

### Development requirements

- 3.48 Most developers would want to acquire sites in excess of 1 acre. However, some developers might consider 0.5 an acre if they could get a higher density. Due to the market current market level the most commercially viable development will be a 4 / 5 story apartment block. These will benefit from the lower construction cost and therefore make the development more viable.
- 3.49 Residential development in the town centre will also play a major part in the evening night life in Wigan. By developing residential apartments within the town centre, this could drive the emergence of a broader, enhanced evening economy.
- 3.50 Development is commercially viable, however it has to be carefully considered to meet the requirements of the potential purchasers and still be commercially viable.

### Development Uses

- 3.51 Above we have referred to uses that we consider may be suitable to complement and develop the existing town centre offer. To establish if there is any support in the market for the development of such uses we have made enquiries of developers

and operators on an informal basis. Clearly it would be a requirement that any development proposal would have the support of the planning authority and be economically viable. The table below sets out a number of potential uses within the study area and gives an indication of the strength of demand for those uses within the town. It should be understood that this should be taken as indicative only.

| Use             | Strength of demand  | Comment   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Cinema          | Non at present  | Demand satisfied by the existing out of town Empire cinema  |
| Hotel           | There is an outstanding requirement from Travelodge for a 40-60 bed hotel in the Wigan area   | Limited offer in the town centre at the moment. An additional hotel would broaden the town's offer. Land values are generally fairly low compared to competing uses such as residential and retail.     |
| Residential     | Good general demand   | Timing will depend of other schemes coming forward so as not to oversupply the market. Pre sales may be required to trigger development.  |
| Supermarket     | The 4 major supermarket operators are represented in the borough. Supermarkets in general will look at any opportunity that strengthens their position. | PPS 6 supports retail development within the town centre and thus any demand could be accommodated subject to site availability. Potential for mixed use development incorporating residential use.     |
| Non Food Retail | Focus's occupier requirement database identifies approximately 50 requirements from retailers ( Note such   | PPS 6 supports retail development within the town centre and thus any demand could be accommodated subject to site availability and economic viability. If the a number of void units in the Marketgate |

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
|         | data bases are not entirely reliable)   | shopping centre are still under the terms of a lease, the secure income received could dissuade the landlord from pursuing redevelopment.  |
| Offices | Believed to be latent demand from existing local businesses.<br><br>Council Requirement | The provision of modern accommodation with freehold tenure will broaden the choice for businesses in the area and support and encourage other desirable town centre uses such as restaurants.<br><br>A new customer facing Council building will improve service delivery, release existing sites and the new development would act as a catalyst for regeneration. Option analysis required to inform the Council of the procurement options, the financial impact of each and the practicalities of the change |

## 4.0 AREA APPRAISAL

### Introduction

4.1 This section of the report aims to identify the key characteristics of the study area in terms of its structure, function, built form and general townscape qualities. This area appraisal is helpful in identifying those assets and features of Wigan Town Centre that should be retained and developed as part of a masterplan strategy for the Northern Crescent area. Equally the analysis identifies those areas of the environment that require improvement. This section of the report will, therefore, consider the following topics:

- Historical overview
- Townscape: layout, land use, character and public realm
- Accessibility and car parking.

4.2 This section will discuss the layout, scale and massing of development. It will identify key gateways, landmarks, focal

points, views and vistas and will assess levels of permeability, legibility and connectivity. The function of an area is defined by its activity; the analysis will, therefore, identify nodes of activity and key linkages, as well as areas that are lacking vibrancy.

### Historic context

4.3 Wigan as a settlement has a history that can be traced back to at least Roman times. The early settlement grew up on rising ground above the River Douglas (a tributary of the Ribble) and situated on the alignment of the Roman Road between Preston and Warrington. It is thought that the name Wigan is probably Saxon in origin.

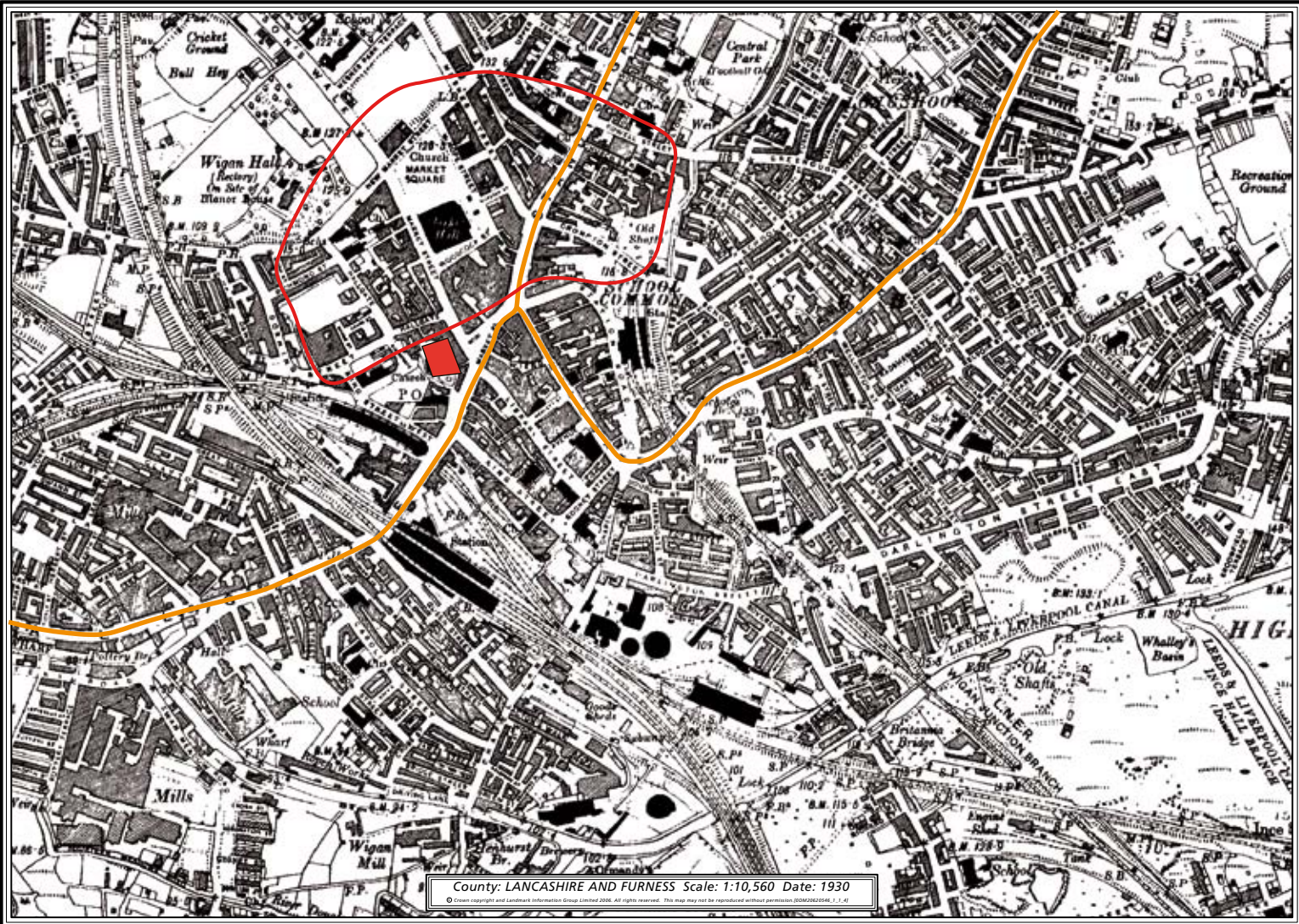
4.4 By the mid 18th Century the town was known for its brass, copper, bedding, rugs and cannel coal products. Its main industry was coal mining aided by the development of canal connections initially by a link to the River Douglas. A direct canal link to Liverpool was opened in 1772 later becoming part of the Leeds and Liverpool canal. The introduction of steam engines and innovations in textile machinery led to the growth of the textile industry into the large cotton mills.

- 4.5 The town's principal industries of coal and cotton flourished during the 19th Century aided by the coming of the railway in 1832 via a link to Liverpool and Manchester. The line to Preston was completed by 1838. The development of ironworks followed the coalfield expansion. A number of independent coal owners were replaced by the Wigan Coal and Iron Company formed in 1865.
- 4.6 The town's population grew from approximately 11,000 in 1801 to 32,000 by 1851 and to 48,000 by 1881. The mid to late 19th Century was a prosperous time for Wigan and this was reflected in the rebuilding and development of fine social, commercial and civic buildings in and around the town centre during this period such as the new market hall opened in 1877.
- 4.7 Wigan town centre's pattern of development since medieval times had been characterised by the development of burgage plots, held by the town's burgesses, which were deep narrow plots of land fronting the historic main streets such as Standishgate, Millgate, Hallgate and Wallgate. These plots gradually became intensively infilled particularly during the town's expansion as an industrial and commercial centre during the 19th Century.
- 4.8 The historic plans overleaf illustrate Wigan Town Centre in 1849 and 1909. It is evident that in 1849 the majority of development was focussed along the principal routes in deep narrow burgage

plots. Development beyond these principal routes was relatively sparse. However, by 1930 the town had grown substantially. Burgage plots had been intensively infilled and a new network of streets had been developed including Market Street, Mesnes Street and New Market Street. With the exception of the development of the Ring Road around the north and east boundaries of the Town Centre the historic street pattern has remained relatively intact.

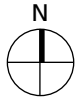
#### Historic Parks and Gardens

- 4.9 The study area borders onto the southern boundary of the historic Mesnes Park. The park was designed by John McLean and was officially opened in 1878 offering a place for recreation within the densely developed town. The park is listed as Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The register provides a description of the park stating that 'notable features include its topography and duck pond; the survival of the historic layout and planting structure and early buildings including the lodge, pavilion and bandstand which are listed buildings'.
- 4.10 The park forms a major element of the Mesnes Conservation Area and contains seven individually Listed Buildings within the park:



County: LANCASHIRE AND FURNESS Scale: 1:10,560 Date: 1930  
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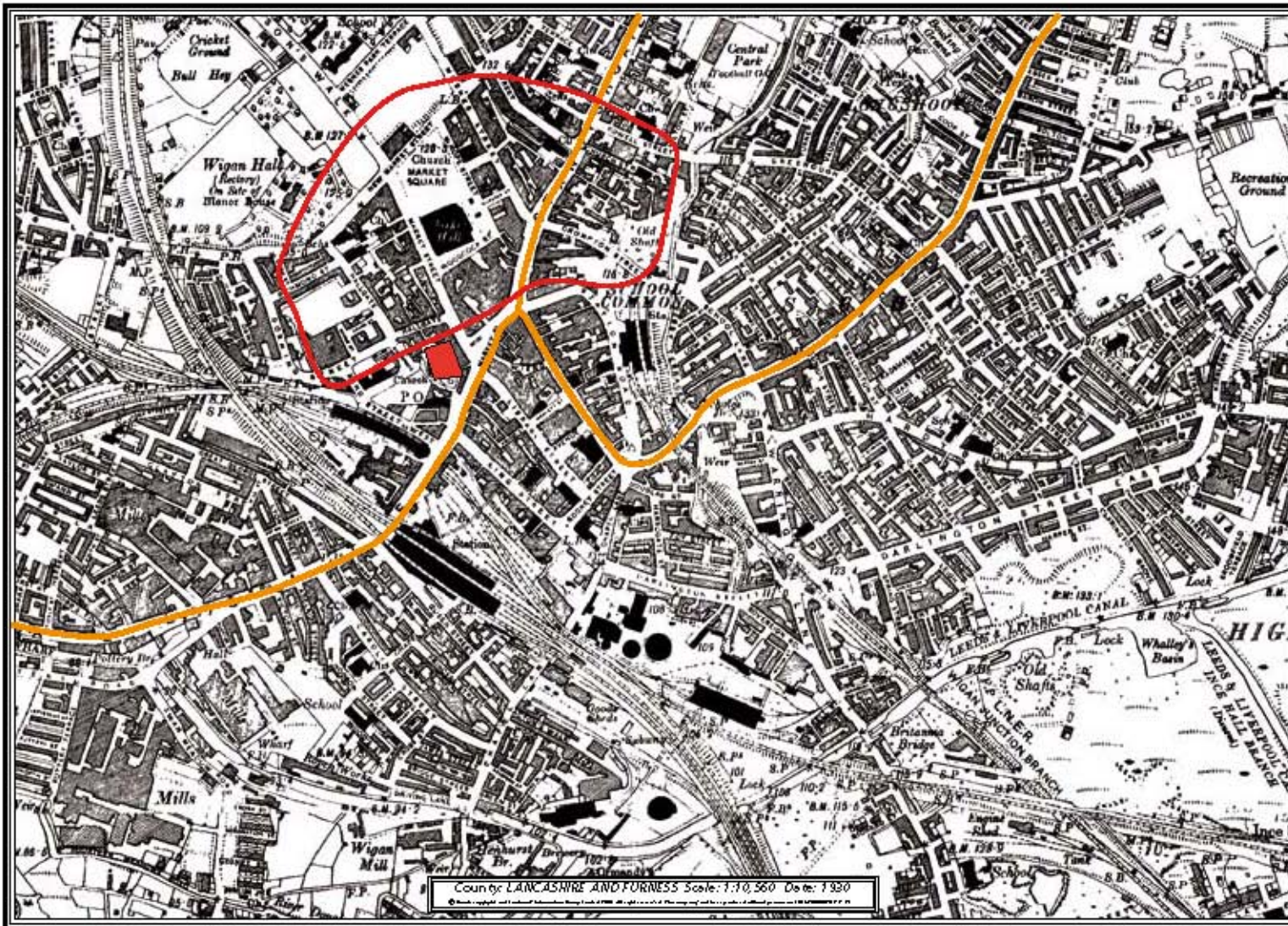
- Key Routes
- Site Boundary



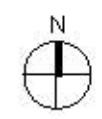
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# Wigan Town Centre Wigan 1909

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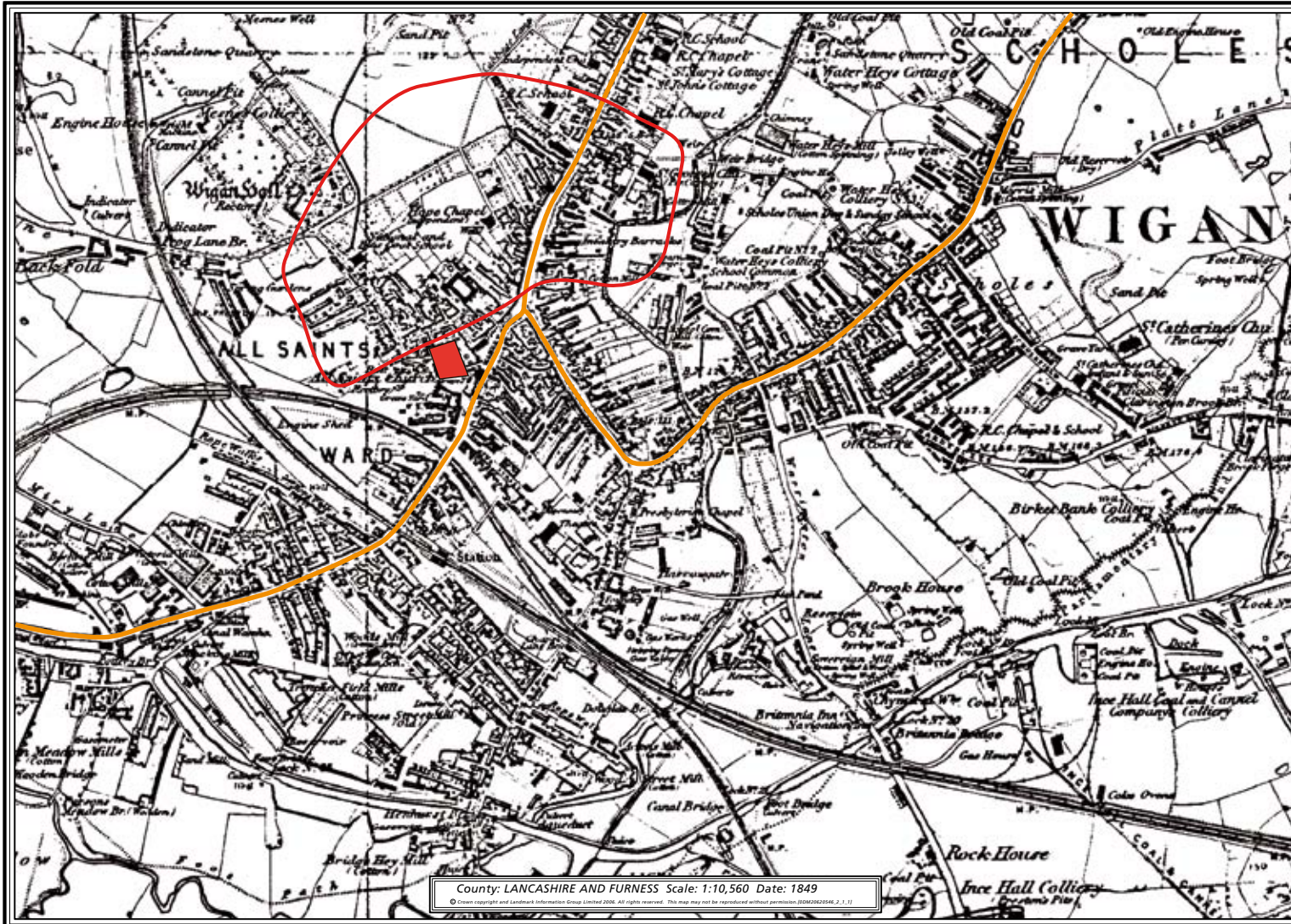
- Key Routes
- Site Boundary



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## Wigan Town Centre Wigan 1930

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- Key Routes
- Site Boundary



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## Wigan Town Centre Wigan 1849

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- The Bandstand; c1880.
- The Powell Monument; a monumental statue in bronze on granite plinth dated 1910.
- The Pavilion; c1880.
- Double flight of steps to west of pavilion.
- Double flight of steps to south of pavilion, both c1880.
- Entrance gateway to Mesnes Park from Mesnes Park Terrace, 1878.
- Entrance Lodge, 1878 vernacular revival style, enlarged and altered; 2 storey portion added set back (c1928).

### Listed Buildings

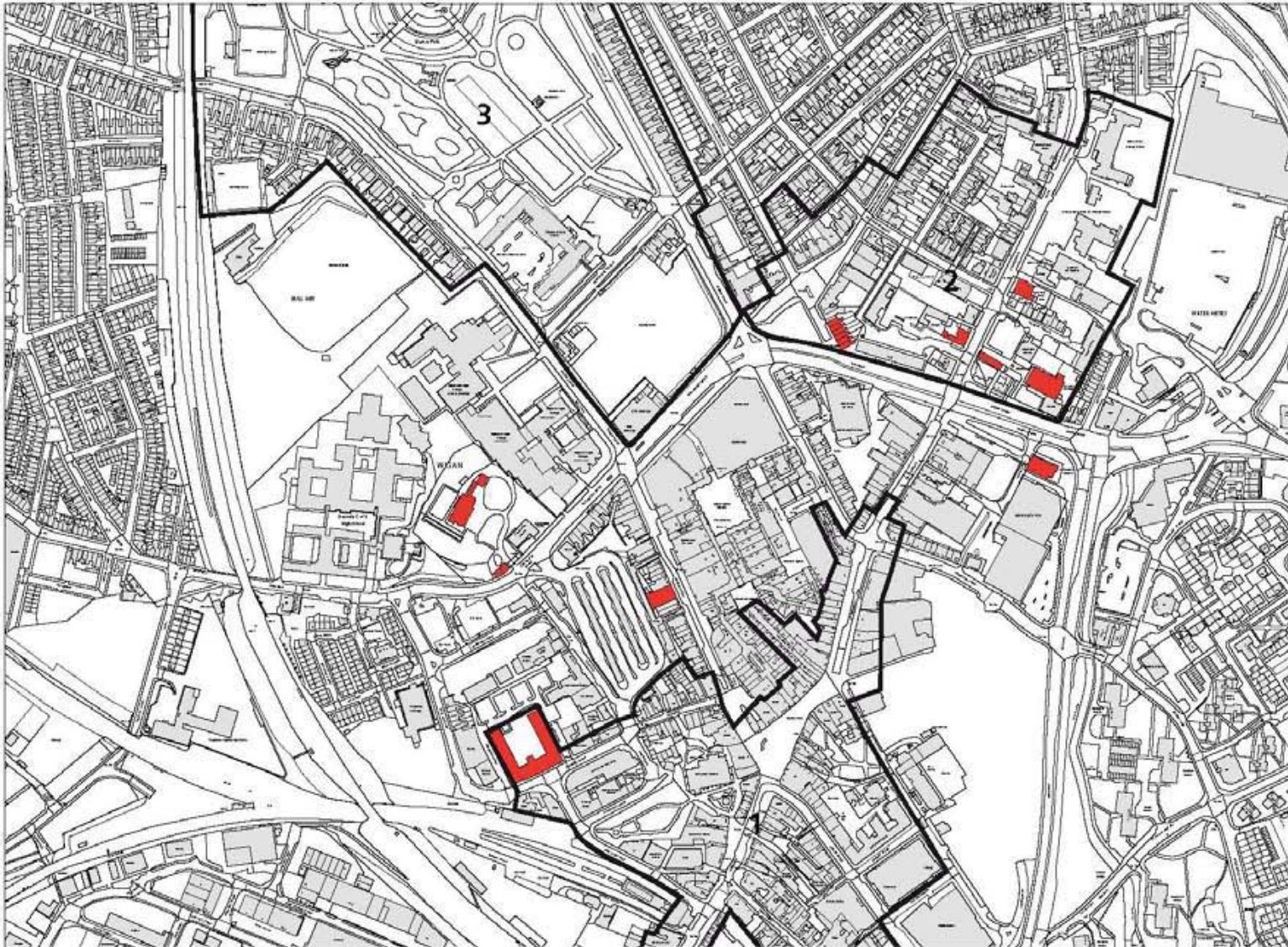
- 4.11 There are a significant number of listed buildings located within the Town Centre, a number of which are attractive landmarks in

the street-scene. The majority of these listed buildings are located within a cluster around Market Place and Wallgate south of the study area. Within the study area buildings of note include the terrace of Georgian style town houses, Dicconson Street (All Grade II); St Johns Club, Standishgate (Grade II); The Griffin Hotel, Standishgate (Grade II); The Royal Oak, Standishgate (Grade II); Church of St John and the monument in front of the Church, Standishgate (Both Grade II); Church of St George, Water Street (Grade II\*); Queens Hall Methodist Mission, Market Street (Grade II); Wigan Hall including the Gate House, terrace walls and steps, New Market Street (All Grade II); and Coops Factory Building, Dorning Street (Grade II). Those listed buildings that fall within the study are identified on the plan overleaf.

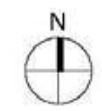
- 4.12 Immediately to the north of the boundary is the former Wigan Grammar School Building off Parsons Walk (Grade II) and the several listed buildings and structures in Mesnes Park.

### Conservation Areas

- 4.13 A significant proportion of the site falls within one of the three separate Conservation Areas. The Mesnes Conservation Area incorporates the Mesnes playing fields and the current Council building on New Market Street and extends north-west to encompass the whole of Mesnes Park. A detailed character



-  Listed Buildings
-  Conservation Area Boundary



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**Wigan Town Centre**  
Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings  
NTS

appraisal for Mesnes Conservation Area was published in January 2006 and is summarised in more detail at Para's 2.15-2.17.

- 4.14 The Dicconson Conservation Area incorporates a number of listed buildings fronting onto Dicconson Street and Standishgate and comprises a mix of uses including residential and office. The Town Centre Conservation Area falls mainly outside of the study area but incorporates key landmark buildings centred on the principal historic streets of Standishgate, Market Place and Wallgate.

#### General Layout

- 4.15 To a large extent the physical layout and structure of Wigan Town Centre has remained relatively unchanged over the years. Market Place represents the centre of activity with key historic routes such as Standishgate, Wallgate, Market Street and Library Street all converging at this point. Other key routes in the Town Centre include New Market Street, Northway, Crompton Street, Mesnes Road, Millgate and Hallgate. The development of the Galleries and Marketgate Shopping Centres has incorporated a number of minor historic routes including the attractive Makinson Arcade.
- 4.16 Within the study area the principal areas of pedestrian activity are Market Street, Standishgate and the Galleries and Marketgate shopping centres. The opening of the Grand Arcade development

however is likely to have a significant impact on this, particularly for the Galleries/ Marketgate Shopping centres. The Galleries/ Marketgate shopping centres built in the late 1980s occupy a major section of the study area and form a core part of the designated Principal Shopping Area of the Town Centre. The buildings are orientated around a series of internal squares including Woodcock Sq, Atherton Sq and Wigan Sq (which currently holds an outdoor market). A number of arcades and passageways provide access through the centres and to the squares, although access is restricted at night when the centres close and passageways are gated.

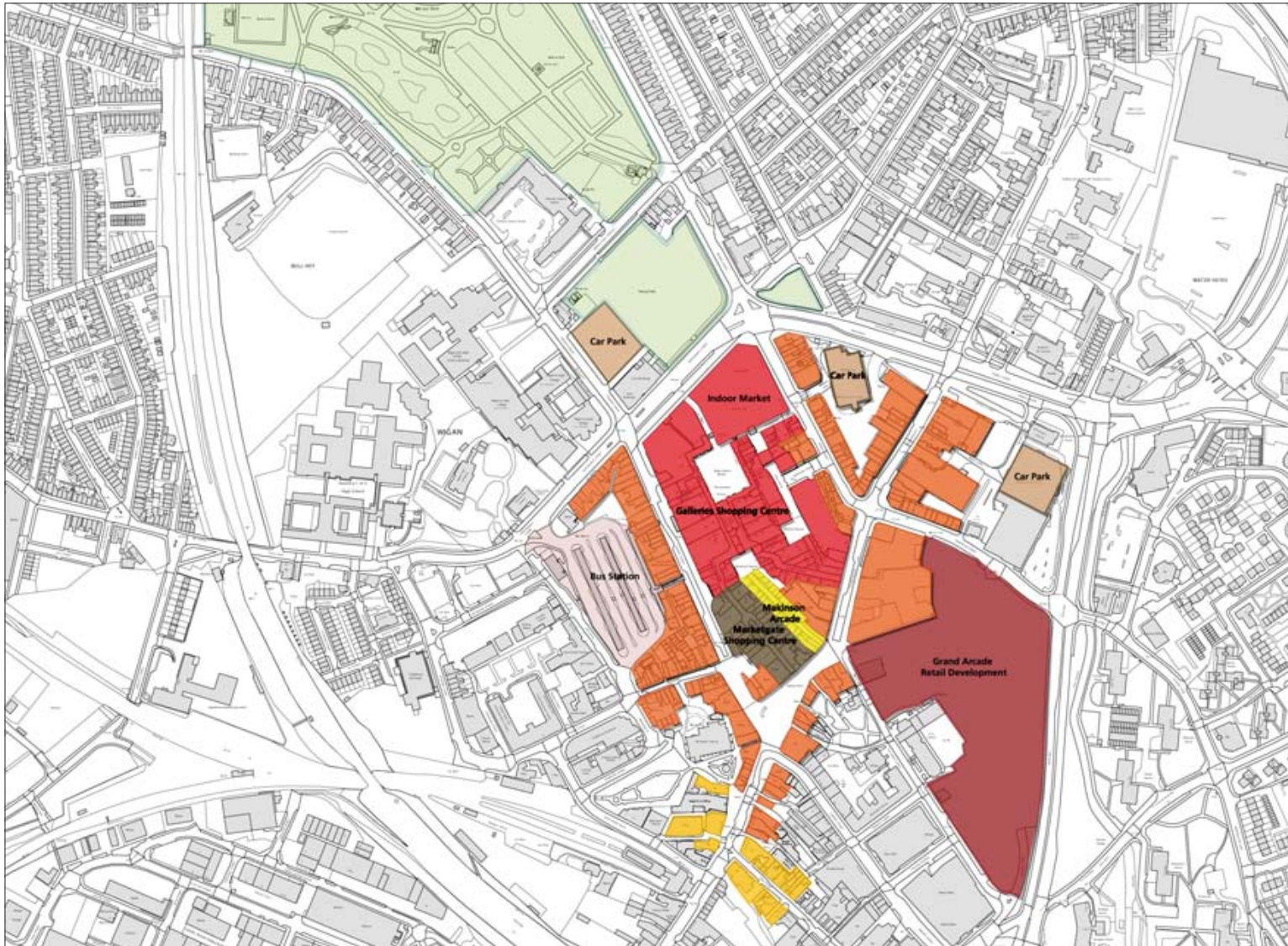
- 4.17 The ring road of New Market Street, Northway, Powell Street and River Way provides the principal areas of vehicular activity with the junctions with Market Street/Parsons Walk and Mesnes Street/Bridgeman Terrace providing key vehicular nodes and gateways to the Town Centre. The ring road is substantial in width comprising four lanes of vehicular traffic. The section along New Market Street also includes an additional two lane taxi rank. This acts as a significant barrier to pedestrian movement and serves to constrain the growth of the centre to the north. It also has a negative impact for the quality of the public realm insofar that it fails to achieve any sense of enclosure.

## Land-use

- 4.18 The plan overleaf illustrates the variety of land uses in the town centre. It illustrates the location of the major retail shopping centres including the Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres, the Makinson Arcade and the Grand Arcade which is currently under construction. The plan also identifies the location of key Town Centre uses along the principal streets, namely Market Street, Market Place, Standishgate and Mesnes Street. Key town centre uses include elements of A1 retail but also include financial and professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3), drinking establishments (A4), takeaways (A5), office (B1) and other such town centre uses.
- 4.19 While a range of uses are distributed throughout the Town Centre there is also a tendency for some uses to cluster in particular locations. Banks and Building Societies generally cluster around Market Place, office accommodation around upper Standishgate and Bars and Night Clubs around lower Standishgate and King Street.

## Gateways

- 4.20 Strategic access into the town centre from the town's hinterland is dealt with in Para's 5.1-5.2. This section looks at the key entry points into the study area and into the town centre generally. There are a number of key gateways into the town centre, but all are relatively poor in aesthetic terms. Access from the ring road is provided at six key junctions. Within the study area these include the gateways via Dorning Street, Market Street, Mesnes Street and Standishgate.
- 4.21 Entry into the town centre from the west is via Dorning Street. This gateway is characterised by surface car parking and two-storey residential development. The surface car parking also provides direct views of the Royal Mail Sorting Office which provides a poor first visual impression of the town centre.
- 4.22 The gateway via Market Street is provided at the cross-roads with Parsons Walk. The imposing Council building has a strong presence at this location and the buildings on the west side of Market Street create an attractive corner feature. The presence of these buildings however is undermined by the width of New Market Street and the poor relationship of the college building and Morrison's to the street. The visual clutter of traffic lights,



- General Town Centre Uses (A1 - A5)
- Open Space
- Galleries Shopping Centre & Market
- Marketgate Shopping Centre
- Makinson Shopping Arcade
- Bus Station
- Car Park
- Grand Arcade Shopping Centre
- Bars/Night Clubs



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## Wigan Town Centre Land Use

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signage and guardrails also detracts from the quality of this gateway.

- 4.23 The gateway via Mesnes Street is provided at the cross-roads with Bridgeman Terrace. Again the width of New Market Street and the poor quality of buildings fronting onto the street provides a poor first visual impression of the town centre and creates an intimidating pedestrian environment.
- 4.24 Access to the town centre from the north-east is provided via the historic route of Standishgate. However, the existing buildings to the south of the ring road are set back from the street and orientated away from the ring road. This provides poor frontage to the ring road and an unwelcoming approach to the town centre.

#### **Landmark Buildings**

- 4.25 Wigan town centre contains a number of landmark buildings that provide important points of reference. At the centre of Wigan to the south of the study area is the All Saints Church. This imposing building occupies an elevated position and provides glimpse views of its attractive tower from around the town centre and from Mesnes Park. Within or directly adjacent to the study area key landmark buildings include the Old Grammar School with its

substantial Clock Tower, the former industrial buildings on New Market Street (Council Building) and Dorning Street (Coops Building) and the Queens Hall Methodist Mission on Market Street. The Galleries Shopping Centre also provides a modern landmark building in the form of a substantial clock tower which has a significant impact on the town centre skyline.

#### **Open Space**

- 4.26 There are a limited number of green open spaces within the town centre. However, the substantial Mesnes Park is located within a short walking distance. The interface between the park and the town centre is provided by the Mesnes Playing Fields adjacent to New Market Street. The playing fields offer open views across the area to the exposed rear of buildings fronting Mesnes Park Terrace and to the area of car parking associated with the Council offices. The playing fields lack any defined function having no clear public rights of way.

## Public realm

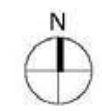
- 4.27 The quality of the public realm varies considerably throughout the study area and throughout the town centre as a whole. Some attractive frontage is achieved along lower Standishgate, Market Place and Wallgate in the southern part of the study area and the Makinson Arcade is a particular asset. Along these facades the appearance of a fine grain has been achieved and the Galleries and Marketgate shopping centres are well integrated into the street-scene. There are also a number of attractive buildings on the west-side of Market Street, the narrow courts off Hallgate and the east side of Mesnes Street, although a number of these would benefit from some refurbishment and reuse.
- 4.28 Townscape quality however suffers generally around the north boundaries of the Town Centre and within the Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres. The Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres presents a poor quality of frontage onto Market Street with the exposed service yard providing the termination of views along the historic Hallgate. Frontage onto New Market Street is particularly poor. The Morrison's Store and the Market building present dead-frontage onto the street and the width of the road creates an intimidating pedestrian environment. Some poor quality buildings also occupy frontage positions along upper Standishgate which undermines the quality of the public realm.

## 4.29 In terms of design the key points worth noting are:

- Some attractive frontage and successful integration of buildings around Market Place, lower Standishgate and Hallgate;
- Poor quality gateways into the town centre give a negative first visual impression of the town;
- The ring road creates a physical barrier around the centre restricting growth and pedestrian movement to the north;
- A successful alternative shopping destination is provided in the narrow courts off Hallgate;
- The Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres provide a poor quality frontage onto Market Street, New Market Street and Mesnes Street and the complex network of passageways lacks legibility and dilutes footfall; and



-  Key Gateways
-  Nodes/ Centres of Activity
-  Key Approaches
-  Key Routes/ Linkages
-  Landmark Feature or Building
-  Barrier to Pedestrian Movement



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Wigan Town Centre  
 Townscape Appraisal  
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