

Northgate Street

Summary – historical value:

This zone has its origins in the **medieval** period with the adoption of the present alignment of Northgate Street over the former Roman buildings and the introduction of the market place outside the main entrance to the abbey in the 13th century; its character is based on the commercial focus of the street as the site of the late medieval market and fair.

The plots fronting Northgate Street were larger than those at the Chester Rows with garden space to the rear. To the north of Town Hall Square, the street narrowed again and the plots become more uniform. There appears to have been mixed domestic and commercial activity in this area with several medieval inns recorded near the Northgate. The post medieval and industrial period saw the intensification of building along the street frontage with an increase in the number of industrial and commercial premises and an increase in the numbers of shambles and market halls within the street itself. There are several surviving industrial structures of note in this area including the early 20th century facade of a former coach manufactory (now the city Library) and the remains of the 19th century public market facade at the Forum.

There are also substantial **Roman** remains in this zone including a substantial courtyard structure some 160m in length extending from the Forum Shopping Centre to the Odeon Cinema, the Roman alignment of Northgate Street running to the east of the present street, and several barrack buildings near the Northgate. The layout of this area was somewhat different from the present; however, the large open space that is Town Hall Square may be a relic of the central space of the courtyard structure.

Also of interest in this area is the recorded discovery of several Saxon sunken timber buildings in the area of the bus station. Although occupation at Chester during this period is known, Saxon remains are rare and their discovery is an important contribution to our knowledge of continued occupation at Chester.

Archaeological Potential:

This zone has a high potential for deeply stratified, well preserved archaeological remains from the Roman period onwards. The potential for Roman structural remains, particularly beneath the road surface is good, while to the north, previous archaeological investigation at the Northgate Brewery site have indicated a good preservation of Roman barracks beneath the present building stock fronting the street.



Existing Designations:

Listed Buildings: 15

Conservation Area: Yes

AAI: Yes

Chester Approaches Areas: A5; A13

There is some potential for medieval stonework within the earlier buildings on this street and there are a number of listed buildings of note including a 15th century inn at the Northgate. Road surfaces have a good potential for buried archaeological deposits relating to the medieval market buildings.

The potential for back yard activity including pitting, temporary structures and wells, from the medieval to industrial period is strong in this zone, particularly towards the northern end where modern development has been limited. In this area one might expect 19th century archaeological remains at a depth of around 0.10m close to the Town Hall and 0.45m close to the Northgate.

The present ground level rises from 28.83m OD at the Town Hall to 31.19m OD at the Northgate, with the base of modern surfaces recorded at a depth of between 0.1m and 0.45m below ground level that there is a strong potential for complex multi-phase deposits. Natural deposits have been recorded at depths of between 0.60m, particularly along the Northgate Street and 1.9m towards the rear of the plots.

Potential Depth of Deposits

(based on five locations in the zone)

Base of Modern	0.1m-0.45m bgl	Good potential for industrial structural remains
Top of Archaeology	0.1m-0.45m bgl	High potential for multi-phase deposits
Top of Natural	0.6m-1.90m bgl	Some potential for features cutting into natural

Key Considerations:

- This zone has preserved archaeological remains that may influence national perspectives on the Roman fortress and the medieval city, with the potential for further discoveries of significant archaeological remains.

Built Heritage:

- Protection of designated listed buildings and their setting.

Below Ground:

- This zone is a key area within the Area of Archaeological Importance and planning and development here should be approached with particular sensitivity to the high potential for significant archaeological remains of at least a national level
- Road surfaces may have a higher level of preservation due to their minimal development impact while the potential for structural remains from the Roman and medieval periods remains high.