

1. The special interest and character of Barnoldswick

The town centre and adjacent residential areas have considerable quality and can be justifiably designated as a conservation area. The town is located at the confluence of several tributaries of Stocks Beck, close to a low col in the Pennines. It is characterised by predominantly two and three storey 19th century buildings as a result of the growth of the cotton industry and associated mills, and the construction of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. The canal facilitated the exploitation of local stone from which many of the traditional buildings in the town have been built.

Most buildings in the town are not in themselves of national importance with regard to architectural or historic interest, but contribute positively to the townscape of Barnoldswick. The character of the townscape owes more to the human scale of both residential and commercial properties, and the configuration of back alleys than to individual landmark buildings. The vernacular architecture is unfussy and for the most part uncluttered. The predominant building materials are sandstone for walls and roofs, although blue slate is also a common roofing material. A characteristic of many buildings is the low pitch of the roof. Ornamental details are rare, in character with the simplicity of design.

Barnoldswick is a particularly interesting town where the buildings are largely Victorian, but with roots going further back to pre-industrial times. Much of the street pattern is medieval in character onto which were grafted Georgian and Victorian stone streets and buildings. The character is thus a mixture of the picturesque and the laid-out formality of later years. The intersection of the various streets and buildings often leads to interesting spaces and nooks and crannies of considerable charm and character.

There is a complex intermixture of uses and activities in the centre, with small scale shops and town centre houses having unusual prominence. The interrelationship between the buildings and spaces, and the uses and activities carried out in them is a key aspect of the Conservation Area. With the exception of the gap left by the old railway, the town centre spreads smoothly out into the surrounding residential areas without the dislocation caused by twentieth century highway schemes, as often found in other towns.

Land levels vary and add complexity and interest to the townscape, but broadly speaking the land rises gently to both sides of Butts Beck which runs through the conservation area from south to north. The junction of Church Street and Walmsgate is the historic bridging point and also marks the western edge of the town centre. Church Street is traditionally the town's high street; its buildings are of a larger scale and more formal in character, with some ashlar stone-fronted commercial buildings of three storeys, most with traditional shop frontages. The other shopping streets of Albert Road, Rainhall Road and Newtown are generally smaller scale and more vernacular in character, with rows of 2-storey cottages, many of which later became shops. Further variety is brought to the streetscape by some later Victorian and

Barnoldswick Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Edwardian development in a more decorative architectural style, mainly banks, and public buildings such as the Civic Hall and Conservative Club on Station Road, and the Majestic Buildings on Albert Road.

2. Archaeology

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the conservation area although the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record holds some information about sites within the conservation area.

This does not mean that archaeology is of no importance in Barnoldswick. It is likely that there may be several areas of interest in the conservation area. The town is situated close to a Roman road, the town was mentioned in the Domesday Book, and a Cistercian abbey existed near the town. Its medieval past is evident in the street pattern.

3. Building materials

The cutting of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal enabled the transport of locally quarried stone, for example from the former Barnsay quarry, accessed via the Rain Hall Rock Branch or “Little Cut”, and a quarry east of Greenberfield locks. The canal opened in 1796 although improvements were made at Greenberfield locks between 1817 and 1820. Between Barnoldswick and Salterforth there are large gritstone quarries. Most of the town is built of local stone. Welsh slate was later imported for use as roofing material via the railway.



Figure 1: The Leeds and Liverpool Canal

4. Open spaces

There are some open spaces within the conservation area. Adding to the conservation area and providing a social focus is the town square, created using sympathetic materials and street furniture on the site of the former Co-operative store. Trees and planters have been placed to enhance the area's appearance and to make the square more user friendly. Landscaped areas also exist to the south side of Westgate. Other trees of note in the area are on Albert Road in front of the Majestic Church Centre. The principal open space is around Clough Park and Ousel Dale to the south of the conservation area, which is semi-rural in character.



Figure 2: The Town Square on Albert Road

5. Views and vistas

There are few buildings which stand out as major landmarks from a distance, with the possible exception of the Independent Methodist Church on Walmsgate (listed Grade II*), and Holy Trinity Church on Skipton Road. The development is mostly at a smaller domestic scale. By far the most important views are the street-scenes themselves.



Figure 3: Traditional shopfronts on Rainhall Road

6. Negative features

A significant negative feature in parts of the conservation area is the floorscape. Stone setts have been removed from all major roads and also from many of the alley ways. Roads are almost all tarmacadam, and many stone flagged pavements have been replaced with modern paving materials.

Some modern buildings detract significantly from the character and appearance of the conservation area. These include the Yorkshire Bank buildings, Barclays Bank buildings and York House. Not all newer buildings detract however; Holy Trinity Church and the Library are good examples of what can be achieved.

Barnoldswick Conservation Area Character Appraisal

In the shopping areas there are some good examples of simple traditional shop fronts. There are however other shop fronts that are cluttered with unnecessary embellishments and there are those which are made of unsympathetic materials. There are also vacant shop units in the town centre which detract from the vitality of the area. A large number of properties also have incongruous extensions, porches, new windows and doors.

7. Strategy for enhancement

The reinforcement of the qualities providing special interest in Barnoldswick is vital if the conservation area designation is to have meaning. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved.

1. Design briefs can be prepared for sites to be developed or for sites which detract from the area.
2. In determining decisions on development proposals, particularly those for new buildings, the quality of design should be seen by the local planning authority as being a principal concern. New buildings should be appropriate in overall mass, in scale, and be in keeping with the area. The materials used should generally match those used in the area.
3. A scheme of environmental improvements should be drawn up to enhance the area through sympathetic landscaping and planting schemes.
4. Regeneration funding should be targeted to improve the shopping area, and should adhere to planning conservation area policy.
5. Street furniture and the materials used in roads and footways should be in character with the area. Every effort should be made to retain historic, or reintroduce traditional, surfaces.
6. A series of planning policies should be prepared to ensure that developers are aware of the requirements in the area, and to guide the decision making process.
7. Publicity should be given to the designation of the conservation area, its aims and the means to improve the area.



Figure 4: The Majestic Buildings on Albert Road