

# SPOTLAND BRIDGE AREA

## Historic development

*DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION*



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## 1. Map progression analysis



View to Spotland Road looking west, mid 20th century, date unknown

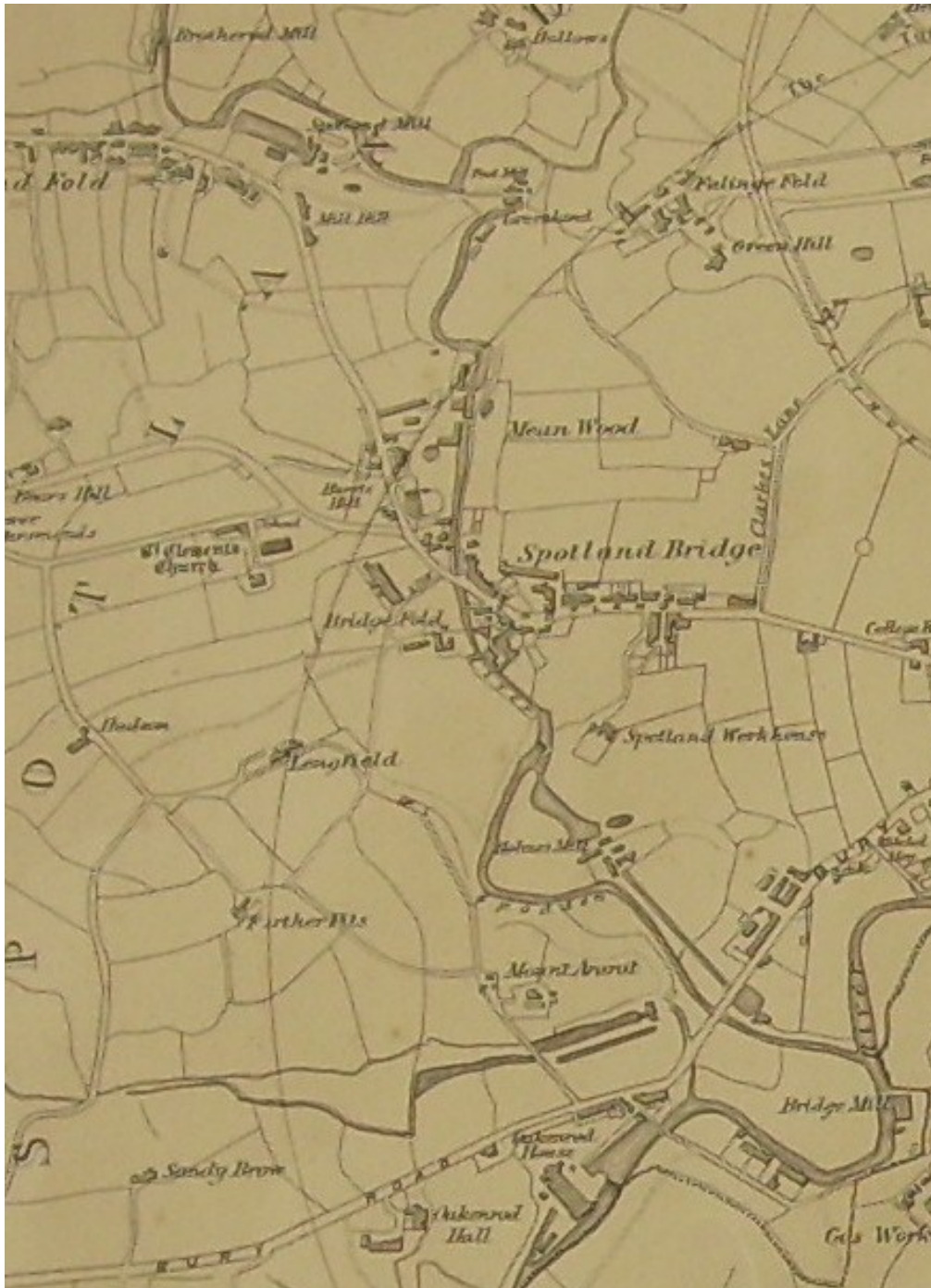
### *Origins*

The industrial history of Spotland Bridge started around 1610 when five fulling mills were constructed along the River Spodden. The fulling mills were driven by water wheels and used to finish the cloth to make it ready for sale. The 'clothiers' created this Factory System; they built these mills and the Dye Works and bought 'pieces' of cloth from the handloom weavers.

By 1740 the area had expanded substantially and was consequently chosen as the location for a workhouse (visible on this 1831 Ordnance Survey map) which was located at the southern end of what is now Primrose Street. This provided homes and jobs for 100 orphans and elderly men and women. The workhouse formed one of the rallying points of the Rochdale Poor Law Union, which fought the 1837 Poor Law revisions. In March 1873, the Old Spotland Workhouse partially collapsed, possibly because of subsidence due to an old coal-pit beneath the building. However it was used for another four years, waiting for the construction of Birch Hill Hospital (former Dearnley Workhouse). Today this workhouse no longer exists in Spotland area as terraced houses were built in the late Victorian times to the bottom of Primrose Street.

The townscape of Spotland evolved considerably during the early Victorian times, which is the Golden Age of the textile industry and continued to grow through the Victorian and Edwardian periods as demonstrated by the following map regression. The historic development map provides an analysis of the different historic maps and shows that today, the varied collection of buildings in Spotland Bridge evidences the impact of the industrial revolution upon Rochdale's urban landscape.

1831



In 1831, the settlement in Spotland Bridge was concentrated at the junction with Spotland Road and the River Spodden. Spotland Workhouse, Spotland Fold, Saint Clement's Church and Vicarage and some small-scale textile industrial sites along the river were the major forms of urban development. Despite this, the landscape was predominately rural and Spotland Bridge would have had a backdrop of hills, the fast flowing River Spodden and Mean Wood to the north.

1844



After the 1830's, cotton became the principal textile produced in Rochdale, and eventually four times as many people were employed in cotton, than in woollen mills. Factory process increasingly replaced human labour and this can be seen on the maps by mills increasing in size and number. Furthermore, in 1839 the Manchester and Leeds Railway opened better linking Rochdale industry to Manchester and Leeds and in doing so, increasing access to national and international markets. The resultant growth is clearly seen in comparing this and the 1831 map.

By 1844, the construction of new large scale cotton mills with tall chimneys resulted in profound changes to the urban landscape. It had become a thriving textile area, featuring Spotland Bridge New Mill, Spotland Bridge Dye Works and Spotland Bridge Brewery to the east of the river. The area was characterised by multi-storey mills further indicating the prime location of the land.

However, the woollen industry was still visible present: adjacent to the fulling mill on the Ordnance Survey map, is a series of parallel lines, the 'tenters'. Tenters were used to hung cloth from poles and lines and to expose them to the effects of sun and rain, as an early form of bleaching.



During the Victorian period, Rochdale was at the heart of the cotton industry in Lancashire, resulting in a massive growth of the population. Its population has doubled in forty years to reach 119,191 inhabitants by 1871 with people coming into the town to work in the new cotton and woollen mills. Many of them were Irish immigrants who came after the Irish potato famine of 1845-6. Spotland itself had grown to house over 15,000 people in 1856 and would have grown further with the construction of Spotland New Mill to the east of the River at the turn of the 1870s. Originally, a woollen mill, it was later converted to cotton in 1880's.

The urbanisation of Spotland spread with terraced dwelling constructed along Spotland Road and later Rooley Moor Road. The pattern of terraced houses is particularly well preserved today. The 1891 Census shows clear evidence that the inhabitants were working in the local textile industry as cotton spinners, cotton weavers, cotton operatives, wool spinners, silk spinners and fulling millers. Therefore the residential development around Spotland Bridge is part of the social history of textile industry in the River Spodden valley. The evidenced growth and industry also provides context for Rochdale's outstanding town centre heritage that was established at this period including the Town Hall, banks, library and parks.

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1909



Spotland Bridge's industry continued to expand up to 1909 with the construction of Mellor Street Mill and the density of the residential areas increasing. As transportation developed through the Victorian and Edwardian periods, it also left its mark on Spotland. The tramway (removed between 1930s-1950s according to OS maps) linked Spotland Bridge to the town centre via Spotland Road and Mellor Street. This extended system of trams ran between Heywood, Bury, Whitefield, Oldham and Manchester. A new tramway Car Depot, was built on Mellor Street as part Rochdale's new tramway infrastructure. To carry this road, two bridges spanning the River Spodden were built in 1905 using pioneering construction. The bridges were at the cutting edge of concrete bridge construction in England, being amongst the very first bridges to be constructed entirely of ferro-concrete and also using vault-slab arches in their design.

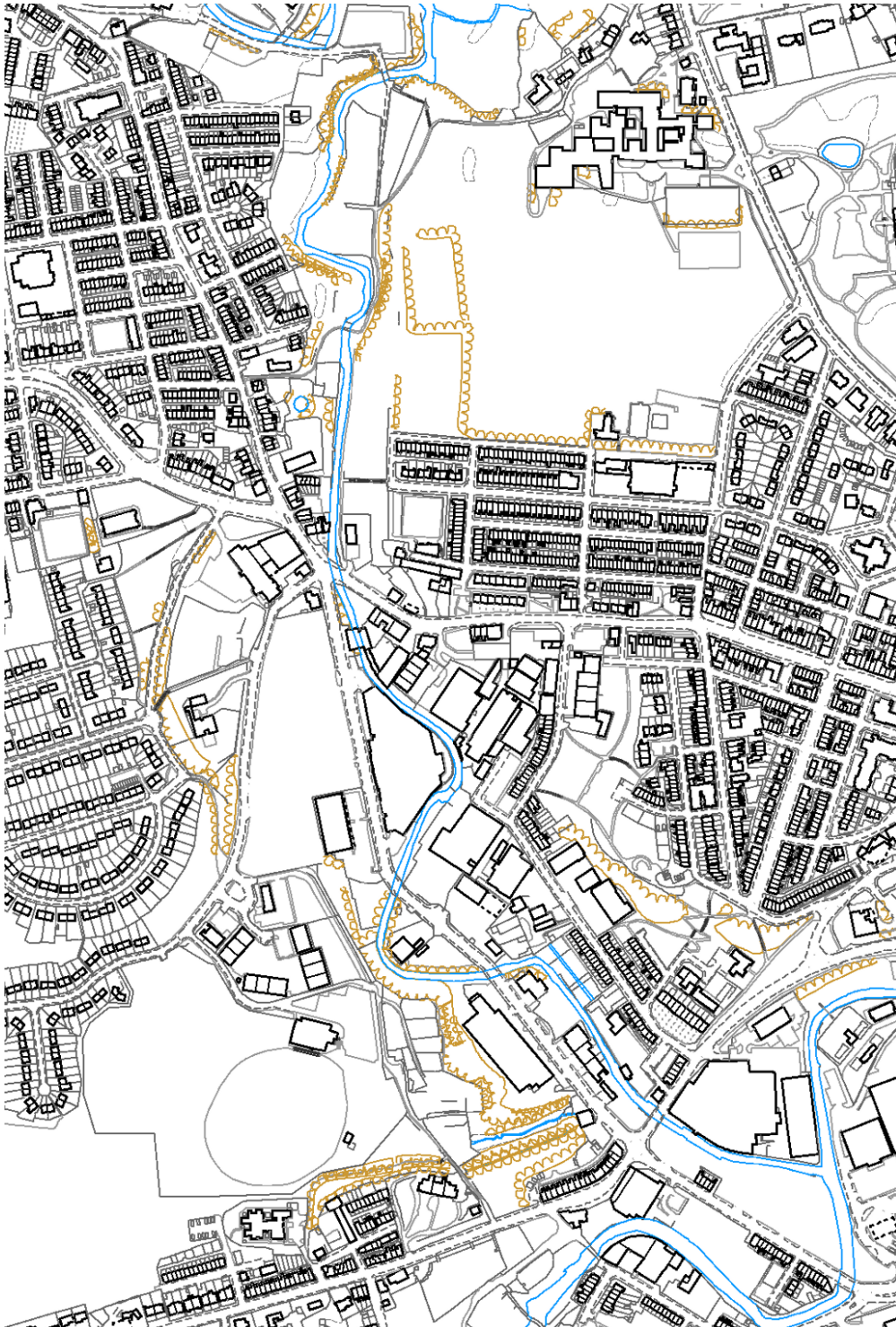
1930



Between 1909 and 1930, the landscape of Spotland Bridge continued to change albeit at a slower rate no doubt resulting from the 1920s/30s recession when many mills closed and unemployment started to affect the population. Rochdale was not immune and a decline in its spinning capacity is recording as having declined through this period. The development that did occur during this period was concentrated along Mellor Street with a substantial extension of Mellor Street Mill and an adjacent Tramway Depot, opposite the existing Tram Depot. In addition, the architectural style of the new houses changed significantly; evidenced on maps by a more suburban layout characterised by semi-detached houses. The more spacious housing may have been financed by wages increases resulting from the post World War I boom in the cotton industry.

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Today

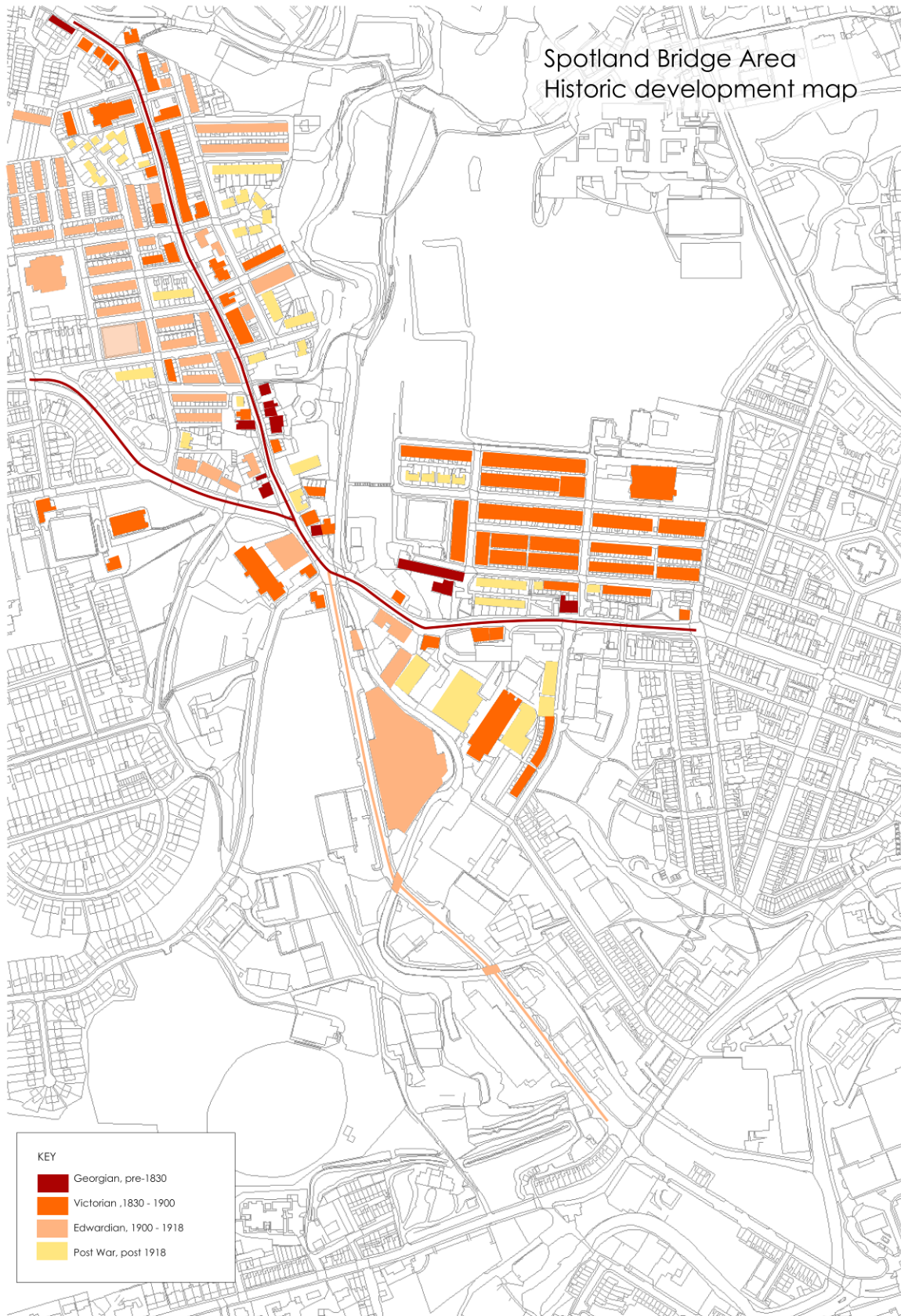


During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the woollen and cotton industry had shaped the Spotland area. Spotland Bridge New Mill and Spotland New Mill are Spotland's 'Cathedrals in Brick' (A short history of the textile industry in Rochdale, p.102, G.T. Whithworth) which remain the symbol of the industrial revolution in the area. Much of this development has remained and the area retains a strong sense of identity as well as evidencing the industrial and social history of Rochdale .

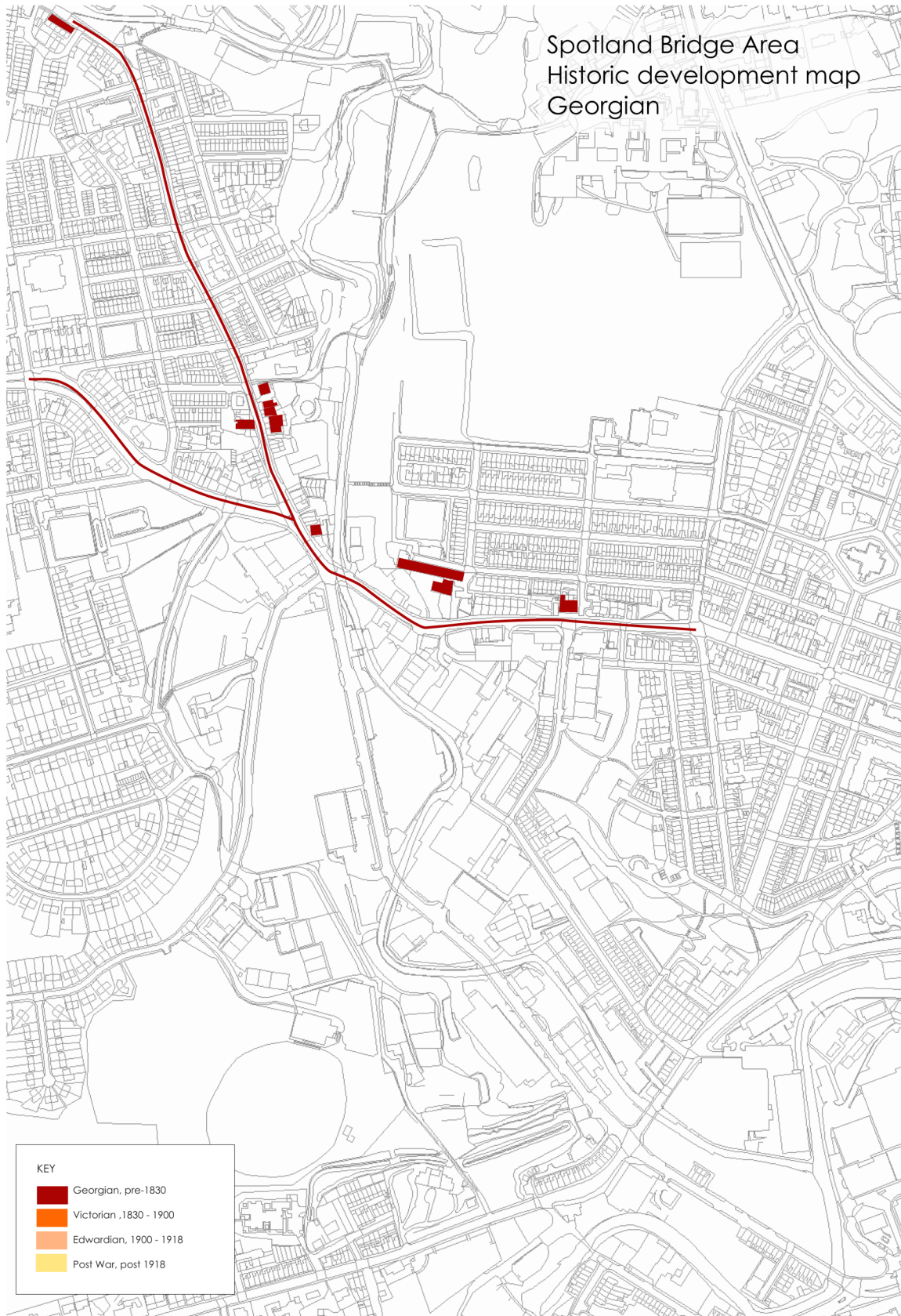
The 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by the World Wars, machinery modernisation and international competition. The urbanisation of the area slowed down and change occurred in smaller pockets of development.



## 2. Spotland Bridge historic development



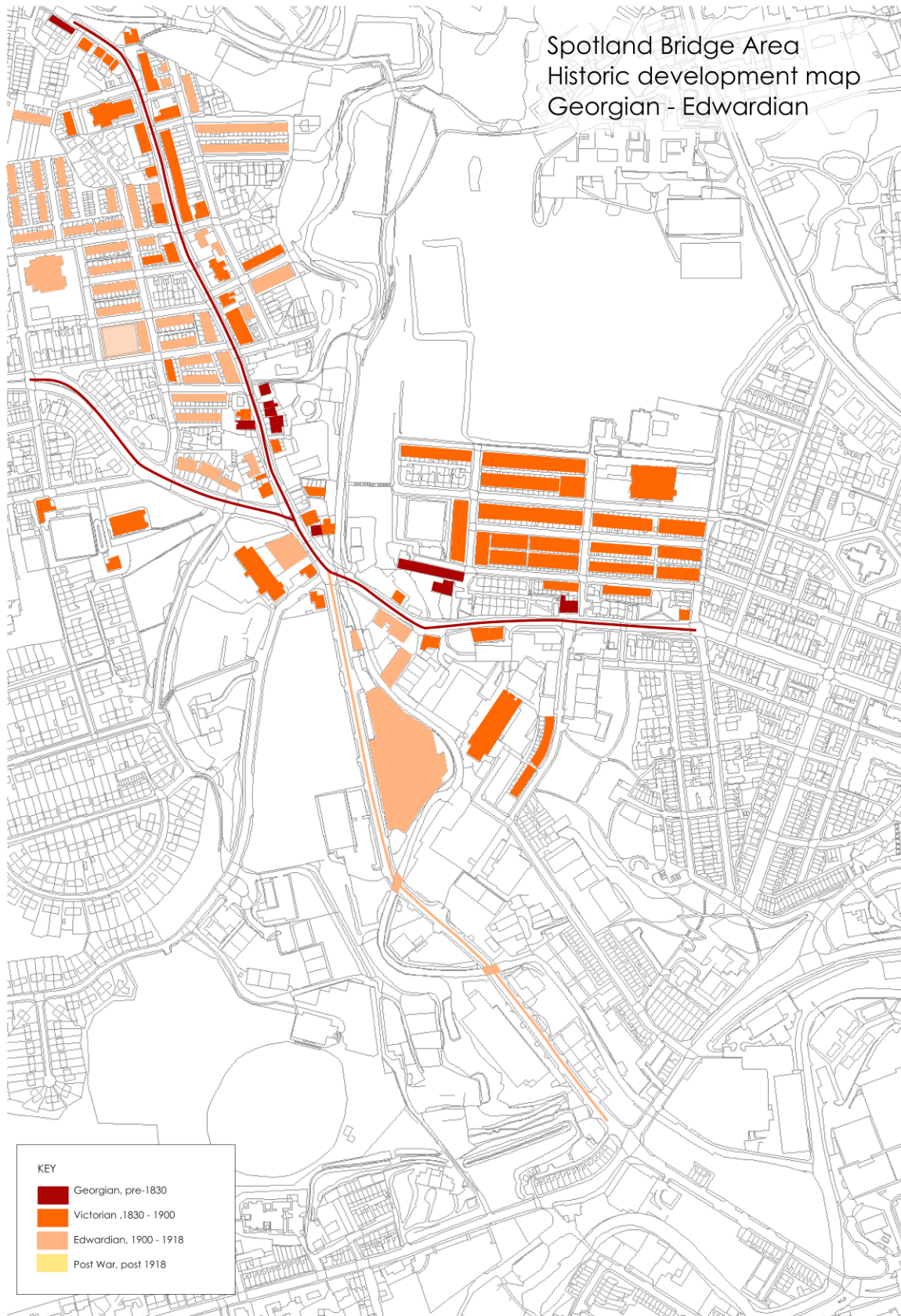
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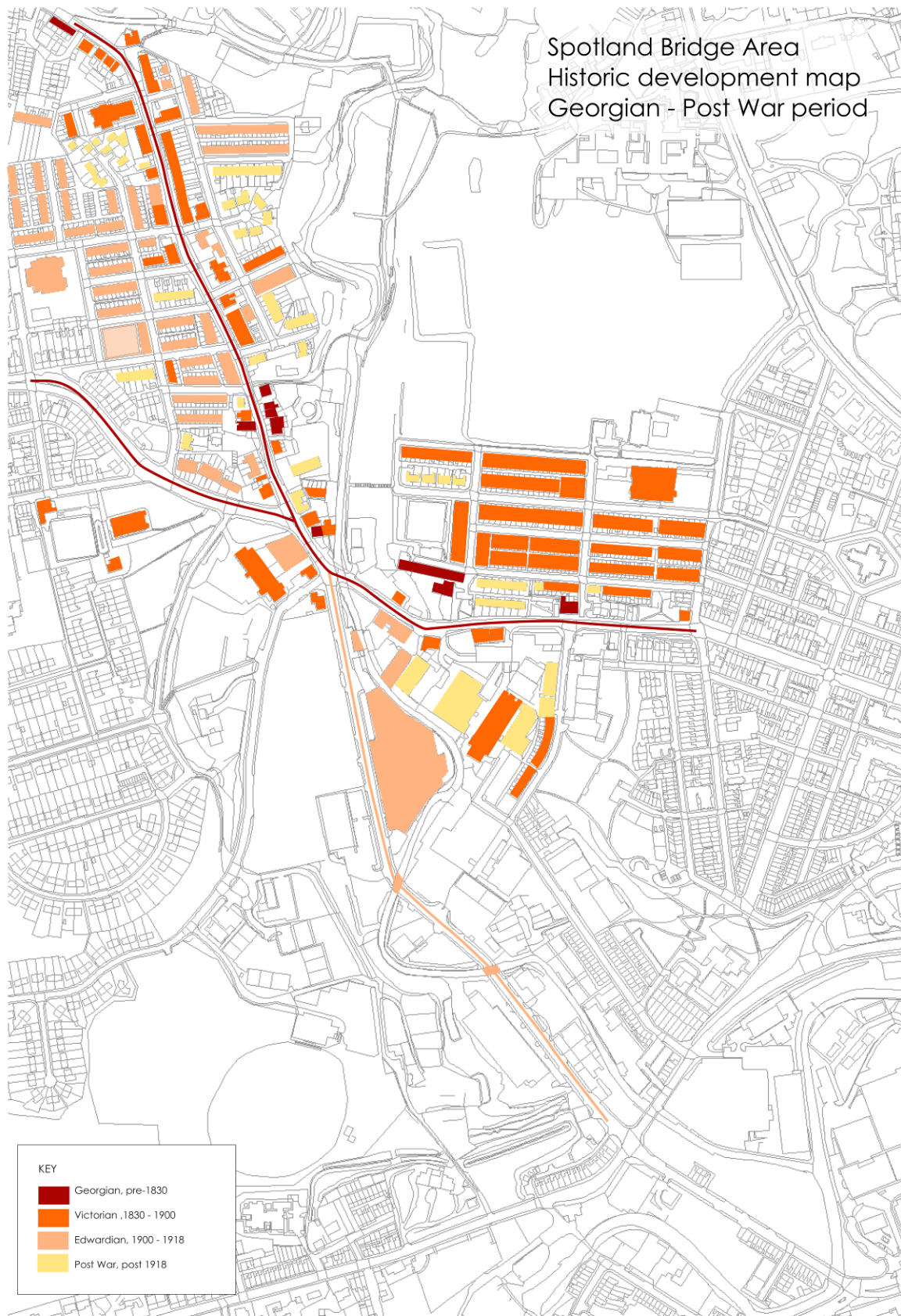
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### 3. Townscape evolution



Rooley Moor Road 20th century, date unknown



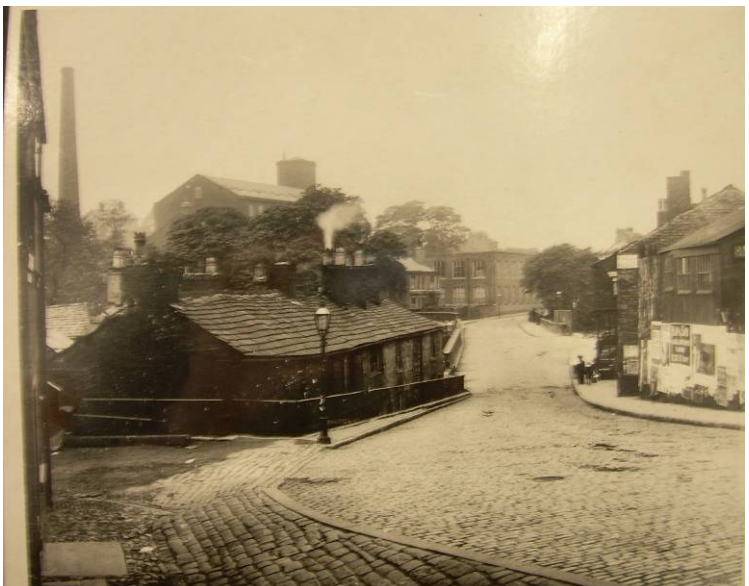
Rooley Moor Road, today



Spotland Bridge gateway, 20th century, date unknown



Spotland Bridge gateway, today



Spotland Road, view to the west, date unknown



Spotland Road, view to the west, date unknown

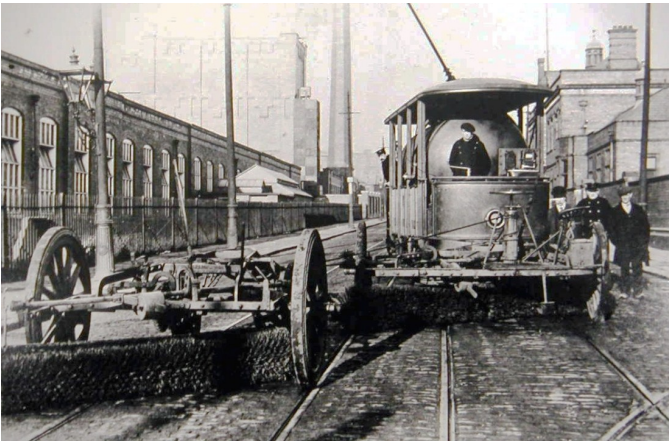
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Spotland Bridge gateway, 20th century, date unknown



Spotland Bridge gateway, today



Mellor Street, 20th century, date unknown



Mellor Street, summer 2012

## References

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- Rochdale Council documents  
Spotland Bridge, Rochdale CA, RMBC, David Morris
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  - A short story of the Textile industry in Rochdale, G.T. Whitworth, Bobbins
  - British architectural styles, An easy reference guide, Trevor Yorke