

## 5.2 H. Station Gateway

### Character Area Assessment

#### Location

The Station Gateway area extends from the railway station southwards to include its road connections to the City Centre – principally Brook Street and City Road. The area also includes Egerton Street, land between these north-south routes and to the east of City Road as far as Westminster Road. The railway line marks the northern boundary of the area and the Shropshire Union Canal its southern boundary.

#### Sub-Areas

The area is comprised of the following sub-areas:

- **H1. Station Gateway** – the station, Station Road and the corner onto City Road.
- **H2. Brook Street** – the whole street, from the inner ring road to Station Road.
- **H3. City Road** – as far south as the Canal.
- **H4. Egerton Street** – the road between Brook Street and the canal.
- **H5. The Royals** – a planned block of terraced streets to the east of Queen’s Avenue (named after Royal titles).

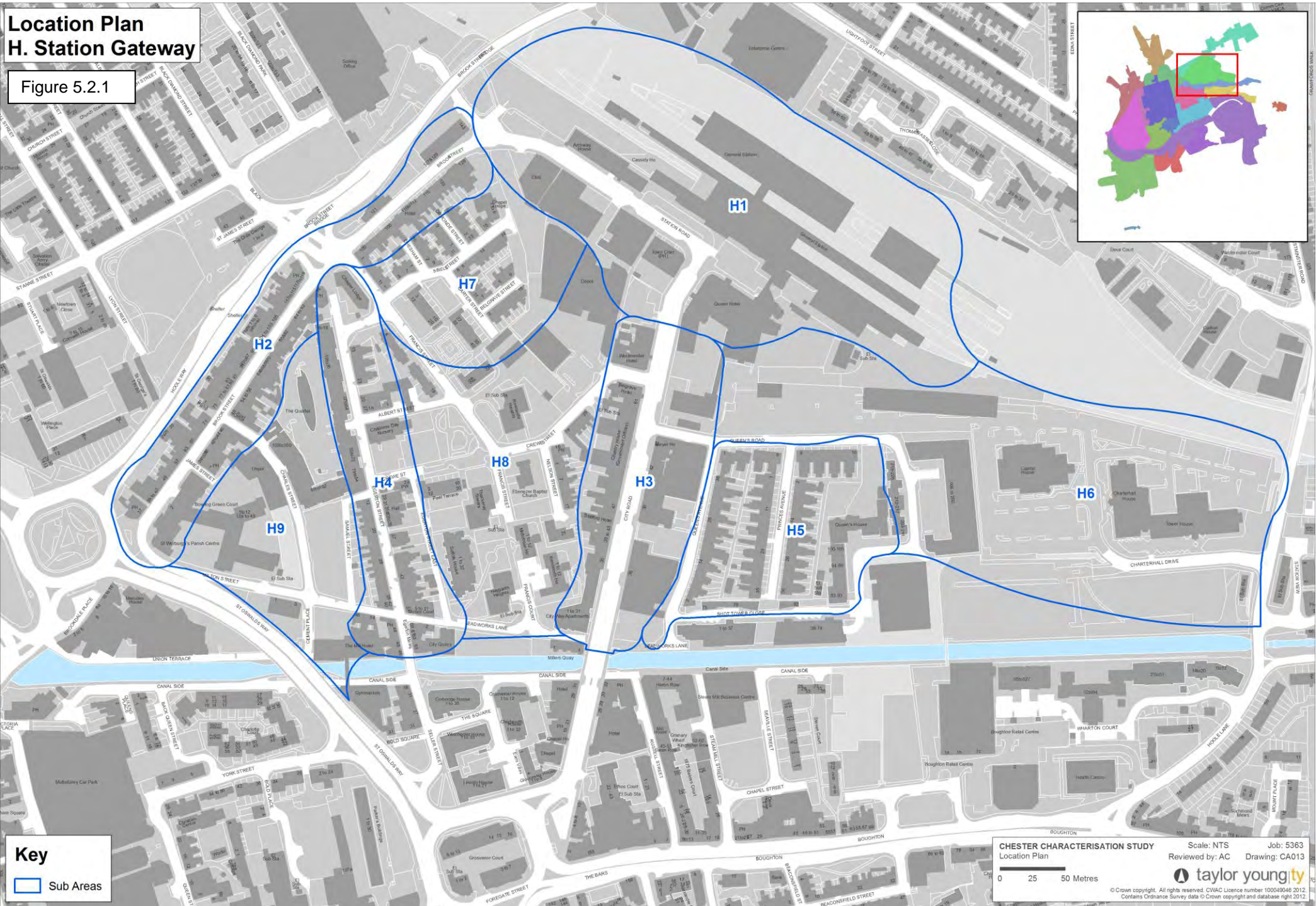
- **H6. Charterhall Drive Office Park** – land between City Road and Westminster Road, including the station car park and a series of new apartment blocks.
- **H7. Sibell Street** – a series of streets to the south of Brook Street.
- **H8. Frances Street** – land between Egerton Street and City Road, occupied by modernist-style social housing development.
- **H9. Charles Street** – a triangular shaped piece of land between Brook Street and Egerton Street, occupied principally by contemporary apartment development.



H2. Brook Street

# Location Plan H. Station Gateway

Figure 5.2.1



## Historical Development

Early accounts describe this area as somewhat marshy and low-lying. Map evidence shows the area remaining rural until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although the alignment of Brook Street, is visible as a road on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps, revealing this as a historic route out of the City.

The Chester-Nantwich Canal was constructed from 1772 to 1779. This in turn led to the development of industries which used the canal to transport bulky goods. The newly constructed canal is shown on the 1789 plan (see Figure 5.2.2).

The development of the area was accelerated with the construction of Walker Maltby and Company's Leadworks, to the north of the canal and east of the Steam Mill. The buildings were constructed, over a large site, in the 1790s, including a shot tower which provided lead shot for muskets during the Napoleonic Wars. The leadworks had doubled in size by 1875. By 1833 there was more industrial development to the north of the canal, notably the Steam Mill (outside this character area but significantly influencing its development). This was supported by workers housing between Brook Street and the Canal; Egerton Street appearing at this time.

Chester then became important as the confluence of four railway lines, which all reached Chester in the 1840s. A joint station to serve all the lines was enabled by an Act in 1847 and the station was opened in 1848. It was designed, in grand Italianate style, by Francis Thompson, under the appointment of Robert Stephenson. Thomas Brassey, the local contractor is also celebrated with a blue plaque on the station. The Queen Hotel, designed in a matching style, was built in 1860, and re-built to the same plan (with a storey added) in 1862 following a fire. By 1875 there had also appeared a dense layout of terraced housing for railway workers in Francis Street, Crewe Street, Sibell Street and Carter Street.

Brook Street originally served as the route out of Chester to Warrington. It remained relatively undeveloped until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It then became an important road lined by buildings and providing shops and services for the local working population. This included several public houses that survive today and also, interestingly the Cocoa Rooms (now a restaurant). Cocoa Rooms were provided by religious groups and temperance campaigners in the Victorian era as a more socially responsible alternative to public houses in working class areas. The former Cocoa Rooms building on Brook Street, once owned by the Chester Cocoa House Co. is a rare survival of this social movement and a distinctive townscape feature.

The coming of the railway led to more rapid development of the area. Brook Street and Egerton Street became the locations for artisans housing. By the 1908 plan we can see that this whole area has become densely developed, with further industrial development alongside the canal, the large massing of the station and associated railway infrastructure and dense terraced housing for workers occupying the rest of the area.



*Railway station, 1860s*



*Former Cocoa Rooms today*

After the opening of the station City Road was constructed as an alternative grand route from the station to the City Centre. This meant that Brook Street declined in importance, resulting in a reduction of footfall and a more secondary role. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the construction of Hoole Way and the inner ring road further isolated Brook Street from the City Centre and removed its role as a gateway to the City. The local working population declined with traditional heavy industries closing or requiring fewer workers. As a result Brook Street took on a somewhat down-at-heel feel, with several buildings in need of refurbishment and limited use of upper storeys. However, in recent years, following a feasibility study and design guide, the Council and its funding partners have supported businesses in restoration and refurbishment schemes. A significant number of buildings have now been successfully refurbished and the heritage value of Brook Street is starting to be better appreciated.



*Liverpool Arms Hotel (now Lloyds Hotel), Brook Street, 1856*

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Second World War development in the area was smaller in scale and limited to infilling the previously established pattern. This particularly included land to the west of City Road. A grid of streets was completed here on the site of the former wagon repairing works. An iron and brass foundry also existed in this densely developed area. At the end of Sibell Street St Barnabas Mission Church was built.

City Road was developed slowly, as evidenced by the range in age of its properties. From the establishment of the road its proximity to the station made it a focus for hotel location, such as the Queen's Hotel and Westminster Hotel. Its development was given impetus by the arrival of the public tramway (the last vestiges of this tramway are still visible at the entrance to the former tram sheds opposite the rail station). This area then became more strongly connected with the commercial and financial heart of the City. The west side of City Road then became filled with properties of mixed domestic and commercial character. A new

upper working class residential enclave appeared to the east of City Road, comprising Queen's Road, Queen's Avenue and Prince's Avenue.

After the Second World War the main emphasis was on infilling development. This first included the then still vacant sites on the eastern side of City Road (for example, the large inter-war office building next to the Methodist Church). To the west of City Road there was a major 1960s re-building programme of social housing, typical of its time.

In recent years the area has undergone further change. On the former leadworks site there was a major development of financial office buildings, with associated landscaping and surface car parking. Associated with the growth of the office and service sectors there was a rise in the population of young professionals. This led to new apartment development, which can be seen in the area on Charles Street, the northern end of Egerton Street and Shot Tower Close and Queen's Road. The form of these apartment blocks were largely based on the large mass of the mill buildings they often replaced: buildings, and decorated with small window openings and imitations of warehouse loading doors.

In summary, the development of this area has been dominated by industry, led by the construction of first the Canal and then the railway, and led by major industries such as Steam Mill and the leadworks (and the railway itself). The leaders of these industries provided close-knit terraced housing for their workers, near to each site. These were supported by corner shops, pubs and then schools and churches. Another focus was in providing hotels for railway travellers, on City Road and Brook Street (a role which continues today). Links between these land-uses weakened over time. Traditional industries failed and new sectors emerged. These were supported by redevelopment for new housing. Existing centres for shops and services (such as Brook Street) survived through these changes but changed in its role and importance.

### Brook Street over the years



No. 74 Brook Street, 1903



Brook Street, 1963



Brook Street, 1900



Top: Ormonde Hotel, Brooke Street, 1905

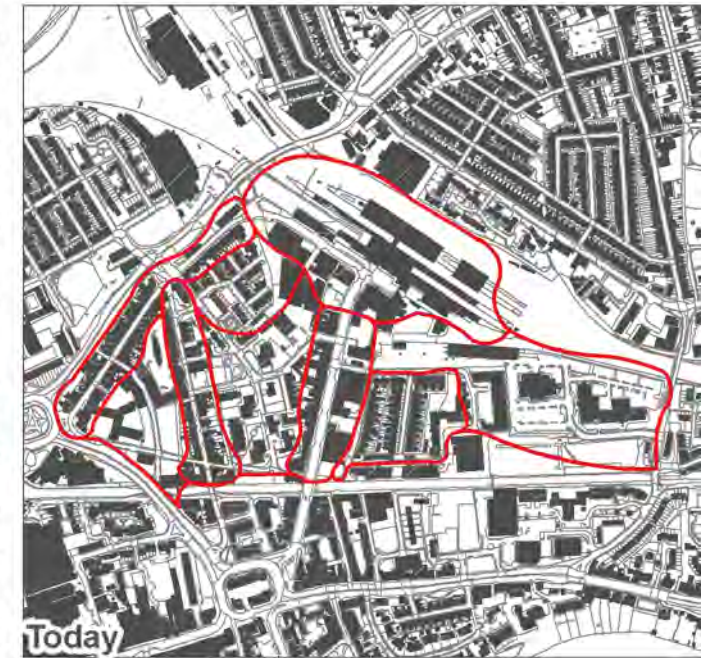
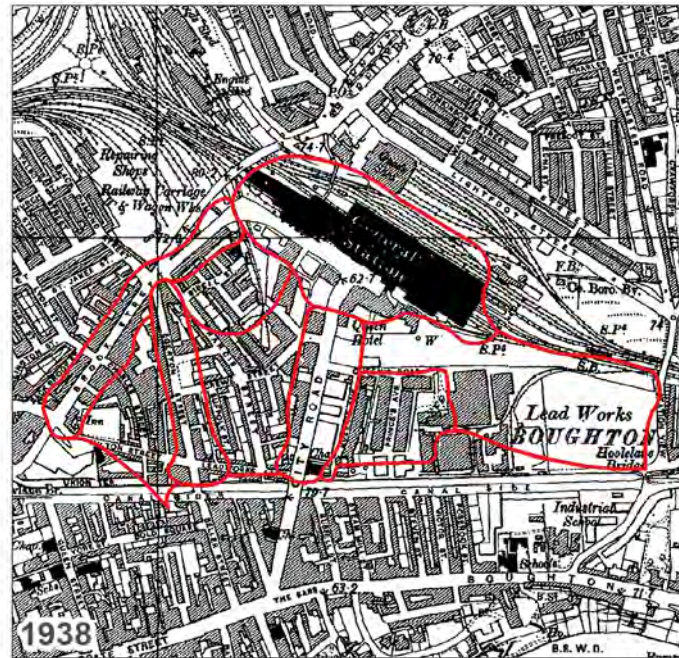
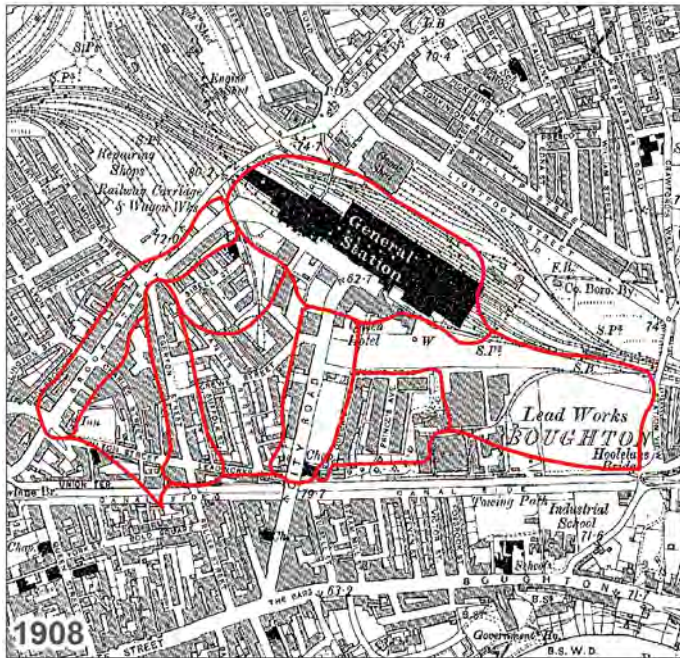
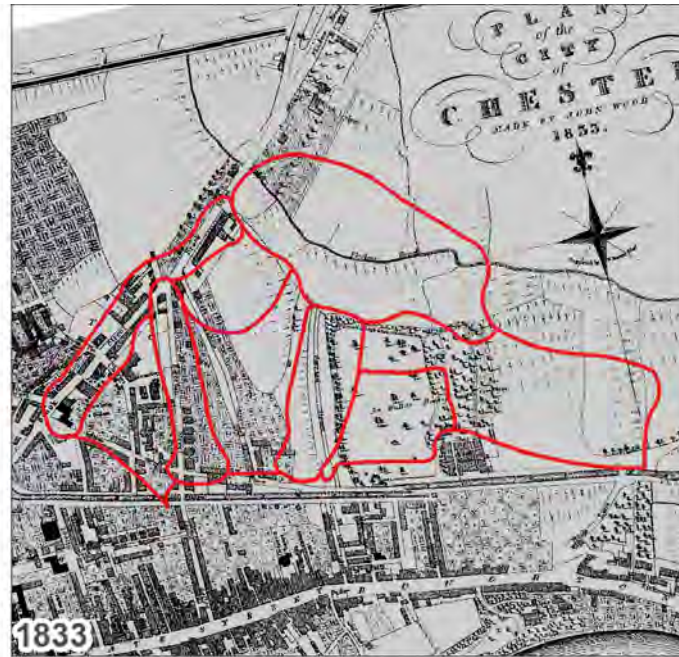
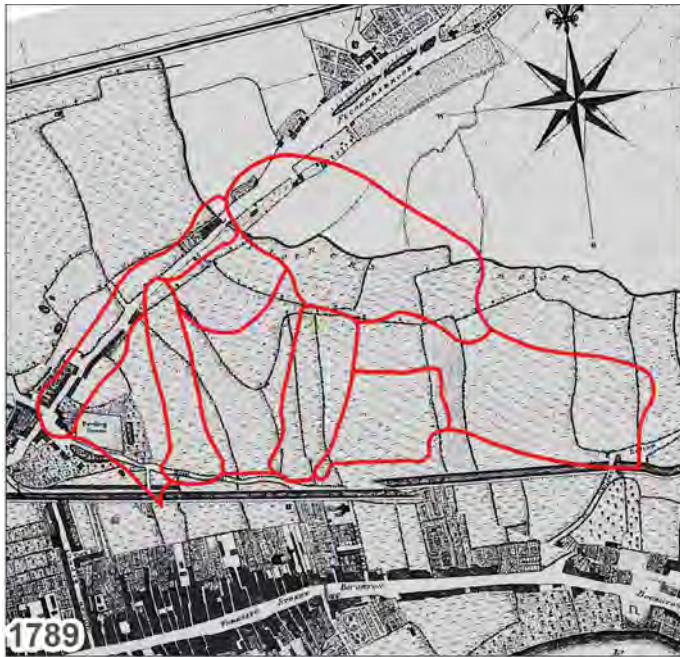
Below: The same building today.



Gaumont Cinema, Brook Street, 1961

# Historical Development H. Station Gateway

Figure 5.2.2



## Land-uses

The area has undergone much change, losing most of its industry – although remnants do survive. Most of the land in the area is now in residential use, although the station remains the most important function in the area and that has given rise to supporting leisure uses on Station Road, City Road and the northern end of Brook Street – mostly hotels and public houses. Brook Street retains a retail function, although this is now secondary in nature and has a more local catchment, though it remains fairly busy. There are a few new employment uses in the area, principally office and service uses on City Road and on the former leadworks site to the east.

## Urban Form

The character area is very well defined, being bound in a triangular shape between Hoole Way, the railway line and the canal.

The form of the area has been largely dictated by its infrastructure: north-south roads radiating from the City Centre (Brook Street, Egerton Street, City Road, Westminster Road) bisected by the east-west corridors of the railway and the canal. These radial roads were the first to be developed and are lined with Georgian and Victorian development; the spaces in between these radial routes were infilled later. This is evident in the urban form visible today (see Figure 5.2.3) which reveals the varying eras of development: tight back-of-pavement development on the radial streets and larger plot development (but still back-of-pavement) on the later developed City Road.

The form of the infill development varies widely depending on its age: planned back-of-pavement development within an irregular grid (the Sibell Street area); more planned back-of-pavement on a regular grid (the Queen's Road area); a 1960s Radburn-style layout that fails to address streets (the Crewe Street/Francis Street area); and contemporary

apartment blocks and offices that generally replicate the earlier industrial form with buildings of huge massing which are still generally back-of-pavement. This can create a strong canyon effect on narrow streets such as Charles Street.

The earlier industrial landmarks are still present in the form of the former Milns Seeds Warehouse (outside this area but its tower is highly visible from it) and the Shot Tower. Although most of the industrial building on which it stood is now demolished the Shot Tower remains as a highly visible feature and a strong link to the area's history. Views of both these towers are an important feature of the character of this area.



*The Town Crier with Station behind*

The most significant landmark in the area is, of course, the station. This forms a planned and attractive townscape 'set-piece' alongside the Queen Hotel and the Town Crier public house. The public realm here has been recently improved and this environment forms a strong gateway to the Chester when arriving by train. Further from this set-piece though the environment soon worsens to the west, forming a weak intersection with Brook Street with a series of industrial and poor quality buildings and badly kept spaces open to the street.



Urban Form  
H. Station Gateway

Figure 5.2.3



Key

Sub Areas

CHESTER CHARACTERISATION STUDY  
Figure Ground – H. Station Gateway

Scale: NTS Job: 5363

Reviewed by: AC Drawing: FG013

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## Townscape Character

The area is a mix of architectural styles, consisting of several distinct groups according to the age of development. On Station Road the buildings are generally large and Italianate in style. The station is constructed in dark brown brick. As mentioned elsewhere its Italianate stylings are picked up in the Queen Hotel and Town Crier public house. There is also the former Sorting Office: an Edwardian building which is now undergoing redevelopment behind its retained façade.

City Road has a varied mix of styles. Buildings are back-of-pavement, larger and detached in the north and in a terrace form in the south. There are a number of fine buildings through the street. There are flavours of warehouse design influence and of the Arts & Crafts movement. There are also a few negative factors: the space between the Town Crier and the Westminster Hotel presents an unwelcome break in the street frontage at the northern end and the modern tower addition to the Queen Hotel is out of scale and is overly dominant in views northwards up the road.

Egerton Street has a well preserved domestic Georgian townscape at its southern end. The street here has consistent frontages with brown brick in Flemish bond, with arch door heads with fanlights, multi-paned sash windows and traditionally pitched slate roofs. The crossroads with Leadworks Lane presents a fine corner group with public houses and shops.

Between City Road and Brook Street there is a strong survival of the simple single-fronted terraced house. These railway workers houses retain a strong character. In most cases they have a simple front door in an arched opening (without fanlights) and simple sash windows to both floors. No. 8 Sibell Street somewhat detracts from this character by being rendered and painted a very vivid blue.



*Egerton Street*

The Royals area has a very consistent and strong character. This is based on a strong red brick with terracotta details. Variety is provided with bay windows, sometimes extending to first floor with a hipped roof. Properties here are set back from the pavement with a brick wall enclosing a small front garden.

On Brook Street properties are a mix of late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian styles. They are all back-of-pavement, in narrow plots in a continuous terrace form, two to three storeys in height. These are mostly simple in style but with several distinctive buildings providing character and interest, especially in 'book-ending' corners. These include medieval-revival style public houses which articulate the corners of the street and more impressive, individually designed buildings such as Lloyds Hotel, with its neo-Baroque decorative façade.

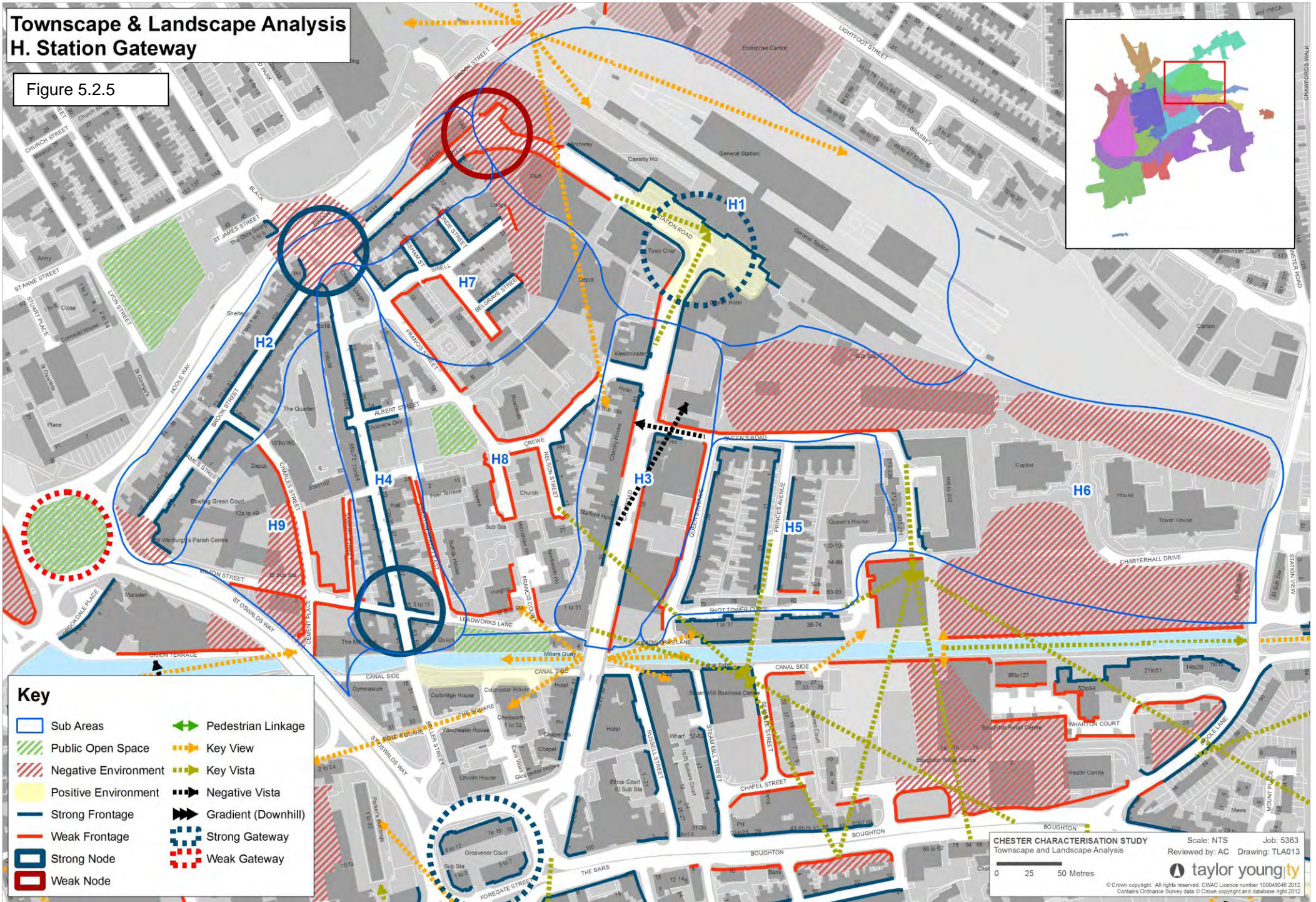
Later infill developments are typical of their period: the concrete and render of the 1960s social housing in the Crewe Road/Francis Street area or the brick, glazing and steel frame of contemporary apartment blocks.

### H. Station Gateway: Typical Materials and Details



# Townscape & Landscape Analysis H. Station Gateway

Figure 5.2.5



**Key**

- Sub Areas
- Public Open Space
- Negative Environment
- Positive Environment
- Strong Frontage
- Weak Frontage
- Strong Node
- Weak Node
- ↔ Pedestrian Linkage
- Key View
- Key Vista
- Negative Vista
- ↘ Gradient (Downhill)
- Strong Gateway
- Weak Gateway

CHESTER CHARACTERISATION STUDY  
Townscape and Landscape Analysis

Scale: NTS  
Reviewed by: AC  
Job: 5363  
Drawing: TLA013

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## Landscape Character

There is little formal open space in the area, although views to the canalside provide a visual relief and openness. The form is very urban, the only planting generally being in the redeveloped Crewe Street/Francis Street area. There is a small children's play area on Francis Street which has been recently improved and is a positive feature.



*View to the former Milns Seeds Warehouse and Canal from City Road*

The majority of buildings are constructed to back-of-pavement so there is no need for boundary treatments. Some of the small terrace buildings have low brick walls to the front and higher walls to the rear (if needed). The low front walls are often capped with terracotta copings. Gateposts are few, more frequently there are piers capped with terracotta.

Hard paving is almost entirely ubiquitous tarmacadam. The exceptions to this are the terraces around Sibell Street. Here granite setts, blocks and textured pavers and bricks remain, providing more interest and character.

The public realm in front of the station has been well considered. Roads are still surfaced in tarmac but pedestrian areas tend to be of granite blocks.

There is little distinctive street furniture within the area, however smaller details, e.g. the gate piers associated with station, are part of the historic character and should be retained.

## Designated Heritage Assets

Most of this character area falls within the City Centre Conservation Area. The exceptions are the island of 1960s redevelopment around Crewe Street/Francis Street, and the station car park and former leadworks site to the east of City Road and Queen's Road, which has also been redeveloped.

There are 15 listed buildings (or groups of buildings) within the character area. The most significant are:

- **Chester Station**, Station Road (Grade II\*, 1848)



- **The Queen Hotel**, City Road (Grade II, 1862)



- **Former Church of St Barnabas and Curates House**, Sibell Street (Grade II, 1878)



- **The Town Crier public house**, Station Road (Grade II, 1865)



The former leadworks lies just outside the boundaries of the area but is highly visible within it and contributes to the area's character. Much has now been demolished but the Shot Tower remains a prominent feature of this Grade II\* listed building.

Other notable buildings are the Grade II listed Catholic Club at the southern end of Brook Street and the Egerton Street County Primary School. The listings also include a number of buildings of group value, principally on Egerton Street and at the northern end of Brook Street.

There are also a number of Article 4 directions covering the southern end of Egerton Street.

## Buildings of Townscape Merit

- **H1b. Former GPO Sorting Office**, Station Road – Edwardian building currently being restored and refurbished for apartments.



- **H2a. Stanley Arms**, Brook Street – medieval revival style public house that helps to define the gateway to Brook Street.



- **H2b. Georgian shop (1)** and **H2c. Georgian shop (2)**, Brook Street – good pair of shops in close to original form.



- **H2d. Railway Inn**, Brook Street – strong corner public house in good condition.



- **H2e. Railway Cocoa Rooms**, Brook Street – striking individual building with historically significant use, well known locally.



- **H2g. Egerton Arms (and corner group)**, Brook Street – prominent on the corner, unusual example of a simple Georgian corner pub in Chester.



- **H2f. Georgian-style corner building**, Brook Street – strong Georgian proportions and detailing, despite loss of central window.



- **H2h. Lloyds Hotel**, Brook Street – a local landmark with a distinctive façade.



- **H2i. Black and white barber shop**, Brook Street – good medieval revival detailing and form.



- **H2k. Former Maltby's works** – this frontage is a remnant that tells of the industrial history of this street.



- **H2j. Former Majestic cinema** – the shop-front has been inappropriately replaced but the building has historical importance as a remnant survival of Chester's first purpose-built cinema.



- **H2l. Indian Flava**, Brook Street - three Georgian shops in good condition, now combined as an Indian restaurant but maintaining original proportions and integrity.



- **H3a. Westminster Hotel**, City Road – well detailed building with black and white decoration.



- **H3c. Arts & Crafts townhouses**, City Road – good examples of this distinctive style.



- **H3b. Meyer House** – interesting Victorian house with unusual detailing.



- **H3d. Inter-war commercial building**, City Road – grand building, currently vacant and in poor condition.



- **H3e. Stafford Hotel Terrace**, City Road - late Victorian terrace, including Stafford Hotel - well detailed though in mixed condition.



- **H4a. Egerton Street/Milton Street Shop** – interesting corner building with original shop-fronts to both elevations.



- **H4b. Egerton Street/Leadworks Lane Shop** – another interesting corner opposite H4a, with original shop-front.

- **H4c. Egerton Street/Albert Street house** and **H4d. Egerton Street warehouse** – distinctive former public house with historic warehouse behind.



- **H5a. Queen's House, Queen's Road** – altered but with many original features, once stood in extensive grounds in this area.



- **H9a. Mill Hotel, Cement Place** – altered and extended mill building but the historic part of the building, with chimney, remains visually and historically important.



## Key Detractors

A number of key detractors have been identified in this area. These comprise the following:

- **Land at the northern end of Brook Street**, north of the Cocoa Rooms – currently occupied by an open car wash and a series of one storey pre-fabricated shop units. This is a poor environment for this historic street at its approach Station Road.
- **Land north and south of Station Road** – a series of yard spaces, car hire storage and poor quality buildings, often with secondary rather than town centre uses, that are inappropriate to the setting of the Station and the gateway to the City here. This includes the car park to the immediate west of the station: an important gateway site that should be better defined by built form.



- **Depots west of City Road** – the last remnants of industrial use in this area, visible from residential streets to the west and south. Unsightly and untidy this presents a poor impression, especially now that the use of surrounding land has changed.



- **Land between the Town Crier and Westminster Hotel on City Road** – a break in the building line between and opposite several key buildings weakens the townscape at the important approach to the station gateway on City Road.
- **Queen Hotel tower block** – an unsympathetic and highly visible tower that dominates views northwards on City Road, detracting from heritage buildings.

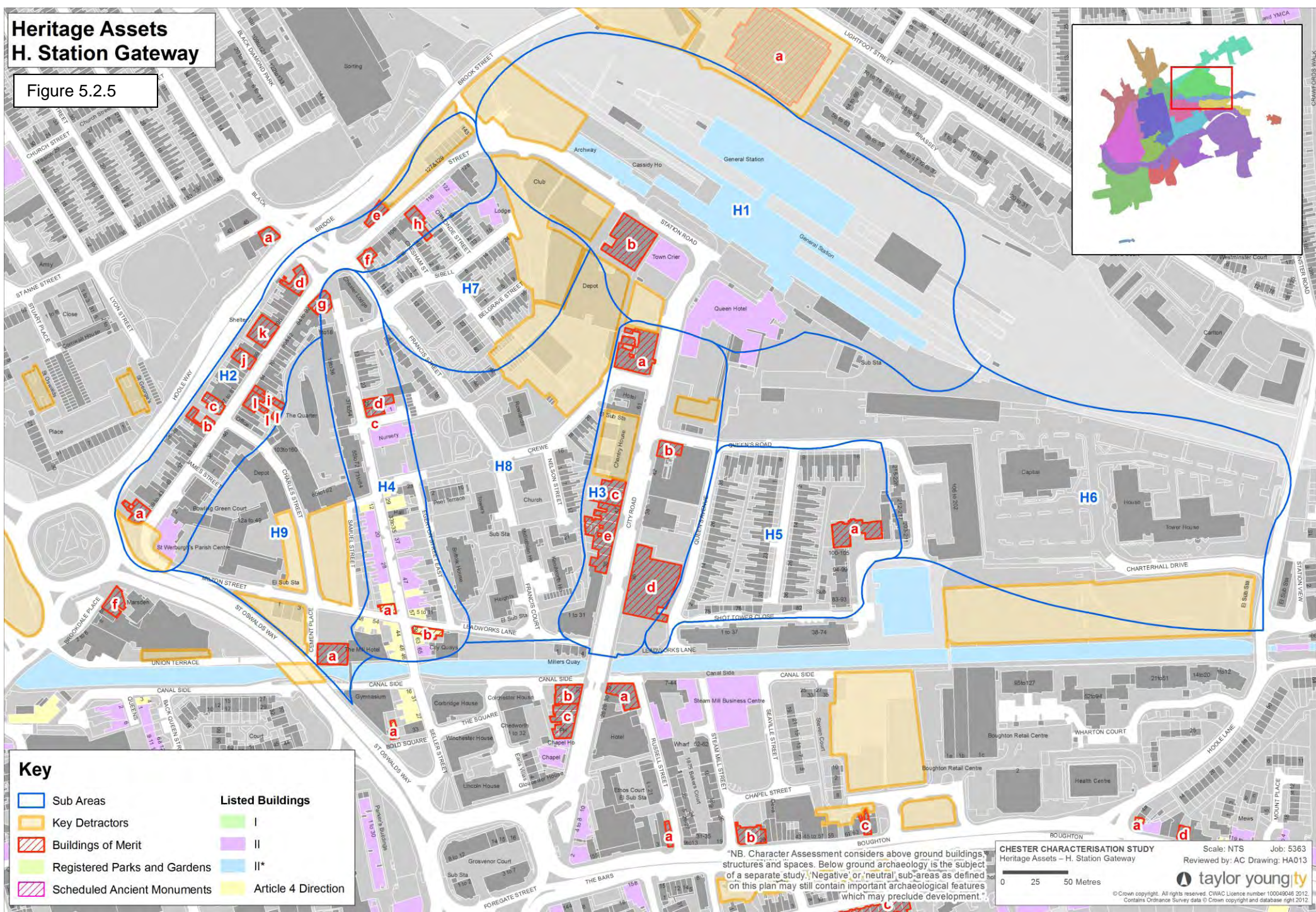
- **The Jobcentre on City Road** – a plain modernist design that does not respond to the prevailing character of the area. The building is unsightly and terminates the vista from Queen’s Road.



- **8 Sibell Street** – terraced housing that has been rendered and painted a vivid blue. This could be fairly easily remedied but at present it is a visually dominant feature that detracts from the local character.
- **Southern termination of Brook Street** – the public realm at this important gateway has come second in priority to highway infrastructure, leaving a hostile environment of steel railings and concrete planters and bollards. This creates a poor setting at the arrival of this historic route at the City, and a poor pedestrian experience that serves to further isolate Brook Street.
- **Southern end of Charles Street/Cement Place** – the land here includes a cleared site, unattractive surface car parking, modern low-rise industrial buildings and a poor pedestrian subway environment. Collectively this detracts from the overall character of the area and provides poor residential amenity.

# Heritage Assets H. Station Gateway

Figure 5.2.5



**Key**

Sub Areas	Listed Buildings
Key Detractors	II
Buildings of Merit	II*
Registered Parks and Gardens	Article 4 Direction
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	

\*NB. Character Assessment considers above ground buildings, structures and spaces. Below ground archaeology is the subject of a separate study. 'Negative' or 'neutral' sub-areas as defined on this plan may still contain important archaeological features which may preclude development.

CHESTER CHARACTERISATION STUDY  
Heritage Assets – H. Station Gateway

Scale: NTS Job: 5363  
Reviewed by: AC Drawing: HA013

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## Summary: Character Assessment

In summary this is a mixed area. It has undergone change several times in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and is in many places still a zone of transition. There remain important heritage assets that contribute to the character of the City overall (notably the Station gateway itself). There are also areas of heritage value that still require enhancement of varying degree (i.e. Brook Street and Egerton Street) and a large number of Buildings of Townscape Merit that currently have no special protection. Elsewhere modern development and ill-considered approaches have created areas that do not reflect the historic importance or wider character of the area.

- **H1. Station Gateway: Critical** – a strong townscape set-piece and arrival point at the City.
- **H2. Brook Street: Positive** – historically important, with many interesting historic buildings and improved in recent years, although need for further enhancement in parts.
- **H3. City Road: Positive** – a varied and strong townscape. Though with a few detractors.
- **H4. Egerton Street: Positive** – the southern half is a strong Georgian streetscape.
- **H5. The Royals: Positive** – a good consistent example of planned lower middle class Victorian/Edwardian housing.
- **H6. Charterhall Drive Office Park: Negative** – an area that has lost the relationship with its past with plain modern redevelopment.
- **H7. Sibell Street: Neutral** – evidence of the previous planned workers housing remains but this is compromised by later developments and poor views at the end of terraced streets.

- **H8. Frances Street: Negative** – an infill area of 1960s social housing that pays no regard to surrounding context or the historic character of the area.
- **H9. Charles Street: Negative** - an infill area that is partly redeveloped in a neutral style and partly a low grade industrial environment.



Station Road



## Character Statement

*“The Station Gateway area is a mixed area, whose form tells of its history. It was largely developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the back of the arrival and expansion of key industries such as the leadworks and Steam Mill. The Canal and then the railway acted as key drivers and location factors for development. This was followed by planned housing for workers, which can still clearly be seen in parts of the area. The station is a major landmark and setting at its gateway creates a strong first impression to the City. City Road represents a varied but strong linkage from the station to the City. Brook Street is a pre-existing historic route that has suffered changing fortunes but remains important as a secondary shopping street with an interesting mix of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings “.*



Brook Street

## Management and Policy Recommendations

This is a mixed area, with many buildings and streets in good condition and others in poor condition or with unsympathetic alterations. The situation has certainly improved in recent years with the refurbishment schemes on Brook Street and it is recommended that this strategy is extended further. In general this area has much value in heritage terms and this needs to be recognised locally and celebrated more widely.

## Capacity to Accommodate Change

There are a number of sites and buildings within the area that currently detract from the historic environment. These could be used to accommodate change and new development. They are outlined below.

## Design Principles for New Development

New development opportunities are likely to follow the key detractors previously identified. They fall into four main groupings and each should follow the principles set out below.

### Brook Street/Station Road Gateway

- The key objective here is to provide a stronger gateway to the Station area when approaching from Brook Street, and vice versa. This will require strong street frontages at both sides of the road and a form that defined the corner between them.
- A good quality pedestrian environment will be required to encourage visitors to walk from the station to the City Centre via Brook street.

- New development on Brook Street must also address the existing building line and the scale and character of existing buildings on Brook Street.
- New development on Station Road must respect the scale and character of existing buildings here and should appear to subordinate the Station itself.
- Development in this area should also be mindful of elevated views from the Hoole Way bridge over the railway line.

#### **Industrial land west of City Road and south of Station Road**

- Development of this area should bring the area to a more residential scale and character and should have regard to the amenity of surrounding residential properties.
- A satisfactory interface will need to be achieved to the rear of commercial properties on Station Road and City Road.
- Development in this area should also be mindful of elevated views from the Hoole Way bridge over the railway line.

#### **Sites on City Road**

- If development occurs here should follow the building line established by existing properties on City Road. Continuous frontages should be achieved as much as possible.
- It should also respect the scale, proportions and character of townscape buildings on City Road, as described in this document.
- Views to the Station/Queen Hotel/Town Crier pub should be respected and framed sympathetically by the proposed development.

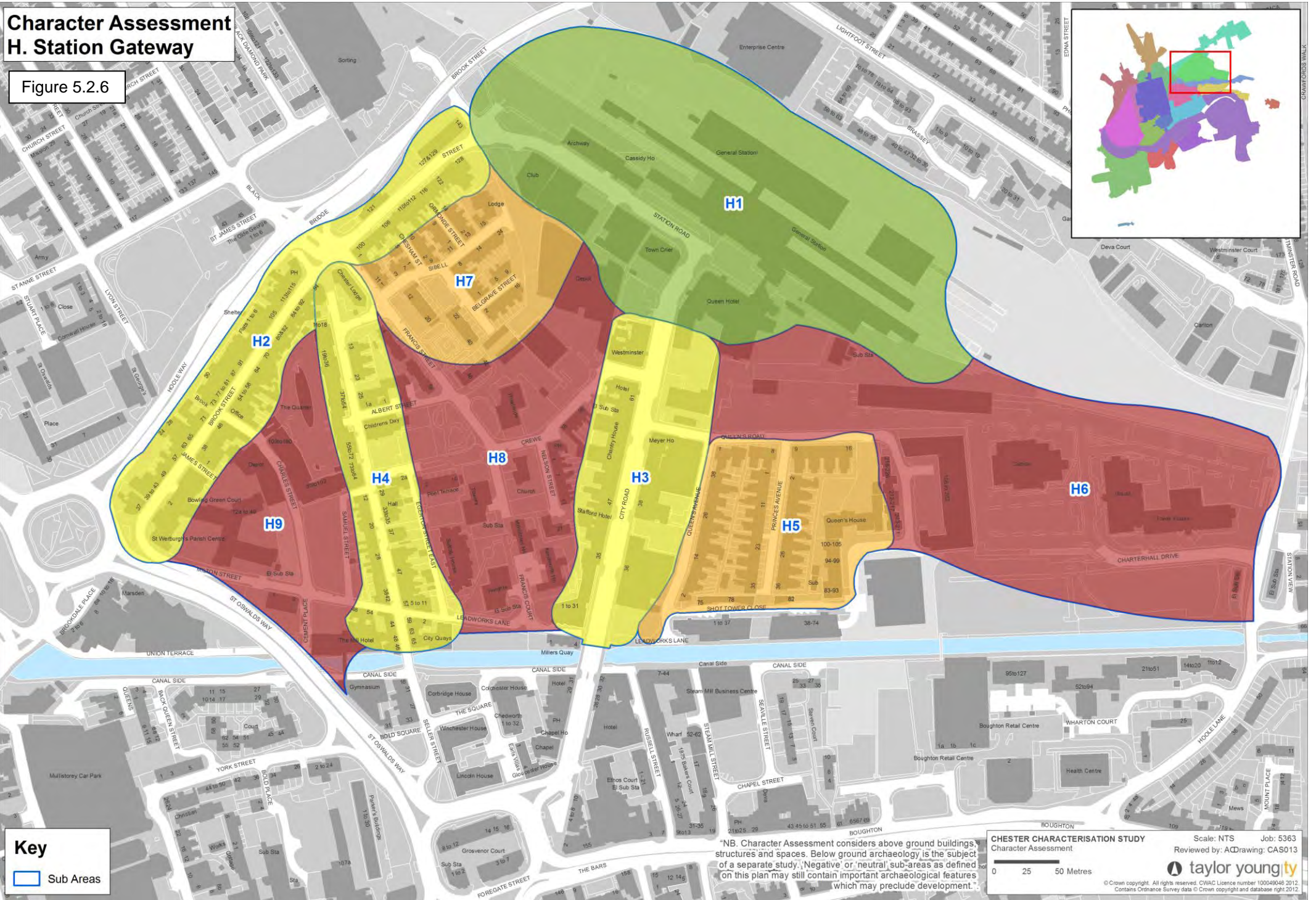
#### **Sites around Charles Street/Cement Place**

- Opportunities should be taken for new development to address the street in a back-of-pavement form and restore street frontages in this area.
- New development should be of a significant scale in response to surrounding buildings.
- The opportunity should be taken to enhance the public realm and pedestrian environment, including an improved connection underneath St Oswald's Way.



# Character Assessment H. Station Gateway

Figure 5.2.6



'NB. Character Assessment considers above ground buildings, structures and spaces. Below ground archaeology is the subject of a separate study. 'Negative' or 'neutral' sub-areas as defined on this plan may still contain important archaeological features which may preclude development.'

CHESTER CHARACTERISATION STUDY  
Character Assessment

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