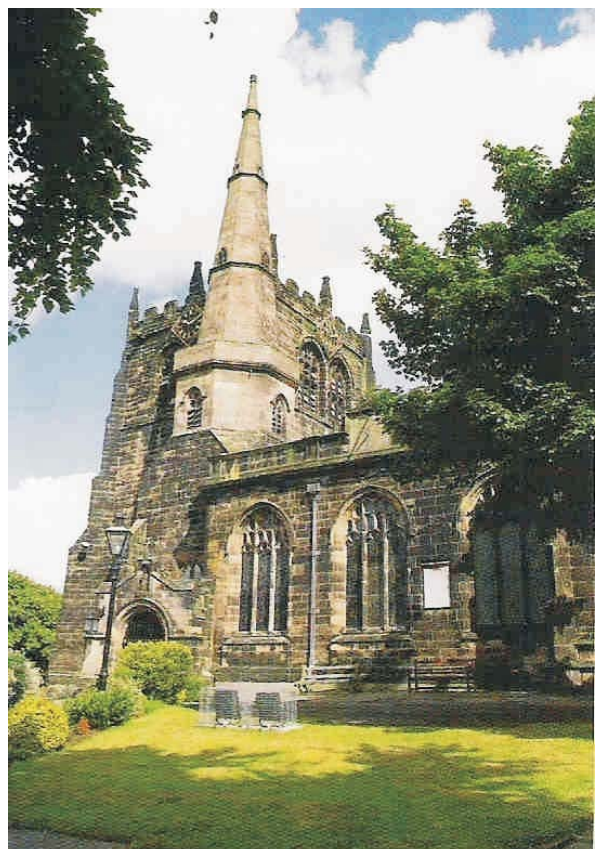


Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area

Re-appraisal 2008 / 2009



Addendum



West Lancashire District Council

1 ADDENDUM: ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA RE-APPRAISAL 2008 / 2009

1.1 Introduction

This appraisal is part of a rolling programme of appraisals of all the conservation areas in West Lancashire. The District Council has an obligation under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review, from time to time, its conservation area designations, and under Section 71 of this Act to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

Ormskirk Town Centre was last appraised in 1999/2000. Current guidance from English Heritage recommends that appraisals should be reviewed every five years. The guidance specifically says:

“The character and appearance of most conservation areas, the special interest that warrants designation, generally does not change rapidly. The outcome of the five-yearly review might therefore result in an addendum to the existing appraisal, recording what has changed, confirming (or redefining) the special interest that warrants designation, setting out any new recommendations and revising the management strategy.”¹

The existing appraisal can be considered to be sound and clearly defines the special interest of the conservation area at the time. As, perhaps, the conservation area in West Lancashire which has seen the most development, it was considered necessary to have a re-assessment of the built environment. The method and results are recorded below. In addition several possible boundary extensions were considered and an examination of several key issues undertaken.

The entire process has been subject to consultation with the local community and other interest groups. This draft will be consulted upon and any appropriate changes made prior to submission for its approval and adoption by the Council's Cabinet.

This draft addendum should be read as an addition to the 1999/2000 full appraisal document. There have been some changes to the conservation area in this time and this document aims to identify these and further highlight the special interest of the area. This document does not supersede the 2000 appraisal but rather adds another layer to understanding of the character of the Conservation Area. **The maps provided here relating to the building assessment and the important corner sites (Appendix C) supersede those originally included within the 2000 appraisal. The other maps are additional analysis.**

The addendum document was approved by the Council at its Cabinet meeting on the 24th March 2009.

1.2 History and Development

The history and development of Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation area was provided in the previous appraisal. This history has now been published in the

¹ English Heritage (2005) *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*

document: '*The Conservation Areas of West Lancashire: A Brief History*' available for free download from www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/heritage. Copes are also available as a reference resource in all libraries, and at Customer Service Points in Derby St, Ormskirk and The Concourse, Skelmersdale

1.3 Work Implemented From the 1999/2000 Appraisal

1.3.1 Introduction

In reviewing and appraising the Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area in 1999, three documents were produced:

- The Conservation Area Appraisal
- An Environmental Audit
- Conservation Area Proposals Document

The three documents underwent a public consultation exercise and were adopted by the Council on 6th January 2000. A number of proposals and action points set out in these documents have since been implemented representing total investment in Ormskirk Town Centre since 2000 of over £1 million. The following are some of the projects and schemes that have been completed.

1.3.2 Aughton Street

Aughton Street is one of the four main streets in the town centre and an essential part of the Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area. The environmental works to enhance the area involved re-surfacing the street with robust, natural stone and providing 8 new 'bespoke' planters, seating and lighting. The design took into account the need to accommodate the existing market. The majority of funds came from the Council's Capital programme.

1.3.3 Coronation Park

The Park provides an important setting to the Conservation Area, significant facilities for the public and is a valuable open space. New and improved features within the park include: new bandstand; improved path network; cycleway & lighting; children's play area; multi use games area and skate park; lake fountain & dipping platforms; wildflower area and new formal flower beds. Features which have been upgraded include: the lake edge; toddlers play area; woodland walk; landscaped areas; stream channel improvements and sluice gate; bowling green fencing and pavilion; replacement park furniture and litter bins.

1.3.4 Clock Tower

As part of the on-going programme of work to improve the appearance of the Town Centre it was identified that parts of the structure and particularly some high level masonry needed to be sensitively repaired. The restoration works were undertaken and completed, with funding from the Council's Capital programme, in 2007.

1.3.5 Alleyways

Resurfacing of alleyways to maintain and enhance access routes in the Town Centre Conservation Area.

1.3.6 Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) and Church Street

The Council entered into a three year partnership with English Heritage running a HERS scheme within Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area. Grants were awarded for structural repairs to allow upper floors to be brought back into use, reinstatement of missing architectural features including shop fronts and improvements of the public realm including Church Street and the alleyways.

1.3.7 Article 4(2) Direction

An Article 4(2) Direction was made following the 1999 appraisal and consultation with residents which removed some of the 'permitted development rights' from residential properties within the conservation area. The 'permitted development rights' affected include alterations to doors and windows fronting a highway, changes to roofs, construction of porches, alterations to walls and fences and the introduction of hard standing or satellite dishes, amongst others.

1.3.8 Railway Station

The Council has worked in partnership with Lancashire County Council, Network Rail, Railtrack and the Railway Heritage Trust to develop a scheme for the improvement of the existing station facilities. Listed Building Consent has been approved and work is planned to start early 2009.

1.3.9 Town Centre Car Parks

Car park improvements, including resurfacing, landscape work and tree planting have been carried out in Stiles and Wheatsheaf car parks. Security systems in all the Council run town centre car parks have been upgraded, including 24 hour CCTV and they have been awarded the Park Mark safety accreditation.

1.3.10 General Street Enhancements

Various schemes to replace and renew bollards, railings, trees, planters and other small schemes throughout the town centre. The repair and maintenance of existing structures e.g. the raised dais in Moor St. and the cleaning and repair of the Beaconsfield Monument. Cycle provision across Coronation Park and some cycle stands introduced in the Town Centre.

1.4 Consultation and Public Participation

The Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal process 2008/2009 has included a variety of ways of involving the public and other interested parties.

1.4.1 Stage 1: Council Partners Meeting

A meeting was held on the 18th February 2008 to which a representative was invited from all WLDC Departments and Sections that were deemed to have some interest in Ormskirk Town Centre. The Conservation Officer gave a presentation about Conservation Areas and the appraisal process and sought suggestions about how the process might be carried out to avoid 'over consultation' and clashes with other projects. The role of each Section was clarified and several additional external groups and contacts were suggested for consultation purposes.

1.4.2 Stage 2: Focus Group

Representatives of external organisations and groups with a potential interest in the Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area were invited to attend a Focus Group on the 17th March 2008. The Focus Group was well attended and its purpose was to decide the scope of the appraisal, how it should be undertaken and who should do it. A short presentation about Conservation Areas and the appraisal process was given by the Conservation Officer. Appropriate methods of future consultation and involvement were also agreed.

1.4.3 Stage 3: Building Assessment

As a result of the Focus Group's suggestions, volunteers were asked to re-assess the built environment of the Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area. The results of this exercise were reviewed by the Heritage & Environment Section and developed into a map which shows the contribution each built heritage element makes to the character of the Conservation Area. This map (see Appendix B) updates and supersedes that from the previous appraisal.

1.4.4 Stage 4: Issue Papers and Gallery Exhibition

Six key issues relating to the Conservation Area were identified for consideration in this appraisal:

- Alleyways
- Possible extensions to the Conservation Area boundary
- Gateways
- Townscape & Highway issues
- Important Corner Sites
- Possible enhancements to Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area

Following research and analysis by the Conservation Officer, 'issue papers' were drawn up for each subject. These papers formed the basis of an unmanned exhibition held within the Chapel Gallery, Ormskirk. The papers included comments boxes and consultation points. Copies of all issues papers were provided to the Ward Councillors and were also available on the Council's website. A press release advertised the exhibition and hard copies were sent out to anyone unable to attend.

The results received from this consultation have informed this draft addendum document and are explained in more detail below. Copies of the issues papers form Appendix C of this document.

1.4.5 Stage 5: Manned Exhibition

A full exhibition to supplement the issues papers was held in the Arts & Community Centre, Ormskirk on the 4th December 2008. The exhibition was manned by Council Officers to provide an opportunity for interested parties to talk to the officers involved and find out more about the project and the Conservation Area.

1.4.6 Stage 6: Draft Addendum

Following the closure of the consultation period on the 9th January 2009 and receipt of over 70 consultation comments, a draft addendum to the original appraisal was prepared. A copy of this document was sent to all parties involved in the previous consultation stages and was available on the Council's website, placed in local libraries and at the Customer Service Points in Ormskirk and Skelmersdale. Throughout the consultation process hard copies of the documents were made available on request.

The closing date for the consultation on the draft addendum was the 20th February 2009. The *Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal Addendum* was reported to and approved by the Council on the 24th March 2009.

1.5 Built Environment Assessment

Volunteers were asked to assess the contribution of the built heritage to the character of the existing Conservation Area.

Continuity of the results was ensured by the use of pre-printed recording sheets, a set of criteria and brief training. This allowed all buildings to be given a 'score' to assess their contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was divided into sections and each assessor took a different area. The results of this exercise were reviewed by the Heritage & Environment Section to ensure accuracy and are shown on the map included in this document. This map updates and supersedes that from the previous appraisal.

Green buildings are identified as having a positive contribution. Yellow buildings have a neutral role and red buildings have a negative effect on the character of the Conservation Area.

The map showing the results of the assessment is included in Appendix B.

1.6 Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary

Guidance from English Heritage says that an important part of the appraisal process will be considering where the boundary of the conservation area should be drawn, the wider setting being taken into consideration. English Heritage also reminds us that it is important that rational and consistent judgements are made in determining the special qualities and local distinctiveness of an area.²

² English Heritage. 2006. *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*

'The principle concern of a local planning authority in considering the designation of a conservation area should be to form a judgement on whether the area is of special architectural or historic interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.³

In the 1999 / 2000 appraisal several areas were added to the Conservation Area:

- 42-50 (even) Derby Street
- Station Approach and Railway Approach
- Nos. 8 - 14 (even) and 3 - 9 (odd) Moorgate and the Railway Cutting south of Moor Street Bridge
- Rear of 35 Church Street and side of Church House
- 1 - 43 (odd) Stanley Street

During the 2008 appraisal process four additional areas were considered for inclusion within the Conservation Area boundary. Each area was assessed individually and a summary of the results is shown below. The detailed assessment for each area is available on request. A map showing the where the areas are located is shown in Appendix A.

Whilst some consultees clearly felt strongly that the boundary should be extended to include certain areas, the overwhelming majority considered that the proposed areas were not of the required 'special architectural or historic interest' to merit designation. This is also supported by the responses to the paper 'Possible Enhancements' where the option to extend the boundary was considered against 11 other possible enhancement projects. The option to consider an extension to the conservation area boundary failed to gain any votes and so is clearly not considered to be an important part of this review. It can therefore be assumed that the majority opinion is that the current Conservation Area Boundary is correctly defined.

1.6.1 Upper Burscough Street

From Hants Lane and the rear of the police station northwards along Burscough St to Scarisbrick St and the former garage opposite. (Green area on map)

- Primarily suburban residential character
- Open spaces are used for car parking and are generally poorly surfaced
- Corner behind Police station is an attractive 'green' point
- Buildings are a mixture of architectural periods and of varied quality
- Not of a homogenous character
- Tarmac and concrete used for highway/footpath surfacings
- Only two buildings assessed under the review positively contribute to the character of the area
- Not considered to be a continuation of the character of the town centre area – dilute mixture of services, residential and commercial

Consultation results:

Extend boundary to include Upper Burscough Street: 2

Do not extend boundary to include Upper Burscough Street: 13

³ D.O.E. 1994. *PPPG15: Planning and The Historic Environment*. Paragraph 4.5.

Recommendation: **Not** to extend the Conservation Area boundary to include this area.

1.6.2 Lower Aughton Street

Frontage developments on both sides of the southern part of Aughton St from Park Rd to Town End House at the junction of Prescott Rd and Aughton St. (Yellow area on map)

- Original medieval town extended into part of this area
- LCAS has responsibility for assessing archaeological implications of development proposals in this area
- Mixture of existing building types with no consistent or predominant character
- Physically detached from main town centre area by ring road (Park Rd)
- No clearly defined place to draw the boundary
- The quality, style and age of architecture is highly variable
- 'Gateway' to town centre
- Tarmac and concrete used for highway/footpath surfacings
- Open spaces private / poor quality
- Over three quarters of the buildings assessed are considered to have a neutral impact, make no contribution or make a negative impact on the streetscene and character and appearance of the streetscene

Consultation results:

Extend boundary to include Lower Aughton Street: 2

Do not extend boundary to include Lower Aughton Street: 12

Recommendation: **Not** to extend the Conservation Area boundary to include this area

1.6.3 Coronation Park

(Blue area on map)

- Owned and managed by the District Council
- Physically detached from main town centre area
- Provides a 'green' setting to the parish church and western edge of the town centre
- Views out from existing conservation area over park and vice versa
- Formal public park / urban park character
- Attractive well used recreational space – important open space to the town
- Visual character of park does not link well with historic market town character
- Possible 'gateway' to the town centre
- Important views protected through existing situation
- More a 'buffer zone' rather than extension of the historic core

Consultation results:

Extend boundary to include Coronation Park: 2

Do not extend boundary to include Coronation Park: 12

Recommendation: **Not** to extend the Conservation Area boundary to include this area

1.6.4 Southport Road

Frontage development from the Civic Hall and the car park in front of it towards Fiveways junction, along both sides of the road and including the Malthouse Business Centre. (Red area on map)

- Victorian / early 20th century style architecture contributes to character of the area
- Good group value
- Historic route into town centre
- Two poor open spaces and one which positively contributes to areas character
- One building off main road to be recommended for inclusion on the list of buildings of local architectural or historic value
- No clear end to this period of development in this area – continues northward on the other side of the junction
- Other areas demonstrate the late Victorian / early 20th century of development in Ormskirk better and are already designated as Conservation Area
- Less than a quarter of buildings assessed make a positive contribution to the character of the area
- The large number of negative or neutral buildings would potentially dilute the strong character of the existing conservation area

It appears that the incremental damage done through small alterations and permitted development rights have significantly altered the character of this area. It still remains a nice group of Victorian and early twentieth century properties and the old brewery building at the rear has been assessed as being worthy of inclusion on the List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest, which are given some protection through Policy EN5 in the Replacement Local Plan.

While there is some historical value to this area (its layout and road system probably date from an early period) I do not consider that the current urban environment meets the 'special interest' required for designated conservation area status. It is, however, perhaps the best example of all the possible extensions, which were assessed.

Consultation results:

Extend boundary to include Southport Road: 2

Do not extend boundary to include Southport Road: 12

Recommendation: **Not** to extend the Conservation Area boundary to include this area

1.7 Management Proposals

Key Issues

- Alleyways
- Gateways
- Townscape & Highway issues
- Important Corner Sites
- Possible enhancements to Ormskirk Town Centre Conservation Area

As a result of work done for this appraisal and the results of public consultation; the following priorities have been identified for the key issues above. The full consultation text can be found on the issues papers in Appendix C. All works under the control of the Heritage & Environment Section are subject to funds becoming available. For works outside their control the Heritage & Environment Section will continue to work with the relevant partners and agencies as necessary to try to improve the Conservation Area.

Alleyways		
High priority	Medium Priority	Low priority
A1.1 Encourage re-opening blocked alleyways and providing new pedestrian routes	A2.1 Surface improvements where it is necessary	A3.1 The use of appropriate signage and interpretive information
A1.2 Lighting to be improved where appropriate		A3.2 The production of an information leaflet and historic trail
		A3.3 Use of the alleyways to incorporate interpretative art works

Gateways		
High priority	Medium Priority	Low priority
G1.1 Focus efforts on regenerating key buildings at 'gateway' sites	G2.1 Customised street furniture such as planter, seating, railings, bollards, litter bins etc	G3.1 Hard copy information in libraries, information points, on website etc: maps, leaflets, trails and other information
G1.2 Public artwork including plaques, signage, town trail maps or information boards	G2.2 A contrasting road surface and / or pavement treatment	G3.2 Electronic tourist information points
	G2.3 Customised lighting	G3.3 Planting at gateway points

Townscape & Highway Issues		
High priority	Medium Priority	Low priority
T1.1 Maintain historic street furniture and artefacts where possible and incorporate into	T2.1 Supply necessary signage and safety measures in innovative ways within the	T3.1 Reduce width and intensity of colour of yellow lines

modern streetscape (e.g. clock tower)	streetscape and use designs that relate to the townscape character	
T1.2 Street trading: encourage street cafes and improve appearance of market stalls	T2.2 Encourage the use of more appropriate road surfacing at key points to define gateways, boundaries or other key features	T3.2 Incorporate necessary services within design of streetscape, e.g. drains, service covers, crossings, cycleways, seating, bollards, guardrails etc
T1.3 Encourage the use of high quality, bespoke designed street furniture that reflects and enhances its context	T2.3 Look to reduce amounts of street advertising and A-frames and improve the design of shop signage	T3.3 Reduce number of unnecessary highway signs
T1.4 Seek to improve the standard of highway repairs within the Town Centre Conservation Area	T2.4 Improve street lighting provision including considering imaginative schemes and avoiding unnecessary light pollution	T3.4 Look to combine highway signage with street furniture or lighting columns
	T2.5 Reduce clutter and signage repetition. Seek to reduce road signage to essential signs only and avoid unnecessary backgrounds and colours	T3.5 Encourage the use of local materials especially for surfacing, kerbs and barriers

Important Corner Sites Design Principles		
More agreed with	Some agreed with	Fewer agreed with
C1.1 It is important to retain historic buildings or features on corners sites where these contribute positively to the character or appearance of the streetscene – can provide a key focal point for development.	C2.1 Consider maintaining the existing architectural style and form of buildings and avoid forcing changes in scale or design, which produce overly prominent buildings.	C3.1 Corner sites should acknowledge, maintain and where possible enhance existing historic street patterns.
C1.2 Buildings should be of an appropriate scale for their setting.	C2.2 Features could be introduced to improve street frontage (enclosure or definition of views) and to create a sense of place.	C3.2 Highway works on corner sites should look to reduce street signage and clutter, incorporate suitable sight lines and deal with the safety of users in an appropriate manner.
C1.3 Make a point of retaining and enhancing important 'open' sites and not just developing them.	C2.3 Provide good and safe pedestrian environments.	C3.3 Designs need to consider ways of providing visual interest on all frontages (dual frontage)
C1.4 Using high quality materials, which are		C3.4 Consider and respect existing building lines.

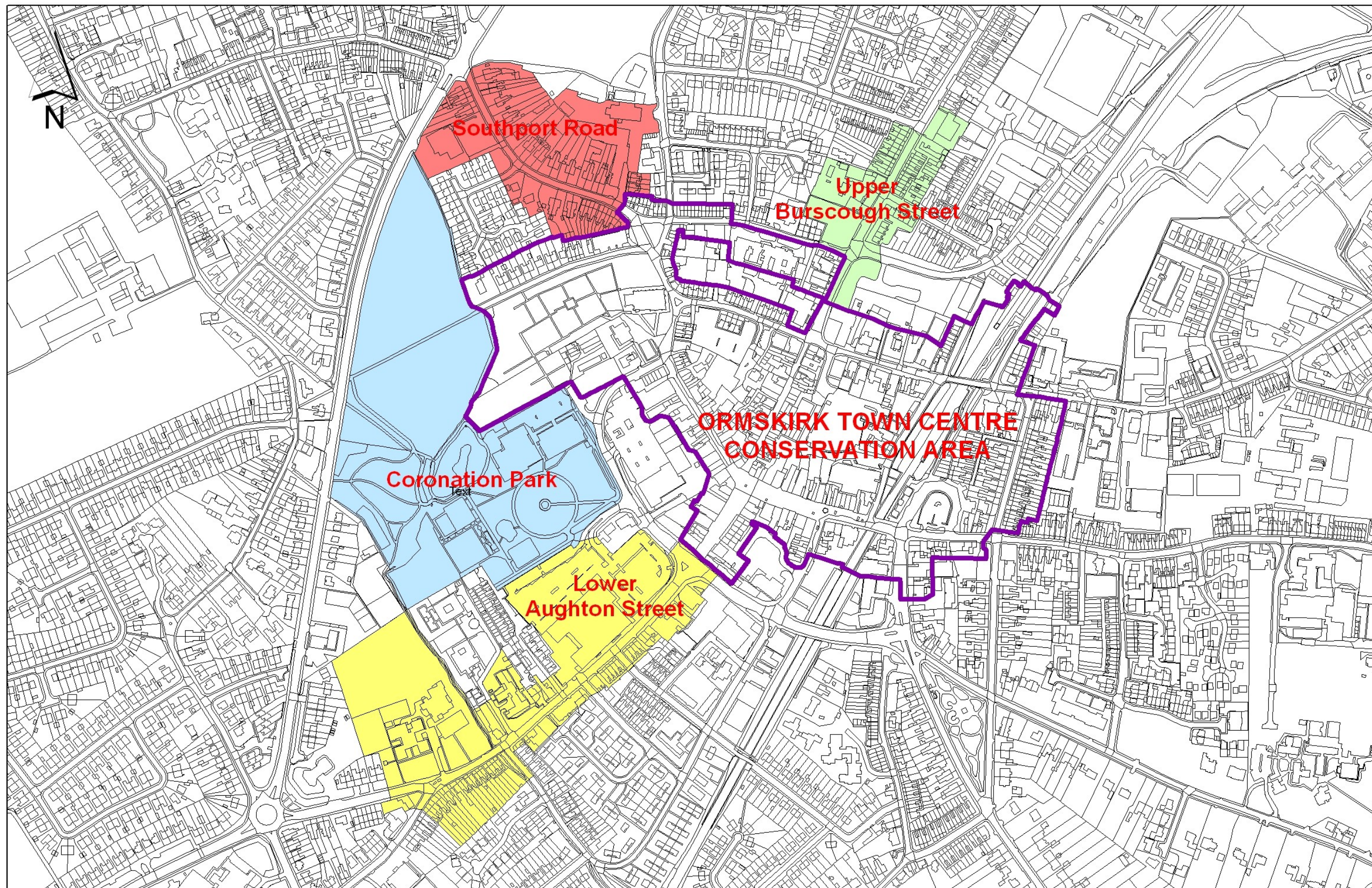
appropriate to their context.		
		C3.5 Careful definition of corner sites through incorporating appropriate design features i.e. the position of entrances/doorways and lighting.

The following table prioritises the above schemes. The table clearly shows that the public consultation considered the most important elements to be: **Alleyway improvements, Grant Scheme, Re-surfacing pedestrian areas** and **Townscape improvements** as shown above. The option to consider extending the Conservation Area Boundary was also included but received no votes and so is clearly not considered to be an important part of this review and is not included in this table.

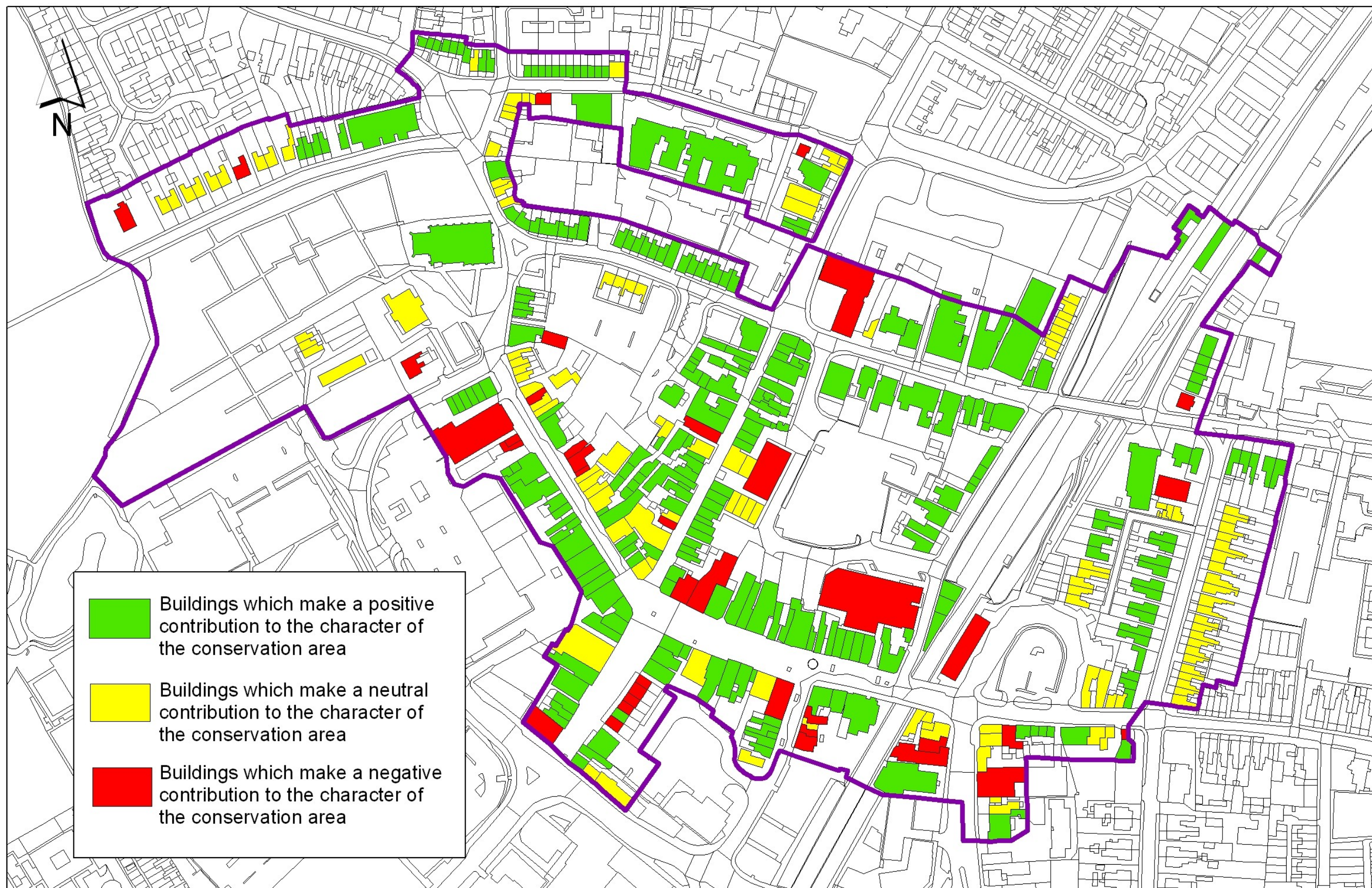
Possible Enhancements		
High priority	Medium Priority	Low priority
E1.1 Alleyway improvements (see above)	E2.1 Definition of gateways (see above)	E3.1 Improvement of important corner sites (see above)
E1.2 Traditional feature 'repair or replacement' grant scheme	E2.2 New customised street furniture incorporating interpretive material	E3.2 Signage scheme (see above)
E1.3 Re-surfacing pedestrian areas where not already implemented	E2.3 New street lighting	E3.3 New integrated interpretation (e.g. leaflets, information on website, interpretation panels etc)
E1.4 Townscape improvements (see above)		E3.4 Public art

How works are financed largely depends on the ownership situation and on the availability of public sector finance to support those works that are not viable for the landowners. The list above should be used as a starting point for determining the areas for priority action and for where funds and resources should be targeted in the future should they become available.

2 APPENDIX A: MAP OF AREAS ASSESSED AS POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



3 APPENDIX B: BUILT HERITAGE ASSESSMENT



4 APPENDIX C: ISSUES PAPERS