



Lancaster Conservation Area Appraisal

Character Area 4. Dalton Square

March 2013

3.4 Character Area 4. Dalton Square

3.4.1. Definition of Special Interest

"The Dalton Square area is a distinct part of the City Centre, laid out as a planned late Georgian suburb and retaining many fine buildings and attractive spaces. The grid street pattern and Georgian buildings, focused on Dalton Square reflect the heyday of eighteenth century Lancaster, whilst the Edwardian Town Hall, and wide variety of religious and existing commercial buildings express later prosperity and confidence."

3.4.2. Topography and Views

This part of the City Centre was developed on ground that falls to the north, most apparent on Friar Street, with a slight fall westwards from the eastern side of the area, most apparent on Nelson Street. The views that exist are partly derived from the formal planning and grid street pattern, with the Town Hall facing the south side of Dalton Square, a successful aspect of the townscape. Views to the Town Hall (particularly of the tower on the principal elevation) exist from the Brock Street, across Dalton Square and from Nelson Street. In the latter two cases mature tree canopies limit these views.



Town Hall seen from the western side of Dalton Square

3.4.3. Current Activities and Uses

The Town Hall is still in its original civic use, with building with civic functions extending south to Aalborg Place and the Magistrate's Court and north to Palatine Hall on Dalton Square. Buildings on the eastern side of the square generally in office use, with some leisure or community use. To the west of the square, uses are very much part of the retail core, with retail and leisure uses predominating. Side streets leading off the square to the north are generally residential, including conversions of large historic buildings.

3.4.4. Historical Development

The grid of streets centred on Dalton Square was laid out during a speculative development by the Dalton family of Thurnham Hall in the 1780s. The Daltons acquired the land after the Dissolution in the 16th century; it had previously been a Dominican Friary, and remained an undeveloped area known as the 'Fryerage' until the late 18th century. The monastic community of black friars was established in the mid-13th century area, and occupied a substantial area enclosed by a precinct wall. The area of the land extended west to roughly Penny Street and Gage Street, north to Moor Lane, east to Bulk Street and St Peter's Road and south to George Street/Quarry Road. Speed's map of 1610 marks the buildings of the Friary, including some by then in ruins. Parts of the precinct wall stood until 1840, but no trace now remains; it limited the eastward growth of the town.



The Friary (18) on Speed's map of 1610 (Lancaster University)

After securing an Act of Parliament in 1784 to enable him to develop the land, John Dalton engaged Edward Batty to draw up plans for a residential suburb. Batty's plan shows a grid of streets with an oval garden in the centre of Dalton Square. The intention was to build large houses for affluent occupiers, with the design and density controlled by covenants. As Lancaster's Georgian heyday was waning, development was patchy and by 1821 (Binns' map), only some of the plots were built on. The 1821 map shows large detached or semi-detached houses with rear outriggers and gardens on the east and south sides of the square, with denser development along Great John Street and Moor Lane. Stables and coach houses fronted Bulk Street which acted as a service lane, and warehouses and commercial buildings on side streets such as Bridget Street, Mary Street and Gage Street.



Dalton Square in 1821, Binns' map (Lancaster Library)

Some large houses were built before the end of the 18th century; 1 Great John Street was built for Robert Inman c.1783 and 1 Dalton Square dates from c.1798. On the west of Thurnham Street houses were built between 1786 and 1793. The houses on the east side of the square were built in the early 1800s, including No.5 for Jacob Ridley.



Houses on the east side of Dalton Square, c.1800

The availability of building plots enabled non-conformist congregations to acquire land for chapels; the Catholics built a chapel and presbytery in 1799 on the north side of Dalton Square, probably with support from the Daltons, a Catholic family. The Methodists built a chapel in 1805, reputedly on the site of the Friary church; the existing church was a replacement for this, built in 1873-74 by Paley & Austin.

In the 19th century, retail and business uses became increasingly important; some houses on the west side of Dalton Square, on Brock Street and Moor Lane were adapted with inserted shop fronts, and some new commercial premises were built. The co-operative society built large warehouse premises on the north end of Bulk Street, in 1901, designed by Austin & Paley. On the east side of the square the Poor Law Union had their offices.



Shops in former houses, west side of Dalton Square

The civic function of the square dominated after the Corporation built a new Town Hall on the south side, designed in 1906-09 by E.W.Mountford, a gift of Lord Ashton. The Town Hall's formal setting included gardens to the east side, and Dalton Square was re-designed to provide a dignified setting for Queen Victoria's memorial statue, in 1906. East of the Town Hall, a fire station was built in 1909. It was not until the early 20th century that Thurnham Street continued south of George Street to the junction with Penny Street; this opened up the area to more traffic and business activity.



The Town Hall, built 1906-09

By the late 20th century, offices had become the key function on the east side and north sides of Dalton Square, adapting historic buildings such as the former Catholic chapel (Palatine Hall) or built as infill. Residential conversion of redundant buildings is also a theme of the late 20th century, including the warehouses on Bridget Street and former Methodist church and co-op warehouse on Sulyard Street. New flats on Quarry Road and Nelson Street have been built on cleared sites.

3.4.5. Archaeological Potential

Dalton Square is thought to have been just outside the east edge of the Roman town, with Moor Lane representing the line of a Roman road. There may be some evidence for edge-of-settlement Roman activity outside cellared areas, possibly including a cemetery area.



Warehouses adapted for housing, Bridget Street

The area's greatest potential, however, relates to the Dominican Friary that occupied the core of the area from the mid-13th to the mid-16th century. Whilst the Friary church is thought to have been destroyed by later building, buried remains of other friary buildings are known to survive behind 3 Dalton Square and more survivals are likely in other rear areas. The Moor Lane frontage is also likely to have been occupied from the medieval period. Little is known about how the area was used after the Dissolution when owned by the Daltons, but survival of pre-19th century remains will depend upon the level of later disturbance.

In some cases there is potential for standing structures to retain fabric from earlier buildings, and to reveal information about their original purpose and design and later alterations. Proposals for alteration or redevelopment will need to be accompanied by a thorough assessment, and recording, where appropriate.

3.4.6. Buildings and Architectural Quality

Sandstone is the dominant building material, generally laid in regular courses. The quality of stone finish is used to express status; tooled ashlar is used for high status buildings and details, with coursed dressed or random masonry for side and rear elevations. Architectural details such as sill bands, moulded cornices and enriched door cases are a feature of the Georgian houses, with more elaborate carved stone details used on

19th century Revival buildings such as the former co-op warehouse and Methodist church. Carved name and date stones are also important features, as on the former co-op warehouse. The high status of the Edwardian Town Hall is expressed through the use of pedimented elevations and rich carved details by the sculptor Pomeroy. In contrast, lower status domestic buildings such as coach houses on Bulk Street and warehouses on Bridget Street are vernacular in character with plain details and roughly coursed stone.



Former coach houses and stables on Bulk Street

Roofs are generally laid with Cumbrian slate in diminishing courses, but some have been replaced with concrete tiles. There is a very wide range of window and door patterns, depending on the date and function of the building. Former houses generally have 12-pane sash windows, although some have been replaced with modern patterns. Panelled doors with fanlights are a feature of Georgian domestic architecture, usually with a pediment or moulded cornice; the Dalton Square houses display a rich variety of classical details. Steps protected with iron railings are a distinctive part of some frontages, provided on sloping streets.

To the rear of large Georgian houses, distinctive stair windows and outriggers are a local feature, often visible from side streets.



Georgian doorways on Dalton Square



Stair window and rear wing or outrigger, Dalton Square

The primary phase buildings, mostly houses, were constructed from the late 18th century onwards, with a range of 19th and 20th century buildings of varying uses built on gap sites or to replace demolished Georgian houses. The scale of the domestic architecture is generally 3-storey and these frontages define the streets, built up to the back of the footway or behind a narrow railed area. There are a few smaller 2 or 3-storey terraced houses on Sulyard Street, Bryer Street, Friar Street and Gage Street.



Higher density early 19th century houses on Sulyard Street

There are some distinctive churches, chapels and church school buildings in the area, some now adapted for non-worship uses with varying degrees of success. The former Catholic chapel (1798), now Palatine Hall, is in a late Georgian style, with a domestic appearance to the front and arched side windows. The Gothic Revival Methodist church (1874 by Paley & Austin) is now flats and is fronted by a large 1980s porch. The attractive gabled school rooms are now used as the Methodist church. The Baptist chapel (1896) on Nelson Street is a steeply gabled Gothic Revival building, with Sunday school behind and low stone walls. On Brock Street the gable-fronted chapel is now a restaurant, with new signage and windows.



1874 former Methodist Church, by Austin & Paley, on Sulyard Street, now flats



1895 Baptist Church designed by N.G. Simpson



Brock Street chapel, now a restaurant

Commercial buildings are dominant on the west side of the area, on Mary Street, Gage Street, Brock Street and Lucy Street; former warehouses and workshops have often been extensively adapted making original functions to read and affecting their significance. This is the case on Mary Street and Lucy Street, but on Gage Street former warehouses are still legible, one retaining a gabled canopy. The Royal Hotel, on the corner of Dalton Square and George Street is a good example of a late 19th century hotel, with stables in the rear yard.



Former Warehouses on Gage Street, adapted for retail and residential use in the 19th and 20th centuries



Timber and curved glass shopfront on Dalton Square

There are some good examples of timber shop fronts dating from the late 19th century or early 20th century, mostly inserted into adapted former houses, on Brock Street and the west side of Dalton Square. On Moor Lane, Pizza Margherita occupies a late 18th century former house converted to a showroom in the late 19th century with inserted large display windows.



Pizza Margarita, 2 Moor Lane - large windows inserted in the late 19th century for retail use



Brock Street houses, with inserted shop fronts

Recent architecture is prominent on the east side of Dalton Square with large late 20th century rear additions or new offices on infill sites. These buildings have employed some classical influence in their proportions to fit in with adjacent Georgian houses but their overall footprints are much larger. Small scale infill on side streets generally fits in fairly well, using appropriate materials and proportions; for example on Bryer Street. Some of the 20th century infill on the west side of the area on Mary Street and the north side of Gage Street is of lower design quality and the larger footprints and overall scale detract from the character of the area.



Small-scale infill on Bryer Street



Late 20th century offices east of Dalton Square

Historic stone paving, setts and kerbs have been retained on some streets and back lanes, contributing to the character of the area. Where historic ironwork survives on railings or to steps, it is also an important part of the area's architectural character.

3.4.7. Assessment of Condition

The condition of buildings is generally very good with business or civic uses maintaining properties and their settings. There are no buildings at risk in this area. There is a good survival of sash windows and panelled doors on listed Georgian buildings, although windows, shop fronts and doors on unlisted buildings have often been replaced. New uses have ensured a future and a good standard of maintenance for buildings where historic uses ceased such as churches, although this has also introduced modern window patterns. Some slate roofs have been renewed in concrete tiles. On Lucy Street, non-domestic buildings are in poorer condition and have been subjected to a high

level of alteration, reducing their significance in the area.



Altered non-domestic buildings on Lucy Street

3.4.8. Urban Form and Frontages

The planned Georgian street form still predominates in the area and dictates the urban form. This comprises a series of rectilinear blocks. These are occupied with continuous frontages on all sides, with a few exceptions where buildings have been cleared. Buildings front one frontage within each block, often presenting side or rear elevations to the other streets. This creates a clear street hierarchy: Dalton Square, Brock Street/Nelson Street and Gage Street/Sulyard Street are the primary frontages and are all fronted by primary elevations. Other streets such as Bulk Street and Mary Street have some side or rear elevations fronting them. However, these secondary frontages are not all unattractive and the breaks in built form (such as the car parks on Bulk Street) generally have strong boundary treatments.



Bridget Street: a secondary street

Buildings sit squarely within the blocks, with very little attempt to turn or define corners. These are mostly of three storeys, stone-built and with simple pitched roofs. They have classic Georgian proportions and detailing. The Town Hall is a landmark building within the townscape and occupies its own block. Dalton Square also occupies a block.

Modern re-development on the west side of Great John Street disrupts this townscape form, presenting inactive or rear frontages to the street.

3.4.9. Nodes and Gateways

This is sub-area within the City Centre and does not have major gateways within it. The new apartment block on Quarry Road marks arrival at the City Centre from the east, and from here westwards, views open up to significant historic buildings.



New apartment block on Quarry Road

When approaching the centre from the east, the junction of Church Street/Moor Lane and Stonewell represents arrival at the City Centre, on the north edge of this area. It is also the gateway between three distinct Character Areas. This gateway is well defined with an attractive public space, traditional carriageway surfaces, strong built frontages (the multi-storey car park frontage to the west has been well considered) and a historic fountain.

3.4.10. Landmarks

The Town Hall is a city-wide landmark that dominates this area. Other historic buildings in the area have generally been designed to blend into unified streets rather than act as landmarks, although the late 19th century churches were designed to be prominent. The new apartment block mentioned above, with its circular corner projections serves as a local landmark to legibility.

3.4.11. Positive Spaces

Dalton Square is a key space within the City Centre, as well as in this character area. This is a townscape 'set-piece' in which the urban form and surrounding frontages (especially the Town Hall) contribute to the value of the space, as well as the treatment of the space itself. The square includes stone boundary balustrades, simple flag paving, mature trees, grass, and a statue of Queen Victoria as a central feature. There is scope for improvement, with higher quality paving but the square is a positive space and an asset within the City. However, the Queen Victoria monument is in a deteriorating condition.



Dalton Square

Aalborg Square and Place make a positive contribution to the character area. This low-key space off Thurnham Street has an effective landscaping scheme with regularly-planted semi-mature trees, simple seating and raised grassed areas. This is a welcome relief in the tight urban grid.

The War Memorial garden to the east of City Hall is another positive space. This provides an attractive space for quiet contemplation, a clear function that is very different to Dalton Square, and this is an asset within the area.



War Memorial Garden

3.4.12. Listed and Unlisted Buildings

In Character Area 4, the most intact and highest quality Georgian former houses are listed, particularly on Dalton Square. Former Georgian warehouses are also listed but there are many other unlisted buildings in the area that make a positive contribution to its historic and architectural character. Most of these have evolved from their original use; on the south side of Gage Street, the pattern of blocked openings indicate that some of the buildings were built as warehouses, a characteristic Lancaster building type, later adapted for other uses. On the west side of Dalton Square there are some good examples of late 19th century shop fronts in former Georgian houses, and on Sulyard Street, the former co-operative premises contribute strongly to the street scene. On Bulk Street, 2-storey former coach houses and stables relate historically to the former houses on Dalton Square. Community buildings such as churches and chapels are an important group of unlisted buildings in this area, including the Baptist Church on Nelson Street, and the Methodist buildings on Sulyard Street which were designed by Austin & Paley.

3.4.13. Public Realm

The public realm on the streets around Dalton Square is of a high standard and this enhances the character of the area. It consists of setts on the carriageway with wide stone-flagged pavements and street trees. Car parking has been sensitively designed into the public realm. Historic setts and stone-paved footways are also prevalent in the northern part of the area and these contribute strongly to local character, although maintenance is an issue in some cases. On other streets a more standard highway-dominated public realm predominates.

Other incidental landscaping - for example the strip on the west side of Thurnham Street, opposite the Town Hall, is of a surprisingly high standard with an interesting historic interpretation board.



Good quality incidental landscaping: Thurnham Street

Maintenance and boundary treatments, where they exist, are generally strong - for example the stone wall and planting defining the east side of Bulk Street. Boundaries between properties have largely been lost due to phases of redevelopment, but east of Dalton Square some former garden walls have been retained and these are also important on Bulk Street, Sulyard Street and Nelson Street. High quality stone walls with balustraded panels have been used to define Dalton Square and the east side of the Town Hall, all part of the Edwardian formal design. The formal garden east of the Town Hall has decorative railings (now in a poor state of

repair) to its west side, allowing views into the space.



Balustraded ashlar walls to Dalton Square, 1906

3.4.14. Low Grade Environments and Detractors

There are no low grade environments or detractors within this area.

Figure 3.4: Conservation Designations (Centre)

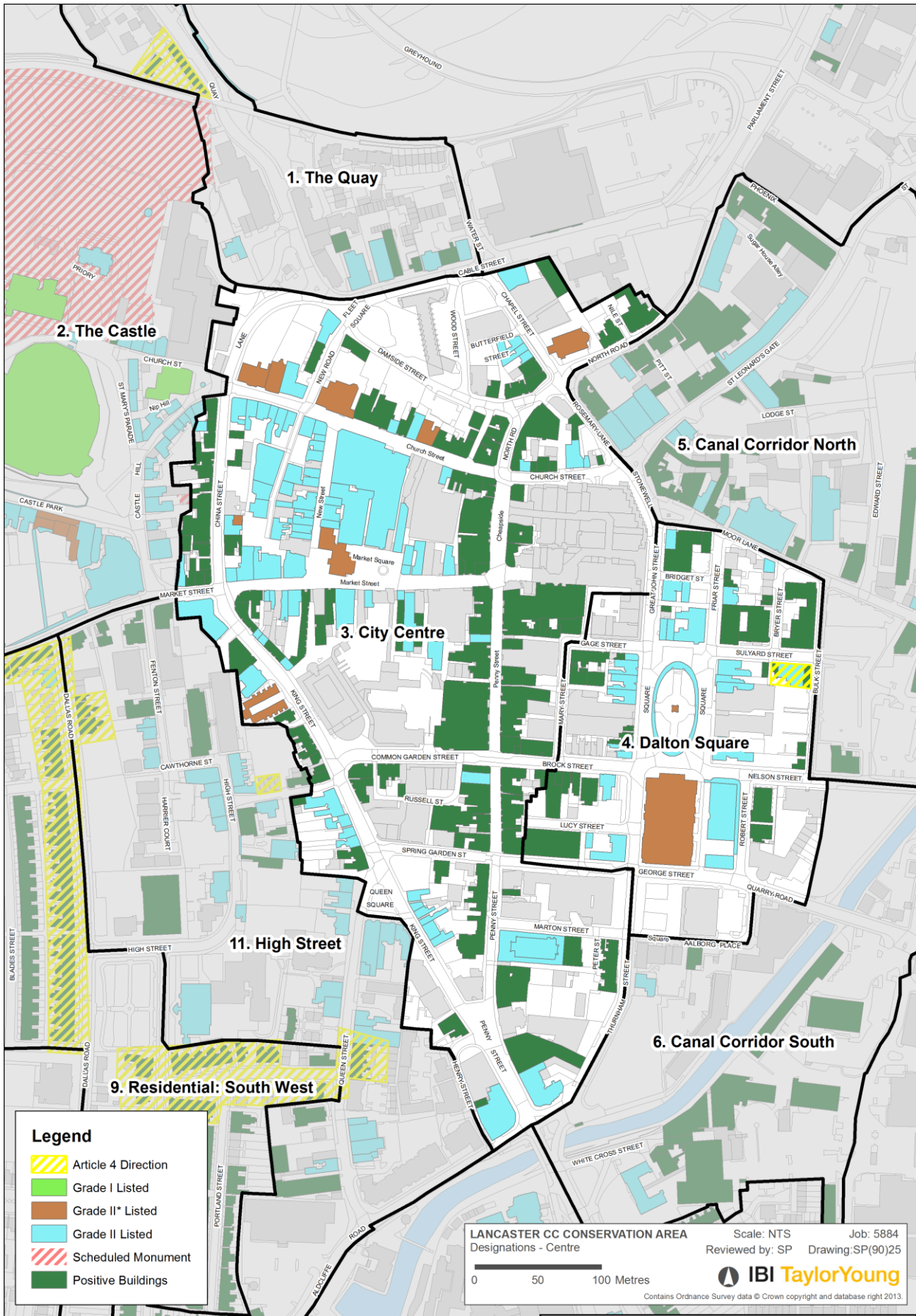


Figure 3.5: Townscape Analysis (Centre)

