

Lensfield Road provides a link between Regent Street and Trumpington Street on the southern edge of the city centre.

Its development in the past included opportunistic building at the entrance to the city, fashionable housing, university departmental buildings and the Scott Polar Research Institute. The street is now a leafy suburban area but is busy with through traffic as part of the city ring road. The soaring tower and spire of Our Lady and the English

Martyrs' Roman Catholic Church visually dominates the street for much of its length.



Lensfield Road

SIGNIFICANCE - SIGNIFICANT

General Overview

Lensfield Road is recorded on Loggan's map of Cambridge of 1690 as an unnamed road running between fields. It takes its name from Dr John Lens (1756-1825), Sergeant-at-Law, and later King's Sergeant, who originally owned the land on the south side of the street. The road links Trumpington Street to Regent Street as the two main approaches to the south of the city centre and skirted the land recorded as The Marsh by Loggan (now partly forming the site of Downing College).

The east entrance to the road is notable for the informal cluster of C18 cottages and inns, which were presumably built as part of ribbon development along Regent Street to capture the trade of those arriving in the city centre from the south. The variable scale and inconsistent roof lines contribute to the character of this group as an opportunistic, organic development, although the consistency of the use of brindled clay plain tile for the roofs does provide some visual cohesion.



Cluster of C18 cottages and inns



Downing Terrace

Lensfield Road became a fashionable place to live in the early C19 so the west end of the road is lined with a mixture of townhouses and villas built in Gault brick and set back from the road with green lawns in front enclosed by iron railings. William Wilkins built 'Lensfield', a villa for his own occupation in early C19 (now demolished). Downing Terrace, built to either side of a double-fronted house, acts as a centrepiece flanked by single fronted terraced houses. These are grouped into pairs by giant arcading with semi-circular arches that require unusually shaped windows to the first floor. Bay windows and a forward extension of No. 65 appear to be late C19 additions that have altered the essentially late Georgian character. A small group of shops at the western end of the street help to provide a focus of activity in the street and include a C19 public house.



Semi circular arches



Later additions to No. 65



Small group of shops at western end



Row of detached villas

Later C19 development included the row of detached villas running along the north side of the road, east of Tennis Court Road and representing development on the edge of the Downing College site. This represents an expansion of the availability of upper middle class housing for the well-to-do on the edge of the city centre. They have distinctive Dutch gables for dormer windows and were built in red brick, providing a contrast with the earlier townhouses and villas. They stand back from the road in private gardens that were originally defined by low brick walls topped with iron railings, although the latter were removed during the Second World War.

The character of the street changed when 'Lensfield' was demolished and the university's Chemistry Faculty was built in the 1950s. The Chemistry Building is unprepossessing and towers over the street on the south side. The earlier Scott Polar Research Institute on the other hand is a building of historical and architectural interest, built in a Classical style that is sympathetic to the early C19 buildings on the street with tall semi-circular arched windows that reflect the arcading of Downing Terrace. The surrounding lawn contains sculpture and artefacts memorialising various polar expeditions. Adjacent and forming the street corner is the Our Lady and the English Martyrs' Roman Catholic Church, built 1887-90 as a stone Gothic Revival church, which forms a strong contrast with the late Georgian buildings on the street. This church is also a major expression of the return of Roman Catholicism within Cambridge and the land was donated by the Duke of Norfolk, whose family had been supporters of Catholicism since the early C16. The church, its tower and spire provide a focus to views eastward along the street.



Scott Polar Research Institute

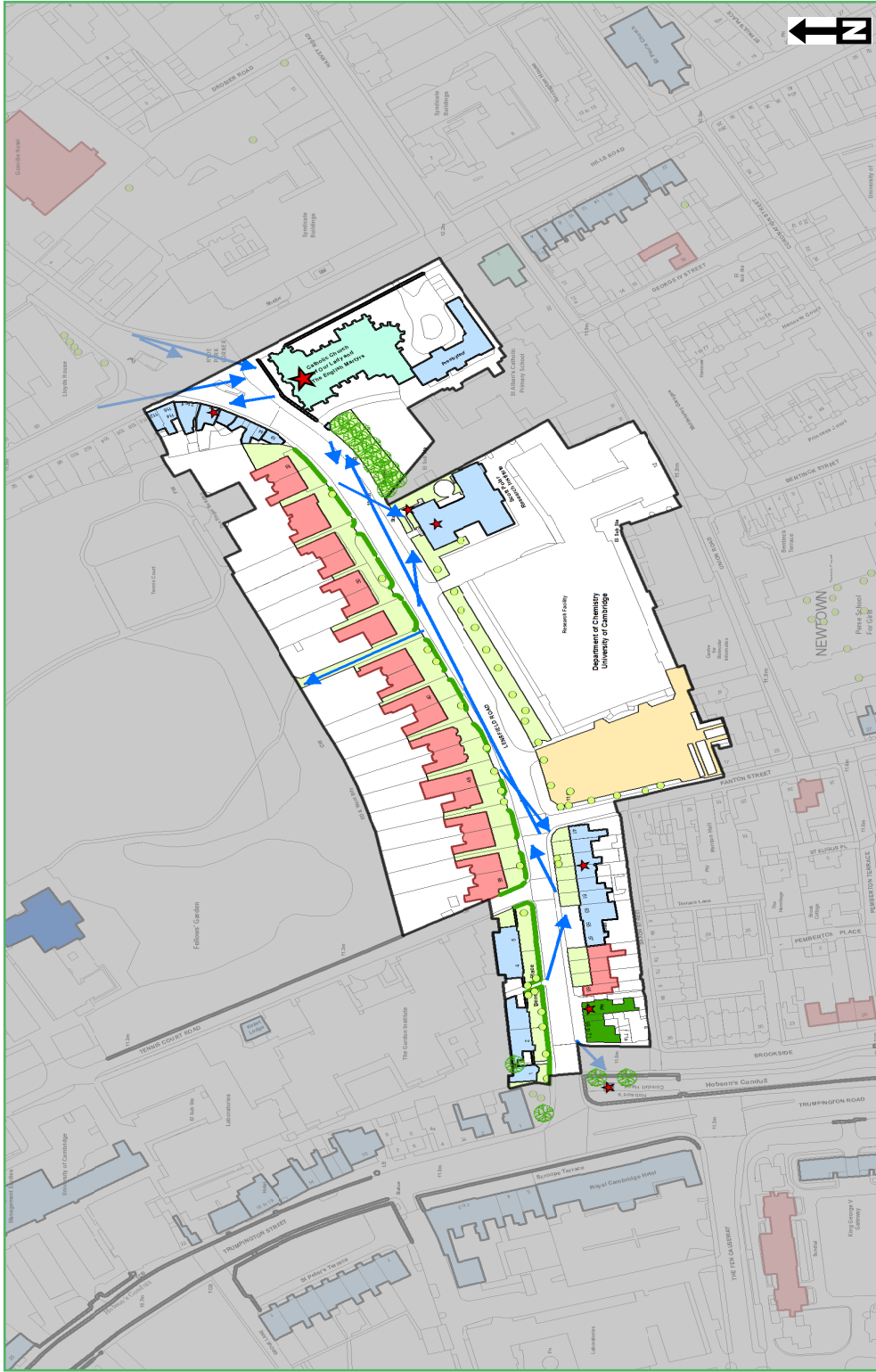
Lensfield Road is a very busy vehicular route, forming part of the ring road, which gets highly congested especially during term time. Although it is also well used by pedestrians and cyclists, these tend to be students and residents, not visitors.

The buildings are mostly in a mixture of college, university and private residential uses, along with the church, hotel and doctors' surgery, as well as shops and restaurants or bars at either end of the street.



Our Lady and the English Martyrs' Roman Catholic Church

- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Positive Building/Structure
- Building of Local Interest
- Key Positive view
- Key Negative view
- Positive building/structure
- Historic shopfront
- Grade II* Historic Park & Garden
- Grade II Historic Park & Garden
- Area of Quality Paving
- Positive Green Space
- TPO Areas (Boundaries)
- Individual TPO
- important trees
- Focal feature
- Poor Quality Features



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Townscape Elements

- Buildings predominantly set well back from road behind walls and front gardens.
- Exceptions are the older cottages, Nos. 2-16, which sit on the back of the pavement at the corner with Regent Street, suggesting the buildings were built for a commercial use that has been maintained.
- Roofscapes are varied and interesting, including the Dutch gabled dormers of Nos. 20-58, and the uneven roof surfaces of the 'organic' development at Nos. 2 - 16.



Varied roofscapes

- The Catholic Church with notable spire provides a significant landmark.
- New fume extracts on the bulky Chemistry Faculty provide some skyline interest.
- The relative harshness of the Chemistry Faculty is softened by mature trees, although this effect is diminished in winter.
- Front garden trees on the north side of the road and the trees in the grounds of the church provide softening and greenery in the views along the street.
- Front gardens and boundaries make an important contribution to the character of the street, providing openness and greenery. The variation in use of materials between narrow upright railings for the early C19 and red brick dwarf walls, which historically supported cast iron railings, is an element of changing design that helps document the development of the street. The reintroduction of an historic pattern of timber gates at the main entrances to houses at Nos. 22 – 58 is seen as a positive process of conserving the street's character.
- Some views along the street are marred by a proliferation of signage, particularly at the east end.

- The gentle curve of the street provides unfolding views contained by trees and the building line.
- Views westward include Hobson's Conduit Head, originally located on Market Hill, an important feature of the early municipal development of the city – this forms the end of a green 'corridor' into the city.
- Scroope Terrace on Trumpington Street provides a terminus to views further westward.



View terminated by Scroope Terrace

Enhancement Opportunities

There is very little in terms of redevelopment potential, with the exception of the car park to the Chemistry Faculty. Some of the low boundary walls in front of the Edwardian terrace are in need of repair and enhancement, and this programme has begun with works undertaken by Downing College. Further enhancement could include reintroduction of a suitable pattern of cast iron railing.

The clutter of signage towards the east end of the street could be rationalised.

The cluster of C18 buildings at the eastern end of the street appear to be in need of some maintenance.

The area around the bus lay-by near the church could also be improved.

North side (from east end)

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
112 Regent Street	Listed Grade II	late C18	2 + attics	colour washed brick	mansard / slate		
114 - 116 Regent Street			2		parapet / slate		
2 & 4	Listed Grade II	late C18	2	colourwashed brick	parapet / flat slate		C19 shopfronts
6 (The Oak PH)	Listed Grade II	C18	2 + attics	colourwashed brick	parapet / old tile		
8	Listed Grade II	late C18	2	colourwashed brick	mansard / old tile		
10-14 (even)	Listed Grade II	C18	2 + attic	colourwashed brick	old tile / 5 segmental top dormers		
16	Listed Grade II	C18	2 + attic	plastered	old tile		
20-58	BLI	c1902	2 + attics	red brick / stone dressings	gabled dormers / slate		No. 58 has a small tower with 1909 plaque fronting Tennis Court Road
4 & 5 Bene't Place	Listed Grade II	c1820	2	Gault brick	hipped / slate		Nos. 1-5 form a group
2 & 3 Bene't Place	Listed Grade II	c1820	3	Gault brick	hipped / slate		Nos. 1-5 form a group
1 Bene't Place	Listed Grade II	early C19	3	grey Gault brick	hipped / slate		Nos. 1-5 form a group

South side (from east end)

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Church of Our Lady & the English Martyrs, Hills Road	Listed Grade II*	1887-90	N/A	stone			built from designs of Messrs Dunn, Hanson & Dunn
wall and gates	Listed Grade II	1890	N/A	red brick wall, stone coping, wrought iron gates			
pair of gate-piers, Hills Road	Listed Grade II	early C19	N/A	cast-iron			
Rectory of the Church of Our Lady & the English Martyrs, Hills Road	Listed Grade II	c1890	2	red brick with stone dressings	slate		
Scott Polar Research Institute	Listed Grade II	1933-34	2 + attic	yellow brick & stone	tiled	Sir Herbert Baker	extension by John Miller & Partners 2000
Department of Chemistry	none	1953-60	5 + attic	red / brown brick, concrete dressings	flat	Easton & Robertson, Cusdin, Preston & Smith	
41-57 (Downing Terrace)	Listed Grade II	1819	2	Gault brick	slate		
59-65	BLI	1819, raised late C19	3	Gault brick	slate		
67 (The Snug)	none		3	clad	slate / pitched		
69 - 71	none		3	Gault brick	slate / pitched		Shopfront to ground floor