

## Friars Lane

This lane off the busy Westgate Street leads to the River Linnet and is still a reminder of quieter and more bucolic times. While just off the 'Medieval Grid', this historic route to the fields to the south of the town still retains much of the feeling of a much earlier era. This is in part due to the narrowness of the road and the enclosure of the sides with tall walls in flint, brick and stone. Behind these walls the buildings are often hidden or incorporated into the boundary structures and have been for many generations. The lane has a singularity and charm which is incomparable in the town, and indeed rare in any town centre location across the country thanks to the adjacency of open fields and 'natural' landscapes so close to the areas of high activity. Because they are so important in the streetscape and in defining the character of the lane, the walls are fundamentally important to the conservation area and they make a critical contribution to it.

At the north end of the lane is 'Greene Mews', a new development from the late 2010s. This small residential estate took its design inspiration from the lane's walls and the surviving Victorian/early 19<sup>th</sup> C buildings on the site (some of which are incorporated into the completed project). It is perhaps too early to judge the new buildings, but the surviving historic elements are an important reminder of the origins of the sites 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> C uses when it formed part of the Greene King Brewery

Further to the south on this eastern side of the lane is the entrance to a complex of modern buildings which remain part of the Greene King Brewery uses in the town. These are not visible in the public realm, and neither is the Brewery's large car park. While not generally visible from publicly accessible locations they make no contribution to the conservation area.

To the east is an architectural gem from the late 20<sup>th</sup> C in the form of 'The Crystal Palace', a house created by Sir Michael and Lady Patty Hopkins. Whilst not visible from the public realm, this is a house of remarkable quality and design the like of which is rare in the country and it is a pity it is not visible for the public to see. It is none the less of such high architectural and historic interest to ensure that it makes a very major contribution to the conservation area.

Other buildings set back from the lane on this west side are of 2010s construction and not really visible from the public realm. They make no contribution to the conservation area.

The road and pavement (to the west side only) are finished in asphalt. Modern street lighting on steel columns.

Friars Lane is a special environment, still having the feel of a country location so close to the heart of this busy town.

### The Coach House

This is one of the buildings which are within the tall boundary walls which run the length of the lane. In flint and red brick and, presumably originally a service building. However, if the building is from an earlier date than the late 20<sup>th</sup> C it must have been very heavily rebuilt in the recent past as the brickwork is stretcher bond and presumably the walls are cavity construction. It has two bays of fenestration facing the lane with single windows on each of the two floors. Red brick return gabled elevations with that to the south having a symmetrical arrangement of windows with three at first floor, with a central tripartite model, and a single at attic level. The windows are all wooden framed casements. On the elevation is a lean-to ground floor extension. The north elevation is blind. The roof has a clay pantiled finish and there is a brick stack. Plastic rainwater goods.

There are elements of historic boundary walls to the north and south of the building.

Although this building is not old it does address the lane in a positive manner and it makes some limited contribution to the conservation area.



## The Stables

These are a group of historic service buildings which are built into the tall boundary wall with differing heights and hiding modern development behind which is not visible from the public realm.

The historic buildings are in red brick and stone and of different periods. To the north is an element which started life as just the boundary wall with brick, flint and Abbey stone construction with alterations in the form of rather randomly coursed brick in header bond, above which is a coping and then 19<sup>th</sup> C brickwork and an area of higher brick walling which is presumably early 20<sup>th</sup> C. That higher area has a separate clay pantiled roof from the part to the north. There is a modern door opening into the northern element with modern door joinery

To the south is another element, but contiguous, with mainly flint walls with brick dressings and later extensions in red brick too. Again the roof is stepped and clay pantiled.

There is a mixture of plastic and profiled metal rainwater goods.

There is a modern service gate to the south.

Because these buildings are in effect part of the characteristic boundary walls of the lane they help make a strong positive contribution to the conservation area. The modern buildings are not visible from the public realm and do not make any contribution to the conservation area.

## Lane to Crystal Palace

This track leads from the lane to the developments to the hinterland to the west. It is private property and gated so not normally visible from the public realm. There is at the south corner built onto the historic boundary wall a garage type structure with a clay pantiled roof above the flint and brick wall. In the same way the buildings to the north contribute to the conservation area so does this.

