

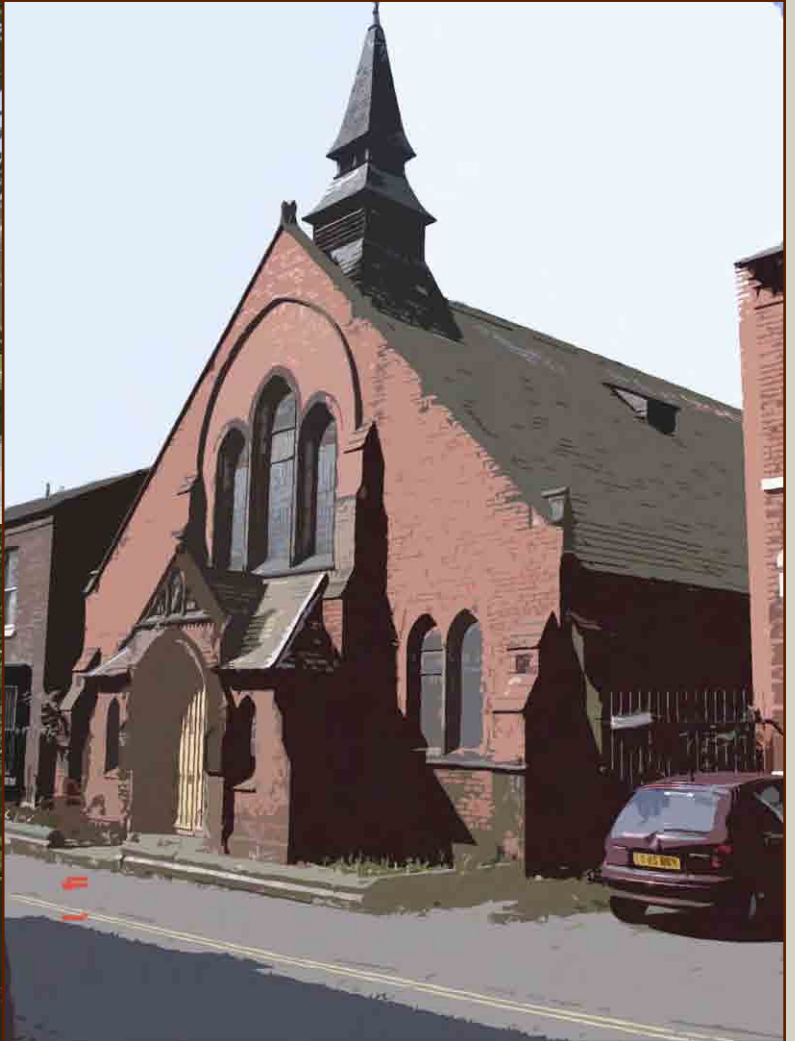
Conservation Area Appraisals: Palmyra Square



Warrington Borough Council
Environment & Regeneration
Planning Policy Division

OCTOBER 2007







CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION
 - 1.1 Background to Palmyra Square Conservation Area
 - 1.2 Conservation Areas
 - 1.3 Conservation Area Appraisals
 - 1.4 Preliminary Consultation
 - 1.5 Summary of main findings of this appraisal

- 2 LOCATION & SETTING
 - 2.1 Warrington's Strategic Location and Early Development
 - 2.2 The location of the Conservation Area in relation to the town centre
 - 2.3 Land Form & Setting
 - 2.4 General Character and Plan Form

- 3 ORIGINS & HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT
 - 3.1 Origins and Historic Development of the Conservation Area
 - 3.2 Development during the latter C19th
 - 3.3 Queens Gardens
 - 3.4 Changing Character
 - 3.5 Heritage Audit

- 4 ANALYSIS OF THE AREA'S SPECIAL QUALITIES
 - 4.1 Character Areas
 - 4.2 Palmyra Square Character Area - The Character & Appearance of Buildings
 - 4.3 Museum Street Character Area - The Contribution of Buildings
 - 4.4 The 1985 Extension to Palmyra Square Conservation Area
 - 4.5 Museum Street Frontages
 - 4.6 Wilson Patten Street

- 5 TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS
 - 5.1 Spatial Qualities
 - 5.2 The Contribution of Landscape - Queens Gardens as remodelled
 - 5.3 Materials & Details
 - 5.4 Maintenance / Upkeep / Vacancy
 - 5.5 The Public Realm
 - 5.6 Negative Factors, Loss, Intrusion and Damage
 - 5.7 Summary of Townscape Analysis

- 6 ISSUES FOR A CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN
 - 6.1 Addressing the Negative Factors
 - 6.2 Mainly Private Sector Issues
 - 6.3 Mainly Public Sector Issues
 - 6.4 Responding to Pressures for Development and Change
 - 6.5 Boundaries

- APPENDIX 1 Legal and Policy Framework relating to Conservation Areas
- APPENDIX 2 Results of Preliminary Consultation
- APPENDIX 3 Historical References
- APPENDIX 4 Heritage Audit
- APPENDIX 5 Summary of Local Geology



PALMYRA SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL LIST OF PLANS AND DIAGRAMMS

- Fig.1 Town Centre Conservation Areas
- Fig.2 Palmyra Square Conservation Area showing extensions
- Fig.3 Strategic Location of the Town
- Fig.4 Aerial Photograph
- Fig.5 Spatial Arrangement and Built Form
- Fig.6 Extract of Wallworth and Donbavand Map 1772*
- Fig.7 1826 Manorial Survey map*
- Fig.8 Legh Estate Map*
- Fig.9 1851 edition Ordnance Survey*
- Fig.10 1888 edition Ordnance Survey*
- Fig.11 1907 edition Ordnance Survey*
- Fig.12 Contribution of buildings to the character and appearance of the conservation area
- Fig.13 Townscape Analysis
- Fig.14 Proposed boundary modifications.

**** The documents marked thus are reproduced with the kind permission of the Warrington Libraries and Museum Heritage Service.***



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Palmyra Square Conservation Area

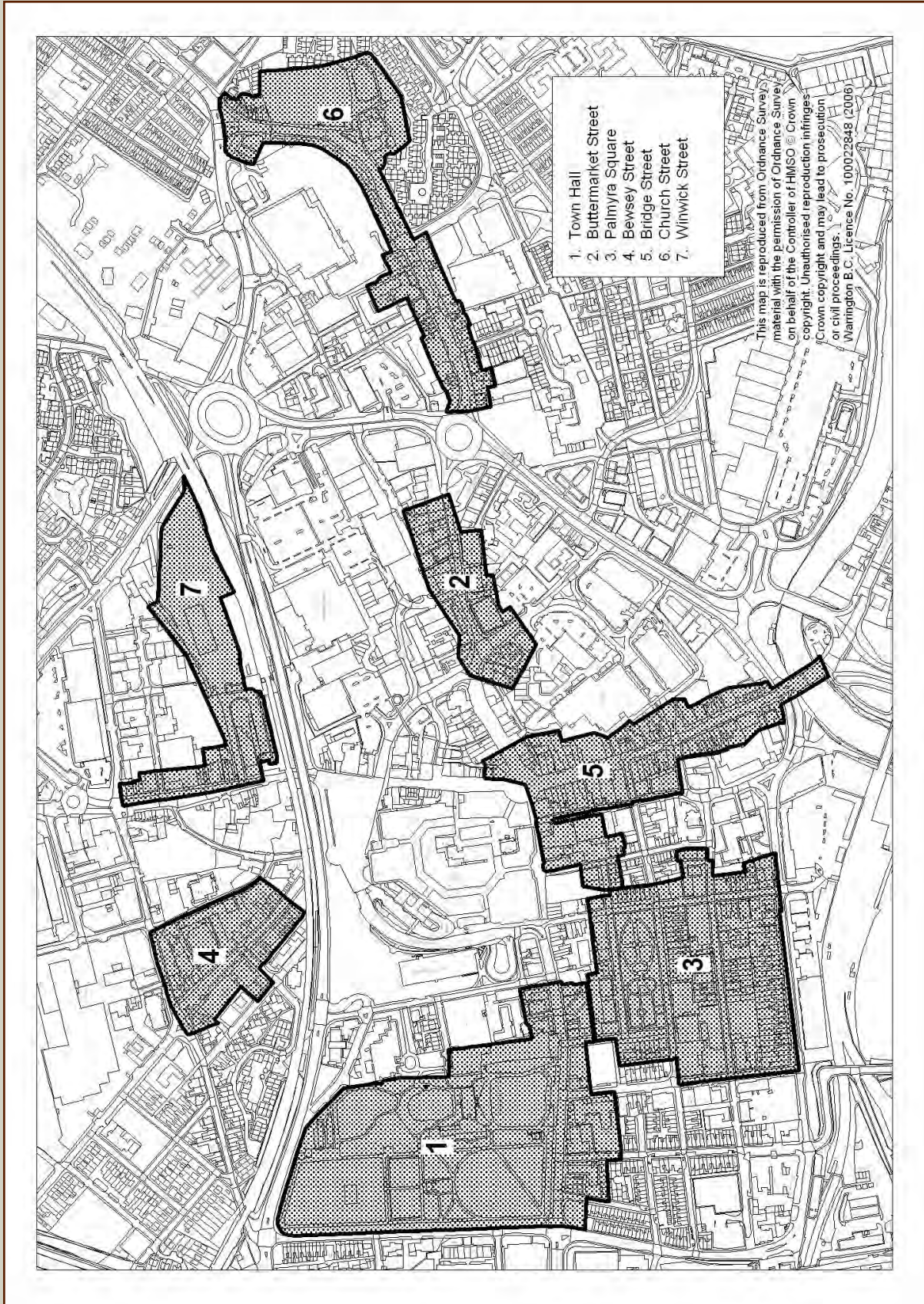
Palmyra Square is one of seven conservation areas covering the historic core of the un-parished town of Warrington. Their locations are shown on Figure 1. Though in close proximity, they are all quite different in character.

Palmyra Square Conservation Area was designated in January 1974, being the third of the former County Borough Conservation Area designations.

The designation report noted that many buildings of note had been demolished in the town in the pre- and post -WW2 years and that conservation policy, which had been introduced in the 1967 Civic Amenities Act , was necessary to protect the remaining buildings which reflected Warrington's traditional character and history. Palmyra Square had been indicated as a potential Conservation Area in the 1969 consultant's town centre plan, prepared in the context of proposed New Town expansion. The square and its surrounding buildings were at the heart of the town centre's main office area. The basic quality of the area derived from the grouping of the buildings and the spaces created by their grouping rather than from the individual buildings. It was however noted that there were several buildings of importance in the area which had been suggested by the Warrington Civic Society for inclusion in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The public gardens were noted as being potentially attractive with overhanging trees and seclusion from the bustle of the main streets though parked cars and the intrusion of traffic marred the overall appearance.



Figure 1: Town Centre Conservation Areas





The stated objectives of conservation policy were:

- to preserve those elements which collectively or individually give the area its special character, from neglect or decay and from potential threats of unsympathetic or unnecessary redevelopment or alterations;
- to encourage the proper maintenance and repair of property including collective action in frontage painting schemes;
- to ensure that any redevelopment is in keeping with its surroundings and does not impair the character of the area;
- ultimately to take positive steps to improve the environmental quality and visual appearance of the area with particular regard to landscape, advertisements, street furniture and consideration of measures to diminish the impact of vehicular traffic.

The original designated area consisted of Queen's Gardens and the surrounding buildings and included the Library and Museum, in all some 4.3 hectares. Palmyra Square conservation area has undergone two further extensions. The 1982 Town Centre Local Plan recommended the inclusion of the lower section of Bold Street including the listed Stone House and the Stanley Street listed Georgian town houses. This 1.9 hectare extension was designated in November 1985.

In response to concerns over piecemeal demolition of properties, in November 1995 a further extension was approved to encompass Museum Street and the corresponding frontage of Wilson Patten Street, together with the Friars Green Church and Sunday School, this being confirmed in May 1996.

Palmyra Square Conservation Area now extends to 6.27 hectares and includes some 105 buildings as identified from the Ordnance Survey map base. The boundaries are best described by reference to Figure 2.

The Conservation Area is within the Bewsey and Whitecross ward of Warrington Borough.

1.2 Conservation Areas

What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas were introduced in 1967 by the Civic Amenities Act in response to the erosion of historic areas by inappropriate new development. This concept has been incorporated into planning legislation namely the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are now over 9000 conservation areas in England.

The statutory definition of a conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The areas designated as conservation areas vary widely from historic town or village centres to sites of industrial or former industrial interest. They may be heavily built up such as a Town Centre, or quite sparsely populated such as a historic parkland. They can vary in size from small areas such as churchyards to very long linear routes such as canals.

Conservation areas create a framework within which to safeguard the character of a whole area by acknowledging the contribution of; individual buildings, street patterns and the spaces between buildings.

Conservation area designation does not prohibit new development, and is not the same as preservation. However, new development in a conservation area should either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.



This will usually mean that an appropriate quality of design and materials are used for new development.

Not every part of the conservation area may be of an historic or architectural interest in its own right. In addition there may be buildings outside the conservation area that contribute to the setting of a conservation area. Development proposals in such locations must then be considered in the context of respecting the character and appearance of the adjacent conservation area.

An outline of the legal and policy framework relating to conservation areas is set out in Appendix 1.

The objectives of conservation policy stated in 1974 by and large remain valid today and thus provide a useful yardstick by which to assess the effectiveness of conservation policy over a period of more than three decades.

1.3 Conservation Area Appraisals

Since the original designation, the character and appearance of the town centre has been profoundly affected by redevelopment and other changes, whilst local patterns of economic, leisure and social activity have also undergone significant changes in parallel with national trends.

Meanwhile, buildings within the conservation area, now mostly in excess of one century old, have endured the relentless effects of weather coupled with perhaps varying degrees of maintenance and repair. Many have been altered for example by changes in the type of windows. Some have undergone changes in use and occupation whilst a few have been demolished and replaced by new development. The insatiable demand for car parking has resulted in former gardens being paved over wherever access can be obtained, with consequent loss of trees and greenery.





Until now, there has been no full assessment of the cumulative impact of such factors upon the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Conservation Area Appraisals provide a means of describing and analysing systematically their special qualities and providing an understanding of the issues that are affecting them or are likely to affect them in the future. They should also aim to identify any negative factors that detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area and to suggest opportunities for enhancement.

In 2005, English Heritage published a good practice guide for the preparation of conservation area appraisals. This appraisal aims to follow their recommended approach. Conservation Area appraisals are now part of the Council's Best Value performance standards. Palmyra Square is the fifth such appraisal in the present series which commenced in 2006 and includes Bridge Street, The Town Hall, Buttermarket Street and Church Street.

Appraisals should not just be an academic exercise but should form the basis for a conservation area management plan. The Management Plan will in turn address the issues raised in the appraisal in a practical manner with the aim of securing the protection for the benefit of future generations of the special qualities of the area that are considered to be important. The appraisal and the management plan will be subject to further consultation. The Council will consider adopting the appraisal and Management Plan as supplementary planning documents (SPD).

Whilst this appraisal attempts to highlight the main features of interest and to identify issues affecting the conservation area, it cannot be all embracing. New issues may arise as a result of development proposals or additional matters may arise through consultation, requiring further consideration.

1.4 Preliminary Consultation

During 2006 all residents and occupiers, totalling some 210 address points, were invited to comment upon a range of issues relating to the conservation Area. Although the response rate was relatively low, 8%, some nonetheless useful observations were made.

The following matters attracted responses from 25% or more of respondents

- * Good quality Victorian buildings especially on the east, south and west sides of Queen's Gardens and the gardens themselves were the main and positive elements of the area
- * The Parr Hall, Palmyra Square South, The (former) Technical School and the Library/Museum were seen as the most important buildings;
- * The gardens and all the historic buildings should be preserved
- * The character was well, or reasonably well, preserved
- * Any views of the gardens were worth preserving
- * Nearly all thought the character was threatened by new development or the erosion of quality of the area.
- * Over one quarter supported the need for additional planning controls
- * A majority though the boundaries about right.

The full responses are set out in Appendix 1.



1.5 Summary of main findings of this appraisal

* Palmyra Square Conservation Area represents a unique example in the town of a mid-nineteenth century planned development of middle class housing, arranged around a garden square. By the early C20th residential occupation was giving way to professional and business use, a process that has almost certainly ensured the survival of the former town houses in well maintained condition and largely unaltered in external appearance.

* The area also provides the location for a number of prestigious public buildings, reflecting the prosperity and civic pride of the developing industrial town during the latter part of the C19th. Some of these have been successfully adapted to accommodate changes in use, ensuring their continued survival into the C21st.

* The combination of good quality domestic architecture and civic buildings, a significant number of which are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, forming a cohesive grouping gives the area a distinctive character and strong identity. These qualities are reinforced by the consistent use of a limited palette of building materials, enriched with well executed detailing. (See section 5.2).

* The grid plan layout, with its tight junction radii, provides effective enclosure to the main spaces but also provides long vistas to areas beyond the conservation area and good connectivity with adjoining areas of the town centre.

* The extension areas have ensured the survival of the wider context of Palmyra Square and contain individual buildings of merit and residential facades that represent later fashions in Victorian building.

* New development has been limited in extent and the most recent developments have successfully responded to the character and appearance of their context.

* Conservation Area designation has undoubtedly helped to secure the preservation of an important enclave of the town's Victorian heritage and to ensure that where new development has occurred, it has made a positive contribution to its setting. However if the essentially Victorian ambience of the area is to survive, the scope for further infill development will be very limited.

This appraisal has identified a number of negative factors and issues which may be addressed in a Conservation Area Management Plan. These are set out in Section 6.

* Negative factors relate to relatively minor features such as paving condition, street furniture and cosmetic alterations to buildings for example replacement windows and loss of railings and gardens. The dominance of western Museum Street by open parking is the area's weakest part in terms of visual amenity.

* Future challenges include the impact of changes of use associated with the 'Cultural Quarter' concept and securing a suitable new use for the former Technical School.



2. LOCATION AND SETTING

2.1 Warrington's Strategic location and early development

Warrington is an historic town that can trace its origins to a Saxon settlement situated on the north bank of the River Mersey near to an ancient ford crossing at Latchford. Below Latchford, the river was tidal and its ford provided the only convenient crossing point of the river between Manchester and the estuary, giving the settlement a position of strategic importance in the region's communications. In the late C13th Warrington's first bridge was constructed at a location about 1 km downstream of the ford. The first bridge was succeeded by later structures in the same position. The north-south route via the bridge was intersected by an east-west route on a ridge of higher ground on the north bank. The cross-roads so formed became the focus of town development up to modern times, the two highways being classified latterly A49 and A57.

In the C14th, a Friary was established on the north bank close to the bridge, evidence according to Pevsner of a prosperous settlement, as the incumbents were largely dependent upon charity. Traffic from the whole region converged upon Warrington's bridge. Indeed until the opening of Runcorn bridge c.1960, the only other crossings downstream of Warrington were the C19th Runcorn transporter bridge and the 1930s Liverpool- Birkenhead tunnel. Water transport also played an important part in the town's economy. The construction of the St Helens canal, 1757, and C18th improvements of the river navigation enabled the importation of the raw materials needed to sustain early industrial development most notably in the Bank Quay area. (Ref. Town Hall Conservation Area Appraisal).

From the C18th the town became established as a nodal point of a developing network of turnpike roads linking Warrington with neighbouring towns and cities and with the surrounding rural communities, fostering the growth of the town's market and its trading economy. From the late 1830s the development of the railway network also placed Warrington in a strategic location. The London-Scotland main line to the west of the town centre intersected two east-west routes passing, respectively, to the north and south of the town centre. The alignments of the railways on the western and southern sides of the town centre were to exert a major influence on the form of development of the south western quarter of the town centre.

During the C19th Warrington had developed as a major industrial town so that as noted by Hayes and Crosby:

*By 1900 Warrington was to almost every observer, an industrial town through and through- but to those who cared to look more closely it was clear that the old businesses, the commerce, retailing and services were still there and flourishing as never before. The market was rebuilt, shops spread along Bridge Street, Palmyra Square was full of professional gentlemen living in large houses and the town's role as a transport hub was of exceptional importance."**

* "Warrington at Work " Janice Hayes and Alan Crosby, Breedon Books 2003.

In 1968 Warrington was designated as a New Town and for the next 20 years underwent significant growth and development mainly on the periphery of the established settlement. The town has now entered to a large degree a post -industrial era with a predominantly service based economy and a population of some 190,000. Its strategic importance as a communications centre is retained by virtue of the motorway network which mirrors the railway routes albeit at some distance from the town centre. Meanwhile the role of the town centre as a retail and service centre has been reinforced by the recent completion of a major expansion of the Golden Square shopping centre. The once important strategic highways through the town centre have been by passed by new roads, but Wilson Patten Street remains a major cross town link road.



2.2 The location of the conservation area in relation to the town centre.

Warrington's basic cross roads plan effectively divides the town centre into four quarters. Bridge Street and Sankey Street define the town centre's south west quarter, a more or less rectangular block of land extending over 600m westwards from Bridge Street and 300m southwards from Sankey Street and comprising an area of about 19 hectares. Palmyra Square conservation area occupies about one third of this area. From its eastern edge 160m from Bridge Street, it extends 300m westwards to Winmarleigh Street. From its southern boundary on Wilson Patten Street it extends 200m northwards up to the rear boundaries of properties on Sankey Street. Palmyra Square lies within 200m of Bank Hall, the imposing Georgian mansion which has been Warrington's Town Hall since 1872.

The land now designated as the conservation area was developed progressively from the 1850s to c.1900. The early stages of development took the form of a residential quarter for the middle classes but Palmyra Square and its adjacent newly laid out streets soon became established as the location for several major public buildings. From the early years of the C20th, growing demand for business and professional services in the town, together with the area's proximity to the town centre resulted in the gradual incursion of offices and consulting rooms. Palmyra Square's role changed from middle class residential quarter to an enclave of professional services, particularly as a focus of the legal sector, a role which it retains today. Palmyra Square, being located away from the bustle of the main traffic routes, presented for the most part a quiet ambience, appropriate to a residential area and latterly a professional quarter, though its peace was once disturbed by the rattle of trams along Palmyra Square South!

But the presence of several public buildings has always given the area a more diverse character. With the development of the Pyramid Arts Centre the opportunity has been taken to re-brand the area as the 'Cultural Quarter', in recognition of the juxtaposition of the Arts Centre, Parr Hall, Library and Museum with the remodelled Queen's Gardens providing a distinctive and recognisable focus. The extension to Golden Square shopping Centre opened May 2007, has introduced a new mall entrance facing Bold Street within 150m of Queen's Gardens. The 'Cultural Quarter' is thus well placed to benefit from the potential for additional shopping centre visits and the parking and public transport facilities within the development.

The Cultural Quarter and the Town Centre Strategy

The Cultural Quarter coincides closely Palmyra Square Conservation Area, omitting Wilson Patten Street. The Cultural Quarter concept arose in part from the development of an arts strategy for the town in support of the Arts Lottery bid to secure funding for the conversion of the former County Courts to an arts centre. The Cultural Quarter has been given formal recognition in Warrington Town Centre Strategy adopted in 2003.

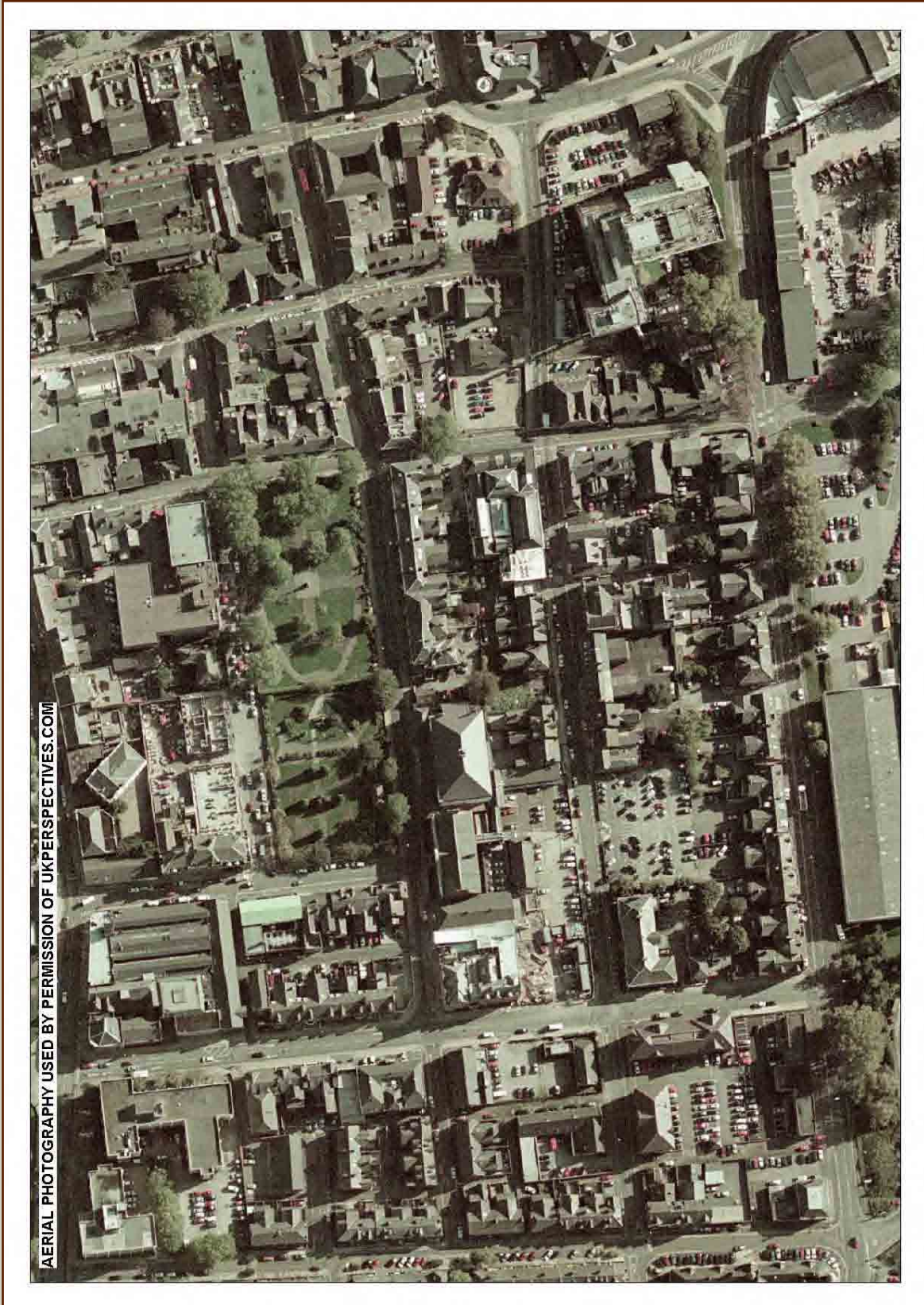
The Town Centre Strategy refers to the conversion of the post office to leisure uses including "Le Frog" Bistrot, "Le Main" Cafe and "Energie" Health Club and to the luxury apartment development on Palmyra Square North. Alongside the Pyramid Arts Centre these new uses would reinforce the area's role as the focus of cultural and family friendly leisure activity in the town centre. The strategy aims to explore the potential for further re-use along these lines and states that the council will take the lead in market testing alternative uses for the former technical school. Alternative uses suggested for the area include specialist craft shops, restaurants, a contemporary art gallery with an integral cafe and artist studios and accommodation.

Priorities identified in the Town Centre Strategy relating to the Cultural Quarter were:

- * To promote the full potential of the Pyramid Arts Centre
- * To design and improve linkages with the retail, civic and cafe/club quarters
- * To identify investment priorities and opportunities for cultural 'flagship' buildings
- * To draw up a conservation management and enhancement plan in consultation with stakeholders
- * Ongoing marketing to promote the Cultural Quarter as a cohesive entity.



Figure 4 Aerial Photograph





2.3 Land form and Setting.

The land form of the south west quarter of the town centre rises in a northerly direction from the river meadows of Arpley to a low ridge delineated by Market Gate and Sankey Street. From 7.3m. AOD along Wilson Patten Street, the level reaches approximately 12m. AOD near Sankey Street, the rise becoming steeper north of Museum Street, typically about 1 in 32 . There is little change in level along the east -west axis. The low lying area extending southwards from Museum Street towards the Arpley meadows is shown in the Unitary Development Plan as an area of flood risk consultation. The underlying geology of the town is briefly summarised in Appendix 5.



The south west town centre is effectively boxed in on its south and west sides by major physical barriers in the form of two railway lines, closely paralleled by busy roads. (See section 3). These barriers are reinforced by changes in the character of built form and land use. The fine Victorian town houses on Wilson Patten Street define the conservation area's southern edge. They once enjoyed an open southerly prospect -as exemplified by 'Halton View Villas', (nos. 3,5 Wilson Patten Street). Today they face onto a retail warehouse, car parking and beyond, a modern business park, whilst to the west of the railway at Bank Quay, the looming bulk of the Ineos Silica plant, formerly Joseph Crosfields soap works, abruptly stops the westward prospect from within the conservation area. Bank Quay Station on the west coast mainline, is located within 400 m of the centre of the conservation area.

The conservation area's northern and eastern edges are less sharply defined, tending to merge with the adjacent built form. Palmyra Square Conservation Area has short interfaces with the Town Hall and Bridge Street Conservation Areas on its northern and eastern edges respectively (Figure 1).

Today, traffic management measures prevent through vehicular movement on Palmyra Square South and Springfield Street. Other streets within the conservation area have not been as fortunate. Wilson Patten Street on the southern edge of the conservation area is, as noted above, a heavily trafficked cross- town route linking Bridgefoot with A57 Liverpool Road. Bold Street is a main outbound bus route and Museum Street and Winmarleigh Street, on the Conservation Area's western boundary, are also well trafficked. Sankey Street though no longer part of the A57 route between Prescot and Manchester remains a busy town centre access road.

The heavy traffic flow on Wilson Patten Street affects air quality such that the frontage is included within the town centre air quality monitoring zone. The conservation area is also subject to occasional grounding of the emissions plume from the Bank Quay industrial site. However the air quality within the conservation area is not now considered to be below acceptable standards.

2.4 General Character and Plan Form

The area is laid out in a grid of streets of uniform width with a garden square as its centrepiece. Rows of former town houses in the form of long terraces, or closely spaced shorter groups, face directly onto the streets. Some had shallow front garden areas but these are now mainly paved. The streets are straight, of 7-8m width with 2m footways. Junctions are right angled with minimal corner radii. The distance between frontages on Museum Street for example is only 14m. The scale of the town houses is however modest. The terraces facing Queen's Gardens are entirely two storeys and elsewhere do not exceed 3 storeys except where modern development has occurred. Interspersed with the town houses are larger public buildings, including the Library and Museum, School of Art, Parr Hall, Technical School, Borough Gymnasium, County Court, the latter four forming a group. Of this group, only the Parr Hall retains its original function. The area also contains the Register Office, former main Post Office and three non-conformist Churches. There are also a number of modern buildings as described in Section 4.



The grid pattern of the south-west town centre is unusual in that it does not appear elsewhere in the town centre. It is clearly an example of C19th formal town planning and civic improvement. The origins of this arrangement are outlined in Section 3.

It is notable that the grid plan is a reflection of the right angled relationship of Bridge Street and Sankey Street and further reinforced during the C19th by the right angled configuration of the west coast and Arpley railway lines.

Palmyra Square South, Museum Street and Wilson Patten Street provide 220m long parallel east-west axes, providing development blocks of 60-75m depth. Bold Street and Winmarleigh Street are the principal north-south axes. The grid plan provides good connectivity with the adjoining areas, there being some 9 points of entry into the conservation area, though of course diagonal movement through the area is not possible except via the paths within Queen's Gardens. The long east-west alignments also present north-facing elevations which receive little incidence of sunlight to enliven facades.

Queen's Gardens, the centrepiece of the conservation area, were laid out as a public town park in 1897 as the town's civic commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. An outline of the historic development of the gardens is given in Section 3. The gardens in their present form are the outcome of several remodelling schemes over the years the most recent and perhaps most radical being that undertaken in 2005. (Section 4.3) Queen's Gardens stretch 150m east-west and 50m north-south representing a space of generous proportions.



The close relationship of buildings to the streets and the tight junctions give the area a strongly enclosed urban character, but with contrasting long vistas along the main axes and within the central open space. The combination of substantial and robustly detailed public buildings, the dignified town houses and the regular layout with a garden square as its focal point creates a distinctive townscape of good quality representative of the high point of Warrington's town planning and development during the Victorian era.

The key elements of the spatial arrangement and built form are indicated in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Spatial Arrangement & Built Form





3 ORIGINS AND HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The town's historic development is well documented and some reference sources are provided in Appendix 3. Related aspects of the town's historic development are outlined in the companion appraisals published by Warrington Borough Council.

A brief outline of the strategic influences which have shaped the town's development was given in Section 2.1. In the interests of brevity, this appraisal focuses on the evolution of the pattern of development within the conservation area.

3.1 Origins and Historic Development of the Conservation Area.

Despite the medieval origins of the town and its steady industrialisation from the C18th, development beyond the frontage plots west of Bridge Street and south of Sankey Street, was essentially a phenomenon of the mid- to- late C19th. However the layout of the land before building development took place is not without interest in that it almost certainly influenced the subsequent pattern of development.

Wallworth and Donbavand Map

The earliest large scale map of the town is the Wallworth and Donbavand edition of 1772 (Figure 6). This map is of great significance in revealing the extent and form of the town's development at the very beginning of the industrial revolution. The town's population of some 8,000 was mainly concentrated around Market Gate but with greater development in depth to its north- east and north- west.

The land to the south-west of the town centre is shown on the 1772 map as largely in agricultural use but with areas abutting onto the burgage plots on Bridge Street and Sankey Street laid out as gardens or orchards. However an incursion in the form of Stanley Street is shown, thus confirming the 18thC origin of the 'L' shaped group of town houses at its western extremity. The street presumably takes its name from Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby, builder of the nearby stone bridge which endured from 1495 until 1813 and is clearly indicated with its distinctive piers on the 1772 map. Stanley Street leads off Chancel Street clearly an allusion to the nearby Friary. The street was later renamed Friars Green. It is possible that some of the gardens or orchards may have been part of the Friary lands.

The south western quarter of what is today's town centre is otherwise devoid of buildings until the industrial sites at Bank Quay are reached. The only streets to penetrate the area are a narrow lane or path called Ashton's Lane and Slutchers Lane both running southwards from Sankey Street. Comparison with later maps reveals Ashton's Lane to be on the alignment of present day Bold Street, whilst Slutchers Lane aligns approximately with present day Arpley Street. On Sankey Street, frontage development peters out a short distance west of Ashton's Lane.

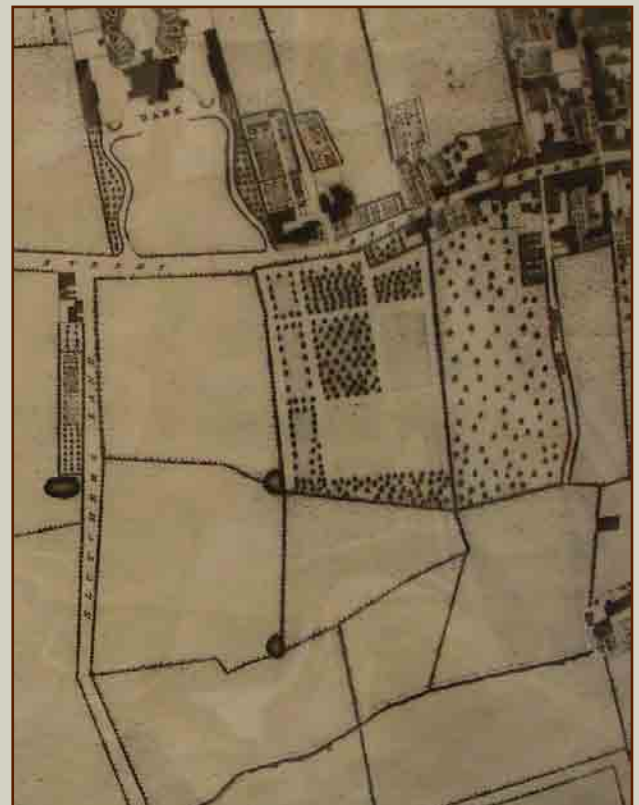


Figure 6: Extract of Wallworth & Donbavand Map 1772



The Manorial Survey Map 1826

The next detailed map is the Manorial lands survey of 1826 (Figure 7).

This reveals an intensification of development to the north and east of Market Gate and to the east of Bridge Street but little further building in the south west quarter. The presence of Friars Green Methodist Chapel dating from c.1796, is indicated as is the adjacent Stone House. The subdivision of fields and orchards into garden plots has intensified. These neatly laid out rectangular plots occupy an area extending 150m south from Sankey Street and about 300m westwards from Bridge Street.

Most are of similar size but one plot abutting the west side of the Unitarian Church extends the whole depth of the area, its southern extremity abutting Friars Green Chapel.

By the 1830s, the town's population had reached some 14,000. The provision of garden plots in the south west quarter may have been a response to encroachment by building development in other quarters of the town centre. During the C19th, garden space was rapidly disappearing under residential courts, workshops and business premises as the impact of the industrial revolution began to shape the town's development. Slutchers Lane has meanwhile been renamed Arpley Lane but otherwise no further roads have been formed.





Figure 7: 1826 Manorial Survey Map





The Legh Estate Map

An important document held in Warrington reference library is a map to a scale of 100 feet to 1 inch showing “Proposed Improvements on the Estate of Thomas Legh Esq.” (Figure 8). The map relates to an area of land forming part of Warrington’s manorial estate, extending some 175m southwards from Sankey Street and between present day Cairo Street and Arpley Street. The southern boundary of the estate coincides with the rear boundaries of the properties on Palmyra Square South and abuts onto land owned by Thomas Wilson Patten -the owner of Bank House, later Warrington Town Hall.

The map shows the proposed laying out of a series of “12 yard streets.” (i.e. streets of 12 yards, 10.9m, overall width). The eastern part of the land is laid out in a grid pattern and includes a “proposed new square.” The layout bears a close correlation with the positions of Bold Street, Cairo Street, Suez Street, Egypt Street, Palmyra Square North, Palmyra Square South. The new square was to be approximately 170 feet wide (51m) and some 300 feet long (91).This corresponds with the position of the gardens as they exist today and their dimensions before their westward extension, c 1900. Interestingly, the west side of the square was to be bounded by another 12 yard street.

The proposed street, later known as Bold Street, clearly represents a widening of Ashton’s Lane. The north south alignment of this ancient lane was thus a significant influence on the development pattern of the area. The map itself is undated but is indexed as of 1857 origin. However the 1851 edition Ordnance Survey shows Bold, Cairo Suez and Egypt Streets named, though with frontage development only on parts of Egypt and Suez Streets. Moreover, a Council minute of November 1843 refers to a “new street running off Sankey Street, called Bold Street, being not yet in a finished state and the town surveyors therefore not being called upon to take charge of it”. Another minute of May 1845 refers to the entrance to Cairo Street in Sankey Street being “laid with wood pavement”. Cairo Street for the most part falls within the very long garden plot shown on the 1826 map. Suez Street is recorded as named in 1846.

Clearly as the Legh map indicates a proposed street layout which had commenced by 1843, it must date from no later than that year but its actual date of origin remains for the time being a mystery.

The westernmost part of the area extending to a point on Sankey Street about 200m west of Legh Street, departed from the grid and is shown laid out as a curved avenue lined with spacious detached and semi-detached villas standing in large gardens. A lodge and gates are indicated at the Sankey Street entrance. The plan also shows a large villa abutting the square occupying’ land leased but it is not clear whether it is existing or proposed. Named Springfield House on the 1851 OS, it was the home of William Fell a partner of Joseph Crosfield, soap manufacture. The proposed development scheme would have augmented the choice of dwellings for the town’s middle classes, providing the C19th equivalent of today’s ‘executive homes’! As it was a tapering plot bounded on its south side by Thomas Wilson Patten’s land, westward extension of the grid plan wholly within the Legh land ownership would have been impractical at that time.

It seems that whilst the Wilson Patten family was in residence at Bank Hall it was keen to preserve the open prospect beyond the hall gates. When in 1847, proposals were made for the extension of the St. Helens Railway westward to Arpley, clauses inserted in its Act of Parliament prohibited the erection of buildings within sight of the hall windows and penalised the company for leaving wagons in view of the hall for longer than necessary!

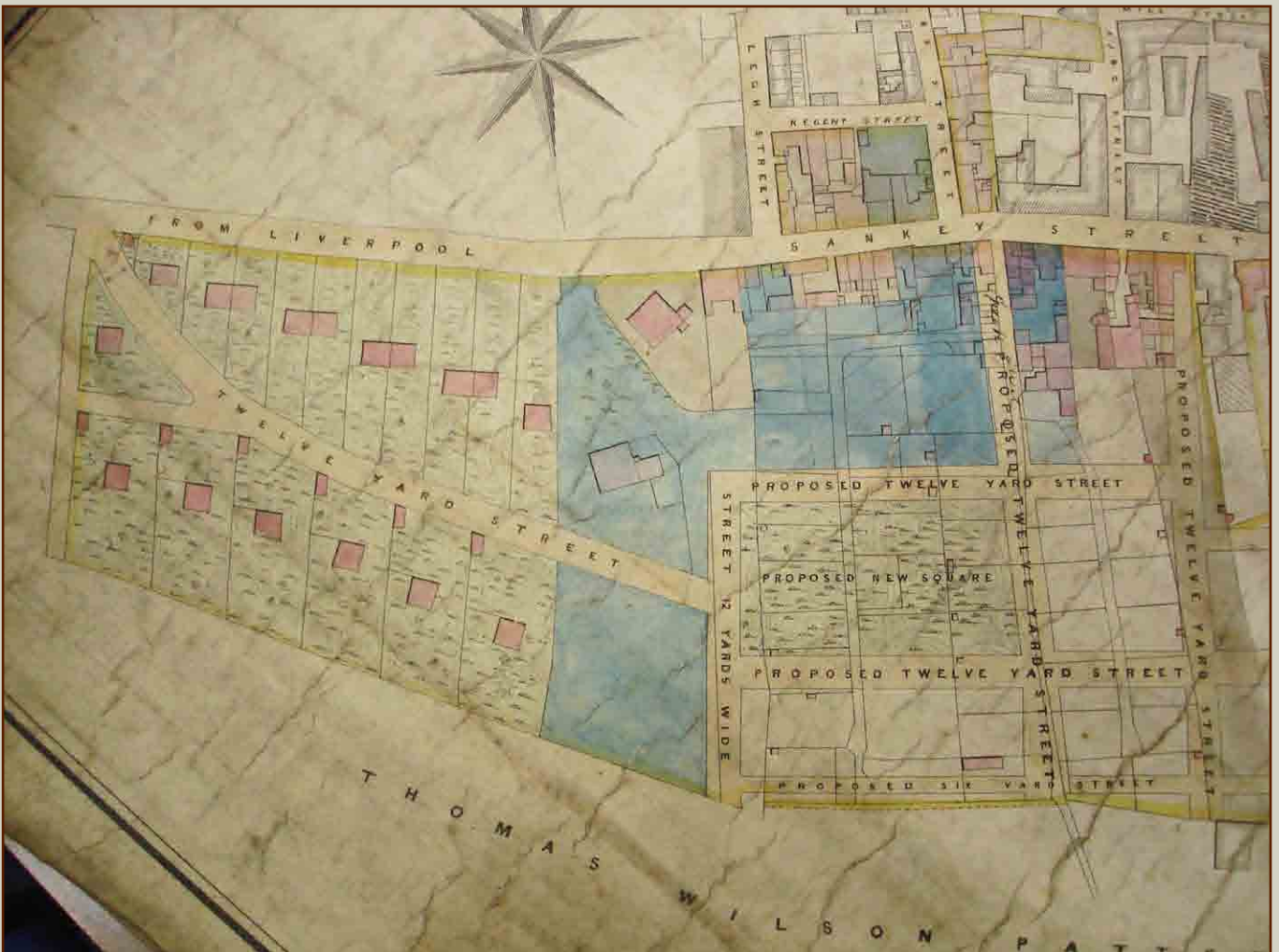
In 1870, Colonel John Wilson Patten, then Lord Winmarleigh, great grandson of Thomas Patten, the builder of Bank Hall, decided to vacate the hall because of encroaching industry, offering it on favourable terms to the Borough Corporation to acquire it for use as their town hall. Only then did the Wilson Patten estate lands to the south of Sankey Street finally become available for development, providing the opportunity to extend the grid pattern of streets that had been established around Palmyra Square some 20 years earlier.



Though the western extension shown on the Legh Estate plan remains an intriguing ‘might have been’ it nevertheless appears that the planning of the area comprising much of the present conservation area must be attributed to the surveyors for the Legh Estate in first half of the C19th. It seems that the intention from the outset was to create an enclave of houses for the middle classes close to the amenities of the town centre but offering a spacious and relatively self contained environment. In conception it perhaps represents a mid -Victorian attempt to introduce to Warrington a formal town square modelled on the Georgian pattern. Unlike most Georgian town squares, however, the built form was of two rather than three storeys. The grid plan was itself a logical development of the rectangular garden plot layout, taking as its north -south axis the alignment of ancient Ashton’s Lane, widened to form Bold Street.

Meanwhile in 1847 the Borough of Warrington was incorporated. The new corporation began to put in place various civic improvements including the adoption of the newly laid out streets. From 1850, Council minutes record various instances of the sewerage of new streets including Bold Street and Cairo Street. The names given to the new streets commemorated important local landowners as well as the Middle-Eastern campaigns fought by the South Lancashire Regiment.

Figure 8: Legh Estate Map



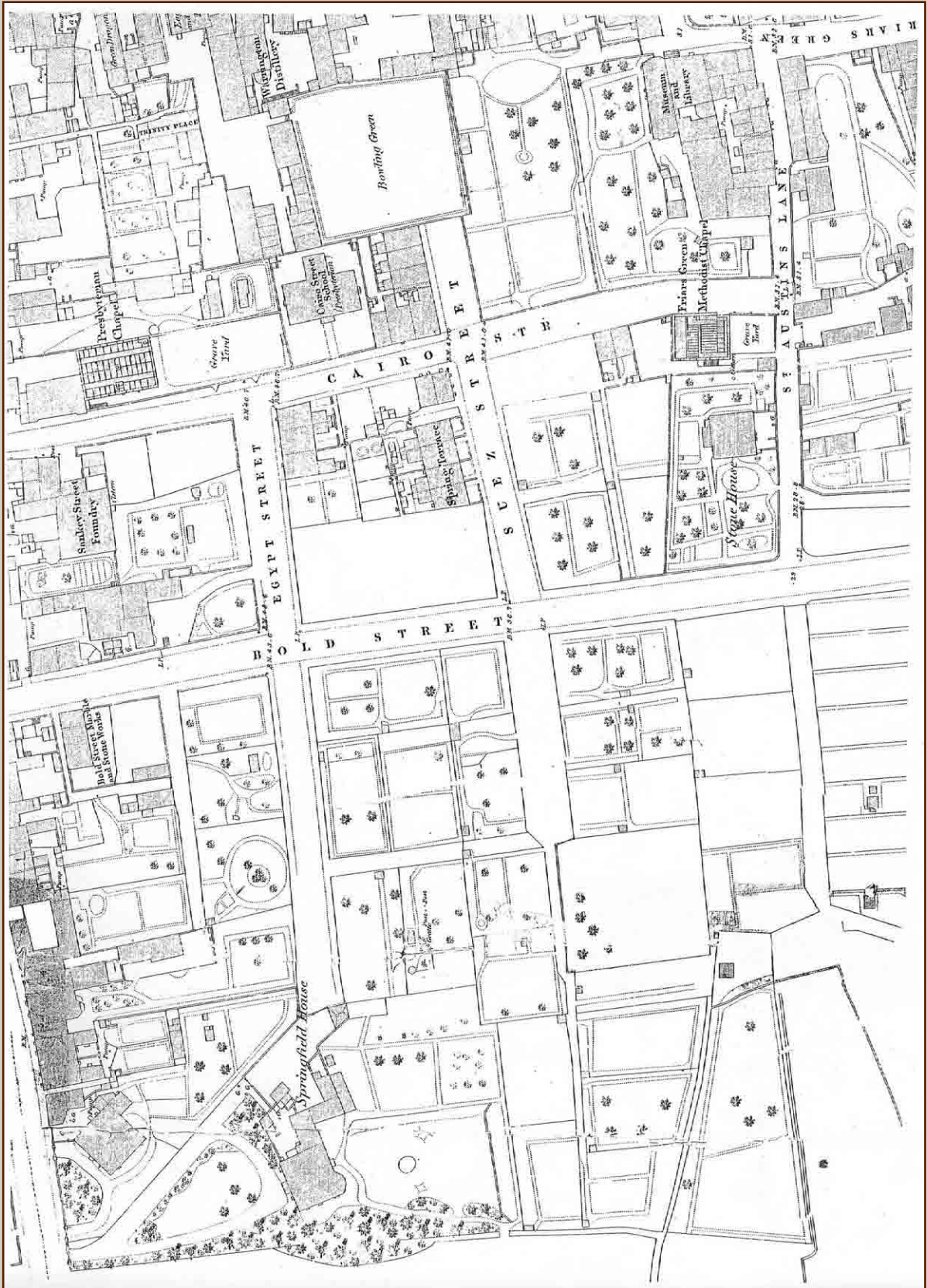


1851 Ordnance Survey

This large scale map, (Figure 9). provides a snapshot of the area during its transition from garden plots to residential quarter. The town's population had by then reached some 22,984. The spacious new streets being laid out in the south west quarter were in sharp contrast with the densely packed courts, yards and alleys leading off the main streets, around Market Gate and especially to the east of Bridge Street. Building development in the south west quarter progressed generally westwards from the town centre. The 1851 map shows limited frontage development on Suez Street, Egypt Street and Cairo Street. Sections of Palmyra Square South and Palmyra Square North have been delineated but as yet not developed or named though a large villa, Springfield, occupies spacious grounds at the western end of an un-named lane, later Chapel Street. Numerous garden plots remain within the framework of the new street lines.



Figure 9: 1851 Ordnance Survey Map



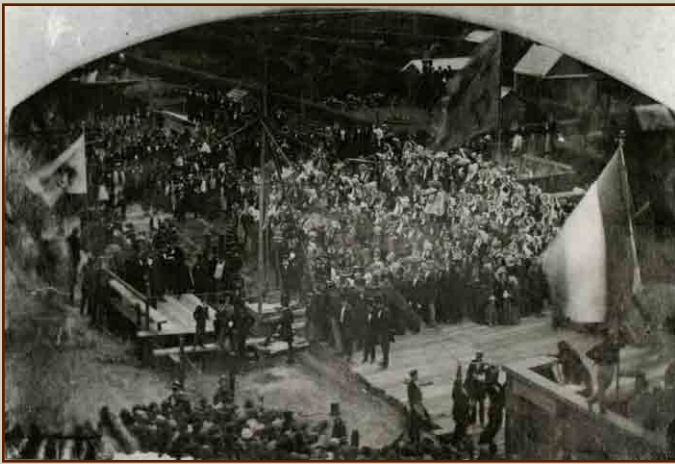


3.2 Development during the latter C19th

The new street layout provided opportunities for further civic enhancements in the form of public buildings, the first of which was the Bold Street Wesleyan Chapel 1849-50 displacing a group of gardens. To its rear a large Sunday School Building was erected.

In 1855 the foundation stone for the Museum and Library was laid amongst great ceremony. A photograph of the event shows a background of neat garden plots bounded by tall hedges. The town's museum and library had hitherto occupied premises in nearby Friars Gate.

It seems likely that the row comprising nos. 9-19 Bold Street and no. 10 Egypt Street and no. 13 Suez Street was the first part of the square frontage to be built as the street was in existence by 1851 with pavements and carriageways shown. Council minutes of 1850 record the sewerage of Bold Street, which would normally be implemented in tandem with frontage development. It would be a logical continuation of the development of Suez Street and Egypt Street which had been completed by 1851.



The terrace of fine town houses on Palmyra Square South must soon have followed. Council minutes of 1861 refer to a request for lighting this new street and the directory for 1864 reveals nos. 1-13 to be fully occupied as residences. St. Austin's Chambers, dated 1864, represents what appears to be purpose built office accommodation.

In 1873 sewerage of Museum Street was authorised "as far as required for residential purposes". Palmyra Square South was adopted as a public street in 1874. Plans for houses in Museum Street were approved in 1877.





Wilson Patten Street

Wilson Patten Street, now one of the town centre’s principal traffic arteries, owes its origins to the decision by the London and North Western Railway to relocate its main line station. The original 1837 Grand Junction Railway (Newton-Birmingham), station was adjacent to the Liverpool Road bridge. By the 1860s it had become cramped and inadequate and it was proposed to build a new station at the position where the main line crossed over the Warrington and Garston railway. A station serving this line which had by then been extended eastwards to Altrincham, had opened in 1854 at Arpley adjacent to Bridgefoot, accessed by an extension of Bold Street. The proposed new station at Bank Quay was to serve both routes by high and low level platforms providing the opportunity to dispense with nearby Arpley. The new station site at Bank Quay however lay beyond the reach of the town centre’s road network. In order to provide access to the new station, the L&NWR Co. proposed to construct two new roads of 12 yards width, eastwards to connect with Bold Street and northwards to connect with Sankey Street. The railway submitted their proposals to the Corporation in 1866 in the form of a continuous route in effect paralleling the two railway lines and involving a right angled bend in front of the station site.

The Council approved the name of the new road ‘Wilson Patten Street’ in Jan 1868. The new station at Bank Quay opened in November of that year. In March 1869 the Council resolved to adopt Wilson Patten Street as a public highway together with a short length of Bold Street leading to Arpley Station. Later the section between Bank Quay station and Sankey Street was renamed Parker Street. The new road was quickly exploited as a development opportunity, a succession of plans for new dwellings being approved between 1870 and 1873.



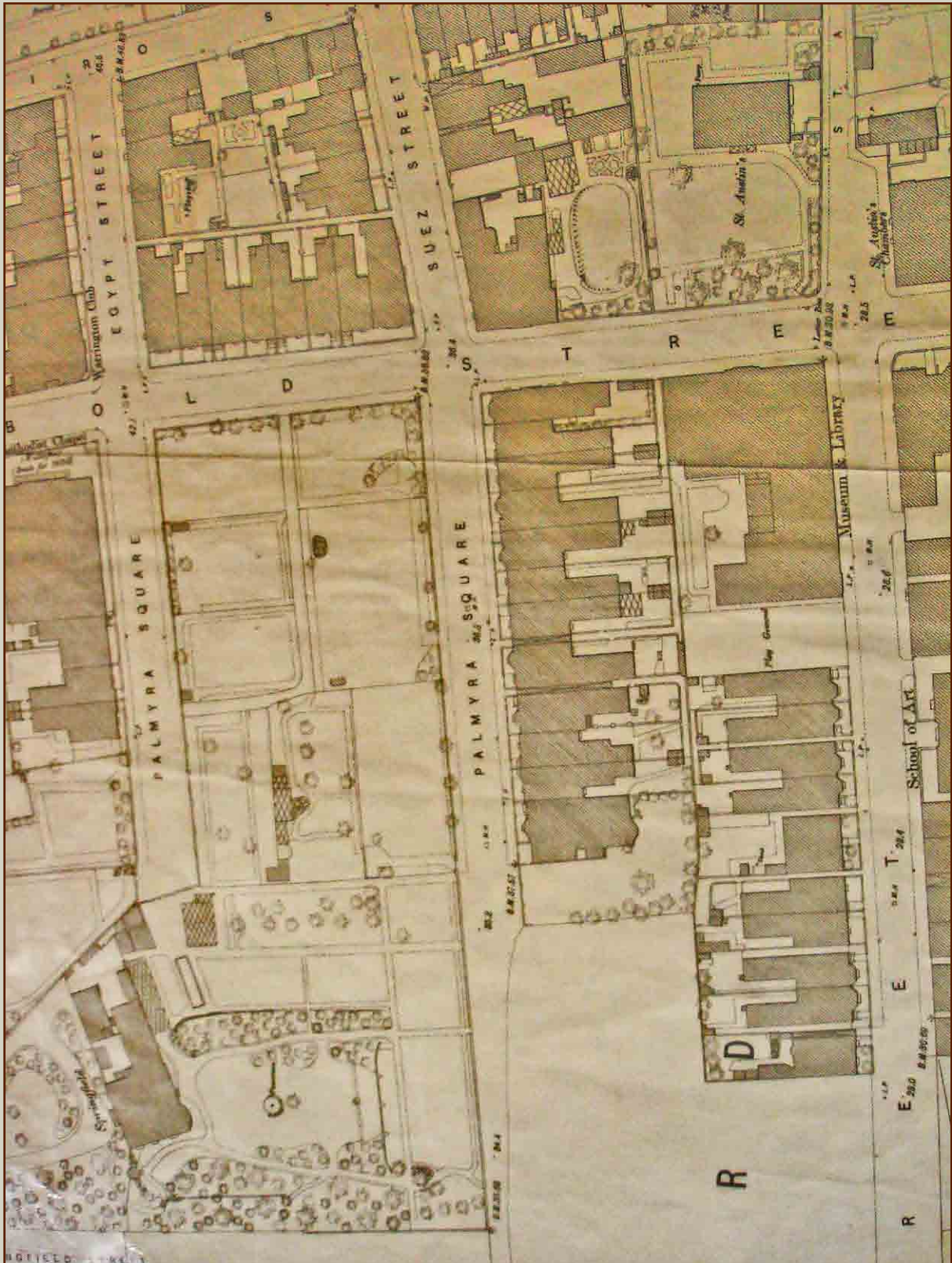
1888 Ordnance Survey

The 1888 OS (Figure 10) indicates that the entire frontage up to Winmarleigh Street had been completed with substantial town houses facing onto Arpley Meadows -beyond the railway sidings! Clearly early residents were not troubled by the thunder of traffic as today! The area east of Bold Street was by then also fully developed.

A row of 12 town houses lines the south side of Palmyra Square, (nos 1-21 and no 12 Bold Street). Its north side is occupied by the Methodist Chapel and three adjoining houses beyond which are rear gardens of properties on Sankey Street and Springfield. The square itself is a walled enclosure containing private garden plots. These are 8 in number and clearly not sufficient to provide gardens for the total of 20 houses facing the square.



Figure 10: 1888 Ordnance Survey Map





In 1882 the town acquired another fine public building, the School of Art, situated opposite the Museum and Library.

Museum Street is built up as far as no.23 north side and no.24 opposite. The area west of these frontages is as yet undeveloped but with indicative road alignments shown. The north end of Springfield Street is occupied by a printing works and a house called Winmarleigh Lodge. The as yet incomplete Palmyra Square North was for a time known as Chapel Street.

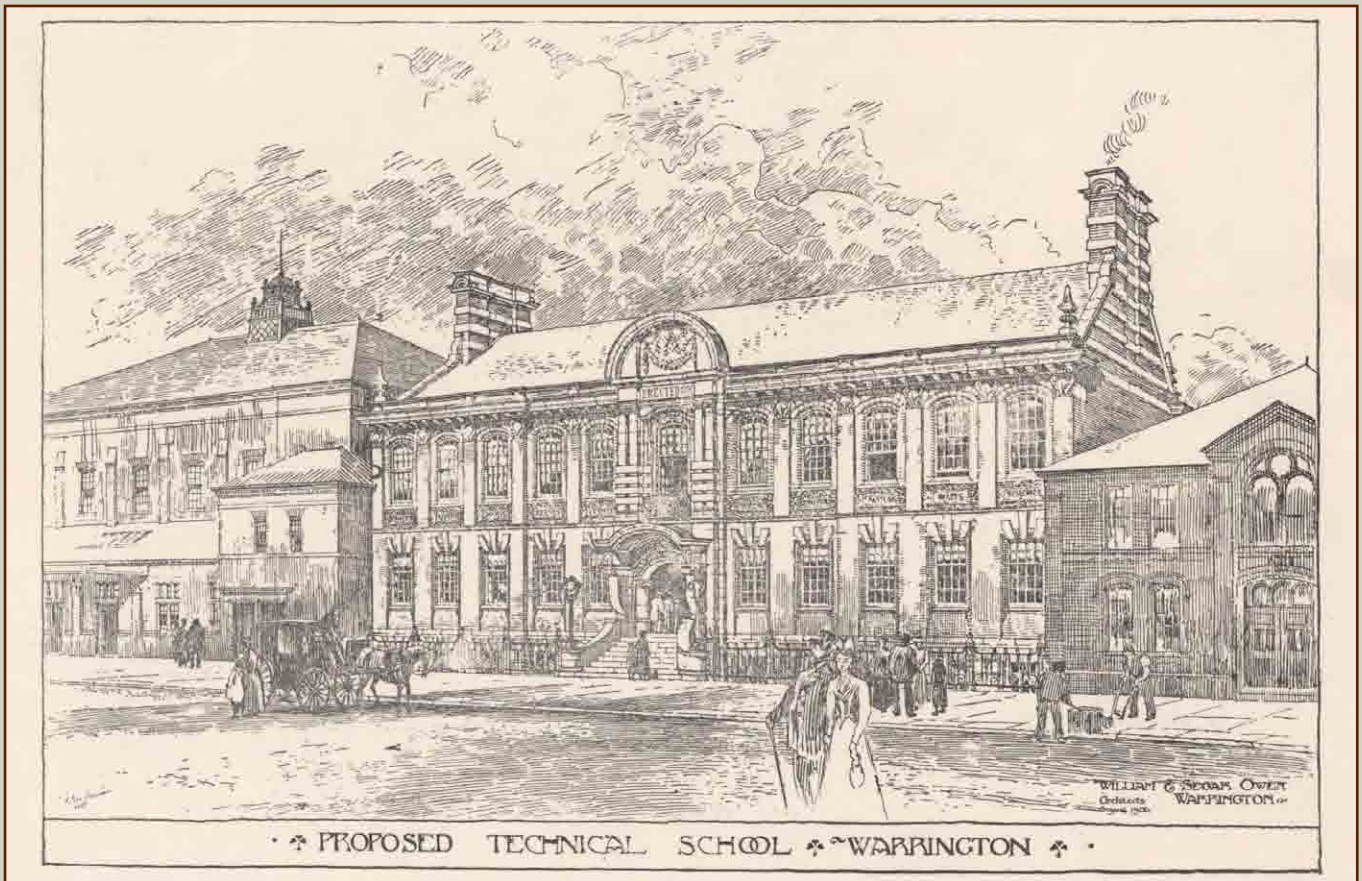
Although it had been conceived as a residential area, the remaining undeveloped land on Palmyra Square South and Museum Street was in the event, used to accommodate a number of public buildings. These were erected between the 1890s and early 1900s and included the Parr Hall, the County Court, the Technical School. The nearby Police Station and magistrates Courts (outside the conservation area) were built 1899-1900.

The Borough Gymnasium was also built about this time whilst the main post office followed in 1906/07. Clearly, the civic leaders of the day saw the newly established street layout in the south west quarter as an opportunity to accommodate the prestigious buildings required by a growing and prosperous town in a location that was conveniently placed in relation to the Town Hall and to the town centre.

Progress in the area's development can be traced by date plaques carried by several buildings, or by documentary evidence, for example:

- c. 1796 Friars Green Independent Methodist Church- rebuilt 1859
- c. late C18th 25, 27,29 Stanley Street
- 1849-50 Bold Street Wesleyan Chapel
- 1855 Museum and Library
- 1864 St. Austin's Chambers
- 1872/3 Carlton Villas, Halton View ; Wilson Patten Street
- 1876 The Warrington Club, 7 Bold Street.
- 1877 1 Museum Street
- 1878 14-16 Museum Street
- 1882 Emmanuel Church, Bold Street

- 1882 School of Art
- 1893 15 Springfield Street
- 1895 Parr Hall
- 1897 County Court
- 1900-02 Technical School
- 1906 General Post Office
- 1924 Board Of Guardians, Museum Street.
- 1926 Holy Trinity Vicarage, Palmyra Square North.





3.3 Queen's Gardens

By the turn of the C20th, the town's population had reached 64,242, four and a half times its 1830's number.

The town's spirit of civic enhancement was given further expression in 1897 when the Corporation acquired the private gardens in Palmyra Square and remodelled them as a town park in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The gardens were provided with an informal arrangement of paths and flower beds and a drinking fountain by the renowned McFarland Foundry. The fountain probably dates from the opening as it carries Queen Victoria's Jubilee image. The boundary wall was originally topped with railings and gated. In 1902 the Council agreed to supply the Chief Constable with a key- perhaps early evidence of anti social behaviour!

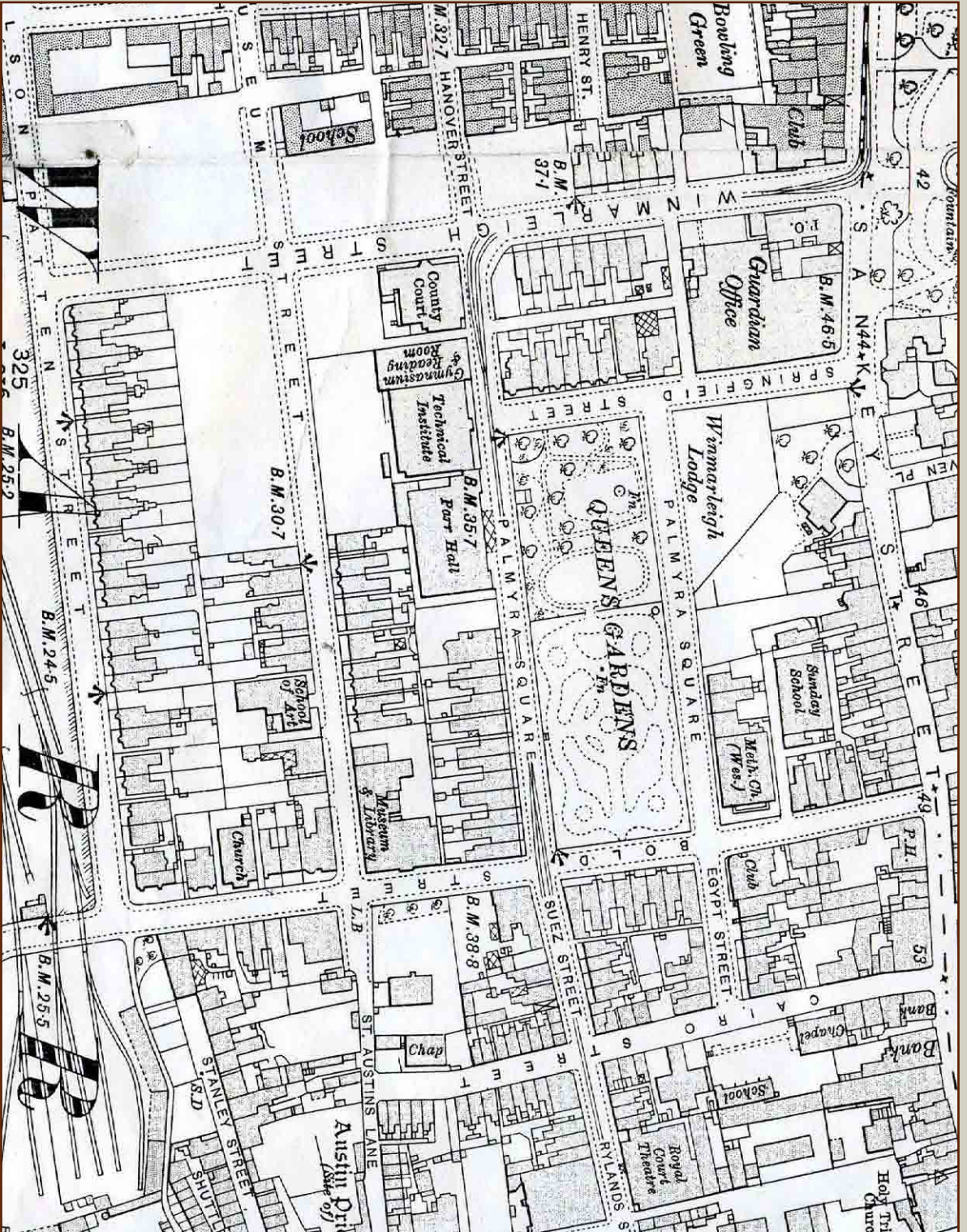
About the turn of the century the large villa Springfield, must have succumbed to development pressure. In 1902, the Council resolved to consider the advisability of adding part of the Springfield estate south of the continuation of Chapel Street to Queens' Gardens. In the same year it was resolved to remove the greenhouses from Springfield for re-erection in Bank Park. In 1904 it was resolved to remove the hedge dividing the two sections of the gardens and to make connecting paths. The demolition of Springfield had enabled former Chapel Street to be connected through to Springfield Street thus completing the present day street layout with the formation of Palmyra Square North.

Meanwhile Queen's Gardens underwent a further modification with the installation of the Colonel O' Leary statue, a war memorial to the men of the South Lancashire Regiment commemorating their action in the Boer War in 1900 which contributed ultimately to the relief of Ladysmith. Fund raising for a memorial had been authorised in 1903. The statue of Colonel O'Leary, cast in bronze, was the work of Alfred Drury ARA and was unveiled in 1907 amidst great pomp. A photograph of this event reveals the post office still under construction despite its 1906 date stone!

Contemporary photographs and the 1907 OS (Figure 11) show a layout of paths and flower beds more elaborate than today's arrangement. The layout must have been simplified some time after 1907, probably to ease maintenance, though it retained the basic oval plan and central focus, now emphasised by the statue.

At some time, probably post 1907, a number of plane trees had been planted very close to the perimeter wall. By the 1980s these fine trees had reached maturity but were threatening the stability of the boundary wall. The 1850s wall had become weathered and eroded in places and the soft sandstone copings damaged by the removal of the railings. The problem was especially acute on the south side where the wall retained the gardens at higher level. The Council had no option but to remove the most seriously unstable trees and to reconstruct the entire perimeter wall of the western gardens. The recent remodelling of the gardens is described in Section 4.3.





3.4 Changing Character

That the area was laid out initially as a quality residential quarter for the middle classes is in no doubt. A plaque fixed to no.9 Palmyra Square South records that William Hesketh Lever, first Viscount Leverhulme, resided there 1886-88.

In 1902 a writer described Bold Street and Palmyra Square as “very select,... nice people still live there but office school and surgery are rapidly taking the place for their own”.*

*”Changing Warrington 1770s-1990s”.

It seems that a combination of increasing commercial pressure from the growing town together with the availability of suburban housing made accessible by local railways and tramways may have led to the gradual exodus of residents from the area. Another incentive for those who could afford to move away may have been the pollution and noise from nearby industry and railways.

The head Post Office had provided a prestigious frontage to Springfield Street and the corner of the new street called Palmyra Square but its sorting yard left an unfortunate gap on Palmyra Square North -which remained until the development of Knightsbridge Court in 2002.

By 1935, nos. 1,3,9,11,13,15,17,19,21, Palmyra Square South were in use for various business purposes including estate agents, physicians, accountants, solicitors, though the street directories suggest some continued residential occupation perhaps as flats. This gradual encroachment of commercial uses gathered pace in the post WWII era such that the majority of houses throughout the conservation area had become used for commercial purposes.

As well as offices and business uses, the area remains today host to a number of surgeries and consulting rooms and social/welfare type uses, for example containing the premises of the Warrington and Widnes Society for the Blind and the Warrington Centre for the Deaf. ‘Relate’, St.Joseph’s Family Centre, NHS CDT centre and National Children’s Homes also have premises in the conservation area. These uses are indicative of the area’s convenience for town centre facilities.

The range of uses also demonstrates the flexibility of the former large town houses in accommodating changes in occupation, albeit with some extensions and adaptations. Conversion to non-residential uses has almost certainly ensured the continued viability of the area, permitting its survival largely intact after nearly a century and a half.

Changes in the pattern of use have also affected the conservation area’s public buildings. The School of Art is now the Adult Education annexe of Warrington Collegiate Institute. The Parr Hall remains a place of public assembly and entertainment. The Technical School, latterly Council offices, is vacant (May 2007) and offered for sale. The Pyramid Arts Centre has been created from the former Borough Gym and the County Courts, whilst the former post office has been converted to use as a restaurant and health club.

Meanwhile, very recent redevelopment has begun to open a new chapter in the evolving character of the conservation area.





After well over a century, the residential character of the area is being re-established but the residential revival is mainly in the form of purpose-built apartment developments rather than the conversion of the former town houses back to residential use.

The prestigious Knightsbridge Court on the site of the Post Office yard has contributed 49 units, and the recent Bovey Court on the site of Stone House has added 22. An infill scheme at 15-17 Museum Street offers 7 units. These developments are evaluated in Section 4.

3.5 Heritage Audit

The efforts of the Civic Society in securing Listed Status for a number of buildings in the town centre resulted in the conservation area now containing 37 Listed Buildings including the Boer War Memorial and fountain within the gardens. A further 13 buildings are identified in the Unitary Development Plan as Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest. These are indicated on Figure 12 and listed in Appendix 3. Designation of the conservation area came about too late however to save the impressive C 19th Bold Street Methodist Church. The Grade II Listed Stone House, St. Austin's Lane was demolished c. 2002.

Archaeology

The conservation area lies outside the medieval core of the town and has no known features of archaeological interest. The nearby Friary site and the archaeological investigation carried out in 2000 were mentioned in the Bridge Street Conservation Area Appraisal.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE AREA'S SPECIAL QUALITIES

4.1 Character Areas

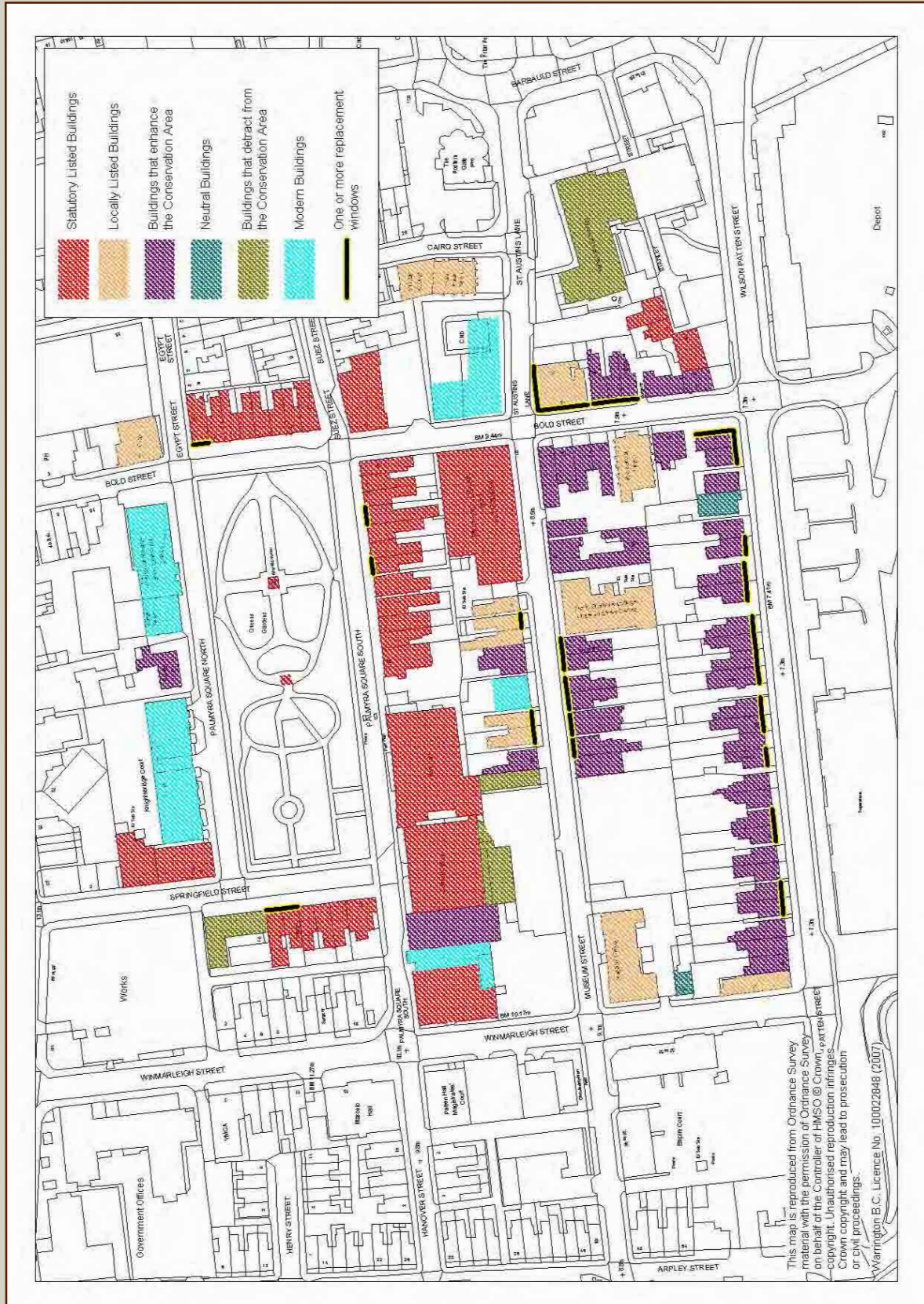
English Heritage consider that some larger conservation areas may naturally contain separately identifiable groupings of buildings or spaces. Use of such distinctions as 'character areas', can facilitate description and analysis but the final appraisal should consider the contribution of the parts to the conservation area as a whole. To some degree the square and its enclosing buildings are a separate entity from Museum Street and Wilson Patten Street. Moreover they represent broadly the earlier and later phases of the area's development. For the purposes of this appraisal they are considered as separate character areas, as indicated by Figure 2 and referred to as Palmyra Square and Museum Street Character Areas. The character areas are merely aids to description and it is acknowledged that there is some overlap and inter-visibility between them for example along Bold Street.

Figure 12 shows, in diagrammatic form, the contribution of the various buildings to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Sections 4.2 to 4.6 describe the various architectural qualities of the buildings that make up the conservation area.



Figure 12: Contribution of Buildings to the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area





4.2 Palmyra Square Character Area - The character and appearance of buildings

The terraces on Bold Street and Palmyra Square South together with no. 21 and no.12 Bold Street are architecturally the most cohesive of the conservation area's residential buildings, consistent in their two storey height, scale, proportion and materials *. In style they display features typical of the late Georgian town house, for example an unbroken cornice line, their 'Golden Section' window proportions and multi-paned hornless sashes. They also display some elements of the late classical revival.

*See also Section 5.2

The Bold Street frontage comprises a row of 8 town houses in a symmetrical composition. Three pairs of houses sharing double porches are flanked by no.10 Egypt Street and no. 13 Suez Street. These form the outer ends of the row and have ground floor bay windows with doors on the return sides. The doorway of 13 Suez Street is especially impressive with double round arches and Ionic columns flanking a panelled door. The ends and centre pair project slightly and are edged by quoin blocks. Stone string courses feature only on the intermediate pairs. The paired stone porches have segmental arches. Above are pairs of windows with stone surrounds with drip moulds. Originally stone pediments were provided above the cornice over each pair of first floor windows, visually emphasising the porches and the symmetry of the whole group. Only the pediment to nos. 9/11, now remains.

Though the street slopes southwards, the ridge line of the low pitched hipped roof is continuous giving a visually neat and balanced effect. Windows are of 8 or 12 paned sashes, though several have lost some lower glazing bars. No. 10's bay window is modern. Early C20th photographs show the presence of low front walls and railings with elaborate cast iron gate posts. (See Page 25).



No.21 presents an imposing symmetrical elevation to Bold Street. Its main entrance has square lintel and cornice flanked by Ionic columns and pilasters; Large ground floor windows have painted stone architraves with cornice on decorated console brackets. First floor windows also have architraves, the centre one with a small cornice; the main cornice is dentilled. The hipped slated roof is of shallow pitch. The plainer Suez Street facade is graced by a number of relief plaques which are believed to be replicas of plaques originally situated at William Beamont's house in Market Place.

(William Beamont was Warrington's first Mayor, a lawyer and a renowned local historian).





No.12,Bold Street opposite, is of similar architectural style to no 21, also with Ionic doorway. The return elevation of no. 12 Bold Street is part of the facade of town houses facing onto Queen's gardens,numbered 1-21 Palmyra Square South. The cornice line is continuous; a stone string course links first floor window sills. Projecting cornices supported by console brackets occur over upper floor windows, especially where the windows are grouped in pairs over entrance porches.



Some windows have flat gauged brick arches of typical Georgian pattern. Doors are set singly or in pairs within plain stone surrounds but nos. 5,7 have a paired porch flanked by Ionic columns with frieze and cornice. Regrettably no.5 has a widened ground floor window as has no.

11. The return elevation of 12 Bold Street has a ground floor bay window as have nos. 7, 13,15,21 Palmyra Square South.

Nos. 17,19,21 have a series of full height brick pilasters which break the string course and are topped by stone capitals. All windows are given bracketed cornices. This group has a higher roof profile and was perhaps of later date as only nos. 1-13 were shown as occupied in the 1864 street directory.



The widened windows, which pre-date the conservation area, are the only major discordant features of the row, but the loss of some glazing bars is regrettable. Alarm boxes and some window advertising are also evident though generally the presentation of the frontage as a whole is of a good standard.



Though the square was never completed in its intended form, the relationship between the east and south terraces is nonetheless pleasing and provides good enclosure to the square. No. 21 Bold Street provides an important pivotal feature especially viewed from within the gardens. Similarly, no.7 Bold Street a later Victorian Gothic style gabled mansion provides an important terminal feature on the north east corner of the square.

The public buildings facing the square are each individual in character and detail and represent changing architectural influences of the late C19th and early C20th.

The Parr Hall, designed by local architect William Owen has a rather austere external appearance due in part to its drab common brick though hard red brick is used for cornices, window surrounds and other details with sparing use of pink sandstone for mullions transoms and sills. The lofty main hall is set back and flanked by two storey pavilions between which a single story lean- to provides a canopied entrance lobby. The canopy is carried by elaborate scroll brackets. The upper main hall has five very tall windows of 24 panes but they are now blanked out.

The massive hipped roof topped with a cupola is a notable feature especially viewed from the town centre direction. A row of chimney stacks add to its skyline interest.



A plaque affixed to the Parr Hall commemorates its 1895 opening and its presentation to the Borough by Charlton Parr of Grappenhall Heys.

This local benefactor was a descendant of Joseph Parr, founder of Parr's Bank, in 1788. Parr's Bank was to become an early constituent of the National Westminster Bank. Its premises at Winwick Street dating from 1877 known as 'Old Bank' are still occupied by NatWest and are Grade II Listed.

The Parr Hall contains a fine organ originally built in 1870 at Bracewell Hall Yorkshire by the French master organ builder Cavaille-Coll. It was installed in Parr Hall c.1926. It is the only example in Britain of an instrument of this scale by this significant French builder, which retains its original specification. The organ is described in the revised List entry for the building of August 1999 and must be regarded as an integral part of the building.

The Parr Hall though undoubtedly one of the town centre's major cultural and civic assets has never displayed an architecturally vibrant image, perhaps because of its north aspect, sombre materials and poor interface with the public realm.

The remodelling of the gardens which has provided a traffic free paved area in front of the Hall offers the potential to link in a more positive manner, the interior functions of the hall with its external setting though of course as the building is listed, any internal or external alterations would require great architectural skill and sensitivity.



The adjoining former Technical School by William and Segar Owen built 7 years after the Parr Hall, is an altogether more exuberant edifice in hard red brick and buff sandstone. A contemporary account described the style of the building as “later English Renaissance with the main weight of the treatment being kept to the central doorway which it was though desirable to emphasise”. The style is certainly eclectic and has elements of ‘Beaux Arts’ style (after the French architectural movement of the period). The main two-storey facade is set back slightly above a semi -basement area. The raised ground floor is accessed by a sweeping flight of steps leading up to an elaborate and massive sandstone hooded porch above which are paired blocked columns flanking a wrought iron balcony, the whole surmounted by a large curved pediment which carries the Borough arms in relief. The entrance is placed centrally between five 24 paned ground and first floor windows. The first floor windows have elliptical stone heads which merge with a deep projecting corbelled cornice, a typical hall mark of the architects. Terracotta panels beneath the first floor windows proclaim the names of eminent historical scientists. The tall chimney stacks which rise from each gable end are especially impressive skyline features. The imposing entrance aligns with Springfield Street providing one of the most impressive prospects within the conservation area. The ornate railings to the basement light well survived the WW II cull.

The building was clearly designed to present its prestigious elevation to the square. Its rear facing south onto Museum Street, is utilitarian in character and marred by additions and exposed pipe-work. Until recently occupied by the Council Finance department, the whole site is currently being offered for sale.

The conversion and reuse of the Listed former Technical School, possibly for residential purposes will require the utmost architectural skill and sensitivity to reconcile new uses with the preservation of the external character and appearance as well as important internal elements such as the mosaic floor, doors, glass and staircase.





The Borough Gymnasium is a modest two storey structure of symmetrical composition also in red brick with some stone and terracotta detailing. It is now part of the Pyramid Arts Centre. Marking the western end of Palmyra Square South, the former County Court, 1897 by Henry Turner of London is a fittingly prestigious example of public building when Britain was at the height of its Imperial power. It is essentially Tudor in style though the stepped gables suggest Flemish influence. Cream coloured faience is used for mullioned and transomed windows and other details set within walls of hard red brick. The Building exploits its corner site effectively with a tall gabled bay facing onto Winmarleigh Street. Its south elevations were functional, perhaps intended to be concealed by further development which never materialised.



The former courthouse became redundant after the opening of the new Crown Courts in Legh Street and lay unused for many years. It was subsequently acquired by the Council for use as an Arts Centre and in 1999/2000 underwent substantial internal remodelling to accommodate its new role as Pyramid Arts Centre. The tall glazed entrance lobby situated between the former Courts and the gymnasium is a distinctive feature of the adaptation, as is the re-cladding in translucent material of the rear elevation.

The entrance lobby, which projects forward of the building line, provides a dramatic townscape feature but viewed from the square partially conceals the old courthouse especially its roof profile,- an illustration of the care required when introducing major new built form in the setting of listed buildings.



Regrettably the new entrance faces onto a service street adjacent to which is a white painted wooden fence of the Army Careers office car park. This open plot at the corner of Winmarleigh Street was never developed. The corner is splayed and provided with a more generous radius than any other in the locality, probably in order to accommodate the tramway which once followed Palmyra Square South and Winmarleigh Street on its route to Sankey Bridges.



The west side of Queen's Gardens is effectively enclosed by a row of red brick town houses, nos. 3-13 Springfield Street. Nos. 7,9,11,13 feature gabled dormers crowned by pediments. The floor levels and window lines are constant, the slope of the street being taken up by steps. Bay windows and terracotta detail add interest. No 13 once had an ornate Flemish gable but this was removed for safety reasons some years ago. Its return elevation to Palmyra Square South has a terracotta date panel 1893. This row is listed as of group value, together with the other listed buildings facing Queen's Gardens. The additional height due to the sloping street helps to provide an effective relationship between nos.7-13 and the Technical School in enclosing the square.



No 1 Springfield Street c.1957, a 2 storey office building is of quite different character. Its light coloured materials and green metallic roof are perhaps the most incongruous features of the whole conservation area. However it represents an era of post-war building uncommon in the town centre and any proposals for its redevelopment should be carefully evaluated against its rarity value.

The Post Office, Grade II Listed, is a robust edifice in hard red brick with buff stone mullioned windows, plinth, band courses and dormers. In style it is perhaps of the Beaux Arts genre featuring decorative swags in stone and an ornate balustrade above a deep modillioned cornice. The main elevation facing Springfield Street is generally symmetrical and features square towers in the centre and at the ends. Two pairs of ground floor windows have segmental arched heads. The return elevation to Palmyra Square North is of two bays flanked by corner towers. Ground floor windows are at high level due to the slope along Springfield Street.



Rainwater hoppers display ER and crown confirming the Edwardian era of the building's construction. The same device appears in stone relief with date 1906 above the redundant posting box in juxtaposition with the EIRR which appears on the adjacent oval post box.



The attached sorting office and yard once occupied a frontage of 58m to Palmyra Square North leaving the north side of the square architecturally incomplete. In 2000/2001 the site was acquired for development involving conversion of the main post office building to accommodate a restaurant and health club with construction of an apartment block on the sorting yard site. Today the substantial Knightsbridge Court apartment scheme completes the enclosure of the north side of the square. Projecting bays, stone cladding to ground floor, frieze and cornice reflect the themes of the post office building. At five floors plus a penthouse level, it is perhaps uncomfortably high in relation to the former post office though its scale is not inappropriate to its setting facing the square.

Black fabric window blinds proclaim the former Post Office building's new role but partially conceal the arched windows. Some of the stonework is eroded, perhaps a consequence of cleaning carried out in the 1970s.



The eastern frontage of Palmyra Square North is dominated by the 1970s combined office and Church development which replaced the original Bold Street Methodist Church. Although some attempt was made to articulate the built form, the result is a bland monolith lacking in depth and modelling and of little merit. The Church is perhaps the most successful part of the group in its use of tall narrow windows which reflect the parkland trees.

The 1920s Holy Trinity Church Vicarage, in neo-Georgian style, now seems diminutive situated between its bulkier neighbours.



4.3 Museum Street Character Area - the contribution of buildings

The Museum and Library

The Museum and Library building, was included in the 1974 conservation area designation. It is one of the town's earliest public buildings, dating from 1855-57 being built soon after the incorporation of the Borough in 1847 and indeed amongst the earliest such public buildings in the country. Grade II Listed, the list entry describes the building as Museum and Art Gallery, though the bulk of the ground floor is occupied by the public library. It is noted as forming part of the Palmyra Square group.



The Library/Museum is a robust and dignified building of red brick with stone plinth, window surrounds, band course, quoin blocks, frieze and modillioned cornice. The building stands immediately at back of footway at the junction of Bold Street and Museum Street. The Bold Street entrance is pedimented with Tuscan pilasters and flanked by pairs of tripartite windows. The first floor is provided with stone panels in place of windows, the upper floors originally having rooflight glazing, now mostly blanked out for art conservation reasons. A corbelled chimney and part of the hipped roofs can be glimpsed from street level. The library entrance to Museum Street is in an 'Art Deco style'. It has recently received a ramped access. A 1960's extension on the Museum Street frontage is typical of its era but fortunately modest in extent.



The List entry attributes the building to John Dobson of Newcastle. However research by the Museum Curator has revealed that Dobson's impressive design was deemed too ambitious and that he was paid off with £150 for his drawings! An architect called Stone from Newton-le-Willows was engaged to carry the scheme forward. Elements of Dobson's design which Stone evidently retained are the rusticated quoin blocks and the stone panels at upper level. The Museum entrance was originally to have been placed on Museum Street. An illustration of 1864 shows the extent of the original building with three bays on its south side and that Museum Street was evidently not in existence! The original 1857 building, which included the School of Art, has undergone a series of extensions and alterations both internally and externally. Intermediate quoins on the Museum Street elevation, which coincide with a change in the hipped roof spans, relate to an 1870 extension of 5 bays. An end entrance to Museum Street was later changed to a window when a new entrance was made to the library in the 1930s.



The piecemeal alterations have resulted in a modernised building that contains a number of inefficiencies in use of space, circulation and access. A bid is currently being prepared for Heritage Lottery funding which would open up further useable floorspace and greatly improve circulation whilst resolving some outstanding structural problems. The proposed alterations would have little impact upon its external appearance other than the raising of a central portion of the roof structure. In the longer term a possible connection through to Palmyra Square could be envisaged to link the Museum more effectively with the Cultural Quarter. See section 6.



4.4 Museum Street Character Area - The 1985 Extension to Palmyra Square Conservation Area

This extension was intended to safeguard an area of largely unaltered buildings over one century old which provided a link between Palmyra Square and the Georgian Listed Group at Stanley Street. The extension included a mixture of former town dwellings, now converted to offices, interspersed with individual buildings of more substantial character. These included the School of Art, St. Austin's Chambers, Emmanuel Church, and the Stone House (since demolished).

It was observed that the area was noteworthy for its well executed brickwork detailing and pleasing scale and that trees were an important feature of views up and down Bold Street.

The School of Art 1884

This building is a pleasing and dignified element to the street scene, situated appropriately opposite the Museum and Library. It continues the hard red brick theme, enriched with stone detailing and decoration. The building is slightly set back from the street and is symmetrical in composition displaying Art Nouveau and perhaps Flemish influences. Twin gables, featuring tall round headed windows, are surmounted by pediments with curved side brackets. The stone detailed entrance has round fanlight and balusters. A scrolled pediment above the first floor central window contains a panel carved 'School of Art.' The doorway is flanked by tall narrow windows in stained glass below which are similar mosaic panels which contain the royal crown and cartouche VR and legend 'established 1853'. This refers to the formation of the school in that year from an art class in the Mechanics Institute.

The building remains in educational use as the Warrington Collegiate Institute Adult Education Centre.





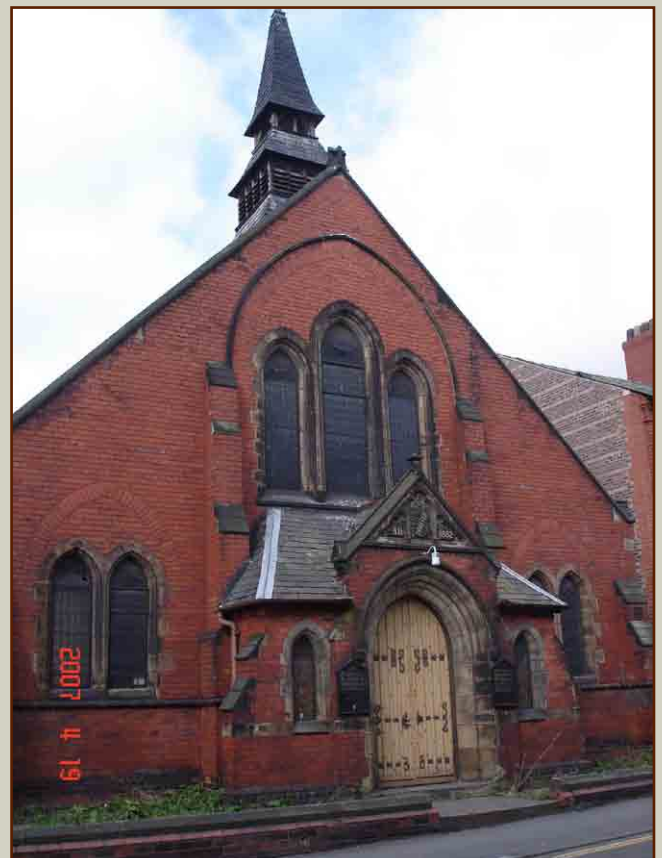
St Austin's Chambers

Situated on the south east corner of the junction of Bold Street and St.Austin's lane, St.Austin's Chambers is a two storey building in red/brown brick with blue and yellow brick detailing and stone plinth, band course, sills and mullions. It is unusual in that it represents early purpose built office accommodation dating from 1864. The narrow pointed arched windows suggest Gothic revival influence. The polychromatic brickwork is an unusual and distinctive feature and the elaborate brick detailing of the eaves is especially notable. The two part hipped roof appears to have been recovered in concrete tiles and artificial slates. Roof gablet vents described in the 1985 designation report are no more. Upper floor windows appear to retain their original sashes but all ground floor windows are modern. The distinctive elevational character of St.Austin's Chambers has been applied successfully to a new restaurant building on the adjacent site.



Emmanuel Church

The Free Church of England is a gabled structure of modest scale in red Accrington or Ruabon brick with stone dressings. Of late Gothic style it has a tripartite lancet windows above a projecting pedimented porch. The pediment carries the inscription Emmanuel AD 1882. A two stage lantern tower rises above the sweeping slate roof adding to the townscape interest of the street. Regrettably the front railings have gone and the small front garden area is neglected. Indeed the building conveys the appearance of being no longer in use.





Other constituents of Bold Street are two and three storey former town houses in red brick except nos. 20,22 which are a pair of bay windowed villas in brown brick, no 22 is in use as a pharmacy, the only retail use in the conservation area. It exemplifies the difficulties in applying retail signage onto residential facades, and is an argument for limiting the incursion of such uses into the conservation area. No 22 was once known as Arpley House. Its return elevation abuts onto 1 Wilson Patten Street, which was called Arpley Villa. These properties probably date from the 1870s, following the construction of Wilson Patten Street.



Nos. 25,27,29 Stanley Street form an L shaped group of three storey former town houses, abutting onto the rear of no 33. Bold Street. Though well restored they retain much of their original character and represent rare survivors of Warrington's town centre Georgian heritage. They are constructed in brown brick in Flemish bond on stone base with two stone bands and alternate long and short quoins. Nos. 25,27 have sliding sash multi paned windows with panelled doors and rectangular fanlights. No.29 has two paned sashes and door with segmental arch and recessed fanlight. Its elevation to Wilson Patten Street has been altered and is part rendered.

The group is set back from Wilson Patten Street in wooded grounds now used for parking. Part of the street retains its setted surface. Access is curiously from beneath the adjacent telephone exchange, an ugly concrete monolith which regrettably looms over the listed group.

In 1995 the conservation was extended to include Friar's Green Church and the adjoining Sunday School. The Independent Methodists were established on the site c.1796 but the present building dates from 1859. It is a curious structure featuring twin narrow gabled outer bays flanking a central wing with transverse roof. A second floor was added in 1879. The south and west sides have been thickened with stock brick and massive buttresses added but traces of the 1859 structure are visible, notably round arched windows on the upper north elevation and the apexes of the twin gables. The space on the south side is shown on the 1851 OS as a graveyard. The Sunday School dating from 1911 has a high gabled facade in hard red brick with deep modillioned cornice and tall round arched tri-partite window. It was built on the north graveyard after all remains had been removed except those of the founder, Peter Phillips.





The south elevation of the Chapel is marred by a stainless steel flue and by the neglected condition of the small car park. Nonetheless, the pair of buildings represent a distinctive feature of the conservation area's built form and provide a further example of Warrington's diverse religious traditions.

The adjacent site was occupied by Stone House an C18th structure built entirely of ashlar blocks and set back from Bold Street. It had been occupied by the British Legion with its garden used as a bowling green but in the 1980s it was vacated and became vandalised and ruinous. Various attempts to secure re-use were fruitless. In 2003 a scheme of residential development was approved involving the demolition of Stone House. The resultant development is a three storey apartment building. The two upper floors are in red brick above a ground floor of coursed art stone. Its bulk and massing relate well to its surroundings. Wooden sash windows are set within reveals and have stone (probably reconstituted), heads and sills. In all the new development can be described as making a positive contribution to the conservation area offsetting the loss of a listed building. The building is set back from Bold Street and St.Austin's Lane by 2-3m, with a low wall topped with railings. The open corner which once offered a good prospect of the Museum elevation has however been lost.



The 1995 extension of Palmyra Square conservation area took in the remainder of Museum Street and Wilson Patten Street. A property in Museum Street had by then already been demolished. Demand for car parking in the area from business users was such that other buildings could be at risk, with adverse consequences for the townscape and the setting of the historic buildings in the area. It was recognised that the Victorian town houses possessed architectural character and interest which was worthy of protection.



4.5 Museum Street Character Area - Museum Street Frontages

The north side of Museum Street was occupied by ten late Victorian town houses comprising a row of 4, two detached and two semi-detached pairs. No 5 was demolished c 1960s to accommodate an extension to the Library; A modern apartment development has been built recently on the site of nos.15-17. Museum Street was laid out in the 1870s and 1880s. Its frontages are quite different in character from the earlier development of Palmyra Square, representing a change in architectural tastes from the mid to late C19th. The frontage is to a building line of about 3 metres, providing small garden areas. These are now mostly paved but some boundary walls remain. Because of their close spacing the street frontage appears as a continuous row when viewed along the street.

Nos. 7,9,11, Museum Street comprise a two storey block in 'Gothic revival' style with gabled attics and ground floor bay windows. Attic gables have deep projecting fascias. They feature areas of brick-on-edge detail, or cogging, in panels over first floor windows. No. 5 was demolished pre-WW2 to accommodate an extension of the Museum. No. 7 is occupied by the Museum Service.

No 13, now a dental surgery, is a detached villa of plainer style, central doorway flanked by paired sash windows; hipped roof with brick cogging to eaves.

For many years the site of demolished nos. 15/17 lay unused but in 2002 proposals for the development of apartments were approved.

The development can only be described as a successful interpretation of the form and detail of its Victorian neighbours, with its use of a gabled roof form, ground floor bay window and ornamental brick detailing. Its first floor windows are not as deep as those of its neighbours because of modern lower ceiling heights, but in overall height and massing and surface detail it is entirely in keeping with the street scene.

Nos. 19/21 are a semi-detached pair of two storeys with gabled attics. No 19 has a wide attic gable over an unusual first floor half timbered over-sailing bay window. A terracotta plaque contains a monogram 'JH'. Both re-windowed at ground floor.



No 21 has ground floor bay with triple pointed arched windows above and smaller attic gable. Both have pointed arched doorways with hood mouldings fanlights and terracotta 'barley- sugar' architraves, with 4 panelled raised and fielded doors. (See Page 60). It has an 1877 date plaque.

No 23 is a two storey detached house without bays or gables, with slightly projecting brick portico with elliptical arch and pediment.

The south side of Museum Street is plainer. With the notable exception of the School of Art, the frontages are ungabled and at back of footway. No 2 is red brick two storeys with hipped roof and stone strings linking ground and first floor sills. The tall windows are set within very deep reveals. A small detached coach house remains though part rebuilt. The Society for the Blind occupies no. 4 a detached former villa, tall in proportion with stone sills, lintels and some brick cogging detail. West of the School of Art, nos. 14-20, dated 1878, are a terrace of four with central arched yard entrance. Doorways are round arched with bullnose brick architraves. Doors are panelled, all windows replaced by top hung hardwood frames but retain their flat gauged brick arches, a reversion to an earlier style. A utilitarian roller shutter has been installed in the archway. No 22 is a detached villa dated 1882, slightly higher than nos. 14-20. Central entrance; elliptical brick arches to door and windows which are plastic. Nos 24-26 are a pair of houses of similar detail to nos. 14-20. 24 has received replacement windows. No. 26 is a post 1907 addition possibly built as offices; three ground and four upper sash windows.

The north and south frontages extend a similar distance westwards, beyond which residential frontages gave way, in the late C19th, to civic uses. The south side, formerly educational land once occupied by temporary buildings, is now a private car park. Beyond, are former gardens now converted to parking areas to serve the properties on Wilson Patten Street. On the north side the yard of the former Technical School extended up the Winmarleigh Street and is now also a car park.

The west end of Museum Street is dominated by vehicles and is one of its least satisfactory parts of the conservation area in terms of visual amenity, with few trees to soften the scene. However the boundary wall of the Technical School yard with its surviving cast iron railings is a valuable feature of the street scene and helps to screen the parking area.





The Register Office, formerly Board of Guardians offices, stands at the junction with Winmarleigh Street. The building a substantial two storey hipped roof pavilion is in a neo-Georgian style of symmetrical design. It is faced in hard red brick, in Flemish bond with finely gauged lintels. Windows are multi-paned sashes with some limited replacement in 'like for like' UPVC. Though of rather austere appearance, the building is of undoubted quality and is one of only two inter-war buildings within the conservation area. It also provides an important element of built form in an otherwise weak part of the conservation area.





4.6 Museum Street Character Area - Wilson Patten Street

The frontage consists of 28 town houses in 4 semi-detached pairs and 5 rows of 4. It is set to a building line 3-4 m from edge of footway enabling small front gardens and bay windows to be provided. Spacing of the blocks is in places minimal, restricting vehicular access to the rear. In a number of cases neighbouring owners appear to have agreed to share accesses as a means of opening up the generous rear gardens for parking. Nos. 31-37 and 39-45, have central personnel passages.



Several of the earlier houses were given names perhaps intending to appeal to aspiring middle class occupants who sought dwellings of individual character in contrast to the more restrained taste of the first half of the C19th- typified by the frontages to Palmyra Square. The end pair adjacent Bold Street, 'Arpley Villa' and 'Arpley House' were described under the 1985 extension, above.

Nos 3,5 'Halton View Villas' dated 1873 are three storeys. No. 3 has first floor projecting bay and triangular pediment above eaves. It has the superficial appearance of a single large villa in a form of transitional design between Georgian and Victorian Gothic styles. Regrettably no 5 has been rendered spoiling the unity of the original.

Nos 7,9 'Carlton Villas', 1872, are more of modest late Georgian style with hipped roof, ground floor bays and gauged brick arches to doors and windows and stone sill /string course. The central first floor window is evidently dummy. Now in use as Warrington's Centre for the Deaf the building has received a somewhat ungainly ramp, replacement bay window and various rear extensions.

Nos .11,13 'Springfield Villas' have ground floor bays, stone lintels and pointed arches to doors. Nos. 15-21 'Osborne Terrace' of 1873, represents a transition to groups of four, but in similar style to nos. 11,13. Ground floor splayed bays have slated roofs. The eaves line is continuous and the roof hipped.

Nos. 23-29 are of similar style but have gabled ends, paired round arched doorways and square stone lintels. The bay of no.23 has been rebuilt with loss of brick piers. 25 has sprouted a flat roofed attic dormer. 31-37 are similar but with terracotta band course. 31 has a gabled dormer; 35,37 have flat roofed versions. The two westernmost blocks of four are altogether grander in style with gabled attics, ground floor bays with parapets the whole enriched by raised brick and terracotta detailing. The curved drip mould arches over the paired first floor windows are a notable feature. They are similar in style to nos 7,9,11 Museum Street. The return frontage of No. 20 Winmarleigh Street fittingly ends the row with full width gable and two storey height bay.





Viewed obliquely the rhythm of bays and attic gables is especially pleasing, the closely spaced blocks along the entire Wilson Patten Street frontage appearing as a single architectural entity.



Only about four of the entire row remain in residential use, the very heavy road traffic being an obvious amenity issue. Some properties have received one or more replacement windows in UPVC or hardwood possibly as a noise reduction measure. Over half of the former garden walls have been removed and the small front gardens have been paved over to enable frontage parking. A notable exception is the recent conversion of nos.43-45 to apartments. The refurbishment of this building, with its tasteful new colonnaded porch, steps and reinstated wall and railings demonstrates how the presentation of these elegant town houses can be greatly improved. Undoubtedly Conservation Area status must have contributed to a revival of confidence in the street's future.





5. TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

'Townscape' is the term used to describe the relationship between buildings and the spaces between them and the detailed elements, such as materials and details which make up the street scene. Townscape may have negative aspects for example relating to loss, intrusion or damage. Various aspects of townscape have already been outlined in the preceding sections.

5.1 Spatial Aspects

The most significant feature of the area's visual appeal is undoubtedly the good sense of enclosure which is achieved within Queen's Gardens. This is achieved by buildings which vary considerably in height, bulk and massing. The two storey elements on the eastern and southern sides of the square balance each other, whilst the old Post Office and Knightsbridge Court are in balance with the group of bulkier public buildings which enclose the south western corner. The open space gives a degree of prominence to the surrounding elevations as they can be seen 'square-on' as opposed to the normal oblique views along streets.

The grid plan offers views to features beyond the conservation area. The view southwards from Bold Street is especially notable for its prospect towards the wooded ridge at Hill Cliffe. This view should be considered in the event of development proposals in the intervening area. A new entrance to the Golden Square shopping centre now closes the view northwards along Bold Street in place of the former inner circulatory road. However, the roof-top car park structure rather detracts from the scene. It illustrates the potential for adverse visual impacts that can be exerted upon conservation areas by developments at some distance.



Also visually very prominent are the views towards the massive industrial buildings at Bank Quay. Views north and south along Springfield Street are however terminated by attractive building facades. The potential for other landmarks or focal points in long vistas might also be considered where development opportunities arise.





Museum Street has a good sense of enclosure but as noted, this breaks down at its western end where the space opens out on both sides. The new apartment development on Winmarleigh Street has however provided some enclosure on the west side of this space. The telephone exchange though outside the Conservation Area makes its presence felt from various viewpoints within it. Its relationship with the listed Stanley Street group is particularly unfortunate. Various townscape features are indicated in Figure 13.

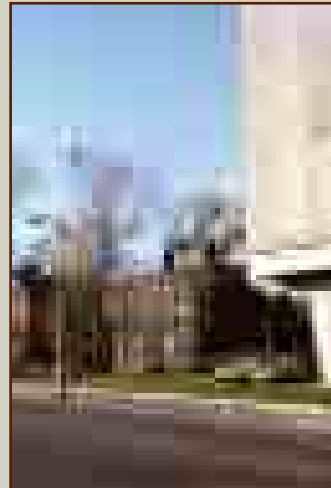
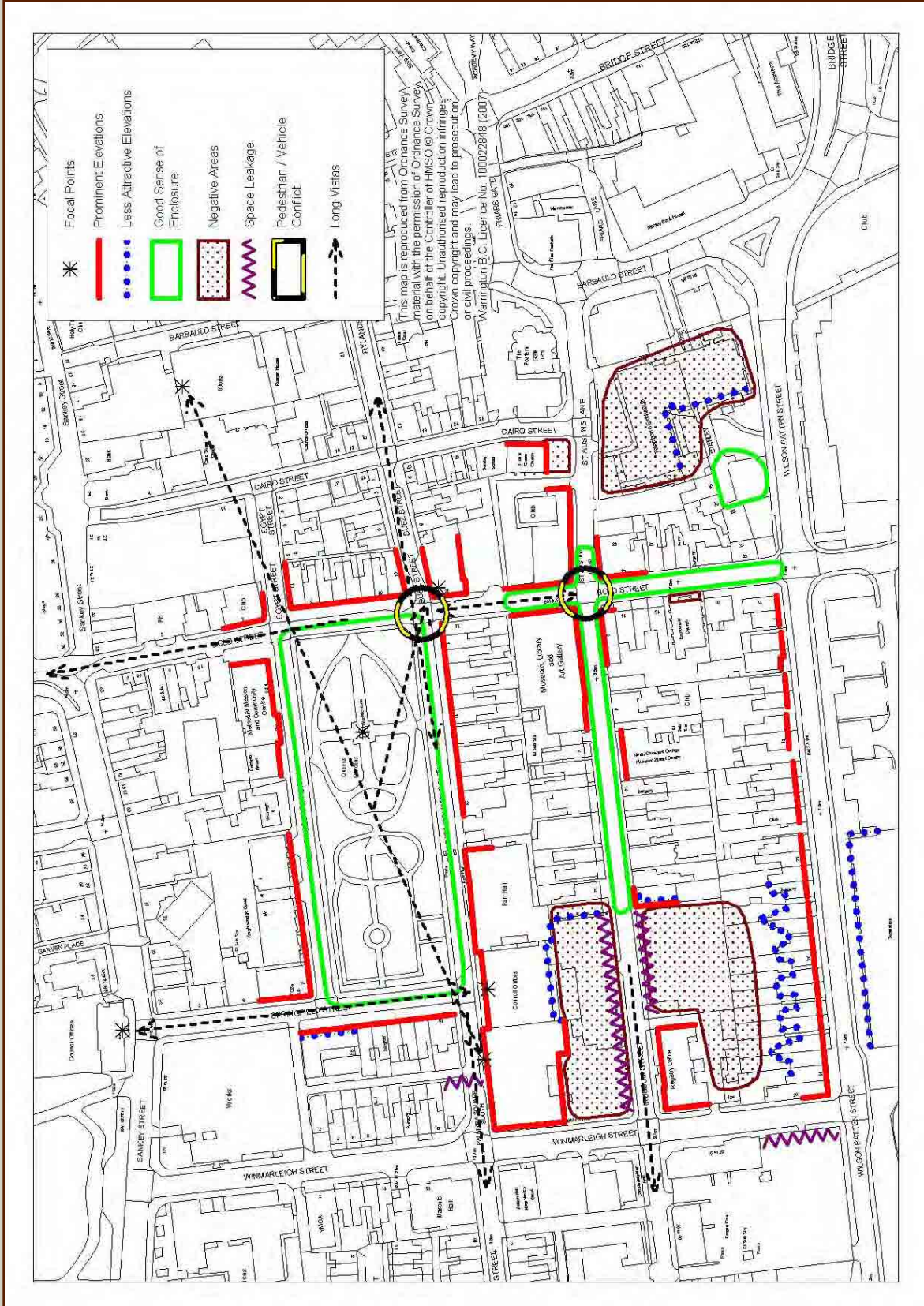




Figure 13: Townscape Analysis





5.2 The contribution of Landscape -Queens Gardens as remodelled

The present appearance of the gardens is in large measure due to the extensive remodelling carried out in 2004/5, with the financial assistance of the North West Development Agency. Continuity with the earlier phase of the gardens is maintained by retention of the pre-existing path layout of the eastern gardens with the Boer War memorial as its centrepiece. A new central longitudinal path has been formed, paved in yorkstone. Secondary paths have been resurfaced in resin bound gravel. The McFarlane fountain has been positioned along the main axis together with the large urn which has since been damaged. New seating and low level lighting has been installed together with an interpretation panel. New tree planting and shrubbery has been carried out to augment the several mature trees which remain. Regrettably some of the new lighting has suffered from vandal damage.

The major alteration is the creation opposite the Parr Hall of a semi-circular arena space with concentric rows of granite benching. An area of gravelled and granite slab paving extends the arena space across the former carriageway so that the space can be used in association with activities in the Parr Hall and the Pyramid Arts Centre.



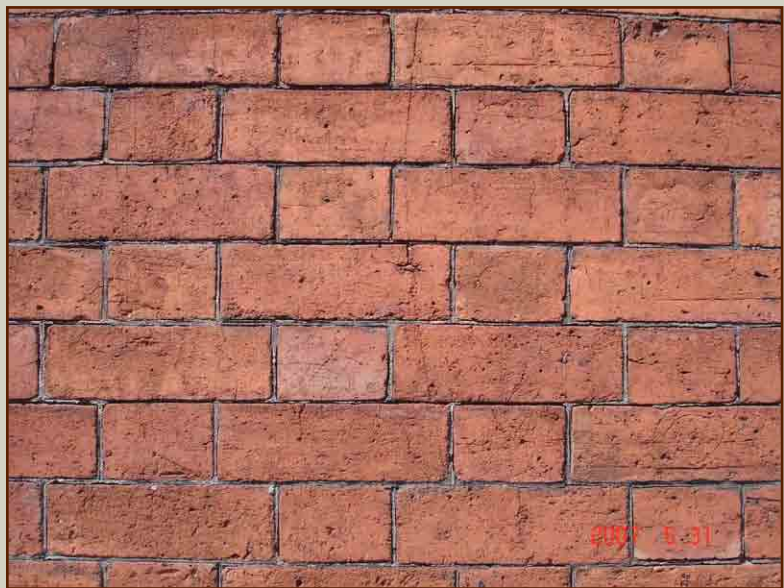
The remodelling scheme successfully unites for the first time the eastern and western parts of the gardens to provide a more open and cohesive amenity space. The use of unpretentious contemporary design elements with good quality materials ensures that the remodelled gardens blend equally well with the historic and modern elements of the surrounding built form. There have however been instances of vandalism especially damage to low level lighting which will require substitution by a more robust design.

There are no other areas of landscaping as such within Palmyra Square Conservation Area but the mature trees within the gardens and the single tree at no 21 Bold Street are very significant features of the townscape.



5.3 Materials and Details

The architectural cohesion of the whole conservation area is due not least to its restrained palette of materials, notably red brick, stone and terracotta. Brick is the predominant construction material but much use is made of stone for sills, lintels, string courses and other details. Some stonework is however painted over. More extensive use is made of stone for some of the public buildings, notably the Library/Museum, School of Art, Post Office and Technical School. The stone is mainly buff sandstone or grit-stone. The local pink sandstone appears only infrequently. Terracotta also appears, mainly for small scale decoration but in its faience form, (glazed terracotta), is a major feature of the former County Courts. The scientist name panels at the Technical School represent perhaps the most exuberant display of terracotta work within the conservation area.



The brickwork is mostly of an orange-red colour with some limited use of a darker toned red / brown. The brickwork of the town houses facing onto the square is of good quality, regular in size and consistent orangy red colour. It is almost certainly of local origin. Flemish bond is widely used (alternate headers and stretchers), with fine jointing. Later buildings display the very hard pinkish red Accrington or Ruabon type of brick which is more uniform in colour and smooth in texture. Unrelieved, it can appear bland but is effective when used in conjunction with stone or terracotta e.g. the Technical School.

St. Austin's Chambers is the sole example within the conservation area of polychromatic brick decoration.

Roofs are almost universally of Welsh slate in hipped and gabled forms. The earlier phases of development generally have flatter pitches with a plain eaves or a cornice. The late C19th town houses tend to have steeper pitches and eaves which are emphasised by corbelling or brick relief detailing.



A remarkable number of original panelled doors survive. These are an important part of the street scene, representing the craft traditions of the period and their retention should be encouraged. Those at Springfield Street are of especially good quality, featuring raised and fielded bevelled edge panels and stained glass top-lights. Doorways themselves can be the most significant part of a facade. The conservation area displays a range of doorways from the humble to the grandiose, the Technical School's grand entrance being the most flamboyant.





Other details such as date plaques and the few surviving examples of original railings and ironwork add to the general interest of the area. Fortunately, the Palmyra Square facades retain most of their original hornless multi paned sash windows though many have lost some glazing bars. In some cases this has been done to display signage. The later buildings tend to use horned sashes with single panes. The loss of original windows has been most acute in Wilson Patten Street where some 60% of properties have one or more replacement windows of non- authentic design. In Museum Street 50% of properties have received replacement windows.





5.4 Maintenance / Upkeep/ Vacancy

The external maintenance of buildings throughout the conservation area is generally of a good standard and there is evidence of refurbishment being carried out in a number of cases, for example Stanley Street and nos. 12 Bold Street and nos. 1,3,5 Palmyra Square South. There is some evidence on this row of water staining possibly from leaking parapet gutters. Properties on Wilson Patten Street generally appear to be well maintained despite the dust and fumes from heavy traffic.

Perhaps the main maintenance issues are the neglected condition of the front gardens of the Emmanuel Church and the Friars Green Chapel, probably both dependent upon voluntary efforts. Somewhat surprisingly, the Register Office window frames are overdue for a repaint!

At the time of survey in mid 2007, 11 estate agents boards were noted, representing about 10% of properties, though in some cases the boards relate to parts of premises. The most significant vacancy is of course the former Technical School. No.2 Museum Street, a large commercial property is presently unoccupied.

5.5 The Public Realm

Elements which make up the public realm are the road and footway surfaces, the incidental street furniture, open spaces, trees and greenery, boundary walls fences, railings.

Historic photographs show the original carriageway surfaces to be part sett paving and part evidently tarmacadam. The setts appeared to be used originally at junctions but a c.1900s photo shows most of Museum Street sett paved. Today's surfaces are universally bituminous macadam but old setted channels and gritstone or granite stone kerbs survive in Museum Street and elsewhere. It is important that these are retained where possible. Pictorial evidence suggests that footways were probably originally paved in large concrete slabs. Prior to conservation area designation, frontage parking on the narrow forecourts had become a problem resulting in damaged paving and spoiling the setting of the buildings. In the 1980s an improvement scheme was implemented, with the co-operation of property owners, involving the re-paving of forecourts around the square with concrete slabs and sett margins and installation of iron bollards to prevent parking. This greatly improved the appearance of the square.





In the late C20th the footways around the square were repaved in small concrete squares. This treatment was extended to Museum Street (north side) and Suez Street but elsewhere paving is bitmac or standard concrete flags. Bold Street is mainly bitmac with some sections in flags of variable condition. The south side of Museum Street is in a particularly poor state with cracked flags and bitmac patching. The carriage-way is also badly damaged by utility work. The footways of Palmyra Square North and Springfield Street are all bitmac. A small section of granite sett paving remains at Stanley Street but regrettably disfigured by yellow lines and bitmac footways. The general lack of consistency in footway paving throughout the conservation area is regrettable.



Photographs of the early 1900s reveal a street scene enriched by elegant gas lamps, and shrubby gardens bounded by low walls topped with iron railings. As noted most of the railings have gone and the former gardens areas are almost universally hard paved. Utilitarian metal columns have replaced the gas lamps but they are black painted and relatively unobtrusive. For the most part their height is not excessive in relation to the adjacent buildings, except in Wilson Patten Street where the status of the highway requires taller columns, though these are few in number.





The most intrusive elements of street furniture are inevitably the items associated with traffic management. Probably the worst locations for street furniture clutter are the cross roads of Bold Street / Palmyra Square North/ Egypt Street and Bold Street /Palmyra Square South/ Suez Street, the latter being light controlled. Double yellow lines are ubiquitous.



It is recognised that traffic furniture is a necessary and inevitable part of the modern street scene but as with the other conservation area reviews it is desirable to keep the provision and positioning of such items under review and to remove redundant items where appropriate. The juxtaposition of signage with important buildings should also be carefully considered and consideration given to rationalising the use of posts and to harmonising sign dimensions where multiple panels are required. Generally black painted posts are less intrusive than galvanised steel.

“Streets for All, North West” published in 2005 by English Heritage, is an excellent guide to good practice regarding the design and management of the public realm. It includes guidance on the selection, siting and rationalisation of street furniture and the design and improvement of streets and public spaces, with reference to examples of recent good practice in the North West of England. The guidance stresses the need for co-ordination between Local Authority Departments in matters involving the installation of signage, paving, lighting and other works which affect the appearance and quality of the public realm. It encourages the retention of surviving traditional elements which add to local distinctiveness. Local Authorities are urged to remove redundant signs and poles which unnecessarily clutter the street scene. English Heritage recommends where those are essential, the use of “consistent dark or receding colour” are recommended.

The principles set out in “Streets for All” should be adopted corporately as part of the Conservation Area Management Plan to provide a basis for the longer term improvement of the street scene within the conservation area.



5.6 Negative Factors / Loss / Intrusion / Damage

The foregoing descriptions of the buildings and townscape of the conservation area have referred to some negative aspects such as window alterations and losses of original features for example, Victorian street furniture, iron railings and the greenery once provided by the small domestic gardens. The intrusive effect of some modern street furniture has also been mentioned.

Other negative factors include:

* the visual impact of the open car parking around Museum Street and the lack of trees and greenery in this area.



* intrusive forecourt parking especially on Bold Street south of Museum Street and on some properties on Wilson Patten Street.

* some limited but intrusive signage;

* the poor outlook from the main entrance of the Pyramid and the painted fence opposite;

* pedestrian/vehicle conflict particularly at the 'Museum corner' of Bold Street and the bus turning movements at the Suez Street cross roads which almost overhang the footway.

* Lack of consistency in footway paving;

* Minor visual clutter such as alarm boxes and estate agents boards- these can be particularly intrusive where multiple boards appear on apartment developments and on terraced rows; some frontage waste bin storage;



* Lack of consistent frontage/boundary treatment in Museum Street and Wilson Patten Street.

* Lack of effective boundary treatment and generally shabby condition of grounds of Stanley Street group.

* The cleared site of the former tax office at the corner of Wilson Patten Street and Winmarleigh Street, though outside the conservation area, has the appearance of waste ground to the visual detriment of no.20 Winmarleigh Street.



5.7 Summary of Townscape Analysis

Despite the negative factors outlined above, the core of the conservation area around Queen's Gardens presents a favourable impression of a neat and well ordered private and public realm. The public realm works in the gardens and to the forecourts have greatly enhanced the overall appearance of the conservation area and undoubtedly encouraged stakeholder confidence in the future of the area as exemplified by the recent residential developments.

Conservation Area designation coupled with public and private investment has undoubtedly helped to arrest economic decline and protect an important enclave of the Victorian era of Warrington's development.

The most recent modern developments have been generally successful in maintaining the character and quality of the Victorian townscape. However the strength of the conservation area lies in the very cohesion of its Victorian townscape. The survival of so much of the good quality C19th building fabric restricts the opportunities for further infilling. Thus the conservation area has a limited capacity to absorb new development without diluting its historic integrity.





6 ISSUES FOR A CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

This appraisal should form a basis for a management plan which would aim to address the identified negative factors and balance future pressures for change and development with the conservation of the essential Victorian character of the conservation area as a whole.

6.1 Addressing the negative factors

As with other conservation area appraisals the identified problem areas may lend themselves to short, medium and longer term remedies. These would be matters for the management plan taking into account public and private sector resources and priorities.

6.2 Mainly Private Sector Issues

- * the proper maintenance and upkeep of buildings including painting and routine maintenance of rainwater systems;
- * Maintaining to a good standard the spaces around buildings;
- * Removing the remaining front area parking and reinstating a suitable form of boundary treatment perhaps to a Local Authority design guide;
- * Retaining wherever possible original doors, windows and other architectural details which contribute to the building's historic character;
- * Reinstating lost detail where feasible, for example the window openings of nos. 5,11 Palmyra Square South and lost glazing bars.
- * Where windows have been replaced with UPVC or hardwood frames of non-authentic design, it would be desirable in the long term to reinstate the original type of wooden frames and vertical sliding sashes. These would greatly improve the appearance of the building. Where UPVC remains the only option, the use of a good quality product which replicates as closely as possible the authentic sash design is to be encouraged. Non-authentic types should in no circumstances be used to replace windows on Listed Buildings.
- * Limiting estate agents boards to the statutory dimensions and numbers.

6.3 Mainly Public Sector Issues

Public realm improvement & management in accordance with English Heritage guidelines, including;

- * A phased footway paving scheme using consistent materials appropriate to the conservation area.
- * Review and rationalisation where possible of street furniture including removal of unnecessary signage.
- * A medium to longer term programme of street furniture replacement by more appropriate types with particular reference to street lighting. The potential for building mounted lighting should be considered as an alternative to columns.
- * Good standard of upkeep and maintenance of the public realm including Queen's Gardens.
- * Use of the LPA's enforcement powers where appropriate in regard to unauthorised signage, (though this is not a major issue in this conservation area).



6.4 Responding to Pressures for Development and Change

The development situation is subject to constant change. The main issues foreseen at the present time are:

* The use and development of the vacant Technical School - this presents an architectural challenge requiring imagination and sensitivity of the highest order. The future use or uses, must be reconcilable with the preservation of its important architectural features and with its context within the Cultural Quarter situated between the Parr Hall and the Pyramid, both places of assembly and entertainment. The opportunity should be taken to improve the presentation of the south side and the associated yard area.

* The impact of the Cultural Quarter concept upon the use and character of the former town houses. Clearly these listed properties have a limited capacity to absorb uses that require extensive alteration or the addition of signage, whilst the streets may not readily accommodate increased service traffic. For the time being, it is reasonable to assume that the area can retain a balance between professional office type uses side by side with 'cultural quarter' activities. Proposals for new uses must be assessed against the relevant UDP policies supplemented by the character analysis within this appraisal.

* A matter which may arise in this context is the provision of a link between the Museum/Library and Palmyra Square South via one of its frontage buildings, in order to strengthen the relationship of this important public building with the other key Cultural Quarter uses and to achieve a more direct link with the town centre via Queen's Gardens.

* In the longer term, an urban design strategy is desirable to address the poor quality environment of western Museum Street.

* The Holy Trinity Church Vicarage on Palmyra Square North is now sandwiched between buildings of substantially greater height and bulk. Its redevelopment in an attempt to release value may be sought, however the scope for further apartment developments may be curtailed by the housing policy limits. Moreover it would not be desirable to create an unbroken mass of built form along the entire north side of the square.

* Any proposals to develop this site in a more intensive form will require a building of good quality which retains a separation gap with its neighbours and articulates the relationship between the larger neighbours in an imaginative manner for example by imposing a different type of built form, perhaps with extensive glazing to reflect the park landscape.





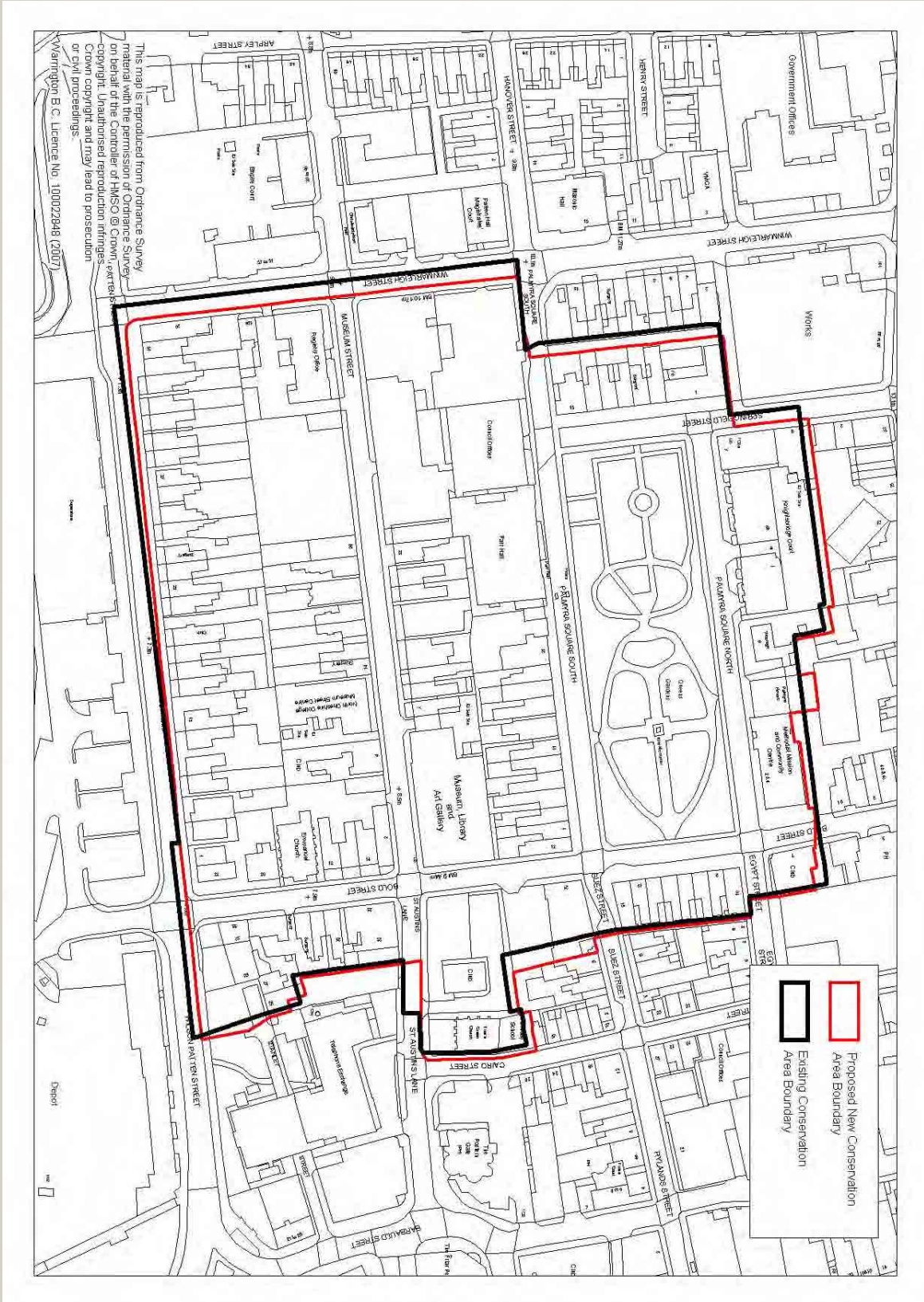
6.5 Boundaries

The Conservation Area with its various extensions now embraces the core of the town square around Queen's Gardens and its peripheral context. Areas to the north and east abut onto the Town Hall and Bridge Street conservation areas. To the west Winmarleigh Street marks the logical limit of the character of the town centre related to Palmyra Square so that there is no obvious reason to extend Palmyra Square CA further. However the translation of the present boundaries to computer map base has revealed a number of minor anomalies which need correction. The proposed adjusted boundaries are indicated in red on Figure 14.





Figure 14: Proposed Boundary Modifications



APPENDIX 1 : LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT FOR CONSERVATION AREAS

A1.1 Legal Background

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

Every local planning authority -

- (a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and
- (b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly.

It has been over twenty five years since the first conservation area was designated and now over 8000 exist. Over this time the approach to designation has changed greatly in parallel with the reassessment of the criteria for and expansion of the statutory listing of historic buildings. (paragraph 1.2 of English Heritage Publication Conservation Area Practice published October 1995).

English Heritage guidance is that the decision to designate a conservation area is comparable to a major land use policy decision. The view of English Heritage is that it is vital that only areas which are demonstrably of "special architectural or historic interest" in the local or regional context should be designated because of the responsibilities and obligations which designation confers. (paragraph 2.4 of English Heritage Publication Conservation Area Practice published October 1995. Conservation Area Consent is required from the local planning authority for the demolition of unlisted buildings within a conservation area. Planning Permission may also be required for development that may not be required outside a conservation area such as some additions and alterations to dwelling houses and buildings within the curtilage of dwelling houses i.e. garages and some sheds. The local planning authority must be given 6 weeks notice of intention to lop, top or fell any tree. Additional powers to control development within conservation areas may be sought by Local Planning Authorities by use of Article 4 directions.

The legislation relating to conservation areas can be complex, having been influenced by policy and caselaw. The advice of the Planning Authority should be sought by those seeking to carry out development or other works within a conservation area.

A1.2 National Policy framework

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) provides the national policy framework for Planning and the Historic Environment. The planning system is currently under reform, PPG's will be revised as Planning Policy Statement (PPS), although PPG15 is yet to be revised and therefore remains in situ. PPG15 provides the policy framework for developing policy at the regional and local level - both of which are discussed in more detail below. PPG15 prescribes that Conservation policy should address the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings.

LPAs have a duty under Section 69 to review Conservation Areas from time to time. Furthermore the designation of a Conservation Area gives the Local Planning Authority (LPA) the ability to control development within the Conservation Area and ensures the setting of the Conservation Area is not compromised to its detriment.

A1.3 Regional Policy

Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) became the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) under the new planning system. RPG13 is currently under review, however, the policies within RPG13 are still relevant, particularly; ER3 (Built Heritage) and ER4 (Contribution of Built Heritage to Regeneration) are relevant in formulating Local Policy.



A1.4 Local Policy

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006 is the adopted development plan for Warrington. However, under the new planning system this is now under review and will be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF).

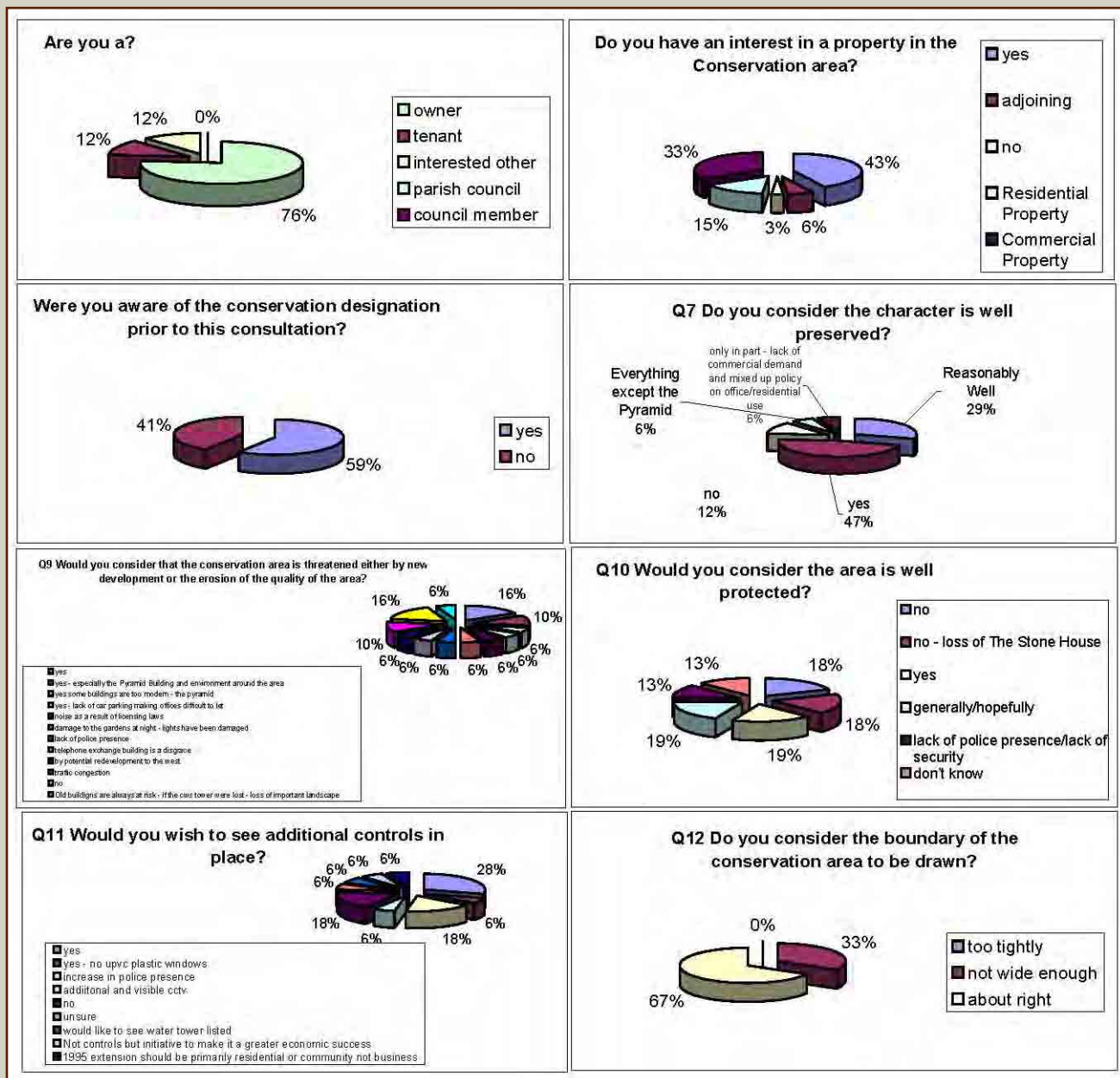
Relevant UDP policies include;

- BH6 - Designation and Review of Conservation Areas
- BH7/8 - Development in Conservation Areas.

A1.5 The Management Plan

The Management Plan will provide a strategy to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area and will pick up on the issues identified in the appraisal. It is intended that the Management Plan will be formulated as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) at a future date. The adoption of the Management Plan will itself be subject to further consultation.

APPENDIX 2 : Results of Preliminary Consultation





APPENDIX 3 Historical and other references.

Cheshire Historic Towns Survey 2003 -Cheshire County Council and English Heritage; this contains a comprehensive bibliography and is kindly acknowledged. Other references used in this appraisal include:

- * Beamont, W, 1872 History of Warrington Friary *
- * Beamont W, 1887 Walks About Warrington *
- * Carter, G A, 1971 Warrington and the Mid Mersey Valley.*
- * Carter, G A, Warrington Bridges 1285-1985; Warrington Museums and Cheshire Libraries
- * Crosby ,A, A History of Cheshire, Phillimore.*
- * CSMR County Sites and Monuments Record; Environmental Planning , Cheshire County Council.
- * Darling, J, 1989 Portrait of Warrington, Sigma Leisure.
- * Department of the Environment 1975 List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. (WBC).
- * Durrant, W 1951, History of Friar's Green Church; Guardian Press.*
- * English Heritage, 2005 - Conservation Area Appraisals, Guide to Good practice; Streets for All, North West.
- * Hayes, J, 1991 Changing Warrington, A Portrait of a Town from the 1770s to the 1990s.
- * Hayes, J, 1994 The old photographs series
- * Hayes, J and Crosby A, 2003 Warrington at Work , Warrington Borough Council, Breedon Books.
- * Heawood, R, 2001 Excavations at Warrington Friary*
- * Holt, G, Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain Vol. 10 North West England.
- * Pevsner,R,N, 1969 The Buildings of England, South Lancashire.*
- * Strickland,T, 1995 The Romans at Wilderspool*

* Documents available at the Warrington Reference Library Local History Section. The kind assistance of the staff of the Warrington Libraries and Museum Heritage Service is gratefully acknowledged, as is their permission to reproduce the various historical maps and illustrations used in this appraisal.

APPENDIX 4 HERITAGE AUDIT

4.1 ARCHAEOLOGY From Cheshire County Historic Environment Record

Ref. 438/20/0 Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and Sunday School, Bold Street; Chapel built in 1850 by James Simpson of Leeds to supersede Bank Street Chapel. Minister's houses added 1856; Sunday School and keeper's house 1884. (demolished .c 1975). Sub surface remains.

438/21/0 Friar's Green Methodist Chapel - First Chapel built 1802 for society of Independent Methodists formed of Quakers and Wesleyan seceders. Present Chapel on same site built 1859/60 but much altered. Whole structure strengthened 1938. Extant building.

438/22/0 Graveyards at Friar's Green Methodist Chapel. Two graveyards north and south of the Chapel shown on 1850 and 1890 town plans.

628 grounds of no.21 Bold Street - find spot Roman Pottery.

4.2 LISTED BUILDINGS

Department of the Environment 1975-List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic interest -- Borough of Warrington. (See text for general descriptions; all are Grade II unless otherwise stated).



Bold Street: nos 9-19 odd; no 21; No.12; Museum and Art Gallery;

Egypt Street: no.10 (corner of Bold Street).

Palmyra Square South: nos. 1-13 odd; nos. 13A-21 odd; Parr Hall and Cavaille Coll organ; County Court; Technical School;

Queen's Gardens: Memorial to South Lancashire Regiment; small fountain made of iron.

St.Austin's Lane: Stone House pre -1820 house of painted stone; former family home of Robert Pierpoint, Tory M. P. for Warrington (1892-1906) who later donated it to the British Legion. Demolished 2003 and site redeveloped.

Springfield Street: Nos. 3-13 odd; General Post Office.

Stanley Street: Nos. 25,27,29; former street now closed and made into a private cobbled yard for the former town houses.

Suez Street: Nos. 13 and 15.

Note: Nos. 13 and 15 form a group with 3-13 odd Springfield Street,12, 9-21odd, the Museum and Art Gallery, Bold Street, 10 Egypt Street and all the Listed Buildings in Palmyra Square.

LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

Bold Street: 7, 23, Emmanuel Church.

Cairo Street: Friar's Green Independent Methodist Church & Sunday School.

Museum Street: 7,9,11; 19,21; Former School of Art; Registry Office.

Winmarleigh Street: No. 20 (corner of Wilson Patten Street).

APPENDIX 5 Summary of Local Geology

The underlying geology of the town comprises Upper Mottled Sandstone. To the north of the Mersey, in the vicinity of the medieval town, the drift geology includes blown sand of the Shirdley Hill Sand Group. To the south, in the area of the Roman settlement at Wilderspool, the drift geology comprises fluvio-glacial sand and gravel, as does the area around St.Elphin's Church which is believed to be the original area of Saxon settlement on the north bank of the river. The conservation area overlaps both these ground conditions with the position of Museum Street forming the approximate dividing line. Generally, to the north of Museum Street is underlying blown sand - corresponding with the rising ground towards Sankey Street,- whilst south of Museum Street is a narrow band of sand and gravel bordering onto the zone of alluvial deposits within the course of the Mersey and its meanders.

(British Geological Survey 1977-8).

The soils of the surrounding area are principally sandy gley soils which are most suited to arable farming and are graded Classes 2-3.

(Furness 1978).

The above information is based upon information contained in the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey, (see Appendix 3).

