



Wigan 
Council



Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

January 2022

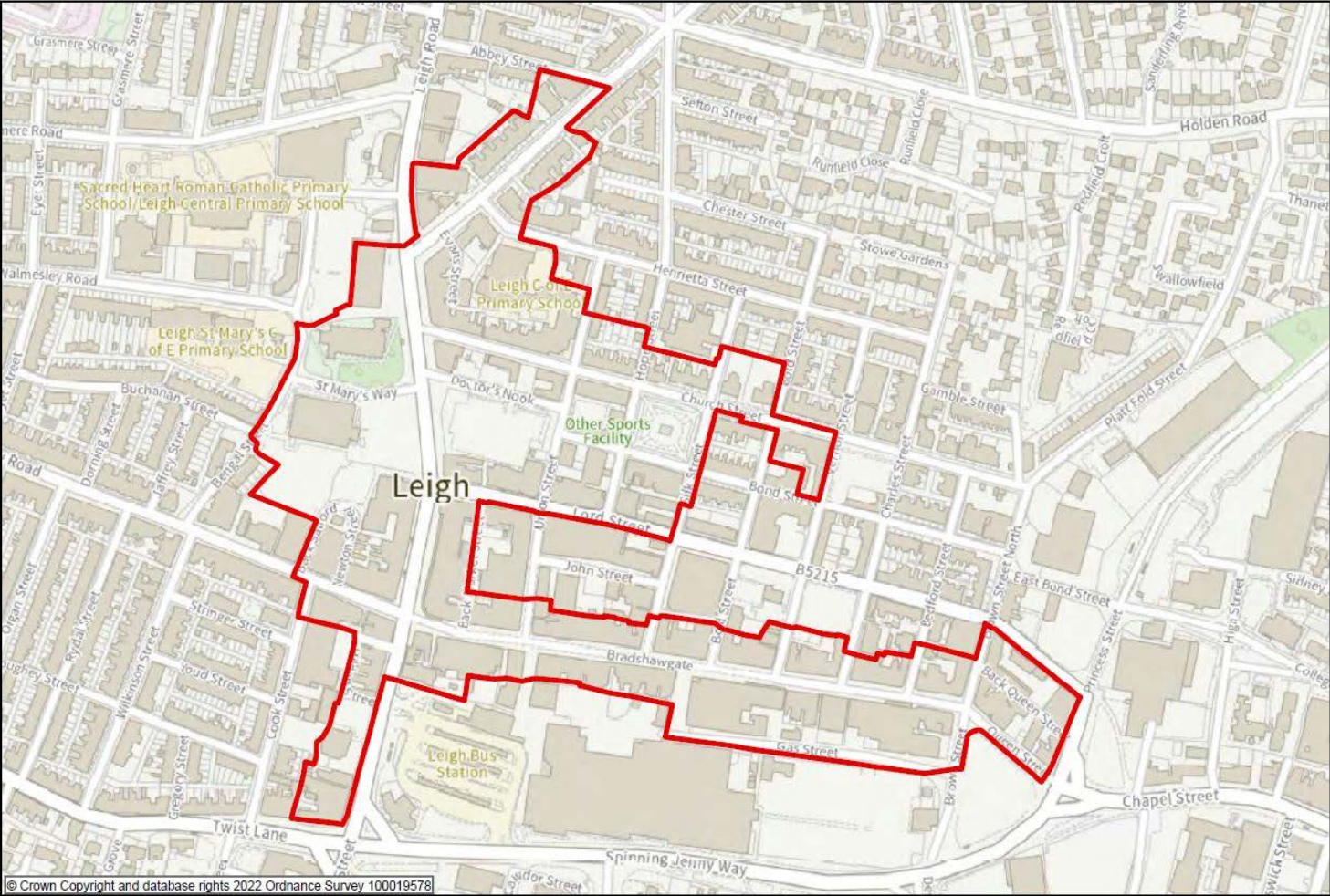


1 Location and Setting of Leigh Town Centre

- 1.1** The Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area is located in the commercial heart of Leigh and was originally known as Market Street Conservation Area. It was designated on 24 June 1981. The conservation area was extended and re-named as Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area on the 24 January 1990. The boundary covers an area of 10.36 hectares and is characterised as a historic town centre.
- 1.2** There are 10 listed buildings – all Grade II – within the boundary: Leigh Town Hall, the Obelisk, the George and Dragon public house, the former National Westminster Bank, the War Memorial, the Boars Head public house, the former stables to the Boars Head, St Mary the Virgin Leigh Parish Church (hereon referred to as St Mary’s Church), St Mary’s Church boundary wall and the Yorkshire Bank.
- 1.3** The conservation area includes the traditional marketplace, now known as Civic Square and St Mary’s Church, which are known to have existed in some form since the 12th century. The historic routes running north-south and east-west form the framework of the conservation area.
- 1.4** The character of Leigh town centre has been influenced by many different factors, from its agricultural beginnings, through industrialisation and the subsequent decline of heavy industry in the town. However, despite the historic nature of the settlement, its historic character derives chiefly from changes and developments that took place towards the end of the 19th and early 20th century.

Map 1: Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area Boundary

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- 1.5** The modern town of Leigh originated as three separate townships; Pennington, Westleigh and Bedford. These townships expanded and combined sometime in the late 18th or early 19th century with the urban areas becoming contiguous around 1850 and legally unified in 1875 (see Appendix 1 for historic maps). The modern Leigh Town Centre is roughly the location of the village of Leigh which straddled the Pennington and Westleigh townships. The name is believed to be Anglo-Saxon in origin – “*Leah*” - denoting a rich pasture or meadow.
- 1.6** Until the 19th century the area was prominent for its farmland, especially its dairy farming which led to it becoming well known for cheese production. The earliest industrialisation can be traced back to the cottage industries of muslin, fustian and linen production.
- 1.7** In the 17th and 18th century silk weaving became a particular speciality of the town and this necessitated specialised silk-weavers houses, several which survive today. Further industrialisation was stimulated by the arrival of the Bridgewater Canal in 1799, the Leeds-Liverpool Canal in 1820 and the Bolton and Leigh railway in 1828.
- 1.8** In 1841 the population was 11,000 - but it had grown to around 50,000 by the end of the century. This reflected the growth of the mills in the town, at this time predominantly producing cotton, and the exploitation of nearby coal-seams. The increasing number of labourers saw a large expansion of terraced housing around the town centre as well as the facilities (shops, theatres, clubs and pubs) to support that population. The early 20th century saw Leigh at its zenith with ambitious public buildings being constructed, including the Town Hall (1907) and Leigh Spinners mill (1913).
- 1.9** By the late 20th century most of the mills were suffering the effects of post-industrialisation decline and by the early 21st century many had been demolished. Leigh town centre now has a largely service based economy with many people commuting to work outside the town. Leigh is well located to take advantage of the short commuting distance to Manchester. The town also benefits from the attractive green space close by - with Pennington Flash Country Park and Lilford Park both within twenty minutes' walk of the centre.
- 1.10 Form and Character**
- 1.11** Leigh town centre sits on a low plateau and is relatively flat with the land rising to the north and west and falling away to the south and east towards Astley, Bedford and Chat Mosses. This topography affords considerable views out of the conservation area, especially to the north where Winter Hill dominates the vista.
- 1.12** As the town grew from a collection of smaller settlements on this plateau, it has numerous focal points. The most significant nucleus at Market Street/Bradshawgate Junction is slightly off-centre and follows the north-south and east-west roads that linked the original villages.
- 1.13** The conservation area is urban in character, with the majority of street frontages comprising terraces or rows of individual buildings. The variation in building forms and architectural treatments has come about through the development and redevelopment of individual plots over the years, creating a high degree of visual interest.



Picture 1.1 Leigh sits on a plateau with views towards Winter Hill in the distance



Picture 1.2 The junction of Bradshawgate, King Street, Market Street and Railway Road is a key node in the area framed by tall, impressive buildings.

- 1.14** There are several prominent junctions in the conservation area which are traditionally framed by public houses or bank buildings on high profile corner plots.



Picture 1.3 Leigh has a varied townscape of small narrow plots with varied building heights



Picture 1.4 Bradshawgate is the main shopping street, typified by 3 and 4 storey buildings on narrow plots

- 1.15** The distinctive gridiron pattern of straight street lines and strict geometric blocks of development is particularly evident on Church Street and Silk Street. Later 19th century properties, located around the War Memorial to the north of the town centre, are also based around a similar pattern.
- 1.16** As would be expected in a town centre, the core is predominantly commercial, however there are substantial residential elements on the immediate periphery and to the north-east in particular. Bradshawgate - the main shopping street - was partially pedestrianised in 1997. The Spinning Gate Shopping Centre was constructed in the early 1990s with its main entrance on Ellesmere Street.

There are a range of public buildings, typical of a market town, these include the town hall, library, places of worship and leisure/entertainment buildings. The level of footfall and activity reduces towards the edges of the conservation area, away from the core commercial area.



Picture 1.5 Short terraces of common brick walls and slate roofs and a grid-iron pattern

2 Key characteristics

- 2.1** The conservation area is characterised predominantly by Victorian properties dating from 1850 - 1900. Many forms of Victorian architecture are represented, providing a rich and eclectic mix of architectural styles and detailing throughout the town centre, but in particular along Market Street.



Picture 2.1 Looking along Railway Road and Market Street there are eclectic styles of grand Victorian architecture.

- 2.2** Early 19th century buildings within the conservation area tend to be smaller, more domestic in scale, and less decorative. Many exhibit Georgian elements in their design, such as stone quoins, hipped roofs and classical features, including pedimented entrances and pilasters. Although the Georgian period ended around 1840, the architectural style persisted well into the Victorian era.



Picture 2.2 On Bradshawgate simpler 19th century properties contrast with more ornate later ones.

- 2.3** On the main thoroughfares the buildings are of a grand commercial scale. These include the Town Hall, the Boars Head Public House, the National Westminster Bank and The Eagle and Child Public House. Many of these have three storeys and an attic and are further heightened by architectural features such as chimneys and gables, which are a characteristic of later Victorian buildings, substantially increasing their overall scale.



Picture 2.3 Chimneys and gables on three storey buildings typify the commercial heart of Leigh

- 2.4** The presence of a number of buildings by the local architectural practice of Joseph Caldwell Prestwich and Sons is a significant feature of the conservation area. JC Prestwich was born in Atherton and as Pevsner explains: “it is recognised that any building of merit in Leigh that was not a church or mill was almost certainly by him” and he was “capable – sometimes very capable, in a number of styles”¹. Prestwich designed buildings are of special local importance.
- 2.5** There are some examples of high quality buildings from the 20th century providing a contrast to the earlier architectural styles. Unfortunately, there are also examples of later 20th century buildings which do not make a positive contribution to the townscape.
- 2.6** The key characteristics of the conservation area that contribute towards it being an area of special architectural and historic importance, include:
- Domestic terraced buildings
 - Slate roofing materials
 - Dominance of red/brown common brick building material
 - Grand 3 storey commercial corner buildings
 - Intricate rooflines
 - The use of terracotta ornamentation and detailing on prominent buildings
 - Gridiron street patterns
 - Notable buildings by local architect JC Prestwich and Sons



Picture 2.4 High quality decorative terracotta and carved stone details are a defining feature of Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area

¹ Pevsner, N & Pollard, R (2006): Buildings of England: Lancashire, Liverpool & the South West

3 Character Areas

3.1 For the purposes of the appraisal the conservation area is divided into three character areas. These character areas have some differences with regard to predominant use, scale and character, but they are not mutually exclusive - they share some common qualities and features. Each character area is appraised

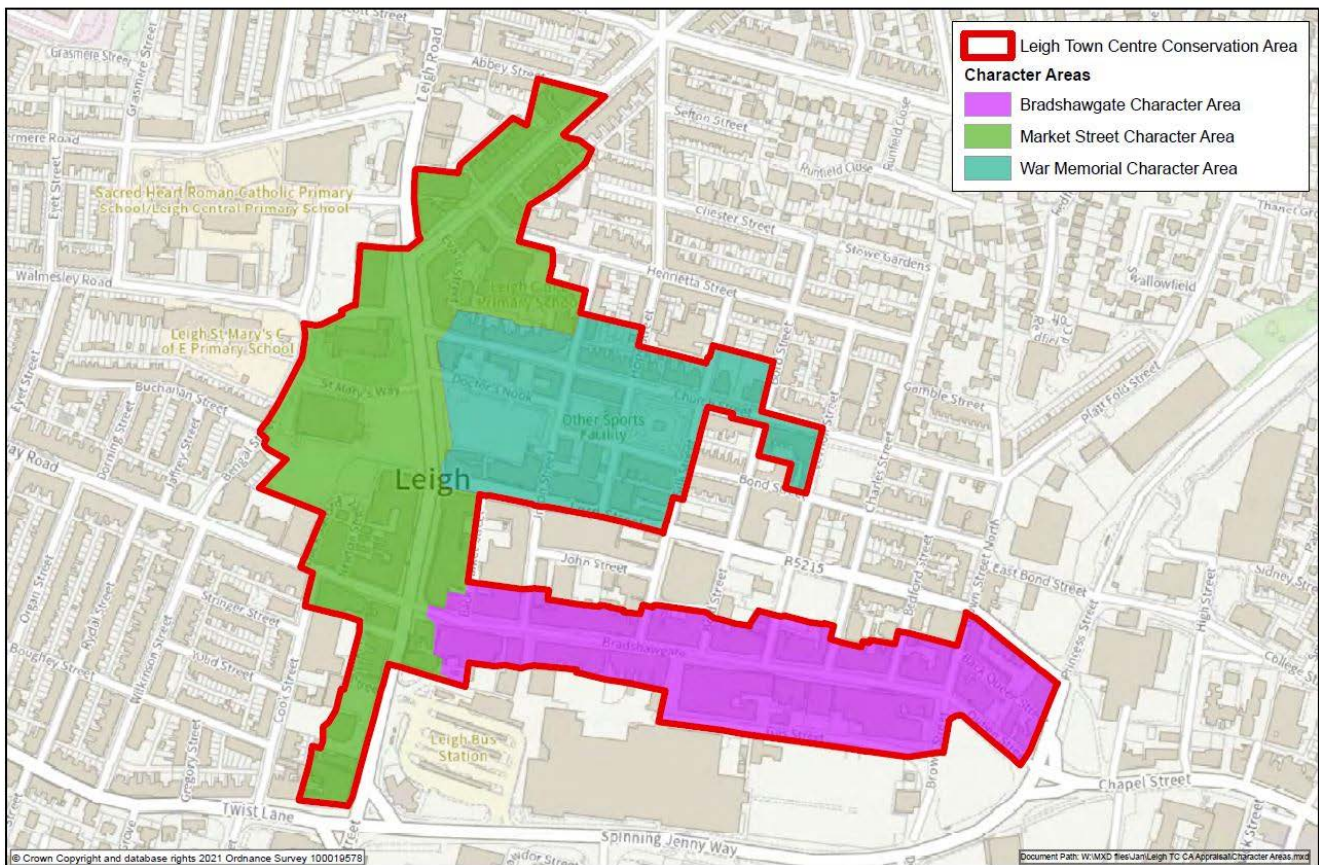
Market Street Character Area - King Street / Market Street / Market Place / The Avenue/part Railway Road

War Memorial Character Area - Lord St / War Memorial area

Bradshawgate Character Area - Bradshawgate / Queen Street

Map 2: Leigh Town Centre Character Areas

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4 Market Street Character Area

Definition of Character

- 4.1** The Market Street Area is located to the west of Bradshawgate and is dominated by the main north-south highway along Market Street and King Street, which is a major thoroughfare through the town centre and heavily trafficked.



Picture 4.1 King Street looking towards Market Street is a major thoroughfare.



Picture 4.2 Market Street looking towards Market Place, note the redbrick Boars Head Public House

- 4.2** This route was the Old Turnpike Road and the chief means of communication with other parts of the region. The character area is bookended by the junctions of King Street/Twist Lane to the south and Market Street/The Avenue at the north, with The Avenue continuing north-east. The area comprises a mix of commercial activity, particularly along Market Street King Street and the end of Railway Road, however, the western side of Market Street and Market Place has more of a civic character with the Town Hall, Turnpike Centre and St Mary’s Church located here. The grand ornate Edwardian Town Hall sits amongst other 3 storey buildings. The Avenue is characterised by mainly 2 storey Victorian residential properties.



Picture 4.3 The former Eagle and Child public house and Barclays Bank building are examples of strong corner treatment used to frame views and junctions.

- 4.3** The architectural character of the area is mainly defined by late 19th and early 20th century development. Ornate, tall buildings demonstrate a breadth of design such as the grand Italian Renaissance and Edwardian styles as well as classical Victorian grand and modest styles. Examples of the Victorian principle of framing street corners with prominent landmark buildings are evident, in particular the junction of Railway Road / Market Street with the National Westminster Bank and Barclays Bank helping frame this junction. The Eagle and Child building remains on one side of the junction of King Street and Twist Lane however, the opposite corner has largely been lost through development and road widening.



Picture 4.4 The Turnpike Centre on Civic Square

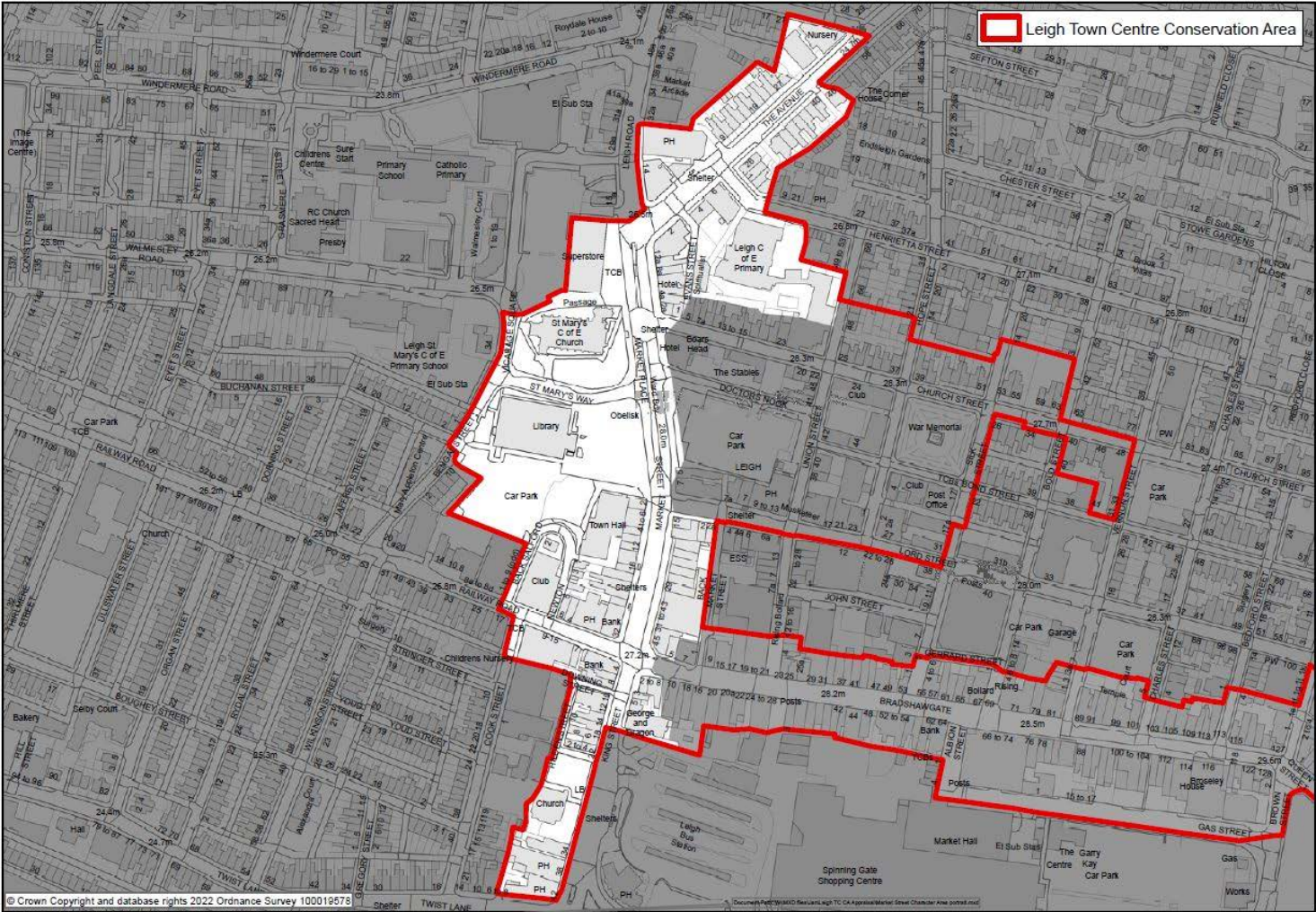


Picture 4.5 Leigh Town Hall looking down Market Street

- 4.4** At the northern edge, the First and Last Public House provides a strong curved junction presence to The Avenue and Leigh Road. Further along The Avenue, the 2-storey late 19th century housing gives a more sedate edge to the character area as the town centre dissipates into the suburbs.

Map 3: Market Street Character Area

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Open Spaces

- 4.5** The most prominent open space in this part of the character area and the conservation area as a whole is the Civic Square. It is framed on three sides by the impressive Town Hall, Turnpike Centre and St Mary's Church, however its true sense of enclosure as a public square is diminished by the gap created by surface car parking both in Bengal Street and Doctors Nook Car Park and the road frontage at Market Place. The Civic Square is surfaced with red block paving and is centred around the Grade II Listed Obelisk with benches, flower planters, decorative lighting columns, bollards and litter bins. The expanse of hard landscaping is softened to some extent by street trees and flower planters. It has historically been important as a public meeting space and as a marketplace. There is a sense of disconnection from the commercial heart of the town centre due to the width of the road at Market Place, the central barrier and dominance of vehicles.
- 4.6** Close to this is the churchyard of St Mary's, a formal quiet space that is important to the character of the area. It is surrounded by a low wall and is easily visible from Market Place. There are several mature trees and a path around the churchyard and it offers a pleasant green buffer and a glimpse into the historic centre of Leigh.
- 4.7** Trees can be important features within conservation areas as they help to soften the urban landscape and add variety to the area. There are groups of prominent mature trees at Market Place, the war memorial garden and those adjacent to the George and Dragon public house, which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.



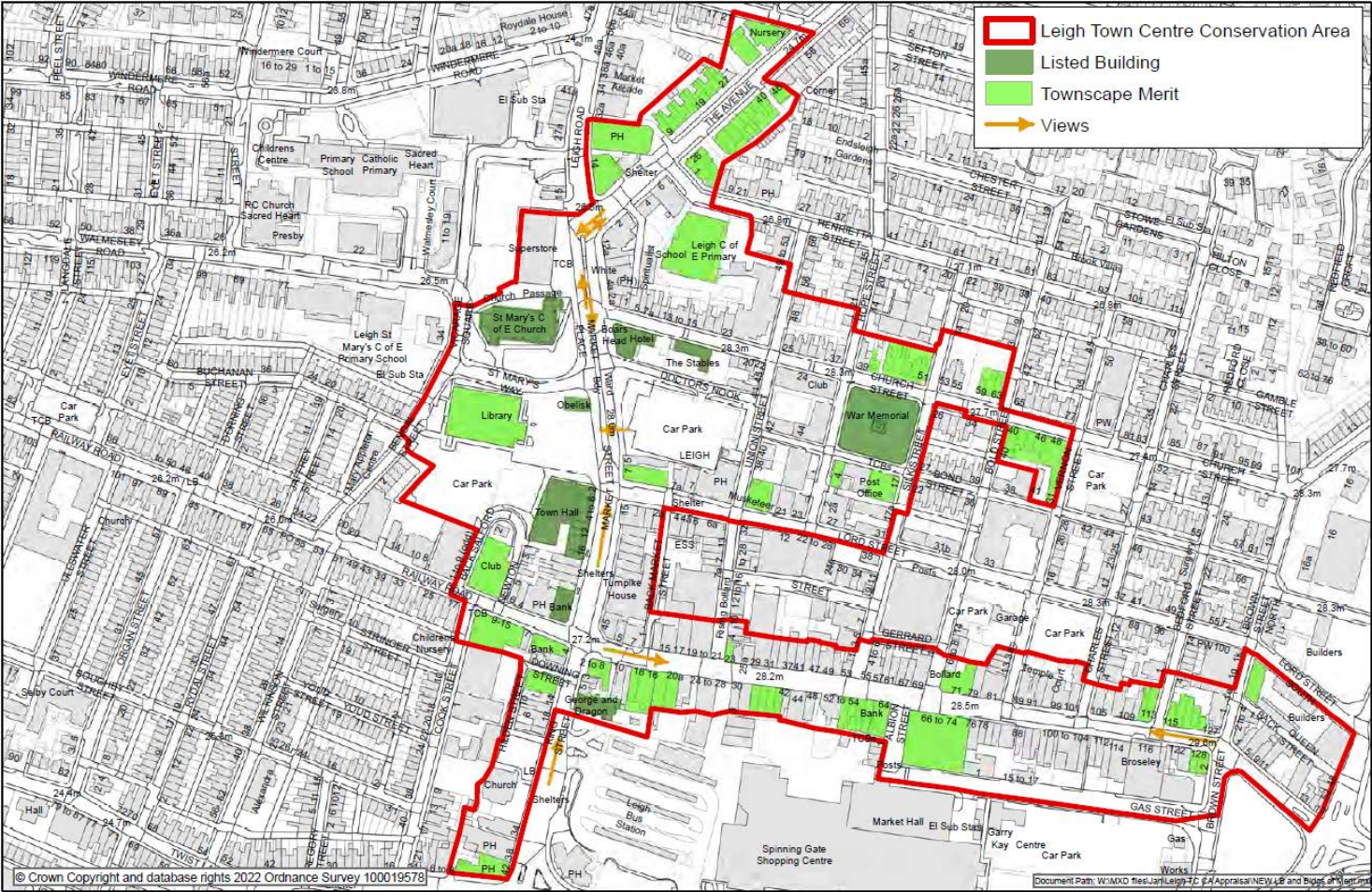
Picture 4.6 Civic Square panorama

Key Views

- 4.8** There are several key views within the character area (these are indicated on Map 4), each view provides different focal points and aspects:
- (a) King Street towards Market Street** - This view is along the length of King Street, from the southern boundary of the conservation area. It includes the northern edge of the area with the former Barclays Bank, The National Westminster Bank and Leigh Town Hall visible, and terminates towards the Boar's Head in the distance. These are fine 3-storey buildings and provide the main focal point to the east of this view.
- (b) Market Street westwards across Market Place** - This view from Market Street is along the breadth of Market Place, the Civic Square enclosed by Leigh Town Hall, the Turnpike Centre and St. Mary's Church. All three properties are grand in style and form strong building lines on three sides of the square.
- (c) Market Place north towards The Avenue** - This view is up Market Street to northern edge of the Conservation Area boundary. The view encompasses several fine Victorian buildings including the church and The First and Last public house with the tree-lined residential street of The Avenue.
- (d) Along The Avenue** - This view takes in the polite terraces, church, and tree-lined vista of The Avenue into the suburbs beyond.

Map 4: Key Views, Listed Building and Buildings of Townscape Merit

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Architecture, Materials and Details

4.9 The buildings in this character area vary in age. The majority are 19th and early 20th century but there are some that may have earlier origins, such as the George and Dragon public house. There are prominent examples of mid-20th century brutalism in the form of the Turnpike Centre and Turnpike House and there is a small number of later 20th century buildings – but these are not typical. There may be some medieval fabric within the tower of St Mary's Church, but the majority of the building dates from the 1870s onwards.



Picture 4.7 Older buildings have more vernacular forms and materials.



Picture 4.8 St Marys Church is an example of a grander more formal building built in stone.

- 4.10** The range of styles within the conservation area is reflective of the periods from which the buildings date, with older buildings adopting more vernacular forms, materials and plans and later buildings being more formal in their style.
- 4.11** The range of building ages and styles lead to a somewhat eclectic mixture of architecture, with grand Victorian buildings with classical and baroque features contrasting markedly with the relatively plain Turnpike House influenced by brutalist architecture.
- 4.12** There are some architectural outliers such as the former Burtons tailors' shop, which takes an unexpected Art-Deco form and the Kingsleigh Methodist Church on King Street, which is in a late-20th century brick building of Modernist style.
- 4.13** At ground level many buildings have suffered from unsympathetic alterations to create modern shop fronts. The refurbishment of shop fronts as part of the Town Hall redevelopment at Market Street provides a good example of reinstating Victorian/Edwardian forms to positively contribute to the character of the conservation area.



Picture 4.9 Restored Edwardian shopfronts at Leigh Town Hall enhance the area whilst unsympathetic plastic and metal detract at Leigh Bazaar on Railway Road

- 4.14** The frontages play a key role in informing the character of the conservation area, especially with its general retail focus. At upper floor level there are often very elaborate details utilising fine brickwork, stonework and decorative elements to enhance buildings. A typical feature of this part of the conservation area is the use of front-facing gables, a form usually found in earlier buildings but carried through to later ones here.
- 4.15** Along The Avenue, houses are primarily of brick with timber gable and porch details, there are good examples of original timber doorways and doorframes, they have small front gardens retain much of their original frontages however the use of uPVC and inappropriate window style is prevalent and this has a negative impact upon the conservation area.



Picture 4.10 Timber details on The Avenue



Picture 4.11 Original doorways and decorative elements on The Avenue

Buildings of Townscape Merit

- 4.16 The First and Last Public House** is an important corner building. It is constructed of red brick which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area by virtue of its interesting architectural style, with tall banded ridge chimney stacks, decorative brick gables and the curved front elevation at the junction of The Avenue and Market Street, which has an attractive stone doorframe. However, the windows have been changed unsympathetically.
- 4.17 The terraced houses on The Avenue** are a mix of late Victorian and early Edwardian properties constructed of red brick with slate roofs and bay windows to the ground floor. Many of them are characterised by timber gablets. Number 21 The Avenue has surviving original timber fenestration with sliding sashes to the ground and first floor. The street trees and private gardens along The Avenue give it a pleasant, leafy suburban feel, despite its proximity to the town centre. Numbers 30-40 are a short terrace mid-victorian terrace which have large central ridge-chimneys, slate roofs and canted bay windows with particularly ornate doorways. Numbers The short terrace on Henrietta Street that turns the corner dates from between 1850 and 1890.

- 4.18** On The Avenue the **Chapel and Sunday School** form a dense cluster of red-brick buildings with a variety of roof shapes. The buildings are massed well and make a positive contribution to the conservation area. The chapel is neoclassical in style with decorative stone hoodmoulds, window tracery and a stone pedimented principal entrance.
- 4.19** The former **Grand Theatre & Hippodrome** (1908, J C Prestwich) is prominent on Leigh Road, displaying a tall façade of red brick and buff terracotta. The Hippodrome Theatre was built on the site of Walker's silk mill of 1827. It subsequently became a cinema and is now a pub.
- 4.20** To the north of the Civic Square, the Grade II listed **St Mary's Church** by Paley and Austin dates mainly from 1873, although the inner structure of the tower survives from 1516 and the outer facing is from 1910. The church has a long, unbroken roof and clerestory. The aisle windows are characteristic of the Gothic Perpendicular style. The entrance has a finely detailed porch with an elaborate niche canopy and statue. The red sandstone is notable for its hammered texture.
- 4.21** Enclosing the Civic Square to the west, the **Turnpike Centre** constructed in 1971, is a brutalist building with a reinforced concrete frame and prefabricated concrete panelled walls. The deeply textured relief sculpture above the entrance was by a leading sculptor of the period, William Mitchell. Designed by Prestwich & Sons, it provides a very interesting contrast to the work of Prestwich himself. In front of the Turnpike Centre is the Grade II Listed **Obelisk** a 19th century structure built on the site of the former market cross.
- 4.22** The Grade II Listed **Leigh Town Hall** is located on Market Place to the south of the Civic Square but its side elevation faces Market Street. Built by Prestwich in 1904-1907, the elevation features large gables with massive cornices at both ends, with four giant order pilasters and a small projecting oriel window at the centre. The Town Hall is an example of the Edwardian Baroque style, with classical architectural features used in a monumental manner. It is constructed of Darley Dale sandstone and Westmorland slate, a favoured roofing material of Prestwich.
- 4.23** The Market Street elevation of the Town Hall is occupied on the ground floor by a row of nine shops, facing out onto the street. They are separated by massive rusticated piers. Some of the shops retain their original joinery, with fine detailing including classical and Art Nouveau carving. Also of note are the finely turned corner posts, or mullions. Despite the overall proportions of the Town Hall, the row of shops along Market Street interestingly replicate the former older plot sizes, helping to accommodate the mass of the building.
- 4.24** Occupying the corner with Railway Road is the **National Westminster Bank**, originally Parr's Bank, built in 1908. It is a fine building decorated with banded ashlar, with emphatic first-floor window surrounds with large keystones. It is a classical Italian Palazzo design, notable for the splayed corner and decorative details, such as the second floor circular window with arched cornice and carved festoon of fruit. This west side of Market Street boasts arguably the best architecture in the conservation area. Designed by Prestwich, the entire block is of considerable quality and interest.
- 4.25** **Barclays Bank** on the corner of Railway Road and King Street, constructed of stone, at 3 storeys with some architectural embellishment, makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. Across the road the building forming the corner with Bradshawgate is a striking 20th century inter-war design for **Montague Burton Tailors**, whose architects developed distinctive, classical and Art Deco façades that were easily recognisable. The upper façade is classical, with a curved corner supported on two giant fluted columns with deeply recessed windows and giant pilasters to both side façades. The pilasters and columns have highly stylised Corinthian capitals with central palmettos, and a massive cornice finishes the façade. The metal windows are typical of the 1920/30s.

- 4.26** To the west, a row of former workers cottages along Back Salford Street was replaced in 1879 (J J Bradshaw) by a grand 3-storey building executed in an eclectic style and is now the closed **Leigh Conservative Club** on Railway Road. It was Leigh's cinema between 1908 and 1963.
- 4.27** **The Manchester and Liverpool District Bank** on King Street is a flamboyant example of the French Renaissance revival style. Built in 1900, the building demonstrates the use of several materials including granite, sandstone, brick and terracotta. It is generally the case that the most expensive materials are used on the most prominent public façade of a building, with lesser materials used elsewhere. Surprisingly, however, the elaborate and expensive design of this building is continued on the narrow street to the side of the bank.
- 4.28** Across the road on the eastern side of King Street, the **George and Dragon** public house is a rare survivor from the 17th century and is Grade II listed. It is likely that the building originated as a farmhouse. The building was recorded as a "beer house" in 1698. It seems that the original 17th century building was re-fronted in the early 20th century with imitation timber framing. There is an unsympathetic lantern-skylight but this does not detract significantly from the building's historic form.
- 4.29** At the junction of King Street and Twist Lane, is a large three-storey public house, previously known as the **Eagle and Child**. Built in 1895, the building displays themes and characteristics that typify the architectural endeavours of the time: strong corner treatment; interest and detailing at the roofline; tall storeys; and highly decorative door surrounds. The most notable feature is the corner chimney, with triangular vertical ribs rising to the height of at least one more storey above the main building.
- 4.30** The **school building on Henrietta Street** was built in 1905 as the Leigh Church Institute. Its primary architectural interest lies in its symmetrical façade with baroque moulded terracotta stonework and unusual header-bonded bricks of a pale pink hue – although this may be through weathering. It is an impressive frontage and a worthy addition to the conservation area through both its architectural and communal associations.

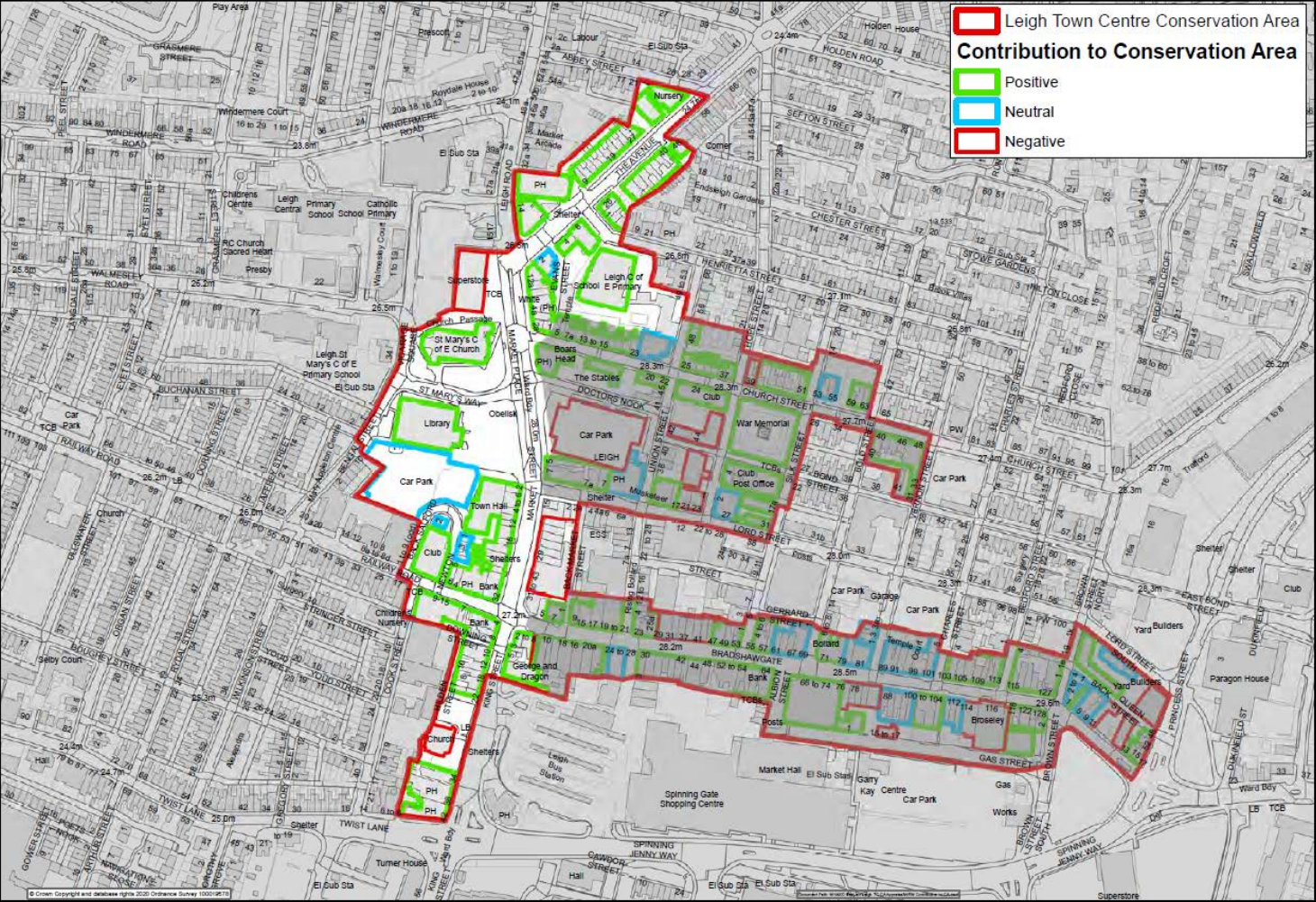


Picture 4.12 Market Street Buildings of Townscape Merit 1 - 15.

Key to pictures	
1. First and Last public house	2. Terraced Houses on the Avenue
3. Chapel and Sunday School	4. Grand Theatre & Hippodrome
5. St Marys Church	6. The Turnpike Centre
7. The Obelisk	8. Leigh Town Hall
9. National Westminster Bank	10. Barclays Bank
11. Montague Burton tailors	12. Leigh Conservative Club
13. Manchester and Liverpool District Bank	14. George and Dragon public house
15. The Eagle and Child public house	16. School Building Henrietta Street

Map 5: Market Street Area Character Contribution map

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Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement

- 4.31** The townscape has suffered most where frontages and blocks have been cleared for road widening and car parking. Much of the east side of King Street, from the George and Dragon public house southwards, was cleared in 1992 to make way for the bus station, which lies just outside the conservation area. The car parks on Bengal Street and Doctors Nook could be prominent development sites and good quality development here could enhance the conservation area and compliment the Civic Square.
- 4.32** Architectural quality is somewhat marred by the 1960s block - Turnpike House - on the corner of Bradshawgate. The building is included within the conservation area boundary due to the significant impact the site has within the area. Its plain utilitarian design does not respond well to its context, lacking a distinctive corner treatment. It replaced one of Leigh's finest Victorian corner buildings, the **Rope & Anchor Hotel** (1897, Prestwich). A section of the building still survives on Bradshawgate. The recent conversion of the upper floors to residential use has improved the appearance of the premises, however it's architectural form and detail detracts from the character of the conservation area and if a replacement were ever to be proposed much greater consideration should be given to its design.



Picture 4.13 Strong building lines broken by poor infill development



Picture 4.14 Large surface car-parks near the Civic Square disrupt density.



Picture 4.15 Modern buildings like Turnpike House lack the corner presence of previous ones.

5 War Memorial Character Area

Definition of Character

- 5.1** This area is situated to the east of Market Street and has a strong late Victorian grid-iron street pattern. It comprises a mix of residential and commercial properties, with the War Memorial as a focal point, revealed in a pleasant and well-framed square. The area is predominantly 2 storey with dense 19th century terraced residential properties to the northern boundary and more modern commercial properties along the southern edge, however, in between there are some larger scale properties such as the Post Office on Silk Street.



Picture 5.1 The War Memorial square is at the heart of the character area.



Picture 5.2 Streets in this area are generally 2 storey on a tight grid pattern.

5.2 The residential area comprises short terraces arranged in square blocks which surround the public square where the town war memorial is located. The built character of the area is dense short common-brick terraces of 19th century centred around the public war memorial square which is an attractive focal point. There are some pockets of commercial activity amongst the residential uses, such as the Grade II Listed Boars Head public house and its stables at the west end of the area. Further to the south Lord Street and parts of Market Street are predominantly commercial in nature, with buildings stepping down in height from Market Street along Lord Street.



Picture 5.3 The Boars Head Pub with golden post box in front in honour of 2012 Olympian Heather Fredericksen.



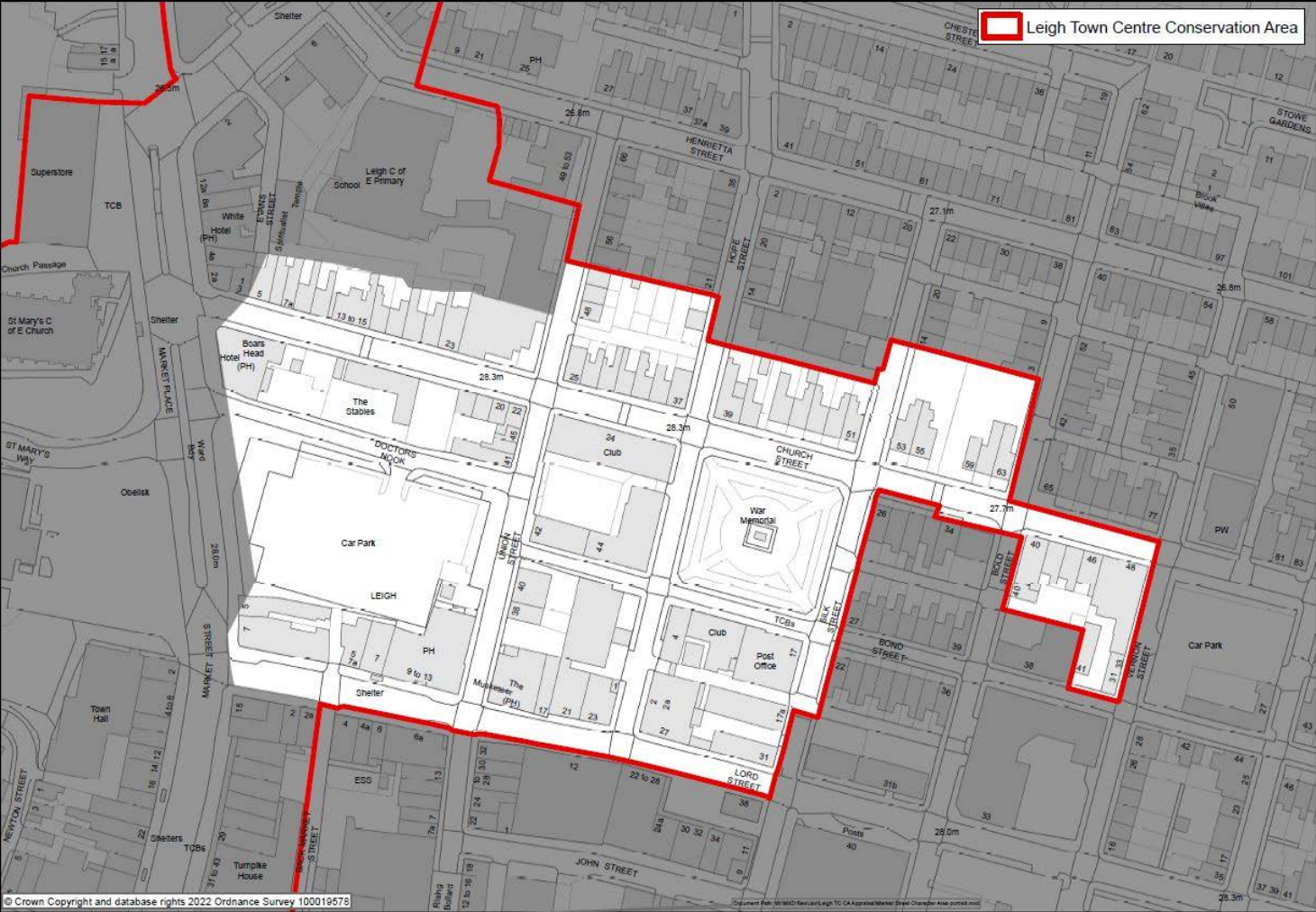
Picture 5.4 Commercial buildings stepping down from Market St along Lord St.

5.3 The street grain is extremely tight with occasional buildings of more communal and public importance often taking up larger plots, sometimes entire sides of streets. It is notable that the smaller terraces are occasionally punctuated by larger and more ornate properties such as the former residential terrace at 53-63 Church Street.

- 5.4** Of particular interest is the block which includes the former Courts Hotel and solicitors offices. These buildings date from around 1878 and were built as a complex to service the local police court. The adjacent terraced buildings which are now mostly solicitors and associated legal trades were originally houses. There is particular local importance in number 46 Church Street which was the one-time home of J.C. Prestwich. The rear element of the Hotel on Vernon Street is a later extension, used as a brewery, but clearly identified as part of the same complex through the continuing dark blue double string-course.

Map 6: War Memorial Character Area

1:1,500 



Open Spaces

- 5.5** The only open space of note within this character area is the War Memorial Garden which is a formal square with railings and benches and a formal planting scheme. It is faced on all sides by buildings of two or three storeys however, to the west the aesthetic quality is marred by the single storey 1970s Judo Club building which is of no particular architectural merit.



Picture 5.5 The 1970s Judo Club building mars the quality of the open space.

- 5.6** There is limited greenery - mainly the War Memorial Garden and the small gardens to the front of some houses - but it is not generally a particularly strong feature of this character area.

Key Views

- 5.7** There are several key views within the character area (these are indicated on Map 7), each view provides different focal points and aspects:

(a) Church Street Looking South towards War Memorial - Views across the War Memorial Garden are of paramount importance, both aesthetically and historically, to the character of the conservation area. In particular, views from the north looking south with the backdrop of the 3 storey buildings on Bond Street and Silk Street which can be glimpsed through the trees within the garden.



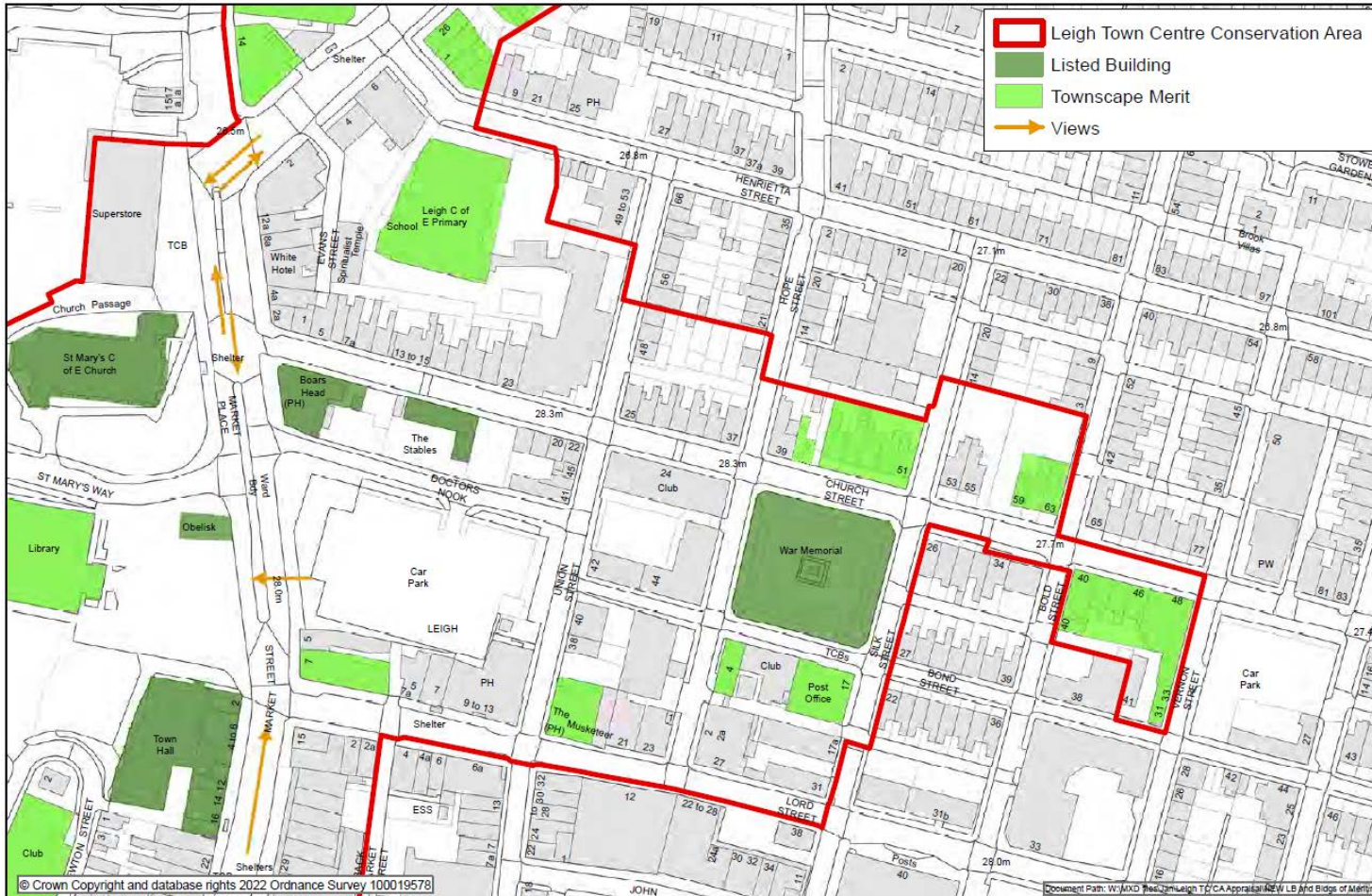
Picture 5.6 Views across the War Memorial square are important.

(b) Church Street / Market Place Looking East - The view from the western edge of the area includes the Boars Head Public House and stables on the southern side, with 3 storey buildings on the north side stepping down to the rows of 2 storey terraced houses which characterise the area.

(c) Church Street / Silk Street Looking West - Looking west the open space to the War Memorial can be seen, along with larger 19th century villas on the north side of Church Street, and distant glimpses of the Boars Head cupola at the far end of the vista.

Map 7: Key Views, Listed Building and Buildings of Townscape Merit

1:1,500 



Architecture, Materials and Details

- 5.8** The majority of the buildings within the area are from the 19th century, albeit there are some early 20th century buildings, including the Post Office and War Memorial. Later 20th century buildings, mainly on Lord Street are of much lower material quality. Brick is a particular feature of this area with examples of decorative bonding patterns, polychromatic brickwork and even finely detailed 1930s decorative brickwork.
- 5.9** There are a mix of styles across the area, the predominant being low rise Victorian terraced housing, however there are occasional examples of Georgian and neo-Georgian design. Most domestic properties have been altered with original timber sliding sash windows replaced with uPVC which has had a negative impact on the quality of the conservation area.



Picture 5.7 Georgian properties, formerly weavers house on Lord Street.



Picture 5.8 Victorian properties on Church Street, note the surviving sash window in the building to the left..

5.10 Many of the Victorian buildings are still domestic in nature, of predominantly brown/red common brick mostly in an English garden wall bonding pattern. A particular feature is the large gauged brick splays found on the flat arches above windows, this can be seen on both commercial and domestic buildings in the area. Some houses have been unsympathetically rendered obscuring much of the brickwork.



Picture 5.9 Gauged brick window heads with large splays are a feature of this area..



Picture 5.10 Decorative brickwork is important in this area.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

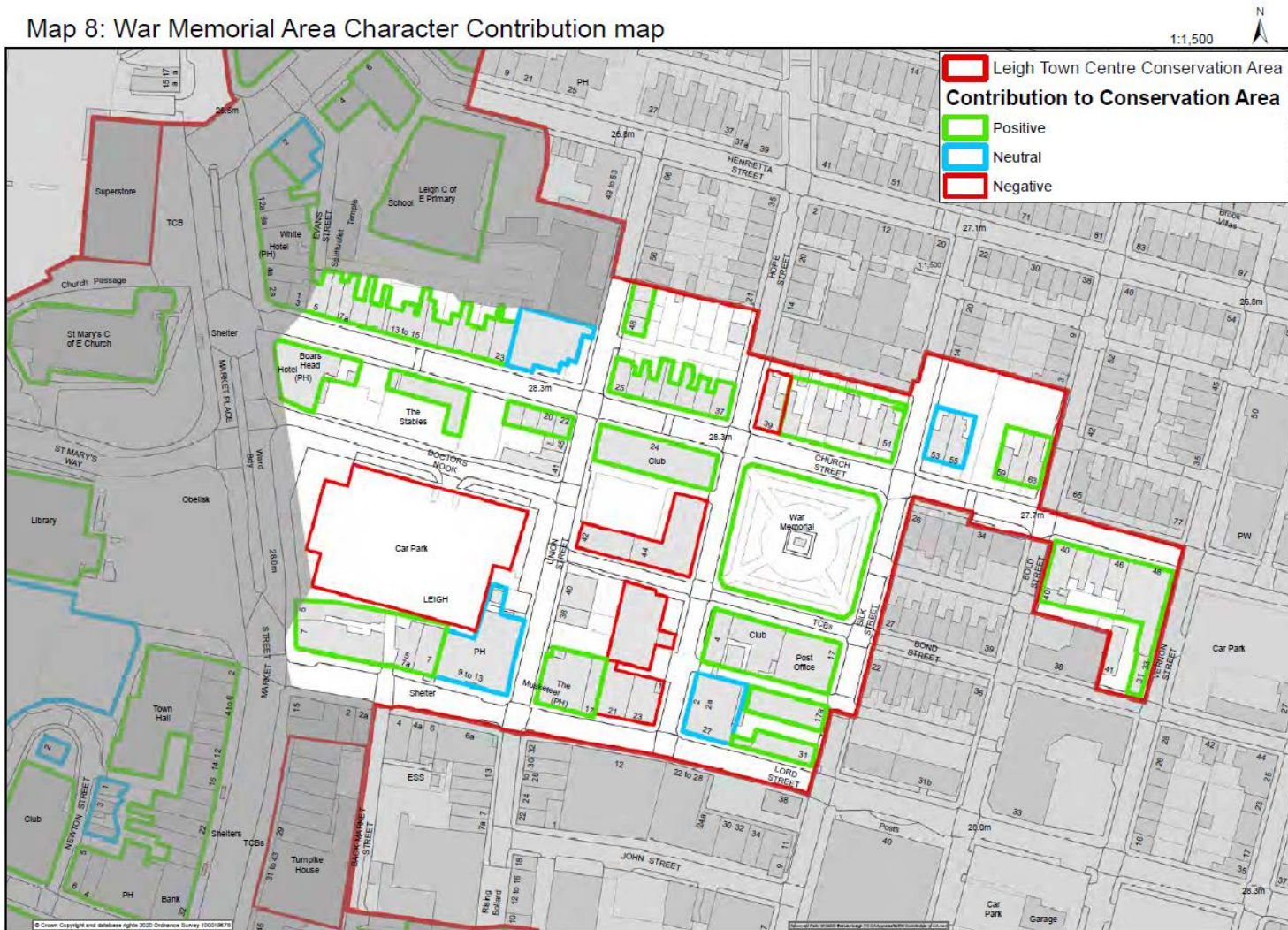
- 5.11 The **Post Office** at the corner of Bond Street and Silk Street is 1930s neoclassical in style with hipped roof and a pedimented principal entrance to Silk Street. The **Collins and Darwell Printers** building and Leigh Catholic Club, which face Bond Street and turn into Hope Street, are red-brick buildings from 1864 and were originally part of the Bond Street Brewery.
- 5.12 The three-storey former **Royal Bank of Scotland** building on the corner of Market Street is of a Georgian style and is a rather solitary reminder of the type of buildings that surrounded the square. It is complemented by the three-storey houses in the adjacent Lord Street.
- 5.13 The **Musketeer Public House** was formerly a cottage which was converted into a silk warehouse. Here domestic silk weavers obtained yarn for weaving and were paid for their completed products. The 1840 Pennington Rate Book shows that four such warehouses were located between Union Street and Hope Street.
- 5.14 The Grade II listed **War Memorial** (1922, Prestwich & Sons) is a good example of a formally designed open space. It takes up a whole square of the grid pattern in this area. The cenotaph is built in Portland ashlar and the bronze plaques on either side are framed by engaged columns. The layout is fairly simple but is a welcome break in the historically compact built-up area.
- 5.15 The **Boars Head Public House** on the corner of Market Street and Church Street is a departure from the buildings along the street, being of 3 storeys built in a grander Victorian style than the more modest houses. Displaying Flemish gables, terracotta, oriel bays and a cupola providing a focal point and a landmark the public house also has associated Grade II Listed Stables to the rear.
- 5.16 The former **Courts Hotel** and the adjoining terrace date from 1878. The main Hotel building is four bays wide, two stories high and is built in an electric Victorian style utilising pressed red-brick, dark blue double string-courses and terracotta elements. The windows are stone mullions, in column form at ground floor. The adjacent terraced buildings are notable for retaining their original timber sliding-sash windows.



Picture 5.11

Key pictures from top-left to right		
1. Post Office	2. Colin and Darwell Printers	3. Royal Bank of Scotland
4 The Musketeer public house	5. The War Memorial	6. The Boars Head public house

Map 8: War Memorial Area Character Contribution map



Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement

- 5.17** This area has suffered some loss of streetscape value due to the clearance of buildings to make way for the car park adjacent to the Boar's Head public house and stables. However, there are buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the area by virtue of their architectural styles, materials and scale. The gridiron street form also remains largely intact throughout the area.
- 5.18** There is a proliferation of street furniture, especially signage associated with the one-way system. These signs blight the historic streetscape through their overabundance and repetition. As with other street furniture in the conservation area they are usually on poles of untreated metal, a jarring aspect in the conservation area.



Picture 5.12 Large amounts of street signage blight the area.

- 5.19** Unsympathetic alterations such as the replacement of traditional windows with uPVC and installation of modern shop frontages and advertisements with little regard to the form, materials and detailing of the buildings detract from the character and appearance of the historic buildings. Unsympathetic infill also dilutes the character of the area. A key example is the modern pub building at 13 Lord Street.

6 Bradshawgate Character Area

Definition of Character

- 6.1** This area runs east – west along Bradshawgate and Queen Street, the former being the principal shopping street within the town centre. The western end of Bradshawgate meets with the junction of Railway Road, King Street and Market Street - a busy crossroads. The eastern end runs into Queen Street at the junction with Brown Street. Due to incremental change, these two gateways do not provide a particularly strong built environment frame to the character area.



Picture 6.1 Bradshawgate looking east from Back Market Street.



Picture 6.2 Bradshawgate showing some of the grand buildings in the town centre.

- 6.2** The Bradshawgate area comprises predominantly commercial retail and service uses accommodated within a mix of large 3 storey buildings such as the former Co-op building, Prestwich offices (14 – 18 Bradshawgate) and smaller more intimate buildings on the northern side of the street and further east.
- 6.3** Little development had taken place in the first quarter of the 19th century, except for a long row of weavers' cottages and a few other buildings present on the south side beyond Albion Street. Remnants of the earlier cottage industries can be found providing a picture, albeit fragmented, of how Leigh appeared before the industrial revolution. The street retains its finer grain of small, narrow plots.
- 6.4** It was not until 1850-1875 that development gathered pace in the area. From 1888 onwards, rebuilding occurred on the south side, as far as Albion Street. In 1898 a programme of road widening was undertaken which led to rebuilding on the north side near Market Street. The newer buildings were taller, wider and more elaborate, using gables to heighten their three storey facades. On Bradshawgate, the influence of the architect J C Prestwich is notable. The south side of the street, as far as the Co-operative building, is very much characterised by his work.



Picture 6.3 Prestwich designed buildings characterise the north side of the street, notable for their pressed red-brick and stone details as well as varied gables.

6.5 The architectural character of Bradshawgate changed significantly during the course of the 19th century, corresponding to the changes brought by industrialisation and greater prosperity. There are several examples of the late Victorian principle of emphasis of street corners as a means of punctuating the linear and geometrical layouts. This principle resulted in a great variation of treatments and rich architectural detailing. Moving east along Bradshawgate, the older character becomes more apparent through the smaller scale of buildings and their vernacular architecture. Due to the commercial nature of the street, the ground floor of the majority of buildings have been altered to create modern shop fronts some of which detract from the character of the area.



Picture 6.4 Prominent features on street corners break up the geometrical layout.



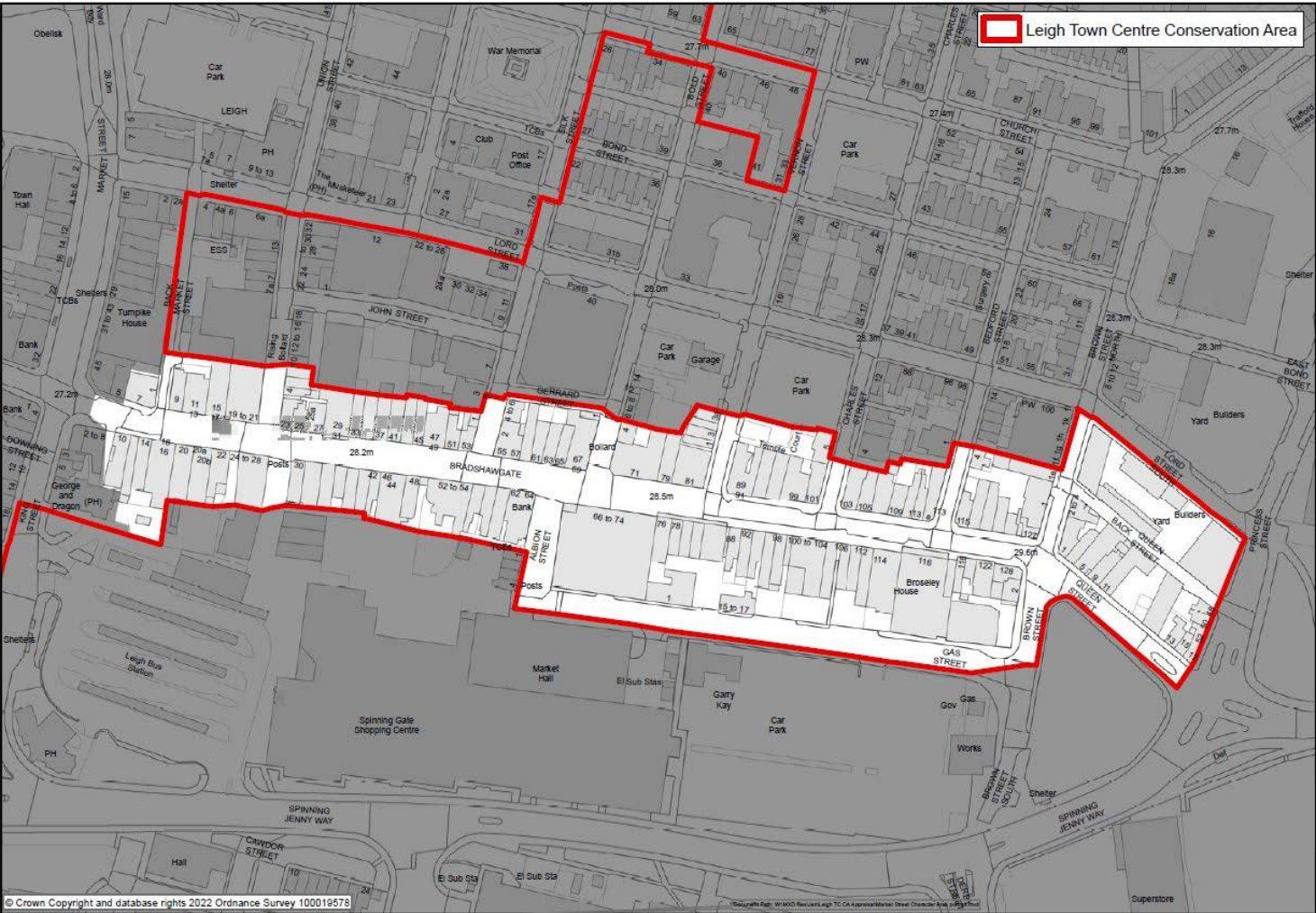
Picture 6.5 Inappropriate shopfronts can affect the impact of corner buildings in particular.



Picture 6.6 Decorative elements are also found on corner buildings..

Map 9: Bradshawgate Character Area

1:2,000



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Open Spaces

- 6.6** There are no formal squares within this character area although some junctions with Bradshawgate and side streets form informal meeting points, in particular at the junction of Bradshawgate and Albion Street, indicated by seating and a public artwork recalling the heritage of Leigh.



Picture 6.7 Informal 'square' space at Albion Street.



Picture 6.8 Junction of the pedestrianised area and roadway showing unsympathetic 20th century infill behind

- 6.7** An open area of land which forms the Queen Street car park is outside of the conservation area but currently offers some viewing into it, however, this is not a purpose designed view, being the site of the former railway arches, and planning consent has been obtained for development which will restore historic density to the area.

- 6.8** There is little in the way of surviving historic floorscape (such as cobbles, setts and traditional stone-flag paving) across the area, and the public realm along Bradshawgate. In the early 21st Century a comprehensive pedestrianisation scheme took place with sandstone block paving. Road carriageway is mainly black bitmac outside of the pedestrian zone for about a third of Bradshawgate.


Key Views

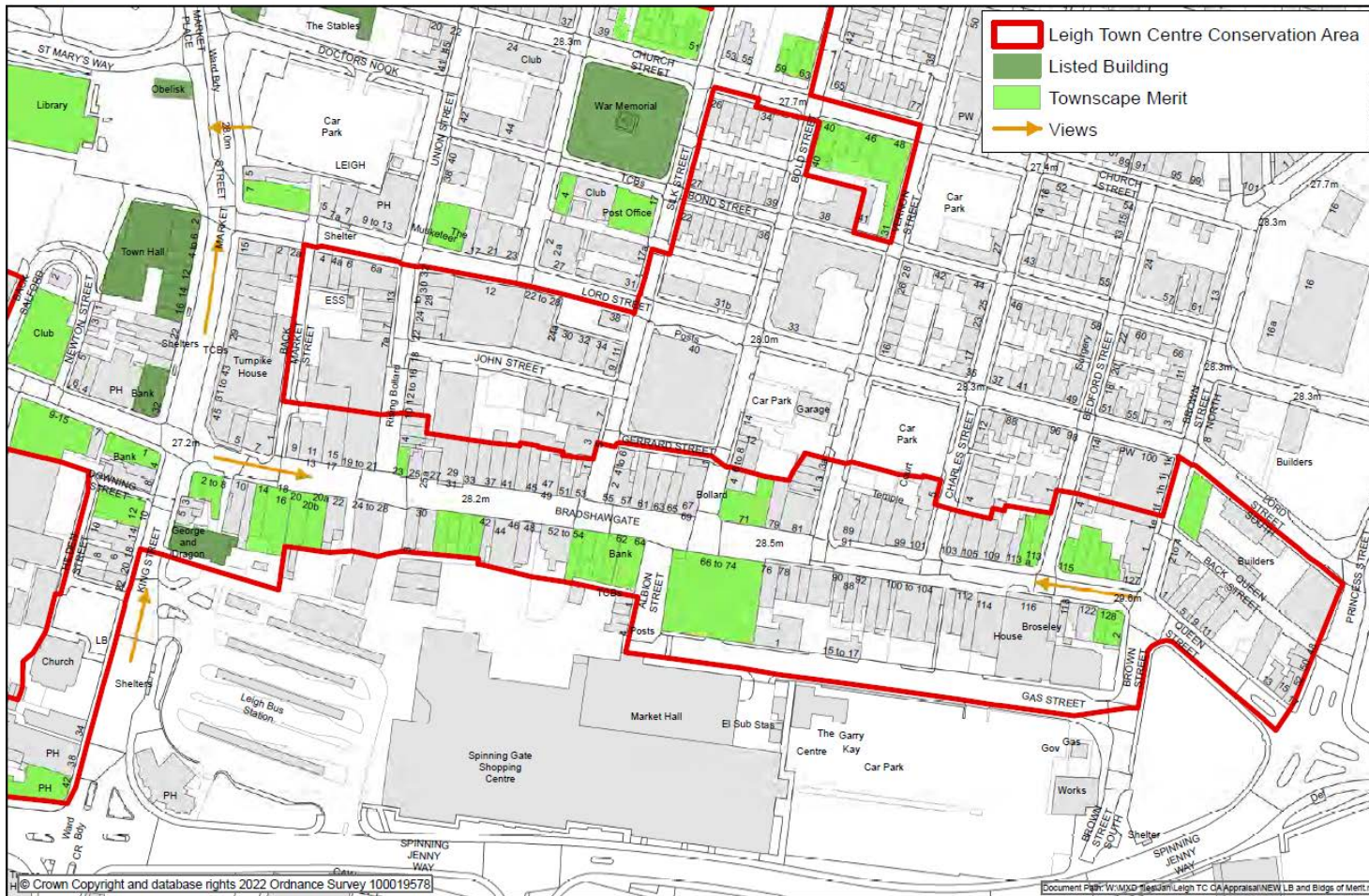
- 6.9** As a long linear route running east – west, there are two key views providing views through the conservation area (Map 10).

(a) Back Market Street Junction Looking East - This view along the length of Bradshawgate with its connection to Queen Street in the distance includes an array of 3 storey buildings to the south, with larger Art Deco buildings to the north, with more modest 2 storey buildings punctuated by intermittent 3 storey buildings.

(b) Queen Street / Brown Street Looking West - Looking west down Bradshawgate from this location, there are several 3 storey buildings in the foreground – the former Lilford Hotel on the right and local silk agent John Hilton’s former house on the left. The mix of 2 storey buildings on each side of Bradshawgate are dwarfed by the former Co-operative building on the south side of the street whose physical presence dominates the streetscape in the middle of this commercial centre. The longer range view is terminated by the sandstone Barclays Bank on the corner of Railway Road and King Street at the far end.

Map 10: Key Views, Listed Building and Buildings of Townscape Merit

1:2,000 



Architecture, Materials and Details

- 6.10** The buildings in this area are predominantly mid 19th century onwards, however, there are some infill buildings displaying out of character mid to late 20th century features, and late 20th century pastiche developments which have attempted to blend in with the urban morphology.
- 6.11** A mix of styles exists across the area demonstrating the building periods of the time. At the eastern end of the area, the aforementioned Lilford Hotel is a fine example of Gothic revival, whilst many buildings still display more classical Georgian proportions and styles. Some buildings, mostly by Prestwich, demonstrate the Flemish influence with a range of gable styles, whilst a relatively small number of buildings at the western end of the area display classic Art Deco styles.



Picture 6.9 The high Victorian gothic details of former Lilford Hotel.



Picture 6.10 More restrained Georgian style properties.



Picture 6.11 Art Deco elements, although uncommon are also found on Bradshawgate.

- 6.12** There are two sets of buildings of particular interest on Bradshawgate. The first is the row of very narrow shops towards the eastern end of Bradshawgate with early 20th century mock-Tudor framing, and which incorporate unusual 'ginnels' or passages to the backland behind. The second set of buildings are the small 1870s set of buildings, originally houses that had front gardens converted in the late 19th century to shops.



Picture 6.12 Houses with their original gardens converted to shops during the 19th century.



Picture 6.13 Early 20th century mock-Tudor details on buildings on much older narrow plots

- 6.13** There are some traditional examples of shop frontages along Bradshawgate, however, there are many modern shop fronts and modern signs which do not relate to the style of the building. Above ground floor level however, much of the history and architectural detailing of the buildings is still

intact. In particular, many of the grander 3 storey buildings contain original sash windows, or stone mullioned and transomed windows. Detailing such as stone cills and banding is provided, and the use of terracotta is notable, particularly on the Co-operative building.



Picture 6.14 Details at upper floors such as stone dressings, timber windows and ornate terracotta gables with finials.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

- 6.14** The offices of J C Prestwich at **14–18 Bradshawgate** were designed by the practice which remained here until 1989. The three-storey building displays many of Prestwich's trademark features: the upper storeys are brick banded with buff stone; continuous pilasters from ground level to the parapet wall and windows are deeply recessed, with the sliding sashes behind the horizontal stone transoms, however at ground floor the frontages have been modernised.
- 6.15** The former Bulls Head Hotel located at **20–20a Bradshawgate** was an inn as early as 1720. It was rebuilt in 1891 with coach houses and stables for 20 horses at the rear. It had its own brewery and was one of the main places where farmers' carts were parked on market day. A weighing machine was located outside on the street.
- 6.16** Further along at **34–40 Bradshawgate** (built by Prestwich in 1899) is a row of four gabled shops built in two pairs, in an Arts and Craft style, with Jacobean and Queen Anne features. The terrace of buildings at **54–64 Bradshawgate** (1889–1890, Prestwich) is in the Flemish Renaissance style, with a rich, intricate roofline of Dutch gables.
- 6.17** Arguably the grandest building on Bradshawgate is the **Leigh Co-operative building** (1899, Prestwich) which physically dominates the street, and is one of the largest and grandest commercial buildings in Leigh town centre by virtue of its sheer size and architectural detailing. Gables occur at each end of the façades, and a corner tower sits on the junction of Bradshawgate and Albion Street. The detailing of each gable and wall below vary, reflecting the eclecticism that was the order of the day in architecture.
- 6.18** The Co-operative Society came about due to the dire state of the silk trade and was registered in 1858. Over time, the society acquired and opened premises in the town. Between 1865 and 1895, a steady stream of additional shops opened in the town centre.
- 6.19** On the corner of Bradshawgate and Brown Street is an attractive group of late Georgian buildings with small paned sash windows on the upper floors. **2 Brown Street** has in the centre of the elevation a taking-in door which extends down to floor level, indicating that the two upper floors were the warehouse and winding and warping shop producing muslin, and subsequently silk. This building became the Derby Arms Public House in 1885. It was the home of local silk agent John Hilton.
- 6.20** The north side of Bradshawgate was not as extensively redeveloped as the south, and the interest here lies in the buildings that have survived from earlier in the 19th century, which are much more domestic in scale, although many have unfortunately undergone alteration.

- 6.21 23 Bradshawgate** is a small corner building on the corner of Union Street. It has a splayed end and hipped roof, giving recognition and emphasis to the corner. The red sandstone corner bank building at **71 Bradshawgate**, (1906, Prestwich & Son) at only two storeys, this building is less grand than some other examples from this architect. However, it still displays key elements such as the splayed corner feature with a heavy stone canted oriel window. Although plain, the roof is of green Westmorland slate. As with many buildings in the conservation area, the front and side façades have been treated differently, and the building becomes plainer as we move further from Bradshawgate.
- 6.22** An interesting terrace of earlier houses is to be found at **111-113 Bradshawgate**. These two-storey dwellings were built in the 1870s, again in the later Georgian tradition. They originally had small gardens in front, but these were built over by the row of single-storey shops in the early 1900s. Although the shop fronts are modern, the parapet wall above is a typical early 20th century feature.
- 6.23** The former **Lilford Hotel** at **115-123 Bradshawgate** is an earlier design of Prestwich in the Gothic Revival. The hotel originally had domestic-type ground floor windows and the modern shop fronts detract from the character of this rather fine building. However, it makes a very interesting contrast with the plainer Georgian style buildings opposite on Brown Street.
- 6.24** The **Jackson's Lilford Brewery** built in 1895, is located in the yard to the north of Lilford Cottage and contributes positively to the character of the conservation area through its architectural detailing.

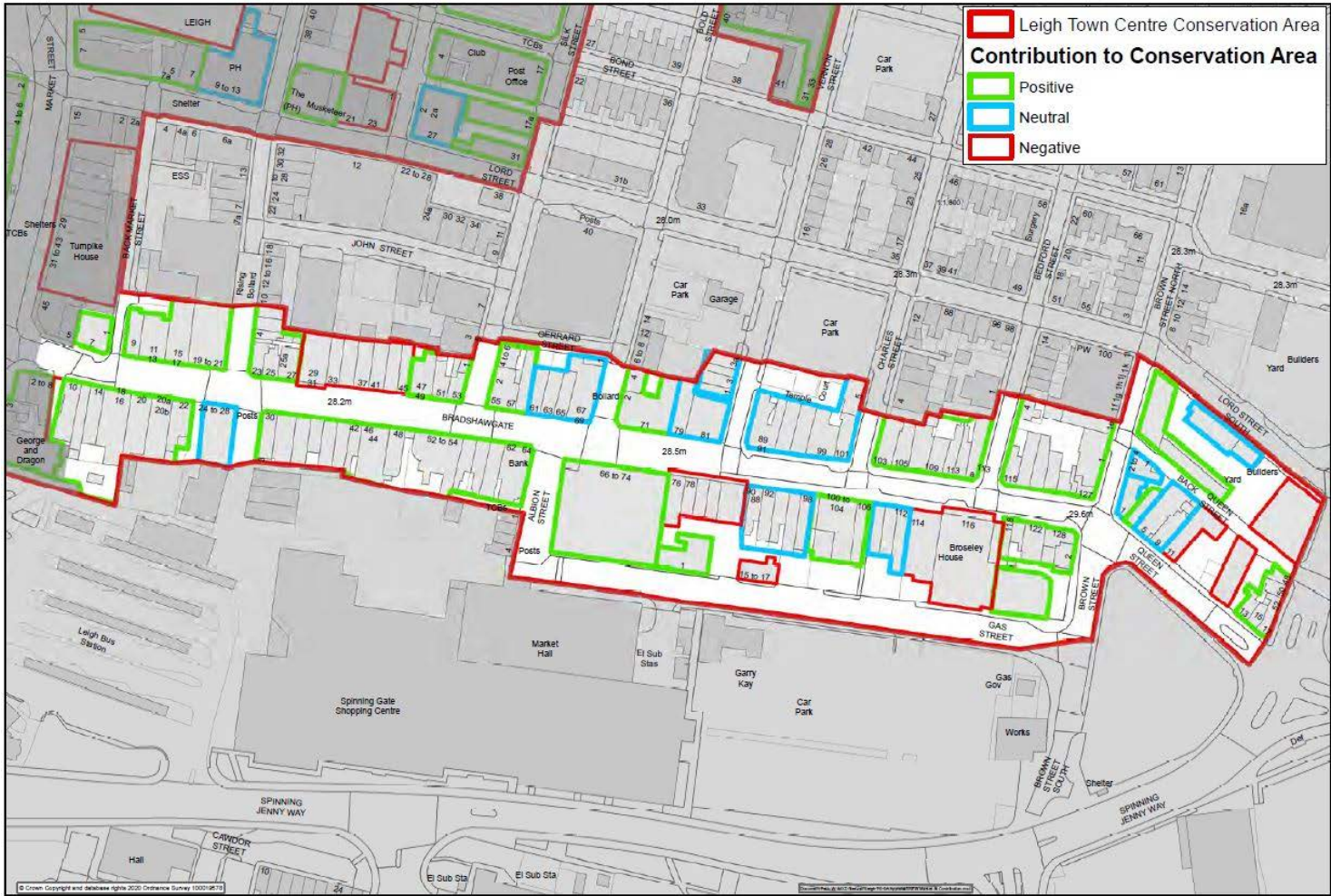


Picture 6.15

Key to pictures From Top, left-to-right			
1. 14-18 Bradshawgate	2. 20-20a Bradshawgate	3. 34-40 Bradshawgate	4. 54-64 Bradshawgate
5. 71 Bradshawgate	6. Leigh Co-Operative Building	7. Jacksons Lilford Brewery	8. 23 Bradshawgate
9. 111-113 Bradshawgate	10. Lilford Hotel, 115-123 Bradshawgate	11. 2 Brown Street	

Map 11: Bradshawgate Area Character Contribution map

1:1,800 



Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement

- 6.25** Along Bradshawgate, there are many examples of unsympathetic shopfront replacements. Many of these shopfronts are of inappropriate size, materials and colours, with signage that does not relate to the building or the character of the area. This has resulted in the loss of many original architectural features of the building at ground floor. Furthermore, a proliferation of roller shutters and shutter boxes impact negatively upon the streetscape.
- 6.26** Some modern infill buildings do not contribute to the character of the area and there are a series of these along Bradshawgate whose size, scale, style, materials and fenestration detract from historic character.
- 6.27** Vacancy is an issue across the town centre and a particular concern in the conservation area as securing long term use of heritage assets is key securing a building's future.. Vacancy not only impacts upon vitality and viability of the area, but the condition of the building can quickly deteriorate when vacant. Whist upper floor vacancy may not have such a significant visual impact as ground floor vacancy, it can also lead to deterioration of the building fabric and increase the requirement for ongoing maintenance.



Picture 6.16 Inappropriate shopfronts and vacancy are an issue.



Picture 6.17 Inappropriate infill with scale, style, materials and fenestration are not positive contributors to the conservation area.

7 Summary

- 7.1** The Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area is a large busy urban and commercial conservation area. Generally, the quality of the conservation area is good to fair with a large number of individual high-quality buildings. Where the conservation area is weakest is in the quality of the shopfronts on Bradshawgate, the loss of nearly all original windows within the War Memorial Character Area and in the gap sites and inappropriate infill development across the area.
- 7.2** Being a commercial conservation area, there is a greater pressure for change and development. Managing that change in a way which allows economic growth but also protects the important qualities of the conservation area is key to ensuring sustainable development overall enhancement of the conservation area.
- 7.3** The following summarises the neutral and negative factors identified in the conservation area that present opportunities for enhancing the character of the conservation area:
- Numerous surface car parks are located throughout the conservation area and detract from urban form and in some instances residential amenity. Rationalising car parks could provide potential infill buildings to recreate traditional tight urban grain, active uses to animate the street or greenspace to enhance amenity.
 - Buildings on corner plots are important landmark features that contribute to the character of the area. Particular care should be taken to protect and conserve these premises and ensure modern development on corner plot are of appropriate scale, quality and prominence.
 - Upvc and render on buildings detracts from the original architectural detail of many buildings. Replacement of upvc with traditional windows should be encouraged.
 - Unsympathetic shop fronts detract from quality buildings. Reinstatement of traditional shop fronts or sympathetic modern designs should be encouraged to re-establish local identity.
 - Roller shutters detract from the character of the area. Alternatives to roller shutters (such as internal grilles) should be encouraged to balance the need for security with the need to ensure an attractive and active streetscape.
 - Vacancy contributes to deterioration of historic fabric. Encouraging refurbishment and re-use of buildings, particularly vacant upper floors of retail premises, would help to secure the future of the historic fabric. The former brewery buildings on Back Queen Street presents an excellent development opportunity for conversion to appropriate town centre uses.
 - Some signage detracts from the character of the conservation area, particularly due to poor positioning, size, type of fixings and method of illumination. Proposals for new signage, particularly to shop fronts, need to be carefully considered to ensure that they do not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Buildings and Sites at Risk

- 7.4** The following are considered to be the key buildings and sites at risk in the Conservation Area:
- 16-18 Bradshawgate, the former J.C. Prestwich Offices is showing signs of a deteriorating upper-floor level with broken windows, plywood replacements and plant growth.
 - 79 Bradshawgate is a commercial building which is suffering from long-term vacancy. It appears there has been some water-ingress and this has caused and is likely to continue to cause long-term damage.
 - Rear of 101 Charles Street is a series of old cottages which appear to be in a poor state of repair due to water ingress/missing gutter and rainwater goods.

8 Conservation Area Boundary Review

- 8.1** The boundary of the conservation area was considered as part of the review of this Conservation Area Appraisal. The review concluded that several amendments were necessary and these have been incorporated in this document.

9 Article 4 Direction Review

- 9.1** Residential dwellinghouses enjoy a variety of permitted development rights which mean that certain alterations can be carried out without the requirement to obtain planning consent. These include works such as replacement windows, doors, addition of rooflights, solar panels, removal of chimneys and demolition of boundary walls, amongst others. Changes of this nature can affect features of importance and significance within the conservation area, having a detrimental impact upon character.
- 9.2** Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, permitted development rights may be restricted which means that planning consent must be secured. Expanding the types of development that require planning permission provides the Local Planning Authority with the opportunity to ensure that the proposed development is not detrimental to the character of the conservation area.
- 9.3** During the review of this Conservation Area Appraisal the potential for introducing an Article 4 Direction has been considered. This assessment has considered: (a) the existence of architectural features that contribute character of the conservation area but may be altered/removed without planning consent; and (b) the degree of change/alteration to these features in the subject property and block (thus the level of intactness and impact of further loss on the character of the conservation area).
- 9.4** The assessment found four distinct groups of properties, where properties exhibit a range of architectural features that contribute to the character of the conservation area. These groups represent the most intact and coherent groups in the conservation area and are important in terms of both historic and aesthetic value. Works to these properties under permitted development rights could have a detrimental impact on the conservation area. Incremental changes pose a threat to the conservation area as they may erode the value which can result in a loss of significance and character. It is recommended that the statutory process to consult upon and make an Article 4 Direction is commenced.
- 9.5** Other parts of the conservation area also include properties with important features and characteristics that contribute to the overall character of the conservation area, however they are not considered appropriate for an Article 4 Direction as the level of change/alteration they have already undergone means that fewer original features remain, this means that although they still contribute to character in terms of their built form, their contribution in terms of the level of architectural detail is reduced.

10 Historic Map Regression

10.1 To understand what makes a place significant, it is important to understand its historic development. One way to understand that is through historic map regression. Below is a sample of historic maps showing the development of Leigh between 1849 and 1947.



Ordnance Survey, 1849, Leigh

Picture 10.1



Ordnance Survey, 1894, Leigh

Picture 10.2



Ordnance Survey, 1908, Leigh

Picture 10.3



Ordnance Survey, 1929, Leigh

Picture 10.4



Ordnance Survey, 1947, Leigh

Picture 10.5



Ordnance Survey, 1952, Leigh Town Centre

Picture 10.6



Ordnance Survey, 1969, Leigh Town Centre

Picture 10.7



Ordnance Survey, 1981, Leigh Town Centre

Picture 10.8

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