

5. Management and enhancement

5.1 Identification of issues

5.1.1 Positive issues and assets

The town centre Conservation Area contains an area with an attractive, if modest, Victorian townscape including notable examples of historic inns and shopfronts, and also incorporates the important ecclesiastical spaces and some of the surrounding early terrace housing.

The three Character Areas – the commercial centre, the area to the south with small terraced housing, and the more open spaces to the west around the churches, provide significant examples of the history of the development of Ashton-in-Makerfield.

Individual buildings on Gerard Street present examples of the progression of design and detailing through the second half of the C19 – from the simpler design of the Palatine Buildings 1863, to the more ornate brick and terracotta detailing of Central Buildings 1899 and Bridge Foot House 1902.

New development within the Conservation Area has retained a scale and materials that respect the heritage townscape – The Gerard Street frontage of the Gerard Shopping Centre, and Bar Aqua at no.1 Gerard Street.



Bar Aqua between heritage buildings.

5.1.2 Negative issues and problems

The three key negative issues and problems are:

1. the poor standard of building alterations, repairs and maintenance;

- loss of heritage details and materials including low quality repairs
- the use of pebble dash, render and other non heritage wall finishes
- the use of inappropriate roof materials
- the replacement of front doors with inappropriate designs
- the replacement of wooden sash windows with aluminium and UPVC frames with different window bars and of inappropriate size and shape;
- the removal of heritage mouldings and other details;
- the removal of chimney stacks and pots;
- the replacement of boundary walls and railings;
- and few considerations for the heritage character of the area when rebuilding or renovating.

2. the particular impact of inappropriate shop fronts and signage;

A significant proportion of the buildings within the conservation area are in retail use. The quality and design of the shop front and its signs has a high impact on the appearance on the building and townscape. A poor quality, or inappropriately designed shop front can dominate the elevation of a building, as well as its neighbours, and can be out of scale with the balance and proportion of the streetscape as a whole. There is evidence available from historic photographs which can provide information on the original designs of the shop fronts. Those creating significant townscape damage are shown on Figure 8, but others with a negative impact can be found at 2-12, 7-13, 44-46 and 47-49 Gerard Street; and 2c Warrington Road.



Insensitive shop fronts



3. and the effect of the heavy through traffic.

The impact of the heavy through traffic along Gerard Street and Warrington Road detracts from the experience of shopping and appreciating the Victorian townscape and severely affects the qualities of the Conservation Area, possibly limiting its economic success.

5.2 Management recommendations

5.2.1 Boundary changes

The Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area was designated in August 1989 and this Conservation Area Appraisal, 2005, has reconsidered the boundaries and suggests changes to be adopted by Wigan Council.

With slight adjustments to the existing boundary to reflect current land use and to accommodate suitable properties to complete local townscapes, this Conservation Area includes a mix of development that provide examples of the built form of an area of Victorian urban growth.

See Figure 9 showing the current and proposed boundary for the Conservation Area.

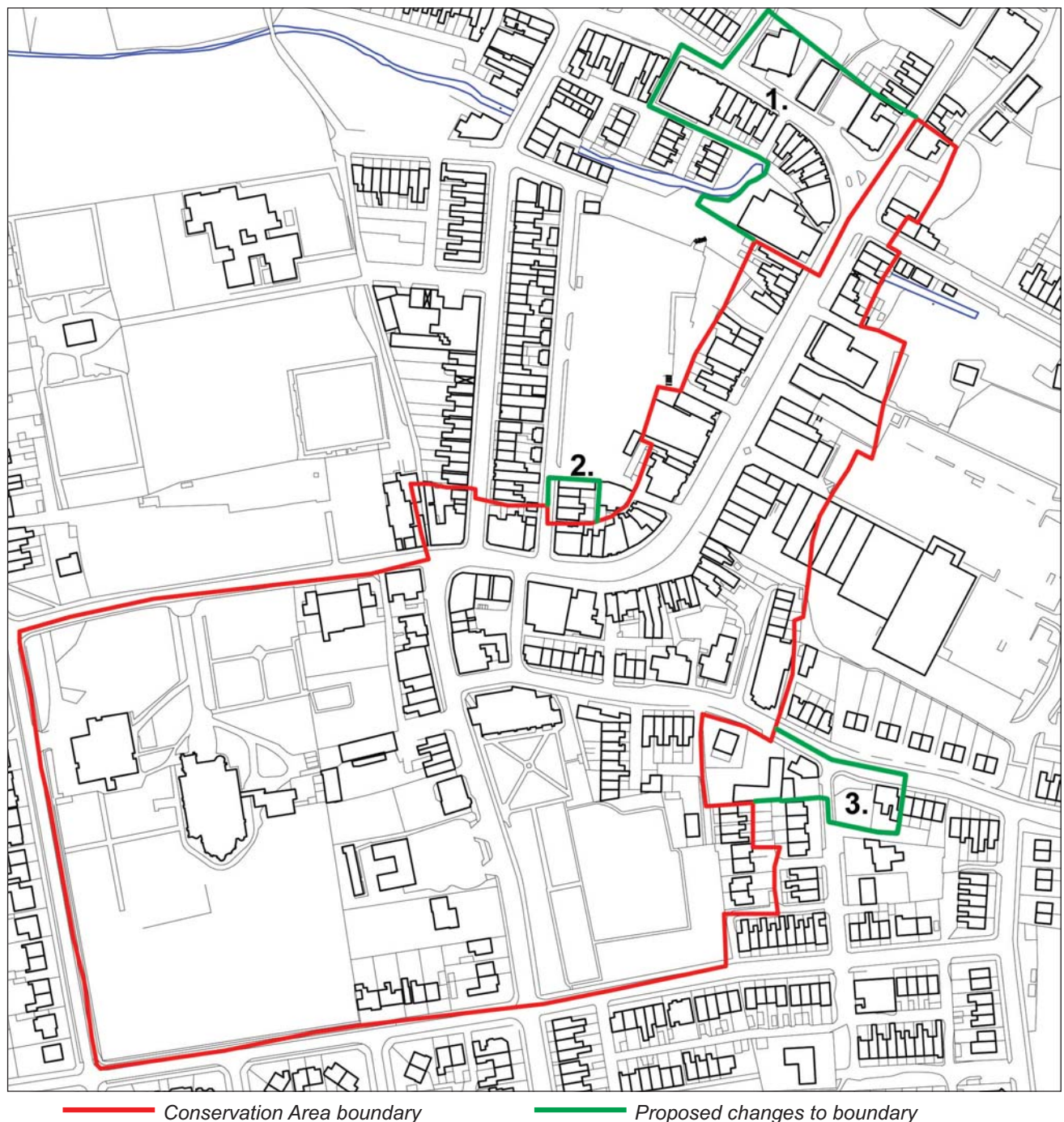


Figure 9: Conservation Area proposed boundary changes

Proposed alterations to the Conservation Area boundary:

1. **Add** on the north side of Wigan Road, the Robin Hood Hotel through to no.4 Wigan Road – previously the Armoury on Armoury Bank; and the Sir Thomas Gerard public house, and the corner bank on Gerard Street with the adjacent shops through to the Queen’s Theatre on the south side of the Wigan Road.



Robin Hood Inn

This will complete the local heritage townscape around the junction that includes the Cross Keys Inn and Bridge Foot House. This grouping of notable buildings provides an important visual northern boundary to

the Conservation Area when viewed along Gerard Street. The extension along Wigan Road includes the historic Armoury 1870’s, and the early C20 shops and theatre which create an important entry to the town centre.

2. **Add** the commercial premises nos. 2 to 8 Garswood Street, part of the Palatine Buildings built in 1863.



Palatine Building

This inclusion will complete the block that was built with the same scale and detailing as the Gerard Street frontage and links to the entrance to the Market.

3. **Add** the area on the south side of Heath Road to include the buildings from the Cave Browne Evangelical Church to the Hingemakers Arms.



Cave Browne Evangelical Church to the Hingemakers Arms.