

Character Area Appraisal

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4.1 Character Appraisal

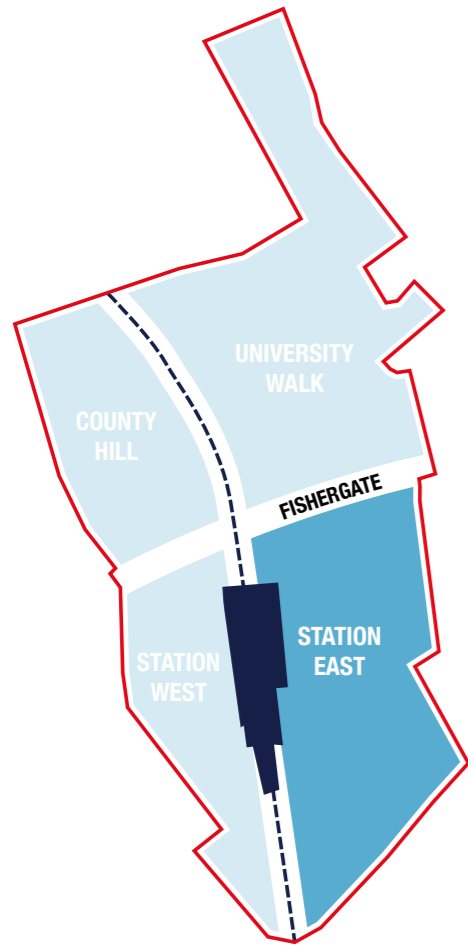


Figure 4.1.1: Station East Location Plan

Station East

For many people arriving at Preston by train and exiting the station via the footbridge or subway to the eastern entrances, the south east quadrant will be their first impression of the city. At present this area is dominated by the Fishergate Shopping Centre, the extensive surface car parks and the multi-storey rail user car park.

The Fishergate Shopping Centre was developed in the 1980s and is typical of its time being designed as an inward looking covered shopping centre. Whilst the centre responds to the historic scale of Fishergate, the building in modern red brick is unprepossessing. The overall scale and bulk of the centre clashes with the finer grain of the historic city and presents a blank unwelcoming frontage to the station's Butler Street entrance. The internalised layout of the centre also stymies the ability to integrate the rest of the area into the city centre.

The area around the Butler Street entrance to the station is one of the busiest, but dominated by car parking and vehicle movements, which compromises the pedestrian and cyclist experience. Despite the adjacency to Avenham and Miller Parks there is no direct link, and there isn't a clear route to the historic Winckley Square.



Fishergate Centre



Fishergate Car Parks



East Cliff



Butler Street looking towards Fishergate



Butler Street entrances to Preston Station



Butler Street entrances to Preston Station

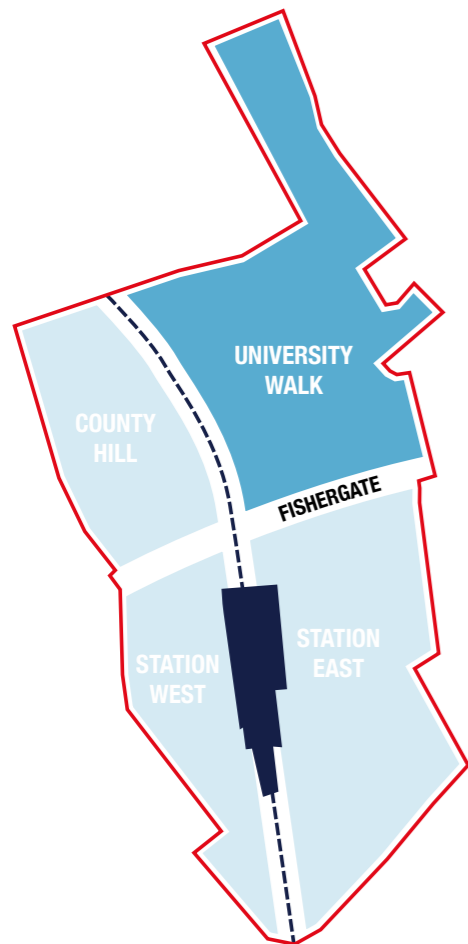


Figure 4.1.2: University Walk Location Plan

University Walk

The north east quadrant is the link between the station and UCLan and is focused on Corporation Street, but this quadrant suffers from poor connections due to a physical and psychological barrier formed by Ring Way, a large six-lane ring road which carves through the site. The crossing at the junction of Corporation Street and Ring Way is awkward, severing this key link.

Poor commercial offerings, vacant sites and surface car parks undermine the potential of this area as a vibrant gateway between the city core and university campus. Large areas of surface car parking form gaps in the urban fabric and many buildings are poor quality, failing to enclose and animate the public realm, which itself is compromised by the scale of vehicular infrastructure over pedestrian space.

The lower end of Corporation Street benefits from high quality paving materials, lighting and street trees and the new university square to the north has created a significant public space. However, the public realm is generally very poor and limited to narrow pavements and standard / degraded paving materials.



Ring Way



Corporation St, looking south to Fishergate Centre



Network Rail depot



Commercial premises on Corporation St



UCLan Student Centre and University Square



Retail warehouses on Ring Way

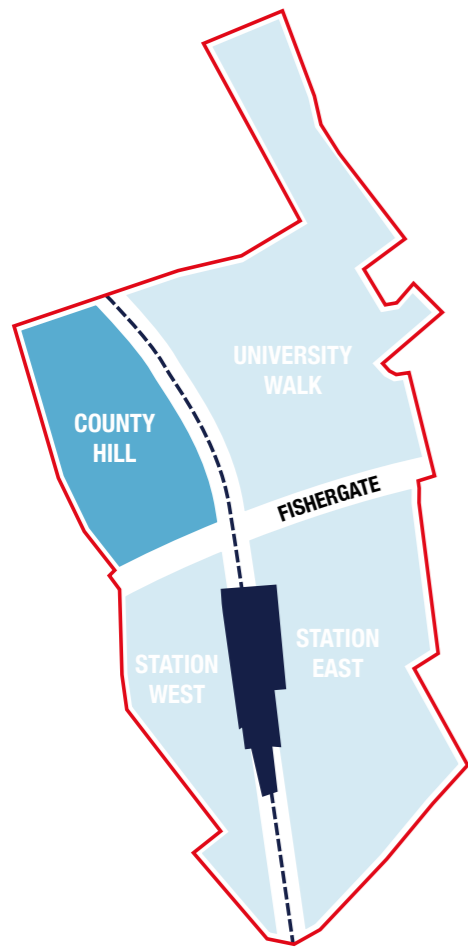


Figure 4.1.3: County Hill Location Plan

County Hill

The north west quadrant is entirely occupied by the county council. The County Hall complex includes the main offices and Council Chamber as well as the Registration Office and County Archives.

County Hall comprises a range of buildings built between the early 1880s and post-war period. The main cluster of buildings located at the brow of Fishergate Hill is very imposing and dominates the local skyline due to its expansive massing in relation to adjacent buildings as well as a cavernous area of railway track that it overlooks to the east. The complex is clearly of historic and architectural merit, and a prominent city centre landmark, but there are no formal areas of open space and landscape features are also lacking.

The rest of the site (accounting for approximately 50% of the area) is used for surface car parking.



Fishergate Bridge



County Hall



Bow Lane visitor car park



County Archives



LCC car park



Arthur Street

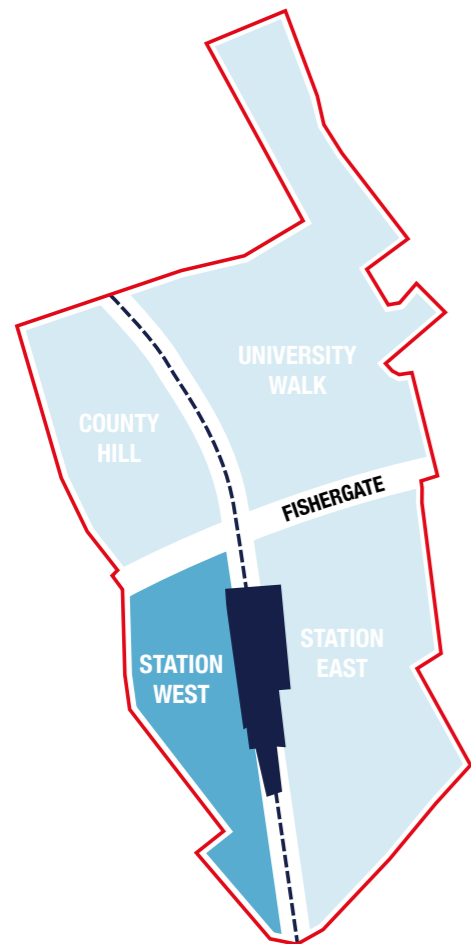


Figure 4.1.4: Station West Location Plan

Station West

The south west quadrant is dominated by rail-related uses, including Network Rail depots and the operational railway line to Preston Docks. This area includes the Royal Mail sorting office, though there is no longer any link to the station as mail is no longer transported by rail. The former 'parcels platforms' to the west of the station may be brought back into use as part of plans to enhance regional rail services and also to enable longer term plans to accommodate HS2 rail services at the station.

The Royal Mail sorting office is a functional industrial shed contained from public view by a boundary wall and surrounding townscape. The rest of the area is dominated by yards and service areas. The wider setting of the Fishergate Hill Conservation Area includes a range of traditional house types from two-storey back of footway Victorian terraced housing to detached Georgian townhouses.

As largely a service area, the area has just one access in via Christian Road, which is not a permeable street. West Cliff provides a link between Fishergate Hill and Avenham and Miller Parks.



Rail link to Preston Docks



Royal Mail sorting office



West Cliff leading to Miller Park



West Cliff



Walton's Parade



Christian Road

Summary

Together the four quadrants currently fail to capitalise on the asset that is Preston Station. Much land is underused and the quality of the urban realm is poor. There is excellent potential for development and new placemaking.

Station East can provide the catalyst for the area's regeneration. By redeveloping the dated Fishergate Centre and areas of surface car parking there is significant scope to introduce new city centre uses and create a transformational area of the city.

University Walk should also be a much stronger part of the city, linking the key assets of the station and UCLan. There are opportunities to enhance connections and public realm, but also to bring in new uses that would suit an intense urban area.

County Hill is a dominant landmark but is isolated in a sea of surface car parking. Again there is scope to introduce new uses and urban realm.

Station West provides scope for HS2 to come to Preston. Over the longer term there may also be opportunities to redevelop yard areas and, as a theoretical / illustrative possibility, the Royal Mail site for new uses, subject to Royal Mail being in a position in the long-term where this could be considered.

The station itself is also in need of significant investment in order to contribute to, and capitalise upon, the regeneration potential of the Station Quarter as a whole.

Figure 4.1.5: Quadrant Appraisal Plan

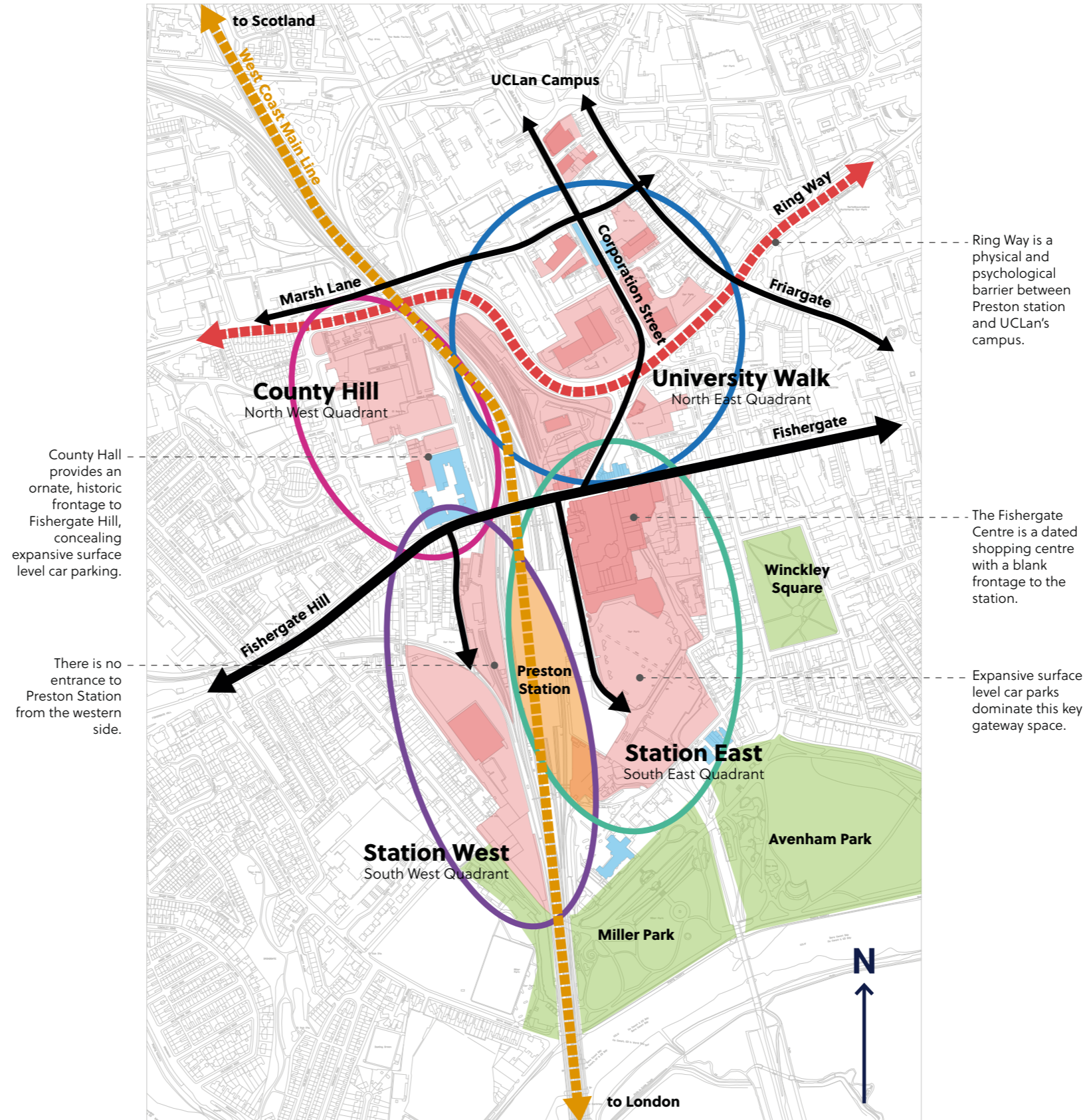


Figure 4.1.6: Existing Aerial View of Preston Masterplan Area



