

## 5. Historic Development



## 5. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

### Key Facts

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The historical development of North Beach can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century</li> <li>• The development of the area was prompted by growing demand for visitor accommodation in the resort, and led by the opening of North Pier in 1863</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of Dickson Road took place gradually during the last quarter of the 19th century, with terraces of large lodging houses built in the 1870s on the west side towards the south end, but the east side not developed until the c.1900.</li> <li>• The study area has a strong Victorian built heritage</li> </ul> |
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### Introduction

- 5.1 The history of the development of Blackpool is well documented and there area a number of key source documents available, which are referenced at the end of this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to provide further understanding of the way in which the South Beach are in particular has developed, including the key milestones during the development. It also highlights any significant issues for the future development of the area,

such as key heritage features, buildings, layout or general form that should be retained. A more specific detailed analysis and evaluation of some of the key or significant Townscape and heritage features are detailed in the subsequent chapter.

- 5.2 A key document used to inform this section is the recent report Historic Townscape Characterisation Assessment (Draft, January 2009). This report is one of six historic townscape assessments undertaken by The Architectural History Practice Limited [AHP] commissioned by Blackpool Council (The Council). The intention of the reports is to provide context for developing plans for regeneration.
- 5.3 A detailed account of the historic development of the Blackpool can be found within this report, alongside a number of additional historical maps and photographs. Additional detail is also provided in Appendix 1.

### Early Development

- 5.4 Until the second half of the 19th century, the land along the coast north of the growing town centre was used as farmland, enclosed with a loose pattern of rectangular fields
- 5.5 A major influence on the development of North Shore was the opening of the branch line to Blackpool by the Preston & Wyre Railway in 1846, which later provided visitors with easy access to the North Pier along Talbot Road.

- 5.6 The development of North Shore began in earnest in the 1860s, prompted by growing demand for visitor accommodation in the resort, and led by the opening of North Pier in 1863 and the development of the Claremont Estate for middle class accommodation. Inland, a grid of streets was laid out, gradually developed for terraces of lodging houses and lower class housing.
- 5.7 The spurt of development in the 1960s was short-lived and later development was aimed at respectable working class people. Representative of the 1860s and 1870s phase of development are a few terraces of handsome lodging houses (Figure 24) on the roads closest to the sea, such as the western end of Banks Street, Cocker Street, Wilton Parade and the south end of Dickson Road. Plainer lodging houses were built further inland on streets such as High Street in this phase.
- 5.8 Subsequent development was gradual and most of the area was not fully developed until the early 1900s. The development of Dickson Road, which has functioned as the area's main through route, took place gradually during the last quarter of the 19th century, with terraces of large lodging houses built in the 1870s on the west side towards the south end, but the east side not developed until the c.1900. The south end was lined with a mixture of shops and lodging houses, interspersed with churches and pubs.
- 5.9 Along the eastern fringes of the area and north of Pleasant Street, dense terraces of residential housing were built towards the end of the 19th century and into early 20th century, most for working people.

**Figure 24: Prominent Boarding House on Lord Street c.1900 (from [www.rossallbeach.com](http://www.rossallbeach.com))**



- 5.10 The historic map of 1892 illustrated in Figure 30 indicates the following:
- The tight grid network of streets present within North Beach was already established by 1892, and has remained largely unchanged. Although not yet fully developed by 1892, the development plots were already clearly laid out.
  - In 1892 there was a mixture of building usage within the North Beach area. A mix of uses is also present within the North Beach area today. The map indicates residential usage,

hotels, and public facilities such as public baths, a post office and chapels/schools. A skating rink is located to the immediate north of the site boundary. The demolition of some of these facilities has resulted in the current ground level parking areas in Cocker Square.

- Direct access to the railway station was formerly available via Dickson Road, due to the orientation and position of the previous railway station building.
- Some of the landmark buildings currently present within North Beach and the immediately surrounding areas are also evident as distinctive buildings on the 1892 map. These include Lansdowne Crescent; the Metropole Hotel (formerly Bailey's Hotel) to the immediate south-west of the North Beach site boundary; and the Methodist Church and Unitarian Chapel on Dickson Road.

5.11 The tram ran along Dickson Road from 1898 until closure in 1963. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Imperial Cinema opened on the corner of Dickson Road and Lansdowne Crescent, with a billiard hall, eclipsed by The Odeon cinema which opened in 1939, the largest in England. The most significant change during the post-war years was the relocation of the railway station from its original site on Dickson Road, to the present 1938 excursion station building further east on High Street. The 1898 Talbot Road station was demolished in 1974.

5.12 Dickson Road was the principal street within the neighbourhood, lined with lodging houses interspersed with shops and large community buildings such as churches. Shops still line the north end of the road although economic decline of the area and changing patterns of business has led to

a more limited range of businesses than historically existed. For example, most of the banks have closed and there are now few grocery or food stores.

- 5.13 The streets west of Dickson Road were developed with larger boarding houses and service buildings on lanes to the rear of Promenade properties (see Figure 25). A few notable public buildings were provided in this area including swimming baths on Cocker Street (1871) (**Figure 26**) and the Grundy Art Gallery and Carnegie Library (opened 1909).

**Figure 25: Typical Lodging Houses on Dickson Road**



**Figure 26: The Baths on Cocker Street before Demolition in 1974 (Blackpool Library)**



- 5.14 The spiritual needs of the community were met by a range of churches and chapels, including Christchurch on Queen Street, opened in 1871 (closed in 1982). Nonconformist chapels and churches on Dickson Road included the Mount Pleasant Wesleyan Chapel, first built in 1888 on the corner of Cocker Street and replaced by the present Methodist Church and school rooms in 1907 (Figure 27) and on the same side of the road, the Unitarian Church which opened in the 1883. The Baptist Tabernacle and Sunday school were built at the west end of Springfield Road in 1904.

**Figure 27: North Shore Methodist church and former Sunday school, Dickson Road, 1907**



- 5.15 A detailed documentary of the development of the North Beach study area is provided in the Townscape Characterisation Assessment (Draft, January 2007, page 20).

### **Distinctive Layout and Modern Alterations**

- 5.16 The spatial character of the area is uniformly dense, with a regular, tight urban grain and a strong sense of enclosure in the streetscene. The spatial character of streets is related to the role of each street in the street hierarchy with Dickson Road the widest street reflecting its role as a through route and local

- centre. This pattern of development has resulted in a distinctive, fairly homogenous townscape with a fine grain populated with buildings of regular scale and similar pattern.
- 5.17 East-west streets leading to the sea and close the town centre tend to be wider than those further inland, with funnel-shaped spaces towards the sea at the west ends of Cocker and Queen Streets; these 'squares' provide valuable open spaces, connecting to The Promenade.
- 5.18 Most of the grid-pattern streets have a homogenous spatial character, narrower in width than principal routes and with well-defined building lines created by uniform terraces.
- 5.19 There have been few changes to the historic density of the area, with recent infill built at the same or a higher density, generally respecting historic building lines, if not the form, appearance and height of existing buildings. Some sites have been cleared and are in use as surface car parks; these open areas disrupt the tight urban grain and allow for unattractive views onto the rear of properties, for example the car parks on Queen Street and Cocker Street.
- 5.20 Most of the streets of terraced housing or lodging houses are intact with very little later development, cleared sites or modern infill to disrupt the overall unity of the streets. This means that views along streets, including to the west and the sea, are much as they were a hundred years ago. Victorian church spires still act as landmarks along Dickson Road, the main route north-south through the area. Churches and chapels are the most important group of historic community buildings in
- 5.21 North Shore; there are a total of six buildings built as places of worship still extant, most still in use as places of worship or in two cases adapted for new uses. Christchurch on Queen Street is a notable loss.
- 5.22 At a detailed level there has been a high degree of alteration, particularly to doors, windows and shop fronts. Many of the lodging houses on streets closest to the sea have been altered with roof extensions and ground floor additions over front gardens, but this type of change is not as prevalent or as intrusive as in South Shore or in Bloomfield, for example. Front garden walls are generally still in situ along residential streets with relatively few lost for front parking.
- 5.23 The historic and present day photographs of Lansdowne Crescent (Figure 28 and Figure 29) indicate the extent of modification and additions that the buildings have received. This is typical of the whole of the North Beach area, and in many cases, the quality of the buildings has been degraded.

**Figure 28: Lansdowne Road 1890**



**Figure 29: Lansdowne Road Today**



**Figure 30: Historical Map 1892 with Inset Present day Plan**



5.24 However, most buildings appear in reasonable condition, and are occupied and in use, although there are signs of low maintenance levels on some properties dependent on tourism.

**Key Evidence Sources**

- Historic Townscape Characterisation Assessment (Draft, January 2007)
- Blackpool Central Library