



Greyfriars Townscape Heritage Initiative
21 St Martins Street, Leicester, EL1 5DE

By

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Introduction

The Greyfriars Townscape Heritage Initiative is a project set up with the aim to educate people within Leicester of the history and heritage which are found within the city. The focus of this project is the building located at 21 St Martins. This building is included in a schedule of Listed Buildings within the City of Leicester and has been given Grade II* status. Through our study of this building and its history we believe that we can help to educate the public on both this building and also others which have been incorporated within the Greyfriars Conservation Area (Figure 1). Included in this report we have included an in depth history of the building of 21 St Martins, a copy of a questionnaire and the reports of our findings from the public in Leicester and their opinions towards the project as well as their own knowledge of the history of Leicester and the greyfriars. Within this we have also planned a public exhibition to allow members of the public to come and view the work done by the project as well as ask any questions they may have about the project or buildings. To round off this report there is a complete and detailed explanation of our budget and where our funds will be allocated, this includes our travel costs as well as the cost of producing exhibition boards and other costs.



Figure 1: A map of the Greyfriars Conservation Area

The History of 21 St Martins

Contained within this section of the report we have included all the information we have relating to the history of 21 St Martins. Our sources have a range of both textual and online origins.

21 St Martins has been the center of various businesses since the middle of the 19th Century. Over 150 years the property has been host to various architectural firms, a brewery, offices for the Leicester Mercury, an accountancy firm and various educational establishments. Unfortunately due to a lack of textual documents we have few exact dates as to when the property changed hands in terms of its uses. The main reason for this is that our main source is Leicester directories which were published every three or 4 years, as a result of this it us with gaps in our timeline. The earliest reliable records we have of the property are from 1842 which lists 21 St Martins as an Architectural firm run by William Parsons, by 1849 William Parsons has formed a partnership and the company had become Parsons and Dain. The architects firm later became Dain and Smith in 1855 as it appears William Parsons left the partnership this company occupied the property until 1870. This then is recorded as a accountants and surveyors firm in 1875. In the years 1882 to 1888 the property appears under 'Chronical and Mercury offices' and on an 1888 ordnance survey map it bears the legend 'Printing works' which supports the textual documents. In 1888 the property is also labelled as John Bell and Co, Brewers. The next dates we have in the records is in 1909 where the property ahs become a Municipal Training college for domestic students, this remains as such until 1922 when the property was bought by the educational committee and became Alderman Newtons girls school but as the boys school grew, St Martins was repurposed in 1960 to be an annex and cafeteria until 1999 when the school was closed. Since then the property has been used as office accommodation as well as being used by the nearby cathedral as a meeting and conference location in an attempt to improve contact with the community.

Questionnaire

Here is a copy of a questionnaire we used to try and engage the public with the project and learn their points of view on the project. Another purpose behind this was to see how people felt towards the local buildings and also where people had existing knowledge towards the history of Leicester. For this questionnaire we asked a total of 50 people from varying age groups in order to gain information across the demographic.

Greyfriars Townscape Heritage Initiative Questionnaire

- 1) Are you aware of the Greyfriars project and the work it is doing to educate people to the local history?
- 2) Would you be interested to learn more about the local buildings and their history?
- 3) What do you currently know about the history of Leicester?
- 4) If an exhibition was held about the local history would you be inclined to attend?
- 5) Have you ever heard of 21 St martins in any historical context?
- 6) Once you learned the project was being supported by the University of Leicester and students were taking part in the project what were your first thoughts?

Questionnaire Results

With our questionnaire results we received a wide range of feedback but there did appear to be a general trend with each question. From our results we were able to draw several conclusions. When it came to questions about the Greyfriars projects the majority of people were unaware of the project but also appeared interested to learn more about the local history of the area. This proves to be a solid basis for the projects being the people are interested in the history of the area but without a means of accessing the information the majority will not independently learn about the local history. When asked about the history of Leicester there were two topics which stood out: the fact that that Leicester had been a Roman town and that King Richard III was found under the Greyfriars carpark and now resides in Leicester Cathedral. This result is not unexpected as Leicester is known for being a Roman town, and also due to the large amounts of publicity focused around the discovery of Richard III. When questioned about if they would attend an exhibition dedicated to the local history the vast majority showed interest at the prospect with a few inquiring as to whether we were going to be holding one for our project. On the other hand, only 3 people knew of 21 St Martins in any historical context and this was mainly through the educational uses the building had in the mid to late 20th century. When it came to the public opinion on students taking part in the heritage projects the feedback was very supportive and positive. People appeared to like the idea of students trying to help educate the public in areas they may not have researched themselves.

The Exhibition

As part of this project we will host a community event in which we will aim to educate the public on both the history of 21 St Martins and the Greyfriars Heritage project itself. In order to do this we are going to have several exhibition boards made up containing information about the project and what it entails as well as 21 St Martins. In order to do this there are several things which need organising. These things include event space, the exhibition boards as well as refreshments for the public. For the production of the exhibition boards we have been quoted £17.50 per board for a A2 board in colour. This price when discussed with Sophie Noon seemed reasonable but Sophie feels that she can get the boards produced cheaper through the council. This price however is yet to be finalised so for the purpose of this report and budget we will be using the prices we have been quoted. In terms of refreshments we will be offering tea and coffee as well as squash and snacks for the hot drinks as well as biscuits to entertain any young children who may come and visit the exhibition with their parents. For the venue we are looking to hire through Leicester Cathedral their green room, this venue can hold 40 people and includes toilet facilities located at St Martins. We think this venue would be appropriate as it allows interaction between us and the public on a level which you would not be able to achieve with a venue which has the capacity of 200. The price of hiring the venue is expected to be around £70 which will be incorporated into our budget.

Budget

For this project we were given a budget of £250 by Leicester City Council which we needed to use for travel costs, the cost of photocopying, scanning and photographing images at the record office, the cost of producing the exhibition boards aswell as holding the community event which includes event space and refreshments.

Expenses	Cost
Travel Costs	£21.60
Production of Exhibition Boards	£52.50
Community Event	£130

In our budget our total travel expenses came to £21.60, during our first trip to the records office we travelled by bus but we later realised it was cheaper to travel by taxi. The production of our exhibition boards are set to cost us £17.50 per board so if we produce 3 boards that comes to a total of £52.50. Finally we have the costs of hosting the community event, this is where we expect most of our budget to go, the hire of the venue is expected to cost around £70 not including refreshments. When it came to refreshments we were generous when assigning funds, which we have set at £50 but it likely to be much less than that. Overall then our total expenses are £204.10 which leaves us with £44.90 which would be set aside to cover any unexpected costs.

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