

High Baxter Street

This is a street which, while one of those laid out in the 12th C and within the Town Centre Conservation Area, has challenges. It is a street which saw large scale clearances in the 1960s when the offices (St Edmunds House) in Lower Baxter Street to the east, were built and much of the east side of Higher Baxter Street was turned into ground level car parks. While there are listed buildings at the north and south ends there is just one lone listed building in the centre of the street (no 11) and this survived the clearances due to it being owned by the Suffolk Hotel which used to occupy buildings in Buttermarket to the west. While the widespread demolition of properties on the east side of the street may now seem an extreme action to have been taken, it is important to understand that the effect of the burgeoning commerciality of the town centre, and especially the Buttermarket in the 19th C meant that this back street became a service street to that to the west. By the start of the 20th C it was occupied by garages, stables, workshops and storage buildings, and while some of these may have had medieval origins they would have had none of the charm that, for instance, residential properties south of Abbeygate Street have.



This still is a service street and suffers as a result, it is rightly in the conservation area as it is part of the historically very significant area laid out in the 12th C and deserves treating with more respect than perhaps it has been for some time.

There are issues with the street and these are not so much to do with its buildings as the spaces between them. The buildings are a very mixed bag and other than the listed buildings at 11, 15 and 16, and on the corners of Abbeygate Street, are generally tall (4 to 5 stories) to the west, with a mixture of styles but generally of the warehouse type (or faux warehouse type), while there is a proliferation of modern houses to the east, with Marks and Spencer's Warehouse at the north east. The spaces between the buildings are generally badly maintained and used for car parking delivery bays and places for dumpsters to be left. The public realm is, for a conservation area, woeful. If there is one thing that would enhance this street it would be to repair and maintain the street finishes, its roads and pavings, and to provide an enclosed store for refuse bins. Development of vacant lots and removal of car parks should be a longer term aim. Accommodating the service uses of the street need not compromise its historic interest and the conservation area in this locality should be enhanced.

3 High Baxter Street

This is a smart modern domestic building in two storeys of (very) white brickwork ranged perpendicular to the street and largely facing north onto an access road which gives views to the buildings in Lower Baxter street to the east. The north elevation breaks forward to the centre and the house has a simple double pitched tiled roof, which steps at the break. There is a gable onto the street to the west. Metal rainwater goods.



Fenestration is with wooden framed casement: on the west elevation there are two large windows at ground level and two smaller above; on the north elevation there are tripartite and bipartite windows in the east most section and a small window at half- landing level and a lead clad semi-dormer at first floor, again with tripartite window. There is a pair of framed and ledged entrance doors. All openings have soldier course lintols

This is a good modern addition to the conservation area to which it makes a modest positive contribution.

5-10 High Baxter Street

This is a rather large development from the late 1990s/early 2000s in three storeys of rather over complicated town houses. It was designed by MS2 Architectural Consultants. The group has an 'L' shaped plan in general terms with a west facing elevation to the main street and another facing south overlooking the access street which gives views to the east. It has different elevational treatments to each of the different addresses in the block and these are not just different in materials but also in forms too and with a rather (over) complicated relationship with the street pattern, with step backs and projecting bays.



The buildings are either red and/or buff brick, as well as stucco render. There are faux stone plat bands and window cills. Added to this some have steel railed balustrades to first (and one second) floor balconies and there are also a variety of pediments above entrance doors. Fenestration is largely in the form of sash windows of a variety of types, some with semi-circular fanlights, there are also some French casements with a similar arrangement.

The roofs are finished in pantiles and are a variety of shapes, principally being hipped double pitched elements but there are also gables as features too. Plastic rainwater goods.

Those which set back from the pavement have steel railed balustrades and at the east most there are large steel gates to allow car access to a ground level garage.

These are clearly a development of some quality in good materials and well-constructed but it's hard not to conclude that an edit of the design might have made a simpler solution which would have fitted better in the conservation area. Because of this its contribution to it is neutral.

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Car Park to Rear of 11 High Baxter Street

To the north of 10 High Baxter is a rather aggressively steel railed gated opening to the car park which was that which serviced St Edmunds House- to the east. This opening allows views to the rear of the office building in four storeys with buff brick and a third floor with stucco render finish. A neutral element in the conservation area although it has detracting roof top plant.

The car park also detracts from the conservation area, it would be improved with more sensitive gates and screening and, perhaps, some landscaping.



Marks and Spencer Warehouse

This is a large building filling much of the northeast part of the street. It is part of a development from the 1990s along with the rear extension of the store on the west side of the street (that is described below). It is a building in three tall storeys of buff brickwork with red brick bands - it is similar in style but in contrasting brickwork to the block on the west side of the street, to which it is linked with an glazed bridge at second floor level. It has an irregular plan form being slightly set back from the pavement edge in part and then canted to the north with a wing perpendicular to the street and another, set back, parallel to it. The latter part has a loading bay at ground/1st floor level and there is a lorry parking area adjacent and a car park to the north of that. The car park has a low brick wall which provides some enclosure (see below). To the south there is another car park and the building is open at ground level to enable vehicles access. This also has a low brick wall and here are also steel gates. The brick wall has, to the north, a steel balustrade section guarding steps to an escape door from the building.



There are regular bands of red brick at ground level and a similar band at second floor level and below the eave which has a profiled cornice/gutter. The corners are articulated as towers of an extra storey height which have slated hipped roofs, the remaining roofs are faux mansards also slated. Fenestration is with casements with red brick lintols, these have flat gauged arches at first floor level and arches at second floor. At ground level there are door and other openings which have steel lintols.

The north car park has within it an electrical substation, which is largely hidden behind the brick boundary wall. From the street the eastern side of it is enclosed by the west elevation of the 19th C Trinity Methodist Church. Notwithstanding this the car park and the relationship of the building to it means that the loading bay and vehicles parked adjacent are always visible and this detracts from the conservation area. Some landscaping at least would soften and ameliorate this.



The south car park exposes the east elevation of the St Edmunds House offices in Lower Baxter Street, and particularly the service plant on its roof. While not as detracting from the conservation area as the northern car park it still is harmful and, again, some landscaping could lead to an enhancement.

The building itself is built in good materials and seems to fulfil its function although the bridge might be kept tidier. Clearly deliveries have to be made to a large retail unit and the design has managed to assimilate a large storage building into the conservation area reasonably well, it is more its setting that is an issue. Overall the building is neutral in its contribution to the conservation area while the flanking car parks detract.

17 High Baxter Street

This is an interesting building, clearly of some age, which should probably have further research to establish its significance.

It is a simple building in three storeys with a ground floor shop unit, with separate access to the upper floors via a recessed entrance, and the two upper floors appear to be in separate commercial use. The upper floors have a stucco finish while the ground floor is largely a modern faux historic shop front with some painted brickwork. The fenestration to the first floor is most unusual for Bury, with continuous tripartite casements divided into four panes each, stretching almost across the full width of the elevation, with a single multi panes casement at the extreme south. This is redolent of weavers windows but seems too small but, presumably was installed for a craft/workshop type use for this level in the building at some time towards the third quarter of the 19th C. The second floor fenestration is rather more conventional with a pair of bipartite casements and another single at the southern extremity.



There is a simple double pitched roof and no obvious chimney stack. Plastic rainwater goods.

This is a building which could date back to the 17th C. The walls are probably wooden framed and the roof steeply sloping too but it is the conundrum of the first floor fenestration which is beguiling. In some ways it is surprising the building is not already statutorily protected, but it certainly makes a strong positive contribution to the conservation area.

18-24 High Baxter Street

This is a Victorian warehouse building presumably from the third quarter of the 19th C in red brick and in three bays each with two bays of fenestration. They were formerly part of the Suffolk Hotel and some of the alterations date from when the hotel closed and subsequently converted into shops. The centre bay has three storeys and the flanking two each has two. Above ground floor the fenestration is all regular with two over two sashes below painted stone lintols, all of this appears original fabric. At ground floor there have been modern alterations in the south and central bays where, to the former a modern joinery screen has been inserted to provide service access to the Buttermarket shop 'Edinburgh Woollen Mill', while the latter has similar, but rather badly done, accesses made for the neighbouring shop 'Waterstone's'. This has a pair of double doors either side of a large brick pier and above this the brickwork is now painted. The north most bay still has its original construction, which matches the arrangement above but the upper sashes have been boarded over to allow the installation of vents.



The roofs are not really visible from ground level but the southern two bays seem to have pitched roofs while that to the north appears to be flat with a parapet - this suggests it may be a later addition.

These are good handsome working buildings which help tell the history of this commercial location and they make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Their setting is somewhat compromised by the lack of refuse bin storage and the consequent need for such bins to be left on the footpath.

Carta House High Baxter Street

This is a pair of terraced houses which echoes the historic warehouse buildings to its south. The scheme dates from circa 2002. It replaced a single storey building that provided off-street parking for the Suffolk Hotel. As at 18- 24 High Baxter it is in three storeys of red brickwork. It has four bays of fenestration above the ground floor, with two over two sashes on the second floor and to the centre bays of the first. Otherwise the flanking windows on the first floor are French casements, with balconettes. On the ground floor is a symmetrical arrangement of three shallow arches with entrance doors to the two houses to the centre and flanking garage doors. There is a faux stone plat band at sill level on the second floor and the window openings have buff brick flat gauged arch lintols. There is a band of buff bricks at first floor level and the ground floor arches are also in buff brick. The entrance doors are panelled, the garage doors slatted metal and there is another WC/ cloak room window to each house on the ground floor too.



The flank (north) elevation is also red brick and here it can be seen the roof finish is clay tiles. The rainwater goods are metal.

While not the most architecturally challenging design, this pair of houses is sensitive to its location and makes a quiet positive contribution to the conservation area.

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Rear of 29 Buttermarket

This is a building that was constructed as 'the Playhouse' theatre and cinema in 1925. Following closure in the late 1950s, it has been used for retail purposes with a large storage facility to the rear. It is understood a residential conversion is planned for it. It has an elevation to the street and another facing south onto the area described above.

This is a large white brick masonry building which was designed for functionality rather than delight. This was clearly the rear parts of a building and there never was any great concern over its appearance. Having said all that the building is in what would approximate to be three tall storeys of white brickwork. The tall ground floor had a service bay which is now infilled, but including flush double doors, with flanking window openings, and another to the north. Above this there is a red brick band and at first and second floors are three window opening to each floor. All the openings in the original masonry have been filled in with bricks in more recent times.

The roof is not visible but it clearly has an uneven hip arrangement the geometry of which is reflected at the eave level which has part verges to the north and south slopes. Plastic rainwater goods.

The side elevation clearly had some buildings attached, principally at ground level, until recent times and again is primarily in white bricks and with the red brick band too. There are some steel framed casements somewhat randomly disposed on the elevation and other openings have been infilled in the manner of those on the east elevation. The fly tower seems to survive rising above the general level set back from the street frontage.



While rather sadly compromised this is a building of some limited interest but its contribution to the conservation area is more historic than architectural and modest at best.

Area to North of Carta House

This is one of several vacant plots in the street which would, presumably, at one time have been filled with a building onto the street frontage. It now acts as a service access to shop units in Buttermarket and one of many dumpster locations in the street. It is bounded by buildings to the north and south in High Baxter Street and by the rear parts of buildings in Buttermarket. While by no means the worst vacant plot in the street it would be better developed as it currently is somewhat detracting in the conservation area.



Rear of 27+27a Buttermarket

This is a three (tall) storey building in red brick over a ground floor which was previously a shop front and rear entrance door when occupied by W H Smith. A building from the interwar years, this is of some quality and appears to be largely in its original form with all original fabric. It is in a stripped down neo-classical idiom but very simply detailed.

The ground floor has a modern access to the upper floors at the south end recessed behind an original doorcase which is missing its original doors but does still have its fancy fanlight. The remainder of the ground floor frontage is boarded up with a single roller shuttered opening for access at this level. The frieze does survive with corbel brackets supporting a dentiled cornice. Above this at first and second floors are four bays of windows. Those at first floor have multipane four light casements with gauged flat arch lintols with key stones above which is another frieze with a small cornice to the top and bottom. The second floor windows are simpler two over two casements with flat gauged arches. There is a deep plain parapet hiding the roof. Between the windows on the first floor are small lozenge shaped plates, presumably these are for decoration only.



The north facing elevation exhibits evidence of where a small domestic building was until being demolished, presumably in the post war period when other buildings were removed in the street.

The alterations at ground level detract from the building but overall, and despite the ubiquitous dumpsters outside, the building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

Rear 25-26 Buttermarket

Another of the spaces between the buildings in the street which is an eyesore. Here there is a lock-up garage on what is, other than the meanest of rear parts of the Buttermarket buildings, otherwise another vacant plot. The scars of the last premises on the plot are permanently inscribed on the north side of the building to the south.

Another open space which detracts from the conservation area.



Rear 23 Buttermarket

This is the rear elevation of the Marks and Spencer store and is contemporary with the warehouse extension across the street to the east both being built at the same time in the 1990s in a kind of late 'Post Modern' style. The two elements are linked by a glazed footbridge (which could be kept clearer of clutter than it often is). This western building is again in three tall storeys of red brickwork with ground level entrances at the north end for staff/servicing/collection and another in the southern part of the elevation at first level, accessed by steps, providing a rear customer entrance to the ground floor shop floor when entered from Buttermarket. The street descends to the north which means the ground floor, with some buff brick banding, diminishes in height to the south. There are other openings with services doors and louvred panels between. These openings have steel lintols. The customer shop entrance to the south has arched brick openings, for the lift and the brick clad staircase. At second floor level is a buff brick band. On the first and second floors are rather randomly located fixed casements with brick arches and there is a faux stone cornice/gutter to a slated faux mansard roof which has, above, what appears to be a plant room. This has slated cladding to its sheer walls and can be seen in long views from the north. At the south end is a lift tower which projects above the remainder of the construction, this has buff brick banding and a hipped slated roof. Metal rainwater goods.



To the north of the building is a narrow space which is protected by a metal balustraded gate. This is another location in the street for dumpsters. At the south end set back behind a loading bay is a single storey extension, in red brick with a tiled roof and ledged and a pair of braced doors. This is attached to a loading platform where the store's rubbish is stored in the open air exposed for all to see. The issue is exacerbated by the lack of enclosure on the street to the south as this allows views of the entire blank façade of the store building which would not be visible if the street were properly built up. Again this is another space in the street which detracts from the conservation area.

While the spaces to each end of the building are eyesores the actual store building itself has, considering its size and commercial nature, been assimilated into the conservation area reasonably well. It would be improved were the south elevation not visible and if the two spaces flanking it were improved. As it is overall the building's contribution to the conservation area is neutral while the flanking spaces detract.

30 High Baxter Street

This is a building, presumably from the 1960s which is in three storeys, the upper two cantilevering over the ground floor on the north side. The building, which is in mixed white and blue brick at ground level appears otherwise to be stucco rendered, but with projecting concrete bands at each floor and roof level. There is an access to a shop in Buttermarket to the south, a takeaway food outlet to the north, and access to residential or office accommodation above on the north elevation.

Above the ground level facing north the elevation has four large and two smaller windows at first floor and five large ones at second floor. The east facing elevation, which is that which faces the street (the north elevation is rather hidden behind trees) is plain in the extreme with three small WC type windows at second floor and one somewhat larger at first floor. There is a flat roof hidden by a parapet

The setting of the building is not improved by the ground level car park to the north, or the dumpsters which are stored adjacent. This could only really be worse if the trees which are planted in the public realm to the north on the corner of Brentgovel Street were not there.

This is not a good building in the conservation area and along with the open space to its north it detracts from it.

