

IRWELL VALE CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS PLAN

ADOPTED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES FROM 26TH OCTOBER 2011



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Irwell Vale Conservation Area was designated in on 4 December 1974 by Rossendale Borough Council. The Council is required by law to periodically review its conservation areas and to consult local residents and business owners with any proposals for change. The production of up-to-date Character Appraisals also assists the Council in making decisions on planning applications within or on the edges of the conservation area.

This Irwell Vale Conservation Area Character Appraisal with its attendant Management Proposals Plan has been produced for Council by The Conservation Studio. The survey and background research were undertaken in November 2010 and an initial public consultation, via the Council's website, took place in February 2011. Comments made by the IVLRA (Irwell Vale and Lumb Residents' Association) on an early draft have also been incorporated into this document.

These documents identify the character and positive qualities of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area, highlight key issues, and put forward proposals for its management over the next five years. The general format of these documents follows guidance produced by English Heritage on the effective management of conservation areas.

As part of the process, the existing Conservation Area boundary was also reviewed and following public consultation one change has been recommended as set out in Section 2 of the Management Proposals Plan.

The Irwell Vale Character Appraisal was adopted by the Borough Council as a material consideration for development control purposes with effect from 26th October 2011 and the Recommended Actions in the Management Proposals Plan, including the Conservation Area boundary revision, were agreed to be implemented incrementally as resources allow.



Listed buildings in Aitken Street

PART 1 – IRWELL VALE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Irwell Vale Conservation Area

The Irwell Vale Conservation Area was designated by Rossendale Borough Council on 4 December 1974. Irwell Vale is a small rural hamlet situated at the confluence of the River Ogden and the River Irwell, just to the west of the M66 where it passes by Edenfield. The village is sited in an attractive setting of fields and woodland, with the land rising gently to the west towards a line of high hills and moorland. Ramsbottom is about three miles to the south.

This part of Rossendale was part of a large rural estate which until the 17th century was owned by the Rowstone family who lived at Lumb, just to the south of what is now Irwell Vale. When the last male heir drowned in an accident in 1664, the estate was sold off. The area remained in agricultural uses until the early 19th century, when first woollen, then cotton, mills were built along the line of the River Irwell, utilising the swift-flowing water to power the machinery. John Bowker, a merchant from Manchester, built the first woollen mill at Hardsough in 1801 and a larger cotton mill (Irwell Vale Mill) on the opposite side of the River Irwell in 1833. At the same time he built long terraces of cottages as homes for his workers, and these, in Bowker Street and Aitken Street, are now listed grade II. Other buildings of note include the former Methodist Chapel, dating to 1853 but now a row of cottages, and the late 19th century chapel which replaced it, strategically placed at the western end of Bowker Street.



View towards Aitken Street from Irwell Bridge

Both of Bowker's mills have since been demolished, although a 1930s and 1950s extension to Irwell Vale Mill, mainly on the north side of the River Ogden, remains and is used to manufacture soap. The 1912 engine house also remains, although it is now a house.

Issues facing the Conservation Area include the need to make one small adjustment to the Conservation Area (add Nos. 269-277 (odd) in Hardsough Fold),; the need to review and

possibly re-serve the existing Article 4 Direction; the control of satellite dishes; the care and protection of the mature trees within the Conservation Area; the need for improvements to street lighting, street furniture, and the paving; the control and future enhancement of the existing listed buildings; the provision of a 'Local List' for the area; and a number of 'Site Specific' recommendations affecting the Methodist Church, the village playground, Milne Street, and the Sigma Soap factory.

1.2 The control of conservation areas

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (March 2011). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within “*Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and the Historic Environment*” (PPS5).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area and identify the issues which threaten its special qualities (in the form of the 'Character Appraisal');
- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and also achieve the enhancement of the conservation area (in the form of the 'Management Proposals Plan').

1.3 Community involvement

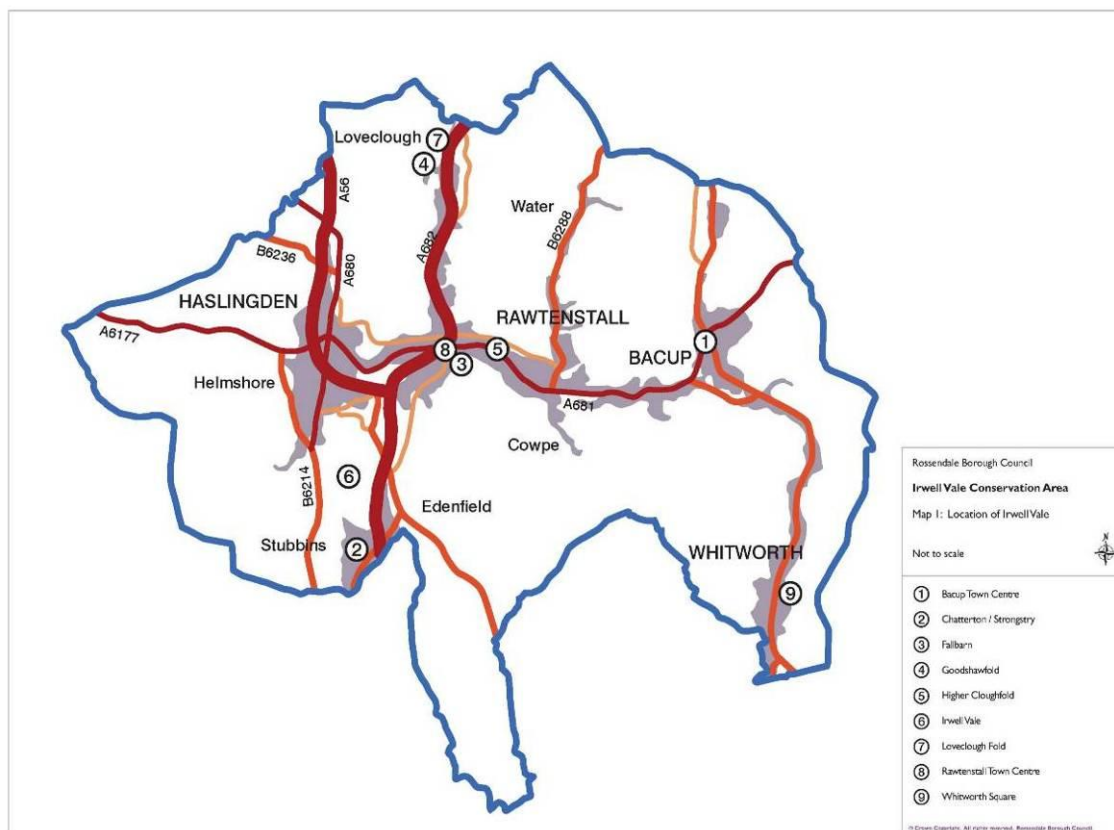
This document has been produced for Rossendale Borough Council following an initial consultation with the local community via the Council's website. Following the drafting of the Character Appraisal and Management Proposals Plan, a six week public consultation was undertaken which was completed on 25 April 2011. After this, a Public Consultations Report was prepared (copies available from the Borough Council on request) and amendments to the text and mapping were made as appropriate. As part of the process, the existing Conservation Area boundary was also reviewed and following public consultation one change has been recommended as set out in Section 2 of the Management Proposals Plan.

The Irwell Vale Character Appraisal was adopted by the Borough Council as a material consideration for development control purposes with effect from 26th October 2011 and the Recommended Actions in the Management Proposals Plan, including the Conservation Area boundary revision, were agreed to be implemented as resources allow.

2 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

2.1 Location

Irwell Vale is located on the edge of the Pennine Hills in the valley of the River Irwell. Ramsbottom is about three miles to the south and Edenfield is less than two miles to the east. At this point, the M66 motorway runs almost parallel to the River Irwell in a somewhat elevated location. Fortunately the road is concealed from the Conservation Area due to clever planting and the rising land beyond the line of the former railway which cuts through the eastern edge of the village. Part of the Conservation Area lies on the Irwell Sculpture Trail.



2.2 Landscape setting, topography and geology

Irwell Vale is located in the south Pennine Hills at the confluence of the Irwell and Ogden rivers. The village sits on a flat area of land which lies to either side of the Irwell, although the land begins to rise to both the east and the west almost immediately. The principal approach is from the north from Ewood Bridge, and the road, which has the character of a winding country lane, follows the line of the river and is therefore relatively flat.

The rising topography provides an attractive setting to the village which is best appreciated before entering the village from this road from north, where there are long views across the surrounding fields and hedgerows which rise to the west. Less appealing are the views to the east which take in a large sewage works, just to the north of the Conservation Area but fortunately hardly visible from it.



View to west of the approach road to the north of the conservation area

The principal hill is Holcombe Moor, an area of remote moorland which is crossed by the occasional footpath only, such as the Rossendale Way. This follows the 250 metre contour around the eastern side of the long range of hills which starts close to the three reservoirs (Calf Hey, Ogden and Holden Wood) which lie to the west of Haslingden, and finishes some eight miles further south close to Ramsbottom.

Glacial action has been very important in influencing the landscape in Rossendale, both in terms of scouring out the valleys to leave more resistant and higher areas untouched, and through the deposit of drift material. The variable nature of this glacial action and deposition significantly contributes towards a similar variety of soil types, which in turn are instrumental in determining the type of agriculture most suitable in different areas. The Pennine moorland is characterised by large boggy areas of grass, heather, and peat, where the high altitude prevents any useful farming apart from summer grazing. These uplands are underlain by Carboniferous rocks, mainly millstone grit, sandstones and coal measures, and the soils are acidic and strongly leached, requiring frequent liming to prevent surface mat formation. However, the sandstone deposits have provided an important source of stone for building and paving – much of London is paved in sandstone flags from Rossendale, and sandstone quarries are marked on historic maps close to Whitworth. Scouring of the land to the south of the Irwell Vale Halt is a good example of this glacial action.

2.3 Biodiversity

On the tops to the west of the Conservation Area, the open heather moorland environment provides examples of characteristic flora and fauna. Further down the hill slopes, closer to Irwell Vale, the fields, hedges and groups of trees provide a more suitable environment for wildlife such as foxes, badgers, and smaller mammals. The location of Irwell Vale next to two rivers supports a wide range of wild birds, including grey herons, kingfishers, long tailed tits, blue tits, and greater spotted woodpeckers. Wild flowers such as meadow sweet, the common spotted orchid, and the common dog violet, can also be found.

3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Archaeology

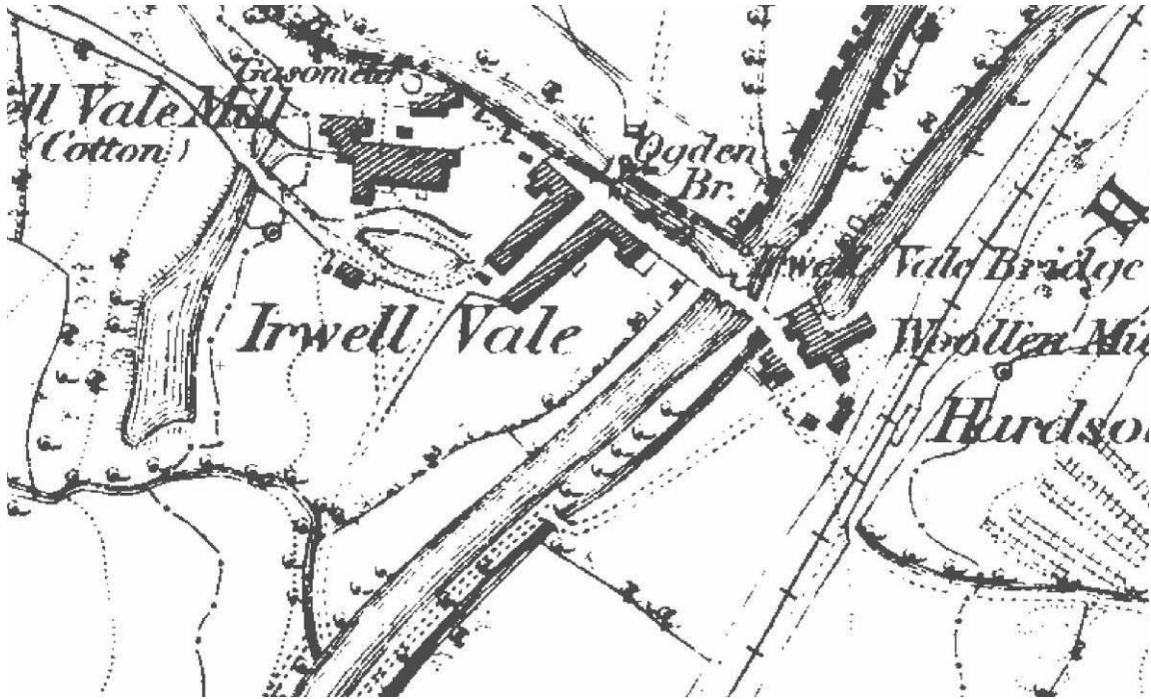
There are no known prehistoric or Romano-British sites in Irwell Vale, and no recorded settlement in the immediate vicinity before the industrialisation of Irwell Vale in the early 19th century. The earliest settlement in the area was at Lumb, a mile or so to the south of the Conservation Area, where the Rowstone family built a mansion in the Middle Ages. The Rowstones were the most important landowner in the area for several centuries, but in 1664 the last male heir died in a drowning accident and as a result the estate was sold. The land continued in agricultural uses until the late 18th century when various mills were incrementally built along the River Irwell, taking advantage of the fast-flowing water to provide power. The survival of the name 'Hardsough Fold' suggests that there may have been some sort of small agricultural settlement there before the woollen mill was built in 1801.



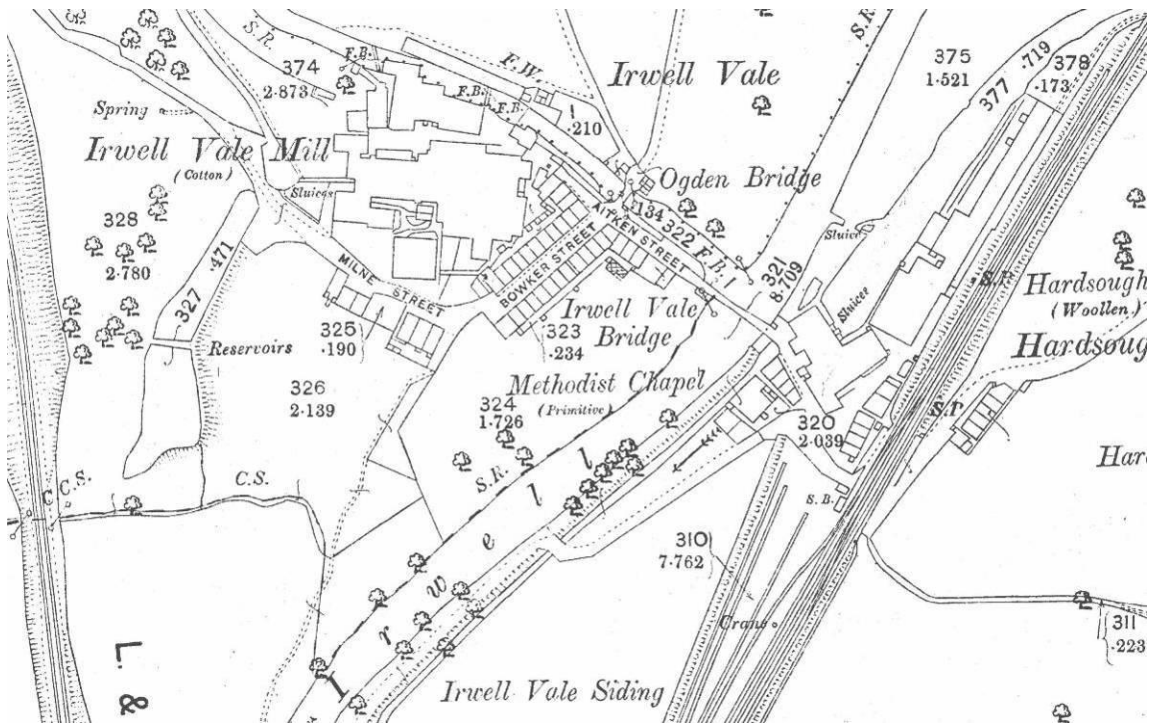
Hardsough Fold

3.2 Historical development

Irwell Vale as seen today is largely the product of one man, John Bowker, a Manchester merchant who purchased land in the area in the late 18th century and who built a woollen fulling mill in Hardsough next to the River Irwell in 1801. A mill and a large mill leat are shown on the 1850 map, close to the river, with associated tenter grounds to the south-east. It is noted as 'disused' on the 1930 map and has since been demolished and the land reverted back to pasture.



Historic map of 1850



Historic map of 1893

In 1833 Bowker built another mill (Irwell Vale Mill), this time for cotton, on the opposite side of the river using the River Ogden to power two water wheels. In the same year he built long rows of cottages along Bowker Street and Aitken Street to house his workers. The first mill tenant was Harry Kilshaw, who went bankrupt in 1837. The business was then taken over by James Stott, Thomas Smith and Thomas Aitken, a cotton spinner and manufacturer who already had a mill at nearby Chatterton, where the 1826 power-loom riots took place. Aitken became the sole partner in 1839, and was later joined by his sons. Extensions, including a weaving shed and ancillary departments, were added in the late 19th century, and the 1893 map shows how extensive both mills had become. In 1880 power was delivered by a McNaughted beam engine and other smaller engines – at this time the mill had 12,000 spindles and 160 looms. The mill employed 250 people and was noted as a specialist maker of felts, filter cloth, belting, calicoes and fustian. In 1912 the existing weir and mill race were altered to allow the construction of a turbine which generated electricity. Further expansion on the north side of the River Ogden took place from 1914 onwards. By 1956 there were 121 workers, but in the 1970s production was scaled down, and when weaving ended in 1975 there were only 28 workers. The older part of the mill is shown on the Conservation Area Designation Map in 1975 but was closed in the 1980s and has since been demolished, leaving a small section of Mock Tudor offices dating to the 1930s. A long red brick building, dating to the 1950s, also remains on the north side of the river, which is currently used by Sigma Soap. The 1912 engine house has been converted into a house.

Bowker Street is named after John Bowker and Milne Street is named after his son-in-law, the Rev. Nathaniel Milne, who was a rector in Radcliffe. No. 12 Bowker Street was the first meeting place in the village for local Methodists. Between 1880 and 1938 No. 26 Bowker Street was used as a Working Men's Club and Reading Room where for a small (2 shillings and six pence) annual subscription men could read newspapers, buy minerals, herb beer, tobacco at concessionary prices, and play billiards or dominoes.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel was built in Hardsough in 1853, but in 1894 it was converted into three cottages after a new chapel had been built on the other side of the River Irwell, at the end of Bowker Street. The new chapel cost £1,925 and was opened in 1893.



The former Primitive Methodist Chapel, now three cottages

The railway line to Irwell Vale was connected in September 1846. There was no station at Irwell Vale originally, only a signal box and some sidings for the mills. In 1848 the viaduct to carry the Accrington to Stubbins branch of the East Lancashire Railway was built. The

railway closed in 1980 but has since (1991) been re-opened by a group of enthusiasts. The Conservation Area was designated in 1974 and in 1985 an Article 4 Direction was served. In 1992 Irwell Vale won the Rossendale Best Kept Village award. Proposals in 2006 to demolish what is left of Irwell Vale Mill, and replace it with a number of houses, have not been progressed.

Around 1950, a social club (now known as Rivermead) was built at the far end of the village green. This replaced No. 26 Bowker Street and provided tennis courts and a bowling green for workers. The building was the hub of village life and was eventually converted into a private house by Geoffrey Dewhurst and his family, who moved from Vale Lodge in Lumb. Lumb is considered to be part of Irwell Vale although the distance between the two means that it would not be appropriate to include it within the existing Conservation Area boundary.

3.3 Historic Environment Record (HER)

The HER for Irwell Vale records the history of the two mills and provides useful information about the machinery and products of Irwell Vale Mill particularly. It also describes the listed cottages in Bowker Street and Aitken Street in some detail. Otherwise, there are no records of any archaeological features in the area, although from the historic maps it is clear that a former holding pond to Irwell Vale Mill remains, albeit in a somewhat truncated form, to the west of Bowker Lodge. The HER also records that the mill race between the reservoir and the mill is fairly complete, with original stones visible.

3.4 Activities

Irwell Vale is an attractive, mainly residential area with only one commercial business, the Sigma Soap factory, which lies on the north-east side of the River Ogden, just outside the Conservation Area boundary. There is one place of worship, the Methodist Church, in Bowker Street. A small children's nursery operates from No. 4 Milne Street.

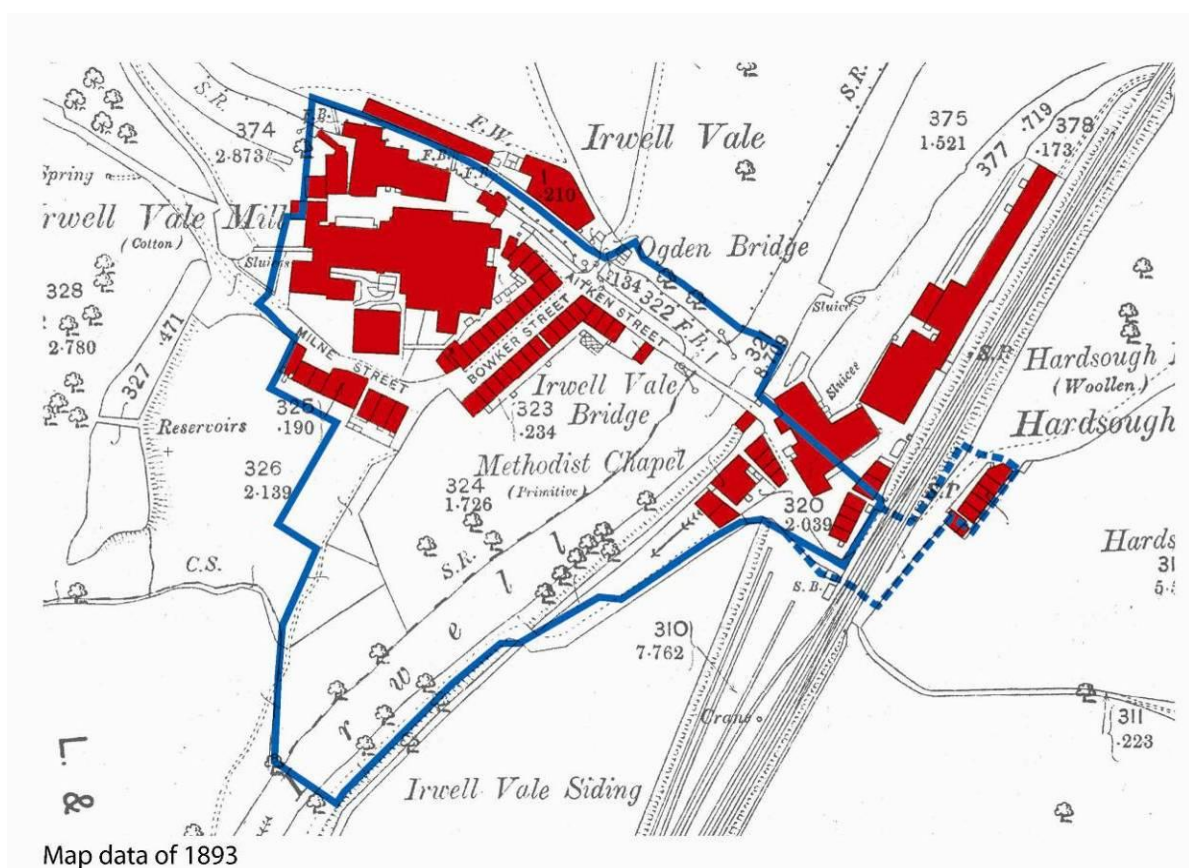
Irwell Vale is also a popular destination for walkers and other visitors who visit the Methodist Church and its part-time tea room and enjoy the riverside setting. Visitors include tourist walking groups, cyclists using the National Cycling route, horse riders, picnickers, and enthusiasts using the ELR railway. This range of visitors is welcomed by local residents and demonstrates the importance of supporting the work of the IVLRA.

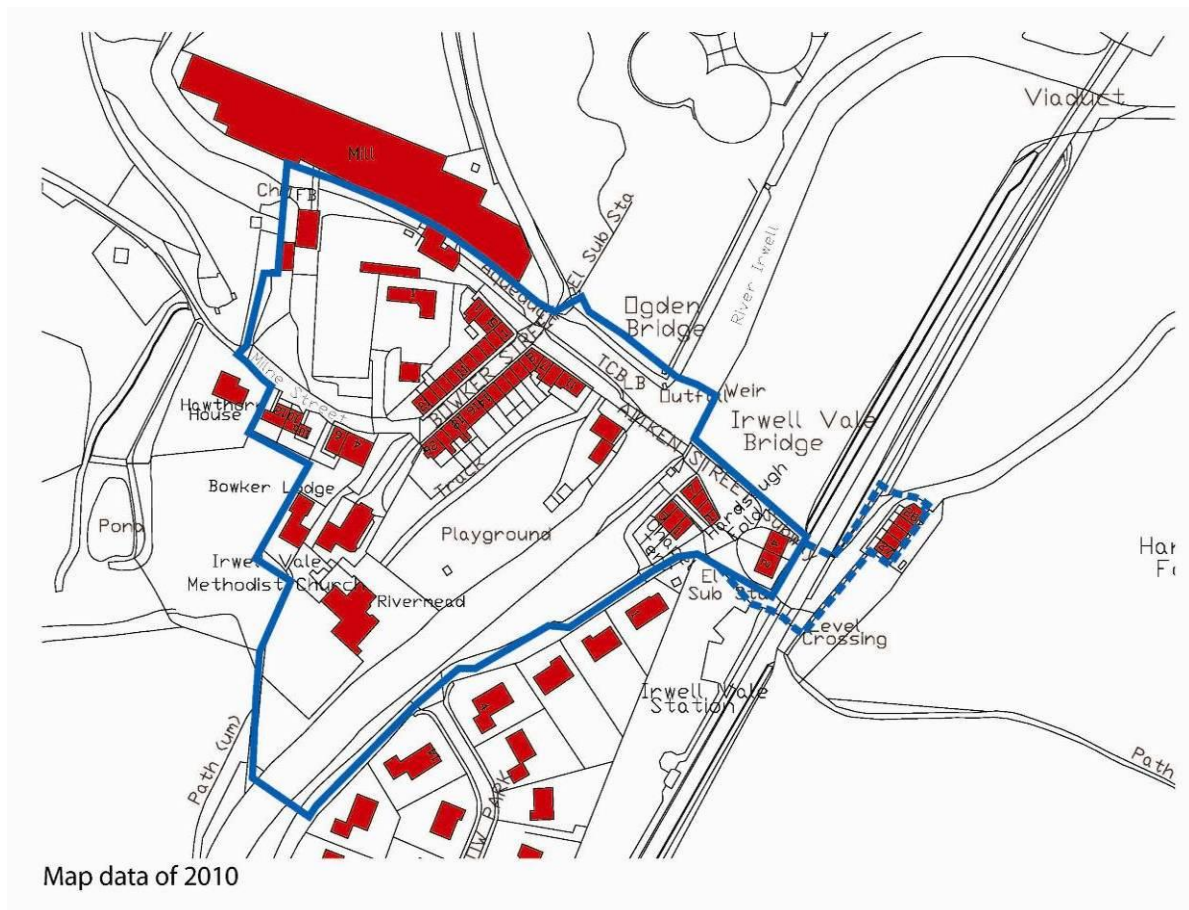
4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Layout and building pattern

The layout of the streets in the Conservation Area is more understandable after consulting the historic maps, for it is clear that the location of the two mills was dictated by the availability of water which had to be drawn off the River Irwell in a short mill leat (for Hardsough Mill), and from the River Ogden (for Irwell Vale Mill, which was partly located over the river). A reservoir was also created, fed from a small stream, on the west side of the settlement, which presumably fed additional machinery or perhaps was used when the level of the water in the Ogden was low. This is shown on both the 1850 and 1893 maps and remains in part as an ornamental pond. The routes of other man-made water courses in the village have all disappeared.

The workers' housing was simply located as close as possible to the mills, and linked over the Irwell by a narrow bridge which still remains. The only vehicular access is from the north, from Ewood Bridge, the road leading through the village and ending in Lumb to the south. This road enters the village over another narrow bridge over the River Ogden, leading directly into Aitken Street (which leads to Hardsough) and Bowker Street (which leads to Milne Street). Another dominant feature is the line of the railway which still operates on a part-time basis, which currently forms the eastern boundary to the Conservation Area. A second railway line lies in a somewhat concealed position to the immediate west of the Conservation Area – it is public footpath.





The relationship of the buildings to the street varies. In Hardsough, the earlier settlement, there are just two short rows of cottages which are separated by a narrow private road. The back row (Chapel Terrace) dates to the 1853 and was once the village church. The slightly odd widening of the road outside these properties is explained by the realisation that when the mill was demolished, the road was widened to provide a more spacious setting to the properties. In Bowker Street and Aitken Street, the continuous terraced houses of 1833 lie at the back of the pavement without any front gardens. Around the corner in Milne Street, there are just two short groups of historic houses, part of one group being shown on the 1850 map (Nos. 10 and 12). Otherwise, the clearance of Irwell Vale Mill has left large areas of rather neglected open space although some small stone buildings remain which may be all that is left of the original mill, facing the forecourt which now serves Sigma Soaps. The Engine House, now somewhat isolated, stands looking down over the former mill site and is accessed from Milne Street. There has been very limited infilling within the Conservation Area, mainly Rivermead and Bowker Lodge next to the church, and Hawthorn House at the end of Milne Street, where it narrows and becomes a rough country lane leading away from the settlement.

Overall, therefore, there is a tight concentration of buildings in Bowker Street and Aitken Street which is reinforced by the surviving mill building on the north-east side of the River Ogden, with more dispersed development along Milne Street and at Hardsough. A probably 1960s development of detached properties off Hardsough Fold are not immediately obtrusive.

4.2 Open spaces and trees

Historically, there were no 'planned' open spaces, as the settlement was a working area with the two mills and the associated worker's housing being tightly grouped together in an otherwise rural setting. In the 20th century, a public area of open grass (referred to as the village green) has been created between the River Irwell and the houses on the south-east side of Bowker Street, which is used as a children's playground and for other recreational activities. A hens' enclosure, protected by removable metal grilles and with a hen-house, has been provided within this space. From here are long views over the River Irwell, and shorter views in the opposite direction to the Methodist Church. The land is managed by Tilerock Ltd and an application for Village Green status for this land was refused in 2009. The church has an area around it with mature trees which connect to other trees in the adjoining playground, and which provide an attractive setting when the church is viewed along Bowker Street. The countryside around the village largely remains, despite the housing estate on the south-east side of the River Irwell, which is fortunately relatively unobtrusive from the opposite river bank due to the provision of an area of trees and grass which helps to shield the newer buildings from the Conservation Area.



The village green (from Aitken Street)

Otherwise, the public open spaces are provided by the roads which lead through the village, although there is a widening of the street at Hardsough Fold which gives the suggestion of a more formal space – this is reinforced by the provision of the Irwell Vale Village Sign, on a tall pole.

Both rivers also make an important contribution to the spatial characteristics of the village, particularly the Irwell, the much wider and deeper of the two. Views over both rivers can be obtained by the two bridges within the Conservation Area, with much longer views from the bridge over the Irwell.

Trees are particularly significant in a number of places, where they make a major contribution to the streetscape and, or, to the setting of historic buildings. Further mature trees follow the line of surrounding field boundaries.

The most significant trees are as follows:

- Between the Methodist Church and Bowker Street, and within the adjoining village green, including one large free-standing tree which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO)
- Behind the church and Rivermead
- Defining the boundary to the field on the north side of the confluence of the two rivers
- Along the southern bank of the River Irwell, providing a visual break between the river and 20th century development

These trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map, but the omission of any particular tree does not mean that it is of no importance.

4.3 Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas

Focal points and focal buildings:

There are three obvious focal points in the Conservation Area as follows:

- At the junction of the Ogden Bridge, Aitken Street and Bowker Street
- Around the Methodist Church (the principal 'focal building')
- On Irwell Vale Bridge, over the Irwell

Other less important 'focal buildings' include the whole of the listed terraces housing in Bowker Street and Aitken Street, which together form the highest quality buildings in the Conservation Area.

Views and vistas

Irwell Vale's location on the River Irwell, and the rising topography to the east and west, all provide particularly stunning views across the river, over the surrounding fields and woodland, and up to the moorland above. The most dramatic of these views can be seen from Irwell Vale Bridge, and views from the village playground, next to the river, are also significant. Other important views can be seen from the access road to the village from Ewood Bridge, mainly to the west and the high moorland beyond trees and fields.



View from the playground towards Hardsough and beyond

The most important views are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map but the omission of any particular view does not mean that it is not significant.

4.4 Boundaries

In the centre of the Conservation Area, the tightly packed terraced houses mean that there are no visible boundaries. However, along Milne Street and in Hardsough Fold the more dispersed layout means that some historic boundaries remain, invariably built from local sandstone rubble, dry laid with (usually) half-round or triangular stone copings. A particularly fine example is the wall between the churchyard and Milne Street. Close to Sigma Soaps, some stone walls have copings made from rectangular blocks of stone and may date to the 1920s or 1930s. Across Ogden Bridge, thick sandstone flags, clamped together, are used to create an upstand on one side only.



Flag-stone detail on Ogden Bridge

Irwell Vale Bridge is framed by very simple white painted metal railings (modern), which look entirely appropriate. Wrought iron 'park' railings can be seen in Hardsough. Further metal railings, possibly early 20th century, can also be seen on the northern edges of the Conservation Area, possibly relating to the early development of the Sewage Works as they look utilitarian. Spiked metal railings are evident, in poor condition, next to field which sits to the north-east of the Sigma Soap factory, and closer to the building, further metal railings, with a curved head detail, can also be seen. More historic are the metal spiked railings which are used to create the gates to the Methodist Church, although they are in poor condition.

In several locations a variety of more modern boundaries are visible, including timber palisade fencing, timber panel fencing (such as the back garden boundary fence to No. 4 Milne Street), wooden posts on the village green, metal railings with decorative gold heads (Hardsough Fold), and timber panel fencing (Sigma Soap factory). There is one example (Bowker Lodge) of metal railings set on a low stone wall, with an automatic gate. This variety is somewhat discordant within the Conservation Area and some standardisation might be advisable (this is discussed further in the Management Proposals Plan).

4.5 Public realm

The public realm covers the spaces between the buildings including pavements, roads, street lighting, street furniture, and any other features of local significance. Most of them will be the responsibility of the Highways Department of Lancashire County Council.

Irwell Vale is fortunate in retaining some substantial areas of sandstone flags, and examples can be seen on both sides of Bowker Street and parts of Aitken Street. These make a major contribution to the setting of the adjoining listed buildings. In places, these have been replaced with concrete slabs which replicate the size and pattern of the original material. Sandstone kerbstones, and road gutters lined with three rows of sandstone setts, can also be seen. All are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map. Elsewhere in the Conservation Area, some pavements are covered in simple black tarmac, or further areas of concrete paving slabs have been laid, both relatively unobtrusive.



Bowker Street paving

Public seating is provided by simple wooden benches and examples can be seen next to Ogden Bridge, next to Irwell Vale Bridge, and in the churchyard. A modern 'well' is a feature of the playground. Litter bins are again modern in two styles – simple black plastic with gold lettering, or wooden bins on a short column.

Irwell Vale village signs can be seen in two locations – on Ogden Bridge (dated 1833) and in Hardsough Fold. A village information panel is also next to Ogden Bridge, along with a small bright red cast iron post box. Street lighting is provided by slim steel columns with modern 'hockey-stick' lanterns, of no special merit but relatively plain and unobtrusive. Despite complaints from residents, these were installed following the removal of more historic lights. Some overhead cables are evident, particularly in Bowker Street. Again, local residents have complained to BT but no action has been taken.

A residents' application to open up public footpaths across the village was refused by Lancashire County Council in 2007/8. The roads and pathways are generally considered to be privately maintained and the cost there falls on local residents (no contributions have been made by local landowners Tilerock Ltd or Webbplace Ltd). Wear and tear on these roads is made worse by traffic accessing the station car park, built in 1986 when the new railway halt was built. To date, over £40,000 has been collected from local residents to

maintain the roads and bridges. In 2009 Rossendale Council forced the adoption of the sewers below these roads by the water authority.

5 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

5.1 Building uses and dates

Nearly all of the buildings in the Conservation Area are in residential use. The prevailing building type is provided by the neat rows of terraced houses, mostly dating to 1833, in Bowker Street and Aitken Street. These two storey cottages are now listed grade II. In Milne Street and Hardsough Fold there are further, shorter, groups of similarly sized properties, some of which may date to the building of the first mill in Hardsough in 1801 although there are no obvious examples of this period. The Methodist Church is dated 1893 and its predecessor in Hardsough Fold, now a row of cottages, is dated 1853. Nos. 10 and 12 Milne Street appear to be shown on the 1850 map and may have been built as more prestigious, double-fronted house (possibly for the mill manager) but has since been divided into three and large extensions added on both sides.



Nos. 10 and 12 Milne Street

Nothing remains of Hardsough Mill, and there are only remnants of Irwell Vale Mill, including the Engine House (1912), now a house, and some single storey stone or concrete buildings which probably date to the 1920s or 1930s. A stone building facing the courtyard in front of Sigma Soaps may form part of the 19th century complex but it has been altered and appears to be of little architectural interest, although it has some significance historically.

The mock-Tudor entrance to what is now Sigma Soaps lies on the south side of the River Ogden, just within Conservation Area. It appears to date to the 1930s as well. There are just six other buildings in the Conservation Area, mostly detached houses dating to the 1960s or later, although the pair of bungalows next to the railway line (Nos. 2 and 4 Hardsough Fold) are unusual as although clearly 20th century, they are roofed in traditional stone slate – they may have been built as accommodation for railway workers. Despite the name ‘Hardsough Fold’ there are no obvious examples of former agricultural buildings (stables, barns or houses) in the Conservation Area.

5.2 Listed buildings

The listed buildings are all in residential use and they all located in Bowker Street (Nos. 1-21 odd and Nos. 2-24 even) and Aitken Street (Nos. 1-5 and Nos. 7-11 all odd). They date to 1833 (datestone) and were built by John Bowker to house his workers in the adjoining Irwell Vale Cotton Mill. No. 1 Aitken Street has a larger ground floor window which indicates that it was once a shop, and it also retains a date inscribed 'Irwell Vale 1833'.



Listed buildings in Bowker Street

5.3 Positive buildings

In addition to the listed buildings, a small number of unlisted buildings have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as being *positive* buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as being *positive* will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. In Irwell Vale, most of these buildings date from the mid 19th to the early 20th century, but some may be earlier.

The publication of PPS5 in the spring of 2010, which suggests that the significance of all 'heritage assets' needs to be recorded and assessed, has meant that further analysis of positive buildings is considered necessary, incorporating what in the past might have been considered to be 'neutral' or even 'negative' buildings. For Irwell Vale, these buildings have therefore been broken down into the following categories:

- Positive unlisted buildings of high quality
- Positive buildings of medium quality

- Modern positive buildings which fit into the townscape, or historic buildings which have been altered
- Modern buildings where sensitive redevelopment (in time) would be welcome

The identification of these ‘positive’ buildings follows advice provided within English Heritage’s *Guidance on conservation area appraisals*, which provides a helpful list of criteria in Appendix 2. The guidance advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a ‘positive’ contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Proposals to demolish such buildings will therefore be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings. This implies therefore that all buildings marked blue and orange on the Townscape Appraisal Map will be retained in the future unless a special case can be made for demolition.

The Methodist Church is the only high quality ‘positive’ building in the Conservation Area and is marked blue with cross-hatching. Other ‘positive’ buildings of medium quality include the cottages in Hardsough Fold, properties in Milne Street and one unlisted house in Bowker Street (No. 26).

5.4 Building styles, materials and colours

The historic buildings of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area are built almost exclusively from sandstone, which historic maps confirm was quarried locally. The stone is usually cut into regularly sized rectangular blocks with a smooth outer face, and laid in narrow, roughly equal courses. The stonework on the properties in Hardsough Fold (Nos. 1-7 odd) is rougher ‘rock-faced’ stone, suggesting a slightly later date – the former chapel behind this group is actually dated 1853. Some of the houses have been rendered and occasionally this has been painted.



Nos. 1 – 7 (odd) Hardsough Fold

The overall styles are simple and typical of the industrial housing which can be found elsewhere in Rossendale. The terraced properties are two storeys high and usually just one window wide with a shallow pitched roof with ridge chimney stacks and natural slate roofs. The only stone slate roofs can be seen on the probably 20th century pair of bungalows next to the railway (Nos. 2 and 4 Hardsough Fold). On the listed buildings, gutters are either modern or cast iron, and in Bowker Street they are supported on small stone corbels. There

do not appear to be any original windows left in the Conservation Area, and even the listed properties in Bowker Street and Aitken Street have an assortment of modern 'sash' windows, some of them top hung. Front doors are usually simple boarded doors (some may be original) set in stone architraves. Nos. 10a, 10 and 12 Milne Street appear to have been built as a single double-fronted house of some status, with a stone string course at first floor level and a central front door with a bay on either side.

The Methodist Church at the end of Bowker Street was completed in 1893 and is also built using the local sandstone. It is a small, simple building with Gothic windows and what appear to be its original leaded lights with stained glass insets. The steeply pitched roof is slated and topped with red clay ridge tiles. The best elevation faces east down Bowker Street with a large stained glass window providing the focal feature, above a pair of original white-painted Gothic entry doors. This building may be eligible for local listing – this is further discussed in the Management Proposals.



The Methodist Church

In 1976, soon after the designation of the conservation Area, a developer refurbished many of the houses in Bowker Street, replacing all of the sash windows and also carrying out alterations to the internal layout of the houses.

5.5 Article 4 Direction

An Article 4 Direction was approved by the Secretary of State on 28 March 1985 which covered the whole Conservation Area and two fields which immediately abut the designated area – the first between Bowker Lodge and the former reservoir, and the second, the field to the north of Hardsough Fold, known locally as Hardsough Meadow. The Direction removes

'permitted development rights' for a number of changes which could otherwise be undertaken without the need for planning permission.

The Direction covers (summary):

- The siting of a caravan or similar
- The temporary use of land
- The enlargement, improvement, or other alteration of a dwelling house (includes the installation of new windows and front doors)
- New buildings within the curtilage of a dwelling house
- The construction of a vehicular hardstanding in the garden of a dwelling house
- The construction of an oil tank within the curtilage of a dwelling house
- The alteration or demolition of front boundaries (within certain constraints)
- The creation of a means of access
- Painting external elevations

The purpose of the Direction was to preserve the rural setting to the Conservation Area, and to protect and in time, enhance, the various unlisted residential properties in the Conservation Area. Listed buildings are controlled by separate, more rigorous, legislation, and the timing of this Direction may have coincided with the listing of the properties in Bowker Street and Aitken Street in the early to mid 1980s.

6 SUMMARY OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEATURES

6.1 Key positive features

This Character Appraisal concludes that the most significant *positive* features of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area are:

- Small somewhat dispersed rural hamlet set in an attractive valley location at the junction of the River Ogden and River Irwell
- The groups of mature trees on the edges and within the Conservation Area
- A narrow bridge links the two parts of the settlement, providing views along the river and surrounding open land
- There are also long views towards rising land to the east and west
- The close proximity of both rivers and the accompanying wildlife, including a range of wild birds including grey herons
- A large playing field next to the River Irwell, a children's playground, and the Methodist Church, form the centre of the Conservation Area
- The principal building is the church, dating to 1893
- There are two groups of worker's housing – the first at Hardsough, on the east bank of the River Irwell, where there are two short rows of two storey cottages, one of which used to be the Methodist Chapel
- A second much larger and more regimented group can be found in Bowker Street and Aitken Street on the west side of the River Irwell
- Nos. 1-21 and Nos. 2-24 Bowker Street date to 1833 (date stone) and are listed grade II, along with Nos. 1-11 Aitken Street
- These provide neat rows of two storey terraced houses sitting tightly on the back of the pavement
- Two further pairs of mid 19th century properties in Milne Street, one (Now Nos. 10a, 10 and 12) was possibly built as a higher status house for the mill manager
- Use of local coursed sandstone, timber windows (not original), modern or cast iron gutters, sometimes supported on stone corbels, and natural slate or the occasional stone slate roofs
- Whilst most of the windows have been replaced (see below) some simple boarded doors remain, possibly original
- Some traditional stone paving and setted gutters remain
- A number of examples of sandstone boundary walls, built from rubble stone, dry laid, with half-round or triangular stone copings bedded in
- Stone slab walling forming a parapet on the bridge over the River Ogden
- Some simple metal railings or fencing, probably associated with the adjoining works
- A number of modern park benches and standard black litter bins are not obtrusive
- The Irwell Vale village sign at the north-west entrance to the settlement, the Hardsough sign at Hardsough Fold, a Parish notice board and the Irwell Vale (East Lancashire Railway sign) Information Board next to the railway line
- Both Hardsough Mill and Irwell Vale have been demolished, although some buildings remains on the Irwell Vale mill site which date to the 20th century, including the Sigma Soap factory site which lies mainly just outside the Conservation Area
- A red brick two storey house (The Engine House) dates to 1912 and remains just within the boundary
- Residential uses apart from the Methodist Church, the Sigma Soap factory and the Irwell Vale Nursery, which is located in No. 4 Milne Street

6.2 Key negative features

This Character Appraisal concludes that the most significant *negative* features of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area are:

Spatial:

- A number of modern inappropriate boundary treatments and gates, despite the Article 4 Direction
- Modern street lights and overhead wires
- Untidy car parking and uncared for 'left-over' spaces in Milne Street
- There is a threat from inappropriate new development – Rivermead has been extended since the Conservation Area was designated and is a modern building of little architectural merit sitting on a very sensitive site overlooking the playground and the Methodist Church

Buildings:

- Some evidence of poorly maintained buildings
- Many of the listed buildings have modern windows, and there are also examples of visible satellite dishes
- Some of the unlisted residential properties have been altered unsympathetically despite the Article 4 Direction

Site specific:

- The poor condition of the Methodist Church metal gates
- The redevelopment of the Sigma Soap factory is an on-going issue which could potentially have a big impact on the character of the adjoining Conservation Area
- There has been further pressure in the past for new housing around the edges of the village which have been successfully opposed by local residents
- Parts of the Sigma Soap site are untidy and negative in their impact, although the bulk of the main building lies just outside the Conservation Area

The majority of these 'negative' features are considered further in a series of recommendations which are contained within the Management Proposals Plan for Irwell Vale.

PART 2 THE IRWELL VALE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of the Management Proposals Plan

Part 1 of this document, the *Character Appraisal*, has identified the special positive qualities of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area which make the conservation area unique. Part 2 of this document, the *Management Proposals Plan*, builds upon the positive features and addresses the negative features which have been identified to provide a series of recommendations for improvement and change, most of which are the responsibility of Rossendale Borough Council or Lancashire County Council. The structure and scope of this document is based on the suggested framework published by English Heritage in *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (March 2011). Both the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the Management Proposals Plan should be subject to regular monitoring and reviews, as set out below.

The involvement and approval of the local community in the formulation and delivery of these documents helps to strengthen their status and will hopefully mean that the various actions identified in the Management Proposals Plan will have greater impact and longevity. For Irwell Vale, this has been achieved by early consultation with the community via the Council's website after which these documents were drafted. The documents were subject to a six week public consultation exercise ending on 25 April 2011. A Public Consultations Report was prepared (copies are available on request from the Borough Council), and the text and mapping amended as appropriate. As part of the process, the existing Conservation Area boundary was also reviewed and following public consultation one change has been recommended as set out in the following section.

The Irwell Vale Character Appraisal was adopted by the Borough Council as a material consideration for development control purposes with effect from 26th October 2011 and the Recommended Actions in the Management Proposals Plan, including the Conservation Area boundary revisions, were agreed to be implemented incrementally as resources allow.

2 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW

2.1 Conservation area boundary review

As part of the survey work for the Character Appraisal, a full assessment of the existing Conservation Area boundary was carried out. The consultation draft Character Appraisal and Management Proposals Plan recommended one alteration to the boundary as follows:
Addition:

- Add Nos. 269-277 (odd), on the east side of the railway line



Add Nos. 269 – 277 (odd) to the conservation area

These form part of historic settlement of Irwell Vale and are shown on the 1893 map. They are built from the local sandstone and are similar to Nos. 1-7 off Hardsough Fold. Overall, they provide a good example of a mid to late 19th century terrace of five houses. No objections were received.

3 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following recommendations are based on the key negative features identified as part of the Character Appraisal. Some of them may have to remain aspirational for the time being, but it is considered 'good practice' to identify possible actions which could be implemented in the future if the funding is available. Other recommendations rely upon the Borough Council providing sufficient staff resources to ensure that the proposed actions are carried forward. All of the recommendations rely upon a successful partnership between the Borough Council and the local community, assisted by the County Council as appropriate.

3.1 The control of unlisted houses

It has been noted that an Article 4 Direction has already been served on the Irwell Vale Conservation Area, affecting the unlisted family dwellings. Despite this, some unsympathetic alterations appear to have taken place, including the use of modern windows and front doors. In addition, poor quality modern boundaries have been erected, possibly without permission. This may be due to a lack of publicity, or because unauthorised work has been allowed to happen without any enforcement.

The Direction is now somewhat out of date as the legislation covering such Directions has changed several times, and it would be advisable to consider removing the existing Direction and serving a new Article 4 Direction. At the same time, a photographic record of the current condition of each building (including the listed buildings – see 2.3) should be made. Future applications for change would have to be viewed in the light of this record, noting that the area already retains many modern windows, rooflights and other alterations. New Article 4 Directions are being recommended for most of the Borough's other conservation areas, so this work could be undertaken as part of an overall review. The items of work mainly relate to the front roof slope or to the principal elevations where they face a public highway.

Items which need to be controlled include:

- Changing roof materials, installing rooflights, and works to chimneys
- Painting previously unpainted stonework or render
- Installing new windows or doors
- The addition of a porch
- Changes to the front boundary (where they are not already controlled by existing planning constraints)
- Creation of a vehicular hardstanding in the front garden



Protect these unlisted properties in Milne Street with a new Article 4 Direction

Other issues which may need to be covered include the siting of a caravan or similar; the temporary use of land; new buildings within the curtilage of a dwelling house; and the construction of an oil tank within the curtilage of a dwelling house. The inclusion of the two fields outside the Conservation Area in the Article 4 Direction will need to be reassessed in the light of current planning policies.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 1:

- The Borough Council will review the existing Article 4 Direction and consider re-serving it in line with current legislation;
- The Borough Council will undertake a detailed building-by-building photographic survey;
- The Borough Council will consider the production of detailed householder guidance, relating to features such as windows, doors, roofs, porches and boundaries.

3.2 The control of satellite dishes

During the survey work for the Irwell Vale Character Appraisal, it was noted that a number of satellite dishes were visible which presumably had not been granted planning permission. The rules governing satellite dishes in conservation areas are significantly tighter than outside such areas and have recently been changed by a revision to the *General Permitted Development Order 1995*. This states that for all unlisted buildings in a conservation area, in whatever use and of whatever size, planning permission is required for all 'antennas' (which includes satellite dishes and any other equipment used to deliver electronic communications) which are located on a chimney, wall or roof slope which face onto, and are visible, from a road. In such cases, planning permission will usually be refused.

The rules governing other locations on the building are extremely complex so it is always best to ask the local planning authority if planning permission is required before carrying out the work.

For listed buildings, Listed Building Consent is practically always required for the installation of 'antennas' and if the Borough Council considers that the installation will have an adverse effect on the special architectural or historic interest of the building, Consent will usually be refused.

Conventional TV aerials and their mountings and poles are not considered to be 'development' and therefore planning permission is not required.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 2:

- The Borough Council will consider taking action against the owners of properties where satellite dishes have been erected without planning permission and where negotiation has failed to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

3.3 The care and protection of trees

Within all conservation areas, anyone intending to carry out works to a tree greater than 75 mm diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground must give the Borough Council six weeks written notice before starting the work. 'Work' is defined as lopping, topping, or felling and includes heavy pruning of branches. This provision provides the Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served. This protects the tree from felling or inappropriate lopping. Fruit trees are no longer exempt,

although slightly different constraints occur where the tree forms part of a commercially managed forest or orchard.



Mature trees provide an appropriate setting to the Methodist Church at the end of Bowker Street

There are a number of mature trees of townscape importance in the Irwell Vale Conservation Area and the most significant of these are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map. Some of these may be specifically protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Most appear to be within the churchyard, where they are presumably the responsibility of the church authorities, and a number also lie within the village green.

All tree owners need to be encouraged to look after their trees, to remove any which are dangerous or diseased, and to plant replacement trees where the removal of an existing significant tree has become necessary.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 3:

- The Borough Council will continue to monitor the management of trees within the Conservation Area, and will consider the possible serving of further Tree Preservation Orders where it is considered likely that the amenity value of significant trees is at risk.

3.4 The public realm

It has been noted that modern street lights and overhead wires are an inappropriate feature in some of the streets. Whilst traditional sandstone paving has been retained in several locations, the pavements have been repaired using modern materials. Street furniture, such as public seating and litter bins, is modern and largely unobtrusive. By contrast, the two 'place signs', off Irwell Vale and Hardsough Fold, provide a feeling of local distinctiveness which needs to be reinforced.



'Irwell Vale' sign on Ogden Bridge

Improvements to all of these elements in time, as funding permits, would be welcome. As a start, any further repairs to the pavements in Bowker Street must be carried out in matching sandstone flags, rather than concrete. The replacement of the existing modern street lights, possibly using reproduction 'Victorian' street lights, should be another aspiration. However, as local residents are responsible for these areas, improvements will only happen if they are funded by Rossendale Borough Council or Lancashire County Council.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 4:

- Funding permitting, the Borough Council and County Council will work in partnership with local residents to enable improvements to the street lighting and street furniture in the Irwell Vale Conservation Area;
- All works which involve traditional paving in the Conservation Area will be carried out carefully, and any disturbance to the paving is made good to exactly match its original appearance. Further enhancement works will be carried out if funding is available.

3.5 Listed building condition

It has been noted that all of the windows, and most of the front doors, to the listed buildings in Bowker Street and Aitken Street are modern. Historically, the windows would almost certainly have been vertically sliding timber sash windows, probably divided into six panes per sash (more research is needed). The restoration of the windows to their original design would greatly enhance the Conservation Area although it is accepted that this can only be achieved incrementally as the existing windows come up for renewal. At the same time, existing historic front doors must be retained and any new front doors must follow the simple boarded pattern which is already established.



Modern windows in Bowker Street listed buildings

It is regrettable that the Borough Council is currently unable to offer any grant aid to the owners of any buildings in the Conservation Area, but should this become available at some stage in the future, assistance with the cost of traditional joinery for both the listed and unlisted buildings would appear to be desirable.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 5:

- The Borough Council will encourage listed property owners to use traditional materials and details in the Conservation Area;
- The Borough Council will consider taking enforcement action against listed property owners who carry out work without the necessary permissions.

3.6 Unlisted buildings of special but local interest

As recommended in PPS5, the preparation of a 'Local List' for the Borough should be a priority. The first action should be the drawing-up of a set of criteria, based on English Heritage guidance and local building types.

In Irwell vale, the Methodist Church, and possibly Chapel Terrace in Hardsough Fold, might be eligible for inclusion. Further features, such as the sandstone flagged pavements in the centre of the Conservation Area, where they are original, could also be added.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 6:

- The Borough Council will work with community groups to produce a new 'Local List' of buildings in Irwell Vale.

3.7 Site specific actions

The following sites within the Conservation Area are considered to be in need of enhancement. Most of the actions will be the responsibility of the Borough Council, perhaps working in partnership with the County Council, and the local community should be consulted first before any schemes for improvement are implemented. All proposals are dependent upon funding being made available although for some of them funding is less important than the availability of local effort.

3.7.1 The Methodist Church

Whilst the actual building appears to be in a good state of repair, the cast iron spear-headed railings which make up the two entrance gateways are in poor condition. Repainting in an appropriate colour is advisable before they deteriorate any further.



Entrance gates to the Methodist Church

3.7.2 The village green

Parts of the village green are somewhat neglected and in need of minor enhancements. The area close to Irwell Vale Bridge is particularly in need of some improvements due to its concrete hardstanding, posts, seating, and 'wheel' feature. The land is owned by Richmond Commercial and Residential and is managed by Tilerock Ltd. Residents are keen to see this land compulsorily purchased by Rossendale Borough Council.



Improvements would be welcome to the village green

3.7.3 Milne Street

Milne Street retains two pairs of historic buildings (nos. 4 and 6, and 10a, 10 and 12) of historic interest, and glimpses of The Engine House are also of merit. The lane climbs the hill beyond Hawthorn House where it becomes a rough track, crossing the former mill reservoir at it heads in a north-westerly direction over the former railway line. On the north-east side of the street, the demolition of Irwell Vale Mill has resulted in a large open space being created which has been partially filled by new buildings which are somewhat concealed by rows of leylandii. Other parts of the lane have been filled by *ad hoc* car parking or areas of tarmacadam or unmade road or driveways. The overall effect is untidy and negative, but as these roads are unadopted, and it is not clear where private and public ownerships apply, it will be difficult to achieve any improvements. The Borough Council may wish to approach local property owners to see if any improvements can be made (which the Council may have to support financially) and the County Council also needs to check whether the on-street car parking can be more effectively controlled.

3.7.4 Sigma Soap factory

Most of this site lies just beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area. However, any development on this site will have a huge impact on the special interest of the Conservation Area which is why previous proposals for the site did not receive a favourable response from the Borough Council. Staff resources allowing, the production by the Borough Council of some design guidance for any new development on the site would be welcome.



Back view of the Sigma Soap Factory

Parts of the Sigma Soap site are also untidy, with poor quality boundaries and a degree of detritus scattered around the buildings. Some of these negative features are particularly visible when entering the village from the north.

RECOMMENDED ACTION 7:

- The Borough Council and Lancashire County Council should work together with property owners and local groups to try and achieve the various improvements detailed above.

4 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Local authorities are required by law to periodically review their conservation areas and the preparation of Character Appraisals and Management Proposals is part of this obligation. Indeed, in the past keeping Character Appraisals and Management Proposals Plans up to date has been a Key Performance Indicator in the Best Value assessment of local authorities, and as a result, a five year review cycle is now considered to be best practice.

Over the next five years the Borough Council should therefore be expected to regularly review the content of this document, to carefully monitor change within the Irwell Vale Conservation Area, and to involve the community in any proposals for enhancement (subject of course to the funding being available).

The Borough Council should therefore:

- Carry out periodic reviews of the effectiveness with which the service addresses pressures for change;
- Update the baseline photographic survey of the Irwell Vale Conservation Area on a three yearly basis;
- Review the Irwell Vale Conservation Area Character Appraisal on a five yearly basis;
- Review and update the Irwell Vale Conservation Area Management Proposals Plan on an annual basis.

5 CONTACT DETAILS

For all enquiries relating to conservation areas and historic buildings, please contact:

The Conservation Officer,
 Rossendale Borough Council,
 Development Control,
 One Stop Shop,
 Town Centre Offices,
 Lord Street,
 Irwell Vale,
 Rossendale,
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Map 1 Townscape Appraisal Map

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