

## 2. Location and setting

### 2.1 Location and population

Ashton-in-Makerfield, the third largest town in Wigan Borough, is located within the highly urbanised area of South Lancashire to the east of the M6 motorway and to the north of the East Lancashire Road, half way between Wigan and St Helens with Manchester 15 miles to the east. The Haydock Park racecourse is located on the southern edge of the town. The Census of 2001 shows the population of Ashton to be 11,799 and of Bryn, the adjacent area to the north, to have a population of 11,769. – a potential catchment for the Ashton town centre of over 23,000 people.

The town developed with the growth of the mining, cotton weaving and ironwork industries during the 18th and 19th Centuries. Now all the significant employers in these industries have closed, with the last around 1990, being Crompton, Nettlefold, Steadman Ltd, the original hingemakers with a major building on Gerard Street.

As a shopping centre it performs poorly relatively to its size because of nearby competing centres, the lack of an in or out-of-town superstore, and the severe traffic congestion along the main shopping street. A future proposal for a by-pass may assist in alleviating some of these problems.

### 2.2 Landscape setting

Ashton - in - Makerfield is located within the lowland Lancashire Plain. The underlying geology is mainly Permian and Triassic with overlying glacial drift, alluvium and silt deposits which give the area a gently rolling relief. The highest ground is at 350 ft near Billinge and the lowest at 90 ft on the Millingford Brook at the eastern boundary of the town.

The resulting landform within the Conservation Area is a generally level area around the two churches and the Warrington Road, with a noticeable fall in height northwards along Gerard Street until just before the junction with the Wigan Road. The levels rise again slightly on the northern side of the Millingford Brook to the Cross Keys public house and beyond along the Bolton Road.

The most notable views within the Conservation Area are:

- from the north looking southwards up the slope of Gerard Street until it bends to the right creating a sense of anticipation as to the extent of the town centre;
- and the view on arrival from the south where first the Angel Inn and St Thomas's church announce the beginning of the town centre, and the Kings Arms and the contrasting heights of the historic buildings on Gerard Street close the view.



*View up Gerard Street*



*View along Warrington Road towards Gerard St.*

the view to the north, down Gerard Street and out of the Conservation Area is closed by the Cross Keys and Robin Hood inns facing each other across the rising Bolton Road; whereas the view out to the south has only the end of the churchyard wall to mark the boundary, as the vista along the straight Warrington Road is unexceptional.



View down Gerard Street

See Figure 2 identifying the landscape setting and views.



Figure 2: Landscape setting and views.