Commentary: This frontage forms part of Prudential Assurance development, the construction of which was completed in 1973. The Architect for this development was K.C. Wintle.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Between 29 & 31 (Wood Street) Abington Street

The buildings on the east side of Wood Street at its junction with Abington Street. This late 1920s photograph records the corner building not long before its demolition for road widening. (N.R.O.)

Commentary: Building constructed in the mid 1970s as part of the Grosvenor Centre development. The glazed canopy was introduced in the early 1990s.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.

As existing, 2008
Local Listing Description

31, Abington Street

Approximate Date: 1930s
Conservation Area: No
Adjacent to a Listed Building: No

Storeys & Use(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storeys</th>
<th>Use(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>Commercial (Woolwich)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Commercial (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Vacant (?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Value: Limited

Description:
Reconstructed stone, flat roof, ground floor: modern shop front, access to upper floors gained via side steps towards the rear of the building. Original metal framed windows with horizontal glazing bars to upper parts: on the chamfered corner of the building these are interrupted by a central chevron pattern. The stonework between the floors is distinguished by long horizontal string courses in relief (forming narrow bands at parapet level). Above the entrance, the staircase has a long vertical window protruding in a V-shape and having diagonal-pattern glazing bars.

Special Features:
Typical 30's metal casement windows of chevron design. Above the corner window (on the second floor) is a relief carving of a head.

Alterations:
Modern shop front on the ground floor

Building at Risk: Possibly second floor

Historical Association: Architectural/Technical

Significance: A good example of 30's architecture.

Commentary: These two distinctive 1930s frontages now stand in the lee of the Grosvenor Centre entrance. Obscuring views of the west (Wood Street) elevation of no. 31, the fascia ‘frieze’ of this early 1990s introduction is extended to incorporate the shop fronts of no.s 31 & 33. This intrusion is a detraction which confuses understanding of the buildings’ historic form.

Guidance: Further searches should be undertaken for archival photographs which will provide evidence of the 1930s frontages’ primary form. Such evidence will be needed to inform any scheme to adapt the existing Grosvenor Centre fascia ‘frieze’ for the restoration of the frontages’ historic form. As part of the effort to focus attention on the several handsome 1930s buildings on Abington Street, careful consideration should be given to the lighting of these frontages.
Commentary: This frontage was constructed between 1967 and 1970 to the designs of Beecroft, Bidmead and Partners.

Guidance: This 'modern' frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street's heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street's architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: Frontage built between 1968 and 1969, to the design of Monro and Partners.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
47 Abington Street

Commentary: J.W.R. Whitehand (1984) notes this building to have been constructed for A.R. Cleaver of Northampton to the (1934) designs of W.L. Carter of Northampton. The architectural impact of this frontage’s original design has been compromised by the introduction at high level of lead flashings and the relatively recent re-working of its shop frontage.

Guidance: Further archival research should be undertaken to reveal evidence of the ‘1930s’ shop frontages’ primary form. If cleaned and restored to its inter-war form this street corner building might prove an architectural and visual asset to Abington Street. However, at this early juncture the street’s appeal would be more considerably uplifted if heritage enhancement efforts were extended elsewhere.
Commentary: Frontage which from its design form looks as though it were constructed in the 1960s.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,

ii. which merit works of restoration,

iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
55 - 57 Abington Street

Commentary: Although it looks more modern, letters in the Borough Council’s files suggest that this building was being constructed in 1963.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: The first floor level store plaque notes that this façade was constructed by the ‘Shop and Store Group’ in 1993. Loosely responding to the styles and materials of the historic buildings about it, the design of this modern building is more sympathetic to its historic setting than any other of the late 20th century buildings on the street.

Guidance: It is suggested that heritage enhancement efforts be expended elsewhere.
Commentary: Thought to be coeval with its neighbour, this late 19th century building is something of a landmark on Abington Street.

Guidance: Although archival evidence survives telling of the primary form of the shop frontage, the replacement frontage has been designed and installed with consideration to the heritage appeal of the whole. It is therefore considered, at this early juncture, that Abington Street’s appeal would be more considerably uplifted if heritage enhancement efforts were expended elsewhere.
Commentary: The handsome stone surround to the door of this frontage bears the inscription ‘Victoria Buildings 1897’. The gables, the height and the black and white timber framed element of this frontage give it, together with its coeval neighbour, a distinctive presence on Abington Street.

Guidance: Although archival evidence survives telling of the primary form of the shop frontage, the relatively recent frontage does not unduly detract from the building’s heritage appeal. It is therefore considered, at this early juncture, that Abington Street’s appeal would be more uplifted if heritage enhancement efforts were expended elsewhere.
Commentary: The beaten panels between the windows of the centre bay bear the date of 1928. The (evidently relatively recent) date at which the extant shop frontage was introduced is not known.

Guidance: Further searches should be undertaken for archive photographs which will provide evidence of the inter-war frontage’s primary form. Any future discussion about informed restoration will need to be held with the benefit of such documentary evidence. As part of the effort to focus attention on the several handsome 1930s buildings on Abington Street, careful consideration should be given to the lighting of this frontage.
Commentary: In the photograph dated 1961 can be seen signs showing that these, the last residences in Abington Street, had been sold (for redevelopment). J.W.A. Whitehand (1984) notes that this building was constructed for provincial shop proprietors to the (1960) design of Lacoste and partners. In the mid 20th century one of the residences seen in the 1961 photograph was occupied by the gardener to the convent.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: The sisters of Notre Dame of Namur founded a boarding school on Abington Street in 1852. The main element of the convent was built in the early 1870s and an extension was built on the west end in the late 19th century. The school was closed in 1975 and the buildings demolished four years later. The extant building was constructed in the early 1980s.

Guidance: This 'modern' frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street's heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street's architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: The two photographs sourced from the archives provide evidence of the fact that this probably mid 19th century building has seen considerable alteration over the course of its history. Almost certainly built as a house, the building was evidently in use as a restaurant in the 1950s and for many years now it has been occupied as a pub.

Whilst the primary window frames appear to survive at first and second floor levels, the glazing bars were evidently removed before 1959.

Guidance: This historic building is so changed that works to restore its historic form would be prohibitively expensive. The fact that the building’s use has also changed from the use for which it was constructed adds a further layer of complication to any thought of extensive restoration. However, two activities would serve to enhance the frontage’s heritage appeal:

i. Redecoration in colours which tie the legibility of the floor levels.
ii. Re-introduction of the glazing bars to the windows.
Commentary: Brick built frontage, the appearance of which suggests a construction date of the 1990s. Set back from the street frontage, the upper elements of the elevation are thought to have been constructed in the 1960s (see archival photograph P.5105).

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
**Local Listing Description**

**81/85, Abington Street (Radio Northampton)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Date:</th>
<th>1891, extended 1930 (to west) in identical style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Area:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to a Listed Building:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storeys &amp; Use(s):</td>
<td>3: Radio station and associated offices - LH part of building is Solicitors' offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Value:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>Red brick with contrasting blue brick at its base in which there are shallow windows serving the basement. The ground floor has tall arched windows - sash, with an arched top section with glazing bars in a fan-shaped pattern. These are divided by rusticated brick ionic pilasters. Each window has an arched dripmould with key-stone. Arched doorway at corner with unfortunate modern canopy and fanlight over with glazing bars. Plain band above with relief moulding over doorway. First floor - sash windows with glazing bars in top half, stone sill band and keystone above each window with brick segmental arch. Second floor - sash windows as on 1st floor, with brick segmental arches with contrasting keystone. Cornice to eaves. Tiled roof with three large and three small gables with arched pediments with contrasting stone copings. The gable faces each bear square tablets: on the Abington Street elevation the LH tablet bears the date 1930; the RH tablet is a crest inscribed with the initials R.P. and the date 1891. The cast iron rainwater goods bear the date 1930.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Features:</td>
<td>Arched pediments to the roof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alterations:</td>
<td>Few, but external advertising could be more sympathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building at Risk:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Association:</td>
<td>Built for the International Goodyear Shoe Machinery Co. See illustration of original building in &quot;Northampton 1835-1985. Shoe Town - New Town&quot;, by Cynthia Brown, 1990. The illustration shows a 2nd floor hoist on the north side (now a window), a secondary doorway, now also a window, and a single storey extension on the north side, now demolished. The Abington Street elevation was extended in 1930 in similar materials and identical style, so that it is only by comparing the illustration with the present building that it is possible to tell the original finishes and the new begins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commentary:** Built in 1991 and 1930 this frontage has been subject to very little alteration. The BBC’s signage is mild mannered and respectful of the frontage’s architectural message.

**Guidance:** Efforts should be made to focus public attention to this handsome and unspoilt historic frontage. For instance when siting street furniture consideration should be given to leaving views of this frontage unobscured.

**Local Listing Description**

**As existing, 2008**

- Discoloured perspex covering all windows at ground level
- Pigeon deterrent spikes
Commentary: Although the construction date and primary use of this building are not known it is thought likely that it was built as a Chapel in the second half of the 19th century. Compare this building’s extant form with that recorded in the early 1960s photograph and it can be appreciated that its frontage has undergone considerable change. At the time that the archival photographs were taken the building appears to have been rendered or at least painted. The decorative use of blue brickwork in the London stock brick suggests that the brickwork of this frontage was built with the intention of being exposed. The date at which the frontage was rendered or painted is not known, neither is it known when as much was removed. It is imagined that in the post c.1960s scheme in which the paint/render was removed the gable’s primary deep cornice and coping was also taken off, along with the shop fronts (seen in the c.1960s photographs).

Guidance: The visual and architectural appeal of this distinctive frontage is compromised by the lack of uniformity in the treatment of the semicircular window head panels. The architectural appeal of the frontage would be greatly enhanced if like the easternmost opening all of the window heads, and frames to the doors and windows beneath, were painted black.
Commentary: The early 1960s photographs, of this the south side of Abington Street’s east end, shows the gable ended chapel to have been bounded to the east and west by brick built buildings with stone dressings and round headed windows at second floor level. In the 1960s the eastern of the chapel’s neighbours has been lost (presumably to a road widening scheme) and the previously exposed brickwork and stone of no.s 108 – 110 Abington Street painted.

Guidance: Further searches should be undertaken for archival photographs which will provide evidence of the shop frontage’s primary form. Such evidence will be required if informed restoration of the historic form of the shop frontage is to be made possible. Consideration might also be given to the option of carefully removing the paintwork to expose the elevation’s brickwork and stone dressings.
Commentary: Although no documentary evidence has been found to confirm the date of this frontage’s construction or tell of the historic form of its lost shop frontage, on stylistic grounds this looks to be a building of the late Victorian era. The existing shop frontage is evidently a relatively modern introduction. Members of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society recall the building, (constructed as a residence) prior to the installation of its shop frontage, having ‘domestic’ windows at ground floor level.

Guidance: Further searches should be undertaken for archival photographs which will provide evidence of this frontage’s primary form. Such evidence will be required if informed restoration of the shop frontage’s historic form is to be made possible.
Commentary: The Borough Council’s records provide evidence of the fact that this brick built shop was constructed and open for business by 1980.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: Although no archival evidence has been found to confirm this building’s construction date its frontage bears the appearance of a frontage built in the mid 19th century. It might be imagined that this building was constructed as a house and was converted at ground floor level to shop use at some point in the 20th century. The existing shop front is a relatively recent introduction.

Guidance: The existing shop frontage has been designed with care and style. Its form does not compete with the historic architecture over it. On the grounds that to date no evidence of the form of the frontage’s historic shop front can be found and the existing shop front is of high quality, it is reckoned that Abington Street’s appeal would be more considerably uplifted if heritage enhancement efforts were expended elsewhere.

Guidance: The existing shop frontage has been designed with care and style. Its form complements the architectural elements above it. On the grounds that to date no evidence of the form of the frontage’s primary shop front can be found and the existing shop front is of high quality, it is reckoned that Abington Street’s appeal would be more considerably uplifted if heritage enhancement efforts were expended elsewhere. That said, as part of the efforts to focus attention on the several handsome 1930s buildings on Abington Street, careful consideration should be given to the lighting of this prominent street corner frontage.
Commentary: Although no archival evidence has been found to confirm this building’s construction date, on stylistic grounds a date of about 1880 is suggested. The building’s ground floor is understood to have been used for several decades, from the late 1920s, as a showroom for Austin cars. The existing shop frontage is a relatively recent introduction which appears to have been incorporated into an historic shop frontage.

Guidance: Further searches should be undertaken for archival photographs which will provide evidence of the shop frontage’s primary form. Such evidence will be required if informed restoration of the historic form of the shop frontage is to be made possible.
Commentary: The photograph on the left shows no. 94 as a three storey residence or office with two bays projecting at ground and first floor levels. Although no documentary evidence has been found to clarify the date at which the extant frontage was applied, on stylistic grounds it is suggested that this is a frontage of 1920s build. The 1959 photograph shows a glazed shop front with a central door accessed via a shallow inlet. The existing arrangement, which provides entrances and window frontage for two businesses, is as unbalanced and visually confusing as the architecture above is visually coherent.

Guidance: The appeal of this frontage would be greatly enhanced if the shop frontage could be redesigned in a manner which enabled it to be read more coherently not least with the architectural elements above. Prior to planning such a re-design archival research should be undertaken to source photographs providing evidence of the shop front’s primary form.
Commentary: Although no documentary evidence has been found to clarify as much it is suggested that this frontage dates from the late 18th or early 19th century. The existing shop front is modern. The 1959 photograph provides a relatively clear record of a handsome shop front.

Guidance: Although this frontage is not in a landmark position there does survive a clear record of its historic shop frontage. Consideration should be given to restoring the shop front of this (otherwise little altered) building to the form it is recorded to have had in 1959.
92 Abington Street

Surface mounted service and associated cabling to be carefully re-sited to less visually obtrusive location

Existing shop frontage to be removed and replaced with shop frontage replicating that seen in 1959 photograph
The houses and shops which were demolished to make way for the New Theatre (built 1912) (NCL[NS])

Commentary: There was considerable opposition to the proposal to demolish the New Theatre. Unfortunately the campaign to save this, the most handsome building on Abington Street, proved unsuccessful.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on the north side of Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
By 1959 the single storey building had been replaced by a three storey building with a shop front at ground floor level (NRO)

Commentary: As yet no documentary evidence has been found to confirm either the date of this frontage’s construction or the date at which the building was converted to use as a shop. The existing first and second floor windows look as though they might have been fitted in the Edwardian era. The shop front is a relatively recent introduction.

Guidance: Further searches should be undertaken for archival photographs which will provide evidence of the shop frontage’s primary form. Such evidence would be required if informed restoration of the historic form of the shop were to be made possible.
Commentary: The Borough Council’s records provide evidence of the fact that this building was constructed before 1966.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: Watts and Sons Ltd built their new store at no. 80 Abington Street in 1929. With a deep arcade glazed its full length and sizeable display case windows at first and second floor levels there was plenty of opportunity for this furnishing company to display its wares to the passer-by.

A survey report dated 26th February 1940 describes the building as having been constructed ‘of a girdered steel framework interlaced with brickwork’ and its frontage ‘finished off in a composite stonework’.

Whilst changes have been wrought upon this handsome Art Deco frontage much of the primary fabric survives. Although in the 1960s the coloured glass of the display windows’ ‘tracery’ lights was removed and the entrance door was replaced, the arcade and display glazing otherwise survives unaltered.

The chief detraction from the frontage’s heritage appeal is the illuminated display box. The company first put a box of this type onto the frontage in 1972. Prior to that date the company advertised its presence at this ‘fascia’ level through the use of primary bronze lettering like that which survives at high level.

Guidance: Opportunities to restore the primary appearance of this fine deco frontage might be taken through:

i. The re-forming of the first and second floor display case windows.

ii. The removal of the light box and reinstatement of bronze lettering in the horizontal banding between ground and first as well as first and second floor levels.

To compensate for the loss of display consideration should be given to the option of installing some display panels within the rectangular fields either side of the first and second floor windows. As part of the effort to focus attention on the several handsome inter-war buildings on Abington Street, careful consideration should be given to the lighting of this frontage.
80 Abington Street
Existing and potential future form

- On 4 fielded panels affix bronze or enamel designs to advertise Watts and Sons wares
- Install lit display cases to permit wares to be displayed to those on the street
- Make and affix new bronze lettering to match that at high level
- 1970s light box removed and any damage to fascia made good
- Installation of a security roller and shutters behind the fascia in the arcade and within the window cases immediately inside the glazing
- If evidence of a canopy is found - contingency for the cost of making and installing a new canopy
**Commentary:** So thorough has been the ‘improvement’ of this frontage that it is a challenge to work out whether it has recently been re-built or whether behind the surface coverings there survives the stone frontage recorded in the 1907 photograph. The apparent parity in the structural opening sizes of the extant and the historic windows prompts the thought that the historic frontage was not replaced but rather covered over.

**Guidance:** The siting of this frontage, between two of the most interesting frontages on Abington Street, strengthens its cause when considering which frontages to restore. The fact that pictorial evidence survives, showing the historic form of the shop front, the arrangement of the sashes of the first and second floors etc, also strengthens the case for undertaking informed restoration here. Whether or not the facing stone would still be in a condition fit for re-exposure to the elements would need to be a matter for investigation and careful consideration.
Investigation to be undertaken to establish:

i Whether the existing surface covering can be removed with minimal damage caused to the stonework behind.

ii The condition of the primary facing stones

Remove existing windows and their surrounds and replace with sashes and cills to match those seen in 1906 photograph

Remove existing shop front replacing it with shop front akin to that seen in the 1906 photograph
Commentary: Built two years before the similarly ornate New Theatre, the Public Library reflects the pride and prosperity of pre-Great War Northampton. This survives as the street’s most impressive and only listed building.

Guidance: Although it might be best to restrict the special lighting of buildings on Abington Street to inter-War buildings, if there is one building for which an exception should be made to the rule, it is this.

Listing Description
ABINGTON STREET II 231887 LB009 5 9 Jan 75
Central Library
1910 by local architect Herbert Norman. Classical stone front. 2 storeys and basement.
Interior: marble staircase, well plan.

As existing, 2008

Pigeon deterrent netting
TV aerial
Co-op: 60–64, Abington Street

Approximate Date: 1938
Conservation Area: No
Adjacent to a Listed Building: Yes
Storeys & Use(s): 3 All retail
Group Value: Yes

Description:
Long facade clad in white and green tiles with a central arcade running through the building to St Giles Street. The facade is slightly concave in shape with recessed bays at each end.

Ground floor: large modern shop windows under a broad canopy.

Upper floors: Large square metal casement windows with inter-floor fluted panels (except in the end bays). The design is symmetrical about a central feature (slightly protruding) with bay windows, the upper lights of which have diagonally-crossing glazing bars.

Special Features:
Art deco style with horizontal ribs of white and green tiles at roof level. Fluted pilasters between the metal casement windows.

Alterations:
Mainly to the ground floor. Upper floors carefully refurbished to retain original character.

Building at Risk: No

Historical Association:
Enlarged premises opened on 22 October 1938, replacing an earlier Co-op building dating from 1905, and increasing the shop’s capacity from 7 departments to 19. An arcade originally ran through to St Giles Street, of which only the southern half remains - the St Giles Street elevation is dated 1938. A tobacconist originally fronted on to St Giles Street, with a men’s hairdresser adjacent and women’s hairdresser next to the men’s. Other departments included, among others, a chemist, optician, dental department, café, furniture, footwear and funeral furnishing store. The lift was provided by Express Lifts. The first floor contained administrative offices, including the cash office, which was linked to serving points by a system of pneumatic tubes.

Architectural/Technical Significance:
By the Co-operative Society’s architect L G Ekins. A typical 30’s Department Store development.

Commentary: In a street rich in inter-War buildings this is the most striking. The building’s impact is heightened on account of the fact that it bows inward towards its centre and the street is broadest at this point. Long since sold by the Northampton Co-operative Society, this building is now occupied by a collection of stores. The installation of a fascia board giving each the opportunity to advertise its presence on the frontage has significantly impacted on the frontage’s architectural appeal (compare the appearance now and in the 1960s photograph).

Guidance: Careful efforts should be made to encourage leaseholders to re-design their signage to work in sympathy with the building. Of all the 1930s buildings on Abington Street it is this one which most merits special lighting.
Commentary: Although no documentary evidence has been found to confirm its construction date it is considered, on stylistic grounds, that this frontage was built in the first years of the 20th century. Built as a pair of shops, at some juncture it was converted to use as a single shop. Designed in a ‘traditional’ style, the existing shop front works reasonably harmoniously with the architectural elements above.

Guidance: The survival of archival evidence of the shop front’s primary form presents opportunities for restoration. Even if the two-entranced primary arrangement is not required, any new shop front design could adopt some of the framing, glazing and fascia detailing recorded in the archival photographs.
Commentary: Almost certainly of late 19th century construction, the architectural appeal of this once handsome building has sadly been much eroded. The painting of the bay and the decorative dormer gables has thrown what architectural integrity the frontage once had and the appeal of the whole has been further diminished through the loss of the historic shop front for replacement with a frontage altogether less delicate (it is possible that something of the original is concealed behind the existing arrangement).

Guidance: The survival of archival photographs showing the shop frontage’s historic form, presents opportunities for informed restoration. The appeal of the frontage as a whole would be greatly enhanced if the paintwork were (carefully) removed from the stone of the bay and gables and the overpowering blue signage of the occupant of the upper storeys was redesigned.
Commentary: J.W.R. Whitehand (1984) notes that this building was built for Norwich Union Insurance Societies to designs prepared in 1959 by A.W. Walker and Partners of Northampton.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
42 - 46 Abington Street

Local Listing Description
42/46, Abington Street (Woolworths)
Approximate Date: 1928
Conservation Area: No
Adjacent to a Listed Building: No
Storeys & Use(s): 3 All retail (Woolworths)
Group Value: Limited

Description:
Red brick building clad in white tiles.
Ground floor: large modern shop windows with central recessed entrance.
First floor: the facade is subdivided into three equal sections by two large pilasters. These three sections are further subdivided by six smaller fluted pilasters, creating a large central bay and two smaller side bays. Each of the bays contains the original metal framed windows.
Second floor: the layout follows the same pattern as the first floor facade. The roof is hidden by a parapet.

Special Features: 1920-30's Art Deco style

Alterations:
Introduction of large modern windows and doorway on the ground floor.

Building at Risk:
No: but a limited amount of repair work is required on the facade of the first and second floor.

Historical Association:
42-46, Abington Street were reconstructed in 1928 by F.W. Woolworth & Co.

Architectural/Technical Significance:

Commentary: Built in 1928, this is one of a very limited number of shops on Abington Street which is still owned by the retailer by whom it was built. Unfortunately no frontal photograph has been sourced in the archives to gain a better understanding as to how the shop frontage originally appeared. The existing simple and heavily glazed arrangement, capped by a bold and tall fascia, has little or no visual or architectural correspondence with the language of the art deco frontage over it.

Guidance: The qualities of the upper parts of this frontage (and indeed others on Abington Street from the inter war years) should be brought to the attention of pedestrians through the lighting of its (their) upper parts. In order to lessen the impact of their signage on the historic frontage of their store in Ludlow Woolworths has eschewed the use of a red fascia and simply planted Woolworths in large gold lettering on the frontage. Efforts should be made to encourage the same treatment here in Northampton.
Commentary: The construction date of this uncompromisingly austere frontage is not known.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the streets architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: The construction date of this frontage is not known.

Guidance: This ‘modern’ frontage is one of a significant number on Abington Street. The misfortune is that the construction of this undistinguished frontage, and the building behind it, required the demolition of historic buildings of considerably greater architectural and visual appeal. Degrading the street’s heritage appeal, the great number of these bland modern frontages is such that it would be an enormous undertaking to attempt to improve the street’s architectural appeal through making improvements to them. It is recommended that those seeking to raise the heritage appeal of Abington Street draw attention away from the modern buildings through improving, properly lighting and drawing attention to those heritage buildings on the street:

i. which occupy landmark sites,
ii. which merit works of restoration,
iii. for which documentary evidence survives against which to implement an informed restoration.
Commentary: Thought to date from the early 19th century this frontage retains much of its historic form in its upper parts but has a shop frontage of uncompromising modernity. Surviving archival photographs provide clear evidence of the frontage’s historic form.

Guidance: The frontage stands beside no. 34 Abington Street, an historic frontage on a ‘landmark’ corner plot. If no. 34 is to be ‘restored’, the opportunity to build upon the heritage appeal of the corner plot by restoring its neighbour should be seriously taken into consideration. In addition to restoring the historic form of the shop front, the historic form of the first floor glazing should be restored and careful consideration given to the option of removing the paint to reveal the brickwork and stone dressings.
Undertake investigations to establish the condition of the stone and brick of which the frontage is constructed. Allow sum for the removal of the paintwork and re-exposure of the window heads, the quoins, the cornice and the brickwork.

Modern window removed for replacement with a sash replicating that seen in the archival photographs.

Remove all 'modern' items attached to the historic frontage and refit as necessary in less visually sensitive locations.

Removal of existing modern shop frontage for replacement with a shop front replicating that seen in the archival photograph (of the Bijou Cafe).
Commentary: This early to mid 19th century frontage occupies a ‘landmark’ location at the junction of Abington Street and Fish Street. The fact that Abington Street broadens immediately to the west of this junction only serves to heighten the prominence of this building. The survival of a high quality photograph in the archives, providing evidence of the frontage’s historic form, presents an excellent opportunity for informed restoration.

Guidance: Serious consideration should be given to the option of restoring the west and north frontages of this building:

i. Removing the existing very modern shop front for replacement with an arrangement matching or akin to that seen in the photograph.

ii. Restoring the first and second floor windows using traditional materials.

iii. Giving careful consideration to the option of removing the existing paint and render to re-expose the walling’s chequer board Flemish bond brickwork.

iv. Restoring the original cornice.
34 Abington Street
Existing and potential form

- Historic cornice reinstated
- Undertake investigations to establish the condition of the stone and brick of which the frontages is constructed.
- Allow sum for the careful removal of the render and painted decoration and re-exposure of the window heads, the quoins, the cornice and the decorative brickwork.
- uPVC windows removed and replaced with sashes to match those seen in the archival photograph.
- Carefully remove existing shop frontage for replacement with shop front to match that recorded in the archival photograph (less the shutters). Care to be taken to retain any surviving elements of the original.
### Local Listing Description

#### 32, Abington Street

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Date:</th>
<th>1950s (?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Area:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to a Listed Building:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storeys &amp; Use(s):</td>
<td>3 plus basement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground &amp; 1st floors:</td>
<td>Horne Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd floor:</td>
<td>Vacant (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Value:</td>
<td>Provides a focal point on the corner of Abington Street/Fish Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>Red brick building clad in stone, situated on the corner of Abington Street and Fish Street. Ground floor: modern shop front, entrance is situated on the corner. First floor: there are two large rectangular windows on each of the side elevations, a smaller window is located above the entrance. Second floor: layout of the windows follows the same pattern as the first floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Features:</td>
<td>The two windows situated above the entrance are set within an arch and are separated by a circular clock. Either side of this arch are two arched niches which contain metal organ pipes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alterations:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building at Risk:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural/Technical Significance:</td>
<td>The building represents a trend in 1950s commercial development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Commentary:  
J.W.R. Whitehand (1984) notes this building to have been constructed for Fraser, Son and Mackenzie to the (1938) design of F.H. Allen of Northampton. The building it replaced might, on stylistic ground, be dated to the end of the 19th century. Although relatively recently introduced, the extensively glazed shop front sits relatively well with the stark planar architecture above (NB the extent of glazing in Fraser, Son and Mackenzie’s earlier building and new store when first constructed).

#### Guidance:  
It is suggested that heritage enhancement efforts be expended elsewhere.
Commentary: The details charted on the Ordnance Survey mapping provide evidence of the fact that this building was constructed at a date between 1937 and 1949 (the development is understood to have been masterminded by Bernard Sunley). As the 1946 photographs showing the demolition of the plot to the east show this building in situ it might be understood that it was constructed immediately before World War II. The upper elements of this frontage display architecture of a pared back unflamboyant art deco style. If this style was also expressed at shop front level it has long since been obscured or lost to replacement frontages. The asymmetry and competing signage of the extant frontages significantly detracts from the subtle architectural language of the deco elevation above.

Guidance: Further efforts should be made to find an historic photograph showing the primary form of this frontage’s shop fronts. Such evidence would enable informed restoration to be undertaken and the frontage’s subtle appeal to be returned to view. As part of the effort to focus attention on the several handsome 1930s buildings on Abington Street, careful consideration should be given to the lighting of this frontage.
Commentary: Further to the demolitions and road widening activities of 1946, this building is believed to have been completed by the mid 1950s (the development is understood to have been masterminded by Bernard Sunley). In this ‘functional’ frontage can just be made out the dying echoes of Art Deco design.

Guidance: The modern shop fronts do not unduly detract from the appeal of the frontage as a whole. It is suggested that heritage enhancement efforts be expended elsewhere.
New stores for Kingham’s of Northampton constructed to the design of Law, Harris and Croft of Northampton, 1938 (NRO:P.5007)

Commentary: Compare the signage of Caffé Nero with that of First Choice and the difference can be seen between a shop frontage which works with its architectural context and one which does not.

Guidance: To enhance the architectural appeal of this striking stone fronted building efforts might be made to encourage:

i. First Choice to reveal the dark pilasters and fascia and work their signage with the historic arrangement (as has been so successfully achieved next door).

ii. The restoration of the original fenestration arrangement at first and second floor levels.
Commentary: This handsome 1940 stone built frontage survives in remarkably unadulterated form. However, unfortunately, so bold and overpowering is the leaseholder’s fascia board that it is a challenge to appreciate the elevation’s subtle architectural appeal.

Guidance: Efforts should be made to encourage the leaseholder to redesign the fascia display, preferably using cut out lettering applied to the primary stonework (as seen in the archival photograph and for instance at 15, Market Square [Barclays]).
Commentary: It might be imagined that this frontage is coeval with its neighbour to the east (built 1940). The shop frontage looks, on stylistic grounds, to be an introduction of the early 1970s.

Guidance: Efforts should be made to track down a photograph providing evidence of this stone built frontage’s primary form. With such evidence informed restoration could be undertaken, removing these secondary elements (i.e., the shop frontage and first and second floor windows) which currently detract from the frontage’s heritage appeal.
For many centuries the plot at the corner of Abington Street and Wood Hill was occupied by the old Town Hall. At the construction of the new Town Hall (or Guild Hall) in 1864, the old Town Hall was rendered redundant, and the old building was auctioned and demolished. c.1860 (NRO)

Commentary: J.W.R. Whitehand (1984) records that this corner site building was constructed for Montague Burton, Leeds to designs drawn up by the company’s in house architectural team.

Guidance: Although the Skipton Building Society’s treatment does not unduly detract from the building’s architectural appeal, evidence of the primary arrangement would allow the option of limited informed restoration to be considered.
8.0 LESSONS LEARNT FROM HERITAGE LED REGENERATION SCHEMES CARRIED OUT ELSEWHERE

8.1 Newark on Trent Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS)

Over the course of the last 20 – 25 years English Heritage has fostered and supported heritage led regeneration schemes up and down the country. The tried and tested methodology is to offer grants to building owners or leaseholders to undertake specific works of maintenance, repair and or restoration to enhance the heritage appeal of their property. Working in collaboration with the Local Authority and often also the Heritage Lottery Fund, the aspiration is that through fostering such improvement works (generally to the tune of 1/3 or 1/2 the cost) to a significant number of the town centre’s historic building frontages, the visual appeal of the streetscape will be lifted and with it the tenor of the place and people’s perception of it.

Between 1995 and 2005 English Heritage, in association with the Local Authority and Heritage Lottery Fund, met 1/3 of the total cost of the £2.4 million spent on heritage enhancement works to over 100 properties in Newark upon Trent, Nottinghamshire. Newark is a charming historic market town whose streets are lined with buildings whose frontages date from the 19th and 18th centuries and even earlier. In gradual economic decline through the 20th century, by the 1980s the town wore a run down look and regarded as (the unofficial) bare knuckle fighting capital of the UK, was burdened with an unenviable reputation.

Spared the road widening schemes and unsympathetic developments which compromised so many historic towns which thrived in the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s, Newark was (and is) largely unblemished by jarring mid to late 20th century introductions. Tailor made for heritage led regeneration, Newark’s once tired looking historic buildings have been reinvigorated and, having street after street of characterful, unspoilt and unbroken historic frontages, now appears as a remarkable survival. The revitalised streetscape has attracted the attention, not least of Londoners who, with a commute of just over an hour by train, have underwritten the economic uplift which has ensured Newark’s transition from quiet demise to vibrancy.

Whilst at Newark the heritage led regeneration programme appears to have proven successful, there have been many instances where the efforts made have gone largely unrewarded. After decades of working at such schemes English Heritage have come to the realisation that the odds of succeeding with heritage led regeneration are greater when working in smaller towns such as Matlock Bath and Cromford in Derbyshire. To this end English Heritage is currently supporting a dozen or so heritage led regeneration schemes in the smaller market towns of Lincolnshire.
8.2 Belper and Milford Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

The Belper and Milford Townscape Heritage Initiative is an ongoing 5 year heritage led regeneration programme. It is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the East Midlands Development Agency (via the Strategic Partnership) and the County, Borough and Town Councils. Born from the findings of a study undertaken, by the Countryside Agency, into the health of market towns, the THI was instituted to enhance the fortunes of Belper and Milford through works of repair and restoration to the public realm and historic building frontages. The scheme commenced in April 2004 and is due to be completed by March 2009.

The THI officer initially made public a map showing which properties were eligible for grant funding. At the outset only those historic buildings whose heritage appeal had been compromised by unsympathetic alteration (and would benefit from works of informed restoration), were included on this map. However, to this list were soon added those buildings whose historic fabric needed preservation through informed repair, redecoration etc.

The take up for the 75 – 80% grants was initially slow. However, with leafletting, word of mouth and guidance from the THI officer (for instance to those who were seeking consent to replace windows), the trickle of enquiries soon led to a steady flow. (Take up from owners of residential properties was much greater than from businesses). Interest in the initiative grew with the publicity (local newspapers) given to several of the scheme’s more notable buildings.

The key challenge to those running this THI was in securing the match funding. Whilst the HLF officers were all too aware of the need for patience, flexibility and a long term view, the THI officer struggled to secure the 5 years worth of match funding required, not least on account of her challenge to explain (to the match funders) the (inevitably) slow start to the initiative as something other than a lack of progress. The resulting lack of constancy and security in the match funding caused the initiative to come to a standstill on more than one occasion.

Working on 74 projects, the Belper and Milford Townscape Heritage Initiative has to date spent £1.7m of grant monies (with owners contributions totalling £300,000). The Belper and Milford Townscape Heritage Initiative was winner of the 2007 East Midlands Royal Town Planning Initiatives Award for heritage and overall winner of the 2007 East Midlands Awards. It has also recently received a Civic Trust Award.

8.3 Rotherham, South Yorkshire (THI)

The THI in Rotherham proved a success in large part on account of the enthusiasm of the Town’s Civic Society and other interested parties in the locality. As the economic vitality of Northampton has been impacted upon by the success of Milton Keynes, so Rotherham has been impacted upon by the remarkable popularity of the nearby Meadowhall Shopping Centre. With money raised from the Local Development Agency, ostensibly to improve the public realm, Heritage Lottery Fund monies supporting THI repairs to building frontages and English Heritage giving further support for works of maintenance and repair, the scheme has served to greatly lift the tenor of the Conservation Area at the heart of Rotherham.

8.4 Richmond, North Yorkshire (THI)

Richmond, like Northampton, is a town with a market square at its heart. The square and the rundown nature of the streets running off it provided the focus of a recently completed THI scheme. The success of this scheme was founded on the enthusiasm and determination of a collection of individuals who drummed up local support for the initiative and persuaded owners and leaseholders to undertake (grant aided) works to their buildings. With local people, local businesses, English Heritage and the Local Development Agency working together, and a tireless Town Centre Manager enthusing the stakeholders, the initiative proved a considerable success.

Since 2006 The Richmond Heritage Partnership has fostered nineteen schemes of enhancement in the town. £730,000 has been awarded in grants and £1,270,000 in private sector money. The works to lift this market town’s economic stagnation and enhance its heritage appeal saw schemes undertaken to: restore the historic form of altered windows, replace detractor shop frontages, improve the public realm and bring back into use redundant spaces on the floors over the historic buildings’ ground floor shops.

Disused either on account of the fact that owners could realise enough income from the rental of the ground floor, or due to access to the upper storeys having been problematic, the conversion of these upper floor spaces (mostly to office use) has greatly lifted Richmond’s economy. The works to lift this market town’s economic stagnation and enhance its heritage appeal saw schemes undertaken to: restore the historic form of altered windows, replace detractor shop frontages, improve the public realm and bring back into use redundant spaces on the floors over the historic buildings’ ground floor shops.

Disused either on account of the fact that owners could realise enough income from the rental of the ground floor, or due to access to the upper storeys having been problematic, the conversion of these upper floor spaces (mostly to office use) has greatly lifted Richmond’s economy. Financial support for such conversions has been provided by Yorkshire Forward (keen to promote economic regeneration) and the works of repair and restoration have been undertaken with the support of English Heritage. By the admission of the project leader, from Yorkshire Forward, it is rare that such a marriage between economic and heritage regeneration can be so successfully forged.

The success of the project is in large part due to the Local Authority’s taking a lead role in smoothing the process for all those involved. Carrying out all of the business planning for the Heritage Partnership Scheme, the Council also did as much as it could to help applicants with their application forms, their grant claims, finding an architect etc.
9.0 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY’S RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND CONSULTATION

The Need to Address the Key Detractor Frontages and Shop Fronts: In this study it has become abundantly apparent that the task of addressing the detractors from the appeal of the building frontages on Market Square and Abington Street will be less about the removal of inappropriate fixtures and largely about the wholesale replacement of detractor building frontages and shop fronts.

Assessment of Each Frontage’s Suitability for Heritage Led Regeneration: The following factors will need to be considered when assessing the potential suitability of a frontage to be the recipient of the heritage led regeneration support.

a. Is its frontage of historic value and has that value been compromised by alteration?
b. Is there documentary (pictorial or photographic) evidence of the frontage’s historic or primary form?
c. To what extent will heritage enhancement works to this frontage benefit the wider setting?
d. Is the owner/leaseholder open to the idea of undertaking heritage regeneration works?

Commercial viability – The Priority: Whilst there is general interest amongst shop owners and leaseholders in any efforts that can be made to improve the town centre to allure more shoppers, their enthusiasm to undertake works of heritage enhancement will be tempered either if the disruption to trade (whilst the works are undertaken) is great or the long term commercial attractiveness of their shop front is in any way to be compromised.

Prioritising works to the Market Square building frontages: i. The Need to Address the Market Square’s Key Detractor Buildings: So long as the Norwich Union building (No. 21 Market Square) and frontage of Peacock Place remain, the Market Square’s heritage appeal will be compromised. In heritage terms more will be gained through replacing the unsympathetic alterations on the Square’s west, the south and the southern part of the east sides will greatly enhance the appeal of views along these frontages, with building frontages sympathetic to their setting (see picture to the right), than any amount of shop front replacement or removal of unpápealing fixtures and fittings.

Prioritising works to the Market Square Building Frontages: ii. Works of Enhancement to the Historic frontages: Works to undo the few unsympathetic alterations on the Square’s west, the south and the southern part of the east sides will greatly enhance the appeal of views along these frontages (if the works of enhancement were to be phased, it might prove beneficial to tackle one side of the Square at a time).

The Requirement for a Bespoke Approach for Abington Street: So numerous are the ‘detractor’ buildings on Abington Street that efforts should be expended, not on their replacement but on drawing attention to those buildings on the street which are of heritage merit, through:

i. The special lighting of key frontages.
ii. The restoration of (compromised) heritage buildings which are sited in landmark locations.

The Need to Independently Review Public Realm Issues: Many factors contribute to, and perhaps more particularly detract from, the heritage appeal of the Market Square and Abington Street. The manner in which they are paved and lit, the siting and form of the bins, the seating and the phone boxes all have a major impact. For instance the south west corner of the Square, where the historic building frontages are at their finest, the appeal of the setting is significantly compromised by the gathering in that location of numerous telephone kiosks and bins.

Winning the Enthusiasm of Building Owners and Leaseholders: In the process of consultation, in which efforts were made to contact all building owners/leaseholders, in addition to the enthusiasm expressed for heritage led regeneration, a cynicism was occasionally encountered with comments made about this ‘being yet another study which will lead to nothing’. Although the tight programme meant that it would have been a challenge to give more notice of the meeting about the shop frontages study, the smallness of the number that turned up might be read as an indication of the future need to enthuse owners and leaseholders as to the potential benefits of the heritage led regeneration scheme. To this end the experience of English Heritage has been that in the first instance the undertaking of enhancement works to a limited number of buildings provides the opportunity for potential doubters to see:

i. That the study and scheme is delivering,
ii. The potential benefits to themselves and local businesses.

The Need to Broaden the Study: In the consultation process a common question which arose was ‘why a study of only the Market Square and Abington Street?’ The answer to this was ‘because the study is a pilot and it is anticipated that future studies of this type will be executed for the buildings on the town centre’s other streets. Whilst it is recommended that the process of extending this study to the town centre’s other streets is indeed undertaken, to ensure the ‘buy in’ of the owners and leaseholders in the town centre, it is recommended that the process of studying the streets be undertaken at the same time as the first pilot heritage enhancement works are undertaken. It is considered likely that if financial support is to be procured from the Heritage Lottery Fund, that they will wish to see evidence of the fact that the heritage led regeneration studies have considered the town centre in its entirety and offered to improve as best it can a greater number of places than just Abington Street and the Market Square.

The need to ensure that owners and leaseholders are aware of the Borough Council’s guidelines in relation to shop front design: The Borough Council’s shop front design guide provides useful information, not least in relation to the regulations pertaining to the alteration of shop fronts. The appeal of the streetscape will be enhanced through:

i. Ensuring that owners and leaseholders are aware of the Shop Front Design Guide’s existence.
ii. Policing of matters pertaining to the alteration of shop fronts (both physically and in terms of signage).
iii. Updating the shop front design guide and re-launching it (the existing document dates from 1998).

Addressing the visual blight of contemporary fixtures and fittings: The visual (and in most instances heritage) appeal of virtually every building frontage in Abington Street and on the Market Square is diminished by the existence of elements affixed to them. In addition to the inappropriate and poorly sited (for instance the first storey height mounted satellite dish), many fixtures and fittings are probably quite unnecessary (eg. the collection of security alarm boxes and or TV aerials). A Council led campaign should encourage:

i. The removal of such redundant fixtures.
ii. Reduction in the impact of unnecessary fixture through redecoration, redesign or relocating them to alternative sites.

Such action should have a marked impact on the street/square’s visual appeal.

The netting and spikes used extensively on the building frontages and roofs to deter pigeons have a significant visual impact. Whilst owners should be encouraged to use the rod and wire deterrent system, which is considerably less visually disruptive than the spikes, the Council should also look to review its strategy in relation to the control of feral pigeons. It may be possible to negate the need for unsightly building mounted pigeon deterrents through addressing the root cause of the problem.
10.0 SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND HOW THEY MIGHT BE ADDRESSED

10.1 The challenge of the unappealing ‘modern’ eye catchers

10.1.i The Challenge

Northampton has been an active place over the course of the last sixty years. It has lost many fine historic buildings and the developments of those years are all too visible. Whilst a few of the replacement buildings make some sort of contribution to the street’s appeal, the vast majority of the mid to late 20th century introductions prove such a detraction that, however thorough any works of enhancement undertaken to the heritage buildings of the Market Square and Abington Street might be, the appeal of their setting will always be tempered by the unyielding appearance of their visually unappealing ‘modern’ neighbours. (see the picture to the right)

10.1.ii Addressing the Challenge

In addition to enhancing the frontages of the historic buildings, any heritage regeneration work in Northampton will need to identify those buildings which detract most from the heritage appeal of the Town Centre’s historic buildings – and consider the demolition of their façades for replacement with frontages which will:

i. contribute positively to the townscape’s appeal,
ii. work in harmony with the materials, the styles and the proportions of the historic buildings about them. (see the picture to the left)

Whilst dealing with the key detractor frontages in this manner would greatly benefit the Market Square, on Abington Street there are too many modern buildings of indifferent quality to make their replacement a practical option. Efforts, for instance through judicious lighting, might be made to focus attention away from these ‘detractor’ frontages and on to the façades of the nearby historic buildings.

The majority of buildings constructed over the course of the last fifty years have not been designed ‘to last forever’. In knowledge of the fact that each will reach the end of its useful life (probably sooner than the historic buildings which were invariably built to last), it would be wise to set out guidelines for the design of the buildings with which they are to be replaced. Such supplementary design guidance should form a key element of a broader plan or vision as to how Northampton will evolve.

10.2 Instances where historic residences have become shops and the restoration of historic form therefore implies a change of use

10.2.i The Challenge

Until the early 20th century the majority of the houses on Abington Street were residential. Known by some as Northampton’s Harley Street, the street was home to the surgeries of many doctors’ practices. Through the 20th century the street underwent the gradual process of becoming a street of shops. Whilst the Market Square was evidently historically bounded by shops, houses and offices, the gradual process of houses being turned to use as shops is also evident here.

The aspiration to restore the historic appearance of the frontages thus presents a challenge. In most instances, if the ground floor is to be restored to its original form, the restoration process implies conversion (particularly on Abington Street) of the frontage to the form it had when it was in use as a residence.

10.2.ii Addressing the Challenge

a. The objective of heritage led regeneration is emphatically not to return buildings to their primary purpose – it is to undertake such works as might add to their heritage appeal and the commercial viability of the local environment.

b. The answer to this particular challenge is to identify, and look to restore the shop frontages of, those buildings which were shops in the 19th century, were converted to as much at an early date or which were built as shops pre-World War II.

c. Not every building has to be utilised as a shop: In special circumstances conversion to the building’s primary residential or office use may be entirely appropriate. A case in point is no. 18 Market Square. The building’s late 17th century frontage, the finest in the Square, is let down by its shop front which was built in 1960 at the building’s conversion from office to retail use. As there is excellent photographic evidence telling of the frontage’s primary form, a strong case should be made to restore the frontage to its primary appearance and the building, potentially, to a non-retail use.

10.3 The potential conflict between the aspirations of retailers and the desire to improve building frontages in terms of their heritage merits

10.3.i The Challenge

A marked difference to the heritage appeal of the Market Square and Abington Street will only be achieved if significant numbers of shop owners/leaseholders are willing to subscribe to the frontages improvement scheme. There is a general acceptance amongst the retailers that a more attractive setting should entice greater numbers of people to the centre of town and that this should lead to increased custom. However, such potential increases in custom will have to be weighed up against the costs incurred in undertaking the works of improvement, in terms of outlay, as well as in loss of custom whilst the frontage is scaffolded and being worked upon. A further major anxiety to retailers is that almost any heritage led recommendation will reduce the extent of glazing in the shop front (the accepted wisdom in retailing appears to run along the lines; the greater the glazing in the frontage the better, for it maximises the opportunities to expose your wares). From a straightforward commercial standpoint most retailers (and perhaps more importantly freeholders who are looking to let to retailers) will see it as counter intuitive to reduce the size of their window display area.

10.3.ii Addressing the Challenge

a. When isolating which of the historic buildings on Abington Street and the Market Square are suitable for enhancement, one of the critical determining factors will be the extent to which the owners and/or leaseholders ‘buy in’ to the concept of heritage led regeneration. Particular efforts should be made to win round the owners of historic buildings in key landmark locations on the Square and Abington Street.

b. In the discussions with owners and leaseholders some accommodation should be permitted (in terms of the design of the restored frontage) to ensure that, as well as gaining a frontage of enhanced heritage appeal, the new shop front proves an asset to the owner/leaseholder.

The Guildhall extension. Built in the early 1960s, Norwich Union House dominates the Market Square’s south east corner as well as the buildings near by it.
11.0 NORTHAMPTON’S REQUIREMENT: A CONCLUSION

The object of enhancing the façades of the buildings’ fronting onto Abington Street and Market Square is to raise their visual and architectural appeal, thereby helping to make the centre of Northampton a more enticing place to visit. With more people attracted to come to the centre of Northampton this should have a positive reflection on the Place’s economic viability.

It is recognised that the process of improving the frontages will not, on its own, have a marked impact on the trading success of the town’s shop owners. This initiative needs to be undertaken in parallel with a raft of other schemes to make the place more attractive to visitors and shoppers. Such considerations will need to include the making of improvements, in particular, to access to the town centre, parking and street furniture.

Northampton is too large and its historic streetscapes have been too compromised by unsympathetic developments in recent decades to allure potential grant aiding from English Heritage in the Newark vein. (Where Newark effectively went into decline in the mid 20th century, between 1921 and 1961 Northampton’s growth saw the town’s population rise from 92,000 to 118,000. The contrasting fortunes of these two towns during this period is now all too evidently visible in the extent to which the built heritage of each is compromised). Even if heritage led regeneration of the Newark type were rolled out in Northampton it would (not least on grounds that extensive ‘reversal’ would be required) prove a costly challenge to accomplish a fraction of the success achieved at Newark.

Northampton requires a bespoke approach to address its very specific needs. It is the rich surviving medieval urban pattern of its streetscape and the many handsome (if under-sold) historic building frontages, which line those streets, which give Northampton enormous potential. If harnessed in the right way it is, as the Public Realm Implementation Framework puts it: “the quality of Northampton’s townscape that is likely to set it apart from competing towns”.

It is envisaged that the findings of this document will inform the planning of future schemes, providing evidence to support funding applications to West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC), Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd (NEL), East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage.
12.0 THE ALLEYWAYS STUDY
Extended views both into and beyond the alley help to draw people through, towards the activity. Alleyways, which form routes between differing activities or shopping areas, will attract greater use, which will instil a sense of familiarity and personal security. This in turn promotes use of the route.

Retrospective treatment of openings should be in keeping with the architecture of the façade. This maintains the cohesiveness of the elevation and strengthens its relationship to neighbouring buildings.

The existing stone flag finish to the ground appears to be sound, is hardwearing and sympathetic to the architecture. The material brings both physical properties and aesthetic qualities to the space, which are appropriate to the local environs. All repair and replacement should be made using a matching material.

Pipework and services should be ‘designed in’, and look as though they belong to the space. This example of how pipework is set back into the façade, so that it does not detract from the architecture is appropriate. The random distribution of services over the face of the building does not enhance either the architecture or the space and the result is highly unsympathetic.

Shop fronts which extend around the corner and into the alley, maintaining their primary design, help to link the alleyway to the street scene. Modern window security in such situations should ideally be internal and removable during business hours thus preserving the external appearance of the building and making the external space more hospitable.

Broken and leaking pipework causes damage to the building fabric and can result in unsightly and dangerous conditions for pedestrians, making access difficult and uncomfortable.

External services distributed about the elevation are unsympathetic and do nothing to improve the quality of the space. Where possible, such services should be concealed, coordinated or designed, as far as is possible, to complement the space and the architecture.

External bulkhead lighting littered about the elevation, is both unsightly and distracting. It serves little purpose to the space as a whole and is of little architectural merit. Lighting schemes should be coordinated and of a suitable design, directing light to where it is required and along the length of the alleyway.

Blank windows (with no visual connection through them) limit opportunities for internal / external interaction as well as being unsympathetic and unwelcoming. Buildings which look into the alleyway provide a sense of security to pedestrians using this route.

Splayed corners at the entrance of the alleyway help to draw in pedestrians and open up the route, making it a part of the street façade. Opening out into the street or square in this manner, provides an area for people to congregate and a useful meeting point. This promotes activity, which in turn provides greater security to the alleyway and adjacent premises.
Northampton Market Square: Alleyways Study - Outline Proposals

Osborns Jetty

Remove all existing, external bulkhead light fittings and provide new external lighting to the full length of the alleyway to be uniform in design, complementary to the architecture and connected to the main street lighting installation.

Remove the existing flush door and provide a new painted softwood door in keeping with the shop front design. Include for new laminated, security glazing (10mm Optilam or similar) in new frame, to the adjacent window.

At the end of their serviceable life, external exposed service conduits, boxes etc. should be removed and replacements either concealed internally, or arranged in a manner to be more sympathetic to the elevations. Paint out all services conduit and associated fittings etc. to match adjacent wall colour.

Provide new laminated, security glazing (10mm Optilam or similar) in new frame, to the shop front window located within the alleyway, to be in keeping with the existing window treatment.

Replace damaged and leaking rainwater pipework with new cast iron sections to match.

Consider options for replacement of 1 no. blank window to the ground floor level, to provide new clear laminated security glazing and framework to window opening. Proposals to be co-ordinated with the internal spaces of the building.

Consider options for replacement of 2 no. blank windows to the ground floor level to provide new clear laminated security glazing and framework to window opening. Proposals to be co-ordinated with the internal spaces of the building.
The use of blind openings for installation of ‘auto banks’ helps to mitigate the impact of such machines on the architecture. However, siting of ‘auto banks’ within a poorly lit, confined space may not encourage their use.

The installation of service grilles and bulkhead lighting is unsympathetic. Services should generally be painted out to match the adjacent fabric and lighting should be appropriate to the architecture and pedestrian route.

The use of suspended signs outside businesses is helpful in promoting their location on a long and narrow access, where the facade signage would be difficult to see.

The axis of Drum Lane coincides with the tower of the church which promotes appreciation of the architecture and a sense of purpose to this route. The fact that the lane is also a main thoroughfare between the Market Square and adjacent shopping streets makes this the most widely used route of those surveyed.

Drum Lane benefits from two public houses, which bring activity and promotes use of the alleyway. However, recent legislation results in ‘smokers’ standing outside the entrance and care should be taken to avoid obstruction, littering of cigarette ends and a proliferation of cigarette bins.

This hoarding to the fire escape staircase beyond, helps to screen and protect the staircase, although a more sympathetic colour or artistic design may be more appropriate.

The splayed corner and shop fronts with awnings which dress around and into the alleyways, maintaining their primary design, help to link the alley to the adjacent street. Modern window security in such situations should ideally be internal and removable during the hours of business.

The display windows of the Halifax Building Society are inoffensive, but again the opportunity to create links between the inside and outside spaces has been lost due to their obstruction by the displays.

Ventilation grilles within the decorative cornice should be painted out to match the joinery, to limit the impact of their appearance.

The unit, recessed doorway is perhaps a necessity for escape purposes, although perhaps presents a security issue for pedestrians. It is noted that an external shutter is available, although it is not determined whether or not this is used when the building is closed.

The existing stone flag finish appears to be sound, is hard wearing and sympathetic to the architecture. The material brings both physical and aesthetic qualities to the space which are appropriate to the local environment. All repair and replacement should be made use a matching material.

A variety of external lighting types, both of the buildings and the route, results in a patchwork appearance. The alleyway and buildings may be better served by uniformity in the lighting design, perhaps linked to the main street lighting network, rather than the individual buildings.

High level air conditioning units should be painted out to blend in with the background colour, if re-siting in a more discrete location is not possible.

The historic door and surround is unfortunately spoilt by inappropriate lighting and protective caging within the frieze. More appropriate light fittings would be desirable, in this case perhaps independent of the main alleyway lighting scheme.

At the time of inspection, the corner building in this position was enclosed in site hoarding.
Northampton Market Square:
Alleyways Study - Outline Proposals

- Remove existing, unsympathetic bulkhead light fittings and provide a new lighting installation to the full length of Drum Lane, connected to the street lighting system.

- Provide new ventilation grilles, to various locations, to be powder coated finish to match the background wall structure. Alternatively, paint out existing service grilles etc. to match wall colour.

- Allow for painting out 1 no. service cabinet within Drum Lane to match elevational treatments. It is recommended, however, that consultation is held with local disability groups regarding the inconvenience this may cause to partially sighted pedestrians.

- Allow for additional focused lighting of shop signs, shop fronts and entrance doors, as necessary to be in keeping with the architecture of the facade. For example, the external lanterns to 'Shipmans' Public House appear to be generally in keeping with the facade.

- Paint out the hoarding to the fire escape staircase in a colour which is more complementary to the adjacent buildings. Consideration could also be given to articulation of this facade or the introduction of a mural or similar arrangement to lessen the impact of this hoarding.

- If the hoarding is not required to be removable, consideration should be given to a masonry construction, or traditional steel railings which may be more in keeping with the adjacent facades.

- It is assumed that the shop front windows of the jewellers have some form of security glazing. If this is not the case, the introduction of 10mm Optilam glass, or similar is recommended. Note that insurance companies may require further security measures.

- Ensure that the security shutter to the recessed doorway is operational and allow for its use to this exit, only when the building is unoccupied. Include for lighting of this recessed area to improve security within the alleyway when security shutter is not in use.

- Paint out ventilation grilles within decorative joinery to match the colour of the cornice/frieze.

- Remove existing painted timber gate and fence together with associated barbed wire and bird mesh at the entrance of the private alleyway. Form new rendered brickwork wall with access door, to an increased height to prevent unauthorised access and designed to be in keeping with the adjacent building.

- Provide a new, more sympathetic light fitting above the historic door opening.

- Air conditioning units which cannot be raised out of eye level or removed completely should be painted out to blend with the background colour of the building against which they are installed.
Transparent windows provide a visual connection between internal and external areas and help to provide a sense of security to pedestrians using this route.

The use of unsympathetic materials and inappropriate bird mesh and barbed wire, to infill the entrance to the private alleyway is unfortunate and consideration should be given to a more appropriate means of entrance and containment.

Broken and leaking rainwater pipework causes damage to the building fabric in addition to reinforcing the unkempt appearance of the route. Rainwater discharge from such pipes may create unsightly and dangerous conditions for pedestrians, making access difficult and uncomfortable.

The method of infill to this historic door surround does little to complement the historic joinery. The provision of a door and external lighting which is in keeping with the surround would be more appropriate.

Modern “patio” doors to this opening are not in keeping with the primary architecture, although transparent glazing helps to promote interaction between the internal and external environments.

Service boxings within the alleyway are placed against the sides of the main thoroughfare, although their appearance is a distraction and their siting may prove to be an inconvenience to partially sighted pedestrians. Painting out of such equipment to blend in with the walls against which it is sited may be helpful, although this may also prove to be a hindrance to persons with limited sight.

Extended views both into and beyond the alleyway help to draw people through, towards the activity. However, routes which appear unwelcoming or inhospitable will be infrequently used with the result that they may become misused. In this case, the storage of store holders’ equipment results in an unkempt appearance and creates obstacles for pedestrians.

The existing stone flag finish to the ground appears to be sound, is hardwearing and sympathetic to the architecture. The material brings both physical properties and aesthetic qualities to the space, which is appropriate to the local environs. All repair and replacement should be made using a matching material.

Intilling of door openings with sheet steel unsympathetic to the primary architecture and creates a negative impression for people using this route. The ventilation holes within the steel infill to this opening provide roosting spaces for pigeons and the resultant guano and smell is offensive and unfortunate.

The siting of air conditioning units provides roosting spaces for pigeons and is unsympathetic. Services and equipment which are painted out to match the building are likely to have less visual impact.

The plain and somewhat grubby facade of the building on the eastern side of the alley offers little to this route. The building “turns its back” on its neighbours and pedestrians.

Splayed or radiused corners at the entrance of the alleyway, help to create links between this route and the footpath of Mercer’s Row. The siting of rubbish bins on the axis of the entrance is unsympathetic and a potential hindrance to pedestrians. However, street furniture such as benches, which encourage people to congregate at such junctions promote activity which improves the perception of use and security within the alley.

This particular alleyway suffers from lack of activity perhaps as a result of its relationship to its enclosing buildings and lack of purpose. At its southern end this route addresses the Memorial Gardens, the gates of which are locked. Public use of the gardens could enhance both the visual and physical connection between the memorial and the Market Square, via this route.
Remove all stored materials, pallets etc. associated with the adjacent market and ensure that this public access route is not used for such purposes.

Replace steel door/infill with ventilation holes and clear out pigeon roost and associated debris. Provide new powder coated steel infill panel, coloured to match wall finish.

If steel doors and louvered openings are required and are to be maintained, these should be painted out to match the elevation. Allow for 7no. items.

Consider options for decoration of the modern facade within this alleyway, either with a plain background colour to disguise infill door openings and services, or a mural to detract the eye from these unsightly necessities and to bring a sense of activity to the route.

Air conditioning units should ideally be removed from the elevation, although if this is not possible, allow for painting out to match the adjacent wall.

Allow for painting out 3 no. service cabinets within Conduit Lane to match elevational treatments. It is recommended, however, that consultation is held with local disability groups regarding the inconvenience this may cause to partially sighted pedestrians.

Unlock and open up gates to the Memorial Gardens to help create a visual link as well as reinforcing the pedestrian route between this space and the Market Square, via Conduit Lane.
13.0 REVIEW OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING
NORTHAMPTON MARKET SQUARE AND ABINGTON STREET

INITIAL REVIEW OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING
## Controlled Document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gifford No:</th>
<th>14706.R1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status:</td>
<td>Final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy No:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared by:</td>
<td>G Pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked:</td>
<td>D Neills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifford Approved:</td>
<td>D Neills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>14/03/2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Revision Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>By</th>
<th>Summary of Changes</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Aprvd.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15th May 2008</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Costs removed to report 14706.R2, further examples of architectural lighting added, lighting plan added to appendix</td>
<td>DN</td>
<td>DN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NORTHAMPTON MARKET SQUARE AND ABINGTON STREET
INITIAL REVIEW OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE ......................................................... 1
2. SURVEY AND FINDINGS ............................................................ 2
3. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...................................... 3
   3.1 Means of Achieving the Objectives ................................... 3
   3.2 What Needs to be Done – Discussion .................................. 4
   3.3 The Lighting Budget ......................................................... 5
   3.4 The Human Factor .......................................................... 5
   3.5 What Needs to be Done – Key Points .................................. 6
4. APPENDIX ONE – PROPOSED LIGHTING PLAN .............................. 7
5. APPENDIX TWO – PROPOSED ARCHITECTURAL ILLUMINATION TO ABINGTON STREET BUILDING 8
1. Introduction and Scope

Project Objectives – The Need for Change and Improvement

Northampton is an English market town with a strong heritage and tradition. Various reports and consultations have identified an undesirable trend towards the domination of large out-of-town retail parks and the resulting decline of traditional market and town centre shopping. Several reasons for this trend have been put forward and discussed and Northampton Borough Council (NBC) have put together a team to devise and implement a strategy for regenerating the town centre with a view to stemming the decline and improving the prosperity and character of the town centre.

This is supported by the intention for the town to undergo planned growth over the next 15 years by the construction of new housing and accommodation. In theory this gives the town centre a greater pool of shoppers to draw from and the opportunity to develop the town centre into something that its citizens can be proud of. Improving the artificial lighting and streetscape is just one element in a package of considered measures to address social change, market and retail development and citizen involvement.

The scope of this report is to review the building-mounted lighting installations and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate. At present the scope is limited to the buildings in Abington Street which are of architectural merit as well as all of the buildings in the Market Square, Osbournes Jetty, Drum Lane and Conduit Lane. General street lighting and other street furniture which is not mounted on buildings is specifically excluded from the scope of this report. However, out of necessity it will be considered as part of the overall visual environment.

Poundland, Sports World and H&M – Three retail outlets residing beneath a classic Art Deco building facade but dominating the streetscape.
2. Survey and Findings

A visual, non-intrusive survey was carried out in January 2008 and recorded in photographic form using a digital camera. This comprises of over 200 photographs which are available on CD on request.

The building-mounted lighting in the Market Square and along Abington Street generally consists of adjustable floodlights and non-adjustable bulkhead luminaires. Both types are designed for a low pressure sodium lamp which results in an orange-yellow coloured light. Along Abington Street these adjustable floodlights are intended to supplement the free-standing street lighting whilst in the Market Square the bulkhead luminaires are responsible for the majority of the light.

It has been verbally confirmed that these luminaires are maintained and operated by “Atkins Street Lighting” on behalf of Northampton County Council (NCC). It is assumed that each group of luminaires has a wayleave agreement associated with them which would give NCC the legal rights to install and maintain the luminaires and the associated power supply cabling.

In addition to the luminaires operated by NCC, many buildings also have other forms of external lighting which are either used for advertising and branding purposes. These are a mixture of internally and externally illuminated signs in a variety of formats and orientations.

Within the alleyways leading from Market Square, a number of the businesses appear to have installed their own general lighting to compensate for the absence of general street lighting. These are generally small format bulkhead lights. As can be expected of an ad-hoc installation these are of varying styles, light outputs and states of repair/maintenance.

As well as the lighting, there are other mechanical and electrical services which are fixed to the facades of numerous buildings including those of architectural merit. These items include public address equipment, telephone cabling and apparatus and CCTV equipment. The heat rejection (air conditioning) equipment which is present in Condsett Lane and Drum Lane is particularly prominent.
3. Discussion and Recommendations

3.1 Means of Achieving the Objectives

1. To support the regeneration of the town centre by removing lighting apparatus which is aesthetically unsympathetic to the visual environment.

2. To support the regeneration of the town centre by providing lighting which is aesthetically sympathetic to the buildings and streetscape.

3. To support the regeneration of the town centre by ensuring that the shopping areas are provided with the appropriate pattern, quantity and quality of light to facilitate and encourage use of the area.

In summary we want to make the Market Square, its alleys and Abington Street a pleasant place to be by day and by night.

These three points are designed to be simple, concise and defined. Their implementation will require judgement, sound application of engineering and artistic principles, intelligent consideration of how we achieve the objectives and efficient management of the process. A logical starting point to this process is to consider the challenges and limitations which will apply to the project. These can be divided into four groups, namely; financial, technical, legal and political.

Financial - The challenge for this group is to set the budget for the project so that the objectives are still met but the cost of meeting them is realistic and achievable. In order to do so the objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound. In this respect the objectives should be agreed through focused discussion between Northampton Borough Council and a professional team who is responsible for not just the lighting but the entire streetscape.

Technical - The technical aspects will be a mixture of self-imposed constraints as well as technical guidance related to subjects such as light pollution. This may fall into two categories, namely “Statutory Nuisance” and “Light Pollution”. Whilst only “Statutory Nuisance” is an offence, all forms of unnecessary light pollution should be avoided in a well designed scheme. The Institution of Lighting Engineers produce a “Guidance Note for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (GN01)”. Whilst this document has no legal status it is widely cited in other guidance and published by an authoritative source. The guidance within it should form part of the brief given to any installer or lighting designer responsible for external lighting.

Legal - The legal processes and formalities associated with installing architectural floodlighting are not insurmountable but should not be underestimated. These range from obtaining the appropriate wayleaves and easements to gaining planning permission to make additions and alterations to the facade of listed buildings.

Political - Along with the financial constraints, this is likely to be one of the more significant challenges. Enforcing and imposing improvements to the visual environment of the streetscape alone will not achieve the objectives. A large scale architectural lighting project such as this with numerous stakeholders is only likely to be successful if there is a genuine spirit of cooperation between the shop tenants, building owners, lighting designers, English Heritage, planners and the Borough and District Council to name but a few. Clear communication, a shared understanding of the objectives and a considered management strategy are key to this.

Hoover Building, A40, London – An iconic building by day made even more striking at night through the use of coloured light and light, reflective surfaces. Whilst this particular technique may not be appropriate for Northampton Town Centre, it demonstrates the principle of “life after dark.”
3.2 What Needs to be Done - Discussion

The process of improving the visual environment should be carried out in a logical, analytical, considered and value-conscious manner.

The visual survey would appear to show that over the years the artificial lighting provided in the Market Square and Abington Street has been installed on an ‘ad hoc’ basis. This is demonstrated by the sheer variety of luminaire styles, lamp colours and mounting arrangements. The cumulative subconscious effect of this cannot be defined with authority within the limited scope of this study but it is unlikely to be positive. Within the last decade, luminaire and lamp technology has developed and will continue to develop. In parallel with this our understanding of the psychological effects of light has also developed. Technology and understanding will continue to develop and where appropriate these developments should be harnessed and incorporated into the regeneration project.

One observation made during our survey was that after dark, a significant imbalance became apparent between the street lighting and the light spilling from the shops. With light spill from shop windows dominating the visual environment, the architecture and character of the buildings simply fades into the background leaving the streetscape dominated by advertisements and branding. One subjective opinion is that this commercial dominance leaves the streetscape devoid of character and does little to inspire civic pride.

In our professional opinion, the optimum solution to redress this imbalance is to get the shops to “tone down” their display lighting and persuade the owners of heritage buildings to install and operate a well designed architectural lighting installation to illuminate the features of merit on the building facades. The technical challenges lie in ensuring that the architectural lighting is sympathetic to the building, the luminance (brightness) is balanced with the display lighting as well as being balanced in relation to nearby lighting. As discussed earlier in the report, the financial, legal and political challenges will also apply.

In parallel with the illumination of key buildings, it is our professional opinion that all of the building-mounted lighting which is fixed to buildings of architectural heritage value should be removed. In Market Square in particular this will leave the general area significantly underlit. At present, streetlighting is not within the scope of this study. To support the removal of unsympathetic lighting from buildings we recommend that the next phase of this study is extended to encompass all artificial lighting and that this should be considered in conjunction with the buildings landscaping and street furniture.

In order to provide NBC with some degree of control over the development and character of Market Square and Abington Street we recommend that the existing Conservation Area be extended to encompass all of Abington Street up to its junction with the A5123 Lower Mounts/York Road. A short guidance document should also be prepared setting out standards or guidelines for the design of facade alterations, advertising signs, display (shop window) lighting and architectural lighting. We have deliberately avoided use of the word “footlighting” since this has the potential to be misinterpreted as the unsympathetic and ‘broadcast’ application of a number of light fittings to blandly ‘wash’ a facade with light or colour.

The guidance document should give advice on the minimum level of automatic lighting controls, switching on and switching off times, peak luminance (brightness), average luminance and the use of colour and dynamic displays. We would envisage the lighting being fed from the Landlord’s supply in each building with control being via local timetables for simplicity.

Over the years it would appear that there has been a lot of discussion, consultation and consideration about the regeneration project. This is an essential part of making the scheme a success. Through our work, professional interest and experience of other projects we have witnessed the positive impact that something tangible, something visible and something permanent can make on the public as well as the project team. The regeneration of the Town Centre is likely to take some time and has already been discussed for several years. In order to demonstrate commitment to the project and to provide some impetus to the public and the stakeholders we propose that NBC commission the design and installation of a pilot architectural lighting scheme for one of the buildings identified in the Rodney Meville & Partners report. In order to get best value for money and to minimise the risk of the project stalling due to legal or bureaucratic issues the building should ideally be in a prominent position and should have owners and tenants who are amenable to the proposals. At the very least this would be a demonstration of NBC leading by example and could provide NBC and the project with a significant level of media publicity.
3.3 The Lighting Budget

Approximate costings for potential architectural lighting schemes are included in the appendix to this report. These are very basic estimates and are intended to provide an overall picture of how much it is likely to cost to provide architectural illumination to the buildings identified in the Rodney Meville & Partners report. Adjustments should be made to the figures for inflation and VAT as well as administration, management, legal and professional costs.

The figures are based on a particular lighting concept for each building which is outlined in the table. If the actual lighting concept is significantly different or if restrictions limit the way in which the concept is realized then the actual cost may be significantly different. It is not possible within the scope of this report to provide detailed illustrations or assessments of restrictions and limitations.

3.4 The Human Factor

In order to understand why our strategy above is necessary and why it will work it is necessary to understand a little about how the human neuro-visual systems work. Variety provides visual interest. This is the case for both colour, tone and intensity as well as how these properties vary over time. However, although the eye is highly adaptable, most people will tend to focus on the most intense, most vivid objects within their field of view. The overall solutions for Abington Street, Market Square and the Alleys should therefore be about balance. A balance between the shop display lighting, streetlighting and architectural lighting. Variety and variation within the visual field is essential otherwise the streetscape will become bland and washed out like many in capital cities around the world.

White lighting for general illumination with good colour rendering is undoubtedly the preferred choice from both a “human friendly” and “CCTV friendly” point of view. The streetscape appears more natural and people look more like people when illuminated with white lighting. Although one Home Office study has suggested that this has a neutral effect on actual crime figures, the creation of a “people friendly” night time environment can only be an encouragement for shoppers to extend their stay and be lured back to the town to enjoy a night out if the appropriate facilities are in place. This is a type of civic pride; citizens can be proud of their town centre and show this by returning to enjoy the different atmosphere that a town offers once shops have closed. It could be argued that if Northampton is to grow in a “societally balanced” manner and maintain its status as a civilised and mature large town the providing the appropriate environment and streetscape to encourage this is a must.

Flinders Station, Melbourne – An effective example of using the building facade to illuminate the street. The warm tones provide a psychological sense of comfort whilst the brightness of the facade helps to provide a visual boundary and reveal the form of the building.

Abington Street – Many retailers choose to use bright, vivid colours (i.e., colour contrast) to make their retail outlet stand out and draw shoppers attention. This conflicts with the proposal to “tone down” display lighting and restore the balance between architectural beauty and retail needs. Possible solutions exist in the form of internally illuminated shop signage which has a “neutral” appearance when not in use.
3.5 What Needs to be Done – Key Points

1. 1 – Initiate, encourage and support a programme of architectural lighting schemes to redress the current imbalance of lighting between building facades and shop display lighting.

2. 2 – Act on the PRIF (Public Realm Implementation Framework) study carried out by Atkins to improve the general lighting in Market Square, its alleys, and Abington Street with a view to removing the unsympathetic building-mounted lighting and providing a cohesive and appropriate lighting scheme for the area which could potentially be extended to other areas of the town centre.

3. 3 – Implement measures to extend the Conservation Area to encompass all of Abington Street to provide a greater degree of control over the character of the area.

4. 4 – Commission an appropriately competent team to develop a draft guidance document for the future development of facades and associated illumination.

5. 5 – Implement a pilot project to provide either a temporary or permanent architectural lighting installation to the Central Library.

In considering these five points, the proposals for lighting improvement should be reviewed in conjunction with the other elements of the regeneration strategy to ensure that they are complimentary. By planning the lighting and streetscape strategy in conjunction with elements such as tourism, events and marketing, the time and money spent on the scheme is likely to give a better return on investment.

Enquiries: mail.oxford@oxford.uk.com Please quote project number 14706

Victoria, London – The building will remain anonymous but this is an example of how not to do it.
4. Appendix One – Proposed Lighting Plan
5. Appendix Two – Proposed Architectural Illumination to Abington Street Building