

# Brierfield Mills Conservation Area Appraisal

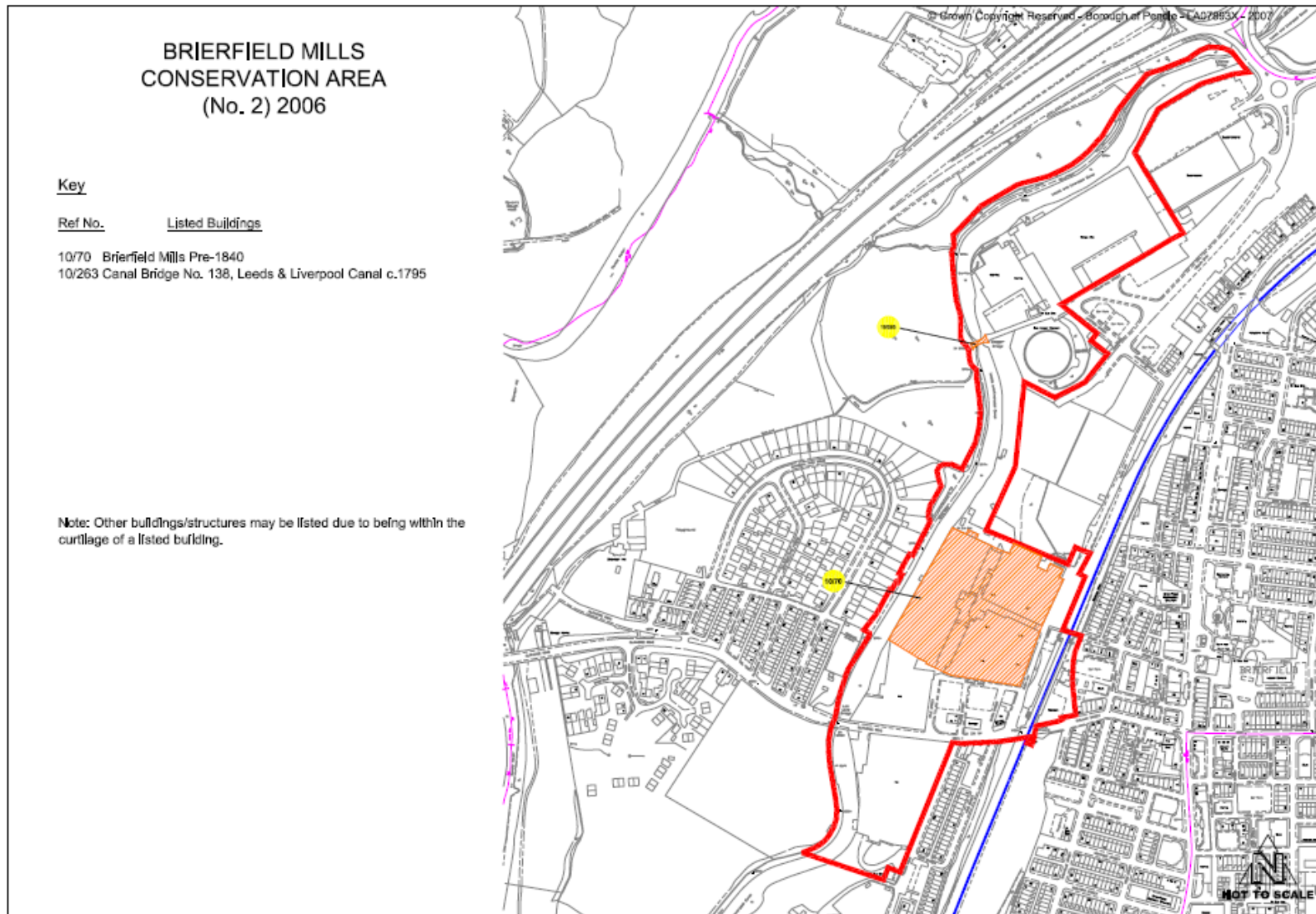


November 2006

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## Conservation Area



## 1.0 Introduction

Pendle Borough Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate as conservation areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The Brierfield Mills conservation area was designated in November 2006.

Where it is considered that an area has special architectural or historic interest, a conservation area character appraisal is a way of recording this. An appraisal should record all the elements that are considered to create this interest. This may include such things as current and past land uses, types of buildings and open spaces, or the social and economic background.

## 2.0 Planning Policy Framework

Designation of a conservation area provides the foundation for the application of conservation policies set out within the Replacement Pendle Local Plan 2001-2016, which enable any change to be controlled. It also provides a sound starting point for any future initiatives that may arise for improving the area.

This character appraisal will therefore be supported by principles set out in a ‘Pendle Conservation Areas Design and Development Guidance SPD’ for the whole Borough. This Appraisal and subsequent SPD will supplement policy 10 of the

Pendle Local Plan regarding areas of special architectural or historic interest.



## 3.0 Summary of Special Interest

The area around Brierfield Mills, along the Leeds-Liverpool canal, provides an interesting self contained ‘snapshot’ of the cotton industry within the Pendle area. This special interest is created by the factors that combined in this location to make cotton production possible. These variables, amongst others, included climatic conditions, transport evolution and social change. These provided the conditions for an industrial area to develop that not only has historical and architectural importance, but is still important to the local population today. Its importance today derives from similar factors as were apparent historically, such as

employment opportunities, but now the area is also used for recreation, and valued for the attractive views it provides and its biodiversity.

#### *Location and context*

The conservation area is centred around a group of mills, which grew up along the Leeds-Liverpool canal in Brierfield, two miles south of the town of Nelson, on the eastern slope of the Pendle Water valley. The boundary of the conservation area is defined by existing infrastructure, to the north by Churchill Way and the M65 motorway, to the east by the railway line, to the south by Robinson Lane and to the west by the Leeds - Liverpool Canal. The area is detached from the town centre of Brierfield, which grew up along the Turnpike road further east. The mills however were located further west to benefit from the location of the canal and later the railway line.

#### *Landscape setting*

The conservation area takes a linear form 'sandwiched' between the Leeds Liverpool Canal and the former Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway line. Despite being located partway down the valley side, the conservation area includes several buildings that dominate the landscape, seemingly 'emerging' from the significant green areas that blur the boundaries between town and country in this part of Brierfield.

## **4.0 Historic Development and Archaeology**

### *Origins and Historic Development*

The Brierfield Mills conservation area is considered to be an area of special architectural and historic interest, particularly due to its historical relationship with the cotton industry, and the growth of the surrounding related infrastructure.

Brierfield was particularly suited to the weaving of cotton because of its location. The town is situated in the lee of Pendle Hill and therefore is sheltered from the worst weather. Due to this, a humidity is created which enabled better working of cloth. Initially, however, these preferable conditions were of little value commercially due to the relatively inaccessible location of Brierfield in the early eighteenth century. This situation began to change when, in 1796, the Leeds Liverpool canal was brought through the area. This enabled industrial growth, as is particularly evident in the conservation area. The canal allowed transport of coal for the steam powered engines and raw materials to the area, and also the carrying of finished materials back to towns and ports for further distribution. Proximity to the canal was therefore an obvious location for the cotton mills as this enabled efficient movement of materials.

The next phase of transport infrastructure, the turnpike road, arrived not long after this in 1803, demonstrating the increasing importance of the area.



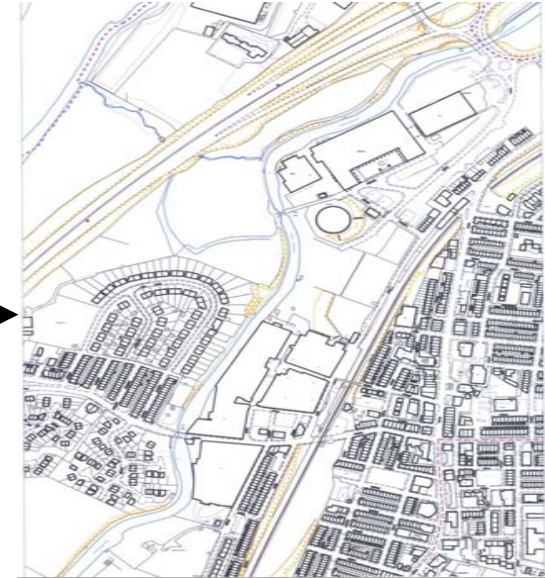
## Development Phases



**1844** – there is very little development evident at this stage. The first phase of Brierfield Mill is fairly isolated next to the canal; the former Marsden Colliery lies immediately to the east (on the site of the current no.3 shed at the mill). The cotton and coal industry vied for prominence in the area; the cotton industry was later to dominate as Marsden Colliery closed in 1873.



**1893** – Much change has taken place in the intervening years. Brierfield Mill has been rebuilt and expanded. Marsden Pit is no longer present. Hollin Bank Mill and Lob Lane Mill are evident, the latter having replaced the brewery adjacent to Lob Lane Bridge. Pendle View Shed has been built on the west bank of the canal. The Lancashire and Yorkshire railway runs through the area, parallel to the canal. The gas works are also in place, bought by the Nelson Local Board in 1888 from a Mr. Tunstill.



**Today** – relatively little change has taken place within the conservation area in over 100 years. The M65 motorway now borders the area to the north. Pendle View shed has been demolished and replaced by a modern housing development; there is further new housing on the previously open fields to the west of the canal adjacent to the 19thC mill cottages.

The turnpike road ran from Duke Bar, Burnley, to Nelson and was constructed parallel to the canal.

The infrastructure was finally completed in 1848 with the arrival of the railway. This was of particular significance as it afforded quicker transfer of goods around the country. The importance of the railway to the mills is evident by its close proximity, again, as with the canal, allowing easy access for raw and finished goods.

The maps showing the phases of development indicate how quickly Brierfield grew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first map in 1844 shows very little development. The canal and Brierfield Mill, constructed in 1838, are the only significant features in the conservation area, whilst there are a few buildings clustering around the Turnpike Road. However, compare this to the situation nearly 50 years later. Considerable development has taken place within this space of time. Much of the development is directly related to the cotton industry. The other mills, Hollin Bank Mill and Lob Lane Mill, are now evident. Brierfield Mill has also been rebuilt and expanded. The railway and surrounding urban development is also apparent.

This evolution has left a particular mark on the area. Current Ordnance Survey maps show the extent of this industrial growth. The large mills are sandwiched between the railway and canal, with the road being the focus of further urban development of varying ages. The boundaries created by the canal and railway provide clear emphasis of the relatively untouched industrial heart of Brierfield. It is appropriate therefore for the conservation area to focus on this area.

### *Building Materials and Details*

Most of the buildings within the conservation area are built in a simple and robust style in local Pennine sandstone and Welsh slate. Brierfield Mill however is of particular architectural quality, being designed to portray wealth and importance. The front office buildings are of formal squared stone in straight courses. Large ashlar blocks, string courses and mouldings are used for emphasis around windows and doors, with classical detailing underlining the grandeur of the mill. The repetition of rounded headed window openings with key stones and strong cornices make for a visually pleasing building. This is emphasised by the strikingly ornate clock tower.



The other mills are of a more simple design with little decoration. Hollin Bank Mill is largely built of coursed squared stone with relatively less detailing, as is much of Lob Lane Mill. The later multi-storey phases of Lob Lane Mill which infilled the site up to the Clitheroe Road frontage are constructed of red brick, with some stone facings. The relatively simple window openings in these mills take the form of lintels and sills without jambs.

The warehouse blocks of the mills are of several storeys, with the weaving sheds being single storey. Hollin Bank Mill and Lob Lane Mill have retained some of their glazed 'saw tooth' north light roofs which are of particular quality in the weaving shed design. Both these mills retain their tall chimneys which are important landmarks of the conservation area.



The gas holder has been constructed of cast iron and has been worked to produce an elegant design with slender components and ornately detailed finials. The strength provided by the material allows the gas holder to be of considerable height whilst retaining this slender form. This is in strong contrast to the 'bulky' materials and solid forms taken by the mills and, with the exception of Brierfield Mill, little detail.

The roofs of most buildings in the conservation area are of Welsh blue slate, which became plentiful after the expansion of the railways in the 1840's. The close proximity of the railway in this area would have meant that builders had easy access to such newly available materials.

Also within the conservation area are some smaller buildings and structures built of local stone, but tending to be of relatively simple design with little detailing. Such buildings include the Railway Tavern and the former Station House.

The canal and canal bridges were also built using local stone. The bridges are simple in design but have proved to be robust, and are still fulfilling their purpose today around 200 years after construction.



## Buildings and Structures in the Conservation Area



1.(a-b) Lob Lane Mill

2.(a-c) Brierfield Mills

3. Clogger Bridge

4. (a-b) West Mill (Hollin Bank Mill)

5. Gas Holder

6. Railway Tavern

7. Railway Signal Box

## *Listed Buildings*

### *Brierfield Mills (2a –2c)*

The most significant building within the area is Brierfield Mill, which whilst being the dominant building in the area is also Grade II listed. A mill was originally constructed on this site in 1833 by Henry Tunstill, but this was demolished, and Brierfield Mills was rebuilt and substantially extended between 1868 and 1907 in local stone and Welsh slate. A much larger spinning block and three associated weaving sheds were developed. This is the complex that is evident today. The mill occupies a prominent position on the valley side and although a substantial part of the mill is set well below the railway line it is a dominant building in the area. It is a substantial structure being 39 bays long, 8 bays deep and 4 storeys high. The main mill buildings are mainly of squared stone rubble and were all steam powered. The south east shed incorporates a stair tower surmounted by a clock tower, and is built up to a two storey range with an Italianate office block (2c) and added warehouse.

### *Clogger Bridge (3)*

Clogger Bridge was constructed in 1795 by Robert Whitworth at the time of the Leeds Liverpool canal construction in the area. This structure is Grade II listed. The bridge is constructed of dressed stone and has an elliptical arch with dressed stone and rusticated voussoirs.

## *Locally important buildings*

### *Lob Lane Mill (1a- 1b)*

Lob Lane Mill was built by Thomas Veevers of Burnley in 1859/60 from local stone and Welsh slate. It was constructed in three phases. In 1859 the initial building was constructed, of which only the beam engine house, stone chimney and part weaving shed remains. In 1889 a horizontal engine was installed into a new engine house and in 1902-4 a dye works and warehouse were added which front onto Clitheroe Road. Later the canal front was rebuilt in 1909-10. The mill's name derives from the fact that the straight highway east for a mile from Quaker Bridge was used to lob the cobble stone or road bowl, a now rarely known game. Although not as imposing as Brierfield Mill, Lob Lane Shed contributes to the canal side environment with its multi pitched roof and striking four storey façade rising up from the waters edge.

### *West Mill (Former Hollin Bank Mill) (4a-4b)*

The former Hollin Bank Mill is a steam-powered room and power cotton weaving mill of at least two phases. The first phase was built between 1887 and 1891 which consists of an engine house and boiler house. Adjacent to the boiler house is a red brick chimney and a single storey weaving shed with glazed saw-tooth roof. The second phase of construction occurred between 1891 and 1910. This saw the mill double in size with a second weaving shed butting against the original. Much of the mill survives in good condition and is currently used as a retail outlet.

#### Gas Holder (5)

As the town of Nelson grew during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, the costs of gas to supply the town were considered to be higher than necessary. This was due to the fact that, at the time, Nelson was not located on a canal or railway route. A gas works at Brierfield built by Tunstill, the owner of Brierfield Mill, was purchased by the Nelson Local Board in 1888, with exactly those attributes. The only remaining element of the works is the tall Victorian gasholder with its ornate detailing.

#### The Railway Tavern (6)

The Railway Tavern was one of the public houses that grew up in the area to provide hotel accommodation. This indicated the growth of industry in this area of Brierfield and was a direct effect of the influx of workers to the area. It is constructed of local stone with Welsh slate. It has an angled frontage due to its prominent corner location.

#### Brierfield Signal Box (7)

Brierfield Signal Box is an original signal box dating from 1876. It was built for the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway under contract by Saxby & Farmer. This particular design only appeared on railways in the north of England. It is of timber and brick construction and appears to be in good condition, although some of the original windows have disappeared.

## **5.0 Spatial Analysis**

### *Character of spaces*

Although the conservation area has comparatively few buildings and structures, there are several clearly defined character areas. These are identified on the Plan on page 11.

#### Trackside (A)

This area has a well defined sense of enclosure, created by the clearly defined section of the railway line combined with the powerful scale of the Brierfield Mill buildings adjacent. The strong lines of the mill building and its heavy Italianate detail add to the feeling of enclosure and the dominance of the built form.

#### Roadside (B)

The principal road through the area is Clitheroe Road, between Brierfield Mill and Lob Lane Mill. The feeling of being within an industrial area is increased here as the mills sit directly adjacent to the road. The mills tower above the road and pavement accentuating the dominance of the mills in this area, and again create a feeling of enclosure.

#### Canalside (C)

In contrast, the feeling of enclosure is lost in this area; from the canal towpath a sense of openness is created by the canal and the adjacent trees. The trees soften the strong lines of the mills and other structures, reducing their dominance.

The character becomes one of a recreational space, with cyclists, dog walkers, joggers, canal boats and fishermen all using it.

## 6.0 Character Analysis

### *Activity and its influence on the plan form and buildings*

The area's character derives from both the evolution of the cotton industry and that of transport. The conservation area provides a snapshot of the cotton industry in Pennine Lancashire, and the evolution of that industry; how at first the mills were dependent on the canal, then eventually turning their attention to the railway and its ability to move goods faster. These two methods of transport have clearly left their mark on the area as they both cut across the landscape.

The regular plan form of the mills is influenced by their size, and means that development covers a significant area. Large buildings were needed in order to house the large spinning and weaving machinery and the number of workers needed to ensure constant production.

The valley route followed by the transport links meant that Brierfield grew in a linear form to ensure proximity to these forms of transport. Nearby are buildings linked to the mills that show how workers' houses and supporting businesses sprang up to provide services to mill workers and to capitalise on the success of the cotton industry. The interrelationship and contrast between these varying man made elements and the

wider unspoilt countryside creates significant interest. This is most notable with the slowly curving canal and its soft lines, open space and landscaping which is in sharp visual contrast with the stark built form of the mills.

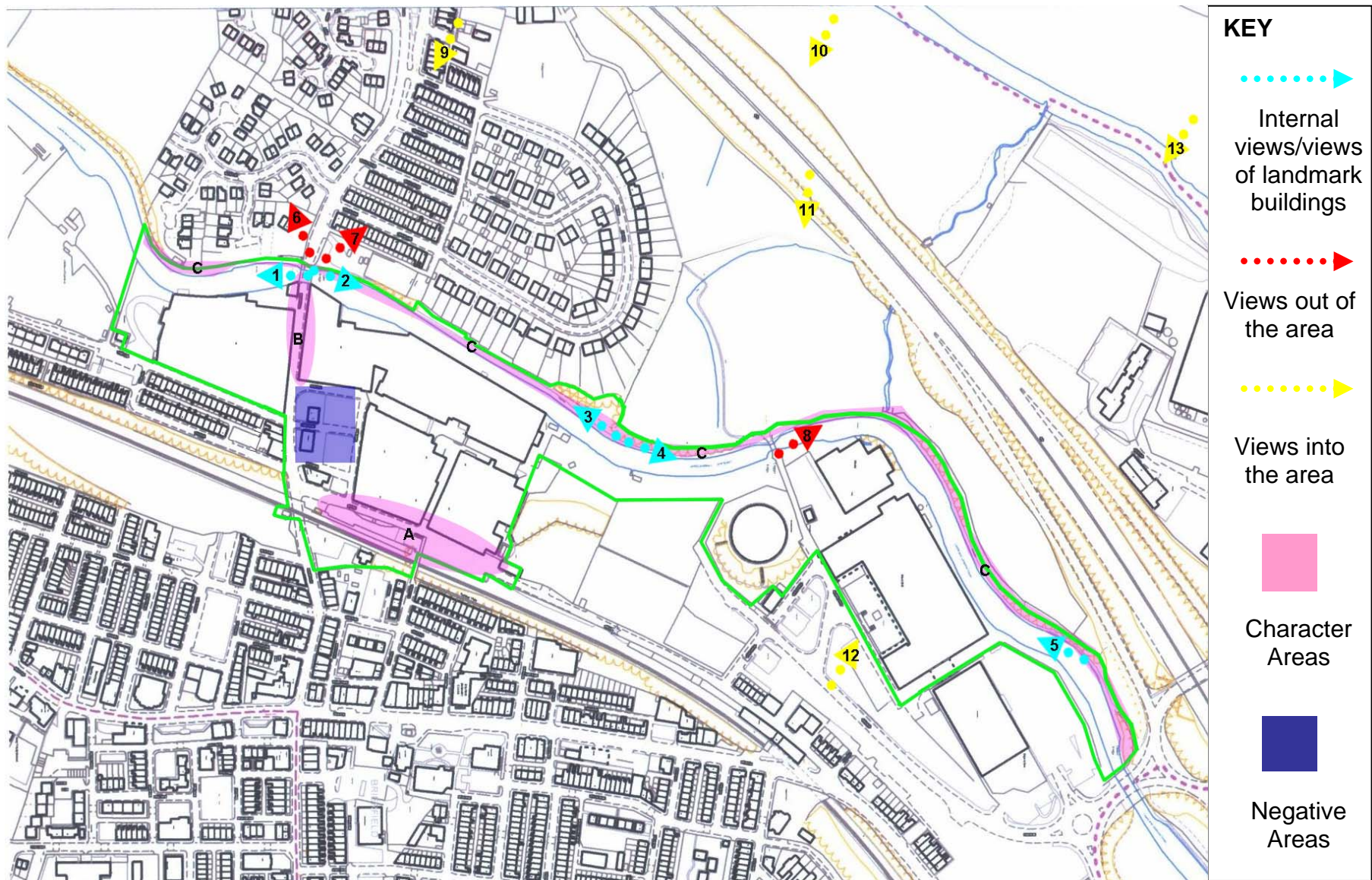
### *Views and Vistas*

There are several views into and out of the area as well as internal views that contribute to the character of the conservation area. The Plan below identifies particularly important views and the following photographs illustrate the character.





## Views and Vistas/ Character Areas







1. View from Lob Lane Bridge towards Lob Lane Shed. The curving canal leads the eye past the adjoining mill and to the wooded area beyond. This creates a pleasant view consisting of varying elements of the man made and natural environment.



2. View from Lob Lane Bridge towards Brierfield Mill. The canal acts as a buffer between the imposing Brierfield Mill and the softer landscape to the left. The canal leads views into the distance towards the gas holder rising from the wooded areas.



3. View along the towpath towards Brierfield Mill. The interaction between the landscaping and built form is of interest here. The mill is almost enveloped by the surrounding trees, but rises impressively through the foliage in the foreground.

4



4. View along the towpath towards the gasometer. The ornate and delicate gasometer rises above the trees, **its** straight lines and detail contrasting with its surroundings.

5



5. View along towpath to rear of the former Hollin Bank Mill. The strong lines and verticality of the mill buildings and chimney contrast with the soft lines of the surrounding foliage.

6



6. View from Lob Lane Bridge to the south-west. The open view over adjacent new development towards the rising rural landscape beyond.



7. View from Lob Lane Bridge to the north-west. Extensive view over the canal in the foreground to the open countryside beyond, framed by trees in the foreground.



8. View from Clogger Bridge to the North. An appealing view as the canal curves out of sight. The trees on both banks frame views out into open countryside.



9. View from the west valley side. This position gives extensive views of the area and shows how dominant Brierfield Mill and the mill chimneys are in the landscape.





10. Distant view from above Fence. The linear shape of the developed area is apparent, shaped by the valley. The mills and gasometer are evident even at this height and distance.

11. Brierfield Mills and the gas holder are dominant manmade features seen from the northbound approach of the M65 motorway (no photograph).

12. View across the former Hollin Bank Mill. The rigid lines of the north light roof lead the eye to the undulating landscape beyond. The chimney and mill building frame the landscape.



13. View from the north-west over the motorway. This view emphasises the dominant horizontal scale of Brierfield Mill and the vertical Lob Lane chimney and their importance in the landscape.

### *Contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces*

Despite the historically industrial nature of the area, there are significant areas of green space, mainly taking the form of trees and shrubs along the canal. These areas link to the wider green spaces beyond creating 'green corridors' for wildlife. These green spaces have become inseparable from the built form around them and are an integral part of the character of the conservation area. The green spaces contribute to the character in that:

- They are important features in terms of views within the area, having framing properties for internal views. Views continually change as glimpses of what is ahead are gradually revealed by the trees.
- They form an integral part of the setting for the area and create dramatic scenery in views into the area. The area seen from a distance is dominated by tree cover, with the built form impressively punctuating the trees at intervals.
- They provide pleasant surroundings for recreation and users of the area, through general provision of greenery.

In addition the canal corridor itself is also identified as a Biological Heritage Site, which indicates its importance in contributing towards biodiversity.



### *Extent of intrusion or damage*

One part of the conservation area is considered to have a negative effect on the character of the area as a whole. This area is located off Clitheroe Road, and adjacent to Brierfield Mills. It consists of generally poor quality modern industrial buildings. This is compounded by the open storage of materials associated with the use, and the unsightly security fencing. This area is marked on the Plan on page 11.



### *Problems, pressures and capacity for change*

The conservation area, along with much of Brierfield, falls within the Housing Market Restructuring Intervention boundary as defined in Pendle's Local Plan. It is under the Government's Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Programme that a number of areas in Brierfield are being targeted for regeneration.

One of these areas, known as the Brierfield Canal Corridor, is a 'live' HMR project. The boundary of the HMR site which includes Lob Lane Mill partially overlaps the conservation area. The

Council's aspirations for the regeneration of the Brierfield Canal Corridor Housing Area are set out in an adopted Supplementary Planning Document (October 2005). They include the sensitive conversion of the 4 storey canal side mill buildings and the redevelopment of the single storey north light shed for new housing. New developments will be expected to respect and enhance the setting of the canal and the distinctive urban character established by the mill buildings, to reinforce the distinctiveness of the neighbourhood. The conservation of the best parts of the mill will ensure its protection and enhancement, encouraging high quality development on the adjacent sites and contributing to the objectives of housing market renewal.

The Railway Street Neighbourhood lies adjacent to the proposed conservation area and is currently the subject of a masterplanning exercise to determine what interventions are needed in order to regenerate the area. Protecting and enhancing the historical features and key buildings within Brierfield will benefit the whole town, and will help to support the regeneration process being pursued through HMR.



## 7.0 Conservation Area Guidance

### *What is a Conservation Area?*

A Conservation Area is defined as *‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’*. Pendle’s conservation areas contain the best of the older parts of the district; each one is distinctive with its own individual qualities, which together contribute to the diversity and attractiveness of the Borough.

### *Caring for Conservation Areas*

The Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas. Thus the various historic buildings, trees, open spaces and views that together make the area special need to be carefully conserved. In this way, local historic environments can be passed on to succeeding generations.

It is not the purpose of conservation areas to prevent change, but to carefully manage change by ensuring that it respects the character of the area. Even small alterations, over time, can disfigure a sensitive area where they fail to reflect its traditional character and materials. In particular, modern building materials often spoil the historic character of an area. Similarly the loss of original features such as timber sash windows and doors, iron railings, old signs and original road surfacing materials can easily damage the quality of the environment.

### *Planning Controls*

The designation of a Conservation Area gives the Council greater ability to control the demolition of buildings and to protect trees. Consent must be obtained from the Council for most works to demolish buildings or walls. Similarly, consent must usually be obtained for felling or other works to trees.

Importantly, all new development must preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. Householder ‘permitted development rights’ (where people can undertake development without applying for planning permission), are more restrictive in conservation areas. The Council can also remove or alter these rights through an ‘Article 4 Direction’, which can bring under control more minor alterations such as new windows and doors, works to chimneys, roofs and dormer windows, external painting, building of porches or outbuildings, and so on.

Before any work is undertaken, it is always wise to check if any consents are required with the Council planning section at Nelson Town Hall (Tel 01282 661661), and for general advice on how to carry out alterations in the most appropriate way. Further information and guidance is also available on the Council website at [www.pendle.gov.uk](http://www.pendle.gov.uk)

### *Listed Buildings*

Listed buildings are identified nationally, and represent the best of the nation’s built heritage. There are over 300 listed buildings within Pendle, many of these within conservation areas. These statutory listed buildings are protected by law from any external or internal works of demolition, alteration or



extension in any manner that would affect the character of the building.

### *Conservation Advice*

The Conservation Team at Pendle Council can offer advice on a range of conservation area, listed building, tree and woodland, and other heritage matters.

ConservationTeam  
Planning and Building Control  
Town Hall  
Market Street  
Nelson  
BB9 7LG

Tel. 01282 661788 or 661960 for building conservation enquiries, and 01282 661729 for tree and woodland enquiries.

Email: [conservation@pendle.gov.uk](mailto:conservation@pendle.gov.uk)

Further information and guidance is also available on the Council website at [www.pendle.gov.uk](http://www.pendle.gov.uk)