were acquired by the Council, 204 of which were by CPO.[155] Town & City Properties Ltd. were required, in return, to offer premises to those traders displaced by the redevelopment at a reasonable rate.

The development was on a massive scale, with over 150,000 cubic yards of soil

excavated and 3,850 concrete piles sunk to support the 14,000 tons of steel and 55,000 cubic yards of concrete required to provide the structure and all 34 acres of floor area.[156] Consequently, construction was planned in a number of clearly defined phases (not to be built in order) which would allow sections to open and operate independently as soon as they were finished, without having to wait on other sections being completed. Construction was supposed to be completed by late autumn 1974, but a series of delays – including strikes and materials shortages – postponed completion until mid-1977.[157]

Phase I of the build saw the construction of the Market and Library Theatre car parks as well as the eastern section of the mall between Smiths Lane and Church Street and was complete by early 1972. Phase II extended the mall by building the central section around Cheapside but did not open until late 1975, with the central car park not complete until December 1977 – the very last part to open. Phase III was the western section of the mall, over parts of Bute Street and Williamson Street, and was complete by early 1974. Phase IV contained the hotel and surrounding structure linking the Library Theatre car park to the mall, with the hotel opening in May 1973. Phase V saw the rest of the mall opened in September 1976, with further work on St George's Square and pedestrian access continuing into mid-1977 (Figure 85).[158]

The architects for phases I, II and II were Leonard Vincent, Raymond Gobing & Partners, with the Tripe & Wakeham Partnership taking over phases IV and V, with Ian Fraser, John Roberts & Partners acting as Consultant Architects throughout.[159] Speaking in November 1967 Mr Arnold Hagenbach, chairman of the Arndale Property Trust Ltd, stated that 'this scheme must be designed to delight, to surprise… It must also stand the test of time, both architecturally and in amenity value' and that the opportunity to create a covered

Figure 85. The eastern approach to the Arndale, Luton. *© English Heritage NMR DP141956.*

shopping centre, a reasonably recent concept within the UK, would 'be worth while, and would add much glamour to the fine architectural features that have already been drawn'.[160]

The Arndale covers more than 17 acres of Luton town centre at the point where Bute Street, Cheapside, Smith's Lane and Melson Street once met Waller Street. The interior of the mall was specifically related to the previous street pattern. The main mall thoroughfare runs for a quarter of a mile at first-floor level, following the line of Waller Street and is punctuated by four squares: Bute Square, Cheapside/Central Square, Smith's Square and Melson Square, at the points where those roads once met. The mall is accessed from Church Street and Smiths Lane, with secondary entrances at Cheapside, Bute Street and Williamson Street as well as through several of the larger stores along George Street.[161] Directly beneath the mall, at ground-floor level, is a service road which follows the course of Waller Street and is 24 ft wide by 14ft 6 high with access from Melson Street and exit via Library Road.[162]

PROPOSALS

A proposal for a 62,000 square foot, three-storey extension to the Arndale was submitted in 1988. This scheme would have seen the design, by Michael Haskell Associates, constructed on the corner site between Bute Street and Silver Street and connected to the existing building by means of a glazed walkway over Silver Street.[163] However, whilst the Council granted permission, the proposal was deemed too expensive by the developers and was called off in February 1989. Around the same time a number of proposals were drawn up for the development of interior of the mall – including the controversial removal of a flamingo sculpture in Central Square. Many residents held strong views on this piece of sculpture and a series of articles was written in the local paper, expressing local feeling on the matter, for example:

> In a letter to the Herald, Paula, who visits Luton frequently from her London home, said the flamingos are "the only architecture of any note in the entire centre, if not the whole of Luton".[164]

Clearly, the public felt a sense of ownership over the Arndale and believed it had a right to have its views heard but the campaign was to no avail and the flamingos were removed in April 1995 as part of the extensive overhaul of the Arndale – only to be replaced by a scaled down version in March 1996 following a local outcry. The renovation of the Arndale in the mid-1990s had the greatest impact on the structure since its initial construction. The entire roof was replaced – almost doubling the internal ceiling height and admitting natural light for the first time.[165] This was followed by the 75,000 square foot St George's Square extension which opened in 2010 at a cost of £20 million.[166]

The current development proposals for the Arndale – with the extension to the north of the existing mall – were first put forward in 2004 and are designed to tie in to the wider Luton Gateway scheme which would largely redevelop the Plaiter's Lea Conservation Area. The £150 million proposal for the mall detailed in 2007 would see a 37,000 sq m (400,000 sq ft) extension, covering the area between Cheapside and the existing Library Theatre car park, with offices, flats and parking in addition to retail space. The major

aims of the project are stated as being to 'improve the appearance of The Mall and its relationship to the town centre through high quality architecture and urban design, and integrate The Mall with other key regeneration initiatives in Luton'.[167] However, this would be at the expense of a substantial portion of the Conservation Area.

i) Impact

The construction of the Arndale development had a knock-on effect on the wider area, with George Street in particular seeing retailers who could not compete with the Arndale being replaced by banks, estate agents and the like.[168] Those retailers which did survive – such as the Co-operative Society store on Bridge Street – often saw a need to redevelop their premises in such a way as to become more modern, thereby more closely matching and competing with the Arndale.[169]

The Arndale severs the link between the station and George Street, disrupting the historic street plan and dominating the skyline. The northern face of the Arndale is particularly obtrusive – an almost completely blind wall soaring above the Conservation Area and variously described as 'not pretty' or an outright 'Berlin wall' by local residents. This may partly be explained by the fact that the developers seem always to have intended for the Arndale to extend to the north, setting aside the land on the corner of Bute Street and Silver Street for future development which has, as yet, remained unrealised.

In sitting the Arndale behind a range of existing buildings on George Street Mr Hagenbach saw an opportunity:

> This, right in the centre of a thriving town of the importance of Luton, provides a challenge to make the centre not only the most notable in Britain, not just the outstanding one in Europe but a classic example in the world of how to blend successfully on to our existing High Street… Luton will be an entry in the diary of local authorities, architects and developers from every progressive country.[170]

Whether he was successful is highly debatable, but this opportunity has arisen again with the current development proposals. At present the scheme would see half of the Conservation Area demolished, including two listed buildings, and replaced with new buildings in the style seen on the St George's Square extension. The stated desire to remodel the Arndale and recast it within a new commercial centre as part of the 'Northern Gateway' development carries with it great risk to the surviving fabric of the historic environment in the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area. This Assessment report has underscored both the extent and condition of historic assets here and may help to inform development which is more sympathetic to both the history of use of the buildings within the area and their potential value within any redevelopment scheme. The key objective of any future redevelopment scheme should be to retain and integrate all the existing fabric which preserves or enhances the character of the area in order to ensure the future wellbeing of the area whilst maintaining the historic fabric and distinctiveness.

HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION: CONCLUDING REMARKS

David Grech, Historic Area Advisor.

The Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area was established in 1991 in recognition of the significance of the surviving architectural fabric and its role in the historical and commercial development of Luton. Its creation may be regarded as a reflection of increased concern about loss and degradation to the key buildings as well as alterations to the streetscape and character of the area. Since 1991, however, the Conservation Area has been under almost constant threat from further demolitions, insensitive alterations and a general deterioration in the condition of a number of properties. It is clear from the resulting plethora of gap sites and decay that the Conservation Area is in urgent need of more proactive management. Therefore, in order to understand better the impact of such piecemeal demolitions and other applications for change, English Heritage recommends that a comprehensive appraisal of the conservation area is prepared and adopted by the Borough Council, including a robust management plan. This appraisal and management plan should be prepared in accordance with the latest guidance published by English Heritage and should also incorporate a review of the boundaries to the Conservation Area.

The harm to the Conservation Area resulting from decay and dereliction may be symptomatic of a lack of investment. However, investment also has the potential to cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. At Plaiters' Lea, English Heritage view the current undetermined planning application for the 'Northern Gateway' project, which involves a major expansion of the Arndale north towards the station, as just such a threat. A project that may well require the demolition of almost a third of the historic buildings within a Conservation Area and the further obliteration of historic street patterns cannot but be in conflict with the underlying principals of conservation legislation which defines Conservation Areas as 'Areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.[171] That is not to say Plaiters' Lea cannot accommodate change. Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5) describes conservation as 'the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and where appropriate enhances its significance,' and it is possible to envisage a proposal that might provide a similar level of retail provision through the adaptive reuse of key historic buildings in conjunction with sensitive infill on existing gap sites. This was the conclusion of the joint CABE - English Heritage Urban Panel when they visited Luton in May 2009 and observed:

> In summary, the Panel believed that the next extension of the Mall need not be made at the expense of a perfectly good conservation area, the fabric of which holds the key to creating something special for Luton. Furthermore, the Panel believed that with the right brief and a shared will to enhance both the town and the shopping experience, a good design team could balance modification of the Mall, retention of much of the fabric of the PLCA and some clearance and new build in the conservation area in such a way as to produce a far more attractive

> and unique place, while also bringing the cut off northern area back to life.[172]

This report and its outcomes are forcefully targeted at supporting the principles outlined in PPS 5. In particular, Policy HE2: Evidence Base for Plan-making and Policy HE3: Regional and Local Planning Approaches. These principles are also reflected in paragraph 37 of the draft National Planning Policy Framework that is likely to replace PPS 5 in the near future. Each of these underscores the critical role that a detailed evidence base plays in ensuring that the plan-making process properly takes account of an area's heritage assets as well the influence of these on the character of the local environment. The surviving buildings in the Conservation Area are distinctive, contributing positively to the character of the area and many of them could be re-used in such a way as to act as a catalyst for appropriate regeneration of the area A number of buildings constructed in Plaiters' Lea during the early decades of the 20th century are framed buildings, and as such are capable of accommodating a variety of uses.

The value of the Plaiters' Lea historic area has been recognised and promoted repeatedly since the Conservation Area was first designated in 1991. For example, the 'Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area Enhancement Scheme and Design Strategy' published in 1995, expressly sought to maintain existing historic fabric but within the context of ongoing regeneration and, subsequently, a consortium of Luton Borough Council, and English Heritage, supported by EU funding, enabled a 'Historic Environment Regeneration Scheme' to take place within the Conservation Area. The results of this were dramatic with a large number of properties being allocated grants towards their refurbishment (24, 28s, 28, 36, 51, 57 and 59-61 Guildford Street, 53 Bute Street, and 23-27 and 35-37 John Street). The 'Luton Town Centre Development Framework' (which was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in 2007) identified that the area contains 'a number of good quality buildings and areas of high townscape value that should be retained' and set objectives that, as well as providing improved retail opportunities, would also improve pedestrian links, enhance the mix of uses and celebrate the area's built heritage. Wider public awareness of the historic value and interest in the area came via the creation of a Heritage Trail through Plaiters' Lea.[173] As well as identifying the function and importance of the surviving buildings in the area this also promoted a wider engagement with heritage issues for local residents and visitors.

The significance and value of the Conservation Area has also been asserted in the current Luton Local Plan (2006), and particularly in Policy CA5 on the 'Northern Gateway,' which seeks to facilitate a mixed-use redevelopment of the area between the Arndale Centre and the railway station. This Policy requires any proposal to 'retain and, where appropriate, enhance those buildings within the area that are of particular architectural merit or historic interest'. The principles underlying this Policy have been carried forward into the Pre-Submission version of the Core Strategy, which was submitted to the Secretary of State on 8th March 2011:[174]

> Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document 11.2, p.156
> Item 3. Establish a clear role and identity for the historic Plaiters' Lea area lying between the Central Railway Station and the main shopping areas, including securing the implementation of the 'Northern

Gateway'.

and

> Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document 11.3, p.157
> Item 2. Centred on the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area on the northern side of the Town Centre, a key objective for this area is to secure an expansion of the main Town Centre retail offer to the sub-region that is sympathetic to the historic environment of this area with its significant hat industry linkages:

In addition

> Policy CS17 on Luton Town Centre, p.162
> Objective 6. Safeguard, promote and enhance Luton's rich historic fabric, assets and features, including ensuring that extensions to The Mall appropriately integrate with and respect their historic surroundings.

Despite the designation of Conservation Area status and the stated aim to maintain Plaiters' Lea's historic role within the proposed 'Northern Gateway' development, there are clearly a number of older properties that are currently at risk either from further decay or from insensitive alterations. This, in part, is due to the difficulties that arise in effectively 'policing' Conservation Areas but also reflects a lack of appreciation of the area amongst individual property owners and landlords. A particular focus for concern are the properties at 49-51 Cheapside and 29-31 Guildford Street and especially what remains of Melson Street where immediate attention is required. An alarming state of decay is apparent on certain street frontages and is even worse at the rear of the properties where crumbling brickwork and roofs in a state of near collapse are evident.

Figure 86. Buildings in a poor state on Melson Street *© English Heritage NMR DP141946.*

Despite the challenges in preserving or enhancing the fabric and integrity of the Conservation Area, one of the primary recommendations arising from this work is that the boundary of the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area should be reviewed, and English Heritage would promote the inclusion of the northern side of Guildford Street west of 40 Guildford Street. The buildings here are all intimately associated with the activities that define the special character of the Conservation Area and the new inclusion would encompass the Alexon Factory at 42-48 Guildford Street, the Balfour hat factory at 50 Guildford Street and the adjoining row of terraced properties – 52-56 Guildford Street, which were clearly built in association with the adjacent factory and are residential-scale, domestic, production centres.

i) Future work

There are, at present, nine listed buildings within the Conservation Area and another five are included in the 'Local Designation List'. This project has identified a small number of additional premises which may warrant further investigation with a view to potential or improved designation. Namely, these are 49 Cheapside, 22a & b Guildford Street, 30 Guildford Street, 32 Guildford Street, 57-61 Guildford Street, 47-53 Bute Street and 55 John Street – but this should not be seen as an exhaustive list. Additional research within these properties will help clarify the survival of original (or early) fixtures and fittings as well as provide an assessment of internal layout and workflow thus underscoring their full value and significance.

However, the scope for further research within the Conservation Area extends beyond examination of the surviving buildings. The canalised course of the River Lea, which should be viewed as an asset, bisects the Conservation Area though much of it is now culverted below ground. Observations made in the early 20th century suggested that a now deeply buried, but substantial, building of Roman date was sited on the southern side of the river in the area of Waller Street. The extent of this, or associated structures, is unknown but any future work along the flanks of the river within the Conservation Area should assess the potential for deep deposit analysis, i.e. analysis of deeply buried soils that may well provide detail on the sequence of development and early land use here before the urban and industrial expansion of the 19th century.

ii) Summary

This report recommends:

- A comprehensive appraisal of the Plaiters Lea Conservation Area should be prepared and adopted by the Borough Council, including a robust management plan. This appraisal and management plan should be prepared in accordance with the guidance published by English Heritage.

- A review of the Conservation Area boundary to include the northern side of Guildford Street west of 40 Guildford Street.

- Further investigation of a number of properties with a view towards potential

designation – namely 49 Cheapside, 22a & b Guildford Street, 30 Guildford Street, 32 Guildford Street, 57-61 Guildford Street, 47-53 Bute Street and 55 John Street.

- A reassertion of the significance and value of the historic fabric within the Plaiters Lea Conservation Area as outlined in the Pre-Submission version of the Core Strategy

- That the existing building fabric within the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area should play a pivotal role in regeneration within Luton, resulting in a heritage lead approach to the development of the 'Northern Gateway'.

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APPENDIX

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0001 Date: 02/12/10 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 0928 2133

Name: Amy's hair and Beauty Unisex Salon Former name(s):

Address: 16 John Street, Luton

Contact info: Salon: 01582 653000

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: 1-22 & 27-28 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory/warehouse

Earliest phase: c.1890 Later phase(s): Mid C20

Walls: Luton stock brick with stone dressings Roof: Slate to front building

Current use: Salon to front, WH Smith delivery and storage area to rear

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

An L shaped set of buildings. The front building is of three storeys plus basement and attic, gabled to John Street. Constructed from Luton stock brick in English bond with decorative stone dressings, the facade is two bays wide with a central oculus within a truncated gable. There are two windows with shallow aprons to both the first and second floors, flanked by pilasters, creating a symmetrical arrangement with a vertical emphasis. The ground floor is elevated above street level, the recessed porch accessed by a short set of steps to the west side of the central display window. Beneath this display window is the window for the basement, with heavy glazing bars dividing the window into small rectangular panes. To the east is a secondary entrance which once provided access to the rear of the property. The piers to either side of the side entrance, and to the west of the main steps, are constructed from red brick with four decorative bands of stone, the upper supporting a stone fascia and moulded cornice supported on dentils. Beneath the lower stone band the bricks are green glazed. The first-floor windows have segmental brick heads formed from three rows of headers alternating with stone voussoirs - a design repeated around the oculus window. The second-floor windows have straight heads and a concrete lintel, above which is a moulded brick cornice, this design being repeated at the top of the pilasters. All the windows have stone sills and, with the exception of the oculus and the basement windows, have been reglazed in uPVC.

The western elevation of the front building is blind, having been reclad in brown brick laid in a stretcher bond c.1960. To the rear is a large, flat roofed, three-storey extension in red brick laid in English bond. The western elevation is blind save for a loading bay door and access door, both with concrete lintels. The southern elevation has three straight headed windows to the second floor, two to the first floor with a covered walkway to the east connecting the building to the Arndale Centre. The ground floor is mainly rendered, save for a partially infilled loading bay to the west which is currently in use as a standard door. All of the windows on this elevation have concrete sills. A property of similar dimensions is shown on the 1880 Bedfordshire 1:2500 OS map, and the 1901 OS map shows a building with a small extension to the rear (no larger than a porch/lobby perhaps) with a detached outbuilding along the southern boundary. A major change occurred between 1901 and 1924, with the construction of a single L-shaped extension to the rear of the building, replacing the earlier extension and outbuilding, almost completely filling the available space. Additionally, between these dates the previously open plot of land to the west of the building was built over - this new structure directly abutted the property. The 1938 Goad insurance map of Luton identifies 16 John Street as a straw hat factory with electric powered motors.

HAIR & BEAUTY UNISEX SALON

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0002 Date: 03/12/10 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL09282133

Name: The Beach Gardens Former name(s):

Address: 18-24 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: 15-18, 23-24 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Former hat related buildings, now offices with flats above.

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Brick with render Roof: Concrete tiles to front block

Current use: Offices and rented accomodation

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Two storey front block, with attic, with three-storey extension to rear. Built in Luton stock brick, the front block is rendered and little of the original layout remains. The elevation to John Street is largely symmetrical, visually divided into two properties at ground level, each with a recessed central doorway set beneath a canopy incorporated within a projecting fascia with clay tiled monopitch roof, the fascia to each property terminating in bracketed pseudo-consoles resting on fluted pilasters (the easternmost pilaster is missing). Between the central pilasters and the doorway of each property is a modern plate glass window with arched glazing bars set within a straight head. To the east of 24 John Street is a narrow recessed doorway, accessed via three steps. There are six first-floor windows, the end windows narrower than the others, all with straight heads and modern casements. This window arrangement is repeated in the gabled dormers above which are clearly a recent insertion, again all with modern casements. The eastern gable wall is blind. All that can be seen of the rear of this block is the easternmost section of 24 John Street, which has a single dormer window with a small first-floor window below. The three-storey extension to the rear is constructed from Luton stock bricks with some red brick, and has windows along its eastern wall. The ground floor is rendered with, from north to south, a doorway set within a blocked window opening, two segmental headed windows with timber casements, and a further doorway. There are five windows to the first floor, all with uPVC windows set within a segmental head constructed from a triple row of red brick headers, the southernmost being a very small window - probably lighting the stairwell. The windows on the second floor are similarly arranged, but with a loading door

complete with modern pulley (now partially filled in to become a window) in place of the third window, and all with straight heads formed by stone lintels. A two storey extension to the south has recently been demolished, the southern gable wall of the existing building once being connected by a ground and first-floor doorway, now blocked. Above the roof scar of the demolished section is a small window with stone header and sill. The 1880 OS town plan shows that the site originally comprised four domestic scale terraced properties, each with a glazed section across the rear and a small garden - they appear to have been built at the same time as a uniform development with access to the rear of the properties by means of two shared passages, one to the side of 18 John Street and one to the side of 24 John Street. The large extension which runs back from 22 & 24 was built between 1901 and 1924 and blocked the rear access to 22, suggesting that by this time 22 & 24 had been unified for use as a single premises. The Goad insurance plans of 1938 show that all four properties had been merged for use by a single company, with an office in 18, a warehouse in 20 and a hat factory (with electric motors) occupying 22 & 24 as well as the three-storey extension to the rear. The plan describes the four properties as being of two storeys with a basement - the use of the attic is clearly a more recent development.

Kynance
Beach Gardens

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0003 Date: 14/02/11 Investigator: KG

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL 09315 21339

Name: 24-28 John Street Former name(s): 26-30 John Street

Address:

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: n/a HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Previously the site of a number of hat factories.

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): n/a

Walls: n/a Roof: n/a

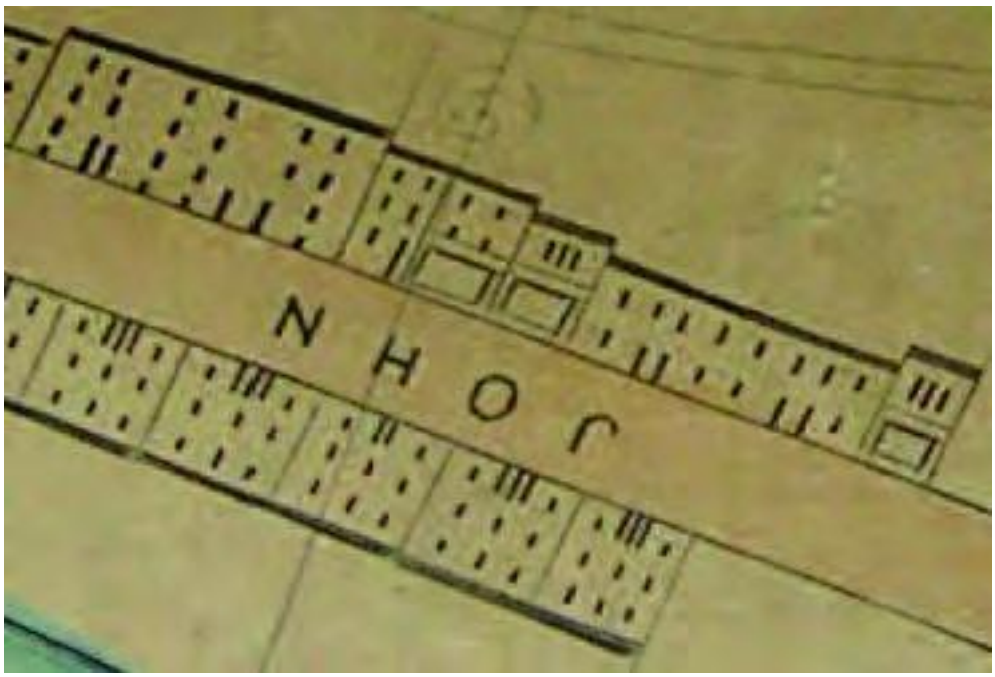
Current use: Vacant.

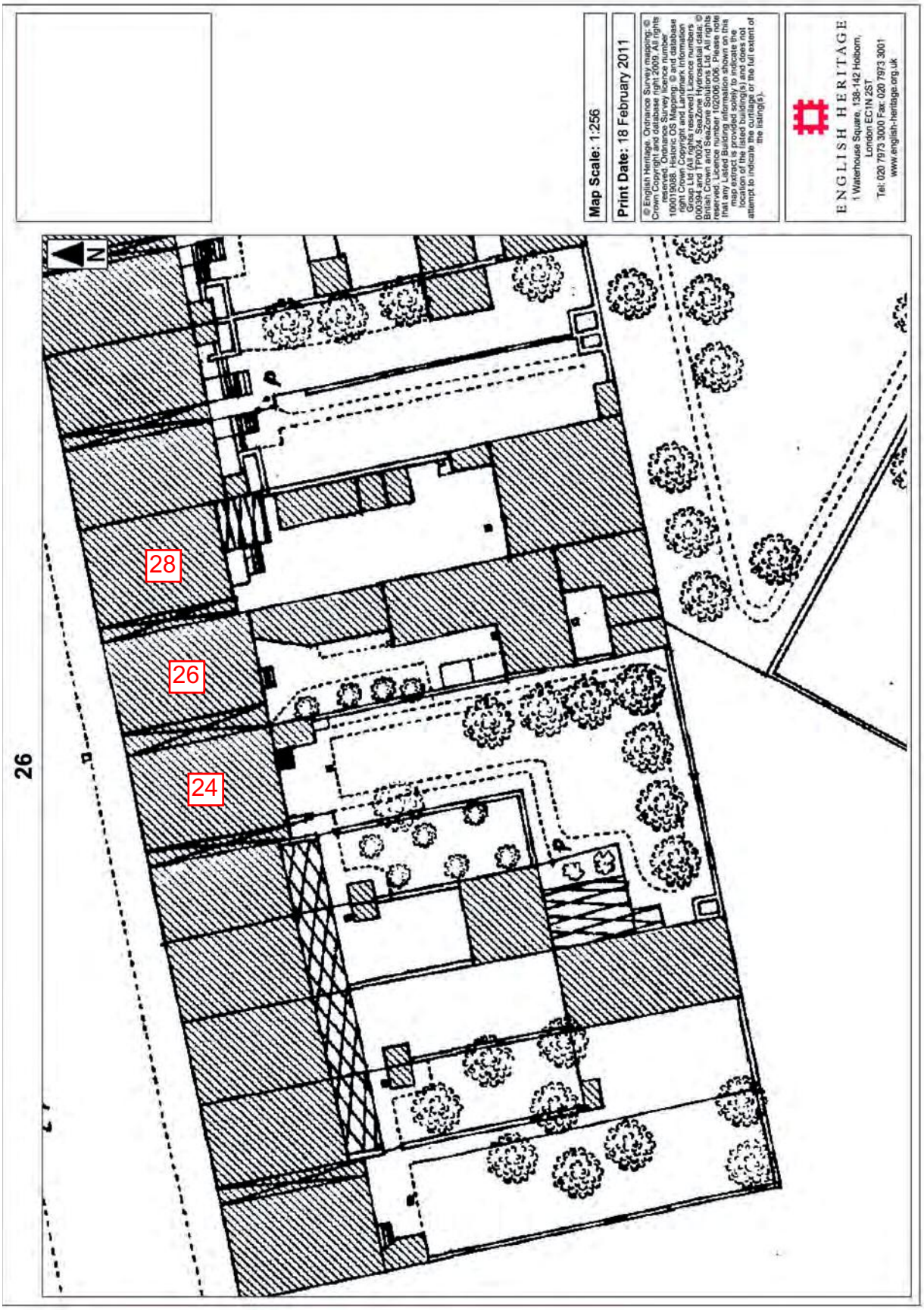
Condition: Demolished Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

An open plot of land on the south side of John Street. The site was developed prior to 1880: the OS map of this date shows three terraced properties, with rear access to the west of each property, with a number of outbuildings behind 26 John Street (these were connected as a rear range by the time of the 1901 OS map, leaving only a small courtyard space). By the time of the 1924 OS map all three properties had extensive rear ranges, taking up most of the available plot. The 1880 1:500 town plan shows 24 John Street to have had a formal garden with greenhouse, although the c.1870 pictorial map of Luton shows 24 and 26 as having display windows to John Street - suggesting that the ground floors, at least, were shops or warehouses. The presence of a formal garden to the rear of 24 (originally called 26 John Street) therefore suggests that the upper floor was in residential use - a theory supported by Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire for 1890 which shows a James Gladwell, straw hat manufacturer, at 26 John Street (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1890, commercial listings) as well as a James Gladwell at 26A John Street, Luton (ibid., trades: straw hat and bonnet manufacturers).The pictorial maps also shows 24 John Street as being two storeys high, whilst 26 and 28 are shown as three storey buildings. The Goad insurance maps confirm the height of the buildings, as well as the additional information that 26 & 28 (28 & 30 on Goad's map) had basements. 24 John Street is shown as being vacant in Feb 1938, whilst 26 & 28 had been combined (along with, possibly, the buildings to the east as far as 26 John Street - shown on the map as 38) for use by Bracey Brothers and Sons Bleach and Dye Works who had also expanded beyond the southern boundary wall and built a number of structures within the gardens to the north of the school on Waller Street.

The picture below is a detail from the c.1870 pictorial map of Luton, showing No. 16 John street to the top right, with Nos. 24-28 in the centre. On the following page is a detail from the 1880 town plan, showing the formal garden to the rear of No. 26 John Street.





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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0004 Date: 14/02/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09330 21343

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 32-34 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 4909-4912 & 4915-4916 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat warehouse/factory (small scale)

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s):

Walls: Luton stock brick with rendering Roof: Slate

Current use: n/a

Condition: Partly vacant Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A pair of three-storey buildings, of rendered brick with slate roof. Smooth rendered first and second floors, with one window to each floor per building - all with uPVC replacement casements. Immediately beneath the sill of the first-floor windows is a wide, modern fascia. The ground floor is covered with rusticated rendering, and contains a central doorway providing access to the rear of the properties, to either side of which would have been the shop windows and individual entrances to each property - a modern version of which remains to 34 John Street - whilst the ground floor of 32 John Street has been knocked through to create vehicular access to the yard area behind. The western gable wall is blind - visible due to the demolition of the adjoining property. The rear elevation also contains one large window to the first and second floor of each building, set under straight brick headers, whilst the ground floor of 34 John Street contains a doorway and a blocked window, a later insertion (no quarter bats) at a high level, between the ground and first floors. The exposed brickwork on the western and southern elevations is in Flemish bond, and the central passageway to the rear has been blocked. Miss Casandra Pratt, straw hat machinist and John Pratt, dairyman, resided at 32 John Street in 1890 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1890) and 34 John Street was occupied by George Swain, carpenter.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0005 Date: 09/03/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 0934 2134

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 36 - 38 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146090 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Commercial

Earliest phase: c.1950-60 Later phase(s): c.2010

Walls: Red brick Roof: n/a

Current use: Flats and commercial

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This is a three-storey building erected in the late 1950s or early 1960s with a concrete frame, dark red brick cladding in stretcher bond, and a flat roof. The ground floor consists of a central shop window with door to the right, the bay to the south providing vehicular access into the room behind, whilst the northern bay contains a door giving access to a stairway - suggesting that the ground-floor was used independently from the upper floors. The stall riser beneath the central window is clad with dark red brick in a stack bond - suggesting alteration in the 1970s. The stairway occupies the whole of the northern bay - with a single small window to both the first and second storey. The central and southern bays of both the first and second storeys are dominated by a bank of metal framed windows, each containing three panes, the upper two of which, on every alternate window, are pivot opening. Concrete panels are set beneath each set of windows, and above the second-floor windows - infilling the space between the window heads and the simple projecting cornice. A similar arrangement is seen to the rear of the property - with a brick clad northern bay and the central and southern bays dominated by glazing with concrete panels below - with the addition of a single doorway to the far south of both the first and second floors, linked by an external fire escape. The ground floor is hidden by a flat roofed single-storey extension linking the main building to a single-storey extension with hipped asbestos cement roof which extends to fill the whole of the plot. The building replaces an earlier structure that housed Frederick Ellis, Straw Hat Manufacturer in 1890 and 1898 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire), remaining in the Ellis family until, at least, the outbreak of World War I.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0006 Date: 20/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0935421348

Name: Lawrence Hall Former name(s):

Address: 40-46 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic - University accommodation block

Earliest phase: Early 21st century Later phase(s):

Walls: Dark red brick cladding Roof: Slate

Current use: Student acccommodation

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A four-storey steel framed accommodation block with dark red brick cladding laid in stretcher bond with decorative black brick bands. The ground floor is dominated by a central archway providing pedestrian and vehicular access to the rear of the property, flanked by two windows two either side with segmental heads - that to the far east being wider and matching the form of the central archway. Two gabled projections in the form of bracketed oriels extend through the upper two floors, located above the central archway and the larger window to the east. There are five windows to each of the upper floors; all are straight headed casements without sills. The hipped roof is covered in slate, and there are two projecting rear wings, that to the east being the larger of the two. The site was previously occupied by four Victorian terraced properties - Kelly's directories reveal that 40 John Street was occupied by a coal merchant between 1890 and 1914, 44 by a butcher and 46 by a shopkeeper.

Lawrence Hall

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0007 Date: 20/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0937421352

Name: Lester Hall Former name(s):

Address: 48-54 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic - university accommodation block

Earliest phase: Early 21st century Later phase(s):

Walls: Dark red brick Roof: Slate

Current use: University halls of residence

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This four-storey H shaped building, fronting John Street, has a steel frame covered with brown brick cladding laid in stretcher bond. Each of the upper floors has 12 windows, all of which have a soldier course of brown brick forming the headers, with a matching band between the first and second floor. The ground floor consists (east to west) of a gated passageway providing pedestrian access to the rear of the property, a display window incorporating a doorway into an independent commercial unit, a central doorway providing access to a gabled stairwell, another display window/commercial unit, with a large window to the west - all set within a slightly projecting brick surround with lead flashing. The gabled stairwell is articulated externally by the use of rendered panels between the windows of each floor. Formerly the site of five Victorian terraced properties, 52 John Street was home to a straw hat manufacturer in 1890 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1890).

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0008 Date: 20/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL0939821353

Name: JJ Galvin & Co Garage Former name(s):

Address: 2 Melson Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Commercial - garage

Earliest phase: c.1950 Later phase(s):

Walls: Corrugated iron Roof: Corrugated asbestos cement

Current use: Garage

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A single storey shed, the garage is entered through double timber doors set into the gable wall facing Melson Street and extends parallel to John Street. The side walls are formed from alternating panels of corrugated iron and corrugated plastic which allows light to penetrate. A number of small lean-to type extensions may be seen to the south of the main building. The site is bounded by a brick wall approx. 6ft high. The garage is located on the site of a foundry (Goad, 1938).

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0009 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09398 21321

Name: Beya Ltd Former name(s):

Address: 4-6 Melson Street, Luton

Contact info: Tel. no: 01582 400657

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 4925 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Modern pantiles

Current use: Electronic engineers

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

4-6 Melson Street is a pair of two-storey, two-bay properties separated by an entry that appears to run through the building. The walls are of brick, now painted, and there is a double-pitched pantile roof, with an end stack to the south. The entrances flank the through entry and have arched heads. Beyond these were windows under segmental arched heads, now reglazed (left) or converted into a full-height aperture (right). The two first-floor windows to 6 Melson Street appear to be original, being wooden sashes with margin light glazing. They have flat heads with keystones. The window apertures and glazing to 4 Melson Street have been altered. They have been heightened, suggesting serious alterations inside the building, perhaps with a raised floor level. The properties are shown on the OS 1:2500 map of 1880 but not on any earlier drawings and so, were built in the 1870s. 4 Melson Street, was the private residence of Mrs Beasley in 1890 (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, 1890). Goad's Insurance map of 1938 lists 4-6 Melson Street as a 'hat factory'.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0010 Date: 21/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09397 21321

Name: Property Connections Former name(s):

Address: 8 Melson Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DCSN 4924 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Commercial and residential use

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

8 Melson Street is a two-bay, two-and-a-half storey terraced property - quite unlike those to either side and set back from the street line. It is built of brick (now painted) and has a slate roof, with an end stack to the north. The half basement accommodates a commercial business (Property Connections), and is accessed down steps. The basement area is spanned by a flight of steps leading up to a doorway. To the right of this is a window protected by a secure iron grill or safety rail. Neither these nor the two upper-floor windows have heads and thus appear to be modern, suggesting the property has been refronted. The property is in a rapidly deteriorating state of disrepair. 8 Melson Street was built in the 1870s - it is depicted on the OS 1:2500 map of Luton town centre published in 1880 but not on Corney's map of 1872. James Morris, a private resident, resided here at the end of the 19th century (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, 1890; Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1898; Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903). The Goad Insurance map of 1938 lists it as a hat factory.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0011 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09397 21315

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 10 Melson Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 4923 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Straw hat & bonnet manufacturers

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Residential

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

10 Melson Street is an end of terrace property that stands three and a half storeys high, including a raised basement. It is of red brick, pier and panel construction, with large windows, suggesting an industrial function on all floors. The roof is covered in slate. On the ground floor, steps lead up to a lobby entrance, located to the right of a re-glazed display window (below this is a substantial basement). This arrangement is flanked by rusticated pilasters, only that on the right being properly finished with a moulded cap. Above this is a plain fascia with a weather moulding. The upper floors are divided by pilasters into three bays - a wide central bay flanked by narrow side bays - and at each level the windows are linked by a stone sill band. The first-floor windows have segmental heads with stone keystones. Those on the second floor lie under the eaves, and consequently have flat heads. All contain modern glazing (UPVC). A modillion cornice carries the eaves. The southern side wall is blind.

A substantial building is shown here on Corney's map (latest date 1872) but not on Todd's version which immediately pre-dated it (latest date 1862) and the OS 1:2500 map of Luton town centre published in 1880 shows it as part of a lengthy row of commercial/industrial and residential units. Charles Dobbs, straw hat & bonnet manufacturers, were based here in 1903 (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903) and the Goad Insurance map of 1938 describes it as a 'lining factory'.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0012 Date: 21/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0942521381

Name: The Melson Arms Former name(s):

Address: 65 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Public house

Earliest phase: c.1860 Later phase(s): Late 20thC

Walls: Rendered Roof: Slate

Current use: Public house

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

`The Melson Arms' is located on the corner of John Street and Church Street. It is two storeys high with a cut off corner and large paned sash windows, it was purpose designed as a public house and is unmistakably Victorian in character. It is a plain building, updated and rendered in the 1960s at which time the main original entrance on the corner of the public house was blocked in favour of the current one on John Street, and a single storey flat roofed toilet block added to the west. Three metal ties are visible in the western gable wall, and three rendered brackets/ corbels on the eastern wall immediately below the projecting eaves brackets. To the rear (north) of the main building is a small single storey outshot with tiled monopitch roof and segmental heads to the window and door. Although reputedly built in 1856 (S. Smith Pubs and Pints: The Story of Luton's Public Houses and Breweries, Luton, 1995, 19) John Street wasn't laid out until 1860 at the earliest and so the current heavily modified building probably dates to this decade rather than the previous one.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0013 Date: 21/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL0939321374

Name: Wayne's Court Former name(s): 55: Tomson & Sons corn merchants

Address: 53-55 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP141941 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Corn warehouse and flats

Earliest phase: c.1913 Later phase(s): Late 20thC

Walls: Red brick Roof: Mixed

Current use: Mixed commercial and domestic

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Wayne's Court is a modern two-and-a-half storey development of flats attached to an earlier corn warehouse at 55 John Street. The modern section dates to c.2000 and is built from red brick in stretcher bond under a slate roof. The elevation to John Street has three gabled dormer windows, six first-floor windows and one ground-floor window - all with uPVC frames set beneath red brick soldier course headers. Access to the rear of the building is by way of a vehicular passageway adjoining 55 John Street. The former corn warehouse at 55 John Street is an intriguingly late example of gothic revival design, built for Tomson & Sons corn merchants in c.1913. Built using pier and panel construction, the four-storey building is dominated by giant order pointed arches springing from the piers to encompass the windows. It has been constructed using a mixture of Luton stock and red brick with concrete details. The panels incorporate decorative tiles which hint at the influence of the arts and crafts movement. Save for the addition of a glazed stair turret in the centre of the eastern elevation, a number of satellite dishes and the replacement of the original windows with uPVC frames, 55 John Street retains much of its original appearance.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0014 Date: 21/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL0936521369

Name: NA Former name(s): Electrolux and J ALbert & Co

Address: 37-51 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Vacant plot

Earliest phase: Later phase(s):

Walls: NA Roof: NA

Current use: Vacant

Condition: Demolished Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

According to the series of OS maps this roughly rectangular site was occupied by seven terraced properties in 1880, which had been combined and amalgamated into five properties by 1901. By 1924 the five properties to the west had been replaced by a single building which occupied almost the entire plot, stretching back almost to the river - the Goad insurance maps show that this building was home to two companies, Electrolux in the western half west and J. ALbert & Co's hat factory in the east. They were demolished in c.2000.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0015 Date: 20/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL0934021363

Name: Auction House Courtyard Former name(s):

Address: 23-35 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP141942 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed domestic and commercial

Earliest phase: 1933 Later phase(s): c.2005

Walls: Mixed brick Roof: Slate

Current use: Mixed domestic and commercial

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

23-33 John Street and 1-20 Auction House Courtyard form a modern (c.2005) development of flats which incorporates the older Auction House at 35 John Street. The John Street frontage has been designed with respect to the plot boundaries of the six terraced properties which once stood here and attempts to replicate this through varying roof lines and false building breaks. Built using yellow brick in a Flemish bond, the windows contain uPVC sash windows and moulded reconstituted stone has been used for the heads and sills. 23 John Street is two storeys high, 25 and 27 are two and a half storeys with dormer windows set into mansard roofs, whilst 29-33 are three storeys high. The ground floor is occupied by a series of commercial units under a continuous fascia. Access to the courtyard is provided by a double gateway at 25 John Street. 35 John Street is a symmetrically designed three and a half storey building, with raised ground floor showroom above a half basement, whose interior floor levels are clearly articulated by the concrete framing. The glazing occupies the entirety of the space between the piers and consists of large metal frames divided into multiple small panes. The piers are clad in red brick and the parapet has been rendered. Somewhat unusually the main doorway (to the west) and the passageway (to the east) have been treated equally - the only difference being an extra step up to the main door, with an internal lobby beyond. This helps to create a well balanced design which, despite extensive renovation work in recent years, retains its structural integrity. A certificate of completion for the property is dated 31 May 1933 and names Mr H. C. Janes as the builder. No architect's name is provided, suggesting that the builder may also have been the designer.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0016 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0931521358

Name: Kebabite Former name(s):

Address: 23 John Street

Contact info: 01582 722273

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic

Earliest phase: c.1870 Later phase(s): c.2000

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Concrete tile

Current use: Commercial - kebab shop

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A three-storey building, originally part of a terrace, it is shown as a domestic property on the Goad insurance maps. There is a single window to both the first and second floors, each with a stone lintel, engineering brick sill and timber casement windows. The ground floor has been remodelled with the insertion of a modern shop frontage. The stallriser beneath the window is rendered and may disguise basement lights.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0017 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL0930321354

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 15-21 John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: NA

Earliest phase: Later phase(s):

Walls: NA Roof: NA

Current use: Vacant plot

Condition: Demolished Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Vacant rectangular plot stretching back to the river Lea, formerly the site of four terraced properties. The Goad insurance maps show that 15 and 17 John Street were in use as a block factory with offices and domestic accommodation. 19 John Street was in use as offices and 21 John Street was a domestic property. Demolished c.2000.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0018 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL0923621362

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 37-47 Cheapside

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Car park

Earliest phase: c.1960 Later phase(s):

Walls: Concrete Roof: NA

Current use: Car park

Condition: Partly vacant Historic integrity: High Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Although this car park has a subterranean level, accessed via a concrete ramp on Silver Street (not accessible), only the surface level is in use. The ramp is a remnant of the basement car park that belonged to the 1960s office block which stood on the site until c2000. Prior to the office block the plot had been the site of a terrace of seven buildings matching that at 49 Cheapside - the last surviving remnant.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0019 Date: 17/01/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 0925 2138

Name: 49 Former name(s): Meredith & Co

Address: Cheapside, Luton

Contact info: Mr Roger Walter Smallbones: service@lutoncameras.co.uk

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5000-5006 & 5015-5018 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Showroom/warehouse related to the hat industry

Earliest phase: 1899-1900 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock with red brick detailing Roof: Pantiles

Current use: Vacant

Condition: Partly vacant Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Three-storey building with original shopfront, built directly over the River Lea. Built from Luton stocks with red brick detailing in a Queen Anne revival style, the building is the last survivor of a uniform terrace of properties which once extended to the south. The front (eastern) elevation is aligned with Cheapside, with the northern gable wall running at a right angle to follow the line of 51 Cheapside, whilst the southern gable wall angles out to the south-west, following the course of the river. Original display shopfront with a wooden frame and segmental headed plate glass panes with transom lights above. The leaded transom lights contain red, blue and yellow quarrels with marginal glazing; there is an etched floral design to alternate quarrels, creating a checkerboard pattern. Beneath the display window is a plain brick stallriser in Flemish bond with a simple timber stallboard above. To the south of the display widow is a recessed lobby with a wooden panelled ceiling and panelling beneath the shop window which contains an original letter-plate. The southern wall of the lobby is of plain brick set in a Flemish bond, whilst there is no evidence of a tiled floor - only a worn flagstone. The door is original, with a segmental headed upper section containing plate glass, beneath which is a letter-plate and two timber panels. Above the door is a a tall fanlight, split into two panes (of modern replacement glass) by a central timber glazing bar. Above the shopfront is a narrow fascia formed by a riveted metal beam, with brick dentilled cornicing above.

The first floor contains a single canted oriel window with decorative bright red brick detailing and a moulded brick sill. The oriel has a leaded ogee-shaped roof. The windows contains the same coloured transom lights as seen on the shopfront: the central ones open as casement windows and retain their original hinges. There are two sash windows to the second floor with chamfered brick reveals, a moulded brick sill band and shaped aprons below, under red brick chamfered heads which rise to meet the heavily moulded and dentilled brick cornice at the eaves. The clear building break indicates all that remains of 47 Cheapside - a narrow section of wall obscuring the southern elevation of 49. The rear elevation contains two larger and one smaller windows to all floors, with segmental red brick headers and stone sills - the smaller windows lighting the staircase. A ground-floor extension to 51 Cheapside partly obscures the northern-most part of 49, whilst the course of the river Lea underneath the building can clearly be seen to the south - the building being carried above on metal beams.

Kelly's trade directories provide a potted history of the site - in 1898 49 Cheapside was the premises of Meredith & Co, straw hat polish manufacturers (who had been on Cheapside since at least 1890 - according to Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1890), whilst the 1903 and 1910 directories give it as the premises of Peter Davenport, silk merchant. By 1914 the site is used by Thomas Hawkes, straw plait merchant, and the Goad insurance map of c.1938 continues to show 49 as a hat warehouse, with stores in the buildings behind. The property register for 49 Cheapside includes the original conveyance text for the property, dated 2nd September 1899, which states that the owner of the land, a Christine Mary Ordish, had the right to to build over the River Lea, adjoining the southern side of a warehouse belonging to Mr Edmund Wiseman at 51 Cheapside). This suggests that a previous building on the site was replaced in c1899/1900 by the current property.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0020 Date: 18/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0925821388

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 51 Cheapside

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP141924 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed domestic and commercial

Earliest phase: c1885-1895 Later phase(s): Mid 20th century

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Concrete tile

Current use: Vacant

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A three-storey building set back from the street, constructed primarily from Luton stock bricks in Flemish bond with a two-storey flat roofed block filling in the space between the main building and the street. The second-floor windows have arched stone heads with a stone key. The glazing has been replaced with mid-20th century timber casements, whilst the picture window on the first floor of the extension has has fixed glazing with opening top lights. The front block is also constructed using Flemish bond with a moulded brick cornice. The display window is boarded up, with a Fletton brick stallriser in stretcher bond below. The recessed lobby is accessed via two stone steps. To the rear of the property is a single-storey extension. The 1895 Goad insurance map is the earliest evidence of a building on the site and shows a three-storey building with offices and domestic accommodation fronting Cheapside, a Tinsmith to the rear and a small shop fronting Barber's Lane. By the time of the 1938 Goad map the main building is shown as a restaurant with a hardware store to the rear.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0021 Date: 18/01/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09261 21393

Name: Traffik Nightclub Former name(s): The Cowper Arms

Address: 53 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 141923 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35797

Building/ monument type: Temperance tavern

Earliest phase: 1882 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Flemish bond red brick and pebble dash Roof: Clay tile

Current use: Nightclub

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A three-storey building with distinctive Queen Anne revival elements. The three bay eastern (Cheapside) elevation has a triple gable with finials and moulded bargeboards, with fishscale tiles in the apexes of the gables. Decorated rainwater heads beneath the gable valleys provide a date of 1882. The second floor is jettied with a moulded bressumer resting on supporting brackets, the whole being rendered in pebble dash. Within each of the gables is a uPVC window. The first floor is a symmetrical arrangement with outer oriel windows and two single-light windows between, these having moulded brick aprons beneath. The ground floor is arranged with a recessed double doorway to the south, accessed by two steps, with two canted bay windows to the north - simple brick piers articulate the bay divisions. Above the windows and door is a fascia with dentiled cornice, above which are four small pediments in line with the piers below. Beneath the bay windows are loading doors for the basement. A number of extensions project from the rear of the property, reaching as far as Barber's Lane. Internally the building has been much altered - with the additions of bars, toilets etc. Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire for 1910, lists the premises as being occupied by Clay and Co., Straw Hat Manufacturers. It is listed as being occupied by Charles Clay and Sons Ltd., straw hat trimmings manufacturers in Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire for 1914.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0022 Date: 19/01/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Designed landscape OS grid reference: TL 09280 21361

Name: Former name(s):

Address: Eastern corner of John Street and Cheapside, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Landscaped public area

Earliest phase: Late 20th century Later phase(s): Early 21st century

Walls: n/a Roof: n/a

Current use:

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A segment shaped public area largely comprising paved surfaces and raised beds containing shrubbery. Occupying a corner plot, the northern and eastern boundaries meet almost at right angles in the north-east corner, the boundary to the south-west arcing between Cheapside and John Street. Shown as open land in the pictorial map of c.1870, the 1880 OS map shows seven buildings fronting on to John Street - the two westernmost standing where a large part of the road junction now lies. The Goad insurance map of c.1935 also shows a garage adjacent to 42 Cheapside, and reveals that most of these building were used by various elements of the hatting industry.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0023 Date: 11/01/11 Investigator: KG

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL 0927 2138

Name: Right Homes, Twisted Tongues & Exel Former name(s):

Address: 42-48 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info: Right Homes: 01582 480011, Twisted Tongues: 01582 510821, Exel: 01582 456500

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5008-5013, 5019-5028 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed commercial and residential

Earliest phase: c.1890 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick in English bond Roof: Mixed pantiles and slate

Current use: Two estate agents, a clothing store and flats

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Four properties, built as a terrace. 42 and 44 Cheapside are three storeys in height whilst 46 and 48 are two storey. Ground floor: four matching shopfronts each consisting of narrow double doors with fanlight above, with a display window to the north which is divided into two plate glass panes by a vertical glazing bar. The stallrisers are clad in wood with the exception of 48 Cheapside which has glazed bricks beneath the window. A passageway providing access to the rear of the property runs between 42 and 44. To either side of this and to the south of each doorway is a pilaster with glazed bricks on a stone base, with a simple console and triangular pediment forming part of a continuous fascia. The doors to 48 open into a small lobby, with a brick threshold, simple parquet floor and recessed mat in front of a replacement inner door. Fire walls divide the roofs of 42 & 44, and 46 & 48, whilst the roofs have all been re-tiled using pantiles, with the exception of 46 Cheapside which retains its slates. A clustered brick stack rises to the north of 48. 46 and 48 each have two first-floor windows with straight heads set immediately beneath the eaves, with stone sills. Beneath the window sills is a red brick band which continues across 42 and 44, with a moulded brick band halfway up the height of the windows, above which is red brick with a scroll motif to either end. 42 and 44 each have two windows to both the first and second floors, each floor with a narrower central window above the passageway. The first-floor windows have moulded brick segmental heads with a moulded keystone, whilst the second-floor windows have straight heads set immediately beneath the eaves. The scroll motif is repeated at the outer edges.

With the exception of 48, all of the windows contain modern uPVC replacement casements. The southern wall of the range is blind, before it reduces to two storeys in height and turns north-east at an angle to meet the rear block of 46 (which also runs at a slight angle), creating a trapezoidal range accessed via the passageway between 42 & 44, with a very small courtyard in the center which now allows access to the flats ranged around it. This courtyard contains a number of blocked and altered windows. Both of the rear blocks contain a number of straight headed windows, some of which are later insertions. A roof scar shows where a further extension once stood to the rear of the northern extension, behind 46. 48 was constructed over the river Lea and does not have any form of rear extension. The properties were built between 1880 and 1901, with the rear extension to 46 in place by 1901, as was most of the southern range although this did not yet connect to 42. The 1938 Goad insurance maps show a straw hat factory on the site, with associated straw plait warehouse in 46 Cheapside and a separately owned straw plait warehouse in 48, with access through to the warehouse, offices and block factory at 50 & 52 Cheapside.

Kelly's trade directory for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire 1898 states that 46 Cheapside was the premises of John Facer, a coal merchant. More information is given in Kelly's 1903 directory, which shows an Alfred Sapwell, straw hat manufacturer, at 42; an Ernest Underwood, straw plait merchant, at 46 and T & J Brodie & Co Limited - paper merchants, color printers and paper bag manufacturers - at 48. In the 1910 directory, Alfred Sapwell is still present at 42, whilst a Henry Webb, manufacturers' agent, has taken over 46. By the time of the 1914 directory much has changed - Alfred Sapwell is now listed as being a straw hat manufacturer occupying 42, 44 and 46 Cheapside - using all three buildings.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0024 Date: 18/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09279 21396

Name: Sharpcuts Gents Barbers Former name(s):

Address: 50 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5086 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Former warehouses and offices

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Gents Barbers

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

50 Cheapside is a two-storey terraced building, of plum-coloured Luton Grey bricks, with red brick dressings, and a tiled roof straddled by two brick stacks, set on the cross walls. It appears to contain two properties. At ground-floor level, from left to right, is a small doorway, a window, and a shopfront. The head of the doorway may have been remodelled: modern patching in the brickwork above the lintel interrupts a red brick band. The large plate-glass window has a depressed-arched head containing decorative leaded glazing above a transom bar. To its right is a boot scrapper. The shopfront (Sharpcuts Gents Barbers) has a large modern shop sign over a part-glazed entrance door (left) and display window (right). At first-floor level, the two right-hand windows are plate-glass sashes, while the three on the left - including an inserted window flanked by original window openings - have UPVC glazing. Rear not viewed.

The earliest depiction of the structure dates to 1901 when it is shown on the OS 1:2500 scale revision of Luton town centre. In 1903 it was occupied by Frank Moody, engineer and manufacturer of machinery for straw hat manufacturers (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts, and Northamptonshire, 1903). By 1910, White and Newbold, straw hat manufacturers and George Newbold, coal merchants, were housed at 50 Guildford Street (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910): White and Newbold continued to occupy the building up to the outbreak of the First World War (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1914). The Goad Insurance map of 1938 lists it as `Warehouse and offices'.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0025 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09283 21403

Name: Glamour Hair Studio Former name(s):

Address: 52 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info: Tel no: 01582 658269

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP146070 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic residence and shop

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: hair salon

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

No. 52 Cheapside is a two and a half storey terraced property, apparently built as a single unit with a commercial function on the ground floor, and residential above. It is of plum coloured Luton Greys, with red brick dressings and a slate roof. The full width of the ground floor ('Glamour Hair Studio') is taken up by a shopfront with panelled pilasters and bracketed consoles, framing a tripartite shop window to the left of a gated lobby entrance. The latter has an encaustic tile floor and contains two entrances: one to the shop; the other to the house. There are two first-floor windows. That on the left is in the form of a large-scale canted oriel window, with wooden sash glazing, on a panelled base. It has a dentilled cornice and is covered by a lead roof. The window to the right is smaller. The sill is carried on small brackets, and the segmental head has a projecting label. It contains a wooden sash. Above the oriel is a gabled dormer containing modern glazing; there appears to be a skylight to its right. The eaves are formed of decorative sawtooth brickwork.

A vacant plot is shown on the OS 1:2500 map of Luton town centre dating to 1880 and the building is first shown on the update of 1901. It was occupied by Frederick John Pedley, house decorator, until at least the outbreak of the First World War (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903; Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910; Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1914).

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0026 and 0027 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Block OS grid reference: TL0928921416

Name: Rivergate House Former name(s):

Address: Rivergate House, John Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed domestic and commercial

Earliest phase: c.1980-1990 Later phase(s):

Walls: Luton stock with red brick detailing Roof: Flat

Current use: Mixed domestic and commercial

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A four storey building constructed from Luton stock brick with red brick detailing used in the ground-floor arches and as a diamond motif between the upper floor windows. The ground floor has a central archway providing vehicular access to the rear of the building, and to the flats above, flanked by independent commercial units whose fascias are set within depressed arches. There are three oriel windows containing timber casements to each floor.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0028 Date: 21/6/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09294 21427

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 56 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 141927 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Offices and flats, former coal merchants

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C19

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Unoccupied

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

56 Cheapside is a large and imposing building, occupying a prominent corner plot at the junction of Cheapside and Guildford Street, and is notable, primarily, for its highly decorative window surrounds. It is a three storey building with a cut-off corner entrance and a subsidiary entrance to the side of this (on Cheapside), separated by a window. Symmetry is apparent on both façades of the building: on Guildford Street this consists of paired and single sash windows on each floor; on Cheapside, two sets of paired sash windows on each floor. Ground and first-floor windows comprise stone sills and decorated lintels with a continuous band of red brick at sill level. There is a continuous projecting hood moulding above these windows. The intervening space between the flat lintel and the moulding contains a flat, red brick, panel or tympanum. The second-floor sash windows are smaller with stone sills and projecting brickwork in between. The heads are composites of red and yellow brick and there are small black-glazed brick crosses between the windows. The roof is of Welsh grey slate.

56 Cheapside is first noted in Kelly's Directory for 1903 where it is listed as a coal merchant (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903). A vacant plot is shown on the OS town plan of 1880, and the building makes its first cartographic appearance on Goad's insurance map of 1895: by 1938 it was registered as `offices and domestic' premises.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0029-0030 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09267 21403

Name: Raldis Cafe ; Glen Smith photographers Former name(s):

Address: 55-57 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info: Glen Smith Studio - 01582 23135

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5088 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Straw hat manufacturer, plait warehouse and factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: 55 Cheapside - cafe; 57 Cheapside - photography studio

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This is a pair of terraced properties, 55-57 Cheapside, each two bays wide and three storeys high, built in plum-coloured Luton brick with red brick and stone dressings. Each has a commercial business on the ground floor. 55 accommodates a café (Raldis Café), with a window and doorway under a large modern fascia. 57 is a photographic studio (Glen Smith Studio), with a frontage of modern brickwork comprising an arched window to the left of a doorway. This may have replaced an older shopfront. On the upper floors, each property is treated in the same manner, although 55 has been painted white with decorative details picked out in black, and has replacement glazing. The original treatment is, therefore, best seen on 57. The windows have segmental heads, with stone lintels carved with stylized Maltese crosses to either side of a chamfered keystone. They contain plate glass wooden sashes. The eaves are of sawtoothed brickwork. Several satellite dishes are attached to the frontage.

These properties were built in the 1870s - absent from Corney's map completed in 1872 but present on the OS 1:2500 map of Luton town centre published in 1880. 55 Cheapside was occupied by William Sleight, straw plait merchant from the end of the 19th century through to the outbreak of the First World War (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903; Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, 1910; Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1914).

57 Cheapside was occupied by Richard Burley, straw hat manufacturer, in 1910 (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, 1910) and Swain & Burley, straw hat manufacturer in 1914 (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1914). Goad's Insurance map of 1938 lists 55 Cheapside as a 'chemical warehouse'; 57 Cheapside was at the time a `straw hat factory' with 59 Cheapside.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0031 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09270 21410

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 59 Cheapside, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5089 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Straw hat factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Former shop now unoccupied

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

59 Cheapside is a single end of terrace property, two bays wide and three storeys high, of plum coloured Luton Grey bricks with red brick and stone dressings. It is very similar to 55-57 Cheapside, but simpler in style, with a slightly higher second storey. The ground floor may have been occupied by commercial premises, and currently displays a `to let' sign. It has been converted to residential use, with a window to the left of the entrance. Above this are segmental headed windows with sash glazing. These have chamfered keystones. The eaves are of sawtoothed brickwork. The adjoining building to the north has been demolished.

This property was built in the 1870s - it is absent from Corney's map completed in 1872 but present on the OS 1:2500 map of Luton town centre published in 1880 where it is a component in a short terrace incorporating 55-57 Cheapside. It was occupied by Henry Edwards, tailor, in 1898 (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1898), Walter Edward Brown, straw hat manufacturer, in 1903 (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903), and from 1910 by the Labour Club & Institute (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, 1910; Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1914). Goad's Insurance map of 1938 lists No. 59 Cheapside as a 'straw hat factory' (conjoined with 57 Cheapside).

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0032 Date: 21/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL0928921416

Name: Former name(s):

Address: Western corner of Cheapside and Guildford Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Surface level car park

Earliest phase: / Later phase(s): c.2000

Walls: NA Roof: NA

Current use: Car park

Condition: Demolished Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This L shaped plot of land extends behind the rear of numbers 55-59 Cheapside and is currently used for surface level car parking. It was formerly the site of a number of straw hat factories and warehouses shown on both sets of Goad insurance maps as being two or three storeys in height and filling almost all of the available plot.

NO PARKING
IN FRONT OF GATES
24 HOUR ACCESS
REQUIRED

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0033 Date: 21/6/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09243 21430

Name: Former name(s): Maurice Davis' Hat Factory

Address: 47 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146079 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35821

Building/ monument type: Former hat factory

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Unoccupied (storage?)

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A three-storey building with a slate roof, it is largely 'domestic' appearance, built in Luton Grey bricks with stuccoed quoins. There are four bays to Guildford Street - the bay furthest to the west being clearly delineated from the others. The building curves to the east to continue in another two bays down Barber's Lane. The ground floor on Guildford Street comprises a central, double-door, with a plain rendered, surround and large sash windows on either side. These are notable for their stuccoed quoins and stuccoed gauged heads as well as narrow stone or concrete sills. In addition, there is a prominent and continuous stuccoed plat band at first-floor level. The windows on the first floor all follow the same design, with original wooden sashes, apart from those placed centrally which have arched heads and plain stucco surrounds. The right hand bay features a large ground floor passageway: this incorporates a substantial concrete lintel and it has been narrowed in recent times. The sash windows above this have plain rendered surrounds and narrow stone or concrete lintels.

Supposedly built in the 1860s, the building probably dates to the 1840s. A building of the same dimensions is marked on this location on the updated Tithe map of 1844 and the building is unmistakably shown on Todd's map (first stages produced in 1853, latest in 1862) as a three-storey with four bays, the fourth being clearly delineated as it is seen today.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0034 Date: 22/6/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09233 21435

Name: Luton Camera Repair Services Former name(s): HC Brown Hat Factory

Address: 49 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Tel No: 01582 458323

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146079 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Camera shop, formerly hat factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Modern concrete tiles

Current use: Camera sales and repairs

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A three-storey building plus basement, it is three bays wide - although the central bay is wider than the outer bays, with paired windows to the first and second floors and single windows outside of these. The ground floor consists of a wide central bay that contains a large window with a tiled stall riser. This is separated from the side bays by rendered flat pilasters capped with capitals. The left-hand bay contains the current, recessed, doorway to the shop, flanked on the left by a pilaster of similar form. The right-hand bay was, originally, a second entrance now blocked with a shop display window and tiled stall riser. The original fascia is hidden behind a modern shop sign but at first-floor level there is continuous band of projecting, moulded, cornice. Both ground floor windows have been heavily modified and all trace of exterior access to the basement has been removed. The central, paired, windows on the first and second floors are separated from the single windows to the side by brick piers - the windows, however, are all of similar form. The original wooden frames have been replaced by uPVC casements. Sills are narrow, in stone or concrete, and the accompanying heads are flat, rendered and gauged. Each window has a simple brick apron below the sill but those under the first-floor windows have recessed, brick-defined, panels. The front elevation is completed at roof line level with a course of brick dentils beneath two projecting courses of brickwork; the roof is clad in modern concrete tiles.

The hat factory at 49 Guildford Street is shown on the 1880 1:2500 town map, but in a much reduced form - it has clearly been extended on a number of occasions since then - and it is depicted as being a component part of the factory at No. 47 on Goad's insurance map of 1895. HC Brown Hat Manufacturers occupied the premises in 1914 (http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/luton/0.local/luton_news_directory_1914.pdf) and it remained in use as a hat factory into the post Second World War years. It currently hosts Luton Camera Repair Services.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0035-0037 Date: 28/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09226 21437

Name: Luton Kebab House Former name(s):

Address: 51 Guildford Street

Contact info: Tel No: 01582 722905

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5220 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Restaurant

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock grey brick painted Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Fast food outlet

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

51 Guildford Street is a squat building, dwarfed by 49 Guildford Street on its left. A two storey building with a low-pitched roof in Welsh Grey Slate, it sits in a key location in the Conservation Area - at the junction of Guildford and Bute Street, facing the station approach. The shop front has been substantially altered in recent years but hints of its original form can still be discerned. Currently, it comprises a double, two-light, ground floor window with rendered stall riser and a door to the side. This window has heavy wooden glazing bars with a simple, narrow, wooden sill, and the upper lights are sub-divided into four panes, again, each divided by wooden glazing bars - this arrangement extends to the fanlight above the door. A single window with a quadruple light above lies on the right hand side of the door and the shop front is divided by flat wooden pilasters beneath a wide, modern, fascia with narrow projecting cornice. The pilasters are capped by crude consoles with small pediments. The first floor is dominated by a large tripartite sash window with wooden mullions; the head is not visible beneath the modern paintwork but the sill is a simple, narrow, band of stone or concrete. This window sits directly above the main ground-floor shop window. There is a smaller, two-light, sash window to the right of this and it, similarly, sits directly above the smaller ground-floor window. It is likely that the current ground-floor window and door arrangement is of more recent date - the door, in particular, appears to be a later insertion and the window may well block an earlier cart entrance to the side of the building. The smaller ground-floor window marks the location of an original entrance to the building.

A building is shown on this site on Todd's map which has a latest date of 1862. It is one component of a row of buildings that formerly combined 51 Guildford Street with 56-58 Bute Street. Goad's Insurance Plan of 1895 shows all three as a single unit at that time - as a Plait Warehouse - but it is possible that, based on similarity of form with the 'Cooper's Arms' and the 'Wheelwrights Arms', it was originally a public house. It had certainly been sub-divided into three separate properties by the start of the 19th century. Wallace Bruce Cox, estate agent, occupied 51 Guildford Street in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903) and in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910). It is shown as a single property used as offices on the Goad Insurance Plan of 1938.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0038-0040 Date: 19/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09215 21428

Name: Sun Do restaurant; Coral betting shop Former name(s):

Address: 50-54 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info: Sun Do - 01582 482533; Coral betting shop - 0800 328 4273

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP146081 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory and warehouse

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Mixed commercial and residential use

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This terrace of four units at 50-54 Bute Street, has commercial usage on the ground floor with residential above. It stands three storeys high, of brown brick with stucco dressings, including a rendered parapet that conceals the roof. Each unit is roofed separately, with a double-pitched roof running at right angles to the street. There are substantial wings behind 50-52 Bute Street. The façade is Baroque in style, with horizontal stucco bands connecting the windows at sill and lintel levels, and with small brackets beneath the sills. The tripartite first-floor windows are topped by prominent pediments, while the second-floor windows, again grouped as triplets, have large keystones. Some windows contain plate glass sashes while others have modern replacement glazing. The ground floor houses two businesses. No. 50 is a betting shop (Coral). The wooden shopfront - with panelled pilasters and bold consoles - comprises a display window to the left of a plate glass shop door. To the right of this is a vehicle entry with gates. 52-54 Bute Street accommodates a restaurant (Sun Do), with a pink granite shopfront containing two doorways, one to either side of two tripartite plate glass windows. The doorway on the right serves the restaurant; that on the left the upper floors. The buildings, in their current arrangement are shown on the OS 1:2500 plan of the town centre produced in 1880. A short terrace of structures is, however, depicted on Todd's map of 1855 with a full terrace on the map update of 1862. The buildings, in their present form, probably belong to the late 1870s: the Goad Insurance map for 1938 list the property as a straw hat warehouse and factory.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0041 Date: 24/01/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Other: Terrace OS grid reference: TL 09233 21412

Name: 23-29 Barber's Lane, Luton Former name(s):

Address: 23-29 Barber's Lane, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5030-5040 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed commercial

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Ceramic pantiles on 23. Uncertain for the others.

Current use: 23-25 in residential use; 27-29 in commercial use

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A row of four properties which appear to have been built as part of a terrace. Each building is of three storeys, with no evidence of basements or attics, constructed from Luton stock bricks in Flemish bond. The buildings face east, along Barber's Lane, and the ground floors of this eastern elevation have been heavily modified with the exception of 29 which retains its original shopfront. The roofing material is unclear apart from on 23 Barber's Lane where pantiles are evident. Paired doorways to the properties lie either side of the party walls, to the side of ground-floor windows. The modern replacement doors to 23 & 25 are set in a timber surround and with a fanlight above. Each building has a single window with a shallow segmented head formed by red bricks and with projecting stone sills, aligned above the ground-floor window on both the first and second floors. 25 Barber's Lane differs by having a second first-floor window, above the doorway - this appears to be an insertion. With the exception of the first-floor window of 29 (which contains a replacement timber casement), all the frames are uPVC replacements. The ground floor of 27 has been completely remodelled and the original doorway is hidden behind steel security shutters. 23 and 25 Barber's Lane have also seen substantial modification with original shopfronts infilled and replaced by uPVC casement windows, protected by wrought iron grills. The ground floor of 23 & 25 Barber's Lane is rendered in plain stucco and, together with 27, incorporates a tapering chamfered stone plinth compensating for the sloping away of the ground to the south.

The shop front to 29 remains relatively intact - a black glazed tile stallriser supports a two-light timber framed window with moulded central mullion in collonette form with a foliate capital and flat double cyma reversa bracket. Additional cyma reversa brackets frame the uppermost corners of each light and the window is surmounted by a simple dentiled cornice below a plain, outward-tilting, fascia. Both the fascia and the moulded entablature above are flanked by fluted consoles with segmental pediments and lead-flashing. No visible evidence survives for earlier ground-floor frontages on the other properties due to rendering and painted brickwork. Dentiled eaves are visible on all buildings, a short section of cast iron guttering survives to 29 Barber's Lane whilst the iron supports/brackets for the guttering are visible to the other properties. The blind southern gable wall of 23 Barber's Lane has been rebuilt in mid-late 20th century stretcher bond with buttressing. Access to the rear of the properties is limited but 23 & 25 are pebble-dashed and the fenestration pattern to all properties is eccentric and much altered. A chimney stack is visible between 25 & 27 and at the gable end apex of 29 Barber's Lane. The properties are depicted on the 1880 Bedfordshire 1:2500 OS map and it is evident that they are the remnant of what was once a terrace of eight buildings with yards to the rear, the demolished buildings once standing to the south of 23 Barber's Lane. Subsequent revisions in the OS maps up to the middle of the C20 illustrate an increasingly densely occupied zone with major clearance occurring in the final decades of the C20. Kelly's Directory of 1890 indicates that 23 Barber's Lane was tenanted to Charles Dould, straw hat & bonnet wire maker but by 1914 it was being used by John Walters, news agent. 25 Barber's Lane was occupied in 1903 by John Ager, clothier and seven years later it was in the tenancy of John Wakefield, wardrobe dealer. 29 was owned by Annie Emerson (Mrs) confectioner, in 1910. The Goad insurance map, last modified in 1938, notes that 29 Barber's Lane was by then a restaurant; 27 was an office; 25 produced hat machinery and 23 was an engineering works.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0042 Date: 18/01/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL 09200 21390

Name: Former name(s):

Address: Corner of Bute Street and Silver Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5041 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type:

Earliest phase: Later phase(s):

Walls: NA Roof: NA

Current use: Open-air car park

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Open-air car park incorporating part of the culvert for the River Lea, occupying a roughly rectangular plot bounded by Bute Street, Silver Street and Barber's Lane to the west, south and east, and by 48 Bute Street to the north. The area to the immediate south of the river Lea is shown on the 1842 tithe map as containing a banked linear structure, running between Bute Street and Barber's Lane. No evidence of this remains, so it is not clear whether it was a remnant of a larger feature, or a relatively modern freestanding feature relating to the river. The 1880 OS map shows a significant number of properties on the plot, including a public house constructed over the river Lea, fronting on to Bute Street - the 1880 town plan identifies this as the 'British Queen'. A number of the properties on the corner of Bute Street and John Street appear to have been amalgamated between 1901 and 1924. None of the OS maps or the town plan show any evidence of the banked feature seen in the 1842 tithe map.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0043 Date: 18/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09169 21397

Name: The Engine Former name(s):

Address: 43 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP141916 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Public house

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Unoccupied

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

`The Engine' at 43 Bute Street has a decorative façade to Bute Street, with a more plain return elevation to the south-west, facing onto the course of the Lea. It is two and a half storeys high, of brick, with a tiled roof carrying two ridge stacks. At ground-floor level the façade contains an asymmetrical arrangement of five apertures, now boarded up, with stilted arches carried on oxblood coloured glazed brick piers with bullnose corners. The widest archway, on the right, has a depressed head and appears to have been a vehicle entrance. Otherwise, two entrances with round-headed arches flank a pair of windows with depressed arches. Above this the name of the pub is displayed on a plat band defined by horizontal mouldings. The first floor is of red brick with painted stone dressings and segmental-headed windows containing modern glazing. The central tripartite window is higher than those to either side and has a tympanum with incised vine decoration. Above this rises a gabled dormer with a plaque inscribed: `rebuilt AD 1900'. To either side are flat-headed dormers; these may be modern insertions. The exposed side elevation is of white brick with red bands and contains an assortment of openings with segmental heads, comprising headers embedded in the red brick bands. In form, the rear wing comprises a shallow section of two storeys, with a double-pitched slate roof and a tall end stack built of Luton greys, abutted by a single-storey outshot under a catslide roof. A building is shown on this location on all maps of Luton town centre from, and including, the Tithe update map of c.1844. It may well have been (re)built as a public house in the late 1840s/early 1850s and has remained in a similar use through to the present day - it is currently unoccupied.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0044 Date: 18/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09180 21411

Name: Premier foodstore/AFC restaurant Former name(s): The Vyse Factory

Address: 47-53 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0682 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory

Earliest phase: c.1930 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Brick Roof: n/a

Current use: Mixed use - foodstore and fast-food restaurant

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This four-storey structure is an excellent example of a 1930s `daylight' factory built for the Vyse company in 1930 to replace a row of earlier buildings. It is built on a larger scale than earlier hat factories in the area, as it occupied a particularly wide (or double) plot. Here, the commercial Neo-Classical style of the 1920s was eschewed, although decorative fasces appear in the concrete render of the parapet. Instead, the building adopted a Neo-Georgian idiom, which is somewhat at odds with the industrial form of the building. The windows, instead of being metal-framed, are small-paned wooden sashes, separated by horizontal metal panels masking the floor levels and displaying, in the narrow central bay, the letter `V'. The piers are faced in red brick, laid in Flemish bond. The ground floor is divided into three bays containing modern shopfronts and a vehicle entry: the original arrangement here is not known. The nature of the buildings it replaced are unclear but a row of structures is shown here on all early maps from at least 1844. The earliest mention of an occupier and trade dates to 1890 when 53 Bute Street was used by Thomas Horley, baker (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1890). Thereafter, all of the properties were employed in the hat industry. Thomas Barley, straw hat manufacturer worked out of 47 Bute Street in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903) and the straw hat manufacturers Giddings and Wright were based at 51 Bute Street. The bakers at 53 Bute Street had been replaced by George Neumann, straw hat manufacturer by 1903.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0045-0046 Date: 18/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09191 21424

Name: The Desert's Rose Former name(s): The Cooper's Arms

Address: 55 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info: The Desert's Rose: www.desertsrose.co.uk; 01582 757473

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☒ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP141920 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Public House

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Rendered brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Restaurant

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

55 Bute Street is a three-storey, two-bay building, with a yellow painted brick façade and a slate roof with red ridge tiles. A red brick stack rises from the front slope of the roof. The entire width of the ground floor contains the frontage of `Desert's Rose', restaurant and café. This involves a central doorway flanked by windows, within the framework of a shopfront comprising pilasters, consoles, and fascia. The upper-floor windows, two per floor, have flat heads and contain sash glazing, with three lights per sash (three over three). A hanging signs projects from the frontage. A plaque advertising Green King ales reveals that the building was once a public house. Rear not examined.

The earliest date for the building here is unknown but ia structure in this location is certainly shown on the Tithe map update of 1844 and illustrated clearly on all subsequent cartographic sources for this area of Luton. In 1903, the landlord was Francis Edgar Dawson (Kelly's Directory for Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903), Henry Tilbury in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910) and William J Taplin in 1914 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1914).

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0047 Date: 29/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09186 21445

Name: Cheviot House Former name(s):

Address: 55 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Tel No: 01582 744000

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0693 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Office block

Earliest phase: Late C20 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Concrete

Current use: Jobcentre Plus

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The Job Centre at 55 Guildford Street is also known as Cheviot House. It sits at a crucial junction of the two most important roads through the Conservation Area - Bute Street and Guildford Street. The current building dates to the late 1970s and is a six storey office block with a steel or concrete frame clad in red brick. One of the most noticeable design features are continuous bands of marginally recessed glazing carried around a minimally splayed corner providing a strong horizontal emphasis, an effect which is heightened by the absence of any mouldings or other decoration. It is built on site of a 'once very decorative building of red brick and stone, with gables and bow windows, described as 'new warehouses' in 1907' (Luton Borough Council,1988, 'Luton Hat Trail 1: The Bute Street Area', p.6) which itself succeeded a range of buildings shown here on the Tithe Map of 1844. It is recorded as the premises of Harmer and Stonebridge straw hat manufacturers in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910) and shown as two properties on the Goad Insurance Map of 1938 - a ribbon manufacturer on the corner (53 Guildford Street) and a straw hat manufacturers alongside it (to the west).

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0048 Date: 29/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09173 21470

Name: Luton Dental Health Centre;Picasso Hair Salon Former name(s): Sunman & Hewson Hat Factory

Address: 57-61 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Tel No: 01582 416029/510444

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0687 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: 57 - Dental practice; 61 - Hair salon

Earliest phase: Mid C20 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Concrete render Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Mixed commercial use

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The building comprises two distinct properties, each a mirror of its neighbour and whilst there has been much recent renovation the earlier form and fabric remains identifiable. The ground floor is dominated by what would once have been embedded bow shaped shop windows, recently altered into a more angular form. Each has doors either side of the window accessed via a small flight of steps. The eastern shop window has a rendered stall riser but that to the west is still largely glass fronted. The doors and windows are separated by flat Doric pilasters with horizontal rustication and projecting capitals: the fascia above these extends across both premises and also includes a pronounced cornice. Four bays are evident to the upper floors and the windows are casements with original steel glazing bars. The first-floor windows are separated by flat Doric pilasters, each with a raised panel, and there is a dramatically projecting cornice above the capitals into which elaborate, 1920s style, drops have been incorporated. The second-floor windows are of the same scale and form as those below and they are separated from smaller upper-floor windows by a raised band of render with dentils. The building façade is completed by a markedly projecting cornice with modillions. The roof is in Welsh grey slate.

Three separate properties (57, 59, 61) are shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plans of 1880 and 1901. Similarly, three properties are depicted here on Goad's Insurance map of 1895. They are drawn as domestic-scale buildings probably related to the hatting or straw plaiting industries. Each is shown as a small terraced property with rear extension on the ground floor. Harry Eustace Hunter, straw hat manufacturer, resided at 57 Guildford Street in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903) and it hosted William J Rankin, straw hat manufacturer in 1914 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1914). Jeffrey Standbridge, straw hat and bonnet manufacturer's was registered at 59 Guildford Street in 1890 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1890) and 61 Guildford Street housed Hubbard Guest & Reinmann, architects in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1910) and Copestake, Crampton & Co, merchants in 1914 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1914). These are both recorded as `Hat Factories' on Goad's insurance plan of 1938: at this time 61 Guildford Street was part of the Sunman and Hewson Hat Factory. There are strong similarities between Stirling House, 30 Guildford Street, and the paired arrangement of hat factories at 57-61 Guildford Street - both are built in neo-classical style but the former is earlier. The merging of properties and the refurbishment of the new factories at 57-61 Guildford Street, took place at the end of the 1920s and the resultant building is notable for the inclusion of projecting cornices at different floor levels, and the use of bright rendered concrete.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0049 Date: 04/02/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Other: Terrace OS grid reference: TL 09120 21530

Name: 52-60 Guildford Street Former name(s):

Address: Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☐ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☒ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5090-5099 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic, associated with the hat industry

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C19

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Pantiles

Current use: Domestic

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A terrace of five domestic buildings on northern side of Guildford Street - extending in a row to the west of the listed hat factory at 50 Guildford Street. 52-59 were built in a single phase, indicated by continuous brick courses and a lack of building breaks, whilst 60, at the western end, was built at a slightly later date. Built from Luton stock bricks in a Flemish bond with red brick detailing, all of the buildings are roofed with modern pantiles. The typical form for 52-58 consists of a two storey unit with a basement, on a rendered plinth course which widens to the west to accommodate the slope of the ground, with recessed doorway accessed via a flight of five steps with a window to the side, below which is the window to the basement, and two windows to the first floor. Chimney stacks rise between 52 and 54, and 56 and 58, each with twelve chimney pots. The windows and entranceways have flat heads with red brick voussoirs and stone sills to the windows. The predominantly timber sash windows are formed by two lights separated by a horizontal bar, the upper light being hinged to the top, each divided into two panes by a narrow vertical glazing bar. A number of windows have been replaced with uPVC frames. Additionally, there are passageways between 52 and 54 and to the west of 58, providing access to the backyards of these properties. 52 extends over the passageway and is wider than the other buildings with a third first-floor window; the roof of 52 is of a shallower pitch than the adjacent roofs, and the ridge slightly lower.

60 is clearly a later addition to the terraced row - there is a marked building break between it and 58, and a break in the roof line too. Although also constructed from Luton stocks in a Flemish bond, the brick is somewhat darker that seen in 52-58. The building is of two storeys with a basement and attic conversion, the recessed doorway is accessed via a flight of six steps; adjacent to which is a casement window, and two first-floor casement windows all with uPVC. The windows are treated differently to those at 52-58, with bracketed stone sills and a decorative pointed design in the centre of the window heads. The basement is more substantial than previously seen, with two timber-framed windows each of two lights with a central vertical glazing bar, the upper light having attached handles. The heads of these windows are different, running in a continuous red brick soldier course across both windows. The sills for the basement windows also consist of a single row of red brick headers and it would appear that the basement window arrangement has undergone some alteration. Two single light attic windows have been inserted into the roof space, each directly above a first floor window. The western gable wall of 60 is blind and the upper section, close to the apex of the roof, has been rebuilt. The buildings were constructed as part of planned expansion along Guildford Street in the second half of C19, although Guildford Street itself had been laid out prior to 1842 - as shown in the Tithe map of that date. The pictorial map of 1870 depicts the hat factory at 50 Guildford Street as well as 52-58, but there is a vacant space where 60 Guildford Street was later constructed. All the buildings are described as dwellings on Goad's Insurance map of c.1938 and appear to be associated with the hat factory at 50. On this map, 52 is shown as being more substantial than the others in the terrace with a bigger footprint and extension to rear alongside the factory, adjacent to an internal hoist at 50.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0050 Date: 07/02/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0913421530

Name: Balfour House Former name(s): Durler & Suter, 46 Guildford Street

Address: 50 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☐ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_8073-8089 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35820

Building/ monument type: Plait warehouse

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Red brick Roof: Slate

Current use: Flats

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This imposing late 19th-century hat factory/warehouse comprises four floors plus a raised basement and an attic. It is built of brick with a Welsh slate hipped roof, with good quality red brick, terracotta and stone dressings used to create a highly decorated facade in the Queen Anne Revival style. Above the ground-floor shopfront, this facade is divided into three bays by pilasters, with a narrow central bay flanked by wider, or double, bays. The central bay is crowned by a shaped gable which rises through the brick parapet. It is flanked by volutes and contains a terracotta roundel with prominent voussoirs. The ground floor comprises three depressed arches with red brick heads and rendered spandrels with roundels, beneath a dentilled cornice. The main entrance is contained within the central arch, whilst a side doorway and a show window are framed by the left-hand arch. This, together with the larger show window within the right-hand arch, contains small-paned metal-framed prismatic lights and ventilators that serve the basement. The panelled doors are set beneath transom lights, and are accessed by steps spanning the raised basement.

The upper-floor windows are all of cross-mullion type, with wooden frames. The central first-floor window is set within a moulded brick architrave, with egg and dart decoration, beneath a terracotta frieze with swags and a segmental pediment. The simpler flanking windows have segmental heads comprising rows of headers, and are again surmounted by terracotta panels with swags. Above this, on the second floor, all five windows have straight brick heads and decorative terracotta tympana within semi-circular arches with stone detailing. The third-floor windows are simpler, with a stone keystone to the central bay. The attic is lit by skylights in the roof. The blind west elevation is abutted by a terrace of houses, while the east elevation is blind except for a fire escape. This factory was built prior to 1895, when it was shown on Goad's map as the plait warehouse of Durler & Suter. It was taken over by Lambie & Cain around 1905, as a straw hat factory, and continued into the 1990s, as the home of Balfour Hats. David Bevan's PhD thesis of 1992 includes photographs of the interior in use, with storage of materials in the attic and basement, finishing and trimming on the upper floors, blocking on the ground floor, and a display showroom at the front.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0051 Date: 01/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09171 21500

Name: The Alexon Factory Former name(s):

Address: 42-48 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 483422

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☐ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☒ None

Photograph nos: DP 141937 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Factory

Earliest phase: Late C20 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Brick Roof: unknown

Current use: Factory and sales outlet

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This large, post-war, factory at 42-48 Guildford Street, lies outside the Conservation Area on its north-western periphery. The street façade is notable for its 'horizontality' in sharp contrast to the strong 'vertical' faces of earlier factories, such as the adjacent building, 40a Guildford Street. The constructional design for the Alexon building emphasises the horizontal `layering' of floors and window lights to the building. It is a six storeys building and six bays are evident on the ground floor: the building entrance and stairwell is at the far left-hand end of the building with the doorway protected by a flat canopy. The factory is built using grey brick and this provides a stark contrast with the white painted, steel window frames. The ground-floor windows are all triple casements with strong glazing bars, the upper lights being smaller than those below. The ground-floor fascia is defined by a narrow concrete band painted white. Above this, the windows on the first to third floors are of a similar form. They extend along the entire length of the building above the ground-floor bays apart from the entrance and are designed to maximise the availability of natural light. Upper and lower lights, as well as separate window panels, are divided by thick, metal, glazing bars painted white - the lower lights are hoppers. Sills are simple, sloping, wooden boards and the heads comprise a continuous course of concrete painted white. The windows on the fourth and fifth floors are equally substantial but they are separated by a concrete band painted white - the uppermost floor is also recessed. Each window consists of five, equally-sized, panes separated by narrow metal glazing bars; the upper lights on the fourth floor are casement windows but there are also hopper lights on the fifth floor.

It was built for the Alexon Group at the end of the 1960s on the site of a vacant plot shown on the Goad Insurance map of 1938. A row of four domestic properties is shown in this location on Corney's map of c. 1872 and had been replaced by a single building with outbuilding, possibly an engineering works with private rail sidings, on the OS 1:2500 plan of 1880. 48 Guildford Street was occupied as a private domestic residence in 1890 by Isaac Clarke (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1890) and 44 Guildford Street by Joseph Mardle in 1890 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1890), again as a private residence. Alexon manufactures and sells women's clothing and so maintains many of the manufacturing skills that emerged in the town as a result of hat-making - the group currently use 40 Guildford Street as an outlet shop.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0052 Date: 18/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09192 21477

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 40 Guildford Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5252 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35818

Building/ monument type: Hat Factory

Earliest phase: 1905 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: colourwashed brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Commercial premises - part of the Alexon factory

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This imposing hat factory was built in 1905 using a cast iron frame with pier and panel façade in debased Jacobean style. At five storeys high plus attic and basement it is one of the tallest structures in the Conservation Area - with a five-bay façade. The colourwashed façade is crowned by a complex gabled parapet behind which is a truncated pyramid turret that would, most likely, have once have supported a flagpole: the gable is surmounted by small pediment bearing a date of 1905. The ground floor currently contains four windows with segmented heads and prominent keystones, with a recessed double door in the eastern bay reached via a flight of five steps. The eastern bay originally contained the secondary entrance, a passageway allowing access to the rear of the property. The two windows to the immediate west of the main entrance have basement lights beneath, whilst the basement window to the west of these appears to have been blocked. The upper three storeys are divided into bays by plain pilasters, each bay containing a single, six-light, casement window with slightly arched heads furnished with substantial triple keys interrupting a projecting moulding - the top-floor windows having single keystones. The central lights in each casement louvered. A moulded sill cornice extends below the second-floor windows. The first-floor windows have arched heads, with single keystones, springing from the capitals of rendered giant order pilasters which encompass the lower two-and-a-half floors.

The building features many Neo-Jacobean elements, such as the obelisks to either side of the gable, whilst there are also a number of Queen Anne revival touches including the swags above the attic window, but is especially notable for its use of a two-storey showroom front, with a giant arcade serving to distinguish the showroom and offices from the functional factory element on the floors above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0053 Date: 18/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09202 21471

Name: easyHotel Former name(s):

Address: 40a Guildford Street

Contact info: 01582 482119

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5253 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35819

Building/ monument type: Former hat factory

Earliest phase: Early C20 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick and rusticated render Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Hotel

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The former hat factory at 40a Guildford Street, now part of the easyHotel, was built in the same style as its earlier neighbour on the corner of Bute and Guildford Street (61 Bute Street). It was erected between 1901 and 1905 on a site previously occupied by a number of private houses and gardens. Like its neighbour, it is a striking building in red brick with yellow brick quoins and dressings but it is three storeys high with five bays. As seen previously, the ground floor is rendered in rusticated concrete, divided by a horizontal band, with three segmental-headed windows like those at 40 Guildford Street, and a matching recessed entrance. It was clearly built to blend in with the existing architecture of the town, indicating a respect for the styles and forms already present and a desire to maintain the scale and character of the street.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0054 Date: 19/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09227 21467

Name: easyHotel and the 'Great Northern Inn' Former name(s):

Address: 61-63 Bute Street

Contact info: 01582 729311

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5221 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35784

Building/ monument type: Public house

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Public house

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Built in red brick, the three-storey building has four bays along its western elevation on Bute Street, the northernmost of which is currently in use as 'The Great Northern' public house, and three bays along Guildford Street. Rusticated stucco has been used to great effect (mirroring its use on 47 Guildford Street) on the ground floor of the building along with yellow brick quoins to the first and second floors. The main entranceway is on the corner of Guildford Street and Bute Street - the building having a cut-off corner, whilst a secondary entrance is adjacent to 'The Great Northern'. There are two wide headed arched windows to Bute Street and three to Guildford Street.

The property is absent from Todd's map of 1862 but shown in its original form on Corney's map of 1870 before a 1905 addition saw the building extended east along Guildford Street. Kelly's directory for 1903 lists a Mrs. Jane Hume, bakers as residing there at the start of the 20th century (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903). Thomas Hume was listed in 1903 as being landlord of the 'Great Northern Inn' (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903, p. 130). By 1914 Harold Stansfield is noted as the landlord (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1914). The ground floor is notable for its fine glazing - similar to that seen at 'The George II', also on Bute Street.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0055 Date: 18/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09236 21478

Name: The Hat Factory Former name(s):

Address: 65-67 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info: www.thehatfactory.org; 01582 878100

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat Factory

Earliest phase: c.1930 Later phase(s): Late 20th century

Walls: Brown brick Roof: Unknown

Current use: Arts centre and cafe

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The Hat Factory, 65-67 Bute Street, is a large factory that occupies a wide, sloping site, standing five storeys high and six bays wide. It is faced in brown brick, with a parapet concealing a shallow double-pitched roof, and with a stack rising through the south end wall. The windows are metal framed with opening casements, and are separated by white-painted metal panels at second and third floor levels. Those in the lateral bays are narrower than those in the centre. The four southernmost bays at ground level contain large windows, while the two northernmost contain entrances. Blocked basement lights are also visible. The edges of reinforced concrete floors are visible on the elevations to the north and south. Buildings pre-dating the Hat Factory are shown on a number of cartographic sources but the earliest depiction dates to 1880 when the OS 1:2500 map depicts a number of small properties. The current building dates to the early 1930s and replaced two straw hat manufacturers: Ward & Bonner at No. 67 Bute Street (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910) and A & F Higgins at No. 65 Bute Street (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire, 1910).

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0056 Date: 19/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09261 21485

Name: Part of 'The George II' Public House Former name(s):

Address: 70 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 728916

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 141922 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35788

Building/ monument type: Public house

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock grey brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Public house

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

'The George II' public house, 70 Bute Street, sits at the northern end of a row of buildings on the approach to Luton railway station. It was clearly a later addition to an already existing row as the brick courses between it and 68, to its right, are discontinuous. Although 'The George II' was built in the 1870s it has seen extensive renovation on a number of occasions but particularly in the final decade of the 19th century when substantial modifications were made at ground level. It is a three storey building constructed from Luton stock grey bricks, there are two bays on first and second floors. The ground floor is dominated by a large central window with rendered stall riser. The window comprises a large, arched, pane of glass with curved glazing bar, flanked on either side by smaller rectangular panes: the stall riser incorporates a door which provides access to a beer cellar. The central window is flanked on the left by another window of similar form with a rendered stall riser - this may well be a blocked doorway - and the current entrance to the public house is on the right-hand side of the window. All of the ground-floor elements are framed by narrow Doric pilasters crowned by small pedimented consoles - the consoles are particularly noteworthy and consist of single, ornate, acanthus leaves. The entablature is tripartite due to the interruptions of the pedimented consoles but it incorporates a projecting cornice. The first and second-floor windows are simple, double-hung, balanced sashes with red brick gauged heads and simple stone/concrete sills. The first-floor windows, however, are slightly larger and include white painted wooden valences.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0057 Date: 19/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09257 21480

Name: La Trattoria Restaurant & part of the George II Former name(s):

Address: 66-68 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info: 68 Bute Street - 01582 728916; 66 Bute Street - 01582 410291

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5210 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35787

Building/ monument type: 68 Bute Street - former straw hat manufacturer; 66 Bute Street - former public house

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock grey brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: 68 Bute Street - part of public house; 66 Bute Street - restaurant

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

66-68 Bute Street is part of a row of buildings that is contiguous with 'The George II' public house but probably pre-date this by at least two decades. The buildings are listed and described as dating to c.1870 but the likelihood is that they are in fact earlier in date, probably constructed in the 1840s and certainly pre-dating the construction of 'The George II' public house at the end of the row. As with 70 Bute Street, the façades to these buildings were altered at the end of the 19th century. Both are three storey red brick buildings with slate roofs hidden by a brick parapet. Each building has two first-floor windows containing sashes to 66 and casements with upper hopper to 68. There are three second-floor windows, each with gauged brick heads, two are double-hung balanced sashes another, that at 68, is a modern casement - all with simple stone sills. Both have impressive ground-floor frontages. 66, formerly 'The Bridge Hotel', which is the more substantial of the two, has been heavily modified and may well be the result of a combination of two earlier properties. The ground floor has a four-bay arrangement, divided by simple plain pilasters with a continuous fascia and cornice (now partly masked by the awning over the restaurant currently occupying the premises). The current entrance to the restaurant lies at the junction with 68 Bute Street but the consistent width of the adjacent bay suggests that it, too, was an earlier (now blocked) entrance. 68 Bute Street is a narrower property and is now part of 'The George II' public house. The street façade is dominated by two bays on the ground floor in much the same style as the larger component next door. Two windows, each with a rendered stall riser, are incorporated into the bays, that on the left is wider with a large arched pane of glass framed by a curved glazing bar.

The adjacent window is narrower but of a similar form and was, undoubtedly, a former entrance - a single step up to this still survives. The large window is flanked by narrow, flat, Doric pilasters crowned by ornate pedimented consoles: the entablature includes one other, isolated, pedimented console above the narrow window on the right-hand side.

A terrace of three buildings in this location matching, to a degree, what survives, is shown on the 1844 Tithe map but a more complex arrangement is depicted on the Todd map of the 1860s. Consequently, linking these earlier cartographic depictions to the current layout is difficult. 68 Bute Street is now integrated with the public house and this, together with 66 Bute Street may well be the three-bay building shown on Corney's map of c.1870. 68 Bute Street housed F.J. Cooke & Co. straw hat manufacturer in 1898 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1898); Frederick Simpson, straw hat manufacturer, in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903); and L. Joseph & Sons, feather merchants, in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910). It is shown as a straw hat factory on Goad's map of 1938. 66 Bute Street is listed as the Bridge Hotel with Samuel Boutwood as the proprietor in 1898 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1898) and in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903); as the Bridge Hotel, landlord George Alcock, throughout 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910) and 1914 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1914). It is still shown as a public house on the Goad map of 1938.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0058 Date: 19/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09248 21469

Name: Walter Gurney & Son Former name(s):

Address: 64 Bute Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☒ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DSCN 5213 HER/ indentifier: LB UID35786

Building/ monument type: Hat Factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C19

Walls: Mixed, predominantly Luton stock grey brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: No current use - planning permission for conversion to flats is at application stage

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The Gurney & Son hat factory at 64 Bute Street is an exemplar of its type and is one of the most readily identifiable buildings in the Plaiters' Lea Conservation Area. A three storey building plus basement and attic, it was built in 1889 with a complex façade. Constructed in red brick with stone dressings with three bays to Bute Street, the ground floor contains a recessed central lobby accessed by a short flight of steps. This is flanked by display windows beneath which are basement windows set within glazed brick stall risers and to the north of these is the trade entrance. All of these elements are finely crafted, with Corinthian pink granite pilasters resting on stone plinths supporting a continuous stone fascia with a segmental pediment over the entrance, terminating in fluted consoles with pediments. The detail is not confined to the ground floor - the first-floor windows have stone mullions and transoms set beneath shallow tympana containing cartouches and moulded stone swags whilst the second-floor windows in the outer bays are surrounded by stone architraves whilst the central bay contains a twin arched window. The façade is completed by dentilled eaves and a shaped gable containing a date stone of 1889, a roundel window lighting the attic, and a stone plaque with carved swag.

The first known occupant is Charles Haddon Osborne, straw hat manufacturer (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903) and cartographic assessments indicate that the building replaced earlier structures on the same plot. It is shown as being occupied by Frank Harden, straw hat manufacturers, on Goad's plan of 1938 but more recently it was under the ownership of William Gurney & Son who are now seeking to convert the factory into domestic accommodation.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0059 Date: 19/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09257 21451

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 36 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 516116

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 141930 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Straw hat factory/warehouse

Earliest phase: c.1870 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton Stock Grey brick and concrete render Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Monna Lisa Italian Restaurant

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

36 Guildford Street, whilst smaller in scale than a number of nearby factories and wholesalers, nonetheless, reflects the predominant architectural styles and motifs of the final decade of the 19th century. The building sits in a prominent location close the intersection of Bute Street and Guildford Street at the hub of the former hatting quarter and is now occupied by an Italian restaurant. A three-storey building with a raised basement, it is built from red brick laid in Flemish bond, with a rusticated render to the ground-floor shopfront. The shopfront consists of two arch-headed display windows with basement lights set immediately below, their size suggesting that they would have allowed for the loading and unloading of bulky raw materials such as straw plait directly from the street. To the immediate west of the windows is the main doorway into the building with a heavily bracketed canopy above, with the secondary passageway to the rear lying to the west of this. The first and second floors each have three windows, slightly misaligned from the windows and main door below, containing simple two-over-two sashes without horns. The first-floor windows have segmental brick heads with a central keystone. Whilst the reveals are formed from moulded brick, the sills form part of the cornice to the rustication and the keystones are incorporated within a moulded string course. The second-floor windows have straight heads set within a flat eaves band, the sills forming part of a simple band. The unusually thick gable wall to the west is the remnant of the party wall of an adjoining building which once stood on the corner of the junction and is, therefore, blind.

The precise construction date is uncertain - changes in the brickwork and style of window on the first floor indicate that the original building was substantially enlarged with the addition of the second floor and the westernmost bay in c.1900. The original layout of the property is unclear as the western bay contains both entrances to the premises and it therefore seems likely that the entire shopfront was remodelled and rendered during this phase. In 1903, Joseph Mardle, straw hat manufacturer, resided here but by 1910 it housed Henry Darler & Sons, straw plait merchants (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910).

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0060 Date: 20/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09266 21449

Name: 'The Wheelwright Arms' Former name(s):

Address: 34 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 759321

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☒ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 141931 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Public House

Earliest phase: Mid C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: White-washed brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Public House

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

'The Wheelwright Arms' at 34 Guildford Street bears a striking resemblance to 'The Cooper's Arms' on Bute Street and was, similarly, constructed in the middle decades of the 19th century. 'The Wheelwright Arms' boasts a discrete but decorative façade unique, not only in the Conservation Area, but within the town. It is a three-storey building, brick built with a plain brick parapet, all since painted, with double hung sashes to the first and second floors with simple stone sills and straight heads. The ground floor has a central doorway with side and top lights. Either side of the entrance there is a window with a central stone mullion - both windows and the doorway have heavy moulded stone hoods supported on brackets. Access to the rear is by way of a passage, wide enough for vehicles, on the right-hand side of the property.

In 1862 the landlord was also doubling up as a bonnet blocker and herring curer (Luton Borough Council, Luton Hat Trail 1: the Bute Street Area, 1988, 4). In 1903, the proprietor was Edward Impey (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903, 239), and by 1910 Henry Pocock was the landlord (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910).

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0061 Date: 21/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09280 21447

Name: Gym/The Redeemed Christian Church of God Former name(s): Stewart Hubbard's

Address: 32 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 456074

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146069 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Straw plait warehouse and hat factory

Earliest phase: c.1910 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Slate

Current use: Mixed use - gym and church

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This is a striking building of four storeys plus attic and a basement with raised ground-floor showroom above. Constructed from red brick with a pier and panel façade, the decorative parapet incorporates a shaped dormer with segmental headed window lighting the attic, whilst giant order arches enclose the upper three storeys - lending an almost Neo-Jacobean style to the upper floors. The ground floor is rusticated with deep horizontal grooving and a projecting moulded cornice above and this provides an immediate contrast to the upper storeys, being more classical in style. There are three arch-headed windows (now boarded over) and a door to the east in the same style. The windows and doorway incorporate a key painted black in contrast to the white of the rustication. The second and third-floor windows have moulded segmental brick heads with a prominent keystone and label, containing fixed lights divided by timber glazing bars and incorporating a central hopper within the upper section of each window. The third-floor windows have arched heads with a keystone and below the windows, as on the second floor, are simple brick aprons.

The west side of the building is exposed and the windows on the first to third floors can be seen. Those on the first and second floors are large, wooden-framed, with fixed lights and timber glazing bars, the upper panes of which are hopper windows. They are furnished with substantial segmented heads and simple narrow sills. The windows to the upper floor are smaller but follow the same form with upper hopper lights. In this case, though, the heads are flat and built of stone (or concrete) immediately above the window frame. Again, the sills are narrow in stone or concrete. 32 Guildford Street, the ground floor of which is now used as a gym, has had a varied history. It is built on the site of a property that belonged to Fred and Jesse Hawkes of The Wheelwright Arms next door, and the land it stands on had been used as a wheelwrights until the end of the 19th century. (Luton Borough Council, Luton Hat Trail 1: the Bute Street Area', 1998, 4). By 1914 the current building was home to Stewart Hubbard's straw plait firm and the Goad insurance map of 1938 indicates that it was used for the storage of hoods and other hatting goods, with a hat factory on the upper floor.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0062 Date: 21/07/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09289 21445

Name: Stirling House Former name(s):

Address: 30 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 455325

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146068 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory and showroom

Earliest phase: 1919 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Rendered brick Roof: Slate

Current use: Euro Italia Pizzeria Ristorante

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A small number of factories within the Conservation Area were built at this time in a radically new and different style. Stirling House at 30 Guildford Street is one of a small number of hat factories and showrooms in the Conservation Area that are distinctive in their use of white concrete rendering: this immediately raises the visibility of the buildings above that of neighbouring properties. The building combines a number of Neo-Classical elements dominated by flat, Doric, pilasters and large casement windows.

It was built as a hat factory in 1919 and now has split usage between an Italian restaurant on the ground floor and an evangelical Christian mission upstairs. The ground floor is remarkable in its monumentality with a large, central, embedded bow window bracketed on either side by Doric columns. To the left, the main entrance is approached via a small flight of stone steps: the goods entrance lies to the right of the window. The fascia is wide with a projecting, moulded, cornice, and there are inscribed paterae above each of the Doric columns: half paterae are apparent at the ends of the fascia cut by the rusticated pilasters with horizontal banding that extends the full height of the building. The three bay arrangement extends to the first and second floors with the central windows flanked by flat Doric pilasters: half Doric pilasters have been incorporated at the edges of the side windows. The Doric columns are crowned by a fascia that replicates the decorative form of the ground floor example, on this occasion; however, a strong projecting cornice has been added. The squat windows on the uppermost floor are separated by flat pilasters beneath a plain

fascia and the façade is crowned by a parapet of concrete in a lattice (or repeating St. Andrew's cross) pattern which is unique within the Conservation Area.

The current building is evidently a rebuild of an earlier structure or, at least, a new building on an old plot. David Dunham, a builder, occupied the address at the time of the 1890 Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire (Kelly, 1890), and between 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Beds, Hunts & Northants, 1903) and 1914 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1914) it was occupied by a rubber company.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0063 Date: 21/07/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09299 21445

Name: The Guild House Former name(s):

Address: 28 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0662 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Former hat factory and showroom

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Dark red brick with light red brick detailing Roof: Modern concrete tiles

Current use: Currently unoccupied - former office accommodation

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

28 Guildford Street (Guild House), is a two storey building plus basement. Built in the 1870s from a dark red brick with lighter red brick detailing under a hipped roof, the ground-floor shopfront consists of a large centrally placed doorway with a window to either side, these being flanked by glazed brick piers. The double door is surmounted by a pair of opening transom lights, with a single fixed fanlight above these. The window to the right (east) of the door is the larger of the two, and would have had basement lights below but these have since been rendered over. The smaller window to the west of the main door was once the side entranceway, as shown in building plans for the adjacent property (Stirling House). There are three first-floor windows, that above the blocked entranceway being narrower than the other two. The segmented heads are made from moulded bright red brick, whilst a bright red brick band connects the windows. Unusually, there are four sets of paired brackets to the eaves - flanking the windows. Mrs Pitkin, straw hat and bonnet manufacturer, is listed here in Kelly's directory for 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903).

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0064-0065 Date: 16/08/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09312 21443

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 26 & 28a Guildford Street

Contact info: Tel no: 01582 488700

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0663 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Plait and Straw Hat warehouses

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s):

Walls: Luton stock brick with red brick detailing Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: 28a Guildford Street is currently empty; 26 Guildford Street hosts an evangelical ministry

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

26 and 28a Guildford Street share a common architectural appearance with other buildings along this terrace (Guild House, 28 Guildford Street and 24 Guildford Street). A symmetrical pair of terraced properties, two and a half storeys high, they are built from Luton stock brick with red brick detailing: each has slate roofs with decorative ridge tiles. The ground floor of each consists of a large shop window flanked by an entrance to the shop and, outside of this, another door presumably leading to the upper-floor work areas as well as the rear of the building. The ground-floor windows are large with four panes (28a Guildford Street) and two panes (26 Guildford Street) separated by thin wooden glazing bars. 26 Guildford Street retains its prismatic basement lights beneath the main window, whilst those to 28a have been rendered over. The main entrances are wide with large rectangular transom lights above whilst the side doors are narrower with segmented heads. The shop fronts are flanked by Doric pilasters of glazed brick, whilst the fascia across both premises is divided by a console. Each of the pilasters is crowned by a basic console and small semi-circular pediment which repeats a pattern seen elsewhere in the Conservation Area. The first-floor fenestration consists of one large window over the shop window, with a narrower window above the entrance. The segmental heads and projecting labels to the first-floor windows are made from red brick and form part of a decorative band which meets that on the adjacent Guild House, helping to unify this section of the street. 28a Guildford Street retains its original timber window frames, whilst the windows to 26 Guildford Street have been replaced by uPVC frames.

Above the windows is a finely moulded red brick cornice, whilst the Welsh slate roof is enhanced using pierced terracotta ridge tiles. The centrally positioned chimney stack is constructed from Luton stock brick and forms part of the central dividing fire wall.

Goad's insurance map of 1895 shows 28 and 24 Guildford Street, but a vacant plot where 26 and 28a now stand. By the time of the 1901 OS 1:2500 plan these are present, confirming a construction date of c.1900.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0066 Date: 25/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0930621472

Name: Bute Mills Former name(s):

Address: 28b Mill Yard, Bute Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☒ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP141913 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mill

Earliest phase: C.1910 Later phase(s):

Walls: Red brick Roof: Unknown

Current use: Vacant - formerly used as offices

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The Bute Mill is one of the most recognisable buildings in the Conservation Area, four and a half storeys high and constructed to a high standard using red brick with yellow brick dressings. The northern and southern elevations are divided into four bays with recessed panels between, each bay contains a single window to each floor save for the ground floor which contains seven windows. The western elevation is not visible, and the eastern gable wall is blind until second-floor level where there are three windows of varying size and position, with three symmetrically arranged windows to the third floor and two set into the apex of the gable above. All of the windows have fixed multi pane glazing, divided by metal glazing bars with opening top lights. The stone cornice is simply decorated with modillions, above which is an attic storey set back behind a parapet - the easternmost bay on the northern elevation rising through this to form a gabled tower with yellow brick pillasters flanking a window. The most distinctive element of the building is, however, the iron water tank built on a corbelled brick support. This is a landmark feature, visible from a number of locations across the town centre and is emblazoned with `Brown Bros', an important milling family long-established in Luton. The mill was built between 1901 and 1924 (OS maps) and is marked on the 1924 map as a 'Steam Mill - Corn'.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0067 Date: 16/08/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09320 21442

Name: RJ Blow & Co Accountants Former name(s):

Address: 24 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Tel No: 01582 738792

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☒ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0670 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Offices - Goods Yard then hat factory

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Offices - accountants

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The offices for R.J. Blow & Co. at 24 Guildford Street were constructed in the 1870s as offices with a second-floor warehouse forming part of the goods yard adjacent to Luton Railway Station. By the late 1930s, it had been converted to a hat factory and it is, currently, occupied by a firm of accountants. It is one of a small number of smaller properties in the area constructed in the second half of the 19th century. Only the main block on Guildford Street now survives: Goad illustrates clearly that the hat factory extended northwards to a junction with Bute Street and the railway goods yards there. It is built on three and a half storeys from Luton stock brick with red brick quoins and detailing. The Guildford Street elevation is gabled and contains a symmetrical ground-floor shopfront consisting of a wide double door and rectangular transom light above. Either side of this are large four-pane windows with wooden glazing bars - the windows and doorway are framed by flat Doric pilasters faced with glazed red bricks. The entablature comprises a flat fascia constrained by projecting moulded cornices above and below. All this is bracketed by heavy fluted consoles surmounting the outer pilasters. There are three first-floor windows - each comprising a balanced (two-over-two) sash window in wooden frame. The central window is the larger but each is framed by a red brick window surround with segmental heads and chamfered stone sill - the central window is further embellished by a stone key. The second-floor windows are similar to those on the floor below but, here, all windows are to the same scale. There is a diamond-shaped motif on the gable picked out in red brick.

The side elevation (which flanked the main entrance to the Mill Yard) comprises three windows per floor. The ground-floor windows are more ornate and resemble those at 56 Cheapside. Each of the three windows is of the same size and proportion - sash windows (two-over-two) in wooden frames - and they incorporate chamfered stone sills with a continuous sill course of projecting, moulded, brick. A course of red brick extends across the wall face close to the midpoint of the upper sash and this is surmounted by a decorative projecting brick moulding that arches over a red brick tympanum above each window. There is a plat band at first-floor level: the first-floor window arrangement to the side mirrors that on the street front - a large central window flanked by smaller ones. Again, each incorporates a chamfered stone sill but instead of having full red brick window surrounds have simple red brick segmental heads. The three second-floor windows, which are smaller but similar in proportion, are balanced sashes with chamfered stone sills and flat gauged red brick heads.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0068 Date: 16/08/11 Investigator: DSM & KC

Unit of record: Block OS grid reference: TL 09344 21439

Name: Flavas / Cutter Grinding Services Former name(s):

Address: 22, 22a&b Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 724288 / 01582 735626

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0673 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: 22: Domestic then hat warehouse 22a&b: plait warehouses

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Mixed

Current use: 22: Fast food restaurant, 22a: vacant, 22b: light engineering works

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

22 Guildford Street pre-dates the Neo-Georgian buildings at 22a&b Guildford Street and was built in the 1870s. It is two-and-a-half storeys high with a large ground-floor shopfront that has been substantially altered: the basement lights, for example, have been boarded up. This shopfront consists of a single narrow entrance approached via steps, to the side of a large shop window. This has also been heavily modified and the current window is elongated above an extended, rendered, stall riser. The entablature is currently hidden beneath the shop banner. There are two windows on the first floor - each containing uPVC frames. The sills are hidden by a continuous plat band of white render at first-floor level and the heads are simple and segmental. The exposed side to the building is blind. It is shown on the OS 1st ed 1:2500 map of 1880 and is referred to as a 'domestic' property on Goad's insurance map of 1898. Goad for 1938 lists it as a 'hat warehouse'.

The hat factories at 22a&b Guildford Street are good examples of the Neo-Georgian style that was current in the early 1930s. This is a small symmetrical pair of premises, two and a half storeys high, of red brick, with a flat roof hidden behind a soldier-course parapet. The commercial function is betrayed by the treatment of the ground floors: each property has a central doorway, reached via steps spanning the basement and flanked by two display windows. These have smooth rendered surrounds, not the banded rustication favoured elsewhere throughout this district. The panelled double doors and fine transom lights survive. Above this, the first-floor windows contain casements, and in

each case the central one is emphasised by a broad, rendered frame with a prominent keystone. Building control plans for the building shows that it was designed by B.B. Franklin in November 1931 and approved in January 1932. Although the building appears to be a pair of identical premises set up for use by two independent businesses, the plans indicate something quite different. The earliest part of the building is the basement and ground-floor on the left (west) - this forming an earlier warehouse. The 1931 plans form an extension to this whereby a matching building was built to the right (east) with basement storage and a ground-floor plait shop with offices, with a first-floor showroom running the width of both properties (Wardown Park Museum unclassified building plans - number 2941. Brown's Mill, Guildford Street, Luton: Proposed Additional 1st Floor Storey to Warehouses For the executors of the late W.H. Brown). Given the homogeneity of the brickwork it seems likely that the extension was part of a longer term plan carried out shortly after the construction of the warehouse and by the same builder. It also seems likely that the façade of the warehouse was refaced as part of the rebuilding work. The apparent lack of access between the first-floor display room and the warehouse below may indicate that the warehouse was used by a separate firm, or that it was a storage area for a wholesaler making use of the newly built retail premises.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0069 Date: 25/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL0934121466

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 24a-c Mill Yard, Bute Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mill and offices

Earliest phase: c1870 Later phase(s): Late 20th century

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Slate

Current use: Mixed commercial

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

24a-c Bute Street is clearly a surviving component of the former mill dating to around 1870: truncated rafters on the surviving west-facing gable indicate that the building extended to the west, a fact supported by the Goad Insurance plan of 1895. The northern elevation, visible from Bute Street, comprises a mill building and adjacent office or residential block. The residential block to the east of the mill has been greatly altered: the road here has been substantially raised so that the original floor level is now buried and only fragments of the ground-floor window heads can be seen. Indeed, the present door is a modified, formerly first-floor, window. Modern windows have been inserted, but fragments of the original, narrower, segmental heads can still be seen. The larger mill building to the west is dominated by a loading bay on the first floor - this has clearly been enlarged in the past, with the addition of an RSJ and concrete sill. The two blocked and truncated doors close to ground level indicate that the former ground floor of these buildings was significantly lower than the current road level.

S.R. Wood & Son
FOR SALE/TO LET
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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0070 Date: 24/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL0940721449

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 2-20 Guildford Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: NA

Earliest phase: NA Later phase(s): NA

Walls: NA Roof: NA

Current use: Vacant plot

Condition: Demolished Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Vacant plot of land, formerly the site of 15 Victorian terraced houses and the three-storey warehouse of Asher Hucklesby - built sometime before 1895 (Goad), remodelled in 1928, closed in 1947 and demolished c.2000 (Luton Hat Trail Leaflet One - The Bute Street Area).

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0071 Date: 14/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 9407 21414

Name: Villa Ada Ristorante Italiano Former name(s):

Address: 5 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Villa Ada - 015832 705059

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146092 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Currently Italian restaurant but formerly a domestic and outworker's residence

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Modern concrete tiles

Current use: Restaurant

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

5 Guildford Street is currently at the end of the terrace but three properties to the west (1-3 Guildford Street) have been demolished. A fragment of wall abutting the left-hand gable is all that remains of the rest of the terrace. The house (and terrace) were built in the 1870s. Although now very much integrated with the terrace that extends to the west, discontinuous brickwork between it and 7 Guildford Street indicates that it is a separate build. The original form of the façade has been heavily altered - new doors and window on the ground floor; new window frames on the first floor - but the overall character of the building remains recognisable and is built on two storeys with a large, single, ground-floor window and two smaller windows on the upper floor. Irregular brickwork on the left-hand side of the ground floor window suggests that this is a more recent insertion - probably an enlargement of a smaller window on the scale of those on the upper storey. There are two doorways on the ground floor - one immediately to the left of the large window (and currently the entrance to the restaurant) is the former access to the main house; a second doorway adjacent to the main entrance provides access to a rear courtyard and backyard extension - quite probably a workshop. All of the fixtures and fittings for the windows and doors are modern replacements; the first-floor windows are fixed and each comprises two lights. Exterior paintwork masks other detail but each window has a simple stone or concrete sill and a flat, stone or concrete, head. The current fascia is also a recent addition.

It was recorded as the domestic residence of a Mrs Thompson in 1898 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1898), and it is entirely likely that it doubled as a domestic straw plaiting workshop.

Villa Ada
Ristorante Italiano
1582
705059
www.coda-music.com

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0072 Date: 14/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09403 21414

Name: Coda Music Former name(s):

Address: 7 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Coda Music: 01582 725625

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146092 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed commercial and domestic

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Modern concrete roof tiles

Current use: Musical instrument retailers

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Constructed as part of a terrace in the 1870s, probably as a purpose-built bakery - trade directories indicate that as early as 1898 it was occupied by James Ansell, baker, and remained in use as such until at least the outbreak of the First World War (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1914). It is a taller building than its neighbours on either side, and wider too, perhaps reflecting its original commercial usage. It is on two storeys and has two wide windows with two side-by-side doors on the ground floor and three windows on the first floor. The upper-storey windows, which are arranged in a symmetrical manner, comprise two-lights in uPVC frames and each has a simple stone or concrete sill. Although the heads have been painted they appear to be flat (tapered) stone or concrete rather than brick. The ground floor is dominated by two, large, display windows. Alterations to the brickwork indicates that the left-hand window is a more recent insertion and it is wider and taller than the window to its right. Similarly, it has clearly undergone some alteration and the disturbed brickwork visible beneath the sill suggests that it has been reconstructed. Both comprise three lights - that on the left with simple wooden glazing bars (mullions); to the right more complex with narrow wooden glazing bars and shallow segmental heads - with simple wooden sills. The fascia extends over both windows and is framed by small pedimented consoles at the heads of narrow plain pilasters. The main entrance lies to the west this window, with a secondary entrance immediately adjacent to the main doorway providing access to the rear of the property. All the doors and windows, with the exception of the earlier display windows, have been replaced with uPVC surrounds.

CODAMUSIC
www.coda-music.com
Tel: 01582-725825
1582
705059
7
9

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0073 Date: 14/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09400 21415

Name: Annie's Massage Former name(s):

Address: 9 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0638 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic/commercial

Earliest phase: c.1870-1880 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Welsh grey slate

Current use: Massage parlour

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

9 Guildford Street is part of a group of three buildings (9-13 Guildford Street) constructed in the 1870s - all three properties clearly having been built at the same time as evidenced not only by the repeating form of the windows but also by the continuous brick coursing and roof height. It is on two storeys with a large ground-floor shop window, now blocked and with a single doorway. The window is currently tripartite but with a wide glazing bar to the right hand light. All are flanked by simple flat, fluted, pilasters with a plain fascia above - an original shopfront. A dramatically projecting moulded cornice completes the ground floor. There are two windows on the upper floor, both uPVC casements, but the irregular brickwork suggests that they have seen much alteration. The smallest, presumably for a lavatory, is a later insertion, judging by disturbance to the brickwork beneath the sill as well as crude flat head above. The larger of the two windows sits eccentrically within the modified opening underscored by the fact that the segmental head is off-set from the current window alignment.

The property was described as being owned by Frank W Harrison and Co, furriers, in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910), and has been heavily altered, so much so that the style of the original street frontage, as well as the internal arrangement, is hard to discern.

MUSIC
9
ANNIE'S MASSAGE 01582 459774
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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0074 Date: 16/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09394 21414

Name: Book Fayre Former name(s):

Address: 11 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: Book Fayre: 01582 402055

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0637 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Shop

Earliest phase: c.1870-1880 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Painted Luton Stock Grey brick Roof: Welsh Grey Slate

Current use: Adult Book Store

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

11 Guildford Street was built in the late 1870s, it is built on two storeys with two windows on the upper floor. The façade to number 11 is very similar to that at 9 Guildford Street and consists of a large display window with two entrances (shop and rear access) to the east. The eastern entry, which presumably provided access to the rear of the property, is now blocked but it is a fairly narrow and high portal with a round headed arch resting on top of imposts. The shopfront itself has been altered recently but is dominated by a plain fascia and projecting moulded cornice supported by narrow pilasters. The now boarded-up shop window incorporates a low brick stall riser beneath a wooden sill. There are two first-floor windows, each with segmented brick heads and simple stone sills, with one window above the passageway leading to the rear of the property and a second window above the shop window.

Miss Emily Howard, a milliner, resided here in 1903 but it soon changed ownership and was listed as belonging to a shopkeeper in the 1910 and 1914 trades' directories (see, for example, Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1914).

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0075 Date: 16/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09394 21414

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 13 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0637 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Domestic

Earliest phase: c.1870-1880 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Painted Luton Stock Grey Brick Roof: Welsh Grey Slate

Current use: Domestic

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

13 Guildford Street was built in the late 1870s, probably as part of a terrace of three buildings (9-13 Guildford Street). It is a narrower building than its neighbour (11 Guildford Street), built on two storeys. The ground floor consists of a single window with adjacent doorway: the window has a uPVC surround with two lights, the upper one of which is an opening light, with a segmented head and simple stone sill. The doorway incorporates a semi-circular fanlight. It is embellished by a brick arch on springer blocks - without pilasters or piers. The single first-floor window contains a uPVC surround with two lights and has a simple stone lintel and segmented head.

In 1890 it was the home and commercial premises of Daniel Hill, described at that time as a coal dealer, but listed as a 'landscape gardener' in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903).

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0076 Date: 16/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09381 21416

Name: China Cottage Take Away Former name(s):

Address: 15 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: 01582 616277

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146094 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Currently restaurant but was a watchmaker's shop

Earliest phase: c.1870 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton Stock Brick and Rusticated Render Roof: Modern Concrete Tiles

Current use: China Cottage takeaway restaurant

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

15 Guildford Street is the most substantial and impressive building in this terrace (nos. 9-15). It is built of two storeys: the upper floor has three large balanced sash windows with no horns (two-over-two) set within prominent moulded, wooden, architrave surrounds, heavier and more ornate than those seen in other contemporary and similarly-sized properties in the Conservation Area. Renovation to the brickwork above the windows - there are two heavily pointed courses directly above them - indicates more recent alterations to the cornice and eaves of the building. This may well have included raising the roof to a new height with a lesser pitch: interestingly, this has only affected the front section of the roof as the rear slope corresponds with that of adjacent properties in the row. The ground floor is dominated by a shop window with vertical wooden, glazing bars separating seven lights, and has a recessed doorway to the left. The surround is rendered in heavy, rusticated, concrete with an entablature above. This comprises a wide fascia flanked, above and below, by strong projecting mouldings.

It is now the China Cottage takeaway restaurant but was listed as the premises of a watchmakers in Kelly's Directory for 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903).

China 彩 Cottage
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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0077 Date: 20/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0937521420

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 17-19 Guildford Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Mixed domestic and commercial

Earliest phase: c.1990-2000 Later phase(s):

Walls: Dark red brick Roof: Unknown

Current use: Mixed domestic and commercial

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A three storey block of flats with an independent commercial unit on the ground floor beside the vehicular and pedestrian passageway leading to the rear of the property. Constructed from dark red brick in stretcher bond with yellow brick banding between the windows, as quoins and in a solider course above the windows and passageway. There are four timber casements to each of the upper floors. The current building replaces two Victorian terraced properties.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0078 Date: 17/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09360 21412

Name: TL House Former name(s):

Address: 23-25 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: TL House: 01582 705013

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146098 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Former hat factory

Earliest phase: c.1910-1920 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Red brick Roof: Slate

Current use: Mixed use - commercial and residential

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

23-25 Guildford Street is another impressive building dating to c.1910-20, comprising two symmetrically-arranged four-storey premises separated by a party wall but covered by a single roof. Of brick with stone and rendered dressings, it has been converted into flats and given a new roof with a high eaves band - this sits rather unhappily above the carefully detailed façade. The extensive use of banded rustication on all floors marks continuity with earlier commercial buildings in the vicinity, although this is now executed in exposed brick and stone rather than white-painted stucco or render. Each property comprises a wide central bay, recessed between salient bays, as at 37-39 Guildford Street. In each case, the centre of the ground floor (now remodelled) may have contained a shopfront or showroom window. On the inner side of this is a doorway - reached by a flight of steps, presumably spanning a raised basement - which would have served the street block. On the outer side, an entry with a transom bar probably accessed the long four-storey factory wings to the rear.

23 Guildford Street was occupied by Down & Pope, straw hat and bonnet manufacturers, in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910). Before the reconstruction of the building in the early 20th-century, 25 Guildford Street was occupied by Arthur Trott (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1890): in 1910 it was occupied by George Mardling, boot and shoemaker (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910). The first OS depiction of the re-built and extended factory, amalgamating two buildings by this stage, dates to 1921 and Goad 1938 illustrates a large straw hat factory extending to the line of the river Lea conduit on the south.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0079 Date: 20/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Block OS grid reference: TL 09348 21424

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 29-31 Guildford Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146097 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: 29 Straw hat manufacturer; 31 Shop

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Mid C20

Walls: Brick Roof: Modern Concrete Tiles

Current use: Vacant

Condition: Partly vacant Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

29 (on left of photograph) and 31 Guildford Street are good examples of small-scale production alongside larger premises. They were constructed as two separate buildings, judging by the discontinuous brickwork, but 29 is the larger of the two buildings. 29 Guildford Street is a three storey building, with no apparent basement. The ground floor comprises a relatively small window positioned centrally, which now contains frosted glass and with wooden glazing bars separating four, one over one, lights. The stall riser is rendered and there is a small moulded sill at the junction with the window. There are two doors, one on either side of the window but early architectural features are missing or masked due to recent refurbishment. Nonetheless, the left hand one may well be the original panelled door, which also incorporates a large, rectangular, transom light, flanked on either side by simple brick piers. Detail of the door on the right is hidden by a modern security shutter, but it, too, incorporated a large transom light. This doorway provided access to a substantial rear range, taking up almost the entire plot and stretching back to the river Lea. A large and obtrusive modern fascia hides any earlier entablature. The first and second floors each have two wide bays flanked by brick piers which have been embellished by the incorporation of narrow bands of tiles. The brickwork and mortar is notable as it is similar to that used in the adjacent hat factory (23-25 Guildford Street). The windows on each floor are of a similar form, consisting of four lights each in a four-over-one arrangement. The outer, lower, light in each window opens as a casement but all other elements are fixed. No sills or heads are incorporated with these windows, instead there is a large rendered plain panel above each. The windows on the upper floor are of the same width as those

below but are shorter in height and, on this occasion, the remnants of a stone or concrete sill survive above simple brick aprons. The projecting, moulded, cornice immediately beneath the roof line is ornate and heavy for a building of this scale. The roof tiles are modern and concrete.

31 Guildford Street, similarly, is three storeys but the ground-floor arrangement is significantly different. This is dominated by a large two-light display window with a recessed doorway on the right-hand side and another outside of this: the former provided access to the shop and the latter, access the working areas on upper floors and in the backyard. There is no hint on the pavement of a basement and the brick stall riser is capped by the stone sill beneath the window. The recessed doorway incorporates a large, rectangular, transom light and the shopfront is flanked by glazed brick piers capped by a simple moulded cornice. A modern fascia obscures much of the original detail above the shop window but it formerly extended across the entire building frontage. The glazed bricks within the entrance lobby suggest that it was constructed as a grocer's shop. The arrangement of the casement windows on the first and second floors is symmetrical: each window, set within a relatively deep reveal, comprises two casements of eight panes each above which is a light of ten panes. The first-floor heads have been painted over but are flat, gauged, bricks and the sills are narrow, painted, stone or concrete. The second-floor windows are of the same form but the gauged brick heads are narrower and the irregular brickwork at this level, and above, suggests that the wall here has been re-built, perhaps as a result of work being undertaken on the roof. The stone or concrete sills on the upper floor are supported on simple stone brackets.

The properties are both marked as 'domestic' on Goad's insurance map of 1895 but each is depicted with a substantial rear extension. 29 was recorded as a straw hat manufacturer in Kelly's 1903 Directory (Mrs Henrietta Boss); 31 was a shop in same directory (Mrs Louisa Cooper) (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903). On Goad's Insurance map of 1938, 29 was incorporated as part of the straw hat factory complex at 23-25 Guildford Street; 31 is shown as a plait warehouse with substantial rear extension and another, isolated, plait warehouse at the end of the property alongside the Lea. Both buildings are shown in their present form on the OS 1:2500 town map and stand in marked contrast to the much larger factories and premises on either side of Guildford Road.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0080 Date: 23/06/11 Investigator: KG

Unit of record: Open space OS grid reference: TL 09335 21418

Name: Former name(s):

Address: 33-35 Guildford Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Vacant land

Earliest phase: c.1880 Later phase(s):

Walls: Roof:

Current use: Vacant land

Condition: Demolished Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

Vacant plot of land, formerly the site of two commercial properties.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0081 Date: 28/01/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL 09322 21427

Name: Former name(s): Austin & Co.

Address: 37-39 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☒ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 146095 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Hat factory and warehouse, later clothing warehouse.

Earliest phase: Early C20 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Luton stock brick Roof: Welsh slate

Current use: Restaurant

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: High

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

One of the most striking buildings within the Conservation Area is the warehouse and factory built for Austin and Co. at 37-39 Guildford Street in 1912. The style of the street façade - a modified Edwardian Baroque - does not recur on any other building in the Conservation Area. Comprising three and a half storeys, the building is tall and narrow, of brown brick, with white or buff painted dressings and a slate roof. The centre of the façade is recessed between salient lateral bays. At ground-floor level, beneath a plain frieze or fascia articulated by triglyphs, a central show window is framed by engaged Ionic columns and flanked by doorways with rusticated jambs. The doorway to the left gave access to a lobby with stairs and a lift, and formed the entrance to the showroom, while that on the right ran through the front block to the factory at the rear. The upper-floor windows, all sashes, have pulvinated friezes; those in the central bay are treated as triplets, with that at first-floor level flanked by Ionic columns. The roof carries four dormers: the pair in the centre have flat tops, while the outer dormers are framed by volutes, crowned by pediments, and contain windows with prominent stepped keystones. The blind gable ends were originally abutted by other structures which followed the street line. The factory wing to the rear is plain and industrial in character, largely faced in Fletton brickwork, with metal-framed windows. It would not originally have been visible from the street, but is exposed due to the loss of neighbouring buildings.

At the rear of the building, a flat-roofed three storey block abuts the main building on the west. This is of two-bays, with the narrower (and lower roofed) bay on the west. The size and position of the windows suggest that this is probably a stairwell with WCs to the west.

Insert image above.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0082 Date: 21/6/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Other: Terrace OS grid reference: TL 09310 21430

Name: David French Partnership Former name(s):

Address: 41-43 Guildford Street, Luton

Contact info: David French Partnership: Civil and Structural Consulting Engineers

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: IMG_0648 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Engineer's offices, formerly stables and garage

Earliest phase: Late C19 Later phase(s): Late C20

Walls: Painted Brick Roof: Welsh Grey Slate

Current use: Engineer's offices

Condition: Good Historic integrity: Medium Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This low range of properties is an amalgamation of three separate properties: 41 and 43 Guildford Street as well as a mid-20th century extension which filled in the formerly open space abutting 56 Cheapside. The building as it presently stands was formed in the 1930s, when 41 and 43 Guildford Street were combined to create a single property and a large ground-floor passageway inserted to allow access to the garage and rear yard. This passageway now contains a set of double doors, with a semi-circular fanlight above. To either side of this there are large, three light, showroom windows with arched timber surrounds. Two sash windows, two-over-two, in a deep reveal, complete the ground-floor arrangement of windows. The heads for these are not visible but heavy, chamfered, stone sills have been incorporated. The ground floor also includes a narrow fascia with a large projecting moulded, cornice, above and slighter cornice below. The overall tripartite division of the premises is apparent in the street front façade and is reflected, in particular, in the size and disposition of the windows as well as the disjointed roof line between 41 and 43. The roof to 41 is less steeply pitched and the junction between it and the neighbouring property to the right is marked by a slight step down. There are two bays in this building and each hosts an unusually wide sash, two-over-two, window at first-floor level; no window heads are visible and the sills are simple, narrow, bands of stone or concrete.

This building is notable on account of the heavy, moulded, projecting cornice above the first-floor windows. The cornice is bracketed by consoles employing the same decorative motifs. The first-floor windows to the middle section of the range, formerly 43 Guildford Street, comprise two sash windows, each two-over-two, that on the left is the narrower of the pair. Again, the window heads are not visible and the sills are narrow in stone or concrete. The first-floor windows to the 1930s extension on the right-hand side of the range are, similarly, simple, two-over-two sashes.

41 Guildford Street has had a varied history - on the Goad plan of 1895 it is noted as a domestic residence. It was the residence of Thomas William Norman, photographer, in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903), and of a straw hat manufacturer, Arthur Woodfield, in 1910 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, 1910). 43, by contrast, is referred to as a domestic hat factory in 1895 with a rear workshop connected to stables and a large yard too. Cornelius Terry resided here in 1898 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1898) and Herbert Dimmock in 1903 (Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire, Hunts and Northamptonshire, 1903, both straw hat manufacturers. By the time of the 1938 Goad insurance map it is shown as a garage with yard to the rear.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0083 Date: 24/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Designed landscape OS grid reference: TL0924821457

Name: Former name(s):

Address: Eastern corner of Guildford Street and Bute Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☒ Conservation area ☒ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: NA

Earliest phase: NA Later phase(s): NA

Walls: NA Roof: NA

Current use: Public space

Condition: Poor Historic integrity: Low Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

A segment shaped open space, largely planted with an area of concrete to the rear and a concrete plinth to the fore, displaying a hat press donated to the borough by William Hornman (Chairman of the British Hat Guild) and placed here as a symbol of Luton's heritage. Prior to the widening of the road the site was home to a four storey straw hat factory.

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Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0084 Date: 28/06/11 Investigator: DSM

Unit of record: Building OS grid reference: TL0908821445

Name: Library Theatre Car Park Former name(s):

Address:

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☐ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☐ None

Photograph nos: DP 141945 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Car Park

Earliest phase: Late C20 Later phase(s): Early C21

Walls: Brick Roof: n/a

Current use: Disused car park

Condition: Good Historic integrity: High Further interest: Low

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

This car park was built on the site of a number of demolished hat factories and domestic workshops, shown on a series of maps from the mid-19th century onwards. The Library Theatre Car Park is a six storey, split level, car park with 12 levels, built in early 1970s and now closed and earmarked for demolition. The heavily modelled V-shaped fibreglass panels to each floor impart a powerful horizontality efficiently punctuated by projecting stair towers, which are glazed on the returns and display deeply incised vertical lines on the elevations facing the street. It is not possible to gain access to the interior. Overall it is an impressive composition, but an out-of-keeping dwarf brick wall is surmounted by equally incongruous, municipal style and rather fussy railings in front of it at pavement level.

Insert image above.

Luton Historic Area Assessment Field Record Sheet

Provisional survey no: 0085 Date: 25/10/11 Investigator: KC

Unit of record: Complex OS grid reference: TL0922421268

Name: The Mall (Arndale) Former name(s):

Address: The Mall - Silver Street/ George Street

Contact info:

Designation: ☐ Grade I ☐ Grade II* ☐ Grade II ☐ Conservation area ☐ Locally listed ☒ None

Photograph nos: DP141953-14161, 146084 HER/ indentifier:

Building/ monument type: Commercial - shopping centre with car parks and hotel

Earliest phase: 1970 Later phase(s): Early 21st century

Walls: Predominantly concrete and brown brick Roof: Mixed

Current use: Mixed commercial.

Condition: Fair Historic integrity: High Further interest: Medium

SUMMARY (main features, development, setting, significance, additional info, plan etc):

The first Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) was confirmed in February 1965, and covered the area between Bridge Street and Bute Street. In March 1965 the Council produced a brochure with basic information and a briefing, inviting developers to submit schemes for the redevelopment. By October of that year 24 schemes had been chosen from a submission of 50, and from this a short-list of three schemes was chosen for further consideration. In December 1966 Arndale Development Ltd were confirmed as the successful candidates, and initial details of the scheme agreed upon prior to the second CPO being served in November 1967. Shortly after the scheme was accepted, the developers convinced the Council to change a number of key features - namely to switch from a standard open precinct with flats above to a covered mall without any flats, but with a larger hotel. The main justification for this was that a closed environment would protect shoppers from the cold, wind and rain and therefore be more popular year round. Work clearing the site commenced in December 1969, with the third CPO taking effect in February 1970. A partnership agreement was entered in to between the Council and the developers, the council invested £10.75 million to cover the cost of acquiring the land and building the market and car parks in return for an annual ground rent plus 40% of the equity.

The development was on a massive scale, with over 150,000 cubic yards of soil excavated and 3850 concrete piles sunk to support the 14,000 tons of steel and 55,000 cubic yards of concrete required to provide the structure and all 34 acres of floor area. Consequently, construction was planned in a number of clearly defined phases (not to be built in order) which would allow sections to open and operate independently as soon as they were finished, without having to wait on other sections being completed. Construction was supposed to be completed by late autumn 1974, but a series of delays - including strikes and materials shortages - delayed completion until mid-1977.

Phase I of the build saw the construction of the Market and Library car parks as well as the eastern section of the mall between Smiths Lane and Church Street and was complete by early 1972. Phase II extended the mall by building the central section around Cheapside but did not open until late 1975, with the central car park not complete until December 1977 - the very last part to open. Phase III was the western section of the mall, over parts of Bute Street and Williamson Street, and was complete by early 1974. Phase IV contained the hotel and surrounding structure linking the Library car park to the mall, with the 151 bedroomed hotel opening in May 1973. Phase V saw the rest of the mall open in September 1976, with further work on St George's Square and pedestrian access continuing into mid-1977. The architects for phases I, II and II were Leonard Vincent, Raymond Gobing & Partners, with the Tripe and Wakeham Partnership taking over phases IV and V, with Ian Fraser, John Roberts and Partners acting as Consultant Architects throughout.

The Arndale covers over 17 acres of Luton city centre at the point where Bute Street, Cheapside, Smith's Lane and Melson Street once met Waller Street. The interior of the mall was specifically related to the previous street pattern. The main mall runs for a quarter of a mile at first-floor level, following the line of Waller Street and is punctuated by four squares: Bute Square, Cheapside/Central Square, Smith's Square and Melson Square, at the points where those roads once met. The mall is accessed from Church Street and Smith's Lane, with secondary entrances at Cheapside, Bute Street and Williamson Street as well as through several of the larger stores along George Street. Directly beneath the mall, at ground-floor level, is a service road which follows the course of Waller Street and is 24 feet wide by 14ft 6 high with access from Melson Street and exit via Library Road.

The overhaul of the Arndale in the mid-1990s had the greatest impact on the structure since its initial construction. The entire roof was replaced - almost doubling the internal ceiling height and admitting natural light for the first time. (Luton Herald, 20th Oct 1994). This was followed by the 75,000 square foot St George's Square extension which opened in 2010 at a cost of £20 million. The Arndale severs the link between the station and George Street, disrupting the historic street plan and dominating the skyline. The northern face of the Arndale is particularly dominant - an almost completely blind wall rising three storeys or more above the conservation area.

STRATHMORE HOTEL