

# Newchurch & Spen Brook Conservation Area Character Appraisal

---

## 1. Introduction

The conservation area covers the two main settlements and the surrounding fields, farms and copses which form part of their history and landscape.

Newchurch and Spenbrook lie within the ancient Parish of Goldshaw Booth, which is situated in a narrow valley to the south east of Pendle Hill. The two settlements are located to the west of Nelson and Barrowford and just to the north of Fence, in the western part of the Borough of Pendle. The village of Barley lies directly to the north, and scattered farmsteads characterise the surrounding countryside. Newchurch-in-Pendle is the older-established village which lies on higher ground about 400m to the northwest of Spenbrook. The settlements are clustered and prominent in the landscape, particularly Newchurch, which is a landmark settlement clinging onto the hillside. Newchurch lies on steeply sloping land which rises northwards, whereas Spenbrook lies on flatter land to the south. The Conservation Area boundary extends from Cross Lane north of Newchurch, to include the disused Faughs Delph Quarry off Well Head Road to the west, and to Spen Brook Mill and Dimpenley to the south and east.

The character and appearance of the area around Newchurch and Spenbrook is still influenced by its origins as scattered settlements for farming and handloom weaving; indeed it has changed little over the last 100 years. Newchurch is characterised by stone handloom weavers' cottages which grew up informally around a chapel at a crossing of two ancient routes within the Forest of Pendle. The character of Spenbrook derives from its development to support the textile mill which was built there in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, although the older hamlet is now surrounded by 20<sup>th</sup> century housing.

The village roads in the conservation area are predominantly lined with sandstone dry stone walls which are a pleasing feature in the public realm. However, the roads and pavements are predominantly tarmac with concrete kerbs and copings. Very little original fabric in the form of stone flags or setts remains. A number of attempts have been made to reinstate some traditional materials mainly in the centre of Newchurch where stone setted paths run between the properties. A few 1930's black and white cast iron signposts have been refurbished and some traditional style lighting columns are located in Newchurch. These help to retain a traditional village feel to the public realm.

# Newchurch & Spen Brook Conservation Area Character Appraisal

---

## 2. History of the Area

The area now known as Pendle has been continually inhabited since the Neolithic period. The settlements and landscape of Goldshaw are the result of a fascinating history since medieval times when vaccary (cattle) farms were established by the de Lacy family to produce draught oxen. These first vaccaries were like small islands of cultivation in the extensive hunting forest of Pendle.

The 1295/96 accounts record eleven vaccary farms at Pendle (there were others at Trawden) with an average of 82 cattle per farm. Farms were at Over and Nether Goldshaw and the accounts record repairs made to houses for yearlings at Sabden in 1295. After a period of disorder, these two farms were leased to Richard de Whiteacre and John de Dyneley in 1324. A length of vaccary wall survives near Stainscomb. In 1507 a survey led to many tenants of the farms becoming copyholders - many of whom had the same surnames as the cow keepers a hundred years before. Of the 12 tenants of the Over and Nether Goldshaw vaccaries, four were named Nutter, three Robinson, four Aspden and one Bykeby.

There followed a period of stability and growth in farming which supported a considerable period of building in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. St. Mary's Church was completed in 1544 following the appointment of a chaplain of Goldshaw in 1529. The settlement of Goldshaw Booth then became Newchurch-in-Pendle. A chapel of ease had already existed on the site since 1250. Of the original church, only the tower survives, and this was restored twice, in 1652 and 1712. The rest of the church is 18th century in origin. On the outside of the church is the mysterious 'Eye of God' stone, supposedly to deter evil spirits. Buildings of the early to mid-eighteenth century are less well represented because of the success of the previous century. Of particular note, however are the rebuilt nave of St. Mary's Church and the Old Parsonage.

The famous Pendle Witches trial of 1612 involved two rival families of Newchurch, that of Elizabeth Southernness, or Demdike, her daughter Elizabeth Device, and her grandchildren, Alizon and James, and the family of Anne Whittle (Chattox), and her daughter Ann Redfearn. Evidence against the feuding families was collected by Roger Nowell of Read Hall, the Magistrate of Pendle, and the accused, along with 14 other individuals, were sentenced to hang.

The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the further development of agriculture with new farms built or old ones reconstructed. The hamlet of Newchurch is mostly comprised of buildings of this date. The century also saw the construction of the only cotton mill at Spen Brook. Around the mill has developed the hamlet of nineteenth and twentieth century buildings.

# Newchurch & Spen Brook Conservation Area Character Appraisal

---

Spen Brook Mill was built between 1854 and 1879 as a steam powered, cotton weaving mill. It expanded considerably during the 20th century and was last occupied by William Pownall and Sons Ltd, carpet manufacturers. Some terraced housing was built around the mill during the late 19th century to accommodate the workers.

The Old School House in Newchurch is of 17th century origin and was restored in the early 19th century when it was then used as a school room. When the first Day School opened in the village in 1825, the Old School House became the schoolmaster's home. St Mary's School was founded by Major LeGendre Nicolas Starkie in 1874, and was opened in 1876. Extensions were made to the building in 1923 and 1963. The Lamb Inn opened for business in the 1860s (it was previously a farmhouse). The original village inn was the 'Friendly Inn', which was built in 1775 but closed in 1930 and is now a house.

## 3. Newchurch

Newchurch is an old settlement and much of its character is derived from the vernacular style of building in local stone and slate, and the organic nature of the pattern of building. The road gently winds up towards the settlement, however it is mostly hidden from view by hedges and trees which tightly line the road. At many points in the village hedging or banking gives a strong sense of enclosure. Buildings are positioned at varying ground levels and in various orientations giving a sense of randomness to the layout of the village. Some are two storey but many are three. These characteristics also lend themselves to a strong roofscape as chimneys and roofs are prominent in views. Buildings which are of different materials or finishes, such as the white-painted cottages, tend to stand out. Mature trees, primarily along the lanes, reinforce the distinct sense of place.

Buildings are located directly adjacent to the road which serves to hide from view the rest of the village and as such the village is experienced section by section as it is revealed. At the centre of the village a more coherent layout is evident as the buildings orientate around the junction of Cross Lane and Jinny Lane. This part of the village is laid out much like a village green or square, with the houses overlooking it.

## 4. Spen Brook

The character of Spenbrook as a tiny industrial settlement derives essentially from the textile mill which was built there in the mid-19th century, although the small older hamlet is now surrounded by late 20th century housing. Prior to the 1850's

## Newchurch & Spen Brook Conservation Area Character Appraisal

---

the Spenbrook area consisted of rural land with scattered farmsteads. Spenbrook Mill was built in 1857 by the Newchurch Building Company Ltd as a steam powered cotton weaving mill. The company comprised a group of local businessmen who built the mill in an isolated position on a flat site adjacent to Spen Brook, with the aim of letting space to tenant cotton weavers. The location of the mill was advantageous due to its proximity to Newchurch, which was already essentially a handloom weaving village.

The mill was extended later in the 19th century, and in its heyday was running up to 300 looms. It has a tall square-section chimney to the rear, an L-shaped preparation and warehouse block, and to the east side an attached engine house partially rebuilt in the 1930's. Random local stone from nearby quarries is the main building material. The weaving shed has been demolished and the mill is currently awaiting conversion for housing development.

A row of workers' back-to-back terraced cottages was built immediately to the north of the mill shortly after the mill was built. There was then no further housing development until the early 20th century, when two rows of houses at Osborne Terrace were built opposite the mill. Other workers would have travelled to the mill from Newchurch and the surrounding settlements and farms. The hamlet did not expand any further until the late 20th century when around 20 modern houses were built surrounding the original Osborne Terrace.

The hamlet today is centred around and dominated by the former mill. On approaching the hamlet from the south the stone mill building and its chimney are seen as a focal point, surrounded by trees and sitting within open countryside. This is also the impression when seen from Newchurch to the north. From the south the entrance to the village is emphasised by the chimney and the large flank wall of the mill dominating the approach. Dry stone boundary walls sit directly adjacent to the road, which give a strong sense of enclosure, yet still emphasise the informality of the rural setting. Within the hamlet the feeling of enclosure is increased by the surrounding built development and a number of tall trees which partly screen views out to the wider landscape. Despite being located in the open countryside these characteristics can in places combine to give a feeling of separation of the village from its surroundings. This is intensified by the relative extent of 20th century development, both industrial and residential, which has tended to weaken the character and distinctiveness of the original industrial settlement.

The varying ages, architectural styles and materials of the buildings have tended to leave the hamlet with no clear overall character. The 19th century buildings however, in their simple and robust forms and the consistent stone and slate of their construction, do have much greater architectural strength and unity.

## **5. Listed Buildings**

There are eight listed buildings within the conservation area.

### **Church of St. Mary, Listed Grade I**

There has been a Chapel of Ease on the site since 1250, but the first stone church was built in 1544 which provided the Parish with its present name – the New Church. The tower of the church was restored in 1653 and 1712 and is the only part of this original church which remains. The rest of the church was built in 1735 which is evident in the classical type of architecture which was popular at this time in comparison to the gothic style which was preferred when the tower was constructed.

### **22 Newchurch, Listed Grade II**

This is a detached cottage dating from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. It is typical of such early rural properties in this area being built with local rubble stone and a stone slate roof.

### **16, 18 & 20 Newchurch, Listed Grade II**

This property was originally built as two houses, but is now divided up into three cottages. It dates from the mid eighteenth century and is also built from local rubble stone with a stone slate roof. The windows of the property are particularly attractive with three-light flat faced mullions being prevalent on the principal elevation. A lunette window also survives on this elevation.

### **Nutter Headstone, Listed Grade II**

This is a headstone in St Mary's Churchyard which probably dates from 1694. It is a plain slab with a curved top which is inscribed: "Ellin Nutter 1651 – George Nutter 1657 Isabell Nutter 1658 and Margret the wife of Richard Nutter – Buried September the 13 1694 Also Richard Nutter senior Buried May the 4" with the rest obscured.

### **Parker Tomb, Listed Grade II**

The Parker Tomb is a table tomb which dates from 1691. It consists of a raised stone slab on square legs with caps. The slab is moulded as an arch, with angels in the spandrels, around an inscription recording the death of Henry Parker of Wheatley, and his grandson of the same name, 1760.

### **St Mary's Old Parsonage, Listed Grade II**

The former Vicarage dates from the mid 1700's and like the church is a rare example of the classical style in this area. The front of the building is symmetrical in appearance which is a key feature of classical architecture. The main part of the house was built around the time of the rebuilding of the church (mid-18<sup>th</sup> century), with a later

## **Newchurch & Spen Brook Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

extension to the west side. It served as the Vicarage until 1980.

### **Mounting Steps adjoining boundary wall to SW of St Marys Vicarage, Listed Grade II**

These stone mounting steps possibly date from the 1700's and reflect a time when horses were the main method of transportation.

### **Dimpenley Top Farmhouse, Listed Grade II**

This farmhouse probably dates from the early 1700's. It too is constructed from local rubble stone with local sandstone slates.