

Williamson Park: Conservation Area Assessment

Why is Williamson Park Conservation Area special?

Williamson Park is a formal park laid out in the late-19th century. The boundary encompasses the main park and woodland which are situated to the east of Lancaster city centre on steep rising topography.

During the 18th and early-19th century the area was quarried for sandstone, which was used in Lancaster's Georgian and Victorian buildings. Following a period of industrial hardship in the 1860s, many mill workers were left unemployed. Subsequently, an unknown benefactor gifted money to the town for the construction of a carriage driveway, gravel paths and stone benches through the previously quarried moorlands, thus creating work for the unemployed. In the 1870s and 1880s the land was extensively landscaped and funded by James Williamson I and was handed over to the Lancaster Corporation in 1881 by his son James Williamson II, later known as Lord Ashton. The park was laid out by McLean. In 1904, further works were funded by Lord Ashton for improvements to the park including a stone bridge over the lake, stone shelters, a bandstand, a fountain and a palm house.

At the centre of the park is Ashton Memorial, which was described by Pevsner as 'the grandest monument in England'. The monument was designed by Sir John Belcher for Lord Ashton as a memorial to his former wife. The building was constructed 1906-1909 in Portland stone and is designed in English Baroque style with central main dome and east and west porticos. The building dominates the skyline of Lancaster and enshrines the wealth and importance of Lord Ashton at the time. From the memorial, there are panoramic views over Lancaster, Morecambe Bay and the Lakeland fells.

The significance of this Conservation Area derives from its architectural and landscape features; the woodland, grassed opened areas, water features, winding paths, gated entrances, lodge houses, bridges, bandstand, fountain and the centrepiece monument. Part of the Conservation Area is also a Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden due to its historic association with the development of a late-19th century urban park and retention of landscaped and built features from its original construction.

General

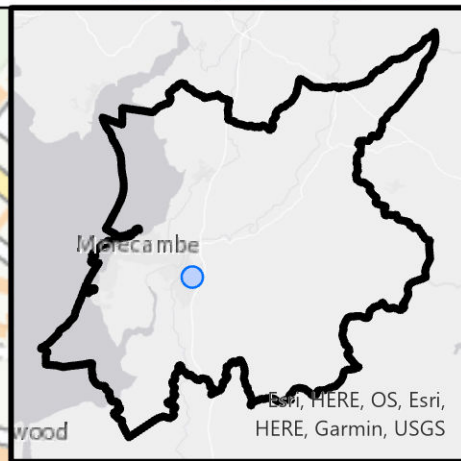
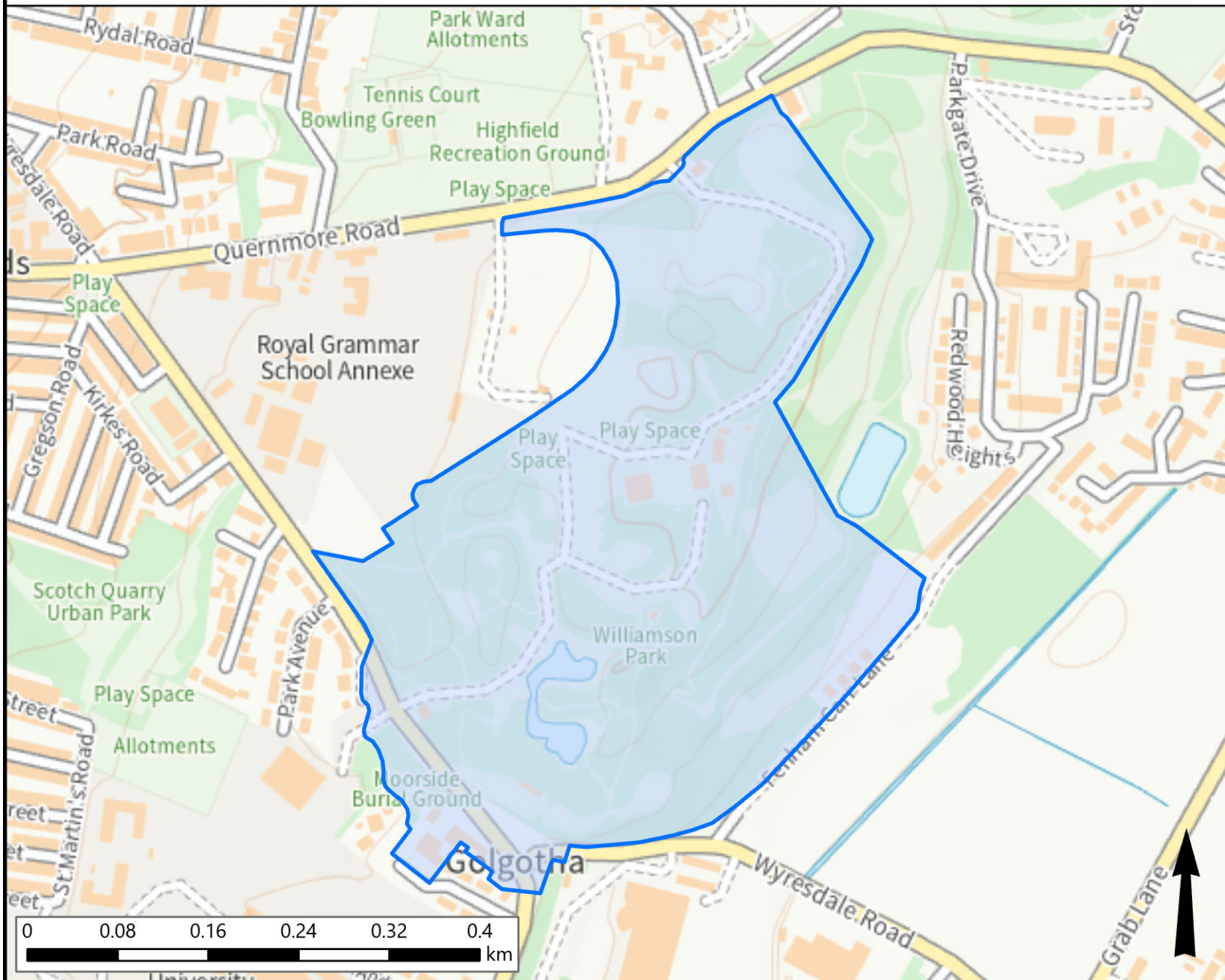
- Origins as a sandstone quarry in the 18th and 19th centuries
- Historic association with a significant linoleum manufacturer, James Williamson I and his son, who was later known as Lord Ashton
- Two main phases of construction and landscaping funded by the Williamson family: 1880s and 1904-09
- Urban setting of the park on a steep hill, which overlooks Lancaster and Morecambe Bay
- The architectural grandeur of Ashton Memorial dominates the park and the city
- Retained its original plan form and associated features, such as bandstand, fountain and shelters

- Mature trees create a sense of seclusion and tranquillity, interspersed with open green spaces
- Decorative gates on the main road create a formalised entrance to the urban park

Important buildings and features

- Ashton Memorial (Grade I) - one of the most iconic buildings in Lancaster, constructed in Portland stone and copper dome, dominates the city's skyline
- Palm House (Grade II) - built c.1909 and designed by Sir John Belcher as a glasshouse with brick and stone base. The building is now used as a butterfly house
- The lake is a late-19th century man-made feature in a quarried area of the hill, with a decorative stone bridge (Grade II) over the latter of which dates c.1909
- Gated entrances and walls to Wyresdale Road and Quernmore Road (both Grade II) - these formal entrances were constructed c.1880 in sandstone ashlar with wrought iron gates and designed with Neo-Classical detailing such as fluted pilasters. The friezes have 'Williamson' and 'Park 1880' carved into and mark the first phase of construction of the formal park
- Tower (Grade II) - the remains of a garden pavilion c.1909 designed by Sir John Belcher

Conservation Area Name	Area (ha)	Designation Date
Williamson Park	20.01	1986



- ### Legend
- Conservation Areas
 - Lancaster District Boundary

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