

Urban Conservation and Design

Hessle Road Conservation Area Character Statement

Summary

Despite major road improvements and other alterations from the 1950's to the 1980's the central core of Hessle Road, from Marmaduke Street to Gillett Street, has retained much of its original character. Once the main route from Hull to Hessle, the street is relatively wide with a variety of predominantly three storey individual buildings and terraces many of which have a high level of architectural detail. The focus of Hessle Road is a grand circle marking the Boulevard junction which provides a generous tree lined open space and prominent setting for the Fisherman's memorial. Traditional building materials are predominantly red brick and slate, although a few terraces are formed in yellow brick and there are occasional examples of terracotta, faience, stone dressings, polished granite and local clay tiles. Closely connected with the growth in Hull's fishing industry, Hessle Road developed as an important shopping and social centre in the late nineteenth century for residents in the surrounding area and elsewhere. Although neglect and inappropriate alterations have detracted from the appearance of some properties, Hessle Road's use as a popular shopping street remains central to its character with most properties occupied by shopkeepers on the ground floor. Recent street improvements, made possible by the reduction in traffic, have enhanced the character of the conservation area and improved the quality of the pedestrian environment.

The area's main positive features can be summarised as:-

- the terraces and individual buildings which despite their rich variety of styles, architectural features and details, have a consistency of colour and materials and of scale.
- Streetscape features including landmarks; corner features; the enclosure of the street; the common building line; the height to width ratio; well terminated views and the structure and layout of streets and open space.
- Original shop frontages; shop fronts with some original detail and sensitively refurbished shop fronts.
- The quality of the recent street improvements including road alterations; paving; street furniture and tree planting.
- Open air stalls on shop forecourts.
- Its shopping and residential uses.

Historical Development

The land to the West of Hull, on which Hessle Road now stands, was an open and marshy area originally known as Myton Carr. The position of Division Road junction now marks the Anglo-Saxon boundary of Myton.

The first formal lane along the line of Hessle Road appeared after Myton Carr was enclosed at around 1800. It was known as Patrick Grounds Lane and ran westwards from the position of Great Thornton Street to where Coltman Street now stands. The land provided an improved thoroughfare from Hull to Hessle but both the land and the areas on either side were exclusively rural at this time.

The subsequent development of Hessle Road, along the line of Patrick Grounds Lane, and further westwards, was closely linked with the growth and expansion of the fishing industry beginning with the opening of Albert Dock in 1869. Hessle Road developed rapidly in the mid to late nineteenth century and by 1890 it had developed right up to the Dairycoates railway crossing. Simultaneously dense housing developed in the streets and courts on either side to house workers in the fishing industry and Hessle Road became a popular working class centre.

In the twenty years up to the first World War Hessle Road became established as one of the main roads of the city as the fish docks and railways continued to boom attracting more industry and many familiar shops moved into the area such as the Hull Co-operative Society in 1910.

Hessle Road reaches its peak as a major shopping centre in the 1920's and 30's. From the 1950's onwards the housing clearance programme resulted in the demolition of much of the workers housing then in poor condition, particularly in the area to the south of Hessle Road. As a result much of the local population was moved to new suburban council housing on the outskirts of the City. However, some new housing was erected in place of the demolished properties on the north side of Hessle Road and not all the older houses disappeared, the three 'river streets' of Tyne, Dee and Ribble at the north western end of the road remaining as notable examples of the former fishing communities housing. Also the development of a flyover in 1962 meant that much of the eastern section of Hessle Road was cleared away. Later, the construction of Clive Sullivan Way and the Brighton Street link road in the 1980's completed the major alterations which have affected Hessle Road by drawing off traffic and allowing street improvements to take place. Many of the original frontage buildings, however, remain west of Rawlings Way roundabout and the central core of Hessle Road has retained much of its original character.

Streetscape and Open Space

Once a major arterial route, there are many features which remain to express the importance of Hessle Road such as the difference in scale between the wide High Street and the narrow side streets which run from it, the imposing nature of the buildings which line it and the grand circle at its centre which marks the Boulevard junction.

The predominantly three storey buildings which front Hessle Road are mostly arranged in defined terraces - the most distinctive of which have front facing gables or dormers in the roof slope. The contrast between plainer terraces designed with full three storey elevations and those with gables or dormers provides a pleasing degree of variety and is an important characteristic of the road. However, because development was mainly carried out in terraces and over a limited time span, there are certain principles which have been adhered to which lend the frontage a uniformity of layout and finish. These principles can best be summarised as a use of vertical proportions for the building and elements within it; the common building line; an adequate amount and quality of detailing and the use of traditional materials.

The common built edge, with few gaps or setbacks, also helps to create an enclosed feel despite the width of the street. The sense of enclosure is reinforced by recent street tree planting which visually reduces the width of the street and by a bend in the road at the Division road junction which allows views from the east to be terminated by the well maintained and finely detailed Rayners public house.

Another factor in the character of the streetscape is the way in which buildings turn the corner at the entrance to most side streets. Of particular merit are those which incorporate corner shops with original features including entrances right on the corner and those with architectural corner features on the upper floors in the form of decorative parapets, gables, towers or plaques which may once have displayed shop signage.

Corner features located on the roof, in particular the towers on the Yorkshire Bank and the corner of Rosamond Street also create prominent landmark features. These features punctuate the skyline and help to give the area a sense of place.

Of great importance to Hessle Road's identity, however, is where the road widens to a large circus or circular open space at the Boulevard junction. This space is the focus of Hessle Road. The position of the Fisherman's Memorial in this prominent location lends the space a distinct identity and maximises its impact. Much of the character of the space also stems from its circular shape, the massing and detailing of the buildings, which form it, the wide

pedestrian areas which it encloses and its shady tree lined feels augmented by the recent tree planting carried out in the 1980's.

Recent street improvements, made possible by the construction of Clive Sullivan Way and subsequent reduction in traffic, and including pavement widening, street tree planting, repaving and seating have enhanced the character of the street and improved the quality of the pedestrian environment. The pavement is now comfortably wide and contributes to streetlife whilst the trees extend the tree lined character of the Boulevard circle, accentuate the enclosure of the street and contribute to a pleasant shopping environment. The uniformity in the paved materials and co-ordinated and well placed street furniture has also improved the pedestrian facilities and the setting of buildings.

Uses and Activities

In use as a local shopping centre in the late nineteenth century, Hessle Road is still a popular shopping street with most premises occupied by shopkeepers on the ground floor and few vacant units in evidence within the conservation area. Important to its continued success is the fact that shoppers are now drawn from a much wider area as the road has developed a city-wide reputation for bargains and inexpensive goods.

Characteristically, the shops have forecourts at the back edge of the pavement and in several places these have been utilised for extra display space by shopkeepers. This adds to the local flavour of the centre by creating a market atmosphere and providing interest and free entertainment. The attractions are the inexpensive goods that are on offer and the activity, noise, colour and vitality which the open stalls and shops generate. It is likely that pavement widening as part of recent street improvements has contributed to the decisions of shopkeepers to use forecourt space in this way.

Above the shops a substantial number of the upper floors of properties appear to be in use as residential flats. This mix of residential and commercial uses and the few public houses and other leisure uses ensures the street has a reasonable level of activity well into the evening as well as during the day.

Positive Buildings and Groups of Buildings

Although there are a few individual buildings which are particularly distinguished, the terrace blocks which mainly form Hessle Road, have a group value --with the variety of architectural features such as gables and dormers providing an important element of the road's character. One long terrace in particular at nos. 362-388 has distinctive Dutch style gables.

Also of importance to the character of the street is the quality and type of detailing found on many of the terraces which includes:-

- carved timber barge boards on front facing gables.
- ornate brick or plaster cornices
- decorative lintels in carved stone
- brick or stone pilasters which divide up individual buildings and add to the vertical emphasis of terraces

There are few surviving original shop frontages but perhaps the best example is Hird's the jewellers at no. 270. A greater number of shop frontages, however, have some remaining original details. The sensitive refurbishment or replacement of some of these shop fronts in recent years had helped to strengthen their importance to the character of the street. One terrace of shops has been particularly sensitively refurbished at nos. 422-436 where traditional designs and materials have been used to relate visually to the original pattern and character of the complete terrace.

The few individual buildings which by virtue of their location, unique features or materials and high level of detail are more prominent in the streetscape tend to be banks and public houses located on street corners and include:-

- Criterion public house
- Rayners public house
- Yorkshire Bank
- TSB Bank
- Barclays Bank

As well as these individual buildings and the traditional Victorian terraces there has also been a limited amount of later development and redevelopment. A particularly fine art deco building (nos. 283-287) which now houses the Wingfields store is perhaps the most noteworthy example - its decorative tiled and colonnaded frontage contrasting pleasingly with the ornate Yorkshire Bank situated adjacent to it.

Materials

The predominant building material is red brick but the more expensive cream/yellow brick is also in evidence in the street on the more prestigious buildings i.e. at the Boulevard circle and the Criterion public house. Both have red brick contrasts on the eaves and lintels. In the case of the Criterion this has been done in a particularly decorative fashion with red brick arranged at the cornice to create a chequerboard pattern and used in bands to great effect.

Some departures from brick on the more prominent individual buildings are notable. They include:-

- The Yorkshire Bank faced in part with terracotta dressings and faience at ground floor level.
- The TSB has ashlar dressings and ornamentation.
- Rayners public house faced in red and black polished granite at ground floor level.
- The art deco building (nos. 283-283) faced with white faience tiles.
- Barclays Bank has terracotta dressings and faience at ground floor level.

There is evidence that the majority of buildings in the street were originally roofed with Welsh slate rather than the locally made clay tiles - although there are examples of this roofing material of some terraces - most notably on nos. 266-298.

Timber is the characteristic materials used in the street for bay windows, barge boards and decorative details. The barge boards on front facing gables are often particularly decorative and finely carved.

There is evidence that the street pavement was once paved with York Stone due to its existence on some shop forecourts. However, the street has now been comprehensively repaved with red clay paviors and mixed buff and plain concrete slabs giving a natural effect which is an acceptable alternative to more traditional materials. The paving is well laid and the colours complement those of the adjacent buildings giving the street a simple uniformity. In addition, street furniture including seating and litter bins of an appropriate style have been well integrated into the scheme.

Neutral Elements

The recent St. Barnabas Court residential development occupies the south east corner of the Boulevard circle on the site for St. Barnabas church. Complementary in style and detailing the building does not conflict with the character of the more traditional buildings in the surrounding area and its position and massing maintains the completeness of the Boulevard circle.

Negative Elements

In some places the street has a run down appearance due to the poor repair of some of the buildings including settlement damage and missing or crumbling details such as cornice tiles etc. The worst cases of neglect are generally to be found where the upper floors of properties are not in use or are underused.

In other cases refurbishment or maintenance works have led to the removal of original details and materials such as carved timber barge boards, decorative cornices and particularly original roofing materials (cheaper concrete tiles often replacing slate or local clay tiles). This type of work undermines the character of the conservation area by removing those elements which make a terrace special and distinct from another as well as degrading the quality of individual buildings.

In the evening when shops and offices close, and throughout the night, the character of the conservation area is altered for the worse by the widespread use of roller shutters. This type of security treatment creates dead frontages and a hostile environment because it excludes window shopping and reduces or excludes light from the shops falling onto the street. In addition shutters are often inappropriately fitted to frontages leaving protruding shutter boxes which have a permanent detrimental impact on the frontage and streetscape.

In other places weak edges occasionally occur due to gaps in the frontage or blank frontages which are detrimental to the character of the street because they reduce the sense of enclosure and do not generate pedestrian activity. The worst examples include:

- The corner of Harrow Street where the demolition of a building has exposed an unsightly side gable.
- A blank brick wall near the corner of Flinton Street (the edge of a warehouse). Although not in the conservation area it has a detrimental effect on it by creating a dead area.
- A factory/cold store set back from the street opposite the Criterion public house. Again, this is not the conservation area but detrimental to it because it creates a dead area and weakens the sense of enclosure although this is offset to some extent by the line of street trees planted in front of it.

Modern replacement windows including standard uPVC designs and windows of different dimensions or style from the original i.e. the replacement of bay windows with modern picture windows or even the removal and bricking up of all upper floor windows is in evidence in the street and weakens the character and individually of terrace blocks.

A significant number of properties within terraces have been rendered, painted or tiled which weakens the unifying effect of the traditional materials.

The replacement of traditional shop frontages as well as those with some original details with frontages of an inappropriate design also weakens the character and level of interest in the street. Inappropriate designs are those which are clearly constructed from non-traditional materials, have modern features and proportions such as box fascias and extend over more than one individual building within a terrace thus not respecting the proportions and vertical emphasis of the building.

The construction of a new road and flyover has meant that views into town from Hessle Road and at the western end are open. This is, however, partly mitigated by a bend in the road which means that at certain points the road is visually enclosed by Rayners public house. The view alongside streets particularly on the southside of the street are also poor where they are either not terminated or terminated poorly by light industrial units or factories.

Approved by the Planning & Design Committee, 10th September, 1997