

Matlock Bank

Conservation Area Appraisal

7. Analysis of Character



ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

Preamble

This section looks in detail at the relationship between the structures and spaces, following a circuit of the major routes within the conservation area. Figure 8 is annotated with a series of symbols that represent the main elements of the townscape. The spaces marked on this map are public, and it does not reflect the richness of open spaces and planting provided by many private gardens. Similarly only the prominent landmark buildings visible from the public realm are highlighted, as many impressive buildings are largely hidden from the street. Views and glimpses marked on the map have been selected as representative of the tremendous wealth of views from many places within the conservation area.

The omission of any particular building, feature, view or space within this appraisal should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Summary of important features of the townscape

- ... Generally small massing of buildings providing frequent glimpses across the Derwent Valley
- ... Landmark quality of large former hydros
- ... Large private gardens to former hydros and the grandest houses
- ... Tree cover providing screening and sculptural quality, Scots pines in particular
- ... Key public open spaces
- ... Informal wooded areas
- ... Roofscapes visible from above
- ... Landmark features visible from above (particularly large chimneys & mansard roofs)
- ... Contrast between wide, open junctions and enclosed character of connecting roads
- ... Hierarchy of roads from main roads (generally more or less north-south routes) down to cul-de-sacs and semi-private side roads (often running east-west)
- ... Narrow, steep footpaths and stepped routes, crossing the contours, especially where stone setted

Bank Road and Rutland Street

Bank Road forms the central spine of the Conservation Area, with County Hall, the former Smedley's Hydro, dominating the centre of the area. Because it is a main artery, its frontages and streetscape are of particular importance in the character of the conservation area. On entering the conservation area from Crown Square the Town Hall dominates, with its balconies overlooking the corner of Bank Road and Imperial Road. Above this, spires and gables of the churches and chapels and other large buildings punctuate the street and create a varied roofline, particularly on the eastern side of the road. Between the larger public buildings, much of Bank Road is bounded by terraces, with rooflines broken up by the gradient as plots step up the hill. The street is lined with low level stone boundary walls, behind which houses have small front gardens.



Terraced houses rising up the west side of Bank Road

The gently curved alignment of a row of terraces with ground floor shop windows (50-72 evens), combined with a widening of the road at this point, makes these properties particularly noticeable. On the opposite side of the road, 63 Bank Road, formerly Yewtree House, stands out as a rare older eighteenth century property, set back from the road, in contrast to the uniform street frontages of terraces on this road.

The junction with Smedley Street is highlighted by the towering prominence of County Hall wrapping around the corner, and straddling onto the northern side of Smedley Street, connected by its two double-height bridges. The sheer height of the buildings on either side creates a very strong sense of enclosure to this part of Smedley Street, increased by the contrasting openness at the road intersection.

The enclosure of Smedley Street between the tall buildings of County Hall on either side (right) and at the junction with Smedley Street East, Bank Road and Rutland Street (below)



On opposite corners of this junction are buildings of very different character, but all once served users of the hydropathic industry. On the one side of the junction is County Hall and adjacent shops bearing intricate stone carved details, and the other is the Gate Inn, with the simple & unpretentious outbuildings to the rear. The car park / land at the rear is thought to have once been part of the livery yard.

County Hall itself is of huge muscular proportions. It is hard to find a satisfactory vantage point from close up to appreciate the architectural variety and significance in one view, the classic panorama being from the other side of the valley.



County Hall's formidable west elevation

There are, however, clearly points from within its own site which were intended as viewing places, such as through the avenue of trees which survive to the south west, between more modern blocks, and from the terraced lawn to the south.



County Hall, viewed from the west through an avenue of trees



County Hall and the Winter Garden viewed from the terraced garden below

A particular characteristic of the conservation area is the network of footpaths running down the steep slope taking the shortest routes. This site is connected via a concessionary footpath to Edge Road far below, leading past the backs of gardens and wooded area to what is now the car park.



Concessionary footpath leading from Edge Road up to the car park at County Hall

Bank Road becomes Rutland Street north of the Smedley Street junction, and from here it is Rutland Court (former Matlock House Hydro), which dominates the skyline above. The former Elmtree Hydro is just to the north, forming a cluster of larger buildings along this stretch of the eastern side.



View downhill from Rutland Street, showing part of County Hall including the striking chimney. To the left are buildings at the rear of The Gate.



View up the hill from Bank Road towards Rutland Street, with Rutland Court, the former Matlock House Hydro, visible in the distance

Several quiet residential roads off Rutland Road run east-west along the contour of the hillside. Hopewell Road runs parallel to the northern block of County Hall, part of the original Smedley's Hydro, including a former water tower. Opposite this are a number of buildings dating from the late nineteenth century, including a row of terraces marked as 'Hopewell Terraces' on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1899. These are an example of a number of early named terraces which first appeared relatively isolated, now mixed with later infill. Another such example is 'Greenhill Terrace' (14-30 Rutland Street), even earlier, appearing on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 which still retains a sense of relative isolation on an unadopted section of road off Rutland Street. Upper Greenhill Gardens to the north of this terrace was developed on the former grounds of Matlock Bank Hydro.



14-30 Rutland Street, a terraced row off the main Rutland Street

Rutland Avenue running more or less parallel, further north, is tucked away, and has housing from a range of periods. Still further north, Wellfield

hosts several buildings of architectural and historic significance, most notably Wellfield Cottage, the only pre-hydro building in the conservation area which is a listed building, and Wellfield House, a former hydro, just visible within a large garden. In addition to these, 7-11 Wellfield Court, a long building with ornamental finial to the gable, and an interesting terraced row opposite known as 'Oldham Villas', together create a varied and interesting route.



7-11 Wellfield Court

The stone setted pavement outside Oldham Villas is an important example of historic streetscape, one of several remaining to older terraced rows. At the eastern end of Wellfield the route continues as a footpath linking through to Chesterfield Road. A north-south pedestrian route also meets at Wellfield, linking it to Wellington Street to the north, and southwards past the end of Rutland Avenue and down to Smedley Street East.

The Matlock Green Garage, comprised of former tram depot buildings, is a key focal point at the top of Rutland Street, on the corner with Wellington Street. From this point Rockside is visible



Rockside from below, viewed from near the junction between Wellington Street and Rutland Avenue

dramatically towering above. Bank Road and Rutland Street offer magnificent views across the valley, from almost any point on these steep roads.



View of Ribber Castle from Rutland Street with Rutland Court in the foreground

New Street and Henry Avenue

Roads off to the south-east of Bank Road and Rutland Street tend to be quieter, short residential cul-de-sacs or, at the lower end of Bank Road, links through to New Street. The steep, narrow and twisting nature of New Street provides interesting views both up and down the hill with varying details to stone terraces and occasional larger properties. The former hydros and their contemporary larger buildings, such as Derbyshire Records Office (Bank House) and Golding House, stand out amongst the terraces. Oak Road continues to the east of New Street, as an untarmaced, unadopted road, demonstrating a hierarchy of roads from the larger, busy main roads, down to small, semi-private roads.

The streets in this area are mainly residential, punctuated with large civic buildings. Similar to those on Bank Road, houses tend to have a small



Typical pair of houses on New Street. The parked car reveals the steepness of the street

front garden and stone boundary walls, some retaining iron railings and gates.

The western section of Oak Road is dominated by Matlock Methodist and United Reformed Church. St Joseph's Street and Lime Grove Avenue consist of mainly terraced and semi detached buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.



Matlock Methodist and United Reformed Church on Oak Road

Part of Henry Avenue, along with Rutland Avenue higher up the hill, is lined with pollarded trees which add interest to the streetscape. By the end of the 19th century trees were seen as a barrier to dust and a health benefit and it is most likely that they were planted at the same time that both residential streets were formed in the early part of the 20th century.



Pollarded trees along Rutland Avenue

The section of Henry Avenue running north-south links at either end with footpaths which form a very old continuous pedestrian route north-south through the conservation area, from south of Steep Turnpike, up as far as Wellington Street.

Smedley Street East

Henry Avenue meets Smedley Street East at a point of change in character from the retail heart of the conservation area, to the west, linking with the Rutland Street and Bank Road intersection, and to the east a more residential character leading towards Chesterfield Road. The retail section of Smedley Street East is lined with impressive frontages abutting the street, particularly on the southern side of the road.



The retail section of Smedley Street East

On the northern side, evidence of pre-hydro Matlock Bank can be seen with a cottage set back from the road and tucked between later nineteenth century buildings, and another, gable end onto the street.

The eastern end of Smedley Street East becomes increasingly modern with several late 20th century developments including Victoria Hall Gardens and Victoria Court. The street frontage to Victoria Hall Gardens retains the original boundary wall



Boundary wall and garden remnants of the demolished Victoria Hall

with trough, and a section of the garden with terraced seating areas and planting, an important remnant of the original Victoria Hall. On the opposite side of Smedley Street East the planted park is one of the few formal public open spaces in the conservation area, offering tranquillity screened from the road by mature trees.



Park on the south side of Smedley Street East

Chesterfield Road (A632) and Steep Turnpike

The junction of Chesterfield Road and Smedley Street East is a very wide, open space and in the 19th century it was softened by a landmark tree in the centre. The junction is surrounded by buildings dating from a range of periods, on either side of the conservation area boundary. Chesterfield Road, originally the 1823 Chesterfield to Matlock Turnpike, bears heavy traffic along the edge of the conservation area, and leads down the hill to the A6. There is considerable variety in terms of the architectural quality and the age of the buildings and sites along this road. However being a major through-route, many passers-by will only see this edge of the conservation area, without venturing into the historic centre, thus increasing the status of Chesterfield Road. Chesterfield Road has a semi-rural character, bounded by stone walls and by much of the east side opening onto fields. On the west side, the allotments increase the openness, creating a 'breathing space' within the development,



Allotments viewed from Springfield Rise



The sculptural quality of Scots pines, seen in several historic locations across the conservation area. Top: the grounds to Presentation Convent (formerly Chesterfield House Hydro). Middle: adjacent to the YHA (formerly Smedley Memorial Hospital). Bottom: beside Rockside

allowing views up to and from houses above. Two of the larger former hydros are on this road, and another building, Westlea, is prominent with its large double height bay window. The dominant Chatsworth Hall (former hydro) abuts the roadside, and on the other side of the road the former Chesterfield House Hydro, now Presentation Convent, is hidden from sight within extensive grounds along with the later development, St Joseph's School. Scots pines in the grounds of this

estate are significant in creating all year round structural enclosure and screening. Scots pines appear to be a relatively abundant species elsewhere in the conservation area, also important as sculptural features in the grounds of the Youth Hostel on Bank Road, and adjacent to Rockside, most striking when viewed from Cavendish Road.

Steep Turnpike is as dramatic as its name suggests, with a strong sense of enclosure created by trees and by retaining walls. The old north-south footpath crosses Steep Turnpike and continues past Turnpike House northwards, and follows the boundary through a wooded area known as Happy Valley (right), just below the grounds of Lilybank. Informal wooded areas such as this, along with Jackson Tor area and the wooded area at the south of the County Hall site are significant as natural spaces within the developed area and are also reminders of the earlier rural pre-hydro Matlock Bank.



Towards the top of Steep Turnpike are several large buildings of the hydro era, including Bell Vue and the apartments at 42 Steep Turnpike, formerly known as The Mount. Beyond these buildings, to the east, there is a marked contrast from the enclosure of Steep Turnpike to the open character



42 Steep Turnpike, highly visible on the ascent of the hill

of Chesterfield Road, accentuated by the expansive forecourt at the fire station.

Wellington Street and Cavendish Road

The narrow site at the junction of Wellington Street and Cavendish Street is known as the Wild Thyme Garden, an attractive small space with an award winning design. This space is thought to be a remnant of the nurseries shown in this area on early maps. Changes in level at road junctions like this one tend to present unusual triangular sites.



Wild Thyme Garden



Triangular site further west on the steep junction between Jackson Road and Jackson Tor Road

Wellington Street and Cavendish Road in this area offer variety in both small terraces and larger houses. Many of the terraces on Wellington Street have frontages abutting the street. A section along the northern side of this road is dominated by a retaining wall, which creates a narrow raised access to numbers 2-24, running parallel with the street below, which slopes away to the south west. Glimpses through narrow gaps between buildings, sometimes through layers of building lines, street below street, create visual delight, moving from the enclosed urban character of streets to the vast openness of the valley beyond.



One of innumerable glimpses between houses, hinting at the long distance views beyond

Rockside dominates this area, towering above Wellington Street above a high retaining wall. Retaining walls are a feature along Wellington Street, sometimes set with recesses, some containing stone troughs.

Larger properties are often set back from the street behind stone boundary walls, a few with notable gateposts. West of Rockside, the character of Cavendish Road is unlike anywhere else in the conservation area with larger detached houses, a number of which display Arts and Crafts features. Private gardens are important here, providing plentiful tree and shrub coverage. Bidston and Claremont are two significant properties in garden settings, the latter house is hidden behind a formal garden with symmetrical beds and planting. The large gardens of the houses on the southern side of the road run down the steep rocky terrain and contain the ridge of trees which can be seen as a wooded escarpment from the streets below.

The far northwest corner of the conservation area opens out at the playing field above Jackson Tor with a spectacular view across the valley to the south. A footpath with a steep flight of steps links Cavendish Road at this point with Jackson Road running down the hill alongside an exposed rocky outcrop and arriving at the side of Jackson Tor House some distance below.



Views along the path leading up from Jackson Road - through the former quarry area (above), up to the play area on Cavendish Road (below)



Steep gardens between Cavendish Road and Jackson Road



Jackson Road, Jackson Tor Road and Cobden Road

If it were not for the views of the rest of the town below, parts of Jackson and Jackson Tor Roads and Cobden Road could almost be mistaken for a rural community. A number of properties in this area predate the hydros, even if later extended and altered. A number of the houses front the street without boundary walls or front gardens. Like branches of a tree the roads fork off, becoming more and more private and narrow. The narrow lane and footpath connecting Jackson Tor Road with Cobden Road across the hillside is an excellent viewing point.



Spectacular view from the footpath between Cobden Road and Jackson Tor Road - the main landmarks are County Hall and the Winter Garden dome, with the south side of the Derwent Valley beyond

The layering of the roads, one above another on the steep hillside, and the dense development of short rows of cottages, results in the unusual circumstance of looking down onto roofs. This makes roofs, chimneys on the south side of the street and their form, materials and details particularly noticeable.



Layering of roofs, three Welsh Slate roofs, one above another, viewed from above on Jackson Tor Road.

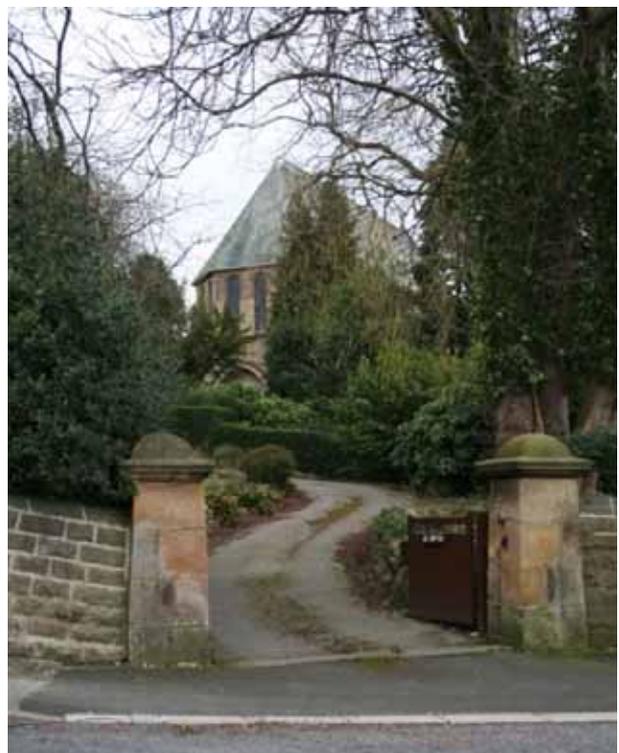
Dimple Road, Woolley Road, and Smedley Street

An old sycamore tree stands in the island at the junction between these three roads, just outside the conservation area. Once again views are important, straight down Woolley Road and across the valley, and down Dimple Road with All Saints School spire, an elegant landmark feature. Between Dimple Road and All Saints Road to the south are several late nineteenth century and early twentieth century terraces and larger buildings which relate to the character of the hydro era.



Dimple Road

All Saints Church can be seen glimpsed elevated above and behind the screen of trees surrounding the tranquil churchyard. This churchyard setting is a formal garden behind a stone boundary wall to the south and west of the church, rather than a cemetery.



A winding pathway at the entrance to the vicarage on the corner of Smedley Street and Far Green allows an inviting glimpse of the church



All Saints within its garden setting, viewed from Smedley Street

Far Green runs up the hill adjacent to All Saints Vicarage with glimpses of the church beyond in its tree enclosed site. Opposite the Vicarage is a group of older cottages, an important part of the early Matlock Bank development before the hydros.

Further east, on Smedley Street are a number of buildings with a sense of their street presence, such as Malvern House and the row of shops opposite with grand three storey gabled frontages, although the shopfronts have been altered (below). These form part of a series of shops along this stretch of Smedley Street and a few retain original shopfronts.



As elsewhere, narrow roads and alleyways off the main road offer glimpses between buildings of views beyond.

As Smedley Street continues eastwards it is bounded by buildings of County Hall.



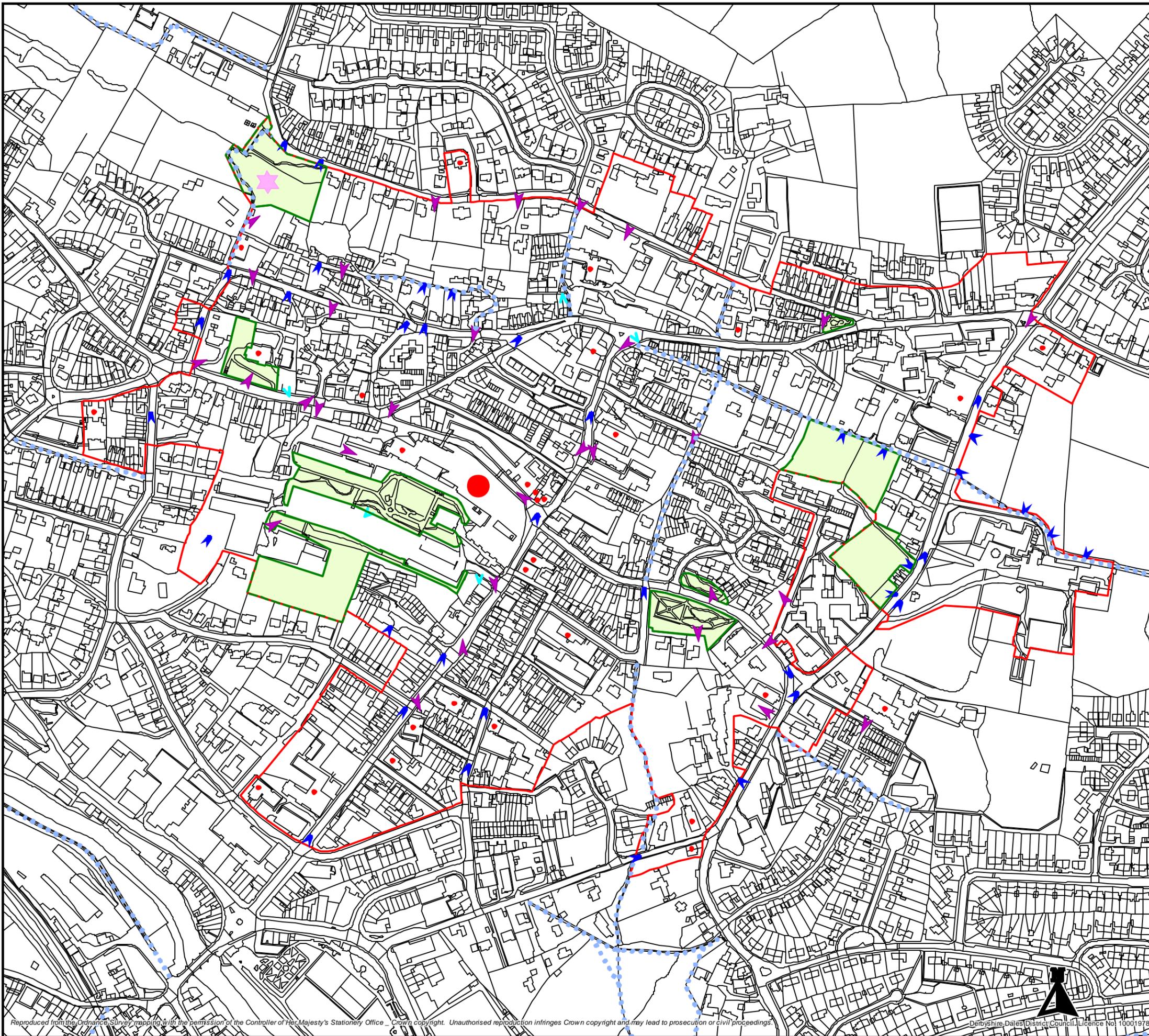
View up Smith Street from Smedley Street



Above: the western end of County Hall can be seen on the left hand side of this image, with the Winter Garden dome just visible above a garage site

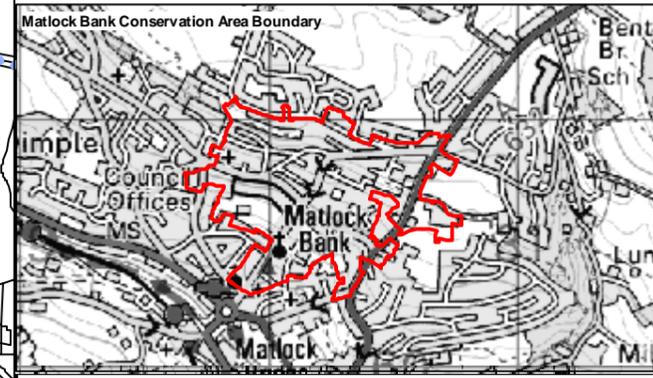
Below: County Hall rising on either side of Smedley Street, leading back towards Rutland Street and Bank Road





KEY

-  Conservaton Area
-  Public Footpaths
-  Important Public Open Space
-  Glimpses
-  Prominent or Landmark Buildings
-  Principal Views
-  Long Range Views
-  Natural landmark



**MATLOCK BANK
CONSERVATION AREA**

Matlock Bank

Relationship of
Structures and Spaces

FIG 10