

# 1 Part One

## Summary

**1.1** The Goyt Valley carries one of the two principal routes from the Manchester/Stockport area through the Medieval forests of Macclesfield and High Peak, the other passes by Chester.

**1.2** Whaley Bridge lies on the crossing of the River Goyt in the base of the Goyt Valley. The Eastern slopes of the valley were part of the royal forest. Disafforestation promoted the use of the areas natural resources and by the 18th century Whaley Bridge had developed as an important centre for transport routes for cotton, supply of coal and development of textile mills. Coal was transported on the Whaley branch of the Peak Forest Canal (1805). The Cromford and High Peak Railway expanded Whaley's importance as a transhipment point.

**1.3** Most of the early development within Whaley Bridge centres around the canal basin and the White Hart public house. Development then began to spread along Market Street and Old Road in the mid 19th century. More widespread development of the area occurred in the late 19th century.

**1.4** In summary the main characteristics of the Whaley Bridge conservation area can be described as follows:

- Historical development associated with transport and coal industry and still evidenced within the canal basin.
- Relationship of the canal basin and the town centre.
- Existence of the River Goyt flowing through the centre of the town.
- Topography of the area providing long distance views across the valley.
- Close relationship between buildings and surrounding countryside.
- High survival of traditional surface materials and street furniture.
- High survival of 19th century development within the town being overlain by more recent developments.
- Survival of key focal and architecturally prominent buildings along Market Street.

## Background Information

**1.5** The High Peak area (excluding the Peak District National park) has 32 designated conservation areas. These are defined <sup>(i)</sup> as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

**1.6** Each conservation area has a distinct character which can be derived from a number of factors such as; topography; historical development; townscape value; open spaces; traditional street furniture and surfaces.

**1.7** Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment stresses the need for local planning authorities to define and record the special characteristics of each conservation area. The existence of a clear definition of an area's character helps reduce uncertainty for owners and developers and provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal for local plan policies and development control decisions.

---

i Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990



# 1 Part One

**1.8** A local authority's performance in conservation area designation, appraisal and management proposals is currently the subject of a heritage "Best Value performance Indicator" (BV219). The formal requirements of BV219b expects local authorities to publish character appraisals for new and existing conservation areas <sup>(ii)</sup>.

**1.9** The Whaley Bridge Conservation Area was designated in 1987 and its original boundary extended in 1994 and 2000. The Council completed a detailed character appraisal for the area in May 2000. It is considered good practice to regularly review appraisals to keep them up to date. As such, this document has been updated in accordance with the published English Heritage Guidance entitled 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals - 2005'.

**1.10** The final document will be prepared subject to full public consultation as set out in the Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement'.

## Planning Policy Context

**1.11** Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Act imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate conservation areas. Conservation area designation is the main instrument available to authorities to promote and deliver conservation policies for a particular area. Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

**1.12** Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment.

**1.13** The Council's local policies for conservation areas are contained within Chapter 5 – Conservation and Enhancement of the Built Environment of the High Peak Local Plan – Adopted March 2005 and contains the following policies:

**BC5** – Conservation Areas and their Setting

**BC6** – Demolition in Conservation Areas

**1.14** In the future, policies for the enhancement and protection of conservation areas and the built environment will be formulated through the emerging Local Development Framework scheduled for adoption in 2011.

**1.15** The Whaley Bridge Conservation Area was designated in 1987 and since that date it has been extended a number of times. The current boundary is shown on Map 1. This map also identifies other statutory designations within the area, namely; listed buildings; scheduled monuments and tree preservation orders.

---

ii As from April 2008 BV219 will be removed from the new list of national indicators.

# 1 Part One

## Location and Context

**1.16** Whaley Bridge is situated on the edge of the historic Peak District and lies on an ancient crossing of the River Goyt. The town settles comfortably at the base of the Goyt Valley on a rock bed formed of coarse sandstone (locally known as Millstone Grit) The Council's Landscape Character document <sup>(iii)</sup> describes the area's landscape character type as settled valley pastures.

**1.17** Its development has been linked with its position in relation to various transport routes and its mining and textile activities. Coal mining has taken place since the late 16th century. However, it was the increased demand for coal and the town's importance as a transhipment point, between the Peak Forest Canal and the Cromford and High Peak Railway, which significantly contributed to its growth and pattern of development. Later the town developed a number of railway activities with the development of the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway, which joined the Cromford and High Peak Railway in the town.

**1.18** By the early 20th century farming, coal and cotton were the main industries in Whaley Bridge. Today, the town's industrial image has receded as pleasure boats now preside in the canal basin. However, a walk around the town centre will reveal evidence of Whaley Bridge's industrial heritage.



**Picture 1 the canal basin with the canal warehouse in the background**

**1.19** In order to preserve this heritage, the Borough Council designated the town centre as a Conservation Area in April 1987 and subsequently extended it in September 1994 and May 2000. The Conservation Area boundary takes in the canal basin and surrounding area, the town centre, linear development along Old Road to Horwich End and the small residential area of Reservoir Road and Whaley Lane.

**1.20** The following character appraisal is not exhaustive and therefore any building, feature or site not mentioned should not be taken to mean that it is of no interest or, does not contribute positively to the character of the Conservation Area.

---

iii High Peak Borough Council Landscape Character 2006 SPD 5

# 1 Part One

## Origins and History of Whaley Bridge

**1.21** Whaley Bridge is an administrative construct of the late 1930s created out of the former Yeardsley-cum-Whaley Urban District Council and parts of the townships and parishes of Chapel-en-le-Frith, Fernilee, Disley, Taxal and Kettleshulme. This union recognised the integrity of the community that had grown up on both sides of the valley of the River Goyt.

**1.22** For centuries the valley had provided a highway for travellers between the dry uplands to the south and east and the populous lowlands to the north and west. The succession of (...lee, ...ley) place names along this route; Fernilee; Whaley; Hockerley; Yeardsley; Diglee and Disley speak of the grazing grounds that were available to sustain travellers' animals.

**1.23** Following the Norman Conquest, the eastern slopes of the valley were part of the Royal Forest of High Peak while, to the west, lay the Royal Forest of Macclesfield.

**1.24** Undoubtedly both forests were settled, where possible, and were used to grow subsistence crops of roots, grain and greens, while sheep, cattle, pigs and geese were raised on marginal land. Timbers for building and wood for fuel and charcoal were further products of the forest. In medieval times, these were strictly managed for the benefit of the Crown under a traditional body of 'Forest Law'.

**1.25** The 'disafforestation' of these two Forests allowed private enterprise to exploit the natural resources of the area. These were principally; well drained routes for transport; abundant clean water; coal and sandstone. In turn, this led to coalmines; the building of textile mills (powered initially by water and then coal); the first turnpike in Derbyshire (1724); the Peak Forest Canal (1794 – 1805); the Cromford and High Peak Railway (1831) and the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway (1857) and its extension to Buxton.

**1.26** The growth of Whaley Bridge as a mining town was caused by two factors – a hugely increased demand for coal, associated with the growing lime burning industry, and its advantageous position with respect to the improved rail and canal transport links.

**1.27** The application of lime to pastures and fields, the advent of the industrial revolution, developments in the chemical trade and the demand for lime building mortars all caused a phenomenal demand for lime. This was in a plentiful supply in the area around Buxton. Part of the production process involved the burning of limestone to extract the lime. Lime burning, therefore, became a major consumer of the coal produced in the Whaley Bridge mines as they increased their output for lime burning at Bugsworth, Buxton, Harpur Hill and as far away as Cromford.

**1.28** The expansion of the Coal industry was, however, heavily reliant on an efficient transport system, which up until the late 18th Century had existed of packhorse routes and turnpike roads. The first Derbyshire turnpike, dated 1724, was the Buxton to Manchester road that passed through the town, from Elnor Lane, Old Road and Bridge St to Whaley Lane and Laneside.

**1.29** On 28 March 1794 the Peak Forest Canal Act was passed. This allowed the Peak Forest Canal Company to construct a canal and tramway for the transportation of lime and limestone from the Peak Forest area to industries throughout Lancashire and Cheshire. The 14 miles of the canal was completed in 1805 and ran from Ashton through Dukinfield, Hyde, Romiley, Marple, Disley, Newtown and Furness Vale to the twin termini at Whaley Bridge and Bugsworth. At

# 1 Part One

Bugsworth, the canal met the Peak Forest Tramway which ran onto Loads Knowle. The Whaley branch of the canal was used for the carriage of coal that was utilised for the burning of the lime. It was also used to bring in the raw materials associated with the textile industries.

**1.30** Although it was always secondary to mining and transport, the Whaley Bridge area also saw a number of textile mills and related industries develop. Weaving took place in the town as early as 1800 but reached its peak towards the late 19th century with the construction of the largest single room mill in England – Goyt Mill (1865). The site has subsequently been redeveloped as housing. Alongside the weaving industry, associated trades thrived such as bleaching process (Botany Bleach Works, 1830) and Calico printing.



**Picture 2 Now demolished an illustration and map sit on the site of the former Goyt Mill. The area has now been developed for housing**

**1.31** In 1825 it was proposed to link the Peak Forest Canal and the Cromford Canal so that these regions could be opened up to each other. Originally the link was to be a canal but problems ensuring an adequate water supply resulted in a tortuous rail link of 33 miles – the Cromford and High Peak Railway. The line ran through a number of Derbyshire quarry sites however, its traffic also involved grain and coal (its promoters were largely textile magnates concerned with feeding workers and the supply of raw materials). It was constructed in two sections with the 17 miles from Hurdlow to Whaley Bridge opening in 1831.

**1.32** The Cromford and High Peak Railway, with its link to the Peak Forest Canal, expanded Whaley Bridge's importance as a transshipment point. However, the main line railways quickly reduced canal traffic and the need for the canal/rail interchange at Whaley Bridge. A line was constructed which linked the Cromford and High Peak railway to the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge railway in 1857. After this date, the most likely use of the Canal Basin would have been limestone and local coal bound for Bugsworth and the Furness Vale Brickworks.

**1.33** For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, economic development has depended on increased mobility for goods. Today's network of motorways has restricted the prospects of future physical economic development of the Goyt Valley area. The Cromford and High Peak Railway from the bottom of the Shallcross incline to Ladmanlow closed in 1892. The canal closed in 1923 followed by the Whaley Bridge incline of the Cromford and High Peak Railway line in 1952. In 1974 the canal re-opened following extensive restoration works.



## 1 Part One

**1.34** It was the development of the road, canal and rail networks, and the changes to the route of the Manchester to Buxton turnpike road, that dictated the pattern of development that has largely been retained today. Much of the earlier development centres on the canal basin area and the original 'Whaley Bridge' at the end of Bridge Street (although most of the latter has now been obliterated by later developments). The White Hart Public House became central with the building of the new bridge around 1783. By the mid 1850's development was beginning to creep along Market Street and Old Road. But it wasn't until the late 19th Century that development occurred along Market Street, Buxton Road and Horwich End (junction area).



**Picture 3 The White Hart public house**



**Picture 4 Survey Map dated 1835**

### Building Types, Traditional Details and Materials

**1.35** The period of development within the Whaley Bridge Conservation Area varies greatly from the School House on Whaley Lane (dated 1630) to a modern small housing development, known as Goyt Place, located off the south east corner of Bridge Street. Most residential and commercial buildings were constructed during the mid to late 19th century.

**1.36** Locally quarried coursed, squared and pitched-faced gritstone is the predominant material used for walls and chimney stacks with boundary walls constructed both in coursed gritstone and random rubble. Dressed gritstone, ornately carved in some instances, has been used for window and door surrounds, sills and heads. Welsh blue slate is the most common roofing material, but a number of stone roofs still survive within the conservation area.



**Picture 5 Stone roofs on cottages along Johnson Street**



**Picture 6 Stone roofs along Johnson Street with the Navigation Inn in the foreground**



## 1 Part One

**1.37** Although gritstone is the predominant building material, different styles have been used throughout the area to differentiate the period of development or importance of the building. The Mechanics Institute, the Royal Bank of Scotland and former bank building at Horwich End have front facades of ashlar stonework. The Mechanics Institute, in particular, has decorative door and window surrounds. The Railway Inn, at the junction of Market Street and Reservoir Road has decorative ashlar stonework to columns, door and window surrounds. An unusual building is the former bank, located at the corner of Market Street and Wharf Road. Here the stonework has been laid to produce decorative fan heads to the door and windows. In addition, the colour of the local gritstone is unusually pink in colour.

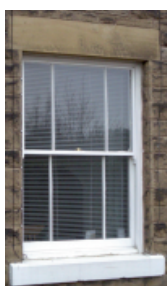


**Picture 7 11 Market Street**



**Picture 8 The Mechanics Institute**

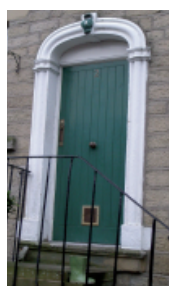
**1.38** Unfortunately, many of the original joinery details to windows and doors within the Conservation Area have been lost. Although this is not a particularly major issue concerning the commercial buildings, only a handful of residential properties still retain original details. Sliding sash windows would have been predominant with the glazing bar subdivision reflecting the age of development. Regrettably some of these details have been replaced with modern style timber windows, stained timber windows and in some instances PVC-U. It is these historic details that greatly contribute to the character of an area. The retention of those which remain must be encouraged in order to preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.



**Picture 9**



**Picture 10**



**Picture 11**



**Picture 12**

**1.39** The above photographs show a selection of traditional joinery details present throughout the conservation area.

# 1 Part One

**1.40** Several traditional Victorian shopfronts within the commercial core have also been lost and replaced with badly designed shopfronts and signs. These unsympathetic alterations are out of character with the buildings and general streetscene and are generally far inferior to their original 19th century Victorian shopfronts. Fortunately, a number of surviving traditional shopfronts still exist and planning controls have, where possible, encouraged good new design.

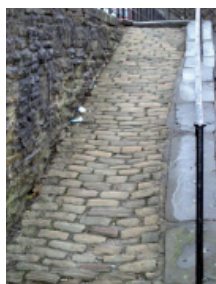


**Picture 13 A well detailed and maintained traditional shopfront on George Street**



**Picture 14 A well designed modern shopfront on Market Street**

**1.41** Whaley Bridge is fortunate in retaining many traditional surface materials and street furniture throughout the conservation area. The photographs below illustrate some of these features that still exist within the conservation area.



**Picture 15**



**Picture 16**



**Picture 17**



**Picture 18**

**1.42** The building materials, traditional details and styles together with historic paving materials and street furniture, have a great effect upon the appearance of an area. Within a conservation area this is even more so. It is important therefore, that such local details are retained or, where lost, reinstated in order to maintain the character of the area. Any change or development occurring should be sensitively managed to reflect and contribute to its character. This can be achieved by incorporating traditional building materials, styles and details along with a general understanding of the character of such an area.



# 1 Part One

## Landscape Quality

**1.43** The Borough Council's Landscape Character document identifies Whaley Bridge as falling within two distinct landscape types; riverside meadows and settled valley pastures. The riverside meadows follow either side of the flow of the river Goyt. This flows over carboniferous sandstone and shales creating gentle valley floors. Further out from the river the landscape changes to settled valley pastures. Here the underlying geology is gritstone and shale. The valley slopes are moderate to steep. There is a wooded character associated with this area with tree belts running along streams and cloughs.

**1.44** Trees and tree cover play an important part in defining the character of an area and its landscape setting. The town of Whaley Bridge and the conservation area is set within a wooded landscaped area. Views from north to south especially, show the town nestled under the escarpment of trees known as Bings Wood. This area provides an ancient and important backdrop and setting for the town. The wood is covered by a Tree Preservation Order and contains a good selection of broad leaf mature trees. Mature oak trees extend in a linear route down the southern edge of Bings Road towards the town centre.

**1.45** Tree cover within the centre of the town predominately follows the line of the canal, river Goyt and railway. Occasionally, where the river passes under the town, tree cover pops through the building line and offers a pleasant break from the otherwise continuous built frontage. The predominately broad leaf mature tree cover within the gardens of Whaley Lane, in combination with the high stone boundary wall, helps to intensify the sense of enclosure to this route.