

Character Area Seven: Monkgate



Overview

Monkgate is one of the historic approaches to the city from the north east. Although developed during the Middle Ages, its heyday was during the 18th and 19th centuries when it was a prosperous suburb. However, its location next to the River Foss attracted industrial uses and it did not maintain its residential status in comparison with Bootham. Whilst Monkgate has retained its charm, the area is surrounded by the remnants of this industrial legacy as former works sites have been developed into a retail park.

Boundaries

This area consists of Monkgate and the land between it and the River Foss. The southern boundary is defined by the city wall. The northern and eastern boundaries are defined by the River Foss. The western boundary runs behind the back of Monkgate.

Despite the obvious historical link with Monkgate, Monk Bar is in character area 10, The Medieval Streets, because of its present strong spatial relationship with Goodramgate.

Historical Development

Monk Bar lies 100 yards south east of the Porta Decumana of the Roman legionary fortress, which is just inside character area 6 (Lord Mayor's Walk). The line of Monkgate runs close to that of the Roman road from the north east. The name Monkgate is first mentioned about 1075 and derives its name from a community of monks belonging to the pre-Conquest Minster.

Like other areas outside the walls such as Bootham and Gillygate, there was development along Monkgate in the 12th century. At this time the church of St Maurice was founded on the corner of Monkgate and Lord Mayor's Walk. There was also Jewish cemetery near the present multi-storey car park on Jewbury in use until the Jews were expelled in 1290.

Even though the area escaped serious damage during the Civil War siege of 1644, nothing of the medieval settlement remains and the historic character of the area is reflected in buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries ① (refer to plan on page 191).

Monkgate in the 1930s



Then, Monkgate was a popular residential area but never grew as grand as Bootham. Its appeal was limited because of its proximity to the industrial River Foss and the York Gas Company which operated from 1823 on the present site of Sainsbury's ②.

The County Hospital was founded in 1740 and occupied various small buildings in Monkgate until a competition was held for a purpose built building. This opened in 1851 and was closed in 1977 following the opening of York District Hospital on Wiggington Road. It became the headquarters of Yorkshire Water and then conversion to flats took place in 1985 when the forecourt was redeveloped with new houses - 'Monkgate Cloisters' ③. The former Hospital is now private flats.

Other 20th century changes include the demolition of St Maurice's in 1967 for road widening. The churchyard was left as open ground and some headstons remain ④. In the 1985, the former gas works site and more of the hospital grounds were developed as two supermarkets and car park.

Ambience and use

Monkgate has a small collection of independent commercial and retail uses at the southern end and becomes more residential away from the Bar. There is also a church, school and health centre.

Although there is a high volume of traffic at the large roundabout at the northern end and along the inner ring road, most of it bypasses Monkgate itself meaning it is not as congested or noisy as some other city approaches.



St Maurice's Church, built in the 12th century and demolished in 1878. Its replacement was also demolished, in 1967


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- 1 18th and 19th century houses still mostly in residential use
- 2 Sainsbury's supermarket and car park
- 3 Former County Hospital and grounds now converted and redeveloped for housing
- 4 Site of the former St. Maurice's Church now public space

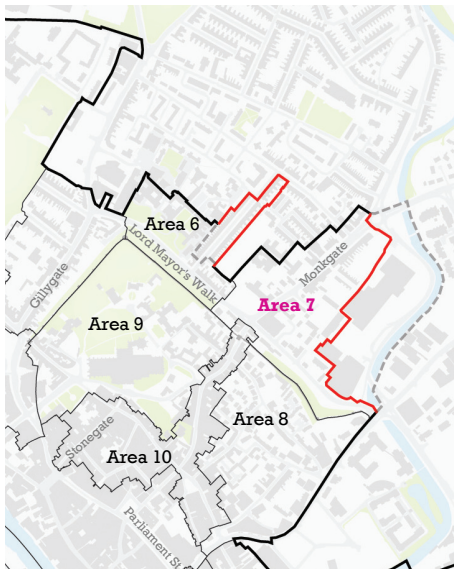
 Landmark

 City Wall

 Conservation Area boundary

 Character area boundary

Area 7 location plan



Introductory Plan

Designations

One building, Middleton House (No. 38 Monkgate), is listed Grade II* and there are a number of Grade II houses along the main road. This reflects the age and good architectural quality of the buildings, which are largely unaltered. The former County Hospital is also Grade II.

Several Buildings of Merit have been identified including Trinity Methodist Church and Monkgate Health Centre, both on Monkgate.

The Job Centre Plus on Monkgate is the only detracting building by virtue of its poor design and its position within a fine view of the Minster.

Boundary changes











At present, the Conservation Area includes Sainsbury's and one surface and one multi-storey car park. These developments have been built since the Area was designated. Neither Sainsbury's nor the car park has any special architectural or historic interest. Therefore, it is recommended that the boundary be altered to exclude them.

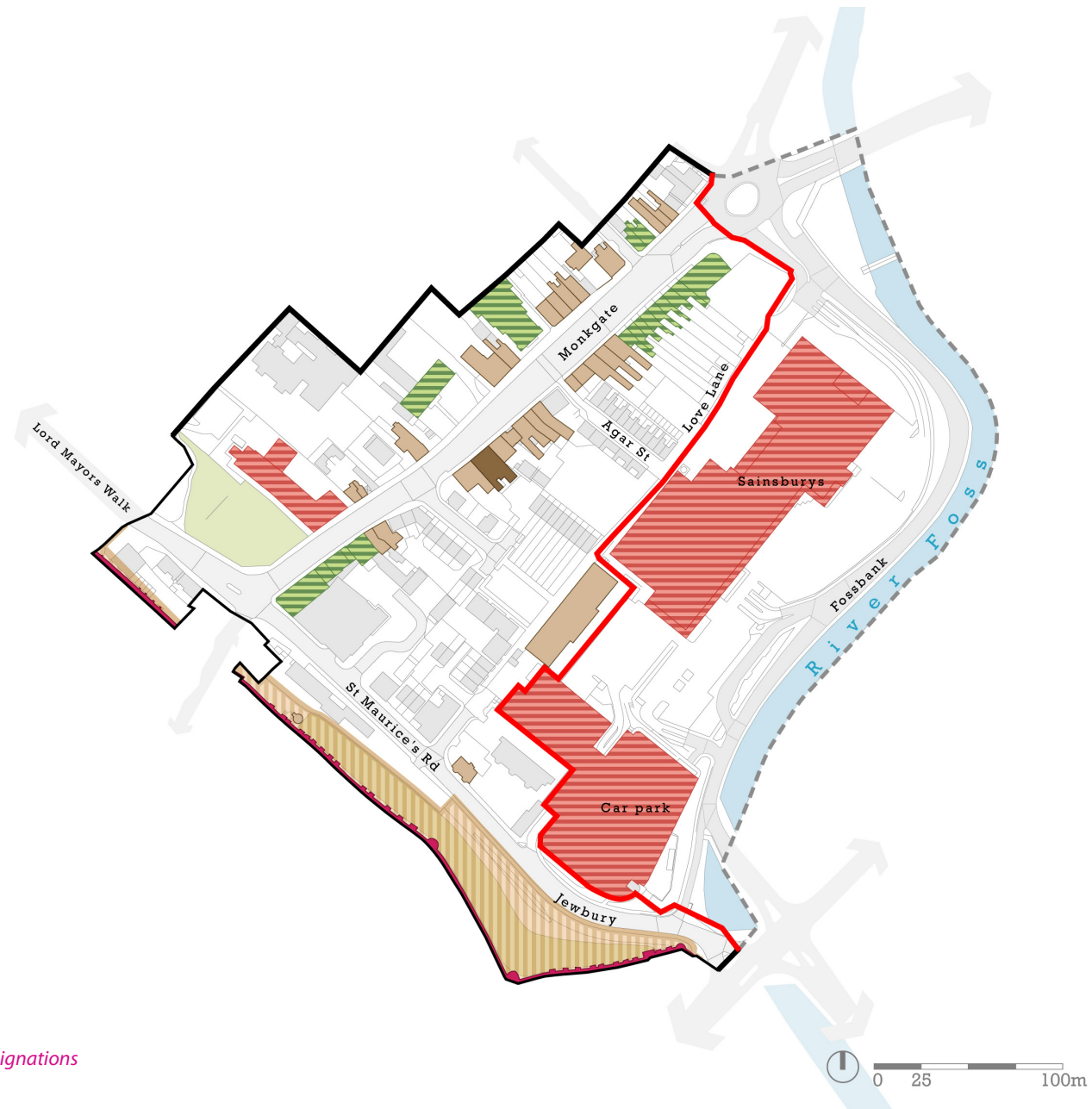
The new boundary should run along the alleyway from St Maurice's Road to Foss Bank; this is a historic, possibly medieval, route called Love Lane. There is also a level change which helps define the boundary. It should then run behind the former nurses' home and along Jewbury.

Landscaping along Jewbury and the River Foss helps screen the car parks from the city walls and it is recommended that further controls be introduced such as Tree Preservation Orders.



The "big box" retail unit Sainsbury's has been omitted from the Conservation Area as it is not of any special architectural or historic interest

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



Designations

Streets & Spaces

Monkgate

This is an attractive street, although not on a par with some of the other Bar approaches, such as Bootham. It is a noticeably broad and opens out to the east. The southern side has a similar building line throughout in contrast to the northern side which is much more fragmented, some buildings being set quite far back.

Monkgate once had an avenue of trees but only a few remain; some new replacements are in planters rather than the pavement. There are pockets of green space such as the garden of the Monkgate Health Centre. Pavements are wide and the original cobbled margins have survived on most of the eastern side, but have been replaced with brick paviors on the western side.

The northern end of Monkgate widens as it reaches a large roundabout at the junction with Foss Bank, Huntingdon Road and Heworth Green. This busy junction and modern buildings beyond signal the edge of the historic city.

From half way along Monkgate there is a very good view of Monk Bar and the Minster to the south. However, this is spoilt by the poorly designed and intrusive Job Centre Plus building in the foreground.



Cobbled margins, generous street widths and consistent building lines on the northern side add to Monkgate's character

Green space

The ramparts in this area have two distinctive features: firstly, the stretch along Jewbury is very wide and secondly, there are buildings in the ditch either side of Monk Bar.

The section between Jewbury and Monk Bar has an impressive stretch of mature trees. The ditch and rampart are used as a recreational space in summer and for sledging if there is snow in winter.

There is an interesting brick feature built into the rampart adjacent to Monk Bar - an early 19th century circular ice house that was originally used by the public house which backs onto it.

In addition to the ramparts, there is the former churchyard of St Maurice's on the northern corner of the junction between Monkgate and Lord Mayor's Walk which was created through road widening works. Headstones remain visible, demonstrating its former use.

The former churchyard is used as a pedestrian link to the car park behind. However, the space is overgrown and lacks the features, such as benches, required to serve as a functional civic green space. It is in a prominent location but appears 'left over' and undesigned, with buildings facing away from it. These qualities mean the area can attract anti-social behaviour.



The ramparts along Jewbury are lined with semi mature trees

Buildings

Georgian and Victorian houses

18th and 19th century buildings along Monkgate define its character. Most were built as houses and would have been occupied by the wealthier middle classes, for example George Hudson (the 'Railway King') lived at No. 44.

On the south-eastern side, no. 51 and its neighbours were converted into offices but during the last five years some have been converted back to houses including no. 44.

A series of archways, some blocked and others in use, can be seen along Monkgate. These were formerly entrances for horse-drawn carriages; No. 38 is one example.



Middleton House (No. 38) is the finest house on the street. The earliest parts date from about 1700 and it was heightened in 1765. It was initially built for a gentleman and then owned by a baker and a silkweaver. In 1798 the house was bought by Rev. Charles Wellbeloved who became the principal of Manchester College.

Georgian and Victorian public buildings

Monkgate Health Centre (No. 33) was built in 1784 as the Grey Coat School, a charitable school for orphaned girls. Girls were taught basic literacy and domestic work including washing, sewing, knitting and spinning. The building was enlarged and re-fronted in 1868 by J.B. & W. Atkinson and extended to the rear during the 20th century. The red brick façade is relatively plain with little decorative detail and marred by inappropriate signage.

The County Hospital was built 1849-51 to the designs of J.B. & W. Atkinson. It is in a simple classical style with heavy eaves. The front door is particularly impressive as it sits within a heavy stone frame and has a large gas lamp on either side. It has been converted into flats.

Trinity Methodist Church was built 1901-3 by F.W. Dixon of Manchester to replace the Ebenezer Chapel in Little Stonegate.

The style has both classical and Gothic elements and there are some good Art Nouveau stained glass windows.



The County Hospital, 1849-51 by J.B. & W. Atkinson



Monkgate Health Centre was built as a school in 1784

20th century

There are good and bad examples of post-war architecture. Monkgate Cloisters, designed in 1985 by David Crease and Partners, creates a pleasant forecourt to the former County Hospital, with arches unifying the facades. The Job Centre Plus is in a prominent location at the end of Monkgate, intruding into views of the Minster. It is too tall, entirely bland, with no entrances onto Monkgate and no frontage onto the former churchyard. Its removal would be welcomed.



Houses at Monkgate Cloisters built in the neo-vernacular style

Traffic & Movement

Monkgate and the junction in front of Monk Bar seem less congested than other Bar approaches. Drivers coming in from the north heading for the large Foss Islands Road retail park have to use Foss Bank instead of Monkgate. However, the western side of Monkgate can be busy as traffic feeds in from St Maurice's Road and Lord Mayor's Walk, heading towards Heworth, New Earswick and Haxby.

Jewbury and St Maurice's Road is a very busy and unpleasant stretch of the inner ring road and there are few pedestrians. Even so, there are no pedestrian crossings over the road so it can be a dangerous place to cross.

A popular pedestrian shortcut to Sainsbury's is through Monkgate Cloisters, between the historic Love Lane and St Maurice's Road.



Congestion is limited along Monkgate as traffic tends to travel along Foss Bank instead

Issues & Opportunities

Strengths

- The ramparts and ditch along Jewbury are very attractive. The landscape and trees need to be maintained to a high standard.
- The 18th and 19th century buildings and former County Hospital create an attractive townscape along Monkgate.

Weaknesses and opportunities

- The junction at the north eastern end of Monkgate is poorly designed and difficult for cyclists to use. Although it is proposed to exclude the roundabout from the Conservation Area, if the road layout was better designed, cyclists would be more encouraged to use Monkgate.

All the other opportunities are related to improving the junction outside Monk Bar. There are two sensitive sites next to the city walls, York Enterprise Academy and Monk Bar Garage. Both require planning statements to clarify acceptable development parameters. In principle, for existing sites within the walls' ditch, new development should be: of no greater footprint than the existing building; be of the highest quality design; and not be higher than the walls. More on the management of the walls can be found in the Management Strategy.

- The Academy is currently vacant and has been vandalised. A new use needs to be found to ensure its future maintenance. If the building is altered, its height should remain one storey. The visual appearance of the car park should be enhanced.











Sensitive development sites next to the city walls include the York Enterprise Academy (top) and Monk Bar Garage (above)

- The Garage is owned by the Council which is seeking to sell it. If it was to be redeveloped, any new building should be of very high quality design and not higher than one storey in this particular location.
- The corner of Monkgate and Lord Mayor's Walk needs to be improved and the Job Centre Plus is key to this.
 - i) Any future redevelopment of the Job Centre site should deliver a building of higher quality and lower height in order to enhance the view of the Minster;
 - ii) Any new buildings should front onto the former churchyard space to enliven it and could be accessed via that space;
 - iii) The former churchyard would benefit from redesign to create a more usable public space. In the first, there needs to be better maintenance of the bushes, shrubs and trees. In the long-term, with seating and planting and a stronger connection to the rear car park. A children's play area may also be a possibility if security from the road was improved.



The former churchyard of St Maurice's has headstones and semi mature trees


Existing

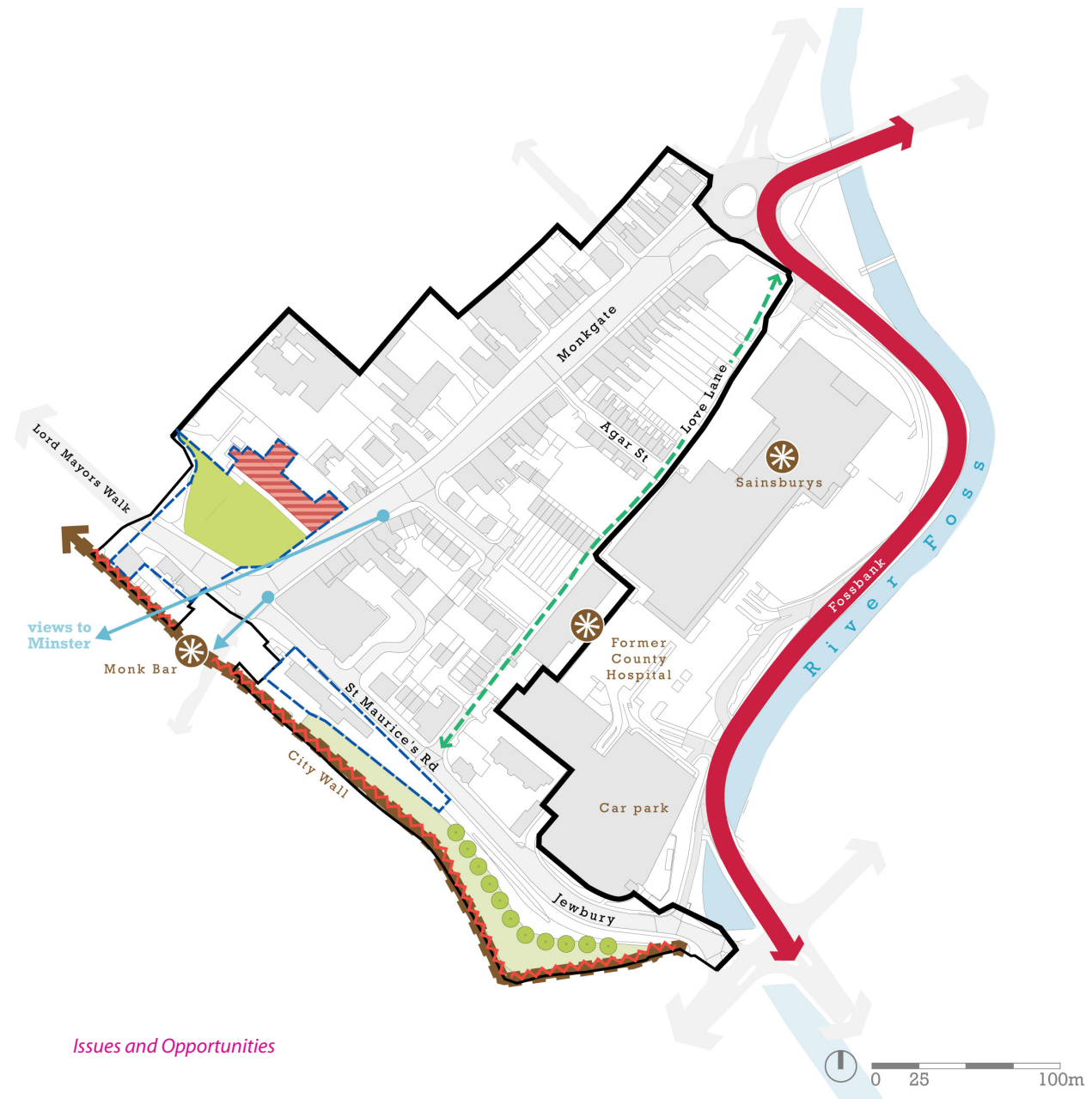
-  Significant street trees
-  City Wall defines movement patterns
-  Detractor
-  Former churchyard of St Maurice
-  High volume of traffic
-  Landmark
-  City Wall
-  Public footpath

Opportunities

-  Enhancement opportunities

Views

-  Fixed with focal point



Issues and Opportunities

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