

The Traverse

A pedestrianised thoroughfare linking the town's main square on Cornhill with Abbeygate Street and forming an important secondary retail location for the town centre. Amongst its principal features are: the dominant Grade 1 listed Market Cross building at its northern entrance; the central former fire station building; and the Corn Exchange at its southern entrance. The eastern side is less grand but has a continuous terrace of charming shops which include the (rebuilt) 17th C Cupola House and the country's reputed smallest pub, the Nutshell. The rear elevations of the buildings on the eastern side are visible from Skinner Street.

The street scene is enhanced by tree planting at the north and south entrances and faux Victorian gas street lamps. Parking bollards, bicycle rails and telecommunication cabinets do little to enhance the area around the southern approach. But overall this is a high quality historic environment with real architectural gems and all the more enjoyable for being pedestrianised.

All of the properties along The Traverse are listed with the exception of No.5.



No. 5 The Traverse

This is a Victorian commercial building which clearly had major interventions and remodelling in the inter-war years so while the second and third floors of the building retain their 19th C appearance, the ground and first floors are in a rather more 'moderne' style. Although it was a separate, free-standing building, this was once part of the Debenhams department store which was located on the Buttermarket - the two parts were linked by customers having to cross Skinner Street in the open.

The surviving earliest parts of the elevation to the Traverse are the two upper storeys. These remain in a late Victorian free renaissance sort of style with five bays of fenestration in the form of sash windows. These are set in stone dressings with cills and carved lintol band with pediments on corbel brackets at second floor level and moulded stone lintol band at second floor, above which is a stone dentiled cornice and a brick parapet with stone dressings - all very 1890s. The ground and first floors contrast with this having been treated to a stucco rendering which resulted in a moulded architrave to the sides and top framing a continuous shop front at ground level and large windows/glazed panels at first floor. Presumably the latter were, when the remodelling was done, first floor show rooms. There are flanking multipane windows with a central tripartite window which is effective the width of three bays of the Victorian fenestration above, The whole of this group of windows is linked by a continuous moulded cill. The windows steel framed and multi paned and appear to be contemporary with the remodelling phase of construction, as does the ground floor shop front which has a recessed door (this does seem modern) providing access to the upper floor flats and the shop itself.

This is a curious building, the later alterations have value in themselves and the Victorian element also has some quality it is a building which tells its own story and this contributes positively to the conservation are, although the more recent changes have no value.

