

## **LYTHAM DESIGN AND REGENERATION ISSUES**

### **MEETING ARRANGED FOR WARD COUNCILLORS WHOSE AREAS TAKE IN THE COMMERCIAL CENTRE OF LYTHAM**

Meeting held on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at the Town Hall

Present Councillors Ashton, Fradley, Thomas and Bamforth (via video link)

Apologies from Councillors Lloyd and Anthony

Officers: Paul Drinnan, Catherine Kitching

1. The meeting had been arranged in view of a number of issues that had been identified in Lytham Town Centre that potentially involve a number of agencies, the Borough and County Council's and the business community.
2. The meeting was informal and took the form of a number of slides being presented of the issues considered relevant by the officers present as a basis for the sharing of knowledge and as a framework for discussion.
3. Discussions included specific problem areas identified but also opportunities and a reminder of some of the ideas that had previously been discussed including those which are contained within approved strategies and documents of the Borough Council.
4. There were no direct resolutions or recommendations made as this was an informal discussion. However, it was considered appropriate for a resume to be prepared that identified some of the key issues and potential ways of moving the particular matter(s) forward.
5. The issues under discussion are summarised as a discussion document and prompts for further exploration.

### **CLIFTON STREET**

The discussion with regards to Clifton Street was based around a number of photographs presented that highlighted issues raised by officers, councillors, members of the public, the business community and County Council. These can be summarised as follows.

#### **Environmental Quality**

There is an overall consensus that Lytham retains a particular character and quality and that its economic fortunes, popularity and place-making qualities are inter-linked. The town centre is included within a large conservation area in recognition of its architectural and historic interest. In the last 20 years, it has witnessed some improvement and enhancement works, notable examples being the pedestrianisation of Clifton Square and the extension of Pleasant Street car park.

Improvements to pavements and forecourts, enhanced street furniture including street lighting and the re-instatement of verandas have been undertaken, in addition to works to the Market Square. In preparation of for the 2012 Open, an enhancement scheme was implemented around the Station and Sparrow Park. The Town Centre has seen considerable private sector investment including Booths, which led directly to the environmental improvement scheme to Station Road funded by way of a commuted Section 106 contribution.

However, now many years on from the first enhancement works it would seem an appropriate time to have a review of the town centre environment. To maintain a competitive edge, it is important that

town centres remain accessible and attractive in both the offer and environmental quality and continually adapt and improve.

The Lytham in Bloom Group implement exemplary schemes to enhance the environment of the town including floral displays. The development of the former Mussel Tanks by the Lytham St. Annes Civic Society is another example. These initiatives are complimented by other initiatives and high quality grounds maintenance by Fylde Council. It is important that this high quality input forms part of an overall approach to place making and its on-going management.

### **Present position**

It may be an appropriate time, therefore, to work towards a short to medium term plan for Lytham Town centre, perhaps in the same way as that undertaken in St. Annes, Ansdell and Kirkham. This approach is based around an identified plan of action accompanied by a phased method of delivery. Of course, the physical environment is one part of attracting the visitor but nonetheless a very important one. The events and festivals held in town are a huge attraction and draw in visitors from a wide catchment area. It is important that the visitor is impressed with the quality of place and that the reputation of the town becomes more widespread.

### **Some of the relevant issues are considered to be:**

#### ***Paved areas***

Some 20 years ago, an environmental improvement scheme to part of the town centre, notably Clifton Square and Clifton Street was implemented using the services of an adult training scheme. This proposal had been promoted by the Lytham St. Annes Civic Society and Fylde Council. It was very cost effective due to low labour overheads. However, the quality of the laying of the paving material, whilst representing a significant improvement, was variable in quality. Some 20 years on the block paving is looking somewhat dated and 'patchy' in parts. In developing the scheme, not all of the building owners participated, with some forecourts in particular, being retained in tarmac or flags in what now appears as a somewhat haphazard arrangement. This 'historic' approach is somewhat different to the more recent practice of using a restricted range of materials for specific purposes such that these schemes appear as being consistent and coordinated.

One scheme that was implemented more recently in Lytham, was the public realm improvements at Station Road, as part of the Booths development. Section 106 contributions were secured to implement a paving and lighting scheme at a cost of some £120,000. This resulted in a more discernible and coordinated approach to design. The Booths development and the enhancement works have revitalised Station Road, which now enjoys 100% occupancy rates and a more attractive street scene character. It is known that the local traders refer to this part of town as 'The Windmill Quarter'.

Outside of parts of Clifton Street, and more recently Station Road, there is no consistency of approach or a specific palette of materials specified for the town centre. Many pavements remain surfaced in tarmac with uncoordinated patching presenting an overall appearance that is not befitting of Lytham. If a scheme was drawn together, it would probably suggest a palette of materials to be specified and agreed with the long term objective of providing a coordinated approach to pavement and forecourt material specification, also covering future management and maintenance.

## ***Trees***

Without question, tree cover in Lytham is a fundamental part of its character and appearance. Many preservation orders protect them from felling and unsympathetic maintenance. The town centre, notably Clifton Street, contains extensive tree specimens that are again, definitive of its overall character.

Back in the late 1980's, Dutch Elm Disease was prevalent in the area, which resulted in the unfortunate but necessary felling of trees on Clifton Street where the species predominated. In order to replace those lost with trees that would have an impact in the short term, London Planes were specified, which after a short time had the desired effect. However, the choice of this tree species in a relatively narrow shopping street with a modest building line frontage has resulted in large broad leaf trees, which make a significant visual contribution but equally have created a series of problems.

These particular problems include:

- The broad leaf trees creating management problems due to their rate of growth such that there are continual requests for pruning and even removal.
- Excessive shading to forecourts and within premises, again resulting in requests to significantly prune.
- Overhang into the carriageway creating a problem for larger vehicles including buses.
- Root systems creating pavement 'heave', dislodging parts of footways and forecourts, creating a potential hazard. The trees are largely on private forecourts where litigation has taken place against owners resulting in requests for permission to fell.
- Clutter and uncoordinated 'design' solutions around the base of trees to prevent potential trips and falls to reduce the risk of litigation and insurance issues.

A broad survey of the trees along Clifton Street has been undertaken. It is the case that there are serious issues with some of the trees, both with respect to their size, but particularly their root systems. In a few cases, best arboriculture practice, in combination with an assessment of safety issues, leads to the conclusion that they should be removed. This would prove unpopular, certainly in the absence of any immediate strategy to replace them with suitable species of an appropriate size.

It is suggested that an in depth study of the trees be commissioned (this can be done in house) in the near future to look at options for the trees, both individually and collectively, to ascertain what options there might be. This might include initial removal in the worst cases and other perhaps more creative solutions, such as the introduction of larger tree pit surrounds with a bound gravel surface to accommodate root spread, in others. However, this would need to be done as part of a broader consideration of paving systems and solutions for the longer term so as to achieve a consistency of approach. It might be appropriate also to produce a collective maintenance and management plan for the trees to overcome the present ad hoc approach to dealing with requests for pruning.

A palette of Lytham Tree types suitable for particular locations would also be worthy of consideration.

## ***Street Furniture***

This is the broad term given to signage, lighting, seating, bollards, bins, guard rails etc. that has a functional and sometimes decorative presence in the street scene. There is little coordination in this respect and the multi-agency approach to providing statutory signage and amenity features, including seating are not coordinated. The work of the In Bloom Group incorporates various features and utilises structures that should be coordinated in the broadest sense. The display of ad hoc signage and A

Boards on forecourts and along the footway presents a cluttered appearance as they compete for attention. These types of advertisements also present a hazard to pedestrians.

Street lighting is ad hoc in the extreme apart from where a coordinated scheme has been drawn together. This includes schemes that were carried out many years ago around part of Market Place, Queen Street and Clifton Street. In some cases maintenance is desperately needed, particularly re-painting. The Station Road scheme – referenced earlier - has used a heritage style fitting considered to be appropriate to the historic character of Lytham.

As part of any overall design approach the potential for a ‘design code’, as has been adopted in other locations, should be considered. This would specify appropriate items of street furniture, colour coordination, type, and consider maintenance issues associated with them. A street lighting strategy for the town centre is essential and the potential for replacing the street lighting along the roadway of East and West Beach is considered somewhat of a priority. A business directory, possibly of a digital format/display could be located appropriately, which would identify retail/food and beverage and other businesses throughout the town centre.

### ***Public Realm Coordination***

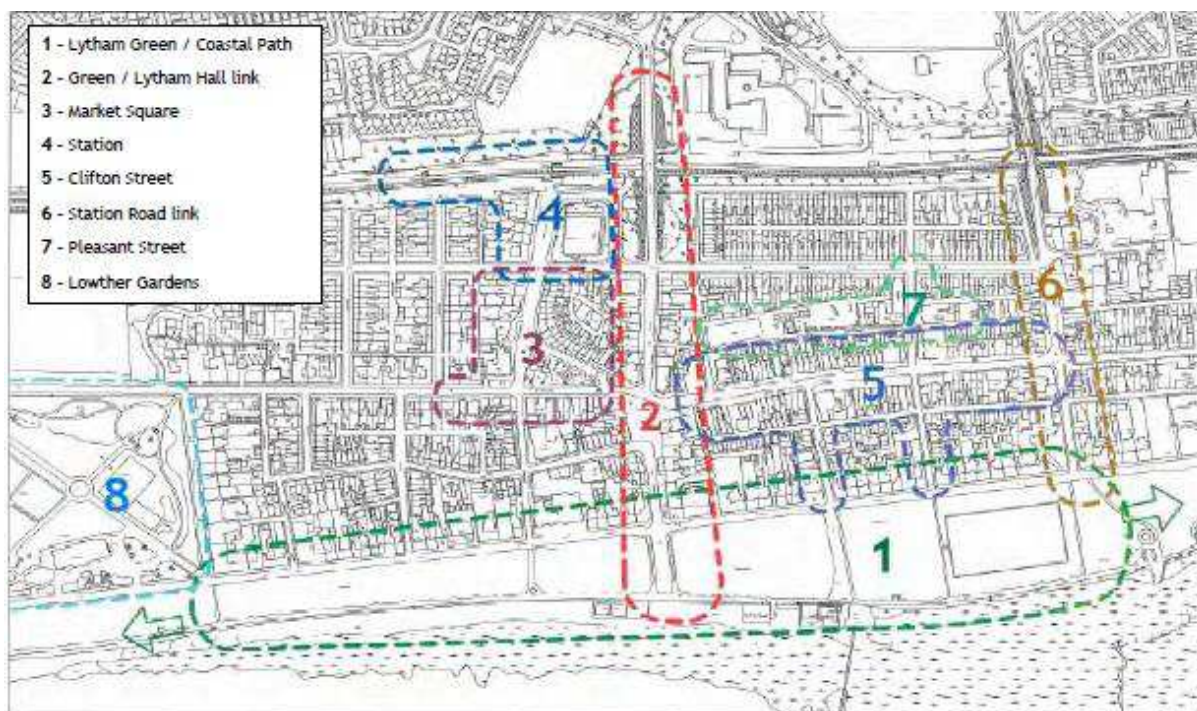
The items mentioned in this report, whilst identified separately for ease of description and discussion, obviously have an interplay and should be considered together as being complimentary. As a consequence, choices about appropriate paving materials, trees, landscaping and street furniture should be considered on a town centre wide basis in the form of an agreed design code and applied to parts of the public realm as improvements are made. This overview would then readily inform the proposition of a phased series of projects.

## **POTENTIAL PROJECTS**

A small number of strategies and other documents have been prepared over the last few years that relate specifically to Lytham Town Centre. This document is primarily concerned with the commercial centre of town although inevitably some schemes do extend beyond its defined limits.

### **The Lytham Mosaic**

The 2020 Vision Document proposed the preparation of an integrated design plan for Lytham which essentially is based around a series of zones that have a particular character, but are of course interrelated. This follows the approach in St. Annes through the creation of a ‘design mosaic’. Within this plan, eight discreet character zones were identified. These are shown on the plan below. The idea would be that each of these zones would have its own design plan, although as these areas are interlinked, there would be common themes such as the approach to planting, paving, lighting and building design, as discussed earlier in this report. In respect of the existing quality of the environment, this is somewhat ‘patchy’ and this approach would give the opportunity to review these zones on a comprehensive basis. The Zones relate primarily to the commercial core of the town.



*The above plan shows Lytham: Design Mosaic*

### **Lytham Green and Hall Link**

Reference to the plan, Zone 2 (above), relates to an initiative identified as the Green-Hall link. As the title suggests, the concept is one of enhancing the quality of the environment and related experience between the two strategic facilities/places. Since the more recent advent of enhanced opportunities for the general public to use Lytham Hall Park and the Hall itself, one of the great virtues of the site is its very close relationship to the town centre. This close relationship (with the Station in between), presents great opportunities for enhancing the incidence of linked trips between the two, increasing footfall with the obvious commercial benefits this might bring. Zone 2, as illustrated on the map, demonstrates the clear link as a linear route between the Hall, Station, Park Street, Square/Clifton Street and Green.

In preparation for the 2012 Open, a scheme for the enhancement of Sparrow Park and the Station Approach (creating a small plaza) was implemented, also refurbishing the Clifton Memorial and providing for its illumination.

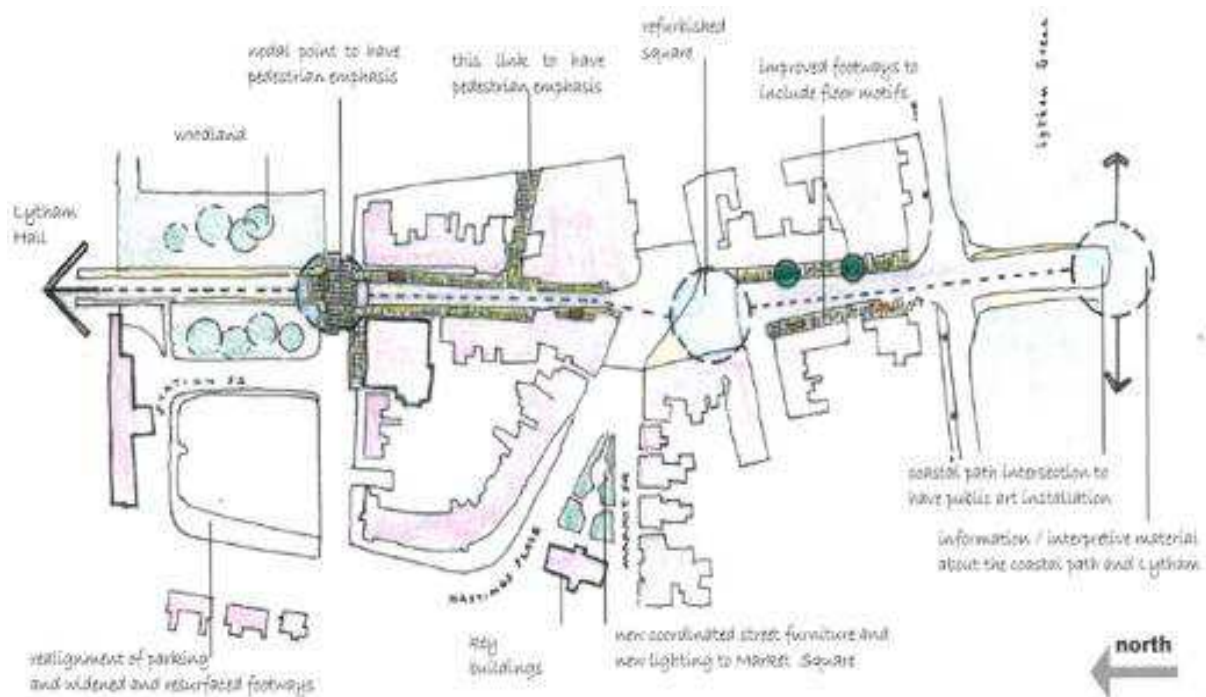
Clifton Square was pedestrianised many years earlier and lies at the important intersection of Clifton Street and Market Square and is the focus for community activities and activities.





*Clifton Square with its pedestrianised area linking Clifton Street with Market Square. This also illustrates the importance of this space as an integral part of Zone 2 and the potential to enhance this link.*

The concept plan (below) included within the 2020 Vision document, outlines some potential design interventions that could be used to provide a themed link between the Green and the Hall. These include public art, new lighting with banner arms, new paving with an incorporated art trail, enhancements to Robin Park, improved access arrangements to the Hall entrance, the better revealing of the listed gatehouses by selective tree removal and the illumination of these listed structures.







*Figure 1. Park Street, part of the link. Poor surfacing outside the commercial frontage underneath the traditional verandah and right, further along the street with poor quality surfacing and street furniture including unsympathetic lighting.*

*Figure 2. Upper Row. Enhancements undertaken in 2012 in connection with the hosting of The Open to Sparrow Park and the formation of a plaza at the entrance to Lytham Railway Station.*



*Figure 3, Above. View along Ballam Road towards the listed gatehouses at the entrance to Lytham Hall Park. The potential for some judicious tree clearance around the entrance would reveal the listed gatehouses that could be illuminated as a focal point along the road terminating the impressive visual axis.*

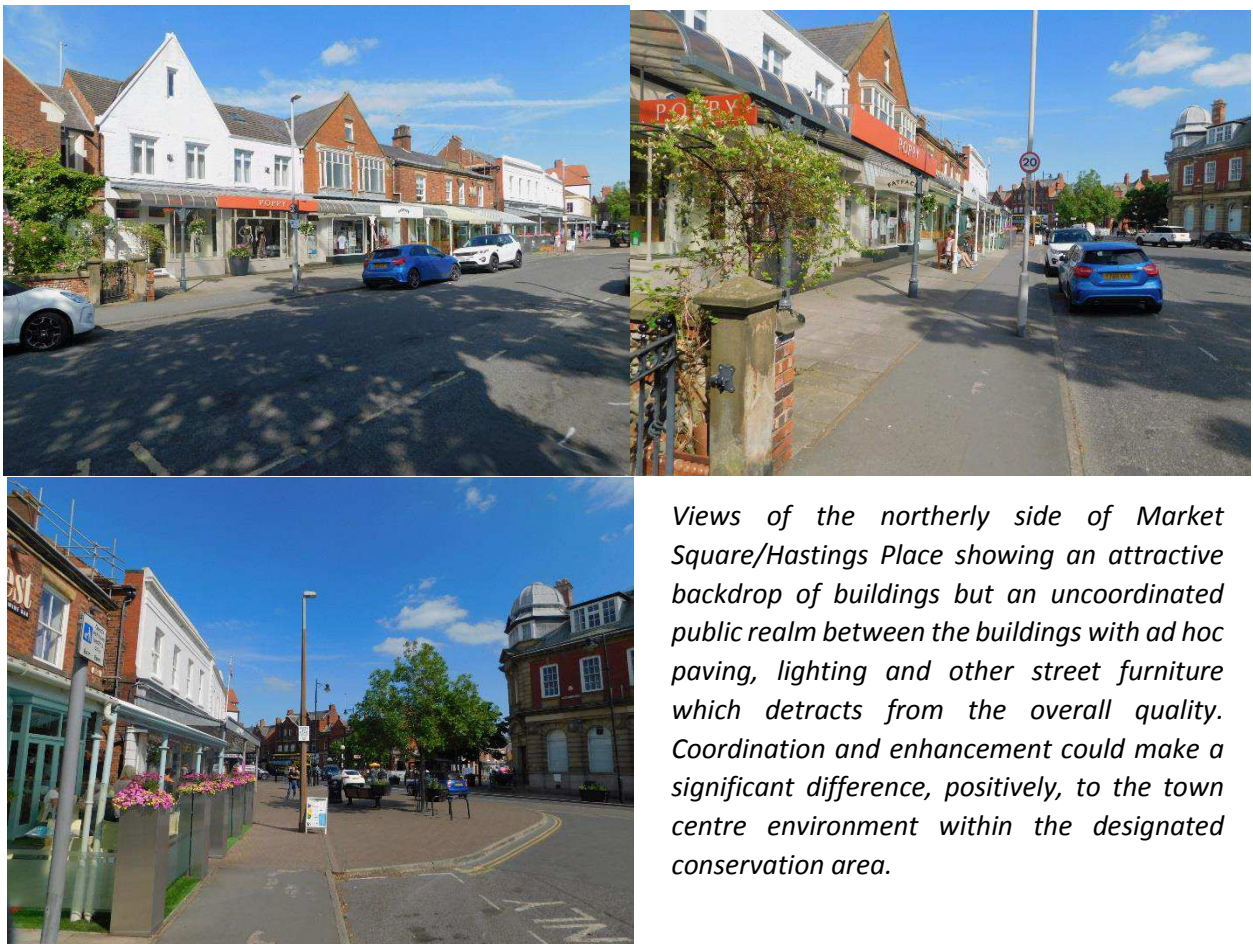


## Market Square and Hastings Place

This is the prominent location at the centre of town centred on the listed 'Italianate' Market Hall. Some enhancement works have been implemented several years ago with a refurbishment of the memorial garden and outer railing. The building is an undoubted centrepiece of the town. Its illumination would be a positive addition to the evening economy of the town centre.

The paving and street furniture around the Market Square is ad hoc and disjointed and requires a comprehensive renewal scheme. Some research has been undertaken and discussions held with Lancashire County Council. The historic street lighting design of Lytham can be traced back to the swan neck style and their removal over the years has been met with consternation by many members of the public.

A new lighting scheme could be designed around the use of this type of feature.



*Views of the northerly side of Market Square/Hastings Place showing an attractive backdrop of buildings but an uncoordinated public realm between the buildings with ad hoc paving, lighting and other street furniture which detracts from the overall quality. Coordination and enhancement could make a significant difference, positively, to the town centre environment within the designated conservation area.*

In common with other parts of the town centre, the public realm in this location does not benefit from a coordinated design code, which would stipulate a particular approach to design. This would ordinarily cover paving, lighting, colour choices, street furniture in general and possibly extend to dealing with proposed alterations to buildings. This would include the policy with regards to forward extensions adopted by Planning Committee and the adopted Windows and architectural Joinery SPD.



This part of the town centre can benefit from funding that is available from the Section 106 commuted payments in connection with town centre residential developments close by, discussed later in the report.



*A modern interpretation of the swan neck bracket and lantern that could be used for Lytham to provide for a coordinated, attractive unit with a better light source and white LED lighting for improved colour rendition.*



*Left. The original approach to Lytham Hall along Hastings Place, which is a wide open highway dominating the character of the locality. It would be possible to narrow the carriageway and provide a tree lined approach or more inventively, the possibility of incorporating a line of trees beyond Westby Street in the centre of the road to subdivide the space and effectively create two visually subservient parking courts allowing access to the car park. The roadway in front of the Station Tavern could be pedestrianised or partially so. Right, ad hoc replacement street lighting.*

### **Clifton Street**

As discussed at length in the report, the principal commercial street of Lytham has benefited from improvement works over a number of years. However, it is known that there are a number of issues that require attention. One of the principal ones is the impact of tree growth on the paved area and the condition of forecourts.

There are a number of options that are available. These would range from its complete refurbishment, probably over a number of years and most likely on the basis of a series of phased improvements, following the Ansdell/St. Annes/Kirkham model. There is no doubt that the 'tree issue' requires a comprehensive coordinated plan of action since this is an on-going problem. Whilst there may well be a need for some elements of immediate intervention, , the logical course of action would be one of a staged approach, addressing some immediate issues but bringing about a comprehensive public realm strategy, based on the 'Design Mosaic' principle referred to earlier in this discussion paper.

Some of the issues relating to the public realm of Clifton Street are shown in the illustrations below.



*Above.*

*During the 1980's a large number of elm trees were removed and replaced by London Planes. Whilst these have had a significant impact and have ensured that Clifton Street maintains its tree lined character the converse issue is the problem of pavement heave, spacing, shadowing and maintenance issues.*



*Above*

*To deal with the issue of pavement heave, some of the adjoining property owners have attempted to reduce the hazard by employing a number of ways of 'covering up' the problem, including rockery,*



*seating units, plant pots, adverts etc. which presents a cluttered and uncoordinated appearance. The block paving was installed some 20 or so years ago and is now looking jaded. In addition, at the time, the paving was not laid to the geometric standards that would be specified today and looks somewhat disjointed and some of the forecourts remain surfaced in tarmacadam.*



*Above: Unsympathetic reinstatement to both the private forecourts and the adopted footways totally detracts for the street scene character. Right, potential solution to tree pit issue with resin gravel*



*Above : The footways and paved areas adjoining Clifton Street and sections within it have not been the subject of enhancement and offer a poor visual quality within these prominent areas.*





*Above : The listed cobble pavements on Bath Street are deteriorating and have been the subject of damage and very poor reinstatement. Cast iron bollards are deteriorating and have not been maintained by simply painting them.*



*Above : The backdrop buildings of Lytham are a key element in creating its overall character. It is essential that they are maintained as historic artefacts and that any alterations are carried out in a sympathetic manner. To the left, poorly related signage and the installation of UPVC windows which require planning permission are in contrast to the properties to the right of the right hand photo, which show the elegance and design of the original sash windows and a more sympathetic replacement. The Council does have a policy on window replacements in conservation areas but some building owners replace them in the mistaken belief that planning permission is not required.*

Lytham Conservation Area does not presently have an appraisal or management plan, which is actually a statutory requirement. It is suggested that this be undertaken as soon as practicable. Within it a design code for alterations, windows and other policy requirements should be included to protect the long term character and appearance of the area.

### **The Beach lighting**

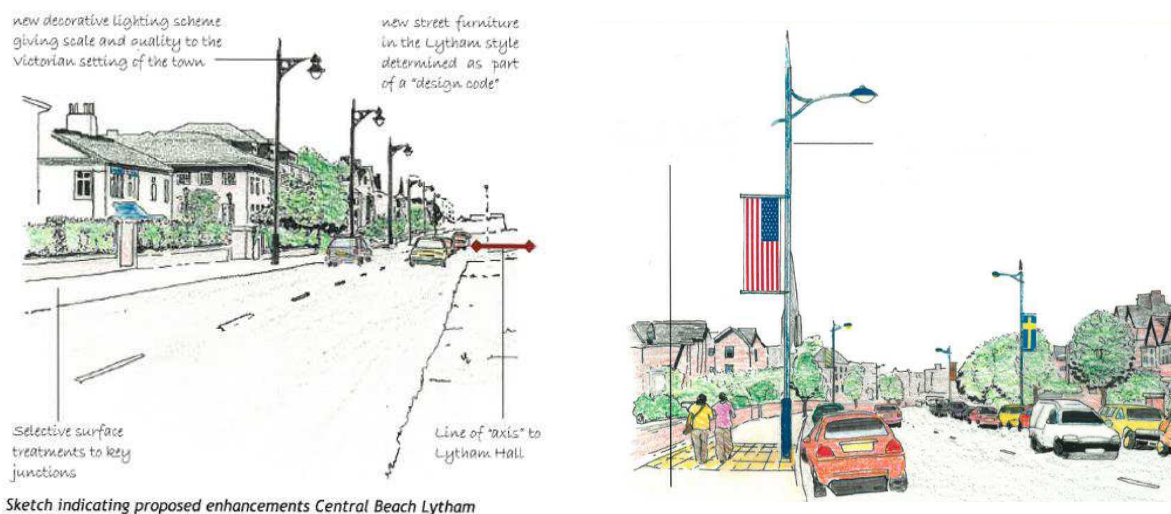
East and West Beach form one of the principal arterial routes of the Borough, part of the coast road and providing the setting for the Green and the frontage buildings which face it. The areas is within the designated conservation area and contains a number of listed buildings. The area is highly

prominent and sets the scene for a number of key events attracting thousands of visitors. The design, maintenance and management is obviously a key issue.

The street lighting scheme is of poor visual quality but is prominent due to the height and conspicuous nature of the columns. One slight virtue is the fact that they are one sided and as a result do not intrude into the open nature of the Green environment. Some preliminary discussion have taken place with LCC about a possible replacement scheme. The length of both East and West Beach is such that a replacement scheme would be relatively costly, but could be implemented in a number of phases. A new scheme would obviously be designed to be sympathetic to the conservation area setting and could be used, for example, to display banner arms (the current scheme would not allow for this due to structural issues), particularly when seasonal or national events were to take place. This could add colour and vibrancy to the character of the Green environment.



*Above : The prominent lighting on The Green is an adaption of columns originally placed in situ in the 1960's but have been adapted in the 1980's and later to fit LED fixtures. The steel sleeves are unsightly and weathered. Overall the columns are an intrusive feature of the conservation area and Green environment.*



*Above : Sketch contained within the Lytham St Annes 2020 Vision document showing the potential impact of new lighting and right a sketch of elsewhere indicating the potential attractive visual impact of well- designed and fitted banners on columns.*

### **Key building illumination**

To add to the evening economy the potential for up lighting buildings would add to the character of the town centre. The Windmill is the obvious example and other key buildings including the Market Hall, former banks, Library, and churches – key public buildings would help reveal and display their significance and architectural qualities within the general townscape.

### **Signage and Orientation**

There are some examples of signage around the town centre including display boards and finger post signs, but these are generally ad hoc and not consistent in relation to their overall design and locations. A 'way marking' plan for the town centre would be a positive addition and assist visitors orientate their way around town.

### **Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

As discussed in this report the preparation of an appraisal and management plan for the conservation area is a requirement. This has never been undertaken although discussed at some length. As part of the Councils adopted Heritage Strategy, one of the key actions is the preparation of these studies for all of the conservation areas within the Borough.

The appraisals would include policies to protect and importantly enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area as well as including policies for the public realm including building conservation. To this end the work undertaken and discussed in this report can be regarded as part of that process.

### **Funding**

The investment in town centres has been a worthy aspect of the Council's strategies and policies over a number of years. Such funding has been drawn in through an array of means including significant grants from a number of external bodies, the Council itself and by way of Section 106 contributions. Within the present Council's budgets some £130,000 is available for general environmental enhancements as part of the Lytham Hall Link/ Market Square – secured from the Hastings Point development. A further £32,500 is the initial payment due from the 'AEGON' sheltered housing scheme although its release is timed to the phasing of the development. A further potential contribution might well be considered by the Council to take forward improvements to Clifton Street, which would be the subject of a capital bid.

### **Conclusions**

Lytham remains an attractive coastal town being of historic importance. Its visitor economy is an essential aspect of its vitality and viability. However, in order for the town to remain competitive and economically vibrant, it is essential, as it is with all destinations, for it to be well maintained with progressive stewardship an essential element of this approach. The role of the voluntary groups e.g. Lytham in Bloom is to be applauded and the role played by the hosting of events is commendable. However, the underlying infrastructure of buildings and spaces and their maintenance and management is an essential aspect of making and maintaining attractive places. The discussion document in general recognises the high quality of maintenance in parks and open spaces and in the context of many buildings but equally, points to some issues within the town centre that detract from



its overall character and probably prevents it from achieving its full potential and retaining its obvious reputation.

The options for intervention can be numerous from a 'light touch' approach, dealing with specific issues that arise; an example being the tree problem on Clifton Street. Alternatively, a more comprehensive longer term approach, based around the preparation of an overall plan relating to the range of issues and solutions to be dealt with on a phased basis, might offer a more considered and comprehensive way forward.

A further discussion could follow a consideration of issues raised within this report.

PD 9/18