

MYTHOLMROYD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1. LOCATION & POPULATION

Mytholmroyd is located in the Calder Valley, West Yorkshire, between Halifax and Hebden Bridge. It is a small town based at the confluence of Cragg Brook and the River Calder, which like many of the towns in the valley developed since the 18th Century. The town is surrounded by gently sloping wooded hillsides forming an attractive backdrop. The population of Mytholmroyd was 4,114 at the time of the 1991 Census.

2. THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SETTLEMENT

The name Mytholmroyd has 2 meanings; 'mytholm' is a place where 2 streams meet and 'royd' means a clearing.

Early settlement in the Calder Valley from the Celtic Iron Age concentrated on the hillside terraces which avoided the wooded and poorly drained valley floors and high bleak moorland. This produced a pattern of scattered farmsteads including Broad Bottom Farm, Hawksclough, Elphaborough Hall, Redacre House, Mytholmroyd Farmhouse and White Lee, with a network of trackways. Laithe-houses, which combined house with barn and mistal (cowhouse) are found at 8, White Lee and Low Bank Farmhouse.

Packhorse routes existed at Mytholmroyd between the old weaving hamlets of Sowerby and Heptonstall and there must have been an early crossing point for travellers between Mankinholes and Midgley. There may have been a crossing point at Hawks Clough before this. The packhorse routes probably influenced the existing road pattern and development of the settlement.

The stone bridge over the River Calder at Mytholmroyd was instigated by Timothy Wadsworth in 1684 and survives to the west. The bridge was widened to the east, 1823-4 in rock faced stone. When flood prevention works were undertaken in the 1960's, excavations under County Bridge showed some heavy timbers with sockets which suggested that they were the foundations for the wooden bridge which existed before the existing stone bridge (Spencer, 1999).

Public houses were often located close to crossing points at the river to take advantage of the maximum custom. The Dusty Miller pub, dating from the late 18th Century, was probably built to refresh the growing number of people transporting goods. The pub has Venetian windows with cart-entry and mistal doorway to the side. Jack Uttley (1995) researched that in 1792 the building had been 'lately erected by John Alexander of Halifax Doctor of Physic, and now used as an Inn.' It has been wrongly suggested that in 1769 the Dusty Miller was the pub where local counterfeiter met, but that particular inn was on the opposite side of the turnpike road and was demolished when the present inn was built. The row of cottages called Bridge End now occupy the site.

The valley turnpike road came to Mytholmroyd in the 1760's and various toll houses were built with toll gates jutting into the road. A toll house still exists on Scout Road, although many were pulled down when toll gates were abolished in 1878. Cragg Road, created by the Local Turnpike Act 1815, was one of the last in the country to expire in 1886.

Textile manufacture came to Mytholmroyd later than the weaving settlements of Midgley and Heptonstall. Mytholmroyd Mill was built in 1794 by William Patchett of Bankfoot Hall, it was taken over by Thomas Edmondson before 1796 as a water powered worsted mill then Joshua Fielden who changed the name to Grange Mill in 1836. It was destroyed by fire in 1892. Thomas Edmondson built 26 leasehold cottages in 1796 called New Houses, later Pall Mall, they were demolished in 1946 and the site is now occupied by the White Lion car park. Four Day Work Mill was built in 1836 by John Edmondson for cotton spinning. It was later named West Field Mill, in the 1860's and used for steam powered worsted spinning. Some depleted parts of the complex are currently let as separate 'units' (Jack Uttley, 1995). Clough Mill was also built in 1836 for velvet and cotton manufacture, it was demolished in the 1960's for the widening of Midgley Road. Old pictures of Mytholmroyd, when these mills existed, show that the character of the town would have been very different as the mills would have dominated the main route through the valley.

There is still a significant amount of evidence for the impact of textile manufacturing on the development of the character of Mytholmroyd. Elphaborough Hall, of mid 17th Century origins, displays evidence of textile manufacturing or storage in the form of taking-in doors at first floor and attic level. Mount Pleasant Mill, Midgley Road was constructed in the late 18th Century with a broad Venetian window. The workers' cottages for this mill are located nearby at No. 22-42 Sunny Bank in the local form of over and under-dwellings with mullioned windows. No. 4-6 Church Street are 4 combined houses dated 1800 with a single work room above.

The Rochdale Canal, completed in 1804, passes through Mytholmroyd and links the Calder and Hebble Navigation at Sowerby Bridge across the Pennines to the Bridgewater Canal at Manchester. Stone bridges over the canal, including the grade II listed Redacre Bridge, and the linear developments alongside the canal contribute to the old early industrial character of the town. Later rail transport followed the line of the valley. The railway was completed in 1841 with stations at Todmorden, Eastwood, Hebden Bridge, Luddenden Foot, Sowerby Bridge, Elland and Brighouse but there was no station at Mytholmroyd which shows how few people lived there in 1840. The railway viaduct was built in 1840 by George Stephenson. A Station existed in 1847 but was probably a temporary one (Sheeran, 1994). The passenger stair-tower, forming Mytholmroyd Station, was built in the 1850's or 1860's and is very prominent in the town centre. Very few original canopies have survived except for this one at Mytholmroyd

3. FORMER USES WITHIN THE AREA, INFLUENCE ON PLAN FORM & BUILDING TYPES

As outlined above the former uses of buildings and land have had a significant impact on the plan form. In particular the natural form of the land following the Calder valley and Cragg Brook means that the transport routes have followed the easiest routes. Originally the pack horse routes kept to the drier high land but passed through Mytholmroyd to cross the River Calder between Midgley and Mankinholes. Later the Turnpike Road was developed along the line of the Calder valley, followed by the Rochdale Canal and the railway. The settlement developed on the flat land that was easier to build on, near the river crossing point and around the transport routes.

Building types consist of dwelling houses, agricultural buildings, transport structures, mills and houses to accommodate mill workers and other residential, commercial and community buildings. The majority of the buildings are 2-storey but there are also some 3 and 4 storey buildings including Mount Pleasant mill and Coiner's Wharf. There are some tall terraced houses located on hillsides such as Sunnybank, which form over and under-dwellings which are characteristic of this area, using the land efficiently for dense housing.

When Thomas Edmondson arrived in Mytholmroyd there was no place of worship, but he allowed a group of baptists, under Dr Fawcett, to use a room in his mill to hold their meetings (Jack Uttley, 1995). This arrangement was only temporary until the Methodists established a Chapel and Sunday School in the village. There are currently 3 churches within Mytholmroyd; the Methodist Chapel built 1825 at the south end of the town with Sunday School added 1872, the Church of St Michael built 1848 by Mallinson and Healey in Early English style, and the 20th Century Catholic Church. They are all located in prominent parts of the town centre.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

A Bronze Age urnfield exists on the moor top, north of Mytholmroyd. It is a burial ground with cremation urns, dating between the 16th and 11th Centuries BC of national importance. Evidence of pre-historic farming is apparent by the fact that they cleared the upland forests for cattle grazing and created the peat moorlands. Most of the Celtic Iron Age settlements were concentrated on the hillside terraces which avoided the wooded and poorly drained valley floors. Most of the older listed buildings are located on the hillsides away from the valley. A Roman coin hoard has been found to the south of Mytholmroyd.

5. ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC QUALITIES OF BUILDINGS & THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE AREA

There are 21 listed buildings/structures (list entries) within the conservation area.

Redacre House, off Burnley Road dates from the late 16th Century, and is important as it is probably the earliest house in Calderdale exhibiting an F-plan formed by the projecting 2-storey porch and crosswing (C.F. Stell, 1960). The house has 3 gables projecting forward altogether, with coped gables and

kneelers. It has a Tudor arched doorway with roll moulded surround. The first floor jetties out slightly. All windows are double chamfered mullioned with cavetto moulded mullions and hoodmould.

Mytholmroyd Farmhouse (formerly St George's Chapel of Rest or Fold), on Scout Road was also an isolated farmhouse but is now prominent within the centre of the town. There is evidence of a late medieval timber-frame rebuilt in stone, early to mid 17th Century. The main feature of this building is the first floor 7-light window with 10-light mullioned and transomed window. This house and Redacre are both grade II* listed buildings by virtue of their age and architectural and historic significance.

Other listed buildings include the cottages at White Lee, off the Midgley Road, that are characterised by their low 2-storey height of coursed stone with stone slate roof with mullioned windows. This characteristic style is found at many residential properties in Mytholmroyd and the Calder valley generally.

6. CONTRIBUTION MADE BY KEY UNLISTED BUILDINGS

There are a number of unlisted buildings that are attractive and enhance the conservation area, mostly dating from Victorian times including; the Nurses Homes, fire station and Scar Bottom House on Cragg Road; the toll house, weavers' cottages and Victorian housing on Scout Road; Coiners' Wharf (formerly the Co-Op) on New Road; the bank (Royd Regeneration) and the Royal Oak pub (although derelict) and adjacent stables building on Burnley Road; residential cottages at the entrance to Midgley Road (No. 3-9). These properties are constructed of local stone and have either stone or blue slate roofs. Local stone architectural features include quoins, drip moulds, string courses and stone window surrounds.

7. CHARACTER & RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES WITHIN THE AREA

Much of the character of Mytholmroyd is derived from the complex inter-relationship of the natural features and transport routes within the town. The River Calder could be a dominant feature but is generally obscured at a lower level with development occurring right up to a hard edge rather than being softened by a flood plain with soft landscaping. Roads and bridges over the Rochdale Canal, river and railway introduce interesting contrasting views that are revealed unexpectedly and provide a different dimension to the quite densely built-up urban environment.

8. PREVALENT & TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS, TEXTURES, COLOURS

The main building material used in Mytholmroyd is local gritstone of a rich golden brown colour, often weathered at the edges to a darker sometimes blackened appearance. There is a mixture of ashlar, wide coursed and narrow coursed stone walling and some dry stone boundary walls. Large slabbed, stone slate roofs are usually weathered to a darker grey/brown colour, provided the slates have not been turned. The use of this stone for the basic components of buildings and also for the detailed features and boundary walls and copings means that the built environment fits into the landscape very naturally. These materials are much less jarring on the eye in

this area than red brick/tile, or painted render which is used on the edges of the town and outside the historic core.

9. LOCAL DETAILS

One of the main features of earlier housing in this area is the stone mullions often used in weaving cottages to allow more light particularly in the upper floors. Older properties have chamfered and moulded mullions, recessed from the face of the wall and more recent properties have flat faced mullions and window surrounds. Other features include natural stone copings and kneelers on roofs; window surrounds; drip moulds above windows and doors and elaborate label stops; lintels, sills, door jambs and quoins. The older properties often have more multi-light mullioned windows, whereas 3-light and 2-light mullioned windows were used later, which were replaced by taller larger windows in Victorian times. A local variation of the mullion window in Mytholmroyd is the centre light raised higher than the two either side. Older houses and cottages were generally built as low 2-storey properties, then some terraced houses were built taller, with over and under-dwellings.

Agricultural buildings often have a large single entrance cart door with an arch. This is also often accompanied by a Venetian window at a higher level. This is a 3-light window with a taller arched centre. It was very often used in late 18th Century to 19th Century barns as seen at the former barn near White Lee. There are at least 70 Venetian windows like this across Calderdale (Stell, 1960) and they are rarely used elsewhere so it is definitely a feature of local distinctiveness. Classical features were introduced to these vernacular buildings from the 18th Century as evidenced two of the barns at White Lee. Mount Pleasant Mill also displays a broad Venetian window to elevate its status.

10. CONTRIBUTION MADE BY GREEN SPACES, TREES, HEDGES, NATURAL OR CULTIVATED ELEMENTS

Within the town centre of Mytholmroyd there are several green spaces that contribute to the overall attractiveness of the town. In particular trees are a vital element in the south part of this town, particularly around Cragg Brook and the Rochdale Canal. Smaller groups of mature trees provide an attractive setting to historic buildings and sites such as the Firth Glass building near Mount Pleasant Mills and to the rear of the Dusty Miller and the War Memorial garden.

Large open, green spaces at the recreation ground, around St Michael's Church, the bowling green and the cricket ground with associated trees and hedges all contribute to contrast with the dense building form of the town. There are two landscaped areas within the town including; the Memorial garden; and the green, near the library, with a stone horse trough and drinking fountain monument, presented by Charles Robertshaw in 1921. Although small they provide attractive, formal seating areas at each end of the town centre.

11. SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA, RELATIONSHIP WITH LANDSCAPE/OPEN COUNTRYSIDE, LANDMARKS, VISTAS, PANORAMAS

Mytholmroyd is set within the Calder Valley at the confluence of Cragg Brook. The landscape of this surrounding valley makes a significant contribution to the setting of the town. The wooded hills nearby are often viewed when looking out of Mytholmroyd, across the town, into the distance providing a very attractive backdrop to the town. The surrounding views of green hillsides provide a welcome contrast to the compact urban built-up environment of the town. These areas are designated as Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas and are protected in the Unitary Development Plan.

The main landmark features in the town include the tower of the Church of St Michael, which can be seen from many different view points and also the railway viaduct which dominates the centre of the town. The tall old mill buildings are also very prominent being higher than all the other 2-storey properties.

12. NEGATIVE FACTORS; LOSS, INTRUSION, DAMAGE, HARMFUL PRESSURES ON THE AREA

The environmental quality and enjoyment of the town is greatly reduced by the heavy traffic on the main road through the Calder Valley. Many of Mytholmroyd's shops are located on Burnley Road including the Post Office so the shopping environment is not as pleasant as it could be. The Memorial garden loses its attraction in such a noisy environment. New Road experiences quite heavy traffic with narrow footways reducing the quality of the environment.

A number of alterations to buildings have occurred that spoil their original vernacular character. The local vernacular tradition is to build in natural stone but where this has been painted or rendered and other original details lost, these buildings detract from the overall character of the area. The Post Office for example is rendered with a hipped red tile roof, modern wide windows with a canopy adjacent, this considerably disrupts the unity of the appearance of the Conservation Area.

13. EXISTENCE OF NEUTRAL AREAS

The shape of the Conservation Area is quite irregular as it excludes large areas of industrial development that have occurred near the centre of the town. It is recognised that these are important for employment and the economy of the town, therefore, they have been excluded from the boundary to allow redevelopment where necessary. Some modern housing has been well designed using quality materials and landscaping but this has been excluded from the Conservation Area as well. Isolated listed buildings on the outskirts have not been included because they will be protected under their own legislation.

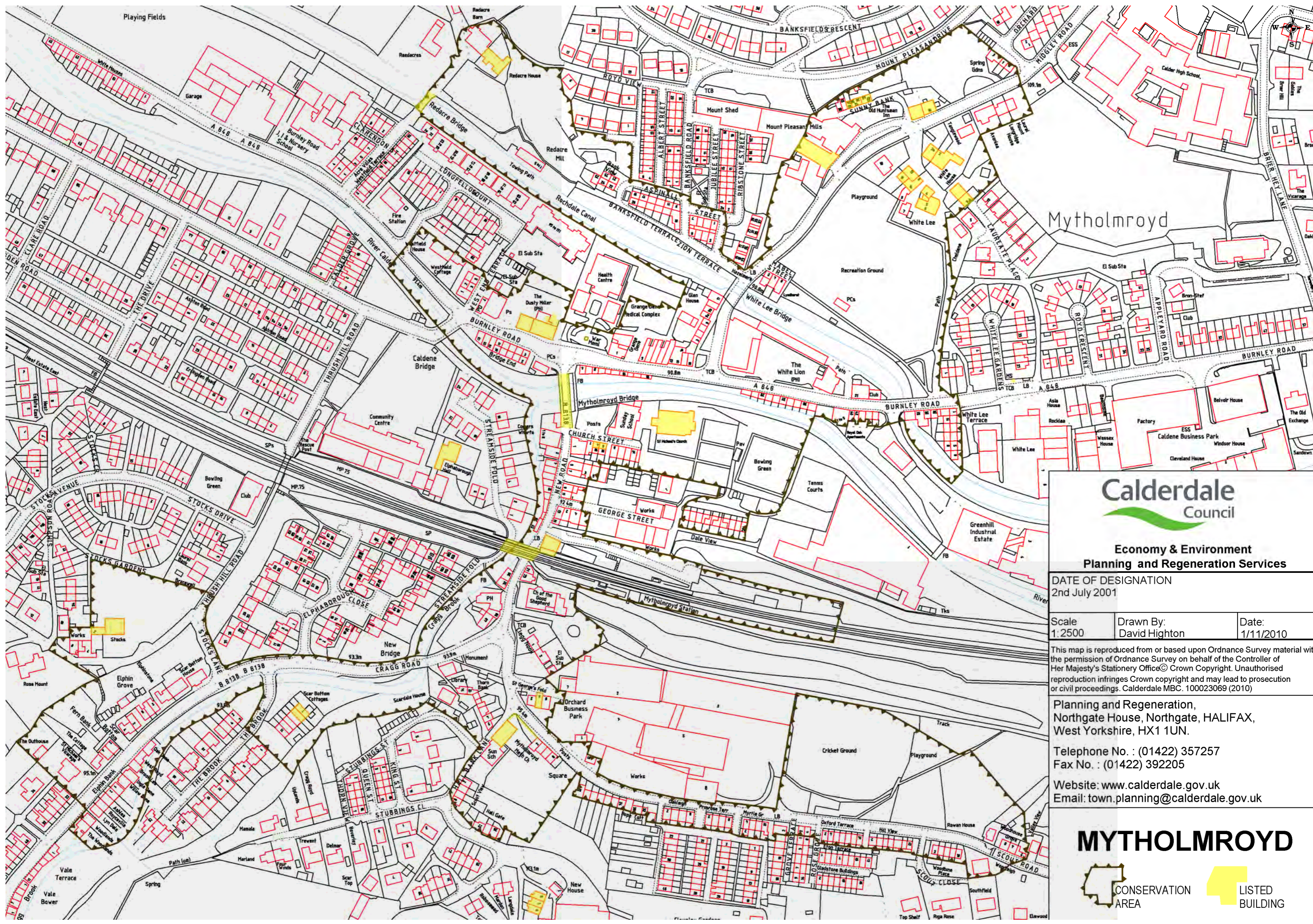
14. SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTER OF MYTHOLMROYD

The settlement of Mytholmroyd follows the transport routes of packhorse trail, road, canal and railway. There are 16th to 18th Century farmsteads that have

now been incorporated into a Victorian settlement that grew rapidly with textile mill development in the industrial revolution. There are a few dominating buildings including St Michael's Church the Methodist Church, Mount Pleasant Mill and the railway station passenger stair tower. The character of the town is derived from the natural stone buildings built close to the road frontage including terraced housing, shops and pubs. The main distinctive features include the stone mullioned windows and other stone features. A particular local variation is the raised centre mullion. There are also a number of Venetian windows with an arched raised centre mullion which are typical of the Calder valley and found on old barns, Mount Pleasant Mill and the Dusty Miller pub. The town has an attractive setting with wooded hillsides all around.

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Mytholmroyd



**Economy & Environment
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