

Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

Draft for public consultation October 2021



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Macclesfield Conservation Area			

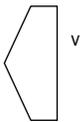
Executive Summary

Macclesfield is a special town with a strong identity. Its geography literally sets it on a pedestal, giving it a dramatic topography which provides striking views to the Pennine hills. Its character is further reinforced by the strength of its 18th and 19th century townscape and medieval origins; from the central Market Place including the Greek revival Town Hall and 13th century St Michael's Church to the intimate passageways, cobbled meandering streets and steps and impressive continuous groups of listed buildings and historic shop frontages. Whilst some parts of the conservation area have deteriorated and historic buildings have been lost, new development has largely been contained within the prevailing scale, therefore minimising any harmful impact. There are also a number of exemplar schemes of the adaptive reuse of historic buildings from former industrial buildings, to public houses, the Drill Hall and now the Picturedrome which all represent the positive impact that retaining such buildings has on the overall character of the town. The greatest threat the conservation area faces is the cumulative impact of piecemeal alterations, primarily replacement windows and poor quality shopfronts, roller shutters and signage. Furthermore as our high streets face unprecedented change and as we as a society focus on sustainability, and greater emphasis is placed on the role of the outdoors in our health and well-being consideration needs to be given to the public realm, green spaces and the spaces between buildings, particularly the expanses of hard landscaped surface level car parks within the conservation area.

The primary objective of this document therefore is to harness the identity and pride which is abundant in Macclesfield and the desire of people to improve their urban environment, promoting the economic benefits that a well-managed historic environment can bring as well as the role that it plays in our sense of identity, belonging and mental health. It will provide the tools necessary to promote heritage-led development and to ensure that all proposals for change are underpinned by an understanding of what is significant about the conservation area.

To achieve this the document comprises three elements: the Appraisal which provides an understanding of the significance of the conservation area and the character and appearance of its constituent part; the Management Plan providing recommendations, which seek to manage change in a sensitive manner; raising the quality of the urban environment and; the gazetteer which provides an assessment of each individual building in the conservation area.

This Appraisal was written by Donald Insall Associates in conjunction with Macclesfield Town Council for Cheshire East Council and replaces the earlier appraisal written in 2005.

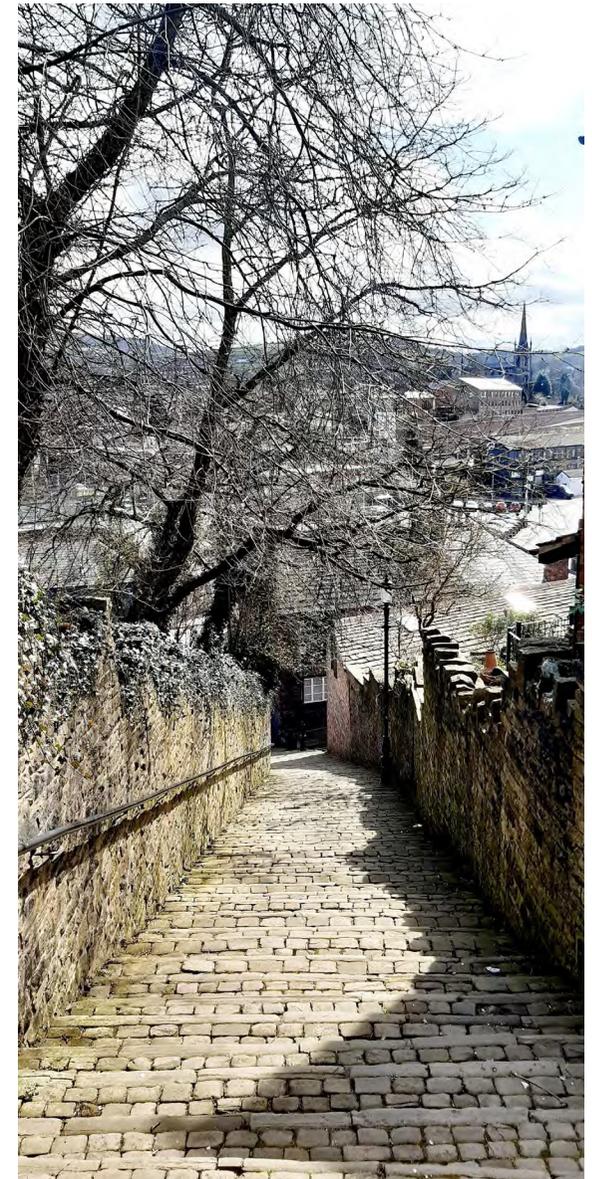




1.0 Introduction

1.1 Defining Conservation Areas

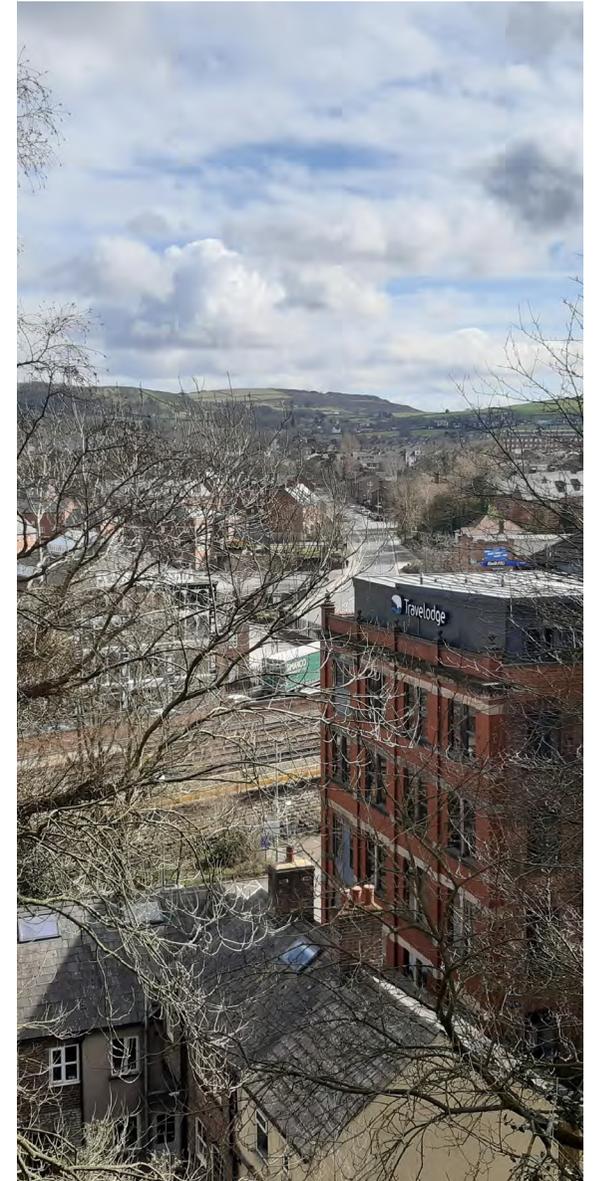
Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance',¹ and are recognised for their distinctive townscape, including their buildings, streets and public realm. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPF) conservation areas are considered as 'designated heritage assets'; any proposals for change or development must assess the effect that the development might have on the character and appearance of the area. The Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area was first designated in December 1968.



1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 69.

1.2 Related Policy and Guidance

Once designated, Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to review the character and boundaries of its conservation areas; this appraisal of the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area provides the evidence base for this review process. It will support the policies contained within Cheshire East's Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (adopted July 2017), including Policy SE7: The Historic Environment. The revised Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) is yet to be adopted and the saved policies of the Macclesfield Local Plan, which will be superceded by the SADPD, therefore remain in use. The overall appraisal strategy is based on Historic England's English Heritage Guidance, in particular, Historic England's 2019 Advice Note 1 – Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management which clearly sets out guidance on the production of management plans and conservation area character appraisals.



1.3 Aims of the Appraisal

The Local Plan Strategy guides development in the Borough and recognises the need to actively manage the historic built environment to ensure that: 'heritage assets are protected, have appropriate viable uses, are maintained to a high standard and are secured and have a sustainable future for the benefit of future generations.'

This appraisal builds upon the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal prepared by The Conservation Studio for Macclesfield Borough Council in 2005. It describes the historical development and character and appearance of the conservation area. It aims to identify and explain important local features, highlighting buildings which contribute to the area, distinctive streetscapes and important local views. It also identifies features which detract from the area's character and outlines opportunities for positive change.

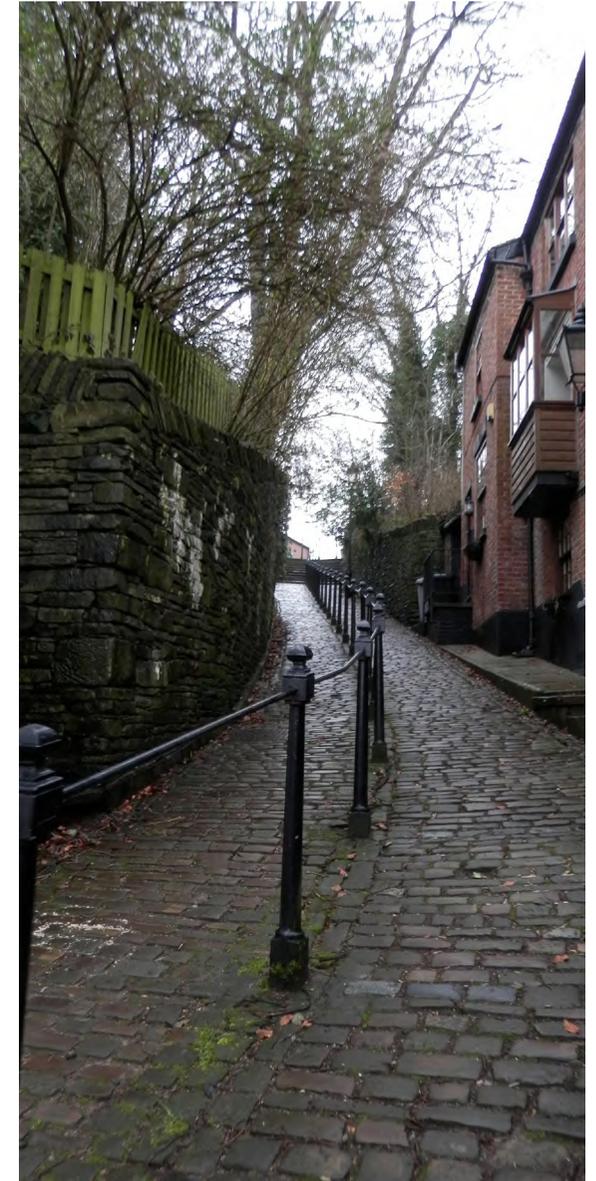
Paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.' The appraisal has carefully considered whether there are any further opportunities to extend the boundary of the conservation area since those extensions made in 2005 and makes recommendations for two minor alterations to the boundary. It also highlights buildings which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area and those which detract.



1.4 Future Use

This Appraisal document serves as a precursor to the accompanying Management Plan, both of which have been generated following consultation by both the local authority and the local community. Site visits were undertaken during March 2021. The adoption of this document will serve the following key purposes:

- Address the challenges facing the area;
- Understand the significance of the conservation area and suggest opportunities to enhance its character and appearance;
- Stimulate local interest in both the protection of and careful development of the conservation area for present and future generations;
- Encourage wider use and enjoyment of assets within Macclesfield Town Centre;
- Encourage the conservation, repair, reuse and management of the area's historic features;
- Be a tool in the development management process;
- Support town centre regeneration and promote high-quality design in development proposals.



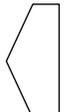
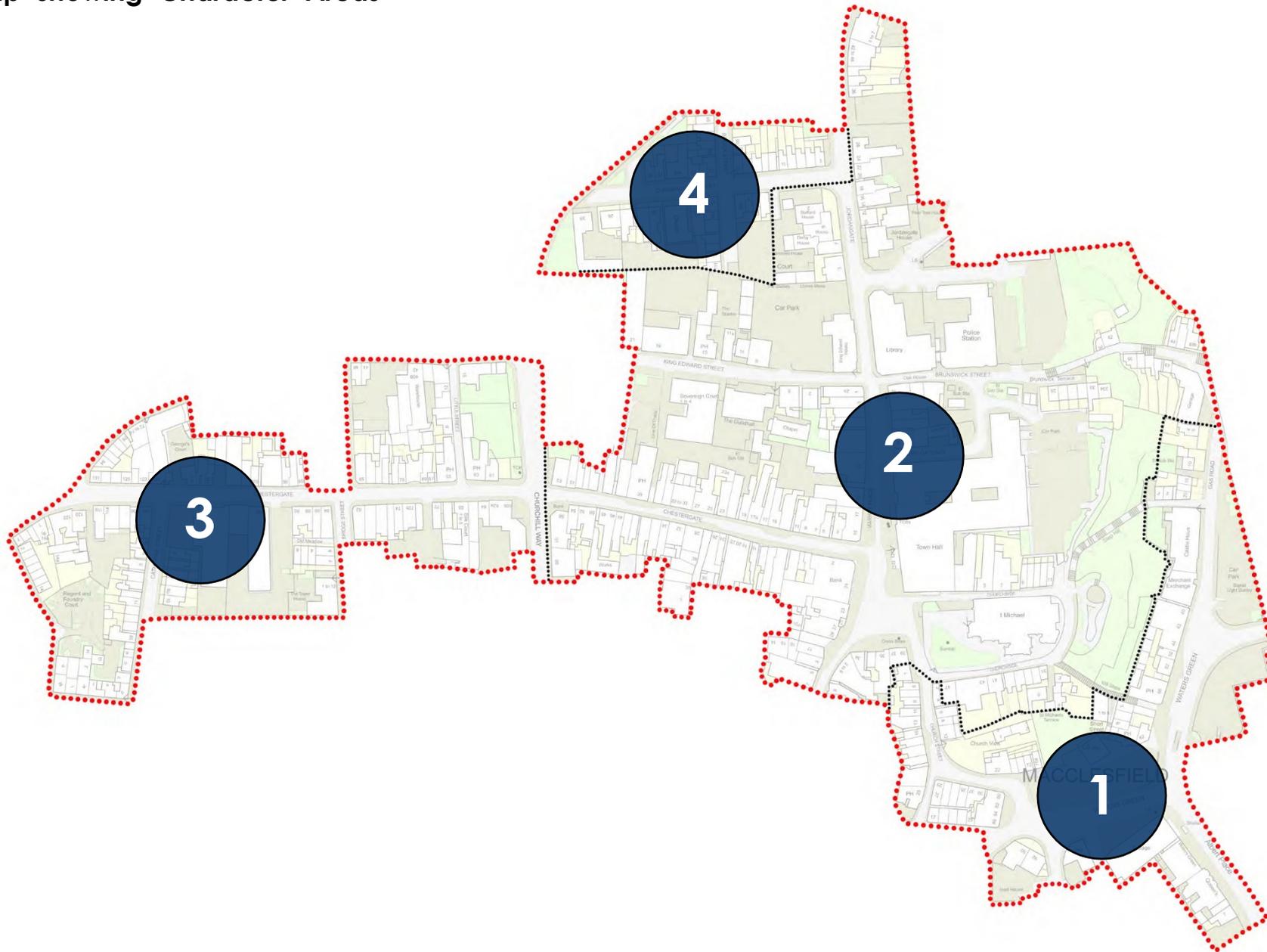
1.5 Interactive Format

This document has been designed to serve as a practical guide for the present and future care of the conservation area. The digital version features interactive navigable elements which enhance its range and ease of use by the Council and both the local and development communities. These include:

- Front cover links which navigate directly to the Appraisal, Management Plan or Gazetteer sections as required;
- A contents page with headings which directly link to the different sections within the appraisal and plan;
- Navigable headings at page corners, including one which returns users to the contents page;
- Interactive map keys which link to relevant sections within the text where applicable; and
- Interactive icons at the base of the Gazetteer pages which navigate to conservation area buildings and buildings within proposed conservation area extensions.



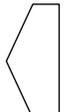
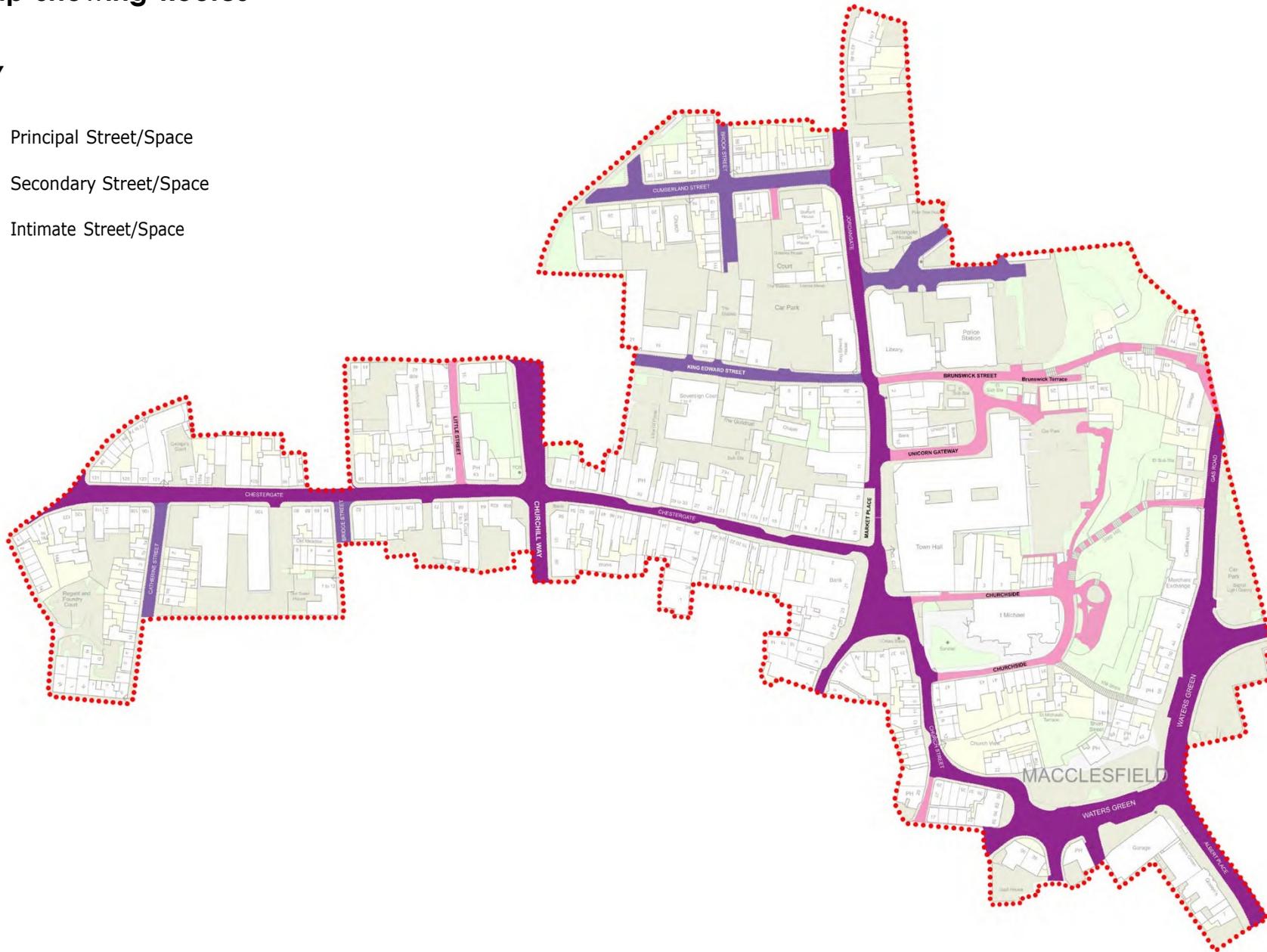
Map showing Character Areas



Map showing Routes

KEY

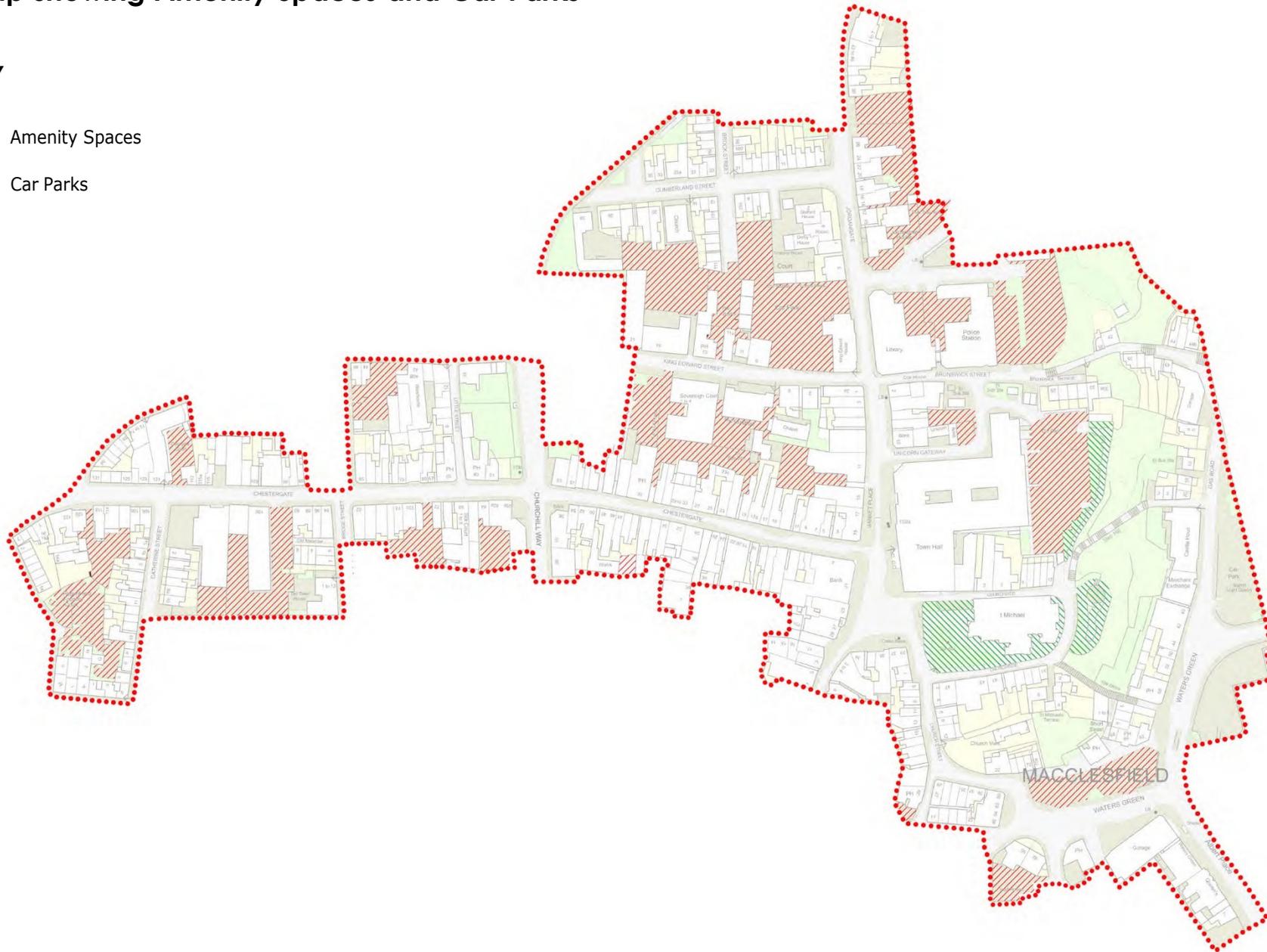
-  Principal Street/Space
-  Secondary Street/Space
-  Intimate Street/Space



Map showing Amenity Spaces and Car Parks

KEY

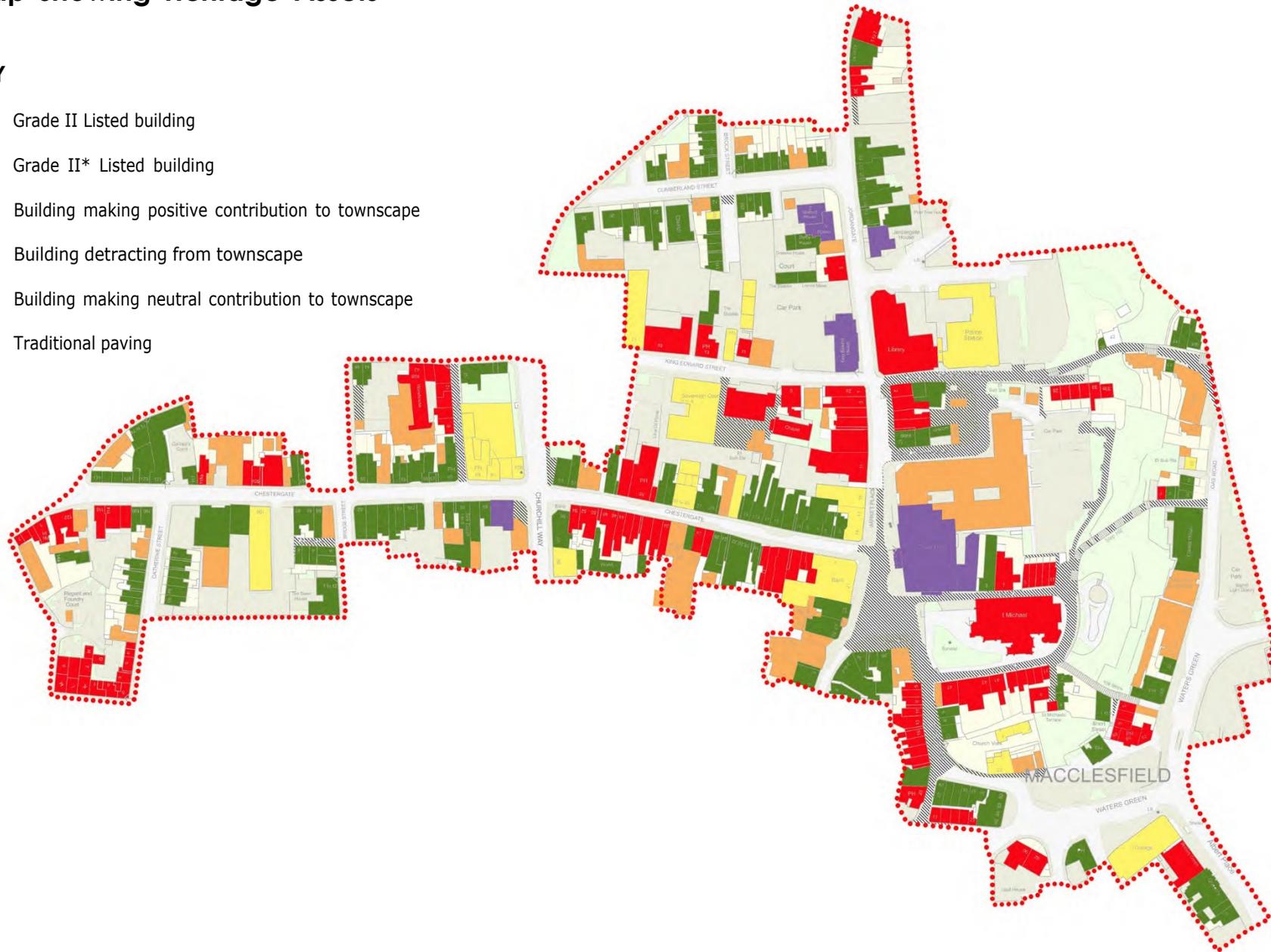
-  Amenity Spaces
-  Car Parks



Map showing Heritage Assets

KEY

- Grade II Listed building
- Grade II* Listed building
- Building making positive contribution to townscape
- Building detracting from townscape
- Building making neutral contribution to townscape
- Traditional paving



2.0 Assessment of Significance



Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area has a strong identity – its character defined by the largely 18th and 19th century townscape laid over a medieval settlement – established in the 13th century with St Michael’s Church and the Market Place key remnants of this period. One of its principal defining features however is its position on top of the hill which gives it a dramatic topography and striking views over the River Bollin to the Pennine hills beyond, capturing an entire cross-section of Macclesfield and its surroundings in a single frame. Its hillside position has also given rise to its intimate cobbled, meandering streets, lanes and steps which navigate its slopes and which again are fundamental to the character of the town. The core of the town centres on the Market Place, an important public space with key civic buildings – its role enhanced by its pedestrianisation. The three principal streets which retain the medieval street pattern, Chestergate, Jordangate and Church Street, all extend from the Market Place – each with its own distinct character. The high concentration of listed buildings (nine at Grade II*) and those which positively contribute, often within continuous runs, is reflective of the town’s historic significance and connection to the silk industry. However only a handful of buildings within the conservation area are directly linked to the town’s industrial past including the early-19th century Little Street Mill complex and remains of silk weaver’s cottages in Short Street.

Architectural style and materials vary throughout the conservation area – however domestic-scaled terraces of two or three storey brick buildings built hard up against the pavement edge with pitched roofs dominate with intervening grander, set-piece buildings primarily along Jordangate and within the Market Place. Whilst some 17th century buildings remain such as the rubble stone cottages at 1-7 Chester Road, evidence of these timber-framed buildings has largely been concealed by the later refronting of buildings. The shopfrontages along Chestergate and to Market Place maintain a sense of lively commerce, enhanced by the absence of cars, Jordangate however retains much more of its original air of formality, leading into Market Place at the civic heart of the town. The cobbled and terraced streets and narrow footpaths east of the Market Place offer a more intimate, domestic scale and lead down to Waters Green which by contrast has a busy environment dominated by cars and infrastructure.

The general townscape is a characteristically dense urban environment with very limited green space – Sparrow Park itself is a hard landscaped area. Whilst this is typical of post-industrial towns, the sheer expanse of surface-level car parks and hard surfaced backland areas detracts significantly from the conservation area although at face value could provide the space needed to address the pressing issues of this generation relating to sustainability, greening and the quality of the environments in which we live. The public realm otherwise contributes positively to the character of the conservation area, the enhancement scheme to Market Place has created a quality public space whilst planters, festoon lighting, traditional lighting columns and remaining sections of historic paving throughout the conservation area add to its character. Whilst the pedestrianisation of the eastern end of Chestergate enables a better appreciation of the local townscape the red clay pavers, which also extend along the pavements to Jordangate detract.

A number of exemplar adaptive reuse schemes have been undertaken which highlight how the role of such buildings in the conservation area can be retained despite their original use being lost. The conservation area, however, is not without its issues with the regrettable loss of historic buildings – whilst principally in the town's more distant memory, the demolition of the Old King's Head Public House demonstrates that even under current planning law and policy heritage assets can be lost. Modern interventions, of varying quality and typically unsympathetic to their context, have generally followed the prevailing scale of the townscape and as a consequence, their impact overall has been limited. The greatest threat to the significance of the conservation area however is small-scale, incremental change, principally modern windows, poor shopfronts, roller shutters and signage.



3.0 Location and Setting



Macclesfield is the largest town in north Cheshire; located to the north-east of the borough of Cheshire East it forms a principal town, alongside Crewe. It is located 36 miles east of Chester with Greater Manchester to the north. The A523 runs north to Stockport and south to Leek (the Silk Road) whilst the A537 runs west to Knutsford and east to Buxton. The town is surrounded by contrasting geographies, with the Peak District National Park located 1 mile to the east and the Cheshire Plains to its west. The hilly topography of the town is one of its principal defining features and the views of the Pennine hills particularly make a significant contribution to its character. Macclesfield is a medieval settlement laid out on a hill to provide a defensive outlook over the River Bollin, this topography affords striking views of the surrounding area and retains a sense of its historic context with the steep slope to the river side marking the edge of the historic town – the river itself now culverted. 'Modern' Macclesfield now spreads beyond, having expanded over last two

hundred years - principally to the north, west and south. Beyond is designated Green Belt and the protections that this affords against further expansion. The three principal roads meet at the Market Place, the civic core and centrepiece of the conservation area with the Town Hall and St Michael's Church.

The topography of the town centre, the presence of the A523 (Silk Road) and the mainline railway gives the eastern side of the conservation area a very clear definition. Viewed alongside the dominance of cars and car parking both inside and outside of the conservation area in this location the character very quickly changes from the historic town core to a harsh urban environment before a more historic townscape rises up on the facing side of the river with key buildings including the Arighi Bianchi building, Union Mill and St Paul's Church [Plates 3.1 – 3.3].



Plate 3.1 Pedestrian tunnel under the railway line at the bottom of Brunswick Hill



Plate 3.2 Harsh urban environment at Waters Green with Arighi Bianchi building beyond



Plate 3.3 Dominance of car parking and railway facing east side of conservation area

The sharp contrast between the conservation area and its surroundings continues around its northern edge including the Royal Mail Delivery Office and office buildings which make use of the hill slope to accommodate their increasing height before Hibel Road cuts through the townscape. The road forms a significant intervention and a distinct boundary to the conservation area, only cutting in around the Jordansgate Car Park. Whilst views are afforded through to the residential areas beyond – the manner with which roads such as Cumberland Street, Pownall Street and Brock Street have been truncated has had a divisive impact on the town – particularly in terms of pedestrian permeability [Plates 3.4 – 3.6].

To the north-western edge of the conservation area the boundary is less defined as Chestergate protrudes out westwards whilst excluding those areas of modern development around the northern end of Churchill Way which make no contribution. There are buildings and spaces around this northern fringe which are of historic interest, however they are rather detached from the town centre both geographically and in terms of its character and are statutorily protected through their listed status including the former Kings School and Stanley’s Almshouses. As King Edward Street curves round to become Chester Road the open Whalley Hayes Car Park on its north side provides a clear boundary line [Plates 3.7 – 3.9].

To the south-western and southern edge of the conservation area, its boundary is blurred with the domestic terraces continuing outside of the conservation area; these are largely contained within the Christchurch Conservation Area. Along Chester Road (and outside of both conservation areas) there are some shared characteristics within the townscape which continue, however the level of alteration to the buildings here tends to increase and this combined with the distance from the heart of the town centre means that they are not worthy of inclusion in the conservation

area. Once again this does not preclude the value of some individual buildings along this fringe including St Alban’s Church and its associated buildings [Plates 3.10 – 3.11].

The south-eastern corner is framed by two significant interventions of the late-20th century – The Grosvenor Shopping Centre and its associated car park on Churchill Way, the road has a fairly harsh urban environment as it extends south with large retail units and surface level parking. The southern end of Market Place falls away into Mill Street where the high street meanders down towards Park Green with an open view through to the countryside beyond. Whilst in term of the town centre, Mill Street very much forms part of its retail and commercial core – the character of the townscape is much more mixed with a higher variety in architectural style and quality and a greater degree of modern intervention. It does however make one of the greatest contributions to the setting of the conservation area as a principal entry points, further emphasised by its continuation of the town centre pedestrianisation and the cobbled narrow street of Back Wallgate which runs along the southern edge. To the west side of Mill Street are the bus station and large retail stores which, owing to their location towards the lower side of the hill, are largely tucked away from view [Plates 3.12 – 3.16].



Plate 3.4 Royal Mail Depot



Plate 3.5 Jordansgate Car Park



Plate 3.6 Hibel Road bisecting historic residential townscape



Plate 3.7 Modern development at north end of Churchill Way



Plate 3.8 View through to the former Kings School



Plate 3.9 Whalley Hayes Car Park



Plate 3.10 View along Chester Road and Prestbury Road



Plate 3.11 Residential terraces south along Catherine Street in Christchurch Conservation Area



Plate 3.12 Churchill Way and Grosvenor Car Park



Plate 3.13 View south along Mill Street



Plate 3.14 Mill Street leading into Market Place



Plate 3.15 View east down Back Wallgate

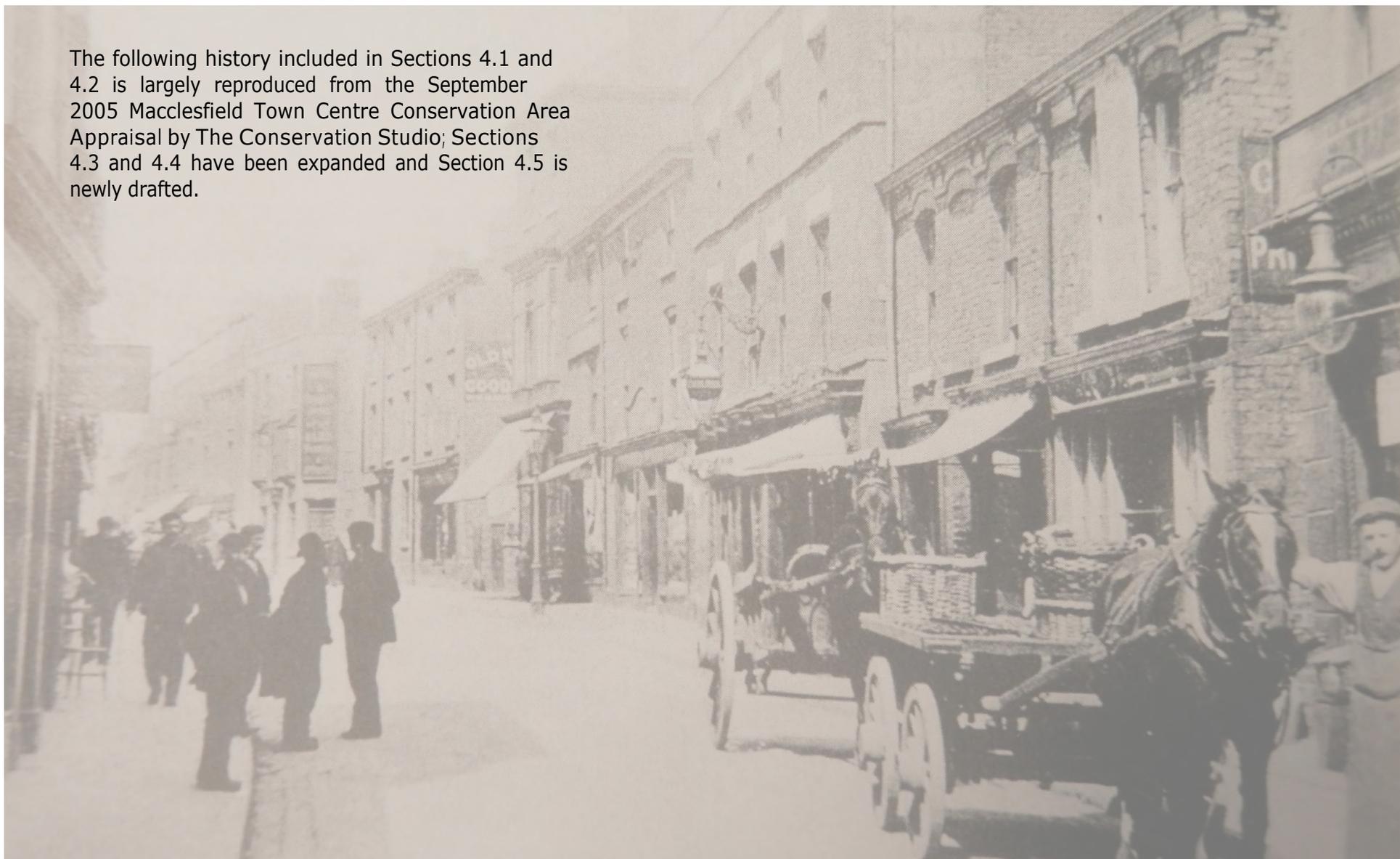


Plate 3.16 Large retail units and bus station to south of Queen Victoria Street

4.0 The Historical Development of Central Macclesfield



The following history included in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 is largely reproduced from the September 2005 Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal by The Conservation Studio; Sections 4.3 and 4.4 have been expanded and Section 4.5 is newly drafted.



4.1 Archaeology

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area, although the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (Cheshire County Council 1997 – 2001) confirms that the whole conservation area, which largely lies within the boundaries of the medieval settlement, has archaeological potential. In West Park, Macclesfield, are three standing Crosses of possibly 11th century date, which are Scheduled, although not in their original locations. A further standing Cross on the Prestbury Road and a bowl barrow at Tytherington, are Scheduled.

Around the town Bronze Age burial mounds and further remains have been discovered, suggesting that the Macclesfield area was clearly of some importance in the Prehistoric period. There is no evidence of Roman activity in the town. Further details are included in the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey.

4.2 The Development of Macclesfield

Before the shire of Cheshire was laid out in the late 9th to 10th centuries the Macclesfield area may have been included in the territory of the Pecsæte (Peak dwellers), which covered parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire. By the 10th century it appears probable that there was a large royal estate centred on Macclesfield and by Domesday in 1086 Macclesfield was one of two large estates (the other being Adlington) belonging to the Earls of Mercia within the hundred of Hamestan. The survey records a hall and a mill but also that the value of the land was only 20 shillings, and that the area was waste, presumably because of the crushing of the rebellion against the Normans in 1070. Macclesfield remained in the hands of the Earls of Chester until the last earl died in 1237, after which it reverted to the crown along with the earldom. Thereafter, the Manor was held by the monarch until 1835 and rented out from time to time to various local families, including the Earls of Derby and the Savage's.

The borough of Macclesfield was created by Ranulph de Blundeville, Earl of Chester, in around 1220, and its economy was based on agriculture and associated trading in the Market Place. The original charter has been lost, but a new charter was granted by Edward I in 1261 and it can be assumed that this contains similar provisions. The land around the Market Place was divided up into approximately 120 plots, facing Jordangate, the Market Place, Mill Street and the newly created Chestergate. The new burgesses were given the right to form a merchant guild and were exempt from tolls in Cheshire. Each burgess was allocated an acre of land within the town fields to the west of the town. They also had the right to dig peat in the Danes Moss to the south-west of the town and to pasture sheep, horses and cattle on the common land to the east of the River Bollin.

Some time in the 13th century a medieval guildhall was also built, on the site of the present Town Hall, and this was replaced by a stone building above an arcade of three shops in the late 16th century. A new church, All Saints, was provided by Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I, in 1278, subsequently renamed as St Michael's. It acted as a chapel of ease to the larger church at Prestbury until 1835 when it became an independent parish.

A market hall was provided by the Black Prince in c1357 and this building survived until 1826 when the Market Place was cleared. At this time, it appears that the medieval Manor of Macclesfield was located slightly out of the settlement on the Congleton Road, in an area known as Castle Fields, where there is some documentary evidence for a motte and bailey castle. However, nothing now remains.

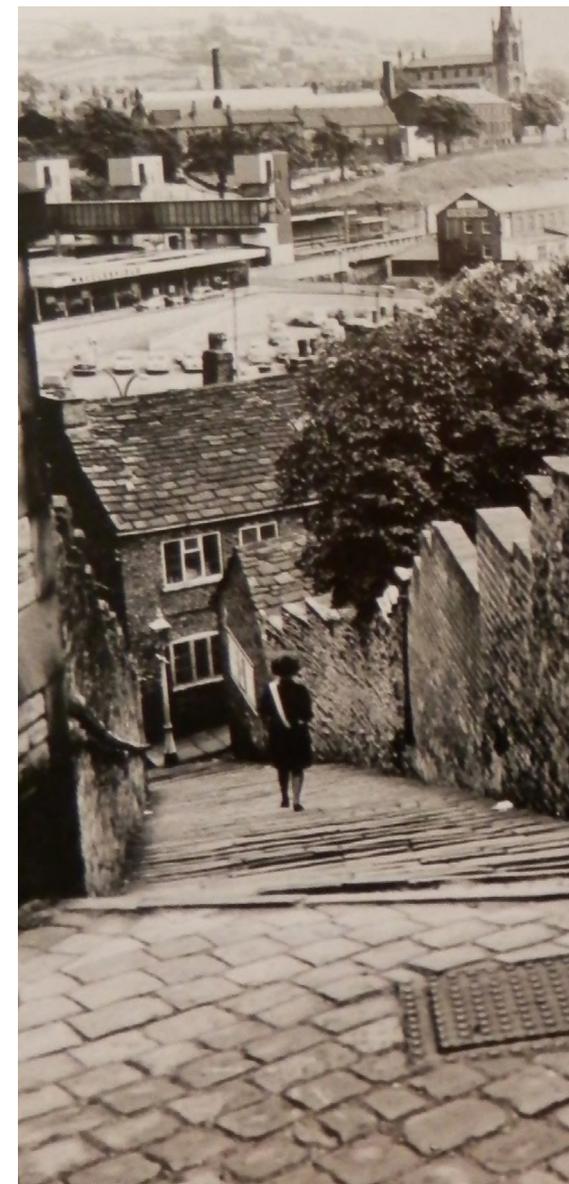
In c1398 John de Macclesfield built a large and prestigious house on four adjacent burgage plots on the east side of Mill Street. By 1585 it was ruinous and the only remaining features, a porch and central turret, were demolished in 1933.

Throughout the Middle Ages Macclesfield continued to act as an important administrative and trading centre for the surrounding region. By the 16th century, the town had spread from the Market Place along the main streets and down Wallgate and Church Street to Waters Green. William Smith described Macclesfield at the end of the 16th century as being 'one of the fairest towns in Cheshire.'²

2 The Vale-Royal of England or County Palatine of Cheshire, 1656, <https://archive.org/details/valeroyalofengl00king> [accessed March 2021].

In 1684 Charles II granted a town charter that confirmed the existing privileges, and gave the town greater autonomy including the right to bring water into the borough from the common – an important right that was to encourage the development of industries. Quarrying of stone and coal were known from at least the 16th century, with a brick works being established in 1696 and a copper works in 1758. Additionally the burgesses were allowed to enclose strips of land. Many enclosures were for houses, but others were for small-scale industries such as silk works and dye houses. The commons were eventually divided up and enclosed in 1804, and by the 18th century the town's open fields had already been consolidated into separate farms. St Michael's Church was extensively rebuilt in 1739, although the tower and the chapels to the Legh and Savage families were retained. Further restoration took place between 1898 and 1901.

The Macclesfield Canal was built by William Crosley in 1881, connecting the Peak Forest Canal at Marple with the Trent and Mersey Canal at Talke in Staffordshire. However, it had only a brief period of success. Only a few years later, in 1845, the railway line from Macclesfield to Manchester and Birmingham was opened and soon after that, in 1849, a line to London and the Potteries. This entailed major alterations to the layout of the area around Waters Green and much of the course of the River Bollin was culverted. A new station for both lines was constructed in Hibel Road and a tunnel was cut under Beech Lane. In 1872 a third railway line was brought into the town and another new station, the Central Station, was opened in 1873.



4.3 The Macclesfield Silk Industry

The town's association with silk goes back almost four centuries, when silk-covered buttons were manufactured in the area. The preparation of yarn began in the mid-17th century with hand throwing taking place in long and narrow brick sheds known as shades. Silk weaving in Macclesfield continued as a hand industry carried out in weavers' garrets – three-storey cottages. Over six hundred of these were built and more than two hundred are thought to survive.³ The key innovation which sparked the growth of the silk industry was water-powered factory-based spinning introduced to Britain by John and Thomas Lombe who imported mill design from visits to Italy and built their first on the River Derwent near Derby. This became the model for other industrialists and was imported to Macclesfield by Charles Roe.⁴

The first water powered throwing mill in Macclesfield was built by Roe in 1744 and the town quickly became a centre for the throwing industry, supplying yarn to silk weavers in Spitalfields, London. Broadloom weaving was introduced to the town in the late-18th century and Macclesfield became a centre for the production of newly fashionable silk, aided by investment from local families. The town rapidly expanded from 8,743 people in 1810 to 23,129 in 1830 due to this burgeoning industry and this is also reflected in the numbers of mills – of which there were just 30 in 1814 but by 1840, 70 were in operation. This quite rapid expansion was due to the introduction of power looms to the industry in 1820 and the preference of manufacturers to have their workers in mills rather garrets.⁵

A substantial cause of the population growth in the industrialising years of the later-18th century was due to the migration of workers from the nearby rural areas and from parts of Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Following the initial establishment of the industry, workers were drawn from further afield including Dublin, London, Coventry and Leek. The mid-19th century census returns show that 79% of the population were born in Cheshire in 1841 but by 1851 58% were native to Macclesfield with 15% from elsewhere in the country, 10% were migrants from Ireland and 1% from London.⁶

The success of the industry saw many local firms exhibit Macclesfield's silk wares at the Great Exhibition of 1851. However the industry was also impacted by the loss of American and European markets after the Napoleonic Wars and further following the 1860 Cobden Treaty with France, which allowed cheaper goods to be imported to Britain. Many people emigrated to Patterson, New Jersey which was the centre of the American Silk industry, founded by John Ryle from Macclesfield. Artificial fibres were first woven in Macclesfield from c.1900 and by the 1920s artificial silk fibres were woven and printed along with silk before gradually replacing them. Macclesfield companies worked with chemical manufacturers to create new artificial fibres, adapting the established processes and techniques. The Second World War provided a further boom for the silk trade in the town, with essential war work being the weaving of parachutes, silk underwear for airmen and producing the 'escape maps' for jungle warfare.⁷

By the late-20th century the silk industry in Macclesfield was just a fraction of its former size, but a small number of companies survive and are engaged in yarn processing, knitting, dyeing, weaving and printing.⁸

3 Collins L and Stevenson M, Macclesfield: The Silk Industry (Chalford 1995) p.7.

4 Malmgreen, G, Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield 1750-1835 (Hull University Press 1985) p.10.

5 The Silk Industry, p.7.

6 Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield 1750-1835, p.7.

7 The Silk Industry, p.8.

8 The Silk Industry, p.9.

Plates 4.1a & 4.1b

The view looking towards the Town Hall in the 1890s, shows a row of high-quality buildings with ground-floor shops fronting the Market Place, demolished in the mid-20th century. The archway on the left was the opening of Unicorn Gateway and led the Shambles. The present-day photo shows the major change that the construction of the Town Hall extension in 1992 created at this gateway into the Market Place incorporating an area of landscaped public realm.



Plate 4.1a Market Place looking south-east, 1890s (Pickford 2003)



Plate 4.1b Market Place looking south-east (Insall)

Plates 4.2a & 4.2b

This early-20th century photograph looking east along Chestergate highlights the important historic relationship with the Town Hall as a set-piece public building, framed by the street. Many shopfronts are fitted with awnings and although window displays appear to be rather busy, there are relatively few hanging signs. The present-day photo shows the results of mid-20th century pedestrianisation of the street and a general deterioration in the quality of shopfronts.



Plate 4.2a View east along Chestergate, early-20th Century (Macclesfield Library)



Plate 4.2b View east along Chestergate (Insall)

Plates 4.3a & 4.3b

The historic view of Mill Street shows the southern boundary of the conservation area at the entrance to Market Place. A fair amount of rebuilding has taken place, for example at 3-7 Mill Street, but the corner building at the entrance to the Grosvenor Shopping Centre remains, albeit with a new shopfront comprising an oversized fascia.



Plate 4.3a Mill Street looking north towards Market Place, c.1900 (Pickford 2001)



Plate 4.3b Mill Street looking north towards Market Place (Insall)

4.4 20th Century Development

In the 20th century, Macclesfield's population continued to expand from over 34,000 in 1901 to around 49,000 in 1991. Inter-war and post-war housing was added, principally to the north towards Prestbury, to the west towards Knutsford, and to the south. The natural boundaries created by the rivers and the Pennine hills have prevented similar expansion to the east, where the proximity of Macclesfield Forest and the Peak District National Park has provided a wide range of leisure opportunities for the local and visiting population. Today there are still several working mills in the town, and the silk industry has also left another important legacy with the survival of a large number of silk workers' houses, characterised by long rows of continuous windows which provided light for silk throwing and weaving.

Early-20th century developments in central Macclesfield included the extension of Little Street Mill in 1909. Formerly a silk mill, the extension was completed for Wood and Son, victuallers and replaced the steam engine house (formerly horse-powered) creating an enclosed mill yard. This period also saw the clearance of housing to the immediate east of St Michael's Church, laying the foundations for the creation of Sparrow Park. From the late 1960s the area behind Jordangate was redeveloped as a Post Office Depot, replacing former gardens and a number of buildings were cleared along the north side of King Edward Street. The declining silk industry had an undoubted effect on the town, and gradually a number of former industrial buildings fell out of use, which offered opportunities for the redevelopment of those sites.

In 1971, alterations to the south end of the Market Place included the re-setting of the Market Cross remains within a traffic island and the demolition of the Angel Hotel and Parr's Bank on the corner with Chestergate for the construction of the present-day NatWest.⁹

The Grosvenor Shopping Centre was also constructed at this time, set behind retained frontages along Chestergate and Mill Street but truncating Stanley Street and replacing almost its entire eastern end.

By the mid-1980s a number of redevelopments had taken place within the town centre some of which involved complete demolition of buildings while others were converted. By 1986, the former Iron Foundry on the south side of King Edward Street was replaced with Sovereign Court, a substantial concrete building whilst, in contrast, the large industrial complex of Regents Foundry on Catherine Street was successfully converted into a residential complex at the end of the decade. Similarly, the former Royal George Mill at the western end of Chestergate (now George's Court) was gradually converted from 1988 to provide retail, office and residential units. The loss of historic buildings and piecemeal redevelopment has resulted in some large breaks in the street frontages, notably on the north side of King Edward Street.

In 1988 the eastern portion of Chestergate was pedestrianised as part of the wider scheme which created Churchill Way, cutting through Chestergate, King Edward Street and Cumberland Street to join Hibel Road at the north end of Jordangate. This involved the demolition of a number of buildings and effectively severed the relationship between the western and eastern sides of Chestergate. Further public works included the conversion of a redundant bank building on the corner of Jordangate and Brunswick Street into Macclesfield Library. An adjacent building which had formerly been a pub was demolished to allow an extension to serve the library, the works were consented in 1991. The following year, the Town Hall extension by Conder UK and HLM Architects was completed in the Market Place to accommodate expanded facilities.

9 Bentley Smith D, *Past Times of Macclesfield: Volume I* (Landmark, 2004).

Plates 4.4a & 4.4b

The c.1900 view east along Chestergate shows the form of traditional shopfronts, with modest-sized fascias, awnings and small projecting signs. This view takes in the buildings which were demolished in the late-20th century for the creation of Churchill Way, which has formed a physical boundary within the town centre and broken a formerly continuous stretch of historic buildings in the streetscape.



Plate 4.4a Chestergate looking west, c.1900 (Bentley Smith 2004)



Plate 4.4b Chestergate looking west (Insall)

Plates 4.5a & 4.5b

This early-20th century view of Brunswick Hill is remarkably familiar to that of the present-day, with historic railings, stone setts and rubblestone walls surviving.

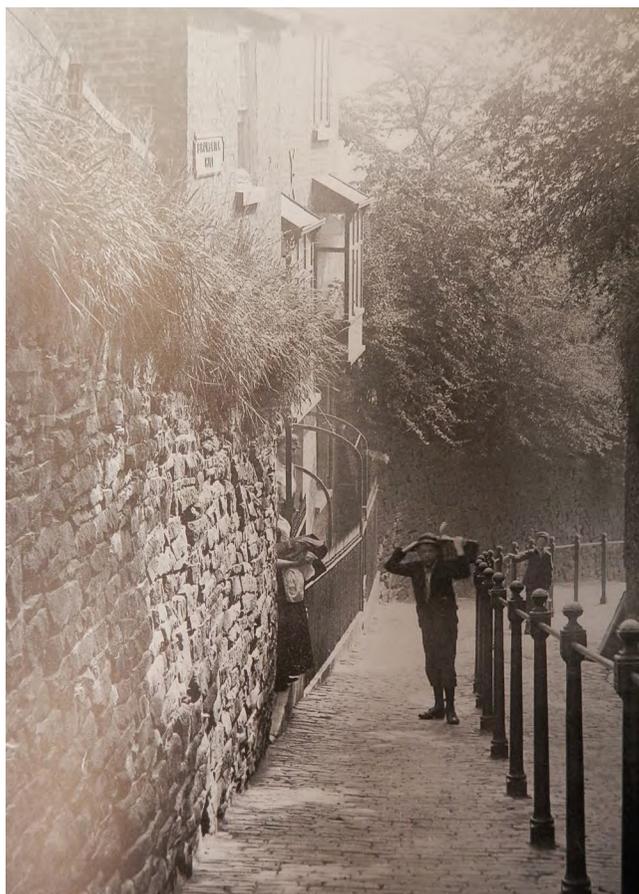


Plate 4.5a Brunswick Hill, early-20th century (Pickford 2001)

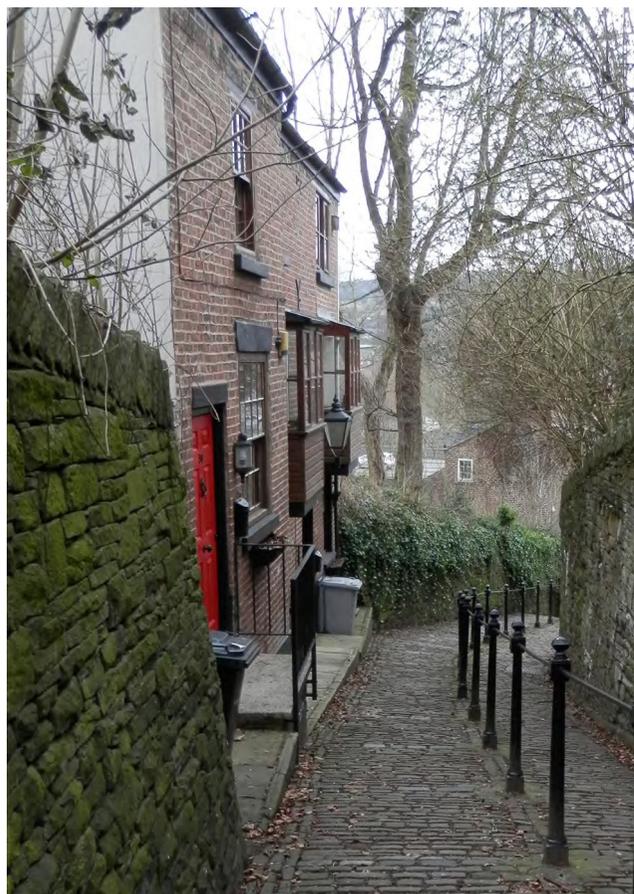


Plate 4.5b Brunswick Hill (Insall)

Plates 4.6a & 4.6b

This view shows how continual change has affected the town centre. Modern for their time, the bold shopfront designs may have replaced more modest shopfronts and they show the transition towards many of the present-day designs. Whilst no.3 was entirely replaced in the 1970s as part of the Grosvenor Shopping Centre development.



Plate 4.6a 3-7 Mill Street, late-1950s (Pickford 2003)



Plate 4.6b 3-7 Mill Street (Insall)

Plates 4.7a & 4.7b

The shopfronts in this 1966 view of 125-131 Chestergate are a uniform design. Their splayed entrances have been removed and the fascias are all much deeper and the consistency between the units has been lost. Large signage on the gable end now detracts from this gateway to Chestergate from the west.



Plate 4.7a 125-131 Chestergate, 1966 (Macclesfield Library)



Plate 4.7b 125-131 Chestegate (Insall)

4.5 21st Century Development

In the 21st century, Macclesfield's industry centres on its international reputation in science and the pharmaceutical industry, along with professional services such as architecture, engineering, advertising and market research. The population has seen a steady growth to 52,500 in 2017. The fabric of the conservation area has been affected by the redevelopment of a number of historic buildings and modern extensions to them. In many cases, this has taken the form of providing residential accommodation for town centre living, such as the former George Hotel at 48 Jordangate (2003) and the Guildhall (former County Police Offices) on King Edward Street (2005).

Other development has focused on retail and business use, including the substantial new wing to the former Rural District Council building at 19 King Edward Street, which was approved in 2000. The conversion of the former industrial works at Castle House in Waters Green started in 2008 and now comprises the Travelodge Hotel and offices in the adjacent extension, Merchant Exchange. Both schemes again demonstrate that historic buildings can be adaptively reused to secure their conservation – although in these instances with substantial contemporary extensions. A scheme which proposed the redevelopment of the former Old King's Head and Three Pigeons public houses was approved in 2008. This was to include the partial demolition of the buildings and the construction of two, three and four storey buildings to create a mixed-use of retail and business. In November 2019, parts of the Old King's Head were demolished due to structural instability and redevelopment work is yet to start.



Plates 4.8a & 4.8b

The eastern end of Chestergate, opening onto Market Place is marked by tall high-quality buildings. The Town Hall still forms the focal point of the streetscape, but is somewhat obscured by landscaping in the form of trees and lampposts. Again, some historic shopfronts have been lost and replaced with ones of lower quality using inappropriate colours and materials.



Plate 4.8a View east along Chestergate to Market Place, 1966 (Macclesfield Library)



Plate 4.8b View east along Chestergate to Market Place (Insall)

Plates 4.9a & 4.9b

108 Steps retains an intimate historic feel and highlights the sharp topography of the town. The growth of trees has obscured views to some extent and adaptations to allow for car parking somewhat remove the historic feel of this street.



Plate 4.9a 108 Steps, 1966 (Macclesfield Library)

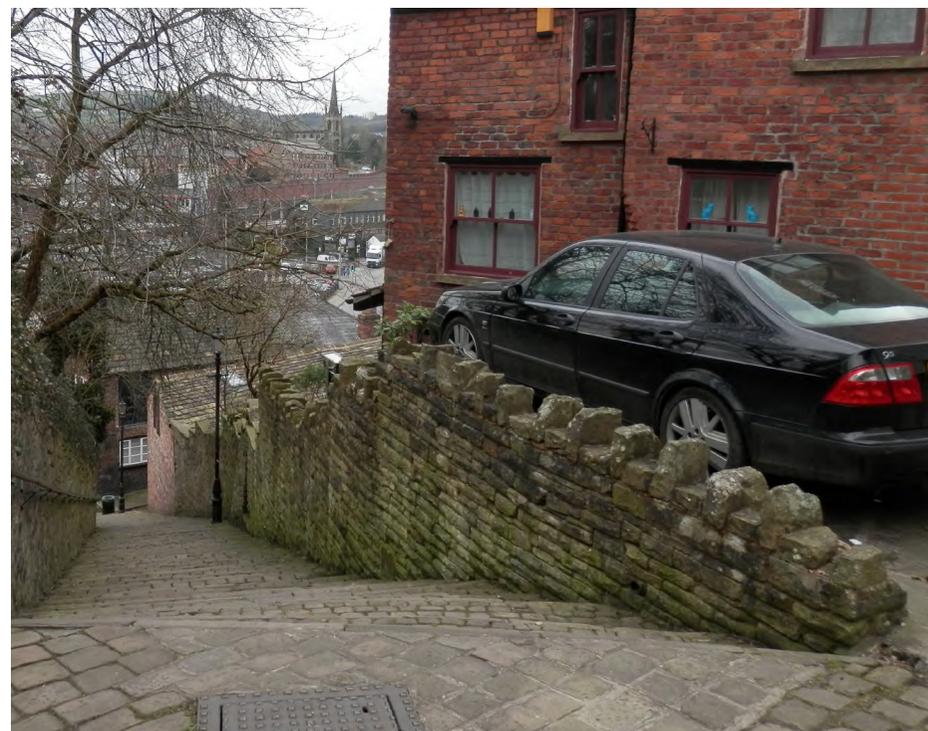


Plate 4.9b 108 Steps (Insall)

Plates 4.10a & 4.10b

The impact of Waters Green Car Park on the southern gateway to the Town Centre via Church Street is clear to see here. This 1970s view shows both far fewer cars and a great deal less signage. The view from the Station across Waters Green and up Church Street is now cluttered with both and create a complicated streetscape. The buildings have been altered to varying degrees, including the replacement of some traditional windows with uPVC. Church View now looms over the buildings on Waters Green.



Plate 4.10a View towards the Church from Waters Green, 1970s (Pickford 2001)



Plate 4.10b View towards the Church from Waters Green (Insall)

Plates 4.11a & 4.11b

This 1994 photograph shows the former layout of the south end of the Market Place which included a traffic island. The present-day view shows the now pedestrianised public realm which offers the Market Place as an accessible open space. It also shows how the quality of shopfronts has deteriorated within a relatively short space of time, especially on the corner with Mill Street where a contemporary shopfront with oversized modern fascia has been inserted which bears no relationship to the historic building which hosts it.

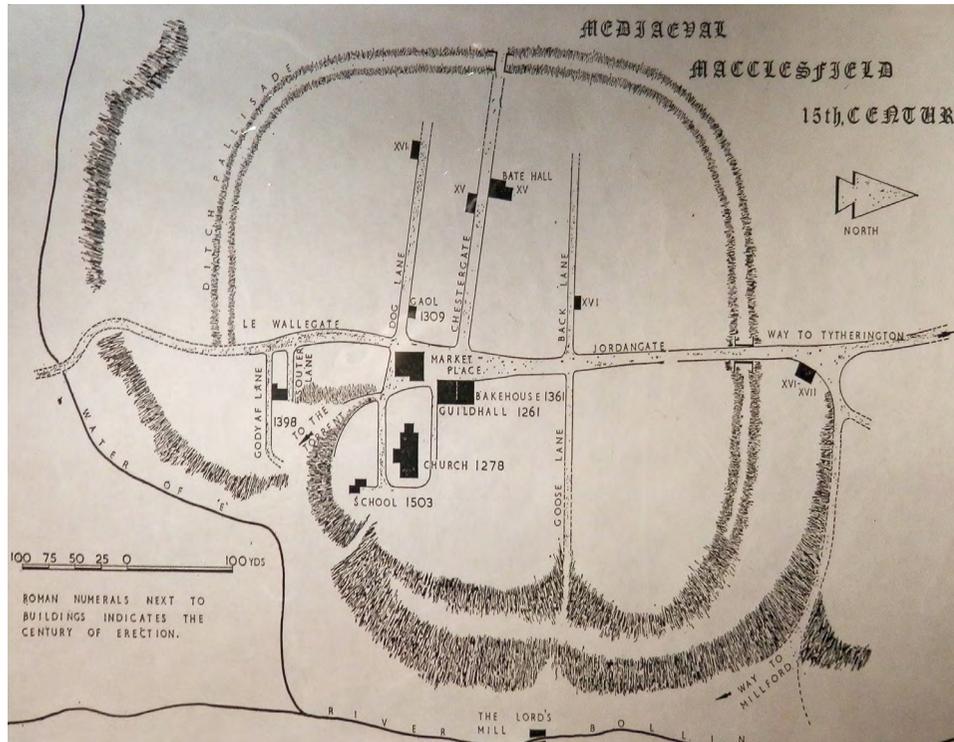


Plate 4.11a Market Place looking west, 1994 (Bentley Smith 2004)



Plate 4.11b Market Place looking west (Insall)

4.6 Map Regression



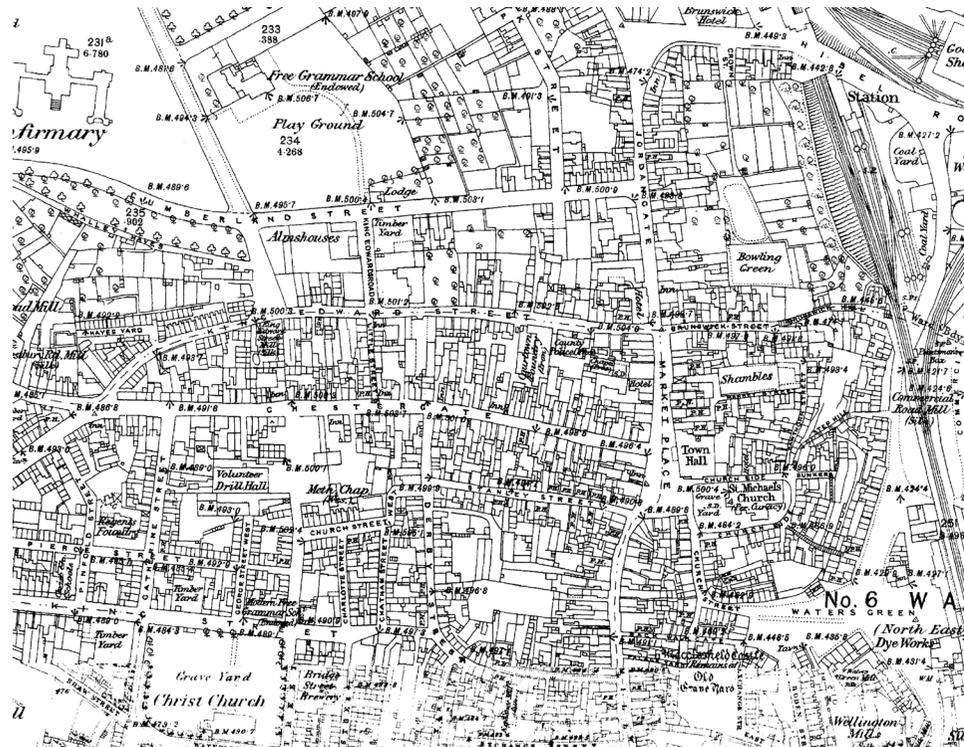
Medieval Macclesfield

The medieval map of Macclesfield in the 15th century shows the assumed extent of the town at that time. It emphasises the town's elevated defensive position overlooking the River Bollin to the east, encircled by a ditch and palisade to the north, south and west. The principal streets – Market Place, Chestergate, Jordangate and Mill Street – which were laid out with burgage plots after the 1261 Charter, are shown along with the 13th-century Church of St Michael and the Guildhall.



1853

The town plan of 1853 shows how centuries of development along the medieval streets had resulted in dense urban blocks in the central area, with the town starting to expand to the north and west. Cumberland Street is shown part-way through its development as a residential area, along with the Railway Station on Hibel Road. The development on Waters Green associated with the driving through of the railway line and subsequent culverting of the Bollin can also be seen.



1873

By 1873, the laying out of Cumberland Street was complete, although it mainly consisted of gardens with the first houses having been built on the north-east corner with Jordangate and also at the junction with Brock Street. The detail of building plots arranged along the lines of the original medieval burgage plots is clear along Chestergate, King Edward Street and Stanley Street, and the intricate alleys which stretch back from the streets commonly interconnected to form backland courts. Toward the western end of Chestergate is a large cleared area on the south side, occupied today by Bridge Street, which was mostly likely being laid out at this time. On Waters Green, the area was still occupied by silk mills and dye works along with a number of pubs and inns, serving workers and visitors and travellers brought in by the new railway station, Waters Station.



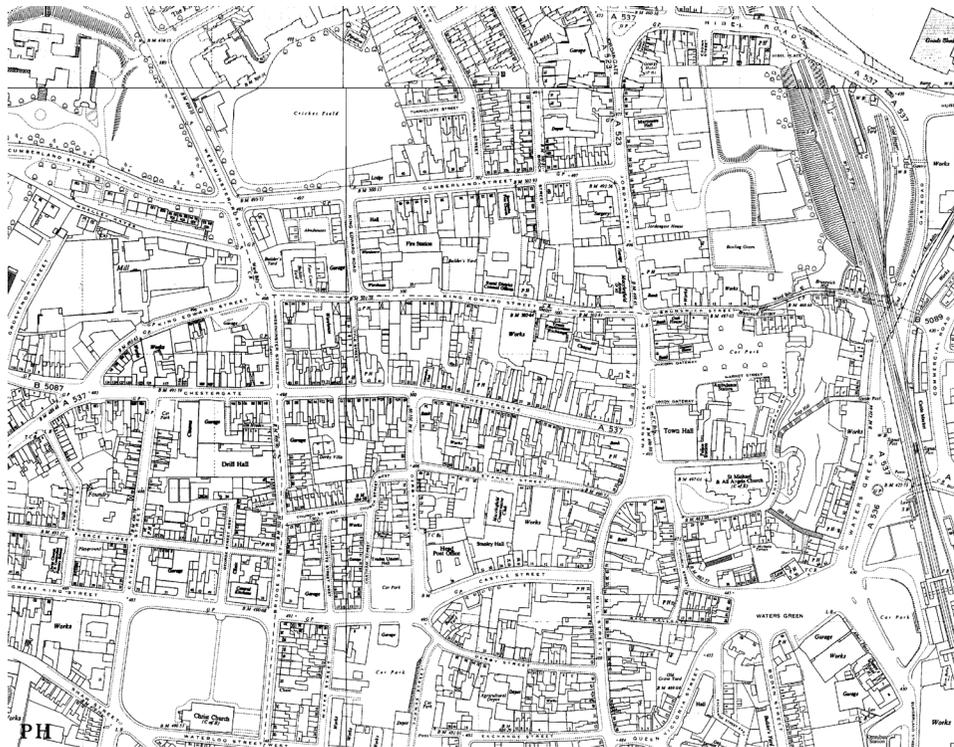
1898

By the end of the 19th century, the development of housing along Cumberland Street had been extended to replace the former gardens, also including a Sunday School (now Macclesfield Spiritualist Church) and terraced housing on Brock Street. The northern portion of Bridge Street had been completed and now included the Gothic frontage to the Drill Hall (now The Tower House) and terraced housing opposite. In Waters Green, the station had been renamed Central Station and the buildings which had previously stood to the west had been cleared, opening up the approach to the bottom of Church Street and the town centre beyond.



1909

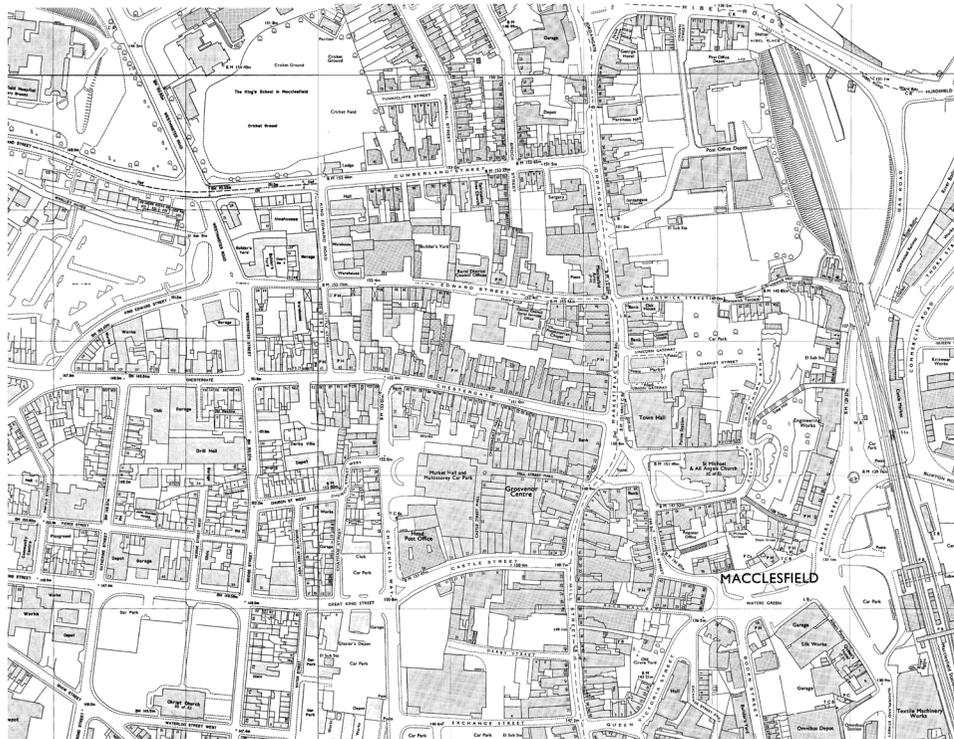
By 1909, very little change is apparent. The most significant alteration was the demolition of what appears to have been former housing to the east of St Michael's Church prior to the creation of Sparrow Park.



1965-69

By the late-1960s there had been a number of significant changes within the town centre. At the northern end of Jordangate, former terraced buildings had been replaced with a large garage, opposite the junction with Hibel Road. Additional clearance was taking place at this time to the rear of the buildings on the eastern side of Jordangate on land formerly occupied as gardens. On King Edward Street, a terrace to the west of the Rural District Council Offices (now no.19) was cleared and in use as a Builder's Yard. Further west, at the junction with Prestbury Road, terraced housing at Hayes Yard was cleared and replaced with the Grosvenor Street Mill complex which stood opposite the Royal George Mill on Chestergate. The map also shows the location of Castle Street, which was constructed in 1923 to join Mill Street with Derby Street to the west.

On Waters Green, a surface-level car park had been created in front of the station and buildings on the corner of Albert Place had been replaced by a garage. A large-scale clearance was undertaken to the north-east of the Town Hall, in Unicorn Gateway, which demolished a number of buildings fronting Market Place and the site of the Shambles. They were replaced by a surface-level car park and to the east of this, an extension to Sparrow Park was made following the clearance of a short terrace.



1973-86

By the time of this map, significant large-scale developments had occurred in the town centre which in places altered its historic form. To the rear of the east side Jordangate, the Post Office Depot had been constructed on land previously occupied by gardens. To the south of this, a large plot of land fronting Brunswick Street which formerly housed a bowling green had been cleared to make way for the Police Station. On the south side of King Edward Street, the brutalist Sovereign Court was built on the site of a former iron works. The surrounding open hard landscaping opened up the backland area between Chestergate and King Edward Street. The Grosvenor Street Mill at the western end of King Edward Street was completely replaced with an extensive surface-level car park (Whalley Hayes Car). On Waters Green, another surface-level car park was laid out at the eastern end of Church Street and obscuring the open relationship which had previously existed with the station. In Market Place, by far the largest development in this period was the building of the Grosvenor Shopping Centre (1971) occupying the urban block bound by Chestergate, Mill Street and Castle Street. While the frontages to Chestergate and Mill Street were retained, the historic footprint of Stanley Street was almost entirely replaced by the centre and multi-storey car park. To the west of the Shopping Centre, the road formerly called Derby Street was widened and re-named Churchill Way, running south from Chestergate.



Present-day

The map of present-day Macclesfield shows how the town centre has developed since the late-20th century. Perhaps the most important change was the driving through of Churchill Way which passed through Chestergate, King Edward Street and Cumberland Street to join Hibel Road at the northern end of Jordangate. This scheme effectively cut both Chestergate and King Edward Street in half and created a wide boundary to the town centre to the north. The Town Hall Extension on the eastern side of Market Place was completed in 1992 which infilled a formerly open area however in other places buildings were cleared creating large empty plots between buildings and in backland areas, mostly used for parking. Examples of this are found on the north and south sides of King Edward Street and at the north-east end of Jordangate.

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5.0

Area

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5.1 General Character

Macclesfield town centre has a distinct character defined by its dramatic topography as it rises up from the River Bollin. This gives the town striking views both out towards the Pennine hills and inwards to the medieval church sat on top of the hill, providing an understanding of the town's geographical context which underpins its character. The hillside location has also created a historic townscape both intimate and impressive as the cobbled Church Street, 108 Steps, Step Hill and Brunswick Hill all navigate its hillside position and Churchside cuts round behind the church. This gives an inherent hierarchy to the townscape as they open out at the top of the hill, where Church Street joins Chestergate and Jordangate at the Market Place [Plates 5.1.1 – 5.1.5].

Despite the prevailing Georgian and Victorian townscape, the alignment of the principal streets with the medieval street pattern, its defensive hilltop position and the heart of the town centred on the 13th century St Michael's Church and Market Place all retain evidence of its medieval origins. This however has been significantly eroded by the loss of the medieval burgage plots to infill and expanses of hard landscaping, the 18th and 19th century development of the town and the re-fronting of those 16th and 17th timber-framed buildings which remain.



Plate 5.1.1 St Michael's Church above Waters Green



Plate 5.1.2 Church Street leading to Market Place

Long continuous rows of intact and handsome 18th and early-19th domestic-scaled terraces now form the backbone of the town's character. They are now largely in commercial use with office or residential accommodation above; to the fringes of the conservation area they remain in full residential use. This is interspersed by grander, more prestigious Georgian houses on Jordangate and King Edward Street, now converted, reflective of the status and wealth associated with the silk weaving industry [Plate 5.1.5 - 5.1.8]. Whilst the silk industry was integral to the development of Macclesfield, the associated mills, weaver's houses and cottages were largely concentrated further south on Mill Lane closer to the River Bollin (for water power and damp conditions), a handful are however located in the conservation area including the former Little Street Silk Mill in the Little Street and nos.2 - 6 Short Street [Plates 5.1.9 - 5.1.10]. In addition a number of civic buildings characteristic of a town centre remain including the Greek Revival Town Hall [Plate 5.1.11]; although most have now been converted into new uses including the former borough and country police offices, alongside a number of remaining public houses – again a number now converted to residential use.



Plate 5.1.6 Chestergate looking towards Market Place



Plate 5.1.7 Market Place leading into Jordangate

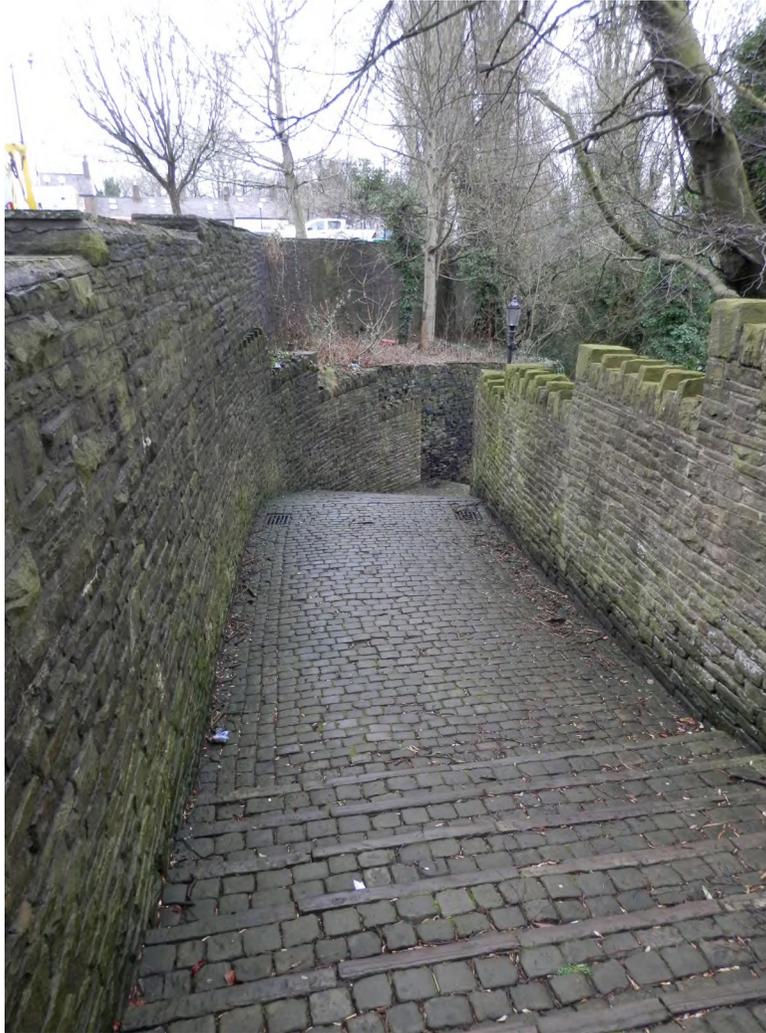


Plate 5.1.3 Step Hill



Plate 5.1.4 Market Place, the Town Hall and Church



Plate 5.1.5 Churchside



Plate 5.1.8 North side of Jordangate



Plate 5.1.9 Little Street Mill



Plate 5.1.10 Short Street



Plate 5.1.11 The Town Hall and former borough police offices

The town centre is a characteristically hard urban environment with little in the way of green space largely limited to the churchyard and Sparrow Park to the east of the church itself a largely hard landscaped space [Plate 5.1.12]. There is a pocket of greenery to the east of the Town Hall extension and small amenity spaces towards the north end of Jordangate and on the corner of Chestergate and Churchill Way whilst planters throughout the town centre add visual interest. Furthermore, the break in townscape which the steep slopes of the hillside afford and views out to the countryside give a sense of openness. The pedestrianisation of the town centre and the removal of traffic to Market Place and Chestergate significantly enhances its character and perhaps more importantly the opportunity for it to be enjoyed and appreciated. Whilst traditional lighting columns, the remaining sections of historic paving and schemes such as the festoon lighting to Chestergate, Market Square, Church Street and Back Wallgate add to the quality of the environment. The remodelling of the Market Place with setts is of particular note; this is undermined by the uncharacteristic surfacing to Chestergate and along the pavements extending northwards along Jordangate [Plates 5.1.13 – 5.1.14].



Plate 5.1.12 Sparrow Park



Plate 5.1.13 Pedestrianisation of Market Place



Plate 5.1.14 Pedestrianisation of Chestergate east

More modern development has been kind to the character of the conservation area; whilst of varying quality architecturally and almost always out of context with its historic character, it is largely contained within the prevailing scale of the buildings and this has limited the harmful impact in almost all cases except to Sovereign Court owing to the prominent red roof storey and surrounding hard landscaping and the NatWest bank due to its important position on Market Place. Whilst historic buildings have been lost to the detriment of the conservation area – principally during the middle of the 20th century – there are numerous examples of the successful adaptive reuse of historic buildings within the conservation area including the Guildhall and Macclesfield Library, a number of former industrial buildings including Regents Foundry, Waters Green House and St George’s Court as well as public houses such as the Bull and Gate on Water’s Green, The George Hotel and King Edward House (formerly the Macclesfield Arms) [Plates 5.1.15 – 5.1.19]. The reuse of the Picturedrome particularly has had a positive impact on the conservation area - drawing people across Churchill Way and reinvigorating the commercial offer at the western end of Chestergate. The threat that the loss of viable uses has on historic buildings and therefore the conservation area however remains ever present, the partially demolished site previously occupied by the King’s Head and the Three Pigeons public houses stands testament to that [Plate 5.1.20].



Plate 5.1.15 Macclesfield Library, Jordangate



Plate 5.1.16 Regents Foundry Court



Plate 5.1.17 Waters Green House, Albert Place



Plate 5.1.18 70 Waters Green



Plate 5.1.19 Picturedrome



Plate 5.1.20 The Three Pigeons, Little Street

Development which has had the greatest impact on the character of the conservation area is small-scale and cumulative – principally the replacement of historic windows and doors with poor quality uPVC units, the installation of poor quality shopfronts, roller shutters and inappropriate box fascia and projecting signs. Poor quality retail frontages have a particularly harmful impact on the appreciation of the conservation area given their dominance at the human scale and largely divorcing them from the historic façades above. Redundant fixtures and fittings and modern security measures such as alarm boxes, satellite dishes and wiring running across facades all detract [Plates 5.1.21 – 5.1.22]. The many good examples which remain highlight the positive impact that undertaking alterations sympathetically can have – particularly in terms of adding character and interest – therefore attracting customers – to retail shopfronts. The extent of open, poor quality hard landscaping behind and surrounding buildings – largely given over to surface level car parking, has also had a significant impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area forming chasms in its townscape whilst the dominance of cars and car parking around Waters Green is overbearing [Plate 5.1.23].



Plate 5.1.21 Impact of variety of modern uPVC windows



Plate 5.1.22 Variety in quality of shopfronts and signage on Chestergate



Plate 5.1.23 Dominance of parking and cars in Waters Green

5.2 Streets and Spaces

5.2.1 Principal Streets/Spaces

The principal streets and spaces in Macclesfield are those which follow the medieval street pattern including Church Street, Chestergate, Jordangate and Market Place. They make up a dense historic urban environment, predominately three storeys, some two, and largely comprising terraces built hard up against the pavement edge. Church Street and the eastern end of Chestergate exhibit the best and most intact historic frontage. The pedestrianisation of Chestergate (east), Market Place and part of Church Street significantly enhances the quality of the urban environment and the ability to appreciate the townscape; the red clay pavers to Chestergate (east) and to the pavements extending into Jordangate detract [Plates 5.2.1 – 5.2.4a/b].

To Jordangate the townscape is of similarly high quality but is more varied with substantial Georgian houses interspersed by modern development and gap sites. Market Place extends south from Jordangate and opens up into a triangular public space with the churchyard and wooded hillside contributing to its general character.

Waters Green (including Albert Place and Gas Road) forms the gateway to the conservation area from the east and the station. It retains the highest concentration of buildings linked to the town's industrial past as well as a number of historic public houses. It is much more open however is dominated by cars and car parking [Plate 5.2.5].

Churchill Way is a principal street insofar as it is the main vehicular thoroughfare to the west side of the town centre, it is however a modern intervention which cut through the historic streets and only forms part of the conservation area for a short stretch [Plate 5.2.6].



Plate 5.2.1 Church Street



Plate 5.2.2 Chestergate



Plate 5.2.3 Jordangate



Plate 5.2.4a Market Place



Plate 5.2.4b Market Place



Plate 5.2.5 Waters Green



Plate 5.2.6 Churchill Way

5.2.2 Secondary Streets/Spaces

The secondary streets within the conservation area tend to lead off the main streets with a more restrained character typical of their secondary nature. Catherine Street and Bridge Street have a domestic character with residential terraces whilst Westminster Street is a mixed street dominated by gaps in the townscape. King Edward Street has a similarly mixed character, buildings tend to be larger in scale and set-pieces with the historic frontage interrupted by modern development and gap sites [Plates 5.2.7 - 5.2.10].

Brock Street and Cumberland Street comprise mid-late 19th century residential cottage terraces built hard up against the pavement edge with grander, semi-detached houses to the western end of Cumberland Street; both streets truncated by Hibel Road bringing an abrupt end to the conservation area [Plate 5.2.11].



Plate 5.2.7 Catherine Street



Plate 5.2.8 Bridge Street



Plate 5.2.9 Westminster Street



Plate 5.2.10 King Edward Street



Plate 5.2.11 Cumberland Street and Brock Street

5.2.3 Intimate Streets/Spaces

The intimate streets and spaces in Macclesfield are as intrinsic to its character as the grander main streets. The narrow footpaths down Brunswick Hill, Step Hill and 108 Steps to Waters Green and Gas Road are peaceful, wooded spaces with no traffic away from the commercial core and are steeped in historic character [Plates 5.2.12 – 5.2.14].

Churchside has one of the best and most intact frontages which alongside its cobbled surface and the manner it loops behind the church creates an intimate townscape of particular note [Plate 5.2.15].

Streets including Little Street and Short Street give a snap shot into the fabric of Macclesfield's industrial past, again retaining their cobbled surfaces which adds to their historic character [Plates 5.2.16 – 5.2.17]. Stanley Street – once a secondary street – has been truncated by the Grosvenor Shopping Centre and again gives the experience of walking into a snap shot of the town's industrial past.

Riseley's Passage is one of the main passageways in the town centre running between Chestergate and King Edward Street which may mark an earlier boundary. It is one of many passageways running underneath buildings, some open, some closed, some leading to intimate courtyards which give a sense of how the buildings and their backland spaces were used – reinforcing the historic character of the town [Plate 5.2.18].



Plate 5.2.12 Brunswick Hill



Plate 5.2.13 Step Hill

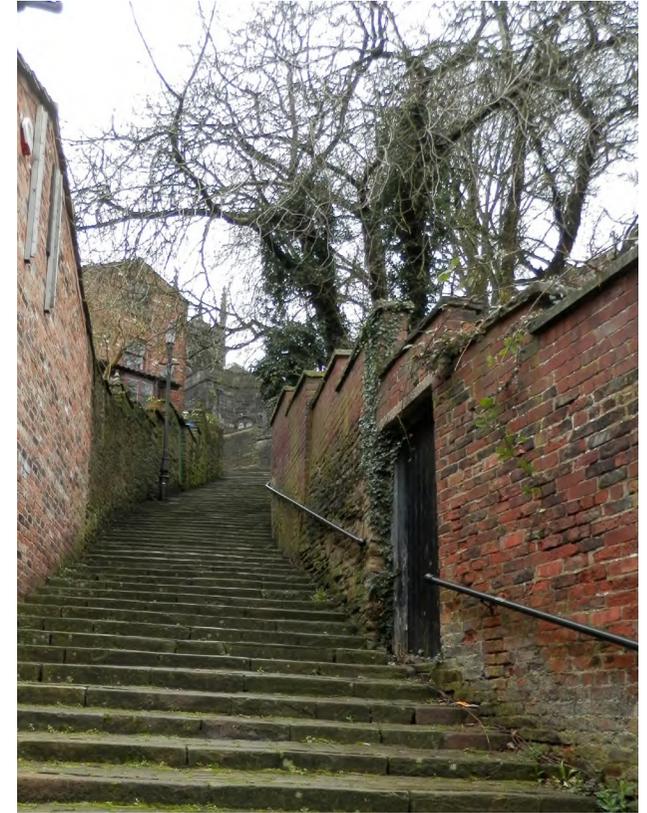


Plate 5.2.14 108 Steps



Plate 5.2.15 Churchside



Plate 5.2.16 Little Street



Plate 5.2.17 Short Street



Plate 5.2.18 Riseley's Passage

5.3 Land Use

Macclesfield is a principal town with the Borough of Cheshire East and supports a large catchment, providing numerous services for employment, retail, education and leisure. It is a busy town centre with pedestrians and vehicles alike, the pedestrianised areas in Market Place at its core and at the eastern end of Chestergate provides a particularly pleasant environment for the shopping area and the ability to better appreciate the surrounding townscape.

The uses are generally grouped and often respond to the townscape they inhabit including the buildings themselves and their public realm. They are predominantly commercial, with some office and residential use - activity in the town centre is predominantly during the day. Uses at upper floors are often less easy to define but typically are those which don't require a street presence such as office and commercial services and increasingly residential.

5.3.1 Commercial

The conservation area is predominately commercial, the shopping streets comprising Chestergate, Market Place and Mill Street and spilling down into Church Street. The Grosvenor Shopping Centre is located immediately to the west, whilst this obliterated the historic townscape to the eastern end of Stanley Street (outside of the conservation area) it utilises historic buildings on Chestergate and Mill Street and quite discreetly links into the conservation area. Churchill Way splits Chestergate into two – the west side forming a secondary commercial street although the adaptive reuse of the Picturedrome into a food hall now increasing footfall. Public houses and other food and beverage offers are also located within the retail frontage. The commercial activity around Waters Green is mixed, including estate agents, a car showroom, public houses and the hotel and office complex in the former silk mill to the north end.

5.3.2 Residential

Residential uses tend to be located on secondary streets to the fringe of the conservation area including to the north end of Jordangate (including Cumberland Street and Brock Street), Brunswick Hill, Catherine Street and Pinfold Street. Residential uses are however starting to permeate further into the conservation area, both on the upper floors of commercial buildings and in historic buildings through their adaptive reuse including former civic buildings, industrial buildings and public houses.

5.3.3 Offices

Office uses are predominately located on Churchside, Jordangate and King Edward Street but again they also occupy the upper floors of the retail terraces. Professional services do also occupy street frontages with the retail core where there is some degree of access required by the public. The Town Hall extension forms a substantial office building in the town centre.

5.3.4 Civic

A number of buildings associated with civic uses have now been converted including the former county (Guildhall, King Edward Street) and borough police offices (Churchside) and the Rural District Council office (19 King Edward Street). The Town Hall and its modern offices, alongside St Michael's Church, Macclesfield library (located in the former bank on Jordangate), the Cheshire Constabulary Police Station off Brunswick Street and the Post Office depot (despite being located outside of the conservation area) all contribute to the sense of a civic core to the conservation area.

5.4 Buildings

Macclesfield has a high-quality townscape, principally dating to the 18th and 19th centuries but with some earlier 16th / 17th timber framed buildings now concealed behind new frontages and the 13th century St Michael's Church (heavily restored in late-19th century by Sir Arthur Blomfield). Buildings typically are domestic in character, of two or three storeys constructed in stone, brick or with rendered frontages, pitched slate (Welsh slate or Kerridge stone slate) clad roofs and built hard up against the pavement edge; features are characteristically late-Georgian with sash windows and panelled doors. Whilst many have historic shopfronts, these were typically added later to the townhouse facades. The town centre has a high number of listed buildings including 9 Grade II* listed, some of these play an important role in the conservation area as local landmarks including St Michael's Church, the Town Hall (by Francis Goodwin, extended by James Stevens), the Library and Jordangate House.

Differing building typologies in the conservation area, principally around Market Place and Waters Green where different uses are predominant, tend to exhibit a contrasting architectural style employing different materials and detailing. These include the Town Hall, St Michael's Church, hotels, public houses and industrial uses. Detailed descriptions for all buildings can be found in the accompanying gazetteer.

5.4.1 Industrial Buildings

Despite the fact that much of the built form of the silk industry including mills, weaver's houses and cottages is largely concentrated further south on Mill Lane closer to the River Bollin (for water power and damp conditions), a handful are located in the conservation area including the former Little Street Silk Mill (Grade II, 1804), an intact complex of buildings including mill, dye-house, managers' and workers' housing dating to 1804. Originally horse powered it was converted to steam in 1909 as part of its conversion and extension for Wood and Son, victuallers. Further large buildings reflective of the town's industrial past include former mills and works such as the former silk mills at Waters Green House (1875, Grade II) and Castle House in Waters Green (1903), George's Court (mid-19th century) which spans between Chestergate and King Edward

Street, nos.72 - 74 King Edward Street (late-19th century), the former Stanley Street Works (early-mid 19th century) and Regents Foundry (c.1800, Grade II) – all now converted to new uses. Weaver's cottages also remain at nos.2 - 6 Short Street (mid-19th century, Grade II) – likely to have had a weaving garret on the upper floor with the adjoining public house, the Old Millstone added in 1840-50 [Plates 5.4.1 – 5.4.8].





Plate 5.4.1 Little Street Mill, extension to west of King Edward Street range



Plate 5.4.2 Waters Green House, Albert Place



Plate 5.4.5 72-74 King Edward Street



Plate 5.4.3 Castle House, Waters Green, with Merchant Exchange



Plate 5.4.4 George's Court, Chestergate



Plate 5.4.6 Stanley Works, Stanley Street, east elevations



Plate 5.4.7 Regent's Foundry



Plate 5.4.8 2-6 Short Street, rear

5.4.2 Listed Buildings

There are over 100 listed buildings and structures within the conservation area (highlighted on the Heritage Assets map at the beginning of this Appraisal), most 18th or early 19th century, some refronted earlier structures. Predominately these were originally townhouses but some were commercial buildings including public houses, hotels, silk mills and warehousing as well as religious and civic buildings such as St Michael's Church (13th century, Grade II*), the Town Hall (1824, Grade II*) and King Edward Street Unitarian Chapel (1690, Grade II*). The highest concentration of listed buildings is found in Church Street, Churchside, Jordangate, Chestergate and Market Place – where the town's two most important buildings, St Michael's Church and the Town Hall, are located – which form the focal point of the town centre [Plates 5.4.9 – 5.4.11].

Refronted 16th and 17th century buildings can be found at 41 Chestergate (Grade II, 1691), nos.50 - 54 Chestergate (17th century, Grade II), nos.115a - 115c Chestergate (late-17th century, Grade II) and the former Bate Hall Hotel (late-16th / early-17th century, Grade II*). 1-7 Chester Road (early-17th century, Grade II) presently the best example of domestic 17th century buildings in the conservation area [Plates 5.4.12 – 5.4.16].

Georgian buildings of note include Cumberland House and Jordangate House on Jordangate (early-18th century, Grade II*), King Edward House - (former Macclesfield Arms Hotel) on Jordangate (late-18th century, Grade II*) and Charles Roe House at nos.60b, 62 and 62a Chestergate (c.1700, Grade II*).

Ranges of late-18th century and 19th century terraces (Grade II) can be found to Chestergate (where they may hide earlier structures), Market Place, Brunswick Terrace, Church Street and a particularly fine group on Churchside [Plate 5.4.21 – 5.4.22].



Plate 5.4.9 St Michael and All Angels Church, Market Place



Plate 5.4.10 Town Hall, Market Place



Plate 5.4.11 King Edward Street Unitarian Chapel



Plate 5.4.12 41 Chestergate



Plate 5.4.13 50-54 Chestergate



Plate 5.4.14 115-115a Chestergate



Plate 5.4.15 Bate Hall Hotel, Chestergate



Plate 5.4.16 1-7 Chester Road



Plate 5.4.17 Cumberland House, 9 Jordangate



Plate 5.4.18 Jordangate House



Plate 5.4.19 King Edward House, Jordangate



Plate 5.4.20 Charles Roe House, 60b - 62a Chestergate



Plate 5.4.22 27-31 Brunswick Terrace



Plate 5.4.21 9-17 Churchside



5.4.3 Buildings Which Make a Positive Contribution to the Conservation Area

Throughout the conservation area there are buildings and groups of buildings which reinforce its character, these are identified as buildings where the external appearance is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area either through their townscape contribution or their architectural quality. They are typically good examples of their type or style and are relatively unaltered, largely dating to the 19th or early 20th century; they are identified on the Heritage Asset map at the beginning of this Appraisal and described in detail in the accompanying gazetteer.

Of particular note are the unlisted buildings which provide evidence of the town's industrial past including Castle House in Waters Green, St George's Court which spans between Chestergate and King Edward Street, nos.72-74 King Edward Street and the former Stanley Street Works (see section 5.4.1).

Public houses and their distinctive architectural styles also make a positive contribution including The Swan with Two Necks on Chestergate, The Cock in Treacle on King Edward Street, Waters Green Tavern, Queen's Hotel, Nag's Head and the former Bull and Gate on Waters Green and the Three Pigeons on Little Street despite its derelict state [Plates 5.4.23 – 5.4.27].

Terraces of particular quality also make a positive contribution to the conservation area including nos.29 - 39 Church Street (c.1850), nos.3 - 27 Chestergate (c.1840-1860) and nos.1 - 19 Catherine Street (c.1840-1860) [Plates 5.4.28 – 5.4.29].

The recently converted Picturedrome (1911) – the first purpose built cinema in Macclesfield and now a market-style restaurant with outside seating – makes a positive contribution to the conservation area, its distinctive art-deco frontage and its use both adding interest and vitality to its character [Plate 5.4.30].



Plate 5.4.23 The Swan with Two Necks, 65 Chestergate



Plate 5.4.24 The Cock in Treacle, 13 King Edward Street



Plate 5.4.25 Waters Green Tavern, Waters Green



Plate 5.4.26 Queens Hotel, 5 Albert Place



Plate 5.4.27 Nag's Head, 60 Waters Green



Plate 5.4.28 27-33 Church Street



Plate 5.4.29 Catherine Street



Plate 5.4.30 104 Chestergate, The Picturedrome

5.4.4 Buildings Which Make a Neutral Contribution to the Conservation Area

In some cases, buildings may have been so severely altered that their character has been irreversibly damaged however their scale and materials still blend into the surrounding townscape. These have generally been identified as neutral. Similarly, buildings which do not strictly follow the established character and appearance of the conservation area but not to the extent that this is immediately apparent or considered harmful are also identified as making a neutral contribution.

5.5.5 Buildings Which Detract from the Conservation Area

Negative buildings are identified as those which, due to their scale, detailed design, materials or condition are incongruous in relation to the predominant character of the conservation area. These are described in more detail in Section 8.



5.5 Materials

The following description is reproduced from the September 2005 Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal by The Conservation Studio which outlines the prevailing materials utilised within the area.

The earliest buildings in Macclesfield were built from timber or from local sandstone. This versatile stone can be roughly shared into blocks and coursed, or it can be spilt and used for paving and roof slate. St Michael's Church and nos.1-7 Chester Road are the only buildings in the conservation area which are faced in this stone, although some stonework remains on the back elevations to some of the listed buildings in Chestergate. The sandstone is also evident in some of the boundary walls within the conservation area, most notably 108 Steps and Step Hill, where the pathways are lined with long, sinuous stone walls which fall down the hill towards the River Bollin.

Timber-framing, with wattle and daub infill panels, would have been common in Macclesfield until the beginning of the 18th century when brick became fashionable. Most of the buildings fronting Chestergate were probably once built from this material, and several buildings retain evidence for such timber frames although the buildings have subsequently been refronted. In 1696 a brickworks was sited on Macclesfield Common, to the east of the town, and the early 18th century Enclosure Awards record a brickyard in what is now Bank Street. After this date, brick became the almost universal material for new buildings, although there was a brief period in c.1900 when false timber-framing became popular (e.g. The George Hotel, Jordangate).

The Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area is therefore notable for the many examples of good quality brick built Georgian and Victorian buildings which face the four principal streets – Chestergate, Market Place, Jordangate and Church Hill. The best quality brick building is probably Jordangate House, listed Grade II*. The three storey symmetrical building is dated 1728 on the lead hoppers on the front elevation and provides an example of exemplary Georgian detailing, with stone quoins, architraves, keystones and string courses. The central doorway is accessed via a short flight of stone steps which leads to a six-panelled front door and a fine doorcase with Ionic pilasters supporting a heavy stone pediment.

By contrast, a much more modest terrace of late Georgian properties can be found at nos.9-17 (odd) Churchside. These are brick with slate roofs, two storeys and just one windows wide, with eight-over-eight pane sash windows. Stone has been used for simple robust decoration: flat-arched painted stone heads and stone cills, above a stone plinth. These are typical of this part of Macclesfield and many of the other listed houses in the conservation area.

Towards the western end of Chestergate, the majority of the buildings tend to be late-19th century and of a more industrial nature. More are rendered and painted although like many of the earlier buildings in Chestergate they were built as houses and have subsequently been converted into shops. Nos.88-90 are typical – red and white brick, modillions to the eaves, simple sash window without any glazing bars, and a good quality shopfront. One building is, however, entirely unique: the Picturedrome, a 1911 cinema with some Art Deco details which has recently been subject to a scheme of adaptive reuse.

Generally, the buildings in the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area display the following characteristics:

- Buildings sit on back pavement
- Stone slate or Welsh slate roofs
- Brick elevations with late-Georgian details
- Sash windows, made from timber
- Panelled front doors
- Simple doorcases with pilasters and door hoods most common feature
- Good quality late-19th century shopfronts
- A few more prestigious buildings have greater decoration and more front gardens.



5.6 Shopfronts

There are numerous examples of good shopfronts throughout the conservation area, both historic – dating from the 19th and early-20th centuries – but also newly inserted shopfronts which are well-detailed and replicate the traditional style including stallrisers, transom lights, mullions, pilasters, fascia boards and features such as pointed arches to the transom lights. Whilst these can be found throughout the commercial core, those illustrated in the accompanying images demonstrate the inviting appearance of such shopfronts and the positive impact they can have on attracting customers [Plates 5.6.1 – 5.6.13]. By contrast poor quality shopfronts and signage can have a particularly harmful impact, overbearing the public realm and severing the architecture of a building in two - typically divorcing the upper floors and removing them from the human experience of the conservation area. Roller shutters can be particularly harmful, creating a dead frontage which can create a hostile environment – particularly at night time (discussed in more detail in Section 8 below).



Plate 5.6.1 17 Church Street



Plate 5.6.2 19 Church Street



Plate 5.6.3 29-33 Church Street



Plate 5.6.5 80-86 Waters Green



Plate 5.6.4 8 Church Street



Plate 5.6.6 21 Back Wallgate



Plate 5.6.7 7 Albert Place



Plate 5.6.8 5 Market Place



Plate 5.6.9 6a Market Place



Plate 5.6.10 4 Chestergate



Plate 5.6.12 11 Chestergate



Plate 5.6.11 28 Chestergate

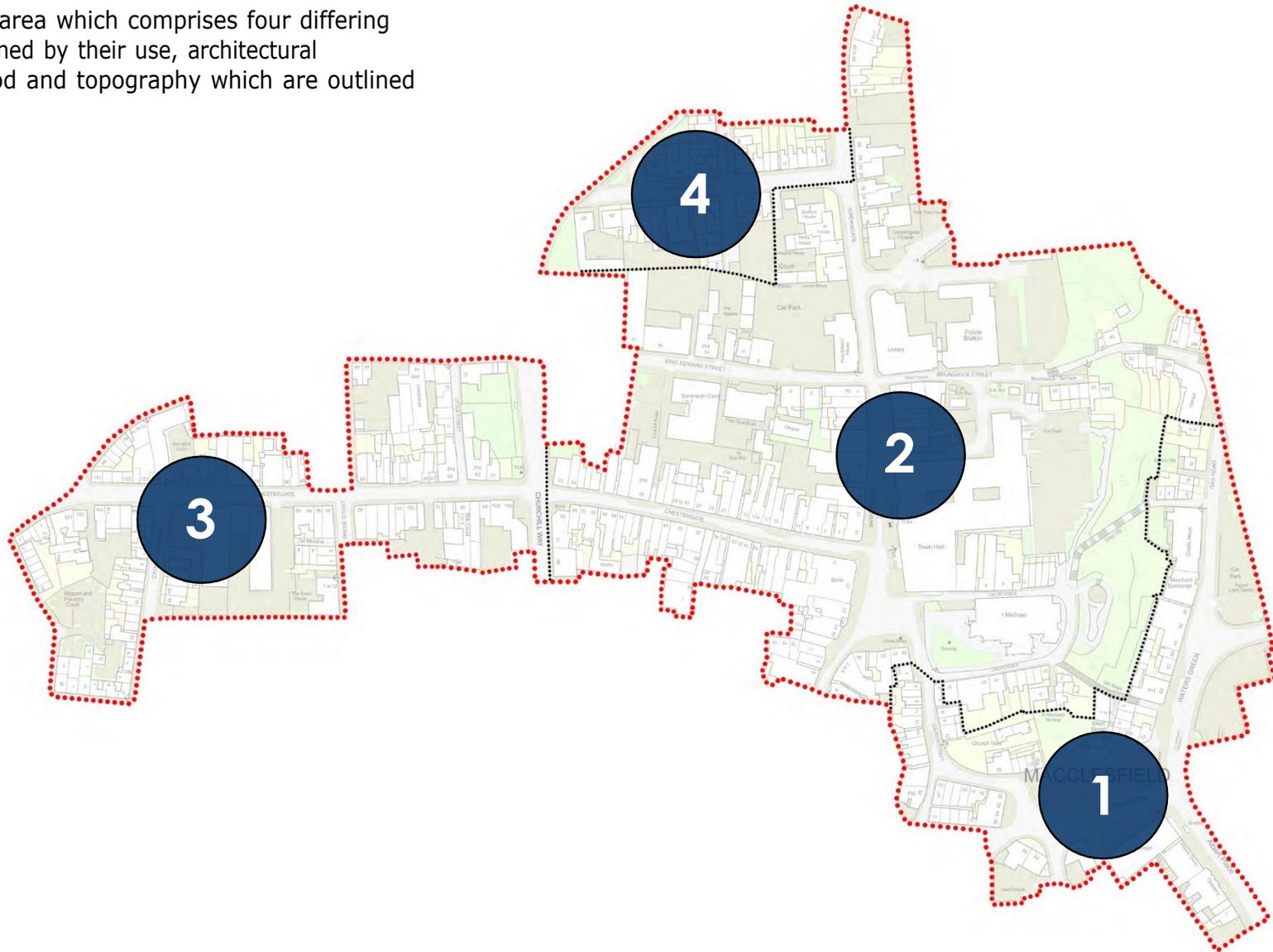


Plate 5.6.13 3 Chester Road

6.0 Character Areas



Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area is a large conversation area which comprises four differing character areas defined by their use, architectural character and period and topography which are outlined in more detail below.



6.1 Waters Green and Church Street

Located at the bottom of the hillside Waters Green has medieval origins and serves as a key entry point into the conservation area from which Church Street meanders up the steep hill with St Michael's Church at its peak. The area has some of the greatest variety in building styles and includes the highest concentration of industrial buildings reflective of its position next the River Bollin – now culverted. The collection of public houses of architectural merit which sprung up to serve the railway are also of interest. The A523 Silk Road and railway have a major impact on the character of the area, providing a hard edge to the conservation area boundary which is reinforced by the extent of car parking which dominates, creating a harsh urban environment which detracts. This also impacts negatively on the pedestrian connection between the railway and the conservation area, which although highly visible upon arrival, is challenging to navigate towards. It is not until pedestrians reach the northern end of Waters Green that the character and appearance of the conservation area is evident and engaged with. At this point the key feature of Church Street exhibits some of what is best about the conservation area with stone setts and listed buildings and buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area including traditional shopfronts of note. The steps which lead up the hillside including 108 Steps, Step Hill and Brunswick Hill all spring from Waters Green and offer intimate views, steeped in historic character which draw people up and into the conservation area [Plates 6.1.1 – 6.1.2].

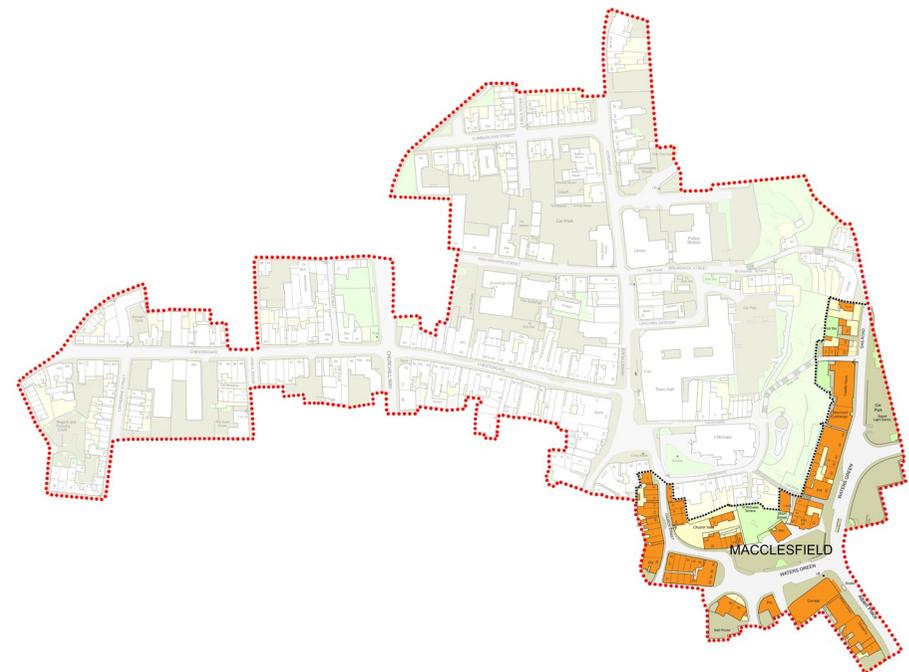




Plate 6.1.1 Waters Green and Church Street



Plate 6.1.2 Step Hill alongside Castle House

6.2 Market Place, eastern end of Chestergate, King Edward Street and Jordangate

This area forms the core of town, centred on the medieval Market Place and 13th century church which then extends out along streets including Chestergate and Jordangate. The regeneration of Market Place and the public space created within the setting of the Town Hall and the church is integral to the special interest of the conservation area - the ability for people to linger and appreciate its character and appearance is key in terms of the identity of Macclesfield. The continuous terraces of listed buildings and those which make a positive contribution and high-quality shopfronts which line Market Place and the pedestrianised part of Chestergate (east) further reinforce its historic character. This is diminished to a degree by out of context red clay pavers to Chestergate and the pavements into Jordangate, the modern buildings which bookend Chestergate and sporadic poor-quality shopfronts, signage and roller shutters.

The peaceful qualities of the churchyard and Churchside contrast with the activity of the town centre, Churchside is steeped in historic character with stone setts, traditional lamp standards and early-19th century listed buildings which spill into Sparrow Park with views out to the Pennine hills. This character continues to Brunswick Terrace and down all three sets of steps with sandstone setts and walls through the wooded hillside to Waters Green. The modern Police Station, the rear of the Town Hall extension and large areas of parking serving both detract from this intimate character.

To Jordangate and King Edward Street the character changes to one of larger scale detached buildings including the library and high-quality Georgian houses – although their gardens given over to car parking; towards Hibel Road the character steps back down to more domestic scaled terraces. This part of the conservation area is particularly affected by gap sites given over to surface level parking whilst buildings including the 1960s Sovereign Court and 21 King Edward Street detract [Plates 6.1.3 – 6.1.4].

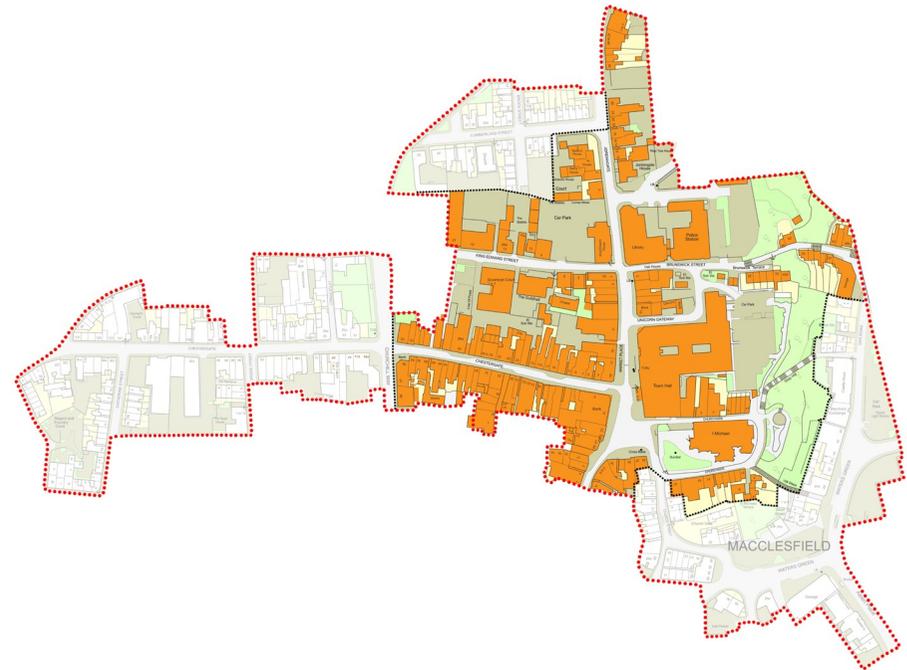




Plate 6.1.3 Jordangate looking towards Market Place



Plate 6.1.4 The Guildhall, King Edward Street

6.3 Western end of Chestergate

The western end of the conservation area is detached by Churchill Way which cuts along its eastern edge. It has a more mixed character, whilst the retail frontage continues along Chestergate (west) the architectural style of the buildings is more varied although still largely of high quality. The buildings here are predominately mid-to-late 19th century with the 17th century stone cottages at nos.1 - 7 Chester Road at the western edge of the conservation area. This part of the conservation area also has the highest concentration of the adaptive reuse of former industrial and large-scale buildings including, George's Court, Regents Foundry, Tower House (Drill Hall) and the Little Street Mill. The recent conversion of the Picturedrome to a market style food hall has reinvigorated the commercial offer at the western end of Chestergate. Smaller residential terraces also make up the character of this part of the conservation area to Catherine Street, the south-west end of King Edward Street and Pierce Street. The new single house development behind Pierce Street demonstrates how contemporary architecture can be successfully integrated into the conservation area. Surface level parking once again fills the backland spaces however it is the partially demolished site of the former King's Head and Three Pigeons public houses which is particularly detracting – especially given the otherwise high quality and intimate historic townscape along Little Street [Plates 6.1.5 – 6.1.6].

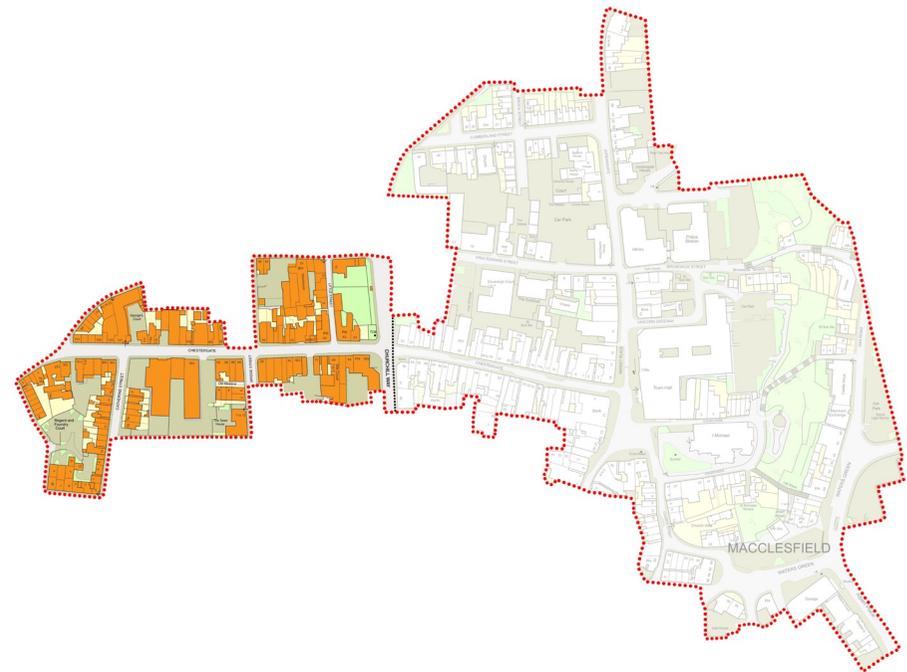




Plate 6.1.5 Chestergate West



Plate 6.1.6 The Tower House, Bridge Street

6.4 Cumberland Street, southern end of Brock Street

Cumberland Street and the southern end of Brock Street are located at the northern end of Jordansgate, truncated by Hibel Road they form an abrupt end to the conservation area. The two streets are made up of mid-late 19th century terraces of cottages – their relative uniformity diminished through the insertion of uPVC windows and doors of varying designs. The western end of Cumberland Street comprises a short run of grander semi-detached houses of the same period set back from the road. Views eastward along Cumberland Street provide a snapshot of the Pennine hills whilst southwards along Brock Street the red roof storey of Sovereign Court intrudes into the setting [Plate 6.1.7 – 6.1.8].

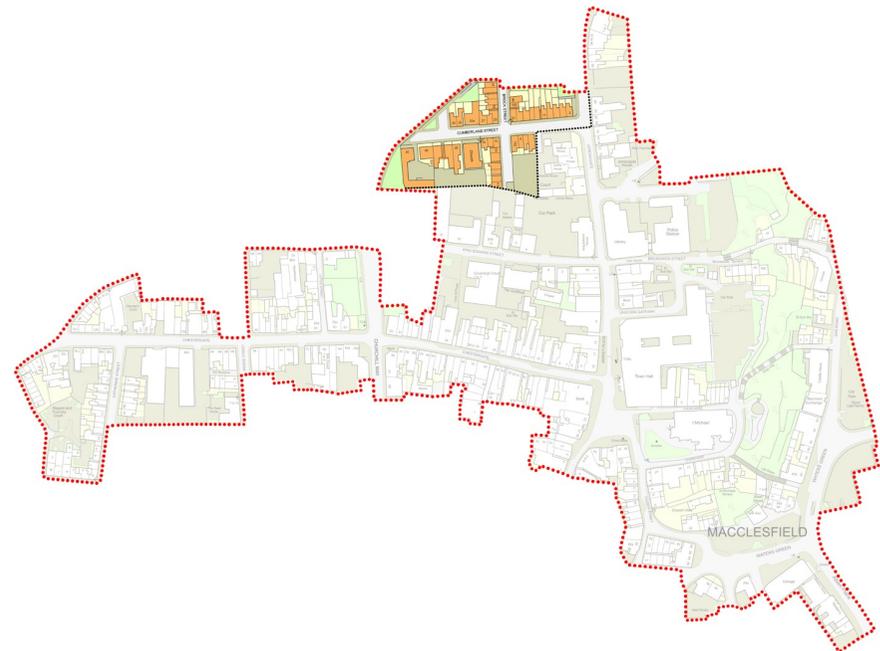




Plate 6.1.7 91-99 Brock Street



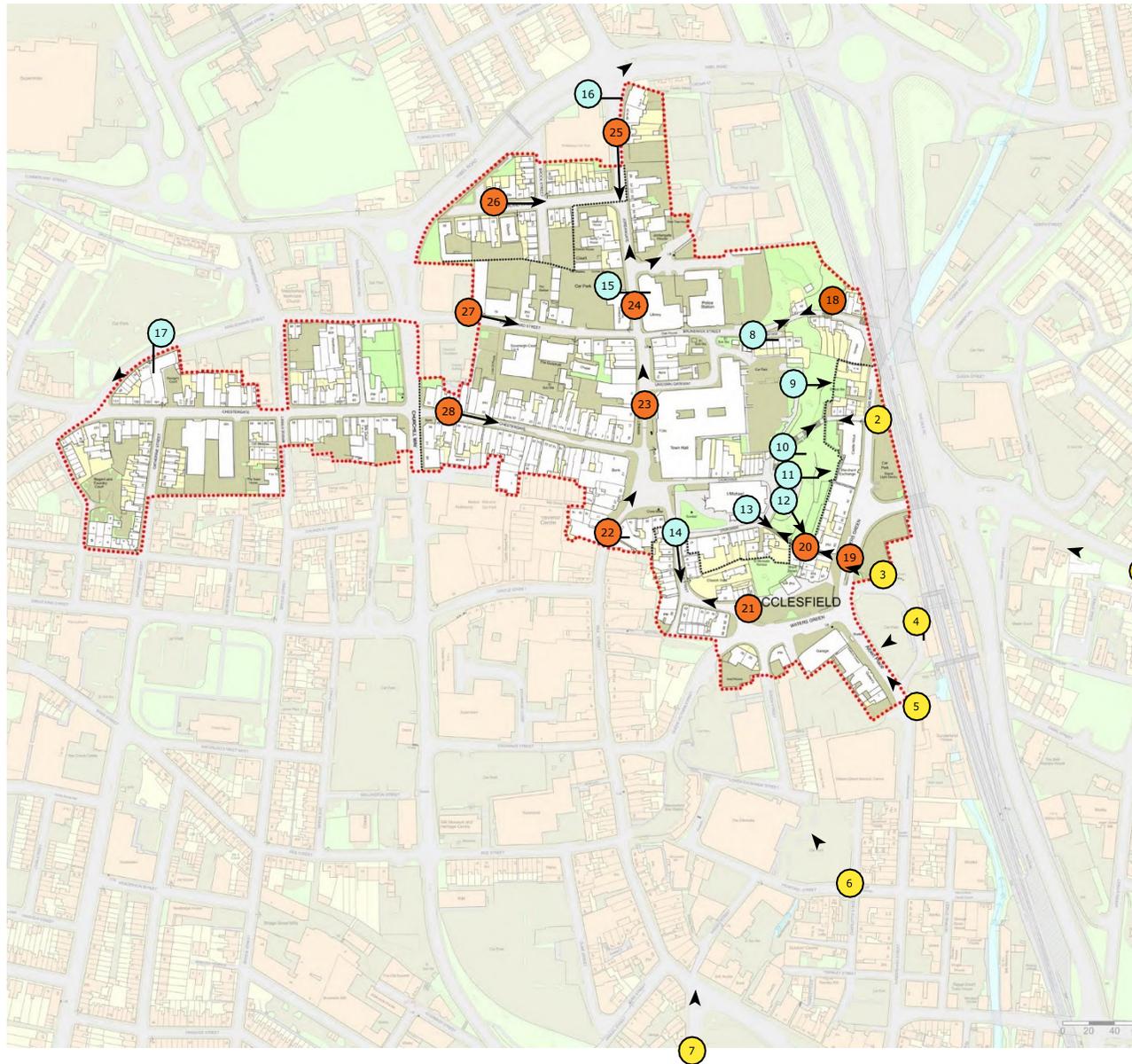
Plate 6.1.8 Sovereign Court viewed from Brock Street

70 Views and Vistas



Macclesfield's position on a hill gives it a dramatic topography and striking views over the River Bollin to the Pennine hills beyond, capturing an entire cross-section of Macclesfield and its surroundings in a single frame. Its elevated location also draws views towards the conservation area – particularly the tower of St Michael's Church. The hillside position has also given rise to shorter views along the lanes and steps which navigate its slopes which again are fundamental to the character of the town alongside more formal townscape views along its principal streets. The views are highlighted on the map on the following page.





Group 1 - Views Into the Conservation Area

1. View west from junction of A537 and Fence Avenue
2. View west of Step Hill
3. View west from Station car park
4. View of Albert Place from the Station
5. View north-west along Albert Place
6. View north from corner of Pickford Street and Charlotte Street
7. View north from Paradise Mill, Park Lane

Group 2 - Views Out of the Conservation Area

8. View north-east from Brunswick Hill
9. View east from gardens to rear of Town Hall Car Park
10. View north-east from Step Hill
11. View east from Sparrow Park
12. View south-east from Sparrow Park
13. View south-east from 108 Steps
14. View south from Church Street
15. View north-east from Jordangate
16. View north-east from junction of Jordangate and Hibel Road
17. View south-west from King Edward Street

Group 3 - Views Within the Conservation Area

18. View up Brunswick Hill
19. View from the bottom of 108 Steps
20. View up 108 Steps
21. View west up Church Street
22. View from Mill Street into Market Place
23. View north along Mark Place
24. View north along Jordangate
25. View south along Jordangate
26. View east along Cumberland Street
27. View east along Kind Edward Street
28. View east along Chestergate

7.1 Views into the Conservation Area



View 1 View west from junction of A537 and Fence Avenue



View 2 View west of Step Hill



View 3 View west from Station car park



View 4 View of Albert Place from the Station



View 5 View north-west along Albert Place



View 6 View north from corner of Pickford Street and Charlotte Street



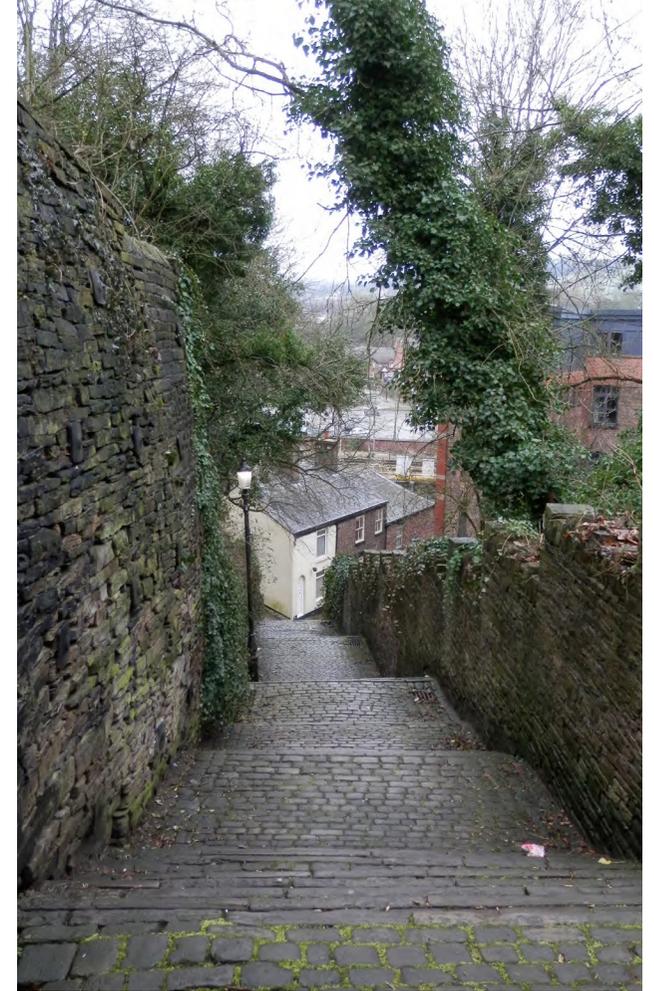
View 7 View north from Paradise Mill, Park Lane



View 8 View north-east from Brunswick Hill



View 9 View east from gardens to rear of Town Hall Car Park



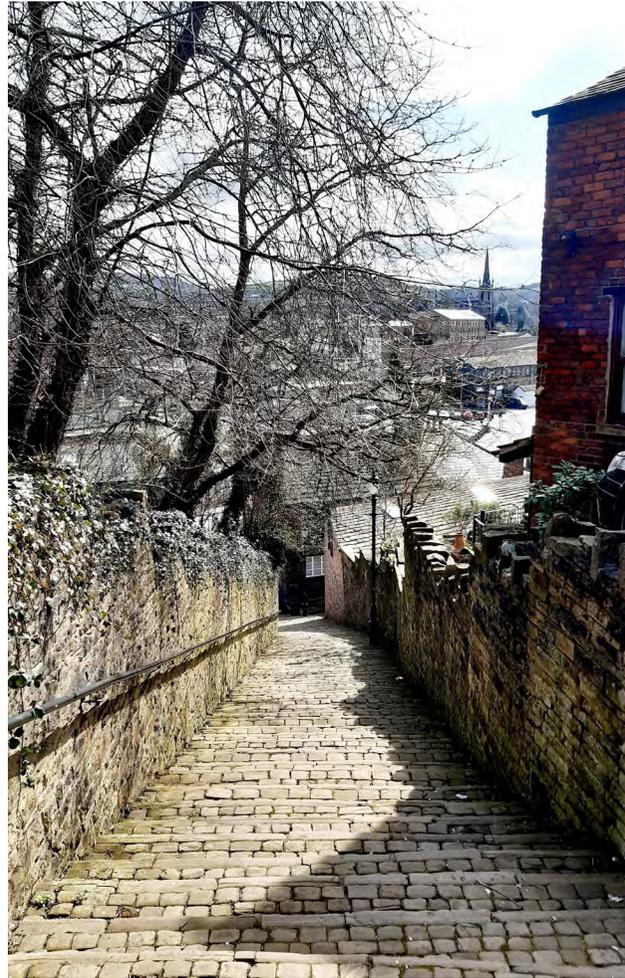
View 10 View north-east from Step Hill



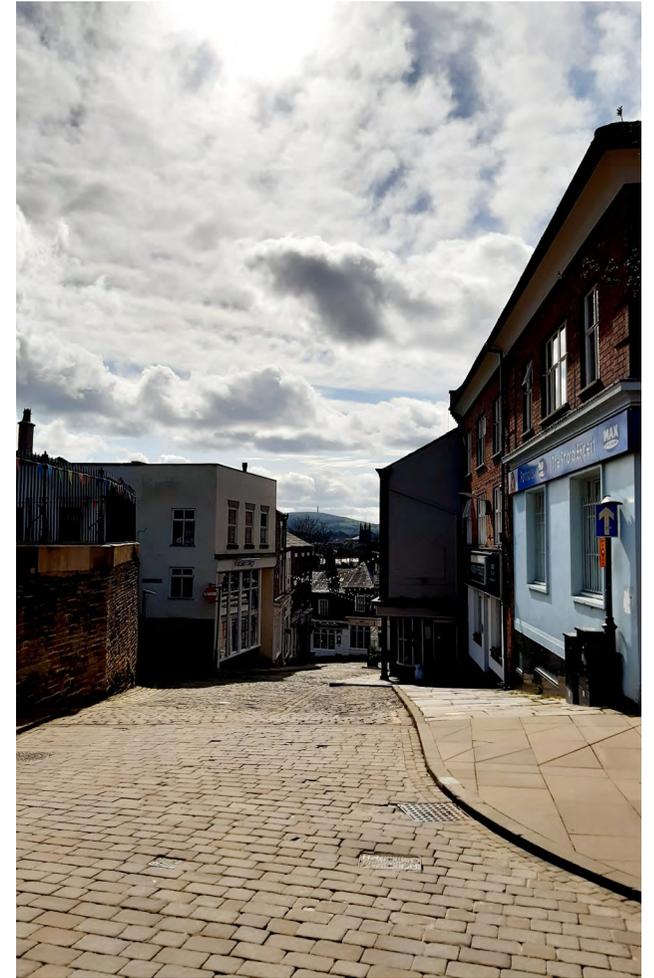
View 11 *View east from Sparrow Park*



View 12 *View south-east from Sparrow Park*



View 13 *View south-east from 108 Steps*



View 14 *View south from Church Street*



View 15 *View north-east from Jordangate*



View 16 *View north-east from junction of Jordangate and Hibel Road*



View 17 *View south-west from King Edward Street*

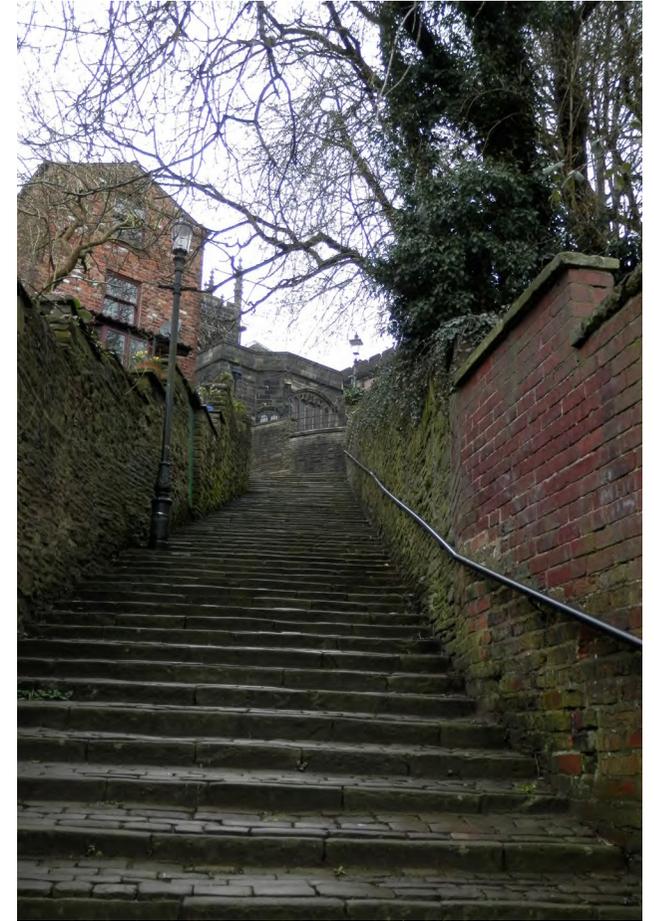
73 Views within the Conservation Area



View 18 *View up Brunswick Hill*



View 19 *View from the bottom of 108 Steps*



View 20 *View up 108 Steps*



View 21 View west up Church Street



View 22 View from Mill Street into Market Place



View 23 View north along Market Place



View 24 View north along Jordangate



View 25 View south along Jordangate





View 26 View east along Cumberland Street



View 27 View east along King Edward Street



View 28 View east along Chestergate

8.0 Townscape Details



8.1 Public Realm

Macclesfield has an urban town centre, characteristic of its medieval origins and 18th and 19th century development. Whilst small rear gardens and front yards do exist to the some of the domestic terraces lining Catherine Street, Bridge Street, Brock Street and Cumberland Street as well sporadically throughout the conservation area, they are limited and make a minimal amenity contribution. The larger gardens that once served the grander Georgian houses have been lost, either redeveloped or now hard landscaped for car parking.

Market Place is a high-quality public space which forms the heart of the town centre, whilst clearly a modern reinstatement owing to the contemporary simplicity of the stone sett road and stone slabbed pavements with low kerb lines, it reinforces the significance of the flanking historic buildings and allows them to be better appreciated. The provision of a space in the core of the town centre which allows people to dwell, orientate themselves and appreciate some of the key buildings which make up its identity is integral to engaging with the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is reinforced through the addition of street trees, seating (both traditional and contemporary), 'heritage' cast iron finger posts, lamp posts and planters.

The pedestrianisation of the town centre which extends out from Market Place to the eastern half of Chestergate and south along Mill Street makes a significant contribution to its character, giving emphasis to the pedestrian experience and allowing the buildings fronting these spaces to be better appreciated. Conversely, this allows detracting features such as poor retail frontages to also dominate. Whilst streets such as Churchside and Church Street are not pedestrianised, the cobbled streets and the steps which navigate the hillside further reinforce this character.

Waters Green was historically an important open market space, however its value as a public space or one of amenity value is completely undermined by car parking and the dominance of traffic.



8.2 Amenity Spaces

Other than Market Place the town centre offers little in the way of public amenity space. Sparrow Park Memorial Garden is the key space located to the east of the church. It was subject to a scheme of restoration completed in 2016 which saw the repair and redecoration of the hard landscaping, seating, lighting columns and bins etc, the installation of lights to the trees, CCTV, the relandscaping of the plant beds and the removal of three trees and pruning of others to open up the views eastwards to the Pennine hills. Whilst these works have uplifted the quality of the park and therefore its contribution to the enjoyment of the conservation area, it is a small formal park space with limited opportunity for any activity other than sitting on the benches provided [Plate 8.1].

In addition St Michael's Churchyard leads directly from the south-east corner of Market Place, partially grassed over with seating lining, it offers a peaceful space in the setting of the church, its boundary wall, railings and gates providing a sense of detachment from the activity of the town centre [Plate 8.2].

A small area of 'Gardens' is located to the eastern boundary of the Town Hall car park, opened in the 1950s, with trees and benches however this would benefit from extension and a reduction in the extent of car parking to enhance its setting and amenity value [Plate 8.3].

A small space is also located to the northern end of Jordangate on the east side, elevated from the street level, hard landscaped with trees and a bench. However tucked away, opposite the Jordangate car park near the heavily trafficked Hibel Road its amenity value is limited.

Similarly on the corner of Chestergate and Churchill Way a planted bed which runs along the edge of the road softens the harsh environment brought about by the heavily trafficked road – however this road diminishes the amenity value of the seating area on the corner with trees and a planter [Plates 8.4 – 8.5].



Plate 8.1 Sparrow Park Memorial Garden



Plate 8.2 St Michael's Churchyard



Plate 8.3 Gardens to east of Town Hall car park



Plate 8.4 Amenity space on Jordangate



Plate 8.5 Pocket of amenity space on Churchill Way

8.3 Hard Landscaping

Historic (or replica) paving can be found throughout the conservation area with Kerridge sandstone used for setts, kerbstones, gutters, paving slabs. The extent which remains is highlighted on the Heritage Asset map at the beginning of this Appraisal including Back Wallgate, Church Street, Waters Green, Churchside, 108 Steps, Step Hill, Brunswick Street, Brunswick Terrace, Brunswick Hill, Unicorn Way and Little Street as well as patches to forecourts and access between buildings. Historic paving can also be found on the roads which frame the conservation area including Pierce Street, Pinfold Street and Church Street West. Poor quality materials typical of modern town centres are also present throughout the conservation area including tarmac, concrete pavers and slabs. Despite the beneficial impact that the pedestrianisation of the town centre has had on its character, the red clay pavers to Chestergate, the upper end of Mill Street and along the pavements to the northern end of Market Place and Jordangate are completely at odds with the character of the adjoining buildings and the overall historic appearance of the conservation area [Plates 8.6 – 8.10].



Plate 8.6 Historic paving in Churchside



Plate 8.7 Historic paving meeting red clay pavers in Unicorn Gateway



Plate 8.8 Low kerb line and reinstated setts in Market Place



Plate 8.9 Inappropriate red clay pavers to Chestergate east



Plate 8.10 Inappropriate red clay pavers to Jordangate

8.4 Trees and Soft Landscaping

A band of trees runs across the eastern side of the conservation area from Hibel Road southwards including mature trees located behind the Police Station and the wooded hillside between Churchside and Waters Green. The wooded hillside can be appreciated from the stepped paths otherwise it is largely inaccessible. The trees to the hillside present a management challenge, they offer an amenity value to the conservation area however, largely self-seeded and intrude into the important views out to the Pennine hills which are intrinsic to the identity of the conservation area. The hillslopes themselves however appear a missed opportunity in terms of greening within the conservation area and areas such as the one immediately to the east of Sparrow Park could present the opportunity for a scheme of rewilding with or without public access which would enhance the conservation area. Street trees are also located in Market Place and along Chestergate which further adds to the amenity value of these public spaces [Plates 8.11 – 8.12].



Plate 8.11 Band of trees running alongside hillside



Plate 8.12 Bank below Sparrow Park

8.5 Street Furniture

Street lighting within the conservation area is mixed; traditional lamp standards to streets and spaces including Market Place, Churchside, Brunswick Street/Terrace, Chestergate and to the steps add to their historic character whilst modern concrete posts are of no value. In places where both types of lighting are in close proximity it appears rather awkward, as does the contrast between the modern lighting to the rear of the Town Hall and the traditional lamp standards on Churchside and Brunswick Street [Plates 8.13 – 8.14].

Street lights fixed directly to buildings in streets such as Church Street resolves the issue of available space in the highway however the modern fittings are at odds with the historic character of the buildings, add clutter and detract. Wall mounted carriage lamps which replicate a traditional style are much more sympathetic and inkeeping with the buildings [Plates 8.15 – 8.16].

Festoon lighting through the conservation area including to Chestergate, Market Square and Back Wallgate adds to the character of the conservation area [Plate 8.17].

Planters are located throughout the conservation area with a high concentration in its pedestrianised core, these are well-maintained and add considerable amenity value to an otherwise 'hard' public realm. Other than those outside of the Town Hall the planters themselves are of no particular merit. There are a high number of litter bins (both traditional designs and modern recycling bins) within the conservation area – particularly in the central area. Seating is typically unobtrusive and either traditional metal or timber and metal benches. Within Market Place are large contemporary metal seats which have a sculptural quality, this style is continued through to the

cycle stands located at the Jordangate end [Plates 8.18 – 8.21].

In terms of wayfinding the 'heritage' cast iron finger posts are appropriate to the conservation area context. The gold postbox at the southern end of Jordangate in honour of Sarah Storey's success at the 2012 Olympics is also of interest whilst the stone base to the Market Cross is located to the south-east corner of Mark Place [Plates 8.22 – 8.23].



Plate 8.13 Traditional lamp standard on Churchside near modern lighting to rear of Town Hall



Plate 8.13 Traditional lamp standard to south of Market Place



Plate 8.15 Modern fitment on Church Street



Plate 8.16 Carriage lamp at 80-86 Waters Green



Plate 8.17 Festoon lighting to Chestergate west



Plate 8.18 Planters outside the Grosvenor Shopping Centre on Chestergate



Plate 8.19 Planters outside the Town Hall



Plate 8.21 Cycle stands in Market Place



Plate 8.20 Modern seating in Market Place



Plate 8.22 Gold postbox in honour of Sarah Storey



Plate 8.23 Stone base for the Market Cross

9.0 Negative Features and Opportunities for Enhancement



Modern piecemeal development within the conservation area is relatively limited and is typically accommodated within the prevailing scale of the townscape. As a consequence any harmful impact is limited to the immediate setting rather than the overall character and appearance of the conservation area. However modern development is of varying quality and in almost all instances is out of context within the conservation area. This can range from 'any place' set piece architecture down to poor quality detailing which does not replicate the richness of the historic townscape. Of greatest impact however is small scale incremental change such as the replacement of windows and doors and inappropriate shopfronts, signage and roller shutters and it is this retail frontage which also presents one of the greatest opportunities for enhancement to the human experience in the conservation area.

The numerous gap sites within the conservation area and large breaks in the townscape, hard surfacing of backland areas and surface level car parks also present a major opportunity for enhancement in terms of new development and also when looking to green the town centre and provide additional amenity space – particularly given the increase in town-centre living.

Whilst the loss of historic buildings and removal of ancient streets is less of a threat than during the 20th century when major change was forced upon the town, the partially demolished site previously occupied by the King's Head and the Three Pigeons public houses highlights that this threat does remain [Plates 9.1a/b]. The numerous schemes of adaptive reuse outlined in Section 5 however demonstrate how the retention and reuse of historic buildings often presents a much more successful means of place making.



Plate 9.1a The Three Pigeons and Old Kings Head derelict site



Plate 9.1b The Three Pigeons and Old Kings Head derelict site

9.1 Detracting Buildings

The detracting buildings within the conservation area are highlighted on the Heritage Asset map at the beginning of this Appraisal. Sovereign Court (1960s) on King Edward Street has had the greatest impact in terms of its prominence in the immediate setting owing to the surrounding gaps in the townscape and the visibility of the red roof storey in longer views. To Market Place, 2 Chestergate/21 Market Place (1970s) step up from the prevailing roofline on both Market Place and Chestergate and its design bares little relationship to its context, detracting from the overall historic character of this space – this is further compounded by the modern developments at 1 Chestergate/17 - 19 Market Place (1980s) and 15 Market Place. Other large-scale 20th century buildings in the conservation area which detract from its character include 100 Chestergate, 21 King Edward Street, and the Cheshire Constabulary Police Station whilst modern buildings inserted in the townscape such as 29 - 33 Chestergate break the general uniformity of the townscape. To Waters Green the car showroom and its surroundings add to the dominance of cars in this area over the historic environment whilst plates 4.10a and 4.10b highlight how the development of Church View has intruded into what was previously a more open view from Waters Green to St Michael's Church [Plates 9.2 – 9.10].



Plate 9.2 Sovereign Court, King Edward Street



Plate 9.3 2 Chestergate and 21 Market Place



Plate 9.4 1 Chestergate and 17-19 Market Place



Plate 9.5 15 Market Place



Plate 9.6 100 Chestergate



Plate 9.7 21 King Edward Street





Plate 9.9 29-33 Chestergate



Plate 9.8 Police Station, Brunswick Street



Plate 9.10 JJ Cookson Garage, Waters Green



9.2 Car Parks and Vacant Sites

Multi-storey car parks are located outside of the conservation area and therefore the detracting impact they can often have on a historic townscape is avoided, although both the Jordangate Car Park and Grosvenor Car Park (to a lesser degree) have a harmful impact on its setting. The conservation area is however dominated by surface level car parking (highlighted on the Amenity Spaces and Car Parks map at the beginning of this Appraisal) including the formal car parks at the Town Hall and Waters Green, the hard surfacing to backland areas and cleared vacant sites. These cleared sites leave chasms in the townscape which detract from its character and create a sense of dilapidation – the site which spans between King Edward Street and Jordangate has had a particularly harmful impact given its position in the heart of the town centre [Plates 9.11 – 9.14].



Plate 9.11 Car parking to Waters Green



Plate 9.12 Car park to rear of police station



Plate 9.13 Car park to rear of Town Hall extension



Plate 9.14 Gap site between Jordangate and King Edward Street

9.3 Retail Frontage

One of the most significant detracting features within the conservation area is poor-quality shopfronts, signage and roller shutters within the retail frontage. Within the commercial core to Market Place, Chestergate (east) and the north end of Mill Street owing to the pedestrianised the human experience at ground level is dominated by a ground floor-level of buildings unhindered by traffic. Whilst the absence of traffic is a major benefit, poor-quality contemporary shopfronts, projecting box signs and internally illuminated or oversized box fascias, dominate otherwise handsome buildings above and overly intrude into the streetscene. External, solid roller shutters are also detracting, creating a dead frontage when closed and adding to the perception of crime and antisocial activity at night time [Plates 9.15 – 9.25]. Extensive examples of either historic or modern traditional shopfronts however remain within the conservation area which demonstrate the positive impact that appropriately detailed units have both in terms of the architectural quality of the individual building and the commercial attraction of the retail offer itself.



Plate 9.15 Build up of projecting signs to Chestergate west



Plate 9.16 Build up of projecting signs to Chestergate east



Plate 9.17 Poor quality shopfronts, signage and roller shutters



Plate 9.18 Fascia spanning across two buildings



Plate 9.19 Excessive signage to end wall of terrace and roller shutter housing



Plate 9.20 Oversized fascia signage





Plate 9.21 Mix of shopfronts and signage which highlights both the positive and negative impact they can have



Plate 9.24 Contemporary shopfront which does not relate to the character of the building



Plate 9.22 Contemporary shopfronts that do not relate to architectural style of the building



Plate 9.23 Contemporary shopfront and oversized signage which does not relate to host building



Plate 9.25 Variety of shopfronts and signage detract from uniformity of upper floors

9.4 Small-Scale Change

Small-scale and incremental change can often have a major impact on the appearance of buildings and their contribution to the conservation area. To the unlisted residential streets including Catherine Street, Pierce Street, Cumberland Street and Brock Street the replacement of timber sash windows with uPVC casements and the insertion of uPVC doors has had a significant impact on the historic character of these buildings, the variation in designs has further compounded this issue by diminishing the uniformity which these terrace groups once had. Refronting, rendering and painting buildings within otherwise brick terrace groups has also had a harmful impact, detracting from the uniformity once held and also obscuring architectural features of interest. The addition of satellite dishes, flues and vents and proliferation of wiring, modern light fittings and security equipment often have a cluttering impact which once again detracts [Plates 9.26 – 9.30].



Plate 9.26 Variety in modern uPVC windows, doors and frontages detract from historic character of terrace groups



Plate 9.27 Variety in modern uPVC windows, doors and frontages detract from historic character of terrace groups



Plate 9.28 Variety in modern uPVC windows, doors and frontages detract from historic character of terrace groups



Plate 9.29 Variety in modern uPVC windows and doors detract from historic character of terrace groups



Plate 9.30 Variety in modern windows and shopfronts across terrace group detract from their uniformity

9.5 Threats / Risks

The biggest threat facing the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area is the impact of small-scale, incremental change and the potential for poor development of the vacant sites. In both instances the solution lies in engaging all those with an interest in the conservation area from residents and the general public through to retail and business owners, developers and architects with the conservation area and this Appraisal and Management Plan. Fostering a better understanding of the significance of the heritage assets within the town centre and the role they play in economic and social vitality should assist in a process of enhancement. There is clearly a strong sense of pride and identity in Macclesfield and this should be harnessed to ensure that all new development is contextual and contributes to what is important about the town centre.

The significant shift in the nature of retail in recent times and the impact of the pandemic are likely to have a long-term impact on the town centre, creativity and forward thinking is required to ensure that the retail core stays ahead of its time and adapts and changes as necessary.



9.6 Opportunities

There are a number of opportunities for enhancement of the conservation area, which are outlined in detail in the accompanying Management Plan. These range from small-scale reinstatement of historic features and improvements, to shopfronts and signage, to the redevelopment of vacant sites and detracting buildings and the introduction of greening into the conservation area.



10.0 Proposed Extensions



Cheshire East has a statutory duty to review the character and boundaries of its conservation areas. As part of this appraisal two minor extensions are proposed to the existing conservation area to include buildings which appear to have no grounds to have been excluded at 12-20 Bridge Street and Cooney Building, Riseley's Passage which both are contemporary with, and follow the character and appearance of, their immediate context [Plates 10.1 - 10.3].



Plate 10.1 12-20 Bridge Street



Plate 10.2 Cooney Building, Riseley's Passage



Plate 10.3 Cooney Building, Riseley's Passage, rear