

Character Area Three: Marygate



Overview

Marygate is a street of medieval origin which is now a part of the residential suburb of Bootham. The meandering buildings on one side and old Abbey wall and St Olave's Church on the other create a picturesque view down to the river. Behind this pretty scene, there is considerable modern development and a large car park, and backs of plots are cluttered with garages and concrete driveways.

Marygate Landing is part of the riverside walk popular with walkers and joggers, and one of several pedestrian short cuts through the area into the city ❶.

Boundaries

This area is enclosed by both man made and natural barriers on three sides – the Scarborough railway line to the west, the River Ouse to the south and the wall of St Mary's Abbey to the east. The northern boundary runs along the backs of long gardens belonging to houses on Bootham and St Mary's.

Historical development

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recounts how Siward, an important earl of Scandinavian origin who ruled York from 1041-55, was buried in 'St Olafs'. This church was the predecessor to the present St Olave's, which was largely re-built from the 15th to 19th centuries. Some of this work stemmed from damage sustained through the church's use as a gun platform during the Civil War.

Historic documents record houses in Marygate from the 12th century, although the Abbey wall itself was not built until the 13th. The surviving houses however, date from the late 17th century onwards ❷.

Maps of the 17th century show houses but are not sufficiently detailed to distinguish whether there were any buildings built against the wall itself. However, the 1851 Ordnance Survey map does show such buildings. Photographs suggest they dated from the 18th century. They were demolished in 1937-40 after pressure to reveal the

walls was exerted by Yorkshire Philosophical Society, then owners of the Abbey site. Once this was done, the walls' poor condition could be seen and heavy restoration was needed.

Flooding damaged several streets behind Marygate and they were condemned and demolished in the 1970s; four terraced streets (Bean, Hetherton, Clayton and Walker Street) were cleared to create Marygate car park. Houses on Frederic Street were also demolished and replaced with residential blocks ❸. Many of the back gardens of houses on Marygate and St Mary's have been concreted over and are used for garages ❹.

Ambience and use

Marygate is a residential area with a couple of public houses. The limited vehicular access into the area and lack of through routes means it is generally quiet even though there is a public car park. The peaceful atmosphere is broken by the occasional low rumble of a train or a peal of bells ringing out from St Olave's.

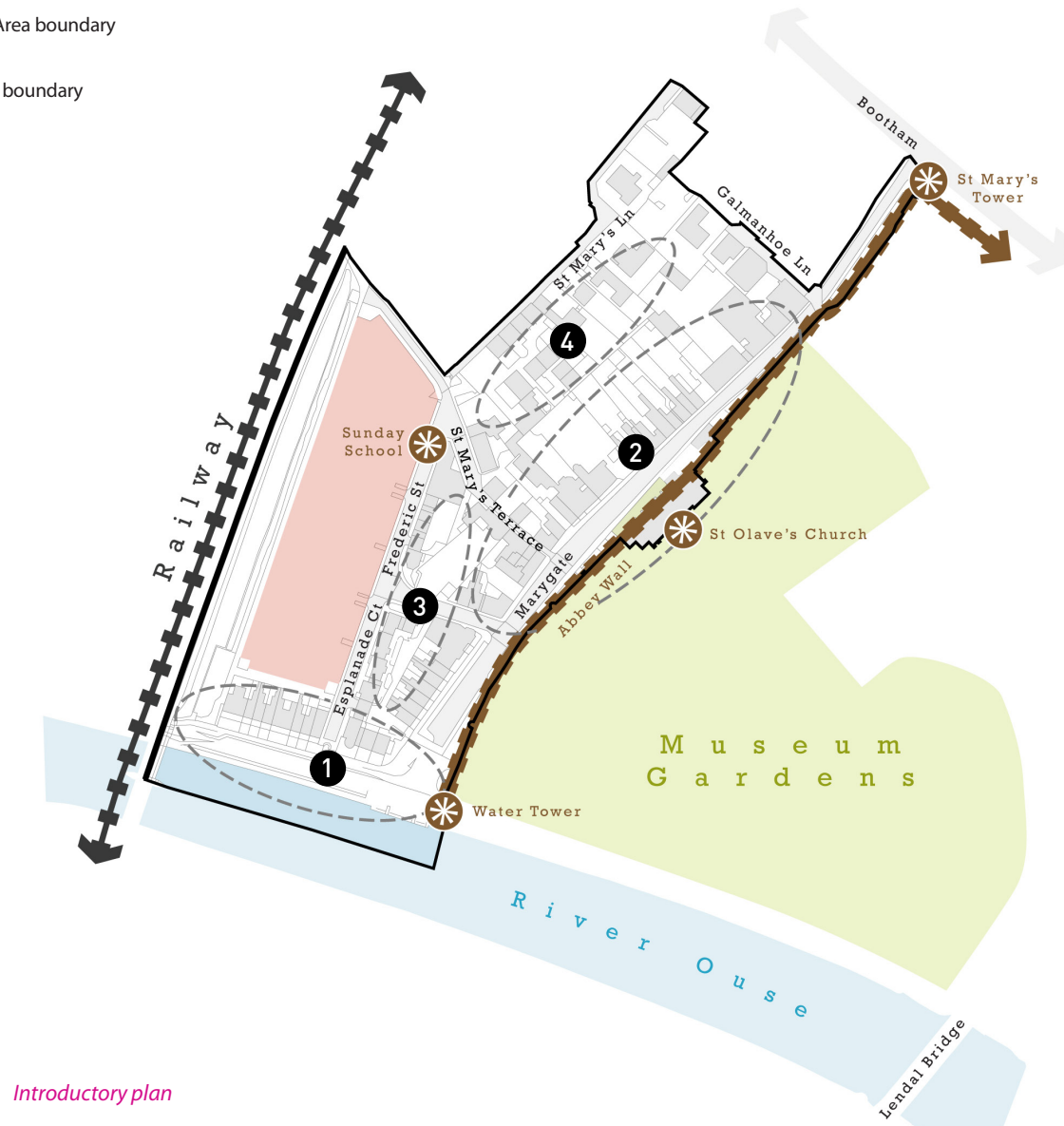
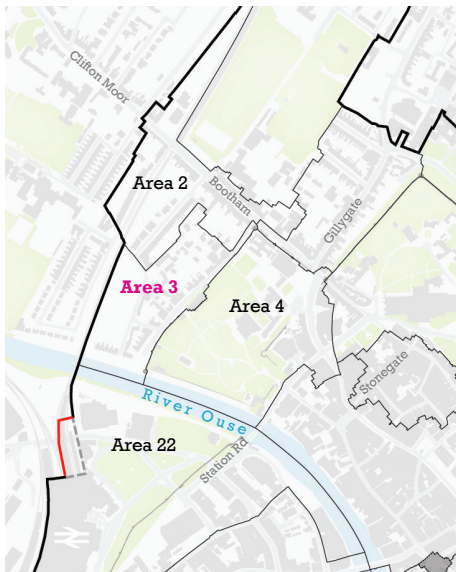


Historic photograph showing houses against the Abbey wall in about 1930

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 - 2 Buildings from the late 17th century onwards
 - 3 20th century development
 - 4 Driveways and garages
 - ⊛ Landmark
 - Abbey Wall
 - Railway
 - Car Park
- Conservation Area boundary
 - - - Character area boundary

Area 3 location plan



Introductory plan

Designations

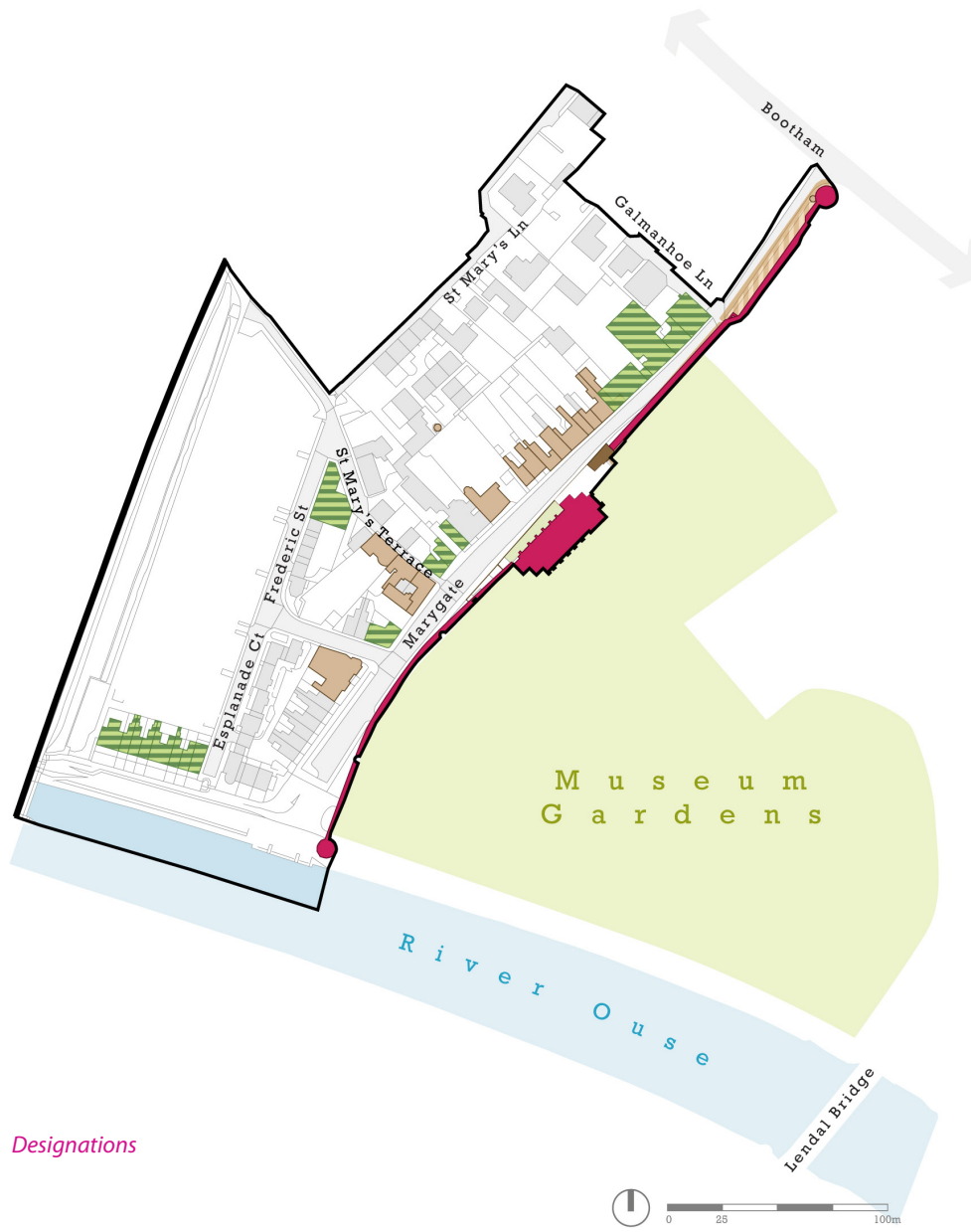
St Olave's Church is Grade I listed and some of the oldest houses along Marygate are Grade II. The late 19th century Bay Horse public house is also Grade II.

There are a number of Buildings of Merit which contribute positively to Marygate's picturesque townscape such as Earlsborough Terrace and the former Sunday School of St Olave's



The Sunday School on the corner of Frederic Street, a Building of Merit. It has been converted for residential use.

- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Building of merit
- Conservation Area boundary
- Character area boundary



Designations



Streets and Spaces

Riverside

Marygate Landing is the section of riverside accessible from the end of Marygate and is part of the riverside walk up to Lendal Bridge. The landscape contains quite a number of different elements including bollards, railings, cobbles, and paving. Trees also line the bank and there are some attractive front gardens belonging to Earlsborough Terrace.

Since the riverside is prone to flooding, the bank and walkway is occasionally covered with mud and enhancement proposals would need to take account of this. Unlike at Skeldergate, here a flood barrier protects Marygate.

There are some good views towards city centre from the riverside walk. However, the Royal Mail building on the opposite bank is rather unattractive and only screened by trees when in leaf.



View from the riverside towards Lendal Bridge and the city centre

Marygate

This is one of the most picturesque streets in York due to its topography and variety of buildings. It winds downhill from Bootham and terminates in a view of the river. The buildings are almost entirely on the north west side facing the historic Abbey walls which are scarred from the removal of other houses. A grass verge now borders the walls, broken by a pretty cluster of buildings half way down the street: an 18th century house, St Olave's Church set in a leafy churchyard and the grand Abbey gatehouse.

North of the church, the houses are without front gardens and the pavement is extremely narrow. Towards the river end of the street, the houses are set behind railings and pavements are wider.

St Mary's Lane

This is a narrow tarmac lane running between the backs of the long plots off St Mary's and Marygate. The ends of the plots have mostly been concreted over and used as service areas for parking or wheelie bins. Garages and other out-buildings have been built by different owners and are haphazardly arranged.



Topography and architectural variety create a distinct character along Marygate



Haphazard development along St Mary's Lane

Buildings

The Abbey wall and St Mary's Tower

The wall was begun in the 13th century as a boundary rather than for defence and was about 11ft high and built in magnesian limestone. At the start of the 14th century, it was extended in height by 5-6ft and towers were added.

St Mary's Tower on the corner of Bootham and Marygate is round on the outside but octagonal inside. Following damage during the siege of York in 1644 it was restored with additional windows taken from the King's Manor. A photograph from the late 19th century shows how buildings were pressed up against the Tower, their removal between 1896 and 1920 causing some damage.

St Olave's Church

This church was founded in the 11th century but the present building was re-built in the 15th, 18th and 19th centuries but its architectural character remains overwhelmingly medieval.



© Imagine York



Historic view of Marygate Tower (top), with buildings built directly adjoining the wall and tower, compared with the view today (bottom)



Grade I listed St Olave's Church and Gatehouse to St Mary's Abbey, Marygate

Marygate and riverside

Whilst some streets in the city are attractive because of their homogeneity, Marygate's interest comes from the unplanned nature of its development, leading to architectural variety. The earliest group of houses are opposite St Olaves Church, dating from the late 17th and early 18th century. This includes No. 28 and parts of St Olave's Cottage (No. 48). Some of the later 18th and 19th century houses are painted cream.

A nice group of late Victorian buildings stretches from Hetherton Street to the river. On the corner is the largest, the Bay Horse public house built in 1894 by Penty and Penty. It is designed in a 'mock-Tudor' style with medieval window types, half-timbered gables and tall chimney stacks. Earlsborough Terrace is a late 19th century row of two and three storey houses facing the river. The patterned brickwork is particularly attractive. There would have been many more of this type of house prior to the extensive 1970s demolition.

20th century houses

Frederic Street contains two contemporary housing developments in the 'neo-vernacular' style, with private parking in small courtyards behind. The development nearest the river consists of two storey red brick terraced 'cottages' with casement windows and slate roofs. This design may make reference to the terraced houses which once stood on the site.



The 19th century houses of Earlsborough Terrace overlook the riverside



20th century houses on Frederic Street

Traffic & Movement

There is only one way for traffic to enter this area which is down Marygate; the downhill gradient and lack of impediments can induce speeding. This seems more threatening to pedestrians simply due to very narrow pavements. Despite the size of the car park, the area never feels overly busy with cars even at peak times.

Whilst vehicles are restricted, pedestrians can move through the area with ease. Popular short-cuts to other parts of the city include through Marygate Lane to Museum Gardens, along the riverside walk to Lendal Bridge, under the railway line to Bootham Terrace and over Scarborough Bridge. This latter route is in poor condition and could be improved.



Large surface level car park on Frederic Street

Issues & Opportunities

Strengths

- Marygate is a picturesque street with a distinctive character. The buildings are well maintained.
- There are good pedestrian routes to the city centre through Museum Gardens and to the Railway Station









Weaknesses and opportunities

- Marygate Landing could be improved to feel more like a single cohesive space by streamlining the types of landscape materials used.
- Marygate Car Park appears well used but could be a future development opportunity if parking could be accommodated elsewhere. In this case, new buildings should relate to the height and scale of the surrounding buildings (i.e. no more than three storeys).
- The Royal Mail building and car park opposite Marygate Landing is not attractive and is particularly visible in winter. If the site is ever to be redeveloped, the design of any new building must take into account the need to improve the setting of the river and the quality of views from the opposite bank.
- Scarborough Bridge is well used by pedestrians but is in a poor condition. The pedestrian walkway could be replaced with a more attractive and well lit design.





The Royal Mail building is highly visible from the riverside walkway in winter



Existing

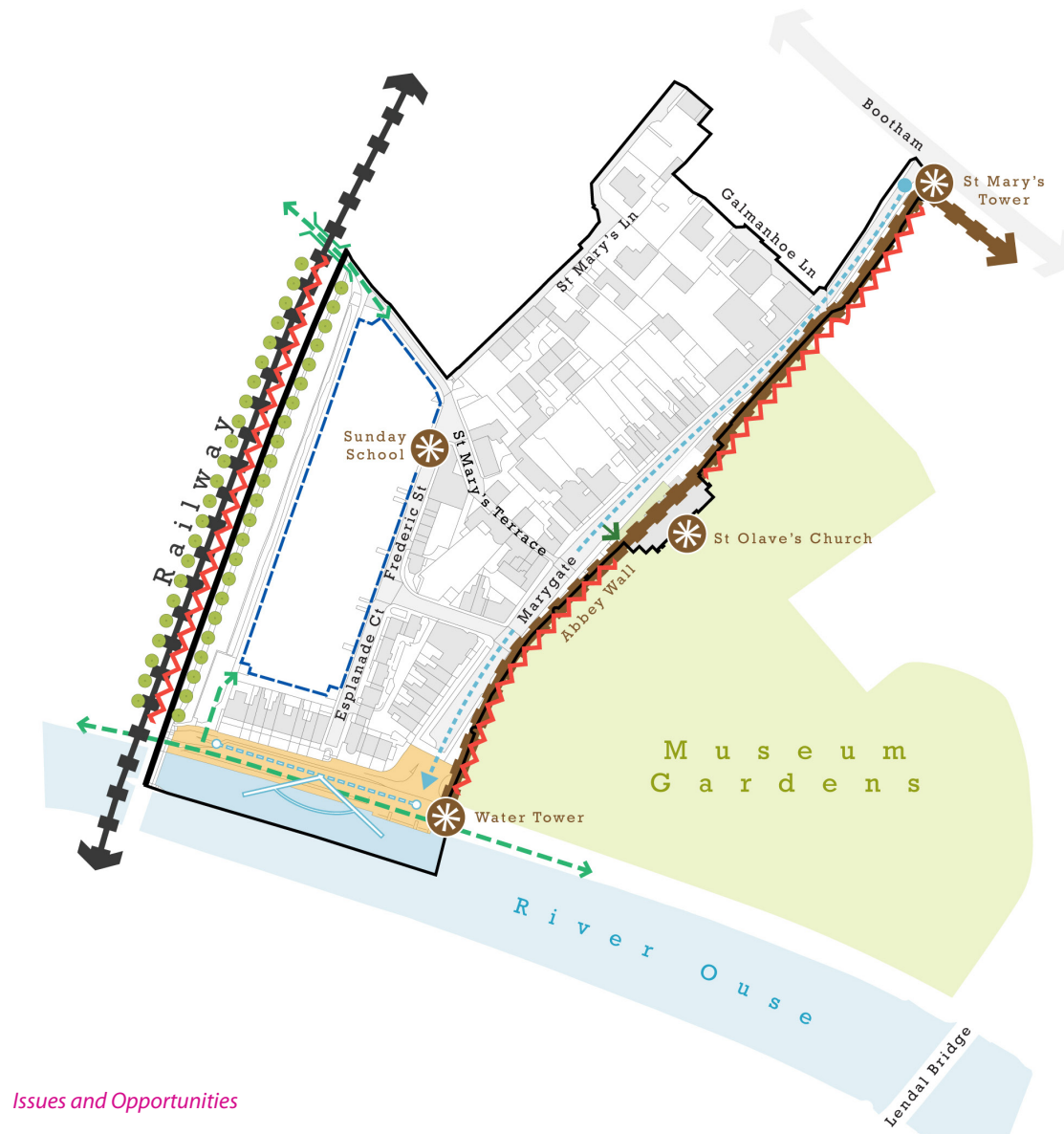
-  Pedestrian walk
-  Abbey Wall and Railways define movement patterns
-  Entrance to Museum Gardens
-  Landmark
-  Abbey Wall
-  Railway
-  Underpass
-  Trees

Opportunities

-  Potential for public space improvement at riverside
-  Potential development opportunity at car park

Views

-  Dynamic local
-  Potential for new dynamic panorama



Issues and Opportunities