



Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Helmshore

Draft Version for consultation

15 September 2026



A High Quality Environment

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PLEASE NOTE:

No Conservation Area Appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive. Omission of any building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest or significance. In addition, there is a Glossary at the back of this Appraisal amplifying a range of historical and technical terms used within this document.

Executive Summary

Helmshore is a linear settlement that has developed along the river. It has undergone considerable change over the last century with many new developments. Helmshore has an important complex of mills and related workers housing which illustrate how important the area was during the industrial revolution. With development pressures high and the threat of cumulative changes to domestic properties which could dilute this quality character and appearance the Council seeks to designate a new conservation area.

This appraisal and associated management plan has been undertaken by Alexandra Fairclough MA BSc(Hons) LLB(Hons) PGDpLP(Bar) IHBC MRTPI MITG of Heritarc on behalf of Rossendale Borough Council.

The appraisal will outline the special historic and architectural interest of the area that warrants its designation. The appraisal work was undertaken in January 2026.

This appraisal has assessed the significance of the conservation area, and those features that contribute to its special architectural or historic interest. It also identifies what features are important to preserve or enhance, and what features would benefit with improvement. This is in accordance with national and local planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework on the historic environment and the local plan. The report makes further recommendations to support the area's special architectural or historic interest. These are contained within the Helmshore Conservation Area Management Plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 advises that Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This conservation area appraisal has been commissioned by Rossendale Borough Council. It follows guidance produced by Historic England on conservation area appraisals. The intention is to objectively record the existing character of the conservation area which is based on the area's special architectural and historic characteristics. The area of study centres on the River Ogden and Holcombe Road in Helmshore and their immediate environs including Helmshore Mill and viaduct. This document will be subject to public consultation.

The report is set out in two parts.

The first part will comprise the character appraisal:

- Summary of the value of conservation areas, the legislative and policy background
- Understanding the area: This consists of a summary of the area, its historic development and significance.
- A brief summary of Helmshore's historical development
- Summary of Special Interest: This sets out key elements of the Conservation Area and how they contribute to its character, appearance, and significance.
- A Swot Analysis: This is an important component of a Conservation Area Appraisal as it provides a clear and structured framework for understanding the condition, qualities, and prospects of the proposed designated area.

The second part comprises the Management Plan:

- The report continues with observations around specific issues and threats and sets out a series of 11 action points that can be used to inform the policy principles to help guide future development, opportunities for improvements and regeneration.

1.2 Definition of a Conservation Area

A conservation area is defined under S 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area 'of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' The local planning authority has the responsibility for designating and reviewing the extent of designation and to designate further areas if appropriate. Section 71 of the Act imposes a duty on the local planning authority to formulate, communicate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Designation recognises the unique features that contributes to the distinctiveness of an area. This may also include its setting.

1.3 The Value of Conservation Area Appraisals

Conservation area designation aims to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of an area which is of special architectural or historic interest. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), conservation areas are considered as 'designated heritage assets,' and their conservation is to be given great weight in planning permission decisions; any proposals for change or development must assess the effect that the development might have on the character and appearance of the area.

Therefore, in a conservation area, changes to the external appearance of buildings may require planning permission which would not otherwise be needed.

Definition of a 'Heritage Asset' The NPPF defines a heritage asset as: A building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

The special interest and character of Conservation areas may be affected, both positively and negatively, by direct physical change or by changes in their setting.

Identifying an area's special architectural and historic interest is fundamental to understanding its locally distinctive character to designate it as a conservation area. Recording these features in an appraisal ensures that a common ground is established, and it is easily understood. It also identifies the capacity for future changes. An appraisal will lead to a better understanding of the area's history, local distinctiveness, character, setting, and condition, which together contribute to the place it is today.

This will form part of the evidence base for the designation and for positive management of the conservation area in which changes can be considered within a robust policy framework, including Neighbourhood Plan policies and other supplementary planning guidance.

Once the conservation area is designated and the appraisal is adopted by the local planning authority, it becomes a material consideration to use when making development and appeal decisions. It is also relevant to decisions made by the Secretary of State and when considering urgent works to preserve an unlisted building in a conservation area.

The characteristics of the conservation area defined by this document should be the starting point for further discussion with the local planning authority where alterations are being considered to or will affect a heritage asset(s). Each site will be judged on its own merits and on those positive elements which make the Helmshore Conservation Area significant.

The Proposed Conservation area



Extract from Rossendale Local Plan (2019-2036) Policies Map showing the Proposed Conservation Area ©Rossendale Borough Council

1.4 Methodology

The content of this report has been based on fieldwork analysis, which has been summarised in this document. A key aspect of the survey work was to assess buildings of local interest and townscape merit. These are buildings that are not listed, nor are they likely to be, but are sufficiently important to reflect the distinct character of the area.

The appraisal summarises the area and has sub categorised it according to the contribution that the characteristics make to the overall townscape value and character of the conservation area.

These areas have been defined as: -

Critical - of key importance, defining the distinct character of the conservation area (designated heritage assets).

Positive - contributes strongly and positively to the character of the conservation area.

Neutral – neither positive nor negative features that contribute to the conservation area.

Negative – detracting from the character of the conservation area.

1.5 Community Involvement

This document has been prepared for Rossendale Borough Council. The Council conducted a public consultation on the establishment of the Helmshore Conservation Area as part of the Local Plan. It will be available for a further consultation on production of this appraisal and management plan.

1.6 Scope of the Appraisal

This document is not intended to be comprehensive in its scope and content. It may not include every feature or aspect located in or adjoining to the Conservation Area, but it may well be of significance as evidence emerges. Such information will be considered in conjunction with the appraisal during decision-making by the local planning authority.

The appraisal recommends actions that will be supported in the Conservation Area Management Plan. Some of this will be delivered through the Development Management process.

2.0 Legislative and Policy Context

2.1 Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the legislative and national policy framework for Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.

Under Section 66 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when assessing planning applications, there is a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings or their settings. Section 72(1) of the same Act, states that the local planning authority must pay special attention ‘to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.’

Policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local development plans, including neighbourhood plans, set out national and local planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment. The NPPF states at HE1: “To deliver a positive strategy for the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment, development plans should, at the most appropriate level:

- a. Identify the heritage assets within the plan area, including those heritage assets at most risk through neglect, decay or other threats, set out the key issues facing them and identify where these assets can be used to support sustainable development;
- b. Be informed by a proportionate heritage assessment;
- c. Consider the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- d. Take opportunities, for example through site allocations, design guides, design codes and masterplans, to draw on the contribution which the historic environment can make to the character and quality of development, and its context; and
- e. Be supported by a local heritage list to identify non-designated heritage assets that are important to the local community.”

2.2 Planning Constraints in a Conservation Area

Conservation Area Consent was abolished on 1st October 2013. However, Conservation Area designation brings with it some legislative controls to ensure that any changes respect the special character of the area. The following controls apply to any building or land within a Conservation Area:

- Planning permission will be required to demolish a building totally or substantially with a volume of 115 cubic metres or greater.
- Prior approval will be required, from the Authority's Planning Service, to demolish a building between 50 and 115 cubic metres.
- Planning permission will be required to demolish all or any part of a wall, fence, gate, or other means of enclosure one metre or more in height next to a highway (including a public footpath or bridleway), waterway or public open space, or two metres or more in height elsewhere. Class C of Part 11 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) (England) as amended (GPDO) grants planning permission for the demolition of the whole or any part of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure, but only where the demolition is not relevant demolition in a conservation area. (See GPDO as exempted by the Town and Country Planning (Demolition - Description of Buildings) Direction 2021).
- Planning permission will be required to demolish a building constructed before 1914 and in use, or last used, for agricultural or forestry purposes. (see Part 11 of the GPDO S.55 and S.196D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Ss74 and 75 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- Planning permission may also be required for some minor development.
- Planning applications for development within a Conservation Area will have to demonstrate that the proposed work will preserve, and where possible enhance, the character of the Conservation Area.
- Trees with a diameter 7.5cm, or more, in a Conservation Area are protected. Anyone proposing to cut down or carry out work on a tree in a Conservation Area is required to give the Local Planning Authority 6 weeks written notice of intent to do so.

The above guidance reflects legislation and guidance at the time this Appraisal was written. For further advice, please contact Rossendale Council's Planning Service.

2.3 Definitions

A heritage asset is described in the glossary of the NPPF (Annex B) as a *“building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”* (Annex B: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government).

Designated heritage assets as those designated under legislation. These are a *“World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area.”*

Non-Designated Heritage Assets are defined on the Government’s website as *“buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.”* (Paragraph:039 Reference ID 18a-039-20190723 see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>).

The definition of **significance** in relation to heritage policy is defined in the glossary of the NPPF as *“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, and historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”*

The setting of a heritage asset is defined as *“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”* Setting is not a heritage designation.

2.4 Local Policy Context

The development plan includes **the Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036** adopted in 2021. [Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036 | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

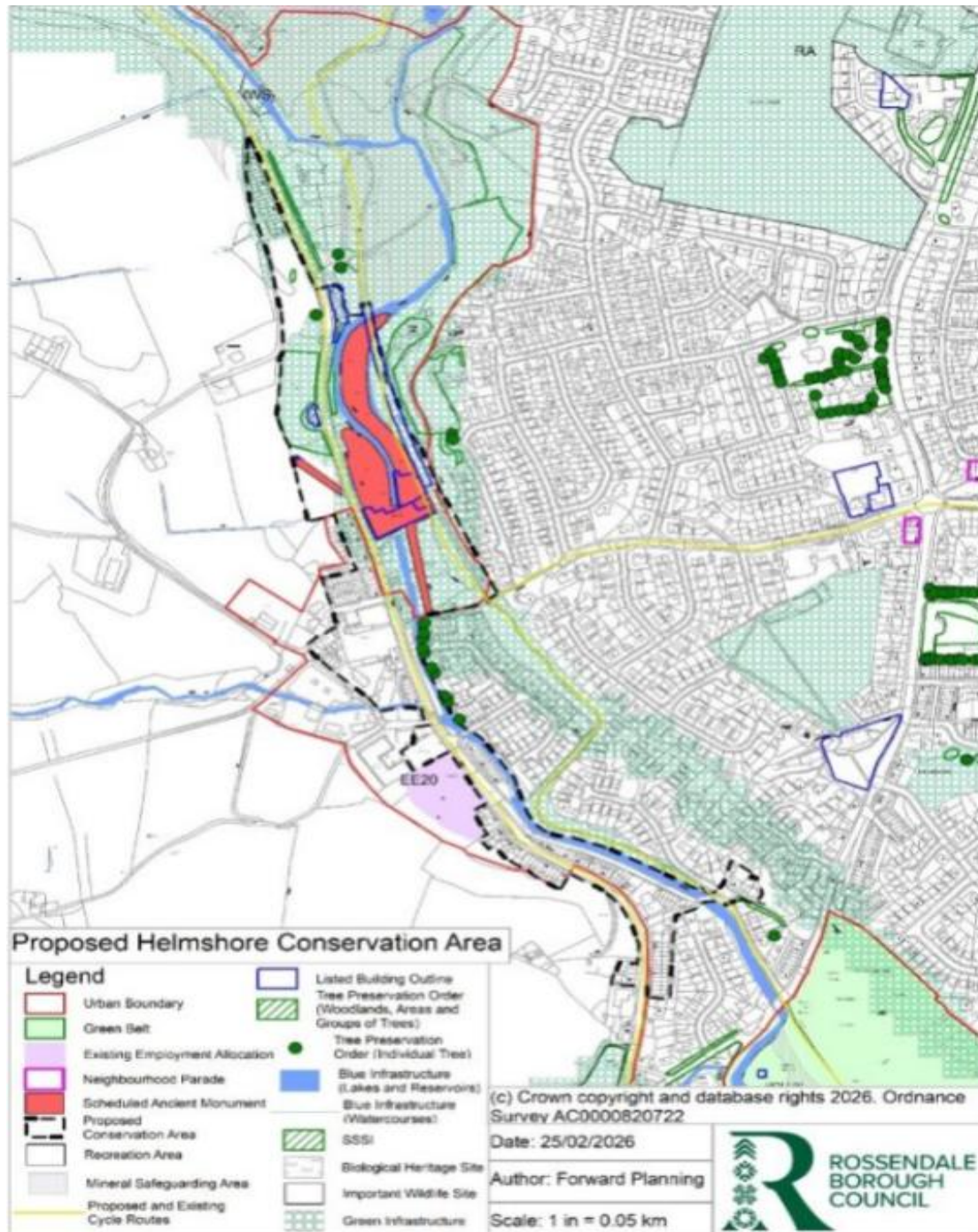
The most relevant policy is strategic **Policy ENV2: Historic Environment**. This seeks to ensure the significance of those elements of the historic environment which contribute most to the Borough’s distinctive identity and sense of place are not harmed.

Strategic Policy ENV1: High Quality Development in the Borough is important for new development in conservation areas. This requires good design in line with national policy and seeks to take account of the character and appearance of the local area.

Policy HS12: Conversion and Re-Use of Rural Buildings in the Countryside requires the careful consideration for the reuse and adaptation of rural building to ensure their character and architectural importance are retained.

Policy R6: Shopfronts the Council seeks to retain original shopfronts of architectural quality and character (particularly those in Conservation Areas) or when new shopfronts are unavoidable, sensitive replacements should be considered.

Extract from Rossendale Local Plan (2019-2034) Policies Map



Other relevant policy documents include Supplementary Planning Documents.

Rossendale Council - Supplementary Planning Documents

<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/supplementary-planning-documents-spds-guidance>

- Affordable Housing
- Alterations and extensions to residential properties
- Climate Change
- Conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside
- Open Space and Sports Provision
- Re-use and re-development of employment land
- Shopfront design guide

Other Local Guidance:

- Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Guidance on landscape impacts of wind turbines under 60 metres
- Hot food takeaways
- Compensation Measures for Green Belt Release
- Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (adopted by the Council on 16 March 2022)
- Local Standards for Accessible and Adaptable New Housing

2.5 Conservation Area Policy Guidance

The following Historic England documents were consulted as part of this appraisal:-

- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)
- Historic England 2019 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1
- Historic England 2017 The Setting of Heritage Assets, Second Edition, Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3

Historic England's Streets for All (2018) provides advice for Highway and Public Realm works in Historic Places. This document sets out five goals for public realm enhancement as

- An inclusive environment
- Public safety and ease of movement
- A healthy environment that supports our wellbeing and cohesion
- A high-quality environment, and
- Economic benefit.

Identifying significance is contained in the Historic England document Conservation Principles, (2008). Four heritage values are assigned through which a site or place can be interpreted: evidential, historical, communal, and aesthetic.

Ways to write the assessment is contained in the Historic England suite of documents Understanding Place, as well as Heritage Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management 2019.

Public consultation will be undertaken on the appraisal and its contents.

2.6 What Does Designation Mean?

The legislative requirements, also reflected in national and local policies, are to encourage positive conservation and management of Conservation Areas. This is particularly relevant in determining applications for development. These include statutory permissions for: -

- **Demolition** - Planning permission is usually required to demolish buildings or structures totally or substantially within a conservation area.
- **Permitted development** - The extent of 'permitted' development is reduced, such as cladding, extensions to the side of the original dwelling or the installation of satellite dishes.
- **Pruning or felling trees** – A six weeks Section 211 Notice is required to the local planning authority for such works to trees in the conservation area, which are over 75mm in trunk diameter, and higher than 1.5 meters above ground level. This is different to works to trees protected separately under a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) where the written consent of the Local Planning Authority is required. Should a tree be felled, a replacement is usually required.
- **Advertisements** - Restrictions apply regarding the type and size of advertisements that can be erected without advertisement consent.

2.7 Other permissions

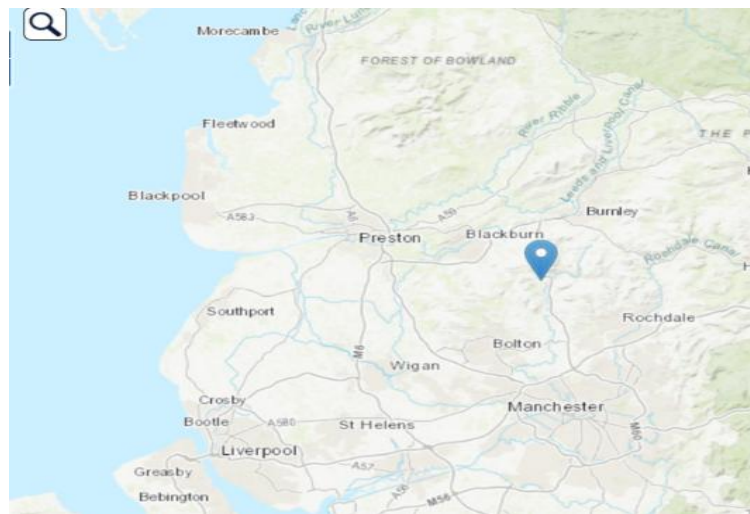
The Town and Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) sets out permitted development rights for certain minor forms of development - i.e., development that may be legitimately undertaken without the need for planning permission.

A local planning authority can remove permitted development rights to positively enhance the special interest of a conservation area, under an Article 4 direction. This requires that certain types of proposed small-scale development will require further discussion and planning permission. It is designed to further consider the impact of incremental changes to features such as windows, doors, chimneys, boundary walls and gate posts and certain types of extensions before they are undertaken. It also allows for time to provide an agreed design solution that suits both the applicant and the special character of the conservation area.

3.0 Understanding the area

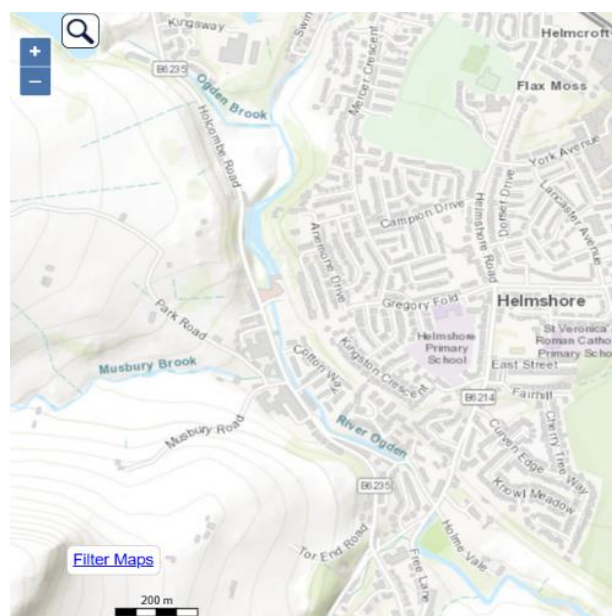
3.1 Designation of Helmshore Conservation Area - The creation of several new Conservation Areas in Rossendale was proposed by Rossendale Borough Council. A consultation on new Conservation Areas was undertaken as part of the draft Local Plan and ended on Monday 9 October 2017. Four additional Conservation Areas were proposed. Helmshore was one of the four proposed.

3.2 Location of Helmshore – Helmshore is a village in the Borough of Rossendale in Lancashire. It is positioned to the south of Haslingden between the A56 and the B6235 and is some 16 miles (26 km) north of Manchester.



Source National Libraries of Scotland

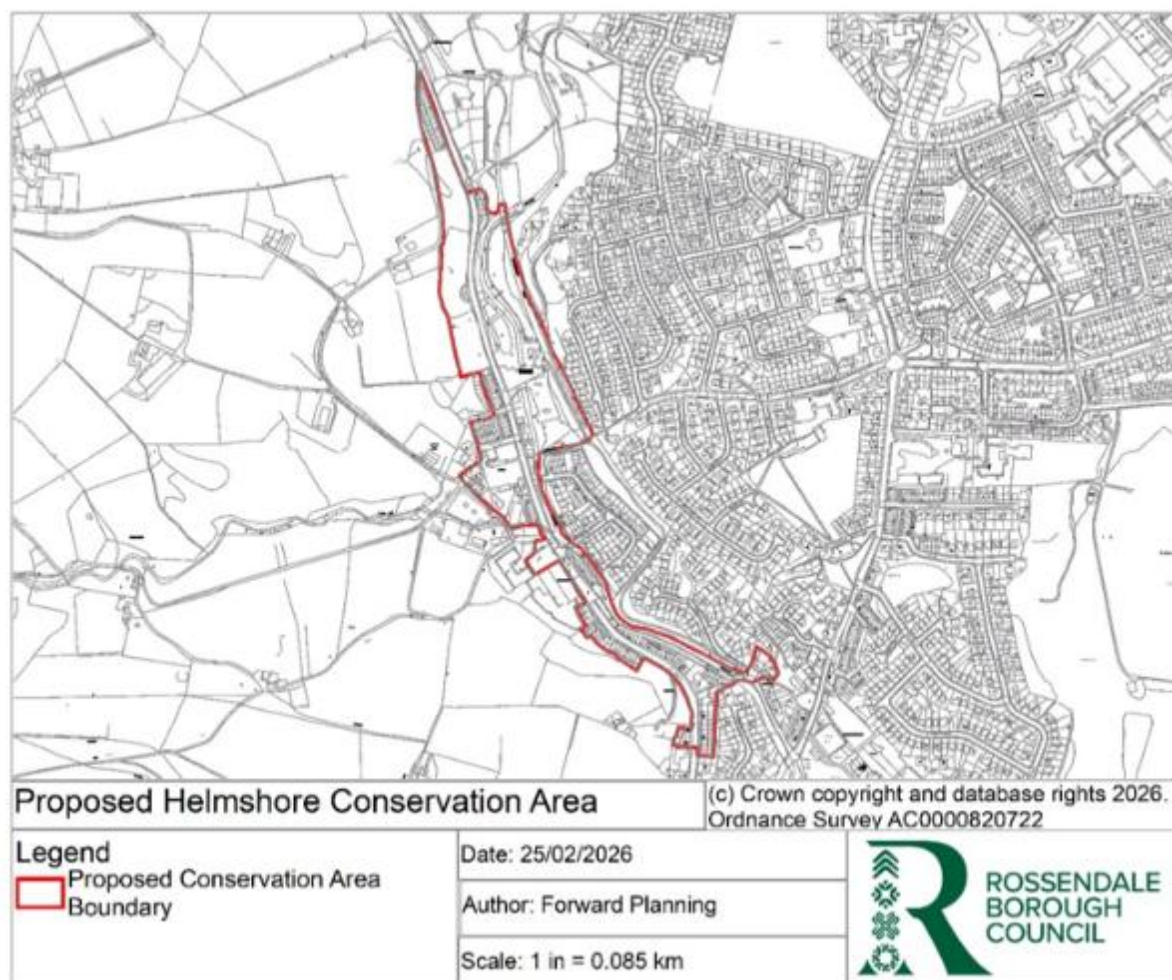
The proposed area for Helmshore conservation area focuses on the industrial heritage within the area. Helmshore again is a linear settlement. The proposed area has retained many mill buildings fronting the main road, including the historic Higher Mill (Scheduled Ancient Monument) and its associated complex of mill ponds. Please see map below (source: National Libraries of Scotland).



The physical constraints within the area, including the River Ogden and narrow valley, have helped to protect the area and have restricted development to follow the linear pattern of the road. This has made the larger buildings along Holcombe Road and Station Road dominant and focal points along the linear views.

The topography has produced a distinctive pattern of residential development with a complete row of cellar-dwelling types of properties on Station Road (up to 4 storeys in height when viewed from Station Road). There is also a variety of 19th Century housing types. While the most significant architectural group of Higher Mill is already protected by Listing and scheduling, this does not protect the wider group community including several other mills, which are also an integral part of the area's industrial history.

Map of Proposed Conservation Area



Map Source ©Rosendale Borough Council

3.3 Landscape Setting and topography

Landscape Setting - Helmshore is set within the scenic, steep-sided valleys of the Rossendale Valley in East Lancashire, characterized by dramatic, heather-clad moorlands, stone-built villages, and rugged industrial heritage. The landscape is dominated by the flat-topped hill of Musbury Tor (338m) and surrounded by valleys like Alden and Musbury, featuring rushing streams and former mill sites. Historically the land was sparsely populated with limited agriculture and settlement due to its harsh terrain.



Figure Musbury Tor, Helmshore, Lancashire, UK by Bob Frith



Figure Alden Valley showing the boundary ditch that encircled the medieval deer park by Bob Frith CC

The River Ogden flows through the village and is an important feature. The river is approximately 4.4 miles (7.1 km) long and allegedly has a catchment of around 9.77 square miles (25.298 km²). The source of the river is high on the moors of Haslingden Grane as Ogden Brook, it heads east, feeding Ogden and Calf Hey Reservoirs. It then passes through the Holden Wood Reservoir and collects Swinnel Brook in an area historically known as the Trippet of Ogden, becoming the River Ogden.

Turning to the south, the River Ogden then passes through the village of Helmshore and on to Haslingden where it is met by Musbury Brook and then Alden Brook, overlooked by Musbury Tor. It then flows in a south easterly direction where it joins the River Irwell at Irwell Vale.

Summary of key features of the local topography and landscape around Helmshore

- **Musbury Tor:** A prominent, steep-sided hill that provides panoramic views and divides the local valleys. Mainly consisting of farmland and pastures, its summit is 340.1 metres (1,116 ft) above sea level. The hill is a prominent landmark and can be seen from much of Helmshore and is often colloquially referred to as 'the Tor' by the local population. 'Tor View' is a name shared by several houses and a local school.
- **Waterways & Valleys:** The landscape is defined by the River Ogden and smaller streams such as Musbury and Alden Brooks, which historically powered textile mills.
- **Industrial Heritage:** Remnants of old mills, chimneys, and stone quarries are interspersed with green spaces.
- **Rural Charm:** The area is dotted with stone-built farms, stone walls and stone cottages



A black and white woodcut print of Musbury Tor, Helmshore, Rossendale, UK by Bob Frith.

3.4 Geology

The Rossendale landscape has been heavily shaped by glaciation both by erosion and deposition. This means that part of the landscape has been 'scoured out' by moving ice whilst other areas have sediment deposits as the glaciers retreated and

melted. The upper valley areas remained untouched thus giving it a wild landscape appearance. The type of soil and the resulting farming was a direct result of glacial action. In the Pennine Moors, the landscape is characterised by grasses, heathers, and boggy peats with the upland areas only suitable for summer grazing. The geology of these areas is Carboniferous sandstones such as millstone grit and sandstone with coal measures in certain locations. This stone has been quarried and is part of the vernacular material palette that has come to define the Rossendale valley. 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. A small quarry is shown in Chatterton, close to the river, on the 1850 map.

3.5 Trees, Key Habitats and Protected Sites

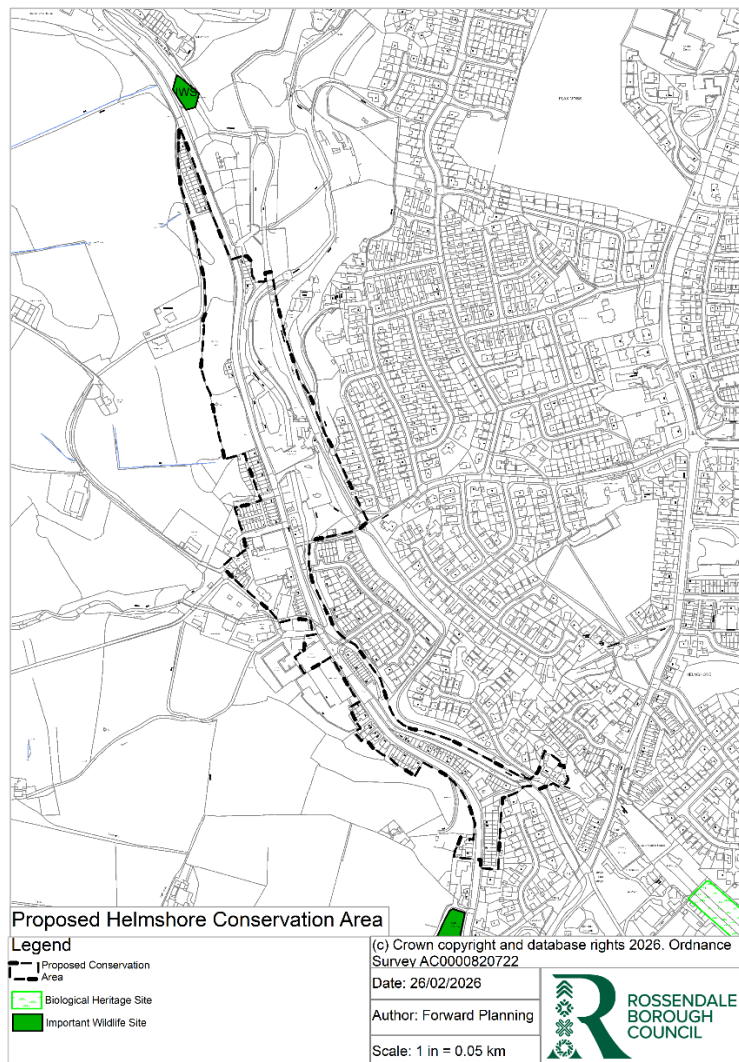
Biodiversity - The area around Helmshore features a mix of upland moorland, river valleys, and former industrial sites that now support a surprisingly varied range of biodiversity. The area is part of the wider Rossendale borough, which contains four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 52 Biological Heritage Sites, and several ancient woodlands.

The main features include:

- **River Ogden** provides a mosaic of semi-natural habitats located approximately 1km south of Helmshore, encompassing the river corridor and sections of former railway lines.
- **Musbury Brook** is a watercourse that runs through the urban boundary of Helmshore and is a key local ecological feature.
- **Broadleaved Woodlands:** Areas such as Wood Bank, Scofield Wood, and Alden Wood they form a linear woodland network about 1.4km southwest of the village.
- **Biological Heritage Sites (BHS):** Rossendale contains 52 BHS, which are local wildlife sites identified for their county-wide importance for nature. Haslingden Grane, Valley and Reservoirs; Musbury Valley and the Ogden Valley are 3 BHSs in close proximity to Helmshore.

There are no formally designated natural sites within the proposed conservation area although the Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy does identify 'Ogden Valley & East Lancashire Railway' in Helmshore as a Local Wildlife Site overlapping the north-eastern section of the proposed conservation area. There is an important nearby site at Calf Hey and Ogden Reservoir. The site is rich in birdlife and forms part of the West Pennine Moors Landscape. Please see map below.

Map of Nature Sites



Map Source ©Rossendale Borough Council

Tree Preservation Orders

There are two tree preservation orders within the proposed conservation area, as shown in the map below.

- The Borough of Rossendale (Higher Mill Museum and Top O' Th' Brow) Tree Preservation Order 1976 (reference T2/10) protecting an individual sycamore tree, a group and two areas of trees along Holcombe Road
- The Borough of Rossendale (Land at Station Road/Station Brow, Helmshore) Tree Preservation Order 1990 (reference T2/55) protecting a group of sycamore trees.

Map of Tree Preservation Orders



Map Source ©Rosendale Borough Council

4.0 Brief Summary of Helmshore's Historical Development

According to Thomas Newbiggin's 19th century historical records, Rossendale underwent a dramatic transformation over around 360 years. From a profitless tract of country, it evolved into a thriving industrial district. The Forest of Rossendale, within which Helmshore is situated, was never a dense woodland but in medieval England it was a legal designation – land reserved for hunting, rather than land described as covered by trees.



Map Extract of John Speed's Map 1610 courtesy of Lancaster University
<http://library.lancs.ac.uk/maps/speed1610.jpg>

Helmshore has a history shaped by its landscape, its mills, and the wider industrial transformation of northern England. Though today it is a quiet residential community, its past reveals a story of rural beginnings, industrial innovation, and cultural preservation. The name Helmshore is thought to have derived from Old Norse. Helmshore can be interpreted as 'shelter on a steep slope' or 'cattle shelter on a steep slope'. The Viking word 'Helm or Hjalm' means shelter and 'shore' means steep slope.

4.1 Archaeology, Early Landscape and Pre-Industrial Helmshore (Pre-1780s)

The archaeology of Helmshore is characterised by prehistoric upland activity and significant industrial revolution textile manufacturing. Key sites include Neolithic/Bronze Age implements on Bull Hill, bog oaks in the peat and preserved 18th and 19th century mills that exhibit early wool and cotton processing.

Before the 19th century Helmshore did not even exist as a village. There were scattered farms between the townships of Haslingden, Musbury and Tottington Higher End. One of the farms was known as Helmshore, a name used to describe a cattle shed on a steep slope. This site is said to be above the fulling mill site at Helmshore Museum.

There has been limited excavation works in the locality. However, an excavation as part of the 29km Samlesbury to Helmshore gas pipeline, constructed by Transco, which runs through East Lancashire connecting an Above Ground Installation produced post-Roman (medieval) pottery, not Roman material. The appendices include information on relevant archaeology.



Map Extract of John Speed's Map 1610 courtesy Lancaster University

During the medieval period, the land surrounding Helmshore was part of the Earl of Lincoln's hunting park. Before the rise of industry, the area that would become Helmshore was a rural landscape of farms, scattered cottages, and upland pastures.

Its position in the Rossendale Valley—between Haslingden and the moorlands—made it suitable for small-scale agriculture and local weaving. Other small-scale industries included hand spinning, and leather tanning,

The land was also exploited of its natural resources such as stone and peat located on the nearby moors. The River Ogden and surrounding hills shaped early settlement patterns, laying the groundwork for later industrial development. There had been a fulling mill at Ravenshore since the 17th century, it was joined by others at Bridge End, Cams and Helmshore (in 1789). This was eventually known as Higher Mill.

4.2. The Industrial Dawn: Higher Mill and the Textile Revolution (1789–Early 1800s)

The true birth of Helmshore as a recognisable settlement began in 1789, when the Turner family built Higher Mill, a wool-fulling mill designed to finish woollen cloth woven by cottage weavers or nearby mills. The mill scoured, washed, shrank, and compacted cloth, producing a smoother, water-repellent fabric.



Map Extract of Early Old Map of Helmshore Lancashire 1805-1845

William Turner (1793 – 1852) influenced the development of Helmshore, building rows of terraces and employing hundreds of workers. By the 1820's, the family owned four mills. Higher Mill's construction marked the start of Helmshore's industrial identity. Powered by water and situated in a valley ideal for mill operations, it became the nucleus around which the village grew.



Map Extract of Lancashire Sheet 71- Surveyed: 1844 to 1845, Published: 1849 Reuse CC-BY-(NLS)

4.3 Expansion and the Rise of Cotton: Whitaker Mill and Village Growth (Early–Mid 19th Century)

The early 19th century saw the arrival of new roads including Holcombe Road (created under the Turnpike Act 1810 and Helmshore Road (Created under the Turnpike Act 1827). The most impactful change was the arrival of the railway in 1847-48.

As the textile industry shifted from wool to cotton, Helmshore expanded rapidly. William Turner, son of Higher Mill's founders, added Whitaker Mill to the site, creating a larger industrial complex. By the mid-19th century, Helmshore was described as a large place, with several cotton mills and fulling mills, located beside the East Lancashire Railway, with its own railway station, Helmshore Station, and post office.



Unknown artist; Helmshore Viaduct, Lancashire; National Railway Museum; <http://www.artuk.org/artworks/helmshore-viaduct-lancashire-9791>

The arrival of the railway was transformative. It connected Helmshore to Bury, Manchester, and the wider Lancashire network, enabling the rapid movement of raw cotton and finished textiles. Workers' housing—rows of stone terraces—was built around the railway and mills, and the village began to take on its modern form.

In 1851-2, William Turner provided the site and gave some funding to construct a church to serve the village. (This is located outside the proposed boundary of the conservation area). Turner died soon after the completion of the church and was the first person to be buried within its graveyard.



Map Extract Lancashire Sheet LXXI.SE- Surveyed: 1891 to 1892, Published: 1894 Reuse CC-BY-(NLS)

4.4 Helmskore at Its Industrial Peak (Late 19th Century)

Following William Turner's death, his businesses closed creating mass local unemployment. The smaller local mills continued, and new ones were built including Park Mill.

The Porritt family moved to Helmskore, Sunnybank, and built a mill for paper and felt manufacturing. By the end of the century, the Porritt's had purchased many smaller mills and farms in the locality. Porritt's became the main employer and built houses for both their workforce and themselves, and they planted trees.

By the late 1800s, Helmskore had become a thriving mill village. Cotton spinning and fulling dominated daily life, and the mills were the centre of employment, noise, and community identity. The village's population grew, and its infrastructure—shops and chapels reflected its industrial prosperity. Helmskore's landscape blended rural beauty with the unmistakable presence of mill chimneys, water systems, and railway lines.



Map Extract Lancashire Sheet LXXI.SE- Revised: 1928, Published: 1931 Reuse CC-BY-(NLS)

4.5 The 20th Century: Decline of the Textile Industry and Social Change

The Porritt family were the main benefactors in the village during the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century. They donated the site for the Memorial Gardens in the 1920's in memory of the villagers that were casualties of World War One.

By 1900, the village had two methodist chapels and its own co-operative society. It also had several public houses including the Turner's Arms (built in 1847 by William Turner) and conservative and liberal clubs.

The 20th century brought major shifts. As Britain's textile industry declined, mills across Lancashire closed or were repurposed. Helmshore's mills eventually ceased production, and the railway station closed as part of wider rail cutbacks in 1966.

The village transitioned from an industrial hub to a residential community. Although the industrial character of the area diminished with mill closures and the demolition of major buildings in the 1970's, the physical reminders of its past—stone terraces, mill buildings, and watercourses—remain central to its character today.



Map Extract SD72SE – A-Surveyed / Revised: 1960 to 1963, Published: 1965 Reuse CC-BY-(NLS)

4.6. Museum Helmshore Mills Textile Museum (Late 20th Century–Present)

Recognising the historical importance of its mills, Helmshore embraced heritage preservation. Higher Mill and Whitaker Mill were restored and opened as the Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, a site where visitors can experience working historic machinery and learn about Lancashire's industrial past. The museum showcases: the wool-fulling processes of Higher Mill, the cotton-spinning heritage of Whitaker Mill, original machinery demonstrations and stories about the social history of mill workers and their families.

That Museum is housed in the two adjacent former textile mills, (Higher Mill and Whitaker's Mill), which covers a three-acre site, most of it running alongside the River Ogden.

Higher Mill was constructed in 1789 and Whitaker's Mill in the 1820s by the Turner family, textile manufacturers from Blackburn area. In their early life the mills alternated between working wool and cotton; by 1920 they were working shoddy (recycled cotton) as condenser mule mills. Although a large part of Whitaker's Mill was destroyed in a fire in 1857, it was rebuilt shortly afterwards and continued in operation until 1978.

The mills closed in 1967, and they were taken over by the Higher Mills Trust who maintain it as a museum. The museum is open for visitors and does carding and mule spinning demonstrations. On the ground floor of Higher Mill is the fully operational, large waterwheel with five pairs of fulling stocks, and the first floor is home to an interactive wool story display. Whitaker's Mill houses a fine collection of industrial machinery in an authentic setting. The upper floor includes the impressive spinning floor and an exhibition gallery. The historical importance of the mills and their surroundings is conveyed by the fact that the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

4.7 Notable people and events

Helmshore's identity is rooted in its mills, workers, and local heritage rather than celebrity culture. The Helmshore Mills Textile Museum and the village's industrial past tend to dominate historical records. However, the following are local people of note:

- **Chris Aspin (1933–2024):** A renowned journalist, historian, and author who was a long-time resident of Helmshore. He wrote extensively about the local textile industry and was a key figure in the preservation of the Helmshore Textile Museum.
- **William John Porritt (1820–1896):** A prominent mill owner and benefactor of the village. He owned the Sunnybank and Bridge End mills and donated the village's Memorial Gardens and clock tower.
- **Jeremiah Lord :** A former Mayor of Helmshore who led the local May Day parades.

- **Joyce Bargh Hill** : Though not a public celebrity herself, she was the inspiration for the American band The Factory Incident, who named their 2001 EP *Helmshore* as a tribute to her, as she was raised in the village.
- **Ellen Strange**: A well-known local historical figure, though sadly for tragic reasons. Ellen Strange was murdered on Holcombe Moor in 1761, and her story has been retold for generations in Helmshore. A cairn on the moor traditionally marks the site associated with her death.
- **The Turner Family** : The Turners' are the most prominent family associated with Helmshore. They built and operated the mills that defined the village's industrial identity. They built Higher Mill in 1789 and later Whitaker's Mill in the 1820s. The mills processed woollen cloth and later cotton, becoming central to Helmshore's economy. William Turner (1793–1852) expanded the operations and became a major local figure.
- **The Porritt family**: were also influential. They owned and operated **Porritt's Mill**, one of the key textile mills in Helmshore. Their business was central to the village's economy during the height of Lancashire's textile industry.
- **Airtours**: was based in Helmshore until 2002 and was a major employer in the area. Founded by David Crossland, a Lancashire businessman (originally as Pendle Travel Ltd.), he wanted to base his company locally. They were based in Wavell House, Holcombe Road from the 1970's. By the 1990's it was one of the UK's most influential holiday companies, pioneering vertically integrated travel (own airline, hotels, and tour operations) and mass-market international package holidays. In 2001-2002, Airtours rebranded to become My Travel Ltd and moved to Manchester. They merged with Thomas Cook in 2007. Thomas Cook, once the world's oldest travel company (founded in 1841), collapsed into compulsory liquidation on 23 September 2019.

4.8 Notable Events

One of the most important political-social events in Helmshore's history was the Loom Riots of 1826, part of wider unrest across Lancashire during the Industrial Revolution.

The Loom Riots started by a group of handloom weavers, fearing unemployment due to the introduction of power looms. So, they attacked a local mill in Helmshore. They broke down the doors and destroyed more than one hundred looms. The riot was a direct response to economic hardship and the political struggle between workers and industrialists.

Two rioters were transported to Australia, a common punishment for labour unrest at the time. This was a significant event in the village as it reflects the political tensions of early industrial Britain, where workers had little legal protection and often resorted to direct action. The event is commemorated with a Blue Plaque in Helmshore, marking its importance in labour history.



4.9 Lancashire Historic Environment Record (HER)

A Historic Environment Record (HER) is a local, publicly accessible database that brings together information about the archaeology, historic buildings, landscapes, and other heritage assets within a specific area. It's essentially the core reference point for understanding the historic environment of a county or local authority.

Helmshore is located in Rossendale, within Lancashire, so its historic environment information is held by the Lancashire Historic Environment Record (Lancashire HER). Although there is no separate HER specifically for Helmshore, the Lancashire HER includes all archaeological sites, historic buildings, and landscape features within the village and surrounding area.

The Lancashire HER contains over 40,000 sites, including Roman-period entries, but Helmshore's listings are dominated by the Industrial heritage (mills, chimneys, textile sites), medieval/post-medieval features and local wells and landscape features (e.g., Robin Hood's Well). The HER does not list a Roman fort, road, or settlement in Helmshore itself, though Roman sites exist elsewhere in the county.

For a list of the HER sites recorded within the proposed conservation area see Appendix 4. This includes the six listed building entries and the scheduled ancient monument.

5.0 Summary of Special Interest

5.1 Context

The Conservation Area's physical character derives from its features including the relationship with the River Ogden and the undulating topography.

The spatial layout of the proposed conservation area follows the valley floor and river. It is linear in nature and the road winds to follow the undulating landscape.

The village evolved around the farming and weaving industries and developed further as the industrial revolution progressed until present day.

The river has not only served as a source of water and power for the village's industry but also to mould the form of the settlement's development. It consists of the historic core of the settlement adjacent to the river and a later urban sprawl which sits on the slopes to the east of the River Ogden. This later area of development is outside the proposed conservation area. Overall Helmshore as a settlement can be viewed as distinct groupings connected by narrow winding roads and pathways. The natural stone bridges forming road crossings also make a significant contribution to the character of the area. They to connect the two sides of the river valley.

Holcombe Road forms one of the principal historic routes through Helmshore, running along the valley floor between Haslingden and the wider Rossendale area. Its character is shaped by the village's industrial heritage, the surrounding Pennine landscape, and the linear pattern of settlement that developed around mills, associated terraced dwellings, transport routes, and later residential expansion.

The road sits within a dramatic topography: steep hillsides, open moorland edges, and the River Ogden corridor all contribute to a strong sense of place. This landscape context is inseparable from the architectural identity of the street.

5.2 Character

The special character of the proposed conservation area derives from its domestic and industrial architecture. A strongly coherent feature throughout is the stone walling that bounds the River Ogden on one side of Holcombe Road and the stone walls that retain the rising land on the other.

Helmshore includes two distinct building forms relating to the development of the wool and cotton industries from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. This consists of the larger industrial mill buildings and the smaller related dwellings. There are also several buildings now in domestic use that had earlier uses perhaps as schools or shops. The dwellings generally comprise 2-storey dwellings though there are some 4 storey cellar dwellings with aspects onto 2 roads. Plus, former back-to-back dwellings. The river runs along the valley floor, and the buildings are located along its linear pattern. Interspersed are several modern buildings of little note that detract from the vernacular character of the village.

Given the linear nature and the mixed character of the buildings, it is difficult to divide the area into defined character areas.

Therefore, the character is best described as comprising:

- Several buildings or monuments listed or of local architectural or historic interest.
- Buildings exhibited a palette of local materials and techniques such as watershot, coursed stone, or random rubble walling with stone slate. Some were constructed using traditional craftsmanship with later dwellings being more standardised construction.
- Visual harmony resulting from use of this limited palette of natural building materials of locally derived stone and stone or slate roofs.
- Rural area within a valley surrounded by undulating moorland and hills. Consequently, most buildings are set close to the road.
- Views are limited due to the linear nature of the proposed conservation area. However, there are views to the north of the conservation area over the allotments adjacent to the river as well as views between buildings and along the side roads to the west to the Musbury Landscape.
- Green Space - There is limited green open space within the proposed conservation area other than the areas around the Mill Ponds and the river valley itself. There is open space adjacent to the proposed conservation area boundary.

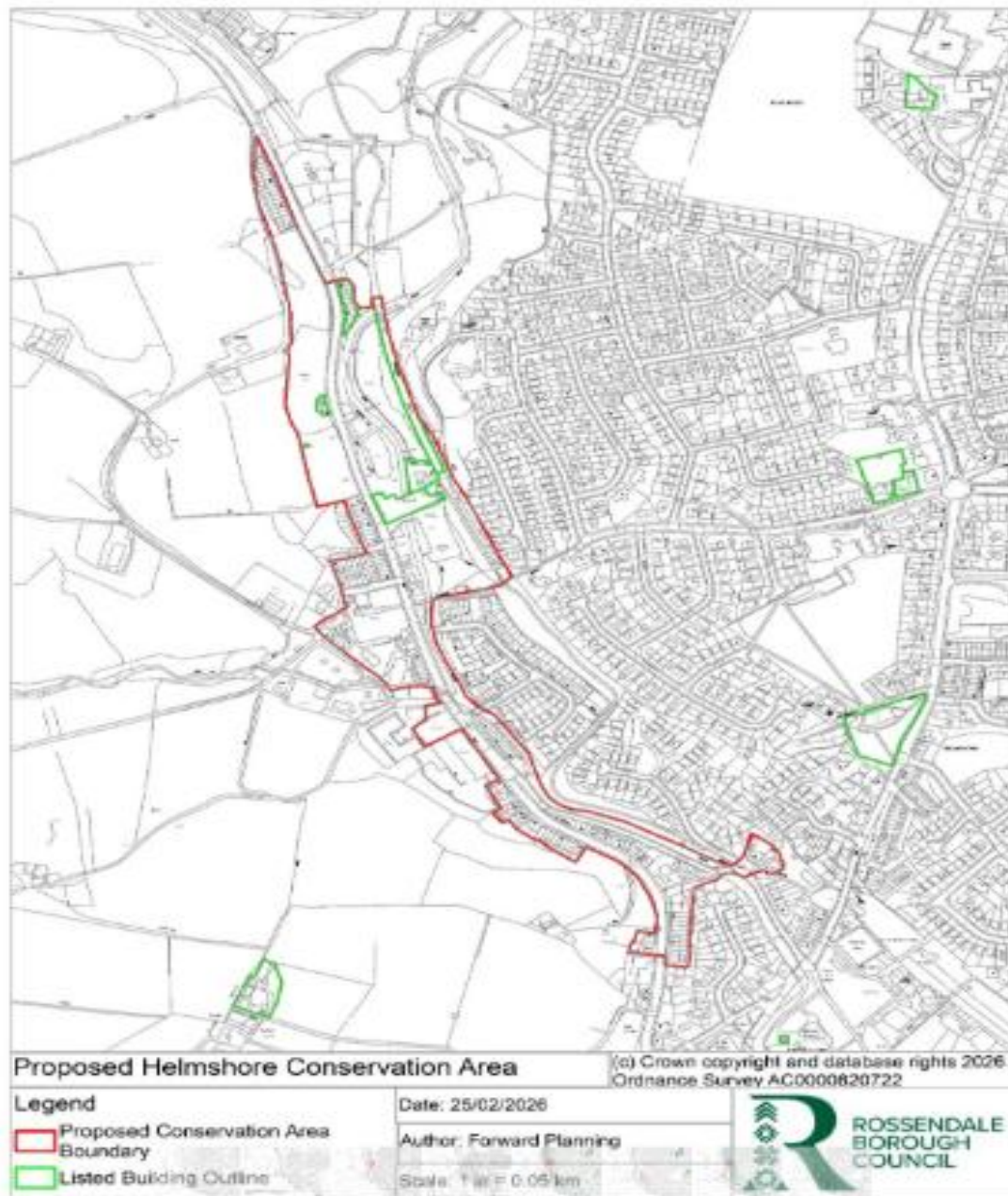
5.3 Listed Buildings

Listed Buildings have been designated by the Government as having special historic or architectural interest at a national level. Within the conservation area, there are six listed building entries. They are all Grade II.

These include.

- Nos 250-264 Holcombe Road
- Nos 241-247 Holcombe Road
- The Chimney to Higher Mill off Holcombe Road
- Museum of the Lancashire Textile Industry, Holcombe Road
- Higher Mill, Holcombe Road
- Two Viaducts and linking Revetement

Map showing Listed Buildings in and around the Proposed Conservation Area.



Map Listed Buildings ©Rossendale Borough Council

The listed buildings are detailed in the Appendix 1 to this CAAMP.

Listing is not intended to prevent change. Rather, it means that when changes are proposed these need to be carefully considered so that the alterations do not negatively impact the special interest of the building. These changes are controlled through listed building consent applications.

5.4 Buildings of Local Interest

Numerous buildings within the conservation area make a positive contribution to the character and significance, with many considered to be non-designated heritage assets for their architectural and/or historic interest, helping shape the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Non-designated heritage assets constitute most historic buildings within the conservation area. Whilst many may have suffered some form of superficial alteration, such as the insertion of a modern shopfront or uPVC windows, the underlying integrity of the historic building and its part in the historic development of Helmsore means it still makes a positive contribution to the locality.

Many non-designated heritage assets might be worthy of being 'Locally Listed', having a degree of significance at a local level. The Council has consulted on a Local List. Please see <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/heritage/heritage-1/5>. Details of buildings of local interest are appended in Appendix 2.

The Townscape Appraisal Map shows these as positive buildings of townscape merit.

The best surviving buildings can be categorised as being relatively original with minimal alterations. Buildings with insensitive alterations still remain positive where their style, detailing and building materials provide the streetscape with interest and variety. Importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area. Buildings that make a positive impact in both medium and low terms as well as those that make a neutral or negative impact are depicted on the Map showing Buildings of Significance in para 5.6 below

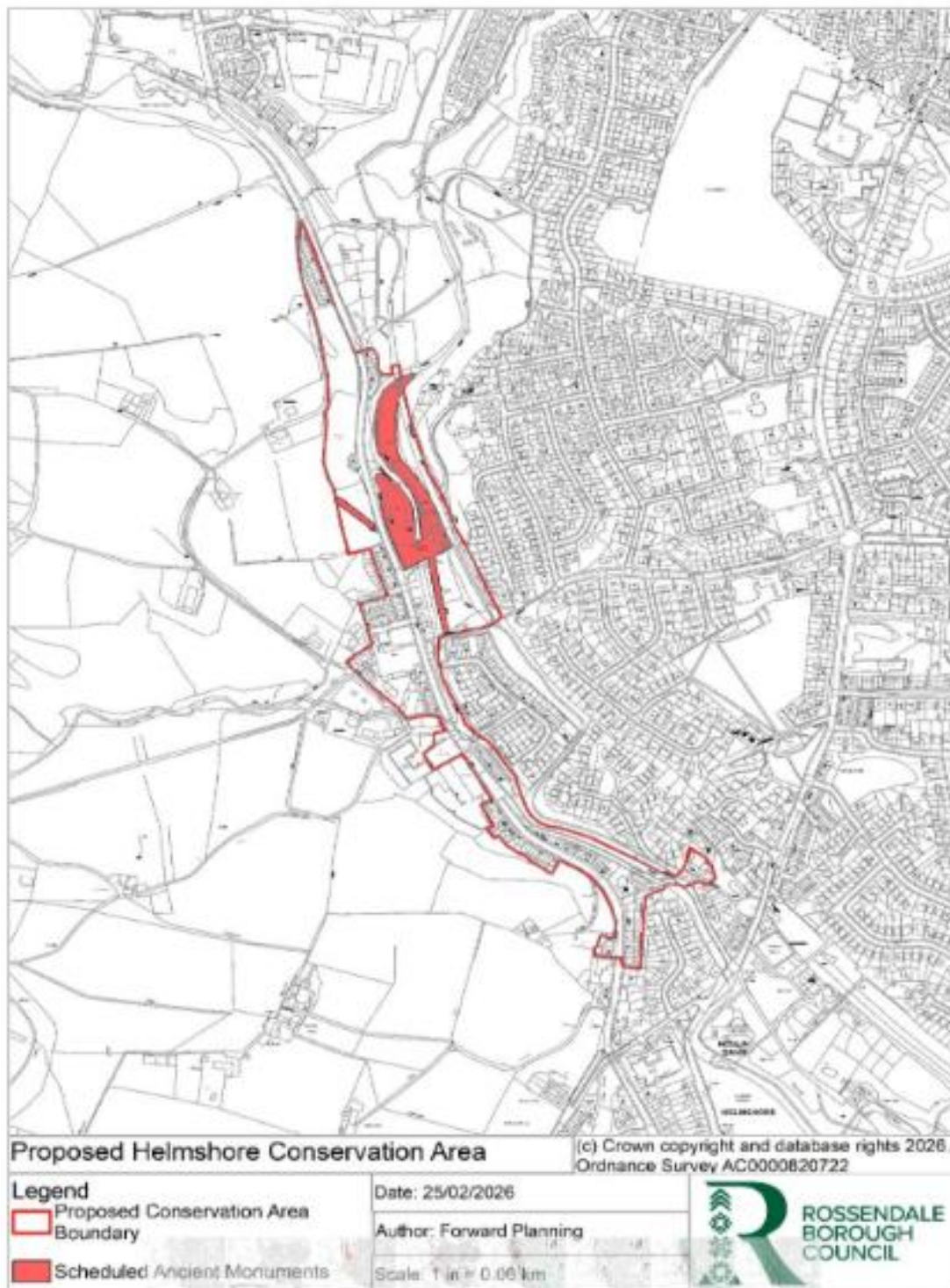
5.5 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

They are scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended, being of national importance.



Higher Mill is a scheduled monument within the proposed conservation area, protecting underlying industrial archaeology associated with the Mill. These include the surviving water-powered mill structures, associated mill races, wheel pits, and water-management features. Please see <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1005102?section=official-list-entry>

Map showing Scheduled Monument within the proposed boundary



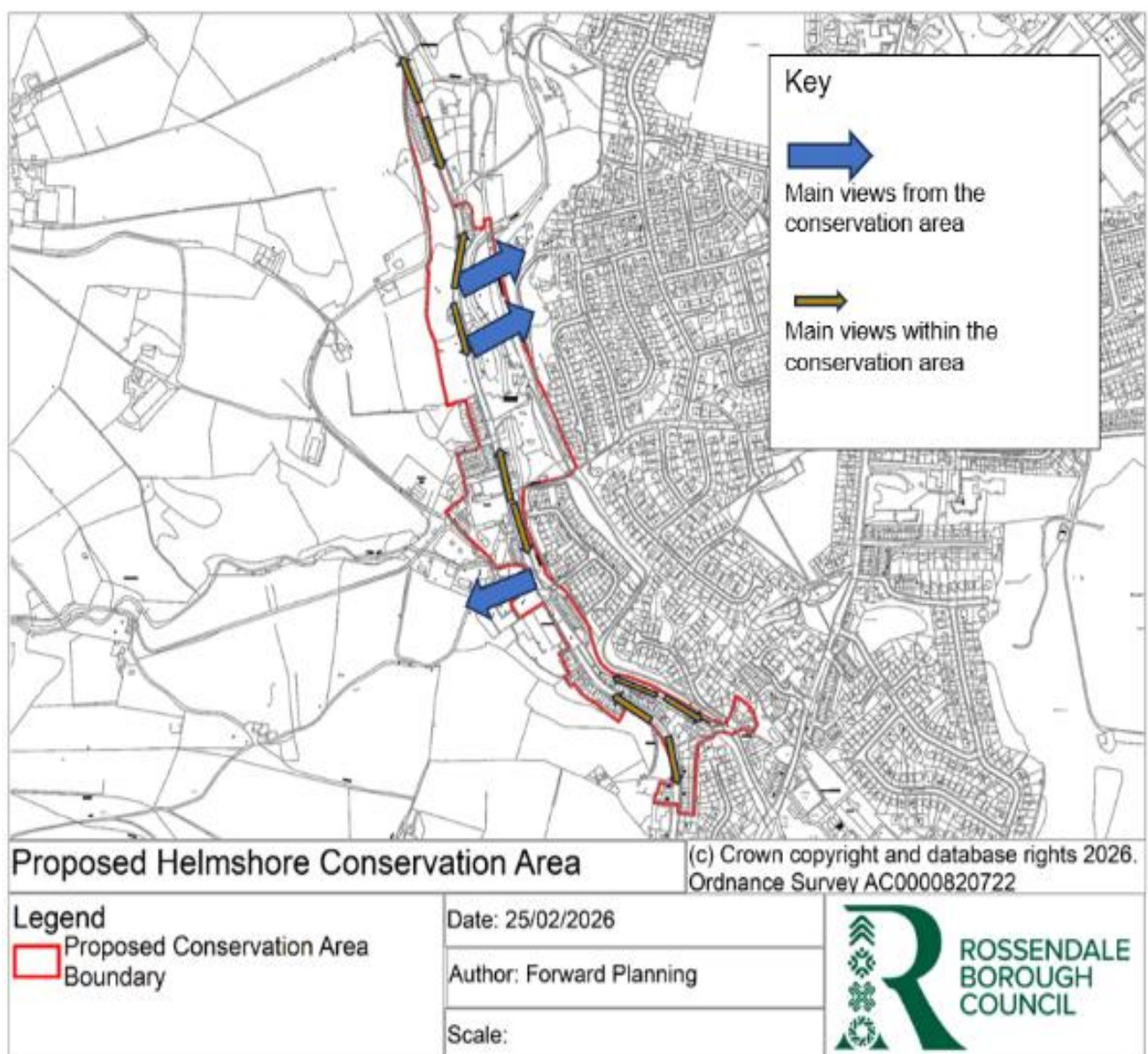
Map ©Rossendale Borough Council

5.6 Views into, within and from the proposed conservation area

The impact of proposed developments should include consideration of views into, within and from the conservation area. The B6235 Holcombe Road adjacent to the River Ogden, the mills and mill ponds remain at the heart of the conservation area and as such is a constant linear landmark throughout the area.

The views within the conservation area are limited to along the roads – Holcombe Road and Station Road. The built form of housing, commercial building, stone boundary walls, some of which are retaining walls, and general topography limit views beyond the proposed boundaries.

Map showing Prominent Views



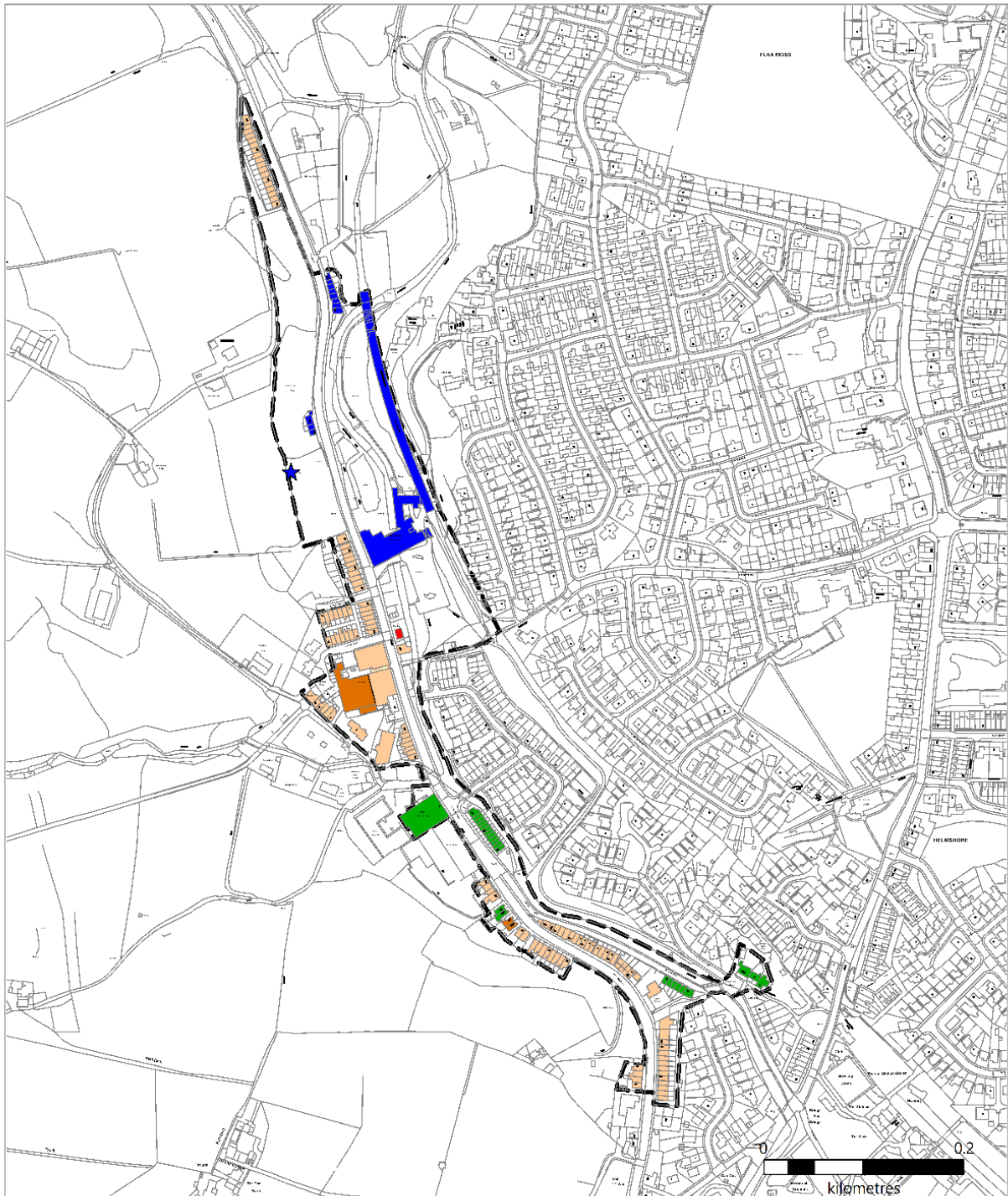
The images in the following pages illustrate these views, and refer to the quality of built form as shown in the photographs.

Building assessment

The map following provides the Building Assessment for the proposed Conservation Area. Each building has been colour-coded according to its contribution.

The assessment of the quality of built form is based on the following.

Critical	Of key importance, defining the distinct character of the conservation area (designated heritage assets)
Positive medium	Contributes strongly and positively to the character of the conservation area. Medium and Low. Medium are likely to be considered as having potential for a local list.
Positive low	Low are those that are more modern or older with alterations but overall have innate architectural quality)
Neutral	Neither positive nor negative features that contribute to the conservation area
Negative	Detracting from the character of the conservation area



Proposed Helmshore Conservation Area

Building Assessment

■ Listed Building	★ Chimney
■ Positive impact (medium)	
■ Positive impact (low)	
■ Neutral impact	 Proposed Conservation Area Boundary
■ Negative impact	

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Date: 03/09/2026

Author: Forward Planning

Scale: 1 in = 0.05 km



Analysis of features

Listed Buildings are considered as critically important.



Nos 7 – 1 Bridge End (Positive impact – medium)



Looking south towards Bridge End Nos 25-35 Station Road (west side) (Positive impact – medium)



Looking south- Station Road with River Ogden (east side) (Positive impact – low)



Junction of Station Road and Holcombe Road (Positive impact – medium and low)



Looking south -Nos 352 – 374 Holcombe Road (east side) (Positive impact – Medium)



Looking south -Wavell House, Holcombe Road (east side) (Former Middle Mill) (Positive impact)



Looking south Wavell House Holcombe Road (west side) (former Middle Mill) (Positive impact)



Looking north Nos 399-391 Holcombe Road (west side) with Power Mill /Loom House beyond (Positive (low) housing and wall; Mill to be considered for local list; and, neutral to negative -mill extension (modern stone building)).



Looking north - Nos 287 – 271 Holcombe Road (west side) Higher Mill and Helmshore Mill Museum (east side) (Positive impact high- Mills, medium - walls and low housing)



Looking North (Positive impact houses – high Listed Buildings)



Looking North (positive impact low - housing and important views across allotments to east)



Bridge End close to Bridge over River Ogden (positive impact medium housing)



Station Road view (Rear of buildings 374 -406 Holcombe Road) Positive impact – low housing)



Station Road view (Rear of buildings 374 -406 Holcombe Road) (Positive impact -low)



Nos 397 – 421 Holcombe Road (positive impact medium to low)



Looking south along Holcombe Road (positive impact low)



Looking south along Holcombe Road (positive impact low – housing and wall)



Looking southerly along Holcombe Road (Positive impact low - housing and walls)



Looking southerly along Holcombe Road (positive impact including former shop, terrace and wall)



Nos 374 -406 Holcombe Road (east side)(looking north Positive impact -low including housing and wall)



Internal views along the River Ogden – looking along Station Road

5.7 Views across and out of the proposed conservation area

Although a confined area, there are several views out from the conservation area which offer long uninterrupted street views and as such have a visual impact on the area.

Large developments along these roads, or those which terminate these views could interrupt this characteristic.

Street views of note, without excluding others are noted below: Bridge Street Bridge Street to Church Street Church



5.8 Brief Chronology of development of Helmshore Village

Holcombe Road and Station Road reflect several key phases of Helmshore's growth:

Early Industrial Period (18th–20th Century)

- The area developed around textile production, with mills and workers' housing forming the earliest built fabric.
- Rows of stone-built terraced cottages, often with simple vernacular detailing, remain a defining feature some single depth plan and some were built as back-to-back houses.
- Proximity to the historic Higher Mill and Whitaker's Mill reinforces the industrial narrative.

Late Victorian and Edwardian Expansion

- As the village prospered, larger terraced and semi-detached houses appeared some elevated above the road others set back with small front gardens.
- Architectural detailing became more decorative: bay windows, stone lintels, slate roofs, and carved door surrounds.

20th-Century Infill and Suburbanisation

- Interwar and post-war housing introduced reconstituted stone, render, and more varied roof forms.
- Small clusters of cul-de-sacs and modern estates branch off the main road, softening the previously linear pattern but these sit outside the proposed conservation area boundary.

Building types

There is a mix of building types within the proposed conservation area boundary. The predominant types are former industrial buildings and dwellings. Most of these buildings are constructed in stone with original features evident. Those that have had minimal changes create a positive impact. Those that have been altered with the insensitive use of UPVC, addition of satellite dishes, porches, replacement roofs or removal of chimneys are considered to have a low positive. The reinstatement of lost architectural features using traditional materials and designs is to be encouraged.

The oldest industrial buildings are used as a museum and shop/café. Later buildings have been converted to commercial or residential uses. These provide a positive-neutral impact on the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area.

There are other buildings such as a chapel/schoolhouse and the Robin Hood Public House, constructed in stone these provide a positive impact.

The few modern structures within the village provide a neutral-negative impact. Those that create a negative impact include a modern commercial garage, a public utility building enclosed with palisade fencing and several garages isolated from other domestic development.

5.9 Architectural character - Materials and Palette

The type of materials used for buildings make a key contribution to local distinctiveness. The use of locally and imported materials imbue the built environment with a high level of aesthetic interest and a strong sense of its history, reflecting changes in fashion and levels of economic success of an area. Holcombe Road and Station Road exhibit a consistent Pennine vernacular. The materials palette includes:

- Locally quarried sandstone is the dominant material, used for both walls and boundary treatments.
- Natural slate roofs are common on older properties.
- Later developments introduce brick, concrete tiles, and render, but stone remains visually dominant.
- Boundary walls reinforce continuity along the streetscape.



5.10 Architectural Character - Building Form and Scale

- Traditional terraces are typically two storeys, narrow-fronted, with small forecourts and rhythmically repeated.
- Victorian houses introduce taller rooflines, more generous plot with small front gardens.
- Modern housing varies in scale but respects the established height of 2–2.5 storeys.
- The general topography, the road's gentle curves and the changes in elevation create a dynamic roofscape.



5.11 Architectural Character - Architectural Detailing

Common features include:

- Stone window surrounds and lintels
- Sash or timber casement windows (with some modern replacements)
- Chimney stacks punctuating the skyline.
- Modest eaves and verge detailing
- Traditional timber doors, some with fanlights or stone surrounds

Where modern replacements occur, uPVC windows and doors introduce visual inconsistency, though not to a degree that overwhelms the historic character. However, the use of coloured top hung opening uPVC windows does detract from the innate Victorian character of the stone terraced cottages.



5.12 Streetscape and Townscape Qualities

Spatial character – There are open areas within the proposed conservation area. However, these are limited to the areas related to the river, riverbank, mill ponds and the car park to Helmshore Mill Museum. Views into these areas are screened by the back edge of pavement walls and the plants, shrubs, and trees.

- Holcombe Road and Station Road have a linear, enclosed feel especially where terraces sit close to the pavement.
- Approaching the outskirts, the street opens-up with slightly set-back houses, front gardens, and wider verges.
- Mature trees and views toward the surrounding hills soften the built form.



5.13 Landmarks and Focal Points

- The larger mill buildings of Helmshore Mill Museum - Higher Mill and Whitakers Mill - act as major visual anchor in the village. However, the Viaduct is also a prominent feature when travelling north along Holcombe Road. Other large former mill buildings also dominate, and the characteristic stone cottages and riverside stone walls also create a sense of place.
- Former chapels/school buildings, public houses, several commercial buildings, and a red brick former mill add architectural variety to the traditional former mills and workers housing.
- Subtle shifts in building line and topography create natural focal points along the curvilinear route.



5.14 Public Realm

- Pavements are narrow in older sections.
- Stone boundary walls contribute positively especially the wall flanking the River Ogden.
- Street furniture is functional and signage clutter the streetscene
- Traffic volume and on-street parking can detract from the pedestrian experience, but the road retains a village-scale character.



6.0 SWOT ANALYSIS of Proposed Conservation Area

Holcombe Road and Station Road provide a richly layered streetscape that captures the evolution of Helmshore from an industrial village. Its architectural character is defined by stone-built terraces, Victorian detailing, and the powerful presence of industry within the surrounding landscape. Despite modern interventions, the roads retain a strong sense of place and offers significant heritage value.

A SWOT analysis is an important component of a Conservation Area Appraisal as it provides a clear and structured framework for understanding the condition, qualities, and prospects of the designated area. By examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the analysis supports a balanced assessment that goes beyond description and helps shape informed, proactive management.

Identifying the strengths of the conservation area ensures that the features contributing most to its special architectural and historic interest are clearly articulated. This strengthens the justification for designation and provides a firm basis for policies aimed at preserving character and significance.

Recognising weaknesses allows the appraisal to acknowledge where the area's qualities have been eroded or are at risk. Issues such as inappropriate alterations, poor maintenance, or intrusive modern development can be highlighted in a transparent and systematic way, helping to prioritise areas where intervention or guidance is needed.

The identification of opportunities ensures that the appraisal is forward-looking. Opportunities may include the restoration of lost features, enhancement of the public realm, reuse of historic buildings, or improved interpretation. Highlighting these prospects helps to align heritage objectives with wider regeneration, environmental, and community ambitions.

Considering threats enables the appraisal to anticipate external pressures that may undermine the area's character. These may arise from development demand, climate impacts, economic change, or the loss of traditional building skills. Understanding these risks at an early stage supports more resilient policy responses and informs the development of a robust Management Plan.

Overall, the SWOT analysis acts as a bridge between the appraisal and the practical management of the conservation area. It distils complex information into a clear strategic overview, supports community engagement, and provides a defensible basis for decision-making. Its inclusion ensures that the appraisal not only describes the area's significance but also guides its long-term care and enhancement.

6.1 Key Character Strengths

- Strong vernacular identity rooted in local stone and traditional forms in the distinctive Pennine industrial heritage. Helmshore has well preserved stone terraces, mill, chimneys, and historic commercial buildings that reflect the areas textile past.
- High quality local materials especially millstone grit, stone roof tiles and slate creating a unified character.
- Dramatic topography and landscape setting with steep valley sides and glimpses of views of Musbury Tor
- Clear evidence of industrial heritage
- Cohesive terraces and Victorian streetscape elements
- River Ogden and Mill ponds are attractive natural features.
- Presence of landmark buildings and historic mills
- Strong community involvement with heritage as exemplified by the Helmshore Museum and its friends and Rossendale Civic Society



6.2 Sensitivities and Weaknesses

- Several modern buildings do not harmonise well with neighbouring buildings.
- Erosion of character through incremental change such as loss of traditional detailing e.g. roof materials and chimneys and poorly designed extensions including porch canopies
- Loss of original stonework or inappropriate render
- Painting or insensitive cleaning of stone buildings
- Incongruous cement pointing causing weathering of the stonework
- Unsympathetic window/door replacements – in both materials and design
- Large-scale development that disrupts the linear pattern or roofscape
- Insensitive positioning of building clutter such as satellite dishes, balconies, insensitive high front boundaries, domestic paraphernalia on the street frontage/ front gardens
- Vacant properties – upper floors and empty buildings, though few do exist.
- Street clutter including a profusion of refuse bins and heavy road markings.
- Traffic dominance on the narrow roads especially parking of large vehicles with some unsightly off-road parking such as parking bays and garaging.
- Public Realm clutter including some mismatched signage and street furniture





6.3 Opportunities

- Heritage-led regeneration is evident especially the adaptive reuse of former mill buildings is evident.
- Improvements can be made to the public realm such as improvements to the hard landscaping and opportunities to add to the soft landscaping enhancing the street scene.
- Restoration of lost features such as reinstatement of sliding sash window and traditional doors, the relocation of satellite dishes to less prominent positions.
- Public realm improvements including pavement surfacing, wall repairs using natural stone and a new scheme of streetlighting.
- Sensitive infill that respects scale, materials, and building line.
- Use of narrow double yellow lines to reduce prominence of dominant parking restriction details
- Green infrastructure enhancements including improvements to the river corridor by enhancing native planting especially along the river corridor.
- Enhanced interpretation of industrial heritage with local artefacts and discretely placed boards.
- Funding opportunities due to heritage funding, levelling up money and community led projects.

6.4 Threats

- Lack of maintenance of householder.
- Unsympathetic permitted development. Cumulative changes weaken the integrity of the character and appearance of the locality.
- Development pressure for housing schemes that could impinge on the setting of the conservation area especially along the eastern sides of the road to the north of the proposed conservation area. They may not respect scale, materials, or settlement form.
- Climate impacts including increased rainfall may affect stonework, drainage and historic roofs or cause flooding especially if homes poorly maintained.
- Loss of local traditional skills to enable repairs to be undertaken to the historic buildings.
- Traffic growth and parking can risk the further erosion of historic street character by creating clutter.

7.0 Conservation Area Management Plan 2026

7.1 Introduction - Managing Change

A conservation area is ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Section 69).

When dealing with planning applications in conservation areas Rossendale Borough Council is required to ensure that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’ (Section 72). Also, Rossendale Council has a duty ‘from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas’ (Section 71).

The 1990 Act (as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (2013)) prevents the relevant demolition of buildings in conservation areas without planning permission and allows for the service of Urgent Works Notices for vacant buildings in a similar way to those for listed buildings. This Management Plan is an example of the sort of proposal envisaged in Section 71. The sections of the 1990 Act provide the legislative basis upon which Rossendale Council is required to manage the built environment in such a way as to retain the special qualities of conservation areas.

There are, however, a wide range of other pieces of legislation, national guidance and local policy which assist in this task. They deal with other types of heritage assets, such as listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets, additional controls to supplement those included in the 1990 Act (often called Article 4 Directions), various types of repair and enforcement notices, and advice on how to assess the impact of development on the setting of an area or building and many other related topics. Consequently, it is important that this document is not read in isolation from additional guidance and policy documents. Where applicable, links to the documents have been listed in the relevant principal sections below to provide additional guidance. Appendix 6 also contains further advice in respect of works of alteration and repair.

The management aims and principles presented in this document are based upon the understanding of the conservation area outlined in the Appraisal, and most critically the negative features and opportunities for enhancement identified in Section 6 of this document. They seek to provide guidance to Rossendale Council in determining planning applications for development, but also to building owners and developers when preparing development proposals. It is essential that any Management Plan supports the community and is considerate of both social and economic factors.

In view of this a public consultation process will be undertaken and will form an important aspect in formulating the principles in the Appraisal and Management Plan. It is important to add that conservation areas are not frozen entities and should not be seen in isolation from their surrounding context.

7.2 Action Points

The main aim of the following action points is the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area. This can be managed through the protection and improvement of existing buildings and townscape features which make a positive contribution and the introduction of good quality, contemporary design. There is also a presumption against demolition, except where buildings have been identified as having a negative impact on the conservation area.

There will be some cases of overlap between this Management Plan and existing policy documents and guidance. It is not the remit of this document to address matters associated with the wider management of items such as parking, housing, or crime.

Each set of management action points is underpinned by a series of overarching strategic aims. Recommendations are included where additional processes could be adopted to further support the conservation area's preservation and enhancement

It is the intention that these are brought forward through a collaborative approach between the Council, the local community (including building owners, local interest groups and developers amongst others) and other partners, providing various funding streams, as and when opportunities for funding arise, to bring about meaningful change where input is required from everyone.

The understanding of the Helmsore Conservation Area set out in the Appraisal shows there are some key objectives that, if implemented, will contribute to this ambition.

Each Management Plan is bespoke, with site-specific recommendations. To make the plan user-friendly quoting policies in full has been avoided, where found elsewhere

In the Plan we set out actions to maintain and enhance the special character of the area, as defined in the Appraisal. This includes the development control process and other aspects of the historic environment.

The Management Plan aims to:

- Aid understanding of the significance of the conservation area.
- Suggest opportunities to enhance the area's character and appearance.
- Stimulate local interest in both the protection of and careful development of the conservation area for present and future generations.
- Help address the challenges facing the area.
- Encourage the conservation, repair, reuse and management of the area's historic features and public realm.
- Engage with owners, businesses, residents, and developers in the sensitive planning of change to buildings and spaces, and in appropriately designed larger scale developments.
- Engage with and encourage owners of properties within the conservation area to meet their responsibilities in respect of repair, reuse, and sustainability.
- Promote high-quality design in development proposals.
- Provide Rossendale Council with an up to date, evidence-based appraisal, and management plan to enable the conservation area to be designated.

It is intended that this Management Plan will provide a tool for supporting the care of the historic environment whilst guiding sensitive change.

Raising awareness of the significance of the village will help to promote shared responsibility for looking after the conservation area.

Several key themes have been identified relating to the principal areas for the long-term preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. These have been developed from the Appraisal and analysis of the key issues and opportunities in section 6.

The themes have been grouped into the following key headings:

1. Preservation
2. Enhancement
3. Demolition and New Development
4. Management

The proposed actions identified under these themes in the CAAMPs are summarised below:

	ACTION	THEME
1	Repair and Maintenance of Heritage Assets	Preservation
2	Inappropriate Alterations	
3	Views and Setting	
4	Climate Change	
5	Public Realm and Green Spaces	Enhancement
6	Retail Frontage, Signage and Commercial Advertisements	
7	Vacant Heritage Assets and Sites	
8	Traffic and parking	
9	Demolition	Regeneration and new development
10	New development	
11	Adoption and Enforcement	Management

More detail is set out in the following sections:

Theme 1: PRESERVATION

Action 1 - Repair and Maintenance of Heritage Assets

Objective: To encourage the reversal of cumulative negative impacts that (1) the poor upkeep and maintenance of and (2) inappropriate alterations and have had on structures within the proposed conservation area on its character and appearance. It is essential that the buildings are subject to general maintenance and repair by their owners on a regular basis.

This should include the following:

- Re-painting of external joinery.
- General minor repairs to fenestration, including replacement of glazing where necessary.
- Re-painting of external render.
- Periodic repointing with appropriate mortar mix and pointing type.
- Removal of debris from gutters and drains.
- Removal of vegetative growth.
- Removal of redundant fixtures and fittings; and,
- Repairs, including repair of missing or slipped roof slates to prevent water ingress.
- When undertaking repairs, materials should be used on a like for-like basis and be appropriate to their architectural period. Salvage and existing materials should be used as far as possible; unpainted external walls such as stone or brick should not be painted or rendered.

Further Guidance Links:

Historic England online guidance: Looking after Historic Buildings:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/>

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: [Advice | The SPAB](#)

Theme 1: PRESERVATION

Action 2- Inappropriate Alterations

Objective: To ensure that alterations to buildings preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, with opportunities taken to bring about an enhancement where possible.

- Features and materials that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area should be retained, or reinstated where lost. These include, but are not limited to, local natural slate, timber windows, solid timber doors, and traditional shopfronts.
- Any replacement of windows, doors, roofing materials, and decorative details should be like-for-like, or where lost and be reinstated, they should conform to traditional designs and materials found within the conservation area and be appropriate to the character of the building.
- When applications for works to historic buildings are proposed it will be expected that poor-quality modern windows and doors are replaced with appropriate timber windows and doors following the historic fenestration pattern.
- When applications for servicing works to buildings are proposed it will be expected that ventilation ducts, air-conditioning units, security equipment, wiring and heat pumps will be in discreet locations and any redundant services/wiring removed. Existing detracting features such as satellite dishes, ducting, lighting, and alarm boxes will be removed or more discreetly located. Applications for future proposals must take into consideration the impact such equipment has on the appearance of buildings and the conservation area.
- Enforcement action such as urgent works notices, enforcement notices and listed building enforcement notices will be pursued where it can be demonstrated that it is expedient to do so.
- The Council should consider the use of Article 4 Directions.

Further Guidance Links:

Historic England: Traditional Windows: their care, repair and up grading,

<https://historicengland.org.uk/imagesbooks/publications/traditional-windows-care-repairupgrading/>

Theme 1: PRESERVATION

Action 3 - Views and Setting

Objective: To protect the established and valued views within the conservation area and of the setting of the conservation area.

- Any future development within the setting of the conservation area must preserve (or better reveal) those elements of its setting that make a positive contribution to its overall character.
- Development within or outside of the conservation area which would harmfully intrude into the views identified in the Appraisal and cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area overall will not normally be permitted.

Further Guidance Links:

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, updated 2017)

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets.pdf>

Theme 1: PRESERVATION

Action 4 - Climate Change

Objective: To contribute locally to the transition to a low-carbon future by shaping Rossendale in a way that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, reuses existing resources, and supports renewable energy adaptations. This will contribute to carbon reductions whilst also increasing future resilience to extreme weather.

- The responsible retrofitting of historic buildings is to be encouraged. This requires a careful consideration for the types of interventions and materials appropriate for a historic building and which will preserve the fabric and appearance of the building and the wider conservation area. Small interventions, such as upgrading to LEDs, modern electrical items or roof insulation, are cost effective ways to save energy and should be considered first before instigating more intrusive works.
- External wall cladding is unlikely to be acceptable on historic buildings within the conservation area. Where historic windows remain, their retention is encouraged. Thermal upgrading can be achieved through draft proofing and secondary glazing. The use of double or triple glazing will be assessed on a case-by-case basis subject to the window profiles and, where appropriate, the retention or reinstatement of glazing bars.
- Where solar panels or solar slates are proposed they should be located to the rear or side elevations and be set flush with the roof slope. If this is not possible (to maximise solar gain), planning permission will be required to ensure a balanced approach to heritage conservation and climate change mitigation is taken. Solar panels on a listed building will require listed building consent.
- Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) should be positioned to the rear or side elevations in locations not visible from the street where possible. Thought should be given to the amenity of neighbours when siting ASHPs.
- Changes in the public realm including e-charging points (where they do not add to the clutter of street furniture), selecting materials from low-carbon sources, introducing Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and planting native species which are resilient to changing weather conditions will be welcomed.
- Measures for traffic calming to reduce vehicle speeds and therefore improve air quality will be explored. Alternatives to vehicles will be encouraged such as cycling and walking through new and better routes and paths.

Further Guidance Links:

Historic England: Energy and Retrofit in Historic Buildings [Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings | Historic England](#)

Rossendale SPD [Climate Change](#)

Theme 2: ENHANCEMENT

Action 5 - Public Realm and Green Spaces

Objective: To ensure new interventions in the public realm are considered carefully to create a cohesive appearance to streets.

Reason: to preserve and enhance its essential character and to encourage the introduction of appropriate greening and landscaping.

- Proposals for additional street trees and planting need to be carefully considered and not be positioned to obscure positive buildings or block views.
- Options for additional green spaces in which to sit and dwell should be considered as part of future redevelopments within the conservation area or its setting.
- New signage carefully placed to not lead to the build-up of street clutter, having regard to the character and quality of the existing townscape.
- Opportunities for public art which reinforces the identity of the conservation area should be pursued.
- Suitable paving materials should be used in all areas, including new developments, and existing historic and sympathetic modern coverings must be preserved.
- New interventions into the public realm should consider the needs of those with mobility problems, pushchair use and disabilities.

Further Guidance Links:

Historic England, [Streets for All | Historic England](#)

National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring, and successful places (2021). National_design_guide.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Theme 2: ENHANCEMENT

Action 6- Retail Frontage, Signage and Commercial Advertisements

Objective: Any new shopfronts and commercial signage must be in-keeping with the character and appearance of the host building and street scene and relate satisfactorily to the design of the upper parts of the facade. Although there are no shops currently with the proposed conservation area, there are several commercial properties to which this could apply.

- New shopfronts within historic buildings should preserve those elements that contribute to the traditional character of the building including historic corbels, pilasters, fascias and stallrisers, or seek to reinstate them where missing. Size, scale, elaborate or uncomplicated design and detailing, the use of correct materials and colour schemes are all important in ensuring a sympathetic design.
- Signage must be sensitively designed and integrated into the shopfront and street scene.
- Internally illuminated box fascia or projecting signs will not normally be acceptable.
- Shop signs should be located at fascia level and follow the pattern within the street.
- The location of signage on non-retail buildings must be carefully considered to not harm the appearance of the building.
- Solid external roller shutters and box housing will not be acceptable within the conservation area, and the Council will look to collaborate proactively with owners to negotiate and secure internal or external lattice grilles which are integrated into the shopfront where such security measures are necessary.
- It is recommended that the existing Shopfronts Design Guide (2012) is updated.

Further information

National Advertisement Guidance (March 2014)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advertisements>

Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide SPD 2012 [shop-front-design-guide](#)

Theme 2: ENHANCEMENT

Action 7 - Vacant Heritage Assets and Sites

Objective: To secure the viable reuse of vacant heritage assets and sites to prevent decay and dereliction and ensure their long-term preservation and contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- Building owners should keep their buildings and grounds in good condition to prevent long term maintenance issues and decay. A clear legal process exists to compel owners to undertake essential repairs to listed buildings and those whereby the preservation of the building is important to maintaining the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- Vacant buildings should be correctly maintained by their owners to ensure their preservation whilst new uses are sought.
- The Council will pursue enforcement action for neglected or dilapidated buildings where it is expedient to do so.
- The Council should consider the use of discontinuance powers for poor advertising benefiting from deemed consent, and the potential for designating an area of special advertisement control within the commercial areas of the conservation area.

Further Guidance Links:

Vacant Historic Buildings: [Managing Vacant Historic Buildings | Historic England](#)

Stopping the Rot: A Guide to Enforcement Action to Save Historic Buildings [Stopping the Rot | Historic England](#)

SAVE Britain's Heritage: advice on how to save a building at risk

<https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/buildings-at-risk/bar-faqs>

The Architectural Heritage Fund (AFH): supports the sustainable reuse of buildings

<https://ahfund.org.uk>

Theme 2: ENHANCEMENT

Action 8- Traffic and Parking

Objective: To protect the appearance and enjoyment of the conservation area by reducing the dominance and impact of vehicles throughout the conservation area.

Viable solutions to decrease the volume and speed of traffic, prioritise pedestrians over vehicles and promote alternative forms of transport should be explored.

Solutions which reduce the amount of on-street parking of larger vehicles within the conservation area should be considered.

Theme 3: REGENERATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

Action 9 – Demolition

Objective: To ensure the significance of the conservation area is preserved and that any future development enhances its positive characteristics.

- Demolition of buildings identified as positive in the conservation area will not normally be permitted except where there are demonstrable public benefits in accordance with national and local policy.
- The current condition and/or the wilful neglect of heritage assets will not be accepted as rationale for demolition. This is underscored by the NPPF and Historic England guidance.
- Any replacement buildings must complement the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of heritage assets.
- New buildings should be accessible and provide an active frontage where this is beneficial to the vitality, character, and appearance of the street scene.
- As part of future regeneration initiatives particular regard should be given to the redevelopment of buildings and sites which are identified as making a negative contribution to the conservation area and to the reuse of vacant heritage assets.

Further Guidance Links:

National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2025)

[National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

National Planning Practice Guidance [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Theme 3: REGENERATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

Action 10 - New Development

Objective: To ensure that only applications for development which reflect careful consideration of the character and appearance of the conservation area are approved, and to encourage the replacement of buildings which are considered to detract from the special interest of the conservation area or redevelopment of vacant sites within the conservation area and its setting.

- All new development must be of high quality. It should respect the character and appearance of the conservation area and should be of appropriate scale, density, height, form, massing, layout, plot position, materials, colours, composition, and detailed design, and will be guided by local and national guidance.
- Outstanding modern design is encouraged where it is well designed, of an appropriate scale, using good quality appropriate materials and is carefully considered to respond to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- Original building plots, where their relationship with the pattern of development and other plots makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, should be retained or reinstated.
- Changes that have a detrimental impact on the conservation area will not be permitted; the cumulative impact of the loss of existing uses must be taken into consideration.
- New extensions must have regard to the character and appearance of the principal building. They must be of an appropriate design, mass, scale, height, colour, material, layout, and form to ensure that they are subservient to the original building and that it is not obscured or overdeveloped. In the case of roof extensions, they must not disrupt uniform rooflines or visually intrude into surrounding views.

Further Guidance Links:

Historic England, 2022, Design in the Historic Environment' - [Good Practice for Design in the Historic Environment: Principles and Case Studies | Historic England](#)

National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring, and successful places (2021). [National design guide - GOV.UK](#)

National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2025) [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

Rossendale SPD [Alterations and extensions to residential properties](#)

Rossendale SPD [Conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside](#)

Theme 5: MANAGEMENT

Action 11 - Adoption and Enforcement

Objective: To ensure that the conservation area is correctly managed and the tools available to Rossendale Council are used to effectively enforce the conservation area status.

- Building owners are responsible for ensuring the appropriate consents are in place before undertaking any changes to their property.
- Rossendale Council will investigate unauthorised development and may take necessary action to ensure compliance with national and local policy where expedient to do so.
- A regular review of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, should be undertaken updating policy as required ensuring the plan remains a useful, relevant working document.

Bibliography

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