

Historical Context

Blackpool Town Centre

In the early eighteenth century Blackpool consisted mainly of a few modest cottages along the shoreline, and Fox Hall, a large late medieval half-timbered house. By the end of the eighteenth century, the town had become a fashionable sea bathing resort, and the first visitor accommodation was built to meet this demand.

By the late 18th century there were only around 50 houses on the seafront. Blackpool's subsequent expansion was in large part due to the town's growing popularity with working people from the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile districts. By the 1830s there were more than a thousand visitors a year. The town became more accessible with the opening of the railway to Blackpool North station in 1846.

By 1848 Talbot Road became the principle east-west thoroughfare, linking the north railway station with the Promenade. Town centre development swelled in the 1850s when Blackpool's principal shopping area was conceived, and by the late 1860s the fields surrounding Upper Church Street, Topping Street and Edward Street were developed. Bank Hey Street, Church Street, Market Street and West Street, and later Abingdon Street, Birley Street and Clifton Street became the heart of Blackpool's commercial centre in the late 19th century. In addition, the construction of North and Central piers, and a new promenade which was both a tourist attraction and part of the town's sea defences, helped attract the development of respectable accommodation, and new streets were laid out in a grid behind the seafront.



Figure 2.35 – Historic Site Plan 1847

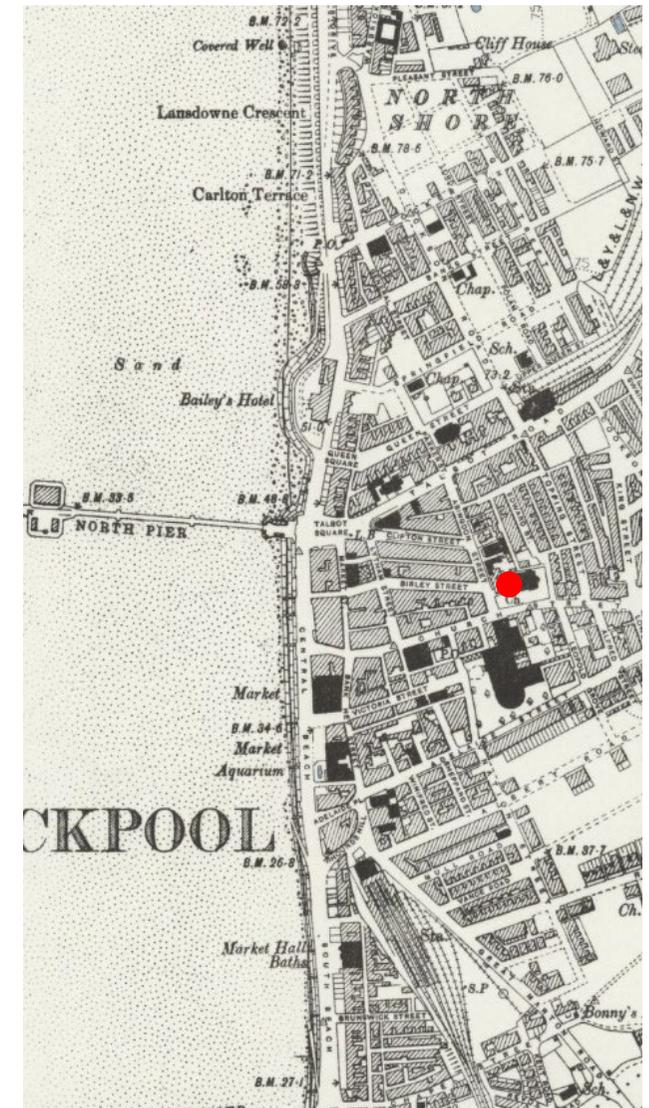


Figure 2.36 – Historic Site Plan 1895

Blackpool's second railway station, Central Station, the terminus of the Blackpool and Lytham Railway to the south-west of Albert Road, was opened in 1863 (closed in 1964). The transport links were conveniently placed for entertainment complexes, the central shopping district and the boarding houses to the south of the Winter Gardens.

Banks, public houses, and theatres and, from the early 20th century, cinemas were also constructed to service and entertain the growing resident and visitor population.

Many of these buildings survive relatively intact across town and within the conservation area and are included on the local list.



Figure 2.38 – Historic Site Plan 1931



Figure 2.37 – Aerial View – Early 20th Century



Figure 2.39 – Aerial View – Early 20th Century

The Development Site

The Old General Post Office was opened in 1910 and is Grade II listed. Constructed in the renaissance style, the Post Office signified Blackpool's growing importance as an urban centre in the early 20th century and reflects a grandeur and solidity typical of civic building in the UK at the time. Clad with Portland stone with a hipped roof of green slate, with a rectangular plan parallel to the street, with three storeys over cellars, the building was a key asset in developing Blackpool's early civic character. The later addition of the neo renaissance styled Sorting Office, fronting Edward Street, further enhanced the functionality of the Post Office as the town further expanded. More austere in its material and detailing, however, due to its prominence and scale, it remains a major feature in the Conservation Area.



Figure 2.40 – Aerial View Early 20th Century



Figure 2.41 – General Post Office Early 20th Century



Figure 2.42 – Historic Site Plan 1938

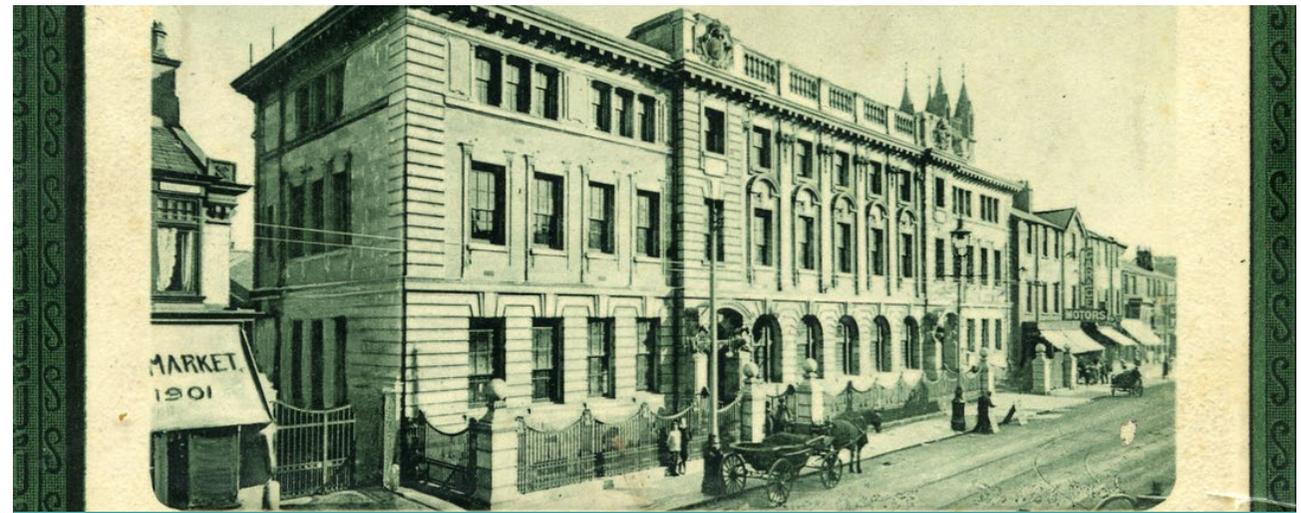


Figure 2.43 – General Post Office Early 20th Century

Conservation Area

The proposed development site is located within Blackpool Town Centres' designated Conservation Area.

Despite containing a mix of retail, civic and entertainment buildings the character of the Conservation Area is homogenous in that it contains the historic commercial and entertainment heart of the town.

The Town Centre Conservation Area brings together many of the town's key entertainment and public buildings. This includes listed buildings such as the Tower, Winter Gardens, Post Office, Grand Theatre, and listed churches but also locally listed buildings such as public houses, banks, and other commercial premises.

The seafront has always been Blackpool's key driver, from its early days attracting visitors eager to bathe and promenade to today's collection of leisure facilities along its length. The historic shopping area is focused on Abingdon Street, with a grid of north-south and east-west streets containing shops and other commercial premises running off it.

The spatial character of the of the conservation area is uniformly dense, with a regular, tight urban grain and a strong sense of enclosure in the street scene. The spatial character of streets is related to the role of each street in the street hierarchy. East-west streets leading to the sea and close to the town centre tend to be wider than those further inland, which have a homogenous spatial character, narrower in width than principal routes and with well-defined building lines.

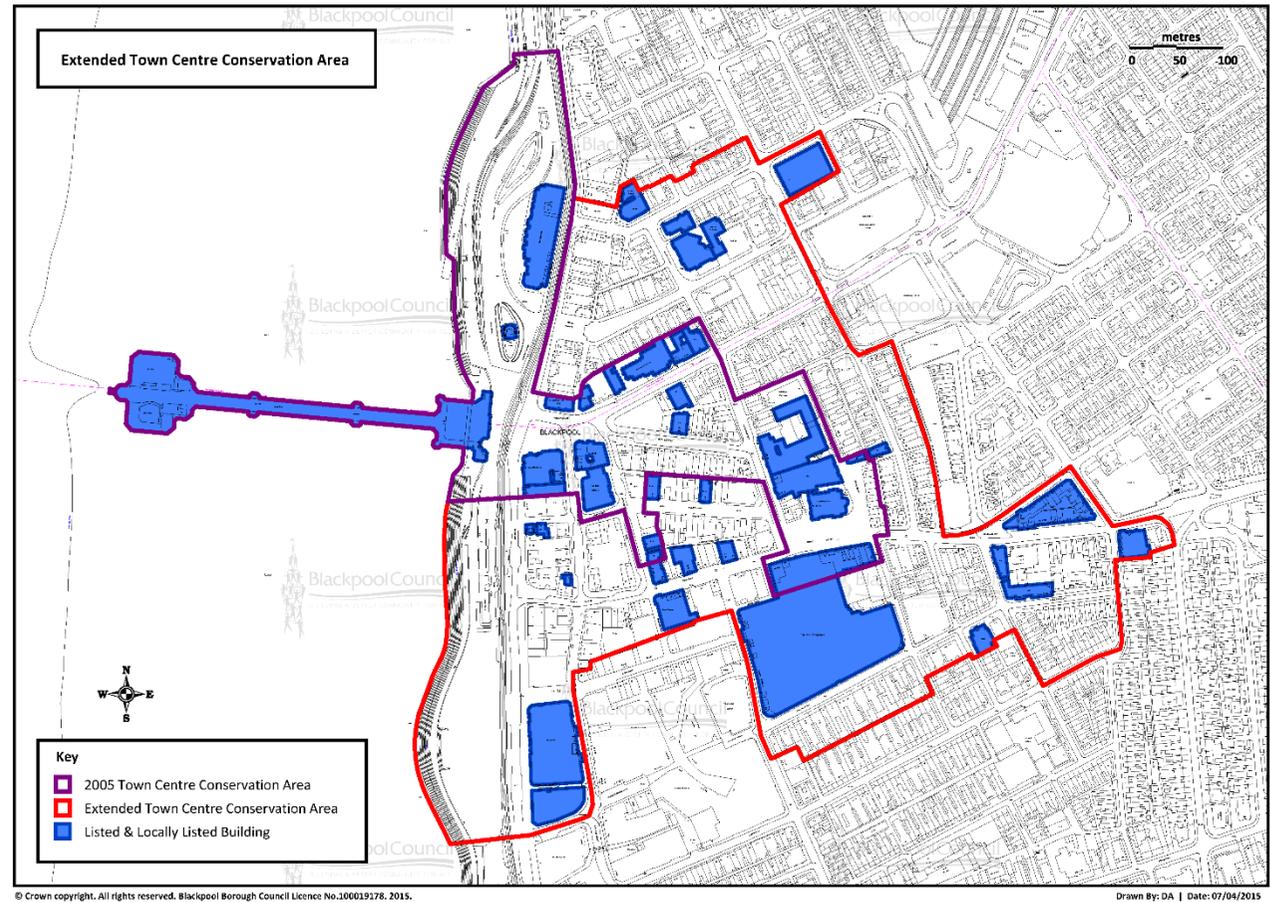


Figure 2.44 – Blackpool Town Centre Conservation Area

Designations

The area denoted in red opposite is the Town Centre Conservation Area. The original area was designated in 1984, extended in 2004 and extended again to its current extents in 2014.

The designated area contains much of the Town's Civic Building Stock and is described as Blackpool's civic heart.

- A. North Pier
- B. Post Office / Sorting Office
- C. Bailey's Hotel / Metropole
- D. Blackpool Tower
- E. Winter Gardens
- F. Former Public Library
- G. Odeon Building
- H. St John's Blackpool
- I. Abingdon St Market
- J. Cedar Tavern / Churchills
- K. Church of the Sacred Heart
- L. Town Hall
- M. Stanley Buildings, Counce St



Figure 2.45 – Blackpool Town Centre Conservation Area



Figure 2.46 – North Pier



Figure 2.47 – Metropole Hotel



Figure 2.48 – Blackpool Tower



Figure 2.49 – Winter Gardens



Figure 2.50 – Former Public Library



Figure 2.51 – The Odeon



Figure 2.52– St Johns



Figure 2.53 – Abingdon Street Market



Figure 2.54 – Cedar Tavern



Figure 2.55 – Church of the Sacred Heart



Figure 2.56 – Town Hall



Figure 2.57 – Stanley Buildings

Heritage Assessment

The General Post Office

Key features of the façade to the Listed General Post Office Building are identified in the adjacent photograph.

1. 26 - 30 Abingdon Street - General Post Office. Designed by Architects of the Office of Works and built by R Neill & Son of Manchester in 1910.

2. Group of 8 Telephone Kiosks. Designed by Sir Giles Scott in 1935 and made by various contractors, Grade II Listed on 14th June 1988.

A. Plain Frieze

B. Giant Pilasters to the Upper Floors of the 5 Bay Centre with Ionic Caps

C. Modillioned Cornice

D. Balustraded Parapet

E. Large Round-Headed doorways with a prominent segmental canopy borne by a pair of Atlantes on tall pedestals. Canopy with moulded head and scrolled key block.

F. Round-Headed windows with run-out voussoir's triple keystones and tripartite sashed glazing. With panelled-pilaster mullions and original stained glass

G. Two colonnaded 3-light sash windows with set-in Tuscan colonettes

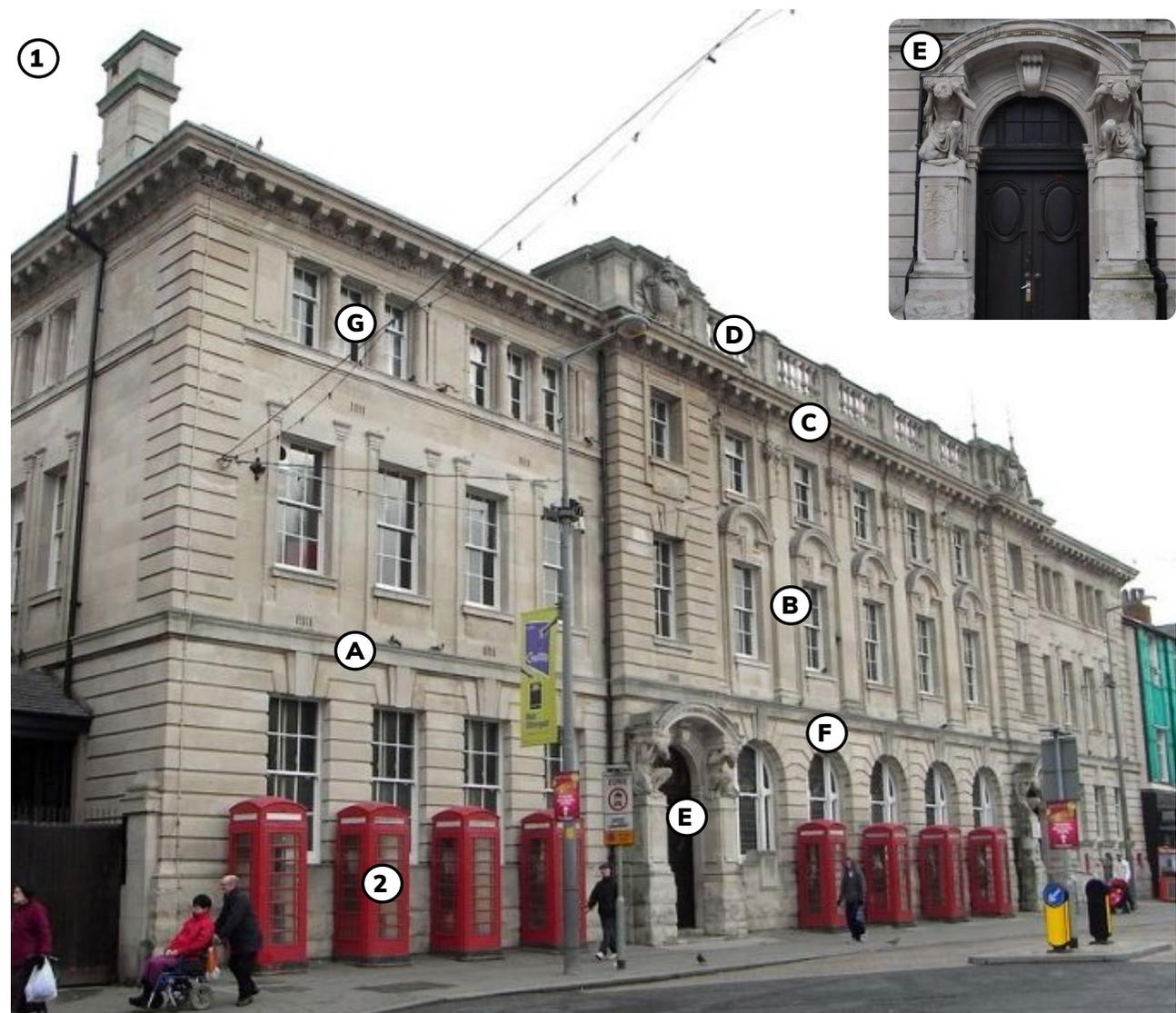


Figure 2.58 – The General Post Office Architectural Detail

The Sorting Office

Key features of the façade to the Locally Listed Sorting Office Building are identified in the adjacent photograph.

- A. Plain Frieze
- B. Modillioned Cornice
- C. Stone Quoins
- D. Large Round-Headed doorways with a prominent stone surround and key block.
- E. Round-Headed windows with voussoirs and keystones.
- F. Sashed glazing with brick decorative brick lintels and stone keystone.
- G. Sashed glazing with decorative Stone surrounds.

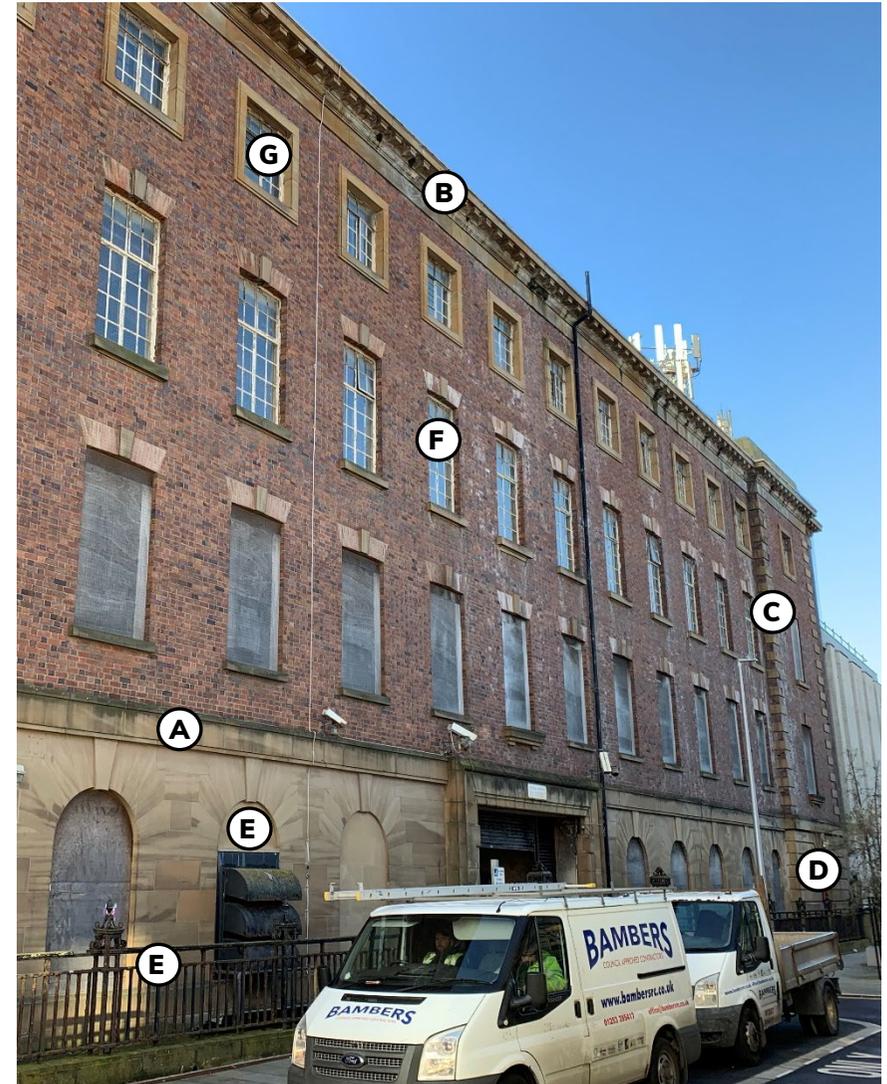


Figure 2.59 – The Sorting Office Architectural Detail

Condition Survey

Street Facing Facades

The existing facades of the two buildings offer a unique opportunity to provide a quality hotel development.

for the town of Blackpool. The Grade II Listed facade of the Former Post Office has a great street presence and is ideal for a Food & Beverage offering and Hotel Front of House accommodation.

The Portland Stone frontage is in good condition and would only require minor remedial works. The Grade II Listed telephone kiosks also add character to the street scene.

The slightly more modern sorting office, circa 1930, fronting Edward Street equally offers a unique opportunity to provide quality, sought after hotel accommodation within the town centre. Due to its massing and grandeur, it is a positive addition to the Edward Street scene.

No modifications to the exterior of the building is proposed aside from general repairs and remedial works. Window positions to the front facades are proposed to remain as existing.



Figure 2.60 – General Post Office



Figure 2.61 – General Post Office



Figure 2.62 – Sorting Office



Figure 2.63 – Sorting Office

Courtyard Facades

The facades to the rear of the two properties are in a state of dereliction in parts. Much of the demolitions approved as part of the 2019 approval have been carried out and the courtyard has generally been cleared.

Stair cores have been removed to both buildings and the buildings are both currently open to the elements.

Windows have generally been boarded or vandalised and both buildings are accessible via ground floor openings. Water ingress and vermin are visible within both buildings and a full structural and condition survey is required.

The Sorting Office building has also had a roof top extension constructed which is in a similar state of disrepair and appears damaged in various locations.

The rear facade of the sorting office building has been rendered and would need completely replacing.



Figure 2.64 – Courtyard



Figure 2.65 – Courtyard



Figure 2.66 – Courtyard



Figure 2.67 – Courtyard

Interior – General Post Office

There are several internal elements relating to the listing of the Former Post Office Counter Hall that have outstanding heritage value. In line with the principles of an Indigo Hotel all these features are to remain and inform and compliment the internal design of the space.

Stained-Glass Windows - Although currently boarded up the Stained-Glass Windows fronting Abingdon Street remain intact and will be retained as part of the development. Repairs and remedials will be carried out where relevant.

Internal Porches - Existing Porches complete with carved wooden architraves and barrelled coffered ceilings remain to both entrances off Abingdon Street.

Marbled Flooring - It is believed that marble mosaic flooring to the porch entrances has been covered over with a modern floor covering and it is proposed to expose and repair these dependent on condition.

Post Office Counter - The existing Post Office Counter is still present within the counter hall however it has been damaged in places and in its current form is an impediment to development owing to its size.

The proposal, in line with the previously approved planning application looks to re-use the counter as a central bar as part of a new Food & Beverage offering.

Perimeter Cornicing - Egg and dart cornicing is visible to much of the perimeter of the internal counter hall spaces. Although this has been damaged in places, largely where modern partitions have been taken up

to the soffit, it is proposed that these will be re-instated and repaired as part of the development.

Internal Columns - Feature columns with low level timber cladding and feature cornicing appear intact and will be renovated as part of the development.

There is no intention to remove any of these columns.

Upper Floor Accommodation within the Post Office is sub-divided by brickwork walls creating cellular spaces. They do not contribute to the quality of the property and will be removed as part of the development.



Figure 2.68 – Post Office Interior



Figure 2.69 – Post Office Interior



Figure 2.70 – Post Office Interior

Interior – Sorting Office

The Ground and Upper Floors of the Sorting Office Building comprise largely uninterrupted floor plates.

A small number of internal partitions have been added to create cellular accommodation.

All internal walls will be removed as part of the development as the building will be largely used for hotel guest bedrooms. Window positions to Edward Street will remain although some alterations will be required to the rear elevation overlooking the courtyard.

It is considered that the removal of any internal walls will not have an adverse effect on the heritage status of the building.



Figure 2.71 – Sorting Office Interior



Figure 2.72 – Sorting Office Interior



Figure 2.73 – Sorting Office Interior



Figure 2.74 – Sorting Office Interior

Constraints

There are several site constraints to be addressed as part of the proposed development.

1. **Post Office – Grade II Listed** – The Post Office is a Listed Building.
2. **Sorting Office – Locally Listed** – The Sorting Office is Locally Listed.
3. **Access Limited by Existing Entrances** – User access is limited to the existing access points.
4. **Listed Telephone Kiosks** – Adjacent telephone kiosks are listed.
5. **No Physical Connection between Buildings** – There is currently no built connection between the buildings.
6. **Servicing Access Limited** – Service access to the courtyard is limited to the existing locations.
7. **Courtyard** – Development of the courtyard must carefully consider the existing arrangement and general setting.
8. **Vehicular Access Limited** – Vehicular access to the site is primarily restricted to Edward Street
9. **Noise** – The site is flanked by busy town centre streets.
10. **Adjacent Buildings** - The site flanks several existing properties and the party wall condition must be considered.
11. **Views** – Respect the setting of the heritage assets

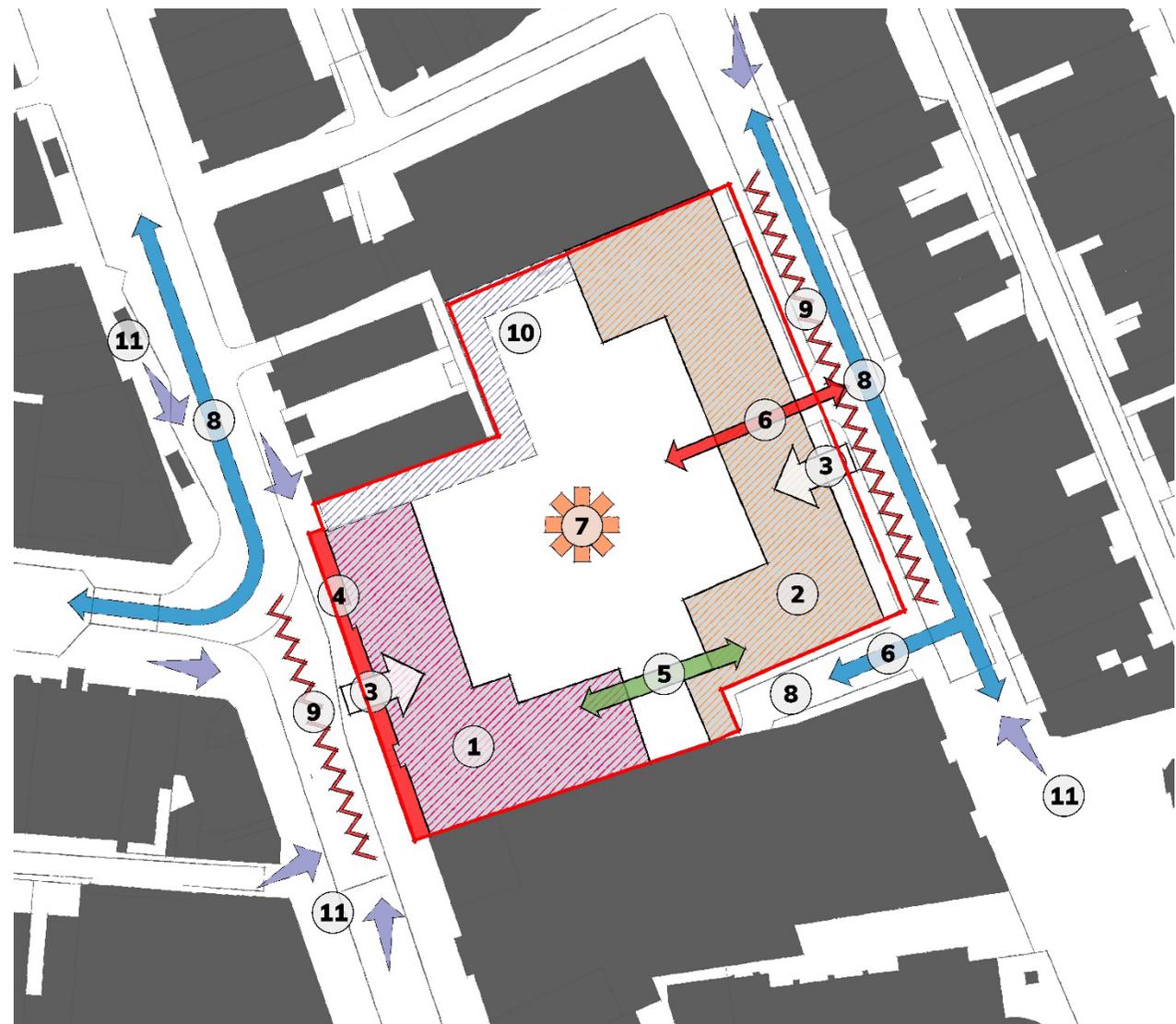


Figure 2.75 – Site Constraints

Opportunities

There are many opportunities to improve and enhance the area whilst realising the potential of the site.

1. Regenerate, renovate and secure the long-term future of the Post Office.
2. Regenerate, renovate and secure the long-term future of the Sorting Office.
3. Integrate a sympathetic and high-quality connection between the Sorting Office and Post Office, providing further enclosure to the courtyard.
4. Increase interest and activity along all adjacent streets through active frontages.
5. Provide enhanced passive surveillance on adjacent streets.
6. Create enhanced connectivity to the inner courtyard, envisioned as an oasis in the town centre,
7. Provide a high quality and appropriately design external amenity space in the courtyard which is functional not only for hotel guests but also for potential corporate and hospitality functions.
8. Integrate at roof level a terrace area for guest amenity, providing vistas across Blackpool towards the sea front and Blackpool Tower.

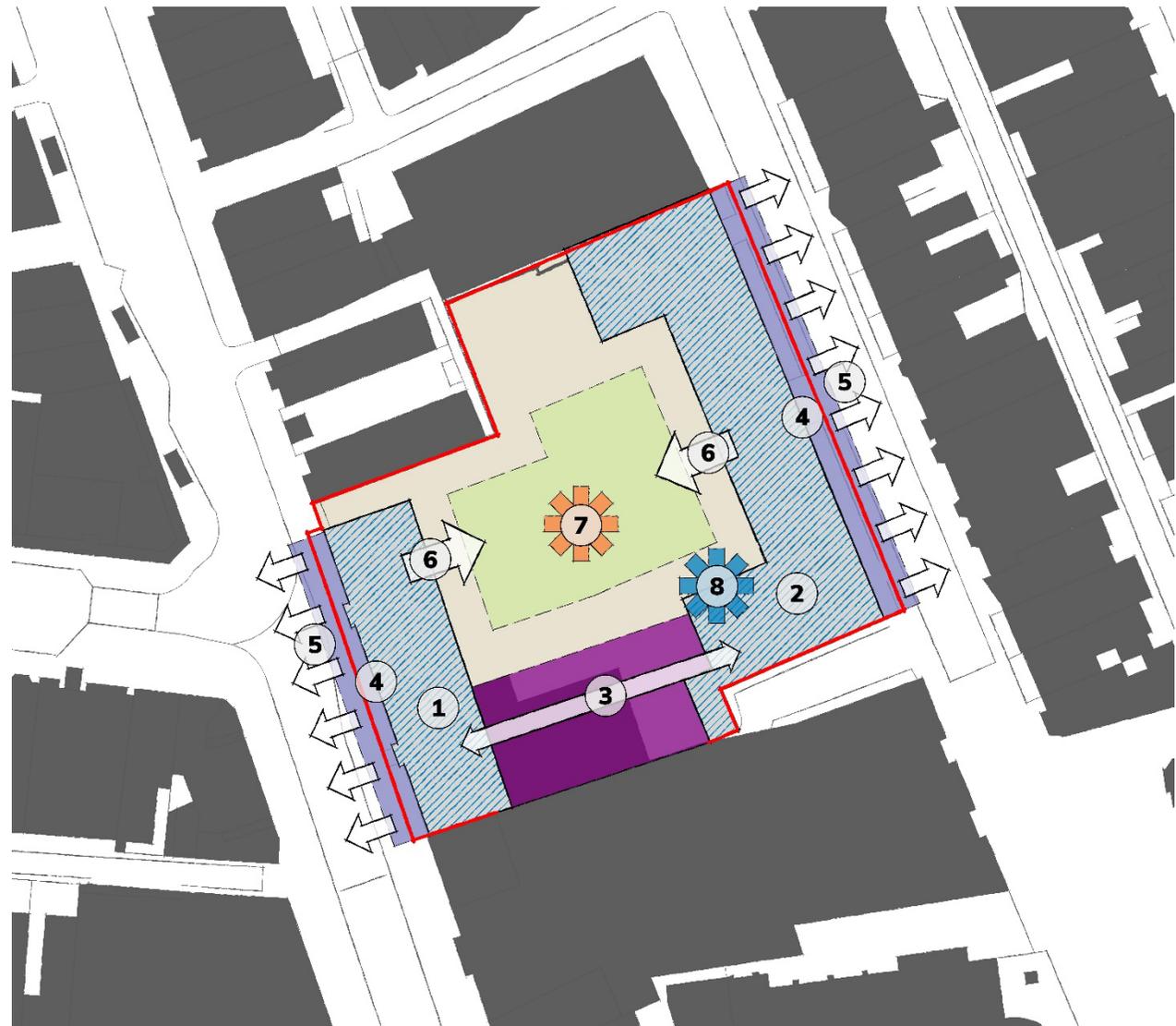


Figure 2.76 – Site Constraints

Opportunities Continued

The existing Post Office and Sorting Office presents several opportunities which would make a positive contribution to the character and amenity of the immediate area. The repurposing of the buildings into a high-quality hotel development presents several opportunities for not only the renovation of the existing facades and refurbishment of the historic fabric, which will uplift the street scene, but also the integration of amenity provision adjacent the Abingdon and Edward Street. The form of development will include restaurant and front of house provision which will also result in the repair and uplifting of the street facing interiors of the Post Office and Sorting Office.

A series of precedent images which have informed the interior strategy are shown adjacent, highlighting how the renovation of the existing interior features and refurbishment of a buildings historic fabric can secure its long-term future.



Figure 2.78 – General Post Office

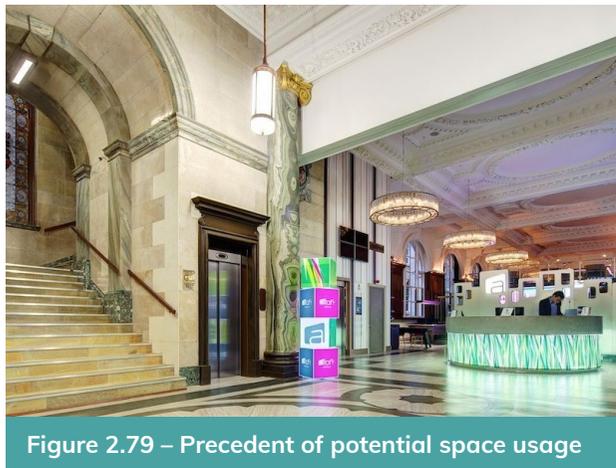


Figure 2.79 – Precedent of potential space usage



Figure 2.80 – Precedent of potential space usage



Figure 2.81 – Precedent of potential space usage