

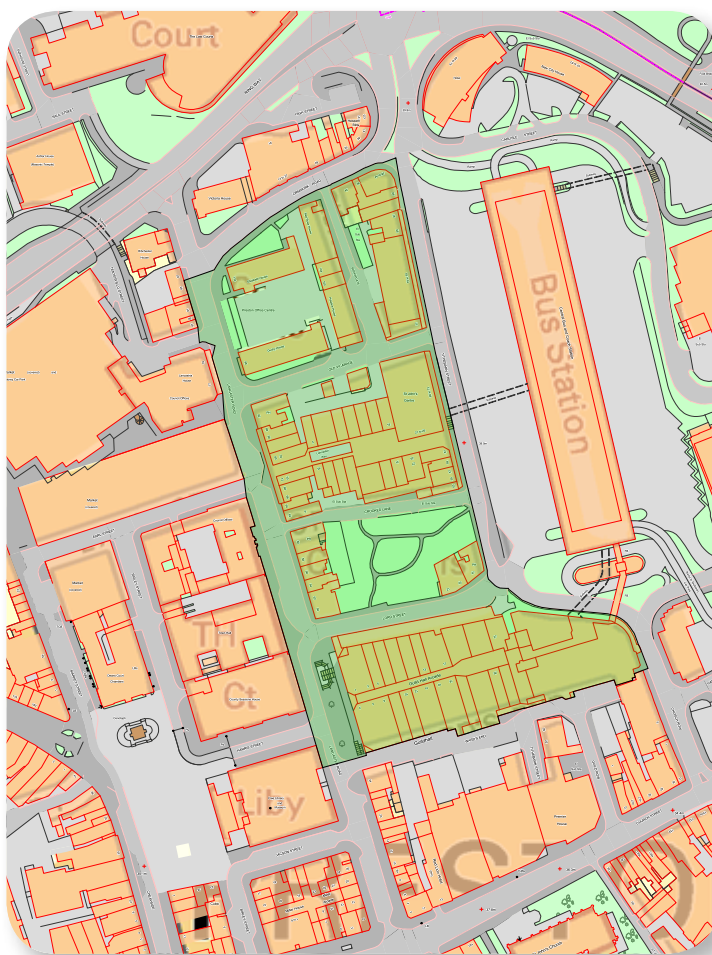
Bishopgate

7.30 The central block within the area is bounded on either side by two key public transport corridors – Lancaster Road and Tithebarn Street. These two roads provide a clear definition to the area and create four distinct blocks with varying characteristics and uses.

7.31 Preston Office Centre is situated in the most northern block, dissected by Bishopgate, with Ormskirk Road to the north and Old Vicarage to the south. Preston Office Centre contains a significant amount of office floorspace, part of which is currently vacant.

7.32 Immediately south is the, partially enclosed, St Johns Shopping Centre containing a secondary, lower value shopping offer. St John's acts as a gateway to the city centre for shoppers and workers alighting at the bus station as it is the most direct, and therefore, principal pedestrian route between the two: the pedestrian underpass from the bus station emerges adjacent to the entrance to the St Johns Shopping Centre.

7.33 The third block is dominated by a cleared development site owned by the Council temporarily in use as an area of low-grade open space. The buildings that front onto Lancaster Road contain a mixture of commercial units, some of which are vacant. All the buildings in the block fronting Lancaster Road are Grade II listed, as is the early nineteenth century warehouse building attached to The Tithebarn public house.



7.34 Finally, the southernmost block in the area is the Guild Hall Complex. The complex comprises of the Guild Hall venue, Charter Theatre and the Guild Hall Arcade. In October 2014 the complex was transferred to a private company – Preston Guild Hall Ltd. At the rear of the Guild Hall Complex is the Guild Centre, a fifteen-storey office building which can be accessed through the complex, via pedestrian link from the bus station, or on Lords Walk/Church Row, and a long-time vacant convenience store.

Bus Station

7.35 The Grade II listed bus station is situated on the eastern fringe of the city centre. Built in the late 1960s in the Brutalist architectural style, the station has the capacity for 80 buses at any one time, with 40 bays on both sides of the building. This level of capacity makes the bus station amongst the largest in western Europe.

7.36 At ground floor level there exists a limited commercial offer. Above ground floor level the building performs the function of a multi-storey car park, over nine floors, with a capacity for in excess of 1,100 vehicles. However only on rare occasions are all floors open, and the car park never operates at full capacity.

7.37 The bus station apron surrounds the main building, with ramps providing vehicular access and egress from Tithebarn Street and Lords Walk and to Carlisle Road and Lords Walk. Pedestrian access and egress is via subways to Tithebarn Street and Carlisle Road, along with footbridge at first floor level to the Guild Hall Complex. The only pedestrian access at ground floor level is via a makeshift pedestrian crossing across the apron to Tithebarn Street.

7.38 In September 2013 the bus station structure was awarded Grade II listed status by the Government. The County Council took ownership of the building and its curtilage from the Council in April 2014.

7.39 The remainder of the site is occupied by an element of open land accommodating the vehicular ramp to the bus station, a small surface car park, and a small entertainment venue.



Ringway

7.40 The zone fronting Ringway is dominated by high-rise buildings. At the centre of the area is an identified major gateway into the city centre – the junction of North Road and Ringway – this is a vehicle dominated gateway, which operates as one of the main entry points into the heart of the city centre.

7.41 Starting at the western edge of the area, Ribchester House, a seven-storey office building occupied by a solicitors firm, fronts onto Ringway. Immediately to the rear of Ribchester House are retail units, partly occupied by residential uses on upper floors.

7.42 Moving east, the adjacent block of buildings has frontages to both Ringway to the north, and Ormskirk Road to the south. Victoria House is a partially tenanted ten-storey office building, prominently placed opposite Preston Crown Court. Beyond Victoria House, the Ringway frontage is broken, and set back with an element of car parking. The buildings at ground floor level are generally either the rear of premises on Church Street, or units in commercial use. The principal frontage to the properties in this block is to Ormskirk Road, where the main building of note is Sheraton House, the former Co-Operative building.

7.43 The Holiday Inn Preston, one of the city centres three main hotels, fronts the junction. By virtue of its size, at its highest nine storey's, the building is a landmark feature in the city centre. The hotel, established in the 1970s, has more than 100 rooms and small-scale conferencing facilities.

7.44 Immediately to the east of the hotel sits New City House, an eight-storey office building. The building has undergone extensive refurbishment recently and is currently let and occupied.

7.45 The easternmost section of the Ringway site is occupied by a single storey retail building and associated car park, the latter of which front onto Ringway. The building was constructed in the late 1970s and originally occupied by Sainsbury's. Numerous retailers have since occupied the building; it is currently occupied by a discount retailer. The building and car park are of poor design and environmental quality, on a prominent route through the city centre and represent a key target for improvements during the plan period. Immediately south of this site sits the Unicentre, a fourteen-storey office building fronting Lords Walk.

