



Lancaster Conservation Area Appraisal

Character Area 11. High Street

March 2013

3.11 Character Area 11: High Street

3.11.1. Definition of Special Interest

"The High Street Character Area has a consistent Georgian townscape due to its origins as a late 18th century suburb on the south-west edge of the City. The high quality of the architecture, the continuing presence of institutional uses and an often steep topography combine to make this a distinctive area within the City."

3.11.2. Topography and Views

Topography plays an important role in the character of this area. Land generally falls gently southwards toward the Canal, but High Street also runs along a low ridge, approached from the east by a steep rise up Middle Street. The high point is located around the Georgian Gothick-style building on High Street from where the land falls, often steeply, to the east and west. This is handled with changing ground levels within terraces. The enclosure of relatively narrow streets with tall development (generally three storeys) means that long range views are rarely possible. The street layout has been used to create some important framed vistas to prominent buildings; particularly to 4 High Street from Middle Street and to the Storey Institute from Fenton Street.



Long street views are a local feature

3.11.3. Current Activities and Uses

The area maintains longstanding community and institutional uses, with several schools and religious buildings still in use. Many of the Georgian houses are now in use as offices (a pattern that began as far back as the early 20th century). Domestic use has continued, especially on Queen Street and High Street. Queen Street is rather mixed, and also has some trade/retail uses including a large B&Q store. The post office on Fenton Street is an important and longstanding employment use in the area. In general the area has a well established and consistent pattern of land-uses that contribute strongly to its character as an edge-of-centre district of the City.

3.11.4. Historical Development

High Street, Middle Street and Queen Street were laid out west of King Street as part of the expansion of the Georgian town. Prior to the 1770s, this was an area of gardens and fields. Piecemeal development led to the building of new houses at a low density. Gardens were an important a feature, shown on maps of 1778 by Mackreth and 1821 by Binns. The area provided space for institutions; the first to be built was the Independent Chapel on High Street in 1772-3, later a Congregational Chapel; its Sunday school was built in 1856.

Many schools were located in the area including the National School at the north end of High Street, built in 1820. The former Bluecoat School on Middle Street, originally built in 1772, was re-built and enlarged in 1849-50 by Sharpe and Paley. It was again extended in the late 19th century, and both these are now in residential use. The Lancasterian School, off Aldcliffe Road was built by 1847 but later demolished. Dallas Road School on High Street dates from 1911, and to the south is Lancaster Girls' Grammar School (1912-14), both still in use..



Binns' map, 1821

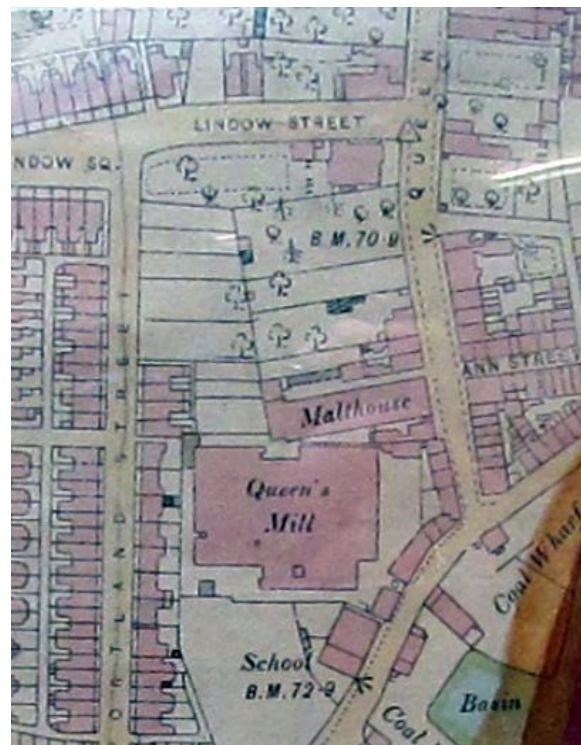
At the south end of the area, Queen's Mill was built in 1840, close to the canal; this was taken over by Storeys and extended in the later 19th century, later used as a chemical works by the Rembrandt Intaglio Company. To its north was a malthouse, first shown on the 1891 OS map. Historical associations include the poet and scholar, Lawrence Binyon (writer of the poem *For the Fallen*), who was born at 1 High Street in 1869. Two notable scientists worshipped at the United Reformed Church in their youth: Sir Edward Franklin and Sir John Fleming. Thomas Mawson, landscape architect had premises at Highmount House, High Street (1906-1936)

Development in the 20th century included the demolition of the 18th century Fenton Cawthorne House in the early 1920s, to make way for the Post Office; the portico was re-used as an entrance to the Storey Gardens. In the second half of the century, large telephone exchanges were built on Cawthorne Street to the south, and Harrier

Court, a block of flats was built west of High Street, with new development on the east side of Queen Street. In the south of the area, Armstrong-Siddeley used Queen's Mill for making aircraft components during the war; the mill was demolished in the late 20th century, and the site redeveloped for retail development, which has eroded the historic character of this part of the area.



Plaque recording notable scientists, United Reformed Church, High Street



Queen's Mill, 1892 OS map (Lancaster Library)



Fenton Cawthorne House, demolished in c.1920 to make way for the Post Office

Spinners Court, a 1990s block of flats was built over Ann and Britannia Streets, and more recently, apartments have been built on the former Arla Foods depot in the Aldcliffe Road/Henry Street area, on part of a Roman cemetery,

3.11.5. Archaeological Potential

The southern tip of the area extends into a former Roman cemetery area, where an unusual and important 2nd century memorial stone (now in Lancaster Museum) was recovered. Burials were also recovered from Queen Square, although it is not known if these were late prehistoric or Roman in date. If the latter, they support the theory that King Street was of Roman origin and the potential for the cemetery area to be extended eastwards further into this part of the conservation area. In the medieval period, with the exception of the frontage onto Meeting House Lane/Market Street, occupation was probably limited to the ends of burgage plots extending from King Street, with most of the area used as part of the town fields.

For the post-medieval period there is potential for buried remains relating to the construction and use of buildings of the 18th century, or for remains of structures which were later demolished or redeveloped. The potential for the latter is, however, likely to be constrained by cellaring and other foundation works – for example the the former Bluecoat School of 1772, was re-built and enlarged, probably damaging remains of the earlier

building. Works on the Arla Foods depot site, however, showed that islands of important early archaeology can survive, sometimes at significant depth, and that remains of even low status yard housing can exist below later redevelopments.

3.11.6. Architectural Quality and Character

Building materials in this area prior to the mid 20th century, were almost entirely local sandstone; the 18th century buildings are generally faced with ashlar to the front, with coursed stone or rubble stone used for rear and side elevations. An exception is 2 Fenton Street, built in red brick in 1913 with sandstone detailing, designed by Spencer Barrow architect, as a Friends' Hall. Local stone slate roofs have survived occasionally and these should be preserved; most roofs are laid with Cumbrian slates in diminishing courses, although some have been replaced with concrete tiles. A few buildings are covered with vernacular rough cast render, including the Kingdom Hall on Queen Street.

Most of the 18th century buildings, t, were built as private houses for the middle classes. High Street retains a rich collection of fine Georgian houses, with a formal ensemble of three houses facing Middle Street, all built c.1775. The central house, No. 4, was built for John Rawlinson, and has a pedimented central block with doorway framed by Doric columns. The houses either side have carriage entrances and the whole block has a balustraded parapet.



No 4 High Street, from Middle Street, built c.1775

There are also fine examples of houses on Queen Street, such as the pair at 5 and 7, which have paired doors with fluted architraves beneath a scrolled pediment. The historic ironwork on the front steps also survives. The house at Number 1 has an over light and a portico entrance; this is now a doctor's surgery.



Georgian entrances and ironwork at 5 & 7 Queen Street

The predominant character and architectural style of the area is Georgian. 18th century town houses are two or three storeys high and up to five bays in width, most built up to the back of the pavement. Some are quite austere, and others more elaborately decorated with moulded door surrounds with pediments, cornices and parapets. Panelled doors with over-lights and sliding sash windows are set in moulded stone architraves, with moulded eaves cornices, raised quoins and large stone chimneys. Early 19th century terraced houses are usually plainer, often without window architraves; the houses on the north side of Middle Street, houses on the north side of Fenton Street, 21 – 29 Queen Street and 1 - 9 High Street are typical examples of this later Georgian style. The doorways of 1 - 9 High Street have deep plain reveals under a simple cornice and the sliding sash windows at No. 9 all appear to be original.



Highmount House, High Street, built 1774 (former offices of landscape architect Thomas H. Mawson)



1-9 High St



Early 19th century houses at 21-29 Queen Street

Other buildings are in a variety of styles according to their date. In contrast to the controlled Classical Georgian of the larger houses, the Cottage is an unusual example of late 18th century Gothick, with arched windows, inter-laced glazing bars and a castellated parapet.



High Street Cottage, Gothic style

The 1770s Trinity United Reformed Church has a symmetrical frontage with arched windows, glimpsed across a grassed forecourt from High Street.

There are few industrial buildings left in the area; a linear stone building between 22 and 24 Queen Street was a malthouse in the late 19th century, and is now a wholesalers. A building the east side of High Street was associated with a former timber yard, shown on the 1892 map; this stone building has cast-iron columns and beams to one side, and is now in residential use. Between Queen Street and King Street, sections of historic boundary walls are evidence of the steam-powered saw mills that replaced Henry Street Cotton mill before 1893.



Former industrial building, High Street, 1880s

Early 20th century classical revival buildings include No. 2 Fenton Street, dated 1901, in Queen Anne style, and the 1920s Post Office on Meeting House Lane, designed by

Charles Wilkinson in Baroque Revival style. Behind the Post Office is a group of telephone exchange buildings which contribute to the character of the street; the 1952 building is designed in an austere, blocky classical style and faced in ashlar.



2 Fenton Street



Post Office by Wilkinson, 1920s



Telephone Exchange, 1952

The style of the schools varies, depending on their date. The former National girls' school is a long, low building in a severe Georgian

style with a simple cornice over the door and a moulded tympanum. The former Bluecoat School on Middle Street is built in a Jacobethan style, with gables and a continuous hoodmould above the ground floor. The Independent Sunday School dating from 1856 on Middle Street is in a Romanesque style. Revival style details are characteristic of late 19th and early 20th century schools. The Girls Grammar School was designed by the Manchester architect, Henry Littler, in an Edwardian Baroque style. The Dallas Road School is in similar but more austere Baroque style. It was originally built with segregated entrances, with carved lettering over doorways to indicate Girls' or Boys' entrances.



Former Bluecoat School, 1849-50



Dallas Road School entrances

In response to the topography of the area, some houses have steps up to their entrances, with iron railings. The roofline varies depending on the topography and building uses; houses on the main streets have a fairly uniform scale with horizontal eaves. Historic plots with narrow frontages are still a feature on High Street and Queen Street, but in the west part of the area, on the slopes below High Street, later development was built to a different pattern and density, with community buildings such as the schools set in larger plots. The scale and massing of these buildings is also larger than the domestic buildings.

3.11.7. Urban Form and Frontages

The street pattern is the result of attempting to establish a regular Georgian grid onto an area of steep topography, whilst also accommodating some large footprint uses such as schools. The long diagonal of King Street (outside the east of this area) and the plots behind it also play a large part in dictating form within this area. The result is a distorted pattern of straight and curving roads with no clear blocks within them.

Within this street form buildings positively address the street, mostly built up to back-of-pavement and presenting an active frontage. The plots behind them are often long and buildings often extend back a long way. Some are set back within their own grounds. The larger Dallas Road School and post office building occupy the interior of blocks as well as presenting a street frontage. The buildings themselves are a mix of short terraces and large detached buildings. These vary in height from two to four storeys but Georgian domestic buildings are mostly three-storey. High Georgian storey heights and pitched roofs, often with dormers and gables, effectively increase building heights.



The street layout creates vistas to prominent buildings.

The character area directly fronts the Lancaster Canal to the south edge. The new apartment blocks facing the canal follow the approximate massing of historical industrial buildings that once stood here. This form is appropriate and provides good enclosure and overlooking to the canal-side, which lies at a lower level behind a retaining wall on the opposite side of Aldcliffe Road. The active and articulated frontages of these blocks provide interest to this frontage. Further west the B&Q store is set back from the canal edge, behind new apartment blocks that lie outside of the conservation area. The siting of the retail warehouse pays no regard to the canal-side but the boundary treatment, consisting of a low stone wall and some planting in places, does help the building relate to the surrounding environment.

3.11.8. Nodes and Gateways

There are no real gateways into this area. The junction of Fenton Street and Market Street, marked by the Storey Institute, is a wider gateway into the City but Fenton Street is secondary here and this is not a gateway into this character area. Queen Square is a more prominent entry point into the area but Queen Street is clearly secondary in importance to King Street and so this is not really a gateway either. In general this is a discrete, quieter area with a fairly disconnected street form and no real gateways or key nodes.

3.11.9. Landmarks

The Dallas Road school is the only real landmark in the area. Located on a large site, the attractive historic building is visible and accommodates a well-used community function. There are several other important historic building and important community uses such as chapels and school but these are in less prominent buildings set within grounds.

3.11.10. Positive Spaces

At the southern edge of the area the canal-side provides a generous and pleasant area of public realm which benefits from views along the canal and to the listed hospital building on the opposite side. This forms part of the wider canal-side corridor, which is well used for recreation.



Canalside space

Queen Square is an attractive space on the east edge of the area. This is described in text for Character Area 3. Dallas Road Gardens are a positive space at the western edge of the area, covered in Character Area 9. Within this character area itself there are no formal areas of public space, although the street environments are often strong, and the other spaces referred to are accessible from this area.

3.11.11. Public Realm



Public realm on High Street

The public realm in the area comprises strong street environments, which are an important positive element in the character of the area. The pavements are typically laid with stone flags, and cobbles also survive on a few minor access roads. Buildings generally front the back-of-pavement, their interesting stone frontages adding character and framing the street. Sometimes there are steps up to an upper ground floor entrance with an undercroft level below. Some buildings are set back (typically 1 metre or less) behind attractive iron railings. Other buildings sit within their own plots. In these cases planting often contributes positively to the streetscene (especially on High Street and Queen Street). In a number of instances (Queen Street bungalows or Trinity United Reform Church) these grounds are particularly attractive spaces and glimpsed views into them add considerable interest to the streetscene. At Trinity URC this view is framed by a Georgian wrought-iron arch with a hanging lantern.

Aldcliffe Road has a more standard treatment and lacks most of these features.



Attractive views into plots from the street.

3.11.12. Listed and Unlisted Buildings

Most of the fine Georgian houses in this area are listed. Unlisted buildings that contribute to the character of the area include some altered late Georgian domestic buildings and good quality Victorian and early 20th century buildings in a variety of revival styles, including houses, schools and places of worship. The Dallas Road School, the Methodist church on Queen Street and the former Independent Sunday School on Middle Street are all distinctive community buildings with moulded stone details. Buildings designed in classical revival style include the 1920s Post Office on Meeting House Lane, by C.P.Wilkinson. In contrast,

Figure 3.8: Conservation Designations (West)

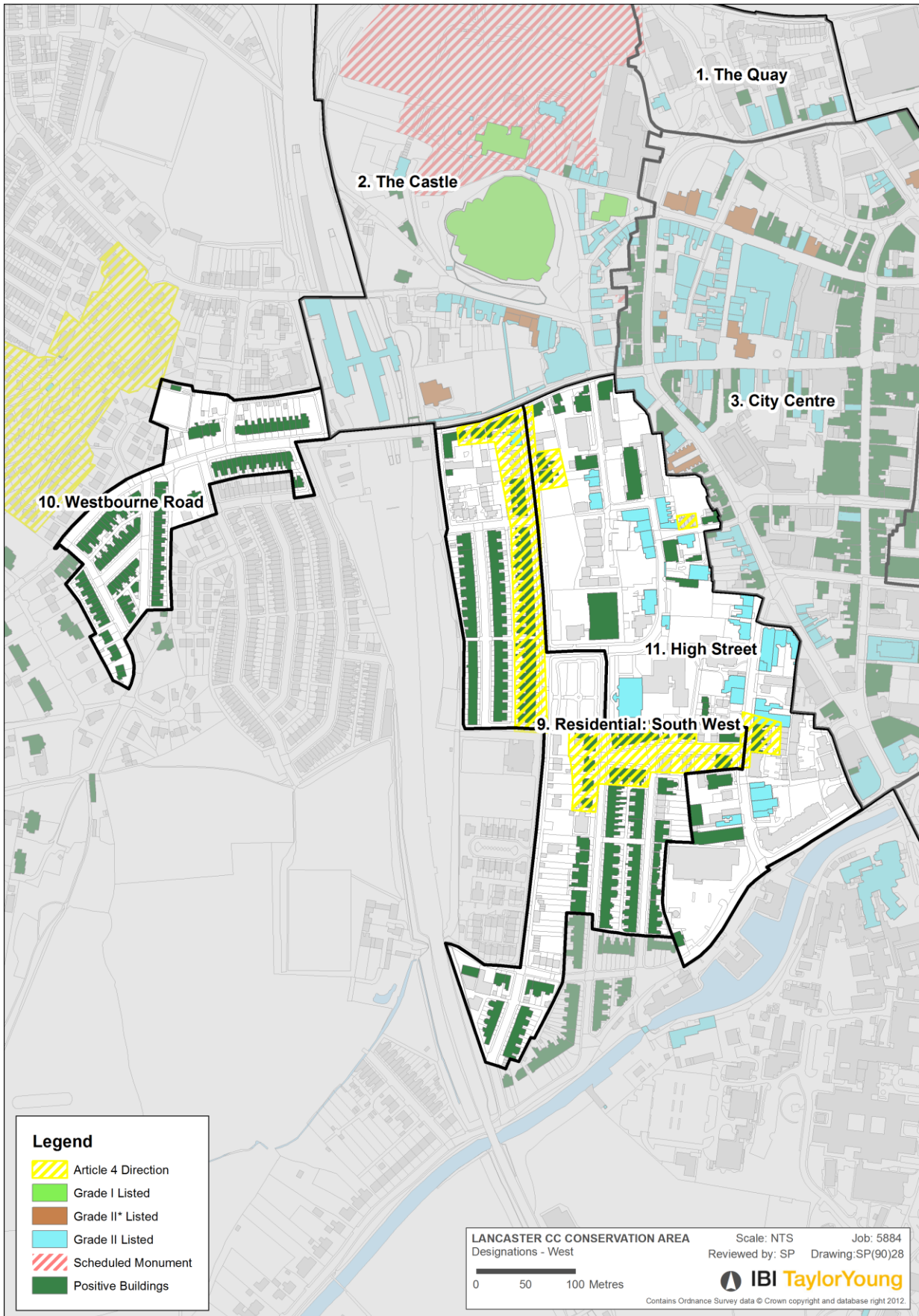


Figure 3.9: Townscape Analysis (West)

