


# Primet Bridge Conservation Area Appraisal

May 2007







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PRIMET BRIDGE  
CONSERVATION AREA  
1999

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## **2.0 Introduction**

Pendle Borough Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Building 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*'.

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 things that are considered to create this interest. This may include such things as current and past land uses, types of buildings, architectural detail, materials, and the social and economic background.

## **3.0 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 carefully controlled. It also provides a sound starting point for any future initiatives that may arise for improving the area.

The appraisal will therefore be supported by principles set out in the forthcoming '*Pendle Conservation Area Design and Development Guidance Supplementary Planning Document*' which will guide development in all the Borough's conservation areas. The SPD will supplement policy 10 of the Pendle Local Plan regarding areas of special architectural or historic interest. This appraisal will provide a baseline and evidence to support the planning policy.

## **4.0 Conservation area review**

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time. The Primet Bridge Conservation Area was designated in 1999. The original Conservation Area Appraisal for Primet Bridge has now been reviewed to ensure that the currently designated boundaries continue to be appropriate. It is apparent that there has been little erosion of the character of the area since it was designated. Indeed many changes have been for the better due to a conservation grant scheme (HERS) which ran in Primet Bridge between 2000 and 2005. As such it is not considered necessary to alter the conservation area boundaries at this time.

## **5.0 Summary of special interest**

The special architectural and historic interest of Primet Bridge Conservation Area resides in its mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial development, the mixture of historic uses and architectural types, the tightly packed appearance and character of the buildings, the valley landscape, and the relative completeness of the surviving heritage. The area is predominantly industrial in character, containing mostly Victorian textile mills and other industrial premises and structures such as the railway viaduct, which cluster along the flat valley floor of Colne Water. There are some small pockets of workers' housing which are also 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin and intrinsically linked to the industrial buildings.

The Primet Bridge river crossing is the focal point of the conservation area, where architectural emphasis is given to the scene by the Grade II listed former Primet Foundry, its two mill chimneys, and the adjacent Bridge Works. From this core run three principal axes westwards: Greenfield Road, Colne Water and Burnley Road, each enclosed by buildings and with an individual character and townscape. This predominantly linear form of development follows the flat valley floor, enabling good views over the valley landscape from surrounding higher land. The strong form of the railway viaduct creates an effective visual barrier to the eastern boundary.

The buildings are mostly of local sandstone and blue slate with a relatively plain and functional appearance. There is a wide variety of stonework ranging from ashlar to coursed rubble which contributes much to the subtlety and texture of the area. Many of the buildings follow the traditional single storey weaving shed form with distinctive north-light roofs. Variety is introduced by vertical elements such as chimneys, warehouses and engine houses.

The conservation area has remained relatively unchanged since its creation around 150 years ago. The area continues to be used for industry, with the buildings used and adapted for modern industrial processes, in the most part without the loss of their historic character. Policy 22 of the Pendle Local Plan protects the mills for employment use.

## 6.0 Historic development

Cotton weaving became the single most important factor in the development of the Colne district from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Textiles had been important before this, but with wool and worsted rather than cotton. Cotton weaving had two distinct phases; the handloom dominated from around 1790 to 1840, and the powerloom dominated thereafter. The handloom industry was cottage-based and scattered across the countryside. Prior to the industrial revolution, textile production was one activity amongst many undertaken in the buildings of the local, predominantly farming, community. During the handloom era weavers' cottages were built, where textile manufacture was carried out in a separate loomshop within the building. Weaving became a full time occupation for one or more members of the family, although farming and other work still had a role.

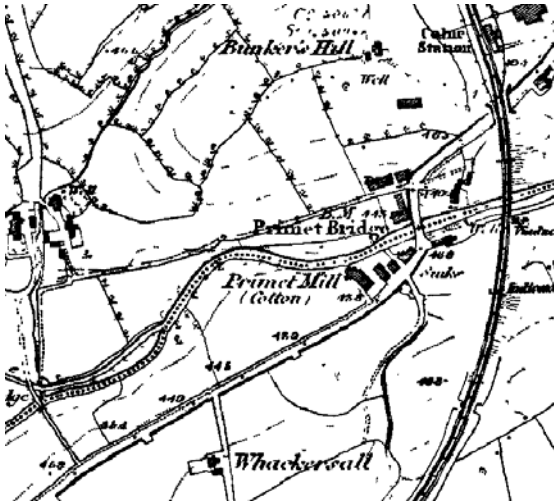
In the powerloom era this separation developed further and whole families were to become dependant on the cotton industry. Separate factories for weaving and loom making grew up on flat land close to water sources and transport links. These were initially built cheek-by-jowl with terraced workers' houses. Later, mills and sheds tended to be grouped together into areas more physically separate from the houses.

Thus over a period of less than 200 years the production of cloth changed from being fully integrated within scattered individual households to completely segregated industrial zones across towns. This process transformed the appearance of the landscape and laid the foundations for modern urban living.

The development of the factory system in the textile industry is an important part of the history of the Primet Bridge area of Colne. It is an industrial urban landscape, and it is appropriate that important examples of the local industrial revolution and the development of the textile industry be conserved for future generations. The maps below illustrate the historic development of the conservation area.

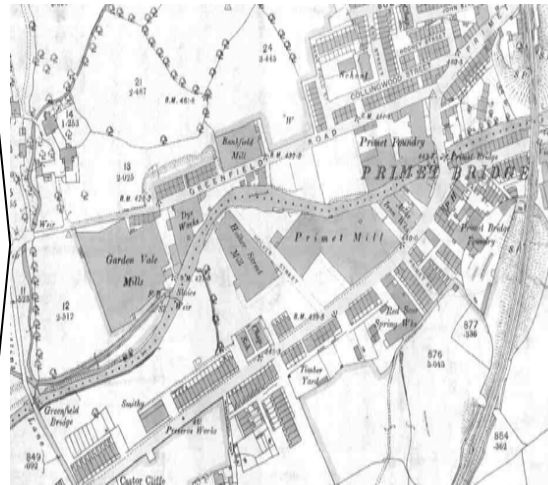
## 7.0 Development phases

1848



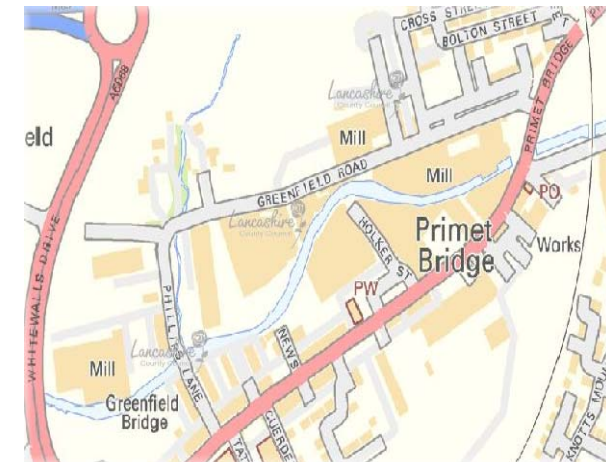
The impact of the industrial revolution is evident at this early stage. The first mills in the area are clustered around the Colne Water crossing but are still surrounded by open fields at this point. The railway is a new feature in the landscape, crossing the valley on a viaduct.

1890



Over the next 42 years there is substantial industrial growth in the area. Large scale mills, foundries and workshops are now in place, with terraced houses for the workers, to support the needs of the mechanised textile industry.

Present day



There has been little change in 120 years, with the M65 and its link road to the west being the major change affecting the area. The road river crossing has been widened and straightened. The conservation area has seen the majority of original buildings remain intact, with only a few buildings being lost or added to.



## 8.0 Buildings and structures in the conservation area





## **1. Primet Foundry, (listed Grade II), 1848**

One of the earliest factories to be built along the river, established in 1848, and now known as Greenfield Mill. The complex is prominently located adjacent to Primet Bridge itself, and creates an imposing presence on Burnley Road. The foundry of John Pilling & Sons manufactured among the most famous of the Lancashire looms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and supplied high quality weaving machinery to the cotton mills of Lancashire and beyond. Primet Foundry is a complex of industrial buildings which developed under a single owner during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and is a complete example of a foundry, loomworks and machine shop all on a single site.

The complex comprises several buildings, including iron foundry, workshops, warehouse, offices and weaving sheds. It is constructed of coursed rubble sandstone with ashlar dressings, with Welsh and stone slate roofs, including glazed north-light sections. The main east elevation includes a four storey engine house with attached truncated square chimney of 1852, extended in 1895. In the south east corner of the site is another octagonal chimney of 1895. Extending northwards, a three storey mill building of twelve bays has large multi-paned windows to all floors.

The south elevation which rises steeply from the bank of Colne Water consists of a nine bay saw-tooth profile roof range of three storeys, with glazed eastern slopes. The northern elevation to Greenfield Road comprises a wide gable of a former machine shop and three smaller gables to two storey ranges. Within the complex is an impressive single span foundry building which backs onto the river.

## **2. Riverside Mill, c1905**

This steam powered cotton mill was built by the loom makers Pilling & Sons in 1905, and lies adjacent to Primet Foundry. Its plain stone frontage is prominent on Greenfield Road. It is said to have been used for research and development of Pillings' own looms. The large weaving shed held 575 looms when originally built. From 1911 until the 1960's it was operated by Ratcliffe, Brown and Lancaster.

### **3. Bankfield Mill, 1844**

A cotton weaving mill to the north side of Greenfield Road, founded by John Pickles in 1844, and remaining in the ownership of the same company until 1968. The sloping site dictated its unusual layout, with the weaving shed extending over the office, yarn preparation and engine house. It was extended around 1891, 1910 and then again in 1929-30. It was used briefly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for worsted weaving.

### **4. Calder Bank Mill, 1854-79**

Formerly the Garden Vale Works, a sizing works built between 1854 and 1879, the site was in multiple occupancy before a weaving shed was built over it, with only a small dye house surviving from the earlier buildings. The weaving shed was built between 1923 and 1933 as a steam powered, cotton weaving shed. It has now been substantially altered.

### **5. Garden Vale Mill, c1850**

Originally known as Greenfield New Mill, Garden Vale Mill was substantially extended probably in the 1880's when a new weaving shed was added. It is now in use as industrial units. Four small terraced cottages are built on to the Greenfield Road frontage.

### **6. Electricity Generating Station, 1901**

This building was Colne's first electricity generating station. It is a significant building on Phillips Lane at the far western end of the conservation area, and helps to create a visual 'gateway' marking the entrance to the conservation area at this point.

### **7. Holker Street Mill, 1879-1887**

A large steam powered cotton weaving mill built over three phases, the first between 1879 and 1887, the second between 1891 and 1897 and the third between 1910 and 1929-30. The company of William and Arthur Riley was the sole occupier of the mill from when it first opened until at least 1941. The engine house, boiler house and chimney have all been demolished. The complex is now a business centre.



## **8. Bethel Independent Methodist Church, 1882**

The original Methodist Church in Primet Bridge was built in 1857 by the Independent Methodist community based at Waterside. This new larger Church was built close by. The funeral of Wallace Hartley, the bandmaster on the Titanic, was held here in 1912. Hartley had been a choirboy at the church in his younger years.

## **9. Primet Mill, 1844-1891**

A steam powered, cotton weaving mill was possibly first built in the 1820's on this site, although this was probably rebuilt into a later mill between 1844 and 1891. The early mill is shown on the 1848 OS map as Primet Mill. The site was occupied as early as 1854 by Thomas Mason, cotton manufacturer. Thomas Mason Ltd occupied the mill until the 1980's. Since then the mill has been partially demolished, whilst surviving parts are now used as business units. It is possible that Primet Mill began as a multi-storey cotton spinning mill and later developed into cotton weaving.

## **10. Red Scar Loom Works, 1854-79**

This complex was built between 1854 and 1879 by William Bell White and originally called the Red Scar Spring Works. W. B. White & Sons Ltd originally manufactured components for looms, eventually moving into complete loom production by the 1930's. Extensions were made to the works in 1888. The original buildings were largely rebuilt and replaced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **11. Primet Bridge Foundry, mid 1800's**

This works on Little Queen Street was established by Rushworth Brothers, who specialised in the manufacture of cranes and stone-sawing machines for use in quarries. The original crane has been restored as a feature of the front elevation; the building is now called Crane Works.

## **12. Bridge Shed, c1905**

This small weaving mill was built on the site of the Atlas Iron Works (in existence from the 1850's) and a size works, where cotton thread was coated with a weak glue to reduce friction during the weaving process. The blank shed wall defines the edge of Burnley Road and follows the bend round towards the bridge. This started off prior to 1846 as a sizing works. However, at the turn of the century the buildings were modified and joined with those of the adjacent Atlas Iron Works to form Bridge Shed, presumably for cotton weaving.

## **13. Railway viaduct, 1848**

When the railway arrived in Colne in the 1840's the river valley needed to be crossed. The impressive stone built viaduct spans the road and Colne Water, providing a strong visual backdrop to the edge of the conservation area.

## **14. Former Co-operative building, Primet Bridge**

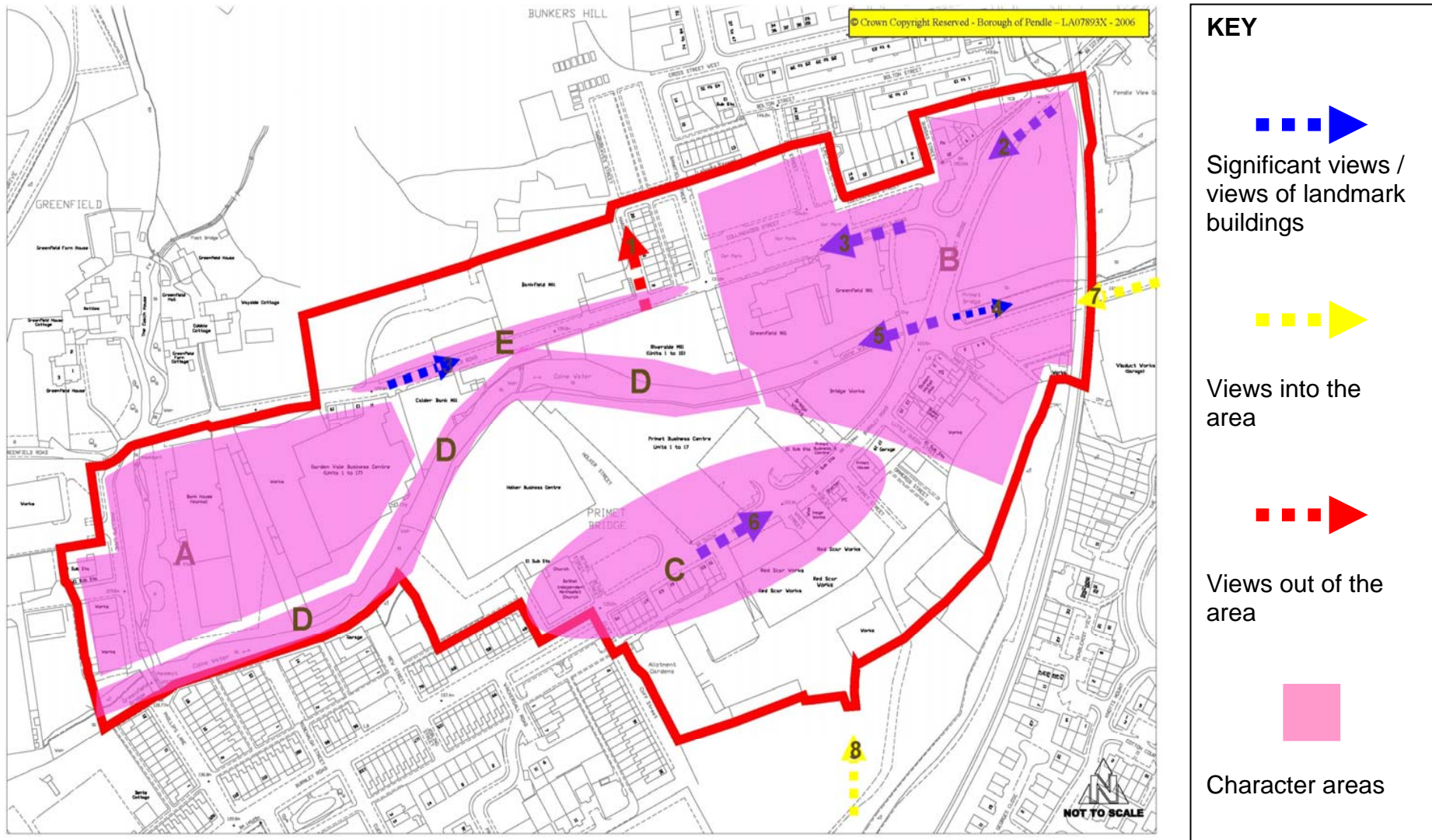
The three storey former Co-op building is a significant and prominent feature adjacent to the viaduct at the eastern edge of the conservation area. Its unusual roof form adds to its interest. A shopfront is located on the ground floor whilst the upper floors would have been used for storage purposes.

## **15. Former back-to-back cottages, Burnley Road**

To accommodate the influx of new workers to the area, terraced cottages were crammed into the spaces around the mills. The earliest of these were 'back-to-backs', with no yard or street between adjoining rows. It was not until the 1870's that the introduction of by-laws meant that houses were built with a piped water supply and separate lavatories for each household. There are surviving back-to-backs on Burnley Road, but these have now been modified to modern living standards. Most of the other cottages shown on the 1890 map have been demolished; the car parking and open grassed areas on Collingwood Street and Greenfield Road were originally back to back cottages.



## 9.0 Spatial and character analysis



## **Character areas**

Five separate character areas can be identified in the conservation area; these are indicated on the plan above and described below. Significant views within and around the conservation area are also identified.

### **A. Phillips Lane and Greenfield Bridge**

Greenfield Bridge (over Colne Water) and Phillips Lane form the western entrance to the conservation area, where the former electricity generating works creates a strong focal point at the gateway. Otherwise Phillips Lane is characterised by two recent industrial buildings on previously undeveloped land. The pre-industrial character is preserved in the pollarded trees of the little beck which runs from the adjacent Greenfield Conservation Area.

### **B. Primet Bridge river crossing**

At the opposite end of the conservation area, the second river crossing at Primet Bridge forms the focal point of the area. To the east of this, the scene is dramatically enclosed by the arches of the railway viaduct, which allow only glimpses of the river valley beyond.

The scene is dominated by the former Primet Foundry, now Greenfield Mill. It creates a strong architectural feature in the street scene with the original 1850's multi-storey machine shop and associated tall chimneys dominating the views of the river crossing. Since the realignment of Burnley Road, the hard urban qualities of the foundry and other buildings have been softened by the planting of trees, resulting in a gentler more attractive landscape. Overall, the foundry buildings, chimneys, trees and landscaping give the Primet Bridge crossing a strong identity and focus.

On the opposite bank of the river and forming an important part of the same scene is Bridge Works. These buildings are characterised by their tall perimeter wall which follows the curve of Burnley Road and imparts a traditional enclosed character to the street scene just prior to the bridge.

On the opposite side of Burnley Road is a group of buildings built around 1850 which face the main road and Little Queen Street. The block is made up of the Queens Hotel, the Knotts Lane Post Office and a number of houses, some originally back to back. To



the rear is Primet Bridge Foundry with its cast iron hoist. All these buildings are arranged around an inner courtyard, Queen Court. This is an interesting early Victorian courtyard development, illustrating how houses of different types were physically integrated with industrial buildings.

The urban form at this point on Burnley Road gently opens out towards the bridge and the junction with Knotts Lane, and acts as a subtle 'announcement' of the green open space of the river crossing. North of the crossing the land rises steeply up Primet Hill where the railway viaduct effectively delineates the northern extent of the conservation area. A former pub, cottages and warehouse add interest and complete the scene.

### **C. Burnley Road**

The eastern section of Burnley Road described above is where the road curves northwards to cross the river. As the road moves west it straightens out where, to the north, are Primet and Holker Street cotton mills, both relatively large complexes. The former was one of the first buildings at Primet Bridge, and dominates the views along Burnley Road looking towards Colne.

On the southern side of Burnley Road, the 19<sup>th</sup> century development is smaller in scale, due to the rising land behind. Next to Little Queen Street is a former carriage works, followed by a pair of better class houses similar to those of the Post Office block described above. Terraced houses on Ormerod Street and Primet Street to the rear have been demolished.

Next is Red Scar Loomworks, the second specialised loomworks in the area. Most of the complex lies to the rear of the advert hoardings and two rows of houses, the first of which contains former back-to-back cottages and a former chapel. To the rear of the second row, the aptly named Cliff Street negotiates the hillside slope.

On the north side of the road, the Bethel Church acts as a marker in the street scene after which both sides of the road are made up of late nineteenth century houses and shops of attractive appearance. Further west, Burnley Road is of a different character being dominated by residential buildings, a result of its later development when greater segregation between housing and industry was considered desirable. This area is therefore located outside the Conservation Area but forms part of its setting.

#### **D. Colne Water**

The second axis is the river itself which winds more or less westwards from the bridge. The view from the bridge is a wonderful example of a mature early Victorian industrial landscape. Mill and foundry buildings of one to five storeys rise sheer from the river creating a linear space enclosed by a 'curtain wall' of stone buildings. This is a particularly important aspect of the appearance and special interest of the area.

On the south bank are the Bridge Shed, Primet Mill and Holker Street complexes, whilst on the north bank are located Primet Foundry, Riverside Mill, Calder Bank Mill and Garden Vale Mill. These buildings comprise a significant group of mills and factories in a surprisingly good state of preservation, and collectively of very high townscape value.

#### **E. Greenfield Road**

The third axis, Greenfield Road, was laid out around 1850 and for most of its length runs in an almost straight line westwards and gently downhill from its junction with Burnley Road. On the south side of the road the industrial buildings extend in most cases right up to the edge of the pavement and form a varied but strong industrial streetscape. This is finally relieved by a short row of cottages tucked in against Garden Vale Mill where the road kinks slightly northwards. Much of the special interest of Greenfield Road lies in these different buildings and their facades. The road ends in the countryside of the Greenfield Conservation Area.

On the north side of Greenfield Road there are spaces left by the demolition of several rows of back-to-back houses, and as a result the streetscape is created from the terraces on the steeply sloping Bankfield Street and Hargreaves Street. Bankfield Mill is an interesting example of a weaving mill design adapted to cope with the steepness of the slope.

## Significant views



View 1 – Hargreaves Street

The residential streets that run off the main industrial areas add to the densely developed character of the conservation area.

The houses and mills stand cheek-by-jowl which creates significant visual interest and adds variety to the built form. The steeply sloping terraced houses of Hargreaves Street are an example of this type of scene as are the cottages on Burnley Road.

View 2 – from Primet Bridge at the eastern edge of the conservation area

The view from the elevated position at the top of Primet Bridge emphasises the valley nature of this part of the conservation area. The road descends to the Colne Water crossing.

From this position, the industrial nature of the area does not dominate. The cottages and public house on Burnley Road are prominent elements of the built form, with only the chimney of Primet Foundry giving a glimpse of the industry further down the valley. The trees in the foreground and those in the background and landscape help to soften the view at this point.





View 3 – Greenfield Road

The views westwards along Greenfield Road clearly show the industrial nature of the area. The tall industrial buildings abut directly onto the road, creating a strong and dramatic industrial townscape.

The repetitive gables and rooflines guide views along the road, in both directions. The open land opposite, created when back to back houses were cleared, contrasts with the built form opposite.

View 4 – the railway viaduct from the river crossing

The railway viaduct delineates the eastern extent of the conservation area. Its massive proportions dominate the cleared land in the foreground.

Along Knotts Lane, views are guided through the arches of the viaduct which effectively frames views of the landscape beyond.





View 5 – the view along Colne Water from Primet Bridge.

This view captures the industrial nature of the area and the dramatic forms of the mills as they cluster around the original water source of the river. The buildings channel the view as they tower either side of the river.

Architectural features such as the north light roofs and the tall small-paned windows create visual interest and a strong vertical emphasis. The consistent unifying effect and texture of the local sandstone is apparent in this and other views.



View 6 – the view from Burnley Road up to Primet Bridge.

The land rises from the river crossing up to the railway viaduct. The former Co-op building is prominent in the distance at the bend in the road.

The blank weaving shed wall in the foreground rises characteristically from the pavement emphasising the enclosed nature of the road.

The trees in the near distance contrast with the straight lines of the buildings and soften the townscape as the view opens out.



View 7 – the view from higher land off Knotts Lane to the east, through the viaduct arches.

The strong lines of Primet Foundry dominate the middle-distance. The visual contrast between the saw-tooth north light roofs, the taller mill buildings and the chimneys is evident.

The valley location of the industrial settlement is emphasised by the rising hills beyond.

View 8 – the view from higher land to the south.

The construction of buildings 'cheek by jowl' is evident as the buildings are densely packed along the valley floor.

The variety of roof pitches and north light roofs create an interesting and varied roofscape, and the varying heights of the buildings bring additional contrast and character to the scene. The Primet Foundry chimney is a particular landmark.



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

There are relatively few green or open spaces in the area as the industrial buildings were densely developed, making use of all the spare land available. Those that do exist are the result of earlier buildings being demolished and not replaced. This has resulted in minor changes in density and character in parts of the conservation area, but these small open areas do not significantly alter the defined industrial character of the area.

The trees that are located at Primet Bridge and Burnley Road, in particular, help to soften the industrial forms. When these combine with the visible open landscape beyond, attractive contrasts are created between the built and natural landscape.

### **Extent of intrusion or damage**

There are some small sites in the area, such as the open land on Collingwood Street, which detract from its generally 'enclosed' character. Many are where rows of back-to-back and other cottages were demolished under clearance schemes many years ago and not subsequently redeveloped. The area is therefore more industrial and less residential than it used to be. Nevertheless, some of the sites have been planted with grass and trees which softens the landscape in a beneficial way, whilst other sites provide valuable parking and operational space.

There have been some modern and unsympathetic building materials introduced into the street scene, for instance metal sheeting for walls and roofs of industrial buildings, and plastics for windows, rainwater goods and signs. There has also been some loss of architectural details such as chimneys (to both factories and houses) and original windows and doors. The introduction of advertising hoardings and the proliferation of signage on Burnley Road has also detracted from the visual qualities of the area.

These negative features and losses however do not substantially detract from the overall special interest and appearance of the conservation area.

## **10.0 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 Team at Nelson Town Hall (Tel 01282 661333), 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/planning](http://www.pendle.gov.uk/planning)

### **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.

Conservation Team  
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)