

Town Hall Conservation Area



Draft Conservation Area Appraisal

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***Cover illustration: Bolton Town Hall in 1908, from a postcard
(www.boltonrevisited.org.uk)***

TOWN HALL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 Introduction

The Town Hall Conservation Area is situated in the central part of Bolton town centre. The conservation area is focused on Victoria Square, with the streets to the west.

The purpose of the conservation area appraisal is to reassess the designated Town Hall Conservation Area, and to evaluate and record its special interest. As part of this review, two small extensions to the conservation area are proposed. This review of the Conservation Area was undertaken in 2007 by The Architectural History Practice, on behalf of Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council. The appraisal will have an important function in development control and managing the area, and supplements the guidance within *Building Bolton Supplementary Planning Document*, published by the Council in 2006.

2.0 Policy Background

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”, as set out in Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Local authorities have a duty to designate such areas and to review them, and to use their planning powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas within a framework of managing change with a positive approach. Designation automatically entails control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, strengthens controls over minor development and gives special protection to trees within the area. Policies in the Unitary Development Plan also guide the Council’s decision-making within Conservation Areas.

The Town Hall Conservation Area was originally designated as part of the Town Centre Conservation Area in 1987 which was subdivided into three smaller areas in 1996. The Town Hall conservation area was last reviewed by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council in the late 1990s.

3.0 Summary of special interest

The focus of the Conservation Area is the Town Hall in Victoria Square. This building dominates the conservation area and the town centre due its scale, mass, architectural style and the height of the tower, a local landmark. The area also includes the civic complex on Le Mans Crescent and the partly open area space between here and Black Horse Street. The conservation area takes in buildings that line all sides of the Square.

Victoria Square was first created as a formal open space for the town’s market in the 1820s. The area was an attractive location to site the market, as it was close to the existing market place on Deansgate and Churchgate, and one of the few undeveloped open spaces in the town centre. Up until the 1820s, the area was covered in orchards and fields, in an area in the south-west quadrant of the town, in the angle between Deansgate and Bradshawgate. The square was chosen as the site for the Town Hall, built following an architectural competition and opened in 1873. The Town Hall was extended in the 1930s as part of the creation of a formal group of civic buildings on Le

Mans Crescent. The frontages around the square were re-developed for retail or office use in the 20th century, and original 19th century buildings are now rare in this area.

The scale of the majority of buildings in the conservation area is fairly uniform, with buildings generally no more than 3 or 4 storeys high, allowing the large volume and tall clock tower of the Town Hall to visually dominate the area, and indeed much of the central part of the town. Longer views of the Town Hall are important from points around the edge of the town centre, including from Queens Park and gateways into the town such as Tonge Road, Chorley Old Road and Bury Road.

Within the town centre, the grid street pattern and openness of Victoria Square allows for a mixture of open and framed views. Views of the Town Hall across the Square are very significant, although in summer trees partly obscure the views. Views either side of the Town Hall are important towards Le Mans Crescent, and also along Queen Street and Cheadle Square of the rear of the Crescent, where the high quality of the Le Mans Crescent buildings extends to the rear elevation. Longer north-south views are possible along Oxford Street and Newport Street. Views along side streets are terminated by the mass of the Town Hall, creating some dramatic framed views of the building.

Most buildings are faced in stone, reflecting the high status of the civic buildings and also the post-war use of stone cladding. A few buildings have been rendered or painted on Oxford Street. Roofs are slate or in a variety of sheet cladding materials such as copper.

The fairly coarse grain of the townscape is the result of the re-development of many sites with large buildings from the early 20th century, often occupying whole blocks in contrast to the finer grain of early 19th century streets in Bolton. Some of this re-development has obscured the historic street pattern; the rear of the Town Hall was built over Howell Croft and the west end of Exchange Street was built over at first floor level by part of the Crompton Place development. Victoria Square is the town centre's most important open space, with a secondary open space west of Le Mans Crescent; however, this works less well and there may scope for development on part of this area.

Historic street surfaces are important to the character of the conservation area, particularly on Le Mans Crescent, Howell Croft North and Queen Street, where granite setts and stone paving have been retained. Elsewhere, streets are surfaced in tarmac with concrete paving. Victoria Square has been re-laid with a combination of concrete setts and stone paving, with contemporary lighting and seating. There are some good examples of historic street lamp columns on Cheadle Square. Except for Black Horse Street and Ashburner Street, vehicular traffic is light due to the large pedestrianised areas, which are busy with people.

4.0 Assessing Special Interest:

4.1 Location and setting

The Town Hall conservation area is located on the east side of the town centre, on a plateau of land defined by the River Croal to the north and east. Bolton developed at the junction of several small rivers, which are tributaries of the River Irwell. The underlying geology is Carboniferous Sandstone with coal measures, overlain by sands and gravels.

The conservation area is roughly 300 metres above sea level, on land that generally slopes to the south towards the railway line and beyond to the Manchester basin.

The conservation area is bounded by Black Horse Street to the west and the east edge is defined by the properties fronting the west side of Victoria Square. The north side is bounded by properties fronting the north side of the Square and the south boundary runs along Ashburner Street and behind properties on the south side of the Square. To the north is the Deansgate Conservation area focused on the Market, and to the east is the Mawdsley Street conservation area, with Nelson Square. South of Victoria Square is Newport Street, re-developed along its west side in the 1950s.

Town Hall Conservation Area is within the area referred to as The Civic Core in *Building Bolton* SPD (2006), with the core shopping area within the north, east and south edges of the conservation area and public buildings to the centre and western side.

4.2 Historic Development and Archaeology

Early Bolton

Archaeological work in Bolton has shown that there were prehistoric settlements in the area; a Bronze Age burial was found just a quarter of a mile to the south east of the Church. The church occupies a low promontory site bounded by the River Croal to the north and east which would have presented an attractive, defensible place to establish a community, on well-drained sands and gravels. The only evidence for Roman activity in Bolton comes from a fragment of Roman pottery found during recent archaeological excavations at the site of the former Boar's Head Inn on the north side of Churchgate.

Although Bolton is not mentioned in Domesday, a settlement almost certainly existed by then, suggested by the Anglo-Saxon cross found during the construction of St Peter's Church in 1868. The place-name is Old English and means a dwelling or hamlet in an enclosure, first recorded in the 12th century. The town was also known as Bolton-le-Moors, referring to its location on the edge of open moorland.

Following the granting of borough status to Bolton in 1253, the town's burgesses had the right to build on burgage plots fronting Deansgate and Churchgate. These streets were the centre of town life from the medieval period to the 18th century, and provided the site of the market. A market charter was first granted to William de Ferrers, the Lord of the Manor by Henry III in 1251, a market cross stood at the junction of Deansgate Bradshawgate and Churchgate from 1486 until 1786. During most of the medieval period Bolton was principally a market town, with its residents dependent on the surrounding farmland. Textiles became increasingly important to the prosperity of the town, initially woollens and later cotton and linen; by the 1530s Leland noted that the market "standeth most by cottons and coarse yarn", with fuel coming from coal pits as well from turf. In the 17th century the town was known for fustian manufacture, a mix of cotton and linen, and trade supported a growing merchant class. Counter-panes and bed-quilts were specialities; Bolton was renowned for the fine quality of its cotton production.

As there has been no archaeological work undertaken on sites within the conservation area, little is known about early settlement, medieval or post-medieval activity in the area. Opportunities for future investigation should be taken whenever sites are redeveloped in the future.

During the Civil War in the 1640s, Bolton supported Parliament against Charles I and the Earl of Derby; the town was staunchly protestant and had a growing merchant class. In 1643, following his defeat at Preston, the Earl of Derby unsuccessfully attacked the town but a third attack in 1644 succeeded and Bolton was sacked and burned. The Earl of Derby was subsequently tried in Bolton, and beheaded at the Market Cross on Churchgate in 1651.

The town grew slowly until the late 18th century, when the rapidly expanding cotton industry brought accelerated growth and prosperity to the town. The 1793 map of Bolton Appendix 2 shows a layout that was essentially that of the medieval town, with limited expansion to the south of Deansgate (the River Croal and Little Bolton limited northwards growth). Beyond the edge of the built-up area were orchards, gardens and meadows. These were developed as the town grew more quickly from the late 18th Century onwards. At this date, a series of long narrow lanes ran south from Deansgate, a pattern that reflected the layout of medieval burgh plots. These lanes included Spring Gardens, Howell Croft, Old Hall Street and Oxford Street, and they were later linked by short east-west lanes including Barn Street, Hotel Street and Ashburner Street.

The old street names reflect the town's rural origins and its later industrialisation. Ashburner Street was probably so named because it originally led to a number of engineering works. Barn Street was originally the site of Barn Meadow. Spring Gardens ran south from Deansgate to Great Moor Street and was the site of gardens, which were later developed for engineering works. Old Hall Street was named after Bolton's first poor house, The Old Hall, which was built by the overseers of Great Bolton in 1785. Howell Croft is probably named after the Howell Family who owned a croft or meadow in this area at the turn of the 19th Century when the street was first laid out.

Town Hall conservation area in the 19th century

In 1810 an area of meadows between Howell Croft and New Acres was acquired as a new market place, as the medieval market on Deansgate and Churchgate had become congested. The new market opened in 1826 on a square initially known as New Market Place, shown on Baines' 1824 map (Appendix 2). Oxford Street was cut through from Deansgate in the early 19th century to provide access to New Market Place from the north and Newport Street was laid out from the south, named after Viscount Newport of the Bridgeman family whose title was conferred in 1815.

Once established, the area around the market became an important focus of commercial activity. The first Bolton Savings Bank opened on Oxford Street in 1818, with an assembly room, and in 1824, the Exchange Buildings were built on the south-east corner of the square, designed by Richard Lane in Greek Revival style. The east side of the square was developed with a long terrace of shops and town houses. Along the north side of the square ran an east-west street named Barrack Lane on the 1793 map, New Market Street on Baines' 1824 map, and shown as Hotel Street on the 1849 OS map (Appendix 2). The Victoria and the Commercial Hotels were on this street in the 19th century. Throughout the 19th century, the area west and east of the square was dense with narrow north-south lanes built-up with terraced workers' housing (Fig.2). Between Black Horse Street and Spring Gardens there was a large foundry, and the 1890s map (Appendix 2) also shows a tobacco manufacturers between Howell Croft and Old Hall Street north of the Square.



Fig.1: Exchange Buildings, built in 1825

The Square was provided with features to complement its function and civic status. At the opening of the New Market Place Benjamin Hick, an industrialist, presented a gas lamp for the centre of the square. His son later donated a circular stone horse trough, and a public drinking fountain was erected by public subscription, all these features have been removed, the latter to Queens Park. The market was re-located to the newly built covered market on Knowsley Street in 1855, although the Square continued to be used by some market traders and was also popular with travelling fairs. A large wholesale market opened on the south side of Ashburner Street in 1871.

The town council ran a competition for the design of a new town hall in the 1860s, to occupy a central position in the market square. The winning design was by the Leeds architect William Hill, who provided a confident classical design, very similar to Leeds Town Hall. The new Town Hall was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1873, with its imposing east-facing entrance, and the same year the square was renamed Town Hall Square. Statues of two prominent Boltonians flank the front of the Town Hall; the statue of Dr. Chadwick, a local doctor and prominent benefactor, was unveiled in 1873 and that of Sir Benjamin Dobson, a cotton and machine manufacturer, and mayor, was unveiled in February 1900. The Square was re-named Victoria Square in 1897.



Fig.2: Victoria Square, the east side before redevelopment, early 20th (Bolton Archives)

In the late 19th Century a tram route ran north-south across the square and along Oxford and Newport Streets, and in later years, the Square operated as a bus terminal and was a popular starting point for charabanc outings (Fig.2). A public library was built south of the Town Hall in 1893, on the site now occupied by the Wellsprings building.

Town Hall conservation area in the 20th century

Bolton's civic pride and the prosperity of the town as the leading cotton town in Lancashire led to a visionary scheme to create an ambitious civic quarter in the early 20th century. Part of the "Beautiful Bolton" scheme promoted by Lord Leverhulme and developed as a design by the landscape architect Thomas Mawson, the design envisaged the complete re-planning of the town centre with a wide tree lined boulevard connecting the front of the Town Hall to the Parish Church, with another curving boulevard to Queens Park. This scheme was not pursued, but an alternative civic centre project was developed from 1931 by the Borough, designed by Bradshaw Gass and Hope, the leading Bolton architects. The Council acquired the site of a cleared foundry and housing in 1927. The new civic scheme extended the Town Hall to the west across the line of Howell Croft, and created a curved crescent of civic buildings on a new street to the rear. Complete by 1933 and opened by the Earl of Derby in 1939, the complex was named Le Mans Crescent in 1974 in honour of Bolton's first twin town in France.

The Bolton War Memorial on the east side of Victoria Square was unveiled in 1928; the arched memorial was designed by Robert McNaught of Bradshaw Gass and Hope. The shop on the west corner of Oxford Street and Victoria Square was built for the co-op in 1928, also designed by Bradshaw Gass and Hope.



Fig.3: Le Mans Crescent and the Town Hall extension under construction, early 1930s (photo from W.E.Brown, 1972)

Although the historic space of Victoria Square and the Town Hall remains the focus of the conservation area, the present appearance and character of the area is largely the result of re-development in the first half of the 20th century. The west side of Newport Street was cleared for new retail development in 1957, and the terrace of former town houses lining the east side of the square was demolished to make way for retail development in 1959. The shops were completed as part of the Arndale Centre, now called Crompton Place, which opened in 1971. The section of Whitakers' department store facing the Square on the north side of the Town Hall was built in 1968-69. The Octagon Theatre, on the south side of the Square, on Howell Croft South dates from 1967.



Fig.4: Victoria Square prior to its closure to traffic in the early 1960s
(www.boltonrevisted.org.uk)

The pedestrianised character of the square was established in the late 1960s, following an earlier improvement scheme on the east side of the square. In 1963 the late J.W. Wigglesworth, a Freeman of the Borough, paid for the east side of Victoria Square to be improved with tree planting, floodlighting and two fountains adjacent to the War Memorial (Fig.4). In 1969, Oxford Street, Victoria Square and Newport Street North were closed to traffic, to create Bolton's first pedestrian precinct. The paved area was opened in 1973 and the scheme won a Civic Trust award. In 1998, extensive environmental improvements were carried out to the whole of Victoria Square, to upgrade the quality of Bolton's most important public space. The work included natural stone paving and quality concrete setts with new fountains and street furniture including lighting, benches, litter bins, bollards and banners. The shelter at the north end of Newport Street incorporates two elephants with castles from the Bolton Bleachworks on Chorley Street.

Victoria Square now performs two key urban functions, as a civic space with public buildings on its western side, and as an important public space within the retail core. There are some signs that retail activity may not be as viable in this area as in the past, with the former co-op store, Victoria Plaza currently vacant. The impact of commercial advertising is intrusive on other premises.

3 Open Spaces

Victoria Square is the focus of the conservation area, the town's most significant public open space. This square is enclosed by the three or four-storey buildings that line the

sides of the square, with the Town Hall dominating the west side of the space. The square is a hard-landscaped area with concrete setts and natural stone paving, with a small area of formal garden around the War Memorial. The square has mature trees along the south side in front of the Exchange Building and along the north side. The trees now appear too close to the Exchange Building and hide this important building in views from the north and north-west.

The current landscape design of Victoria Square was created in the late 1990s, providing new seating, lighting and other street furniture in a contemporary design. The square was first pedestrianised in the 1970s, along with Oxford Street and Newport Street. The landscaping of these two streets is less well defined and visually, the streets appear to “leak” out of the square, with poorer quality paving than in Victoria Square. Oxford Street was chosen as the site for a Hick Hargreaves 1886 steam engine, visible to the public in a glazed enclosure. The view south down Newport Street is partly blocked by the modern shelter.



Fig.5: The north side of Victoria Square, with trees, recent paving and lighting.

The partly open area between Queen Street and Black Horse Street was occupied by the buildings of the Black Horse Foundry until the end of the 19th century. Cheadle Square was laid out in the 1930s and provides an important formal approach to Le Mans Crescent. Either side are areas of unenclosed open space used as car parks or covered with grass; these spaces are poorly defined, with scattered 20th century buildings on the edges. There are no public facilities other than parking in the space. As the urban grain is fragmented here, this area would benefit from appropriate new development, whilst protecting Cheadle Square.



Fig.6: Green space and 1930s office west of Queen Street

4.4 Views and vistas

The wide open space of Victoria Square provides open views of the Town Hall, slightly obscured by trees, particularly in summer. The linear street pattern and fairly level topography allows for longer views along Newport Street and Oxford Street. The only views of the wider Bolton area and the West Pennine Moors are northwards from the southern end of Queen Street and Cheadle Square. There is a view from the north side of Victoria Square down Oxford Street and Knowsley Street to the towers of the Victoria Hall and the former Church of St. George. The tower of the Victoria Hall is also visible from Old Hall Street North and the tower of the Parish Church of St. Peter can be seen from parts of the Square. The Town Hall tower can be seen over the roof tops from many locations around the town centre, with tightly framed views of the building from nearby side streets such as Coronation Street.



Fig.7: View of the Town Hall tower from Newport Street.

The gentle curve of Le Mans Crescent creates an interesting succession of views of the enclosed townscape at the rear of the Town Hall. West of Le Mans Crescent, the open, formal views of the central archways are important from Cheadle Square. Longitudinal views north and south along Queen Street are more intimate and provide some

interesting oblique views of the rear of Le Mans Crescent. The openness of the land west of Le Mans Crescent means that framed views of the civic building are lacking.



Fig.8: View east along Cheadle Square towards Le Mans Crescent

4.5 Character and appearance

The character of the conservation area is defined by Victoria Square and the imposing presence of the Town Hall and civic buildings on Le Mans Crescent. The buildings that enclose the square are either in retail or civic use, and of differing dates, resulting in buildings of contrasting appearance. The functional, rather “closed” appearance of the civic buildings contrasts with the retail premises, where shop frontages have large areas of window for displays and advertising, which create visually lively frontages.



Fig.9:Crompton Place retail development on the east side of Victoria Square, opened in 1971 as the Arndale Centre.

Architecturally, the two groups of buildings differ in terms of quality, with ashlar stone and fine detailing used on the civic buildings to denote their status. There are a few brick buildings such as the office on Queen Street (Fig.6) and 19th century terraced buildings on Oxford Street, now painted or rendered. Stone cladding is used on the post-war retail stores, with Portland limestone on Newport Street. Other materials such as copper sheet are used for mansard roofs.



Fig.10: Le Mans Crescent in the mid 20th century (Bolton Archives)

The open public spaces around the Town Hall contrast with the narrow, enclosed spatial character of Howell Croft North and Coronation Street which are partly used as service streets for surrounding buildings. All streets within the area, apart from Queen Street are well used by pedestrians because they contain a wide variety of shops, services and leisure facilities. Cheadle Square is an important pedestrian route from the Town Hall Square area to the bus station and the markets. Vehicular traffic within the conservation area is light due to the large pedestrianised spaces. Taxis and private cars use Le Mans Crescent and Ashburner Street for access to the civic buildings and offices. Car parking is visually dominant in Cheadle Square.

There is no residential property within the conservation area, in contrast to over a 100 years ago.

4.6 Character areas

The conservation area can be divided into two contrasting character areas, Victoria Square and the streets to the west of Le Mans Crescent .

a) **Victoria Square**

Victoria Square is the most important public space in Bolton, providing the setting for the Town hall. Le Mans Crescent is a fine example of 1930s town planning, the setted street lined with civic and public buildings, with a restrained, formal character. The Town Hall has a strong vertical emphasis with rich detailing in contrast to the plain architecture and horizontal lines of the retail development on the east, south and north sides of the square. The square is laid with concrete setts and natural stone paving with contemporary street furniture, and mature trees are also important. Some 19th century buildings survive on Oxford Street, where the fine grain of the historic townscape is still evident in narrow, 3-storey frontages. This contrasts with the large 20th century retail premises on Victoria Square; they have a fairly neutral presence in the area, due to their restrained style. The Octagon Theatre, on Ashburner Street, was designed in contrast to the historic context, in a brown brick with large areas of glazing, but is a distinctive part of the local street scene.



Fig.11: The Octagon Theatre

b) Ashburner Street and Black Horse Street.

The western part of the conservation area covers an area once densely developed with workers' housing and industry. It is now has a fragmentary character with thinly developed sites and unenclosed open spaces, but is strongly defined along its east side by the rear of Le Mans Crescent. The other buildings are of varied function and scale, mostly of 20th century date. On Black Horse Street the government building used as the Job Centre has a large volume and occupies most of a block, in contrast to the single-storey retail premises on the corner to the south. Main streets are surfaced in tarmac with concrete paving, with stone setts retained on Cheadle Square and Queen Street.

4.7 The Qualities of Buildings

The Conservation Area contains two main building types and styles, with retail premises on Oxford Street and the east and north sides of Victoria Square, and public and civic buildings to the west of the area. The civic buildings provide some of the highest quality architecture in the town, using fine ashlar stone and carved decorative details in a classical style. The Town Hall was designed to be imposing and its quality, scale and form ensure that it is an important landmark in Bolton.

The commercial buildings are three or four storeys high and the majority are faced in Portland limestone, glazing or other modern materials. These buildings generally have horizontal proportions with canopies, flat rooflines and long shop fronts (Fig.9). Some have been altered at ground floor level with new shop fronts and advertising. A few 19th century buildings survive on Oxford Street, originally built as townhouses or hotels.

More recent buildings are of five or six storeys, their bulk being partly disguised by false mansard roofs clad in slate, lead or copper. The quality of the later 20th Century buildings varies from the clean lines and strong vertical proportions of the Wellsprings to visually much less successful buildings of extremely bland design, for example the Job centre on Black Horse Street.

Listed Buildings

Five buildings are listed as being of Special Architectural or Historic Interest within the Conservation Area.:

*Town Hall, Victoria Square, Grade II**

The Town Hall was built between 1866 and 1873 to designs by William Hill of Leeds, with George Woodhouse of Bolton. It was extended in 1938, designed by Bradshaw, Gass and Hope. The building is faced in ashlar, designed in the form of a Classical temple with a broad flight of steps up to the pedimented portico. The baroque-style clock tower gives the building height. The building has a high basement storey with two principal floors above. On plan there is a central hall lit by a clerestory with offices forming an outer ring. The relief sculpture in the pediment is by W. Calder Marshall, with a central figure representing Bolton with a crown, shield and the Borough arms, flanked by other figures representing manufacturing and commerce. The central hall was damaged by fire in 1981 and the Albert Halls have been reconstructed with an inserted ceiling to form two public halls. The original coffered ceiling with vaulting and the plaster panelled walls have been reinstated. The 1930s extension provides office space, and was sensitively designed to match the Victorian building externally, but with plain 1930s interiors.



Fig.12: 1873 statue of Dr Chadwick in front of the Town Hall

Nationwide Building Society, Victoria Square, Grade II (Fig.1).

This property was originally built as an exchange and library between 1825-1829 and is now offices. It is constructed of ashlar with a slate roof. Designed in a Greek Revival by Richard Lane, the frontage has giant Ionic columns each side of the central bay and the central entrance has a moulded architrave with a flat entablature. The windows have fifteen pane sashes with emblems carved in panels above them. The cast-iron street sign is an important historic feature on the west gable.

Le Mans Crescent, Grade II

Civic buildings constructed in 1932-39, to designs by Bradshaw Gass and Hope on a formal, slightly asymmetric plan of end pavilions flanking a shallow crescent. The

complex provides accommodation for the museum, library, health clinics, police station and courts. The steel-framed building is faced in sandstone ashlar with continuous parapets to the slate roof. The central triple arches are on an axis with Cheadle Square to the west.



Fig.13: Queen Street and the west front of Le Mans Crescent

Statue of Lieutenant Colonel Sir B.A. Dobson, Victoria Square, Grade II.

The statue was sculpted by John Cassidy and consists of a bronze figure standing on a polished granite plinth. B.A. Dobson (1847-1898) was a manufacturer and mayor of Bolton between 1895 and 1898, and the statue was erected by public subscription.

Chadwick Statue, Victoria Square, Grade II (Fig.12).

This statue of Dr Samuel Chadwick was erected in 1873 and sculpted by C.B. Birch. It consists of a bronze figure on a stone plinth which has an inset bronze low relief tablet depicting a seated woman with poor children.



Fig.14: War Memorial with formal garden.

War Memorial, Victoria Square, Grade II

The War Memorial commemorates the men of Bolton who died in the First World War and dates from 1928, with statues added in 1933. It was designed by Robert McNaught of Bradshaw Gass and Hope, with sculpture by Walter Marsden. The memorial is in the form of an arch, faced in white granite ashlar with recesses enclosing a bronze cross, with bronze figures on each side.

Unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Victoria Plaza, Victoria Square (Fig.26).

This prominent building on the corner of Oxford Street, Victoria Square and Old Hall Street was built as a co-op store in 1928. Its classical design has some similarities with Le Mans Crescent and it was also designed by Bradshaw Gass and Hope. Faced in dressed stone, it is three storeys high with a pitched slate roof with dormer windows, behind a balustraded parapet topped by urns. There is a continuous canopy at ground floor level, and the windows have metal frames with margin lights. The building is currently vacant.

No.6 Oxford Street.

This early 19th century building is three storeys high with a rendered frontage and a pitched slate roof. There are three tall Venetian windows on the first floor with painted stone surrounds and vertical sliding sash windows. This indicates that the building may once have been used for functions; assembly rooms are shown on the 1824 map close to this site. The ground and second floors have been altered.



Fig.15: No. 6 Oxford Street retains early 19th century windows to first floor, although the ground floor shop front is intrusive.

4.8 Building materials and features

Buildings in the conservation area are built of a wide range of materials, with buff-coloured sandstone being used for the higher status buildings such as the Town Hall

and le Mans Crescent and also 20th century retail stores. Early 19th century buildings on Oxford Street were built of red brick which has been rendered. Roofs are slate with modern materials on mansard including metal sheeting.



Fig.16: The 1970s Wellsprings Building is faced in sandstone ashlar, to complement The Town Hall.

Railings and boundary walls are not a common feature in the conservation area, as most properties are built up to the back of the footway. An exception is the rear of Le Mans Crescent where panels of good quality steel railings protect the basement area.

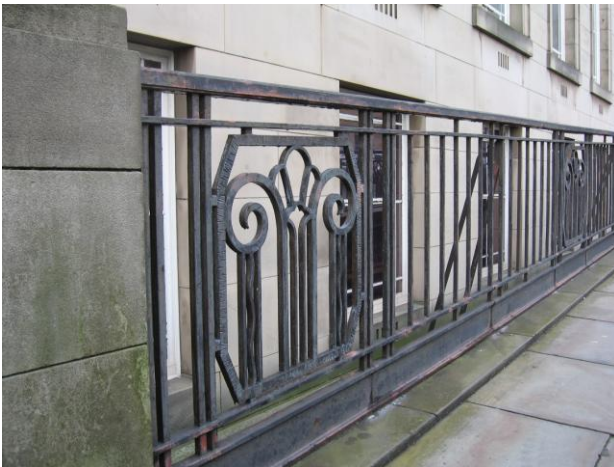


Fig.17: 1930s railings on Queen Street

4.9 Public realm: roads and pavements

Carriageways on Ashburner Street and Black Horse Street are surfaced in tarmacadam, with large stone setts laid on Le Mans Crescent and north and south of the Town hall extension. These setted surfaces have the benefit of slowing traffic on the street as well as complementing the architecture and the street scene. On Victoria Square, good

quality concrete setts were used with natural paving, as part the 1990s enhancement work in the square.



Fig.18: Granite stone setts on Howell Croft North, with stone paving and kerbs; the yellow lines are intrusive

The hard surfacing on Oxford Street is of lesser quality with a mixture of concrete pavers, now in need or renewal. The footways to Ashburner Street and Black Horse Street are concrete. Standard red tactile paving has been used to mark pedestrian crossings. Steel guard railings are used on the front edge of Ashburner Street footways, probably installed in the 1930s.



Fig.19: concrete paving surfaces on Oxford Street, now in need of enhancement

Street furniture that contributes to the street scene includes the 1930s lighting on Cheadle Square and the Edward VII post box outside the former Exchange Building on Victoria Square.



Fig.20: traditional post box outside the former Exchange Building

5.0 Extent of intrusion and damage

5.1 Negative aspects

Rear yard areas are often hidden from view, but car parking and the management of waste, particularly wheeled bin storage is increasingly intrusive in views into rear yards and on some side streets.



Fig.21: The ugly side elevation of a retail property on Coronation Street, off the south side of Victoria Square, wheeled bins are also intrusive here.

Some of the late 20th century office and retail development in the conservation area has been harmful to the character of the area and the setting of the Town Hall. A mediocre standard of design is the key issue, as the scale and massing of new buildings has often been appropriate to the context. Examples of poor design for the context include the Mothercare store on the north east corner of the square and the rear of Whitakers on Old Hall Street. Poor design can be exacerbated by badly sited building services and surface parking, resulting in unattractive places for pedestrians, and the erosion of the historic townscape.



Fig.22: Post-war offices on the east side of Black Horse Street, with large area surface car park.

Poor quality alterations to historic buildings, including the rendering of brick elevations and the installation of modern windows has harmed the character of street frontages, for example on the east side of Oxford Street. Shop fronts, advertising and security shutters in inappropriate materials and styles have been installed in a number of properties, and there is pressure for temporary advertising such as plastic banners. Alterations to ground floors for large shopfronts have been harmful to the character of the conservation area in some cases.



Fig.23: Rendered gable and signage to the one surviving 19th century terraced building on Cheapside Square, in the south-east corner of Victoria Square.

The quality of hard landscaping on some streets is poor and now in need of renewal in durable, natural or appropriate high quality materials. Surfaces and lighting along Oxford Street and Ashburner Street are now in need of upgrading, to complement the high quality surfaces elsewhere in the conservation area. The use of standard double yellow lines has spoiled the appearance of good quality setts around Le Mans Crescent (Fig.18). The openness of Victoria Square and its connection to Newport Street has been eroded by the shelter on Newport Street, and by the amount of poles in the square

which create visual clutter; excess poles could be removed. The first floor link built over Exchange Street erodes this part of the street pattern and reduces linkages between the Victoria Square and the Mawdsley Street conservation area.



Fig.24: The charity shelter at the north end of Newport Street blocks views down the street and has an unclear function

5.2 Neutral areas

Some late 20th century development has had a neutral impact on the character of the conservation area due to an appropriate scale and compatible natural facing materials, although the design quality is modest. The Wellsprings offices south of the Town Hall and the Job Centre on Black Horse Street are examples of this. The 1960s retail development on the east and north sides of Victoria Square are neutral in terms of their scale and form.

5.3 General condition

The condition of historic buildings within the conservation area is generally good, with most buildings appearing to be in active use and benefiting from regular maintenance. Exceptions to this are the 1928 former co-op, Victoria Plaza, on Victoria Square/Oxford Street, which is currently vacant, as is the retail property at No. 6 Oxford Street. This report has not recorded the extent of upper floor vacancy.

The public realm is generally well maintained, although the paving on Oxford Street and Newport Street is now in need of enhancement, due to the poor condition and quality of materials. Traditional stone setts and paving on Le Mans Crescent appears in good condition, although on one side roads the setts have been covered in tarmac.



Fig.25: The tarmac laid over stone sets off the west side of Howell Croft North could be removed

5.4 Pressure for change

Commercial pressure for highly visible advertising is becoming visually intrusive in some areas, particularly on principal retail frontages. Changes in retail patterns are causing increasing vacant space on upper floors and in one notable case, an entire store.



Fig.26: The prominent Victoria Plaza, built for the co-op in 1928 is currently empty.

Changes to waste management standards are resulting in large wheeled bins which can be hard to conceal and intrusive in the street scene, unless easily accessible rear yards are available.

Disabled access standards mean that some businesses will need to adjust entrances with steps on some historic buildings, or make other reasonable alterations. In the public realm, future enhancement schemes will need to comply with the latest standards and guidance.

The 2007 ban on smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces is likely to generate a demand for smoking shelters and outdoor seating, which will require careful management to avoid intrusive new structures.

6.0 Community involvement.

A publicity leaflet which included a tear out questionnaire was distributed to businesses and properties within all the Town Centre Conservation Areas. In addition two half day drop in sessions were held at the library foyer in Le Mans Crescent on 22nd and 23rd January 2008 to provide advice and respond to comments. In total approximately 600 leaflets were distributed. A press release raising awareness of the drop in session was advertised in the Bolton Evening News and the Conservation Area Appraisals were made available to view online.

Respondents were asked if they agreed on the boundary extensions, whether they wished to see more areas protected and to score in terms of importance eight key recommendations set out in the Conservation Area Management Plan.

The response rate was low but raised no objections to the boundary extensions. The Civic Trust were one of the respondents and were generally supportive of all the Conservation Area boundary extensions. Some concern was raised regarding constraints that Conservation Area status afforded and that the extended areas could not be afforded adequate protection by the Authority given the investment pressure in some of these areas.

7.0 Suggested conservation area boundary changes

No additional areas are recommended for inclusion in the conservation area.

8.0 Guidelines for development

Building Bolton provides guidelines for new development in the town centre. However, opportunities within the conservation area are limited and are most likely to be presented by small infill and gap sites, or sites where existing buildings have a negative impact on the character of the area. New development must reflect the character of existing buildings with respect to siting, scale, proportions, materials and detailing. Applications for Outline Planning Permission will not be considered unless supported by a masterplan and a high level of detail. Applications for full planning permission must include a Design and Access statement that explains the development's affect on the character and appearance of the conservation area, demonstrating that the scheme will be sensitive to its context, supported by visual images such as photomontages or perspective drawings. Good quality contemporary design, related to the historic context and character of the area will be encouraged.

Key factors to take into account are:

- consistent building heights, except where punctuated by corner features;
- the varied skyline,
- the texture of frontages and the balance of windows/recessed openings to solid wall;
- vertical rhythm and the proportion of elevations;
- articulation of building elevations;
- tightly-developed plots and buildings providing enclosure to streets.

8.2 Demolition

Consent will not usually be given to demolish buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, unless it can be demonstrated that the replacement development will bring over-riding community benefits and be of a high design quality. The criteria in PPG15 and UDP policy will be referred to.

8.3 Advertisement Control.

The Authority will apply high standards when considering applications for Advertisement Consent in the Conservation Area. Certain categories of advertisements are not permitted in Conservation Areas and discontinuance action will be taken against existing signs where they do not conform to the guidelines given in Planning Control Policy Note No.6 - "The Display of Signs and Advertisements". Temporary advertising such as plastic banners are not acceptable in the conservation area.

8.4 Street surfacing and furniture

The *Public Realm Implementation Framework*, adopted by the Council in 2007, provides guidance on design and standards for public realm enhancement. In addition, an audit of original stone flags, setts and kerbs in the conservation area should be undertaken, and significant examples retained and relaid where necessary. The potential for repairing and relaying significant examples of setted streets should be explored, for example on Oxford Street.

New paving should be in reclaimed or new stone. Concrete flags incorporating an appropriate aggregate may be acceptable in some locations. Brick paving or black tarmac should not be used on footways as these materials are not in keeping with the character of the area.

Historic street furniture such as cast-iron lamp standards should be retained and repaired, with appropriate light fittings.

New lighting, bins and bollards, highway signage and seating should be designed to complement the character of the street. The number of separate items should be minimised to reduce visual clutter and obstacles to disabled people. High quality contemporary designs will be encouraged where appropriate, as well as more traditional designs.

8.5 Building Materials

Alterations should utilise traditional materials to match those used to construct the building. These include brick, stone, terracotta, slate, stone flags and clay tiles, reclaimed local stone, new stone or reconstituted stone.

Strap or ribbon pointing should be avoided since this not only harms the appearance of the building but can damage the stone or brick by preventing the evaporation of water.

External brick and stone walls should not be painted, rendered or clad in modern materials.

External cleaning should only be carried out to remove corrosive dirt. Cleaning should be carried out by a specialist firm under close supervision.

Decorative features including plaques, mouldings and date stones should be retained.

8.6 Windows and doors.

Stone window cills, lintels, door surrounds and stone steps should be retained together with any original windows and doors.

Any doorways or windows no longer in use should be retained and not blocked up. Historic joinery should be maintained in good condition and not replaced with modern imitations.

Owners should be encouraged to use the following styles when replacing windows and doors:

- For Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century properties, vertical sliding sash windows with glazing bars and six-panelled doors.
- For late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century properties, vertical sliding sash windows and four-panelled doors.

Windows and doors should be made of timber and should be painted. Staining is not a traditional finish for timber and should not be used. P.V.C.u windows and doors are not acceptable as they are not in keeping with the character of traditional buildings.

New windows and doors should be recessed to the original depth and should not be fitted flush with the face of the wall or project from it.

8.7 Chimneys and Roofs.

Chimney stacks should be retained. If rebuilding is necessary this should be in the same materials used to construct the remainder of the building, this may be brick or stone with clay pots. Where central heating flues are installed, these should be contained within the original chimney pot or a traditional replacement.

Roof repairs or replacements should be in natural slate, stone flags or red clay tiles to match the existing materials. Where ridge tiles need replacing these should be in stone or clay.

New rooflights may be acceptable but these should be flush fitting and should not be on prominent roof slopes.

8.8 Rainwater Goods.

Replacement rainwater goods should be in cast iron or moulded aluminium with a black coating. Plastic rainwater goods are not acceptable.

8.9 Boundary Walls, Gates and Railings

Brick and stone boundary walls, iron railings and gates should be retained and any repairs carried out using the same materials and methods of workmanship.

8.10 Shop fronts and Advertisements.

The installation of traditional-style painted timber shop fronts will be encouraged on historic buildings, incorporating the use of stall risers, pilasters and cornices to frame the shop window. Contemporary shop front designs of high quality will also be encouraged on appropriate buildings. More detailed guidance can be found in the Council's *Shopfront Design Guide*.

Advertisement consent will not be given for internally illuminated box signs. External lights and concealed lighting will be encouraged in conjunction with well-designed signage. Temporary plastic signage such as banners is not appropriate in the conservation area. Hand painted fascia signs and hanging signs will be encouraged.

Security shutters should preferably be fixed inside the shop windows and be of a perforated grille type to allow for a view of the window display. If external shutters are unavoidable, they should be incorporated into the overall design of the shop front with the shutter box concealed behind the fascia. The shutter system should be colour-coated to match the colour of the shop front and the shutters should be perforated.

Externally-fixed shutter boxes which project from the facade of the shop, galvanised finishes and solid shutters are not in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area and are not acceptable.

8.11 Minor Fixtures and Services.

Standard external fixtures including satellite dishes, meter boxes, burglar alarms, central heating flues and security cameras should be sited in unobtrusive positions wherever possible. They should be colour-coated to match the background materials i.e. walls or roofs. Air-conditioning units should only be located on hidden, rear elevations.

8.12 Wheeled Bins.

The layout of traditional properties can create difficulties for storing bins. Wherever possible they should be stored out of sight and not left out on the street or footway where they can create obstacles for people with disabilities. New development should incorporate well-designed, discreet bin storage.

8.13 Archaeology

Where there is the potential for archaeology to be discovered on development sites, appropriate recording or investigation should take place in advance of development, with the advice of Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit.

8.14 Interpretation

Historic Bolton is an interesting place for people who work there, as well as visitors. Well-designed and carefully sited interpretation boards or plaques can enhance people's enjoyment and understanding and raise awareness of good conservation area management.



Fig.27: sign boards could be used to provide interesting information about the history of the area

References:

Bolton Vision, *Building Bolton*, SPG, 2006

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C.Hartwell, M.Hyde and N.Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Lancashire: Manchester and the South-East*, 2004

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Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit, *Bolton: Areas of Archaeological Interest*, 1982 (unpublished)

G. Readyhough, *Bolton Town Centre, A Modern History*, 1998

A.Redman, *Bolton Civic Centre and the Classical Revival Style*, in C.Hartwell and T.Wyke, ed., *Making Manchester*, 2007

Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record, University of Manchester

APPENDIX 1

Unitary Development Plan

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas represent a significant element of Bolton's architectural and historical heritage. The council will preserve and enhance these areas through the control of development and through positive schemes of enhancement. Development which is allowed should contribute positively to the quality of the environment. The Council is empowered to designate further Conservation Areas and will consider designating them as appropriate.

D7. The Council will permit development proposals that preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas. They should:

- (i) be of appropriate height, size, design, materials, roofscape and plot width;
- (ii) retain materials, features, trees and open spaces that contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area;
- (iii) utilize appropriate materials for highway and footpath surfacing; and
- (iv) not adversely affect important views into, and across, a conservation area.

The desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas is prescribed by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Conservation Areas represent a significant element of Bolton's architectural and historical heritage and contribute to local distinctiveness. The Council will preserve or enhance these areas through the control of development and through positive schemes of enhancement. The number and extent of Conservation Areas in the Borough has been recently reviewed, with a total of 25 Conservation Areas within the plan area (Appendix 3). However, it is possible that further Conservation Areas might be proposed during the life of the plan or the boundaries of existing Conservation Areas reviewed. This policy outlines some of the elements which the Council will take into account when considering applications in Conservation Areas.

D8. The Council will permit development proposals - involving the demolition of an unlisted building or feature within a conservation area that contribute to its character or appearance - provided that the applicant can demonstrate that:

- (i) rehabilitation is impractical and there is no viable new use for the building; and
- (ii) redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community that would outweigh the loss resulting from demolition; and

- (iii) detailed proposals for the reuse of the site, including any replacement building or other structure, have been approved by the Council which incorporates agreements made to ensure that the replacement works will be carried out within a specified timescale.

Conservation area consent procedures for the demolition of most buildings within a conservation area are dealt with under Section 74 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Under the consent procedures, English Heritage must be notified of all proposals to demolish listed buildings, and allowed access to buildings that it wishes to record before demolition takes place. For unlisted buildings within a conservation area, in the case of a demolition proposal the Council will in specific instances condition any consent, requiring recording. There is a general presumption in favour of retaining buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Applicants should refer the Conservation Area Character Assessments which identify buildings and features of particular interest and note.

Demolition of buildings in Conservation Areas may lead to the creation of 'gap sites', which can remain vacant for long periods before redevelopment takes place, damaging the appearance of the area. It is therefore important that consent should not be given for demolition unless it is clear that the site will be redeveloped in a way which will preserve or enhance the character of the area within a reasonable timescale. Before demolition, the Council will require an assessment to establish whether the building contains a protected species, such as bats (policy N9).

D9. The Council will require proposals for new or replacement shopfronts in Conservation Areas to:

- (i) respect the period and style of the building and relate to it as a whole;
- (ii) be of a high standard of design, and use appropriate materials;
- (iii) avoid the use of large expanses of undivided glass;
- (iv) include historically accurate detailing; where the proposal is of traditional character; and
- (v) retain any features of architectural or historic interest.

Shopfronts can play an important part in establishing the unique character of town centres. The Council will endeavour, through control of development and design advice, to improve the standard of shopfronts in the Conservation Areas in particular. Where the building involved is 'listed', the introduction of a new shopfront or changes to an existing one will almost always require Listed Building Consent. Because of the historic and architectural interest of these areas it will be essential that shopfronts should not conflict with the style or period of the building, weakening its character and its contribution to the area as a whole. Equally the quality of the design must be high: poorly proportioned shopfronts, for example, will detract from the visual quality of the area. Large expanses of undivided glass are a feature of modern shopfronts, and conflict with the historic

character of these areas, as well as reducing the interest of the building in order to let the displayed goods predominate. Applicants should refer to Planning Control Policy Note 4 – Shopfronts.

APPENDIX 2

Historic Maps



Fig.28: detail from 1793 map of Bolton, showing the Town Hall area (Bolton Archives)



Fig.29: detail from 1824 map of Bolton showing the Town Hall area (Bolton Archives)

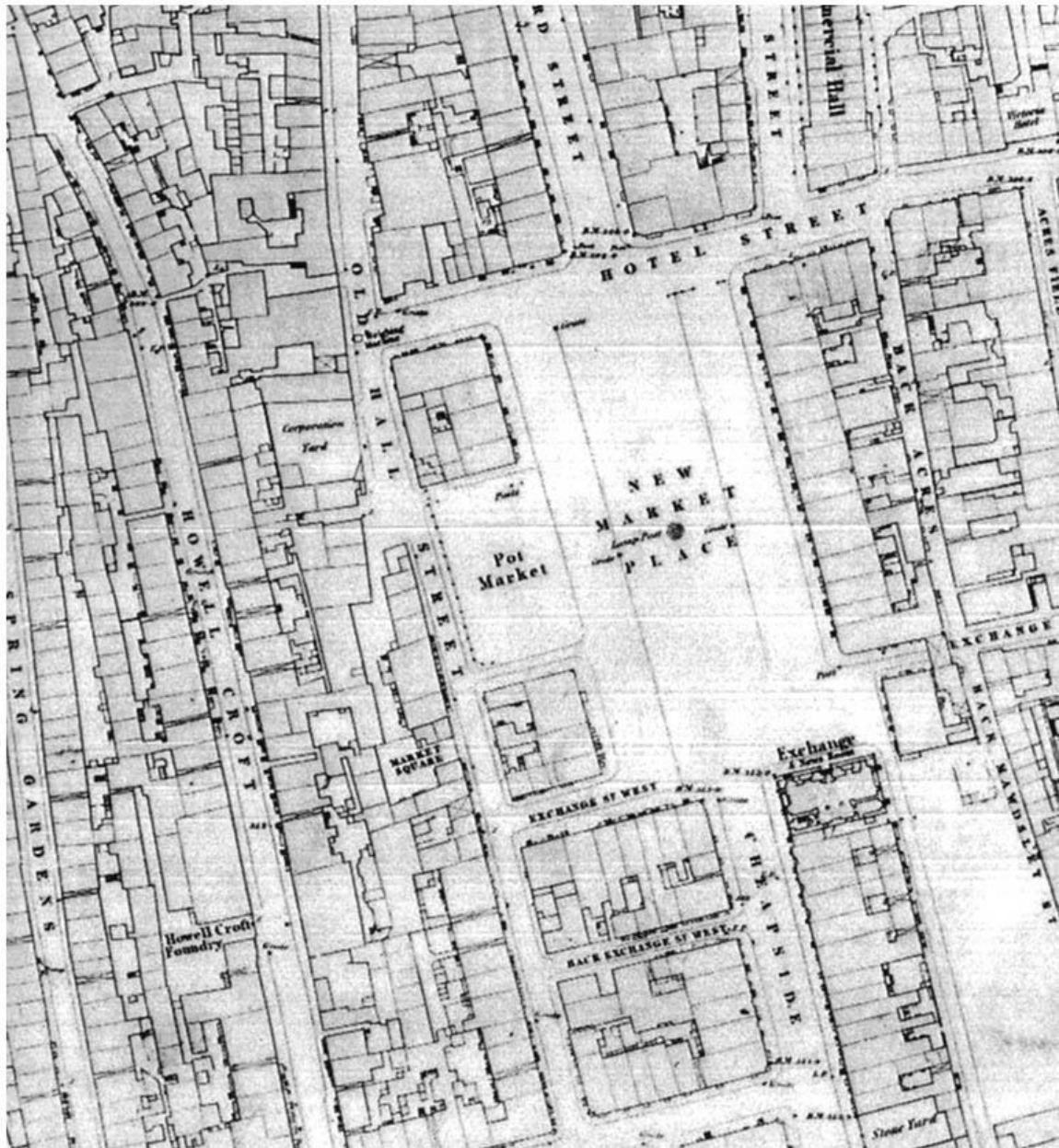


Fig.30: detail from 1847 Ordnance Survey map showing the Town Hall area (Bolton Archives)



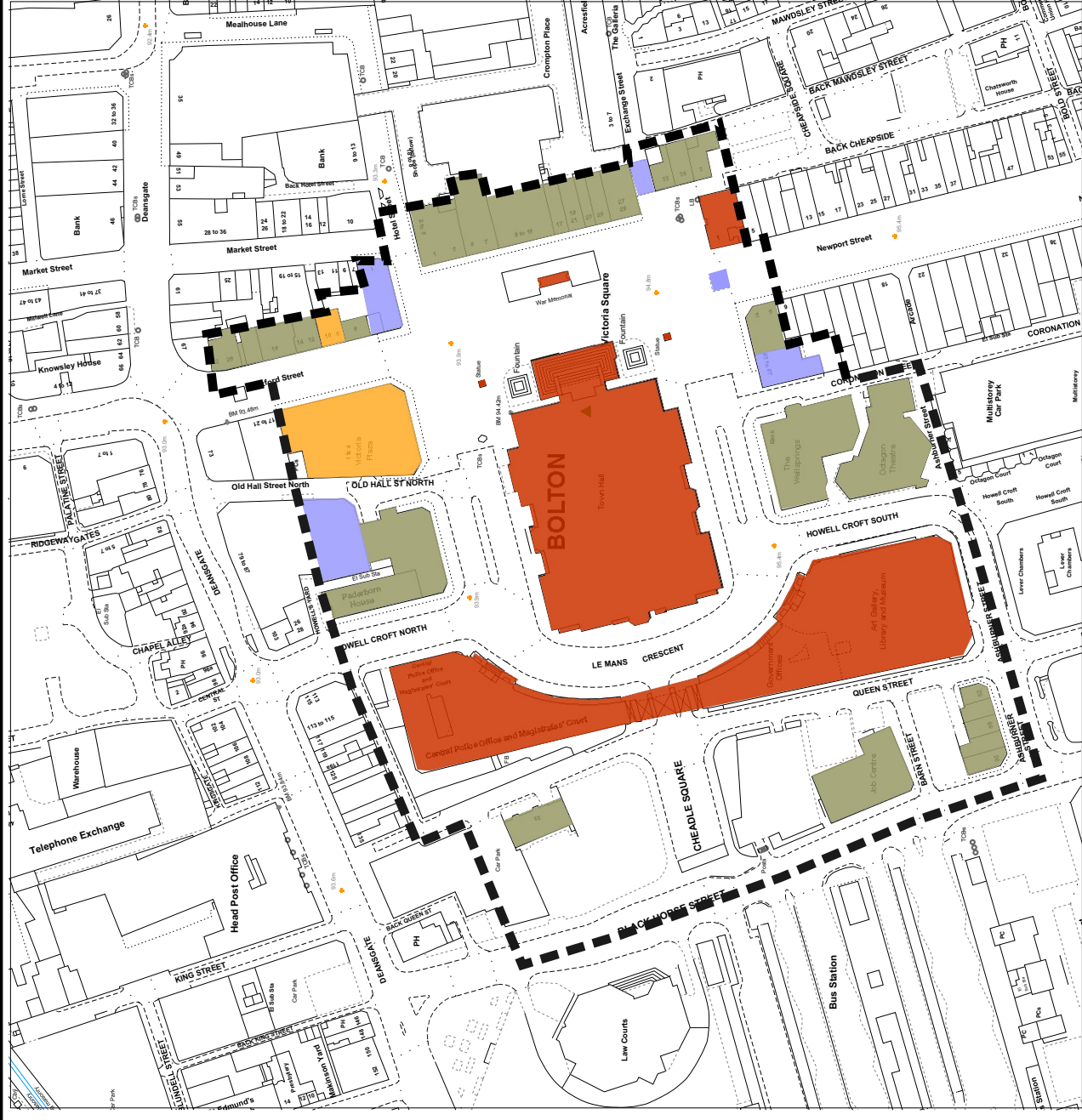
Fig.31: detail from 1893 Ordnance Survey map, showing the Town Hall area (Bolton Archives)



Fig.32: Detail from 1930 OS map showing Town Hall area prior to the building of Le Mans Crescent

Quality of Buildings





- Listed building
- Unlisted buildings of merit
- Building making a neutral impact
- Building making a negative impact
- Existing Conservation area boundary *

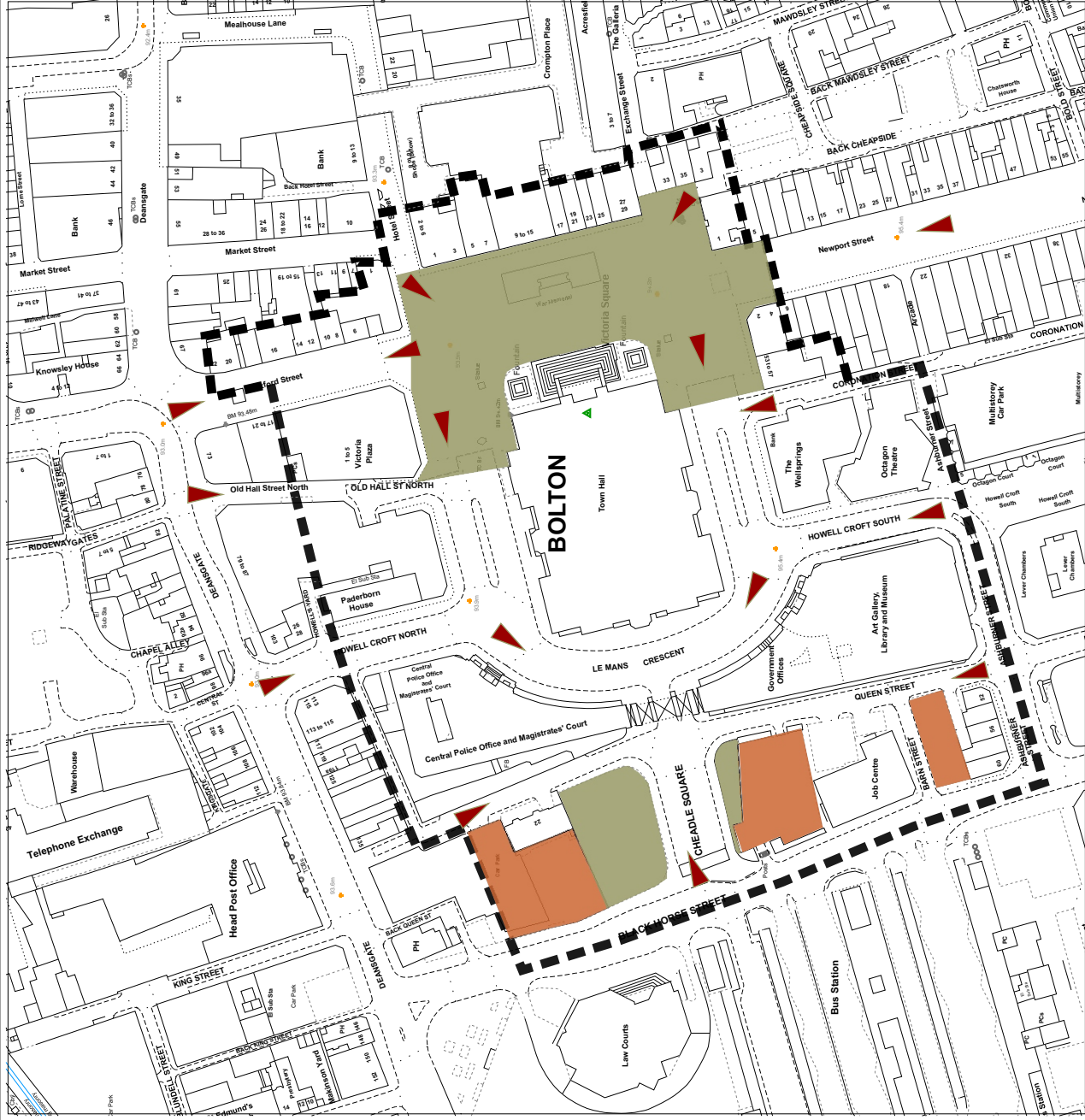


* Approved 2007

Map 1

Townscape Analysis

-  Potential development site
-  Important open space
-  Important view
-  Existing Conservation area boundary *



* Approved 2007
Map 2