Foxhall conservation area appraisal

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Foxhall Conservation Area Appraisal
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1. Introduction

1.1 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. Current guidance stresses the value of heritage in creating sustainable neighbourhoods.

1.2 In 2010 the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranked Blackpool as the 6th most deprived local authority in the

country, with Foxhall the 7th most deprived area in Blackpool.

1.3 The Architectural History Practice Limited (AHP) was commissioned in September 2008 by Blackpool Council, funded by English Heritage, to prepare historic townscape characterisation assessments of several areas of Blackpool, including Bloomfield. This exercise was intended to inform the Council about the heritage value of the areas as part of the development of regeneration proposals, and the town's bid for World Heritage status.

1.4 The Characterisation Project itself saw every street and group of buildings assessed for townscape and heritage merit. The study established that the best-preserved area was the grid of streets including York Street, Shannon Street, Yorkshire Street, Bairstow Street, Dale Street and east to Coop Street and Caroline Street. This distinctive group of densely-developed streets is one of the earliest parts of the study area, and it was concluded that there was potential for conservation area designation.

1.5 The Statement of Universal Significance prepared by Professor John Walton of the University of Leeds for the World Heritage bid also points out that the town, with over three hundred and fifty thousand bed spaces, was in effect an industrial landscape as much as it was a resort. It is the remaining boarding house districts, of which Foxhall is one of the earliest and most intact, which supply the physical evidence for this significance.

1.6 There are currently no conservation areas or listed buildings in the area. Most of the buildings within the proposed area make a positive contribution to the distinctive character of the local townscape and some are locally listed. However, most buildings are of modest architectural quality and it is the unity of the terraced streets and their uniqueness in Blackpool rather than the individual merit of buildings that gives the area its distinctive character.

2. Policy Context

2.1 A conservation area is an area designated as being an "area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance", as set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2.2 Under this legislation, local authorities have a duty to designate such areas and to review them, and to use their planning powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas within a framework of managing change with a positive approach. Designation automatically entails control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, strengthens controls over minor development and gives special protection to trees within the area.

2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the historic built environment is an irreplaceable resource, and strategies should be developed through Local Plans so that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

2.4 When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest. This appraisal, therefore, sets out the special interest of the proposed conservation area.

2.5 Policy CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy - Revised Preferred Option 2012 states that development proposals will be supported which respect and draw inspiration from Blackpool's built, social and cultural heritage. Proposals will be supported that strengthen the existing character created by historic buildings. Developers must demonstrate how the development will complement and enhance existing features of heritage significance including their wider setting for conservation areas, listed buildings and other identified heritage assets.

3. Context: Historical Development of Blackpool

3.1 In the early eighteenth century very few visitors braved the journey to Blackpool, which consisted mainly of a few humble cottages straggled along the shoreline and Fox Hall itself, a large late medieval half-timbered house belonging to the Tyldesley family[1]. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the town had become a fashionable sea bathing resort for the wealthy, and the first visitor accommodation was built to meet this demand[2].

3.2 By the late 1780s there were about 50 houses on the seafront. In the early 1820s the population, excluding visitors, was about 750. The steady growth through the first half of the 19th century was focused along a one mile stretch of coastline.

3.3 Blackpool's great expansion was due to the resort's growing popularity with working people from the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile districts. By the 1830s there were more than a thousand visitors a year. However, further expansion was hampered by the town's relative remoteness and patterns of landholding.

3.4 The town became more accessible from 1846 with the opening of the Preston and Wyre branch railway to Blackpool North station. The Blackpool and Lytham railway opened in 1862 using Central Station. Construction of North and Central piers and a new promenade, which was both a tourist attraction and part of the town's sea defences, helped attract the development of respectable accommodation, and new streets were laid out in a grid behind the seafront.

3.5 During the 1860s and 1870s new terraces of lodging houses were built on the fields around the edge of the town centre surrounded by densely packed terraced houses for the working people employed in tourism or the railway industry.

3.6 The sea was the defining factor in the scale and status of boarding houses and small hotels, with the Promenade reserved for hotels and higher class establishments. Lodging houses for middle-class families were built on the streets running east-west off the Promenade in large semi-detached or terraced houses. Denser terraces of lodging houses were built further inland away from the sea, on streets such as those in Shannon Street, Rigby Road and Coop Street in the Foxhall area.

4. Historical Development of Foxhall

4.1 Foxhall developed as a dense area of lodging houses and private housing over a 50-year period beginning in the 1860s and providing affordable holiday accommodation for working people. This tight grid of streets was developed after the opening of Central Station in 1862 and Central Pier in 1868, close to the junction of Foxhall Road and Chapel Street. This area has recently become known as Foxhall Village, after the former Foxhall Inn.

4.2 Some of the earliest development in the area is around York Street where three-storey terraces were built in the 1860s. With no gardens, the terraces create tightly enclosed streetscapes with the main streets originally having a view of the sea at the western end. The 1877 street plan shows the speculative development of streets such as York Street, Yorkshire Street and Bairstow Street for lodging houses.

4.3 Terraced streets like Singleton Street, Caroline Street and Shannon Street were more densely developed with a mixture of lodging houses and workers' housing. A meandering open stream, the Spen Dyke, ran east-west along the line of Rigby Road until the last quarter of the 19th century when it was culverted. The town takes its name from the pool of peaty, brackish water at the mouth of the Spen Dyke where the stream emptied onto the sands.

4.4 Immediately to the south east of Foxhall, the area around Rigby Road was developed for utilities from the mid 19th-century. The Corporation coal gas-works were built on the north side of the road, supplying street lights from the 1850s. Electric lighting for the Promenade and town street lights was generated by the electricity works located off the south end of Coop Street, opened in 1893. Both sites were supplied with coal from sidings off the Blackpool and Lytham railway line, which had opened in 1863.

5. Character

5.1 The character of Foxhall can be summarised as a dense area of streets, developed with a range of terraced housing, for both holiday accommodation and workers' housing. Development in this area was built at a high density with the building line following the back of the footway, creating tightly framed streets.



York Street looking East

5.2 The town's requirements for affordable, mass holiday accommodation resulted in a distinctive range of specialised housing known as 'company housing', built to provide lodging houses for working class holiday-makers. These were similar in appearance to Lancashire urban terraced housing but were planned and built on a larger scale, with long outshuts filling most of the rear yards, and with large single or two-storey bay windows to the front. Streets characteristic of this development include those around Yorkshire Street, Shannon Street and Coop Street.



Shannon Street looking East



Caroline Street - Typical workers housing



Terracotta details, now painted, on Bairstow Street

[1] Eyre, Kathleen ***Seven Golden Miles*** Dalesman Books, 1989, p. 15

[2] ***Talbot Square Townscape Heritage Initiative Conservation Area Appraisal*** Paul Butler Associates, p.4

5.3 The character is unified by the use of brick and slate, although much of the brick has been painted or rendered. Bricks were made locally in the Fylde, on the edge of the urban area. A fine-grained sandstone is generally used for hood molds, bay windows, sills and lintels, door surrounds and string courses, although this has not weathered well in the marine environment and has generally been painted. Molded brick and terracotta are less often used for friezes and other details.

5.4 Brick is generally laid in English garden wall bond which is usually three or four courses of stretchers to one of headers. Stone details for door surrounds and bay windows use either classical or gothic motifs. Chimney stacks are in red brick, most with projecting bands, often rendered. Pots where they have been retained are in cream or red clay.

5.5 Eaves are often finished with a timber fascia board cut into simple repeating patterns. Rainwater goods were provided in cast-iron; the larger buildings have ogee-section gutters, which were a more expensive choice than simple half-round gutters. Most down-pipes are now plastic, although some cast-iron examples have survived.

5.6 Regular fenestration and two-storey bay windows create homogenous frontages with subtle variations in detail reflecting different phases or builders. Many buildings have retained architectural features, although window and door joinery has mostly been replaced. Windows were originally vertically-hung sashes in a number of sizes and formats.



York Street looking West

5.7 The terraces of the area are made up of two-storey housing on streets north of Shannon Street. The dense three-storey terraces on Bairstow Street and Yorkshire Street are the most unaltered.



Original joinery, York Street

5.8 Dale Street and Chapel Street were also busy with retail premises in the 1890s. The principal streets were served by back streets and lanes, where garages and warehouses were built, for example on Pier Street, Singleton Street and Cragg Street.



Lifeboat Inn, Foxhall Road

5.9 The area is fairly complete, with few losses since the area was developed in the late nineteenth century. A drill hall between Yorkshire Street and Shannon Street was demolished in 2005 and replaced with four-storey flats of no architectural merit. However, due to the scale of incremental change on Foxhall Road itself, the western boundary has been set at Dale Street. The Lifeboat Inn is locally listed and has a limited measure of protection under the planning system.



Bickerstaffe Street facing original site of drill hall

6. Urban Form

6.1 The distinctive linear or grid street pattern with densely-developed frontages provides well-framed views and a sense of enclosure. Foxhall retains a strong sense of place and community and has a very distinct feel from the other key boarding house areas in the town.

6.2 Historic map evidence shows that no open spaces were provided within the area. There is an absence of street trees and gardens are too small to provide significant greenery.

7. Views and Vistas

7.1 Views out of the area to the west provide tightly framed glimpses of the sea and promenade. With the exception of York Street these are uninterrupted by other buildings. Views north provide good views of Blackpool Tower along the main north-south routes.

7.2 Views into the area from the west are tightly framed, with buildings following historic building lines. The close grain of the streets suggests a sense of enclosure and community which has survived superficial changes to the area.

8. Chapel Street

8.1 This east-west Street was developed in the first half of the 19th century and is shown on the 1838 Tithe map, when the south side of the street was lined with buildings. The street was named after the Methodist Chapel that opened on the south side of the street in 1862, and flourished after Central Pier opened in 1868.



Chapel Street facing West

8.2 Scale, materials and building form vary greatly, giving the street an eclectic character. Whilst the street is intact along its south side, overall the townscape is fragmented due to the late 20th-century clearance and replacement of most buildings along the north side (outside the proposed conservation area).



Stanley Arms, Chapel Street

8.3 The south side has a varied historic character with a group of lodging houses at the east end and much-altered retail businesses towards the middle and west sections. The frontage is broken into distinct blocks of buildings by the north-south streets. Significant community buildings include the locally listed 1930s former Methodist Chapel of a striking and relatively forward looking design whose tower is a local landmark, and the locally listed Stanley Arms pub, a good example of a late Victorian public house. Shopfronts on corner sites have survived relatively intact.



Methodist Church, Chapel Street

8.4 In addition, Chapel Street has a number of 1920's box bays above the shop fronts. The box bay in high densities has been identified by Paul Butler Associates and AHP as a uniquely Blackpool phenomenon. The bays were normally built over shop fronts and were often associated with the need for increased light in first floor reception rooms for either private living accommodation or boarding house use.

9. Foxhall Road

9.1 Foxhall Road is an important historic north-south route but its character has been eroded by frontage alterations and 20th century infill such as The Foxhall Market, which replaces an earlier market building. There are some good pub buildings including the locally listed Lifeboat Inn. However, due to the level of change, it is proposed that this road should fall outside the conservation area.

10. Dale Street

10.1 A linear north-south street, developed in the wake of Central Pier opening in 1868 and first shown on the 1877 street plan. Until the early 1900s, the street was named as three separate sections: South Bank Street, Wellington Street and Warbreck Street, when it was lined with retail businesses.

10.2 The narrow street has a tight grain with buildings built up to the back of the footway, giving tightly-framed views north to Blackpool Tower. The street is crossed at regular intervals by east-west streets, breaking the street frontages into defined blocks. Buildings are two or three-storey, and the



earlier blocks are almost of a late Georgian character with flat frontages, no bays and regular fenestration



West side of Dale Street looking North from Bairstow Street

10.3 Buildings are mainly brick with stone details, some painted or rendered. Notable historic buildings include former livery stables at Wilkinson's Yard (now Dale Street Mews), and The Stanley Arms at the north end on the corner with Chapel Street.

10.4 Historic cast-iron street signs are a feature.

11. Caroline Street and Coop Street

11.1 These densely developed north-south streets to the east of the Yorkshire Street area were developed in the last quarter of the 19th century, for a mixture of workers' housing and lodging houses. Each street has a terrace along the east side, facing the gable-end walls and back alleys of the east-west terraces along the west side of the street. There are tightly–framed views north to the Tower and buildings are built up to the back of the footway. Terraces are two or three-storey.



Caroline Street

11.2 Towards the north end of Coop Street the quality of the buildings is higher with two-storey stone-built bays. The brick-built frontages are now partly rendered or painted and fenestration is mostly modern.



Example of lodging houses on Coop Street

11.3 Coop Street is fairly intact despite superficial alterations.

12. Singleton Street, Pier Street and Cragg Street

12.1 Singleton Street, Pier Street and Cragg Street link key buildings on Chapel Street such as the Stanley Arms and the Methodist Chapel and, despite being of more neutral value in themselves, they have retained their historic scale and street pattern. As such they contribute to the overall unity of the area.

13. Negative factors

13.1 Most properties retain Welsh slate roofs, although some properties have been re-roofed with heavier concrete tiles. Whilst openings have on the whole not been altered and the overall proportions of the elevations have been retained, the loss of historic joinery and window patterns has eroded the unity of the terraces at a detailed level, particularly where houses in different ownerships have received different replacement window and door types. Properties that retain original Victorian doors and windows are rare; most doors and timber windows have been replaced with double-glazed windows, often in uPVC, although enough remains to be able to understand the original appearance of the buildings.

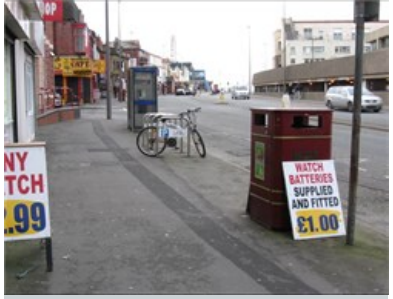


Original window Singleton Street.

13.2 The unity of terraced frontages has also been affected by individual approaches to the cladding, painting or rendering of brickwork, concrete 'stone' cladding is particularly intrusive for example on Caroline Street. Paint has generally been applied to decorative stone features such as cills and lintels. Many rear yards have been built-up with extensions or sheds, congesting already tight spaces.



13.3 All footways are now laid with either concrete paving or tarmacadam. Kerbs are almost all concrete, although some original examples of granite kerbs have been retained on side streets. Historically, footways would have been laid with stone paving and roads either rolled gravel or setts/cobbles. Setted surfaces survive on some side streets, but are often in poor condition. Rear alleys are now generally laid with tarmac, but historic setts are visible in some places where the tarmac has worn through. Street furniture is largely modern with concrete lighting columns.



Tarmac surfaces and modern street furniture on Chapel Street.



Original door and surround York Street.



Alley off Coop Street

14. Summary and conclusion

14.1 Foxhall village forms one of the oldest self-contained mixed use districts in Blackpool.

14.2 Despite some losses and alterations the historic core of the village remains relatively unchanged. Where there has been change to the fringes of the village, infill has maintained historic building lines and, with the exception of the modern flats, new buildings have maintained the scale and volume of historic buildings.

14.3 Pressures for development have given rise to the need to assess the heritage value of the area in order that regeneration can take place sustainably and sensitively. It should be understood that designation does not mean that development cannot take place. However, the townscape of Foxhall forms a small but important element of Blackpool's cultural landscape, and conservation area designation will enable greater local control over demolition, and quality control of design of work to old buildings and any new development.

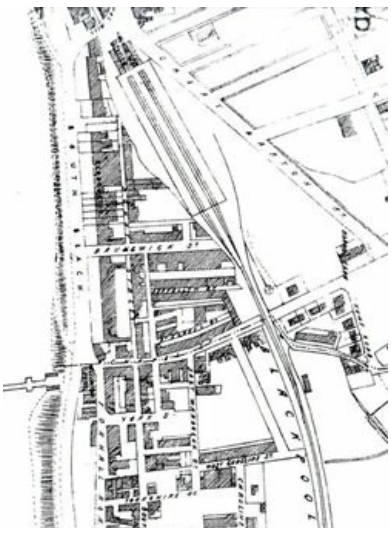
15. Next steps

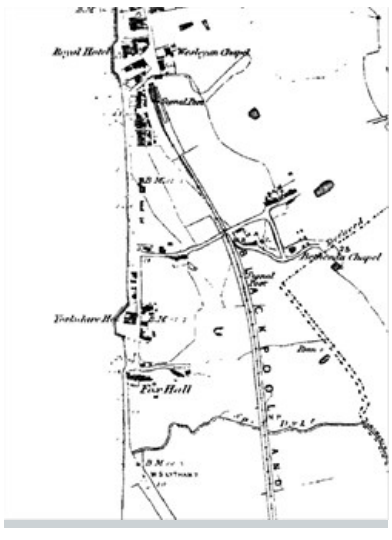
15.1 Executive approval will be sought to undertake public consultation on this Appraisal and a proposal to designate a Foxhall Conservation Area. This would be followed by a period of public consultation, the results of which would be incorporated in a report to the Executive for consideration of formal adoption of the conservation area appraisal and designation.

15.2 Should designation of the conservation area be made, a management plan would be produced which would include recommendations for heritage protection. The plan would analyse what is positive and negative, and identify opportunities for beneficial change or the need for additional protection and restraint through the use of article 4 directions to remove a number of permitted development rights. The use of article 4 directions would help to protect vulnerable features such as original joinery and other details and thereby maintain the character and special quality of the conservation area.

Appendices

Maps







Appendix II: 1877 Street Map, Blackpool Library

Appendix 1: 1847 Street Map, Historic digimap

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