



Syke Conservation Area Appraisal

Consultation Draft



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Figure 1 - Aerial view of Syke and surrounds

1. Introduction

Syke lies to the northeast of Rochdale town centre. The area is centred on a large area of open space, known as Cronkeyshaw Common. The area has a number of well-preserved historic buildings and spaces, including former farmsteads and weavers cottages. Syke Road was also on the historic packhorse route, which connected Clitheroe to Rochdale and beyond.

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For these reasons, the area has been identified as having special architectural and historic interest, worthy of designation as a Conservation Area. Conservation Area status will help to protect the heritage of this well-preserved historic area. It will also help to promote its unique landscape, architecture and history as well as providing the local community with a strong sense of identity and pride.

The purpose of this appraisal is to set out the significance of the area and to set measures to ensure that its special character can be preserved and enhanced for future generations. This document is intended to guide future development and inform any future management plans.

This Conservation Area Appraisal has been written in conjunction with local residents. It is based on site visits, archive material, information from local residents and guidance documents provided by Historic England.

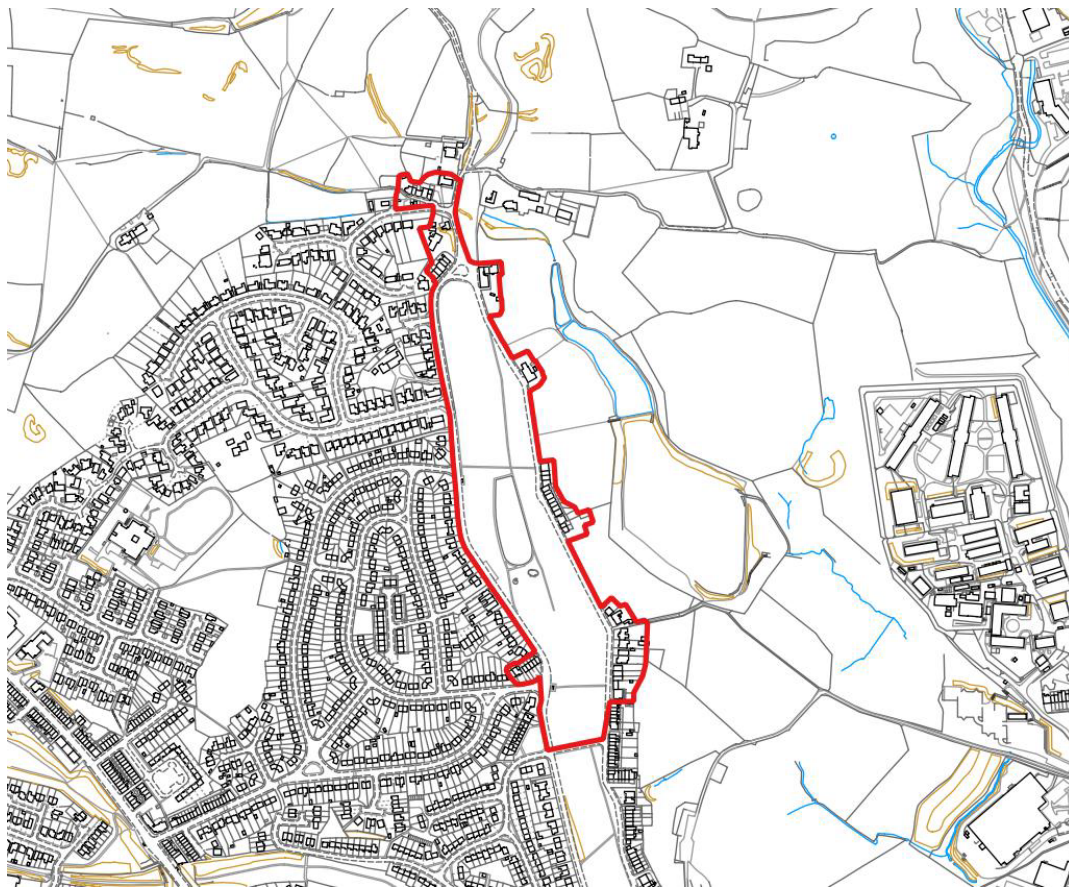


Figure 2 - Proposed Conservation Area boundary

2. Planning Legislation, Planning Policy and National

Conservation Area Designation

The following legislation, planning policy and guidance documents are relevant when designating conservation areas:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)
- Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition) – Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

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.’

This means that where an area is considered to be of special architectural and historic interest, local planning authorities should designate it as a conservation area.

Section 69 also requires local planning authorities to review past conservation area designations to ensure that these areas remain worthy of protection and to promote enhancements where possible.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

Chapter 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Paragraph 197 deals with the designation of conservation areas. It states that ‘when considering the designation of conservation areas, 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.’

Historic England Advice Note 1 – Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management

This document provides guidance on appraising and designating conservation areas. It also includes guidance on the ongoing management of conservation areas.

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Living in a Conservation Area

Conservation areas exist to protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place. Within conservation areas there are additional planning controls and considerations. These exist to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the area special.

In planning policy, conservation areas are designated heritage assets. When considering planning applications affecting conservation areas, the local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area (Section 72, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. This chapter sets out how development is expected to consider the needs of heritage assets.

The local plan for Rochdale is made up of a suite of policies and plans:

- The Places for Everyone combined Greater Manchester Plan Policy JP-P2 supports the celebration and protection of heritage assets, including conservation areas.
- Rochdale Core Strategy policies SO3 (to improve design, image and quality of place) and P2 (protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage apply). Policy P2 looks to conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets, which include conservation areas
- Saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996 – 2016, are a material consideration, Saved policies /16, BE/17 and BE/18 all consider the impact development can have on conservation areas.
- Rochdale Borough Council has also published a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) relating to design, housing, retail and the environment. The additional guidance within these documents helps applicants and their agents interpret policy so that their schemes are able to gain the relevant permissions.

Permitted development rights (i.e. works that can be carried out without planning permission) are more restrictive in conservation areas. This is to ensure that any changes are sensitive to the area's special architectural and historic interest.

Amongst other matters, within Conservation Areas, planning permission is required for:

- Substantial demolition of any building or structure
- The demolition or erection of a wall, gate or fence abutting a highway if this is over 1m or over 2m elsewhere.
- Certain householder extensions and alterations

Article 4 directions can also be used in conservation areas. These are restrictions which remove additional permitted development rights.

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Trees

If you want to cut down, top or lop any but the smallest of trees in a conservation area, you must notify the local planning authority at least six weeks before the works begin. The local planning authority will then consider the contribution the tree makes to the character of the area and if necessary create a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it.

More information on all of the above is available at: [Living in a Conservation Area | Historic England](#).

3. The Location and Setting of Syke and Cronkeyshaw

Syke and Cronkeyshaw Common lie around 1 mile to the northeast of Rochdale Town Centre, on the edge of the town. The area is dominated by open spaces: the Common, woodland, and the foothills of the Pennines to the north. The area's topography rises gently to the north towards the foothills of the Pennines. To the east, the land levels drop towards Syke Woods and its reservoirs. To the south, the land drops towards Rochdale Town Centre, allowing for views towards the town Centre.

Development was historically focussed around the Common and the packhorse trail. There are many examples of well-preserved weavers' cottages, as well as former agricultural buildings. The surviving buildings and spaces highlight the area's industrial and agricultural origins.



Figure 3 -Syke in relation to Rochdale Town Centre

4. Historical Development

Rochdale is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Following on from the Norman Conquest of 1066, the land belonged to the de Lacy Family, who used the area for farming, primarily cattle rearing. The administrative centre of the de Lacy family was at Clitheroe but they also had contacts in Cheshire. The movement of goods, mainly salt and lime, between the two areas was important.

Rochdale was conveniently sited halfway between Clitheroe and Cheshire and was on other ancient routes including the Roman Road between York and Chester. The town also had a well-established church, St Chad's, which can be dated back until at least the 13th century. These factors contributed to the growth of Rochdale as a market town. With the growth of the woollen industry in the 1500s, the town became one of the principal wool towns of Lancashire.

Syke lies just north of Rochdale on the historic packhorse route that linked Cheshire to Clitheroe. In the centuries prior to the industrial revolution, packhorses were the only means of transporting goods such as coal, wool, cloth and limestone. There is a network of similar trails, which criss-cross the Pennines.

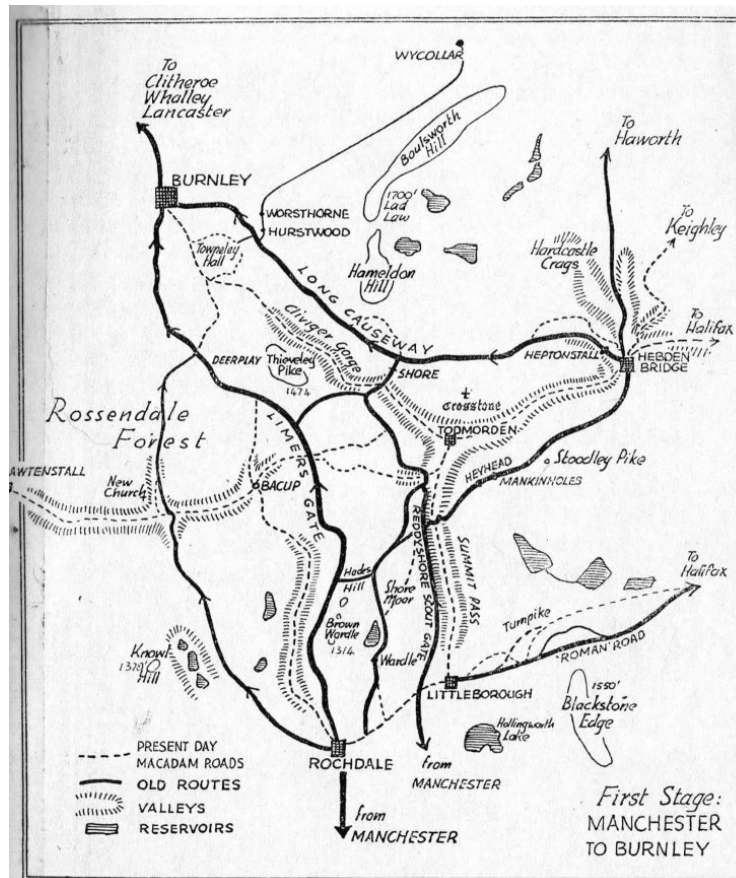


Figure 4 - Limers Gate as taken from the 'Roof of Lancashire' by Herbert C. Collins

The web of roads that spread out from Clitheroe were known as Limers' Gates, from the old

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Norse 'gata', used in the north of England for a street or road. The pack horse teams, were known as Lime Gals. Even when their cargo became more diverse, the name remained. The lime carried by the packhorses would primarily have been used for building works and the cultivation of crops, rather than textile bleaching.

In the Rochdale area, the most famous and last of the Lime Gal drivers was Mary Alice Hartley known popularly as Ailse O'Fussers. She was well-known in the area and when she died in 1879 was buried in Whitworth cemetery.



Figure 5 - Alice O'Fussers - Touchstones

By the mid-18th century, an increase in trade saw similar increases in the numbers of journeys and horses using the same roads. It is likely that to meet demand from this additional traffic, more places along the Packhorse route, including at Syke would have offered refreshments. One such building may have been the Cordwainers Arms, which lies just to the north of the proposed Conservation Area boundary.

The 18th century saw important inventions for the textile industry, such as the flying shuttle and the spinning jenny which greatly sped up production. These inventions also saw textile production increasing moved out of houses and into purpose built mills.

By the early 1800s, there was a woollen mill and a cotton mill in Syke. The presence of these two mills provides good evidence that by the early 19th century, thread was being produced on a reasonably large scale in the area.

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These early mills were most likely for carding and spinning, as weaving as a factory industry developed later. Between the 1770s and 1830s, there were many different arrangements between the spinning mill owner and the weavers who dealt with his thread. Farm or cottage owners sometimes extended their properties, allowing them to take in local thread and produce woven cloth at home. Sometimes, mill owners would build joint working and living premises for employees. In both cases, the woven products would need to be sent for finishing and marketing the goods.

In Syke, there are examples of both types of handloom weaving mentioned above. Some of the former agricultural buildings appear to have been used at one time used for weaving. There are also examples of purpose built cottages, such as those at Polly Green.

Handloom weaving gradually died out in the mid-19th century. The woollen mill which kept it going at Syke longer than in many other areas, was burnt down in 1850 and by that time it was not viable to rebuild it so far out of town.



Figure 6 - Handloom weaving - Touchstones

The latter half of the 19th century, saw the construction of more conventional terraces for those working in Rochdale, while the interwar period saw the construction of a new housing

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estate to the west of the Common along Dewhirst Lane.

The Common was donated to the Town as a park in 1876, and formally opened for recreation in the 1890s. The Common's survival is a major factor in the survival of Syke Road and Polly Green as they are today. Although many of the original 'weavers' cottages' were abandoned in the late 19th century, the desirability of living in attractive surroundings, so close to town facilities, brought new people into the area in the 20th and 21st centuries.

5. Historic Maps

Ordnance Survey Map 1851

On the 1851 edition of the Ordnance Survey map, many of the key buildings and features in Syke were already present. These include the main routes, such as the Limers Gate, the farms and weavers' cottages, including those at Polly Green.

Two textile mills are shown at the northern extent of the present Common. A cotton mill on Syke Lane and a woollen mill on the junction of Dewhurst Road and Ringlows Lane.

The reservoirs to the East were owned by Rochdale Waterworks and supplied the growing town. Other signs of industry in the area included the brick field on Sheriff Lane and Nook Colliery to the east of the Common.

Syke at this time was physically separate from Rochdale.



Figure 7 - Ordnance Survey 1851

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Ordnance Survey Map 1891

By the 1890s, the first red brick terraces had been constructed to the south of the Common along Syke Road and at Nook Terrace on Dewhurst Road. The Methodist chapel had been built, replacing one of the weavers' cottages.

The buildings along Syke Lane were still present but no longer labelled as a cotton mill. The woollen mill had also disappeared. The brick fields and the colliery had also disappeared, but there was a new mill depicted to the east of the Common.

While there were more buildings, Syke in the 1890s remained overwhelmingly rural and was still physically separate from Rochdale to the south.



Figure 8 - Ordnance Survey 1891

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Ordnance Survey Map 1911

The early 20th century saw few new buildings constructed in Syke, as shown on the 1911 Ordnance survey map, other than terraces at the southern area of the Common to house workers in the new mills.

A key change in Syke was the designation of the green space as a Common in the late 19th century and the formation of the ponds. The designation of the Cronkeyshaw Common would see it protected from development and become a focal point for outdoor recreation and congregation in the area.



Figure 9 - Ordnance Survey 1911

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Ordnance Survey Map 1936

The interwar period saw significant changes to the area around Syke, with a large new housing estate to the west of the Common along Dewhurst Road, as shown on the Ordnance Survey from the late 1930s. The north and east of Syke remained as open farmland with sporadic farms and buildings.

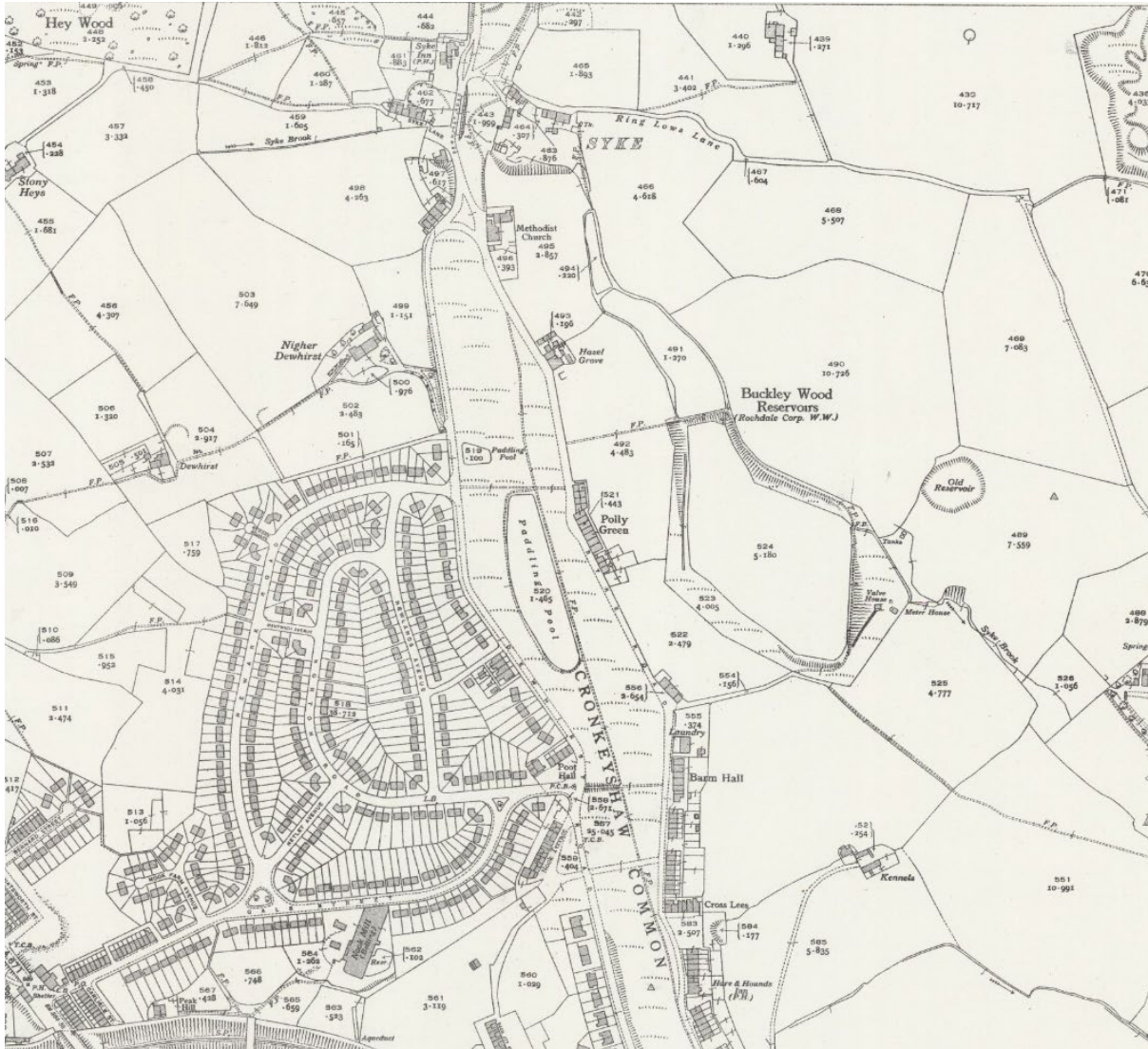


Figure 10 - Ordnance Survey 1936

6. Key Characteristics

The key assets of the Conservation Area are:

- The northern extent of Cronkeyshaw Common and Syke Pond
- Evidence of former industry, including well-preserved weavers cottages and mills and reservoirs
- Vernacular buildings and farmsteads typical of the Pennine range
- Use of sandstone in vernacular buildings
- Drystone and flagstone walls
- Syke Road as the former Limers Gate and Packhorse trail

7. Landscape Character

The relationship between the built environment and open space is critical to the character of the Conservation Area. Connections between public spaces, natural landscapes, farmland and manmade landscapes define the character of the area.

Former farmsteads and fields underscore the once rural character of the area, which still exists to the north and east of the common. The role of industry in the area's development is also apparent through the many weaver's cottages, reservoirs and associated structures.

There are numerous historic paths which cross the Common, including the remnants of the old Packhorse trail. These paths show the links between the key sites in the area, offering hints as to how the spaces were used.

The area is one of contrasts, where manmade landscapes, such as the Common, farmland and reservoirs meet the less manicured natural landscape of the hills to the north and the woodland to the southeast.

8. Key views and vistas

Key views within the Conservation Area tend to be expansive, focusing on the architecture in the foreground and important landscape features in the background, such as the Common, the foothills of the Pennines and the woodland.

The locations of key views identified below are representative. Given the nature of the architecture and its relationship to the landscape, views are possible along the extent of main roads and footpaths, as well as from the Common.

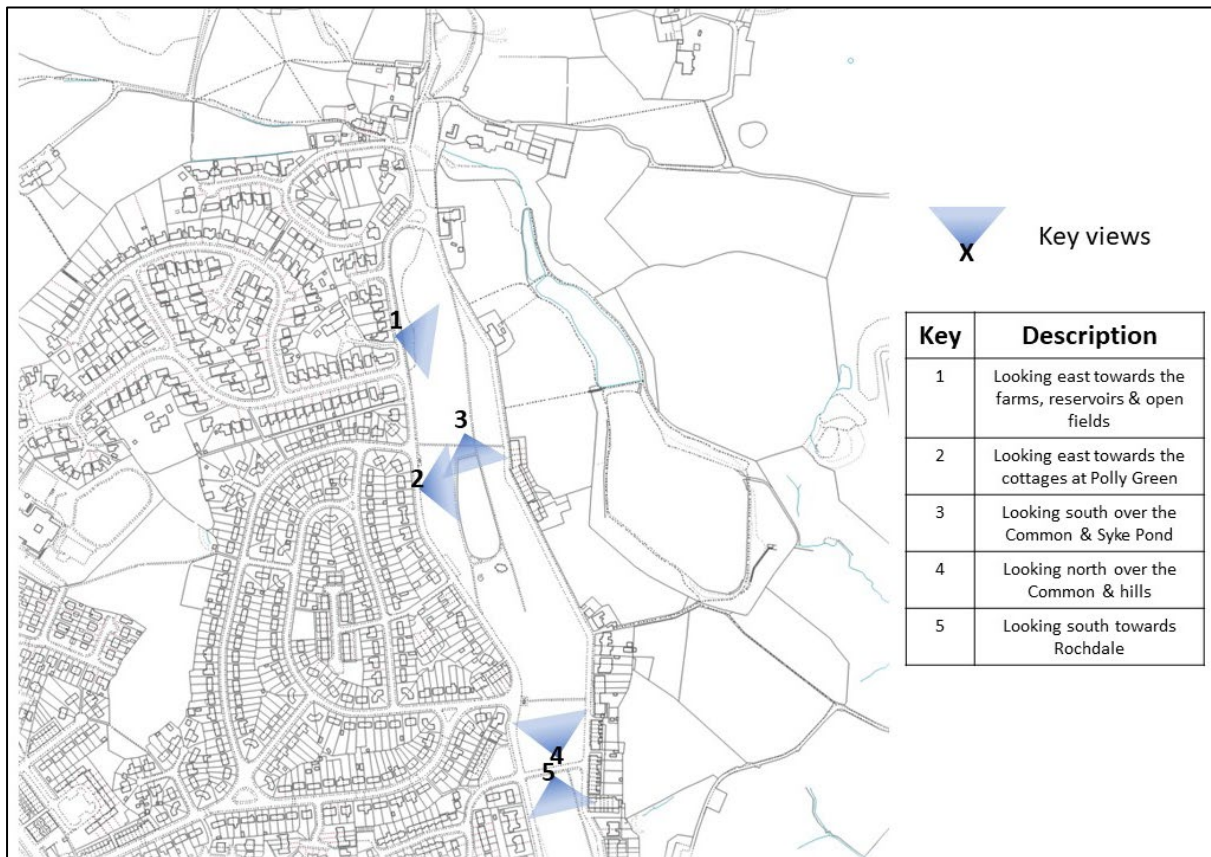


Figure 11 - Key views plan

Viewpoint 1 – Looking east towards the farms, reservoirs and open fields



Figure 12 - Viewpoint 1 - Looking east towards the farms, reservoirs and open fields

Looking east from the northern part of the Common, the view is of former farmsteads, with open agricultural land beyond. The land drops away gently, allowing for long distance views across the landscape.

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Viewpoint 2 – Looking east towards Polly Green Cottages



Figure 13 - Viewpoint 2 - Looking East towards Polly Green Cottages

Further south, the view east across the Common takes in Syke Pond and Polly Green Cottages, with the hills visible in the background.

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Viewpoint 3 - Looking south over the Common and Syke Pond



Figure 14 - Viewpoint 3 - looking south over the Common and Syke Pond

Looking south with Syke Pond in foreground allows for panoramic views of the Common, surrounding countryside and housing, with views of Rochdale in the back ground.

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Viewpoint 4 – looking north over the Common and towards the hills



Figure 15 - Viewpoint 4 - looking north over Common and hills

From the road which forms the southern boundary of the Conservation Area, looking north there are largely uninterrupted views possible across the Common, with the Pennine foothills visible in the distance.

Viewpoint 5 - looking south towards Rochdale



Figure 16 - Viewpoint 5 - Looking south towards Rochdale

From the southern boundary of Conservation area, the views towards the southern half of the Common and central Rochdale are at their clearest.

9. Architectural character

Traditional building materials

The vernacular buildings, which pre-date the mid-1850s tend to be constructed using locally available materials. These include indigenous sandstone, dressed in the local watershot style. Properties also have stone sills, lintels and architraves. Stone quoins are also evident on some of the former farms.



Figure 17 - example of local stonework

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Figure 18 - stone quoins on historic buildings

Roofing materials were historically also stone with a relatively shallow 30degree pitch, and while some stone roofs remain, others have been replaced with slate or modern concrete tiles.

Historically, windows would have been painted timber. Many timber windows have been replaced with modern UPVC alternatives. The weavers' cottages have distinctive runs of windows on the upper floors, designed to maximise light to the upper floor workshop.

The later 19th century terraces which run along the south-eastern boundary of the Common are brick with slate roofs.

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Figure 19 - Late 19th century terraces along Syke Road

The construction of first the canal in the late 18th century and then the railways in the early 19th century enabled materials to be imported from further afield. This resulted in a standardisation of materials and building techniques across the country. Houses, which previously would have been built in the local materials instead came to be constructed of brick and Welsh slate.

Brick and slate continued to be dominant in the interwar housing, on the western side of the Common. Render is also used for detailing on upper stories.



Figure 20 - Interwar housing along Dewhirst Road

10. Building Typologies and key buildings

The following buildings have been identified as being key to the conservation area:

Weavers Cottages and industrial buildings

Prior to the industrial revolution, the production of textiles often took place in homes. Even when elements of the textile production came to be industrialised, weaving continued to take place in the domestic setting into the 19th century.

Domestic loomshops are readily identifiable by their long windows at upper floor levels. These would have maximised light, which was essential for the weavers' work. As noted in the historical development section, there are various types of domestic loomshops in Syke.

Originally Syke had two mills. The woollen mill burnt down in the 1850s and the cotton mill on Syke Lane was converted to cottages in the 19th century. These cottages survive and are detailed below at 4 to 14 Syke Lane.

100 to 102 Syke Road

This group of three cottages are said to date from circa 1810 and to have been constructed as eight back-to-back cottages. 101 and 102 Syke Road each merged with the cottages to the rear to form two dwellings. The rear cottages behind number 100 were demolished and this property was merged with its neighbour to form a single dwelling.

There is also some speculation as to whether 100 Syke Road is actually an older property, although there is no definitive evidence for this. It may date from the early 1700s and be the original Barm Hall. If this is the case, then it may have been a traditional Pennine Farmhouse, of three single depth bays, which was later repurposed for the textile industry.

All of the cottages are built of watershot stone, and would originally have had stone roofs. While 101 and 102 Syke Road still have stone roofs, the roof on 100 Syke Road has been replaced with slate. The upper floors of the cottages would have been used for weaving, which is evident from their distinctive window ranges.

The cottages play a significant part in illustrating the history of the textile industry and its development throughout the 19th century (and possibly earlier). They retain important architectural features, which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

101 and 102 Syke Road are listed at grade II. 100 Syke Road was delisted in 2021, but is still identified as a non-designated heritage asset.



Figure 21 - Weavers cottages at 100 to 102 Syke Road and Barm Hall

144 to 154 Syke Road (Polly Green Cottages)

This row of terraces forms the 'backbone' of weavers' cottages on Syke Road. In 1816 stonemason Peter Law of Wardle and James Tattersall yeoman, signed an indenture with John Entwistle, a local landowner, which stipulated that '*one or more messuages or dwelling houses*' should be built within a year. They were to be specifically built '*to carry on the trade of handloom weaving*'.

144 to 148 Syke Road were originally constructed as 10 back to back dwellings. According to the 1821 census, each cottage housed families of up to 12 people. The upper floors of the cottages were used for weaving, but may also have provided sleeping accommodation for the families, along with the roof space.

By the time of the 1841 census the terrace had been extended to 14 back to back houses, (149 and 150 Syke Road). The 1841 census shows that the residents were mostly employed in the woollen industry.

The last eight back to back houses were built between 1848 and 1851 (modern day 151 to 154 Syke Road).

By 1851, there were 22 families living at Polly Green. While many of the occupants were still

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employed in the woollen industry, others worked as coal miners, bricklayers and carpenters.

The earliest houses within the terrace, 144 to 148 have the upper floor windows set well below the eaves level. This would likely have allowed for the loft space to have been used for accommodation.



Figure 22 - Weavers Cottages at Polly Green, Syke Road

6 and 7 Poot Hall, Dewhirst Road

This pair of cottages are shown on the first edition OS map from 1851. They are three storey and constructed in watershot stone, with the distinctive run of windows on the upper floor that marks them out as weavers' cottages. In appearance, they are similar to the listed 190 to 192 Dewhirst Road.

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Figure 23 - Weavers Cottages at 6 and 7 Poot Hall

Today, the cottages are visually separated from the Common by housing built in the late 19th century and early 20th century. However, early photographs and historic maps show that they were once a more prominent part of the Common's landscape and the textile industry in Syke.



Figure 24 - view across the Common towards Poot Hall in 1910 - Touchstones

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190 to 192 Dewhirst Road



Figure 25 - Weavers Cottages at 190 to 192 Dewhirst Road

This run of three houses dates from around 1800. They are three storey and constructed in watershot stone. As with the other cottages in the area, they would originally have had stone roofs. These have been replaced on 191 and 192 with modern 20th century tiles.

As with the other weavers' cottages in the area, they have a distinctive run of windows on the upper floor.

4 to 14 Syke Lane

This collection of buildings lies to the north of the Common along Syke Lane. On the 1851 map they are identified as Syke Mill (Cotton). Syke Mill is not named on later maps, indicating that they were converted to a domestic use in the later 19th century.

10 Syke Lane was reportedly occupied by George Williamson, a Scottish deserter from the Jacobite army. He opened quarries in Whitworth and Brown Wardle, and in 1757 married a local woman, Hannah Matthews. He was reportedly responsible for building 10 Syke Lane in 1754, and later 6 and 8 Syke Lane in 1782. His initials are also still legible on the stone tablet above the door.

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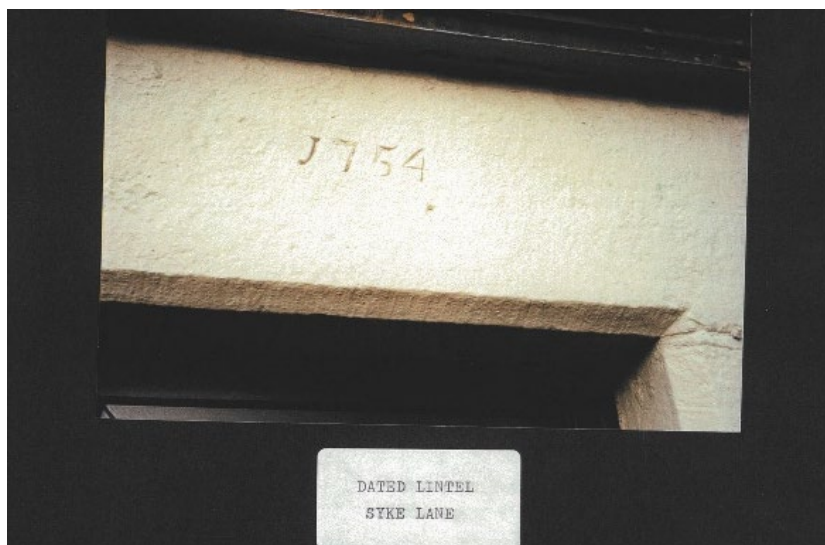


Figure 26 - Lintel dated 1754 - Touchstones

The properties within the terrace have been built over various phases and include the distinctive weavers lights found elsewhere in the proposed Conservation Area. The presence of these lights indicates that this mill may have started out life as domestic loomshops before being used as a mill. If it was originally used as a cotton mill then it would have been one of the very first in the area.

It is possible that the mill would originally have been water-powered, although no power features remain. If it was water-powered, it likely drew water from the nearby Syke Brook, which appears to have been culverted near the mill.

These buildings are of particular architectural and historic interest, and would be worthy of further study and investigation.

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Figure 27 - houses on Syke Lane (undated)



Figure 28 - Houses on Syke Lane

Farms

Farming in the Pennines region was often subsistence. Farmers would frequently take on textile work to supplement their income.

Along the west Yorkshire border, laithe houses are common features. In a laithe house, the farmhouse and barn are combined in a singular linear range. Although less common on the western side of the Pennines, there are still examples of this type of farmstead.

116 Syke Road /former Cross Lees Farm:

Cross Lees farm appears on the 1851 map (see figure 7). The long linear form on the map indicates that it may have originally been a laithe house or at least included an agricultural use within the original building.

Today the only part of the range that survives is the old farmhouse. The quoins which are only present on the northern elevation and the rendered wall on the southern elevation all indicate that the existing house was once part of a larger building.



Figure 29 -Farmhouse at Cross Lees Farm

Hazel Grove Farm



Figure 30 - Hazel Grove Farm - 1915 painting by C.W. Nurse

This former farm is now in residential use. At first glance, its linear form and the combined agricultural and residential uses indicate that it could be a laithe house. However, the barn appears to be a later addition, as it has a lower ridge than the farmhouse.



Figure 31 - Hazel Grove Farm

The building appears to have undergone several alterations and different uses during its history. Early photographs show the house having a continuous run of upper floor windows, and a single window at ground floor level, indicating that it was used for weaving. The building was converted to residential use in the late 20th century.

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Figure 32 - Hazel Grove Farm (undated)

Syke Farm, Ringlows Lane

Syke Farm on Ringlows Lane to the north of Syke is also present on the 1851 map. The building has a date stone from 1612, but appears to have been significantly altered and extended. Other than its name and linear form, few traces of its former agricultural use appear to remain.



Figure 33 - Syke Farm, Ringlows Lane

Other buildings

Syke Methodist Church



Figure 34 - Syke Chapel

Syke Methodist Church sits at the northern most point of Syke Common. It was constructed in 1868 and opened for worship in 1869. One cottage was demolished to make way for the Church but other weavers' cottages were retained and survive as part of the complex today.



Figure 35 - Chapel and Cottages

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Prior to the building of Syke Methodist Church, non-conformist services at Syke took place to the north on Pot House Lane, outside of the conservation area boundary. The original Wesleyan Methodist Church can be dated to 1825 (listed grade II). It is now in use as a dwelling.



Figure 36 - former Methodist Chapel, Pot House Lane

The Methodist Church at Syke, was originally proposed to be constructed at Cross Lees. However, the current site was chosen, as the landowner at Cross Lees refused to let the land for a non-conformist Chapel.

Today, the Methodist Church is used for Christian worship, as well as being an important community base, with regular events. Whilst architecturally unpretentious, it has a height and mass that complement the three loomshops on Dewhurst Road and rounds off the northern edge of the common before it narrows into the area around the ford.

The exterior of the building has been re-rendered, the chimney has been removed and the windows have been extended. The northern wing was replaced with a brick extension in 1991. All of these changes have degraded the building's architectural interest, but some features remain, such as the arched lintels with keystones above the ground floor windows and southern entrance.

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Figure 37 - Syke Chapel and UMC football team of 1920

Barm Hall

Depicted on the first edition OS map from 1851, Barm Hall was reportedly built by local farmer and publican John Binns. Allegedly, the house was named in reference to the barm that he sold as a by-product from brewing beer.

There is also some speculation as to whether the original Barm Hall was 100 Syke Road.



Figure 38 - Barm Hall, Syke Road

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19th century terraces along Syke Road

In the late 19th and early 20th century, more terraces were built along the southern half of the Common. These terraces accommodated workers from the mills in the nearby town.

The terraces are clearly distinct from the earlier housing in the area. They are constructed of red brick with slate roofs. By this time, textile production took place in mills rather than domestic settings. As a result, the properties do not include the distinctive upper floor windows found on the earlier weavers cottages.

Interwar housing along Dewhirst Road

In the interwar period (1918 to 1939), the area underwent a further stage of development. New housing was built along the western-side of the Common, transforming the western edge from largely rural to a suburb of the expanding town of Rochdale.

The interwar houses are mainly semi-detached, with some short runs of terraces. Brick and slate dominate, with selective use of render. They are not of the special architectural or historic interest which would merit inclusion in the Conservation Area. Nevertheless they still provide an attractive backdrop to the Common.



Figure 39 - Interwar housing along Dewhirst Road

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Demolished buildings and structures

A number of other buildings in the area have been lost. The most significant of these are detailed below:

Cordwainers Arms (Syke Inn)

The site of the Cordwainers Arms lay to the north of Syke Common and is to the north of the proposed Conservation Area boundary. It was replaced by a private dwelling in the mid-20th century. Some elements of the old public house appear to have been re-used in the existing house, such as the door surround:



Figure 40 – House on the site today (L) and former Cordwainers Arms (R)

Before the 19th century home brewing of ale was common, and practiced at many farmhouses on rural tracks which were used by pack horses and travellers on foot. These were ‘beer houses’ rather than official inns or hostelries. The Cordwainers Arms was likely one of these premises, before becoming a public house following the introduction of licensing control in 1830 and 1869.

The public house may have taken its name from leatherworkers in the area. Syke would have been compatible for leatherworking due to the farming of cattle and the availability of water. It was also away from heavily populated areas, which was important as leatherworking was historically an unpleasant and dirty process.

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Weavers Cottages at Syke Bottom (Ringlows Lane and Dewhirst Road)

These cottages were shown on the first edition OS map and like other surviving cottages appear to have been used for domestic weaving. They appear to have been demolished at some point during the mid to late 20th century.



Figure 41 - Demolished weavers' cottages at Syke Bottom

11. Significant structures and roads

Historic walls and gates

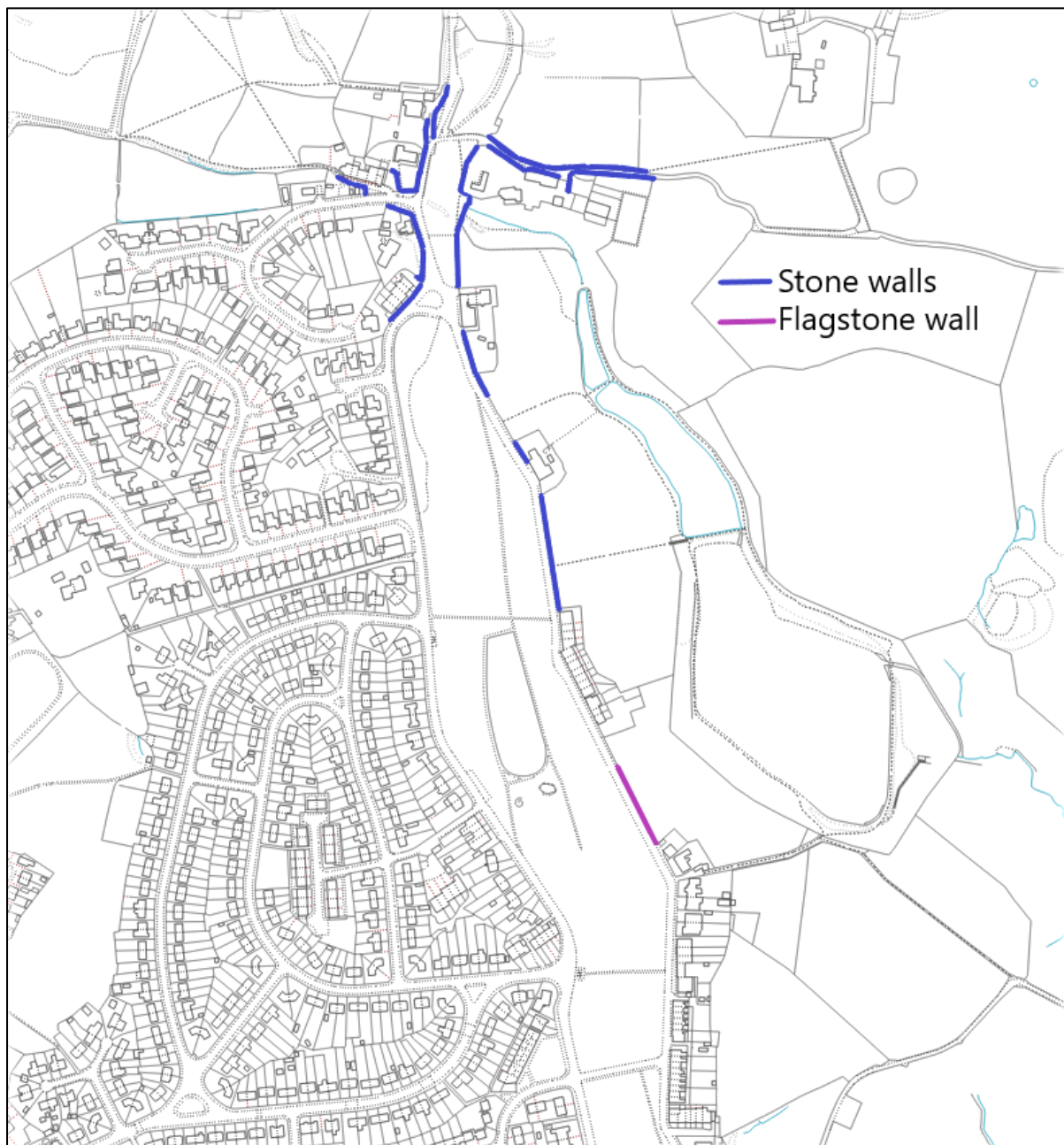


Figure 42 - stone and flagstone walls in Syke

Flagstone walls

Flagstone walls are built of large slabs of stone, erected vertically, held in place by bolts and tightened with metal plates. While not a common feature nationally, they are found across the borough to mark field boundaries and to separate back to backs of terraced housing.

Historically, the flags likely either came from local sources in the Whitworth area or smaller unmarked quarries.

In Syke, there is a low-level flagstone wall which separates Syke Road from the field to the north and the adjoining field for approximately 75m. The flags are distinctive in that they are much smaller than those found in flag stone walls elsewhere. They appear to be acting as a retaining wall in addition to marking the field boundary.



Figure 43 - flagstone wall on Syke Road

Stone walling

Drystone walls are found across the Syke area, particularly to the north and east. A dry stone wall runs from Polly Green to the Methodist Church on Syke Road.

Other stretches of drystone wall are found to the north of the Methodist Church on Dewhirst Road and along Ringlows Lane. As with the flagstone wall further to the south of Syke

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Road, these are remnants of the previous field boundaries and are indicative of the former rural character of the area.



Figure 44 - Examples of stone walls in Syke

Roads and Paths

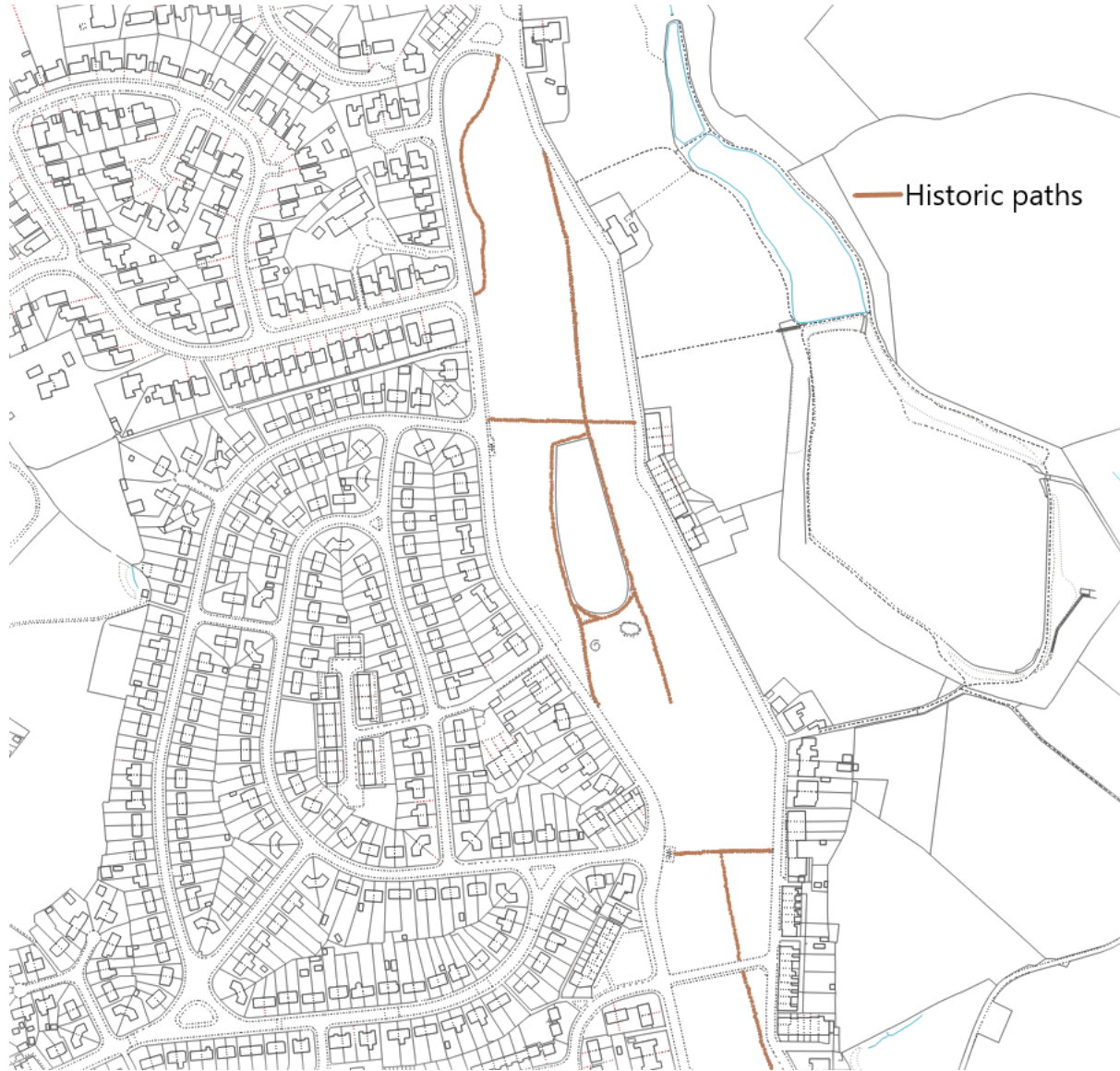


Figure 45 - Plan of historic paths on Cronkeyshaw Common

It is assumed that modern day Syke Road follows the old packhorse trail. However, there are other historic paths and trails, which criss-cross the Common. It is possible, that one of these trails may have been the original route of the pack horses, or that the horses used various routes depending on conditions. Remnants of these old trails are still visible today.

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Figure 46 - Historic Paths on Cronkeyshaw Common

12. Green Spaces, trees and biodiversity

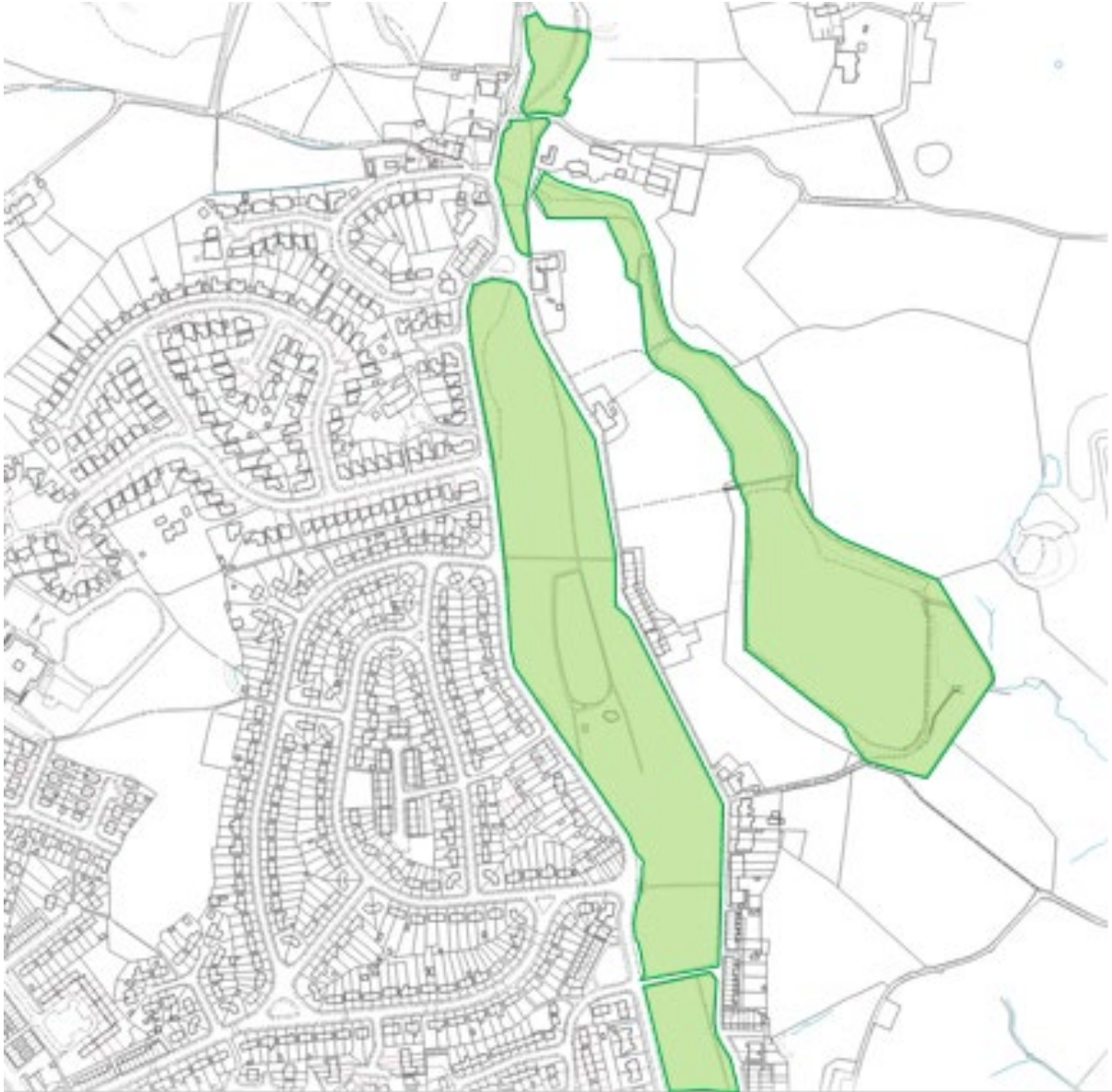


Figure 47 - Plan showing key green spaces in and around the Conservation Area

The Common is one of the key green spaces within the Conservation Area. Buckley Woods and the Reservoirs to the east of the Conservation Area boundary are also key green spaces.

Mature trees as well as saplings are found across the common. More mature woodland is found at the northern extent of the Conservation Area, where Dewhirst Road meets Ringlows Lane.

Cronkeyshaw Common

Syke Common forms the centre-piece of the Conservation Area. It forms the backdrop to many of the key views and vistas within the Conservation Area.



Figure 48 - Syke Pond, Cronkeyshaw Common

Historically, the Common was used for the extraction of clay for marl and brick making. This resulted in the creation of ponds on the land in front of Polly Green. The ponds, along with the views and fresh air of the nearby countryside made the area a natural attraction for nearby Rochdale residents.

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Figure 49 - Children on Cronkeyshaw Common 1910 – Touchstones

In 1817, Cronkeyshaw Common was the site of a large political reform meeting, called to find a way 'to obtain a reform on the Principles of Universal Suffrage, annual Parliaments and election by ballot'. 35000 men and women marched through Rochdale to the Common. Amongst their number was the radical reformer Samuel Bamford, who addressed the crowds at the Common. In August 1819, Samuel Bamford would lead a group from Middleton to St Peter's Fields in Manchester to attend a meeting calling for parliamentary reform and the repeal of the Corn Laws. Infamously the attending Cavalry opened fire on the protestors, killing 11 and seriously injuring more than 400. This event is now known as the Peterloo Massacre. [History of Rochdale \(manchesterhistory.net\)](http://manchesterhistory.net)

In 1823, Lord Byron sold Cronkeyshaw Common to the Dearden Family to finance his expedition to Greece. In the 19th century, the rapid expansion of towns and concerns regarding poor living conditions, increasingly highlighted the need for Parks and Gardens. In 1878 James Griffith Dearden gifted Syke along with the Common to the Town. By this time, the area around Syke was being used for informal recreation, much of it illegal, including cockfighting, dog fighting and wrestling.

In 1892 the old ponds were given a formal landscaping make-over by the Council, becoming known as Polly Lake and on September 9th, 1893, the area was officially opened as a dedicated recreation ground by the Mayor, Alderman Duckworth.

In the late 20th century, the condition of the pond and the Common became a cause for concern. A new landscaping scheme and the refurbishment of the paths and pond has largely addressed these concerns.

The Common continues to provide an important recreational role for both residents and visitors to Rochdale. It retains its open character, which enables views through and to foothills of the Pennines beyond. The Common is bisected by various Yorkstone paths and an unnamed road which connects Scarr Drive with Syke Road.

Syke Pond



Figure 50 - Syke Pond and Polly Green Cottages

It has been used for paddle boats and yacht racing and it is still much used by people for recreation and to relax. People of all ages walk round the pond or sit and enjoy the views across it, and it is still used often by people with model boats.

The pond also attracts birdlife, including geese, mallards, coots, black faced gulls and seagulls. Heron and swans have also occasionally been seen at the pond.

Buckley (Syke) Wood and Reservoirs

Buckley Wood lies to the east of the ribbon development along Syke Road and the Conservation Area boundary. In 1838 to 1841, the site was chosen to construct three reservoirs to supply water to Rochdale. These were the first reservoirs to be built in Rochdale and are mainly fed by Syke Brook. Only two reservoirs remain today. The third and largest reservoir has been drained.



Figure 51 - Reservoir at Buckley Woods

Syke Woods sits in the basin of the drained reservoir. The woodland has been allowed to grow naturally and is now covered in dense trees and other foliage. One Elder tree in Syke Woods is noted on the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory, and, together with the other reservoirs, the area is listed as a Site of Biological Importance by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.

It provides a habitat for diverse wildlife including, amongst others, deer, foxes, badgers, stoats, mink, grass snakes, bats, nut hatches and many and varied bird species. Some of these are rare and protected species. The area also includes more carpets of bluebells and other wildflowers and berries.

The area's former use is still visible today, in the form of drainage channels, a stone bridge and the dam wall. There are also steps linking Syke Road to the Buckley Wood reservoirs. These would have been used by workers to access the reservoir.



Figure 52 - Stone Bridge associated with the reservoirs

Polly Well

This well is recorded on the 1851 OS map and is located behind the Polly Green cottages near to Syke Woods. The well likely provided a water source for the residents of the cottages, until they were provided with a water supply in 1878. Polly well is still visible today although it is somewhat overgrown.

13. Character Appraisal

General character and plan form



Figure 53 - Contributor Plan

Positive contribution

- The area has a high concentration of weavers' cottages and other vernacular buildings including farmsteads. The original uses and character of the area are clearly legible.
- High quality open spaces, including Cronkeyshaw Common and Syke Pond, which provide an important open space and provide a setting for the weavers' cottages.
- There are many well-preserved historic elements including buildings, walls, paths and open spaces
- Preservation of historic elements

Negative contributions

Inappropriate Materials and Structures

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- On some buildings, original windows have been replaced with uPVC. uPVC frames are often chunkier than wooden frames and have a flat uniform finish. As a result they are often a poor replacement for the original or historic timber windows. The harm is particularly great when the configuration is different to the original windows.
- Many of the original stone slate roofs have been replaced with either slate or modern concrete tiles. The loss of the original stone slates has degraded the quality of some of the properties. Surviving stone slate roofs should be retained wherever possible.



Figure 54 - original stone mullions removed and uPVC windows installed

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- The Church has been re-rendered, which has obscured some of its historical features. The pink colour of the render does not relate to any other materials within the local area. The render has also started delaminating in areas.



Figure 55 - Render delaminating on the Church

- There are some examples of unsympathetic outbuildings and materials within the Conservation Area.



Figure 56 - Incongruous outbuildings on Syke Lane

14. SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties are generally well-maintained and cared for • The Common and pond have been recently refurbished, with repairs carried out including to the ponds • Survival of historic details • Well-preserved vernacular architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries • Dry stone walls and other significant local features such as flag walling. • Views over Rochdale and the Moors 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of UPVC windows. Many of the windows on the unlisted properties have been replaced with modern designs, which do not reflect the historic glazing patterns • Some stone roofs have been replaced with concrete roof tiles • Examples of extensions and alterations, which are not in keeping with the character of the area
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-designed domestic extensions • Reinstatement of original features, such as timber windows • Continued enhancement of green spaces 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate development in the Conservation Area and its setting. Given the open nature of the Common, longer range views are also a consideration. Particular harm could result from insensitively sited telecommunications equipment • Loss of historic paths – through theft or lack of maintenance • Further piecemeal alteration and removal of historic detailing, such as roof covering, windows and walling.

15. Conclusions

This appraisal determines that there is special architectural and historic interest in Syke and Cronkeyshaw Common, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. This Conservation Area Appraisal has been produced to highlight the significance of the area and to guide the design and layout of future development projects within or in the setting of the Conservation Area. The production of a management plan should also be considered to further guide development within the area.

The evolution of the Syke is still evident in the built environment and landscape, with weavers' cottages, farms and the Common. The general character of the conservation area is typified by the surviving vernacular architecture and materials, traces of industry and agriculture and Cronkeyshaw Common. The plan form of Syke seen today is a direct result of this relationship between the development of industry in the area, the Packhorse trail and built environment, with Cronkeyshaw forming a focal point of the area.

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