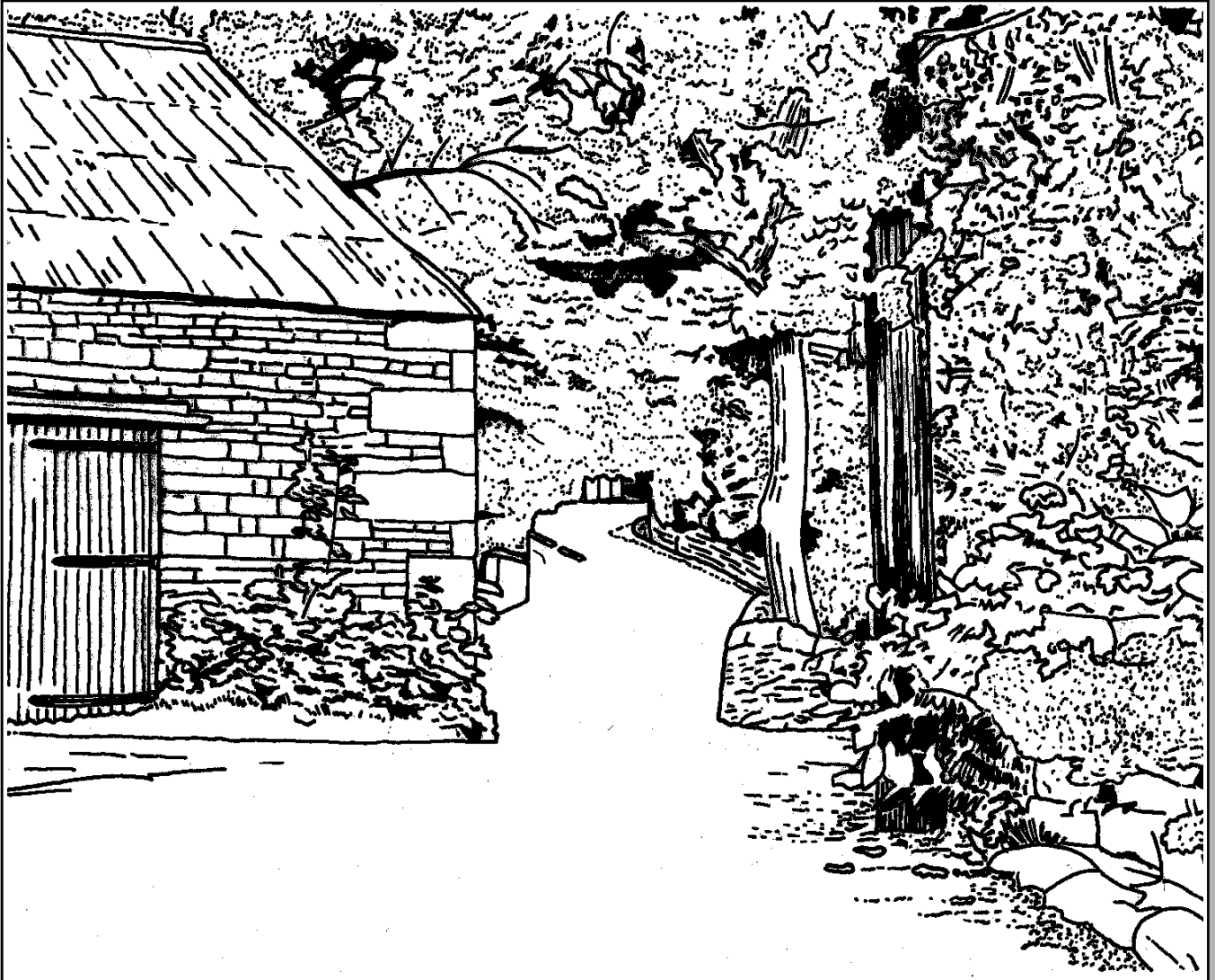


# GRASSCROFT

## CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL



### Grasscroft Conservation Area

Grasscroft Conservation Area was designated in September 1973 by Saddleworth Urban District Council. The area covered by the designation centres on

Clough Lane and takes in all the buildings of the area which contribute to its original character as well as their gardens and also includes surrounding wooded areas.

## What is a Character Appraisal?

All conservation areas have specific architectural or historic interest which was identified when the areas were designated. The Oldham Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which guides development in the Borough, recognises that the aim of conservation area designation is more likely to be fulfilled if there is detailed agreement and understanding of the particular characteristics of an area which

contribute to its special identity. The Council has therefore undertaken, as resources permit, to draw up character appraisals for all the conservation areas in the Borough. Character appraisals are of particular importance for development control purposes and will be a key component of any bid for external funding as well as in the formulation of conservation area enhancement schemes.

## Historic Significance

In the seventeenth century Saddleworth was divided between several 'Lords of the Manor', one of which being the Manor of Quick, a mediaeval estate. The map drawn up for division purposes in 1625 defines the Manor of Quick which includes an area identified to the south of Grotton Head and to the east of Lydgate known as Grasscroft Chartership. However, Grasscroft can be traced as far back as 1303 when the de Quick family sold the estate to the Bradshaws of Bradshaw, Bolton.

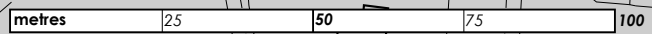
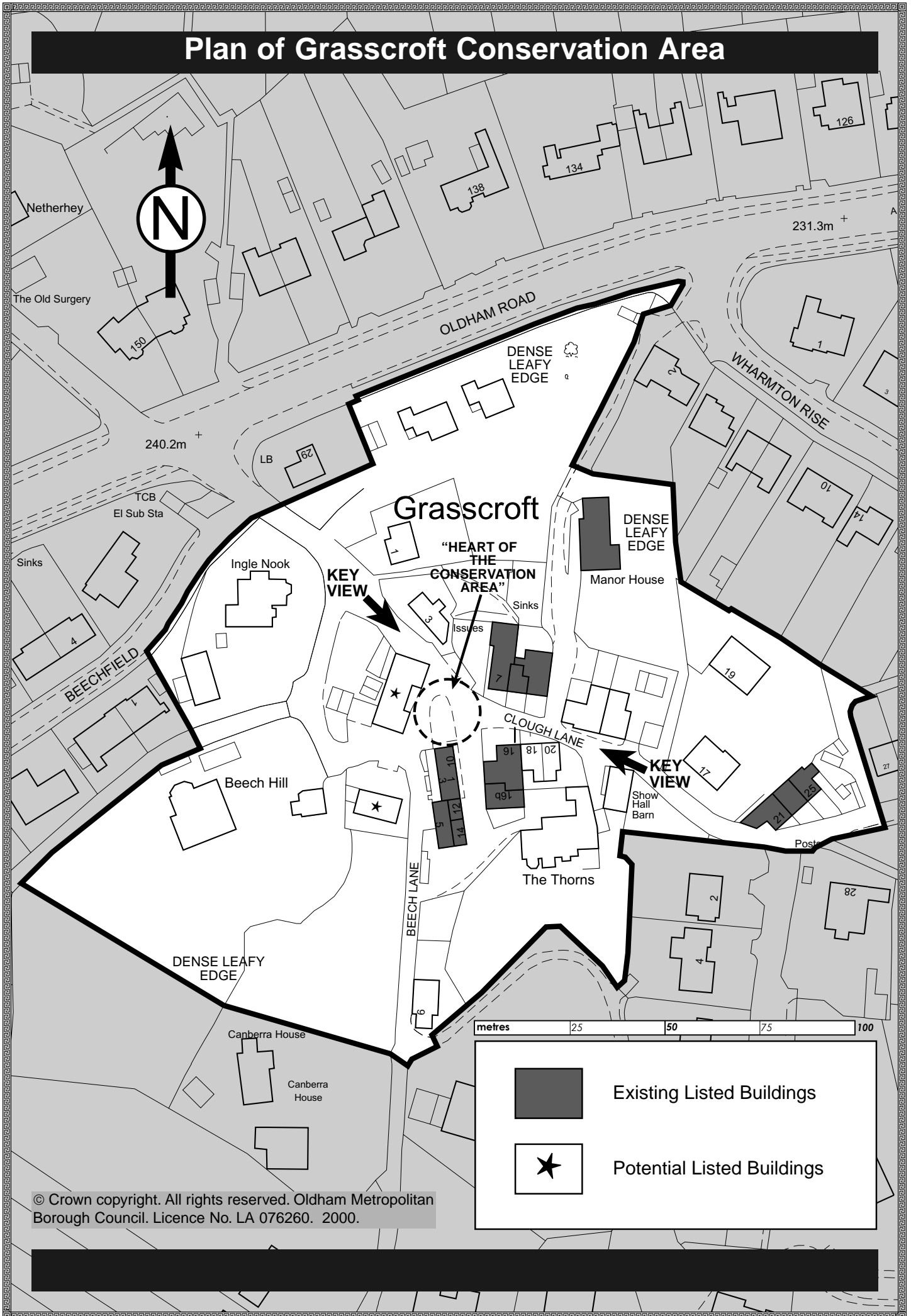
This part of Saddleworth Commons, Quick Moor, was notable for its better quality agricultural land which was reflected in the early enclosure of land into four separate farms. This would also explain the name 'Grasscroft' with 'grass' implying pastoral qualities and 'croft' implying arable land, which together suggest an early farming role for the settlement.



In the late 18th century, the Harrop family became the main owners and occupants of Grasscroft and, having made their wealth in the woollen industry, introduced the production of textiles to the village. This is reflected in the buildings which remain from that era.

Grasscroft has now evolved from its agricultural and textile origins to a purely residential village.

Grasscroft Conservation Area centres on Clough Lane, 'clough' meaning steep sided valley which is an accurate description of the setting of what are thought to be some of the oldest buildings in Saddleworth.

# Plan of Grasscroft Conservation Area



	Existing Listed Buildings
	Potential Listed Buildings

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## Setting and Layout

Clough Lane, which runs northwest - southeast down the hill towards the Tame Valley, forms the main throughroute of Grasscroft Conservation Area which is set on the easterly slopes of Quick Edge. When viewed from the opposite side of the valley, the conservation area can be identified by its dense tree cover. Similarly, when viewed from Oldham Road the conservation area presents a dense, leafy edge protecting what amount to, on investigation, a 'hidden gem'.

The heart of the conservation area is clearly the area around 16, 18 & 20 Clough Lane where most of the oldest buildings are to be found. The close spacing of the buildings is the dominant characteristic here and there is no discernible geometric pattern evident in this earliest part of Grasscroft, although topography seems to have been a major determinant in building layout. Early 18th century buildings have been built adjoining one another (in the case of 7, 9 & 11 Clough Lane) and subsequently added to. From the late 18th century, the village expanded into the surrounding area with development tending to take the form of larger detached dwellings set in their own grounds such as Manor House. Twentieth century infill housing development has tended to follow this pattern, as exemplified by 1, 17 and 19 Clough Lane.

The character and layout of the conservation area is thus in direct contrast to the remainder of Grasscroft which is more suburban and low density in both its architectural and layout characteristics.

## Architectural Qualities

The character of Grasscroft has altered through time, as its agricultural role has diminished and textiles introduced, to its present state as a residential settlement. Accordingly, the types of buildings to be found in Grasscroft Conservation Area range from the traditional barn, the weavers cottage with loom shop, the 18th century manor house, to 20th century infill houses.

Buildings within the conservation area which are judged to be of architectural or historic interest include five Grade II Listed Buildings, as follows:

Manor House, Clough Lane  
Nos. 10, 12 & 14 Clough Lane  
Nos. 7, 9 & 11 Clough Lane  
Nos. 16 & 16b Clough Lane  
Nos. 21, 23 & 25 Clough Lane

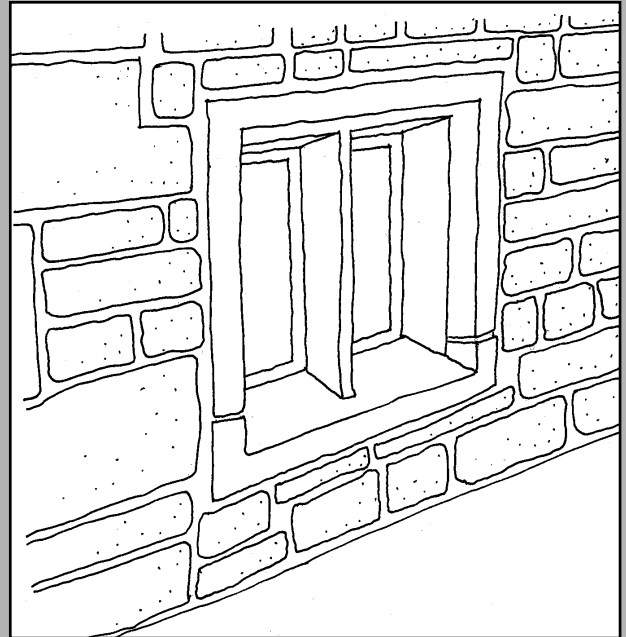
Notable non-listed buildings include Shaw Hall Barn and the barns at the junction of Beech Lane and Clough Lane. Other buildings in the conservation area clearly also date from the 19th century and have, for the most part, been sensitively altered over time and restored. These barns however, one of which features a 16th century doorway and window, signify the village's agricultural origins. Furthermore, they greatly contribute to the irregular, dramatic townscape quality which makes this conservation area special.

Grasscroft lies within a belt of millstone grit and so, perhaps naturally, the pre-20th century buildings are constructed in gritstone. These buildings are constructed in squared rubble stone with stone cills and little other detailing. Later 18th century

buildings feature stone quoins. Traditionally these buildings would have had stone flag roofs. These only remain on 7, 9 & 11 Clough Lane and The Manor House, and have been replaced elsewhere with blue Welsh slate. In the case of 21, 23 & 25 Clough Lane they have been unsympathetically replaced with modern roof tiles. Roofs are simply pitched and vary from those with stone cornices to later ones with timber eaves and corbels, and some with fascias.

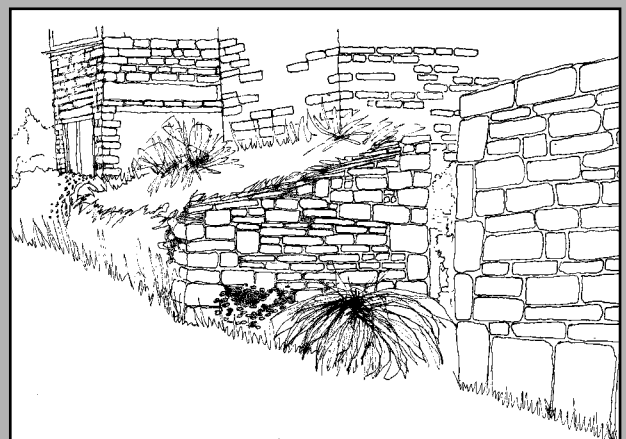
The weavers cottage design, as exemplified by the two-storey 11 Clough Lane, set the scene for the larger four storey wool merchants warehouse at 10, 12 & 14 Clough Lane. In addition to built form, the overriding key characteristic of these buildings is the vertical emphasis of the windows, referred to as 'weavers cottage windows'. Originally, the glass was set directly into the stone mullions to allow maximum daylight into the building. However, as alternative sources of lighting became available and better ventilation was required, the glass was more often set into a narrow timber frame. Some of these are side hung with others being further developed into sash types. Larger sash windows feature in the later buildings in the conservation area.

Stone mullions, as seen in several buildings, are an essential characteristic of Saddleworth buildings. Even these vary in style with square cut mullions featuring in 12-16 Clough Lane, whereas 11 Clough Lane features chamfered mullions which allow more light into the building. It is alleged that these very mullions were recovered from an early 18th century building.



*Fig. 1 : Chamfered stone mullion*

Whilst the materials and detailing remain more or less constant, the design of buildings in Grasscroft, and in Saddleworth as a whole, has developed over time from asymmetric to symmetric. Extensions tend to replicate the original buildings in style, massing and materials but some of the best additions are the simple lean-to outhouses which add to the jumbled atmosphere of the conservation area. This should continue to inform the design of any extension or outhouses. Notably, the 20th century detached garage is a rare feature of the conservation area.



*Fig. 2 : Stone outhouse at 5 Beech Lane*

## Spatial Qualities

Despite its rural origins and hillside setting the conservation area has an enclosed feel about it. At its heart this is created by the early cottages placed in tight proximity to one another, held together round the edge by the established trees and still substantially separated from the surrounding suburbs by the remaining garden areas. The plot shapes and sizes are highly diverse and unique to each of the early buildings. These form a combination of regular and irregular townscape which is key to Grasscroft Conservation Area and such a diversity must be maintained. It provides an endless range of shapes and planes which each uniquely respond to the daylight when viewed from different points within the area and at different times of the day and year.



*Fig. 3 : The variety of buildings as viewed from Manor House*

Some of the key vistas which are pivotal to Grasscroft are those of the barn halfway down Clough Lane. When approached from the southeast this building provides a termination to the view up Clough Lane. In contrast, this same building when approached from the northwest, creates an element of suspense as it causes the lane to curve to the north

which in turn leads into a hidden broad space which is unexpected in this tight arrangement. This drama is further added to by the imposing weavers cottage building that forms 10, 12 & 14 Clough Lane.



*Fig. 4 : Looking up Clough Lane to barn to be considered for listing*

Indeed, one of the most individual and endearing characteristics of Grasscroft is the way in which some of the most revealing aspects of the settlement are caught almost by accident between the buildings and trees. This highlights the complex relationship of buildings and spaces with their natural settings of lighting, topography and vegetation and how crucial it is to ensure that new buildings respect this context.

## Hard & Soft Landscape Features

The conservation area can be picked out on the hillside by its leafy massing surrounded by modern infill. Indeed, the development of the surrounding has been kept substantially at bay by the pattern of land ownership (i.e. the large gardens in which the characteristic trees have been allowed to mature).

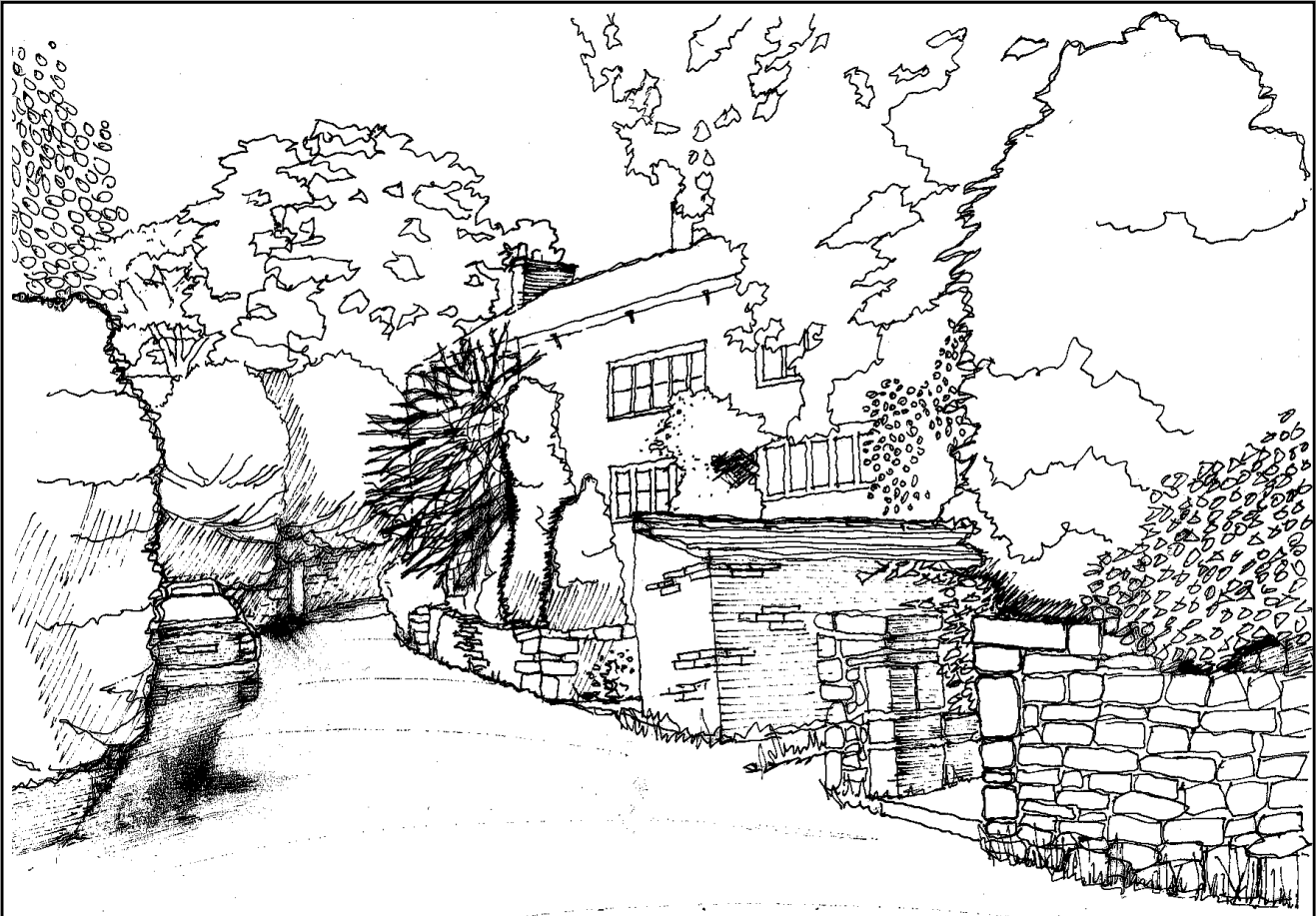


Fig. 5 : 25 Clough Lane. Note the stone walls

Substantial boundary stone walls are a common feature, as opposed to fences and dwarf walls, and range from early stone flag layers to coursed rubble. Where space between buildings is tight, semi-private space is defined by a change in the surface as is the case outside 12-16 Clough Lane. Grasscroft Conservation Area is unusual in having no pavements, which is due to the tightness of buildings and their curtilages, however they are defined.

Few areas of stone setts remains and the public highway is now tarmac which is fairly unobtrusive. Unfortunately, block paved driveways have been introduced to the conservation area which are blatantly at odds with its period character and should be discouraged. Despite having developed sporadically and in a haphazard, organic manner, there is a

distinct lack of clutter in the streetscene.

Everyday infrastructure, such as electricity and telephone poles and wires are well screened by the trees, further demonstrating the role of trees in the character of the conservation area and in protecting it. This is less so in the winter month when the trees are bare, exposing the overhead cables.

## Planning Policies

The policies which control development within the conservation area are contained in the Oldham UDP (adopted 1996). Copies are held in all local libraries and are also available directly from the Council's Environmental Services Department.

## Objectives

1. The primary objective is to protect, restore and enhance the character of Grasscroft Conservation Area.

2. The Council will seek the use of traditional materials, styles and proportions when considering proposals for the restoration or alteration of existing, or the erection of new, buildings in the conservation area.

3. Landscape features such as walls and trees which are important to the character of the conservation area should be retained and the Council will exercise its powers to protect these.

4. The Council will seek the added protection of the following buildings by requesting that they are added to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport's List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest:

Barn located at the junction of Clough Lane and Beech Lane (opposite No. 3 Clough Lane)

Barn located opposite Nos. 1, 3 & 5 Beech Lane.

5. The Council will encourage the location of satellite dishes to the rear of buildings and as unobtrusively as possible.

6. Infill residential development will be resisted where it would adversely affect the spatial character of the conservation area and result in unacceptable tree loss.

It is intended that these objectives will be progressed in co-operation with property owners and occupiers, amenity groups and any other interested parties. This will be done mainly through the processes of statutory development control and informal advice.

## Enhancement Proposals

Grasscroft is clearly a singularly unspoilt conservation area. Its beauty and character is derived from its incremental rather than planned development which has not necessitated the provision of highways infrastructure of an inappropriate urban character such as pavements, registered lighting columns, safety railings, etc.

Consequently, the public realm required little in the way of enhancement and preservation of existing character is all that is required.

## Further Information

For further information contact:

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## Acknowledgements

Greenfield & Grasscroft Residents' Association  
Saddleworth Civic Trust  
Saddleworth Historical Society  
Saddleworth Parish Council