

Character Area Eighteen: Fishergate



Overview

The Fishergate area was continuously occupied throughout the Middle Ages but the present buildings date from the late 18th century onwards. The historic character of the area is fragmented by modern development and its ambience is compromised by high volumes of fast moving cars – it essentially operates as a traffic island. Despite these issues, the area should be incorporated within the Conservation Area as it forms an important entry point to the city and provides a setting for the city walls.

Boundaries

This triangular shaped area consists of development either side of Fishergate to the east and Fawcett Street to the west; the boundary is delineated on both sides by a change in building age and type further back from these main roads. The northern boundary is defined by the inner ring road and city walls.





Historical development

There is known to have been a Roman cemetery south of the city along the road from Fishergate.

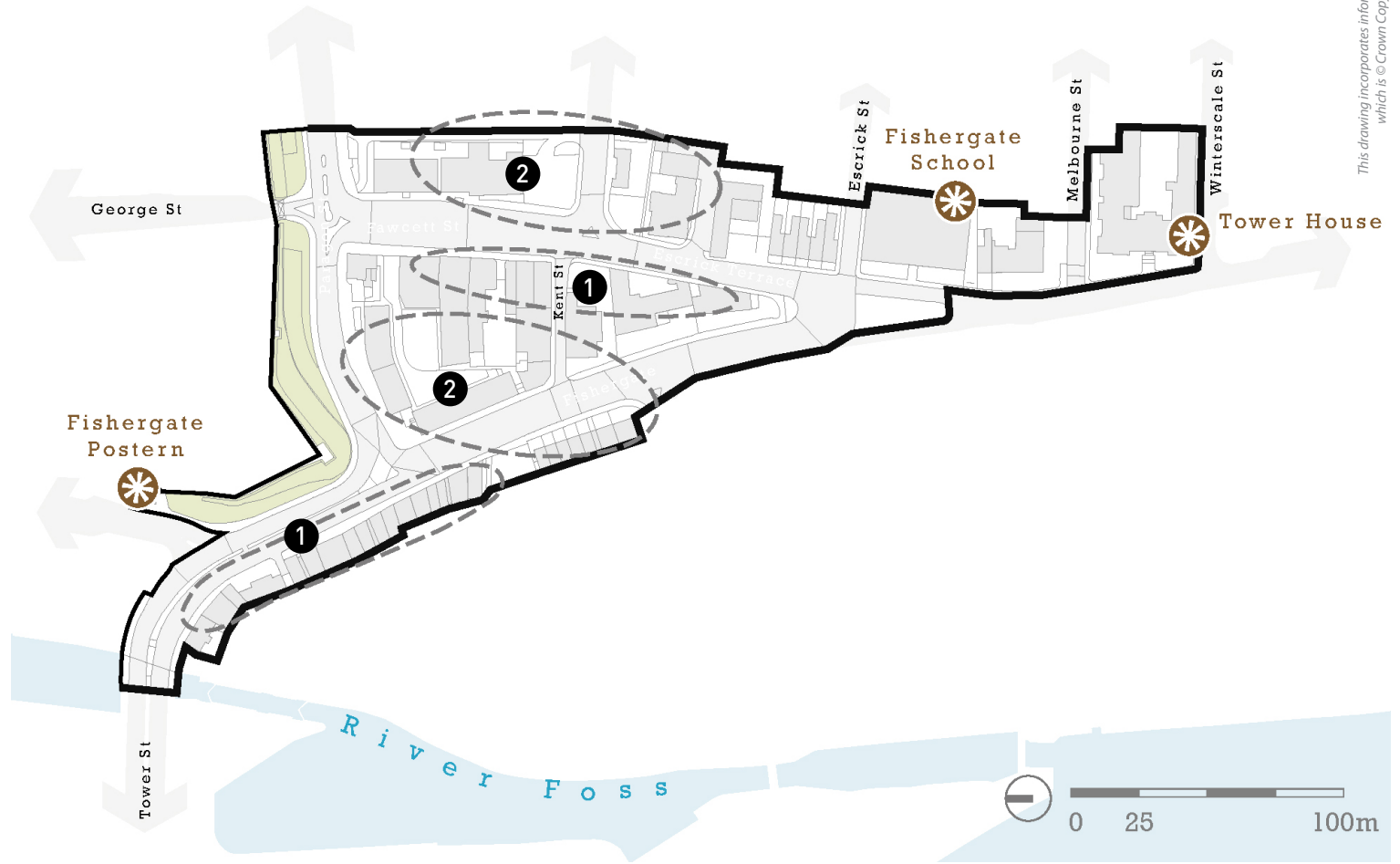
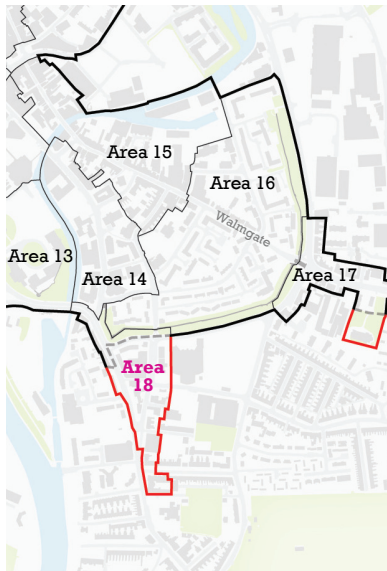
Excavations in the 1980s revealed traces of several 8th and 9th century buildings where the Ouse and Foss converge. Further work has suggested that there was a linear settlement along the banks of the Ouse and part of the Foss from the 7th to 9th centuries. Following the arrival of the Scandinavians in the mid-9th century, the focus of settlement moved away from Fishergate.

From historical records Fishergate is known to have been settled in the 12th century - the main road continued to be important as demonstrated by the large number of ecclesiastical buildings that lined it. These included the Augustinian priory of St Andrew's to the west of Fishergate and All Saints Church, south of the present day Paragon Street. Outside Fishergate Bar was a chapel dedicated to St Catherine but neither this, nor the others survive.

Part One: Understanding the City > Character Areas > Eighteen: Fishergate

- 1** 18th and 19th century houses, some converted into public houses and shops
- 2** Modern development, predominantly residential
-  City wall
-  Landmark
-  Proposed Conservation Area boundary
-  Character area boundary

Area 18 Location plan



Introductory Plan

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Despite development in the Middle Ages, maps from the 17th century show only fields beyond Fishergate postern. This was because the city population had shrunk in the 16th century and was confined within the city walls, which had been built in the late 14th century.

Fishergate postern is one of the main landmarks in the area and more impressive than the remains of the nearby bar which had been blocked up for many years. The postern is first mentioned in 1440 but seems to have been rebuilt in the 16th century. It is four storeys of magnesian limestone with a timber-framed roof.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, some large houses were built along Fishergate demonstrating

that it was a desirable place to live. ❶ However, from 1827 the status of the northern end may have been compromised with the building of a cattle market on a site between Fawcett Street, Paragon Street and Barbican; animal pens at the base of the city wall ramparts stretched from Fishergate to Walmgate Bar.

During the 20th century, substantial demolitions shaped the appearance of this area. A small 18th century glass manufacturing business had expanded into a large works on the land between Fishergate and the River Foss. The business expanded under various different owners until it was purchased by National Glass Company in the 1930s. After World War Two, the relocation of the business to Tadcaster released land for development.

Around the same time, some 19th century terraces along Paragon Street were demolished to make way for two blocks of flats to celebrate the Festival of Britain in 1951. ❷ The last major change to street layout occurred in the 1980s with the closure and demolition of the cattle market. This released land east of Fawcett Street ❷ for the building of the Barbican Centre in 1989 and the removal of cattle pens enabled the widening of Paragon Street.

Ambience and use

This area is a small local centre with some independent shops, pubs and housing. Its ambience is entirely dominated by traffic, moving at speed around the gyratory system and the inner ring road, producing significant noise and pollution.



Historic photograph showing Fishergate in the first half of the 20th century



Horses at the Cattle Market during the First World War

Designations

Although this area is small, there are ten Grade II listed buildings, six of which are on the triangular island between Fishergate and Fawcett Street. Nearly all date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries and were originally houses which have been converted to a variety of uses. Out side this group are

There are three Buildings of Merit – Tower House, a red brick Tudor building once headquarters of the Northern Command, No. 3 Fawcett Street (Macmillan Cancer Support) which is particularly attractive despite the rather strange ground floor conversion to a shop.

There is one detracting building, the one storey No. 7 Fawcett Street. It has no architectural merit and looks like it may have been some sort of garage (which is being converted into a restaurant). The building's scale is a poor termination to the row of listed buildings and the low height leaves the blank wall of No. 5 exposed.










Boundary changes

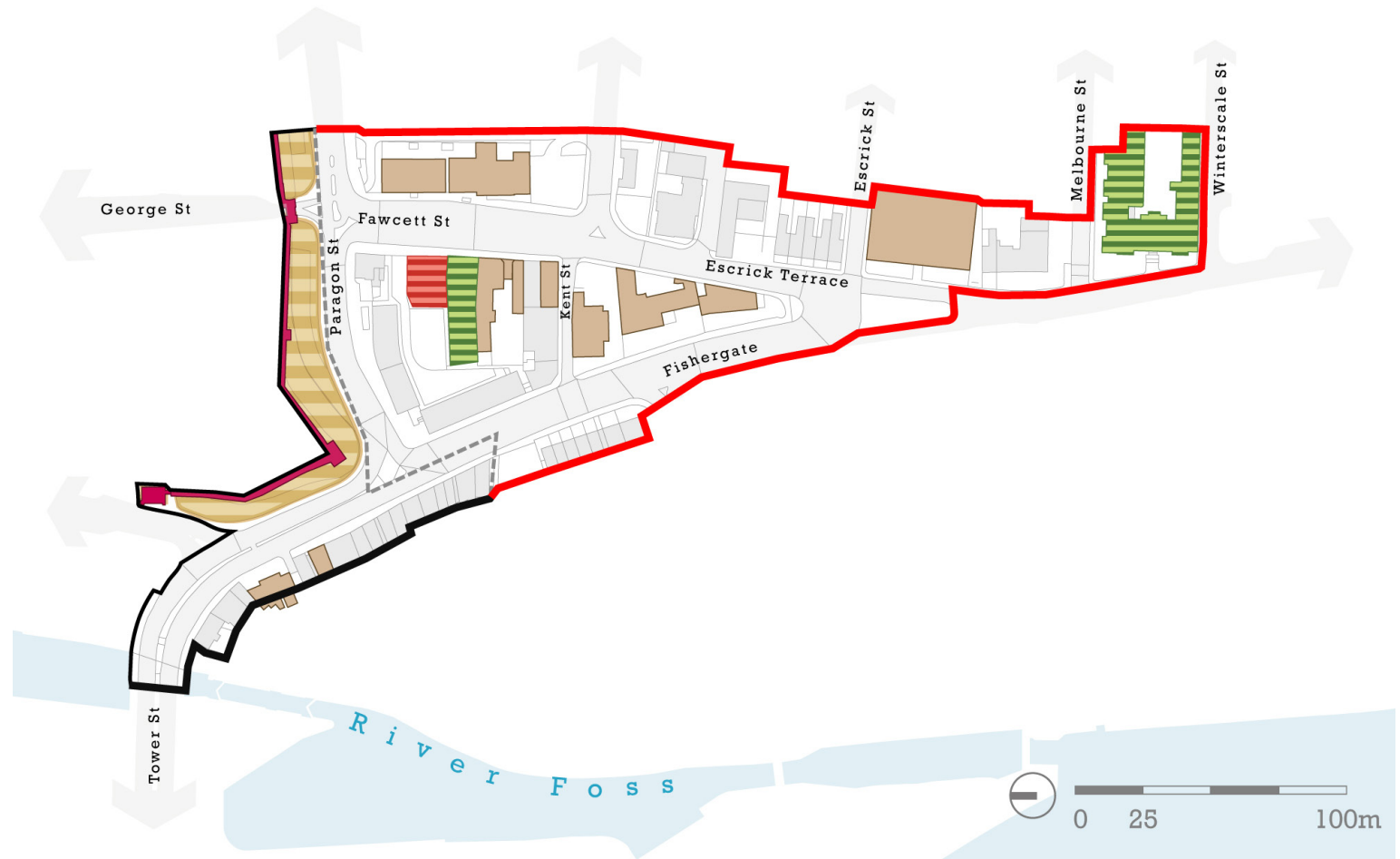
The Conservation Area currently includes part of the inner ring road and row of shops from Castle Mills Bridge to Fishergate Bar. It excludes buildings lining Fishergate and Fawcett Street and the triangular area between them.

This area has a number of listed buildings and Buildings of Merit which as a group, would contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. There are a number of opportunities to enhance the area to provide an improved approach to Fishergate postern and bar. Therefore, in order to protect the townscape and prevent further degradation, it is recommended the boundary is extended.



T.M. Oxtoby & Sons has a particularly attractive shop front

-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Grade I Listed Building
-  Grade II Listed Building
-  Building of merit
-  Detractor
-  Existing Conservation Area boundary
-  Character area boundary
-  Proposed Conservation Area boundary
-  Superseded Conservation Area boundary



Designations Plan

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Streets & Spaces

This area is comprised of three wide roads which form part of the busy inner ring road and a one-way gyratory system. The properties between the roads are marooned on a large triangular traffic island.

At the northern end of the island, properties face the street in all directions. However, the three properties south of Kent Street only face Fishergate, presenting their backs to Fawcett Street. The very narrow pavement at the rear is used for service access and there is little 'buffer' between the listed buildings and the traffic.

Of the three busy roads, Paragon Street is the most pleasant since it is bordered by the ramparts and city wall. Some good views of the Castle area and the Minster are possible from the wall walk.



Paragon Street is flanked by the city walls on one side



The rear of properties facing Fishergate

Buildings

18th and 19th century houses

These houses are examples of different scales and designs but have been converted to other uses.

No. 27 (The Edinburgh Arms) Fishergate dates from about 1830. It was converted into a public house in 1937. It is three storeys of rendered brick with slate roof.

No. 29 Fishergate was originally built as the Convent of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent-de-Paul in the late 18th century but extended in 1902. The Georgian part of the house has typical classical features such as the central pediment.

No.33 Fishergate (Ivy Cottage) was built in the early 19th century but was converted into a hotel and is now vacant. Its pointed windows and door suggest the 'Gothic Revival' style.

No.1 Fawcett Street is a late 18th century house which became a public house in about 1830 and more recently a restaurant (Toto). Its position on the corner means it was designed to have a double aspect.

No. 6 Fawcett Street is from about 1845 and was converted to The Woolpack public house; the name makes reference to its position opposite the cattle market.

The exception to the group is No.4 Fawcett Street (The Sea Horse Hotel), which was purposely built as a public house in the mid-19th century and was originally known as The Shire Horses. It is much larger than the converted houses and has a covered entrance way to yard behind where travellers' horse would have been stabled.



Ivy Cottage was a house then a hotel



The Edinburgh Arms public house



The Sea Horse Hotel was purpose built

20th century residential blocks

The Festival Flats are two large blocks which were built following a design competition in 1951 to commemorate the Festival of Britain. This is the same year as the Navigation Road flats in Walmgate (character area 16) but the designs are quite different. Whilst those at Navigation Road are Neo-Georgian, the Festival Flats are more modernist, with concrete balconies and distinctive ranges of small windows lighting the stairwells.



The Festival Flats, 1951

Traffic & Movement

This area is comprised of three wide roads which form part of the busy inner ring road and a one-way gyratory system. In contrast to other parts of the city which suffer from congestion, the traffic here is constantly fast moving. Cars turn particularly quickly around the blind corner at the southern bend of the triangular island. Speed restrictions have recently been introduced to limit traffic to 20 mph.

Both Fishergate and Fawcett Street are very wide, comfortably incorporating three lanes of traffic, on-street parking and bus stops. However, this width seems overly generous and considering the narrowness of pavement. There are few signalised or zebra crossings so some pedestrians may risk crossing at dangerous points.



Fishergate and Fawcett Street meet at the southern corner of the traffic island



Fawcett Street is very wide

Issues & Opportunities

Strengths

- There are some good views from city walls to Castle area and the Minster.

Weaknesses and opportunities

- Nos. 14 – 38 Fishergate are 19th century houses some of which have been converted into shops. Their historic character is under threat from uncontrolled alteration, including bricking up of the ground floor (conversion back to house), changes to windows and doors, and poor quality shop fascias. Since this row of buildings provides a setting for the city walls, an Article 4 direction should be applied to control permitted development.
- The wide roads surrounding the 'island' of listed buildings are detrimental to their setting and physical condition (through heavy vehicle vibration and pollution). Widening the pavement at the back of Nos. 27, 29 and 33 Fishergate would create a buffer to help reduce this impact.

- There are few crossing points along Fishergate and Fawcett Street. This helps keep traffic moving but means pedestrians are not prioritised. Additional safe crossing points should be considered.
- There is one development opportunity - an empty gap site on the corner of Fawcett Street and Kent Street. The eastern side of Fawcett Street has a mix of modern buildings and therefore, although the site is opposite some listed buildings, it is not particularly sensitive.
- There is one enhancement opportunity - No. 33 Fishergate is a vacant listed building in poor condition and considered at risk. A new use needs to be found urgently for this building to ensure repairs and maintenance are carried out.








Some houses on Fishergate have been poorly converted into shops and much altered




Development opportunity on Fawcett Street


Existing

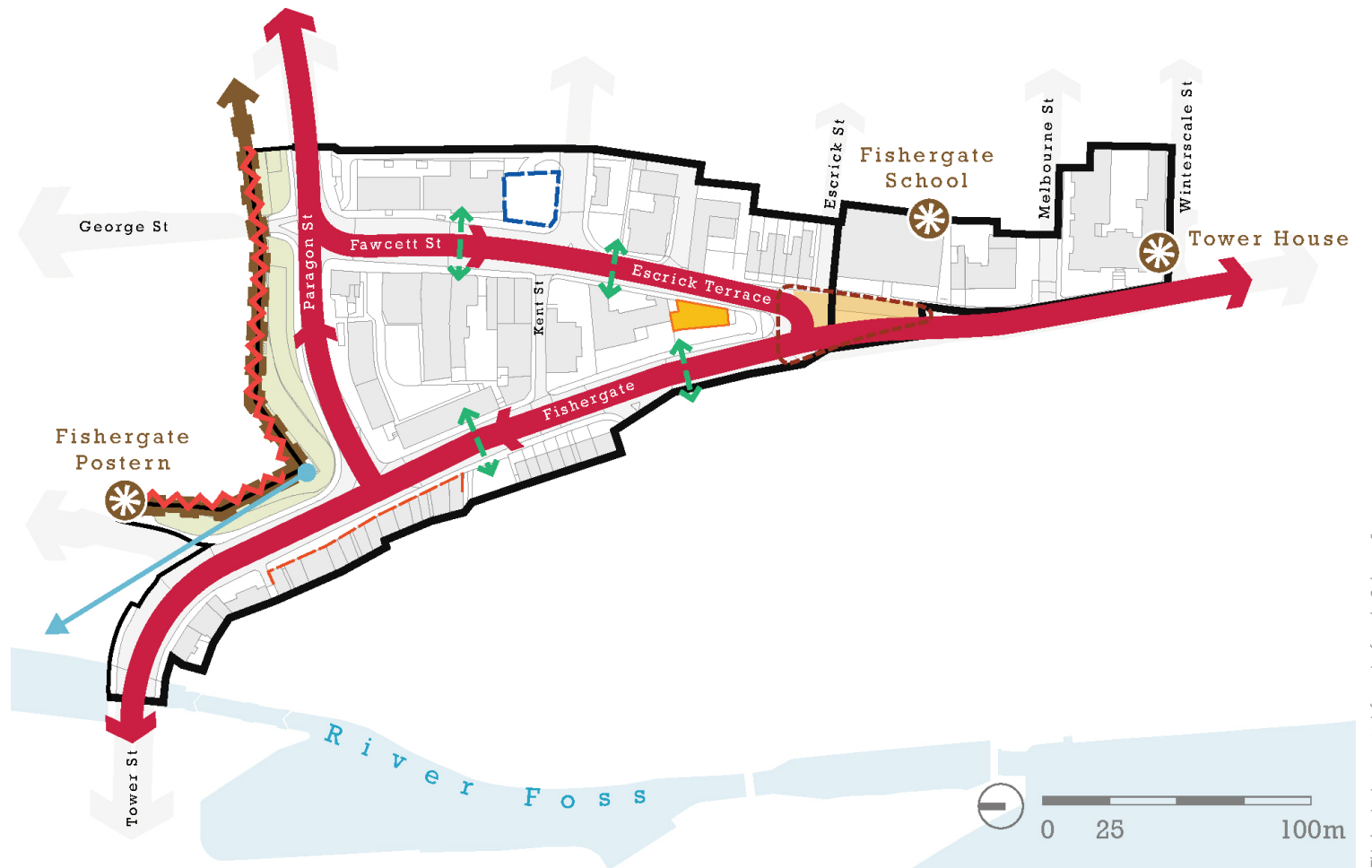
-  City wall
-  Landmark
-  High volumes of traffic
-  City Walls define movement
-  Uncontrolled alteration

Opportunities

-  Junction Improvement
-  Further public space improvements
-  New pedestrian crossing points
-  Building at risk
-  Development opportunity

Views

-  Local with focal point



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Issues and Opportunities