

Oldham Rochdale HMR Pathfinder Heritage Assessment

Executive Summary

September 2006



Lathams

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1.00 INTRODUCTION

Background

Oldham and Rochdale Partners in Action have commissioned a series of heritage assessments of the Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (HMRP) area, one of nine Partnership areas where the housing market has been identified by the Government as weak and in need of fundamental change.

The aim of the Partnership is to enable the delivery of a high quality, sustainable urban environment which address the problem of concentrations of poor and outmoded housing. An extensive series of actions that will reverse decline and reinvigorate the housing market are planned, which will initially involve strategic interventions in four neighbourhoods:

- Derker and Werneth Freehold districts of Oldham,
- East Central Rochdale area of Rochdale, and the
- Langley area of Middleton.

A combination of refurbishment, demolition and new building is being used to replace dated, unpopular housing of all types and periods with modern sustainable accommodation, supported by other initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal and New Deal for Communities. The aim is to deliver over a 10–15 year period clean, safe, healthy and attractive environments in which people can take pride.

Recognising and building on the heritage value of the existing communities is a key component of the overall strategy for renewal. This is why the Partnership supports the need for heritage assessments which can be used to inform spatial planning and development decisions at a variety of levels, from the masterplanning of whole neighbourhoods to the reuse and refurbishment of individual buildings. Consultants were therefore appointed to carry out intensive assessments of the four ‘first wave’ neighbourhoods within the context of an extensive assessment of the Oldham–Rochdale HMRP area.

Detailed reports on the Oldham, Rochdale and Middleton HMRP areas should be consulted for a deeper understanding of the heritage value (significance) and the issues arising in respect of heritage assessment of the wider area(s) and the individual neighbourhoods.

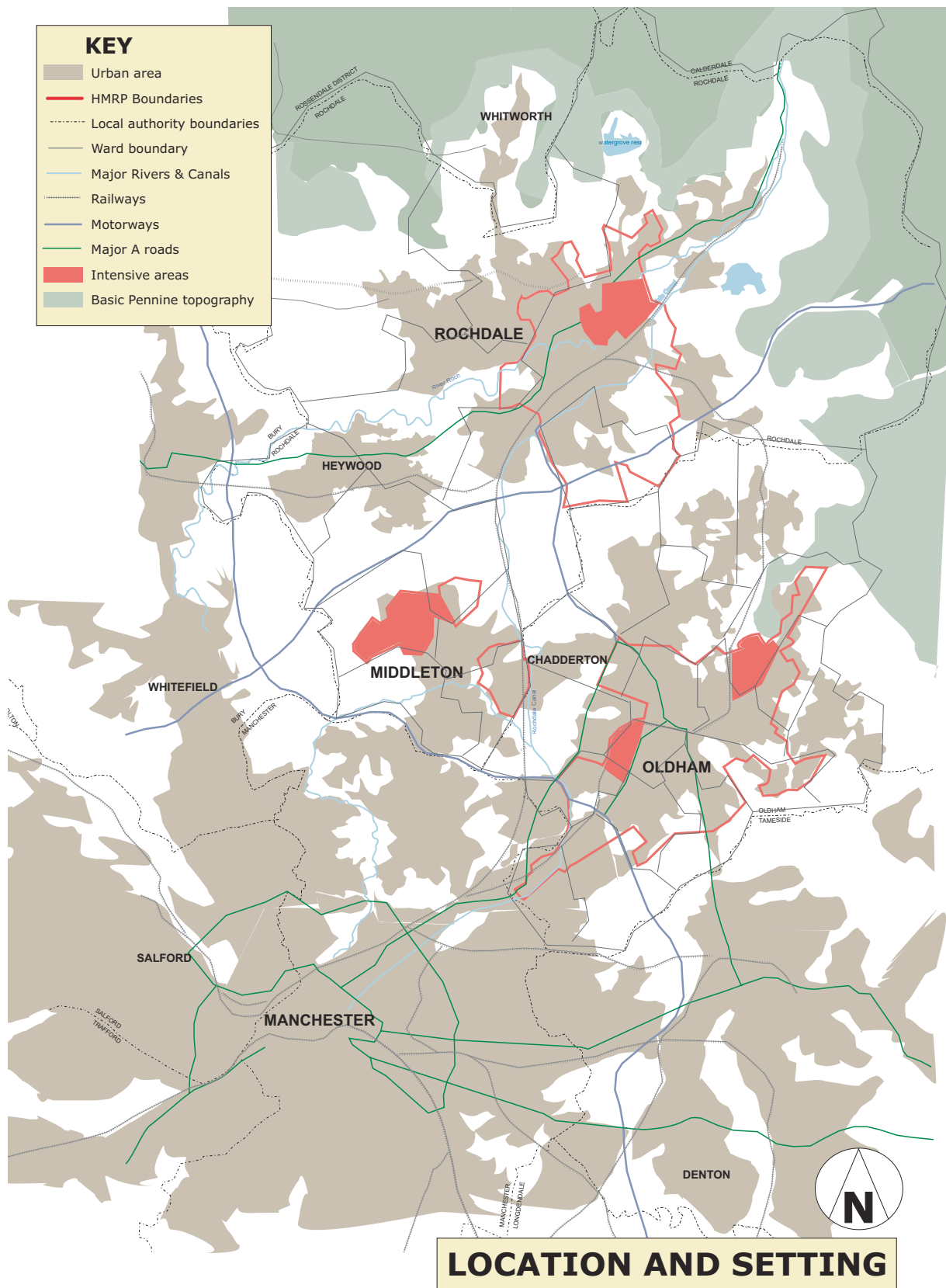
Approach

The extensive assessment was required in order to establish an overview that would give an initial impression of the heritage of the HMRP area, its value and level of survival. Research and fieldwork were brought together so as to encapsulate in writing those attributes which, in heritage terms, define the identity of the three component towns: Oldham, Rochdale and Middleton. The aim was to explain why the towns are as they appear today and to provide broad recommendations as to how significance could inform the decisions of the Partnership with respect to each town as a whole.

Intensive assessments defined the heritage value of each of the four neighbourhoods in a way which can inform the regeneration of individual areas, streets and buildings, even where clearance has already been agreed in principle. Research and fieldwork underpinned an objective assessment process which led to the categorisation of buildings, features, streets and spaces in a way which will enable the heritage assessment to be used as a practical development control tool.

The Oldham–Rochdale HMRP area

The Oldham–Rochdale HMRP area lies within the Metropolitan Boroughs of Oldham and Rochdale. Within the region are the densely settled towns of Rochdale, Oldham, Chadderton, Middleton and Royton, and former villages such as Failsworth, Shaw and Crompton, all characterised by a period of rapid industrial growth which began in the late 18th century and continued into the 20th. It is a diffuse landscape whose character is shaped by an often dramatic interaction between topography and development, crisscrossed by Motorways and major roads yet in many places still rural. One can be within a few kilometres of the centres of Oldham, Rochdale or Middleton and yet in the wild and open Pennine environment which provides the backdrop for their shared and separate heritage.



Location Plan showing Oldham, Rochdale and Middleton in context with HMRP boundaries highlighted

2.00 OLDHAM

Generally

The Oldham HMRP Area embraces virtually the whole of the town of Oldham as well as the outlying though now connected settlements of Hollinwood and Failsworth, and a large part of Chadderton. Moorland hamlets such as Watersheddings and Sholver are also included. It is a diverse, complex and extensively built-up area which extends from the low ground of the valley of the River Medlock some 10km northeast to the Pennine Moors, and approximately 3km each side of Oldham town centre.

The significance of Oldham lies in the way in which its fabric illustrates the social and economic development of the town in the period from c.1850 to 1914, and to a lesser extent beyond. It was the multi-storey mills, each with their mill lodges (reservoirs), the forest of mill chimneys, and the associated rows of uniform red-brick houses, that gave Oldham its special character, and which in many ways still does. Also, the way in which such development was shaped by the topography of a landscape which was not an obvious site for what would become the most important cotton spinning town in the world, other than for the combination of coal and technology which gave rise to the urban landscape of Oldham today.

Having studied and analysed the heritage of Oldham, it is recommended that, within in the context of the limitations of the process of extensive assessment:

- (1) An intensive heritage assessment should be undertaken to inform any masterplanning or detailed implementation plans being developed for areas considered for Housing Market Renewal, particularly if these involve the Werneth–Coppice area, the periphery of Alexandra Park, Glodwick, and Greenacres–Clarksfield area.
- (2) Close groupings of mills and housing within areas considered for Housing Market Renewal should be presumed to be of historic value unless intensive historic assessment demonstrates otherwise. Housing of limited architectural or historic interest should be understood in terms of the way it works in terms of the setting of the mill and the wider townscape. Such understanding should be used to inform the design of any replacement development.
- (3) The planning and design of any intervention within areas considered for Housing Market Renewal should respect any historic street patterns and property boundaries that are known to exist, or which are revealed via the process of intensive heritage assessment.
- (4) There is an extreme presumption in favour of the retention of any listed buildings which lie within or adjacent any areas of Housing Market Renewal. The settings of all listed buildings should be assessed as a part of the process of intensive heritage assessment with due regard to the recommendations of PPG15.

- (5) In formulating proposals for change in areas of Housing Market Renewal, there should be a general presumption in favour of the retention of churches, pubs, clubs, schools, retail premises of note (e.g. Co-operative stores), and similarly distinctive buildings, pending the outcome of intensive heritage assessment.
- (6) No mill which is capable of continued and sustainable use (or re-use) should be demolished, though this does not preclude the selective removal of parts of any complex which has been extended and altered, subject to intensive historic appraisal and - where appropriate - the preparation of a conservation plan.
- (7) A detailed survey of all surviving mills within the HMRP area should be undertaken with a view to establishing the extent to which this important aspect of the heritage of Oldham has been lost or is being progressively eroded. Such a survey should also aim to identify any mills which warrant consideration for listing, with a focus on early mills (pre-1860) such as notable later examples.
- (8) Subject to a formal appraisal process which accords with current English Heritage Guidance, consideration should be given to the designation of the greater part of the Werneth-Coppice area as a Conservation Area.

Finally, the clearance of any housing of any age should only take place after a desk-based archaeological appraisal, similar to ones which have already been undertaken in respect of the Derker and Werneth Freehold areas.



Panoramic view of Oldham looking west from Lydgate

Derker

The Derker area is typical of the rapid expansion of Oldham between 1870–90 and its subsequent encroachment on the surrounding countryside during the 1920s and 30s. It lies northeast of the centre of Oldham. Ripponden Road defines its eastern boundary, Derker Road its southern extent, while its western edge corresponds to Cromford Street and a short section of the line of the Oldham to Rochdale railway. The northern boundary meanders along the rural fringe of the town, adding to Derker proper the areas of Whetstone Hill, Watersheddings and Broadbent.

Derker is characterised by dispersed pockets of tightly knit, terraces of 19th century housing, between which lies a mixture of the abandoned or reused industrial sites and clusters of later, mainly post-WW2 housing. This is in contrast to areas of low density council housing built in the 1920s and 30s, and in which green space and trees are paramount. The strong sense of connection between this 'edge-of-Oldham' suburb and the wider landscape emphasises the role of the underlying topography in defining uniqueness and local distinctiveness. A few local landmark buildings add to the character of the area, though not in a way which is in any way as overt or significant as in other parts of Oldham.

An evaluation of the impact on the historic environment of the Derker masterplan revealed that, in heritage terms, the loss of a number of streets and buildings would to varying degrees erode the significance of the area. It is therefore recommended that, subject to wider social, economic and environmental concerns:

- (1) The feasibility of a programme of selective refurbishment is investigated as an alternative to the wholesale clearance of a number of terraces which have been identified as having been designed by the historically important architectural firm of Stott & Sons, particularly those which make-up Granite, Marble and Flint Streets. However, adjacent terraces which are purely of townscape value could be redeveloped provided that their replacement respects the existing street lines, the topography and other historic townscape qualities.
- (2) Proposals for the redevelopment of London Road should strive to retain and reuse the Co-op building, and that if retention and refurbishment of terraces of townscape value is not feasible, replacement development is designed to reflect the enclosed, tight-grained, frontage characteristics of the existing urban environment.
- (3) Efforts should be made to find a sustainable use for the St. James Ward Liberal Club building on Derker Street, and to integrate it within any development proposals for the area. Retention should extend as far as the surrounding traditional paving and the adjacent flagstone walling. It is also recommended that a spatial and economic feasibility study into options for reuse is undertaken.



St. James Ward Liberal Club (1897) on the corner of Derker Street and London Road

- (4) The possibility of retaining the most significant parts of Albert Mill on Cromford Street, and integrating them within new development are explored. Likewise the feasibility of retaining the Alexandra public house on Derker Street and — if confirmed by research to date from the Regency period — the Gardener's Rest on Acre Lane.
- (5) Effort should be made to keep in use the historically most valuable parts of the Broadbent School building. It is recommended that a spatial and economic feasibility study into options for reuse is undertaken, a part of which could extend as far as the preparation of a well-researched conservation plan.
- (6) The possibility of repairing and remodelling the terraces on Abbotsford Road should be explored, especially if further research demonstrates the development to be of significance of the context of the Oldham as a whole. This could involve the creation of larger houses behind the existing facades, lateral conversions and other options.



Broadbent School (c.1884) from Broadbent Road

INSERT MAP 06 (GATE FOLD)

Werneth Freehold

The Werneth Freehold area lies south west of the centre of Oldham. Manchester Road defines the greater part of the eastern boundary of the study area, the remainder being along the line of Featherstall Road South. To the north and west is the line of the railway that links Oldham to Ashton under Lyne, with the southern boundary of the area corresponding to the line of Old Lane and its continuation along Spencer Street.

Werneth Freehold is characterised by a 19th century street pattern overlaid on an old rural network of lanes, filled out by a variety of mainly through terrace, bye-law type housing dating from the later Victorian and Edwardian periods. Churches, shops and pubs, and the proximity of historic industrial sites adds up to an area which is typical of the industrial suburbs which radiated out from the old centre of Oldham. This is notwithstanding the uniqueness of character which is afforded by factors such as the underlying topography, the planning of Oldham Freehold Land Society, the proximity of Werneth Park, and a handful of buildings of individual significance.

An evaluation of the impact on the historic environment of the Werneth Freehold masterplan revealed that, in heritage terms, the two sit comfortably together notwithstanding localised areas of conflict which need to be resolved. It is therefore recommended that, subject to wider social, economic and environmental concerns:

- (1) Clearance of the streets to the north of Edward Street (St. John's area) should only take place as long the following principles inherent in the existing townscape are taken into account in redevelopment proposals:
 - the line of the northern side of Edward Street is respected and the corner of its junction with Harry Street is treated as a subtle focal point in the unfolding view when approaching from the Oxford Street direction,
 - streets should run along or at ninety degrees to the contours, maintaining and if possible enhancing historic views to the north and west,
 - the tight-knit, close-grained character of the area should be recreated, and
 - new housing should be of modest scale, reflecting the historic interplay between terraced cottage and large mills and thereby accounting for the need to respect the setting of two important listed buildings.
- (2) Proposals for Tamworth Street and the end of Bath Street should be modified so as to ensure that the integrity of 21–33 Bath Street and its relationship to the public garden is maintained. Replacement of the Tamworth Street terrace would in heritage terms be acceptable as long as the building line and the general townscape qualities of the street are recreated in new development. It is also important that the townscape qualities of the point where Tamworth Street meets Oxford Street are retained.

- (3) Redevelopment on the corner of Stafford and Cambridge Streets should recreate the existing qualities of scale and proportion, and be clearly subservient to the architectural interest of 80–112 Cambridge Street (Cambridge Terrace)
- (4) Subject to further investigation, the Gem Cinema on Suffolk Street should be retained and integrated within a new development. As far as can be ascertained at the present time, there is no reason why the building could not be remodelled to enable reuse, notwithstanding any information which may come to light and justify listing.

It is also recommended that the following buildings should be further investigated with a view to the possibility of listing:

- St. John's Church,
- The Royal Oak public house, and
- The Smut Inn on the Manchester Road.



St. John's Church, built 1843 to the design of E. H. Shellard



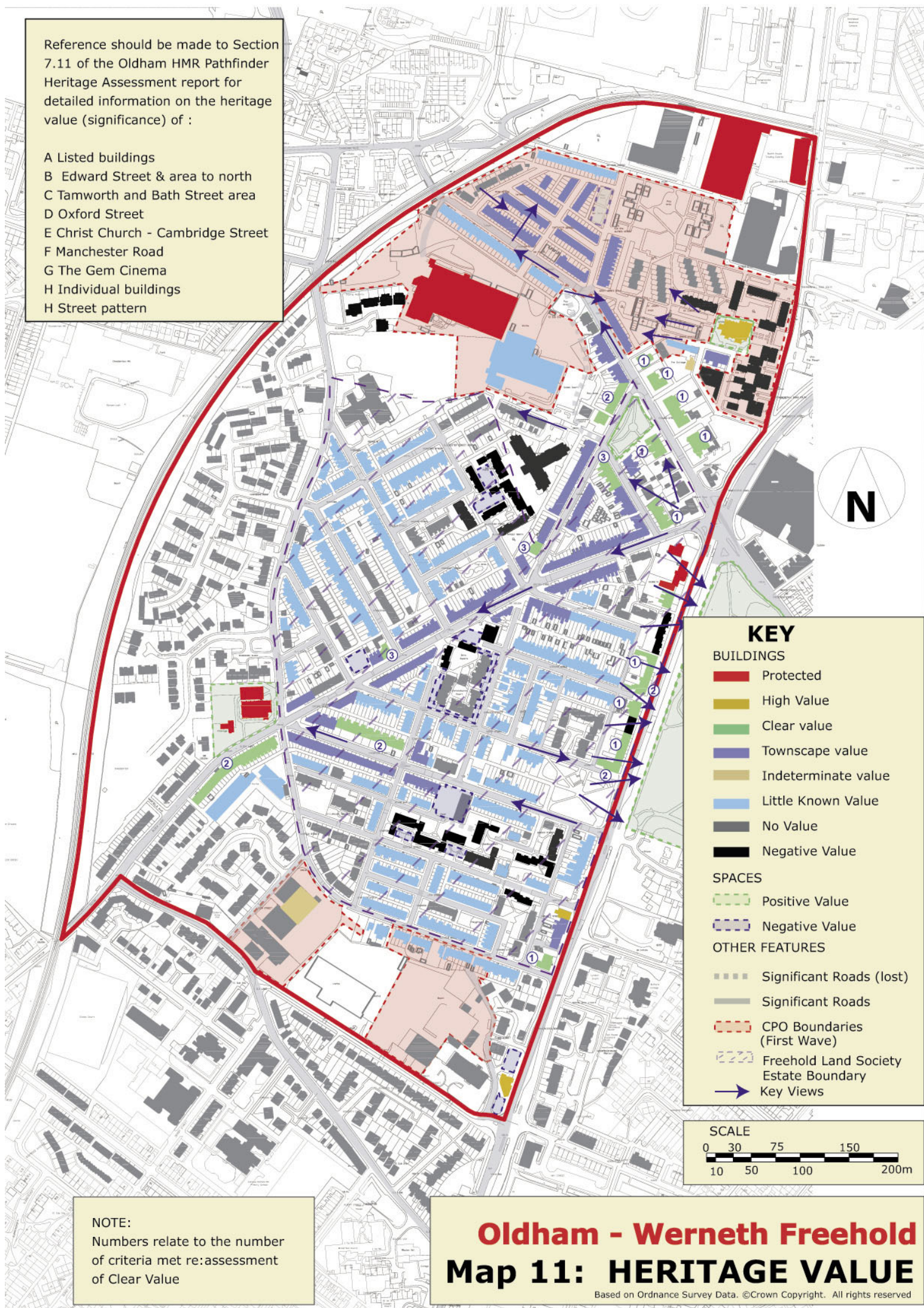
The Royal Oak public house on Manchester Road (pre 1845)



The Smut Inn on Manchester Road (1884) complete with detail of bay window: 'Strive Mightily But Eat And Drink As Friends'

Reference should be made to Section 7.11 of the Oldham HMR Pathfinder Heritage Assessment report for detailed information on the heritage value (significance) of :

- A Listed buildings
- B Edward Street & area to north
- C Tamworth and Bath Street area
- D Oxford Street
- E Christ Church - Cambridge Street
- F Manchester Road
- G The Gem Cinema
- H Individual buildings
- H Street pattern



NOTE:
Numbers relate to the number of criteria met re:assessment of Clear Value

Oldham - Werneth Freehold

Map 11: HERITAGE VALUE

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3.00 ROCHDALE

Generally

The Rochdale HMRP Area embraces large parts of the town of Rochdale as well as places such as Balderstone, Kirkholt and Smallbridge which are now subsumed. It is a diverse and complex area which extends some 8km from north to south and 4.5km east to west, roughly centred on the old market town of Rochdale. Through the area flows the River Roch and its tributaries. The Rochdale Canal traverses the high ground south of the Roch valley and the town centre, following a line from southwest to northeast which was later picked-up by the railway and — further south — the M62.

The significance of Rochdale lies in the way its fabric illustrates the social and economic development of the town from c.1800 to 1914, and to a lesser extent beyond. Although the presence of mills and streets of 19th century by-law housing gave the town a large part of its special character (and in many ways still does), the most distinctive and significant characteristic about the town is the way in which its growth in relation to roads and topography has maintained a close sense of connection between town and country.

Having studied and analysed the heritage of Rochdale, it is recommended that, within the context of the limitations of the process of extensive assessment:

- (1) An intensive heritage assessment should be undertaken to inform any masterplanning or detailed implementation plans being developed for areas considered for Housing Market Renewal, particularly if these involve the Falinge–Spotland Bridge area, the area between Drake Street and the Railway, Stoneyfield, and clusters such as Spotland Fold.
- (2) The planning and design of any intervention within areas considered for Housing Market Renewal should respect any historic street patterns and property boundaries that are known to exist, or which are revealed via the process of intensive heritage assessment.
- (3) There is an extreme presumption in favour of the retention of any listed buildings which lie within or adjacent any areas of Housing Market Renewal. The settings of all listed buildings should be assessed as a part of the process of intensive heritage assessment with due regard to the recommendations of PPG15.
- (4) In formulating proposals for change in areas of Housing Market Renewal, there should be a general presumption in favour of the retention of churches, pubs, clubs, schools, and similarly distinctive buildings, pending the outcome of intensive heritage assessment.
- (5) No mill which is capable of continued and sustainable use (or re-use) should be demolished, though this does not preclude the selective removal of parts of any complex which has been extended and altered, subject to intensive historic appraisal and — where appropriate — the preparation of a conservation plan.

- (6) A detailed survey of all surviving mills within the HMRP area should be undertaken with a view to establishing the extent to which this important aspect of the heritage of Rochdale has been lost or is being progressively eroded. Such a survey should also aim to identify any mills which warrant consideration for listing, with a focus on urban mills.
- (7) Subject to a formal appraisal process which accords with current English Heritage Guidance, consideration should be given to the designation of the greater part of the Falinge–Spotland Bridge area as a Conservation Area, along with two further areas in East Central Rochdale.

Finally, the clearance of any housing of any age should only take place after a desk-based archaeological appraisal, similar to the one which has already been undertaken in respect of the East Central Rochdale Housing Market Renewal area.



College Bank flats (1966) from Broadfield Park



Broadfield Park (1870)

East Central Rochdale

The East Central Rochdale HMRP area comprises the areas of Wardleworth, Hamer, Belfield and Clover Hall, all of which lie in the valley of the River Roch northeast of the old core of Rochdale. The western boundary of the area is marked by the line of John Street and the Whitworth Road, with Princess Street to the north and the River Roch to the South. The area spreads eastward and north along the major arteries of Yorkshire Street and Halifax Road, its northern boundary meandering along a number of roads and features including the Rugby Road, the line of the Hey Brook, Foxholes Road and Albert Royds Street. The eastern and southern extent of the study area is the rivers Roch and Beale, the line of the Manchester to Leeds railway, and the sometimes tortuous line of the point where built development meets countryside and the open river valleys.

East Central Rochdale is difficult to characterise as a single entity, a consequence of its fragmentary and piecemeal development over nearly two centuries, and the way in which the area is broken up by the River Roch and its tributaries. The most notable parts are:

- The area closest the centre of Rochdale, defined by the nature of its street pattern which comprises a grid of streets which breaks the area into small blocks which date from the Regency to the late Victorian period. Interspersed within this area are places of worship and other notable buildings.
- The area of late Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing which centres on Hey Brook and the curve of Entwisle Road, in which the starkness of the terraces is relieved by a combination of greenery and street frontage activity.

The character of the remainder of the area varies between a jumbled mix of terraced and suburban housing and low density suburban development employing Garden City and Radburn type principles of planning, within this can be found historic fragments which predate modern development. Most notable the enclave of buildings and associated industrial remains that survives in the Belfield area. Otherwise it is the interplay between built form, greenery and cleared (or almost cleared) industrial land which pervades.

An evaluation of the impact on the historic environment of the East Central Rochdale Physical Regeneration Framework revealed that, in heritage terms, the two sit comfortably together notwithstanding localised areas of conflict which need to be resolved:

- (1) In the George Street Regeneration Zone, the proposal for a direct link between a point of crossing on John Street and end of the South Street would cut-across and for all intensive purposes destroy the gardens to the houses on Roach Place, which have been identified as of high heritage value.

It is recommended that a detailed archaeological study of the Roach Place houses and gardens is used to inform the realignment of the proposed new pedestrian route, with consideration being given to alternative locations for the crossing of John Street.

- (2) The proposed reconfiguration of the allotments south of Kellett Street in order to provide additional space for new housing and to support the development of a riverside walk.

While there is in heritage terms no objection to this proposal in principle, it will need to be developed with sensitivity and care so as to ensure that the essential characteristics of the heritage value of the allotments in relation to the adjacent housing and the Hey Brook corridor as a whole are not compromised.

- (3) In the Town Head neighbourhood, the development of land which projects into the Hey Brook valley for housing, and the potential loss of a number of identified buildings of heritage value: Regent Mill on Princess Street, the Britannia public house on Lomax Street, the Big Red public house on Regent Street and the former dairy to the west of St. Patrick's Church and presbytery.

It is recommended that, following further research into the historic value of Regent Mill, the technical and economic feasibility of retaining and incorporating this building and the two public houses within the development of the new residential neighbourhood of Town Head is explored. The former dairy is primarily of townscape value; redevelopment would in heritage terms be acceptable so long as its existing relationship to Bunyan Street and the adjacent presbytery are retained in terms of space and scale. It is further recommended that the extent to which development projects into the Hey Brook valley is limited to the bounds of the existing scrap yard and the existing openness of views north from the vicinity of the Wardleworth Bridge is maintained.



Hey Brook running south then under Entwisle Street to join the Roch



Well-tended allotment garden on Alkrington Street

Two parts of the East Central Rochdale HMRP area are recommended for designation as conservation areas.

- (1) The group of Regency streets bounded by the lines of Jermyn Street to the north, East Street, South Street and George Street to the west, and extending:
 - east along Yorkshire Street as far as Edward Street so as to take in all buildings between Jermyn and Back Bradshaw Streets,
 - west to embrace St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church and the area as far south as Robert Street, and
 - south to Norreys Street so as to include the whole of the gardens historically associated with Roach Place.
- (2) The whole of the Hey Brook character area (C), other than the areas occupied by Foxholes Close and the grounds of the former Foxholes House.

The following buildings are recommended as in need of further investigation with a view to the possibility of listing:

- Numbers 2–9 Roach Place,
- Numbers 24–47 Belfield Old Road, and
- Regent Mill and Magnetic Works (Alma Mill) on Princess Street.



Frontage (now backs) of part of 24-27 Belfield Old Road (before c.1840)

INSERT MAP 06 (GATE FOLD)

4.00 MIDDLETON

Generally

The Oldham–Rochdale HMRP area includes two separate parts of Middleton. To the north and northeast of the town centre is the contiguous area of Langley and Hollins, while to the southeast is Moorclose. The vast majority of the land in all three areas is given over to large estates of post 1945 housing, though in Moorclose can be found pockets of housing and industry dating from before the 1914–18 war, mainly as ribbons of development along the Oldham Road and Grimshaw Lane.

The significance of Middleton is primarily vested in its collection of listed buildings of exceptional quality, including a significant number by the architect Edgar Wood. There is little of value in terms of its coherence as a town, and evidence of its period of leadership in the cotton–spinning industry is all but gone.

Having studied and analysed the heritage of Middleton, it is recommended that, within in the context of the limitations of the process of extensive assessment:

- The older terraced developments fronting Hollins Lane and Rochdale Road on the edge of the Hollins area should — subject to appraisal — remain, in that they are of significance as frontage buildings on the approach into town and hence a part of the historic townscape of Middleton.
- Older terraces which line the Oldham Road in the Moorclose area should also be appraised with a view to retention, as should any similarly consistent runs on Grimshaw Lane. This is particularly important in the context and setting of the surviving part of the Soudan Mill complex.
- There is an extreme presumption in favour of the retention of the Grade II* listed Elm Street School in Moorclose and the protection of its setting. This should preclude any development of its playing fields and any attempt to demolish or significantly alter the building. The impact of any development in proximity should be assessed as a part of the design process.
- Subject to further research and assessment of historic value, the cluster of older housing to the west of Hilton Fold Lane is retained as one of the few surviving examples of such development in Middleton. It is considered that a rapid assessment process would be appropriate for this small group of streets.
- The future of Soudan Mill should be investigated in order to identify — and if necessary mitigate — any threats to its long-term survival. The possibility of this building as a candidate for listing might be explored via further research due to the fact that it appears to be one of the last mills of the early 20th century mill-boom in Middleton to have survived relatively intact.

Finally, the clearance of any housing of any age should only take place following a desk-based archaeological appraisal, similar to the one which has already been undertaken in respect of the Langley estate.



Detail of the former Royal Bank of Scotland by Edgar Wood (1892)



Edgar Wood's own house: Redcroft on the Rochdale Road (1895)

Langley

Langley Housing Market Renewal Area occupies the higher ground to the northwest of Middleton. It is made up of land that was once part of the Langley Estate and, to the south, an area which was once part of the manor of Middleton. By the early 20th century the area was known locally as Bowlee after a farmstead to the east.

Although of no overt heritage value, it is recommended that any part of the Langley Estate which is to be demolished or cleared is photographed or otherwise recorded and that these images are deposited with local and county archives, along with copies of any surviving original plans and supporting documentation which may still be in the possession of Rochdale or other Councils.



An example of typical housing with public green space on Kirkstone Drive