



Lancaster Conservation Area Appraisal
Character Area 1. The Quay

March 2013

3.1 Character Area 1. The Quay

Definition of Special Interest

"The Quay area extends along the south bank of the Lune, north of the City Centre and is focused on St George's Quay. The area is important for the views of the river and the fine group of Georgian warehouses that have been successfully converted to new uses. The quality of the architecture and the amenity of the River, with distinctive views of historic and new bridges, create an attractive environment for living and recreation."

Topography and Views

The Quay character area adjoins a curve of the southern bank of the River Lune, close to sea level. The area is in two parts: St George's Quay to the north and the rectangular block of land between Damside Street and Water Street to the south-east.



View of Carlisle Bridge



View of St George's Quay from viaduct

St George's Quay provides a number of important views and these define the character of the area to a great extent. Perhaps most significant are views to Carlisle Bridge. This railway bridge is an historic landmark which also defines the western edge of the conservation area. Views of the Quayside, attractive with its historic building frontages, also define character: from the former railway viaduct (now a cycle path), from Millennium Bridge and from Morecambe Road on the northern side of the River. There are also attractive views eastward from St George's Quay over the City, with the Millennium Bridge in the foreground and the Ashton Memorial in the background. The curve of the river at this point enhances the view.



View east from St George's Quay

Historically, views between the Quayside and Castle Hill were also an important part of the local character. Today, due to heavy vegetation on the intervening open land, only glimpsed views of the Castle and Priory from the Quayside are possible.

3.1.1. Current Activities and Uses

This is an area where uses have changed considerably in recent years, but not at the expense of historic character. The warehouses and commercial buildings lining St George's Quay have been converted to offices and modern apartment blocks. New apartment blocks have replicated their form and overall appearance on infill sites. Also on the Quayside are two public houses and a museum, the latter in the former Custom House, a prominent mid 18th century classical building.



Buildings on St George's Quay Damside Street

The southern part of the area mostly comprises new build apartment blocks on Damside Street, and between this road, Water Street and the river. Georgian buildings front the north side of Cable Street. These are in a mixture of office, student accommodation and residential uses today. This part of the area represents a northern extension to the City Centre area around Cable Street with a more distinct area with its own character along St George's Quay. The latter is in residential and leisure use, based around the river, and is quieter and more tranquil than the City Centre. Damside Street marks the transition between the two areas.

3.1.2. Historical Development

The area was on the edge of the 1st-5th century Roman forts, and could include the site of the Roman river crossing. A small section of the wall of the last fort survives to the west of Bridge Lane. A medieval bridge across the River Lune is first recorded in 1215 (located opposite the first terrace on St George's Quay); the first timber bridge was rebuilt in stone before being replaced by the

fine stone Skerton Bridge further upstream in the 1780s. Sections of the medieval bridge were still standing until the mid 19th century, shown on maps, and fragments can be seen at low water.

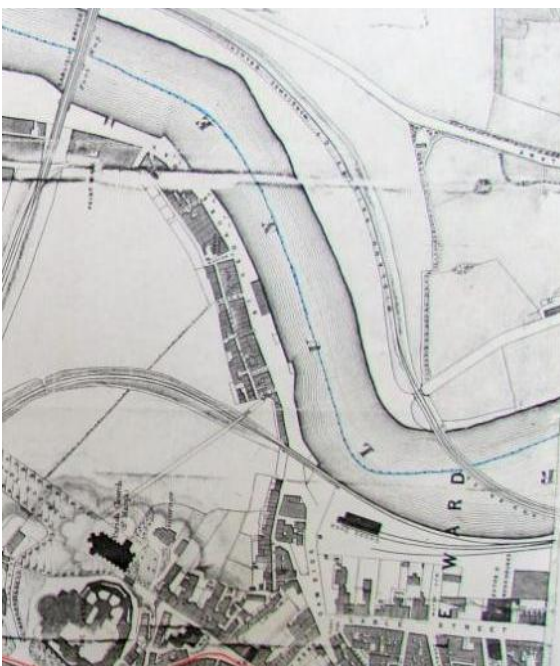


The Quay in 1821, on Binns' Map

This area owes its character to the town's role as a port associated with the Atlantic trade. St George's Quay was developed on glebe land downstream of the medieval bridge, between 1751 and 1781. The fine custom house was built in 1763-4, designed by Richard Gillow. Damside Street was built over the culverted medieval mill race in the mid 18th century; the curving line of the race is reflected in the line of the street. Fleet Square, at the junction of Cable Street and Damside Street marked the downstream end of the mill race, still shown on Binns' map of 1821. Cable Street was laid out parallel to the river in c.1759, lined with fine houses, some with rear warehouses and gardens overlooking the river. Shipyards fronted the river further east, but the port was in decline by the early 19th century, eclipsed by Liverpool. The historic northern edge of the city and the 18th century waterfront is reflected in the rear plot boundaries that survive behind the north side of Cable Street; beyond this was the river.

Some housing was constructed before the introduction of bye-laws; Nos. 1-11 St George's Quay was built 1849-56 by a co-operative of artisans, with an open drying ground behind laid out with groups of privies. Public buildings provided in the 19th century included a public baths with wash houses off Cable Street in 1863. Gas lighting was supplied from a works on St George's Quay from 1826, which was acquired by the Corporation in 1879. In 1848, the North Western Railway opened a new station on Green Ayre, linked to the Castle Station in 1849; the new railway line was built on reclaimed land on the south bank of the river, creating new land for development north of Cable Street, where a goods shed was built.

By the mid-20th century, the warehouses were redundant and derelict. Bridge Lane was cut off by a new road between China Street and Cable Street. It was not until the 1980s that the river frontage began to be re-colonised for new residential development, particularly for university students, with warehouses converted to new uses and new blocks built on gap sites. The Custom House re-opened as the Maritime Museum in 1985, with an addition designed by Lancaster City Council. The Millennium Bridge, designed by Whitby Bird & Partners, was built with its north end close to the site of the medieval bridge, and in 2007-08 new flood defences were built along the quay.



The Quay area in 1877, on Hall & Harrison's map, showing the railway line

3.1.3. Archaeological Potential

This area is important for the historic quays on the river and for the site of the medieval bridge over the Lune. It is also rich in 18th and early 19th century quayside buildings which have archaeological potential as standing buildings. Although there are cellars in most of the waterfront buildings and some of those along Damside Street, recent excavation work in Damside Street, Fleet Square and behind the Wagon and Horses area shows that the river bank was further back and there is potential for Roman archaeology related to the waterfront area.

The site of the medieval bridge and its approaches have archaeological potential. Access to the bridge was via Bridge Lane, past the Three Mariners pub, and Bridge Lane. A short stretch of Bridge Lane survives with a setted surface although the remainder is lost under 20th century development. The Three Mariners is one of the oldest surviving vernacular buildings in the city, extended in the 19th century, and its fabric may repay thorough investigation.

Works to improve the quayside after 1750 may have affected the earlier archaeological resource along the waterfront, and recent development may have damaged below ground deposits; the archaeological potential of the area is variable, depending on the history of each site. The building of the Green Ayre railway line resulted in the bridge over Damside Street used as a cycle and walking route. However, recent development including a large floodwater tank and new housing on formerly open ground south of the former railway has limited the potential for remains in this area.

3.1.4. Buildings and Architectural Quality

Building materials in this area are almost exclusively buff sandstone; the highest status buildings are faced in dressed coursed stone or ashlar, with rubble stone for rear and side elevations. Late 17th and early 18th century buildings are generally entirely of coursed

rubble stone. Roofs are of Cumbrian slate laid in diminishing courses and chimneys are in local stone although some have been rendered. Where buildings have steps to entrances, these are also of stone.

This area includes some of the city's most distinctive architecture. The Georgian warehouses on St George's Quay are among the best in the country, and conversion to modern uses has not diminished their importance and contribution to the river frontage. The Three Mariners, a late 17th century public house on Bridge Lane is an unusual survival from the pre-Georgian era associated with the port function, and has vernacular mullioned windows and horizontal proportions. Domestic buildings are also important in the area, with three-storey Georgian detached and semi-detached townhouses on Cable Street, and pre-byelaw housing on St George's Quay. The key historic public building in the area is the former customs house on St George's Quay.



Late 17th Century Three Mariners Public House

Architectural styles are generally relatively austere; the 18th century or early 19th century Georgian houses have restrained classical detailing and vertical proportions. Warehouses are robustly detailed and functional in style.

All properties are built up to the pavement but the differences in scale, orientation and massing create a varied skyline. The houses have their eaves parallel to the frontage, compared to warehouses which were built at right angles to the quay, with roof gables extended to shelter the loading bays, creating a distinctive skyline.



18th century Warehouses on St George's Quay

Large Georgian houses are up to 5 bays in width, compared with the 1-bay wide terraced workers' housing. The warehouses are up to five storeys high, and two to four bays wide, including central loading slots.



Georgian house on Cable Street



Terraced houses on St George's Quay, 1849-56

The workers' housing is characterised by low 2 or 3-storey terraces with a regular pattern of windows, doors, chimneys. Openings have

plain raised architraves and doors have simple moulded hoodmoulds.

Architectural details relate to particular periods of architecture: surviving late 17th century buildings feature mullioned windows and leaded glass; Georgian domestic buildings are distinguished by moulded stone window and door surrounds, pedimented entrances with steps and timber panelled doors and over lights, a variety of sliding sash windows, tri-partite windows, moulded eaves cornices, kneelers, sill bands and stones to protect walls at coach entries. The late 18th century George and Dragon public house has a recessed timber canted bay window on the ground floor and retains a timber loading door to the basement. Most buildings have a variety of cast-iron rainwater goods which should be retained where possible.



Panelled doors with transom lights



Timber loading door to cellar at the George and Dragon

Some properties were built as houses and remain so, but large Georgian townhouses have been converted to other uses, although external alterations have been minimal. The future of former historic warehouses has been secured by their adaptation to other uses, including residential, commercial uses and a radio station; modern windows, railings and patio doors have been inserted into most loading slots, although Brunton's Warehouse has a restored slot with timber doors and chains across openings. The former Customs House was sensitively converted to museum use in 1985 with an attractive wood and glass extension for an accessible entrance. Two pubs also survive on the water front.



Refurbished warehouses



Extension to Maritime Museum, 1985

3.1.5. Assessment of Condition

Buildings in the area are in generally good condition and have been well maintained. Buildings that appear to be 'at risk' include the listed numbers 1 and 3 Cable Street which are vacant and in poor condition, windows having been replaced with inappropriate windows with horns, and number 5 is boarded up with blocked and leaking gutters. There is significant vegetation growth on the side of the railway bridge to Green Ayre.



Vegetation growth on disused railway bridge

Intrusive alterations include shop-fronts inserted in the late 20th century and mullions removed for replacement windows on Cable Street. Some slate roofs have been replaced with concrete tiles, chimneys rendered and rear extensions to warehouses on St George's Wharf have been covered with a coarse render which, although it appears on late 19th – early 20th century houses elsewhere in the Conservation Area, is not appropriate on warehouses. Exterior stonework has been painted and steps to the Wagon and Horses pub covered with modern tiles. Non-traditional doors and windows, shop-fronts, roofs and wall finishes can erode the appearance and character of historic buildings, to the detriment of the conservation area. Modern installations, such as satellite dishes and building services can also be intrusive if poorly located.



Replacement windows and concrete tiles on terraced housing



Stone steps with modern tiles

3.1.6. Urban Form

The urban form of the area has been dictated by the river, and the Georgian warehouses which lined the south bank. New development largely mirrors this form. The predominant form here is of narrow frontages and deep plot units forming a continuous back-of-pavement frontage. The buildings vary in height between three and five storeys, with storey heights being generally taller than on residential buildings. In contrast, there is an important group of 2-storey cottages at the southern end of St George's Quay. These form a continuous back-of-pavement terrace facing the river.



New apartment blocks



Cottages on St George's Quay

The new apartment buildings in the southern part of the area follow the historic form less closely. These are generally of a larger footprint and somewhat taller. They do not slavishly replicate architectural features but broadly follow the historic warehouse form with a vertical emphasis and gabled roofs. They do not detract from the local character.

3.1.7. Nodes and Gateways

The gateway to this area is the junction of Damside Street with Cable Street. As this leads to a primarily residential area north of the City Centre, it is appropriate that this gateway is somewhat secondary and discrete.. The Carlisle Bridge represents the western gateway of both this character area and the whole Conservation Area. The stone arches that span across St George's Quay very clearly define this entry point and the historic bridge provides a very positive gateway.

3.1.8. Landmarks

The dominant landmarks in this area are bridges rather than buildings. The Carlisle Bridge dates from the 1840s and is both a significant historic structure and a visual landmark.

The Millennium Bridge has a strong positive presence in the area. It features in views and is well used by pedestrians crossing the River. Its installation in 2000-2001 is also part of the recent history of the area. It complements the historic character of the adjacent area.



The Millennium Bridge, by Whitby Bird & Partners, 2000-01

3.1.9. Frontages

The frontages on St George's Quay are a strong defining characteristic of the area. The controlled variety within a consistent framework is aesthetically pleasing. The consistent elements are the building line, relationship to the back of pavements and common use of local stone. Within this there are a variety of colours, heights and architectural features. There is repetition of architectural features, materials and fenestration within building types and groups. There are also many historic features, such as wooden loading beams, retained on historic buildings.

New development on St George's Quay has generally been successful in retaining the historic character of the Quay. New design has been inspired by key architectural details of the historic warehouses and their form replicates the massing of these buildings, which translates well to modern apartment

blocks. They also reflect many historic architectural details. In general they are a sensitive, understated addition that has a neutral impact on character.

Frontages on St George's Quay:





Top: new apartment blocks on St George's Quay;
bottom: Cable Street frontage

The buildings on the north side of Cable Street are mostly listed and present a very strong frontage. These are large, three storey Georgian buildings, which are either detached (with only a few metres between buildings) or form a continuous terrace. They have been well preserved with many original features and are in a mix of residential, student accommodation and office uses.

In the southern part of the area the new apartment blocks have a more modern, standard appearance but do not detract from local character, as they are rarely located adjacent to historic buildings. On the southern bank of the River, east of Millennium Bridge, new buildings present a strong, contemporary frontage to the river and articulate the corner facing the bridge,

3.1.10. Positive Spaces

The whole public realm of St. George's Quays is a positive space. The attractive frontages, the treatment of the public realm, the recently improved waterfront and the

attractive views all combine to make this an interesting and enjoyable space. As such it works well as a holistic environment with a strong sense of place and is one of the City's greatest heritage assets.



Public realm on the Quay

3.1.11. Listed and Unlisted Buildings

Within Character Area 1, the best examples of Georgian warehouses on the Quay are listed, together with the fine classical former Customs House (Grade II*). Buildings which make a positive contribution to the area, but are unlisted include former houses with good quality frontages on Cable Street and an early 19th century former warehouse and the terraced housing at 1 – 11 St George's Quay. This mid- 19th century stone terrace is an unusual surviving example of pre-byelaw housing in Lancaster, built in local vernacular style, and although there have been alterations to doors and windows, the terrace is a positive asset to the street.

3.1.12. Public Realm

The public realm of St Georges' Quay has been recently improved as part of the Environment Agency's flood defence works. In addition to the structural flood prevention work a new towpath has been built, set at a lower level to the street behind a substantial but attractive stone retaining wall. Access points to the street, with steps, are provided at intervals. The towpath is a good, wide and well used pedestrian and cycle route. Benches are also provided. At street level the public realm includes a grass verge, new street trees and new lighting columns. The lighting columns provide lighting for both the towpath and street and their design is well considered. Build-outs to the pavement occur at various points and provide a greater opportunity for planting and feature paving. Retained historic elements are also incorporated into the floorscape at various points. The public realm scheme is an asset of the area that enhances its environment.



Public realm at St George's Quay



Retained historic features in the public realm.

Also worth mentioning is a site for public art, located immediately east of viaduct on Damside Street. At the time of writing this was occupied by a conceptual sculpture on the theme of slavery. This adds interest to the public realm experience. The footpath on the opposite side of the viaduct also includes some excellent new way-finding signage.

The public realm on the streets in the southern part of the area have a more functional appearance. Damside Street has a cycle lane and some good quality stone flags on the footway but the pavement is made narrow by too many bollards. Water Street has concrete paving, standard lighting columns, a small number of bollards and benefits from some street trees. The public realm on Cable Street is characterised by concrete flags and highway signage. It is rather too narrow, and due to heavy traffic is not a pleasant pedestrian environment.

There are no low grade environments or detractors in this character area.

Figure 3.2: Conservation Designations (North)

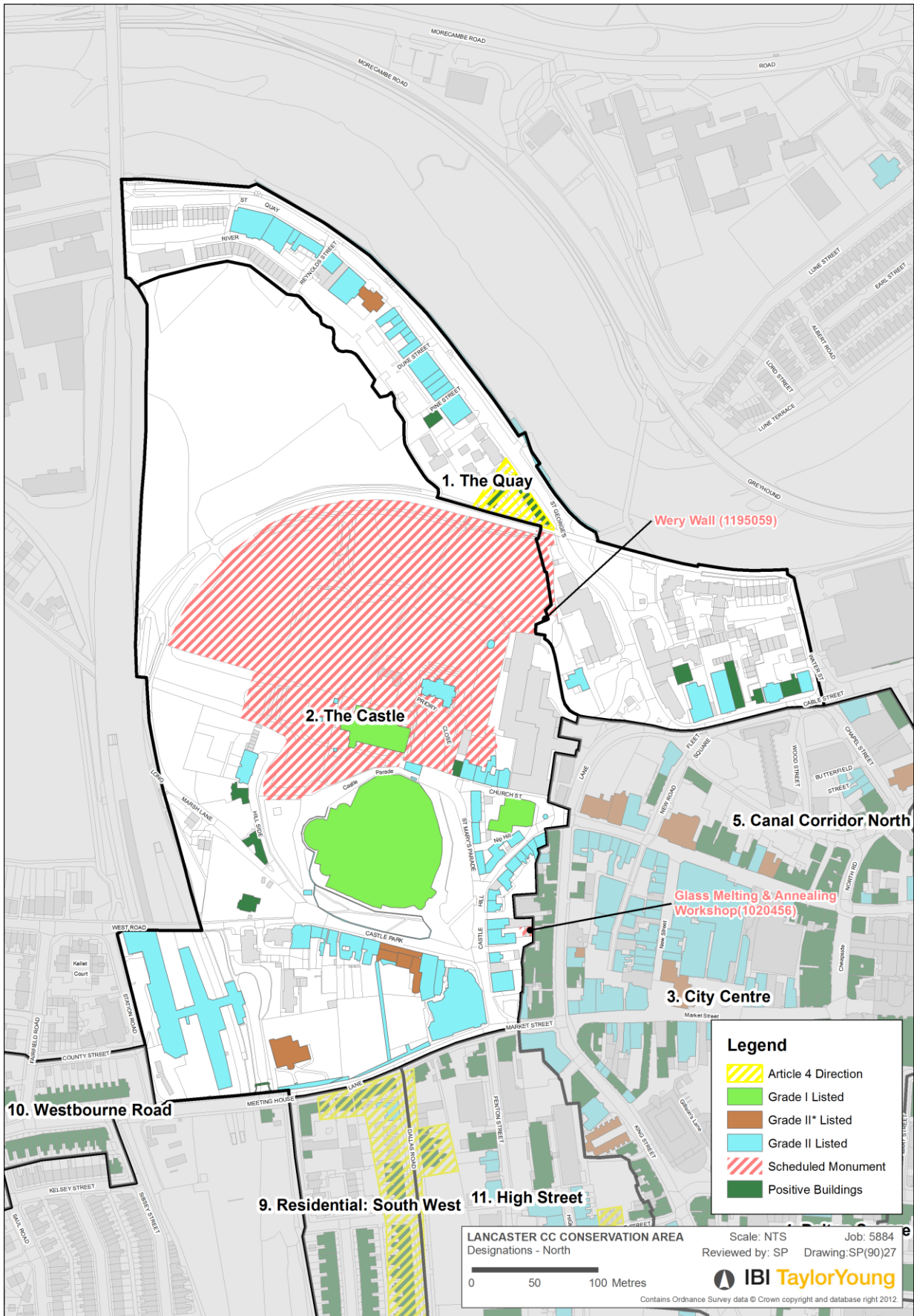


Figure 3.3: Townscape Analysis (North)

