

# Proposed Syke and Cronkeyshaw Common - Boundary Options Assessment

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** Rochdale Borough Council is proposing to create a Conservation Area covering Syke and parts of Cronkeyshaw Common. Officers are proposing to carry out a consultation exercise with local residents on the proposals for a Conservation Area, as well as the potential boundaries of the Conservation Area.

**1.2** This document sets out the boundary options for the new Conservation Area and should be read in conjunction with the draft Conservation Area Appraisal. It includes:

1.2.1 A brief description of the three areas being considered

1.2.2 The heritage significance of each area

1.2.3 Officers' recommendations on whether each area should be included within the Conservation Area boundary.

## 2. Planning Legislation and Policy and National Guidance

### 2.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

2.1.1 Section 69 of this Act requires Local Planning Authorities to 'determine which parts of their area are of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and [...] designate those areas as conservation areas.'

2.1.2 This means that where an area is considered to be of special architectural and historic interest, a local authority should designate it as a Conservation Area.

### 2.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

2.2.1 Chapter 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment

2.2.2 Paragraph 197 states that: "when considering the designation of conservation area, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest."

## **2.3 Historic England 2019 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1**

2.3.1 Paragraph 68 of this advice note states that “an important aspect of the appraisal process will be considering where the boundaries should be drawn.”

2.3.2 It continues by stating that: ‘as spaces contribute to enclosure, as well as framing views of assets and defining settings, a unified approach is desirable to their management as well as suggesting that in almost all situations the conservation area boundary runs around rather than through a space or plot.’

2.3.3 Paragraph 73 states that:

“Conservation area designation is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape (agricultural use of land falls outside the planning framework and is not affected by designation as a conservation area) but it can protect open areas particularly where the character and appearance concerns historic fabric, to which the principal protection offered by conservation area designation relates.”

2.3.4 Paragraph 75 states that:

“Before finalising the boundary it is worth considering whether the immediate setting also requires the additional controls that result from designation, or whether the immediate setting also requires the additional controls that result from designation, or whether the setting is itself sufficiently protected by national policy or the policies in the Local Plan.”

## **3. Areas to be considered**

**3.1** Three areas have been considered for inclusion within the proposed conservation area boundary. These areas are depicted on the map below and as follows:

1. Cronkeyshaw Common and weavers cottages
2. Reservoirs and fields to the east of Syke Road
3. Former Cordwainers Arms public house and Syke Farm

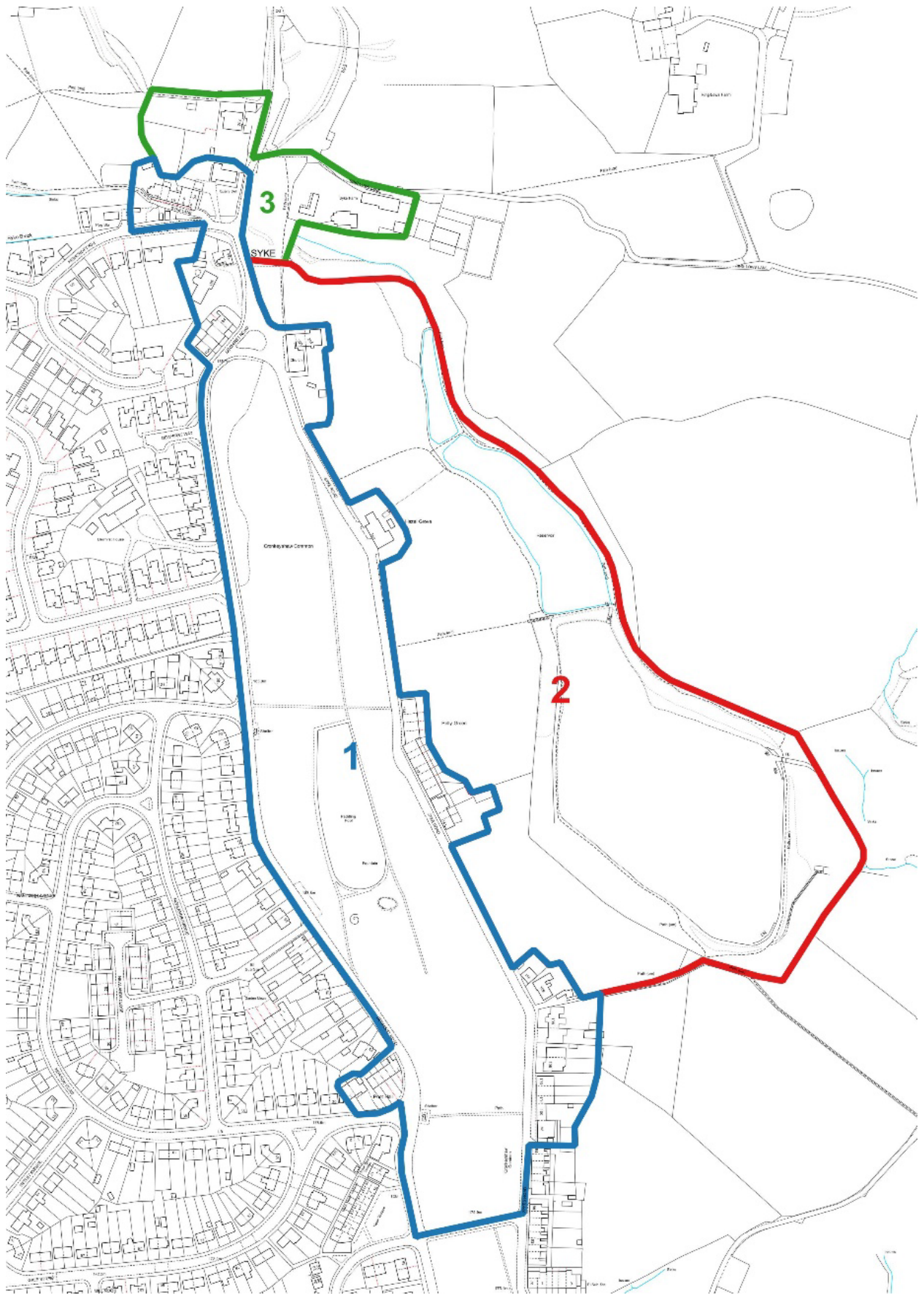


Figure 1 - Proposed areas for consideration as part of the Conservation Area

## 4. Area 1 – Cronkeyshaw Common and weavers' cottages

### 4.1 Description

- 4.1.1 Area 1 covers the northern portion of Cronkeyshaw Common, Syke Pond and the weavers' cottages which enclose the Common to the north and east. This area also includes Syke Road Methodist Church and the remnants of former farms along Syke Road. Area 1 also includes a small terrace on Poot Hall and the adjacent weavers' cottages, to the west of the Common.



*Figure 2 - Syke Common and Cottages at Polly Green*

### 4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 Cronkeyshaw Common was donated to the Town as a park in 1876, and formally opened for recreation in the 1890s. There are numerous paths which cross the Common. These include remnants of the Old Packhorse trail, which linked Cheshire to Clitheroe, passing through Syke and Rochdale.

- 4.2.2 The area includes numerous former weavers' cottages dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the remnants of historic farms. These buildings provide important evidence of the industries in the area, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when domestic loomshops were still a common feature. Many of the weavers' cottages retain many of their original features, including the distinctive run of windows at upper floor, designed to maximise light and subsequently the number of hours, the weavers could work.
- 4.2.3 The surviving buildings, Cronkeyshaw Common and associated paths and walls present a largely intact historic landscape, of special architectural and historic interest.

### **4.3 Officer recommendation**

- 4.3.1 This area is of significant architectural and historic importance, exemplified by the presence of numerous weavers' cottages, historic farmsteads and the former packhorse trail. Cronkeyshaw Common forms the centrepiece of this area and it is the Common that forms the backdrop to many of the key views and vistas.
- 4.3.2 It is the view of officers, that area 1 should be included within the Conservation Area boundary.

## 5. Area 2 - Reservoirs and fields to the east of Syke Road

### 5.1 Description

- 5.1.1 Area 2 lies immediately to the east of the properties along Syke Road. It includes the fields to the east of the Road, along with the reservoirs and Buckley Syke Woods.



Figure 3 - Reservoir at Buckley Woods

### 5.2 Significance

- 5.2.1 The eastern part of the area originally comprised three reservoirs. These were constructed between 1838 and 1841 to supply water to Rochdale, and were the first reservoirs serving the town. Two of these reservoirs survive today, while the third has been drained and is now the site of Syke Woods. The woodland has been allowed to grow naturally and the area now covered by mature trees and foliage. The reservoirs and woods are listed as a Site of Biological Importance by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.
- 5.2.2 In addition to the two surviving reservoirs, ancillary features also survive in the form of drainage channels, a stone bridge and the dam wall.

- 5.2.3 The western portion of the area covers undulating farmland and extends up to the rear of the houses along Syke Road. Historic field boundaries are present in the form of drystone walls. To the rear of the cottages is Polly Well, which originally provided water to the occupants of these dwellings.
- 5.2.4 These areas provide important context for the development of Syke and Rochdale. The reservoirs were essential in providing water to the growing town, while Polly Well provided water to the weavers of Polly Green. The open fields also provide a setting to the historic farmsteads and weavers cottages.
- 5.2.5 The surviving built form is of historic interest and provides important context and setting to the weavers' cottages and farms in area 1.

### **5.3 Officer Recommendation**

- 5.3.1 In recommending whether or not to include area 2 within the Conservation Area boundary, officers have had regard to the relevant legislation and guidance as set out within Section 2 above.
- 5.3.2 Of particular relevance is paragraph 73 of Historic England Advice Note 1, which advises that while conservation area designation can be used to protect open areas, where the character and appearance concerns historic fabric, it is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape.
- 5.3.3 The reservoirs and agricultural fields are important in providing context for the development of both Syke and Rochdale. The presence of water and suitable farmland enabled the development of industry and agriculture in Syke prior to the industrial revolution. The reservoirs and surviving ancillary features are of particular historic interest.
- 5.3.4 That being said, built form in area 2 is largely limited to the reservoirs, ancillary structures and stone field boundaries. The majority of area 2 is covered by fields and woodland.
- 5.3.5 Area 2 lies within the Green Belt, where both national and local policies restrict the types of development, which may be carried out (NPPF Chapter 13 and Places for Everyone policy JP-G9). The reservoirs and woodland are also designated as a site of biological importance.
- 5.3.6 Given the above, it is the view of officers that area 2 should not be included within the Conservation Area boundary. This is because there is limited built form in this area and its inclusion would cover large areas of undeveloped agricultural land. Additionally, as noted above, area 2 is already protected by its allocation as Green Belt, with part of it identified as a site of biological importance.

## 6. Area 3 - Former Cordwainers Arms PH and Syke Farm

### 6.1 Description

- 6.1.1 This area lies to the north of the Common and includes the site of the former Cordwainers Public House and Syke Farm along Ringlows Lane. The site of the Cordwainers Arms public house is now occupied by a dwelling, built in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This appears to have reused elements of the historic public house, including the lintel above the door.
- 6.1.2 Syke Farm is depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map from 1851. While elements of the original building may remain, it appears to have undergone significant alteration and extension.



*Figure 4 - Dwelling on the site of the former Cordwainers Arms*





Figure 5 - Syke Farm, Ringlows Lane

## 6.2 Significance

- 6.2.1 The Cordwainers Arms would have been an important focal point of Syke, providing refreshment and accommodation to travellers passing through on their way along the Packhorse Trail. However, the original building has been lost and replaced with a 20<sup>th</sup> century dwelling. Elements of the original public house appear to have been reused as part of the new dwelling, including the keystone above the front door. However as the historic public house has been demolished and rebuilt, much of its architectural and historic interest has been lost.
- 6.2.2 Syke Farm would have been typical of the farms which developed in the area, prior to the industrial revolution. It is depicted on the first edition OS map from 1851. As noted above, it is not clear to what extent the original farm buildings survive, but there does appear to have been a significant degree of rebuilding. The level of alteration and rebuilding appears to have much diminished the architectural and historic interest that the site once held.

## 6.3 Officer recommendation

- 6.3.1 On the basis that both of the above sites have been heavily altered and rebuilt, officers recommend that they are not included within the proposed conservation area boundary.

## **7. Conclusions - Boundary Recommendations**

- 7.1 Officers recommend that the Conservation Area covers the extent of Area 1, for the reasons as set out above. Officers consider that Area 1 is of special historic and architectural interest and is worthy of Conservation Area designation.
- 7.2 Officers consider that while Area 2 is of historic interest, it should not be included within the Conservation Area boundary for the reasons as set out above. In summary, Area 2 covers large areas of undeveloped countryside and is protected by existing designations.
- 7.3 Officers consider that much of the architectural and historic interest of Area 3 has been lost through demolition and alteration. As such it is proposed that this area is not included within the Conservation Area.

## **8. Next steps**

- 8.1 This document sets out the potential boundary options for the proposed Syke Conservation Area. Officers' preferred option is for Area 1 only to be included. However, Officers would like to consult on all three areas, so that the views of local residents can be obtained and any additional relevant information can be considered and taken into account when making the final decision on the boundary.
- 8.2 The final recommendations on the Conservation Area and its boundary will be presented to Rochdale North Township for decision following on from the public consultation period.