



Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Prepared for
Oldham Metropolitan Borough

by
Stephen Levrant : Heritage Architecture

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1	Inherent Topography	13
This appraisal	1	Queen Street	13
Summary	2	Union Street	13
Location & Population	3	Old Post Office	13
Origins & Development	4	The Arcades	14
Origins	4	Unlisted Buildings	15
Early days	4	a) Hilton Arcade, 1893:	15
Traffic	5	b) Market Avenue, 1880:	16
The Population	5	c) Greaves Arms, 1925:	17
Industry	5	d) Hark to Topper, Bow street, 1914: ..	17
Milling	5	e) Victoria House, Greaves Street:	17
Hat Making	6	f) Town House Restaurant, Greaves	
Coal mining	6	Street:	18
Engineering	6	g) Local Interest Centre (Friends' Meeting	
Growth	6	House):	18
Development Pattern	6	h) The Grapes Hotel, Yorkshire Street .	19
The elevated position	6	I) Nos. 20 - 30 Yorkshire Street:	19
The prevailing or former uses within the area		Spaces Within the Area	20
and their historic patronage, and the		Union Street	20
influence of these on the plan, form and		Industrial Area	21
building types.	7	Yorkshire Street	21
The Prevailing Use	7	The Market Place/Albion Street/Curzon	
Former Uses	7	Street block,	21
Early Development	7	The Ancient spaces	21
The Plan Form	7	Church Street,	22
Union Street	8	The other small streets	22
Linking streets	8	Building Materials, Textures & Colours .	23
Spread of Development	8	Walling	23
Archaeological Significance	10	Roofing:	24
Ancient monuments	10	Pavings & Road Surfaces:	24
Early Settlement Records	10	Generally	24
Industrial Archaeology	10	Church Street	24
The canal	10	Terracotta & Faience:	24
Mines or Pits	10	Cast Iron:	25
Foundries and Workshops	11	Local Details	26
Railways	11	Distinctiveness	26
Architectural & Historic Qualities	12	Green Spaces, Trees Etc:	27
Architectural Period	12	Formal Green Spaces	27
The Sub-Areas Discussed	12	The Church Yard	27
Church Lane	12	In the south,	27
Church Terrace	12	Preservation of Ambiance	27
Town "Square"	12		
Greaves Street	13		
Union Street	13		

Relationship to Landscape, Open

Countryside, Vistas:	29
Surrounding Views	29
Elevation	29
Walk-Through	29

Negative Factors	31
Sites	31
Rock Street	31
Old Church Street	31
West Conservation Area	31
21 - 41 Yorkshire Street:	31
Seton House	31
The Bus Station	32
High Street: Redevelopment	32
Union Street	32
Street furniture	32
Street Surfaces	32

Neutral Areas	33
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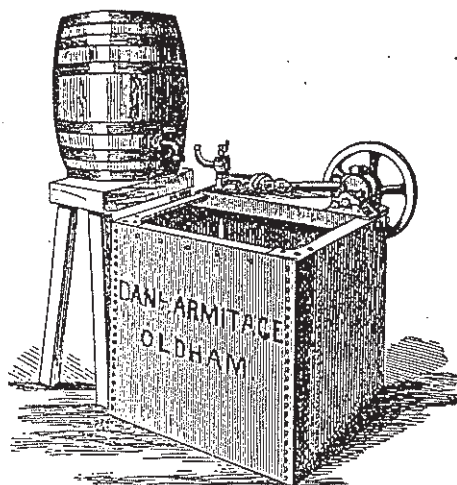
Conservation Area Extensions	34
Influence of early road pattern	34
Uses	34
Archaeology	34
Status Buildings	34
High Street Extension	35
Market Place Extension	35
Jackson Pit Conservation Area	35

Appendix 1: Listed Buildings	37
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Bibliography: References of Works Consulted	45
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Map Sequence	47
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ARMITAGE'S *Anti-Incrustation Injector.*

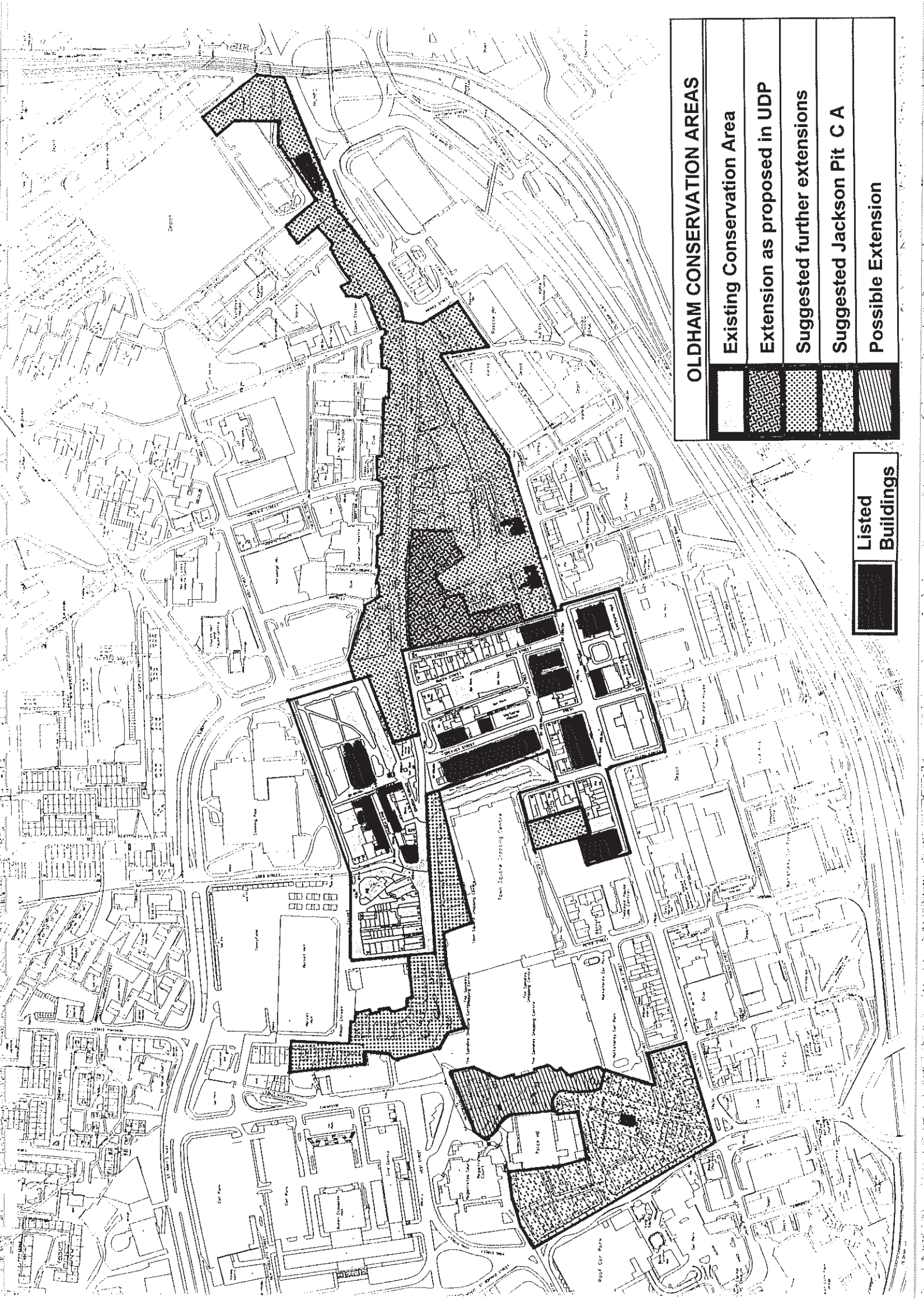


THIS Plan shows the method employed by Mr. D. ARMITAGE of injecting into Boilers, by small doses, his Anti-Incrustation Vegetative, which is the best preventative of scale or incrustation in Boilers. The substance is first dissolved in the Cask, and the small Force Pump is set to work to inject it into the Feed Pipe, first passing through the "Economisers" or "Feed Water Heaters," (where they are employed), so that the Boilers and "Economisers" are regularly supplied in small quantities.






This plan is superior to that of taking off the Man-hole lid and putting in the material periodically, or passing it through a Funnel.

The Pump can be fixed in any position in the Engine or Boiler House, and merely requires a small $\frac{1}{4}$ Cotton Band to drive it.

DANIEL ARMITAGE,
118, EGERTON STREET, OLDHAM.



OLDHAM CONSERVATION AREAS

	Existing Conservation Area
	Extension as proposed in UDP
	Suggested further extensions
	Suggested Jackson Pit C A
	Possible Extension

	Listed Buildings
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1

Introduction

This appraisal

is carried out and formulated in accordance with the English Heritage Consultation Draft, June 1996 "Conservation Area Character Appraisals. Defining the Special Architectural or Historic Interest of Conservation Areas". The importance of the character appraisal is emphasised by the following extract:

2.0 CHARACTER APPRAISALS

2.1 *Need for character appraisals*

Over the past twenty five years, the approach to designating conservation areas has changed greatly. As their numbers have grown, the criteria for designation are being looked at more critically. Section 54A of the principal Act has emphasised the importance of including in the development plan firm conservation area policies, based on a clear definition of the special architectural or historic interest that warranted designation. PPG 15 stresses the need for local planning authorities to make an assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of all conservation areas in their districts.

In English Heritage's view, therefore, it is vital for the special interest that justifies designation to be clearly defined and analysed in a detailed character appraisal. This will not only provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the development plan policies and development control decisions, but will also form the groundwork for a subsequent conservation area study or policy statement, containing proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the area. English Heritage has called for such an appraisal to form part of the detailed action plan for Conservation Area Partnership schemes.

An authority's justification for designating a conservation area, as demonstrated in a character appraisal will be taken into account by the Secretary of State for the Environment in considering planning appeals. Where asked to make a direction under Section 76 of the Act (allowing a local authority to carry out urgent works to preserve an unlisted building in a conservation area), the Secretary of State for National Heritage is more likely to do so where the area's special interest has been clearly defined and published. Such definition may also help to reduce uncertainty for those considering investment in the area and may contribute to the shaping and content of the new development. First priority should be given to areas where the pressures for change are greatest, such as historic town centres.

To be of lasting value, character appraisals should be as factual and objective as possible. A clear distinction should be made between such appraisals and the necessary but separate work of problem analysis, development control statements and design guidance. All of these should however come together as components of a subsequent conservation area study.

The Character appraisal is an important tool in evaluation for external funding for any regeneration proposals in the town. The Conservation Area Partnership schemes which have been so successful in recent years are to be phased out of English Heritage control and funding, and will be administered under the Heritage Lottery fund as a first step towards the allocation of Lottery grant funding to private individuals. The accurate appraisal of character will therefore be vital in the assessment for this and other grant aid.

2

Summary

- The Conservation Area, as designated, includes the remaining historic nucleus which is well defined, but its straggling linear configuration does not have a distinct core.
- The area has a noticeable sense of place, emphasised by the urban mix of core retail and civic buildings.
- The high concentration of listed buildings and other buildings of quality, add considerably to the character, assist in definition of the boundaries, and provide a very real sense of history.
- There is not a particularly well defined edge, or boundary, which sets the area apart from surrounding areas. However, there are good quality similar buildings adjoining the area in several locations.
- There is considerable scope for enhancement, both of the public realm and in development of individual buildings and sites.
- There is a high level of existing townscape quality, particularly around the Church and Town Hall/Greaves Street and Union Street, where considerable effort has been expended in attaining appropriate quality of street scape design. There is still scope for further enhancement.
- There has been erosion of valuable elements of character since the original designation, including the demolition of at least one major listed building. Alterations to shop fronts have left much to be desired, *ad hoc* repairs to streetscapes and indiscriminate displays of signage and street furniture have also lead to significant detractions of the inherent quality. It is important to halt any further erosion and preserve the historic character.
- Examples of vernacular and other historic details do still remain in places, and should be preserved; and the earliest through route is still discernable in the modern street pattern, though poorly treated.
- The area was developed over a comparatively short time-scale and during a period of rapid economic and social change. It therefore, retains an easily recognisable historic character, with many interesting features.
- The unlisted buildings within the conservation area and adjoining are of good quality, retaining much of their original fabric and of a pleasing diversity of treatments and styles.
- There is a very good case for extending the area to incorporate more of the historic street patterns and include numerous buildings of quality. There are several individual buildings of outstanding architectural interest, which should be added to the local list.

3

Location & Population

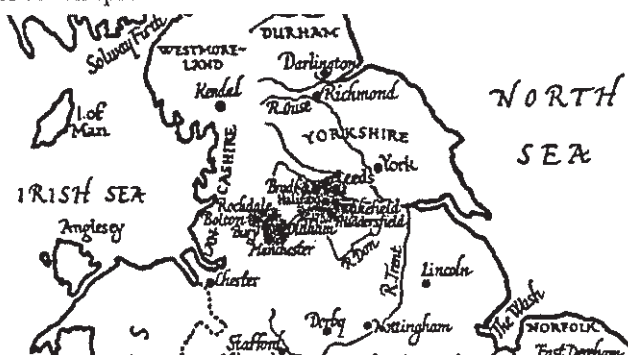
Oldham is situated to the immediate north east of Manchester and now forms part of the Greater Manchester conurbation. The name "Oldham" originates from a combination of old English: *ald*; and old Scandinavian: *holmr*, meaning "old promontory".

The town does indeed spread over a high prominence commanding views over the surrounding countryside, a characteristic, which in past times, was regarded as a positive criterion and distinct topographical advantage.

Geologically, it lies within an area of sandstone and millstone grit, with coal measures:

"Sandstones of the Coal Measures are confined to a region well South of the Ribble, well North of the Mersey and well back from the coast, but they make an important contribution to the appearance of such cotton-spinning towns as Oldham....."¹

The population today numbers about 95,000 (Compared with over 145,000 in 1927) and historically are ostensibly descended from farmers and yeomanry. The area was an important for arable and sheep farming in the early years of human settlement. As civilisation developed the redistribution of land, the dividing up of common land, engrossing of farms etc altered the condition of country people in the era prior to the industrial revolution. Even so, until the middle of the 18th century Oldham was surrounded by farms that the freeholders occupied and worked. They provided wool for the north midlands weaving industry, that covered an area from Bolton in the east, to Leeds and Wakefield in the west. This was almost entirely cottage based, the farmers and their labourers also weaving and spinning the wool. The balance of industry (home weaving) and farming became tipped in favour of the former as the industrial revolution gathered pace and a new class developed. Its origins, if not actually in Oldham, certainly stem from the new milieu generated in the area generally. Thus the same families who in the mid-18th century were farmers, and yeomen had 50 years later become heads of the town's chief manufacturies. At the height of its fame as a world renown industrial centre Oldham boasted the largest number of cotton spindles in the world.



The North Midlands Woollen Trade Belt at the beginning of the 18th Century

¹ Pevsner

4

Origins & Development

Origins

The town developed from a small hill-top settlement situated on an ancient cross-Pennine route that linked Manchester and York. It was not served directly by any Roman road of consequence, and until the Industrial Revolution it remained a very small settlement with an agrarian economy, providing wool for export to Yorkshire for spinning. The Church has ancient origins and was a prominent landmark until the late 18th century.

The Streets of Oldham provide the most evocative link with the past growth of the town. The exposed elevation - regarded in the past as a major attribute - prevented any central connection with the canal system, and it was not until 1842 that the railway was navigated through a precipitous terrain to provide the transport link demanded by the enormous expansion of trade produced at the peak of the Industrial Revolution.

It is from the streets that the pattern of development and history are traced. The colonisation of the hilltop prominence was dictated largely by the advances in road building technology, which exploited advantageous routes over the irregular topography.

Early days

The earliest known map of the town is a depiction of c.1756, (See appendix of map sequence) by Butterworth which was drawn in 1817, to enable comparison of the town at those two dates.² Butterworth's source for the early map is uncertain. The principal thoroughfare was called Goldburn, which from Mumps (then a separate settlement) followed the line of Bow Street, Church Street and, possibly, Church Lane, then becoming Main Street at the same point as today's High Street. The main through road to Manchester, running south from High Street, was Water Street, later George Street. The road to Rochdale also joined Main Street at this point, forming an important junction which is now beneath the Spindles Shopping Centre.

The most historically intact area of the town is thus, the "Square" by the Church, at the junction of Yorkshire Street and High Street, known in the early 19th century as Mill End. At that time, it was more definitely a Square, but the steep terrace at Church Street, always prevented a uniformity of a formal Square. It was balanced at the west end of the High Street by Market Place, then at the junction of Henshaw Street and George Street. From that nucleus, the town streets then spread north/south, starting as passages between the ribbon developed buildings, hence their narrow width today.

Yorkshire Street provided a more direct route to Mumps, cutting across the steep hillside at the end of the 18th century, and eventually marooning many of the older properties in what became Bow Street. Union Street

² Butterworth orientated the early map incorrectly, by lining-up the route from Manchester with West Street which was the principle route at that time. In fact the early route from Manchester actually entered Oldham via King Street from the south.

Yorkshire Street provided a more direct route to Mumps, cutting across the steep hillside at the end of the 18th century, and eventually marooning many of the older properties in what became Bow Street. Union Street was driven through a series of gardens at a low level, to provide a bypass, but it was not developed fully until well into the 19th century, after achieving turnpike status in 1825. It assumed a grand civic dignity, following establishment of Charter of Incorporation making Oldham a Borough in the mid-century.

Traffic

The principle traffic to and from the town were merchants and goods on waggons, travelling between Lancashire and Yorkshire. The route via Oldham had been established in pre-Roman times. The main centre for production of cloth was West Riding and transport and distribution westwards, was via trains of pack-horses. The first Turnpike Trust, which affected Oldham was not created until 1734, but until well into the latter part of the 18th century, Oldham was relatively isolated.

The first coach service through Oldham began in 1790, as a stopping point on the Manchester to Wakefield route. The remaining years of the century saw an expansion of road construction to accommodate coaches, with routes through Oldham, linking to Huddersfield, Ripponden and Hull. All traffic passed through the Town Centre of High Street/Yorkshire Street (then part of Goldburn) and through what is now Bow Street. The High Street was thus very narrow for a major thoroughfare even by late 18th century standards and there were complaints due to the congestion of traffic. Land was acquired in 1823 and 1828 to widen the route.

The Population

The large population explosion from the late 18th century, saw the transformation from an obscure village, into an internationally known town. In 1714 there was a population of 1,732; in 1801 this had risen to 12,024, by 1826 it reached 20,000, and by 1901, had reached 137,246. The chief industry was cotton milling, but coal was a major contributor and later, engineering. These three industries had a major effect on the development and character of the town. Pits, mills and workshops developed and were operating within the town, co-existing with residential and commercial properties.

Industry

Milling

Prior to the bulk importation of cotton from America and India, wool weaving had been the principal cottage industry, centred on Yorkshire. The hills around Oldham were heavily grazed by sheep, providing the raw material. Introduction of cotton, together with the development in technology and working practices, fuelled the Industrial Revolution. The first mills appeared in Oldham in the last quarter of the 18th century, and there were 12 within the Parish by 1778, all using water power. A further 20 years saw the introduction of steam power and the further expansion of business. By 1794, Oldham was established as a centre for the manufacture of fustian - a mixture of cotton and linen, and for hat making.

Among the earliest mills, was that erected at Water Street (later, Manchester Street) very near the Market Place, by James Smethurst; and James Leas built one at similar date in Church Lane. Others were sited at Holebottom, off Yorkshire Street; and Sheep-washes off Union Street. The coming of steam power demanded newer and bigger buildings and by 1805, there were 30 mills.

By 1825, there were 65 mills in the area, all built since 1800, most were spinning cotton and all were steam powered. They provided employment for over 6,600 families. By 1833, there were 11,000 cotton mills in the entire region, of various sizes. It was the siting of mills on the outskirts and further reaches of the town from 1770s onwards, which shaped the pattern of development. These grew to house and service the workers, eventually coalesce with themselves and the town.

Hat Making

The origins of hat making in Oldham are obscure, but by 1817 there were 22 firms producing about 1,000 hats per week, an output second only to London.

Coal mining

was carried on extensively throughout the area, from an early date, mainly for local domestic heating, until the improvements in roads and canals allowed export further afield. By 1714, there were 14 collieries in Oldham and like cotton, the industry expanded dramatically with the introduction of steam power. Unlike the mills, the number of mines did not increase greatly, but production of coal accelerated. The ready supply of coal assisted the spectacular growth of the cotton industry and its export to Manchester assisted the prosperity of the town.

Engineering

developed from the late 18th century, as an offshoot of the cotton industry - for maintaining and repairing the spinning machinery. This developed into machine making and by 1821, there were 21 engineering firms. The growth in use of steam also required engineering services and by 1832, there were 92 steam engines in use in the town.

Growth

Throughout the remainder of the 18th century, the town consolidated and expanded upon the foundations laid early in the century. The 62 mills of 1832 had become 265 by 1880, and at that time Oldham was converting 25% of the entire raw cotton imports to England.

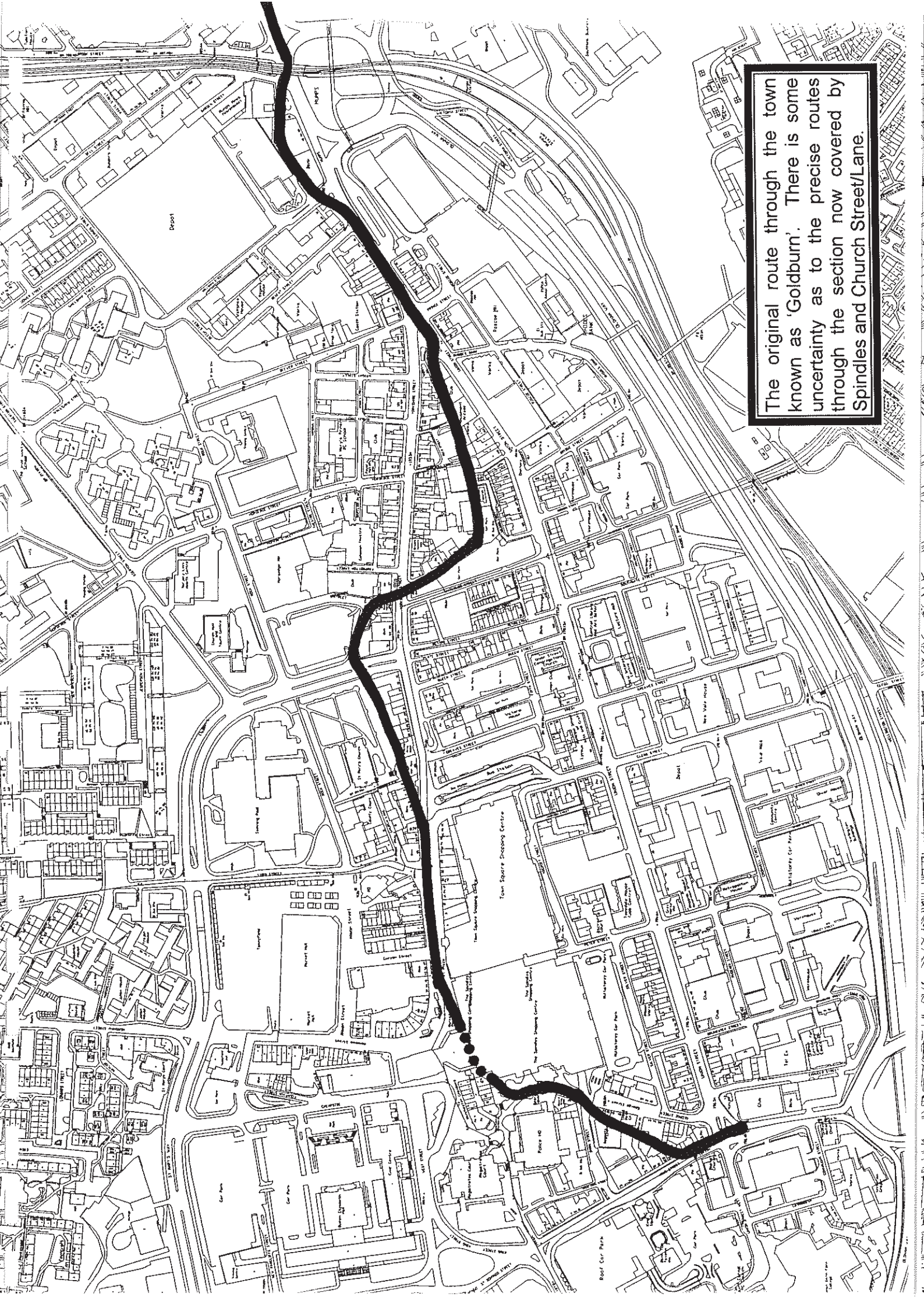
Development Pattern

The shape of the town can be clearly traced from the original nucleus at the summit of hill, around the Church, at the confluence of roads and trackways to High Street. Each phase of subsequent development and expansion has left its mark on the town and its buildings as the town progressed from agrarian through manufacturing to commercial economy. The topography dictated the size, position and direction of routes; the siting of mills and mines, led to concentrations of population. The increase in working population led to demand for commercial development. The Tommyfield Market was started as a private venture in 1856, and was purchased by the Corporation in 1865. The construction of the Market Arcade in 1880, by Oldham's most prestigious architect Sir Sydney Stott, was followed by Hilton Arcade in 1893. The decline of industry forced the development of services, leisure and commercial industries; and the town is now poised for a new phase of cultural renaissance, fuelled by the new financial and social environment.

The elevated position

was regarded as an advantage in the past, the town being regarded as "pleasantly situated on an eminence, commanding an extensive and delightful prospect...." The distant views across the countryside are particularly important today, when set as a backdrop to the built environment.

The transformation over a relatively short period from village to large town, is very apparent in the buildings, and many examples of the stages of this development survive.



The original route through the town known as 'Goldburn'. There is some uncertainty as to the precise routes through the section now covered by Spindles and Church Street/Lane.

5

The prevailing or former uses within the area and their historic patronage, and the influence of these on the plan, form and building types.

The Prevailing Use

Retail shopping forms the principal use in the majority of the conservation area and in the adjoining areas of similar character. Queen Street and Greaves Street are predominately offices; and that part of Union Street within the Conservation Area, has a character determined by the dignified civic buildings within it.

Former Uses

Early Development

The pre industrial town served the agrarian community as the primary activity, the industrial town was dominated by the secondary factors and the services for it. The post industrial town of today is a centre for the tertiary sector providing services for the informal economy which replaced the structured system of the industrial era. (The "informal economy" is that without dominating single characteristic). In the early development of the town, intensive mixed uses were located in the centre, and there was no distinct separation of residential, commercial and industrial. Early maps show a quarry in Yorkshire Street, coal pits in Greaves Street, Union Street and Rhodes Bank, and mills throughout the area.

It was only in the latter years of the last century, that some polarisation of uses took place, driven by the improved transport facilities, and the development of the commercial/retail element. The decline of traditional manufacturing industries was followed by the emergence of an informal economy. Oldham, like many similar towns, changed from being largely a centre of production to become largely a centre of consumption.

The Plan Form

The plan form of the area is substantially the result of the road developments. The earliest buildings were erected in ribbon fashion, adjacent to High Street, Goldburn (Yorkshire Street and Bow Street) and George Street. Increased traffic demanded road improvements, resulting in the formulation of Yorkshire Street and Union Street, and Rhodes Bank, serving mills and mines. As more mills were built, roads were constructed or enlarged to serve them. Henshaw Street, for example, is named after the owner of the mill it served.

The narrow north/south roads, linking Yorkshire Street and Union Street, developed from the alleyways, defining the plots of individual buildings originally fronting Yorkshire Street. Many of the early buildings still remain *in situ*. The semi regular grid is a result of this later development, whereas the earliest route (Goldburn) followed the easiest contour around the hill.

Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Prevailing and Former Uses

The maze of smaller streets, which originally marked the western entrance to the town via George Street, Water Street and adjoining streets, were swept away in construction of the Shopping Centre. Some of this early route still survives, but is largely outside the Conservation Area, in Jackson Pit.

Union Street

developed into the grand civic route containing the finest buildings. Despite its relatively early creation, it did not flourish until well into the nineteenth century. It remains surprisingly undisturbed, although there are modern replacement buildings on several sites. It also contains the main concentration of listed buildings, some outside the Conservation Area.

Linking streets

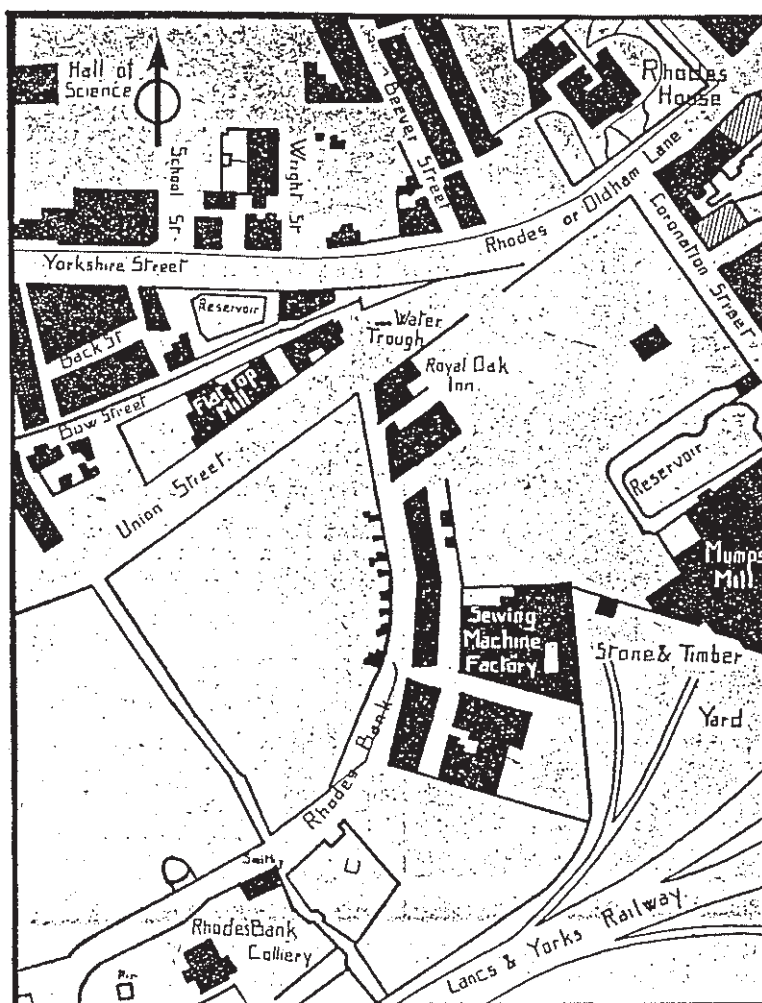
The streets linking streets from Union street to the Town Square and Church, have the high status buildings, Greaves Street and Queen Street being particularly fine. The smaller streets contained the earliest urban housing of modest artisan dwellings or shops and there is a surprising harmony between the larger commercial buildings and these smaller ones, which has to do with detail, scale and proportion.

Spread of Development

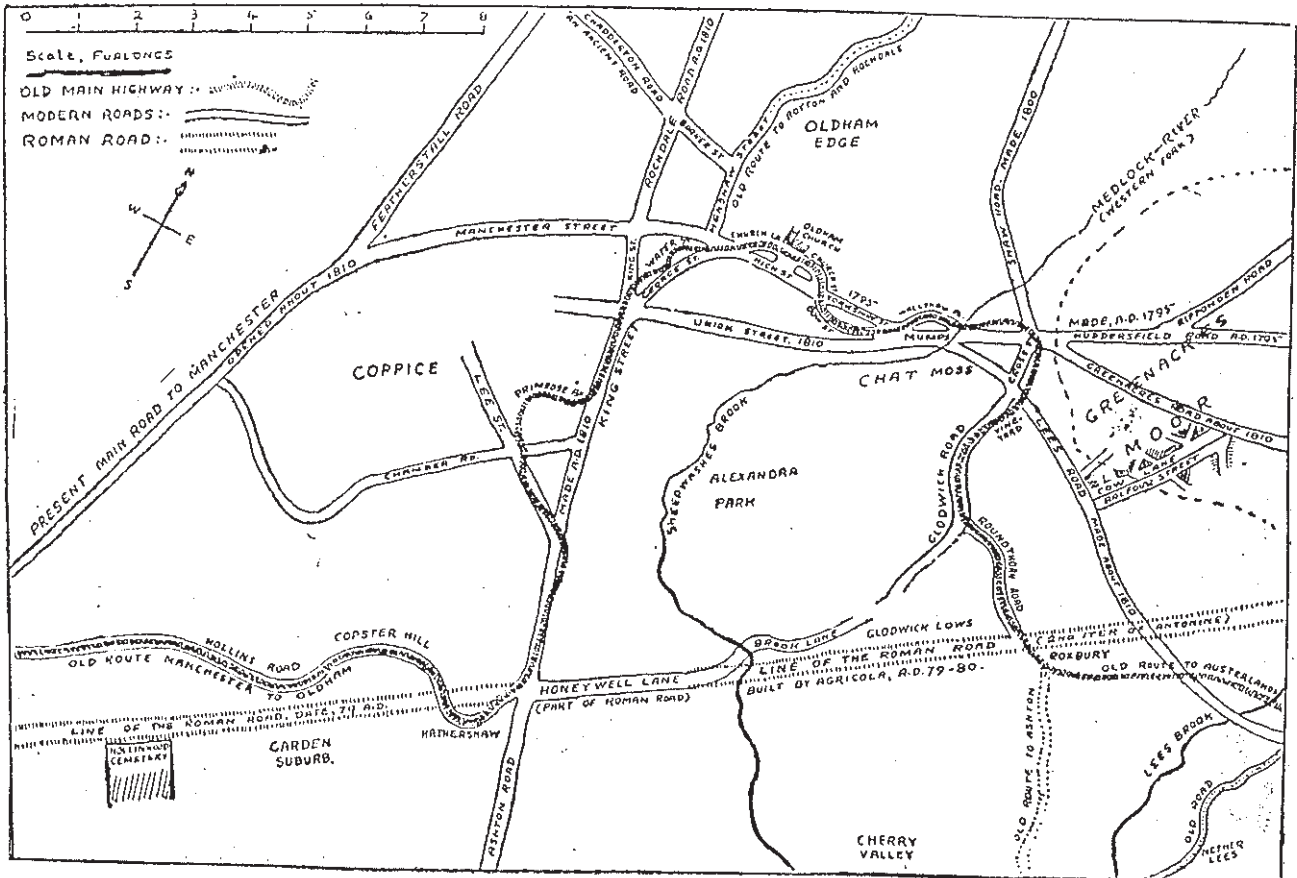
The rapid spread of development driving the Industrial Revolution, which saw enterprises fail as fast as they grew, was not conducive to carefully orchestrated urban planning. The interspersed of large footprint industrial buildings, with smaller commercial buildings, set a pattern which remains up to the present day.

Union Street, Yorkshire Street & Rhodes Bank in 1851.

Showing the mixture of industrial uses



Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal



6

Archaeological Significance

Ancient monuments

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the conservation area, or its immediate surrounds. There are no ancient above ground structures in evidence. The oldest recorded building was the previous parish Church, demolished to make way for the present structure, and its foundations may still remain beneath the present Churchyard.

Early Settlement Records

Although only written records tell of early settlement on this route to Yorkshire, there is little or no above ground evidence. There may be remains of early buildings adjacent to Bow Street, but later developments are likely to have damaged them. There were records of some early thatched buildings noted in the latter years of the 19th century, but all trace of these has now gone.

Industrial Archaeology

The area is still rich in industrial archaeology but is fast losing many of the remaining buildings. The advances made during the Industrial Revolution were responsible for a proliferation of mills and workshops, and the rise and fall of various business concerns resulted in many changes over a relatively short time-scale. The important feature of this development was the construction of mills within the urban fabric. Some of these still remain on Bow Street and behind Union Street, but the majority lie outside the Conservation Area, or have now been demolished. The demand for larger premises required development outside the concentrated town centre. There is an excellent survey of Oldham's mills³, and it is recommended that some surviving examples might be worthy of inclusion on the local list.

The canal

and basin is too far from the Conservation Area to be included in this assessment, and the impact of the canal has little recognisable effect on the remaining character, although it was a prime instigator of wealth, particularly in respect of mines.

Mines or Pits

There appears to be no visible physical remains of mines or pits within the Conservation Area or Town Centre, although the whereabouts of several are shown on the maps.

Archaeological Assessments may be pertinent before development on the vacant sites, to ensure that no unsecured shafts are breached; as well as allowing recording of any remains, as so much has already been lost.

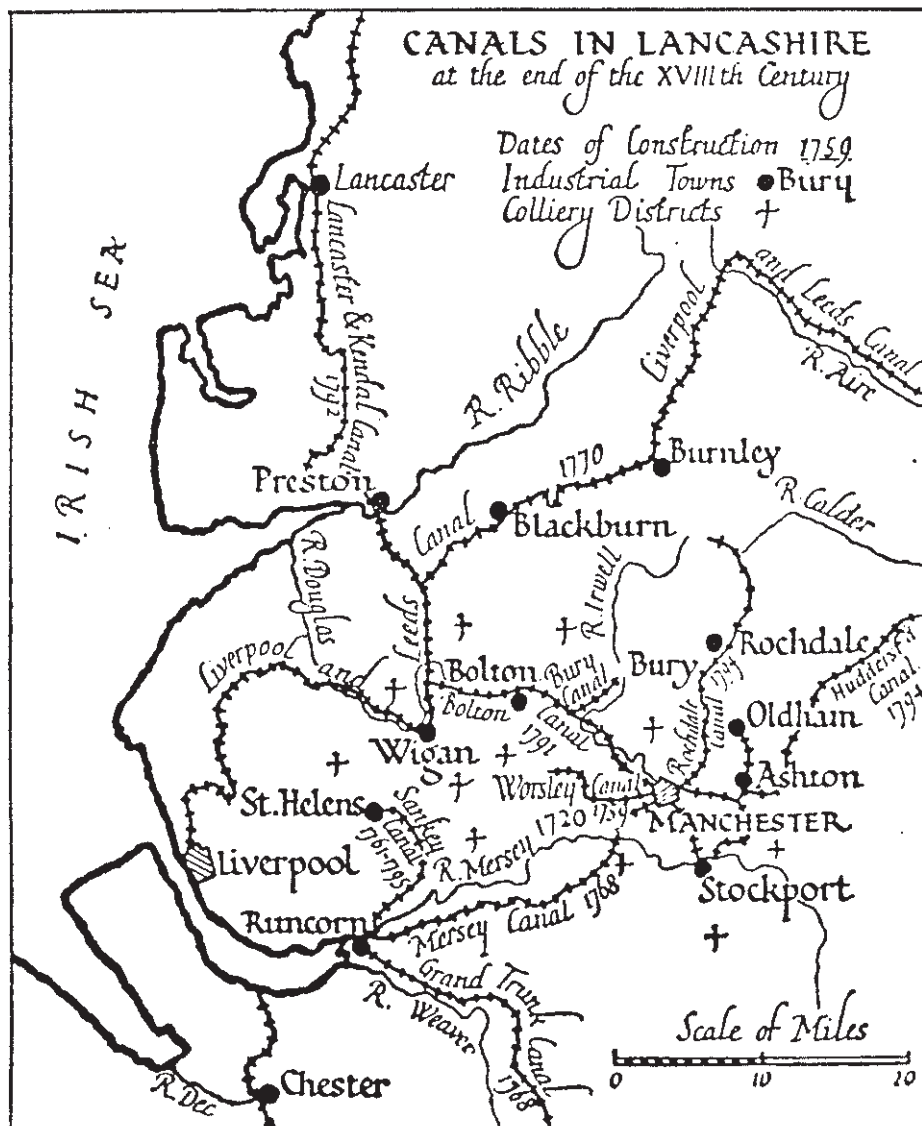
³ *The Cotton Mills of Oldham* Duncan Gurr & Juliet Hunt

Foundries and Workshops

which did exist in the town centre, have not been recorded or researched in detail. There is some interesting and pertinent data to be gathered on this subject particularly where architectural or building ancillary materials may have been locally manufactured. The building construction of many early industrial buildings is important and can often be demolished without true understanding of its importance. For example the highly important Dronsfield Offices in King Street, seem to have escaped listing and vanished. This was a pioneering concrete construction, designed by J Henry Sellers in 1906-7 and noted in several books.

Railways

Very little now remains of the railway systems which served the town and surrounding areas. The earlier stations have all vanished, and the iron bridge, over to Glodwick, still survives, though outside the Conservation Area. The Mumps station has its days numbered as the plans for extension to the Metrolink system are finalised.



7

Architectural & Historic Qualities

Architectural Period

The dominant period is mid-to-late 19th century, with a smattering of early 20th century buildings. The high concentration of listed buildings, which give so much to the character of the area, are predominantly high status and include several banks. The civic buildings of Union Street contrast with the smaller scale earlier buildings clustered around Church Lane, and epitomise the polarity of character within the present Conservation Area boundaries.

The Sub-Areas Discussed

Church Lane

Almost every building in this small cobbled street is listed and the road surface is independently listed, to ensure preservation of the entire group. This street, which is believed by some commentators to be part of the earliest route through the town, has a highly distinctive domestic character. Situated in the oldest intact part of town, the properties step up towards the Church (which is later) and present a view equal in quality to that of any small 18th century street in the country. Even the larger County Courts complex does not seem out of place, and is consistent with the traditional mix of uses prevalent throughout the town.

The rear elevations of these buildings are also important, particularly those facing onto the small alley between Church Lane and Church Terrace. N^o 8 has a distinctive quoined entrance door surround in this alley.

Church Terrace

Church Terrace is bounded by the Greaves Arms, Barclays Bank and terrace railings. The Greaves Arms forms a highly important focal point at a prominent elevation. This group comprising N^o 35 to N^o 41 High Street and N^o 1 to N^o 9 Church terrace, together with the area of Church Terrace to the pavement edge, form a special area which needs particular care and attention. N^o 11 Church Terrace, which returns into Church Terrace, is quite rightly listed, but the adjoining N^o 7 and N^o 9 are not, despite having a date stone of 1715, prominently positioned. The railings to raised pavement are also listed, as is the War Memorial.

Town "Square" (Town Hall Place)

The buildings surrounding the Church or town "Square" still contain the epitome of a provincial town centre : church, town hall, market or gathering place, banks, pub and houses becoming shops. This is provincial urbanism at its best. The distinctive terrace of elevated pavement and railings, the grouping of diverse building types and materials, the long distance views; perfection is only marred by the awful bus station and intrusive edge to the shopping centre.

The Town Square is at high level on the hill forming the original settlement centre. It is dominated by the original facade of the Town Hall. The sense of enclosure has been lost here, due to at least two periods of road widening, but now there is an important enclave formed by the dominant colonnaded front to the Town Hall,

and the rounded corner to N° 32 - N° 34 High Street, leading the eye westwards, along the now pedestrianised High Street; and eastwards, the listed Bank, adjacent to the Town Hall, but subservient to it, leads to a vista down Yorkshire Street and to the hills far beyond.

Greaves Street

The Town Hall Extension which occupies most of the street, provides the link between the early Town Centre through route and the later post-Incorporation civic grandeur of Union Street. This very large building, with a foot-print of similar size and shape to many of the mills, has successfully resolved a counter-topographical relationship to the natural slope of the street, and prompted high status buildings of high quality in the remainder of the street.

The individual buildings provide an extremely important contribution to the appearance and quality of the street, an eclectic mix of styles and types, typifying the characteristic mix of uses so prevalent throughout the town. Although only the Edgar Wood Office building and the return facade of the Bank are listed the other buildings on the east side are of high quality and need particular care and attention. The steep fall towards Union Street has allowed the large bulk of "Town House" restaurant on the corner of Frith Street, to form an important visual link between the end elevation of the Town Hall and the bulk of the Union Club adjacent.

Union Street

The group of buildings in Union Street represent the later stage of development, stone construction, and of nationalistic, rather than vernacular origin. The prominent and important group which they form has been severely damaged by the demolition of the Public Baths.

Inherent Topography

Throughout the Conservation Area, the inherent topography plays a most important part in the formation and understanding of character. The grid pattern of north south streets dictated plot sizes, and the smaller sub-plots gave much needed verticality to street elevations. However, there are examples of the typical Midlands/North County continuous roof terrace, with eaves lines parallel to the slope, and without steps, characteristic of the mass dwellings of the area. The individual facades of dwellings, or shops beneath the eaves, still provided the necessary intricate vertical emphasis, which preserves the human scale.

Typical of this development are the east side of Queen Street, Retiro Street, and west side of Waterloo Street (the latter outside the present Conservation Area boundaries).

Queen Street

Another highly important group is the east side of Queen Street. The majority of the street comprises a domestic terrace, now largely in commercial use, running south down to a group of larger buildings, which take advantage of the topography to increase their height and bulk, without loss of scale and cohesion. Thus, visual containment of the terrace is provided by the buildings of differing character at each end. This particular quality is not so prevalent in Retiro Street, which marks the present boundary to the Conservation Area.

Union Street

The buildings within the southern extremity of the Conservation Area lining Union Street, have outstanding quality as important individual elements in the grandest thoroughfare. However, they do not have the obvious cohesion of other groups mentioned, due to the nature of Union Street which drives through them. The character mix of listed large buildings, interspersed with smaller buildings of lesser quality, continues east and west along Union Street. The loss of the Public Baths and its replacement, which does not conform to the established building line, has seriously eroded the quality and importance of this group.

Old Post Office

The block containing the Library and Local Studies (Old Post Office) has a very important role to play in acting as counterpoint to the Union Club, Church and Bank opposite. The balance once provided for the Lyceum by the Baths, has now disappeared. The unlisted Local Interest Centre, provides an important element in the Greaves Street elevation, south of Union Street, and has some wayward detailing of vernacular charm.

The Union Club and adjoining Congregational Church, both listed, also have a level of vernacular unsophistication in their detailing, which adds considerably to the qualitative mix of visual delight in this part of the street.

The Arcades

at the extreme north west edge of the Conservation Area, represent another distinct sub-group. The block containing them is dominated by Hilton Arcade of 1893. The High Street elevation is seriously devalued by the later modern buildings adjoining each side, but the street facade east of the Market Avenue has an interesting elevation, ranging from the early and largely untouched building immediately adjoining the Market Avenue (probably the oldest surviving building in this part of the High Street) down to the idiosyncratic faience "Art Deco" corner buildings, representing the last stage of major road widening.

The arcades provide an important link to the Tommyfield Market, and as the original covered market pre-dates them, act as a continuation or precursor to that retail form. The Hilton Arcade and its containment block is an extremely important architectural landmark in the retail area. Internally, the arcade has a high degree of original fabric. The entire building represents the epitome of lively and exuberant late Victorian detailing.

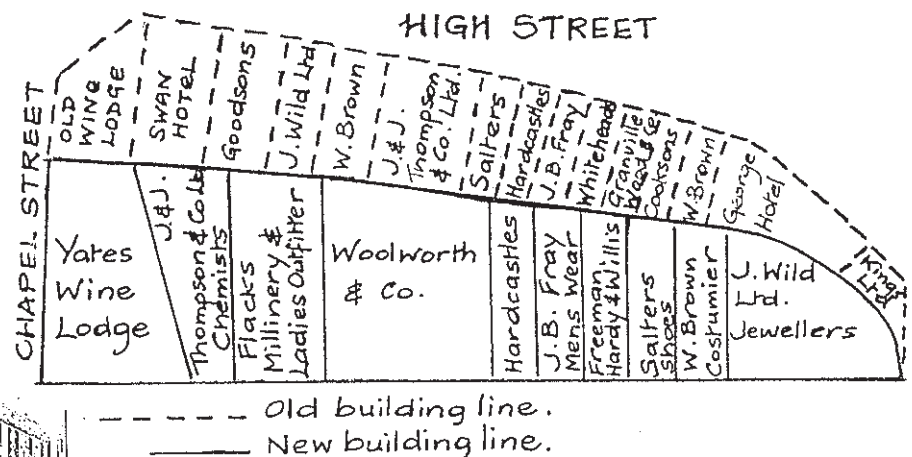
Market Avenue Arcade is older dating from 1880, but is of considerably lesser quality. It has lost much of its original fabric. However the two arcades adjacent are an interesting feature for a settlement of this size and play an important part in the character of the market area generally: which is one of very small individual retail outlets of almost ephemeral nature.

Outside the present designated Conservation Area, there are other individual buildings and groups, which are of similar or compatible quality and character. These are discussed under Conservation Area Extensions, below.



The High Street around 1910 before road widening made the demolition of the George Hotel necessary.

The last phase of widening of the high street completed during the 1920s



8

Unlisted Buildings

The present Conservation Area boundary has been drawn almost as “joining the dots” of the listed buildings. However there are several important individual unlisted buildings, which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area character. There are also groups of unlisted buildings which likewise reinforce character. Some of these have been touched upon above.

a) Hilton Arcade⁴ 1893

- *Architects:*

Wild Collins and Wild. A firm of local note. The senior partner, John Wild (1836-1901) set up the practice in 1856. The partnership established in 1876. They were responsible for no less than 22 mills in the Oldham district between 1882 and 1900; and several local churches, including St Peter's Oldham (1900) and St Marks, Glodwick (1875), as well as many chapels and schools. The arcade is probably not typical of their work, but is a highly competent and well mannered design.

- *Comparative Quality: Age, Style Materials*

The arcade and its containment buildings compares and reflects well with similar commercial buildings within the Conservation Area, although its configuration is unique. It represents one of the last remaining substantial purpose built retail/commercial buildings in the town centre.

- *Relationship to Listed Buildings and Setting:*

There are no adjacent listed buildings, but it has an important relationship to the corner Barclays Bank to the west and presents a counterfoil landmark in the street progression.

- *Part in Growth or Development of the Settlement:*

A valuable contributor to the economic and social history of the Town. The High Street being the earliest through route and long established commercial centre, the development of arcades represent a distinct and important phase in retail expansion, and in the establishment of Oldham as a distinct regional shopping centre.

- *Landmark Quality:*

Has very high landmark quality at all exposed elevations. The High Street elevation, despite loss of the dome, is immediately identifiable in old photographs and holds its own among the modern, larger scale, buildings adjacent. Seen from the west, it is a dominant feature acting in counterpoint to the corner tower of the listed Barclays Bank, and leading the eye beyond to the distant views east.

⁴ There are some 123 surviving historic shopping arcades in Great Britain, of which 34 are listed. A further 42 have been demolished.

- *Condition: Very Good.*

The High Street elevation has suffered most loss, including the removal of the dome. The mechanical "Ivanhoe" clock by Potts of Leeds, was removed in 1926 and the wooden figures used as garden ornaments. The Albion Street and Curzon Street elevations are surprisingly complete, apart from shop fronts. Internally, the arcade retains virtually all its original fabric at the upper levels, including some original and now rare, light fittings. The pitched glass roof and arched steel trusses have been restored.

The ground floor shop fronts are appalling and the intrusions onto the central aisle should be removed.

The High Street facade has always been problematic, as the two neighbouring buildings were in separate ownerships. The present buildings are both abominable and are very poorly related in scale, materials and design, both would be better replaced.

b) *Market Avenue, 1880:*

- *Architect:*

P. Sydney Stott⁵ (1858 - 1937). Undoubtedly Oldham's greatest architect. Third son of A H Stott (Senior), founder of the architectural dynasty, which included his brother Joseph Stott and his sons, who transformed the industrial and economic fabric of Lancashire, and Oldham in particular. His father, A. H. Stott, established himself as the leading mill architect of Lancashire during the 1860's, and took two of his three sons into partnership. During the mill building boom, he not only designed the buildings, but promoted and took shares in many mills.

Sydney Stott established his own practice in 1884, on the retirement of his father when the firm of Stott & Sons moved their Head Office to Manchester. Sydney built 25 mills in Oldham, and 55 elsewhere in Lancashire, accounting for no less than 44% of the total increment in the spinning capacity of Lancashire between 1887 and 1914. He was created a Baronet in 1920, enlarging his practice and speciality in mills to an international concern. During a career of 40 years, he claimed to have designed mills around the world with an aggregate total of 9 million spindles.

- *Qualities:*

The remains of the building contain an interesting wrought iron truss system and thus represent a part of the industrial heritage of Oldham. They are, no doubt, typical of the constructional systems used on many similar utilitarian buildings. It has no other parallel within the Conservation Area.

- *Group Value:*

The adjoining building to the east the High Street elevation is probably contemporary and may repay further research. The shops shells accommodated within the arcade on the east side, may also be original. The arcade has little group value in its present environs, particularly at the north end.

- *Importance:*

The arcade has been much altered. The shop fronts remained open to the central street until 1954. The development of the later adjoining Hilton Arcade pushed the west side units out into the central space. The structure of timber pitched roof with iron ties, is of interest, but not of major importance. The surviving early lanterns are valuable, and there may be interesting historic fabric remains within the west side retail shells. But it is a curiosity rather than an important historic building, worthy of recording but not of unconditional preservation.

⁵ Erroneously named 'Scott' in Mackeith's books on shopping arcades

c) *Greaves Arms, 1925:*

- *Qualities: Age, style materials etc.*

Very typical of many early 20th century pubs in Oldham. Many were rebuilt during the inter-war years, and Greaves represents the traditional eclectic approach. Its materials of terracotta, stone dressings and brick, are distinctive, though not inherently of the vernacular. The roof of green Westmoreland type slates, contrasts with the stone and brick of surrounding and adjacent buildings.

- *Relationship to Adjacent Buildings and Setting:*

Contrasts rather than clashes with St Mary's and Church Terrace, but offers a vibrant counterpoint to the listed Baroque stone Barclays Bank in the High Street. Provides an extremely important element in the relationship of buildings forming the Town Hall Square, and the termination of Church Terrace. The elevated position is set against a backdrop of the hill falling away down Yorkshire Street and to the distant views beyond the town. It is one of the most prominent buildings in the town, on a highly sensitive site.

- *Historic Plot Features:*

The first inn established on this spot, was known as the Blue Ball erected during the first half of the 18th century. The name sequence was: Blue Ball, Old Church Inn, Nelson's Ball, The Ball, becoming the Greaves Arms in 1826, when owned by Edward Greaves. At that time, it had expanded to cover 160 square yards. The most significant change, and one of positive benefit to the townscape, was the rebuilding of 1925. The 1923 War Memorial was erected only two feet from the steps to the earlier building. The present building was set back 23 feet, creating the broad expanse of terrace around the Memorial, which is now an important characteristic of the Conservation Area.

d) *Hark to Topper⁶ Bow street, 1914*

- *Qualities, Age, Style & Materials:*

Another pub of faience/terracotta and brick, with eclectic detailing, but well proportioned. Very typical of its age, though not particularly in any local vernacular.

- *Importance in Development/Road Layouts etc:*

Sited on "Goldburn" the earliest route through the Town. Earliest reference to a beer house on the site is 1834, but the 1817 map shows the site as built up. The name dates from at least 1880. The present building was erected in 1914, on a site adjacent to the original, and was re-named Manor Inn. The original name was re-used in 1971, after major internal alterations. The site is therefore significant and is one of the now few remaining early plots on the original Goldburn.

⁶ This pub name has nothing to do with the hat making industry. There were two other "Hark to..." pub names in Oldham - "Hark to Famous" and "Hark to Nudger". Both appearing briefly in records of around 1856. "Famous" and "Nudger" were names of well known hunting dogs, "Topper" was presumably another.

e) *Victoria House, Greaves Street:*

- **Qualities:**

Contributes towards the setting of the listed Town Hall opposite and of the Edgar Wood office building to the north. A highly distinctive building, of low elevation, which allows the more important buildings to dominate.

- **Form/Function**

The unusual low mass and large floor plate are a direct result of the original function as purpose built Billiard Hall. It is presently vacant

- **Materials:**

A finely detailed and sophisticated construction, using faience and brick, well articulated to reduce the impact of the large rectangular floor plate.

f) *Town House Restaurant, Greaves Street:*

- **Qualities:**

An exuberantly detailed front elevation of local sandstone, late 19th century, probably a warehouse or office originally. Typical good quality building of the era and function of the major period of growth in the town.

- **Landmark Contribution:**

Forms an important element in the group at the junction of Greaves Street/Firth Street, and due to the slight bend in Greaves Street, is seen against the buildings in Union Street. The extremely robust and dominant dentiled pediment is highly distinctive.

- **Condition:**

Poorly decorated, and the painted stonework is likely to be detrimental to long term preservation of the fabric.

g) *Local Interest Centre (Friends' Meeting House):*

An extremely important corner building, defining the edge of the present Conservation Area on Ashworth Street.

- **Qualities:**

An essay in provincial brick classicism with stone pediment with deep dentil cornice and centrepiece with arches. Very typical of the higher status buildings for community use, and not the usual austere detailing associated with a Friends' Meeting House.

- **Relationship to Adjoining Buildings:**

It relates very well to the Old Post Office (Local Studies Library) at Greaves Street/Union Street corner, having the same materials of red brick and stone dressings, but is very different in approach and detailing. Although, also of two storeys, the position at lower in the sloping site makes it correctly subservient to the Post Office building. It also acts as a foil to the Museum Lecture hall at the opposite end of the Ashworth Street block, and its massing provides a valuable element in the visual crescendo to the dominant Museum building, from the south west.

- *Contribution to Character:*

This building is one in the tightly knitted block formed by Local Studies Library (Old Post Office) and Museum and their attendant additions. Surrounding the only formal green square in the Conservation Area, which provides views over the lower country to the south. The importance of this block cannot be over estimated.

The smaller linking buildings and wall between the Local Interest Centre and the Art Gallery Lecture Hall extension, is not of high quality and would benefit from improvement to provide more suitable visual and physical presence to the Ashworth Street elevation.

h) The Grapes Hotel, Yorkshire Street

(Agreed Conservation Area Extension):

- *Qualities:*

A highly idiosyncratic and distinctive building by virtue of the series of consol brackets or keystones above the first floor windows decorating on otherwise plain facade. The rendered front is not typical in the area.

- *Setting:*

It relates positively to the street elevation, matching its neighbours in the west for height and scale, and forms an important constituent of the group of commercial premises in Yorkshire Street.

- *Historic Associations:*

The premises appears to date from 1828, and are part of the early development of Yorkshire Street, as the importance of Goldburn declined. At that time the premises included a shop and a stable entered via the existing archway. The present ground floor frontage with its broken pediment over the main entrance, probably dates from the turn of the century, when the pub was bought by Wilsons' Brewery. It remained virtually unaltered until a major refurbishment in 1985.

l) Nos. 20 - 30 Yorkshire Street:

A group of unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area and within the agreed UDP extension, forming an important northern edge. This group has great variety and inherent qualities which represent the best of typical provincial town centre development. Here are buildings erected over a comparatively short time scale of c.1880 - 1930 with a remarkable cross section of types and designs. Here are the banks, commercial premises, offices and possibly residential units above, which provide such interest and scale to the street, leading the eye up to the Town Hall. As expected, the quality increases as the buildings progress towards the summit of the hill.

This run of buildings is divided into four blocks, punctuated by two individual buildings, the latter particularly are on early historic plots which provided the original genesis of the north/south streets.

There is not a superfluous building among them, and any call for replacement would have to demonstrate a matching or superior quality. However, they are severely let down by the shop fronts, which apart from two or three examples, are universally appalling.

9

Spaces Within the Area

Town Hall Square

The most important space within the Conservation Area is undoubtedly the Town Hall Square or Old Market Place, also known for a short time in the early 19th century as Mill End. Although not the exact topographical apex of the Hill on which Oldham is founded, it is very near that, and forms a base for the Church of St Mary set high above the terraced roadway. Until recent years, this formed the prominent landmark for some considerable distance, although it had to compete with numerous mill chimneys (including one next door on the County Court site).

This highly distinctive space had always been enclosed by prominent and high status buildings, and its idiosyncratic terrace marking the line of the old road at the formation of Yorkshire Street, now provides a major landscape element which emphasises the propitious topography of the town. The formation of "space" rather than an enlarged street dates from the time of the Yorkshire Street construction in c.1808. Certain characteristics have remained from that date, in the form of surrounding buildings.

The two periods of road widenings at the entrance to High Street have both times preserved the rounded form of buildings to the corner of Clegg Street; and the steep fall away down Yorkshire Street has always provided a view out over the surrounding countryside. As the topography falls from north to south as well as west to east, the larger buildings to the south being set lower, tend to present a more even skyline than would otherwise be the case.

At present, there is a serious gap both in the Conservation Area boundary and in the architecture, which followed the destruction of the Clegg Street and Mill Street block behind the Town Hall, and which presently contains the Bus Station. It is vital that the original sense and scale of enclosure should be reinstated here. (*See below, 14 Negative Factors, Bus Station*).

Union Street

driven through an undeveloped area of the town in the early years of the 19th century, sometime between c.1806 and c.1814, was the first "modern" thoroughfare in Oldham. Probably intended to bypass the congested and narrow Town Centre, it did not really achieve that until much later in the century, following the construction of the north/south linking streets to High Street and Yorkshire Street. The uninterrupted straightness creates a unique space in the town and one which is uncommon in many urban settlements of similar date. It almost achieves Haussmannian boulevard status in the boldness of its approach.

The fall away to the east becomes more pronounced at the junction with Waterloo Street and the slight turn to the north creates an important stop to the vista which is at present vacant. Although the section of Union Street falling within the Conservation Area is small, and contains the most important buildings, there is no obvious east/west boundary or edge at this point. Rather the strong linear nature of Union Street carries the character through and beyond the Conservation Area boundary.

The nature of Union Street is one of mixed uses and buildings, and the section within the Conservation Area typifies the whole, i.e. small domestic scale properties interspersed with large buildings. Within the Conservation Area section these are civic and high status commercial, outside they are industrial or commercial. Union Street provided the earliest "new" edge to the settlement, and although it remained undeveloped for the early years of the 19th century, expansion of industrial and housing exploded after the coming of the railway.

Industrial Area

The area between Union Street and the railway was dominated by mills, workshops and pits, but was interspersed with streets and blocks of dwellings, highly chaotic but also so typical of the general development of the town. So the rather disparate appearance is not a recent innovation. However, it is clear that the siting of the most important group of civic buildings in a close group, was a highly mannered urban design decision, long before the era of structured town planning.

The larger foot-print buildings - mills and warehouse - were often erected on unbuilt ground, rather than requiring demolition of groups of smaller properties. However, the scale and relationships of the various groups of buildings tend to merge rather than jar upon each other, and that element of modern urban design needs to be encouraged for new development sites which will impact upon the Conservation Area. The vacant site adjacent to Greenhill Passage, which is immediately on the turn of the street towards Yorkshire Street junction, is one of the most sensitive. Formerly containing a cinema, this will be highly visible from the Conservation Area.

The position of Union Street in relation to the topography gives views to the north up to the Church and the high buildings towards the Town Centre; and to the south, the falling ground gives views out over to the surrounding countryside. The often large scale buildings to the south are subservient to those on the street frontage, due to this fall in topography. It is an important characteristic of the Conservation Area - and the remainder of the street - that the dominance of buildings on the thoroughfare remains.

Yorkshire Street

is the other principal thoroughfare within the Conservation Area, its present form indicated on a map of c.1805. This broad street was to replace the winding, narrow, Goldburn (Church Street/Bow Street) and act as a continuation of the High Street. It lacks the civic formality of Union Street, is far steeper and less uniform. The nature of buildings defining the edges is far smaller in scale throughout, but the views out westwards are extremely fine, even in the lower reaches as the street continues to fall beyond its junction with Union Street and on towards Mumps.

The sense of enclosure is severely compromised at the sensitive west end, below the Church, by the modern block to Church Street and the intrusive "motorway-to-nowhere" - St Mary's Way. Otherwise, the vertical rhythm of the "street wall" remains surprisingly intact, and the consistency of scale creates a feeling of spaciousness without alienation of the human factor. The quality of the street - both within and beyond the Conservation Area, is let down by appalling shop fronts.

The Market Place/Albion Street/Curzon Street block,

has an uneasy spatial definition between the new market building, the new Post Office and the older buildings containing the arcades. Despite the entrance piers to the market area, there is little sense of enclosure or functionality. There is an ill-defined relationship between the section of space within the Conservation Area and the part beyond to Henshaw Street, although linked by the new market building. The resultant space cannot decide if it is a pedestrianised street or a more formal spacial event.

The Ancient spaces

One of the most gratifying spacial experiences within the Conservation Area is moving through the old narrow streets which still survive. Church Lane and its rear alley, and the Church steps (which are a comparatively late construction) form an inviting and atmospheric byway. The verticality and sense of containment give the most accurate surviving experience of the early street configuration "barely wide enough for two carriages to pass". The sense of containment is lost at the entrance where the early street pattern has been eroded by successive widening and alterations. The resultant space is bordered by the new Post Office which has been kept to a low profile, but has an alien articulation which is not compatible with the traditional street pattern. The space then loses definition at the edge on the junction with Rock Street, the market entrance and the leisure centre site. (See *Green Spaces*, below)

Church Street,

The other ancient thoroughfare within the Conservation Area, has lost all meaning since the construction of the new block facing Yorkshire Street. The Church wall and section enclosed by the Greaves Arms are all that is now redolent of historic integrity. It is a great pity that a more imaginative development did not take advantage of the topography to create two frontages at different levels. A row of small shops facing Church Street with residential or commercial space above, would continue the original enclosure of this space and make an attractive street.

The other small streets

with their mixture of domestic and commercial sized properties give a varied and enticing visual experience throughout the area which is only reduced by poor shop fronts.



The High Street in the 1920s. Woolworths has been demolished but Yates Wine Lodge two doors along is now MacDonalds

10

Building Materials, Textures & Colours

The earliest local materials for buildings were stone and thatch. The last remaining thatched cottage was noted in the 1920s. It is conceivable that some of the lesser vernacular stone built dwellings remain, concealed behind later facings of brick or render. Prior to the railways, local sandstone was the principal material, and at least one quarry was recorded in Yorkshire Street in the early years of the 19th century. Very few stone built vernacular buildings now remain obvious within the Conservation Area and adjoining, but those parts of the town (within the Conservation Area or not) which are known to have early development, should be carefully examined before demolition proposals are approved.

Walling

Church Lane at the historic core, has houses of local sandstone, refaced later in the more fashionable brick. The elevation facing the Church gives a good indication of the built texture that the town exhibited prior to the major expansion periods. The wall to the Church Yard facing Church Street, is thought to remain on its original boundary line, and there are two distinct periods of building exhibited. The lower stonework which is the oldest, is local Oldham Edge sandstone; the upper extension is a mixture of local sandstones.

The town now presents an appearance of almost entirely brick built for the majority of buildings, stone being reserved for the higher status developments. Sources of brick are beyond the scope of this study, but there were regional brick fields and types which could be easily brought in by rail and canal.

The principal sandstones include a generic York stone, from various quarries in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Many door-steps and surrounds to the 19th century buildings have York stone dressings. The Library and Art Gallery in Greaves Street is of Coal Measures sandstone. The "Town House" restaurant on the corner of Firth and Greaves Street is of a local sandstone quarried from Oldham Edge, near enough to be transported by horse and cart for use in the town and surrounding villages.

The two principal Banks in the Conservation Area, both use regional stones. The National Westminster Bank, adjacent to the Town Hall, uses a coal measures sandstone, although it sits on an "imported" Dalbeattie Granite from southern Scotland. The Royal Bank of Scotland on Church Terrace uses a Darley Dale gritstone from Derbyshire, sitting on an imported black gabbro.

The Church is also of a local stone a Kinder Scout Grit which was probably quarried from the Chew Valley area of Saddleworth. The vestries at the east end are a recent addition in very distinctive Liverpool Red sandstone, which was salvaged from the demolished St Peter's Church on the site of the Shopping Centre. The dressings to buildings in Church Lane, and other 18th century/early 19th century town buildings are usually in local sandstone, often exhibiting distinctive striations of iron staining.

The carved and painted capitals to the parade of shops in Henshaw Street (*See Conservation Extension, below*) are sandstone.

The Town Hall is largely of local coal measures sandstone, with the plinth of the later extension to Firth Street in Millstone grit.

The Ponsonby Office in Greaves Street, by local architect Edgar Wood, uses a non-local stone - Bath limestone, and therefore are totally alien to the local vernacular. New buildings in the Conservation Area should be encouraged to use local stone rather than foreign or imported.

Roofing:

The prevalent vernacular is now slate, the ubiquitous Welsh variety having spread as thoroughly here as elsewhere in the country.

There remains at least one building with large irregular slates in Back King Street outside the present Conservation Area but in the Town Centre. Elsewhere there are tiles, lead and asphalt as to be expected in an area of rapid industrial growth.

Pavings & Road Surfaces:

Generally

Paved surfaces and roadways are not intrinsically ancient. In common with many provincial towns streets and squares first began to be formally paved in the era preceding the Industrial revolution known as the Urban Renaissance during the mid-18th century. Local pavings were traditionally of regional flagrock. Generically a form of York Stone, these large random squared flags have either a riven or sawn finish. Riven being earlier. They have a fine texture and a rich colour, often with inclusions. Those used in the town hall were taken from Haslingden in Rossendale, and Elland Edge near Huddersfield. Remaining examples are precious survivals and must be preserved. An example remains at the lower end of Greaves street which is pecked to prevent slipping. The juxtaposition of large flags for foot traffic with small sets for roadways, is a highly attractive and very durable traditional finish.

Church Street

and Church Lane still retain their squared setts, although the Church Street roadway is in poor condition with asphalt overlay and filling. There are other surviving examples of setts, the alley behind Church Terrace and beneath later asphalt coverings in minor roads. The large square setts have a very different character and texture to the smaller, rectangular cobbles often used to-day to create historic or period effect. Side streets which are not necessarily subject to heavy traffic should be considered for revealing their original finish. A Town Heritage Trail for the length of the original Goldburn from Mumps to King Street, might be laid in these large square setts.

Terracotta & Faience:

These materials have no vernacular or local origins. Their popularity as a status material stems from the latter years of the 19th century, through to the inter-war period when faience became favourite of the *Art Deco* stylists. There are several buildings of this era in the Conservation Area and in other parts of the town. The material is highly durable provided it is not ill-treated by inappropriate cleaning. Both materials are used for dressings and ornament, and faience is also used as cladding. Glazed bricks also belong to this sub-class, usually used as a light reflective agent on close built facades. The Old Mill street facade to the Town Hall is constructed of them, and as they were never intended to be seen from any distance, concealing them again would be no loss. Other isolated areas also retain glazed bricks, which should not be painted over, and retained in any proposals for alteration.

One of the more sophisticated uses of glazed faience is to be found on Victoria House in Greaves Street, the previous Billiard Hall, which has some finely modelled ornament and fresh interesting colours. The Victory Cinema Deluxe in Union Street also has some good period Faience work in vibrant colour and robust detail.

Cast Iron:

The Conservation Area has some fine examples of cast and wrought ironwork, and some further detailed research would be valuable to determine the manufacturers. There were iron foundries in the town, and any locally produced material would have great historic value.

The range of railings at the edge of the raised Church Terrace, which are listed, are a splendid pattern of robust mid-to-late 19th century street furniture. This is an unusual application of such fine work. Public realm utilitarian furnishings are usually of plainer work, unless in high status or ornamental areas. The use of this pattern, with its integrated street lanterns, indicates the stature of the Old Market Place or Town Hall Square, as an important civic space.

The ironwork to the Lyceum building is also of exceptionally high quality, massively detailed and well proportioned, it adds considerably to the strength of the architectural composition of the building by emphasising the base. It has suffered some damage and is badly decorated.

Lanterns at both the Lyceum and the Art Gallery are very fine, and are also suffering some damage. Other examples of small scale decorative ironwork are still extant, and there are remaining industrial pieces worthy of note. On the edge of the Conservation Area, opposite Old Church Street, some massive cast-iron pillars remain, framing the basement access to a previous factory. Old photographs show decorative wrought-iron cresting above facias to shops that might be considered suitable for reinstatement as an enhancement measure.

In the Market Place a combination lighting standard and drinking fountain provided a notable features in cast-iron - twice over. The earliest example was installed in the mid-century, to be replaced by a more elaborate version, a generation or so later.

One of the most conspicuous iron features in the past was the tram-line power supply in Union Street. As befitted the status of this street, the overhead cables were supported from central iron posts with elaborate scrolled ironwork to the outrigging gallows brackets.

There are several examples throughout the area, of good, early-pattern street lanterns, particularly in Church Lane and Rock Street, although the latter are suffering damage to their lanterns. At the lower end of Lord Street, adjacent to Church Lane, there is a remaining earlier tall lamp-standard, and although reasonably attractive, this is out of scale with the adjoining properties. Other examples of these earlier poles exist, but should still be replaced with more suitable designs.

The Hilton Arcade has good decorative wrought-iron at the High Street elevation, and the lanterns in the interior are of good scale and quality.

The listed Midland Bank, in Union Street, is almost unique in the town, in having prominent iron-cresting to its steeply pitched slated roofs. This is a highly prominent feature from many vantage points from within the Conservation Area.

11

Local Details

Distinctiveness

Many distinctive local details have been noted in previous sections, above. These include the paving setts, use of local stone and ironwork.

There are no details which are obviously specific and unique to Oldham. As the main development of the town coincided with the acceleration of the Industrial Revolution, local distinctiveness in details vanished beneath the weight of "imported" materials and prefabricated and mass-produced items, which are seen in almost every provincial urban centre of similar date. Neither was there any dominant individual developer stamping a preference over the area. Within the Conservation Area, and adjoining areas, the individual plot developments are diverse. Groups of buildings, where they exist, are small in number, and do not have obvious local characteristics.

The most interesting surviving regional characteristic is the sloping continuous eaves line, previously mentioned. The device - purely and economic expedient - is seen all over the industrial midlands, where long terraces of dwellings are constructed. The eaves and ridge to the roof is continuous and parallel to the fall or slope of the ground, and is without any party wall divisions. They usually have a plain moulded cornice which adds emphasis to the device. Queen Street and Rotiro Street follow this form. One of the better examples, though interrupted by later demolition, is in Waterloo Street in the area of proposed extension to the Conservation Area.



12

Green Spaces, Trees Etc:

Formal Green Spaces

There are two formal green spaces within the Conservation Area, which have a distinct contribution to character, and another which has a negative influence.

The Church Yard

defines the northern edge of the Conservation Area, and is an ancient space and of great importance. Occupying the summit of the hill, and surrounded by walling, it provides a valuable breathing space within the dense urban fabric of the town. The views out to the east from Rock Street, are emphasised by the sharp fall in the ground, and there is a visual link between the distance green hills and the green Church Yard, redolent of the earliest period of settlement hereabouts. The function as an edge to the Town Centre and the Conservation Area is diluted by St Mary's Way, but the walling fortunately preserves the sense of isolation and enclosure.

To the north, outside the Conservation Area but highly relevant to it, is the landscaped area surrounding the new Leisure Centre. In contrast with the Church Yard, it has no containing wall and offers an effective foil to the formality of the Church Yard (and to the buildings which should be facing it on Rock Street). This informality is appropriate and reflects something of the relationship that the Church and Church Yard originally held with the surrounding landscape, that remained undeveloped until comparatively late in the town's history. The car park area at the lower levels is not quite so successful in its planning or relationship to the Church Yard and the green area, and this is one of the few places in the Conservation Area where additional planting would be of benefit.

Union Street

In the south of the area, there is the formal small garden area between the Old Post Office (Local Studies Library) and the Art Gallery. This is an essential element in the formal civic architecture of this part of Union Street. It suffers from accessibility problems, due to the levels but that is also a characteristic of the topography. It is overshadowed and the southern boundary is undistinguished. As a unique example of civic green space, it is a valuable historic survival. More importantly, it represents the attitude to such amenity spaces prevalent at the genesis of the town's present urban form, i.e. no greenery.

Preservation of Ambiance

The strongest characteristic in relation to green spaces and planting is the highly conspicuous absence of anything resembling formal planting, trees, or green spaces. This was a hard-edged, exposed, heavy industrial, "no-nonsense" town. The social and environmental climate did not recognise planting or formal greenery as a necessary factor in development. Although the nature of the Town Centre has changed, and is changing, this vital characteristic should be preserved, especially within the Conservation Area.

One of the buildings referred to as having negative contribution to character, emphasises the point: Seton House and the planting in front. The building and its siting are poor and damaging to the Conservation Area, the planting fronting it is most inappropriate, ill-conceived, and lacks scale and meaning. It must be obvious that such ill-considered landscape is not only alien to the character, but actually emphasises the other errors and defects.

There is no tradition or historic example of domestic or residential planting - shrubs, hedges, gardens - within the Conservation Area or the Town Centre. The predilection for window boxes and hanging baskets - particularly on pubs - also falls within this category, (although some pubs can get away with it more easily than others....). More importantly the civic or public realm enhancement of the town has never included or allowed trees or such landscaping at any period in its history. New developments, which imprint upon or affect the Conservation Area, must continue to uphold this abstinence from verdure as must any proposed "enhancements" to the street scape.

There is undoubtedly a modern desire for greening of inner cities which is probably an effect of the changing nature of the post-industrial environment, and the rising green culture generally. Those developments which are self-contained, remote or screened from the Conservation Area, can provide suitable playgrounds for the arboriculturally deprived. Where there is a justified desire for more green space it can be successfully accommodated outside the conservation area to the benefit of much of the newer development. The Spindles/Police Station precinct proves that not only does good landscaping play an important part in the quality of modern urban design but that there are practitioners capable of producing high standards of work which genuinely enhance their setting.



Yorkshire Steet in the 1880s

13

Relationship to Landscape, Open Countryside, Vistas:

Surrounding Views

The relationship to surrounding views and topography is one of the most vitally important contributors to the character of the Conservation Area and the town. Here, the history of the settlement can be read and understood, and visual pleasure of moving through the town is enhanced greatly by long distance views.

Elevation

Oldham is built on a hill and developed from this prominence. The dense urban sprawl which exudes out from Manchester has tended to blur the boundaries of early individual settlements to the point of non-existence. The journey impression from Manchester to Oldham is one of continuous urbanisation, but at Oldham, the effect ceases and one is immediately confronted with high ground view, particularly to the south and east which are redolent of the rural origins of the settlement.

Walk-Through

The main pedestrian route through the town from west to east via Spindles Shopping Centre, moves from the enclosed antiseptic and - some would say - characterless mall, into the High Street, with its remains of individual shops still providing visual variety and on entering the Conservation Area, there is a sudden and superb view over to distant hills as Yorkshire Street falls away suddenly. The formal verticality of landmark buildings to the north provide a framing reference, and are echoes in distant spires.

Moving down High Street to Yorkshire Street, the distant view is immediately obvious, and the punctuating landmark building to the north - Hilton Arcade, Barclays Bank, Greaves Arms, draw the eye out to distance and emphasize the height of Oldham above the surrounding countryside. The Greaves Arms appears to be perched on a precipice, drawing the pedestrian onwards, intrigued to discover what lies beyond.

Moving through the Town Hall Square and down the continuing fall of Yorkshire Street, and into the agreed Conservation Area extension, the experience repeats. The lower buildings lining street exaggerate the perspective and emphasize the long distant views until the junction with Union Street is reached. Even at this lower level, there are still good distant views to green hills, the landmark towers of the Bank become prominent, and still to the north, the railway bridge cuts across the built-up area beyond. Throughout Yorkshire Street, the high lamp standards intrude into the sky line, being higher than many of the buildings, and are most unsuitable.

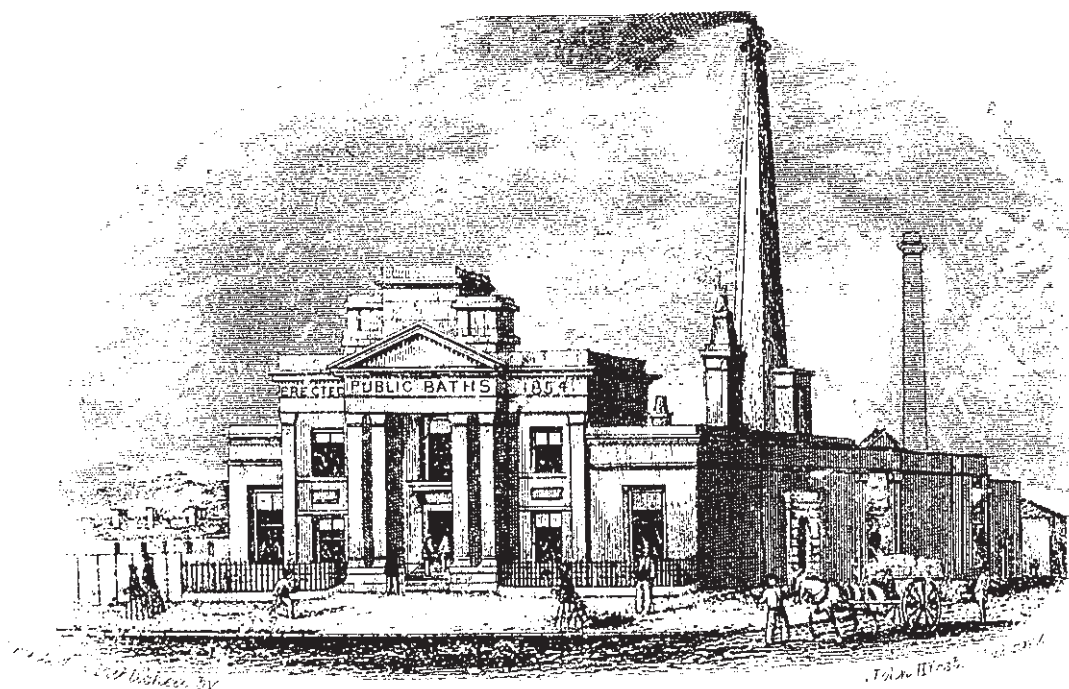
Continuing down Yorkshire Street, there are highly sensitive views glimpsed through the north/south connecting streets to Union Street and beyond. An extensive vista of Glodwick, dense housing, predominated

by taller towers and chimneys, giving a texture and colour that moulds to the further landscape beyond. A superb visual experience of unbounded space in which Oldham feels like the centre of the universe.

Turning into Greaves Street or Queen Street, the vista changes as more of the distant landscape comes into view, and as the far ground is still falling a long view is extant. Joining Union Street, the Art Gallery and Post office are dominant features against the sky, and despite the cleared sites beyond, they would have always been higher than the previous buildings behind them. This stark profile of these landmark buildings, against a wide sky and distant views, is an important and valuable characteristic of the area and town.

At the Albion Street/Tommyfields area of the Conservation Area, a tightly enclosed urban space suddenly breaks into a near rural prospect. The backs of the buildings in Church Lane, built up to the crescendo of the church tower, standing stark against the sky line, and the steep fall of Rock Street, bordered by the free-form green of the Leisure Centre, takes the eye out to long distant views of the far-off mills.

It is important that any proposed building developments to the south or east of the Conservation Area, particularly on known proposed sites, are designed to preserve these very important views.



The Public Baths before alterations. Demolished to make way for Seton House.

14

Negative Factors

Sites

The Conservation Area contains several empty "opportunity" sites, and there others adjacent to the present Conservation Area boundaries. As empty sites, they impose negative factors which disturb the inherent character.

Rock Street

At the north of the Conservation Area, the car park and shed adjacent to the rear of County Court building and adjacent to the Church, is extremely poor in relation to the extremely fine quality of Church Lane, the Church and the views beyond. The new buildings backing onto Church Street have been mentioned above and have a very damaging impact on both the Town Hall Square and Church Street.

Old Church Street

This vacant site - at present a car park - is bounded by St Mary's Way, Old Church Street and Bradshaw Street. It lies in a sensitive position, on the edge of the present Conservation Area, and is most unprepossessing. This site desperately needs to be developed to preserve the urban grain which previously existed here. Old Church Street is part of the historic ancient route through the town, and although the site previously contained a large mill, any new proposal will need to take careful account of the awkward topography and the proximity to the Church Yard, as well as the effect on distant views from Rock Street.

West Conservation Area

The elongated sites in Back Greaves Street, Queen Street and Waterloo Street, are gashes in the conservation area fabric which need patching. New development here must respect the verticality of the older buildings, which even if covering a large foot-print, tended to avoid horizontal emphasis, which is unrestful in the context of deeply sloping topography. The Queen Street site is used as a car park which is most intrusive and unsuitable. This is one rare occasion where some temporary perimeter planting to disguise the cars might be appropriate, provided it is truly temporary.

21 - 41 Yorkshire Street:

A modern terrace of shops, which detracts seriously from the environment of Yorkshire Street and Church Street. These buildings are coarse, poorly detailed and have a totally alien horizontality. Traditional architecture dealt with the steep topography by ensuring verticality - to lessen effect of unrestfulness and thus turn necessity to advantage. Although this group are outside the Conservation Area, they have a serious detrimental effect on the earliest part of the town, and should be replaced.

Seton House

Greaves Street (New). This building seriously detracts from the character of the Conservation Area and should be replaced. It occupies a key position in the Conservation Area, its predecessor - the Public baths - helped

define an important edge. The position of the building standing back from the building line is its most offensive feature. The footprint is large, but there are many large footprint buildings locally. It is poorly articulated and clumsily detailed, with particularly weak corners and is a prime candidate for the encouragement of change to re-establish the formal building line.

The Bus Station

The projected removal of the Bus Station, adjacent to the rear of the Town Hall, is a welcome move. The present arrangement is severely intrusive to the remaining buildings in Clegg Street as well as to the views to and from the Town Square. Any new development here will obviously need extremely careful design in both massing and detail to reflect the dominance of the Town Hall. There is a major opportunity to improve the present weak gap adjacent to the curved corner, which resulted from the demolitions to form the shopping centre and bus station.

High Street: Redevelopment

In the High Street, there is a particularly weak corner opposite Barclays Bank, that contains a plain brick-faced building, adjacent to an *Art Deco* period faience faced shop. It has a miserable area of planting, immediately adjacent and another raised bed in front. This is outside the listed and prominent Bank building and can also be seen from the west, affecting the entrance to Church Lane. There is opportunity here for a stronger and more sympathetic development.

Union Street

In the extreme west of the southern part of the Conservation Area, on Union Street, the site adjacent to the Prudential building is empty and is a very poor boundary to the area. This is another extremely sensitive site and any new development will be prominent in views into and from the Conservation Area at this point and beyond.

Street furniture

needs rationalisation throughout the Conservation Area. Some valuable progress has been made on this in the Albion Street area and in the pedestrianised parts of Market Place, adjacent to the Conservation Area, but there are still remaining tall, empty posts in both the High Street and Albion Street. There is much street clutter, throughout the area, with individual posts supporting single signs which could be beneficially re-arranged to allow multiple signs on a single post.

There is also evidence throughout the area and beyond of street-lighting affixed to the buildings, this is a precedent which could be copied, with great advantage, in the narrower linking north/south streets.

Reference has already been made to street lighting which is out of scale and of unsuitable design. A reappraisal throughout the area would be beneficial with a general proposal that all such lighting should be replaced with shorter standards, more frequently spaced. This is particularly important where lamp posts are seen against a background of open countryside.

Street Surfaces

The use of brick and block pavements is unacceptable anywhere in the conservation area or the proposed extensions. There are known precedents for use of local natural materials, and the principle of small texture materials for roads (setts), and large texture materials for foot traffic (flags), is a well established iconography.

15

Neutral Areas

There are few areas within the existing Conservation Area, which can be said to neither enhance nor detract from character or appearance. The existing Conservation Area boundaries are so tightly drawn, around the prominent listed buildings, and the few remaining other original buildings, that the contribution they make *en masse* is inseparable. In the areas immediately outside the present Conservation Area boundaries and the agreed extension, there are some neutral areas, which are discussed below, in "Proposed Extensions".



The confluence of Yorkshire Street and Union Street looking towards Mumps. Early 20th C. Part of the proposed extension conservation area. Many of the buildings shown are still extant.

16

Conservation Area Extensions

There are a number of extensions which should be considered to the present Conservation Area, as the characteristics of the existing area quite clearly extend beyond the present boundaries. This has been recognised, in part, by the present proposed extension, to include a further part of Yorkshire Street, parts of Bow Street, Waterloo Street and Walter Street. The extension area includes a number of fine individual buildings and good quality commercial properties, which are in relatively good condition.

Influence of early road pattern

The early character of the town was quite clearly developed around the early road pattern. Most important, was Goldburn, which provided the main route from Manchester, over the Peninnes, to Yorkshire. The majority of this early route, through the town, still exists and the Conservation Area should be extended to the east to include it. Not only can the original route be clearly traced, but the buildings within such an enlarged Conservation Area are of considerable quality and value. Therefore, a proposal is put forward to extend the Conservation Area to include Old Church Street, the buildings lining the north side of Yorkshire Street down to, and including, Wallshaw Place to the Mumps Bridge; and extending southwards to include the north side of Union Street.

Uses

The uses of the buildings within this area are almost entirely commercial and retail and thus continue the prevalent uses in Yorkshire Street. However, there are the remains of some industrial buildings and leisure buildings, which are important contributors to the character.

Archaeology

The archaeological significance of Goldburn (now Bow Street and Old Church Street) is high, and the buildings and sites lining it are therefore, important. Many of the buildings within the Bow Street/Yorkshire Street extension, are the first built on their plots and are clearly shown in early plans and photographs. As Yorkshire Street developed relatively slowly, eventually linking the separate settlement of Mumps, it assumed a stronger commercial/retail character. Old maps and plans indicate coal pits, quarries and other works in the area and adjacent surrounds, the remains of which may still lie below the present buildings.

Status Buildings

The area contains important listed and other high status buildings, which add to the criteria for designating an extension to the Conservation Area. The important Bank, at Mumps Bridge, forms a very prominent landmark, and the adjoining buildings on Wallshaw Place and Garden Street, are characteristic late 19th early 20th century industrial buildings, of significant character and quality with some excellent detailing. In Union Street, the extension will include three further listed buildings, of early 19th century date, of domestic scale, which frame the existing empty development site. The terraced shops, in Waterloo Street, retain their early shop fronts and have good remaining details and dressings. The area bordering Bow Street, apart from its archaeological importance, has some remaining early stone walling and has great potential for further development on a more intimate and historic scale.

High Street Extension

At the extreme west of the Conservation Area, the buildings to the south of the High Street and to the north of Market Place and west of Henshaw Street, are worthy of inclusion in an extension to the Conservation Area. The group to the south of the High Street, whether by accident or design, were excluded from the Town Square/Spindles shopping development but make a valuable contribution to the scale and containment of the High Street pedestrianised area. Extension of the Conservation Area, to form a notional boundary between the radiuses end elevation of these buildings, and the old Town Hall, will preserve a civic space within the Old Town Hall Square.

Market Place Extension

To the west, of the High Street, the group of buildings fronting Market Place and the return into Henshaw Street, have a distinct curved form, which is dominated by the prominent *Art Deco* corner building. There are other individual buildings in this group that are worthy of note and improvement.

In Henshaw Street, between Priest Hill Street and the Inn, in Henshaw Street, is possibly the finest row of shops in the Town Centre: a group of late 19th century, 3-storey shops with carved stone corbel brackets, representing different trades. These have been carefully painted in traditional manner, although the adjoining shop fronts and supporting pilasters, leave a great deal to be desired. Two of the units contain their original glazing, to the first floor, including margin lights to the clerestory. The joinery work to the dormer windows, roofs, facias and chimney stacks is all largely intact.

Immediately adjoining them, to the south, is a large retail shop, of similar date with fine brickwork and well detailed stone dressings to the upper storeys. The shop front is extremely poor. Priest Hill Street still retains its cobbled surface and the Inn, backing onto Clan Fold has an *Art Deco* faience refacing to an earlier building, as is apparent from the rear elevations and is also worthy of inclusion in this group.

Jackson Pit Conservation Area

An outlying, separate Conservation Area, should be considered to encompass the area bounded by King Street, George Street centred on Jackson Pit, and possibly including parts of the new landscape area between Spindles and the Police Headquarters.

This area contains the continuation of the original Goldburn. The exact route is not sufficiently researched, but lies beneath the new landscaped area, where previously a complex maze of small streets led into George Street and Jackson Pit. Either of the latter could be part of the original route, as both streets are ancient and the properties they contain are modest but of great character.

The single listed building in this area, the Independent Methodist Chapel of 1815, provides an important focal point and there are buildings which would repay greater study in Jackson Pit.

The proposed area would include the shops fronting King Street from N° 1 down to the Star Public House. The latter has played a prominent part in the Oldham townscape since the establishment of the town, forming a highly notable focal point at an important crossroads. Also, within this group is the large Co-operative building, which although having suffered some unfortunate alterations, is a remarkable building and represents an extremely important development in the economic and social history of Oldham.

The group of buildings at the north end of King Street have some fine façades and the small house, now offices forming the corner of King Street and Barn Street, is particularly fine, only demeaned by a crass re-working of the Barn Street elevation in recent years. Adjoining Back King Street is an intriguing mid-19th century building, possibly a workshop or stables, which retains its original large flag slates and an interesting timber flèche.

The landscaped area between the Spindles and the Police Headquarters, contains the Brewery Tavern, a fine brick building, with stone dressings and an elaborate brick and stone corbelled cornice. Not an outstanding building. But good conservation area material. The pedestrianised precinct leads to a one of the best examples of successful modern urban landscape design. Filling the sloping and awkward site between the Spindles, and the Police Station, it echoes the former small meandering streets at the head of Water Street. The planting and hard landscape have been carried out with panache and skill, interspersed with sculptures and variations in texture and colour which make it an inviting prospect. The inclusion of such an area, within a Conservation Area, may be premature, or contentious, but there is no reason why examples of good enhancement should not be preserved.



A corner of Holebottom, near Yorkshire Street. Clearly depicts the confusion of industrial workings and interspersed housing.

17

Appendix 1: Listed Buildings

The Conservation Area contains a significant number of listed buildings. The Extracts from the "Green Backs" are included here for ease of reference

CHURCH LANE

Nos. 7 & 9 (North Side)

GV

II

Pair of houses, now in use as offices. c.1800. Brick with stone dressings and Welsh slate roofs. 3 storeys, each a 3-window range with central entrance. 6-panelled doors in rusticated stone architraves. Windows in plain stone architraves, extensively renewed. 16-pane sashes (12-panes over doorway) renewed with pivoting windows in original openings. Moulded modillion eaves cornice. Angle quoins to left. End wall stacks. Wide return gable with irregular fenestration and central doorway in rusticated stone architrave.

No. 8 (South Side)

GV

II

House, now in use as offices. c.1800. Brick with Welsh slate roof. 2 storeys, 5-window range with central entrance. Door with over-light in rusticated painted stone architrave. Windows are 2-pane sash windows, renewed in original openings with flat arched brick heads to ground floor.

No. 11 (North Side)

GV

II

(Formerly Listed as: CHURCH LANE Nos. 7-11 (Odd))

House, formerly in use as offices but vacant at time of inspection. c.1800. Brick with stone dressings and Welsh slate roof. 3 storeys, symmetrical 5-window range with central entrance. Door in Tuscan pediment case with plain fanlight. 2-pane sash windows, some renewed in original openings, with flat arched gauged brick heads and stone cills. 6-paned sashes to attic storey. Stone eaves band.

Nos. 10, 12 & 14 (South Side)

GV

II

Terrace of 3 houses, now in commercial use. c.1880. Brick with Welsh Slate roof, and white glazed brick to rear elevations. Tall 3 storeyed 11-window range. 3 doorways in stone pedimented architraves recessed into wall. Lower 2-pane sash windows have stilted stone hood moulds and stone cills. Upper windows have cambered brick arched heads and stone cills. Plain wood eaves cornice. End wall stacks, partially truncated.

County Court (North Side)

GV

II

(Formerly Listed as: CHURCH LANE Probate Office. County Court)

Court house and offices. 1894. By Henry Tanner. Red brick with white terracotta dressings and Westmorland slate roof. 2 storeys with attic, asymmetrically planned with entrance block to left and advanced and higher main range with flanking block to right. Entrance has shallow segmental arch with deep moulding and paired panelled doors. 3 foiled lights above with frieze of low relief arms and inscription, "County Court" on heavily foliate ground. 3 plain lights above, and embattled parapet.

Central range has five 2-light mullioned and transomed windows to ground floor and continuous hood mould. Tall blind panels above forming aprons to upper windows which are paired foiled lights alternating with 3-tiered mullioned and transomed windows cutting into two gabled dormers which have polygonal pilasters terminating as finials, and a central chamfered finial.

Additional doorway in right-hand block with paired foiled lights along side and oriel over with central moulded pilaster buttress springing from dog corbel. Small service windows beyond. Steep hipped roof with vents. Original interior wall linings etc.

Church of St Mary and St Peter (Eastern End)

GV II (Upgraded II* 19.12.94)

Parish church. 1827-30. By Richard Lane. Coursed and squared rubble with Welsh slate roof. West tower with clasping porches, nave and aisles under a single roof. Simple Gothic style. 4-stage west tower with doorway in Perpendicular arch with shafts, flanked by foiled moulded panels, with corbel table and quatrefoil frieze over.

Large 3-light, 2 tier Perpendicular window over with crocketed hood mould. Low stage housing clock above, and acanthus frieze below 2-tier bell chamber lights. Trefoiled frieze below embattled parapet. Polygonal angle buttresses form pinnacles. Narrow blind panelled bay with terminal polygonal buttresses and pinnacles links the tower to the north and south porches which clasp it. These have 2-tier 3-light windows in west walls and buttresses on outer angles. Doorways to north and south in wide shallow segmental arch with shafts and crocketed hood mould over. Blind foiled niche over doors, and embattled parapet.

Each aisle is identical, divided into 6 bays by buttresses which terminate as pinnacles. Angles marked by heavier polygonal buttresses and pinnacles with coronets. Each bay has 3-light 2 tier window with shafts. Additional entrance porches to east of aisles, with shafts and moulding to archway. Shallow chancel with high roof and trefoiled frieze below parapet and polygonal buttresses. City arms in relief over 4-light east window which has slender tracery. 2 symmetrical vestries added to east, 1967.

Interior: North and south entrance lobbies each with shallow stone spiral staircase with cast iron balustrades giving access to upper galleries. 6 bay arcade with slender (possibly cast iron) clustered columns with high bases, foliate capitals and roll moulded arches. Sexpartite vaulted ceiling with bosses. Galleried on three sides, with additional cast iron columns supporting the gallery across the west. Lozenge panelling with quatrefoil decoration to front of galleries. Organ in western gallery. Wide chancel arch to shallow chancel. Early 20th century oak fittings, including pews and dado panelling throughout. Chancel has panelling with integral canopied sedilia, dated 1933. Triptych behind altar, by E Stanley Watkins, 1908. Christ in Majesty, in a neo-medieval style but including representations of leading historical figures of the church in England. Side chapel in north aisle also has triptych of 1908 by E Stanley Watkins. Similar style though more ornate triptych form with arched hinged panels.

The church was refitted c.1975 by Stephen Dykes Bower: complete frescoed interior with geometrical painted panelling using late medieval emblems (quatrefoils, fleurs de lys etc), in rich colours. Altar rails and lectern designed to echo the simple geometry of the window tracery which was renewed at the same time.

(The Buildings of England: Pevsner, Nikolaus: South Lancashire: Harmondsworth: 1969).

War Memorial Gates, Steps, Wall and

Churchyard Railings to Church of St Mary (Eastern End)

GV

II

Retaining wall and gates to south of churchyard, forming war memorial, and cast iron railings to west. The wall and gates c.1920, the railings early 19th century. Stone walls with cast iron gates. Walls form quadrant each side of gate piers which have crosses in low relief and are capped by cast iron globe lamps. Terminal piers have shallow pyramidal caps and low relief panels with scrolls and foliate decoration. On the quadrant walls are inscribed the names of the dead of the First World War. The memorial was erected by the citizens of Oldham. Adjoining the wall, and forming the west boundary of the churchyard, 19th century railings. Cast iron spear head railings with intermediate scrolled braces.

War Memorial (South Side)

GV

II

War memorial. 1922. Albert Toft, sculptor. Polished granite plinth with pyramidal bronze group of soldiers ascending a boulder. In the plinth, a window shows the roll of honour and insignia housed within. Panelled bronze doors in rear of plinth.

CHURCH TERRACE

No. 11

II

19th century, embodying earlier fabric. Stone. Right hand side facing church has 2 small gables and new windows. Front is 3 storeys, brick, stone quoins, a round-arched doorway with fanlight, a basement, one window ground floor, and 2 on each upper floor.

FREDERICK STREET

Gateway to Former Blind Workshops (North East Side)

GV

II

Gateway to former Blind Workshops, possibly originally to coach-house yard of Werneth Park. c.1870. Brick with stone dressings. Wide central gateway with overarch and concave flanking walls. Terminal piers to walls are brick with stone hands and stepped pyramidal caps. Main gate piers also brick with stone bands and scroll mouldings carrying stilted arch with stone voussoirs and heavy key. Arch is surmounted by a pediment with crest in roundel and spiked ball finial.

GEORGE STREET

Independent Methodist Chapel (West Side)

II*

Methodist chapel. 1815. Brick, with Welsh slate roof. 4-window range, unequally divided, and built on a sloping site with basement to rear, and entrance up steps to right. Tall windows with stone cills and flat-arched brick heads, with stained glass margin lights. Paired panelled doors in stone pedimented architrave with cast-iron railings and gates. Blind basement windows. Stack on left-hand gable end. Paired high windows each side of stack in gable wall. Lower side similarly detailed but with full basement with 3 doors with stone cills and jambs, and windows partially blocked.

Interior: galleries to three sides, the frontals with sunken panels, all supported on cast-iron columns (each with knop and moulded capital). Complete set of panelled box pews. Tiered seats around rostrum below organ. Queen post roof. Basement rooms have certain features including fireplaces with simple stone surrounds and grates. Said to be the oldest place of worship in Oldham for Methodists.

GREAVES STREET

No. 5 (East Side)

Ponsonby and Carlile Office

GV

II

Office building. 1901-2. By Edgar Wood. Ashlar faced, brick to rear, with stone flagged roof. 2 storeys, 3-window range articulated by pilasters, with wide central entrance with elongated keystone raking out to cut high string course over. Initials H.B. on keystone, and also on rainwater heads, which are dated 1902. Carved trees in shoulder each side of lintel. Paired doors with narrow stained glass lights, and brass name-plates. Blind mullioned band above the door. Bands of 5-light leaded mullioned and transomed windows each side of entrance, with segmentally-arched heads. Similar windows above have timber lintels below eaves. Wrought-iron brackets to sharply overhanging eaves. 3 gabled dormers in roof. End wall stacks. Rear elevation of brick with central canted full-height bay with parapet that continues to left. Overhanging eaves over right-hand, and 2 heavy gabled dormers in roof.

GREAVES STREET

Town Hall

See under: Town Hall: YORKSHIRE STREET

HIGH STREET

No. 25 (North Side)

Barclays Bank

GV

II

Bank. c.1900. Ashlar faced with Welsh slate roof. 3 storeys, corner site with elevation to High Street of 4 principal bays, and 4-window return elevation. Entrance in canted angle stressed with tower and dome over. Round-arched architrave to doorway, paired round-arched windows above recessed in moulded architrave with heavy cornice. Round-arched window to third storey with heavy moulded architrave, cill band and string course. Arcaded string course to triple round-arched windows of tower above, with fretted parapet and leaded dome. Main elevation to High Street divided as 4 asymmetrical bays. Paired recessed windows with flanking side lights to ground and first floor of first bay, with stressed architrave and string course. Paired recessed windows to second bay with single lower window alongside. Triple windows recessed in architrave and with deep moulded string course in right-hand bays, with single inserted window to ground floor of right-hand bay. Continuous arcaded fenestration to upper storey, and attic dormers in the roof. Segmentally pedimented attic dormer to return elevation which is similarly fenestrated, with paired recessed windows with side lights. Small dome over curved angle with Church Street.

JOHN STREET

Church of St Patrick (West Side)

GV

II

Roman Catholic Church. 1869-70 with remodelling of 1907. By Mitchell of Oldham. Coursed and squared rubble in small blocks, banded Welsh slate roof. Nave with western narthex, clerestory, lean-to aisles and chancel. Early English style. West front with gabled porch with triple lights to apex, and trefoiled windows each side. 3 stepped lancets above. Bellcote carried on corbels at gable apex. 4-bay nave with wide paired lancets in each bay, and projecting confessionals expressed as gables. Lower western bay with paired windows over north door. Apsidal chancel with wide lancet windows.

Interior: has organ loft over western narthex, and 4-bay arcades. Richly decorated reredos to chancel, and stained glass in east windows. (*Pevsner, Nikolaus: South Lancashire: Harmondsworth: 1969*).

MUMPS

National Westminster Bank (North Side)

II

Bank. 1902-03. By Mills and Murgatroyd. Ashlar, rusticated to ground floor, with polished granite plinth and Welsh slate roof. Flamboyant baroque style exploiting corner site. 2 storeys with tower, 7-window range. Tower over entrance at left-hand corner. Polished granite architrave with engaged shafts, bolection moulding and mask between scrolls in frieze. Shallow swept parapet over, with 'Bank' in raised lettering. Tripartite sash window behind the parapet. Modillion cornice above. Half octagonal stair turret to left hand corner, and bow window with balconette in return elevation. First stage of tower above has segmental pediment to cornice and transomed lights. Upper stage has heavy volutes to angles, and a pediment in each face carried on free standing polished granite columns with balustrading below recessed windows. Stone domed roof with fleche. Main range beyond entrance bay of 5 windows, divided by coupled engaged Corinthian columns carried on corbels above ground floor. Lower windows divided by Colonettes, 2-pane sashes in segmentally-arched shouldered architraves above. First bay distinguished by use of plain pilasters which carry a segmental pediment with coat of arms. This is balanced by a similar bay to right, which has subsidiary entrance in segmentally-pedimented architrave. Modillion cornice and balustraded parapet which is stepped up over pediments at each end.

(*The Buildings of England: Pevsner, Nikolaus: South Lancashire: Harmondsworth: 1969*)

UNION STREET

Library and Art Gallery (South Side)

GV

II

Library and Art Gallery. 1883 with additions of 1894. Rusticated rubble, coursed and squared in small blocks. Red plain tiled roof with ridge cresting. High 2 storeys, symmetrically planned with central entrance gable and flanking blocks, each of 3 bays. Steps up to Romanesque style entrance with squat shafts carrying round arch, and low relief in tympanum. Shallow oriel with leaded trefoiled lights, city arms and inscription in frieze above. Gable coping surmounted by statue. Gable returns are linked to flanking blocks by full-height segmental bays in the angles with 2-light windows on each floor.

Flanking blocks each of 3 windows, with tall segmentally-arched mullioned and transomed ground floor windows with stained glass in lower panes. Upper windows are trefoiled mullioned and transomed lights, and the central window cuts into gabled dormer with rose window. The gable of the dormer is carried on stumpy shafts. End wall stacks. Gable returns each have central stack corbelled out over first floor with rose windows to each side of it. Behind this frontage entrance block, 2 parallel rear wings comprise main galleries. High ground floor divided by buttresses into 6 bays each with segmentally-arched window, then high relief busts of artists and literary figures beneath timber clerestory which has overhanging eaves carried on paired timber shafts.

Lower 3-bay block beyond has eastern entrance in gabled porch, inscribed "Lecture Hall" over doorway. Cast-iron railings with stone plinth wall and terminal piers flanking entrance steps carrying cast-iron globe lamps.

Lyceum and School of Art (North Side)

GV

II

Lyceum and Art School. Built in a single block and to a common style, the Lyceum in 1856, the Art School (to the right) added in 1881. Pennington of Manchester the original architect. Ashlar, rusticated to ground floor, Welsh slate roof. The 2 buildings form a strongly symmetrical range, differing only in small details. Each is 2-storeyed, a 7-window range with central entrance.

Lyceum (to the left) has round-arched doorway with rusticated and chamfered stonework each side, and paired 8-panelled doors in slightly advanced architrave enriched with low-relief carving. Three 2-pane sashes each side of entrance, and round-arched upper windows with low relief panelling above and below forming a continuous arcade at first floor level. Laurel wreaths in low relief above the windows, and Greek key frieze. Elaborate tripartite window over entrance, with foliate capitals to architrave, round-arched central light, and segmental glazing forming outer arch. Cast-iron balconette. Modillions and foliate emblems form cornice over this bay, which has a shallow segmental pediment inscribed "Lyceum". Urns surmount the panelled parapet.

Art School similarly detailed, differing only in the entrance bay, which has a plainer squared architrave and over-light, with heavily rusticated piers. Pediment over this bay inscribed "Science and Art". Return elevations to Clegg Street and Greaves Street similarly detailed. Heavy decorated cast-iron railings on low plinth wall with stone piers at angles and each side of entrance steps, surmounted by cast-iron globe lamps.

The Lyceum was built to include newsroom, reading room and library, lecture rooms, committee and club rooms, class rooms and observatory.

Masonic Hall (North Side)

II

19th century, Greek style. 2 storeys. Asymmetrical, with high plinth and basement. 6-windows on upper floor, 2 of them projecting (the second and sixth) and crowned with pediments. The second bay also has a Greek Doric entrance portico with frieze of triglyphs, and cornice. All windows in stone architraves, but 4 are now blocked. Top cornice, and frieze of triglyphs and metopes.

Prudential Assurance Buildings (North Side)

GV

II

Office building. 1889. By Alfred Waterhouse. Brick with terracotta dressings, and red plain tiled roof. 3 storeys raised over basement with attic. 3-window range with recessed polygonal towers over entrances to each side. Polished granite plinth and piers to round-arched entrance in shallow projecting gabled porch. 3

wide round-arched windows to ground floor, each of 3 lights with small upper panes. Raised lettering "Prudential Assurance Buildings" over ground floor windows. 3-light mullioned and transomed windows above, with decorative terracotta panelled architraves and cartouches over each window. Second floor windows similar. Lozenge frieze below modillion eaves cornice. New dormer windows in roof, and gable end stacks. 2-light transomed windows in 3 faces of angle towers, with decorative terracotta dressings. Attic storey above cornice, and interlace decoration to frieze over attic windows. West return of white glazed brick, with long 2-storeyed wing with 5 wide segmentally-arched windows and smaller windows to service range beyond. East return brick and terracotta, with canted angle to rear gable. Rear range parallel to street links the two wings. Interior: Main Hall has ornate plaster panelled ceiling and tiled walls.

Union Club (North Side)

GV

II

(Formerly Listed as: UNION STREET (North Side) Masonic Hall)

Club, formerly Masonic Hall. c.1880 with rear wing of 1924. Rusticated rubble, coursed and squared in small blocks. Welsh slate roof. 2 storeys raised over basement, 6-window range, asymmetrically planned in Greek revival style. Entrance in advanced bay towards the left, up steps in portico with fluted Doric columns and triglyph frieze. Paired doors with heavy raised panels. The frieze line of the portico is continued across the facade as a plain string course. Tall casement windows in ashlar architraves with moulded aprons below architraves. Shouldered architraves to first floor openings, but all but two of these are blind. Pediment over advanced entrance and right-hand bays, triglyph frieze at eaves level, and overhanging cornice. Later rear range of brick with stone dressings. 2 storeys and attic. Polished granite entrance to left with narrow stair windows over. Heavy rusticated voussoirs to high first floor windows. Dated in cornice over second storey, "AD MCMXXIV".

Union Street United Reformed and Methodist Church (North Side)

GV

II

United Reformed Church, formerly Congregational Chapel. 1877. Rusticated rubble, coursed and squared in small blocks, with slate roof. Tower, nave with 2 aisles. Squat central tower in south wall with 6-light decorated window with hoodmould, and doors recessed to east and west within wide plain stepped early English arch to porch. Enriched trefoiled window in south wall inside porch. Buttresses to tower, which has embattled parapet. Shallow copings to aisles each side of tower, with foiled lancet windows in south walls, the east and west walls divided by buttresses into 4 bays, each with foiled lancet window. Wood clerestory over, with continuous trefoiled lights. Northern gable has small 3-light decorated window, and hipped roofed single-storeyed rooms projecting beyond, with paired 2-light windows. Cast-iron railings and gates carried on low plinth wall between stone piers to south and east.

(*Worall: Oldham & District Directory: Oldham: 1880*)

No. 84 (South Side)

Former Post Office

II

Post Office, now in use as library and offices. 1877. Brick with stone dressings and shallow pitched Welsh slate roof. Neo-classical style. 2-storeyed, 7-window range with central entrance in moulded architrave and 2-pane sash windows, also with moulded architraves and set between pilasters. Additional doorway to right now disused. Cornice over ground floor forms cill band of upper 2-pane sash windows in moulded architraves with entablatures. Stone cornice and parapet, stepped over end and central bays, with shallow pediment over blind panel in centre.

(*The Buildings of England: Pevsner, Nikolaus: South Lancashire: Harmondsworth: 1969*)

No. 109 (North Side) Midland Bank

GV

II

Bank. Dated 1892. By Thomas Taylor. Ashlar faced with Welsh slate roof. French Renaissance style. 2 storeys raised over basement, 4-window range to Union Street. Outer bays slightly advanced, and forming corner pavilion towers, with entrance to left. Porch with polished granite Ionic columns carrying entablature. Round-arched entrance with paired panelled doors within. 2 central windows, divided by a shaft, and a third window in advanced right-hand bay.

Round-arched windows to first floor, with moulded architraves to central window, articulated by pilasters with Ionic capitals. Plainer architraves to outer windows with simple moulded frieze. Moulded cornice and blocking course to central range, running between steep hipped roofs of outer pavilion towers, which have shallow pediment to cornice in each face, and are capped with wrought-iron brattishing.

Return elevation to Queen Street has similar pavilion at far corner, and 5-window range to banking hall, divided by Ionic pilasters, and with full-height round-arched windows. Similar elevation to Retiro Street with foundation stone recording *'This building was erected by the Oldham Joint Stock Bank Limited. Commenced March 1890. Opened 22 February 1892'*. Basement area to Union Street elevation has cast-iron railings with twisted and scrolled decoration, on low plinth wall.

No. 115 (North Side)

GV

II

(Formerly Listed as: UNION STREET Nos 115 & 117)

House, now in use as offices. Brick with slate roof. 2 storeys, 3-window range with doorway to right recessed in round archway. Paired low relief consoles and panelling to architrave, with 4-panelled door. 2-pane sashes with flat-arched stuccoed heads. String course and dentilling to eaves cornice. Stack on left-hand gable wall.

No. 117 (North Side)

GV

II

(Formerly Listed as: UNION STREET Nos 115 & 117)

House, now in use as offices. Brick with slate roof. 2 storeys, 3-window range, the outer bays slightly advanced. Central doorway with 4-panelled door and architrave with console brackets to entablature recessed in round arch. Tripartite sash windows with console brackets to entablature each side with wide splayed brick arched heads. 2-pane sash windows to first floor. String course and moulded wood eaves. Axial stack to right of centre.

No. 121 (North Side)

GV

II

House, now in use as offices. c.1820. Brick with slate roof. 3 storeys, 3-window range, the central bay slightly advanced, and the angles stressed with brick pilasters. Central entrance with fanlight in moulded architrave with entablature carried on console brackets. Tripartite sashes to ground floor, 2-pane sash windows above, and pivoting windows renewed in original openings to second floor. All windows have very wide splayed brick arched heads. Stone cornice and blocking course with shallow pedimented central block. 2-windows in wide gable return, and central round-arched stair window to rear. Stack on right-hand gable.

YORKSHIRE STREET

Town Hall (East Side)

GV

II

(Formerly Listed as: YORKSHIRE STREET Town Hall)

(Formerly Listed as: GREAVES STREET Side facade of the Town Hall)

Town Hall, incorporating courts and civic offices. 1841, extended 1879 - 80. By George Woodhouse of Bolton, Edward Potts of Oldham. Main block facing Yorkshire Street, ashlar faced, rusticated to ground floor, with slate roof. Austere Greek revival style. 2 storeys, 7-bays with Ionic portico advanced to central 3-bays. City arms in pediment. Central paired panelled doors with over-light in architrave with entablature carried on console brackets. The outer bays are articulated by shallow pilasters, and each has a 2-pane sash window.

Returns are brick with stone dressings, and are linked to the later extensions which form long ranges fronting Greaves Street and Firth Street. Elevation to Greaves Street is sandstone ashlar, rusticated to ground floor, and vermiculated to massive basement plinth. Two-and-a-half storeys with attic, 5-bays, with 3-windows in outer and central bays.

Central entrance in concave recessed architrave with Gibbs surround and massive keystone. Windows over doorway in recess spanned by high arch. Tripartite leaded window to first floor with cast-iron balconette, Round-arched leaded window to second floor. The advanced outer bays have coupled Ionic piers to first floor, carrying heavy cornice each side of the high central arch. Between these piers are concave full-height architraves divided by a band of stone carrying coats of arms in high relief. Square windows in moulded architraves to attic storey above. Greek key frieze over attic storey which has windows in the outer bays, and raised central blocking course with incised panels.

Return elevation of 3-bays with doorway with high arch over central window and doorways on upper side. Long white glazed brick wing to west, comprising original courts and police accommodation: ventilation towers from cells still visible in roof. Return elevation to Greaves Street comprises a series of blocks employing a free monumental classical style. To rear of Firth Street block, 4-bays articulated by engaged Ionic pilasters over the ground floor, with heavy modillion cornice below attic storey, then advanced block, divided above the ground floor into 3-bays articulated by pilasters, the wider central bay blind. Attic storey over cornice. Beyond this, 2 similar blocks of 3-bays articulated by Corinthian pilasters over high basement, and with balustraded parapets.

Interior: of original building has central corridor running the length of the original building, with staircase towards rear. Corridor gives access to main stair hall of additional block, which has stained glass window with figures representing industry, science, etc.

Original building intended to include magistrates and committee rooms, public meeting and concert rooms, and borough surveyors offices. Wing of 1880 included police and courts accommodation, in addition to council chamber, mayor's parlour, and committee rooms.

(Slater: *Directory of Oldham: Oldham 1895*)

National Westminster Bank (South Side)

GV

II

Bank, c.1890. Ashlar faced, rusticated to ground floor, roof not seen behind parapet. 2 storeys, 4-window range to Yorkshire Street, 5-window return to Greaves Street. Neo-classical style, with outer entrances to Yorkshire Street elevation, each with panelled door and round-arched fan. Round-arched windows between and to Greaves Street elevation. Upper windows alternatively triangular and segmentally pedimented, with balustrading beneath each one. Angle quoins. Cornice and blocking course, with stressed central panels. End wall stacks. Original INTERIOR of banking hall survives, with Ionic columns carrying square panelled plaster ceiling.

SGL/srl/Oldham/JBN1125/listbuil The Listed Buildings

18

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19

Map Sequence

Turnpike Trust Survey extract of c1805. Showing the projected line of Yorkshire Street.

The earliest reliable map of Oldham of 1814, by Butterworth, including the depiction of the town in 1756 (source unknown).

Parish of Oldham from Butterworth's Map of 1817.

Dunn's Map of Oldham, 1829. Showing the partially completed Union Street.

Oldham & District in 1832, produced for the Boundary Commission.

Ordnance Survey Map of 1880.

Worrell's Map of 1880.

Oldham & District. Showing mid-19th century railway connections.

Oldham & District. In the early years of the 20th century. Showing distribution of cotton mills.

Map produced by the Borough Surveyor's Office for the Oldham Town Planning Competition, 1912.

Ordnance Survey Map of 1921.

Map to accompany Local Town Planning Programme of 1947. Showing the projected Bypass and the distribution of various uses.