

# Historic Townscape Characterisation Assessment

## Central Promenade, Blackpool



AHP Architectural  
History  
Practice

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

For most visitors, Central Promenade is quintessentially Blackpool. The 'Golden Mile' is nationally and arguably internationally famous and offers a unique and instantly recognisable scene. Blackpool is the only resort in Britain with three piers and its centrepiece, the Tower, is a regional landmark and a national icon of the British seaside. Central Promenade is a linear zone running between the Metropole Hotel in the north and the Sandcastle leisure complex in the south. The west boundary is defined by the seawall and to the east is a range of narrow streets serving the hotels and boarding houses at the south of the area, widening to shopping streets north of New Bonny Street. The seafront area developed southwards from the early nucleus around Talbot Square from the 1860s; the first Promenade was opened in 1870. The arrival of the railway in the 1840s gave inland workers the opportunity for seaside holidays, resulting in a boom in development including the opening of the tramway along the Promenade and the expansion of the entertainment industry.

The Central Promenade is characterised by facilities for holiday makers, from entertainment around the Tower and piers at the north end, to hotels and terraces of boarding houses in the south. The latter development was closely related to the growth of South Beach as a middle-class resort, initially separate from Blackpool and characterised by large boarding houses; the two resorts had merged by 1893. The character of the Central Promenade area can be summarised as a unique seaside landscape incorporating the iconic Blackpool Tower as a principal landmark, three piers and other buildings which exemplify the development of mass tourism during the Victorian period and the continuing search for novelty in the entertainment industry.

The long panorama of Promenade buildings is divided into blocks by intersecting east-west streets along its length. However, in contrast to the North Promenade the blocks are of varying sizes and the buildings are generally of a lower quality. To the west of the buildings, the Promenade itself is constructed on successive phases of sea defences, comprising the sea wall (recently reconstructed), a wide promenade walkway, a two-way tramway, two-way roadway and pedestrian footway. This creates a broad vista from which to view the buildings and the sea, in sharp contrast to the dense grain of narrow service streets at the rear of the buildings. Blackpool Tower is a constant landmark feature and despite the level of 20<sup>th</sup>-century change, building scales are fairly homogenous and there are few tall buildings, allowing the Tower to dominate the townscape.

The central area of the Promenade is dedicated to leisure and although it has been continuously updated it broadly retains an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century character. In addition to Blackpool Tower, landmark heritage assets include important open spaces – the setting for the war memorial and Talbot Square. Buildings have often been altered and partly obscured by brash advertising and brightly coloured fascias; an important

aspect of Blackpool's character, if not of historic significance. Between Central and South Pier the area is characterised by retail, fast food and entertainment outlets concentrated close to the piers, with late 19<sup>th</sup>-century hotel and boarding house development between. Again, constant pressure for change has resulted in alterations and adaptation of historic buildings.

At a detailed level the amount of alteration is significant. Individual boarding houses in the south of the area have been amalgamated and extended with sun lounges constructed over front gardens, although front boundary walls have generally been retained or rebuilt. Front gardens have been given over to off-street parking. Many buildings have been painted or rendered, and universal alterations include the insertion of uPVC windows and modern signage. To the north, advertising and modern frontages on older buildings create layers of old and new, with contrasts in scale and materials. However some important historic character is intact, especially to the landmark buildings.

The whole area was assessed for townscape and heritage merit as part of the study and 23 potential buildings chosen for a potential Local List. The Central Promenade area has the highest proportion of listed buildings in the areas surveyed. Tower Buildings is Blackpool's only Grade I listed building; North Pier, the New Clifton Hotel, the war memorial, and three pairs of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Promenade shelters are all listed Grade II. At its north end part of the area is situated within the Town Centre Conservation Area. Among the potential Local List buildings are the two unlisted piers and a number of pubs and hotels dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century to the interwar years. The lifeboat station and former Woolworths store are two notable high-quality Art Deco buildings with potential for the Local List. Broadly speaking, the north end of the area is of positive value, with most of the central area around the Tower being neutral, punctuated by strong individual buildings of positive local and national value. South of Central Pier the area is largely of neutral value. The landscaping to the seafront is currently being renewed, and the overall high quality of design has enhanced the seafront experience compared to the lower-quality areas near the Tower Buildings.

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*All images by AHP unless otherwise stated*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

The Architectural History Practice Limited [AHP] was commissioned in September 2008 by Blackpool Council (The Council) to prepare a characterisation assessment of the Central Promenade area in the context of developing plans for regeneration.

### **1.2 The Brief**

The brief for this project was issued by The Council in July 2008. The Brief explains the reasons for the assessment, the outputs, the local and national context, a summary of matters to be covered by the characterisation assessment, and resources available from The Council. The project has also been undertaken with reference to guidance from English Heritage on urban characterisation, including on the assessment of historic significance in areas of low demand housing.

### **1.3 Authors**

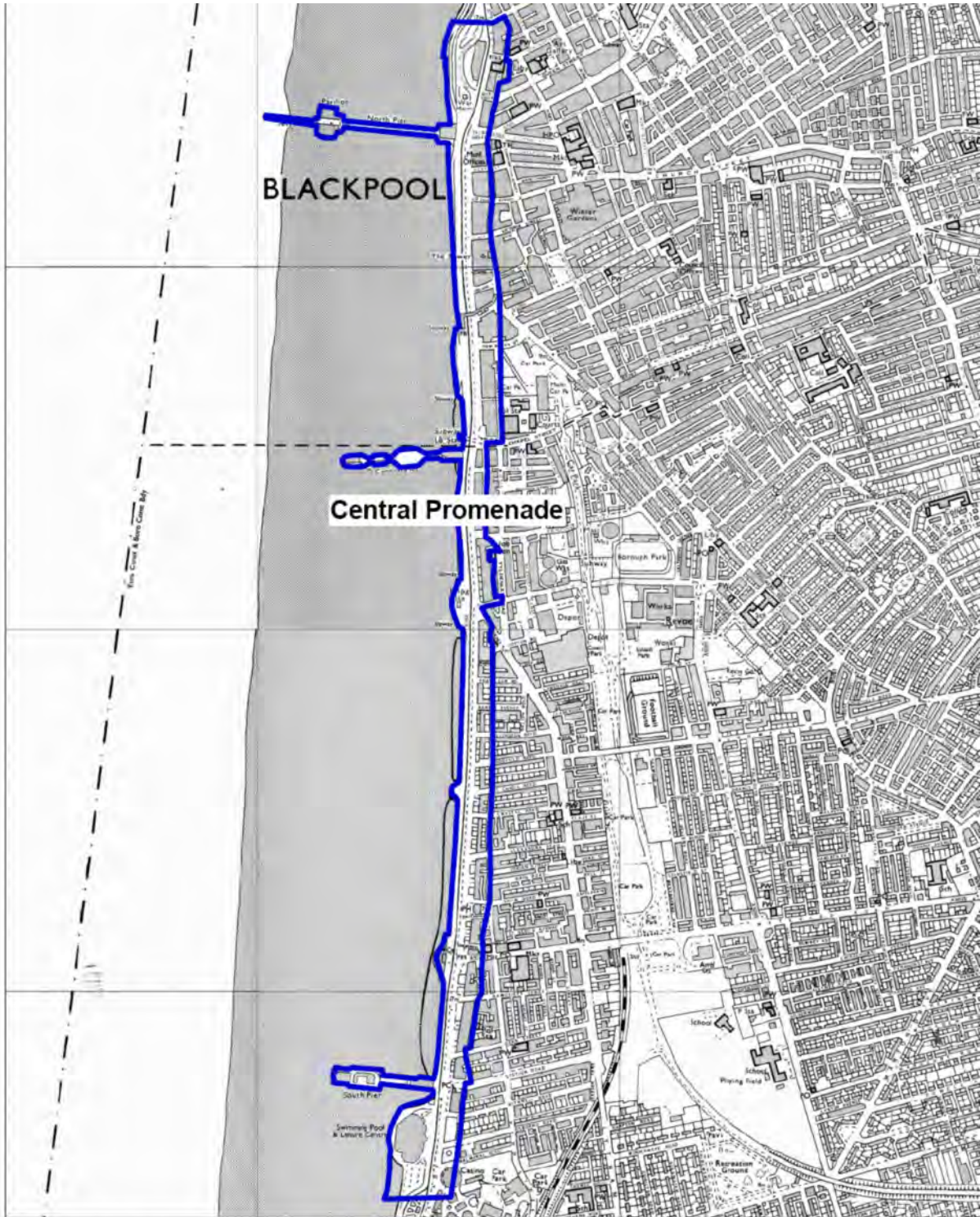
This characterisation assessment was prepared by Marion Barter, BA MA IHBC, Director of AHP, Clare Hartwell, BA MA, Director of AHP and Samantha Barnes BA MA, Associate of AHP.

### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

AHP is grateful for assistance and advice offered during this project, in particular, Carl Carrington of Blackpool Council, Tony Sharkey and the librarians at Blackpool Library and John Rylands University Library, Manchester (JRUL), and Ted Lightbown, local historian. AHP is also grateful for the use of historic images from [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk).

### **1.5 Location of study area**

Central Promenade is a linear area which runs north-south immediately adjacent to the sea wall. It stretches from The Metropole Hotel in the north to the Sandcastle swimming complex in the south, and is defined to the east by a range of back streets, also running north-south, and to the west by the sea wall adjacent to the beach. The study area includes Blackpool's three piers, Blackpool Tower and part of the Talbot Square conservation area [See Fig.1 for a map of the area.] The NGR centred on the middle of the study area is SD305350.



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Fig. 1: Location of study area

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Assessment**

The work was undertaken as an intensive assessment of the whole area. The project was divided into an initial research phase and a detailed fieldwork phase, which included photography, GIS mapping and an assessment of potential Local List buildings.

#### **2.1.1 Research**

Secondary research was carried out at the Local History Library at Blackpool Library. This consisted of a detailed review of historic maps and trade directories, a general review of works on the history of Blackpool, its architecture and housing, and its development through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Relevant websites on the history of the area were reviewed, including the collection of historic photographs available at <http://www.blackpoolimagegallery.org.uk/> and [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk). Photographs in the Local History Library collections were also consulted. Additional historic maps were obtained from the John Rylands University of Manchester Map Collections. See the *Bibliography* for full details.

#### **2.1.2 Fieldwork**

Central Promenade was physically assessed on foot in October 2008. The fieldwork took place after the research had been undertaken and took into account its findings. Where public buildings were of interest and accessible (i.e. churches and former banks) the principal interiors were assessed; however, generally the assessment is based on what could be seen from the public highway and frontages.

#### **2.1.3 Knowledge Gaps**

There are a number of additional lines of research which might produce additional historical information on the history and development of Central Promenade such as rate books, insurance and drainage records. However, whilst further research may provide greater detail and depth to an understanding of how the area developed, it is not considered that this will significantly alter the overall findings of this assessment.

### **2.2 Limitations**

AHP were commissioned to assess the architectural and historic character of the buildings of Central Promenade as part of a characterisation assessment, including the heritage significance of the area. This study has not assessed other important factors which may be relevant to a decision on the future of the area's buildings. Relevant factors which AHP has not assessed include the physical condition of the buildings, their internal or external facilities, thermal performance, repair costs and viability, market value, potential for adaptation, environmental consequences of demolition and rebuilding, and quality in relation to current standards or any other factors that are not directly related to their heritage value.

### **2.3 Consultation and Community Involvement**

This draft report will be subject to community consultation, including with the Heritage Forum and may also be available on Blackpool's Council's website. Following initial consultation, the report may be amended to take account of any new information that emerges and of the views of local people, particularly in relation to significance.

### **3.0 PLANNING AND REGENERATION CONTEXT**

#### **3.1 The Blackpool Local Plan**

The Local Plan was adopted in June 2006. The Proposals Map identifies Central Promenade south of Central Pier as a resort neighbourhood (including a significant inland area). The area around the Tower Buildings is defined as a primary leisure zone, with the stretch between New Bonny Street and Central Pier designated as a key tourism investment site. The whole of Central Promenade is located within the defined inner area. The Promenade is part of a primary distributor route which runs along the seafront.

#### **3.2 Heritage assets and regeneration**

The protection of the historic environment is a Government priority, enshrined in planning legislation and guidance, such as PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment*. The level of protection depends on the value attached to the historic building or asset and Planning Policy Statement 1, *Delivering Sustainable Development* states that 'a high level of protection should be given to the most valued townscapes and landscapes...'; this encompasses designated heritage assets such as listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas. There is also now recognition that local heritage merits attention, that people care about the historic environment (*Power of Place*, p.4) and the community should be consulted on masterplans and regeneration proposals. However, it is also recognised in national planning policy that not all aspects of the historic environment can be retained; PPG15 notes that 'the historic environment is all-pervasive, and it cannot in practice be preserved unchanged' (para 1.3). It is therefore important to understand the relative value of the historic environment before making decisions about the future of an area (*Power of Place* p.5).

The Government recognises that heritage assets can play an important role in the success of sustainable urban regeneration, helping to create distinctive places with a strong identity. English Heritage, the government's advisor on the historic environment promotes the re-use of historic buildings in regeneration; their published guidance includes *Regeneration and the Historic Environment*, *Low Demand Housing and the Historic Environment*, both issued in 2005 and *Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns*, 2007. English Heritage guidance on townscape and heritage characterisation developed from a methodology used by EH in Anfield, Liverpool in advance of housing market renewal. In autumn 2008, CABE and English Heritage jointly issued guidance on townscape appraisals in housing market renewal areas, emphasising the importance of understanding and assessing an area before decisions are made on its future regeneration.

The contribution that historic buildings can make to sustainable development was investigated by a 2004 House of Commons Select Committee, which reported that 'it is simply better in sustainability terms to use and recycle old buildings than to

demolish them and build new ones.’ *Heritage Works*, a good practice document produced jointly by RICS, English Heritage, British Property Federation and Drivers Jonas in 2006 advises that ‘there is a strong economic case for regenerating historic buildings’, but also notes that ‘critical to the success of regeneration is finding a viable economic use that can support initial refurbishment, provide the owner or developer with a reasonable return...and which generates sufficient income to ensure (the) long-term maintenance...’. Viability, as well as heritage value is therefore a critical factor in determining the future of an area.



## **4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL PROMENADE AREA**

### **4.1 Location and brief description**

Central Promenade is located on the western seaward side of Blackpool and stretches from the Metropole Hotel in the north to the Sandcastle leisure complex in the south. To the east the area is bounded by a range of service streets at the rear of the Promenade buildings which comprise mainly hotels, boarding houses and leisure facilities. To the west the area is contained by the sea wall. Central Promenade is the principal character area of the town. Blackpool's 'Golden Mile' is nationally famous and it offers a unique and instantly recognisable scene. Blackpool is the only resort in Britain with three piers and the Tower is a regional landmark and national icon of the British seaside.

### **4.2 Historic development: Context**

#### **4.2.1 An overview of the development of Blackpool**

Modern Blackpool developed from the medieval manorial holdings of Bispham to the north, Layton, to the south, and Marton and Carleton to the east, with each being further divided into townships. A settlement pattern of small nucleations in the manors probably changed little from the medieval period to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The reclamation of mosslands, on which Blackpool is built, began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Following the reclamation there was pressure to enclose the land and the creation of farmsteads (including Foxhall and Raikes Hall) formed a farming community which may have been supplemented by fishing. Fragments of Bispham's 12<sup>th</sup>-century parish church incorporated in its 19<sup>th</sup> century successor, and a few 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century cottages and farmhouses are almost all that survive of Blackpool before about 1850.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the manorial land was owned by Alexander Rigby, but as a result of debt the land was dispersed of under an Act of Parliament in 1715 and again in 1731. The result of this was that most of the land surrounding the settlement of Blackpool was freehold and held in small estates, allowing its development to be piecemeal and unplanned. By the late 1780s there were about 50 houses on the seafront and the population, excluding visitors, in the early 1820s was about 750. The steady subsequent growth over the following 50 years was focused along the one mile stretch of coastline as demand grew from increasing visitor numbers as Blackpool became recognised for its seaside location. One of the earliest recordings of Blackpool as a visitor attraction was made by Bishop Pococke in the early 1750s, who recorded that accommodation was available for those who came to bathe. Blackpool as a seaside resort developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century from a growing interest from the working classes of Lancashire and Yorkshire's textile districts; by the 1830s there were more than a thousand visitors a year. However, unlike Fleetwood and Lytham, Blackpool was not planned as a seaside resort. Expansion and improvement in the



early 19<sup>th</sup>-century was hampered by poor communication systems and its layout was conditioned by patterns of landholding. The 1838 Tithe map (Fig. 2) shows that the mile-long stretch of houses on the seafront had evolved into a double row of buildings, with inland development to the south. Between 1841 and 1851 the housing stock grew by 83%, and a number of new streets were laid out in a grid behind the seafront, but this expansion was not governed by planning principles; the priority for new development was to be as close to the foreshore as possible. Between 1841 and 1861 the resident population had risen from 1,378 to 3,506, and although this was still less than at rapidly developing Fleetwood, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Blackpool was considered a significant resort and in 1842 was described as 'the Brighton of Lancashire' (Redding & Taylor, 1842).



Fig. 2: Detail of Tithe Map of Blackpool, 1838 (Blackpool Local Studies)

The period of greatest 19<sup>th</sup> century development was the 1860s, with the fields to the east of the established centre being built upon. The Preston and Wyre railway opened a single line to Blackpool in 1846, with the Blackpool and Lytham railway adding to passenger numbers in 1862; the coming of the railway is seen by many as the start of an era of rapid expansion with the construction of respectable accommodation and public buildings. The first attraction of Blackpool was its sandy beach and the possibilities for sea bathing. By the end of the 1860s there were two piers (North and Central), and the construction of a new promenade was begun in 1868; the latter was both a tourist attraction and part of the town's sea defences. Building development, untrammelled by dominant landowners or effective local government, was initially undertaken piecemeal in small freehold units. New blocks of lodging houses, first established in the 1840s, were built in the 1870s on the fringes of the built up area, surrounded by houses for artisans employed in the tourism industry or the railway industry. The housing needs of Blackpool were met by brick-built terraced housing to the east of the town centre; however, the number of bedrooms in individual houses was maximised so that housing intended for domestic use could be adapted to offer holiday accommodation. Hotels of the period included the Imperial (1867) at North Shore, an area developed as an enclave for middle-class residents and visitors.

By the 1870s, the population was around 7,000 and visitor numbers were estimated at more than one million, as the decade saw the first large-scale visitor attractions promoted by entertainment companies. These inaugurated the rise in a new sort of commercial entertainment, with large-scale theatrical presentations heralding the modern world of show business. The first purpose-built theatre was the Theatre Royal (1868), followed by pleasure gardens at Raikes Hall estate in 1872 and from 1878 by the Winter Gardens. The 1870s boom was supported and promoted by the Corporation, who saw improvement of the town for tourism as their single-minded goal. Provision for visitors included increasing numbers of 'company houses', respectable boarding houses aimed at working-class visitors. The Promenade was lit by electricity from 1879, placing the town in the vanguard of electric street-lighting, the famous electric tramway was inaugurated in 1885, and by the end of the century many amenities were controlled by the Corporation which had been formed in 1876. The latest technological advances were swiftly adopted in a policy which aimed at attaining a high profile and creating a new kind of mass holiday-making.

Blackpool became the resort with the greatest number of attractions in Europe, crowned in the 1890s by the opening of the Tower in 1894 when in six years, in addition to the Tower, investors in commercial entertainment constructed the Grand Theatre, Empress Ballroom, gigantic wheel, the Alhambra (1899), and a third Pier (1893), soon followed by the Pleasure Beach. The Promenade was extended in 1895 to the north of the town centre and expanded in 1902 and 1905, extending the sea front 100 feet beyond the high tide mark.

The population in 1901 was 47, 348, although Blackpool had absorbed surrounding settlements such as Layton and South Shore. Tourist numbers rose to four million in 1914, while the resident population had risen to almost 60,000; between 1911 and 1939 the town more than doubled in size. In 1912 the Corporation inaugurated the Illuminations which popularised and extended the autumn season. The prosperity and draw of the coast ensured expansion through the inter-war years, and in response to booming populations of both residents and visitors, North Shore was earmarked for extensive development in the 1920s and '30s with avenues of detached and semi-detached houses. Between 1925 and 1935 around 12,500 houses were built, and a significant number of the properties were lived in by retired people, who constituted for a significant proportion of the population increase. One significant response to an influx of visitors in the 1930s, one of the earliest by any municipal authority, combined provision of multi-storey and underground car parks with investment in the tram system.

There were few large scale developments after the Second World War. Tourist facilities continued to grow; for example by 1936 there were 15 cinemas, including the Odeon on Dickson Road which catered for 1,800 and was then the largest Odeon ever built. The growth of the Pleasure Beach also quickly became a forerunner to the giant themed amusement parks of the later 20<sup>th</sup>-century. The population of the town peaked at 153,183 in 1961. Ambitious plans to redevelop the centre stuttered to a halt in the early 1970s but later developments including the Hounds Hill shopping centre provide for both residents and visitors. The late 20<sup>th</sup>-century advent of cheap flights and package holidays to the Mediterranean affected demand for holidays in the resort and there have been few new hotel developments since the Hilton. However, the constant requirement for budget accommodation has ensured that many of the purpose built boarding houses have remained in use.

#### **4.2.2 The 19<sup>th</sup>-century development of the Central Promenade area**

The development of Central Promenade is linked to the growth of Blackpool as a whole, as it was the sea and beach which drew visitors to the town. Early mapping of Blackpool shows that a rudimentary seafront road was in place from 1786, stretching as far as Fox Hall in the south after which it branched off to become Lytham Road (covered in the South Beach area); by the early 1800s there were a number of buildings along its length. However, the construction of a proper Promenade was not only essential for the ambitious holiday town, but it was crucial for the town's sea defences. The Local Board took over the seafront in 1863 and a Parliamentary Bill passed in 1865, to ensure that the Promenade would be properly constructed and maintained and to allow free public access. Work began in 1868, and a two mile long Promenade and carriage drive, which relieved congestion and tackled erosion, was opened in 1870.

The tramway first opened along the Promenade in 1885, under the Blackpool Tramway Co. Ltd., and initially improved connections along two miles of the sea

front road. The first trams were operated by underground electrical conduits. The Company was transferred to the Corporation in 1892, at which date the trams ran from North Pier to South Pier, with a small stretch of line from the Manchester Hotel along Lytham Road opened in 1897. The overhead power system was adopted, amidst protests from residents, in 1898. The tramway was extended north to Gynn Square in 1900, where it joined with the Blackpool and Fleetwood Tramway. The Promenade was widened in 1905, moving the tramway from the road to its own section of Promenade. By 1911 there were 65 tram cars and apparently around 120,000 passengers were carried on a typical summer's day.

The character of the Promenade today is different as throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was gradually widened and enhanced to cater for the tramway and the growing influx of visitors. Compared with historic postcard views from the early 20<sup>th</sup> -century, today the Promenade is more cluttered with street furniture and modern signs, and the impact of traffic has also had an effect on its character. The floorscape of Central Promenade is also different, with modern tarmac and concrete surfaces replacing what was probably natural stone paving. The whole Promenade is currently undergoing regeneration, with curved areas projecting towards the beach, creating an even more spatial feel to the Promenade.

Although Blackpool developed very rapidly over a short period of time, there are differences in the character of the seafront; the construction and improvement of the piers and Promenade and the establishment of the Tower Buildings in the 1890s was a direct contrast to the rows of boarding houses in the South Beach area of the town. In describing the historic growth, the Promenade has been divided into five linear blocks. The area is also divided for characterisation into three 'character areas' (see Fig. 11).

#### **4.2.3 South Promenade: Sandcastle to Shaw Road**

The development of the southern part of the area to Shaw Road is analogous with the development of South Beach. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was known as New Blackpool and was formed as a separate community and a rival resort to Blackpool (The area is often locally known as South Shore, its historic name). The 1838 Tithe map (Fig. 61) shows that South Beach was a distinct community, with buildings mainly located on a square of streets formed by the seafront, Bolton Street and Britannia Place. William Thornber described the early settlement as 'a pretty hamlet, chiefly comprised in a row of handsome cottages fronting the sea, having a lawn or Promenade at the front' (Thornber, 1837, p.344). There was no main road along the seafront, with the early buildings fronting parcels of land which probably sloped down to the beach. Some of the earliest buildings on the seafront were developed by the son of Thomas Moore, who built the first house in the area in 1819.

Between 1845 and 1850 land at South Beach had become highly desirable, and the distinction between the district and Blackpool proper is obvious from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition

(1844) OS map (1:10560) (Fig.62). At this date, seafront properties included a detached villa with a large front garden (a vicarage) and a watch tower to the south, with further buildings to the north, probably early boarding houses fronting onto a minor road along the Promenade. There were also several baths at South Beach, fed by pumped-in sea water.

A plan of Blackpool made in 1877 by Joseph Harding shows how the infrastructure of the area had grown; a Promenade was in place joined by the major east-west streets from Lytham Road. South of Station Road however, properties had been developed inland, although there was no Promenade. The first edition 1:2500 OS map of 1893 (surveyed 1891) defines the use of many of the buildings on the seafront, including the South Shore Hotel and terraces of large boarding houses and private residences of a higher standard than those being constructed inland.

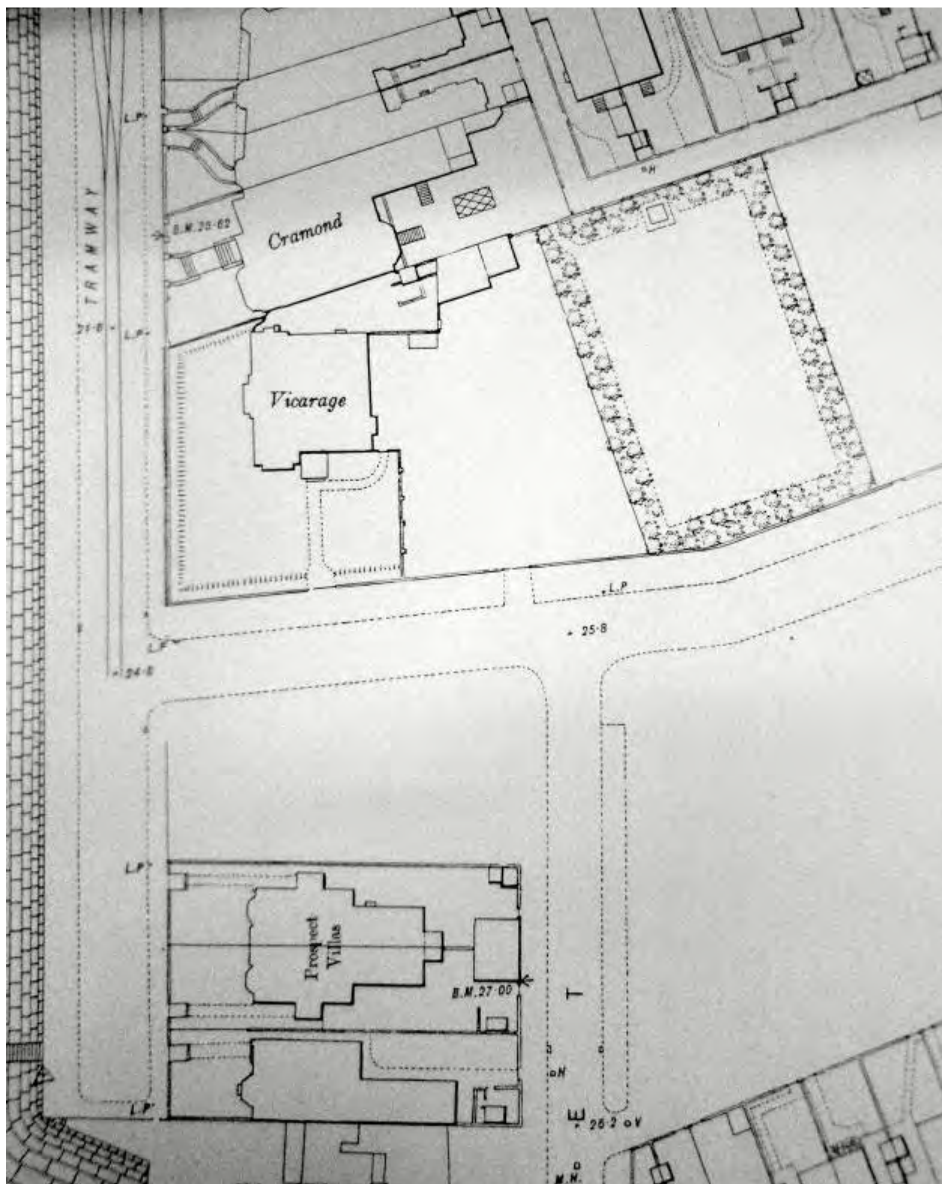


Fig. 3: Detail of 1:500 1893 OS map (surveyed 1891) showing the southern end of South Promenade (Blackpool Library)



To the rear of the seafront properties narrow service streets were constructed, although in some cases (i.e. Montague Street) these lanes were initially as wide as the principal roads themselves. Stretching from Waterloo Road to the north of Lytham Road, Bolton Street, one of the oldest streets in the area, was built up on the east side of the Promenade buildings but principally acted as a service street. A tramway, opened in 1885, ran along the narrow Promenade, ending just to the south of Station Road. The seawall was of sloping masonry with access to the beach opposite Waterloo Road. South Pier (originally named Victoria Pier) was opened in 1893 (Fig. 4), and the modernisation of the south Promenade began in 1902; it was widened by 100 feet to the width of the sloping sea-wall and extended as far as Balmoral Road, providing additional building land to the west of Simpson Street.



Fig. 4: Victoria Pier in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Image from [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk))

The beach access by Waterloo Road was converted into a slipway, and in c.1905 four shelters were constructed on the Promenade to designs by the Borough Surveyor John Shanks Brodie. The Promenade was extended again to the south in 1926, partly in response to the growth of the Pleasure Beach, and a large open-air swimming bath was installed to the south of the pier in 1923. The plots to the west of Simpson Street are shown on the 1932 OS map as being small parks, one with a central fountain; it is possible that the seaward area with the parks, baths and pier was intended as an 'open' leisure area, in direct contrast with the built-up leisure areas to the north around the Tower Buildings and Central Pier.

#### 4.2.4 South Promenade: Shaw Road to Lytham Road

The historic development of the stretch of Promenade north of Shaw Road is inherently the same as that to the south (See *Section 4.3.*). Historically the area was part of South Beach, and today is known as Bloomfield. The 1838 Tithe map shows that the development at South Beach was focused around the streets to the north of Waterloo Road, namely Bolton Street and Alexandra Road, with a terrace of properties fronting the rudimentary Promenade. From this point to the north end of Lytham Road the area was rural, with only one property on the seaward side. By 1877 the Promenade was in place and a series of east-west streets joining Lytham Road and the Promenade were planned. Terraces of substantial buildings with rear outshots were constructed in blocks between this grid, and most sites were filled by 1877. At the junction of the Promenade and Lytham Road the Manchester Hotel was erected (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century postcard of the south Promenade, looking south; the Manchester Hotel is the closest building (Image from [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk))

The 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:2500 OS map of 1893 (and the 1:500 OS of the same date) shows that the blocks of seafront buildings were distinguished by names such as 'Victoria Terrace', 'Waterloo Bank' and 'Crystal Terrace' and had larger-than-standard front gardens (Fig. 6).

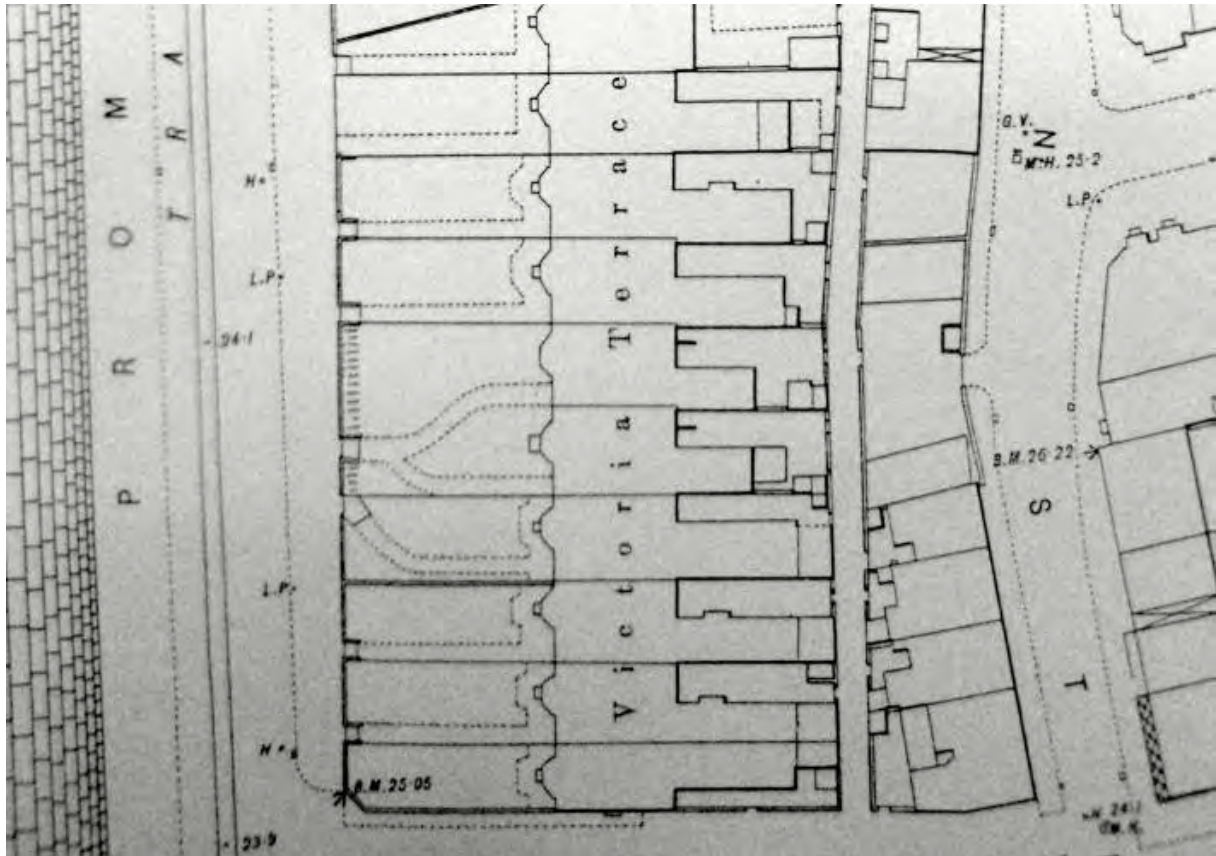


Fig. 6: Detail of 1:500 1893 OS (surveyed 1891), showing seafront properties in South Beach (Blackpool Library)

The Promenade and tramway continued along the seafront, with a slipway opposite the north end of Lytham Road; a lifeboat station was located on Lytham Road and the lifeboats were horse-drawn to this slipway. This was replaced in the interwar period by a building beside Central Pier. The Promenade was widened from 1902-05, to cater for huge increases in visitor numbers in the late 1890s. Shelters were erected along its length.

#### 4.2.5 Central Promenade: Lytham Road to Hounds Hill

The 1838 Tithe maps shows a small concentration of buildings around Fox Hall, at the north end of Lytham Road where it joined what was later known as Foxhall Road. Fox (or Vaux) Hall was built at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Edward Tyldesley and was the first large house to be constructed in Blackpool. It was extended in 1864 by James Slater and converted into a lodging house; a house was built later on the west side and the two combined to create a hotel. It was demolished in 1990. North of Fox Hall were empty plots, and the development of Blackpool proper began just south of New Bonny Street with terraces of substantial houses. The 1877 street plan gives a visual impression of this growth and helps to identify the network of streets which had developed in the 1860s. The plan shows that several east-west streets feeding onto the Promenade had been formed, and that the Promenade between Chapel Street and Hounds Hill was called South Beach. Central Pier is also shown (built 1867-8) (Fig. 7).



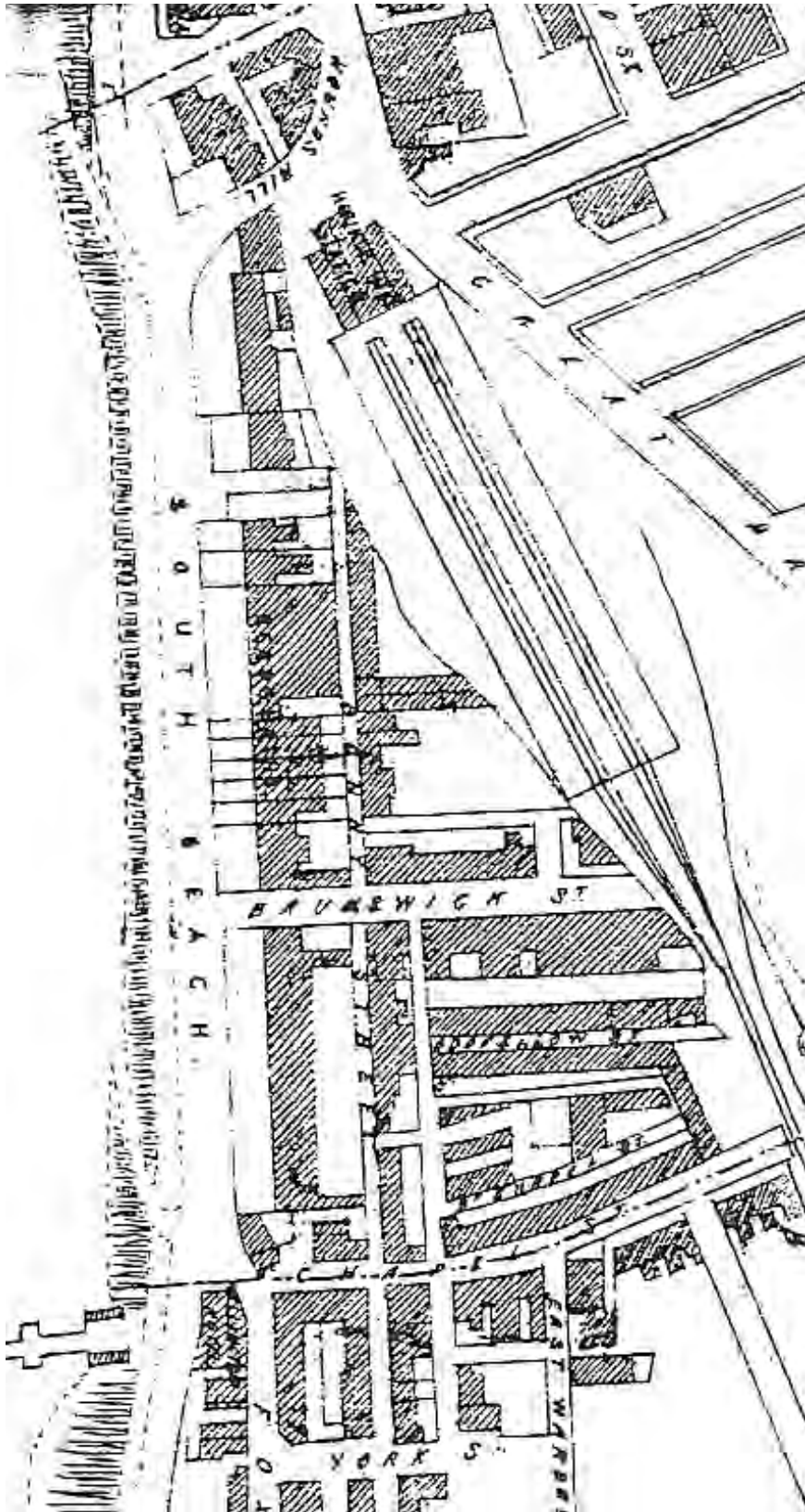


Fig. 7: Detail from "Plan of Blackpool, Southshore [sic], & the township of Layton with Warbreck, in the county of Lancaster, laid down from actual survey made in the year 1877", made by Joseph Harding, Civil Engineer (Blackpool Local Studies)

On the 1893 1:2500 OS map (surveyed 1891) the grid of streets and rows of seafront terraces clearly shows Tyldesley Terrace and a school located next to the Foxhall Hotel (Fig. 8), and blocks of terraces and two large hotels on South Beach. At the north end Central Station was accessed from Hounds Hill, where the Palatine Hotel was located. There were also public baths on the Promenade.

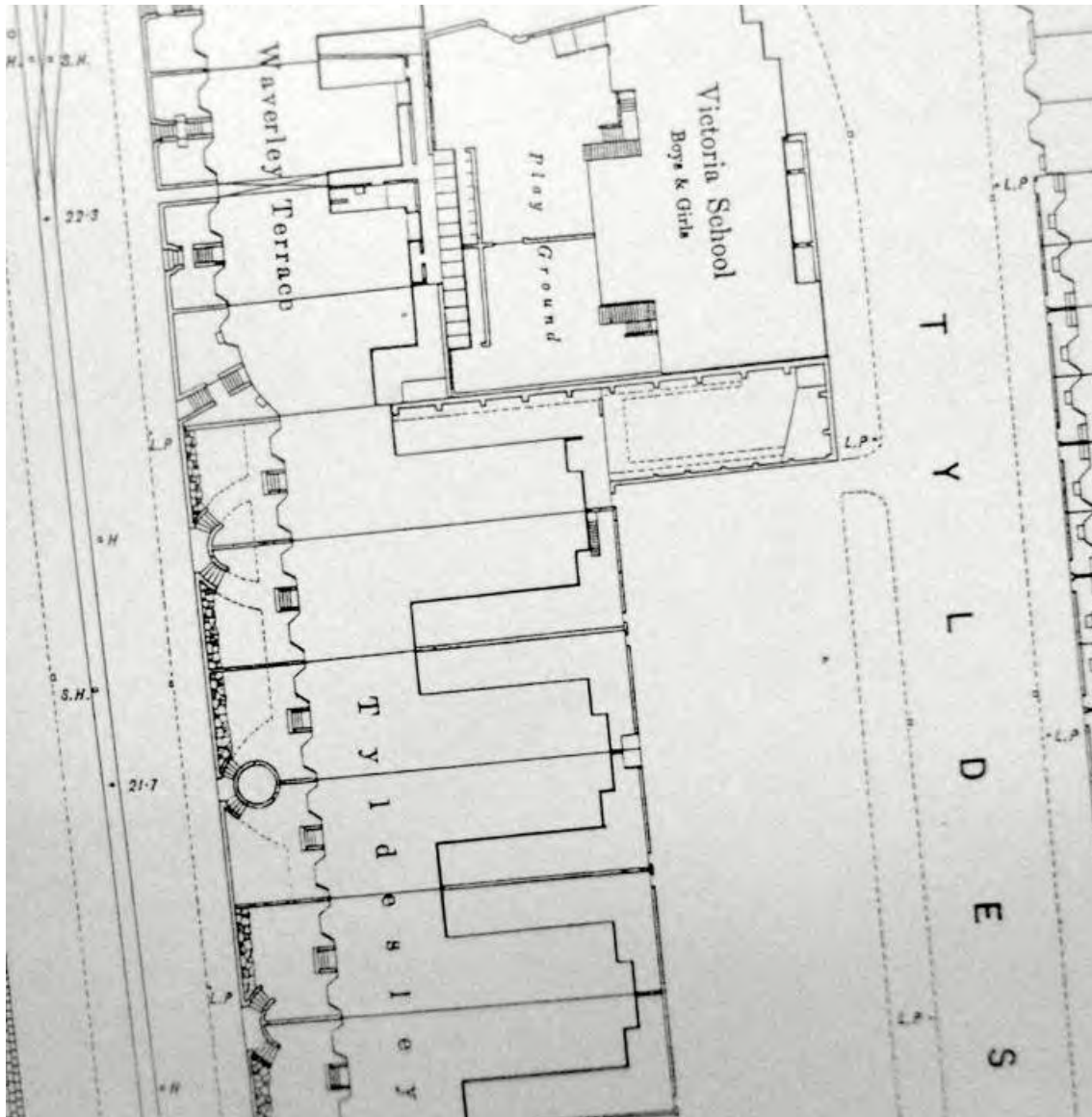


Fig. 8: Detail of 1893 OS map, 1:500 (surveyed 1891), showing Tyldesley Terrace (Blackpool Library)

#### 4.2.6 Central Promenade: Hounds Hill to the New Clifton Hotel

The 1838 Tithe map shows terraces and detached buildings along the sea front; the uses of some can be established from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1848 OS map (surveyed 1844). By this date there were two main hotels, the Royal and Dickson's, alongside Fox Hall, Yorkshire House and Coburgh House. In the 1860s Blackpool's main shopping streets formed a cohesive area centred on the market located directly behind the

seafront. The 1877 street plan by Joseph Harding clearly shows this development. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century large-scale entertainment premises were being to be built or rebuilt (Fig.9) and the 1912 OS map shows the seafront fully built-up and the Tower Buildings in place. The Tower was first promoted in late 1890 by the Standard Contract and Debenture Corporation, and in February 1891 the Blackpool Tower Company, an offshoot of the Standard Contract Company, was incorporated with £150,000 capital in £1 shares, including 62 subscriptions from Blackpool dignitaries and historic families. As the aims of Standard Contract became fraudulent – they had hoped to acquire the land and sell it to the Tower Company at profit, take on the construction and then go into liquidation – John Bickerstaffe, Blackpool's Mayor, reconstructed the Tower Company and pressed on with its development. The Tower Buildings were designed by Maxwell & Tuke, with the engineer R. J. G. Read; it opened in 1894 (Walton, 1998, p.91).

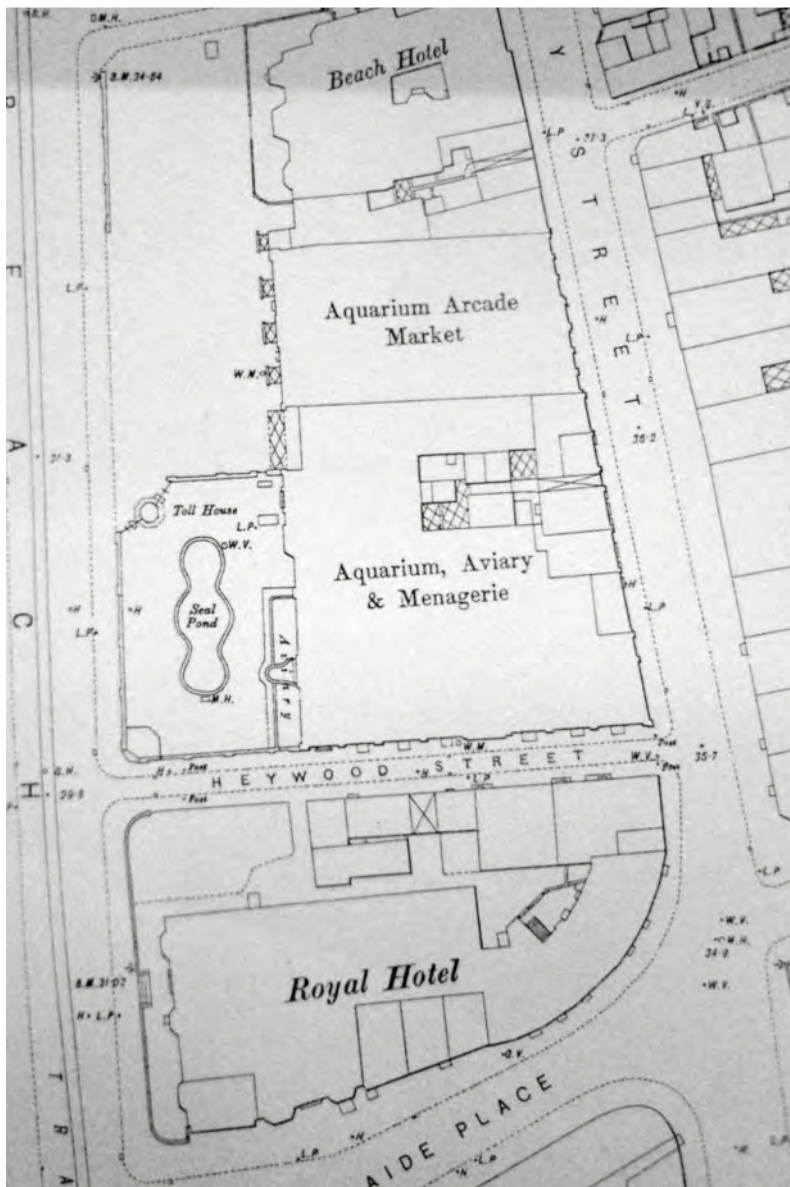


Fig. 9: 1893 OS map (surveyed 1891), 1:500, showing the Tower Buildings site (Blackpool Library)

#### **4.2.7 Central Promenade: North Pier and Princess Parade**

The 1838 Tithe Map shows Foxhall Road bearing west to follow the seafront, forming the Promenade, splitting again to form Bank Hey Street and Market Street inland, with the Promenade continuing to the north before turning off inland to the east of Dickson's Hotel. The 1877 street plan shows the northern part of the Promenade fully developed, with the Clifton Hotel and Bailey's Hotel prominent on the seafront. Bailey's Hotel was established in 1776 and was altered and enlarged in 1896; it has doubled in size by 1900. North Pier was opened in 1863 (Grade II listed) and the pier-head enlarged in 1874; its Indian Pavilion was destroyed by fire in 1921 with its successor also destroyed by fire in 1938; a new one was opened in June 1939. Sea defences were installed in 1868-70, and in 1912 a colonnade was built over them by the Borough Surveyor John Shanks Brodie. The colonnade formed part of Princess Parade and was opened by Princess Louise in May 1912. A large war memorial on a site to the south of the former Baileys Hotel (now Metropole Hotel) was unveiled in November 1923, probably designed by Grayson (Grade II listed).

20<sup>th</sup>-century change and renewal has meant that the Central Promenade now has a brash and colourful character, while retaining a subtle backdrop of 19<sup>th</sup>-century character developed from the early entertainment complexes. Pressure for change in the holiday market, especially through advertising, has created a streetscene of modern fascias and neon lights. Little historic advertising or building frontages, especially north of Central Pier, remains. South of Central Pier the area is characterised by terraces of substantial boarding houses. Many of these have been amalgamated to create larger hotels, with the addition of uPVC windows and modern signage. Historically the boarding houses along the whole Promenade had large front gardens; most of these gardens have been removed, probably from the mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century. Some have been re-surfaced and are used for car parking, usually with the original front boundary walls removed, and others have been partially built over with ground floor extensions to hotels. Although this has had a negative impact on the streetscape, none of the hotels have been extended to the back of the footway.



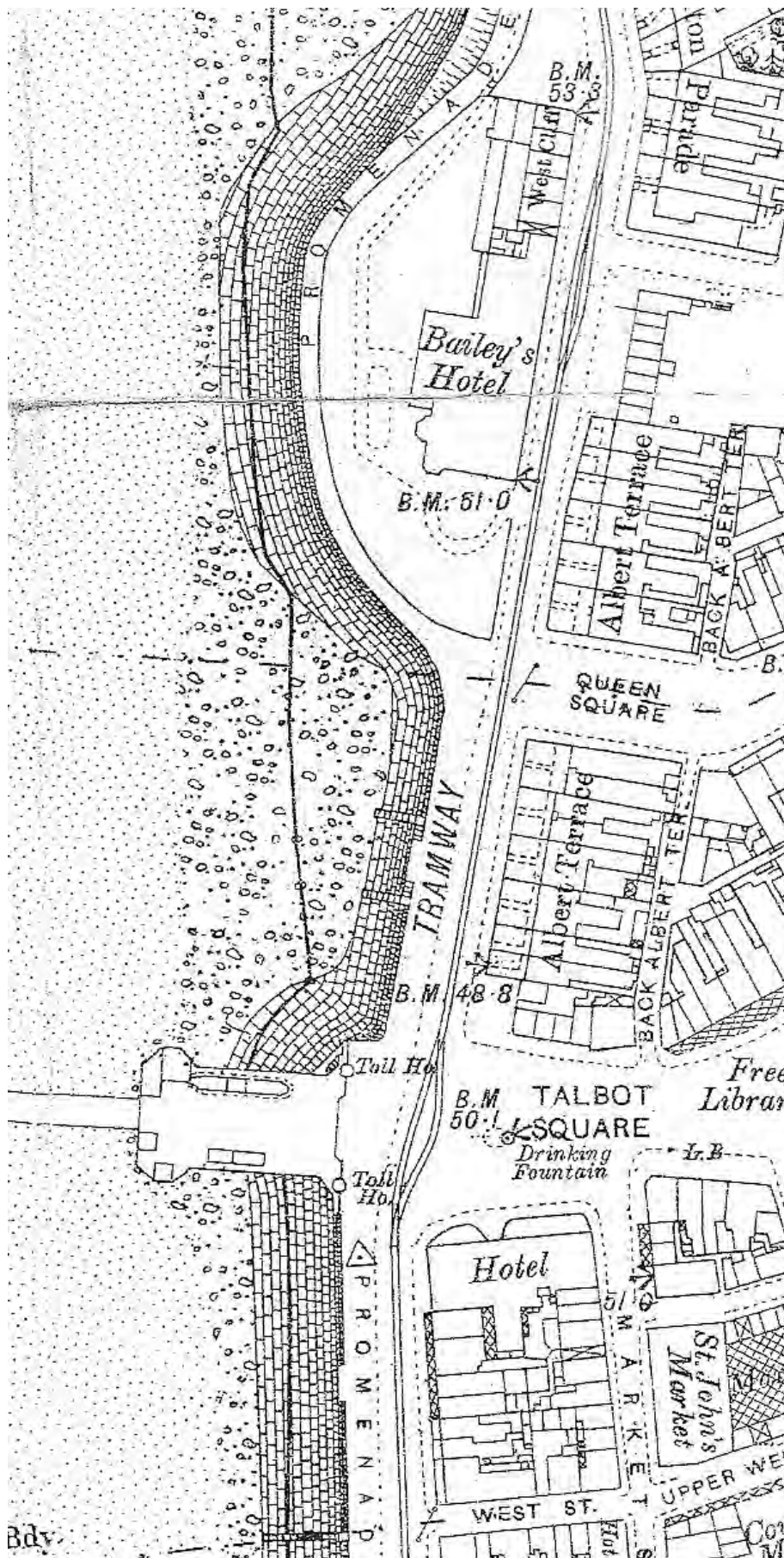


Fig. 10: 1893 OS map (1:2500) showing the Talbot Square area (Blackpool Library)

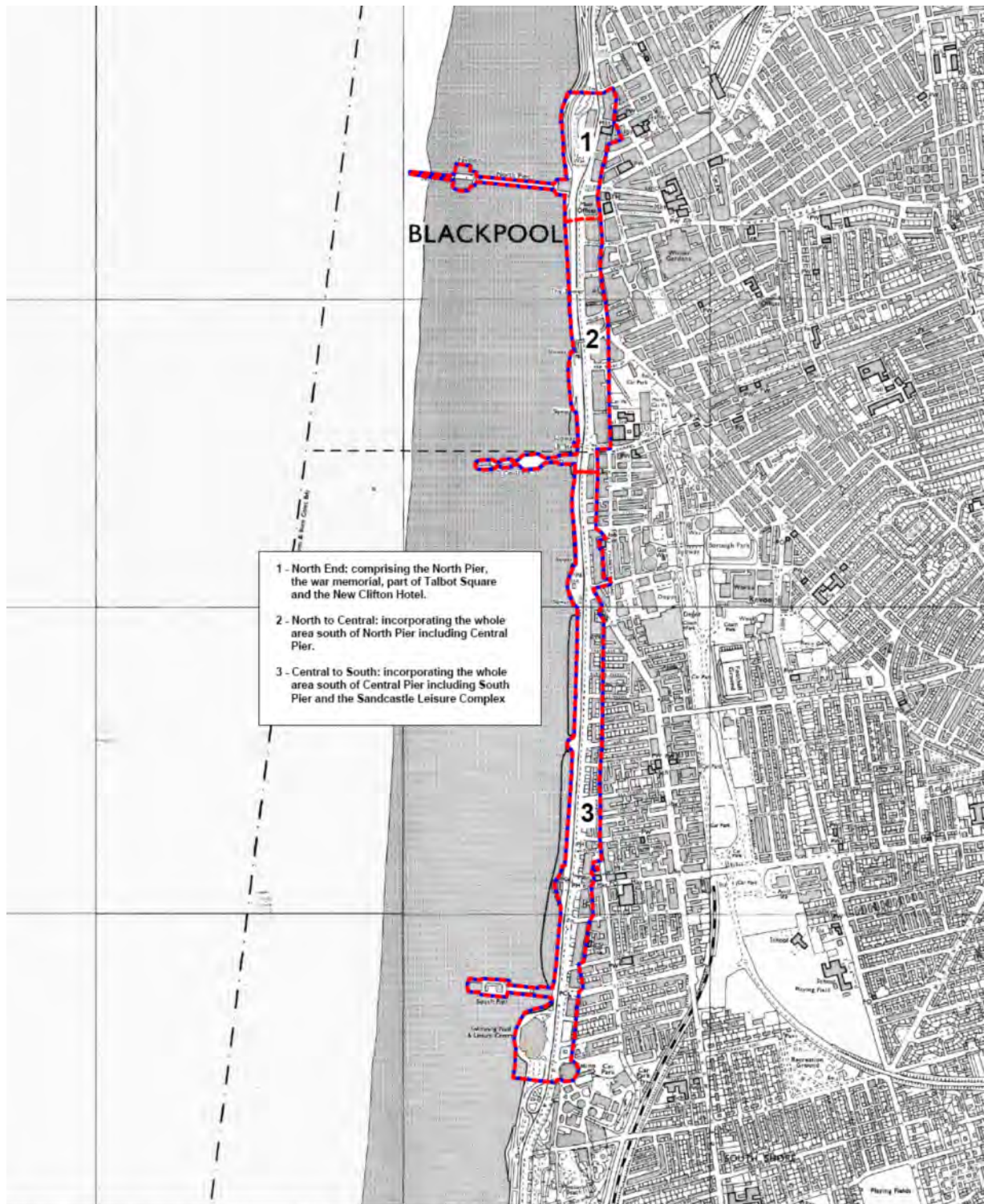
## **5.0 CENTRAL PROMENADE: CHARACTERISATION ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1 Character and appearance**

The area has been divided into three character areas defined by building types and survival of historic elements, shown on Fig. 11. The two principal areas have linear characteristics, defined to the west by the seawall and side streets one block east of the Promenade. The frontage consists of the Promenade proper, for pedestrian use, the tram lines, the road, for vehicular traffic, and the pavement on the landward side. Generally speaking the Central Promenade area can be characterised as one of retail, fast food and entertainment outlets concentrated close to the piers, with hotel and boarding house development to the south. The Promenade buildings are arranged in blocks, divided east-west by the inland streets and backing onto a series of back streets, especially to the south of Tyldesley Terrace. The specific areas are:

- 1) *North end*: comprising the North Pier, the war memorial, part of Talbot Square and the New Clifton Hotel
- 2) *North to Central*: incorporating the whole area south of North Pier including Central Pier
- 3) *Central to South*: incorporating the whole area south of Central Pier including South Pier and the Sandcastle leisure complex.

The character of the areas was assessed during field work and the principal characteristics recorded; these are set out in sections below.



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Title: Central/South Promenade  
 Sub Character Areas

Scale: 1:15000

Date: 13/01/2009 Printed by: CCC



Fig. 11: Central Promenade character areas

## **5.2 Spatial attributes, views and open spaces**

The spatial character of the area is derived from a combination of the underlying topography of the area, and the pattern of superimposed development, generated by the attractions of the sea itself. The Promenade falls slightly in height from the north to the south; at the war memorial it is at 20m above sea level, dropping to around 10m above sea level at its southern point. The underlying geology consists of Permo-Triassic sandstones masked by drift deposits of Aeolian-deposited sand and alluvium. The soil was described in 1838 as being composed of fine sand and gravel (LHTS, p10).

The line of the Promenade provides the most significant vista within the town, with the panorama of buildings on the land side, and sea views stretching away to the west. Views around the Promenade area can be appreciated from several small shelters built in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century. The views along the Promenade are dominated by the Pleasure Beach 'Big One' rollercoaster (outside the study area) to the south, while to the north views of both the big wheel on Central Pier and the Tower are prominent. The east side of the Promenade is densely developed with the frontage divided into blocks by east-west streets. This provides a strong urban 'edge' to the seafront of the resort. Framed linear views characterise the east-west streets between blocks of buildings. Open spaces in the area are at a premium as the Promenade provided the principal outdoor recreation space for the resort.

On the Promenade itself, the space is divided into three functional zones, the road fronting properties lining the east side, the tramway and the pedestrian area along the sea front; spatially these merge as one broad space with no visual barriers separating functions and views of the sea.

### **5.2.1 North end**

The northern tip of the Central Promenade arguably has the finest views out of the town within the area. A walkway leads towards the beach from the North Pier entrance, and provides vistas of the sea, sand and, on a clear day, the hills of the Lake District. The generous width of the walkway is enhanced by Princess Parade, to the east, which sweeps round to meet the tramway before stretching along the North Promenade towards Gynn Square. To the south of the Metropole Hotel the grassed Remembrance Square with its war memorial is a rare space of its type in the town and contributes to the spatial character at the north-west of Talbot Square.

Talbot Square, immediately opposite the North Pier, is another important open space, with views over the sea and to the Grade II listed North Pier. There is also a sense of space and important views towards the town, including several prominent historic buildings (such as the Town Hall). Talbot Square is in the Town Centre Conservation Area and although it is thoroughly urban its spatial characteristics are part of its importance. Queen's Square, to the south-east of the Metropole Hotel, is another public open space, but has less positive character; the buildings here are



generally altered with inserted ground floor shops, and the street furniture is of poor quality.



Fig. 12: View north along Princess Parade

### **5.2.2 North Pier to Central Pier and the Tower Buildings**

The area between the Metropole Hotel and the Central Pier is at the heart of Blackpool's famous 'Golden Mile' with some of the town's most famous buildings and landmarks, including the Tower, symbol of the place, which is pre-eminent in views all along the front. The densely built-up eastern side of the area which contains Blackpool's principal entertainment complexes is in direct contrast with the spacious Promenade to the west and the sea beyond. Views around this area are linear and stretch north to south, either along the Promenade to the sea or to the inland side, dominated by the built-up street frontage and the Tower.

Views into the area can be obtained from the North and Central Piers, and from the sea itself. Back streets, such as New Bonny Street, are also run north-south, although there are no far-reaching views due to the tight grain of buildings, at least three storeys high, on these back roads. Glimpses of the sea are gained between blocks of buildings (Fig. 14).



Fig. 13: View south along the Promenade from North Pier



Fig. 14: View of the sea from between the Tower Buildings and Woolworths

### 5.2.3 Central Pier to South Pier

As well as the views along the Promenade of the buildings and the sea, there are also views north of the whole Promenade from South Pier. These views are partly characterised by the tidal range with the newly-developed steps to the beach creating a visual boundary between the beach and the Promenade. Blackpool Tower and Central Pier are again prominent features in these views (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15: View north-east from South Pier

The steps also provide an ideal place to view the South Pier, and the best views of its historic structure are perhaps achieved from the edge of the Promenade and beach (Fig. 16).

At the south end of the area there are two open spaces between Simpson Street and the Promenade (Fig. 17). One is used as a crazy-golf course and the other is a small park (hosting a large free-standing display during the Illuminations) with a grassed area and a large paved area to its north. The spaces are bounded by stone and brick walls respectively, to the back of the footway. The spaces are particularly important as they give relief from the tight building grain of the Promenade's back streets.





Fig. 16: Looking south towards South Pier



Fig. 17: Open space at the south-east end of the Promenade, looking south towards the Casino and Pleasure Beach

### **5.3 Historic and current uses**

The principal uses of the buildings on the Promenade are commercial, either as retail or entertainment premises. However, to the south of Central Pier there are also terraces of high-quality boarding houses and several large hotels.

The demands for change in the holiday market mean that building uses are not constant, however late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Trade Directories give an impression of the original entertainment or retail facilities available. Taking the Central Promenade as an example, the 1885-6 Barrett Directory lists the Clifton Arms Hotel, the Blackpool Visitors' Office, the Blackpool Herald Office, four other hotels, and the Prince of Wales Baths and Market. The 1895 lists the use of retail premises (milliners, confectioners and oyster dealers, to name a few) and the Tower Buildings were also added to the Directory. Moving towards South Beach, the character of the Promenade changed, with more lodging houses, interspersed with hotels such as the Wellington (opposite Central Pier) and the Washington. By the late 1920s there were more entertainment and retail premises around the Tower Buildings, with the addition of the Picture Palace and Woolworth's Bazaar. Smaller retail premises included 'fast food' outlets such as oyster bars, sweet shops, tobacconists, and dealers of 'fancy goods', probably all aimed at the tourist market. The area south of Foxhall Square was almost wholly taken up with lodging houses and apartments. To the east of the Promenade, retail premises were focused around Market Street and Bank Hey Street; an example from the 1895 Barrett Directory lists grocers, drapers and bootmakers among the main trades, alongside cafés and public houses such as the White Swan.

Uses of the buildings on the Promenade changed as the buildings were altered, with the notable exception of the Tower Buildings, and were later augmented by entertainment complexes to the south such as Sealife, Funland and Louis Tussauds as well as numerous arcades and amusements. However, there is little late 20<sup>th</sup>-century development on the Central Promenade as older buildings have generally been retained and refaced. Further to the south the rows of boarding houses and apartments have remained in use as hotels or holiday apartments, although not without cosmetic alteration. Many of the apartments constructed in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century had large front gardens, often with pathways and a fountain or central feature. Almost all of these spaces have now been converted to hard standing for parking, probably beginning in the mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century with the reliance of motor vehicles. Many hotels have also been extended at ground-floor level towards the front, and some have added attic storeys. There are few retail premises on the Promenade today and the principal shopping area is concentrated around Bank Hey Street and Market Street, to the east of the Promenade.

The architectural character of the existing buildings is described in the following section.

## 5.4 Materials and construction

### 5.4.1 Elevations and roofing

The buildings on the Central Promenade are constructed of a mixture of brick, stone and steel. The older, 19<sup>th</sup>-century boarding houses are generally stone-faced, although many have been painted or rendered, while Edwardian buildings such as ‘Tommy Ducks’ pub and the Dutton Arms are constructed of hard red brick in stretcher bond, with terracotta details. A softer red brick, laid in stretcher bond, and probably constructed on a steel frame, was used for Nos. 1-5 Waterloo Road, which also has dressings of cream faience (Fig. 18). Faience is more common on the seafront buildings, being hardwearing, other examples include the former Woolworth’s store, the former Central Beach cinema, and Feldman’s Arcade.



Fig. 18: Brick and faience apartment building at the corner of Waterloo Road

Mid to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, particularly around the Tower Buildings and Central Pier, are generally of steel-frame construction and are faced in a variety of materials. The Tower and piers are of cast-iron construction, with the pier decks and buildings generally of timber. This variety of materials gives diverse character, and around the Tower frontages are broken into blocks of distinct commercial development phases; for example the Sea Life centre and Funland have flat rectangular elevations with extensive modern signage on the upper storeys, creating



a homogenous frontage block (Fig. 19). Roofing is generally of Welsh slate to the hotels and boarding houses, but roofs of commercial and leisure properties are often hidden behind parapets. The roofs of tram shelters and pavilions on the Promenade proper are covered in sheet lead, and the pier buildings use modern materials, including asbestos tiles (South Pier) and asphalt sheeting (North Pier).



Fig. 19: Modern fascias to the Sea Life centre and Funland, adjacent to the Tower

#### 5.4.2 Doors and windows

To the south of the area windows of boarding houses and hotels have generally been replaced with uPVC double-glazed units, and doors are also often modern replacements. Where timber sash windows exist they are usually in poor condition due to weather damage; one building of note is the Beachcomber Café (No.499 Promenade) which has timber sashes with coloured, leaded glass to the upper lights, and an oriel window complete with leaded glass (Fig. 20). The adjacent 'Tommy Ducks' pub also retains its sash windows. The Camelot and Sands Hotels (No. 487 Promenade and 1-3 Dean Street) have stone mullioned tripartite windows to the ground floor, with some coloured glass retained in the upper lights (Fig. 21).



Fig. 20: Timber sashes and coloured glass to the rear elevation of the Beachcomber cafe



Fig. 21: Ground floor windows to No.487 Promenade



### 5.4.3 Shopfronts and fascias

The range of shopfronts and building fascias in the area is broad, but generally the survival of historic elements is rare. One example of an earlier timber shopfront with console brackets can be found to the rear of No. 499 Promenade (No. 1 Simpson Street), but this has been adapted with metal roller shutters. Well-designed fascias to leisure facilities are also rare, although examples such as Coral Island and the Golden Mile Centre bring unique character to the Promenade buildings (Fig. 22).



Fig. 22: Coral Island, on the corner of New Bonny Street

Commercial demand to draw more visitors and the pressures of advertising has ensured that signs have got bigger and more colourful; subtlety is not a characteristic of Blackpool's seafront. A regular feature of the Promenade entertainment buildings is ribbed metal fascias with lightbulbs forming illuminated signage (Fig. 23). In many cases, such as at the former Picture Palace (Happy Dayz arcade) these fascias have been added to the ground floors of older buildings.



Fig. 23: Typical amusement arcade frontage on the Promenade

The brashness of many of the arcades and amusement centres is integral to Blackpool's character and this is reflected in the introduction of new materials as they have become available.

#### 5.4.4 Signs and details

Historic signs on the Promenade are rare. The Promenade road is a major thoroughfare (A584) and directional signs are modern as are most street-name signs at the junctions.

On the back streets such as Bath Street some older metal street-name signs survive, probably dating from the 1920s when there were street name changes. The signs are made up from individual letter plates. Some directional signs take the same form, such as those on 'Tommy Ducks' pub at the corner of Station Road (Fig. 24).



Fig. 24: Historic directional signs to Nos 495-497 Promenade

Other forms of historic signage include cast-iron mile markers along the Promenade, erected in the 1920s both as a topographical reminder, and as an incentive for visitors to walk the 'Golden Mile' (Fig. 25). The markers may also have been erected to tempt visitors away from the central area of entertainment around the Tower Buildings, and towards the South Pier and Pleasure Beach. There is also a cast-iron standard commemorating 'Britain's First Electric Tramway' by North Pier (Fig. 26).





Fig. 25: Mile marker by South Pier



Fig. 26: Cast-iron sign noting 'Britain's First Electric Tramway'

Architectural details such as wrought and cast-iron balconies can be seen on the bigger hotels, particularly the north-west elevation of the Metropole (Fig. 27).



Fig. 27: Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century ironwork balconies to the west elevation of the Metropole Hotel

### 5.4.5 Boundaries

The principal boundaries along the Promenade are to the beach at the western edge of the area and to the frontages of properties; the types of boundary treatment here are described under 5.4.7. *Street furniture*. To the south of Foxhall Square, where hotels are prominent, property boundaries are generally of modern construction, although a few examples of original walling and gate piers have survived (Fig. 28).



Fig. 28: Original stone boundary wall to back of footway outside the Camelot Hotel

The high brick elevations of service buildings line the western sides of back streets, especially in the south.

### 5.4.6 Roads and footways

The Promenade comprises a series of elements, from the sea wall to the back streets behind the Promenade buildings. The back streets have tarmac surfacing, with narrow concrete or tarmac footways, which at the south end of the area are generally confined to the east side of the street. The inland footway is wide with a tarmac surface, with pavements and tactile surfaces at crossings and junctions. The main Promenade road is surfaced with tarmac, as is the tramway. The Promenade proper consists of a number of different surfaces, none of which are historic. At the south and north ends a mixture of tarmac, concrete and modern surfacing such as pavements and tactile blocks are used (Fig. 29).



In some areas the footway surface has been patched and is showing signs of disintegration; this is being eradicated by a programme of improvement works to the Promenade. Where the Promenade has been improved it has been resurfaced, creating a homogenous floorscape which offsets many of the views along the Promenade, especially around the area of the Tower Buildings and Central Pier.



Fig. 29: Surfacing to the Promenade near South Pier

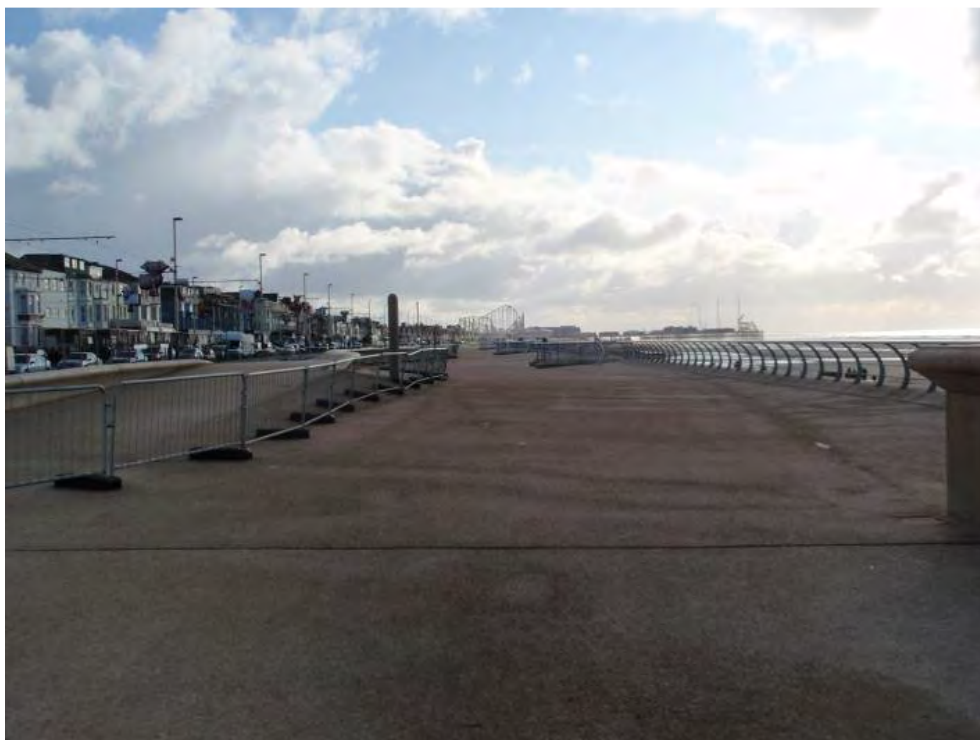


Fig. 30: New Promenade surfacing near Central Pier

#### 5.4.7 Street furniture

Stretches of the boundary railings between the Promenade and the beach have recently been replaced during the widening and resurfacing of the Promenade. Historic cast-iron railings of at least two patterns can be found in the area. Those shown in Fig. 31 are characteristic of most of the principal seafront, from the Central Pier to the Tower Buildings. To the north of North Pier the design is much simpler, and is probably contemporary with the construction of Princess Parade in 1912.



Fig. 31: Late Victorian or Edwardian cast-iron railings on the Promenade

There are also examples of 1930s railings, specifically adjacent to North Pier where there is a viewing platform, with a lavatory block beneath accessed from the lower Promenade walkway. At the upper level the platform is bounded by square-section geometric steel balustrading of a typical interwar pattern (Fig. 32).





Fig. 32: 1920s steel balustrading near North Pier

Short sections of railings near the Tower Buildings are of a plastic material, emulating a historic style (Fig. 33).



Fig. 33: 20<sup>th</sup>-century synthetic railings near North Pier

The busy central road running north to south has created safety issues and there are various protective barriers on the edges of the footways. All of these are of modern materials, usually galvanised steel, and have little aesthetic value. A row of cast-iron or steel bollards, probably dating from the interwar period, are extant outside the former Picture Palace (Fig. 34).



Fig. 34: Cast-iron bollards on the east side of the Promenade

There are areas of seating both along the Promenade and on the lower walkway. Historic seating includes sets of double benches with cast-iron frames with a lions' head detail and timber struts opposite the Tower Buildings (Fig. 35). These could be of interwar date or reproductions to designs of that era. The lower walkway near North Pier has three tiers of timber seating (Fig. 36). At the south end of the area the refurbished sections of the Promenade have less seating, but the stepped hard-landscaping down to the beach provides adequate seating.





Fig.35: Cast-iron and timber benches near the Tower



Fig. 36: Timber seating near North Pier



Historically, the Promenade was lit by cast-iron standards placed at regular intervals (Fig. 37).



Fig. 37: Early 20<sup>th</sup> century postcard looking south from Central Pier  
(Image from [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk))

These standards have almost all been replaced with simple modern versions. Examples of historic lighting survive adjacent to the North Pier (Figs 38 & 39). The principal roadway and back streets are lit by modern galvanised standards of little aesthetic value, although cast-iron standards with modern lamps are extant at the rear of the Sea Life centre and Funland.



Fig. 38: Modern lamp standards near the Tower



Fig. 39: Edwardian twin-lamp standard near North Pier

Blackpool's tram system is not only a vital part of its transport infrastructure, but the tram stops form visual landmarks and places of orientation. Historic images and postcards suggest there were few tram shelters along the Promenade, and these were small and elaborate compared with today's examples. The overhead electric power supply for the trams and the cables carrying the Illuminations are carried on steel poles, forming a lightweight visual characteristic of the Promenade. The poles probably largely date from the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century.



Fig. 40: Tram shelter at South Beach, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century  
(Image from [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk))

Tram shelters extant today are of two types. Those shown in Fig. 41 are designed in a pastiche of a Victorian style, similar to the style of the Promenade shelters, with a timber structure and lead roof with pinnacles. Later 20<sup>th</sup>-century examples are metal framed with glazed panels (Fig. 42).





Fig. 41: Tram shelter near the Tower



Fig. 42: Late 20<sup>th</sup>-century tram shelter by South Pier

Other important landmarks on the Promenade include a series of shelters erected in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century to designs by John Shanks Brodie. Three pairs are listed Grade II, described in their list description as being located opposite Alexandra Road, Wellington Road and Trafalgar Road; these have been removed during refurbishment work on the Promenade and are being restored off-site. Their return and re-siting, possibly in their original positions, is important and with correct interpretation would contribute significantly to the historic development of the Promenade. There are also several replica shelters, some of which are kiosks (Figs. 43 & 44), which were part of a large Promenade refurbishment project completed in 1994.



Fig. 43: Replica Promenade shelter





Fig. 44: Pair of kiosks opposite the Tower, in the style of the historic shelters

A bandstand (opened 1994) and a tourist information kiosk (opened in 1989) are designed to echo historic shelters; both are positive contributions to the townscape.

### 5.5 Architectural character

The architectural character of the area as a whole is dominated by the principal entertainment structures which give Blackpool its unique quality. Blackpool is the only British resort with three piers, all of 19<sup>th</sup> century origin, all of structural interest. Blackpool Tower is unique and one of very few buildings which can accurately be described as iconic. These structures, central to the character of the place, are all essentially Victorian (repairs notwithstanding), immense cast-iron structures of the railway age and potent symbols of the birth of the mass entertainment industry. These structures and the Promenade, successively extended and widened, provide the context. Broadly speaking the architectural character is Edwardian and Victorian with some distinctive interwar buildings and some post-war buildings. Entertainment buildings frequently exhibit a patina of fascias and elevational treatments responding to the need for constant change and novelty.

The character of the small hotels and boarding houses is generally dictated by function; the need to capitalise on desirable sea-front locations by building to three

storeys incorporating bay windows to take advantage of sea views. Later additions include attic and ground floor frontage extensions (Fig. 45).



Fig. 45: Boarding houses on the Promenade

Display concentrates on front elevations, though there are a few street-corner buildings and only one or two on island sites where elaboration is continued in the side elevations. Within this general framework the architectural styles encompass Italianate, Gothic or Elizabethan and Renaissance idioms and the materials usually reflect the need to withstand sea-front weather conditions. This means that timber is only occasionally used, while the use of terracotta and faience becomes more common once the materials became readily available from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Long terraces, some of unified design, are a special feature of the southern part of the area. The notable interwar buildings include some apparently designed as apartments and a few adopting a distinctive Art Deco style. Post-war boarding houses hotels and apartments are few and generally without architectural distinction.

Apart from the Tower and the basic structure of the piers, all with qualities of mass and scale which transcend superficial alteration, the entertainment buildings are prone to continuous alteration and often complete rebuilding. Exceptions which retain strong character despite ground-floor alterations are the former South Beach Cinema, and Feldman's Arcade, both clad in faience and both in broadly Edwardian

Baroque style. The Palace Discotheque and attached footbridge of 1975 can be characterised as a light-hearted Pop Art style (Fig. 46).



Fig. 46: Palace Disco

Coral Island, with a frontage by Roche Design (1999) features remodelling of very high quality, continuing in the spirit of the interwar film-set interiors of the Winter Gardens. Apart from these examples most other entertainment buildings defy architectural categorisation in their (often ephemeral) façade treatments and although many have definite character and contribute to a lively and varied scene, some present bland or degraded façades with little engagement with the general setting.

Another category is retail and food outlets. The importance of Blackpool as a shopping centre is underlined by the locally listed former Woolworths store beside the Tower Buildings. A huge structure of broadly Art Deco inspiration, it stands on its own in terms of scale in the study area, though there are slightly smaller and less prominent counterparts just inland (such as the Edith Centre on Bank Hey Street, a Marks & Spencer store of 1936). There are few other shops or food outlets which have not escaped substantial alteration. One exception is Roberts Oyster Bar, which retains mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century character and, most unusually, cast-iron column canopy



supports. Another is Notarianni Ices in on Waterloo Road which has retained its interwar character.

### 5.6 Degree of completeness

The piers, the Tower Buildings and the former Woolworths store are of sufficiently robust design and on such a scale that despite superficial alteration the landmark qualities can be described as well preserved, with qualities of massing and scale which underpin the historic and architectural context. The Tower Buildings and the North Pier are the best preserved, reflecting in part the protection offered by listed status. Having said this, almost all the buildings within the study area have been altered, many of them greatly. The principal contributing factors are the search for novelty and eye-catching qualities important to the entertainment buildings (Fig. 47), and the need to capitalise on space, evident in many of the boarding houses and hotels.



Fig. 47: Entertainment buildings south of the Tower

Another factor of specific relevance to the piers is a history of damage by severe weather and fire, which, combined with the constant need to offer new visitor attractions, means that (with the exception of the listed North Pier) very few original deck buildings survive, though the piers retain original structural elements.



Loss of original windows and doors is common in all area of Blackpool, but on the front the depredations of the weather and need for insulation militate against survival of timber originals, and few are in evidence. Boarding houses, hotels and pubs often feature altered or extended entrances, some of which are reversible, and many have 20<sup>th</sup> century extensions along whole stretches of the frontages to provide sun lounges or cafés. Although these are visually intrusive, in many cases upper storeys survive in relatively unaltered condition (Fig. 48).



Fig. 48: Ground floor extensions and almost complete upper storeys to Eaves Terrace

Of the lesser buildings the degree of completeness is generally fragmentary, but certain examples, especially those with potential for local listing, are sufficiently intact to retain historic and architectural interest. In the cases of terraces and blocks of similar date and design the alterations can in some cases be considered to be subservient to the overall impact, especially where upper floors are well-preserved. The Promenade itself has been greatly altered since first constructed in phases between 1870 and 1905. Comparing historic views (Fig. 37) to present appearance, the main change has been the substantial increase in width, creating a very broad space between buildings and sea, distancing the buildings from their historical close relationship to the sea.

## **5.7 Archaeological potential**

Early mapping suggests that before the Modern era the area was mainly open land or in cultivation with little evidence for human settlement. The remains of any pre-18<sup>th</sup> century structures along the principal historic routes are unlikely to have survived constant building and rebuilding, and the current state of knowledge suggests that the archaeological potential is low. Further advice on specific sites should be sought from Lancashire County Council in advance of major redevelopment.

## 6.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 6.1 Assessing significance

The relative significance of buildings in the study area has been assessed using a variation of the assessment criteria developed and used for the Oldham and Rochdale Pathfinder Heritage Assessment report, prepared by Lathams in 2006. The key issues that contribute to heritage significance are the historic context and the architectural merit of the buildings. The following factors have been taken into account:

- Buildings constructed as part of the 1880s-1890s phase of development and surviving in anything like their original form;
- Intrinsic architectural or historic merit, including association with significant event or individual;
- Relationship with other groups of significant buildings or landscapes, which have a designated merit, e.g. conservation areas;
- The relationship between otherwise unremarkable buildings and the wider urban landscape, to create townscape of value in the context of the wider area.

These attributes in some cases overlap. They have been used to determine significance values of buildings and groups of buildings or spaces, according to the following categories of significance.

- **Protected:** buildings, features or spaces that are protected by way of listing, scheduling or being within a conservation area or registered park. There are four listed buildings within the area: the Tower Buildings (Blackpool's only Grade I listed building), North Pier, the New Clifton Hotel and the war memorial (both Grade II). A series of Grade II listed Edwardian shelters on the Promenade have been removed for restoration. The north end of the area, as far as the Metropole Hotel, is within the Town Centre Conservation Area.
- **High value:** buildings, features or spaces that could be candidates for listing or other protection, where retention is presumed.
- **Local List Potential:** buildings, features or spaces of clear local interest. Although not candidates for listing, they make a positive contribution to the street scene and should be retained unless it can be demonstrated that redevelopment would be of greater benefit to the character of setting of adjoining buildings and spaces or that there are overriding social or economic factors. Twenty-four buildings have local list potential along Central Promenade, including both unlisted piers, and a number of pubs and hotels.

- **Positive value:** buildings, features or spaces of good local interest but of lesser quality than potential Local List buildings, or altered superficially. They make a positive contribution to the street scene and should be retained as part of future regeneration, if practicable. Along Central Promenade there is quite a low proportion of positive buildings, due to the continuous need for alteration and pressure for change. Those identified are mainly in the area near the Tower Buildings.
- **Neutral value:** buildings, features or spaces which although of little individual merit, combine with other buildings and spaces to create a townscape of value, which could be recreated through careful new development that complements the townscape. Neutral buildings constitute the largest proportion of the character of Central Promenade.
- **Negative value:** buildings, features or spaces which have an adverse impact on any aspect of the significance or heritage value of the townscape or other buildings, and where redevelopment or removal is positively encouraged. There are several negative buildings on Central Promenade, identified mainly because of extensive alterations or unsympathetic frontages. Badly maintained buildings also contribute.

## 6.2 Summary of significance of Central Promenade

### 6.2.1 Character summary and designation status of the area.

The character of the Central Promenade area can be summarised as a unique seaside landscape incorporating the iconic Blackpool Tower as a principal landmark, three piers and other buildings which exemplify the development of mass tourism during the Victorian period and the continuing search for novelty in the entertainment industry. The buildings' contribution to the streetscene is shown in the three maps in Appendix 2.

The Central Promenade area has the highest proportion of listed buildings in the areas surveyed in 2008. The Tower Buildings are listed Grade I and were built between 1891 and 1894; the Tower itself is the most prominent and famous aspect of Blackpool's townscape. Also listed, all at Grade II, are the North Pier, the New Clifton Hotel, the war memorial, and three pairs of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Promenade shelters originally opposite Alexandra Road, Wellington Road and Trafalgar Road (currently removed). At its north end part of the area is situated within the Town Centre Conservation Area, which continues to the east to Topping Street (not included in this survey). The area has been divided into three character areas defined by building types and survival of historic elements, shown on Fig. 11.



### 6.2.2 North end

The north end of the Central Promenade area contains the largest number of landmark assets. It is characterised by the spatial relationships between the approach from Talbot Square to the east, towards North Pier and Princess Parade to the north-west. Talbot Square and Queen's Square, along with the area around the war memorial are important open spaces within the town. The New Clifton Hotel (1875-6), designated Grade II, is one of Blackpool's earliest large hotels, and is a landmark building marking the corner to the Golden Mile. Most of this area is contained in the Town Centre Conservation Area. The area is inherently **positive**, with the North Pier, the New Clifton Hotel and the war memorial having statutory designation at Grade II, and the Metropole Hotel and Colonnades on Princess Parade having local list potential.



Fig. 49: Looking north from North Pier

The row of buildings to the east of the Metropole (Nos 114-190) are **neutral**, although the former Princess Electric Cinema of 1912 (now Club Sanuk) with its off-white faience cladding, and the flanking terracotta-faced former market buildings (Nos 174-186) are of **positive** value. The Counting House pub (No. 10 Talbot Square) has local list potential.



Fig. 50: North east side of the northern end of the Central Promenade area

### 6.2.3 North Pier to Central Pier

The area between Talbot Square and the Central Pier is at the heart of Blackpool's famous 'Golden Mile' and is central to the character of Blackpool with some of the town's most famous buildings and landmarks, notably the Tower. It is an area dedicated to leisure and although it has been continuously updated it broadly retains an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century character.

The Promenade was laid out in 1870 and successively altered and embellished. Changes included the creation of the Princess Parade Colonnade in 1912 and a spacious setting between this and the North Pier where the First World War memorial stands. The stretch between North Pier and Central Pier retains a relatively high number of original or facsimile structures and street furniture, including replica and Edwardian shelters and kiosks, and tram-stop shelters which appear to be of late

20<sup>th</sup>-century date on a traditional Edwardian pattern. This stretch incorporates a walkway on two levels and access to the beach via steps.

North Pier was the first of the piers to open, in 1863, and was designed by Eugenius Birch, the premier pier designer of the day. The buildings on the seafront include some relatively small premises as well as one of the largest retail buildings and landmark in its own right, the former Woolworth's building of 1936 immediately south of Tower Buildings. The Metropole Hotel, to the north, is right on the seafront. The buildings form a mix of old and new, which differ in scale and materials. Roberts Oyster Bar and its neighbours to the north are amongst the earliest and the new Woolworth's store and frontages to entertainment buildings to the south date from the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Of the more recent buildings the Golden Mile amusement centre (Fig. 51), the Pop-Art style Palace Disco and more recent Coral Island (originally opened 1978; altered with current façade 1999) are **positive** additions to the repertoire of entertainment buildings. Between North Pier and New Bonny Street, The Metropole Hotel, Roberts Oyster Bar (No.92), Feldman's Arcade (No.100), and the former Woolworth's building have local list potential. The Tower is designated Grade I, and North Pier and the war memorial are listed Grade II. Interwar buildings on the corner of Church Street (Brannigans and Burger King, Nos. 2-4 Church Street) are considered **positive** despite ground-floor alteration.



Fig. 51: Typical colourful street frontage on the Promenade



In contrast the group to the south of New Bonny Street, including the Golden Pyramid, Funland and the Sea Life centre (Nos 47-59), have relatively flat homogenous façades. The latter two buildings were built on the site of Read's Baths and Bazaar, which in the 1920s became Luna Park; this was demolished in the 1967 for the present buildings. Louis Tussauds (Nos 75-83) was opened at the current site in 1929, and the original faience façade by Shaw's of Darwen was removed in 1974 when the building was extended over the forecourt. Funland and the Sea Life centre have a negative impact on the townscape, but overall this stretch of the Promenade is **neutral** in character, with the Central Beach cinema (Nos. 95-97), Central Pier and former Lifeboat House being of local list potential.

The back streets running parallel to the east of the Promenade include The Strand, a pedestrianised street connecting Talbot Square with Queen's Square, acting as a service street and lined with the backs of shops and restaurants (Fig.52). The square and The Strand are **neutral** in character. The Counting House pub (No.10 Talbot Road) has local list potential and also lies within the Town Centre Conservation Area.



Fig. 52: The Strand, from the south



To the south, Market Street is a major town centre thoroughfare populated by larger retail, restaurant and entertainment buildings of varying dates and types; the survey area covers the west side only. Nos 23-37 are in rather poor condition and there is a gap site on the north-west corner with West Street. Overall the street is **neutral** in character, although there are several positive buildings on Market Street, including: the Market Street Diner (No. 41), and Leonard Dews (No.16 Church Street), of four storeys, rendered brick, with consoles to the windows and a good shopfront; the building is dated 1874. 'Fever' (Nos. 43-47), and Feldman's Arcade (No.100 Promenade) have local list potential. Also of note on Market Street is a sculpture outside Nos. 43-47; 'Acrobats' by Glynn Williams was installed in 1999 as part of a programme of public art sculpture in surrounding streets and it makes a positive contribution to the street scene (Fig. 53). The New Clifton Hotel at the north end of the street facing Talbot Square is designated Grade II and was being refurbished during the survey; the hotel and Feldman's Arcade both lie within the Town Centre Conservation Area.



Fig. 53: 'Acrobats' sculpture outside Nos. 43-47 Market Street

Further south the west side of Bank Hey Street is mostly pedestrianised and the west side taken up with the back of Tower Buildings, the curving termination of the old Woolworths store, the rear of the Palace Disco building and a modern brick building, opened for Woolworth's in 1994. The latter makes a negative contribution to the streetscape, and many of the historic buildings have been altered at ground floor level, with the insertion of modern shop fronts and fascias (for example a fast-food restaurant – KFC - at the north-east corner of Tower Buildings), the street is **positive** and retains some powerful streetscape presences. The former Woolworth's building has strong potential for a local list; the Tower Buildings are designated Grade I.



Fig. 54: The east side of Tower Buildings on Bank Hey Street

Bank Hey Street runs into Bonny Street, via New Bonny Street which curves around Coral Island (the survey area boundary runs through the centre of the latter). Bonny Street is characterised by the rear elevations of the entertainment complexes on the Promenade, and these elevations are notably different to their public ones. The street has an open aspect, owed to the open land on the former Central Station site and isolated character of the police station and magistrate's court complex on the east side (outside the survey area) and views of the Tower. Overall the street is of **neutral** character, with the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Pump and Truncheon pub (Nos.11-15) to the rear of the Golden Pyramid being of positive value.



Fig. 55: Looking north along the west side of Bonny Street

#### 6.2.4 Central Pier to South Pier

Central Pier was the second of Blackpool's piers, erected in 1867-8. The Promenade between it and South Pier was laid out in 1870, and South Pier (formerly Victoria Pier) was built in 1892-3. Generally speaking this section of the Central Promenade area can be characterised as one of retail, fast food and entertainment outlets concentrated close to the piers, with hotel and boarding house development between. The Promenade between the Central and South Piers retains a few elements of ironwork, probably of mid and later 20<sup>th</sup>-century date. Most of the Promenade was being rebuilt and improved at the time of the survey as part of a major coastal defence project. A few buildings on the seafront are of neutral quality. They include a pumping station with striped chimney opposite Gramsford Lodge Hotel and, opposite Eaves Terrace, an electricity substation.

Immediately opposite the Central Pier the block of buildings on the Promenade is further forward than to the north, and the block between Chapel Street and Foxhall Square contains disparate entertainment buildings, cafés and retail outlets. These are generally of poor quality, with a mixture of scale and fascia treatments and are generally negative in character. No. 123 (Webster's Pub) has local list potential.





Fig. 56: A building with negative character, No 115-121 Promenade, next to a potential local list building at No.123

The back streets, from Foxhall Square north to Chapel Street, are characterised by the rear elevations of the entertainment buildings; these have been less altered than frontages and are more utilitarian, and are of neutral value (Fig.57). There are good framed views to the north to the Tower.





Fig. 57: Looking south along the east side of Foxhall Road from Chapel Street

From the Reflex Bar, a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century pub to the south of Foxhall Square, the area's character changes as the front becomes dominated by rows of hotels. The buildings from this point south are largely of **neutral** value; however as a group, despite some later infill and additions, they are central to the character of this part of the Promenade. Buildings are generally of three storeys with full-height bay windows and added attic storeys, and are mainly set well back from the road, but almost all have later additions to the ground-floor frontages to provide lounges, cafés or shops, sometimes run as separate businesses. Those without extensions have forecourts almost universally given over to car parking, with loss of historic gardens and front walls. There is a general loss of detail, with replacement windows and added signage. Buildings are almost all rendered or stuccoed brick with slate roofs, and were probably built speculatively in blocks from the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century after Central Pier was built. Tyldesley Terrace (Nos. 211-221) is one example, dated 1880 and occupied by a number of separate establishments. These long ranges of hotels include some blocks with positive qualities, such as St Chad's hotel, (Nos 317-327) dated 1891 (Fig.58), and Lord's Hotel (No. 341). Individual buildings which have positive value include the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Beachcomber café (No. 499 Promenade) which retains its original form and sash windows with coloured lights; 'Pablo's' (Nos. 489-491), a former early 19<sup>th</sup>-century vicarage, extensively altered to create a restaurant but retaining historic integrity and interest at the gable line. Kennedy

House, a block of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century flats, on the corner of Alexandra Street, and Nos 275-279 and 421-425 Promenade are of negative quality.



Fig. 58: St Chad's hotel

Nos 235 and No 237, the Gramsford Lodge Hotel, are a pair and the best preserved examples of the building type in this area, little altered externally, with (probably replacement) front walls, with local list potential. Eaves Terrace (Nos. 263-271), dated 1878, and the Camelot and Sands Hotel (No 487 Promenade & No. 3 Dean Street) also have local list potential with good retention of historic detail and little-altered upper floor elevations. The latter is also a prominent landmark within South Beach.



Fig. 59: 'Linden Lea' (No 487 Promenade & No. 3 Dean Street) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Image from [www.rossallbeach.co.uk](http://www.rossallbeach.co.uk))

Most other buildings with local list potential are for public use, including a number of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century pubs and hotels, for example Tommy Ducks bar (Nos. 495-497), and, and those of interwar origin such as New Oceans Hotel (No. 335), Yates's Wine Lodge (former Lion Hotel), and the Dutton Pub. The two unlisted piers, Central and South, are also recommended.

South of Foxhall Square the streets to the east, which mainly run parallel to the Promenade, can be characterised as service streets. On their west side they comprise the rear yards and minor outbuildings associated with the frontage hotel buildings. The whole stretch from Simpson Street to Foxhall Square is of **neutral** character.





Fig. 60: Montague Street, west side, with the former South Shore Hotel at the southern end



## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The significance of the area is set out in *Section 6.2*. The following recommendations are based on heritage value, as assessed in earlier sections of this report and do not take detailed account of other factors such as economic viability or sustainability. To protect buildings of positive significance, a Local List containing the potential buildings identified in this report could be formed and maintained, informed by relevant policy and guidance in the Local Development Framework. It is not considered that any part of the area merits being designated as a conservation area, or as an extension to the current Town Centre Conservation Area.

### **7.1. Impact on adjoining conservation areas**

The current Town Centre Conservation Area contains several designated buildings, but those adjoining it are not of the same quality. However, several have local list potential, including the former Feldman's Arcade and Robert's Oyster House, and these have a positive impact on the north end of the Promenade area.

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### ***Historic maps***

Tithe Map of Blackpool, 1838 (Blackpool Local Studies)

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Ordnance Survey, 1932 (revised 1930), 1:2500 (JRULM map collections)

Ordnance Survey, 1938 (revised 1938), 1:2500 (JRULM map collections)

## APPENDIX 1: Historic maps

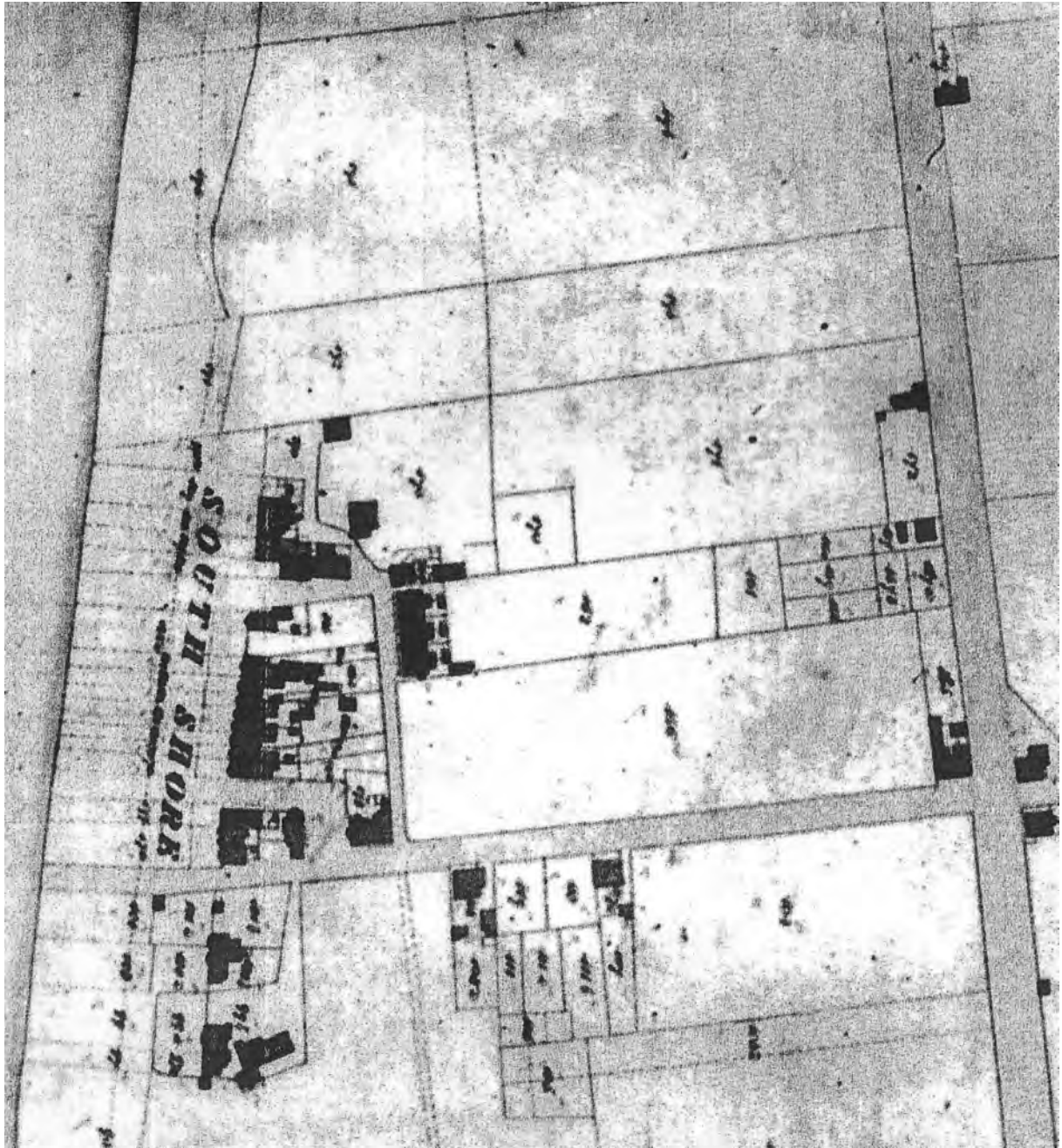


Fig. 61: 1838 Tithe Map of South Shore, showing the gap to the north between it and Blackpool proper (Blackpool Local Studies)





Fig. 62: 1844 OS (surveyed 1841) 1:10560, showing South Shore before development



Fig. 63: 1912 OS (1:2500) showing the rows of boarding houses south of Central Pier (JRULM Map Collections)

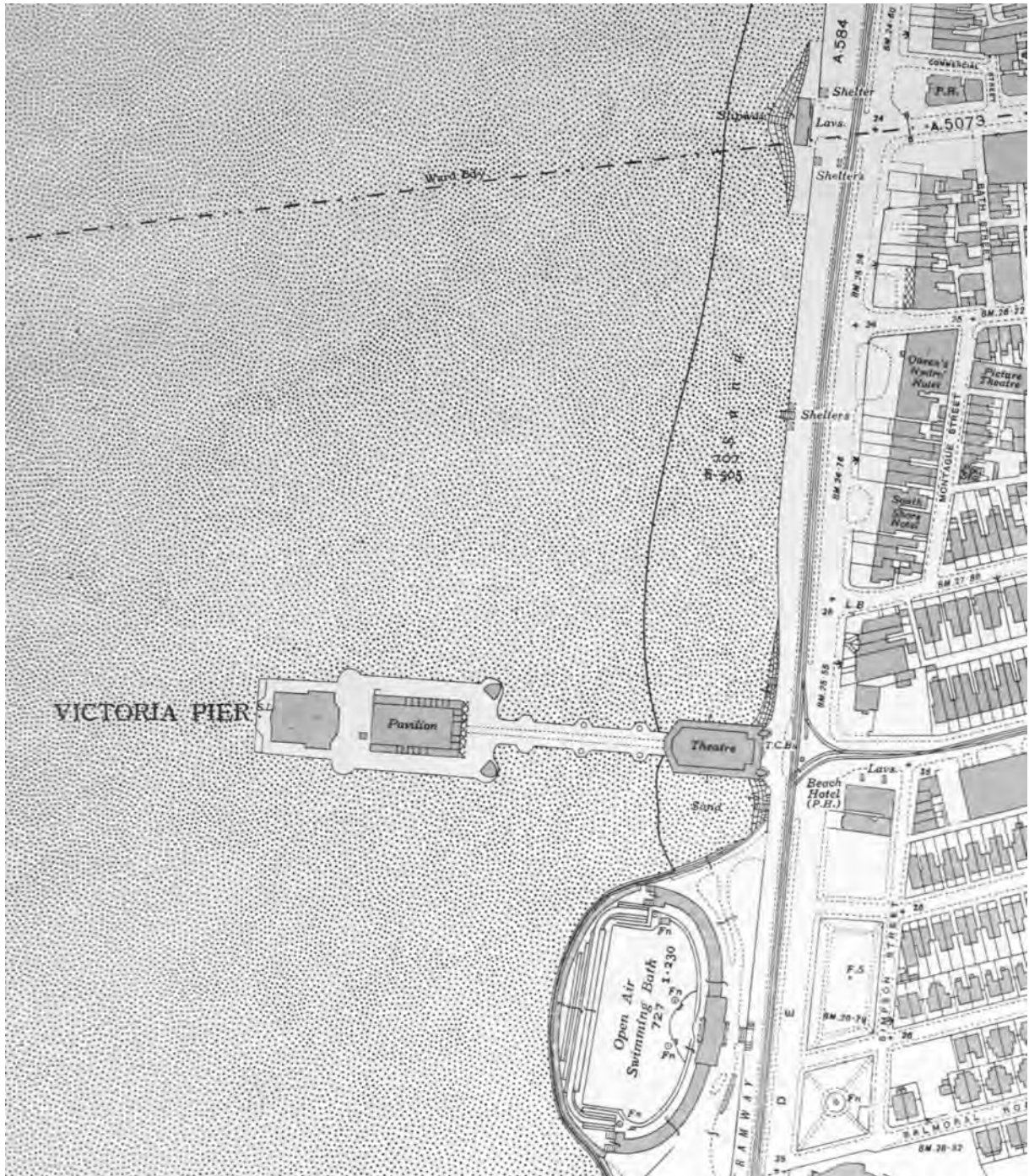


Fig. 64: 1938 OS (1:2500) showing the South Beach area and the open air baths opened in 1923 (JRULM Map Collections)



## APPENDIX 2: Maps showing buildings' contribution to streetscene



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Title: Contribution to Streetscene  
[Central Promenade]

Scale: 1:10000

Date: 17/02/2009 Printed by: CCC



North end of the area



Contribution to Streetscene	
No Data	(7)
Demolished	(7)
Listed Building	(2)
Local Listing	(30)
Negative	(45)
Neutral	(207)
Positive	(76)



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Title: Contribution to Streetscene  
 [South Promenade] 1

Scale: 1:10000

Date: 17/02/2009 Printed by: CCC



Central area of the Promenade

Contribution to Streetscene	
No Data	(7)
Demolished	(7)
Listed Building	(3)
Local Listing	(30)
Negative	(45)
Neutral	(207)
Positive	(175)



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Title: Contribution to Streetscene  
[South Promenade] 2

Scale: 1:10000

Date: 28/04/2009 Printed by: CCC



The south end of the area

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