



Lancaster Conservation Area Appraisal

## Character Area 10. Westbourne Road

March 2013



### 3.10 Character Area 10. Westbourne Road

#### 3.10.1. Definition of Special Interest

*"This Victorian and early 20th century residential neighbourhood is just outside the west edge of the City Centre, either side of Westbourne Road. Attractive street environments are characterised by good quality stone houses with mature trees and stone boundary walls, creating a pleasant residential area"*

#### 3.10.2. Topography and Views

The area has a gentle topography which contributes to its character. Land falls gently when travelling westwards along Westbourne Road and then rises again after passing the junction with the eastern arm of Ashfield Avenue. The street form curves gently in response to the contours. This enables long street views that reveal attractive glimpses of frontages, and adds interest to the area. The extent of mature trees in gardens or in the street often blocks and filters views but adds interest.



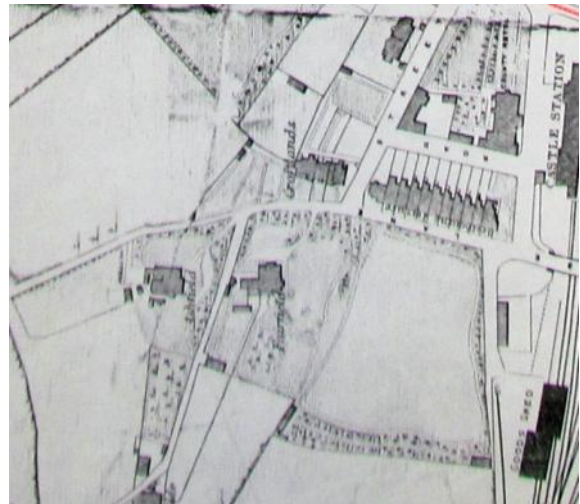
View westwards on Westbourne Road

#### 3.10.3. Current Activities and Uses

The area remains in its original use as residential. There are a few other uses: The former Co-op shop building at the eastern end of Westbourne Road has been converted to offices and there is a bowling green to the north of Westbourne Road, but the overall character is wholly residential.

#### 3.10.4. Historical Development

Like Area 9, this area was mostly fields and gardens until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1844, there were some recreational activities located here; an archery ground to the south of the road and the Luneside Bowling Green to the north - which still exists today. Meeting House Lane, is on Speed's map of 1610 and the main route west out of the town to the town fields and marshes. It was re-named Westbourne Road west of the railway line late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Development of terraced houses in this area took place after 1870, as demand for new middle class housing grew. Westbourne Terrace on Westbourne Road was built by 1871, for middle class occupiers, and by 1877, two detached villas had been built on the south side of the road, Fairfield and Ashfield, either side of Sunnyside Lane.



Westbourne Road in 1877, detail from Harrison & Hall's map (Lancaster Library)

A third phase of development took place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Ashfield Avenue and Redvers Street were laid out with higher density terraces, on the site of Ashfield House. The present layout was almost complete by the 1913 OS map; the 1930s semi-detached housing at the south end of Ashfield Avenue is the most recent housing in this character area.





*Luneside Bowling Green club house, early 19<sup>th</sup> century*

### 3.10.5. Archaeological Potential

A route to the grazing land west of the Roman fort is likely to have existed, but its line has yet to be identified. The presence of Roman burials (but of distinctly 'native' character) found just west of the Luneside bowling green (and outside the conservation area), in Westfield Memorial Village suggests potential for further Roman archaeology in this area.. As the area was largely fields and gardens with some recreational activity until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the archaeological potential for medieval and post-medieval periods is low. The archery ground and gardens along Sunnyside Lane, the only recorded uses south of Westbourne Road, are unlikely to have left significant below-ground remains.

### 3.10.6. Architectural Quality and Built Form

In common with most of the Conservation Area, the prevailing building material is local sandstone, with buildings faced in dressed coursed stone or ashlar with rubble stone used for rear elevations. Unusually for Lancaster, Westbourne Terrace is partly faced in snecked stone. Roofs are generally laid with Cumbrian slate in diminishing courses and chimneys are of local stone.

The club-house for the bowling green is the only building from the first phase of development in this area, a classical style building typical of late Georgian architecture, and a rare early example of this building

type. The club house has distinctive large ground floor openings facing the green, with moulded string courses, cornice, quoins and architraves. Most of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century houses are built in a revival style characteristic of Victorian middle class housing, with repeated details, often high quality. The 1930s semi-detached houses have rough-cast render to the first floor with hipped roofs, and design influenced by Arts and Crafts architecture.

Most of the Victorian houses are two to three storeys, with gabled attic dormers for the upper floors. Later houses are two-storey.



*Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century terraced houses, Ashfield Avenue*



*Large terraced houses, north side of Westbourne Road, 1870s*



*Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century semi-detached House on Ashfield Avenue*

Architectural details are associated with particular periods of architecture: the late Georgian bowling green club house has classical proportions, moulded stone architraves, eaves cornice and raised quoins. Victorian and Edwardian buildings have more modelled frontages with canted bay windows with sashes, some with decorative leaded and stained glass to upper panes and moulded string courses. Roofs are detailed with timber barge boards, stone gutter brackets, gabled dormer windows with iron finials and stone chimneys. Door details include panelled doors with overlights, moulded stone surrounds, house-names inscribed in stone and paired entrances with stone cornices. Most buildings have a variety of cast-iron rainwater goods which should be retained where possible. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century semi-detached houses have some Arts & Crafts details such as roughcast render, curved bays, deep eaves and arched doorways.



*Paired doors with panelled doors*



*Panelled door in red sandstone surround with hoodmould at 2 Ashfield Avenue*



*Historic leaded windows on Ashfield Avenue*





*Square bay with leaded windows on Ashfield Avenue*

Most properties were built as houses and remain in domestic use, but some end-terraces were built as shops and retain their shop-fronts. The former co-operative society shop at 1 Westbourne Road is dated 1912; designed by Austin & Paley this features a corner octagonal bay topped with a domed turret and mosaic tiling to the entrance. Now in office use, it retains large display windows and is still an important corner building. 4 Ashfield Avenue has a former shop front, inserted into a former house.



*Converted Edwardian Co-operative Shop at 1 Westbourne Road, by Paley & Austin*



*Mosaic entrance to former co-op shop*

### **3.10.7. Assessment of Condition**

Buildings in the area are in generally good condition and well maintained. One building appears to be 'at risk', the former Railton Hotel at 2 Westbourne Road which is vacant, boarded up and overgrown with ivy. As this is prominent on the approach from the town centre, its poor condition particularly detracts from the appearance of this character area.

Many buildings retain their historic fenestration and stonework intact but some windows have been replaced in modern styles and materials. Some terrace frontages have been extended beyond the building line and inserted basement entrances disrupt the unity of terraces in some cases. The over-painting of some exterior stonework on Ashfield Avenue interrupts the appearance of the whole terrace. Some historic boundary railings have been replaced with a variety of fences. Non-traditional doors and windows, roofs and wall finishes can erode the appearance and character of designed groups of historic buildings. Modern installations, such as satellite dishes and skylights on front elevations detract from the character of the historic environment if not carefully located.



*Replacement upper floor windows*



*Painted exterior stonework*

### 3.10.8. Urban Form

The built form and pattern of the area is dominated by terraces, with a few larger buildings such as the detached Fairfield Hall (now a nursing home) and a small number of 1930s semi-detached houses. The terraces mostly comprise relatively large middle-class homes; these are two and a half storeys tall and set back 4 to 5 metres from the street behind a boundary wall. Properties on Ashfield Avenue and Redvers Street are a little smaller, with a building line 2 to 3 metres behind the footway, but are broadly similar in form. The terraces south of the main road have small rear yards or gardens instead of the spacious rear gardens with mature trees north of the road. Fairfield Hall is set within its own grounds.



*Terraced houses on Westbourne Road*

The street form is irregular, and responds to the topography. Westbourne Road is gently arching. Streets leading from it are straight but aligned at different angles and do not create a regular grid. This is particularly evident around Ashfield Avenue. There are also a number of smaller lanes such as Sunnyside Lane that function as rear lanes, with of an ambiguous status between private lane and public road.

### 3.10.9. Nodes and Gateways

This is a distinct part of the Lancaster Conservation Area with a wholly different function and character to the central areas. The railway line and the single point of entry to the area (from the City Centre) on Meeting House Lane create a very obvious and definable gateway. This strong gateway leads into a leafy residential area which is immediately visible, and the former Co-op building responds to this gateway with a



strong built form including a corner tower and active frontages on two elevations.



*The former Co-op building helps to define the gateway to the area from the east.*

### 3.10.10. Landmarks

There are no strong landmark buildings in this area, and all the buildings are of a modest domestic scale. Fairfield Hall, now a nursing home, is the largest individual building in the area, but does not have landmark quality as it is set back from the street in landscaped gardens, for privacy and historic status.

### 3.10.11. Frontages

The consistent, quality and detailing of the building frontages are an asset of the area and a key factor in its special character. The interest of the elevations and the streetscene created by the rhythm of bay windows and dormers creates a strong townscape.

The buildings also make some attempt to turn corners, often providing surveillance and interesting on the return elevations, although there are still some blank elevations. The house on the east corner of Westbourne Road/Ashfield Avenue has a full-height octagonal bay, and the former co-op shop has a corner turret. One challenge is the irregular street grid in the Ashfield Avenue area which results in some acutely angled plots. The response is some irregularly shaped house-types with several active frontages and a distinctive roof profile. These add some interest and individuality to the otherwise uniform frontages.



*Frontages in the area (top: Westbourne Road; bottom: Ashfield Avenue)*



*Irregular house type on corner plot on Ashfield Avenue*

### 3.10.12. Positive Spaces

The area lacks any formal public or open space. However, the bowling green north of Westbourne Road is an attractive and well maintained semi-public space. This creates a strong formal composition with the Georgian clubhouse building. The well-hidden,



screened character of the bowling green means that it does not make a strong contribution to the general character of the area.

### 3.10.13. Significant Open Spaces, Parks, Gardens and Trees

Although there are no formal open spaces in the area the street environment does benefit significantly from the presence of mature trees and planting. On Westbourne Road this includes street trees. Mature planting within the front gardens of house plots and hedges on front boundaries are important features throughout the area, and particularly on Westbourne Road. These features are lesser significant on the side roads where front gardens are smaller than on Westbourne Road and there are no street trees.



*Street trees create a pleasant street environment*

### 3.10.14. Listed and Unlisted Buildings

There are no listed buildings in this area; most of the buildings are late Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses which all contribute to the character of the area through the unity of the stone frontages and repeated details such as sash windows, stone door surrounds and front walls and gate piers. Other buildings which make a positive contribution to the area's character include the former Co-operative shop designed by Austin & Paley, on Westbourne Road, Fairfield, now a nursing home, one of the few examples of a detached middle class villa, and the club house built for the bowling green, an interesting exception to the

Victorian housing in the area, built when the area was fields and used for recreation.

### 3.10.15. Public Realm

The public realm is a traditional residential street environment. On Westbourne Road this includes stone flags and kerbs, with mature street trees. Frontages to terraced houses are defined by low stone boundary walls with stone gate piers, iron railings or hedges. The front garden walls are topped with weathered stone copings or rustic limestone toppings, a local feature. Walls are often supplemented with hedges and garden planting. Walls to back lanes are higher and topped with triangular dressed stone copings. The only street furniture is simple lighting columns. Overall, the public realm is attractive and retains many traditional features that contribute to the character of the area.

### 3.10.16. Low Grade Environments and Detractors

At present the end property facing the gateway to the area on the northern side of Westbourne Road (the former Railton Hotel) is vacant. Windows are boarded up and the garden in front of the area is overgrown. This is a prominent location facing the gateway and the site currently detracts from the character of the area.



*The former Railton Hotel currently detracts from the quality of the area*

**Figure 3.8: Conservation Designations (West)**

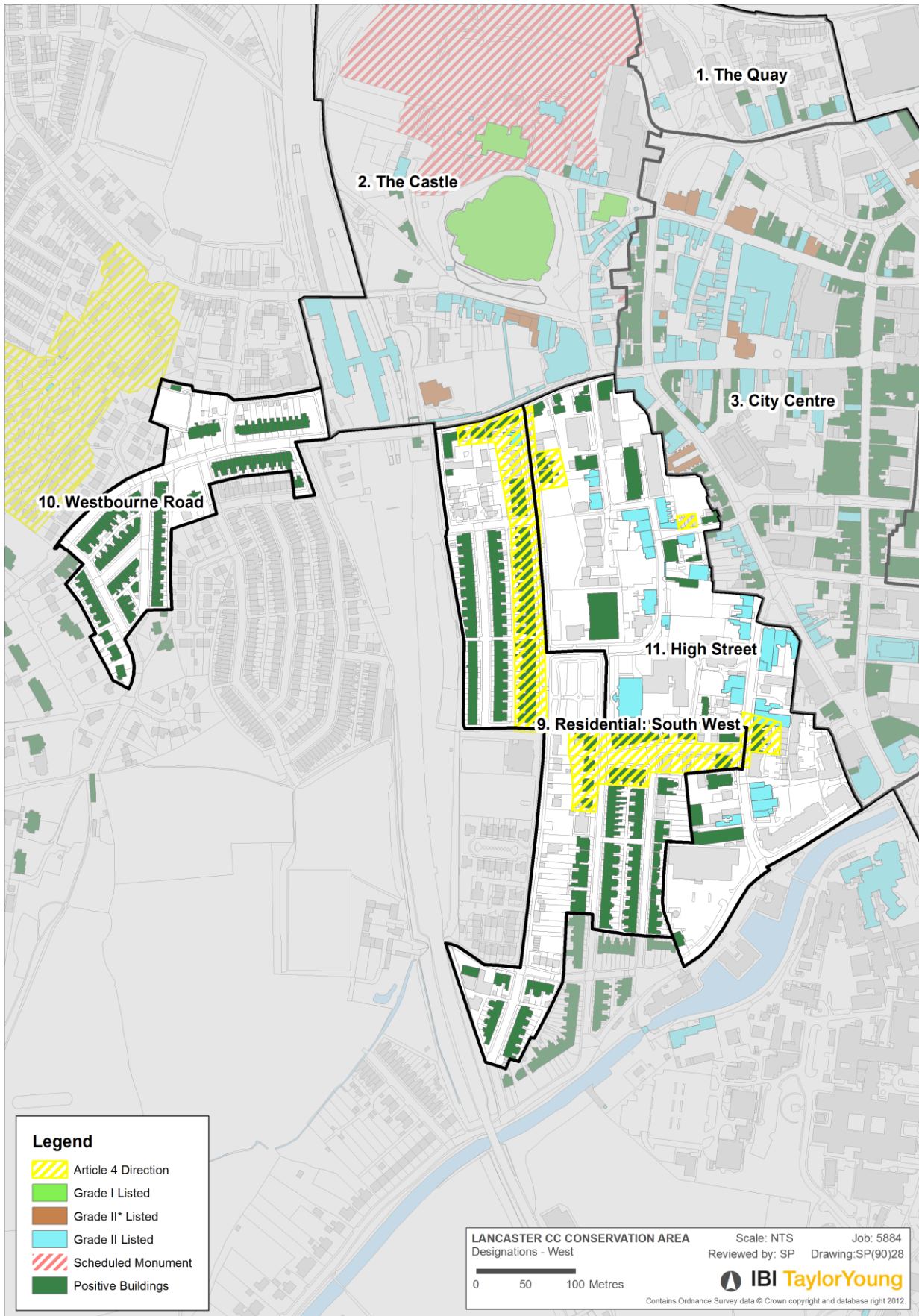




Figure 3.9: Townscape Analysis (West)

