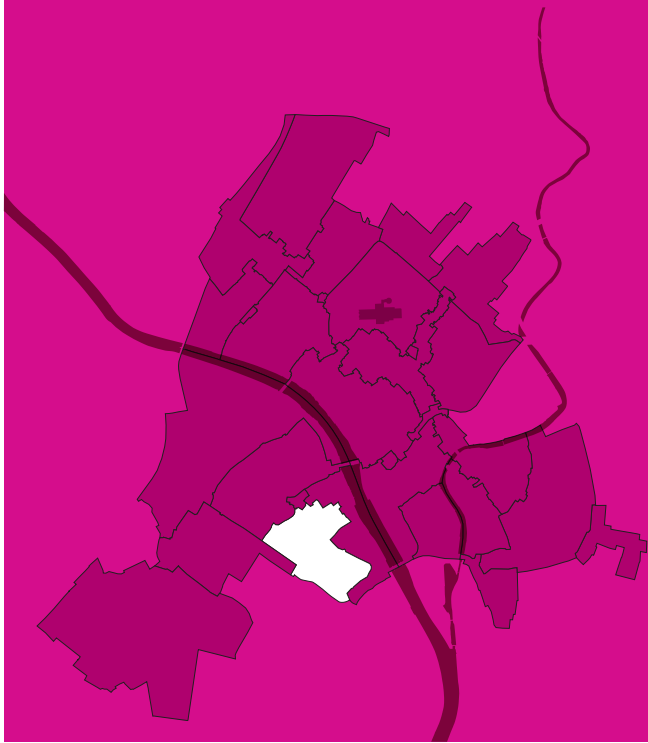


Character Area Twenty: Bishophill



Overview

After the Romans departed, Bishophill was a sparsely populated pastoral area until the 19th century when it was densely built up to house York's population growth. Today, the charming network of terraced streets strongly reflect the character of a Victorian suburb; the regimented and repetitive nature of the architecture makes the area distinct from others in the city walls. Enclosed by the wall, this area is a tranquil haven with a very strong sense of identity.

Boundaries

This area comprises the central spine road Bishophill Senior (which becomes Cromwell Road) and its side streets. The majority of buildings are residential, dating to the second half of the 19th century. The northern and western boundaries are where these give way to the large modern blocks of Skeldergate (character area 19).

The city wall forms the southern and eastern boundaries of the area.

Historical development

Bishophill was within the Roman civilian settlement. Where the land rises up from the River Ouse to the ridge of Bishophill Senior, the Romans terraced a natural ridge, above which homes would not be inundated by flood waters.

In the south eastern corner, following his seizure of York in 1068, William the Conqueror built a motte and bailey castle to guard the River Ouse in conjunction with York Castle on the other side of the river. The southern fortification did not remain in regular use and by the 13th century came under the control of the Archbishop of York. Its only significant role since then occurred during the 1644 Siege of York when it was used by Royalists as a gun emplacement. Today, just the motte remains.



The 11th century Castle mound on Baile Hill Terrace

Despite development pressure elsewhere in the walled city, this area remained open land until the mid-19th century. Baines' map of 1822 shows only a small cluster of houses at the junction of the present Victor Street, Bishophill Senior and Cromwell Road. The other notable buildings shown are the City Gaol, built alongside Baile Hill in 1802-7, and the church of St Mary, Bishophill Senior.

There are several reasons for the delay in further development. Firstly, in the 17th century Bishophill had several large houses with extensive grounds. One of these, Buckingham House, was considered to be the grandest house in the city and was located on Bishophill Senior next to St Mary's church. However, by the mid-19th century only parts of the building remained following a fire and a large factory was developed on the site, known as the Buckingham Works (demolished).

Secondly, the City Corporation kept the land between Bishophill Senior, Cromwell Road and the city wall as 'pasture closes' (land for grazing animals) and was reluctant to develop it until population growth forced the issue in the 1850s. Because of the extensive planned development, the area has a strong sense of identity today.

The first phases of development included Buckingham Street (1851-61), Fairfax Street and Hampden Street (1860s) ❶. In 1878 the City Gaol was demolished to make way for the second phase of housing. This allowed the widening of Cromwell Road and the development of Falkland Street, Baile Hill Terrace, the southern end of Kyme Street and Newton Terrace ❷.

One of the key features of Bishophill is its enclosure by the city wall on two sides. Whilst offering security, it very much limited access to the area; road entry from outside was via Skeldergate Postern or Micklegate Bar. In 1832, a new opening, Victoria Bar, was created in the south-western section of the wall, aligned with Victor Street.

There has been little modern development in the area during the 20th and 21st centuries. Only four streets have blocks of flats, all of which are modest in scale – Bishophill Junior, Victor Street, Falkland Street and Lambert Court ❸.

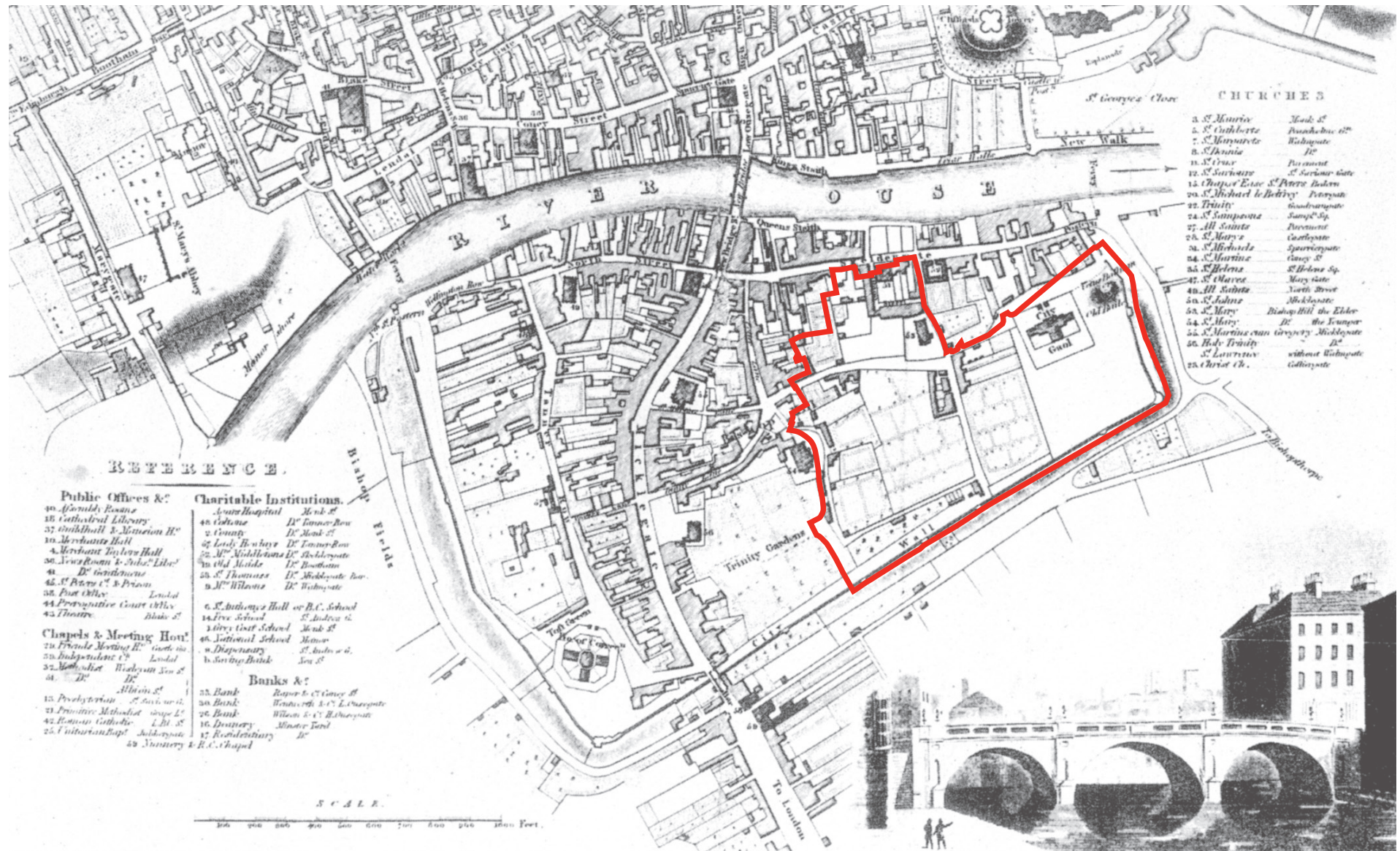
Ambience and use

This area is sheltered by the city walls and protected from traffic noise around the edges as a result of closing through routes towards the city in the 1990s and controls at the Bars. Its tranquillity and wholly residential character make it a pleasant oasis away from the hustle and bustle of the commercial city centre and Micklegate but within easy walking distance.



Kyme Street in early 20th century





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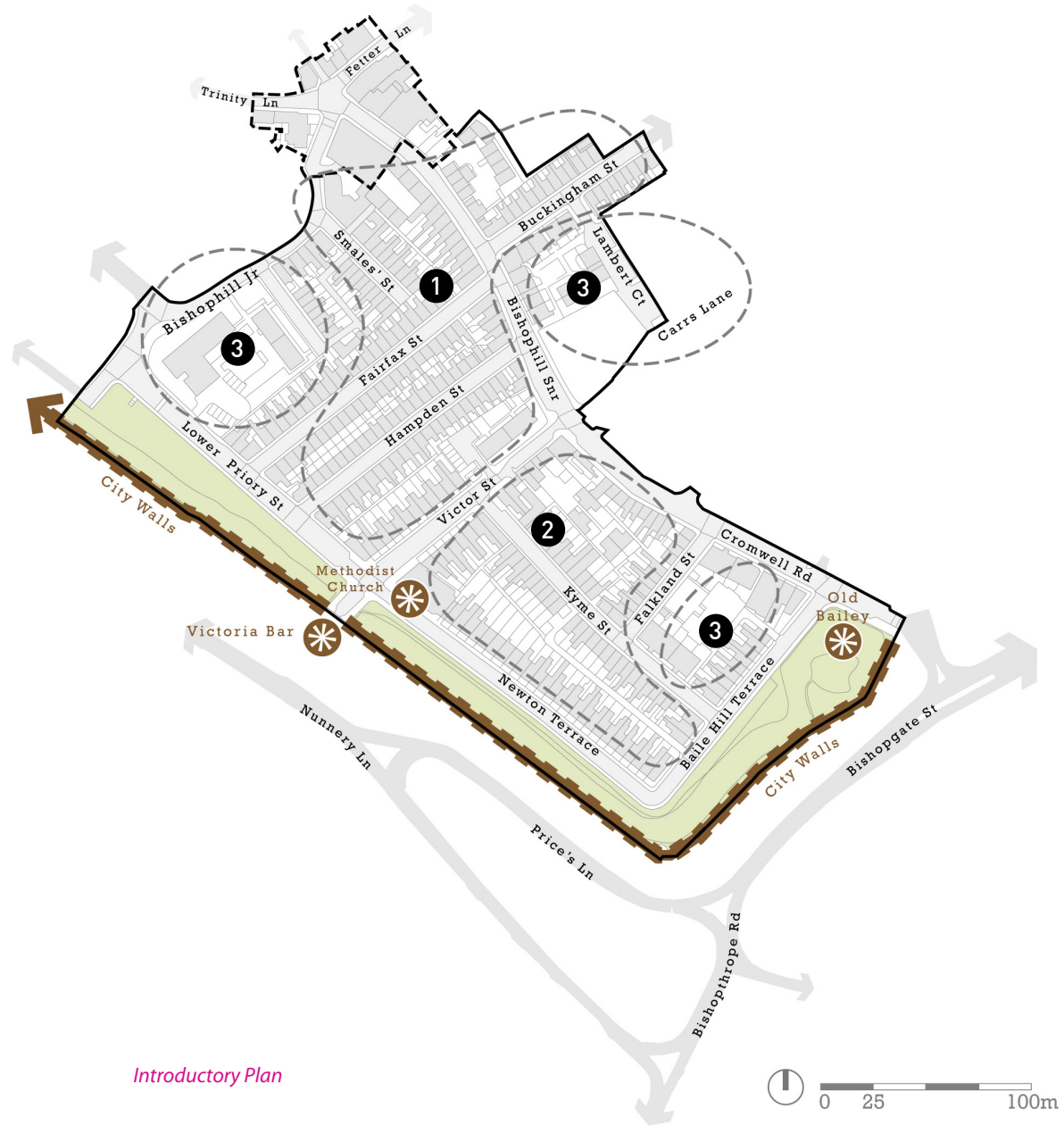
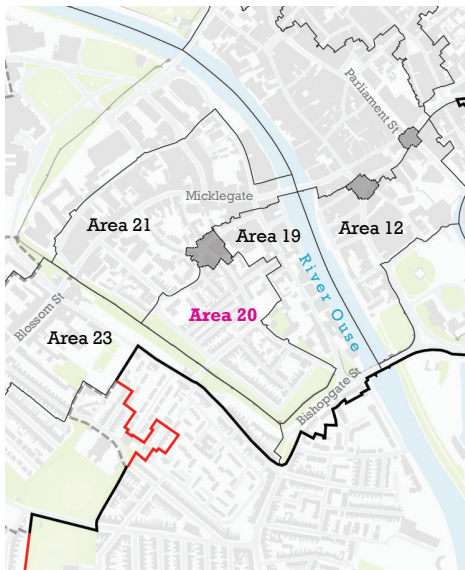
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Map of York, 1822 by Baines, showing open land before terraces were built and character area boundary in red

Part One: Understanding the City > Character Areas > Twentv: Bishopohill

- 1 Phase 1 of 19th century terraced housing development
- 2 Phase 2 of 19th century terraced housing development
- 3 Modern flats
-  Landmark
-  City Wall
-  Character area boundary
-  Area of Overlap

Area 20 Location Plan



Introductory Plan








Designations

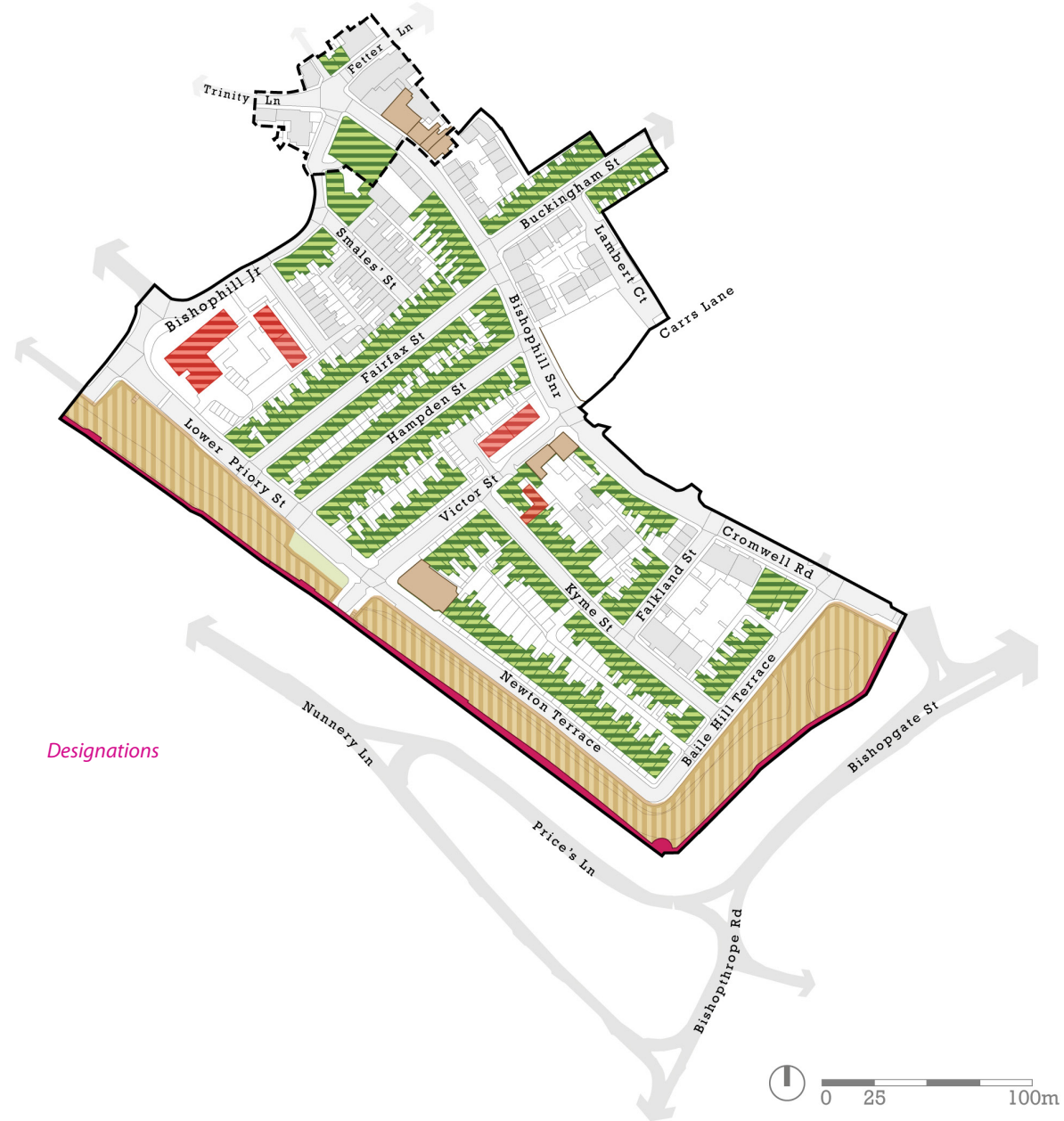
There are only three listed buildings in this area, all off Victor Street – the Golden Ball (public house, 1880s), the Old Rectory (late 17th century) and the former Victoria Bar Primitive Methodist Church (1880).

The low number of listed buildings reflects the late development of the area and the fact the terraced houses are not unusual or special in a national context. However, due to their homogeneity and powerful contribution to the character of the area, the terraced streets have strong local value as a group and should be considered Buildings of Merit.



Victor Street

-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Grade I Listed Building
-  Grade II Listed Building
-  Building of merit
-  Detractor
-  Character area boundary
-  Area of Overlap



Streets & Spaces

Terraced streets

The terraced streets are arranged in a grid pattern across the area. Although they have a uniformity of scale and mass, their designs are subtly different as a result of being built in small groups by different builders. Narrower streets have small houses which front on to shallow pavements. There are small yards to the rear accessed via alleyways and occasional corner shop. The arrangement of buildings with a common roof line encloses the streets strongly. The lack of street trees emphasises the dense urban character. Pavements on most streets are grey concrete slab. Together these streets are an excellent example of a Victorian community.

Wider streets facing the city walls accommodate large terraces with small front gardens providing a pleasant setting for the houses. The low front walls and iron railings form an attractive boundary.

Green spaces

Apart from a small number of front gardens, green space within the area is confined to the ramparts. There is a substantial flat area of grass along their base enabling greater use than in other areas of the city. Mature trees are planted along the ramparts and around the prominent remnant of the old bailey. The whole composition is very attractive.

The demolition in 1963 of St Mary, Bishophill Senior (on the corner of Carr's Lane and Bishophill Senior) was significant because it created more open green space in the area. The headstones of the graveyard are still visible. Across Carr's Lane is also a burial ground owned by York Area Quaker Meeting, resting place of some of the well-known Tuke family. It is thought that the walls of Carr's Lane may contain Roman material As does the retaining wall along the north eastern side of the former churchyard and inner portions of Lambert Court.



Terraced houses on Fairfax Street



The ramparts of the city wall

Buildings

As the result of extensive planned development, the building type here is extremely homogenous.

19th century houses

The overwhelming majority of buildings are late 19th century terraced cottages of nearly identical design. Fairfax Street, Hampden Street, Victor Street and Kyme Street are very similar. The typical house is red brick, two storeys, with decorative door case or moulded brick frame, a sash window on each floor with slightly rounded or flat arch above. The houses are often in pairs, with 'doors together'. Some terraces are more attractive than others due to decorative details and the extent of historic window and door survival. Unattractive plastic replacements have degraded the character of some streets.

Since these streets can be seen from the city walls, their roofscape is particularly important. The regular rhythm of slate roofs, chimneys and dormer windows, is attractive.



Hampden Street, 1861-7; a typical terraced street in Bishophill built for York's working classes

Larger terraces include Baile Hill Terrace and Newton Terrace. The latter's houses are more substantial in the material and design than the small terraces, probably designed for the lower middle classes. They have white brick facades, slate roofs, canted bay windows and small dormer windows with attractive decorative barge boards.

Late 20th century housing blocks

The last type of building is the late 20th century housing block. There are a number of these on the corner of Bishophill Junior/ Lower Priory Street and the eastern end of Victor Street.

The character of the area stems from narrow repetitive frontages of the terraced houses: by contrast these blocks have long uninterrupted facades. Locally used materials such as brick and slate are employed, however, the doors and windows are poorly proportioned.

Newton Terrace was built in two phases, 1876 and 1882-90



An inappropriate housing block amongst terraced streets



Traffic & Movement

Confined by the city wall on two sides, the area is not on a key route to the city centre and as such there is very little movement of through traffic. In addition, entry via Victoria Bar is restricted to permit holders only. Consequently, many street have very little traffic and pedestrians are free to wander unhampered.

Parking is on-street and given the level of car ownership and the narrowness of streets, parked cars dominate views. This contrasts with the neighbouring residential area of Skeldergate where parking is hidden beneath new buildings.



Entry into the character area is restricted to permit holders only

Issues & Opportunities

Strengths

- The area benefits from the city wall in two ways. Firstly, it is protected from traffic noise along the inner ring road outside and secondly, through traffic is restricted.
- The attractive, homogenous terraced streets create a strong and distinctive character. Views of the roofscape from the city walls are particularly important.
- The ramparts are shallow, wide and lined with semi-mature trees, providing attractive green space for residents.

Weaknesses and opportunities

- Incremental changes to windows and doors on some terraced streets have diminished their uniformity and damaged the character of the group. This situation will continue to worsen given the pressure for environmental adaptation and the potential demand for energy generation technology such as solar panels. An article 4 direction should be applied to control permitted development.
- Some of the late 20th century housing blocks do not relate to the surrounding Victorian terraces. Their long unbroken facades do not reference the rhythm of the terraced cottages or their materials. Any new development should pay regard to the traditional street pattern, building rhythm and materials of the area.
- There is a lot of open space at the junction of Bishophill Junior and Priory Street but it is poorly maintained and characterised by grass verges and haphazard parking arrangements. It could be re-designed to create a much more attractive environment for local residents.



Large amounts of poorly designed open space at the junction of Bishophill Junior and Priory Street




Poorly designed modern windows (left) detract from the appearance of the terrace



Existing

-  Tightly enclosed street of attractive homogenous character
-  Significant trees
-  City wall defines movement
-  Restricted entry
-  High volume of traffic
-  Backyard alleyways
-  Landmark
-  City Wall

Opportunities

-  Public space improvements to hard landscaping

Views

-  Strategic panoramic with focal points
-  Local panoramic



Issues & Opportunities

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