

# Historic Townscape Characterisation Assessment

## Town Centre, Blackpool



**AHP** Architectural  
History  
Practice

August 2009

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Blackpool town centre is the commercial heart of the town, perhaps second in character and importance to the piers and seafront buildings, including the Tower, which characterise the town. The town centre is located immediately to the east of the Central Promenade buildings, and for this survey is bounded to the north by Talbot Road; to the east by Larkhill Street, Grosvenor Street and the north end of Regent Road; to the south by Albert Road; and to the west by a boundary along the centre of Bank Hey Street and Market Street. The town centre is characterised by three distinct areas: the historic shopping district, the modern shopping centre at Hounds Hill, and a large area of residential and boarding houses to the south and east of the Winter Gardens. The area contains several of Blackpool's famous and significant entertainment buildings and a large proportion of its listed buildings.

Late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Blackpool was still a relatively minor settlement with a few houses and lodgings catering for a small tourist trade; it was provisioned from Poulton-le-Fylde and had few shops of its own. The earliest available mapping shows that Church Street was crossed by Market Street and Bank Hey Street, which developed into the commercial heart of the town from the 1870s. The trade directories show that there was a mix of commercial and lodging premises within the town centre. However, the 1980s Hounds Hill development is now the retail heart of Blackpool, and one of the largest modern redevelopment sites in Blackpool. South of Church Street and east of King Street boarding houses and residential properties were being constructed from the 1880s on newly laid-out streets; Adelaide Street and Albert Road were the principal east-west streets, with shorter streets crossing north-south. To the north-east Charles, Milbourne and Counce Streets form a horizontal grid with the vertical Cookson and Grosvenor Streets.

Alongside shops and commercial premises, there are a number of churches and entertainment palaces in the town centre; these exist with substantially high levels of original detail and fabric due to national designation, unlike the regular buildings to the main shopping streets which although within the conservation area have been blighted with alterations, additions, modern shopfronts and advertising. As much of the town centre north of the Winter Gardens is pedestrianised, modern street surfaces and furniture of varying quality prevails. Despite these infractions, the historic street pattern is retained and there are some buildings with high architectural or social relevance; overall the historic town centre is of positive value, which is reflected in a designated conservation area. Tighter controls over advertising would enhance the area even further. South of the Winter Gardens, the residential and boarding houses have been altered to suit modern usage as small hotels; there are some good almost complete examples of private residential properties on Albert Road (although replacement uPVC windows and the removal of front boundary walls are as common here as elsewhere in Blackpool). Although the streets to the south of the Winter Gardens are generally neutral in character, the cumulative effect of rows of similar buildings largely built to serve the holiday trade is distinctive and has

historic significance. The whole area varies in quality and character, with well-maintained properties in the south of the area, and rather run-down ones in the north-east of the area; the latter is also blighted by several surface car-parks and late 20<sup>th</sup>-century concrete buildings which are out of scale in the streetscene. The town centre shopping streets were undergoing a programme of repair and regeneration at the time of the survey.

The whole area was assessed for townscape and heritage merit as part of the study and 21 potential buildings chosen for a potential Local List. There are 17 listed buildings in the area, including the Grade II\* Sacred Heart Church on Talbot Road and an attractive series of K6 telephone boxes outside the former Abingdon Street Post Office (both listed Grade II). About two-thirds of the Town Centre Conservation Area is within the study area and it is recommended to consider extending the boundary to include streets to the south to regard the historic street pattern and include the entire Winter Gardens complex. Buildings of positive value include several late 19<sup>th</sup>-century red-brick terraces on Albert Road and Adelaide Street, and several re-fronted shops with terracotta faience in the shopping district. There are few negative buildings, but the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century bowling centre on George Street, the Wilkinson Store on Talbot Road, the 1950s M&S on Coronation Street/Church Street, and the inappropriate materials used to clad the Syndicate nightclub on Church Street are notable examples of intrusive architecture. Overall the town centre buildings are of overall modest quality, with outstanding architectural highlights provided potential local list and listed buildings in the area.

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*Note: all images AHP unless otherwise stated*

*JRULM – John Rylands University Library Manchester (map collection)*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

The Architectural History Practice Limited [AHP] was commissioned in February 2009 by Blackpool Council (The Council) to prepare a characterisation assessment of the Town Centre 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 Samantha Barnes BA MA, Associate of AHP, with support from Marion Barter, BA MA IHBC, Director of AHP, and Clare Hartwell, BA MA, Director of AHP.

### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

AHP is grateful for assistance and advice offered during this project, in particular from Carl Carrington of Blackpool Council; Ted Lightbown, local historian; Tony Sharkey and the librarians at Blackpool Library and John Rylands University Library, Manchester (JRULM).

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

Blackpool town centre is the commercial heart of the town and is located immediately to the east of the Promenade buildings. The survey area is bounded to the north by the backs of buildings on the north side of Talbot Road; to the east by Larkhill Street, Grosvenor Street and the north end of Regent Road; to the south by the backs of houses on Albert Road; and to the west by a boundary along the centre of Bank Hey Street and Market Street. The NGR for the centre of the Town Centre, roughly at the Winter Gardens, is SD309361.

**To be inserted**

Fig.1: Location of study area

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## **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 twentieth century. Relevant websites on the history of the area were reviewed, including the collection of historic photographs available at <http://www.blackpoolimagegallery.org.uk/>. Photographs in the Local History Library collections was also consulted, supplemented by images in Ted Lightbown's publications and reproduced with his consent from his personal collection. Additional historic maps were obtained from the John Rylands University of Manchester Map Collections. See the Bibliography for full details.

#### **2.1.2 Fieldwork**

The town centre area was physically assessed on foot in February 2009. 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 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 the Town Centre 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 Town Centre 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.

No further full review of the buildings in the area was undertaken after the initial survey period in February 2009. The status of some buildings may have changed, but this has only been later altered in the report where it has been brought to AHP's attention, for example the damage caused by fire and subsequent demolition of Yates' Wine Bar.

### **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 that the town centre is within the defined inner area boundary, with the streets to the south of the Winter Gardens being a resort neighbourhood and outside of the defined town centre boundary. Hounds Hill is the principal retail core, while the streets between Abingdon and King Street are defined as a 'mixed use' zone. Cookson Street and King Street have their own policy set out under SR4 which suggests that the area could be redeveloped for office use. Policies for the Winter Gardens are set out under SR2 (both are found in Chapter 3 of the Local Plan document). Talbot Road is a primary distributor route, and Counce Street is a Tertiary Distributor Rote. Most of Hounds Hill and Birley Street are defined pedestrian areas. The National Cycle Network runs along Clifton Street, Talbot Road and Abingdon Street

#### **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 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN CENTRE**

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

Blackpool town centre is the commercial heart of the town, although perhaps second in character and importance to the Promenade, piers and Tower Buildings which characterise the town. Located immediately to the east of the Promenade buildings, it is approximately 25 metres above sea level, rising to the east along Albert and Adelaide Streets. The area of this survey is bounded to the north by the backs of buildings on the north side of Talbot Road; to the east by Larkhill Street, Grosvenor Street and the north end of Regent Road; to the south by the backs of houses on the south side of Albert Road; and to the west by a boundary along the centre of Bank Hey Street and Market Street.

The area contains most of the Town Centre Conservation Area, and is characterised by three distinct sub-areas: the historic shopping district, the modern shopping centre at Hounds Hill, and a large area of residential and boarding houses to the south and east of the Winter Gardens. The area contains several of Blackpool's famous and significant entertainment buildings and a large proportion of its listed buildings.

### **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, making its development 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).

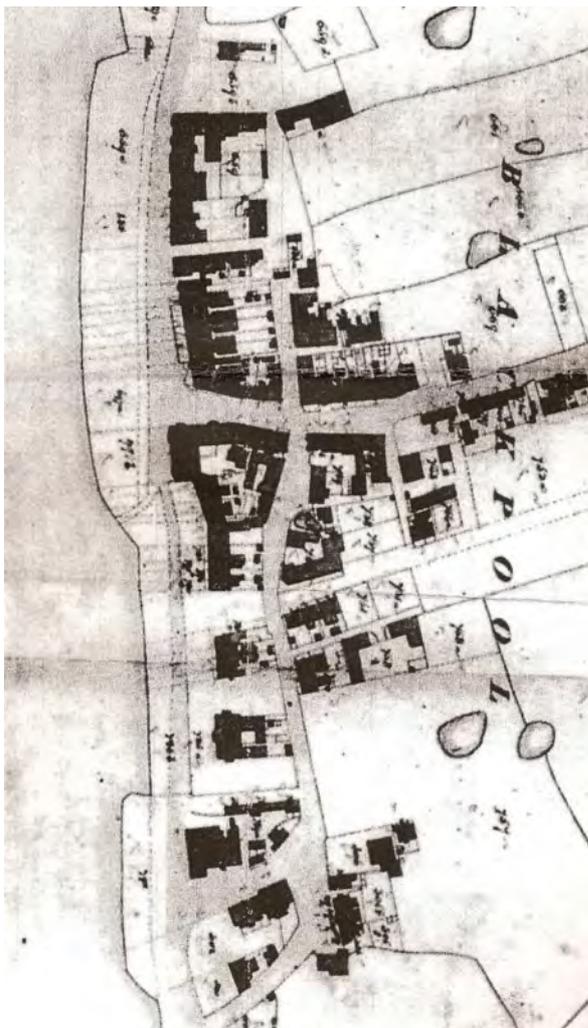


Fig. 2: Detail of Tithe Map of Blackpool, 1838 (Blackpool Local Studies)

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), 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 the then 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. New hotel developments such as the Hilton, and the constant requirements for budget accommodation have ensured that many of the purpose built boarding houses have remained in use.

#### **4.2.2 The historic development of the town centre**

Many of Blackpool town centre's key development phases, notably the creation of entertainment complexes and the laying out of streets, are described in the preceding section. The historic town centre is noted as one of Blackpool's surviving plan components in the Lancashire Historic Town Survey (LHTS).

Before the creation of the 1838 Tithe map, earlier mapping shows very little detail of the layout of the commercial town centre. This correlates with research undertaken for the LHTS that late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Blackpool was still a relatively minor settlement with a few houses and lodgings catering for a small tourist trade; it was provisioned from Poulton-le-Fylde and had few shops of its own. The principal streets shown on the Tithe map are Church Street (running east to west with buildings on the south side only), crossed by Market Street and Bank Hey Street. At the south end the latter was linked to the Promenade by Hounds Hill, and south of this there was no inland development. Town centre development surged forward in the 1850s when Blackpool's principal shopping area was conceived. New streets were laid out in a grid behind the seafront; prime sites near the sea rather than planning principles governed this early development. By the late 1860s the fields surrounding Upper

Church Street, Topping Street and Edward Street were developed, and so the town centre spread eastwards. Bank Hey Street, Church Street, Lane Ends Street, Market Street and West Street, and later Abingdon Street, Birley Street and Clifton Street (named for the wealthy Clifton family who owned much of the land on which Blackpool was built) became the heart of Blackpool's commercial centre in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Clifton Street originated as a street of boarding houses and only in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century became a commercial centre. Early significant public buildings include the Talbot Road Assembly Rooms and Theatre Royal, opened in 1868, with a Free Library was opened in the Octagon Room in 1880 (notably with the first female librarian in the country).

The next available detailed mapping, Harding's street plan of 1877, shows the extent of the town centre development (Fig. 3). By 1848 Talbot Road had replaced Church Street as the principle east-west thoroughfare, linking the north railway station with the Promenade. All of the principal streets extant today were in place and were largely developed with ranges of buildings on both sides.



Fig. 3: Detail of the 1877 street plan, showing the developed streets within the town centre, very much the same layout as today (Blackpool Library)

The street pattern in the town centre was different to that developing contemporaneously in the south of Blackpool, for example in South Shore, where long east-west streets between the railway line and the Promenade with shorter north-south streets created a formalised grid. Talbot Road and Church Street were principal thoroughfares from the 1870s but the streets which developed off them did not develop with such formality, as the 1877 map shows. However, by the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century landmark buildings had begun to terminate major shopping streets such as Abingdon Street (Fig.4) and a homogenous street pattern had developed. Historic mapping suggests that the buildings on roads such as Church Street were generally small and constructed on a tight building grain up to the back of the footway, within which large buildings such as the Winter Gardens, the Grand Circus and St John's Church were prominent features.



Fig. 4: View south along Abingdon Street to the Winter Gardens, c.1895 (reproduced with permission of Ted Lightbown)

The streets to the west of Corporation Street were focused on St John's market which successively developed from 1844 to the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century. A photograph from c.1908 shows the market on the left with the Town Hall spire (later removed) in the distance (Fig. 5). A Lloyds Bank on the right had side is extant today but all of the buildings on the left, except the Town Hall, were replaced by a large department store in the 1950s, giving the street a very different character. Market Street was linked to Abingdon Street (then Lytham Street) by Upper West Street and Euston Street, forming a block with Talbot Road at the north and Church Street to the south. St John's Market became the site of the Town Hall Extension (1937-8), and a short

side street (Town Hall Street) was later eradicated to link the older and new municipal buildings. The remaining buildings to the south of West Street were demolished in c.1939.



Fig. 5: View north along Corporation Street (then Lytham Street) in about 1908 (reproduced with permission of Ted Lightbown)

Former domestic buildings on streets such as Clifton Street had shop fronts inserted to the ground floors and first floor bays or picture windows installed above the shop entrance so that the upper rooms could continue to be used as lodgings (LHTS, p.44; the 1892 and 1902 Barrett directories mark the change in building use). This is a feature prominent and particular to Blackpool.

The trade directories show that there was a mix of commercial and lodging premises within the town centre, for example the 1895 Barrett directory advertises a mix of lodging houses and commercial businesses on Birley Street, including architects and solicitors. The building types located in the town centre are outlined in *Section 5.3. Historic and current uses*; the history of the significant entertainment palaces in Blackpool's town centre are outlined in other literature, such as the Pevsner *Buildings of England* guides, and in designated buildings' list descriptions.

The principal entertainment building in the town centre is the Winter Gardens, the dome of which is prominent in views around the area. Its development can be seen through OS mapping starting from 1893 (Fig. 6), when a planted open area on the

south side must have been a pleasant outlook for holiday-makers on Adelaide Street. The enlargement of the Winter Gardens eradicated a couple of north-south streets running north from Adelaide Street and shown on the 1877 street plan. Adelaide Street was in place from at least 1877, and by 1893 was fully developed as high-quality boarding houses with large back gardens and small front yards.

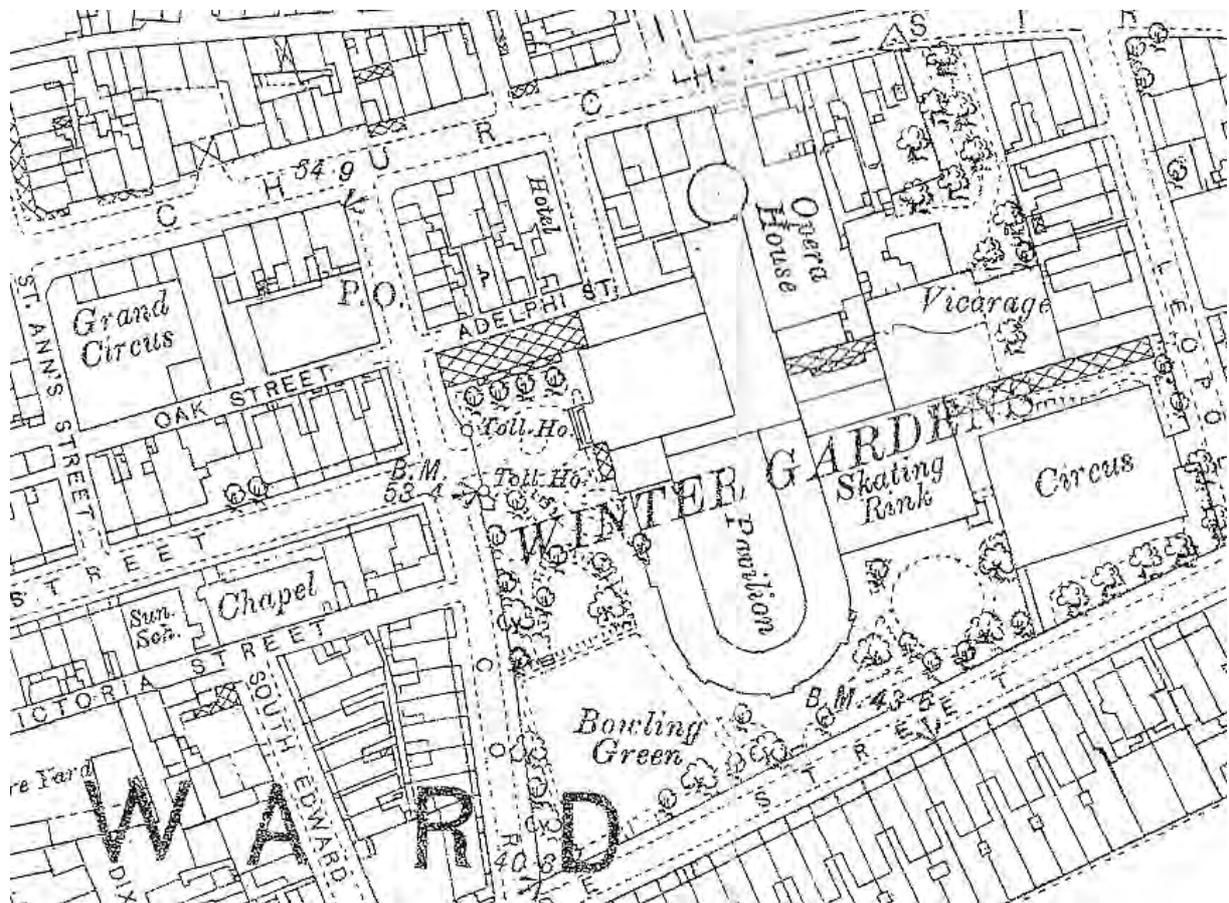


Fig. 6: Detail from the 1893 OS map, showing the Winter Gardens before it was extended along Adelaide Street (JRULM)

Hounds Hill was named in c.1833 after the area was used as the starting point for hare coursing which occurred there in earlier years. It is now the modern shopping district of Blackpool, and one of the largest modern redevelopment sites in the town centre. The new development was begun in 1982 on a series of streets between Church Street and Albert Street as shown on OS mapping, with the demolition of many 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings typical of Blackpool's shopping streets (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: Detail of 1932 OS map (1:2500) showing the grid of streets replaced by the Hounds Hill shopping centre (JRULM)

The new shopping centre has brought another dimension to the town, for locals and holidaymakers alike; the holiday destination is no longer singularly focused on the sea.

Although Blackpool's tram system initially served the seafront only, by the early 1930s there were tramlines along Talbot Road, Clifton Street and Church Street. The former linked with Blackpool North (then Talbot Road) railway station (Fig. 122). Hotels such as The Talbot were built on Topping Street to serve travellers due to its close proximity to Blackpool railway station. To the south-west of Albert Road was Blackpool's second station, Central Station, the terminus of the Blackpool and Lytham Railway, opened in 1863. It was closed in 1964 and replaced by a car park (outside of the survey area). As such the transport links were conveniently placed for entertainment complexes, the central shopping district and also the boarding houses to the south of the Winter Gardens.

South of Church Street and east of King Street boarding houses and residential properties were being constructed from the 1880s on newly laid-out streets; Adelaide Street and Albert Road were the principal east-west streets, with shorter streets such as Leopold Grove and Alfred Street crossing north-south. To the north-east the grid pattern seen in south Blackpool is repeated, with Charles, Milbourne and Counce Streets forming a horizontal grid with the vertical Cookson and Grosvenor Streets. OS mapping from 1912 shows that Albert Road street was lined on both sides by terraces with small front gardens and good sized rear yards to the properties east of Coronation Street, and the 1892 Barrett directory confirms that the majority of houses on Adelaide Street were in use as lodging houses although there were also some private residences. The location of Adelaide Street and Albert Road, to the east of Central Station, was prominent and convenient for holiday makers, hence the high proportion of high-quality boarding houses.

1930s development in Blackpool is strong in the town centre, and is further outlined in *Section 5.5. Architectural character*. One of the most significant buildings is the Talbot Road car park, completed in 1939 and built on the site of the Talbot Hotel and a bus station (Fig. 8). The cream and green tiles of its original faience matched Blackpool's buses and trams and high above the street was a frieze depicting the progress of transport. It was re-clad in 1963 but is recognised as perhaps the first multi-storey car park in the country.



Fig. 8: Talbot Road car park shortly before completion in 1939  
(reproduced with permission of Ted Lightbown)

The east end of Talbot Road was successively developed through the interwar period, with a further large building on the north side (now Wilkinsons). Other interwar buildings of note in the town centre include the Regent Cinema and a range of buildings erected at the east end of Church Street with elevations to the latter, Cookson Street and Counce Street. There are also several shops on Talbot Road and Church Street, and the Cedar Tavern which retain their architectural character and are excellent examples of faience-clad buildings. The Winter Gardens were also notably re-clad in terracotta faience with blue decoration in the interwar period.

## **5.0 TOWN CENTRE: CHARACTERISATION ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1 Character and appearance**

The town centre area has been divided into three character areas defined by building uses and the historic layout of the area, shown in Fig. 9. The areas cannot be defined as clearly as those prescribed on, for example, the Promenades, and are described under the headings below.

1) The historic town centre: bounded to the north by Talbot Road; to the east by East Topping Street; to the south partially by Church Street and then running down the west side of Leopold Grove and around the Winter Gardens along Adelaide Street and returning on its west side north along Coronation Street; then along Church Street, meeting the western boundary north along Market Street.

2) Hounds Hill - the modern shopping district: the inherent late 20<sup>th</sup>-century character of Hounds Hill Shopping Centre provides a different commercial character to that described above. The area is bounded by Church Street to the north, Coronation Street to the east, Albert Road to the south and Bank Hey Street to the west.

3) Residential and boarding houses: to the south and east of the area residential properties are laid out on a grid of streets. The streets are separated by the main east-west thoroughfare of Church Street, distinguishing their different use and character to the commercial town centre district. The area is bounded to the south by the backs of buildings on Albert Street; to the east partially by Regent Road and including a block containing Riley's Pool Hall on Church Street, before running north along Grosvenor Street and Larkhill Street and then west around an area of large car-parks; south down King Street, partially along Church Street and then south along Leopold Grove, meeting the boundary of the historic town centre around the Winter Gardens and including Adelaide Street.

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

Fig. 9: Town Centre character areas <b>to be inserted</b>
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## 5.2 Spatial attributes, views and open spaces

Apart from the small grassed area in front of St John's Church and its graveyard, there is virtually no planned open space within the study area. The graveyard was closed for burials in 1873 following the opening of Layton cemetery and the graves removed to allow for the road to be widened. At the junctions of Cookson Street with Deansgate and George Street, along the east side of East Topping Street, and at the north-west end of Church Street buildings have been demolished and surface car parks created (Fig. 10). However, generally these expose the neglected backs of buildings on adjacent streets and are negative in character. The open aspect provided by the car park between Counce Street and Church Street allows views to Riley's Pool Hall (the former Regent cinema), recommended for the local list.



Fig. 10: Surface car park on Deansgate

Open aspects are, however, common. Cedar Square provides relief from the grid of streets and makes a positive contribution to the green space next to St John's mentioned above. Other urban open aspects include the junction of Abingdon and Church Streets, giving a view east towards Riley's Pool Hall; King's Square, where the view is split along Church and Counce Streets by a 1930s triangular-sited building; and the east ends of Albert Road and Adelaide Street, from where there are excellent views of the Tower and Winter Gardens' dome (Fig.11). The changing character of

these streets, from two-storey terraces to three or four storey boarding houses, is also evident in these views.



Fig. 11: Looking west down Albert Road

The relative density of the streets in the historic town centre area (Birley Street, Clifton Street etc) creates an enclosed character, although the Tower is a consistent landmark when looking towards the west; views from the west entrance of the Winter Gardens are particularly impressive (Fig.12). Views through to the seafront are few as the Promenade buildings are tall and densely built. Where gaps do appear, such as adjacent to the Tower Buildings, the view is obstructed by poorly placed telephone boxes and other street furniture.



Fig. 12: View west down Victoria Street from the steps of the Winter Gardens

The north-south streets give good views of other prominent landmark buildings, such as Riley's Pool Hall (achieved from the north of Cookson Street), the Winter Gardens, the Grand Theatre and the Library and Art Gallery on Queen Street (outside of the area). The Talbot Street car park is another landmark building, and has local list potential due to its historic architectural significance.

The grid of residential east-west streets to the north-east of the area (George, Charles, Milbourne and Counce Streets), although neutral in their townscape value are enhanced by excellent views of both the Tower and the tower of St John's church (Fig.13); these are the only good views of the latter from outside of Church Street.



Fig. 13: Looking west down Charles Street

### 5.3 Historic and current uses

Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century trade directories give an impression of the original building uses, and how uses changed into the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. In the 1892 Barrett directory the buildings on Church Street were in commercial use, but those on Clifton Street were lodging houses; the latter is now a shopping street. Lytham Street (now Corporation Street) was also a commercial road, mostly with tailors and drapers but with few grocery outlets. The Blackpool Tower Company, Blackpool Printing Company and the offices of the Gazette were located on Church Street. Leopold Grove, King Street and Adelaide Street comprised lodgings and boarding houses, with a few commercial premises and private residences. By 1924 Clifton Street was thoroughly commercial with premises for umbrella makers, confectioners, dressmakers and opticians among others, but streets such as Albert Road and Adelaide Street remained as the principal lodging-house district in the area.

The principal uses of the buildings in the town centre today are commercial and retail premises, extended with the construction of the Hounds Hill centre in the 1980s. However, to the south and north-east of the Winter Gardens the area mostly comprises terraces of high-quality boarding houses, now converted into bed & breakfast accommodation or small hotels. Public (the former Post Office), civic (the

Town Hall) and entertainment (the Winter Gardens and Grand Theatre) buildings are also common to this part of Blackpool, although the Post Office is now a sorting office only.

## 5.4 Materials and construction

### 5.4.1 Elevations and roofing

Due to the different types and uses of buildings within the area, no single material characterises the architecture. Buildings in the residential and boarding-house areas to the south are generally constructed of brick, although many have now been painted or rendered, destroying any homogeneity of materials to the principal street frontages (Fig.14). Nos 120-150 Adelaide Street are a positive example. Many of the early buildings on the east-west streets in the shopping area are also of red brick construction, but again have been altered.



Fig. 14: Red brick and rendered boarding houses on Adelaide Street

Brick was also the main material used in the first phase of the Hounds Hill shopping centre in 1982, and in the Tower Shopping Centre. Although some of the detailing to the upper floors of the former (especially on the north side of Victoria Street) is rather bland, the latter building reflects the scale and footprint of the listed Tower Buildings opposite (Fig.15).



Fig. 15: Looking south down Bank Hey Street

Sandstone ashlar is used for banks such as the RBS on Talbot Road, and pitch-faced yellow sandstone is common for late 19<sup>th</sup>-century public buildings, including St John's Church, the Spiritualist Church on Albert Road and the Masonic Hall on Adelaide Street (Fig.16). Yellow sandstone was also a popular choice for banks.



Fig. 16: The central bay of the Masonic Hall on Adelaide Street

Terracotta faience is also readily seen in the area; this material is common on the Promenade buildings due to its durability and was probably used in the Town Centre as an architectural flourish on steel-framed buildings, and also allowed further possibilities for decoration with the introduction of dark blue or pea-green panels, as seen on the Winter Gardens and the surviving original parts of Talbot Street car park. Most of the significant faience-clad buildings in the area date from the interwar period, including the re-faced elevations of the Winter Gardens (Fig. 17), and the range of buildings at the east end of Church Street which replaced Stanley Terrace in 1935.



Fig. 17: Faience to the Coronation Street elevation of the Winter Gardens, re-faced in 1930

Post-war architecture is more apparent in the town centre area than the Promenade or boarding-house centres to the south and north, and therefore there are a variety of modern materials, particularly in the Hounds Hill shopping area. Brutalist concrete buildings, such as the NatWest and Yorkshire banks, and the 1950s Marks & Spencer store on Church Street, are of varied quality and the scale and materials can create a jarring effect in the street scenes. Thoroughly modern buildings (Fig.18) introduce colour and metallic finishes into the streetscene, although some buildings are unsympathetic to their neighbours (for example the Syndicate nightclub on Church Street).



Fig.18: Modern finishes to the new Hounds Hill stores on Albert Road

Roofs, where visible, are generally of Welsh slate, although replacement roofing is often of concrete tiles, in common with other surveyed areas within Blackpool. There are also a number of flat-roofed buildings in the town centre area. The glazed dome to the Winter Gardens is the only unusual roofing structure in the area. The survival of brick chimney stacks is quite high to residential terraces in the south of the area. The eaves of these buildings often also have painted timber cornices.

#### **5.4.2 Doors and windows**

Stone canted bay windows are common in the south of the area, where they characterise the boarding and residential properties on Albert Street, Adelaide Street and the north-south streets which intersect. The bays vary in height from ground floor only to three storeys high from the basement, and there are also examples of rectangular bays. Some bays are embellished with cylindrical colonettes.



Fig. 19: End of terrace on Adelaide Street, canted bay windows with timber sash windows and panelled door on the right and uPVC casements on the left.

The windows themselves, as with most of the buildings in whole or partial residential use in Blackpool, have generally been replaced by modern uPVC or equivalent casements. However, there are a few surviving examples of original joinery, including panelled front doors and sash windows, some with leaded coloured glass. Listed buildings retain their original (or sympathetically replaced) windows, including many-paned sashes to the Abingdon Street Post Office. Shop fronts are described below.

Paired doorcases are also an important feature, and often give a building some merit when other architectural features have been removed. The boarding houses generally have steps up from the footway to the front door, which gives them an elevated status to the smaller residential houses in adjacent areas.



Fig. 20: Various styles of paired doorcases on Regent Road

#### **5.4.3. Shopfronts and fascias**

North of Adelaide Street the area is generally characterised by the various shopping districts at the heart of Blackpool. There is varied treatment of shopfronts, fascias and advertising signage, most of which are modern and of low merit. Their poor design is an overriding issue in the town's commercial area, and often bring a generally positive building down to neutral status (Fig.21). Poor-quality signage in inappropriate colours also applies to potential local list buildings, such as the Stanley Arms on Church Street, but buildings such as this have been chosen as the overall architectural merit overrides the alterations. Modern interventions such as signage and deep fascia boards are superficial and guided re-design would enhance the qualities of the associated buildings.



Fig. 21: Obtrusive superficial signage on positive building on Church Street



Fig. 22: Modern shopfronts to altered buildings on the south side of Talbot Road; these buildings can be said to have positive merit as the alterations are superficial

Good examples of shopfronts include the ground-floor shops to Nos 1-9a Counce Street and 150-170 Church Street, many of which are occupied by private commercial concerns (Fig. 23). The survival of mosaic tiled surrounds and recessed entrances with plate-glass windows are rare features within the town.



Fig.23: Shopfronts to Counce Street

Other frontages of a similar date include No. 28 Topping Street although the window itself has been altered, and Sun Chambers and Deansgate Chambers on Deansgate (Fig. 39). Hardly any complete 19<sup>th</sup>-century timber shopfronts or surrounds have survived although one example to Churchill's Bar at No. 83 Topping Street is an attractive survivor (Fig. 24).



Fig. 24: Churchill's pub on Topping Street

#### 5.4.4. Signs and details

As noted above, the constant pressures of advertising in the commercial heart of the town has led to a large amount of poor-quality signage, some of which is temporary or covers up earlier timber entablatures. Overall it is superficial and does not affect the overall integrity of the building. Despite this, there is a good proportion of interesting signs and architectural details surviving in the town centre.

Street-name signs vary between metal plates, introduced in the 1920s during a period of street renaming, and modern steel signs which are typical throughout the country. On Birley Street there is a chunky steel name-sign, probably intended to replicate a historic cast-iron type. The 1920s signage is also occasionally used for directional signage, such as on the corner of Leopold Grove (Fig. 25).



Fig. 25: 1920s sign for Blackpool North Station

Many of the listed and potential local list buildings retain features such as moulded red terracotta decoration (the Town Hall), or faience panels (1930s Counce Street/Church Street building, Fig. 26), carved sandstone panels (the Town Hall Extension), stone cartouches (Abingdon Street post office), or cast-iron canopies to the street (Grand Theatre, Fig. 28).

Also of interest is a relief sculpture of the Three Graces by Samuel Wood on the west side of Nos 23-27 Church Street. It was revealed in 1976 after being hidden for many years, but later damaged and replaced with a plastic replica (Fig. 28).

The tradition of cast-iron canopies and brick architectural details has been continued in the Hounds Hill centre, where the original design was described in 1982 as 'quasi-Paxton'. The detailing to the Hounds Hill centre varies in quality, although it is generally subtle and well-designed.

Details on residential and boarding houses include cast-iron cresting above doorways, and occasionally other historic finishes and details, such as terracotta paving tiles (Fig.29); gate piers and boundary walls are discussed below.



Fig. 26: Terracotta faience decoration on Church Street



Fig. 27: Canopies to Grand Theatre entrance



Fig. 28: Replica relief on 23-25 Church Street



Fig. 29: Terracotta paving tiles on Milbourne Street

#### 5.4.5 Boundaries

The most conspicuous boundaries occur in the residential and boarding house streets to the south and north-east of the area. Here the houses generally have short front gardens, bounded to the footway by low brick or stone walls. However, in many cases this wall has been removed to allow off-street parking, rebuilt in a similar material or replaced with steel railings or fencing. There are, however, several excellent examples of walls and other boundary features such as cast-iron railings, as illustrated in Figs 30 & 31 and also seen on Charles Street and Milbourne Street.



Fig. 30: A continuous, if partially rebuilt, boundary wall on the south side of Adelaide Street



Fig. 31: Cast-iron railings on Albert Road

Some front gardens are well maintained, with a privet or similar hedge enhancing the external appearance of the property. Gate piers often survive alongside boundary walls and railings, and are usually of stone, mostly painted, with similar architectural details as doorcases to their associated houses. Some are inscribed with the historic house name. Modern galvanised steel gates have been added to many of the rear service lanes to help with crime prevention (Fig. 32).



Fig. 32: Modern steel security gate off Grosvenor Street

On the shopping streets there are few boundary features as the shops are built up to the back of the footway. There are modern safety barriers to street corners, such as the corner of Bank Hey and Albert Street. The definition of pedestrian areas is marked by a change in street surface (see *Section 5.4.6* below).

#### 5.4.6 Roads and footways

Road surfaces are all modern asphalt, and footways generally are of poured concrete or slabs. There are however a few surviving examples of historic surfaces, especially to back service lanes, where stone setts survive under broken-up tarmac (Fig. 32). One example of stone flags survives off Cedar Square (Fig. 33).



Fig. 33: Stone flags to a back lane off Cedar Square

A variety of materials are used in the pedestrianised areas of the town centre. Examples include pink and buff paviments to Church Street, Bank Hey Street and Victoria Street, with artificial stone setts (made of concrete) and concrete granite-like slabs to the latter (Fig.34). Pedestrianised areas are defined not only by a step up from the road, but also by the surface finishes.



Fig. 34: Various non-traditional street surfaces to Victoria Street

#### 5.4.7 Street furniture

There is a greater variety of street furniture in the town centre, in contrast to the Promenades, mainly due to the requirements of defining pedestrianised and vehicular areas. Boundaries between the footway and the road are marked by steel bollards, which also prevent parking on the kerbs; these are probably of a post-war date (Fig.35).

The pedestrianised areas of the town centre have a range of street furniture, much of which has little historic interest. Fig. 36 shows the differing styles of street furniture at the west end of Church Street, and the modern curving streetlamps are boldly designed, though they compete with the height of the buildings. Corporation Street is also blighted by clutter, and although the pavements are wide, street furniture creates obstacles on the footway, particularly for people with disabilities and parents with buggies. Plants in containers brighten the street.



Fig. 35: Steel bollards on Leopold Grove near the Winter Gardens



Fig. 36: Looking east from the west end of Church Street



Fig. 37: Street furniture on the east side of Corporation Street

The listed K6 telephone boxes outside the Abingdon Street post office and the Church of the Sacred Heart, Talbot Road are positive examples of street furniture, although they are also structures in their own right. Other phone boxes are modern, such as on Bank Hey Street, and not of an appealing design. Of a similar scale, cylindrical advertising stands are common in the pedestrian areas and do not add positively to the streetscene. Similarly, modern steel benches are rather industrial in character and do not suit the architectural character of many of the streets (Fig. 37). Telephone boxes and advertising stands are often also poorly sited, for example to the north of the Tower Buildings a group of phone boxes obstructs one of the few views from the town centre to the Promenade. These are issues that could easily be remedied with a design opportunity to tidy up the streetscene; practically they are superficial.

## **5.5 Architectural character**

The architectural character of the town centre area is varied, representing architectural styles current from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century to the present day. If any buildings dating from before the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century survive they have generally been altered and nothing earlier in date than c.1850 has been identified (the 1838 Tithe map does not identify individual buildings so it is possible that earlier buildings survive in the town centre). The buildings exhibit an eclectic mix of styles and finishes, with many 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century characteristics, typical of a busy town centre. Typical architectural styles from the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century are fairly well represented, including Renaissance, Baroque and classical styles, while Gothic Revival is largely confined to the churches and places of worship. Quite a number of buildings exhibit interwar features reflecting a spike in activity during this period when rebuilding and re-fronting of existing properties occurred. Styles adopted are typical of the period and include free classical compositions and others of Art Deco inspiration. Design typical of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century is seen especially in the Hounds Hill Centre and retail outlets in neighbouring streets (*Section 5.4.1.*).

Buildings in the central area which give Blackpool real distinction are the Winter Gardens and Grand Theatre, the early company-house streets around Albert Road, the Town Hall extension, with its unusual sculptural panels, and the multi-storey car park and bus station on Talbot Road, the latter an exceptionally early example of the building type. The Abingdon Street Post Office also deserves mention as an unusually large, well preserved and architecturally accomplished example of its date.

### **5.5.1 The historic town centre**

Public buildings are an important and characteristic feature of the historic core. The Grade II listed Town Hall is a key element of the Town Centre Conservation Area and a local landmark, in Jacobean or Northern Renaissance style typical of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building retains a range of original interior features such as stained glass, furnishings, fittings and statuary which enhances its historic character. Different in tone is the Town Hall Extension (or Progress House), an example of interwar style, which is made very distinctive by the sculptural panels on the theme of progress. These panels give it an important local character, reflecting the achievements and aspirations of the town and linking it with the latest technical advances of the day. The listed Post Office (1910) on Abingdon Street is a key public building and can be considered architecturally as one of the best buildings of its date in the centre, with good sculpture. It is broadly Baroque in conception, executed in Portland stone, and represents a particularly ambitious design by the Office of Works architectural team. Its character is enhanced by the presence of a row of K6 telephone boxes along the frontage.



Fig. 38: The Town Hall from the west

The two churches in this sub-area are both listed buildings. Sacred Heart was the first Roman Catholic Church in Blackpool (1854-6), and St John Evangelist (1878) is on the site of the first Anglican church in the town (1821). Both buildings adopt Gothic revival styles typical of the periods represented. Sacred Heart is by E.W. Pugin, one of the most active and important architects Catholic Church designers of the mid and later 19<sup>th</sup>-century. The building is one of the earliest to survive in the centre. It was enlarged by the successor firm Pugin & Pugin and the later work (1894) is of special note for particularly elaborate and unusual treatment of the crossing, which is octagonal, and east end. The group of related buildings is architecturally significant, and the former school has special merit and could well also be the work of the Pugin & Pugin firm; if this attribution could be confirmed it is a possible candidate for national designation.

St John Evangelist is more typical for its date; the principal architectural importance lies in the exterior and landmark tower, while in townscape terms the open space around it can be regarded as part of the character reflecting the presence of the (truncated) graveyard. The monument recording burials on the site has some historical significance.

Commercial buildings are an important element, especially banks, some of which are now in other uses. These include the RBS on Talbot Square which is a particularly good example of interwar classicism with freestyle elements, and a key building in the Town Centre Conservation Area. The quieter and smaller former District Bank, No. 26 Talbot Road, by the distinguished architect Francis Jones, combines mid to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century with restrained 20<sup>th</sup> century features. Banks and former banks at No. 22 Clifton Street (classical, interwar), the Birley Street HSBC (1897) and Barclays (early 20<sup>th</sup>-century) are typical of styles adopted when enlarging branches in town-centre contexts. Of later commercial buildings the Brutalist Yorkshire Bank on the corner of Church Street is perhaps the most challenging. It is considered to be a good example of its type, but alien in the street scene and with regard to the setting of St John's church (Fig. 39).



Fig. 39: St John's church on Church Street, next to a Brutalist concrete bank

Retail outlets, cafés and restaurants form another typical group. There is relatively little in the centre with special distinction, though there are a number of good examples of interwar design, often adopting a popular green and cream livery. Good examples include the Art Deco No.28 Topping Street, and the upper floors of Sun Chambers and Deansgate Chambers on Deansgate (Fig. 40). The Cedar Tavern public house at the head of Cedar Square is a good example of interwar classical

design with faience cladding and metal casements, as is the triangular-sided building between Cauce Street, Cookson Street and Church Street.



Fig. 40: Sun Chambers and Deansgate Chambers on Deansgate

Finally in the historic town centre character area are the entertainment buildings. The Tower is outside the area but a constant visual presence. The Winter Gardens is a vast, unique indoor entertainment complex with extraordinary interiors ranging from the 1870s to the 1930s. It is an enormously distinctive and important building with an exterior treatment which reflects investment and expansion during the interwar period and the influence of the cinema in interior design. The Grand Theatre (Fig. 41) is in contrast quite small, but it is one of the best preserved and most appealing theatres of its date by one of the best-known theatre architects, Frank Matcham. The late 1990s restoration is highly creditable. Lastly the Yates's Wine Lodge on Church Street was an interesting example of an entertainment building of relatively early date (1868) which originated as an arcade and assembly rooms and underwent various modifications and changes of use before serious damage by fire resulted in its demolition in early 2009.



Fig. 41: The corner of the Grand Theatre on Church Street

### **5.5.2 Hounds Hill**

The architectural character of the Hounds Hill area is dominated by the 1980s shopping centre, which adopts a scale and palette designed to defer to the Tower Buildings and as such has some distinction in the field of shopping centre design. New additions and alterations sometimes adopt upbeat Postmodernist or later styles designed to create an atmosphere of modernity. Older retail buildings of local list quality include the Edith Centre, a former Marks & Spencer store of 1936 which is a large but relatively low-key Art Deco design incorporating maritime motifs (Fig. 42).



Fig. 42: Detail of the corner tower of the Edith Centre, to the junction of Bank Hey Street and Albert Road

The former Regent Cinema of 1921 by Lumb & Walton (now Riley's Pool Hall) is an interwar design of classical inspiration with good landmark qualities. The former Empire Hippodrome has been clad with unsympathetic materials and converted into the Syndicate nightclub, and has landmark qualities for all the wrong reasons.

Churches are represented by the New Central Methodist Church of 1973 on Adelaide Street which is not considered to be a particularly distinguished design of somewhat late Brutalist character.

### **5.5.3 Residential and boarding house areas.**

The last character area, dominated by boarding or company houses represents a relatively early colonisation of this area, from the 1870-80s in prime positions close to the seafront and to the former Central Station. J. K. Walton has identified the part of this area nearest the seafront as the first specialised company-house district. The houses often incorporate large bay windows and were, as Walton remarks, aimed at working class visitors and 'similar in architectural idiom to the streets of their own home towns, writ only slightly larger'. The effect of the rows of similar buildings up and down the streets, especially in the Albert Road environs is strikingly distinctive (Fig. 43). Blackpool can lay claim to being the home of the archetypal company or

cheap but respectable boarding house. While other resorts possibly contain earlier examples it is doubtful if anywhere else has as many of such an early date as part of distinctive street scenes.



Fig. 43: Typical high-quality boarding houses on Adelaide Street

Transport buildings in this area include the site of Central Station, preserving the large public lavatories, essential in the days before facilities on the trains. However, the transport building of principal interest is the bus station and multi-storey car park on Talbot Road which marks a transport gateway into the town and is of technological and historical importance. If the original cladding survives it would emerge with a higher degree of architectural interest.

Churches and places of worship of architectural interest are hardly represented. The exception is the Albert Road Spiritualist Church (Fig. 44), of some architectural and historical interest as an early purpose-built example, retaining interior features and an interesting adoption of a broadly nonconformist format for this relatively rare building type.



Fig. 44: The Spiritualist Church on Albert Road

### 5.6 Degree of completeness

The three defined areas have comparatively different levels of original material and features remaining. In the historic town centre pressure for change through advertising and changing ownership has resulted in almost all of the buildings on the shopping streets north of the Winter Gardens having been altered; some modern interventions are purely superficial. Some prominent buildings, particularly banks, still exist in something of their original form (e.g. Barclay's on Birley Street). Comparing a photograph of Church Street from 1898 (Fig. 45) and today's streetscene the Liberal Club (now Poundland) is little changed, although a range of buildings stretching east along the street are all but gone. Buildings on Cedar Square and the Empire cinema are visible in the background; the latter is now the Syndicate nightclub.



Fig. 45: A view along Church Street in 1898 (reproduced with permission of Ted Lightbown)

Even recent and relatively cosmetic alterations have degraded more modern structures and the character of the street: in 1958 shops on the corner of Abingdon and Church Street built in the 1860s were replaced by a stylish building faced in black mosaic lined with pink; it was covered in ivory paint in the 1980s and today is vacant (Fig.46).



Fig. 46: Nos 86-94 Church Street

The Hounds Hill area is unquestionably modern, with little historic fabric retained. Where the occasional 19<sup>th</sup>-century building survives, the ground floor has generally been altered, such as the former Liberal Club on Victoria Street (Fig. 47), and No.18 Bank Hey Street.



Fig. 47: Modern shopfront to a late-19<sup>th</sup> century building on Victoria Street

The residential and boarding house area to the south of the Winter Gardens has been subjected to a range of cosmetic changes, such as rendering or painting of elevations, replacement roof coverings, windows and doors (with uPVC casements, ubiquitous to Blackpool where timber windows rarely withstand the weather), and the removal of front boundary walls and gardens to create off-street parking. Ground floor and attic extensions are less common here than, for example, in Bloomfield and South Beach. Some properties have been altered beyond recognition (Fig. 48), but despite this range of alterations some streets retain a homogeneity which gives positive townscape character (these characteristics are outlined in *Section 6*).



Fig. 48: A completely altered property on Milbourne Street

There are few vacant sites in the town centre area, and surface car-parks have been inserted where buildings have been demolished in the past, creating a viable if not wholly aesthetically pleasing use.

National designation has helped the most significant buildings in the town centre retain a high level of the historic and architectural interest. The creation of a list of building of local significance may assist in identifying buildings with worthwhile architectural and historic qualities worthy of preservation.

### **5.7 Archaeological potential**

Early mapping suggests that before 18<sup>th</sup> century development the area was mainly open land or in cultivation with little evidence for human settlement. The remains of any pre-18th 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 in the AHP characterisation assessment of The Welsh Streets, Liverpool in 2007. 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 surviving from the earliest phases of development (prior to 20<sup>th</sup> century) and as part of the early 20<sup>th</sup> suburban 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 five 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 seventeen listed buildings in the area: Sacred Heart Church is designated Grade II\*, and the Winter Gardens, the Grand Theatre, St John the Evangelist, the former Post Office, 11 K6 telephone kiosks (8 outside the former post office and 3 on Talbot Road), the Town Hall are all listed Grade II. About one-third of the area lies within the boundary of the Town Centre Conservation Area.
- **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 or setting of adjoining buildings and spaces or that there are overriding social or economic factors. The majority of potential local list buildings in the Town Centre area are commercial buildings such as shops, banks and pubs. Perhaps the most notable of the potential local list buildings is the Town Hall Extension (Progress House), which is theoretically part of the Grade II listed Town Hall, and the school connected to the Sacred Heart Church which may be by Pugin & Pugin and therefore a potential candidate for national designation.

- **Positive value:** buildings, features or spaces of clear local interest, but of lesser quality than 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. Shops which have been altered at the ground floor but retain good architectural detail or character to the upper floors are an example of this. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century red-brick terraces in the south of the area are little altered and as a group are a positive contribution to the streetscape.
- **Neutral:** buildings, features or spaces which although of little individual merit, for example due to the level of later alterations, combine with other buildings and spaces to create a townscape of value, which could be recreated through careful new development that complements the townscape.
- **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. In the Town Centre these are mainly located to the north-west of the area, such as the Wilkinson Store on Talbot Road.

## 6.2 Summary of significance of the Town Centre area

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

The town centre has two distinct building uses, commercial and residential, which in turn defines the three sub-character areas: the historic shopping district; the modern shopping centre at Hounds Hill; and the residential and boarding-house area.

The town centre is identified by Blackpool's retail core, containing a mix of buildings of different styles, types and ages. The historic shopping area is focused around Abingdon Street, with a grid of north-south and east-west streets containing shops and other commercial premises, churches, and the prominent Winter Gardens complex at its southern edge. The area has a tight building grain allowing for little open space but supplying good vistas to landmark buildings. The LHTS identifies the historic street pattern as being of greatest significance, enhanced by several key buildings of outstanding merit.

The Hounds Hill development is part of the retail core, and although the historic street-layout was destroyed by buildings with large footprints, it contains some recent buildings of architectural merit.

South of the Winter Gardens and to the east of Topping Street the area is characterised by grids of residential and boarding-houses, similar to but in most cases of a better quality than the boarding houses streets in South Shore, Bloomfield and North Shore. Again vistas along streets are an important part of the streetscene,

and the area is of high significance as one of the earliest boarding houses areas in Blackpool centre.

There are a range of listed buildings in the Town Centre, from the Winter Gardens complex to the former Post Office on Abingdon Street. Most of the Town Centre Conservation Area is also in the area. Supplementing the designated buildings, some buildings have potential for a potential local list; these are mainly public and commercial buildings, with several good examples from the interwar period.

### 6.2.2 The historic town centre

The streets are listed alphabetically for easy reference, and minor and service streets are described together. Where only part of a street is described, the rest of its character can be found in the following section (i.e. Church Street has two characters, east and west of Cedar Square; the latter part is in this section).

#### *Abingdon Street*

Abingdon Street is one of Blackpool's historic shopping streets although its principal buildings were not added until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The street is a principal north-south thoroughfare in the town centre, and is of **positive** value. A wide street, it narrows at the north end across Talbot Road, and its linear qualities give important views to the south of the listed Winter Gardens and to the north of the listed Library and Art Gallery on Queen Street.



Fig. 49: Abingdon Street looking north



Fig. 50: Abingdon Street looking south towards the Winter Gardens

There are also views westwards down popular shopping streets in the centre, Birley Street and Clifton Street. Most buildings are two or three storeys high, and almost all are in retail or commercial use. Poorly-designed, but superficial, alterations to shop fronts and modern fascias are almost universal. At the north end of the street most of the buildings are of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century and some buildings of less positive value, mainly of mid or late 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, are found towards the south end, where the scale increases. Nos 6-12 is a rather brutal building but it respects rooflines and shares the general scale of its neighbours, as does The Yorkshire Bank, another mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century Brutalist composition which attempts to respect its surroundings but is jarring in form and materials in relation to the listed St John's Church and Winter Gardens complex.

The grade II listed Post Office, with the row of eight Grade II listed telephone boxes, is highly significant to the townscape value and does much to enhance the character of the street, and views of these assets can be obtained from Clifton Street as well as in long views up and down Abingdon Street.

The south junction with Church Street is of high townscape significance and is currently the subject of improvement as part of the St John's Plaza project.



Fig. 51: Nos. 6-12 Abingdon Street (right) in the street scene



Fig. 52: Post Office and K6 telephone kiosks, Abingdon Street.

### *Birley Street*

Along with Clifton Street, Birley Street was one of the early streets to be laid out between the seafront and Abingdon Street. Historic mapping shows that both sides of the street were characterised by small properties, few of which remain today, especially on the south side. Birley Street was pedestrianised in 1996 and was undergoing a programme of refurbishment at the time of the survey.

The street is a principal commercial street, mainly with cafes, banks, small chainstores and privately-owned shops. The buildings are a mix of two and three storeys, generally two bays wide, although some more recent buildings are of a larger scale, for example the three-storey Nos 9-19 Abingdon Street. The NatWest bank on the west corner is similarly prominent, and although Brutalist in its architecture is not a negative contribution to the street. It has a **high neutral** value.



Fig. 53: Looking down Birley Street from the east in February 2009

The north side of the street mainly comprises older, late 19<sup>th</sup>-century premises, although these have been considerably altered at the upper floors, and superficially to the ground floor with modern shopfronts and signage. Exceptions such as No.26 which is practically intact, and Nos. 6 & 8, although altered, represent the former character of the historic street. The south side is mainly of mid-late 20<sup>th</sup>-century flat-roofed blocks with modern shopfronts, although some of these are superficial cladding to original masonry fronts. The historic nature of the street is a positive aspect, but the buildings present little homogeneity to the streetscene presenting a neutral character with one or two exceptions. HSBC is positive though altered, and Barclays bank has local list potential. The Rose and Crown pub on the south-west corner has a modern verandah, obtrusive signage and outside seating arranged haphazardly on the pavement; it is a negative contribution, although historically the site of a pub since the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century.

Recent public realm installations impede on the spatial qualities of this relatively narrow street. This regeneration project is overscaled, but it could be used as a starting point for a period of change to Birley Street. Using surviving 19<sup>th</sup>-century fabric the street could form part of a townscape initiative to demonstrate beneficial change, similar to the works recently carried out in Cedar Square. There is enough historic fabric, backed-up by the history and development of the street, for this to

viable. The Rose and Crown and the NatWest bank opposite are included in the Town Centre Conservation Area and the remainder of the street has the potential to be included within an expanded boundary.

Street surfaces are modern, and include pink and grey pavements up to the building line. The street has a new lighting scheme integral to the recent public-realm works. Views to the west are terminated by Progress House (the town hall extension) and to the east by the Brutalist Yorkshire Bank on the corner of Abingdon and Church Streets. The Birley Street buildings are built up to the back of the footway and the closed views give a sense of enclosure at street level.

#### *Carter Street, Adelphi Street and Matcham Court*

These three streets are short service roads south of Church Street. Matcham Court was created following the construction of M&S in the 1950s, and originally joined with Carter Street across Coronation Street. Adelphi Street runs north from Carter Street, forming an island block of buildings, Nos 61-75; Nos 73-75 has an interesting architectural pediment on the east elevation which has been partially covered and its merit removed by post-war surfaces. The streets are pedestrianised but have vehicular access. Matcham Court is covered by a colourful sculptural steel glazed roof. The streets have a high **neutral** quality.



Fig. 54: Adelphi Street

### *Cedar Square*

Cedar Square lies between Edward Street and Church Street, and is an area of high **positive** value with several potential local list buildings. Cedar Square is the subject of a scheme of improvement as part of the St John's Plaza project and work was in progress at the time of the survey.

A row of small shops on the east side, with a datestone for 1865 and formerly residential, are altered and individually of neutral value, but they share a common coherent scale, upgrading them to positive townscape value. The west side is dominated by the east end of St John's church (listed Grade II) which is prominent in views around the square and an important town-centre landmark. Views to the north are partially closed by the Cedar Tavern (Fig. 55), a pub of interwar date clad in creamy-coloured faience with retained metal casements, which has local list potential. The interior was not inspected but if this survives in any way intact the pub may be suitable for national designation.



Fig. 55: The Cedar Tavern and Homer Terrace, dated 1865

Abingdon Street market, the rear of which is on Cedar Square, was later joined on to earlier buildings (the former Police Station) on Abingdon Street also has local list potential. Just east of the church a monument commemorates those buried in the

graveyard when it was partially reduced to form Cedar Square and this too could be included on a potential local list (Fig. 56).



Fig. 56: Monument, St John's graveyard.

Off Cedar Square are two short service streets, Police Street and Queen Vera Road; the latter is part of Blackpool's civic trail as it was named after Vera Greenwood of Rochdale, the reigning Cotton Queen, in 1937. Both streets are of neutral value.

*Church Street (west end, Nos 22-94 (even) and 7-109 (odd))*

Church Street was historically the principal east-west thoroughfare in Blackpool, and today links the Promenade with Whitegate Drive, to the east. The street layout has changed little since its conception, and has retained its character as a major shopping street into the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. Today the street is pedestrianised at the west end, with traffic only from the junction with Abingdon Street. The street rises slightly from the west, and has a relatively wide aspect with two and three-storey buildings framing both sides. There is a large amount of street furniture of varying dates and styles which gives the impression of a cluttered street scene, although there are positive contributions outside the Grand Theatre (Fig. 57). There are good views to the west of Blackpool Tower from the junction with Abingdon Street, and the dome of the Grand Theatre is also a prominent feature. Church Street is a typical commercial street with a range of buildings of different styles and dates. The historic aspects of

the street, augmented by St John Evangelist church, the Grand Theatre and Winter Gardens which are all listed, are positive although there is a certain amount of off-putting post-war infill on what is an important historic street (Fig.58). Overall Church Street is **positive** in character, with some individual negative buildings.



Fig. 57: Church Street, looking east from the junction with Corporation Street



Fig. 58: Looking west along the south side of Church Street

Nos 23-27 is one of the oldest surviving buildings in the town centre, built in 1847. It retains much of its character and has local list potential. Nos 57-59 was built as a Post Office in 1877 and later became a Labour Bureau; it is a positive building. The north side of Church Street comprises individual narrow units, mainly of three storeys, some of which have strong architectural character and of merit; Nos 56-58 and 74-76 having local list potential. In between these two buildings is a block of c.1970s shops which are negative value, and re-fronting and modern shopfronts also impacts on most of the buildings on Church Street as they are unsympathetic in their scale and materials; however, it should be remembered that most of these alterations are superficial. Nos 77-81 is also negative as it jars with the positive qualities of the Winter Gardens (Fig. 59).



Fig. 59: Nos 77-81 Church Street, next to the Winter Gardens

The remaining buildings to Bank Hey Street are mainly of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century date and use modern materials. The design is simple and the scale is relatively sympathetic and they can be said to have a high neutral quality (Fig. 60).



Fig. 60: Nos 61-71 Church Street

### *Clifton Street and Cheapside*

Clifton Street is at the north of the surveyed area, and with Talbot Road and Abingdon Street forms a triangular site with the apex at Talbot Square. Clifton Street is a relatively short commercial street forming part of the historic east-west grid of shopping streets between Corporation Street and Abingdon Street. The street is characterised by a relatively wide aspect, with a tight building grain of three-storey buildings, two bays wide, built up to the back of the footway. The buildings have shops at the ground floor with modern shopfronts and signage, and offices or residential apartments above, or are large entertainment premises. There are a couple of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, for example the No. 1 built as a Tourist Information Bureau in 1981. The remaining buildings were built in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Overall the street is of **positive** value and three buildings have local list potential.



Fig. 61: South side of Clifton Street, looking west

There are good views to the west of the Town Hall tower and of North Pier and the Promenade. Abingdon Street Post Office has strong townscape value in views from the east, and until recently the curved frontage of Yates' Wine Bar was a strong focal point. Street surfaces are modern, with parking bays on the south side. Supplementing concrete street lamps, the street has two designs of large curving aluminium street lights, a feature in this commercial part of the town; their positioning often jeopardises views of important buildings, such as Nos 22-24 (Fig. 62).

At the east end are two attractive sculptures of nymphs by David Annand, 1997 (Fig. 63), and contribute positively to the streetscene.



Fig. 62: Nos 22-24, 'Sundays' pub and club, with a modern streetlight in front



Fig. 63: Sculpture of a nymph by David Annand at the junction with Abingdon Street

Cheapside, a narrow service street, runs east-west to the south of Clifton Street. Historically it was known as Back Clifton Street and historic mapping shows that the boarding houses on Clifton Street and premises on Birley Street, to the south, had short back yards with small outbuildings. Today the street is characterised by the tall rear elevations of buildings on Clifton Street and Birley Street, constructed of various materials and dates. It is of **neutral** character; the backs of the local list buildings in Clifton and Birley Streets are no different to the other buildings on the street.



Fig. 64: Cheapside, from the west; NatWest bank is on the right.

Clifton Street and the north side of Cheapside are included in the Town Centre Conservation Area.

#### *Coronation Street (east side)*

The east side of Coronation Street is dominated by the west elevation of the Winter Gardens. The street is relatively narrow and views of the whole elevation are difficult to obtain. The east side has **positive** value, but overall is neutral due to the buildings on the west side of the street related to the Hounds Hill Centre (see *Section 6.2.3*). There are good views of the Tower to the west from the steps of the Winter Gardens.

### *Corporation Street*

Corporation Street was one of the first principal north-south shopping streets, historically characterised by parades of shops with small frontages. Today the street is one way to traffic, and has wide footways, giving it a relatively wide vista with, on the west side, BHS, the Town Hall and Town Hall Extension, all of which are constructed on large footprints, and a range of 19<sup>th</sup>-century shops and banks, generally of two or three storeys and of a smaller scale, to the east. The south end of the street, across Church Street, is pedestrianised and characterised by a dense building grain of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings on the west side, and the Grand Theatre and Matcham Court on the east. There are concrete planters with palm trees, steel bollards and modern steel benches on the north-east side, with a mix of mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century and modern curving lamp standards. The Rose and Crown pub on the corner with Birley Street is of negative value (see also *Birley Street*), but generally the street has good architectural qualities, with Brutalist post-war infill such as No 20 (NatWest) giving variation to the character. Overall the street is **positive** in value.



Fig. 65: East side of Corporation Street, looking south

### *Deansgate*

Deansgate was historically known as Upper Talbot Street and is now a minor thoroughfare running east-west from Cookson Street to Abingdon Street. The westernmost part of the street is pedestrianised. The street falls into two areas of different value, although overall it is of **neutral** value.

The section to the east of Topping Street, which meets Deansgate at its north end, is essentially of negative character, while to the west the area is of neutral merit. On the south side there is surface car parking and views of the unkempt backs of properties on King Street and Topping Street (Fig. 66). On the north side the rear of the potentially local list Talbot Road bus station and car park is a building of high historical interest but it does not engage with pedestrians. Beside it the Prudential Building, while matching its neighbour in scale, is of generally negative quality.



Fig. 66: Looking south from the east end of Deansgate

The western part of Deansgate is of high **neutral** value with the street characterised by terraces of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century domestic scale buildings, mainly now in retail use. An exception is the Telecom Building (see Edward Street). The buildings have some interesting features such as faience to Nos 10-12 which also have a strong interwar character, though later alteration to shop fronts has generally damaged their integrity.



Fig. 67: Deansgate looking east

### *Edward Street*

Edward Street runs north-south linking Deansgate and Cedar Square. The street is an unusual survivor in the town centre, retaining on its west side a domestic scale terrace (Nos 12-28), with surviving canted bay windows and front boundary walls, now in use as offices. Overall the street has strong **positive** character.

Although Edward Street has an enclosed character, there are views south towards Cedar Square, where the vista opens out a little.



Fig. 68: Edward Street, east side looking south to Cedar Square

The west side is partially affected by the negative Telecom building in terms of scale and materials. The rear of the listed Abingdon Street Post Office, although being its service face, is another positive aspect with the retention of wrought-iron railings and lamps to the back of the footway (Fig.69).



Fig. 69: Wrought iron railings to the rear of the post office

*Market Street (east side only), and West Street*

One of Blackpool's earliest streets, Market Street became one of the first major north-south shopping streets in the 1860s, and was the location of a large covered market until the interwar years. Today Market Street is characterised by the west elevations of the Town Hall Extension and the 1957 British Home Stores (BHS) (Fig.66), with West Street intercepting from the east, and Talbot Square and Church Street at the north and south ends respectively. The west side of Market Street has been assessed under *Central Promenade*. West Street is a narrow street squeezed between the elevations of the Town Hall Extension and BHS, with access to a car-park within the BHS block on the south side. Market Street is one-way north to south and us a major bus stopping area. Although these factors make Market Street busy with traffic, overall the street is of **positive** value, with contributions made by good views of the Tower to the south and a general homogeneity of scale. BHS is typical of its time, and the curving south face is a strong feature of the building.



Fig. 70: East side of Market Street, from the south

Progress House was built as the Town Hall Extension in 1937-8 to designs by J. C. Robinson; it is an eye-catching and significant building and has good local list potential. The extension is linked at its north end to the Grade II listed Town Hall by Potts, Son & Hennings (1895-1900) and is therefore arguably part of the listed

building. The Town Hall and Town Hall Extension are within the Town Centre Conservation Area, reflecting the block's positive architectural value.



Fig. 71: The west elevation of the Progress Building with the Town Hall in the background

### *Talbot Road*

Talbot Road is a principal town-centre street running east-west from High Street and Swainson Street in the study area to Talbot Square and the Promenade. There are views westwards down the street towards the North Pier with the Grade II listed Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and the Town Hall also providing good landmark quality. A pivotal street-corner building at the junction of Clifton Street is the Yates's Wine Lodge, recently seriously damaged by fire. The street is generally of **positive** value with stretches of buildings having high neutral value. The townscape of the eastern end has been impacted on by development.

Buildings on Talbot Road with local list potential include the Royal Bank of Scotland, formerly a Williams & Deacon Bank built in 1927 (Fig. 72). This is a fine architectural composition with group value with the neighbouring Counting House (in the North Promenade study area) and the listed town hall opposite.



Fig. 72: The RBS building on Talbot Road

The group around Sacred Heart Church includes a former school, west of the church (Fig. 73), which has group value with the church and is a building of strong architectural and historic interest. Dated 1898, it was completed shortly after the second phase of works at Sacred Heart by the architects Pugin & Pugin, who may have been responsible for the school's design. Its architectural quality and survival of details such as the boundary railings, makes it a candidate for the local list but if the attribution can be confirmed it may be suitable for national designation. The mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century associated Roman Catholic buildings to the north have local list potential.



Fig. 73: Former R.C. School on Talbot Road

Opposite, on the south side, the former District Bank is a building of strong architectural interest with local list potential. The undoubted historic interest and townscape value of the Yates's Wine Lodge building has been erased following demolition after a fire in 2009.



Fig. 74: Yates's Wine Lodge before the fire

Buildings in the middle part of the street, between Abingdon and Topping Streets, are largely in retail or commercial use. They are mainly of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date with a few later examples, and their consistent scale and building grain makes the street of high **neutral** value, although poorly designed shop fronts and fascias are intrusive. A block of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century commercial premises between Cookson Street and Swainson Street have the same townscape value.

From Topping Street the quality of the townscape disintegrates to buildings of a lesser quality, and views west to east are blighted by several large concrete buildings of little architectural value. These include the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Pearl Assurance building on the corner of Abingdon Street, the Prudential building on the corner of Topping Street, and the Wilkinson Building on an island site on the corner of Dickson Road (Fig. 75). These buildings have a damaging effect upon the character of the area, which is essentially a gateway to the town for rail travellers. The negative qualities are exacerbated by the busy roads junctions in this area.



Fig. 75: The Wilkinson building and the Talbot Road street scene

Despite the negative qualities of the east end of the street, the bus station and car park is an interwar building of high historical interest but with poor external finishes added in 1964 which undermines its appearance (Fig. 76). The historical interest is sufficient for its potentiality as a local list building; it is of more than local interest as probably the first municipal multi-storey car park in the country, reflecting the progressive character of Blackpool Corporation with regard to interwar transport policy.



Fig. 76: Talbot Road Car Park and Bus Station

The original finish seems to have been terracotta or faience tiles, of which a little survives around pedestrian entrances at the front and rear of the building (Fig. 77). If the original finishes survive beneath the later cladding their reinstatement would transform the appearance of the building.

Talbot Road is included in the Town Centre Conservation Area as far as the junction with Abingdon Street. There is no reason for the boundary to be extended here as it encompasses all the buildings of merit on the street.



Fig. 77: Talbot Road car park and bus station, original tiles and entrance.

### *Topping Street*

Topping Street was probably constructed to provide commercial services for travellers due to its close proximity to Blackpool railway station. It runs north-south between the principal east-west thoroughfares of Talbot Road and Church Street. It is a street of **positive** value and is characterised by a mixture of retail premises built on a tight grain up to the back of the footway. Most buildings are of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century date with several examples built or re-fronted in terracotta during the interwar period. Most premises have been altered at ground-floor level to incorporate late 20<sup>th</sup>-century shop fronts or entrances, and almost all feature modern signage and fascia treatments.



Fig. 78: Topping Street looking north

Only one building of local list potential has been identified. The Washington Inn, dated 1875, retains relatively unaltered openings, including joinery at ground-floor level. It occupies a corner site and is splayed to the corner (Fig. 79). The interior has been altered.



Fig. 79: The Washington, corner of Wood Street and Topping Street

No. 28, the Card Market, is a building of strong positive character which preserves a little-altered interwar frontage (Fig. 80). It was re-modelled in 1933 as the new showrooms for Naylor's Fireplaces by John C. Durham, FRIBA, of Blackpool, emulating a proscenium arch or even a giant fireplace (Fig. 81). A newspaper report from 1933 announced that this was the first use of buff and green terracotta in the town (*Blackpool Gazette & Herald*, 25/02/1933, p10).



Fig. 80: No. 28 Topping Street; a striking interwar frontage



Fig.81: No. 28 Topping Street in 1933

The Barnardo's Shop (No.68) building is also of positive value and appears little-altered externally (Fig. 82). The building, which extends east along Wood Street may have been purpose-built as offices or works. Decorative features include pilasters, inset fascias and pale green detailing.



Fig. 82: The Barnardo's shop on Topping Street

*Wood Street, East Topping Street and Winstanley Grove*

On East Topping Street a terrace of small houses with tiny back yards was demolished and is now the site of a surface car park. Winstanley Grove was known as Stanley Grove in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century. These three streets are minor service roads and side streets around Topping Street. Wood Street is fronted by the sides of buildings on neighbouring streets and is of **neutral** value. East Topping Street and Winstanley Grove, and other service streets and alleys in the study area are generally somewhat unkempt, with tarmac or occasionally stone flag surfaces, and varied treatment of the backs of properties which line them.

### 6.2.3. Hounds Hill: the modern shopping area

The Hounds Hill Shopping Centre is located on a three acre site within a block of streets approximately bounded by Albert Road to the south, Bank Hey Street to the west, Coronation Street to the east and Victoria Street to the north. The first phase was designed by Building Design Partnership in 1982 and attempted to link the red brick of the Tower Buildings and the architecture of the Winter Gardens with similar materials and ‘quasi-Paxton cast ironwork’ to create new and exciting architecture. The centre has been refurbished and updated since 1982, with an additional block housing Debenhams and Next on the corner of Albert Road and Coronation Street. This is the new shopping area vital to the heart of Blackpool, but its development has obliterated some of the historic connections with the town’s 19<sup>th</sup> century street layout.

#### *Victoria Street*

Victoria Street follows the historic street line first shown on the 1877 street map; however only one 19<sup>th</sup>-century building remains, the former Liberal Club at Nos 17-23, which has local list potential. The rest of the street is composed of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, of red brick and generally two storeys, with a steel verandah along the south side, built as part of the Hounds Hill Shopping Centre development in 1982. The street is pedestrianised with modern benches and other street furniture. There is a significant view of the Winter Gardens from the west, but this is partially obscured by the 1950s Marks & Spencer store at the east end of the street, which is of negative value. Similarly, poorly positioned street furniture obstructs views of the sea to the north of the Tower Buildings. Overall the street is of **neutral** character.



Fig. 83: Looking east along Victoria Street

*Bank Hey Street (east side)*

Bank Hey Street was probably in place in the 1830s although there are few 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings remaining. Albert Road, Adelaide Street and Victoria Street fed onto Bank Hey Street from the east, a layout less obvious since the construction of the Hounds Hill Shopping Centre in 1982. Today Bank Hey Street is one of Blackpool's principal shopping streets, with several large chain stores in modern buildings. It is pedestrianised from Albert Road through to Church Street. The street is characterised by a range of buildings of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, mainly of two or three storeys with a flat roofline, with buildings built up to the back of the footway at the rear of the Tower Buildings, reflecting the large footprint of the latter. There is a sense of homogeneity, and the varied range of buildings relate reasonably well in terms of scale and materials. Overall the east side of the street is of **neutral** value, with the Edith Centre, a former M&S store, having local list potential. There are also some buildings of positive value, including No. 18, a two storey building, two bays wide, of red brick and terracotta with a 1893 datestone; the ground floor is altered with a modern shopfront, but this early building is a rarity on the street. Nos 6-10 (currently vacant), was built in 1935 to replace a parade of 1840s shops then considered as an eyesore; it retains some green and buff faience, but is of no more than neutral value.



Fig. 84: The Tower Shopping Centre and Boots building opposite the Tower Buildings

A concrete footbridge, constructed as part of an unfinished development involving high-level walkways, spans the street at the south end. The central Methodist church is located at the corner with Adelaide Street West, and is a two-storey brick building with a jettied verandah and piloti to Adelaide Street West, with shop units to the ground floor and the church above; it replaced a Wesleyan chapel on this corner site, shown on historic OS maps, and was constructed in 1973; it is of neutral value.

There is a large amount of street furniture, of different qualities and dates, including late 20<sup>th</sup>-century telephone boxes, benches and planters, and plastic bollards.

#### *Coronation Street (west side)*

The west side of Coronation Street at the junction with Albert Road is characterised by a mix of 19<sup>th</sup>-century individual units, mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century concrete buildings, and recent glass-fronted shopping units. The latter (Debenhams and Next), at the corner of Albert Road replaced semi-detached houses; it is of an acceptable scale and built of very modern materials and is neutral in value. Marks & Spencer, at the north end of the street, was built over the site of Oak Street in the 1950s, and wraps around the listed Grand Theatre. It is out of scale on all elevations and creates a bleak feel to the street; it is negative. Nos 31-53 are also neutral in value as they are all altered and offer little homogeneity. The street is **neutral** in townscape value.



Fig. 85: The west side of Coronation Street, from the south

*Sheppard Street, Winifred Street, Tower Street, Adelaide Street West*

These four streets are the remnants of a series of short streets which formed blocks of buildings to the north of Albert Road, built over during the Hounds Hill development in 1982. Winifred Street and Sheppard Street were apparently lined with good-sized terraced housing, while Adelaide Street West was the western end of Adelaide Street with a chapel on the south-east corner. Tower Street, named South Edward Street in 1893, was a triangular block of densely-built houses, bounded by Coronation Street to the east.

Today Adelaide Street West continues through the Hounds Hill Centre and a multi-storey car park built on the site, joining Adelaide Street at the east; the west end is pedestrianised and has benches and concrete planters. The north side is dominated by the tall blind elevation of the Tower Shopping Centre, extended upwards post-1982, and the street is terminated to the east by the refurbished west elevation of the Hounds Hill Centre. These streets are all **neutral** in character, with Sheppard Street and Winifred Street being the service entrances to the department stores at Hounds Hill. On Tower Street a former warehouse and three-storey terraced housing are of some historic merit but are of no more than neutral value (Fig. 87).



Fig. 86: Looking east along Adelaide Street West



Fig. 87: Warehouse and housing on Tower Street

#### **6.2.4. Residential and lodging houses**

These streets lie to the south and east of the historic town centre, and comprise mainly large, good-quality lodging houses, with a few terraces of two-storey residential properties. They are described below in alphabetical order, and streets which are similar in character are grouped together. Although these streets are generally neutral in character, the cumulative effect of rows of similar buildings largely built to serve the holiday trade is distinctive and has historic significance.

##### *Adelaide Street*

Adelaide Street runs east-west between Hounds Hill and Regent Road and is characterised by terraces of private residential and boarding houses. Today Adelaide Street has a similar mix of properties as Albert Road, and the wide aspect towards the Tower is also continued. It is overall **neutral** in value, with some terraces having strong positive value for their homogeneity, and several potential local list buildings.

At the west end the later extensions of the Winter Gardens are a prominent feature on the north side of the street. These extensions replaced an open area which included an ice rink and bowling green. At the junctions of Leopold Grove and Coronation Street there are elaborate canted corner entrances (Fig.89), but the rest

of the elevation is quite utilitarian. The Winter Gardens are listed Grade II and, especially when combined with views of the Tower, are a strong and important positive feature on the streetscene.



Fig. 88: Looking down Adelaide Street from the east towards the Tower



Fig. 89: The south elevation of the Winter Gardens, from the east

The range of terraced buildings on the north side as far as South King Street (Nos 61-79) are all of neutral value. They are mainly three storey lodging-house types, with attic extensions and have been affected by the general removal of front boundary walls and joinery. No. 71 retains the most original features. Nos 87-89 contribute positively to the streetscene, and have group value with the adjacent Masonic Hall, which has local list potential. Of red-brick and terracotta the buildings are a pair of double-fronted three storey houses with ground floor canted bay windows and panelled timber doors. The front boundary walls have been rebuilt. Nos 103-105 are also positive, flanked by two modern buildings, Adelaide Court and a new build to the corner of Regent Road, both of which are neutral as they respect scale and materials.

On the south side Nos 56-100 are neutral, and are three-storey lodging houses, facing the Winter Gardens as described above. Most have been altered with replacement windows and added attic storeys, although all retain double-height stone canted bay windows and most retain their original boundary cast-iron railings. Four properties at the west end (Nos 56-62) have a lower roofline and the bay windows are smaller in scale. Many of the houses have been combined to create larger hotels. The range is served by a back street accessed from Leopold Grove.



Fig. 90: The west end of the south side of Adelaide Street

The east end of the south side of the street (Nos 102-150) is generally positive in character. No 102, with one gabled bay to the Adelaide Street elevation and three to Leopold Grove, was probably built as a private residence and has terracotta plaques on the Leopold Grove elevation with the initials 'J. S' and a date of 1912 (Fig. 91). The house is of red brick with buff terracotta dressings to double-height bay windows and a Welsh slate roof. It also has a well-maintained garden, with intact boundary walls and planting.



Fig. 91: No 102 Adelaide Street, elevation to Leopold Grove

Nos 104-114, although typical good-quality boarding houses, retain a high level of original detail. No 116, the Comrades' Club, is a detached villa, and has local list potential. No 118, on the south-west corner of South King Street, is a three storey detached villa, now a doctors' surgery. It has been rendered and altered, but retains bracketed eaves and a classical-style doorcase, and is of positive value. Nos 124-150 are a red-brick two-storey terrace of residential properties, with paired doorcases and canted ground floor bay windows (Fig. 102). Some retain timber sash windows and panelled doors. All have front boundary walls to small front yards; although some of the boundary walls have been rebuilt this creates a homogenous streetscene here, which is enhanced by the retention of chimney stacks and pots to the roofline. Nos 124 and 120-122 are double-fronted villa-types, probably of the same building phase as the terrace. The latter has a canted corner entrance and forecourt to South

King Street; the corner premises are occupied by a pharmacy. The house retains timber sash windows with coloured glass to the upper panes, boundary walls and gate piers. The east end of the south side of the street is of positive value.



Fig. 92: Nos 124-150 Adelaide Street from the east

### *Albert Road*

Albert Road is an east-west street located between the historic site of Hounds Hill and Regent Road, and crossed by Coronation Street, with smaller side streets on the north side: Leopold Grove, Alfred Street and South King Street. From Coronation Street Albert Road rises slightly uphill, giving good views back towards the Tower. The proximity of the street to the town centre and Promenade would have made it a popular choice with tourists looking for lodgings; the properties here are of a good quality with some architectural embellishments. Today most are in use as small hotels or bed & breakfasts, with residential properties at the east end of the street. It is generally **neutral** in value.

Today the street is characterised by these terraces of lodging houses, mostly of three storeys, two bays wide and constructed of red brick. Each set of buildings, e.g. Nos 5-51 on the south side, has different qualities and the range of modern alterations varies. This set was one of the first to be built, probably in the 1880s, and generally has attic extensions and uPVC replacement windows. Some properties have been

combined to provide larger hotels, such as No 29-31, the Hotel Avante. (Fig. 93) The range is of neutral townscape value.



Fig. 93: The Hotel Avante and neighbouring properties on Albert Road which retain some historic character

This range of buildings faces the newest part of the Hounds Hill development; Albert Road is quite narrow at the west end forcing the new building slightly out of scale; however the new development is of neutral value.



Fig. 94: Albert Road, east of Coronation Street

East of the junction with Coronation Street the street widens slightly and rises uphill. On the north side Nos 64-108 were probably built in the early 1900s as paired houses with paired central entrances; most have been amalgamated into double-fronted properties. They are generally of four storeys with double-height canted bay windows above a basement, and a varied roofline of gables and flat roofs. Most retain fair-faced red brick to the street elevation. The terrace generally retains a range of front gardens, larger than those to the houses to the west, with rebuilt boundary walls to the back of the footway. Some historic detail has been retained, such as ironwork to front boundaries (Nos 98-108), sash windows and panelled front doors (No. 108). This range is of neutral value. The properties on the south side, Nos 55-117, are of a similar date, with a few of an earlier date marked on the 1893 OS map. Although most of the houses have been altered with attic extensions and modern signage to the ground floor, and replacement uPVC windows, some retain good architectural details. Nos 75-83 have colonette details to the bay windows, and Nos 75-77 have cast-iron railings to the front boundary. Overall they are neutral in value.



Fig. 95: Nos. 73-117 Albert Road from the east

Nos 110-134, on the north side between Leopold Grove and South King Street, are of a general lodging house type, with 20<sup>th</sup>-century alterations. There is little definition between the properties and the footway, all boundary walls having been removed.

Nos 110-122 were built as 'Rydal Terrace' and the houses probably date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are all neutral.

The two storey red-brick terrace at Nos 136-154, on the north side and rising on a sloping site, is positive in value (Fig. 96), as although the houses have uPVC windows and some of the front boundary walls have been removed, they retain a substantial amount of architectural detail and have few major alterations or extensions, resulting in a homogenous streetscape. Nos 140-154 are private residences. The eastern corner property has a corner tower to Regent Road.



Fig.96: Nos 136-154 Albert Road

All other buildings not described above are neutral, i.e. Nos 133-147 and Nos 55-69. The Council offices at No 125 are modern, and harmonise with the scale of the earlier buildings; they were constructed on the site of a police station with an adjacent surface car park formerly the site of a fire station.

Nos 32-40 (a range of shops at the west end) and an early Spiritualist Church of 1896 on the south side both have local list potential. No. 53 has an altered ground floor with an interwar façade of green and cream faience over an earlier building; overall it is of no more than neutral value but the upper-floor treatment is good (Fig.97).



Fig.97: No 53 Albert Road

### *Alfred Street*

Alfred Street was probably constructed at the same time as Leopold Street, with most buildings built as lodgings. Today the street is of similar character to Leopold Street, and comprises mainly late 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick two or three storey boarding houses with double-height bay windows; overall the street is of **neutral** value.



Fig. 98: Alfred Street from the south

On the north-west side Nos 2-4 have shops to the ground floor, and to the north of these there is a block of flat-roof shops. The side returns of No 110 and No 116 Adelaide Street are of positive value, the latter having local list potential. North of No. 13 a c.1950s two-storey brick garage block is of negative value. The rounded corner to No 125a Church Street is a prominent feature; it was probably built in the 1930s but is of neutral value.

The street is served by side lanes to the east and west, some of which retain stone setts to the street surface, and there is metal sign to No. 124 Albert Road, pointing to North Station, probably 1920s in date. Otherwise, street surfaces and furniture are modern.

#### *Counce Street, George Street, Charles Street and Milbourne Street*

These four streets form the east-west streets of a grid of terraced houses to the north-east of the area, running between King Street and, within this survey, Grosvenor Street, with Cookson Street intersecting. The historic tight building grain is retained today, and there are good views to the west of Blackpool Tower and the tower of St John's Church on Church Street. Overall the streets are of **neutral** value, with one or two positive aspects.



Fig. 99: Back service lane between Charles Street and George Street

George, Charles and Milbourne Streets comprise two-storey brick terraces (Charles Street properties generally having an added attic storey) with short front gardens with boundary walls to the back of the footway. Although Charles Street has some properties which appear to have been designed to a higher quality (e.g. Nos 13-17), it retains the least historic character of the four streets. Cauce Street consists of two blocks of buildings on its north side; that to the east of Cookson Street is a two-storey terrace with ground floor bay windows, and is significantly altered. To the west of Cookson Street there are commercial premises to the ground floor of a terrace. There is a gap site to the east of No. 20. On the south side of Cauce Street there is a surface car park across which there are good views to Riley's Pool Hall (the 1921 former Regent Cinema, with local list potential), and to the west of Cookson Street Nos 1-9a form part of a 1935 building with local list potential. Overall, both Charles and Cauce Street are **neutral** in value.



Fig. 100: Looking west down Counce Street

The houses on Milbourne Street have ground floor stone canted bay-windows, and the south side of the street (Nos 21-43) is positive as it has a homogenous character and retains front boundary walls, despite altered windows and doors. The north side is neutral.



Fig. 101: The south side of Milbourne Street, from the east

George Street (Nos 5-28) is also of positive value and, within the survey area, comprises a single terrace facing the 1990s indoor Bowling Centre. It is named 'Livingstone Terrace' on a central stone plaque. It is pretty homogenous, with front boundary walls to the back of the footway and ground floor bay windows (Fig. 102). The terrace also draws the eye to views of the tower to the west and is an important spatial feature.

The Bowling Centre is featureless and bland, and along with the wide expanse of paving and no boundary to the back of the footway to its south, is a negative building in the townscape (Fig. 103).

There are views north-west across an adjacent surface car park to the former Odeon on Dickson Road, although this view is also dominated by the Talbot Road multi-storey car park (which has local list potential).



Fig. 102: Nos 3-25 George Street from the north



Fig. 103: The indoor bowling centre on George Street

The west ends of Charles and Milbourne Streets, across Cookson Street, are much shorter and are all neutral in value. Here there are various commercial premises converted from residential terraces, and there has been a significant loss of architectural character.

*Church Street (east end Nos 96-224a (north side) and Nos 115-197 (south side)), and including King's Square*

As described in the historic shopping district, Church Street is the principal thoroughfare linking the promenade with Whitegate Drive, to the east. Today the street retains most of its historic character, including several interwar buildings inserted to help regenerate the street. Church Street has a wide aspect and there are good views west towards the town centre, with Blackpool's main landmarks prominent, and also east towards the Raikes area. The street is a busy traffic thoroughfare and also a main bus route (historically it was a major tram route), and there are a few good quality commercial buildings east of the Stanley Arms. The street has a high **neutral** value in terms of townscape character, with good positive aspects stemming from its importance as a historic shopping street. It represents a typical commercial street with a mix of buildings of scales, materials and ages.



Fig. 104: Looking east from the Winter Gardens towards Riley's Pool Hall

There are a number of two or three storey parades with shops at the ground floor; on the north side Nos 106-128 probably date from the 1870s to the 1890s, with Nos 106-116 being a double-fronted villa type regularly seen in Blackpool. The former Hippodrome has been superficially altered and clad in a metallic material and is now a large nightclub; it is overbearing and makes a negative contribution to the streetscape (Fig. 105). Nos 150-170 are part of the 1935 rebuild of Stanley Terrace, which has been local list potential. Nos 218-224a are all that remain of a terrace of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century premises, and have superficial modern signage and alterations.

However, at this end of the street there is a change of townscape character as Raikes is approached, with trees lining the streets and a more spacious quality to the streetscene. This is not enhanced by a large surface car park to the west of No. 218, which has no boundary to the back of the footway and reveals the back of buildings on surrounding streets.



Fig. 105: 'Syndicate' nightclub, formerly the Hippodrome, a negative building although the cladding is superficial

King's Square, at the west end of Stanley Terrace, is also an important open space. Historically used as a bus stop, it is now paved with modern materials and granite blocks as seating. The approach to the corner of this building from the west has strong townscape significance, and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century former red-brick Midland Bank (retained when the Terrace was rebuilt in the 1930s) is a positive and important landmark along Church Street (Fig. 106).

On the south side the street frontage is intact but there are few unaltered buildings. This side is generally of positive value, although most buildings have modern shopfronts to the ground floor and altered upper storeys. The range Nos 193-197 retain timber oriel bays to the first floor and are of some merit (Fig.107), as does a former bank at No.137 with a rusticated ground floor. St John's Primary School was being rebuilt at the time of the survey. Riley's Pool Hall has local list potential, and is a terminating landmark feature in the streetscape.



Fig. 106: The former Midland Bank in King's Square



Fig. 107: Nos 193-197 Church Street, next to Riley's Pool Hall

### *Coronation Street*

The section of Coronation Street between Church Street and Albert Road is dominated by the east elevation of the modern Debenhams and Next store on the west side, which is neutral in value. On the east side there are two negative buildings, Nos 30-44 (the Citadel Market and Langley Dance Centre). The side returns of buildings on Adelaide Street and Albert Road are neutral; the large house at the corner of Adelaide Street (No. 28) has roller shutters to a vacant ground floor shop (Fig. 108). The street has overall townscape **neutral** value.



Fig. 108: The east side of Coronation Street, south of Adelaide Street

### *King Street, Cookson Street and Grosvenor Street*

These three streets form the north-south streets within the grid where Charles Street, George Street, Milbourne Street and Cauce Street run east-west. Only the west side of Grosvenor Street is included in this survey. The properties on these streets are similar to those on the east-west streets, being two or three storey late 19<sup>th</sup>-century properties, although most are now in commercial use on the ground floor. All the buildings have all been significantly altered or are of low architectural merit, and the street is therefore **neutral** in character, with The Hop pub at the north-east end of King Street having local list potential.

Buildings on Cookson Street are built up to the back of the footway; Nos 7-19 have a datestone of 1873. There is no boundary between the footway and the building line on King Street, where the buildings are slightly set back from the footway with parking in front of premises.



Fig. 109: The east side of Cookson Street from the north

Views south down Cookson Street to Riley's Pool Hall, a local landmark, and down Grosvenor Street to the Salvation Army Citadel and the former Methodist Church on Raikes Parade (beyond the survey area) are a positive factor (Fig. 110).



Fig. 110: Looking south down the west side of Grosvenor Street towards Raikes

### *Leopold Grove*

Leopold Grove is a north-west street connecting Church Street and Albert Road, and was historically developed with lodging houses. The character of the street is a narrow one way residential street, rising slightly towards the north, but has quite a wide aspect framed by trees planted on the footway. The street comprises both positive and neutral buildings, with few boundaries between the buildings and the back of the footway. Overall it has **high neutral** townscape value, with several boarding-houses and similar buildings of strong positive value which retain a high level of original detail. The retention and restoration of these buildings, would set an example for the future use of similar properties in Blackpool.

Nos 2-8 and 11-13 are of positive value; the former are a two storey red-brick terrace with dormers, with double-height bay windows, probably of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. There is some cast-iron cresting above the front doors and timber casements with coloured top-lights have been retained at No 4, but the boundary walls to the back of the footway have been removed. Nos 11-13 are named Beeston Villa with a date of 1883, and comprise a double-fronted house (now in use as a small hotel), of two storeys with a basement and attic extensions, with steps up to the front door and double-height rectangular bay windows. Although of brick construction it has been

largely rendered, but retains some cast-iron cresting over the door and stone gate piers. Its setting is enhanced by a tree immediately outside the front boundary.

The eastern part of the Winter Gardens, the former Circus, is a **positive** building, although this is jeopardised by a later extension below the positive brick gable feature (Fig.113).



Fig. 111: Looking north up Leopold Grove from Albert Road

Neutral buildings of interest include No. 115 Church Street, which has its east return to Leopold Grove, probably constructed in the 1930s but much altered. The remaining neutral buildings (Nos 10-26) are standard boarding house types. Return elevations of buildings on the east-west streets are also neutral.

There are several service lanes off Leopold Grove, some of which retains stone setts and Victorian street furniture. A service lane to the south of Nos 11-13 serves the rear of properties on Albert Road (Nos 64-108) (Fig. 112). The backs of the houses in some cases reach up to five storeys, and this lane is significant in exposing the 'working' rear face of the boarding houses, although most have modern fire-escapes and back yards are used for customer parking. There is also service access to the north of the Winter Gardens, on the west side of the street.



Fig. 112: South side of service lane to Albert Road

No 102 Albert Road is also positive, and is described under that street. Nos 7-11 (a former Roseby's store) is negative and currently vacant.



Fig. 113: The east elevation of the Winter Gardens complex and corner entrance

*Regent Road (north of Albert Road only)*

The west side of Regent Road comprises the side returns of buildings on Albert Road, Upper Adelaide Street and Church Street. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century terraces on the east side are quite densely built, with small front and back gardens. The linear quality of the terraces on the east side has been retained today, and is mirrored in new and relatively good-quality residential buildings on the east side. Nos 34-36 have some positive qualities in their doorcases and retained boundary walls, but overall the street is **neutral** in quality, as many of the terraces have been altered and have attic extensions. They are mostly in use as small hotels. Riley's Pool Hall at the north-east end of the street has local list potential.

All street surfaces are modern, with galvanised barriers at the north end to the footway. Some trees give a slightly positive air, although it is a main vehicular thoroughfare and often congested with traffic.



Fig. 114: The east side of Regent Road, from the north

*South King Street (north of Albert Road only)*

South King Street was slowly developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century and is similar in character and quality to other north-south streets in the area. The east side of the road is generally **positive**: a range of two-storey red-brick terraces with ground floor canted bay windows and front boundary walls to the back of the footway (Fig. 115).

Although some have been rendered or painted and the windows have generally been replaced, the range remains homogenous with a consistent roofline and no breaks in the building frontage. At the north end, across Adelaide Street, are the two potential local list buildings, the Stanley Arms and the Masonic Hall. The west side of the street is less homogenous, with a single-storey late 20<sup>th</sup>-century medical centre and a range of shops (Nos 3-21) being neutral in character; the latter are possibly those shown on the 1877 street plan. No 118 Adelaide Street and No 137 Church Street, both corner properties, are positive in character.



Fig. 115: Nos 8-30 South King Street (east side)

Views to the north are closed by the Syndicate nightclub which has a negative character. The street continues to the south across Regent Road (outside of the surveyed area).

## **70 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The significance of the area is set out in *Section 6.2*. 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.

### **7.1 Local List Potential**

To protect buildings of positive significance, a Local List containing the buildings identified in this report could be maintained, covered by relevant policy and guidance in the Local Development Framework. 25 groups of buildings or individual buildings have been selected as having Local List potential in the town centre area.

### **7.2 Potential conservation area extensions**

The current boundary of the Town Centre Conservation Area includes most of the significant shopping streets at the north-west corner of the town centre area, but is tightly drawn and excludes some key buildings to the south. There is merit in extending the boundary to the north to include the west end of Queen Street (see *North Shore* characterisation report), to the east to include Edward Street, and to the south to include the whole of Birley Street and Church Street, to include the Winter Gardens complex and the Grand Theatre. Although this would include some buildings of more negative townscape value, and the recent public realm additions on Birley Street detract from its value, the larger conservation area would enable all the essential elements of Blackpool's historic town centre to be encompassed. It would also include more of the historic street pattern which contributes to the area's historic significance and character.

### **7.3 Development control in and around the conservation area**

As the Town Centre Conservation Area is Blackpool's only conservation area, it has a unique significance. Around its edge, the car parks to the north-east of the area have a particularly negative impact on the approach to the conservation area and the town in general. The proposed Talbot Gateway regeneration in this area of the town offers an important opportunity to improve the image of the town and also to enhance the setting of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The scheme has been described as providing 'Complementary retail, civic, commercial and residential developments...to greatly enhance the vitality of the town centre and the resort. Distinctive, high quality buildings and streets will enrich the visitor experience and be a catalyst for Blackpool's Regeneration'. However, this opportunity should also take into account any buildings of historic merit within the scheme's boundary, notably the Talbot Road bus station and car park, which, whilst its re-clad and rather downtrodden appearance makes it unattractive to users, is an important building architecturally and in terms of the history of Blackpool's transport system. The development will also affect Cookson Street and King Street which are covered in this report and are regarded as having some good townscape qualities, but are overall neutral in character.

Poor-quality design of shopfronts, signage and finishes, including cladding has had an adverse impact on the conservation area. The design quality of these elements is not noticeably higher or more sensitive within the designated area, and its unique historic character could be protected by stronger advertisement controls. More control over shopfronts and alterations to commercial buildings would protect the special character of the area and also enhance its attractiveness as a retail district. Many of these modern interventions are superficial, and original external wall finishes and timber shopfronts and surrounds may survive below modern ones. If discovered, these should be retained and restored, particularly on the historic shopping streets such as Church Street, Birley Street and Abingdon Street. The positioning of street furniture could also be carefully controlled, as there are several examples and types which detract from townscape qualities, including obstructing views of the sea front and of important buildings. The design of some of the street furniture is also out of character with the town centre.

While it is important to retain as much of the Town Centre's historic character as possible, within the conservation area particularly, opportunities for Townscape Heritage Initiatives may provide prospects to demonstrate positive change in the town centre, following the lead of the Cedar Square development.

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### **Historic maps**

Tithe Map of Blackpool, 1838 (Blackpool Local Studies)

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"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)

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**APPENDIX 1: Historic maps showing the development of the town centre**



Fig. 116: Detail of 1817 Greenwood map of Lancashire  
(<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/oldmap/index.asp>)



Fig. 117: Detail of 1838 Tithe map showing the whole Town Centre area (Blackpool Library)

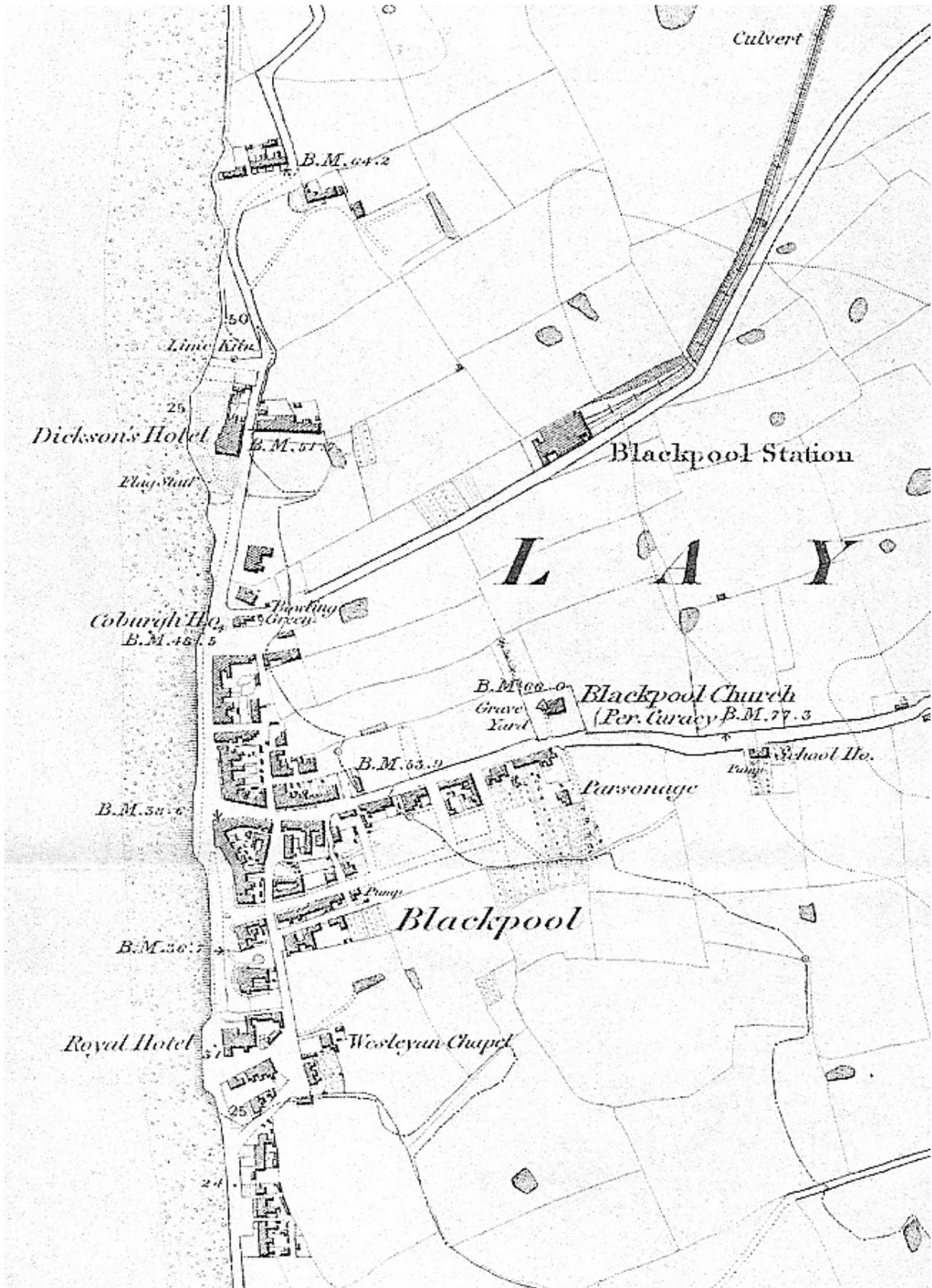


Fig. 118: Detail of 1848 OS map (1:10560) (JRULM)



Fig. 119: Detail of Harding's 1877 street plan (Blackpool Library)



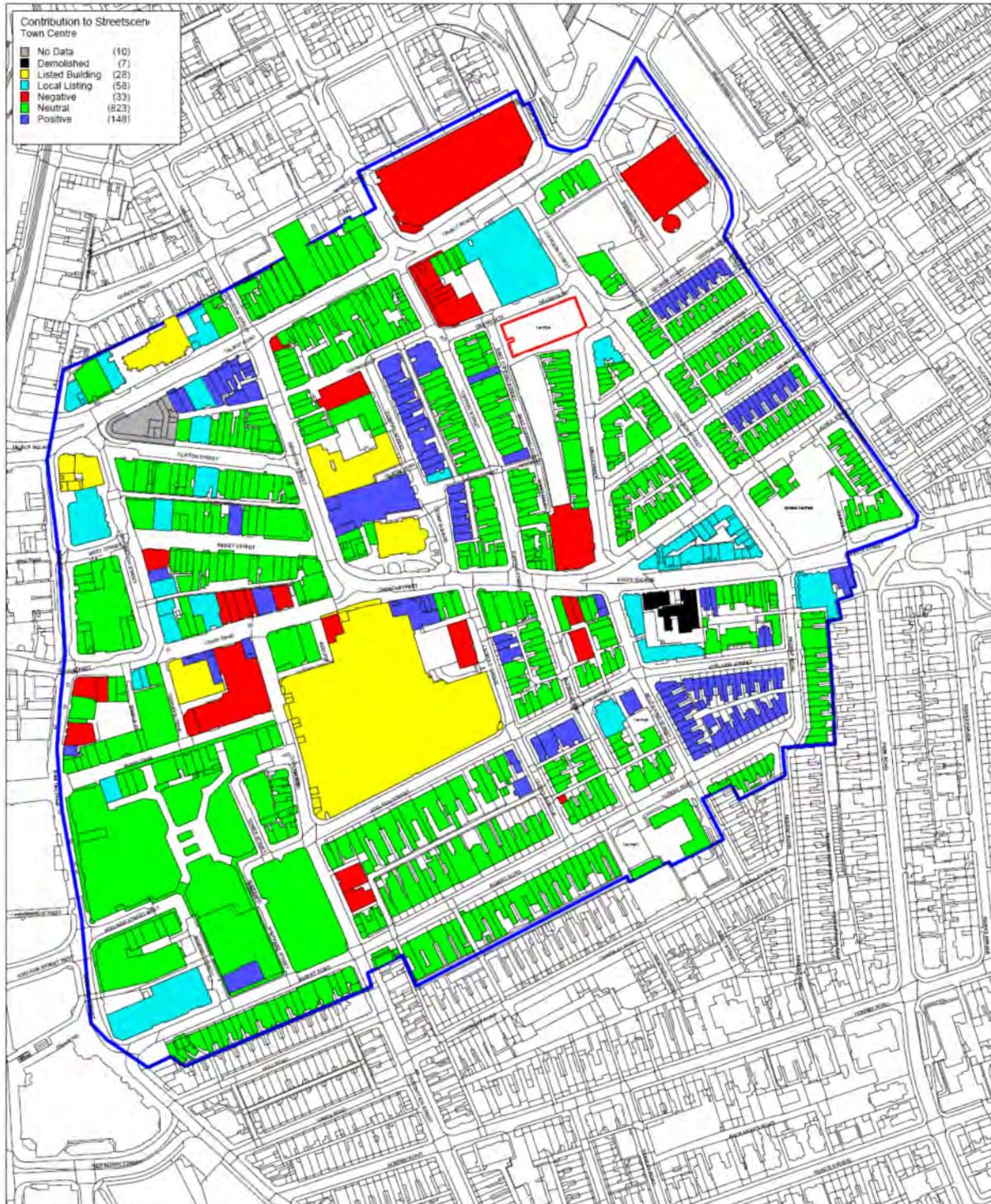
Fig. 120: Detail of 1893 OS map (1:2500) (JRULM)





Fig. 122: Detail of 1932 OS map (1:2500) (JRULM)

## APPENDIX 2: Characterisation map



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Title: Contribution to Streetscene  
[Town Centre]

Scale: 1:10000

Date: 13/05/2009 Printed by: CCC



**APPENDIX 3: Proposed extensions to the Town Centre Conservation Area**

To be added

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